

PROWLERS & PARAGONS



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Thank you for being my superhero, Papi. This is for you.

For more superheroic action visit us at

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ONE: INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO PROWLERS & PARAGONS!

Prowlers & Paragons (or P&P) is a tabletop roleplaying game with a narration-driven, rules-light system designed to emulate four-color superhero comics. Let's break that down so you can see what you're getting yourself into.

P&P is a *tabletop roleplaying game*. If you don't know what that is, skip to the next section (What is Roleplaying). Once you're done, you can come back here.

P&P is a *narration-driven system*. The rules in this game are not effects driven. For the most part, they don't tell you what happens. Instead, they tell you who gets to describe what happens. And that's what it's all about in P&P: describing what happens. Both the players and the GM take turns narrating events in the game world. This makes P&P feel more like an exercise in collaborative storytelling than a typical roleplaying game. However, P&P isn't totally freeform and open-ended either. There are rules that help determine what characters can do and how they compare to one another. This prevents the game from devolving into a never-ending debate about what is and isn't reasonable.

P&P is *rules light*. It's chock full of gross oversimplifications and blatant inaccuracies that mimic comic book tropes rather than real-world facts. This also makes P&P a simple game with a streamlined set of rules. Once you know what you're doing, you should be able to play without ever opening the book.

Finally, P&P is *designed to emulate four-color superhero comics*. This game is about the heroic things the characters do and the heroic burdens they shoulder. Mundane matters get little attention. There aren't any detailed rules for dealing with money and wealth, but there most definitely is a rule for smashing into a bank vault. Let's be perfectly clear: This is not a deep and cerebral game. P&P was designed to let you play stories about super heroes who save the world and beat the snot out of villains who richly deserve it. Like so much of the genre, P&P is a gleefully unapologetic exercise in heroic wish fulfillment.

WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING

Oh come on, really? Did we just time-warp back to 1974?

Nowadays everyone who buys a tabletop roleplaying game knows what it is and how to play. Many people have played or watched someone play a tabletop roleplaying game. And many more have been introduced to roleplaying games through video games and MMORPGs. Still, every tabletop roleplaying game includes a section that explains what roleplaying games are and how they work. It's just How Things Are Done. So like the lemmings we are . . .

When playing a roleplaying game, a group of people get together and collectively create a story. One player, called the gamemaster (or GM), creates the basic outline of the story. The other players create the main characters (or heroes) and play them as they make their way through the story. The GM describes the game world to the players, tells them what happens to their heroes as the story unfolds, and plays all the other characters in the game. The players play their heroes and try to act, think, and respond to what happens in the story as their heroes would. Game play works like this: The GM presents a situation to the players; the players tell the GM how their heroes react; the GM tells the players what happens as a result, and so on. This back-and-forth dialogue is the essence of how you play a roleplaying game.

CHAPTER 1

Roleplaying games also have rules—thus this book. The rules add the mechanics and strategy that turn this exercise in collaborative storytelling into a game. They describe the people, places, and things in the game world. They also help determine what characters can do and what happens when they try to take an action whose outcome is uncertain. The GM decides how to use the rules in his game. He determines which rules to use, which to bend, and which to ignore.

Games usually last three to six hours, but some folks enjoy longer sessions. A game session normally ends when the GM decides that the story has reached a reasonable stopping point.

GLOSSARY

In the spirit of the comic books that inspired this game, P&P uses comic book lingo in place of some common roleplaying terminology. Here's what we mean by these terms.

Page: Often called a *round* or a *turn* in other games, this is a brief unit of game time that represents a few seconds in combat or any other fast-moving scene. It represents roughly one page of a comic book.

Scene: A variable unit of game time that equates to one chapter of a book or one scene of a movie or TV show. Each scene usually involves a specific task, theme, event, goal, or location.

Issue: A single game session, representing one issue of a comic book. Issues are made up of any number of scenes. Although this can vary greatly, it usually takes 1 to 6 issues to complete a single story.

Story: Sometimes called an *adventure*, a story is a discrete tale with a distinct beginning, middle, and ending. Stories often span multiple issues. Be careful not to let this term confuse you: Because of the collaborative nature of storytelling in roleplaying games, the actual story that gets told over the course of the game may be very different from the rough outline the GM has in mind when sitting down to play.

Series: Often called a *campaign* in other games, this is a series of related stories that usually involve the same hero or group of heroes and unfold in chronological order. As with comic books, you can have a one-shot (which isn't really a series at all), a miniseries, or an ongoing series.

"X"d: Indicates "X" number of dice of the common 6-sided variety. For example, a hero with 8d Athletics rolls 8 dice whenever he attempts to perform an athletic feat.





TWO: ACTION

TAKING ACTION

The first thing we need to discuss is how you play the game. Once you understand the basic rules, you'll be able to focus on the important stuff: defeating black-hearted villains, thwarting their nefarious plots, protecting innocent civilians, and making sure your secret identity stays secret.

Your hero can automatically do anything a normal person can do. All you have to do is tell the GM that your hero is taking the action. But whenever your hero or any other character tries to perform an action whose outcome is uncertain, he has to make a trait roll to see who gets to describe what happens.

Characters have **traits** that represent their attributes, skills, and powers. To make a **trait roll**, roll a number of dice equal to the trait that applies to the attempted action. Every even number rolled counts as a success. If you roll a 6, you earn a success and you also get to roll that die again. Another even number earns you another success and, if you roll another 6, another roll. This continues as long as you keep rolling 6s. If you want to play it safe, you can always take 1 automatic success for every 2 dice you choose not to roll.

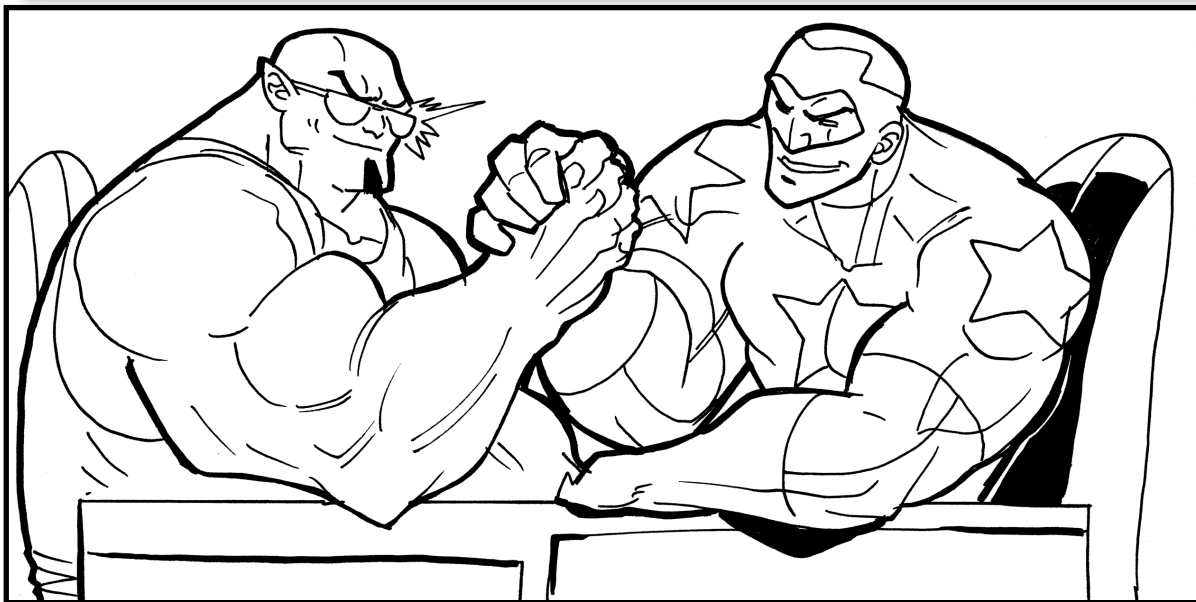
Total up your successes and then subtract the task's **Difficulty**, which reflects how hard it is to perform. The result determines who gets to describe what happens, as shown on the following table. As used below, the character attempting the action is called the actor and the one resisting it is called the target. If several characters are attempting the same action, whoever rolls the most successes gets to be the actor. In cases where the action doesn't really have a target, use the following rule: When a player is making the roll, the GM acts as the target; when the GM is making the roll, the players act as the target.

SUCCESSSES	RESULTS
Less than 0	Target describes
0	Target describes, Actor embellishes
1	Actor describes, Target embellishes
2 or more	Actor describes

A task's Difficulty measures how hard it is to accomplish. When acting against a target, the target makes his own trait roll to resist or defend himself against the action. The Difficulty equals however many successes he rolls. The GM can apply a modifier of anywhere from +1d to +3d to either or both characters to account for circumstances that make their actions easier or harder. The extra dice go to the actor when things are easier or to the target when things are harder. When not acting against a target, the GM assigns the task a Difficulty using the following table as a guide. The GM should consider how hard a task is to perform in general and under the current circumstances when assigning a Difficulty.

DIFFICULTY	DESCRIPTION
0	Ordinary
1	Hard
2	Brutal
3	Extreme
4	Superhuman
5	Hard Superhuman
6	Brutal Superhuman
7+	Extreme Superhuman

Two mighty heroes, Citizen Soldier and Gatecrasher, are putting on an arm wrestling exhibition for charity. Both have a 10d Might, which is the trait that applies to this action. Citizen Soldier doesn't bother rolling and instead takes an automatic success for every 2 dice of Might, giving him a total of 5 successes. Gatecrasher, meanwhile, rolls all 10 dice and gets only 4 successes. However, two of those successes are 6s. He rolls those two dice again and gets a 1 and a 6, granting him a fifth success and another roll. He rolls that 6 a third time and gets a 2, granting him a sixth and final success. Gatecrasher winds up with a total of 6 successes! Because both characters are attempting the same action, the one who rolled more successes (Gatecrasher) is considered the actor. Subtracting Citizen Soldier's 5 successes, Gatecrasher ends up with 1 net success. Gatecrasher will get to describe the outcome of the arm wrestling competition, but Citizen Soldier will get to add an embellishment to the narration.



DESCRIBING THE ACTION

Okay, a quick word or two about describing outcomes. The whole point of this system is to make the game compelling. The players and the GM are expected to narrate interesting results. The assumption is that players will usually slant their descriptions to favor the heroes and GMs will usually slant their descriptions against the heroes. That's fine, but the final narration should involve something more than a simple "I win" or "You lose." For example, if a hero fails his trait roll when attempting to leap across an open pit, the GM should come up with something more interesting than, "You failed, so I guess you're

dead.” Maybe the hero stops short at the edge of the pit, causing him to drop something he was carrying. Maybe he almost makes it across and ends up dangling by his fingertips, waiting to be rescued by one of his allies. Maybe he falls and gets trapped on a ledge some twenty feet down. You get the idea.

The same applies to embellishments. An embellishment should be a reasonable clarification or detail that expands on the description without contradicting it. The best way to think of it is with the words “Yes, but. . . .” An embellishment can’t make a narration untrue or render it meaningless. For example, let’s say you roll a success when your hero tries to leap across an open pit, and the GM has you end up on a ledge. You can’t say that you do make it across the pit after all, or that you land on a springy branch that catapults you over to the other side. These embellishments render the GM’s description untrue or meaningless. However, you might say that there’s *another* ledge on the opposite side of the pit, and that the far wall looks like it might be rough enough to climb. Or maybe there are natural stairs leading down from the ledge into the darkness below. Or whatever else you wish, as long as it doesn’t contradict the original description.

EXTENDED ACTIONS

As the GM, you’ll sometimes want an activity to involve more than a simple trait roll. In that case, make it an **extended action**. Extended actions are broken up into multiple exchanges. Short extended actions should have 2 to 4 exchanges and long ones should have 5 to 7 exchanges. Each exchange involves one part of the overall activity, and is played out separately. For example, a chase scene could be handled as an extended action: The first exchange has the characters sprinting through darkened alleys, the second has them scrambling up facades and fire escapes, and the third has them racing across the city’s moonlit rooftops. Whoever wins an exchange gets to describe something that happens during that exchange and earns a cumulative bonus on all subsequent exchanges. This bonus equals +2d for short extended actions or +1d for long ones. Whoever wins the final exchange gets to describe the outcome of the extended action.

COMBAT

P&P should always be played with a strong narrative focus. However, because super-powered slugfests are such an important part of the genre, combat is the one place where the rules get a bit more concrete.

EDGE

In combat, time is broken down into pages. A page represents a few seconds of game time. Every page, all combatants act in order of their **Edge**, from highest to lowest. A character’s Edge equals his Athletics + Perception + Willpower traits. In the case of tied Edge scores, heroes act first, villains act second, and npcs act third. When you have characters of the same type fighting one another (don’t heroes seem to fight each other all the time?), characters with tied Edge scores act simultaneously, making it entirely possible for them to knock each other out on the same page. Minions (the nameless enemies that heroes tend to fight in groups, discussed in Chapter 3) have no Edge, so they always act after heroes, villains, and npcs.

CHAPTER 2

ACTIONS

All combatants get to move and perform one or more **actions** per page. An action is an activity that requires a bit of time and attention. The most common action taken in combat is attacking. Combatants can also perform minor actions and reactions, called **free actions**, as needed. Free actions include things like defending yourself against attacks, drawing, sheathing, or dropping a weapon or handheld item, yelling something to an ally, and so on. Once everyone has acted, the current page ends and a new one begins.

TRAIT EXHAUSTION

You suffer a cumulative -2d penalty whenever you use any trait more than once per page. For example, if you use Strike to perform an attack and then later find yourself having to use Strike to defend yourself against an incoming attack, that second use of the Strike trait will suffer a -2d penalty. If you have to use that same trait a third time before the page ends, that third use of the trait will suffer a -4d penalty. And so on. You can't use a trait whose effective rank is reduced to 0d or less because of this (or any other) penalty.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS

If you wish, you can perform more than one action per page. You have to declare how many actions you want to perform before attempting any of them, and you suffer a -2d penalty to all trait rolls per extra action. For example, if you use Blast to attack one target and Strike to attack a second target on the same page, you'll suffer a -2d penalty to each attack. This penalty lasts until it's your turn to act on the following page, and it stacks with the trait exhaustion penalty described above. Accordingly, if you were to use Blast to attack two separate targets on the same page, the first attack would suffer a -2d penalty and the second attack would suffer a -4d penalty. Despite these rules, you can never attack any target more than once per page.

MOVEMENT

Movement is normally automatic: You move where you want when it's your turn to act. At times, however, there may be a question as to how far you can move in one page, who gets somewhere first, or whether you can advance on or retreat from an unwilling opponent. In cases like this where the outcome of your move is unclear, make a trait roll against your opponent. You'll both use either Athletics or a movement trait (such as Flight) to make the roll. As usual, the roll determines who gets to describe the outcome.

RANGE

There are three ranges in P&P: close, distant, and visual. You have to be at close range for melee attacks, and can be at either close or distant range for ranged attacks. Visual range is just that: the distance at which things are visible but too far away to affect. You can close or expand the distance between yourself and an opponent by one range category per page. If your opponent is unwilling to alter the current range category, you'll have to make a successful trait roll against your opponent as describe above in order to do so.

ATTACKS & DEFENSES

Attack rolls work like trait rolls. The attacker makes a roll using whichever trait represents his attack and the target makes his own roll using whichever trait represents his defense.

If the attacker rolls more successes than the target, the attack hits. The attack's net successes determine how much it affects the target, as discussed below. If the target manages to roll at least as many successes as the attacker, the attack doesn't affect him—either it misses him or he shrugs off its effects.

There are two types of defenses: active and passive. **Active defenses** represent intentional attempts to avoid getting hit or interpose something between yourself and the attack. For example, any attempt to dodge an attack or deflect it with a shield is considered an active defense. **Passive defenses**, on the other hand, represent the ability to withstand damage or resist an effect. For example, your passive defenses against damage normally include the Armor and Toughness traits (or the Willpower trait when resisting mental damage). This distinction may matter for attacks that can't be actively avoided or passively resisted. No matter how many defenses you may have available to you, you can only use one defense against any attack. Note that this is an abstraction: The target isn't actually choosing between avoidance and resistance. That being the case, the target should always be allowed to use the best defense available to him.

You can all-out attack or all-out defend yourself by declaring it at the start of a page. All-out attacking gives you a +2d to all attacks but prevents you from using your active defenses and gives anyone who attacks you a +2d bonus to their attacks. All-out defending gives you a +2d to all of your defenses but prevents you from attacking. Either way, these effects last for the entire page.

AMBUSH & SURPRISE

Being ambushed or surprised is a trifecta of bad news. First, you can't perform any actions on the first page of combat. Second, you can only rely on your passive defenses during the first page of combat. And third, if you've been ambushed, you can bet that your attacker is going to be making an all-out attack on that awful first page of combat. After all, he knows you aren't going to be striking back at him.

OTHER MODIFIERS

Modifiers should be used sparingly in P&P. The game isn't very realistic to start with, so adding complexity to better simulate reality doesn't make a lot of sense. However, modifiers can sometimes make gameplay more interesting. Accordingly, the GM can occasionally give combatants a modifier of anywhere from +1d to +3d to their rolls to account for specific conditions and situations. Attackers might get positive modifiers when trying to hit large, stationary, or otherwise helpless targets. On the flip side, targets might get positive modifiers for being small, fast-moving, cloaked by things like darkness and smoke, or protected by cover. Additionally, targets might also benefit from conditions like lousy weather and unstable footing.

DAMAGE

When using an attack that inflicts harm, every success rolled in excess of the Difficulty inflicts 1 point of damage to the target's Health (see below). The one exception to this rule involves minions: When fighting minions, you defeat one for every net success you roll.

