

Sample file

TO SERVE AND PROTECT™

An Adventure Scenario for Champions by Scott Heine

Thanks to Randy "Doc Sonic's a Woman?!" Bownds, Pat "Zounds and Aghast" Dobbin, Steve "You think you are a chicken" Holmes, Ed "Rattle, Rattle, Bam" Kahn, Tom "I saw it in *Aliens*" McKimmy, Matt "Don't look like a tree" Moore, Paul "I was mind controlled. Really." Parkhurst, Robert "Lost in the void" Perez, Dean "Eliminate the hostage situation" Theophilou, and Alfred "But Matt's character is stronger" Wenzl for their friendship and inspiration for this adventure (not to mention several years of exciting gaming).

This book is dedicated to my beautiful wife, Margo, whose patience and support made this project possible.

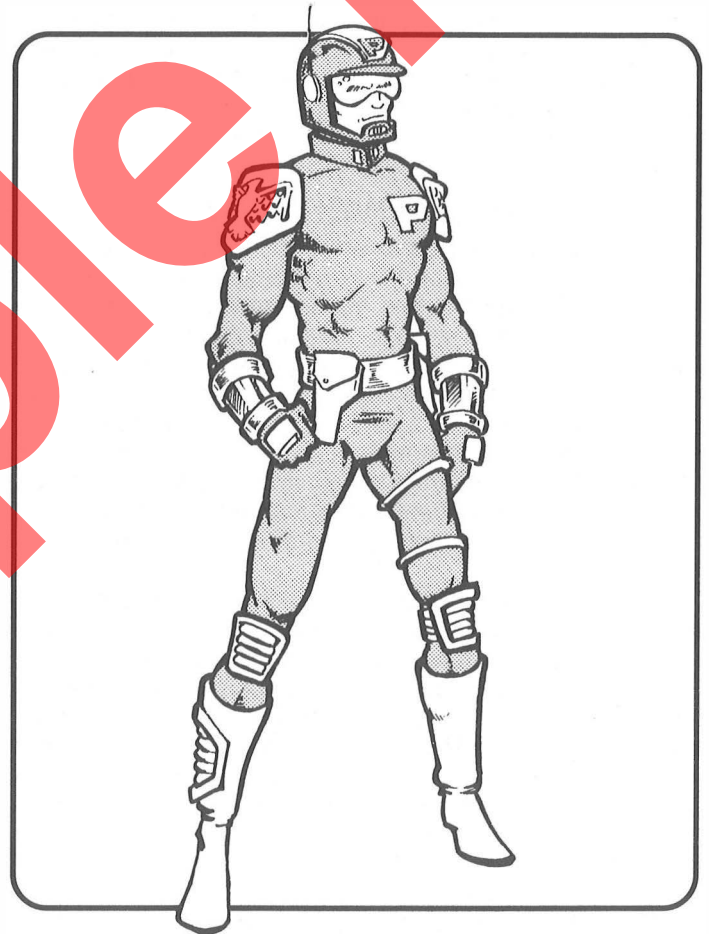
Project Editor: Rob Bell **Series Editor:** Rob Bell **Editorial Contributions:** Coleman Charlton, Leo LaDell

Cover Art: Tom Lyle **Cover Design:** Bart "Hlavin" Bishop **Interior Art:** Scott Heine

Production: Scott "Lamborg, Lamborg... Let's just call it a Jag" Heine, Rob "I already used it. We'll make it a BMW" Bell, Margo "Proof it again?" Heine, Suzanne Young, Kurt "Are you sure you can spell BMW?" Fischer, Paula Peters, Eileen Smith, Leo LaDell, Larry Brook, Coleman "The Mexican God with a Fruitbasket on his Head" Charlton

Page Layout: Leo LaDell

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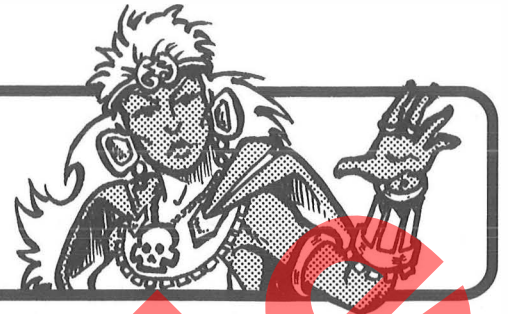
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INTRODUCTION



To Serve and Protect is multi-part adventure scenario for 5-7 characters with 50-60 active point attacks and 20-25 point defenses. This adventure will not only require careful strategy on the part of the players, but will force their characters to deal with issues of loyalty and ethics. If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading here. If you are the Gamemaster, read through the entire scenario thoroughly before beginning play.

