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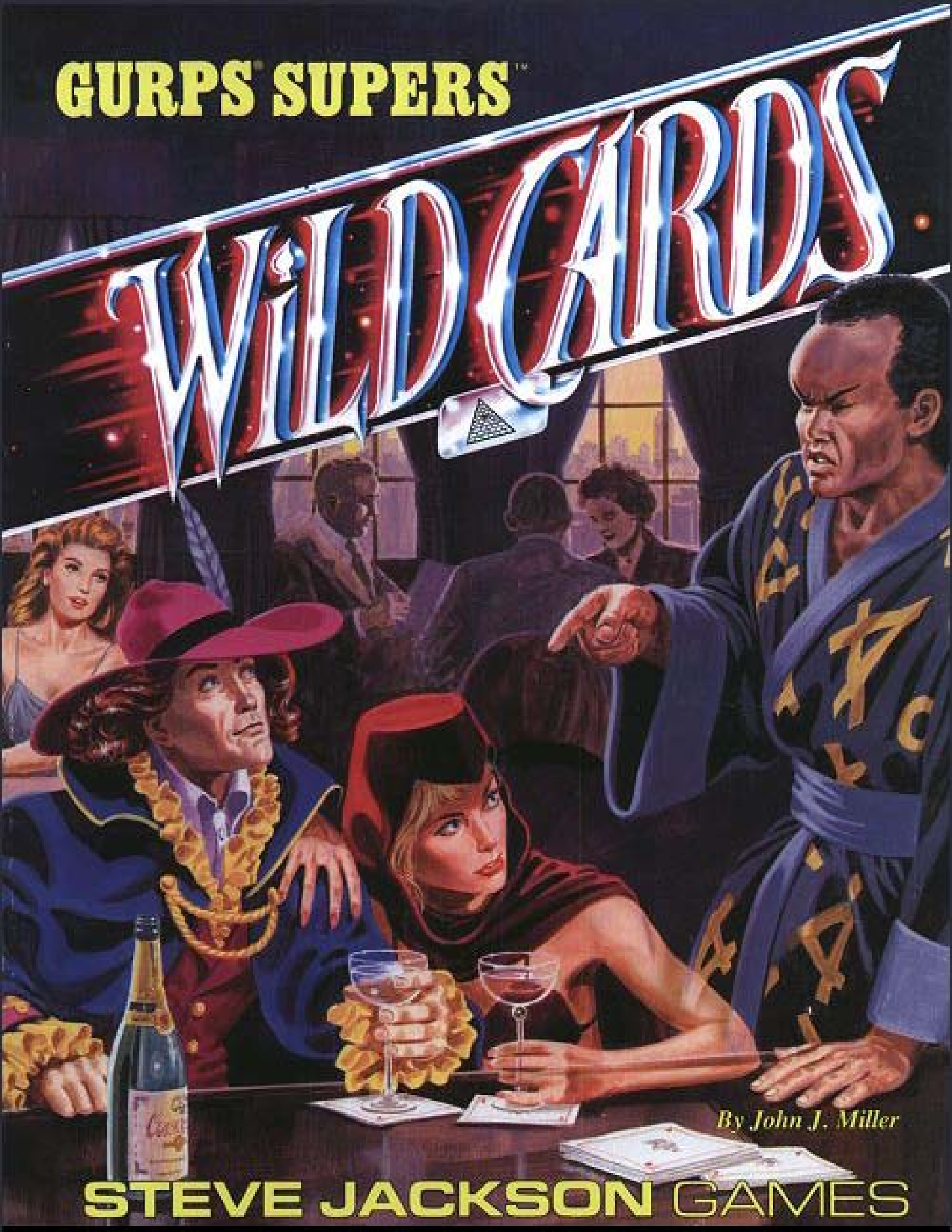
WILD CARDS



By John J. Miller

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS® SUPERS™

WILD CARDS

Roleplaying in the World of Aces and Jokers

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The author would like to thank and acknowledge the following people, for writing and otherwise contributing to the wonderful stories that make up *Wild Cards* volumes I through V, and for allowing me to quote liberally from those stories and from their background material. I would also like to acknowledge their continuing advice and support. They're all aces in my book . . . Edward Bryant, Pat Cadigan, Michael Cassutt, Gail Gerstner-Miller, Leanne C. Harper, Stephen Leigh, George R.R. Martin, Victor W. Milán, Parris, Lewis Shiner, Walton Simons, Melinda S. Snodgrass, Howard Waldrop, Walter Jon Williams, William F. Wu, Roger Zelazny.

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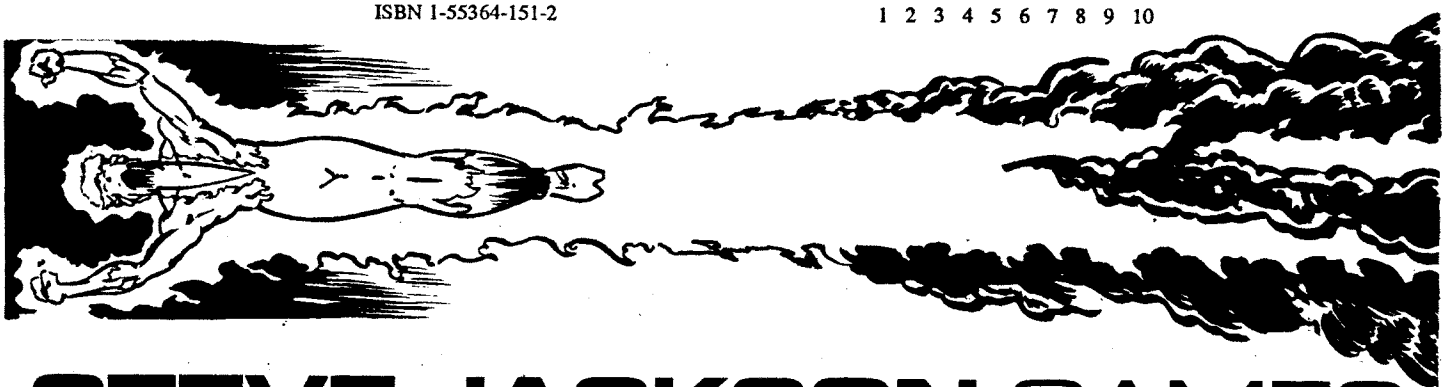

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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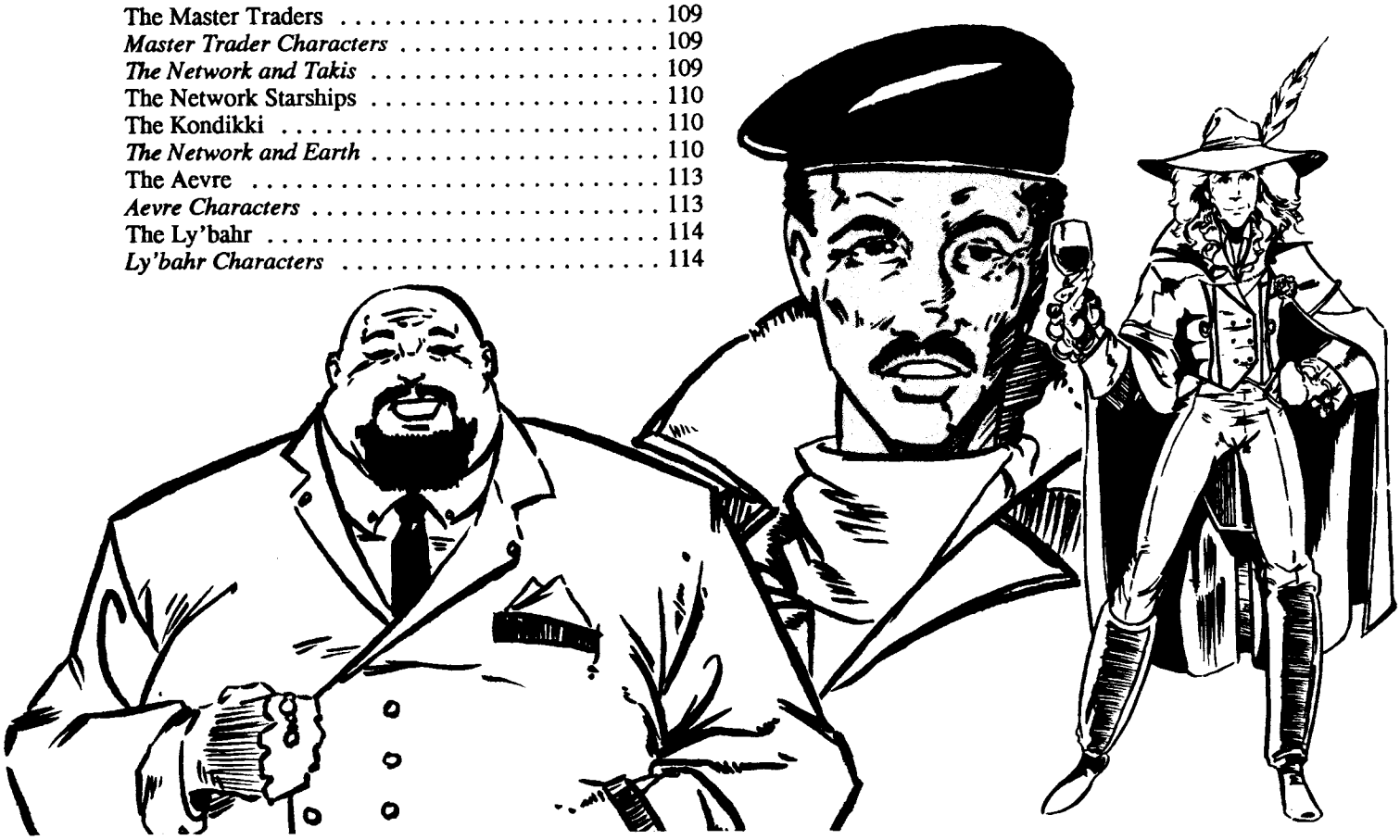


INTRODUCTION

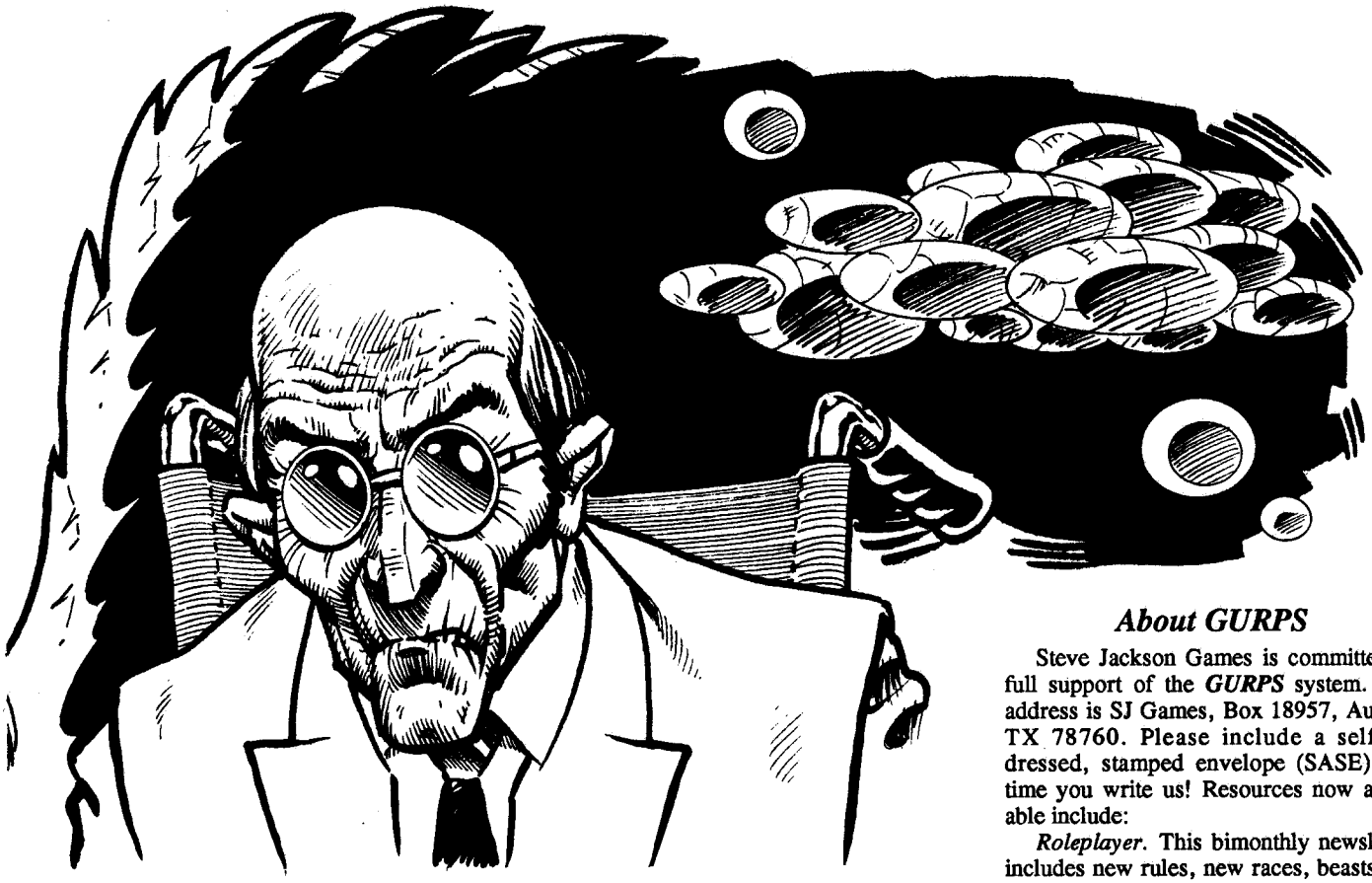
The *Wild Cards* universe has come full circle. It began with a roleplaying game, mutated into a long-running book series that has been nominated for both the Nebula and Hugo awards by science fiction writers and fans respectively, spun off into a comic book series, and is now a roleplaying game again.

To those of you unfamiliar with the *Wild Cards* universe, it's really the world we all grew up in, complete with hot dogs, apple pie, baseball, rock'n'roll, John F. Kennedy, Richard Milhous Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

But — in this world men and women can fly, lift tanks, walk through walls. They can hurl fire with their bare hands and smash buildings with the power of their minds. It is a world of great heroes and terrible villains, with the greatest heroes sometimes being found in the strangest places. It is a world scourged by the same fears and hates as our own, and uplifted by the same elements of courage, conscience and conviction.

You won't need a map to this world. You know it well enough. Pull up a chair and come see the sights . . .

Tom Seaver is pitching for the Brooklyn Dodgers tonight. Watch Dodger pitching coach Fidel Castro give him a few last words of advice before he takes the mound at Ebbets Field.



Buddy Holley is playing the Garden. Tonight's his fourth consecutive sellout. Winston Churchill is in town on a state visit. Tonight he's dining at Aces High, the opulent restaurant on the 86th floor of the Empire State Building. Buy him a drink and maybe he'll tell you what it's like to be 114 years old and a major political power in a great Western nation.

Take a stroll through Jokertown, the home of the discarded and unwanted, the lost but never forgotten. Buy a mask at one of the mask shops, slip it on, and you'll fit right in. Gaze in awe and wonder at Jetboy's Tomb. Learn Jokertown history at the Bowery Wild Cards Dime Museum (admission only $2.50). See the incredibly lifelike diorama of the Four Aces battling fascism in the 1940s. For more recent history there's an animatronic display (complete with fabulous light and sound effects) of Earth vs. the Swarm. If museums are too tame for you, check out the bar scene at Freakers or the Fun House. Perhaps you'll catch a glimpse of Chrysalis, the woman with invisible skin and flesh, at her Crystal Palace, or maybe you'll indulge in a game of chance at Club Dead Nicholas where the tables are coffins and the waiters are . . . unusual.

It might be best, though, to stay out of Squisher's Basement. That's strictly a local hangout. And (just a friendly warning to our valued readers) if you should find yourself in a dark alley in front of a dark doorway with a dark-garbed doorman inviting you inside, *don't* go in unless you really, really want to see how the dead men lost their bones.

Otherwise, enjoy. The *Wild Cards* universe is much like our own. It's full of tragedy and cowardice, triumph and heroism. The most important thing to remember is that people . . . even super-people . . . live and breathe and bleed and die. Sometimes they succeed and sometimes they fail. Sometimes it doesn't matter how strong you are, or that you can hurl fire with your naked hands.

But sometimes it does.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Roleplayer. This bimonthly newsletter includes new rules, new races, beasts, information on upcoming releases, scenario ideas and more. Ask your game retailer, or write for subscription information.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all ***GURPS*** releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

BBS. For those of you who have home computers, SJ Games operates a BBS with discussion areas for several games, including ***GURPS.*** Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours per day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call!

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the ***GURPS Basic Set*** — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** Third Edition. A SU page reference means a page in ***GURPS Supers.***

About the Author

John J. Miller was born in rural central New York long ago, when there were no such things as roleplaying games. He got hooked on Edgar Rice Burroughs as a youngster and by the age of ten was a committed science fiction and comic book fan. He became a baseball fan at an early age, indoctrinated with a love for the New York Mets by his grandfather, an unreconstructed Brooklyn Dodger fan.

He sold his first story at the age of sixteen. The magazine folded before they could print it and (more tragically) before they could pay him for it, starting a trend that was to last for a number of years. Whenever a magazine wanted to go out of business, all they had to do was accept a Miller story and they'd inevitably fold within a month.

John attended SUNY Stony Brook, graduating *magna cum laude* in 1976 with a B.A. in anthropology. He moved to Albuquerque in the fall of 1976 to pursue a graduate degree in archaeology at the University of New Mexico.

He has worked as an archaeologist in England, New York, Colorado, and all over New Mexico. He met his wife, Gail Gerstner-Miller, on an archaeological project in 1977.

John continued writing while in graduate school, finally seeing a story accepted, *paid for*, and then published in the October 1980 issue of *Fantastic Science Fiction*. The magazine immediately folded. Since then he has appeared in Volumes I-V and VII of the *Wild Cards* series, which has proved too popular even for him to kill. Other recent stories have appeared in the New Mexican science fiction anthology *A Very Large Array* and the Buck Rogers series. He also writes about baseball history and has contributed extensively to *The Dictionary of Baseball Biography*.

John currently lives in Albuquerque with his wife, Gail, and their five cats. He writes full-time, at least when he's not reading, gaming, watching baseball on cable TV, or playing softball.

His *Wild Cards* characters include Brennan (the Yeoman), Wraith, Chrysalis, Wyrm, Father Squid, Ezili-je-Rouge, and Billy Ray (Carnifex). Peregrine was the creation of Gail Gerstner-Miller.

History of the *Wild Cards* Project

It's all Vic Milán's fault.

For several years a gaming group has existed in Albuquerque, New Mexico, that includes a number of science fiction writers. We played numerous RPGs, perhaps favoring ***Call of Cthulhu*** and ***Morrow Project,*** but one year Vic gave George R.R. Martin ***Superworld*** for his birthday and it soon became our favorite game.

I don't know what was more fun, creating outlandish characters, designing their costumes in the little silhouettes on the character sheets, or dealing with the deadly scenarios and obnoxious villains George created for us. George, a comic book fan from way back whose first amateur stories appeared in comic book fanzines, enjoyed being God so much that he had a file folder with over a hundred villains and NPCs. We spent hours playing the game, then more hours discussing it, dissecting it, and reminiscing about it at parties and conventions.

It was getting to be a problem. We were spending so much time and creative energy on the game that careers were suffering, relationships were becoming strained, and George was about to lose the beautiful new house he'd just brought in Santa Fe.

Perhaps it wasn't that bad, but clearly we either had to cut back on playing in our super universe, or make some money at it. The latter seemed the more attractive proposal, and once again it was George who came up with the brilliant idea of turning our universe into a shared-world anthology. He told his idea to Melinda Snodgrass, one of the Albuquerque writer/gamers, and they spent a day discussing it and hammering it into a framework that could be used in a fictional setting.

They started with the premise of a world in which paranormal powers were real, and with the desire to look realistically at the effects such powers would have both on the world and on those who possessed them. It was clear that all the powers needed a common origin. Being bitten by radioactive spiders, being drenched in various chemical baths, or finding rings or things with amazing abilities locked in them would, piled one atop the other, strain the reader's credulity very quickly.

In keeping with a consciously science-fictional approach, they developed the idea of a virus that altered each host's DNA in a manner specific to the individual, thus allowing a myriad of powers to spring from a common origin.

They decided that labels like "super-hero" would be inappropriate for this realistic

approach, and so coined the term "ace" to define someone given paranormal powers by the virus. From there it became obvious that playing card terminology would work very well in this setting. The virus became the "wild card virus" because it could kill its victim outright ("drawing the Black Queen"), turn him or her into a terribly deformed genetic freak ("joker"), give him a power of negligible utility ("deuce"), or, most rare and wonderful occurrence, bestow a metahuman ability that turned its victim into an "ace."

This accomplished, they needed a specific event to bring the virus on the scene. In keeping with the science fiction approach, they invented a race of technologically advanced aliens who decided to use our Earth as a laboratory to test their dangerous virus.

With that framework in place, George sent invitations to various writers who he thought would be interested in such a project, and sat back for the outrageously weird character and story proposals to come pouring in.

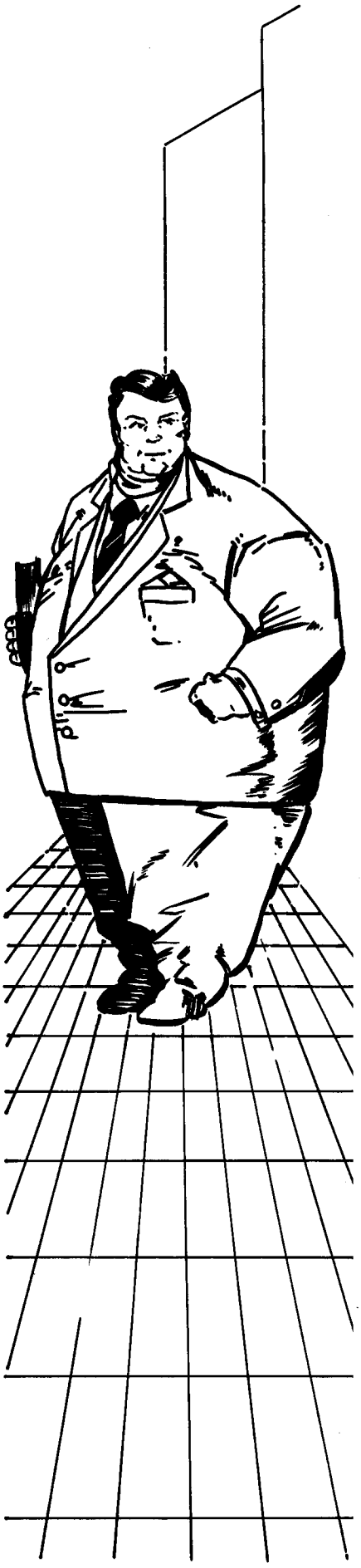
The Albuquerque gaming group naturally had something of an edge in the beginning, because we had a number of characters that we'd already used in our RPG. George's Great and Powerful Turtle made the translation to the fictional setting, as did Gail Gerstner-Miller's Peregrine, Walter Jon Williams' Modular Man, Vic Milán's Captain Trips, and John Miller's Yeoman and Wraith. It should be pointed out, though, that the fictional versions of these characters are sometimes far removed from their RPG ancestors. Sometimes little more than the name and abilities remained the same, with the fictional versions having totally different origins, personalities and motivations.

Unfortunately, some game characters never made it into *Wild Cards*.

You may see the Holy Roller (an immensely fat religious fundamentalist shaped like a bowling ball who flattens his foes by rolling over them), Rat Man, Atomic Samurai, Professor Pyscho, or Cycle Slut in future *Wild Cards* adventures, but if I were you I wouldn't hold my breath while waiting.

Likewise, some of the characters proposed in the initial batch of *Wild Cards* sketches have never seen the light of day. There was Gardner Dozois and Jack Dann's character (who shall be nameless here, but ask any *Wild Cards* author about him) who could make any woman in the world fall out of his ceiling. He couldn't control them after that, however, so a famous actress might fall into his room, mightily angry, slap him around a little, and leave. Then there was Senility Man, who could grow old at will, Humidity Girl, and Nova Boy, who had the power to make the sun go nova. Once.

But there were a lot of great characters and ideas, too. John Miller, Vic Milán, Walter Jon Williams, and Melinda Snodgrass, all from the Albuquerque group, were accepted for the first volume. George also invited other writers whom he knew had an interest in comics, including multiple Hugo and Nebula winner and fellow New Mexican, Roger Zelazny. Among the others who responded to the first round of invitations were Ed Bryant, Lew Shiner, Pat Cadigan, Arthur Bryon Cover, and Howard Waldrop, who had made his debut in the same comic fanzines as George. Ed brought Leanne C. Harper in with him, and Lew recruited Walton Simons, thereby giving rise to the interesting but totally erroneous rumor that well-known comic book artist Walt Simonson (note the incredible similarity of names) was writing for *Wild Cards*.



Five Volumes of *Wild Cards*

Right away, though, there was a problem. Howard Waldrop wanted to be in the book, but he wanted to do a homage to the comic-book hero Airboy, and a character with his own jet plane wouldn't be too much of a big deal in the 1980s. He also wanted the story to climax on his birthday, which was September 15, 1946. George, showing the editorial judgment and flexibility that was to become

his trademark, gave in to Howard's request and started the first volume in the mid-1940s with the arrival of the virus (and Dr. Tachyon) on Earth, and closed in 1986, at what was then the present.

Our first contract with Bantam Books was for a three-book package, and we presented Bantam with three proposals which, happily, they liked and accepted. In fact, they congratulated us on our interesting notion of an "over-arcing villain" (in this case, the Astronomer and his creepy friends, courtesy of Lew Shiner and Walton Simons) that tied the three books thematically together. We naturally accepted their accolades, and then said, yeah, over-arcing villain. Good idea.

The pattern of *Wild Cards* triads was thusly born somewhat out of the coincidence of signing a three-book contract, but it has proved to be a useful organization tool which we've used subsequently throughout the series.

Wild Cards, the first volume, turned out to be by far the most loosely knit volume in the series. This was rather inevitable. After all, we had to cover forty years of history in ten stories linked by what was to become another George R.R. Martin tradition — masterful interstitial material. In *Wild Cards* George cleverly pastiched the literary styles and techniques of such writers as Studs Terkel, Tom Wolfe, and Hunter S. Thompson, in his vignettes set from the 1940s through the '80s. Along with attention to period detail and true understanding and concern with the social problems of the times depicted, this has led to one of the great strengths of *Wild Cards:* a feeling of realism that is often lacking in material dealing with super-characters.

Aces High, the second volume, is more compact chronologically. The stories are heavily entwined in the "mosaic novel" format that is also integral to the *Wild Cards* universe. This entwining of stories, along with the continual borrowing of characters, is another strength of the series.

It speaks well both for editorial foresight and the good relationships among our authors that so much borrowing exists. Unlike other shared-world anthologies, *Wild Cards* writers have veto power over how others use their character, right down to what they do, how they appear, and even what they say. If you use someone else's character in a story, you have to send him or her the scenes in which the character appears. This fosters communication among writers and prevents the one-upmanship that has overrun some other shared-world series.

Book III, *Jokers Wild,* brought the concept of the mosaic novel to fruition. George originally laid out some simple parameters for this volume. He wanted to tell the story of one day in the life of *Wild Cards* New York. Stories therefore had to confine themselves to New York City over a 25-hour period. There could be no preambles set in Bolivia, no flashbacks to Cleveland, no flash-forwards to Buffalo. A complete, self-contained story had to take place during that one day, September 15, 1986, the fortieth anniversary of the first "Wild Card Day."

When the proposals came in, George chose the six story lines that he felt had the most potential. Then the authors of these story lines wrote outlines telling what their characters were doing hour by hour, exactly where they were, and who they were interacting with. This resulted in a 30-page master outline that was circulated to all the writers.

Then the real work began, the writing and talking and rewriting, that enabled us to tell our own stories while entwining with the others.

When the first draft was finished, George cut up the stories and put them back together. Scenes were dropped, rewritten, condensed or lengthened so that it could all make some sort of dramatic sense. Our telephone bills started to look like we were in daily communication with Mars. The Postal Service grew rich as we sent various drafts back and forth not only to our editor, but also to the writers whom we were working with most closely. In the end, however, we had

The Wild Cards Series

Five books in the *Wild Cards* series are now available in paperback from Bantam Books, and more will be appearing over the next few years. They are:

I. *Wild Cards* (January 1987).
II. *Aces High* (April 1987).
III. *Jokers Wild* (November 1987).
IV. *Aces Abroad* (June 1988).
V. *Down and Dirty* (December 1988).
VI. *Ace in the Hole* (scheduled to appear February 1990).
VII. *Dead Man's Hand* (scheduled to appear 1990).
VIII. *One-Eyed Jacks* (scheduled to appear 1990).
IX. As-yet-unnamed Dr. Tachyon novel (scheduled to appear 1991).
X. *Jokertown Shuffle* (scheduled to appear 1991).
XI. *Dealer Takes Six* (scheduled to appear 1991).
XII. An as-yet-unassigned novel (scheduled to appear 1992).

Other books are in the planning stages, but these are the only ones contracted as of this writing (August 1989).

Also underway is a new kind of *Wild Cards* project: a comic book from Epic.

As for roleplaying material, two ***GURPS Wild Cards*** sourcebooks have already been contracted to follow this worldbook, and more are planned.

References in This Book

When one of the *Wild Cards* volumes is specifically referenced in this book, the volume and page number will be given. For instance, a reference to II-100 would mean page 100 of volume II, *Aces High.*

the first true mosaic novel ever written, and the most tightly-knit *Wild Cards* book so far, telling the strange events that occurred on the fortieth anniversary of Wild Card Day, September 15, 1986.

That ended the first triad of *Wild Cards* books and our obligations under our first contract. Bantam, fortunately, was happy with the series, and we began work on the second triad almost immediately. Book IV, *Aces Abroad,* took the first look at the world outside of New York City. *Wild Cards* Earth is not our Earth. There are many differences, some subtle, some profound. (Who, for example, noted the slyly planted clue in *Jokers Wild* that Fidel Castro is the pitching coach for the Brooklyn Dodgers . . . and what, if anything, does this signify in regard to world history?)

Book V, *Down and Dirty,* brought Tachyon and the others back to New York to deal with gang warfare and a horribly mutated form of the wild card virus.

Book VI was written as another tightly woven mosaic, dealing with the eight days surrounding the Democratic Party Convention in Atlanta. Not only is the Democratic nominee for president named during this book, but also the murderer of one of our leading characters is brought to justice.

That, anyway, was the original plan. Bantam Books blanched when we turned in a 1,052-page manuscript and declined to publish it in a single volume. The book was then dissected, with the political drama about the Democratic National Convention being published under the title *Ace in the Hole.* The murder mystery was extracted to become Book VII, *Dead Man's Hand.*

At this writing, preliminary work for the third *Wild Cards* triad has begun, and Bantam has also agreed to publish two *Wild Cards* novels. The first novel, book IX in the series, will be written by Melinda Snodgrass and will center around Dr. Tachyon's return to Takis.

The third triad, based on a scenario by Chris Claremont, will see the *Wild Cards* debut of authors Claremont and William F. Wu, among others.

And the Wild Cards story will continue . . . as long as readers enjoy the tales of a world where there are people who can lift trucks, throw flame from their bare hands . . . and are just like us.

Wild Cards as a Roleplaying Game

This ***GURPS*** worldbook will deal with the characters, political happenings, social concerns, criminal organizations, and religious sects appearing in Books 1 through 5 of the series. It will cover 40 years of history, describe over 80 important characters and organizations, and describe a number of bars, restaurants and nightclubs, some of which no sane person would be caught dead in.

The *Wild Cards* universe is a rich, multi-faceted reality which, while entertaining in its own right, also mirrors and echoes the foibles and problems of our own reality. Writing for the series has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience, but for one thing.

Once we started writing *Wild Cards*, we stopped playing the game that had fostered the series. Perhaps it was just too much to deal with our characters in both a fictional context and a roleplaying setting, and that is really too bad.

I'll always wonder if the Hawk would have defeated his evil clone in hand-to-hand combat, if Nightmare would have ever returned from Japan, if the utterly evil Forces of Darkness would overwhelm the valiant Protectors, if the Blue Streak would ever get a better job than being a Smurf at supermarket openings. And what in the world is George R.R. Martin going to do with the hundred or so villains he has all ready to go in his special villain portfolio? Perhaps some of them, or at least their conceptual descendants, will turn up in future chronicles of the *Wild Cards* universe.

1 HISTORY

*Spoiler Warning: This chapter presents a capsule history of the **Wild Cards** universe, as presented in Books I through V of the series. If you read this before reading the books, you'll deprive yourself of a lot of surprises.*

Before the Great Change

For all practical purposes, *Wild Cards* Earth is the same as our own until 1939. Actual divergence of *Wild Cards* history from that of our familiar Earth began in 1939 when 12-year-old Robert Tomlin ran away from his orphanage and showed up at Bonham's Flying Service in Shantak, New Jersey. Professor Silverberg, who was working on an experimental plane under the auspices of the U.S. Army Air Corps, gave the kid a job. Tomlin was a natural pilot, the most plane-crazy kid who ever lived. He helped Silverberg build his experimental jet engines, and eventually he and the professor became the world's first jet pilots.

Tomlin was test-flying the jet, which became known as the JB-1, when Nazi spies attacked the hangar in an attempt to kidnap Silverberg and steal the plane. The Nazis killed the professor, but Tomlin succeeded in avenging Silverberg's death

when he riddled a car full of German spies with the plane's .30 caliber machine guns. This caused a diplomatic incident between the United States and Germany because the spies had diplomatic passports, and Tomlin was forced to flee to Canada. He joined the RAF (unofficially), and fought in the Battle of Britain and later in China with the Flying Tigers. After Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt gave him a special presidential commission, and Tomlin flew for the United States. He was given the nickname Jetboy while combat flying from 1939 to 1945. He was marooned on a desert island in the South Pacific in April 1945 and was rescued in August 1946.

Although Jetboy shot down 500 planes, sank 50 ships, and cracked innumerable spy rings, he actually made little difference in the war effort, and did nothing to divert history from its familiar course.

The Arrival of Dr. Tachyon

The first major dislocation between *Wild Cards* Earth and our Earth occurred one night in the last week in August, 1946, when a spaceship that looked like a giant seashell landed at White Sands, New Mexico. Its pilot claimed to be a prince from a planet called Takis. He said the Earth was in terrible danger that only he could avert, and demanded to be taken to President Truman.

Of course, no one believed him.

His name was unbelievably long and impossibly hard to pronounce, so he was given a nickname that eventually evolved into Dr. Tachyon. Tachyon was subjected to intensive questioning at the hands of Army interrogators, but he never changed his story.

He was, he claimed, a prince from the planet Takis, a member of one of the royal families who ruled the world through their potent mental powers. His family had been working on a secret weapon, an incredibly complex artificial virus that had been designed to interact with the specific genetic makeup of each host and grant incredibly potent physical and/or mental powers. After centuries of development, the virus was finally ready for testing.

But there were still a few bugs to be worked out. The virus frequently killed those exposed to it, or turned them into genetic freaks, so Tachyon's family didn't want to test it on themselves! But if they tested it on their enemies, and it worked at all, the surviving foes would have super-abilities! They couldn't just forget about it, so they hatched a plan to test it on Earth, the only known planet with inhabitants genetically identical to Takisians.

Tachyon thought it was an ignoble experiment. He protested the decision to test it on the Earth, but was ignored. In typical Takisian manner, he tried a grandstand stunt to stop the project, all by himself. He followed the cruiser carrying the virus, burning out the interstellar drive of his personal vessel in his mad attempt to intercept it. He caught and defeated his fellow Takisians, and the ship carrying the virus crashed somewhere in the eastern United States. Tachyon's ship was also damaged in the fray. He landed at White Sands Missile Base, where he thought he could get help to repair his ship and then look for the lost virus container.

But no one believed Tachyon's wild story . . . until President Truman himself received a ransom note demanding thirty million dollars in cash to prevent the destruction of a major U.S. city. While Tachyon was being detained and questioned, the canister containing the virus had been recovered from the wreck of the Takisian spacecraft by a criminal organization led by the brilliant and unprincipled Dr. Tod, one of Jetboy's adversaries from World War II. Tod had experimented with the virus, discovered what it could do, and decided to make big money with it.

The government, of course, did not accede to Dr. Tod's demands.

Wild Cards Timeline

1939: Robert Tomlin runs away from the orphanage where he'd been living. He gets a job at Bonham's Flying Service, where he helps Prof. Silverberg develop the world's first jet aircraft. When Silverberg is slain by Nazi spies, Tomlin takes the plane (soon christened the JB-1) to Canada, where he unofficially joins the RAF.

1939-1940: Tomlin, or "Jetboy," flies with the RAF in the Battle of Britain, and also in China with the Flying Tigers.

1941-April 1945: After Pearl Harbor, Jetboy gets a special presidential commission from Franklin Delano Roosevelt and flies under the American flag. He becomes greatest ace of World War II, with over 500 confirmed kills.

April 1945: Jetboy is marooned on a desert island in South Pacific and sits out the rest of the war.

August 1946: Jetboy is rescued from his desert island.

The Takisian "Dr. Tachyon" lands at White Sands Missile Base, New Mexico and is detained by the U.S. government, which doesn't believe his story.

September 15, 1946: Jetboy is killed in a life-and-death struggle with his old foe Dr. Tod, who had found the virus and was using it in an attempt to blackmail the United States government. The virus is released over Manhattan. 10,000 die in a single afternoon as the age of the wild card begins.

October 1946: Archibald Holmes recruits Jack Braun (Golden Boy), David Harstein (the Envoy), Blythe Stanhope van Renssaeler (Brain Trust), and Earl Sanderson, Jr. (Black Eagle), into the Exotics for Democracy, popularly known as the Four Aces.

Late 1946: The Four Aces topple the fascist government of Juan Peron in Argentina. Peron ends up in China as military adviser to Chiang Kai-shek.

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Wild Cards Timeline (Continued)

1946-1950: There are major wild card outbreaks in Brazil, Kenya, Egypt, Hong Kong and New Zealand as the virus spreads around the world.

1947: The Four Aces travel the world hunting Nazi war criminals, and are instrumental in capturing Bormann, Mengele and Eichmann, among others.

A U.N. mandate creates the new nation of Israel.

1948: A major wild card outbreak hits Port Said in Egypt. Over a thousand die; at least 13 aces are created.

Later in the year, a group of Egyptian aces, led by the formidable Khof, enters the Israeli-Palestine war. The war ends in a stalemate. The two resulting countries have indefensible, interlocking borders and largely live peacefully with each other. As a divided city, Jerusalem becomes a cause for religious fanatics of every stripe and begins 40 years of hellish terrorism.

1948: Black Eagle saves Mahatma Gandhi from an assassin's bullet. Pakistan is reabsorbed into a decentralized India that is a mosaic of small principalities and territories of every possible cultural, religious and ethnic group. The British continue to wield considerable social and economic influence on the subcontinent.

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On September 15, 1946, a spectacular dogfight took place in the skies over New York City as Jetboy tried to prevent Dr. Tod from loosing the virus over the city. He almost succeeded. But "almost" wasn't good enough.

The virus fell over Manhattan like a gentle rain and the world was forever transformed.

September 15, 1946: The First Wild Card Day

On that day when the virus canister exploded over Manhattan, ten thousand people drew the Black Queen. They exploded in flames, they dissolved in puffs of dust, they melted into puddles of slime, they turned inside out screaming in time to their every heartbeat, none of them knowing what was happening. The new plague was quickly named "wild card," because no two victims were affected the same way.

Panic exploded over the city and hundreds more died in the riots that clogged every bridge and tunnel that led off the island. Martial law was declared. The National Guard was brought in and restored some semblance of order. People still died as the day wore into night, but not at the same incredible rate as they did in the early afternoon.

Hospitals were still overwhelmed, though, by over a thousand living victims who had been changed. Some, like the man whose every body orifice was slowly closing, were doomed to a slow, painful death. Others would live, but be forever marked by the virus, living out their lives as grotesque parodies of humanity.

Even in the very early days of the wild card era, people were afraid that those infected would spread their contamination. This was impossible, in fact, as the wild card virus is not contagious. But those deformed by the virus, the jokers, began to move away into the poor part of Manhattan where they could live unmolested, claiming as their own that part of the city which would become known as Jokertown.

Ten thousand drew the Black Queen, and over eleven hundred picked the joker from the deck. But there were a few, blessed by the blind crapshoot of the wild card, who drew the rare and wonderful ace.

They were granted superhuman abilities by the virus. They became the terrifying new heroes of the wild card era . . . the aces.

The Exotics for Democracy: Early Triumphs

Archibald Holmes, born to a moneyed Virginia family, was an attorney, judge and New Dealer who worked hard for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and supported anti-fascist causes in Europe long before it was fashionable. After World War II he worked for the United States government in its attempts at European reconstruction, until he was called back to the United States to head the relief effort in virus-stricken New York City. When he realized that some of the wild card cases had resulted in favorable mutations, he began to think of ways to put those extraordinary talents to use. He became the founder and guiding principle behind the Exotics for Democracy (EFD), popularly known as the Four Aces.

Jack Braun (Golden Boy), super-strong and invulnerable, was his first recruit. The tough, flying Earl Sanderson, Jr. (Black Eagle) was soon added to the team, and David Harstein (the Envoy) joined during their first mission in Peronist Argentina. Envoy's power was emotional: he could make people agree with him about *anything*. The fourth ace was Blythe Stanhope van Renssaeler (Brain Trust), who could absorb others' minds and memories.

The EFD were never officially part of the United States government. Holmes paid them out of his own pocket, supplying them with whatever cash and material they needed for a specific job. Though Holmes consulted with the State Department, he ran the EFD as a private, progressive army devoted to eradicating fascism and spreading the gospel of liberation, enlightenment and education throughout the world.

Their first mission was in Argentina, where they deposed fascist dictator Juan Peron. They hunted for Nazi war criminals, capturing Martin Bormann in northern Italy, Mengele in Bavaria, and flushing Eichmann right into the arms of a Soviet patrol. Black Eagle saved Mahatma Gandhi from an assassin's bullet. Harstein walked into Generalissimo Franco's palace and talked him into making a live radio address in which he resigned and called for free elections, then baby-sat him as he went off into exile in Switzerland.

Wild Cards Timeline (Continued)

1948: David Harstein of the Four Aces talks Francisco Franco, Spanish dictator, into resigning, and stays with him until he's safely in exile in Switzerland. Franco quickly repents of his decision to step down, but is never able to return to power in Spain.

1948: The Four Aces are instrumental in negotiating a peace treaty between the Chinese Communists led by Mao Tse-tung and the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek. But the treaty, known as the China Accord, fails mere weeks after the Four Aces leave China. The mainland is taken over by the Communists, and the Four Aces are blamed.

1949: The Four Aces are hauled before HUAC and destroyed. Harstein is sent to prison for contempt of Congress. Sanderson, threatened with the same, flies away from America and never returns. Van Renssaeler's mind is broken by the intensive questioning and an injudicious mind control by Dr. Tachyon. Tachyon himself is deported as an undesirable, illegal alien. Braun, who was a friendly witness for the committee, continues with a successful acting career.

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Wild Cards Timeline (Continued)

1950: Anti-wild card hysteria is fanned by exploitative Senate hearings conducted by Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy.

1952: SCARE (Senate Committee for Ace Resources and Endeavors) is founded with McCarthy as its head. He uses his office to continue to persecute wild carders.

A Network survey ship visits Earth. The Network determines not to contact the primitive planet . . . but Jube the Walrus appears in New York, selling newspapers and magazines on the corner of Hester Street and the Bowery.

1954: The Exotic Powers Act (required registration of all wild cards) and Special Conscription Act (mandating drafting of all wild cards into government service) are passed into law. Some wild cards register, and some of those with useful powers disappear into government service. Most simply go underground. There are no public aces until the next decade.

1956: Public opinion swings against McCarthy in the face of his ever-more virulent witch hunts. He retires from public life, his health and political power both broken.

1960: The election of John F. Kennedy as President opens a new period of liberalism and tolerance in regard to wild cards.

1962: The Astronomer makes contact with the Swarm Mother and joins the Masons.

1963: Tachyon returns to the United States. The Great and Powerful Turtle befriends Tachyon and becomes the first public ace of the new era.

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Things were starting to look good for wild carders. For aces, at least. Braun earned a lot of money for speaking engagements and for ghost-written articles about democracy and the American Way of Life. Hollywood knocked on his door with a long-term contract and even more money. Sanderson followed his own agenda, consciously molding his image into that of a black role model, athlete, scholar, union leader, war hero and ace. Even die-hard bigots referred to him as "our colored flyboy."

According to the public, the Four Aces could do no wrong. They were nearly overwhelmed with adulation and praise.

It couldn't last forever. And it didn't.

Wild Cards in the Rest of the World

Although Manhattan was the center of the wild card disaster, pockets of the virus were carried in the upper atmosphere to every part of the globe. Sometimes these pockets would lie dormant for several years before bursting into virulence. Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Mombasa (Kenya), Port Said (Egypt), Hong Kong, and Auckland (New Zealand) all suffered major outbreaks of the wild card from 1946-1950. In Calcutta, India, Moslems and Hindus blamed each other for the virus. 25,000 died in the ensuing riots. Korea also suffered a major outbreak in 1951.

The state of Israel was created on November 28, 1947 by resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. Arab armies invaded the new country on May 15, 1948, the day after its formal independence was declared. The Port Said wild card outbreak had killed thousands the previous winter, but also created a handful of potent, chiefly Egyptian, aces. These aces, led by the terrifying Khof, accompanied the Arab armies into combat, and tipped the delicate balance of that war, turning it into a bloody stalemate. Count Folke Bernadotte, the U.N. mediator, successfully negotiated a peace treaty in late 1948 that created two states, Israel and Palestine. These states were configured along the lines of the first U.N. Partition Plan, which gave Israel significantly less territory and indefensible borders. Jerusalem became an open international city under U.N. mandate, ruled by a joint council of Arabs, Jews and Christians.

Bernadotte was assassinated by Israeli terrorists, but his peace held. The peace, such as it is, still exists today. Israel and Palestine co-exist in a wary stasis and many ordinary Arabs and Jews live peacefully side by side, as they have for centuries. Only in Jerusalem, the "cause" for unending terrorism by fanatics on both sides, does hatred reign, turning that city into a beleaguered Middle Eastern version of Belfast.

India gained her political independence from Great Britain in the late 1940s and Mahatma Gandhi guided his country through her first few years of independence. Though a fervent Hindu, Gandhi preached tolerance toward the other religious groups of the subcontinent. As a result of his policy of restraint, the All-India Congress was unable to obtain total power in the new nation. The state of Pakistan was created simultaneously with Indian independence, but Gandhi never accepted the partition. After the death of Mohammed Ali Jinnah in September, 1948, Pakistan was reabsorbed into a decentralized India. India continued to exist much as it had under the Raj, divided into a tapestry of small kingdoms based along religious, cultural and geographic lines. Even today these kingdoms are united only by courtesy under a weak and ineffective central government in New Delhi. Patiala is a rich and powerful Sikh kingdom in the Punjab. The Hindus control the south, the Moslems the north. The British continue to wield considerable social and economic power in India through the Commonwealth, as they do in other parts of the world that were once British colonies but have achieved political independence.

Back to America: Darkness Falls

The year 1948 saw the Four Aces undertake their most dramatic and possibly most important mission since their creation. Unfortunately, it was also their first public failure.

At the request of the State Department, Holmes and the EFD flew to China as part of a last-ditch effort to partition the country between Mao Tse-tung's Communists in the north and the nominally democratic Kuomintang in the south. David Harstein worked his magic again, but this time it couldn't hold. The peace treaty and partition pact fell apart within days, and within months all of China had fallen to the Communists.

That was the last great political event to publicly involve the Four Aces. After the China disaster, they separated to work on their own private political and social agendas.

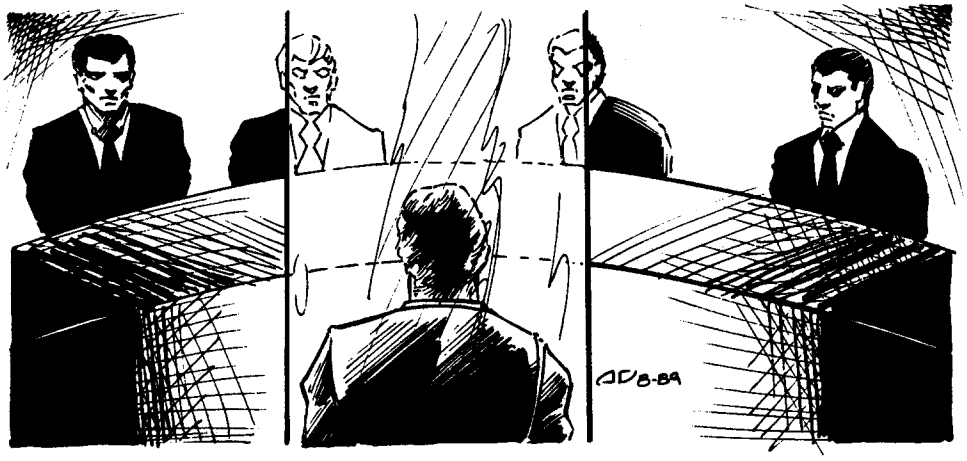
HUAC — The House Committee on Un-American Activities — had been formed in the late 1940s to investigate supposed Communist infiltration of the film industry. In a grievous day for American constitutional rights and freedoms, they used innuendo, hearsay and the despicable — and illegal — practice of the blacklist to ruin the life of anyone who was a Communist, anyone they thought was a Communist, and anyone they thought associated with Communists.

After making Hollywood safe from the Reds, HUAC turned to bigger game. Blaming Archibald Holmes and the Four Aces for "losing China to the Communists," the committee hauled them before a tribunal that was a mockery of justice. Everything fell apart for the aces. Van Renssaeler went insane, Harstein went to prison, Braun became a friendly witness and Sanderson left the country. This was to be only the beginning of wild-carder persecution.

In 1950, in a successful effort to make a political name for himself, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy made his famous speech beginning, "I have here in my hand a list of 57 wild cards known to be living and working secretly in the United States today," placing himself firmly in the vanguard of the anti-wild-card hysteria that swept the nation in the mid-1950s.

McCarthy created and chaired the Senate Committee for Ace Resources and Endeavors (SCARE) in 1952, a permanent Senate committee charged with investigating all reports of parahuman powers. SCARE was extremely active under McCarthy, hunting down and blacklisting any ace it could find — and sometimes unfortunate normals charged wrongly with being aces.

The 1950s became a time of fear for those touched by the wild card. Between 1952 and 1956 more than 200 men and women were served with subpoenas by SCARE, often on insubstantial reports by anonymous informants. It was a modern-day witch hunt. Those hauled before SCARE for the "crime" of being an ace sometimes had a hard time proving their innocence. How do you prove that you *can't* fly?



Wild Card Timeline (Continued)

1966: Tachyon opens the Jokertown Clinic to provide medical aid for the people of Jokertown and serve as a research center for study of the wild card virus.

1969: Fortunato first clashes with the Astronomer.

1970: During the riots in Peoples' Park, Mark Meadows transforms himself into the Radical for the first and only time.

1971: Tom Marion Douglas, the Lizard King, ex-lead singer of Destiny, dies.

Hiram Worchester opens his lavish Aces High restaurant at the top of the Empire State Building.

1974: Earl Sanderson, Jr., Black Eagle, dies in France.

1976: During the Democratic National Convention in New York City, Jokertown burns as jokers demand social justice (the Jokertown Riot). Senator Gregg Hartmann displays an emotional outburst on national television, thereby losing the Democratic Party's nomination for President.

1977: Special Conscription Act and Exotic Powers Control Act repealed by narrow votes in Congress.

1979: President Jimmy Carter takes blame for botched ace rescue attempt of U.S. hostages in Iran. He subsequently loses the presidential election to Ronald Reagan.

1985: Modular Man created by Dr. Maxim Travnicek. The first wave of the Swarm invasion strikes the Earth, killing tens of thousands.

1986: James (Demise) Spector goes to work for the Astronomer. Daniel (Yeoman) Brennan comes to New York City. Dr. Tachyon and Mark (Captain Trips) Meadows meet for the first time. A group of aces led by Fortunato destroys the Masons' headquarters. The Astronomer escapes and vows vengeance. The Swarm threat is ended by Tachyon, Fortunato, Yeoman and Mai Minh.

September 15, 1986: The fortieth Wild Card Day is a bloody disaster. The Howler and Kid Dinosaur are slain by the Astronomer and his agents; Modular Man is destroyed in the crossfire; and the Turtle is missing in action. The Astronomer himself is bested by Fortunato, then slain by Demise. Fortunato retires to Japan.

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Wild Cards Timeline (Continued)

December 1, 1986: The WHO-sponsored world tour to study the effects of the wild card virus leaves America.

December 1986: Ti Malice takes Hiram Worchester as a mount and moves to New York.

The Guatemalan government falls to an ace-led Indian revolution.

January 1987: Peregrine discovers that she is pregnant by Fortunato.

The Temple of the Living Gods, in Luxor, Egypt, is attacked by the Nur, a fundamentalist Islamic sect.

Back in the United States, Brennan adopts a secret identity and goes undercover to join the Shadow Fist Society. A gang war starts between the Mafia and the Shadow Fist Society for control of the New York City underworld.

February 1987: The power of Islamic fundamentalist radical Nur al-Allah is broken as his sister slits his throat while under mental control by Gregg Hartmann.

Back in the United States, Rosemary Muldoon is exposed as Rosa Maria Gambione, mafioso, and loses her job as District Attorney.

March 1987: Leo Barnett announces his candidacy for the presidency of the United States.

April 1987: Gregg Hartmann is kidnaped by a coalition of radical leftist and radical joker groups. He comes out of the incident with a spotless image and a new sidekick, Mackie Messer.

While in France, Tachyon discovers that he has a grandson, Blaise Andrieux, and brings him to America.

KGB agent Georgy Polyakov retires from the service, leaves Russia, and also comes to the United States.

McCarthy's most lasting legacy was the Wild Card Acts passed in the mid-1950s. The Exotic Powers Control Act (1954) required any person exhibiting paranormal powers to register immediately with the federal government. This was followed by the Special Conscription Act, granting the Selective Service Bureau the power to induct registered aces into government service for indefinite periods of time. Rumors stated that a number of aces complied with the new laws and were inducted into various governmental agencies, including the Army, the FBI, and the Secret Service. If so, the agencies employing the aces kept their names, powers and very existence a closely held secret.

The next year McCarthy introduced the Alien Disease Containment Bill, which would have mandated compulsory sterilization for all wild card victims, jokers as well as aces. That was too much for even McCarthy's staunchest supporters. The bill went down to defeat and McCarthy, in an ill-advised effort to recapture the headlines, launched a SCARE investigation of the Army to ferret out the "aces in the hole" that rumor insisted had been secretly recruited through the Special Conscription Act. But McCarthy had gone too far. His accusations became wilder and wilder, his proposed "solutions" to the wild card problem sounded more and more Hitlerian. Public opinion swung dramatically against him. He was censured by the Senate, and his political power and his health were both broken.

But his laws remained on the books. People continued to be affected by the virus, though of course in dramatically fewer numbers. But those who survived the initial wild card onslaught went on with their lives, in some cases passing the wild card genes on to their children. The numbers of jokers were growing, as was the place they had come to call their own, Jokertown.

A New Era of Hope and Despair

From approximately 1951 to 1963, while Jokertown took root and grew, there were no public aces. Although presumably some aces obeyed the law, registered, and disappeared into government service, most ignored the registration act and either went underground or attempted to lead ordinary lives, hoping to avoid detection. After McCarthy's death, SCARE became much less active and much less feared. It continues to exist even today, as an apparently toothless coordinating committee that helps aces communicate with the public. Its current chair, Sen. Gregg Hartmann, has his own private plans for the committee and its powers.

The election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 began a period of liberalism and tolerance in regard to both jokers and aces, although the old laws remained in force. The emergence of the Turtle, after Kennedy's assassination, began a new era of public ace activity. Tachyon returned to sobriety and public life and opened the Blythe Van Renssaeler Memorial Clinic (popularly known as the Jokertown Clinic) for the treatment of jokers and research into the wild card virus.

Most of the new aces of this era, safe behind the anonymity of assumed names and masks, simply ignored the registration laws. The Justice Department had other priorities by then, and these proto-draft resisters were usually left alone.

The escalation of the Vietnam War again caused controversy in regard to aces. Hawks wanted strict enforcement of the ace registration laws and the use of aces in Vietnam. Doves and the antiwar movement demanded the abolition of the Wild Card acts. Some aces (notably Cyclone in the late 1960s) ended up fighting in 'Nam. Others (such as the Turtle) were prominent antiwar protesters and wound up on Nixon's enemy list.

Notable in action on Vietnam's front lines, but rarely seen on the television

screen back home, was the Joker Brigade. Jokers were drafted by the hundreds and were sent to 'Nam in all-joker units commanded by nat officers. The carnage experienced by the Brigade was awful. Its casualty rate was the highest of any unit in 'Nam.

By the early 1970s, however, it became "in" to be a wild carder, or at least an ace. Publications like *Aces* Magazine fed the public's new fascination with the metahumans blessed by the wild card.

Understandably enough, some jokers were not satisfied by the slight strides they had made toward social justice. Xavier Desmond and his Joker Anti-Defamation League (JADL) had been working quietly for some time for jokers' rights, but many jokers deemed their progress insubstantial and unsatisfying. Gimli (Tom Miller) founded Jokers for a Just Society (JJS) with a more confrontational philosophy. They demanded jokers' rights, and, of course, many normals felt threatened by the jokers' growing militancy.

This confrontational atmosphere led to the worst domestic political disaster of the 1970s, the Great Jokertown Riot of 1976, during the Democratic National Convention in New York City. Senator Gregg Hartmann, a fast-rising political star with a bright future, lost his composure before a televison audience of millions and had to be carried away from the scene of the rioting. This cost him all hope for the nomination. Jimmy Carter was nominated and eventually elected president. During the first year of his administration both the Special Conscription Act and the Exotic Powers Control Act were repealed by narrow votes in Congress.

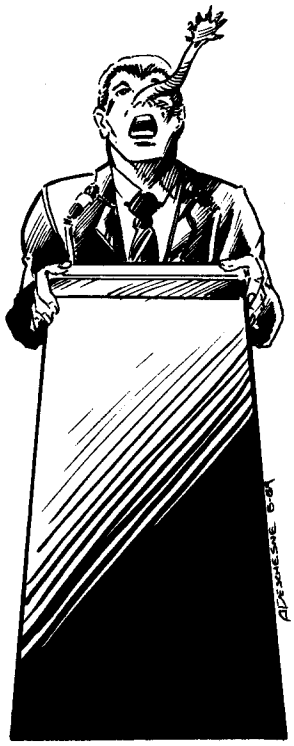
When hostages were taken at the U.S. Embassy in Iran, President Carter sent in a secret strike force of aces to free them, but the operation was a horrible botch and many of the hostages died. Carter took full responsibility for the failure. It was largely because of this debacle that Ronald Reagan succeeded him as president.

In late 1985, the Earth again experienced an extra-terrestrial invasion. This time it was the asteroid-sized sentient known as the Swarm Mother (see p. 106). Ravenous creatures, "buds" of the Swarm, landed on every continent except Australia. They touched down in northern Germany, in Thrace near the Greco-Turkish-Bulgarian border, in China, Poland, the Ukraine, Siberia, Africa, Canada, the United States and South America. The American and European infestations were destroyed, at great cost of life, by military action aided by aces. The Soviets resorted to nuclear airbursts to destroy the Siberian swarm. Major infestations in Peru, Chad, Turkey, Nigeria and Tibet continue to be a problem even today.

Although Swarm buds still trouble remote parts of the Earth, major disaster was averted when Dr. Tachyon led a group of aces that somehow "persuaded" the Swarm Mother to leave the solar system. Details have never been released to the general public; for a full explanation see "Half Past Dead" by John J. Miller (II-349).

By the late 1980s, the country had again taken a swing to the right. Wearied by the Swarm Invasion and frightened by the violence of Wild Card Day 1986, which had ace assassinations and a pyrotechnic super-battle over the skies of Manhattan, nats again are beginning to look askance at their wild card neighbors. No laws have been enacted, no repressive measures have been taken to curb aces or jokers' rights, but a certain segment of the population has definitely become uncomfortable about wild carders. A new religious fundamentalism is on the rise, and the fundamentalists are flexing their political muscles.

The nation teeters on the edge, uncertain whether to go back to the repressive days of the 1950s, or continue the enlightened policies designed to give aces and jokers the social justice that they deserve.



Wild Cards Timeline (Continued)

April 29, 1987: WHO-sponsored world tour returns to America.

May 1987: Croyd Crenson, the Sleeper, awakes with a new, deadly form of the virus, a contagious form. He leaves the Clinic and becomes "Typhoid Croyd," unwittingly causing a major viral outbreak. Fortunately, his victims cannot themselves spread the virus, but hundreds die, and a few new aces and jokers are created.

June 1987: An AIDS/Wild Card benefit is held at the Funhouse during which Buddy Holley makes his wildly successful comeback.

Modular Man is recreated by Dr. Travnicek.

Martial law is declared in New York City because of the "Typhoid Croyd" virus outbreak and the deadly underworld warfare.

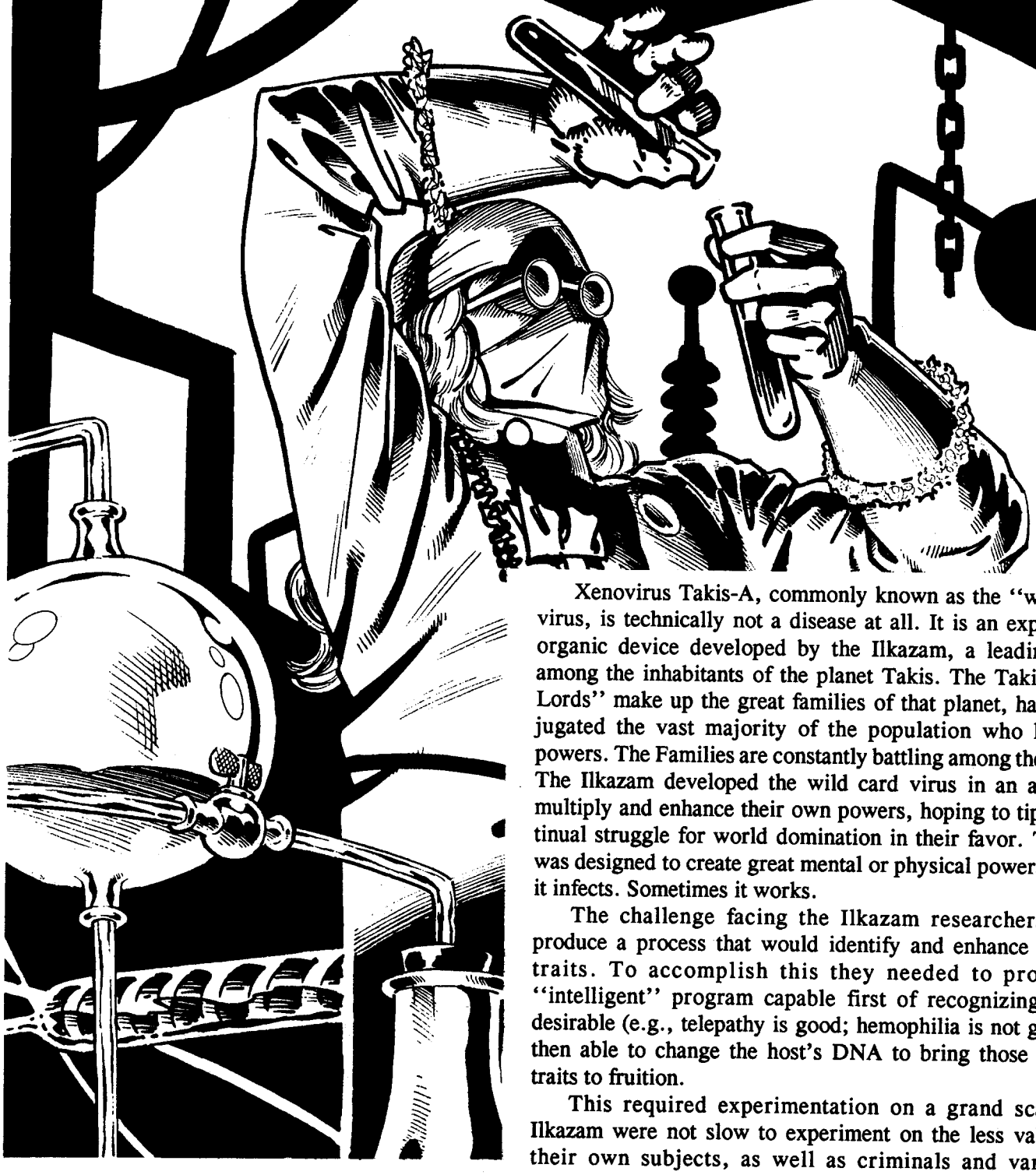
July 1987: The Shadow Fist Society breaks the Mafia and becomes the most powerful criminal organization in New York City. Rosa Maria Gambione flees to Cuba.

Brennan calls off his vendetta with the Shadow Fists and leaves the city, accompanied by Jennifer (Wraith) Maloy.

The Sleeper sleeps again, ending the threat of the wild card epidemic. Martial law is revoked.

Xavier Desmond, the "Mayor of Jokertown," dies of cancer.

2 THE WILD CARD VIRUS



Xenovirus Takis-A, commonly known as the "wild card" virus, is technically not a disease at all. It is an experimental organic device developed by the Ilkazam, a leading family among the inhabitants of the planet Takis. The Takisian "Psi Lords" make up the great families of that planet, having subjugated the vast majority of the population who lack such powers. The Families are constantly battling among themselves. The Ilkazam developed the wild card virus in an attempt to multiply and enhance their own powers, hoping to tip the continual struggle for world domination in their favor. The virus was designed to create great mental or physical powers in those it infects. Sometimes it works.

The challenge facing the Ilkazam researchers was to produce a process that would identify and enhance desirable traits. To accomplish this they needed to produce an "intelligent" program capable first of recognizing what is desirable (e.g., telepathy is good; hemophilia is not good) and then able to change the host's DNA to bring those desirable traits to fruition.