HEALTH

Your **Health** measures how much punishment you can withstand. Heroes have 1 point of Health for every 3 hero dice they possess (as you'll see in Chapter 3, hero dice are mainly used to buy traits and perks). For example, a hero with 36 hero dice has 12 Health.

CHAPTER 2

When tracking your Health on the character sheet, simply clip a paperclip to the bottom of the sheet and slide it along the Health track as you take damage. You can cross off any extra Health bubbles you don't need if you have less than 15 Health. If you have more than 15 Health, we recommend that you use differently colored paperclips: green for the first 15 points of Health, yellow for the next 15, red for the next 15, and so on.

So does a hero with 37 or 38 hero dice. Once a hero has 39 hero dice, his Health goes up to 13. Health doesn't necessarily represent physical toughness; it might reflect experience, grit, or determination. Or it might in fact represent physical toughness—that's up to you.

Once you lose half your total Health, you're badly wounded and you suffer a -1d penalty to all of your traits. Once you lose all your Health, you're defeated and you fall unconscious. Characters don't ever go below 0 Health unless you're using certain gritty combat rules discussed in Chapter 8. The victor always gets to describe the details of a defeat if he wishes.

HEALING

Heroes who rest for a few minutes after a fight is over are allowed to make a Toughness roll to recover from their injuries. They regain 1 point of Health for every success rolled, but they can't regain more Health than they lost in the fight that just ended. Heroes get to make additional recovery rolls after each night of rest (or day of rest if you happen to be living la vida nocturnal as many heroes do). There is no limit to the amount of Health that can be regained after a night of rest. Once defeated and carted off to the authorities, villains and minions recover as quickly as the GM wants.

STATUS EFFECTS

Unless otherwise noted, attacks that inflict a status effect (such as the Ensnare, Mind Control, or Stun traits) last for 1 page for every 2 net successes rolled on the attack. In other words, you have to roll at least 2 net successes to inflict a status effect on a target. They



expire when the character who inflicted them gets to take his action on the final page of their duration. For example, if a hero with Edge 12 inflicts a status effect that lasts 2 pages, the effect will expire 2 pages from now, after everyone with an Edge of 12 or higher has gotten a chance to act. This duration can be extended with subsequent attacks, stacking the duration of additional successful attacks onto an existing effect's remaining duration. If a status effect's duration ever reaches 6 pages or more, the target is completely overwhelmed and the effect is assumed to last for the rest of the current scene. Again, the one exception to this rule involves minions: When fighting minions, every net success lets you hit one with a status effect that lasts for the rest of the scene.

Parthian smiles as he watches his friends arm wrestling at the fundraiser he organized. A tap on the shoulder gets his attention, and he turns to look into the eyes of the villain, Heartbreaker. Unable to avert his gaze, his smile fades as he feels his willpower draining away. Heartbreaker is using Mind Control on Parthian. She rolls 7 successes for her attack and he rolls 2 successes for his defense. Heartbreaker takes control of Parthian's mind for 2 pages (1 for every 2 of her 5 net successes).

You can also extend the duration of a status effect by spending Resolve (see Chapter 4). A hero who has completely overwhelmed his target with a status effect (meaning that the effect's duration will last for the rest of the scene) can spend 1 Resolve to make it last for an extended duration (usually anywhere from an hour to a day). Characters run by the GM do this by spending Adversity (also in Chapter 4) instead of Resolve.

GRAPPLING

If you want to grapple a target, you have to perform an unarmed combat attack against him. The target can use only his active defenses or his Might to defend himself. You have to roll at least 2 net successes to grapple a target, and if successful, the target will be grappled for 1 page for every 2 full net successes rolled on the attack. This lasts until after you get to take your action on the final page of the grapple's duration. Once your target is grappled, you can perform unarmed combat attacks on subsequent pages to damage him without letting him go. You can try to reestablish the grapple on the page in which it expires. This is considered a new attempt to grapple the target, even though you're really just trying to maintain the hold. A grappled target is assumed to be trying to escape and can't perform any physical actions. Whether or not he can use any of his superhuman abilities, however, is for the GM to decide on a case-by-case basis.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

An attacker can spend successes to narrate special effects like disarming a target, tripping him, or knocking him backwards. These effects are supposed to be limited in scope, inconveniencing the target in some minor way or creating roleplaying opportunities. You have to spend 2 successes to narrate a purely descriptive special effect or 4 to narrate one that has some small and short-lived effect on gameplay. For example, you'd need to spend 2 successes to make the swordsman you're dueling realize he's totally outclassed, or 4 successes to prove it by disarming him. You don't need to make any special declaration ahead of time to use this rule; you simply have to roll enough successes. If you do declare your intention to inflict a special effect ahead of time, you need to roll 1 success less than indicated. However, if you don't roll enough successes, your attack misses completely. Special effects can't be used to do things like blind your enemies or hack their limbs off—this just isn't that kind of game.

CHAPTER 2

Citizen Soldier and Gatecrasher are about to go sign some autographs when a giant mecha and a trio of robotic minions smash their way into the charity exhibition, gunning for our heroes. The mecha has a 13 Edge, Citizen Soldier has a 12 Edge, Gatecrasher has a 9 Edge, and the robots, being minions, have no Edge. This means that on every page of this fight scene, the giant mecha will act first, Citizen Soldier will act second, Gatecrasher will act third, and the robot minions will act fourth.

On the first page of combat, the giant mecha tries to step on Gatecrasher. The mecha rolls its 11d Might and gets 7 successes. Gatecrasher chooses to use his 10d Armor trait to defend himself against the attack, and rolls 5 successes. With a total of 2 net successes, a giant mechanical foot stomps Gatecrasher into the ground, inflicting 2 points of damage.

Citizen Soldier acts next. He attacks the robot minions using his 10d Might, and they defend themselves with their 6d Threat rank. Citizen Soldier rolls 6 successes on his attack, and the robots roll 2 successes on their defense. Ouch! His targets being minions, Citizen Soldier could have defeated up to four of them with his four net successes. The player running Citizen Soldier describes how he turns these three into scrap metal.

Not one to take this kind of thing lying down, Gatecrasher leaps up and charges at the giant mecha. Using his 10d Might, he rolls an amazing 7 successes. However, the mecha also gets 7 successes when it rolls its 14d Armor as its defense. Gatecrasher's devastating attack has no effect—that thing is tough!

Now that everyone has acted, a new page begins.

This time, the mecha tries to grab Citizen Soldier with a grappling attack. Using its 11d Might, the mecha rolls 6 successes. Citizen Soldier must use his Might or one of his active defenses to protect himself. He decides to rely on his impressive 10d Might, but he only rolls 3 successes. With 3 net successes, the mecha grapples our hero, leaving him unable to take physical actions until after the mecha's next action.

Although he'd normally get to act next, all of Citizen Soldier's attention is focused on using his superhuman strength to escape the mecha's massive metal mitts.

Gatecrasher has had enough. He fires his eye-beams at the mecha, using his 9d Blast trait, and rolls an impressive 7 successes. Unfortunately for the mecha, Gatecrasher's eye-beams have the Penetrating pro, meaning that the mecha can't use its Armor or Toughness traits to defend itself against this attack. With no other option, the mecha has to use its 2d Athletics as its defense. It rolls 1 success. That's a total of 6 net successes! Gatecrasher decides to lower his total successes by 4 points, down to 2 successes, in order to narrate a special effect. In addition to inflicting 2 points of damage, Gatecrasher declares that the attack carves a nice big hole into the canopy, leaving the pilot completely exposed and understandably nervous.

Citizen Solder looks right at the wide-eyed mecha pilot, "This is when you give up, son."

Unfortunately, that's when Parthian, now securely under Heartbreaker's mental control, leaps onto the scene firing a volley of explosive arrows at his friends. . . .





THREE: CHARACTERS

CHARACTER TYPES

Characters are the beings that populate the game. There are four types of characters: heroes, villains, minions, and npcs. Heroes are the characters run by the players. As their name suggests, they're the main characters in the story told in the game. All other characters are run by the GM. Of those, villains are the important bad guys, minions are the mundane bad guys whose job it is to be defeated and make the heroes look good, and non-player characters ("npcs") include everyone else.

HEROES & VILLAINS

Heroes and villains are defined by the following stats.

First, heroes and villains have **traits**, both mundane and super. Traits include physical and mental attributes, skills, and super powers, and are rated in dice. All normal human beings have 2d in all mundane traits. If it ever matters, once you have 3d or higher in a mundane trait, you're considered skilled in that trait. Heroes and villains can also have **weak traits**, which are underdeveloped and rated at only 1d.

Second, many heroes and villains will have one or more **perks**. Perks include special abilities, skills, super powers, and even social advantages. Unlike traits, perks aren't rated in dice.

Third, many heroes and villains have one or more **flaws**. Flaws are the physical, mental, and even social limitations that burden the character. Although detrimental, many players select flaws because they make a hero more interesting to play. They also help a hero earn Resolve, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Fourth, some heroes and villains use **gear**. Gear includes mundane weapons, armor, vehicles, tools, and other equipment not represented by a character's traits. Gear is described in Chapter 5.

And fifth, heroes and villains have a collection of descriptive elements called **finishing touches** that help make them living, breathing characters in the game world. These finishing touches include the character's hero (or villain) name, his secret or civilian identity, his description (both in and out of costume), his motivation, a quote, three details, three connections, and his origin.

MINIONS

Minions are the nameless foot soldiers and henchmen that attack heroes en masse. A group of minions is normally treated as a single character, but one group can always break into two or more groups as needed. Unlike heroes and villains, a group of minions has only two stats: the number of minions in the group and their **Threat**. Threat indicates how powerful the minions are, as shown below, and is used to make trait rolls. Whenever minions attack, defend themselves, or do anything else, their effective trait rank always equals their Threat rank. Although they may have special abilities and equipment, these are just descriptive elements when dealing with minions, so their effects are left up to the GM's discretion.

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THREAT	DESCRIPTION
2d	Mundane
3d	Skilled
4d	Veteran
5d	Enhanced
6d	Super

MINION ATTACK BONUS

A group of minions attacks as a single character. As mentioned above, a group of minions can split into two or more groups to attack multiple heroes, but each group attacks as one. This means a hero only needs to make one defense roll when attacked by a group of minions. In order to account for their numbers and weaponry, minions get a bonus to their attack rolls depending on how many are attacking a target, as shown below.

TOTAL MINIONS	UNARMED BONUS	ARMED BONUS
1	+0d	+2d
2 to 6	+2d	+4d
7 or more	+4d	+6d

NPCS

Any character run by the GM who isn't a villain or a minion is an npc. These characters run a very broad gamut in terms of who they are and how important they are to the game. Some npcs are supposed to get involved in the action, often as allies or enemies. These characters are created like heroes, villains, or minions. Use whichever option best suits the character. Other npcs are only supposed to interact with the heroes on a superficial or social level. Because these characters aren't expected to participate in any kind of action, they aren't given stats, just whatever descriptive elements the GM considers necessary. If one of these npcs does somehow get drawn into an action scene, the GM will have to give him some stats on the fly.

CREATING A HERO

There are 6 steps to creating your very own hero. Humorously enough, these are also the steps a GM should follow when creating his very own villain.

Step 1: Concept. Come up with a basic idea of the hero you want to play. If you lack inspiration, try the time-honored tradition of stealing your idea. There are enough characters out there that finding one you like shouldn't be too difficult. You can use an existing hero as is or modify him to make him your own.

Step 2: Traits and Perks. Spend hero dice to buy traits and perks. As discussed below, you'll get anywhere from 12 to 90 hero dice to spend on your hero, and your maximum possible trait ranks will range from 6d to 16d depending on the power level of the series. Discuss this with your GM.

Step 3: Flaws. Select up to 3 flaws. Unlike in many other games, flaws are a good thing in P&P because they're under your control and are used to earn Resolve, as discussed in Chapter 4. Some GMs make having at least one flaw mandatory.

Step 4: Gear. Pick whatever mundane gear you want your hero to have. You can have it as long as you can explain why you do and the GM approves. You can find mundane gear in Chapter 5.

Step 5: Finishing Touches. Create the details and roleplaying elements that make up your hero's finishing touches. These are described at the end of this chapter.

Step 6: Review. Finally, show the GM your hero to confirm that he fits into the series the GM has in mind. If he doesn't, discuss how you might tweak your hero in order to make him work.

HERO DICE

Heroes come in a wide variety of power levels, ranging from highly skilled humans to demigods and cosmic entities. In P&P, we account for this variety with **hero dice**. Hero dice have two distinct uses. First, as mentioned in Chapter 2, they are used to calculate a character's Health. Second, hero dice are used to create new heroes and improve their abilities over time. The table below indicates how many hero dice you have to spend when creating a new hero and your hero's maximum trait rank. A hero can only have up to 3 traits at maximum rank. Both factors depend on the game's power level, which is always set by the GM.

POWER LEVEL	HERO DICE	MAXIMUM TRAIT RANK
Mundane	12	6d
Pulp	18	7d
Street	24	8d
Low	30	9d
Standard	36	10d
High	42	11d
Very High	48	12d
Extreme	54	13d
Iconic	60	14d
Iconic Plus	+6 Hero Dice per extra tier	+1d per extra tier

TRAITS

As mentioned earlier, traits represent attributes, skills, and powers, and are rated in dice. There are two types of traits: mundane and super. Mundane traits are those possessed by normal human beings. All heroes automatically have 2d in all mundane traits that aren't weak traits (discussed below). Super traits, however, are available only if you put hero dice into them.

Traits are purchased with hero dice on a one-for-one basis. Whether mundane or super, the first hero die put into a trait raises it to 3d and every subsequent hero die raises it another 1d.

When it comes to mundane traits, the rule of thumb is that you're weak at 1d, average at 2d, skilled at 3d, exceptional at 4d, enhanced at 5d, and superhuman at 6d or higher. Remember, however, that this is only a guideline: Comics are filled with supposedly normal people with mundane traits of 6d and higher.

Traits can also be given **pros** (▲) and **cons** (▼). Pros make a trait more effective or powerful. They also make it more expensive, raising its cost by the number of hero dice

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indicated in parentheses. Cons, on the other hand, make a trait less effective or powerful. In exchange, they make it less expensive, lowering its cost by the number of hero dice indicated in parentheses. Regardless of cons, however, no trait can ever cost less than 1 hero die. In effect, you pay more for enhanced traits and less for impaired ones.

MUNDANE TRAITS

Mundane traits include everyday aptitudes and skills. As noted previously, characters begin with 2d in all mundane traits, representing an average level of natural ability. At 3d or higher, you have some degree of actual training or experience. That being the case, the GM is free to rule that certain uses of a mundane trait are only available to “skilled” characters with a rank of at least 3d. For example, the GM might rule that you need to have at least 3d Medical to even attempt to perform surgery on someone.

If you wish, you can select up to 3 weak traits. Weak traits have a 1d rank, making them much less effective than even the average 2d human trait. In exchange, each weak trait you select grants you 1 extra hero die to spend on other things. This does not, however, affect your total hero dice—that total remains the same, regardless of whether or not you select any weak traits.

MUNDANE TRAITS		
Academics	Perception	Survival
Athletics	Professional	Technology
Charm	Riding	Thievery
Command	Science	Toughness
Medical	Stealth	Vehicles
Might	Streetwise	Willpower

ACADEMICS

This represents your knowledge of scholarly subjects like anthropology, archaeology, art, cultures, history, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. If you have at least 3d in this trait, you’re highly educated and know a lot of really esoteric information.

- ▲ **Languages (+1d):** You are fluent in a number of additional languages equal to your Academics rank. You can select this pro multiple times.

ATHLETICS

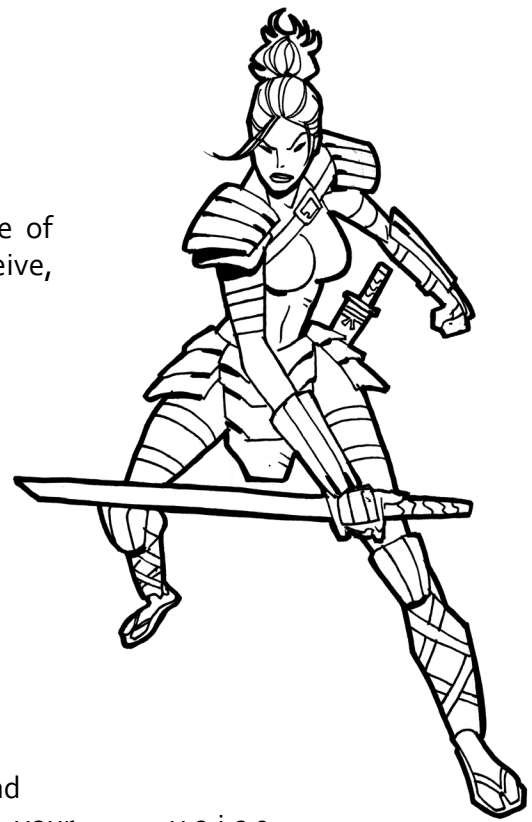
This trait covers your agility, coordination, and ability to perform feats of acrobatic prowess such as balancing, climbing, diving, jumping, and running. Although you can’t move as fast as someone who possesses a movement trait (discussed shortly), this is also the trait used when involved in a chase or footrace. Last but not least, Athletics is often used in combat. It applies when attacking with mundane ranged weapons and when performing an active defense against physical attacks.

- ▲ **Martial Arts (+1d):** You can use half your Athletics rank (rounded down) instead of your Might rank when attacking with your bare hands (feet, pseudopods, whatever).
- ▲ **Weaponry (+1d):** You can use half your Athletics rank (rounded down) instead of your Might rank when attacking with mundane melee weapons.

CHARM

This reflects your attractiveness, empathy, social skills, and force of personality. You use this trait whenever you try to charm, deceive, persuade, or seduce another.

