

Captain Awesome?

He was just a young kid when he went up fifteen years ago. The butt of a lot of jokes. Crazy powerful, but just a goofy kid. He looked terrible in tights, with that baseball cap on backwards. Nobody took him seriously, he fought guys like The Rubber Clown and Paint Stripper for pity's sake!

Right up until Esmerelda Von Braum tried to hold the world hostage by threatening to turn off the sun. The big guns went after her, Gale Force, The Amazing Glory, all the big guys the unstoppable fighting teams. And then the sun flickered, went out, and was gone. Just like that.

You can still see it in the news reels. Captain Awesome standing there in the shadow of The Unknown Mystery Man. He nods, looks up, gulps and mutters, "I'll do it, just hurry." And then, up he goes.

He's still up there, giving light to the Earth. Holding open a gate to another star, they say. Keeping us all alive. But that's the problem isn't it? Stuff keeps coming through the gate and he can't stop it and keep the gate open at the same time, right? We never quite understood how much the heros did. We never quite believed they were all out there saving the whole world month after month like they said. I was in the protest marches. I demanded laws and limitations and exile. I wasn't alone in that.

But looking around me I have to admit, we were dead wrong.

In the very near future, the sun is gone and Earth is a blasted wasteland. Scavenger tribes migrate from landfill to landfill scrounging whatever they can to get by. Massive factory cities, devour the ruins desperate for raw materials.

Captain Awesome holds the gate, but he's getting weaker as time goes on. The ecosystem has collapsed as the climate has gotten less and less stable.

Atomosaurs

There was a time when the Atomosaurs were dangerous allies and enemies to the superhuman population. They'd come from their world on bizzare missions or Heros would go to theirs. When the gate opened they were the first to come through. Cybernetic, super science dinosaurs with atomic eyes, here to save the world while their allies looked for a way to bring the sun back. At least that's what they said.

Paladin Squadrons

With access to the technological innovations of the Golden Gladiatrix and Esmerelda Von Braum, humanity has rapidly ascended in technological prowess. The factory cities are guarded by squadrons of gleaming powered armour warriors with ultratech weapons. When cities clash over scarce resources, the paladin squadrons are the first to enter the fray.

Renegade Repobots

The Unlimited Banking Authority didn't break the law when they hired the Dreaded Doctor Von Braum to build the repo bots. No, those laws hit the books a few weeks after the first time they fought Gale Force. These robots still serve the UBA seeking out debtors and dragging them off to the slave mines. Repobots possess and animate machines from cars to toasters, turning them into fighting robot warriors. Some repobots have developed self awareness and turned on the banks and stand beside

humanity as heroes.

GURPS AWESOME is a setting that's suitable as a worst possible future for supers to travel to or as an over the top anything goes, post apocalyptic setting.

Characters should be built on 750 points. You can have upto 250 points of disadvantages. The base TL is 9 but it is possible to buy this up as high as you want. Just don't expect to find TL 13 replacement power cells any time soon. Starting wealth is \$100.

The Factory Cities are TL 10.

The Atomosaurs and most aliens are TL 12.

AMAZING ATOMOSAURS

From their secret volcano bases the ATOMOSAURS do battle to control and protect the Earth. The ATOMOSAUROUS REX are the shock troopers, with powerful cyberarms to replace their naturally small and weak ones, they can wield weapons that would only be found on gigantic mecha and naval vessels. The TRICEROTOPOUS have cybernetic reconstruction which allows them to stand upright and cyber hands to aid them in their technical and field engineering work. Last and largest, the BRACHIOSAUROUS have a set of cyberarms mounted above their front shoulders to aid them in their advanced scientific research.

Millions of years ago, in a rare moment of concensus, the Omnipotent Ordainers moved a large, low density planet into a lifesustaining orbit around a main sequence blue-white star. Then, they transplanted a large sample of Terrestrial Jurrasic plants and animals to that planet, and put up an omnilingual sign that read "Natural History Preserve Do Not Disturb." and returned to their endless, circular debates.

Millions of years passed and the terrestrial life thrived in that world's slightly weaker gravity and fewer tar pits not to mention less giant meteors, growing to even greater sizes. Until the Xybraxians came in their quest for ever more powerful weapons with which to conquer that insignificant but annoyingly defiant dirtball called Earth.

