

Champions Now Hero creation preview extravaganza

Our opening statements, as provided by me:

- HEROIC POWERS, YES; HEROIC IDEALS, MAYBE
- UNLESS IT'S FOUGHT, EVIL WINS – EVERYWHERE AND ALWAYS

Our location is Ashburn, Virginia, as chosen by Keith because he knows it well. Notable details include the extensive data centers and the fact that 70% of world internet traffic passes through there.

Keith's hero: **NEBULA**

This is our three-corner start-up "sketch."

- Person: alien princess from a far-off planet; privileged, planned life, fun; beautiful, sophisticated, intelligent
- Powers: glowing, flying, cosmic blasts
- Problems: fish out of water, it's so complicated here! Enemy alien hunters

The build

Situations	Points
Unusual Looks: Exotic + occasional odd behavior, 11-	10
Psychological: Doesn't get basic values (often)	15
Psychological: Believes power must be benevolent (sometimes, irrational)	20
Dependent non-player character: Brigitte St. Claire (Psychological: loves Nebula, often; 15)	15
Hunted: Alien-enemy hunter (group, super-powered, ruinous)	20
Hunted: Department of Defense (organization, manipulative)	20
Total Points = 100 + 100 = 200	
Characteristics	
Strength 4d6	10
Presence 4d6	10
Body 14	40
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery 14, Stunned 14 • Knockout 28, Endurance 42 	10
Speed 2	20
Defense total 18 (3 resistant)	
Dexterity 13	20
Intelligence 12	10
Ego 11	0
Skills	
-	
Powers	
Awareness: situational (20), unusual sense: internet (+10); 30 Points	30 ÷ 1½ = 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild Shutdown (½ Limitation) 	
Elemental Control: Nebulonic Energy 20 Points	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Etheric Soaring: Flight 20 hexes; 40 Points 	40 - 20 = 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nebula Bolt: Force Field 16; 40 Points 	40 - 20 = 20
Total Points = 200	
Ratio = (220 ÷ 210) x 100 = 105.0	

The use-sheet

Situations
<p>Unusual Looks: Exotic + occasional odd behavior, 11-</p> <p>Psychological: Doesn't get basic values (often)</p> <p>Psychological: Believes power must be benevolent (sometimes, irrational)</p> <p>Dependent non-player character: Brigitte St. Claire, roommate, romance partner, and ally (Psychological: loves Nebula, often)</p> <p>Hunted: Bug-alien conqueror hunter-squad (group, super-powered, ruinous)</p> <p>Hunted: Department of Defense (organization, manipulative)</p>
Characteristics
<p>Strength 4d6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endurance 4 <p>Presence 4d6</p>
<p>Body 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery 14, Stunned 14 • Knockout 28, Endurance 42 <p>Speed 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phases 3 / 5 <p>Defense total 18 (3 resistant)</p>
<p>Dexterity 13</p> <p>Intelligence 12</p> <p>Ego 11</p>
Skills
-
Powers
<p>Awareness: situational, special sense (internet)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shutdown (mild) <p>Elemental Control: Nebulonic Energy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Etheric Soaring (glows with purple ethereal aura, no trail): Flight 20 hexes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Endurance cost: 1 per 5 hexes • Nebula Bolt (bright ball of purple energy, photon torpedo-like): Blast 8d6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Endurance cost: 8

Notes of interest:

- Nebula became her "own" character, as opposed to the starting inspiration of Starfire, when Keith focused on the Dependent NPC as a co-hero sort of person. It is not out of line to conceive of Brigitte as being a member of the hero team.
- Nebula is very low on Limitations, which is what Keith wanted. Note the Ratio mechanic, which divides the hero's points without Limitations by the actual points. One of the new rules is that the hero's ratio cannot exceed 119.
- Nebula has no listed Skills. That's because the Skill List is very short and limited to over-the-top versions of skills. Nebula has plenty of skills, status, resources, and other details that come from her "person corner," but are not expressed with points.
- The opening statements don't say anything about aliens, one way or another. Now that a player has chosen to include the concept, well, that means we have aliens in the setting.
- Strength and Presence are expressed as dice, and Dexterity, Intelligence, and Ego are now scored or rated as their own target numbers.
- Points are a bit more "valuable" in this design, so a total of 200 is close to 250 in the original Champions (1st to 3rd editions).