- ▲ **Disguise (+1d):** You are a master of disguise and imitation. Given enough time, you could even imitate someone well enough to fool those close to him. Use Charm when making any necessary trait rolls. Every extra hero die you put into this pro grants you a +2d bonus on all such rolls.
- ▲ **Gambling (+1d):** You are a skilled gambler. You're good at calculating odds and you excel at games like poker that involve bluffing and reading others. Use Charm when making any necessary trait rolls. Every extra hero die you put into this pro grants you a +2d bonus on all such rolls.
- ▲ **Ventriloquism (+1d):** You are skilled at mimicry and ventriloquism. You can imitate other people and can make your voice seem to come from other locations. Use Charm when making any necessary trait rolls. Every extra hero die you put into this pro grants you a +2d bonus on all such rolls.



COMMAND

This is your ability to get others to do what you want. Use this trait whenever you try to frighten, intimidate, interrogate, motivate, or order someone around. If you have at least 3d in this trait, you may well have some kind of military command experience.

MEDICAL

This trait covers everything from basic first aid to neurosurgery. If you have at least 3d Medical, you are some kind of trained medical professional. Your parents must be very proud. If you have the necessary supplies and time, you can treat allies that have been injured in combat. This allows them to recover 1 point of Health per success scored on your Medical roll. You can only do this once per patient per day.

MIGHT

This represents your physical strength. It's used when attacking with mundane melee weapons or your bare hands and when throwing heavy objects (use Athletics when throwing light objects). It's also used both offensively and defensively when grappling. And it comes into play whenever you want to perform feats of strength like lifting heavy objects and tearing things apart. The table below shows how much you can lift.

- ▲ **Shockwave (+2d):** If you have at least 12d Might, you can clap your hands together to create a shockwave that knocks down everyone around you, causing them to fall down and lose their next action. This requires a successful Might roll against each target's Toughness.
- ▲ **Tremor (+2d):** If you have at least 12d Might, you can stomp your foot on the ground to create a tremor that knocks down everyone standing on the ground around you, causing them to fall down and lose their next action. This requires a successful Might roll against each target's Athletics.

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MIGHT	MAX LIFT
1d	100 pounds
2d	250 pounds
3d	500 pounds
4d	1,000 pounds
5d	1 ton
6d	2 tons
7d	5 tons
8d	10 tons
9d	25 tons
10d	50 tons
11d	100 tons
12d	250 tons
13d	500 tons
14d	1 kiloton
15d	2 kilotons
16d	5 kilotons
17d	10 kilotons
18d	25 kilotons

PERCEPTION

This trait represents your physical senses, empathy, intuition, and general level of awareness. It's used to sense or notice things like clues, lies, or a bunch of ninja hiding in your closet.

- ▲ **Acute Sense (+1d):** One of your senses (pick one) is sharper than normal, granting you a +2d bonus when making trait rolls involving that sense. You can select this pro multiple times.
- ▲ **Investigation (+1d):** You know how to conduct investigations. You are skilled at finding and analyzing clues, questioning witnesses, and performing research. Use Perception when making any necessary trait rolls. Every extra hero die you put into this pro grants you a +2d bonus on all such rolls.

PROFESSIONAL

This reflects what you know as a result of your career or profession. The baseline 2d represents common knowledge. If you have at least 3d, you are some kind of professional and have to make up the specifics when you buy this trait. Common professions include business, law, and politics.

- ▲ **Experienced (+1d):** This grants you another career, profession, or area of expertise to which this trait applies. You can select this pro multiple times.

RIDING

This trait combines riding, caring for animals, and mounted combat. If you have 3d or more in this trait, you know a lot about animals in general, including how to tame and train them.

SCIENCE

This trait covers your knowledge of scientific topics including disciplines like astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, ecology, genetics, geology, metallurgy, oceanography, physics, and quantum mechanics. If you have at least 3d in this trait, you're probably a trained scientist and know a lot of really esoteric information. Whether or not They Called You Mad is up to you, but they probably did.

STEALTH

This trait represents your ability to do things like hide, move quietly, follow people surreptitiously, camouflage objects, and conceal things on your person. It also covers technical skills like high-tech surveillance. If you're being sneaky, you're probably using this trait.

STREETWISE

This is your knowledge of important locations, personalities, and happenings in the criminal underworld and your ability to interact with them. If you have at least 3d in this trait, your parents probably aren't nearly as proud as they would have been if you'd gone to med school.

SURVIVAL

This trait concerns wilderness survival in all environments. You use it when doing things like finding shelter and sustenance, building a fire, setting traps and snares, and reading and following tracks. This trait also reflects how much practical information you know about plants and animals found in the wild.

TECHNOLOGY

This trait deals with the use, repair, and even creation of mechanical and technological items, including computers and computer-controlled systems. If you have at least 3d in this trait, you're a skilled engineer, hacker, mechanic, or technician. You can also use this trait to repair robots and cyborgs, using the healing rules described under the Medical trait.

THIEVERY

This trait concerns intrusion and theft. It's used to detect and circumvent security systems, locks, traps, and alarms. It also covers acts of nimble-fingered larceny like palming items and picking pockets. Having 3d or higher in this trait doesn't necessarily mean you're actually a thief; you could just as well be some kind of spy or black-ops specialist.

TOUGHNESS

This combines your constitution, endurance, and overall physical resilience. You can use this trait as your passive defense against physical attacks and agents like diseases, drugs, and poisons. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this trait also determines how quickly you heal.

VEHICLES

This covers your ability to operate land vehicles. If you have at least 3d in this trait, you can operate all types of land vehicles. If not, you can only operate whatever is used for everyday transportation in the game world, like cars and motorcycles. For more on vehicles, see Chapter 5.

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- ▲ **Aircraft (+1d):** You can also use this trait to pilot all types of aircraft.
- ▲ **Spacecraft (+1d):** You can also use this trait to pilot all types of spacecraft.
- ▲ **Watercraft (+1d):** You can also use this trait to pilot all types of watercraft.

WILLPOWER

This is your discipline, spirit, and resolve. Use this trait when resisting negative emotions and influences. You also use Willpower as your passive defense against mental attacks and powers.

SUPER TRAITS

Unlike mundane traits, super traits are not everyday abilities. The default assumption is that a super trait represents a super power. If you want a super trait to represent something else, however, that's fine too. Pick one of the options listed below or get the GM's approval and make up your own.

Magic: Includes all magical or otherworldly spells and abilities.

Natural: Covers the inborn natural abilities of nonhuman characters.

Psionic: Represents any ability that involves the mind or mental energies.

Super: Generic super powers: this is the assumed default for superhuman abilities.

Tech: This covers powers that come from a mechanical or technological source.

Training: Includes special skills and abilities acquired through study or practice.

This also applies to mundane traits with a rank of 6d or more, called "super" mundane traits. Like super traits, "super" mundane traits can represent magic, natural, psionic, super, tech, or training abilities (again, the default assumption is that a "super" mundane trait represents some kind of super power).

You cannot have a weak super trait. In fact, some super traits are so powerful that they're twice as expensive as normal traits. Called **strong traits**, these traits are identified by the "(x2)" after their name.

Some traits, called movement traits, let you move faster than a normal person. Check the table below to determine how fast you can travel when using a movement trait (sound has 10d speed and light has a 28d speed). Movement traits can be used as active defenses when you perform an all-out defense. They can also be used to perform charge attacks. Charge attacks work like normal attacks, but you get an automatic +2d bonus on your attack roll and, if you hit, both you and your target suffer damage. An attacker can only use his passive defenses when resisting the effect of his own charge attacks.

MOVEMENT TRAIT	SPEED
3d	8 mph
4d	15 mph
5d	30 mph
6d	60 mph
7d	120 mph
8d	250 mph
9d	500 mph
10d	1,000 mph
11d	2,500 mph
12d	5,000 mph
13d	10,000 mph
14d	25,000 mph

15d	50,000 mph
16d	100,000 mph
17d	250,000 mph
18d	500,000 mph

If you buy a super trait that inflicts or repels one type of damage, select the type of damage from the following list (common alternate names are included in parentheses): acid, blunt (kinetic), cold (ice), edged, electric (lightning), energy (laser, light, radiance), fire (heat, plasma), magic, mental, poison (toxin, venom), radiation, and sonic (thunder, vibratory). Feel free to add any we missed, but get the GM's approval first.

SUPER TRAITS		
Absorption	Force Field	Power Slide
Animate Images	Growth	Running
Animate Objects	Healing/Repair	Shrinking
Armor	Illusions	Solid Form
Banish	Images	Special Attack
Blast	Leaping	Strike
Boost	Life Drain	Stun
Constructs	Machine Control	Super Speed
Darkness	Matter Chameleon	Swimming
Dazzle	Mind Blast	Swing Line
Deflection	Mind Control	Telekinesis
Dispel	Nullification	Telepathy
Drain	Omni Power	Teleportation
Energy Field	Plasticity	Transform Other
Ensnare	Port Other	Transmutation
Flight	Possession	Tunneling

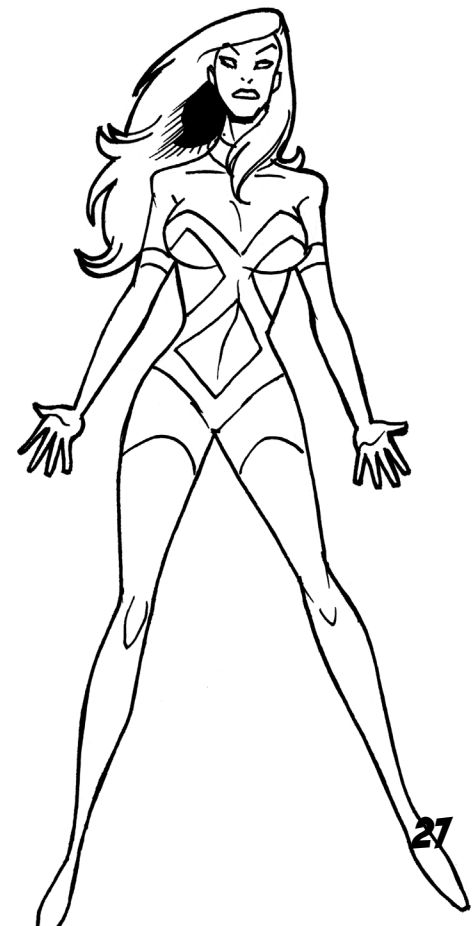
ABSORPTION

You can absorb one type of damage and channel the energy for your purposes. Use this trait as a passive defense against that type of damage. Additionally, whenever someone attacks you with something that inflicts the kind of damage you can absorb, you gain a number of bonus dice equal to the lesser of your trait rank or the attack's rank. You can use these bonus dice to increase one or more of your traits for one page (your traits can't exceed the game's trait cap for heroes, even when boosted), to fire a ranged attack that works exactly like the Blast trait, or to heal yourself of up to 1 point of Health per bonus die spent. Bonus dice are lost once used, but you can hold them in reserve until the end of the scene in which you earned them.

▲ **Siphon (+1d):** You can spend an action to draw energy from nearby power sources to fuel this ability.

ANIMATE IMAGES (X2)

You can animate and control images, bringing them to life off the canvas, screen, or wherever else until the end of the current scene or until you dismiss them. Animated images can have whatever traits and perks the images seem to have, plus those they're thought or believed to have. In effect, they're described by the player and created by the GM on the fly. No animated image can have a trait



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greater than this trait's rank or a perk that costs more than this trait's rank in hero dice. You can animate multiple images, but this trait's effective rank is lowered by 2d per extra image animated at the same time.

ANIMATE OBJECTS (X2)

You can animate and control objects, bringing them to life until the end of the current scene or until you dismiss this effect. Animated objects gain a degree of almost cartoon-like flexibility and, unless they're fixed in place, mobility. They retain their Hardness (see Chapter 6) and always have a Might rank equal to double their Hardness. Otherwise, animated objects use this trait's rank to make any necessary trait rolls. You can animate multiple objects, but this trait's effective rank is lowered by 2d per extra object animated at the same time. You cannot animate any object that, once animated, would have a Might rank greater than your effective Animate Objects rank. Similarly, you cannot animate any object heavier than you could lift with a Might rank equal to your Animate Objects rank.

ARMOR

You have some kind of armor or personal force field that repels physical damage. You can use this trait as your passive defense against all physical attacks and, unlike most traits, you do not suffer any penalty when using this trait multiple times in the same page.

- ▲ **Impenetrable (special):** This trait is immune to the effects of the Penetrating pro (see below). This pro can also be applied to the Hardness of inanimate objects (discussed in Chapter 6). Unlike most pros, this one doesn't cost anything: Instead, it gives the trait a "x2" cost, making it a strong trait.
- ▲ **Psychic (+od):** This trait repels mental damage instead of physical damage. Note that because this pro costs od, it's effectively a free option.
- ▼ **Active (-1d):** This trait represents either a shield that you interpose between yourself and incoming attacks, or the ability to somehow deflect attacks, making it an active defense.

BANISH

You can banish any target within distant range to another time, place, or dimension (describe the specifics when you buy this trait). This requires a successful Banish roll against your target's active defenses, his Toughness, or his Willpower rank (target's choice). As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes. This ability can't be used to send a target to a time, place, or dimension that will automatically injure or kill him. For example, you can't use this to banish someone into the sun.

BLAST

You have the ability to fire some kind of ranged attack that can be used to strike targets at up to distant range. Pick the type of damage inflicted when you buy this trait.

- ▲ **Blocking (+2d):** You can use this trait as an active defense against ranged attacks.
- ▲ **Penetrating (special):** This attack can cut through just about any physical object. Passive defenses like Armor and Toughness are of no use against this ability. The Force Field trait, however, will protect a target normally. This attack also ignores the Hardness of most inanimate objects. Unlike most pros, this one doesn't cost anything: Instead, it gives the trait a "x2" cost, making it a strong trait.

- ▼ **Marksmanship (-1d):** You can only use this trait when armed with a specific type of ranged weapon such as bows or guns (pick the type when you select this con). Note that you don't take the weapon's stats into account—you're using the Blast trait to represent what you can do when armed with such weapons, so their stats don't really matter. Similarly, you can only use this trait's pros, not those belonging to the mundane weapon. If you're armed with a mundane weapon that has a pro you want to take advantage of, you're always free to use the weapon normally instead of attacking with your Blast trait.

The hero Psidearm has the Blast (Marksmanship: guns) trait at 9d. As long as he's armed with one or more guns, he can use his 9d Blast trait. Fully automatic weapons like submachine guns often have the Area pro, representing the fact that they can fill an area with lead, but Psidearm's Blast trait lacks this pro. This means that when Psidearm is armed with a pair of submachine guns, he can either fire a 9d Blast attack, or he can use the weapons normally (which for him would be a 7d attack with the Area pro). And in case you're wondering, the fact that he dual wields is just for show. It has no game effect.

BOOST

You can use an action to raise the rank of one or more of a group of related traits. The traits affected by this ability must somehow be logically connected to one another—make up the specifics when you buy this trait. The rank of a boosted trait is raised up to this trait's rank. You can apply this boost to more than one trait, but this ability's effective rank is lowered by 2d per extra trait boosted at the same time. The boost effect fades at the rate of 1d per page (this happens at the end of each page).

CONSTRUCTS

You can create simple physical objects or constructs such as geometric shapes, bars, columns, ramps, walls, and so on out of thin air. Your constructs have a Hardness rank equal to half your Constructs rank (round down) and can hold up as much as someone with a Might rank equal to your Constructs rank could lift. You can have multiple constructs existing at once, but this lowers your effective trait rank by 2d per extra construct existing at the same time. Once created, constructs last for the rest of the current scene, until you dismiss them, or until they're destroyed.

DARKNESS

You can fill the area around you with inky blackness, impenetrable fog, a blinding sandstorm, or some other obscuring element through which no one but you can see. Your rank determines how large an area you can affect, as shown on the table below.

- ▲ **Absolute (+2d):** Your power thwarts not only normal vision but also visual Super Senses.

RANK	AREA
3d	large room
6d	football field
9d	stadium
12d	city block
15d	one-mile radius
18d	ten-mile radius

DAZZLE

Much like a flash-bang grenade or tear gas, you can overwhelm the senses of any living target within distant range by making a successful Dazzle roll against the target's Toughness or Willpower (target's choice). Every 2 full net successes cause the target to suffer a -1d penalty to all trait rolls (so you need at least 2 net successes to affect a target). This effect fades at the rate of 1d per page. The target will also be blinded as long as this penalty equals or exceeds his Toughness or Willpower rank (again, it's the target's choice). Like most status effects, you can attack a target multiple times and spend Resolve to increase this trait's duration. Dazzle penalties don't stack; just use the greatest in effect at any time.

▼ **Deafening (-1d):** Targets are deafened instead of being blinded as describe above.

DEFLECTION

You can deflect one type of damage back at an attacker or at another target as long as you're aware of the incoming attack. Use this trait as an active defense against that type of damage. If the attack misses you, you can immediately make an attack roll using the lower of your Deflection rank or the rank of the incoming attack to target anyone within distant range.

DISPEL

You can dispel the effects of any super trait. This requires a successful Dispel roll against the super trait to be dispelled. This doesn't prevent a trait from working in the first place; it just ends its duration.

DRAIN

You can drain one mundane trait from any living target within distant range by making a successful Drain roll against the target's Toughness or Willpower (target's choice). Pick the trait affected when you buy this ability. Every 2 full net successes rolled lowers the affected trait by 1d (so you need at least 2 net successes to affect a target). This effect fades at the rate of 1d per page. A target will fall unconscious for as long as the affected trait is drained to 0d or less. Like most status effects, you can attack a target multiple times and spend Resolve to increase this trait's duration. Drain effects targeting the same trait don't stack; just use the greatest in effect at any time.



