

A group of diverse, stylized characters from the roleplaying game 'Everyday Heroes'. The characters are arranged in a cluster, each with unique features and outfits. At the top left, a man in a hat and vest holds a flaming gun. Next to him, a woman with a large afro and a pink 'Q' on her shirt holds a gun. In the center, a man in a dark suit and tie looks upwards. To his right, a woman with blonde hair in a green tactical vest looks forward. Below the man in the suit, a young boy in a blue suit and red bow tie holds a small gun. To the right of the boy, a man with a beard and a white hat is partially visible. In the bottom left, a woman with red hair and glasses holds a pink smoke bomb. In the center foreground, a large, muscular man with a red face and a black glove on his right hand is prominent. To the right of the muscular man, a man in a white lab coat with a badge on his chest is visible. The background is dark and blurry.

# THE ICONIC CHARACTERS OF **EVERYDAY HEROES™**

A ROLEPLAYING GAME FOR THE MODERN WORLD



# FORWARD BY JEFF GRUBB

D20 MODERN CO-DESIGNER AND EVERYDAY HEROES DESIGN CONSULTANT

## ICONIC CHARACTERS & THE SAGA OF MOONDOG

Iconic characters have been part of the roleplaying game ecosystem from the beginning, and they have evolved with the game itself. Among the first were the continuing characters in the marginalia of Dungeons & Dragon's original Dungeon Master Guide – unnamed but facing an ongoing series of monstrous encounters. There were unique-looking characters like Strongheart or Warduke, who first made their appearance as licensed toys, or Aleena and Bargle from the classic Red Box rules. But the "Iconics" fully came into their own with 3rd Edition. Here we saw each class get particular characters as representatives of their class. These would be THE fighter and THE cleric and THE rogue as far as our discussions were concerned.

Tordek. Regdar. Lidda. Mialee. These were the first characters that the players encountered in the 3rd Edition Player's Handbook. These were the archetypes that showed off what the player characters could become. Aspirational. Cool-looking. Truly iconic characters.

And when we started designing D20 Modern, we created Iconics for the classes there as well. D20 Modern's classes were based on character abilities scores, so we would have a Strong Hero (Strength), a Fast Hero (Dexterity), a Tough hero (Constitution), and so forth. Each created an instant image in the players' minds – this was what the character represented. As within the ruleset itself, these became the cast of characters for examples and illustrations.

And that is where Moondog Greenberg came in.





Moondog predated D20 Modern to some degree. In various pitches over the years (to TSR and elsewhere), he was my epitome of a modern fantasy character – a wizard on a motorcycle. A creature of both technology and magic. A melding of the Middle Ages and the modern times. And when we started playtesting D20 Modern (with lead designer Bill Slavicsek as the Gamemaster), I unearthed this concept for my character in the campaign.

Moondog Greenberg. First name from a creature in Monster Manual II. Last name from a young woman in my Lovely Bride's Girl Scout Troop. He rode a Harley (Classic flathead V-twin engine as opposed to later knucklehead or panhead designs). He had a denim jacket, the sleeves ripped out. On the back of the jacket was stitched the symbol of the Kabbalah (the mystic Tree of Life). He was our Tough Hero, and in personality was very typical of the type of characters I played – gruff, resolute, smarter than he looked (yes,

I played a lot of Dwarves over the years). He took no guff, and in combat took no prisoners. He was the guy who was at the center of the brawl, the tank, the damage sponge. He was fun to run.

And in play he did get some magic – small spells, a few minor artifacts. Enough to provide a surprise to those opponents who thought of him as just another big lug. And when it became time to cast the iconic figures for the game, we picked Moondog to join Russell Whitfield (Strong Hero) and Yoriko Obato (Fast Hero) as one of the Iconics. We had wonderful art for our lineup, and they became regular features in the core book and those books that followed.

Now we are on to a new era. Everyday Heroes takes a classic RPG of modern-day adventures and brings it up to the present time. New times, new heroes. These are the iconic archetypes of today and tomorrow. Enjoy.

- Jeff Grubb, March 2022



*Jeff Grubb*

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# WELCOME TO THE EVERYDAY HEROES™ LOOKBOOK

## AND THUS THEY WERE BORN.

Everyday Heroes™ is first and foremost a game inspired by action cinema and other thrilling tales of adventure from comics, books, and our own imaginations. As we began to flesh out the classes, these iconic characters started to come to life.

Like the great iconic characters that came before - D&D's Regdar the Human Fighter or Pathfinder's Fumbus the Goblin Alchemist - we're excited to showcase the 18 iconic characters for our rule system.

## ABOUT EVERYDAY HEROES

The setting for Everyday Heroes is the world we all live in, with plenty of space for you to imagine whatever differences you desire and whatever changes make exciting opportunities for adventure. Whether you want to experience a gritty story of heroism torn from today's headlines, recreate a favorite movie franchise, or throw modern-day heroes into adventures in faraway times and places, Everyday Heroes can get you there!

Like every creative effort, Everyday Heroes stands on the shoulders of giants that have come before us. The fantastic d20 Modern is the game that inspired our theme and how to model the real world in a game. We like to think of Everyday Heroes as its spiritual successor. For rules, we went with the strong foundations of the most recent, fifth edition of the system reference document, whose roots go back to the very dawn of role-playing adventure games. The team at Evil Genius Games melded these two influences with our own inspiration and experience to create Everyday Heroes.

**So fasten your seatbelt, check your magazine, and get ready for action, adventure, and other memorable moments with Everyday Heroes!**



# MACK WILLIAMS

**CLASS: BRUTE**

LOCATION: DETROIT, MI USA

WEIGHT: 280

AGE: 28

HEIGHT: 6'4



Every hero has a code, a line they won't cross. When Mack Williams is pushed over his line, he pushes back, and hard.