The GM is free to decide how he wishes to implement these scenarios. It is possible for this adventure to be run in a single play session, by trimming out the subplots and moving play quickly to the final confrontation. However, as in the comic books, the storyline of this scenario can also be spread out over several weeks of play, manifesting itself in various subplots, and introducing new elements of role playing.

PLOT OVERVIEW

Centuries ago, a superpowered Aztec maiden discovered a mysterious skull-shaped pendant deep in the jungle near her home. Though she had no idea of where the pendant came from, she was strongly attracted to it and decided to keep it for herself. In reality, the pendant was a magical charm which bent the minds of those who fell prey to its influence and imparted a zealous desire to rid mankind of every form of evil and impurity. The Aztec girl soon became affected by the pendant's power and sought to purge all humanity. She was eventually entombed in stone by her peoples' sorcery, and the skull pendant lay waiting for a new victim.

Today, the pendant has been rediscovered, and it has worked its magic on a powerful team of American superheroes known as the Protectors. As a result, they have decided to free the petrified Aztec maiden and continue her quest with a newfound fervor. It is at this point that the players' heroes will enter the story. The Protectors will attempt to raid the local museum and recover the Aztec "statue," and our heroes will be brought in to stop them. Considering the size, experience, and disposition of the Protectors, it is likely that the characters will find themselves on the receiving end of an overwhelming attack.

After the battle, the remaining heroes will discover the theft of the statue, and will be left with a number of unanswered questions about the sudden change in this famous band of crimefighters. The trail of the robbery will lead our heroes to investigate the Protectors' floating Citadel in San Francisco Bay. This base is heavily guarded, and the heroes will have to fight their way through the sophisticated, automated defense systems of the Citadel in their search for answers.

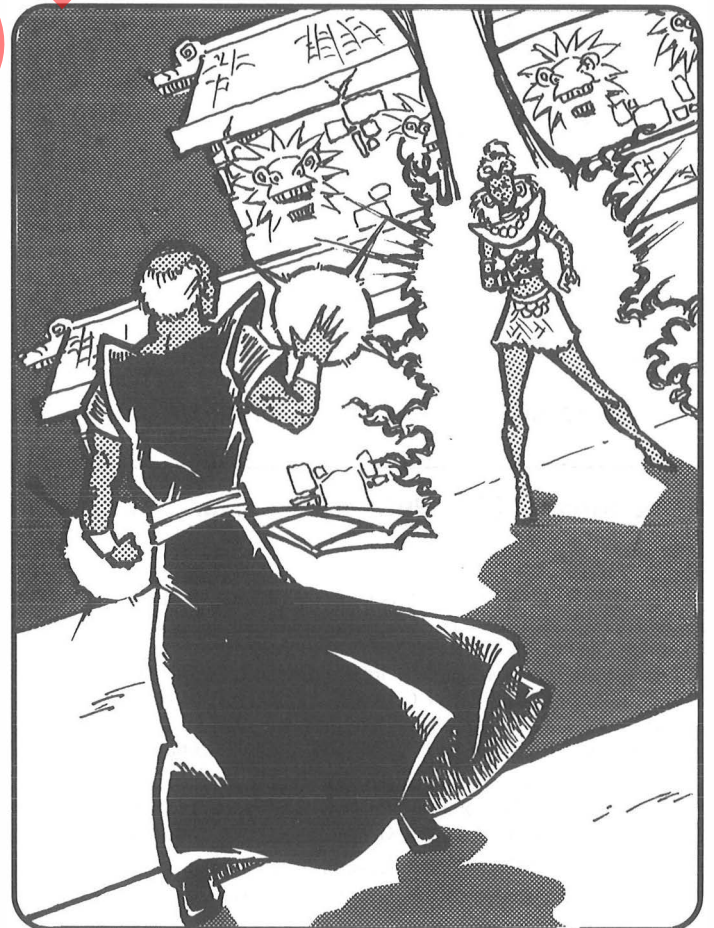
Though the players may learn more about the reasons for the Protectors' behavior from their investigation of the Citadel, they will find little information about the team's current location. Meanwhile, the renegade heroes revive the Aztec girl and help her become accustomed to this modern era.

