

Previously ... The Away Team

The Away Team assembles on the bridge of their home base (Captain Starship's mother's garage), staring into the 57" plasma view-screen (tv). After news of the Stone men from Saturn blares across the screen, Captain Starship clicks on the Captain's Log recorder on the side of the Captain's chair (mp3 recorder duct-taped to an office chair).

"Captain's Log, Stardate 1-13.14. We had just dispatched the leader of the Bluebloods to Starfleet authorities, and went back to monitoring our sector when we received a distress call from the local inhabitants. Initial reports indicate the Saturnians have violated Federation space, and are now terrorizing the people of Shadow Hill. We're moving in to investigate."

Clicking off the recorder, Cpt. Starship turns to First Officer Space Alien. "First officer, scan the area. Let's see if we can pinpoint the Saturnian landing site and catch them off guard."

Peering into a taped cardboard box, resting over a computer monitor, First Officer Space Alien clicks on a few local access traffic cameras. "Scanning. I'm detecting indigenous flora ... a few pedestrians ... and one SHAMBLING SATURNIAN!"

"BA dum-bum-BUM!" Lt. Decoy helpfully interjected a vocally dramatic beat.

Ctp. Starship swiveled quickly in his chair ... "Ok dude. Do you REALLY have to vocalize the dramatic music? It just sounds so dumb!"

"What?" asked Lt. Decoy, half-smiling. "C'mon, man! I never get to do anything but stand in front of the bad guys while you guys do all the cool stuff!"

"What are you talking about? Didn't I let you stand in as the fake policeman so we could catch Eustace Tilly red handed? Isn't that YOUR picture on page 5 of the Champion City Star?"

"LET me stand in??? Man, I didn't even get to pick my own name! You CALLED me Decoy, and then told me to pretend to be a cop so Tilly and his boys would come after me, while you all hid in the bushes! Oh, and that picture was me getting my face bashed in with a chair! Here, look ... I've still got a freakin' bruise." Lt. Decoy points to a pronounced lump and slight discoloration on his forehead, just below the hairline.

Doctor Bones pulls out a small noise-making device, waving it around Decoy's head.

"Captain ..." First Officer Science Alien interrupted. "I think you better see this."

"On screen."

First Officer Space Alien clicks the mouse a couple of times, and the local access traffic cam appears on the plasma viewscreen.

All four members of The Away Team stare intently at the screen, jaws slightly slacked, with an expression of both fascination and terror. “Captain, that ... that thing ...” stammered Dr. Bones.

“I see it, Doc. Decoy, prep the shuttlecraft! Doc, bring your stim-pack. First Officer, open hailing frequencies to the local authorities.”

First Officer Science Alien flips a switch on the police scanner. “Hailing frequencies open, Captain.”

“This is Captain Starship of the Away Team calling Champion City Police.”

A voice crackles over the speaker. “Starship, dammit! How many times do I have to tell you that this frequency is for official police business only! If you don’t stop using this channel for your own ...”

“Chief, we don’t have time for this! Our scanners just picked up Saturnian activity in your sector, on Shadow Hill. I’m sending our Away Team to investigate. I just thought you would want to know.”

“STARSHIP!!!!!”

“Starship, out.”

The Away Team all piles in to a grey Honda Civic, hatchback. The sides of the vehicle have long round tubes mounted on the sides, spray-painted to look like engine nacelles. The words “USS Away Team” are hand-painted in black on either side. As Lt. Decoy starts the engine, LED lights cause the front of the tubes to illuminate with a reddish-yellow glow. First Officer Science Alien, donning the latex accoutrements of a being from another planet, attached with spirit-gum, flips on the GPS. After punching in the address for Shadow Hill, he opens the glove-box and pulls out a couple of laser-pointer mounted phaser toys and hands them to the rest of the crew.

Captain Starship leans forward in his seat in the back. “Lt. Decoy, take us down.”\

Previously The Global Grappling All-Stars

The local community outreach station interrupted their regular coverage of high school badminton and the Ye Olde Folks Home's bridge tournament for a paid infom-, er, that is, a live on-the-spot sports report. A small, balding man wearing a purple tuxedo coat and a neck brace stood with a microphone in hand on a farm somewhere on Champion City's outskirts.

"Thank you Linda. It was a scene unlike any other in recent memory: a barnyard brawl for the ages pitting a villainous behemoth against Champion City's finest defenders of liberty, love, and livestock. No holds were barred in this down and dirty, mud-covered battlefield. But when the dust settled, today's victor turned out to be none other than Justice. Joining me now is the star of tonight's match, Serge the Colossal."

"Hello Linda," the large man said, waving affably.

"Clearly Serge, This was your finest victory since your epic 'Sardine Barrel' bout with Big Rig Bartholomew. Do you have any thoughts about how your first match as a provisionally licensed hero went?"

"Well, I am happy none of the people or animals were hurt. Hamfist was tough, but what he was doing was not very nice, so I am glad we stopped him."

"Is there any message you'd like to send to any criminals looking to challenge the Global Grappling All-Stars?"

"To any bad people, I would like to say: Wun for your lives! There will be NO SURVIVORS! ... I am making a joke. I look forward to my next opponent and I hope the match will make people happy."

"There you have it ladies and gentlemen: a man whose staggering physical prowess and natural talent are surpassed only... by the size of his heart. In the meantime we now have with us another participant in today's vigilante action, the one and only "Manic Man" Jamie Wild."

The mustached announcer was now joined at the mic by a bearded man in a mud-stained, formerly vibrantly colored jacket with a crazy look in his eyes. "Farmhouse: Champion City! Just a little taste of big things to come for the Manic Man, yeah. A tidbit, a morsel, just enough to whet the appetite if you know what I'm sayin', yeah."

"It was indeed an auspicious start for the All-Stars. What sort of big things do you see on the horizon for you and the other wrest-, er heroes?"

"Have you ever been to the jungle, Dean?"

"No, no, can't say that I have--"

“They got snakes there Dean! Oh yeah. Big ones, long ones, ones that will crush a man’s breath from his body, yeah. The Manic Man has faced several serpents in his lifetime. Do you think he was scared?”

“I’m guessing no-”

“Score one for Mean Dean. Now, if the Manic Man has stared down the mighty cobra... if he’s wrestled with the deadly anaconda, what makes you think he’s going to back down from filthy, low down overgrown earthworm?”

“If you’re referring to the Rockworm, eye witness reports say it’s the size of a small neighborhood.”

“You’re darn straight I’m ‘referring’ to the Rockworm. Rockworm! You made a big mistake messin’ with... with...”

“Weasel Bag? The hero that was captured-”

“That’s right! Jamie Wild, friend to all weasels, yeah. You better get your affairs in order Rockworm because this Sunday I’m comin’ straight for ya. *Oh yeah!*”

“You heard it here first, ladies and gentlemen. This Sunday, it’s beast vs. man. The Armor-Plated Abomination, the Titan of Tremors, the Rockworm against what will hopefully be the full might of the Global Grappling All-Stars. It’s going to be-”

“Dean, Dean, let me ask you sumthin. Are you a man... or a chicken?”

“I’m, I’m not certain I understand the-”

“It’s a very simple question, Dean... Are you a *man*, or are you a *chicken*?”

“Well, I’m a man of cour-”

“*That’s right!* You’re a man ‘cause you showed up today, yeah. I can respect that, yeah. But Samson? He ain’t a man or a chicken, ‘cause even the chicken showed up to fight today! Smash Samson, you better mark my words and mark them well, yeah. This Sunday Night! Champion River Valley! We’re gonna find out who the real Heavyweight Champ of Champion City is. *Ooooooh yeeeeeah!*”

Team Orders:

Serge spends his 3 xp on new boots to replace his muddy ones, raising his speed to 3.
The entire team will go on the Rockworm Special Mission.

Previously ... The Groovy Flower Power Girls

Dream Dust Debbie, Tie-Dye Tina, and Butterfly Betty--and Charlie! have finally found a comfy hang-out--the Steel Dust Diner. Located on the outskirts of Burns Industrial Park, it caters to the working men ... and women who keep the city's mechanical heart beating.

"They also make super shakes!" chirps Tie-Dye Tina.

"... I understand the All-Star Super Squadron is from here..." says Dream Dust Debbie, with a wink.

"Hey, are you wearing mascara?" says an outraged Butterfly Betty.

"It's tres mod," drawls Debbie. "Wanna try some?"

"Ummm.... " Tina blows a nervous bubble. "...maybe..." She rubs her earlobe which is sorta red.

"Enough with the chitter-chatter. Last time out we had a blast but we need to decide what to do this week."

"How 'bout the seein' what's shakin' with Bombastro?"

"You just want to go there 'cos of the cute guys."

"What do you mean cute guys? They're... gangsters!"

"Fit, bad-boy gangsters..." Debbie smiles.

"We should really help our fellow crime-fighters."

"Do you mean Admiral America, Jonathan Harker and Dr. Socrates? That could be keen. I like literature."

"If you like literature, how about the Novelizer? He's been kidnapped, too."

"Oooh!"

"And Bongo Boy... don't forget him..."

"Who could forget Bongo Boy? He's the ginchiest." Tie-Dye Tina is fairly bouncing up and down in her seat.

"We're saving the fine arts scene!"

From the counter, a rough, British voice bellows, "Gurrls, back to work! What am I paying you for?"

"Yes, Mr. Hunt," they chime.

"And get tha' giant moth out of me washbasin!"

Previously ... The Outsiders

When Ponyboy Curtis stepped away from the bright lights of the news reporters into the darkness of the back alleys, he had two things on his mind: the Man Eating Cow and how he was going to get a ride home for him and his brother.

"Hey, Sodapop, let's go!" he called back to his brother, who was still flexing for the cameras. His brother turned, grinned, and ran to catch up with him.

"What's the hurry, little brother? Didn'tcha see? We're famous!" Soda turned and waved at the still flashing cameras again.

"We're not famous," Said Ponyboy, pulling his jacket closed and shuffling faster to get around a corner and away from the unwanted attention, "we just stopped some guys from lifting a car. Now how are we gonna get back to our pad?"

Sodapop shrugged. He reached into his pocket and pulled out two smokes. He popped them both in his mouth, lit them, then handed one to his brother.

"Don't snap your cap, Ponyboy. We'll just walk. it ain't that far anyways."

Both of the boys walked for a time in silence. Finally, Ponyboy spoke.

"Hey, tell me again, when did we move to Champion City?"

Sodapop shrugged again. "I dunno, a while ago. With Mom and Dad. Before the accident."

His mood visibly shifted. Ponyboy frowned and took a drag from his cigarette. Looking up, he watched a police dirigible float silently overhead. He could hear the sounds of the city around them, muted slightly by the alleys. The buildings were shorter where they were, though, so he could see the tops of the skyscrapers of the Industrial Park and the Business District. He had lived in the city his entire life, but he couldn't shake the feeling that everything was new. What was going on?

