



Game Master: Jim Caswell

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Prologue

The New Orleans sky was filled with an all-too-familiar sight, though not a pleasant one. A battle was taking place high above between their protector - leader of the city's super team - and one of his many foes. The hero's red cape plastered against his body as he sped through the air, preparing to make contact with a move-through just as the villain prepared to teleport out of the path. A window-shaking bang echoed through the air as both hero and villain disappeared and air rushed in to fill the large void of space.

A woman, clad mostly in blue, flew to where the hero was just moments before, searching the area for her now-missing husband. She raised her hand to her ear, activating her communicator. "Fan out. He has to be here somewhere. We must find The Messenger and make sure he's alright."

Chapter 1

Stepping out onto her balcony, Hoshi heard a loud pop, drawing her attention to the sky above the Lake Pontchartrain. Enhancing her vision, she saw an unconscious body dressed in red and black dropping through the sky. Flying out and matching speeds with the plummeting body, she caught the mysterious stranger and brought him back to earth safely. After reviving him, she learned that he had amnesia and super powers. Realizing that he had no place to go, she took him back to her condo to feed and clothe the mystery man.

While there, the duo discovered that there was a robbery in progress down at Harrah's and set out to stop the crime. On the scene before most of the cops, they arrived in time to stop one of the skull-masked gangbangers from firing off a rocket launcher at the one cop car already on the scene. Within seconds, the duo had taken out all six armed men and Hoshi began binding them up and giving them medical attention. The newly-formed New Orleans Strikeforce was quickly called on the scene to investigate the new heroes, allowing Hoshi to ask Bodé about the rumored gargoyle in the city and for The Messenger to recall his heroic title. They departed, still lacking answers about the mysterious rumors.

Chapter 2

While pulling to a stop at a stop sign, a young couple is violently pulled from their car by two le Crâne members. Moments into their car jacking, however, they find the car covered by a large, winged shadow. Meanwhile, as Hoshi stepped out onto her balcony to do a preliminary scan of the city, she saw the large shadow pursuing the car and she and Messenger launched into action. At the same time, Hailstorm was monitoring the police ban from her dorm room and learned of the carjacking, and Diamant witnessed the pursuit while on a date and decided to investigate.

As the le Crânes began to believe they had gotten away with the crime, they found the car lifted into the air and carried by Fantasia. She, in turn, found herself in a tug of war with Messenger, with the two of them separating the car from its roof. As all of the heroes arrived on the scene, a four-way fight breaks out, ending in Fantasia and Hoshi calling for a cease fire and Diamant and Messenger encased in an ice



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cage with the gang-bangers and the car. As Hoshi binds the thieves, the ensemble agrees to meet and discuss the protection of the city on a nearby rooftop.

While Diamant began pitching a team-up among the heroes, Fantasia was forced into a vision of a gator farm attacked by a legion of gargoyles. Dedicated to investigating, she invites the others to join her. Minutes later, the group finds the farm and investigates, only to find it to be an ambush by the Slayers, dedicated to destroying the gargoyle. A fight ensues, with the Slayers focusing mainly on Fantasia. Soon, after many of the Slayers had been knocked down at least once and Shaft had been knocked unconscious by a team effort between Fantasia, Hailstorm and Diamant, the Slayers surrendered, vowing to return to finish their strike against the abomination.

After the New Orleans Strikeforce was summoned to the scene, the group of heroes agreed to work together. Diamant took it upon himself to initiate things over the next couple of weeks, custom-building communicators, distributing them to the team and seeking out a potential headquarters for the group.

Chapter 3

Having made crime difficult for the le Crânes both individually and as a group, the team went about their own personal business as dusk approached. Diamant was already out on patrol while Hoshi did her pre-patrol scan of the city. Fantasia was stuck at work, harassed about her constant necessity to leave before dark and assigned to investigate a series of waterfront warehouse fires that point to arson. As she begins to feel the change coming on, she sees on one of the monitors a televised celebration at the train station interrupted by five super-beings. Also seeing this, Hoshi hits the communicator to call in the team.

Messenger, Hoshi, Diamant and Fantasia all arrived in time to see Warrior and Hardbody tear a train in two and the masses attempting to flee. As soon as both sides laid eyes on each other, Warrior let his sword fly and struck Messenger with an earthshaking blow, stunning him with one shot. Diamant was likewise knocked backward by a blow from Stretchon while Hoshi turned invisible and began attacking Warrior. This left Fantasia to face off against Stretchon, Hardbody and Ronin, and Infinity splitting his attention between her and Diamant. Fantasia used half of the train to bash Hardbody and Ronin, who was finished off seconds later by a revived Diamant. Once Messenger regained his senses, he repeated the move using his telekinesis on the other half of the train, this time hitting Hardbody and Infinity. In the end, Fantasia was temporarily knocked out by Hardbody, Diamant by Infinity, and Hoshi by Warrior, leaving Messenger the only one left standing against the four remaining mercenaries. Warrior then took the opportunity to inform Messenger that the heroes needed to leave town because it belonged to the le Crânes, and that next time the mercs would show no mercy. With that, the mercenaries left.

Once all of the heroes had regained consciousness, Hoshi invisibly shape-changed into Warrior in order to demand the taped coverage of the fight, though unable to do anything about the live feed. The heroes then fled the scene before any questions could be asked.



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Chapter 4

Two days later, Diamant set up a meeting for the team at a newly bought mansion along the bayou. Once everyone but Hailstorm had arrived, Diamant gave a tour of the facilities as an introduction of their new headquarters - including the pending changes that he had in mind - while they discussed a name for themselves. After several options were bandied about, Orleans Force - or Force d'Orleans - was agreed upon and adopted. Once they had arrived at the master bedroom, a debate ensued between Messenger and Fantasia over possession. As a solution, Diamant suggested a sparring match in the back acreage. As the fight progressed, Hoshi switched into her secret ID and sneaked back up to the master bedroom, putting a mesh over the entrance and a sign stating "le Crânes HQ". After several rounds of blows being thrown, Diamant called the fight before Fantasia could be knocked unconscious, but not before Messenger was burned by a flame blast.

As the trio returned to the building, they found Tia lounging about the pool and the message left by Hoshi. This led the group to discuss their current difficulties with the street gang, sparking Fantasia to share her tale of confrontation with them while investigating "Papa" Boulet. With this information in effect, along with Diamant's personal knowledge of the man, Force d'Orleans went to pay a visit to the supposed kingpin.

Upon their arrival, Diamant dispatched Hoshi and Fantasia to disable a set of guards, though Hoshi did the task by herself. Messenger then used his clairvoyance to see into the house, catching the enormous "Papa" Boulet coming out of the shower. Wishing he could "share" the experience with his fellow heroes, Messenger accidentally rediscovered his mental illusion powers, transforming Hoshi's surroundings into a repeat performance. The power also backfired on him, putting himself into a surreal reality in which he was in the room, discovered and shot by an armed guard. The two of them recovered quickly enough, allowing the plan to proceed. Force d'Orleans then broke into the millionaire's mansion, tracking him to his study. With Hoshi binding him with a towel, Diamant explained that they knew Boulet was behind the le Crânes, and that they would be watching. Likewise, they also all but dared him to send the hired mercenaries back after them.

After leaving the Boulet household, the group returned in time to hook up with Hailstorm and fill her in on the evenings activities. Shortly after, a news report was issued about the millionaire's break-in, identifying the local gargoyles and several other masked individuals, leaving another blemish on their public opinion.

Chapter 5

At the beginning of the workday, Diamant sat in his office looking over reports on excavation projects instituted to find more of the power gems he used in his super hero persona, while Fantasia was in a production meeting, covering such news stories as the recurrence of fires along the riverfront and the new team of apparent supers in town. When both she and her archrival at the network both provided info on the group (Charisma covering the break-in at Boulet's and Tazi having names), they were assigned to work together to gain as much info as possible on Force d'Orleans. Meanwhile, Diamant received an update call from the survey team, which was interrupted by sounds of an attack. Calling in the other



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heroes, Hoshi used her enhanced vision to check out the scene to see the survey team attacked by the Rainbow Warriors.

At the same time, Sea Bolt began to regain consciousness several meters from the attack. Hearing an ongoing battle, he made his way through the bijou to find an invisible Hoshi trying to remove the unconscious surveyors from Blue Bolt. He joins in the battle by attacking Golden Goliath as Messenger attempted to cast a mental illusion to intimidate the villains. Moments later, Diamant, Hailstorm and Fantasia also arrived to fight, the latter of whom opened with a mass flame attack, causing Red Rocket to focus on grabbing the object the Rainbow Warriors had come for. After moments of battle, Red ordered Indigo Ghost to transport the unconscious Golden Goliath, Green Gnome and Blue Bolt away while Orange Obsession and Ultra Violent ran interference. This plan seemed to be a sound one until Red Rocket was knocked out by Sea Bolt, Ultra Violent by Fantasia, and Orange Obsession's images were discovered and Hoshi, Messenger and Hailstorm tracked him down.

After reclaiming the onyx power crystal from Red Rocket, the group attempted to question both he and Orange Obsession, only managing to find out that they considered the jewels theirs, and vowed to return for them. When Strikeforce arrived, Bodé reintroduced himself, as well as his second-in-command, Bianca Fornier. After a question and answer session about Sea Bolt, the "imposters" who broke into Boulet's home, and ways to keep in contact, Messenger - completely captivated by Fornier - attempted flirtation, only to be shot down. Strikeforce then took the three Rainbow Warriors into custody as Force d'Orleans left.

Back at the Maison de Force, Sea Bolt and Hailstorm recognized each other from their childhood and caught up on old times, while Diamant offered him membership to the team, complete with a green card. Sea Bolt declined the offer, which was fine by Diamant as he was unsure about it in the first place. Afterward, Diamant began his research on the crystal and micro-sized scanner left behind by Green Gnome. Hoshi followed Fantasia to learn her secret identity, and suggested to Diamant that some positive press would be in order.

Chapter 6, Part 1

Having had Hailstorm return home for the summer break (but promising to return as soon as possible), Diamant and Hoshi (disguised as Fantasia) meet with Tazi Cristo for an interview to clear up misconceptions about Force d'Orleans. During the interview, the question of Papa Boulet was addressed, stating that things are not always as they appear and that crime will be tracked down wherever it may reside.

Meanwhile, Messenger was out on patrol when he spotted the security guards of Drébin Technologies, one of which had an arrow through his hand. He soon learned that the Free Radicals had taken employees hostage. After flying the guards to the roof, Messenger made his way inside.

Back at the TV station, the interview finished and the heroes prepared to depart when the reporters began to scramble in response to the police scanner. Tazi was forced to turn down the assignment, meeting with



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her teammates on the roof. As Hoshi teleported the trio to the roof of Drébin, they get a debriefing from the guards and head for the elevator shaft.

Messenger, having worked his way through the building, emerges in the lobby in time to face down Deadeye, telekinetically taking her bow away. The rest of the team joined him very soon after, taking out Deadeye and Speedstress immediately. It trying to explain what they wanted, Foxfire and Messenger debated the definition of heroism until the police arrived.

Later that evening, the heroes gathered together to discuss the case. Messenger complained about being made fun of and that the women had a point about not doing enough for the poor of the city. Leaving, he went to the Strikeforce precinct to continue speaking with Foxfire. Hoshi then starts working on establishing more shelters and assistance for the homeless of New Orleans.

Part 2

On his way to the precinct, Messenger walked through the city streets in civilian clothes, wanting to get a better vision of what his new city entailed and if Foxfire's accusations were true. After entering the poor side of town, down near the docks, he soon found one of many Hassid House facilities and began working as a volunteer to help clean up after dinner. After interviewing a teenage volunteer and a Vietnam vet named Ralph, he finally met with one of the managers of the facility and began to learn about the real workings of the shelter, homeless life in New Orleans, and what it means to be a hero. They conclude with Messenger volunteering to spend his free time helping out and promising to make the world a better place.

Leaving the shelter, he then travels to the Strikeforce precinct, where he meets up with Lt. Fornier, who reluctantly agrees to let him visit with Foxfire. As Messenger shares his discoveries of the evening with the villainess, he slowly realizes that his words will not convince her that she's wrong, and only fuels her own beliefs that he is a tool of "the man". In a last ditch effort, Messenger places images of Neo-Nazi Germany in her head, with Foxfire as Hitler. This makes the woman freak out, demanding to see her lawyer, while the escort guard attempts to get Messenger out of the area. A small struggle ensues, ending with Messenger leaving under his own accord, but further angering Fornier, who realizes that this has been a violation of Foxfire's rights and will probably cause her to be released. Meanwhile, Messenger leaves to try and find more evil to vanquish.

Chapter 7

A couple of days later, Diamant and Fantasia were patrolling the streets of New Orleans when a call came through the scanner on a reported disturbance. Being in the vicinity, the duo quickly arrived at the home of a well-known local author who was reporting that her vampire creation was stalking around in her backyard. Investigating the apparent kooky situation, they found three sets of footprints running through the back yard and down toward the swamp. Calling in for backup from Messenger, they pursued the trespassers until interrupted by another call, this time in downtown.



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Upon their arrival, they found a squad car overturned and police officers quartering off an alley. Taking the lead, the pair found a homeless person making his way over the rooftops, with abilities far beyond those of normal men. When confronted, he showed himself to be able to withstand most of their attacks, even when Messenger eventually arrived. Once the man finally spoke of a game being played and Messenger was shot in the back by an unknown assailant, however, Diamant and Fantasia examined the area to find a sniper nearby. Diamant took out the gunman with a single blast, while Messenger attempted to take the target to the finish line.

On the way to main street, Messenger discovered that the man in his arms was dying, causing him to double back in case cheating was causing the deterioration process. Meanwhile, Diamant found that the sniper was an acquaintance from the country club. When Messenger got back to the duo, the homeless man had already perished. While Messenger recognized the man from the shelter, Diamant remembered reading something about people dying after receiving superhuman abilities, but not the details.

While Messenger went to get paramedics, Diamant and Fantasia left to re-question the homeowner. On their way, however, they heard a pack of motorcycles fleeing the area. Pursuing, they quickly overtook the foursome, with Fantasia using her smoke breath to limit their visibility and escape. When Messenger caught up with them, he used his clairvoyance to see that they were surrendering. Opposed to being able to question the "hounds," however, the heroes discovered that the men were without tongues.

After the police had arrived, Messenger went to the local hospital to further investigate the homeless man. While the hospital had pronounced him D.O.A., the morgue was empty, the body having mysteriously disappeared. He then changed into his civilian clothes and went to the shelter to break the bad news. The boss was obviously upset by the news of another lost soul without explanation.

Chapter 8

The next afternoon, the group reconvened with Hoshi having returned from visiting Japan. They discussed the case from the night before, including the information that Diamant had discovered about the enhancement drug known as OJ (a different drug from Dr. Sullivan's Juice, but with similar effects and a higher fatality rate), as well as Messenger's other activities. They agreed that Hoshi should go in undercover to the Hessid House as a homeless person. Meanwhile, Messenger would use his position at the house to garner information as well while Fantasia used her position as a reporter to investigate the other local shelters to see if they have had anyone mysteriously disappear.

Diamant began an investigation of his own, going to the county club and joining with the sniper's golf foursome to see what he could learn. After asking some poignant questions, he learned that the man belonged to an exclusive gun club. Establishing a fake identity, he hit the Internet searching for the club, eventually being contacted by an anonymous lead. A meeting was arranged for the following night.

Meanwhile, Hoshi infiltrated the shelter and began going through the entry process. Both her and the other new arrival were greeted and questioned by the Vietnam vet Ralph, who promised a potential job opportunity in the near future. Messenger also witnessed this, placing the old man at the top of the



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suspect list. Fantasia also learned that none of the other shelters had been losing homeless people and that over a dozen arson cases had been reported over the past six months, corresponding with the number of missing persons.

The nightly meeting allowed the heroes to correlate facts and continue instituting plans. The next day, Messenger investigated Ralph's reported address, only to find the apartment empty. That night, Diamant met with the gun club coordinators with Fantasia in the wings, arranging that he would join in a hunt of OJ-enhanced people two nights later. One more meeting had the heroes agreeing to have Hoshi relocate the other new homeless person in order to increase her chances of being picked.

Chapter 9

Having agreed on a plan of action, Hoshi (disguised as a homeless man) arrives with two others in the back of a van while Diamant and two other hunters met in an open field. Messenger and Fantasia hovered overhead in the night sky as the mysterious organizer and his bodyguard arrived in a fourth limo. Rounding out the crowd were five of the voiceless "hounds," motorcycle-riding assistants for the hunters. As the organizer explains the rules of the game, he neglects to mention the life-ending use of the OJ drug to the bums. Just as they are about to be injected with the drug, Diamant hits his signal devise, bringing Messenger and Fantasia in to swoop off with the potential victims.

Their appearance triggers a battle, with Hoshi shifting back into her natural form and teleporting behind the Asian hunter with a crossbow, taking him out with one blow. Diamant "accidentally" shoots the other hunter with an entanglement. While Hoshi continues to take out the hounds, Fantasia and Messenger join in the fun, causing Tracker to go invisible and attack the female gargoyle, knocking her for a loop. While Hoshi fires off a submachine gun in his general direction, Fantasia makes contact with a giant fire bolt, charring parts of him and making him semi-visible. Messenger uses this to his advantage by flying up to him and punching him into the middle of next week. Diamant finishes things off by capturing the organizer.

The group begins questioning the man and learn that the OJ is made locally, based on information shipped in from the Russian mobsters in St. Louis. When Messenger asks about the missing Ralph, the man smugly informs them that he is buried in the bay. When he is confronted for his attitude, he simply explains that he has millions to spend on a defense.

Over the next couple of days, Diamant and the local Strikeforce team discovers the lab used, enabling a detailed account of the ingredients for the OJ. Fantasia uses her alter ego as a reporter to give Force d'Orleans their first bit of truly positive publicity, doing an expose on the entire situation and how the heroes brought the threat to an end. Messenger returns the two homeless men to the Hassid House, along with the recovered body of Ralph for a proper burial.

Chapter 10

After a chemical accident transformed his DNA, deciding to use his newfound powers for good, adopting the heroic identity of Elastor, and getting the location of the Maison de Force from his cousin, Rex Hudson



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was in route to offer his services to the group when he encountered three strangers at the front gate. When one of those strangers reached out with an elastic arm and pulled down the Crâne from the construction being done on the roof, he was forced to dive into the bushes and use his own stretching to circumvent the attack. Meanwhile, François Drébin got a phone call from the foreman working on the renovations to the mansion, reporting the attack. Acting quickly, he signaled his teammates, changed into Diamant, and was in route when picked up by Messenger.

Back at the Maison de Force, Warrior attacked Elastor, being the sole target for the three mercenaries. Doing his best to avoid being hit while still holding the Crâne, he was relieved to see the hero team arrive. While Fantasia grabbed the falling Crâne operator, Messenger dropped Diamant's motorcycle and plowed into Hardbody. Once dropped, Diamant tried to fire at Warrior, only to trip while trying to flip off the bike, shot out a window in the mansion, and face-plant into the ground. Noticing the arrival of the heroes, Hardbody announces that they were waiting for Messenger to arrive; while Ronin and Infinity couldn't make it this time, they had a new volunteer who wanted in on the action. At that point, Gladiator teleported in behind Messenger and attacked his arch nemesis.

The fight continued with the Diamant being temporarily stunned by Warrior's sword, Fantasia trading punches with Hardbody, Messenger being leveled by Gladiator, only to be rescued by Elastor. Once it becomes clear that Gladiator is concentrating solely on Messenger, the rest of the group worked together to attack the new villain and allow their teammate to get a second breath.

Allowing Diamant a chance to insert his new onyx jewel into his gauntlet and thus utilize its healing ability, the group continues to attempt to wear down their opponents, with their tenacity if nothing else. As one hero drops, another steps up to divert attention until their partner is able to stand again, eventually managing to knock Hardbody down several times and entangle Warrior and Gladiator. Once the tide had officially shifted, Gladiator warned Messenger that he would be back before teleporting away from the fight. After Hardbody was once again knocked down by Fantasia, Warrior offered the heroes a deal: in exchange for the chance to leave without pursuit, the contract taken out on them by le Crânes would be null and void. Seeing the opportunity, Diamant agrees, allowing the villains to escape.

Once all of the heroes were once again on their feet, Diamant offered membership to Elastor, who gladly accepted. The group decided, now that they had a couple of victories under their belt, to begin working on developing their teamwork skills in combat, as well as continuing the work on their mansion and repairing the damage done to the surrounding neighborhood. They knew that they needed to work on their fighting skills together to prepare for whatever le Crânes might throw at them next.

Chapter 11

It was that special time of fall when high schools were already in session while Dillard University was just beginning its semester. Skylar had returned from summer break with Tito in tow, having convinced him to join her in New Orleans. Meanwhile, the local high school was having their "Take Your Child To Work" Day, with Jack Lucas going with his father on the search for gems for Drébin Technologies. It happened that this dig led to success as the crew uncovered a Star Garnet crystal that emitted the energy



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signatures that they were looking for. Calling in, Frank came out to the site just in time to see RGB: The Color Commando, Lumiere and Lightning Strong Man arrive on the scene. RGB seemed to be following a device similar to the one used by Green Gnome of the Rainbow Warriors. Upon seeing the workers at the site, LSM fired a lightning bolt at Jack, shattering the star garnet crystal and knocking him into the woods.

As the workers scattered, Frank headed into the woods to change into Diamant and call for backup. On his way, he stumbled over an invisible object, taking a moment to mark the spot before continuing on. After changing and calling in Fantasia, Messenger and Hailstorm (Elastor was in a class and had his communicator shut off), he attempted to sneak back to the site, only to be discovered thanks to the gem detector used by RGB.