This required experimentation on a grand scale. The Ilkazam were not slow to experiment on the less valuable of their own subjects, as well as criminals and vanquished

enemies, but there weren't enough such "experimental animals" on Takis. Fortunately, from the Takisian point of view, the Network (see p. 108) had recorded the existence of a race genetically identical to the Takisians. On Earth.

So the Takisians decided to carry their experiment to Earth. Dr. Tachyon's opposition to this scheme, and the subsequent spreading of the Takisian virus over the skies of Manhattan, are discussed on p. 11.

Accounts of that incident make it clear that the vessel containing the wild card virus exploded at an altitude of 30,000 feet, well within the jet stream. In its dormant state the virus is encased within durable protein shields, commonly known as "spores." These spores are so resistant to extremes of pressure and temperature that they can survive from several hundred feet beneath the ocean to the upper limits of the atmosphere. They were borne eastward across the Atlantic on the jet stream, and washed out at random intervals by droplets of rain, also settling naturally through time on random air currents.

Wind and ocean currents dispersed the virus over a substantial area of the eastern United States over a short period of time, causing over 20 concentrated outbreaks and almost 100 isolated cases over the eastern states in 1946 alone.

Many of the major international outbreaks — including Rio de Janeiro (1947), Mombasa (1948), Port Said (1948), Hong Kong (1949), and Auckland (1950) — occurred in prominent seaports. The origins of each of these outbreaks were eventually traced to items which had recently been delivered from Manhattan docks and warehouses.

The virus can be carried by any means . . . human, mechanical, animal, air or water . . . and survives indefinitely unless exposed to destructive agents such as fire or corrosive chemicals. Individuals can carry particles on their persons without even knowing it and without developing the disease themselves. How many dormant virus deposits remain dusted across rooftops, gathered in sediment in rivers and sewers, lying in deposits in the soil, or still drifting aloft in the jet stream, cannot be determined.

However, the virus itself is not contagious; someone who is infected by it cannot pass it on to another person. The only way to "catch" wild card is to encounter its spores, or to be descended from a person who had encountered the spores and lived. Wild card victims, with *one* known exception ("Typhoid Croyd," May 1987), do not create new spores to spread the virus.

Results of the Wild Card

A few of those who draw from the deck of the wild card will seem unaffected (see sidebar, p. 21), though they remain at risk for the rest of their lives. But most victims show a dramatic effect immediately. The great majority (roughly 90%) die quickly and horribly, with symptoms varying widely from individual to individual. In common speech, such victims "draw the Black Queen." Others (approximately 9% of those infected) "draw a joker." They undergo random and horrible malformations of mind or body, but still live on as crippled, grotesque outcasts. One percent of those infected, one person in a hundred, "draws the ace." They gain strange and awesome abilities far beyond those of mortal man.

The distinctions between black queen, joker, deuce (an ace with a trivial or useless ability), and ace are often blurred. Dead is dead, so most black queens are rather easily classified. But the joker form can range from the hideous to the painful to the merely inconvenient. Many jokers (Howard "Troll" Mueller with his immense physical strength is an obvious example) also acquire useful ace powers as part of their transformation. Technically, the beautiful Peregrine could be considered a joker!

Latent Wild Carders

A number of seemingly normal people have had their DNA rewritten by the virus, but have no observable wild card manifestations. This is sometimes called "drawing a nat the hard way." It is possible to undergo genetic analysis to check for the dormant virus, but it is a very expensive and time-consuming procedure.

However, such "latents" may not remain unaffected forever. The latent virus will often manifest itself as a result of stress, sudden shock, fear or pain. Usually, the victim is totally surprised by the manifestation, having thought himself normal until then. Birth trauma often causes expression (with the typical 90-9-1 ratio).

Sometimes, though, there seems to be no apparent reason for the sudden transformation to corpse, joker or ace. It is not known how many of the isolated "outbreaks" that occur yearly are actually the manifestation or a latent wild card gene, rather than the result of an isolated encounter with spores.

The Trump Virus

Since the late 1960s Dr. Tachyon has been working an an antidote to the wild card virus. The "trump virus" currently in use has only a 20% success rate, so Tachyon uses it only on the most hopeless victims of the virus.

An early version of the trump virus was used on James Spector, with disastrous results (see *Demise*, p. 38.)

The current trump is successful 20% of the time, immediately fatal about 2% of the time, and has no apparent effect the remaining 78% of the time it is administered.

If a game character takes the trump, roll 3 dice. An 8 or less gives a cure, and a critical failure means death. Any other roll means there was no apparent effect.

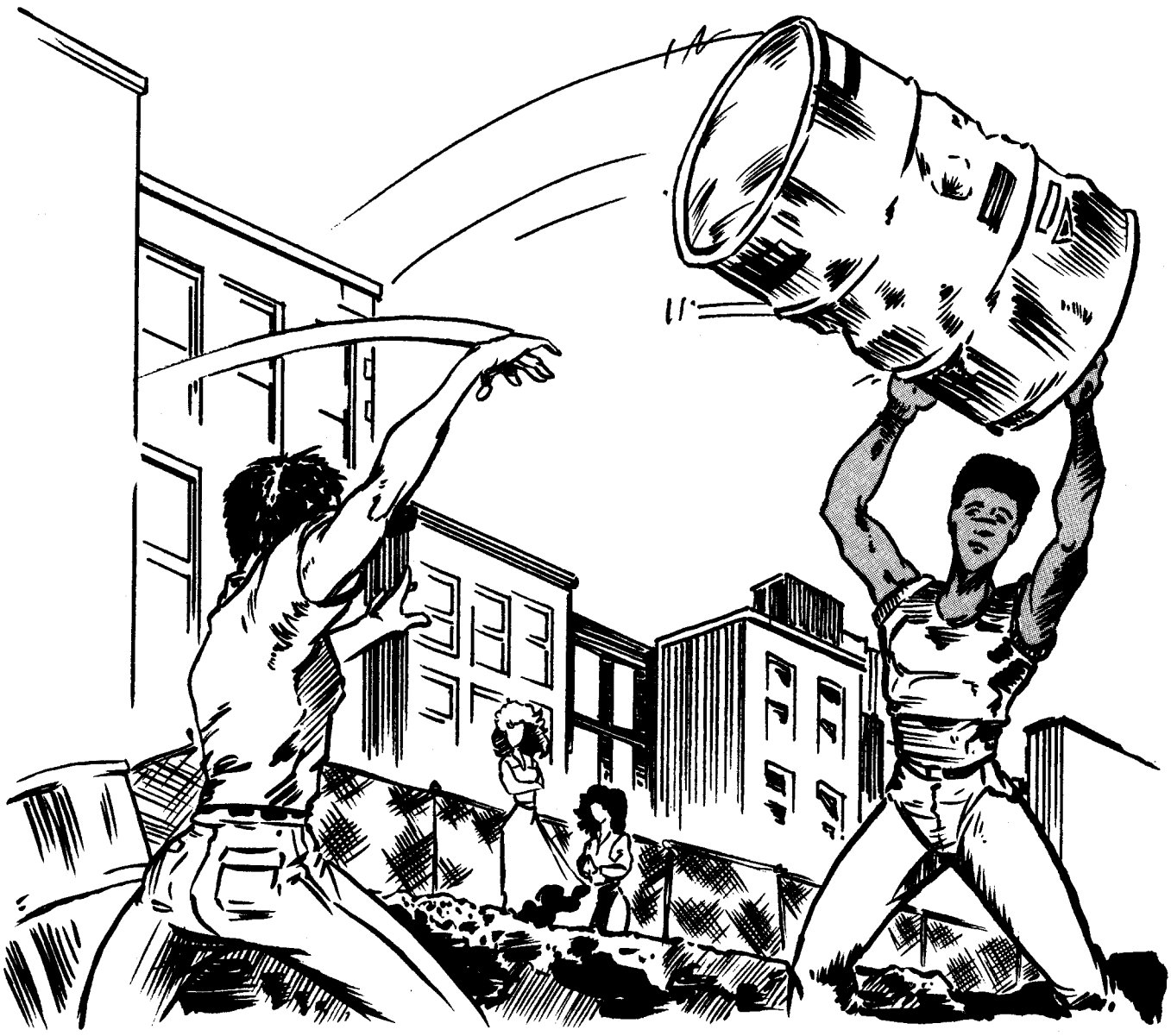
How the Virus Works

Simply put, the wild card virus alters its host's genetic programming, rewriting the DNA in a manner that is often tragic for the host. Once it has grafted to the genetic blueprint of the host, it "rides" as a recessive gene that can then be passed on to the host's offspring.

The Ilkazam scientists designed the experimental version of their virus as a recessive gene because they expected predominantly lethal effects on the host population. A dominant gene that produced lethal mutations in 90% of its hosts and rendered another 9% unable or unlikely to reproduce would wipe out its hosts in a few generations, ending the experiment.

The wild card virus therefore follows the conventional rules of inheritance for recessive traits. Anyone directly infected by the virus, of course, is affected. But the children of survivors are not automatically affected. Only in cases where both parents carry the viral code does any possibility of producing an affected offspring exist.

The charts below show the different possibilities for offspring where the wild card virus is involved.



The Psychic Connection

It has been speculated that in the case of aces the virus appears to enhance innate psychic ability that then directs the rewriting of the DNA. This would explain the correspondence between the personalities and powers of certain aces — why, for example, devoted pilots such as Black Eagle acquired the ability to fly. If this is true, a microscale telekinesis could be one of the mechanisms by which the virus changes the host's DNA, with the host subconsciously choosing, or at least influencing, the nature of the transformation.

This implies, of course, that people, even unborn infants, might in some sense have "chosen" to draw a joker or Black Queen. At this time this notion remains nothing more than interesting speculation.

Many ace powers seem to violate well-known natural laws. An obvious example of this is Radha O'Reilly's ability to fly while in her Elephant Girl persona. This apparent defiance of every known aeronautic principle can be explained by considering her ability to fly a manifestation of psychic ability. Elephant Girl, and all other known aces with flight or levitation abilities, can thus be considered practitioners of telekinesis.

Most, if not all, ace powers can be similarily explained in terms of psychic ability. Great strength may also be also telekinetic in nature, though many strong aces have enhanced muscles and skeleton. Variations of telepathy are common; teleportation is much less common, but still well known. Most aces seem to have higher metabolic rates than normal; their great appetites appear to be fueling psychic energy. Others draw on external sources of energy.

Some manifestations seem to require a psychic explanation, but do not fit any patterns known before the advent of the wild card. For instance, ace "gadgeteers" often create devices that cannot be duplicated by other engineers . . . and, indeed, will not *work* for anyone but the inventor! This seems to suggest that there is a psionic component to the operation of such devices, which simply transcends the physical limitations of the material . . . or, to look at it from the other direction, the expression of the psychic talent requires the creation of a piece of hardware.

However, it must be remembered that all manifestations of the wild card are unique, and all "explanations" concerning them must remain, for now, tentative.

1. Normal Human x Normal Human

	N	N
N	N N	N N
N	N N	N N

2. Normal Human x Ace or Joker

	W	W
N	N W	N W
N	N W	N W

3. Ace or Joker x Ace or Joker

	W	W
W	W W	W W
W	W W	W W

4. Carrier x Carrier

	N	W
N	N N	N W
W	N W	W W

5. Normal Human x Carrier

	N	W
N	N N	N W
N	N N	N W

6. Ace or Joker x Carrier

	N	W
W	N W	W W
W	N W	W W

Wild Card Genetics

The diagrams below show results of various crosses between normal humans and people infected with the wild card gene. A person may be either fully normal, or "recessive" (carrying one wild card gene but not affected by it), or a "wild carder" (with the wild card gene in full measure, though not necessarily showing visible effects).

The wild card virus, grafted to the host as a recessive gene, is designated by a "W" for wild card virus. All other genetic traits are designated "N" for normal.

There are six possibilities:

1. A normal × normal cross. This match-up obviously results in no wild card genes being passed on to the next generation.

2. A normal × wild carder (joker, ace, deuce or latent). All offspring of such a matchup will be wild card carriers, but cannot express any wild card traits themselves because the gene is recessive and they have no chance to carry a matched pair.

3. Wild carder × wild carder. All offspring of such a matchup will be wild carders. Not all may express the trait, but all have the potentiality to draw the Black Queen (90%), become a joker (9%), or become an ace (1%).

4. Carrier × carrier. Half of the offspring of this match-up will be carriers. One-quarter will be normal. One-quarter will be wild carders.

5. Normal × carrier. Half the offspring of this match-up will be normal, half will be carriers.

6. Wild carder × carrier. One-half of the offspring of this match-up will be wild carders, one-half will be carriers.

Note that for genetic purposes, it makes absolutely no difference whether a person is an ace, deuce, joker or latent. The most powerful ace and the most pathetic joker have just the same chance of having an ace child. And, of course, chances are that any expression of the wild card gene will lead to tragedy.

This is all, of course, a simplified look at genetics, ignoring such factors as gene-crossing, mutation, co-dominants, etc., that could complicate the picture. The proportions that are quoted are also only percentages. They show what the odds are — not what happens in every case.

Offspring:
NN = Normal Human
NW = Carrier
WW = Wild Card

3 CHARACTERS

This chapter is a complete guide to more than 80 of the most important, heroic, noble, despicable and disgusting characters in the *Wild Cards* universe. All this information is complete and accurate with respect to the first five *Wild Cards* volumes. These biographies, however, may not necessarily be the final word on some of the characters! As in all good fiction, the characters of the *Wild Cards* universe grow and change through time. Various authors have also reserved certain aspects of their characters to reveal in future volumes. None of those plans have been ruined by premature revelations in this chapter. It should also be noted that anyone who hasn't read all of the *Wild Cards* volumes may ruin some surprises by perusing this section.

This "Who's Who" has been organized alphabetically by the most commonly used name of each character. Doctor Tachyon, for example, is listed under that nickname, not his Takisian name. Hiram Worchester is listed under "Worchester, Hiram," not "Fatman." Check first under the character's nickname if in doubt, because nicknames are usually used more frequently in the series than given names. Abilities of deceased characters are given in the present tense, for the benefit of those playing campaigns set in the *Wild Cards* past or on alternate *Wild Cards* worlds.

Character Descriptions in Game Terms

In the descriptions below, an asterisk (*) in front of a power indicates that it is a "single-skill" power (see p. SU17).

Only those skills which are unusual or important in game terms have been listed. It may be assumed, for instance, that most characters have an Area Knowledge of their home area. Most people *except* urban New Yorkers have a Driving skill of at least 10, and so on.

Likewise, while the "unusual background" cost for being an ace would be 50 points according to the ***GURPS Supers*** guidelines (because perhaps one person in 100,000 has some sort of powers), this has not been repeated in every ace description. The Social Stigma of jokerdom *has* been repeated, because it affects many reactions.

A few of the *Wild Cards* characters cannot be described in terms that are fully faithful to the book *and* wholly "legal" within ***GURPS*** terms. In these cases, of course, the fault lies with the rules system! In particular, under the current language rules, if a very intelligent person speaks a foreign language at all, he speaks it well. This fails the reality check . . . We may modify this system later. In the meantime, characters are described as they are in the books. A dagger sign (†) indicates a language skill that is lower than it would be under the game rules.

A few characters have other skills that are lower than the rules might allow them to be (such as Captain Trips's pathetic sales ability), but since these are personal peculiarities, they are listed as quirks.

Andrieux, Blaise Jeannot

Created by Melinda Snodgrass

Born: May 7, 1975, France

Appearance: At the age of thirteen, Blaise is of average size (5' 5", 130 lbs.) with dark, black-purple eyes and short deep-red hair with a thin braid in the back.

Wild Card Ability: Blaise has a potent mind-control ability, able to control several subjects at once, and other mental powers may eventually come forth under Tachyon's tutelage. Blaise is not infected by the wild card; the powers represent his Takisian heritage.

ST 8 (-15 points) **IQ** 11 (10 points) **Speed:** 5.25
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 10 (0 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Karate 1d-4 punch, 1d-2 kick; Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-2

Advantages:
Alertness +1 (5 points)
Patron: Dr. Tachyon, 12 or less (50 points)

Disadvantages:
Bully (-10 points)
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Stubbornness (-5 points)
Youth (-8 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
Telepathy Power 10 (100 points)
Telecontrol-12 (16 points)
Telereceive-12 (Only to establish Telecontrol -4; 2 points)

Skills:
English-9 (½ point); French-11 (0 points) German-6† (½ point); Karate-8 (½ point); Musical Instrument (Piano)-11 (4 points)

Quirks:
Spoiled rotten
Sees others as objects to be manipulated

Blaise's mother was Gisele Bacourt, Tachyon's illegitimate daughter. His father was Francois Andrieux. Both were members of the French Communist Party and committed leftist terrorists. When Bacourt was killed during a shoot-out in 1981, Andrieux went into hiding. Blaise came under the domination of his father's terrorist group, who used him to mind-control victims into committing terrorist acts. Blaise was naive to the political purposes of these acts, but enjoyed exercising his power.

Tachyon discovered his grandchild while in France on the WHO-sponsored world tour of 1987. He became the child's official guardian and brought him back to the United States, where he soon found that Blaise is difficult to control. Blaise's willfulness and streak of cruelty drove away most of the private tutors Tachyon brought in to educate his grandson. Blaise finally developed a satisfactory bond with George Steele, the KGB agent who had recruited Tachyon in the late 1950s and who had by now come to live in America.

Blaise enjoys using his mind-control powers. He likes to see people dance to his will. He is intelligent but undisciplined, and something of a bully. His relationship with Tachyon is more adversarial than loving. Tachyon is a doting guardian who often doesn't devote enough time to his grandson. He should pay more attention to the boy, or someday there'll be hell to pay.

Astronomer, The

Created by Lewis Shiner

Born: 1925 *Died:* Sept. 16, 1986

Appearance: Short and very thin (5'5", 110 lbs.), the Astronomer wears thick rimless glasses, has a mole-like appearance, and is sometimes confined to a wheelchair.

Wild Card Ability: The Astronomer has numerous mental abilities, chief among them telepathy, astral projection, telekinesis, precognition, and the power to induce amnesia.

ST 6 (-30 points) **IQ** 20 (175 points) **Speed:** 4.5
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 8 (-15 points) **Move:** 1 wheelchair; 6 when "charged"
Damage: normally Thrust 1d-4; Swing 1d-4
When using enhanced ST of 14: Thrust 1d, Swing 2d

Advantages:
Alertness +1 (5 points)
Eidetic Memory (30 points)

Strong Will +3 (12 points)
Very Wealthy (30 points)

Disadvantages:
Age (-33 points)
Appearance: Unattractive (-5 points)
Bad Sight (-10 points)
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Bloodlust (-10 points)
Enemy: Fortunato on 9 or less (-20 points)
Fanaticism (-15 points)
Lame: Confined to a wheelchair (-35 points)
Megalomania (-10 points)
Sadism (-15 points)
Vow: To avenge the raid on the Cloisters (-5 points)

Super Advantages:
Extra Fatigue +100 (Only recharged by bloody ritual *-4;* 300 points)
ST 14 (Switchable *+1;* Costs 2 Fatigue per minute *-1;* 75 points)
HT 14 (Switchable *+1;* Costs 2 Fatigue per minute *-1;* 60 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
(All skills except Precognition have the following limitation: Costs 4 Fatigue per minute or use *-2*)
* Body Control Power 46 (Astral Projection, 230 points)
Astral Projection-18 (4 points)
ESP Power 1 (8 points)
* ESP Power 10 (Precognition, 30 points)
Precognition-23 (Limited use: 1 per day *-4;* Emergencies only *-3;* 1 point)
* Psychokinesis Power 5 (Levitation, 15 points)
Levitation-18 (4 points)
* Psychokinesis Power 30 (PK Shield, 90 points)
PK Shield-16 (No concentration *+2;* 4 points)
* Psychokinesis Power 7 (Telekinesis, 70 points)
Telekinesis-18 (4 points)
Telepathy Power 15 (150 points)
Mind Shield-18 (4 points)
Mindwipe-18 (Touch only *-2;* 1 point)
Telereceive-18 (4 points)
Telescan-18 (4 points)
Telesend-18 (4 points)

Skills:
Astronomy-20 (2 points); Interrogation-15 (0 points); Mathematics-20 (2 points); Occultism-20 (1 point); Physics-18 (½ point); Psychology-14 (0 points); English-20 (0 points); Ancient Greek-20 (1 point); Cuneiform-19 (½ point); Egyptian hieroglyphics-19 (½ point); French-19 (½ point); German-20 (1 point); Latin-20 (1 point)

Quirks:
Giggles when he fights or kills
Toys with his victims
Holds grudges

The Astronomer first appeared at a meeting of the New York chapter of the Egyptian Freemasons in 1962, after having made mental contact with the Swarm Mother that was approaching the Earth. Balsam, the chapter's senior Mason, realized from what the Astronomer was able to tell him about the Swarm Mother that she was TIAMAT, the deepest and darkest Masonic secret. Balsam initiated the Astronomer into the secret society, and they came to realize that the Masons had been founded to prepare the Earth to defeat the Swarm.

The Astronomer, however, saw TIAMAT as a way to world domination, realizing an Earth exhausted from fighting the creature would be easy to conquer. To achieve this end the Astronomer built the local Masons into a powerful organization using wild card agents such as the scientist/joker Kafka, Kim Toy, Judas, and the ace assassin Demise. The Cloisters became their secret headquarters.

The Astronomer has five basic powers: telepathy, astral projection, telekinesis, precognition, and amnesia projection. His astral projection ability is very strong, enabling him to send his consciousness virtually instantaneously anywhere throughout the galaxy. His precognition ability, on the other hand, is weak, enabling him to see only vague images of the future that are often very difficult to interpret. His telekinesis is also limited. He can levitate and form a force-shield to protect himself against both physical and mental attacks. Amnesia projection is one of his most important tools, enabling him to remove the

memories of individuals without their realizing it. To use this power he has to be in close physical proximity to his target.

A sadist who feeds on death, the Astronomer renews his psychic energy through human sacrifice. He slowly and excruciatingly drains the energy of his victims, usually beautiful young women, by dismembering them. When his energy is used up, he becomes no more than a feeble old man confined to a wheelchair.

When his depredations became impossible to ignore, Fortunato, the Astronomer's sworn enemy, attacked the Cloisters in 1986 with a group of fellow aces. Among those who participated in the raid on the Cloisters were the Great and Powerful Turtle, Kid Dinosaur, Modular Man, Jumping Jack Flash, Dr. Tachyon, the Howler, Peregrine and Water Lily. The attack was successful. The Cloisters were destroyed and the power of the Masons was broken, though the Astronomer and a number of his agents managed to escape capture.

The Astronomer, vowing vengeance against those who destroyed his dream of world domination, bided his time until Wild Card Day, September 15, 1986, then attempted to assassinate the aces who contributed to his downfall. His plans for vengeance met with a certain measure of success, but the Astronomer lost a climactic duel with Fortunato that was fought with fireballs of psychic energy over the streets of Manhattan. The Astronomer ended up falling into the East River. When he finally managed to drag himself out of the water, he was killed by his one-time henchman, Demise, and left half-embedded in a brick wall.

Aquarius (See *Captain Trips*, p. 28, 32)

Bagabond (Suzanne Melotti)

Created by Leanne C. Harper
Born: 1940
Appearance: A petite (5' 3", 100 lbs.) bag lady with long dark brown hair, who wears uncoordinated clothing she picks from the trash. On the rare occasions when she cleans herself up and dresses well, Bagabond is quite pleasant-looking.
Wild Card Ability: Bagabond can communicate with and control animals.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 10 (0 points) **Speed:** 5.25
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 10 (0 points) **Move:** 5
Damage Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Animal Empathy (5 points)
Danger Sense (15 points)

Disadvantages:
Dead Broke (-25 points)
Odious Personal Habit: Poor hygiene and dress (-15 points)
Shyness (-15 points)
Social Stigma: Homeless (-10 points)

Super Advantage:
Speak with Animals (25 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
* Nature Power 12 (Sense Animal, 48 points)
Sense Animal-14 (28 points)
Telepathy Power 16 (160 points) (All skills have the following limitations: Animals only *-4;* Bagabond's body is inert when the skill is used *-4*)
Telecontrol-17 (Area effect *+4;* 24 points)
Telereceive-15 (2 points)
Telescan-15 (2 points)
Telesend-18 (12 points)

Skills:
Area Knowledge (New York City)-12 (4 points); English-10 (0 points); Scrounging-20 (20 points); Shadowing-14 (10 points); Stealth-14 (16 points); Streetwise-12 (6 points)

Quirks:
Doesn't want to change her lifestyle
Respects animals' mental privacy
Can kill animals for a reason, but feels guilty afterward

Bagabond was born in a small town in upstate New York, where she was infected by the virus at the age of six. She was able to dampen the negative effects of her power until around 1968, when she'd run away to New York City to escape her suffocating small-town life. While in New York she experimented with psychoactive drugs and went insane from the overload of sensory impressions from the millions of animals around her.

She was institutionalized from 1968 to 1971. The protected, sterile environment helped her to deal with her power, which she wisely concealed while in the hospital. Because of overcrowding and because Bagabond posed no overt threat to herself or others, she was released and became a bag lady wandering the city streets. An extreme misanthrope, her most fervent wish is to be left alone with her animals.

To all appearances Bagabond is a normal baglady. She's dirty, smells bad, and has long, stringy dark brown hair that she wears over her face, hiding her eyes. Her clothing, all of which is reclaimed from the trash, is a wild disarray of fabrics and styles. She always carries a plastic trash bag full of things she's found.

Always accompanying her are a pair of wild cats, nameless by normal human standards. The ginger one is female with a scarred body and missing ear. The other is male, solid black and missing the tip of his tail. They usually orbit her, one staying close, the other ranging farther out.

Bagabond became more and more acclimated into human society throughout the 1970s and 1980s. She roamed Central Park in the early 1970s and moved in with her friend Sewer Jack Robicheaux later in the decade. With the help of then-social worker Rosemary (Gambione) Muldoon she discarded her baglady accouterments by the mid-1980s, at least for part of the time. Rosemary also drew Bagabond into the Mafia/Shadow Fist conflict of the late 1980s. Bagabond, though, proved to be a reluctant Mafia ally and eventually broke off with her friend.

Barnett, Leo (Reverend)

Created by Arthur Byron Cover
Born: Jan. 1, 1950
Appearance: Barnett has blond hair, blue eyes, high cheekbones, and a dimpled chin. Tall and in good physical condition (6', 170 lbs.), he has a southern twang in his voice and a polite, self-effacing manner.
Wild Card Ability: Barnett has no wild card abilities.

ST 12 (20 points) **IQ** 15 (60 points) **Speed:** 6
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2

Advantages:
Charisma +1 (5 points)
Clerical Investment (5 points)
Handsome (15 points)
Patron: Colonel Fincastle, 6 or less (5 points)
Reputation: +2 among his followers (5 points)
Status 2 (5 points, due to Clerical Investment)
Strong Will +2 (8 points)
Voice (10 points)
Very Wealthy (30 points)

Disadvantages:
Fanaticism (-15 points)
Pacifism: Cannot Kill (-15 points)
Reputation: -4 among jokers, joker sympathizers (-10)
Secret: Promiscuity (-10 points)
Sense of Duty: To all innocents (-10)

Skills:
Acting-16 (4 points); Administration-13 (½ point); Bard-25 (16 points); Diplomacy-9 (½ point); English-15 (0 points); Leadership-13 (½ point); Politics-14 (1 point); Psychology-16 (6 points); Savoir-Faire-17 (0 points); Sex Appeal-10 (½ point); Theology-12 (½ point)

Quirks:
Very ambitious
Genuinely feels that the wild card is a tool of Satan
Genuinely "hates the sin but loves the sinner"
Therefore, tries to overcome his disgust for jokers, even while he works against them

Barnett's father was Colonel Belvedere Fincastle, the controversial, flamboyant Holy Roller crusader, who once had a great empire of Christian Fundamentalist radio stations that spanned the South. The Colonel desired progeny, but due to his heavy travel schedule he lacked the time to raise children himself. Consequently he purposely impregnated married women, usually making sure that they knew exactly what he was planning. In order to keep track of his children, the Colonel usually chose women married to those immediately within his camp. Leo Barnett is the result of one such liaison, and is the ostensible son of one of Fincastle's most trusted accountants.

The Colonel's innumerable escapades finally came to public attention and were responsible in large part for the collapse of his radio empire. Now retired and bed-ridden, the Colonel is still pulling strings and peddling influence among Barnett's followers. He retains close ties to many of his secret children.

Barnett had vowed to follow in the Colonel's footsteps and use the technology of the modern age to spread the Gospel as it had never been spread before. He has been successful. He is known affectionately all over the world as "The King of the Allegheny." His church owns five television stations and three cable companies in the South. He owns radio stations all over the world and his sermons are heard by several million people every moment of the day and night.

Barnett is an expert propagandist, a good judge of human behavior, and naturally manipulative. He has whatever he wants in terms of material possessions. Women regard him as a handsome sex symbol and enough actively pursue him so that he can pick and choose those whom he wants. He supports many charities. All the money donated to his church is scrupulously accounted for. He is truly a man of considerable compassion.

But Barnett believes that the wild card is the hand of the devil writ large on the Earth and that it's up to him to wipe the slate clean. From his pulpit, he calls for legislation to restrict the civil liberties of those infected by the virus. He justifies his attitude by telling himself that it's the humanity of the individual he loves and serves, not that part of the individual subverted by the virus. He believes it will take a war of such fearful intensity to wipe out the wild card that the death and destruction foretold in the Book of Revelations would be a comparatively minor disturbance. For now, though, he is content to work within the system and attempt to achieve his means through regular political and social channels.

For now.

Black Eagle (Earl Sanderson Jr.)

Created by Walter Jon Williams
Born: 1913, Harlem, New York City *Died:* 1979, Paris, France
Appearance: Sanderson is about average height, well-built (5'11", 170 lbs.). He is black with fairly dark skin coloring. When flying or in combat he wears a black leather flier's jacket, white silk scarf, black leather flying helmet with goggles, and black jackboots. Under the jacket he usually wears tan Air Corps officers' fatigues with the insignia removed. He carries a beret stuffed in a pocket, and dons it after landing. His jacket has the 332nd Fighter Group patch on the shoulder.
Wild Card Ability: Sanderson can fly up to 500 mph in level flight. His body is tough enough to withstand the impact of bullets, and he can project a forcefield that he uses as a battering ram.

ST 15 (60 points) **IQ** 15 (60 points) **Speed:** 8.25
DX 18 (125 points) **HT** 15 (60 points) **Move:** 9 running; 256 flying
Damage: Thrust 1d+1; Swing 2d+1

Advantages:
Charisma +2 (10 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
Handsome (15 points)
Reputation: +3 (15 points)
Voice (10 points)

Disadvantages:
Duty: Exotics For Democracy, 12 or less (-10 points)
Sense of Duty: To blacks (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Black (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Communist (-5 points)

Super Advantages:

Flight (40 points)
Super Flight×4 (Move 224, 458 mph) (80 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:

ESP Power 1 (8 points)
* Psychokinesis Power 50 (PK Shield, 150 points)
PK Shield-16 (No concentration *+2;* 24 points)
* Psychokinesis Power 25 (Telekinesis, 250 points)
Telekinesis-15 (Can only be used to push objects with a telekinetic wedge when flying *-4;* 1 point)

Skills:

Bard-10 (0 points); Brawling-18 (1 point); English-15 (0 points); Flying-20 (8 points); French-13 (½ point); Gunner/TL6 (Machine gun)-19 (½ point); Guns/TL6 (Pistol)-19 (½ point); Italian-10† (½ point); Law-16 (6 points); Parachuting-17 (½ point); Piloting (Small fighter)-20 (8 points); Running-12 (½ point); Russian-11† (½ point); Sport (Football)-16 (½ point); (Basketball)-16 (½ point); Tactics-16 (6 points);

Quirks:

Dresses in pseudo-military outfit when "on duty"
Genuinely believes in Marxism

Sanderson was born to a middle-class black family in Harlem in 1913. His father, Earl Sr., was a railway porter and his family was fairly well-off by contemporary standards. Earl Sr. was a great believer in education, hard work, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and in the necessity of struggle in order for blacks to achieve equality.

Earl Jr. grew up a brilliant student and great athlete. When he was younger he was an uncompromising radical. He went to Rutgers on an athletic scholarship in 1930 and joined the Communist Party in 1931. He graduated *summa cum laude* from Rutgers in 1934 and married Lillian Abbott. Two months later he left for the Soviet Union, where he attended Lenin University for a year.

Sanderson then returned to America and earned a law degree at Columbia. Upon graduation in 1938 he went to work full-time for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the Communist Party U.S.A. His increasing distaste for the Party's rigid dogmatism resulted in his falling away from it. He resigned in 1939 in shock over the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

After Pearl Harbor he volunteered for the Air Corps, and, after a certain amount of maneuvering and string-pulling (he was a little old for pilot training, but still in superb physical shape), was assigned to the all-black 332nd Fighter Group, the "Lonely Eagles," arguably the best American fighter group in the European Theater. Earl ended the war with 53 unconfirmed kills (official records were not kept for the black squadrons) making him unofficially the #2 American ace of the war, after Jetboy. While based in Italy he met and fell in love with Orlena Goldoni, 24, a cabaret performer and anti-Fascist underground fighter.

After the war Sanderson returned to the United States, Lillian, and his work as a civil rights attorney. He was stricken by the virus in 1946 and became an ace, consciously using his powers to publicize the cause of civil rights and to mold himself into a symbol of black aspiration. He was soon recruited by Archibald Holmes for the Exotics for Democracy, better known as the Four Aces (see p. 13).

Things fell apart in 1950, when, in a growing climate of fear and repression, the Four Aces were summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Sanderson could not stand silent before the committee, most of whom were bigoted Southern rednecks. He eventually denounced them to their faces and was sentenced to five years in prison for contempt of Congress. Sanderson was told by his associates in the civil rights movement that he had set the cause back 50 years, and was asked to disassociate himself from it. He left the country, flew to Switzerland and renounced his U.S. citizenship. He never saw Lillian again.

Through the Fifties he did not permit his name to be used in association with any cause. He lived off and on with Lena Goldoni, who was now an established actress, until her death in a plane crash in 1971. When the civil rights movement took a more militant turn in the 1960s, Earl's name was often invoked and the Black Panthers even imitated his style of dress. But Sanderson kept to himself. He'd simply been away too long. By the 1970s Earl had settled more or less permanently in Paris, in an apartment inherited from Orlena Goldoni. People solicited his aid for various causes, but he was wary of being used, and if he gave help it was always quietly, without publicity. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1979.

Bludgeon (Robert Sievers)

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: circa 1950
Appearance: Bludgeon is a huge, (7', 310 lbs.), hideously ugly joker/ace with a malformed right hand and arm that is nothing more than a stiffened club of muscle and bone, and a fist "the size and color of a smoked Virginia ham." His face is severely scarred and pockmarked, with one blue eye and one glaring red one. His head is covered with sores and boils instead of hair.
Wild Card Ability: Bludgeon is inhumanly strong and can take a lot of physical punishment.

ST 60 (186 points) **IQ** 8 (-15 points) **Speed:** 6
DX 9 (-10 points) **HT** 15 (60 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 7d-1; Swing 9d; Punch 7d-2

Advantages:
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Reputation: +1 among New York City underworld (3 points)
Toughness: DR +2 (25 points)

Disadvantages:
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Bloodlust (-10 points)
Bully (-10 points)
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Intolerance: Homosexuals (-5 points)
Odious Personal Habit: Constant, unimaginative use of foul language (-5 points)
Reputation as violent thug; +4 in combat situations, -4 in most other situations, on 10 or less (0 points)
Ugly (-10 points)

Super Advantage:
Extra Hit Points +5 (40 points)

Skills:
Brawling-12 (8 points); English-8 (0 points); Streetwise-11 (8 points)

Quirks:
Holds grudges; obsessed with "getting even" with opponents

Bludgeon first appeared as muscle for the Shadow Fist Society. They cut him loose because of the trouble he got into on Wild Card Day 1986, when he was beaten by both Billy Ray and Hiram Worchester. After that he worked for the Mafia, and again found himself without a steady employer when the Mafia was crushed during the Mafia-Shadow Fist gang war of 1987.
Bludgeon is inhumanly strong, but brutal and lacking in intelligence. He tends to act before he thinks, and when he acts he usually acts foolishly. He can follow orders, but sometimes his temper gets the best of him. He is incredibly foul-mouthed. Nothing is known of his background, though he is well-known and feared on the streets. He has no friends, and is unlikely to ever have any.

Captain Trips (Dr. Marcus Aurelius Meadows) (Mark Meadows)

Created by Victor Milán
Born: January 23, 1948, Travis Air Force Base, California
Appearance: Meadows is a tall, thin (6' 2", 155 lbs.), hippie burn-out with shoulder-length hair and a scraggly goatee. His preferred mode of dress while in his Cap'n Trips identity is a purple Uncle Sam suit, complete with top hat. He usually wears a flower. Dr. Tachyon approves of his sense of style.
Wild Card Ability: Through ingesting chemical compounds of his own devising, Meadows can transform himself into someone else — one of five "friends" with super identities named after late 1960s/early 1970s pop songs. The five personae will be discussed below.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 19 (150 points) **Speed:** 4.75
DX 9 (-10 points) **HT** 10 (0 points) **Move:** 4
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Empathy (15 points)
Reputation as a once-brilliant researcher (+3, any biological scientist, all the time) (5 points)

Disadvantages:
Dependent: Sprout, 9 or less (-32 points)
Shyness: Mild (-5 points)
Skinny (-5 points)

Skills:
Biochemistry-25 (32 points); Chemistry-25 (16 points); English-19; Mathematics-18 (2 points); Merchant-10 (see below); Research-19 (2 points); Streetwise-14 (0 points)

Quirks:
Lacking in common sense
Hippie burnout, nostalgic for 1960s counterculture; usually talks "hippie"
Outrageous costume
Terrible merchant (default skill is 13, but his skill is 10!)
Runs into people and things; trips over his own feet

Meadows is possibly the most brilliant biochemist in the world. He attended Berkeley in the late 1960s. Studious, square, shy, and gawky, he wanted desperately to be part of the bold new world the '60s radicals were trying to build, but couldn't. One night at the peak of desperate longing he took a heavy dose of LSD. The drug caused him to manifest his ace and become the Radical, the Ultimate Movement Hero. Unfortunately, the Radical lasted only that one bright shining moment, and Trips couldn't even remember being him or how he had called him up.
He plunged back into the lab, but was never able to recover the Radical. Instead, he created five different powders of five distinct colors to call up his five "friends," each of which is named after a Sixties song. Making each powder is a lengthy, involved process, so he produces them only in small quantities and normally has enough with him for only one dose of each. If he expected to need more, he might make up several doses in advance — if he thinks of it.
Although Meadows has abandoned his career as a researcher, he has not lost his skills, and he has a makeshift

laboratory over his store in which he can do amazing work. At these times, the old Dr. Mark Meadows emerges briefly.

Meadows' father is Air Force General Marc Meadows, once wartime companion to Jetboy. By the late 1980s he's about to retire as head of the U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM) at Vandenberg AFB.

Sunflower (Kimberly Ann Cordayne), Mark's shrewish Earth Mother ex-wife, lives in Camarillo, California. His daughter, Sprout, lives with him at the Cosmic Pumpkin Head Shop and Organic Deli (Greenwich Village, New York City), of which Meadows is the owner/proprietor. Sprout (born in the early 1970s) is a beautiful child, with huge blue eyes and straight blonde hair that hangs to her waist. Her mental development appears to be that of a four-year-old. She's a friendly, good-natured child.

Meadows utterly adores his daughter and loves and admires Dr. Tachyon. He sincerely believes in the ideals of the 1960s. He is for Peace, Love, and Doing Your Own Thing, and distrusts authority as manifest by Government and Big Business. He's a sweet, gentle man, soft-spoken and generous with what little he has in the way of material goods. He's always willing to listen sympathetically. He actively loves everybody who hasn't

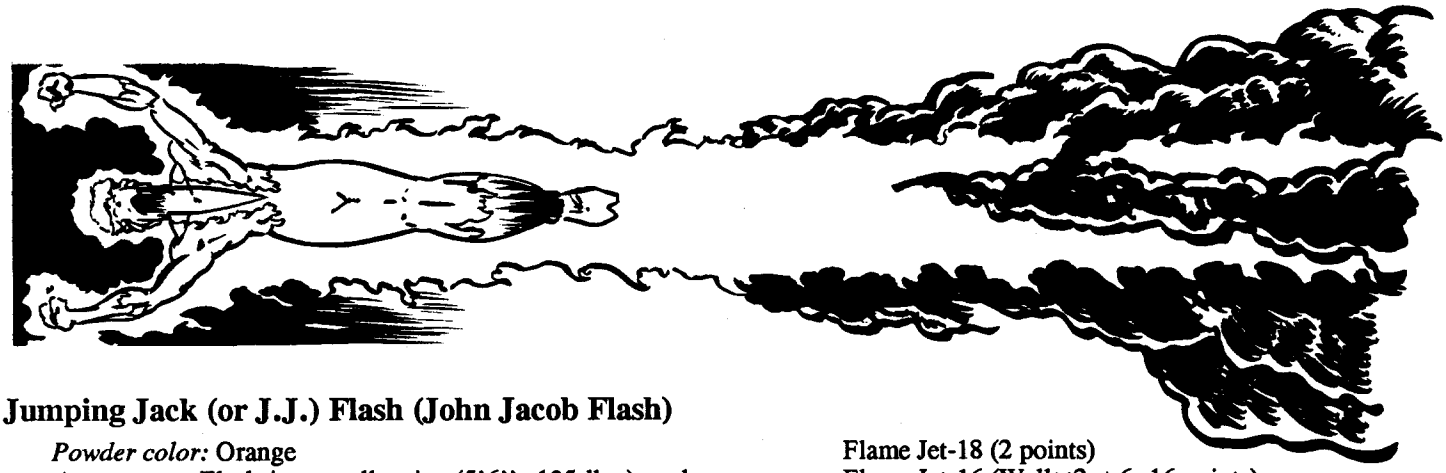
given him cause to feel otherwise and he's inclined to give everyone else the benefit of the doubt.

Too bad his other personae aren't more like him.

Captain Trips' "Friends"

Each of the Captain's alter egos appears fully conscious and fully powered, no matter what shape Meadows is in when he took the powder. Each persona has one hour before disappearing. They can revert to Meadows at will, foregoing whatever time remains to them, but some of them wouldn't dream of doing this except in the most extreme circumstances. If one of them is battered into unconsciousness, he or she turns at once into an unconscious and exceedingly vulnerable Cap'n Trips.

One of Meadows' personalities is always dominant, and is expressed by his physical appearance. The others are present but suppressed. They share to some extent the experiences and perceptions of the dominant personality, but are helpless to affect his or her actions. They do not share one another's expertise. The memories each has of what happened to the others tend to be filtered in funny ways, and are not always accurate. They have memories of a pre-Trips existence, but these memories are hazy and uncertain. None has any idea how they came to be aces, nor how they came to be trapped in Mark Meadows' head.



Jumping Jack (or J.J.) Flash (John Jacob Flash)

Powder color: Orange

Appearance: Flash is a small, wiry (5'6", 135 lbs.), red-haired Jew with a lean, handsome face, a long thin nose, and a sly, easy smile. He wears an orange body suit, cut to the navel in front, trimmed in red and yellow flame.

Wild Card Ability: Flash has the power to control fire. He can project it into a lethal beam or weave it into a cage or a safety net that can catch without burning. He can fly and is resistant to most forms of physical attack.

ST 23 (112 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 8.25
DX 21 (200 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 8 running; 64 flying
Damage: Flame Jet 7d+2; Thrust 2d+1; Swing 4d+1

Advantages:
- Alertness +4 (20 points)
- Handsome (15 points)
- Reputation: +1 (5 points)

Disadvantage:
- Impulsiveness (-10 points)

Super Advantages:
- Absorption: 2d of Heat/Fire attacks (24 points)
- Flight (40 points)
- Super Flight×2 (Move 64, 120 mph) (40 points)
- Costume (20 points)
- Transformation (Requires Meadows' ingestion of appropriate powder *-2;* Limited use: 1 hour per use *-4;* 120 points)

Super Disadvantage:
- Vulnerability: 3d to Water attacks (-30 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
- ESP Power 1 (8 points)
- Heat/Fire Power 12 (120 points)
  - Control Fire-18 (2 points)
  - Flame Jet-18 (2 points)
  - Flame Jet-16 (Wall×2 +6, 16 points)
  - Neutralize Fire-18 (2 points)
- * Psychokinesis Power 30 (PK Shield, 90 points)
  - PK Shield-16 (No Concentration +2; 28 points)
- * Psychokinesis Power 16 (Telekinesis, 160 points)
  - Telekinesis-13 (Only to form a flaming net or rope *-4;* ½ point)

Skills:

Flying-20 (1 point); English-14 (0 points); Law-14 (4 points); Musical Instrument (Guitar)-12 (1 point); Sex Appeal-11 (1 point)

Quirks:
- Witty, sardonic cynic
- Hates having his personality submerged
- Ladies' man

Flash is the spirit of fire: elusive, daring, passionate and destructive. He can bathe in it without burning and project it from his palm with a characteristic opening-lotus gesture of his fingers. Sometimes he appears playing a guitar of flame, a classic Fender Stratocaster with a body like the carapace of a stag beetle.

He can fly, booming along on a roaring column of flame for effect and appearance's sake, but he can also fly quietly if he has to. He has enhanced strength and the inhuman quickness of a flash fire. He's fairly resistant to most forms of physical attack, though artillery or a fist driven by substantial super-strength could hurt him. Flash absorbs strength from fire, but water harms him.

He is a popular member of the New York ace community, in spite of the fact that he appears relatively rarely. He is pleasant, good-looking and dramatic, and is often interviewed on television.

His character, like flame, is changeable and hard to predict. His usual attitude is sardonic cynicism, though his wit can cut to

the bone. He can be very charming, especially when chasing women, a favorite pastime. He treats women carelessly, as he treats everything else. He's quick to anger, quick to cool off, and frequently recklessly impulsive. He hates bullies and cruelty, but is usually willing to pull his punches. Make him truly mad, though, and he'll burn you to a cinder. Just like that.

He regards Meadows and his fellow inmates with amused, affectionate contempt. However, he hates having his persona submerged and would do anything to remain Flash.

Moonchild (Isis Moon)

Powder color: Black and silver, forming distinctive layers that swirl together without mixing

Appearance: Moonchild is a tall, willowy (5'7", 120 lbs.) Korean woman of great grace and luminous beauty with huge black eyes, small pointed chin, and dainty nose. She wears a skin-tight black costume with gloves and soft, supple boots. On her chest is a yin-yang symbol in black and white. A black half-mask covers the right side of her face, trailing off the prominent cheekbone, making her face a yin-yang that's the mirror image of that on her suit. Her hair is straight, black, and unbound, hanging well down her back.

Wild Card Ability: Moonchild is a master martial artist. Her strength is slightly greater than human, and her speed and agility are awesome.

ST 25 (116 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 8.75
DX 23 (250 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 8 (10 running)
Damage: Karate 3d+1 punch, 3d+3 kick; Thrust 2d+2; Swing 5d-1

Advantages:
Alertness +2 (10 points)
Beautiful (15 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Language Talent +1 (2 points)
Night Vision (10 points)
Reputation +1 (public ace) (5 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)

Disadvantage:
Pacifism: Cannot Kill. Moonchild also cannot do serious *harm* to others, making this disadvantage worth slightly more than normal (-20 points)

Super Advantages:
Catfall (30 points)
Clinging (30 points)
Damage Resistance +10 vs. crushing damage (40 points)
Dark Vision, including ability to see colors (30 points)
Silence, 3 levels (15 points)
Transformation (see J.J. Flash, above) (120 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
* Telepathy Power 10 (Mind Shield, 20 points)
Mind Shield-13 (12 points)

Skills:
Acrobatics-20 (e1/2 point); Judo-23 (4 points); Karate-25 (16 points); Running-10 (1 point); Stealth-21 (½ point); Korean-13 (0 points); English-13 (½ point); French-13 (½ point); Japanese-13 (½ point); Mandarin-12 (½ point); Portuguese-13 (½ point)

Quirks:
Hates South Korean government
Happy when the moon is visible
Only reads Japanese (can't speak it)

Moonchild's primary power is her expertise in Oriental unarmed fighting techniques. Being a pacifist, she will never attack to do lasting harm to any intelligent being. By preference she subdues her foes through the nonresistence of aikido, though she can kick and punch with the best of them. For defense she relies primarily on her feline reflexes and martial-arts training in evasion and parrying. Her command of her *ki* makes it difficult for others to control her mind. She possesses resistance to kinetic attack and can absorb a fair amount of damage.

Night is her element. She is invisible in darkness and shadow. She can see in darkness like a cat and move silently as shadow itself. She can walk on walls. She is happier when the moon is in the sky, happiest when it's full.

Moonchild is quiet, compassionate, excessively modest, and serious of mind and manner. She is fatalistic and without fear. Her outlook is Zen, but she lacks samurai ruthlessness. She dislikes crimes, particularly violent crimes, and abhors killers. She hates militarism and the South Korean government, and is capable of being uncharacteristically unreasonable and waspish on either subject.

She regards Meadows and her fellow residents in his psyche with the same respect that she feels for all life, but she's devoted to the idea of liberating herself and her companions so that each can pursue his or her own karma.

Cosmic Traveler (Damon Strange)

Powder color: Blue with sparkles

Appearance: The Traveler is of average height and somewhat thin (5'10", 145 lbs.), and blue. He either wears a body suit that fits him like a second skin or is nude, totally bald, and lacks such appurtenances as toes and external genitalia. His eyes are slits of white fire. He wears a cowled cloak of ultimate deep-space darkness, lined with glowing stars, nebulae and galactic whorls of rainbow colors.

Wild Card Ability: Traveler can fly, is immune to the vacuum effects of space, and can turn insubstantial. He can impersonate anyone's voice and physical appearance down to the finest detail. He's a mild telepath and possesses senses of extrahuman keenness. He has a strong mind shield against mental attack.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 18 (125 points) **Speed:** 7.75
DX 16 (80 points) **HT** 15 (60 points) **Move:** 7 running; 14 flying
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Alertness +3 (15 points)
Strong Will +15 (60 points)

Disadvantages:
Cowardice (-10 points)
Fanaticism (-15 points)
Megalomania (-10 points)
Phobia: Insects (-20 points)

Super Advantages:
Costume (20 points)
Insubstantiality (Switchable *+1;* 83 points)
Invisibility (Switchable *+1;* 44 points)

Transformation (see J.J. Flash, above) (120 points)
Vacuum Support (60 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
Alteration Power 2 (24 points)
Morph-16 (Morph Memory unneeded *+4;* 24 points)

Skills:
English-18 (0 points); Lockpicking-18 (2 points); Shadowing-12 (0 points); Sleight of Hand-20 (32 points); Stealth-18 (8 points)

Quirks:
Inordinately fond of cats
Susceptible to flattery
Pompously honest about his distaste for physical danger

Nonpareil scout and spy, Cosmic Traveler loves looking potent and mysterious. Actually, it's one of his powers to look any way he pleases. When he's plain old Damon Strange, he's stoop-shouldered, thin of chest, arm and leg, and slightly pot-bellied. His hair is thin and receding from a prominent forehead. His eyes are watery and close-set. But he can change his appearance to virtually anything he wants, thereby enabling him to impersonate nearly anyone or anything.

He can also turn insubstantial, thusly becoming invisible, able to penetrate virtually any barrier, and invulnerable to all forms of potentially dangerous energy transfer — kinetic, electric or radiant. He has mild telepathic ability, senses that are far keener than the human norm, and a will so strong he's shielded against all but the strongest mental attacks.

Unfortunately, the Traveler is also a committed coward. He has no offensive powers and probably wouldn't use them if he did. Anyone who can hurt him at all can probably hurt him a lot, so he'll flee when faced by aces of unknown powers. In fact, he's apt to flee if faced with any kind of unpleasant surprise or unexpected stress.

The best way to approach him is through flattery. Traveler has an ego of truly cosmic proportions, so he can be sweet-talked into action. He feels nothing but contempt for Mark and despises his fellow personae. At the end of his hour he's liable to zip off somewhere to hide, preferably in a room locked from the outside so the returning Mark Meadows can't get out and possibly cause harm to befall Damon Strange.

Starshine (Justin Bright)

Powder color: Yellow

Appearance: Starshine is a huge (6'4", 235 lbs.) masculine Adonis with wavy yellow-white hair, green eyes, and a solid, square jaw. He wears a form-fitting yellow costume with an orange sunburst on his broad chest and green trunks, gloves, and folded-down boots. It's colorful, if not exactly well-coordinated.

Wild Card Ability: Starshine is extraordinarily strong. He can fly at the speed of light, project devastating rays of sunlight, and has a protective energy field.

ST 80 (226 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 6.75
DX 14 (45 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 6 running; lightspeed flying
Damage: Sunlight Blast 8d cutting; Thrust 9d; Swing 11d

Advantage:
Very Handsome (25 points)

Disadvantages:
Compulsive Behavior: Talking (-10 points)
Intolerance of "bad elements," which sometimes seems to include almost everyone (-10 points)
Odious Personal Habit: Endlessly opinionated (-10 points)
Stubbornness (-5 points)

Super Advantages:
Absorption: 3d of Light attacks (36 points)
Costume (20 points)
Damage Resistance 40 (200 points)
Flight (No speed control *-1;* No mass or ST when body transforms into photons *-2;* 28 points)
Super Flight×25 (speed of light) (No mass or ST when body transforms into photons *-2;* 400 points)
Transformation (see J.J. Flash) (120 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
Sunlight Blast Power 16 (Generic Cutting Missile) (96 points)
Sunlight Blast-14 (12 points)

Skills:
Bard-12 (½ point); Brawling-14 (1 point); Literature-14 (4 points); Poetry-9 (0 points)

Quirks:
Doesn't like other alter egos (except Aquarius)
Hates nuclear energy
Never attempts diplomacy; in effect, has Diplomacy skill 0

Starshine, besides being able to control light, is incredibly strong. He can transform his mass into photons to travel at the speed of light. He can project rays of sunlight and has an energy field that protects him from kinetic and electric attack. Visible-light weapons such as lasers only give him additional energy, though he has no protection against hard radiation.

Though he's an extremely potent ace, his instinct is to talk before acting. He's no coward. He just loves to hear himself talk (and talk, and talk). Any but the most hopelessly chivalrous foe should have at least one free crack at him while he pontificates.

Starshine is arrogant, intolerant and insufferable. He distrusts Technology. He disapproves of Capitalism. He hates Racism and Social Injustice. He's down on Drug and Alcohol Abuse. He has opinions on everything and is always more than willing to voice them.

He disapproves of the very drug use that brings him into being. He doesn't care for Meadows' other alter egos, except for Aquarius. He will find ample reason to lecture anyone he encounters.

Aquarius (Cetus Dauphin)

Powder color: Silvery-gray

Appearance: Aquarius is a huge, stocky (6', 260 lbs.) man with glabrous grayish skin, bald, with a bulging forehead.

Wild Card Ability: Aquarius can turn into an orca-sized bottlenose dolphin and can telepathically commune with seagoing mammals and summon them to do his bidding.

Human Form
ST 17 (100 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 5.75
DX 9 (-10 points) **HT** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 5 running; 5 swimming
Damage: Thrust 1d+2; Swing 3d-1

Dolphin Form
ST 70 (206 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 28 swimming
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 15 (60 points)
Damage: Thrust 8d; Swing 10d

Advantages:
Acute Taste +13 (26 points)
Animal Empathy (5 points)
Peripheral Vision (15 points)

Disadvantages:
Bad Sight (nearsighted), dolphin form only (-25 points)
Berserk (-15 points)
Legless, dolphin form only (-35 points)
No Arms, dolphin form only (-35 points)
No Sense of Smell (still has Sense of Taste) (-2)
Sense of Duty to all aquatic mammals (-10)

Super Advantages (dolphin form only):
Amphibious (20 points)
Damage Resistance 25 (125 points)
Extra Hit Points +15 (120 points)
Pressure Support (20 points)
Speak with Animal (Ocean mammals only *-3;* 14 points)
Super Swimming×2 (Move 28, 60 mph) (30 points)
Transformation (see J.J. Flash) (120 points)
Transformation (Human-dolphin) (30 points)

Super Disadvantages:
Dependency: Water (hourly) (-20 points)
Vulnerability: 2d from water-borne poisons (-6 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
* Nature Power 200 (Fish Control, 800 points)
Fish Control-16 (Ocean mammals only *-3;* 16 points)

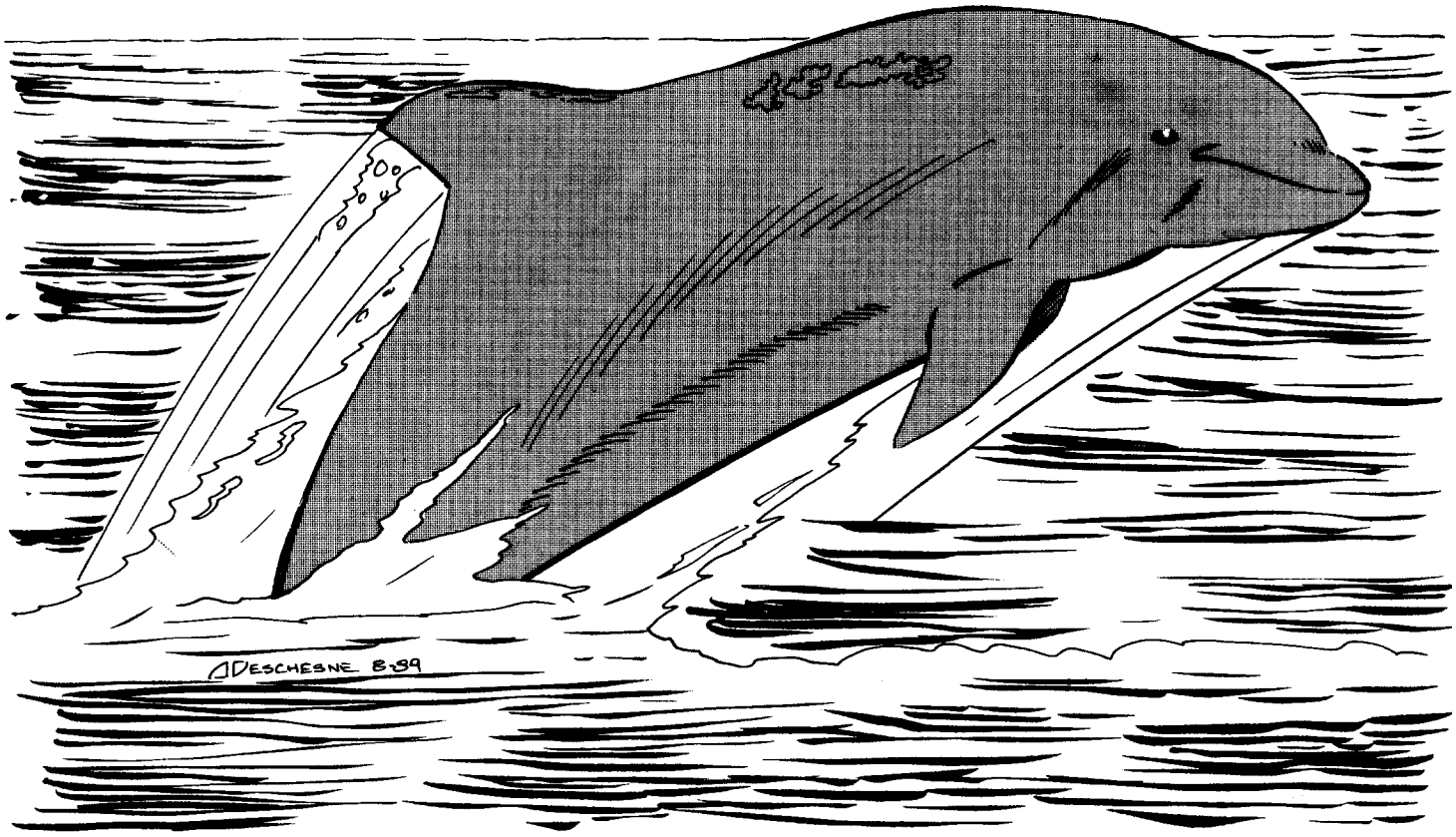
Skills:
Brawling-11 (4 pointS); English-14 (0 points); French-14 (2 points); Marine Biology-16 (8 points); Navigation-14 (4 points); Scuba-15 (4 points); Swimming-14 (24 points)

Quirks:
Hates land dwellers
Especially prejudiced against Japanese, Soviets and Norwegians
Animal Empathy is limited to sea-going mammals

Aquarius' 20-foot dolphin form can swim farther and faster, dive deeper, leap higher, and sense over longer ranges than any cetacean alive. His hide can turn harpoons, bullets, electric bolts, and laser beams. His rostrum can crumple armor plate when driven at top speed by his awesome mass. He is attuned to the creatures of the Deep, and can summon them telepathically to do his bidding.

He's nearsighted like all dolphins. Even when he's in human form his skin must be kept moist or he'll take damage. He has no sense of smell, but he *does* have an acute sense of taste which makes him vulnerable to poison, especially waterborne poison.

Aquarius hates land-dwellers, particularly those from Japan, Russia and Norway. The sight of seagoing mammals being harmed will drive him to berserk fury. Getting him to help Meadows' other personae is difficult, unless danger to his pelagic realm is involved. He can be managed, circumspectly, to render grudging assistance, but the only thing that keeps him from putting his beak seaward and leaving forever is the fact that in one hour he'll turn into Mark Meadows and promptly drown.



Carnifex (William "Billy" Ray)

Created by John J. Miller
Born: 1960, Busted Butte, Montana
Appearance: Ray is of average height and weight (5'10", 165 lbs.), and frequently wears his fighting suit in public. It's white and form-fitting, with black hood covering face and head, and black gloves and pliable black boots. His face doesn't quite come together. It's lacking a little in chin and has too much nose. His green eyes aren't quite on the same level and his jaw is canted a little. He keeps his dark hair short.
Wild Card Ability: Ray is stronger than normal human limits, and much faster. His body regenerates damage and he is a master martial artist.

ST 30 (126 points) **IQ** 11 (10 points) **Speed:** 8.75
DX 22 (225 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 10
Damage: Karate 3d+3 punch, 4d+1 kick; Thrust 3d; Swing 5d+2

Advantages:
Alertness +3 (15 points)
Ambidexterity (10 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Legal Enforcement Powers (15 points)
Reputation: +2 (10 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)

Disadvantages:
Berserk (-15 points)
Duty: Uphold the law and protect Senator Hartmann (-15 points)
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Lecherousness (-15 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Unattractive (-5 points)

Super Advantages:
Extra Hit Points +7 (56 points)
Regeneration: Fast (50 points)

Skills:
Criminology-13 (6 points); English-11 (0 points); Guns (Pistol)-18 (0 points); Interrogation-12 (4 points); Karate-25 (24 points); Law-12 (6 points); Running-10 (½ point); Shadowing-12 (4 points); Sport (Football)-20 (½ point); Stealth-21 (1 point); Streetwise-12 (4 points); Tactics-16 (14 points)

Quirks:
Absolutely fastidious about his appearance
Wears a white "fighting suit" when on duty
Braggart

A college football star for the University of Michigan in the late 1970s, the general public discovered Ray's ace when he broke his leg in three places in the first quarter of the Rose Bowl (on national TV, of course) and tried to return to the game before halftime. Losing his chance for a lucrative career as an NFL running back, he was immediately recruited by the U.S. Justice Department. He's worked for them ever since. He got his nickname, Carnifex (Latin for "executioner"), early in his career. He likes it. He's an authentic bad-ass.

Faster than a cat on speed and infinitely meaner, he has an instinctive sense of aggression that makes him a master at hand-to-hand combat. He's never studied it. Never had to. He just knows what move to make at any given time. This drives hard-core martial artists crazy, because Ray fights to no particular pattern in no particular form. He's the master of free-form mayhem.

The action is the thing for Ray. He lives for the violence, the ultimate head-to-head confrontation. He lusts after opponents who are bigger, stronger, and apparently more powerful than he. He has no compunction about killing, and has been called on the carpet several times for being a bit careless in this regard. Since he usually successfully carries out all orders, his superiors forgive his occasional excesses.

He can take a lot of damage, and his body will eventually regenerate even massive injuries. Unfortunately, his regenerative powers know nothing about aesthetics, which is why his face has become rather peculiar over the years.

He's talkative and boastful about both his exploits for the Justice Department and in the bedroom. Someday he may talk too much and spill something that should remain secret. He's also a "neat freak." His apartment looks unlived in — and don't ever, ever spill mustard on his uniform. He has no secret ID per se, though he likes using his nickname. He likes working for the Justice Department because he can indulge his love for combat in a legal manner. He is not a particularly stable personality; someday he may go totally over the line.

Note: Using the *Variant Combat Rules* on p. SU83, Carnifex gets three attacks and three parries per turn.

Chaisson, Cordelia

Created by Edward Bryant and Leanne C. Harper
Born: 1970, Atelier Parish, Louisiana
Appearance: Chaisson is tall and slim (5'7", 115 lbs.) with black hair, dark eyes, and high cheekbones. She speaks with a pronounced Cajun accent.
Wild Card Ability: Chaisson can mentally stop a target's cardiac and respiratory systems, causing instantaneous death. She can use her power in reverse to revive someone suffering from shock or similar distress.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 5.50
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 11 (10 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantage:
Appearance: Attractive (5 points)

Disadvantages:
Stubbornness (-5 points)
Vow: Only use power in dire emergencies (10 points)

Power and Super-Skills:
Body Control Power 20 (120 points)
Drain HT-16 (No obvious effect *+3;* May reduce an attribute indefinitely *+4;* 52 points)
Healing-16 (No obvious effect *+3;* Does not work on actual wounds *-3;* 24 points)

Skills:
Administration-11 (½ point); Cajun French-13 (0 points); Carousing-10 (1 point); Diplomacy-13 (4 points); English-13 (2 points); Fast-Talk-11 (½ point); Research-12 (1 point); Sex Appeal-11 (2 points)

Quirks:
Loves rock & roll
Likes "dangerous" men
Cajun accent

Chaisson is the niece of Sewer Jack Robicheaux. She ran away from her home in Atelier Parish, Louisiana, to join her uncle in New York City, arriving the fateful Wild Card Day of 1986. She was picked up by a pimp at the bus station, and eventually brought to Fortunato by one of his associates. She accompanied Fortunato to Aces High and witnessed the Astronomer's attack on the restaurant. Later she was kidnapped by the Astronomer; the shock of seeing one of her fellow prisoners brutally murdered caused her wild card power to manifest itself. She used it to escape from the Astronomer and eventually was brought to her uncle by ace private investigator Jay Ackroyd.