Darrell Curtis stopped outside the door to his apartment. Through it, he could hear his television. That either meant his brothers were home, or they forgot to turn it off, or one of the other gang was in there. He sighed and opened the door. Inside the apartment, sitting around the rather small living room/dining room/flop house for his lazy friends, were his lazy friends. Two Bit, Dallas, Johnny, and Steve were all lounging around, drinking beers.

"Hey hey, the king has returned." Joked Two Bit.

"Want a brewsky?" Asked Dallas, tossing him a Nati Bo. Darrell smiled and popped the cap.

"Does the cow drink beer?" Asked Johnny.

Behind him, the clang of Man Eating Cow's bell reminded him of the odd night he just had. He turned and, yes, there she was.

"Do any of you mugs remember when the cow moved in?" He asked, knowing what the answer would be. They all just shrugged at him. Yep, that was the answer he was expecting.

"Did you know your brothers were on the tube?" Asked Steve, pointing at the tv. "They beat up some car thieves. The news lady is calling them super heroes! Says they're members of The Outsiders."

"Why'd she call us The Outsiders? Everybody knows we's da Greasers." Two Bit looked perplexed.

It was Darrell's turn to shrug. He looked at the television. Sure enough, there was his lunkhead of a little brother, Sodapop, flexing for the news cameras. A young woman was fawning over him, describing how he ripped a street lamp out of the sidewalk and threw it at some car thieves. He frowned thoughtfully, were they going to have to pay for that?

At that moment there was a knock at the door. He walked over and opened it. Standing outside was a man dressed in the black and silver of the Champion City Thunder Gods, the local baseball team. He was carrying a baseball bat and his face was painted black and silver to match his clothes. The two young men nodded to each other.

"Hey Allen." Said Darrell.

"Hey Darrel." Said Allen.

"How's things with the Furies?"

"Not bad. Not bad. How's things with The Outsiders?"

"How do you even know that name? They just started-"

"Listen, ain't got time for your questions. Bombastro has called a summit. Every gang is to go. That includes you guys. "

"I don't like being told what to do, Allen." Darrell stepped closer to him. Behind him, Allen noticed all the other young men in the room stood up. Working on the docks and in construction and walking countless city blocks definitely helped the Outsiders stay fit. Two Bit, who was not very smart, still looked like his jacket was stuffed with bowling balls. The other guys were smaller but that was a relative term. Not one of them would be blinked at twice if they climbed into an olympic boxing ring. Also, there was a cow. She turned and looked at him with bloodshot eyes.

"Whoa," said Allen, backing away, "I just came to give the message. I don't want no trouble. Just be at the summit, dig?"

The boys in the room started towards the door. Allen turned and ran for it. "Yeah! I dig!" shout Darrell after him.

"We going to the summit, Darrell?" Asked Dallas, stepping up next to him to watch Allen running into the distance.

"Yeah," Replied Darrell, frowning, "we're going. We'll grab Soda and Pony on the way. And bring the cow."

Behind the boys, a cowbell clanged in approval. The boys picked up various leather jackets, lit cigarettes, and filed out of the apartment. A few moments later, the cow squeezed through the door and followed.

Previously ... The Super Squadron

Mike Axford, the presidential bodyguard and head of the Treasury Department, was cooling his heels in the waiting room of the Oval Office. "SUFFERING SNAKES!" he expostulated in his thick Irish brogue, "Casey, ye gotta lets me in to see the President! I'z supposed to be protecting him! And besides of which—"

Lenore Case, the Secretary of War, and also the President's personal secretary, took a pencil from behind her ear to make a correction on the presidential letter she was typing. Her hair was done up in a style called a 'Victory Roll' and atop her saucy curls was perched a fashionable hat. She was nattily attired in a long jacket with padded shoulders and a thigh-length skirt with hose and heels.

"Not now, Mike!" She snapped, "I've got to get this letter out to the President of Russia. The Russians have claimed the North Pole as part of their sovereign territory, and the United States has to make it clear that we will not stand for this aggression, and that no options are off the table."

"Holy Crow! Those Ruskies are trying to stop Christmas! *Again!*"

"The United States will act — even if our layabout president will not. If we have to drop a Nuke, so help me—"

"Suffering Snakes! Are you telling me that *you*, the President's secretary, gets to declare war? And here I thought Congress or something..."

"Just a police action, Mike, just a police action! And someone has to run things while the President is out nightclubbing!" Miss Case jabbed a well-manicured fingernail down on the speakerphone. "Get me Admiral America over at the Pentagon, stat! I need a dozen nuclear submarines off the coast of Siberia! Yesterday! And the President needs his coat pressed for his press conference with TIGER BEAT magazine."

The voice of Colonel O. Wisdom came back over the line. In the background was the noise of the busy front office of the Pentagon, with military men rushing back and forth calling out the names and numbers of various assets and personnel being delivered world wide, the clatter of tickertape, and the harsh jangling of telephone bells. "I am sorry, Miss Case," said Colonel Wisdom, who also doubled as the office manager for the Pentagon, "But Admiral America has not reported in. Semaphore signals to the Liberty Ship just get a busy signal. I am not sure what to do. We need to get the war ready if we are going to make our 3:30 deadline."

Lenore Case said, "Get the war started for our 3:30 deadline without fail! We can always add more troops with an extra deployment."

"Should I reinstate the draft, Miss Case?" asked Colonel Wisdom.

She sighed. "You know I cannot do that without the President's direct order. Just stand by. I'll get back to you." At that moment, her typewriter jammed. "And now I need a new ribbon! I hate being Secretary of War!" She turned to the thickset Irish bodyguard. "Mike, you have to talk Mr Norcross into letting me go out on field missions. I can help protect the United States! This desk job is driving me crazy!"

The buzzer on her desk rang an alarm. "Miss Case, this is the switchboard. I have a phone call from Saturn."

"The Greek God or the big planet?"

"The party did not say. It was a man's voice, but there was buzzing theramin music playing in the background. He demands to speak to the President. Something about Stone Men in a certain neighborhood in Champion City, New Delaware. It could be a crank call. Should I put it through to the President?"

But Mike Axford, hearing this, had had enough. Stomping over to the big doors, and pushing himself past the marine guards, he stormed into the Oval Office.

There sat the young, daring President, feet crossed on the desk, leaning back in his chair, elbows high, hands behind his head. Standing next to him, unnoticed in his leather motorist coat and cap and goggles, was the White House Chief of Staff and Presidential Chauffer, Kato Mifune.

"Suffering Snakes, Jamie boy!" grated Mike Axford, "What would your father say if he could see you now? Your father, he thought you would give up on your playboy lifestyle, nightclubs and theaters, and settle down to real work if only you were put in charge of the United States! He thought running a great country would straighten you out. But here you are whistling at the ceiling, while the Russians are trying to stop Christmas, and the Stone Men of Saturn are stalking the streets of a city in New Delaware."

President Norcross smiled indulgently at the rough Irishman, but raised his voice, "Miss Case, is New Delaware actually a state in the union?"

The trim figure of the Secretary of War appeared in the doorway, her steno pad in hand. "Yes sir. As of last Thursday. I checked with Chief Justice, who is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, as well as the Chief of the Justice tribe. He says you can create new states if Congress is in recess. We are now up to 57. The House of Representatives is up to 900 members. We are having some trouble dividing West Virginia into East West Virginia and West West Virginia. Oh, and Saturn is on line one; Red China is on line two."

He waved a hand at her. "You handle those calls, Miss Case. Declare war on whichever one is hurting our national interests."

She pouted. "But, chief! I've been your secretary for years! I know more about running the United States than any man! I think I should be out there in the field, with Mr Axford, fighting enemies of the nation! I bet I could whip inflation by myself!"

Mike Axford said, "Now, Casey, you know whenever you poke your pretty nose into National business, it ends up getting smudged. Why not leave the rough stuff to tough customers like me? You stay here in the Oval Office with the President, where it is safe!" He rounded on the President with a snarl. "Speaking of which, where in the blistering Blue Blazes was you last night?"

"Why, what do you mean, Mike?" asked the President innocently.

"The Red Chinese are claiming airspace over Taiwan and the City of New Orleans suffered a major flood! Ivan Kragoff landed on the moon in a glass space ship crewed by three super-apes and scuffed out Neal Armstrong's footprints! The Punisher shot in the head of that Middle Eastern death cult before the Navy Seal team was ready, totally stealing our thunder! Super President was fighting Godzilla!" Axford pointed a blunt Irish finger at Norcross. "And where was you, might I be asking? No one could find you." He shook his head in disgust. "Playing golf, was it? Out with a dame, was it?"

Norcross said, "Super-President, eh? I think he was winning that fight, if only he had not been knocked through a building. Turns out concrete is not something you should turn into when you are being pounded through concrete."

Mike Axford pounded his fist in his palm. "And, by thunder, that Godzilla is now a hero. A super hero! Part of a biker gang or something. I saw the report put out by the Treasury Department of Red Chinese, our rival nation! You know what that means!"

Norcross nodded grimly. "They scooped us again, Mike! The Reds are planning economic warfare, no doubt about it! Perhaps we should not have let the Mandarin buy up so much of our National Debt! I do not want to speak ill of my predecessor in office, the disembodied undead brain of Roosevelt in a jar, but some of his policies, such as means testing for welfare, and mandatory hypnosis in public schools ... "

Miss Case spoke up, "I almost forgot to tell you, boss, that M from the British Secret Service called yesterday while you were out. They've run some tests, and discovered that the disembodied undead brain of Roosevelt was actually a living brain, just wearing yellow fright makeup to make it look undead."

"Wait," said Norcross in a puzzled voice. "You mean the disembodied dead brain of a former President resurrected by unnatural and illegal scientific techniques was actually the disembodied living brain of someone else who was completely alive?"

"M-I 6 is not sure," answered Lenore Case pertly, " The British think the United States for the last eight years was being run by a super villain in disguise, either Doctor Sun, or Doctor Morbius, Doctor Donovan or Professor Doctor Herman Von Klempt, or Professor Menace, or that Guy with the French Gorilla... It would explain a lot ... "

Mike Axford waved his thick Irish hands in the air as if to wipe the topic aside, and spoke in his thick-witted thick Irish voice, "Suffering Snakes! Sometimes a man can't hear himself talk, listening to you! Is it totally missing the point you are?"

"What do you mean, Axford?" asked Norcross in a voice of surprise.

"Just this! If Godzilla is a GOOD GUY, and he was fighting Super President, you know what that means?! It means Super President is a BAD GUY! I was coming here to tell you that the Treasury Department is putting together a cunning plan to nab this Super President character next time he appears in public, and catch him red-handed!"

The President exchanged a worried glance with his Japanese Chauffeur and White House Chief of Staff. "But—how can the T-Men catch him, Mike? Super President can turn his body into steel, or uranium, or..."

"Or yarn!" said Casey. "Or Nail Polish!"

"Or Whiskey!" said Axford.

"Or anti-Godzilla oxygen-destroying knock-out gas!" said Kato, "If he's been thinking!"