As the other heroes arrived on the scene, they began picking their targets. While Sea Bolt grabbed Lumiere with his whip, Messenger altered LSM's reality, making him believe that RGB was Messenger. Meanwhile, Jack regained consciousness to find that he had superpowers, racing back to the scene to investigate the fight in progress. This enabled the heroes to gain a seven versus two advantage for several seconds. While RGB would have normally stood up to the local heroes to gain back the gems, he found that the numbers were too much to their advantage and fled the scene. The heroes, clearly having the advantage despite the remaining villains' enormous power level, pounded on them until they were unconscious.

With Lumiere and Lightning Strong Man subdued, Diamant sent Jack to find his father, who was once again looking for his son. He then spoke with Hailstorm and Sea Bolt, learning that they were back in town for school and set them up with rooms in the Maison de Force and a communicator and work visa for Tito.

The next day, Frank visited the Lucas family, offering to help Jack with the examination of his powers. While John Sr. agreed to an examination, he seemed to be looking for a cure rather than training. Taking Jack with him to the lab, he learns that the changes are irreversible. Leaving and returning as Diamant, he offers to take Jack on for training with Force d'Orleans to master his powers. Taking on the code name Black Volt, Jack officially joined the team.

Chapter 12

While Diamant was preparing for a combat training session for Force d'Orleans at the mansion, he received a phone call from Lt. Fornier of Strikeforce, relaying a message from Washington, D.C. Dwight Jones of the Parahuman Security Bureau had called wanting an appointment with the leader of the new group. The two men set an appointment for two days later, which corresponded with the training session.

When Jones arrived, Diamant greeted the infamous politician at the door. The two men sat and discussed the presence of the Rainbow Warriors, RGB: The Color Commando and Lumiere in New Orleans. Diamant shared the fact that they appeared to be after the gems that he used, which Dwight confirmed to be similar to the ones that originally transformed him into Spectrum. He likewise shared the various theories as to the existence of other forms of the crystals. Determining that there were more than just the



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nine already discovered gems, Spectrum offers his services in tracking down any others. Changing into Spectrum, the two men flew high above the city, enabling Spectrum to examine the entire area at once. Moments later, Spectrum had a lock on the three remaining gems and recovered them.

Returning to the Maison de Force, the two men continue to discuss their common enemies, with Dwight conveying words of wisdom and advice to Diamant, including a suggestion to encase the gems in a dense metal to hide their energy signatures from the villains while not in use. Dwight suggested that Diamant look into using Cesedetanite, a material specifically designed to absorb energy, to build a box for storage and a new gauntlet. Diamant also shares information about his team, discussing the various powers and membership of them. Dwight also asks about the fifth founding member, the missing Hoshi, and volunteers to assist in the search if Diamant ever decides to wonder about her disappearance. (For her continued adventures, go to the [Shooting Star Ranch](#) write-ups.) Dwight likewise offered Diamant his business card, telling the hero to call if he ever needed information or assistance with the villains in the future. To finish off their conversation, Diamant asks the Champion if he would stick around for their training session to provide instruction, to which Dwight agrees.

Shortly afterward, the rest of the team arrives and is paired up into groups for combat simulation. Several of them seemed to have a difficult time grasping the idea of teamwork in combat, but soon overcame their difficulties. After several tags, the group was introduced to Spectrum, allowing him to gain a firsthand knowledge of the members and let them team together to practice against a target that could withstand their combined might. Working together, they landed several blows against the hero before he congratulated them on good work and prepared to leave. Elastor decided to try to taunt him before the Champion's departure, to which he received a launch into the air. Six miles above, the stretching man was forced to shift into glider form in order to return to terra firma safely, by which time Spectrum had taken his leave.

Chapter 13

As Hailstorm covered the monitors while doing homework, Diamant took the afternoon off to relax, Messenger worked at the Hassid House, Fantasia was starting an interview with the Deputy Mayor, and Elastor, Sea Bolt and Black Volt were in their respective classes. As such, when the New Orleans Strikeforce called the team for assistance in investigating a reported robbery by A.R.M.O.R., only the first three were available to respond.

When the three heroes arrived on the scene, Captain Bodé and Lt. Fornier greeted them and told them that the villains fled the scene before the police had arrived. After being told that they had been seen flying west, Hailstorm asked how much money was stolen, only to be told that the thieves had fled empty handed. Sending Messenger ahead to scout the villains out, Diamant caught a ride on Hailstorm's ice slide to pursue. Other than spotting a few la Crânes along the way, the pursuit led to the edge of the warehouse district where Messenger spotted Tank and Sureshot landing on a roof. Using his clairvoyance to eavesdrop on their discussion, he learned that Tank was against the contract hit. The two villains then spotted Messenger and Tank gave chase.



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Messenger flew back to the nearby factories, rendezvousing with the incoming Hailstorm and Diamant. As the frozen heroine dropped off the team leader on a nearby roof, Messenger engaged Tank in fisticuffs and words, trying to convince the ex-hero to switch sides. While he couldn't be convinced to turn, he did agree to feign fighting and, if the heroes won, give them the name of their employer. As the rest of A.R.M.O.R. approached, the heroes called in Strikeforce backup and prepared themselves for a tough battle.

Working in various teams, the heroes began working their way through the ranks of A.R.M.O.R. Starting with Nuke, Messenger and Diamant knocked the nuclear villain for a loop, causing him to drop Doc. At the same time, Hailstorm unleashed a snowball blitz on Sureshot (who had been carried to the battle zone by Ramjet and dropped off on another roof), knocking her out of the action. Doc became the next target with Hailstorm and Diamant teaming up, taking the mentalist out of the action while Messenger traded blows with Ramjet. Overdrive decided to go after Hailstorm, but the numbers turned to the heroes favor as Black Volt arrived on the scene and teamed with Diamant to finish off the returning Nuke. With Hailstorm taking down Overdrive, her brother retrieved the fallen villain and flew off. As Strikeforce approached, Tank kept his word and told the heroes that Poppa Boulet hired them. In return, Messenger let him flee the scene and get away.

As Strikeforce began gathering up the unconscious villains, Diamant debriefed Bodé, informing him of the contract hit taken out by Boulet. While the Strikeforce captain doubted the connection to the respected businessman, he told Diamant to make sure he had hard evidence. Diamant then took the group back to the mansion and told them it was time to take the fight to Boulet.

Chapter 14, Part 1

Having arranged for an invite to Pappa Boulet's monthly party, François Drébin and his date for the evening (weather girl Gwen from a different station than the one Fantasia works for) attended the black tie affair with the hopes of gaining insight on the kingpin's criminal activities. Upon their arrival, Drébin took note of not only the armed guards around the grounds and mansion, but also the big names in business and government that were in attendance, including the Deputy Mayor of New Orleans, the Deputy Governor of Louisiana, the Chief of Police, and the producer of news for Fantasia's station.

While working the crowd, Drébin introduced himself and his date to the Deputy Mayor and Chief of Police, chatting them up until offered to be presented to their host. Once introduced to Pappa, Drébin arranged for a private conversation with his host when he had a free moment. As the two men separated, Pappa Boulet escorted the politicians, several of the businessmen and a couple of unknowns (though Drébin suspected that they may be part of the local underworld) to his den for a clandestine meeting.

Allowing his date to show him around to her circle of influence, Drébin was introduced to Fantasia's boss, who tried to derail the winning endorsement from François for Tazi by questioning her "work ethic," choosing her family and the truth over what he wanted from her. After pointing out that it was the producer whose values were in question, Drébin slipped away to try and learn more about what was going on



Game Master: Jim Caswell

upstairs. After trying to sneak his way upstairs three times, only to be blocked by the Boulet's human watchdog, Drébin saw the group descend the stairs and was invited by his host to join him in the den.

After a bit of small talk, the two men began discussing business and the effect the superhuman community was having on it. While speaking in circles, Boulet dropped hints that the situation could be controlled. The subject of business also led to the discussion of how Boulet made his money: connecting two groups together to make a higher profit. While talking about investments, Boulet hinted at the fact that he knew Drébin had bought the Maison de Force, causing François to admit that he was leasing the property. With the offer to potentially do business together in the near future and work towards becoming "friends," the two men left to rejoin the party in progress.

As they descended the stairs once more, Drébin spotted a semi-familiar face in plainclothes next to the watchdog, identifying him as the man who aided the mercenaries during the attack on the Maison de Force - the one who knew Messenger. After receiving an explanation of "extra security" from Boulet, Drébin took his leave.

Part 2

After attending the Boulet party, Diamant recruits Hailstorm to infiltrate the le Crânes to try to find incriminating evidence. Deciding to pose as a teenage boy, Skylar went to Messenger and Fantasia for lessons on acting and disguise. Adopting a haircut, a darkened skin tone via makeup, prosthetic facial hair and baggy clothes, she started hanging out in Crâne territory in neutral colors, looking to be recruited.

After striking up a "friendship" with two gangbangers, Skylar first found her loyalties tested during an evening of joyriding that turned into armed robbery of a liquor store, with her driving the getaway car. After her inauguration into the gang, her next assignment was to drive during a trip into rival territory, leading to a drive-by shooting. While she was torn over the criminality of the mission, she subsided her concerns with knowing that she had to be accepted to find the connection between Boulet and the gang.

At the first opportunity, Skylar placed an anonymous call to Strikeforce to report the shooting, but there was no evidence of the crime when they arrived on the scene. Thanks to her "success," however, she was fully accepted into the gang, given a blaster and mask of her own, and introduced to Drew, the leader of le Crânes, who brandished a large skull tattoo on his left bicep. Now fully ingrained into the gang, Hailstorm reported in to Diamant to compare notes.

Part 3

After coming together and comparing notes, Hailstorm and Diamant agreed that it was time to bring in the rest of the team and the New Orleans Strikeforce to work towards closing Boulet down permanently. Sharing the common denominator of Drew - the head of the le Crânes - they felt as though that was enough. Garnering support from Captain Bodé, the head of Strikeforce did some checking and found an outstanding arrest warrant for the lead gangbanger. Provided that it was indeed Drew that Diamant's "friend" Drébin had seen at the party, it would give the police a reason to follow through on their plan: Elastor, Sea Bolt and Lieutenant Fornier would lead one division of Strikeforce officers on a bust of le



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Crânes while Hailstorm accompanied Drébin to the next party as his date to confirm Drew's presence, followed by an attack on the mansion by the rest of Force d'Orleans and Strikeforce. Diamant also announced that Fantasia was to be considered his second-in-command of the group from this point forward.

Once Hailstorm had identified Drew and Boulet called his inner circle together for their meeting, Hailstorm snuck away from her escort to rejoin her teammates, quickly followed by Diamant. With him leading the charge with Hailstorm, Black Volt and Bodé through the front door, Fantasia and Messenger entering through the bedroom window, and the Strikeforce officers mopping up the hired guns outside, the heroes launched their attack, scattering the innocent guests and corralling the guilty ones as they exited the meeting.

A battle quickly ensued between the heroes, Boulet's super-powered bodyguard and Gladiator, with Momma Boulet attempting to join in the fray through the use of voodoo magic. Hailstorm formed an ice cage around Boulet and his friends, sparking the mob boss to take Drew's gun away from him and using the gangbanger as a battering ram against the entanglement. Watchdog finished releasing his boss before launching into a fight with Messenger and Fantasia, focusing on the latter after she took out Momma with a fireball. This left Gladiator fighting Diamant and Black Volt, Bodé subduing and arresting the remaining members of Boulet's cadre, and Hailstorm being pelted with bullets from Pappa Boulet, who retaliated by encasing him in a solid block of ice. Realizing that the two heroes on the ground floor were only nickeling-and-diming Gladiator, Messenger used his mental illusions to make the villain believe Diamant was Boulet, which switched his attention to the second floor and his arch nemesis. Fortunately, Messenger and Fantasia had teamed up to knock down Watchdog (who was finished off by Hailstorm) and quickly continued their efforts to take down Gladiator.

After finishing the fight, Bodé and his Strikeforce officers not only arrested Boulet and his henchmen, but also the Chief of Police, Deputy Mayor, Drew and the rest of the men in the meeting. Several of the businessmen began striking deals to testify against one another and the politicians involved, allowing the district attorney to open investigations into various shady deals perpetrated at the highest levels of city decision-making. With Boulet assaulting Drew directly in front of Bodé, along with the heroes, he could be brought up on charges of attempted murder, and well as the investigations once the D.A. was able to get into his home for evidence. The other half of Force d'Orleans was likewise successful, bringing over a dozen of le Crânes to justice and dealing a heavy blow to the gang.

Chapter 15, Part 1

Following his normal morning routine, Jack Lucas arrived at school at the bright and early hour of seven A.M. after working on his hockey skills at the local ice rink. Being greeted by the principal's secretary, he made his way to his locker and started for the library before strange noises from the cafeteria drew his attention. Going to investigate, he spots several giant rats. Deciding that calling in backup was the better part of valor, he hopped on his communicator to Diamant.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Meanwhile, across town, Jonathan Blake prepared to open Hassid House for breakfast when he too was greeted by a pack of giant rats. When the call came in from Diamant, Messenger relayed his part of the tale, sparking Fantasia to be dispatched to his location and the group's leader going to help out Black Volt. Upon Fantasia's arrival, the two maintained their aerial position while attacking the rats, eventually leading Messenger to use his mental illusion abilities on the rodents of unusual size, turning them against each other by making them think that their fellow rats were giant chunks of cheese.

Back at the high school, Black Volt managed to get the secretary to evacuate the building by setting off the fire alarm, allowing him and Diamant - once he had arrived - to have free access to the building. The two heroes began searching for the giant rats, eventually finding them in the boys' locker room, attempting to open a locker. As each man took a different entrance, they began to attack, only to be eventually overpowered by the giant rats, trapped beneath their massive weight. With only one of the original four rats still conscious, the duo was aided by Fantasia (who left Messenger to clean up the mess at Hassid House).

Once free, Black Volt left to change back into Jack, who was being looked for by the fire department, while Diamant and Fantasia investigated the scene. Both they and Messenger found similar bags of half-eaten rice, grown and produced at a local farm, in the wreckages. Agreeing to get rid of the giant rats by drowning, Fantasia and Messenger set out to dispose of the bodies while Diamant took samples of the rice back to their headquarters for examination.

As Fantasia worked on getting word out to local businesses and authorities about the tainted rice, Diamant was contacted by Bodé about the incident, who requested samples of both the rats and the rice for their own crime labs to examine. Likewise, a call had come in from Elastor and was answered by Hailstorm (who lived at the Maison de Force while attending college - Sea Bolt had been kicked out of school for grades and gone home to Mexico). That duo had faced their own group of giant rats at Dillard University (where both of them attended, though they didn't know of the commonality), with Hailstorm bringing back a batch of rice and a giant rat of her own.

Part 2

With Black Volt left behind to attend school, the rest of the group headed for the bayou farm where the rice was being produced. Under the guise of a potential investor, François Drébin (who finally revealed his secret identity to his teammates), Tazi Cristo and Jonathan Blake went to talk to the farm owners while Hailstorm and Elastor went to the fields to take some soil and water samples to compare to the chemicals found in the rice. Inside, the trio learned that the farmers had a visit from their nephew who worked for a scientist in Canada.

With a little bit of work, the group deduces that the nephew probably had the chemical either on his clothes or in his stuff. Because the farm works with complete recycling, the water used to wash the clothes was also circulated out to the crops. When Hailstorm realized that the chemical compound was built to alter DNA, Diamant put two and two together and remembered a report saying that one of Madame Y's lieutenants was recently located in Canada. Realizing that this was a bit out of their ballpark,



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Diamant called Dwight Jones and relayed the details of the case to him. He, in turn, referred to another on-going case being pursued by Osprey of Huron City and promised to pass along the information.

Chapter 16

While walking to an afternoon hockey practice after class, Jack Lucas was with his friend Rob when he confided that he was receiving pressure to take some form of enhancement supplement, called Tang, as part of the school baseball team. Jack told his friend that, no matter what the reason, it was dangerous to tamper with steroids. When Rob said that the coach was also telling him to take the supplement or get kicked off the team, Jack asked to take a sample to a friend and see what it was.

That evening, he met with Diamant, who ran tests on the sample and concluded that it was a diluted version of OJ: the superhuman-creating drug that also killed its user. Diamant asked Jack to follow up on the matter, trying to find out where the drug was coming from.

The next day during study hall, Jack went to the coach to ask how to get his hands on some Tang in order to increase his performance during hockey; that his friend Rob had mentioned it to him. The coach asked him to come to his office after school, where he had four of the baseball players waiting to introduce their bats to Jack. Trying very hard to not exhibit his powers, the teen hero managed to slide past the athletes and lock them in the office by frying the lock.

Changing into his Black Volt costume, he watched from the shadows as baseball practice was canceled and the coach and his four players piled into a school van. Following them, he quickly realized that they were headed towards Rob's house (who he had told to skip practice) and cut the van off. When three of the players once again came at him, Black Volt was able to use his Amp Blast to knock them all out in a single spread, then went to the van before the fourth was able to overdose on Tang. After confronting the coach, the man finally surrendered.

As Diamant and Strikeforce arrived on the scene, François recognized the coach as a relative of a member of his staff at Drébin Technologies. Diamant confronted the coach with the identity of his brother, who had been put in charge of analyzing the OJ obtained by Force d'Orleans (see session 8). Once confirmed, François went to his company, found the proof that the drug was being produced there and had the police present to arrest him the next morning.

Chapter 17

*(Co-GMed by Ken Hallaron) * The Great Darkness Saga crossover **

Responding to a 911 report of a murder committed by a monster, Lt. Bianca Fornier made the command decision to call on Force d'Orleans to help in the investigation. Reaching Messenger at their headquarters, he in turn called in the team to respond. Being the first to arrive, he began flirting with the Strikeforce second-in-command until movement in the wooded park nearby drew his attention. Flying out to investigate, he found a shadowbeast. After a brief tussle, Messenger sent it flying into the open, where Fantasia opened fire literally.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Once Diamant and Elastor arrived on the scene, they quickly learned that the beast had come from the apartments that were located in front of them when three more burst through the top-story window. Diamant managed to capture one of them with his entanglement beam crystal while Messenger and Fantasia took care of the other two. When a fourth emerged from the room, Diamant had Elastor carry him up to the apartment to investigate where they found a barely-dressed woman cornered by an open portal. While they tried to encourage her to be calm, she insisted that she hadn't meant to open it.

Meanwhile, outside, Nova and Sean Remington, reservist members of the Champions of Justice, were in route to investigate a report of similar circumstances off the coast of Columbia when they spotted the situation in New Orleans, which led Nova to detour down. Upon her arrival, she dispatched the last beast as Fornier welcomed her and Diamant called down for Messenger to give them a hand upstairs. Nova headed up, followed by Messenger, leaving Fantasia and Fornier to discover that Gator of the American Rangers was lurking in the shadows.

Upstairs, Messenger arrived and started acting forceful, which led the young woman to use her darkness-manipulation powers to shove him back out the window. He responded to this by blasting her through the bathroom wall and ticking her off. Diamant ordered Elastor to block the portal while he used his entanglement beam on the girl. As Elastor was clawed at from inside the portal, the girl opened another one inside her energy casing, escaping the room. A scream from outside drew Nova's attention back out while Fantasia came upstairs and Elastor stretched his arms inside trying to grab the beast, only to be blasted backward by explosive fire coming from both portals. This led Messenger to find fire extinguishers while Diamant tended to their fallen comrade and the team working together to evacuate the building and put out the flames.

Back outside, Fornier and Gator heard the scream and saw yet another beast flying around behind the building. Heading toward the new problem, they were joined by Nova and saw the back area of the building on fire and the young woman making a run for it into the park. While Nova tended to the injured bystanders and dispatching the new beast, Gator and Fornier chased after the woman, who proceeded to blast Fornier when they got within reach. Gator then grabbed her and began to squeeze as the woman once again tried to teleport, taking him with her into the bayou.

Once the flames were out inside the building, Force d'Orleans exited the building and continued their firefighting efforts outside while Nova put information gathered by the other Champions of Justice into action. She began using her solar powers to close the various portals and kill any emerging beasts. With the help of Force d'Orleans and Lt. Fornier, they also tracked down the new holes opened by the teleporting girl, but were unable to find either her or Gator. With the murder case closed and the immediate threat taken care of, Fornier thanks all of the heroes involved for their help and begins organizing the various relief efforts for the area. Nova leaves to meet up with her teammates as Diamant accompanies her, Fantasia and Elastor return to their daily activities and Messenger attempts to impress Fornier (once again) by sticking around to help.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Interim 1

After the completion of the Great Darkness Saga, several developments occurred within the city of New Orleans:

With the capture and conviction of Papa Boulet and his sergeants, a power vacuum within the city's underworld community has opened, with other criminal organizations building to fill the void. In addition to rumors of crime families from New York, Fort Bernard, St. Louis, Houston and Los Angeles moving to town, crimes such as drug and weapon trafficking, extortion and petty theft have been on a steady climb. Gang activity has also been on the rise, with other groups forming and challenging le Crânes for territory. On a personal level, Jack (Black Volt) Lucas has been noticing a rise of new gang colors with the start of the new school year.

Tensions within the city are also on the rise thanks to the ongoing Quebec Separation Movement that has the heavily French parts of Canada trying to attain independent rule. Thanks to their connection to their French heritage, grumbling has also been heard from some members of the New Orleans community supporting the Separatists, leading to political disputes throughout many parts of the city. Protests against American actions and other political aspects occur on a regular basis.