Mack started out in 8 Mile, Detroit, a place they say robs your soul and makes hard men that'll do anything to survive. Getting by in that world meant survival of the fittest. It meant being the biggest and baddest, and it meant standing up no matter who tried to knock you down. A man's humanity could get lost in a place like that, but not Mack. He kept his eyes on the prize, and that prize was being the best.

He knew violence from a young age, fighting in schoolyards, back alleys, and anywhere he could put his fists into action. He learned every trick in the book, most the hard way. The conflict felt good, and coming out on top felt even better. Mack fought hard. Brute force drove his victories, but he always kept it fair. He had no problem beating sense into those who deserved it.

Talent got noticed, even on the hard side of town, and Mack soon found himself using his fists as tools of persuasion. He hurt bad people for bad people. It was good work. There was no moral ambiguity, no gray areas to test his code—until his bosses had ordered him to make an example of an innocent. That was his line.

Now, he works for himself and coming out on top never felt so good.



# ROMEO SINCLAIR

## CLASS: HEAVY

LOCATION: KINGSTON, JAMAICA

WEIGHT: 180

AGE: 28

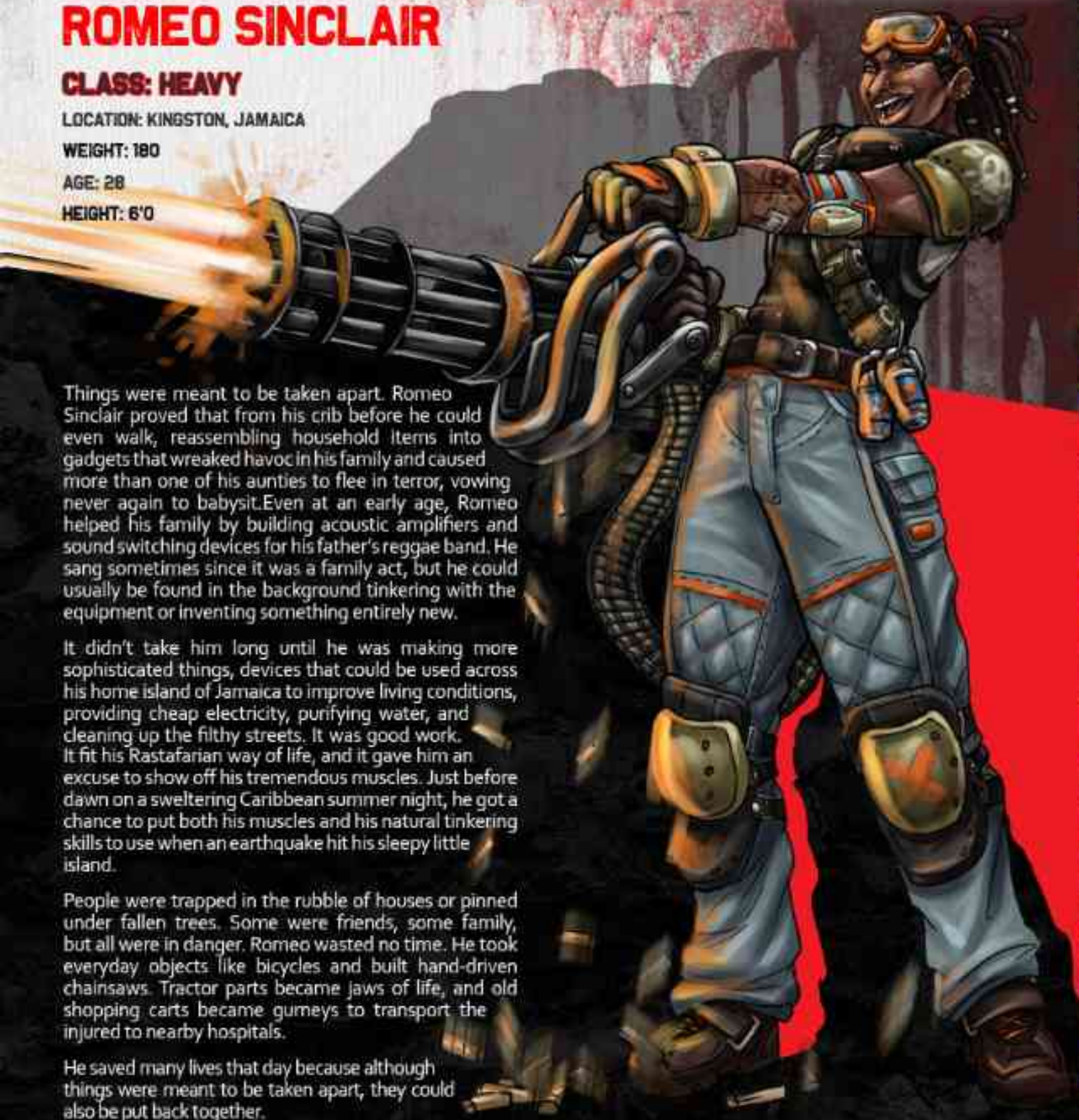
HEIGHT: 6'0

Things were meant to be taken apart. Romeo Sinclair proved that from his crib before he could even walk, reassembling household items into gadgets that wreaked havoc in his family and caused more than one of his aunts to flee in terror, vowing never again to babysit. Even at an early age, Romeo helped his family by building acoustic amplifiers and sound switching devices for his father's reggae band. He sang sometimes since it was a family act, but he could usually be found in the background tinkering with the equipment or inventing something entirely new.

