

Mystery Men Comics Issue 54!

UNDERMINER STEALS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT!

The Underminer undermines the city's source of electricity, and lets it fall into his shadowy domain! Fortunately, extremely long cables allow the city to continue running its electric equipment, but for how long, I ask you! FOR HOW LONG?

(Man Eating Cow), Ponyboy, Sodapop, John Ringo, Lois McMaster Bujold, David Weber, the Flash, Team? What Team?

"We just follow these cables and we find the boss fink," says Ponyboy Curtis. "It's a snap!"

"That's a lot of voltage," says David Weber. "See my pen vibrating? Whenever you pass a current through a wire, it creates a magnetic field. Baen Science Fact!"

"Come on, we're not here for science!" says Sodapop. "I'm finally going to one of these rumbles, and I want some ACTION!"

Out of the darkness shamble dozens of faceless stone men, the minions of the Underminer!

"Uh ..." says Sodapop. "Dozens?"

"Rawrrr!" declares Godzilla.

"Thu-wat!" says the Lone Power Ranger, using his Beta Capsule to grow to giant size.

"Vrroom!" says Kamen Rider Tokyo, or more accurately, his motorcycle. Kamen Riders don't say "vroom".

"Action, he says. How about we shed some light on the subject?" says John Ringo.

He holds up a curved mirror, angling it to match the mirror mounted over the hole overhead. A beam of twice-concentrated sunlight blazes forth, lighting up every inch of the cavern and clearly revealing the power plant!

The Stone Men, being faceless, are therefore also eyeless. The light doesn't bother them. But the Underminer's mole-like snout retracts as he folds over his face to shelter from the glare!

"Aa! The LIGHT! The yellow face, it burnses us! Get them, obedient henchmen! Engage them in battle, or as I like to call it, Mine Kampf!"

"Ouch," says Lois McMaster Bujold. "Hitler humor."

"We're dealing with a late-night chatroom caliber of mind, here," John Ringo says. "Anyway, the boss is out of action. We have any way to quickly and easily handle his horde of underlings?"

"Places it would be nice to have a suit of nanomolecular battle armor," says Weber. "Third in a series."

"Third in a series of how many?" asks Bujold.

"I don't know -- how long are they gonna keep buying them?" says Weber.

And everybody laughs.

At least, the Baen Books team does. But they've chosen their Laugh on the Bridge a little hastily, for the fight has not yet been won!

While the Underminer scurries away into the underworld, Stone Men close in from all sides. Ringo goes down swinging, while Bujold gets her blade stuck in one of the Stone Men's scaly stone scales. Weber falls back and invents the steam engine, powering a wheel with an offset lever that converts rotary motion into linear motion, and triphammers the Stone Men into dust.

Ponyboy and Sodapop fight back to back, punching and kicking Stone Men. If they won't use blades, neither will we, although Sodapop picks up a rock and that's cool, because they're pretty much rocks themselves.

The Flash, seeing the Underminer run for it, chases him into the darkness, except it isn't darkness when you've got a nine-cell Ultramag flashlight in your hands!

When he drags the Underminer back by his ear, yelping and squeaking, the Stone Men surrender. Which is good, because those dudes were winning! Although Ponyboy and Sodapop will never admit it.

Underminer CAPTURED!

25 experience, +5 Fame, +5 Fortune

The Flash: 5 xp

Sodapop: 4 xp

Ponyboy: 4 xp

John Ringo: 4 xp

Lois McMaster Bujold: 4 xp

David Weber: 4 xp

Kamen Rider Tokyo: 4 xp

Kamen Rider Godzilla: 4 xp

Lone Power Ranger: 4 xp

Baen Books Hard SF Panel: +2 Fame, +3 Fortune

The Outsiders: +3 Fame, +2 Fortune

Shojo Shaman and the BACKUPS: +1 Fame, +1 Fortune

SHOWDOWN WITH STALIN GRAD!

Stalin Grad teams up with Teddy Roosevelt's arch-nemesis, the Terror! And they're taking over the Industrial District! You know, for the *workers* ...

(Dallas, Johnny) Manic Man, Chicken Little, Mean Dean

Manic Man Jamie Wild bounds into the ring (actually, the parking lot of Smelting Metal Amalgamated Steel Horizons) to the enthusiasm of his fans! Employees of SMASH who are not Jamie Wild fans look on, bemused, as he runs around the lot, slapping outstretched hands and bellowing.

"Awwww RIGHT! Let's get it AWWWWN!"

"Aaaand in this corner ... weighing in at, wait, 2300 pounds, the Tag Team of Terror ... and Stalin Grad!" says Mean Dean.

Stalin Grad drives out of the plant, behind the controls of a fork lift. Crouched on the fork lift is a 104-year-old man in a black morning suit and cape, with a purulent green "T" monogrammed on the pocket of his coat.