All of this paled in comparison to the news of a hurricane approaching the city limits. Fortunately, however, several members of the superhuman community stepped in to intervene. Druid of San Francisco, le Tempêt of East Africa, Roadwalker (under the close watch of visiting Florida Strikeforce officer - and former fellow Brotherhood of Freedom member - China Malone) and Hailstorm, now working with the American Rangers, were brought in to work on spreading and weakening the storm's energy. Meanwhile Turbo of the Champions of Justice, Critical Velocity of the American Rangers, and Torpedo of the D.C. Defenders worked to redirect the winds. The Force d'Orleans team also stayed busy, aiding the local authorities with looters and other crime caused by the impending disaster. In the end, the worst of the storm weakened down to a category two tropical storm and a lot of the water saturated clouds spread up the country to bring rain to areas that were suffering from drought.

The area of New Orleans that received the worse amount of damage was at Dillard University where Hailstorm, Elastor and Sea Bolt had all attended school. Thanks to the damage done to the college, Elastor was forced to relocate to continue his education. Likewise, after running scenarios on the amount of damage that could have been caused by the storm, the U.S. government has ordered massive reconstruction efforts for the city to minimize the "bowl" effect that has formed over the previous century.

On a personal level, the damage done to the university sparked nightmares for Jonathan (Messenger) Blake of personal loss and a sense of longing; as if he had lost his second home and a loved one.

Chapter 18

In the city of St. Louis, the Gateway Guardians have dealt with the Ruspovik crime family since they moved their activities from Mother Russia to the United States. As such, they were the first ones to learn about the drugs-for-guns exchange that was set to take place in New Orleans after questioning one of the



Game Master: Jim Caswell

low-level mobsters. Without any specific details, Micron was chosen to go, covertly hooking up with the mobsters contact: a teenager in the newly-formed "Hole In The Wall" gang, primarily known on the street as the Wallers.

A short time later, Jack Lucas was at school when he overheard some members of another local street gang, the Rulers, talking about an exchange going down at the pier. Taking that information back to Diamant, the leader of Force d'Orleans decided that the two of them would investigate the situation while Messenger continued with repairs at Dillard University and Fantasia took her turn on patrol. When the duo arrived, however, they observed a meeting between the Rulers and the Wallers, with each gang being escorted by superhuman hired muscle.

Calling in the rest of the team, Diamant used his new flight crystal to do a fly-over. Unfortunately for him, Renegade was able to spot him, ruining most of the surprise. As Ice Blossom fired on him, Messenger flew in across the water and rose up next to the dock just in time to one-punch the ice-slinger before being knocked into the gulf by a Mammoth-thrown Renegade. Fantasia also arrived on the scene in time to have Battle Mistress jump on her back and begin siphoning off her strength. All of this caused the Wallers to take off running, leading Micron to abandon his ride and fly back to join Diamant in stopping the Rulers from using the weapons they were preparing to trade.

Black Volt traded attacks with Mammoth as Fantasia struggled with Battle Mistress until Messenger returned and plowed through the large strongman. A Micronic Wedgie was then applied to the thong-wearing villainess. This freed Fantasia up to use her smoke breath to put the Rulers in the dark while Messenger flew ahead of the Wallers and removed the dock in front of them. Once all of the other mercs were out of action, everyone attempted to dogpile on Renegade, with Micron fishing him out of the water when he tried to make an escape.

Once Captain Bodé and Strikeforce arrived on the scene, the prisoners were handed over and pleasantries were exchanged, allowing Force d'Orleans to learn that the guns-for-drugs trade was the beginning of a possible alliance between the Ruspovik and Caparetta clans, who are obviously taking a page from Boulet's playbook in using street gangs as runners for their criminal activities.

Chapter 19

It was a quiet weekday afternoon at Drébin Industries. Tazi was in François' office, while a young man named Hamilton Mulligan was finishing a job interview, applying to work in the company's cafeteria. Suddenly, the windows in the foyer were blown in, allowing entrance for the Rainbow Warriors. They were once again searching for the missing gems, choosing to check out the company that had assigned a survey team to the area in which they were lost (see session 5). Realizing that there was trouble downstairs, Diamant and Fantasia exited the building using his secret exit, calling in Messenger and Black Volt as backup.

By the time Diamant and Fantasia had circled the building, they found Mulligan already involved in the fight, protecting the HR worker and the people in the foyer. The heroes quickly joined the fray. While the



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Rainbow Warriors had the numerical advantage, the heroes quickly turned the tables. Within moments, the heroes had managed to diminish their numbers down to Green Gnome, who was taken down by a telepathic blast from Ham. As the shrunken hero lost consciousness, Ham learned that the villains were acting under orders from President Andrew Mahn.

When the young man questioned what the heroes had done to draw the attention of the United States government, Force d'Orleans were forced to question what was going on. The villains were less than cooperative until the heroes promised the protection of the Radke detention facility where the villains thought they may be safe from Mahn's reach. They revealed that they were working for the President of the United States, implying that there was far more to the man than what the public knew.

Realizing that they were probably in a bit over their head, Diamant placed a call to Dwight Jones to ask for advice.

Chapter 20, Part 1

A few days after the Rainbow Warriors encounter, François Drébin was back in his office, dealing with various bits from the battle, including checking with his Human Resources department to learn the identity of the young man that had helped them during the battle. Learning Ham Mulligan's name and address, Frank proceeded to offer the young man a job and prepared to meet him afterward in his heroic guise with Fantasia. As the two were ready to leave, however, they received a phone call from the Maison de Force, stating that Jonathan Blake was there inquiring about Jonathan Blake. Knowing Messenger's history of amnesia, the two asked for him to wait until they arrived.

Before proceeding to the mansion, the two waited for Ham at his bus stop, offering the young man a position on the team and asking him to accompany them back to the Maison de Force as they investigated another situation. They had him at the mention of getting paid.

Once the trio arrived at the mansion and Ham was being given a tour, Diamant and Fantasia met Professor Jonathan Blake of Petrie College in Kentucky. He was investigating what he believed to be a case of identity theft resulting in Messenger applying for identification in this dimension. Learning that he had an extra-dimensional doppelganger, however, was not part of his plan. This sparked Diamant to try and contact Messenger, who was out wandering, apparently with his communicator shut off. They then got in touch with the former Legion of Champion Doctor Tesseract (through the CoJer Osprey), whom Diamant had met during the Great Darkness Saga.

Upon the Doctor's arrival, he examined Professor Blake, who was interested in the various differences he had with his "twin." After discussions about what could cause such differences to occur, the group decided to call it an evening, in hopes of contacting Messenger the next day and work towards a resolution of the situation.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Part 2

(Co-GMed by Ken Hallaron)

The next morning, Messenger returned to the Maison de Force and was greeted by Diamant, who in turn introduced him to Doctor Tesseract. Ham, who was also on hand, talking with the doctor about parallel worlds, was quickly exposed to Messenger's warming personality before Professor Jon Blake was called in and introduced to his parallel world doppelganger. While Blake was stunned by his twin, Messenger concentrated more on the idea of getting back to his home dimension.

Doctor Tesseract sat down with Messenger and asked him to describe as much as he could, with his only partially restored memory, of his native world. He could remember that his uniform was supposed to be more patriotic than it was. This led to the conclusion that on his Earth, his country's flag was red, white and green. It seemed to him that New Orleans was too small, and didn't seem to hold the same cultural import to the nation. Professor Jon Blake then theorized that if New Orleans was the largest city and major port in the U.S. that, on Messenger's world, shipping goods to and from Central and South America had been a major industry for a long time, suggesting closer ties to Portugal and Spain in the U.S.'s early history. Diamant suggested that Messenger's attitudes often made it seem as if that he thought he'd be better suited serving with a team like the Champions of Justice - watching for global threats. From there it was suggested that the reason Messenger hadn't sought that out was that on his Earth he had perhaps founded a team that filled that need.

With this information in hand, Doctor Tesseract returned to his home in Great Britain. He then spent the next several hours using his equipment to locate Messenger's world. During this time Jonathan Blake got to know the Jon Blake of this Earth better. The problem Tesseract then faced was that, while his equipment allows him to travel through extra dimensional space (such as the fourth dimension that gives him his name), this is simpler than traversing the realms that separate alternate Earths.

He brought the equipment he could back to New Orleans, to Maison de Force. Setting it up, he showed Messenger and the others that he had indeed found what could be Messenger's world, but he lacked the energy source needed to supercharge his cross-dimensional gate, and that he couldn't be 100% sure it was the right Earth. It was Jon Blake, having learned how his counterpart had kept his powers while on Earth, who suggested that Messenger's amulet might provide the energy. Diamant suggested that since the amulet was still in direct contact with the original meteorite, passing energy through that this link could be followed. This was attempted, and indeed it worked, as a rift was opened between the two dimensions.

As the rift opened, Messenger realized that the amulet needed to stay behind to power the machine and decided that this world needed a Messenger. He asked Professor Blake to keep it and "continue the mission," knowing that he had the original asteroid back home and therefore could harvest another shard. Then, as he entered the rift, his memories returned, depositing him into the arms of his wife and team in his own dimension.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Chapter 21

As the National Hockey League entered play-offs, François Drébin saw the opportunity to treat his young protégé, Jack Lucas, to the fourth Western Conference playoff game between the Dallas Stars and the home team Nashville Predators. Flying Jack and John Sr. out in a private helicopter, Frank got glass-side seats for the three of them, enabling them to enjoy the game until a disturbance drew their attention away.

At the precise moment an excellent fight broke out on the ice, the trained ears of the two heroes caught the distinctive sound of gunfire. With Frank excusing himself for a "business meeting" and Jack headed for the bathroom, Black Volt and Diamant were soon on the scene. Volt was the first to encounter three members of The Oddballs - Manifest Density, In-Forcer and the Weird - and decided to try the big guy first. He was pleasantly surprised to see the effectiveness of his electrical blasts on Density, but was quickly retaliated against by the other two. Diamant drew their attention long enough for the boy to recover, but things were looking bad when they both found themselves face down with the Oddballs walking away with the money. The duo quickly regained their senses thanks to Diamant's healing rays, working together to double-team the Weird before moving on to In-Forcer. Using teamwork and an occasional electric punch to keep Density off-balance, the two took down the trio and took them to the local authorities.

While Black Volt questioned his teammate's timely arrival, Diamant excused it with a business meeting and sent the boy back to his father. Arriving in time to see the winning goal, Jack and John Sr. eventually reunited with Frank at a restaurant before returning back to New Orleans.

Chapter 22

With Fantasia out of town on vacation with her family, Force d'Orleans found themselves shorthanded when a call for assistance came in from the local Strikeforce team at 3AM. Getting the call patched to him at home, Bodé asks Diamant to bring the team to New Orleans classic Cabildo museum. Dispatching Black Volt and Ham Mulligan, the team leader was the first to arrive on the scene, encountering a cloven-hoofed speedster and a armor-legged man throwing fireballs. Meanwhile, Volt and Ham ran into a third creature fleeing the scene, carrying a small steel trunk covered with odd runes. As Ham began working the man over, Volt snuck in and retrieved the artifact.

Back at the museum, Diamant was grabbed in the air by the speedster, but drained the man of most of his enhanced strength in the process. Once he was able to shrug the attacker off, the speedster took off, followed closely by the newly arrived Ham. This gave Diamant and Black Volt the chance to focus on the flamethrower, hitting him with their "green thunder punch" attack. Ham was able to overtake the last bad guy, catching him and bringing him back for questioning.

While the villain wouldn't talk, the trio learned that the box was the only thing taken and that it had originally surfaced in Berlin. Relying on his impressive memory, Diamant remembered some minor media coverage of the Thunder Twins dealing with odd ruins and cultism, leading him and Ham to research the Follower of Germanicus on HeroNet.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Chapter 23

A few days later, Jack Lucas is at school when he witnesses a drug deal going down in the hallway. Realizing that he has time to spare thanks to an extended study hall, he follows the dealer out of the building and toward the "bad part of town." Seeing Jack leave the school, the truancy officer also follows to see what's going on. When the drug dealer meets up with a group of gangbangers to do an exchange, the officer calls in the police, which alerts the punks thanks to a police scanner. Realizing that he should probably get some backup, Jack calls in Diamant before going to change into his costume. The officer takes to the skies, changing into Blackfire on a nearby roof.

Diamant contacts Ham, who uses his speed to be the first hero on the scene. Upon seeing him (and specifically, his use of super powers), the gangbangers call in backup. As Diamant arrives and Black Volt and Blackfire return from changing, a vortex opens, expelling Stretchon, Titaneron and Leopard. As the heroes get ready to engage, Blackfire accidentally hit Ham with a blast of cold flame, stunning the urban hero. Black Volt follows soon after at the hands of Titaneron, who was nervous about the potential damage of the electric-wielder. He then used the teen as a projectile against Diamant, who took the opportunity to make a strategic withdrawal for a few seconds.

Upon his return, Diamant found Ham and Blackfire facing off against Titaneron and Strechon, with Leopard leaning against the wall with uncharacteristic calm. As the heroes continued to whittle away at the mercenaries defenses, the villains realized that they had completed their task and called Spectre for another portal. As the mercs began to leave, Ham threw one last punch, knocking Titaneron out and capturing him. Diamant stops Black Volt from pursuing the bad guys through the portal and questions Blackfire, notably not offering him membership but telling the newcomer that they'd be keeping an eye on him.

Chapter 24

(Guest GMed by Ken Hallaron)

After receiving a report of a creature terrorizing an area of the bayou, a Strikeforce team led by Lieutenant Bianca Fornier was sent out to investigate. Sixteen hours later, Captain Maurice Bodé feared the worse and prepared to call in the Force d'Orleans for assistance. Meanwhile, François Drébin was on the morning-side of his date when his consort received a call from the New Orleans Police Department, informing her that her brother, an officer within the Strikeforce branch, was currently MIA. Asking Frank for whatever aide he could provide, he was surprised to receive a call from Captain Bodé.

Across town, Jack Lucas was sitting in a studio with his parents, watching a pre-recording of Tom Wayne's Marti Gras cooking show. Before the former Crusader could begin preparing his desert, however, he was interrupted by Alderman Carter Tate (father of Drébin's current girlfriend), who was asking the hero to help find his son. He too was put in touch with Bodé and was asked to join up with the captain and Force d'Orleans at their headquarters. At the same time, Jack received the call from Diamant and was told to meet up with them as soon as he was dropped off at the mall by his parents.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Several minutes later, the quartet met at Maison de Force and was joined by Ham Mulligan before setting out for the bayou. As they traversed the swampy marshes on airboats, Mr. Behemoth and Captain Bodé discussed the situation with Officer Clarence in Empire City, as well as other Crusader-linked occurrences. The conversation was interrupted, however, when the entourage came across a giant hand floating in the water. Upon recovery, the limb became animated, grabbing Behemoth by the neck. Pressured by his teammates to shoot, Black Volt hit Mr. Behemoth with a stunning bolt of energy, knocking the big man down for several seconds while the rest of the group struggled to contain the rapidly-regenerating creature. After several seconds of wrestling and shooting, the group was finally able to contain the freshly-grown monster and sent for a containment unit to be delivered by other Strikeforce personnel.

After Diamant and Behemoth worked together to create a homing signal from the Strikeforce communications system, the group restarted the hunt for the missing officers, coming across another of the creatures. Using their experience with the first one as a learning experience, they sprung into action. With Mr. Behemoth holding it in place, Diamant sapping its strength with his sapphire gem and Black Volt blasting it, the creature was quickly subdued and prepped for containment. Meanwhile, Ham had scouted ahead, finding yet another one that they took care of in mere seconds.

With the homing signal getting stronger, Diamant took to the air and spotted the group of officers, with Lieutenant Fornier holding an alligator at bay. With a flick of his turquoise tractor beam, Diamant sent the gator flying and was rewarded with a kiss from the attractive lieutenant. Calling in the rest of the group, the injured officers were loaded on the helicopters. Also loaded up were two more creatures found by Black Volt and Ham, having knocked each other out while brawling. It was agreed by all that the creatures should be sent to a research facility, choosing Behemoth's old employers (and the newest subsidiary of Drébin Technologies): Technological Improvements Now (T.I.N.).

Interim 2

* Also printed in [The Aces](#) writeup *

Force d'Orleans has minor scuffles with normal criminals and the usual le Crânes activity, but nothing big. It is a typical Monday board meeting for Drébin when a proposition is presented to purchase the Las Vegas Starchylde Casino, with the added effect of becoming the new sponsor of its resident superteam, The Aces. After a fair amount of debate over the subject and a tied vote, Drébin decides to go ahead with the purchase, asking his assistant to book a visit for the following weekend and calls for Tazi to join him in his office for a meeting on the matter.

While the meeting was going on, Tazi was down in the cafeteria with Ham, lamenting about the fact that her husband had just lost his job after his workplace was taken over by Bronson Laboratories, a subsidiary of MahnTech. They discuss the moral and ethical merits of asking Drébin to find him a job, with Tazi deciding that the best course of action was to mention it to Frank and see if he knows of any openings anywhere, not just at Drébin Industries. Tazi then gets the page, calling her to Frank's office. Once there, he informs her of the new purchase and, knowing about what has happened to her husband's



Game Master: Jim Caswell

job, suggests that she consider taking her family to Las Vegas to run publicity for the casino while her husband works in bookkeeping.

Meanwhile, The Aces were gathered around the kitchen table when Pastor Kyle entered the Sleeve and regretfully announced that he was being reassigned to a new church in New Orleans. While Jack took the news with a fair amount of cynicism, the others decided that it was best to send him off with a going-away party. Once that decision was made, Lesley (Duncan's personal assistant) entered and announced that Macarthur had left and was selling the casino. The group was asked to make themselves available to meet the new owner. Except for White Mask, who has a prior engagement, they agree.

The following weekend, François Drébin, Tazi and Joshua Cristo were given a tour of the casino, finishing in The Sleeve. After introductions were made, it took mere seconds for those in the room to recognize the uncanny resemblance between François Drébin and Stalwart. François mentioned that his father had originally grown up in the Las Vegas area, but left soon after his older brother had been killed in the line of duty. Once in New Orleans, he had met and fallen in love with a debutant heiress, whom he married. When their only child was born, he wanted to name him after his dead brother, and she agreed under the condition that her French heritage would be encouraged in the boy. With this realization, Stalwart revealed that he was François' long-lost uncle, Frank Drebin. The two men instantly agreed to build a familial relationship.

When matters circled back to business, François informed the group that his company would continue to finance the organization. Tazi's alter ego was introduced as she offered her services to the team, while at the same time assuring them that she had no intent to wrestle leadership from Migraine. It was decided, however, that her experience as Diamant's right hand would be useful and she was asked to take on the same role there. With the matter already on team trades, François was informed about Pastor Kyle and his transfer, and Drébin agreed to recommend to Diamant that he get in touch.

During an impromptu celebration afterward, François found Jackie on the balcony and, in the process of chatting her up, learned of her recent concerns over her safety, being a normal playing sidekick to a group of heroes. Jack, who recognized the look in François' eyes and had joined them (realizing that neither would be interested in what the other has in mind and wanting to save them both some time and heartache), was quick to point out that she wasn't a sidekick, but he also saw that she was playing a dangerous game. Jack offered to share his equipment, but it was agreed that it would be a bad idea as he was a bad example (more lucky than good) and she didn't want to become the Jackie of Diamonds. She instead stated that she was considering moving on; her brother was doing well in rehabilitation and, in spite of her deep desire to continue helping in the superhero community, Vegas had developed too many memories for her. Instead, François offered to bring her back to New Orleans with him (under the understanding that it would be a working relationship only) and have her run Maison de Force. She would be in charge of managing the staff and monitoring the city, calling in the team when they were needed. While Jack initially objects in his typical sardonic way, Jackie agrees and promises to stop by whenever she's back in town visiting her brother.

Soon after, with Jackie settling in well at the mansion and Pastor Kyle having accepted Diamant's offer for membership, things were starting to settle back into routine when a call came in requesting the team's



Game Master: Jim Caswell

help. Reports of a monster in the swamp were once again running rampant and Bodé was concerned that it was a piece of Rot (the creature from session 24) that had been missed and regrown. Force d'Orleans agreed to once again enter the bayou, but instead found a large alligator-like creature. Initially assuming that it was the American Ranger known as Gator after having gone through further mutation, the team approached him as friends. It wasn't until they got closer that they realized he was different and began asking questions. They learned that the man was a scientist who had been transformed into the gatorman by an experiment gone wrong decades earlier and was trapped in this form. Recognizing his difficulty and wanting to help, Diamant offered the Spectacled Caiman membership in the team and use of the Maison de Force as a home.

Chapter 25

A couple of days after the Spectacled Caiman joined Force d'Orleans, Jackie got a call for assistance at Maison de Force requesting that the team investigate a disturbance at Audubon Park. While Bodé and his Strikeforce officers would normally investigate it themselves, they were busy with a prisoner escort to the state penitentiary. When the team arrived at the park, they found Titaneron tearing up the playground, chucking the swingset at the heroes before running for the woods. Suspecting a trap, the heroes hesitated, choosing to approach stealthily and from different angles rather than charging in after him. This proved to be a benefit as they quickly learned that their suspicions were accurate. It was indeed a trap set by the not-so-jolly green giant along with five other mercenaries. As Diamant worked his way down through the treetops, he played hide-and-go-seek with Black Widow. Ham Mulligan, who had circled around to the other side of the preserve, was creeping in until a reaction between Chains chains and Magneta's magnetics had a noisy interaction. Spectacled Caiman and Black Volt were entering from the side when they found Titaneron waiting for them at the entrance with Veneno and Stretchon.