"...or whatever the need requires," finished James Norcross.

Lenore Case said, "And what would you arrest him for? What has he done?"

"He has not signed up for Disembodied Brain Care, has he?" said Mike Axford triumphantly. "Remember how the last president had a Patient Protection and Affordable Brain Care bill passed requiring everyone to put his personal medical information as well as a gene sample and a copy of his brain wave patterns, into the three-thousand-foot high super-computer COLOSSUSKYNET 9000 built out of black adamantium on top of that Volcano in Antarctica, Mount Erebus, where all those ancient Aztec ruins were found, and those giant albino penguins? Well, anyone who has not signed up for Brain Care is breaking the law!"

James Norcross rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Well ... I am not sure if that counts as a Federal crime. But come to think of it!" He snapped his fingers. "Mike! Maybe you are right. I am sure that Super President, if he is a villain like you say, he is sure to seek out Godzilla for a rematch. Why don't you take your Treasury Department and look for him? I heard he was fighting an obscure monster called Baragon."

Lenore Case looked suspicious. "How did you hear that? You were not in when Dr. Diplodocus from the Federal Bureau of Monsters called."

"Oh um," said Norcross, putting a finger under his collar and loosening his tie. "Well, I met the Premier of Japan last night in the nightclub, and he mentioned it to me."

"Well, I guess that highlife lifestyle is good for something," muttered Casey.

James Norcross leaped to his feet and clapped Axford on the shoulder, "But if this Super President fellow, whoever he is, really IS such a bad guy, like you say, then he is sure to seek out Motor- Godzilla for a rematch! Villains are always into that vengeance stuff! — You and your Treasury Men hightail it to the scene of destruction where the lumbering leviathans are fighting. On your way out, ask Miss Case to have some military units close in on the giant monsters and vainly fire ineffectual rockets and useless missiles at them the moment any monster walks through any high tension power cables or exploding oil refineries. Also, I'd like a nuclear submarine in the Arctic and a submarine sandwich on my desk— both of them before lunch! Now get moving! This is the United States, not some fly-by-night bit-bit nation working out of a garage!"

"Sure and by gum, saints preserve us, by golly, Jamie boy!" enthused the Irishiffic Irishman in a sudden cloudburst of ethnic local color, "I'll get that assignment for ye, or my name ain't Michael Aloysious Axford! So long! See ya later!"

After he left, Lenore Case shook her pretty head, and chuckled wryly, "That Axford! He's quite a card. But, say, chief, you don't think the Super President is behind the recent rash of crimes and disappearances? Or trying to blow up the moon? Admiral America is gone, and so is Bongo Drummer Boy – and the Novelator!"

James Norcross raised an eyebrow. "Why, Miss Case, what caused this sudden interest in missing pulp fiction novelist crimefighters?"

Her cheeks turned pink as she stammered, "W-Why, it's not an interest, exactly. It is just that I was reading the fourth book in the Novelator's nine-volume trilogy, LUMBERJACKS OF DUNE MEET GODZILLA ON THE WHEEL OF TIME, and if he goes missing, he will not have the next book written in time for publication this week!"

"Well, well, you are the Secretary of War. Why not send the marines to go look for him?"

She rolled her eyes. "You know the marines are busy fighting giant ants in New Arizona that emerged from the subterranean kingdom of Subterranea. Besides, kidnapping is a matter for the local police."

And, the moment she left, James Norcross finished her sentence for her, "... or for the SUPER PRESIDENT! Quickly, Kato! To the Presidential Poles!"

Stuffing the nuclear football with all the launch codes behind the bust of Washington, Norcross pressed a secret switch hidden in the Presidential desk. The Great Seal of the United States, enameled into the floor, slid aside, revealing the secret passage down to the Presidential Cave.

Next to the giant penny and the corpse of Lenin, and other trophies from American victories overseas, rested the sleek and powerful streamlined shape of the flying limousine known as the Presidentmobile.

"What I no understand, Mr James," said Kato politely, "Is why you do this? Why not send out the United States Army and Navy and Marines?"

"Kato," said James Norcross grimly, "As we both know, my ancestor back in England, King George III, was secretly the masked avenger known only as Super King. He roamed the highways and byways of the British Empire, righting wrongs and doing good deeds upon his noble steed, Golden, leaving gold musketballs in the heads of scofflaws and rebels. I intend to carry on that same great tradition. Uh, except only for four years, eight if reelected."

"Then you go back to being Super Senator, right? Or Super Lobbyist? So what mission we do now, please?"

"As the President of the United States, with the power to appoint the Postmaster General as well as turn my body into steel or ceramic or glue or whatever the need requires, my first duty must be to protect the citizens of the nation."

"So we help with the invasion from Saturn? Or the war with Russia? Or the Subterranean empire of mole-things?"

"Of course not! We have to save the Novelator from a gang of Stonecutters! And the Bongo Drummer fellow! Quick! Back up the Oval Office! I need to use the hotline!"

Donning his rocket belt and steel helmet and silly looking red and white uniform without a single trace of blue in it, Super President rocketed back up to the Oval Office.

There, next to the red hotline phone leading to the Kremlin, and to Fu Manchu the Premier of China, and next to the seashell shaped hotline phone in the fishtank leading to the offices of Amphibious Man the Lord of Atlantis, and next to yet another hotline phone leading to the secret Warlock President of Magical America that exists halfway in our in our dimension and halfway in the Twilight Zone but cannot be seen by anyone except Irishmen, not mention a few other hotlines leading to the Tooth Fairy's Fortress of Dentistude, or Mary Poppins' house, or the year 40000 AD, or the Robot Empire, or the local Pizza Express Parlor, was of course the red and green hotline leading to Santa's Palace at the North Pole.

Super President picked up the phone, "Burbank speaking," came the calm, mysterious voice over the wire.

"Connect me with Santa Claus. This is the President!"

"Stand by...."

There was a click, and the voice of Supermarket Santa came on the line. "Ho! Ho! HO! And what would YOU like for Christmas this year, little boy?"

"This is Super President speaking, Santa. Did you actually get your secret base at the North Pole up and running? I thought you said the keys were on the Planet Neptune, or trapped in the time bubble three seconds away from the Big Bang or something?"

"Adolph the Talking Reindeer remembered a back way. There is an Easter Bunny tunnel that runs straight from Champion City to the North Pole. There are squads of elves here, but I cannot figure out how to unlock them from cryogenic storage. It seems the Silver Age Supermarket Santa was a Space Alien, whereas the Golden Age Supermarket Santa had a magic ring from China or something. My base here, however, is from the Alan Moore period, the Dark Age, so there are dead minions of Ozymandias all over the place. Apparently they were killed by an excess overload of gritty realism. I think Frank Castle was the Space Santa before I got the job. He equipped the sleigh with machine guns and a smokescreen. He wrote 'I see ya when you're sleeping' on the side of the air to ground missile."

"Doesn't it cost experience points to buy a headquarters and minions? We did not get anything last turn except for one point of fame and one point of luck."

"No, Mr President. In this game, secret bases and secret identities are all freebies, since they do not actually affect your power or speed or wits or anything. It's just for local color and to give us more personality. But what is this I see in the Washington White House Newspaper? Apparently the President of the United States has ordered a nationwide manhunt for the Super President! But with my mystic power to tell who is naughty and who is nice, I simply know that you are not the racketeer the newspapers make you out to be."

"Well, the order was actually given by someone named Axford, the comedy relief Irish Mick... Say! Wait a minute! Don't I get extra points if I am being hunted?"

"Not in this game. And not if you are hunted by yourself. And stop breaking the fourth wall!" said Santa in an angry voice.

Super President said, "Well, what do we do, Santa? You know who is naughty and nice? Do you know who is the weakest villain with the most points."

"Fourth wall!"

"I mean, who is the biggest menace?"

"As a Santa Claus, my main mission is to spread Christmas spirit. So I think we should wreak a holiday revenge on anyone who dares mess with the capes of Champion City."

"The Stonecutters?" said Super President.

"Exactly! Our fellow heroes need not pine in vain! And Captain Curling has a special vendetta against the Stonecutters, since they cut stones, which he would rather see slide slowly across the ice. We will meet in the garage of Fast Racer. He happens to be sharing a garage with the world famous race car drive Go Mifune, and they have the same style, make and model of car, and the

same height, weight, build and hair color, and I have never see the two of them together, but Go Mifune does not wear a tiny domino mask under his goggles but Fast Racer does, so they must be two entirely different people. Meet there at Twenty-Five hundred hours, Eastern Standard Earth Time. District Attorney Scanlon will bring the soda and chips."

"Roger! Super President signing off!"

"Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!"

Previously ... Team? What Team? I Don't Even Know These Guys!

Kamen Rider Tokyo finally arrived off the boat from Japan, when he was attacked by a giant anthropomorphic chandelier (who looks like a Chandelure Pokemon with feet.)

Tokyo: "Oh brother! A monster from The Anime Empire—the An-pire, if you will."

Suddenly, he is surrounded by several anthropomorphic Rattata ninjas.



Chandelure: "Listen, Cherubi, I have been sent by the Evil Anime Empire—the Am-pire, if you will—to either capture or destroy you."

Tokyo: "Why do you guys keep calling me Cherubi? I'm a normal human? And, for that matter, where's that Ice Cream Guy? Or that Jigglypuff Singer Girl?"

Chandelure: "That is none of your concern, Cherubi. For I alone am enough to destroy you."

Tokyo: "Oh yeah. Cause I haven't heard that one before."

Kamen Rider Tokyo then attaches his driver to the area around of the waist.



Tokyo: "*Henshin!*"

The sky unzips. A giant metal cherry drops onto his head. It unfolds into armor.

The battle raged. The Ratta-ninja threw knives and shuriken at him over and over again. One Ratta-ninja ripped off his arm.

Tokyo, sarcastically. “Ow. I’m feeling so much pain. Give me that!” He grabs his arm back and sticks it back on. Then he wipes off the knives and shuriken sticking in him. (It’s good to be made of bubble gum.)

Tokyo blows into his fist and shouts: “*Bubble, bubble punch!*” He punches the Ratta-ninja who ripped off his arm across the room.

Tokyo then does a ninja move. There is a puff of smoke, and then there are two of him. Both of them wind their arms around each other. The arms slowly get longer and longer.

He then shouts: “*Bubble, bubble windshield wipers.*”

His elongated arms swing to the left and then to the right, imitating a wind-shield wiper. The enemy is knocked into the walls and vanishes.

Facing the last Ratta-ninja, he pulls out his sword and finishes the last opponent with a chi blast.

Chandelure: “So, it appears you have defeated the Ratta-ninja. Now, I will have to go all out.”

Chandelure stamps on the ground. A magical seal appears in a circle around him, bearing the emblem of the Pokemon Chandelure. Then, a real Chandelure rises from the ground.



Tokyo: “Why don’t you keep your Pokemon in a Pokeball, like a normal guy? Go, Cherry!” He releases his Cherubi.