ENERGY FIELD (X2)

You can sheathe yourself in a type of energy (pick one). While sheathed, you can use this trait as a passive defense against that type of energy. Additionally, you get to make an immediate attack against anyone who touches you, and this attack can only be resisted with passive defenses. This happens automatically; it isn't even considered a free action. You can use this trait multiple times per page without suffering any penalty. This trait can represent any effect that damages anyone who touches you, even something like a wall of twirling blades.

- ▲ **Defensive (+3d):** Your energy field is intense enough to destroy attacks before they harm you, letting you use this trait as a passive defense against physical objects and weapons.
- ▲ **Energy Form (+6d):** You can completely turn into energy. You effectively gain the Phasing perk, even though your body can still damage those who touch you as described above.

ENSNARE

You can trap a target in something like ice, vines, or webbing. The target can only defend himself with his active defenses or with traits like Energy Field, Might, and Strike, representing his attempt to break free of the ensnaring material. As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes.

- ▲ **Capture (+1d):** If you wish, you can automatically pull a restrained target into close combat range. You can't pull a target that weighs more than someone with a Might rank equal to your Ensnare rank could lift. If you try to do so, you'll end up being the one who gets pulled towards your target.
- ▼ **Immobilize (-2d):** This trait merely holds a target in place and prevents him from moving to another location. It doesn't otherwise stop him from making attacks or performing actions.

FLIGHT

You can use this movement trait to fly like a bird, or a plane, or a cow with jet engines strapped onto its terrified back. You get the idea. Flight requires more room to maneuver than other movement traits.

- ▲ **Spaceflight (+1d):** You can travel much faster than light while moving through outer space.
- ▼ **Gliding (-1d):** You can only glide; you must descend as you travel unless you can catch an updraft.
- ▼ **Levitation (-2d):** You can only move up and down or hover in place.
- ▼ **Wings (-1d):** You have wings that must be free and have room to spread in order to fly.

FORCE FIELD

You can project a force field that repels physical damage. You and anyone else protected by the force field can use this trait as your passive defense against physical attacks, but this works in both directions (you're basically creating a wall of force). You do not suffer any penalty when doing this multiple times in the same page. If you or anyone protected by your force field is injured, your force field will collapse and have to be reactivated. Activating or reactivating a force field is considered an action, but maintaining one is not.

▲ **Psychic (+od)**: This works as described under the Armor trait.

GROWTH (X2)

You can grow much larger than normal. Your Growth rank determines how large you can be, but you can always use less than your full Growth rank if you prefer. You can substitute your current Growth rank for your Might and Toughness ranks while this ability is in effect. If either trait is equal to or greater than your current Growth rank, you get a +1d bonus to that trait instead. You also gain Running at half your current Growth rank, rounded down. The table below shows how tall you are at each Growth rank. You always weigh however much someone with a Might equal to your current Growth rank could lift.

GROWTH	HEIGHT
3d	7½ feet
4d	10 feet
5d	12 feet
6d	15 feet
7d	20 feet
8d	25 feet
9d	30 feet
10d	50 feet
11d	75 feet
12d	100 feet
13d	120 feet
14d	150 feet
15d	200 feet
16d	250 feet
17d	300 feet
18d	500 feet

HEALING/REPAIR (X2)

Healing lets you heal living beings on contact. Your touch heals 1 Health per success scored on your Healing roll. The Difficulty for this roll equals the number of times you've used this trait in the same scene. Repair works the same way, but it affects robots, vehicles, and other machines instead of living beings.

▲ **Cure (+2d)**: You can also use this trait to cure diseases and counteract drugs and poisons, adding their Potency to the Difficulty of the Healing roll.

ILLUSIONS

You can create illusions in the mind of any living being within distant range by making a successful Illusions roll against the target's Willpower. Illusions can be as subtle as changing the color of a real-world object or as intricate as creating an illusory landscape that stretches to the horizon. They only exist in the target's mind, so no one else will be able to experience them. An affected target will believe the illusion is real and can be made to think he's been injured or even killed, but he'll be fine once the illusion fades. As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes.

IMAGES

You can create illusory sights and sounds that can be seen and heard by all observers including people, animals, and even objects like cameras and microphones. Anyone who attempts to interact with these images will immediately realize they have no substance and aren't real. Your rank determines how large an area you can fill with this ability, as shown on the table below.

RANK	AREA
3d	large room
6d	football field
9d	stadium
12d	city block
15d	one-mile radius
18d	ten-mile radius

LEAPING

This movement trait lets you jump incredible distances. In effect, you can fly in one direction for one page, after which you need to land on a solid surface. As an added bonus, you can use this trait as an active defense against falling damage. Over long distances, you travel just as fast as you would with any other movement trait. The only difference is that you need space above you and a place to land between jumps.

LIFE DRAIN (X2)

Your touch can drain the life of living beings by making a successful Life Drain roll against the target's active defenses, his Toughness, or his Willpower (target's choice). As with any other attack, you inflict 1 point of damage per net success. You also recover as many points of damage as you inflict (or 1 Health for every minion you defeat). There's nothing to stop you from using this trait when you're unwounded, in which case it works like a normal attack but gives you no extra benefit.

- ▼ **Slay (-4d):** You do not recover Health when you use this ability. Additionally, when you defeat a target using this ability, that target is killed; you don't have the option of simply incapacitating him.

MACHINE CONTROL

You can control machines and electronic devices within distant range. For example, you can use this trait to hack into a computer, deactivate a security camera, or remotely control a car. You can use your Machine Control rank or your rank in the applicable mundane trait +1d when making any necessary trait rolls.

- ▼ **Cables (-1d):** You have to be in physical contact with the controlled machine.
- ▼ **Interface (-1d):** You can only affect computers and computer-controlled systems.

MATTER CHAMELEON (X2)

You can take on the properties of objects you touch for up to the rest of the scene. This works like the Solid Form trait, but you must first touch an object in order to use this ability, and your effective rank can't exceed double the object's Hardness (see Chapter

6). You can also take on the energetic properties (such as heat) of objects you touch. This works like the Energy Field trait, but your effective rank will equal the lesser of your Matter Chameleon rank or the Intensity rank (see Chapter 6) of those energetic properties. You can also use this trait as your passive defense against the harmful energetic properties of any object you touch.

MIND BLAST

You can fire an attack that inflicts mental damage on living beings at up to distant range. Armor (Psychic), Force Field (Psychic), and Willpower are the only effective defenses against this trait.

MIND CONTROL

You can force a living target to do whatever you want by making a successful Mind Control roll against the target's Willpower. You get a +2d bonus to your roll when asking a target to do something he's already inclined to do. Conversely, you suffer a -2d penalty to your roll when asking a target to do something he wouldn't ever do. As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes.

- ▼ **Animal Control (varies):** This only affects animals and characters with the Beast flaw (see Flaws). This con has a -1d value if you can control all animals, a -2d value if you can control a large category of animals, or a -3d value if you can control a small category of animals. Whether your Mind Control represents brutal domination or friendly interaction with the animal kingdom is up to you.
- ▼ **Confusion (-2d):** You can only confuse your targets. As long as this is in effect, you and the target roll a die each page to determine who decides how a confused target acts. Whoever rolls higher determines how the target acts, but the other person gets to add an embellishment unless the winner rolled a 6. In the case of a tie, the target is too confused to take any meaningful action that page.
- ▼ **Emotion Control (varies):** You can't actually control a target's thoughts or actions, but you can inspire incredibly powerful emotions. This con has a -1d rating if you can inspire any emotion you desire or a -2d rating if you can only inspire one specific emotion.
- ▼ **Hypnotism (-2d):** You can't outright control your target, but you can plant suggestions that can be triggered in the future. The trait's duration determines how long it lasts once it's been triggered. You have to speak to your target calmly to use this ability, making it all but useless in combat.
- ▼ **Pheromones (-2d):** This ability represents the effects of pheromones. It only affects targets attracted to your gender and won't affect anyone protected against airborne chemicals. Additionally, you have to actually tell your targets what you want them to do when using this version of Mind Control.

NULLIFICATION

You can create a dampening field around yourself that prevents all superhuman abilities of one type (magic, natural, psionic, super, tech, or training) from working. This affects super traits, perks, and even mundane traits with a rank of 6d or higher (mundane trait ranks drop to 2d). You must concentrate when using this trait: You have to spend an action per page to maintain this effect and can't take multiple actions while doing so. Your rank determines how large an area you can affect, as shown on the table below.

RANK	AREA
3d	contact
6d	small area
9d	large room
12d	football field
15d	stadium
18d	city block

OMNI POWER (X2)

This trait lets you create a variety of different effects. You use Omni Power to imitate other traits and perks by spending 1 Resolve per ability imitated (or 2 Resolve when imitating a strong trait). Spending the Resolve grants you one immediate use of the imitated ability. When you imitate an ongoing ability like Armor or Phasing, it lasts for a number of pages equal to your Omni Power rank. Imitated traits share this trait's rank. Imitated perks work normally, but you can't imitate a perk that costs more hero dice than this trait's rank. For example, you need an Omni Power rank of at least 9d to imitate the Liquid Form perk, which costs 9 hero dice. You can imitate multiple abilities at once, but this lowers your effective Omni Power rank by 2d per extra ability imitated at the same time. Note that this doesn't only lower the rank of imitated traits: It also affects the perks you can imitate. For example, because you need at least 9d Omni Power to imitate the Liquid Form perk, you need at least 11d Omni Power to imitate Liquid Form and one other ability. When you first select Omni Power, you must describe what it represents and specify the kinds of effects it can create: Use one of the options below or make up your own, subject to the GM's approval.

Adaptation: This represents your body's ability to adapt to alien or hostile environments. Whenever you find yourself in such an environment, the GM assigns you one or more abilities tailored to help you survive, move around, and otherwise operate in that environment. If you have to develop immunity to a specific type of damage, this will cost you 2 points of Resolve instead of the usual 1 point. You decide how much Resolve you're willing to spend, but otherwise you have no control over the abilities you develop.

Control Element: This trait represents the ability to control a particular element, loosely defined as a type of energy, matter, force, or phenomenon. Common elements include air, cold/ice, darkness,



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earth/stone, electricity, fire/heat/plasma, friction, garbage, gravity, light, magnetism, metal, plants, radiation, sand, shadows, sound, tectonics, time, vibrations, water, weather, and wood. You can manipulate the element within distant range and use it to alter your environment in minor ways. You can also use this trait to create effects that mimic other traits and perks, provided they make sense for the element you control. For example, you could use Omni Power (Control Earth) to mimic the Blast trait by flinging stones at a target.

Gadgets: This trait represents the fact that you carry an assortment of useful tools and gadgets. You can only imitate the effects of traits and perks that simulate high-tech tools and equipment. You can't normally use these items in combat, nor can you use them to do anything you couldn't do with a mundane object. This version of Omni Power is often, but not always, given the Item con.

Nemesis: This represents the power to develop the abilities needed to defeat or at least survive an encounter with a specific opponent. You select one opponent within close range to be your nemesis. The GM then assigns you one or more abilities tailored to overcome that target. You decide how much Resolve you're willing to spend, but otherwise you have no control over the abilities you develop.

Projectiles: This represents the fact that you carry an arsenal of trick projectiles like arrows, bullets, or grenades. You can only imitate the effects of traits and perks that inflict damage or adverse status effects. This version of Omni Power is often, but not always, given the Item con.

Shapeshifting: This represents your ability to alter your size and shape at will. You can only imitate traits and perks that reflect a change in your physical form, abilities that would be obvious from looking at you. You can't radically alter your physical composition, so you can't become a gas, a liquid, or an energy form.

Warning: This is a potent and potentially game-breaking trait. Although it's meant to simulate the classic comic book trope of always having just the right power or piece of equipment for the job, it can easily be used to unbalance the game. Omni Power is intended to be an expensive but flexible utility power, not a giant "I WIN" button. Accordingly, the GM should feel free to require that players limit this trait with cons like Charges, Inhibited, or Requirement, or even to prevent them from having it at all. When creating new versions of this trait, be sure to specifically describe and limit the kinds of effects it can create. Omni Power should never simply let a character do whatever he can imagine. Although such abilities do exist in the comics, they're beyond the scope of these rules and exist solely within the purview of the GM.

PLASTICITY (X2)

Your body is rubbery and elastic, allowing you to mold yourself into different shapes and sizes and squeeze through most openings. You can use this power to attack near and distant targets, to defend yourself, and to do pretty much anything else you can attribute to your elasticity.

PORT OTHER

You can teleport a target by making a Port Other roll against your target's active defenses, his Toughness or his Willpower rank (target's choice). If successful, you can port the target as far as indicated on the table below, depending on your net successes. You can't port a target into a solid object, and you must be able to see or be familiar with the target's

destination. This won't affect a target who weighs more than you could lift with a Might rank equal to your Port Other rank.

NET SUCCESSES	MAX DISTANCE
1 or less	no effect
2 to 3	close range
4 to 5	distant range
6 or more	visual range

POSSESSION

You can take control of a living target's body by making a successful Possession roll against his Willpower. While in possession of a target's body, you gain his physical abilities and flaws and keep your mental abilities and flaws—whether something is physical or mental is up to the GM. Your body lies dormant while using this trait. You'll automatically jump back into your own body if your current body-mobile gets defeated in combat, and the shock will leave you helpless for 1d pages. As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes.

POWER SLIDE

This movement trait lets you travel by surfing on slides of matter or energy that you create as you move (the slides eventually dissolve or vanish). You must remain within distant range of something to which your slides can be attached as you move.

RUNNING

You can run faster than normal using this movement trait. This can represent any kind of land-based movement, including rolling on wheels or even bouncing. Running is very maneuverable, requiring much less room to maneuver and turn than most other movement traits.

SHRINKING (X2)

You can shrink at will. Your Shrinking rank determines how small you can be, but you can always use less than your full Shrinking rank if you prefer. You can substitute your current Shrinking rank for your Athletics and Stealth ranks while this ability is in effect. If either trait is equal to or greater than your current Shrinking rank, you get a +1d bonus to that trait instead. The table below shows how small you are at each Shrinking rank. You weigh much less than normal when using this ability (around 50 pounds at 3d, 6 pounds at 4d, less than 1 pound at 5d, and effectively nothing at 6d or higher).

- ▲ **Micro-Universe (+1d):** You can shrink yourself down so small that you enter a subatomic micro-universe. In effect, this pro grants you a very specific version of the Dimensional Travel perk.
- ▼ **Proportional Strength (-2d):** You become physically weaker as you shrink. Lower your Might rank by 1d at 3d Shrinking rank and by an extra 1d per extra Shrinking rank you have in effect.

SHRINKING	HEIGHT
3d	4 feet
4d	2 feet
5d	1 foot
6d	6 inches
7d	3 inches
8d	2 inches
9d	1 inch
10d	½ inch
11d	fly-sized
12d	flea-sized

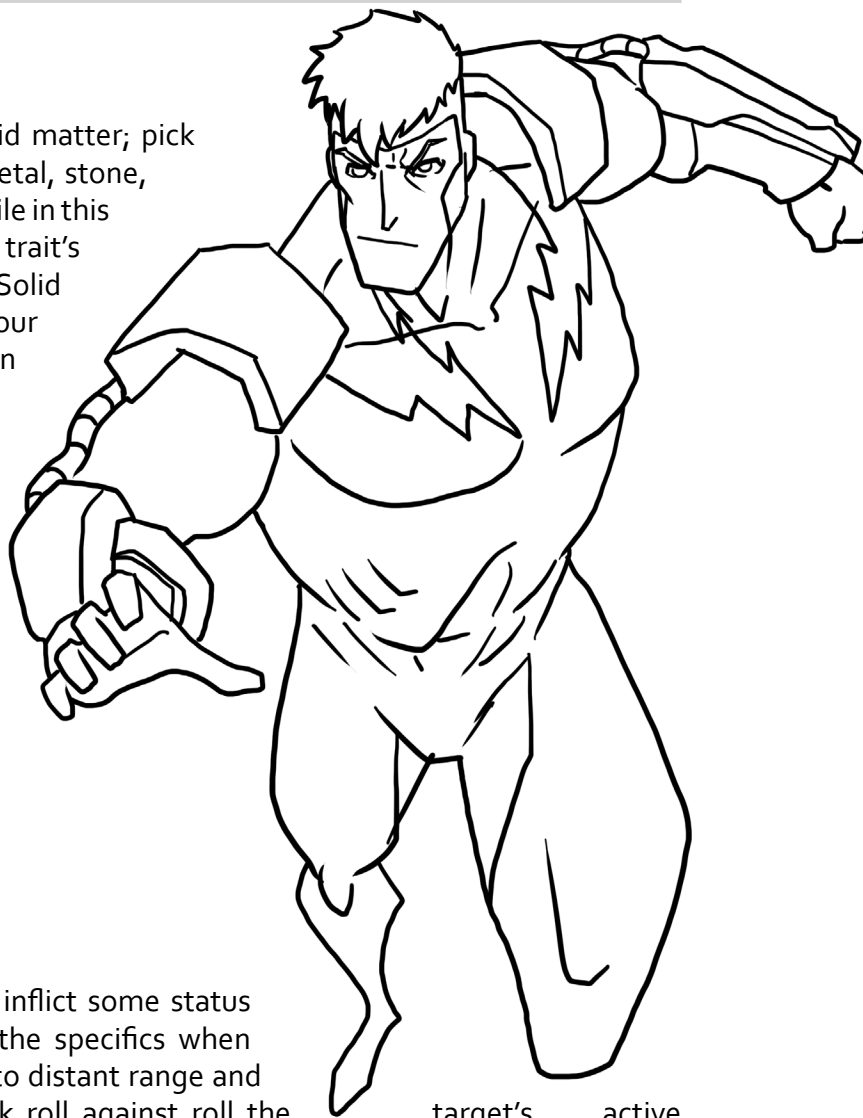
SOLID FORM (X2)

You can turn into some type of solid matter; pick one when you buy this trait (ice, metal, stone, and wood are common choices). While in this form, you gain the Armor trait at this trait's rank and you can substitute your Solid Form rank for your Might rank. If your Might rank is equal to or greater than your Solid Form rank, you get a +1d bonus to your Might rank while this ability is in effect.