Diamant started the fight after his communicator's vibrations drew Black Widow's attention. Using his new image-casting gem in combination with the invisibility gem to create a duplicate of himself, he drew an attack from Widow. Ham was thinking along the same lines when he drew the attention of Magneta and Chains, drawing a magnetic field that encased him and deflected Chains very metallic attack. The fight drew the attention of the three mercs and two heroes in the front, who began working their way back. Caiman was in the right place to catch Diamant, who was found by Widow and knocked out. Volt, who was at the back of the pack, was joined by White Mask and coached to use his electricity to zap the very conductive Titaneron. Unfortunately, this drew the attention of Veneno, who put the boy in a bare hug and started poisoning him. White Mask responded by putting the large, orange man in a sleeper hold until he fell unconscious from a lack of oxygen and the barrage of voltage.

Meanwhile, Ham tried to do a jumping move through on Chains only to miss and find himself in the same vicinity as Diamant and their newest member. The spiderwoman tried to entangle the trio with another web, but Ham ripped through it with a casual shrug. Caiman took to the trees to confront Widow, but found that she had been joined by Magneta. Between the two of them and the newly arriving Stretchon, he quickly found himself falling back to the ground. Diamant switched over to triage work when Ham also got hit, but White Mask and Black Volt arrived on the scene and started working on evening things up. Ham blasted Black Widow out of the area, Chains left when he got tired of Magneta's powers messing



Game Master: Jim Caswell

with his attacks, and Stretchon tapped out under the pressures of Mask's hold. Magneta was blasted while trying to flee, leaving the heroes with four of the mercenaries in custody.

Realizing that this was a set-up, Diamant calls Jackie back to learn that an attack against the First National Bank was taking place at the same time. With Force d'Orleans tied up in the park, Bodé left the prisoner escort to investigate. It was then that they realized the escort was for Pappa Boulet and that both occurrences were probably the distraction to break him out. Splitting into two groups, Ham and Black Volt left to catch up with the transport while Diamant, Caiman and White Mask went to check on Bodé.

When the trio arrived at the bank, they found the Strikeforce Captain unconscious on the steps. Once being awakened, he told them that his power armor had been drained of energy by the mercenary Leecher while Arachnor and Decibelle looked on. Having their suspicions confirmed, they checked in with Ham and Volt, who had arrived to find the escort decimated and Boulet long gone. Significant damage pointed toward a person who had cold powers, at least two different types of blade-wielders, someone with enhanced strength and another with vibrational energies. Realizing that Boulet was now on the run and probably wouldn't return to his mansion, but that someone needed to check and make sure. Sending Caiman, Volt and Mask back to recover from the fight, Diamant and Ham headed for the compound.

When they arrived, they circled around to the back of the grounds, which linked up with the beginnings of the bayou. Realizing that something was different, the duo discovered that the dog pin was emptied, pointing to Boulet taking his dogs with him. When a couple of guards came by on their patrol, Ham used his mental abilities to scan their minds, learning that Pappa wasn't around, but that Momma and two of their adopted children were home. The compound was on lockdown and was expecting unwanted visitors; an expectation that was confirmed by the two immense headaches that accompanied the mind probe. Having learned what they came for, Diamant and Ham left.

Interim 3

On the national scale, President Mahn had been removed from the office of President of the United States by the Champions of Justice. During this time, Black Volt was offered a place at the Radio Ranch, which serves as a school for parahuman youngers to learn how to control their powers and become super heroes.

Chapter 26

Francois was expecting a visit from his uncle for a visit and Tazi for an update. Ham was down in the cafeteria working before being sent to Pastor Kyle's church to deliver a food donation for the soup kitchen. Caiman and Jackie were at the Maison de Force, talking about Jackie's concerns about getting hurt while trying to help. Their conversation was interrupted, however, by a call from Maurice Bodé, now a private detective after being released from Strikeforce for Boulet's escape. He tells the team (put through communicators by Jackie) that his P.I. partner had gone out on his own to investigate a report about a motorcycle gang squatting on the edge of the bayou. Only after he left did Bodé get a report that the Evicted Demonz had once again broken out of Alister Institute and were last seen headed toward Louisiana. With that, the team traveled in groups to the address provided by Bodé.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Ham and White Mask were the first to arrive, with the younger partner telling the pastor about the recurring nightmares he occasionally had about the Evicted Demonz; how he was a white dude and was fighting them. Upon their arrival, they discovered a young boy named Nick in the vicinity, playing with his pet turtle, Vindicator. As the rest of the team arrived, Ham convinced the boy to head home and let them deal with the "mean guys in the broken down house." Learning that Caiman and Jackie had approached from the bayou and could see both into the lair and Bodé's partner strung up over the water like gator-bait, Ham ran at super speed to join them in the water. Diamant took up position over the house while Fantasia, White Mask and Stalwart prepared for a frontal assault when the distraction came. The distraction was given by Diamant, in his invisible state, untying the captive and dropping him into water where Jackie was waiting to swim away with him. Ham and Caiman gave the bikers the show they were waiting for: man vs lizard.

With the bikers properly distracted, the team leapt into battle. Fantasia, White Mask and Stalwart took out the guards in the front yard while Diamant, Caiman and Ham went in the back. As the front yard trio broke in the door, four more humanoids came out of a back room. The fight escalated, with people pairing up for combat, including Ham facing off against Overkill, Caiman pulling the hydrophobic Lynx back into the bayou, Stalwart versus Squirrel, White Mask and Fantasia taking on the two Claws (who shifted into copies of Fantasia and Pallesquin) and Diamant evading Hell Rider's attacks. The fights stayed evenly matched, with no one gaining the higher ground, for some time, sparking Jackie to check in and, failing to get a response, calling the CoJ for backup support. Turbo, Ampere, Colonel Victory and Electra answered the call and arrived on the scene just in time for Force d'Orleans to start turning the tide. Diamant and Fantasia started the turn by knocking out the faux-dragon. Then Lynx finally broke loose of Caiman's grasp and went running into the bayou screaming. Squirrel tried to make a run for it as fog, but was stopped by Victory's powerful lungs and Fantasia's fiery breath. Fantasia and Diamant do another one-two combo on the second Claw, knocking him out as well. Victory then went outside to lend a hand, taking down Overkill with Ham after the biker one-punched Caiman (who was immediately evacuated by Turbo), while Ampere, Electra and White Mask finishes off Hell Rider.

When the dust finally settles, Ham takes off after Lynx while the other heroes start clean-up. He finds him up a tree, almost in a vegetative state. He calls for help and White Mask, Ampere and Diamant go to his location as Strikeforce arrived on the scene. Once the trio managed to get the cat-man out of the tree, Colonel Victory was called in to question him on the location of the missing members of the Demonz. Lynx was cooperative until he made the mistake of mentioning the innocents that were hurt in their travels, which angered Victory enough to smack him, at which point the interview was over. Lynx was taken to Strikeforce, Victory and Electra went off in search of the traveling Demonz and the rest returned to Maison de Force. There they found Megaman - who was giving Caiman a once-over from the battle - and Turbo.

Chapter 27

A week after the battle with the Evicted Demonz, Stalwart had returned to Las Vegas and Drebin was in route to Chattanooga with Tazi. Jackie called in the rest of the gang with a request from Stephanie



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Hayden from Red Jacket Firearms to come up to Baton Rouge. While gathering to head out, Ham and Jackie had a moment of confusion over unexpected physical contact, but the two quickly straighten it out and gain a bit of understanding about each other. Taking the Air-amis (that Jackie had requested Drebin to buy), they picked up White Mask and the Spectacled Caiman and left for Baton Rouge. Upon arriving at Red Jacket, they were greeted by an off-duty camera crew who ushered them inside to Captain Fornier and Ms. Hayden, who explained that she called them out because of a pair of women who brought in a Pierce .80 to try and get it fitted for a suppressor. Kyle explained that the weapon had a wicked recoil that would rip the arm off anyone who couldn't bench press anything below a half ton. Between that and the attempted break-in the night before, it made the group believe they were dealing with a pair of superhuman women, leading Jackie to make the connection to the S.L.U.T.s. She explained who the terrorist organization was and recapped the Aces experience with them. Bianca calls some contacts to see if any new strip clubs had opened, finding the location and the heroes head out.

Doing a fly-over before landing, Ham used his X-ray ultravision to peek inside the bar; seeing that, while the place was under construction, the SLUTs were home alone. Once they landed, it was clear that Jackie was starting to suffer under the strain of being in another dangerous situation against the SLUTs and feeling her vulnerability. Promising to recommend that she see the new Las Vegas Strikeforce Bureau Chief when they're done, Fornier tells Jackie to stay behind as the rest of them go in through the door for a frontal assault. As the police captain knocked on the door, the group prepared for battle.

Starz opens the door to find the heroes waiting for her and responds by pulling a Pierce .57. The heroes start in on her until Star Spangled Stripper moved to get involved, drawing Ham to battle. The next to join the fight was Nascar Nellie, who accidentally drove herself into a wall trying to get involved while Starz was finally knocked out. School Girl was next, picking to fight Caiman. Nellie was taken down by a well-placed taser shot from Fornier. The last to join in was Pokerface - who threw razor-sharp playing cards at Ham and Fornier - and Stripez, who used her Spooze Gun to goop up the cop and the priest. Ham knocked out the male stripper, Caiman knocked out School Girl, Ham blew the balcony out from underneath Stripes, and Pokerface ended up surrendering when she found herself alone and outnumbered. At that point, a crash was heard outside and, checking it out, found the Air-amis pinning an unconscious Dominatrix Barbie to the building.

Ham went inside to investigate the reinforced steel boxes that he couldn't see through earlier, only to find a member of the construction crew that had been horribly transformed into a monstrous creature. Realizing that helping the man was a bit out of Caiman's ability, he contacted Doctor Conan and asked that they work together to help the poor man.

Chapter 28

*** The Golden Dragon Saga, Pt. 1 ***

Drebin was in route to Chattanooga with Tazi for the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Drebin Industries / TIN laboratory. While in flight, Tazi mentioned that she was homesick and wanted a transfer back to New Orleans. Drebin agreed that it would be nice to have her back and said he'd make it happen.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

As they were about to shake on it, Tazi got a weird feeling of something wrong; that she was approaching a place that something evil occurred.

After the plane had landed, the duo was working their way through the airport when they were intercepted by Dr. Eleanor Sonimbesea, otherwise known as the heroine and activist Druid. She wanted to ensure that the new building was acknowledging the environmental concerns. Inviting her to accompany them to the site, the trio traveled to the location. While Eleanor went to investigate the concerns, the foreman told Drebin about a recent extortion attempt by some local mobsters just as an SUV approached. The disturbing feeling that Tazi had been feeling was also getting stronger when Drebin asked her to go change in case there was trouble.

When the Kearns Brothers stepped out of their SUV with the mercenary Hardbody, they immediately took to trying to intimidate Drebin. What they weren't expecting was the rainstorm that appeared out of nowhere or the lightning bolt that blew the top off their vehicle. Drebin took the opportunity to dive into his limo and had just enough time to turn invisible before Talon of the Yama tore the roof off, surprised to find it empty. Fantasia stepped out to find that the bad feeling she was having was because of the tortured soul of the Golden Dragon that was bound to Wyrms armor. She entered into a duel of flames with Wyrms and fisticuffs with Hardbody, with Druid blowing up gas tanks, making the earth move and using nature as her weapon. Hardbody was the first to fall thanks to the combined might of the three superheroes, with Talon following soon after, leaving the Wyrms to try (and fail) to make an escape. After knocking him unconscious, Fantasia began to speak with the dragon spirit, learning how he came to be in this horrible situation.

Landing with the unconscious villain, Fantasia explained what was going on to Diamant and Druid. The Force leader, being a man of science rather than mystics, volunteered to take the bad guys to the authorities after the Kearns Brothers were stripped of their mystical items. Druid attempted to destroy the Talon artifact with a lightning bolt, but only succeeded to send a mystical alert to a few of the mages of the world. This brought Balatar to the scene (this takes place during the downtime between adventures 7 and 8 of [Retribution](#)). Learning of what has been going on from Fantasia (an old acquaintance from their days on the short-lived Freax team), he disposed of the talon by casting it back to the realm of Chinese hell. Learning that the dragon wanted to be freed from the armor and to create an amulet of his own as a legacy, Balatar transformed a disk of mud into an amulet and aided the dragon in transferring his essence and freeing him from his mystical prison.

With the dragon released, Fantasia and Balatar were left trying to decide what to do with the new dragon medallion.

Chapter 29

* The Golden Dragon Saga, Pt. 2 *

(Co-GMed by Ken Hallaron - guest starring the Champions of Justice)

When the Golden Dragon medallion was created, a mystical shockwave was felt across the globe. In addition to drawing the attention of heroes like Eidolon and Black Dragon (who contacted Morning Star for



Game Master: Jim Caswell

help in investigating), it also made evil magic users take notice and want the new dragon for themselves. So as Fantasia, Balatar and Druid contemplated what to do with the new medallion, portals began opening all around them. Lady Fortanchu was the first to arrive with Ice Dragon, her Snow Ninjas and Yeti in tow. Lady Fortanchu's obsession with the dragons became quite evident as she looked at Fantasia and the medallion she held, ordering Ice Dragon to retrieve it for her. Fantasia started to run while Balatar tried to stem the flow of villains, but she was quickly cut off by the arrival of Supremus and a platoon of his father's henchmen. Heroes also began to flow onto the scene, with Eidolon, Turbo, Music Man, Ampere, Morning Star and Black Dragon joining the fray. But Raziel had also sent his people to try to win the prize as yet another mystical portal deposited Light Mage, Demosthenes, Mazer, Flashblade, Vesuvius, and a squad of Viper agents onto the battlefield.

As the dragons fought each other, Supremus launched an attack at Morning Star, Balatar and Ampere worked to disable Lady Fortanchu, Music Man divided and conquered against the Yetis while their American cousins watched from the wooded edges, and Eidolon fought Light Mage and his boys. As the various factions' agents began battling one another, Flashblade made a play for the medallion, only to be grabbed and stashed in the Memphis Strikeforce holding cell by Turbo. Morning Star managed to make quick work of Supremus with a well-placed blow, but the super-mage was swallowed by another vortex before hitting the ground, reclaimed by his father. Before Morning Star could join the fray below, however, he was intercepted by the newly-arriving Thunder Twins. Eidolon, having encased Light Mage in a darkness globe and Demosthenes in the Bonds of Bogardan, he used Soul Blight to put the finishing blow on Lady Fortanchu, knocking her unconscious.

Music Man finally gained the advantage over the Yeti as the Sasquatches came in to finish the job. Ice Dragon found his attention torn between trying to capture the medallion and the protection of his mistress, resorting to slitting the throat of one of the snow ninjas and throwing it at Fantasia, hoping to activate the dragon magic. Ampere attempted to destroy the dragon medallion, only to find it indestructible. Light Mage escaped his prison and teleported the medallion away from Fantasia, turning Ice Dragon's fury upon himself. With a slash of his claws, Ice Dragon gutted Light Mage, triggering the medallion and transforming him into the golden-skinned Sun Dragon. With his attention on the new gold dragon, Fantasia was able to strike Ice Dragon, knocking him unconscious.

As the newly-created dragon relented to the stresses of transformation, Professor Mobius and Banshee arrived with Dragon to learn what was going on. Sun Dragon and his cohorts were quickly reclaimed by their master, causing Eidolon to chase the teleport scent to try and find his eternal foe (a chase that led to misdirection and dead-ends to hide Raziel's true location). Balatar also made a strategic withdrawal from the scene when, after Fantasia described what led to the battle, Ampere made disparaging remarks about him for helping create the medallion in the first place.

When Professor Mobius attempted to lay claim to the fallen Fortanchu, Turbo arrived with a resurrected Mo in tow, who laid claim to both his sister and Ice Dragon by right of blood. Dragon, realizing that there was nothing he could do now, handed a small leather pouch over to Banshee, instructing her to give it to "the smelly one" to dispose of, and then opened his own portal to return home. Seeing what was in the pouch, Turbo said he would take care of it, offered Black Dragon honorary membership in the CoJ, left to dispose of the bag and trail the Thunder Twins back to their base of operations. Mobius offered to aide



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Mo in returning to Tibet, which the new head of the Fortanchu clan accepted. The rest of the heroes helped in rounding up the Fortanchu, Kristoffer and Viper minions, leaving Fantasia to reunite with her team leader.

Making her way to town, Fantasia was joined once again by Balatar, who explained that he had fallen in league with another group of individuals and that he was working on creating magical communicators for them to use. Wanting to stay in touch with his fellow former Freax, he offered one to her, enchanting her wedding ring with the communications spell. He then departed, leaving her alone with her thoughts and travels.

Chapter 30

It was a peaceful Sunday morning and each member of Force d'Orleans was enjoying the day in their own way. François Drébin was using the time to catch up on some much-needed sleep. Dr. Chelmsford was likewise relaxing, though his way entailed taking a swim in the swamps before returning to the maison and reading the newspaper. Ham was at church with his family listening to Pastor Kyle's sermon, and then stuck around afterward to speak with his teammate about dealing with the odd dynamics of the team.

Meanwhile, Tazi and her family had already attended services and were spending the rest of the morning at the park when she spotted a group of le Crânes ducking through to the forest area nearby. Sending her husband and daughter to get ice cream, she followed and found them meeting with another group of gangbangers from the Wallers with their trench coat-wearing enforcers. In short order, Tazi overheard the Wallers threaten that they were going to take over the territory and that this was the Crânes only chance to get on board or be wiped out. Realizing that this was a problem that was only going to get bigger, Fantasia called in the rest of Force d'Orleans for backup.

When Ham, White Mask and Caiman arrived (Diamant was still unavailable), they saw the Crânes turn on the Wallers. Trying to find out what was going on, Ham used his Ultramind abilities to discover the lead Crâne's intent and knock him unconscious in the process. The guys in the trenchcoats opened up next, mowing down several more Crânes in a hail of gunfire. Caiman used a log to hit a couple of the coat-men, only to see them bounce right back up from it. Fantasia blanketed the area with smoke, allowing her teammates to move in and then hit the area with a burst of fire. Once all of the heroes had moved onto the battlefield, it didn't take long for them to take down all of the Waller Enforcers, leaving just two gangbangers to pursue into the forest.

Using his Ultravision, Ham quickly found the two Wallers, who were talking to a man in a business suit. The team pursued, with only Caiman recognizing the man as Herb Sikorsky, otherwise known as the ex-Havok member Cyclotron. Claiming to be there in search of his new wife's son's friend and "regretful that he arrived too late," Sikorsky promised that the boys would be cooperative with the authorities and excused himself to make arrangements with a lawyer.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

When Strikeforce finally arrived on the scene, the group compared notes on what had just happened. White Mask found a vial and syringe in one of the trenchcoated teen's pockets, which Caiman took to analyse. While wondering what the Russian mob was doing here, and Cyclotron's involvement, they realized that, with Poppa Boulet on the run, the power vacuum was opening wider in the New Orleans underworld and wondering how much more trouble was coming to the city.

Interim 4

With the decision to make the Chattanooga office the new headquarters of Drébin Industries, Frank, Tazi and the Cristo family relocate to Tennessee, establishing their heroic personas as security for the business after the events of The Golden Dragon Saga. This marks the departure of the last of the founding members of Force d'Orleans. Also, in honor of the fallen hero Colonel Victory, whom Ham had met and admired as a role model for a young, black super hero (see session 26), Mulligan finally assumed a codename... Mister Victory.

Meanwhile, gang activity continued to rise, building in violence as each group struggled to gain dominance on the city streets. In combating this, Force met and was joined by three new heroes: Lumen, Menagerie and Turtle.

Chapter 31

White Mask summons the team together at Maison de Force after learning that a war council has been called among the competing mobs in the city. While his contact, a young man struggling to get out of the gangs, didn't know any details, Turtle had inside information that said that the Ruspoviks were calling the meeting and that it was going to be held on neutral territory aboard The Maiden's Virtue: the state-owned riverboat casino. While this bothers Ham at first, knowing that this is where his sister Madison works as a waitress, he then remembers that she was off that night and wouldn't be aboard. Agreeing that they didn't have any proof of wrongdoing so far on the mobsters, the group decides to spy on the meeting to gather intelligence. Turtle states that he can get a bug inside the room and the others agree to take position around the boat (Ham on the shore, Caiman trailing behind, Menagerie flying above, Lumen intangible and invisible inside and White Mask in the casino) to provide backup if needed.

An hour later, Kazuta Takei stood outside the riverboat entrance waiting for his father. Upon his arrival, Kodokawa (the head of the New Orleans Yakuza) greets his son, expressing his happiness in him agreeing to help in this matter. The two enter, accompanied by the elder Takei's driver and bodyguard, walk to the back room and join the others: Bogdan Sikorsky and four of the juiced-up Wallers representing the Ruspovik Family, Val Mangione and her driver / bodyguard Totes for the Caporetta Family, and Michael Boulet with a le Crâne for the reigning mob family. As the group discussed the need for peace between the different organizations and how splitting up the activities could facilitate that, Boulet expressed his family's desire to keep things as they are and refused to negotiate. Upon learning this, Kodokawa ordered his son to kill him.

Knowing that he had to maintain appearances, Kazuta dropped a gas arrowhead into the crowd, causing most of the attendees to become dazed. He then swiftly moved across the room, deposited the listening



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device into Sikorsky's coat pocket, grabbed Michael and (with a little help from Mister Victory's Ultravision taking out the locks) exited through the window into the water below. As Caiman and Menagerie closed on them, Kazuta drew his knife and cut off the young man's hand before turning him over to Caiman and insisted that he needed to be returned to the boat. Menagerie reluctantly swooped him back up to the deck before returning and taking the injured man to Victory, who insisted that he could help. Meanwhile, Takei's driver pulled a gun and shot the Crâne in the head and dropped his gun, saying that no more violence was needed. Kazuta returned to the room dripping wet, wielding the severed hand, and picked up the gun, stating that both problems were solved. This left Ham to zoom Boulet to the hospital after using his Ultra-healing energies to seal the wound.