During the following weeks, a new crimefighter will emerge, who zealously battles evil with deadly dedication. This is actually the revived Aztec maiden operating under the name of "the Purifier." She and the Protectors will target even the smallest of offenders for violent punishment, drawing the world's attention and fear.

Eventually, the Purifier will conclude that only a cataclysmic, worldwide event will truly cleanse humanity of its imperfections. With the Protectors' help she will construct a deadly device capable of destroying the entire world, and the Protectors will prepare to activate it from a remote cave in the South American jungle. The plot will reach a climax when the PCs arrive to put a stop to the merciless scheme.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Gamemaster should first read through the entire scenario, noting the flow of the plot and the slow revelation of the growing crisis. He should then examine the characters in the back of the book closely. Remember that the Protectors should be powerful enough as a group to defeat the Player Characters. The GM should also familiarize himself



with the strengths and weaknesses of the Protectors so that they can function properly as an integrated team. Information has been provided on the various personalities of the characters, and the GM is encouraged to roleplay the NPCs dramatically, thereby bringing them to "life" during play.

As always, the GM should feel free to change and adapt the scenario to fit into his own campaign. If the NPCs' abilities are too tough for your heroes, reduce the number of dice of their attacks and/or lower their defenses. If your heroes will easily overpower the Protectors, you can always make them more powerful, or even add Protectors Inc. agents to make things more difficult.

To **Serve and Protect** is more than just an adventure pack; it can be a source of valuable campaign material and a springboard for further adventures. The Protectors provide an excellent example of how to build a well-balanced superteam, and notes have been included on group composition and suggested combat tactics. Whether they are ever "cured" of their zealous bent for justice or not, they can easily become regular NPCs in your campaign. You may even decide to have the Player Characters join or replace the Protectors, taking over their base and becoming entangled with the teams' old arch-enemies.

Additionally, this adventure can be used to help define some of your heroes' ethical principles. Will they actually fight against their fellow champions? And if the Protectors are trying to eliminate crime (even if it means taking the lives of powerful mob leaders and supervillains), will the heroes try and stop them? Will they join the violent war against evil? And at what point will they consider things to be out of hand? If your campaign already involves "gray heroes" — super-types who fight crime in totally unconventional and often illegal ways — perhaps the Protectors will choose these characters as recipients of their wrath. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

It should be noted that the plot of this adventure is loosely based on actual Aztec mythology. If the GM wishes more information and inspiration on the subject, including material on Coatlicue and other figures in the Aztec pantheon, he should check out the mythology and art history sections of his local library. Several books, such as Richard Cavendish's *Mythology, An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (London: Orbis Publishing; 1980), Pierre Grimal's *Larousse World Mythology* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons; 1965), and Brian M. Fagan's *The Aztecs* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company; 1984), offers a wealth of interesting material.

USING OTHER HERO SYSTEMS WITH THIS ADVENTURE

The basic plotline of this adventure can easily be adapted for use in a **Super Agents** campaign. Detailed notes on the Protectors Agency are provided, and with just a little expansion, they can replace the supertypes in the scenario. Simply establish a number of agents as the elite force within the agency, and give them Knowledge Skills and sophisticated weaponry resembling the power effects of the Protectors. The Purifier can be used almost as is; keep her touch of death, eliminate her elemental powers, and decrease her DEX and SPD.

Furthermore, several of the suggested options in the adventure involve the use of agents. The GM may wish to have his players create **Super Agents** for these scenarios, and use their **Champions** characters for the rest of the adventure.

More work will be required to adapt the scenario for **Justice Inc.** and **Danger International**. For Justice Inc. the idea of a resurrected goddess may easily fit with the pulp novel environment, though the Protectors will have to be replaced by characters more appropriate to the genre. Perhaps the GM can create a group of "mystery men," known only by a few, who secretly help the poor and oppressed. For **Danger International**, the type of adaptations necessary depend largely on the type of campaign you're running. In most cases, you'll need to tone down the fantastic elements of the adventure, but the effects of the pendant on fellow agents can still provide quite an adventure. Of course, for both **Justice Inc.** and **Danger International**, the statistics of the NPCs will have to be substantially reduced. Attacks, defenses, and characteristics should be just slightly higher than the average of the players' characters.

SETTING THE SCENE

BACKGROUND

Deep within the heart of the Mexican jungle near Tenochtitlan, a young Aztec maiden stood boldly atop a stone pyramid surveying the mob of angry warriors gathering below. Years before, when her miraculous powers over the elements first manifested themselves, the people proclaimed her as the living incarnation of Coatlicue, the mother of the gods. Now, after hundreds had felt her "cleansing touch" of death, her worshippers wanted her destroyed. She knew that their bone weapons could never harm her, and she grieved that she would have to pour out her deadly judgment to purify them of their wickedness.