"What's that? What's that ye say? Speak up, young fella! You want me off your lawn?"

"It is noise of capitalist industrial machinery," says Stalin Grad, shutting off his forklift. "Is better?"

"Better! " says the Terror, scourge of the early twentieth century. "I can hear the ringing in my ears more clearly now. So you think you can match the Terror and his good pal Joseph Stalin, do ya?"

The Terror's bony finger points out a guy in the crowd with a SMASH polo shirt and a hard hat.

"What? No!" The Guy exclaims. "I just work here. Your butt is gonna get kicked by the Manic Man, not me!"

"The Panic Man? Thinks he can throw a skeer inta me, huh? Not while I've got my Dr. Snakeoil's Patent Nerve Remedy!"

The Terror drinks half a bottle of a hideous dark-green concoction from a hideous dark-green bottle. Then he replaces the hideous dark-green cap and puts the bottle back in a particularly hideous dark-green pocket.

"It ain't the PANIC man, walnut-face! It's the MANIC Man! But yeah, you SHOULD be panicking right about now, because I'm gonna take your left foot and your right hand and bend you into the world's most dried-up pretzel!"

"And what about me?" says Stalin Grad. "You can outwrestle fork lift, maybe?"

“Don’t even get me started!” roars Jamie Wild as he lunges for the machine.

“But I have got fork lift started!” says Stalin Grad. “Oh, that was not good. I am not good at banter.”

Jamie Wild leg-locks Stalin Grad and flips him right out of the seat! Stalin Grad lands hard, but bounces up, ready for more.

“Now I have a forklift!” says Jamie Wild. “Ho Ho Ho!”

The Terror opens his skull-headed ring, emitting a cloud of Terror Gas. This sends Jamie Wild into a screaming, frenzied manic terror-fit, although the forklift is serenely unmoved. Unmoved, that is, in a purely emotional sense – locationally, it is indeed rolling forward, pinning the aged Terror between its prongs against a five-year-old SUV!

“My car!” shouts The Guy. “You vandalist! I’ll sue you ...”

“Talk to my manager, maaaaan!” Jamie Wild exults.

“... with this bucket of MOLTEN COPPER!” says The Guy.

“Whoa, whoa! Who tagged in the psycho?” says Mean Dean.

Then Stalin Grad has him in a half-nelson, and Jamie can’t wrench him loose in time! The bucket approaches, sparkling with green flames ...

"DOOOM!!"

"Eh? What's that, young fella? You prophesyin' doom over there?" says the Terror.

"Yes, I am! Doom! The world is doomed!" says Chicken Little.

"And here I am stuck to a shiny little jeep," fumes the Terror. "What with the world ending an' all, every flatfoot in this burg'll be up to his eyebrows in screaming citizens! What a time for a crime spree! Ah, it takes me back t'the good old days ... lifting Calvin Coolidge's wallet during a Thanksgiving parade ... selling the Japs the secret of the Navy's prescription sunglasses ... overthrowing the government of South Dakota and waitin' THREE YEARS for someone to notice! Heh, heh!"

"Waal, if the last reel's about to end, I'm not going out in cuffs at the hands of a chicken, a wrestler in a purple tux, and a long-haired hippie ape. So long, suckers!"

The Terror twists one end of his withered nose, which turns out to be a cunningly crafted prosthetic! Inside, two green glows swirl and merge, brightening quickly until they rival the Sun.

"Radium nose eradicator!" chuckles the Terror. "That'll put starch in your shorts!"

The blinding green glow prompts Stalin Grad to cover his eyes. Manic Man Jamie Wild flips Stalin Grad over his shoulder, knocking over The Guy and splashing molten copper all over the Terror, who goes up in a green fireball!

"He's escaped!" says Chicken Little. "He won't be struck by the sky falling! Sky falling!"

"You really think the Terror's down for the big three-count?" says Jamie Wild. "You really are a bird-brain!"

And everybody laughs.

Stalin Grad and the Terror DEFEATED!

Jamie Wild: 6 xp

Mean Dean: 4 xp

Chicken Little: 6 xp

Shojo Shaman and the BACKUPS: +2 Fame

Global Grappling All-Stars: +2 Fame

EVIL TWO-HEADED GIRAFFE MAN!

Robs a bank, because there aren't any Leaf Depositories in this town.

Betty Butterfly

Betty Butterfly's butterflies search the streets, finding the two-headed giraffe man known to the world as Two-Headed Giraffe Man. He's the only giraffe man, whether with one, two, or three heads, in the whole downtown area. Maybe the whole town.

Giraffe Man rears back, lowering his twin heads away from the eucalyptus tree he was munching.

"I didn't want to bite any of the pretty butterflies," he explains. "Hey, can you hold this sack of stolen money? My mouth is getting tired."

"Okay," says Betty Butterfly, and takes the sack. "Pretty heavy! What's all the money for?"