The hero team

The other heroes were conceived through a couple of emails each, for a final group consisting of Nebula, Brigitte St. Claire, Bad Dog, Ops, Vixen, Static, Palladium, Infoburst, and Gavilán.

Important: these heroes were created independently, without consulting one another. I was also careful to turn any statements like “can I” or “is it OK if” back toward the player, so that they were telling me what to do, rather than the other way around.

Direct lifts from the contributors’ emails are given in italics.

BAD DOG, Ken Boss

Person: Ken Boss, who looks exactly like the sort of roided-up hot-tempered blond-haired blue-eyed clean-shaven square-jawed white-bread security guard that people point to when claiming that private security can be irresponsible and entitled and evil. His favorite breed of dog is the pit bull, which is unfortunate given the hysteria over that breed. The runner-up is the boxer, and his leggy puppy Laila (named after Laila Ali) is his pride and joy at home; he has no one else (his parents live in South Carolina, are doing well, and don’t want him to bring the dog if he visits).

He’d been employed first by various tech companies in the Ashburn area (as a security guard), then various private security firms, and he’s burned enough bridges that those jobs are getting harder to come by. Consequently, he’s on relatively good terms with contacts in a number of security companies and tech firms, as long as he doesn’t make those connections obvious. His next step may be forming his own security company, or getting into private investigations.

Powers: He’s tough, but by no means the toughest. He’s fast, but by no means the fastest. He’s strong, but by no means the strongest. He’s just scrappy enough that most supers fighting him would find him difficult, but ultimately manageable. He’s trained with a variety of hand-to-hand weapons and firearms that put him over the top for average people to handle, though he doesn’t often carry them himself.

He’s a master of perception and a savant of human behavior. Watching peoples’ movements and reactions, he can often discern their thoughts and motivations on the reflexive level, even before they realize themselves what they’re doing. The talent is almost Sherlockian, although his reading is almost all of people and none of the scenery around them.

For a costume, I’m thinking dark reds and browns, generally snug-fitting except for the hood-and-mask combo, calf-high boots, gloves, and a few belts and straps that are, without holsters or sheaths, merely decoration (except perhaps for the one that holds the cap on his left shoulder). If he does have to carry some sort of weapons, he’ll hang them from those.

Problems: First off, he’s impulsive. Sometimes he perceives other peoples’ reflexes on his own reflexive level, and acts before he really thinks about things like consequences. This is why he frequently gets into fights. He can never justify his actions because he’s working on information gained at a level most people can’t conceive. And this is why he’s been drummed out of most security companies in Ashburn, and why his CV bleeds more red ink than Carrie’s prom. He means well; possibly the only reason he hasn’t been properly arrested and charged is because each of those fights he got into just happened (yah, right) to reveal some greater misdeed that the person he tangled with was planning. But the intention doesn’t excuse the action.

Second, there’s a bitter sort of irony about having a wicked-powerful ability to read people in an environment where personal interactions are being diminished by technology. Technology flattens hierarchy, but it also depersonalizes. His power doesn’t work on text, and his ability to hear guilt or intention is far less than his ability to see it (maybe if he practiced it...), and he does better when he sees it in person rather than over a monitor. However potent his powers of perception, deduction, and behavior may be, it sometimes feels like a “power of a bygone age.”

Despite cataloguing all the improvements in his life, he might still not be totally sure who he's become; does the sudden increase in potential make him fundamentally different somehow, or should it? There's also the mystery origin complication: These sorts of whole-body upgrades don't just happen on their own; will someone want it back?

I could also still see him being an irascible ass at times; that may not be so much out of other people's deception as his own insecurity. And that should make him spicy as a character to play.

OPS, August Fox (and his sister VIXEN)

Person: August Fox was the older of two children, he has a young sister, to a poor single mother in Richmond. His mother died when he was 13 and his sister was 11. But they were smart and managed to get their Uncle to sign paper saying he would look after them, he did not, but the two of them managed to survive, keeping their mother's cheap apartment, working jobs for under the table cash but keeping in school. Not one for gangs, but skilled with tech, he kept them at arms length by helping them avoid electronic surveillance. As he got older, his skills with tech moved from exceptional to paranormal. This he kept secret from everyone but his sister and together they used his talents to make money, nothing fully illegal but some grey areas but also including a few patents, banking knowledge for the future.

