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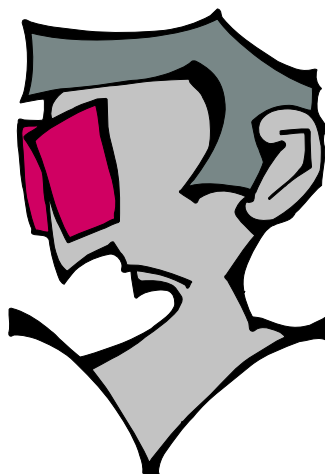
The First SupersPunk Adventure.

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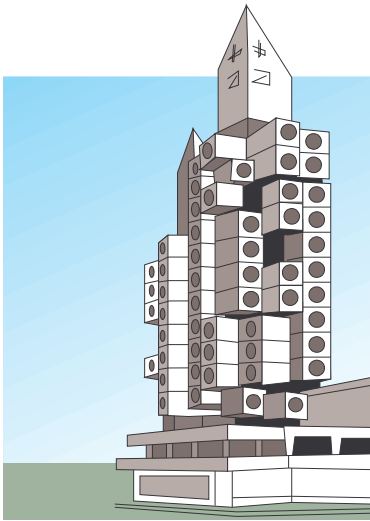
Our entry in Rec.Arts.Comics Challenge II. Chapter 16, to be exact.

**Supers
Theme
Issue**



Corps and Mega-Corps

Finance and Governance in the World of SUPERSPUNK



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All art is royalty-free clip art. Welcome to the wonderful world of desktop publishing. For \$50 I got five CD-ROMs chock full of clip art, some of it even useful. It's loads of fun, but it takes forever to print out on my slow printer.

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Editor and Publisher:

David S. Carter
2921 International Drive #2011
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
(313) 434-5812

superman@umich.edu

<http://www.ipl.org/~superman/>

What is a Mega-Corp?

The strict definition of a Mega-Corp in the SupersPunk universe is a corporation which has complete control of an entire large Hive. Whereas most Hives are 'time shared' amongst multiple corporations, the Mega-Corps have a monopoly on the communications into and out of a particular region and thus effective control of that region and its inhabitants. There are four (or five, depending on how you count them) Mega-Corps in North America:

The Mega-Corps

FutureTech

Homes: Boston, Dallas

Other major operations: Los Angeles, Detroit, Kansas City, London, New Dehli, Cairo

CEO: Douglass Basker

Major Interests: Communications, Transportation, Medicine

FutureTech is the largest and most powerful of the Mega-Corps. Its public image is clean, and it does right by its employees, but behind the scenes FutureTech will stop at nothing to get what it wants.

BioHorizons

Home: San Francisco

Other major operations: Atlanta, Detroit, New Orleans, Rio de Jenaro, Bangkok, Sydney

CEO: Jefferson Bagley

Major Interests: Biochemicals, Medicine

BioHorizons sees the future in the purposeful exploitation of the Earth's biological resources. Their health care facilities are first-rate, making them a desirable corporation for which to work. Their Detroit facility secretly houses the only known living Alien specimens.

Sony

Homes: Tokyo, Seattle

Other major operations: Sydney, Toronto, Chicago, Berlin, Mexico City

CEO: Hiroshi Kudo

Major Interests: Communications, Entertainment, Electronics

The Sony corporation was one of the few pre-Invasion corporate entities to survive in the new era. Cities controlled by or with a major presence by Sony will have a large instance of Japanese culture.

Disney Enterprises

Home: Orlando

Other major operations: Los Angeles, Paris, Phoenix, Chicago, Rome

CEO: Margaret Meiland

Major Interests: Entertainment, Communications, Transportation

For all intents and purposes, Disney controls the entire state of Florida, including the former U.S. space facilities at Cape Canaveral; Disney intends to be the first to launch the new breed of global communications satellites once the problem of cutting through the Aliens' static is solved. Outside of Florida, Disney is the epitome of its famous 'mouse ears magic kingdom' image. Within Florida, it runs a police state, using threats, intimidation and mind control to keep the populace in line.

PentaCorp

Home: Alexandria

Other major operations: the rest of North America

Run by: General Curtis Graves

Major Interests: Security, Transportation

PentaCorp is completely different from the other Mega-Corps, or for that matter from any other entity on the planet. Rising from the ashes of the U.S. government, particularly the military, PentaCorp provides 'security' for the Mega-Corps and other corporations in North America, protecting them from external threats and each other. In return, the corporations pay PentaCorp a large sum of money. It is either the largest protection racket in history, or the only thing resembling government order. Probably both.

Living in a Corporate World

Life in the SupersPunk world tends to be rather feudal. Citizens fall, for the most part, into one of five categories: Officers, Management, Stockholders, Employees, Unemployed (see sidebar for how these relate to GURPS status levels). Officers and Management may also hold stock, but only for the corporation for which they work. Officers and Management control the daily workings of a corporation; Officers are chosen by the stockholders, Management is appointed by the Officers. Stock is either given as part of a salary in the form of stock options, or is acquired on the open market (regulated by PentaCorp). Stockholders only have input during bi-annual stockholder meetings, and may expect to share in the corporation's profits. Employees have no rights per se in the corporation, but may expect to be clothed, fed and housed and have their medical needs provided for. The Unemployed may not actually be such, many run their own enterprises (legal and illegal), but unless they are highly successful they are effectively shut out of the socio-economic system.

Payment by the corporations is generally given out in company script. In an area controlled by a corporation or where that corporation is particularly strong, that corporation's script spends just like old fashioned money, but where a corporation is weak or non-existent, that script is next to worthless. The most stable currency in North America, and for that matter the entire world, is PentaCorp script, which is almost always accepted; the various markets (stock, commodities, etc.) operate solely in PentaCorp script.



Status in SupersPunk

Level	Example
7	Mega-Corp CEO
6	Other CEO
5	Corporate Officer
4	Upper Management
3	Lower Management
2	Major Stockholder
1	Minor Stockholder
0	Employee
-1	Unemployed

Supers work both corporate and freelance. Those that work for corporations fall into the same categories as other citizens, most at the Stockholder level or above. Those that work freelance, though technically considered part of the Unemployed class, are generally accepted at a higher status level than their standing would suggest.