"Leaves," replies Giraffe Man. "There aren't many leaves in the city, and a lot of them are pines. I can't eat pines – they sting my lips. So I thought I'd rob a bank, then buy a ton of leaves, and then eat them. It's a complicated plan, but so far ..."

"Silly giraffe!" says Betty, smiling. "There are plenty of leaves in Pokey Oaks. And as long as you don't eat all the leaves off one tree, nobody will mind. In fact, they pay people to cut leaves off their trees!"

"They do?"

"Uh huh! Come on, let me show you!"

Betty hands the bag to Charlie the Giant Purple Butterfly, who flies it back to the bank. Pokey Oaks, unlike a natural forest, has dozens of different species of trees in a small space, each of which tastes different. And the children, of whom there are many in a suburb, like to ride on the Two-Headed Giraffe Man's back, and slide down his neck. Which tickles.

Two-Headed Giraffe Man REFORMED!

No xp (because there was no actual fighting) but +3 Fame for the Groovy Flower Power Girls

SHADOW HILL FALLS INTO THE EARTH!

An army of Rockworms undermines the old hills and quiet graveyards of Shadow Hill, and nine square miles of territory fall into flames and belching smoke! Everyone always knew Shadow Hill would be the first to go to Hell ... but no, there it is, just a few hundred feet below street level, and there aren't any demons. Just Rockworms. Oh, and faceless yellow stone men. The ones previously believed to be from Saturn.

18 experience, +3 Luck

Novelator, Bongo Drummer Boy, Weasel Bag, Dream Dust Debbie, Graffiti Guru

"Rockworms. Why did it have to be Rockworms ..." mutters Weasel Bag.

"Don't sweat it, Weez! We're gettin' handy at whompin' these pebbleheads!" raps the Graffiti Guru.

Novelizer vs. A Rockworm: "Slowly the huge serpentine form folded its geologic folds, shifting and rumbling to turn its eyeless maw in the direction of its helpless prey. I saw that it had heavy cowlings protecting its mouth, angled outward like flattened tusks in place of teeth. But teeth there were in plenty, ranged in rows like the spears of a mighty army, lining the gullet of the rocky throat to drag down its meals!"

The Rockworm pauses, as if waiting for the Novelator to describe it some more.

"The terrifying denizen of the netherworld seemed to recognize its opponent, for it slid on its belly-plates to build up speed in its downward career, while lowering its blunt, bullet-shaped nose for impact! First, it knocked the Novelator off his feet, then rolled, crushing the Descriptive Detective's breath from his body beneath tons of malevolent stone!"

And you know what? That's exactly what it does! Way to describe your defeat, Novelizer!

Bongo Drummer Boy vs. Another Rockworm: "Yeah! Pow! Ba-bompbompbomp-baDOW!"

"Rrr." (crunching sounds) "Rrr!"

"Babalooop-bop-bap-a-la-bap-a-la-bap-bap!"

"Rrr"

"Ba bompbompBOMP!"

...
...

"Awright!"

Weasel Bag vs. A Different, But Nonetheless Strongly Similar, Rockworm: "You want a snack? All right, rock-ribs; EAT WEASEL!"

CHOMP.

"I didn't mean EAT them! You ... you jerk! Those were ALL my WEASELS!"

The Rockworm turns yellow, then firey red.

"Spice Weasel gets SPICY when he gets scared!" exults Weasel Bag. "But you KNOW that now, doncha!"

The Rockworm rolls over, clearly unhappy with its spicy meal. Four weasels run squeaking out of its mouth.

"YEAH! Who's your daddy? Come 'ere, little weasel pals! Ow, Spice Weasel, turn it down already! You're making my eyes water!"

Graffiti Guru vs. All the Rest of the Rockworms: A quick faux-to real sketch in brown and brown, and BAM! The Rockworms try to slither down a tunnel which is really solid rock, and knock each other out!

Dream Dust Debbie vs. Faceless Stone Men: Without a face, you can't smell Dream Dust. But without eyes, you dream ALL THE TIME. So it doesn't take much to redirect those dreams to a quiet place, where silence and darkness sit around and drink tea with each other, and there's always a cookie left over for you.

Dream Dust Debbie joins the Stone Men in their dreamworld. So they're out of the fight, but so is she. Which is groovy, baby. Peace.

Graffiti Guru, Weasel Bag, and Bongo Drummer Boy vs. The Last Remaining Rockworm: Weasel Bag threatens with his Spice Weasel and the Rockworm backs away slowly, avoiding eye contact. Which is easy, being without eyes.

Bongo Drummer Boy starts a-whompin and a-whalin on the Rockworm's dome, and as it retreats, it pushes part of Shadow Hill back up into the sunlight! And then it flees in panic from the merest scent of Spice Weasel, causing the neighborhood in question to flop back into the hole.