But the people were aware of her invulnerability, and had prepared for her execution by securing the arcane powers of an elder priest of the Great Serpent, the god of the sky. As the blazing sun reached its peak, the old priest worked his charm, and the young goddess was suddenly encased in stone. In jubilation, the warriors took the resulting statue and buried it deep within a dried-up well, and hung her skull pendant high upon a pole as a trophy of their victory over a god.

Centuries later, archeologists discovered the Aztec well and its wealth of artifacts, including both the statue and the pendant. As excavation proceeded, outbreaks of violence occurred among the diggers, and the source of the violence was eventually traced back to squabbles over the skull pendant. It seemed that all who came into direct contact with it began behaving aggressively toward other workers and developed an attitude of self-righteous piety. The problem was referred to various parapsychologists, who also suffered the same effects.

Eventually the pendant was handed over to Dr. Wraithe, a powerful magician and member of the the Protectors, a San Francisco-based team of superheroes. Though he used extreme caution, Dr. Wraithe eventually came into direct contact with the artifact, and suffered the same personality transformation as the others. He realized that all forms of evil, no matter how trivial, must be purged from the earth. He shared this revelation with each of his teammates by bringing them into contact with the mysterious relic. As the Protectors went forth to battle crime with a new-found fervor, Dr. Wraithe explored the origins of the skull-shaped amulet. He eventually traced it back to the life-like Aztec statue found in the archeological dig, and recognized the ancient secret behind the goddess.

The Protectors have now decided that Coatlicue, the petrified Aztec mother of the gods, must be released so that she can bring her powers of purification to this wicked generation.

THE SKULL PENDANT

This small pendant is made of enchanted jade and is about three inches in diameter. The origin of the pendant is currently unknown (even Coatlicue herself is unaware of its maker), and is certainly several centuries old. It does not actually add to the powers of its wearer as a Focus would; rather, it has transforming effects on all who come into prolonged contact with it. Anyone who directly handles the amulet will find themselves becoming obsessed with the idea of absolute justice and purity. Though they will feel that they are above judgment themselves, they will be compelled to discipline other offenders harshly. No evil, no matter how small, can be tolerated. Eventually, even the fundamental moral scruples of a victim will be bypassed in the effort to purify the world.

The effects of the pendant are cumulative, so that the longer the exposure, the stronger the effect. The pendant's influence can be reversed in a number of ways. First, the victim can undergo a period of intense psychological treatment, working through the twisted patterns of thinking and re-evaluating personal ethics. However, this can take some time. For more immediate results, Telepathic contact, at the 4x level, can "awaken" the true person inside. The contact must be maintained for at least three phases to be effective.

The Skull Pendant: 3d6 Transformation Attack (vs. Power Defense); cumulative effect; totally invisible power effect; result is a personality transformation into a zealous avatar of absolute justice

PROLOGUE

For the past several months, criminal activity in the world has been increasing dramatically. A great deal of it seems to be in response to an all-out war being waged by a San Francisco superhero team against the underworld. This team, known as the Protectors, has moved from defending society to mercilessly hunting down and eliminating criminals, using ruthless and often illegal means. Rumor on the street has it that the Protectors have even acted as vigilante executioners for a few major villains. Spokesmen for the team have exposed several scandals within important government circles, and some agents of Protectors Inc. have begun interfering with police investigations. Newspaper headlines are constantly peppered with the latest "busts" by the Protectors, and government agencies have begun to alert their local heroes to the possible threat of brutal public conflict, which would endanger people and property. Some restraining orders have been issued, but no actual charges have been filed yet. The Protectors have steadily increased the scope of their activities, and have been seen in nearly every major city in the United States.

INVOLVING THE HEROES

Though there are many possible ways to involve the characters in this adventure, the method chosen should be tailored to the individual styles of the players. Any extra planning effort by the GM to catch the players' interest is bound to pay off in the long run.