Tokyo and his Pokemon fight in unison against the anthropomorphic Chandelure and his Pokemon. Tokyo and Chandelure trade blows...sword on candelabra. Meanwhile, the Pokemon blast each other with Pokemon movies.

Finally, once Chandelure and his Pokemon are weakened, Tokyo whistles. His bike comes roaring out of the storage unit and transforms into a giant mecha. Tokyo leaps in.

Chandalure grows to giant size. The two foes face off. The giant mecha focuses its giant laser pizza cutter. Tokyo shoots a special beam that traps his opponent in a laser pizza. He then cuts the laser pizza in half with the laser pizza cutter and poses. A giant explosion ensues, produces energy cheeries. Chanelure is destroyed.

Meanwhile, Cherry finishes off his opponent with a Solar Beam.

Tokyo: "Well, Cherry, it appears even in America, monsters are still trying to get us."

Cherubi. "Cherubi!"

Tokyo: "You're right, Cherry. We should go rescue the Super Strategist. Seems they didn't get him back yet."

The Lone Power Ranger and Lambda are riding around in Champion City. When an Old West guy in a rubber chicken costume attacks. Lone Power Ranger immediately shoots.

Lone Power Ranger: "I don't think you're going to make it, monster."

Lambda: "Aye-yi-y-yi! Again! Another monster from the Zed Brother's gang has attacked."

Guy in Chicken Suit: "Rawr!"

Lone Power Ranger: "Why does the chicken say '*rawr*', Partner?"

Then the Lone Power Ranger activates the Lambda Capsule and grows fifty feet tall. He finishes the guy off with a giant laser beam from the Lincoln Tunnel Cannon.

Lone Power Ranger: "Well, that was annoying. But at least it's over now."

Lambda: "I don't think this is going to end well, do you?"

Lone Power Ranger: "Probably not. Honestly, I reckon this will end in blood. Come on, Lambda, we must find the Super Strategist and the other heroes who have been taken."

Kamen Rider Godzilla is riding through the city on his giant motorcycle, when all of a sudden Baragon rides up on his motorcycle and attacks.

Godzilla: "Rawr."

Baragon: "Rawr."

Godzilla's translation: "So, Baragon, thou wert sent by my arch nemesis: Kamen Rider Ghidorah!"

Baragon's translation: "Indeed. Ghidorah's master, Kamen Rider Gigan sent me to destroy you and the entire Champion City. Unless you hand over the Kaiju Crown."

Godzilla and Baragon leave their motorcycles and start punching and hitting and kicking each other. The two monsters use their breath weapons. Godzilla finally finishes him off with a Rider Kick. (A Rider Kick is a fancy jump kick.)

Godzilla: "Rawr."

Godzilla translation: "It appears my arch nemesis has been revived from the dead again. This time, I shall finish the fiend off for good.

Somewhere in the middle of the ocean.

Gigan "Rawr."

Ghidorah "Rawr.."

Gigan "Rawr."

Gigan's translation: "I am glad I have revived you, Ghidorah. But it appears that Baragon has failed. This means that I will have to revive yet another B-List Kaiju monster."

Ghidorah translation: "Gigan, there is no need to revive another. Send me. I will take him out.

Gigan's translation: "No, I will save you for now. Worry not! You'll get a second chance to take him on. And when you do, he will surely hand over the Kijiu Crown!"

Back at Champion City:

Godzilla: "Rawr."

Godzilla translation: "Hm. Now then. I must better continue my search for the missing human heroes who have been captured. That stupid rock president villain distracted me. Turns out he wasn't even a villain. Gah! The incompetent executive! I must continue with my noble quest!"

Previously ... The Justice Seeking Vigilantes of Justice For Justice

Outside of Lunabomber's base:

Utility Belt : “What just happened?”

Robbie Rocket Pants : “We just beat Lunabomber, That is what happened!”

Chief Justice : “One victory for our team; one giant victory for *justice*.”

Wonder Boy : “Well, this is wicked awesome!”

Sofa Wizard : “Could someone get the Sofa Emperor off me.”

Everyone : “Sofa Emperor?!”

Then, a voice rang out inside all their heads like a newly-cleaned sofa.

???: “I thought I told you not to call me that, Sofa Wizard.”

Utility Belt : “Wh-what was that?”

???: “It is I, *THE AMAZING SOFA!*”

Utility Belt : “Aaah, it’s a talking sofa! *The Night Of The Living Sofa* came true! Everybody run!”

Wonder Boy : “Mr. Sofa, Sir, are you planning to kill us?”

THE AMAZING SOFA : “No, you silly human, I want to help you and your team.”

Chief Justice : “Well, you are officially a team member, but Sofa Wizard is not.”

Sofa Wizard : “ I’m *THE AMAZING SOFA*’s sidekick, not a full-fledged superhero.”

Robbie Rocket Pants : “Sofa's thought's were a lot like... Nah, it couldn't be.”

Later, at the Justice Seeking Justice Vigilantes Of Justice For Justice's secret base...

Wonder Boy was sitting on a chair in the corner, reading the newspaper. Robbie Rocket Pants was sitting on *THE AMAZING SOFA*, with Cute Little Kid, Ugly Old Dog, Leprechaun and Siamese Twins watching the TV news. Alien and Chief Justice were in another corner, next to the official *Justice Aquarium Of Justice* talking about Alien's citizenship. Woman was taking care of Pig next to the *Bookshelf Of Justice*.

Sofa Wizard, who looked amazingly like New Rookie From The Academy except that he was wearing glasses, was cleaning *THE AMAZING SOFA*. Meanwhile, New Rookie From The Academy was nowhere to be seen. Second Rate Mime was playing chess with Dinosaur. Then Utility Belt walked into the secret base with a worried expression on his face.

Wonder Boy: "Cheerio, Utility Belt, Old Chap!"

Utility Belt: "What? Oh...hi."

Robbie Rocket Pants : "What's wrong?"

Utility Belt : "Well, I haven't seen my friend Sean since we went to fight Lunabomber."

Robbie Rocket Pants: "So?"

Utility Belt: "I went to his house. He wasn't there. His roommate said he hadn't been back since that night. Then I asked the Bat Computer, and it can't find him either."

Robbie: "Oh! That is bad!"

Cute Little Kid: "Not the news again!"

Anchorwoman on the TV: "Hello, this is Luna Lindsey of Channel Over 9000 News. Today, we have a special report, Rob Lucci, high school science professor, was discovered in a secret lab in the castle on Shadow Hill.



Utility Belt: "Professor Lucci!"

Robbie: "You know this guy?"

Utility Belt: "He was my science teacher!"

Luna Lindsey on the TV: "Professor Lucci was taken downtown. Test showed that he had no brain in his skull. Experts differ on how it is that he can move and

talk. After this discovery, he declared that he was Professor Menace.

"Professor Menace then teleported everyone in that building to his castle, where he is holding them hostage. He claims he will kill the hostages unless he receives a hair from every cat in the city, each in its own Ziploc bag."

Siamese Twins (in unison): "That's terrible! We have to stop him!"

Chief Justice: "Vigilantes! We're moving out *for justice!* Robbie, go scout out the castle. *For Justice!* Dinosaur, take Utility Belt, Wonder Boy, Second Rate Mime, *THE AMAZING SOFA*

and his sidekick, Sofa Wizard-who looks remarkably like New Rookie From the Academy, but it can't be. He's wearing glasses. *Of Justice!* To the castle! I am going to the Hall of Records to get the blueprints *of justice!* I will meet you there, *for justice!*”

Robbie Rocket Pants flew up high and discovered the castle's location.

Meanwhile, in the Hall of Records: Chief Justice used his knowledge of legal procedure to acquire a blueprint of the inside of the castle. *For Justice!*

Outside the Castle:

Robbie Rocket Pants, flying with his rocket pants, returned and told them all where the scouts were. Wonder Boy, Second Rate Mine, Sofa Wizard, and *THE AMAZING SOFA* arrive at the castle riding on Dinosaur's back.

Utility Belt pulled out his Bat Pogo Stick and pogo-sticked to the scene.

Utility Belt: “*Na-na-na-na-Na-na-na-na Utility Belt!*” murmured, “Works better with Batman.”



Outside the Castle was a huge army of robots.

Dun-dun-dun!

Second Rate Mime: “Oh, oh, what'a we do?”

Wonder Boy, “We smash them to smithereens, Old Chap.”

Dinosaur ran to the front doors, smashing robots under his feet and biting them in two. The robots turned and started opening fire on Dinosaur and his passengers. This had no effect.

Second Rate Mine leapt forward. “Oh, no! A wall!”

Using his second-rate mime skills, he convinces the robots that there was a wall between them and the party. Some of the robots transformed into battering rams. Other robots picked up the battering rams and started trying to batter down Second Rate Mime's imaginary wall.

Utility Belt, shouting: "Bat Pogo Stick Bat Attack!"

Utility Belt started pogo-sticking atop the robots while they were distracted. He leapt into the air and, swiveling his pogostick, jabbed robots in the head, back, chest, etc. The robots opened fire on him. Utility Belt started pulling things out of his utility belt—a Bat Rubber Duck, a Bat Cebu Plush (useful for negotiating with Braham). Finally, as the bullets wizzed, he pulled out and quickly put on his Bat Bullet-Proof Pajamas.

Utility Belt: "You know, other heroes get bullet proof vests. But nooooo! I get pajamas!"

Robbie Rocket Pants, with the help of Dinosaur, blasted through the doors of the castle. Utility Belt, in his Bat Bullet Proof Pajamas, pogo-sticked over to the others, hopping on the heads of robots.

The Vigilantes all charged in.

Robbie Rocket Pants: "What should we do now?"

Sofa Wizard: "Oh, I don't know. Let's go that way!"

The group ran pell-mell through the castle, unable to find their way. (*Cue Scoobie-Doo music.*)

Coming around a corner, who should they find but Chief Justice, holding the blueprints!

Utility Belt: "Chief, how did you get here?"

Chief Justice, waving the blueprints: "I used a secret passage."

Using the blueprints Chief Justice acquired, they found Professor Menace's dungeon and freed the captives. Then, they all started running back towards the front doors. But Professor Menace was waiting for them with an army of robots and some giant robots.

And now, it's time for some witty banter with *The Justice Seeking Justice Vigilantes of Justice For Justice!*

Professor Menace : " Oh, look! It's a group of Superheroes who came to rescue my hostages. Well, before I kill you, I would like to know your names. Wait a minute, if I don't kill you, then I'll have more hostages! And, they'll be superheroes, which would make it more likely that I would get the cat hair I need."

Chief Justice : "I am Chief Justice of Justice! For Justice! Because of Justice! With Justice on top! And a side of Justice! With a glass of Justice!"

Wonder Boy : “I am Wonder Boy.”

Utility Belt : “ I'm Utility Belt . He is Second Rate Mine. He's Dinosaur. He's *THE AMAZING SOFA*. And he's Sofa Wizard. Now, what do you plan to do?”