It didn't take him long until he was making more sophisticated things, devices that could be used across his home island of Jamaica to improve living conditions, providing cheap electricity, purifying water, and cleaning up the filthy streets. It was good work. It fit his Rastafarian way of life, and it gave him an excuse to show off his tremendous muscles. Just before dawn on a sweltering Caribbean summer night, he got a chance to put both his muscles and his natural tinkering skills to use when an earthquake hit his sleepy little island.

People were trapped in the rubble of houses or pinned under fallen trees. Some were friends, some family, but all were in danger. Romeo wasted no time. He took everyday objects like bicycles and built hand-driven chainsaws. Tractor parts became jaws of life, and old shopping carts became gurneys to transport the injured to nearby hospitals.

He saved many lives that day because although things were meant to be taken apart, they could also be put back together.





# SAOIRSE O'CONNOR

**CLASS: SHARPSHOOTER**

LOCATION: BELFAST, IRELAND

AGE: 34

HEIGHT: 5'9

Saoirse O'Connor aimed to make a name for herself in a male-dominated world, and she always hit her mark.

Her father had been a revolutionary, a hard man who'd demanded perfection and never accepted Saoirse's best for good enough. He'd called her weak once, but only once. Saoirse was as proud as her father was tough, and she was driven; driven to prove him wrong, driven to get approval from the only person whose approval mattered, and it made her stronger.

It was preordained that she would follow in her father's footsteps, fighting the good fight, fighting on the side of the poor and oppressed. She excelled at shooting, hitting all the marks, dropping every target assigned to her as effortlessly as downing a pint of Guinness. The more difficult the better, and it didn't take her long to be labeled better than the best. But she soon found there was no profit in revolution.

Either to impress her father or maybe in spite of him, she gave up that world in favor of international intrigue and an expense account as an Interpol agent. They'd trained her in tactics her father had never dreamed of, and for a while, it was enough.

Then, while working in Prague on a "little embarrassment" for the French President, she received the letter she knew would one day come. Her father had died, not in his sleep, but taken out by rivals.

Saoirse quit right then. She went home to Ireland, took her vengeance, and never looked back.



# ANTONIO SANCHEZ

## CLASS: SHARPSHOOTER

LOCATION: MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA

WEIGHT: 160

AGE: 25

HEIGHT: 5'10

Antonio Sanchez grew up watching westerns through the small black and white screen of his television, while at the same time witnessing the vulgar brutality of the cartels out the windows of his small flat in the hills outside Bogota, in the infamous District 4.

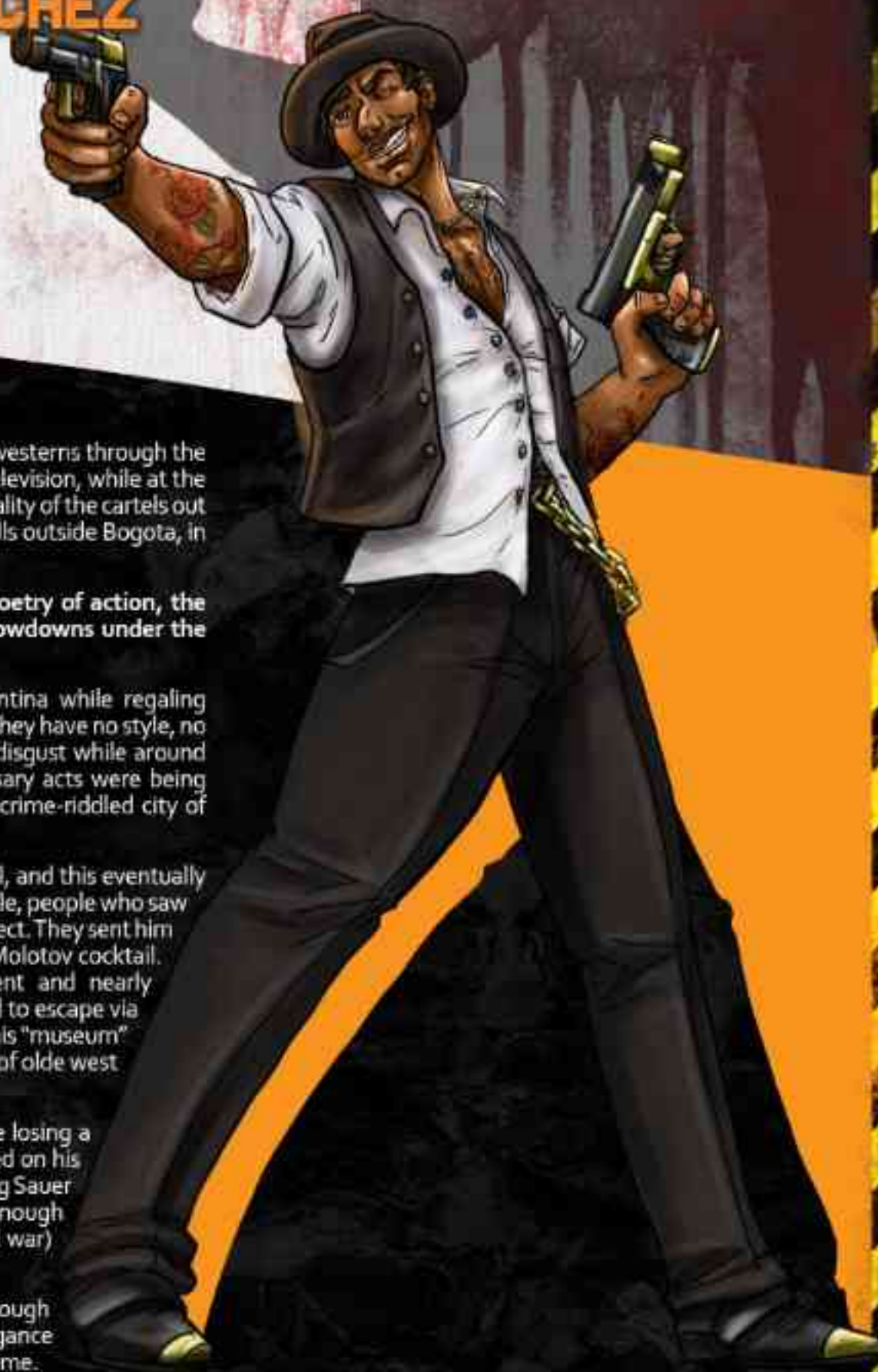
**"Where is the flair? Where is the poetry of action, the duello of banter and honorable showdowns under the clock tower at high noon?"**

He'd tell his compatriots at the cantina while regaling them with his gunslinging exploits. "They have no style, no grace." He would shake his head in disgust while around him the most heinous and unnecessary acts were being committed in the overcrowded and crime-riddled city of Medellin.