"We gotta fill up these holes so Shadow Hill can get back up top!" says Graffiti Guru.

"But how?" wails Weasel Bag.

The Stone Men patiently, vacantly, dreamily start stacking rocks one on top of the other. Slowly, slowly the gables and steeples of Shadow Hill ascend, until they are back in their wonted places, or no more than a few feet below where they were this morning.

Shadow Hill SAVED!

Weasel Bag: 3 xp

The Novelizer: 4 xp

Bongo Drummer Boy: 4 xp

Graffiti Guru: 4 xp

Dream Dust Debbie: 4 xp

The Don't Quit Your Day Job Heroes: +1 Luck

Shojo Shaman and the BACKUPS: + 1 Luck

Groovy Flower Power Girls: +1 Luck

PUTTY IN THE SCULPTOR'S HANDS!

The Sculptor animates all the monumental statues that tower over Champion City. The Captain Amazing statue is pretty big, but the Captain Clothes Pins Monument is made of freaking granite. And they're tearing up Downtown!

Super President, Captain Curling, (Supermarket Santa,) Fast Racer, Shojo Shaman, Smash Samson, Justice Seeking Justice Justice Vigilantes for Justice Justice Justice

Captain Curling and Utility Belt vs. The Shoveler Statue: The Captain, with great effort and engineering ingenuity, slowly slides the Blue Raja Statue from its base near Knickerbocker Ice Rink toward the animated Shoveler statue. Utility belt greases the street, and when necessary the lawns in the way, with Bat-Grease, allowing a smooth travel for the mighty stone image! The Shoveler statue, intent on digging up the Museum of Geological Oddities with its massive stone shovel, does not sense the approaching stone, and the collision shatters both into car-sized rubble. The Shoveler statue's head almost, but not quite, slides into Champion Bay, but Captain Curling sweeps the dock clean of dirt and the head slides the remaining hundred feet. Splash!

"That's how we do it up North, eh?"

Shojo Shaman and Captain Foosball vs. Captain Clothes Pins Monument:

Captain Foosball is faster than a walking statue, so he gets in the first attack! Which bounces plastically off the stone shin. Then the statue steps on him, and there isn't any second attack. Little plastic foosball players watch in agreeable silence.

"Ah, Captain Clothes Pins, The Monument. We meet again! Only this time, the advantage is mine! Ha ha! Ha ha! Ha ha ha!"

Captain Clothes Pins' sculpted features bespeak a noble fortitude in the face of adversity, so he doesn't react.

"Draw your card!" Shojo Shaman demands, and whips out five huge red cards with gold edges. She carefully schools her face to immobility (although the layers of makeup make that a task somewhat short of daunting) and selects a single card.

The Monument does not select a card.

"I said, draw your CARD!" Shojo Shaman insists, stamping a schoolgirl-uniformed foot. "It isn't fair unless you have time to choose your card carefully. So HURRY UP AND TAKE YOUR TIME!"

The Monument shifts, moving one step closer to Shojo Shaman.

"Do you ... could it be .. you don't HAVE any cards?" she says, squiggly confusion lines sprouting around her head. "Poor Captain Clothes Pins! Here ... have one of mine."

She flutters up his arm in a whirl of ribbons and sticks a card between his thumb and the web of his fist.

"All ready then? You play THUNDER ON THE UNDERSEA MOUNTAIN! But I have TIDAL WAVE OF MOLTEN LAVA SAMURAI! You LOSE!"

A volcano erupts in Champion Bay, shaking the ground. But from the East comes a tsunami of boiling red lava, cooling to stone at the base but rolling forward in molten orange-yellow inexorability on top, where surf the Lava Samurai on their boilerplate lavaboards.

The Lava Samurai draw their swords, white-hot, from their scabbards. They chop the granite statue like hot knives chopping an ice cream cake -- difficult, but possible. The Captain Clothes Pins Monument topples in five pieces, the arms and legs already stiffening into granitic rigidity.

Shojo Shaman claps her hands.

"Well struck, underground warriors! Now depart, back into the mystic Destiny Deck until I summon you once again!"

"Just once, I'd like to fight a Fire type card," one of the samurai grouses as they bow, flatten into flatness, and slide back into their places on the card.

Fast Racer and Robbie Rocket Pants vs. Captain Amazing Statue: The Captain Amazing statue's rocket packs are functionless stone replicas. The Mock Mach Macht Schnell's rocket packs, however, work! So the Statue tries to bat the race car out of the air like King Kong for a while, until it trips over a pedestrian bridge and falls on its face, like a clumsy version of King Kong. Made of stone.

Smash Samson and Super President vs. Mr. Furious Statue: "No, really, Mr. Speaker, I have an urgent appointment in Champion City. We'll have to discuss Hydra's theft of South America later this afternoon. No, I'm not putting you off again. What? Mr. Speaker, really! If you think the President would cavalierly disregard the authority of a co-equal branch of Constitutional government, you must be living in a comic book! Good day."