Professor Menace : “What do I plan to do? *Mwaha haha haha!* Why in the world would I tell you?”

THE AMAZING SOFA : “ I will find out... His mind is not in his body.”

Wonder Boy : “Gasp! I don't care, Old Chap.”

Wonder Boy activated his Wand of Wonder and summoned a rhino. He jumped on the rhino's back and charged towards the doors, casting enchantments from his Wand of Wonder along the way. Random stuff shot out of the wand.

The front rank of the robot army opened fire on Wonder Boy. Other robots began firing at everyone else.

Wonder Boy blocked the incoming fire with actual fire. He shot a fireball. Second Rate Mine jumped off and started convincing the robots that they were stuck inside boxes. Dinosaur kept running towards the front door. He roared.

Chief Justice jumped off and started tomahawking and law-booking robots into submission. Utility Belt pulled out his Bat Robot Repellent. Robots were repelled!

Professor Menace's giant robots and robot army responded by firing more. They started using missiles, bombs, grenades, axes, swords, bows, boomerangs, etc.

Then Utility Belt contacted the Bat Computer and the computer gave him a plan. That plan sucked. So, the computer came up with a different plan. Following the plan, Robbie Rocket Pants flew towards Professor Menace, barreling through robots as he went.

Professor Menace pulled out a sword and threw it at Robbie Rocket Pants. The sword transformed into a elephant in mid-air

Robbie used his Ancient Laser Pizza Delivery Boy Technique to throw the Elephant sword into the air.

Sofa Wizard grabbed *THE AMAZING SOFA*, jumped off Dinosaur, spun around, knocking robots away. He threw *THE AMAZING SOFA* down the aisle that Robbie had made.

Wonder Boy: “This is my BOOM STICK!” He activated his Wand of Wonder producing thirty feet of darkness. “I can't see!”

When the spell wore off, all the robots had been destroyed by the Vigilantes, and Professor Menace was under *THE AMAZING SOFA*.

After turning Professor Menace into the police, the Vigilantes of Justice (etc) return to their secret base.

Back at the secret base:

Robbie Rocket Pants: “Utility Belt, what were you saying about your friend Sean?”

Utility Belt: “He’s still missing.”

Wonder Boy, “Hey look, some bloke went to fight the Rockworm with nothing but a bag of weasels!”

Utility Belt: “Sean!”

Robbie Rocket Pants: “What? Bag of weasels?”

Utility Belt: “We’ve got to rescue Sean! That’s him. With the weasels!”

Chief Justice: “I declare that, in the name of Justice, we justly save this justice-doer! *For Justice!*”

The entire team goes after the Rockworm, hoping to save Weasel Bag in the process

Previously ... The Don't Quit Your Day Job Heroes

Dr. Oevilopolis, known to his minions as Dr. Evil, sat in his chair petting his hairless cat. His right hand man, Number One, came into his office, looking nervous.

"Number One," Dr. Evil asked eagerly, "how is the Evil Sea Bass project coming along?"

"Very well, sir. We think we've managed to breed a sea bass who is born ornery."

"Very good." Dr. Evil rubbed his hands together. "Ornery is a good step. It will only be a matter of time until we can breed truly evil sea bass." He waited, but Number One did not leave. "Is there anything else?"

"Um, sir, your son appears to be missing."

"Missing? How...missing?"

"He hasn't been back to his apartment for several days."

"Is this...unusual?"

"Yes, sir. He has very few friends, beyond that creep with Batman's old belt. He usually spends his time at home, watching TV."

"Do we have any idea where he might have gone?"

"Seems he was last seen heading out with a bag of weasels."

"Bag of Weasels?" Dr. Evil perked up. "Do you think he might be planning to start that evil petting zoo we had discussed?"

"Um...possibly, sir...but first, it seems he went up against the Rockworm."

"With...a bag of weasels?"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Evil blinked. He petted his hairless cat.

"I am not sure what to make of it, Number One."

"Neither do I, sir."

Dr. Evil waved a hand dismissively, "I'm sure he was planning some kind of evil. Must have been. Nobody could be that stupid."

"Possibly, sir." Number One squirmed.

"Maybe he hoped to use the Rockworm to wreak destruction upon the city?"

"That could be." Number One waited. "What would you like me to do about it, sir?"

Dr. Evil thought about this. He waved his hand, dismissing Number One. "What can we do? Let us return to our current projects."

"But, sir....your son..."

"Oh, very well!" Dr. Evil sighed. "If you must, send a few minions carrying particularly ornery sea bass."

And now ... Issue 52 of Mystery Men Comics!

MORE HEROES MISSING !

Admiral America vanishes from his command, the Liberty Ship!

Dr. Socrates poses an intriguing riddle to his Justice Academy, but doesn't show up the next day!

Johnathan Harker Jr. buys 50 gallons of garlic juice, but never makes it home!

Where have all the heroes gone?

12 experience, +6 Fame

Kamen Rider Godzilla, Lone Power Ranger, Invisible Boy

Kamen Rider Godzilla reasons thus: "Rawr!"

He's right, as it turns out, and leads the team to a mysterious abandoned warehouse in the Business District. Both Godzilla and the Lone Power Ranger are fifty feet tall, which leaves Invisible Boy largely unnoticed. But he's used to that.

Within is a deep hole in the concrete floor, into which railroad tracks lead. The smell of garlic lingers on a torn scrap of gold braid from Admiral America's cap. This must be the place!

Down and down they go ...

"Hey! Before we go down too far, I'm callin' the Justice Seeking Justice Vigilantes of Justice for Justice on my celly!" shouts Invisible Boy.

Godzilla nods his head wisely. Godzilla is a friend to cell phones.

"They're not there!" fumes the invisible infiltrator of invincibility. "I'ma leave a message."

"Ay-yi-yi!" said Lambda, leaping to the Lone Power Ranger's shoulder. "What's THAT?"

THAT is actually THOSE, because there is not one pair of eyes advancing menacingly from the darkness, their slanted glow alive with menace. No, there are LOTS of eyes advancing menacingly from the darkness, their slanted glow alive with menace!

"Underground monsters!" shouts the Lone Power Ranger. "Kamen Rider Godzilla, attack!"

Kamen Rider Godzilla breathes radioactive death flame on the monsters. They explode.

"Thought this might be more difficult," the Ranger says to himself.

Then the second wave of underground monsters comes, and Godzilla flames them.

"Yeah! Go go Godzilla!" That's Invisible Boy, obviously.

The third wave is bigger. Godzilla doesn't get all of them, so Lone Power Ranger has to clap his palms together and summon a circular sawblade of pure force. That does the trick.

The fourth wave isn't so bad. But then the fifth wave has more monsters than all four previous waves put together.

"I think they're getting their act together ..." says Invisible Boy. "How many of them ARE there?"

"Rawwr!" says Godzilla, breathing fire and stomping as fast as he can.

"Well, yeah, obviously, but they can't just go all the way down to the middle of the Earth! Isn't that where Frodo lives?"

"That's Middle-Earth," says the Lone Power Ranger.

"What I said! Middle, earth."

"Rawr!"

"Right!" says Invisible Boy. "Here, I can ... hit one with a shovel ... unhh! I used to know a guy who could do this MUCH better."

Yellow, bald, stone-creased, mouthless monsters with big flat spatulate fingers climb up the Lone Power Ranger's legs until they reach his chest. He slaps them off, but each one he slaps is replaced by more and more.

"Too many!" he shouts. "Lambda, get clear ... I'm activating the Beta Override!"

"The what?"

Lone Power Ranger slaps his chest, pushing the blinking life-light down. Then he turns it upside-down. The glowing liquid inside runs from the top to the bottom, glowing with red fury.

"Power Ranger, NO!" shouts Invisible Boy, as a gang of monsters drag him away into the darkness.

THU-ATT! A mighty slap of pure power turns the darkness into noon and throws monsters in every direction. Godzilla is thrown into the air, out of the ruins of the warehouse, and lands on a nearby bank, demolishing it like an empty box.

Both Godzilla and the Lone Power Ranger, and every underground monster in view, are knocked cold by the Lone Power Ranger's last desperate action. Eventually, a battered Power Ranger of normal human size staggers out of the center of a melted, smoking hole in the ground. The tunnels into the underworld have all been fused shut, and no trace of the missing heroes is found

...

Except that a set of human boot-prints is pressed into what was, for a while, steaming hot lava. The tracks lead to a crack in the soil which has been filled with rocks from beneath.

And there's no trace of Invisible Boy ...

Villains and Heroes TIED! Everyone knocked out except the mysterious footprint maker.

Half award to the heroes: 6 experience and +3 fame.

ROCKWORM RETURNS!

The Rockworm tunnels through solid stone like air -- and you're not exactly made of solid stone! Who can stop his aimless rampage? We know from experience that one hero, even with a four-weasel bag, is not enough!

18 experience, +4 Fame, +4 Luck

Global Grappling All-Stars, Chief Justice, Wonder Boy, Utility Belt, Part-Time Human Bomb, Chicken Little

At least it's not hard to locate the Rockworm. Manic Man Jamie Wild is jumping up and down on one of its boreholes, taunting it to come out, when the Justice Seeking JVoJFJ show up. Probably in a Justice Van. Of Justice.

"Are you ready? CAN you be ready? Can you POSSIBLY be ready for the smorgasbord of suffering the Manic Man is fixing to dish out on your plate, Rock Head? Yeah!"

"He can't hear you," says Chief Justice reasonably. "He's probably miles away."

"Oh yeah? And WHY is he miles away, huh? Because he's as scared as Smash Samson to face the MANIC MAN, that's why! Come on out! Come out and taste the paaaaaaain!"

"My utility belt shows some seismic activity to the northwest," says Wonder Boy. Just kidding -- it's Utility Belt, of course.

"Dere isn't much of a party," declares Serge the Colossal. "Jamie thinks the Rockworm is chicken."

"Awwk! What's wrong with chicken! Aiee! The sky is falling! Awwk! Run! Run!"

You all know who **that** is.

With a rumble and a roar, the Rockworm rears from its rubble-strewn refuge!

"This is bigger than the one on the news," says Serge sensibly.

"Stand back! I'll use my Wand of Wonder on it!" says Wonder Boy. "Prosan kobar!"

Whoosh! It rains furiously on the Rockworm. Apparently they don't have rain underground, because it starts frantically biting at its own back, trying to get the bugs off.

Chief Justice assails the worm's rocky skin with his space-gavel, the ultimate refinement, combination and sublimation of judge's gavel, hand-ax, Iroquois war-tomahawk and claw-hammer, which chips the rock slightly. Which is progress, right? The worm flexes and its clashing spikes converge, chafing the Chief chunderously.

Utility Belt showers the stony serpent with exploding explosives. Which explode! Rock chips spatter in all directions like chips of rock. Fortunately, a folding transparent Bat-Cave-In-Umbrella deflects them.

Part-Time Human Bomb squeezes his eyes shut tight and slaps the worm's side, causing his hand and the worm to explode like a bomb. The crater is wide, but not deep, and doesn't appear to have seriously harmed the Rockworm!