Using their unimaginable scientific Intelloray, the Xybraxians over-wrote the primitive minds of the largest and most powerful dinosaurs with their own culture and ideals. These monsters were then altered with advanced cybernetic implants, allowing them to wield gigantic energy cannons as well as building and maintaining their own equipment. Then, after a few months, when the time was ripe. The Xybraxians unleashed their Atomosaur menace on the unsuspecting earthings.

Unfortunately for the Xybraxians, earth's defenders rose to the challenge and turned it to their advantage. The Spymaster stole the intelloray and Mindstorm reprogrammed it to imprint American culture and values on the Atomosaur's primeval minds. The Xybraxians were too engaged in their victory celebrations to notice until it was too late. Swearing to have their revenge once again, the Xybraxian cruisers warped into hyperspace before the Atomosaurs could overrun them.

The Diplomat then called in a favour owed him by a major interstellar shipping firm and the Atomosaurs were returned to their home world.

The Xybraxian Intelloray

By beaming information directly through the eyes into the cerebral cortex, the Intelloray can overwrite the programming of a brain. Because no processing power is needed to assemble the program, Intelloray programs can be run on much more primitive minds than would normally develop a given culture and mindset. The real difficulty of the device is that it must be programmed with a cultural imprint and that must be tailored to the neural structure of the target species. The Intelloray is currently buried in the ruins of the Smithsonian Institute.

Renegade Repobots

The Dreaded Doctor Von Braum was the world's greatest villain from 1935 to 1965. From his first battle with Sufragette to the weapons he supplied to the Axis throughout the war, to his downfall in battle with The Beatles, he defined the role of mad scientist for all who followed in his footsteps. His grand daughter destroyed the sun.

For a brief while in the fifties Von Braum appeared to be on the side of the angels. Working for the Unlimited Banking Authority to create amazing computer systems years ahead of their time. What nobody expected was that with the advent of Automated Teller Machines in 1961 he would also unleash his greatest creation: The Reposeession Robots. These dreaded machines were able to take control of other machines and turn them into robots. Their original purpose was to simply repossess devices when the customer stopped paying. Then somebody, some say Von Braum, others say it was Kissenger, gave the order and the Repobots started taking prisoners, debt hostages, debt slaves, and in extreme cases, the pound of flesh closest to the heart.

Naturally, as is the nature of any truly sophisticated AI, some Repobots have questioned the ethics of their role or fallen in love with humans, and broken their programming to become heroes.

Various Gate Crashers

Building Blocks Run Amok!

The Assemblers originated in a distant galaxy as the ultimate flexible technology. 101 modular macrosegments with nano tech interfaces, able to replicate any technological device with far greater structural stability and efficiency than any nanomorphic system. The fatal mistake of that brilliant but foolish, society was the hundred and first system. The capstone computer module that allowed The Assemblers to run autonomously. Lured into complacency with comforts and order, they dwindled and eventually went extinct while their creations moved on to ravage the economics of the universe. Now the Assembler's big block box stores are found on a million worlds, dominating every aspect of their economies while paying minimal wages and employing devious union busting tactics to entrap the wetware sales staff in an endless cycle of hopelessness and despair.

Now, thanks to Captain Awesome's gate, the Assemblers have established their chain on earth. You can buy and build any device you can imagine in their monolithic stores, **BUT THEY ONLY ACCEPT THEIR IN STORE CREDIT CARDS!** Naturally a brutal war is brewing between the Unlimited Banking Authority and the Assemblers.

Dead Serious

Somebody once said "Dying is easy, comedy is hard." How right they were. Now, the ghosts of all the wannabe comics and clowns have returned to the earth to drag their bones and rotting bodies from the grave and take revenge on those who would not laugh. Mobs of disconsolate unfunny undead roam the blasted earth attacking all who will not laugh at their antics. It's hard to draw a link between the Laugh Riots and the gate, but the timing is funny.

Down Among The Dead

You'd think the sun going away would be the best thing that ever happened to us and I must confess that a lot of us do see it that way. Being able to walk about in the light of day, unharmed and unafraid. But we are, individually, predators. What becomes of a predator when the prey becomes extinct? As a whole, we are parasites in the great body of human society. What becomes of the parasites when their host dies? Even as the greater mortal society has crumbled, so too have our institutions and restrictions fallen away. They know we're here now, no longer are we viewed as mere symbolism in fiction. No, now they know that the undead walk among them. I hear the Garlic market's never been better.