- ▼ **Dense (-2d):** This trait affects your density instead of or in addition to your composition. As such, your current weight always equals the amount you can lift when using this ability. Floors hate you.

SPECIAL ATTACK

You have a special attack that can inflict some status effect on living targets—make up the specifics when you buy this trait. This works at up to distant range and requires a successful Special Attack roll against roll the target's active defenses, his Toughness, or his Willpower (target's choice). Armor has no effect against this trait, but Force Field does. As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes.



STRIKE

You have some kind of close combat attack described when you select this trait. You can use this trait to attack and defend yourself in melee combat. If your Might rank equals or exceeds this trait's rank, you can substitute your Might rank +1d for your Strike rank when using this trait to perform an attack.

- ▲ **Blocking (+2d):** This works as described under the Blast trait.
- ▲ **Penetrating (special):** This works as described under the Blast trait.
- ▼ **Fighting (-1d):** You can only use this trait when armed with mundane melee weapons. Note that you don't take the weapon's stats into account—you're using the Strike trait to represent what you can do when armed with melee weapons, so their stats don't really matter. Similarly, you can only use this trait's pros, not those belonging to the mundane weapon. If you're armed with a mundane weapon that has a pro you want to take advantage of, you're always free to use the weapon normally instead of attacking with your Strike trait.

STUN

You can render a living target helpless for this trait's duration, usually by incapacitating, paralyzing, or stunning him. This works at up to distant range and requires a successful Stun roll against the target's active defenses, his Toughness, or his Willpower (target's choice). Armor has no effect against this trait, but Force Field does. As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes.

- ▲ **Slow (-2d):** This trait merely slows the target. A slowed target moves at half speed and can only perform one action every 2 pages. Slowed targets can't perform multiple actions

SUPER SPEED (X2)

You can move very quickly. This ability is considered a movement trait, letting you run as fast as this trait's rank allows. If you have at least 9d in this trait, you can actually move fast enough to defy gravity and run across water and up vertical surfaces. In combat, you can substitute your Super Speed rank for the rank of any one or more of the traits normally used to calculate your Edge. You can use this trait to attack and as an active defense against physical attacks. When using Super Speed to attack minions, you automatically defeat twice as many as normal (thus, you defeat 2 minions per net success). Finally, you can perform mundane tasks much faster than normal; 4d Super Speed makes you twice as fast as a normal person and every extra 2d doubles this factor. For example, at 10d, you are sixteen times as fast as a normal person.

SWIMMING

You can move through the water faster than normal using this movement trait. You can also breathe and move freely underwater, and your senses work as well underwater as they do on land.

SWING LINE

This movement trait lets you travel by using some kind of swing line. You must remain within distant range of the things to which your swing lines are tethered (usually buildings) as you move.

TELEKINESIS (X2)

You can manipulate physical objects with your mind, using your Telekinesis rank as your effective Might rank for all purposes. This ability can be used both offensively and defensively and can affect anything within distant range other than your own body.

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- ▼ **Focused (-2d):** This only affects one type of material such as earth, stone, or ferrous metals.
- ▼ **Tendrils (-2d):** This ability represents actual physical tendrils, tentacles, or something else along those lines, so you can only affect objects within close range.
- ▼ **Weak (-4d):** You can only manipulate objects that weigh no more than your trait rank in pounds. You still use your rank to determine how accurately and effectively you can control these objects.

TELEPATHY

You can read minds and send your thoughts to other living beings. You must be able to see a target to use this trait on him. You can read the surface thoughts of anyone within distant range by making a successful Telepathy roll against the target's Willpower. A person's surface thoughts reflect what they're thinking and feeling at that moment. A target with this trait or the Psi-Screen perk will instantly realize when he's being scanned. You can also perform a mind probe, which is like rifling through a target's memories for information. This also requires a Telepathy roll against the target's Willpower, even when probing a willing target. This takes as many pages of total concentration as your target's Willpower, and you get a +2d bonus to the roll when in physical contact with your target. A successful mind probe reveals not only regular memories but also repressed memories and even original memories altered with the Alter Memory pro (see below). These memories can be restored if desired.

- ▲ **Alter Memory (+6d):** You can alter the memories of anyone you mind-probe, although this requires a second successful Telepathy roll against your target's Willpower. These changes are permanent, but the original memories remain buried and can be restored as described above.
- ▲ **Cloak Mind (+1d):** You can hide your mental presence from telepaths. A telepath using Sense Minds (see below) must make a successful Telepathy roll against your Willpower to detect you.
- ▲ **Dream Travel (+1d):** You can enter a sleeping target's dreams. While in a dreamscape, you use your Willpower for just about everything. You can even bring other dreamers with you.
- ▲ **Sense Minds (+2d):** You can detect the presence and pinpoint the location of sentient beings by detecting their thoughts. This requires one page of total concentration. Once you've detected a person's mental presence, you can use Telepathy and other mental abilities on him.
- ▼ **Empathy (-2d):** You can only detect and transmit emotions and feelings, not thoughts and memories. While helpful, this falls somewhere short of true communication. On the other hand, this lets you use your Telepathy trait on non-sentient beings (animals) as well as on sentient ones.

TELEPORTATION (X2)

You can instantly transport yourself as far as shown on the table below. You can only travel to places you know or can see and you retain your inertia when you port.

- ▲ **Blind Porting (+2d):** You can teleport to unfamiliar places as long as you have a general idea of where you want to go. The ability won't work if you mistakenly attempt to port into a solid object.
- ▲ **Combat Porting (+2d):** You teleport in and out of combat, making you a difficult opponent to fight. This grants you a +1d bonus to your attacks and active defenses. You can buy this pro multiple times.

- ▲ **Gate (+2d):** You travel using gates or portals and you can make them large enough to allow others to use them. You can't see through these gates unless you buy the Scrying perk (see Perks).

TELEPORTATION	DISTANCE
3d	5 feet
4d	50 feet
5d	500 feet
6d	1 mile
7d	10 miles
8d	100 miles
9d	1,000 miles
10d	Planetary
12d	Moon
15d	Solar System

TRANSFORM OTHER

You can turn a living target within distant range into some harmless or helpless form—such as into a frog or perhaps into stone—for this trait's duration (make up the specifics when you buy this trait). This requires a successful Transform Other roll against the target's active defenses, his Toughness, or his Willpower (it's the target's choice). Armor has no effect against this trait, but Force Field does. As a status effect, this lasts for 1 page per 2 net successes.

TRANSMUTATION (X2)

You can alter the shape and substance of inanimate matter within distant range. You can mold objects into whatever form you desire, although their weight will stay the same. You can also alter the composition of matter, raising or lowering its Hardness by up to one half this trait's rank (rounded down). If you can lower an object's Hardness to less than 0, you can disintegrate it by turning it into a liquid or a gas. You can even create simple objects with a Hardness equal to one half this trait's rank (rounded down) by turning gases or liquids into solid matter. You can only affect as much material as someone with a Might rank equal to your Transmutation rank minus 6 could lift.

TUNNELING

This movement trait lets you travel by digging through the ground. You give no indication of your passage to those above ground, making this an excellent means of surprising your enemies. You can move through materials tougher than normal earth, but this slows you down. Determine whether or not others can use the tunnels you leave in your wake when you first buy this ability.

- ▲ **Disturbance (-1d):** You shake the ground or cause it to buckle as you travel, making your presence and location obvious to anyone on the surface.

PERKS

Perks represent special skills and abilities. Unlike traits, perks aren't rated in dice. You either have a perk or you don't. If you ever need to make a trait roll for a perk, you'll use one of your traits to do so.

Perks are purchased by spending a flat number of hero dice, as indicated in parentheses.

Some perks can only be bought once, while others can be selected multiple times to enhance their effects. Perks can have their own pros and cons, as discussed below. Unless otherwise noted, you only pay for a pro or get the discount of a con once per perk, even if you buy that perk multiple times.

Like super traits and "super" mundane traits, you are free to define most perks as being magic, natural, psionic, super, tech, or training abilities (and like super traits and "super" mundane traits, the default assumption is that they represent super powers). The perks marked with an asterisk, however, are the exception to this rule. These perks represent social advantages such as authority, status, and wealth.

PERKS		
Ally*	Immunity	Relentless
Ambidexterity	Invisibility	Scrying
Animal Empathy	Knockdown	Separation
Animal Forms	Leadership	Speak with Dead
Astral Projection	Life Support	Special Vehicle*
Authority*	Lightning Reflexes	Super Senses
Blending	Liquid Form	Super Translation
Blind Fighting	Luck	Time Stop
Communicator	Morph	Time Travel
Contact*	Patron*	Trackless
Cosmic Awareness	Phasing	Transformation
Dimensional Travel	Photographic Memory	Two-Dimensional
Duplication	Power Mimicry	Uncanny Defense
Enhanced Defense	Power Theft	Unkillable
Extra Limbs	Precognition	Unliving
Fame*	Psi-Screen	Vanish
Gaseous Form	Psychometry	Wall-Crawling
Headquarters*	Quick Change	Warp Pocket
Hibernation	Reach	Weakness Detection
Immortality	Regeneration	Wealth*

*These perks are advantages that do not usually need to be classified as a type of power.

ALLY (2D)

You have a completely loyal ally. Although this normally refers to a sidekick or a pet, it could also include a being that you created in your workshop, summoned from another dimension, or even raised from the dead. Whatever the specifics, the ally is an npc created using 2 hero dice for every 6 of your hero dice. You run this character and your hero at the same time. Allies earn hero dice over time just like you do. You can buy this perk multiple times in order to have multiple allies.

- ▲ **Boss (+2d):** You have an especially powerful ally created using 4 hero dice for every 6 of your hero dice. Unlike most pros, you must buy this for each of your "boss" allies.
- ▲ **Summoning (+2d):** You can spend an action to instantly summon your ally, making this perk an actual power. Your ally will vanish if defeated, but you can summon him again next scene.

AMBIDEXTERITY (1D)

You can use both hands equally well. Although certainly useful in many different ways, this doesn't have any particular effect in combat.

ANIMAL EMPATHY (2D)

You share a strong empathic connection with animals, or maybe you can even talk to them. Generally speaking, domesticated animals tend to like you and wild animals tend to leave you alone. Animals will attack you only if trained to do so or in extreme cases, such as when starving.

ANIMAL FORMS (6D)

You can turn into animals, gaining their physical abilities and flaws while retaining your mental abilities and flaws. If you're an alien, then you can turn into animals native to your home world. For the sake of simplicity, even though the alien animals from your world may look strange and exotic, they'll have exactly the same stats as the Earth animals described in Chapter 7.

- ▲ **Xenomorph (+6d):** You can also turn into extinct animals. And before you ask, yes, that does include dinosaurs. You're welcome. You can even turn into alien and supernatural creatures. However, you must actually encounter such beings before you can turn into them. The GM is free to rule that certain especially massive or powerful creatures are beyond the scope of this ability.

ASTRAL PROJECTION (6D)

Your astral form can leave your body. Although it can perceive the physical world, your astral form is invisible, weightless, and incapable of attacking or interacting with anything physical. It's also immune to all physical harm and environmental conditions. Your astral form has the Flight trait at a rank equal to your Willpower (if you have a 2d Willpower, it travels at 4 miles per hour). Your body lies dormant and vulnerable while your astral form is out cruising around town.

AUTHORITY (1D)

You have more legal power than the average person. For example, you might be a law enforcement officer who can arrest people, or a government agent who can access classified information and locations. Make up the specifics when you select this perk.

- ▲ **Supreme (+2d):** Within the scope of your authority, your legal power is nearly absolute.

BLENDING (2D)

You can change color to match your surroundings like a chameleon. This grants you a +4d bonus to Stealth rolls, but only for purposes of not being seen.

BLIND FIGHTING (1D)

You don't rely on vision in combat and thus do not suffer any penalties when fighting in darkness or against an opponent you can't see. Describe why when you buy this perk.

COMMUNICATOR (1D)

You can communicate over great distances with anyone else who has a similar version of this perk. Common versions include walkie-talkies and magic scrying objects.

CONTACT (1D)

You know people who are well-connected and can get you useful information or owe you favors. Make up the particulars when you select this perk. Common examples include academic, business, criminal, legal, media, military, police, political, and scientific contacts.

- ▲ **High Level (+2d):** Your contact is someone extremely powerful or incredibly well-connected.

COSMIC AWARENESS (2D)

Once per issue, you can enter a trance and ask a yes-or-no question of the cosmos, which the GM must answer truthfully. You can buy this perk more than once, each time granting you the ability to ask one extra question per issue. Additionally, you are sensitive to cosmically powerful beings, forces, and occurrences, making you an exceptional plot device for the GM.

DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL (2D)

You can travel to other dimensions or planes of reality. You appear at a random location on your first visit and reappear wherever you left the plane when you return.

- ▲ **Gate (+2d):** This works as described under the Teleportation trait.

DUPLICATION (6D)

You can create a duplicate or “dupe” of yourself. Your dupe is an exact copy of you, but he can’t create more dupes (nice try). Dupes can spend Resolve, but they lack their own. Your dupe will vanish if either of you gets knocked out, but a defeated dupe can always be summoned again next scene. You can buy this perk multiple times, each time allowing you to create another dupe.

- ▲ **Legion (+12d):** You can create as many dupes as you wish. You and your dupes can each create one dupe per action. However, this pro turns your dupes into an army of minions. Dupes created using this version of the Duplication perk attack, defend themselves, and otherwise act in unison. Like minions, you lose one dupe per net success against them in combat. Dupes created using this version of the perk always vanish at the end of the current scene.

ENHANCED DEFENSE (4D)

Pick one of your active defenses when you buy this perk. You do not suffer any penalty when using that one defense multiple times in the same page.

EXTRA LIMBS (1D)

You have a prehensile tail or any number of extra limbs. Although certainly useful in many different ways, this doesn't have any particular effect in combat.

FAME (1D)

You are famous. People generally react favorably to you and many will fall all over themselves trying to please you. If you have a secret identity, decide which identity is famous.

- ▲ **Crazy (+2d):** You are known and loved the world over. Your fans will do almost anything for you.

GASEOUS FORM (3D)

You can turn into a gas. In this form you are weightless, incapable of attacking or interacting with anything in the physical world, and immune to all physical harm and environmental conditions except for things that can affect gases. You travel by floating along the ground at your normal speed and can pass through anything that normal gases can pass through.

HEADQUARTERS (1D)

You have some kind of base, headquarters, or hideout. Headquarters can range from cave complexes to satellites to undersea bases to several floors of a skyscraper to whatever else you want. Multiple heroes with this trait can combine them to create larger and more elaborate headquarters.

HIBERNATION (1D)

You can enter a state of suspended animation for as long as you want. While hibernating, you barely age and don't need to eat, drink, or breathe. You remain more or less aware of your surroundings and can wake up whenever you wish.

IMMORTALITY (1D)

You will never grow old or die of old age. Nevertheless, you may feel compelled to retire to Miami at some point in your life.

IMMUNITY (1D/3D)

You're immune to one attack, effect, or type of damage. Examples include diseases, drugs, fatigue, fear, poisons, pressure extremes, radiation, a specific super trait (such as Dazzle or Mind Control), and temperature extremes. Most immunities cost 1d, but immunity to a type of damage costs 3d.

- ▲ **Environmental (+2d):** For a total cost of 3d, you can be immune to all hostile environments.

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INVISIBILITY (6D)

You can turn invisible. You can still be detected by other senses, by any number of sensory powers, or simply by how you affect the environment. While invisible, you get a +2d bonus on your attacks and active defenses when fighting opponents who can't see you.

- ▲ **Make Invisible (+2d):** You can make anything you touch invisible. Small objects will stay that way for the rest of the scene but large ones demand your concentration. The maximum amount you can affect equals what you could lift with a Might rank equal to your Willpower rank.

KNOCKDOWN (1D)

You can use one of your traits (pick one when you select this perk) to knock a target down by making a successful trait roll using that trait against the target's Athletics or Might. If successful, the target will fall down and lose his next action as a result. Getting back up is considered movement.

LEADERSHIP (1D)

Whether through inspiration, motivation, or tactics, you can grant any one of your fellow heroes a free reroll once per issue as long as you can see and communicate with him. You can buy this perk multiple times, each time granting you one extra use of this ability per issue.

LIFE SUPPORT (1D)

You don't need to breathe, you don't need to eat and drink, or you don't need to sleep—pick one of those three options each time you buy this perk.

LIGHTNING REFLEXES (1D)

Your reflexes are exceptionally quick, granting you a +3 bonus to your Edge.

LIQUID FORM (9D)

You can turn into a liquid, making you immune to blunt and edged attacks. You travel by moving along the ground at your normal speed and can pass through any opening a normal liquid could pass through. This can also represent turning yourself into particles or bugs.

LUCK (2D)

Whether under your conscious control or not, you are extremely lucky. Once per issue, you can reroll one of your rolls, declare that some minor lucky break has befallen you, or inflict some misfortune on someone else. The lucky break should be the kind of thing you would normally need to spend Resolve to make happen, while the misfortune should be the kind of thing a GM would normally need to spend Adversity to inflict on a hero. You can buy this perk more than once, each time granting you one extra use of this ability per issue.