Got into VT on a scholarship, graduated in three years and went to work for a start up. Provides high tech gadgets and costumes to new superheroes and, occasionally, does some supering himself. But more into the exposing corruption so that other people can deal with it.

Powers: Genius level intelligence combined with intuitive understanding of technology and how to modify it for expected results. Has a stockpile of gadgets and gimmicks, always carrying a few defensive one with him. Physically, athletic human with slightly heightened senses and endurance.

Problems: Distrustful of police and government authority figures, but complete hatred of those who prey on the weak. Protective of his sister, who is a physical prodigy and wanting to hero. Sometime the gimmicks he builds have ended up taken from fledgling heroes and ended up in criminal hands, which he then feels duty bound to recover, or at least disable.

STATIC, Ed Franklin

Person: He is biracial, black and white. He is a recent MIT graduate, with training in computers and also data/intelligence analysis. He had recently moved to either Baltimore or D.C. (not sure yet), living in an apartment with a male roommate. I kind of like the idea that he did not own a car but used scooter/bicycle/motorcycle, depending on how close he lived to NSA HQ. His life was mostly consumed with his work, and with cyber-security studies/development. He has lived a life of privilege and has mostly been pursuing his career, until recent events have changed his course. Once he was self-occupied, indifferent to those who are underprivileged, until a recent event in the inner city changed some of that.

Powers: I am thinking perhaps control of electricity . . . I can envision the ability to create balls of electricity in his hands, and then tossing them . . . I can see him in a dark body suit . . .

*Problem: I used to work for the NSA, until my stay there became unwelcome. I was a loyal, trusting government employee until I found out some *top secret* that I was not supposed to know. There was a rival in the NSA, most likely a mole from a different, rival country, who ratted me out. Due to their influence and manipulations, I am now on the government's black list . . . they think I am a bad guy, but due to my powers and who I really am, I'm really wanting to be a good guy . . .*

PALLADIUM, formerly/secretly ANCILIA

Former supervillain Ancilia, a full on "But before I kill you..." type. Reach always exceeded her grasp, purely B-List material trying plots like holding a city's power grid hostage, kidnapping celebrities, or stealing some grand jewel or something that she honestly had no hope of ever fencing, but never quite realized that. Middling mechanical engineer, enough to build death traps, not enough to make them reliably deadly. Deadly schemes, dangerous powers, but her ability to carry them out was always hampered by bad luck or her tendency to

overlook rather large holes in her plans. A tendency to team up with murderers, marauders, and malcontents, but never a killer herself. At least, not on purpose.

Person: Still working on a real name. *Ethnicity:* Hispanic (Possibly Puerto Rican?) I figure she's got family, though she's likely been disowned thanks to her villainous career. Even the most forgiving family would have to draw a line after you get on the news for trying to ransom someone. That's probably a point of regret for her, but that doesn't mean she doesn't try to keep tabs on them from the other side of that flaming bridge. Something happened, I'm still hammering out details, and she ended up putting on the powered armor of a superhero who died saving her life in order to save a few more. Caught up in the deception, having effectively faked her own death, she felt forced to become Palladium, techno-armored cyber knight and hero of the people. That said, she's slowly discovering that she likes being a hero, even if she finds the role... limiting.

So she's a former crook. Not world famous, but she's definitely been arrested a few times. So the key word here is flying under the radar. She's a mechanical engineer, a competent one, and could make a decent living that way, but that kind of thing means background checks and not flying under the radar. So I'm considering the idea of her running an electronics repair store, one of those small jobbies where people drop off computers, televisions, tools, etc. and she has them repaired in a few days. I don't know how she would've afforded it without using dirty money somehow. (This would also give her a place to make small repairs to the Palladium suit.) It's a small thing, three employees working under her on varying days with a comfortable amount of pay (but still not anything to brag about) but it'd let her keep her own hours and dip out when hero work needs doing. She'd pay them well enough and be overall friendly, but wouldn't really be close friends. Paranoia, after all. The rule would be "Keep your home life at home" and she probably wouldn't be inviting them out for drinks. The baker who she buys her breakfast croissants from is kind of cute, though...