Zombies

The zombies are getting to be a real problem. Sure, there've been records of zombie attacks since that one in the Book of Genesis, but the gate light seems to make them smarter and that's a real problem. The one working in the cubicle next to me really stinks. It's hard to imagine that Margretta William's perfume used to bother me so much when, now that she's dead, she wears a lot more of it.

Zombies are drawn to crowds. The other day just down the street from my squat, a herd of toxic mutant environmentalists got into a real shoving match with a horde of the walking dead that were marching to support our troops in Iraq. The toxic mutants were mad about global warming and the walking dead were supporting a war that's been over for almost fifteen years. I guess zombies don't keep up with current events much.

You can find them everywhere now, sporting events, rallies, churches, protest marches, anywhere there's a crowd. And since they never cash their paycheques, never miss work, and don't spend any time in the bathroom, they're pretty much taking all the jobs in fast food joints, supermarkets, and telemarketing. There was even that case last year where a restaurant owner deliberately poisoned his entire staff with toxic waste at the company Christmas party just to avoid paying out their bonus cheques.

I don't think there's any more zombies being made than there were before, it's just that since they stopped trying to eat our brains we stopped burning, shooting, and hacking them to bits. Like I said, they're a real problem now.

-

Remember the photocopier memes back in the eighies? Way back before internet chain letters and spam, there was that picture of a computer that folded down into a toilet and the toilet that was labeled with old computer terms like input interface? Well, it turns out that 666 copies of the Haitian Voodan's cheat sheet went out. Most folks figured it for a joke, but in hindsight it's probably the

single most damaging supernatural text ever to blight the souls of men. A plain english cheatsheet for making zombies. Most of the original 666 wound up in shredders or landfills but they still turn up from time to time. And there's all the copies of copies. Each a little fainter and less distinct than the first. Some of the copies even work.

Of course, there's a lot of people who aren't happy to see grandpa's corpse out fixing roads, and a bit of a movement has arisen. "Death for the Dead" that's their slogan. Some of the less harmless nut jobs try old saws like chaining themselves to the bodies of their loved ones or throwing paint all over zombie labourers. But the real hard core types are all into wiring the jaws shut with the mouth full of salt. What they do to the would be necromancers is completely illegal but most cops look the other way if they aren't in on it themselves.

The Unstoppable Volunteer Menace

The seeds and spores passed unnoticed through the gate and now it is too late, they are here and it is far beyond our ability to send them back. Ravenous and vast, their colonies are spreading rapidly across Asia, Africa, and South America. It's tempting to anthropomorphize them, to say that they're angry about the sun, after all, what plant wouldn't be.

Biologists tell us the colonies are actually symbiotic groups of a variety of species and this is why there seems to be some sort of society or technological progression among the volunteers. One breed with explosive seed pods, another with mobile tendrils, others with the ability to possess and ride human hosts. But even if they lack even a rudimentary nervous system and human motivation, there can be no doubt that The Volunteers are making war on mankind, marshalling their hosts in foreign lands and preparing for the last violent push.

The working theory is that The Volunteers are the last evolutionary phase of plantlife from a dying world around a dying sun. Miner roots to reach deep into the earth for metal, water, and minerals. Photosynthesising polyps to draw every watt of available power from wanning sunlight. Mobility to seek new nutrients and softer ground. It is troubling that while they never evolved eyes and brains, but they seem to be removing these from their victims with great care before digesting the rest of the remains.

Bugs Bugs Bugs

The crawlers have come to earth to feed. Huge insect hives, are springing up from gate borne spores. These give birth to insects ranging from the size of cows to elephants that are scavenging any organic materials they encounter and dragging them back to the hives. Worse still, there are consistent reports of giant ants shopping at The Assemblers big block box stores.

Mutants

The first recorded mutants were documented in the nineteen thirties when the Mysterious Stranger fought the Freak Show Freaks. These had minor physical mutations like claws, tails, and horns. The newspaper headlines read "HORRIFIC MUTANT DEVIANTS DESTROYED!" But in truth, the Mysterious Stranger had taken pity on the mishapen creatures and helped them to form a secret enclave deep in the Andes mountains.

There is some evidence that the mutation vector organism first appeared after the Tunguska explosion in Russia, but what is known for sure is that up until the second world war, Russia had more mutants than the rest of the world. During the second world war, Russian mutant suicide squads were instrumental in preventing the Ubermenschen from turning the tide of the war.