MORPH (4D)

You possess a limited kind of shapeshifting that allows you to look like anyone or anything you wish. You can make yourself larger or smaller than normal when using this ability, but it won't affect your weight. This doesn't alter your abilities in any way, only your appearance.

- ▼ **Doppelganger (-1d):** You can only copy the appearance of other bipedal humanoids.

PATRON (1D)

You have ties to a person or organization that provides you with information, services, equipment, funding, and support. Common patrons include government organizations and rich humanitarians compelled to adopt teenagers with super powers. Make up the specifics when you select this perk. A patron provides you with whatever support you need to accomplish missions for him as long as you remain more or less loyal to the patron and his agenda.

- ▲ **Clout (+2d):** You are highly respected and have access to almost anything at your patron's disposal.

PHASING (4D)

You can become intangible. This makes you weightless, incapable of attacking or interacting with anything in the physical world, and immune to all physical harm and environmental conditions. It also lets you pass through solid objects, but not through force fields.

- ▲ **Astral (+2d):** You become totally non-physical and can even pass through force fields.
- ▲ **Phase Object (+2d):** You can phase anything you touch. Small objects will stay that way for the rest of the scene but large ones demand your concentration. The maximum amount you can affect equals what you could lift with a Might rank equal to your Willpower rank.

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY (2D)

You automatically remember anything you pay attention to and can make a Perception roll to see if you noticed specific background details as well.

- ▲ **Recording (+1d):** Your memories can be read, displayed, and even copied on a computer. Don't take this the wrong way, but you're probably a robot or a cyborg.

POWER MIMICRY (12D/24D)

You can mimic the traits and perks of any living target you touch and use those abilities yourself. You can mimic only one type of ability: magic, natural, psionic, super, tech, or training—pick one when you buy this perk. This has no effect when your target lacks the type of abilities you can mimic. If you want to mimic the abilities of an unwilling target, you have to grab him. You'll need to make an Athletics roll against your target's active defenses and score at least 2 net successes. If successful, you make contact and can use the mimicked abilities for the rest of the scene. Your target is completely unaffected by this. Power Mimicry costs 12d if you can only mimic one of your target's abilities (your choice) or 24d if you can mimic all of them.

POWER THEFT (12D/24D)

You can steal the traits and perks of any living target you touch and use those abilities yourself. You can steal only one type of ability: magic, natural, psionic, super, tech, or

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training—pick one when you buy this perk. This has no effect when your target lacks the type of abilities you can steal. If you want to steal the abilities of an unwilling target, you have to grab him. You'll need to make an Athletics roll against your target's active defenses and score at least 2 net successes. If successful, you make contact and can use the stolen abilities for 3 pages, during which time your target falls unconscious. This is considered a status effect, so this duration can be extended by spending Resolve over subsequent pages (the first point spent doubles the effective duration to 6 pages; after that it works like any other status effect). Power Theft costs 12d if you can only steal one of your target's abilities (your choice) or 24d if you can steal all of them.

PRECOGNITION (6D)

You can see the future. In game terms, this lets you effectively rewind time all the way back to the start of the current scene by saying that what happened in the game was one of your visions. You can only do this once per issue, but you can buy this perk multiple times, each allowing you one use per issue. Because this can be a major pain, the GM is free to restrict or even prohibit this perk.

PSI-SCREEN (1D)

You aren't a telepath, but you can tell when someone tries to read your surface thoughts, as described under the Telepathy trait. You also get a +2d bonus to your Willpower roll to resist the attempt.

PSYCHOMETRY (2D)

You can get impressions and information from physical objects. This lets you ask up to 3 yes-or-no questions per issue, which the GM must answer truthfully, about the history of any object or objects you touch. This requires at least one page of total concentration per question asked. You can buy this perk more than once, each time granting you the ability to ask up to 3 extra questions per issue.

QUICK CHANGE (1D)

You can change from ordinary civilian appearance/attire to hero (or villain) appearance/attire in an instant. Describe how this works when you select this perk.

REACH (2D)

Whether attributable to stretching powers, telescoping limbs, or maybe something like the ability to create wormholes in space that let you reach across great distances, you can attack and manipulate targets and objects at distant range as if they were at close range.

REGENERATION (3D/6D/12D)

You recover from injuries very quickly. You heal 1 Health every hour at 3d, 1 Health every minute at 6d, 1 Health every page at 12d. If you get defeated in combat, your Regeneration keeps working, but you can't automatically recover and rejoin the battle unless you spend Resolve or Adversity, as discussed in Chapter 4.

- ▼ **Weakness (-1d):** Injuries caused by a common type of attack or damage are unaffected by this ability.

RELENTLESS (1D)

You can ignore pain and injuries. You don't suffer the -1d penalty that would normally be applied to all of your traits when you lose half your total Health in combat.

SCRYING (4D)

You can focus on a distant being, object, or location and perceive what's happening to and around it as if you were there. This works at any distance, maybe even across dimensions. For this to work, you must either be personally familiar with whatever you're trying to observe, or you must have some meaningful item or fetish that belongs to whatever you're trying to observe.

SEPARATION (2D)

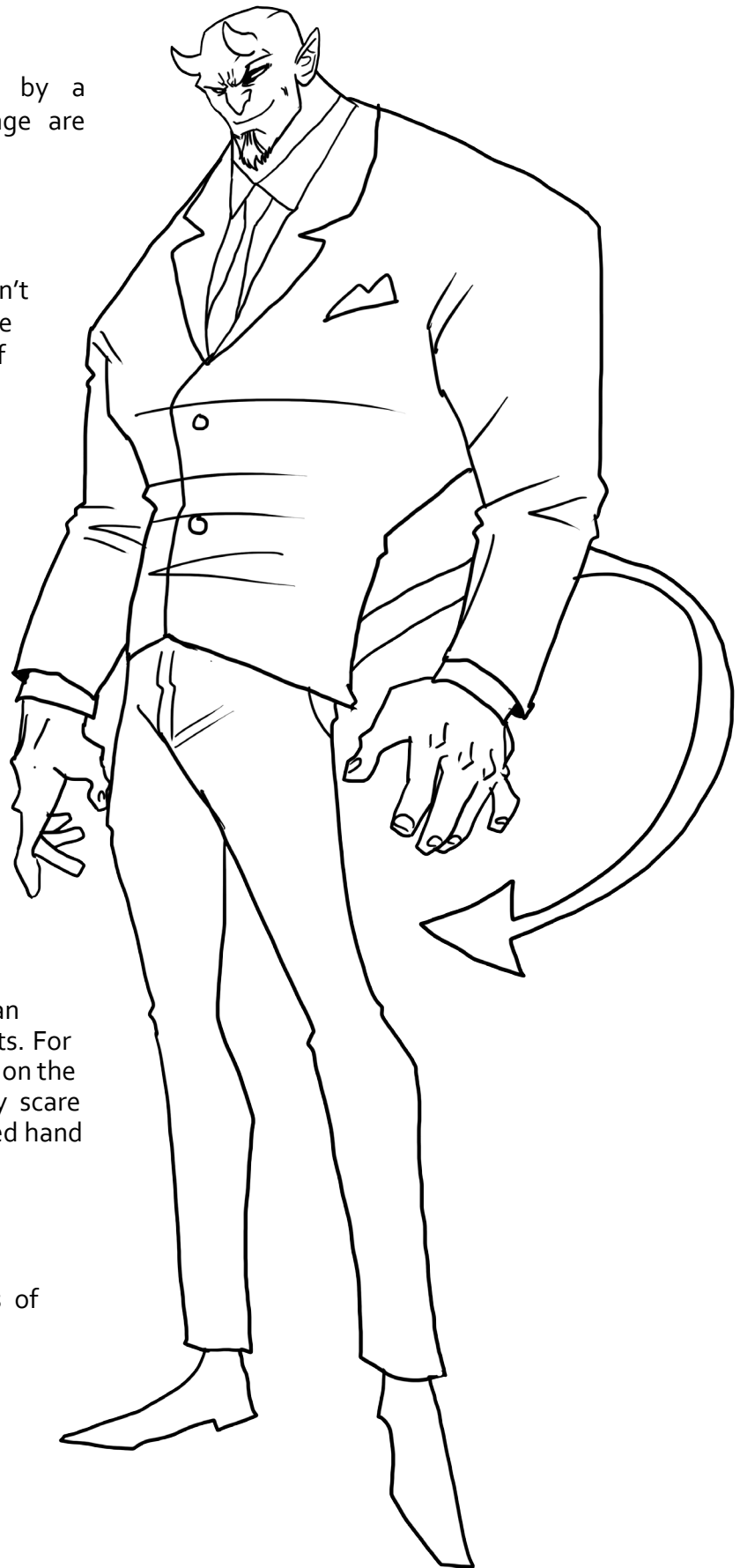
You can detach your body parts without suffering the usual unpleasant side effects like bleeding to death. What your parts can do depends on the part and your other traits. For example, a detached hand can crawl around on the ground, manipulate objects, and generally scare people silly. If you can fly, then your detached hand can probably do that too.

SPEAK WITH DEAD (2D)

You can momentarily animate the bodies of those who have died in order to speak with them. The dead will know no more or less than they did at the moment they died. You need to have an actual dead body, or at least its head, to use this power.

SPECIAL VEHICLE (1D)

You have one or more special vehicles. Every time you buy this trait you get either 18 hero dice that must be spent to create a new special vehicle, or 6 hero dice that can be spent to enhance your existing special vehicles. Vehicles and vehicle traits are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.



SUPER SENSES (VARIES)

Your senses can pick up things normal human senses can't. Pick one of the options below or make up your own. You can buy this perk as many times as you wish. When using Super Senses, it's important to note that just because you can detect something doesn't mean you always will. You may still need to make a successful Perception roll to detect things that are faint, hidden, or otherwise difficult to notice.

Astral Sight (1d): You can see into the astral realm and interact with invisible spirits.

Attuned (1d): You're attuned to one aspect of nature, like plate tectonics or the weather.

Circular Vision (1d): You have a 360-degree field of vision; no one can sneak up on you.

Danger Sense (1d): You can sense danger and gain a +2d bonus on Perception rolls involving imminent danger to you or your allies. You can take this perk multiple times.

Detection (1d): You can detect a specific object or substance within distant range.

Lie Detection (1d): You have some kind of superhuman means of detecting lies.

Microscopic Vision (1d): You can see objects too small to be visible to the human eye.

Night Vision (1d): You can see perfectly well in even absolute darkness.

Radar (2d): You have some kind of radar that provides you with a rough three-dimensional picture of your surrounding area and lets you operate in even absolute darkness.

Radio Hearing (1d): You can pick up and interpret radio transmissions.



Sonar (1d): This works just like Radar, but it only works underwater.

Telescopic Vision (1d): You can see even small details on distant objects.

Thermal Vision (1d): You can see heat patterns, granting you a kind of night vision.

Trace (1d): You can lock onto a specific signal or transmission and then follow it.

Tracking Scent (1d): You can identify and even track others purely by scent.

True Sight (4d): You can spend 1 Resolve to see through disguises, illusions, and other visual "lies" whether generated physically, technologically, or otherwise.

Ultra Hearing (1d): You can hear both infrasound and ultrasound.

Ultra Vision (1d): You can see in ultraviolet light, which is invisible to the human eye.

X-Ray Vision (4d): You can see through physical objects if you concentrate. You must select one common material such as brick, metal, stone, or wood through which you can't see.

SUPER TRANSLATION (3D)

You can instantly understand and speak any language you encounter. The only thing you can't do is speak in a language your vocal cords can't mimic.

TIME STOP (12D)

You can stop time, rendering everyone and everything else frozen in time for this perk's duration. You can do this for a number of pages equal to your Willpower rank per scene for free. After that, every subsequent page of time stopped in the same scene costs you 1 Resolve.

TIME TRAVEL (4D)

Warning: this can be a major headache, so the GM is free to prohibit heroes from having this ability. Assuming the GM does let you have it, this perk lets you travel as far as you wish through time. The GM will have to decide whether or not a person who travels back in time can change the past.

- ▲ **Gate (+2d):** This works as described under the Teleportation trait.
- ▼ **Waypoints (-2d):** You are limited to traveling between only a few set points in time.

TRACKLESS (1D)

You move through natural terrain with complete ease, no matter how overgrown or obstructed, and you only leave tracks if you wish to do so.

TRANSFORMATION (4D)

You can turn into a different form, created using as many hero dice as your main form. Your other form can have whatever traits, perks, and flaws you wish. As you gain extra hero dice over time, you can spend them differently for each form. You can buy this perk multiple times, each time allowing you to create another form, but all of your forms must buy this perk the same number of times.

- ▼ **Weak Form (-2d):** Your extra form is built using half as many hero points as your main form. You can apply this con multiple times, once for every form you want to be a weak form.

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TWO-DIMENSIONAL (2D)

You can become almost two-dimensional. This renders you effectively weightless and allows you to pass through solid objects (but not force fields) by moving sideways.

UNCANNY DEFENSE (2D)

You are never caught completely off guard. As long as you are conscious and able to move, you can use your active defenses even when you have been ambushed or surprised.

UNKILLABLE (2D)

You can be hurt and incapacitated, but you are very hard if not downright impossible to kill. Aside from making you fun at parties, this grants you a +1d bonus on all defense rolls.

UNLIVING (9D)

You aren't alive in the traditional sense. You're probably some kind of elemental, golem, plant, robot, or undead. You're immune to diseases, drugs, poisons, radiation, and things that only affect living beings, but you're vulnerable to things that affect inanimate objects.

▲ **Automaton (+6d):** You're also immune to mental damage and all mental effects.

VANISH (1D)

You can vanish from sight under cover of a blinding flash or puff of smoke. In effect, this gives you a chance to use Stealth to hide yourself even when someone is looking at you.

WALL-CRAWLING (2D)

You can stick to walls and ceilings, letting you climb and hang from them automatically. You might need to make an Athletics roll to stick to really slick or slippery surfaces.

▼ **Wall-Running (-1d):** You can only do this for one page at a time and only while running.

WARP POCKET (1D)

You can access a pocket dimension and use it as portable storage space. Your warp pocket can hold a lot of stuff, enough to fill a small room and maybe more.

WEAKNESS DETECTION (6D)

You can discern the weak points of an enemy or object by spending an action studying it. After that, the target's passive defenses like Armor and Toughness are halved (rounded down) against your attacks for the rest of the scene. This halving effect also applies to Hardness when targeting an inanimate object. This perk has no effect on targets protected by the Force Field trait or the Impenetrable pro.

WEALTH (1D)

You are wealthy. You can buy your way around challenges that could otherwise prove daunting. You can also buy whatever mundane stuff you want whenever you want it.

- ▲ **Great (+2d):** You are tremendously wealthy and have access to more resources than most countries.

PROS & CONS

Pros and cons are the final touches that help you define your abilities. Traits and perks don't mean very much on their own. For example, the Blast trait can represent heat vision, the ability to shoot cosmic energy, an archer's bow and arrows, or any other type of ranged attack. Abilities don't exist in a vacuum; they're defined by their details. For example, a super version of the Blast trait is different from a magic version of the Blast trait. Even if they're both super powers, Blast (fire) and Blast (ice) are different abilities. And even if you have two Blast (fire) super powers, give one the Penetrating pro and it becomes a distinct ability. In each case, you have the same trait representing two completely different powers.

P&P includes some abilities that let you imitate other abilities. When using these abilities, pros and cons can be applied to the imitated abilities on an as-needed basis. If you apply a pro to an imitated ability, the ability's effective rank is lowered by the cost of that pro. For example, if you use 9d Omni Power to imitate the Blast (Area) trait, it will have a rank of 7d because the Area pro costs 2d. If you apply a con to an imitated ability, the ability's effective rank is increased by the value of that con, provided the GM agrees the con actually has a negative effect in that moment. For example, if you use 9d Omni Power to imitate the Blast trait while fighting zombies, you won't get any benefit by giving the Blast trait a con that only lets it affect zombies. In other words, you can't slap meaningless cons onto an imitated ability just to increase its effective rank.

While many of the traits and perks listed above included their own unique pros and cons, we've duplicated some of the more common ones and included some extras below.

ADJUSTABLE (VARIES)

Usually applied to traits, this pro lets you to alter this trait's rank. You can lower this trait's rank by 1d or more in order to raise the rank of any other Adjustable trait by the same amount. You can also spread this increase among multiple Adjustable traits. And being an Adjustable trait, you can raise this trait's rank by lowering other Adjustable traits. You cannot raise an ability rank beyond the game's maximum heroic trait rank. Strong traits go up by 1d for every 2d of increase applied to them. You have to spend an action to adjust abilities with this pro, and these adjustments reset at the start of a new scene. This pro costs 1d for normal traits or 2d for strong traits.

AFFECT INANIMATE (+2D)

This pro is applied to an ability that normally affects only living beings and allows it to affect inanimate objects and beings as well. When the trait or perk can only affect inanimate objects and beings, this pro is called Only Affect Inanimate and it's free.

ALWAYS ON (-1D)

The trait or perk is always on and can't be deactivated; this con is only worth something when this would cause you problems.

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AREA/BURST (+2D)

You can affect or target everyone in an area of effect, whether friend or foe, when you use this ability. "Area" means the area of effect is centered on some distant point; "Burst" means it's centered on you. All characters in the area are affected separately. When targeting minions, Area/Burst attacks take out twice as many as normal (or 2 per net success). This pro costs only +1d if the Area or Burst is Fixed, meaning that it can't be switched off so as to target only a single character instead of an area of effect.

AUTOMATIC (-1D)

The trait or perk always activates under certain conditions specified when you buy the ability. You have no choice in the matter and can't stop this from happening.

BUILD UP (-2D)

The ability's rank starts at 0d and builds up to its maximum rank at the rate of 2d per page once something triggers it. Make up the specifics when you buy the trait or perk.

