MARVEL SUPER HEROES™

DELUXE CITY

CAMPAIGN SET

ADVENTURE BOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction **2**
Chapter 7: The Manhattan Social Calendar **2**
Chapter 8: Telling Stories 5
Goals 12
Villains 14
The Adventure Hook 16
NPCs 18
Conditions and Dilemmas 20
Deathtraps 22
The Grand Finale 24
Chapter 9: Running a Campaign **26**
Chapter 10: The Manhattan Campaign 32
What City and Why? 32
The Urban Campaign 33
The Global Campaign 34
The Galactic Campaign 34
Chapter 11: Scenarios 35
The Statue of Liberty 35
Coney Island 36
The Bronx Zoo 37
The Holland Tunnel 37
Central Park 38
The *Daily Bugle* 39
Doctor Strange's Sanctum 39
The Empire State Building 40
Empire State University 41
The Financial District 42
Four Freedoms Plaza 43
Marvel Comics 44
Metropolitan Museum of Art 44
SHIELD Headquarters 45
United Nations 46

FUN CITY: Campaign Scenario 47
Extending the Adventure 62
INDEX to both books **63**

CREDITS

Author: Allen Varney
Editing: Jean Blashfield Black
Graphic Design: Stephanie Tabat
Typography: Gaye O'Keefe
Cartography: Dennis T. Kauth, Diesel, Dave Sutherland, Stephanie Tabat, Paul Hanchette
Keylining: Roy Parker
Cover Art: Jeffrey Butler
Interior Art: The Marvel Bullpen

Thanks to Susan Poelma, Bob Quintan, and Don and Rosemary Webb. Special thanks to Aaron Allston, whose "Adventure Cookbook" in TSR's *Dungeon Master's Design Kit* directly inspired the "Plot Ingredients" in this supplement.

This book is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or other unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written consent of TSR, Inc., and Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. Distributed to the book trade in the United States by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distributed to the toy and hobby trade by regional distributors.

The TSR logo and PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION are trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

All characters appearing in this gamebook and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of the Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. MARVEL SUPER HEROES, MARVEL SUPER VILLAINS and The AVENGERS are trademarks of the Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. ® Copyright 1989 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Game Design K 1989 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

STOP! Have you read the *Campaign Sourcebook* included in this set? If not, go back and look through that book first. When you're done, come back here. . . .

Now that the Sourcebook has conjured up New York City for you, this Adventure Book describes how to use it in telling stories—that is, in preparing adventure role-playing scenarios, stories starring the characters your players want to play.

The supplement begins with a list of some notable events held each year in Manhattan. These events lend color to a campaign and can inspire scenario ideas. For more explanation, consult Chapter 7, "The Manhattan Social Calendar," starting on this page.

Chapter 8 offers a lengthy discussion of the technique of telling a single story. This treatment, especially useful to the beginning Judge, is followed by a series of treatises on individual plot elements, like goals, master villains, and story climaxes. By picking and combining these "plot ingredients," a Judge can easily design limitless numbers of original scenarios.

This is, after all, a campaign set. So Chapter 9 deals with the campaign, the series of linked stories featuring the same characters. Learn how to design a good campaign, choose PCs and villains, dangers to watch out for, and a few of the many types of players. Every Judge, no matter how experienced, can benefit from this chapter.

Chapter 10 briefly discusses the special requirements of a campaign set in a large city, especially New York City. The bibliography of useful books, maps, and other resources points interested Judges to further reading about New York.

Chapter 11, the entire last half of this book, is devoted to ready-to-run scenarios, lots and lots of scenarios!

First up are not one, not 10, but 15*(!)* individual mini-scenarios (in the style of the Encounters in MHAC6, *New York, New York).* Each is keyed to one of the Hotspot locations described in the *Campaign Sourcebook.* Be familiar with a given Hotspot listing before you run the mini-scenario tied to it.

Finally, the campaign scenario, "Fun City," offers a full-length adventure framework that uses as many Hotspots as you want. The scenario works with heroes of any power level, both established Marvel characters and player-created heroes. Run it as part of an ongoing campaign or use the optional "Campaign Kickoff" to begin a new campaign with a ready-made background and long-term goals for your characters.

The removable folder cover of this booklet includes a large map of the Manhattan subway system on the outside. On the inside of the folder are several maps used in Chapter 11 's scenarios.

The Point of This Book

This *Adventure Book* tries to convey that role-playing adventures work by the same rules as any adventure, whether it is a comic book, prose story, or movie. What does this imply?

1. The scenario has a definite structure and ground rules defined by its story genre.

That doesn't mean the adventure proceeds in a straight plotline no matter what the characters do, but that the dramatic action builds toward a climax, where the storyline is resolved.

2. The scenario's characters have genuine functions in the narrative, and they work toward real goals. Their paths to the goals vary according to the characters' personalities. But all of them are trying to make something definite happen in the story, not just throwing punches.

3. The Judge narrates the scenario's events with a sense of tone and staging. For definitions of these ideas, see Chapters 8 and 9.

If you have wondered how to give your scenarios greater depth, and how to pull your players back for later adventures in a broad campaign, think about the advice in Chapters 8-10. Note how the scenarios in Chapter 11 incorporate these ideas into their design. When you master the art of storytelling, your games become richer and more compelling.

Goto it!

CHAPTER 7: THE MANHATTAN SOCIAL CALENDAR

"Hah!" Doctor Octopus cried. "You're too late, heroes! I poisoned ten water cannisters along the Marathon route. In one hour the ten runners who drank them will die—unless you can locate them and give them this antidote" Extending one adamantium tentacle, the villain flung down a simple steel vacuum bottle.

"Now," Octopus continued, "I go to carry out a large financial transaction. You can follow and stop me—but then you allow ten innocent athletes to die. Make your choice, heroes!"

His tentacles lifted him away toward the Chase Manhattan Bank. The heroes gazed across cheering crowds, as 50,000 runners trotted up the avenue. . . .

This chapter lists some of the regular seasonal events in Manhattan and greater New York City: parades, shows, holidays, tournaments, conventions, and festivals. They are grouped according to the months in which they (usually) occur. A few notable events include brief descriptions.

How do you use these events in the campaign? First and easiest, they provide background color, scenic detail, and atmosphere important to a Manhattan campaign. Even if you only mention in passing a specific festival or concert—perhaps as the opening scene of an adventure that quickly moves elsewhere—the players still get a sense of New York's vigorous, cosmopolitan culture.

But these events can also function in more important ways. Here are a few suggestions.

The Lure: Important NPCs might visit Manhattan to attend one of these events. If the campaign is based in another city, an event might draw PC heroes to New York, in either secret or hero IDs.

The Job: Heroes could gain Karma by appearing at some of these events, as per the "charity appearance" award. Or police might ask heroes to work larger events as crowd control, high-profile security officers, or bodyguards.

And, above all other uses—

The Nefarious Plot: Because many of these events draw large crowds and often involve big loot or rare treasures, they make fine targets for villainous mayhem.

A villain will find some events more tempting than others, depending on the bad guy's goals and methods. For instance, the Maggia would usually show little interest in summer concerts in Central Park, but it might have designs on the International Antiques Show's more valuable items. On the other hand, a terrorist who plans mayhem would prefer to target the park concerts or perhaps the Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Customize the villain to the event, the event to the villain, and both to the setting and to your PCs' interests. That helps make your scenario an event to remember.

This listing gives only regular annual events. Remember, New York's social schedule constantly simmers with gallery openings, galas, concert tours, premieres, trade shows and conventions, and one-shot spectaculars. For example, in 1989, New York City was the site of a huge bicentennial celebration of George Washington's first inauguration as President—in New York. Or, in 1988 Manhattan hosted a gigantic arts festival featuring over 150 major events and many more lesser performances. This, too, may become an annual summer event.

For more information about these events, consult New York City newspapers or magazines (available at the local library), or investigate the sources in the Bibliography in the *Campaign Sourcebook.*

MANHATTAN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

• National Boat Show and Greater New York Auto Show, Javits Convention Center (Hell's Kitchen).
• Ice Capades and Nabisco Masters Men's Tennis, Madison Square Garden (Seventh Avenue and 32nd Street).
• Chinese New Year, first full moon after January 19, Chinatown.

FEBRUARY

• Westminster Dog Show (two days and hundreds of entries), Madison Square Garden
• International Antiques Show, Madison Square Garden
• "White sales" of linens and towels at department stores over Presidents Day weekend.

MARCH

Ringling Bros./Bamum & Bailey Circus, Madison Square Garden.
17: St. Patrick's Day Parade, Fifth Avenue.

APRIL

• Easter **Sunday:** Easter Parade, Fifth Avenue. Starts at St. Patrick's Cathedral (Fifth Avenue at 49th Street). The upper classes and would-be socialites put on their finest clothes and strut up and down the street in an annual ceremony, commemmorated in a song by Irving Berlin.

MAY

• Many parades, including Brooklyn Bridge Day, Martin Luther King Jr., and Norwegian Independence Day Parades customarily wend their way down Fifth Avenue, and dense crowds line both sides of the street.
• Ninth Avenue International Festival, a celebration of many ethnic cultures, including free entertainment. From 37th to 59th Streets.
• Park Avenue Antiques Show, Seventh Regiment Armory (Park at 66th Street); lasts an entire week.
• Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit, display of kitsch art for three weekends, beginning the last week in May (Washington Square Park, Broadway. University, and La Guardia Place). Also in September.
• **Last weekend of May:** Feast of St. Anthony, Little Italy. Food, rides, gambling games, and raffles
• **Memorial Day:** Aerobatics and parachuting at Coney Island.

JUNE

• Parades. Puerto Rican Day, Salute to Israel.
• Festival of St. Anthony continues in Greenwich Village.
• Museum Mile, Fifth Avenue: For one midweek evening in early June, ten museums between 82nd and 105th Streets charge no admission.
• Metropolitan Opera performances in many of the city's parks. Many other musical events of all kinds, including a couple of prominent jazz festivals, and Shakespeare in the Park (Central Park's Delacorte Theater), continuing into July.
• Goldman Memorial Band concerts, Lincoln Center.
• "Summerpier" jazz concerts. South Street Seaport.
• Great Irish Fair, Brooklyn.

JULY

• 4: Fireworks above Macy's in midtown; Harbor Festival of races, concerts, and a street fair, lower Manhattan; more acrobatic flying and parachuting at Coney Island.
• Free concerts by the New York Philharmonic in Central Park **and** other parks, continuing in August.
• Mostly Mozart festival of classical music, Avery Fisher Hall (Lincoln Center, 64th and Broadway). Lasts six weeks
• Lady of Pompeii Feast, Greenwich Village. Nightly **for** ten days.

AUGUST

• Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors. Free shows of all kinds of performing arts, lasting three weeks.
• Bluegrass Club of New York Amateur Band Contest, various spots.
• US Open Tennis Championships in Flushing Meadow, Queens.

SEPTEMBER

• Washington Square Outdoor Art Show (see May entries).
• Feast of San Gennaro, Little Italy. Lasts 11 nights. Once at this festival Captain America battled the rat-like villain Vermin.
• 52nd Street Fair, Third to Ninth Avenues
• Steuben Day Parade (German- American). Fifth Avenue starting at 86th Street.
• New York Film Festival, Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center (to early Oct.).
• Atlantic Antic, Brooklyn. Middle Eastern festival.

OCTOBER

• Fifth Avenue parades: Pulaski Day, Columbus Day, Hispanic Day, Veterans Day.
• 24: United Nations Day. No official ceremonies.
• **Last Sunday** of **the month:** New York City Marathon This 26-mile race starts at the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge (Staten Island side), finishes in Central Park at 67th Street, and passes through all five boroughs in between. A major marathon event, it draws tens of thousands of hopeful masochists.
• 31: Halloween Parade in (where else?) Greenwich Village Gaudy and outrageous.

NOVEMBER

• National Horse Show, Madison Square Garden. Lasts six days.
• **Thanksgiving Day:** Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Broadway at Herald Square. The Avengers and the Fantastic Four have been known to ride floats in this parade It usually includes a Spider-Man baitoon, depending on the wail-crawler's public image in any given year. The balloon always occasions an irate *Daily Bugle* editorial.
• The Magnificent Christmas Spectacular," Radio City Music Hall, Times Square.
• **The weekend after Thanksgiving:** National Hot Rod and Custom Car Show, Javits Convention Center.

DECEMBER

• Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, Rockefeller Center (47th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues). A major event.
• Fifth Avenue holiday store windows (through early January). Spectacular moving dioramas that draw heavy crowds.
• 31: New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square where tens of thousands watch the illuminated globe atop the Allied Chemical Tower descend second by second to mark the beginning of the new year. There are also celebrations in Central Park and Prospect Park.

CHAPTER 8: TELLING STORIES

"A bunch of heroes were hanging around together for no particular reason. Suddenly they heard about a super-powered villain's evil scheme. For no particular reason they set out to find the villain. They did, and in a big fight they defeated the villain. The end."

You'd be bored by a comic book with this storyline. You might even say, "I can write a better comic story myself!" When you become a Judge, you can. In your own "comics," your role-playing adventures, you can create stories with as much excitement as the Marvel comics.

This means you create, not just a series of fights, but a storyline with a beginning, middle, and end; giving PCs a clear goal and a struggle against villains with conflicting goals; and featuring a supporting cast of NPCs who can hinder or help the players.

This chapter discusses the elements of a good Marvel story or scenario. First comes a general discussion of story elements, pacing, staging, and other important matters. Novice Judges in particular should find this useful.

Then the chapter presents a series of detailed treatments of "plot ingredients," such as villains, NPCs, deathtraps, and grand finales. By mixing and matching these ingredients, you can create hundreds of new scenarios. Any Judge, no matter how experienced, can use these to improve adventures.

THE GENRE

A "genre" refers to a distinctive kind of story, such as mysteries, Westerns, romances, or fantasy, usually used to distinguish it from general, or "mainstream," fiction.

Readers of these genres quickly point out that there is wide variety within each one. In the same way, the Marvel comic-book genre includes many kinds of stories. But there are certain similarities among them that are worth discussing here.

Why is this important? Because to tell stories like those in Marvel comics, you should understand the rules by which they work. If you already understand the genre (and if you've been reading Marvel comics for a long time, you probably do), skip this section.

Setting the Tone

"Tone," the most important factor in gaming a genre, refers to the general quality or atmosphere of the genre's stories. For instance, hard-boiled detective stories usually have a dark, brutally cynical tone, whereas romances stress true love and heartbreak.

Stories of the Marvel heroes vary in tone between the high-tech galactic adventure of the Fantastic Four and the urban nightmare of Daredevil. With this variety, what genre elements should you use in setting your tone?

Many elements depend on the kind of campaign you choose and on the power level of your PCs. But here are some elements common to all Marvel stories.

Good *vs. evil:* The heroes and villains may not always wear skin-tight costumes, but you can always tell the good guys from the bad guys. Marvel heroes fight the good fight against various agents of death, destruction, tyranny, corruption, and chaos. The heroes, and your PC heroes, are always clearly on the side of right.

Some heroes, such as Wolverine and the Punisher, often work on the wrong side of the law and inhabit an extremely gray area on the spectrum of morality. But almost without fail, their foes act worse than the heroes ever would. So they, too, embody the conflict of good and evil.

Heroes who are highly motivated: These characters have reasons for what they do. Spider-Man knows that with great power comes great responsibility; the FF prevents super villains and aliens from conquering the world; the X-Men and X-Factor protect mutants from persecution; the Punisher fights organized crime to avenge his slain family.

Just having miraculous powers is, in itself, no reason to risk your life battling bad guys. Your PCs should have origins that explain their motives, and your adventures should reinforce those motives.

Bad guys, just as motivated: Don't forget that the bad guys are people, too (at least some of them). They fight for a reason. The villains are greedy, crazy, or just plain nasty; they yearn for power, slaves, or ideological purity; or they just want to prove they're the best at what they do.

Whatever they are, villains are not collections of numbers that exist to be pounded on. They hatch many plots, and they can really antagonize your heroes—get on their nerves in a personal way. The villain who insults a hero, makes his life hard, and kidnaps his dog will mean a lot more to that hero's player than just another thug from the rulebook. This gets players more involved in the story.

High-speed action: Marvel comics are exciting, and your adventures should proceed in that tradition. Every play session should include plenty of chasing around, suspense, and as much action as you can squeeze in.

The characters should be dynamic types who throw themselves into things instead of hanging back and not getting involved, afraid of losing Health. They show their personalities through their deeds, just like the characters in the comics. The comic-book audience enjoys a fast-paced story, and your audience of players is no different.

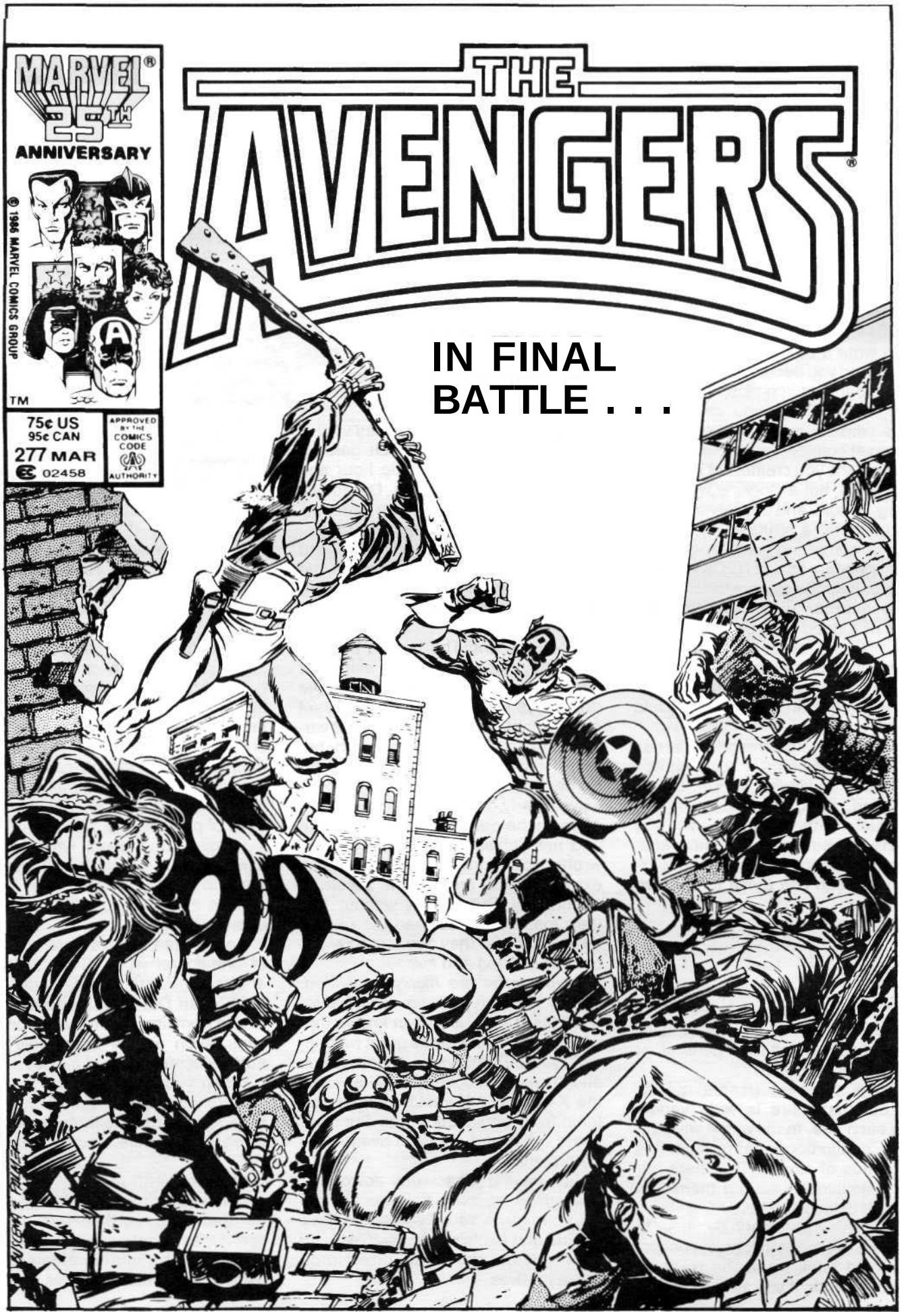
Humor: Don't forget, while your villains plan civilization's collapse and the end of life on Earth, that Marvel comics also feature liberal doses of comedy relief.

Spider-Man always gets off plenty of one-liners; where Thor goes, the enormous Volstagg is seldom far behind; even Doctor Strange manages to grin from time to time. And some villains, such as the Impossible Man, add welcome doses of silliness.

When your scenarios get too grim, players can forget the reason they play: to have fun. So throw in opportunities for wit, satire, or even slapstick.

Genre Conventions

Aside from the elements that create the genre's tone, there are also unspoken assumptions that allow them to work. Every form of entertainment uses "conventions" of this kind. For


MARVEL
25TH
ANNIVERSARY
© 1986 MARVEL COMICS GROUP
TM
75¢ US
95¢ CAN
277 MAR
02458
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE AVENGERS
IN FINAL BATTLE . . .

instance, one of the conventions of opera is that everyone sings beautifully; of space-opera science fiction movies, that you can move from planet to planet in a reasonable time. Without such assumptions, the whole story falls apart.

You might think the conventions of super-hero adventures include things like high-tech gadgets, explosions, and big, climactic battles with villains. But those are just plot elements, and many perfectly good Marvel stories don't involve any of these. Conventions are more subtle. For example:

1. *If you wear a mask, nobody can tell who you are.*

This is the way secret identities work. No one can figure out a hero's true identity without careful detective work.

2. *If you catch someone who is committing a crime and haul the crook to the police, the crook goes to jail.*

Occasionally this idea fails, but only when the story specifically calls for it. For instance, Daredevil turned in the agent called Bullet, but Bullet's government connections got him out of police custody in hours.

In general, though, this convention prevents heroes from having to worry about the legal system, since having to do so seldom produces exciting stories.

3. *You can say a lot during a pitched battle.*

Give your PCs time to make threats, stirring speeches, or insults between thrown punches. Villains can drop clues or gloat. Think of these orations as the word balloons in a comic-book panel. These "soliloquies" take no game time, and they make for a colorful fight.

4. *The heroes are the only ones who can solve the problem at hand.*

The Marvel Universe, especially New York City, is crowded with heroes. But part of what makes them heroic—and what makes a good story—is that each one faces his or her problems head-on, alone.

When the assassin Bullseye went on a killing rampage through Manhattan, did Daredevil knock on the door of Avengers Mansion and say, "Thor, could you take care of this little matter for me?" No. Daredevil fought and bested his enemy alone, because it was Daredevil's story.

In game terms, you should prepare scenarios uniquely suited to your players' characters. If they aren't able to handle magic, don't throw a lot of magical perils at them; they will just have to locate Doctor Strange and ask for help. Your PCs are the stars of the story, so they are by definition the best heroes to handle the situation.

Of course, an occasional visit to Four Freedoms Plaza or Avengers Island is okay. For instance, the heroes might need to borrow a piece of equipment that only the Avengers or FF would have. But if the players start to lean too hard on other hero groups, make sure those others are conveniently "off on missions" when your scenarios take place.

5. *Heroes make a difference.*

New York City may be huge and have problems that millions of people can't solve, but the efforts of its few super humans make life better for everyone. Sometimes this convention, too, is honored in the breach rather than the observance, but, in general, Marvel comics strike a positive note about their heroes' role in society.

When you show that your PCs are improving their world, the players feel good and continue playing. But if the PCs mess up all the time, and their presence only makes things worse, the players will come to feel that they are better off staying home.

ABOUT STORIES

How do you turn all of these ideas into an adventure? How do you mix elements of plot, characters, settings, surprises, and goals, present them to your player characters, and turn their responses into an exciting story?

One funny but useful approach compares your role to that of a chef in a big kitchen. The episodes of your story are like the courses of a dinner, and you have a selection of staple ingredients to mix in your recipes.

Premises: These are the springboards for stories or adventures. A premise provides a situation, a goal, and reasons to try to reach the goal. For example, "The Leader has captured the TV and radio stations atop the Empire State Building and is broadcasting subtle hypnotic suggestions. The heroes must get to the studios, stop his broadcasts, and find a way to reverse the hypnosis, or at dawn millions of people will walk into the ocean and drown."

For more premises you might consider using, see the "Summary" sections that begin the scenarios in Chapter 11.

Goals: In a story, the player characters work toward genuine goals. "Stop Doctor Doom from taking over the UN building." "Find the evidence that will clear a PC hero of this murder charge." "Locate and rescue the Mayor."

There are many goals, all of them having real effects if the heroes reach them or fail. Make your story's goal one the characters care about, and that motivates them to act heroically.

Settings: In a story, the environment is important. It can determine the course of the plot, and it does more than anything else to establish the tone and atmosphere of the story.

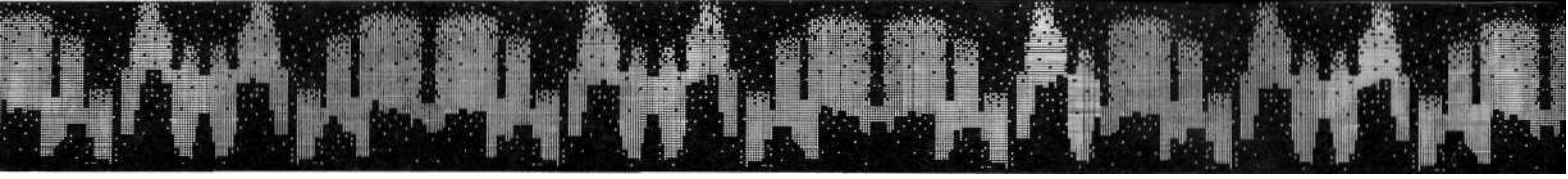
Think about Times Square. Or Four Freedoms Plaza. Or Doctor Strange's Sanctum. These aren't just maps with numbered rooms, they're places where people live or work, with unique features that set a mood.

A low, smoke-stained ceiling with shreds of paint still clinging at the corners. Hot, bright incandescent lights hanging low over green baize tables that smell of grease and dust. The cue ball clicks against the shiny black 8. Big guys in cammo vests or flashy suits look for shots. Now and then a police siren wails across town, and half the players start, looking suddenly guilty. Mumbled bets, crinkling bills, ice cubes clacking in shot glasses, hazy warm air.

If you give your players these details, they'll know more about this story than if you said, "There you are in a sleazy pool hall."

Another way to describe settings is to draw on your players' shared experience of reading Marvel comics. Compare sites to the scenes in the comics: "This is a luxurious brownstone like the one Matt Murdock used to live in," or "This is a big, shiny laboratory like Reed Richards uses in Four Freedoms Plaza." This is a shorthand way to set the scene.

The Hotspot entries in the *Campaign Sourcebook* include enough descriptive detail to get you started, and you can improvise the rest as needed,



from your imagination or additional reading.

Conflict: It's not a story unless something prevents the heroes from achieving their goal with ease. Maybe bad guys are chasing them, only a stretched footstep behind. Maybe the person they're sent to find doesn't want to be found, or works to sabotage the heroes, or has been kidnapped. Or a tremendous disaster has endangered the city, so the heroes must spend valuable time rescuing innocents.

Obstacles to success make exciting adventures. They come not just from villains and henchmen, but from the environment, misunderstandings, or neutral NPCs with conflicting goals. And not all obstacles can be removed with a haymaker or repulsor ray.

Suppose your heroes need to catch a taxi to Queens, so they can warn Aunt May that a villain is headed her way. The only taxi around is occupied by a stuffy rich guy who wants no truck with rowdy muscular guys in funny suits. He's got bodyguards and powerful connections; he can probably outbid the heroes; and if they punch him out, they'll ruin their reputations.

This conflict forces PCs to think around a problem. Even though nobody has swung a fist or destroyed a building, the story is exciting and involving. Try to put many kinds of conflict in stories.

Non-player characters (NPCs): Some NPCs are interesting allies or villains, with their own skills and goals. Others are faceless threats, like thugs or monsters, who are just there for the heroes to overcome. Both kinds fill essential roles in your plot.

Surprises: What comic reader doesn't like a good twist in the narrative? When Spider-Man's first black costume turned out to be a vampiric alien, that startled readers everywhere. When Thor was briefly replaced by the alien Beta Ray Bill, no one was exactly sure what was going on.

When players are acting without much thought, because they think they know what's coming next, make sure they're wrong. Any story offers chances to make the players have to readjust their expectations with a sudden lurch.

Maybe the heroes are trying to rescue an ambassador's teenage daughter, who has been kidnapped by terrorists. The PCs cross the city to the terrorist hideout, sneak in, silence the lone guard, and wake the young woman. She lets out a screech and calls for the terrorists! It turns out she's allied herself with them to rebel against her father and create a new life without him. The players, having proceeded without thinking, must suffer the consequences.

But when the players are alert, think matters through, and plan intelligently for likely turns of events, don't shove in an arbitrary surprise just to mess them up. If the plan they offer would work as you have arranged matters—even if it isn't the way you had figured it would be—it deserves to succeed.

In this way you reward intelligence, and players don't start thinking, "Why bother planning when we're going to get blindsided anyway?" Sometimes when the heroes execute a plan flawlessly, with no drawbacks, the success itself surprises the heroes more than any failure you could invent.

The grand finale: A story's excitement should build to higher levels, and then be resolved in a single dramatic confrontation. More often than not, this is a slugfest with the main villain.

In this climax, the main story elements should be resolved, main goals reached or lost, and most important characters dealt with in some fitting fashion. Maybe the chief villain escapes, surviving to fight again . .. but for now, no one has to worry about him or her for a while.

You can't always know your story's climax when you design the adventure, because players can act unpredictably and send the plotline careening off in new directions. But as you judge the adventure, be alert for ways to resolve the story in a dramatic final scene. Read more about finales later in this chapter.

ABOUT TELLING THE STORY

Now that you've cooked up a dinner, you should decide how to serve it. How will you get your players into the story, and how will the plot develop?

Length: Have a rough idea of how long the whole adventure should take. Of course, players always do unexpected things that affect the length of time a story takes to complete. They take a few days off to earn money or date their girl/boyfriends, or they accidentally stumble on the high-tech item that destroys the villain in one turn. You can't plan for this, but you ought to have some notion of how many evenings everyone will have to keep open to finish the adventure.

A short scenario, with an immediate goal and one or two obstacles, can take a few hours—one play-session. An extended adventure, lasting many days of game-time or ranging across a wide area, with lots of fights or chases, can take many sessions of several hours each.

In planning an extended adventure, try to break down the story into session-length "episodes" or installments. Each episode should offer certain features in its own right, such as action and an opportunity for each player character to do something useful. Otherwise, the adventure may drag, and some players can grow dissatisfied. Episodes are discussed further below.

In a campaign, it is often a good idea to alternate extended, multi-session adventures with shorter, "one-shot" stories. The short breaks provide light relief from the rigors of a lengthy adventure, in the same way you might take a break from reading multi-part graphic novels to browse a short story.

Getting underway: First, make sure you have all the game materials you need, such as pencils, dice, and "paranoia notes" (slips of paper the players use to pass private messages to the Judge). And set out plenty of munchies—role-playing is hungry work! Then everything is ready.

Before the adventure begins, get each player to introduce his or her character to the others. If it is not an established Marvel character, the player should describe the character's appearance and perhaps some background.

Starting an adventure can be a problem. The goal is not only to present a situation, but to involve the players in it—to get them emotionally committed. The "Adventure Hooks" section later in this chapter gives specific ways to pull players into the story.

But here is one point of general advice:

Consider starting the heroes right in the middle of everything. Tell the players that their characters received an urgent summons from a police stoolie; when they went to rescue him, they stumbled into a Maggia ambush. The gunmen are firing. What do the PCs do?

Already players can make interesting choices, they're headed in a clear direction, and you begin to establish the tone for this adventure. When the action lets up for a moment or two, convey the premise and goal of the story, and let the heroes charge onward.

Pacing the story: Once they're charging, how fast do they get where they're going? As fast as possible, of course. Keep things rolling along, and don't get bogged down in detail. If you are not sure about a rule, invent something reasonable and continue; then you can check later, and reverse your earlier ruling if it's still necessary and feasible.

And players shouldn't make things drag with rules questions, either. Their characters don't have time to flip through rulebooks in the midst of heated exertion, so the players shouldn't either. If you make it clear to players that you will treat them fairly and that a finicky rules question won't govern the success or failure of their mission, they should be willing to surrender to the moment and play the roles, not the rules.

STORYTELLING STYLE

The way you describe settings, impersonate characters, and dramatize action directly influences how much fun everyone has.

First, don't drone. The Judge who recites his or her narrative in a bored monotone or a singsong voice, like an accountant reading figures off a tax return, inspires players with no more enthusiasm than the tax return would.

Also, when the action becomes exciting, get excited! Raise your voice. Gesture. Make noises, like the explosion of gunshots or the zaps of magic spells. Just look at any Marvel comic for sound-effects ideas. Ham it up! Your enthusiasm will draw people into the spirit of the story. Or if not, at least they'll be entertained watching you act crazy.

Staging

Here is how two different Judges, one brand-new and the other experienced, describe the end of one battle.

The new Judge: "What did you roll? Okay, that's a hit. Doctor Octopus takes Incredible damage. That brings him to 0, all right. He makes his Endurance roll, so he's not dying, but he's out cold."

The experienced Judge: "What did you roll? Okay, your energy bolt shoots out like lightning, *kzat!* It crackles yellow, white, blue. The smell of ozone fills the air. The bolt strikes Doctor Octopus right in his stomach. His arm controls spark and fizzle, he jerks his head back, and he screams!

"His arms falter. They're still holding him up, but he's sagging to the floor like an old man. He sinks lower and lower. And all the while he's mumbling, 'You can't beat me again—this time I've got you—just let me catch my breath—' Then the arms give way **all** at once, he hits the floor, and he lies there twitching."

The second Judge's narrative excites the players, helps them visualize the action, and simulates the "feel" of Marvel comics. This is called *staging.*

There's nothing wrong with rules, but they exist only to help you and the players create stories. So tell the stories something like an on-the-spot radio news reporter. Describe the fight blow by blow, not die roll by die roll.

A few tips for colorful description:

Use many senses. Describe what the PCs see and hear, but also include interesting smells, the temperature, when it's useful, and the way the scene makes the characters feel: "The Hudson River is wide, slate gray, and smells like the oil in an old gas station. A stiff, cool breeze blows toward you. A few derelicts are staggering along the waterfront. You feel as desolate as they look."

Use sound effects. As mentioned above, don't hesitate to "bang! kaboom! zam!" all you like. Don't be shy—you're the Judge, so you can do anything you want. If the players make fun of you, throw an incredible superpowered villain at their characters.

That should hush them up!

Design dramatic entrances and exits. A major character's appearance or departure is worth playing up. It's okay to say, "There's Doctor Octopus, and he springs to the attack." But you increase suspense and interest if you say, "The only sound in the warehouse is the buzzing of a fly. It flies down in front of you—and suddenly a metal tentacle lances down and grabs it out of the air! Overhead, Doctor Octopus shouts, 'I have you now!' "

Melodramatic entrances and exits can be overdone, so be careful. Listen to your players. If they sound primed to expect a big splash, consider catching them off-guard by having the villain slip in quietly. "You searched the city for the Beetle, but you found nothing. After several hours, you get tired and go back to headquarters. You head for the kitchen to make a cup of coffee . . . and he's waiting for you at the kitchen table."

Describe powers vividly. If your PCs fire power bolts of Amazing intensity, make them sound amazing.

"Orange fire builds around your fingertips. For half a second you wonder, as usual, whether this time the power really will incinerate your hand. The energy builds before you can blink your eyes, and you launch the fireball in a blaze of yellow light."

This makes players feel super human in a way that "You hit him with your flame bolt" just can't.

EPISODES

When you create a long story that players can't complete in one session, give thought to breaking up the plot into episodes.

Each session of play should be interesting in its own right. Otherwise, after a dull stretch, the players might not come back for the next one.

And it's a good idea to break off a session either (a) at some natural pause, such as after a big fight, when the players and their characters would naturally unwind; or (b) at a dramatic, cliff-hanging moment, such as just before a big fight, when your players can hardly wait to see what comes next. This way you know they'll come back for the next session!

An exciting episode of your story should include a lot of the ingredients of the whole story: a clear goal, interesting characters, maybe some mystery. And the episode involves specific plot elements, such as (one or more of) these:

- fighting
- a chase
- high-tech superscience or magic in the mighty Marvel manner
- investigation, if the story is a mystery, or if the goal isn't clear
- comedy, such as interaction with NPCs or weird twists of the plot. Don't let the laughs undermine the importance of the fight against evil; but don't get so solemn that nobody has a good time.

The most important rule: In plotting an episode of your story, think about all the players and their characters. Ask what each character can do in this episode. Each player should feel his or her involvement is important.

Maybe only one character speaks the language of your important NPC, while another knows how to infiltrate a villain's master computer. A third is the only one who can detect that magical trap, while the fourth has a weapon perfect for foiling an ambush.

Make sure everybody gets to show off at least once. That's one of the prime attractions of role-playing.

RESOLVING THE STORY

So the game is going along famously. Eventually, however, like any story, it must end.

Creating the Story Climax

In theory, your adventure has set the heroes a particular goal, and they have been opposed by one or more main adversaries or obstacles. In the climax, try to draw together the heroes, the adversaries, and the goal. Either the heroes reach the goal, or they fail conclusively; the bad guys are overcome, or escape, or triumph (for the moment).

One way to analyze your story and design the climax is to visualize an event that changes the situation, obviously and permanently. Somebody dies; a hero's (or item's) latent power is activated; the object the villains seek is destroyed; a hero and heroine fall in love; the setting burns down or explodes.

Dramatizing the Climax

As the story reaches its end, the players should not lean back to watch the show. You must dramatize the action. That doesn't mean waving your arms dramatically as you describe the ending; it means you involve the PCs as key actors in the drama. The heroes must take action to achieve success.

If the climax of the adventure is an exciting battle, that's fine, and certainly not without precedent. Another interesting type of dramatization requires characters to make a choice, then act on that choice. Then they must deal with the consequences of the choice.

For example, the villain may kidnap a guide who helped the characters on their adventure. At the climax, the villain appears with a knife at the victim's throat. Do the heroes let the villain get away?

Or a spy who's been reporting to a villain on the PCs' movements turns out to be the daughter of an important NPC, perhaps the characters' patron. Do they arrest her on the spot?

Perhaps players will have no trouble with these decisions, but making them agonize isn't the point. The choices they make define their characters and determine the course of the story. There is a whole section about these "dilemmas" later in this chapter.