He was as cool as his rivals were cruel, and this eventually drew the attention of the wrong people, people who saw Antonio's bravado as a sign of disrespect. They sent him a message one day in the form of a Molotov cocktail. The flames destroyed his apartment and nearly ended Antonio's life, but he managed to escape via a clever trapdoor he'd constructed in his "museum" room where he housed his collection of olde west memorabilia.

It was only stuff, but losing it felt like losing a piece of his past. So, Antonio strapped on his six-shooters (along with a Glock 21, Sig Sauer P220, Smith & Wesson M&P 45, and enough ammunition to start a medium-sized war) and called the gangsters out.

The streets ran red as he danced through the hail of bullets with a dramatic elegance that put cinematic fight scenes to shame.





# LAKEISHA BROWN

**CLASS: MARTIAL ARTIST**

LOCATION: HARLEM, NY

AGE: 27

HEIGHT: 5'8

Pick on somebody your own size doesn't apply with Lakeisha Brown. She's small. She's feisty, and the size of her heart overwhelms all opposition as she works tirelessly to clear the worst of the scum from the streets of Harlem. Born with a chip on her shoulder and an intense desire for change, she dedicates herself to making the world, or her tiny piece of it, a better place.

It began with a bang, not a whimper. As a teenager, while playing basketball with some friends near Rucker Park, Lakeisha had her world turned upside-down in the most senseless way. Her twin brother Larnar was gunned down in a case of mistaken identity by gang bangers in a drive by. In an instant, they'd taken away her best friend and protector, the most kind and gentle man she'd ever known.

His last words to her were, "be strong", and she took these to heart.

Always wiry and fit, she upped her game, switching from schoolyard sports to rigorous training, learning to discipline her mind while at the same time excelling in the martial arts and making her body a weapon unto itself. She became the protector she'd lost in her brother, and vowed "never again" on her watch.

Justice wasn't instant, but when it came it hit hard. The bangers who'd killed Larnar were sloppy, and it took little for her to track them down, whispering to each in turn, "be strong" as she sent them to whatever hell they deserved.



**DAXX****CLASS: SCOUNDREL**

LOCATION: LOS ANGELES, CA

AGE: 25

HEIGHT: 5'6

Rules are for suckers. When it comes to a fight, you do what you gotta do. That's Daxx's motto, and they live by it as they flow through the Los Angeles night like a wraith, taking what they want without fear of consequences.

It hadn't always been that way. Daxx had cared once. Their desire to fit in had been just as strong as everyone else's--but that person felt like a stranger to them now. That Daxx had been weak, deserving of ridicule and derision, almost eager to be preyed upon. That Daxx had learned their lessons the hard way. And the scars still showed.

Daxx was a square peg in a round world, searching for acceptance and trying to become something they weren't. They found friends in the night scene; some were alternative, others experimental, but all seemed to be cool with Daxx being themselves. And, for a while, it worked.

Daxx learned and grew, playing the game, crashing the parties where they listened and discovered dirty little secrets they weren't supposed to know. They gained an edge, and leverage over some very powerful people. But Daxx was still naive. They thought they could trust their friends, and relied on others to keep them safe when they should've been watching their own back.

They learned a valuable lesson when it all hit the fan and they were left to take the fall while their so-called friends vanished, ghosting Daxx and leaving them truly alone. They learned the first rule of being a Scoundrel.

**Trust no one.**





## MEL STACKHOUSE

CLASS: BODYGUARD

LOCATION: WASHINGTON, DC

AGE: 30

HEIGHT: 6'0



Being the biggest and toughest gave Mel Stackhouse all the power in the orphanage where she was raised, but it also gave her all the responsibility. She learned early on that survival of the fittest meant caring for the weakest, and she took that lesson into her adult life as she struggled her way out of loneliness and neglect and into the law enforcement family where she made a new home.

Her focus and no-nonsense attitude got her recognized time and again, making her a fixture behind the scenes as her work brought her into the spotlight of increasingly powerful patrons. That single-minded dedication eventually landed her a role in the Secret Service. There was action, plenty of it in the form of terrorist threats, assassination attempts, and looming domestic insurrection. There were daily alerts, briefings, and training. So much training. And she found plenty of opportunity there to mirror her younger years, where she'd kept the peace and protected the weak just as she'd done in the orphanage. But a GS-13 pay grade doesn't put that much food on the table. She needed more. She felt she deserved more, and within the narrow confines of government work, there was little chance of that happening.

Fortunately, there were options. If you were good, you could name your price in private security. **Mel was extraordinary.** She thrived on drama, and watching over powerful people carried its share of respect. It was a comfortable gig, but she missed the daily danger.



# SUE FAIRFIELD

## CLASS: COMMANDO

LOCATION: SOMEWHERE IN THE FIELD

AGE: 35

HEIGHT: 5'7

"De Oppresso Liber", to free the oppressed is the motto of the Green Berets. Sue Fairfield shouted that mantra at the top of her lungs while jumping from a CH-47D Chinook helicopter or deploying from the deck of an Ohio Class submarine. She had so much faith in those words, she'd sacrificed home and family for the corps.