With talks commencing on how to equitably divide the underworld operations of New Orleans, Mangione interrupts the proceedings by stating that they had company, having picked up on Lumen's presence in the room. She proceeds to insist that he should leave if he doesn't want trouble, causing the others in the room to become uncomfortable and decide to adjourn. As the Takei's prepare to leave, a knock at the door reveals Ham's return, disguised in his grandfather's suit and claiming to be Steven Boulet (a fact that Menagerie knows to be false as the only Boulet with a name close to that is "Uncle Stephan"). He reiterates the Boulet position that the criminal elements of the city belong to their family, causing the discomfort in the room to rise and bring the meeting to an end. As Kazuta leaves, though, "Steven" thanks him for removing Michael and allowing his rise to lieutenant. Mangione follows Takei out the door, exchanging parting shots with the invisible Lumen, leaving Ham and the Ruspoviks alone. Outside, Caiman and Menagerie take Takei's driver and son into custody for murder, leaving the old man to drive himself home.

Meanwhile, "Steven" reclaims "his brother's" hand, tries to align himself with Sikorsky by telling him about the bug in his pocket, destroys his own communicator to show that the two men are in the same situation, and departs to return the hand to its owner and help heal the wound. Now alone with the Russians, Lumen hears an exchange between the men in their native tongue. Later, he has it translated to "things may be more difficult than we had hoped. We may need to kill them all."

Later that night, Marie goes to the hospital to visit her adopted brother and learn what he was doing there. Michael confides that Momma called him home from college to take the meeting, though he didn't know what he was getting into in the process. She tells him what she learned about the family and learns that Pappa is still on the run in the swamps along with his dogs, their brother Philippe and the hired muscle known as Tracker. She offers to help him disappear, away from New Orleans and the family. He agrees, citing that people already believe him to be dead. The two leave the hospital in the dead of night together.

Chapter 32

Having learned that Poppa Boulet's hiding place had become public knowledge, Menagerie contacted the other members of Force d'Orleans (except Turtle, who wasn't answering his communicator). Realizing that there would be a manhunt for the escaped convict, not only by the police, but also by the rival gangs that were trying to take over, the team decided to get involved and contacted Strikeforce to combine forces. Heading into the bayou on their airboat, Force met up with Lt. Fornier and her men, as well as



Game Master: Jim Caswell

visiting American Ranger Gator and the newly-transferred in 273, who was reluctantly working as a Strikeforce officer.

After introductions were finished, White Mask and Mister Victory went with two of the police boats while Gator rode with Force, heading directly for the fishing hut hideout. On the way, however, Caiman made comment about how he had spent some time in this area of the swamp a few decades ago, prompting Gator to mention that he was born and raised in this area. The more the two men talked, the more it became apparent that Caiman, while he was temporarily cured of his condition, had apparently met and dated Gator's mother, leading everyone on the boat -- except Gator himself -- to realize that the two men were estranged father and son, providing Lumen with great entertainment. It took Menagerie reminding them that they had a mission to accomplish to keep them from making a detour to visit Gator's birthplace.

Once the quartet had arrived at the fishing hut, they quickly realized that they were not alone; other airboats were inbound from two separate directions. Taking to the air, Lumen played eye in the sky while Menagerie communicated with the spooked birds. Channeling the power of a whale, she headed for the hut while Gator and Caiman went to confront the inbound boats. While they worked on overturning and destroying the Caporetta strike team, Lumen flew over to find the Russians also inbound, hitting their boats with an EMP blast, killing their engines and leaving them stranded. Meanwhile, at the hut, Menagerie and Gambit discovered the shed to be abandoned with a strong smell of C-4 in the air to her wolf-like senses. Clearing out of the area, she informed the team to what she had found, leading Lumen to fly in, ready to hit the shack with another EMP blast. He paused, however, just long enough to look around, giving ample time for the cellphone trigger to be activated, blowing the shack to kingdom come.

Fortunately for him, Lumen was intangible at the time of the explosion, and was able to follow the cellphone signal back to Tracker's savantphone. Unfortunately for him, he chose to call his team and tell them that he had found Poppa Boulet. In spite of the fact that he was invisible and intangible, he was still audible, leading the three men to ready weapons. Using their soulblade attacks, Tracker and Watchdog were both able to hit him, though didn't do any damage, but knowing that they could touch him led Lumen to abandon the scene after hitting their boat with another electromagnetic pulse to leave them stranded in the water.

Upon arriving back to his team, they radioed in to Strikeforce and headed back to the location, only to find the Boulet and his men had abandoned ship and headed back into bayou obscurity. Reunited with White Mask and Ham, Gator attempted to chastise Lumen for letting them get away, but White Mask pointed out that the Rangers were being financed by Andrew Mahn and had two of his men within their ranks, so everyone is entitled to a bad day. As Gator prepared to leave, Lumen through some more comments his way, revealing to White Mask the relationship between Caiman and his son, but still keeping Gator in the dark. When Ham was brought in on the situation, though, he was disappointed in his teammate for not stepping up.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Chapter 33

William Labarre was in his office at Dillard University when he was told that he had a visitor in the foyer. When he went down to see who it was, he was greeted by Dwight Jones, Deputy Director of the Office of Parahuman Affairs, head of the Parahuman Security Agency and former hero Spectrum. Believing that the jig was up, William requested that their meeting take place in a private conference room, but was quickly relieved when Jones revealed that he was there about the minerals that were discovered in the freshwater springs in the bayou, revealing that the samples were comprised of cecededinite, a rare substance that they needed to verify if it was an undiscovered natural vein or an unauthorized manufacturing of the substance. Agreeing to show the agents where he had found the spring, the group headed out to investigate the occurrence.

Meanwhile, Ham Mulligan was at home going through the want ads (having been laid off after a majority of Drébin Technologies were moved to the new offices in Chattanooga) when a knock on the apartment door drew his attention. His visitor was Martin Lefèvre, a gubernatorial candidate looking for his public support of his run for governor. When Ham stated that he needed time to think about it, the two men parted company, allowing the hero to discuss the situation with his grandfather. When the senior Mulligan could only provide vague information, Ham decided to go find Pastor Kyle and get his opinion.

As Labarre, Jones and the two agents arrived at the spring, the former Champion of Justice attempted to call in Murray on the investigation, only to learn that Riptide was busy on another case. This led him to call his office, who regularly kept tabs on the current hero activities, learning that there were some potential aquatics on the Force d'Orleans team. As he put through a call to the team, however, William discreetly shut off the ringer on his cellphone. The call was answered by Menagerie, who had taken up residence at the mansion, and agreed to come assist in checking out the spring. Going down to the airboat, she ran into the Spectacled Caiman, who was on his way in to speak with White Mask, but gladly took the opportunity to be sidetracked by going with her.

Once they arrived at the freshwater spring, Menagerie, Gambit, Caiman and Labarre all entered the water and swam down about 100 feet to the bottom of the pool, discovering a high-pressure waste disposal pipe on the bottom. Menagerie sent her animal friend in to investigate, with Gambit transforming himself into an eel to swim against the current. Keeping tabs on him telepathically, Menagerie quickly learned that Gambit was struggling due to the "dirty water" spewing out of the pipe. Calling him back, the group returned to the surface. As she shared what Gambit had found, Labarre noted that the pipe had been down there for over four years and Caiman shared that he found several dead fish that appeared to have been electrocuted about a month ago.

When Mulligan arrived at Maison de Force, he found a frustrated White Mask who had wanted to speak with Caiman about his new familial situation. The pastor was grateful for the distraction, however, when Ham shared his visit from Lefèvre. Kyle had heard of the wanna-be governor and his desire to lead Louisiana in succeeding from the United States, much like Quebec had done from Canada. Realizing that this plan could be disastrous, the young hero decided it wasn't in anyone's best interest in helping the man and would turn down the offer. As he prepared to hunt down his teammates to find out what they



Game Master: Jim Caswell

were working on, a call came in from Maurice Bodé with a lead on a potential conflict between the Rulers and Wallers down at the docks. While the police were tied up in red tape with Vice, he hoped that Force d'Orleans could respond before it was too late.

Back at the freshwater spring, Gambit finally managed to cough up the particles that he had breathed in while in the pipe. Believing that it was cecededinite, Labarre studied the substance on his hand, running voltage through it to see what would happen. The resulting sparkler effect not only confirmed the mineral's identity but also triggered his protective aura.... a detail that was easily observed by Jones. Speaking softly to confirm Lumen's identity, he told the man that he would protect his secret as a "professional courtesy." He also helped Labarre cover when Ham's call came in for everyone to meet at the docks, allowing him to slip off to change.

Minutes later, the five heroes found themselves watching as a freighter docked and was approached by a group of Ruler gangbangers, accompanied by Caporetta mobsters. Using his ultravision, Mister Victory was also able to find the Waller Enforcers and their Soviet handler in a nearby storehouse. As an invisible Lumen re-raised the gangplank, an ultraspeeding Mulligan knocked the surprised gang into the drink, allowing Caiman to deal with them in his natural watery environment. Menagerie joined Lumen on the deck of the ship, taking the contraband cargo and sending the seafaring sneaks scattering. When White Mask's attempt to stall the Russians by locking them in was foiled by Warhead breaking the door down. This enabled Lumen to call in Strikeforce while Mister Victory used his speed to take down the mad Russian and White Mask defeated his enhanced goons.

Once everyone was taken into custody and the contraband was collected, Labarre returned to the university to find Jones waiting for him. The former hero agreed to allow William to participate in the investigation of the cecededinite and offered his guidance and help if ever the younger man needed it.

Chapter 34

After several days of badgering, Ham had finally agreed to go to an interview at the riverboat casino that she worked at. While the interview went well enough, Ham could tell that the manager wasn't interested in hiring him. Taking a peek at the file the man had on his desk, he sees that his connection to his sister and the fact that he had ties to Force d'Orleans were listed. Feeling ornery, he also decided to take a look into the man's mind, learning that his sister had been bothering him just as much and that the man was also subconsciously thinking about Madison's ample cleavage, making Ham almost glad that the man now had a serious migraine from the experience.

While Ham made his way down the boat's gangplank, he sees a man toting a katana sword approaching the side of the boat. Appearing to prepare to attack the riverboat itself, Ham uses his ultravision to blast the hilt of the sword to pieces before it can be drawn. He also uses the power to look around, seeing three others starting to attack the three other casinos currently docked. Knowing that this was beyond what he could handle on his own, Ham hits the panic button on his communicator before removing his suit coat and starting to trade punches with Nightblade.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Meanwhile, Labarre was in his lab, studying the cecededinite when the call came in for help. Menagerie and The Spectacled Caiman were at Maison d'Force and headed out in the team's Air-amis to help, with White Mask saying that he'll meet them at the casino docks. As such, Lumen was the first backup to arrive, once again invisible. Seeing that Deathrage had made the most progress in damaging the ships, the hero attacked with his most powerful laser with less-than-effective results, making Lumen less sure of himself. A few moments later, when Menagerie and Caiman arrived, they too joined the battle. As Menagerie jumped into battle with Nightclaw, Nigel spotted Bloodpool swimming around the boats and dived into an incredibly even gator vs shark fight. Bloodhawk also joined in by clawing Ham across the back with his talons. Soon, Lumen was airborne again, playing intangible tag with the birdman.

Realizing that the villains had them outnumbered, Lumen called Strikeforce for backup, who swiftly arrived thanks to the teleportation skills of 273. Between them and White Mask finally arriving, the tide started turning with Mister Victory finally knocking Nightblade out. After issuing an order to surrender and being laughed at by the Blood Knights, Captain Fornier launched herself at Deathrage, knocking the villain unconscious with her nightstick. 273 used his teleportation powers to bounce back and forth between the ground and the flying Bloodhawk, knocking the bad guy out with two blows. This freed Lumen up to help Menagerie take down Nightclaw, who in turn channeled the power of a great white whale to help Caiman finish off Bloodpool. This left Deathcleave, who had been sparring with White Mask, to be knocked out by Mister Victory.

As the Strikeforce officers proceeded to take the Blood Knights into custody, Ham and Lumen worked together to make makeshift repairs to the damaged ships. 273, feeling as though his work was done, left with little regard for anyone else, sparking a discussion between Ham and Bianca about his usefulness to uncooperativeness ratio. Ham also mentions his need for work, with the chief saying she'd keep an ear open for any opportunities and that she'd check with the Strikeforce commissary to see if they were hiring.

Chapter 35

Red Mulligan was reading the newspaper when he called over his grandson to see a classified ad that was directed to him. It called for him to meet at an address the following afternoon, but ringing of a trap, Ham called Pastor Kyle for input. When the reverend checked his own copy of the paper, though, there was no sign of the message. Definitely smelling a trap, Ham called together the team to investigate. Lumen scouted the area in advance, finding that the address was technically the entryway to Central Park, but seemed to be clear of anything unusual. They agreed to go together to investigate at the appointed time. Meanwhile, Kevin Takei got an anonymous text message that instructed him to meet at the same place, but his response was to sent Yakuza hitmen to stake out the location, claiming that it was a suspected location to find the Turtle.

The next day, the crew of NCIS: New Orleans were setting up a location shoot at the main entrance of Central Park for a scene that included guest star Charlie Benson. While he was one of the stars of his own syndicated show on TNT -- "Rakes and Hoes" -- Charlie's agent had jumped at the chance at a primetime guest appearance, and playing the villain of the episode provided him with a chance to show his range. The shoot lasted until shortly before five so the crew was all but packed up by the time Force's



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Air-imus arrived, but Charlie's interest was peaked enough to stick around. They were also soon joined by 273, who had also received a mysterious text instructing him to be at this location. Meanwhile, learning that Force d'Orleans had arrived, Kevin has the mobsters pull back while he readies himself to join them as Turtle. Just as he's about to launch his motorcycle out of the back of the Turtle Van, however, a portal opens, sucking the Force team, the actor, the reluctant Strikeforce officer and the vigilante through to another dimension.

The group found themselves in a large elevator. As Ham and Lumen looked beyond the car, they find that they are inside a New York skyscraper on a world that is not their own, as evidenced by one of the two World Trade Center towers being gone. When the elevator opens, they are greeted by a receptionist who, when faced with their confusion, calls her boss, Bart Cartwright. While she is doing that, though, Turtle storms past her and directly into the man's office. They are swiftly joined by Ham when his name is mentioned, only to learn that Cartwright isn't talking about him, but about this dimension's version of him, who had just disembarked from the elevator with his own team, the White Knights.

Vindicator and Turtle both see the other team as a threat and both respond by firing explosive arrows from their matching crossbows, which meet halfway in between, knocking White Mask unconscious. They continue to fight with one another until Caiman intercedes, knocking both men's heads together and unconscious. Meanwhile, the two Ham's (Hamish and Hamilton) tried to work out what was going on, with the native Mulligan checking out his counterpart's drier in obvious appreciation. Lumen was taking a more scientific approach, however, in examining the electromagnetic spectrums of his companions and the surrounding area, he was able to learn that not only was the newspaper from this dimension, but so was 273.

While addressing the history of the world and the differences between them, Ham learns that all supers used to be hunted here until the White Knights were able to defend the World Trade Center from the second terrorist attack on 9/11, which began to sway public and political opinion in their favor. It hadn't kept contacts within the the metahuman community from disappearing at an alarming rate. A contact in New Orleans had been the most recent disappearance, with the White Knights only just returning from investigating. Still trying to run down leads on that, Hamish excused himself to call his contacts in the police, known as the Hounds, to see if they had heard anything. Vindicator and Turtle regained consciousness and, having developed a mutual respect for one another, began sparring in the lobby. Still looking at the newspaper, though, Lumen found a second clue addressed to Cartwright, telling him to visit Marion, Illinois. When investigating what was there that should interest them, the ensemble learns of a federal penitentiary that used to be located there. Deciding to investigate, 273 uses his teleportation abilities to take them all across the country.

Outside the facility, the group began to determine the best way to investigate, with was quickly made mute by Vindicator and Turtle using explosive arrows to blow the gate open. Assault rifle machine gun fire quickly rained down upon them from automated turrets as alarms went off inside, showing the place was not abandoned like it was reported. As Hamish, Charlie (using one of his shoes), Vindicator and Turtle and Lumen took out the guns, the hero made of light transported himself through the electronics to their control source, bringing him face to face with the warden of the prison; a man dressed in a general's



Game Master: Jim Caswell

uniform and wielding a large energy blaster. After being shot at once, Lumen went back outside to get backup.

With all of the heroes coming inside, they find themselves facing off against not only General Shayman, but also six of his prisoners / controlled soldiers. The fight quickly commenced with Hamilton taking down their speedster and Hamish knocking out Orville Jones. This world's Charles Benson used his duplication powers to make four of himself and piled on the Spectacled Caiman, while Charlie, unable to tap into his duplicates, stuck to throwing his other shoe at the General, knocking his blaster from his hand. Menagerie faced off against the man who turned his flesh into steel while Doctor Claw attempted to help Caiman by clawing at the duplicates. Turtle and Vindicator felt satisfied with just trying to blow stuff up and Lumen worked on the General until 273 came over and teleported his force field belt away. When Lumen had the opening to knock Shayman out, the prisoners stopped fighting after telepathic orders had ended.

With the fight over, 273 informed Force d'Orleans that he would be staying here, as this was his natural dimension, to help the victims of Shayman's work. The group, realizing that their reason for being here was over, assumed that they would be shipped back to their home dimension; a suspicion that was quickly proven correct by shimmering light surrounding them. Before they could be taken away, however, Hamish took the opportunity to passionately kiss his counterpart, much to Hamilton's dislike. The heroes, the actor and the vigilante then found themselves back in front of the Central Park entrance, finding that only a matter of seconds had passed.

Chapter 36

Ham Mulligan was preparing for a job interview when his Force d'Orleans communicator went off. Once the call was routed to him from the Maison de Force, he learned that Deuce Investigations were working on a case and wanted the heroes to help them. After gathering the team together, they traveled to the Deuce offices in the back alleys of the French Quarter. Once there, the group was reunited with Bodé, as well as introduced to his partners, Hugh Armstrong and the Houngan. The private detectives explained that they had been hired by Fred and Lilith Reynolds, who had recently lost their daughter and son-in-law in a fire, but that their grandson, Victor, had not been found. Knowing that the boy's father had been rather secretive of his past and they believed the infant had been kidnapped before the fire. In attempting to track down the child, Houngan had received a vision of another child being attacked.

Working together, the two groups managed to narrow down the field to three potential targets. When they discovered that one of them, Deborah Fortin, has no background, Mister Victory takes the Houngan to her home and, using his Ultravision and Ultramind abilities, confirms that her daughter is the target. Meanwhile, realizing the connections to her own past, Menagerie looks for a photo of the woman, which Lumen provides by going to the home and sending her an image. Realizing that her suspicions were correct, she decided to go to the woman directly once everyone was on the scene.

Once at the door, Marie manages to re-familiarize her with her older adoptive sister, realizing that they are both on the run from the same people. Having taken up a sentry position on the child, the intangible and



Game Master: Jim Caswell

invisible Lumen hears their veiled conversation for later reference. Convincing Deborah that they are there to help, the rest of Force d'Orleans and the Houngan enter the home, preparing to defend against whatever may come. That threat arrives shortly after sundown in the form of a mass of chains making its way down the block. While Ham spotted the original threat, it was Luman who spotted the second, sending Menagerie, Spectacled Caman and Lumen out to face them while Mister Victory and White Mask took Deborah and Brittany to the pastor's church for sanctuary.

Once again out on the street, Houngan is joined by his partners, who were also just arriving, in protecting the house while the heroes moved into battle. Caiman quickly engaged the Chains of Doom while Menagerie focused the strength of the elephant and agility of the monkey to close on Electric Eel. Lumen spent a few moments searching for a shadowy third assailant until el Vengaza threw an energy grenade at him, knocking the three detectives for a loop in the process. Lumen responded by moving toward the mercenary, removing the pins from his other four grenades before launching himself into the air. It was only by the barest of margins that Vengaza was able to remove his bandolier and dive for cover before the grenades blew up. Meanwhile, Mister Victory returned and joined Menagerie in taking down Electric Eel. He then turned his attention to grabbing ahold of Vengaza, allowing Lumen to get a clear shot while Menagerie joined Caiman in duking it out with Chains. With two of the mercenaries down, though, the hired hitman realized that he was out-numbered and surrendered.

After the villains had been taken into custody, Mister Victory used his Ultramind powers to question Electric Eel about his employers. While the mercenary didn't know who the customer was, he involuntarily offered up information on how contracts were accepted through the network. Afterward, Lumen jokingly teased Menagerie with the name he heard Deborah call her, causing Marie to tell him that using that name could get her killed, quieting him on the subject.

Shortly afterward, Marie revisited Deborah at Pastor Russell's church, speaking with her in private. Confirming that they took care of the present threat, she offered Deborah and her family the same opportunity she gave Michael; getting them out of town and to safety in a new life. Accepting her offer, Marie left to make arrangements with the assistance of Pastor Kyle.