Darkheart

A SUPERSPUNK Adventure

Adrian Darkheart

Born ?, 6' 3", 200 lbs.
ST 17, DX 17, IQ 17, HT 17.
Speed 8.5, Move 8, Dodge 8.
Advantages: Ally Group; Followers; Sanctity; Awareness; Charisma +3; Unaging.
Disadvantages: Nightmares; Megalomania; Callous.
Psionics: Aspect power 15; Emotion Sense power 10.
Quirks: Smiles when angry.
Skills: Aspect-20; Emotion Sense-20; Leadership-17; Rituals & Ceremonies-17; Theology-16; Body Control-16; Fencing-18; Judo-18; Gun (handguns)-19; Diplomacy-18; Dreaming-15; Occultism-17; Sacrifice-16; Sex Appeal-16; Savoir Faire-17; Hypnotism-18; Pharmacy-17; Physiology-15.

Adrian Darkheart is a prototypical comic book cult leader, one who always seems to have tons of followers who never question him no matter what evils he does. Darkheart had several encounters with the Freedom Squad back before the Aliens arrived. After his most recent defeat in India, Darkheart felt compelled to journey to the Congo. While there, he fell under the nightmares of H'blyathen, but was able to use his lucid dreaming techniques to get them under control. He then presented himself to the natives worshipping H'blyathen as H'blyathen's emissary. Darkheart learned of the drug's existence from Carol Wong and was able to offer it to General Kagali in exchange for a pledge of devotion. No matter what happens in the adventure, Darkheart should escape to plot for another day.

Darkheart is a 666 point character.

What's Going On?

The Company

BioHorizons, a megacorp centered on the US west coast, uncovered old CIA data about a suspected plant in the African Congo which, when properly distilled into a drug, could cause latent supers abilities to surface in a person. An investigative research team was dispatched around the world. The head of the team, Carol Wong, is, unbeknownst to her, the illegitimate child of Jefferson Bagley, the CEO of BioHorizons. Her research team of ten entered the Congo to search for the plant, but were hampered in their mission by:

The General

General Kagali, a military strongman who for several years had been trying to organize the Congo under his control, finally succeeded in capturing the ports and the HiveNet in the Congo. He finally was successful due the emergence of his supers ability, namely the ability to drain others' supers powers, which emerged after he recently took the aforementioned drug, supplied to him by:

The Villain

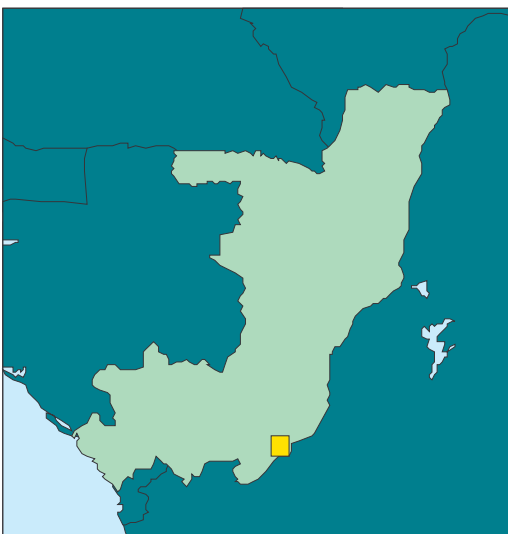
Adrian Darkheart, a charismatic cult leader who had several run-ins with the Freedom Squad and other Supers heroes of the second heroic age. His eventual aim is nothing less than to rule the entire planet, although he is quite patient in pursuing this goal. During the Alien occupation, he and his followers traveled to the Congo, where Darkheart took advantage of a group of natives who were worshipping:

The Horror

Deep in the heart of the Congo lies an underground lake, inhabited by H'blyathen, a Lesser Lovecraftian Deity. Resembling a large multi-tentacled eye (much like a D&D Beholder), the horror has lived for hundreds-of-thousands, if not millions, of years in the lake, subtly feeding off of the dreams of its worshipers. Attended to in its underground cavern by a cadre of ghosts, H'blyathen has recently awoken, perhaps due to the activities of the Aliens. Into this quite messy situation come:

The Heroes

Our fearless PCs, most of whom probably won't behave in a very heroic manner. BioHorizons has gathered the PCs together, offering to send them into the Congo to recover the research team and the drug in exchange for a rather large sum of money. Thus the stage is set for action, horror and betrayal on a grand scale.



The Adventure

The Beginning

The PCs are brought together in the Atlanta offices of BioHorizons by Margaret Finkle, Head of External Security for the company. BioHorizons would like the safe return of the research team and the drug they were investigating, in return for which they will be paid \$200,000 each in PentaCorp script (quite a bit of money in the SupersPunk world, and PentaCorp script is considered to be more stable and universally accepted than standard issue corporate script). Finkle does not know what drug was being researched, nor does she know why orders have come down from on high that the safety of the research team, especially its leader, is of prime importance.

General Kagali has barred the import of firearms into his new United Congo Federation, and BioHorizons wishes to stay on the General's good side since they may wish to send future research teams into the Congo, so BioHorizons has hired this team of Supers to do their dirty work for them.

The PCs will be implanted with a time-limited (3 weeks) subdermal transponder which, depending on the ambient radiation and atmospheric signal blocking levels in the area, will allow them to be tracked at distances up to a mile away. The research team was also implanted with the same subdermal tracking devices, and the PC team is given a device by which to track them.

Assuming the PCs agree to the mission (otherwise this will be a short adventure), they are loaded on to a high-speed trans-Atlantic hydroplaning vessel, which takes a little over a day to reach the coast of Africa.

The Port

Once in Africa, the PCs will be greeted by Payeth, BioHorizons' representative in the region. Payeth can offer little concrete info to the PCs, other than that he set up the research team with equipment and native guides and sent them off into the jungle two weeks ago. He suspects in his gut that General Kagali may have had something to do with their disappearance, but cannot figure out why Kagali would have been interested in them. Payeth knows the general direction in which the research team was going, but not any specifics of their destination.

At this point, the PCs may decide to go after Kagali. Kagali is presently operating out of a majestic, heavily-guarded estate about a mile out of town from the port city. Kagali does not have the research team, but he does know where they are: Kagali and his men intercepted the research team and dragged them out to Darkheart's cult, where they served as guinea pigs for Darkheart's experiments with the new drug. Ten of the twelve team members died, the other two (including Wong) survived and were 'persuaded' to join Darkheart's cult. Kagali then took the drug himself, which resulted in the blooming of his own abilities. Kagali of course will not volunteer any of this information, but, if the PCs can successfully get past the guards and defeat Kagali, they may be able to 'persuade' him to give up what he knows. If the PCs are defeated by Kagali and his men, they will be taken to Darkheart's cult to serve as future experimental subjects or converts.