He hung up the phone, handing it to his chauffeur, who wasn't anywhere near the superhero Chauffeur X, if that's what you're implying.

Smash Samson leapt into the fray with a roar, grabbed the statue's wrist and twisted it into a headlock. Or he would have, if his arms had been fifty feet long! Instead, he bent the wrist into a bent-wrist lock, which is a legitimate wrestling move. Look it up if you don't believe me, doubters!

"An animated bronze statue," he mused. "A literal Man of Bronze. I don't see his five stalwart aides with their assorted visual and verbal tags, but no matter. It seems to me the occasion requires a substance equal in hardness and density to bronze itself. I know -- bronze! Bronze is exactly as strong as bronze!"

"Harder, boss," says his chauffeur.

"What's harder than a Man of Bronze? If only I had some Arctic highway to collect my thoughts while bringing all the diverse forces of science to bear on the question! Or a staff of identical genius robots to delegate the problem to! Or a tiny city of miniaturized superhumans who ... Wait, I have it -- the only thing that can defeat a Man of Bronze is ... a Man of Steel!"

"Copyright, boss!"

"Pshaw! What is copyright to Super President!"

"Your laws have to bind you as well as everyone else, or they're not laws at all," the phlegmatic Japanese murmured politely.

"Quite right, too. I was only kidding about ignoring the law to further my personal wishes. Super President -- AWAY!"

Transformed into solid steel, the Executive of Excitement leapt high, high into the air, landing a ringing blow on the Mr. Furious statue. The bronze deformed under the blow, giving Mr. Furious' likeness a distinctly cocked jaw.

"The real Mr. Furious would be bellowing in stark fury right now, adding the power of his boundless rage to the already adamant strength of solid bronze!" says Super President. "But your skill at imitation doesn't extend that far, does it, Sculptor? You can't capture the soul of a man in your lifeless bronze!"

"I did not even sculpt zis!" shrieks the Sculptor in artistically outraged outrage. "Zis is, how you say, Found Art! I merely animated it wiz my amazing radioactive clay!"

"Careful with that stuff, Sculptor. It'll make your hair fall out and strike your daughter blind!"

"Poppydash!" sneers the Sculptor. "I 'ave worked wiz it for years, and nevair 'ave I had a daughtair!"

He wipes a palm across his brow, and his hair falls out.

"Sacre hair! I am losaing my hair, just as Super President predicted!"

"And more than that," said Super President, "your shout of alarm has led me to your hiding place! This isn't a solid bronze statue at all -- it's hollow!"

"Well, of course! A solid bronze statue would weigh thousands of tons and collapse under its own weight, given the inherent weaknesses of the human form cast in metal ..."

Super President tears open the Mr. Furious statue's head, revealing steel support beams, pierced metal flooring, and the Sculptors's secret studio! Inside are miniature versions of the statues he

controls, sculpted from radioactive clay so radioactive that rays can actually be seen radiating from it, as radioactive radiation rays are known to do.

"Aiee! My 'ideout is exposed, open to all ze world! I 'ave nowhere to ..."

Super President hovers patiently.

"Go ahead," he says politely. "Finish your monologue."

"Ow come you are not attackaing me?" the Sculptor wants to know.

"Oh, I thought my friends might like to be part of the ending, too."

And up behind him float Shojo Shaman (on a cloud of fluttering cards) Robby Rocket Pants, and Fast Racer (in a racing car which also has helicopter blades). Sitting in or on the Mock Mach Macht Schnell are Smash Samson, Chief Justice, Utility Belt, and Wonder Boy.

"Where's Captain Curling?" says Super President.

"He's on his way," says Fast Racer. "He asked us to wait for him."

So they do.

Eventually, he gets there. And the Sculptor still hasn't thought of a way out.

Sculptor CAPTURED!

Super President: 5 xp

Captain Curling: 4 xp

Fast Racer: 4 xp

Shojo Shaman: 5 xp

Smash Samson: 4 xp

Wonder Boy: 4xp

Chief Justice: 4 xp

Utility Belt: 4 xp

Robby Rocket Pants: 4 xp

Captain Foosball and the Foosball Table: 3 xp

Super Squadron: +5 Fame

Shojo Shaman and the BACKUPS: +2 Fame

VAN DAM OVERFLOWS THE RIVER!

The diminutive Belgian martial artist/hydraulic engineer Van Dam has built a concrete dam across the Champion River with his insta-hardening concrete! And he's captured all the brave little boys who tried to poke their fingers through the dike. He's demanding a billion dollars, or Champion City is going to float downstream one building at a time!

Barrellman, Serge the Colossal, Tae Bo Tina, Bag Lady

"J'ai venu a inunder le cite cependant on ne me donne pas mes requirements. Or on Angleesh, I hiv cam to drewn dis ceetee onlass ma dimonds are mat," says Van Dam over the megaphone.