Chapter 37

(Guest GMed by Ken Hallaron)

About a week after the kidnapping case, Pastor Kyle was at Maison de Force, working on the day-to-day paperwork of running a superhero team, when Marie walked by the conference room door. Asking her to join him, Kyle began talking to her about the last case and her reactions to the situation, culminating in him asking her directly about her connection to the Boulet family. Marie shared with him the story of being one of their "adopted" children, only to learn that the Boulet's were responsible for the death of her parents. That, when she left, she took the totem amulet as something to sell, only realizing after she had gotten away that it had power. She admitted to being on the run from Momma and was working to bring the family down. Pastor Kyle assured her that he and the team would help her bring them to justice.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

As they were talking, the front door to the maison opened, which drew the pastor's attention. He knew that the Spectacled Caiman was out, that Lumen would be working and that Ham was at a job interview, so the fact that someone was just walking in was unusual. As the pair went to investigate, they were greeted by the stretched head of Elastor. He, Hailstorm and Sea Bolt had accompanied Gator so he could confront Caiman for being a deadbeat dad. With tensions high, White Mask agreed to contact Nigel and ask him to come in from the bayou. As they waited, Lumen arrived on his lunch break for a free meal and Kyle tried his best to play good host while they waited.

When Caiman could procrastinate no longer, he arrived at the Maison de Force to find everyone standing in the entryway, all eyes on him. Gator immediately started asking him where he had been all of his life and why he hadn't said anything about being his father when they had last met. Caiman tried to explain that he didn't know about Gator until that day and had only confirmed the true a short time ago. While he tried to explain that he was unsure how to deal with the situation, Sea Bolt became accusatory and confrontational. As Lumen suggested that they take it outside, he managed to get the American Ranger out the door before closing it and frying the locking mechanism from the inside. His efforts were rewarded by a punch to the face from Elastor, who insisted that his teammate be let back in. Becoming insubstantial, Lumen stuck his face through the door just in time to see Sea Bolt be blown to small pieces.

Putting the personal affairs aside, the two groups began investigating. While Lumen went flying to get a visual of the area, White Mask worked to get everyone back to the safety of the maison, having to coerce Hailstorm from the splatter that used to be her lover. As she ran upstairs in a fit of mourning, the rest of the group headed for the sniper Lumen had spotted a couple of blocks away. As they gathered on the roof of the condominium, they quickly learned that they had been drawn to a decoy mannequin, set up to draw them in while the true assassin got away.

After Ham arrived (having been called in by Lumen) and another search that came up empty, the group returned to Maison de Force. As Menagerie attempted to comfort Hailstorm in the latter's former room, Caiman and Gator got their first chance to bond as father consoled son on the loss of his friend.

Over the next week, Hailstorm and Gator both stepped down from the American Rangers. Spectacled Caiman did the same with Force d'Orleans, with the two men deciding to take some time in the bayou to get to know one another, gator-father and gator-son in their natural habitat.

Chapter 38

With school have just started a couple of weeks earlier, Hannah Coghlan was still adapting to living in a new city and being a college student at Dillard University. Part of that was getting used to having a roommate; especially one like Cate-Lyn and her boyfriend Race. Their obnoxious mannerisms and inappropriate PDA had finally driven her out of the apartment to explore the campus for the evening. As she wandered the grounds, Force d'Orleans was gathering for a meeting with the Department Chair of the Science Department.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Ham was the last to arrive, having just gotten off from his first day at Blue Dot Donuts. Lumen was clearly unhappy about having to deal with Vanderhooten, who he felt diverted funds that should be given to the Hydrology department to fund the Meteorology department. In the end, though, he acted professionally in front of Vanderhooten to protect his secret identity. The professor explained that the projects of the top students in the department had been disappearing over the past couple of months and, while they had started out with papers being wiped from the hard drives, it had escalated. It was also pointed out that, over the past few years, the students enrolling in the science program from the immediate area had been markedly smarter than in years before and their projects were lining them up to go on to very prestigious master and doctoral programs and may actually produce some significant advances in their fields.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the building, Hannah was continuing her walk when she was surprised by a stranger appearing behind her. While the man asked if she needed anything and then proceeded to flirt miserably with her, she continued on her way until, as she started to round the corner, she felt a tremor and heard the muted cry of an alarm from within the building. Pulling her mask out of her purse, she headed for the rear doors of the building to investigate.

The heroes out front also felt the shake, realizing that it was caused by something heavy dropping nearby. Both Lumen and Mister Victory used their enhanced senses to check the building, finding four villains in the basement vault with the door laying on the floor. Lumen, turning invisible and intangible, raced ahead of the group to confront them, only to be confused with an apparent fifth member of their team. Doing his best to draw their attention, he released a strobe effect that temporarily blinded two of them as his comrades and Spitfire arrived on the scene.

As the fight commenced, Menagerie channeled the power of the elephant and monkey, grabbing Rising Star by the feet and attempting to beat Bad Moon with him. White Mask grabbed Flatline, who was still blinded, while Blue Moon attempted to teleport items from the vault into Mister Victory. Ham, in turn, stepped up to trade punches with Black Moon while Spitfire faced off against the man from outside who was the team's fifth member, Specs. Blue Moon was the first to fall after taking a blast from Lumen, causing his brother to break off from battle to grab him and run. Mister Victory took off in pursuit, but quickly learned that the villain was faster than he was. Meanwhile, Flatline slipped out of White Mask's grasp and turned on the pastor, sending twenty thousand volts surging into his heart and sending him flying back into the vault wall. Spitfire followed up by setting the hallway ablaze to stop Specs from getting away, knocking the pervert unconscious. With the odds being four to two, Rising Star and Flatline didn't fight for long before being subdued.

By the time Force d'Orleans got everyone back upstairs, Strikeforce had arrived to take the three remaining Flux members into custody. EMT's also arrived on the scene and began checking over White Mask, who had gotten a dose of Ultrahealing, but still took enough of a shock to the system that, if not for the Wonder Warrior serum coursing through his veins, would have died. Menagerie left to avoid getting her face seen, while Lumen was asked to escort Strikeforce back to base in case Bad Moon tried to break his teammates free. This left Ham to talk with Spitfire and, once he realized that she was a student at the university, took her and White Mask back to Maison de Force. Once there, he learned that the former Detroit defender was here thanks to a benefactor and bonded over their commonality of having former electrifying speedster teammates. Once they had concluded that she would make a good addition to the



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group and that it would be good to have a team to work with again, Spitfire was given a communicator and welcomed to Force d'Orleans.

Chapter 39

When Chief Fornier called, asking Force d'Orleans to come as backup security to the airport for the arrival of the ambassador from France, they agreed to help. Pastor Kyle and Ham gave Menagerie a gift first, though, in the form of an actual costume. While she was somewhat reluctant to accept it, she realized that their hearts were in the right place and put it on. The reason Strikeforce needed backup was because roughly half of their staff had called out on "blue flu" because of the ambassador's purpose for being there; to provide France's endorsement of Martin Lefèvre's run for Governor. With Lefèvre's stance on Louisiana succeeding from the Union, many of the Strikeforce officers decided to take a stand against it.

When Force arrived at the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, they joined Fornier on the tarmac while what remained of her unit took up positions around the area. While the plane arrived without a problem and the other passengers had disembarked, when the ambassador and his entourage started down the stairs, a shot rang out, hitting the ambassador's male secretary in the shoulder. While Mister Victory and Lumen put themselves in position to protect the visiting dignitary, Menagerie took to the sky and used her enhanced senses to find the shooter: Strikeforce Officer Ryan Tate. Spitfire swooped in, stopping him from putting away his rifle, and took him prisoner. As she flew him down to ground level and under cover, he didn't struggle, seemingly accepting his situation. Meanwhile, Mister Victory called Fornier over to inform her what his team had found, sending her over to take her officer into custody. He then used his ultravision to search the area and, finding no additional threats, healed the shot secretary and helped the bodyguards get the ambassador inside the terminal safely.

While Lumen continued to took over things from above, Ham worked with the security guards to get the ambassador to his car, making sure that it wasn't boobytrapped. Once he was certain it was clear, he rushed back to grab White Mask, sending the senior hero with them to ensure the ambassador's safety. When he and the others convened with Fornier and Spitfire, Lumen began asking Tate questions while Ham used his ultramind powers to peer inside the officer's thoughts. After a bit of digging, they learned that Ryan Tate had been blackmailed into taking a shot and missing with evidence that he and his sister had an incestuous relationship that was videotaped. Fearing what the revelation would due to Candace and his father, Carter's, bid for Governor against Lefèvre, he had chosen to do as he was told, in spite of it going against everything he believed in. While the heroes were convinced, due to his self-loathing over the affair, that they must have been coerced into the act, it didn't stop the fact that he had followed their orders and made the attack.

While Fornier took Tate in for further questioning, trying to find something besides attempted assassination to explain the occurrences, White Mask called from the Crowne Plaza Hotel; the ambassador was under siege by a platoon of U.S. marines. Rushing to aide, Lumen was the first to arrive, finding three bodyguards, the secretaries and White Mask barricading the entrances to the penthouse with a half dozen marines in the elevator and another two dozen in the staircase. The



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ambassador was secured in the bedroom, apparently alone. Mister Victory was the next on the scene, approaching the soldiers in the staircase to talk, but was greeted by blaster fire. Hearing the shots, Lumen went into the staircase and released an EMP, frying all of their electronic devices. Once Menagerie and Spitfire arrived on the scene, the team was able to come together quickly to subdue the faux-marines.

With the fight over as quickly as it began, White Mask called some of his old military contacts to learn that the soldiers were not a dispatched unit. The absence of any forms of ID or dog-tags supported the theory that they were imposters. As they tried to figure out what was going on, Lumen realized that the chief bodyguard was missing and, suspecting the worst, went to go check on the ambassador, only to find him dead. His throat was slit and the bodyguard was nowhere to be found. When asked, the other bodyguards said that the chief had been assigned specifically for this trip by the president's office. Realizing that they had more questions than answers, Ham had Menagerie take pictures of the blasters to post to heronet. He then called Fornier to inform her that Tate had not tried to assassinate the ambassador but was trying to shoot the actual assassin, hoping that it would at least keep him from facing arrest. He then informed her that the ambassador was dead and to send her investigators in.

Chapter 40

After taking in some of the dining experiences of Miami, Dark Force and Bronze Amazon set out for New Orleans, arriving in The Big Easy late in the afternoon. As they approached the city, Dark Force sent out a message to both the local Strikeforce and Force d'Orleans, with the latter responding first and inviting them to visit. Moments later, the duo were landing on the doorstep of the Maison de Force. Within seconds, the door was opened by White Mask, inviting them in quickly, but not before HEIDI detected minute traces of DNA scattered across the entryway.

Once inside, the two Consultants were introduced to the members of Force d'Orleans and small talk about activities in Las Vegas and Stalwart's condition ensued. Eventually, though, discussions turned to their purpose in Nawlins and Dark force explained his desire to talk to the former villain known as Silo. While the team was initially at a loss, Ham put the pieces together and revealed that she now worked at The Maiden's Virtue Riverboat Casino (knowing this because his sister worked there as well). Deciding to help out, Force accompanied their visitors so Ham could act as their emissary. Realizing that the boat wouldn't dock for a couple more hours, though, Ham offered to treat the pair to some down home southern cooking.

Meanwhile, Jack Diamond was already aboard the riverboat, clearing the table with great regularity and flirting with the young hostess at the door. As the ship pulled into dock, the manager called for a suspension of play while old passengers departed and new ones boarded, but not before learning that the hostess would be going on a break after the ship was back underway and was more than willing to spend that time with him. By the time the boat was docking, Jack had moved over to the bar, putting him in the right place to see Mister Victory walk in, talk to the hostess, and she, in turn, walking over to talk to the red-headed waitress who looked familiar the entire time he was aboard. His attention was distracted



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again, though, when the hostess brushed up against him on her way back to her post, reminding him of the upcoming break and that he could meet her in the coat closet.

With Sophie (Silo) O'Neil by his side, Mister Victory returned to the large group of heroes, introducing Dark Force and his purpose for being there before he and Lumen went over to keep the lookie-lous occupied. After gaining her permission, Dark Force had HEIDI begin scans to check for Underdark energies while she told her story of going from professional stripper to unknowing test subject to Superhuman Lustful Underground Terrorist. After being arrested, she had wanted to turn her life around, returning home only to have the Shadow Beasts destroy her parents' home (during the **Darkness Saga**). After that, she didn't want to have the darkness powers anymore and, when the others began regaining their powers, they didn't resurface in her. Completing its scan, HEIDI revealed that a dark mass was located above her sternum, approximately a half millimeter in diameter. With both Ham and Lumen rejoining them, all three men examined her chest, realizing that the spot was an inactive portal to the Underdark. Discussing its presence, what it meant and what it would take to remove it, the party realized that the boat was starting to rock unnaturally. Examining the outer hull of the ship, Lumen and Mister Victory realized that dead Confederate soldiers were beginning to scale up the side. Sending Sophie back inside, the heroes prepared for a fight when three Erylusians flew in above them.

After dropping Kazidan to the deck of the riverboat, Hauptmann Donner attacked Dark Force for daring to speak so informally to him, only to be surprised by the armor-clad man's resilience. Blue Blitz then attacked him while Kazidan went after their intended target, aiming to turn her over to Darinus. Mister Victory, after using his ultraspeed to get the jump on things, began spinning the red-clad Nazi, aiding his fellow heroes by making him a more off-balance target. Dark Force took advantage of this by popping him with his Underdark-enhanced strength, as did Jack of Diamonds, who had come out to see what all the ruckus was about and shot him in the eye with his eyepatch laser. It was Spitfire, though, that landed the final punch, knocking the more-powerful villain out. Dark Force then allowed HEIDI to summon forth dark tendrils for the first time, enabling him to move the boat to the shoreline. Meanwhile, White Mask and Menagerie were dealing with the zombie's that were boarding while Bronze Amazon continued to struggle with the ogre-like godling. Breaking out of his grasp, she morphed her weapon into a battle axe and, with one mighty swing, sliced across his chest, causing him to lose consciousness from the pain. Realizing that things had gone drastically wrong, Blue Blitz attempted to grab her unconscious mate, only to be blown up by Jack's dice and mind-blasted by Mister Victory, falling unconscious into the river below as the hero got the fleeting thought of her wanting to skin Darius alive for sending them after the amazon. Spitfire then fired a stream of flame that stopped the remaining undead soldiers and concluded the battle.

As people started to emerge from the boat to see what had happened, Dark Force used his new tendrils to lower people over the side of the boat to dry land. Ham called in Strikeforce and an ambulance to take custody of the attackers, even though Kazidan's massive wound had already begun to heal. With the boat forcibly drydocked, the management decided to close the tables for the night and, now realizing that the hostess was going to be free for the rest of the evening, Jack took his leave, but not before Ham read his mind, not feeling at all bad about the headache it gave him seeing as the hostess he had deflowered was Madison, his sister. Meanwhile, Sophie rejoined Dark Force and agreed to go with him to try and



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remove the remaining Underdark. Lumen volunteered the use of his lab in the experiment and the three of them, along with Bronze Amazon and Menagerie, left as Strikeforce arrived.

Finding himself in a university science lab for the second time in as many days, Dark Force worked with HEIDI and Lumen to create an electromagnetic inhibitor intended to expose the Underdark spot to light in order to shrink it, hoping to cause a controlled implosion of the field. With the device complete and having made sure it was what Sophie wanted, he activated the machine and watched as HEIDI confirmed that the field had shrunk, at least beyond her scanning abilities. Believing her to be completely cured of the Underdark, Dark Force shared his personal information with her, offering his help if she ever needed it. Thanking him and pointing him in the direction of Midnight for more information, the waitress left, leaving the four heroes and the life of parahuman abilities behind.

Menagerie then invited the two visitors back to Maison de Force for the night rather than staying at a hotel, insisting that Bronze Amazon and she do a “girl’s night” of ice cream, gossip and complaining about Lumen and Dark Force. While the former did his invisible/intangible thing in order to spy on the two women, broadcasting it to the latter (who tuned out when things got personal), Marie shared her fears and anxieties about the amulet and the powers it gave her. She even tried to get Diana to take it from her, believing that she could do more good with it, but Bronze Amazon refused, telling her that she had what it took and to become empowered. In the end, Menagerie kept her powers to continue fighting, but still doubting she had what it took to be a superhero.

(Go here for the rest of [Dark Force and Bronze Amazon’s Cross-Country Tour](#).)

Chapter 41, Part 1

It was Saturday morning, just before noon, and Menagerie was the only Force member at the mansion. Therefore, when two women approached the base, it was up to her to deal with them. As the security personnel disabled the grounds offensive capabilities, but left up the defensive fields (all of which had been installed after the death of Sea Bolt), she went out to meet the women and learn that they were there to ask for the group’s help in finding their missing friend. After getting their names (Felicia Smith and Maeve French) and the name of their friend (millionaire heiress Sondra Carson), Menagerie called in the rest of the team to decide how to proceed. Once together, they agreed that they should go and investigate the hotel room that she was taken from.

White Mask met up with the rest of the group at the front doors of the Hilton New Orleans Riverside, where the women were staying. Because they had all checked in together, they had gotten a spare key from the front desk when Sondra wouldn’t answer her door, so the group was able to go directly upstairs. As they prepared to enter the hotel room, though, Lumen, Mister Victory and Spitfire noticed the water stains on the carpet. Upon further examination, though, Lumen discovered that the liquid wasn’t actually water, had traces of DNA and its origin point was in the hallway, then moved inside the room. This led the group to conclude that the intruder may have been able to turn themselves into liquid and seeped in under the door. Once inside, they found the room messy, but no overt signs of a kidnapping if you didn’t know the victim’s habits. The bed was a mess and the suitcase was overturned, exposing its contents.



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Using his ultravision, Ham also discovered a metal playing card under the bed, which Menagerie identified as being the type that was used by Pokerface, a member of the Superhuman Lustful Underground Terrorists.

When they discuss the group's modus operandi of working out of strip clubs and bordellos, Felicia and Maeve reveal that the three women had visited a strip club the night before for laughs. As they shared the location of the Rod n' Reel Gentleman's Club and a desire to tag along, Ham (having checked out their rooms using his vision powers and found none of the evidence to support their cover story) became suspicious. When the women appeared to be cooperative, though, they were allowed to leave for the lobby, where they were to stay and remain in a public place to keep from getting kidnapped themselves. Unknown to them, however, Lumen followed them, invisible and intangible, and heard them discussing their connections to the Hawk, the CoJ, and how they couldn't call their "friends" for help as they were "busy."

When Lumen returned to the team and shared what he had heard, Ham had the Force support staff check Heronet for anyone with connections to the two hero teams, learning that the women were the group formerly known as the Feathers and had recently joined forces with the Collection Agency. He then had them send out a general message for other heroes to keep an eye out for the rest of the villain team, assuming that "busy" meant preparing for a heist. Learning that the women were professional thieves, he was also reminded that an amulet was laying by the luggage, but when he looked back again, it was gone.

While the group discussed the possibility of letting the Collection Agency and the SLUTs go at each other, they concluded that the spill-over to innocent bystanders could be a problem and prepared to go in undercover. As they discussed how they would arrive, however, they discovered that the two women had stolen the Air-amis and were in route to the Rod n' Reel. Once again turning invisible and intangible, Lumen took off and followed them as the others readjusted their plans and traveled on their own.

Once Felicia and Maeve parked the Air-amis where it would be found, they stealthily moved around the make-shift club until they found a boarded-up window. As Felicia pulled the boards, Maeve shifted down into her cat form to slip inside, then held it open for her partner to contort herself inside, both to the wonderment of Lumen, who phased through the wall to continue following. Meanwhile, Mister Victory watched all of this with his Ultravision, as well as seeing that Carson was strapped to a table in the basement, being examined by Dominatrix Barbie and assisted by School Girl, Nascar Nellie, Pokerface and Je-Lo. The main entrance was being manned by a casually-dressed Star Spangled Stripper while his new Starz and Stripez tended bar. Two "dancers" were on the "stages" with three men watching, while four other strippers waited in the second floor dressing "room."

When Menagerie said she was going to sneak inside, Ham directed her to the entrance used by the two Feathers, who were being directed by Lumen to where their friend was being held. When he attempted to be clever about their powers by telling Maeve that taking her cat form wouldn't be needed, she proved him wrong by shifting into a werecat. As they proceeded to the basement, Menagerie waited in the shadows and Mister Victory, Spitfire and White Mask watched from outside as they waited for the inevitable stuff to hit the fan.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Part 2

As Mister Victory watched the makeshift stripclub using his Ultravision, he saw Catnip (accompanied by Alley Cat and the invisible and intangible Lumen) break through one of the basement steps, alerting the S.L.U.T.s in the basement of their presence and attack the heroes. Using that as his clue, Ham directed White Mask and Spitfire to attack the two bartenders while he kicked in his Ultraspeed and launched an attack on the Star Spangled Stripper, who was on front door bouncer duty. As White Mask dove over the bar to body slam Starz, Stripez pulled a Peirce .57 and tried to shoot him. Seeing what was happening on the main floor and hearing what was unfolding below, Menagerie decided to join the fray in front of her and attacked Stripez, knocking her unconscious. What the heroes didn't know, though, was that the S.L.U.T.s had been increasing their numbers and the afternoon dancers were also superpowered. As the dancer on the front stage lunged for Mister Victory, the secondary one attempted to use her mental powers, failing to do anything but draw Spitfire's attention.

Downstairs, Schoolgirl, Pokerface and Nascar Nellie began battling Alley Cat and Catnip as Dominatrix Barbie beat a hasty retreat through a secret tunnel. Lumen was making himself out to be a giant cockroach until the S.L.U.T.s leader took off, and considered giving chase until he realized that it was better to stick around and help his teammates take on the large numbers. He returned to the basement in time to see Je-Lo attempt to suffocate their victim which, thanks to his intervention, only succeeded in waking her up. Meanwhile, Catnip managed to knock School Girl unconscious.