She'd probably have one of those small condos near Pavilion Lake and the Ashburn Shopping Plaza. One of those "gorgeous" 800 square feet 1 bedroom, 1 bathroom deals. But it'd allow her to stealthily use the suit to tunnel down and make a rudimentary hideout to do repairs/store supplies/hide the armor, with an escape/exit tunnel leading out from underneath a nearby lake or through the woods near Ashburn Park, Superboy style. And she probably wouldn't have lost enough of her supervillain habits to avoid having a self-destruct option. She's not devout, but she is a member of the Saint Theresa parish. The routine is comforting.

Powers: Force field projection. Capable of pushing them out at high speeds, effectively making battering rams or something that could be confused for laser bursts. Cannot make complex forms, it's all simple geometric shapes. Mid-grade powered armor ineptly maintained at a low-grade level. Effectively only a level of protection, enhanced strength, flight. Pretends that her force fields are built into the suit.

Problems: Secret identity as Ancilia, 'dead' supervillainess. And, if it so happened to turn out that she was alive, she's a wanted criminal. She lives in a state of constant terror of discovery, even as she continues an active career as a superhero. Palladium's vocal disguise and overall design is male. The world believes the armored hero to be a man. She originally let the belief continue to help the disguise, but later realized it was a tremendous mistake and is terrified of revealing otherwise in case people start to question who's under the helmet. There's a possibility that Palladium's been blamed for Ancilia's 'death'.

She's trapped acting under her own beliefs of what a hero does. For example, she constantly has money problems because she doesn't think Palladium would take a sponsor to help pay the bills and she can't touch her own ill-gotten goods because Palladium wouldn't take the dirty money. She truly enjoys being a hero, but feels constantly hampered by the moral code she's forcing herself to adopt.

She likely had a couple of companions in the criminal community, considering that her modus operandi wasn't one of those that shoved others away. She'd hardly have been a leader of the community, but someone who hardly ever doublecrossed other villains and worked well. More of a Shocker or a Heatwave-type than a Green Goblin or Professor Zoom-type. Promise her a good cut, have a good plan, and she'd be in up until she decided the amount of trouble wasn't worth the benefits. I could see her having people she teamed up with repeatedly, but not often enough to be properly titled a villain team. Lover-wise, I doubt it. Probably had a few friends with benefits here and there, maybe a roll in the hay after a successful heist, but no real romances.

INFOBURST, Thorn Liam Chetwynd

Person: Nickname: Runt (from childhood)

Male, gay

Age: 31 years, youngest of six children, 5 feet 5 inches tall, 138 pounds. Physically fit with compact muscularity (exercises regularly). Short auburn hair and beard, brown eyes. English, Danish, French Canadian, and Oneida ancestry. Born and reared in central New York state; as a teen, moved with family to Ashburn for parents' work. On high school and college wrestling team, voracious reader (even before powers). Web designer by trade, frequents Washington D.C. to socialize. Helps with his aging parents, recently started dating a potential boyfriend.

Powers: Super-speed (including physical and mental, such as movement, reading, comprehension)

Super-strength

Super-memory (remembers everything he experiences, sees, hears, reads, etc. in vivid and exact detail)

Stealthy

Problems: Never forgets anything

Sometimes "infodumps" too much data or information

Somewhat dislikes advanced technology

Sometimes damages things due to his speed or strength

Can be a security risk due to "everything" that he knows

Familial commitments

GAVILÁN, Alejandro Escalante

Person: Alejandro Escalante. He's a third generation Cuban American man, young - in his early twenties - just finished an undergraduate degree in American History and is trying to decide what to do next. He's researching graduate programs, but is wondering if he shouldn't dedicate himself to activism before continuing his education, given how bad things are in the Trump era, from his perspective. Alejandro, however, didn't grow up with a culture of activism, so he doesn't "know" exactly how to go about that life and doesn't really feel comfortable doing so.