General Kagali

Born 1963, 6' 0", 180 lbs.
ST 13, DX 14, IQ 14, HT 15.
Speed 7.25, Move 7, Dodge 7.
Advantages: Military Rank 8; High Pain Threshold.
Disadvantages: Enemies: Rival Warlords; Jealousy; Lecherousness.
Super Powers: Sense Super Ability power 15; Drain Super Ability power 15 (+180% extended duration x6 [10 min]).
Skills: Drain Super Ability-14; Sense Super Ability-14; Leadership-18; Brawling-15; AK; Congo-15; Guns (handguns)-18; Guns (machine)-18; Survival: Jungle-16; Hiking-16; First Aid-14.

In the wake of the Aliens' departure, several warlords in the Congo region vied for supremacy. Although Kagali had a good deal of support from the people, his rivals all had various Supers on their sides. This balance of power shifted, however, when Kagali joined up with Adrian Darkheart and took the drug, giving him his Supers-neutralizing abilities. Kagali is now a true believer in Darkheart and his religion, and plans to bring his men to undo the initiation and taking of the drug; Kagali figures that 10 Supers powered men are better than 100 normal men.

General Kagali is a 610 point character.

H'blyathen

I was going to do up statistics for H'blyathen, but then I figured why bother. It's a big nasty Lovecraftian lesser god; If the PCs end up tangling with it, fighting won't do them any good.

H'blyathen has existed for eons in the bottom of a pool in a cave in the Congo, attended to by Ghosts (see p. CT 111) and the small group of natives that worshiped it. The appearance of the Aliens caused H'blyathen to awaken. When Darkheart came into the sphere of H'blyathen's influence, it recognized that the demagogue was the perfect tool to gain worshipers and grow in power.

Costume/Armor

All of the PCs in this adventure, and in fact most former heroes and many former villains, have a special kind of armor, developed by the Freedom Squad's gadgeteer Techno Dave. Although it has the same fabric qualities as spandex, this armor protects as though it were Second Chance Standard kevlar. In addition, it genetically bonds with the first person who wears it, providing the Costume advantage. After bonding it can be removed.

The Drug

The McGuffin in this adventure is a drug derived from berries native to the Congo. This drug, when taken, will do one of two things: If a person has latent super abilities, those abilities will come to fore; otherwise, the person dies immediately. The drug also renders one susceptible to hypnosis after being taken.

The Gorilla Four

Recent biosphere activity has caused the plant from which the Drug is developed to become more potent than usual. A group/family/pack/whatever of gorillas found their way into some bushes and ate themselves silly on the berries. Most of the gorillas died, but four gained Supers powers. The gorillas are very confused, and will treat the PCs as a threat.

Mr. Gorilla

ST 21; DX 13; IQ 8; HT 14/18; Spd 7
Stretching 7 levels; Flexibility; Reflection 5 levels vs. crushing damage.

The Invisible Gorilla

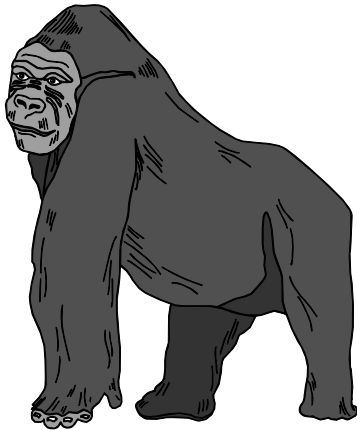
ST 20; DX 14; IQ 7; HT 14/16; Spd 7
Invisibility; Invulnerability, area effect, any kinetic; Wind Blast power 6, skill 14.

The Gorilla Torch

ST 21; DX 15; IQ 7; HT 14/19; Spd 8
Body of Fire 10 levels; Flight; Flame Jet power 5; Fireball power 5.

Thorilla

ST 65; DX 13; IQ 6; HT 16/40; Spd 5
Body of Stone 12 levels; DR +11.



Carol Wong

Born 1968, 5' 5", 110 lbs.
ST 12, DX 12, IQ 15, HT 13.
Speed 6.25, Move 6, Dodge 6.
Advantages: Alertness +3; Attractive; Immunity to Disease; Patron: BioHorizons.
Disadvantages: Overconfidence; Workaholic.
Super Powers: Animate Plant power 15; Plant Growth power 10 (+50% selective effect); Sense Plant power 15.
Skills: Animate Plant-15; Plant Growth-15; Sense Plant-15; Research-17; Chemistry-17; Biochemistry-17; Naturalist-17; Climbing-13; Botany-16; Leatherworking-15; Computer Ops-15.

Unbeknownst to her, Carol Wong is the illegitimate daughter of Jefferson Bagley, the CEO of BioHorizons. Bagley has been watching over her career, making sure that the corporation takes good care of her. Ordinarily Wong is a strong, forthright person, but under the effects of the drug which awakened her powers Darkheart was able to hypnotize her into joining his cult. If the PCs question her, she will go on and on about how Darkheart and The Eye (H'blyathen) have helped her to 'see the truth' etc. etc.

Carol Wong is a 350 point character.

The Apes

Whether they go there on their own or are forced to by Kagali, the PCs will eventually find themselves on the jungle trail towards Darkheart. On the way there, they will begin to see dead gorilla carcasses scattered about. Just a few at first, but then more and more. It seems that a large group of gorillas got into a batch of the highly potent drug plant; most died, but four had Supers powers emerge (see sidebar). These gorillas have become highly territorial and will fight to the death any intruders, namely the PCs.

The Dreams

As the PCs near Darkheart's temple and the resting place of H'blyathen, H'blyathen's influence will begin to affect their dreams. Each PC will have nightmares of their fellow PCs tormenting them. Go around the table and have each player describe a nightmare for the player on their left; each dream should somehow involve the image of an eye (representing H'blyathen, of course). During the dreams, have each player make a fright check, modified depending on the scariness of the dream that was described to them. The morning after the dreams begin, the subdermal transmitters of the surviving two research team members will begin to register on the PCs' equipment.

The Temple

An ancient, vine encrusted temple is where Darkheart is making his home. The temple is decorated with numerous images of H'blyathen and his ghost attendants. If the PCs have arrived on their own, Darkheart will welcome and attempt to convert them. He will explain the drug's effects and claim that the mega-corps only want to use the drug to create private armies; Darkheart wants to use the drug to bring mankind to a new level of enlightenment. Wong and the other surviving team member will testify that they have seen the light and no longer wish to serve the oppressive BioHorizons. If the PCs arrive as captives, Darkheart will still explain the above and make the offer to join him. In either case, any PCs who decline Darkheart's offer will be made into test subjects for an extremely potent dosage of the drug; Darkheart wants to see what effect the drug will have on those already exhibiting Supers abilities.

The Horror

If the PCs talk to the local tribesmen or Darkheart's disciples, they will get clues as to H'blyathen's existence: they will look away when asked about the statues and other eye images, they will make furtive glances towards the cave that leads to H'blyathen's lake, etc.

