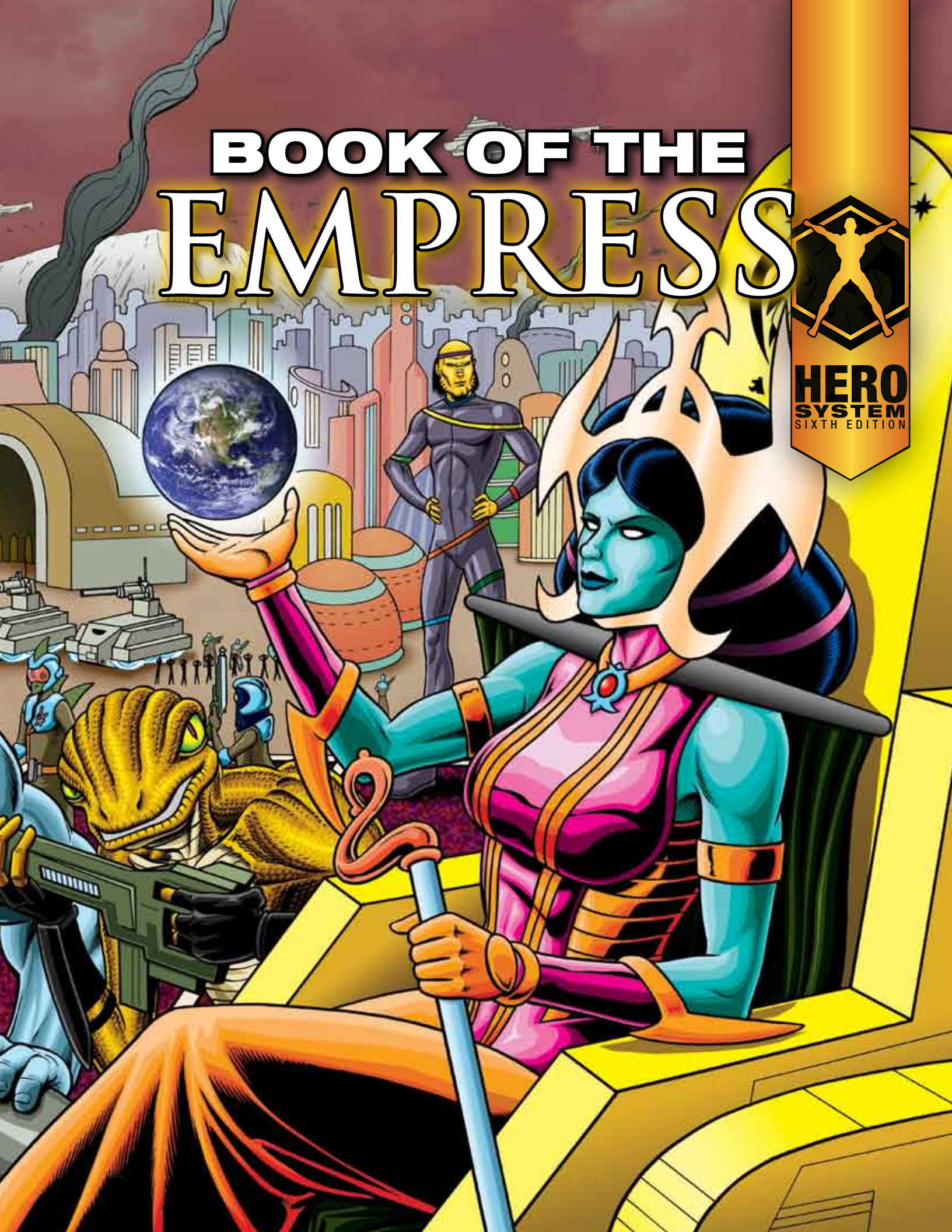


BOOK OF THE EMPRESS



THE POWER OF THE EMPRESS

The Champions Universe features many deadly supervillains, but perhaps the most dangerous of them all is Istvatha V'han, Empress of a Billion Dimensions. Ruler of an empire that encompasses much of the Multiverse, she now has her sights set on the greatest prize of all: Champions Universe Earth!