"What's he saying? Doesn't make any sense to me," says Tae Bo Tina.

"Nope!" agrees Bag Lady. "Won't slice any persimmons with the Martian cowboy truckers, either. Fribble these gummies."

"I think he means to drown the city unless his demands are met," says Serge the Colossal. "He doesn't speak very good French, either."

"Then it's up to the three of us to take him down!" says Tina. "Look -- what's that in the river?"

"Just a barrel," says Serge. "Like all de others. Nothing to remark on."

"Oh, all right then," says Tina.

The three heroes race across the bumpy, crumbly top of the impromptu dam, while Van Dam removes his hard hat, work gloves, safety harness, and shirt.

"Stop right there!" says Serge.

"A em not gah-eeng enywhare, ma calassul frind," says Van Dam with an accent as thick as waffle batter. "A em ga-eeng tu faght yu raht hir."

"No, I mean stop taking off clothes! Some things are better left to the imagination."

"A usally faght without boots," says Van Dam slowly.

"Okay, the boots. But that's it!"

"Ond socks are kand of foolesh-lookeeng," Van Dam declares further.

"Fine, socks," says Tina. "Can we just beat you up now?"

"Nut waal A hef ma karatuh skeels!" says Van Dam, and leaps through the air.

He actually doesn't leap through ALL the air, but he sure does make a noble effort at leaping through nine-tenths of it. Before anyone can say, "Why is everything in slow-motion?" Van Dam

has landed in front of Serge the Colossal, then leapt up on his other foot and kicked Serge sideways several times!

"In wrestling, we generally don't use spin kicks," says Serge helpfully. "For safety, you see? Because this can happen."

Van Dam goes up to kick Serge the exact same way again, and Serge holds out his arm. Van Dam wraps around it like a windowshade rolling up.

"To be honest, THAT doesn't usually happen," Serge admits.

"Roll him out! Roll him out and I'll core him with this umbrella stiffener!" says Bag Lady.

"That doesn't sound very sportsmanlike ..." says Serge. But then Van Dam applies a hydraulic jack to Serge's massive fingers and pries his grip off Van Dam's leg!

"We don't use hydraulic jacks in wrestling either!" Serge says.

"Des eesn't rasleeng," Van Dam says smugly. "Des ees mexed morshel orts."

"Okay," says Serge, and breaks off a chunk of concrete as big as Van Dam's entire torso.

"Concrete is mixed, right?" says Serge. Van Dam seems horrified.

Then, of course, water starts pouring over the dam through the hole Serge made.

"Oopsie," says Serge, and puts the concrete back.

"Anything goes, huh?" says Tae Bo Tina. "Gimme a beat, Bag Lady! What's up?"

Bag Lady turns on a lime-green Walkman from her bag. Remember Walkmans?

To a driving Billy Blanks beat, Tae Bo Tina launches a rhythmic flurry of punches, kicks, punches, kicks, punches, punches, step up, kicks! Van Dam parries and counters, backing away from Serge and his big concrete rock, then poses with muscles flexed and bellows defiance. He winds up for a roundhouse kick that will golf-drive Tina into the distant river, then slips on a banana peel.

Bag Lady drops more banana peels on him. Then potato peels. Then watermelon peels. Then Coke peels, better known as torn aluminum can. Then a minivan peel.

"Oww!" says Van Dam, while Bag Lady rummages for the outer brick facing of a four-story apartment building.

Then, out of seemingly nowhere, a barrel rises out of the water and looms menacingly, casting its barrel-shaped shadow across Van Dam's white-faced, terror-stricken visage.

"Who knows ... what evil ... lurks in the heart of the dam?" the barrel intones. "The BARREL knows ... ha-ha-HA-HA-ha-ha-ha!"

"N-nu! Nit de BORRELL-MEN!" he screams, and turning in panic, forgetting that he's on a narrow dam, plunges to his doom.

"The weed of civil engineering bears bitter fruit," observes the Man of Aged Oak. "Civil engineering does NOT PAY! The BARREL knows! Ha-ha-HA-HA-ha-ha-ha!"

Serge nods.

"He's right, you know. Far more sensible to study art history."

Serge the Colossal: 4 xp

Tae-Bo Tina: 4 xp

Bag Lady: 3 xp

Barrelman: 3 xp

Global Grappling All-Stars: +1 Fame

Groovy Flower Power Girls: +1 Fame

Shojo Shaman and the BACKUPS: +1 Fame

Super Squadron: + 1 Fame

Meanwhile ...

MAN EATING COW is late because of lunch. That's all I have to say about that.

JOHNNY tries to coax the Man-Eating Cow to come with them, but it's no use.

DARRELL tries to pull the Man-Eating Cow into battle, but she's right near a thousand pounds, and getting a rope on her is riskier than Darrell expected.