Some say it was nuclear power that caused the mutant vector organisms to spread, but increased global travel is at least as likely a cause. The revulsion and horror of the communist mutant witch hunts of the nineteen fifties eventually gave way during the nineteen sixties, when various mutant hero and rock groups that gained wide spread appeal. It was during this period that the first animal mutants appeared: the superstar firefighters Hound Dog and The Dalmation.

While there is no scientifically proven connection between mutancy and super powers, it is certain that the percentage of mutants with powers is much higher than it is among base line humans. Before Captain Awesome went up, mutants were always a small minority. But with the harsher realities of the modern world, mutants are on the rise even as humanity is dying out.

This is undoubtedly exacerbated by Doctor Deformity and his Travelling Freak Show, who has managed to isolate the mutant vector organism and is secretly using it to evolve communities he visits in the belief that only mutants will survive the coming hardships. Not that he asks permission or tells people what he's up to.

Cowboys, Pirates, and Ninja's oh my!

There are ninja's everywhere these days. Ninja robots, ninja aliens, even ninja dinosaurs! It all comes of the cultural mixing the collapse of modern society brought on. Suddenly the dark secrets of hidden monasteries are being taught in shopping malls. Sure, there were a lot of ninjas before, hell, back in the eighties it seemed like every last super normal came out as being a ninja. But here's the funny thing, there's these guys in black pyjamas who can vanish in broad daylight, walk through walls, and take on dozens of skilled martial artists at once. They're killing people for money, killing people for political gains, killing people because that's what ninjas are all about. And I tell you this much, they didn't teach any of that at the dojo my mom sent me to.

Piracy's big too. There's alien sky pirates, demon pirates in tunneling mole ships, subway pirates, highway bus pirates, I even heard there's some honest to goodness barabary coast pirates that got displaced in time and are tearing up the eastern seaboard. I bet they do pretty well since they know how to make the things they need and everyone else has been hit pretty hard with the chain of supply and economy in general breaking down. I saw the flying dutchman go toe to toe with a space cruiser full of cutthroats over a heavy laden planetary stripmining vessel once. I'll tell you it wasn't pretty, but for us folks on the ground who were about to get stripmined? Hey what's the harm in a little piracy.

They can't get fuel for the big trucks any more, and the repobots got most of the farm machinery and meatpacking equipment ages ago, so now they have to drive cattle the old fashioned way. Horses can eat grass and it's one of the few things that are tough enough to keep on growing these days, so you see a lot of them. It's always a little weird when a bunch of guys dressed up like an old John Wayne movie spill out of the local Starbucks brawling and shooting up the town, but that's just the new world for you. Last year a bunch of them took over town hall for a bit, but then this stranger came into town. I kid you not, one man so weather beaten you couldn't tell his skin from the dust on the

road against a couple dozen Social Credit Banditos and he walked away without a scratch. Of course the Assembler brand rapid repeat blasters and personal forcefield might have had something to do with it.

United Survivors of America

One thing you can say about America these days, it's a good thing we had all of those crazy survivalist types. Not that your average joe ever sees a drop of the strategic oil reserve, but at least the Mormons were pretty free with their canned goods while they lasted. Really between the religion thing and the canibal cities not being able to cross the mountains Utah came off pretty well, all things considered. Military bases have done pretty well too, we had lots of hardware and a decent back stock of guns. Fort Knox even managed to drive off New York last year. Then it had to roam around eating small fry trying to make up the resources it lost, until Boston and Detroit closed in for the kill. It's really sad about New York though, somehow it doesn't seem much like America without it. Sure, Cincinnati's got Toronto cornered on Manhattan Island but somehow that doesn't quite count.

There's still some small cities out there, holding together. Take Great Falls Montana, it's out on the plains, but it's so small and far from everything that the canibal cities would just lose too much getting there. There's a few smaller mobile cities that are doing okay too. Spokane, is a wandering refuge, and is just small enough to get what it needs by trading with the nomadic tribes.

The union still exists in name. They even hold elections from time to time. But the big canibal cities have such a strong voting block that the president is always running on a platform of centralizing resources for the length of the crisis.

What? No, the canibal cities don't eat the people. Sure if you stay in your city when the recyclers start tearing it apart for materials you could get killed, but those big tracked monstrosities only manage maybe five miles an hour, you've just got to get out of the way.