Back up stairs, Mister Victory Ultrapunched Star Spangled Stripper as the other four dancers leapt into the fray. Nutcracker joined Ballbuster in attacking him while Anchor and Maneater joined Dreamcrusher in pounding on Spitfire and Soulsucker went after Menagerie. Things looked rough for the heroes until Ham blasted five of the stripper terrorists in a cone of heat vision. While it didn't drop them immediately, it did knock the wind out of their sales enough for White Mask to knock Starz unconscious and bust through the already stressed outer wall. Having received his warning, Menagerie and Spitfire lunged for cover in the basement. On his way for the cover, though, Mister Victory once again unleashed the heat vision blast, dropping Dreamcrusher, Maneater and the rest of the wall White Mask had smashed through.

As the basement started getting more crowded, Alley Cat gave heartbreak back her amulet, enabling the woman to finish off Je-Lo after she had been blasted by Spitfire and Lumen turned his attention to Pokerface and dropped her as well. On her way down the stairs, Menagerie nailed Nascar Nellie with the strength of an elephant, knocking the speedster off her track, then launched herself at Soulsucker as she crawled downstairs, plowing her unconscious form into the cement wall. The other three Homewekers didn't arrive downstairs nearly as gracefully, not realizing that Pokerface had blown up the staircase earlier with her exploding dice. While they were jumbled in a pile of arms and legs, Spitfire blasted them with her fireblast. With all of that, it only took a few seconds for Menagerie to drop Ballbuster, Spitfire to take down Nutcracker and Mister Victory to finally finish off Anchor as the last of the exterior walls collapsed upon the basement entrance.

With the overwhelming numbers defeated, Force d'Orleans looked to the former Feathers to see what they were going to do next. Instead of turning on them, however, the two women were more concerned



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with making sure Carson was fine. Ham informed the trio that Force didn't pursue outstanding warrants and that they may want to leave before Strikeforce came downstairs. With Lumen opening the escape hatch, the women thanked the heroes and left, with Maeve stopping just long enough to give Lumen a kiss on the cheek. Moments later, Captain Fornier and White Mask was moving the section of wall and dispatching officers to take the fallen S.L.U.T.s into custody. Ham told Bianca that Carson's people had hired mercenaries to retrieve the heiress, and that she was safely rescued and evacuated by them, covering for the women that they had aided.

Chapter 42

A short time later, after the global invasion of extraterrestrial robots had been routed, Ham and White Mask were working on paperwork at the maison while Menagerie was upstairs letting Gambit in from his afternoon of hunting and carousing. Through her telepathic link with the bobcat, he reports that he overheard two star-chested men (Hole in the Wall gang members) talking about a raid on the Boulet compound, which troubles her because of the children who live there. Going downstairs to talk to her teammates about this news, she walks in on a visiting Houngan who is telling Ham and White Mask that his partners at the detective agency had gone to the compound the night before to find the missing baby, Victor. While he had intended to go with them, Houngan had been stopped by a mystical barrier and was unable to assist. Bodé and Armstrong had not returned.

Spitfire also arrived in the midst of the story, fuming over the numerous difficulties with her roommate Cate-Lyn and carrying a half-eaten jar of peanut butter. That meant that they only needed to call in Lumen before leaving to investigate the two reports. On the way to the Boulet compound, though, Mister Victory detoured through Little Russia, looking for a Waller to question. After a migraine inducing session of ultramind, Ham learned that the attack on the Boulets was not an organization-known event, leading him to believe that outside talent had been hired rather than using their own footsoldiers.

Reuniting with the rest of the group outside of the compound wall, Gambit is sent to scout out the area in bird-form while Lumen tests the mystical barrier with no problems, then flies in, while Ham uses his ultravision to scope out the situation. As such, they all witnessed Mammoth rip the front gates off as Titaneron, Arachnor, Black Widow, Chains of Doom and Stretchon came over the wall, with Hardbody, Leopard, Renegade and Ronin entering behind him. They were met by the family's security detail, but the five armed guards were clearly inadequate for the onslaught.

While Lumen kept Black Widow busy by flirting with / infuriating her, Mister Victory zoomed onto the scene before anyone else so he could use his newly-discovered ultraboom power, attacking all of the combatants at once and knocking the guards unconscious. He is quickly joined on the battlefield by Menagerie and Spitfire, with White Mask being sent into the house to get the kids into the panic bunker under the house. Being severely outnumbered, the heroes were cautiously grateful for the arrival of Boulet's metahuman guards, with Watchdog and Tracker joining in the fray against the intruders.

Spitfire covered Victory's back with her cone-shaped fireblast while Menagerie flew to the front porch to stop the faster mercenaries from getting to the door. She was the first one to drop a mercenary with a



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couple of well-placed elephant-strengthened blows, knocking the links out of Chains. Meanwhile, Ronin attacked Spitfire with her katanas, drawing blood on the fiery heroine and leading her to counterstrike with a massive blast that engulfed the female assassin in flames before getting jumped by more of the mercenaries. This left seeing that the woman didn't die to Lumen, who managed to extinguish the flames before gathering her up and flying for help. Fortunately, he encountered Houngan outside the barrier, who agreed to do what he could to save her life before Lumen returned to the fight.

While he was doing the honorable thing, the mercenaries were being very dishonorable, ganging up on the heroes and busting up the house trying to get in. Menagerie succeeded in swatting Arachnor while Mister Victory, having moved inside and taken several blows from Black Widow's venomous pinchers, dropped the spider-woman before having to stop for a recuperative breath. Lumen moved in to stop Titaneron from making it up the stairs, which left Spitfire the lone Force d'Orleans member being beaten upon by Hardbody, Leopard, Renegade and Mammoth. Watchdog proved useful in dropping Hardbody with a mystic blast, but Tracker's soulblade strike did more damage to her than the two mercenaries that were hit with her. As she fell into unconsciousness, though, she caught a glimpse of Boulet's guard dogs lunging through the air to attack Mammoth.

From his vantage point at the Titaneron-sized hole in the house, Ham watched as a machete-wielding Pappa Boulet came around the house and swung at Leopard, only to be rewarded for coming out of hiding with a gunshot wound through the chest. As he fell dead, the mercenaries began making their retreats with the job completed. As Titaneron began to flee, however, Luman dropped him while Menagerie watched the only man she had ever known as a father lay in a pool of his own blood. Setting out to find his sniper, she and Lumen searched the area only to find a blue mannequin with the rifle in a hunter's nest, just like at the scene of Sea Bolt's death. Frustrated by not being able to catch the killer, Menagerie left to find solitude and come to terms with her mixed feelings. Meanwhile, Victory and Spitfire stopped Mammoth's retreat, making sure that he too would be brought to justice.

As Strikeforce arrived to take custody of the criminals, Momma Boulet and the kids in her care came up from the bunker to kind her husband. Grieving for him, she demands that they all leave, only reluctantly allowing the coroner to take his body away, but swearing to get it back quickly so she can lay him to rest. When questioned about the two detectives, she states that the trespassers were caught and taken out into the bayou, marooned on an inlet. When Ham takes a quick run out to the location given, he finds the two men disheveled, but relatively unharmed. In the short time that they had to look around, though, they couldn't find any sign of Victor. Lumen takes the chance to check in with Houngan, who had managed to whip together an emergency voodoo doll to heal the most serious of Ronin's damage and tie her over until the ambulance arrived, and thus surviving, though she would be horribly scarred from the burns from now on.

Chapter 43

A few days later, Menagerie learned through her contacts that the Boulet family was having a private service in the compound for Poppa. Feeling the need to pay her respects to the only man she knew as a father, she arranges for the team to provide her backup, in case things went bad, and goes once more to



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visit the place she once called home. With Lumen beside her, intangible and invisible, and the others a few blocks away with Ham watching with ultravision, she was allowed to enter the compound by her former brother, Philippe, as long as she keeps her head down. While she paid her respects, Ham checked out the other guests, who were mostly packing heat and watching for trouble. They both noticed, though, when fallen-from-grace former Congressman Barry O'Neal arrived with a trio of shrews and took up position at Momma's side. He was there when, after being there for an hour, Evangeline was informed that her time was up. Going to her adoptive mother, she is informed that she will be welcomed back home, provided that she returns what she stole and that there is far more to their relationship than the younger woman knows. Taking her leave, three teenage guests try to follow, only to be foiled by a holograph-projecting Lumen making them think that Menagerie is being protected by the ghost of Poppa Boulet.

The next day, the whole team was at Force de Mason when a call came in from Chief Boulet. A Strikeforce convoy had been attacked and she wasn't going to be able to get a team out there in time. To optimize their travel, Lumen grabbed Spitfire and flew at supersonic speeds while Ham carried White Mask and Menagerie with ultraspeed. They arrived moments later to find two of the transports overturned and the other two boxing the officers in for cover, but was being kept down by a constant stream of flame produced by Napalm while the two overturned trucks were being approached by Ripstone and Concrete. The heroes' approach was spotted by the giant fire-throwing Prometheus and club-wielding Troll and battle quickly ensued.

While Lumen and Spitfire took on Prometheus, Menagerie dealt a quick, decisive blow to Napalm, knocking the fire-projector unconscious with one punch. White Mask started throwing down with Troll, exchanging punches with club swings, while Mister Victory attacked Ripstone, who was busy freeing Nascar Nellie (who made a run for it as soon as she was released), Pokerface and Je-Lo. Menagerie moved on to Concrete, who had managed to free Soulsucker before being stopped, but Spitfire blasted the stripper before she was able to escape. Meanwhile, Lumen dealt the finishing blow to Prometheus as Ham received a patched-through call from his sister, who was at work, panicked because a group of women were trying to kidnap her co-worker Sophie, who was the former S.L.U.T. known as Silo. After using his enhanced vision to see that his sister was being grabbed by one of the women, he switched over to ultra-strength to knock out Ripstone. As an exhausted White Mask punched out Troll, he and the villain's club were grabbed up by Mister Victory at ultraspeed, racing for The Maiden's Virtue Riverboat Casino, leaving the rest of the team behind and unaware of the danger. Instead, they took off after the escaped S.L.U.T., leaving the Strikeforce officers to re-secure the prisoners as recover from the unknown and unseen assailant who had been sniping them inside their cover, but had fled when the tide had turned.

With his supersonic speeds, Lumen was able to quickly track down the runner, doubling back to get his female teammates before Spitfire opened fire on Nascar Nellie. Concentrating on avoiding her fire, though, she didn't see Lumen get in front of her, then didn't see anything at all after getting hit with a dazzle, tripping over her superspeed feet and tumbling into unconsciousness. With her recaptured, Menagerie tried calling Ham and White Mask to find out what was going on, but became concerned when she didn't get a response.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Meanwhile, the two men had arrived at the casino, dropping White Mask at the door to stop Sophie from being taken before Ham went to confront his sister's attacker. Using the club, he struck at Whorefrost, who then retaliated with an ice storm that not only struck him, but knocked White Mask unconscious, froze Sophie in place and even blasted her teammate Earthmove. This drew the attention of the other three Elementata S.L.U.T.s on the deck, bringing them in to face the lone hero as well. As they all attacked him, he switched over to his ultra-invulnerability, leaving him unable to reply when Menagerie called. After standing up to all of their attacks and finally relaying his location to the rest of the team, he stood tall, demoralizing them. Their mood was not improved when the rest of the team arrived, leading Earthmove to push the frozen Sophie into the water before rejoining the fray.

As Spitfire directed Lumen to go after the frozen waitress, Menagerie attacked Whorefrost, knocking the ice queen out with two elephant-empowered claw slashes. Wet was the next to fall under the flames of Spitfire, leading the other women to start working toward fleeing. BJ blew the roof off the casino before flying off, leaving Earthmove to be knocked out by Ham and Hot getting tag-teamed by Spitfire and Menagerie. With all of the other women unconsciousness, Ham lifted into the air using his newfound ultraman flight to chase after the last S.L.U.T.

Meanwhile, after using his flight to propel Sophie down the river to safety, Lumen brought her giant ice cube to shore and began dousing it with solar rays to thaw her out. By the time she was freed, wet and shivering, he received a call from Ham, asking for help in catching up with BJ. Leaving her on the shore, he quickly caught up to Mister Victory, who had already attempted to manipulate his powers to take her down, almost falling out of the air in the process. But with Luman carrying him, Ham was able to use his ultravision to knock her from the sky.

After returning Mister Victory and the unconscious S.L.U.T. to the boat, Lumen returned to the former criminal to bring her back. Clearly appreciative of his protection and (uncharacteristic) politeness in her time of need, Sophie invited him to meet up with her after she got off work to escort her home. That time came sooner than they had imagined, though, when her boss gave her the rest of the night off (along with everyone else, as the roof of the boat had been destroyed) and she asked him to walk her home, ending with her inviting him inside for his "reward." Instead, however, he said he would rather take her out on a date, shocking and charming the former stripper into saying yes.

Chapter 44

In the two weeks following Poppa Boulet's funeral, Les Cranes activity had increased dramatically as they began work on taking back the territory they had lost during his time on the run. The New Orleans PD had requested the help of Force d'Orleans in trying to curb the violence as the gang struck pockets of other groups on the streets. According to reports by the few survivors of the experience, Les Cranes offered their opponents the chance to throw down their colors and leave. Apparently, those that didn't were attacked and killed; some by gunshot wounds, but others had been dismembered, while the youngest and those that were the most destitute seemed to have been drained of their life force. While the Wallers and Rulers seemed to be primary targets of Les Cranes, the Yakuza hadn't been hit nearly as hard, seemingly having gone to ground for the moment. And while banger bodies were the primary result



Game Master: Jim Caswell

of these raids, innocents were being caught in the crossfire, making the situation even worse. Menagerie's contacts had told her that Les Cranes had a new leader that had stepped up to run the family; an old friend who was being called "The Doctor" in hushed tones.

Deciding to patrol in packs, Menagerie and Lumen had struck out in one direction, with Marie dressing in the black and white's of Les Cranes to draw them out while Lumen lurked intangible and invisible. What she lured in, however, was a group of Rulers who were looking for some fun and a fight. Seeing her, they thought they could have both until she mentioned Poppa Boulet and Lumen manifested a hologram of his ghost. After putting the fear in them, Menagerie caught one to intimidate, who begged not to be fed to the Doctor and fainted. Deciding to take to the shadows to follow him when he woke, the two heroes began to wait.

Meanwhile, in the skies above New Orleans, Spitfire patrolled from above looking for trouble spots, but was having trouble concentrating on the job at hand. Whenever she wasn't completely focused on what she was doing, she found herself thinking about Florida and how nice it would be to travel there. As she had never been to Florida before and it was nowhere near spring break, the thought would quickly snap her out of the daydream, but eventually her thoughts would go back to the desire again.

Elsewhere, Ham was cruising in the car he had run up to Arkansas to rent, wearing the gang colors of St. Louis' Schwartz Organization, who were one of the many organizations that had looked into taking over territory when Boulet was originally arrested. The fact that he was making a deliberate target of himself hid the fact that White Mask served as his backup, riding in the trunk of the rental. It came as no surprise, then, when Les Cranes emerged to confront him about his colors. When their intimidation tactics didn't work, though, and his invulnerability was revealed, White Mask popped out of the back to confront the three gang members back there as the monstrous form of Rot emerged from the shadows. Realizing that this wasn't going to go as easily as they had hoped, the reverend called in the rest of the team as backup.

After Rot tore his own hand off to throw it at Mister Victory, showing both how disgusting and quick his powers worked, Ham used his Ultraman powers to try to lift the beast into the air, only taking half of it with him, leaving the other half to start growing back its top. Once clear of the buildings, Mister Victory switched over and caused a massive explosion, causing the monster to get blown into multiple pieces, which also started to reform. By the time Lumen and Menagerie arrived, there were multiple Rots reforming and White Mask was taken down by bolts of energy fired from the shadows, with a rotten arm crawling up his body to strangle his unconscious form. Things continued to get worse as the battle continued, with each slice making more and each blast healing back at incredible speed. As one of the severed arms grabbed Menagerie by the throat and her frustration over ineffectiveness grew, her animal totem began to glow, vaporizing the monstrous appendage touching it. By the time Spitfire arrived, though, the group was being overrun by Rots, pestered by ineffective gangbanger gunfire and sniped from the shadows.

As the fiery female hero ashed the one strangling White Mask and resuscitated him back to life, Lumen moved into the shadows to cast a brilliant light on the attackers, blinding one of them as the other teleported them away. Moving over to heal White Mask back to full health, Ham called everyone to come together, wanting to have a unified front. As they did this, Lumen used his hard light (force fields



Game Master: Jim Caswell

combined with holograms) to squish one and trap another under a fish trawler while Mister Victory and Spitfire opened fire (literally) on the Rots, cutting them down to flaming piles of rotting flesh. With only two Rots left, Lumen switched over to a coned net to capture them, offering it up to Spitfire to roast. While she went around vaporizing what was left of the rotten corpses to keep more Rots from forming, Lumen formed a Dumpster for Mister Victory to throw Les Cranes into.

Once the police had arrived to take the gang members into custody, the group came together to try to figure out what was going on. When Lumen used his hologram ability to show them the two women in the shadows, they were able to recognize them as the women accompanying Barry O'Neal, the fallen Alderman, at Poppa's funeral. Putting the pieces together, they learned that O'Neal had gone to ground shortly after charges of corruption were filed, along with his wife and aides, leading Force to the conclusion that they had begun working voodoo and were now the ones in charge of Boulet's operations.

Chapter 45

Over the next couple of days, Hannah "Spitfire" Coghlan was plagued by restless nights and daydreams of inexplicably wanting to travel to Florida. After a failed attempt to pay attention in class, and then returning to her apartment to find Race sleeping in his underwear on the couch. Thoroughly frustrated, she turned to Force de Mason for peace and quiet. When she arrived, she found only Ham there, who had gotten off work and, rather than go home to watch Madison's struggles with job hunting after being let go from the damaged riverboat casino, had also sought the solitude of the headquarters. As such, when Hannah found that her notes from the morning's class consisted of a map of Florida, she was able to turn to him for help.

After discovering that the destination highlighted was a city called Tarpon Springs, Hannah asked Ham to use his ultramind powers to see why she was so fixated. After warning her of the painful side effects, he agrees to help and, after a few tries, manages to glean that she was receiving a subconscious request for help. Deciding that she was going to investigate, Ham agreed to go with her as back-up. After changing into their work clothes, Mister Victory picked her up and, running along the Gulf Coast, was able to make it to their destination in mere minutes.

Once in the city proper, Spitfire was able to guide Ham south to an area of the beach where two people were waiting. Having been acquainting himself with the team records as the de facto team leader, Ham was able to recognize Hoshi as one of the founding members of Force d'Orleans. The man who was with her, though, was a mystery as he asked who Spitfire was. After they explained the rules of dual identities to him, he identified her as the daughter of Claire and that he was both hers and Hoshi's father.... oh, and that he was a dragon. After proving his claims as best he could, he explained that he had summoned his children here to aide their brother, who was being stalked by unknown assailants. While the man wasn't able to give a good description of his son, Ham was still able to spot the young man using his ultravision and the fact that he was leaving the dock area. Unable to wait any longer for his other children (of which he was unsure how many there were), he sent them off to rescue the boy while he flew away in the opposite direction.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

With Spitfire carrying him this time, the three heroes flew into town, arriving as two men in black approach the young man. Hoshi took the initiative to attack one of the two men, leaving any subtlety at the wayside. As the battle ensued, more agents emerge into the sunlight, their skin sparkling in the light. Already outnumbered two to one, though, more foes join the fray from the soup kitchen's entryway and roof, showing that they had a small army ready to capture the boy.

As Spitfire quickly dropped one of the sparkling agents and Hoshi knocks out the man wearing a silver helmet, the flying man in orange and yellow attempted to grab their brother and, failing that, began shooting lightning at him as he fled. As Spitfire pursued the boy and his attacker, the other two heroes started being dog-piled. While Hoshi was able to avoid most of their attacks until she was set upon by the sparkling vampire-like agents, Mister Victory took a pounding without falling under their blows and blasts. The electricity-thrower soon connected with his target, but before he could swoop up his prize, Spitfire rained down a barrage of fire that eventually knocked him unconscious. Hoshi's enhanced strength, coupled with her impressive martial arts, managed to drop one of the men in black and the two sparklers that her sucking on her neck as Mister Victory took a moment to play possum to recuperate, and then launch back into action. Now able to concentrate on one foe at a time, he took one of the guns away from the blaster-wielding stuntman as Spitfire fried his jetpack while the other marksman took shots at her and Hoshi faced off against the last man in black. Before the heroes could get a decisive win, however, all of the attackers disappeared from sight, leaving no trace of their presence, save for the damage they had caused, on the street battlefield.

Once sure that the fight was over, Hoshi flew over to Spitfire, who held the unconscious man in her arm. With the two women agreeing that, the next time they laid eyes on their father, they owed him a good butt-kicking, they looked over the young man, finding silver dragon scales under the epidermis on his back, proving once and for all to Hoshi that they were related. Taking him from Spitfire, the aloof older sister used her powers of healing to rejuvenate the boy and mend his wounds. When Ham suggested that the trio take him back to New Orleans for safekeeping, however, Hoshi tells them that she will take him with her instead, stating that he will be safe with her new team; her new family. Forcing a promise that they will come visit so that Spitfire can get to know her new sibling(s) when Teddy was ready (as they had finally learned his name), Hoshi called someone on a communicator. When a mystical portal opened, she walked through, it closing behind her before the two Force d'Orleans heroes could decide whether to follow or not.