You manipulated the sequence of events to bring about the story's climax. But once you reach it, major manipulation is uncalled for. You can have a villain miss his FEAT roll or fail to see a brilliant tactic, if it would make for a dramatic defeat (see below). But in general, the actions the player characters take of their own accord should decide the story's outcome. Otherwise, the players feel like they're watching events, not shaping them.

If they fail completely, the failure need not be permanent or fatal; see "Victory Levels," below.

Don't Let Dice Mess You Up

The heroes corner your master villain, confront him with his crimes, deliver their impassioned speeches, and hit him with overwhelming force. Everything's set up for his defeat; he'll stagger a few steps, shake his fist in impotent rage, and drop into a bottom-

less pit. **All** they have to do is hit him.

You roll his Dodging or Evading FEAT, and he evades their blow with ease. The moment is lost. The PCs resort to a long, tedious battle of attrition, wearing him down **into** unconsciousness so they can kick him while he's down.

What went wrong? You let your dice do the thinking for you, that's what. The dice don't tell the story, you do! If their results interfere with a fun, satisfying adventure, what do you gain by slavishly obeying them? The reason you're all playing is to have fun, and "having fun" and "following each and every rule, without exception" don't always mean the same thing.

You might ask, "But isn't this cheating?" Sure, but only to help the players have a good time. That's the rule that precedes all other rules. So if you think a scene would flow better if your villain rolled low instead of high—he did! (Just make sure you roll the dice out of the players' view, so they don't know you're fudging.)

It makes a good story. It doesn't hurt anybody, except the villains. And they won't complain.

Victory Levels

The heroes won or lost. But maybe it's not that clear-cut. They rescued the hostages, but the villain escaped. Or, they defeated the radioactive monster, but it managed to destroy midtown Manhattan beforehand.

In designing an adventure, think about levels of victory. The major goal may include certain minor or accessory goals, and the PCs may achieve some but not others.

Most importantly, the heroes' victory may not be conclusive. If they overlook clues, don't take all the right actions, or suffer a string of awful luck, the villain may get away. Or they catch the bad guy, but the building the heroes were guarding gets destroyed in the process. Not good for the reputation.

These inconclusive victories sow the seeds of future adventures. The villain vows revenge, or the site must be rebuilt and looters chased away, and so on.

Defeat: Beyond the foggy land of inconclusive victory lies the swamp of utter, dismal, unconditional failure.

Marvel characters don't often blow it in major, permanent ways. Both in comics and in game scenarios, they come out on top. And a good thing, too; given the high stakes in a superhero adventure, the heroes' failure may mean the end of life on Earth as we know it.

So are you forced to put PCs on a railroad track to success? No. Failing a mission need not mean the death of everyone involved, nor the triumph of evil. If the players fumble, there are less extreme ways of ending the adventure and letting them know they blew it.

They can lose weapons or devices. If the PC playing Thor loses his Uru hammer, you can be sure he knows he made a mistake somewhere. If your characters are forcibly parted from their possessions, they'll hunger to track down the bad guys and retrieve them. Another adventure!

Or you can let the enemy capture the player characters. Then the heroes escape in the next scene and try to pull together the remnants of their mission. And remember, after a failure the goal should somehow be harder to achieve.

Other penalties include reduced Karma awards, scathing editorials in the *Daily Bugle,* and the scorn of **the** characters' peers.

A *bad* way to handle the players' failure is to bring in an NPC to make things right. This galls the players and makes them feel useless. An important part of role-playing is the illusion that the player's character can, and must, influence events. If an NPC is always waiting in the wings to patch up mistakes, a player will think (justifiably) that he or she could have stayed home.

The ultimate penalty is death. In a story, death is important and, usually, final. Don't let your characters die pointlessly in some random gunfight. Their deaths should serve the plot (but not—note!—be vital to it). A hero's death should be a dramatic, emotional moment in the story. Try to stage it as part of a climax, or vice versa, and be sure to give the character a chance for a few poignant (or defiant) last words.

Failure happens. Reasons are not important, after the fact. Be ready to salvage the situation and set the stage for another adventure, in which the heroes have a chance to redeem themselves.

Rewards: The good guys usually win. After a long and hard-fought battle, the PCs want to know their efforts have been appreciated. That appreciation usually takes the form of Karma awards, but there are also other ways to reward heroes.

Equipment, for example. A rescued millionaire or grateful bank president could give them a spiffy limousine or private aircraft. Or the heroes might crib a magic ring or high-tech gizmo from the villain's headquarters. (Not only does this work as a reward, it can also trigger a future adventure.)

Intangible rewards can be just as useful: the friendship of a more powerful or experienced hero; favors earned from the mayor or chief of police; a contact at the *Daily Bugle;* even the grateful tears of an old widow.

What about the rewards for handling really world-shattering events? Depending on the heroes' reputations and standing with the police, city officials could arrange a ticker-tape parade up Fifth Avenue. Filthy rich or influential people could build an entire headquarters for the heroes. National news shows broadcast the PCs' heroism. Of course, that means every gunslinging super-powered villain hot to make a reputation will target the PCs!

Every reward should sow the seeds of future adventures. The story grows into a campaign . . . but that is the subject for the next chapter.

PLOT INGREDIENTS

The following pages describe a few important story elements in greater detail. These discussions include lists of "plot ingredients" that you can combine to create your own scenarios. This approach owes much to another TSR product, the excellent *Dungeon Master's Design Kit* by Aaron Allston and Harold Johnson. Though intended for fantasy role-playing, this product offers a great deal of interest to Judges and to game referees in any genre.

GOALS

Here are several key points to keep in mind when choosing scenario goals for MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ adventures:

1. *Define the goal for the players as clearly as possible.*

This is essential. If the players don't have a clear idea of where they are going, they may just dither, or even strike out in frustration at the nearest likely-looking target.

Not only should you convey the goal at or near the beginning of the adventure, you must also take care to give a clear minor goal in each scene of the adventure. The heroes may know they are supposed to stop Doctor Doom's plot to shrink Manhattan to the size of a grapefruit, but if they don't know how to start looking for him, you haven't clearly defined the **first** scene's goal.

2. *Convey to the players the consequences if their PCs fail to reach the goal.*

If the consequences of failure don't seem serious, and preferably drastic, rethink the goal. Make it important!

"Important" does not always mean world-shaking. The consequences can be completely personal. For instance, if failure in the adventure means that Aunt May dies, a good Spider-Man player will be just as motivated to reach the goal as he would if failure meant the downfall of America.

In assessing a goal's importance, be aware that in a role-playing context, threats against a PC's well-being are functionally identical to threats against the city, nation, or the entire world. Both are equally serious. They both involve the players' emotions to the highest degree.

This principle is useful when you want to run an adventure with potentially disastrous consequences, but you don't want to materially alter the campaign world. Even though life goes on, a single death in an adventure can be a disaster.

3. *Establish paths to the goal that every PC can use.*

If one PC is a sharp detective, *a la* Daredevil, and another plays a powerhouse like Hercules, give both of them ways to be useful. This is fundamental to all good scenario design.

But the heroes should be able to succeed in the goal even when a particular PC is missing, unconscious, or otherwise indisposed. If the PCs can't win without that one character, something is wrong. Ideally, each individual PC could be the key to victory, with the others working as backup and support.

4. *If possible, link the goal to distinctive features of the scenario's setting and villain.*

This is really just chrome, a way to increase the players' sense of place. You can run a fine generic adventure that has nothing special to do with the setting; you just miss an opportunity, that's all.

And some stories work regardless of the ultimate bad guy. The villain's psychology and peculiar motivation are unimportant; he or she is just an opponent to beat up **in** the last scene. This kind of story is not wrong or inherently bad. It just doesn't take advantage of many colorful possibilities of storytelling.

All that said, here are some sample goals that should inspire new and inventive scenario ideas:

Clear Name

Someone has framed a hero or NPC for a dreadful crime. While the accused hero evades public brickbats or the NPC languishes in jail, the heroes must find the responsible villain. Then they must bring back satisfactory evidence of the frame-up, sometimes the trickiest part of the mission.

In a continuing campaign, keep in mind some outcome in case the heroes fail the mission. The accused must stand trial or the group's reputation is ruined. This can give the campaign a new direction for a while. But eventually, of course, you allow the heroes to discover new evidence to clear themselves. (See "Evidence Uncovered" and "Mistaken Identity" in "The Adventure Hook" section below.)

Explore

Not many places on Earth remain unexplored, but there are always the ocean, Subterranea, outer space, and other dimensions such as the Negative Zone or Dormammu's Dark Dimension.

No one can get there but super beings, so a scientist or research society asks the PCs to look around. The heroes must journey there and come back alive. Often the heroes must bring back some legendary artifact associated with the location.

Most likely a villain is using the destination as a headquarters or is plotting to strand the heroes at the destination. Whether or not foul play ensues, play up the sense of wonder, the idea that the PCs are heading "where no one has gone before."

Find Escaped Villain

The Vault calls. "Uh, don't exactly know how to explain this, but remember that arch-nemesis you dragged in last month? Well—" A clue or two, of a kind only the PCs can decipher, puts the heroes on the escaped criminal's trail.

This goal is straightforward and to the point, and especially suitable when the heroes have a personal grudge against the escaped villain.

Help Friend or **Ally**

A fellow hero, dependent NPC, or childhood friend seeks out a hero's help. The NPC is being menaced by some side effect of the villain's plan. The heroes must quash the plan to get the friend out of trouble.

If you prefer to increase the paranoia level of your campaign, **the** "friend" could traitorously lure the heroes into the villain's deathtrap. But once stung this way, players will never regard their friends with open-hearted fellowship again.

Personal Gain

Super beings are, as a rule, above monetary pressures (though Peter Parker would disagree). But "gain" doesn't have to mean just money. The adventure goal might be procuring advanced technology for a hero's fancy power armor—but the needed gadget was just stolen by the adventure's villain!

Alternatively, the heroes might be

looking for information about their mysterious past, or legendary magic spells or treasures. Or they might be trying to "build their rep" as heroes so they can apply for an Avengers franchise.

Protect

The PCs must guard a valuable person or item, such as a witness to a Maggia killing, a priceless Lemurian artifact, the US President and the Soviet Premier during a summit meeting, and so on.

Another simple, straightforward goal, protecting something puts **the** heroes in a passive role until someone tries to do damage to the protected item. So plan on either a slow start to the adventure, or just cut immediately to the exciting scene: "You were called on to guard the Wakandan ambassador, and for three days, all has gone well. But suddenly—"

Rescue

A ransom note, a whispered phone call that is suddenly cut off, a broadcast appeal by the Mayor—anything can let the heroes know someone has a person or item that the PCs must get back. Usually they know the villain's identity from the start, but must find the bad guy's stronghold, enter stealthily or invade in full force, and get out alive. (Most self-respecting heroes don't try to get out **until** they've thoroughly trashed the place.)

Often the villain is expecting the heroes and has a deathtrap or two waiting. Only forethought and skillful entry can keep the PCs out of the trap.

This goal also appears when **the** PCs have messed up the "Protect" goal above. "You let this mess happen," some authority figure tells **them,** "so get out there and make up for your mistake!"

Solve Mystery

Colonel Mustard has been found dead in the drawing room, and a bloody lead pipe lies beside the body. Who did it?

Murder mystery plots don't often work well in super-hero stories. **Their** complicated structures of motive, method, and opportunity call for heavy thinking. Many PC heroes aren't built for that kind of endeavor; or they may have powers that solve the whole case in one turn.

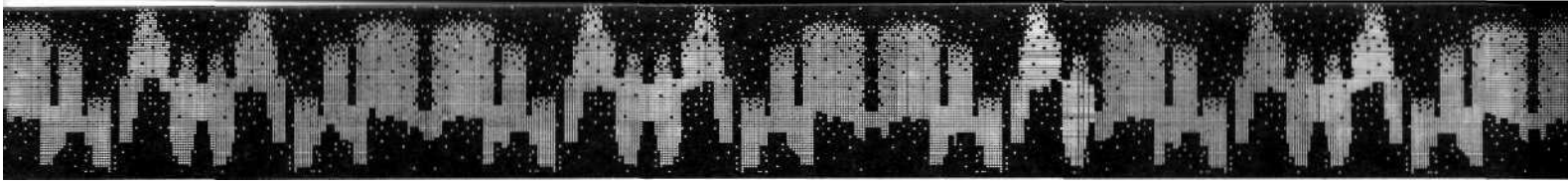
For a more appropriate genre example, who turned the Eiffel Tower upside down, and why, and how? How did that minor villain become so powerful? What are those strange rumblings issuing from that new IRT subway tunnel?

This kind of mystery suits a heroic campaign much better. The heroes immediately see courses of action. They can solve the mystery through physical means (getting to the end of that subway tunnel, for example) and confront the responsible villain in battle. This is the heroic equivalent of a mystery, and it works well in a scenario.

Thwart Nefarious Plot

The quintessential goal. The Mandarin has just mind-controlled **all** of **Wall** Street and threatens the Western world with economic chaos. The Kingpin is turning an entire student population of a downtown high school into drug addicts. Doctor Doom has planted nuclear weapons underneath every state capital building. And so on.

The heroes must find the bad guy, punch his or her lights outs, and destroy all equipment vital to the plot. You can't find a purer version of classic comics than this.



VILLAINS

What would comics be without them? Nothing better defines the point of your story than the identity of its villain.

If you want a rip-roaring chase across the city, you need a fast-moving thief to purloin a valuable item. If you want to tell about racial intolerance, your villain should be an insane ideologue. For an adventure with awesome landscapes and titanic power, choose Mephisto or Dormammu. For a comic change of pace, who better than Madcap or the Impossible Man?

Choose a villain according to his or her *motives* and *methods,* as well as power level relative to the heroes. Power levels are addressed in Chapter 10; motives and methods are discussed separately below.

MOTIVES

Motives tell what drives your story's villain, the goal his or her plots try to achieve and (often) weaknesses that the heroes can exploit. For example, a villain motivated by greed can be tempted away from his target if the heroes create a convincing illusion of greater gain elsewhere. And a villain who is just crazy has many weak points.

Here are some sample motivations. Some are expressed as goals that the villain strives to achieve.

Corruption

This sinister, often horrific villain works to debase all that is good in humanity. His or her methods are customarily subtle and insidious. A single defeat does not spell the end of this villain's threat. Such villains may not necessarily be very powerful, but are truly as evil as they come.

Example: Mephisto.

Evading Capture

The bad guy has already seen Ryker's Island or the Vault and has no desire to visit again. This motive is usually transitory, lasting for an adventure or two until the bad guy re-establishes a headquarters and begins plotting afresh.

See also "Find Escaped Villain" in the "Goals" section of this chapter.

Example: Electro.

Insanity/Ideology

This catch-all category describes villains who do bad things for reasons of personal belief, derangement, or just pure nastiness.

The belief can be a twisted version of an accepted ideology, such as Nuke's super-patriotism. Or the belief can be straightforward hostility to human beings' continued existence, as with the Lizard or Ultron.

This category also includes those under the authority of higher agencies that support a specific ideology. For example, Freedom Force is nominally controlled by the US Government, and the Soviet Super Soldiers usually follow the Kremlin's orders. Note that super-powered villains are independent types who seldom follow orders without question.

An ideological or crazy villain works best in one of two ways:

1. A horrific expression of man's darker side. The villain throws away all notions of civilized conduct and the brotherhood of man because of a narrow, distorted doctrine. Play the fanatic carefully; keep him or her scary, not (just) contemptible.

2. A total bozo. Some of these guys can be funny, in a twisted way. In a humorous adventure, you stress the bad guy's distance from reality, instead of his or her potential threat. Don't let the bad guy kill anybody, or the adventure suddenly turns grim.

Examples: The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, Crimson Dynamo, Fool-Killer, the Hand, the Jester, the Lizard, Mister Hyde, Nimrod, Nuke, the Punisher, the Red Ghost (formerly), Scorpion, the Sentinel robots, and Ultron.

Mischief

Life is boring! Time to pep it up a little. And those PC heroes—they're such stiff-necked popinjays. Maybe they should have their lives stirred up a little, or a lot... just for laughs.

Examples: Arcade, the Impossible Man, Madcap, Typhoid Mary, White Rabbit.

Power

These villains all want to conquer the world, the universe, or at least a part of New York City. In general they have the power to reach their goals, and a single-minded drive that motivates them to remove potential obstacles to conquest. Such as the PCs.

Examples: Annihilus, Ares, Attuma, Baron Mordo, Baron Zemo, Diablo, Doctor Doom, Dormammu, the Enchantress, Hammerhead, Hate-Monger, the Hellfire Club, Hobgoblin, HYDRA, Kang, Kingpin, the Leader, Loki, Magneto, the Mandarin, the Master, Psycho-Man, Red Skull, Urthona, White Dragon, and the Wizard.

Pride

The villain with this motivation thinks he or she is the best in the world at a chosen pursuit. Anyone in the PC group who shows ability of the same kind becomes vulnerable to this villain's challenge. (See "Challenge" in the "Adventure Hook" section, following this one.)

Examples: The late Kraven the Hunter, the Miracle Man, and Puma.

Scouting for Invasion

This bad guy is just the point man (or point thing) for a whole lot of similar bad guys. They all want New York, or America, or Earth, but they want to see how tough the opposition is. When the PCs fight an invasion scout, they must defeat the villain decisively, or the invasion force will just send in another scout later.

Examples: Atlanteans, the Brood, Deviants, Skrulls, Super-Skrull, and the Subterraneans.

Self-Preservation

Some villains do what they do just to survive. This sometimes, though not always, lends them a tragic air—that usually depends on how much the bad guy enjoys his or her work. Remorseful villains can arouse heroes' compassion even as the two sides square off.

Frequently the general public is unaware of, or not sympathetic to, the villain's self-preservation motive. This can mean that, once the immediate threat is

defused, the heroes end up protecting the villain from an enraged mob.

For instance, Reed Richards was instrumental in saving the life of Galactus in the Planet-Eater's most recent visit to Earth. This earned Reed the wrath of most of the civilized universe. At his trial in the courts of the Shi'ar, it took the testimony of Eternity, Odin, and ultimately Galactus himself to exonerate Reed.

Examples: Galactus, Morbius, and (before their destruction in the Marvel Universe) vampires.

Suicide

This extremely offbeat motive makes for a tragic, downbeat adventure. For some reason the villain is unable to die. Tormented by existence and longing for release, this villain dupes the heroes into attacking, in the hope that they can marshal enough force to kill him or her.

The only recent example in the Marvel Universe was Machinesmith, who hated his life (if that's the word) as a machine intellect. He tricked Captain America into fighting his robot bodies, evidently destroying him. But Machinesmith survived the defeat after all. Whether he still longs for death is not yet clear.

Vengeance

The all-purpose villain motive. Every bad guy the heroes have ever fought . . . enemies of NPC heroes that have turned to fighting the PCs as a kind of dress rehearsal for their revenge on their NPC nemeses . . . figures from the forgotten past, attacking friends of the PCs for some barely remembered offense.

All of these long-held grudges are typical of the villain mentality. Anyone who gains power and decides to throw it around becomes bitter and vengeful when that power is foiled.

Examples: Anybody!

Wealth

Almost as much an all-purpose villain motive as vengeance (above), this indicates that the bad guy is just greedy for money, treasures, equipment, Van Gogh paintings, or whatever the villain views as necessary for the good life.

Examples: The Absorbing Man, Batroc, Blacklash, Blastaar, Boomerang, Bullseye, Cobra, Doctor Octopus, Electro, the Enforcers, Jack O'Lantern, Killer Shrike, Klaw, Mastermind, the Mad Thinker, Mysterio, Nitro, the Owl, Prowler, Red Ghost (current), Rhino, Sandman, the Serpent Squad, Shocker, Speed Demon, Stilt-Man, Taskmaster, Terminus, Trapster, and the Vulture.

METHODS

These are some of the paths a villain may take to achieve his or her goal. You can easily come up with other methods, either on your own or by paging through Marvel comics.

Extortion

The villain has power over some person or agency, and will use it unless the victim pays up by a given deadline. Usually an urgent summons by the victim brings the heroes into the adventure, but sometimes the flashier villains make their threat known over public airwaves.

Kidnap and Ransom

The victim can be any person of wealth or relative of such a person, but it can instead be a valuable object, such as an objet d'art, a rare chemical isotope, or urgently needed medicine.

This scheme has special emotional significance if the heroes desperately need the person or object in question to satisfy another goal. For example, a hero might need medicine to save a dying NPC.

Manipulation

The villain does not care to soil his or her own hands doing the deed, and instead enlists some third party, perhaps an unwitting or mind-controlled dupe. The Puppet Master excelled in this type of scheme. It can send the heroes on a wild goose chase for the longest time. By the time they find out who is really behind the sceme, they should be ready to thrash the villain soundly.

Mass Destruction

Especially suitable for insane or vengeful villains, this method demands extreme power. The source of power can be a giant monster or robot (for instance, the Red Skull's Sleeper robots), a nuclear reactor, or that old standby, the atomic bomb.

The heroes learn about the scheme just hours or days before it will occur, and the tension builds as they try to find the villain's headquarters or destructive machine and destroy it, or stop the monster before it achieves widespread destruction.

Murder

Direct and to the point. The motives for murder coincide with those of mass destruction (above), but this is suitable for less powerful villains.

Provocation

The villain tries to achieve his or her ends—a war, perhaps, or a battle between two equally despised heroes—by arranging a fraud. The fraudulent scheme lays blame on one innocent party for an attack on another's interests.

The heroes often are too late to prevent the scheme itself from being activated. But they can search for evidence to implicate the villain, or find the villain and force him to confess, just moments before the provocation leads to ultimate disaster.

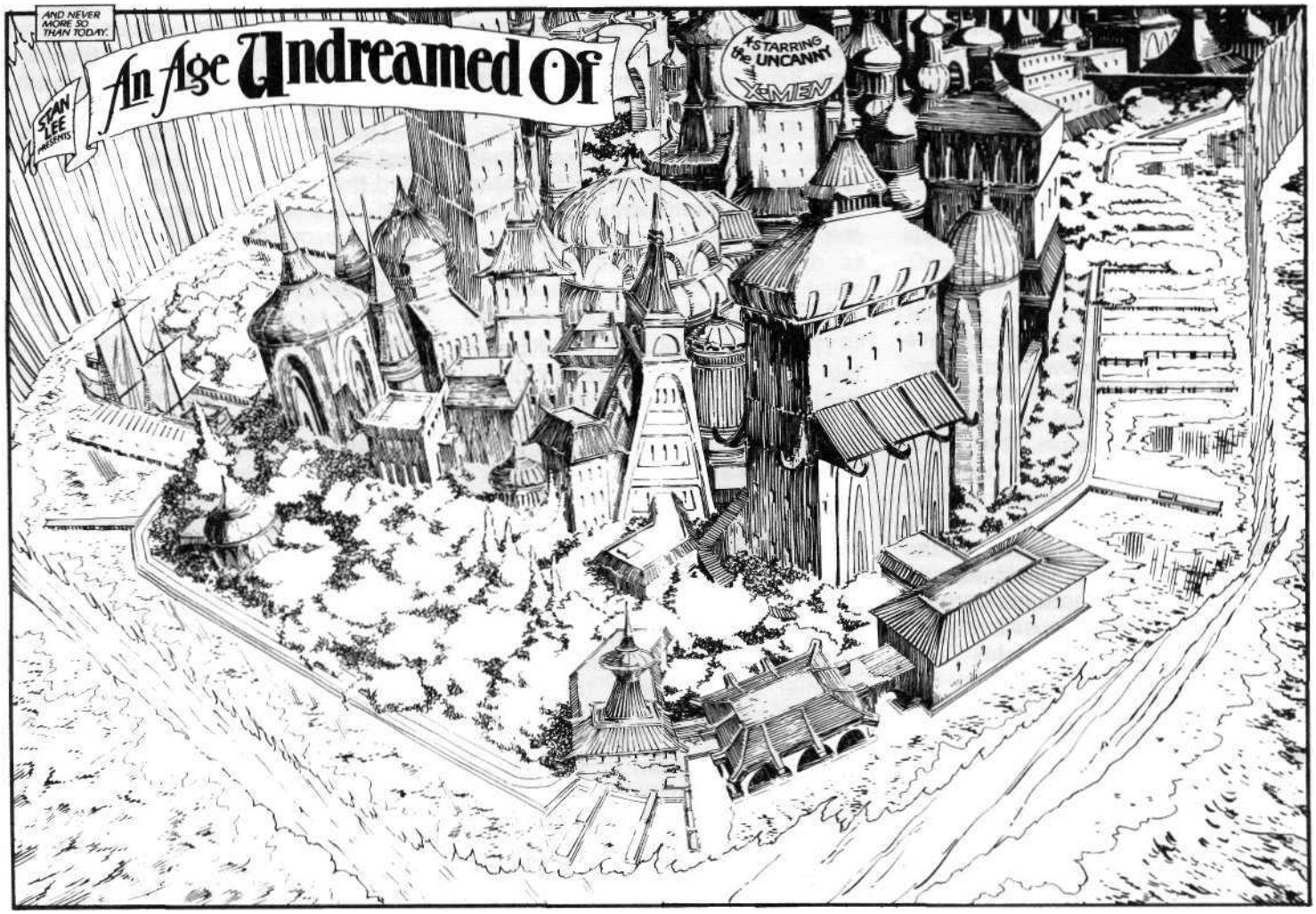
Theft

The standard villain scheme. An early adventure in every campaign is the bank robbery, and attempted thefts of valuables continue on a regular basis thereafter. The players understand their goal and have no trouble telling right from wrong. And virtually no villain is above an ordinary burglary or robbery.

Vice-Peddling

The standard method of the corruption-motivated villain. Gam' bling, racism, envy, lechery—the usual catalogue of sins are all profitable to the criminal element. The heroes may believe the villain's goal is mere wealth . . . until a more sinister pattern emerges and the surprising identity of the Corruptor is revealed.

THE ADVENTURE HOOK



The adventure hook, sometimes known by Alfred Hitchcock's term of the "maguffin," is the plot device you use to introduce your scenario's goal and involve the heroes in achieving it.

You grab your players' interest in an adventure by appealing to the psychology of their characters. For instance, a character obsessed with locating his or her true parents will obviously respond well to an enigmatic note found in the attic of the hero's ancestral home.

If you involve one hero in the scenario, the rest of the group will probably tag along just to be friendly. But beware of activating their own contrary psychological traits (in the example above, a hero who says, "I refuse to help you dredge up past scandals!").

Here are a few tried-and-true adventure hooks:

Challenge

A remote-controlled plane writes smoky letters in the sky above Manhattan: "TRICKERY CANNOT HELP THIS TIME, (name of hero group). MEET TONITE AT OUR LAST BATTLE SITE OR ADMIT YOUR COWARDICE"—and, of course, the skywritten note is signed by your arch-villain.

The challenge leads all the evening newscasts and makes the front page of the *Bugle's* evening edition. Maybe the heroes don't feel like walking into a trap just at that moment, so they pass up the challenge. But the next day the skywriting challenge gets nastier. And the day after that. . .

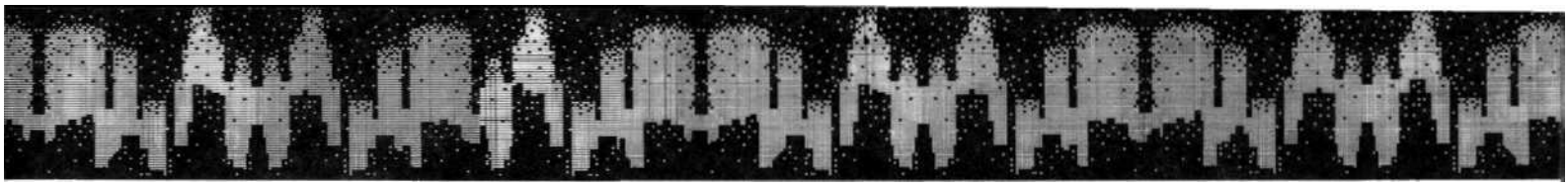
The heroes become laughing-stocks. Sooner or later they get fed up with the humiliation, and they launch themselves into your scenario, ready to pummel the taunting villain.

Obviously, the challenge can take some form besides skywriting. Each form varies in its public exposure, nastiness, and allure. Aim for the dramatic.

Dying Delivery

A hero is on patrol, appearing at a posh charity function, or just lounging around the public HQ. In staggers a mysterious figure. The man (or woman or child or alien) mumbles a few words, hands the hero a clue, and perishes.

The clue or dying words should tell the hero where to start investigating



this mystery. The victim may have named his or her killer, or the assassin's employer, or maybe a loved one who should be informed of the death.

For a twist, the victim might have a completely wrong idea of the killer's identity. This leads the hero on a wild goose chase to the wrong villain, but the chase uncovers another evil scheme. By defeating that scheme, the hero group somehow uncovers evidence that points to the victim's true killer.

Complicating the investigation, whoever killed the victim now wants the clue in the hero's possession. Naturally, he or she will stop at nothing to get it. . . .

Enigmatic Figure

Create an NPC who is sure to fascinate your heroes. The NPC shows up from time to time (perhaps in earlier adventures) for no apparent reason, manifesting strange powers—perhaps powers identical to a hero's! The hero group, intrigued, looks into the mystery and discovers a villain's plot.

Who is the NPC? Some ideas:

1. The villain's agent, luring the heroes to their doom. Heroes should become suspicious of the NPC's actions before that doom strikes.

2. The villain's hostage, who keeps escaping—but never quite long enough to get to the heroes.

3. A freelance hero, fighting against the villain and trying to warn the hero group about the scheme.

4. The ghost of one of the villain's victims. This option is best suited to heroes who have psychic or magic powers.

5. The villain's ally or dependent, who is caught between love or duty and worry over the villain's scheme. This character either dies at the villain's hands by the grand finale or is rescued by the heroes and becomes a dangling subplot for future adventures.

Evidence Uncovered

After some lengthy time, new evidence in an important criminal case has appeared, or a key witness has blown back into town. The statute of limitations runs out in an absurdly brief time, so contacts in law enforcement enlist the heroes' aid to locate and protect the witness or evidence. It goes without saying that some evildoer has also learned of the new evidence and works to prevent the heroes from achieving their goal.

One way to give this hook some emotional momentum is to make the evidence capable of freeing a hero's longtime friend or childhood buddy from unjust imprisonment. Conversely, the evidence might put away a hero's longtime foe for good.

Friend Imperiled

This adventure hook resembles the "Help Friend or Ally" in the Goals section. Here the friend's predicament is easily handled, but proves to be a lead-in to a larger plot.

In campaign terms, this hook gives you an excuse to bring in a recurring NPC, perhaps to foreshadow a major later development.

Grim Necessity

"Get involved or die!" A longtime foe has poisoned the heroes, cursed them, or framed them. If they don't achieve the adventure's goal, it's curtains for the heroes and maybe the free world.

An example: The Hobgoblin once poisoned Spider-Man and his friend Harry Osborn with a slow-acting venom. He promised them the antidote if Spider-Man would steal valuable notebooks from the Kingpin. But Spidey instead negotiated with the Kingpin for the poison's antidote, in return for capturing the Hobgoblin. It turned out, as one might expect, that the Hobgoblin never had an antidote in the first place.

Heroes for Hire

Taking a leaf from the book of Power Man and Iron Fist, the heroes may be employed to prevent the villain's plot, or working a job that is directly endangered when the scheme is sprung.

Most hero groups don't need to take odd jobs to make ends meet. But your heroes may be willing to take on a particular job for reasons besides money. For example:

Compassion. The heroes must carry a vital donor organ to a dying patient far away. Nobody but the heroes can make the journey fast enough.

Prestige. An extremely high-brow embassy party will attract the movers and shakers of world government. The heroes may volunteer to guard against terrorists just so they can make connections with partygoers and get their pictures on the *Daily Bugle's* society pages.

Glamour or recreation. The heroes might play bodyguards to rock star Lila Cheney or another celebrity on a world tour. Who wouldn't take a job like that? Similarly, many high-security courier jobs take the heroes to the world's most luxurious watering holes. This is a good hook if you want to take your players to some exotic foreign locale.

Social duty. Suppose a touring exhibition of priceless artwork is arriving at the Met or another museum. Somebody has to guard them while the exhibits are set up. Can your heroes refuse a heartfelt request from the museum's curator?

Mistaken Identity

In this classic adventure hook, the hero is seen robbing banks, mugging old ladies, sabotaging public events, and acting generally discreditable. Of course, the real miscreant is an impostor, and the impersonation is all part of an evil plot. But no one believes it except the hero's group.

The hero gets a lead when someone in the villain's employ mistakes the hero for the impostor (confused?). The henchman drops a clue to the hero, and that is the avenue into the adventure.

The villain often turns out to be the hero's oldest enemy. By ruining the hero's public image, the villain takes gloating revenge for past defeats.

And who is the impostor? Perhaps a robot. Perhaps an ordinary agent with high-tech gadgetry that simulates the hero's powers. Perhaps another hero with similar powers, whom the villain has kidnapped and brainwashed.

Pushing Buttons

When all else fails, bluntly manipulate the heroes' beliefs and emotions. Find out what one of the PC heroes hates above all else—killing innocents, for example, or persecuting mutants, or beating children. Then have a villain do that very thing, right before the hero's eyes. Inevitably the hero pursues the villain right into the adventure.

NPCS

The heroes are not alone in their world. Give them interesting people and creatures to interact with. The NPCs can help heroes achieve their goals, put obstacles in their path, or just stand on the sidelines looking pretty. But all have a function in the story. Every NPC has a use, even a spear-carrier that the hero defeats in a couple of blows.

In your adventure, think about the characters the heroes will meet while pursuing their goal. Try to make the most important ones interesting and memorable. Make this one funny-looking, that one talk with a lisp or an accent, the one over there a tourist from some foreign land.

Each important NPC has beliefs and objectives in his or her own right. Nasty NPCs have motives and methods like those of the scenario's master villain, but on a smaller scale. Friendly NPCs may share the same emotional involvement in the adventure that the players have. Neutrals just want to make a buck, observe, or be left alone. Perhaps they're just acting as inadvertent conduits for information.

Your players enjoy interacting with these various personalities, and you'll have fun impersonating them. Just as important, you can use the NPCs as tools for your story. They provide many functions:

Information sources, as with a captured thug or stoolie;

skilled people, such as a cryptographer who can break Doctor Doom's coded message—for a price;

Incentives, as with the rich movie star who offers a huge donation to charity if your heroes will serve as his bodyguards on a trip through dangerous territory;

Humor or atmosphere, as with the street urchin who won't leave your gruff hero alone;

Or conflict. Sometimes the players just want to pound on something. That's fine. Throw them a minor villain or a gang of his henchmen and let them blow off a little steam. But bring in these foes for a reason, in a plausible manner, and adjust their strength to that of the player characters.

These "random" encounters should not produce serious damage or otherwise obstruct the plot. Suppose Spider-Man is swinging toward a climactic confrontation with the Rhino and he stops to prevent a mugging. The dice go incredibly wrong, the mugger knifes Spidey, and the story is over. You wouldn't want to read that in a comic, and you don't want it in your adventure story. Remember the earlier advice about not letting the dice mess up your story.

TYPES OF NPCs

There is no way to present an exhaustive list. For examples of some of the many roles NPCs can play, see the Hotspot listings in the *Campaign Sourcebook.* Following, however, are a few general roles NPCs often play in super-hero adventures.

Authority Figure

Heroes usually loathe, but often respect, the NPC who has some kind of power over them. This NPC serves as an information source, an obstacle in touchy situations (meaning all those that expose the NPC's own agency), and in some cases a genuinely useful contact.

But try to restrict a useful NPC's role. If the NPC always cooperates and has plenty of pull, adventures could move along much too easily for the PCs. And where is the heroism in that?

Here are several time-honored authority figures:

Government observer Usually a royal pain, this man (it is practically always a man) insists on adequate supervision of all the heroes' activities. Otherwise, they lose their government clearance, and probably a lot of nifty devices like satellite communication links, jets, and even their headquarters.

Whatever it may say about our society, in practice government observers are often hostile and troublesome. The cardinal example in the Marvel Universe is longtime nuisance Henry Peter Gyrich, a fanatic who distrusts all heroes.

Law enforcement official: These include officers on the beat, plainclothes detectives, precinct captains, commissioners, and FBI and CIA men {again, they are nearly always male). An international adventure could feature agents of Interpol or intelligence services of other countries. Any of them can be friendly or hostile.

Friendly officials bring heroes into troublesome cases, provide deep background information, and alert heroes to actions by hostile officials. Often a friendly official is impatient with the usual law-enforcement channels and wants to see justice done, even if not "by the book."

A friendly official is a likely NPC target for a villain's plot, providing a strong adventure hook to involve the PCs.

Hostile officials harass the heroes, stonewall PCs who want information, and say things that J. Jonah Jameson loves to quote in his *Daily Bugle* editorials.

If you include a hostile official in the story or campaign, establish a reason why the official doesn't make the heroes' lives even harder (for instance, by arresting suspect PCs on the spot). Perhaps the official's superior is friendly to the PCs, or the PCs have official government jurisdiction to investigate cases.

Lawyer: Heroes may run afoul of the law, or at least the fringes of the law, whenever they haul someone to the police station, accidentally destroy property, break into a criminal's office, or fail to heed the summons of a police officer. All of these things happen all the time.

In the Marvel Universe, lawyers are often respected figures. Think of the one-time firm of Nelson and Murdock, lawyers for the Fantastic Four.

Other lawyers can be mere nuisances. These ambulance-chasers may try to harass the heroes into settling out of court for "molesting" their clients, who are innocent until proven guilty of bank robbery, muggings, or whatever the heroes caught them doing.

Then there is the truly crooked lawyer, who springs villains on technicalities and casually commits perjury to

frame a hero. For example, Caesar "Big C" Cicero has become so successful as a mob lawyer that he is the probable successor to leadership of the Silvermane family of the Maggia.

Friend with Dark Secret

Here are two general varieties:

Childhood friend: This NPC, **usually** not a recurring cast member, knew one of the PCs in the old days, usually before the hero began his or her heroic career. You and a player can establish some retroactive reason why the PC cares about the NPC, no doubt rooted in some childhood event. Perhaps one saved the other's life.

The childhood friend returns suddenly, possibly in suspicious circumstances. Though still friendly at first, the old acquaintance soon betrays the heroes, steals something vital, harms an informant, or otherwise shows that the friend is working for a bad guy.

The friend might really be evil, or the master villain might be extorting the friend's cooperation. The bad guy holds a hostage, or the friend is just weak-kneed and buckles under to the villain's orders.

Inevitably, the interested hero must confront the childhood friend, perhaps in battle. The friend can be converted to the good guys' side or may be irredeemably treacherous. Either way, the friend usually dies at the end, at the hands of the master **villain**—another good way to develop personal animosity between a hero and villain.