Any PCs who agree to join Darkheart will be required to undergo the initiation: they must journey to H'blyathen's resting place and spill their blood into H'blyathen's pool. When they do so, H'blyathen will look into their heart to decide if the PCs are true worshipers (GM's opinion as to whether the PCs are genuine or are trying trickery and deception). Those deemed untrue will be set upon by the ghosts. If the PCs defeat the ghosts and/or attempt to confront H'blyathen directly, H'blyathen himself will step into the fray: at this point, the PCs may as well attempt to run—it's the only chance they have. If they escape, H'blyathen will let it be known to Darkheart that the PCs are untrue, and Darkheart and his followers will attempt to deal with them.

The End

If the PCs survive Darkheart and the cult (and H'blyathen) they can take samples of the plant and the drug back to the port city. Wong and the other researcher won't come along willingly, but they could be dragged along if incapacitated and/or restrained. During the journey back, any remaining secret agendas amongst the PCs will hopefully come to fore. If the PCs did not deal with Kagali earlier, or if they did and did not resolve the conflict, he and his men will be waiting for them, attempting to block their departure.

Should any of the PCs successfully return to Atlanta with Wong and/or the drug in tow, BioHorizons will cheerfully pay them the full amount for their mission after a debriefing. If they make any indication of knowing what the drug's effects are, BioHorizons will happily have them executed. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.

Jeremy Bothan

Born 1981, 5' 9", 150 lbs.
ST 10, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 11.
Speed 6, Move 6, Dodge 6.

Advantages: Double Jointed; Patron: BioHorizons.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Miserliness.

Super Powers: Animate power 40; Control Animated Object power 15.

Skills: Animate-14; Control Animated Object-14; Research-15; Chemistry-15; Biochemistry-15; Computer Ops-15; Knife-13; Driving-14; Singing-12; Mechanic-16; First Aid-15.

Jeremy was the junior member of the BioHorizons research team, and the only one besides Carol Wong to survive taking the drug. He had no real purpose in the adventure other than to give the PCs troubles. If the PCs decide to attack at Darkheart's temple, he will use his powers to animate the statues of H'blyathen and the Ghosts and have them attack.

Jeremy is a 350 point character.



The Green Mammoth

(Larry Davis) 500 points

ST: 50

DX: 16

IQ: 12

HT: 18/24

Speed: 8.5

Dodge: 8

Move: 8

Thrust: 5d+2

Swing: 8d-1

Height: 10' 1"

Weight: 400 lbs.

Born: 1975

Advantages

Comfortable Wealth (10)

Charisma +2 (10)

Former Super (5)

Disadvantages

Gigantism (-10)

Hero's Code of Honor (-15)

Pacifism: Cannot Kill (-15)

Honesty (-10)

Bad Eyesight (-10)

Unnatural Feature: Green Fur (-5)

Super Advantages

DR 10 (30)

Super Jump 4 lvls (40)

Quirks

Wears glasses when resting, goggles in combat; Secret Desire to Return to Normal

Skills

Acting-11; Brawling-18; Breath Control-12; Carousing-17; Fast-Talk-13; Savior-Faire-14; Swimming-18; Throwing-16.

Powers & Abilities

You're big. You're strong. You're tough. You're covered with green fur. 'Nuff said.

Origin & Background

As a swimmer training in the Caribbean, you unwittingly unleashed an ancient curse which caused your permanent transformation. Your swimming days over, you became a Supers Hero, joining the Freedom Squad. Your large size and large personality made you a favorite of the hoi polloi, and you used your popularity to your advantage, seeking the limelight whenever possible, appearing on talk shows and in commercials. You regret somewhat the direction your life has taken in recent times, but becoming a mercenary is the best way for you to use your talents and make a living.

Reason for Taking this Assignment

You need the money, and look forward to working with some of your former colleagues.

What You Know About the Other Characters

The Blue Ghost — Former police detective, ally of the Freedom Squad though never a member. Can turn all or part of his body intangible, and can strike fear in opponents when he passes through them. Somewhat spooky and withdrawn.

Animus — Has the power to transform into animal forms. You knew him better as Zoo Boy, a member of the Junior Squad in the old days, hot-headed and quicker to act than to think.

Blade — You know very little about her, except that she may have been an assassin pre-Aliens.

Entropy — A fellow former member of the Freedom Squad, this former French Canadian physicist has the power to violate the laws of thermodynamics, exhibiting simultaneous heat and cold powers.

The Blue Ghost

(Jacob Harrison) 375 points

ST: 12
IQ: 14

DX: 13
HT: 14

Speed: 6.75
Move: 6

Dodge: 6

Thrust: 1d-1

Swing: 1d+2

Height: 5' 11"

Weight: 165 lbs.

Born: 1965

Advantages

Alertness +3 (15)
Attractive (5)
Alcohol Tolerance (5)

Disadvantages

Curious (-5)
Honesty (-10)

Super Advantages

Insubstantial (+10% no encumbrance; +20% parts) (104)
Costume (15)

Psionics

Aspect lvl 15 (-20% touch only; -10% altered form only)
(21)

Quirks

Spooky & withdrawn attitude

Skills

Aspect-18; Area Knowledge: Chicago-15; Brawling-16;
Criminology-17; Detect Lies-15; First Aid-15; Forensics-
16; Guns (Handguns)-18; Lip Reading-14; Pottery-14;
Shadowing-16; Stealth-16; Streetwise-16.

Powers and Abilities

You can turn all or part of your body insubstantial; whenever you do so, your body and whatever you are carrying turns blue. When you pass through a person, you can use your aspect power to cause your 'victim' to become frightened of you.

Origin and Background

You were a police detective in Chicago, but exposure to a stolen artifact changed your life forever, giving you your powers. You thereafter lived a dual life, fighting crime by the books as a detective, and become the Blue Ghost to get those criminals that the law could not touch. Since the end of the Alien occupation you have again assumed a double life, as Jacob Harrison, private investigator; and as The Blue Ghost, mercenary for hire.

Reason for Taking This Assignment

You were hired by the family of Carol Wong, a researcher for BioHorizons. She recently disappeared on a research expedition to the Congo, and her family suspects that BioHorizons has not been entirely forthcoming about the circumstances. You learned through your contacts that BioHorizons was putting together a Supers team to investigate, so you arranged for your Blue Ghost persona to be on the team.

What You Know About the Other Characters

The Green Mammoth — Former member of the Freedom Squad, with a personality and ego as large as his imposing physique.

Animus — Former member of the Junior Squad, as the impulsive Zoo Boy.