Chapter 46

The Houngan had spent the past few nights sleeping restlessly due to regular visits from his spirit mentor, who advised him to join forces with the local heroes to fend off a coming catastrophe. Going to Maison de Force to get their help, he is greeted by Menagerie, who calls her contacts while he communicates with the spirits to learn what is going on. By the time the rest of Force d'Orleans had arrived, the two had learned that a summit had been called between the four crime families in the city and the spirits of the dead gangbangers wanted blood vengeance for their deaths and were willing to diverge the location of the meeting to get it. The heroes decide to stake out the location early with Ham watching the place from



Game Master: Jim Caswell

the restaurant across the street while Lumen planted bugs inside and Houngan crafted a Voodun Doll of healing for Lumen, with Menagerie acting as his assistant.

When they arrived at the hotel, they found it to be under repair, having been damaged years ago during a hurricane. While people worked construction on the upper floors, a group of personal assistants were setting up the ballroom for a large meeting. As it got closer to the meet time, White Mask, Spitfire, Menagerie and Houngan (all in plainclothes) joined Ham and Dr. Michael Vanderhooten (Lumen in the disguise of his co-worker) at the restaurant to see who showed up. The first arrival was Martin Lefèvre, a Louisiana politician who is running for Governor on a platform of independence from the United States, much like what Quebec had done with Canada (and had approached Ham for his endorsement). He is shortly joined by Doctor Voodoo Whosane, two of the Macbeth Sisters, Tracker and five La Cranes representing the Boulets, Kadokawa Takai (and five ninjas sneaking in) for the Yakuza, Val Mangione, her aide Totes and four Rulers for the Caporetas and Mykola Loginov with three of his muscle-bound Hole in the Wall gang enforcers.

Once everyone was inside, Lumen slipped in invisible and intangible while Menagerie and Houngan snuck in the old fashioned way, leaving Ham, Spitfire and White Mask watching (Ham) and listening at the table. Lefèvre took charge of the meeting, stating that a peace had to be reached among the gangs to avoid further loss of life, though the groups didn't want to budge on their individual desires to run things. As the meeting progressed, the Cranes began getting anxious, not liking what they were hearing. Lumen took this as an opportunity to speak to the politician, warning him of their anxiousness. Lumen couldn't leave it at that, though, and snuck up to "flirt" with Val again (remembering her from their last encounter), causing her to first lash out, then reveal his presence to the rest of the room. This led to everyone drawing weapons and accusing Lefèvre of setting them up, bringing the heroes in to save the politician's hide. As Ham tried to calm everyone down, explaining that they weren't there with the politician but shared his desire to see the violence end, Houngan snuck in to put Lefèvre and the three ninjas that held him at swordpoint to sleep. Spitfire quickly removed the wanna-be-Governor to safety, causing the different families to disband the meeting and go their separate ways. While the heroes chose not to try and take anyone into custody, Lumen tailed the Russians while Gambit was sent to follow the Caporetas and Menagerie followed Takai back to his son's sushi restaurant.

When the heroes reconvened at the Maison de Force, Lefèvre awoke and complained about their interference, blaming them for the failure to obtain peace and the waste of resources that had gone into arranging the summit. While the heroes questioned his motivations and alliances, they had nothing to charge him with, allowing him to leave, but with an invisible / intangible tail. As Lumen spent all of his available free time with Lefèvre, he learns that the man's goal was truly to broker peace, but for a bump in his numbers in the upcoming election. When the politician failed to get the families to reconvene, he shared his frustration with someone on the phone, stating his fears of losing the election without something to swing the voters over to his side.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Chapter 47

It was the Wednesday before the November elections, and the gubernatorial race had the incumbent leading in the polls by fifteen percent. Martin Lefèvre ads were all over the television, newspapers and radio and he was on the campaign trail, pushing his independence platform. On this particular afternoon, Dr. William Labarre was stuck in a departmental meeting, headed by Dr. Michael Vanderhooten. Marie Guilbeau, meanwhile, had agreed to meet with Houngan at the Dueces Detective Agency to begin work on understanding what Voodoo was, with the two of them starting with how to enter a trance; a first step that the young woman struggled with.

Thusly, It was only Ham Mulligan and Hannah Coghlan at Maison de Force when news broke on Channel 4 that Lefèvre had been kidnapped from the campaign trail. Charisma Davis reported that a mercenary known as Troll had taken credit for the attack on social media, and it was his Snapchat photos, which were shown on the television, that revealed that they were hiding out in the old Maiden's Virtue riverboat casino, which was now at the Foreman's city junkyard due to the damage done during the battle with the SLUTs. In spite of knowing where they were located, Ham was reluctant to rush to save the day due to his dislike for Lefèvre and his politics, but in the end (and after a call from Pastor Kyle), the two heroes headed for the junkyard.

As the rendezvoused with White Mask a half block from the yard, Mister Victory used his ultravision to scope out the scene, finding Lefèvre bound to the broken bar, Troll sitting at a roulette table messing with his laptop, a man with a small shield on his fist standing guard, and a small, skinny white dude standing off to the side, yelling about something that the other two men were ignoring. Still torn over the idea that this was a political move for a sympathy vote, and therefore not knowing if he wanted to intervene, Mister Victory was finally convinced by White Mask to take action, rushing into the room to free the prisoner, rushing him off to the Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge and Game Preserve for safety (and to get the Federal Government involved).

While Victory was running south with Lefèvre, Spitfire and White Mask engaged the mercenaries, with the pastor facing off against the Buckler Battler while Hannah was attacked by both Troll and Muscles. White Mask managed to land a solid punch on the shieldbearer and Spitfire held her own until Victory's return, when he took over combat duty on the (non-Fury) diminutive loudmouth. As the slugfest continued, Victory took a moment to hit Troll with his ultramind ability, learning that they were hired by an unknown client to kidnap the politician, hold him until after the election, and then kill him if he didn't win, which leaned away from the theory that Lefèvre had hired them himself and towards the idea that he was working as a puppet for someone else. As Victory turned his attention back to Muscles, Troll swung his club at Spitfire, who caught it, then used it as a fuse to set his arm aflame, knocking the big green hater unconscious. Then it was White Mask's turn to drop Buckler Battler with a strong uppercut that got past his shield. Lastly, Mister Victory, using his ultrastrength and with a little help from White Mask, knocked Muscles out for the count.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

As Ham bound the kidnappers, White Mask called Strikeforce for a pickup, but after learning that the investigation was continuing back at the office, the three heroes agreed to bring the villains in themselves while the park rangers would escort Lefèvre back to New Orleans.

After handing the mercenaries off, the heroes joined Lieutenant Fornier in her office to find her on a videochat with Officer Tachi of the Washington DC branch, who was running a search of Lefèvre's personal and campaign financials. While Lefèvre had tied a large amount of his personal funds into his campaign, he had also received a large number of contributions from companies in Quebec and France, including one that had gone bankrupt specifically to donate to his cause. While all of these mysterious donations were unusual, none of them were illegal. It was during the videochat that they were told that the news was reporting Lefèvre's rescue by Force d'Orleans, furthering the idea of pushing for the sympathy vote. Tachi said that she would continue digging while the heroes thanks Fornier for keeping them in the loop and took their leave.

Once back at the maison, Ham placed a call to Tazi Cristo in Tennessee, asking if she could use her connections from being a reporter to help him get a statement on the air. After a few calls, a videochat recording was arranged, in which he stated that Force d'Orleans was happy to help anyone, no matter their beliefs or political stances, but that he personally thought Lefèvre's platform was bad, finally taking a political stance (but not the one that Lefèvre had asked for those many months ago).

When Tuesday rolled around, Ham watched with interest as the votes rolled in. By the time the polls, closed, though, a winner was projected with the incumbent governor winning by twenty-one percent. While thrilled that Lefèvre had lost, Ham had a nagging concern for the man's future life expectancy now that he was of no use to his backers.

Chapter 48, Part 1

Cyber Monday rolled around with Dr. Lebarre and Hannah in class, beginning the preparations for approaching finals, though Hannah's math class was taking the material far more seriously than Lebarre's Intro to Hydrology class. Meanwhile, Marie was job searching on the Maison computer when Pastor Kyle and Chief Fornier came in, discussing the fact that Sea Bolt's murder investigation has been filed as a cold case. Logging in to one of the other computers, Kyle went to hero.net to see if there were any matches to the circumstances surrounding the murder. Their search was interrupted, however, by a call from one of Fornier's Strikeforce officers, reporting that NOPD had found a dead body at the ports that may have been Mister Victory. Immediately getting on the communicator, Pastor Kyle called Ham, learning that he had just ended his shift at the donut shop and was walking home. Calling everyone, the team headed out to converge on the murder scene.

When they arrived, Fornier quickly chastised the officers that "they don't all look alike" before approaching the victim's body. While Fornier searched the water-logged body for identification, Spitfire noted the lack of blood on the body, in spite of being wrapped in chains and barbed wire. Menagerie, given her upbringing, knew that the body hadn't been in the water more than a few hours due to the lack of decomp and bloating, while Lumen could tell by the smell of the water permeating from the man's lungs that he



Game Master: Jim Caswell

hadn't been drowned at this location. Finding the smeared driver's license, Lumen ran it through the visual spectrum to try to pull out the info, learning that the man's name was Randall Parsons from Jonesville, Louisiana. Using her tablet, Fornier called up a photo of the man and, using a 3-D holographic rendering created by Lumen, Menagerie made the water-logged face resemble the picture. Running a background check, Fornier identified him as a retired marine who had served three tours in Sala'aq. Menagerie was also able to remember stories of how the Klu Kux Klan in the area would take people and wrap them in barbed wire and throw them into the river when they were done with them, as well as the fact that they had a strong presence in Harrisonburg; just ten miles from Jonesville. Deciding to go investigate, Mister Victory and Lumen took off at super speed while the others followed in the Air-amus.

Getting to Jonesville in a matter of minutes, Ham found the fanciest restaurant in town and walked in like he owned the joint. Casting an image of Randall around himself, Lumen joined him at the table. While the two men waited for service, the busboy noticed them and came over to talk to Mr. Parsons, who feigned a sore throat to cover his voice being different. The boy showed relief that his friend was well, in spite of being sick, after going to face off against the "masked hatemongers." Feeling sympathy for the boy, he wrote him a note telling him to go to Dillard University and ask for Professor Lebarre, hoping that he could help the boy after his loss. After the busboy left to return to work, Lumen took his leave so the boy would be encouraged to talk to Ham about what had been happening.

Turning invisible and intangible, he returned in time to see Ham order fried chicken, watermelon and a grape soda, much to the chagrin of the waiter. He then summoned over the boy again, explaining that Randall had to leave due to being sick, but asked for more information about what had been going on. Dawson explained that the Klan had been terrorizing people in Jonesville for weeks, speaking against not just people of color or other sexual orientation, but also paras in the world. Mr. Parsons had decided to do something about it. With his military training, he felt a responsibility to do help. Given the superhero mentality and influences like Colonel and Mister Victory, they had nicknamed him the Son of Victory. With his hero-worship on full display, Dawson explained how much he admired, but worried, about the consequences of facing such people. In spite of not being able to do anything, Ham promised the boy he would do what he could to help Parsons. Learning the former marine's home address, he once again sent the boy back to work while Lumen left to search the house.

Arriving and fading through the window, Lumen quickly searched the house, finding a small arsenal for the man to use, as well as a military notebook full of notes about his battle with the villains. He had details of attacks he had made on them, as well as surveillance photos of them, showing that they had modified their standard Klan apparel with a cape and energy burst insignia, detracting from the Fantastic family's emblem. Taking the notebook, he returned to the restaurant and secretly slipped it to Ham, who said that his chicken had too much paprika, paid his bill and left just in time to meet up with the other members of his team, who were just arriving in town. While Fornier explained that she had to follow procedure and report in to local authorities, and encouraged them to wait, she knew that they wouldn't. She was, of course, correct as the group left the Air-amus for her to use and continued on to Harrisonburg under their own powers.

Upon arriving in town, the group split up to check things out. Lumen went to the police station, turning invis/intangible to wait for Fornier's call to see how they reacted. Ham, White Mask and Spitfire went to



Game Master: Jim Caswell

the central park to see what kind of attention they could draw while Menagerie switched her costume to the more casual wear and started going around town to find out what she could learn. The ones that were willing to talk to her warned of the Klansmen who were violent and dragged people into the woods to never be seen again. But the fun started for her when two men tried to avoid talking to her. Getting in their faces, she spurred them to become hateful.

Meanwhile, Lumen heard the call he was waiting for and watched as the sheriff went to tell his men to round up anyone known to be associated with the Klansmen, then followed as one of his officers went to warn his fellow haters. Following the call to the other man's home and learning his address, Lumen returned and informed the sheriff of Officer Charlie's loyalties. As the sheriff went to confront his officer, Lumen disguised himself as Randall once more, causing Charlie to believe he was being haunted before turning himself in from fear.

Mister Victory decided that doing curls with the town tank would draw more attention than just hanging out, which was correct. He was only doing it for a few minutes before a bullet bounced off his back. He turned to see where the shots were coming from in time for the second shot to bounce off his eyeball. Spitfire, watching all of this, also saw where the shot came from and raced over to take the rifle away. When the man called her "Irish," she knocked him unconscious with the butt of the gun.

Menagerie was having just as much luck with the two men who decided to show her who's boss. As the first one pulled his shotgun from the back window of his pick-up, she tapped into the speed of a hummingbird and took it away from him before he could take aim. As they took turns trying to punch her, she dodged and weaved, making fun of them until they took off running. Switching over to the power of an elephant, she lifted their truck, teasing them before carrying it to the police station.

Agreeing that things had gotten out of hand, the sheriff began working to get warrants and arrange for the Fantasti-Klan to be rounded up. In order to ensure that things went smoothly, Force d'Orleans volunteered to come back if needed when the warrant was carried out. They then returned to New Orleans, with Lumen making a side stop in Jonesville to find Dawson and tell him that he was actually Randall's ghost, encouraging the young man that he's fine and that the boy was to seek out the professor and do something with his young life.

Part 2

Two days later, Force d'Orleans was summoned back to Harrisonburg by the sheriff, requesting that they act as back-up while they raided Ron Leroy's farm, which had been turned into the Fantasti-Klan's compound. Zooming back to the farm to scope it out, Lumen sees that there's a dozen men with automatic weapons and two rocket launchers waiting. Knowing that the sheriff's department only had five squad cars and seven officers, Lumen zipped back to New Orleans to ask Strikeforce for additional hardware for the local constables. With flash-bangs in hand, he tests what would happen to explosives if enveloped into his light field for transport and confirms his fears that, once exposed, the chemicals become unstable and either blow up instantaneously or become inert.



Game Master: Jim Caswell

Flying back in a solid form with the grenades, Lumen met up with the others in route to the compound. When they arrived, Ham started setting off the land mines and anti-personnel that had been buried on the property (as he had scoped them out while still in town using his Ultravision), while Lumen went in and teleported the rocket launchers out of the building, then back in, which caused one of them to explode, blowing out the window it was next to and knocking out two of the Fantastic-Klansmen. Meanwhile, Menagerie and Spitfire started disarming and knocking out the men on the ground while White Mask used the new opening to leap into the house and work with Lumen to take down the rest. By the time they were done, all the sheriff and his men had to do was gather up the unconscious prisoners, leading him to mention that they had an interesting interpretation of back-up, but was glad they were there.

A few days later, once back in New Orleans, Marie got a phone call from Bianca, telling her to meet her at the NOPD in two days for a job interview. As opposed to working for a security firm, though, the Strikeforce chief told her it was to work as an assistant Medical Examiner, having been impressed with the heroine's work with identifying Parsons' corpse. Grateful for the opportunity, Marie agreed to the meeting.

The next day, Professor Lebarre received word at his office that he had a pair of visitors. The receptionist escorted Dawson Ray and his mother to William's office, who warmly greeted the two and shared that he knew what had happened in Jonesville and appreciated how the boy had helped his friends. When asked what the boy's plans were for his future education, he admitted that he had dropped out of school to work as he and his mother struggled to make ends meet. Able to see with his own eyes how rough things were for the two of them, William excused himself to make a call, getting in touch with Ham and Pastor Kyle to see what could be done to help them move to New Orleans and make a better life. Agreeing to help, Kyle would contact Drébin Technologies about hiring her onto the Maison de Force cleaning staff while Ham talked to his landlord about renting them the newly-available apartment in the building. With plans in place, William invited the whole team to dinner with Dawson and his mom, coming together to celebrate being able to help people make their lives better.

Chapter 49

It was the Sunday night before first semester finals and Hannah was once again using the common room at Maison de Force to study. Marie was also working on her own homework, as The Houngan had insisted that she begin meditating so as to anchor her own mind and emotions before trying to deal with the spirit realm, lest she be overwhelmed by them. Ham was at the church with Pastor Kyle, cleaning up (at ultra-speed) after the Sunday night bible study. William was in his lab, recording experiment results and not worrying about the tests that would begin the next day ("that's what T.A.'s are for"), when he is notified that he has guests. Carol and Dawson arrive with dinner in tow, wanting to thank him for everything he's done to help them. He clears a table and talks with an inquisitive Dawson about his work while Carol sets out the home-cooked meal and the three sit down to eat.

All of this is disturbed when Chief Fornier calls the Maison, asking Spitfire to gather the team and meet her at Dillard University's Applied Psychology and Neuroscience building (nicknamed The Hippo Campus by staff and students alike). Marie leaves the sleeping Gambit laying on her bed as she joins Spitfire, and



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Mister Victory and White Mask head out from the church. William makes up an excuse about a forgotten faculty meeting to excuse himself, insisting that Carol and Dawson don't have to leave, but cautions them about not messing with the experiments, secure in the knowledge that the Cecededinite samples were securely locked away in his safe.

The team convened at the Hippo Campus building where they find it taped off due to the front doors being ripped off their steel frames. Fornier explains that this is the seventh mysterious attack over the weekend and that she has called them in due to the evidence of parahuman strength. When campus security arrives with surveillance of the incident, the ensemble sees a large man dressed in an overcoat and fedora waiting outside the building as a student begins to exit. When she sees him and retreats back behind the locked doors, he moves forward and rips the doors off, grabbing the girl and leaving the area. Lumen is able to identify the woman as a Teacher's Assistant to one of the professors in the Neurology Department and, using his keen vision and holographs, is able to replicate the man's appearance. Menagerie is quickly able to identify him as Maurice Octavia, otherwise known as Majority of One.

Lumen slipped away to tell Carol and Dawson that he was going to be a while, but asked if they could pick it up later. She agreed to meet him for dinner on Wednesday and packed up as he excused himself to return to the team. Meanwhile, Hannah received a personal phone call from Race, who was wondering where Cate-Lyn was, showing signs of being a bit too controlling for Spitfire's tastes, but also making her worry that her roommate could also be a captive.

They both returned to the discussion to learn that Octavia was currently in custody in the Chicago Strikeforce office, awaiting transfer to Radke, but was currently unresponsive. The group hypothesized that they were dealing with one or more of his duplicates, but questioned what his motivations were, but knowing that he had at least one, if not more than one, captives. As such, they set their sights on finding him. While Spitfire and Mister Victory prepared to take to the skies so he could search the city, Menagerie tapped into the senses of the wolf and the speed of a cheetah and set out to follow the scent. Lumen, Spitfire carrying White Mask and Victory carrying Fornier followed, with the Strikeforce chief talking to Ham about his personal life.

Menagerie led them to one of the few houses hit by the full fury of Katrina years before. Using their assorted enhanced visions, they determined that seven Majority of One's were inside with seven female captives being held in a side room. Spitfire was relieved to learn that Cate-Lyn wasn't one of them. Lumen suggested that Fornier call in backup, which she did, but insisted that, if Octavia was a tough as they believed, her men might be outgunned. That didn't stop her from leading the charge, though, to go inside. Lumen slipped around the side and used his holographics to blend in with the Majority's while Menagerie went to cover the back door. Ham used his ultraspeed to start evacuating the captives while White Mask kicked open the front door, followed by Spitfire and Fornier.

Lumen managed to distract two of the Majority's into concentrating on the back door while White Mask took the first swing, but things started out difficult with Fornier punched back out the door. Spitfire, hesitant to use her flames in the dilapidated building, punches a One, staggering him backward. As the two at the backdoor try to go out, Lumen blinds one while Menagerie blindsides the other, knocking him unconscious. White Mask also managed to pull off a haymaker to drop a second one inside. Spitfire



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continued to soften up the one she was punching, making Fornier's taser blast effect enough to drop him. Mister Victory, having successfully evacuated all of the women, joined in on the fight, switching from ultraspeed to ultra-strength and dropping a fourth Majority, while Menagerie dropped the fifth and Lumen blasted the sixth after it was served up flambeau-style by Spitfire. With all of the other duplicates down and facing the entire group by himself, the seventh surrendered.

As Strikeforce and paramedics arrived on the scene, the team questioned the remaining Majority, learning that he was being taken to Chicago when someone attempted to teleport him against his will. This left the seven of them separated while the original stayed in custody. He was only semi-coherent, though, proving that the experience had messed with their mind as well. Talking to the women, they learned that the Majority's had kidnapped them to make them their brides, causing Ham to exclaim "holy Rodgers and Hammerstein!"

After everything was done, Hannah returned to the apartment, proceeding to kick the intrusive Race out to return to his (seldom used) dorm. Then, settling in to study some more, she was soon joined by Cate-Lyn, who explained that she had taken refuge in the library to study for her own classes, trying to avoid her ever-present and continuously-distracting boyfriend. Realizing that her roommate actually had a redeeming quality, the two women sat down together to prepare for the next day's exams.

For the conclusion of the Boulet Family storyline, go to [B.A.D.A.S.S. Chapter 21](#).