Here are some suggestions for getting the characters involved:

- 1) You may choose to have the Protectors' raid on the museum come as a complete surprise, with the heroes responding to screaming police sirens or a desperate plea for help from authorities. If the players are not aware of the current events surrounding the Protectors, they will probably expect a band of ruthless villains attacking the museum. The sight of a famous group of heroes tearing through the Metropolitan Galleries will come as a shock, and will leave the PCs with a lot of unanswered questions. The Protectors may try to capitalize on the confusion, urging the heroes to trust them, and arguing that they have a good reason for their behavior which "cannot be disclosed at this time."
- 2) Even before the main part of this adventure begins you may want to set the stage for the upcoming events. The Protectors may originally dispatch a large number of their agents to retrieve the statue *en route* to the museum. In this scenario, the heroes would be called in to protect a high-speed freight locomotive which has fallen under siege. The resulting struggle will likely take place atop a moving train (a very dangerous place even for superheroes!) See *Champions II* for details on the weight of a train, the effects of being hit by the speeding locomotive, damage from falling off at high speeds, etc. When it is over, the heroes will be asked to guard the exhibit temporarily, setting the stage for the first part of the adventure, "Night Raid."
- 3) It's possible that an aura of imminent danger may attract heroes with danger sense or magical skills. The origin of the threat lies somewhere within the Metropolitan Galleries, although the exact place and nature of the omen cannot be sensed. The character may choose to warn the museum officials, or he may remain hidden nearby in anticipation of the upcoming events.
- 4) Perhaps the authorities will ask a few heroes to follow the Protectors in case their vendetta against the criminal element gets out of hand. The heroes may then witness and perhaps participate in a furious blitz of a supervillain's hideout. If the characters actually become involved in the Protectors' assault, their efforts will be politely acknowledged, but any questions about the Protectors' motivations or recent activities will go unanswered. Eventually the PCs will observe all the Protectors leaving the Citadel Skycruiser, and can follow them to the Metropolitan Galleries.



CHAPTER 1: NIGHT RAID!



The serene evening is abruptly shattered by the screaming engines of the Protectors' Skycruiser as it streaks over the sleeping city. Dark clouds gather ominously overhead, as if in response to some dark summons.

"Quasar, are you sure we're doing the right thing?" Doc Sonic looks inquisitively into the gleaming yellow eyes of the team's leader. "After all, what we're planning here is outright burglary."

"Do not worry, Doctor. We have all agreed that releasing the ancient female will greatly benefit mankind. She will cleanse this planet of evil once and for all. A day shall come when the people will thank us for our actions."

"Quiet back there!" hisses Huntsman from the cockpit. "We're nearing the museum..."



THE PLAN

Having uncovered the secrets of the skull pendant and its previous owner, the Protectors became convinced that they must free the artifact's mistress from her petrified prison. Knowing that the authorities would never approve, they prepared an all-out assault on the Metropolitan Galleries, where the statue is being kept for display.

The museum itself actually consists of several buildings scattered throughout a wooded park. Each building contains one or more galleries displaying various works linked to a particular historical period or artistic theme. See the map and description of the Galleries for more detailed information.

The Protectors have learned that the unusually realistic statue of Coatlicue is being prepared for an exhibition in the Central American Gallery, which is scheduled to open in several weeks. They intend to fly their Skycruiser, in remove the statue, and travel to a secluded place where Dr. Wraithe can transform the statue back into the Aztec maiden. The Protectors have made no effort to scout out the museum beforehand, trusting that sheer speed and brute power will be sufficient to overcome any opposition.

AT THE MUSEUM

Upon reaching the museum, Huntsman will set the Skycruiser to hover directly above the Central American Gallery. Quasar, Dr. Wraithe, and Silverfist will enter the building through its main doors and begin searching for the statue. Huntsman will remain in the pilot's seat, ready for a quick getaway. The rest of the team will position themselves on the roof of the gallery, watching for any signs of approaching trouble.

As Silverfist kicks open the front doors, a silent alarm will be set off, alerting the authorities to the break-in. The parking lot guard will also call in and confirm the alarm, pointing out that a "glowing U.F.O." is hovering above the museum. Several squad cars will be dispatched, and the police may contact local superheroes for assistance. The brave security guard inside the gallery will manage to get off one shot (which bounces off Silverfist's armor) before Dr. Wraithe sends him into a deep slumber.

Inside the gallery, the three Protectors will discover that none of the artifacts have been unpacked yet. Instead, countless wooden crates and rolls of padding are strewn about the display cases. If they have met no further resistance, the burglars will begin searching the crates for the statue. Silverfist will utilize his X-Ray vision while Dr. Wraithe and Quasar begin tearing the packing apart. It will take them at least five minutes to locate the proper crate and secure the statue (which weighs 1.5 tons and is, for all purposes, magically invulnerable).