Blade — You suspect that this mysterious woman may have had something to do with the assassination of the Mayor of Chicago back in 1993.

Entropy — Another former member of the Freedom Squad, with the ability to control heat and cold.

Animus

(Dale Cougar) 520 points

ST: 12

DX: 15

IQ: 13

HT: 15

Speed: 7.25

Dodge: 7

Move: 7

Thrust: 1d-1

Swing: 1d+1

Height: 5' 11"

Weight: 160 lbs.

Born: 1979

Advantages

Animal Empathy (5)

Former Hero (5)

Disadvantages

Impulsive (-10)

Secret; Working for FutureTech (-5)

Jealousy (-10)

Greed (-15)

Super Advantages

Costume (15)

Super Powers

Animal Morph 30 lvls (+100% no morph memory) (350)

Quirks

Hates when people call him 'Zoo Boy'.

Skills

Animal Morph-16; Brawling-16; Carousing-14; First Aid-13; Flight-16; Tracking-15.

Powers and Abilities

You can change your form into that of any animal that you have encountered (and you have visited a lot of zoos!) Your Animal Morph power is similar to regular Morph, except: you can only morph into animal forms, you take on the ST and HT attributes of whatever you become, and there is no lower limit to your size (your upper limit is 640 lbs.)

Origin and Background

Your powers first appeared when you hit puberty. As Zoo Boy, you and a group of other teenage heroes banded together under the auspices of the Freedom Squad to form the Junior Squad. Since the departure of the Aliens, you have become a mercenary and adventurer, but it annoys you that people still remember you best as Zoo Boy, kid Supers Hero.

Reason for Taking This Assignment

Prior to being contacted by BioHorizons, you were contacted by their competitors, FutureTech. FutureTech believes that the BioHorizons research team discovered a powerful knew biological agent in the Congo. They want you to recover whatever the BioHorizons research team was after, and make sure that BioHorizons cannot profit from it. FutureTech is offering you double what BioHorizons is offering.

What You Know About the Other Characters

The Green Mammoth — Former member of the Freedom Squad, with a huge ego. He was always nice to you, but a bit condescending.

The Blue Ghost — An unaligned vigilante who operated in Chicago before the Aliens, now a mercenary.

Blade — A mysterious mercenary of whom you know very little.

Entropy — Another former Freedom Squad member, and one of your teachers from your Junior Squad days. Can control heat and cold.

Blade

(Allison Swifte) *350 points*

ST: 13

DX: 17

IQ: 15

HT: 13

Speed: 7.5

Dodge: 7

Move: 9

Thrust: 1d

Swing: 2d-1

Height: 5' 7"

Weight: 130 lbs.

Born: ?

Advantages

Weapon Master: Knife (20)

Catfall (10)

Hard to Kill 4 lvls (20)

Perfect Balance (15)

Silence 4 lvls (20)

Ambidexterity (10)

Composed (5)

Disadvantages

Partial Amnesia (-10)

Secret Disads (-30)

Former Villain (-5)

Quirks

Hates when people call him 'Zoo Boy'.

Skills

Acrobatics-17; Artist-15; Climbing-16; Fast Draw (Knife)-18; First Aid-15; Holdout-16; Intimidation-15; Karate-18; Knife-21; Knife Throwing-21; Mind Block-16; Running-12; Throwing-18; Throwing Art-18.

Powers and Abilities

You are a master with the knife, and when a knife isn't handy you can turn almost any object with an edge into a deadly thrown weapon.

Origin and Background

You have no memory of your life prior to five years ago, just after the Aliens departed. From what you have been able to piece together of your former life, you believe that you were a CIA trained assassin. You have since made a name for yourself as a covert operative available to the highest bidder, operating in the shadows of society.

Reason for Taking This Assignment

Margaret Finkle, head of external security for BioHorizons, once helped you out of a tight spot, and is now calling in a favor.

What You Know About the Other Characters

The Green Mammoth — A former hero.

The Blue Ghost — A former vigilante. Something about him seems familiar.

Animus — A former hero.

Entropy — A former hero; something about him causes you not to trust him.

Entropy

(Maxwell de Monique) 500 points

ST: 12

DX: 14

IQ: 16

HT: 13

Speed: 7.25

Dodge: 7

Move: 7

Thrust: 1d-1

Swing: 1d+2

Height: 6' 0"

Weight: 160 lbs.

Born: 1958

Advantages

Temperature Tolerance (10)

Former Hero (5)

Disadvantages

Overconfidence (-10)

Secret: from another dimension (-10)

Vow: Kill the Green Mammoth (-10)

Super Advantages

Costume (15)

Full Coordination (50)

Karmic Luck (20)

Super Powers

Flame Jet 5 lvls (+10 % link; -10% no knockback) (30)

Frost Jet 5 lvls (+10 % link; -10% no knockback) (30)

Cool 10 lvls (+10% link) (11)

Warm 10 lvls (+10% link) (22)

Disintegrate 5 lvls (+10% link; -20% touch only) (36)

Healing 5 lvls (+10% link; -20% touch only) (14)

Quirks

Pretentious

Skills

Flame Jet-16; Frost Jet-16; Cool-17; Warm-17; Disintegrate-16; Healing-16; Mathematics-17; Physics-18; Research-18; Brawling-16; Teaching-14; Woodworking-14; Computer Ops-16; Computer Programming-14; English-14.

Powers and Abilities

You can violate the laws of thermodynamics, as long as everything balances out. Your powers manifest themselves in several ways: you can simultaneously emit flame and frost jets, one from each hand; you can warm a region, as long as you cool another region; you can heal a person, as long as you also disintegrate something. Perhaps the most unique aspect of your powers is your Karmic Luck: you can use Luck, if you choose, every fifteen minutes of game time, but for every time you do, the GM gets to apply Unluck to you.

Origin and Background

You were a physics faculty member at the University of Quebec, when a government sponsored research project went horribly bad. Everyone else in your team died, but the accident unleashed your latent Supers abilities. You used your powers to become a Supers Hero, joining the Freedom Squad. While there, you also served as a tutor for the young heroes in the Junior Squad.

Or at least, that's what everybody on this world believes. In fact, you are the Maxwell de Monique from a parallel universe, where you were not a hero, but a villain. A bizarre hyper-dimensional accident caused you to switch places with your counterpart on this world, and you have assumed your doppelganger's identity. The people on this world believe you to be the former hero, and you go on letting them believe.

Reason for Taking This Assignment

Revenge. And money. But mostly revenge.

What You Know About the Other Characters

The Green Mammoth — On your world, he was your arch enemy whom you have threatened to destroy. If you cannot take revenge on the Mammoth of your world, you will take it on this world's Mammoth. Once the mission is assured of success, you plan on taking him out, hopefully without the others suspecting you.

