

## History:

“Superhero”. The title has existed for ages, ever since the first stories were written down at the dawn of man. Over the years though, the term has changed and evolved, to mean different things to different people.

The modern definition – someone with extraordinary abilities who fights crime and saves the innocent, came into fashion during World War II, when many highly training (and perhaps enhanced) super-soldiers gained fame, some fighting for the Allies and some fighting for the Axis. However, after the war, they faded into obscurity, and it was not until the 60’s when the public encountered their first notable hero. Dark Vengeance was a hero for the people, a masked vigilante that worked to fight crime in the south, and stand up for the rights of those would be abused and discriminated against.

After this first hero arrived, others began to show themselves, and by the early 70’s, most major centers of population had one or two guardian angels working to make a better world. Unfortunately, for every would-be hero, there were several villains who aimed to take advantage of the fantasy and romanticism of the caped hero, and make their own mark. Either thru a desire to become rich, famous, or powerful, or simply to strike back at the world that they had suffered from, villains grew more common. Average criminals became something for the police to deal with, while the superheroes focused on their respective supervillains.

For years, this struggle raged, with neither side really gaining an upper hand. There were victories here and there, and losses on both sides, but with public opinion, their training, and a bit of luck, the heroes managed to hold their own, and hold the world together.

Then late in the 90’s, a new villain came to power, who united all the others under his banner, and systematically consolidated his strength. Dr. Destroyer was a villain unlike any the world had seen, a megalomaniac genius, who had gained great strength and abilities thru genetic experimentation on himself. He was not satisfied with merely ruling the world – his goal was to eliminate all threats to his existence so that he could rule unchallenged. And if that was not to happen, he would happily destroy it all so that no one could rule.

By late 1999, on the eve of the turn of the century, the heroes of the world had united against the common foe, and converged on his lair deep in the center of Chicago. Here, Dr. Destroyer promised to explode a nuclear device hidden in each of the world’s capital cities, unless each country surrendered unconditionally to his rule. Some countries gave in, but many of them refused, despite almost assured destruction.

Over the night of New Year’s Eve, a great many heroes perished in the fighting, and many of the allies of the evil Doctor were captured or killed as well. In the end, the battle was ultimately won, but only at a terrible price. Although most of the weapons were successfully disarmed, Dr. Destroyer had a failsafe located in his hidden base. As he fell to the combined forces, with a final glare, he triggered the device, and in an instant the center of Chicago was no more. Along with the city, nearly all the world’s heroes were vaporized as well, and virtually all of the villains who had sided with Destroyer. By the single action, the age of superheroes faded in a flash of light.

## Today:

It has been nearly 18 years since that event, and in the years since, Chicago has been reborn as The City, a glowing metropolis and shining beacon for the world. Industry and nations, united by the disaster, joined forces to rebuild, and replace the ruins with renewed hope. Rubble was cleared, and new skyscrapers built, roadways and railways repaired and replaced with the latest transportation options, and technology investments encouraged growth where there was only desolation before.

With the death of the superheroes, life for the common person returned to normal – no longer was there a threat of supervillains and world domination – but mob and gang violence returned to fill the void. Police units were re-strengthened to deal with the threat and to protect the populace, now that their guardian shields were no longer present. It wasn't a utopia, but life returned to "normal".

As the years passed, the superheroes became forgotten – a hero has not been seen for the last 15 years – and most consider them merely comic book fantasies and the creation of Hollywood these days. Super powers are all but unheard of, and considered tabloid fuel rather than reality.

Unfortunately, crime and corruption has continued to fester and grow, now that it can do so unchecked. Although The City is a crown jewel to the public, behind the scenes life is as bad or worse than it ever was. In the slums, gang violence rules the streets, and in the business districts, the Mob rules with an iron fist. Even in the ivory towers of the corporate center, the businesses who once moved into to rebuild and grow the city now squabble over profits and margins, with little care for the workers they discard whenever they are no longer useful.

There is a light in the darkness however, and word is spreading of new heroes who are rising, and will once again work to make a better world.

*For reference, we will be using the modern map of Chicago, although no doubt land marks and such will change significantly. Consider Chicago-related knowledge as a starting point, but expect that it will be heavily modified (since I don't know that much about the details of the region).*

## Notable Corporations and Entities:

**Biotech Industries** – a leading medical research and pharmaceutical company, Biotech was initially responsible for cleaning up the pollution in the bay, and clearing the radioactive damage caused by the destruction of Chicago. Since then however, they have managed to gain a controlling interest in the medical and hospital networks of The City, and keep health care costs high to pad their bottom line. There are a few small-time competitors, but they rarely make any progress, and any gains are quickly eliminated when they gain the attention of Biotech.

**Ares Construction** – When Chicago needed to be rebuilt, numerous construction companies offered their services, but the big winner was Ares Construction. With their 56-C series of autonomous construction robots, they could undercut all but a few of the manual labor crews. Over time, their construction bots became as common as traffic lights, but as the rebuild was completed, they consolidated their hold over future projects. Very few new buildings or major repair projects are approved without Ares being involved, a strategy which has allowed them to reap high margins. Most of their profits go back into their workforce, and the 56-C model was rapidly replaced with faster, stronger, and more efficient models. Although the old bots are still found in low-budget projects, they are rapidly being phased out.

**Walther & Mayweather** – Few legal teams can boast the success of the law firm of Walther and Mayweather. Both successful criminal attorneys before the blast, their firm moved in after the devastation and successfully defended against many the lawsuits. In the process, they made allies of almost all the key criminal players, who have continued to utilize their skills ever since – an arrangement which has become very profitable. Today, between legal procedure and criminal protection, they are untouchable, and continue to serve the highest bidder. Although they specialize in criminal defense, they have also branched out into corporate law.

**City Police Department (CPD)** – The City's police department used to be a shining model of efficiency, back when superheroes handled most of the heavy lifting. These days, it is a bloated and frequently corrupt organization, overly influenced by the unions, and burdened by underfunding and government restrictions. It is believed that a large percentage of the cops are under the influence of the mob or various gangs, though there still are a few die-hards that stick to the principles of truth and justice. But after many years without making progress, the system is viewed as flawed more often than successful. Cops, as part of their training and influence of their environment, aggressively pursue would-be vigilantes, and have little patience for those who might wear a mask. This further discourages people from doing the right thing, and standing up for justice.

**Vito Martelli** – The godfather of The Cities largest and most powerful mob family, Vito Martelli was a major player even before the bomb. It is rumored that he was working in the service of Dr. Destroyer, a rumor that the Martelli family likes use for intimidation, but thus far no criminal connection has ever been proven. The Martelli mob controls the smuggling operations of the City, and has a controlling interest in much of the drug trade, though most of the day to day operations are handled by various gangland groups. The Martellis have a long-standing feud with both the Yakuza and the Russian Bratva, though within the last year, much of that bloodshed has quieted down.

**Hounds of Chaos** – The Hounds of Chaos were originally an organized crime gang, which specialized in fraud and long-cons. A few years ago, their leadership was replaced by a new player, who quickly re-arranged the gang into more physical criminal activities, and rebranded the group as the Hounds. Those considered too weak to contribute or simply undesirable, were killed, sacrificed to the police, or simply never seen again. Today, the Hounds of Chaos focus mainly on gun running and armaments, though they are not above doing a bit of insurance fraud as well. The gang's current leader is unknown, but said to be almost paranoid in his sense of security. They are particularly active each year around Halloween, spreading mayhem and destruction in a form of anniversary celebration of their rebirth.