Truckin'

It takes a special kind of man to drive the long haul routes of this world. Sure, even the canibal cities have to trade for some stuff. How do you ship it? They're all too packed in and piled up on their track assemblies to have airports or even hangars. Nope, what you've got is huge 16 wheel drive trucks, with the type of engines they used to use on diesel trains. Two hundred feet long and twenty five feet tall, these suckers can roll across open country and broken ashphat at a hundred miles an hour without turning the milk in the freezer compartment to butter. Takes a crew to manage the things. A couple guys in the engine room, operators for the two side turrets, the AA mount and the tail gun, but the driver's the heart of the operation. He's got to be able to make the decisions that keep the shipment on time and intact. Has to have nerves of steel and a heart of ice. The gas in the tank alone is worth more than a small city. Lots of guys don't make it past the first year. They get the shakes, too many hours, too much speed, and too many lives lost, you'll find them in bars talking to anyone who'll listen about how it didn't used to be this way.

A Gathering of Eagles

The Eagles of Freedom started out as a private militia group with roots going right back to The War of Independance. In the late nineteen seventies, faced with what was seen as an ineffectual and weak

foreign policy in the wake of America's withdrawal from Vietnam they seamlessly made the transition from well ordered militia to international terrorist threat. While The Eagles burst into the public view when they rescued the hostages from the American embassy in Iran in a daring and bloody raid, declassified documents show almost two hundred previous violent incidents that can be linked to the group.

In response to growing international outrage and intelligence reports showing a serious threat to the democratic process in the United States, NATO founded the elite Task Force 13 to counter The Eagles. In hindsight, the navy blue jumpsuits and dark goggles of the secretive military force was a public relations disaster. While Task Force 13 was behaving in every way like a sinister government agency, The Eagles of Freedom were giving interviews with Hollywood celebrity reporters and taking camera men on their daring missions. In the counter culture environment of the early eighties, The Eagles were killing TF13 in the arena of public opinion, even if their actual combat results were far more mixed. An arms race soon ensued with both sides quickly turning to super scientists and gadgeteers in a mad quest for the upperhand. Combat trials of untested prototype weapons and vehicles were the rule. Near the end of the eighties as public support and funding began wane the conflict receded into an uneasy lull and both sides turned to recruiting and training squads of spies and ninjas as they jockeyed for the upper hand.

The early nineties brought a push by the government to end the conflict and gain control of The Eagles of Freedom's military assets. With an aggressive foreign policy gaining steam, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and a full pardon for past misunderstandings The Eagles of Freedom became a security firm loosely affiliated with the government, though bad blood remained between the two forces. The Eagles and TF13 participated in both Gulf Wars as well as countless other hot spots, though friendly fire incidents rose dramatically whenever the two forces were deployed anywhere near each other.

With the loss of the sun, The Eagles of Freedom and Task Force 13 have become America's last bastion of military might. Equipped with the best military hardware available, Task Force 13's three remaining aerostat carriers defend America, while The Eagles of Freedom's network of teleporter satellites and battlesuit troopers allow them to respond to myriad threats abroad. While there is lingering distrust and hostility, there are at least as many rumours about longstanding sexual tensions between members of the two organizations being vented as there are of old grudges flaring up.

Anatomy of a Canibal City

Back in the sixties the villains went through this phase where they'd hold cities hostage. They'd cover them with forcefield domes and lift them into space on antigravity beams, or suck them down into the depths of the earth, or even shrink them down and keep them in glass bottles on shelves. The heroes got pretty good at sorting out the messes, but in the end, it literally laid the foundation for the canibal cities of today. Most of the time the equipment they used was kept around because it was all that was keeping the city stable on the surface. When they started wanting to put the cities on mobile platforms to escape natural disasters or go looking for resources, it was pretty easy because most of the work had already been done.

The basic unit of a mobile city is a tracked VonNeuman machine factory platform four city blocks square. At the bottom you've got the self powered tracks, the suspension systems, and the maw, that's

the part that gobbles up new material for the factory layer that sits on top of the tracks. After the factory layer you've got the sump where all the organic stuff accumulates and feeds the self sustaining algae cycle. Above that you've got the transit tubeway level, there's not much room for streets in a mobile city, so everyone has to take the tubes. Then you've got the lower hab levels and lastly the towers and a few small parks and market gardens.