Serge the Colossal heaves a mighty boulder at the Rockworm, which he suspects might be vulnerable to rocks. Surprisingly, it is! The worm bellows in pain and lashes out at Serge, who may well have attempted to dodge. He didn't move very far, but then the worm didn't correctly guess his location, either, so he's fine. That patch of pavement next to him, however, will never be the same.

Manic Man Jamie Wild is ALL up in the Rockworm's business, brother! It's hard to grapple something without limbs, but grasping it around the midsection (which is easy ... it's all midsection, pretty much) and slamming it on the ground should work. As it weighs as much as a hundred-foot, eight-foot diameter column of rock, that's simple to say but difficult to actually do. Manic Man, instead, manages to lift and drop a section of the worm, but the worm definitely doesn't like that! It smacks the Manic Man with its tail and sends him scattering to the four winds, each limb trying (but failing, fortunately!) to fly in a different direction.

Mean Dean is preparing to announce the start of the match when Jamie Wild careens into him, then keeps going, hardly even slowed by Dean's sequined torso. Dean doesn't get up.

Chicken Little clucks in panic, running in circles and describing just exactly how bad everything is. The Rockworm's circular mouth somehow droops in a despairing frown, and it slumps dejectedly.

"It's working! Chicken, tell him some more! Tell him how the sky is falling!" says Chief Justice.

"I don't think he knows what the sky is," says Serge, hefting an even bigger boulder. "He ... huff ... he doesn't have any eyes."

With Chief Justice, Part-Time Human Bomb, Manic Man Jamie Wild, and Mean Dean out of the fight, Serge the Colossal takes the lead in pummeling the Rockworm with rocks! Which is kind of poetic, if you think about it. Wonder Boy uses his wand to turn 60 feet of the Rockworm's spiny skin into taffy, Utility Belt unleashes a sonic depth charge (which was mislabeled as "Bat-Rockworm-Repellent), and Chicken Little cries in anguish at the doom of the world! The Rockworm gives a few last, desperate heaves of its tail (which knock down Wonder Boy and Utility Belt) and sags, still, spent.

"The world is ending! Awwk! But this corner of it is still around, thanks to Serge the Colossal and Chicken Little!"

"My boulders hit him in the middle!" Serge agrees.

And in the tunnels the Rockworm made through solid rock, the unconscious Weasel Bag is found, being worriedly licked by the Cheer Weasel and the Spice Weasel.

Rockworm DEFEATED!

Global Grappling All-Stars: 2 xp per person who showed up (3 xp for Serge the Colossal), +2 Fame, +2 Luck

Justice Seeking J.V.of J. for J: 2 xp per person, +2 Fame, +2 Luck

Shojo Shaman and the B.A.C.K.U.P.S.: 3 xp for Chicken Little, +1 Fame, +2 Luck

STONECUTTERS HOLD HEROES!

The Stonecutters have Bongo Drummer Boy and the Novelator as captives! WHO WILL SAVE US NOW?

14 experience, +7 Fame

Super President, Barrelman, Fast Racer, Supermarket Santa, Groovy Flower Power Girls, The Flash

“Fellow Stonecutters,” intones their mysterious bald leader, “tonight, we celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of our beloved lodge. And in commemoration of the secret six who met in darkness, below the city’s haphazard streets, to plan a new order of harmonious geometry and sacred stonecutting ... we’re having ribs.”

“Hooray!” shout the Stonecutters in semi-rehearsed unison. Great steaming platters of ribs streaming with red-brown aromatic sauce are wheeled in by men who are wearing extremely realistic “living statue” costumes.

“And also, not as spicy but nearly as important, are our captives, Champion City’s superheroes – the Novelizer, the Novelator, and Bongo Drummer Boy!”

Low-ranked Stonecutters draw the curtain back to reveal their captives, immured in cunningly-carven stone manacles.

“Why are there only two of them?” Tony P wants to know. “Hang on, has one escaped?”

“No one can escape the Stonecutters!” says the leader. “Novelator, answer well and truly if you value your shape: where is the Novelizer?”

“I’m right here. Sometimes I like the Novelator better, but sometimes I prefer Novelizer. Novelizing is what I do, so it’s more accurate. But Novelator sounds more superheroic. I guess it depends on whether I feel like a superhero or a novelizer at that particular time, which ...”

“Silence! Where is the Novelizer?”

The Novelator says nothing.

“Answer or be sculpted into a small plastic flowerpot!”

“You said silence,” said the Novelator. “I was being silent.”

“Can we just melt ‘im down?” suggested Tony P. “Into little hero ingots, say?”

“Nonsense! We are the Ancient Secret Order of Stonecutters, not Stonemelters! No one wants to share a secret headquarters with THOSE guys. No, I have a more fitting end in mind for our close-mouthed captive. If he will not tell us where the Novelizer has gone, he will be most unpleasantly surprised at what I remove from this perfectly ordinary barrel ...”

Indeed, the Novelator is surprised when the Stonecutter leader takes his hands out of the barrel. Because around his hands are smaller metallic barrels, connected with a chain. Almost like Barrel-Handcuffs.

“Wha ... what ... that wasn't what was supposed to be in that barrel!”

“Who knows what lurks in the heart of barrels?” comes an eerie, icy voice from all around them. It seems to resonate from every corner of the somewhat barrel-shaped underground vault. “The BARRELMAN does! Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!”

“Barrelman!” shouts the leader. “Of course!”

“And Super President!” declares Super President, crashing through the wall with his body turned into tough drill steel.

“And Supermarket Santa!” says Supermarket Santa, his red and green bag of gifts glowing with power.

“And Fast Racer!” says Fast Racer, pulling up in a car somehow.

“Hey, boys, don't start the party without us!” call out the Flower Power Girls, who turn up in a van. A kaleidoscopic VW microbus with eyelashes painted over the headlights.

“Does EVERYONE know the location of our secret underground base?” demands the Stonecutters' leader.

“Everyone who knows how to listen ... for the faint sound of bongo drums!” says Barrelman.

Everyone turns to look at Bongo Drummer Boy, who is absently bopping along on his shackles.

“Hey, what's up?” he says. “Dig that crazy sound, amirite?”

“You pathetic un-stonecutting fools!” says the Stonecutter leader. “What use is your sense of hearing, when with but a single gesture I can plunge this hallowed hall into total darkness?”

He gestures. There's a click over by the kitchen door. The lights go out.

Then a powerful white beam shines through the gloom. Surely only the mightiest, the most battery-laden of flashlights could produce such a cone of illumination as this!

“All right, that's about enough dumbness from you, baldy,” says The Flash. “Put down the ribs and put up your hands. In that order. So your hands end up up, instead of down.”

“The Flash!” exclaims the Stonecutter leader. “So you finally tracked me down after all these years!”

“Wait. That was YOU who took that hammer and chisel from the mall?” says the Flash. “It all makes so much sense now ...”

“Stonecutters! After them! And someone drop the Mighty Rock of Leadership on the captives!”

Super President stakes out a firm position on top of the barbecue tables, and defends it tenaciously against all comers. The Stonecutters’ tools make no impression on his tool-steel torso.

“He’s an absolute dream!” enthuses Tie-Dye Tina. “And so YOUNG to be President!”

Barrelman rolls across the floor, knocking legs out from under the Stonecutters. Fast Racer backs several Stonecutters against the overarching wall; they have chisels and drills, but he’s got a car! Supermarket Santa points dramatically, directing a stream of G.I. Joes and electronic games at the Stonecutter leader. The iPods really hurt – they’re hard!

Dream Dust Debbie sprinkles dream dust, but the Stonecutters are already pretty far out of their heads, man. Like, crazy far out. So that doesn’t inhibit their punching and kicking abilities. Tie-Dye Tina lands some rhythmic tae-bo punches, but she’s used to exercising with only one opponent at a time, so some of the Stonecutters wallop her cruelly with pick handles. She’s shocked and surprised they’re beating on a girl! Betty Butterfly directs a kaleidoscope of her fluttering friends to confuse and distract the foe, allowing her giant butterfly to swoop in and carry them away. No one’s ever actually asked where they get taken to, but they’re never seen again.

The Flash pits hammer-handled Maglite against shovel and spade! The Maglite doesn’t break, and keeps right on shining! The hands holding the Maglite, however, get badly swollen from bruises. As long as he holds the rod of illumination, he cannot lose, but once he drops it, well, he does. Lose.

Fast Racer races to the aid of Super President. “Coming, Boss ... I mean, Mr. President!”

“Gee, did Fast Racer just drop a clue to his secret identity?” Debbie wants to know.

“Of course not, silly!” says Butterfly Betty. “The President is EVERYONE’S boss!”

“I’d take HIS orders any day,” Debbie muses. She spins a platter of ribs in front of the van’s tie-dye headlights, casting a set of really bizarre shadows. The Stonecutters are all disoriented, but the ones who are zooming on Dream Dust are gone. Real gone, man.

Betty uses butterfly power to confuse the Stonecutters beating up Tina. Tina rallies and lands flashing fists on their jaws one-two-three-four, falling into step with the sound of the bongos!

Although Supermarket Santa hurries to Barrelman’s aid, the Oaken Avenger goes down under a flurry of blows from Stonecutters! Santa swears a terrible Yuletide revenge.

Super President is starting to fade as the Stonecutters bring up special diamond drillbits*, but fights his way free, leaving a trail of broken dreams and equally broken drilling equipment. He and Tie-Dye Tina fight back to back against the kitchen staff, greasy with rib sauce, and wielding the tools they apparently used to cook dinner, even though that's mostly hammers and crowbars. No wonder the portions were so large ...

*(*They stole them from the Diamond Exchange last ish, remember, Mystery buffs? Sure you do! - --Set-The-Record-Straight Steve)*

Supermarket Santa erupts from a pile of angry Stonecutters, shouting a rhyme that was old when the world was young:

“You better not cry
You better not move
You're better off dead,
I'm telling you, dude –
Santa Claus is GUNNING YOU DOWN!”

Flashes of Christmas lightning in all the colors of a well-assorted string of lights stab at the remaining Stonecutters, dropping them in piles like heaps of not-particularly-well-cut rocks. And just in time, too, because Fast Racer's paint job was getting seriously scratched up.

“We won!” says Butterfly Betty. “And Bongo Drummer Boy's all right! How about a kiss for the girl who rescued your heart?”

“Sure,” says Bongo Drummer Boy. But it ends up as six kisses, in an escalating bongo rhythm.

“Another victory for right, justice, flower power ... insensate Christmas-themed rage ... and justice,” says Super President.

“That's the other guys, boss” Fast Racer reminds him.

“So, Super Prez,” Debbie says shyly. “You busy Saturday night?”

“Why, no, I think my calendar is reasonably ...”

“Russia. States. Wanted. Taiwan,” says Fast Racer quietly. “Kragoff. New Orleans. Punisher.”