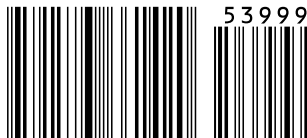
The Book Of The Empress is your guide to everything about Istvatha V'han. It features:

- ❖ The Book Of The Empress is your guide to everything about Istvatha V'han. It features:
- ❖ a history of the Empress, from her earliest days conquering single planets up to her recent attempts to invade Earth's dimension
- ❖ an in-depth look at the Empress herself — her powers, motivations, and resources
- ❖ a review of the Imperial Legions — the mighty V'hanian military — including its regular soldiers, superhuman soldiers, weapons, and vehicles
- ❖ a description of the Multiverse of the Champions Universe, including its nature, its structure, and numerous example dimensions
- ❖ a description of the V'hanian Empire itself, including V'han's regents and viceroys, the imperial bureaucracy, the Imperial Security Force, how she plans and executes the conquest of a dimension, and her current plans for Earth
- ❖ suggestions on how to use Istvatha V'han in your campaign, including plot seeds
- ❖ a discussion of dimensional campaigning, including a Random Dimension Generator the GM can use to quickly create new dimensions

So tell your heroes to get ready — it's time for them to confront the dimension-conquering power of Istvatha V'han!

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BOOK OF THE EMPRESS



BOOK OF THE EMPRESS

A SETTING BOOK FOR *CHAMPIONS*

DEDICATION

Hero Games would like to dedicate *The Book Of The Empress* to Robert "Secret Power Behind the Throne" Towell for his generous support and encouragement.

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You're all Heroes!

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INTRODUCTION



Of all the fiendish and deadly master villains heroes have to face in the Champions Universe, the most dangerous isn't Dr. Destroyer, Mechanon, King Cobra, Menton, or even the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca — it's Istvatha V'han, the self-styled "Empress of a Billion Dimensions." After all, most master villains aspire to conquer and rule Earth, but with the exception of Dr. Destroyer for three months in 1984, none of them have ever succeeded. Istvatha V'han, on the other hand, rules not just a single planet but hundreds of millions of *entire dimensions*. Her resources dwarf those of any other master villain (except perhaps for rival dimension lords like Skarn the Shaper and Tyrannon), and her personal powers of dimension and time travel make it virtually impossible to truly defeat her.

The Book Of The Empress is your complete guide to Istvatha V'han. It covers everything you need to know about her, from her powers and skills, to the beings who serve her, the military forces she commands, and how her empire functions.

Chapter One, *A Crusade Across Realities*, offers a brief overview of V'han's history. It starts with her rise to power on her native planet, then proceeds down the centuries to her recent unsuccessful attempts to conquer Earth's dimension.

Chapter Two, *The Personage Imperial*, provides V'han's character sheet and more closely examines the Empress herself. It delves into her powers and how they work, what she knows (and doesn't know), and her motivations and psychology. It also provides alternate versions of the Empress for use in other genres, such as Fantasy and Science Fiction.

Chapter Three, *The Imperial Legions*, describes the V'hanian military in all its dimension-conquering glory. The chapter opens with a review of the Imperial Battalion, her thousands-strong corps of superhuman soldiers and bodyguards. It then reviews the military proper, covering such subjects as recruitment, ranks and force organization, D-Soldiers and their equipment, imperial warships and ground vehicles, and the Imperial Intelligence Command.

Chapter Four, *The Multiverse*, reviews the Multiverse of the Champions Universe — how it's organized and perceived by dimensional travelers, what types of dimensions exist in which "regions" of the Multiverse, and so on. Even if you don't want to use V'han herself in your games, this chapter

has everything you need for a Champions Universe dimension-hopping campaign.

Chapter Five, *The V'hanian Empire*, focuses in on that part of the Multiverse ruled by Istvatha V'han. It describes the extent of her empire, how it functions, what life is like for her subjects, and most importantly for many Champions campaigns how she conquers dimensions and adds them to her realm. This chapter also includes sections describing her current plans for Earth, and various enemies she has (who might become allies of the PCs — the enemy of your enemy is, after all, your friend... at least for a little while).

Chapter Six, *Gamemastering The Empress*, discusses ways to use Istvatha V'han in your Champions campaign. It includes plot seeds, information on how she interacts (or might interact) with various other members of the Champions Universe, and a section on dimensional campaigning in general. Istvatha V'han makes an ideal foe for a group of superheroes who frequently travel through the dimensions, and with the help of this chapter you can easily create just such a campaign if you want.

So tell your heroes to get ready — they're about to face the greatest threat Earth's ever encountered.

ISTVATHA V'HAN AND "REALISM"

For many gamers, the existence of a master villain like Istvatha V'han raises all sorts of uncomfortable questions. As powerful as she is, why hasn't she already conquered Earth's dimension? How can she really control an empire of millions of dimensions? Why is Earth so special and important that she keeps trying to conquer it? Why is everyone so frightened of her when all of her invasion attempts to date have been defeated by Earth's superhumans?