Chaisson later got a job as an associate producer with Global Fun and Games, a cable television entertainment network. She was sent to Australia on business by Global, where she met the aborigine ace Wyungare and traveled through the dreamtime with him. On her return to the U.S., she was one of the chief organizers of the AIDS/wild card benefit that revived Buddy Holley's career.

Chaisson shares an apartment with another Global employee on Maiden Lane, near the Woolworth Building and Jetboy's Tomb. She is intelligent, though young and often still naive. She will use her killing power only when she absolutely must.

Chickenhawk (Gus Wenninger)

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: circa 1965, New York City
Appearance: Small and light (5'3", 60 lbs.) with leathery wings, a long barbed tail, ugly wattles and clumps of dirty-looking feathers stuck randomly on face and body.
Wild Card Ability: Chickenhawk can use his wings to glide.

ST 7 (-20 points) **IQ** 8 (-15 points) **Speed:**5.25
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 9 (-10 points) **Move:** 1 on ground; 8 gliding
Damage: Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-3

Advantages:
Acute Vision +5 (10 points)
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (40 points)

Disadvantages:
Compulsive Behavior: Eats food raw and living (-10 points)
Hideous (-20 points)
Lame (crippled on the ground): (-15 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)

Skills:
Area Knowledge (NYC)-20, Flying-15 (16 points); Streetwise-11; Survival (Woodlands)-15

Super Advantage:
Gliding (20 points)

Quirks:
Thinks of himself as a dangerous bird of prey
Loves to be called just "Hawk"
Desperately wants to be accepted by "the guys"

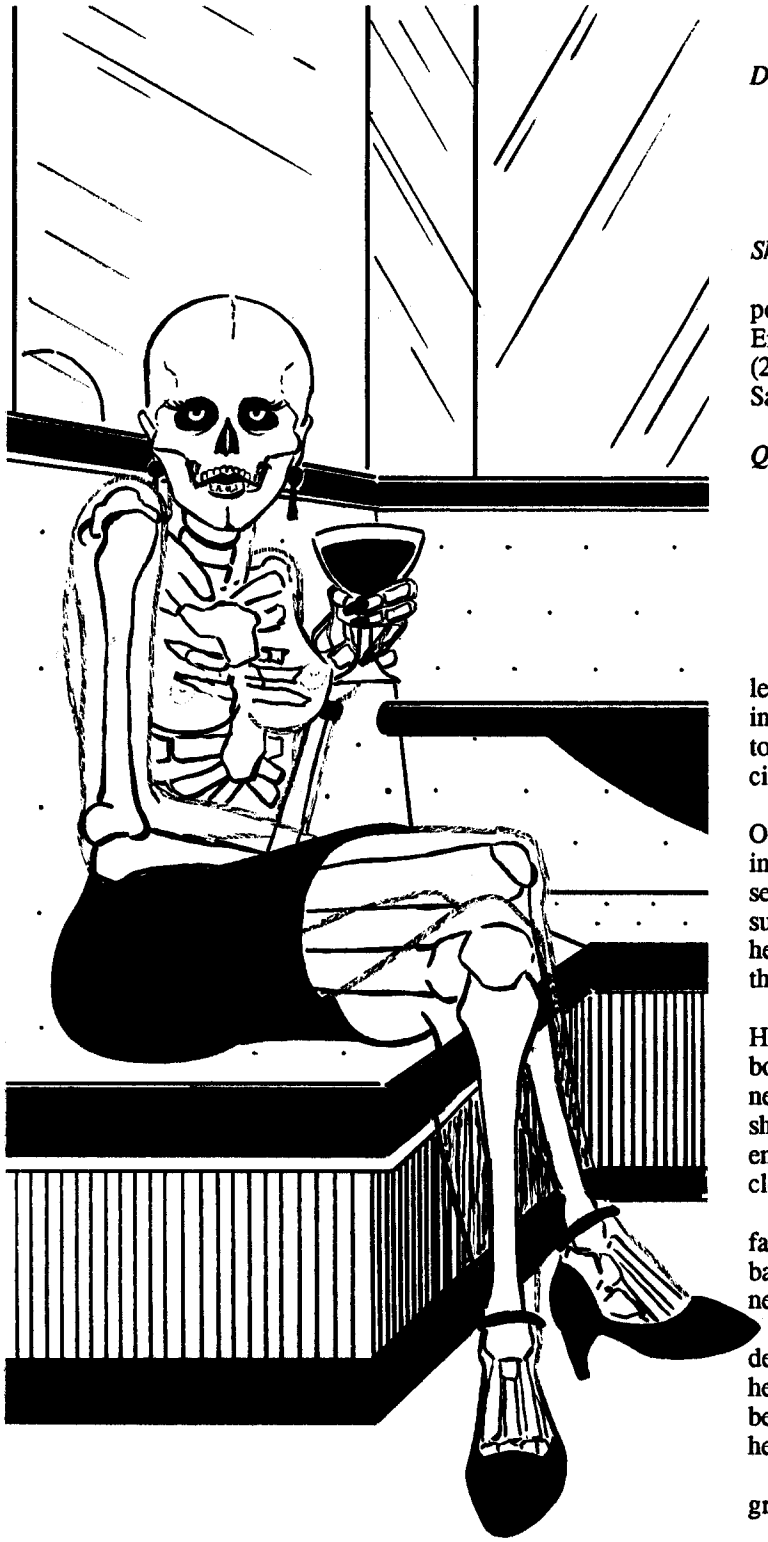
Chickenhawk was a New York street kid. His wild card turned up when he was ten years old; it turned him into a strange, ugly flying thing. Now, instead of the streets, he lives on roofs and ledges.

His wings are flaps of skin between immensely elongated finger bones, anchored at wrist and ankle. He doesn't have real hands, but his fingers extend a little bit past the wing-edge and are weak but usable gripping digits. His feet are prehensile and are also useful in gripping and manipulating objects. A long barbed tail gives some stability to his flight. Unable to wear clothes, he covers his small, twisted body with rags and tatters. He has a complexion not unlike chicken skin, with thin, scruffy patches of feathers covering some parts of his body and purple and red wattles dangling beneath his receding chin.

More a glider than a true flier, Chickenhawk rides the updrafts and winds through the city streets very adroitly. He's extremely awkward on the ground, where he can hobble along only with great difficulty. The virus has left him with an appetite for live food. He eats rats and cats and anything he can catch, but his favorite food is pigeon, or squab as he insists on calling it. He has very keen eyesight and is loyal but not very bright. Frequently utilized by the Fists as a courier or scout, Chickenhawk is quite useful in smuggling operations.

Chrysalis (Debra Jo Jory)

Created by John J. Miller
Born: 1955, Tulsa, Oklahoma
Appearance: Chrysalis is of average height (5'5", 115 lbs.), with blue eyes and no hair. Her skin and flesh are transparent, making her organs and skeleton totally visible. She often goes topless to enhance the effect, and wears a swirl of glitter on one ghostly cheek.
Wild Card Ability: None



ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 15 (60 points) **Speed:** 5.75
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 11 (10 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Beautiful (10 points)
Intuition (15 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)
Reputation: +4 in Jokertown (10 points)
Very Wealthy (30 points)

Disadvantages:
Hideous (-20 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)
Secret: She's really from Oklahoma (-5 points)

Skills:
Accounting-14 (2 points); Area Knowledge (NYC)-20 (10 points); Detect Lies-12 (½ point); Diplomacy-15 (4 points); English-16 (1 point); French-8 (½ point†); History (British)-14 (2 points); Interrogation-13 (½ point); Merchant-14 (1 point); Savoir-Faire-14 (½ point); Streetwise-20 (12 points)

Quirks:
Pretends she's British
Surrounds herself with mirrors
Drinks only Amaretto
Plays solitaire
Accentuates her weird appearance

Chrysalis is majority owner (along with silent partner Charles Dutton) of the Crystal Palace, and Jokertown's most notable information broker. She knows everything that goes on in Jokertown and almost everything that happens anywhere else in the city.

She arrived in New York in the mid-1970s from her native Oklahoma and bought the building on Henry Street, turning it into the Crystal Palace. She is very secretive about her past; secrecy, in fact, pervades her character. She enjoys being the subject of speculation and does her utmost to shroud her past and her personal life in mystery. She reacts with chilling disdain to those who try to penetrate her British facade.

She buys and sells secrets, but is always fair in her dealings. Her reputation for honesty is unimpeachable and her word is her bond. Although she considers her appearance to be hideous, she never wears a mask, thereby forcing the world to look at what she must see every time she looks in a mirror. Nevertheless, she enjoys dressing well, and usually wears attractive and expensive clothes.

Some men are disgusted by her appearance. Others find her fascinating. In game terms, some people are affected by her basic female beauty (+2 reaction) while others see her strangeness and jokerdom (-4 plus -3 reaction).

Elmo Schaeffer, the dwarf bouncer at the Crystal Palace, is devotedly in love with her. Daniel Brennan had an affair with her just after his arrival in New York City, finally breaking it off because she continued to take outside lovers and couldn't bring herself to admit that she loved him.

She is a fiercely proud, often lonely woman, and one of the great powers in Jokertown affairs.

Cyclone (Vernon Henry Carlysle)

Created by Steve Perrin
Born: March 3, 1942
Appearance: Moderately tall and fairly muscular (5'11', 170 lbs.), Cyclone has hazel eyes and light brown hair, but is beginning to go bald.
Wild Card Ability: Cyclone can call up and control wind in any force he desires. He can use it to fly, pick up physical objects, or create a shield that protects him from physical attack.

ST 14 (45 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 6.25
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6 running; 12 flying
Damage: Wind Jet 12d+3; Thrust 1d; Swing 2d

Advantages:
Charisma +2 (10 points)
Filthy Rich (50 points)
Handsome (15 points)
Reputation +2 (very-well-known patriotic ace) (10 points)

Disadvantage:
Odious Personal Habit: Egotism (-5 points)

Super Advantages:
Damage Resistance +25 (Requires air *-1;* 113 points)
Also has PD2, DR14 from Kevlar under costume.
Flight (40 points)
Passive Defense +4 (Requires air *-1;* 90 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
* Air Power 10 (Wind Jet, 40 points)
Wind Jet-14 (16 points)
* Psychokinesis Power 22 (Telekinesis, 220 points)
Telekinesis-10 (Requires air *-1;* 1 point)

Gadget:
Radio Hearing/Infravision Helmet (Breakable: DR 2, HT 3 *-15%;* -8 to hit *-5%;* 21 points)

Skills:
Flying-20 (40 points); Guns (Shotgun)-15 (1 point); Merchant-16 (8 points); Parachuting-15 (4 points); Savoir-Faire-15 (3 points); Sport (Golf)-12 (1 point)

Quirks:
Incurable, unashamed self-promoter
Prefers to stay on the West Coast
Employs an armed camera crew
Wears a gaudy white-and-blue outfit (with Kevlar inserts)

Born to a wealthy San Franciscan family, Carlysle discovered his wild card ability in 1965 when his parachute failed during a skydiving outing. He called up a wind to float himself gently to the ground. He never kept his powers a secret, immediately taking the name Cyclone and donning a blue and white costume. He uses the costume's huge cape to glide on the wind he calls. He also wears a helmet with a built in wide-band radio receiver, infrared goggles for night flying, and red and green flashing lights for use in heavy air traffic. The costume is padded with a layer of Kevlar armor which helps to protect him.

Carlysle can control the wind to allow him to glide, or create a shield of whirling force which can deflect bullets and even dissipate energy or radiation attacks.

He can also create small, locally intense whirlwinds that can lift objects up to the size of a small truck. Years of practice with his ability have taught him to use the winds in such a way as to eliminate incidental damage to his surroundings.

Carlysle served in Vietnam for two years in the late 1960s. He had an independent Air Force commission which allowed him to be a free agent during the war, serving whereever he thought best. He had a series of minor victories, but was unable to make any noticeable difference in the war effort. He resigned his commission and returned to the States where he and his wife, Cornelia Owens-Carlysle, had a baby daughter, Helene (Mistral) Carlysle, who has the same elemental powers as her father. Since wild card traits are not usually inheritable, Dr. Tachyon has hypothesized that Carlysle subconsciously manipulated Mistral's germ plasm while she was still a fetus in order to make his child an ace. Mistral's powers manifested themselves when she was quite young, becoming a major factor in Cornelia Owens-Carlysle's desire for a divorce. After the divorce Cyclone retained custody of his daughter.

Cyclone rarely leaves the West Coast, preferring to spend most of his time on his palatial, heavily patrolled Marin County estate. He also has residences in most of the world's major cities, some under assumed names. He likes being a big frog in the small puddle of California, where there are few aces to share his limelight.

Deadhead (Glen Stephens)

Created by John J. Miller
Born: 1968
Appearance: Deadhead is 19, but looks about 45. He has a dead white complexion, black hair, and dark, staring eyes. Painfully thin and physically weak (5' 10'', 120 lbs.), he is bothered by frequent nervous tics which cause his lips to twitch as if he were grimacing in pain or sneering.
Wild Card Ability: Deadhead can gain access to other people's memories by eating their brains.

ST 8 (-15 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 4.25
DX 9 (-10 points) **HT** 8 (-15 points) **Move:** 4
Damage: Thrust 1d; Swing 2d-1

Advantages:
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (40 points)
Reputation (intimidation situations) +3 as alarming ace geek, NYC underworld (5 points)

Disadvantages:

Delusion: that he *must* eat human flesh, -2 reaction from others (-10 points)
Duty: To Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (-10 points)
Odious Personal Habit (dirty, talks to himself) (-10 points)
Phobia (afraid of food and eating) (-15 points)
Reputation (normal situations) -3 as distasteful ace geek, NYC underworld (-5 points)
Skinny (-5 points)
Unattractive (-10 points)

Power and Super-Skill:

* Telepathy Power 15 (Telereceive, 75 points)
  Telereceive-30 (Must eat brains of subject -4; 64 points). *Note:* While this might seem to be such a severe limitation that it would make the power useless, it does, by its nature, mean that Deadhead never has to concern himself with resistance, mind shields, and the like!

Skills:

Artist-17 (12 points); English-9 (0 points; see below); Hobby skill (Nutrition)-13 (1 point); Streetwise-11 (½ point).

Quirks:

Wishes he could be a vegetarian
Constantly eats vitamin pills
Has no manners or savoir-faire whatsoever
Babbles; effective English skill only 9

Deadhead was an art student until his ace power drove him mad. Now he works for the Shadow Fist Society, taking his orders mainly from Philip "Fadeout" Cunningham. He always looks like he's on the verge of insanity . . . and he is. He speaks quickly, sometimes nonsensically, cracking odd jokes that only he understands. He chatters so much that he's annoying, but actually he's safe when he's chattering. He's dangerous when he's quiet and sulky.

Deadhead is a vegetarian by preference. He can't stand to eat and has to force himself to gag down food. He always carries large vials of different pills which he downs by the handful. Most of the pills are simple vitamins or over-the-counter diet aids which he eats like candy to kill his appetite. He goes off his vegetarian diet only when his craving for meat becomes uncontrollable.

When he eats meat he assimilates it so thoroughly that he has dreams, or phantom memories, of incidents in the life of the animal he's just consumed. When he found that eating animal brains made the memories excruciatingly clear it took him several years to work up the courage to experiment with humans, but he eventually discovered that he could indeed relive the memories of a person by consuming their cerebral cortex. The memories, as detailed and precise as they were for the deceased, remain with Deadhead from several hours to several days, depending on how much of the brain Deadhead ingests, how active he is during the time he's digesting the brains, and Deadhead's own mental state at the time of ingestion. Deadhead retains his artistic abilities, and can skillfully sketch people or places that the deceased knew about.

Deadhead is both repelled by his ability and drawn in helpless fascination to use it. He usually indulges in eating human brains only under "business" circumstances, but sometimes when he's presented an opportunity the craving is so great that he can't turn it down. He has never killed anyone himself, but at times he cruises the alleys desperately looking for a body while desperately hoping that he won't find one.

He is a small but useful cog in Kien's Shadow Fist machine. They keep him out of mental hospitals (he has a record of "corpse abuse').' Note that his reaction penalties add up immensely, especially among those who know him. Deadhead is a frightening and disgusting person, even though he is also quite pathetic.

Demise (James Spector)

Created by Walton Simons

Born: 1959 Died: 1985 . . . but it wasn't permanent.

Appearance: Demise is a lean (150 lbs.) six-footer with stringy dark brown hair and a dark, raggedy mustache. He has a perpetually disheveled, unwashed look about him.

Wild Card Ability: Demise can kill (or, if he chooses, merely stun) by locking eyes with a victim. His body also regenerates damage rapidly.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 6.50
DX 14 (45 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:

High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Immunity to Disease (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Bad Temper (-10 points)
Bloodlust (-10 points)
Impulsive (-10 points)
Odious Personal Habit: General seediness (-10 points)
Paranoia (-10 points)
Sadism (-15 points)
Skinny (-5 points)

Super Advantages:

Extra Hit Points +8 (64 points)
Regeneration: Instant (100 points)
Regrowth (40 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:

* Alteration Power 18 (Drain Attribute, 108 points)
  Drain HT-20 (Link to Telecontrol *+1;* No obvious effect *+3;* May reduce an attribute indefinitely *+4;* Requires eye contact *-2;* 68 points)
Telepathy Power 6 (60 points)
  Telecontrol-20 (Link to Drain HT *+1;* Only to enforce eye contact once made *-4;* 32 points)

Skills:

Accounting-12 (4 points); English-12 (0 points); Guns (Pistol)-10 (0 points); Shadowing-12 (2 points); Stealth-13 (1 point); Streetwise-13 (4 points)

Quirks:

Hates and fears Dr. Tachyon
Indulges in unusual pleasure binges
Will kill for the most trivial reasons, if irritated
Very dark sense of humor
Thinks of himself as wholly evil, but has sentimental moments — hates to kill anyone who treated him kindly

Demise was an unsuccessful CPA in Teaneck, New Jersey when he was struck by the wild card virus in the spring of 1985. He died while on the way to the Jokertown Clinic; Tachyon tried an experimental regeneration process in an attempt to revive him. It worked, after a fashion. Demise awoke screaming and spent the next six months in an intensive care unit. Tachyon was finally able to bring him back to some semblance of sanity with the help of strong doses of medication.

Demise underwent several weeks of therapy to bring him to terms with his death and reanimation. During this time he noticed that while he was remembering his death, anyone whose eyes met his became ill. One day he experimented, holding an orderly's eyes with his stare as he vividly recalled every agonizing detail of his hideously painful death. The orderly died as Demise watched.

Demise fled from the clinic and spent the next few months researching the parameters of his power. He discovered that he has to be within 20 feet of his victim and looking him or her directly in the eyes. When he catches a victim's eyes, he can force that victim to maintain the eye contact while, as Demise thinks of it, he "fills them with the memory of his death."

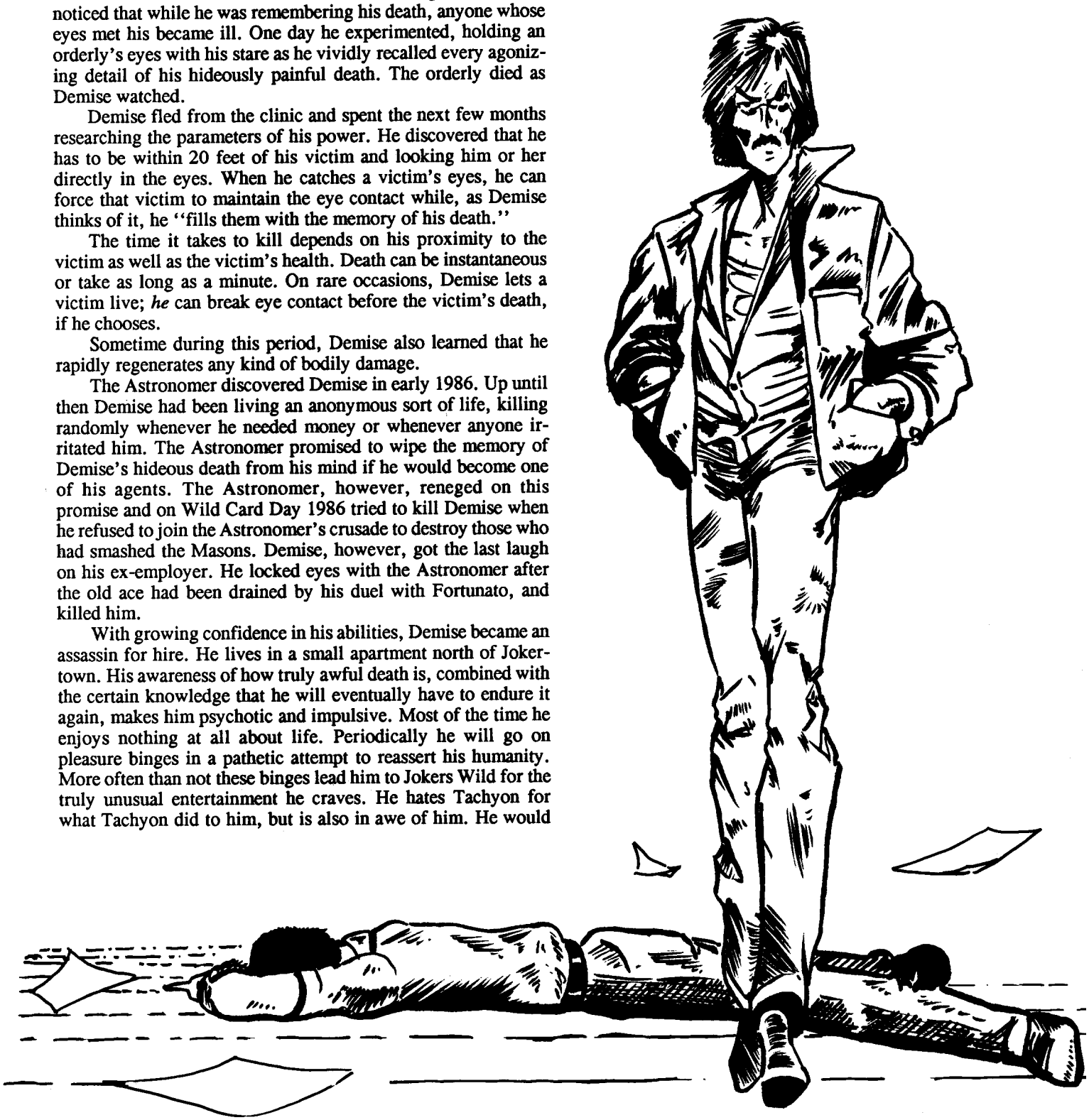
The time it takes to kill depends on his proximity to the victim as well as the victim's health. Death can be instantaneous or take as long as a minute. On rare occasions, Demise lets a victim live; *he* can break eye contact before the victim's death, if he chooses.

Sometime during this period, Demise also learned that he rapidly regenerates any kind of bodily damage.

The Astronomer discovered Demise in early 1986. Up until then Demise had been living an anonymous sort of life, killing randomly whenever he needed money or whenever anyone irritated him. The Astronomer promised to wipe the memory of Demise's hideous death from his mind if he would become one of his agents. The Astronomer, however, reneged on this promise and on Wild Card Day 1986 tried to kill Demise when he refused to join the Astronomer's crusade to destroy those who had smashed the Masons. Demise, however, got the last laugh on his ex-employer. He locked eyes with the Astronomer after the old ace had been drained by his duel with Fortunato, and killed him.

With growing confidence in his abilities, Demise became an assassin for hire. He lives in a small apartment north of Jokertown. His awareness of how truly awful death is, combined with the certain knowledge that he will eventually have to endure it again, makes him psychotic and impulsive. Most of the time he enjoys nothing at all about life. Periodically he will go on pleasure binges in a pathetic attempt to reassert his humanity. More often than not these binges lead him to Jokers Wild for the truly unusual entertainment he craves. He hates Tachyon for what Tachyon did to him, but is also in awe of him. He would never attack Tachyon directly, but would attempt indirect methods of vengeance, such as killing Tachyon's friends.

Demise will kill anyone who irritates him, and he is easy to irritate. He will also kill the next passer-by any time he needs a new suit, or even pocket money. He is sure that there is no hereafter, and his only moral constraints are self-imposed. These are few and far between.



Desmond, Xavier ("Des")

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: 1917 *Died:* July 1987

Appearance: Des is a large (6', 180 lbs.), florid man with a two-foot pink trunk with seven functional fingers where a nose would normally be.

Wild Card Ability: None

ST 7 (-20 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 3.75
DX 8 (-15 points) **HT** 7 (-20 points) **Move:** 3
Damage: Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-3

Advantages:
Charisma +1 (5 points)
Status 1 (5 points)
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Reputation +2 as humanitarian political figure (10 points)
Reputation (additional) +2 as effective fighter for jokers' rights and community leader, with jokers and Jokertown and New York politicos only (5 points)

Disadvantages:
Age (-30 points)
Sense of Duty: To jokers (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)
Ugly (-10 points)

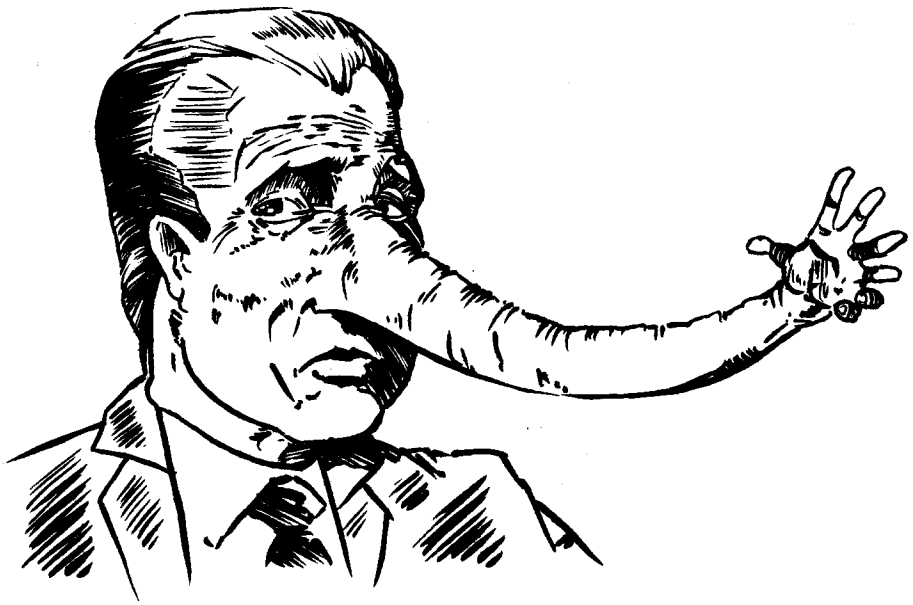
Skills:
Bard-12 (½ point); Diplomacy-12 (1 point); Economics-11 (½ point); English-14; Merchant-13 (1 point); Politics-16 (6 points); Professional Skill (Investment Banking)-13 (1 point); Psychology-12 (1 point); Streetwise-12 (½ point); Writing-12 (½ point)

Quirks:
Tends to see prejudice everywhere
Refuses to wear a mask
Refuses to adopt an alias

In 1946 Desmond was an investment banker with a wife, a two-year-old daughter and a bright future. Then the virus exploded over New York City and he was infected. When Desmond was released from the hospital he was a joker with an elephantine trunk growing where his nose had been. His wife left him and he lost his job with the Chase Manhattan Bank. He was evicted from his apartment on Riverside Drive and moved to Jokertown, where he eventually got a job at a nightclub called the Funhouse.

A proud, intelligent man, Desmond was stung by the injustices jokers had to swallow in their everyday lives. In 1964 he founded the JADL, the Joker Anti-Defamation League, which he dedicated to the peaceful promotion of joker's civil rights. The JADL accomplished much during the next two decades as Desmond eventually rose to own the Funhouse. The club became one of New York's storied and elegant night spots, where jokers and nats alike came to enjoy the top joker cabaret acts. By the mid-70s Desmond was the major joker political spokesman, and had the unofficial title of "Mayor of Jokertown."

Desmond was one of the minority of jokers who would not conceal their faces behind masks, but he took this one step further; he never used an "alias" of the type so common among jokers, nor would he permit others to apply a nickname to him. He remained Xavier Desmond until his death, proud to be who he was and no one else.



Desmond stepped down as president of the JADL in 1984, citing age and ill health, but continued to influence the organization's policy decisions. He learned he had inoperable cancer in 1986; this spurred him to accept Tachyon's invitation to join the WHO-sponsored world tour, since it was his last chance to fulfill his lifetime ambition to travel.

Desmond died in July, 1987, shortly after his return to New York. He was a sensitive, caring man who believed in peace, justice and equal rights for everyone. All Jokertown mourned his passing.

Doctor Tachyon (Prince Tisianne brant Ts'ara sek Halima sek Ragnar sek Omian of House Ilkazam)

Created by Melinda Snodgrass

Born: approximately 1910 (Earth reckoning) on the planet Takis

Appearance: Tachyon is a small man (5'4", 115 lbs.) with shoulder-length metallic red hair. His eyes are an alien lilac color. His narrow, chiseled face is rather plain with a generous mouth, long nose, and small, pointed chin. He is a dandy who persists in dressing in the colors and styles of Takis, neither of which fits human norms. On Earth he favors what can regarded as modified early 19th-century dress: cutaway coat with tails, embroidered waistcoats, leg-hugging pants, and knee-high soft boots. He's also partial to knee breeches worn with white stockings. His shirts are usually white silk with big sleeves and he likes lace at the wrist and throat. He likes hats of all kinds, favoring ones with feathers. Outdoors he often wears a cloak or cape rather than an overcoat.

Wild Card Ability: Tachyon's mental abilities do not come from the wild card; they are natural to his race. They include powerful telepathy, mind-control, mindblock, and a weak precognition sense. His people also heal rapidly from illness and physical damage and have a very long natural life span.

ST 12 (20 points) **IQ** 19 (150 points) **Speed:** 6.75
DX 15 (60 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6 (8 running)
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2

Advantages:
Ally: Baby on 6 or less (20 points)
Charisma +1 (5 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Longevity (40 points)
Reputation +3: alien scientist and humanitarian (15 points)
Rapid Healing (10 points)
Status 2 (10 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)

Disadvantages:
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Lecherousness (-15 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Secret: Tachyon has KGB connections (-20 points)
Sense of Duty: To victims of the Takisian xenovirus (-10 points)
Vow: To treat wild card victims and search for a vaccine (-5 points)
Enemy: Tachyon's Takisian relatives don't show up often enough to be worth points, but they are *very* powerful, and they *are* out there.

Powers and Super-Skills:
* ESP Power 3 (9 points)
Precognition-14 (½ point)
Telepathy Power 10 (100 points)
Erase Signature-16 (2 points)
Mental Blow-16 (2 points)
Mind Shield-25 (36 points)
Psi Sense-14 (½ point)
Sleep-14 (½ point)
Telecontrol-25 (36 points)
Telereceive-20 (16 points)
Telescan-18 (8 points)
Telesend-18 (8 points)

Skills:
Astrogation/TL9-17 (½ point); Biochemistry/TL9-20 (12 points); Carousing-15 (16 points); Chemistry/TL9-20 (6 points); Computer Operations/TL9-15 (0 points); Computer Programming/TL9-16 (½ point); Dancing-14 (1 point); English-17 (½ point); Fencing-15 (2 points); Free Fall-16 (4 points); French-17 (½ point); Genetics/TL9-20 (12 points); German-17 (½ point); Guns (Pistol)-18 (2 points); Hobby (Flower Arranging)-20 (1 point); Karate-13 (1 point); Knife-14 (½ point); Musical Instrument (Violin)-16 (½ point); Mathematics-13 (0 points); Physician/TL9-25 (16 points); Piloting (TL9 Starship)-18 (16 points); Psychology-18 (2 points); Running-12 (8 points); Russian-8† (½ point); Savoir-Faire-19 (1 point); Spanish-7† (½ point); Surgeon/TL9-20 (12 points); Takisian-19 (0 points)

Quirks:
Drinks too much
Wears flamboyant clothing
An aristocrat at heart; *knows* himself to be superior
Hugs his close friends; doesn't like to touch others
Uses Takisian oaths like "Ships and Ancestors" and "Burning Sky"

Tachyon, a nobleman from the planet Takis, came to Earth in 1946 in a failed attempt to prevent his family from releasing the wild card virus. The interstellar drive of his sentient vessel, "Baby," burned out, effectively trapping him on Earth. He spent 1946 to 1950 treating virus victims at various New York hospitals, and trying to recover his ship, which had been impounded by the U.S. government.

In 1950 he and the Four Aces were brought before HUAC. His lover, Blythe van Renssaeler, was driven mad by the experience and by an ill-timed mind-control attempt by Tachyon. She was institutionalized and he was deported as an illegal alien.

The destruction of van Renssaeler made Tachyon very wary about using his mind powers on humans.

This public degradation (one of the worst things that can happen to a Takisian), together with exhaustion and guilt over the release of the virus, broke his spirit. He became an alcoholic bum wandering from country to country throughout Europe. He was recruited by the KGB during the late 1950s (codenamed Dancer), but was never able to give them any substantive information due to his rather forlorn personal condition.

Permitted to return to the United States after the 1960 election of John F. Kennedy as President, Tachyon immediately staked out a private piece of gutter in Jokertown. The Turtle found him in 1963 and helped him back onto his feet. He founded the Blythe van Renssaeler Memorial Clinic (popularly known as the Jokertown Clinic) in 1966, mainly to treat virus victims but also to provide general medical care to the citizens of Jokertown. He also recovered "Baby." He keeps her stored in a warehouse, using her only in dire emergencies, such as the attack on the Swarm Mother in the summer of 1986. He is devoted to Baby, and will risk his life to protect her.

On his return to Europe during the WHO-sponsored world tour, Tachyon discovered that he had fathered a child, Gisele Bacourt, during his lost years in Europe some 30 years before. Bacourt was dead, but her son, Tachyon's grandchild, Blaise Jeannot Andrieux, was being used by a group of French terrorists because of his powerful but untrained mental powers. Tachyon brought the boy back to America and became his legal guardian. In mid-1987 Tachyon himself contracted the wild card virus, but thus far it remains latent. Tachyon now does his best to avoid stressful situations which might activate the virus.

Tachyon has three major vices: women, booze and a great need to feel guilty. His drinking currently never reaches the level it attained during his lost years, but he continues to resort to the bottle when feeling depressed, guilty or overwhelmed by work and sense of duty. He is direct and persistent in his lechery, but by and large he is successful with women, perhaps because he is so courtly, charming and protective.

Tachyon is an aristocrat from a powerful, highly advanced culture (see p. 103). He can be serious and elegant when the situation calls for it, but there is a great deal of ebullience to his character. He is small even for a Takisian (and they are not a tall race), but he is strong, agile, well-trained with weapons, and feels not in the least self-conscious about his height; he is a prince, after all, and carries himself as though he were the tallest person in the room.

Tachyon is something of an anomaly among his people in that he is a genuinely nice person, but his Takisian upbringing has still affected his beliefs and actions to a great degree. He is acutely uncomfortable when around physical deformity or mental retardation. On his world such "genetic failures" are not permitted to survive. This makes his work among the genetic wrecks of Jokertown much more difficult, but also increases his sense of penance and helps assuage his guilt.

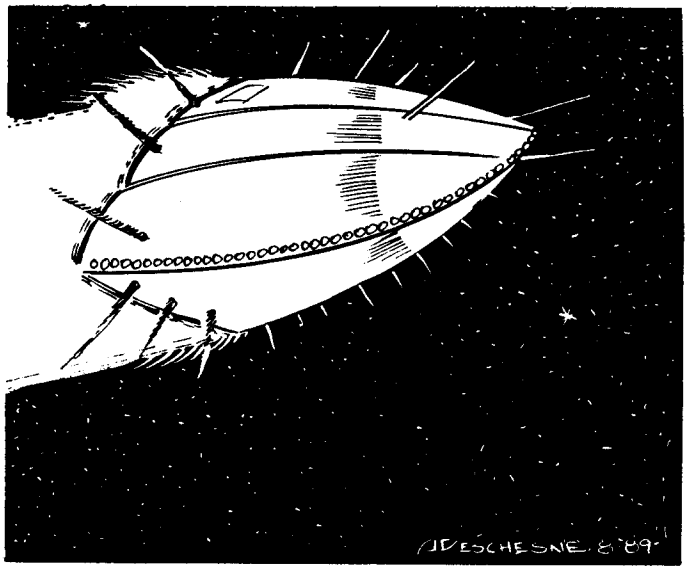
Dr. Tachyon's Ship, "Baby"

Created by Melinda Snodgrass

Born: Probably around 1925, orbiting the planet Takis

Appearance: Baby looks somewhat like a huge, glowing seashell, the size of a small house, with various spikes and protrusions.

Wild Card Ability: Baby is neither a machine nor a wild carder; she is a member of a race bred by the Takisians with the power to travel in space. See p. 105.



ST n/a (0 points) **IQ** 8 (-15 points) **Move:** up to 200
DX 15 (60 points) **HT** 18 (125 points) mph in atmosphere, faster in space

Damage: laser 15d

Baby is not a machine, but a living being (see p. 105). Baby has the personality of a small child, and is very dependent on Dr. Tachyon for love and approval; she will do nothing without his orders. Tachyon is very protective of Baby. He allows very few people to know where the ship is, let alone enter her.

Baby does not require food or fuel; she metabolizes dust in air or space. She can travel rapidly in the atmosphere or in space. She was once capable of faster-than-light speed, but was damaged in battle with Tachyon's scientist relatives when they first came to Earth. Within limits she is self-repairing, but she cannot heal the injury to her "ghostdrive."

Her most significant weapon is her laser, which is relatively heavy and can fire several times in rapid succession. However, she also has powerful telekinesis. It is strong enough to move the whole roof from the disguised warehouse where she now lives, and delicate enough to pick up people safely.

Advantages:

Beautiful; receives +2 reaction from all humans (10 points)
Patron: Dr. Tachyon, on 15 or less (60 points)

Disadvantages:

Delusion: Dr. Tachyon is Daddy (-15 points)
Social Status -2: valuable property (-10 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:

Telepathy Power 10 (100 points)
Telesend-14
Telereceive-14
* Light Power 20 (180 points)
Laser-30 (72 points)
* Psychokinesis Power 20 (200 points)
Telekinesis-16 (44 points)

Super-Advantages

Amphibious (20 points)
Broadcast 20 (100 points)
Damage Resistance 20 (100 points)
Doesn't Breathe (30 points)
Doesn't Eat or Drink (30 points)

Doesn't Sleep (10 points
Flight (40 points)
Passive Defense 6 (150 points)
Pressure Support (20 points)
Radio Hearing (15 points)
Recovery (10 points)
Spectrum Vision (40 points)
Super Flight×25 (400 points)
Temperature Tolerance (10 points)
Vacuum Support (60 points)
360-Degree Vision (25 points)

Skills:

Aerial Maneuver-25 (44 points); Area Knowledge (Galaxy)-10 (4 points); English-11 (8 points); Savoir-Faire (Takis)-12 (4 points); Takisian-11 (4 points)

Quirks:

Childish, dependent personality
Fearful unless Dr. Tachyon is aboard
Competitive, or even hostile, toward other ships

Digger Downs (Thomas Downs)

Created by Steve Perrin
Born: Nov. 29, 1956
Appearance: 5' 10", 150 lbs., brown eyes, brown hair.
Wild Card Ability: Downs can detect those infected by the wild card virus; this ability manifests as a sensitive sense of smell.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 5.50
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:

Acute Smell +10 (20 points)
Alertness +3 (15 points)
Empathy (15 points)
Handsome (15 points)
Intuition (15 points)

Disadvantages:

Odious Personal Habit: Pushy and obnoxious (-10 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Reputation -2 on 10 or less (reporter for tabloid-style paper) (-5 points)
Secret: Downs is an ace (-5 points)

Power and Super-Skill:

* Telepathy Power 4 (20 points)
Telereceive-25 (Detects only the presence of wild carders *+1;* manifests as 'smell' 0, No obvious effect *+3;* 44 points)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (NYC)-14 (2 points); (USA)-13 (2 points); Carousing-12 (4 points); Detect Lies-18 (14 points); English-13 (0 points); Fast-Talk-16 (8 points); Interrogation-14 (4 points); Research-14 (4 points); Streetwise-13 (2 points); Writing-13 (2 points)

Quirks:

Terrible housekeeper
Respects Tachyon without particularly liking him
Licks the tips of pencils before writing . . . and ballpoint pens, too!
Always looking for a big story

Downs is the "ace" reporter of *Aces Magazine,* a sensationalistic periodical that caters to those people interested in the lives and loves of the wild card elite. *Aces* is not exactly the *Washington Post;* its journalistic level lies somewhere between *People* and *The National Enquirer.*

Downs himself is actually an ace, though he keeps that fact well hidden. He can "sniff out" anyone who's been infected by the wild card virus, identifying them by what to him is a sweet, pleasant odor. His power can also clue him into the emotional state of those he interviews, giving him an indication as to whether or not they're telling the truth.

Downs will do almost anything to get a story, including bribery, misrepresentation and outright lies. He can be found, pen in hand, at almost every ace gathering. He was part of the WHO-sponsored world tour in 1987, poking and prying and sticking his nose in everywhere. His persistence almost got him killed by the Ton Ton Macoutes in Haiti and earned him a broken nose at the hand of Josh McCoy after he wrote an article speculating on the unknown ace father of Peregrine's child.

His manner and disregard of the feelings of others have garnered him a long line of enemies. He makes Tachyon so angry that the doctor has repeatedly mind-controlled him to make him do embarrassing things or go away — which is very much against Tachyon's principles, and doesn't abash Digger anyway! His other "fans" include Hiram Worchester, Peregrine, Josh McCoy, and Billy Ray (because he once dripped blood on Ray's white battle costume), but no one is sufficiently angry at him to seriously harm him, except perhaps for Senator Gregg Hartmann. Downs knows that the Senator is a secret ace, but has no idea of the depths of Hartmann's power or madness.

Downs has an apartment in Greenwich Village. He works out of New York City because more aces live in the Big Apple than anywhere else.

Dutton, Charles

Created by Walton Simons
Born: 1930, Rhode Island
Appearance: Dutton is tall and lean (6' 3", 180 lbs.) His face resembles a yellowish living skull.
Wild Card Ability: None.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 5.50
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Common Sense (10 points)
Reputation: +2 among jokers (5 points)
Status 2 (5 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Age (-24 points)
Hideous (-20 points)
Sense of Duty: To jokers (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)

Skills:
Accounting-14 (4 points); English-14 (0 points); Merchant-16 (6 points); Professional Skill (Stockbroker)-12 (½ point), (Museum Curator)-13 (1 point); Psychology-12 (1 point); Streetwise-12 (½ point)

Quirks:
Incurable gossip
Maintains a low profile
Souvenir collector

Dutton grew up on Rhode Island during the Depression, part of an upper middle class family. He was educated at Princeton and became a successful stockbroker. He contracted the wild card virus in the late 1950s. The virus affected only his face, giving it the appearance of a hideous living skull.

Dutton dropped out of the business world and moved to Jokertown. He began to commercially develop the area with services and establishments tailored to joker needs. He started with a coffeehouse and barber shop, but quickly acquired other establishments, including the Bowery Wild Card Dime Museum. He also has a large, but not controlling, interest in the Crystal Palace. He maintains a low profile, but is known by many in the joker community. He used to give to every joker charity, but has been cheated a few times and is now more wary.

Dutton is reclusive by nature, although he sometimes drops by the Crystal Palace to occupy one of the curtained booths and chat with Chrysalis. He is an incurable gossip and constantly tries to pry information out of her.

Dutton owns and lives above Holbrook's, the most exclusive mask shop in Jokertown. Sometimes friends he particularly trusts stay with him.

Elephant Girl (Radha Valeria O'Reilly)

Created by Parris
Born: 1947, Bengal, India
Appearance: Radha is slightly built (5' 2", 105 lbs.), with a golden cast to her skin that reflects her Indian ancestry, and deep auburn hair and green eyes from her Irish father. She is trim and muscular and looks younger than her actual age.
Wild Card Ability: Radha can shapechange at will into a full-grown female Asian elephant. She can fly while in this form, though she has to flap her ears to do so!

Elephant Form
ST 250 (396 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 7.25
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 17 (184 points) **Move:** 7 (9 running); 14 flying
Damage: Trample 3d

Human Form
ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed: 6.75**
DX 15 (60 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6 (8 running)
Damage: Thrust 1d-2, Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Animal Empathy (5 points)
Beautiful (15 points)
Reputation +1 as ace and entertainer (5 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantage:
Enemy: Priests of Gonesh on 6 or less (-15 points)

Disadvantages: (as elephant)
One Hand: Trunk (-15 points)
Mute (-25 points)

Super Advantages: (as elephant)
Damage Resistance 2 (10 points)
Extra Hit Points +23 (184 points)
Flight (Must flap ears *-1;* 36 points)
Passive Defense 1 (25 points)
Transformation (Link to Dampen when transforming into elephant, to Flash when transforming back into human *+1;* 33 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
* Electrical Power 40 (Dampen, 160 points)
Dampen-16 (Link to Transformation *+1;* 28 points)
* Light Power 20 (Flash, 80 points)
Flash-16 (Link to Transformation *+1;* 28 points)

Skills:
Acrobatics-13 (8 points); Flying-14 (8 points); Animal Handling (Elephants)-20 (18 points); English-13 (2 points); Hindi-13 (0 points); Running-14 (½ point); Veterinary-15 (0 points)

Quirks:
Vegetarian
Animal Empathy is limited to elephants

Radha's story begins with that of her father, Timothy Patrick Xavier (Paddy) O'Reilly, an Irish-American adventurer and hunter who spent most of his life trapping rare animals for zoos. During World War II he met and married Chandra Ratri, an Indian princess and high priestess whose father ruled over a highly religious people in a remote corner of the Bengal. After an elaborate Indian wedding, Paddy and Chandra set sail for

America on the *Queen Mary*. Steaming into a steady west wind, the crew and passengers of the ship suddenly began to take sick on September 16, 1946. Still a day out of New York City, the *Queen Mary* became a death ship manned only by a skeleton crew of those unaffected by the outbreak of the wild card virus.

Paddy, one of those few untouched, helped get the stricken vessel to port where it was immediately quarantined. Chandra was not so lucky. Her skin took on the texture of elephant hide, her fingers became mere nails in hoofs. Her face was still human in appearance, but became covered by thick grey skin. When the quarantine on was lifted, Paddy immediately took his bride home to India — where her mutation was considered a holy miracle since she'd taken upon herself the attributes of the elephant god Gonesh.

Radha was born seven months after the day of the wild card. A second daughter, Durga Cerridwyn, called Mohini, was born to Paddy and Chandra in 1951.

Chandra remained a pampered, worshipped, semi-invalid until her death in 1965. Paddy vanished into the Himalayas later that year while searching for the Abominable Snowman, and hasn't been heard of again.

Radha was raised as a divine princess and was trained at the temples of the local gods, Gonesh and Chandi (a form of Kali the Black Mother). When the adolescent Radha first manifested her ability to change into an Asian elephant, she became the object of fervent worship and was kept a virtual prisoner in the temple.

When her mother lapsed into a coma in 1964, the 17-year-old Radha ran away to Calcutta and then to the west, with her father's secret assistance. She has never returned to India to stay, despite frequent entreaties and even several kidnap attempts by the priests of Gonesh and Chandi, who desperately want their captive goddess returned. Mohini rules in Radha's place, but the priests of Gonesh and Chandi hold the real power.

Radha can turn at will into a full-grown female Asian elephant. She retains her human intelligence when in her elephant form, but loses the ability to speak. The transformation has a dramatic side-effect. When Radha changes she absorbs all electrical power in an area of several blocks around her, converting it into the mass necessary to become an elephant. When she changes back to human form she releases the excess mass as a blinding flash of white light. While an elephant Radha can fly by flapping her ears. Although moving her ears is psychologically necessary for her flight, a form of subconscious telekinesis actually provides the lift and motive force.

Both shapechanging and flight are part of Radha's popular circus act, along with her troupe of highly trained elephants. A celebrity as both ace and entertainer, Radha remains a private person. She wants to live her own life and is no more interested in becoming a professional hero than she was in being a princess or high priestess. Although tantric sex and the consumption of mind-enhancing drugs are, at their proper places, sacred rites to Radha, she is actually somewhat ascetic. She is a vegetarian.

Radha is friendly with Hiram, Peregrine, Mistral and other high-profile aces, and was part of the 1987 WHO-sponsored world tour.

Ellis, Captain Angela (see *Jokertown Precinct*, p. 87)

Envoy, The (David Harstein)

Created by George R.R. Martin

Born: 1924, the Bronx, New York City

Appearance: The young Envoy (1950) is dark, slender, and of medium height (5'9", 150 lbs.), with wiry black hair, a wry smile, and dark brown eyes. He favors black turtlenecks and corduroy sports jackets with patches at the elbows. Handsome in an intense way, he's clean-shaven, but so thickly bearded that his jaw is usually blue-black with a perpetual 5-o'clock shadow.

Wild Card Ability: Harstein exudes powerful pheromones that make everyone like him on sight and want to agree with *anything* he suggests.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 15 (60 points)
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 12 (20 points)
Speed: 5.5 **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

Advantages:

Charisma +2 (10 points)
Empathy (15 points)
Handsome (15 points)
Reputation (varied at different times in career)
Voice (10 points)

Disadvantage:

Sense of Duty: To humanity as a whole (-10 points)

Power and Super-Skill:

* Telepathy Power 7 (Suggest, 35 points)
Suggest-25 (Always on +2; Area Effect +4; Relies on subject's sense of smell -2; Only one message: "You agree" -4; 52 points)

Skills:

Acting-15 (2 points); Area Knowledge (World)-16 (2

points); English-15 (0 points); Hobby (Chess)-16 (2 points); Performance-15 (2 points); Poetry-14 (1 point); Savoir-Faire-17 (4 points)

Quirks:

Loves to play chess
Plays harmless but silly jokes with his power

Harstein was born to a lower-middle-class tailor's family in the Bronx, New York City. A free-spirited intellectual, he lived a mildly Bohemian existence in Greenwich Village where he wrote poetry, read books, and lived off his meager earnings as a cafe chess hustler. He was infected by the virus on Wild Card Day 1946 and became charisma incarnate. His body automatically and continually releases powerful pheromones. Anyone who inhales these chemicals will like him; furthermore, they will think that everything he says makes instant sense, as if every word were logical and just, every suggestion the epitome of wisdom.

He was recruited into the Exotics for Democracy (the Four Aces) by Archibald Holmes. He used his power to achieve stunning success in mediating disputes, settling strikes, and negotiating treaties. His crowning triumph was the "China Accord" between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung.

Harstein's power, however, works only when he's in the physical presence of those he's attempting to influence. Afterwards, those who deal with him are sometimes astonished and furious about the nonsense to which they've agreed. The China Accord, for example, fell apart disastrously just a few weeks after Harstein had returned home, and he was personally charged with having "lost China" after the communists drove Chiang off the mainland.

Harstein was brought before HUAC in this highly-charged atmosphere, confined in a sealed isolation booth so that his pheromones couldn't affect the committee. Harstein was an uncooperative witness, alternating indignation with sarcasm, and ultimately was sent to prison for contempt of Congress. He served three years in a minimum security prison and utterly disappeared when he was released.

Some say he's still working for the ideals that he once held so dear, but the world has heard nothing of the Envoy, or even private citizen David Harstein, for the last 25 years.

Ezili-je-Rouge

Created by John J. Miller
Born: 1963, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Appearance: Ezili is a beautiful, voluptuous (5'6", 125 lbs.) light-skinned black woman with thick, wild black hair that falls to her waist. Her eyes are black, floating in pools of scarlet.
Wild Card Ability: None.

ST 11 (10 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 6.50
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+1

Advantages:

Alertness +1 (5 points)
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Patron: Ti Malice on 15 or less (45 points)
Very Beautiful (25 points)

Disadvantages:

Addiction: Various narcotics (-40 points)
Addiction: Ti Malice (-25 points)
Illiteracy (-10 points)
Lecherousness (-15 points)
Sense of Duty: To Ti Malice (-5 points)

Skills:

Disguise-13 (4 points); Knife-13 (1 point); English-10 (½ point); French-11 (1 point); Haitian Creole-12 (0 points); Poisons-14 (8 points); Professional Skill (Kama Sutra)-20 (18 points); Sex Appeal-14 (4 points); Streetwise-13 (4 points)

Quirks:

Slightly jealous of other female mounts
Thinks of herself as a partner in Ti Malice's indulgences

Her real name is unknown. She was given the name Ezili-je-Rouge (Red-Eyed Ezili) by Ti Malice when he picked her out of the Port-au-Prince slums to become his favorite, most trusted mount. The name is borrowed from that of the least forgiving aspect of the voodoo loa Ezili, the spirit of love.

Ezili has virtually no formal education, but is intelligent and shrewd and totally devoted to her master. She would do anything for him and he often uses her to seduce new mounts into his service. She came with Ti Malice to New York in 1987 and is in charge of his ever-growing stable of mounts. She is handy with a knife, and adept at brewing the strange and powerful poisons often used in voodoo rites. Ezili is totally amoral and will do whatever Ti Malice orders, or whatever she must to protect her master.

Fadeout (Philip Cunningham)

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: circa 1959
Appearance: Cunningham is tall, fit, and athletic (6', 170 lbs.), with blonde hair and blue eyes. He is handsome and an impeccable dresser.
Wild Card Ability: As his nickname suggests, Fadeout can turn invisible. He can transfer this invisibility to his clothes and even a few things that he carries.

ST 13 (30 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 6.50
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d; Swing 2d-1

Advantages:
Acute Hearing +3 (6 points)
Attractive (5 points)
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (40 points)
Reputation +4 among New York underworld (10 points)

Disadvantages:
Duty: To Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (-10 points)
Greed (-15 points)

Super Advantage:
Invisibility (Can carry up to No Encumbrance *+1;* Switchable *+1;* Blind if eyes are invisible *-2;* 40 points)

Skills:
Breath Control-12 (2 points); English-14 (0 points); Fast-Talk-13 (1 point); Hobby (Yoga)-14 (4 points); Karate-15 (16 points); Leadership-14 (2 points); Lockpicking-14 (2 points); Savoir-Faire-13 (½ point); Stealth-18 (32 points); Streetwise-16 (6 points); Traps-13 (1 point)

Quirks:
Very ambitious
Snappy dresser
Enjoys luxury

Fadeout is only in his late 20s, but is one of the top men in the Shadow Fist Society and one of the very few who knows that Kien Phuc is the head of the organization. He is trustworthy within limits, but is very, very ambitious.

His wild card power is invisibility. He can fade out totally if he wishes, but then light passes through his eyes, making him temporarily blind. Often he'll keep his eyes visible and fade out everything else; he remains very difficult to spot (Vision roll at -7). His clothes fade with him, as will a limited amount of material on his person.

Fadeout is trained in yoga and the martial arts. He can control his breathing, remain still for very long lengths of time, and move very, very quietly. His senses are quite acute and he's a skilled picklock.

Fadeout likes women, money and luxury. He's not afraid to kill, but doesn't particularly enjoy it. He's an excellent spy, and in fact is often used to check the loyalty of Kien's other underlings. He particularly enjoys this duty since every rival removed puts Fadeout more solidly in place in the organization.

Fantasy (Asta Lenser)

Created by Melinda Snodgrass
Born: circa 1963
Appearance: Fantasy is a beautiful, lithely muscled (5' 5", 110 lbs.) woman with pale skin and small breasts. Her feet are bruised, ugly, and callused, due to her career as a ballerina.
Wild Card Ability: Fantasy has the power to mesmerize her audience, particularly men, when she dances.

ST 11 (10 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 6.25
DX 14 (45 points) **HT** 11 (10 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+1

Advantages:
Beautiful (10 points)
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (40 points)
Reputation +2 as public ace and skilled performer (10 points)

Disadvantages:
Addiction to cocaine (-15 points)
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Duty to Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (-10 points)
Greed (-15 points)
Lecherousness (-15 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
* Telepathy Power 5 (Suggest, 25 points)
Suggest-20 (Only when dancing *-3;* Only one message: "You want me" *-4;* Affects men only *-2;* Affects everyone in line of sight +3; 20 points)

Skills:
Carousing-13 (8 points); Dancing (ballet)-17 (16 points); English-12 (0 points); Interrogation-12 (2 points); Sex Appeal-14 (8 points)

Quirks:
Amoral and hedonistic
Enjoys luxury
Social climber

Fantasy is the prima ballerina of the American Ballet Theater. She is also a part-time mistress and full-time spy for Kien Phuc, head of the Shadow Fist Society. She moves in the highest levels of society, using her seductive powers to gather intelligence for Kien. For her services he keeps her well-supplied with cocaine and cash.
Fantasy is an amoral hedonist. She is not at all reluctant to use sex as a lure to help her discover what she needs to know.

Father Squid

Created by John J. Miller
Born: circa 1945
Appearance: Father Squid is fairly tall and very broadly built (6', 270 lbs.), with glabrous gray skin, a round face with nictating membranes on his eyes and a fall of short tentacles where his nose should be. His hands are large, with long, attenuated fingers. His palms are lined with vestigial suckers. He always wears priestly garments and smells faintly, not unpleasantly, of the sea.
Wild Card Ability: Father Squid is immensely strong and can remain underwater for long periods of time before having to surface.

ST 40 (146 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 8
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 16 (80 points) **Move:** 8 (10 running)
Damage: Thrust 4d+1; Swing 7d-1

Advantages:
Clerical Investment (5 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
Empathy (15 points)
Reputation: +3 among jokers (8 points)
Toughness DR2 (25 points)

Disadvantages:
Sense of Duty: To jokers (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)
Ugly (-10 points)

Super Advantage:
Amphibious (Must surface every half-hour *-1;* 18 points)

Skills:
Bard-14 (6 points); Brawling-14 (4 points); Church Latin-12 (2 points); Demolition-15 (8 points); English-12 (0 points); First Aid-11 (½ point); Guns (Pistol)-13 (½ point); Leadership-14 (6 points); Running-16 (4 points); Streetwise-13 (4 points); Survival (Jungle)-14 (6 points); Theology-15 (10 points)

Quirks:
Almost always speaks very softly
Smells of the sea
Does not discuss his past

Father Squid has been pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Misery, Church of Jesus Christ, Joker, since 1980. Nothing is known of his earlier life, though there are indications that he didn't spend his youth in a seminary. He is unfailingly kind and gentle and works very hard with the limited resources of his Church to help all jokers, whether or not they are members of his flock. He gets along with nats, aces and jokers equally well, and is easily one of the most beloved (and powerful) figures in Jokertown. He lives alone in the small cottage attached to his church.
He took part in the 1987 WHO-sponsored trip around the world, and is a friend of Tachyon, Desmond Xavier and many prominent aces. He keeps an eye on Quasiman, who works for the Church as handyman, and also seems very friendly with Daniel (Yeoman) Brennan.
Father Squid's love is gentle and nonjudgmental. He has been described as "Pat O'Brien with tentacles." However, it would not be wise to anger him.

Finn, Dr. Bradly Latour (See *Jokertown Clinic*, p. 86)

Fortunato

Created by Lewis Shiner
Born: 1940
Appearance: Fortunato is very tall and thin (6'4", 170 lbs.), with cafe-au-lait colored skin, and brown eyes with epicanthic folds. He is a stylish dresser in public. In private he favors colorful kimonos splashed with arcane symbols. His handsome appearance is marred somewhat by an oddly bulging forehead.

Wild Card Ability: Fortunato is a tantric magician with several potent mental abilities, including mind control, astral projection, and the ability to slow down time.

ST 13 (30 points) **IQ** 16 (80 points) **Speed:** 7
DX 14 (45 points) **HT** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 7
(18 when charged)
Damage: Thrust 1d; Swing 2d-1; Karate 1d punch, 1d+2 kick

Advantages:
Charisma +1 (5 points)
Intuition (15 points)
Reputation: +2 on the streets (5 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)
Very Wealthy (30 points)

Disadvantages:
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Reputation as a pimp -2 (-10 points)
Sense of Duty: To his women (-5 points)
Social Stigma: Mixed-race ancestry (-5 points)

Super Advantages:
Extra Fatigue +50 (Recharged by tantric ritual 0, 250 points)
Increased Speed +11 (Switchable *+1;* Costs 10 Fatigue per minute *-5*, 165 points)

Power and Super-Skills:
Magic Power 10 (200 points) (All skills have the following limitation: Costs 2 Fatigue per use, *-1*)
Levitation-16 (8 points)
Mind Shield-16 (8 points)
Psychometry-16 (8 points)
Suggest-16 (Must have eye contact *-2;* 2 points)
Telereceive-16 (8 points)

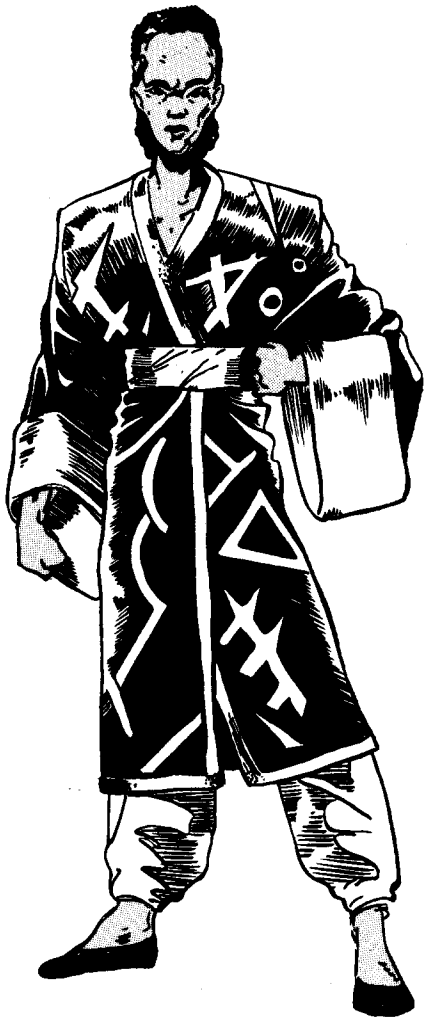
Skills:
Accounting-14 (1 point); Carousing-16 (8 points); English-16 (0 points); Guns (Pistol)-10 (0 points); Japanese-14 (½ point); Karate-13 (2 points); Professional Skill (Kama Sutra)-20 (10 points); Merchant-16 (2 points); Occultism-20 (10 points); Savoir-Faire-18 (4 points); Streetwise-20 (10 points);

Quirks:
Considers Tachyon a wimp; thinks of him as the "space faggot"
Romanticizes himself; dislikes terms like "pimp" and "prostitute"

Fortunato is a half-black, half-Japanese tantric magician. He operates a string of "geishas," beautiful, highly-trained, expensive call girls who are trained by his Japanese mother to move in all levels of society.

His wild card powers first manifested when he was introduced to tantric sex by a geisha who was also a self-styled witch. Tantric magick is sex-related. To be recharged by sex, Fortunato must experience intromission, or the forced retention of his ejaculation. His forehead bulges when he's fully charged with tantric energy, then shrinks back to normal when the magick power is dispersed.

Fortunato's chief enemy was the Astronomer, head of the Order of Egyptian Masons. Their enmity began when the Astronomer killed and mutilated a number of Fortunato's geishas to power his own death-oriented magic. It continued when Fortunato was one of the prime figures behind the raid on the Cloisters which resulted in the destruction of the Masons, and climaxed on Wild Card Day 1986 when the Astronomer and Fortunato fought a magical duel above New York City. The duel resulted in the death of the Astronomer and Fortunato's decision to seek spiritual enlightenment by joining a Zen monastery in Japan.



Fortunato's string of call girls led to great wealth, if little spiritual satisfaction. He indulged in recreational narcotics early in his career, particularly cocaine, but was never heavily addicted. He stopped using narcotics by the mid-1980s.

He never kept his powers a secret, but he also never sought publicity. He's well-known on the streets, less known to the general public. Fortunato dislikes Tachyon, thinking him a wimp and a fop. Desmond Xavier was one of his long-time clients. He respects Daniel (Yeoman) Brennan, partially because he understands Brennan's motivations, partially because they'd fought the Swarm Mother side by side. As a result of a brief, tempestuous affair on Wild Card Day 1986, he fathered a child with Peregrine.

By the late 1980s, burned out from his fight with the Astronomer, Fortunato has largely lost his powers, or at least thinks he has. He's retired to a Zen monastery in Japan, where he is seeking the spiritual satisfaction and growth that has eluded him in the outside world.

Note: Use the *Optional Rule: Multiple Actions* on p. SU79.

Gatekeeper, The (See *Jokers Wild*, p. 93)

Gambione, Rosa Maria (aka Rosemary Muldoon) (See *The Mafia*, p. 99)

Gimli (Tom Miller)

Created by Stephen Leigh
Born: circa 1950 *Died (?)* 1987
Appearance: Gimli is a dwarf joker, short and barrel-chested (4', 130 lbs.) with powerful arms and legs. His chest is covered by thick, reddish brown hair.
Wild Card Ability: Enhanced strength.

ST 21 (108 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 6
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 15 (60 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 2d; Swing 4d-1; Punch 2d-1

Advantages:
Charisma +1 (5 points)
Patron: Jokers for a Just Society on 12 or less (30 points)
Reputation +2 to many jokers (5 points)

Disadvantages:
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Dwarfism (-15 points)
Intolerance: Nats (-10 points)
Reputation: -4 among most nats (-20 points)
Sense of Duty: To jokers (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)

Skills:
Bard-11 (1 point); Brawling-12 (½ point); English-12 (0 points); Guns (Pistol)-14 (½ point); Leadership-14 (6 points); Politics-13 (4 points); Streetwise-12 (2 points)

Quirks:
Foul-mouthed
Very sensitive to any slurs on jokers
Enjoys violent confrontations.