It was the second Persian Gulf war. Her team was embedded with locals on the outskirts of Mosul. There'd been credible reports of insurgents using a school as cover to construct IEDs, and Sue's team had been sent in to place charges and neutralize it. They had a short window while the insurgents were at prayer.

She took point as she cleared room after darkened room, filthy with refuse and child-sized blankets. The pungent stench of Ammonium nitrate, a component of improvised weapons, warned her something suspicious lay in the next chamber. So, she charged in, expecting insurgents, but what she found was a huddle of half-naked children, their arms smeared to the elbow with oily black residue as they filled rusting cylinders with explosive goop.

She'd seen a lot of horrific things, but this broke her heart.

Just then, word came down that the enemy was returning. It was time to bug out. Sue, refusing to leave the children behind, huddled them together and used herself as a shield as she shot her way through the long hallways, risking everything, but gaining more than she'd ever imagined as she breached the final door and saw sunlight and friendly Blackhawk helicopters ready to fulfill that precious motto; "De Oppresso Liber"





# LUIS GARZA

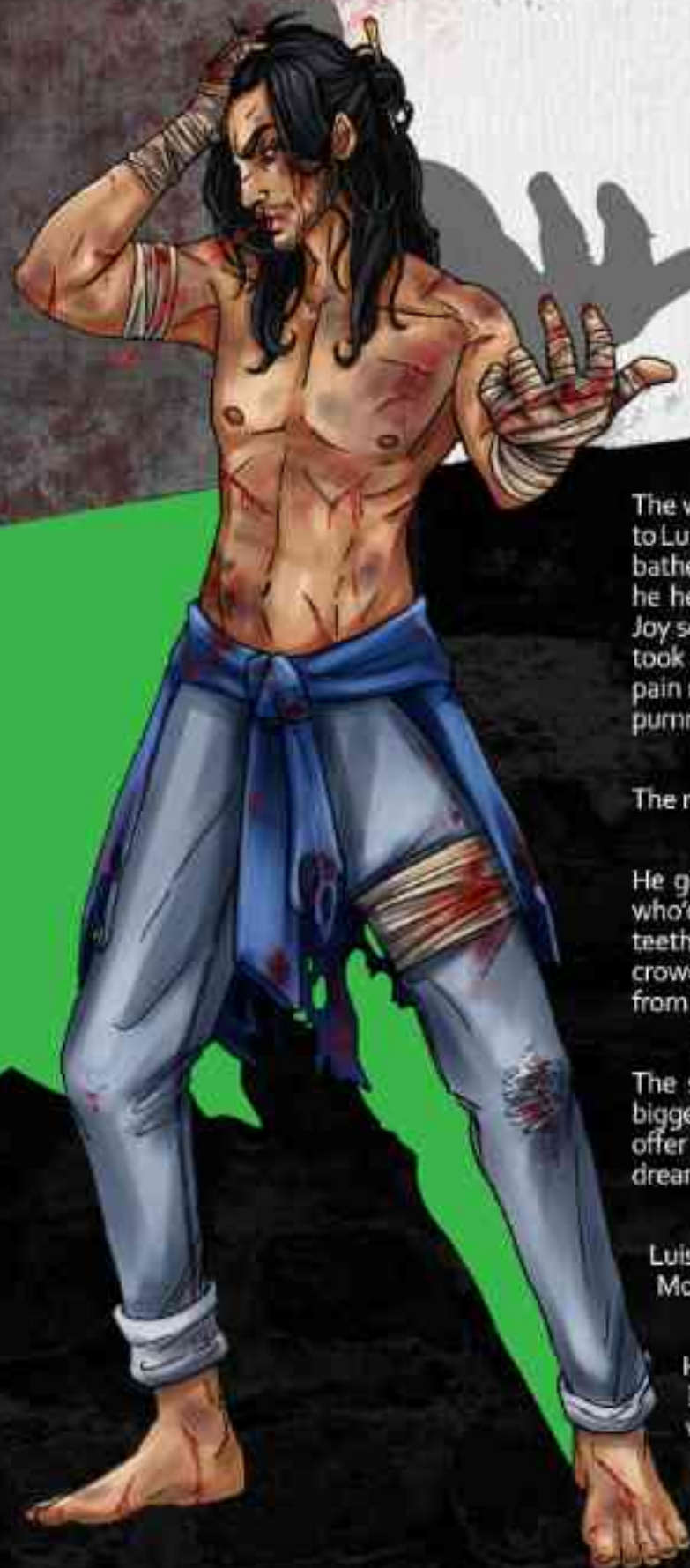
**CLASS: SCRAPPER**

LOCATION: TIJUANA, MEXICO

WEIGHT: 140

AGE: 32

HEIGHT: 5'8



The world had always appeared painted in shades of grey to Luis Garza, not the grey of battleships and gunmetal, but bathed in tones of pointlessness and apathy. The laughter he heard growing up was a source of confusion to him. Joy seemed something unobtainable, and Luis frequently took his frustrations out in the fight clubs of Tijuana. The pain made him feel alive. Whether inflicting it or having it pummeled into him by a superior opponent, he only felt something when he was in the ring.

The rush of downing an adversary was second only to the ecstasy of the blows.

He got famous as the "man who laughed", the fighter who'd chuckle as the fists fell. He smiled through bloodied teeth as he was forced back against the hot wall of raucous crowds, sweaty bodies were the only thing keeping him from collapsing, or grinning as he gleefully hammered his opponent into the blood and sawdust-covered floor.