“I may have to take a rain check on that, Debbie,” says Super President hastily.

Later, as the Groovy Flower Power Girls take Bongo Drummer Boy home with them for a malted, a Manchester burr blares out,

“Ey! Wot d'you think yer doin' wi' MY gels?” demands Gene Hunt.

“We’re just gettin’ a milkshake, man. No need to go bop-bo-bop-bop a-boom-boom-boom bang-ba-bop-BOOM!”

“You sound like a poofa. Whad’you do fer a living?”

“I just go with the flow, you know?”

“Bog’s in the back.”

STONECUTTERS DEFEATED!

Super Squadron: 2 xp per participant, +4 Fame

Groovy Flower Power Girls: 2 xp per participant, +3 Fame

Shojo Shaman and the B.A.C.K.U.P.S.: 2 xp for The Flash, +1 Fame

HE'S THE ONE AND ONLY!

Bombastro, the Boastful Braggart of Braggadocio, is trying to unite all the city's gangs into one criminal army! Here's the sum total: one gang could rule this city. Nothing would move without them allowing it to happen. They could tax the crime syndicates, tax the police -- because THEY GOT THE STREETS, suckas!!

CAAN YOU DIG IT?

Ponyboy, Dallas, Johnny, Man Eating Cow

Every gang in the city is there! The platform's surrounded by heavies. And a man in a purple dressing robe climbs up like a Persian lord and bellows to the throng:

“HEYYYY all you boppers! Hey, all you walking the streets with your fists clenched in your pockets. Who you so angry at? Who you hatin’? WHO do you want to BEAT DOWN?”

“Look left. Look right. You see the guys you beatin’ on every night. They raid you, you raid them. Payback. Pride. Showing your colors. That’s what you call it, but what it really is, what it TRULY is ...”

“... is beatin’ on your OWN SELVES!”

“Now look at what we got here. We got the Red Eyes sittin’ with the Not So Goody Boys. We got the Furriers, right next to the Suzies. Nobody is wasting nobody. THAT ... is a miracle! And miracles is the way things ought to be!”

“In the past, the Man has turned us against each other. We haven’t seen what we can become, because we’re too busy fightin’ for ten square feet of ground. Our “turf”. Our LITTLE piece of turf. That’s crap, brothers! The turf is ours by right. All of it. Because it’s ALL OUR TURF!”

“CAAAAN YOU DIG IT?”

The assembled gangs are eating it up.

“Yeah, man! Bombastro’s right! We could have it all!”

“I don’t know,” says Ponyboy. “I’m not feeling too good about this ...”

“Get with it, Ponyboy!” Johnny says. “Even the Socs are digging it. Bombastro’s the one and only!”

“The Socs? We hate the Socs,” Ponyboy insists. “And they hate us, Johnny! Don’t you remember?”

“Man, bag that noise!” says Darrell, who ought to know better. “We got the power now, suckas! Bombastro’s gonna show us the way!”

“Darrell!” Ponyboy says. “What’s happened to you?”

The Man-Eating Cow lows approvingly, clanking her bell.

“You’re all crazy,” says Ponyboy. “Crazy from what that cat’s saying! He’s making you all twisted up – you’re forgetting what’s real!”

“Yeah, Bombastro! Dig it! Get over on the Man!” says Johnny.

Ponyboy’s entreaties snap Johnny and the Cow out of it. But Darrell’s gone, man, gone, on dreams of conquering the city.

“C’mon, we gotta get him away from Bombastro!” says Ponyboy. Yes, Darrell is the biggest, strongest and toughest member of the gang, although for sheer poundage the Man-Eating Cow’s got the edge on him.

Struggling and swearing, they get Darrell to the edge of the park. Darrell clocks Johnny a good one, but there’s two of them and one of him, so one guy to each arm holds him up. Then the Man-Eating Cow lurches underneath and carries his legs away.

“Where you going?” demands Brad Zeta of the Frat Boys. “Nobody runs off without going through the initiation. A little ordeal we call Crossing the Desert,” he says, brandishing a cricket bat.

Naturally, Johnny knocks him on his can.

A hush falls over the assembled gangs. One of the Rogues points to them, crying out in a high, weird voice:

”The Outsiders! The Outsiders did it! We saw them! It was the OUTSIDERS!”

Every gang in the city rushes them!

Ponyboy kicks a hole in the fence around the arena and they run for it. But the Man-Eating Cow can’t get through! Ponyboy and Johnny haul Darrell through, off the Cow’s back, but then they have to book it with Attacrobats and Parkour Grifters leaping over the fence in twos and threes. And behind them, they hear the contented clanking of a cowbell, as the Cow falls back under the spell of Bombastro’s bombast ...

Man-Eating Cow CAPTURED!

1 xp per escaped Outsider

STONE MEN FROM SATURN!

Word on the street is that the rocky shambolic horrors infesting Shadow Hill are stone men from Saturn! Of course, we're taking the word of people who live on the street for that ...

Away Team, Shojo Shaman

Rocky shambolic horrors are indeed shambling around Shadow Hill. They're also ripping up trees, fire hydrants, telephone poles and subway entrances, while leaving phone booths and dumpsters unmolested. What gives?

"First Officer," says Captain Starship from a half-crouch, one hand cupped before him.

"Analysis, please."

"Fascinating, Captain, but not entirely logical. These beings appear to be made of solid rock ... that one has left footprints in hardened sidewalk concrete, indicating a mass of thousands of pounds. But in order to move their limbs, they would have to be flexible. My theory at this time is that their outer surface is indeed solid rock, but their interior is semi-molten. They are not merely Stone Men from Saturn, but Magma Men from Saturn."

"That doesn't even alliterate, you blue-shirted, inhuman thing!" said Doctor Bones.

"It does a little," says Lt. Decoy. "Magma Men. I mean, if they were from Mercury, that'd be better ... or Mars. Magma Men from Mars."

"Mercury is hotter," said Science Alien. "That would make more sense."

"Turn right here, Decoy," orders Starship. "Keep it under warp factor 25; we're downtown now."

"Great spires of evil, Jim," says Doctor Bones, "LOOK at 'em all? How many of these magma monsters ..."

"Oh, good one," Decoy added.

"... are wandering around Shadow Hill township anyway? And where in blazes are the National Guard?"

"The Guard have a different pattern of uniform camouflage than the active-duty Army or Marines, Doctor," said Science Alien. "I believe those are the Guardsmen there, at three o'clock, being stuffed into an overturned ice-cream truck by the Softened Stone Soldiers of Saturn."

"Damn, you're good," Decoy said.

"Decoy, all engines stop!" Starship commands. "Away Team, phasers to stun."

"That's the green laser pointer, right?" Dr. Bones grumbles.

"Mr. Decoy, energize!"

Decoy presses a trio of red toggles down inset tracks in the minivan's control panel. Slowly, the left and right doors slide open, so the away team can step out in perfect unison, then stand stiffly motionless for a moment.

"Transport successful, Captain," says Lt. Decoy, locking the doors again with the remote.

"Good work, Lieutenant. Bones, Science Officer, spread out. I want to give these Stone Soldiers as difficult a target as possible."

"Prudent, but perhaps unnecessary, Captain. Their attention appears oriented southward, toward the ... toward what APPEARS to be a giant floating cartoon rabbit head surrounded by peaches."

"Odd ... Kamen Rider Tokyo was supposed to be looking for Super Strategist," said Captain Starship. "Bones, could it be ... TWO animes, from TWO different universes, each unaware of the other, yet ... somehow, linked together. Like two animals in a cage ... facing opposite directions ..."

"Sure it could," Bones grumbles. "Once you've got animated characters running around the real world, what's a few more? Only I don't see any giant robots or space-going transforming battleships anywhere ..."

"Surrender to the Five-Card Water and Fire Combination Love Smile of Enlightenment!" shouts someone behind all the Rock Men.

They don't surrender to the Five-Card Water and Fire Combination Love Smile of Enlightenment. They really should have. A waterfall of fire, followed by billowing flames of water, boil up around the Rock Men and whirl them away toward the river. Every one of them has a vacant smile on its featureless stone face.

"Was that even anime at all?" Bones wants to know.

The shout came from a girl with very pink hair, dressed in a blue and white sailor costume with ribbons, lace, a sword sheath and a card pouch.

"Shojo Shaman," says Science Alien imperturbably. "The only hero in the metropolitan area more absurd than Captain Clothes Pins."

"What about Supermarket Santa?" Shojo Shaman demands.

"I like Supermarket Santa," says Science Alien. "He's from space."

"Well, these rock monsters aren't!" she says. "They're more earth-based, so my Spinning Around Shouting Nouns Defense is useless. It only works in space, or on the Moon."

"Well, Starfleet's here now, miss," says Captain Starship. "And we work anywhere, even in the past. Lieutenant, get that rock man's attention."

Lt. Decoy shines his phaser light on the rock monster, shaking it around like a red tornado. Lots of cats leap out of hiding to chase it, but the rock man doesn't notice.

"They're blind, Captain," Science Alien says.

"There goes the Unfolding Fan of Seven Subtle Shades of Emerald Mystery, too!" Shojo Shaman exclaims. "I never get to use that!"

"We had a green girl on the show once ... twice, actually," says Starship. "And one of them did a fan dance ..."

"Focus, Jim," says Dr. Bones. "We have to get these boys corralled before they tear down the whole neighborhood! Any ideas, Shojo Shaman?"

"Well, my Benefit Moon Lucky Starglass Persistence Prism works even on the blind," she says, "but it's sunset! Where are we going to get light in bright primary colors?"

Captain Starship rolls up his sleeves.

"Young lady," he says, "you're in my wheelhouse now."

The Away Team ready their toy phasers.

"Bones! Green stun setting. Decoy! Blue disintegrate. I'll take red, and Science, set yours to "strobe."

"Strobing, Captain."

The Away Team lights up the monsters. Shojo Shaman whistles.

"Over here!" she says, holding up her Benefit Moon Lucky Starglass Persistence Prism. They aim into the Prism.

"Battery power ... dangerously low, Captain. Strobe intensity diminishing!"

"She can't take much morrr a' this, sor!" Lt. Decoy burrs in a Glasgow accent.

"Sure I can!" Shojo Shaman replies. "I can take lots more! This is nothing compared to the Astrogoth, or Mirror Universe Mitt Romney ..."

She turns her prism on the Rock Men, who stand in awe of the flickering colors which pass right through their minds!

"To save our city from devastation! To unite the heroes of our generation! To melt stone hearts with truth and love, and send them back to the stars above – Prism! Flower! Rainbow!"

Eyeshadow! Fluffy Kitty! Lollipop! Give me the sunlight color power to bring the world revolution!”

“We sure are throwing in everything but the kitchen sink ...” says Bones.

“KITCHEN SINK GINSU DRAGON SUSHI EXPLOSION!” she finishes.

A rainbow gurgles out of a kitchen sink and arches across the sky. It unrolls into a dragon, comes apart into dragon slices that attract rice and seaweed wrappers, all clustered together in front of the sun, stack themselves one atop the other with a little bit of wasabi, and then ...