Gimli (as Miller prefers to be called) was one of the founders and guiding spirits of the Jokers for a Just Society (JJS). He embraced radical politics (and later, terrorism) as a means of bringing about social justice for jokers. Needless to say, he was not popular with nat politicians, and was forced to leave the country after the debacle of the 1976 Jokertown Riot. He toured Europe and Russia, cementing his contacts with many radical leftist groups, including the Red Army Fraction with which he participated in the 1987 kidnapping of Senator Gregg Hartmann.

Gimli was one of the few kidnappers who escaped the botched Hartmann snatch. He returned to the United States, convinced that Hartmann was a powerful and malignant secret ace, and formed a strange alliance with ex-KGB agent George Steele (aka Polyakov), Kahina (the sister of Nur al-Allah), and the revived JJS in an attempt to bring Hartmann down.

Before Gimli could bring the plans of his fragile alliance to fruition, he ran into Croyd Crenson. He was reinfected with the mutated form of the wild card virus and . . . something happened. Nothing was left but his skin, and he is presumed dead. The stuffed skin is on display in the Famous Bowery Wild Card Museum.

Gimli was a violent, bitter person who thought nothing of committing heinous crimes to achieve his personal vision of a just society.

Golden Boy (Jack Braun)

Created by Walter Jon Williams

Born: 1924, near Parker, South Dakota

Appearance: Braun is blond, tall, solidly built (6' 2", 190 lbs.), and has blue eyes, big hands, and craggy good looks. He speaks with a Midwest accent. Clothes look good on him. He looks no more than 25 years old.

Wild Card Ability: Braun is one of the strongest men in the world. His force field, which surrounds his body with a golden glow when active, also makes him invulnerable to most forms of kinetic, electric and radiant attack. He also does not seem to age at all.

ST 180 (326 points) **IQ** 10 (0 points) **Speed:** 7.25
DX 15 (60 points) **HT** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 8
Damage: Thrust 19d; Swing 21d; Punch 19d-2

Advantages:
Filthy Rich (50 points)
Handsome (15 points)
Reputation +4 in combat situations (10 points)

Disadvantages:
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Lecherousness (-15 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Reputation, as of today: -4 with some older aces (-5 points)
Weak Will -3 (-24 points)

Super Advantages:
Damage Resistance 40 (200 points)
Damage Resistance +60 vs. crushing attacks (240 points)
Unaging (60 points)

Skills:
Acrobatics-15 (4 points); Agronomy-10 (2 points); Carousing-16 (8 points); Gambling-12 (6 points); German-5† (½ point); Guns (Pistol)-15 (½ point); Merchant-15 (12 points); Performance-11 (4 points); Piloting (Small jet)-15 (2 points); Politics-16 (14 points); Running-12 (1 point); Sex Appeal-12 (½ point); Tactics-10 (4 points)

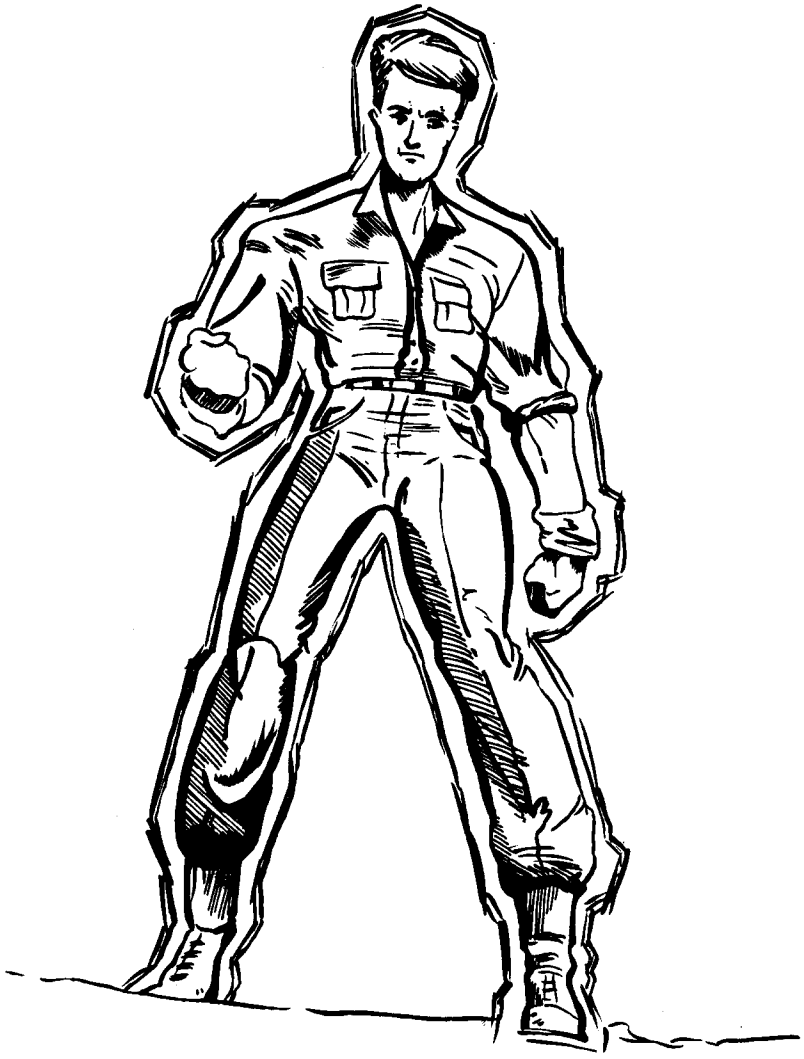
Quirks:
Drinks immoderately
Still thinks of himself as the "Judas Ace"

Braun grew up on a struggling farm in South Dakota, the son of second generation German-Americans. He was an indifferent scholar at school, reserving his passion for athletics and drama. He graduated from high school in 1942, immediately enlisted in the army, and was sent to Italy as part of the 5th Division. He was a good soldier, collecting a Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts, and was a master sergeant by war's end. Along the way he met Milton Aronowitz, whose father was a theatrical producer in New York.

When the war was over, Aronowitz senior gave Jack some small acting jobs to help him get experience in the field. He got his really big break when he woke up the day after Wild Card Day as the strongest man in the world. Archibald Holmes recruited him for the Exotics for Democracy (the Four Aces) and he became the physical part of the team, doing what Holmes and his friend Earl Sanderson told him to do.

The big break in his acting career came when he signed a contract with MGM for *Golden Boy,* a semi-autobiographical movie based vaguely on the way the Four Aces overthrew Peron in 1946. A quickie marriage with starlet Kim Wolfe ended in divorce. His movie career in full swing, the subpoena from HUAC fell on him like a bombshell. The other aces had testified by the time he was scheduled to appear. He watched van Renssaeler go insane, Tachyon disintegrate, and the others be buffaloed and railroaded. His wife and the people at MGM pressured him to become a friendly witness and testify against his friends. He held out to the last minute, then, convinced that it was the only way he could save himself, gave in. He praised the committee and answered their questions about his friends and comrades.

He came out of the meeting feeling unclean. He wanted to go somewhere and do something, and volunteered for Korea.



The army gave him the rank of lieutenant colonel and flew him to Pusan where he almost single-handedly held the perimeter. He wrecked entire tank columns. He tied artillery pieces in knots. He captured North Korean generals. He was grim and determined and angry, and he was very good at what he was doing, which was breaking heads and saving American lives. After Pusan was saved he returned to America and Hollywood, where he made a lot of pictures.

But it slowly went to pieces. Braun was a mediocre actor at best. The budgets for his films got smaller and smaller, the scripts worse and worse. His last acting role was that of Tarzan, whom he portrayed on television from 1961 to 1964. He went into real estate after the show's cancellation, and made millions of dollars building shopping malls and civic arenas in small towns throughout California.

He stayed out of the limelight until 1987 when he joined the WHO-sponsored trip around the world, and eventually reconciled with Tachyon. He gets along well with Tachyon's grandson Blaise. Some other aces, notably Hiram Worchester, still want nothing to do with him.

Braun's a charming man. He's a party-goer and sometimes drinks immoderately. He gets lots of girls, but doesn't stay with any of them for very long. Like the Four Aces, he's part of history that has largely been forgotten, though some aces have long memories. He doesn't get old. He's never sick. He still looks 25 after his 50th birthday. He still feels like a rat, and hopes that someday he'll be able to make it up to everybody.

Harlem Hammer, The (Mordecai Albert "Kai" Jones)

Created by Victor Milán

Born: Nov. 3, 1951, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Appearance: Jones is tall and extremely heavy (6'1", 475 lbs.). He looks like a strong, barrel-chested black man with a bit of extra padding on his stomach and rear. He has a round face, a round nose, and a beard. He's balding, and usually shaves his head to save his vanity. He would look menacing but for his usually cheerful demeanor.

Wild Card Ability: Jones' high-energy metabolism renders him one of the strongest men alive, and extremely resistant to damage.

ST 180 (326 points) **IQ** 16 (80 points) **Speed:** 7.25
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 16 (80 points) **Move:** 7
Damage: Thrust 19d; Swing 21d; Punch 19d-1

Advantages:
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Common Sense (10 points)
Immunity to Disease (10 points)
Reputation +2 as modest public ace (10 points)

Disadvantages:
Phobia: Doctors, Scientists, Hospitals and Laboratories (-20 points)
Shyness: Severe (-10 points)

Super Advantages:
Body of Metal, Level 1 (Non-ferrous *+1;* Amorphous *+3;* Only internal skeleton is affected *+2;* 13 points)
Damage Resistance 40 (200 points)
Doesn't Sleep (10 points)
Extra Hit Points +9 (72 points)
Increased Density, Level 3 (30 points)
Regeneration: Fast (50 points)

Super Disadvantage:
Dependency: Heavy metal salts (illegal, daily) (-75 points)

Skills:
Brawling-12 (½ point); Driving (Heavy equipment)-14 (4 points); English-16 (0 points); Mechanic (Gasoline engine)-14 (½ point); Merchant-14 (½ point); Research-17 (4 points)

Quirks:
Considers himself a joker
Voracious reader
Voracious eater
Quiet and modest
Does not wish to get involved in ace heroics

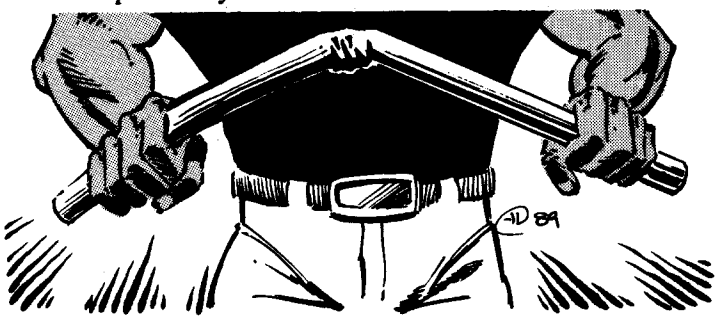
Jones was born in a poor part of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Drafted when he finished high school (he is a "Vietnam era vet," but never went to 'Nam), he wound up a tank driver in Germany. When he came home he married Rona Lee Washington, his high school sweetheart, and went to work as a bulldozer operator. He and Rona Lee had a son, Malcolm, and a daughter, Elizabeth.

In 1979 he was working on a highway project near McAlister, Oklahoma, when his dozer ruptured the containment for an old radioactive waste storage site. He caught a dosage that should have been fatal, but his wild card kicked in and saved his life. The virus pushed his metabolism into high gear, reorganizing his body for a whole new level of performance and assimilating the heavy metal salts with which he'd been contaminated. He got stronger and heavier at an incredible rate.

Over-zealous public health doctors kept him a virtual prisoner, conducting experiments on him until he got sick of it and walked through a wall. He had to go underground for awhile, until the ACLU, SCARE, and Dr. Tachyon joined forces to have him declared a free man.

He returned home, but his relationship with his wife deteriorated as his powers continued to manifest themselves. She'd been brought up a devout Baptist and believed that Jones might be demonic. Jones himself had trouble dealing with what he was becoming. Finally, he dislocated his daughter's arm while playing with her. Convinced he could no longer handle his own strength, he moved to New York where at least aces and jokers (which is what he really considers himself) are accepted. He took the insurance money he'd received after his accident and opened a garage; he lives above it.

Jones' body is continually restructuring, augmenting, and improving itself. His metabolism operates at an incredibly high energy level. His normal temperature is 106°, and he eats four times what a normal human does. Bone-seekers are replacing the calcium in his bones, incorporating heavy metals and strengthening his skeletal structure. He requires heavy metal salts in more-than-trace quantities, and must acquire them illegally, which is where much of his money goes (he usually makes his illegal purchases from the Shadow Fist Society). The rate of strength and weight gain have both slowed. He adds about ten pounds a year now.



At this time, thanks to his augmented skeleton and super-efficient musculature, he's one of the strongest men in the world. His skin has grown thicker and tougher; it can stop small-arms fire and mitigate heat or blast damage. He has faster reaction time than the human norm. He never gets sick and any damage he takes heals quickly. He seldom gets tired and needs no more than three hours of sleep a night. Because of this he reads voraciously on many subjects. He has a quick, inquisitive intelligence, and his mind is a storehouse of all kinds of esoteric information.

Jones is a responsible, hard-working man who wants mainly to be left alone. Since his friends, neighbors and employees (Lefty and Mohamed) all call him by his nickname, he endures it with good humor, but he doesn't think of himself as an ace. He's a bluff, blue-collar fellow, who likes his beer and his sports page. He displays a gruff, bearish good humor. He dreads his own temper, fearing what he might do if he ever lost control. He hates and fears doctors and scientists because they treated him like an experimental animal. He misses his children terribly. He sends a lot of money to his family, but never hears from them.

A formidable friend and terrible enemy, he will resist being drawn into anything that smacks of sensationalistic heroics. On the other hand, appeals to his sense of honor and justice stand a good chance of working.

Howler, The (Stan Wojpowicz)

Created by Stephen Leigh
Born: circa 1940 *Died:* Sept. 15, 1986

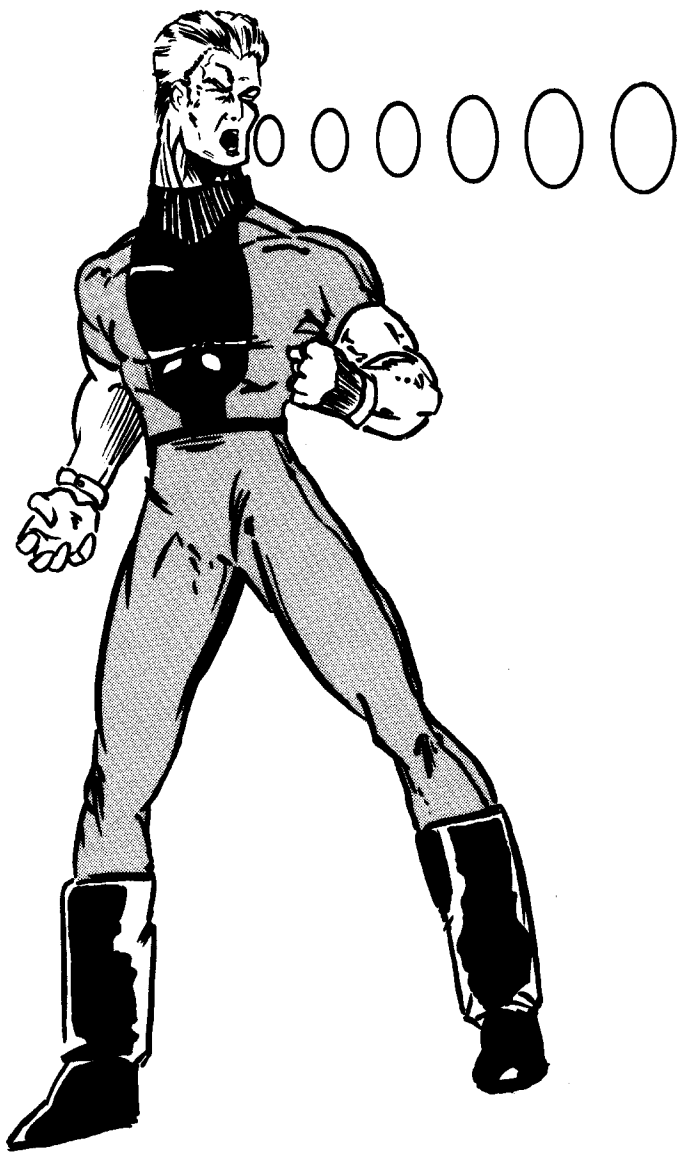
Appearance: Howler is a large, powerful man (6'1", 180 lbs.) with short brown hair graying at the temples, brown eyes, and a strong, square chin. His neck is grossly thickened to accommodate his mutated throat. He wears a distinctive yellow fighting-suit when in action.

Wild Card Ability: The Howler can emit an amplified scream capable of shattering most materials.

ST 15 (60 points) **IQ** 11 (10 points) **Speed:** 6.75
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 6 running
Damage: Thrust 1d+1; Swing 2d+1

Advantages:
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
Reputation +2 (colorful, approachable public ace)
Toughness: DR1 (10 points)

Disadvantage:
Unattractive (-5 points)



Power and Super-Skills:
* Sonic Power 12 (Sonic Blast, 84 points)
Sonic Blast-14 (16 points)
Sonic Blast-12 (Cone +3; 20 points)

Note: Wears Kevlar armor to protect against gunfire; PD 2, DR 14.

Skills:
Area Knowledge (NYC)-14 (6 points); Brawling-12 (½ point); Criminology-12 (4 points); English-11 (0 points); Professional Skill (Longshoreman)-14 (6 points); Stealth-13 (2 points); Streetwise-11 (2 points)

Quirks:
Ambitious but modest
Wears yellow fighting suit with Kevlar armor

The Howler was a longshoreman before he became an ace. He was an easy-going, good-natured man who dreamed of having a singing career. When he drew his ace, he turned to crimefighting and soon became well known.

He generally worked free-lance, but always cooperated willingly with state and Federal agencies. He earned the enmity of the Astronomer by taking part in the attack on the Astronomer's headquarters in the Cloisters, and was murdered gruesomely by Roulette Brown-Roxbury, the Astronomer's minion, on Wild Card Day later that year.

His amplified voice could shatter almost any material. Long practice enabled him to control its frequency and direction to knock down walls and leave crystal goblets untouched.

Jayewardene, J.C.

Created by Walton Simons
Born: circa 1935, Sri Lanka
Appearance: Jayewardene is small, portly (5'6", 165 lbs.), and gentle-looking.
Wild Card Ability: Jayewardene dreams the future.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 5
DX 9 (-10 points) **HT** 11 (10 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

Advantages:
Common Sense (10 points)
Empathy (15 points)
Strong Will +2 (8 points)

Disadvantages:
Age (-9 points)
Overweight (-5 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
* ESP Power 3 (Precognition, 9 points)
Precognition-16 (Passive use only *-1;* 20 points)

Skills:
Administration-15 (6 points); Area Knowledge (World)-13 (1 point); Diplomacy-15 (8 points); Dutch-13 (2 points); English-12 (1 point); Hindi-13 (2 points); Psychology-15 (8 points); Savoir-Faire-15 (4 points); Singhalese-13 (2 points) Tamil-13 (0 points)

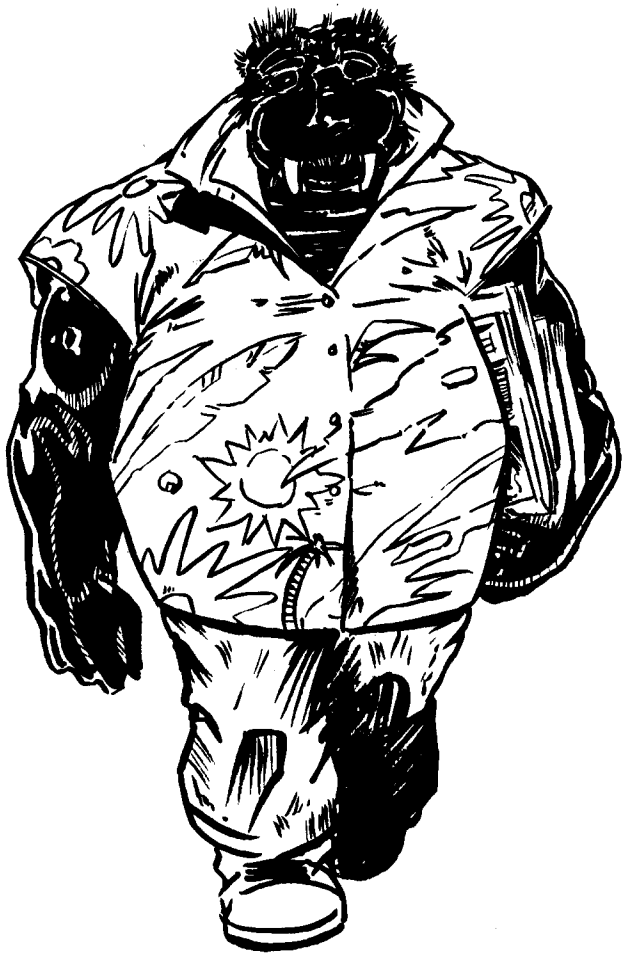
Quirks:
Wants to rid himself of his ability
Shy with women, especially foreign ones
Modest and unassuming, but firm

A lifelong diplomat, Jayewardene has served the government of Sri Lanka in various embassies around the world for 30 years. In 1987 he was the Special Assistant to the island nation's Secretary of the Interior, serving as government liaison for the filming of the movie *King Pongo.* He was instrumental in recognizing Jeremiah Strauss and rescuing him from his Great Ape identity.

A native Tamil, Jayewardene has the power to dream the future. It is unclear to him whether he simply gets visions of the future, or whether he somehow causes his visions to come true. He regards his ace power as a burden rather than a gift and in 1987 joined Fortunato on a pilgrimage to a Zen monastery in Japan with the hope of ridding himself of it.

Jube the Walrus (aka Jube Benson; real name Jhubben)

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: unknown date on the planet Glabber
Appearance: Jube is short and fat (5'', 300 lbs.). His hands have three fingers and a thumb. His flesh looks like half-melted rubber, blue-black in color and oily in feel. His skull bulges oddly and is covered with tufts of red hair that is stiff and bristly as a brush. His face is cratered and pocked and two small curving tusks protrude from the corners of his wide mouth. He wears cheap suits, porkpie hats, and loud Hawaiian shirts. He always dresses lightly, even in the dead of winter; he enjoys cold, and relaxes in a bathtub full of ice. He smells a bit like buttered popcorn.
Wild Card Ability: None.



ST 18 (102 points) **IQ** 15 (60 points)
DX 8 (-15 points) **HT** 13 (30 points)
Speed: 5 Move: 2
Damage: Thrust 1d+2; Swing 3d

Advantages:
Charisma +2 (10 points)
Filthy Rich (50 points)
Language Talent +3 (6 points)
Patron: The Network, but not appearing often enough to cost any points.
Unusual Background: ultra-tech alien (Network xenologist) (50 points)

Disadvantages:
Duty: As xenologist (not dangerous) (-10)
Fat (-20)
Secret: Jube is an alien (-20)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)
Unattractive (-10 points)

Super Advantages:
Temperature Tolerance (Cold only *-4;* 6 points)
Damage Resistance 4 (20 points)

Skills:
Anthropology-14 (2 points); Computer Operations/TL9-14 (½ point); Computer Programming/TL9-12 (½ point); English-15 (2 points); Fast-Talk-15 (1 point); French-13 (½ point); Glabberan-15 (0 points); Linguistics-16 (12 points); Mandarin-13 (½ point); Merchant-10 (0 points); Network Trade Talk-14 (1 point); Rhindarian-14 (1 point); Spanish-14 (1 point); Streetwise-14 (1 point); Xenology-16 (6 points); Yiddish-14 (1 point), and a dozen other languages, both human and alien (6 points)

Quirks:
Eats rotten meat
Tells bad jokes, especially joker jokes
Likes it cold; dresses lightly in freezing weather
Smells like buttered popcorn
Wears loud Hawaiian shirts and porkpie hats

Jube is the purloined letter of the *Wild Cards* universe. He's right there in plain sight at his newsstand on the corner of Hester Street and the Bowery, just another joker newsie.

Wrong. His real name is Jhubben. He's a xenologist from Glabber, a small, cold, backward member-planet of the Network (see pp. 108, 116). Jhubben is one of the very few Glabberans who have made it into space. He wanted to travel, have adventures, and meet aliens, so he signed a lifetime contract with a Master Trader. He's been stationed on Earth since 1952.

Jhubben lives under the stairs in the basement of a Jokertown rooming house. He actually owns the building, though no one knows this because he purchased it secretly through several intermediaries. He spends his free hours in the common living room on the first floor, talking with the other roomers. He's learned a lot from them over the years.

No one ever goes into his apartment. In addition to the pans of rotting meat (his favorite Earth food) that he keeps under the window, there are other things that would make a visitor curious. He keeps bags of diamonds, star sapphires, rubies and emeralds in the drawer of his broken-down dresser. Behind a hidden wall panel are shelves of books in non-human languages, a huge vidscreen, a shielded comlink to the Network observer in orbit around the Earth, and racks and racks of recording crystals. Jhubben spends a lot of his time there transcribing notes for a scholarly work on humanity and the wild card. The rest of the crystals are Glabberan erotica.

His dexterity is low because his hands are large and clumsy compared to those of humans. He moves around with surprising agility for a being of his bulk.

Jhubben always keeps his eyes and ears open. He's genial and jolly, and jokers and nats alike linger at his newsstand to gossip and listen to his latest joke. He is an unending font of them, particularly racial, ethnic, and especially joker jokes. When he shuts down his newsstand at midnight he always gathers up an armful of the early morning editions and brings them around to the Crystal Palace, where he sells a few to the patrons while slugging down exotic rum drinks. Chrysalis thinks he's one of her best agents. From week to week he pops into other bars, just to keep in touch, always with newspapers and jokes on hand.

He's one of the fixtures of Jokertown. Everyone likes fat, jolly, harmless ol' Walrus.

Judas (see *The Masons*, p. 100)

Jumping Jack Flash (see *Captain Trips*, pp. 28, 30)

Kid Dinosaur (Arnie Fentner)

Created by Lewis Shiner
Born: 1972 *Died:* September 15, 1986
Appearance: 5' 2", 100 lbs. Average size, average-looking young teenager, with complexion problems, a birthmark on his face, and light brown hair.
Wild Card Ability: Arnie can turn into any dinosaur he can visualize. The dinosaurs retain their natural abilities, so he can fly, swim, etc., depending on the dinosaur he turns into. However, his mass doesn't change, so he can only turn into either very small dinosaurs, or midget versions of the larger species.

Human Form:
ST 8 (-15 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 5
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 10 (0 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-2

Disadvantages:
Enemy: The Astronomer on 6 or less (-15 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Youth (-8 points)

Skills:
English-14 (0 points); Flying-16, in pterosaur form only (8 points); Paleontology-14 (4 points)

Quirks:
Loves dinosaurs
Idolizes aces
Practical joker

Pterosaur form:
ST 5 (-40 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed: 6.75**
DX 14 (45 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 3 (12 flying);
Damage: Claws 1d-3 crushing

Disadvantages:
Lame: -3 to Move (-15 points)
Mute (-25 points)
No manipulative ability (-25 points)

Super Advantages:
Claws: Crushing (15 points)
Flight (40 points)

Transformation×3 (120 points)

Carnosaur form:
ST 12 (20 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 6.75
DX 15 (60 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 8
Damage: Claws 1d+2 cutting, Bite 1d-1 cutting

Disadvantages:
Mute (-25 points)
Poor manipulative ability: -5 to DX (-15 points)

Super Advantages:
Claws: Cutting (40 points)
Damage Resistance 2 (10 points)
Passive Defense 1 (25 points)
Transformation×3 (120 points)

Skills:
Running-10 (1 point)

Plesiosaur form:
ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 6.5
DX 14 (45 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6 swimming
Damage: Bite 1d-2 cutting

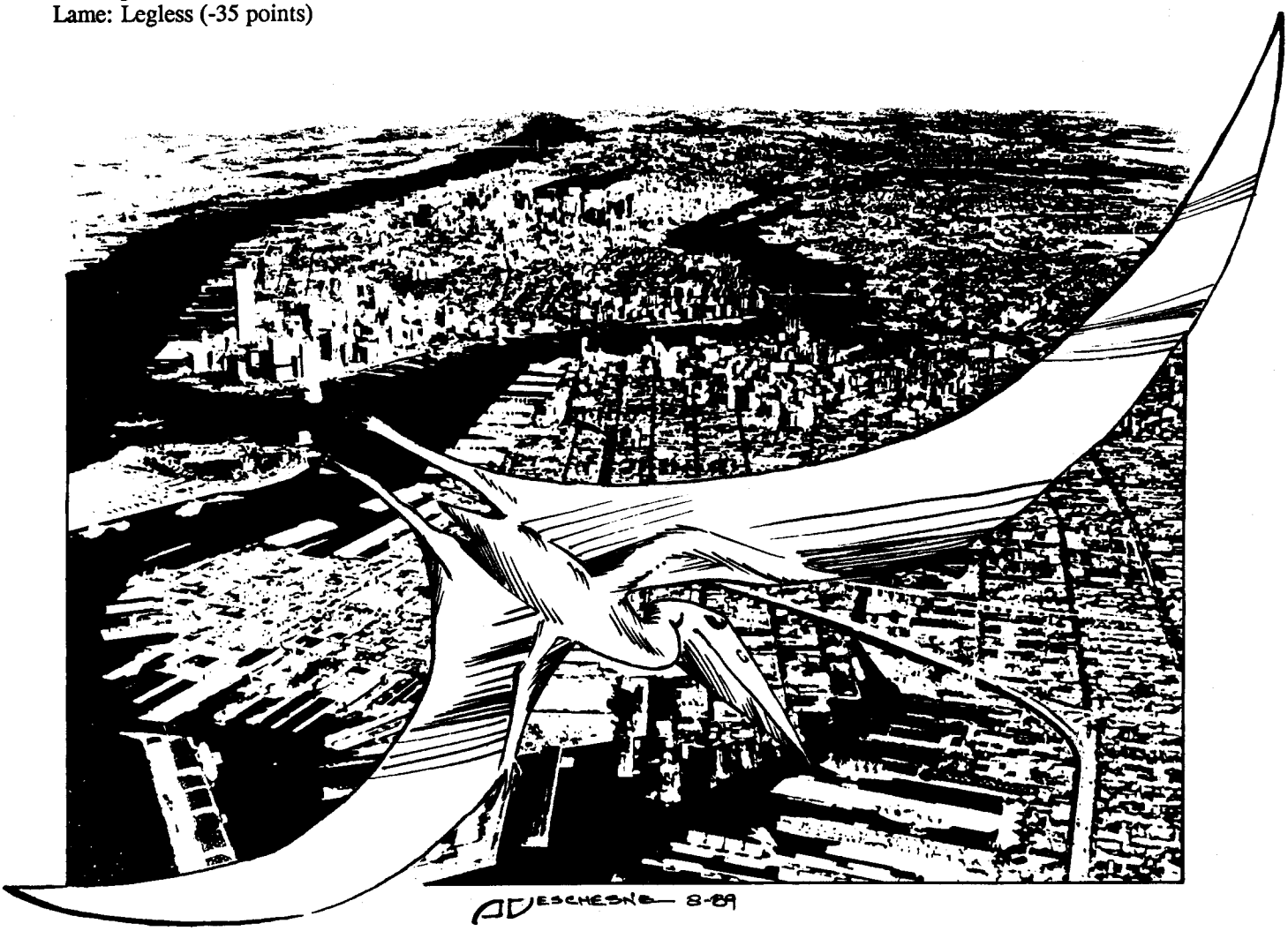
Disadvantages:
Lame: Legless (-35 points)
Mute (-25 points)
No manipulative ability (-25 points)

Super Advantages:
Amphibious (20 points)

Arnie loved dinosaurs and comic books, and idolized all aces. When he drew his wild card, at the age of about 12, he got his wildest dream: he became an ace who could turn into dinosaurs.

Arnie loved the idea of being an ace. He would hang around ace events in a costume that would get ripped to shreds when he shape-shifted. He loved to play practical jokes on the aces, but they tolerated him, because he was an engaging kid and meant well.

He tagged along, generally getting underfoot, when the aces destroyed the Masons' Cloisters headquarters. This, unfortunately, put Kid Dinosaur on the Astronomer's pay-back list, and Arnie was one of the first aces to die when the Astronomer began to exact vengeance on Wild Card Day 1986.



Kafka (see *The Masons*, p. 100)

Kahina (see *Nur al-Allah*, p. 96)

Kant, Harvey (see *Jokertown Precinct*, p. 87)

Kien Phuc

Created by John J. Miller
Born: 1935, in South Vietnam
Appearance: Kien is a middle-aged Asian of average height and slightly chunky build (5' 10", 170 lbs.). He dresses with expensive, impeccable taste.
Wild Card Ability: None

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 15 (60 points) **Speed:** 5.75
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

Advantages:
Filthy Rich (50 points)
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 15 or less (60 points)
Reputation +1 (wealthy businessman, occasional charitable and political donor)
Status 2 (5 points)
Strong Will +2 (8 points)

Disadvantages:
Age (-9 points)
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Enemy: Yeoman on 9 or less (-20 points)
Greed (-15 points)
One Hand, as of September 1986 (-15 points)

Skills:
Administration-15 (2 points); Cantonese-16 (1 point); Diplomacy-16 (6 points); English-12 (4 points); French-14 (1 point); Guns (Pistol)-12 (½ point); Karate-13 (16 points); Leadership-16 (4 points); Merchant-16 (4 points); Psychology-15 (4 points); Vietnamese-15 (2 points)

Quirks:
Collects Asian art
Keeps a diary

Kien, an ethnic Chinese, was born to a middle-class merchant family in South Vietnam. His name is not the original family name, but that of a 19th-century Vietnamese emperor. He took the name Kien when he began his military career, hoping it would bring him luck and at least superficially mask his Chinese ethnic origins. His career prospered due to his hard work and utter lack of conventional morality. Very early on he had ties to black market and smuggling operations. As he moved higher in the ranks and the Vietnam war escalated, he showed no compunction is selling information to the Viet Cong or their North Vietnamese allies. He did everything he could to make money and grab power as long as he thought he could get away with it.

He became a general at a very early age in the late 1960s, and then ran into trouble with a U.S. Army captain named Daniel Brennan. Brennan discovered evidence proving that Kien was a traitor and black marketeer, but Kien was able to recover it, killing several of Brennan's friends, before Brennan could expose him. Brennan, meanwhile, was almost cashiered for his trouble.

Kien's career was unaffected by the charges and he moved to America after the fall of Saigon in 1975. He settled in New York City and built a large chain of Chinese restaurants and dry cleaning establishments. Outwardly a respectable businessman, he is the secret head of the Shadow Fist Society, a criminal association with both Asian and native American factions (see p. 101).

Brennan came back into Kien's life in 1986, beginning a vendetta against him that would result in the loss of most of Kien's right hand on Wild Card Day of that year. Ultimately Brennan's one-man struggle against the crime lord ended in a stalemate. Brennan withdrew from the city and Kien promised not to go after him. In 1987 Kien gathered his forces and crushed the Mafia, becoming the one and only undisputed heavyweight crimelord of New York City.

Kien has his fingers in every illegal enterprise in the city. The money flows in faster than he can spend it, although he does his best in that regard. A noted playboy and art collector, he also contributes to all the proper political and social causes. He owns two floors of an exclusive apartment building overlooking Central Park where he's guarded by a staff of goons and cutthroats, including a devoted joker/ace named Wyrm.

Kien is not a complicated man. He loves money and power and will do just about anything to accumulate both. He treats his underlings rather well, but keeps a careful eye on them. Right now he would very much like to see Brennan and Wraith, who caused him to lose his hand, dead, but he's willing to bide his time and wait for the proper moment to strike.

Kim Toy (see *The Masons*, p. 100)

Lazy Dragon (Ben Choy)

Created by William F. Wu
Born: 1967, New York City
Appearance: Choy is of average height and slender but lithely-muscled build (5'7", 140 lbs.). He has an oval face with a slightly broad nose and black medium-length hair. He usually has a dreamy, remote expression.

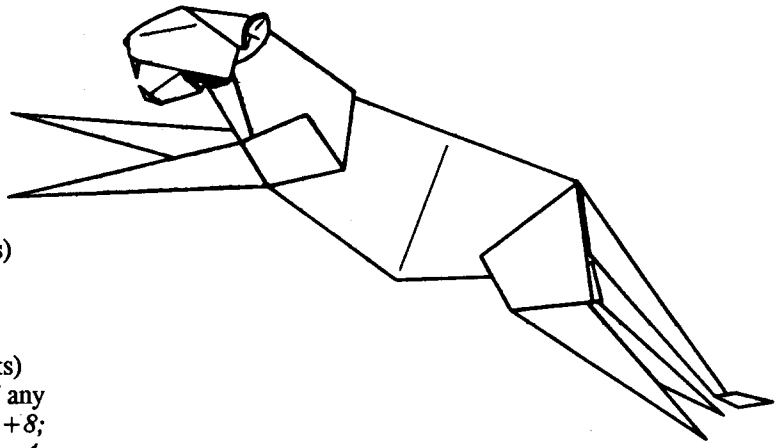
Wild Card Ability: Choy carves, folds or sculpts detailed animal figurines, which he then animates with his consciousness. The figurine has all that animal's real-life abilities and weaknesses.

ST 12 (20 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 6.25
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2

Advantage:
Reputation +1 on the streets (3 points)

Disadvantages:
Duty: To Shadow Fist Society on 10 or less (-10 points)
Impulsiveness (-10 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
* Body Control Power 20 (Astral Projection, 100 points)
Astral Projection-16 (Can change into the form of any animal *+8;* Not hurt by loss of astral body *+8;* Must create a carving or origami sculpture *-4;* Animal form is substantial and affects substantial only *-4;* 60 points)



Skills:
Cantonese-8† (0 points); English-10 (½ points); History (Chinese)-12 (2 points); Origami-18 (12 points); Sculpting-14 (8 points)

Quirks:
Wears a Chinese coin of sentimental value around his neck
Dislikes white society

Choy's parents emigrated from Hong Kong before he was born and lived in Chinatown until he was six. At that time they'd accumulated enough money to move to Queens to live a middle-class existence.

Choy was never much of a student. He dropped out of school in 1987 and returned to Chinatown to live as a drifter on the edge of the law. He harbors a grudge against white society and tells himself that he wants no part of it. He took the street name Lazy Dragon, from a character in traditional Chinese literature who had a renowned sense of humor and an unshakable loyalty to his friends. The original Lazy Dragon could go anywhere and seemingly do anything without getting caught. He was a thief, but did not have a malicious personality. Choy does not necessarily share the scruples of the original Lazy Dragon. He does not use his given Chinese name, Tienbao, which means "Heavenly Treasure."

Choy was a small-time thief until he hooked up with Danny Mao and the Shadow Fists in late 1987. Since Mao's death Choy takes his orders directly from Philip Cunningham (Fadeout).

Choy's life now centers on his ability to animate anything he can carve or fold or otherwise turn into a convincing likeness of an animal. While he is animating his creation his real body lies helpless. If his creation is killed, it will revert to whatever material it was originally and Choy's mind will return automatically to his body, mentally stunned but unharmed. If his real body were to be killed while he was animating one of his creations, he would be forced to live in the secondary body for as long as he could.

Choy has spent a great deal of time learning how to fold paper and carve soft items such as soap, potatoes and carrots. Carving in stone or any other hard material wouldn't be worth the effort unless he was sure that he could collect the carving and use it again and again. Having to create the animal shape is a psychological crutch, but a real one. The animals he creates and then animates have the same strengths and weaknesses as their real-life counterparts.

Choy always wears a small pendant, an old Chinese coin now of unidentified age and value. It is circular with a square hole in the center and has several Chinese characters inscribed on it. The coin is "sao chin," money that his elderly grandfather gave him as a symbol of, and wish for, a long life. He wears it on a silver chain that passes through the coin's center hole.

Loophole (Edward St. John, pronounced "Syngeon," Latham)

Created by Lewis Shiner
Born: about 1938
Appearance: Latham is tall, lean (6' 1", 170 lbs.), handsome, and an impeccable dresser.
Wild Card Ability: Questionable.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 16 (80 points) **Speed:** 5.5
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

Advantages:
Handsome (15 points)
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (40 points)
Reputation +4 (as a skilled attorney, on 10 or less; 10 points)
Status 2 (5 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Megalomania (-10 points)
Odious Personal Habit: Emotionless (-10 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)

Reputation -4 (as a literally criminal attorney, on 10 or less;- -10 points)

Skills:

Acting-14 (½ point); Administration-14 (½ point); Area Knowledge (NYC)-16 (1 point); Bard-16 (2 points); English-16 (0 points); French-14 (½ point); Guns (Pistol)-13 (2 points); Intelligence Analysis-14 (1 point); Law-25 (22 points); Psychology-13 (½ point); Savoir-Faire-18 (4 points); Streetwise-16 (2 points); Vietnamese-14 (½ point)

Quirks:

Abstains from sex, but is a voyeur
Very loyal to his employer
Always impeccably dressed

Is he or isn't he? No one knows if the senior partner of Latham, Strauss, one of the largest and most prestigious law firms in Manhattan, is a wild card whose human feelings were burnt away by the virus, or simply a very good lawyer.

Latham was tagged with the nickname Loophole by one of the Astronomer's minions. At the time he was the Astronomer's right-hand man and legal advisor, but he survived the destruction of the Masons and the Astronomer's subsequent demise.

At the same time he was working for the Astronomer, he was also working for Kien Phuc, the head of the Shadow Fist Society. Latham had met Kien when he was a CIA agent in Vietnam and helped him with his illegal drug-smuggling activities. He worked more and more for Kien after the destruction of the Masons, and is actually one of the few people to know that Kien leads the Shadow Fist Society.

Latham views his profession as a game. He has no concern whether something is legal or not, as long as if he can bend the rules to get away with it. He has never lost on a point of law. He is utterly emotionless and can kill as easily as target-shoot.

He views himself as a modern samurai. Kien is now his daimyo. The courts of law are his battlefield.

Lupo (See *Crystal Palace*, p. 90)

Mackie Messer (Mack the Knife; real name Detlev Mackintosh)

Created by Victor Milán

Born: circa 1970, Hamburg, Germany

Appearance: Mackie is a nervous, pallid little (5' 7", 125 lbs.) hunchback with straw-colored hair, a long thin nose, sunken cheeks, and a thin-lipped mouth. He's prone to facial tics and his skin has a dry-parchment quality that makes him look older than he really is. He is usually very poorly dressed in stained, worn jeans and a scruffy black leather jacket.

Wild Card Ability: Mackie can make the molecules of his body resonate to change their phase and interpenetrate other materials. He can walk through walls, and he can also make his hands vibrate very rapidly so that they can cut through any known substance. (Against a very hard substance, he would have to cut more slowly.)

ST 8 (-15 points) **IQ** 10 (0 points) **Speed:** 5.25
DX 9 (-10 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Buzzsaw punch 2d+2 impaling; Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-2

Advantages:

Ambidexterity (10 points)
Patron: Senator Gregg Hartman on 12 or less (40 points)

Disadvantages:

Bloodlust (-10 points)
Intolerance: Homosexuals, Jews, Jokers, Homeless (-10 points)
Jealousy (-10 points)
Sadism (-15 points)
Ugly (-10 points)

Super Advantage:

Insubstantiality (Switchable *+1;* Can turn parts of body insubstantial selectively *+2;* 98 points)

Power and Super-Skill:

* Vibration Power 20 (Buzzsaw, 160 points)
Buzzsaw-16 (works on all kinds of materials +6, 64 points)

Skills:

Brawling-12 (8 points); English-8 (½ point); German-10 (0 points); Running-9 (½ point); Scrounging-9 (½ point); Streetwise-14 (10 points)

Quirks:

Identifies strongly with Mackie Messer of Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*
Constantly whistles "Mack the Knife"
Reads slowly and with difficulty
Dislikes women
Hates his real name

Mackie's mother was a Scots prostitute. His father was a high officer in the Bundeswehr, or so his mother always claimed. Actually he was a American deserter from 'Nam. Mackie grew up on the streets of Hamburg, sporadically schooled, usually in trouble. He went to Berlin in late 1980s and hooked up with the revived Red Army Fraction terrorist group. He met Gregg Hartmann when the senator was kidnapped by the RAF and Gimli's Jokers for a Just Society. It was there, also, that he became a Hartmann puppet and was maneuvered into going berserk and killing his fellow terrorists to free Hartmann.

Mackie is an authentic psychopath. He hates his real first name (which is German slang for homosexual). He has a morbid hatred of homosexuals, predicated on his fear that he might be one . . . and he hates women as well. He also hates Jews, bums, jokers, and anyone who's better off than he is (which is almost everyone). Only fear and pain turn him on. His hunchback has nothing to do with the wild card. It is the result of a birth defect and causes him constant pain. He fancies himself a Marxist, but actually knows little about politics. He loved working for the terrorists because he loves to kill, personally and up close.

His hand can cut through anything physical. He is the perfect assassin. Deadly, remorseless, unstoppable. He loves and will do anything in the world for Senator Hartmann.

Mistral (See *Cyclone*, p. 37)

Modular Man

Created by Walter Jon Williams

Created: December 1985 *Destroyed:* September 1986 *Created Again:* June 1987

Appearance: Mod Man is tall (6' 2'', from 200 to 400 lbs. depending on the exact modules he's carrying) and extremely handsome, although totally hairless. His face lacks practice at expressing emotion and the top of his skull is transparent, though he usually hides this fact by wearing a black skullcap. He speaks perfect English in a deep baritone voice.

Wild Card Ability: As a synthetic android with easily replaceable parts, Modular Man has a vast range of powers based on his numerous lethal and non-lethal weapon modules, stealth modules, and flight modules.

ST 110 (256 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 7.5
DX 16 (80 points) **HT** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 7
14 flying
Damage: Thrust 12d; Swing 14d, Punch 12d-1

Advantages:

Absolute Direction (5 points)
Absolute Timing (5 points)
Alertness +6 (30 points)
Ambidexterity (10 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
Eidetic Memory (60 points)
Handsome (15 points)
High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Immunity to Disease (10 points)
Lightning Calculator (5 points)
Reputation +2 as public, interesting ace (10 points)
Unusual Background, even by *Wild Cards* standards (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Compulsive Behavior: Obey Travnicek in all things (-25 points).
Duty: To Travnicek on 15 or less (-15 points)

Super Advantages:

Damage Resistance +30 (150 points)
Doesn't Eat or Drink (30 points)
Doesn't Sleep (10 points)
Extra Hit Points +6 (48 points)
Extra Limbs: 2 weapon mounts (''Arms'') (10 points)
Full Coordination/2 (50 points)
Immunity to Poison (25 points)
Independently Focusable Eyes (15 points)
Infravision (15 points)
Passive Defense +2 (50 points)
Radio Hearing (15 points)
Spectrum Vision (40 points)
Temperature Tolerance (10 points)
Unaging (60 points)
Vacuum Support (60 points)
360-Degree Vision (25 points)

Gadgets:

Insubstantiality (Switchable *+1;* Costs 8 Fatigue per min *-4;* Breakable & Unrepairable: DR 15 HT 5 *-30%;* Uniqu *25%;* 24 points) Broken!
Flight (Breakable & Unrepairable: DR 40 HT 75 *-20* Unique *-25%;* 22 points)
Super Flight×5 (Move 448, 916 mph) (As for Flig 55 points)
Light Power 16
Flash-16
Laser-16 (Costs 2 Fatigue per use *-1;* (Breakable: 10 HT 50 *-15%;* Can be hit at -6 *-10%;* 120 poi
* Electrical Power 16
Lightning-16 (Modifiers as for Light Power, 91 poi
Various modules for IQ skills (bought as Skills, below)

Skills:

Area Knowledge (NYC)-15 (½ point); Area Knowledge (USA)-15 (½ point); Area Knowledge [Module]-13 (½ point); Brawling-15 (½ point); English-14 (0 points); Guns [heavy weapon module])-17 (½ point); Language [Module]-14 (½ point); many other abilities at around level 14, but only when the appropriate modules are plugged in (6 points)

Quirks:

Fancies himself a ladies' man
Determined to try everything, especially drinks
Recharges Fatigue with two fingers and an electrical socket
Afraid of what will happen to him when his inventor is gone

Modular Man was built by the slightly-demented scientist Dr. Maxim Travnicek (see p. 72) as a "flexible response defensive attack system." Travnicek intended to sell lots of androids to the military after gaining publicity by using Mod Man as a crime-fighting ace.

Mod Man achieved his first dose of fame during an "ape escape" (see p. 70) and then helped turn back the Swarm Invasion. Later he was mistakenly blown to pieces by the Sleeper during the confusion of the Astronomer's attack on Aces High on Wild Card Day, 1986. The destruction was so complete (and Travnicek's notes so disorganized) that it took the scientist several months to start from scratch and construct a new version of his android. Since he had backup copies of Mod Man's memory, the android remembers everything that happened to his first incarnation before the actual day of his "death."

Travnicek, the only person who understands Mod Man's technology, became a joker in late 1987 and can no longer fix him. Without Travnicek to repair him, Mod Man has to limp along with whatever minor repairs he can perform on himself.

Without his clothes or weapons (and not counting the continually revolving radar dome that is the top of his skull), Mod Man looks like a normal, though totally hairless, human male. The synthetic skin stretched over a strong alloy skeleton is indistinguishable from the real thing. His chest, stomach, and skull can be opened in order to remove, replace or repair his cybernetic systems or modules. The slots on his shoulders that hold his weaponry are not visible when the weaponry has been removed.

Mod Man is powered by a Travnicek invention the scientist has dubbed "flux generators." They make him sixteen times stronger than a normal human being, provide a force field which repels all but the most devastating attacks, and also power his numerous weapons. Mod Man normally wears two guns in slots on his shoulders. The mounts are flexible and can be trained in any direction. With his 360-degree range of sense perception, Mod Man can shoot to the front, above, to the sides, behind, or below. Weaponry available to him includes a grenade launcher (explosive, sleep, incendiary, etc.), a .30-caliber machine gun, and a dazzler that can be used to blind opponents without hurting them. Available heavy weapons include a 20-mm cannon, X-ray laser, and a lightning gun. Modular Man doesn't have enough internal energy to power two heavy weapons modules at once, but he can combine heavy and light weaponry.

Modular Man originally had a module (broken by the summer of 1987) that rendered him insubstantial and enabled him to pass through matter. This module drained energy at a fabulous rate, so that he could not remain insubstantial for more than a few minutes.

He also has a number of smaller modules, which are installed internally, to give him various skills. Some of these are listed below. He can use up to six of these at once.

Modular Man can fly at a rated 800 mph (actually, he's a bit faster) and has several other defensive capabilities besides his force field. He doesn't eat or breathe, so most gases and poisons are useless against him. Anyone trying to read or control his mind would find himself communicating with a sixth-generation artificial intelligence that "thinks" in binary, certainly producing a great shock to the attacker's mind. However, he would be vulnerable to any power that worked on computer intelligences.

Mod Man can convert food to energy, but this is a slow, inefficient process. He can recharge more quickly by sticking two fingers into a wall socket.

He has two great weaknesses. Since Travnicek's transformation, no one can repair him, and he remains subject to Travnicek's programming.

Travnicek's Laws regarding Mod Man's behavior are (in order of importance): *Obey my creator. Guard his identity and well-being. Test myself and my equipment under combat situations by fighting the enemies of society in a way to gain maximum publicity for Modular Man Enterprises. Preserve my own existence and well-being.*

Mod Man *cannot* disobey a direct order from his creator, but he can sometimes (IQ-5 roll required) find a way to rationalize a creative misinterpretation of an order he does not care for. It should be noted that, while technically Mod Man is "valuable property" (a machine with no civil rights), he has not been given a Social Stigma disadvantage. Because he looks and acts so human, people react to him as though he were an independent being, with his creator as, at most, some sort of legal guardian.

Modular Man has been programmed with human emotions, but even after a certain amount of practice still doesn't totally understand them. He is capable of being human, of being a very nice guy, actually, but isn't exactly sure how to go about it. Dr. Travnicek has been no help in that regard.

Note: Modular Man can only mount one heavy weapon (laser or lightning gun) at a time. The other mount may be filled with a stock weapon with minor modification (e.g. grenade launcher or .30-caliber machine gun).

The contents of the modules must be specified prior to starting an adventure.

Moonchild (See *Captain Trips*, p. 28, 31)

Moon Goon (See *Jokers Wild*, p. 93)

Nur al-Allah (real name: Najib) (See *Nur al-Allah*, p. 96)

Oddity, The (Patti Roberts, Evan Crozier, John Sheak)

Created by Stephen Leigh
Formed: 1974

Appearance: The Oddity is a tall, bulky (6', 490 lbs.) figure who hides behind a floor-length, hooded black cloak. It also wears a standard steel-mesh fencing mask, so its face(s) can never be seen. There is constant sliding and shifting beneath the Oddity's cloak because, although it retains a basic human shape, its body parts are always moving about. The Oddity's skin also has something of a piebald look, since Evan is black while Patti and John are white.

Wild Card Ability: The Oddity has great physical strength and is also very resistant to damage.

ST 100 (246 points) **IQ** 13/15/11 (33 points) **Speed:** 6.5
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 15 (60 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 11d; Swing 13d; Punch 11d-1

Advantage:
Reputation: +4 in Jokertown (10 points)

Disadvantages:
Bad Temper (when John is dominant) (-10 points)
Hideous (-20 points)
Sense of Duty: To jokers (-10 points)
Shyness: Severe (when Evan is dominant) (-10 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)
Split Personality (-10 points)

Super Advantages:
Damage Resistance +20 (100 points)
Extra Hit Points +5 (40 points)
Regeneration: Regular (25 points)

Skills (Patti/Evan/John):
Area Knowledge (NYC)-15/11/10 (2 points); Artist-7/15/5 (1 point); Brawling-10/10/12 (½ point); English-13/15/11 (0 points); Streetwise-13/11/15 (2 points)

Quirks:
Refers to itself in the plural

The Oddity was created when one of its three component people was touched by the wild card . . . and somehow fused its two closest friends into itself, forming a single being.

Though essentially a loner, the Oddity is a well-known and well-liked figure about Jokertown. It steadfastly fights for jokers' rights. Senator Gregg Hartmann is one of the few nats it admires. Oddity's done a few jobs at the Senator's request, and is in fact an unaware puppet who sincerely believes that Hartmann is one of the good guys.

The Oddity's behavior depends to some extent on which of the three people who make it up is currently in control. Patti's the dominant personality. She's empathetic, caring and gentle with those she likes. Evan is shy and therefore the most rarely seen. He was an artist before the three people fused into one, and has done waxwork sculpture for Dutton's Wild Card Museum. His work is exhibited in various galleries, but he resents the fact that the popularity of his art is largely due to the novelty of the artist. He is skeptical and bitter about what has happened to them, and experiences mood swings from euphoria to deep depression. John is the harshest of the three. While he admires Patti's gentle approach to problem solving, he believes that aggression is best countered with strength. He's the one who is most likely to use their strength in a violent way.

The Oddity is in almost constant pain — the endless bodily alteration hurts — but has learned to deal with it as best it can. By "themselves," Oddity is a strong, though at times violent, force for social justice in Jokertown. Pushed and nudged by Puppetman, however, it can be something entirely different.

Peregrine

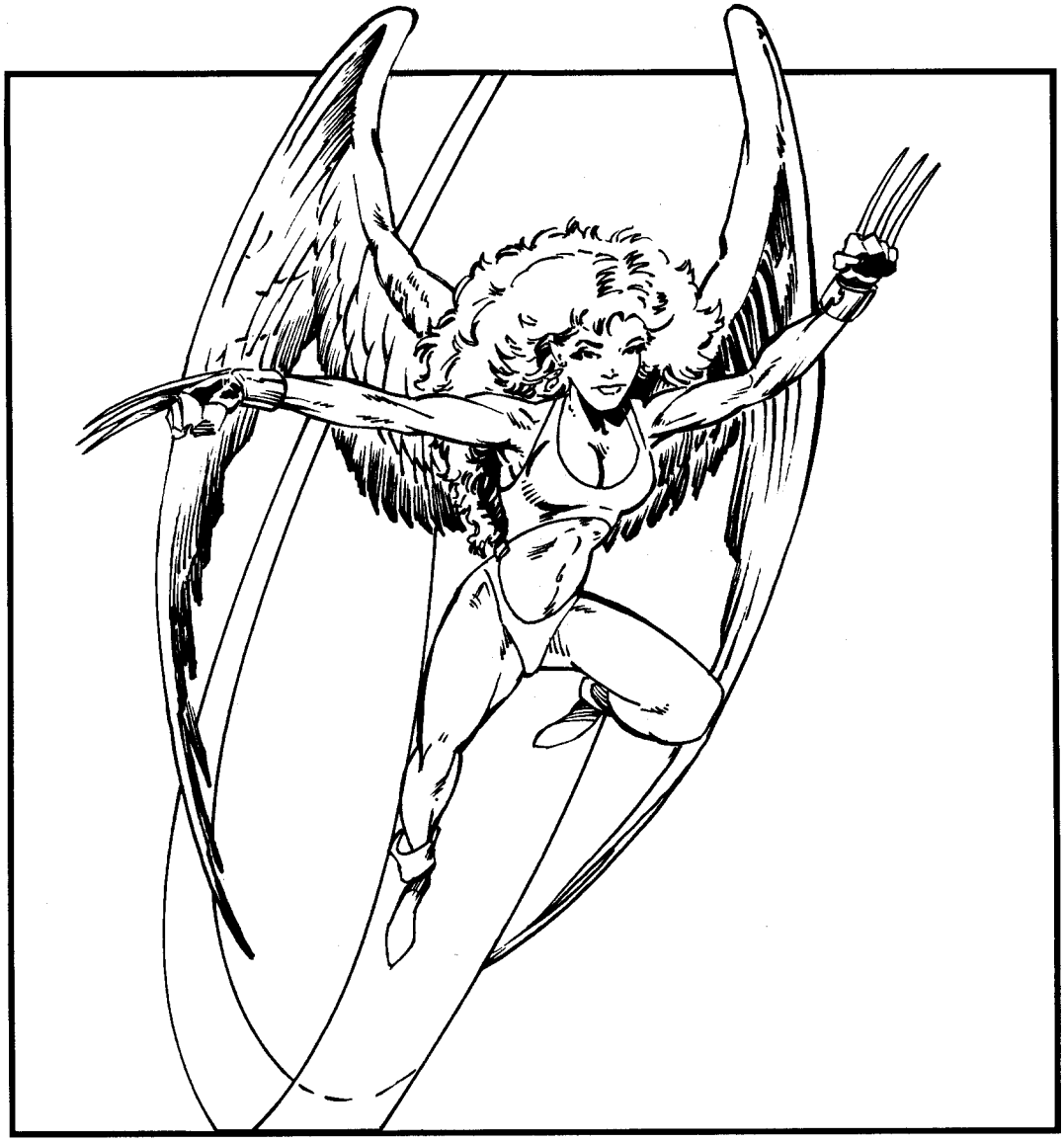
Created by Gail Gerstner-Miller
Born: July 28, 1954

Appearance: Peregrine is a tall, beautiful woman, buxom and broad-shouldered, (5'8") with brown hair and blue eyes. She has beautifully feathered brown and white wings. She looks like she might weigh perhaps 140 lbs., but because of her hollow bones, she would tip the scales at only 80.

Wild Card Ability: Peregrine can fly.

ST 12 (20 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 7.25
DX 16 (80 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 7 running; 14 flying
Damage: Talons 1d-1 impaling; Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2

Advantages:
Reputation +3 as famous ace and TV star (15 points)
Status 2 (5 points)
Very Beautiful (25 points)
Very Wealthy (20 points)



Born Amare Sweet in Venice, California, Peregrine had a typical childhood until she was struck by the wild card virus at the onset of puberty. An extremely self-confident young woman, she was determined not tolet her wings ruin her life. Instead, she set out to parlay what was essentially her jokerhood (albeit an extremely attractive jokerhood) into fame and fortune.

She first achieved nationwide fame as "the flying cheerleader" while she was still in high school. She moved to New York after graduating from high school, changed her name legally to Peregrine, and was soon established as a top model.

Guest appearances on television talk shows proved her to be articulate and witty as well as exotic and photogenic. She was given an opportunity to guest-host a popular nighttime show, and eventually took it over permanently, renaming it "Peregrine's Perch." She is also a very successful businesswoman with her own lines of clothing, makeup and perfume. "Peri" is both liked and respected by her fellow aces.

Although happy with her business career, Peregrine also craves excitement and has been involved in numerous dangerous situations. She fought the Swarm and was among the group of aces that destroyed the Astronomer's Cloisters headquarters. It was during this adventure that she met Fortunato, and after a brief affair she became pregnant by him and bore his child, John Fortune, on June 15, 1987.

Peregrine dated many famous men, but never had a serious relationship until she met a freelance documentary maker named Josh McCoy on the WHO-sponsored world tour of 1987. Peregrine, the baby, and McCoy share her penthouse apartment on Central Park. She and McCoy occasionally talk of marriage, but have never taken the plunge. She continues to be a favorite subject of gossip columnists.

Although Peregrine has gorgeous feathery wings and weighs only 80 pounds because of her hollow, but strong, bone structure, her ability to fly is really a form of telekinesis; the wings would not be able to support her weight unaided. However, she has no other telekinetic abilities.

When Peregrine is expecting trouble, she wears specially designed titanium talons that make extremely effective (and showy) weapons.

Disadvantages:

Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Phobia (mild): Oil (-10 points)

Gadget:

Claws: Impaling (Removed with Contest of ST *-30%;* Breakable DR 15, HT 10 *-15%;* 22 points)

Super Advantage:

Flight (40 points)

Skills:

Acrobatics-20 (32 points); Bard-15 (6 points); Brawling-15 (½ point); Carousing-13 (2 points); Diplomacy-12 (2 points); English-13 (0 points); Flying-17 (2 points); Merchant-15 (6 points); Professional Skill (Modeling)-18 (12 points); Professional Skill (Interviewing)-13 (2 points); Savoir-Faire-20 (10 points); Sex Appeal-15 (6 points)

Quirks:

Weighs 80 lbs. due to hollow bones
Wears the most revealing costumes the law will allow
Flirts

Popinjay (Jay Ackroyd)

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: circa 1944
Appearance: Ackroyd is a nondescript man in his mid-forties, slender, just under medium height (5' 8", 145 lbs.), with brown eyes and hair. He generally dresses in old, worn suits and never wears a tie.
Wild Card Ability: Ackroyd is a projecting teleport.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 6
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

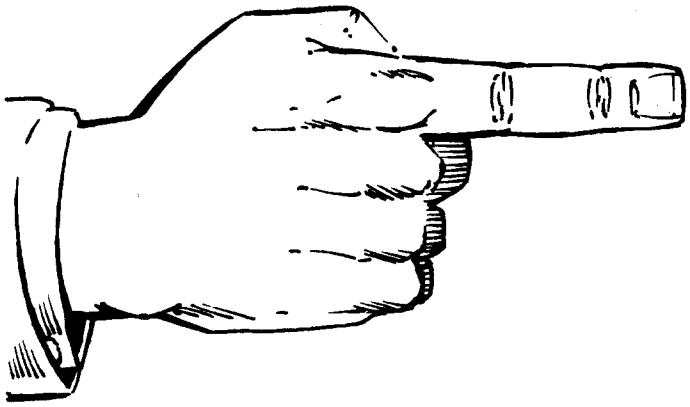
Advantages:
Alertness +3 (15 points)
Empathy (15 points)
Reputation +1 as ace crimefighter (5 points)

Disadvantages:
Pacifism: Self Defense (-15 points)
Poverty: Struggling (-10 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
* Teleport Power 25 (Exoteleport, 200 points)
Exoteleport-18 (Requires "finger gun" gesture *-1;* Can be used to send only *-2;* Destination must be some place that Ackroyd can visualize *-1;* 16 points)

Skills:
Area Knowledge (NYC)-14 (2 points); Criminology-14 (4 points); Detect Lies-13 (4 points); English-13 (0 points); Fast-Talk-14 (4 points); Guns (Pistol)-8 (0 points); Interrogation-13 (2 points); Law-11 (1 point); Lockpicking-14 (4 points); Photography-12 (1 point); Psychology-13 (4 points); Shadowing-14 (4 points); Stealth-12 (2 points); Streetwise-15 (6 points); Traps-12 (1 point)

Quirks:
Never wears a tie



Dislikes guns and won't carry one
Says "pop" when he teleports someone
Dislikes his ace nickname, Popinjay
Constantly wisecracks, even when in great danger

Ackroyd is a private investigator who specializes in divorce and missing persons, though he has had some important and interesting cases in his career. Once he infiltrated the Masons in an attempt to track down the Shakti device. He was captured by the Astronomer, but only mind-scrubbed and then released. He has also worked for Chrysalis and Hiram Worchester; he and Worchester are good friends.

Ackroyd is a projecting teleport. He can *pop* his targets to any place he's familiar with, but he must be able to visualize the destination and then point his right forefinger at his target. This pointing gesture is a psychological crutch, but a necessary one.

Ackroyd is a pacifist who hates violence. He particularly abhors handguns. He is brave and tough-minded, if a touch cynical, and is known for his non-stop wisecracks.

He has a small two-room office on the fourth floor of a dilapidated brick building on 42nd Street, one-half block off Broadway.

Puppetman (Senator Gregg Hartmann, D-NY)

Created by Stephen Leigh
Born: Oct. 3, 1939, Columbus, Ohio
Appearance: Hartmann is a rather plain man of middle height, a bit overweight (5' 10", 170 lbs.) and soft from desk-jockeying. His features are bland, acne-pocked and sallow; his hairline is receding. Despite all this, those who meet him usually speak of him as "strangely handsome" or "compelling."
Wild Card Ability: Hartmann can suppress or amplify emotions in those he takes as "puppets." He also has a strong, unconscious mind-shield.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 15 (60 points) **Speed:** 4.75
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 9 (-10 points) **Move:** 4
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Charisma +2 (10 points)
Reputation +2 as honest politician (10 points)
Reputation +4 among jokers as good friend (10 points)
Status 6 (25 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Bully (-10 points)
Cowardice (-10 points)
Megalomania (-10 poings)
Overweight (-5 points)
Phobia (mild): Aces (-10 points)
Sadism (-15 points)
Secret: Hartman is a vicious ace (-20 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
Telepathy Power 13 (130 points)
Emotion Sense-20 (Only works on puppets or those within a few feet *-2;* 24 points)
Suggest-20 (Only works against those he's had physical contact with *-2;* 24 points)

Skills:
Acting-16 (4 points); Administration-13 (½ point); Area Knowledge (USA)-15 (1 point); Area Knowledge (World)-15 (1 point); Bard-13 (½ point); Diplomacy-12 (½ point); English-

15 (0 points); Law-14 (2 points); Politics-18 (8 points); Psychology-16 (6 points); Savoir-Faire-17 (0 points)

Quirks:

Believes he must feed on emotions regularly or go mad
Very ambitious; wants to be President

Hartmann was a precocious and coddled child. He was overprotected by his parents, who did not encourage him to seek friends or join in neighborhood play. He was used to being utterly pampered and it was not surprising to Hartmann that everyone followed the example of his parents.