The Blue Ghost — On your world, the Blue Ghost was a top thief, but on this world, he was a vigilante.

Animus — On your world, you killed Animus, when he was a member of the Junior Squad called Zoo Boy. On this world, he was apparently one of your double's pupils when he was a tutor to the Junior Squad.

Blade — On your world, she was a CIA assassin; you're not sure what sort of role she played on this world.

RAC Challenge II Chapter 16

by David S. Carter

The far far future:

David nervously approached the cave of the Story Master. He was still a young man—he had yet to complete the final stage of the Rite of Aspersion—so it was a great honor for him to be chosen. It was an important duty, bringing a tale to the Story Master; as long as the people of the tribe kept the Story Master entertained, he protected and provided for them. No one knew what would happen if a good story wasn't delivered, and no one wanted to find out.

David slipped into the cave, turning on his lantern to see down the dark tunnels. Once a ways inside, he saw a glow coming from a cavern up ahead. David stopped, caught his breath, and continued on into the cave.

The Story Master sat majestically on a throne on the far side of the cavern. Around him many volumes of books and other tomes filled the bookshelves that lined the walls. David had not been prepared for the sight of the Story Master; he had been told that the Master was old, but the man on the throne before him was ancient.

“Don't dawdle back there, boy, come forward!” The Story Master's booming voice broke the tense silence of the chamber. David did as he was told, sitting in the rocking chair in front of the Story Master.

After a few tense moments, the Story Master prompted again: “Well, boy, speak up! What is your story called?”

“My story...” David's voice cracked as he began his tale. “My story is called:

Quintessence and Peppermints; or, Gorillas in the Mr. Mister.”

“What the \$#%! is this? One of those \$#!ing Dead Earth Annuals?” Mikey turned back to the cover of the comic he held in his hands. The gorgeously rendered Lieber cover showed a character he didn't recognize sneaking into a zoo, and the bright logo identified the comic to indeed be the latest issue of *RAC Challenge II*.

The overweight, balding, unkempt comic shop owner flicked the ash from his cigarette and looked up from his copy of *Penthouse Letters*. “Hey kid, watch your language,” the shop owner admonished. “This is a family store.”

Ignoring the man, Mikey turned back to the colorful pages inside. “This had better be good,” he muttered.

Today:

Jh'anna picked up the spatula and turned it around, peering at it with confusion. “I wonder where this came from?”

What on Earth is This?

Recently I participated in Rec.arts.comics Challenge II, a round robin story thingie based around the idea from the old *DC Challenge* many moons ago. Each writer had to write his or her story using the title and situations given by the previous author. Needless to say, things get a bit confusing, as each person tries to deal with what went on before, while at the same time trying to screw over the next writer.

I'm not even going to bother trying to give 15 chapters of confusing backstory; it'd take longer to explain than the length of my story itself. The salient points are: In the last episode, The Safecracker had been brainwashed into assassinating Quintessence, the World's Most Perfect Girl, but missed his shot and killed Two-Timer instead. This was bad, because for some unknown reason Two-Timer had to substitute teach in a classroom next Monday, or else the world would end. Meanwhile, Old Mother Tongue sits in her realm of language, The Final Word, planning some nefarious plot involving various primates, and The Fat Kid Who Reads L. Ron Hubbard and the rest of the Illumiterati are up to something. Plus all the usual time travel paradoxes and dire warnings of apocalyses that one expects from a thirty-six issue crossover series.

If anyone is truly interested in reading the whole thing, head on over to Deja News (<http://www.dejanews.com/>) or Alta Vista (<http://altavista.digital.com/>) and do a Usenet search in rec.arts.comics.creative for 'RAC Challenge' (sans quotes).



"I recognize that," Mach Infinity said with excitement. "That's Cin E. Sterr's Time Spatula(tm)!"

Mr. Potato looked up from the body of Two-Timer, his face full of distress. "It's too late. Two-Timer is dead. Not even my potato healing can revive him."

"But if we have Cin E. Sterr's Time Spatula(tm)..." Trixie started.

"One of us can go back in time and save him!" Jh'anna finished.

"I'll do it," Mach infinity offered. "I've seen the Time Spatula(tm) in use before, and I know where Safecracker was when he shot Two-Timer."

"Just be careful," Trixie warned. "With all the time travel that's been going on, there's no telling what might happen."

"Don't worry," Mach Infinity replied. "I know what I'm doing." And with that, she flipped herself back five minutes.

Tonight:

The Locksmith slipped easily past the lone guard patrolling near the primate house of the Dixon City Zoo. In five seconds she easily jimmied the pathetic lock on the doors—obviously meant to hold the animals in, not people out. Silently she made her way to the back of the building, finding the monkey cage.

Since the mysterious disappearance of her arch rival, the Safecracker, the Locksmith had been deluged with offers of work. None, however, had been as easy or as lucrative as this one. All she had to do was to let loose the monkeys from the zoo—not the apes, not the baboons, not the urang-u-tans, just the monkeys—and a cool \$10,000 was hers. And with half paid up front, she wasn't going to question why the mysterious man who contracted her wanted the monkeys freed. She was a professional.

One of the monkeys who wasn't asleep saw her as she began to pick the lock on the cage. The simian started to hoop and holler, waking his cage-mates, and soon all the monkeys were jumping around, making quite a racket. The Locksmith was worried that all the noise might attract the guards. "Quiet down!" she scolded. "Can't you see I'm trying to free you?"

Soon, the Locksmith had the cage doors open, and the

monkeys came pouring out. Almost silently (well, silent for monkeys) they followed her back out of the primate house, and soon scattered to the four corners of the city.

Meanwhile, in a secret back room of a not-so-secret restaurant in the heart of Dixon City, a clandestine meeting was taking place:

"Word on the street is that our entire reality is threatened," said Don Carlotti as he puffed on his Cuban stogie. "And I don't have to tell you what that means."

Kei-Ting "Chuck" Chan nodded in agreement. "If reality is destroyed, our criminal empires will cease to exist."

Dr. Evillo moved from the shadows and adjusted his glasses. "There can only be one course of action."

Mme. Scarlet looked Evillo in the eye. "You don't mean..."

"Yes," Evillo said gravely. "We must implement The Paragon Option!"

Next Monday:

The students in Mrs. Sanders' first-grade class looked around at each other. The bell had rung three minutes ago, yet their teacher was nowhere to be found. Nor had a substitute showed up. To the first-graders, this was an unprecedented occurrence. Not knowing what else to do, the kids all got up from their desks and wandered out onto the playground.