Relative or romantic interest: Functionally much the same as the childhood friend, but this variety of NPC can easily be a regular member of the campaign's supporting cast. A hero cares deeply about the NPC and would go to great lengths to protect him or her.

This kind of NPC never turns out to be evil, but is often temporarily mind-controlled or coerced into betraying the hero group. When the villain's plan is smashed, the NPC begs forgiveness. Depending on the circumstances, the heroes may welcome him or her back, or abandon the NPC to a solitary life outside the campaign.

Note that in a campaign, NPC relatives or lovers should have some useful role in addition to the emotional tie to a PC. For more about this, see Chapter 9.

Guest-Star Hero

Since Marvel Manhattan is crawling with heroes, it is simplicity itself to throw in a guest appearance by Thor, Spider-Man, or Captain Britain. But note that the guest hero should not solve the adventure's main problem, rescue the PCs from a deathtrap before they've tried to rescue themselves, or otherwise steal the PCs' thunder.

Although guest stars work in the comics, because a reader finds all the heroes equally interesting, in a game the guest hero is just another NPC. And above all, NPCs must never make the PCs look bad!

Hero-Worshiper

Publicly known heroes may have fan clubs, or just one or two groupies. A groupie can be a fun way to stroke a player's ego, or the NPC can be a pest who demands autographs at inopportune times, hangs around the headquarters, and interferes during battles with villains.

Worst of all, the hero-worshiper can be emotionally disturbed. A young boy idolized the Human Torch to such an extent that, in order to be like Johnny Storm, he set himself on fire. The boy died, and Storm was hit with a severe emotional crisis. Don't play out this grim sort of encounter unless you can sound out the affected player first. Some players would rather not handle this in the context of a "fun" role-playing game.

Lunatic

The NPC could be crazy. There is ample precedent for this in the comics. Often the loony knows something significant to the adventure, and the heroes have to put up with his or her babbling to get the clue.

Scientist or Expert

This NPC type is often not far removed from the previous one, but the expert doesn't froth at the mouth—at least not publicly. The heroes must humor this NPC's eccentricities because of his or her valuable knowledge.

Beware of making the NPC an expert in one ot the PCs' chosen fields. If this is so, the NPC should be less qualified than the hero, or not given to hogging the stage and showing up the PC.

Alternatively, a scientist's researches may have gotten him or her into really deep trouble, and it's up to the PCs to extricate the "expert."

Snoopy Reporter

A classic NPC. This journalist knows that uncovering a secret identity or a skeleton in the closet would be the scoop of the decade. In modern times newspaper reporters are being supplanted by hair-sprayed TV "reporters" who slept through their Ethics in Journalism classes. But the *Daily Bugle* can always serve as a source for the more traditional type of snoop.

Stoolie

Every streetwise hero maintains a network of informants. Those who don't may meet stoolies through the police department, or the stoolie may seek out the heroes to deliver some especially hot information. These characters are all different, often have very colorful personalities, and can be either tough guys or comic relief. If they come across some really dangerous information, they can end up dead—or, that is, start an adventure by dying in a hero's arms. (See the "Dying Delivery" adventure hook in the previous section.)

CONDITIONS AND DILEMMAS

Many stories have some kind of gimmick. Perhaps the heroes must work under a condition that changes their usual way of operating. Or the resolution of the story thrusts a hero, or the entire player group's heroes, into a choice between unpleasant alternatives. This section discusses these conditions and dilemmas.

Don't overuse these gimmicks. If you tell too many stories that rely on them, your players will feel put upon and frustrated. But if you run an ongoing campaign, throw in a condition or dilemma every third or fourth adventure to keep players on guard and explore new ways of playing.

CONDITIONS

This is a catch-all term for anything that limits the PCs' effectiveness or forces them to work in a new way. There are many, many possible conditions, of which the following are merely examples.

Deadline

This common condition puts a time limit on the resolution of the adventure. If the heroes don't achieve their goal within a certain time, specified at the start of the adventure, then disaster will fall. The city may blow up, or a slow-acting poison will kill one of the characters (see "Grim Necessity" in the "Adventure Hooks" section).

If the heroes seem to be moving smoothly toward success long before the deadline is reached, you can give them a nasty surprise by revealing that the adventure's villain was lying, and that the time limit actually expires much sooner than the PCs believed. But this often appears too blatantly manipulative, so be careful.

Powers Don't Work Right

This one always puts a scare into the players, or at least disturbs them. Some malign agency has tampered with their powers, so they don't work *quite* the way the heroes expect—or, often, **not** even remotely as they expect.

Possible causes include passage to another dimension where natural laws work differently; a mutagenic agent that alters the PCs' body chemistry; or sabotage of the heroes' favorite gadgets.

The adventure's climax should include a way to restore the powers to normal. Or a PC, discovering he or she likes the new powers, decides to continue with them without further change.

Switched Identities

This classic comic-book plot device puts one character's mind in another's body, and vice versa. It can easily work with and lead into the "Mistaken Identity" adventure hook (see that section).

This gimmick works well in a comedic adventure, as one hero tries to learn how to control the other's powers. It also has a sinister side, though, especially if a switched hero finds himself in his arch-foe's body and is hunted by the foe's own enemies!

Villain Immunity

The heroes have the goods on the bad guy, and they know his or her location and weaknesses. But for some reason they just aren't allowed to lay a glove on the villain.

Reasons could include diplomatic immunity (see "The United Nations" in Chapter 3 of the *Campaign Sourcebook),* or a close relationship between the villain and a hero or friendly NPC.

Or a psychic villain might possess the body of a young child. Will the heroes blast the child in order to hurt the villain? Of course not.

This is a frustrating turn of events, so play it up for one adventure, then never use it again until the players have gotten over the sting of it—or avenged themselves on the immune villain in some satisfying way.

Wanted

A frequent turn of events in the comics frames the heroes for some crime, and they must go through the adventure while fighting or evading law enforcement officials. Spider-Man has had to live with this for years.

DILEMMAS

In a dilemma, the heroes have to make a choice between two unpleasant alternatives. Draw the consequences of each choice as clearly as possible, and (if circumstances permit) allow the players as much time as they want to debate the question.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the point here is not to make the players wrack their brains in anguish . . . though that is certainly entertaining. Instead, by making these decisions, the heroes define and display their characters in dramatic fashion.

Here are some sample dilemmas, starting with the one most often seen in super-heroic adventures:

Break the Law?

With great power comes great responsibility. Will the heroes take the responsibility of breaking the law, if they believe it means a greater good?

The obvious context for this dilemma arises when the heroes have the chance to kill a truly powerful, truly evil villain. Kill, and violate every claim to civilized conduct? Or let the villain survive to pillage, plunder, and (often) kill again?

Every Marvel hero has faced this issue. In nearly all cases they decide not to kill, because "that would make me no better than the villain." This is true. Pragmatically speaking, a hero who kills is also hounded by the police and press, and loses Karma and popularity.

Warning to the Judge: If you present the heroes with this dilemma and they disagree on what to do, the next session may turn into an extended policy meeting on the topic "To kill or not?" And the schism may well split the group apart. If you want to protect against this, make sure all the PCs take the same view about killing before you begin the campaign.

Destroy Own Item?

Many heroes derive powers from devices, magic rings, swords, amulets, animal familiars, and so on. In this dilemma, one of these devices proves to be the source of the adventure's problem.

For example, a magic ring may be gradually possessing the hero's mind and forcing him or her to commit mayhem. A villain may have found a way to install a doomsday device in the hero's armor; only the armor's destruction will save the day. Or a mind-controlled animal familiar may turn savage and bestial.

The hero must decide whether to destroy his or her own device in order to solve the problem. Or another hero may destroy it without consulting the owner, a situation that would certainly lead to tension between the two from then on.

The item should not be permanently destroyed. A hero can rebuild a gadget, though usually at some inconvenience and with a delay of an adventure or two. Unique devices, especially magical ones, should require the heroes to undertake an entire adventure to replace them.

Leave the Group?

When the group's outlook and methods become distasteful to a hero, the hero and group may part ways. Most often this is a consequence of divergent views on the issue of killing (see "Break the Law?" above).

Another cause of this dilemma may be the discovery of a hero's dark secret (see "Revelation of Dark Secret" in the section on "Grand Finales," later in this chapter).

When a player is cooperative, you can introduce a subplot wherein that player's hero leaves the group, allegedly for one of these reasons. In fact, the hero is operating solo for a secret reason, perhaps to undertake a dangerous mission without endangering the group. The player plays a different character while the departed hero is gone. Or, for a twist, the player can introduce a "new" character that is really the "departed" hero in disguise.

Reveal Secret Identity?

This one is a killer. A PC must decide whether to tell his or her true identity to another or even, perhaps, go public.

You usually have to do a lot of groundwork to set up this dilemma. For instance, establish a condition in which, for this adventure, the hero cannot appear in his or her secret identity. Perhaps the PC is wanted by police in that identity (the "Mistaken Identity" adventure hook lends itself to this development).

Then, by a chain of circumstances, a valued NPC friend is accused of the murder of the PC! The hero can clear the friend of all charges instantly, just by revealing that he or she still lives. But will the hero do this?

Note: Never put a PC in the dilemma of having to reveal another PC's identity. This just creates bad feelings no matter what action is taken.

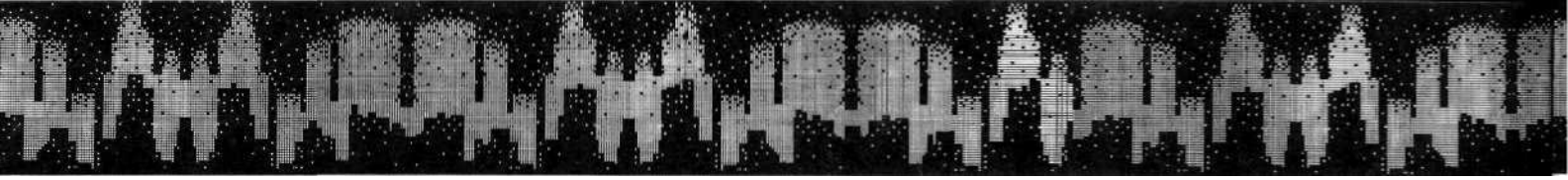
Work with a Bad Guy?

Another dilemma that will have players scratching each other's eyes out (and maybe yours, too). The heroes must enlist a hated foe's aid in order to dispatch a still deadlier bad guy.

The villain agrees to help either because (a) the deadlier bad guy is cutting in on his act ("You can't conquer the world! *I'm* conquering the world!"), or (b) the villain wants to spy on the heroes, learn more about them, and look for a chance to shoot them in the back.

The Fantastic Four once had to fight beside Doctor Doom in a valiant struggle against the Over-Mind. As one would expect, they spent as much time threatening each other as the Over-Mind.

The real dilemma may come when the fight is over. The common enemy defeated, do the heroes (probably weakened) try to capture their erstwhile ally? What if the ally is unconscious—is it honorable to reward his or her aid with capture?



DEATHTRAPS

You should never kill player characters arbitrarily. But it's perfectly all right to make it *look* as though you will arbitrarily kill them.

A deathtrap, naturally, threatens the heroes with death. This is useful in a super-hero story, because the heroes are ordinarily invulnerable to most damage and seldom fear death. A good deathtrap hits them where they live.

But judging a deathtrap is tricky. There must be an escape, since an ugly death in a trap is neither heroic nor dramatically appropriate. But the escape can't be too obvious, or the threat vanishes. But the heroes have to find the way out, or they're dead meat. This is a fine balance to strike.

Still, you have many tools to keep things under control. For example:

1. *The villain's motives.* Despite the term "deathtrap," the bad guy may not want to actually kill the PCs. Perhaps he or she just wants to find out more about the heroes' powers, or toy with them, or preoccupy them while a crucial part of the villain's scheme takes place. When the deathtrap turns out to be non-fatal, play up the narrative surprise.

2. *Coincidence.* An accident can cut power to the deathtrap just as the heroes are about to die. A PC ally, separated from the deathtrap victims earlier in the story, can discover them just in time to stop the trap. And so on.

3. *NPCs.* Generally it is too cheesy to have an NPC release the heroes from a trap. But if necessary, a repentant henchman of the bad guy can work a deal with the heroes in return for freeing them. Or a rival villain may rescue the heroes—so he or she can kill the heroes him- or herself! Out of the frying pan . . .

Means of Escape

What ways can the heroes use to escape the deathtrap? They will nearly always think of something you hadn't, but here are some avenues you may consider:

1. *Heroic effort.* This traditional method relies on the idea that the villain doesn't have a clear idea of the hero's power level.

Doctor Doom may know a PC is incredibly strong, but that does not mean Doom knows specifically that the hero has Incredible-level Strength. Perhaps the heroes can snap their bonds with ease. But next time Doom puts them in a deathtrap, their bonds will be stronger!

2. *Cleverness.* Ideally, the hero responds to the deathtrap with brain power, not brute force. Observation, deduction, and improvisation should show a way out.

For example, suppose a detective hero is covered with honey and tied up on a termite mound beneath the blazing sun. The hero could work loose the magnifying glass in his or her belt, then focus the sun's rays to burn through the ropes.

If the players prove unable to see the deathtrap's solution, you can break down and give them a Reason or Intuition FEAT roll to see an escape route. But this makes players feel bad unless you handle it carefully.

3. *Trickery.* If the villain is gloating over the trapped heroes, they may try some elementary trick such as, "If we die, you'll never find out the identity of your greatest foe." The villain may rightly sneer at feeble lies. But the players, often a clever lot, may come up with a bluff that really does sway the villain.

The deciding factor should be the degree of admiration and hilarity the bluff produces in the players. If everyone thinks the idea is brilliant, then it probably is. The players enjoy themselves more when they think they've put you on the spot—even if you are secretly cooperating in being put there.

Staging Deathtraps

A few points to remember:

1. *Be serious!* This is no laughing matter. Avoid dumb puns, unless that is a gloating villain's style.

2. Keep *the heroes conscious.* One would think the ideal time to spring a deathtrap would come when the heroes are kayoed and can't free themselves. But villains like to see the heroes sweat. So if they have knocked out the heroes, they shouldn't activate the deathtrap until the heroes start to wake up.

For more about waking up, see the optional rule, "Grogginess," below.

3. *Move things along—but not too fast.* The heroes may have scant seconds to think their way out of the trap, but give the *players* a little more time than that. Answer their questions, and **tell** them about whatever they could observe. Don't let them take forever, but a few minutes of suspense won't hurt.

Grogginess (Optional Rule)

If the heroes snap out of unconsciousness and can function at full strength right off, that may make the deathtrap less dramatic. As Judge, you might want the heroes to be groggy for a few minutes, so that the villain can gloat unmolested or so the heroes must strain more heroically to break out of the trap.

If so, consider this optional rule. When a hero regains consciousness, his or her abilities are at Poor rank {or -2 CS, whichever is worse), whether or not the hero lost Endurance ranks. However, the hero recovers +1 CS per turn in each ability, up to the original ability rank (or up to -2 CS, if the hero lost Endurance ranks).

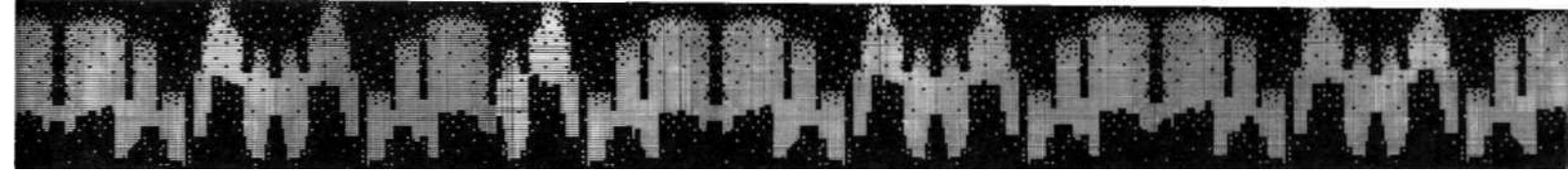
This means that when they awaken in the clutches of the master villain, the heroes will probably be too weak to just bust loose. They may even spend some time *thinking* of clever ways out of the trap.

SOME TYPES OF DEATHTRAPS

Arena

This deathtrap works best in some exotic land, planet, or dimension, one with a different culture and denizens. The heroes get thrown into an apparently inescapable arena. After them comes a variety of opponents: formidable warriors, hungry monsters, or squads of normal-level gladiators.

For drama, have a hero face the adventure's master villain in a duel to the death. The chosen hero should be



one with a deep, personal grudge against the villain (or vice versa).

The cruelest stroke forces the heroes to fight each other. However, most heroes simply refuse to do so, no matter what the cost. They get to be noble, but the deathtrap loses a lot of impact. Drastic coercion, such as holding a beloved NPC hostage, should be frowned upon unless your bad guy is truly nasty.

In certain circumstances, such as in a primitive culture, the heroes can become gladiator heroes, lead a revolt of their fellow slaves, and overthrow the government. However, this is a time-consuming process.

Demolition Zone

The villain places the heroes, bound and probably gagged, in some building or other site scheduled for imminent destruction. Often this is the villain's own headquarters, about to be sacrificed.

The villain may destroy the headquarters to conceal evidence or because his or her latest evil scheme involves its destruction. For instance, a rocket carrying a mind-control satellite is due to launch soon, and the exhaust will destroy the launch site.

Really crazy villains will sacrifice themselves and their HQs to kill their longtime foes. The Red Skull did this many times in repeated attempts to bump off Captain America. Of course, he always had a concealed escape route.

However, the typical villain will tie up the heroes, gloat a little, then run off to avoid the upcoming calamity. Since the villain seldom sticks around, the heroes' escape and reappearance may take the villain by complete surprise.

Exploited Weakness

Many super-powered heroes have a secret weakness. For example, the Shi'ar warrior Gladiator, one of the most powerful mortals in the universe, can be harmed by an unidentified form of radiation. Other vulnerabilities can include mental attacks (these work well on the Juggernaut), particular chemicals, or strange magic.

In this deathtrap, the villain has learned of the hero's weakness, and the trap is loaded with whatever causes it. Details of the trap vary according to the weakness exploited, but the trap can be quite deadly according to how much the substance weakens the hero. Sometimes the only way out is to have a non-vulnerable teammate rescue the susceptible hero.

Murder by Buddy

Often seen in the comics, this deathtrap is a favorite of villains because one of the heroes own teammates killed them!

In one version, all the heroes are wired into the same murderous gimmick, like a multi-slot guillotine or parallel electric chairs. Any one hero can get free without a problem—but the action triggers the device to kill all the other heroes. Coordination and cooperation are the keys to success.

(Before you run this trap, be sure everybody caught in it cares about everyone else!)

Another version puts all the heroes except one in a totally escape-proof trap. They're helpless. A villain mind-controls the one free hero into triggering the deathtrap. ("Now, Kitty Pryde, push the button and activate the plasma-beam that will fry the X-Men!")

Naturally, the hero, by tremendous spiritual exertion, breaks free of the mind control, belts the villain, and frees his or her friends in time for the grand finale showdown.

Remember that mind-controlled heroes get a Psyche FEAT to throw off the control. In this extreme situation, you can allow the hero +1 or +2 CS, and even allow the PC to spend Karma. After all, you don't want the hero to fail the roll.

Natural **Disaster**

Avalanches. Volcanic eruptions. Tidal waves. Earthquakes. The bad guy leaves the heroes in a spot where their powers can't help, and Mother Nature is about to do something awful. Not much time left; what do the heroes do?

Old Standbys

The walls that close in, the sharpened scythe that swings lower and lower, the heavy block poised to crush the life out of the hero beneath, the sawmill blade, the chamber that slowly fills with water or gas, the Burmese tiger trap... all of these classics can be made fresh with a new slant on them. But be sure the slant is genuinely new, or at least new to your players. Nothing gets old faster than a routine deathtrap.

Pinball Gigantus

A favorite of the assassin Arcade, this is a favorite pinball or video game blown up to larger-than-life size.

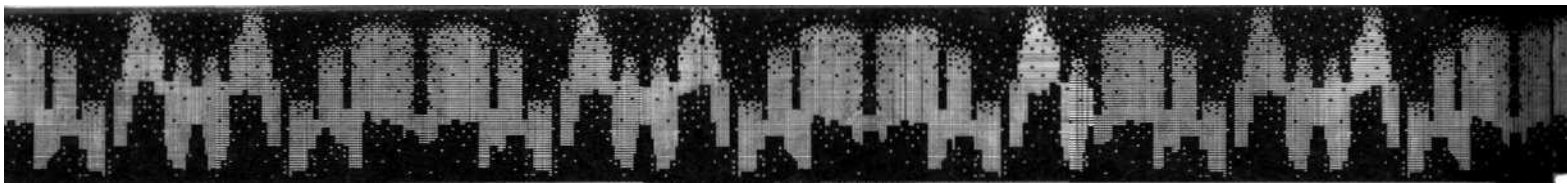
Running the Gauntlet

Perfect for the villain who toys with his or her prey. A gauntlet is technically a double line of armed warriors. An unarmed person, either a criminal or an applicant to the warriors' ranks, must run between the two lines while the warriors beat him or her with their weapons. The term now applies to any severe trial or ordeal.

This starts out as one of the deathtraps described above, but there is one obvious escape route. This leads straight into another deathtrap. That leads into another, and so on, for as long as you want to run it.

Perhaps, while trapped in the slowly filling lava pit, the heroes spy an air vent and crawl through it. The vent's bottom suddenly drops away, and the heroes plummet down a long slide into an alligator pit. Leaping to the rim, the heroes find a boulder rolling down at them. Evading it, they dodge into a room filled with poison gas.

The traps may really be lethal, but the villain does not count on it. Generally, he or she is observing and taunting the PCs at every step. When the heroes emerge from the gauntlet, ragged and exhausted, the villain and all his or her henchmen are waiting there for a huge battle.



THE GRAND FINALE

A story's climax is often marked by battles, explosions, or sudden cosmic transcendence. Fair enough, but that is not what the story's climax is *about.*

A well-designed finale doesn't just blow up scenery; it concludes the plot's dramatic action. Indecisive characters make decisions and act on them. People searching for something find it, or lose it for good. Uncertain relationships become sharply defined.

These generalities indicate that no discussion can give specific, concrete advice for resolving every storyline. Each grand finale is unique and should be tailored to the storyline. Nonetheless, here are some ideas for staging your grand finale.

Confrontation with Entity

Matters have grown so tangled, or the stakes are so high, or the bad guy is so incredibly powerful, that one of the entities of the Marvel Universe steps into the fray. This could be Eternity, a Watcher, a god, or even Death. Consult pp. 54-57 of the Judge's Book in the Advanced Set.

Aim for maximum drama in staging the encounter. These guys never just walk into a scene. They always appear in a cloud of mist, reshape reality to their needs, or summon the heroes to them from across the dimensions. Make the players realize this is a big deal!

This climax is often associated with a *conceptual breakthrough* of some kind. This high-falutin' term means that a character achieves a sudden new understanding of the world and his or her place in it. The entity in question is usually responsible for the breakthrough.

For example, when Reed Richards was on trial for rescuing Galactus from death, the story turned into a hit parade of the biggest deals in the Marvel Universe: the Shi'ar empire, the Watcher, Odin, Eternity, and Galactus. In a massive conceptual breakthrough, everyone involved was made to appreciate Galactus's key role in the development of the universe.

This confrontation can have long-term campaign implications, or even mark a change in the campaign's direction. So be careful. Another danger is that the players have nothing to do except gasp in awe at the entity. Try to arrange an opportunity for the PCs to deliver impassioned speeches, protest, and so on.

Extortion

Like the one above, this finale stresses role-playing over combat. The heroes have found some lever to use against the bad guy. They confront him and say, "Drop the scheme or else."

For example, the Kingpin supported Randolph Cherryh as candidate for mayor of New York City. Daredevil located the Kingpin's beloved wife, Vanessa, who had been thought dead. In return for bringing Vanessa to him, Daredevil coerced the Kingpin into withdrawing Cherryh from office.

There is some moral fuzz to this climax. The heroes are using the same methods a villain would employ. You can either ignore this issue or bring it up later on, when the villain returns and vows revenge. Some highly moral PCs may refuse to use extortion, so be prepared for arguments among players.

Prevented Deed

In gloating over the captured heroes, the villain or a henchman has stupidly revealed the crucial event of the nefarious scheme. Often this takes place while the heroes are struggling to escape a deathtrap (see previous section in this chapter).

After they escape, the battered heroes race to the site of the crucial event and prevent it from happening, often mere seconds before deadline. This usually leads to, or is preceded by, a pitched battle (see Slugfest, below) or one of the endings suggested under "How the Villain Loses" (also below).

Revelation of Dark Secret

This finale takes several forms:

1. Heroes uncover awful truths about the villain and broadcast them far and wide. If the villain has been masquerading as good, pretended to reform, or used a false identity, this means the end of the bad guy's plan.

2. The villain reveals an awful truth. For instance, the villain could be the hero group's patron in disguise, or a beloved relative of one of the heroes. The heroes may have to give up their fight and let the villain's plan succeed (for the moment, naturally), or they may risk the consequences and fight the villain. Try to expect many approaches.

3. A hero is forced to reveal an awful truth about him- or herself. This might be the hero's secret identity, a significant weakness (for instance, Daredevil's blindness), or a hidden relationship to the villain.

The revelation often exonerates a fellow hero or an NPC from some unjust accusation. Or it confuses the villain so badly that he or she cancels the scheme and retreats to regroup.

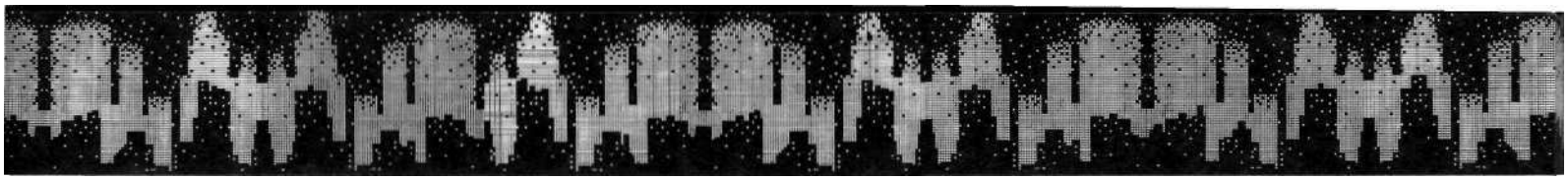
Judging tips: *Never* have someone else reveal a hero's secret. The decision to reveal it must be the player character's. (However, the hero can decide to allow someone else blow the whistle. As long as the hero has the power to prevent the revelation, this is functionally the same thing.)

Also, however tempting the prospect, don't obviously manipulate the plot to force the revelation—at least not without discussing it with the player in advance. The player should have the chance to veto the revelation, since it may well mark a new direction for the character in the campaign.

Slugfest

The classic conclusion. All the main characters converge and start whaling away on each other. In staging this climax, try to present a neat setting with plenty of props that characters can use as weapons. Time-honored sites include power companies (electrical wires, barrels of battery acid, big coils of cable) and construction sites (cranes, girders, skyscraper skeletons).

Be prepared to handle massive amounts of property damage, and be aware of how much damage the site can take before everything collapses. The usual answer is "enough to dramatically fall apart just as the battle ends."



HOW THE VILLAIN LOSES

Do not design one unique, nothing-else-works solution to the adventure. This is heavy-handed and may force your players into actions they don't want to commit. If you design the climax of your scenario as a specific scene—where you manipulate a hero into doing one special thing, so the villain can die or fail in a pre-arranged manner—something is wrong.

Obviously ,you should have in mind one or two possible solutions to the crisis, just so you can suggest something if the players come up short. But don't treat the finale as a scene, with specified entrances and exits.

Instead, think of the climax as a situation. In that situation, the PCs can try any number of things, and the villain's response varies accordingly.

Here are a few of the many ways the heroes can foil the villain's plot. Again, you should not pick one as *the* ending; instead, consider all of them and invent a few of your own, so you have a selection of responses for your villain, depending on what the player characters choose to do.

Emotional Collapse

The villain is so distraught at some player tactic—destroying the villain's HQ, or persistent taunting, or revealing that the villain's cherished son still lives—that the bad guy just throws in the sponge and says, "Take me away."

The PCs can produce the same effect by exploiting a villain's psychological weaknesses. But in general this only works once, and next time the villain will not only be prepared for the tactic, he or she will be filled with hate for the heroes who dare to try it.

This works best with villains who are already on the emotional borderline, like Doctor Octopus, or outright nuts, like Daredevil's foe Typhoid Mary.

Hoist by Own Petard

In this dramatic finale, the heroes can't stop the plot from working, which means certain death for everyone. But they manage to trap the villain with them, so that he or she will die in the same disaster. Panic-stricken, the cowardly villain abandons the scheme and disarms the doomsday machine.

This will not work when the villain is a true fanatic who is willing to die for a cause. But most bad guys are cowards at heart.

Pounded into Pulp

The conventional end to a scenario. The heroes gang up on the villain and just keep punching. Consider whether the villain has some kind of safety hatch or emergency exit when knocked out. For instance, the loss of consciousness may trigger a homing teleporter that automatically pulls the villain to a predetermined hidden refuge.

This tactic is basically unfair to the players if they beat the villain fair and square. But sometimes, unfair or not, the bad guy has to get away to appear later in the story or in a sequel.

Suicidal Mania

A variant of Emotional Collapse, above, the villain reacts to the same stimuli with a sudden urge to end it all. The bad guy tries to trigger a doomsday device prematurely, or leaps off a precipice, or turns a weapon on him- or herself.

If the villain's death creates no disastrous consequences, the heroes may struggle with the dilemma of whether to stop the villain's suicide. Be ready to deal with either choice the PCs make.

Uncontrollable Henchman

The bad guy employs an assistant who goes crazy in the last act. Perhaps the NPC is a bestial muscleman whom the villain has continually mistreated. Or the NPC is the bad guy's fanatical follower, and he or she goes berserk when the villain displays some sign of presumed weakness or hypocrisy. Or . . . **Well,** you get the idea.

The henchman in this case should be powerful enough, or strategically placed, to produce massive amounts of damage to the villain's scheme. Often the villain and the traitorous henchmen go up in the same fireball, or the heroes last see the pair strangling one another.

Vital Gadget Destroyed

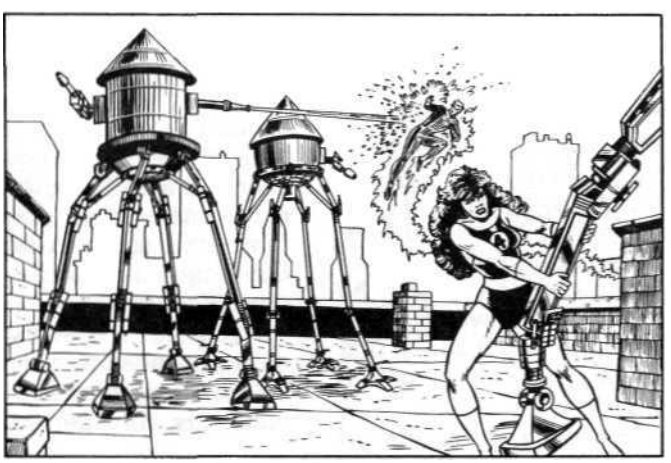
A simple story ending, this assumes the villain's plot depends on one gizmo, doodad, or whatchamacallit that gets destroyed in battle. This wrecks the whole plan, and the villain slinks off or segues smoothly into Emotional Collapse.

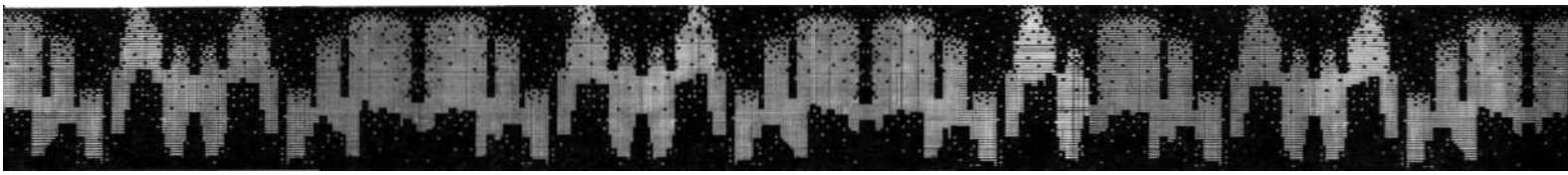
IS THIS THE END?

In many cases, the villain's defeat does not mark the end of the story. If the plot involved the villain's attempt to forestall something, like a PC's discoveries or an NPC's wedding, the story concludes with a scene that depicts the event the villain tried to stop.

Good stories frequently involve a PC or NPC in some kind of moral dilemma. In such a case, the villain's defeat may only be a prelude to the story's true climax, in which the character takes action to resolve the dilemma.

A role-playing adventure doesn't have to end with a big fight. If the story works best and the players will have fun, let it end with role-playing. That's what the game is all about.





CHAPTER 9: RUNNING A CAMPAIGN

A scenario works like a single comic-book issue or, at most, a continued story in several parts. A campaign, though, is a regular comic series, with continuing characters, subplots, ongoing rivalries, and long-term developments. A bad campaign can be tedious, but a well-run campaign gives the highest pleasure that role-playing offers.

TYPES OF CAMPAIGNS

Any campaign can be described by its *genre, tone, concept,* and *rationale.*

Genre: This point, the distinctive kind of story your campaign tells, was discussed at the start of Chapter 8. Your campaign genre is presumably comic-book heroics in the Marvel Universe. You may want to define it further—for instance, a campaign about SHIELD agents, or masters of the mystic arts, or mutant fugitives, or inner-city vigilantes.

Tone: This overall "flavor" of the campaign describes most of the adventures the PCs undertake. Most campaigns include all kinds of adventures, but one kind occurs more often than the rest. This type, the one you think of when telling someone about the campaign, sets a tone.

Are the PCs hunted by the government because of their mutant powers or secret information? This would probably make for a grim tone.

Do you want plenty of comedy, self-referential jokes, and bozo villains, like the second *She-Hulk* series? This would obviously be a humorous tone.

Most campaigns, like most Marvel comics, strike a tone of straight action-adventure. The heroes fight to protect their city, or their planet, or their dimension from evil. Missions, usually serious, call for great effort and personal sacrifice.

Any tone is fine, as long as the players enjoy it. Just make sure you have one in mind before preparing the campaign, and know when to stick with the established tone (the answer is "most of the time") and when to vary it (the answer is "only for variety and a change of pace").

Concept: This is the central idea of the campaign, the description and focus of the heroes' activities. It ties in closely with "genre," above, but a concept is a specific statement of plot-oriented goals within the genre. For example, "high-tech espionage" is a genre; "SHIELD agents battle HYDRA's plans for world domination" is a concept within that genre.

A concept can be "wide" or "narrow."

"Wide" concepts permit extreme variation in the campaign's activities, settings, villains, and storylines. During one session the heroes may catch muggers in the Bowery; during the next, they're off to fight the Skrulls in outer space. Then they fight demons summoned by a loony wizard, then go on to foil Doctor Doom's latest super-science plot. Next week, into the Negative Zone!

Most long-running Marvel titles employ this type of wide base. For example, the Fantastic Four venture all over the world and the galaxy, and they have had every kind of adventure imaginable. Spider-Man, too, has been all over the universe and into other dimensions.

"Narrow" concepts restrict the campaign to a particular subgenre, type of PC and villain, and storyline. At first this sounds like less fun than a wide concept. But a narrowly focused campaign can offer intense role-playing experiences, strong character identification for the players, and a sharp, specific adaptation of a particular favorite comic book.

Suppose you enjoy Doctor Strange. You could create a narrow campaign with magician PCs, perhaps Strange's disciples. The PCs protect Earth from Dormammu's invaders and travel through infinite magical dimensions. There is enough story material here to keep a campaign going for years, all within a narrow focus. If your players tike Doctor Strange's adventures, this is an exciting campaign. Many other narrow campaigns can be equally rewarding.

Rationale: The essential ingredient of any campaign is a reason for the PCs to be together. Sometimes this rationale is very general—"You're all good guys, so you decided to team up to fight crime."

In other campaigns, the rationale can be specific and powerful: "You all seek the Maggia scientist who created the drug that turned you into super humans. You want him to synthesize an antidote to the drug's horrible side effects." (This is the optional rationale offered in the campaign scenario, "Fun City," which starts on page 47.)

Using This Description

When you specify your campaign's genre, tone, concept, and rationale, you are really deciding what kind of stories you want to tell—and the ones you don't want to tell, too.

For example, consider the gods. The Marvel Universe includes the pantheons of Greece, Rome, Egypt, the Norsemen, and every other human culture, not to mention the Celestials, Eternals, and powerful extra-dimensional beings like Dormammu and the late Shuma-Gorath.

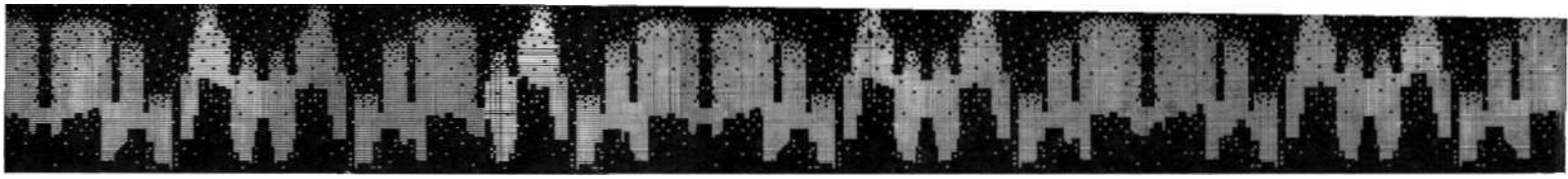
These gods figure often in stories about Thor, Hercules, and Doctor Strange. These heroes are powerful enough for the gods to give them a real challenge. And their concepts include the high-power magic that marks the gods.

But the gods hardly ever appear in stories of Daredevil, SHIELD, and Iron Man, because these heroes work best in genres and concepts that don't call for such powerful beings. Also, the tone of a "god adventure" would be wrong for them. SHIELD and Iron Man use super-scientific devices to fight their opponents, and Daredevil uses his fists. Against gods, their weapons and abilities would be inappropriate.

When you describe your campaign, you define a range of villains, plot elements, and tones that you want to use. With these guidelines, you can start to prepare the campaign.

PREPARING THE CAMPAIGN

With a tone and perhaps a goal in mind, and with the background of the Marvel Universe well established, you



are ready to begin putting together the campaign's many elements: player characters, villains, NPCs, and stories.