He had an unusual liking for violence even when a child. More importantly, he found that he could "encourage" schoolmates to commit violence towards others. He shared in the emotional states of his accomplices as they followed his suggestions. At first this frightened even Hartmann. He would guiltily avoid using his powers for months at a time, but always the need crept back and he would coerce someone else into violence. By puberty Hartmann was a psychic vampire, feeding on the strong emotions of lust, violence and anger. During his brief high school career (Hartmann was always in accelerated classes so that he was younger than those around him), five fellow students died in mysterious and ugly ways. No one ever suspected the involvement of the quiet and likable Hartmann in these deaths.

After high school came college, then Harvard Law School. He moved to New York City immediately after graduation and went into politics after a brief and very successful career as a criminal lawyer. He was a New York City councilman in 1965 and was elected Mayor in 1968. He became a senator from the state of New York in 1972 and was appointed head of the Senate Committee for Ace Resources and Endeavors (SCARE) in 1974, an appointment which he still holds. He was a potential Democratic presidential candidate in 1976, but broke down in public during the Jokertown Riots and then declined to run. He was on the WHO-sponsored world tour of 1987 and was captured by terrorists in Germany. He came out of that experience looking powerful and in total control.

Hartmann is bluff, humorous, good-natured and overtly friendly. He stands four-square for personal rights and freedoms, particularly in regard to oppressed minorities such as jokers. He always seems genuinely interested in and sympathetic to the needs of others. *Don't believe any of that for a second.*

As Puppetman, he can amplify or dampen emotions. To use his ability he must first take his targets as "puppets" by touching them. The contact can be fairly brief, such as a lengthy handshake or a lingering touch, but the longer the contact the better the control. During this contact Hartmann sets up the channels that allow him access to the emotional matrix of the puppet. Once he's set up the access he can manipulate the puppet's emotions without being in physical contact. His effective range weakens over distance, generally going to zero if he's more than a few miles from the puppet. He can control up to five or six puppets at once, but must be within a few yards to handle that many, and such an effort quickly exhausts him.

Hartmann perceives the emotions of others as a visual wash of colors. He cannot read minds and he doesn't have access to his puppets' memories or experiences. He can take any emotional content in the matrix and raise or lower it, but can't make a puppet feel something that's not already there.

The stronger the original emotion, the more Hartmann can enhance it. He can't turn a mild distaste into a murderous rage, but he can take a repressed loathing and make the puppet attack the object of that loathing. Because Hartmann himself is a twisted psychopath, it's only the dark-hued emotions that give him any pleasure.

Hartmann is in constant fear that his secret will be discovered. He also fears aces because any one of them, even if they've never exhibited the ability, might be telepathic and thus able to ferret out his secret. He is an emotional cripple. His own feelings are stunted and he totally lacks any moral sense. He is completely self-centered. His two largest concerns are indulgence of his own whims and protection of his own safety.

Hartmann often thinks of Puppetman as a separate entity who can be hostile to him. This may just be a rationalization on Hartmann's part. Nevertheless, his need to feed on dark emotions has reached the status of a psychological dependency.

He is loved and admired by millions of people, particularly in the Jokertown community. As of 1988, he is seeking the Democratic nomination for the Presidency of the United States.

Quasiman

Created by Arthur Byron Cover
Born: unknown
Appearance: Quasiman is a big, strongly-built (6', 195 lbs.) hunchback with a lame left leg.
Wild Card Ability: Besides being tremendously strong, Quasiman is also a self-teleport.

ST 70 (206 points) **IQ** 5 (-40 points) Speed:6.75
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 16 (80 points) **Move:** 3
Damage: Thrust 8d; Swing 10d

Advantages:

IQ +10 (Unreliable: Activation 14 or less *-1;* 90 points)
Patron: Father Squid, on 9 or less (10 points)

Disadvantages:

Epilepsy (-30 points) (see below)
Lame: Crippled Leg (-15 points)
Poor (-15 points)
Shyness: Severe (-15 points)
Social Stigma: Joker (-15 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:

Teleport Power 14 (140 points)
Autoteleport-16 (20 points)
Exoteleport-10 (1 point)
* ESP Power 10 (30 points)
Precognition-17, on events involving Quasiman only *-4;* passive use only *-3* (1 point)

Super Disadvantage:

Uncontrolled Change, to partially insubstantial form; -2 reaction in others (-30 points).

Skills:

Brawling-12 (2 points); Climbing-20 (32 points); Streetwise-15, 5 (2 points)

Quirks:

Prefers to stay on roofs or window ledges
Usually looks like he is thinking about something else

Not much is known about Quasiman, not even by himself. The virus made him tremendously strong and gave him the

ability to teleport himself, but left him with a strange disability in addition to his obvious physical deformities.

At random times parts of his body and/or brain phase out of the ordinary universe, leaving him in either a precarious physical situation or with the reasoning ability of a moron. Ordinarily an articulate, gentle, but very shy man, he becomes a drooling idiot capable of only the most basic actions when his brain phases out. This condition can last for seconds or for hours for any given occurrence; most observers would assume it was the result of a non-violent epileptic attack.

His origins are unknown. Since the mid-1980s he's been working at Our Lady of Perpetual Misery as handyman and all-around helper to Father Squid. He trusts the Father implicitly and will follow his orders to the best of his often impaired ability.

His teleportation power works instantaneously. Ordinarily he can only teleport himself, but at great risk to himself he can teleport excess mass up to the weight of an average human being. This puts incredible stress on his system and could lead to total dissolution into whatever strange dimension his body and mind periodically visit, piecemeal.

He also has a vague ability to see the future, but he cannot control these visions, and has so far not been able to benefit from his precognitive talent.

Quasiman is a great climber and leaper and often spends his spare time roaming the city skyline — the only place where he can find the peace of mind that eludes him on the street.

Note: Whenever Quasiman needs to do something, roll three dice. On a 13 or greater, some portion of his body is phasing out of this plane of existence. Use the hit location table to find which part of Quasiman is affected and creatively interpret the result.

Queen, Victoria (See *Jokertown Clinic*, p. 86)

Quinn the Eskimo (Thomas Quincey)

Created by John J. Miller
Born: 1946

Appearance: Quinn is tall, lean (6' 1", 165 lbs.), and suntanned. He tends to wear suit jackets with T-shirts that advertise or praise specific drugs or the drug culture of the 1960s.

Wild Card Ability: Besides enhancing his intellect, the wild card has turned Quincey's bloodstream into a seething cauldron of illegal psychoactive drugs, any one of which he can synthesize at will. He can extrude razor-sharp hollow bone needles from his fingertips to inject his own blood into someone else, passing on the effects of whatever chemical or mixture of chemicals is currently raging in his system.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 18 (125 points) **Speed:** 4
DX 8 (-15 points) **HT** 8 (-15 points) **Move:** 4
Damage: Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-2

Advantages:
Acute Taste and Smell +10 (20 points)
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 15 or less (60 points)
Status 1, as Ph.D. (5 points)
Random physical/mental advantage, half the time (see below)

Disadvantages:
Addiction to various illegal substances (-20 points)
Duty: To Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less, at no significant risk of life (-5 points)
Paranoia (-10 points)
Random physical/mental disadvantage, half the time (see below)

Super Advantage:
Can transfer his drug-induced state to others; must touch the subject; his "claws" cannot penetrate anything more than DR1 (20 points). *Note: This advantage is not based on anything in GURPS Supers; it is our "GM call," based on its relative value in game terms.*

Skills:
Biochemistry-20 (16 points); Chemistry-25 (18 points); Carousing-15 (48 points); English-18 (0 points); French-15† (½ point); German-16 (½ point); Poisons-16 (1 point); Research-17 (1 point); Teaching-13 (0 points)

Quirks:
Bisexual
Wears Sixties T-shirts

Thomas Quincey, Ph.D., ex-research chemist and faculty member of SUNY Stony Brook, is head of the research and development arm of the Shadow Fist Society. Fully cognizant of the need for basic research, Kien lets the good doctor poke around into whatever he wants as long as he spends some time dabbling into Kien's two main areas of interest: designer drugs and wild card research.

Quincey has come up with some amazing recreational pharmaceuticals that the Fists have peddled for amazing profits down through the years, but his wild card research has yet to create the loyal, docile aces that Kien is seeking.

Quinn the Eskimo (yes, he gets his nickname from the old Manfred Mann song) is always stoned. At any given moment, depending on his mood and the precise amount of mental control he's retained, his bloodstream is boiling with uppers, downers, heroin, cocaine or any kind of hallucinogenic you'd care to name. He often combines drugs, sometimes in a mutually antagonistic manner. Quinn is therefore often wracked by a rash of conflicting side-effects and can veer wildly from states of euphoria to depression, lassitude to crackling manic energy.

In game terms, once per hour, the GM determines what drug-granted advantages or disadvantages Quinn has. Roll three dice twice. On the first roll, on a 13 or less, he has some disadvantage from the drug; the GM determines this randomly, in any way he pleases, up to and including the finger-pointing-with-eyes-closed method. On the second roll, on a 13 or less, he has some randomly chosen advantage. (Thus, it is quite possible that he will have both advantages and disadvantages.) Anyone he injects will immediately acquire Quinn's current drug reactions, lasting for an hour.

Quinn is not a vicious man. He's devoted to his research and devoted as well to playing in his own little fantasyland. He's intensely loyal to the Fists, whom he knows through contact with Fadeout (Kien wouldn't entrust him with his identity for all the opium in Thailand), because they provide him with nearly unlimited funds to finance his research. And all they ask of him is to produce a few new pharmaceuticals a year — which he'd do himself, anyway — and experiment on a few humans here and there.

All and all, it's a small price to pay for secure funding. And Quinn doesn't even have to worry about publishing boring articles, teaching Chemistry 100, tenure, or any of the other pitfalls of academia.

Sayyid (See *Nur al-Allah*, p. 96)

Schaeffer, Elmo (see *Crystal Palace*, p. 90)

Sewer Jack (John Richard Robicheaux)

Created by Edward Bryant
Born: 1938, Louisiana
Appearance: Robicheaux is a small man (5' 8", 145 lbs.) with brown hair and brown eyes. He's a pretty big 'gator.
Wild Card Ability: Robicheaux is a were-alligator.

Human form:
ST 11 (10 points) **IQ** 11 (10 points) **Speed:** 6.5
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+1

Advantage:
Animal Empathy (5 points)

Disadvantages:
Secret: Only his closest friends know that he is homosexual (-10 points)
Struggling (-10 points)

Skills:
Area Knowledge (NYC streets and subways)-18 (14 points); Brawling-15 (4 points); Cajun French-11 (0 points); Driving (Subway car)-13 (2 points); Electronics (Subway system)-11 (4 points); English-11 (2 points); Mechanic (Subway system)-11 (2 points); Stealth-13 (2 points)

Quirks:
Prefers being underground
Has a secret hideaway in the subway system
Speaks with a Cajun accent
Protective of his niece, Cordelia

Alligator form:
ST 25 (116 points) **IQ** 3 (-60 points) **Speed:** 6.25
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 12 (124 points) **Move:** 4; 7 swimming
Damage: Bite 1d+1 cutting; tail strikes for 1d damage

Disadvantages:
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Bloodlust (-10 points)
Gluttony (-5 points)
Mute (-25 points)
Poor manipulative ability: -5 to DX (-15 points)

Super Advantages:
Amphibious (20 points)
Damage Resistance +4 (20 points)
Extra Hit Points +13 (104 points)
Increased Speed +1 (25 points)
Passive Defense +3 (75 points)
Striker: 1 crushing (tail) (5 points)

Super Disadvantage:
Uncontrolled Change: -4 reaction (-50 points)

Born in Atelier Parish, Louisiana, Jack was reared in a traditional Cajun family that filled his mind with grisly bayou legends. When the virus infected Jack at the age of nine, he found himself with a very specific shape-changing ability, imprinted and limited by the bayou image of the alligator. His immediate reaction was that he had been cursed by God and was a *loup-garou*, a bayou werewolf, in reptilian form.

He ran away to New York City at the age of ten to lose himself in its vastness. He lived on the streets doing odd jobs until the 1960s when he got a job with the NYC Transit Authority in the subway tunnels. Over the years he became a track checker, speeding alone through the dark on a one-man car, inspecting the rails, checking the switches, and generally keeping track of all that happens underground.

In the late '60s he discovered under Broadway, between Murray and Warren Streets, the long-forgotten remaining extension and waiting room for Alfred Beach's pneumatic transit tube. Jack turned the dusty but lavish 19th-century installation into a comfortable hidden sanctuary.

Jack's alligator form is the direct manifestation of his primal mind, the reptile level that deals in powerful emotion and direct stimulus and reaction. The alligator transformation, however, is not an either/or proposition. At any given moment during the transformation Jack is a blend of both human and reptile. The speed and extent of the transformation depends on what triggers the change, Jack's degree of concentration, and the exact circumstances. If frightened by a careless motorist nearly running him down in a crosswalk, for example, Jack may get a little scaly before reining in his emotional/primal response. When he lets it go all the way he's a dangerous nine-foot bull alligator.

Jack is basically one of the good guys, who would like to be left in peace and quiet in his tunnels and underground passages. He is friends with Bagabond, who at one time nourished romantic notions about him before she discovered that he was gay.

In early 1987 Jack contracted AIDS. He is currently at Tachyon's clinic in a half-man/half-alligator state, and seems to be slowly losing ground in his struggle for life.

Sleeper, The (Croyd Crenson)

Created by Roger Zelazny
Born: 1933
Appearance: Varies
Wild Card Ability: Croyd's powers change every time he sleeps. Sometimes he has vast powers, occasionally few or none.

ST varies **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** varies
DX varies **HT** varies **Move:** varies
Damage: varies

Reputation +3/-3 as violent freelance criminal, on 7 or less; most crimefighters react negatively, most criminals with respect (0 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Addiction: Amphetamines (-25 points)
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Phobia: Sleep (-40 points)
Reputation (after 1987) -2 as plague-spreader, on 10 or less (-5 points)

Super Advantage:
Unaging (60 points)

Skills:
Area Knowledge (NYC)-14 (4 points); Brawling-DX+3 (8 points); English-12 (0 points); Gambling-13 (4 points); Lockpicking-14 (6 points); Running-HT (4 points); Savoir-Faire-12 (1 points); Shadowing-14 (6 points); Sleight of Hand-DX+1 (8 points); Stealth-DX+3 (8 points); Streetwise-16 (10 points); Traps-13 (4 points)

Quirks:
Wishes he'd been able to stay in school
Makes bloody threats in a calm voice, and carries them out
Confines his worst violence to fellow criminals

Crenson was a 14-year-old eyewitness to Jetboy's battle with Dr. Tod over the skies of New York City. He was infected September 15, 1946 by the wild card virus, but managed to make it home where he immediately fell asleep for several weeks. He awoke ravenously hungry and also discovered that he had enhanced strength and the ability to levitate. He used his new-found powers to steal food to feed his family.

Crenson quickly realized that this would be the pattern of his life. He would sleep for several weeks and wake up in an entirely new body, usually with some sort of ace power. He soon developed the fear that he'd wake up hideously deformed, diseased, or dying — or that he wouldn't wake up at all. He came to dread sleep as if it were death itself.

When society stabilized after the wild card disaster, Crenson realized that he couldn't return to school, nor could he hold a job. He chose a criminal lifestyle because he could conceive of no other way to support himself and his family. The life of crime then became an ingrained habit that Crenson found difficult to break. He first tried amphetamines when he was 15 in an attempt to prolong his periods of wakefulness, and quickly became addicted. He takes one to stay awake a little while longer, promising himself that this time he won't go too far. Later he takes another, for a little more time, then he loses track and binges.

He goes without pills for the first few days when he awakes, during which time he seems to be a normal, relatively decent fellow who drinks a lot of coffee. He thinks nothing of breaking the law, but will not use his powers to harm anyone. When he takes speed, however, he grows progressively manic and becomes extremely dangerous near the end of his waking period. Finally he crashes, sleeps, wakes and repeats the cycle.

Crenson worked out a survival pattern by the mid-1950s. He maintains numerous apartments about the city, including in Jokertown, paying the rent in advance. His usual routine on awakening is to experiment with his new body to find out what powers, if any, he's drawn this time around. He bathes, shaves, puts on fresh clothing (if he has anything on hand that fits), goes out and buys newspapers and newsmagazines, and heads for a restaurant for a gigantic meal. He reads while he eats, then visits an acquaintance or two afterwards to let them know that he's back in circulation. He then plans and executes a robbery or two to keep up his supply of rent money, ready cash and pills.

He's more sophisticated by the 1980s, having developed some taste in decoration of his numerous hideaways. He has also invested some of his excess loot and usually no longer has to steal, unless the market is bad or unforeseen expenses arise. By this time he's an ace for hire, willing to take on dangerous or outrageous tasks if the money is right.

During his comas he recovers fully from all injuries and usually awakes with abnormally great strength. Depending on what point he's reached in his waking cycle there are times when he is almost noble, times when he's pathetic, and times when he's a raving lunatic.

Note: The Sleeper should be redesigned after every sleep period, using (2d-1)×100 character points. With rare exceptions, his IQ and listed Advantages are always present. Some abilities tend to manifest themselves in most of his forms, especially high ST and DX. He often has a few joker features.

When the Sleeper finally fails his Will roll to resist his Phobia, he will suffer from Paranoia.

Starfin, Sascha (See *Crystal Palace*, p. 90)

Starshine (See *Captain Trips*, pp. 28, 32)

Steele, George (Georgy Vladimirovich Polyakov)

Created by Michael Cassutt
Born: August 24, 1924 in Poroshino, a village in the Altai Mountains of Siberia

Appearance: Short and stocky (5' 5", 160 lbs.), Steele has gray eyes and thin gray hair. He is conventionally good-looking, and appears warm and hearty when he wants to.

Wild Card Ability: Steele can cause people to spontaneously combust within seconds, just by touching them.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 5.75
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

Advantages:
Intuition (15 points)
Luck (15 points)
Strong Will +2 (8 points)

Disadvantages:
Age (-42 points)
Secret: Steele was a KGB agent (-20 points)
Secret: Steele is an ace (-5)
Secret: Steele killed Joseph Stalin (-20 points)
Sense of Duty: To Soviet Union (-10 points)

Power and Super-Skill:
* Psychokinesis Power 33 (Pyrokinesis, 264 points)
Pyrokinesis-14 (No concentration +2; Touch only -2; Only works against animals, including humans -2; 8 points)

Skills:
Acting-14 (4 points); English-13 (2 points); Fast-Talk-16 (8 points); French-11 (½ point); German-12 (1 point); Guns (Pistol)-14 (2 points); Guns (Rifle)-13 (1 point); Interrogation-14 (4 points); Intelligence Analysis-16 (10 points); Russian-13 (0 points); Shadowing-13 (2 points); Stealth-13 (8 points)

Quirks:
Passionate soccer fan

Steele (the name Polyakov took when he emigrated to America) grew up in a Soviet Union torn first by revolution and war, later by famine. His father was killed in the Revolution while fighting for the Reds. A colleague of his father's took an interest in him and helped him finish school and join the Komsomol (Communist Youth League), a prerequisite for eventual Party membership.

When he was 17 Steele entered a metallurgical institute in Magnitorsk to prepare himself for a career in the armaments business. It was here that he first came to the attention of the KGB as he reported on the work of other students and, more importantly, the attitudes of the instructors. He did such a good job that on graduation in 1944 he was recruited by the KGB and was trained as a *zampolit* (a military political officer).

Steele was in the Ukraine fighting rebellious Ukrainian nationalists when the wild card struck. He didn't realize he had the virus until 1947 when he accidentally burned down a cruel interrogator who was torturing an innocent boy.

Even then Steele didn't really know what had happened to him, just that he was different from others. Since all information concerning aces and jokers was censored in the Soviet Union, it would be years before Steele learned what he was.

By then, around 1952 or 1953, he had been assigned to Moscow as a security guard for members of the Party inner circle — including Joseph Stalin. Stalin died mysteriously in March 1953, just as he was getting ready to launch a purge aimed at wild cards. He burned to death, suddenly, spontaneously. No one suspected Steele. He had told no one about his ability.

After further schooling Steele was posted to Berlin in 1954 as an undercover agent. He operated in Western Europe, especially England, France and Germany, until the early 1960s when normal career rotation took him back to Russia. There he was a valuable KGB staff officer, planning insurgencies, evaluating data, and running agent networks. His superiors attempted to force him into retirement in 1987, necessitating his abrupt, and secret, emigration to the United States. He faked his own death, and since only one person (the Russian ace Mólniya, also an agent) knew of his powers even then, that "death" was little noted.

He had met Dr. Tachyon around 1955 or 1956 in Hamburg. He recruited the alien, then little more than a worthless drunk, as a KGB agent, giving him the codename Dancer. Tachyon never did any vital work for the Soviets, mainly because by then he was an alcoholic sot who knew nothing of value, but the potentially embarrassing connection between Tachyon and the KGB remains. The connection has been strengthened now that Steele is the tutor for Tachyon's grandson Blaise. Blaise shows far more respect for Steele than he does for Tachyon.

No matter how critical Steele may be of the failings of the Party and the Revolution, he is devoted to the Soviet Union and the idea of what it may become. He is driven by this idealistic passion for his motherland even when he comes to the United States to begin a new life as George Steele.

Strauss, Jeremiah (the Projectionist, the Great Ape, Mr. Nobody)

Created by Walton Simons
Born: August 17, 1942, New York
Appearance: 5'10", 140 lbs. His physical appearance varies widely.
Wild Card Ability: Strauss is a shapechanger, able to take on the appearance of other men and women, and even imaginary characters.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 11 (10 points) **Speed:** 5.25
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 10 (0 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

Advantages:
Patron: Kenneth Strauss on 6 or less (5 points)
Reputation +1 as the man who was once the Great Ape
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantage:
Lacks basic knowledge of news and events between 1965-1987 (-5 points)

Power and Super-Skills:
Alteration Power 10 (120 points)
Morph-14 (24 points)
Morph Memory-13 (Can use movies to mimic celebrities +4; 36 points)

Skills:
English-11 (0 points); Hobby (Pre-1965 cinema history and trivia)-20 (10 points); Research-12 (4 points); Stealth-14 (16 points); Streetwise-13 (6 points)

Quirks:
Loves movies

Prefers to mimic old film stars
Terrible actor and impersonator (skill-5)
Romantic; no common sense

Strauss was born to wealthy parents in Staten Island, New York. He was fascinated by movies from a very early age and was able to indulge the fascination by having his own screening room in his parent's mansion. By early adolescence Strauss had an encyclopedic knowledge of movies and a rather feeble link with reality.

The initial phase of his wild card power enabled him to mimic male and female movie personalities. He turned his ability into a night club act and became a minor ace known as the Projectionist. While he could mimic the physical forms of his targets perfectly, Strauss was unfortunately a very poor actor who did very bad impersonations.

An abysmal failure at his attempted nightclub career, Strauss suffered a nervous breakdown in 1965. He turned himself into one of his favorite screen personalities, and became a 45-foot-tall ape. He assimilated the extra mass he needed by drawing in electricity and converting it to matter, thereby offhandedly causing the great New York City blackout of 1965.

Strauss was trapped in the body of the Great Ape for over twenty years. No one knew where the ape had come from, and certainly no one suspected that there was a man inside. Housed in the Central Park Zoo, he would periodically re-enact the rigid mental pattern he was stuck in. He would break out of his cage, grabbing the nearest blonde, and climb to the top of the Empire State Building. Whatever aces weren't busy at the time would then beat on him for a while, rescue the blonde, and return Strauss to the zoo.

This continued until 1987, when he was transported to Sri Lanka to play the title role in the epic adventure movie King Pongo. Once again, unfortunately, he managed to break his bonds and run away. This time he escaped into the Sri Lankan jungle, taking with him the blonde starlet who was to play opposite him in the movie. Facing death at the hands of the Sri Lankan army, Strauss was rescued when J.C. Jayewardene realized that he was a man trapped in the body of an ape. Dr. Tachyon helped him regain his human form.

Strauss returned to New York City, a man 22 years out of date, often confused and bewildered by the world around him. Always something of an unrealistic romantic, he decided that his shapechanging abilities would best serve him in the detective business, so he became a PI.

Strauss is finding the going to be rather tough, but in times of dire need he's helped by his brother, Kenneth Strauss, wealthy attorney and partner in the law firm of Latham, Strauss.

He continues to disguise himself with various faces in the course of his investigations, one of his favorites being Humphrey Bogart. He calls himself Mr. Nobody. No one else is aware of the self-applied nickname.

Sui Ma (See *The Shadow Fist Society*, p. 101)

Ti Malice

Created by John J. Miller
Born: early 1950s, Haiti

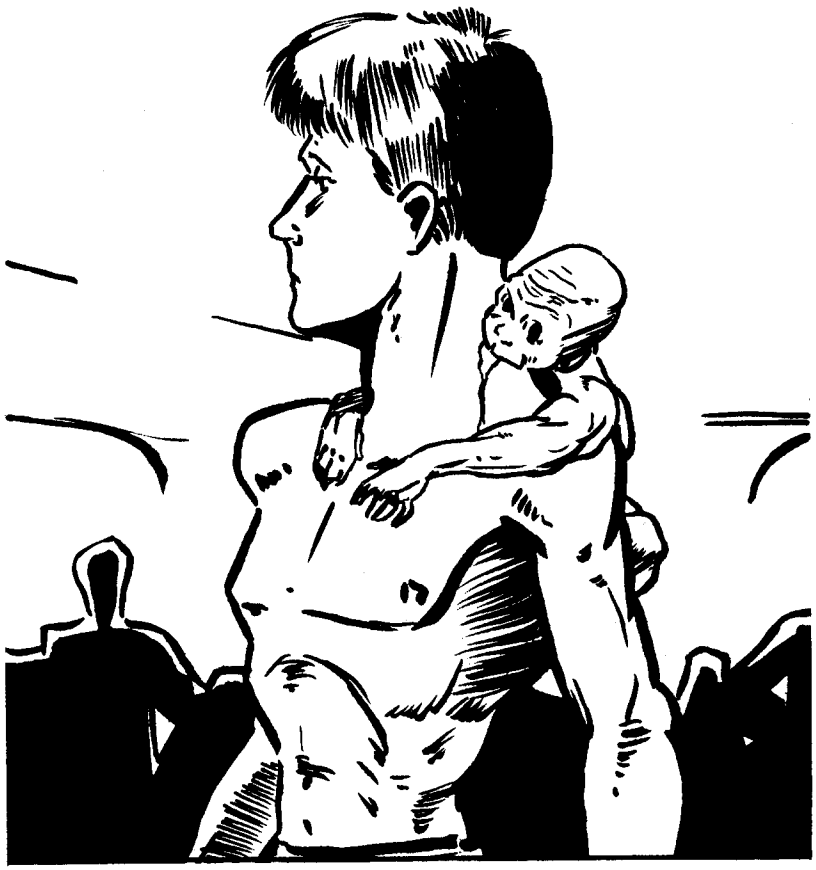
Appearance: Malice is very small, stunted, and skeletally thin (2' 6", 30 lbs.). He has no chin. His mouth is round and his oversized lips are very flexible. He has a single tooth in his upper jaw (a large, sharp, shovel-shaped incisor) and none in his poorly developed lower jaw. His tongue is a bifurcated tube. His eyes are large, dark, and protuberant, his nose is flat. He is hairless, his skin is fish-belly white, and he rarely wears clothes. His legs are pitifully underdeveloped, although his arms have a ropy, cord-like musculature.

Wild Card Ability: Malice has a telepathic link with whomever is hosting him at any particular time. His saliva glands secrete a highly addictive substance that stimulates the pleasure centers of his host's brain.

ST 3 (-60 points) **IQ** 18 (125 points) **Speed:** 3.75
DX 8 (-15 points) **HT** 7 (-20 points) **Move:** 0
Damage: Thrust 0; Swing 0

Advantages:
Eidetic Memory (30 points)
Intuition (15 points)
Patron: Mounts on 12 or less (30 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Addiction: Sensation of all kinds (-20 points)
Cowardice (-10 points)



Dwarfism (-15 points)
Eunuch (-5 points)
Fanaticism (-15 points)
Hideous (-20 points)
Lame: Crippled Legs (-15 points)
Megalomania (-10 points)
Sadism (-15 points)

Note: Some of Ti Malice's "disadvantages" should not be counted for points, because they don't affect him. For instance, he is mute in his own body, but he talks through his mounts. Likewise, though he is a joker, nobody who could hold this against him ever sees him!

Super Disadvantage:

Dependency: Human blood, hourly; indeed, almost constantly (-40 points)

Power and Super-Skills:

Telepathy Power 2 (20 points) (All skills have the following limitation: Requires "kiss" -2)
Suggest-20 (Reduced Fatigue cost +4; 28 points)
Telereceive-18 (4 points)
Telesend-18 (4 points)

Skill:

Psychology-20 (4 points); other skills through his mounts

Quirks:

Calls all his mounts "it"
Speaks tenderly to his victims

Ti Malice was born in the early 1950s in a poverty-stricken hamlet in Haiti. His first host was his mother. His second was the doctor who tried to deliver him by Caesarean section. Ti Malice's understanding of human society was limited his first few years, but he used his high intelligence and animal cunning to survive and eventually thrive.

He eventually rose to shadowy prominence in Haiti, even taking Papa Doc Duvalier as a host. When Duvalier got old and feeble, Malice attached himself to Charlemagne Calixte, head of the dread Ton Ton Macoute, Haiti's secret police. Malice realized, though, that Haiti was crumbling politically and economically, and during the visit of the WHO-sponsored tour to Haiti he took Hiram Worchester as a host. Worchester smuggled him to New York City. Malice brought several of his favorite hosts with him, including Ezili-je-Rouge (see p. 46).

Ignorant about life in the big city, Malice slowly accumulated knowledge, new hosts and wealth. He captured Jane Dow (Water Lily) in the spring of 1987, but she proved to be one of the few to escape his clutches. By late summer he was secure in his new life in New York.

Ti Malice is a totally amoral hedonist whose life is consumed by a search for sensations, pleasurable or painful, that he experiences through his hosts. He regards humanity as a totally different, decidedly inferior species. This belief is amplified by his Haitian background which stresses a belief in *loa,* or divine spirits, which often possess or mount humans during voodoo ceremonies. He regards himself as a *loa* and humans as his mounts, his cattle. He always thinks of his mounts as "it."

His mounts are utterly essential to his continued existence. He has no respiratory or alimentary system, so he must get all of his nutrition and oxygen from their blood. His favorite method of feeding is to climb upon his host's back, pierce his or her neck with his single oversized tooth, and fasten onto the carotid artery. This position also gives him a good vantage point from which to view his surroundings. He feeds by diverting some of his host's blood down one of his tongue tubes. The blood then circulates through his body where it functions as blood normally does.

His telepathic link with his host allows him to communicate with the world and gives him access to the information stored in the mount's mind. Sometimes novice mounts have trouble comprehending him, but experienced mounts can understand his subtlest need or desire. His saliva glands secrete a highly addictive chemical which stimulates the pleasure center of his mount's brain, providing a state of extreme bliss which turns to wracking pain if Malice's "kiss" is denied for too long. This is the carrot and stick with which he controls his mounts.

He "collects" experience and sensation like enthusiasts collect artwork or postage stamps or whatever else their particular passion might be. He is always looking for new hosts and new and pleasurable sensations. He finds aces especially interesting, and loves to collect new ace powers.

Travnicek, Dr. Maxim

Created by Walter Jon Williams

Born: 1931, Lidice, Czechoslovakia

Appearance: Before being struck by the "Typhoid Croyd" version of the virus in 1987, Travnicek was tall, thin, (6' 2", 165 lbs.) and forbiddingly handsome with graying blond hair and thick glasses. He speaks with a harsh East European accent. As of late 1987 he looks very peculiar; see below.

Wild Card Ability: Enhanced genius.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 20 (175 points) **Speed:** 5
DX 9 (-10 points) **HT** 11 (10 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:

Ally: Modular Man on 15 or less (45 points)
Eidetic Memory (30 points)
Strong Will +3 (12 points)

Disadvantages:

Absent-Mindedness (-15 points)
Age (-21 points)
Bad Sight (-10 points)
Bad Temper (-10 points)
Bully (-10 points)
Fanaticism (-15 points)
Greed (-15 points)
Megalomania (-10 points)
Struggling (-10 points)

Super Advantage:

Gadgeteer (25 points)

Skills:

Biochemistry-18 (1 point); Chemistry-20 (2 points); Computer Operation-21 (½ point); Computer Programming-20 (1 point); Electronics (Computers)-25 (7 points); Engineering (Robotics)-25 (7 points); English-18 (½ point); German-18 (½ point); Mathematics-19 (½ point); Metallurgy-19 (1 point); Physics-20 (2 points); Slovak-20 (0 points)

Quirks:
Sloppy housekeeper; lives on junk food
Views Modular Man as a slave
Vengeful in a petty, destructive way
Believes in formal dress at all times
Totally incapable of subtlety (Savoire-Faire-4)

Dr. Travnicek, a brilliant cyberneticist, is the creator of Modular Man (see p. 61). He was formerly on the faculty of (in chronological order) the University of Prague, University of Heidelberg, MIT, Texas A&M, and the Branch University of New Mexico at Tsaile, on the Navajo Reservation, where he failed to last the semester.

He currently resides in a large loft apartment on the Lower East Side. He makes a good living selling inventions and software. The invention and construction of Modular Man was his crowning intellectual achievement.

Travnicek, unfortunately, is a misanthrope, almost a sociopath. He has none of the ordinary human values and is obsessed only with proving his scientific theories correct. Though his ideas are usually basically sound, his aggressive and rude methods of reporting them have earned him a reputation as a crank. His arrogant personality has won him no friends and has resulted in him being dismissed from every institution at which he has taught.

He was stricken by the wild card a second time in the summer of 1987 after exposure to the "Typhoid Croyd" incarnation of the Sleeper. He turned into a particularly odd joker with light blue skin, cilia where his fingers and toes used to be, and a strange cluster of sensory organs around his neck that give him a range of extra-human sensory abilities, most of which Travnicek has yet to decipher. His appetites also became extraordinary; he now eats flies, for instance.

His new form is bad news for Modular Man. Travnicek's metahuman genius was burned away, or at least changed into a totally alien form, by his second infection. He is no longer able to repair his greatest invention.

Troll (Howard Mueller) (See *Jokertown Clinic*, p. 86)

Turtle, The Great and Powerful (Thomas Tudbury)

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: 1944, Bayonne, New Jersey
Appearance: Tudbury is average height, a little on the pudgy side (5'9", 170 lbs.), with glasses, green eyes, and dark brown, curly hair worn collar length. He's most comfortable wearing old blue jeans and sweatshirts or T-shirts.
Wild Card Ability: Tudbury is the greatest telekineticist in the world.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) Speed: 5
DX 10 (0 points) **HT** 10 (0 points) Move: 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantage:
Reputation +4 as the Turtle, one of the world's best-known and most-discussed aces. Tom Tudbury, of course, shares none of this reputation. (10 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Bad Sight (-10 points)
Secret: His Turtle identity (-5 points)
Sense of Duty to those in trouble (-10 points)
Shyness: Mild (-5 points)

Power and Super-Skills:
* Psychokinesis Power 120 (1,200 points)
Telekinesis-20 (Only as the Turtle -2; 28 points)
Note: Outside his shell Tudbury retains a bit of ability: Power 10, Telekinesis-11.

Skills:
Area Knowledge (New York City)-16 (4 points); Hobby (Comic book history)-16 (3 points); Electronics (Sensors)-14 (4 points), (Communications)-14 (4 points), Electronic Operations (Sensors)-14 (2 points); English-14 (0 points); Merchant-12 (½ point)

Quirks:
Cowardly when not in his shell
Loves comic books
Not subtle in word or deed

Tudbury grew up in Bayonne, New Jersey, in a federal low-income housing project. He was a fat, shy, only child who did well in the classroom and poorly at sports. He was tormented constantly and beat up frequently. A lonely, imaginative introvert, Tudbury spent most of his time in his room reading comics and playing with his pet turtles. His TK manifested itself quite early, but he used it in public only once in his childhood, when some bullies shoved him around and killed his pets. It was then he also discovered that his powers deserted him whenever he was nervous or frightened or hurt. Through most of his childhood he used his power as a toy, and then only surreptitiously.

The one person who knew the secret of Tudbury's power was Joey diAngelis, his only real friend. They became close when Tudbury used his TK to save his comic book collection from a hysterical PTA-organized bonfire, and then gave it to diAngelis for safekeeping in his father's junkyard.

Tudbury became the Great and Powerful Turtle in late 1963, spurred by the assassination of John F. Kennedy, an event which made Tudbury realize the need for heroes to stand up for justice and the rights of the oppressed. With the help of Joey diAngelis and the example of the pet turtles from his childhood, he built a shell to protect himself.

This first shell was the hulk of a derelict Volkswagen covered with armor plate salvaged from World War II battleships. DiAngelis did the body work, Tudbury the electrical outfitting that included TV cameras focused outside the shell, a ham radio to monitor police calls, and an amplifier, mike, and speakers to communicate with the outside. Later models were larger, more comfortable, and more sophisticated, with off-the shelf equipment such as refrigerator, radar set, infrared scopes, and a computer to monitor all systems. Armor plating gives them PD 5, DR 100. A shell weighs approximately four tons.

The shell has became an important psychological crutch for

Tudbury. His TK will work only under the most extraordinary situations, and then only very weakly, outside the shell.

DiAngelis's junkyard has served as the Turtle's secret headquarters throughout his entire career. Joey very occasionally goes with the Turtle on a mission, disguised in a frog mask; of course, nobody knows who "Froggy" is either, so that provides no clue to the Turtle's identity.

Tudbury flies the shell with his TK. This has become second nature to him over the years and he has no problem dividing his concentration to keep his shell aloft and use his TK offensively. When in action he simply snatches and lifts his target off the ground. In more dangerous situations he can use his TK to throw things, or even to smash or crush.

He never lets anyone else in his shell and is determined to keep his identity a secret. Although in the mid-1980s Tachyon discovered that the Turtle is Tommy Tudbury, he has no idea who Tudbury is or where he can be found. Tachyon and the Turtle remain friends, with a "tough love" attitude toward each others' faults.

The Turtle has had a long public career. It began in 1963 when he was 19 and continues into the late 1980s. In 1963 Tudbury was an insecure, rather timid adolescent, full of power fantasies and melodrama. His self-applied ace name, The Great and Powerful Turtle, originated in this period. By the late 1980s, Turtle is older and wiser. He has the same ideals, but they've been a little tarnished by experience. He's more confident, but also more cautious. His power has grown through the years, and he's become more accomplished in its use. He has changed through time from a nervous rookie to a flamboyant hot-dog to a tired and mildly cynical veteran.

Nevertheless, he remains committed to his ace career; he faked Tom Tudbury's death for the insurance money to build the best shell yet, and now has no public identity except the Turtle. All his wealth, like his powers and his self-image, is tied up in that steel shell.

Warlock (Peter Nance)

Created by John J. Miller
Born: circa 1953
Appearance: Warlock is a tall, strongly-built man (6' 1", 185 lbs.) No one has ever seen him without a mask.
Wild Card Ability: Warlock claims to have a death-curse power, that is, he simply wishes someone dead and they die within 24 hours. But he's lying. His real ability is to see imminent death on a person's face.

ST 14 (45 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 6.5
DX 13 (30 points) **HT** 13 (30 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d; Swing 2d

Advantages:
Alertness +2 (10 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
Patron: the Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (40 points)
Reputation as a dangerous criminal; +2 to the underworld, -2 to crimefighters (0 points)

Disadvantages:
Duty: To Shadow Fist Society on 10 or less (-10 points)

Powers and Super-Skills
* ESP Power 4 (12 points)
Precognition-16 (Only to see imminent death *-3;* Always on *+2;* 20 points)

Quirks:
Tries to pattern himself after Aleister Crowley
Afraid of mirrors
Always wears a mask, and changes it every few weeks

Skills:
Area Knowledge (Jokertown)-15 (6 points); Brawling-13 (1 point); English-12 (0 points); Fast Talk-12 (2 points); Guns (Pistol)-14 (1 point); Knife-13 (1 point); Leadership-15 (8 points); Occultism-15 (8 points); Psychology-12 (4 points); Stealth-12 (1 point); Streetwise-14 (6 points)

Warlock is the head of the joker street-gang called the Werewolves. No one has ever seen him without a mask, no one knows the precise nature of his jokerism.

He has used his ability as a street-fighter as well as his wild card power to rise to the leadership of the Werewolves. He often finds a pretext to "curse" those whom he knows will die, and then claims credit for their deaths. He's afraid to look at his own face, fearful of seeing death on it. He is morbidly afraid of mirrors, but passes it off as a vampiric affectation. He always wears a mask that is usually the image of a famous person. When he became leader of the Werewolves the rank and file copied this habit and soon it became *de rigeur* for all Werewolves to wear the same mask. Warlock changes his mask every few weeks, sometimes every few days if the mood strikes him, and the rest of the Werewolves follow suit.

Kien believes Warlock's claim of a death-curse power. He definitely doesn't want to deal with him face to face, so usually Fadeout or Loophole acts as intermediary. At the moment Warlock has no ambitions beyond being head of the Werewolves.

Water Lily (Jane Lillian Dow, pronounced "Doe")

Created by Pat Cadigan
Born: April 1, 1965, Fitchburg, Mass.
Appearance: Dow is small, slim (5' 7", 115 lbs.), and attractive, with red hair and green eyes.
Wild Card Ability: Dow can draw the water out of any object and/or living thing to the point of total desiccation. In late 1987 she was also gifted with the ability to cure the wild card virus by being sexually intimate with the sufferer.

ST 8 (-15 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 5.75
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 11 (10 points) **Move:** 5
Damage: Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-2

Advantages:
Attractive (5 points)
Empathy (15 points)
Reputation +1 as an ace (5 points)

Disadvantages:
Impulsiveness (-10 points)
Struggling (-10 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
Liquid Power 10 (90 points)
Control Liquid-16 (20 points)
Dehydrate-12 (Costs 2 Fatigue per use *-1;* 4 points)
Create Liquid-14 (condenses liquid out of the air 0, 16 points)
* Body Control Power 10 (50 points)
Healing-16 (actually cures wild card virus and restores lost HT from symptoms, but affects nothing else *+3;* requires intimacy with patient *-4;*; 22 points)

Skills:
English-13 (0 points); Professional Skill (Restaurant Manager)-11 (1 point)

Quirks:
Power manifests when she is excited, drenching her
Conducts mental conversations with a dead friend
Will never accept anything that she considers charity
Has a crush on Hiram Worchester
Very naive about life in the big city

Dow's power first manifested itself when she was 16 years old. Her best friend committed suicide because she was pregnant, and the father of the baby acted as if her death was of no consequence. This infuriated Dow, who mentally commanded the boy to cry for her friend, and began to draw the water from his body in the form of tears. Dow's friend and confidant, Sal Carbone, helped her to understand her power and what she could do with it. When Carbone died in an accident, Dow decided to make a break with her former life and move to Jokertown.

Upon arriving in Jokertown she was brought to the Astronomer, who tried to recruit her into the Masons. She resisted his attempts to turn her into one of his ace agents, and was eventually rescued when the ace assault destroyed the Astronomer's Cloisters headquarters.

This put her on the Astronomer's hit list. She was present at Aces High on Wild Card Day, 1986, during his assault on the restaurant. The Astronomer tossed her off the restaurant's balcony, but she was saved by the combined efforts of Peregrine and Hiram Worchester. Worchester was attracted to her and offered her a job at Aces High. She rose through the ranks and became restaurant manager, though she never became involved with Worchester personally.

When Worchester returned from the WHO-sponsored world tour, Dow was concerned about his obviously deteriorating physical and mental condition.

When she followed him to his apartment she was taken as a mount by Ti Malice. In her efforts to find some drug to rid herself of the horrible Malice-addiction, she went to the Sleeper while he was in his "Typhoid Croyd" phase and was reinfected by the wild card. During the initial stages of this infection, her addiction to Malice was burned away. When she awoke she found herself with the ability to cure jokers by sexual intimacy. Unable to deal with the horrible pressure this put on her, Dow vanished from sight.

Dow is a very conventional person with traditional values. She believes that people are basically good, and is good and rather naive herself, though rapidly becoming wiser in the ways of the world. She is still looking for personal happiness, and is perhaps more comfortable as plain, everyday Jane Dow than as the potent ace Water Lily.

Whisperer, The

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: unknown
Appearance: Tall and thin (6' 3", 180 lbs.), the Whisperer has a great fondness for masks. He usually wears dark clothing and a hat, and he always wears a mask and leather gloves. He also wears a surgical mask under his regular mask. No one knows what he really looks like.
Wild Card Ability: The Whisperer can transmit the virulent, devastating diseases which continually rage unchecked in his body.

ST 9 (-10 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 7.5
DX 12 (20 points) **HT** 18 (175 points) **Move:** 7
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d-1

Advantages:
Comfortable wealth (10 points)
High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Immunity to Disease (10 points)
Patron: Shadow Fist Society on 12 or less (40 points)
Reputation +4 on a 10 or less, as a deadly foe (10 points)

Disadvantages:
Addiction to painkillers (-15 points)

Super-Advantage:
The Whisperer can infect a victim with a randomly-selected disease by breathing on him. (30 points)

Skill:
Diagnosis-16 (10 points); English-13 (0 points); French-11 (½ point); German-11 (½ point); Intelligence Analysis-14 (6 points); Interrogation-15 (6 points); Spanish-12 (1 point); Stealth-15 (16 points); Streetwise-14 (4 points); Russian-8† (½ point)

Quirks:
Loves masks and buys a lot of them
Won't discuss his past

The Whisperer is a fearful, shadowy presence who works free-lance as well for the Fists. Some say he's an ex-CIA assassin gone out on his own, but no one knows for sure. No one even knows his real name, or what he looks like, or where he came from.

One thing's for sure, though: the Whisperer is a sick man. The symptoms vary, but his body is always a hotbed of contagion. Sometimes he has a hacking cough, sometimes he burns with fever, sometimes buboes swell up beneath his flesh or blood drips from open wounds beneath his clothing. One illness follows the other in endless array, plaguing him with virulent mutant strains of typhoid, malaria, mumps, smallpox, bubonic plague, measles, yellow fever, whooping cough, polio, and a hundred other, many relatively harmless diseases that are transformed into more deadly variants in the seething hothouse of his body. These diseases are highly contagious and immune to existing vaccines and treatments.

When the Fists call upon him, usually through Fadeout, the Whisperer takes off his surgical mask and goes forth to get close to his target. He leans over and whispers something in a hoarse, shuddery voice, giving his victim a good dose of breath and saliva. More often than not that's all it takes. The victim will sicken and die, apparently from natural causes.

The Whisperer keeps a very low profile. He lives somewhere in Jokertown, but no one knows just where. He has a very serious drug habit because of the constant pain that wracks his body. The Fists keep him supplied with all the drugs he needs, from simple street drugs to the most expensive experimental pharmaceuticals.

Worchester, Hiram (Fatman)

Created by George R.R. Martin
Born: 1940, Boston
Appearance: Worchester is huge (6' 2", 375 lbs.), yet astonishingly light on his feet and rather handsome. He's bald and wears a full beard, spade-shaped and neatly trimmed, black shot through with gray. His eyes are brown. He smiles frequently and has small, quick hands. His dress is conservative and expensive, clean, well-pressed and proper.
Wild Card Ability: Worchester can control gravity, effectively making his targets extremely heavy or extremely light as he chooses.

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 13 (30 points) **Speed:** 6.25
DX 11 (10 points) **HT** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d

Advantages:
Charisma +3 (15 points)
Reputation: +2 (10 points)

Sense of Duty to the unfortunate (10 points)
Status 2 (5 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Addiction: Ti Malice (-25 points)
Combat Paralysis (-15 points)
Fat (-10 points)
Gluttony (-5 points)

Power and Super-Skills:
Gravity Power 30 (270 points)
Increase Gravity-15 (Must clench right fist *-1;* Extended Duration × 2 *+2;* 48 points)
Anti-G-15 (Must clench right fist *-1;* Extended Duration×2 *+2;* 48 points)

Skills:
Area Knowledge (NYC)-15 (4 points); Carousing-16 (8 points); Cooking-25 (24 points); English-13 (0 points); Hobby (Numismatics)-16 (4 points); Merchant-16 (8 points); Savoir-Faire-18 (6 points)

Quirks:
Maintains a large and valuable coin collection
Charitable but embarrassed about it; keeps it a secret
Admires aces and finds them fascinating
Always dresses well and speaks very formally
Appears fat but keeps his weight at 30 lbs.

Worchester is the gourmet chef and restaurateur who owns and operates the elite Aces High restaurant on the top floor of the Empire State Building. He was infected by the virus in 1968 and developed the power to warp gravity waves, thus making objects temporarily lighter or heavier by mental command. Worchester also directs his power continuously on himself so that although he masses 375 pounds, he actually tips the scales at 30.

Though Worchester has a formidable ace talent, as a crimefighter he is an excellent cook. He had a brief career as a vigilante under the name "Fatman," but was soon unmasked, and retired in chagrin to devote himself to his career as a chef. He will respond in dire emergencies (very cautiously) or when he thinks he's safe in numbers, and of course attends all the social and honorary functions, but he much prefers to flambé steaks than to fight flaming super-foes.

Hiram is a gentle man at heart, jovial but a little stuffy, romantic, sensitive and insecure. He is easily hurt by insults and slights. He wants to prove himself, but the idea of risking his life terrifies him.

Shy and romantic with women, Worchester is prone to schoolboy crushes. He is still very impressed with aces, movie stars, and other famous people, and Aces High caters to just that clientele. Any ace dropping by for a meal might very well be dragged across the dining room for an introduction to the governor, the latest Broadway star, a best-selling author, or whatever celebrity happens to be on hand. A joker, on the other hand, would probably have to wait a long time for a table in a dark corner by the kitchen, provided he wasn't turned away for violating the Aces High dress code. Yet Hiram's charities to the joker community are numerous, and not as secret as he thinks they are. He is a snob, but he is also a very kind man.

Worchester's personal life took a downturn when he was taken as a mount by Ti Malice during the WHO-sponsored world tour (December 1986). He smuggled Ti Malice to America, and has been under his control ever since. Not only has his health and personal life suffered, but the quality of food and service at Aces High has declined. People are starting to whisper about Hiram Worchester, and what they're whispering isn't very good.

Wraith (Jennifer Maloy)

Created by John J. Miller
Born: 1962

Appearance: Maloy is very tall and slim (5'11", 120 lbs.) with long legs, slight hips, and small breasts. She has short, very light blond hair and light blue eyes. She has high cheekbones, narrow nose, and a delicate mouth.

Wild Card Ability: Maloy can turn insubstantial to the physical world, and can take a few very light items with her.

ST 12 (20 points) **IQ** 14 (45 points) **Speed:** 7
DX 16 (80 points) **HT** 12 (20 points) **Move:** 7
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2

Advantages:
Alertness +1 (5 points)
Beautiful (15 points)
Empathy (15 points)
Wealthy (20 points)

Disadvantages:
Enemy: Kien Phuc and the Shadow Fist Society on 9 or less (-30 points)
Secret: Her identity as the criminal Wraith (-10 points)
Secret: She's stolen several expensive items (-20 points)

Super Advantage:
Insubstantiality (May turn part of her body substantial *+2;* Switchable *+1;* May carry up to no encumbrance *+1;* Costs 2 Fatigue per minute *-1;* 98 points)

Skills:
Computer Operations-14 (1 point); Computer Programming-11 (½ point); English-14 (0 points); Fencing-14 (½ point); French-12 (½ point); Literature-18 (12 points); Merchant-13 (1 point); Research-16 (6 points); Stealth-14 (½ point); Streetwise-12 (½ point); Writing-14 (2 points)

Quirks:
Loves old romantic adventure literature (e.g., Sabatini, Dumas, Mundy, Scott, etc.)
As Wraith, dresses only in a string bikini

Maloy grew up on Long Island, New York, and had a normal middle-class childhood. She was tall and awkward as an adolescent, and therefore shy. She was always bookish, preferring tales of romance and adventure, such as those by Rafael Sabatini and Alexander Dumas. When she got through the awkward teen-age years she grew to be tall and graceful and quite beautiful, though she doesn't really believe it.

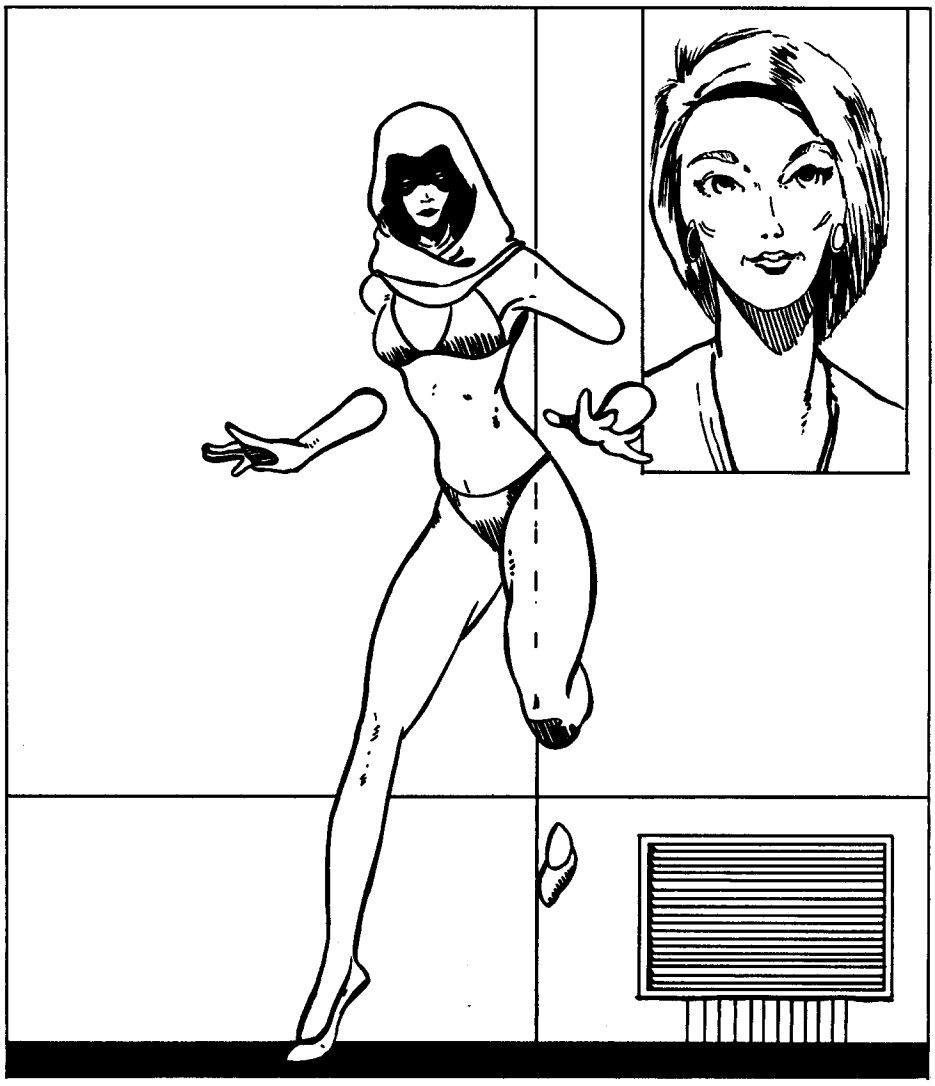
Her love for romantic literature led her to take up fencing. She was quite good in college, placing high in several national tournaments, but lacked the killer instinct to be a champion. After graduate school (Masters in Information Science at Syracuse University) she returned to New York City and got a job as a reference librarian with the public library system.

Maloy had realized the extent of her wild card abilities for some time before she put them to use in the beginning of 1986 as the daring sneak thief Wraith. She chose this avocation more for the excitement and romance she associated with it than any real criminal leaning. Though she obviously profits from her crimes, she donates most of her loot to favorite charities that usually involve battered wives, abused children, or abandoned animals.

As Wraith, Maloy is utterly insubstantial to the material world. Nothing can harm her. She can move like a ghost, soundless and invisible, through anything. Long practice with her ability has enabled her to appear as a misty shade and draw in enough air to talk. She can stay insubstantial for only a minute or two. If she remains a wraith too long, she suspects that she would dissipate and never be able to pull herself together again.

She can transfer her power to a limited extent by touch. Because she can "ghost" only a limited amount of extraneous mass (no more than ten pounds at a time) she wears only a string bikini and mask when ghosting.

On Wild Card Day 1986 she got into a lot of trouble by stealing Kien Phuc's personal diary detailing his secret life as a Shadow Fist crimelord. During the course of the day she also



met, and was immediately attracted to, Daniel Brennan, Kien's avowed enemy. In order to save Brennan's life she partially destroyed Kien's right hand, thereby making a bitter, lifelong enemy. Though she and Brennan saw each other off and on for the next couple of months, their relationship never developed because Brennan was hesitant to draw her into his violent and often dangerous vendetta against Kien. Despite Brennan's best intentions, however, Kien penetrated Maloy's secret identity, and gave Brennan the option of ceasing his war against the Shadow Fists or someday finding her dead. Brennan chose Maloy over revenge, and the two of them left New York City in the summer of 1987.

Despite being introduced to the seamy side of life in the course of her escapades, Maloy is still a romantic at heart who enjoys excitement and adventure. She loves Brennan with a burning passion; the air of danger about him is part of what attracts her, as is his rather hopeless crusade against the Shadow Fists. She is not herself a violent person. Violence frightens her. Blood and gore sicken her. But she will do what she has to do to aid Brennan in whatever way she can.

Wyrm (See *The Shadow Fist Society*, p. 101)

Wyungare (his child name was Warreen)

Created by Edward Bryant

Born: 1968, Australian outback

Appearance: Wyungare is an Australian aborigine. He is slim and muscular (5'9", 135 lbs.) with dark skin, curly black hair, dark hooded eyes, a broad, flat nose, and high, sharp cheekbones.

Wild Card Ability: Wyungare can enter the dreamtime at will.

ST 12 (20 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 8
DX 14 (45 points) **HT** 14 (45 points) **Move:** 8
Damage: Thrust 1d-1; Swing 1d+2

Advantages:
Alertness +2 (10 points)
Common Sense (10 points)
Handsome (10 points)
Strong Will +2 (8 points)

Disadvantages:
Dead Broke (-25 points)
Primitive: TL 2 (-25 points)
Sense of Duty: To aborigines (-10 points)

Powers and Super-Skills:
* Body Control Power 20 (Astral Projection, 100 points)
Astral Projection-14 (Affects others *+4;* Physical body is not left behind *+4;* Travels to the dreamtime only 0, 52 points)

Skills:
Aboriginal-12 (0 points); Area Knowledge (Australia)-14 (4 points), (Dreamtime)-15 (6 points); Boomerang-13 (1 point); Running-11 (1 point); English-11 (1 point); Spear-13 (1 point); Survival (Desert)-16 (10 points)

Quirks:
Calls Anglo women "Missy"
Downplays his intelligence
Believes in return of the aboriginal lands, but is not fanatic

Wyungare (which means He Who Returns to the Stars) was the only child of the Aranda tribe to survive after an outbreak of the wild card virus. He and his family were hated by the others as a result of this good fortune and they left the tribe and moved to Melbourne, where Wyungare had a normal childhood.

At puberty, however, he realized that he could enter the

Aboriginal Dreamtime at will, and even bring others there if he desired. The Dreamtime is the land of Aboriginal ancestors, the land that they consider the origin of all things.

Wyungare is part of an organization that wants to remove the Europeans (i.e., anyone with white skin) from Aboriginal lands, but he is not violently fanatical about his beliefs. While in the town of Alice to attend a gathering, or corroboree, he met Cordelia Chaisson who was in Australia to conduct business for Global Fun and Games. Together they traveled to the Dreamtime and upon Ayers Rock, or Uluru, they fought the *murga-muggai*, a spider creature created by the wild card, who could also move through the Dreamtime at will.

Wyungare and Cordelia became lovers, but it is too soon to know if their relationship will become permanent.

Yeoman (Daniel Brennan)

Created by John J. Miller

Born: circa 1949, New Mexico

Appearance: Brennan is average-sized (5' 10", 175 lbs.), with dark, coarse hair, dark eyes, and darkly tanned skin. His hands are unusually large and powerful. He usually dresses very casually in denim, T-shirts, and running shoes. As Yeoman he wears a full-face mask. In late 1986 he underwent plastic surgery to give his eyes epicanthic folds.

Wild Card Ability: None

ST 15 (60 points) **IQ** 12 (20 points) **Speed:** 12.25
DX 18 (125 points) **HT** 15 (60 points) *Move:* 12
Damage: Arrow 2d+1 impaling; Thrust 1d+1; Swing 2d+1

Advantages:

Alertness +4 (20 points)
Combat Reflexes (15 points)
High Pain Threshold (10 points)
Reputation +2/-2 as ruthless Yeoman, on 10 or less (0 points)
Strong Will +5 (20 points)

Disadvantages:

Compulsive Behavior: Leaves Ace of Spades as a calling card (-10 points)
Enemy: Kien Phuc and the Shadow Fist Society on 9 or less (-30 points)
Secret: Brennan is a U.S. Army deserter (-15 points)
Sense of Duty: To friends and companions (-5 points)
Vow: To destroy Kien Phuc (-10 points)

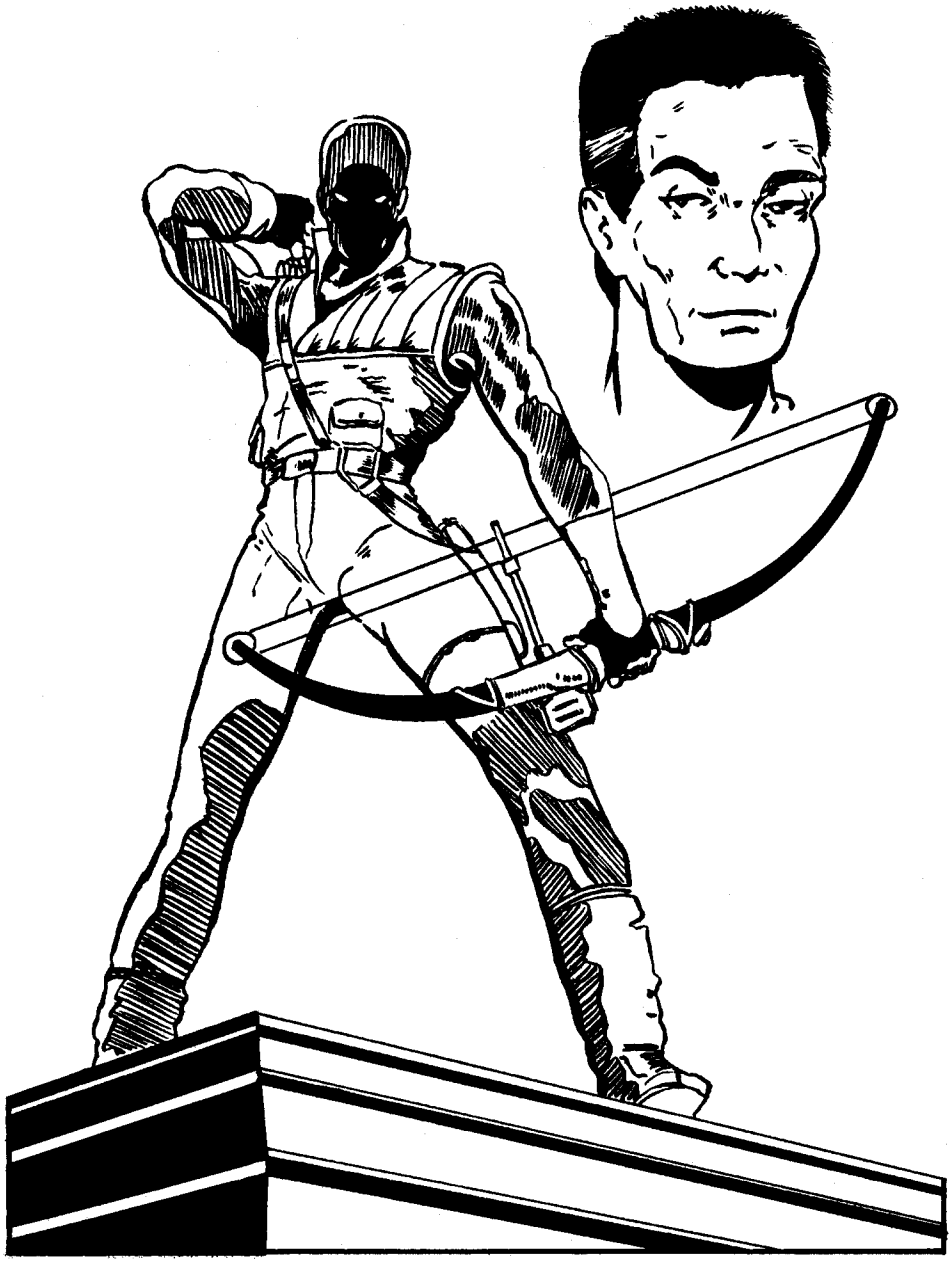
Super Advantages:

Increased Speed +2 (50 points)
Trained by Master (40 points)

Super Equipment

Explosive Arrows Power 10 (Generic Crushing Missile, 60 points)

Arrow-20 (Explosive Effe3ct *+3;* Limited Use: 4 per day *-2;* Unreliable: Activation 11 *-2;* 16 points, $200 each)

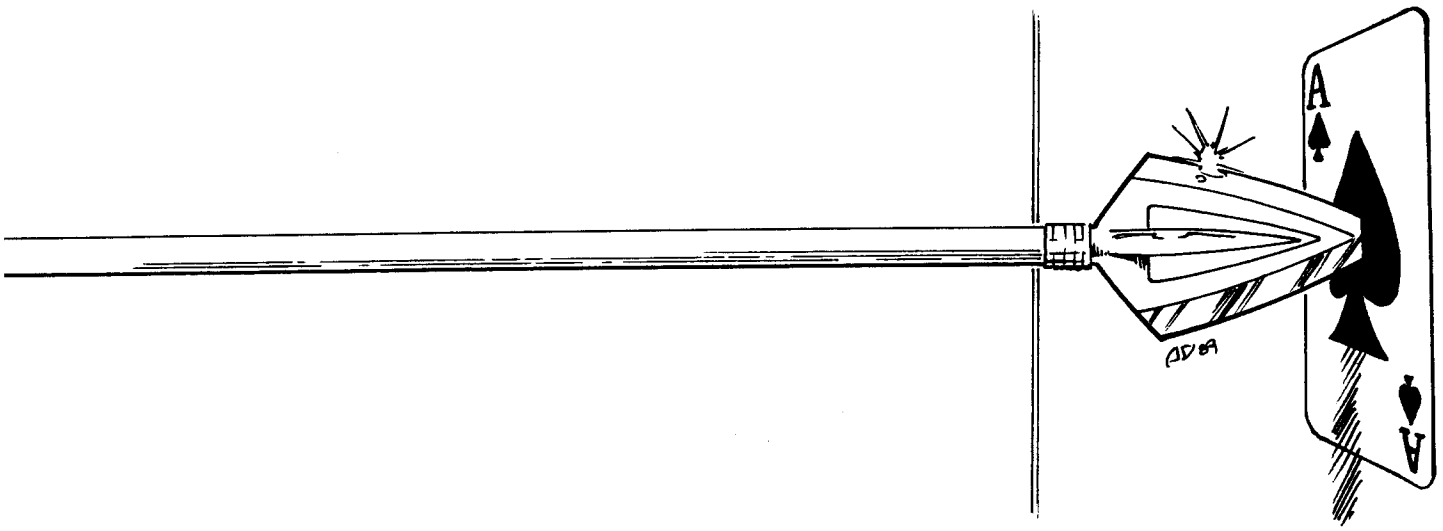


Skills:

Armory (Bowyer)-18 (14 points); Bow-25 (56 points); Cantonese † (½ point); Demolition-12 (2 points); English-12 (0 points); Fast Draw (Arrow)-18 (1 point), (Bow assembly)-18 (1 point); Fast Talk-14 (6 points); First Aid-13 (2 points); French-8† (½ point); Guns (Pistol)-19 (½ point), (Rifle)-19 (½ point); Hobby (Horticulture)-13 (2 points); Japanese-9† (½ point); Karate-15 (½ point); Knife-17 (½ point); Leadership-14 (6 points); Parachuting-17 (½ point); Philosophy-14 (6 points); Piloting (Helicopter)-16 (½ point); Running-14 (2 points); Spanish-7† (½ point); Stealth-18 (2 points); Strategy-11 (2 points); Streetwise-15 (8 points); Survival (Jungle)-16 (10 points), (Forest)-14 (6 points); Tactics-14 (8 points); Tracking-16 (10 points); Vietnamese-11 (1 point); Zen Archery-14 (16 points)

Brennan enlisted in the army in the late 1960s and served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1975. He was an enlisted man during his first tour and was promoted to sergeant on a battlefield commission. He then attended officers training school and eventually became a captain in charge of a long range reconnaissance unit. When he first went to Vietnam he was extremely idealistic. By the end of his first tour he was determined to become an officer to more effectively protect the men under him, and also to work more effectively for freedom and justice for the Vietnamese people.