SUPERMARKET SANTA has to open the first toy shop on Mars. Getting there and back is the real time-consuming part of this.

BARRELMAN is almost lost in his work on his Spaceman in a Barrel project, but fortunately, Super President interrupts him on the President-Phone.

ROBBY ROCKET PANTS wanted to make sure he didn't run out of fuel this time, so he was at the airport when the call came down. Good thing Chief Justice could have him subpoenaed and brought before the Court!

Next Issue ...

The Evil Anime Empire, or Ampire, if you will, sends loose a swarm of rainbow-colored vampires to bite the city's cats and turn them into vampire kittens! The effect of the rainbow colors is, admittedly, somewhat muted by vampires' traditional reliance on darkness. But still.

The Granite Lady attacks the most famous team, the Super Squadron! (Yes, Shojo Shaman's team has equal Fame, but according to the Mystery Men Superheroic Combat Association's Book of Regulations and Procedures, ties go to the President.) She's a normal-sized lady, but made of granite!

Mr. Metamorphic attacks the most wealthy team, the Baen Books Hard SF Panel! ("Wealthiest? There must be some mixup .. we work for PUBLISHERS!" says David Weber.) And he's using heat and pressure to transform asphalt into granite, brick into marble, and people into briquettes!

The Tectonic Twins unite, cutting deep crevasses across the city, in their effort to capture or destroy the city's luckiest team, the Global Grappling All-Stars! Can they stay in the ring when the very ring itself is bouncing up and down! It's the Showdown Rattle in the Bouncy Castle!

And a **previously unimagined number of Rockworms** drill out of the ground to bust the Underminer out of prison! Funny thing, prisons – they never put barbed wire or armed guards UNDER the cells!

Previously ... Team? What Team?

At the pier the beerzooca guy was at, Kamen Rider Tokyo jumps out of the water, along with the Suzies. There's still a few beer party members there, but in the ensuing fight they get beaten up.

Tokyo: "Okay ladies, how come you're able to fight so well? I mean, here I am, a guy from Tokyo, and I am getting beaten up by girls. Hey, don't I know you? You're Susie Sikomorrow right?"

Susie: "Yeah, that's me. How do you know who I am?"

Tokyo: "Don't you remember I dated you in high school."

Susie: "I think I would remember a guy in cherry-themed armor."

Tokyo: "I think you've gotten chubbier."

Susie: "I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!"

Just then, a mole man pops up out of the ground. He looks like he's from Texas. He is very similar to an actual mole. And nothing like the Mole man from marvel comics.

The Mole Man: "Hello, Underminer, I, the Excadriller, have come to offer the hand a friendship to you from the evil anime Empire, or Ampire if you will, yes, in fact that's the name. Now let's talk, what...where am I?"

Just than a man who looks like an ice cream cone jumps out and kicks the Excadriller in the head. The Excadriller is surprise. Tokyo recognizes the ice cream cone guy as one of his reoccurring enemies.

He looked like this, but more human and has only one head.

Ice cream guy: "You fool, the Underminer on the other side of town! I was sent to Shadow Hill to tell you that the Underminer is at the power plant. But when I got there, and you were not there, I realized you had gotten lost! It took me three days to find you! Do you know what I could have done in three days? I could have..."

Tokyo: "Hey, I know you. You're that ice cream guy."

Ice cream guy: "Ice cream guy? My name is Vanilluxe the Constrictor, you idiot! Wait, is that Tokyo? Ah, Cherubi good to see you again. Do you still refuse to join Ampire?"

The Excadriller: "Oh, I'm sorry, sir. Um maybe I should..."

Vanilluxe: "Shut up. You're helping me."

Just then Kamen Rider Pi jumps her motorcycle over the building and lands in front of Vanilluxe.

Pi: "Hello, Champion City, prepare to count your sins. Oh, Commander Vanilluxe. Good to see you again."

Vanilluxe: "Well, well, well. It does appear that a traitor has just jumped right in front of me. Rattaninja, get 'em!"

Rattaninja appear out of nowhere and attack Pi and Tokyo. Pi whips out her boxing gloves and starts beating up the Rattaninja with long distance punches.

Susie2: "Wait, what's going on, boss? Maybe we should get out of here?"

Susie: "No way, he call me fat. I'm going to beat him up."

The Susies' charge at Tokyo. Tokyo charges his sword and uses a *ka may ha may ha*. The Susie's are blasted over the edge of the dock. Then a giant TV screen swallows them.

Tokyo: "Okay...what was that?"

Vanilluxe: "Pretty good, for a beginner."

Tokyo: "Vanilluxe, what was that?"

Vanilluxe: "Like I'm going to tell you."

Just then Pi finishes off the last Rattaninja.

Pi: "Well, that was fun. Good luck, Tokyo."