The stakes got higher with each fight, the adversaries bigger and meaner. Money changed hands, lots of it. An offer was made: Take a dive and become wealthy beyond dreams, or keep standing and make this your last day on Earth.

Luis laughed, his shoulders going up in a carefree shrug. Money was for those with needs, just as life was for those who had something or someone to lose.

He danced carefree into the parting mob, happy and laughing at the tense serious faces around him. Fate would make his choice, and either way, it would be ecstasy.



# THE J=0XX

## CLASS: HACKER

LOCATION: UNKNOWN

AGE: UNKNOWN

HEIGHT: UNKNOWN

There is harmony to everything around us, a design that's obvious if you know how to perceive it. To the Foxx, this symmetry is as obvious as a billboard and as easy to alter as a pencil sketch.

They run a thousand personas as effortlessly as the viruses they create. False identities puppet their words and obey their whims, shadow constructs that obscure their true identity to a world that doesn't deserve to know them. When they speak, it is never as Foxx, and the conversation is never pointed in their direction. Their past is irrelevant, and their future is theirs alone to write.

### Except when it's not.

Being the best requires equipment. Infrastructure is difficult to replace once it becomes integrated. The loss of one node is an inconvenience. The loss of two or three, is troublesome. But when more than half a dozen secret and well-secured server clusters go offline, it's war.

But they're the Foxx, and **nobody's** better. Hidden IPs, ghost pings, and denial of service calls can't stop them from tracing the attacks back to their favorite rogue nation. These hackers had been trying to learn Foxx's secrets since before they'd become the Foxx, and in the past the Foxx had toyed with them, dropping hints and leaving breadcrumbs, but hubris made them sloppy and these hackers had found a way in.

Angrier with themselves than the feeble attempts of their enemies, they shut them down, **hard**.

Lights went out. Trains stopped and coal plants went offline. It got cold and dark and quiet across their entire country, except for a small island of streetlights spelling out "J=0XX". The message they sent was clear and understood.





## WESLEY SCOTT

**CLASS: MASTERMIND**

LOCATION: SILICON VALLEY, CA

WEIGHT: 70

AGE: 13

HEIGHT: 4'5



Violence is the resource of the weak-minded. Wesley Scott prefers the clean squares of a chessboard to the dirty plans of his adversaries, so he meticulously designs both sides of every conflict. He maneuvers his opponents into his game, making them pawns to his whim. It's much easier to win if you are the rules.

As a consultant for the government, Wesley had the highest top-secret clearance. He was included in many think tanks and was considered among the ranks of Einstein and Hawking, so it was surprising when he discovered an opposing genius bent on seizing Wesley's credentials.

His new adversary was good, great even. With every hypothesis Wesley offered, the man countered with a different but equally valid theory. It was frustrating. Wesley had never been challenged before, and this unseen rival had begun to make him feel like a 13-year-old schoolkid. Physically, that was true, but in Wesley's mind he'd grown beyond those limitations.

He devised tests, challenges in the form of equations to which only he knew the answers. His foe solved them all, making Wesley increasingly angry. Finally, Wesley demanded to meet the only man he considered an equal.

His introduction came when they showed the boy into the lecture hall. He was Wesley's age, and nothing like what he expected. Wesley's hostility faded. It was difficult to be angry when he finally understood his opponent. Instead, Wesley shook hands and suggested a much less stressful challenge as he led the boy to his computer where Minecraft was open. After all, they were only kids.



# DR. MARGARET WELLINGTON

## CLASS: SCIENTIST

LOCATION: CAMBRIDGE, MA

AGE: 48

HEIGHT: 5'5"

Dr. Margaret Wellington grew up taking notes on zombie apocalypse movies and sending irate letters to the directors on how improbable those scenarios were, complete with detailed and well-researched formulas on how she could do it better. Many of those letters are highly classified now, locked deep within vaults beneath the Pentagon by white-knuckled generals who cringe at every shadow, drink far too much, and no longer sleep at night. But that research formed the foundation of Dr. Wellington's tenure at MIT.

The virus came out of China quietly, like any other variant. People got sick. Some died, some just vanished, their stories never told. Unlike other variants, this virus caught the attention of some very secret agencies. It didn't take long until they came for Margaret.

They'd seen her research, her earlier and supposedly theoretical hypotheses on the viability of a viral apocalypse involving the reanimation of dead tissue. She laughed when they'd mentioned it.

But not one of them even smiled.

"Then it's true?" She asked. Their leader nodded, and Margaret sighed, her mind already sifting through potentialities.

They told her she had 48 hours until it could no longer be contained, but she didn't hear. Formulas were already scrolling through her brain. Furiously, she sought an answer, exhausting possibility after possibility as the clock wound down. Then, with only minutes to spare, she had it!

She'd stopped the virus just in time. But, as with her earlier work, it would remain classified, and the world will never know how close it really came to its end.





## TJ "DOC" JEFFERSON

**CLASS: SCIENTIST**

LOCATION: MIAMI, FL

WEIGHT: 250

AGE: 40

HEIGHT: 6'2

TJ "Doc" Jefferson had done some questionable things in his search for answers.

From an inauspicious beginning, Doc grew from cooking meth in a run-down trailer at the age of thirteen to refining heroin in an almost factory-like setting for the Rolling 98s a couple of years later. They were using him, and he knew it. But what else did a poor boy from the harsh streets of Chicago do?

**You smarten up and get the hell out of there, that's what.**

He caught the attention of a school counselor, parleying this new friendship into a scholarship to Caltech, chemistry, and biology. It was the opportunity of a lifetime. He ghosted the 98s, running to California with a new name and identity. He attended college, got a job, and eventually forgot all about his earlier life. From California, Doc moved to Miami. He made new friends. He started a life filled with sunshine and the feel of sand on his feet.