Suddenly, the sky opened, and a great blackness started to pour forth. It enveloped the Sun and the clouds, and then started to eat away at the earth.

"What's happening?" Tommy asked the other kids in the sandbox.

"I think it's Poca's Lips," Tabitha offered.

"What's that?" Zoe asked.

"My daddy says that it's the end of the world as we know it," Tabitha explained.

Tommy felt as though he should be doing something to stop Poca's Lips, as though there was some inner power within him, that he only needed adult guidance to tap and thus save the world. Alas, all he could offer, before the blackness engulfed him and his playmates, was: "But I feel fine..."

1890:

The Gentleman Detective opened the curtains of his London flat and looked out onto the street below. It was another gorgeous day, perfect for solving another mystery.

A noise from the sitting room brought him back from his reverie. "Derringer, is that you?" Turning around, the Gentleman Detective could see that wasn't his faithful companion and chronicler, but rather a large pulsating vortex, ripping a whole in space and time. And right there in his sitting room, yet. "I say, what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

A voice from the vortex called forth: "Franklin Banister, alias the Gentleman Detective, you are needed to help save reality."

"Can it not wait?" the Gentleman Detective asked. "It is a lovely day out, and I was hoping to have tea with the lovely Miss Smythe this afternoon."

"Is your tea more important than the fabric of reality?"

"I suppose not. Oh well, I shall have to leave a note for my housekeeper so that she won't be unduly distressed when she shows up and I'm off gallivanting around in space and time." The Gentleman Detective wrote out his note (with perfect penmanship, even though he was rushed) and jumped into the vortex, which closed behind him with a *pop*.

Today:

A short man quietly emerged from the oversized art books section of the Dixon University Library. "You people are really pathetic."

The assembled members of the Illumiliterati turned to face the intruder. "Who are you?" Asked the Angry White Male Who Reads Rush Limbaugh. "What are you doing here?"

"I am the Midget Critic Who Really Really Hates Ernest Hemmingway, and I am the person who will finally give your little conspiracy the direction it so desperately needs to finally conquer the universe once and for all!"

An ominous thunderclap rattled the entire building, causing the McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology, all twenty-four volumes (except, inexplicably, volume twelve) to fall from their perch in the reference section. Which was odd, because outside there wasn't a

cloud in the sky.

The assembled members of the Illumiliterati crowded around the Midget. Perhaps this was the break they needed. Perhaps the Midget Critic Who Really Really Hates Ernest Hemmingway was the one of whom it was foretold would lead them to victory.

From her hiding place in the sorting area, the Only Librarian Who Truly Understands the Dewey Decimal System began to worry. Up until now, she had allowed the Illumiliterati to meet in the library, assured in the knowledge that those incompetents couldn't really cause serious harm. But now that the Midget Critic Who Really Really Hates Ernest Hemmingway was leading them, things were a lot more serious. She would have to alert the High Council of the Librarians of Space and Time of this new development.

Millions of Years Ago:

Dino Hunter aimed his Disrupter rifle at the Tyrannosaur 100 yards away. Holding steady, he lined the reptile in his sights, and prepared to pull the trigger. Just then, a temporal rift open up between him and the dino. Spooked, the T-Rex ran away. Disgusted, Dino Hunter tossed his weapon to the ground. "Not again!"

"Samuel Samson," a voice from the rift called, using Dino Hunter's given name, "you are needed to help save reality."

"Again?" Dino Hunter asked.

"Yes."

"That's the third time this month. How am I ever to get any hunting done if you people keep plucking me from the time stream?"

The voice didn't directly answer his question. "You are needed," it repeated.

"What the hey," Samson muttered as he grabbed his gun and jumped into the time-rift. "It's not like I'm going to catch up with that T-Rex again today."

"Dino Hunter?" Mikey scoffed. "How lame! Who cares about some guy that goes around with a laser rifle shooting dinosaurs? Dinos are so 1994."

The shop owner lit up another Marlboro. "You kids these days have no respect for comic book history. Dino Hunter

was created by the great Kirk Jacoby, original artist on *The Rambling Rage* and *The Fantabulous Furry Freak Fighters*.”

“I wonder if those lame-os will also show up in this story...”

Today:

“Rage!” The Rambling Rage pounded on the walls of his underground prison, as he had done every minute of every hour of every day since his imprisonment two years ago. “Rage! Rage! Rage! Rage! Rage! Rage! Rage! Rage! Rage! Rage!”

“Rage!” It was a different voice, this one coming from a time-rift that had opened in the corner of the cell.

The Rambling Rage was perplexed. It stopped pounding. “Rage?” is asked.

“Rage,” the rift replied. “Rage rage rage, rage rage rage raaaagggeee.”

“Rage rage?”

“Rage!”

The Rambling Rage leaped into the rift. “Rage!” it cried out with triumph.

“Figures,” muttered Mikey.

The Final Word:

The two gorillas appeared with Quintessence in tow. Old Mother Tongue was pleased. At last, something was going according to plan. “Hello, my dear girl. So nice of you to join me.”

By now, Quintessence was getting used to all of the sudden changes in location and time-frame. “Who are you? Where am I? Why have you kidnapped me?” she shot out.

Old Mother Tongue liked this girl. Straight and to the point. No use wasting perfectly good language on flowery exposition. “I’m Old Mother Tongue, ruler of Realm Lingua and soon-to-be ruler of Realm Physical. You’re at the Final Word, my home base. And I’ve kidnapped you so that you can help me replenish my army of gorillas.”

Quintessence pondered for a moment to two gorillas that were at the moment restraining her from hopping up and planting a well-deserved *smack* on Old Mother Tongue’s chin. “Seems to me that you have plenty of gorillas already.”

“You’d think so,” Old Mother Tongue said, “but they keep falling into the Mr. Mister, trying to lick clean the last of the peppermint mist. I lose more gorillas that way.”

The thought of gorillas being chewed-up by a giant Mr. Mister did not paint a happy mental image for Quintessence. Nonetheless, she plowed forward with her expository questions. “So what does this have to do with me?”

Old Mother Tongue was quite pleased. The girl was asking all the right questions, so as to get all the clumsy exposition out of the way quickly and effectively. “Well, you are the World’s Most Perfect Girl, are you not?”

“Well, that’s a bit of a pickle. I’ve changed ages so much recently that I can’t keep track of if I’m supposed to be a girl or a woman or what.”

“Not to worry, my dear. You’re in the Realm Lingua now. If I decide to call you a girl, you’re a girl.” And with that, Quintessence was back to being twelve-years-old.

“That’s better, thank you,” Quintessence said. “But I still don’t understand what you need me for.”