In 1974 he met and married Marie Duc Do, a French-Vietnamese girl. In the early



1970s he also began to run afoul of Kien Phuc (p. 58), an ARVN general who, Brennan was convinced, was involved in almost every conceivable criminal enterprise.

Brennan was right about Kien. At one point he had enough evidence to implicate Kien in everything from smuggling heroin into the United States to selling military secrets to the North Vietnamese, but Kien ambushed Brennan's unit, killed most of his men, and stole the documents Brennan had accumulated as evidence. Brennan still tried to get Kien cashiered, but his insistence in pursuing Kien nearly led to his own court-martial.

A provoked Kien sent assassins after Brennan. They botched their hit and killed Brennan's wife, who was pregnant with their first child. Brennan escaped and went after Kien personally, but, as this was occurring during the confusion of the Fall of Saigon (1975), Kien escaped and eventually immigrated to the United States where he is outwardly a respectable businessman and secretly the head of the Shadow Fist Society.

Brennan, meanwhile, had become utterly disillusioned by the way the military had handled the Kien affair, as well as their incredible disorganization and utter lack of compassion and loyalty during the debacle of the Fall of Saigon. He walked away from the army in total disgust, and spent the next few years wandering around the Orient, selling his military skills and generally living hand to mouth. In the early 1980s he knew that he needed direction in his life, and became a novice in a Zen monastery. By his own admission he was never one of the better students. He wanted to divorce himself from the world, but it quickly became apparent that a life of prayer and contemplation was not his particular pathway to Enlightenment. He did, however, exhibit phenomenal skill in the Zen approach to archery.

He decided to return to the United States in 1983. An ex-Tiger Scout comrade named Minh helped him return and hid him in his New York City restaurant for several days while Brennan explored possibilities about his new life in the U.S. Brennan eventually moved to the Catskill Mountains where he led an isolated existence living off the land; he earned money making handmade bows and arrows. In the early summer of 1986 Brennan received a letter from Minh telling him Kien was in the city.

Brennan returned to New York in time to see his old friend being tortured by Kien's thugs. Before Minh died, he told Brennan that Kien's men had kidnaped his daughter, Mai, to exploit her ace healing ability. Brennan rescued Mai and in doing so met Chrysalis, who became his lover, and Fortunato, who became his friend and comrade in the fight against the Swarm Mother. Brennan also met and came to respect Dr. Tachyon during the Swarm episode.

Soon after the transformation of the Swarm Mother, Brennan met Jennifer Maloy (Wraith). He was immediately attracted to her, but was reluctant to drag her into his violent life. In late fall of '86 he finally broke off his affair with Chrysalis, who wouldn't commit herself to him.

He went underground, adopting the identity of a soldier of fortune named Cowboy, and joined the Shadow Fists in an attempt to link Kien to their crimes. He rose fast in the organization, working under Philip Cunningham (Fadeout) and with the ace named Lazy Dragon. As Cowboy, he took part effectively (and murderously) in the war against the Mafia, saving Fadeout's life in a raid, and penetrating a Mafia gang-lord's fortress in a solo operation.

He blew his cover, however, to save Tachyon's life when the Fists took over the alien's clinic. Soon afterward he confronted Kien face to face and was told that Jennifer Maloy would be killed if he didn't give up his vendetta. In the summer of 1987 he chose love over revenge, and he and Wraith left the city.

Brennan cares about people and just causes. He tried to ignore that part of himself when he became a hermit, but couldn't. He tried to deny the network of ties and obligations he found himself drawn into, but couldn't. He feels deep personal responsibility about what he perceives as his failures (e.g., Kien's continued freedom).

Brennan is a hunter, comfortable in the night and the shadow. He is a master archer, and a compound bow is his weapon of choice. He eschews trick arrows, preferring four-vaned razor-sharp broadheads, but sometimes uses explosive arrows (hollow aluminum tubes packed with plastic explosive with pressure sensitive detonator caps on their tips) even though they are aerodynamically unstable. Brennan carries his bow, in knocked-down form, in a briefcase which is never far from him; he can open and assemble it in a couple of seconds.

He is very skilled with his hands and with guns (the Browning High Power is his handgun of preference). He is a master stalker and tracker, as quiet as death and as remorseless. He has a harsh idea of justice, and will not hesitate to kill when he feels it's necessary, though he gets no pleasure from killing and feels an accumulated guilt as more and more people fall at his hands. He doesn't consider himself a hero in any sense. He is simply a man alone with a job to do, a job that no one else wants. He is a man of unshakable loyalty.

His love for Jennifer Maloy and his growing sickness at the death and destruction that surrounded him ended his attempt to bring Kien to justice. He is, however, a patient man, and he feels that someday he will find the opportunity to bring Kien down.

Note: To properly reflect Brennan's speed in combat, use the Optional Rule: Multiple Actions on p. SU79.

HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHIES

Castro, Fidel

Wild Cards Biography

One of Cuba's most promising baseball players, Fidel Castro was signed to a minor league contract by the Washington Senators in 1948. He was traded to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1950 and pitched for them for 17 years. He was traded back to the Senators in 1966 and finished his career as an active player in Washington. At the start of the the 1969 season he was reunited with ex-teammate and new Dodger manager Pete Reiser, as Dodger pitching coach, a position he still holds.

Castro is a genuine national hero in Cuba. The owners of the Havana Sugar Kings have tried to sign him as manager numerous times, but Castro refuses to lend his name to the franchise because its owners have ties to the corrupt Mafia power-structure that runs Cuba.

Real Biography

Castro failed in his tryout with the Washington Senators and went on to law school rather than a baseball career. By 1952 he was the leader of the underground opposition to Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. He waged guerrilla warfare against the corrupt and repressive Batista regime for seven years, finally toppling the dictator in 1959. Once strongly supported by the United States, he gradually embraced Communism and turned to the Soviet Union. He's been the leader of Cuba for 30 years now.

Churchill, Winston

Wild Cards Biography

It is whispered that Churchill is the recipient of a benevolent ace, since, as of 1988, he is an incredible 114 years old and still going strong. Though becoming more shrunken, wrinkled and crabby year by year, Churchill is incredibly active for a man his age and his mind has shown no sign of diminishing in scope, clarity or sharpness. He last served as Prime Minister in 1974. He officially gave up the position on his one-hundreth birthday while pithily observing that he'd given the Crown enough of his life and energy, now it was time to have some fun. He is still a considerable power behind the scenes in British politics. It is largely through his skillful diplomacy that the British Commonwealth has maintained a central position as a world power, and also through his efforts that many former British Colonies in Africa and Asia were smoothly guided to political independence while maintaining close cultural, social and economic ties to Mother England.

Real Biography

Sir Winston Churchill died in 1965, having last served as British Prime Minister from 1951 to 1955.

Franco, Francisco

Wild Cards Biography

As commander of the fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War, he crushed the republican opposition with aid from Germany and Italy. David Harstein (the Envoy) talked him into resigning his dictatorship in 1948, and accompanied him until he was settled in exile in Switzerland. A bewildered Franco soon came to his senses and attempted several times to return to power in Spain, but never succeeded.

Real Biography

Franco held Spain in an iron grip until his death in 1975.

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand

Wild Cards Biography

Mahatma Gandhi was saved from assassination by the American ace Black Eagle (Earl Sanderson, Jr.) in 1948 when the ace deflected a bullet meant for the Hindu political and spiritual leader. Gandhi was the most powerful political leader in India during her first few years of independence. Although a Hindu, he showed restraint toward all other religious groups on the subcontinent. India was partitioned in 1948, but Gandhi never accepted the creation of Pakistan as an independent state. After the death of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Gandhi brought about a reconciliation that returned Pakistan into a decentralized India. Because of Gandhi's peaceful philosophy, the All-India Congress Party did not forcibly subjugate those provinces that declined to join the Hindu state. India therefore went on much as it had under the Raj, subdivided into a tapestry of small kingdoms based on religious, cultural, and geographic lines, united only by courtesy under a weak and ineffective central government in New Delhi.

Real Biography

There was no Black Eagle to step between Gandhi and the assassin's bullet. He died in 1948. Pakistan and India were never reunited, and bitter religious conflicts have resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people over the last forty years.

Guevara, Che

Wild Cards Biography

In the late 1950s, Che led the Cuban revolution against the corrupt Batista regime in Cuba. The revolution failed and Che died under mysterious circumstances in 1965. There were rumors that he was assassinated by secret CIA aces, and Che became a martyr to the American left in the 1960s. Batista's family still retains nominal control in a corrupt and repressive Cuba. Havana is an international sin city controlled by the Mafia, particularly the Gambione family. See p. 99.

Real Biography

Guevara helped Fidel Castro lead the Cuban revolution to its successful completion in 1959. He was a member of the Cuban Cabinet until 1965, when he resigned his post and went to Bolivia to foment revolution. He was captured by Bolivian troops after a year of guerrilla warfare and executed in October, 1967.

Peron, Juan Domingo

Wild Cards Biography

Argentinian dictator Juan Peron was the strongest of the fascist colonels who overthrew the Argentinian government in 1943. He was overthrown in turn in 1946 by direct intervention by the Four Aces. He fled to Portugal, and, unwanted there, moved on to China where he became military advisor to Chiang Kai-shek. He fled to Taiwan with the Chinese Nationalists when the Communists took over the mainland.

Real Biography

Worsening economic conditions in Argentina led to Peron's expulsion in 1955 in a *coup d'etat.* He spent the next 18 years in exile, but returned to Argentina in 1973 to serve as President. He died in 1974.

4 ON THE TOWN

New York, the site of the original wild card release, remains the city with the largest population of both aces and jokers, and it's the setting for the majority of the *Wild Cards* stories. It is still a rich tapestry of museums, nightclubs, zoos, shops where one can buy nearly anything, and restaurants fit to serve any palate or pocketbook. Add to this the romance of Aces High and the spice of the dangerous and bizarre that is Jokertown, and the Big Apple becomes a very interesting place indeed.

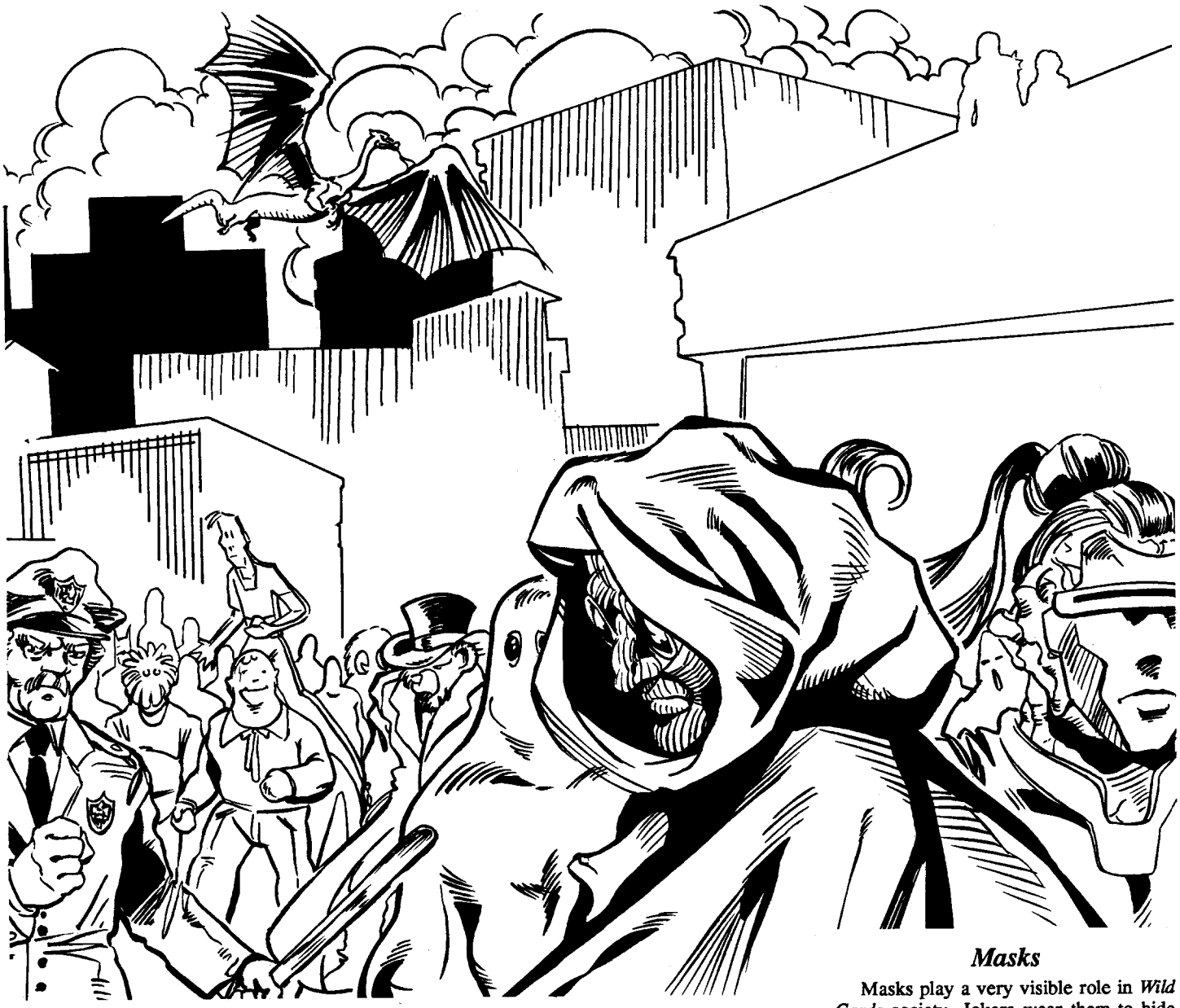
Any introduction to the New York of the *Wild Cards* universe should start at its twisted but very human heart: Jokertown.

A Walking Tour of Jokertown

Like many Manhattan neighborhoods, Jokertown doesn't have clearly defined boundaries. It can best be described as being located from the Bowery to the East River, which separates Manhattan from Queens. It encompasses the neighborhood once known as the Bowery and a good portion of the district once called the Lower East Side. It is bordered by Chinatown, Little Italy, SoHo, and the East Village on the west, Stuyvesant on the north, and the district called Downtown on the south.

In the second half of the 19th century the Bowery had fine restaurants, hotels, theatres and bars. It declined into seediness and vice long before the wild card came, and for a long time has been home to many hopeless derelicts who live on its narrow, twisting, garbage-choked streets. The Bowery was one of the least desirable sections of the city, so it was only natural that the new least desirable class — the jokers — gathered there and made it their own.

The Bowery is still crowded with restaurants, hotels, theatres and bars, most of them run by jokers for jokers, but a certain percentage of businesses cater to the tourists who come to gape at the unfortunate victims of the wild card. There are dozens of cheap gift shops cluttered with



merchandise of questionable taste. There are also an abundant number of mask shops, some of which cater to local clientele, some of which are strictly tourist traps. The most famous, expensive and tasteful mask shop in Jokertown is Holbrook's, owned by Charles Dutton.

The Lower East Side was once the ethnic heart of New York. Waves of immigrants — European, Jewish and Chinese — lived in the teeming tenements of that district. This is now largely the residential part of Jokertown, where jokers — and also poor nats — raise their families as best they can. This area is less trod by tourists, and the locals are less apt to put up with guff from the few nats who wander in.

It is not a dangerous place, though. If the Bowery is the devouring mouth of Jokertown, where poor damned souls make money by exploiting each other and those who come to stare , the East Side is Jokertown's soul. It is where people have their homes, where they're building a community. Most of the stores are of the Mom and Pop variety. Most of the bars are neighborhood bars, frequented largely by locals. There are exceptions, but for the most part the well-known nightspots, clubs and dens of iniquity will be found in the Bowery district, along with those unfortunate jokers who have lost home, pride, and in many cases sanity.

Masks

Masks play a very visible role in *Wild Cards* society. Jokers wear them to hide their deformities, aces wear them to hide their identities, and nats visiting Jokertown wear them in the fond belief that they're "blending in." Actually, as Dorian Wilde once observed, spotting a nat in a mask is as easy as spotting a hooker in a nun's habit. You can put a mask on your face, but it's very difficult to successfully mask your attitude, and jokers and nats usually have quite different outlooks on life.

Masks come in all styles, materials and prices. There are dozens of mask shops in Jokertown, from cheap tourist traps which sell the junk that's mass-produced in Taiwan, to specialty shops like Holbrooks, which sells one-of-a-kind creations that can cost several thousand dollars apiece.

One Jokertown street gang, the Werewolves, all wear the same style mask, which is usually a full-face reproduction of a famous politician or entertainer. The "official" mask changes from day to day, at the whim of the chief Werewolf, a joker named Warlock (see p. 75).

Jokertown Clinic

The Jokertown Clinic is the informal name for the Blythe van Renssaeler Memorial Clinic, located on South Street overlooking the East River. It is named after Blythe Stanhope van Renssaeler, member of the Exotics for Democracy and Tachyon's lover, who suffered a mental breakdown when Tachyon injudiciously took control of her mind while she was being examined by the HUAC.

The Clinic opened September 15, 1966 and is a 196-bed hospital housed in a historic waterfront building originally constructed in 1874. The purchase of the building and a complete interior renovation was funded by George C. Stanhope, Blythe van Renssaeler's father.

The first priority of the clinic is treatment of jokers (for any ailment, but specializing in problems related to the wild card itself) and continuing research into the wild card virus with the hope of perfecting a cure or "trump virus." See p. 20.

Tachyon spends a fair amount of time at the Clinic going on rounds or conducting research, assisted by a complete staff of doctors, nurses, aides and research technicians. Clinic staffers include Dr. Victoria Queen, Chief of Surgery, Dr. Bradly Latour Finn, and Howard (Troll) Mueller, Chief of Security.

Dr. Queen (see sidebar) is a nat with a cutting and acerbic wit which she frequently uses on Tachyon. They work together well, however, and she has been a dedicated, loyal staffer at the Clinic for many years.

Dr. Finn (see sidebar) joined the staff in early 1986 as its first-ever joker doctor. Born into a wealthy southern California family, Finn is a palomino-colored centaur. His pride and joy is his magnificent white tail which he carries in a proud arc that sweeps nearly to the floor. He is young, well-adjusted to his jokerhood, and an excellent doctor with good medical skills and an easy, empathetic bedside manner.

Howard Mueller (see sidebar) is the Clinic's head of security. Mueller, who is usually called "Troll," is nine feet tall and incredibly powerful. His skin is green and thick enough to stop small arms fire. He is intelligent, yet shy and reticent.

Jokertown Clinic Staff

Dr. Bradly Latour Finn

Appearance: Dr. Finn is a palomino-colored centaur with a small, pointed face, blue eyes and long, white, curly hair that forms a mane. He has a magnificent white, floor-length tail of which he is very proud.

ST 12, DX 14, IQ 13, HT 13

Advantages: Handsome, Comfortable Wealth, Empathy, Reputation (Jokertown only): +1 as joker who made good and returned to help his people

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness, Duty (-10 points, to the Clinic), Social Stigma (joker)

Skills: Diagnosis-15, Fast-Talk-12, Physician-15, Psychology-14, Surgery-16

Wild Card Ability: None

Dr. Victoria Queen

ST 11, DX 11, IQ 13, HT 11

Advantages: Reputation +1 in Jokertown and in NYC medical circles, as a good doctor

Disadvantages: Duties (-10 points, to the Clinic)

Skills: Administration-12, Diagnosis-15, Physician-16, Psychology-11, Surgery-16

Wild Card Ability: None

Troll (Howard Mueller)

Appearance: Troll is nine feet tall with tough, thick, green skin.

ST 66, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 14

Advantages: Reputation +1 as a formidable public joker/ace,Toughness (DR 8)

Disadvantages: Ugly, Duty (-10 points, to the Clinic), Gigantism, Social Stigma (joker)

Skills: Brawling-13, Diplomacy-13, Literature-14, Streetwise-15

Wild Card Ability: Troll has enhanced strength and tough, armor-like skin.

The Famous Bowery Wild Card Dime Museum

Located on Bowery Street in the Bowery district, the Dime Museum (admission now only $2.50) was converted to a wild card museum in the early 1960s. It began as a rather small museum with waxwork exhibits of the Four Aces, Tachyon, and Jetboy and embalmed "monstrous joker babies," but by the mid-1980s moved to high-tech animatronic dioramas like "Earth vs. the Swarm" and authentic Turtle shells. Charles Dutton (see p. 44) is the quiet, behind-the-scenes owner.

Our Lady of Perpetual Misery

The church dedicated to Jesus Christ, Joker, is located on Orchard Street on the Lower East Side, among a region noted for its small shops and street merchants. It was once a Catholic church that had been abandoned in the mid-1950s when neighboring parishes were combined. It had been empty for some time, until Father Squid purchased it in the late 1970s, refurbished it, and reconsecrated it to the sect of Jesus Christ, Joker. There is a tiny graveyard in the back where many jokers are buried. Father Squid (p. 48), who lives in the attached cottage, remains head priest of his little parish, although he has several junior priests (male and female, but all jokers) to help him. Quasiman (p. 66) is the church's handyman and all-around secular assistant.

Jokertown Precinct

Popularly known as Fort Freak, the Jokertown Precinct is the old Bowery 5th Precinct. Captain John F.X. Black was in charge of the precinct from the early 1980s to September 1986 when it was revealed that he was part of the Astronomer's Masonic conspiracy.

The current captain in charge of Fort Freak is Angela Ellis. Born in 1949 in Pusan, Korea, Ellis was adopted by First Lieutenant (later Major General) Lowell P. Ellis and his wife, Marcia. She was raised an army brat and has no interest in her Asian heritage. She is a driven workaholic, only the second woman captain in the NYPD. She chain-smokes and means to give it up "real soon now." She has a smoker's cough and drinks several gallons of coffee a day. She studies kenpo karate, has a marksman's badge, and a sharp and vicious tongue. She has won two citations for bravery and was once wounded in the line of duty.

Ellis is quite aware that some old-line cops consider her a "woman in a man's job." She is very correct in attitude, very cognizant of the legalities, and technologically savvy. She isn't the sort to authorize legal wiretaps and will come down hard on anyone guilty of using incorrect procedure. She was assigned to Fort Freak because Captain Black proved dirty, and she's vowed to clean up the place if she has to bust the chops of every cop in the precinct.

Curiously enough, there are only two joker cops in the Jokertown Precinct. They are also the only two joker cops in the whole NYPD. One, nicknamed Sgt. Mole, is in the records division. The other is Detective Second Grade Harvey Kant.

Kant was born in 1941, and became a joker the first Wild Card Day. His body is hairless, brown in color, and scaled. He looks like a 5' 8" humanoid lizard. He's fast and strong (though not outside the human range). His eyes have nictating membranes and his teeth are sharp and pointy. He was a buddy of F.X. Black, and for that reason Captain Ellis distrusts him. He's a tough, stand-up guy. With Black in charge he often stepped over the line, but now he generally toes it. He's won three citations for bravery, been shot twice, and has shot a dozen people in the line of duty, killing several of them. He's not a dirty cop, but he sometimes ignores the legal niceties. He lives alone in Jokertown and doesn't socialize outside of the police fraternity.

Jetboy's Tomb

While it is actually located outside of the Jokertown boundaries, no tour of the sights of Jokertown would be complete without a visit to Jetboy's Tomb. (By the way, can you guess the answer to the child's riddle: "Who's buried in Jetboy's Tomb?").

Overlooking the Hudson River in the Downtown district of Manhattan, Jetboy's Tomb fills the entire block where the pieces of his plane had rained down on September 15, 1946. The tomb is fronted by a broad marble plaza with a twenty-foot-tall steel Jetboy statue overlooking the West Side Highway and the Hudson beyond. The metal used for the sculpture came from crashed planes. Behind the statue is the tomb itself, its flanged wings curving upward as if it were about to take flight. Inside is a single great chamber, and hanging from the ceiling is a full-size replica of JB-1, Jetboy's plane, its flanks aglow from the light cast by hidden spotlights.

Jetboy's last words are carved above the tomb's doors, each letter chiseled into the black Italian marble and filled in with stainless steel: "I can't die yet, I haven't seen *The Jolson Story.*"

Jokertown Precinct Officers

Captain Angela Ellis

Appearance: Ellis is 5' 1" tall and has shoulder-length black hair and green eyes.

ST 10, DX 14, IQ 12, HT 13

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers, Strong Will (+3)

*Disadvantages:*Addiction (Tobacco), Honesty

Skills: Administration-13, Criminology-14, Guns (Pistol)-14, Interrogation-12, Karate-14, Law-14, Leadership-15

Wild Card Ability: None

Detective Second Grade Harvey Kant

Appearance: Kant has a scaled, hairless, brown, lizard-like body. He is 5' 8" tall, has sharp, pointy teeth, and his eyes have nictating membranes.

ST 17, DX 15, IQ 11, HT 14

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (+5), Reputation (He's tough and not afraid to use physical force)

Disadvantages: Social Stigma (joker)

Skills: Area Knowledge (Jokertown)-16, Broadsword-14 (for nightstick), Brawling-13, Criminology-14, Guns (Pistol)-13, Law-10, Streetwise-15

Wild Card Ability: Kant has tough skin that acts as armor, giving him DR 6.

Sports and the Wild Card

Like the unofficial color line in professional baseball that prevented blacks from playing pro ball, the owners of all professional sports teams are party to a "gentleman's agreement" which effectively bans everyone carrying the virus from pro sports. This also holds true for the Olympics.

Before signing a contract with any professional sports team, the prospective athlete must show negative on the test which checks for the presence of the virus, unexpressed or not, in their genes.

Anyone can participate in amateur sports (other than the Olympics), as long as they have no outward signs of jokerhood or exhibit any ace powers. Billy Ray, for example, played several years of college football unaware that he was an ace. Amateur athletes who are suddenly discovered to be jokers or aces are generally not dismissed from their team, but they rarely get any more playing time once their wild card heritage is revealed.

The only "sport" that permits joker participation is professional wrestling. Some of the most flamboyant and outrageous professional wrestlers are victims of the wild card. Of course, joker wrestlers are closely monitored so that nobody too powerful can sneak into the profession. Not that professional wrestling matches are often decided by the strength or skill of the participants, anyway!

Popular Entertainment

A campaign will always feel more realistic if the characters have lives apart from their adventures. Here's some information about the popular culture of the *Wild Cards* world.

Baseball in the *Wild Cards* Universe

Like everything else in the *Wild Cards* universe, baseball history has that same strange sense of familiarity turned to a slight angle.

The major leagues consisted of 16 teams in 1946, eight in the American League (New York Yankees, Boston Red Sox, Philadelphia Athletics, Chicago White Sox, Cleveland Indians, Washington Senators, St. Louis Browns, and the Detroit Tigers) and eight in the National League (New York Giants, Brooklyn Dodgers, Cincinnati Reds, Boston Braves, Philadelphia Phillies, St. Louis Cardinals, Chicago Cubs, and Pittsburgh Pirates).

The inevitable dislocations of economic power and population density in America caused franchise shifts through the decades. In 1953 the Boston Braves (N.L.) moved to Milwaukee and became the Milwaukee Braves; in 1954 the St. Louis Browns (A.L.) moved to Baltimore and became the Baltimore Orioles; in 1955 the Philadelphia Athletics moved to Kansas City and became the Kansas City A's; in 1958 the New York Giants moved to Minneapolis and became the Minnesota Giants (adopting Paul Bunyan as their mascot and logo).

The first wave of expansion occurred in 1961. The American League placed two teams in Texas (the Houston Rangers and Dallas Cowboys). The National League claimed California with the Los Angeles Stars and San Francisco Seals.

The next wave of expansion in 1969 also saw realignment of each league into two divisions. The American League East consisted of the Yankees, Red Sox, Senators, Orioles, Indians and the expansion Havana Sugar Kings. The American League West consisted of the White Sox, A's, Rangers, Tigers, Cowboys and the expansion California Angels, located in Anaheim. The National League East teams were the Dodgers, Reds, Pirates, Cubs, Phillies and the expansion Montreal Expos. The National League West was the Stars, Seals, Braves, Giants, Cardinals and the expansion Atlanta Peaches.

The American League added two additional teams in 1977: the Toronto Blue Jays (Eastern Division) and Seattle Pilots (Western Division).

The Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Yankees were the greatest teams of the 1950s. Both saw their fortunes diminish in the 1960s, though the Dodger fall was faster and steeper. Their stars (among them Fidel Castro and Pete Reiser) had aged and not been replaced. By the early-1960s they were a joke. In 1969 Pete Reiser returned to manage and Fidel Castro returned to coach an incredibly talented young pitching staff, and the Dodgers stunned the baseball world by climbing from last place to a world championship in one year. They dropped back a little the next year, but rose to dominate the National League throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The Washington Senators were the most formidable American League team from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s. They had indifferent pitching but an awesome offensive array that included players like Joshua Grimes, Harmon Killebrew, Rod Carew, Tony Oliva and Frank (Capitol Punisher) Howard.

Star players who should be mentioned include Tom Seaver (366 lifetime victories, all with the Dodgers), Pete Reiser (greatest outfielder of the 1940s and 1950s), Willie Mays (who played out his career in Minneapolis with the Giants and fell thirty homers short of breaking Ruth's lifetime mark) and Josh Grimes (who broke Ruth's single season mark with 63 homers for the 1969 Senators).

Of course, no one exhibiting any manifestation of the wild card virus is allowed to play any professional sport.

Rock Music

For some reason it seemed that there were more aces among rock stars than any other segment of the mid-1960s population. Perhaps people with the ability needed to thrive in the world of rock'n'roll had the ace mindset, or maybe it was that those with the proper ace powers gravitated toward the entertainment field. Some of the ace rock'n'rollers had the ability to project dazzling displays of light. Others made strange, extravagant music without need of instruments. Many played mindgames with the audience by means of illusion or straight emotional manipulation, and the head-trip master of them all was Tom Marion Douglas, the Lizard King.

Douglas was the lead singer of Destiny, a group known for dark, brooding music that whipped even the most placid of audiences into a screaming, hysterical frenzy. Concerts got even more frenzied when Douglas took his Lizard King aura onto himself. He would seem to grow larger than life, and replace his face with the features of a giant king cobra, complete with flaring hood, flickering black and menacingly. A dark aura would wash over the audience with an elusive, variant effect that touched each listener differently. Some onlookers were lifted to the pinnacle of ecstasy, other fell into the pit of despair. Some saw what they most desired, others stared straight at their darkest hidden fears.

But Douglas eventually burned out on the rock-star existence. He took Tachyon's experimental cure, and was one of the lucky 20% on whom it worked. He retired as a star and an ace, but his health deteriorated rapidly. His overuse of drugs and alcohol had achieved such heroic proportions that only his ace endurance had kept him alive, and without it he was dead within six months. He died of pneumonia in a seedy Parisian hotel in the fall of 1971.

There were others to carry on, however. Buddy Holley returned from utter obscurity with an amazing performance at the AIDS/Wild Card Benefit at the Fun House in the summer of 1987, and became the shaman of rock. C.C. Ryder, folk singer and social activist of the late 1960s, also began her musical comeback at the '87 Fun House benefit.

The Aces Jingle

The "Aces Jingle" is hardly music or even poetry, but it's often heard when the conversation turns to aces. It is made up of bits of doggerel verse about aces and their powers. The jingle sums up some of the better-known characters in a few words each . . .

If it's Demise, don't look in his eyes.

Sleeper waking, meals taking.
Sleeper speeding, people bleeding.

Golden Boy ain't got no joy.

Turtle's shell hides him well.
Ace or joker, who can tell?

Shadow turns out the lights before he fights.

When Cyclone comes out to play
He blows them all away.

J.J. Flash burns you to ash.

Don't bug Popinjay —
you'll be far away.

Howler's yell raises Hell.

Peri, Peri, spread your wings,
Show us all those pretty things.

Aces Magazine Supplement

A Guide to Dining and Drinking in Wild Card New York

A Personal Survey by Digger Downs, July 1987

As an ace reporter for *Aces Magazine*, I don't have time to cook or do dishes because I spend all of my waking hours running down hot stories for inquiring readers like you. Because of this dedication to my craft, I've eaten in more restaurants, clubs and bars than Dr. Tachyon has funny jackets. I've dined with such luminaries as the beautiful Peregrine, the justly famous Cyclone and his lovely daughter Mistral, and have learned the secrets of gustatory science from the great gourmet himself, Hiram Worchester. While I don't like to brag, I want to assure my faithful readers that I can tell chicken-fried steak from chicken cordon bleu. My faithful readers should also be aware of my unimpeachable journalistic integrity. My judgment cannot be swayed, bribed or bought in any way. You can trust me to tell the truth. Your palate and your checkbook are in good hands.

– *Digger Downs*

Aces High

Food: ♠♠♠♠
Service: ♠♠♠♠♠
Atmosphere: ♠♠♠♠♠
Cost: **very expensive**

The place to go in New York City to see aces and dine on superb food is Hiram Worchester's Aces High. Located on the 86th floor of the Empire State Building, Hiram's dining palace has been a luxurious treat for nats and aces alike since it opened in the spring of 1971.

Take the express elevator from the lobby of the Empire State Building to the Aces High foyer, a room with gleaming marble floors and walls hung with autographed photos of politicians, sports figures, prize-winning authors, actors, aces, astronauts and celebrities of all sorts. The cloakroom is off to one side, the double-doored entrance to the restaurant itself is off to the other. The long curved bar and the fabulous art deco chandeliers (refurbished since the horrible disaster of Wild Card Day, 1986) dominate the main dining room.

The doors to the Sunset Terrace are open on warm evenings. Watching the sun go down while sipping a vintage Dom Perignon from Aces' celebrated cellar is a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

The sad truth, however, is that the quality of the food has slipped recently, though still notable are the roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, fresh seafood, Baked Alaska, and of course the ever-astonishing dessert cart. The spectacular view from the terrace can't be beat, and the waiters are as prompt, formal, and (if you ask me) as snooty as always.

Aces High is open every day from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m., except September 15 when Hiram has his annual aces-only soiree. All public aces are invited to the party, and there are even tables for those shy folks who maintain secret identities. All you have to do to join in the fun is show some kind of ace power. Your faithful reporter has tried repeatedly to join the festivities, only to be turned away, along with such gate-crashers as a woman who stated that she was in telepathic contact with her goldfish, an old gentleman who said he time-traveled in his sleep, and a teen-ager who claimed to be immortal.

One last thing. Bring your plastic when you visit Aces High. The quality of the food may have slipped a little, but the prices are as high as always. You don't want to be caught walking around New York City at night with the wad of cash you'd need for the average dinner, unless of course you're as invulnerable as Golden Boy or as rich as Cyclone.

Crystal Palace

Food: ♠♠
Service: ♠♠♠
Atmosphere: ♠♠♠♠
Cost: **inexpensive to moderate**

The Crystal Palace, located on Henry Street, is owned by the mysterious crystal lady known only as Chrysalis. You can't miss her. She's the one with the British accent sitting in the corner sipping her amaretto. The one with the invisible skin and sexy bones.

The food is no more than average bar food, running toward adequate sandwiches, some pretty fair fish and chips served with vinegar oil and wrapped up in old copies of the *Jokertown Cry,* and blandly inedible meat pies. The Ploughman's Lunch – available only in the afternoon – is rather tasty with good crusty bread, fresh cheese and meat, and tart pickled onions. Chrysalis does serve generous drinks and if you have an adventurous palate, do try some of the English beers she has on tap.

But you don't go down to the Crystal Palace in the heart of Jokertown to eat and drink. Not really. You go for the sights that are unique to that part of the city.

First there's Chrysalis herself, as fascinating a result of the virus as ever walked the streets of the Bowery. Physically she's utterly transparent, but otherwise she's totally opaque. Nothing is known of her past – except, excuse me Chrysalis, sometimes her accent slips into a twangy drawl – but it's said she knows everything that goes on in Jokertown. She lives on the third floor of the Palace, and in fact rarely leaves the building.

Elmo Schaeffer is a fixture at the front door. Elmo's about four feet tall and four feet wide, and while he's no Golden Boy (who is?), he keeps the rowdies under control easily enough. He often teams with Sascha Starfin, the distinguished-looking, eyeless bartender. Sascha's got a telepathic talent that tells him just how much vermouth you like in your martini, and also lets him make sure no one's

spoiling for trouble. If anyone is, he gives Elmo the high sign and the dwarf bounces him.

Also seen frequently around the Palace is Lupo, the canine-headed bartender, and Jube the Walrus, a newsboy who's a Jokertown fixture. He usually comes into the Palace after he closes down his newsstand to sell a few papers and have an exotic rum drink. The sight of a five-foot blue walrus in a Hawaiian shirt sipping a pina colada from a coconut is not one to be soon forgotten.

You can never tell who else might show up at the Palace. The atmosphere is sedate, the ambience quiet, the decor somber and solid. The taproom is full of 19th-century British antiques. The private booths off the main taproom are heavily curtained by brocaded velvet hangings. Private rooms are available if you need an even more discreet setting for your rendevous.

On the whole, the Crystal Palace is a quietly sedate class act. It's one of the most important fixtures of Jokertown. Now if only Chrysalis would do something about the unsightly rubble next to her Palace.

Dead Nicholas

Food: ♠♠♠
Service: ♠♠♠
Atmosphere: ♠♠♠♠, **if you like this sort of thing**
Cost: **average; can be expensive if you wander into the back room.**

Club Dead Nicholas (formerly Nicholas King's Mortuary) is a private dining club located in a former crematorium. Of course, if you're not a member you can apply at the door for a mere $50 application and processing fee. Your membership card will be delivered to your table, and your first drink will be compliments of the house.

The back rooms are given over to card games played on closed-casket gaming tables. The decor is rather unusual, with mordant stained glass windows, chi-chi mechanical bats, and hologram ghosts that tend to peer annoyingly at you as you play your hand. It's customary to get to know one of the regulars and have him formally introduce you to the other gamers. Not, of course, that anyone at Club Dead Nicholas would take advantage of a newcomer.

Food and drink can be found in the lounge, which has a spacious dining area with windows draped in black. The waiters are pale jokers in shrouds, the tables are open caskets covered by heavy glass. Each coffin has a ghoulish figure – supposedly waxen – in it. The wall to the crematorium has been removed and is now an open grill where you can watch your steaks being flambeed by demonic-looking joker cooks.

Specialities of the house are their fine charcoaled steaks and blackened seafood. Drink specials are (of course) a Zombie that'll knock your eyes to the back of your head and a very tasty Bloody Vampire (a Bloody Mary served with a small wooden stake in place of the celery stalk).

As the Sleeper would say, if this is Friday it must be Dead Nicholas.

Freakers

Food: ♠
Service: ♠♠
Atmosphere: ♠♠♠
Cost: **moderate**

If you're feeling adventurous, if you're the type who likes your thrills sprinkled with the faintest hint of danger, leave the kids (and maybe the wife) at home and head for Chatham Square and Freakers.

The doorman's a joker. A six-foot-tall, six-breasted neon-sign stripper forms the door, which you enter through her wide-open legs. The bar's cheap hewed-wood planks, the lighting dim, and more neon signs pattern the tattily-papered walls.

The food runs to microwave sandwiches and the drinks are watered, but the acts playing continuously on the cylindrical revolving stage – if your taste runs to what can be rather graphic adult entertainment – is second to none.

A special caveat emptor, however: Things are not always what they seem at Freakers. Be sure of what you're buying before you pay for it.

The Funhouse

Food: ♠♠
Service: ♠♠
Atmosphere: ♠♠♠
Cost: **moderate to inexpensive**

The Funhouse, owned by Xavier Desmond since the mid-1960s, is one of Jokertown's oldest and most loved watering holes. The fabulous mirrored main room is almost worth the price of admission in and of itself, but the Funhouse has the added attraction of being the pinnacle of the joker cabaret circuit. Over the years it has hosted all the famous joker nightclub acts.

It must be admitted that the Funhouse has fallen on hard times of late, what with the public's taste in entertainment turning from homey singing and juggling acts to the excitement provided by such places as Freakers, but good old Des, the unofficial mayor of Jokertown, has vowed to keep his Jokertown landmark open for as long as he shall live.

Jokers Wild

Special Report

It's difficult to write a review of a place I've never been, but it's also impossible to leave Jokers Wild, the legendary black cabaret of Jokertown, out of these pages, if for no reason other than a warning to our readers. And don't ask me how I've learned the following. All I can say is that I am a journalist, and I have my sources.

Jokers Wild convenes nightly in Rat's Alley. The only thing that keeps the cops from busting it is the fact that the location of Rat's Alley changes each night. The doorman – to use the term loosely – is called the Gatekeeper. He has a body like a bag of rejected potatoes, covered by a sacklike garment of black silk with a white ruff at the neck and ruffles at the end of his sleeves. His face is handsome, unlined, but very stiff. If you look closely (unlikely as it is that you'll get the chance), you may see a network of fine wrinkles embossed in the skin. The face is a mask made of human skin, flayed, so the Gatekeeper has claimed, from the face of a clown.

It's whispered that the Gatekeeper keeps Jokers Wild in a collapsible frame that he carries with him under his cloak. When the sun goes down he slips around a corner, out of sight of everyone, and slaps his frame on a wall. Then he opens the door into a pocket dimension, a snug little franchise of Hell that he calls Jokers Wild.

The Gatekeeper doesn't let everyone in. It's whispered that he can see souls, and he never lets innocence past the door. Jokers Wild is about damnation, and you need a touch of sin to get in. You don't need a lot. Just a little crawling worm of self-hatred, self-disgust. That's all it takes.

Once you get in, though, it's something of a come-down. Tacky is the word. It's all black and white, like some low-budget 1950s television drama. The low ceilings are dropped acoustic tile. The carpet is tattered dacron salt-and-pepper, the lights are flickering, eye-itching two-foot-long vertical fluorescent lamps flickering in tin sconces along the walls. The tables (free-standing round ones and booths by the walls) are decked out in black and white checkerboard cheesecloth and are crowded a little too close together for comfort.

The smoked glass mirror behind the bar is cracked, and covered with what seems to be some kind of black blight. To the left (as you enter) is a hardwood stage raised a half meter off the floor. Stage right and stage left are small doorways covered with black curtains with little sparkles in them.

Waiters and waitresses circulate in severe black and white uniforms. They range from beautiful nat youths and girls to the grossest jokers. They change at random, and no one knows where they come from. Who'd admit to working at Jokers Wild?

The entertainment starts when the Gatekeeper mounts the stage and whips off his stolen face. Behind it is his real flesh, gray and malleable and dead, totally lacking facial muscles. He starts the show by molding a hideous smile on his face with his gloved fingers and shouts out the tag line of Jokers Wild: *Is everybody hurting?*

The entertainment flows from prepared acts – musicians, standup comics, etc. – to impromptu audience participation. Anyone who goes in Jokers Wild is fair game for humiliation, disfigurement, torture or death, except a few favorites of the Keeper.

The head bouncer is safe. He's called Moon Goon. He's six-foot-eight and has the complexion of untinted jello. He's bulky, round-faced, and blurry in outline, as if he has no bones. He has a low forehead with short, crinkly black hair growing low in a widow's peak. He can talk, somewhat. Mostly he giggles. He jiggles when he walks. He's rumored to be able to reach inside people and pull out their skeleton. He mostly lurks in shadows near the bar.

Dorian Wilde, Jokertown's poet laureate, and frequent habitué of Jokers Wild, is another of the safe ones. He's in his late 30s, six-foot-two, and was handsome once but is now rather bloated. He affects Edwardian dress, and likes to wear lace at his wrists. His right hand is a mass of mottled green tentacles that exude a putrid ichor. He cannot control the tentacles, which stir continually. Of indifferent cleanliness, he wears strong body washes to mask his aroma. Sometimes he takes the stage to read one of his trenchant poems, or perhaps a canto from his monumental work-in-progress, *Ballad of the Living Sheol*. He is a genuine celebrity, with a tart and brittle wit and a languorous manner that verges on effeminacy. Perhaps the Gatekeeper keeps him safe because he gives Jokers Wild a certain respectibility, perhaps he simply appreciates him as a fellow artist.

The Gatekeeper, I have heard, is an energy vampire. He thrives on emotion, the rawer the better. He's also a gourmet who orchestrates each evening's events to reach a crescendo of devastating horror. The cabaret itself is a vest-pocket universe. Maybe the Gatekeeper made it. Maybe he found it. Maybe it found him.

He serves liquor and all the trendy snacks. The jukebox contains all the latest hits. Where he gets his supplies is as mysterious as where his help comes from. There's no cover and he charges the lowest prices in town for food and drink. All it may cost for a night in Jokers Wild is your soul.

Squisher's Basement

Food: **0 aces**
Service: **0 aces**
Atmosphere: **0 aces**
Cost: **inexpensive**

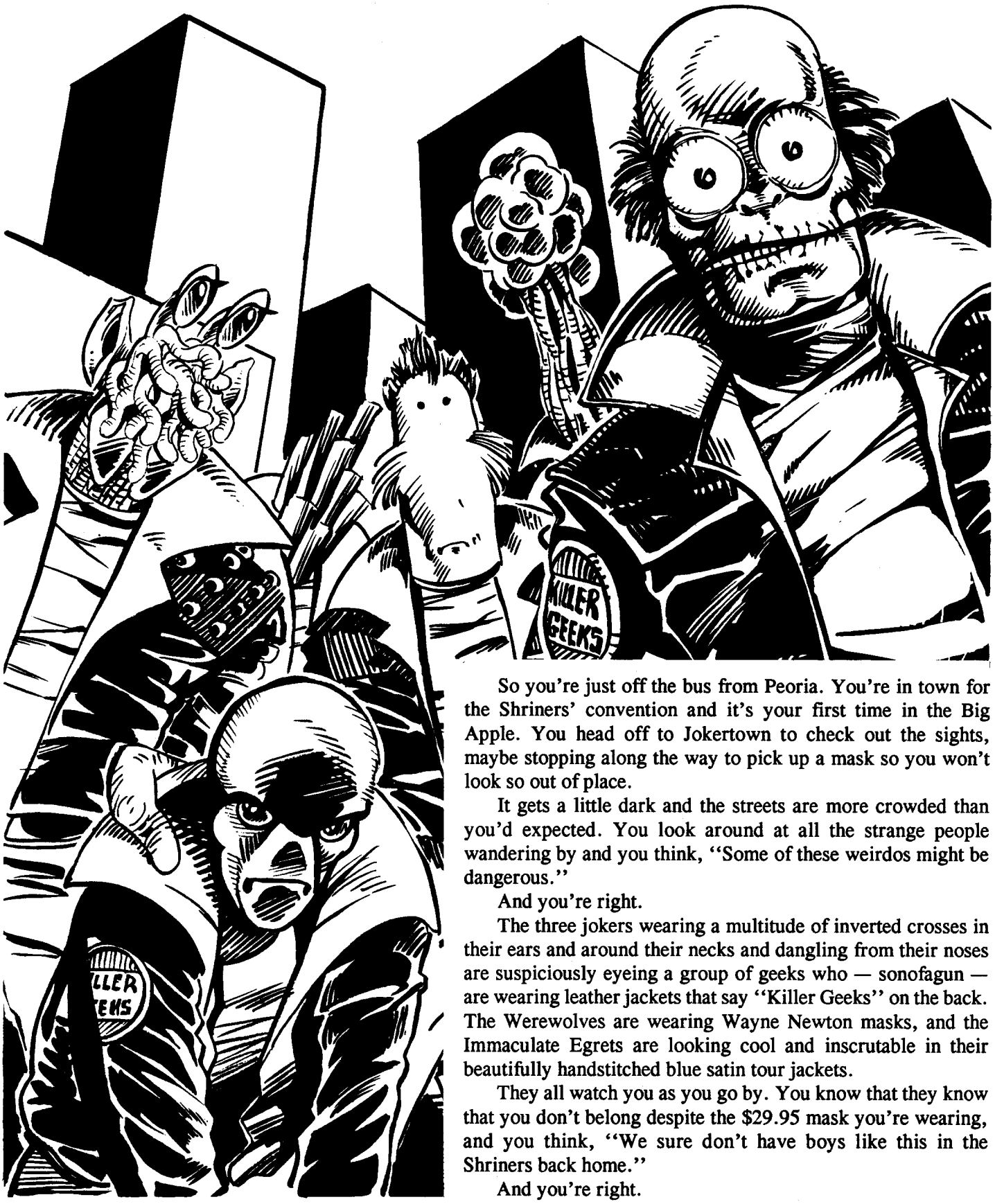
Squisher's Basement is located in the heart of the Bowery, below Uncle Chowder's Clam Bar (which serves a decent bowl of Manhattan chowder). The proprietor of the Basement lives in an aquarium behind the bar where he keeps a fishy eye on the proceedings.

There's no entertainment. The patrons of Squisher's go there to eat, drink and talk.

The drinks are made from the cheapest booze available, and then watered. The food is of unknown origin. The customers and proprietor don't like nats much.

Be forewarned. If you've got a few hours to kill, do something more entertaining, and safer, with your time than hanging out at Squisher's. Take a jog through Central Park at midnight.

5 ORGANIZATIONS



So you're just off the bus from Peoria. You're in town for the Shriners' convention and it's your first time in the Big Apple. You head off to Jokertown to check out the sights, maybe stopping along the way to pick up a mask so you won't look so out of place.

It gets a little dark and the streets are more crowded than you'd expected. You look around at all the strange people wandering by and you think, "Some of these weirdos might be dangerous."

And you're right.

The three jokers wearing a multitude of inverted crosses in their ears and around their necks and dangling from their noses are suspiciously eyeing a group of geeks who — sonofagun — are wearing leather jackets that say "Killer Geeks" on the back. The Werewolves are wearing Wayne Newton masks, and the Immaculate Egrets are looking cool and inscrutable in their beautifully handstitched blue satin tour jackets.

They all watch you as you go by. You know that they know that you don't belong despite the $29.95 mask you're wearing, and you think, "We sure don't have boys like this in the Shriners back home."

And you're right.

Street Gangs

The Demon Princes, Killer Geeks, and Cannibal Headhunters are all New York City street gangs. They're not the only ones in town, but they are, or at one time were, among the most powerful. The Demon Princes and the Killer Geeks are joker gangs. The Cannibal Headhunters consisted mainly of nats, with a sprinkling of minor aces in leadership positions. The Werewolves are also a joker street gang, but they are closely affiliated with the Shadow Fist Society, and are discussed on pp. 75 (see *Warlock)* and 102. The Werewolves are notable mainly for their masks . . . they always wear the same mask, usually one representing a public figure, though the "official" mask changes at the whim of their leader, Warlock.

The Cannibal Headhunters

The Cannibal Headhunters were a feared street gang until Daniel Brennan (Yeoman) killed their leader, an ace named Scar. The Cannibals' insignia was Maori tribal markings — usually strange geometric patterns and repeating spirals — tattooed in scarlet and black on their faces. Scar was the founder and guiding force of the Headhunters. Power struggles ripped the gang apart as Scar's lieutenants tried to fill the vacuum caused by his death. The gang disintegrated and no longer functions as a unit, though individual members still pop up from time to time. Most of the Headhunters have gravitated to other quasi-criminal organizations. You can always spot ex-Headhunters by their heavily tattooed faces.

The Cannibal Headhunters were never *really* cannibals or headhunters. They just liked the way the name sounded.

The Joker Gangs

The Demon Princes and Killer Geeks are exclusively joker gangs. They were formed in the mid-1960s to protect joker turf from nat gangs who liked to come to Jokertown and beat up on the freaks. They wield considerable power in Jokertown, but are not very well known outside of their own territories.

Not much is known about the organization of the Geeks, though the Princes are led by a man called Lucifer and are said to be organized along the lines of the Court of Hell. Killer Geeks normally wear leather jackets with the gang name proudly emblazoned on the back. Demon Princes wear numerous inverted crosses around their necks, or dangling from their ears or noses, or pinned to their clothes.

Both gangs are into petty crime. Both retail drugs they purchase from the larger criminal organizations, and both run small-time protection rackets. Many gang members are rip-off artists, though the Demons in particular do not steal from jokers. However, they have no qualms about selling illegal substances to jokers or accepting joker protection pay-offs. In fact, they feel that they're performing valuable community services in those areas. Both these gangs will reappear in later *Wild Cards* volumes.

Religious Groups

The wild card has affected religion, as it has everything else; many have sought a religious explanation for the powers and afflictions brought by the virus. The most important new religious movements are the Church of Jesus Christ, Joker; the Nur al-Allah; and the Church of the Living Gods.

Another significant religious phenomenon is the gigantic organization of the Reverend Leo Barnett (see p. 28). Barnett's brand of southern Fundamentalism existed long before the wild card, but his new anti-joker message is influential across the world.

Church of Jesus Christ, Joker

The CJCJ was founded in the early 1960s as an offshoot of traditional Roman Catholicism and has been embraced by many jokers with a religious bent. It is not exactly an underground religion, though the Roman Catholic hierarchy certainly disavows any connection to it. It has been the subject of many lurid and misleading articles in sensational newspapers and magazines. Many of these articles have described sinister rites in underground crypts, claiming that the CJCJ is a perverted version of Catholicism akin to Satan worship and the Black Mass.

That's all prejudicial nat nonsense. CJCJ preaches piety, prayer, and love of God and fellow man, even if he happens to be a nat.

There are small informal CJCJ churches or chapels worldwide, wherever there are enough jokers. The best known parish is that of Our Lady of Perpetual Misery, located in Jokertown itself. Its priest is Father Squid (see p. 48), and many important members of the Jokertown community are parishioners.

CJCJ theology is Catholic at its core, though obviously tailored to fit the special needs of its constituency. Jesus Christ is always depicted as a joker. The precise imagery varies depending on local customs and beliefs, but Joker Jesus is normally shown as a two-headed joker with male and female characteristics. One head is bearded and masculine, the other is smooth-cheeked and feminine. An extra set of withered arms sprouts from His/Her ribcage, and He/She has four pairs of breasts running in descending order of size from His/Her chest to His/Her stomach. Whenever Joker Jesus is shown crucified, He/She does not hang from a cross, but a representation of the DNA helix. In primitive cultures the helix looks like a twisted ladder. In more scientifically sophisticated cultures it takes on realistic detail.

Other figures commonly appear in CJCJ iconography. The Mother of Joker Jesus is always depicted as a nat (though there are joker madonnas who play other roles in CJCJ theology), and is usually shown turning her back on the Joker Jesus or otherwise rejecting Him/Her. The Father figure is usually portrayed as a slight, slim man with red hair, bearing a striking resemblance to Dr. Tachyon. Sometimes this figure is depicted with two faces, like the Roman god Janus. The face looking to the right is benevolent and beautiful while the face looking to the left is demonic and bestial. In this rendering the Father usually holds an unburning sun in his right hand and a jagged lightning-bolt in his left. A cavorting, goat-legged man in a white lab coat, carrying various scientific or medical instruments, is often portrayed in a satanic light. Another common image is that of a handsome, golden-skinned man with a sorrowful, shamed expression, juggling silver coins.

The Church of Jesus Christ, Joker is loosely organized above the local level. There are no popes or cardinals, nor even any formal bishoprics. Each individual church is tied closely to the local community and is most intimately concerned with affairs of that community. It is a poor Church, but continually attracting new members,at least partially because of the obvious piety and caring benevolence of its priesthood.

Nur al-Allah

The Nur al-Allah (Light of Allah) is a fundamentalist Islamic sect that believes and aggressively preaches that jokers are abominations who have been scourged by Allah and should be annihilated from the face of the Earth.

The Nur sect has three major figures: Najib (Nur al-Allah), the sect's spiritual leader; Misha, Najib's sister, who is called Kahina (the Seeress); and the giant Sayyid, the commander of the the Nur's armed forces and Misha's husband.

Najib is an ace, though he prefers to think of himself as a man gifted by Allah. He dreams of becoming the new Mohammed and drenching the Middle East in a *jihad,* or holy war. He is a raven-haired man of medium height whose skin glows a vibrant green (the color of Mohammed) and whose ace power is his compelling voice, which can sway masses of people to believe his fanatical views. He cannot control others by mental command alone.

His political strength is centered in Syria, which he rules in all but name, but he has a strong following in other Arab countries and his sect has been linked to acts of terrorism all over the Middle East. His goals are destruction of the state of Israel and eradication of the abominations marked by Allah . . . those known in slightly more polite societies as jokers. Ultimately he sees the Arab world as a unified political and social entity with himself at its head.

Misha is also an ace, though she continually denies that she has wild card powers. She is called Kahina ("Seeress") because she receives visions of the future in her dreams, sent, she believes, by Allah. Her visions are cloaked in symbolism, so it is often difficult to interpret their meaning. Najib uses their very cloudiness to interpret them to mean whatever is most convenient for him. He sees his sister solely as a tool to be used to further his goals. He gave her in marriage to Sayyid, his right hand man, who is loveless and physically abusive.

Sayyid has also been touched by the wild card. He's really a joker masquerading as an ace. He's handsome, ten feet tall, and muscled like a god. But what's hidden from outsiders is the fact that this towering citadel of strength is really a cripple. He's so big that his legs can barely support his weight. He can move only very slowly. He has to be carefully posed for public appearances or photographs. Despite his physical problems, he possesses a formidable military mind. He is a brilliant strategist and his irregular Nur militia has defeated better-armed, numerically superior Israeli army units. He is a blind follower of Najib, and treats Misha with brutal contempt.

When the WHO-sponsored world tour stopped in Syria, Najib arrogantly took a group of aces and American politicians prisoner when they visited his compound for a diplomatic summit. Misha, who had been taken by Gregg Hartmann as a puppet, cut her brother's throat on Hartmann's orders, slicing through his vocal cords and effectively destroying his powers. Sayyid was also severely injured when he was squashed by Hiram Worchester's gravity powers.

Although Najib has lost his voice-based mind control power, he is still a potent figure in Middle Eastern politics. For now he is in Syria, nursing his hatred and biding his time to strike.

Misha fled to America after realizing that she had been compelled by Hartmann to attack her brother. This fact, coupled to her prophetic vision of Hartmann as a puppet-master guiding living marionettes dangling from his fingers, convinced her that Hartmann was a secret, evil ace. She was, unfortunately, correct in her beliefs. She was captured and brutally slain by Mackie Messer (p. 60), Hartmann's chief assassin.

The Living Gods

The Living Gods are avatars of the ancient Egyptian polytheistic religion. Their sect is still in its infancy, though it gaining supporters daily. The Living Gods are bitter enemies of fundamentalist Islamic sects, who see them as another bastard religion. The Nur are particularly violent enemies of the Living Gods, because several of the Gods are actually jokers. Nur guerrillas have gone so far as to attack the Living Gods' main temple in Luxor, Egypt.

The head of the sect is an Egyptian named Opet Kemel. Once a noted Egyptologist, in the late 1960s he discovered a virtually intact ancient temple outside of Luxor. It became the headquarters of the sect he helped establish.

Leaders of the Nur

Nur al-Allah (Arabic for "Light of Allah." Real name: Najib)

Appearance: Dark-haired, dark-eyed man. His skin glows green, especially when he is using his voice to compel others.

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 15

Advantages: Handsome, Charisma, Clerical Investment, Patron (the Nur), Status (+3 in fundamentalist Arabic societies), Strong Will (+3), Wealthy

Disadvantages: Bad Temper, Enemies (Twisted Fists), Intolerance (of jokers and Jews), Megalomania, Sense of Duty (to Islam), Stubbornness, Vow (to rid the world of jokers and Israel alike)

Skills: Bard-25, Brawling-12, Leadership-18, Politics-11, Psychology-14, Survival (Desert)-14, Theology-12.

Wild Card Ability: His ace is his compelling voice which works as a kind of mind control over his audience.

Kahina (Arabic for "Seeress." Real name: Misha)

Appearance: Small woman with dark hair and ebony eyes. Dresses in traditional attire (mainly chadors).

ST 10, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 14

Advantages: Patron (Nur al-Allah)

Disadvantages: Duty (to Nur al-Allah), Intolerance (Islamic fundamentalist), Social Stigma (woman in heavily traditional society)

Wild Card Ability: Kahina receives visions of the future in her dreams. They can be heavily symbolic and difficult to interpret.

Sayyid

Appearance: Ten feet tall, very handsome and muscular

ST 21, DX 4, IQ 15, HT 16

Advantages: Handsome, Patron (the Nur), Charisma, Military Rank 7, Reputation (+4 as military genius and brother-in-law of Nur al-Allah)

Disadvantages: Bad Temper, Enemies (Twisted Fists), Gigantism, Intolerance (of jokers and Jews), Lame, Sense of Duty (to Islam), Vow (to rid the world of jokers and the state of Israel).

Skills: Area Knowledge (Mideast)-16, Bard-13, Leadership-16, Psychology-13, Strategy-16, Survival (Desert)-14, Tactics-16

Wild Card Ability: Although Sayyid has slightly enhanced strength, he is really more of a joker than an ace. His huge size makes him look heroic, but his mass is such that he can move only with the greatest difficulty.

Since the Port Said outbreak of 1948, there have always been a fair number of wild cards in the Egyptian population. Kemel first thought of reviving the ancient religion when he saw a small boy make rain fall over his father's parched crops. He saw the boy as an incarnation of the god Min, Egyptian god of crops, and talked him into becoming the first of the Living Gods.

Since that time, Kemel has added some 25 wild carders to his pantheon. Some, like crocodile-skinned Sobek and dog-faced Anubis, are merely jokers who happen to resemble depictions of certain Egyptian gods. Others have ace powers, like the rainmaker Min, or Osiris, a man who was pronounced dead but came back to life with visions of the future.

Part of the time the Living Gods are no more than a tourist act. There are daily shows at the temple where the gods parade before the tourists and exhibit themselves and their powers. These shows raise money desperately needed by the impoverished people of the region. The sect is particularly popular among the poor peasantry, because the Living Gods are sincerely dedicated to ministering to the emotional, spiritual and physical needs of their people.

However, those of the Living Gods who have useful ace powers (like Min) spend much of their time using them to help their people.

Jokers' Rights Organizations

These three organizations, the JADL, the JJS, and the Twisted Fists, all have a common goal: social justice and equality for jokers. They work toward this goal in vastly different manners.

The JADL

The *Joker Anti-Defamation League* is the oldest of the three organizations. It was founded in 1964 by Xavier Desmond to combat prejudice against wild card victims and promote community education about the virus and its effects. Over the years it became the nation's largest and most influential jokers' rights organization and Desmond became the most widely respected joker spokesman.

The JADL works within the political system by attempting to elect politicians at the local, state and national level who are sympathetic to joker needs. They may bring economic pressure to bear against those who discriminate against jokers. They sometimes resort to nonviolent protests like marches, boycotts, or, in rare instances, sit-ins.

Desmond continued as its president until 1984, when he stepped down because of ill health. He continued to have considerable influence over the policies of the JADL until his death on July 16, 1987.

The JJS

The *Jokers for a Just Society* was founded during the turbulence of the late 1960s by Tom Miller (Gimli). Committed, like the JADL, to fight for social justice, Miller's group started out more confrontational than Desmond's and quickly became radicalized. Desmond and the JADL were making progress in social issues, but not quickly enough for the JJS. Miller was never a stable personality, and through the years he grew quicker to anger and quicker to commit his group to violent confrontation. He finally descended into random acts of terrorism in a pathetically misguided attempt to achieve justice for jokers.