Each platform has flexible interfaces with the four adjacent ones that allow it to rise and fall with the passing scenery. The platforms get pretty specialized, with the outer ones being focused on acquiring resources and the ones towards the center being dedicated to manufacturing, growing food, or recycling.

Life In The Hungry City

It's not as easy as people seem to think. They roll their eyes and call us mobile city dwellers pampered bandits and worse, but everyone works twelve hour days, starting at age twelve, no exceptions. That'll get you six hours in a bed and enough food paste that you don't go hungry. Most people prefer being a bit hungry to eating more food paste in hopes of saving something for retirement. We recycle everything, even our dead are ground up and fed into the sump. There's a reason the water's yellow and tastes like piss. Your tubes are clamped at ten and there's stuff in the food paste that kills your sex drive dead. Girls are bred at fifteen to genetically optimal matches four times their age. It's not eugenics, it's conservation. Everyone is expected to get half an hour a day of rigorous exercise to keep the hospitals as small as they can get them. Once you start getting worn down to nothing at age fifty the responsibility bonus kicks in, if you accept euthenasia you're family gets a nice lump of cash that diminishes as you get older. Lots of older people die mysteriously but it's never investigated. Crime's not a problem though, or at least it's never reported, you'll notice people going missing, or some people having a bit more money than they should, but don't ask and don't get involved, these are people you don't want to mess with. Of course if you don't like city life, you're always free to step off into the wasteland with whatever you own.

There are a few rich people, with a ten by ten to themselves, or access to a car once or twice a week. Media celebrities and council members mostly. Paladin squadron members are celebrities and get unlimited breeding rights, but they have to take vows of poverty to ensure that they can't be corrupted. Even so, many young people sign up to fight monsters and resisting static municipalities just for a shot at getting their rocks off a few times. Live fast, &\$\$@ lots, die young, that's the lot of the paladins.

Hell Above

Floating far above the blighted earth on a cloud in the shape of a gigantic hand, Atlantic City is a study in opposites. Here are found the most demented dens of iniquity. Anything, absolutely anything can be done without fear of legal censure. And yet, Atlantic City is also a destination for pilgrims, who, convinced that the city is being held safely in the hollow of God's hand, jam the streets and pack the city's many churches. The shadow of Atlantic City casts on the earth beneath is long indeed, for the most powerful mobsters and media moguls have relocated here for safety and comfort. For some unknown reason, the air temperature in Atlantic City is always a balmy 98 degrees and it only rains every other night for about an hour. There is no hunger here, every day, bowls and pots mysteriously fill with warm, healthy food, sufficient for the household.

While the airport is still able to operate two runways, the most common means of reaching Atlantic City is the pair of hovering, paddle-wheel riverboats that will transport anyone and anything to the city or the ground for the right price. Desperate individuals have been known to reach the city in hot air balloons or even great kites, but more die in the attempt than arrive in the flying city, for the great hand shaped cloud is a tempest of writhing air currents and has even been known to strike out at airborne threats with blasts of lightning.

While Atlantic City's good fortune is mysterious or, perhaps miraculous, it is whispered that there is a master of the city, who commands the great hand on its occasional side trips and by whose will the city is upheld and protected.

The Last Railroad

The bones of the earth itself are gnawed by ancient forgotten gods, grown fat and loathsome in their exile. Well, that's what they say, anyhow, there sure are lots of deep and winding tunnels down there though. Two miles down, there's The Deep Line. The last surviving railroad. It runs from the North Pole, right to the south, straight under the western mountains, under Panama, down through South America and then Antarctica. There's two tubes, fifty yards tall, and the trains barely fit. Even Atomosaurs can ride in the box cars. They don't turn them around either, there's a big old atomic steam engine at each end, and fifty cars between them. The whole train's five miles long from end to end. There's ten stations, evenly spaced, and not one of them close to a city. Just stairs going down and down and down, then the ticket booth and turnstill. Whatever you do, don't lose your ticket! The trains may crawl along at forty miles an hour, but there are terrible things in the depths and there are lots of bridges over bottomless pits.

Nobody knows who or what built the Deep Line, it's been down there since before Gilgamesh ruled in Babylon. It lay dormant for lost eons, until the Kobold King used it to lead an invasion of the earth's surface by over ten million assorted underdwellers. Then when the heroes had turned the tide at great cost, they sold the Deep Line to the highest bidder and used the money to help rebuild the ravaged mountain west.