Powers: His powers come from an accident that happened at the company that his father works for. They were working on some sort of blended technology, trying to create drones that could have a direct neurological link to their operators, which would allow for more quick and precise control. In order to protect the operators from feedback created if the drones take damage, the drones were also equipped with experimental force field tech. He might also develop some minor machine control, if that makes any sense, due to the neurological link that he had while controlling the drone. The drones integrated several new technologies. The same tech that provides the force fields also provides some sort of anti-gravity flight, and the drone itself is a kind of nanite cluster, the full capabilities of which don't manifest until the nanites link-up into their full configuration.

I picture the nanite cluster fitting into a thick notebook sized container (or locking into such a shape when inactive). They activate upon Alex's mental command and then spiral around his body, starting with his head and working their way towards his feet, coating him in a skintight metallic costume (like a body suit) as they go, with wings.

Gavilán, as you may know, is the Spanish word for a sparrowhawk. They are common in Cuba, and there are all sorts of references to them in folk culture. It has an "outlaw" and bird of prey connotation that is appropriate for a superhero/vigilante. The costume is a metallic bluish-grey and silver. It covers Alex's whole body (including the face). Second, the face covering should have some design feature that suggests a bird of prey. No full beak or anything, but something; it should be more subtle than that. The force field glows orange, but only when it impacts something. Also, I can see him projecting force bolts, which also glow. Actually, he probably doesn't release that energy. It's more like the force field extends into a force lance that ... lances into its target. So, the force field glows when this "lance" attack is used.

Problems:

- Alejandro's family is VERY conservative, which conflicts with his own politics.
- His grandfather was a Cuban exile who arrived in the U.S. in 1960 (in his early 40s). He was had insider knowledge of Cuban politics, so he was recruited by (and happily served in) the CIA.

- *His father was born in the U.S. in 1963 and is also very conservative. Pro-Reagan, vehemently anti-communist, and in favor of an aggressive U.S. foreign policy. After a brief stint in the military, he earned a degree in engineering and eventually landed a job with an R&D company that worked on major defense contracts. He works the R&D side, but his military, CIA, and government contacts allowed him to move into executive positions pretty easily.*
- *All of this is important for Alejandro because his schooling taught him to question all of his family's assumptions. There have been bitter and angry arguments at home around these issues, and Alejandro is seen as somewhat of a disappointment by the men in his family. Essentially, that damn liberal education ruined a good kid, who is now wasting his time.*
- *Alejandro is conflicted as a consequence of the above. He KNOWS he's right about his views, but he's socialized to doubt himself - even though he won't admit it.*
- *Also, this conservative upbringing is what makes him feel UNCOMFORTABLE with activism and other political actions that he totally agrees with INTELLECTUALLY.*
- *I think this tension between his discomfort with activism and his desire to become more involved in opposing what's wrong in the world (environmental degradation, police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, the crackdown on immigrants, corporate and governmental corruption, predatory capitalism, etc.) is what will ultimately fuel his decision to take action as a masked vigilante. It offers a kind of anonymity to the actions that he'll take, which is easier than taking a stand in his non-super ID and facing the consequences on either side of his social world. (Not particularly heroic, if you ask me!)*
- *His father's R&D company might realize the link and investigate and/or send enhanced operatives after him.*

Conceptual notes

The preparation of a game goes like this:

1: The two statements, including the location

2: Separate creation of heroes, with GM as mechanics facilitator but not as guide or director for concepts

- The results generate many setting concepts and an extensive supporting cast.
- Despite the diversity of concepts, since everyone works off the opening statements, the results are consistently compatible.

There aren't any origin stories beyond the brief basics, if that. No complex justification of powers, no elaborate drama of self-discovery or life-lessons. You've had the origin already, you have your powers and super-identity, and that's that. If you want have a problematic or deeply-motivating origin, then bake it into the Situations and you can explain/flashback about it later.

3: The team is conceived retroactively: we see what the heroes are like, then we decide what sort of team would be most fun, and we accept that they already figured that out and are already doing it.

Therefore there won't be any running around in "how we met" mode and struggling to form or to justify the group.

If we had continued and built these heroes with points, the supporting cast would be pretty extensive, and we'd have a strong framework to conceive a group concept. At present, I can certainly see the unifying and troublesome motifs of surveillance and internet and defense/problematic tech. Considering the two statements, I'm clearly mandated to locate where "evil" might be found in the interface among government agencies, internet entities, political special-interests, and high-end tech industry, in addition to the alien presence.