CASTING (+2D)

This pro turns a trait or perk that normally affects just you into one you can cast on yourself and others. Casting is considered an action and lasts for the rest of the current scene. You can only have one use of this ability in effect at any time, unless you select this pro multiple times. If so, every subsequent application of this pro allows you to have an extra casting in effect at the same time.

CHARGES (VARIES)

The trait or perk can only be used a limited number of times per scene. This has a -1d rating if you can use the ability 6 times per scene, a -2d rating if you can use it 3 times per scene, or a -3d rating if you can use it once per scene. You can't apply this to abilities like Luck that have a built-in limitation on the number of times they can be used, but that doesn't include abilities that require you to spend Resolve.

CONCENTRATION (-2D)

Normally applied to an ability that inflicts a status effect, this means the ability can only be maintained as long as you concentrate on it. This prevents you from taking most other actions. Even though you have to concentrate on it, the ability will still expire when its duration runs out.

CONTACT (-2D)

Normally applied to abilities that can be used at distant range, a trait or perk with this con now requires physical contact.

CONTAGIOUS (+2D)

A trait or perk with this pro affects not only your original target but also anyone who comes in contact with him as long as the trait or perk is in effect. Make immediate trait rolls to affect new targets as needed. New targets, by the way, are equally contagious.

DELAY (-1D)

The ability takes effect after some length of time, usually at least d6 pages and possibly much longer. Make up the specifics when you select this con.

DEMANDING (-2D)

The ability takes a great deal out of you: You must spend 1 Resolve every time you wish to use it.

ETHEREAL (+2D)

The ability can ignore the effects of the Phasing perk (even with the Astral pro). This means you can use the ability on a phased target, and you can use the ability on a normal target while you're phased.

FADING (VARIES)

The ability's rank drops by 1d per use. This con has a -1d rating if the ability's rank resets at the start of each new scene or a -2d rating if it resets at the start of each new day.

IMPRECISE (-2D)

This con is applied to offensive traits to represent physical attacks that are very powerful, but not especially accurate. For example, it can be applied to a character with a high Might trait to create a strong but clumsy brute. Whenever a target uses an active defense against an imprecise attack, the attacker rolls only half as many dice as usual, rounding down. Even when this con is applied to a character's Might trait, Might can always be used at its full rank when grappling.

INHIBITED (VARIES)

Something can stop the ability from working. This could include, among other things, certain times, places, situations, emotions, objects, substances, beings, or ways of using the ability. This con has a -1d rating if this happens infrequently or a -2d rating if it happens often.

ITEM (-1D)

The ability comes from an item the character carries or wears. Anything attached to the body, like a bionic arm, doesn't qualify. Specify whether or not the item can be used by anyone else (there are advantages and disadvantages) and whether the item is mundane or unbreakable. Mundane items can be damaged and even destroyed, but they're relatively easy to repair or replace. Unbreakable items can only be damaged or destroyed by exceptional means, but they must be recovered if lost or stolen.

CHAPTER 3

LIMITED (VARIES)

Your ability is in some way limited. For example, maybe it only works in certain ways, at certain times, against certain targets, or for certain purposes. Make up the specifics when you select this con. Minor limitations have a -1d rating and major ones have a -2d rating.

MENTAL (+2D)

The only effective defense against this trait is the target's Willpower trait.

OVERLOAD (+1D)

You can overload this ability, increasing its effective rank by +3d for 1 page, after which you lose the use of the ability for the rest of the scene. As always, this cannot raise the ability rank beyond the game's maximum heroic trait rank, unless the GM wants to make an exception.

RANGED (+2D)

Normally applied to abilities that require physical contact, a trait or perk with this pro can now be used at up to distant range.

REQUIREMENT (VARIES)

The ability won't work unless some requirement is satisfied. This might involve certain times, places, situations, emotions, objects, substances, beings, or ways of using the ability. Requirements that are easy to satisfy have a -1d rating; those that are hard to satisfy have a -2d rating.

RICOCHET (+1D)

Whether due to exceptional skill, a homing mechanism, or something else, this pro allows an attack trait to target enemies hidden behind walls and other forms of cover.

SELECTIVE (+2D)

The trait or perk won't affect anyone you don't want to affect, making it safe to target anyone, even enemies standing right next to or behind your allies.

SIDE EFFECT (VARIES)

The ability has some detrimental side effect that must be described in detail. Minor side effects have a -1d rating and major ones have a -2d rating.

SIGNATURE (-1D)

The ability leaves some kind of residue, signature, or trail that can be detected and traced back to you. Make up the specifics when you select this con.

SUBTLE (+1D)

The trait or perk produces effects or results that seem to come from nowhere, making it almost impossible to tell that it's actually coming from you.

TRAPPING (+2D)

You can trap an area of ground for up to the rest of the current scene. Anyone who steps on the trapped area of ground is subject to this trait's effect. The trait's duration remains unchanged.

UNDERPOWERED (-2D)

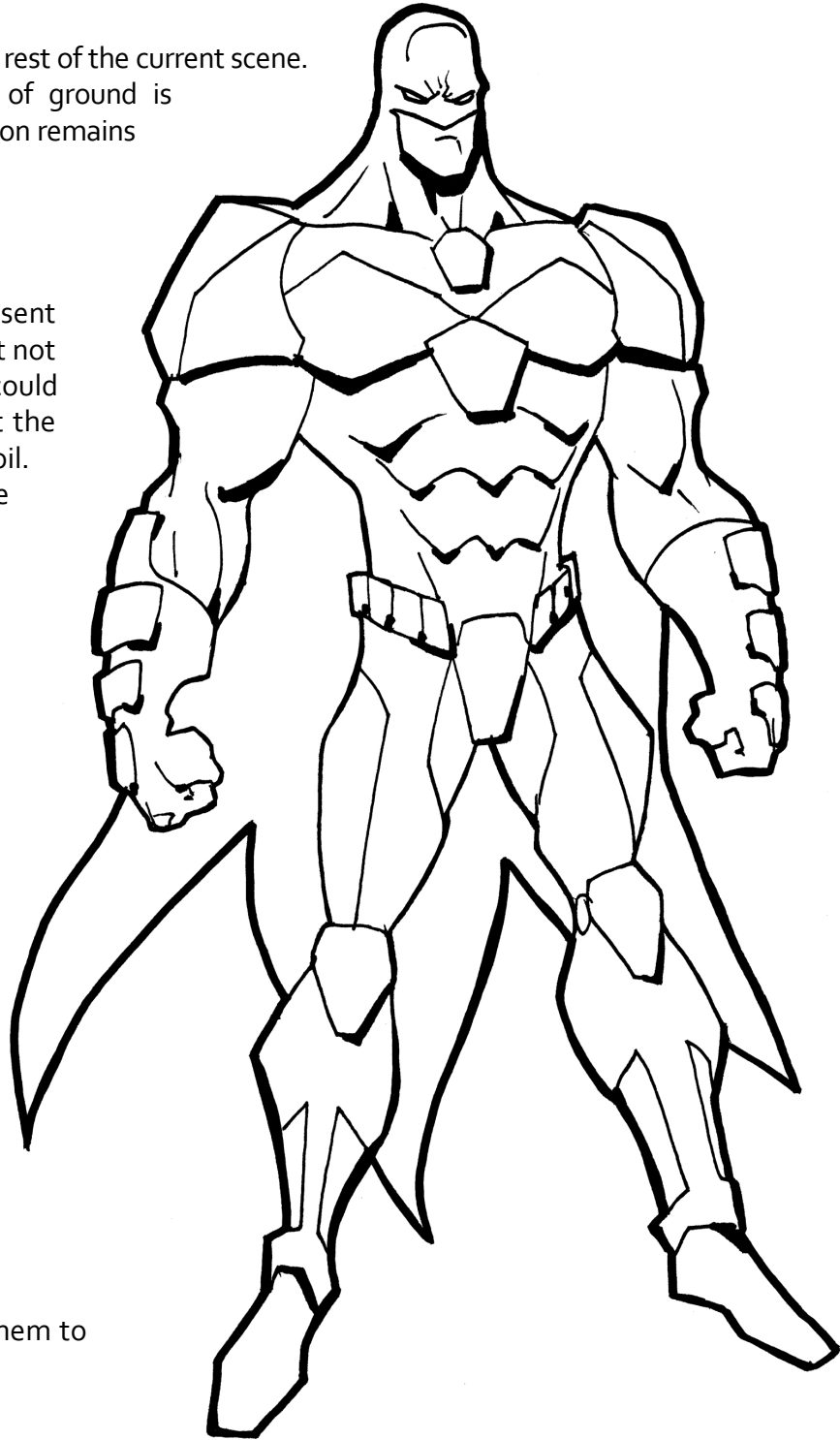
This con is applied to offensive traits to represent physical attacks that are very accurate, but not especially powerful. For example, this could be applied to the Strike trait to represent the effect of a precise weapon like a rapier or foil. Whenever a target uses a passive defense against an underpowered attack, the attacker rolls only half as many dice as usual, rounding down.

VARIANT (+2D)

Apply this pro to give yourself a slightly different version of a trait you already possess. For example, if you have the Blast (cold) trait, you can use this pro to give yourself the Blast (heat) trait at the same rank. The variant trait can have different pros and cons, altering its effective rank. If the variant is too distinct from the original ability, the GM can rule that this pro shouldn't apply and that the variant ability has to be created as a separate trait.

VISUAL RANGE (+2D)

Applied to ranged traits, this pro allows them to be used at visual range.



FLAWS

Every player gets to select up to 3 flaws for his hero. Okay, but why? Why would anyone want flaws? Simple: Because playing a hero with flaws is more fun than playing a hero who's perfect. As in video games, being all-powerful in a roleplaying game is only fun for a short while. Then it gets old. Flaws give your hero something to strive against, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. They make your hero more complex and much more interesting to play. In short, they make the game more fun.

Flaws also help you earn Resolve. Every flaw you select when creating your hero gives you 1 Resolve. After that, whenever you find yourself in a situation where one of your flaws could come into play and make things difficult for you, you get to decide whether or not that happens. If it does, you describe how the flaw affects you and you earn 1 Resolve. If it doesn't, you're assumed to resist the flaw for the moment—you don't earn Resolve, but nothing bad happens either. The GM is always free to tell you when you're in a situation that could trigger one of your flaws, and even to encourage you to let it happen, but at the end of the day the choice is always yours.

Because flaws are under your control, you're free to decide that you've overcome a flaw and dump it between stories. You can always replace it with a different flaw if you wish and the GM approves.

The GM determines when the flaws of villains and unfriendly npcs come into play, and he earns 1 Adversity whenever they do. As with heroes, the GM only earns Adversity when the flaw creates a real problem for that character. Although players can't force the GM to do this, clever heroes who know their enemies' flaws can certainly create opportunities for those flaws to come into play. For example, a hero might taunt a villain he knows has a terrible temper in order to lure him away from an area he's supposed to be guarding. When players come up with inventive ways to exploit their opponents' flaws, the GM is strongly encouraged to reward such ingenuity by letting those flaws take effect.

When it comes to npc allies, it's the players who get to decide whether these characters succumb to their flaws, even though these characters are run by the GM. However, npc allies only earn Resolve when succumbing to one of their flaws makes things harder *for the heroes*. For these purposes, npcs allies are treated like heroes: Resolve earned on account of their flaws goes into the Resolve pool (also discussed in Chapter 4). That being the case, the players should always know the flaws of their npc allies (although the GM may want to wait for an especially dramatic moment to reveal this information to the players).

The person running a character whose flaw has been triggered is always the one who gets to describe what happens to that character. Generally speaking, most flaws will have either minor or major adverse effects when triggered. Minor effects impair the character and last until the end of the scene in which they were triggered. Major effects all but incapacitate the character, but they usually last only 1d pages.

FLAWS		
Absentminded	Enemy	Quirk
Alter Ego	Flashbacks/Guilt	Reaction
Amnesia	Frenzy	Repair
Aversion/Fear	Frightening	Requirement
Beast	Illiterate	Responsibility
Blind	Impaired Sense	Restriction
Broke	Insane	Secret
Code of Conduct	Light Sensitive	Slow
Color Blind	Mute	Unlucky/Jinx
Compulsion	Night Blind	Unusual Looks
Creepy	Nocturnal	Unusual Shape
Deaf	Notoriety	Unwanted Power
Disabled	Outsider	Vulnerability
Emotionless	Power Limits	Wanted

ABSENTMINDED

You tend to forget things. Usually, the things you forget aren't all that important. But sometimes they are. When that happens, you earn a point of Resolve.

ALTER EGO

Your normal form is as weak and vulnerable as any regular human. Create that form using 1 hero die for every 6 hero dice used to create your heroic form. Also decide whether your transformation has any requirements or restrictions. You always revert back to your normal form when asleep or unconscious. Any time this causes you trouble, you earn a point of Resolve.

AMNESIA

You have no memory of your past, although you may be haunted by fragments that appear in dreams or visions. You don't know who you are or where you come from. Invariably, your past will come back to haunt you. Whenever this happens to your detriment, you earn a point of Resolve.

AVERSION/FEAR

You have an aversion to or fear of something. You will do whatever you can to avoid that thing. Failing that, you may become grossed out, hysterical, violent, or simply pass out. However it turns out, you earn a point of Resolve whenever you succumb to this flaw. Common versions include fear of certain animals, the dark, enclosed spaces, fire, heights, insects, public speaking, and water.

BEAST

Your mental faculties are about on par with a bright animal or game designer. You act mostly on instinct and complex reasoning is beyond you. You earn a point of Resolve any time you can't figure out how to do things like open a door or get the sheriff to understand that Billy fell down a well.

CHAPTER 3

BLIND

You are completely blind. You must select a trait or perk that compensates enough to allow you to be a hero. Nevertheless, you earn a point of Resolve whenever you find yourself at a disadvantage because you lack normal vision.

BROKE

You are penniless, jobless, and possibly even homeless. You can't buy anything and you have almost no resources at your disposal. Every time this causes you problems, you earn a point of Resolve.

CODE OF CONDUCT

You follow some code of conduct that goes above and beyond what one would expect from even a hero. You earn a point of Resolve whenever you follow your code even though doing so works to your detriment or to that of your allies. To be honest, this flaw doesn't mean much unless you're playing a dark and gritty game where the heroes often act somewhat less than heroically.

COLOR BLIND

You see in black and white, or you have trouble distinguishing certain colors (reds and greens being the usual culprits). Either way, you earn a point of Resolve whenever this poses a problem.

COMPULSION

You have trouble resisting the urge to do something like drinking, gambling, chasing the opposite sex, grandstanding, proving that your intellect is unmatched, or working on that stupid roleplaying game all weekend long. You earn a point of Resolve any time this interferes with your life.

CREEPY

You give off a vibe that unnerves sensitive observers like young children, psychics, and animals. Animals will shy away from you, unless they're predators, in which case they'll always attack you first. You earn a point of Resolve whenever your unnatural aura causes you trouble.

DEAF

You are completely deaf. You must select a trait or perk that compensates enough to allow you to be a hero. Nevertheless, you earn a point of Resolve whenever you find yourself at a disadvantage because you lack normal hearing.

DISABLED

You are disabled in some way. You could be missing part of an arm or a leg, or you might need to use a wheelchair to get around—describe the specifics when you select this flaw. Whatever they are, you must select a trait or perk that compensates enough to allow you to be a hero. Nevertheless, you earn a point of Resolve whenever you're hampered by your disability.

EMOTIONLESS

You lack human empathy. You don't really understand emotions and can only approach others from a logical perspective. Most people tend to dislike you and react poorly to even your most well-reasoned attempts at meaningful interaction. You earn a point of Resolve every time this causes you problems.

ENEMY

You have an enemy out there that wants you ruined, imprisoned, or dead. Make up whatever details you want and let the GM handle the rest. Your enemy doesn't necessarily have to be a single person; it could just as easily be an organization or even an entire nation. You earn a point of Resolve whenever your enemy or enemies show up and make things difficult for you and your friends.

FLASHBACKS/GUILT

You are haunted by some traumatic event in your past. Whenever something triggers your terrible memories, you'll either be consumed with guilt and impaired for the rest of the scene or lost in the flashbacks and all but incapacitated for 1d pages. Either way, you also earn a point of Resolve.

FRENZY

You tend to rush headlong into combat and often go dangerously berserk. You earn a point of Resolve whenever this gets the better of you and makes you do something stupid, like leaping blindly into a fight, refusing to retreat when your allies do, or possibly even killing someone in the heat of battle.

FRIGHTENING

You look downright scary. Most people who see you will flee in terror, and even those who don't will be on edge. You earn a point of Resolve whenever this works to your detriment.

ILLITERATE

You cannot read or write. You earn a point of Resolve whenever this hampers you.

IMPAIRED SENSE

Your hearing, smell, or vision is lousy—pick one (or more than one if you like). You earn a point of Resolve whenever you elect to automatically fail to sense or detect something as a result of your impairment, and your failure has some adverse consequence for you or your friends.

INSANE

You are quite mad. Either you suffer from a persistent delusion or disconnect with reality, or you endure occasional breaks in the form of hallucinations, bouts of paranoia, or something similar. Either way, whenever your insanity causes you problems, you earn a point of Resolve.

LIGHT SENSITIVE

You are very sensitive to bright light; you could be an albino, but that doesn't have to be the case. Even simple daylight can be blinding, and prolonged exposure can make you sick. You earn a point of Resolve any time you suffer an adverse effect as a result of this condition.

MUTE

You can't or won't speak, or maybe you just speak a language that nobody understands (if you wish, one of the other heroes may be able to understand you and can act as your translator). You earn a point of Resolve whenever this creates a problem for you. Note that this flaw shouldn't prevent a player from speaking to the other players or the GM because that would make for a very boring game.