“Captain, there is only one word left in this attack. I suggest we...”

KABOOM!

Stone Men become Pebble People, pinging off everything in sight. Science Alien and Lt. Decoy are bruised. Captain Starship is unscathed, but tears his shirt anyway.

“Captain, I admit to being extremely puzzled as to what just happened,” says Science Alien. His latex facial appliances are hanging down one side of his head, pinging and sparking with pretty colors.

“That’s perfectly understandable, Mr. Alien,” says Starship. “In fact, I’d say you’re getting more human every day!”

And everybody laughs.

CHAMPION CON CRISIS!

Several known villains are walking about and plotting in plain view, camouflaged by all the other colorful convention costumes!

Baen Books, Bag Lady

“Not a bad turnout,” John Ringo comments to his fellow panelists. “Too bad Genghis Kratman couldn’t make it, but did you see the sparks on that scientist guy’s Tesla coil? They’ve really amped up the science this year!”

“Mm,” says David Weber. “Bet it wasn’t even a megawatt. How are you going to melt steel into glowing green plasma that way?”

“One little bit at a time, David,” says Ringo. “One little bit at a time.”

Lois McMaster Bujold shakes her right hand to get the cramp out, after signing sixty hardback books for one fan. She saw the fan start selling his autographed copies right in front of the autograph stand, turned away in disappointment, and saw a man stroll by pushing a dessert cart full of lobsters.

“Lobster for dinner?” she said. “This isn’t any con grub I’ve ever seen. Is there some special Green Room for the VIPs we don’t know about?”

“Well, we are the HARD science fiction panel,” Weber grunted. “If you want psychic detectives or vampires that sparkle ...”

“Coat ‘em in radium dust,” finished Ringo. “They’ll sparkle day OR night.”

“Well, yeah,” said Weber, “but you have to know science to get that.”

“Who doesn’t know radium?” asked Bujold optimistically.

The two male writers stared at her, eyes narrowed.

“BESIDES almost everyone of voting age, I mean.”

They looked around at entirely too many fans in Star Trek uniforms. (Yes, this is actually possible. It’s not so much the uniform as the, ah, measurements, which displayed areas no man had any business having seen before.)

Three men worked their way between a man dressed as the Death Star and a cluster of kittens wrapped in bacon under the banner “Tribble McNuggets.” Their leader, a slightly balding young fellow in lifts with a determined expression, got his toy phaser in between the booths and levered them past each other, making room for a science alien and a doctor.

“THOSE guys, now, they got the idea,” Weber said. “Could almost be an episode of the original series ...”

“Set in an insane asylum,” said Bujold.

“Whom Gods Destroy, I believe,” said Ringo. “And arguably Dagger of the Mind as well.”

“Weren’t those basically the same episode?” Weber said.

“One of ‘em has crusty old Inspector Luger from *Barney Miller*, and the other one has Batgirl painted green,” said Ringo. “It makes a BIG difference.”

“Evil!” shrieked a potted fern.

Everyone looked. Ferns normally keep their moral opinions to themselves.

It wasn’t, that is, not entirely, a fern. It was a green fern in a brown pot with a woman crouching behind it, wearing a green raincoat and brown pants. At least, Bujold thought she was a woman. Ringo wasn’t sure.

“They’re evil, I tell you! Lobsters! Breeding and crawling on the sea bed, millions of them! They’ve come to steal my husband’s earrings, but I’m too crafty for them! I put his ears in the icebox ...”

“This sounds more like a confession than a cry for help,” Weber said. “But I know I’ve seen this costume on TV ...”

“Oh my God, it’s Bag Lady!” said Bujold. “She’s a real superhero, John. What are you doing at a con?”

“Evil! Spraying my old newspapers with disappearing ink! All the verbs are gone, and soon, it’ll be stacking cat food cans in the men’s room of justice.”

“OHHH – kay,” said Ringo. “I don’t like the sound of that, but the meaning’s going right over my head.”

"There's evil here, and ... okay, the verb thing's throwing me," Bujold admitted.

"Evil? Here? How are we going to spot evil at a convention full of costumes?" Ringo demanded. "I mean, right from this seat I can see three, no, FOUR Darth Vaders, two Luthors, a Zod, the usual handful of Jokers and either R2-D2 or a Dalek, depending on what that costume was going for."

“That’s a pretty good Captain Catastrophe,” put in Weber. “How’s he get his arms to spark like that?”

“The hair’s standing up on my arms,” agreed Ringo. “He’s packing some serious voltage under that spandex. And there’s the Fisherman and his Lobster Legion ... wait a sec. You don’t suppose ...”

“That they’re the real Captain Catastrophe and the Fisherman?” Bujold said.

“Evil! Wriggling out of the hole in the freezer!”

Bag Lady turned away and rummaged in her oversized shopping bag.

“How many other supervillains are there?” said Weber. “No, DON’T point, John. There’s Space Hermit, and the Gluttoner ... Dr. Disaster ... Aztec Dentist ... I think we might be in trouble.”

“This whole con’s in trouble,” said Bujold.

“Frimminy layer bits,” added Bag Lady.

“I’ve got a whole Second Amendment that says you’re wrong,” Ringo said. “I say THEY’RE in trouble, not us. Hey! Space Hermit!”

The Space Hermit turned slowly, pointing at himself.

“Yeah, you. How many other villains are backing you up?”

The Hermit cupped his hand to his ear. It was hard to hear anything over all the convention noise.

“HOW ... MANY ... DID YOU ... BRING?” Ringo shouted.

“Five!”

“Well, there’s a coincidence,” said Ringo. “I brought six myself.”

And he showed the Space Hermit a Magnum revolver from under the table.

“No movie, no shootie, comprende?”

The Space Hermit pulled his entire head down into his torso.

“Uh. I guess that’ll do ...”

“We have to round up the others before they know we’re on to them!” Bujold said.

Weber touched her arm and pointed. Several costumed villains had heard Ringo yell, and were clustering around the Baen Books table.

“Times you could use a suit of nanomolecular armor,” said Weber. “First in a series ...”

“DUCK!” said Bag Lady.

The writers hit carpet. Weber kicked over the table, sending paperbacks spilling.

Bag Lady pulled the remains of a Peking Duck takeout container from her bag. She hurled it at Aztec Dentist, hitting him in the chest. It splattered.

“My costume!” shrieked the Mesoamerican Mouth-Monster of Misanthropy. “Euuh, is this rice? It’s all STICKY ...”

“Get them!” shouted Captain Catastrophe. “But make it look like cosplay, or the jig’s up!”

The villains attacked. Two of them held up cards with “Sudden Attack” printed on them, while the Fisherman rolled a pair of twelve-sided dice.

No one paid them the least attention.

Dr. Disaster set his Disaster Dial to HURRICANE and aimed it at Weber. Hot rain and wind blasted card tables end over end like wet leaves, clearing most of the hallway, but Weber wasn’t there. He was at the dealer’s table.

A scale model of the Battlestar Pegasus speared Dr. Disaster in the belly, doubling him over.

“Thanks, David Weber!” said the model seller. “That’ll be \$300.00.”

“Three large for a plastic model?”

“It lights up.”

Aztec Dentist was too horrified by the damage done to his appearance (each feather hand-sewn into place) that Bag Lady was able to empty the contents of a convention trash can on him. No one comes back from that.

Captain Catastrophe pulled out a broadsword and swung it wildly. John Ringo shot him in the chest and belly; Catastrophe’s explosive armor stopped the bullets, but it also exploded, throwing the unconscious supervillain up into the rafters.

“It ain’t SAPL*,” he opined, “but it’ll do.”

The Fisherman unleashed his Lobster Legions, sending hundreds of lobsters scuttling across the carpet toward Lois McMaster Bujold. Fortunately, the dessert cart was between her and the crustacean horde. She seized the pot of melted butter and splashed them with it, sending them fleeing in briny panic. The Fisherman, however, still had his fishing rod, which he brandished menacingly in Bujold’s direction.

**Solar Array-Powered Laser, from Live Free or Die and its sequels. Available now from Baen!*

Ringo showed him the smoking barrel of his Magnum revolver.

“I hold the key to a door you don’t want to open,” he said. The Fisherman dropped the rod and reel and raised his hands.

The Gluttoner, disguised as Jabba the Hutt, saw what happened to his fellow villains and turned right about-face, leaving the hallway altogether. By the time he escaped, he’d won the costume contest.

Champion Con SAVED!

Baen Books Panel: 3 xp each, +4 Fame

Bag Lady: 3 xp, +2 Fame

PATROL HIGHLIGHTS

Graffiti Guru patrols the Cauldron Slums. Unfortunately, Bombastro's Gang of Gangs has just taken over the slums! He sprays over most of their tags, blending others into a harmonious array, but there's just too many spraycans! Plus, they have knives.

The Toulouse-Lautrec of Taggers bops his way out of one knot of gangers after another, eventually winning his way clear to the Finger Paint Works. There, he tips over a 10,000-gallon vat of steaming hot Titanium White, and washes the bricks clean! The streets, walls, cars, trees, EVERYTHING are titanium white up to the doorsills.

And then, of course, Graffiti Guru writes ALL OVER the blank canvas of the Cauldron.

3 xp, +2 Fame, +1 Fortune

Meanwhile ...

Robby Rocket Pants has a vacuum-pump malfunction and ends up shooting off into the sky! He ends up with his pressure-return valve stuck at 85,000 feet with his fuel supply almost empty. Falling 17 miles can be a real career-ending problem ... unless you have rocket pants! Which, as his name implies, he does. Whew!

Kamen Rider Tokyo is attacked by a fire fox boxer. Which is like a regular boxing fox, but on FIRE. Early reports that he was attacked by a “Firefox browser” should have been received more skeptically. He puts out the fire by driving really fast, then steers his bike through the city streets to track down the fox. He finds the fox battling some seriously ornery sea bass with flashlights tied to their heads; he helps her defeat the bass, and they become friends.

Sodapop spends the whole night talking to some chicks in the subway station about how cool the Outsiders are.

Captain Curling spends the week slowly sweeping his path toward the White House, staying just ahead of his sliding ice stone, but just ... never ... gets ... there. People are cheering, commentators are breathlessly describing the scene, there’s even an OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL at stake ... okay, you got me. That’s too ridiculous even for a superhero comic. A sport like that could NEVER happen!

Smash Samson gets his cartoon approved, but the toy action figure line Mean Dean arranged for him doesn’t look anything LIKE Smash Samson. In fact, all three bodies are identical, although the face of Manic Man Jamie Wild does look something like Manic Man Jamie Wild’s actual face, and Serge the Colossal at least has the lantern jaw and curly hair. But Smash’s plastic hair is cast in one piece, is too short, is the wrong shade of blond, and doesn’t have a moustache!

“Someone’s going down for this, brother! Someone’s going to PAY!” shouts Smash.

And whoever that is, it’s not the Rockworm.