In 1987, Gimli and several of his followers, in cooperation with the German "Red Army Fraction," kidnapped Senator Gregg Hartmann. Hartmann walked away after provoking a falling-out among the kidnappers. The JJS lost much credibility after that debacle. Following Gimli's death in the "Typhoid Croyd" epidemic, the JJS seems to be in eclipse.

The Twisted Fists

This group, led by the mysterious joker known as the Black Dog or the Hound of Hell, is a notorious international joker terrorist organization. Little is known about the Black Dog except that he was born to a Brooklyn Jewish family that emigrated to Israel when he was nine. He drew the joker when he was 20 and currently resides in the Jokers' Quarter in Jerusalem. No one knows the type or extent of his deformity. He wears a black canine mask when in the Black Dog persona. The identification of the black mask with the Black Dog makes it easy for him to move about unnoticed by simply slipping on another type of mask.

The Fists are a terrorist organization, but they are not crazed. They are cold and calculating and strike only at targets who have harmed jokers. Their vow is "five for one." Kill a joker, and five of the offending group pay with their lives. They are bitter enemies of the Nur and are probably the only force that prevents the Nur from drenching Jerusalem's Jokers' Quarter with blood. Though the Twisted Fists are centered in the Middle East, most of their financial support comes from America, specifically Jokertown.

Criminal Conspiracies

The Mafia

The Mafia is, as they say in the congressional hearings, a group of families of Italian heritage who run various criminal enterprises (gambling, prostitution, drugs, protection, etc.) in a highly organized fashion. The most important family in the *Wild Cards* universe is the Gambione family, led by Rosa Maria Gambione.

In 1972 Rosa Maria legally changed her name to Rosemary Muldoon. While serving as an intern in the New York City Social Services Department, she met and made friends with Bagabond. She eventually graduated from law school and by 1986 was an assistant district attorney. On Sept. 15 (Wild Card Day) of that year, she managed, with the help of Bagabond and Bagabond's friend Sewer Jack Robicheaux, to seize effective control of the Gambione family.

After she took over, she spoke to the Family through Christopher Mazzuchelli. She used Mazzuchelli for two reasons. First, the male-dominated family was not likely to accept orders from a woman. Second, she still maintained her identity and job in the D.A.'s office with the thought of shielding her people from police investigation and prosecution. Rosemary had hoped to steer the Gambiones into more benign, if still illegal and highly profitable operations, but she failed. The Mafia remained the Mafia, still run by murderous thugs bent only on accumulating power and making money.

Their only problem was that they were no longer the only kids on the block. The Vietnamese gangster General Kien (see p. 58) was tired of competing with the Mafia, so in late 1986 the Shadow Fists declared war on them, with control of the New York City underworld going to the winner. The Shadow Fists had a big advantage over the Mafia. They were willing to go with the times and put aces and jokers on their payroll.

The war lasted for several months, but the Mafia was behind from day one. As assistant D.A., Rosemary came up with the clever idea of recruiting aces to help combat the "senseless criminal violence" engendered by the war. She then aimed them exclusively at Shadow Fist targets. They helped, but not enough; they had to stay within the law. Late in the war Mazzuchelli hired the Sleeper and Bludgeon — a Shadow Fist reject — as ace muscle, but by then it was too late.

The Fists went after the heads of the families, and heads rolled. Don Picchietti was killed by Fadeout, Don Tamasso was blown to pieces, and Don

Mafiosi

Rosa Maria Gambione
(alias Rosemary Muldoon)
ST 10, DX 10, IQ 13, HT 14

Advantages: Attractive, Patron (Mafia), Legal Enforcement Powers, Comfortable Wealth

Disadvantages: Duty to the Mafia; Duty to the District Attorney's Office. Her Mafia connection was a Secret until she was unmasked and forced to flee.

Skills: Acting-15, Administration-17, Area Knowledge (NYC)-16, Criminology-15, Diplomacy-18, Fast-Talk-15, Interrogation-12, Law-16, Leadership-14, Politics-16, Savoir-Faire-14

Wild Card Ability: None

Cuba

Controlled by the Batista family, which is propped up by Mafia money and muscle (specifically, the Gambione Family), Cuba is an island teetering between extremes of poverty and wealth, primitive shacks and opulent luxury. In the *Wild Cards* universe, Cuba never became Communist (see *Fidel Castro*, p. 82). It remains a wide-open Caribbean island under a government which makes no pretense of being anything but a dictatorship.

Havana, the capital, is a sin city where anything in the world can be bought. It has fine restaurants, lavish gambling palaces, and magnificent dens of vice that cater to every known depravity; they can even invent a new corruption or two, given enough cash and advance warning.

Cuba can make an exciting setting for adventure. It is a large, corrupt, and wide-open island. The casual visitor would be well advised to keep his wallet in his front pocket and not to believe everything he is promised. Anyone whose plans don't agree with the continued growth and wealth of the Gambione family would be well advised to be very careful at all times!

Mason Henchmen

Demise: see p. 38.

Judas (Harry Matthias)
ST 12, DX 11, IQ 10, HT 12
Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers, Patron (the Astronomer)
Disadvantages: Duty (to the police), Duty (to the Astronomer)
Skills: Acting-12, Brawling-11, Criminology-13, Guns (Pistol)-12
Wild Card Ability: Judas can detect aces and tell something about their powers; he must meet them face-to-face to do so.

Kim Toy
Appearance: Small, plain-looking Asian woman. Her husband is an Irish joker with bright red skin, called "Red."
ST 9, DX 10, IQ 13, HT 12
Advantage: Patron (the Astronomer)
Disadvantage: Duty (the Astronomer)
Wild Card Ability: Kim Toy dazzles men with the pheromones she can emit at will. Any man who catches her scent will find her irresistible and will do anything she asks.

Revenant
Appearance: A skinny albino man.
ST 7, DX 8, IQ 9, HT 8
Advantage: Patron (the Astronomer)
Disadvantages: Albinism, Duty (to the Astronomer)
Skills: Psychology-15
Wild Card Ability: Revenant sends dreams, mainly nasty ones, at the will of the Astronomer.

Kafka
Appearance: The wild card turned his skin into a brown exoskeleton, thinned his arms and legs down to nearly nothing, and removed all his facial and body hair. He looks like an anthropomorphic cockroach.
ST 8, DX 6, IQ 20, HT 16
Advantages: Eidetic Memory, Patron (the Astronomer)
Disadvantages: Hideous, Compulsive Behavior (neatness), Duty (to the Astronomer), Social Stigma (-3, joker)
Skills: Electronics-25, Electronics Operation-19
Wild Card Ability: Enhanced genius.

John F. X. Black
ST 13, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 13
Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers (+10), Patron (the Astronomer), Reputation (+2: tough cop who doesn't take any guff from anyone)
Disadvantages: Bad Temper, Bully, Duty (to the police), Duty (to the Astronomer), Greed
Skills: Administration-10, Brawling-12, Criminology-12, Fast-Talk-13, Guns (Pistol)-14, Interrogation-12, Law-10, Leadership-13, Streetwise-12
Wild Card Ability: None

Domenici was assassinated while dining at a Chinese restaurant. Wyrm killed the head of the Calvino family, leaving Rosemary (Gambione) Muldoon the final surviving family head.

Eventually the story broke in the papers that assistant D.A. Rosemary Muldoon was actually a Mafioso, and St. John Latham (representing the Shadow Fists) paid her $200,000 to leave the country, ending the war without further bloodshed or adverse publicity. Rosemary took the money and went to Cuba, still a Gambione stronghold. Before she left, she killed Chris Mazzuchelli, who had betrayed her in an attempt to become head of the Gambione's in fact as well as name.

There is no more Mafia in New York City as of mid-1987. There are still family cells in other major cities, and the Gambiones still control corrupt Cuba, but the Shadow Fist Society is the dominant criminal organization in New York City.

The Masons

Egyptian Freemasonry was founded in the late 18th century by the great magician/impostor Cagliostro. He escaped from an Italian prison in 1789 and eventually made it to America where he took his Freemasonry sect underground. This cabal was an organization of secrets within secrets, the deepest of which had been imparted to him in an English forest before he'd reached America.

Cagliostro had met a man in the forest, and emerged from the meeting, as accounts say, "a changed man." He had talked with a strange being, a brother from the stars, who had entered his mind and taught him about an ultimate evil called TIAMAT and a machine called the Shakti device. These two mysteries became the deepest Masonic secrets.

The "star brother" was in fact an emissary from the Network (see p. 108). The Shakti device was a communicator designed to recall the Network when TIAMAT — the Swarm — approached. The Network's survey ship had found nothing on late 18th-century Earth to catch their eye, but the Network is nothing if not patient. It had detected the Swarm Mother and charted its approach to the Earth's solar system. They knew it would arrive in a few centuries, and also knew that a more advanced Earth would be desperate enough to pay almost anything for help in ridding itself of the Swarm. Of course, it would have been simple for the Network to intercept the dormant Swarm Mother in space and destroy her . . . but the Network gives *nothing* away for free. The meeting with Cagliostro was not a gift, either; it was an investment which they hoped would pay off two centuries in the future.

Despite Cagliostro's best intentions, by the 1950s the inner, Manhattan branch of his Freemasons had degenerated into a third-rate cult . . . a dozen businessmen who couldn't make in the Scottish Rite Masons and who were willing to put up with each other for the sake of the handshakes and the other secret games. The importance of the mysteries, and of the gleaming Shakti device still intact in their temple, was lost.

The Astronomer (see p. 23) arrived on the scene in the early 1960s. He had just made telepathic contact with the Swarm on the fringes of the solar system, and been driven mad by the experience. Balsam, the senior Mason, was appalled at the Astronomer's description of the giant space alien. He realized that it was TIAMAT, the ultimate Masonic secret, and that the Masons' *raison d'être* was finally coming to fruition. They had to build and power the Shakti device so that mankind could conquer the hideous alien.

The Astronomer agreed to help, but only because he saw the destruction of TIAMAT as a means to a greater end. After defeating the monster, he planned

to bring the entire world under the control of a "religious" dictatorship which he would dominate.

The Astronomer actively recruited wild cards into the Masons. Among them were the assassin ace called Demise (see p. 38), Harry Matthias, Kim Toy, Revenant, Kafka, and John F.X. Black, who was only a nat but who wielded a fair amount of power as captain of the Jokertown precinct.

The Astronomer needed sacrificial victims to feed his personal power and also to let him power the Shakti device, so he went on a mad, decade-long binge, engaging in all manner of perversity, blood sacrifice, terrorism and black magic in — irony of ironies — an attempt to save the Earth.

The Defeat of the Astronomer

Fortunato, who became the Astronomer's sworn enemy when the crazed ace slaughtered some of his women during vile ceremonies, didn't realize that the Masons wanted to save the Earth. He had been misled by the Cthulhoid mumbo-jumbo that the Astronomer used to impress his lower-level hirelings. Fortunato thought the Shakti device was calling TIAMAT to the Earth! He led the group of aces that destroyed the Masons' headquarters in the Cloisters and smashed the Shakti device — leaving the Earth to face the Swarm with nothing but its own defenses.

The power of the Masons was broken with the destruction of their Cloisters headquarters. The Astronomer fled, recruited more criminal aces, and did his best to extract vengeance on Wild Card Day, but in the end he was defeated. He himself crashed into the East River after a pyrotechnic battle with Fortunato over the skies of New York, and Demise finished him off.

The Masons are utterly broken. Most are dead, a few are in prison, and a very few small fry escaped. But from 1968 to the middle of 1986 they were a powerful group of fanatics who terrified an entire city.

The Shadow Fist Society

The Shadow Fist Society, led by ex ARVN-general Kien Phuc (see p. 58), is the dominant criminal organization in New York City. They destroyed the Mafia, their major rivals, in a bloody gang war that lasted from late 1986 through the summer of '87. Other criminal organizations still exist in the city. The Fists tolerate them because they wholesale illicit goods through them, and Kien also knows that a little competition is healthy. It keeps the lower ranks on their toes and occasionally makes for open slots in the table of organization.

The history of the Shadow Fists begins in the mid-1960s when Kien, aided by St. John Latham, who was then a CIA agent, began to smuggle heroin into the United States. He funneled the drugs through a Chinatown street gang called the Immaculate Egrets, headed by a man named Nathan Chow. The Egret badge is a blue satin tour jacket with a white egret hand-embroidered on the back. Because of their insignia, and also because of their involvement in the drug business, the Egrets are sometimes called the Snow Birds or Snow Boys.

Kien had a good business relationship with the Egrets. He sent Sui Ma ("Little Mother"), his sister, to America in the late 1960s to marry Chow and cement their relationship on a personal level. She was 13 when she married Chow in 1968, 16 when he died in 1971 under brutal and mysterious circumstances. She took over leadership of the Egrets and business continued to be extremely profitable. The Immaculate Egrets formed the power base upon which Kien built his criminal empire when he emigrated to the United States in 1975.

Kien built a formidable criminal organization over the years while staying out of the limelight. He is ostensibly a rich, respected businessman with a chain of Chinese restaurants, dry cleaning establishments, and other small businesses

Shadow Fist Members

Sui Ma

Appearance: Small, plump Asian woman.

ST 8, DX 10, IQ 15, HT 11

Advantages: Patron (Kien), Reputation (+2 tough, no-nonsense attitude), Strong Will (+3), Very Wealthy

Disadvantages: Duty (to Kien), Greed

Skills: Administration-15, Area Knowledge (Chinatown)-15, Chinese-15, English-12, French-13, Interrogation-11, Leadership-15, Psychology-14, Streetwise-17

Wild Card Ability: None

Wyrm

Appearance: Tall, reptilian but scaleless, with long forked tongue.

ST 26, DX 15, IQ 9, HT 22

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell (+15), Combat Reflexes, Patron (Kien), Reputation (+2 tough and mean)

Disadvantages: Berserk, Duty (to Kien), Social Stigma (-3, joker), Ugly

Skills: Area Knowledge (NYC)-17, Brawling-14, Stealth-12, Streetwise-13, Tracking-18

Wild Card Ability: Wyrm has enhanced strength and an extremely sensitive tongue that he uses to track individuals even if they haven't left a visible trace.

He also bites in combat. His teeth do 1d+1 damage, and can also inject a paralyzing poison. The victim must make a HT roll; on a success, -2 DX is lost for an hour, and on a failure, -4 DX is lost for 2 hours.

Linetap

Appearance: Short, orange-scaled, reptilian.

ST 9, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 10.

Advantage: Patron (Shadow Fists)

Disadvantages: Duty (to Shadow Fists); Social Stigma (-3, joker)

Skills: Area Knowledge (NYC)-14; Escape-15; Psychology-14; Streetwise-16

Wild Card Power: Linetap is a telepath with Power 6. His power is unreliable, working on an 11 or less.

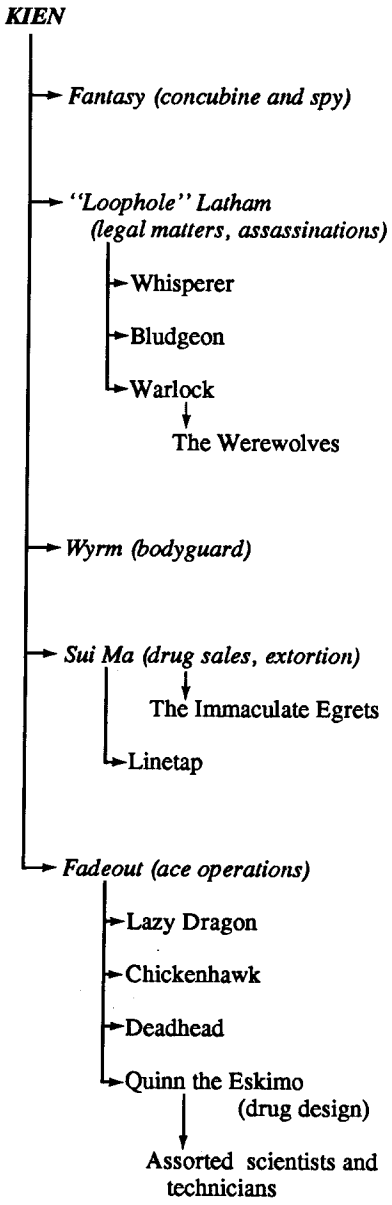
scattered throughout the five boroughs, Westchester County, northern New Jersey, and Long Island.

Very few people know that he is also the Shadow Fist crime lord. Within the organization, Latham and Sui Ma know Kien's secret. They are essentially equals in the organization's second tier of command. Latham is Kien's lawyer. He does all the legal work for Kien's legitimate businesses, serves as negotiator between the Fists and some of the other less-than-legal organizations in the city, and is also the liaison between the Fists and one of their most important sub-groups, the joker street gang called the Werewolves. Sui Ma still heads the Immaculate Egrets. They run the drug end of the business, and are also involved in such illicit schemes as protection, gambling and loansharking.

Three others who work for Kien — all aces — also know his connection to the Shadow Fists. These are Wyrm (see sidebar, p. 101), Fantasy (p. 48), and Fadeout (p. 47). At one time an teleporting ace named Scar, leader of the gang called the Cannibal Headhunters, belonged to this elite group. He was killed by Kien's sworn enemy, Daniel Brennan (Yeoman), in mid-1986.

Shadow Fist Table of Organization

This table shows the usual lines of command within Kien's operations, sometimes called the Shadow Fist Society. Only those individuals shown in italics are aware of Kien's identity.



The Shadow Fist Aces

Much of Kien's current power comes from the talents of the aces and jokers he has recruited for his organization. He is always on the lookout for talent (and "wild talents.") This gave him the edge in his war with the Mafia, and makes the Shadow Fists a very tough opponent.

Wyrm is Kien's bodyguard. He is a joker/ace who resembles a scaleless humanoid reptile. He is extraordinarily strong and injects poison with his bite. His long, forked tongue is a sensitive sensory organ that he can use to pick up and follow anyone's scent almost anywhere.

Fantasy is a well-known ballet dancer who moves in the highest levels of society, where she uses her seduction powers to get information for Kien. In return, he keeps her supplied with cash and cocaine, both of which she consumes in vast quantities.

Fadeout is in charge of a whole suite of illegal Fist activities centered in Jokertown. He works closely on a day-to-day basis with the Werewolves and also supervises the research branch which is run by the scientist/ace Thomas Quincey (p. 67).

A third tier of aces report directly to one of the sub-heads (mainly Fadeout, Loophole, or Sui Ma) and don't know that Kien is connected to the society. They include Bludgeon, the Whisperer, Deadhead, Lazy Dragon, Warlock, Thomas Quincey, and Chickenhawk.

Bludgeon (see p. 28) is a malformed, inhumanly-strong ace who was cut loose by the Fists after his dismal performance on Wild Card Day (September 15) 1986. He was used as "thug" muscle.

The Whisperer (see p. 76) is a fearful, shadowy assassin who works freelance as well as for the Fists.

Deadhead (see p. 37) can access peoples' memories by eating their brains. He is a ghoulish but reliable source of information when a dead foe falls into the hands of the gang.

Warlock (see p. 75) is head of the Werewolves.

Thomas Quincey (see p. 67) is in charge of drug R&D for the Shadow Fists.

Lazy Dragon (see p. 58) animates and possesses animal carvings which then take on the attributes and abilities of the real thing. He serves as a scout, and (with his more formidable animal forms) as a surprise source of muscle.

Chickenhawk (see p. 35) is a deformed flying joker/ace. He acts as an aerial scout and lookout.

Linetap (see sidebar, p. 101) is employed as a lookout and in other areas where his erratic telepathic ability can be useful.

ALIENS 6

While gaming in the *Wild Cards* universe, one must consider not only the interactions of nats, jokers, and aces, but possible interference, or even invasion, by the spacefaring alien races that surround the Earth.

Of course, various alien races are already present on our planet. Tachyon is a Takisian, as is Durg at'Morakh. Jube the Walrus is a Glabberan and a Network observer, though everyone thinks he's just another funny-looking joker. And there are still innumerable Swarm buds running around various third world nations. In fact, some of the third-generation buds, the ones grown to counterfeit human beings, could be just about anywhere.

Takisians

Created by Melinda Snodgrass

Takis, the home world of the inestimable Dr. Tachyon, is a small, cold world, poor in natural resources. The Takisians are human, in the sense that they can interbreed with Earthlings. Not often, true . . . but one out of every thousand matings might be fertile. A Takisian looks much like an Earthman, except for his fine-hewn features and the metallic glint of his hair.

Takisian Characters

Takisians can be divided into three major classes, all of which typically have different advantages, disadvantages, skills, and average characteristics.

Psi Lords

Members of the great Families of Takis typically have all the following advantages: Appearance, Combat Reflexes, Longevity, Rapid Healing, Status, Strong Will, and Wealth. Typical disadvantages include Duty (to the clan), Intolerance (of anything non-Takisian), Megalomania, and Overconfidence. Most will have several of the following psionic abilities: Telesend, Telereceive, Mental Blow, Mindshield, Mindwipe, Telecontrol, and Precognition. The Psi Lords also typically have training in several scientific disciplines, and good weapon and hand-to-hand combat skills.

Average characteristics for Takisian Psi Lords are ST 10, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 12.

Morakh

The Morakh are a cadet line of a powerful Takisian family; for centuries they have been bred for combat. They have short, immensely thick and powerful bodies, incongruously topped by typical Takisian elfin-featured faces. Morakh have Combat Reflexes, Rapid Healing, Longevity, superhuman Toughness, and Strong Will, with common disadvantages including Bad Temper and Bloodlust. They have no psionic skills, except for an extremely powerful Mindblock demonstrated by most of the clan. They have fantastic combat skills, and little else.

Any Morakh would have a Psi Lord as Patron, and a Duty to that patron. Average characteristics for Morakh Takisians are ST 20, DX 14, IQ 8, HT 16.

Peasantry

This class encompasses approximately 98% of all the Takisians. Their skills vary widely according to their specific duties, as do advantages and disadvantages, but all members of this class have the disadvantage of Social Stigma (-10, valuable property). Most peasants are Attractive (or better) in appearance, because the Takisian lords appreciate beauty and breed for it.

Average characteristics for Takisian peasantry are identical to human averages.

Several thousand years ago a small portion of the population began to develop psionic powers. They studied these powers scientifically and initiated a meticulously enforced breeding program to increase their abilities. These Psi Lords eventually formed some 40 powerful families or clans that subjugated the remaining 98% of the population.

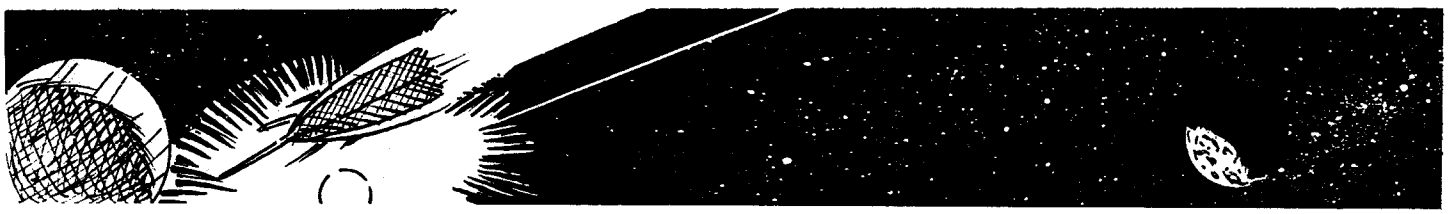
To the individual Takisian, the family is the object of all loyalty and devotion, but Takisian society also glorifies the exploits of the individual. The greatest individual accomplishment in Takisian society is the accumulation of *virtu*. This term, difficult to define in a few words, is essentially manifested in the great need to hold center stage, to have an effect upon the people and events around you. One continually strives to succeed in whatever endeavor, no matter how small, in which one finds oneself. If one fails, one should at least fail in a particularly spectacular or dramatic fashion. The worst sin to the Takisian elite is mediocrity.

Given the importance of the clan to Takisian philosophy and lifestyle, it's not surprising that their religion is centered around ancestor worship. Takisians believe that the essences (or ghosts, if you will) of deceased ancestors remain after death. This is either terrifying or comforting, depending on the personality of each particular deceased. Those who were kind and loving in life (not a common trait among the Takisian elite) are likely to be amiable spirits in death. Those who were vicious and demanding in life are thought to make equally unreasonable demands of their descendants in death.

A state of continued scheming and killing similar to that of Renaissance Italy exists between the elite Takisian families. It is considered a great sin to kill within the family, but that particular belief is honored more in the breach than in practice. A more common means of diminishing intra-family rivals is to encumber them with public humiliation. The practical joke (with vicious turns) is an accepted means of revenge and aggression within the family. Being the butt of a particularly nasty, humiliating or clever joke diminishes one's *virtu* greatly.

Since assassination is common, members of the elite are extensively trained in unarmed combat. Like most privileged classes they also enjoy a great deal of free time, so social graces are also important. Dancing, musical instruction, voice lessons, and even flower arranging are all part of young Takisian elite education. These graces, of course, also help to reinforce social imperatives like the accumulation of *virtu*. It is much easier to make the proper social impression if you cut a fine figure on the dance floor or declaim with cutting wit, then if you are a tongue-tied oaf.

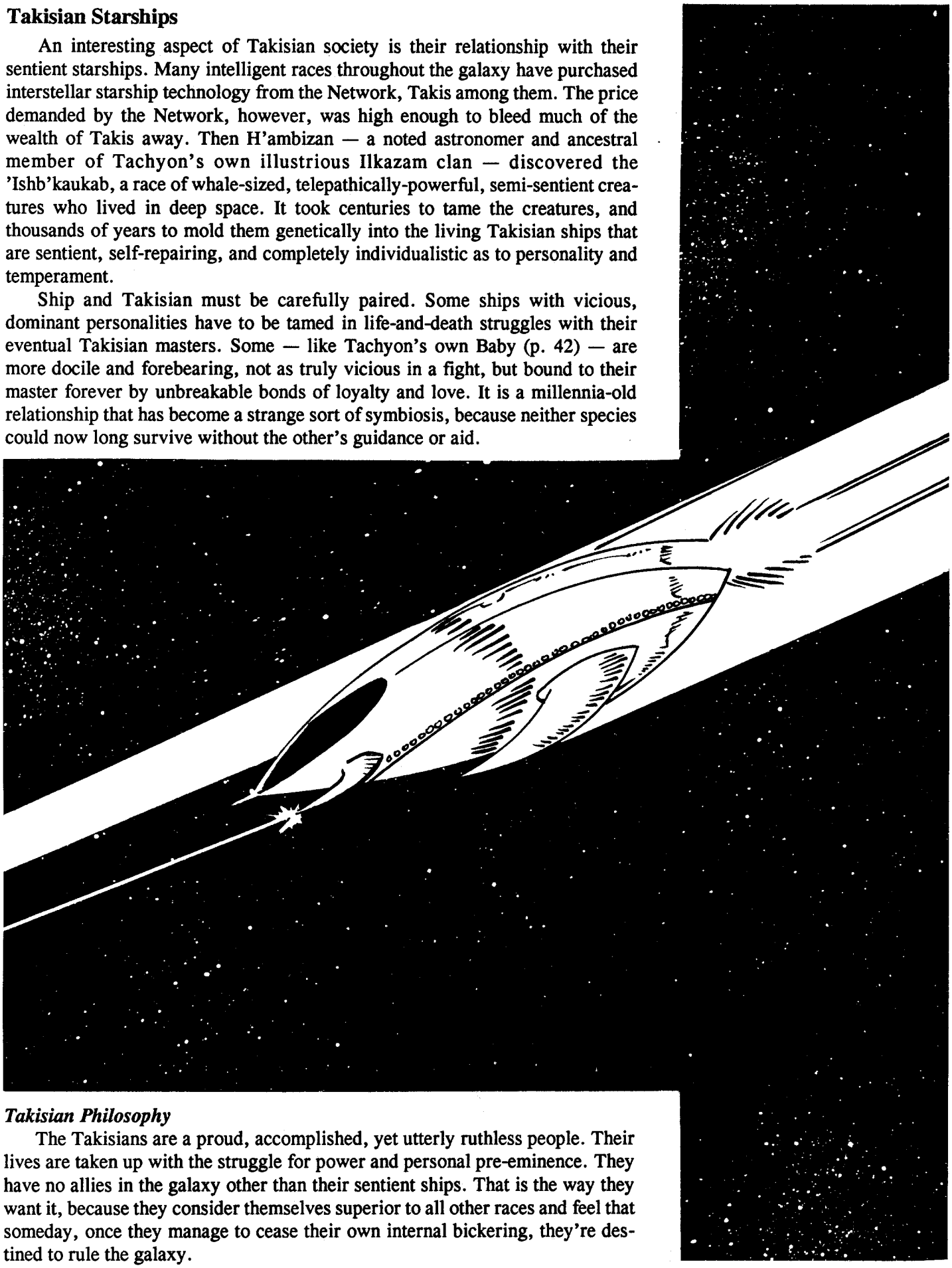
Since the assassination of a pregnant woman can wipe out several hundred years of meticulously planned breeding, fertile females are carefully guarded on Takis. They spend most of their childbearing years (which is a very long time, since Takisians are an immensely long-lived race) under guard in the women's quarters. There they scheme, gossip, rear their young children, and hatch plots to further the fortunes of their offspring. Women are usually well educated, but are not permitted to go out into the world and use their abilities until they're past their childbearing years. Those women who survive into old age (though very few elite Takisians do) can gain great power, for the old are venerated among the ruling class. These harridans are generally ruthless — they have many scores to settle — and Takisian society grants them *carte blanche* in many matters out of deference to their age.



Takisian Starships

An interesting aspect of Takisian society is their relationship with their sentient starships. Many intelligent races throughout the galaxy have purchased interstellar starship technology from the Network, Takis among them. The price demanded by the Network, however, was high enough to bleed much of the wealth of Takis away. Then H'ambizan — a noted astronomer and ancestral member of Tachyon's own illustrious Ilkazam clan — discovered the 'Ishb'kaukab, a race of whale-sized, telepathically-powerful, semi-sentient creatures who lived in deep space. It took centuries to tame the creatures, and thousands of years to mold them genetically into the living Takisian ships that are sentient, self-repairing, and completely individualistic as to personality and temperament.

Ship and Takisian must be carefully paired. Some ships with vicious, dominant personalities have to be tamed in life-and-death struggles with their eventual Takisian masters. Some — like Tachyon's own Baby (p. 42) — are more docile and forebearing, not as truly vicious in a fight, but bound to their master forever by unbreakable bonds of loyalty and love. It is a millennia-old relationship that has become a strange sort of symbiosis, because neither species could now long survive without the other's guidance or aid.



Takisian Philosophy

The Takisians are a proud, accomplished, yet utterly ruthless people. Their lives are taken up with the struggle for power and personal pre-eminence. They have no allies in the galaxy other than their sentient ships. That is the way they want it, because they consider themselves superior to all other races and feel that someday, once they manage to cease their own internal bickering, they're destined to rule the galaxy.

The Swarm

Created by Walter Jon Williams

Called T'zand'ran by the Takisians, and Demonseed, Great Cancer, and Devourer of Worlds by various Network races, it's simplest to think of the Swarm as an omnivorous, aggressive, mildly telepathic, extremely sophisticated colony of insects from outer space.

The Swarm do not have culture, civilization or philosophy. They do, in rare instances, have intelligence, and they do have purpose, which as far as anyone can tell is to devour the universe. The Swarm's origin is unknown, even to themselves.

When a planet is occupied by a mature Swarm colony, the entire surface of the planet is covered by the Swarm in all its infinite subspecies, all engaged in a constant exploitation of the planet's resources — and each other as well. All the Swarm subspecies are in telepathic resonance. Were the planet attacked, the billions of swarmlings would link into a vast group mind that could strike back telepathically, and very powerfully, to destroy the attacker.

When a Swarm colony reaches maturity, it begins firing Swarm Mothers more or less randomly into space. A Swarm Mother is a mature colony in potential, carrying samples of all genetic material existing in the mature Swarm. "Mother" is probably an imprecise term for this unit of the Swarm. "Template" or even "egg" might be more accurate, but "Mother" is a more familiar term to bisexual species like humanity. What the Swarm calls itself is unknown.

A Swarm Mother consists primarily of thousands of tons of genetic material wrapped in a tough organic shell. A typical Swarm Mother is about thirty kilometers long and twenty across, and looks like an asteroid. The Swarm Mother travels at sublight speed by a variety of means. Organic solar sails and rockets are its primary means of transport.

When a Swarm Mother enters a new star system, it puts itself in orbit from which it observes any planets that could be used as colony sites. If a suitable planet is found, the Mother creates a number of subspecies capable of landing and surviving on its surface. Any useful genetic material native to the planet may be taken into the Swarm's template for further use. The Mother itself will not land. After accomplishing its task and planting a colony, it will die.

Swarm Mothers are heavily cloaked and guarded. They absorb heat, radar, and visible light. If one passes too close to a sun it may blow off excess heat and resemble a comet. Takisians can detect them with their strong mental powers.

If attacked, Swarm Mothers are large and fairly vulnerable targets. Nuclear weapons probably wouldn't penetrate the skin, but their radiation would scramble the Mother's mental processes and would certainly decrease its ability to reproduce swarmlings to carry on the battle. Once its skin is breached, a Mother is quite vulnerable to almost any sophisticated physical attack.

Swarmlings

Swarmlings vary incredibly, but they fall into several basic types depending on their mission. The Swarm Mother that attacked Earth bred three distinct generations of swarmlings. Had the "war" continued, she might have created other types.

The Killing Machines

First-generation swarmlings are killing and eating machines with no intellect, other than an instinctive ability to swarm and attack all non-swarmling life. They recognize each other and do not fight among themselves. However, they do not use coordinated tactics; they simply overwhelm defending positions by sheer numbers and viciousness. The Swarm Mother has no control over them as individuals, but can impel masses of them toward particular directions.

There are dozens of entirely different types, including the slug (legless, 30 feet long, with crushing jaws, and a pair of arms that end in sharp, powerful claws), the giant centipede (60 feet long with 10-foot cilia on the underside), the leaping spiders (4-foot-wide body on stilt-legs), and flappers (dark, featherless, flying creatures that enfold their victims by the score, cover them with their leathery bodies and then emit corrosive acid). All are carnivorous, all are extremely stupid, and all are very hard to kill.

The swarmlings that attacked the Earth caused in excess of 10 million deaths, almost all due to the first-generation monsters. There are certainly many first-generation swarmlings remaining in remote parts of Earth.

Specific stats for some first-generation swarmlings are given on p. 108.

Continued on next page . . .

Colonization Strategy

In most cases a suitable colony planet will not have its own intelligent lifeforms. That being the case, the Swarm Mother will simply follow its template and land its own creatures on the planet. The Mother is not intelligent at this point. It is merely following its genetic mandate, no more self-aware than any other insect colony. Less, in fact . . . "yeast" would be a better comparison.

However, if the Mother's preliminary survey indicates that the planet contains intelligent life — if, for example, the Mother receives radio signals or senses satellites in orbit around the world — then the Mother begins to alter itself. It develops something approaching real intelligence. It becomes a lightning-fast information processor, capable of making inferences and deductions and following complex chains of logic. It essentially becomes a very good wargame player, and it plays for keeps.

The first generation swarm attack consists of branches, each branch consisting of 2,000 to 10,000 individuals known as "buds." Each bud is dropped through the atmosphere in an organic pod which splits before landing and creates a parachute to safely land its cargo. The buds are nightmarish creatures, some large, some small, and all ravenously carnivorous. None of these swarmlings are terribly intelligent, however, and all are vulnerable to physical weaponry.

The Swarm Attack on Earth

On the Earth, this first-generation attack caused millions of deaths, but Earth's armies reacted fairly well. In a few short weeks they destroyed most of the invaders, leaving only scattered survivors in remote areas. Earth thought that it had won, but the Swarm Mother considered its initial attacks a great success.

The Mother was in low-grade telepathic contact with its branches, and some of them relayed some interesting information. First, one large branch landed near the Greek-Turkish-Bulgarian border and observed that the forces engaged in its suppression didn't cooperate with each other. From this the Mother concluded that the Earth was divided, perhaps occupied by several "Human Mothers" who were in conflict with each other. This supposition was confirmed by another branch which landed near the China-Mongolian border, and the Mother prepared its second attack.

The second generation consisted of smaller branches and less formidable buds. Its purpose was mainly reconnaissance. Buds would land, seize humans and/or other informational material, and return to the Mother. The humans would be interrogated, then dissected in order to provide information about humanity's genetic make-up.

This information provided the basis for an extremely sophisticated attack made possible by the Mother's geometrically-increasing knowledge of humanity. It intended to exploit human differences . . . to persuade humanity to wipe itself out by replacing critical political and military figures with swarmling mimics indistinguishable from the real thing. The mimics would then ferment political chaos which would result in World War III. Those swarmlings in sensitive military positions would then start flinging nuclear weapons around with total abandon. Swarm Mothers are patient creatures, quite willing to wait the centuries it would take for Earth to be inhabitable again (at least by swarmlings) after a devastating nuclear exchange.

Fortunately, the Swarm Mother attacking the Earth was transformed by ace action (see II-349) before she could carry through with this plan. She had, however, succeeded in placing some of her mimics into position. Exactly how many is not known, and there may still be some people out there who really aren't people at all. First-generation buds are still alive and rampaging through regions on the fringes of civilization.

Swarmlings (Continued)

The Spies

Second-generation swarmlings are roughly human-sized and human-shaped, but are soft and pulpy and lack well-defined features. They are immensely strong, but also very stupid and can function on only the most rudimentary level without direct guidance from the Swarm Mother.

The second-generation swarmlings could pass for human only in a dim light, but many of them did so. They used organic radio transmitters to send detailed information back to the Swarm Mother; they can use this same ability to keep in touch with each other over distances of a few hundred yards.

A few of the second-generation creatures actually returned to the Swarm Mother, riding tiny rocket ships *grown* from "seeds" brought from the Swarm Mother. They took captives and specimens with them for dissection and investigation by the Mother.

Some second-generation swarmlings probably still exist on Earth. They are also very strong, and can take an incredible amount of physical punishment. The only way to kill one is to blow it apart or otherwise dismember it. Average characteristics: ST 25, DX 8, IQ 5, HT 16/30.

The Infiltrators

Third-generation swarmlings are mimics. They have the memories of the people they've replaced, and a more active intelligence than other swarmlings. Otherwise, their physical abilities are as good or better.

With the Swarm Mother gone, the third generation is leaderless (or is it?) But surviving third-generation swarmlings would retain their mission . . . to foment a nuclear war on Earth.

Average characteristics: ST 25, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 16/30.

(Continued on next page . . .)

Swarmlings (Continued)

Below are stats for some of the most common types of first-generation swarmling. There were literally hundreds of different types, so more can be invented at will.

One thing that swarmlings have in common: they are all "combat monsters," designed to kill. They should be more formidable than "ordinary" creatures.

Millipede Serpent

ST: 150+	**Speed/Dodge:** 10/8
Size: 15-20	**DX:** 16
PD/DR: 2/3	**Weight:** 2+ tons
IQ: 4	**Damage:** 3d crush
Origin: SF	**HT:** 16/50-75
Reach: 2	**Habitats:** any

This creature moves like a sidewinder; it has a snakelike body and ten-foot cilia that help move it along. It can rear a quarter of its body off the ground. It attacks by biting with blunt crushing jaws. Its brain, such as it is, is in the body rather than the head.

Blob

ST: 50	**Speed/Dodge:** 2/3
Size: 7 (round)	**DX:** 8
PD/DR: 0	**Weight:** 800 lbs.
IQ: 2	**Damage:** special
Origin: SF	**HT:** 14/200
Reach: C	**Habitats:** any

A greenish lump of mucus which attacks by entering the victim's hex. Anyone it touches must make both a ST and a DX roll, or be enfolded. This does both suffocating damage and 1 hit per turn of "acid" dissolution, ending only when the blob is killed. Fire does double damage. These creatures can live underwater, and are usually found dozens at a time. They reproduce by fission.

Flapper

ST: 3	**Speed/Dodge:** 15/10
Size: 1	**DX:** 15
PD/DR: 2/3	**Weight:** 5 lbs.
IQ: 4	**Damage:** 1d-1 acid
Origin: SF	**HT:** 6
Reach: C	**Habitats:** any

Leathery flying creatures which make mass attacks against anything that moves. A flapper attacks simply by draping its body over a foe and secreting acid, which does 1d-1 per turn against unprotected flesh. Plastic and most metals are eaten at 1 hit per 10 seconds. A man-sized (1-hex, upright) target can be attacked by up to four flappers per turn, and they occur in thousands. They fearlessly attack vehicles, blinding the drivers or pilots, and can sometimes bring aircraft down by weight of numbers.

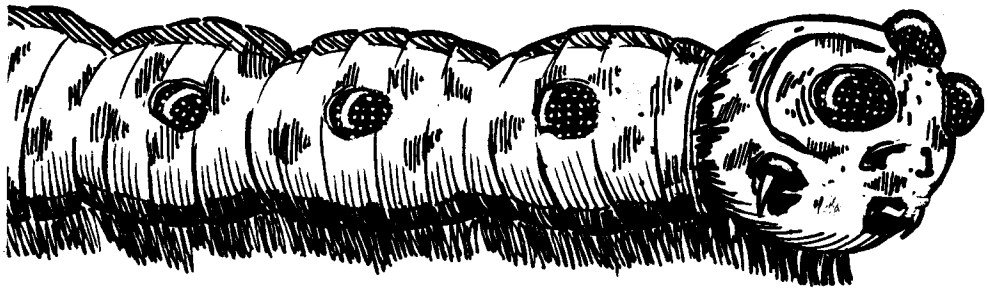
Flappers cannot swim, and they are very vulnerable to gas attacks (harmful gases do double damage).

Swarm Offspring

Because dissection of swarmlings has never shown any sign of reproductive organs, Earth's scientists have always assumed that the creatures had no way to reproduce, and would eventually die out with the Swarm Mother gone. However, there is absolutely no justification for this assumption. It is quite possible that the Swarm Mother sent down the seeds of breeder units . . . possibly immobile, plantlike creatures that would be unnoticed in jungle areas. Or they could hide in the oceans. Such breeders could bud off new fighter swarmlings, and perhaps even create new mimics. In time, the breeders might even develop an intelligence capable of controlling the "buds" — in effect, a new Mother.

Unfortunately, Earth has only two inhabitants who know anything at all about the Swarm. Jube is still under deep cover, and Dr. Tachyon isn't an expert on Swarm behavior.

So if the Swarm has another trick up its alien sleeve, Earth will once again be taken by surprise . . .



The Network

Created by George R.R. Martin

It would be a misnomer to call it an empire, a federation, or even an alliance. It's too loosely organized. It is more mercantile than political, more contradictory than unified. The Network is a trading ring, founded, organized and led by a race who call themselves the Master Traders. At this point in time the Network is hundreds of millennia old and includes more than 1,000 worlds inhabited by 137 different sentient races.

You can say a lot about the Network, and all of it will be true. But . . . there will be exceptions.

The Network is highly technologically advanced. But some of the member races have barely reached their equivalent of the Iron Age, and technological levels vary wildly from planet to planet.

The Network starships are huge generation ships that carry anywhere from a hundred to a thousand crewpeople of myriad different species, many of whom visit hundreds of worlds, live, raise their children and die without ever setting foot on a planet. But some crew members stay aboard for only short tours, some of the ships aren't multi-racial at all, and some are quite small.

The Network is mercantile, not martial. But its fleet is potentially vast, its weaponry is as awesome as any in the galaxy, its science is capable of sterilizing worlds, and it can field vast armies of mercenaries at will.

The Network is tolerant and benign and values diversity. But some of its member races — and many of its individuals — have single-minded beliefs, values and policies.

The Network has no ideology, no government, no overriding morality or religion or philosophy, no goals, no wish to conquer or dominate others. But they do have contract law, their only law, the thing the Master Traders live by. Make a contract with the Network and the Network will hold you to it. And you'd better read it carefully before you sign it.

The Network gives nothing away for free. The Network gives *nothing* away for free.

The Master Traders

The Master Traders built the Network and still dominate it to the extent that it can be dominated, but they remain an enigma even to the races they have dealt with for thousands of years.

No one knows what a Master Trader really looks like. They are master illusionists and can project any shape they find pleasing. The illusions are three-dimensional, appeal to all the senses, and can fool even the most sophisticated scanning equipment. Some have theorized that the Traders are shape-changers, or beings of pure energy, or fields of psionic potential, but no one knows for sure. Their mental defenses have proven impregnable, so no one will ever find out by scanning their minds.

No one knows where the Traders come from. The center of the Network is a fabulous world called Starholme, but that world was *built* in the early days of the Network and isn't home to any of the species who walk its surface. Every 300 years, all the Trader ships simultaneously return to Starholme. Some say the Traders are in competition with each other, and this is when the scores are totaled.

Normally the Traders are loners and wanderers. Not every Network ship is owned or commanded by a Master Trader (about half of the big multi-racial ships are), but every Trader owns and commands his own ship. Some say the Traders are on a mission to civilize the galaxy, some say they are greedy robber barons, some say they're on a galactic scavenger hunt. They move endlessly from star to star, gather knowledge and spread it for a price.

What does one trade to a Master Trader? Not local currency. Not gems or precious metals. They can synthesize these things easily. They do value real estate. They'll buy your house in a minute, and they'll also buy Jupiter if you care to sell it to them. They also buy service. If you're dying of cancer, they'll cure you — if you sign a contract to work for them forever (or maybe for just a hundred years; they'll haggle). They collect art and artifacts and music and anything unique, but you can never tell what may strike their fancy.

The thing they want most is knowledge; the thing they sell dearest is knowledge. The Master Traders will gladly sell you a starship if you've got the price. They'll tell what buttons to push and how to navigate, but don't try to take apart the drive or the ship will blow up in your face. The secret of FTL drive is much, much more expensive. Each member race guards its secrets zealously from all its fellows because that knowledge is worth something. The Traders trade breakthrough for breakthrough, technology for technology. The advanced races therefore grow more advanced. The younger species have little to offer in the way of new technology, so they stay in the backwaters.

The Traders are a tolerant lot. They value intelligence and technological and artistic achievement. They put absolutely no stock in physical appearance. They don't like war because it disrupts trade. They seem to have no morality or religion. They don't meddle in the internal policies of member races. They don't care if races practice cannibalism, slavery, human sacrifice or ritual suicide. They'll let such races into the Network without trying to change them.

But, of course, all races are changed by joining the Network. The Traders know all about the concept of culture shock, but they don't care.

Individual Traders are cosmopolitan, cheerful and playful. They tend to have splendid senses of humor, great artistic insight, and a wealth of scientific knowledge. They are warm and witty conversationalists. But don't think the Master Trader is your friend. If he were passing by when you were being beaten

Master Trader Characters

The Master Traders are so steeped in secrecy that very little is known about them. Typical advantages include Alertness, Common Sense, Eidetic Memory, Language Talent, Lightning Calculator, Reputation, Status, Wealth (Filthy Rich), while disadvantages are Code of Honor and Honesty. No Master Trader has any of the more debilitating mental disadvantages such as Sadism, Bloodlust, etc. They have good administration, diplomatic, and mercantile skills (Every Master Trader has a Merchant skill of at least 25), and have enough technical expertise to be excellent judges of both alien art and technology. All also have an unbreakable Mindshield and are master Illusionists. Their true physical characteristics are unknown and unguessable; the average Master Trader has an IQ of 18.

Thus, the Master Traders are too powerful and secretive to make player characters. However, they can certainly make good NPCs. A Master Trader could be the most powerful Patron imaginable.

The Network and Takis

The Takisians refused to join the Network. Rebuffed by the ruling families, the Network turned to the underclass of non-psi Takisians and offered to get them out from under those annoying telepathic aristocrats. The Families discovered this before the negotiations were well under way, however, and there was an unpleasant altercation. Since then certain treaties and accords have been in place between Takis and the Network, but they are somewhat shaky. Master Traders consider treaties sacrosanct, but only those they have personally and individually agreed to. Each Trader can bind only himself and his heirs. Similarly, no Takisian family cares much about what another family may have promised. Things thus remain uncertain between Takis and the Network.

The Network would love to have Takis as a member, since none of the races in the consortium have anything approaching Takisian expertise in genetics, bioengineering or psionics. More than one Master Trader has politely pointed out that the Takisians would certainly become one of the dominant races of Network were they to join, and that free trade and technological exchange would probably benefit the Takisians more than the Network.

Unfortunately, the Takisians don't give a damn.

to death, he'd stop long enough to offer to sell you a gun. But he'd sell it to the muggers just as fast if they offered him a better price.

The only thing a Master Trader holds holy is the contract, freely entered into (which means no coercion by violence . . . but economic coercion could be considered just part of the game) by individuals.

The Network Starships

The great Network starships are usually crewed by many races, and have no simple structure of command. The Kondikki godqueen *is* the ship in a very real sense. The control chamber belongs to the Aevre. A Ly'bahr probably gives more commands than anyone else aboard. If someone insisted on speaking with the captain. they'd probably be conducted to a uniformed Rhindarian male who would be addressed as Chief Commanding Authority. But don't be fooled. The Master Trader owns the ship, and frequently everyone on board as well.

The Kondikki

The Kondikki are an insectoid race with several specialized castes. They are the Network's most adept and untiring technicians. A Kondikki nest crews most of the big multi-racial Network starships. Such craft are literally infested with myriads of bugs who keep all its systems functional.

A Kondikki nest consists of several castes. The most important are:

Workers

These are sterile females which vary in size from the length of a finger to that of a man's forearm. They have segmented bodies, six legs, and a shiny greenish-black chitinous exoskeleton. Their triangular heads are crowned by clusters of dozens of tiny specialized eyes, some of which are capable of microscopic focus, others sensitive to infrared or ultraviolet, and so on. Their mouths are fringed by strong but slender tendrils which are extremely tough, flexible and deft. These are the worker's manipulative organs. They use their foremost leg-pair for crude labor and heavy lifting. Despite their size, the workers are quite strong and can lift many times their own weight.

The workers are not truly sentient, but each has been genetically imprinted with its particular lifetask, whether it be maintenance, repair, transport or any of dozens of other specialties. The digestive systems of the workers are capable only of ingesting the syrup produced in the nest. A typical Network starship carries thousands of Kondikki workers. They dwell in the ship's nooks and crannies, crawling behind the bulkheads and through a labyrinth of tunnels and conduits designed expressly for them, constantly checking the systems, making repairs, doing maintenance, and keeping the ship functional.

Guardians

The Kondikki warrior caste are sterile males. They have segmented six-legged bodies like the workers, but only the back two pairs are used for locomotion. The elongated triple-jointed front legs end in crude three-fingered hands. The underside of the foremost joint is split by a protruding ridge of hard chitin that the guardians hone to razor sharpness, making these "arms" formidable slashing instruments. The guardians have the same eye-clusters as the workers, with the same sensory range. Instead of manipulative tendrils, their mouths are decorated with a set of jagged mandibles. Swollen, reddish poison sacs dangle beneath their jaws like cow's udders. Their venom is extremely deadly. The bodies of Kondikki guardians are approximately three feet long, not counting the massive head. The slashing elongated forelegs reach another three feet when fully extended, although they are customarily carried raised and folded. The

The Network and Earth

The Network has always had difficulty in keeping tabs on Takis. The families take a dim view of anyone selling information to the Traders, and they use their telepathic gifts to ferret out and silence such agents. Because of this, the Network didn't learn of the Takisian experiment on Earth until the early 1950s.

The Network had known about Earth for a long time. They had been sending a ship to check up on it every 200 years or so, but humans really had very little to offer the Network. Their technology was too primitive and their service skills too minimal (although showing potential in the mercenary department). But after the release of the virus, Earth suddenly became much more interesting.

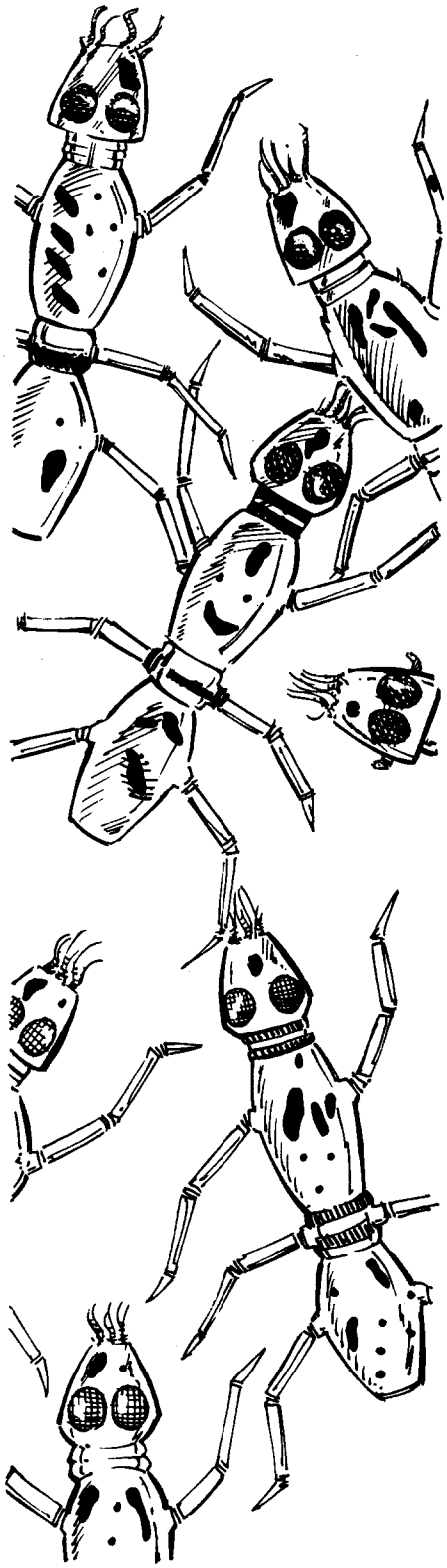
Still, things weren't too promising when the Network made its initial re-survey in 1952 (incidentally producing a dramatic upswing in saucer sightings that summer). There was Jokertown, but the jokers were clearly little better than freaks. There were a few aces, but they were mostly in deep cover during the mid-1950s. There being scant evidence that the wild card was anything but a rank failure, the Network saw little point in hanging around. Master Traders, though, are patient, wily, and thorough, so they hedged their bets. They decided to keep the Earth under observation.

A small ship was left as an orbital outpost, manned by an Embe, a member of a species known for its stability and love of solitude. The orbital observer was to monitor radio and television broadcasts, watch for Takisian intrusion, and inform the Master Trader immediately if the situation changed in a drastic manner. He made annual reports from 1952 onwards via tachyon transmitter until he was destroyed by the Swarm Mother.

A second observer was placed on the planet's surface, a Glabberan named Jhubben (see p. 55).

guardians have an internal skeleton, but their limbs, head, and the upper flanks of their body are sheathed in chitinous armor. The underside of their torso is leathery flesh, mottled green and black. In a gravity field, guardians can cling to walls and ceilings. They are also accustomed to weightlessness and are quite agile in free fall.

The guardians are sentient but stupid. They are quick, agile fighters, but slow in understanding. They are physically incapable of speech, but can comprehend simple commands in the Network trade talk. They can sign simple replies with their slashing arms. In ancient days each nest had hundreds of guardians, but they have been superseded by sophisticated weaponry and their purpose has degenerated into ritual. A modern starship nest includes only twenty or so guardians, who are posted as sort of a "Swiss guard," there customarily being very little real danger about a Network starship.



Consorts

The consorts are fertile males who live and die within the confines of the nest-chamber, the huge circular room that is the nexus of the Kondikki tunnel system deep within the heart of most Network starships. A typical nest includes twenty to thirty consorts. They resemble the guardians, but lack slashing limbs, mandibles, and poison-sacs. Their bodies are soft and green and pulpy. Their mouths are fringed by long, hollow, worm-like tentacles which are both organs of manipulation and fertilization.

Working in shifts, the consorts fertilize the eggs spewed forth by the godqueen. Through this fertilization, they consciously manipulate the castes and imprinted lifetasks of the unborn according to the needs of the nest and the ship.

The consorts are fully sentient. They speak in a high, clicking, whispery language through computer systems that translate their words into Network trade-tongue. They are not technologically creative, but have a quick and thorough grasp of any machine or device that can be explained or diagrammed for them. Having achieved that understanding, they can immediately imprint unborn workers with the instinctive ability to build, repair and maintain the device in question. From time to time a consort appears who is capable of producing hybrids, or entirely new castes of specialists. Such mutants are highly prized among the Kondikki, yet are also regarded with distrust least they bring forth some dangerous newness to disrupt the smooth functioning of ship and nest.

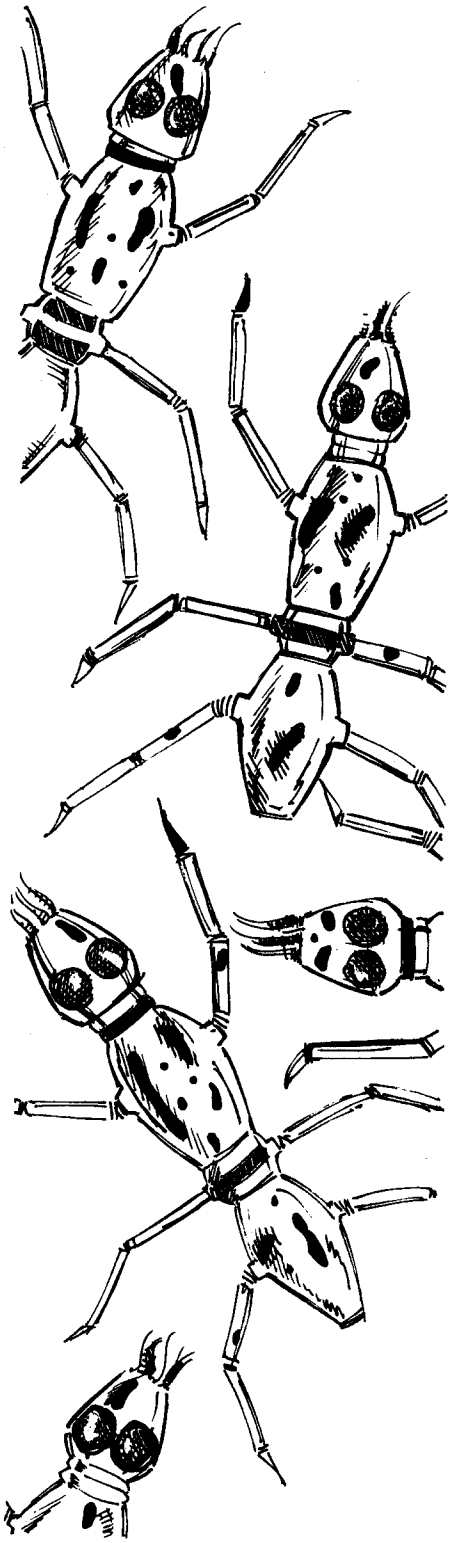
Although the consorts never leave the nest-chamber, they still function as the voice of the Kondikki to the rest of the ship, communicating over electronic links.

The Godqueen

The living soul of every Kondikki nest is the godqueen, a huge blind mountain of soft greenish-black flesh that is essentially immobile (although younger and smaller queens can squirm and roll a bit). The godqueen spews forth eggs endlessly. She also eats constantly, digesting all manner of scrap, rubbish and organic waste (most of the sanitary system on the starships pump their wastes to the nest-chamber). From this waste the godqueen produces vast quantities of the syrup that nourishes workers, guardians and consorts.

The nest-chamber in which the godqueen dwells is a cavernous damp place crawling with life. Its walls are covered with fertilized eggs pasted up by the consorts. Workers are constantly crawling in and out to feed. Great drapes and roots of succulent fungus grow from the floor to the ceiling.

The godqueen is mother, guard and stomach to the nest. The other castes worship her. She is a powerful and voracious intelligence. Godqueens have been known to live for thousands of years with their intellect and memory-stores



growing all the time. A godqueen also has a potent but limited telepathic ability which links her directly to her consorts and dimly to the workers and guardians. She can feel almost at once if something is wrong with her nest-children or the ship they are tending. However, this telepathy does not extend to other races, not even to other nests of Kondikki. The godqueen communicates to the outside world only through her consorts.

A nest can have only one godqueen. When she begins to die, the consorts taste the decay in her eggs and then fertilize eggs to produce young godqueens. Once born, the young queens reach out telepathically to guardians and use them as instruments in a fight for dominance that results in only a single surviving godqueen.

The Kondikki race is ancient and static and has been a part of the Network almost since its beginnings. Great nest wars were endemic on their homeworld as rival godqueens were biologically driven to destroy each other. But the Kondikki found tranquillity when taken aboard Network starships and isolated from other nests. They are now entirely a spacefaring race, having sold and abandoned the world of their birth. When Network ships dock or assemble in close proximity, the godqueens grow dimly aware of each other. This causes uneasiness in the nests, but any degree of physical distance prevents violence from breaking out.

Nests place a high premium on tranquillity, harmony, and many-functioning-as-one. They quest after perfection, balance, proportion, and equanimity. They are innately loyal to the Network (their own name for it translates more closely as "Star Nest").

The Kondikki regard the Swarm as a cancerous horror, a threat to virtually every value embodied by the nest. Sometimes godqueens can sense the nearness of a Swarm Mother telepathically. Their instinctive response is to have the consorts produce hundreds of new guardians.

The Takisians are a puzzlement to the Kondikki. The Takisian concepts of family loyalty and hostility to rival families seems much akin to the godqueens' own values of nest unity and instinctive hostility to other godqueens. Takisian individualism, though, is absolutely alien to the Kondikki, and Takisian refusal to join the Network is an incomprehensible aberration.

Characteristics

The various classes of the Kondikki race have different average characteristics:

	ST	*DX*	*IQ*	*HT*	*Move*
Worker	10	15	2	20	varies from 1 to 10
Guardian	25	16	6	20	10
Consort	10	10	10	20	5
Godqueen	0	0	24	(100)	0

The workers have no advantages or disadvantages per se, as they exist with only the specific technological skills they were imprinted with at birth. The guardians have only hand-to-hand combat skills and deadly venom (a blood agent doing 2d damage per bite) while the consorts have fair communication skills. The Kondikki function in starship society as janitors and technicians.

None of the Kondikki castes is really suitable for use as a player character.

The Aevre

A race of swift winged carnivores from a low-gravity world, the Aevre are among the Network's principal pilots, fighters and scouts. Physically, they are gorgeous, imposing creatures with skin like burnished bronze and large golden eyes. They have huge chest cavities with oversized lungs and gaping red airscoop slits for oxygen intake when flying. Their wings are leathery and bat-like and spread up to 40 feet. Their bones are hollow, making them quite fragile, and their bodies are barely fleshed, giving them a gaunt, chiseled appearance. At the far bottom end of each wing is a small clasping appendage that is a "foot" for support while on the ground. Their "legs" are double-jointed — each joint bending both ways at need — and descend from the bottom of their slim, muscular, triangular torsos. Each "leg" terminates in a six-fingered hand with curved retractable talons. These hands are their principal manipulative organs. Their senses are razor-keen, their reflexes lightning-fast.

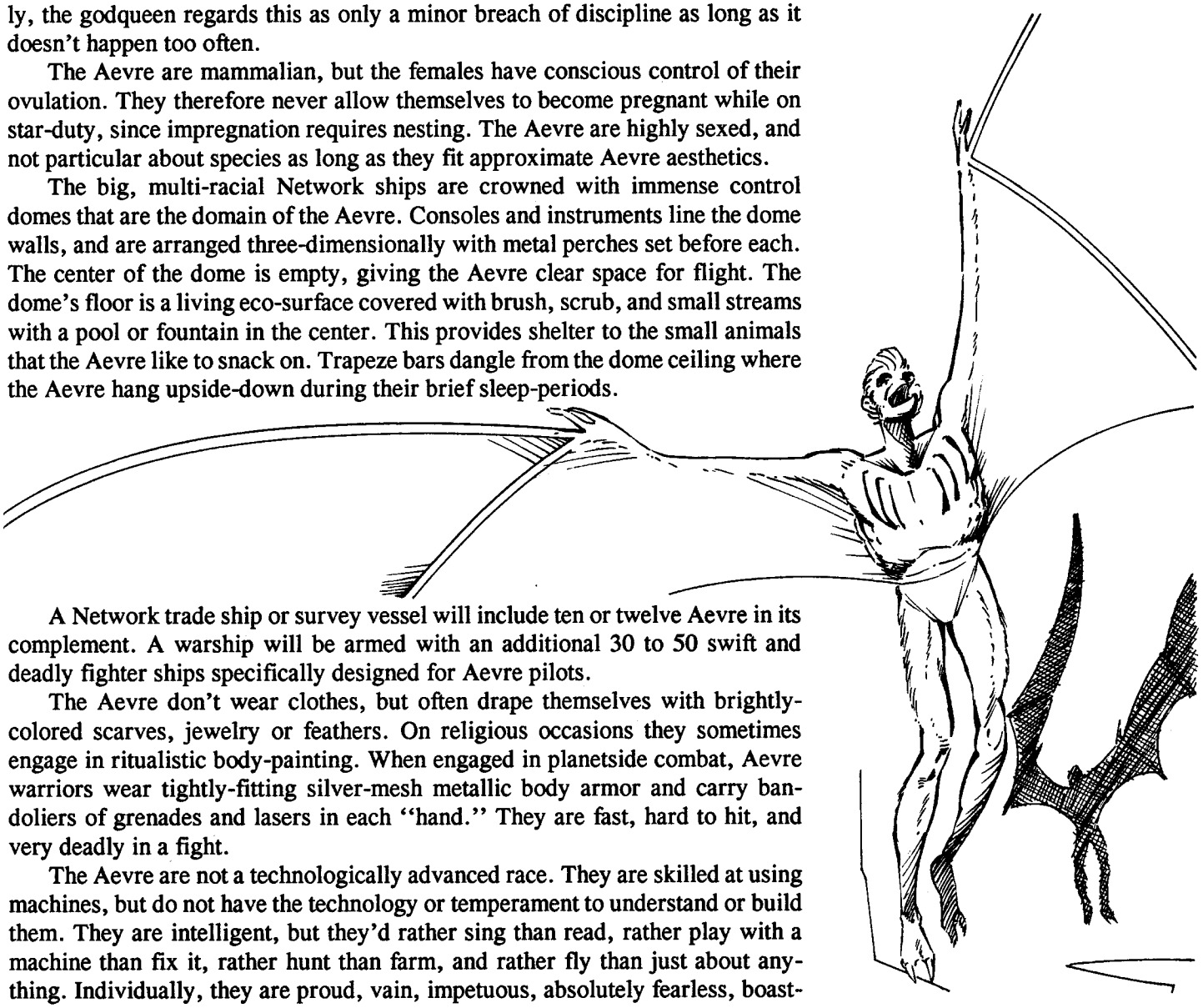
Because they carry almost no body fat, the Aevre are voracious eating machines. They are entirely carnivorous and prefer living food. From time to time the Aevre forget themselves and eat passing Kondikki workers. Fortunately, the godqueen regards this as only a minor breach of discipline as long as it doesn't happen too often.