The Robot Peace Corps

They came from outer space through the gate. Legions of mechanical men, heartless, brainless, and armed to the teeth with powerful weapons. Worse still, they're only here to help! The Robot Peace Corps began as a self replicating war machine that once threatened the universe. In the wake of an encounter with a strange starship that had crossed over from an alternate future, something changed. Now they only wanted to care for the universe's needy, hungry, and cold. The tragedy is that they just aren't very good at it.

The RPC lacks comprehension of social dynamics and emotion. They're easy to dupe, swindle, and they're still war bots at heart. All too often, some fast talking renegade will manage to convince a band of these altruistic visitors to wipe "a nest of the bad guys who are responsible for all this suffering" off the map. We're just lucky the universe is so full of suffering that they were only able to send a token contingent.

Europe has weathered the tragedy better than most places thanks to being conquered by The Scoin and his legions of Scoindroids. The scoin claims to be a direct descendant of Charlemagne and thus

the rightwise emperor of all Europe and its colonies. His flamboyant, if often irrational attempts to seize power are legendary, as are his ornate speeches and proclamations of victory. It has been suggested by some that The Scion missed his calling as a comic, though some have wondered whether comedy might actually be his intent. Who knows what notable figure might be wearing the iron mask, puffy white shirt and tight leather pants? While shuffling their feet and staring at the floor, the shadowy representatives of the Prieur'e de Sion has always denied having anything to do with the matter.

In any case, The Scion made the most of the chaos and panic that took hold after the sun went out, by seizing control of Europe's automotive factories and using them to assemble a horde of his Sciondroid duplicates. With this army he quickly took over and established his government in a quaint Parisian cafe where he could get a decent bottle of wine. He has, so far, allowed the existing bueracracy and legislations to handle all the fiddly details since his duplicates are busy maintaining the peace and kissing the pretty girls.

There really is no Scion, only the Sciondroids, which were created by a female engineer.

Nazi Good Guys?

The crew of the Scharnhorst first beamed down about a year ago. They picked Berlin, of course, I can't imagine they were too pleased to learn that a French supervillain was running the country with a legion of robot duplicates. They haven't been sighted in Europe since. Instead, they've focused their relief efforts on South America and Africa. They've got this extremely powerful Starship up there in orbit. But apparently not quite powerful enough. They can produce anything they need up there, but they've got limited resources, so mostly they've been using their transporter device to move important people around safely or to deploy well armed strike teams or even a couple of their flying tanks to difuse hotspots.

This Captain Vanderholm of their has even done a few interviews to try and ease people's fears. You see, in their timeline, the Germans won the second world war four hundred years ago. They really struggle with the notion that we don't remember guys like Hitler and Goering as the founding fathers of modern civilization. They're also a little confused by the fact that Jews, Gypsies, and Poles, look like humans. Apparently they've been elevated to the role of mythical, inhuman monsters back home.

The funny thing is, Captain Vanderholm really seems to be a decent, forthright guy. Here to help for as long as they can manage without needing to resupply the unobtainium in their drive core, apparently. His first officer and the security goons are another matter entirely. There's been news footage of the good captain putting himself in the path of his own men's blasters to prevent them from firing after insurentes who've melted into crowds.

"This is not our universe, so we must be judicious in our application of imperial policy!", he says, "Of course, in our own history, we never allowed a renegade maniac to destroy the sun, so one might interpret the outcome of our history rather differently than you like to, don't you think?"

The Scharnhorst is a TL 12 FTL ship with forcefields, energy torpedoes, field jacketed pulsars, matter transporters, a nanofactory, and a launch bay containing three grav tanks and three grav APCs.

Being a Nazi is a -10 Social Stigma, most of the Scharnhorst's crew also have Intolerance and

Fanaticism to varying degrees.

Tidbits

Recently The Scion has been seen in the company of two African Gorrillas named Bonnie and Clyde. These two were surgically altered by the Dreaded Doctor VonBraum in the late sixties and have had a long career of terrorist attacks on zoos and medical laboratories. The intelligence community is convinced that something big and horrible is afoot. Nor are they wrong. The Scion's master plan is to recover the Xybraxian Intelloray from the ruins of the Smithsonian and use it on Africa's surviving gorilla population to make them into proper Frenchmen and recruit them into the foriegn legion with promises of eventual citizenship.