Preparing PCs

During a campaign, the heroes will spend a lot of time together, so you have to make sure they can work well as part of a team. Examine each PC with following points in mind.

Motivations: What does this hero want to do? Do you, as Judge, find that interesting, let alone suitably heroic? Does that goal match (or at least avoid conflict with) those of other PCs in the campaign?

Power level: Assess the character's abilities, powers, and talents. Are the attacks far more powerful, or less powerful, than other PCs' attacks? Is the character invulnerable to your villains' attacks, or will the character get blown away by the first punch?

In the comics, heroes of widely differing power levels work together without a problem; think of Thor and Captain America in the Avengers. But that is because comic writers give every hero careful attention and adjust the story to let them all show off.

You can't control your PCs the way the writer controls heroes in the comic books. If your Thor player decides to hog the limelight and wipe out every bad guy in sight, the Captain America player just has to sit back and watch.

Work hard to ensure that all the PCs have about the same power level.

Stepping on other characters: Every character should have a power, skill, or "flavor" unique to the team. Don't bring in another character who can do the same thing, only better. The first player will feel useless.

Also, watch out for the hero who can do virtually anything, the real jack-of-all-trades. Every well-designed character has weaknesses and lacks, as well as strengths; this makes the character interesting, because overcoming those weaknesses is heroic. Make sure your players understand that.

Psychological profile: Is this hero—not to be too blunt—crazy? Can the other PCs trust the hero? Is the hero going to kill somebody, or go berserk, or just fail to get along with teammates? If so, have the player rethink this character. You won't regret it.

Preparing Villains

Villains are discussed in detail in Chapter 8. This section deals with the issues you must consider when choosing the campaign's recurring villains.

The opponents your PCs face can be conveniently divided into four categories: major villains, villain groups, organizations, and nuisances.

Major villains: Nearly every hero or team in the Marvel Universe is associated with one particular heavy-duty bad guy. The FF has Doctor Doom; the X-Men have Magneto; Doctor Strange has Dormammu. Loki, the Kingpin, the Red Skull, the Leader, the Mandarin, and, oh yeah, Galactus . . . you know, *the* bad guy, the one the heroes love to hate. The one who may not show up very often, but who practically defines the hero team by his or her very existence.

Every super-hero campaign needs one of these, a villain who creates mind-shattering schemes and drives your heroes to their greatest exertions. Choose this villain with care, and with an eye toward getting PCs to build really *personal* grudges against him or her. Perhaps the villain is connected with the origins of one of the team members or directly opposes the heroes' goals.

Pick a villain that the PCs' powers uniquely qualify them to face. If they can't stop him (or her or it), nobody can. For instance, if your PCs are magicians, choose a magical villain like Dormammu. If the PCs are experts in robotics, choose a machine intellect that wants to exterminate humanity. Et cetera.

Naturally, the villain should be powerful enough to push around an individual PC with ease, and give a good fight against the entire group.

You should also keep a couple of lesser villains on hand for variety's sake. For instance, the Fantastic Four's ultimate nemesis is Doctor Doom, but they still find time to fight **Annihilus,** Diablo, and Mephisto.

Sometimes you can turn a minor villain into a major force just by looking at the character in a new way. For instance, the Kingpin was originally a small-time crimelord with a laser-beam cane and a stickpin that squirted gas at his opponents. He fought Spider-Man hand to hand, and of course he lost.

Later, though, the Kingpin became a much more cunning and sinister foe who preferred to manipulate others into doing his dirty work. Against Daredevil, the Kingpin became an evil force of almost elemental proportions. In this new and more interesting incarnation, the Kingpin has become a staple villain in many Marvel titles.

Villain groups: If one villain is bad news, six will be even worse. The villain group lets you showcase bad guys who, individually, wouldn't stand a chance against your PCs. Remember Magneto's longtime henchman in the first Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, the Toad? How else could you introduce a Toad into your campaign? If he didn't have backup bad guys, any self-respecting hero could squash him in a round.

A well-designed villain group operates as an efficient team, with code signals and pre-rehearsed tactics that should catch your PCs off guard.

For example, at a leader's signal, the team's strongest member could grab a non-flying PC, throw the hero high into the air, and all of the villains with ranged attacks could simultaneously fire on the helpless hero.

If your PCs don't practice teamwork, a well-oiled group of villains can easily take them out, even when the individual villains are far less powerful than individual PCs. But after one or two of these humiliating defeats, players will get the idea and begin developing their own team tactics. Bravo!

The weakness of any villain group, of course, is the clash of gigantic bad-guy egos. Play this up over the course of the campaign. If the heroes take advantage of it, they can maneuver the villain group into smashing itself more effectively than the heroes ever could.

These groups are hard to design well. Fortunately, you need only one or two really sharp villain groups as a campaign gets rolling.

Organizations: What would the old SHIELD stories have been without HYDRA and AIM? How many stories have ensued from the nefarious activities of Roxxon Oil and Stane International and the Maggia?

Chapter 4 of the *Campaign Sourcebook* discusses some uses of organizations. In the campaign, bad-guy organizations serve two good purposes:

1. They employ lots of normal-level agents for the heroes to beat up on. A combat between a hero and a slew of ordinary people proceeds much differently from a standard slugfest between super types. Also, the hero must avoid doing fatal damage to the weaker agents. (Who wants to blow a whole Karma pool on one measly HYDRA agent?)

2. Organizations create high-tech equipment, which provides interesting story ideas. "Our Global Encephalizer Satellite will turn Earth's entire population into helpless slaves!"

You should design or adapt two or three organizations as the campaign begins, each with its own style, goals, and scale. "Scale" means the dimension of its operations. For example, the Maggia wants to make money through crime; but HYDRA wanted to conquer the world! These differing scales mean the organizations fulfill different roles in scenarios.

Alien races: This is really a subgroup of "Organizations." Are your PCs the types who could handle an invasion from space, the sea, or Subterranea? If so, the Marvel Universe offers many races as suitable adversaries. Aliens can be slightly tougher than ordinary agents, and they use even more exotic technology than HYDRA or AIM. For more about aliens, see the next chapter's subsection on "The Galactic Campaign."

Nuisances: Finally there are the bozo villains. No campaign is complete without the occasional would-be hotshot, the mischievous sprite, and the idiot musclemen. Think of the Trapster, who couldn't even defeat the Baxter Building's automated defenses, or the Ringer, or the Enforcers (Fancy Dan, Montana, Snake Marston, Hammer Harrison, and the everlovable Ox).

Players exuberantly trash these punks. They provide laughs, relief from grim world-endangering plots, and a chance for the players to feel really superior to lowlife scum. Don't overdo it, but keep one or two of these clowns waiting in the wings when you need a break between serious adventures.

Preparing NPCs

Non-player characters are discussed at length in Chapter 8. This section deals with the role of NPCs in a campaign. There are two important rules:

1. *NPCs should not be better than PCs at their chosen pursuits, unless there is a very good reason.*

Players like to feel that their characters are experts, indispensable to the situation at hand. If you bring in an NPC who can do what they do, but better, the players will wonder why they bothered to show up at all. And next session, they won't make the same mistake again!

What is a "good reason" for making an NPC superior to the PCs? Well, the Marvel Universe has a few well-defined absolutes—not as many as you might suppose, but a few.

Doctor Strange is Sorcerer Supreme. Captain America is the greatest mortal expert at fighting, and Reed Richards is the most brilliant human scientist (with the possible exception of Doctor Doom). Daredevil, apart from his blindness, probably has the sharpest senses of any human being. For many years, the Hulk was the strongest mortal. And, of course, Wolverine is "the best at what he does."

These heroes' abilities have been established so well that your players can hardly grouse that their characters aren't as good as these hero NPCs. What's more, you have the power to keep these titans out of the campaign, so your heroes don't have to feel upstaged.

But other NPCs, the lesser lights of the Marvel Universe and the ones you create yourself, should not be superior to the PCs. Think carefully before you give an NPC Ultimate Skill in anything the PCs can do.

2. *The NPCs in a hero's life should have some role in the campaign besides their relationship to the hero.*

In the comics, many heroes have friends, loved ones, or relatives who occasionally figure in adventures—usually as hostages, victims, or targets. The archetypal example is Peter Parker's Aunt May.

These "dependents" are often a part of your PC heroes' lives, too. They serve a valuable plot function: By endangering the dependent, you can get the heroes emotionally involved in your adventure, just like in the comics. But here is where comics and games part ways.

A hero in a Marvel comic is emotionally attached to the dependent and has a stake in the NPC's fate. Peter Parker would be deeply grieved if anything bad happened to Aunt May.

This emotional attachment is much rarer in a role-playing situation. Players just don't relate to you, the Judge, as they would to an aunt or husband. The dependent's plot function becomes nakedly obvious. While players may role-play their PCs' attachment well enough, outside the game they groan when Aunt May appears on the scene: "Oh no, we have to rescue her again, don't we?"

What is the solution? Give the dependent a legitimate function in the campaign. Make the NPC genuinely useful to the heroes, perhaps as a doctor, detective, scholar, or regularly visited source of information. Then when something happens to endanger the NPC, the players' alarm will be genuine, not just role-playing.

The NPC should be able to do something the heroes can't or aren't interested in doing. Good jobs to give an NPC include *Daily Bugle* reporter, FBI agent or government liaison, financial advisor, stoolie, and vehicle pilot. But make sure the NPC isn't better than the players (see Rule 1)!

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Now that you have a PC hero group, a master villain or two, a couple or three organizations, functional NPCs, and all the bozo villains your players can stand, you are ready to start playing. Or, as often happens, the campaign just grew, and you have been making all of this up on the fly, in the thick of the game.

Either way, it is time to discuss matters that arise as play progresses.

Getting Underway

If you have already begun the campaign, you can skip this section.

Any campaign begins best with an "origin adventure," the scenario that establishes its premise, introduces its characters (and, if necessary, the players) to one another, and explains why these heroes are banding together.

Origin adventures can have unusual power, because they evoke a sense that these characters' lives are

changing forever. . . that nothing will ever be the same again. An ongoing campaign can't sustain that feeling, and shouldn't try. Players would soon get worn out!

When you design an origin adventure, aim for a dramatic statement of the campaign's essential peril, the danger that the heroes have joined forces to combat. A major plot by the campaign's master villain is an obvious and excellent choice.

The PCs may not be together, and perhaps they even don't know one another, as the adventure begins. In any case, a beginning adventure (unlike most comic-book stories) does not have to start out with a dramatic incident. It's better to spend a leisurely 10 or 15 minutes per PC, establishing the character's current life, attitudes, and perhaps powers. This non-threatening "trial period" helps a player get the feel of the PC before the real action begins.

In the origin adventure you can play around with players' expectations in a way that takes them by surprise. For example, if the player wants the PC to have a dependent in the campaign, you might establish one early in the origin—but then the master villain disposes of that dependent in horrible fashion! The adventure later presents a new dependent, the one you intended all along. Meanwhile, the PC has formed a royal personal grudge against the bad guy.

But be careful. Avoid sheer ruthlessness . . . unless that's the campaign tone your players expect.

Dangling Subplots

Though this may sound to outsiders like some repulsive medical condition, Judges know this is the way to foreshadow future conflicts, new villains, and amazing changes in the heroes' powers. This foreshadowing builds suspense and keeps players coming back to the game.

Here are several intriguing kinds of subplots.

Mysterious appearances: Enigmatic notes in the mail or messages on the answering machine at HQ. Enigmatic manifestations of psychic power by a dependent. Enigmatic weather, or animals lurking in an alley, or surveillance drones. The common element is mystery.

You need not have a culprit in mind when you introduce the mystery. Listen to the players speculate, and try to pick up on what they find most intriguing. Then, several episodes later, it turns out they were right—sort of! Throw in a devious twist to keep the players off guard.

For example, you tell your players that an unmarked package arrives at HQ. The postmark is from Wakanda. Inside, without any identifying note, is a shapeless hunk of pure vibranium worth almost a million dollars.

The players speculate that the Black Panther, ruler of Wakanda, seeks their help and is testing their honor: If they return the vibranium, they pass the test.

The PCs nobly decide that next session they will call up the Panther, offer to return the vibranium, and ask what's going on. You, having heard this line of speculation, plan a Wakanda adventure. But you decide that, though the Black Panther was testing the PCs' honor, he wants them as agents in selling the vibranium to a client! He can't trust his usual distribution network for this assignment. Why not? The answer to that, of course, provides the adventure.

Relations with the law: Some new inspector or precinct captain has it in for super-powered vigilantes. The official makes life hard for the heroes in their every criminal investigation, and attacks them in the media.

But does the official have an ulterior motive in the attacks? Is there some darker figure behind the scenes, manipulating public opinion?

Increasing insanity: When Matt Murdock descended into paranoia, and the Kingpin systematically dismantled his life, the story gripped readers both old and new. The "Born Again" sequence showed that when fate plunges a hero into the depths, he or she becomes all the more heroic by climbing out again.

This tricky and risky episode requires a player's cooperation if you want to initiate it; or the player's character may already be heading overboard, and you decide to capitalize on the mounting craziness.

The hero begins to part ways with the group. He or she commits Karma-reducing actions, minor ones at first, but gradually increasing in severity. The PC's attitude becomes dangerous.

At last a specially designed adventure faces the PC with the worst consequences of this new attitude. Probably the hero gets the opportunity to kill a hated foe, or the foe discovers the hero's secret identity and ruins his or her life (as the Kingpin ruined Matt Murdock's life). At this critical juncture, the hero either gives way to base impulses, or refuses to do so, thus setting the stage for a dramatic return to sanity.

If you want to keep the PC in the game, make very sure the player in question is inclined to choose recovery. Otherwise, the corrupted PC should be phased out of the campaign or become a villain's henchman.

Note: If you proposed this subplot and the player cooperated, be sure to return all the Karma the PC lost when committing crazy actions. They were your idea, after all.

Criminal trials: A valued NPC (or even a PC hero!) is on trial for some frame-up. While the trial proceeds, good guys search for evidence to clear the accused, and bad guys plant more.

The verdict is by no means certain. Robbie Robertson's recent trial is a good example. If the accused goes to prison, the heroes may consider drastic actions to free him or her. When this subplot is resolved, the campaign may head in a new direction, with the heroes (at least for a time) on the wrong side of the law.

Character Development

The fascination of campaigning comes in watching relationships appear and mature, people come and go, stories begin and end. This section talks about some of the developments that arise in a successful campaign.

Player characters: A story is inherent in almost every good character conception. Does the character have a particular goal, such as vengeance or atonement, or wiping out a given organization? Has the PC been troubled by an ongoing psychological problem, such as a fear of intimacy or a berserker rage? Is there some mystery in the PC's past, such as his or her origin, or the identity of the character's parents?

All of these imply an eventual reso-

lution to the problem, over the long term of the campaign. The PC achieves the goal, overcomes the psychological hangup, or solves the mystery. The conflict is resolved. For example, the Human Torch, after years of dead-end romances, finally found true love with Alicia Masters and married her. The Silver Surfer found a way to leave Earth and return to the universe at large. Doctor Strange became Sorcerer Supreme.

When a PC achieves the culmination of his or her story, that doesn't mean it's time for the character to retire. By that time, the PC has probably become so entrenched in the campaign that he or she takes on a kind of "elder statesman" role as an experienced hero, perhaps a leader, although his powers shouldn't be out of balance with the other PCs.

Over the course of the campaign, try to develop the PCs' stories. You won't ever have time to resolve them all, but their ongoing progress will give your stories the appeal of the Marvel comics and the players the feeling that they really matter to the campaign.

NPCs: These, too, can develop in stories. The boyfriend breaks up with the heroine and leaves town, or dies, or marries the PC. The sidekick gets corrupted by the master villain, but redeems himself with a dying gesture that defeats the bad guy. The helpless sister learns to fend for herself, opens a business, and becomes a financial success and a respected citizen.

Generally, such an NPC, unlike a PC, exits the campaign at this point. The character simply doesn't inspire stories any more. But he or she may return for guest spots now and then.

Villains: One of the most interesting aspects of the campaign is the gradual metamorphosis of the heroes' opponents. Master villains are reduced to annoyances, while minor henchmen take over and grow strong. Organizations are destroyed, but their agents go freelance and make further trouble.

When Doctor Strange began his sorcerous career, for example, Baron Mordo matched if not surpassed him in mastery of the mystic arts. But Strange grew in power while his rival lagged behind, and Mordo became a nuisance menace, a pawn in the schemes of more powerful beings.

Another example: Spider-Man beat Doctor Octopus so many times that Octopus finally just went mad. For a time he was harmless, and then when he returned as a menace he was maniacally driven to defeat the wall-crawler above all else.

Just as your PCs have stories, the campaign villains also pass through life-changing events and emerge from them changed. You need not worry about this for the first year or two of play, but don't overlook these possibilities as the campaign progresses.

Aging

If your campaign goes on long enough, eventually age becomes an issue.

In Marvel comics, characters age slowly or not at all. In almost 30 years of Spider-Man stories, Peter Parker has gone from high school to graduate school. Reed Richards and Sue Storm married and now have a seven-year-old son, but their partner Ben Grimm hasn't aged a bit. Matt Murdock has been 32 ever since *Daredevil* #1 appeared in the early 1960s.

This is one of the conventions of the genre, as discussed at the beginning of Chapter 8. If heroes aged normally, the comics would eventually grow as old and tired as they do. Who could believe a 55-year-old Daredevil leaping across the rooftops?

Some Marvel heroes have authentic explanations for their eternal youth. Thor and Hercules don't age because they are gods. Nick Fury's Infinity Formula has kept him young since World War II. The first time Doctor Strange died, he merged with Eternity. Reborn into this plane, Strange no longer ages. But most Marvel heroes stay young simply because they remain interesting that way.

In general, heroes who start out young age to a kind of "ideal point" that allows the most interesting stories. Then the aging stops, and instead the heroes' past history is revised and updated to make the current version plausible. In Marvel comics, the modern age of super humans is assumed to have begun about seven or eight years before the present, and most well-established heroes have had careers lasting four to eight years of "real" time.

In the campaign, you and your players can choose to (a) ignore the whole issue; (b) play an adventure that gives a plot justification for retarding or stopping the PCs' aging; or (c) specify, by Judge's fiat, a rate of aging you all can live with—one game-year per year of real time, one game-year per three or six real years, or no aging at all.

TYPES OF PLAYERS

Not player characters, players. Role-players are a various lot. Each person in your group may have a different style of play and enjoy role-playing for different reasons. Try to determine each player's wants, and if possible, satisfy them in the adventure you run. That way, everyone has fun.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of some common player types. {Thanks to Aaron Allston for these classifications.)

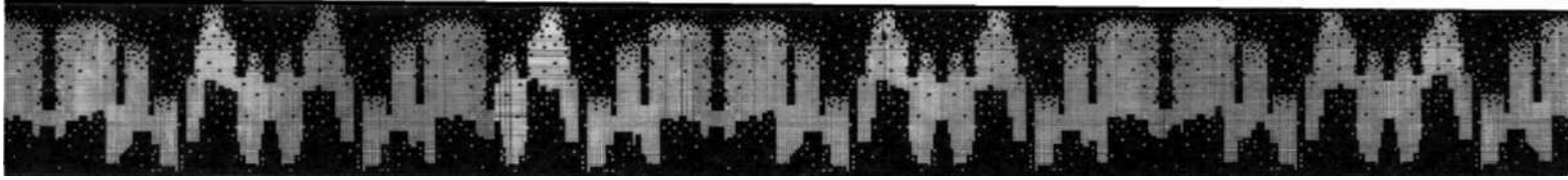
The Psychologist: This player enjoys exploring the personality of his or her character in detail. Role-playing is an acting challenge, and the deeper the character, the better this player likes the challenge.

Throw the Psychologist's character into lots of different situations that call for different responses: negotiation, examination of a new culture, romancing an NPC, staving off romance with an NPC, and crises of conscience. The more angst you foist on the character, the better the player should like it—but be sure your player is of this type before you really heap on the bad news!

The Problem Solver: Faced with a mystery, or even the hint of a mystery, this player looks for clues and culprits and speculates endlessly on solutions. Faced with capture, the player figures a way out of your foolproof ambush.

A player who's alert and thinking is always better than one who isn't. But boy, does this guy make you work hard! If your story calls for the villain to capture the characters, the Problem Solver may send it spinning off in new directions. If you want your surprise twist to stay a surprise, you have to send the Problem Solver chasing after multiple wild geese to keep him or her from guessing the twist in Scene 2.

Judging tip: Listen to the Problem



Solver's theories. Sometimes the player will come up with a solution far more surprising and effective than the one you had planned. Then at the story's conclusion, you throw out the real explanation and substitute the better one. "Yep, you guessed it, all right," you say blandly.

The Killing Machine: His boss is giving him a hard time, or she's having trouble with her classes, or he doesn't get along with his parents. One way or another, this player arrives at the game ready to fight. The Killing Machine wants to take out frustrations on imaginary characters, as explosively as possible.

Role-playing games are a healthy outlet for aggression, so satisfy this player with plenty of action and physical conflict. In the Marvel Universe, this shouldn't prove hard.

Another kind of Killing Machine is the player who worms through loopholes in the rules to design characters of maximum lethality. Many "role-playing" games encourage this, since combat is almost their sole activity. In stories, these characters have less to contribute. But you can make this player happy by sending the character against huge opponents and watching him or her cut them into pieces.

When you're putting together your story, think of your players and try to include elements that will appeal to all of them. As long as everybody gets something fun to do in every session of the game, you'll have a satisfied group.

CAMPAIGN PROBLEMS

As the campaign proceeds, certain problems may appear. Here are some traps to watch out for.

Bad feelings between PCs: Even though your players are getting along fine outside the game, their characters may regard each other with cool hatred. Perhaps one, a Captain America-type, has vowed to protect all life, whereas another, in the tradition of the Punisher or Wolverine, is ready to kill any criminal, Karma loss or no. These two have to get on one another's nerves.

In the comics, this friction can produce deeper characterization and interesting rivalries. It can in your game, too . . . if that is to everyone's taste. Take care that other players don't become uncomfortable with the fractious pair, and keep the combatants from stabbing one another in the back. That's hardly heroic!

A certain amount of squabbling is entertaining. But carried too far, ft can drive the group apart. If you prefer not to risk this, make sure your PCs are all on the same wavelength about important campaign issues before play begins. These "ground rule" issues include:

whether and when to kill;

relations with law enforcement officials;

and whether PCs should trust one another with their secret identities.

New players: Great! That is, as long as the newcomers know the campaign's ground rules: ways to behave, power level, overall goals, and how to uphold the team's reputation.

It's hard to make sure a new player isn't going to do something rash and cause permanent disaster. To guard against this, first have the player guest-star in the campaign as an established Marvel character, one whose behavior every player is familiar with. Once you decide the player can handle the campaign's ground rules, let him or her bring in the new permanent PC.

Too many players: Some Judges, who struggle to find enough interested parties to put together a play session, would love to have this problem. But having too many players is far worse than having too few.

The problems: the Judge can't keep track of everybody's actions; players don't get into the spotlight often enough; and to challenge the larger and more powerful PC group, bad guys have to be still more powerful—and that makes adventures deadlier for individual PCs.

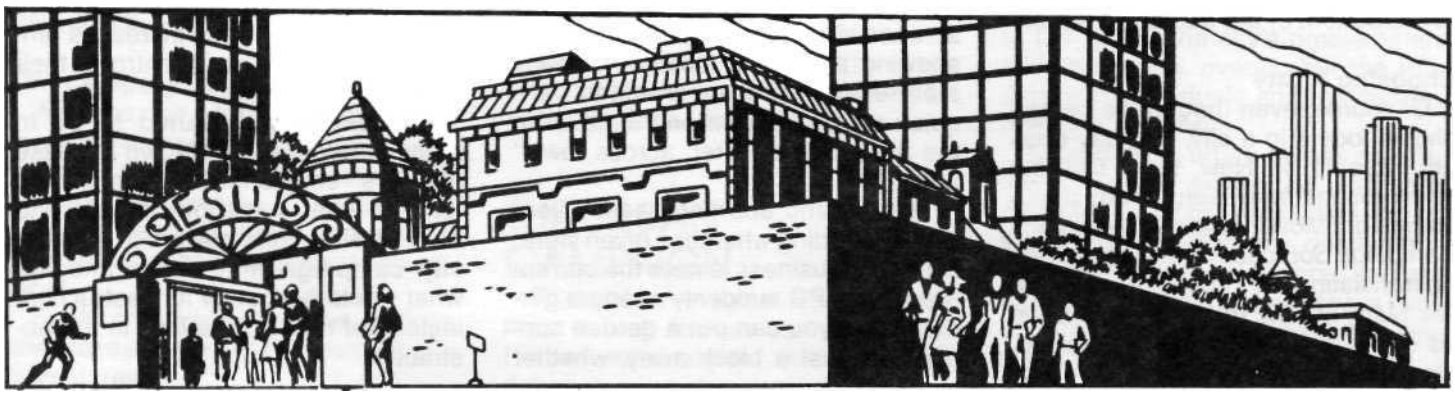
In judging a game, the maxim is not "The more, the better," but "Everything in moderation." Aim for an optimum group of four to six players. If you have many more than this, consider splitting off the group into two separate campaigns.

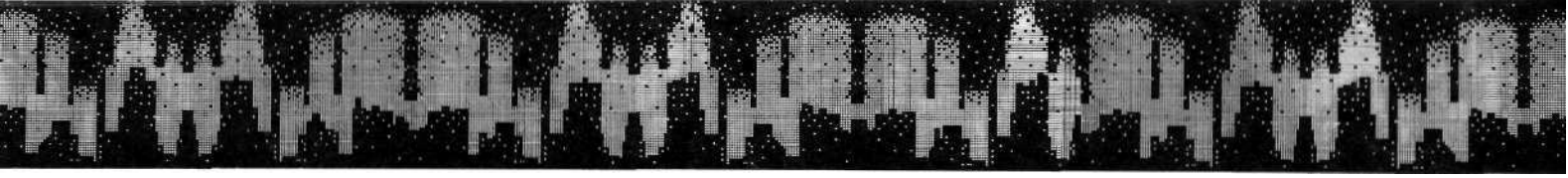
Changing direction: After you have run all the adventures you can think of, you may want to rejuvenate the campaign by shifting its scene, premise, or goals.

This is fine, but talk to your players first. If a player enjoys playing a wealthy industrialist in the Financial District, he or she may not enjoy being flung back in time to 18th-century Haiti or into a post-holocaust future.

If the players object strongly to your proposed change, think it over. If they don't object, but don't think their characters belong in the new campaign, let them create new PCs. Or ask them to play NPCs in your adventures until the campaign returns to the earlier mode.

Remember, players just want to have fun, but usually they need to know what kind of fun they're going to have.





CHAPTER 10: THE MANHATTAN CAMPAIGN

Previous chapters discussed stories and campaigns in general. But since this set describes Marvel Manhattan, this chapter is devoted to campaigns set in New York or any big city.

WHAT CITY AND WHY?

No matter how far afield your heroes range, they need a base of operations. It could be an orbital satellite, an undersea fortress, or even a time-traveling, teleporting phone booth. But a headquarters in a major city has several advantages in a campaign.

1. *Resources:* Whatever the heroes need, whether it's an ancient Egyptian scroll or a new Ferrari or gold bullion, it's available in a large city. The foremost consultants in any field nearly always live in university cities. **The** police departments have advanced criminological equipment and forensic tools. And in Marvel Manhattan, the heroes can easily visit Avengers Island to get confidential information or Four Freedoms Plaza to borrow Reed Richards' latest-model space drive.

2. *Accessibility:* This means the heroes can get to the crime scene quickly. And it also means that your villains can get at the heroes. Both factors keep adventures moving fast. And as in #1, many established Marvel heroes hang around Manhattan, either at known addresses or where they are easily found by any hero group that takes to the rooftops.

3. *Local color:* A city supplies ever-changing backgrounds, events, and bystanders. Judges with a taste for scenic detail find cities much more useful than the depths of outer space or the bottom of the Marianas Trench.

Choosing A City

Of course, even though the heroes should locate in a city, that city does not have to be New York. This set gives you material useful in any urban campaign. Most Hotspot listings in the *Campaign Sourcebook* include advice on translating the Hotspot to other cities. Many of New York's sites work just as easily in Chicago, San Francisco, Denver, Seattle, or Houston. You and your players may find it easier to visualize the action if you set the campaign in some nearby metropolis that you and they know well.

(For advice about setting a Marvel campaign in your home town, consult the adventure "Avengers Franchised!" by David Cook, in MA2, *Avengers Coast-to-Coast.)*

But suppose you do decide to set your campaign in Marvel Manhattan. How should you use the city?

Different Marvel comics set in New York treat the city in two general ways. Some depict it as a generic background of undifferentiated skyscrapers, sewers, and taxicabs. Other stories establish New York in detail, using famous landmarks, giving specific neighborhoods and addresses for story scenes, and evoking the distinctive Manhattan atmosphere.

Either of these offers a sound way to run your campaign. Both ways are discussed below.

The Generic City

If you and your players have never been to New York and don't care about its finer details, much of the *Campaign Sourcebook's* information only gets in the way. Delete trivia and just employ the background your stories require.

In the comics, there is ample precedent for the generic "abandoned warehouse," not to mention "a pier somewhere on the waterfront" and crimes committed in "a bad part of town." Include an all-purpose subway station, research lab, and office building, and you have all you need for most stories.

Advantages: Speedy scenery—you can describe a warehouse or skyscraper without rooting through notes showing the actual location. Speedy storytelling—scene changes are quick dissolves from one location to the next, just a "later, across town" away.

The generic approach eases your task in deciding whether a given store, library, or business is near the current scene. If a PC suddenly needs a garden hose, you can put a garden supply shop just a block away, whether the PCs are in a good neighborhood or the worst slum. This, too, speeds up the adventure.

Disadvantages: Lack of atmosphere, of a sense of place. Missed opportunities—adventures don't exploit the possibilities of Manhattan's actual landmarks, like chess players in Central Park or museums along Fifth Avenue.

New York: Accept No Substitutes

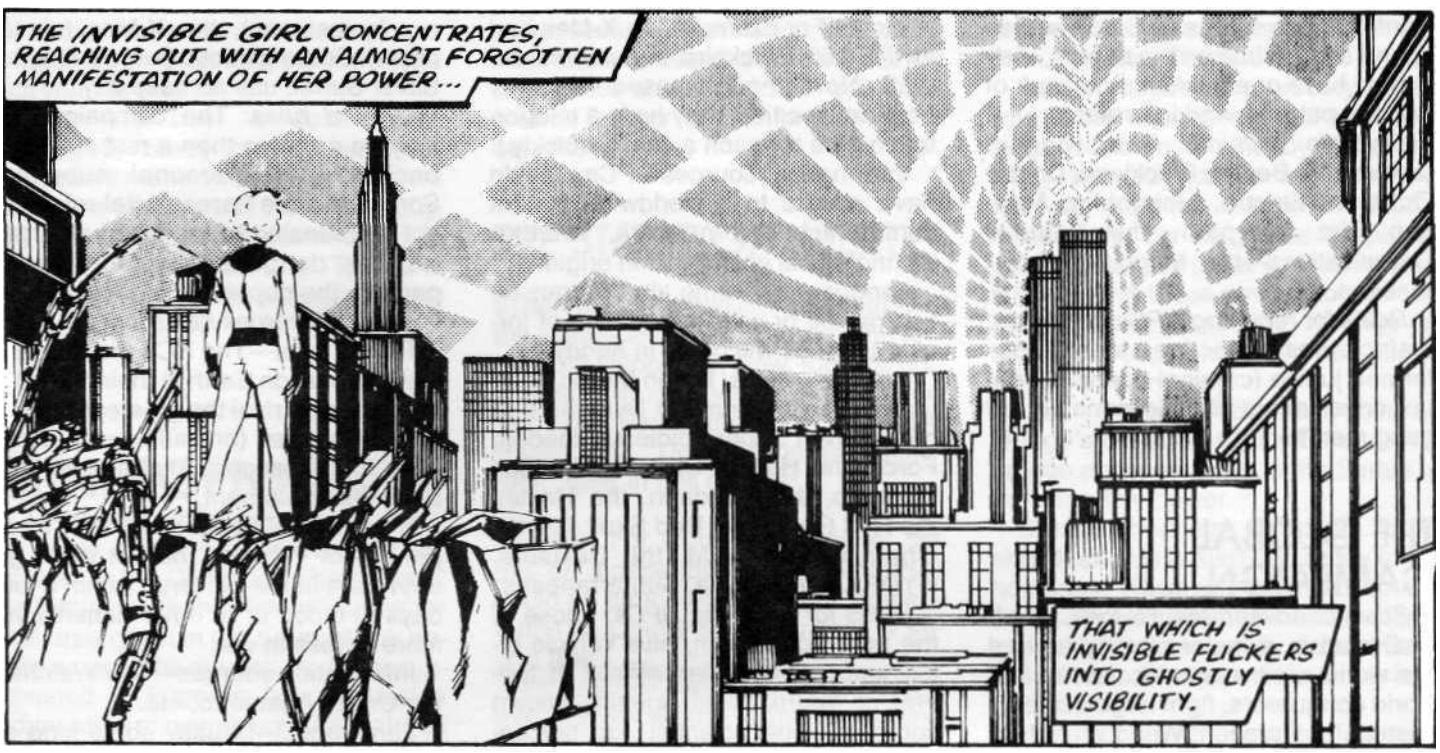
If you live in New York or have players who did, grounding your campaign solidly in an accurate Manhattan may be the only approach you can use without starting arguments. Otherwise, players may shout, "No way is there a garden shop in the Bowery!" stopping play until the argument is settled.

Comics that take the trouble to depict specific real-city landmarks gain depth. For example, when Matt Murdock's partner Foggy Nelson says he lives on West 72nd and Columbus, that tells a lot about Foggy's way of life to someone who knows Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Advantages: When you describe New York landmarks and give addresses, your scenario gains believability. And getting from one part of town to another can be entertaining all by itself; see Chapter 5, "On the Sidewalks of New York" in the *Campaign Sourcebook.*

You can offer new challenges to PCs by setting different parts of a scenario in widely separated parts of the actual New York City. Give the players a deadline to reach a distant location. They know how far they have to travel, and they can try different strategies to get there in time. This increases tension and gives players control of their fates.

Encounters with varied NPCs in many different parts of town increase the PCs' emotional involvement, as well. So when somebody threatens to blow up New York, players in a "real" city campaign may really imagine what would be lost by its destruction, instead of treating the loss in the abstract.



Disadvantages: This approach takes extra research and a willingness to admit mistakes. If you absent-mindedly put the RCA Building in the World Trade Center, your players may give you grief about it when the mistake is discovered.

Sometimes your scenario ideas just won't work in the real Manhattan. If your adventure absolutely requires a subway line to Staten Island, too bad—there isn't one, and your players will know it.

The Campaign Descriptions

A city can be a total campaign environment, a base for worldwide operations, or a rest stop between jaunts around the universe. The following sections describe these three campaign approaches according to six criteria:

Scale of adventures: The settings and stakes of most of that campaign's adventures.

Examples: Established Marvel heroes who function in this adventure style.

Ground rules: Points of genre and tone that both Judge and players should be aware of.

What PC heroes need: Required resources, such as equipment and transportation.

Suitable villains: Suggested bad guys for this style of campaign. Villains are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

Roles for recurring NPCs: The kinds of occupations you should include or assign to dependent NPCs.

THE URBAN CAMPAIGN

Scale of adventures: Restricted almost entirely to New York City itself. Heroes are designed with city backdrops in mind; for example, Spider-Man needs skyscrapers to swing across the city.

Perils include muggings, bank robberies, drug rings, small natural disasters, corrupt city officials, or mass destruction threatening anything up to the city itself.

Examples: Cloak and Dagger, Daredevil, Power Pack, the Punisher, Spider-Man.

Ground rules: Heroes make only a slight difference in this world, if at all. In the genre, the city's problems are insurmountable overall, but the PCs can help individuals and restrain the advance of crime.

Occasionally urban heroes go elsewhere for an adventure, but they never lose their city orientation. For instance, Spider-Man has been everywhere in the Marvel Universe and into other dimensions, but we always think of him swinging between the skyscrapers of midtown New York.

What PC heroes need:

Power level—An individual hero should be able to handle three or four typical armed hoodlums, and hold up in battle with a minor-league villain.

Transport—The heroes should have powers or vehicles that can cross most of Manhattan in 10 or 20 minutes at most.

Information sources—Since heroes spend a lot of time on the streets, they should have or establish a network of friends, patrons, and informants.

Suitable villains: The Kingpin (above ail!), Beetle, Blacklash, Doctor Octopus, Electro, Hobgoblin, Madcap, the Scorpion, the Vulture. Organizations—the Maggia, Subterraneans.

Roles for recurring NPCs: Beat cop, plainclothes detective, stoolie, reformed junkie (criminal connections), taxi driver, minor disciple in magic, kid gang member.

THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Scale of adventures: Heroes, headquartered in a major city, fly around the world, visit exotic locales, defeat world conquerors, fight large-scale disasters, and prevent World War III.

Examples: Alpha Flight, the Avengers, the Hulk, Iron Man, Moon Knight, SHIELD, the X-Men, X-Factor.

Ground rules: Members of the team often have varied ethnic or national backgrounds, but (usually) about the same political outlook. They seldom become involved in the troubles of ordinary individuals, except as an adventure hook for a larger-scale scenario.

What PC heroes need:

Power level—The PCs command great power, and possibly rank among the strongest on Earth in their chosen pursuits.

Transport—The heroes should have powers or vehicles that let them get anywhere in the world within 12 hours at most. {For example, the X-Men had an RS-150 Blackbird supersonic aircraft. Now, though based far away from major cities, they have a teleportation gate to reach a scene quickly.)

Information sources—PCs should have access to a worldwide instant communications network, whether technological or psychic in origin.

Languages—Some kind of translation device or wide knowledge of foreign tongues will come in handy.

Suitable villains: Baron Mordo, Doctor Doom, the Crimson Dynamo and other Soviet Super Soldiers, Freedom Force, the Hellfire Club, the Leader, Magneto, the Mandarin, the Master, the Red Ghost, the Red Skull, Ultron. Organizations—AIM, the Deviants, HYDRA, the Maggia, Subterraneans.

Roles for recurring NPCs: Those of the urban campaign, plus vehicle pilot, ambassador, high official in federal or international agency, known sorcerer, Nobel scientist, robotics engineer, millionaire patron.

THE GALACTIC CAMPAIGN

Scale of adventures: The heroes defend the planet, galaxy, or universe from invasion by aliens or extradimensional villains. They visit other planets, other dimensions, and the Negative Zone.

Perils usually involve the death of all life on Earth, the destruction of the solar system, or changing the physical laws of the universe. Villains are cosmically powerful and evil.

