

This is very much *background* information for the setting of the Real Heroes?

## **Senatorial Investigation Committee into the Regulation of Augmented Persons (APs)**

### **Background The Acme Incident**

In 1995 there was an accident at a top secret research facility, believed to be looking into alternate dimensions, in Acme, New Mexico. There was an influx of what has been called a Meta Particulate Dispersion (MPD), believed to be trans-dimensional in nature. This led to the destruction of the town which remains quarantined to the present day. In the immediate vicinity of the town people and animals were dramatically changed. Some of these people looked normal but gained fantastical powers. Others few grew to immense sizes & turned into rampaging beasts while others simply died in horrible ways as their bodies turned against them. Farther away there were more occurrences of people changing either in beneficial ways or fatal ones but the frequency reduced dramatically. Overall there was significant manifestation of “infection” in the US and Mexico and, eventually, much lower incidence spread throughout out the rest of the world.

The people who changed had an incredible variety of impossible abilities, “superpowers” if you will. These ranged from the cosmetic – elastic tongues or the ability to turn blue to the earth shattering – the ability to fly or to fling balls of plasma. There is almost unimaginable variety in these effects.

Isolated, small MPD outbreaks continue today. There are also indications that individuals have inherited the AP\* condition.

The causes of these powers, how they work and the way they break the laws of nature have defied scientific explanation ever since the incident.

### **Early Responses**

The initial response to the Acme Affair involved military actions against the rampaging monstrosities and disease control efforts to limit the spread of the less imposing afflicted. This latter did not prove very effective as the MPD spreads in a way that is not understood but is more like airborne than any other recognised pattern. The Centre for Disease control did form a new branch the Monitoring AP division (MAPS) to investigate and try to control the new phenomenon. After the initial outbreaks most incidence has been relatively benign and almost entirely confined to humans.

The government banned Extra-Dimensional research and prevailed on the UN to do the same. This lead to the US intervention in Iraq in 2003 to close down Extra Dimensional research labs that US intelligence services maintained were present. None were found.

The government never formally attempted to utilise AP for their AP qualities. However the Baltic state of Bosrovia suffered a bloody revolution that destroyed all of its elected socialist government and replaced it with a repressive monarchy. Reports from Bosrovia indicated that there were US AP supporting the revolution and indeed who were responsible for the massive explosions that wrecked the capital. The US has denied involvement in this.

The changed people (APs\*) have adopted a range of unusual behaviours. Largely eschewing conventional lifestyles many of them have been drawn to fighting crime, often as masked vigilantes, while they are also disproportionately represented amongst criminals.

The US government has also secretly employed some AP to work for it in a variety of roles. Other foreign powers have followed suit.

The issue of APs has raised concerns amongst ordinary people. This is largely due to the damage they cause and the fact they seem to want to operate outside of the law. There is also push back against organisations like BAST and individuals with similar “AP supremacist” agendas. This has been brought to a head by the recent Fort Worth incident.

## Fort Worth Disaster

A vigilante team called Cinque Estrella including, one known as Frostbite was tracking a flamboyant AP criminal Mindwrack and set a trap for them in Ft. Worth where Mindwrack was staging a heist. Unfortunately Mindwrack was a powerful telepath and the reports from the surviving members of Cinque Estrella indicate that Mindwrack took control of Frostbite and made them use their powers in down town Ft Worth. These powers drained the heat from the city and caused 935 civilian casualties and massive property damage due to avalanches of snowfall, ice and collapsing buildings. Frostbite & Mindwrack both did not survive the incident. The rest of the team was rescued by another vigilante. This also reminds us of the incredible durability that most AP exhibit as they suffered far greater exposure to the severe cold than the civilians who died.

This incident led to Anti AP riots in several states & strikes by some police forces who felt their ability to police effectively & to protect citizens was being compromised. There was however support for AP vigilantes from other police forces, who claimed that they were all that kept crime in check, and from AP fan groups.

## Current Position

Currently the role of AP in society is a very high profile issue. The government has set up various groups to investigate the problems and is monitoring the social impact of AP, especially vigilantes, closely.

There are several agencies that take an interest in Augmented Persons. The primary one exclusively dedicated to this, the Monitoring of Augmented Persons Section (MAPS) collects most of the information and collates research on AP and AP related matters. They are protective of their role.

### \*A Note on Terms:

Augmented Person, **AP** is the bureaucratically recognised term for people who have been in contact with the MPD and have been altered by it.

The members of **BAST**, the AP terrorist organisation, refer to themselves as *Transhumans* and consider themselves as the next evolution of the human race. This is sometimes used by others usually to refer to people with useful and potent powers. They call regular people *muggles*.

To round things out **APs** with useful, strong powers are often called *Supers*, everyone will know what you mean if you say this but those in the know may look down on you!

## **Metagame information**

### **Power Levels**

Most AP, perhaps couple of million in the US, are not significantly more powerful than regular people having marginally useful powers at best, though they are generally healthier. On the other hand there are thousands who can do something that far exceeds human power or otherwise violates the laws of nature. The AP *players* are from this group. For reference Spiderman would be one of the most powerful AP encountered. He is strong and resilient but with a limited “footprint”. This of course assumes that the most powerful ones have revealed their powers.

### **Weird "Stuff"**

“AP” is the bureaucratic name for people with magical powers even rubbish ones. They and the "trans-dimensional affair" that caused them are the only source of supernatural abilities or mystical power that has ever been catalogued.

The AP include some who are “super scientists” or similar. but these are "only" as good as the very best regular scientists though they usually don't have to work as hard! A limited exception to this is that some AP can produce devices they or other AP can power up. So no one could mass produce super powered armour for the military. You might be able to make a machine that breaks the laws of physics but ultimately it will depend on an AP powering it. Some AP who make devices cannot power them themselves. AP will undoubtedly push technology even faster than it advances in the real world but in the game it has not advanced noticeably beyond what we have now.

The Affair that caused the AP was related to research into alternate dimensions. This field of research has been outlawed since that incident.

No one has been able to get any scientific basis for the operation of AP though people are trying. They break the laws of nature as we understand them and are essentially magical.

### **Age**

In the game people's age is one of young, mature or old.