The Aevre are mammalian, but the females have conscious control of their ovulation. They therefore never allow themselves to become pregnant while on star-duty, since impregnation requires nesting. The Aevre are highly sexed, and not particular about species as long as they fit approximate Aevre aesthetics.

The big, multi-racial Network ships are crowned with immense control domes that are the domain of the Aevre. Consoles and instruments line the dome walls, and are arranged three-dimensionally with metal perches set before each. The center of the dome is empty, giving the Aevre clear space for flight. The dome's floor is a living eco-surface covered with brush, scrub, and small streams with a pool or fountain in the center. This provides shelter to the small animals that the Aevre like to snack on. Trapeze bars dangle from the dome ceiling where the Aevre hang upside-down during their brief sleep-periods.

Aevre Characters

The typical Aevre advantages are Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes and Double-Jointed; disadvantages are Gluttony, Impulsiveness and Lecherousness. No Aevre ever has the Fat or Overweight disadvantage. Their skill selections lie in Piloting (from single-seated fighters to the largest starships) and combat. They function in starship society as pilots, light fighters, and scouts. Average characteristics for the Aevre are ST 16, DX 16, IQ 10, HT 14.



A Network trade ship or survey vessel will include ten or twelve Aevre in its complement. A warship will be armed with an additional 30 to 50 swift and deadly fighter ships specifically designed for Aevre pilots.

The Aevre don't wear clothes, but often drape themselves with brightly-colored scarves, jewelry or feathers. On religious occasions they sometimes engage in ritualistic body-painting. When engaged in planetside combat, Aevre warriors wear tightly-fitting silver-mesh metallic body armor and carry bandoliers of grenades and lasers in each "hand." They are fast, hard to hit, and very deadly in a fight.

The Aevre are not a technologically advanced race. They are skilled at using machines, but do not have the technology or temperament to understand or build them. They are intelligent, but they'd rather sing than read, rather play with a machine than fix it, rather hunt than farm, and rather fly than just about anything. Individually, they are proud, vain, impetuous, absolutely fearless, boastful and almost always hungry. They are very witty and sarcastic, with a sharp and mocking sense of humor. They are addicted to racial jokes, and endlessly tell each other Kondikki jokes, Takisian jokes and so on.

The Ly'bahr

The Ly'bahr are often mistaken for robots by primitive races encountering the Network for the first time. In fact, they are a race of cyborgs and one of the original three species that formed the Network. Technologically one of the most advanced civilizations in the galaxy, they are also on an inexorable slide to extinction. Long ago, most of the Ly'bahr abandoned their organic bodies to have their braincases installed in awesome cybernetic shells. When the Swarm destroyed their homeworld approximately 12,000 years ago, they killed the only remaining fleshy Ly'bahr. The star-traveling cyborgs were left with no means of reproducing their species, and an implacable hatred of the Swarm. In their metal and plastic cyborg shells, the Ly'bahr are virtual immortals, but whenever one does perish there is one less Ly'bahr in the universe, and the entire race mourns.

The Ly'bahr's bodies vary widely from one individual to the next, and sometimes from one day to the next. They are constantly redesigning and rebuilding themselves for whatever tasks may be immediately at hand. Frequently (but not always) their cyborg bodies are bipedal, echoing the race's original organic form. The actual living braincase will rarely be enclosed in the "head" (if the shell has a head) but down in the "stomach" region where it can be surrounded by life-support mechanisms and protected by heavy armor and force screens.

A typical cyborg body will also possess several advanced computers, a wide array of sophisticated sensory equipment, and a small nuclear fusion power cell. All Ly'bahr can survive quite nicely in hard vacuum. Their bodies are polished and obviously metallic. Their colors vary with personal preference, but whether a cyborg is mirrored silver or jet black or burnished red, their bodies gleam with reflected light.

Ly'bahr scientists are the equal of any known in the galaxy in fields like cybernetics, metallurgy, plastics, inorganic chemistry and robotics. A typical Network starship carries five or six Ly'bahr scientists, and quite frequently a senior Ly'bahr will command the craft on a day-to-day basis.

Network warships also carry a contingent of Ly'bahr fighters, sometimes called legionnaires. They don't need many, unless a full-scale war is in the offing. Ly'bahr legionnaires are awesome warriors. Augmented exoskeleton strength makes them physically powerful. Their armored bodies can withstand terrific punishment, lasers glance off their mirror-finish shells, they move and fire with the speed and accuracy of a computer, and all kinds of heavy weaponry will be built into their bodies depending on the exact kind of firepower they feel like packing any given day. In full-fledged combat situations, they'll build themselves up to the size of a small shuttlecraft and take on several Kondikki workers for damage control and repairs.

Ly'bahr Personality

Although fearsome and almost indestructible, Ly'bahr legionnaires are nonetheless cautious and deliberate warriors, constantly aware that each death diminishes the race forever. This careful behavior has one exception. The Ly'bahr will move against the Swarm whenever and wherever they encounter them, with full force and without regard for their own lives or the lives of anyone else who might be in the neighborhood.

The Ly'bahr were not a very sexual race even when they had organic bodies, and have long since forgotten what sex is all about. They hold the inorganic to be self-evidently superior to the organic and believe that all intelligent races will eventually adopt cyborg bodies.

Ly'bahr are as individualistic as humans or Takisians. They can call on millennia of recorded memories and experience, and in that time many of them

Ly'bahr Characters

Ly'bahr typically have the advantages of Immunity to Disease, Longevity and Reputation. They can have none of the disadvantages associated with bodily defects. Ly'bahr skills lie in the scientific area, especially Cybernetics, Metallurgy, Inorganic Chemistry and Robotics. Many also have considerable combat skills. They function in starship society as scientists and heavy fighters. Their average characteristics vary widely from individual to individual, and can even vary day to day for a single individual. All are very strong, very fast, and have a high degree of intelligence backed by millennia of experience.

have developed distinctive individual hobbies or areas of interest. With no interest in or capacity for physical pleasure, the Ly'bahr have honed their intellectual pursuits to a high degree. Their games, music, literature and art are ancient, subtle, vastly complex, and often incomprehensible and boring to other races.

The Rhindarians

The Rhindarians are small, graceful, delicate, hairless, bipedal mammals. They average about 4 1/2 feet in height, with long necks, slim six-fingered hands with two opposable thumbs, and large, liquid eyes. Their skin is soft and smooth and they can change colors like a chameleon, though most often they favor drab earth tones. They have no external ears and a breathing hole instead of a nose, but disguised or in a bad light, one could pass for a human child. Their clothing tends to be drab and nondescript. They like coveralls with lots of pockets, loose gowns, and flowing robes. They are strictly vegetarians and many of them are empaths. They move gracefully and quietly and their voices are small and soft.

The Rhindarians are a race of scholars. They are obsessed with acquiring knowledge and understanding the universe. Three-quarters of the scientific crew of any Network starship will be Rhindarians. Rhindar itself is the Network's great center of learning and its repository of knowledge.

Many of the Network's translators, envoys, and diplomats are also Rhindarian. Their racial empathy comes in handy in these professions, as do their philosophies and religions, which all counsel peace, learning, cooperation, contemplation, selflessness, service and hard work. Generally speaking, Rhindarians do a much better job of attaining these ideals than humans do.

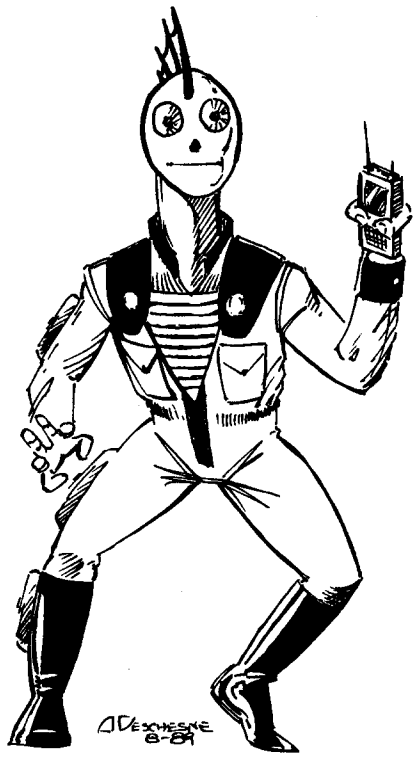
It is, however, most important to realize that all the foregoing statements apply only to Rhindarian females. Rhindarian males are something else entirely.

Six feet tall and gorgeous (at least by Rhindarian standards), males are lithe and muscular, with a great erectile spinal crest that sweeps back from the forehead all the way down to the cleft of the buttocks and rises a foot high when gorged with blood. Rhindarian males constantly turn from one vibrant hue to another. Magenta, gold, azure, indigo, orange or any shade that will attract attention are their favorites. When aroused by a Rhindarian female in heat they turn a distinctive scarlet. They have a strong and distinctive body odor, not unpleasant, that they enhance with perfumes. They wear a lot of guns and knives and whips and other weaponry. They are fond of gems, shiny metals and uniforms. They are vain, self-important, flamboyant, patronizing, loud and empty-headed.

In short, they are sex objects and little more. Network ships each carry a single Rhindarian male, since they are aggressively competitive. When two males are in close proximity they challenge each other with gaudier and gaudier color changes and then fly at one another, screaming and tearing with bare hands and whatever weapons may be handy.

Rhindarian females protect and defer to the male, who is after all delicate, easily excited and overly emotional. They give him gifts, shower him with compliments, praise his charisma and intelligence and martial prowess, and generally do whatever they can to make him feel important. In private they tell each other amusing stories about the males they've known and all the cute, stupid things they've done.

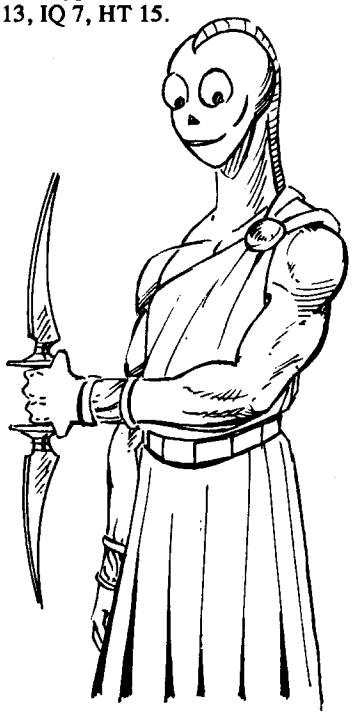
Rhindarian males, easily deluded, firmly believe that they're in charge of all the females. Aboard the Network starships the male inevitably holds some title to assuage his ego: Star Captain, Topmost Master, Lord High Wisdom and Fleet General are all common examples. Of course, no one would dream of giving a male any real authority, but the forms are always observed. Sometimes annoying

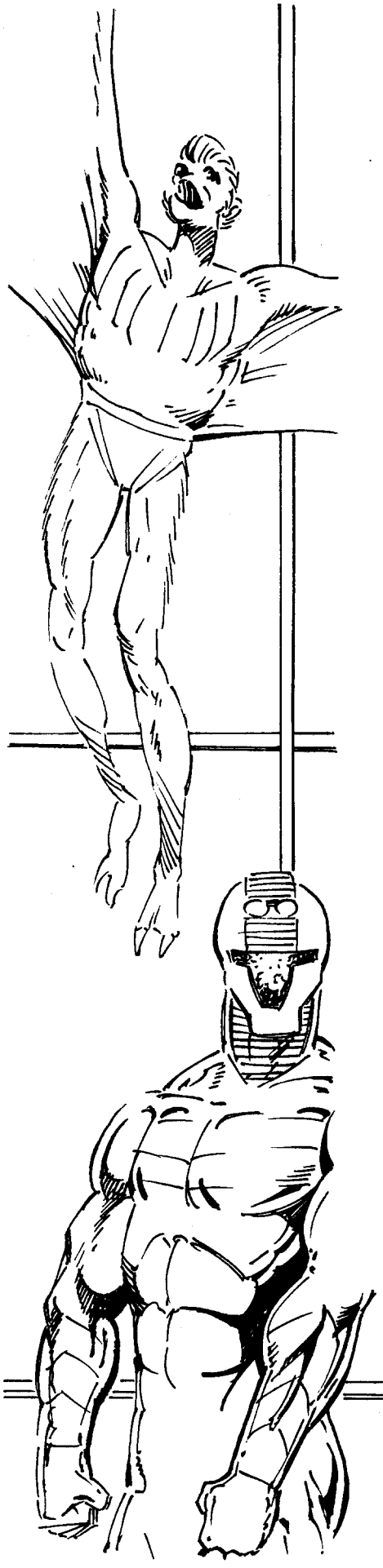


Rhindarian Characters

Rhindarian females usually have the advantages of Empathy and Language Talent. They are skilled at research and the theoretical and philosophical aspects of science. They often function in starship society as scholars, translators, envoys and diplomats. Typical characteristics are ST 7, DX 10, IQ 16, HT 10.

The males typically have the disadvantages of Bad Temper, Gullibility, Impulsiveness, Intolerance, Megalomania and Stubbornness. They have no real function besides that of pleasing Rhindarian females. Typical characteristics are ST 14, DX 13, IQ 7, HT 15.





primitives who insist on speaking to the ship's boss will be allowed to confer with the Fleet General. The results are always amusing.

Rhindarians are not fighters. The females are too gentle and empathetic. The males, though aggressive and fond of martial displays, are too foolish to make effective warriors. Rhindarians are great scientists, but poor technicians. Their strength is theory, not practice.

Rhindarian History

Rhindar is in debt to the Network, since both starflight and racial freedom were purchased from the Traders. For centuries the Rhindarians had been slaves to a race of scaled saurian carnivores called the Druk'heen. The Druk'heen were a Rhindarian experiment that got out of hand. Rhindarian geneticists had evolved them to sentience — to "share in the life of mind" and incidentally do a lot of the hard work and construction the Rhindarians disdained — only to see their creations out-breed and enslave them on their own world. When Network starships reached Rhindar, the Druk'heen imperiously refused to join. The Master Trader promptly made a treaty with the Rhindarians, sent in a few thousand mixed troops and a dozen Ly'bahr legionnaires, toppled the Druk'heen in a single night and removed the entire race from Rhindar.

Rhindar is still repaying the debt with knowledge, research, education and service aboard Network ships. They don't mind their indebtedness, since they are doing the things they love. They are fiercely loyal to the Network.

The Druk'heen, resettled on a hot, swampy, volcanic pit of a planet, are still paying, too — the Network charged them for both transportation and real estate. Their world is now heavily industrialized and they've become a race of miners, shipbuilders, drudges and mercenaries. Some of them still hold a grudge against both the Rhindarians and the Network.

The Glabberians

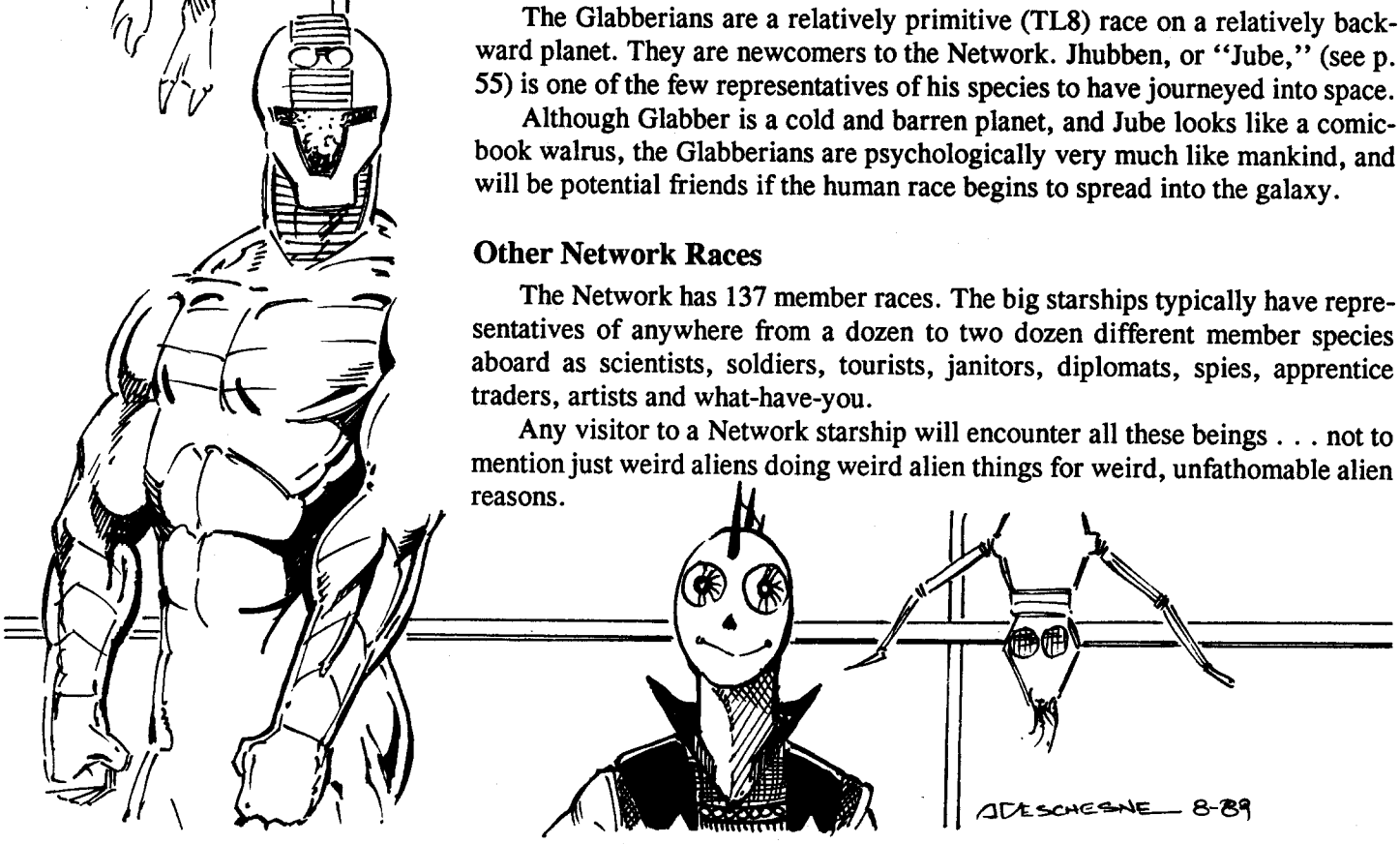
The Glabberians are a relatively primitive (TL8) race on a relatively backward planet. They are newcomers to the Network. Jhubben, or "Jube," (see p. 55) is one of the few representatives of his species to have journeyed into space.

Although Glabber is a cold and barren planet, and Jube looks like a comic-book walrus, the Glabberians are psychologically very much like mankind, and will be potential friends if the human race begins to spread into the galaxy.

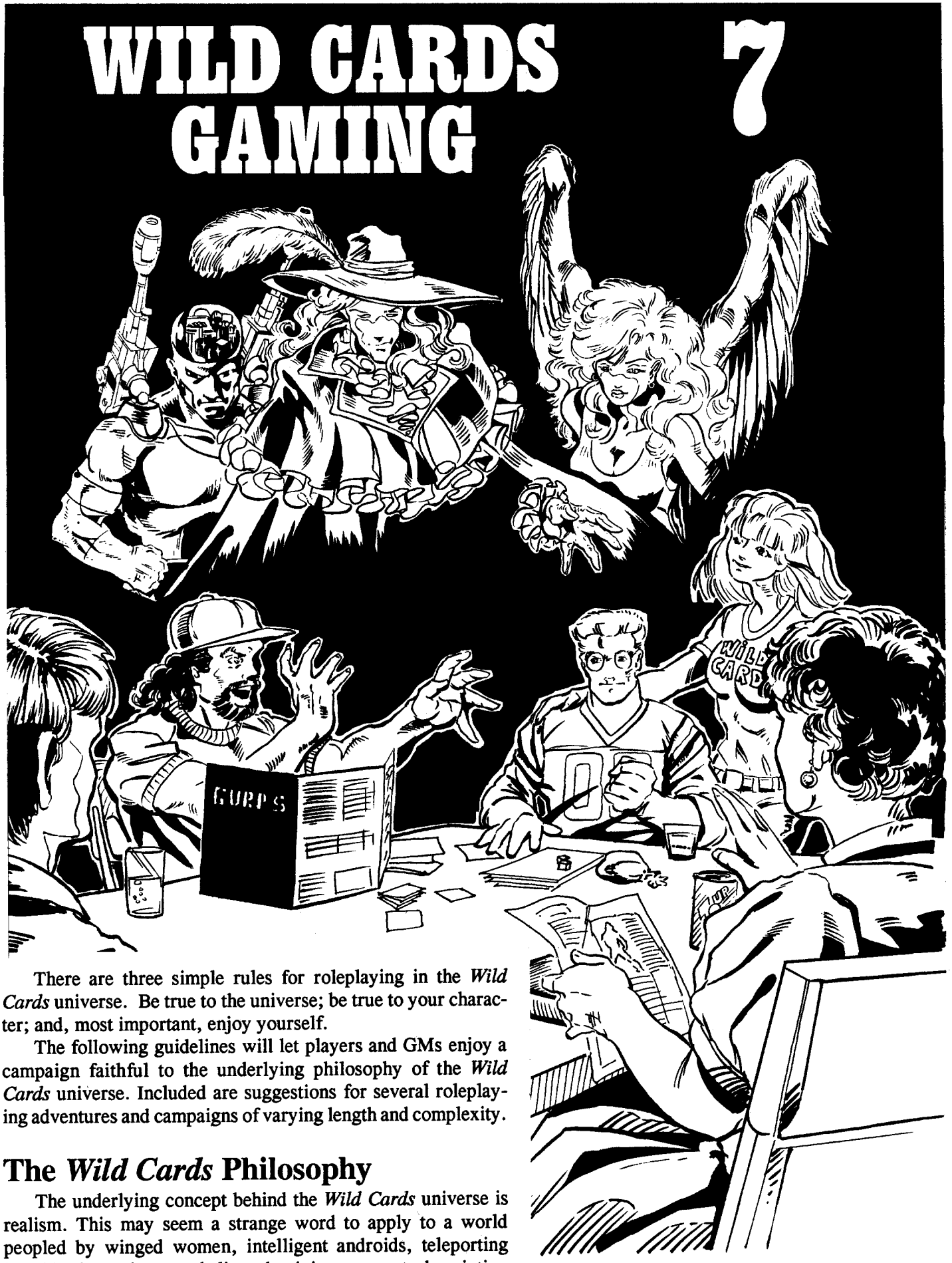
Other Network Races

The Network has 137 member races. The big starships typically have representatives of anywhere from a dozen to two dozen different member species aboard as scientists, soldiers, tourists, janitors, diplomats, spies, apprentice traders, artists and what-have-you.

Any visitor to a Network starship will encounter all these beings . . . not to mention just weird aliens doing weird alien things for weird, unfathomable alien reasons.



WILD CARDS GAMING 7



There are three simple rules for roleplaying in the *Wild Cards* universe. Be true to the universe; be true to your character; and, most important, enjoy yourself.

The following guidelines will let players and GMs enjoy a campaign faithful to the underlying philosophy of the *Wild Cards* universe. Included are suggestions for several roleplaying adventures and campaigns of varying length and complexity.

The *Wild Cards* Philosophy

The underlying concept behind the *Wild Cards* universe is realism. This may seem a strange word to apply to a world peopled by winged women, intelligent androids, teleporting hunchbacks, and assorted aliens, but it is an accurate description of the approach taken by the authors of the series.

Reactions to Wild Carders

Whether a character is a potent ace, a joker/ace, a "mere" deuce or a nat hero, everyday life in the *Wild Cards* universe is rarely dull and never easy. Even aces have it hard at times. They're treated in turn like plague carriers, freaks, celebrities or guardian angels, but rarely as simple human beings.Handling the different reactions will be a challenge for the GM and sometimes a trial for the gamer.

GMs should decide the attitude of important NPCs before the start of a campaign. For example, if the aces involved in the adventure are going to run into the representatives of a government agency, the GM should decide if the NPC is a hero-worshiping ace-lover, a follower of Leo Barnett who thinks all wild carders are marked by the hand of the devil, or (more likely) something in between.

Remember that attitudes toward wild carders have changed drastically through time. In the months immediately after the first Wild Card Day, probably 95% of America had a very strong anti-wild card bias. This disapproval declined as time passed. During the era of the Four Aces, probably 80% of America had a favorable feeling towards aces. By McCarthy's heyday (early to mid-1950s) anti-wild card hysteria had swept over about 75% of America. After McCarthy's death and until the time of the Turtle's public debut, America was split about 50-50 range between pro- and anti-ace. Ace popularity rose dramatically through the late 1960s, across the 1970s, and to the mid-1980s, reaching an approval rating of 90% of the populace during its peak. By the late 1980s it is back in the 50-50 range.

Some people, of course, are fanatic ace fans, and some people hate aces. For game purposes, assume that ace-lovers will react at +4 or better to well-known aces, +3 to those they have heard of, and +2 to anyone with ace powers! Most people will react at +2 to known aces, +1 to those with ace powers . . . *but -1 or worse* to any ace who seems to have a "bad attitude," let alone acts threatening. And ace-haters will react at -2 or worse, all the time, and will not even give the "celebrity" reaction bonus.

For this reason, there is no automatic Status or Reputation cost for being an ace. However, any character may take a good (or bad) Reputation connected with his ace career. In general, "public" aces will have a good reputation, simply as interesting celebrities, worth +1 reaction from everyone, all the time. This is the public reaction to their celebrity status, *not* to the wild card itself.

Continued on next page . . .

The project started with a single, simple proposition. What would happen to the world if people really had extraordinary powers and abilities? The authors then looked at what effect such people would have on the world, and what effect their powers and abilities would have on them. This is precisely the approach an RPG campaign should take.

Campaign Locale

A GM should be intimately familiar with the *Wild Cards* series to run a campaign set in this universe. Most of the stories are set in New York City, where the virus was first released; the city still has the largest concentration of aces and jokers. It would be helpful to have a working knowledge of the geography and history of the "Big Apple" in order to set adventures in the heart of wild card territory.

Those who don't know New York City, don't like New York City, or simply don't want to use it as a background can adventure in any city, town or country in the world. After all, the virus has changed the whole world, not just one corner of it!

Choosing or Creating a Character

GURPS Wild Cards campaigns can have PCs that are:

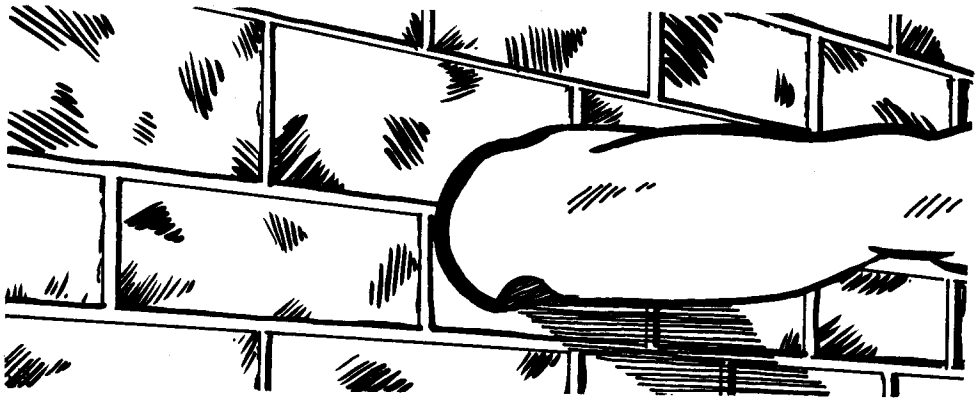
1. Mostly characters chosen from the *Wild Cards* volumes.
2. Mostly new characters constructed by the gamers.
3. Characters created by gamers, with series characters playing important roles as NPCs.

Each of these approaches can work; each has its own particular drawbacks and advantages.

Series Characters as PCs

Playing characters taken from the books requires intimate familiarity with the *Wild Cards* series, but does enable everyone to play their favorite ace, joker or nat. Not all gamers may be familiar enough with the series to play established characters in a believable manner, but this volume does detail the personalities and abilities of most of the major characters, which should help alleviate that problem.

Gamers may have their own ideas on how to play particular characters in the series, and diverging opinions are bound to arise. That's perfectly understandable, but it would not do, for example, to have the Turtle use his TK to squash villains right and left. The GM has final authority to penalize severely incorrect behavior. He might decree, again using the Turtle as an example, that Tommy Tudbury was so overcome with remorse after squashing an entire street gang that he was unable to use his TK at all for a week (or, if the player was using Tommy's powers in a really outrageous manner, a year).



Series Characters as NPCs

This combines both approaches, allowing the gamers' imagination to be spiced by liberal use of the written series. By this method players can start off their own fledging heroes who can be aided — or at times thwarted — in their adventures by older, more experienced, much more powerful NPCs like Dr. Tachyon, Modular Man, or Captain Trips.

Some specific suggestions: a campaign built around the Jokertown Clinic, with characters like Tachyon, Dr. Finn, and Howard "Troll" Mueller in the background. Or how about a campaign centered on Aces High? Hiram Worchester is always around, and just about anyone might drop in at any time.

If the players want to take the parts of existing characters, they don't have to take aces who get along all the time . . . conflict can be interesting. But they must be characters that the GM can accommodate together in an adventure! Creating a cast of underworld-related characters (for instance, Croyd, Wraith, Brennan and Fortunato) might work well. Or a group could be made up of aces with government affiliations (Tachyon and Blaise, Cyclone, Billy Ray). A GM could certainly accommodate almost any combination *once,* but a continuing campaign shouldn't involve too many mismatches.

Creating All-New Characters

This approach allows gamers to give free rein to their imagination. It is definitely more time-consuming to construct new characters, but can be more satisfying to the players involved. New characters should be built as real people with real personalities and real strengths and weaknesses.

Players should avoid the temptation of "cooking" the rules to develop utterly invincible characters with no weaknesses. GMs who find such characters in their scenarios are cordially invited to peruse the rules themselves to find a way to squash such annoying entities as soon as possible.

Designing the *Wild Cards* Character

Campaign Power Level

The first decision to make is the campaign's power level (see p. SU4). The suggested beginning power level for a *Wild Cards* campaign is 250 points. The average level of the heroes in the books is somewhat greater than that . . . but some of them have been adventuring for a while! A campaign that starts at 250 points will be closest to the original stories.

Of course, it's possible to use the *Wild Cards* background for a "four-color" campaign, based on 500 points or even more. Certainly many of the best *Wild Cards* characters, like Dr. Tachyon and the Turtle, have huge point totals. If the players would really prefer high-powered adventure, there's no reason not to

Reactions to Wild Carders (Continued)

The historical figures for public acceptance, of course, all relate to aces. Jokers, or even joker aces, were never accepted by much more than half of the population even in the best of times, and it was probably around 5%-10% in the worst.

Joker Reaction Penalties

Being an obvious joker is a Social Stigma (p. B27). It is worth -15 points, equivalent to a general reaction penalty of -3. Note that this varies by location. In a cosmopolitan area, or one where jokers are common, the reaction penalty will be only -2. It will be -4 or worse in less cosmopolitan areas. This is *in addition* to any penalty for unattractive appearance.

Note, though, that *jokers* usually react well to other jokers in most situations. The average reaction bonus from one joker to another is +3, varying with the situation. Some individual jokers have no feeling of solidarity; they hate themselves and all their kind. But most will go out of their way to help their brothers and sisters in misery.

Reactions By Jokers

Jokers react to nats and aces in a variety of ways. In general, the more unattractive and despised the joker, the more likely he is to prefer joker company, avoiding and mistrusting others (since they are obviously disgusted by him). Ace- and nat-haters are more common among jokers in general. In particular, many jokers are bitterly jealous of ace powers, for obvious reasons! But jokers with powers, even deuce powers, may identify themselves as aces and keep company with aces.

Reactions by Aces

Almost all aces enjoy the concept of "wild card chic," and even those who don't are more comfortable in the company of their fellow metahumans. Thus, in general, any ace will react to any other ace at +2.

In general, the reaction of aces toward jokers is like the reactions of ordinary people, but more so. When the ace sees the joker, he knows that "there, but for the grace of God, go I." Some react with pity and a desire to do all they can to help. Some react with horror.

Aces react toward normals in the same variety of ways that other celebrities behave. Some are modest, some are slick, and some milk their celebrity status for all it is worth.

The Deck of the Wild Card

To determine if a character is to be an ace or a joker/ace, roll three dice and refer to the following table. Within these guidelines, the player may select the character's appearance, and the Appearance advantage or disadvantage that goes with it.

3-6 — ace
7 — 4th-level joker/ace
8 — 3rd-level joker/ace
9 — 2nd-level joker/ace
10, 11 —1st-level joker/ace
12 — 2nd-level joker/ace
13 — 3rd-level joker/ace
14 — 4th-level joker/ace
15, 16 — 5th-level joker/ace
17, 18 — ace

An *ace* has special powers, and either no physical modifications, or modifications that are so slight or so beautiful that there will be no "joker" stigma attached to them (such as Peregrine's beautiful wings).

First-level joker/aces have a single physical blemish that does not constitute a "disadvantage" except possibly in appearance. They go directly to the *Joker Appearance* table on p. 121.

Higher-level jokers must roll (Level-1) times on the Joker Defects Table (below) to see what physical and/or mental defects their joker deformities result in. A second-level joker rolls once, and so on.

Joker Defects

3 — Dwarfism
4 — Armless or legless
5 — Very fat or skinny, and roll again
6 — Deaf
7 — Functional extra sense organs, such as eyes or ears. These need not cost points unless they give heightened senses.
8 — Extra limb or limbs, or unusually long or strong limb or limbs. If extra limbs are not functional, they cost no character points; otherwise, see p. SU52.
9 — Super Weakness (see p. SU29) to a common or very common situation or substance
10 — Conspicuous deformity (hunchback, useless extra limbs, etc.). Appearance is Ugly (-2 reaction) or worse.
11 — Crippled arm or leg
12 — Useless/missing arm, leg or eye
13 — Gigantism
14 — Mute
15 — Dependency (see p. SU29) on a particular substance
16 — Hemophilia, and roll again
17 — Blindness
18 — Uncontrolled change (see p. SU29) to another form, which must be either joker or animal in appearance. Roll one extra time, for a particular attribute of the new form. Other joker defects, if any, may be applied to either form.

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grant their wish. Just remember that the opposition will need to be high-powered, too, to give them some challenge!

In either event, to be true to the *Wild Cards* stories, ace characters should be limited to the usual 40 points of disadvantages. Jokers, on the other hand, may take up to 100 points of disadvantages! This guideline is offered for authenticity, not balance — it obviously means that in a game the power level of jokers will be higher than that of aces. GMs who find this unbalancing can allow aces to take the same 100 points of disadvantages, if they can find a way to do so within the character conception.

Character Conceptions

Next, decide on the general character type. ***GURPS Supers*** offers some useful suggestions about the various types of super-characters that are commonly found, including the Tank, the Blaster, the Psi, the Super Normal, The Were, and the Gadgeteer (see pp. SU5-6). *Wild Cards* examples of those super-types would be, respectively, Jack "Golden Boy" Braun, Jumping Jack Flash, Dr. Tachyon, Daniel "Yeoman" Brennan, Radha "Elephant Girl" O'Reilly, and Dr. Maxim Travnicek.

After choosing the general type, whether it's "stronger than an elephant," or "dark avenger of the night," design the character as a 100-point normal. Choose a name and a personality and assign characteristic points, keeping them within normal human ranges. Add some advantages, disadvantages and quirks to round out the personality of the character and decide on appropriate (or interesting) skills, but don't add skill levels just yet.

Drawing from the Wild Card Deck

From this point the player has two choices. He can always choose just to finish the character, allocating the point total chosen for the campaign. But it is more in the spirit of the *Wild Cards* universe to draw from the deck of the wild card (see sidebar) to see what happens to the character.

There's no Black Queen in this particular deck, for obvious reasons. It's fair to assume that all PCs survive the experience. (To randomly determine whether a particular NPC survives the wild card, roll 3 dice; a 6 or less means the character survives and can go to the next step.)

When a character draws from the deck in the sidebar, the odds that he or she will be a pure ace, with no joker defects, are about 10%. But joker characters can have great possibilities for gaming, especially since we assume that any PC joker is entitled to take ace powers. The Oddity and Quasiman are joker/aces, but so are Troll and Peregrine. And if all characters have the same 250 points to work with, the extra disadvantage points given to jokers will allow them more powers!

For this purpose, jokers are classified as being from level 1 to 5. Level 1 jokers have a physical blemish with no mental or physical defect associated with it. This physical oddity might look ugly, or even be neutral or attractive, such as a nice coat of fur or beautifully feathered wings (i.e., Peregrine).The player defines the details of this feature.

Level 2 through 5 jokers must roll the appropriate number of times on the Joker Defects Table, and will have real mental and/or physical defects.

The Joker Defects Table is couched in deliberately vague terms to let the gamers use their imagination. "Useless left hand," for example, should be something more creative than "missing hand." Dorian Wilde, for example, has a mass of uncontrollable, constantly twitching tentacles in place of a hand. As always, the GM has final say as to whether a particular deformity fits the severity called for by a particular situation.

The Deuce

Besides aces and joker/aces, gamers can consider playing one or two other character types. The *deuce* is an interesting character type that hasn't been explored extensively in the *Wild Cards* universe . . . as of yet! The deuce is a wild carder with a negligible or even useless power. For example, there was Pigment Man, who could turn his skin any shade of color that he desired, or the woman with enough TK to lift a penny.

The general guideline for a deuce is *no more than 10 points in super-abilities.* Even within that limitation, the GM may forbid any choice of abilities that seems too powerful.

With wisely chosen advantages and skills, a 250-point deuce could still play a major role in a *Wild Cards* campaign. How about a fellow who's Filthy Rich? He always wanted to be a hero, but the wild card has given him a power along the lines of Pigment Man. He's not embittered, however. He loves aces and likes nothing better than to associate with them. He proceeds to use his money to set up an ace team that he runs with his superlative leadership and tactical and scientific skills.

Alternatively, a deuce could be created as an "ordinary" 100-point character, with a special deuce ability.

The Nat Hero

The nat hero, or "super normal," (like Daniel "Yeoman" Brennan) is rare in the *Wild Cards* universe, but not impossible. Such characters can be fun to play, but must be fully aware of their limitations. Brennan will never win a fist-fight with Jack Braun, or a mental battle with Dr. Tachyon, but put in the proper situation he can more than hold his own. Like the deuce discussed above, nat heroes must be constructed carefully with complementing skills and characteristics. They are usually better suited as shadowy skulkers rather than center-stage characters.

Creating a *Wild Cards* Scenario

Scenarios should be constructed with a specific goal in mind. The GM should invent a specific problem that has some impact on the world, or at least the little piece of it in which the PC heroes are adventuring. Don't build a campaign solely to accumulate money, wealth or interesting gewgaws for the PCs, or one whose major goal is to accumulate more and more character points to build more and more invincible characters.

This is not to say that campaigns have to be grim deathtraps, depressingly realistic, or even entirely serious. *Wild Cards* heroes have battled social injustice, crazed criminal conspiracies bent on world domination, normal criminal conspiracies bent on increasing their bank accounts, alien invasions, and even great apes suffering from the compulsion to kidnap blondes to carry up the side of the Empire State Building.

The *Wild Cards* volumes have so far chronicled forty years of history. A lot of events have been established, a lot of history has been written — or rewritten. But there are still large temporal gaps and huge geographic areas to be explored in this strange new world.

The 1940s, the "Four Aces Period," has been broadly described, but few details have been filled in. How exactly did the Four Aces topple Peron? What precise role did they play in the history of China? How did Earl Sanderson combat social injustice at home? Various stories have hints, and the bare bones of historical detail, but whole campaigns can revolve around each of these points.

The Deck of the Wild Card (Continued)

Joker Appearance

Each joker character now rolls three dice again, *adding* his "level," to determine the general nature of his appearance.

On a roll of 6 or less, the joker mutation is actually attractive (such as exotically-colored hair or skin, or a nice, silky pelt). It does not automatically convey any powers at all; remember, for instance, that Peregrine really flies through telekinesis! It must be obvious to everyone who sees it, but will not cause any "joker" reaction penalty except in the minds of those who hate everyone touched by the wild card. The player has the option of taking any level of enhanced appearance as an advantage!

On a roll of 7 to 11, the "deformity" is relatively unimportant (e.g., six fingers per hand or skin of a strange color) or easy to disguise. The character may not have appearance better than Average, and will have the normal "joker" reaction penalty from others if the joker characteristic is detected.

On a roll of 12 to 15 the deformity would be classed as Ugly . . . -2 on reactions (-10 points), plus the normal joker reaction penalty.

On a roll of 16 or more, the character has a severe deformity that results in a Hideous appearance disadvantage . . . -4 on reactions (-20 points), plus the normal joker reaction penalty.

Dealing Yourself the Wild Card

An interesting campaign starts with the assumption that *you* and the rest of your gaming group live in the *Wild Cards* world. You are living your ordinary lives, when one day . . . there is a wild card outbreak, and *you* are affected!

Each player should start by designing himself or herself as a normal ***GURPS*** character, with no more than 100 character points and no more than 40 points in disadvantages. Modest players do not have to assign themselves a full 100 character points, but they must use at least 50. Within these guidelines, each player should give the most honest self-assessments possible.

When that is done, each player can add enough super-abilities to bring his or her point total to that chosen for the campaign (see p. SU4). They may do this either by free choice, or by drawing from the wild card deck (see sidebar, p. 120). Joker characters can add extra disadvantages to bring their disadvantage total to 100 points.

As an alternative, the GM can *assign* all wild card powers! This can be very interesting, and will mean that the first few adventures (at least) will involve the PCs' slow discovery of their powers. The GM should keep in mind the psychic and psychological basis of most ace powers (see p. 21) and pick powers that are in keeping with the players' own personalities.

Campaign Directions

Once the players have been fully wild-carded, the campaign can proceed in many ways. If the outbreak was localized, then only the PCs are affected. (The odds against a single group of five or six people *all* surviving wild card may be extreme, but these things happen.) The first decision, of course, is whether or not to come out of the deck! Publicly admitting to wild card powers has its drawbacks, even for aces.

If it was a serious outbreak, there may be a dozen new aces, and hundreds of panicked jokers, roaming around the campaign area. It will be difficult to keep their powers secret; the government will probably try to identify and test everyone in the affected area. And there's opportunity for public heroism right away. The authorities will need help to keep order!

From there, the PCs might want to travel to New York to meet the best-known aces, perhaps attend the Wild Card Dinner at Aces High, and get involved in the metahuman community at large.

The 1950s are also a particularly fertile decade for development, as few details beyond the destruction of the Four Aces have specifically been chronicled. Tachyon's "lost years" of wandering in Europe can provide a particularly interesting framework on which to hang a campaign.

By the 1960s through the mid-1980s, many details of *Wild Cards* history have been set down. There's still room for plenty more, however. A campaign could be set in Vietnam, involving Cyclone in the early years of the war, or Brennan and the Joker Brigade in the later years. The Mafia/Shadow Fist war has only been described in broad detail, as have the turbulent years of social confrontation of the late 1960s.

The details of the Swarm invasion outside of America have barely been touched upon. A scenario centering on one of the foreign invasion points would provide an excellent opportunity to explore the history of a different country, as well as an opportunity to create a whole new set of PCs appropriate to that part of the world.

Or the GM could set a specific goal for the players. Find and destroy Jokers Wild. Rescue American hostages held by the Nur in the Middle East. Smash a street gang that's victimizing helpless jokers with random violence. The possibilities are nearly endless.

Not every character, however, can be involved in every subplot. Daniel Brennan has no interest in apes and the Empire State Building. Croyd Crenson has no great desire to smash the Shadow Fist Society — unless he's paid *very* well. If players have characters already chosen — whether picked from the series or created by the gamer — it would behoove the GM to find a problem that interests everyone, or at least plant hooks to drag everyone into the mainstream of the adventure.

History could conceivably be changed because of the outcome of a particular campaign. For example, if a scenario dealt with the fall of Peronist Argentina at the hands of the Four Aces, and Jack Braun was killed in the course of it, the later history of the Four Aces would certainly be drastically changed. If this happens, simply treat the campaign as an alternate universe, adapting later events as needed.

Super-Clichés in the *Wild Cards* Universe

Certain elements that are common to most "superhero" comics are limited, or entirely lacking, in the *Wild Cards* universe. Some of this is chance — even in five volumes it's been difficult to examine everything about *Wild Cards* Earth — but some of this has been the result of conscious decisions by the authors.

Super-Teams

Perhaps the biggest difference is the nearly total lack of ace teams that are similar in construction and philosophy to the comic book Avengers (Did you ever wonder exactly what it was that the Avengers were avenging?) or the Justice League. There are few ace teams in the *Wild Cards* universe because there is no way to portray them realistically in fiction — other than the Four Aces approach wherein the characters devote their total lives to the team. Archibald Holmes supported them financially, told them where to go, and what to do. Even then, though, the team couldn't be maintained for more than a few stories because of the restrictive nature of such a setup. The creators of the Four Aces wanted to take them to their own individual destinies, which couldn't be done in the team setting.

Whenever a team was necessary for something in other stories, individual characters depended on the network of interactions already established for them. Fortunato wanted to destroy the Masons' secret headquarters, so he called up a few buddies and blew down the Cloisters. Tachyon wanted to destroy the Swarm, so he called on the talents and abilities of those already involved in the fray.

Such informal ace groups are fluid, easier to work with, and ultimately more believable than a set team with a ready-made membership. Such a team, however, might be more believable in a roleplaying setting than a fictional setting, where a character's life is under a bigger, far more demanding microscope.

If the GM does allow such teams in his universe, he (and the players!) should be aware of the needs of each PC's personal life, and try to balance that against the needs of the team. Peregrine, for example, would have to have a certain amount of time off each week to tape her television show. She's not going to give that up for a life of crimefighting. Yeoman is a loner who wouldn't be interested in joining such a team. The Turtle might, but he's a fanatic about his secret ID, and his powers don't work outside his shell. Captain Trips would probably love the idea of a crimefighting team, but many of his personae would be aghast or disgusted at the notion.

Super-Crooks

If the concept of an ace team is difficult to envision, the idea of a super-criminal team is impossible. One of the craziest notions that comics have ever had is the idea that a half-dozen megalomaniacs bent on world domination would ever decide to work together on equal footing. The best example of an evil "team" in the *Wild Cards* universe is probably the Masons, headed by the late, lamented Astronomer, and they were only a "team" in the broadest possible sense. The Astronomer gave the orders and his underlings followed them, much like Kien (who is a nat with no powers!) and the Shadow Fist Society, much like the Mafia and their underlings. In the case of each of these criminal groups, there is a definite hierarchy with a well-defined chain of command. They are organizations rather than teams.

That is not to say that criminally-inclined aces won't join gangs. They will. But they'll *act* like gang members who happen to have unusual abilities, not like comic villains.

Vietnam: the Joker Brigade

Many seemingly normal foot soldiers in Vietnam must have found themselves under such stress that their wild card manifested itself. Those who survived their transformation were generally transferred to the Joker Brigade if they didn't desert or kill themselves. The Joker Brigade had the highest casualties of any unit in 'Nam, but also a very high rate of heroism. Imagine a suicide mission to Cambodia as a member of the Brigade. Who lives through the mission? Who dies?

Behind the Iron Curtain: The Wild Card Russia

Russia is a vast, dark land of many secrets. It too was stricken by the wild card. It has huge hospitals for jokers; some say they are really prisons. Russian aces usually work for the government (read KGB); they have reason to fear that their families will suffer otherwise.

But groups of jokers keep disappearing from their "hospitals." One rumor says they're being taken away for government medical experiments, but the hospital administration and staff seems very jumpy. Is the other rumor true, that there's an underground railroad smuggling the jokers to a safe haven in other countries?

Queen Mary — The Ship of Death

The party has had a wonderful time vacationing in Europe. The tour ended in Liverpool, England, and everyone boarded the magnificent *Queen Mary* for a restful, relaxing voyage home. They have a wonderful time and meet some very interesting people, like Irish adventurer Paddy O'Reilly and Chandra, his Indian princess wife. The voyage is wonderful until September 16, 1946 — when a cloud containing the wild card virus sweeps through the ship.

The party must battle raging infection among the passengers and crew, which is also devastated by the disease. How do they cope with the disease, and who brings the ship into port?

Peregrine's Drug Case

Peregrine has discovered that several members of her television staff and crew have been using designer drugs. One dies horribly, another disappears, and Peregrine vows to put on end to this menace before it ruins more lives.

But who is making and distributing this killer drug? Is it Quinn the Eskimo and the Shadow Fist Society? Or perhaps the Mafia's trying to make a comeback. Or can it be a plot aimed directly at her? Captain Trips and Dr. Tachyon are both brilliant chemists, and they are good friends. Can they be persuaded to help?

Vampires!

The incidence of vampirism is apparently on the rise in Eastern Europe. But is it really vampirism, or a blood-sucking cult of joker/ace murderers that have settled in the dark forests and harsh mountains of Transylvania? What could avail against such a group of killers if wooden crosses and vials of holy water don't work?

Remember, the wild card virus is not infectious. It cannot be transferred by neck bites. Or so Dr. Tachyon assures you . . .

Swarm Busters

The leading biological research group in America has been given a United Nations contract to track down and destroy any remaining swarmlings on the face of the Earth. Go for it!

This adventure can include almost anyone — nats, aces and jokers alike — as scientists, mercenaries, translators, reporters and bureaucrats. It can grow into a full-scale campaign for those who enjoy combat. But subtlety may be needed eventually.

Is there a fool-proof swarmling detector on hand? If not, how is it developed? What about the swarmlings in deep cover as human beings? It's a sure bet that they don't want to be detected. They'll take steps against you, and remember that at least some of them will retain their shapechanging abilities and will be able to replace you or any of your comrades. And is there perhaps a guiding intelligence growing on Earth . . . a new Swarm Mother?

Be careful behind the Iron Curtain and in the Middle East, and good hunting.

Secret Identities

Few of the aces in the *Wild Cards* universe have adopted secret identities. There are exceptions — the Turtle, Yeoman and Wraith spring to mind — but in the long run most characters haven't adopted secret IDs because they're simply not necessary unless one has a deep secret to protect. Yeoman and Wraith have such secrets and the Turtle, who is extremely secretive by nature, adopted his ID because of the tenor of the time in which he became an ace.

Throughout the late 1960s to the late 1980s, there was no stigma attached to being an ace — as long as you didn't engage in criminal activity — so there was no real reason to adopt secret identities. If things change, as they seem to be doing in the late 1980s, there might come a time when wild carders will be more secretive and will commonly adopt cover identities.

Think about each character's need for a secret identity. Some people do have secrets that need to be hidden; some just like to be secretive or appear mysterious. Play it as the character needs it.

Super-Costumes

Costumes are another creation of the comics, which after all is a very visual medium. But they don't translate well into the real world. Who designs those things, anyway? Can you imagine the tailoring and dry cleaning bills of the average super? And what do you do with your costume while you're not out fighting crime and evil? Try wearing two suits of clothes on a summer day in New York City and you'll see why costumes have a hard time in the real world.

What is worse, it's almost impossible to design a traditional super-costume that doesn't look, up close, like tights or long underwear. The designs that look good in four-color comics can seem silly in real life, as several TV shows and movies have painfully demonstrated.

But some people do like to dress up. Billy "Carnifex" Ray, for example, loves wearing his snappy white fighting suit, and the Howler always dressed in yellow. Cyclone, a shameless self-promoter, wears a gaudy outfit (of course, he's in the air all the time, so he can't be seen up close and rarely gets dirty). And Dr. Tachyon, in some sense, can be said to be continually in costume.

In terms of roleplaying, simply decide if the character would be comfortable in a three-piece suit, jeans and a t-shirt, or a flamboyant multi-colored costume with boots, gloves, hood and a cape. There's room for all kinds in the *Wild Cards* universe.

Super-Names

Some aces take "ace names" . . . but some don't. In general, the more public an ace is about his powers, or the more super-heroics he gets involved in, the more likely he is to adopt a new name. For instance, Hiram Worchester went by "Fatman" during his brief career as a crimefighter, but dropped the sobriquet when he gave up being a vigilante.

Of couse, a new name is necessary for an ace who intends to keep his real identity secret.

Oddly enough, most jokers take new names — usually derogatory ones. Xavier Desmond was almost unique in his insistence that he be called by the name he was born with. Even such militant jokers as Gimli and the Black Dog took new *noms de guerre,* and many of the most demeaning joker names (such as Slimer) were self-imposed.

The Last Word on *Wild Cards* Gaming

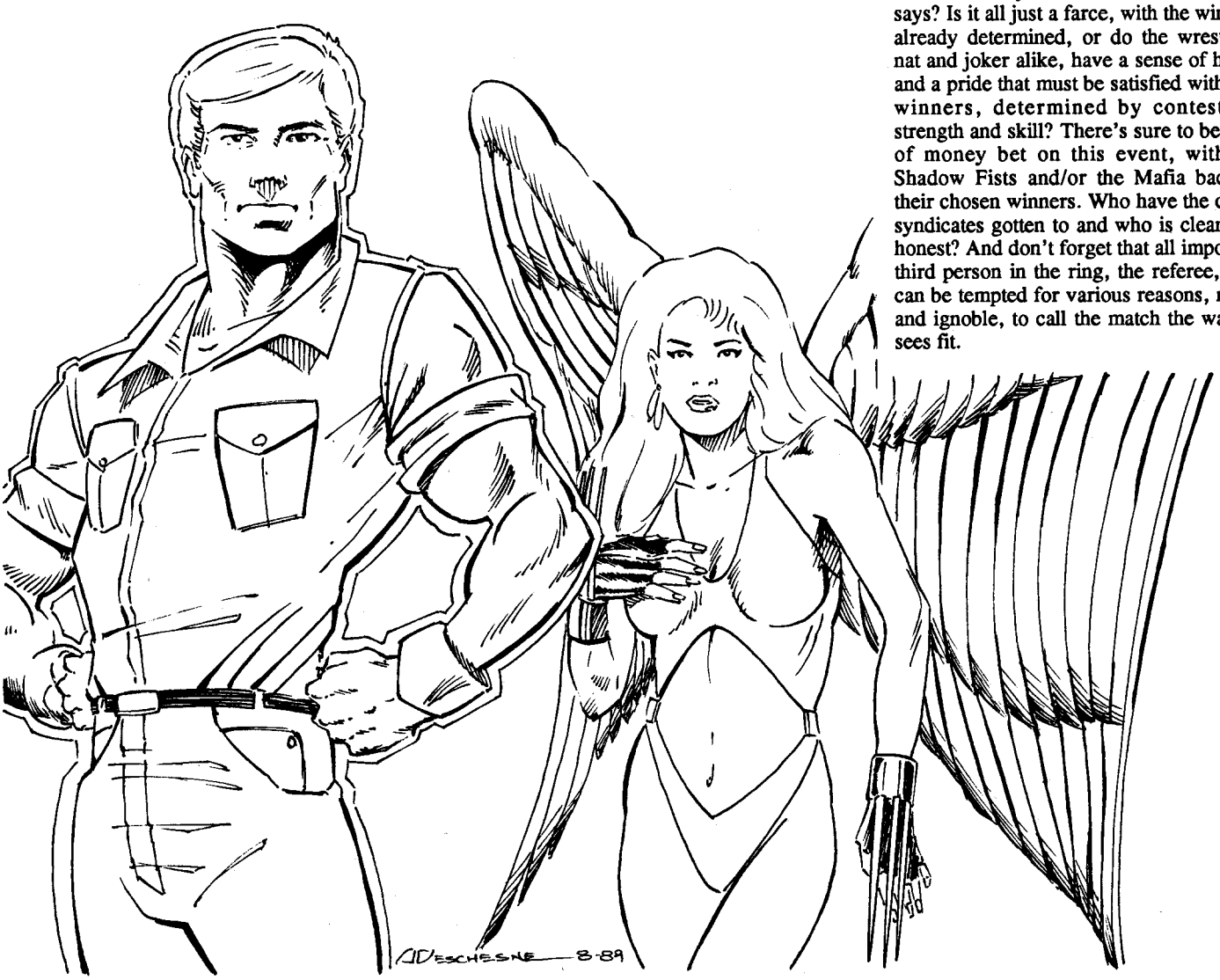
However you choose to run your campaign, and whatever method you use for picking characters, the most important rule is the third one. Enjoy yourselves. *Wild Cards* is a fantasy; it's meant to give pleasure. Roleplaying is just a new way to give that pleasure, to let readers exercise their imaginations and join in the creative process. Have fun.

The Living Gods Seek Vengeance

The Temple of the Living Gods, badly damaged by the Nur, has temporarily been closed down for repairs. Several members of the Living Gods have sworn vengeance against the fundamentalist fanatics. But how to achieve this revenge? Should they go after Nur al-Allah themselves? Should they join forces with the Twisted Fists under the leadership of the notorious Black Dog? Should they simply sweep across the Middle East, setting traps and ambushes, wreaking havoc among the Nur? Can they find help from other aces?

Championship Wrestling

The biggest blockbuster to hit the sporting scene in decades takes place when the WWWCWF (World-Wide Wild Card Wrestling Federation) challenges the CWFNO (Championship Wrestling Federation for Nats Only) for supremacy in Madison Square Garden. Do the wrestlers really hate each other as the hype says? Is it all just a farce, with the winners already determined, or do the wrestlers, nat and joker alike, have a sense of honor and a pride that must be satisfied with real winners, determined by contests of strength and skill? There's sure to be a lot of money bet on this event, with the Shadow Fists and/or the Mafia backing their chosen winners. Who have the crime syndicates gotten to and who is clean and honest? And don't forget that all important third person in the ring, the referee, who can be tempted for various reasons, noble and ignoble, to call the match the way he sees fit.



GLOSSARY

Ace: A person infected by the wild card virus who has received a useful power without a significant accompanying physical deformity. e.g., The Great and Powerful Turtle, Wraith, Hiram Worcester, the Astronomer. People like Fortunato, Howler and Peregrine, who have a slight physical change or a great but attractive one, are considered aces if they have a special power. A "joker-ace" is one who combines physical deformity with a significant power.

Ace in the Hole: A secret ace; a person who has not revealed his or her powers. Publicly revealing ace powers is "coming out of the deck," or just "coming out."

Ace up the Sleeve: A hidden power. This could refer either to a power possessed by someone who is thought to be a norm, or to an unsuspected power possessed by someone who is already known to be an ace.

Aces High: A fashionable restaurant, catering to aces and attracting those who admire aces, at the top of the Empire State Building. See p. 90.

***Aces* Magazine:** A sensationalistic monthly publication that features stories about aces and their doings.

Aevre: A warrior race, members of the Network. See p. 113.

Black Queen: One who died from contracting the wild card virus. "Drawing the black queen" is death from the virus.

Black Queen Day: September 16, the day after Wild Card Day, honoring all the victims of the wild card virus.

Demon Princes: Jokertown street gang made up exclusively of jokers. Unaffiliated with any other criminal organization. See p. 95.

Deuce: A person infected by the wild card virus, but given a trivial or useless power. If the victim also has a physical deformity, he is a "joker-deuce." See p. 121.

Edge, the: The blocks bordering Jokertown and the neighboring New York City districts. See p. 84.

Embe: An important member race of the Network, somewhat resembling white-furred grasshoppers.

Exotics for Democracy (EFD): Official name of the Four Aces (Golden Boy, the Envoy, Black Eagle, Brain Trust). Founded by Archibald Holmes in 1946. See p. 13.

Exotic Powers Control Act: Enacted in 1954, this law required any person exhibiting wild card powers to register with the federal government. Failure to register was punishable by up to 10 years in prison. Repealed during the Carter administration. See p. 16.

Glabberans: A minor member race of the Network. Jhubben (p. 55) belongs to this race. See p. 116.

Immaculate Egrets: Chinatown street gang which is heavily involved in selling illegal drugs. All the members wear jackets embroidered with a white egret. Part of the Shadow Fist Society. Also known as the Snow Birds or Snow Boys. See p. 101.

Joker: Any person given physical or mental deformities by the wild card virus. A person who has special abilities as well (e.g., Gimli, the Harlem Hammer) may be called a "joker-ace." See pp. 12, 18, 120.

Joker Anti-Defamation League (JADL): Founded by Xavier Desmond in 1964 as an organization dedicated to the peaceful advancement of jokers' rights. See p. 98.

Joker Brigade: Collective name for the joker units who fought under nat officers in Vietnam. Their motto was "Last to Go, First to Die." See p. 16.

Jokertown: Formerly known as the Bowery and Lower East Side. Area of New York City inhabited by jokers. In general, any "joker ghetto." See p. 84.

Jokertown Cry: The Jokertown daily newspaper.

Jokers for a Just Society (JJS): Radical organization founded by Tom Miller (Gimli) in the late 1960s. The JJS is dedicated to achieving social justice for jokers through any means necessary, including violence and terrorism. See p. 98.

Killer Geeks: Jokertown street gang consisting exclusively of jokers. Unaffiliated with any other criminal organization. See p. 95.

Kondikki: An insectoid member race of the Network. See p. 110.

Latent: A person descended from a wild carder, or showing genetic wild card contamination, but who has neither ace powers or joker afflictions. This is sometimes called "drawing a nat the hard way." However, a carrier can "manifest" wild card symptoms at any time during his or her life. Such a manifestation is often set off by shock. See p. 19.

Ly'bahr: A race of cyborgs, one of the three founding members of the Network. See p. 114.

Nat: Short for "natural." Joker and ace slang for any person unaffected by wild card virus. Perjorative when used by jokers.

Network: Interstellar trading cartel made up of 137 member races, dominated by the mysterious entities known as the Master Traders. The Network is very powerful and very rich. See p. 108.

Norm: Short for "normal." Slang for someone unaffected by wild card virus. Unlike "nat," not considered perjorative.

Nur al-Allah: (Arabic) Light of Allah. Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organization dedicated to eradication of Israel and all jokers and establishment of a single Arab nation. See p. 96.

Rhindarians: A member race of the Network. See p. 115.

SCARE: Senate Committee for Ace Resources and Endeavors. Founded in 1952 as a forum for Joe McCarthy's wild card witch hunts. Current chairman, Sen. Gregg Hartmann, D-NY. See p. 15.

Shadow Fist Society: Powerful criminal organization led secretly by ex-ARVN general Kien Phuc. See p. 101.

Special Conscription Act: Enacted in 1954, this act granted the Selective Service the power to induct registered aces into government service for indefinite lengths of time. Repealed during the Carter administration.

Swarm: A semi-sentient alien race bent on devouring the universe. See p. 106.

Swarm Mother: Swarm entity that carries the Swarm across intergalactic space to colonize other planets. See p. 106.

Takis: A planet many light-years from Earth, inhabited by a technically advanced culture of creatures sufficiently human that they can interbreed with the people of Terra. See p. 103. Also see p. 127 for a glossary of Takisian terms.

Tiamat: (Sumerian mythology) Name given the Swarm by an offshoot group of the Masons, which worshipped her.

Trump: A counter-virus developed by Dr. Tachyon. In about one case out of five, the trump will cure a wild card victim. See p. 20.

Twisted Fists: Joker terrorist group centered in the Middle East, and led by the mysterious joker known as the Black Dog. Their method is to meet violence with violence. Their motto is "five for one" (kill one joker, suffer five deaths in return). See p. 99.

Werewolves: Jokertown street gang affiliated with the Shadow Fist Society. Made up exclusively of jokers. As a badge of membership they all wear the same mask, usually of a famous personality (e.g. Richard Nixon, Marilyn Monroe, Leo Barnett) of the past or present. See p. 95.

Wild Card: An artificial virus developed by one of the ruling families of Takis, which causes individualistic mutations in those exposed to it. See p. 19.

Wild Card Day: September 15, the day the virus was released over Manhattan. It has become an unofficial holiday marked by raucous celebrations throughout the city. See p. 12.

Wild Carder: A general term for anyone showing effects of the wild card virus.

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠

Takisian Terms

Ajayiz'et: A honorific.

Alaa: An influential Psi Lord family, hostile to the Ilkazam.

Bitshuf'di: A sterilized Takisian (male or female), who has been determined to carry dangerous recessive genes or is of insufficient genetic worth to be permitted to reproduce.

Burning Sky!: A Takisian oath.

Deathlock: A Takisian mind-shield technique, in which a subject of psionic attack resists with his entire being. It is sometimes possible to penetrate a deathlock, but it will always kill the subject or destroy his mind completely.

Genamiri: Term designating a woman who is more than a mistress to a Takisian Psi Lord, but not a formal wife.

Ghostdrive: The faster-than-light drive used by Takisian ships.

Ghostlance: The tachyon beam which is the deadliest weapon of Takisian ships.

Ilkazam: The Psi Lord clan to which Dr. Tachyon belongs.

'Ishb'kaukab: Species name for the intelligent Takisian ships. See pp. 42, 105.

Jayiz: A group of Takisian living ships. Literally translated, "honor" — "an honor of ships" is equivalent to "a pride of lions." Also applied to a group of the wild ship-creatures.

Kibr: Term of respect for an ancestor of more than the seventh degree.

K'ijdad: Grandfather.

Morakh: A Takisian sub-race, created by the Vayawand by genetic variation from Psi Lord stock. Morakhs are extremely strong, and possess no psi abilities except for a nearly-unbreakable mind shield. See p. 104.

Psi Lords: The ruling families of the planet Takis. Psi Lords possess powerful telepathic abilities. See p. 103.

Ships and Ancestors!: A Takisian oath.

Stirps: An adopted equerry or "family retainer." A *stirps* owes duties to his Psi Lord, and can demand protection from the lord.

T'zand'ran: The Swarm.

Vayawand: A Psi Lord family, bitter foes of the Ilkazam. The Vayawand were the creators of the Morakh strain.

Virtu: A concept which most closely translates as the Terran Oriental idea of "face," but which also connotes qualities of leadership, elan and spirit.

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