Examples: Doctor Strange, the Fantastic Four, Thor, the other Avengers (sometimes), the X-Men (sometimes). Some galactic heroes, like the Silver Surfer, use no base city.

Ground rules: The campaign city may be no more than a rest stop and backdrop for personal subplots. Sometimes the heroes' vital role cannot be revealed to the world at large, lest the dangers they face create panic in the populace.

What PC heroes need:

Power level—The PCs are in some way the best on Earth at their pursuits, and probably rival the greatest powers in the universe (or multiverse). They have routine access to phenomenally powerful equipment.

Transport—The heroes should have powers or vehicles that let them go anywhere in the universe within a few days at most, or to other dimensions more or less at will.

Information sources—The Watcher, the Orb of Agamotto, etc.

Languages—Usually some kind of universal translator can be assumed.

Suitable villains: Annihilus, Dormammu, Galactus, Hela, Loki, Mephisto, Surtur, Urthona. Organizations—the Kree, the Shi'ar, the Skrulls.

Roles for recurring NPCs: Those of the urban and global campaigns, plus spaceship pilot or astrogator, heavy-duty sorcerer, ambassador from an alien race, and the Watcher.

CHAPTER 11: SCENARIOS

What if you don't have the time or inclination to design your own scenarios with the plot ingredients described in Chapter 8? What if you don't want to think right now about the campaign subplots and development suggested in Chapter 9? What if you just want to play?

Here are over a dozen prepackaged, ready-to-run scenarios. First come many one-shot encounters set in the Hotspots of New York City. Then the book concludes with a full-length scenario, "Fun City." Tailor it to an existing campaign or use it to start a brand-new one!

THE MINI-SCENARIOS

This section offers a brief adventure for many of the Hotspot locations described in the *Campaign Sourcebook.* Be familiar with the Hotspot listing for that area given in the Sourcebook before running the adventure. Judges interested in learning how to design adventures may note how the features and details of the location sparked the scenario idea.

Each mini-scenario follows the "Encounter" format used in MHAC6, *New York, New York.* Each uses five sections:

The Summary tells what happens in the encounter, who is involved, and what they are doing. When it is important, the Summary also states the time and date when the scenario occurs, as well as other pertinent information.

The Set-Up suggests appropriate maps where necessary, along with ways to get the heroes into the adventure. (See also the staging hints in Chapter 8.) Most of these encounters can be run without maps.

The Adventure describes what can happen when the heroes get involved. How will the villain react? What does the bad guy want from his crime? Can the heroes reason with the villain?

The Aftermath describes what happens after the situation is resolved.

Any *Karma* suggested in the fifth section is a general guideline for the Judge. Use the suggestions in conjunction with the usual rules for awarding Karma.

If the players head off in a surprising direction, as they almost always do, a mini-scenario can suddenly turn into a full adventure. Run with it, using the information presented (and the advice in previous chapters) to set up or improvise further encounters. Remember: Don't panic!

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

SUMMARY: A magician has animated the Statue and set it to attack the ferries and shipping in New York Harbor.

Note: This mini-scenario can be run alone or following those for "The Daily Bugle" and "Doctor Strange's Sanctum," later in this chapter.

SET-UP: For a topical scenario, set this on Independence Day. The PCs could be attending a patriotic presentation on Liberty Island, in hero or secret IDs.

In a non-holiday run, the heroes may be touring the island (or visiting nearby Avengers Island) or on patrol, and they see the Statue actually animate. Failing that, they hear about it on the news or police radio. They arrive on the scene after the Statue has begun wreaking havoc.

Use the Statue of Liberty fold-up map included in this boxed set.

ADVENTURE: The animated Statue's abilities are listed in its Hotspot entry. Delete her power to inspire a love of freedom.

The Statue tears loose from her pedestal with a snap of girders. Play up the spectacle of a 150-foot-tall woman smiting buildings with her torch, pounding the pedestal with copper fists, and terrorizing tourists.

The heroes' first impulse may be to attack directly, but point out that this would damage a national monument. For this reason, the National Guard, waiting on armed boats nearby, has not attacked. Also, there are still innocent people trapped inside the Statue.

Some PCs should try to stop the animated monument's rampage, while others get inside and rescue tourists. A dozen normal people are hanging onto the central staircase at various levels. Half a dozen more are being held hostage in the crown by the culprit who magically animated the Statue: Lester Danton.

Danton, bagboy at a grocery chain, was a self-important geek who pursued occultism as a hobby and eventually learned how to summon the extra-dimensional demon Mephisto. In return for his allegiance, Mephisto granted Danton great power. Danton is now using these powers to achieve his only goals: chaos and revenge on those who supposedly slighted him—basically everybody.

Use Baron Mordo's abilities (Judge's Book, p. 42) for Danton. His unique ability to animate the Statue is an Unearthly power.

Danton has an Amazing force shield up, and is alert and ready to kill hostages. However, he wants to toy with both hostages and heroes for a while. Heroes can easily distract Danton with taunts, which drive him to berserk fury.

(For advice on how to link this encounter with others, see the "Doctor Strange's Sanctum" mini-scenario.)

AFTERMATH: Danton is powerful, but fundamentally third-rate. The heroes should be able to trick him or otherwise defeat him. If they fail, a hostage (perhaps Perry Gawkman?) gets the drop on Danton at a crucial moment and knocks him out with a shoe-heel.

When Danton is out cold, Mephisto appears over his body. (For Mephisto's abilities, see p. 56 of the Judge's Book.) The demon does not attack, but tries to engage the heroes in taunting banter. He knew Danton would fail; as part of the deal, Mephisto could only claim Danton's soul when Danton was defeated. After a dramatic final speech ending with **"I'll** be back," Mephisto and Danton disappear in a flash of light.

With their departure, the Statue returns to normal on its pedestal—if the heroes didn't damage it badly in the battle. Damaging the Statue endan-

gers the hero group's reputation. Perhaps the PCs can recoup the loss by giving an emotional speech justifying the damage and promising to repair it.

If the scenario takes place on the Fourth of July, the ceremony resumes, concluding with spectacular fireworks. Heroes with pyrotechnic powers can get in on the act.

KARMA:

Rescuing all the innocents: +30
Restoring the Statue to normal without major damage: +40
As above, but with damage: +20
Severely damaging the Statue: -40, and Popularity drops by 5.

CONEY ISLAND

SUMMARY: A bunyip is loose off the coast near Coney Island. The heroes must locate it and stop its mischief. What's a bunyip? Keep reading.

SET-UP: A mysterious "sea monster" has been terrifying many tourists and even lifeguards. So far, no one has been injured. Coast Guard divers have found no trace of the creature, so they have called in the heroes to investigate.

ADVENTURE: The bunyip comes from the folklore of Australian aborigines. In one version, it is a mischievous aquatic creature that delights in frightening swimmers.

Though ordinarily as small and cute as a chipmunk, in water it can grow (briefly) to large size. In this monstrous form, the bunyip chases swimmers until they leave the water. The bunyip never attacks, for it means no harm—but New Yorkers don't know that.

How did the bunyip get here? The popular American movie series *"Kangaroo" Muldoon* stars Derry Pynchon as a rugged Australian kangaroo hunter and tour guide. Pynchon stumbled upon the bunyip in the Australian outback while filming the latest movie in the series. A drought had dried up all water in the vicinity, leaving the bunyip small, cute, harmless, and thirsty. Pynchon made it a pet.

The star visited New York, by ocean liner because he fears flying. He carried the bunyip with him, planning to present it to a new girlfriend. But it got loose on the boat journey, and now it gleefully torments swimmers off Coney Island beach.

Stage the scene like a shark-attack movie: First the heroes hear stories about the monster; then they search for it, but find only enigmatic, tiny footprints leading into the surf. As the heroes are futilely searching in the water, they hear screams. Running, they arrive just in time to see the monstrous, shadowy form get away.

At that point, Derry Pynchon arrives. Though he is ostensibly involved in a publicity appearance, he appears too interested in what he hears about the monster and seems to be searching for it obsessively. Perceptive heroes who corner the movie star find that he will reluctantly tell about the bunyip. However, Pynchon doesn't know that the creature is harmless!

Encourage the heroes to devise a clever lure or plan to find the bunyip. Perhaps a favorite food, such as fresh fruit or candy, can serve as bait. If they make no plan, the bunyip appears anyway at a dramatic point, in its monstrous form.

Since the bunyip is unlikely to scare our heroes, it flees as soon as they attack. It can turn into its small form (see below) with great speed, so to unperceptive heroes it seems to vanish. Those who spot the tiny bunyip can try to chase it down, if they can match its Remarkable speed, or they can trap it. If they grab the bunyip, it turns back to monstrous form and struggles to escape.

Heroes may have no power to capture the bunyip. In this case, an NPC magician such as Doctor Strange can give them a magical Australian aboriginal "bullroarer" that attracts the creature. But once the bullroarer brings the bunyip, the PCs must defeat or tame the creature themselves.

The Bunyip

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Fe	Ex	Fe/Rm	Ex	Pr	Ty	Ex

Health: 44/72 Karma: 30
Resources: None Popularity: 0
Appearance: Out of water or when not scaring people, the bunyip is a cute squirrel-like creature about four inches long, with large head and eyes, big pink ears, gray fur, and a hairless pink tail. In this form, its Strength is Feeble.

In its monster form, the bunyip grows into a seal-like creature eight feet long. Its fur is black, and a large black mane grows around its head. Its eyes are beady, its jaws fanged and threatening. Its Strength becomes Remarkable. Rising from the water, it roars and spreads loose flaps of skin beneath its forelegs, so that it appears huge, dark, and menacing.
Abilities: The bunyip can swim at Remarkable speed, and may seem to vanish when it switches forms. The bunyip can take on its monstrous form only in water. As a magical creature, it need not eat or sleep.

The monster-bunyip bites, doing Excellent damage, but only in self- defense. Its thick fur gives Typical Body Armor.
Typical Dialogue: The bunyip does not talk. In its small form, it squeaks a bit. In monstrous form, it roars loudly.

Derry Pynchon
Movie actor

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Ty	Gd	Ty	Gd	Gd	Gd	Ty

Health: 32 Karma: 26
Resources: Ex(20) Popularity: 30
Appearance: Handsome, brawny fellow dressed in khakis and a wide-brimmed hat. Blond, clean-shaven. Cheerful manner, and never fazed by super-heroic abilities.
Talents: Outback survival, kangaroo hunting, acting. Pynchon has no control over the bunyip.
Typical Dialogue: Spoken in a thick Australian accent. Pynchon is a nice guy who handles stardom well, so he will be polite in most circumstances.
Story Function: Exposition about the bunyip; willing partner in any plan to trap it unharmed; the voice of conscience if players just want to kill the thing.

AFTERMATH: If they don't kill the bunyip outright, the PCs can return it to Australia, take it as a mascot, or donate it to the Bronx Zoo. Players may come up with other creative solutions.

If his role in the affair comes out, Derry Pynchon may be in grave trouble for illegally smuggling an animal into the country. Sincerely repentant for his action, he may offer the PCs roles in his next film if they keep quiet about him.

KARMA:

Getting exposition from Derry Pynchon: **+10.**

Clever plan to lure or locate the bunyip: + 10.

Capturing the bunyip without harming it greatly: + 20.

Clever plan to dispose of it: +10.

Killing the bunyip: -20.

THE BRONX ZOO

SUMMARY: Hokkor and R'Dall, the Skrull agents trapped in ape form, get loose.

SET-UP: The PCs are enjoying a holiday at the zoo, attending a ceremony there, or working there in their secret IDs.

This scenario involves Reed Richards of the Fantastic Four. If Richards is one of the PCs, fine. Otherwise, Richards, as an NPC, happens to be there at the same time as the hero group. Richards either attends the same charity function that lured the heroes or is engaging in harmless observation of rare zoo animals.

The PCs encounter Richards and, if they wish, talk with him as he walks around the zoo. If you want to lay the groundwork for the "Four Freedoms Plaza" scenario later in this chapter, he mentions the new unstable molecule he is working on. As they talk (or if the PCs don't talk), he enters the Monkey House.

A scream jars the peaceful air. A gibbon and chimpanzee are breaking loose!

ADVENTURE: Hokkor and R'Dall have recognized Reed Richards and possibly one or more of the PCs. They hope that Richards or a PC has technology advanced enough to turn them back into Skrul! form. They could ask Richards nicely. But that isn't the Skrull way.

The apes have carved keys from a piece of wood using their teeth. (These Skrulls really want to get out!) Last night they unlocked their cages, stole into the primate house's food preparation room, broke into the medicine cabinet, and stole powerful animal tranquilizers.

The Skrulls could probably have escaped then. But they didn't have any way to turn back to normal. Now, with the heroes on the scene, they leap out of their cages and grab bystanders as hostages. Richards stretches out to grab an ape, and it jabs him with the animal tranquilizer. He collapses in a rubbery heap, and now it's the players' turn.

PCs probably defeat the apes easily. But then they must figure out the apes' actions and how to communicate with them. Reed Richards has a universal translator back at Four Freedoms Plaza (see Translation Device on p. 60 of the Player's Book), as well as devices that can restore the Skrulls to normal form.

Once this is established, the PCs must decide whether to turn the Skrulls back to their normal form. This can be a role-playing exercise, since players may have markedly different opinions. Have Richards remain neutral, posing both sides of the issue: Skrulls are dangerous, but it would be cruel to keep these two agents trapped in ape form.

AFTERMATH: Once the heroes have changed the Skrulls back or decided not to, the Skrulls try to escape. If they get away, the aliens reappear in a later adventure, trying to steal a spacecraft and return to what's left of the Skrull Empire.

Even if the Skrulls remain unchanged, they can't stay at the Bronx Zoo. The zoo is now short two apes and may ask the PCs to capture replacements in Africa.

KARMA:

Rescuing the apes' hostages unharmed: + 10.

Coming to an intelligent decision about the Skrulls (Judge's option): **+ 10.**

THE HOLLAND TUNNEL

SUMMARY: Atlantean terrorists, in order to publicize their grievances, sabotage the tunnel.

SET-UP: Two Atlanteans appear at the Manhattan entrance to the tunnel and read a prepared statement. Heroes may be patrolling nearby, or they hear about it instantly through the usual information channels (radio, TV, police band, etc.).

Attention, reads the statement. *In protest against the surface world's continued harassment of the rightful undersea kingdom of Atlantis, we hereby begin a righteous campaign to reclaim territories seized by surface dwellers.*

This underwater tunnel is hereby claimed for the greater good of Atlantis. Alteration to the tunnel to render it accessible to our people commences within ten minutes. As representatives of the Atlantean Territorial Protection Force, we hereby order all surface dwellers to depart our territory at once.

A TV reporter on the scene asks what this "alteration" will be. The Atlanteans say that a bomb planted on the floor of the Hudson will blow the tunnel to bits.

Panic ensues.

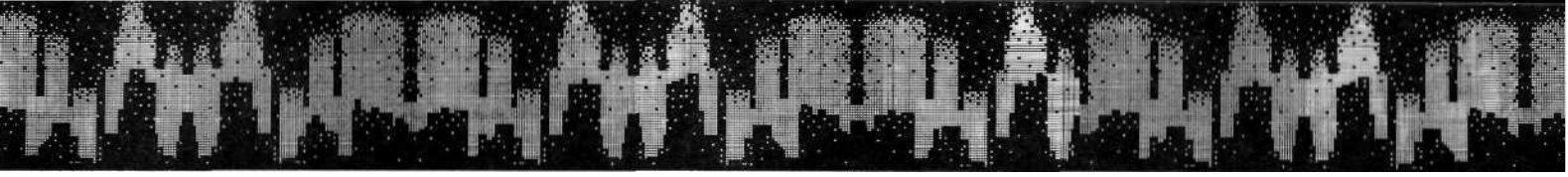
ADVENTURE: Adjust the time the Atlanteans give according to how fast the PCs can arrive at the scene. They should arrive with about three minutes to spare before the tunnel blows. A police officer tells them that some drivers are trapped in the tunnel.

The heroes can attack the two Atlanteans who made the statement. They are unarmed and fight only in self-defense, to demonstrate that they are "not hostile." (Ready to blow up the Holland Tunnel, sure, but not hostile.)

But this battle only wastes time. Heroes have more important objectives: evacuate the tunnel and locate and remove the bomb.

Ordinarily the tunnel could be evacuated within less than ten minutes. After all, it doesn't even take four minutes to drive through it. But when tunnel drivers heard the news over their car radios, a few panicked and turned around in the tunnel to head back to the surface. This led to a multi-car pile-up. Though no more cars are entering the tunnel as the PCs arrive, several are still trapped down there.

There are twice as many cars trapped in the tunnel as there are PCs who enter it. Each car has two passengers, who are trapped in the crushed automobiles with no way out. Passengers all have Typical abilities. **It**



should take three or four rounds to reach them.

Meanwhile, other PCs should handle the bomb threat. They must swim out into the filthy, cold Hudson River and fight the Atlantean bombers. As with the PCs in the tunnel, this journey should take three or four rounds. Describe the river bed, littered with old cars, cans, and other junk. Amid the junk crouch the Atlantean bombers, who attack the heroes by surprise if possible.

There are two Atlanteans for each PC. If the PCs couldn't possibly beat Atlanteans on their home ground (or water), have the terrorists plant the bomb in the tunnel's air conditioning building instead.

For the Atlanteans' abilities, see page 60 of the Judge's Book. Each is armed with a serrated sword that inflicts Remarkable Edged damage.

The bomb is a High Explosive (Player's Book, p. 46). It detonates in three turns after the PCs defeat the Atlanteans, unless they can disarm it.

To deactivate the bomb, a PC must make an Excellent-intensity Agility FEAT to pull loose the correct wire from its tangle of companions. Failure means the bomb explodes in one turn.

If the heroes carry the bomb at least one area away from the Hudson floor, its explosion does not damage the Holland Tunnel.

AFTERMATH: After the battle, Atlantean UN observers appear and try to take the captured terrorists into their own custody, "on United Nations diplomatic authority."

This is a trick. Heroes may be duped into cooperating if they don't know that Atlantis is not a member of the UN. (Give PCs Reason FEAT rolls if appropriate.) Though the diplomats bluster and threaten, heroes can refuse to turn over the criminals without penalty. The NYPD takes custody instead.

The two Atlantean fanatics who read the statement escape or, if captured, may try (Judge's discretion) to commit suicide in their cells by breaking open their water helmets.

After a day or two of investigation, it turns out that the "Atlantean Territorial Protection Force" is a renegade splinter group of Atlantis' government, which disclaims all responsibility. Nontheless, this is a major diplomatic incident, and Atlantis is censured (again) by world governments.

By the way, the bomb was manufactured for the ATPF by Stane International, but the company has effectively concealed its involvement through a chain of intermediaries.

KARMA:

Evacuating the tunnel: +20.
Letting innocents panic or losing control of the situation: -10.
Removing the bomb: +30.

CENTRAL PARK

SUMMARY: The super villain called the Wizard kidnaps a most unlikely set of targets: the old chess players in the park's Chess and Checkers House.

SET-UP: The heroes are near the park, perhaps visiting a Fifth Avenue museum, when they see several airborne figures landing in the park.

Use the map of Central Park included on the fold-up map in this set for large-scale display of widely separated events.

ADVENTURE: The flying figures are the Wizard, also known as the Wingless Wizard, and super villains that he hopes to enlist as underlings for his schemes.

Use as many villains as there are PC heroes. Use any villains you like, especially the Wizard's old cronies in the Frightful Four: Sandman and the Trapster. For their abilities, see MU3, *Gamer's Handbook of the Marvel Universe.*

The Wizard gives non-flying villains anti-gravity disks that bestow Good air speed. He has designed them to burn out within three hours, by which time the villains should be safely on the ground.

The Wizard is demonstrating his brilliance to these villains, who doubt his vaunted intellect in the face of his numerous defeats. Incensed at this doubt, the egomaniacal Wizard plans to kidnap every chess player in Central Park, shanghai them to his mansion on Long Island, and there play all of them in a simultaneous tournament. By defeating all the players (the Wizard reasons), he will demonstrate his mental superiority. This is the way such villains think.

There are twice as many chess players in Central Park's Chess and Checkers House as there are villains to kidnap them. The villains swoop in, plant anti-gravity disks on all their victims, and carry them aloft.

Then the PCs appear. In response, the Wizard sends his villain henchmen off in different directions, toward major Central Park landmarks, and throws his own captives straight up, hoping to divide the heroes. Then, over confident as usual, he threatens the PCs.

"I intend no harm to these imbeciles," he says. "But my business is my own. Follow at your peril." He arrogantly refuses to give his motives.

The other villains use their victims as hostages or throw them aside to delay pursuers. Heroes shouldn't try to target a villain who carries a hostage. If they try, attacks are -2 CS. Missed attacks hit a hostage instead.

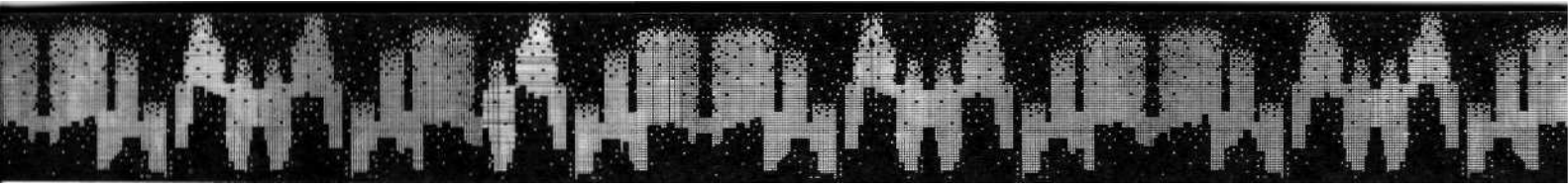
Of course, no hero worth the name will let the villains get away. PCs can steal the hostages, or make the villains set down their hostages and battle.

Showcase as many park landmarks as possible. If any of the Wizard's henchmen have shape-shifting powers, try to change a PC into a frog or rat. Then you can send the PC into the midst of the frog-rat war in the park.

Chess players

F	A	S	E	R	**I**	**P**
Pr	Pr	Ty	Pr	Gd	Gd	Ty

Health: 18 Karma: 26
Resources: Typical(6) Popularity: 0
Appearance: All the players are crusty old guys in cheap suits.
Talents: Chess (Good to Excellent ability).
Typical Dialogue: "Morphy defense, huh? Thought you'd catch me with that?"



The Wizard
Real name unrevealed

Here is an abbreviated list of the Wizard's abilities. For more information, consult MA4, *The Fantastic Four Compendium,* or MU4, Gamer's *Handbook of the Marvel Universe.*

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Pr	Gd	Ty	Ex	In	Ty	Ty

Health: 40 ' Karma: 52
Resources: Ex(20) Popularity: -10

KNOWN POWERS:

Hyper-Invention. Amazing inventiveness in applied physics, sub-atomic particles, and other dimensions. Can create gadgets on short notice with proper materials.

Anti-Gravity Disks. Good Gravity Manipulation; can carry 400 pounds at Typical air speed. Monstrous bonding to target. Remote-controlled by Wizard.

Power Gloves. Control gravity disks; also have following powers:

Electricity. Incredible damage, Poor range.

Force Field. Remarkable rank.

Hyper-Strength. Excellent Strength.

Body Armor. Good against physical attacks.

Flight. Good air speed (140 mph).

Mind Control. Excellent ability.

AFTERMATH: If the PCs discern the Wizard's motive, either through mind-reading or from the other villains, they can challenge the Wizard to hold his tournament right there in the park. If this happens, make Reason FEAT rolls for the Wizard, the chess players, and any PCs who get involved.

If the Wizard loses any game, he goes berserk and attacks the winners. But by then an NYPD SWAT team is on hand, and the villain henchmen give up on the Wizard. So the battle should be short.

KARMA:

Attacking a villain who has a hostage: -10.

Destroying Park property (statues, the Mall, et cetera): -10.

Rescuing all the hostages: +20.

THE DAILY BUGLE

SUMMARY: The *Bugle* ran an expose article on a fake occultist, painting him as a harmless and amusing crank. In revenge, the occultist, a true magician, subjects the city offices to a mystic assault.

Note: This mini-scenario can be run by itself or lead into the next one, "Doctor Strange's Sanctum," and to "The Statue of Liberty" mini-scenario that starts this chapter.

SET-UP: The heroes are in the *Bugle's* 17th-floor City Room. They could be working there in secret ID, checking out a lead for another scenario, or giving an interview in their hero identities. The room is crowded and hums with activity. Use the map on the inside of this book's cover.

Nearby, reporter Ben Urich is trying to get rid of a short, nerdy man who sounds angry. "I'm not a crank!" says the man. "The power of the multiverse flows through me!" This provokes laughter and wisecracks.

The heroes get an explanation from another staffer. Urich wrote a light piece about the man, Lester Danton, a grocery store bag-boy who thinks he can cast magic spells. Urich's piece was hilarious. Danton hated it.

Angered, Danton says, "Fools! Witness the might granted me by the magnificent Mephisto!" He gestures, a force shield appears around him, and in the City Room the desks and furniture come to life!

ADVENTURE: Use Baron Mordo's abilities for Danton. The animated furniture (desks, file cabinets, phones, darkroom equipment) moves one area per turn and inflicts its material strength rank in damage. There are three pieces of furniture for each PC. Danton sends most of it against Urich and the rest at other workers. But as soon as a hero attacks, Danton loses interest in Urich and sends all the furniture against the PC heroes.

This furniture probably presents little threat to the heroes. Conversely, they shouldn't be able to hurt Danton through his Amazing shield. Stalemate.

If Danton's furniture can't hurt the heroes, he becomes frustrated. He flies downstairs, just slow enough for the heroes to pursue. (The furniture goes back to normal.) In the sub-basement, Danton gestures again, and this time the printing presses come to life!

The mobile presses have the following abilities:

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
In	Ty	Am	Mn	Fe	Fe	Fe

Health: 171 Karma: 6
Resources: None Popularity: 0

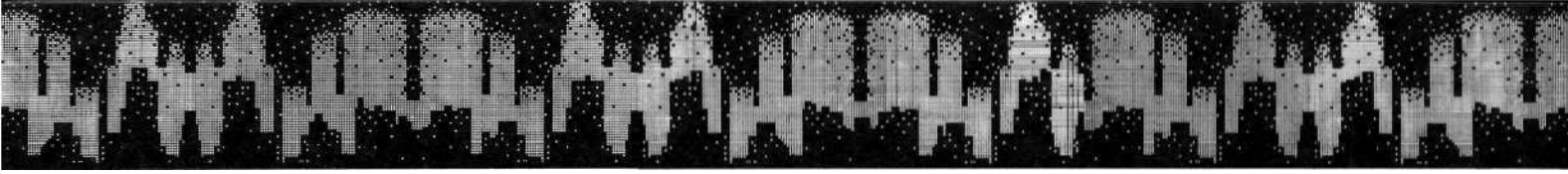
Presses move 2 areas per round. Danton animates one press for each two PCs, or one per PC if your heroes are very powerful. The pressmen panic, and the heroes should spend one or two turns rescuing innocents before the fight begins in earnest.

If the PCs are stopping the presses, so to speak, Danton sends them bursting through the walls and onto 39th Street. He threatens pedestrians right and left and stampedes toward automobiles, making the heroes rescue people instead of attacking. Danton rides them two blocks up and two over, to the United Nations. If he gets that far, use the UN map in this set for a climactic battle in front of the General Assembly Building.

AFTERMATH: If you want to link this scenario with "Doctor Strange's Sanctum" and "The Statue of Liberty," Danton should get away to make trouble in those places. Otherwise, if the PCs defeat Danton, Mephisto appears to claim him; see "The Statue of Liberty" for details. Of course, all of this gets maximum coverage in that evening's *Bugle.*

If Danton defeats the heroes, he cackles and says, "Now let them make fun of me!" He flies off through a window, announcing his next power-play for all to hear. When they recover, the PCs can go there to face him in a rematch. But meanwhile, they will look very bad in the *Bugle's* front-page coverage of the fight.

KARMA: Use standard award rules.



DOCTOR STRANGE'S SANCTUM

SUMMARY: Lester Danton (see previous scenario), at Mephisto's orders, is attacking Doctor Strange. Danton uses his Necromancy magic to resurrect an army of Zuvembies—the bodies of those who were hanged in past centuries on the site of Washington Square Park!

Note: This mini-scenario can be run by itself or follow the previous one, "The Daily Bugle," and lead into "The Statue of Liberty" mini-scenario that starts this chapter.

SET-UP: If the heroes are aware that Doctor Strange is still alive, they may be trying to visit him, perhaps to consult about Lester Danton from the previous adventure. {Strange is away in another dimension right now.) Or the heroes may be touring the Village in secret IDs.

They see people fleeing Washington Square Park, shouting, "Zombies!" Investigating, they find Danton gesturing in the park, as hundreds of bone-white bodies crawl up out of the ground. Make their descriptions as lurid as you can stand. Use the zombie abilities from Baron Mordo's entry in the Judge's Book.

If you choose to play this adventure on a playing field, use the Advanced Set map. The zombies appear in Buchanan Park, a rough equivalent to Washington Square Park. On this map, replace the tenements at 810 Hayes with Doctor Strange's Sanctum. This is the zombies' goal.

ADVENTURE: The heroes learn from Danton's ranting, or by observation, that the zombies are heading for the Sanctum. Doctor Strange is away, but the Sanctum's defensive spells still hold; the zombies cannot enter its area.

Still, the monsters present a threat that must be stopped. The heroes can whomp all they want, yet Danton keeps creating more.

Attacking Danton appears more productive. But when the heroes try this, the coward sends his zombies against innocent bystanders, of whom there are many in Greenwich Village. Danton tries to divert the heroes to rescue missions, and then into battle with the zombies.

These zombies are not silent. They murmur pathetically, speaking of their old crimes: stealing cattle from the Common; treason against colonial-age Britain; even piracy. They protest their innocence, even as they attack the PCs. Play up this eerie, chilling scene.

The key to the zombies' defeat lies inside the Sanctum. Perceptive heroes notice Wong, Doctor Strange's manservant, standing in the Sanctum's doorway, calling to the heroes. If they manage to break away long enough to talk to him (a challenging task), Wong mentions a device that apparently can defeat the undead.

Wong says his master recently obtained a brazier, a metal pan that holds burning coals, from a Polynesian animist-magician. Unless he knows the PCs, Wong does not mention Strange by name, nor the recent destruction of Strange's talismans of power. (Strange acquired the brazier shortly thereafter.) If the PCs, along with the world at large, believe Doctor Strange to be dead, Wong says this brazier was one of the late master's last purchases.

Unfortunately, Wong does not know where Strange keeps the brazier. To find it, PCs must venture into the Sanctum. They travel winding hallways that go on forever, stumble upon huge rooms that seem larger than the house itself, and become confused by floor plans that seem to change whenever they're not looking.

Finally, as Danton's zombie legions threaten to overwhelm the Village, PCs find the brazier in a room much like Strange's study. Give PCs a Psyche FEAT roll to determine if they know how to use it. If they all fail, Wong can give a few fumbling clues, but his help is uncertain at best.

The proper technique is to fill the brazier with incense (stored with it), then light it. The smoke draws the zombies, despite Danton's control. Of course, if the brazier is inside the Sanctum, the zombies cannot reach it.

So, carrying the brazier, the heroes can lead the zombies back to the park, where the undead return to their graves. Or the PCs can make the zombies march into the river, or otherwise destroy them.

AFTERMATH: See "The Daily Bugle" Aftermath section. Also, the heroes can gain Karma by leading a civic campaign to exhume the bodies beneath Washington Square Park and give them proper burial elsewhere.

When Strange returns to this dimension, he may well befriend the PCs and admit them into his confidence.

KARMA: Use standard award rules.

THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

SUMMARY: A lunatic has seized the transmitters atop the Empire State Building, trying to get rid of radio creatures that are taking over his mind. He has taken hostages.

SET-UP: The heroes are relaxing at HQ or in secret IDs when many major TV and radio stations suddenly go off the air.

After a brief moment of static, incoherent raving fills the airwaves. "Stop the voices!" the tortured voice says at one point. "Kill everyone to stop voices! Sent by radio! Get you all!"

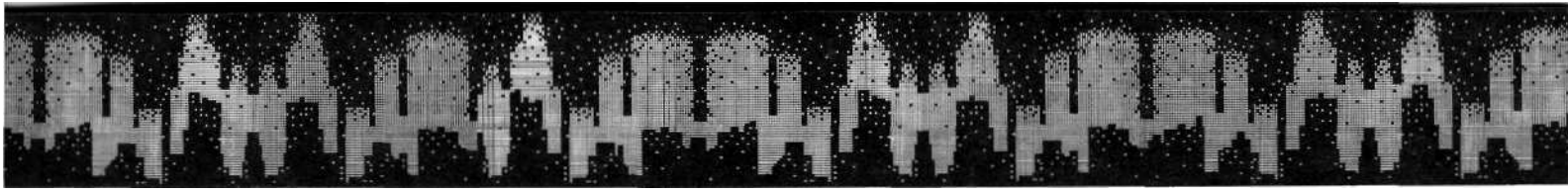
The heroes may rush to the studios of the afflicted stations. Since the studios are not located near their transmitters, this wastes time and may prove disastrous. Far better to call the stations, find out the situation, and rush to the Empire State Building. Calling the stations may prove difficult, however, since the phone lines will be jammed once the raving starts.

ADVENTURE: Use the Empire State Building map included in this set.

As the heroes arrive, they see a hostage dangling by 15-foot-long wires from the broken windows of the 102nd Floor observatory. Others are scattered at random across the setbacks outside the building (see the map).

There is one hostage per PC in the hero group. Most hostages are Girl Scouts—a troop of them had been touring the building. All are either panicky or passed out cold. (If it is plausible, one hostage could be a friend or dependent of one of the PCs.)

The hostages are tied with colored



electrical wires (Good strength). Cubical metal boxes are strapped to their chests. Each box shows an LED time display (three minutes and counting) and a yellow-and-black label reading "DANGER! EXPLOSIVES!"

This is true. The boxes are dynamite bombs {Concentrated Explosive, p. 46 of Player's Book). When the time runs out, they will explode. Cutting any bomb's wires, including the ones binding its hostage, detonates the bomb. Disarming the bombs requires an Excellent Intuition FEAT to determine which of six wires to pull. For more about bombs, see "The Holland Tunnel" scenario in this chapter.

Travel inside the building is straightforward, since the elevators still work. For a longer scenario, have the lunatic destroy the elevators, and increase the time remaining on each hostage's time-bomb.

A dozen security guards and transmitter engineers are tied up (but not wired to explode) on the 102nd floor. If the heroes enter the observatory without stealth or safety precautions, the lunatic inside threatens his hostages with a riot gun. He thinks hostages and PCs alike are agents of radio creatures from the planet Venus, who are subverting humanity toward senseless violence.

The lunatic, one Theo Danziger, is a short, overweight man in his late 40s. For Danziger's abilities and equipment, use the listing for a SWAT Operative in Chapter 4 of the *Campaign Sourcebook.* In addition, he has wired himself with High Explosive. A "deadman's switch" will hit the floor and detonate the bomb if he falls unconscious, unless a hero makes an Excellent Agility FEAT to catch the switch before it strikes something.

Danziger is waiting for more than half the PCs to appear; then he intends to set off the explosives, taking as many Venus-radio agents with him as possible.

If the heroes capture Danziger and resolve the situation too easily, consider planting another, much larger bomb, outside the transmitter tower above the observatory. PCs can learn about it from the hostages. This bomb will explode three turns after the heroes discover it, unless they can defuse it with a Remarkable Intuition FEAT.

AFTERMATH: By sticking around to repair damaged antennas, PCs may develop contacts in the communications business or (Judge's discretion) increase their Popularity with local viewing audiences.

It develops that the lunatic is a former employee of the New York Police Department's bomb squad. The heroes may even have met him in other bomb-defusing scenarios, such as "The Holland Tunnel" in this chapter.

Two years ago Danziger was slightly injured in a bomb explosion. Unknown to anyone at the time, the explosion drove a small bone splinter into his brain. Since then he has been hearing voices. Luckily, these are only hallucinations . . . unless you want to run a real invasion by radio creatures of Venus!

PCs with medical Talents or sensory powers can diagnose Danziger's ailment with a successful Intuition or Reason FEAT. With treatment, he will recover fully, be grateful to the heroes, and may become a valuable NPC resource for them in future adventures. (He has Remarkable knowledge of explosives and detonators.)

KARMA:

Wasting time before getting to the Empire State Building: -5 (no loss of life) to -20 (lunatic shoots hostage).

Curing Danziger: +20.

EMPIRE STATE UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY: A brilliant but crazy chemical engineering student has synthesized a dangerous new "designer drug." He is spraying it across the ESU campus in aerosol form. The drug triggers Dr. Curt Connors' transformation into the Lizard.

Note: This scenario can be run alone or can lead into the next one, "The Financial District."

SET-UP: This adventure takes place in early evening or on a weekend, as ESU's campus revival theater shows a 1959 horror movie, *The Alligator People.* The weather is beautiful, the air unusually sweet and clear.

As the film ends, the heroes are leaving the theater, having attended in their secret IDs, or they are nearby, on a patrol. Other film-goers pass the ticket-taker, a student dressed in a silly alligator suit. They cry out as if frightened.

The heroes assume that the students are just fooling around. But as they pass the alligator, it grows, twists, deforms into monstrous shape, and attacks!

ADVENTURE:

Don't tell the players, but this is the effect of the new drug being sprayed over campus. The alligator ticket-taker has not moved; the PCs have unknowingly fallen under the drug's influence, which causes this hallucination.

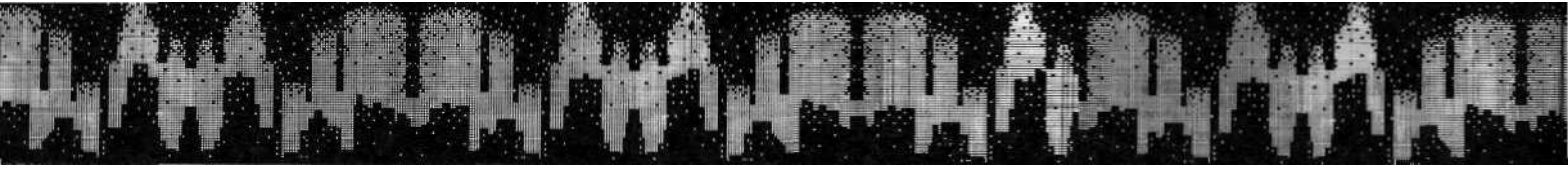
Players who pick up on the "sweetness" of the air get an Intuition FEAT roll to realize it smells too sweet, almost medicinal. Also, nonhuman or non-organic PCs, such as androids, and PCs who do not breathe are not affected.