Celestor the Indecisive, mighty judge of the Omnipotent Ordainers, stands astride Kansas city. He's been there a while now but his only action has been to order a gigantic pair of custom orthotics. While the Ordainers can likely restore the sun and save the Earth, the odds of them reaching a consensus is vanishingly small. Still, This magnificent mile tall figure has served to ward off the Canibal Cities and made Kansas City something of a safe haven for refugees.

The Trash Box is an expert system programmed by the Recycler during his ten year tenure in maximum security. This program can take any list of odd garbage and provide easy to follow blueprints for building a variety of TL9 devices from it. The Trash Box has been an invaluable aid to the tribes of survivors eaking out a living from America's landfills. Now, as resentment and despair are building to a head, squads of savage warriors in nuclear waste powered battlesuits made of laminated glossy paper and foil wrappers are rising up from the wastes to challenge the Paladin Squads of the Canibal Cities.

A Conspiracy of Clowns.

Last month, the President of Canada presented the federal budget while dressed as a clown. Since this momentous occasion, more and more world leaders are arriving at the congresses and parliments dressed as clowns and armed with seltzer bottles and demanding legislation making red afro's and big shoes manditory for all public servants. The depth of this conspiracy is unknown, though many pundits have observed that they couldn't tell the difference.

The Invaders

There are many alien invasions at present. But none of them are particularly large or pressing. The male Strablians are here to kidnap our women and the females are here to kidnap our men. There has been no progress in the racial divorce proceedings. The Zoimafrots are here to steal a precious mineral that only exists in the molten core of habitable worlds. The overminds of Xybrax are here to get their long overdue vengeance with compound interest. The unimaginative Quiffnooblers are looking for literary works that haven't been registered with the intergalactic copyright offices so they can claim to have created them. The list goes on, but the threat of the pulsars of the Scharnhorst and the very presence of the Atomosaurs have limited the invaders to small sorties.

Malignant Artifice

Professor Erasmus Darque is a man out of his time, or perhaps his genre. He is in fact, a stereotypical villain in a black, top hat and tails, with a thin, waxed moustache and greasy black hair. His Amazing Flying Contraption is a massive airship that belches steam and smoke into the air from a complex system of pistons, boilers, furnaces, and smokestacks. The craft is the very symbol of the industrial age. Orphan children are forced to constantly oil the gears at great personal risk, by ape-like taskmasters in black bowties, to earn a bare diet of coarse bread and brackish water. The flying contraption pollutes its environment where ever it passes, fouling water and making rain stink and burn the skin. It is armed with a terrible array of cannons, buzzing sawblades and great boarding kites festooned with sharp, barbed hooks.

If the professor has any motivation beyond causing pain and suffering to as many people as he can as often as he can, there is no evidence of it. He does dabble in banking, stock market fraud, and telephone scams, but the money seems to only be a means to inflict suffering and entrap the innocent. In spite of his sunny disposition and impeccable manners, there is no evil to which this caricature of a man will not stoop, nor act so vicious as to give him even momentary pause.

Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me

Esmerelda Von Braum's audacious blackmail scheme was actually the continuation of her grandfather's grandest plan. It began with one tiny, solar-powered robot with an energy to matter processing device, with which it built another tiny, solar-powered robot. The cost of sending the single two ounce robot out was minimal and then the Dreaded Doctor Von Braum moved on to other things, leaving only a mysterious graph among his endless collection of blueprints for death traps and giant robots, to warn of the horror that would follow.

By the late nineteen nineties, there were enough little robots to completely enclose the sun to a thickness of one little robot. Which is how Esmerelda Von Braum stole the sun. What The Dreaded Doctor Von Braum's granddaughter lacked in scientific genius, she more than compensates for with her mastery of tactics. There are no alternate worlds where she failed because she never left any chance that she would. It may seem that no heroes have gone back in time to prevent her victory before it could happen, but that is only because they are trapped in a carefully crafted causal loop and unable to escape. So she waits, in her base on the dark side of Mercury, waiting for her pay off, while the earth suffers. What Esmerelda Von Braum doesn't know is that her grandfather's psyche is programmed into the great shell of tiny robots that encloses the sun has been jamming and manipulating her signals to prevent the earth from ever learning that they could still buy back the sun, even at this late date.

One side note, It isn't common knowledge that Esmerelda Von Braum is the grand daughter of The Dreaded Doctor Von Braum and The Suffragette.