The answer to all these questions, and others like them, is: "Who cares?" This is a comic book master villain, in a comic book world, in a comic book roleplaying game. Evil masterminds do these sorts of things all the time in the comic books without it bothering anyone, so it shouldn't bother you that Istvatha V'han can do the same. After all, we're talking about a world where people can teleport, fly, fire blasts of energy from their eyes, and report news stories without injecting any political bias. Given all that, it's perfectly plausible that Istvatha V'han could rule her empire but not be able to conquer Earth... yet.

ABBREVIATIONS

This book uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

6E1: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

6E2: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

APG: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*

APG2: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide II*

CU: *Champions Universe*

CV 1, 2, 3: The respective three volumes of *Champions Villains*

FH: *Fantasy Hero*

HSB: *The HERO System Bestiary*

HSEG: *The HERO System Equipment Guide*

HSG: *The HERO System Grimoire*

HSMA: *HERO System Martial Arts*

HSS: *HERO System Skills*

HSV: *HERO System Vehicles*

SH: *Star Hero*

If you feel you absolutely have to, you can devise some sort of “realistic” explanation for V’han and her activities that involves super-technology or superpowers (some parts of this book even do it for you). For example, perhaps Earth’s superheroes have found a way to interfere with V’han’s dimensional technology that makes it impossible for her to attack with the full force of her military. Whatever the justification you decide on, the important thing is this: use Istvatha V’han to have fun in your game. Don’t worry about the “realistic” details, unless everything in your game is about “realism.”

NAMES AND TERMINOLOGY

For ease of reference, this book uses Earth names and terms for people and things in the V’hanian Empire. For example, Chitthoram’s title isn’t really “Grand Chancellor” — it’s a V’hanian term that means more or less the same thing. If the GM prefers, he can create the V’hanian words for things and use them instead; this would be a good way of showing the players how different V’han’s empire is from Earth.

Similarly, names are usually given as if for a single individual, when in fact it’s not unheard of for Istvatha V’han to have multiple versions of the same person from different dimensions working for her. For example, the superpowered soldier Black (page 45) should rightly be called Black-17, since Blacks from various other dimensions than that Black’s also serve in her Imperial Battalion. But that can get cumbersome in the text, so instead he’s just referred to as “Black.” The GM should feel free to assume that the Empress has access to multiple versions of any important character unless the text says differently or he prefers otherwise for some reason.

Additionally, any dates given in the text are Earth years for the reader’s benefit, rather than the standard V’hanian Imperial Calendar, which uses the year of Istvatha V’han’s birth (1537 AD) as Year 1.

MMO INTO RPG, RPG INTO MMO

The Book Of The Empress includes material based on the massively multiplayer online (MMO) roleplaying game *Champions Online* created by Cryptic Studios. While a lot of effort has been devoted to making sure the MMO content is accurately represented in these books in *HERO System* terms, MMOs and RPGs aren’t the same type of game, so the same type of content isn’t appropriate for each one. For example, a villain’s lair in an MMO is deliberately simple, often with one room leading to another to guide game play. That doesn’t make much sense for an RPG, where it’s possible (and often very useful) to expand things beyond the scope of an MMO. Similarly, a villain or costume that works well on-screen in an MMO might not be as appropriate for a paper-and-pencil RPG (and vice-versa!).

Thus, the MMO-based information in this book, while containing the essence of the *Champions Online* presentation, may add to it, or rework it in minor ways, to make things more “realistic” and appropriate for an RPG. Characters who have one or two simple abilities in *Champions Online* may get fleshed out into more detailed characters with a greater variety of powers in this book, since an RPG character sheet isn’t constrained by the same restrictions as an MMO. And of course, there may be some MMO secrets that you should only be able to learn by playing the MMO itself.

So don’t be surprised if you see some slight variation between the *Champions Universe* as portrayed in this book and the *Champions Universe of Champions Online*. The differences are just the result of the book taking the wonderful elements Cryptic Studios has created and doing even more with them.

SUPER“HUMAN”

For ease of reference, *The Book Of The Empress* sometimes uses the term “superhuman” to refer to individuals with superpowers who aren’t actually Human. Technically it would be more accurate to refer to supermembers of whatever species is involved, but that would become awkward. So when you read “superhuman,” assume it means someone who has superpowers regardless of his species unless the context indicates otherwise.