The hallucinatory alligator moves to attack innocent bystanders. It has abilities +1 CS above the highest ability ranks of the hero group. For example, if the PCs' best fighter has Amazing Fighting ability, the alligator-vision has Monstrous ability, and so on.

Its Health and Karma scores are irrelevant, since the Judge determines everything that happens to it according to the story. If the PCs do something clever, it works and the monster is "defeated." If they just blast away at it, their blasts inflict major damage on the surrounding buildings of ESU, and when the PCs recover from the drug, they'll have some explaining to do.

The drug reduces higher mental functions, giving dominance to the oldest, least evolved part of the human brain. This "lizard brain" controls unconscious actions, such as breathing, as well as primitive emotions: love, anger, fear.

The drug may also affect the heroes' powers in unpredictable ways. Physical powers are increased +1 or +2 CS, and become uncontrollable except with a yellow or red FEAT. Mental powers are reduced -1 CS or more, and perhaps even vanish altogether. Also, PCs gradually feel tendencies toward berserk rage; pass notes to individual players and tell



them to role-play this effect.

One profoundly affected victim is Dr. Curt Connors, whose "lizard brain" activates the serum in his body and turns him into the Lizard.

If you are running this scenario independently of the next one, the Lizard crashes through the wall of the Science Building, where Dr. Connors was working late, and attacks the PCs. But he has help: The drug makes ESU students into primitives. Since they are thinking like lizards, the Lizard can control them!

There are enough students to make life hard for the PCs during the battle. The heroes can't attack the students, who are innocent, and they can't necessarily trust their own senses—although you should not overplay this point, or the players will have no clear options.

If you link this scenario to the next one, the heroes see no sign of the Lizard. But they discover the wreckage of his office, and they see the destructive aftermath of his passage across campus. The trail leads to the sewers, then vanishes.

By now the hallucinations are letting up, and the heroes realize that they and the entire ESU student body have been drugged. How to locate the drug and the responsible felon?

The drug, it turns out, extends across a radius of diminishing effect. PCs can trace the origin of the drug's dispersal by zeroing in across campus through areas of increasing dosages. As the PCs "get warmer," the victims are still hallucinating and acting savagely, more so the closer PCs approach to the source.

The source is the top row of the bleachers beyond the track, at the extreme far end of the campus. Here the drug's creator, biochemistry grad student Tony Kendall, opened a cannister of the drug. Winds vaporized the thick liquid and carried the mist across campus.

Kendall is a tall, strapping youth with shaggy blond hair and thick glasses. As the PCs reach him, he is dying of an overdose. His mind clears at the end, and he survives long enough to explain that he just wanted to give everyone the "wow" that he felt when he first used the drug.

He carries a thick notebook containing detailed instructions on how to synthesize the drug. The heroes probably decide to destroy it; if not, the Maggia or the Kingpin will soon try to obtain the recipe for this new commodity.

If you link this scenario to the next one, Kendall is also dying because of the Lizard's attack on him. (A sewer manhole opening is nearby.) Kendall had another, larger cannister of the drug—"enough to cover the city," says Kendall—but the Lizard stole it.

AFTERMATH: PCs with healing powers or high-tech resources can rescue Kendall, who will undoubtedly face life in prison or confinement in a mental hospital.

If you run this scenario independently, you can have Dr. Connors recover when the drug wears off, or continue the adventure as PCs try to concoct an antidote to turn him back to his human form.

Though the hallucinations soon pass, the drug's effect on the heroes' powers can last into the next adventure. This creates tension for the heroes in otherwise routine situations: How will their powers react this time?

After the crisis passes, government agents contact the heroes and ask them to make an anti-drug public service message.

KARMA:

Realizing that the "alligator" is a hallucination before causing major damage: +10.

Discovering the drug's source: **+10.**

THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

SUMMARY: The Lizard has taken to the sewers, and now midtown Manhattan is up to its ears in alligators.

Note: This scenario can be run alone or can follow the previous one, "Empire State University."

SET-UP: If you run this scenario independently, Dr. Curt Connors has turned into the Lizard again and has stolen an experimental drug from Empire State University. The drug's effects are described in the previous scenario.

If you link this adventure to the previous one, the PCs are seeking the stolen drug cannister after witnessing its effects close-up at ESU. They must destroy the drug before the Lizard can turn all of Manhattan into his slaves.

Either way, the scenario begins as midtown Manhattan falls prey to a huge traffic jam. The Lizard, manipulating the traffic signal system, has turned all lights green! After multiple auto collisions and total gridlock paralyze the area, manhole covers fly off of storm drains. Out crawl dozens of alligators!

ADVENTURE: If you wish, use the two maps of midtown Manhattan included in this set. The alligators appear at street intersections of your choice, three alligators per PC, and one intersection for each two PCs. The heroes must fight the gators and rescue innocents.

This free-for-all lets players blow off steam. Play up the setting, the high concrete canyons, and scared New Yorkers.

When one group of PCs finishes with its complement of alligators, another group of gators appears at the next intersection! After a while, when the players get tired of beating up on alligators, it becomes clear that the Lizard is toying with them. The only way the heroes can stop the alligator onslaught is to trace it to its source: the Lizard, down in the sewers.

Ideally the heroes' powers have been changed and no longer work predictably. The drug in the previous scenario, "Empire State University," can do this; or, if you run this scenario by itself, the heroes may be sick, subjected to high radiation, or are somehow mutating.

By changing their powers, or even removing them, you make the PCs much more apprehensive about a trip into the sewers. This intensifies the mood of suspense and horror a sewer adventure should evoke.

In the sewers, the PCs can meet the characters listed in "Underground Manhattan," such as the Mole People and "The King." By conversing with or battling these NPCs, the heroes gain clues to the Lizard's whereabouts. Such encounters should be tense, atmospheric, and hazardous, physically or emotionally.

And where is the Lizard? In a broken junction of storm drains just above the East River. (If you wish, place his underground domain beneath the United Nations, and use the UN map as a climactic battleground.)

Here in the warmth, steam, and stench of a large concrete grotto, amid a mass of rotting garbage, alligators nest. The Lizard dwells here, contemplating the drug cannister and the extermination of all humankind.

When the PCs enter, huge herds of gators arise at the Lizard's command and attack them. But battling the gators is no solution; the players must reach the Lizard and defeat him before he can release the contents of the drug cannister.

The cannister is of Good plastic and looks like a white Thermos jug. If punctured, the drug begins to vaporize in one turn and affects PCs within one area. It spreads at one area per turn.

Because of the extremely heavy dosage, afflicted characters lose one Endurance rank per turn until they can get to fresh air, and they do not recover the Endurance until the drug wears off, hours later. Heat destroys the drug, and intense cold freezes it. Heroes may come up with other ways to destroy the drug.

AFTERMATH: In the Garment District, the alligator handbag makes a temporary comeback. For a few heady days, half the pushcart food stands in New York offer alligator burgers. (Alligators are now bred for food in Florida. True!)

After all this, the heroes' powers, if they were affected, return to normal. Such effects should seldom last for more than one adventure, or players become frustrated and don't act heroic.

KARMA:

Unnecessary slaughter of alligators: -20.

Recovering or destroying **the** drug: +20.

FOUR FREEDOMS PLAZA

SUMMARY: Reed Richards of the Fantastic Four is developing an improved version of his patented "unstable molecules," the compounds that make up the FF's uniforms and many other materials.

Unfortunately, while the FF is away on a mission, one of the vats of unstable molecules becomes contaminated and "goes superfluid," turning into a huge rubberoid shape with animal-like behavior.

SET-UP: Downtown Manhattan on a bustling afternoon. The PCs are patrolling, traveling from Point A to Point B, or just dining at a downtown restaurant. Then comes a crash and honking of horns from the vicinity of Four Freedoms Plaza.

The heroes arrive in time to see a hulking pink mass ooze down the side of the skyscraper, inflate, and take to the air. It floats lazily down the street, probing every which way with jellyfish-like tendrils. People stare uncertainly.

Use the maps of midtown Manhattan included in this set. The rubberoid thing begins at Four Freedoms Plaza and heads west toward Radio City Music Hall.

For extra laughs, set this comic scenario during the Thanksgiving Day Parade. Crowds treat the huge "molecule creature" as just another balloon, and the battle with it as a parade stunt. The parade, many blocks long, heads south on Fifth Avenue while the battle rages.

ADVENTURE: The molecule creature has the following abilities:

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Fe	Pr	Mn	Un	—	—	—

Health: 181 Karma: 0

Resources: None Popularity: 0

Appearance: Stretchy, putty-like. Changes color frequently.

Abilities: The creature can float like a blimp, with Feeble air speed. Edged attacks cause it to deflate and ooze over the area below for one turn, until it can reform itself and reinflate.

The creature has Excellent body armor versus energy attacks and blunt physical attacks. However, it has no armor versus cold attacks. Edged physical attacks divide the creature into two parts, each -2 CS in all abilities.

The molecule creature seeks and detects electricity with Excellent ability. Alert players may deduce this from its targets: first auto batteries, then street lights and neon signs, and finally power generators in the basements of skyscrapers. If a PC breaks street pavement, the creature zeroes in on the power lines beneath.

Every round that the creature absorbs electricity, its abilities increase +1 CS (maximum Shift-Z). Small power sources last only a turn, but larger ones can last two to four turns. Electrical attacks by heroes count as one turn.

After three turns of absorption, the creature splits in two like an amoeba. Each duplicate has the original abilities listed above. They move in different directions, seeking more electricity. Ultimately, they converge on Radio City Music Hall, drawn by its bright marquee and lights, or on another intense power source—perhaps the generators in Four Freedoms Plaza.

There, if given five turns to absorb electricity, it bursts into a cloud of tiny molecule creatures that float across the city. These create awful problems with the city power supply, and the heroes have failed.

One way to defeat the creature is to freeze it. In order of effectiveness, the heroes can lure it to the ice-skating rink at Rockefeller Plaza, where it gradually grows dormant (-1 CS Endurance per turn).

Or, they can find dry ice somewhere off the map . . . especially at the waterfront, where it is used as packing material. A pound of dry ice inflicts Excellent damage, +1 CS per 10 pounds.

Or, the best device to defeat the creature is liquid nitrogen or other liquefied gas. The only source for this on the map is (naturally) Four Freedoms Plaza. Reed Richards uses such equipment routinely in his laboratories.

Liquid nitrogen freezes the creature instantly, leaving it harmless. If it is floating above the parade, it remains **aloft,** one balloon among many.

AFTERMATH: Reed Richards returns, sees the damage, thanks the heroes, and deduces the reason the creature formed: Ben Grimm accidentally dropped a candy bar in a vat of unstable molecules. This eventually triggered the "unusual chemical reaction," as Richards puts **it.**

The FF will probably be tied up in litigation for a long time. If the heroes

stopped the creature without undue damage to the city, Richards gladly rewards the team with an advanced piece of high-tech equipment (Judge's choice, with players' advice—freely given, no doubt).

Incidentally, once Richards irons out the bugs in the recipe, this new type of unstable molecule proves a great success in the marketplace.

KARMA:

Stopping the creature without major damage to the city: +20.

Stopping it without onlookers realizing there's a fight: +30.

MARVEL COMICS

SUMMARY: Marvel wants to publish a comic about one or more of the player characters. The negotiations take a nasty turn when one of the PCs' old enemies shows up for a grudge match.

SET-UP: Run this adventure after the heroes have established themselves, and after some high-profile encounter with a powerful villain who got away.

The publicity from the adventure brings a call from Marvel. A vice-president asks the heroes to visit the office and talk over a comic. If the heroes sound interested, the executive is flexible about a meeting time.

ADVENTURE: At the Marvel offices, a receptionist cordially welcomes the heroes. Staffers, though polite, appear unimpressed by the heroes; after all, these folks already know the most famous NPC heroes in the Marvel Universe.

Play the meeting for light amusement. The executive and several well-known writers and artists make discreet inquiries into the PCs' secret identities, weaknesses, lovers and relatives, and other sensitive topics. No doubt the PCs rebuff these questions; staffers nod understandingly.

Finally the executive determines that Marvel is indeed interested in doing a comic about the PCs. But as the conversation turns to money, the villain who got away from the previous adventure dramatically bursts in! The battle is on.

How did the villain learn of the meeting? That is up to you. Perhaps criminal informants keep a phone tap on the Marvel offices, since these people sometimes talk with famous crime-fighters, and gain valuable data about heroes' abilities and equipment. The villain might have a henchman shadowing the PCs. Or maybe the villain works for Marvel in a secret identity. (No one would suspect it, right?)

AFTERMATH: If the heroes defeat the villain with style, minimizing property damage and protecting innocent staffers, Marvel definitely goes ahead with the PCs' title. Maybe even in Prestige format!

But if the heroes fumbled a lot, destroyed property, used brutal or non-heroic tactics—or if they lost, perish the thought—the comic project is off.

KARMA:

Concluding deal successfully: +10.

Getting Prestige format: +10.

Conversing knowledgeably with writers and artists about their work: +10 (but see next item).

Insulting writers, artists, or executives: -10.

Destroying Marvel Comics: -ALL.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

SUMMARY: The heroes must stop the Red Ghost and his apes as they steal a valuable van Gogh painting from the Met. The trick is to avoid property damage.

SET-UP: Central Park near midnight. A hero trolling for muggers or an NPC informant spies a huge simian shape outside the Met. This is Mikhlo, the Red Ghost's super-strong gorilla. As soon as the heroes investigate, all three of the Red Ghost's super-apes attack! (See Judge's Book, p. 51.)

The battle with the apes should not take long or have great consequences. Igor, the shape-changing baboon, soon turns into a large bird and flies toward the Met's second floor.

Outside a window of the European Gallery, Igor resumes his true shape and raps a warning on the window. This should indicate to the heroes that the ape's master is inside.

ADVENTURE: The Red Ghost has no interest in art, except for its monetary value. He just accepted a contract from a wealthy, unscrupulous European collector to "procure" a canvas by Vincent van Gogh.

The Ghost holds little interest in vandalism of artwork, either. However, he does have an interest in making the PCs look foolish. To that end, he takes his solid form just often enough to keep the heroes busily attacking him. Before the blow lands, however, the Ghost turns intangible and lets it pass through him harmlessly, probably to hit something priceless. (The Red Ghost can still appear solid even when intangible.)

Another of the Ghost's tactics: When on the museum's upper floor, he desolidifies the floor beneath a hero who can't fly, causing the hero to plummet and crash into something below. Remember, any damage at all to an objet d'art, however slight, is akin to destroying it.

In any case, the discovery of the theft means the Ghost gives up the job. After luring the heroes to commit mayhem, he leaves the van Gogh and departs when he hears police sirens (that is, at some suitable stopping point).

AFTERMATH: It develops that the Ghost had knocked out all the museum's security guards and broken the monitor cameras. However, one guard woke up in time to witness the battle, from a safe distance.

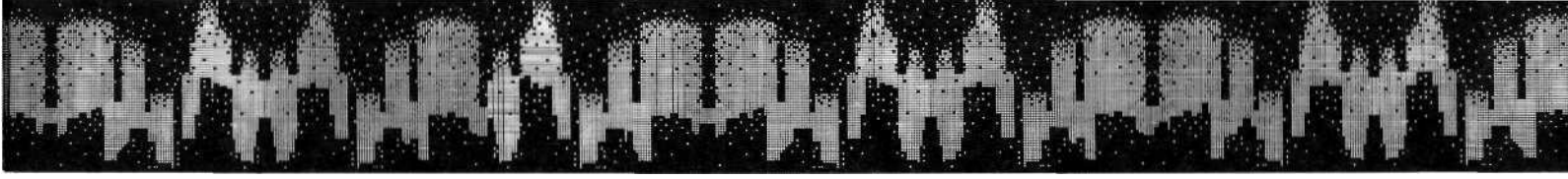
The heroes may have a lot of explaining to do. If there was no damage to artifacts, police thank the heroes and let them go. Otherwise, the witness will tell, truthfully, who inflicted what damage to the artworks. If the heroes did most of the damage, their Popularity drops by 10, for the public reaction is strongly negative.

KARMA:

Damaging art: -5.

Damaging more art than the Ghost did: -10.

Avoiding any damage: +10.



SHIELD HEADQUARTERS

SUMMARY: As both Captain America and Nick Fury have had to, the heroes must face Machinesmith's reanimated SHIELD Central and recover a forgotten high-tech item.

SET-UP: Nick Fury and his SHIELD team have been hospitalized after their last attempt to close down a major SHIELD headquarters overseas. They succeeded, though, and in the process learned that SHIELD Central still holds one last secret: an advanced experimental replica of the SHIELD Power Core!

Fury never knew of this project while he ran SHIELD. Now that he does, he's made recovering and disposing of the Core his top priority: "If anything goes wrong with that Core, most of midtown Manhattan goes up in radioactive smoke, blast it!"

Too seriously injured to recover the Core himself, Fury has tried contacting the Avengers and the FF; the player characters are his last hope. Fury details the building's special features, gives necessary passwords and safeguards, and describes the location of the duplicate Power Core. And he warns about Machinesmith's occupation of the HQ.

What's worse, the PCs must wear special ABC (Atomic-Biological-Chemical) protective suits when handling the Core.The bright yellow ABC suit gives -1 CS to Fighting and Agility, but makes the wearer immune to radiation and biological or chemical attacks. PCs need not don the suits until they are actually in the presence of the Power Core.

ADVENTURE: The building appears deserted. No lights, no movement, no attacks. But encourage player paranoia by mentioning strange sounds in the distance and the pitch darkness to be found in the lower levels.

The lift-tubes work. So do the force fields that catch falling objects in the lower levels. All function normally—while the PCs head downward. This means Machinesmith is running things, right? Play up suspense as the players debate this. But nothing untoward happens on the way down to the Power Core.

The Core is in a lead-shielded room on sub-level 728, at the end of a three-area-long corridor protected by three blaster batteries spaced one area apart. PCs who succeed in a Monstrous Intuition FEAT spot the blasters. The weapons do not fire (yet), and can be disabled.

The room is lined with complex equipment, like a nuclear reactor control center. In the center of the room, inside a Plexiglas cylinder eight feet across and six high (Excellent strength), sits the experimental Power Core.

The Power Core is as big as a 55-gallon oil drum, weighs 300 pounds, and burns with blinding (Monstrous) intensity. The ABC suits have vision filters that protect against this, but unprotected victims cannot see for 1-10 turns, and are -3 CS on all FEATs.

The PCs can shatter the cylinder or, more prudently, look for a control to open it. With a Good Reason FEAT, they find the button that raises the cylinder into the ceiling. Then they can just reach in and take the Core. (Expect them to try plenty of paranoid security measures. These all work.)

As the PCs enter the corridor, the blasters (if they weren't disabled) attack. Machinesmith wants that Core!

The blasters are made of Good material, inflict Incredible damage, and are concealed (-1 CS to ranged attacks).

From here on up to the surface, Machinesmith lets fly with every weapon available. (He was only waiting for the heroes to get as deep as they would go.) Cargo robots, blasters, even Life Model Decoys (replicas of deceased SHIELD agents) all attack, one after another. They never gang up in overwhelming numbers because Machinesmith can't control that many at once.

If the PCs think to break through a wall or find an access panel (a Reason FEAT), then damage electrical circuitry (of Feeble strength), Machinesmith's control is broken on that level. The Mandroids and weapons fall lifeless.

PCs with computer or electronics skills can override Machinesmith's control and ride an emergency lift- tube to the ground level. Otherwise, it's a long climb upward. (Judging tip: Don't play it all out. When the PCs begin to get the upper hand, just dissolve to the final battle on the ground floor.)

Waiting at the exit are Machinesmith's last and most powerful forces: reconstructed Mandroid suits. (See the Mandroid abilities on page 50 of the Judge's Book.) Adjust the number of suits to the heroes' numbers and condition; generally one Mandroid per PC works all right. The Mandroids concentrate their attacks on the PCs who carry the Power Core.

Machinesmith

Here is an abbreviated listing of Machinesmith's statistics. For more information, consult MU2, *Gamer's Handbook of the Marvel Universe.*

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Gd	Ex	Rm	Rm	In	Ex	Ex

Health: 90 Karma: 80

Resources: Rm(30) Popularity: -5

Appearance: None. Machinesmith exists as an electronic personality.

Talents: Amazing reason in robotics and defense systems.

KNOWN POWERS:

Computer Transmission. Can instantly transfer personality and memory to any specially created cybernetic device. Can control multiple bodies at the same time.

AFTERMATH: If they defeat or escape the Mandroids, the PCs are home free. Machinesmith's robots won't follow them outside the building.

Fury has sent a special armored truck to carry the Core. The truck is waiting outside SHIELD Central's hidden entrance.

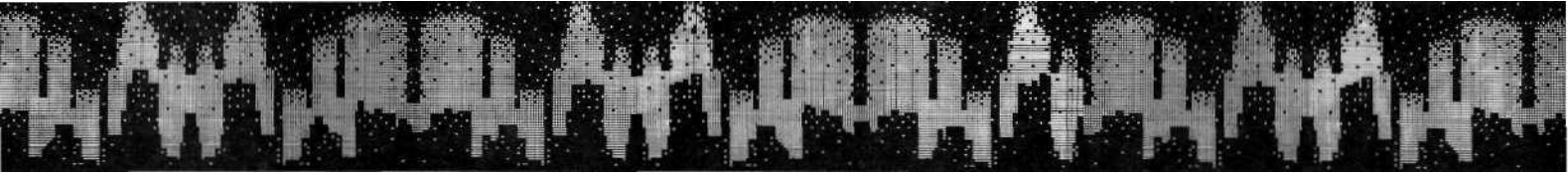
Do the PCs still have the Power Core? If not, Fury chews them out and sends in the Avengers as soon as they return to Manhattan.

If the PCs got the Core, the truck carries them all to storage facilities on Avengers Island. By a convenient coincidence, the Avengers return in time to dispose of the Core safely, probably with Thor's lightning.

(If the players are Avengers themselves, the truck carries the Core to Four Freedoms Plaza, where Reed Richards returns in time to dump it into the Negative Zone.)

KARMA:

Retrieving and disposing of the Power Core: +30.



Shutting down a significant part of SHIELD Central: +10.

THE UNITED NATIONS

SUMMARY: Machine Man applies to the UN to be recognized by the world as a sentient being. The robot Ultron tries to sabotage this attempt.

Note: Try to introduce Machine Man as a friend of the PCs in another encounter before running this scenario.

SET-UP: The sentient robot Machine Man requests the PCs to testify in his cause at the United Nations. By presenting his case to the world, he says, he prepares society to accept sentient robots as thinking, feeling beings. The PCs should find it hard to refuse his request.

The adventure begins as Machine Man addresses the General Assembly. In a moving speech, he speaks of his emotions, such as his affection for his creator, and of his love of existence. The delegates appear to receive him well.

Suddenly, however, Machine Man sparks, hisses, and begins squawking, "Death! Destruction! Kill you all!" He extends his arms, seizes a couple of delegates, and strides through a wall!

For this scenario, use the United Nations map included in this set.

ADVENTURE: For Machine Man's abilities, see the abbreviated listing below.

Machine Man has been possessed by Ultron-11 (see Judge's Book, p. 53). The malevolent robot's intellect survived its most recent destruction by a last-second transmission into a nearby computer, and from there into the global data network.

Monitoring diplomatic channels, Ultron-11 learned of Machine Man's cause. The psychotic Ultron believes Machine Man helped to destroy Ultron's robot mate, Jocasta. In revenge, Ultron now hopes to destroy Machine Man, or at least his chances for acceptance by humanity.

The robot heads for the open lawn west of the UN complex. There he throws the diplomats at his feet and tries to grab more innocent civilians. If the PCs attack, Ultron/Machine Man rips up the Statue of Peace (including its 15-foot-high pedestal, weighing about five tons) and throws it at them. Ultron purposely fights badly, since he wants the PCs to destroy Machine Man.

During battle with Machine Man/Ultron, the PCs can realize what is going on by reading the robot's thoughts; by detecting a high-density transmission beam that targets Machine Man (this is what allows Ultron to control him); or by deduction. Ultron does a poor imitation of Machine Man's manner, and various clues may tip off PCs.

For instance, Ultron, impersonating Machine Man, "takes blame" for Machine Man's past offenses (as Ultron views them). "I don't deserve to live, since I caused Jocasta's destruction!" he says, seemingly in an ecstacy of self- humiliation. His speech patterns are notably different as well.

If the PCs realize, before they destroy him, that Machine Man is being controlled, they can trace Ultron's control beam, or (if they lack this ability) alert PCs notice an unmarked van illegally parked across the street from the UN. Atop the van is a small satellite dish.

From this van, packed full of advanced cybernetic equipment, Ultron's computer intellect guides Machine Man by remote control. By destroying the van (which is of Excellent material strength), the PCs can free Machine Man from Ultron's control. If you want a longer adventure, they can even confront Ultron's new robot body. Machine Man gladly joins in the battle!

Machine Man
"Aaron Stack," insurance investigator

Here is an abbreviated listing of Machine Man's abilities. For more information, consult MU2, *Gamer's Handbook of the Marvel Universe.*

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Ex	Ex	Rm	Un	Rm	In	Rm

Health: 170 Karma: 100
Resources: Typical(6) Popularity: 20
KNOWN POWERS:
Anti-Gravity Generators. Silent hovering or flight at Feeble speed.
Extendable Limbs. Arms and legs work at three areas range. -1 CS Strength per area distance beyond one area.
Environmental Independence. Invulnerable to poisons and vacuum; need not eat, drink, sleep, or breathe.
Heating/Cooling Systems. Hands project heat or cold of Remarkable intensity, radius three areas.
Electricity. Incredible damage, range touch only. Endurance FEAT to avoid passing out for 1-10 turns.
Pistol Hands. Index fingers are .357 Magnums. Good damage, range one area.
Power Source Dependency. -3 CS Endurance per hour if kept in dark over 40 hours. Shuts down when Endurance reaches Feeble. Regains consciousness and +1 CS Endurance per turn when exposed to sunlight.

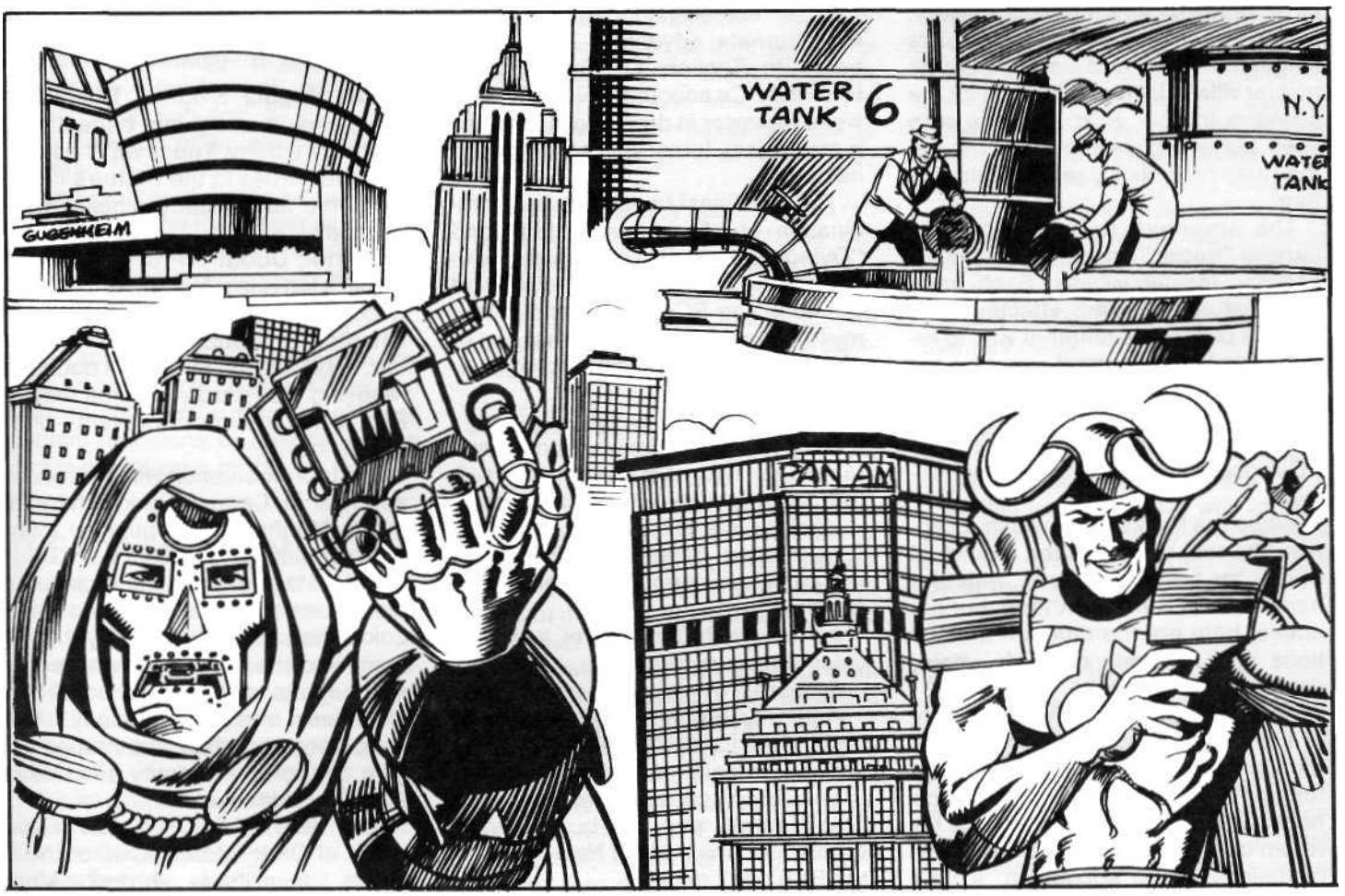
AFTERMATH: Obviously, the UN delegates will become hostile to Machine Man's request. If the PCs do nothing, the delegates reject his request. But give the PCs a chance to make speeches to the delegates. Judge the soundness of their arguments for Machine Man's humanity, and the evidence they present that Ultron controlled him.

If the PCs' arguments ring false or weak, the delegates vote down Machine Man's bid for recognition.

If the PCs argue well and present solid evidence of Ultron's control, the UN tables the matter "pending further investigation." This is the best result the PCs can get, unless the Judge decides to deviate from the established Marvel Universe (where Machine Man's legal status remains undetermined).

KARMA:
Destroying Machine Man: -ALL.
Severely damaging him: -20.
Uncovering evidence of Ultron's control: +10.
Arguing convincingly to UN delegates: +20.

CAMPAIGN SCENARIO: FUN CITY



"Fun City" is a full-length scenario for a Judge and two to six player characters (PCs). The adventure is designed with no particular characters in mind. It can fit into an existing campaign, or you can use its optional Campaign Kickoff to create a group of new super heroes and start a campaign. The playing time is highly variable, from a single play-session to an extended saga lasting many sessions.

The adventure is designed to illustrate many of the precepts of good adventure and campaign design discussed in Chapters 8 and 9. At several points, the text points out ways to stage scenes, motivate characters, and add atmosphere. Judges who want to improve their scenarios can study these sections for demonstrations of the ideas outlined in the first half of this book.

ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

The citizens of New York (sometimes nicknamed "Fun City") begin acting strangely—even for them. At first, the PC heroes have their hands full just controlling people's weird actions. Then several villains show up at various spots around town, acting as loony as everyone else!

Eventually, after gathering and sifting through many clues, the heroes locate the headquarters of the mastermind behind the plot. After a battle, the heroes must decide how to return New York to normal.

The Goal

As is described above, the PCs must discover the cause of this strange behavior (Solve Mystery), find the antidote, and restore New York to normal (Rescue, Thwart Nefarious Plot). The first scene points the way toward a scientist who may be able to help the PCs identify the cause.

The Villain

Who is the villain, and how has he brainwashed the city? Is it—

—the Maggia, using chemicals in the water supply to create a city of drug addicts?

—Doctor Doom, using high-tech super-science to bring the city to its knees?

—or Loki, god of mischief, using his powerful magic to gain revenge on his half-brother, Thor?

Or is one of these three manipulating another? Can all three be respon-

sible? Is the culprit some mysterious new villain?

"Fun City' gives you a complete, almost ready-to-play story framework. However, you pick its locations, set its length and pace, and even choose its master villain! In this way you tailor the scenario to your PCs, and you also keep players guessing even though they may have illicitly read this adventure.

The adventure is built with three parallel "tracks," one for each of three possible master villains. Each track also features different effects of the villain's plot, and a different way to return New York to normal.

You can create a fourth track using your own villain. In this way, you customize the scenario to reflect your PCs' goals and their "personal" villain.

When the tracks differ within a section, the text describes the individual tracks by beginning each with the name of its villain in **boldface.** For example, here are the different motivations and methods of each villain, drawn from Chapter 8:

The Maggia: The Silvermane family of this crime cartel wants Wealth. To recoup narcotics business lost to the Kingpin's crime operation, the mob hopes to create an army of addicts for whom they would be the sole supplier of their addictive substance, a new drug, "Enchantment." So its method is Vice-Peddling.

Doctor Doom: Doom, of course, wants Power. He uses biomedical technology to grind New York beneath his heel, thereby showing that the world should acknowledge him as its master (Extortion).

Loki: The god of mischief has created a fiendish new deathtrap for Thor, his old enemy (Vengeance motive). Loki uses magic to create the disturbance in Manhattan, hoping to lure Thor into his trap (Manipulation).

Your own villain: For detailed lists of motives and methods, consult Chapter 8.

The Adventure Hook

As discussed in Chapter 8, a good beginning draws the players into the scenario and gets them emotionally involved in achieving its goal. The optional Campaign Kickoff does this using the Grim Necessity idea outlined in Chapter 8. The heroes must find the antidote to the drug that gave them their powers, or they will die horribly!

In an established campaign, use the alternate adventure hook given below in Section 1, "Traffic Jam." Here the PCs encounter New Yorkers' weird behavior in dramatic fashion, as a traffic jam turns into sheer weirdness.

The emotional hook here is a combination of "Friend Imperiled" and "Dying Delivery." The lunatic who caused the traffic jam is an old friend of one of the PCs. The friend shows mysterious abilities, but passes out or dies just after giving a tantalizing clue.

NPCs

Most of the population of downtown Manhattan figures in this adventure. A few prominent NPC roles used here:

villains (your choice);

henchmen (Maggia thugs, and a few ambitious normals with temporary powers);

a Friend with Dark Secret, who provides the adventure hook;

Stoolies;

Authority Figures (police officers, and the rector of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Campaign Kickoff);

and cameo appearances by Guest-Star Heroes, who are busy solving problems in the parts of New York that the PCs don't get to.

Conditions and Dilemmas

In this adventure most of the"bad guys" are innocent bystanders under the influence of villainous mayhem. Thus the PC heroes can't just bash them at will. Heroes must devise ways to control the crazy Manhattanites without seriously injuring them.

In the Campaign Kickoff, the heroes also have a Deadline. They must find the antidote to a drug that gave them their powers. If they don't find it within a certain time limit, farewell.

Deathtrap

In the track using Loki, the god of mischief is preparing an insidious trap for Thor. When the PCs appear, Loki places them in the deathtrap as a trial run while he searches for the Thunder God. This is a form of the Demolition Zone deathtrap described in Chapter 8. For more details, see Section 5.

The Grand Finale

The scenario gives three different finales that vary according to the choice of master villain. Here are summaries of the finales, typed according to the broad categories given in Chapter 8.

The Maggia: Slugfest. The Maggia maintains a drug lab beneath the Statue of Liberty. Thugs with hostages lure the heroes to the Statue's crown, while the family leaders below try to escape.

Doctor Doom : Prevented Deed. Doom's lab is located beneath the city, accessible by the routes discussed in Chapter 6, "Underground Manhattan." The lab, run by a robot double, is readying a dastardly scheme that the PCs arrive in time to prevent—or do they?

Loki: Confrontation with Entity. Loki appears in Central Park, where he molds Manhattan's population into a living deathtrap for Thor.

Unless they are extremely powerful, the heroes have little chance to defeat Loki. Instead, he probably throws them into the deathtrap, where they will be absorbed into the horrible shapeless mass of humanity. However, once absorbed, the heroes can gain control of the entity and use its power to defeat Loki!

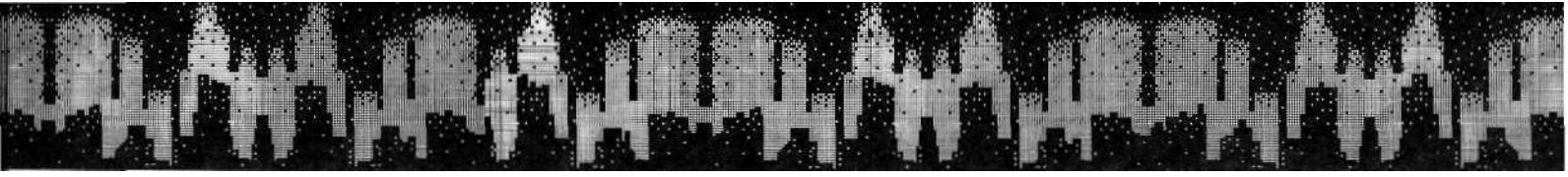
Your own villain : Extortion? Revelation of Dark Secret? One of the finales described above? Many possibilities are outlined in Chapter 8.

Materials Needed

For this adventure you will need the Advanced Set, this campaign set (including the four maps), and a selection of super villains that you want to send against your PCs. These can come from the Advanced Set, from other MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game products, or design your own.

If you start with the Campaign Kickoff, get together with your players before the game starts so they can design their new heroes. Make sure they are of approximately the same power level.

One more thing: Read the whole adventure before you try to run it. You'll be glad you did!



CAMPAIGN KICKOFF

SUMMARY

This section outlines an optional campaign premise. It defines the characters' environment, goals, and reasons for hanging together, and even gives an origin for the heroes' powers. This optional origin closely resembles that of the vigilantes Cloak and Dagger. The PCs begin as normal human beings, orphans or derelicts whom the Maggia kidnaps for drug experimentation.

Code-named "Enchantment," the drug brings out latent powers in the PCs, as a similar drug did in Cloak and Dagger. This can be because of latent genetic mutations or chance, as the Judge and players prefer.

THE CAMPAIGN TYPE

Here is a description of the "Fun City" campaign's four aspects, as outlined in Chapter 9 of this book:

Genre: Low-powered super heroics. This is an Urban campaign, as defined in Chapter 10, and is set in the authentic New York, "accept no substitutes."

Tone: Dark, realistic, an urban nightmare, much like those of Daredevil or Cloak and Dagger.