She winks as she says this. Tokyo immediately starts blushing through his mask. Everyone starts laughing at him. Then, a voice rings in his ears.

Dracul: "Focus, boy. Listen, you can charge your chi into a spirit bomb by absorbing other people chi. Now try it. While, they're too busy laughing"

Vanilluxe stop laughing enough to notice he's about to be shot. So he jumps out of the way. The Excadriller is not so fortunate. He explodes and then implodes.

The Excadriller: "By the power of TV Tropes, make my me grow!"

Suddenly, there's a low angle shot, and The Excadriller is huge.

Tokyo: "Okay, how do I fight him? My motorcycle's broken?"

Pi: "You can't break your motorcycle. All you have to do is whistle, and it'll stand up."

Tokyo: "Okay." *Whistles.*

Then his *blue and yellow* motorcycle, in its robot form, stands up, and Tokyo jumped in.

Tokyo: "Ok, monster prepare to..."

We then cut to the Lone Power Ranger.

Lone Power Ranger: "Man, that was tough, but in the end, we finally beat him."

Lambda: "Aye yi yi yi yi! I didn't know you spoke Japanese."

Lone Power Ranger: "I don't, partner. I am at true blue Texas born and bred. Apparently, my amour has translation function. I must have activated it when I tripped off my *white* motorcycle."

Just then, a giant half-man, half-Excadrille becomes visible nearby.

Lone Power Ranger: "What in tarnation? It must have been sent by the Zed Brothers since, obviously, it's from Texas. I have to go stop it!"

The Lone Power Ranger activate the Lambda Capsule and charges at monster.

Tokyo: "die you..."

Lone Power Ranger "*Grand punch!*"

The Lone Power Ranger jumps on top of Tokyo's robot to launch himself at the giant creature. He punches The Excadriller in the face, knocks him down, temporally.

The Excadriller: "Listen, you varmint, prepare to die!"

Tokyo: "Thanks, stranger. Hey, I know you. You're that guy who help me fight Bombastro."

Lone Power Ranger: "Hey, you're that guy from the King Cobra Dojo incident, Kamen Rider Tokyo, correct?"

Tokyo: "That's my name. So you want to help me fight this monster?"

Lone Power Ranger: “Yes”

The battle is going well until a shot rings out, and a giant's guy in a brain-monster costume jumps out and attacks the Lone Power Ranger. Even with extra monsters, the heroes are still doing well. Then another monster rises from the ocean. It's the Smog Monster.

Smog Monster: “Rawr.”

Smog Monster's translation: “*Kamen Rider Godzilla, show yourself.*”

Now it's three to two, and the monsters are winning, that is until The Excadriller steps on Godzilla's head.

Godzilla: “Rawr”

Godzilla's translation: “*Who dares to step on my head? Whoever you may be, die!*”

The Smog Monster: “Rawr”

The Smog Monster's translation: “*Godzilla, face me.*”

With Godzilla on their side, the heroes manage to weaken the monsters enough to finish them off.

Tokyo: “Grand Rider Pizza Cutter Slash!”

Lone Power Ranger: “Lincoln Tunnel Canon!”

Godzilla: “Rawr!”

Godzilla's translation: “*Atomic Jump Kick!*”

Three explosions follow.

Godzilla: “Rawr”

Godzilla's translation: “*What were those monsters doing here? Mayhap you have a lead to what they wanted?*”

Tokyo: “Is that really what he said?”

Lone Power Ranger: “Yup”

Tokyo: "Well, that mole guy said that he was sent to recruit the Underminer and according to Vanilluxe, the Underminer is at the power plant . So, I'm going after him."

Lone Power Ranger: "Well, I might as well go there, too. Got nothing else to do."

Godzilla: "Rawr."

Godzilla's translation: "*Mayhap I may defeat the Underminer.*"

The three of them leave in three different directions, but all head for the power plant and the Underminer.

Meanwhile on Monster Island

Gigan: "Rawr!"

Gigan's translation: "*Blast! Foiled again!*"

Ghidorah: "Rawr."

Ghidorah's translation: "*Mayhap you could send me this time.*"

Gigan: "Rawr."

Gigan's translation: "*You know I will not send you until the last turn, so quit complaining, my brother-in-arms.*"

Just then the door are flung wide open, and three humans step into the room.

Gigan: "Rawr?!?"

Gigan's translation: "*Who dares to enter the presence of King Gigan unannounced?!?"*

Rayquaza: "Hello, I am Lord Rayquaza, as you already know. I have come to offer the hand of friendship from the Evil Anime Empire, Ampire, if you will, to the usurper of monsters. I also bring the Zed Brothers into this little agreement. I've only one thing to say to you." *Ahem.* "CAN YOU DIG IT!"

Gigan: "Rawer!"

Gigan's translation: *gasp.* "*So you are the one who taught Bombastrow his secret!*"

Rayquaza: "Guilty as charged."