But the past had a way of catching up, and old ghosts sometimes returned. One day, a close friend from Doc's new life overdosed. The autopsy report said heroin, and the newspapers said it was the purest they'd ever seen. It was Doc's own formula, and it almost broke him.

As a kid, it had seemed like a game, but years later it had become all too real. And all too tragic.

From his beachfront laboratory, he experimented, working frantically and tirelessly until he found a path to atonement in a simple chemical formula. He'd found a way to neutralize opioids and cancel the addictive response. This is when he truly realized that his brilliance had consequences.



# ARJUN MEHTA

## CLASS: MASTER

LOCATION: VARANASI, INDIA

WEIGHT: 130

AGE: 38

HEIGHT: 5'8

It is said that enlightenment can be found one single soft step from anger. Arjun Mehta discovered the truth of this from the dingy cubical of an IT support center, with the cacophony of ringing telephones and the incessant babble of the technicians around him. In one endless moment, he went from trying to appease an irate businessman, to finding the key to inner wisdom.

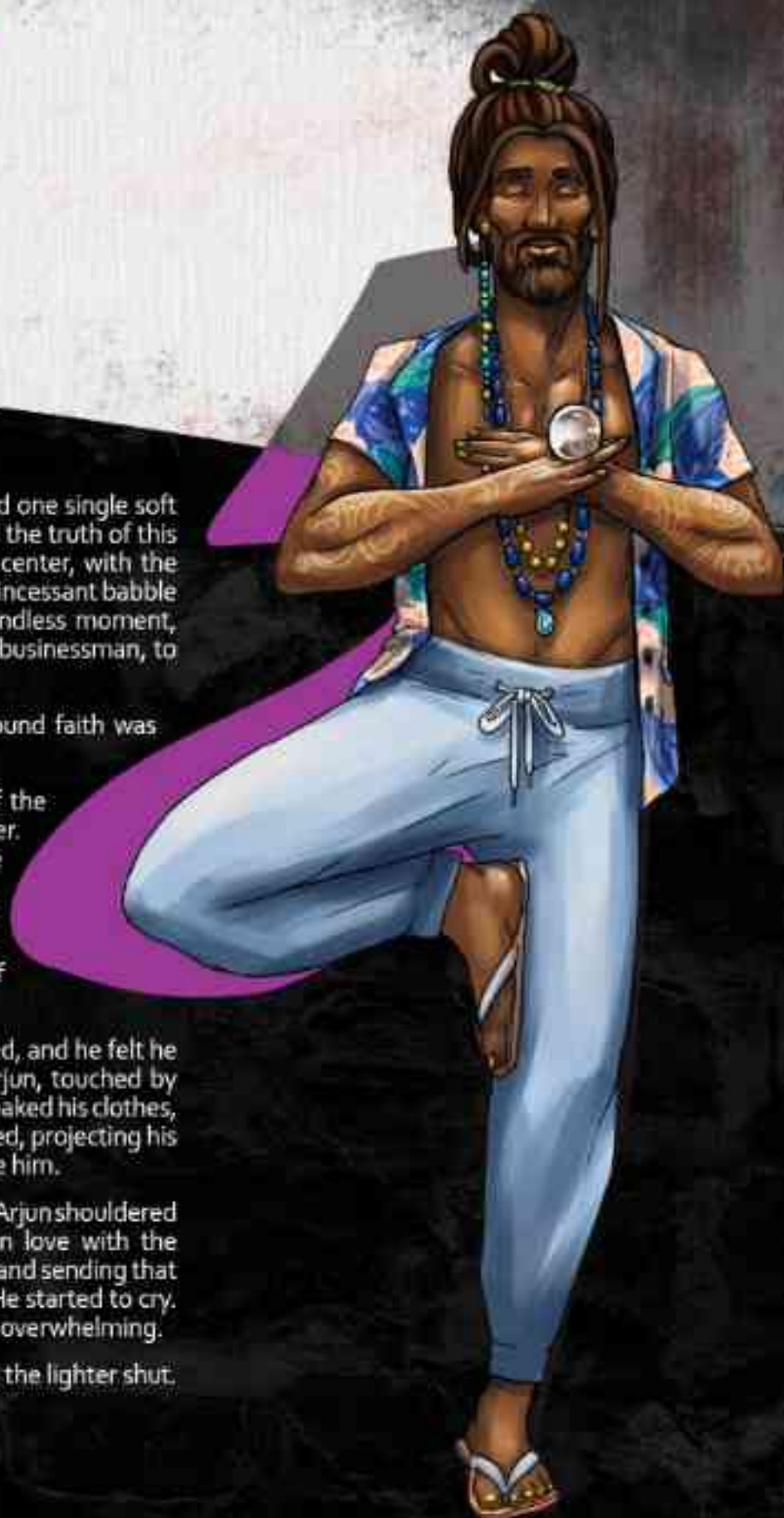
It didn't take him long before his newfound faith was tested.

A middle-aged man sat in the center of the street only blocks from the support center. He held a fat brass cigarette lighter in one hand, its case opened, its flame flickering in the light breeze. A jerrycan lay to one side. Its contents had been spilled on and around the man, and the acrid tang of gasoline hung heavy in the air.

The man was distraught. His wife had died, and he felt he could no longer carry on without her. Arjun, touched by this, sat down beside the man. Gasoline soaked his clothes, the stench making him dizzy, but he smiled, projecting his inner calm onto the troubled figure beside him.

They talked. The man poured out his grief. Arjun shouldered those emotions, sharing them, falling in love with the woman who'd captured this man's heart, and sending that love back. The man's shoulders sagged. He started to cry. Arjun cried with him, the beauty of death overwhelming.