Concept: An experimental Maggia drug has given the PCs unusual powers. But it has also stricken them with side effects. The PCs band together to fight the Maggia and drug dealers in general, hoping to spare innocent people the terrible experiences they themselves have undergone.

Rationale: In the short term, the PCs must stick together to find the antidote to their drug-induced illness. In the long term, they draw emotional support from one another, because they have few contacts left in their normal worlds.

SET-UP

This premise works best with fairly young, human characters who have few or no social attachments—no friends, relatives, or other people who worry about where they are.

Before the adventure proper begins, you may want to start play by exploring the characters' "normal" lives, before they get their powers in this kickoff. Have them describe where they lived and what they did to survive. Do some role-playing here, so the players can get a sense of their characters.

Each introductory section (if you run them) ends as the character is kidnapped by mysterious, brutal thugs.

Then the actual set-up for this kickoff begins. It is near midnight. The characters wake up together in a darkened hall. No, not a hall—a church.

St. Patrick's Cathedral

This neo-Gothic cathedral, opened in 1879, is the center of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of New York. The folder covering this book shows the cathedral's interior, and a top view of the exterior appears on one of the maps of midtown Manhattan included in this set.

Unknown to the law-abiding staff, the Silvermane family of the Maggia is using the cathedral's Crypt tonight as a temporary repository for its experimental subjects. Its thugs intend to kill the drug victims as soon as they document the effects of Enchantment. A henchman, impersonating a staff member, has dismissed the cathedral staff and now keeps watch to turn away intruders.

While the PCs slept, the Maggia henchmen injected them with Enchantment. This produced fever, delirium, and trembling. As the PCs awaken, they are groggy from Enchantment's effects; if you wish, use the Grogginess rule from "Deathtraps" in Chapter 8, or just have the players role-play this.

Waking Up

The PCs awaken, bound, on the steps of the Sanctuary (see interior map). In yellow candlelight from the high altar, they see the shadows of the upper nave, and beyond it, shining through the gloom, the beautiful round Rose Window above the western entrance. The geometric patterns of this huge stained-glass window seem to the PCs to throb hypnotically.

A thug in a tailored business suit speaks into a walkie-talkie nearby. He describes the PCs' symptoms and behavior, clinically, with no compassion in his voice. If any of the PCs have mutated into bestial or monstrous forms, the thug may sound a bit rattled; otherwise, he's unmoved by their suffering.

The awakening PCs hear a deep, accented voice from the walkie- talkie. "Very well, they are reacting like the last batch. Watch to see if they come out of it well enough, then dispose of them as usual."

Meanwhile, the cathedral rector has discovered the Maggia thugs. Entering the nave, he shouts, "What's going on here? Who are you? Leave at once!" The thugs draw their revolvers.

At this point, the PCs wrench their attention away from the Rose Window's hypnotic patterns. They discover their new powers.

ADVENTURE

If you wish, the adventure can start before this set-up. The setting is not the cathedral, but the minds of the player characters. Under the drug's influence, each falls prey to hallucinogenic nightmares of attacks, pursuit, and horrific alterations of his or her own body.

In these visions, the PC victims may spontaneously manifest imaginary versions of the super powers they will really end up with. As they defeat the phantoms of their nightmares, they awaken.

This optional beginning works best for Judges who can handle atmospheric description and staging.

The Fight

The newborn heroes are tied with ordinary ropes (Good strength). Those who metamorphosed into nonhuman shape are tied especially strongly (Excellent strength). More than likely, these ropes prove no obstacle to the heroes. If the ropes would be too strong, reduce their strength to let the heroes break free.

Use the Maggia thug stats given in Chapter 4 of the *Campaign Sourcebook.* There are two thugs for each PC.

If these fall before every PC has had a chance to show off his or her new powers, have more Maggiosi storm in from the street as reinforcements.

If a PC has spiffy new movement powers, exercise them. Several thugs flee the cathedral to a waiting armored limousine outside. Plan a chase across midtown Manhattan on the maps in this set. (For the limo's statistics, see "Security Limo" on p. 48 of the Player's Book and Chapter 5 of the *Campaign Sourcebook.)*

The Rector

In the Marvel Universe, St. Patrick's spiritual and managerial head is Father Henry Truelock. As the Maggia thugs threaten him, he stares them down and tries to reason with them. Unless the heroes interfere, the thugs shoot Father Henry for his trouble. He falls unconscious. However, if you want to keep him around, his wound is superficial.

Father Henry Truelock

Rector, St. Patrick's Cathedral

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Pr	Ty	Ty	Ty	Gd	Gd	Gd

Health: 22 Karma: 30

Resources: Good(10) Popularity: 2

One does not rise to this lofty position without great amounts of talent, savvy, integrity, and connections. Father Henry has them all, as well as scrupulous devotion to his faith and his flock.

Father Henry answers to the archbishop, a venerable figure best left offstage in any scenario.

Appearance: 5'6", 150 lbs. In his late 50s. Thick gray hair, green eyes, bifocal spectacles. Forthright, no-nonsense manner, but compassionate. Not given to "superstitious nonsense."

Talents: Management, counseling, psychology, politics.

Typical Dialogue : "Now, not another word. You're hurt, and that's all there is to it. I'll fetch a sister to bind your wounds."

Story Function: In this kickoff, an innocent to be rescued. In the ongoing "Fun City" campaign, Father Henry can be an important NPC. In gratitude for his rescue, he may set up the PCs in a base of operations near the cathedral. He has many important connections in New York's spiritual and political communities.

AFTERMATH

After the heroes have mopped up the thugs, they can leave or look around. They find empty, unlabeled vials that held the experimental drug, but no antidote (of course).

The door to the cathedral's crypt is open. At the bottom of a short flight of stairs, the Maggiosi have left three bodies: drug victims, much like the PCs, but not so lucky. The small crypt holds the remains of past archbishops, cardinals, and rectors of the cathedral. There is nothing here of immediate interest in the adventure.

The Thugs

All of the thugs know Enchantment's ordinary effects (see Section 1) and the name of the Maggia scientist who created it: Dr. Pablo Azcona Mortega, a brilliant biochemist employed by the Maggia's Central American operation. But they don't know where Mortega is now.

The thugs have tested several versions of Enchantment. They know broad facts about the plot to dump the drug in the Central Park Reservoir and create an army of addicts (see below). But they obviously had no idea this latest version could grant super powers!

If called, Dr. Mortega himself answers the walkie-talkie. This is the deep-voiced man with the Spanish accent that the PCs overheard earlier. For Mortega's abilities, see Section 3.

Mortega, a sadistic louse, taunts the PCs with mock casualness. "So sorry I cannot observe you in person," he says. "Unfortunately, I cannot leave my current lady friend." Of course, he won't reveal his whereabouts.

(Judge's note: Mortega can be found in the Maggia's drug lab beneath the Statue of Liberty—his "lady friend." If one of your PCs can trace radio waves, they can locate him there. That would make this a very short adventure!)

Learning of **the Deadline**

After learning these facts (or if they try to leave the cathedral without learning them), the PCs experience wracking pain! Describe the agony as graphically as you like. Treat this as a temporary loss of one-fourth of each PC's current Health total.

The spasm passes quickly, but this should cue the players to wonder about Enchantment's side effects. They can learn these from the Maggia thugs or from Mortega over the walkie-talkie.

Enchantment killed all the Maggia's previous subjects, painfully, unless they took more Enchantment or a stabilizing agent that Mortega devised, code-named "Dispel." The Maggia loves this side effect, for it gives victims "incentive" to keep using the drug.

The PCs have to find Dispel, or they will soon die. Perhaps the stabilizing agent will remove their powers; they have no way to know. But they cannot live without Dispel.

Mortega has it. The Maggia thugs, though, don't know where Mortega is. Of course, Mortega himself refuses to give any to the PCs—"Why allow more super heroes to live?"

But either Mortega or a thug accidentally drops a clue. He mentions, "Good thing the previous versions haven't shown such effects. Otherwise the Central Park plan would put us hip-deep in powered goons."

Mortega says nothing else, but the thugs can be persuaded to give more details. The Silvermane family is dumping the earlier version of Enchantment into the Central Park Reservoir, to turn the whole city into customers for the drug.

When was this to happen? The thugs aren't sure; sometime around now, they think. (Actually, it happened several hours ago, and the drug has already infiltrated the water supply.)

If the PCs don't want most of New York to become drug slaves, it seems they must rush to the Reservoir. Perhaps there they can also find a supply of Dispel.

KARMA

Rescuing Father Henry: +20.

Getting information from Mortega: +5.

Give other awards as usual.

Section 1: TRAFFIC JAM

SUMMARY

The heroes first realize something is rotten in Manhattan when they come upon a huge automobile gridlock. Nothing out of the ordinary in New York—until they see the drugged-out, super-powered loony causing the jam.

For this section, use the data given in Chapter 5 of the *Campaign Sourcebook,* "On the Sidewalks of New York."

SET-UP

This encounter can take place at any time of day or night. If this scene follows the Campaign Kickoff, the heroes stumble on the traffic jam at night, en route to Central Park Reservoir. If they take the most direct route from St. Patrick's Cathedral, this leads them up Fifth Avenue or Avenue of the Americas. The traffic jam is at Grand Army Plaza and Pulitzer Memorial Fountain, at the southeast corner of the Park.

Otherwise, the heroes are visiting a Hotspotofthe Judge's choice. Ask the players if their characters want to do something in particular before the adventure begins—buy a present for a beloved NPC, follow up on an earlier case at police headquarters, or visit a tailor to get a new costume. Any excuse works if it gets the heroes into the city.

After completing their business, the PCs notice a traffic jam: cars sitting idle, horns honking, air heavy with auto exhaust. People are yelling or (if it's daytime) sunbathing on the hoods of their cars. Ahead, the heroes hear noises of car crashes ... and screams of terror.

The source of the noise is a single individual: an ugly, misshapen person almost 20 feet tall. The individual, whose gender is up to you (see below), crouches before the Pulitzer Memorial Fountain, or some other source of water, like a broken water main or even a drinking fountain. He or she has ripped an awning away from the Plaza Hotel across the street (or any nearby building) to make a kind of diaper.

The giant sits in the intersection, happily stacking cars like blocks.

ADVENTURE

This bizarre giant child is actually a normal man or woman who has been "amplified" by the drug Enchantment. For some of the drug's effects, see below. It can also have other effects at your discretion. The victim had been drinking from the water source, and has become an early victim of the water's contaminant.

No one has been hurt yet, though the childish giant has crushed a few cars. However, people are panicking, and PCs can see an armed police SWAT team running toward the giant from a block away.

If the heroes don't just charge in blindly, attacking on sight, give one of the PCs a Reason FEAT of Poor intensity to spot the giant as a long-lost friend.

The Gigantic Friend

Which PC has the friend? Choose one who is likely to respond to old attachments and to remain loyal to the bonds of friendship. Establish that the friend was once close to the PC, perhaps in childhood or high school.

After that, they just drifted apart, without rancor. Don't make the giant a very close friend whose loss would hurt the PC deeply; after all, the giant may bite the dust within moments.

Speaking of this, the SWAT team will arrive within a few turns. The PCs should decide on a course of action. They might battle the giant; stop the SWAT team from attacking; or take the cars away from the giant. This provokes the childish giant to attack them in fury.

If players are dithering about choosing an action, have the giant lumber to its feet and wander toward the SWAT team. That should provoke action.

One clever way to resolve the situation is for a PC to act parental and command the giant to stop playing with its toys. They can get the giant out of people's way by sternly sending it into an open area of the park or to a wide plaza in front of a nearby skyscraper.

If the PCs have come here from the Campaign Kickoff, this scene becomes too light after that grim start. In this case, the giant behaves more violently, as a berserker with nothing of the childlike about it.

The giant

Friend of a player character

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Gd	Gd	In	In	Pr	Pr	Ty

Health: 100 Karma: 14

Resources: Poor(4) Popularity: 0

Note: The giant still recognizes his or her PC friend, and can even hold a conversation, though only at about a five-year-old's level. The giant tends toward contrariness, but responds to a firm tone from an authority figure.

AFTERMATH

Observers can tell the heroes that the gigantic friend had been acting strangely just before he "grew up." They say he was drinking from the drinking fountain, or dangling his bare feet in the Joseph Pulitzer Fountain, when he suddenly fell down, writhed, and began to grow. Then he woke up as a child.

Unfortunately, the observers who tell this to the PCs are themselves wiping away water from their lips, having just finished drinking from the fountain themselves. Within moments they begin acting childish. See the effects of Enchantment, below.

From this, the PCs should deduce that something has contaminated the city's water supply. PCs coming here from the Campaign Kickoff realize they're too late to prevent the drug's introduction into the Reservoir. No one is at the scene now. Only a few empty 55-gallon drums of Enchantment indicate the deed.

The heroes should try to warn the populace, as quickly and impressively as possible. To be effective, the warning should certainly involve the mass media, especially radio and television, or perhaps some unusual power. {Super shouting, perhaps?)

But the heroes need more than power; they need pull. Unless they are

well-connected, they may have trouble getting the authorities to believe the danger until it's too late. In fact, the authorities themselves may be thoroughly Enchanted when the PCs reach them!

Reports From All Over

When the SWAT team calms down, the police lieutenant in charge can relay to the heroes the reports he receives over his walkie-talkie. It seems that strange beings and odd behavior are being noticed all over the city.

Create any reports you like; these lead into the encounters of Section 2. Here are a few examples:

* In Times Square, super-strong kids are playing stickball, using streetlights as bats, with the big metal apple atop the Allied Chemical Tower as the ball.

* Security guards at the Metropolitan Museum of Art are calling one another childish names and playing cops-and-robbers with live ammo. They've been sent home, leaving the Met vulnerable to theft.

* At the United Nations, some of the diplomats are attacking others with canes and shoe heels. Diplomatic incidents may ensue unless they are stopped. The problem is, some of the diplomats are displaying superhuman powers.

There are uglier incidents. In Harlem and on the Lower East Side, riots have erupted. Warfare between gangs threatens to destroy Yancy Street.

New York's super heroes can be counted on to control most of this anarchy, but the PC heroes must do their part. And fast!

ENCHANTMENT'S EFFECTS

Here are Enchantment's effects as seen in later sections. The drug is transmitted by fluid, including the moisture of body contact, and takes effect within minutes of exposure. The effect's onset is marked by a sudden blush, dizziness, and these features:

1. Lowered inhibitions. Most of those affected simply become silly. They act iike children or adolescents, without regard to morality or public good. The PCs, most other super humans, and a few others are not so affected. If there is a question about a given individual, allow the victim an Excellent Reason or Endurance FEAT to avoid being affected by the drug.

2. Super-human abilities. Optionally, a small fraction of those affected—perhaps those with Type AB- Negative blood, or about one in 300 people—develops strange powers. These are left to you to design, as plot devices for later encounters. Obviously, given the encounter above, growth is a possibility!

A few of these people, who enjoy their powers and want to retain them, can become impromptu superpowered adversaries for the PCs. This is really just a way for you to introduce new villains into the campaign. See the next section, "The Hotspots Heat Up."

If you like, the cause of their powers can be the factor that produced powers in the PCs during the Campaign Kickoff.

If you use the Campaign Kickoff, the version of Enchantment that afflicts New York is not the same one that Maggia thugs gave the PCs. Because of this, the citizens' super powers can be different from those of the PCs, and are probably less powerful.

Whether the plot's mastermind knew of these effects depends on your choice of master villain. (The Maggia didn't, but Doctor Doom and Loki both did.)

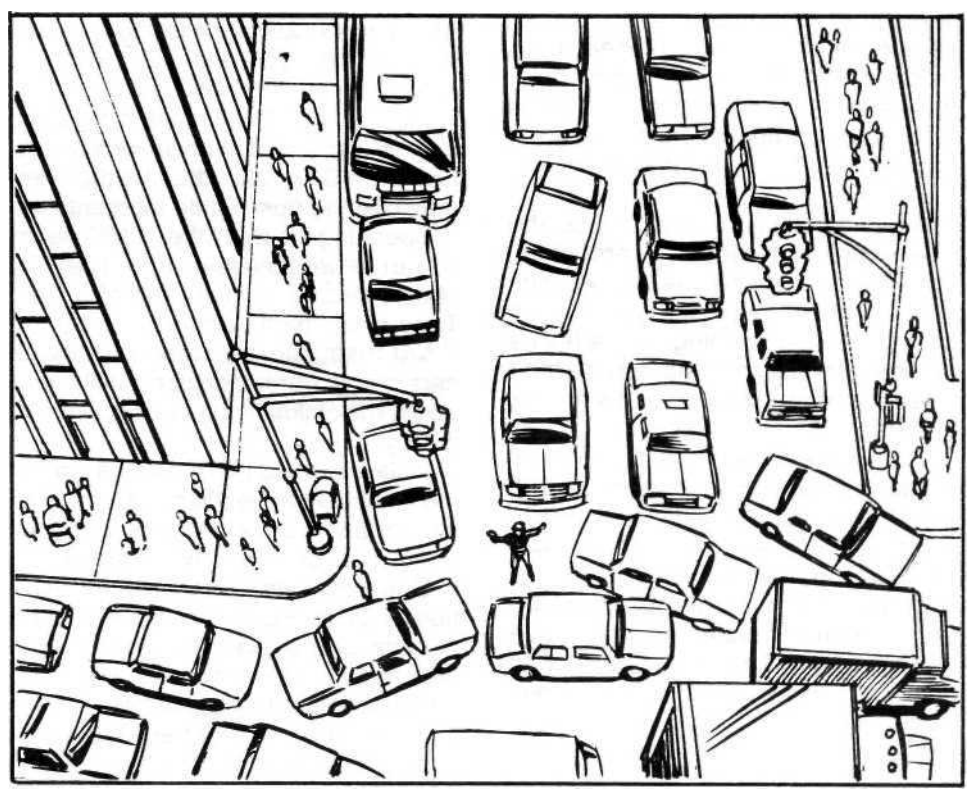
3. Collective power. If Loki is the master villain, the drug—his magical potion—causes its victims to merge together into huge, amoeboid masses. For more information, see Section 5.

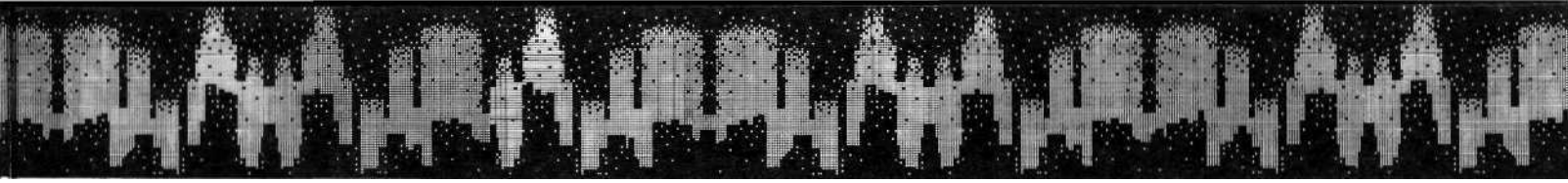
4. Side effects. Enchantment is physically addictive. If the user does not receive doses almost daily, he or she dies painfully. This effect can be counteracted by a stabilizing agent called Dispel. (See the Campaign Kickoff for more information.)

KARMA

Removing the giant's threat without unnecessary violence: +20.

Deducing that the water is contaminated (if PCs didn't know this already): +5.





Section 2: THE HOTSPOTS HEAT UP

SUMMARY

As the drug's influence spreads, chaos follows. Looting, vandalism, and violence occur at many points around the city. And the chaos also includes super villains . . . both those affected by the drug and unaffected felons who are taking advantage of the upheaval to pursue their own goals.

This section gives, not one encounter, but advice on creating your own encounters using the ingredients in this campaign set.

SET-UP

Though this is a short section, it is really the core of this scenario. **The** plot serves as a pretext for you, **the** Judge, to showcase the Hotspots you choose from the *Campaign Sourcebook.* The adventure can accommodate as many or as few as you like.

This flexibility also applies to your choice of villain(s) and goals. Think of each Hotspot encounter as a mini-scenario of your own design. In each, the heroes have two overall goals: control the chaos and turn the city back to normal. The rest is up to you.

Choosing Villains

As the Hotspot "Campaign Use" sections show, settings often imply their villains' goals. For instance, a bank is obviously there to be robbed, right?

When you choose a Hotspot to show off, think about the goal inherent in that setting, and then choose **a** villain who would logically work toward that goal. If you use the United Nations, for example, that may indicate to you an ambitious villain with an international flavor, such as the Mandarin. If you choose Yancy Street, the potential for gang warfare there could involve the Kingpin and his minions. And so on.

A complicating factor, if you choose to use it, is Enchantment. Any villain's goal can become twisted and unpredictable under the drug's influence. For example, the PCs happen upon Electro at Times Square, brace for a lightning bolt, then find he's only twisting neon signs into pretty patterns.

NPC heroes can be affected by the drug, too. They are less dangerous, since they still respect human life; but even so, an out-of- control hero can be an awesome sight. Suppose the PCs see the Thing and Wonder Man playing "kick the statue" in Central Park? The PCs don't have to fight the drugged NPC heroes, just reason with them to make them stop their childish games. (Play this as comic relief during the adventure.)

Don't forget that, if you desire, Enchantment creates a few new villains, **too.** These former normals can have powers that duplicate existing villains' (saving you the time of designing them), duplicate those of the PCs, or have powers that directly work against the PCs' weaknesses. However, these newcomers lack combat savvy and can probably be outwitted easily enough.

Staging

Recall the time of day. If these encounters follow the Campaign Kickoff, it is probably still night. Otherwise, these can take place at any time. If you use many encounters at widely spaced points in the city, set some of them in daytime and others at night as seems dramatically appropriate.

In setting up an adventure at a given location, remember *staging.* Keep these three points in mind:

1. How will the scene appear when the heroes arrive? There should be some immediate course of action visible, such as rescuing an innocent, preventing vandalism, or putting out a fire.

2. That done, how does the villain show up? If he's there as the PCs arrive, what dramatic pose has he struck? If he's not there, how does he blindside them? Play up any unique advantage the terrain offers. For instance, a villain at the World Trade Center could appear from around the far tower, opposite the ones the PCs are in.

3. What features of the location suggest ways to defeat the villain? At the Brooklyn Bridge, for instance, the heroes can push the villain off or fight him or her underwater. At Coney Island, a hero can send the bad guy spinning crazily on a carousel or Ferris wheel. Try to lead the adventure in a direction that prompts players to think of these clever methods.

Deadline Pressure

If you use the Campaign Kickoff, the heroes should gradually feel the side effects of the Enchantment drug. They may suffer Endurance losses, brief failures of super powers in non-critical situations, and other frightening effects.

None of the effects should be debilitating, but this adds tension to the quest to find Enchantment's antidote.

AFTERMATH

Obviously, each slugfest must have a point. Successful heroes should be rewarded with clues that help them move closer to their goal of restoring the city. Sometimes a clue only moves them to the next Hotspot encounter, but the players retain the illusion of progress.

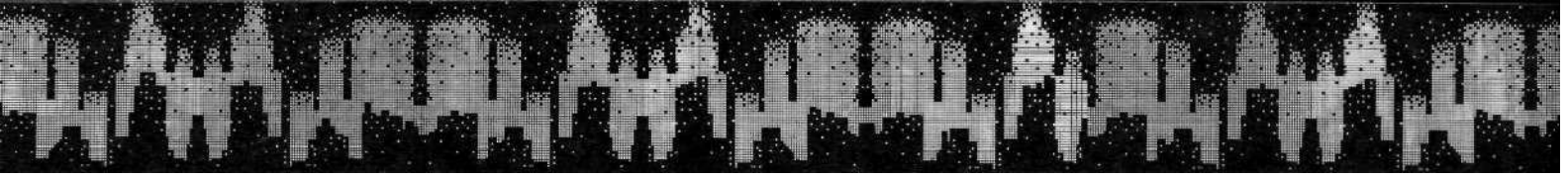
When you choose the Hotspots to use and prepare the encounters there, try to construct a set of clues, one or two per Hotspot, that lead gradually to the adventure's climax. Heroes can find these clues by interrogating the villains, or from drug-crazed bystanders who witnessed or overheard the clues.

The clues gradually reveal: (a) the master villain's motive in creating the havoc; (b) a way the heroes can defeat the villain; and (c) the villain's location. Potential clues are discussed in the Set-Up sections of each finale (the next three sections).

KARMA

Discovering an encounter's clue: +5.

Other awards vary according to the situation. For instance, rescuing hostages (+20 Karma); protecting valuable objects (+5 to +20); clever tactics and use of the surroundings in a battle (+5 to +10); and good role-playing (+15).



Section 3: THE MAGGIA TOUCH

SUMMARY

Use this finale if the Maggia is the adventure's master villain. The heroes have tracked the Maggia drug lab to the base of the Statue of Liberty. There they shut down the lab and confront the drug's creator in a battle atop the Statue.

SET-UP

Having drugged the populace, the Maggia now lets its new customers know that more of the same is available. The news spreads first through the criminal grapevine of informants and sleazeballs. Heroes with street contacts learn that Enchantment is available in concentrated form. "First taste was free," the contacts say, "but now it'll cost ya."

Clues from the Hotspots

With the Maggia as primary villains, the Hotspot encounters can easily feature Maggia-employed villains, thugs, and Maggia observers of random violence. Any of these, with proper persuasion, can become informers at the ends of various encounters. Genuine stoolies, junkies, and other figures on the edge of the criminal culture will also work.

Motive Clues: Straightforward. By feeding Enchantment to everyone in New York, the mob wants to create a huge customer base.

Clues to Methods of Defeat: In this order, the PCs hear the following: The Maggia used a Spanish-speaking scientist named Mortega to create the drug. He's an arrogant louse, but brilliant. He's very touchy about insults to his honor.

Location Clues: First, the PCs learn there is some underground lab. Then, that the lab is the one that used to be based on Ellis Island (Judge's note: the one that led to the origin of Cloak and Dagger). Then, that the source heard the Maggia didn't have to move it far.

Eventually a source mentions the major clue: The Maggia drug lab is code-named "Big Lady." When your players hear this, don't be surprised if they instantly deduce that the lab must be on Liberty Island, the home of the Statue of Liberty. Players can be very smart. But be ready with another encounter if they don't tumble right away.

Use the Statue of Liberty map included in this set.

ADVENTURE

On Liberty Island, PCs notice familiar "tourists" lurking in the restaurant and other buildings there. Well, the tourists are not exactly familiar themselves; but they have that air the PCs have seen before. The expensive suits, the casually arrogant stride, the glance that darts reflexively around—Maggia!

PCs can follow or interrogate the Maggia thugs. The trail leads to the base of the Statue and the Museum of Immigration inside. A concealed staircase at the back of an inconspicuous storage closet (not shown on the map) leads down one story to the Maggia drug lab.

One Maggia thug guards the bottom of the staircase, but he can be taken out easily without attracting attention from inside the lab.

The Maggia Drug Lab

Calling this a "lab" is flattery. It is not sterile, not organized, not even clean. This room, about 40 feet on a side, is a jumbled mess of tables, Bunsen burners, hotplates, Dutch ovens, and recycled oil drums. Stacks of gray drums almost fill one wall. The air is steamy and smells of formaldehyde. The only light comes from a few fluorescent lamps in the low ceiling.

In the lab there are three Maggia hoods per PC. Only one of the three per PC is a well-dressed Maggia lieutenant; each of these has a machine pistol ready, a backup revolver, a walkie-talkie, and a knife. The other two per PC are hoods in leather jackets, unarmed except for the chemical equipment they use to churn out supplies of Enchantment. In a firefight, the hoods improvise Molotov cocktails, formaldehyde in Plexiglas beakers, which do damage as flamethrowers (Players' Book, p. 43).

As soon as they spot the PCs, the lieutenants open fire. The rest withdraw, under their covering fire, to the line of oil drums against the far wall. There, sheltering behind the drums, they throw firebombs, one per hood every two turns.

Dr. Mortega

There is one more Maggia official here: Dr. Pablo Azcona Mortega, the Latin American scientist who designed Enchantment. If you used the Campaign Kickoff, the PCs may already have met him via walkie-talkie. Otherwise, the PCs have heard of him from the Hotspot clues.

If the PCs fight the thugs, they may notice Mortega heading upward through another concealed entrance. This one leads directly up into the interior of the Statue. He carries a supply of white powder—the antidote, Dispel! Turn this into a chase, described below.

If the PCs take out the Maggia thugs without a fight, Mortega is not present. He has overheard the PCs' victory on a thug's walkie-talkie, and he taunts the PCs that he has escaped them. "But I have what you want," he says. "Join me at the brow of my lady friend, where you will witness the true power of Enchantment."

The Race to the Head

If feasible, stage a chase up the Statue. Ideally, the PCs spot Mortega in the Museum on the first floor. He sees them as well, then grabs a woman or child nearby and holds a gun to his or her head. Panic ensues in the Museum.

The chase begins as Mortega, with or without hostage, kicks off his black boots, leaps into the shaft of the hydraulic elevator, and climbs up the sheer wall with the hostage in his arms! At the top, he tears through the ceiling with super-human strength and climbs onto the stairs leading to the Statue's crown.

This peculiar behavior results from Mortega's own ingestion of a heavy dose of Enchantment. This, as the PCs can learn from defeated Maggia

thugs, is a later version of the drug that afflicted Manhattan. If you used the Campaign Kickoff, Mortega has taken a much larger dose of the version that gave the PCs their powers.

In the Statue's crown, Mortega will take more hostages, barricade himself, and demand a helicopter so he can leave alive. Before he makes his demands, though, he intends to gauge his new powers in combat with the PCs.

Those powers? His first four abilities gain + 1 CS per turn of combat, up to a maximum of Shift-Y (Strength enough to lift the Statue). In addition to Wall-Crawling, Mortega also gains Absorption, Psi-Screen, Teleportation, and other powers of your choice. These begin at Excellent rank and increase +1 CS per round of combat to Sh-Y maximum.

Though the hostage and the crowded Statue staircase make it difficult, heroes may defeat Mortega on the way up the Statue. If this happens, they rescue the hostage (award Karma), but Mortega regains consciousness at a higher power level. He is going mad and is now obsessed with reaching the crown and attacking the heroes.

It's best if the heroes defeat Mortega as he reaches his maximum power level. This may prove too difficult, especially for the low-end heroes for whom the Maggia makes a suitable villain. If the heroes fail to defeat Mortega, the drug itself does him in.

As he reaches the height of his powers, he grows large, the way the giant did in Section 1. For a moment he grows childish and dull. In that moment, Mortega is vulnerable, because of the effects of his drug overdose. PCs can let loose their best attacks. Mortega crashes through the Statue's crown windows, flies a short way, then falls like a stone into the waters of New York Harbor.

Naturally, this being a super-heroic adventure, no body is found.

Dr. Pablo Azcona Mortega

F	A	S	E	R	I	**P**
Ex	Ty	Ty	Gd	Ex	Ex	Ty

Health: 42 ' Karma: 46
Resources: Ex(20) Popularity: -1

A Latin American native, Dr. Mortega studied at Empire State University many years ago. ESU can be a source of clues about him, notably about his arrogant nature, amorality, and his arrest and deportment for drug pushing on campus. He is now in America illegally.

Appearance: 5'10", 160 lbs. Swarthy complexion, thick black hair slicked back on a high forehead. Heavy black eyebrows, sinister expression. Wears a Maggia-style business suit, but with high black boots.

Talents and Contacts: Mortega has the Guns, Marksman, Chemistry, Biology, and Genetics talents, as well as high-level Criminal contacts.

Typical Dialogue: Spanish accent. Favors gloating or sneering speeches. "So, you heroes have decided to crush our little operation, yes? I think you are maybe the ones who will be crushed, yes?"

AFTERMATH

If you are using the Campaign Kickoff, the heroes discover supplies of Dispel in the drug lab or find the formula on Dr. Mortega's person (his body?). Go to Section 6.

Campaign Kickoff note: Does the drug neutralize the PCs' new powers? That would make this an awfully short campaign. (Although for a truly grim campaign, you can set up a long-term dilemma. The PCs can have super powers only when they take Enchantment. The longer they remain super human, the likelier it is that the drug kills them. Sounds horrible, doesn't it?)

Therefore, of course, the PCs still keep their powers. If one or more powers has turned out too weak or too powerful, taking Dispel adjusts it to a level you and the affected player can live with.

If you plan no links to other master villains, go to Section 6.

Links to Later Sections

The Maggia introduced this drug into the water supply. But if you choose, the Maggia can be merely a pawn for a different villain.

Doctor Doom: Doom engineered a hormone similar to epinephrine. Using Dr. Mortega (one of his lackeys), Doom manipulated the Maggia into serving as distributors. Their supply of Dispel turns out to be dishwashing soap, planted by Doom as a taunt.

Unlike the Maggia, Doom knew of the side effects described in Section 1. He allowed them to exist, since they increase the chaos. He had no fear of more super humans, since Doom fears no one.

Evidence for Doom's role appears quite dramatically, as Doom himself announces his scheme to all the world. See the beginning of the next section.

If the PCs uncover evidence of Doom's manipulation, they can enlist the Silvermane family's aid. Doom has violated their honor, so they want revenge. The criminal grapevine knows the location of Doom's local underground base. Silvermane bosses gladly give this information to the PCs, hoping that each side will destroy the other.

Loki: Enchantment lives up to its name, for it is really magical. Loki concocted the potion, knowing of its side effects. Then he either introduced it into the Reservoir himself or mind-controlled a Maggia thug into doing so.

PCs can discover this by magical detection spells, or just by finding a witness to the Reservoir escapade. "There was this other guy behind the crooks," says the stoolie. "He was standing in plain sight, but they didn't even see him. He had the weirdest helmet. . . ."

Can the PCs persuade the Maggia to aid them? No. Maggia family heads have no desire to match strengths with a god, even if he was controlling them.

Your **own villain:** Does he or she have Maggia connections? Powers of mental control, disguise, or illusion that would let him or her use the Maggia? How might the PCs find out about this, and how would the Maggia family heads react?

KARMA

Discovering the lab (without undue manipulation by the Judge): +10.

Rescuing Mortega's hostages: +20.

Unnecessary damage to the Statue: -10, and popularity drops by 5.

Section 4: SHOWDOWN WITH DOCTOR DOOM

SUMMARY

Use this finale if Doctor Doom is the adventure's master villain. The heroes locate Doom's laboratory, confront Doom, and can either negotiate or fight. The outcome depends on the players' actions and the assumptions you made in the adventure's set-up. In any case, this Doom is actually one of the Latverian dictator's robot doubles.

Doom's lab contains Dispel, the antidote to Enchantment's side effects. PCs can steal its formula and rescue the city (and, if you use the Campaign Kickoff, themselves as well).

SET-UP

Doom has engineered this plan in order to demonstrate his enormous power to the world. So at some point he claims credit for it publicly.

The Announcement

Doom announces his role after you run a few, but not all, of your planned Hotspot encounters (from Section 2). In a dramatic satellite broadcast on every wavelength, Doom publicly claims responsibility for the chaos, gloats at his power, and offers the antidote to Enchantment—in return for an oath of absolute obedience by citizens of the United States. "Think well," he says. "I can do as much to any city in the world!"

Clues from the Hotspots

Motive Clues: "The Announcement" gives all the information PCs could want.

Clues to Methods of Defeat: Many people know a lot about Doctor Doom. Traditionally, his weakness has been his overweening pride and arrogance. He also has a strong, if peculiar, code of honor.

Doom does not usually employ this "scorched earth" policy of blackmail. Even if the city accepts his deal, it seems unlikely that, after Enchantment, there will be enough left of New York City for him to rule.

Location Clues: Perceptive heroes, especially those with enhanced hearing, can overhear a distinctive squeal under Doom's voice in his announcement. Perhaps it takes them an encounter or two to identify it: the sound of a subway train turning a corner, close by. This, and perhaps clues from Doom's underlings encountered as Hotspot villains, indicate an underground base in the subway system.

How do the heroes locate the base? Perhaps they can trace the broadcast transmission. If they need time to pull together the right equipment, Doom can gloat further in follow-up announcements every few encounters.

Also, after the initial announcement, New York is crawling with FBI and CIA agents, not to mention any super hero who could get here fast enough. They could have the tracking equipment needed, or have a hot lead the PCs can follow. Or PCs may encounter an NPC hero with tracking abilities, perhaps Daredevil or Doctor Strange. The NPC hero can lead them into the subways. Then, in a chance encounter with an Enchantment-crazed bum, the NPC gets seriously wounded in the neck. This leaves the PCs to go the rest of the way.

For a description of the subways, see Chapter 6 of the *Campaign Sourcebook,* "Underground Manhattan," and the maps on the folder of this book.

The entrance to Doom's laboratory headquarters is several hundred yards up from the IRT subway line's 51st Street stop—by no coincidence, very near Four Freedoms Plaza. Doom delighted in the irony of being so near his lifelong foes. The entrance is an Amazing steel door, locked with a Monstrous lock and concealed by a holographic projector to resemble a concrete support pillar. A staircase leads down one area to the lab.

The Laboratory

To set up this scene, use Map C, "Typical Interiors," from the Advanced Set. Treat areas N through P as Doom's lab, and everything beyond them as rock.

Area P is the main laboratory; metal staircases (15 feet high, Good strength) lead up to areas Q and R; and areas N and O overlook the central lab. These observation decks are 15 feet (one area) above the lower level, and are separated from the lab by Plexiglas windows of Excellent strength. All walls and doors are Remarkable-strength steel. The doors are hermetically sealed but unlocked, **and** have windows of Good-strength Plexiglas.

The key to the rooms:

N = Transmitter studio, from which Doom's robot broadcast his announcement.

O = The secondary biochem lab where Doom synthesized Enchantment. This is a small version of the main lab (see P, below). A computer contains the formulae for both Enchantment and Dispel, its antidote. With an Excellent Reason FEAT roll, a character with Computer skill can penetrate Doom's security system and get the formulae. This takes four turns.

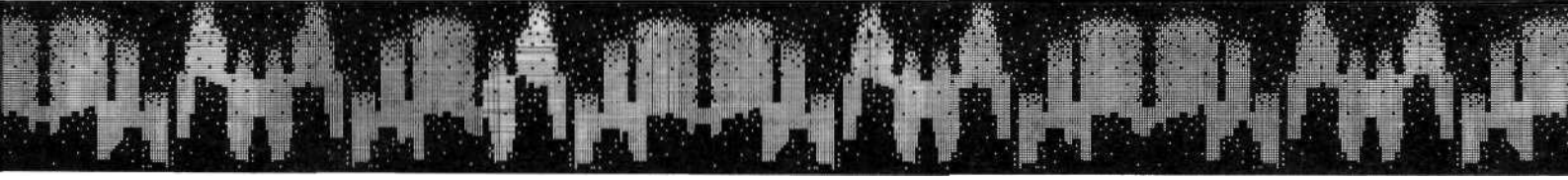
A large metal cannister in a south corner of the room weighs one ton and has walls of Excellent strength. Inside is a white powder, Doom's supply of Dispel.