“Why, my dear, I plan on stealing your World’s Most Perfect DNA, to merge with our simian friends to create the World’s Most Perfect Gorilla!”

David paused in his narrative. “I’m not losing you, am I?” he asked the Story Master.

“No,” the Master replied. “Please continue.”

David took a drink of water and continued...

“I don’t get it,” Mikey complained. “What’s all this \$#!+ about with the kid and the old fart in the cave?”

Jim, a college kid who had entered the store a couple minutes earlier, tried to explain: “It’s a framing device.”

Mikey didn’t think much of Jim, who read stupid comics like *Sandman*, *Bone*, *StrangeHaven*, *Shades of Gray*, *Two-Fisted Tales of Science*, *Patty Cake*, and other dumb

comics with very little fighting or big splash pages. "Why bother?" Mikey griped. "Why not just tell the %#@!ing story?"

"The writer is trying to show how clever he is by putting the main story within another story, thereby having a story that knows that it's a story. It's called being self-referential."

Mikey didn't understand a thing that Jim had just said. "Yeah, whatever," he said as he turned the page.

Today:

CIA Headquarters, Langly Virginia
Office of the Director

"Come in, Holmes, come in. What's so damned important?"

The Deputy Director closed the door behind him and stood in front of the Director's desk. "I'm afraid I have some very bad news, sir. I thought it best that you hear it from me."

"Well, what is it? Spit it out."

"Yes sir. It appears that MK-ULTRA-man has escaped."

"My God! When did this happen?"

"Nearly two weeks ago."

"Two weeks! Why didn't anyone discover this sooner?"

"Well, sir, he *is* MK-ULTRA-man. We didn't discover it until this morning, when one of the attendants went in to take his bi-weekly blood test and found his cell empty."

The Director took a moment to compose himself. "Suffering shellfish, Holmes, with his powers of psychedelic mind control, there's no telling what sort of havoc MK-ULTRA-man could have caused in the last two weeks."

"That's true sir. He could appear to be anyone, from a lowly street bum, to the President, to Paragon the Ultimate Man, or even you."

"Or you, Holmes."

"That's right sir, even me."

Director Watson suddenly saw the writing utensils on his desk get up and start to jig. The colors of his office

furniture changed from muted earth-tones to neon green and pink. The world began to spin, until the CIA Director collapsed into his own dream world.

The man pretending to be Holmes moved the Director's body into the coat closet. He sat down behind the Director's desk and voiced into the intercom system: "Ms. Casey, could you please come in here for a minute?"

The Director's assistant opened the door to his office. "Yes, Mr. Watson?"

"Could you please fetch me the S.Y.Z.Y.G.Y. file, and get me whatever we have on Paragon?"

"Yes sir, Mr. Watson. Right away."

MK-ULTRA-man smiled to himself. All of his carefully laid plans were coming to fruition, right on schedule.

Five Minutes Ago:

Mach Infinity turned over in time and landed on the grassy knoll, surrounded by gorillas. "Oops. I forgot to take into account the Earth's rotation. No matter, I'll just flip this here spatula again and..."

One of the gorillas yanked the Time Spatula(tm) from her hand. "Hey! Give that back!" she shouted.

"Oook?" the gorilla asked as it started to fiddle with the controls.

"You don't know what you're doing! You could seriously damage the time stream!"

Another of the gorillas tried to grab the spatula away from the first gorilla, and a grappling match ensued. One of the gorillas must have flipped a switch, because suddenly, the two gorillas flipped themselves into the time stream.

"Oops. I wonder where they went? I hope they don't cause too much damage. Mach Infinity looked over at the Shatterproof Window Company, and could just barely make out Safecracker in the window, preparing to fire his fatal shot. "It's a good thing that I'm the World's Fastest Girl. All I need to do is quickly run over there and..."

BANG

Too late.

The Desert Island at the Nexus of Time

Birds and other scavengers pick at the remains of the climactic battle, until their movements re-write the message HUSSY into MOSSY. Acronymic power surges forth, as MOSSY stands for Make Our Super Spurgo Youth. The carcasses of the defeated Spurgo Youth come to life, moving together to form one giant creature, the thirty-foot-tall Super Spurgo Youth. With the power to travel through time via the world's oceans, Super Spurgo Youth enters the water with one name on its lips: "Paragon!"

November 22, 1963:

Watson stood about fifty yards away from the grassy knoll, peering through his binoculars. Everything was in place, and the plan was going to go off without a hitch. Although he had been in the CIA for only ten months, his superiors trusted him to observe the events, and make sure that nothing would go wrong.

As the President's motorcade approached, Watson checked the window of the book depository, and saw that the patsy Oswald was in place too. Perfect. He swung his binoculars back over to the gunman on the grassy knoll, just in time to see two gorillas pop-up out of nowhere and knock over the gunman. "What the...!"



Oswald fired his shots anyway, but missed the motorcade completely. The secret service agents quickly converged around the President and the First Lady, shielding them from any further gunfire.

Watson looked over at the motorcade, and saw that the President was still alive. "Uh-oh," he said to himself. "If Kennedy's still alive, we're all in it deep now!"

David hated leaving the story on a cliffhanger, but that's the way the Story Master liked it. "Does my story meet with your approval?"

"Yes it does. I am pleased. Who is to be the next to bring me a story?"

"Donald MacPherson, o wise one. What will his title be?"

"Tell him that the title for the next story is to be: 'The Six Time-Traveling Colorado Chickens Visit The World's Fair'." The Story Master stood from his throne, and disappeared.

David began the long walk back to his village.

Mikey tossed the comic aside with disgust. "How lame! Nothing was resolved, all we got were more questions! Who paid the Locksmith to release the monkeys from the Dixon City Zoo? Does it have anything to do with Simian Sid or Old Mother Tongue's Gorillas? What's the deal with Tommy and the rest of Mrs. Sanders' first-grade class? Who's going around picking up old lame characters from around space and time to save reality? What's the plan of the Midget Critic Who Really Really Hates Ernest Hemmingway and how will it help the Illumiliterati to take over the world? Will Quintessence be able to escape the clutches of Old Mother Tongue, or will she use Quintessence's DNA to create the World's Most Perfect Gorilla? What has MK-ULTRA-man been up to? Why is everyone so interested in Paragon? And if Kennedy was never assassinated, what will that do to the fabric of reality? Not to mention all of the other plotlines that this writer just chose to ignore!"

The store owner was losing patience. "So are you going to buy that comic or what?"

Mikey picked the comic and took it over to the counter. "Yeah, but only to keep my collection intact. The next writer had better be better than this, though, or I'm dropping the title like a bad head cold."

"Sure kid. Whatever."