Then, with a single soft flick, he slammed the lighter shut. Life would continue today.





## KAT WHITLOCK

**CLASS: SLEUTH**

LOCATION: SEATTLE, WA

AGE: 18

HEIGHT: 5'4



"This kat has claws" seemed too obvious to Kat Whitlock at first, but as a would-be investigative journalist, it fit the byline. It earned the clicks and sold copy. It's what got her the big stories, the dangerous stories you could really sink your teeth--or claws--into.

It's also what brought her to the creaking old barge beneath the Memorial Bridge.

The fishy stench of murky water mixed with diesel from leaking fuel tanks. It gave the abandoned-looking vessel an unpleasant mystique. But this was the location. The informant had been specific, choosing this place because it was as far from the glittering glass towers of downtown as possible in both real estate and ambiance.

This would be her big break, the one that finally proved she can write as well as the professionals. This would crush the old-boy network and bring the need for equality and diversity to the forefront of the American imagination. It would change everything.

Her contact was there as expected, a hunched figure in black against the night-grey of the deck, clutching a flash drive in one ghostly hand. He didn't move as she approached. Her Kat senses told her he was dead, and confirmation came with the flash of a blade.

Kat noticed the glint off the water and ducked. Her assailant slashed again, catching her across the left elbow. She screamed, kicking out in the darkness, her boot connecting with something soft. There was an accompanying grunt, and she pressed her advantage, stomping until the form went limp and the knife plunged into the water.

Still breathing heavy, she reached for the flash drive and the biggest story of her life. What a beginning for her future career.



# DEXTER LAFONTAINE

## CLASS: FENCER

LOCATION: LONDON, ENGLAND

WEIGHT: 150

AGE: 27

HEIGHT: 5'10

Dexter LaFontaine parried with his professors as he parried on the field of honor, leaving them staggering off-point and unsure of who was teaching whom. It was his trademark, his forte, and also the biggest thorn in the sides of those who opposed him.

Born to Senegalese immigrants, his early life had been a struggle, but he soon learned to turn anguish and frustration into raw energy. He excelled at sports, whether at a field, on a court, or in the ring, but it was his love of fencing that earned him his scholarship to first Oxford, and then Cambridge; and, eventually, landed him the Olympic gold.

This propelled him from a nobody to an instant celebrity. He rubbed shoulders with the height of society, and everyone knew his name.

### But not everyone had the same level of respect.

He met a rude and pretentious young man at one super-exclusive gathering. The man took an instant dislike to Dexter and went out of his way to belittle Dexter's upbringing, heritage, and achievements, but he took it too far when he brought Dexter's parents into it. Dexter protested, but the man laughed in his face. Laughingly, the man suggested a duel. Dexter immediately agreed, and by the look on

the man's face, he hadn't expected it.

They met at dawn the next day. Having heard of Dexter's work with the foil, the man chose sabers, but modern fencing was an artform with three disciplines, and with a series of deft slashes, Dexter showed the pretentious jerk just why they'd given him the gold medal.





# JOHNNY BLAZE

**CLASS: THE ICON**

LOCATION: LAS VEGAS, NV

WEIGHT: 160

AGE: 26

HEIGHT: 6'1"

Johnny Blaze was big, bigger than Nirvana, bigger than the Rolling Stones even, but he wasn't so big he couldn't see when things had gone off the rails.

It was a big show. Vegas. One of the largest crowds ever, from anyone's standards, and Johnny ate up the attention as he strutted around doing his thing, making his music. Then a fan hopped on stage. Before he could react, security had the kid down and over as if sweeping a clump of dust from the stage.

Johnny paused his singing as the beautiful boy got swallowed up in the throng, his pink woolen jacket and leather pants (an homage to Johnny's own over-the-top outfit) submerged beneath rabid gazes and frantic, worship-filled eyes that never glanced away from Johnny even as the boy begged and pleaded for his life.

This wasn't him. Johnny was the hero of this show, the cool guy who always did the right thing—at least in his own version of reality. He was born to be a hero, the brightest star in everyone's heaven.

Maybe his own star had blinded him. Maybe he'd seen just what he'd wanted to see as the crowds became larger and the fans more fanatic, insulating him from his own indifference. He didn't want to believe it. But if it were true, then it was time for a change.

"Nope" was the last word he shouted as he dropped his mic and fell backward into the crowd. They held him aloft, thinking the crowd surfing was part of his act, but when they set him down, he just kept walking.



# LT. COMMANDER LETICIA WRIGHT

## CLASS: LEADER

LOCATION: THE PENTAGON

AGE: 35

HEIGHT: 5'5

When Lt. Commander Leticia Wright says "jump", if her recruits have to ask, "how high", they've already failed. She demands perfection and accepts nothing less than excellence.

It's what led her to personally oversee the newest batch of recruits. They were the worst of the worst, rough men who cared for nothing. They'd been shipped in from the court system, having been given the choice between the army and prison.

They'd chosen prison, but not even the penal system would have them.

They were as unruly as advertised, resisting commands, getting in fights, and disrupting life on the forward-facing base. Lieutenant Commander Wright refused to put up with their antics, so she led them on repeated forays outside the green zone, and into live enemy engagements.

Her "scared straight" tactics worked on most, but there were still a couple of holdouts, the kind of men too ignorant to see when they were being handed a favor. Wright had to get creative with these two, so they joined her on a live op.

They didn't take this with the seriousness it deserved, and they were soon cut off and under fire by a superior enemy force. Bravado turned to panic. It took all of Wright's skill to keep them from running, but by force of her will, she held them there.

Believing in "lead by example", Wright used their vulnerability to give the men ever more specific orders, training them, forcing them to become a team under her guidance until it became second nature.

And, as a well-commanded team, they fought their way to safety in spite of the odds.





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