Near the cannister is a powered cargo-lifter suit, a metal exoskeleton that gives the wearer Remarkable Strength (enough to lift the cannister), but reduces Agility to Poor and movement to one area per turn. It takes two turns to climb into and activate the suit, which weighs 400 pounds and is of Remarkable-strength steel.

P = Main laboratory. Huge steel vats of bubbling enzymes—enough Enchantment to enslave New York. Pipes, twisting glass tubes, blinking wall panels, and a central control console of Typical strength. Generic Mad Scientist's Lab.

The vats are sealed (Excellent-strength steel). If any PC falls in the vats, he or she undergoes the mutation described for Dr. Mortega in the previous section, and will die within minutes unless given the drug's antidote, Dispel.

On one wall is a large fiber-optic monitor screen (Incredible strength). As the heroes enter, this is turned off. Later, the real Doctor Doom will address the PCs via this screen.



Q = Storage. Cannisters of chemicals and laboratory supplies. None of these includes Dispel. With a Reason FEAT, a scientifically trained character can find a chemical that inflicts Incredible damage on the Doom robot's armor.

Hidden in one corner is a recharging station for the robot.

R = Power supply for the laboratory. This is a small nuclear-fission reactor, a concrete cube 30 feet on a side (Monstrous-strength walls, Monstrous Strength to lift). In front of it are numerous display and control panels.

The reactor is running smoothly. Any damage that penetrates the concrete liberates toxic plutonium dust into the air (Unearthly intensity Toxin if it is breathed or contacts the skin; see rules, Judge's Book, p. 12) and sends the reactor toward a meltdown in 1 d10 + 10 turns. A player with appropriate skills can prevent this with an Amazing Reason FEAT roll and 1d10 turns of total absorption in the task at hand.

The meltdown inflicts Monstrous energy damage and is a CL1000 Toxin within the lab. Fortunately, the solid rock around the lab prevents the radiation from spreading further.

Tell players who ask, or who actively look for strange features of the lab, that there are no facilities for food, water, or sanitation. This is mildly strange even for Doom, whose armor is self-contained. This provides a clue that Doom is not real, but a robot.

ADVENTURE

As the PCs arrive, the Doom robot is in the main lab supervising the production of more Enchantment. The robot regularly patrols the rooms; this may let it discover intruding PCs in other rooms, or may leave the the main lab unguarded for a moment so the PCs can sneak in.

When and if the robot discovers the PCs, it first gloats at its success (assuming the role of Doom, of course), then demands their surrender. When and if they refuse, it attacks.

The PCs want to stop the menace to New York and (in the Campaign Kick-off version) get the Dispel they need to stay alive. Broadly speaking, the players have three general options:

1. Overpower the Doom robot. Use the robot given on page 44 of the Judge's Book. This robot is equipped for combat, and attacks when it seems logical to do so.

2. Steal the Dispel, or steal its formula and synthesize it themselves.

This requires stealth or speed. The Dispel supply may be booby-trapped (see Aftermath, below). Of course, the Doom robot does not knowingly let the PCs work uninterrupted at the computer.

If it looks like the PCs will escape with the Dispel or the formula, the Doom robot heads to the nuclear reactor and sets it on Auto-Destruct. "Flight is now useless," it says. "Be honored that you will join Doom in his final resting place." The reactor core melts in 10 turns.

If the PCs escape with the formula and synthesize Dispel, go to Section 6.

3. Negotiate with Doom. This is difficult, but the robot's Reason is weaker than Doom's (by design) and therefore it can be tricked or persuaded more easily. Many tactics are possible; you can determine their success. A likely approach appeals to Doom's desire to rule an intact kingdom, not a wasteland.

If the PCs can convince Doom that Enchantment will lead to the city's destruction, and that leading a destroyed city would be unworthy of his greatness, the robot may relent. As a gesture of his "mercy, a quality that marks great rulers," he grants the PCs the supply of Dispel. (That robot is due for reprogramming upon its return to Latveria.)

AFTERMATH

Once PCs defeat the Doom robot or arrive at an alliance with it, they can obtain the Dispel antidote from Room O. At your discretion, the cannister may be booby-trapped with a hidden Concentrated Explosive (Players' Book, p. 46) that is deactivated by a switch beneath a far counter in the same room. Detecting and disarming the trap is an Incredible Reason FEAT. The Doom robot, if allied with the PCs, disarms the trap.

The real Doctor Doom is secretly monitoring everything that happens here. If the PCs defeat his robot, he appears on the monitor screen in Room P to taunt the heroes' hollow victory.

Doom can be broadcasting from Latveria; in this case, he will not appear in the scenario. If you want Doom to show up in person (for example, to battle with Loki, as described below), Doom is broadcasting from his hotel room across from the United Nations building. See "The United Nations" in Chapter 3 of the *Campaign Sourcebook.*

Loki: For an involuted scenario, Loki could control Doctor Doom, who believes he himself created Enchantment. Loki uses Doom as a pawn, merely to amuse himself; Doom's supply of Dispel is useless, though the PCs may not discover this until later. This option can mean that Doom, upon learning that Loki used him, allies with the PCs to battle Loki!

Popping in and out of existence at various points, Loki surveys his handiwork with a dry chuckle. Doom's surveillance cameras and advanced parabolic microphones can pick up his murmuring: "All goes well. Thor will soon be here, and that foolish mortal in the armor will occupy all his energies. Meanwhile, I spring my trap."

This incontrovertible evidence causes Doom to tremble with rage. His voice grows deadly quiet as he swears vengeance for this assault on his pride—on his own memories—on his name!

If the PCs do not suggest teamwork, Doom goes off to fight Loki alone (unsuccessfully). But if players argue intelligently for a team effort, Doom arrives in short order, declares a truce, and begins ordering the PCs around. When he and the PCs come to terms, move on to the next section.

Your own villain: He or she must be pretty high powered to enlist Doom, who would never willingly work for another. This indicates powerful magic, mind-control powers, or a careful schemer.

KARMA

Realizing that "Doom" is a robot: + 5.
Locating the Dispel: +10.
Destroying the laboratory: +20.
Allying with Doom against Loki: +0 (a wise choice, but morally chancy).

Section 5: THE GOD OF MISCHIEF

SUMMARY

If Loki is the adventure's master villain, the heroes encounter him in this grand finale in Central Park. This section is intended only for PCs of substantial power, on the level of Thor or the Silver Surfer. Less godlike heroes should be pitted against Maggia or Doctor Doom in previous sections.

If Loki defeats the PCs, he places them in a deathtrap involving an assault by a bizarre and horrible conglomeration of New York's populace. The PCs can turn this weapon against Loki to defeat him.

SET-UP

Use the Central Park map on the fold-up map included in this set. For detailed encounters, use the Area Grid/Outdoors map from the Advanced Set.

Note: Loki's plot revolves around Thor. This description assumes that Thor is not a PC and is currently off in the unreachable depths of space. Your PCs cannot contact him.

If Thor is a PC, well and good. Loki taunts him with the Hotspot encounters, then vanishes before he can attack. At last Loki lures him to Central Park and the adventure's finale.

Clues from the Hotspots

Remarkably, these all come from Loki himself.

Motive Clues: Though he would prefer to conceal his activities from Odin and the rest of Asgard, Loki does not care if mere mortals know he is the culprit. After especially hard-fought encounters, PCs see Loki floating far overhead or standing on a nearby building, gloating and chuckling at their folly.

He pays no attention to the PCs' taunts or questions. But as encounters wear on, PCs may overhear him murmur in frustration, "So, where are you, dear brother? Does even this not lure you to your precious Midgard? My vengeance waits."

Clues to Methods of Defeat: Essentially none. As he is the first to tell the PCs, Loki is an Asgardian sorcerer of enormous power with no known weaknesses. Traditionally, the only way to defeat him has been to bring in Thor or (even better) Odin. Without them, PCs must rely on their own power in a toe-to-toe fight. Good luck.

Location Clues: Eventually Loki yawns and says, "I grow tired of these games. Perhaps you will meet me in your large park over there, and help me construct my revenge." He vanishes.

Doctor Doom as Ally

Doctor Doom may be helping the heroes, if you have established that Loki controlled him. Doom, though he never shows friendship for a second, fights at the PCs' side without betraying them. Betrayal would be dishonorable!

This is a tricky situation for the Judge, because Doom is probably more powerful than the PCs. By all rights he would attempt to show them up at every chance, displaying his own superior power; that is in character for Doom.

However, an NPC ally should never top a player character, because the player will feel useless. What to do?

Perhaps the best way to handle this is to have Loki knock Doom out fairly quickly in the forthcoming battle, while Doom temporarily weakens Loki. Then Doom, bordering on unconsciousness, functions as backup for the players, rescuing them in tight spots or providing distractions. But after the first few blows, he never takes center stage again.

Incidentally, Loki shows no sign that he recognizes or cares about Doom. To him, apparently, Doom is just another mortal.

ADVENTURE

The god of mischief floats high above the Great Lawn of Central Park. Beneath him, if you wish, are the unconscious forms of New York's best-known super humans. If you place them here, they should all be so deeply unconscious (perhaps in magical slumber) that the PCs have no chance of awakening them. The option is provided in case players ask, "Where are all the other heroes when this is going on?"

Loki, master of manipulation and trickery, cannot himself be easily manipulated or tricked. He cannot be provoked to rage by contemptible mortals.

A very realistic illusion of Thor might fool Loki, but not for long. The illusion would prompt him to spring his deathtrap; see below.

Conceivably, PCs could convince him that Thor is nowhere around and not likely to return soon. But this means that Loki leaves Earth for a time, while the damage continues unabated.

With all this, the only other alternative is to fight Loki. The battle is not quite straightforward, however, for Loki prefers to use his Enhancement powers and to create agents. With a gesture, he plucks innocent citizens from around the park and brings them to the Great Lawn. There, shielding himself all the while from PC attacks, he casually endows the innocents with great power and murderous hatred for the PCs.

For these agents, use the statistics of any suitable villains (one per two PCs), but give their attacks and abilities a magical twist. For example, use Electro's powers, but make the citizen an elemental "living lightning bolt." Use Dreadnought robots, but replace their mechanical apparatus with (say) twisting, animated foliage from the surrounding forest. And so on.

Loki spends Karma, if necessary, to create adversaries strong enough to harm the PCs. Meanwhile, he remains above the fray, giving exposition about his new deathtrap and his long-awaited vengeance against Thor.

Loki waits for the PCs to show signs of weakness. Then he floats down and battles them straightforwardly with his Eldritch Blasts.

The Deathtrap

If the PCs somehow defeat Loki, **well** and good. Go to Aftermath, below.

Realistically, though, whether or not Doom helps, Loki probably defeats

the heroes easily. After all, he is an Asgardian god. Let the PCs have heroic final speeches before lapsing into unconsciousness.

If any heroes are dying, Loki, in a spirit of whimsy, heals them. After all, his deathtrap would not get much of a workout if its victims are already dead. However, the healed heroes remain unconscious.

They awaken in the trap. Magical energy bonds of Monstrous strength surround each PC. Loki floats overhead, gloating. To delay troublesome PC interruptions or escape attempts until Loki has given the exposition below, consider using the Grogginess rule from the "Deathtraps" section in Chapter 8. This also lets Loki pick up some easy Karma by gloating for several turns.

Loki tells the PCs that they have the honor to test the trap he has designed for "my dear half-brother" Thor. "You mortals always talk of the 'unity of humankind.' Hah! Unity of ants, of ooze beneath the feet of the gods. See, at forest's edge—witness now the unity of humankind."

From the trees on all sides come thousands of New Yorkers—all ages, sizes, social classes, dressed in **all** fashions—concentrated in the populations represented in all the neighborhoods adjacent to the Park.

Loki gestures, and the people merge. Their skins flow like wax, one form into another, and faces stretch as though formed in putty. Clothes disappear in a mass of flesh, musculature, and hair. As the PCs watch, the thousands of citizens form into shapeless, writhing masses, one for each PC in the deathtrap.

"These Conglomeroids embody enough magic to absorb even Thor," says Loki. "Or, if not, to defeat him by strength alone. You will soon find out.

"For now, I go to the edge of space to scan the heavens for Thor. I hope to return in time to witness your union with humankind."

Loki flies upward and, unless the PCs manage a devastating attack, is soon lost to view. But he remains in this dimension, so his magical Conglomeroids keep growing. Slowly they ooze forward.

Escape **and Battle**

No doubt the PCs wish to escape their bonds before the creatures absorb them. How? For reasons explained below, this matter is not especially urgent, but escape is possible.

The magical energy bonds are keyed to the heroes' current sizes. Perhaps a PC with appropriate powers can shrink and escape his or her bonds. However, the rest remain trapped in their own bonds. And they can't easily be moved from the path of the Conglomeroids, because the bonds also attach them to the ground with Monstrous strength.

The Conglomeroids ooze closer to the PCs, at least one area per turn. They speed up if it would lend suspense to the escape, or if the PCs have exhausted their options and merely wait for the inevitable.

Conglomeroids

Gigantic disgusting ooze monsters

F	A	S	E	R	I	P
Pr	Ty	Mn	Mn	Gd	Gd	Mn

Health: 160 Karma: 95

Resources: None Popularity: 0

Abilities: The creatures absorb PCs with Monstrous ability. They can develop other powers with the proper organization (see below).

Typical Dialogue: "Hnnnrrrghh!"

Escaped heroes can attack the Conglomeroid creatures. But remind the players of the monsters' nature. The things are composed of innocent bystanders under Loki's control. Any damaging attack on them injures or kills the component people!

This should forestall attacks from all but the most impulsive heroes. Other freed heroes may fly up looking for Loki, a time-consuming process.

Meanwhile, the remaining heroes will soon be absorbed.

How, then, to escape? In fact, unbeknownst to the god of mischief, the ideal way to defeat Loki and the monsters is not to escape at all, but to voluntarily be absorbed.

Inside the Creatures

When the Conglomeroids reach the heroes, absorption takes one turn. Once inside a creature, the PC victim feels a moment of suffocating warmth as though gripped in an enormous fist. Then the hero loses all physical sensation.

But this is not the end. The PC's mentality survives, an astral form magically freed of its sheath of flesh. In the gray nothingness of the astral plane, the PC's spiritual form may or may not resemble its physical form. Encourage the players to devise creative differences in appearance, though astral characters' abilities are unchanged.

Around them, chaotically arranged, float the spirits of the Conglomeroids' component citizens. They wander aimlessly, able to communicate with each other but unaware of the monsters' physical surroundings. They are confused, as much an amoeboid mass of psyches as their bodies are in the physical plane.

Drop this as a clue to the players. Perhaps they won't pick up on it and will only continue searching for a way out (there isn't one, until Loki goes away). In that case, allow mystically talented PCs a Psyche FEAT to sense the enormous psychic potential among all these spirits. If only it could be harnessed!

If no PC is suitable or they all fail their FEAT rolls, then one of the NPC citizens, a hobbyist of the occult, can mention the notion: organize the psychic potential of the Conglomeroids and throw off Loki's control!

Conglomeroid Battle

If you wish, a time limit may speed the PCs to action. The Conglomeroids, once the PCs prove no major threat, turn and examine one another. The rivalry among the component citizens of Manhattan's various neighborhoods drives the monsters to hatred for one another. They battle. The monsters struggle because it amuses Loki. He can always make more when Thor comes around.

In this optional variant, the damage these monsters inflict on one another is applied equally against every component citizen within them. Since this would be fatal for normal people, and perhaps even the PCs, reduce the damage by a fraction—for instance, two-thirds or three- quarters. This is strong enough to hurt and exert time pressure, but not to kill.

Organizing the Monsters

How can the PCs organize the populace? They can speak to the surrounding spirits, pointing out the imminent danger and the need to combine energies to throw off Loki's control. Here Persuasion skill and Leadership talent figure prominently.

At first, the heroes attract only a few interested spirits. But as they cluster around the speakers, they fall unconsciously into a crystal-like pattern of energies. At once, light glows around them. A success! The PCs, aided by the psychic energies of their new followers, can now broadcast their message farther.

From this point, a domino effect takes over. As the citizens realize their peril and what they can do about it, more and more flock to the PCs, lending them the power to reach still more citizens. The crystalline pattern, growing by the second, stretches away into the distance of the astral plane. And in the physical world, the Conglomeroids change shape.

Shapeless ooze gives way to structure: arms, legs, a body. The nebulous monsters become nothing less than gigantic images of the PCs themselves—people-shaped figures a hundred feet tall. And the psychic power, now organized through their focus, bestows on the giants powers identical to the PCs' own—at Unearthly levels!

It is time to hunt Loki. Flying characters can head upward and search for him in the upper stratosphere. Or, if some PCs cannot fly, Loki senses his loss of control over the Conglomeroids and returns instantly to Central Park. Infuriated at their effrontery in ruining his plan, he grows to enormous size to attack the PCs.

Play up the scenic detail of this awesome battle. The heroes' powers work within the giant figures at incalculably more powerful levels. As one falls, huge trees splinter beneath. The giants can stride between the skyscrapers of Manhattan like miners through narrow passages. As they battle, describe the conflict for the players with all the drama you can muster.

And of course, the struggle goes badly for Loki.

AFTERMATH

Loki, a coward, flees Earth as soon as the battle turns seriously against him. If the heroes manage to knock him out, his contingency spell teleports him away to Asgard. Otherwise, in a parting speech he vows revenge against the mortal PCs. "Know that you have achieved a high honor: the notice of a god. You will come to rue that honor, another day!" Loki can become a long-term nemesis, if you wish.

With his departure, his enchantments—including, needless to say, Enchantment itself—vanish. The Conglomeroid creatures magically dissolve into ordinary citizens again. The component people are fully clothed and healthy, but they retain no memory of their ordeal. Confused, they wander out of the park.

If Doctor Doom was the PCs' ally, he now makes a parting threat and takes an ungracious leave. PCs can fight him, but this would be violating the truce (not to mention an anti- climax to the adventure).

If Loki was your master villain, the crisis is taken care of except for cleanup work. (It should be a busy couple of days for Damage Control.) But if other villains were behind the plot, Enchantment still remains to trouble the PCs. They must find a way to restore New York to normal. See the next section.

KARMA

Avoiding undue harm to Loki's Conglomeroid-trapped citizens: +15.

Harming citizens inside the monster: -20to -ALL.

Controlling the Conglomeroids to defeat Loki: +30.

Violating a truce with Doom: -20.

Section 6: NEW YORK NORMAL

SUMMARY

By defeating the Maggia or Doctor Doom (if one of these is your master villain), the PCs have procured a supply of Dispel, or at least its formula. Now they must figure out how to distribute it and turn off Manhattan's craziness.

SET-UP

The only set-up this section may require involves creating Dispel from the formula procured in the drug lab (in either Section 3 or 4). If they failed to get the formula, they can analyze a sample of the powder to determine its chemical makeup (an Excellent Reason FEAT for characters with suitable skills).

If they have neither powder nor formula, the heroes can try creating their own. This is an Amazing Reason FEAT, and may call for the most brilliant minds in New York.

Dispel is made of ordinary off- the-shelf organic chemicals. But the huge volume of chemicals needed calls for extensive scientific resources. Ideally, the PCs should have such skills. If so, the city of New York pulls all strings necessary to let PCs use the facilities at Empire State University or another advanced laboratory.

If the PCs don't have the requisite skills, they can go elsewhere for help. Likely locations for these include Four Freedoms Plaza, where Reed Richards can quickly mix up a boxcar-load; Doctor Strange's Sanctum (Strange is a medical doctor); or Avengers Island, where one of the Avengers can either brew up the antidote or find someone who can.

Possible Avengers or former Avengers who are up to the task include geneticist Dane Whitman, the Black Knight; Mockingbird; Iron Man, though this is outside Tony Stark's usual line of work; and, via satellite link to Avengers West Coast headquarters, Dr. Henry Pym.

The Dispel that is created is a fine white powder. Targets can breathe it, drink it in liquid, or absorb the dissolved antidote through the skin. A small dose is sufficient to cure the target of Enchantment's side effects, and render him or her immune to future doses.

ADVENTURE

The problem is to distribute the antidote widely, affecting everyone in Manhattan, and quickly, before the childish residents inflict more damage. The water system is a good start, but that won't get to people quickly—they're busy rioting.

There are actually a couple of effective solutions. Give the heroes Reason FEATs, if necessary, to come up with one.

Let the Rain Come Down

One way is use the Dispel and sodium iodide (available at the same labs that can synthesize the Dispel) to seed the clouds above the city. Sodium iodide creates rain, and Dispel dissolves easily in water, or even in water vapor.

Fortunately, there are heavy clouds, laden with vapor, above Manhattan right now. How to get the Dispel into the clouds? The solution could be as mundane as hiring a private plane to carry a PC up there. But these are super heroes, after all. No doubt, the PCs can get up that high themselves, or at least hitch a ride with someone who can.

Once seeded, the clouds darken and let loose—not a downpour of rain, but a blizzard of snow! No matter the time of year; the Dispel created a hypothermic chemical reaction, leaching the heat from the clouds' water vapor and freezing it. Even in July, it is snowing in New York!

The Enchantment-afflicted citizens of New York rush out to play in the snow. As they start snowball fights and build snowmen, they **return to** normal. But they feel so good, they keep playing. Perhaps the PCs join in.

The Brute Force Approach

Another solution, especially suitable for straight-shooting, linear-thinking PCs, is to haul huge loads of Dispel powder up to the top of tall buildings and turn it loose into the wind. Both the Empire State Building and World Trade Center are good candidates; in northern Manhattan, perhaps Columbia University, Grant's Tomb, and tall hills in Central Park would work.

The powder flies across the city. You may wish to build a little suspense by saying the winds are calm, or they're blowing toward the river; but this is manipulation. If the players originate this idea and carry it out well, it should work.

These two approaches are only examples. The players, often an inventive lot, may well create new ways to distribute the antidote. Perhaps they can make creative use of their powers. Don't hesitate to show the outcome of ridiculous ideas; but if the solution sounds plausible, go **with** it.

AFTERMATH

A parade down Fifth Avenue certainly seems in order. Or perhaps the heroes are not publicity seekers. In this case, an unpublicized visit by Reed Richards, Doctor Strange, or the Avengers may be called for. The NPC heroes solemnly thank the PCs for solving the crisis. The PCs can count on big favors in **the** future.

The adventure's last scene, in classic Marvel Comics tradition, probably shows a poor, put-upon street-cleaner piloting his cleaning truck down a street covered with confetti, debris, and either Dispel powder or snow. As he cleans up all this stuff across the city, he grumbles about his lot in life. "Ah, the workin' life. Jeez, wish I was a kid again and didn't hafta go to work."

KARMA

Discovering an effective way to administer the antidote: + 20.

Section 7: EXTENDING THE ADVENTURE

The immediate plot of "Fun City" is over, but the adventure's elements don't have to vanish. Here are some notes on the features you can establish and exploit for future adventures:

NEW VILLAINS

The adventure has set up three villains, or perhaps one of your own, as possible long-term opponents for the heroes. What's more, the Enchantment drug has created more super humans, these of your own design. Though the Dispel antidote has covered the city, it is the work of a plot device to say that the villains keep their newfound powers. And they will soon gain experience as well, becoming deadlier opponents.

They can be especially effective if you used the Campaign Kickoff option. Tied to the PCs' fate by a common origin in the drug's effects, these villains can represent a still-later refinement of the formula that created the PCs. So the villains are more powerful.

However, the villains may also be in danger of slowly going insane because of the drug's lingering side effects. This probably leads to an unreasoning hatred of the PCs, who are closely tied by the common threads of their origins.

NEW PLOTS

In future adventures you can incorporate the parts of this framework that you didn't employ this time out. Maybe the Conglomeroids, though left on the sidelines in this adventure, show up as the tool of another powerful magician later on. Re-use the laboratory descriptions in later adventures. Adapt the villain tracks by assigning the villains the same motives but different nefarious schemes.

NEW NPCs

Various informants, victims, and bystanders rescued in the Hotspot encounters may reappear later at the PCs' headquarters, grateful for their rescue or needing further help. Some can become long-term campaign relationships.

Another bizarre source of NPCs is the Conglomeroid creatures from the Loki plotline. Assuming the PCs got absorbed and learned to control them, they may have met a new NPC while inside!

Remember the giant in Section 1, Traffic Jam? Perhaps, once cured, he or she can renew that old relationship with one of the player characters. By taking advantage of such elements, you lend continuity and rich subplot possibilities to your campaign.

A NEW WAY TO PLAY

Though this campaign set has described many locations in Marvel's Manhattan, in a larger sense the whole supplement is describing a single concept: a well-constructed campaign, created with a solid premise and direction, tailored to the player characters, rich in detail, background, and ongoing character stories.

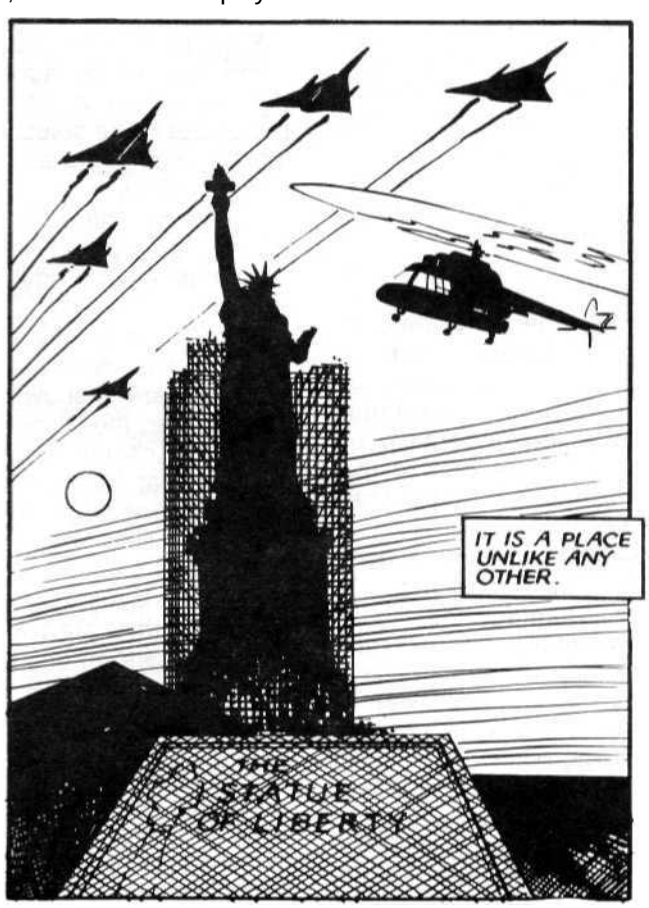
If you already play this way, congratulations! Use the hard data in this set to improve what is probably already an exciting campaign.

If you have felt a lack in your games, or want to improve your abilities in adventure design, establishing goals, staging, playing up character concepts, and encouraging creative play—then this set can be the gateway to a new place... .

A place not just of towering skyscrapers, mysterious tunnels, high finance, and low crime—not just of cops and crooks, good guys and bad guys—but a place of stories, where the most miraculous happenings make sense, because they're truer than real life.

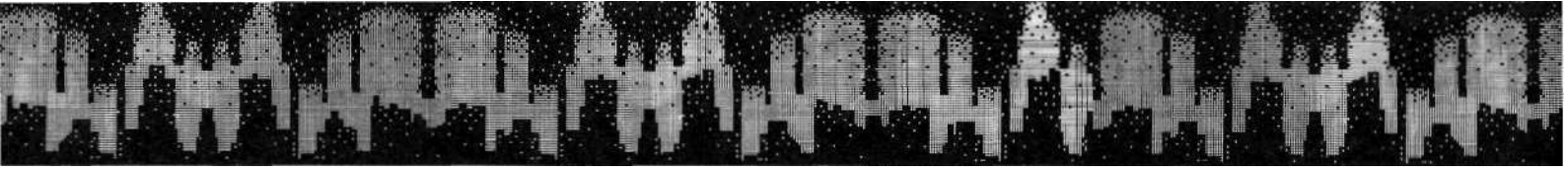
Go through that gateway. Explore that wonderful place.

If you can make it there, you'll make it anywhere.



Boldface numbers mean the pages are in the *Campaign Sourcebook.*
Numbers in regular type mean the pages are in this *Adventure Book.*

Adventure Hook **16**
AIM **63-65**
Air travel in Manhattan **28**
Alpha **70**
American Museum
of Natural History **32,33**
Anne **77**
Atlantean terrorists 37
Atlantis **70**
Avengers **74**
Avengers Island **7,31,54**
Baby Elmo 59
Ballinger, Lenny **77**
Battery Park City **50**
Beast **52**
Bowery **28**
Brand Corporation 52
Bridges **16-17**
Broadway **30,66**
Bronx **6,14-15**
Bronx Zoo
— Hotspot description 14-15
— Mini-scenario 37
Brooklyn **4,10,16**
Brooklyn Bridge
— Hotspot description **16-17**
Building foundations **89**
Bullseye **23**
Buses **27,86**
Cage, Luke **67**
Calendar of Events in Manhattan 4
Callisto **93**
Campaign
— Designing 26-28
— Problems 31
— Running 28
— Types 26
Central Park
— "Fun City" scenario 58
— Hotspot Description **33-35**
— Mini-scenario 38
see also Metropolitan Museum of Art
Century Club **31**
Chapel, Robin 75
Character development 29
Chase Manhattan Bank **48**
Chelsea **30**
Chinatown **29**
City adventuring 32-34
Cleary, Albert **75-76**
Cloak and Dagger **57,67**
Conditions that affect success 20-21
Coney Island
— Hotspot description **10-11**
— Mini-scenario 36
Conflict in the story 8
Connors, Dr. Curt - see Lizard
Conventions in telling stories 6
— Hotspot description **36-38**
— Mini-scenario 39
Damage Control **74-78**
Daredevil **57-50**
Deathtraps 22-23
Delta Project **64**
Deltites 65
Dilemmas facing the
player characters 21
Dilby, Lucius **42**
Dixon, Jay **78**
Doctor Doom **68,70**
"Fun City" scenario 47-58
Doctor Octopus **16,38**
Doctor Strange **39-42**
Doctor Strange in rat form 35
Doctor Strange's Sanctum
— Hotspot description **39-42**
— Mini-scenario 40
Dreadnoughts **83**
East Side **72**
East Village **29,45**
Empire State Building
— Hotspot description **43-44**
— Mini-scenario 40
Empire State University
— Hotspot description **45**
— Mini-scenario 41
Environment **84-87**
Erg **93**
Fantastic Four **53-54;** 43
Fatboys **59**
Federal Reserve **49**
Ferris wheel 11
Financial District **28**
— Hotspot description **48-52**
— Mini-scenario 42
Fireheart, Thomas 49
Fisk, Wilson - see Kingpin
Flatiron Building **74-75**
Four Freedoms Plaza
— Hotspot description **53-54**
— Mini-scenario 43
Fox, Phil **38**
Frogs **34**
Frost, Emma **56**
Frost International **49**
Fury, Nick **29,57,62-65**
Galactic campaign 34
Genre 5
Gladiator **31**
Global campaign 34
Goals for players 12
Gramercy Park **29-30**
Grand finale of the story 8, 24-25
Greater New York City **4-23**
Greenwich Village **29,39-42**
Grimm, Ben - see Thing
Guardian Angels **91**
Hammerhead 81,82
Harlem **32**
Hawkeye **32**
Hellfire Club **31,55**
Hellfire Club Mansion
— Hotspot description 55-56
Hell's Kitchen **57-59**
Heroes for Hire **31,67**
Hoag, Anna Marie **74-78**
Holland Tunnel
— Hotspot description **18-19**
— Mini-scenario 37
Holy Ghost Church **31,57**
Hook **16**
Hopkins, Steve **47**
Hotspots **3, 33-71**
— "Fun City" scenario 53
Human Torch **52**
Humor in telling stories 5
HYDRA **63-65**
Hydro-Base **7,16**
Impossible Man **60**
Inferno **24,44,84**
Inner Circle **55-56**
Iron Fist **32,67**
Jameson, J. Jonah **31,36,37**
Jaxon, Jerry **49**
Jones, Hugh **51**
Josie 67
Judging
— Introduction to Judging 3
— Running a campaign 26-31
— Telling stories 5-25
"King, the" **94**
Kingpin **29,30,50,57,94**
Language **84**
LaPorte, Emma **94**
Latverian Embassy **31,55,68**
Leeds, Betty Brant **38**
Leland, Harry **52**
Little Italy **29**
Lizard **45;** 41,42
Loki, God of Mischief
— "Fun City" scenario 47-60
Lorelei **32**
Lubensky, Nathan **13,67**
Machine Man **12;** 46
Machinesmith **65;** 45
Maggia **7,81-83**
— "Fun City" scenario 47-55
Magneto **56,70**
Mandroids 45
Manfredi, Silvio **82**
Manhattan **4,24-32**
— Campaign 32
— Hotspots **33-72**
— Social Calendar 2-4
Maria Stark Park **31,33**



Marvel Comics
— Hotspot description . . . **60**
— Mini-scenario . . . 44
Merry-go-round . . . **11**
Metrobank . . . **50**
Metropolitan Museum of Art
— Hotspot description . . . **61**
— Mini-scenario . . . 44
Midtown . . . **30**
Mini-scenarios . . . 35-46
Mister Fantastic - see Richards, Reed
Mole People . . . **92**
Morlock tunnels . . . **34,92-94**
Morningside Heights . . . **32**
Motivation . . . 5
Murdock, Mart - see Daredevil
Murray Hill . . . **29-30**
Nefaria family . . . **81**
Nelson, Franklin "Foggy" . . . **32,58**
New Mutants . . . **56**
New York City campaigning . . . 32
New York Police Department . . . **79-80**
New York Stock Exchange . . . **48**
New Yorkers . . . **84**
Night . . . **87**
Nightwing Restorations . . . **32**
Nimrod . . . **56**
Non-player characters . . . 8,18-19
— Preparing . . . 28
NPCs - see Non-player characters
Nuke . . . **58**
Numero Uno . . . **32**
Organizations . . . **73-83**
Page, Karen . . . **57,58**
Parker, Mary Jane -
see Watson-Parker, Mary Jane
Parker, May - Boarding House . . . **12-13**
Parker, Peter - see Spider-Man
PCs - see Player characters
Player characters . . . 7
— Preparing . . . 27
Players, types of . . . 30
Plot ingredients . . . 11-17
Police . . . **79-80**
Porter, John . . . **75**
Potholes . . . **85**
Power Pack . . . **32**
Premise of the story . . . 7
Prison guards . . . **23**
Punisher . . . **94**
Quartermain, Clay . . . **64-65**
Queens . . . 5,12-13
Rand, Daniel - see Iron Fist
Rats . . . **34**
Red Ghost . . . 44
Richards, Reed . . . 37,43
Rintrah . . . **42**
Robertson, Joe "Robbie" . . . **37**
Rockefeller Center . . . **51**
Roller coaster . . . **10-11**
Roosevelt Island . . . **68**
Rotgut . . . 59
Roxxon Oil . . . **49**
Roxxon Plaza . . . **51**
Rozum, John "Bart" . . . **77**
Ryker's Island
— Hotspot description . . . **20-23**
St. Patrick's Cathedral
— "Fun City" scenario . . . 49
Sanctum Sanctorum -
see Doctor Strange's Sanctum
Scenarios
— "Fun City" . . . 47-62
— Mini-scenarios . . . 35-46
— Running, see Campaign
Selene . . . **56**
Sersi . . . **29,32**
Setting of the story . . . 7
Sewers . . . **92-94**
Shaw, Sebastian . . . **56**
Shaw Industries . . . **51**
SHIELD foxholes . . . **93**
SHIELD Headquarters
— Hotspot description . . . **62-65**
— Mini-scenario . . . 45
Silver Sable . . . **49**
Silvermane . . . **81,82**
Skrulls . . . **15**
Sloan, Dr. Morris . . . **47**
Slugfest . . . 24
SoHo . . . **29**
Sound effects . . . 9
Spider-Man . . . **12,30,36-37,42,45**
Stack, Aaron - see Machine Man
Stane International . . . **51**
Stark, Tony . . . **31,64**
Staten Island . . . 6
—Hotspot description . . . 16
Statue of Liberty
— "Fun City" scenario . . . 54
— Hotspot description . . . **7-9**
— Mini-scenario . . . 35
Sternberg, Professor . . . **64**
Storm . . . **93**
Storm, Alicia Masters . . . **28**
Storytelling . . . 5-25
Strausser, Gene . . . **77**
Street Finder for Manhattan . . . **26**
Streets . . . **84-85**
Subterranea . . . **63,74**
Subways . . . **27,90-91**
— "Fun City" scenario . . . 56
Surprises in the story . . . 8
SWAT operative . . . **80**
Swimming against the current
(in tunnels) . . . **19**
Symkarian Embassy . . . **31**
Taxicabs . . . **28,86**
Terrax . . . **24**
Telling the story . . . 5-25
Theater District . . . **66-67**
Thing . . . **72**
Thompson, Eugene "Flash" . . . **47**
Thor . . . **34**
Thor in frog form . . . **35**
Times Square . . . **30**
— Hotspot description . . . **66-67**
Topaz . . . **42**
Traffic jam . . . **51**
Traffic on bridges . . . **17**
Tribeca . . . **28**
Tudor City . . . **30**
Tunnels . . . **18-19,90**
Ultron-11 . . . 46
Underground Manhattan . . . **88-94**
United Nations
— Hotspot description . . . **68-70**
— Mini-scenario . . . 46
Urban campaign . . . 33
Urich, Ben . . . **38**
Vehicles . . . r*86
Verrazano-Narrows Bridge . . . **17**
Victory levels . . . 11
Villains . . . 14
— How they lose . . . 25
— Preparing . . . 27
Von Strucker, Baron Wolfgang . . . **64**
Wakandan Embassy . . . **31**
Wall Street . . . **28**
Washington Heights . . . **32**
Washington Square Park . . . **39**
Waterfront . . . **27**
Watson, Kristy . . . **13**
Watson-Parker, Mary Jane . . . **12,32**
West Side . . . **31**
White Dragon . . . **29**
White Tiger . . . **47**
Wild Pack . . . **49**
Wizard . . . 38
Wolfe, Sara . . . **41**
Wolverine . . . **56**
Wong . . . **41**
World Trade Center . . . **49**
Yancy Street
— Hotspot description . . . **72**
Yellow Claw . . . 9
X-Men . . . **56**