NIGHT BLIND

You have a hard time seeing in dim lighting. You earn a point of Resolve any time you suffer an adverse effect as a result of this condition.

NOCTURNAL

You're wired to sleep during the day or you suffer from a form of narcolepsy. You tend to be tired and sluggish during the day and sometimes doze off when things are calm—shaving cream beards are all too familiar. Whenever this affects you adversely, you earn a point of Resolve.

NOTORIETY

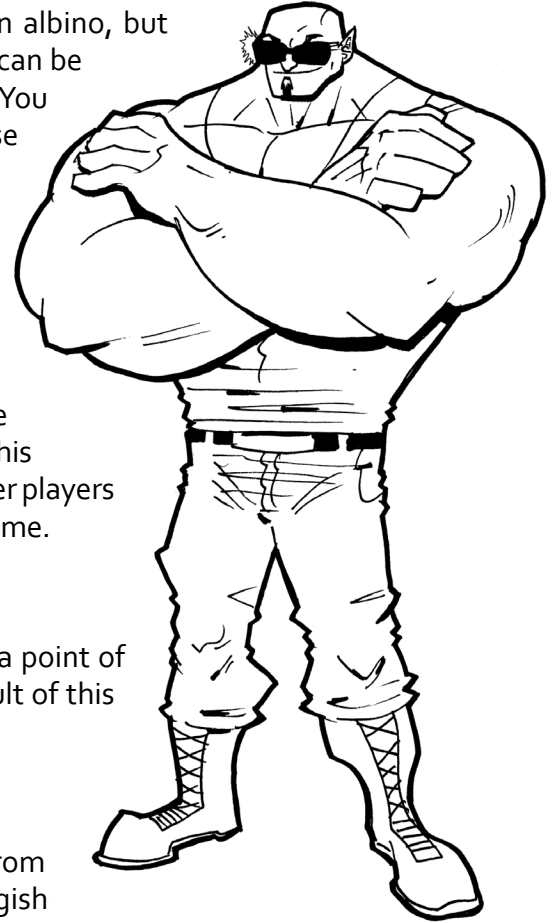
Whether deserved or fabricated by a newspaper editor who hates costumed freaks, you have a bad reputation. Or you might be the subject of blind prejudice. Whatever the specifics, people generally have an unfavorable reaction to you, and some may even flee or call the police when you appear. When things like this happen, you sigh and earn a point of Resolve.

OUTSIDER

You come from an alien, foreign, or primitive culture, world, or dimension and are way out of your element. You earn a point of Resolve whenever you encounter a novel object you don't know how to use or situation you don't know how to handle.

POWER LIMITS

One or more of your super traits or perks sometimes fail you, often by causing unintended side effects or ceasing to function. This can represent wild powers that are hard to control, powers that rely on a limited reserve of energy or ammunition, or just about anything else you wish. Any time your powers go all wonky or fail you when they're needed, you earn a point of Resolve. Describe exactly what limits your powers have and how they work when you select this flaw.



QUIRK

You have an annoying, obnoxious, or otherwise detrimental personality trait that often gets the better of you at the worst of times, earning you a point of Resolve whenever that happens.

REACTION

You suffer some adverse reaction at certain times, in certain situations, or when you come in contact or even within some distance of a particular being, location, object, or substance. Make up the specifics when you select this flaw. You're always ill at ease when exposed to the subject of this flaw, and you earn a point of Resolve any time you suffer an adverse effect as a result.

REPAIR

You do not heal naturally and must instead be repaired to recover lost Health. Due to its ever-present nature, this flaw simply grants you a point of Resolve at the beginning of every issue.

REQUIREMENT

You must satisfy some requirement every so often to avoid suffering some kind of adverse effect (such as needing to take special medicine to stay alive). Make up the specifics when you select this flaw. In all cases, however, you will begin to deteriorate if you fail to satisfy the requirement for too long. You earn a point of Resolve whenever this gets so bad that you start to suffer an adverse effect.

RESPONSIBILITY

You have a duty or responsibility that requires you to do certain things and prevents you from doing others. You earn a point of Resolve whenever living up to your responsibility works to your detriment or to that of your friends.

RESTRICTION

You have fewer rights than the average person, most often because you're a minor or an illegal alien (perhaps literally). This could also apply if you are a slave or were deemed legally incompetent. Whenever your lack of legal power gets in your way, you earn a point of Resolve.

SECRET

You have a secret that must be kept at all costs. Although a secret identity is the classic comic book example of this flaw, the secret can be whatever you wish. You earn a point of Resolve whenever you do something or avoid doing something that works to your detriment or to that of your allies to protect your secret.

SLOW

You move slowly. You earn a point of Resolve whenever this causes you problems, typically by preventing you from catching or getting away from someone or from getting somewhere in time.

UNLUCKY/JINX

Fortune isn't kind to you. Unlucky means that once per issue, the GM is free to inflict a misfortune on you without having to spend Adversity as he normally would (this is explained in Chapter 4). Jinx works the same way, but the misfortune affects one of your allies—whether fellow hero or npc—instead of you. Either way, when this happens you earn a point of Resolve.

UNUSUAL LOOKS

You are incredibly ugly, inhumanly attractive, or downright strange looking. Whatever the specifics, you earn a point of Resolve whenever your distinct appearance causes you problems.

UNUSUAL SHAPE

You aren't shaped like a normal human being. Describe your specific hassles when you select this flaw. You earn a point of Resolve whenever this impairs you in any significant way.

UNWANTED POWER

You have an unwanted power. Maybe you kill all vegetation within reach, or maybe you're perpetually on fire. Any benefit must be represented by a separate trait. Unwanted powers don't have ranks; their negative effects are purely descriptive. This flaw might earn you a point of Resolve every time it comes into play, or it could be more of an ever-present burden, in which case it simply grants you a point of Resolve at the beginning of every issue. Decide how it works when you first select it.

VULNERABILITY

You are vulnerable to something such as diseases, drugs, poisons, a specific material, a type of damage, a type of energy, or whatever else you want. Define the specifics when you select this flaw. You earn a point of Resolve whenever you forego rolling and instead choose to automatically generate no successes on your defense roll against the thing to which you are vulnerable.



WANTED

On a steel horse you ride. You are being actively hunted by the authorities. You earn a point of Resolve whenever they show up and make things difficult for you and your friends.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Once you have your traits, perks, and flaws, the finishing touches are the fluff that turns a collection of game mechanics into a hero. They include your hero's name and identity, description, motivation, quote, details, connections, and origin. Each is discussed below.

NAME AND IDENTITY

Select your hero name and your civilian identity. Note that even heroes with public identities often use some kind of heroic codename.

DESCRIPTION

Describe the three things people first notice when they meet you in costume, then describe the three things people first notice when they meet you out of costume. Although your costume is obviously important, you can also include things like your personality and demeanor, the way you move or carry yourself, the way you speak (or don't speak), and so on. Don't go overboard—use no more than a single sentence for each impression.

MOTIVATION

Not everyone with unusual powers would choose to be a hero. In fact, most folks would probably decide to lead normal lives, free of the troubles and dangers that come with the whole hero gig. But not you. Your motivation explains why. As you will see in Chapter 4, your motivation can also help you earn Resolve. Common heroic motivations are listed below, but feel free to get creative and make up your own.

Acceptance: An outcast, you hope to change that by being a hero.

Coercion: You have been convinced or forced to become a hero.

Exploration: Being a hero provides unmatched opportunities for exploration and discovery.

Fame: You figure that being a hero is a great way to become a household name.

Guardian: As a hero, you can protect those who can't protect themselves.

Idealism: As a hero, you fight to support a worthy cause, ideal, nation, or people.

Justice: As a hero, you can take revenge on those who harm the innocent.

Peace: Being a hero for a while is the only way to achieve the peace or solitude you desire.

Redemption: You hope to atone for your past misdeeds by being a hero.

Responsibility: You believe that with great power comes great responsibility.

Thrills: The life of a hero provides you with the excitement you crave.

Virtue: You are a hero simply because it is how you can do the most good.

Wealth: You figure that being a hero is a great way to earn a lot of money.

QUOTE

Whether a catchphrase you say repeatedly or a one-time zinger, a quote sums up your hero in one revealing phrase or sentence. It's the finishing touch that ties everything else together. If they ever make a movie about your hero, the quote is the line everyone's going to remember long after leaving the theater.

DETAILS

You should now make up at least three details: one about you, one about one of the other heroes in the group, and one about someone or something out there in the game world. You can make up any details you wish. They can be related to each other or not. They can involve the past, the present, or the future. They can involve your background, your history, or your fate. And whether you or anyone else knows or believes these things to be true is entirely up to you. The only requirement is that each detail must provide the GM with some kind of plot hook he can use as the basis of a subplot, story, or story arc. The GM must approve of your details, and your fellow player must approve of the detail about his hero, but otherwise the sky's the limit.

CONNECTIONS

You're almost done. The second-to-last step is to describe at least three npcs who play an important role in your life. This doesn't necessarily mean you like these people, or even have a relationship with them. It just means these people are connected to you in some way. Connections can include family members, friends, coworkers, rivals, and so on. If you have perks like Contact or Patron, they can act as your connections if you wish. You don't have to actually create these npcs (leave that to the GM if it ever matters); just describe who they are and how they're connected to you. As with details, the GM should be able to bring your connections into his stories, making the game feel that much more personal to your hero.

What's all this about details and connections? Simple: It's about telling the GM and the other players what interests you, what kind of stories you would like to play, and what you have in mind for your hero. Although this is something the whole group should discuss before you play any roleplaying game, sharing these specific details and connections helps crystallize things for everyone playing the game. With a better understanding of how you see your hero and what you want him to experience, the GM can craft stories that really speak to what you want out of the game.

ORIGIN

The last thing to do is describe how your hero became a hero. You don't have to write a novel. In fact, a simple sentence that leaves a lot to the imagination can sometimes be more evocative than pages of backstory. And be prepared to read it, because the first thing that happens once everyone creates their heroes is that each player will read his origin to the rest of the group. The heroes may not know one another's backstory at the start of the game, but the players should.

ADVANCEMENT

Except in the case of origin stories, character advancement isn't a common element of this genre. For the most part, heroes tend to be iconic characters who change little over time. In fact, this reliable sameness is part of what we like about them. In the rare instances when heroes do change, these changes are often sudden and dramatic. While that's all true, character advancement is an important aspect of tabletop roleplaying, mainly because it's fun to see your hero become more powerful over time. Accordingly, P&P includes the following rules for hero advancement. Whether or not you use them is up to you.

You earn 1 hero die for every 3 issues of play. However, hero dice are only awarded at the end of a story. Any leftover is carried over into the next story. For example, a hero earns no hero dice at the end of a 2-issue story, but if the next story is 4 issues long, he'll be awarded 2 hero dice at the end of that story (1 for every 3 issues played). You also earn 1 extra hero die any time you defeat or thwart an archvillain.

If the GM wants to slow character advancement in his game, he can implement a staggered advancement system. When using staggered advancement, the number of issues of play needed to earn 1 hero die is increased by 3 every time you earn 6 hero dice. Using this system, you earn your first 6 hero dice at the rate of 1 per 3 issues, your next 6 hero dice at the rate of 1 per 6 issues, your next 6 hero dice at the rate of 1 per 9 issues, and so on.

New hero dice can be spent like those you were handed during hero creation. They can be used to enhance your existing abilities or to buy new ones. They can also be spent to modify your existing abilities by adding pros and eliminating cons. Additionally, three things happen as you earn extra hero dice.

First, as mentioned before, heroes have 1 point of Health for every 3 hero dice they possess. That means your Health will increase by 1 point every time you earn 3 more hero dice.

Second, the maximum trait rank you're allowed to have is increased by 1d for every 6 hero dice earned. For example, a starting hero in a street level game has 24 hero dice and can have up to 3 traits at a rank of 8d. Once he earns his first 6 hero dice, the maximum rank is increased to 9d. After he earns another 6 hero dice, the maximum goes up to 10d, and so on. This doesn't affect the fact that a hero can only have 3 traits at maximum rank—that never changes.

And third, every time you earn 6 hero dice, you can reallocate up to 6 hero dice worth of abilities. You can use this to adjust your trait ranks, get rid of abilities you don't like, and purchase new ones. You can save these reallocations as long as you wish, and you never have to use them if you don't want to.



FOUR: HEROISM

RESOLVE

Although heroes have powers and abilities beyond the ken of normal men and women, that isn't what makes them heroes. They are heroes because something inside them gives them the will to get out there and do what we wish we could: fight the good fight, protect the innocent, right wrongs, and generally make the world a better place. They are heroes because they never give up, despite the hardships they encounter and the dangers they face, sometimes at the hands of the very people they have sworn to protect.

In short, they are heroes because of their resolve.

In P&P, this is measured in Resolve points. Players spend Resolve during play, often to help their heroes overcome enemies and obstacles. As mentioned in Chapter 3, every hero begins with 1 Resolve per flaw. Heroes combine their Resolve into a single pool the instant they form a group. From that point on, every hero can add to and draw from the shared Resolve pool. The best way to keep track of Resolve is to use glass beads or poker chips in a bowl within easy reach of all players.

EARNING RESOLVE

Most heroes will have three flaws, and thus begin play with 3 Resolve. Once a hero spends Resolve, it's gone. Fortunately, there are a number of ways in which heroes can earn more.

CREATIVITY

As discussed in Chapter 3, heroes begin play with several details and connections, giving the GM material to use in his stories. The idea of having players create plot hooks and characters for the GM continues over the course of the game. At the end of every story, each player gets to create one new detail or connection. New details can be about the player's hero, one of the other heroes in the group (in which case the usual veto rules apply), or someone or something else in the game world. New connections can include just about anyone. Although they don't have to be, they're often related to the story that just ended. As a reward for being creative and helping the GM, every new detail or connection adds 1 point to the group's Resolve pool.

DEFEATS

Like everyone else, heroes sometimes fall down. What makes them heroes, however, is the fact that they keep getting right back up again. Suffering a brutal defeat and then coming back stronger than before is a classic hero move. In order to reflect this fact in the game, you earn 1 Resolve any time you suffer a significant defeat, failure, or setback.

FAILURES

As mentioned in Chapter 2, when a hero rolls at least 2 net successes on a trait roll, the player gets to narrate the outcome of that action however he wishes. If a player with full narrative control decides to have his hero fail at whatever he was attempting, presumably

CHAPTER 4

because he thinks it will make the story more interesting, he immediately earns 1 Resolve. This only applies when the hero is making an important trait roll whose failure will have a real consequence for himself or his allies.

FLAWS

As mentioned in Chapter 3, you earn 1 Resolve whenever you trigger one of your flaws. You must be in a situation where the flaw could reasonably be triggered and where this will cause you problems.

INTERLUDES

As will be discussed in Chapter 8, heroes also earn Resolve by creating and playing out interludes. Like subplots and flashbacks, interludes are short scenes that involve the heroes but aren't related to the current story. Because they add to the narrative and the game overall, players are rewarded for making them up.

MOTIVATION

Your motivation can also earn you Resolve. Specifically, you earn 1 Resolve whenever your motivation leads you to do something detrimental to yourself or your fellow heroes. We aren't encouraging impulsiveness, stupidity, or anything that derails the game. But we want to reward dramatic actions that display the strength of your convictions. We want you to roleplay your motivation, even when doing so isn't especially wise. In fact, that's when your motivation becomes most interesting: when it's inconvenient. Yes, there's a fine line here, but the rule of thumb is pretty simple: If your motivation makes you do something that works to your disadvantage without completely throwing the game off track, you earn 1 Resolve.

REWARDS

Finally, the GM is encouraged to give the players an extra point of Resolve whenever one of them does something exceptionally clever, dramatic, funny, heroic, or just plain cool. Great roleplaying, brilliant comedy, clever problem solving, and strategic thinking could all merit such a reward. So could something like helping a new player along. In short, the heroes should earn 1 Resolve any time a player does something that makes the game more enjoyable for everyone.

SPENDING RESOLVE

Resolve can be spent in a number of different ways. Use the following examples as a guide, but feel free to get creative and come up with new and interesting uses for it.

TRAIT ROLLS

You can use Resolve to improve your trait rolls. Spending 1 Resolve allows you to either add 1 success to your trait roll or reroll the whole thing. You can spend any amount of Resolve on a trait roll, and you can decide whether or not to spend Resolve after rolling the dice. The one exception to this rule is that a hero can't spend Resolve to improve his trait roll when trying to attack or adversely affect another hero (a character controlled by another player). His target, however, can use Resolve to defend himself. In other words, Resolve can only be used defensively when heroes fight other heroes. Note that this doesn't apply when fighting a character controlled by the GM, even if that character is technically one of the good guys.

STATUS EFFECTS

As noted in Chapter 2, whenever you completely overwhelm a target with a status effect (meaning that the effect's duration will last for the rest of the scene), you can spend 1 Resolve to make it last for an extended duration. This can mean anything from an hour to a day or longer.

INSTANT ACTION

A hero can spend 1 Resolve to act before he would normally get to act on a page, cutting ahead of other characters with higher Edge. Those characters, however, can spend their own Resolve (or Adversity in the case of characters run by the GM) to do the same thing. When two or more characters spend Resolve or Adversity in this way, use Edge to determine the order in which those characters act.

RECOVERY

If you've been defeated in combat but your allies are still in the fight, you can spend Resolve to recover from your injuries. As long as you remain unconscious or otherwise out of the action for an entire page, you can spend 1 Resolve to make a Toughness roll and recover a number of points of Health equal to the number of successes rolled. You can then rejoin the battle on the following page. Or you can remain as you are and keep spending Resolve and recovering Health as long as you like.

POWER STUNTS

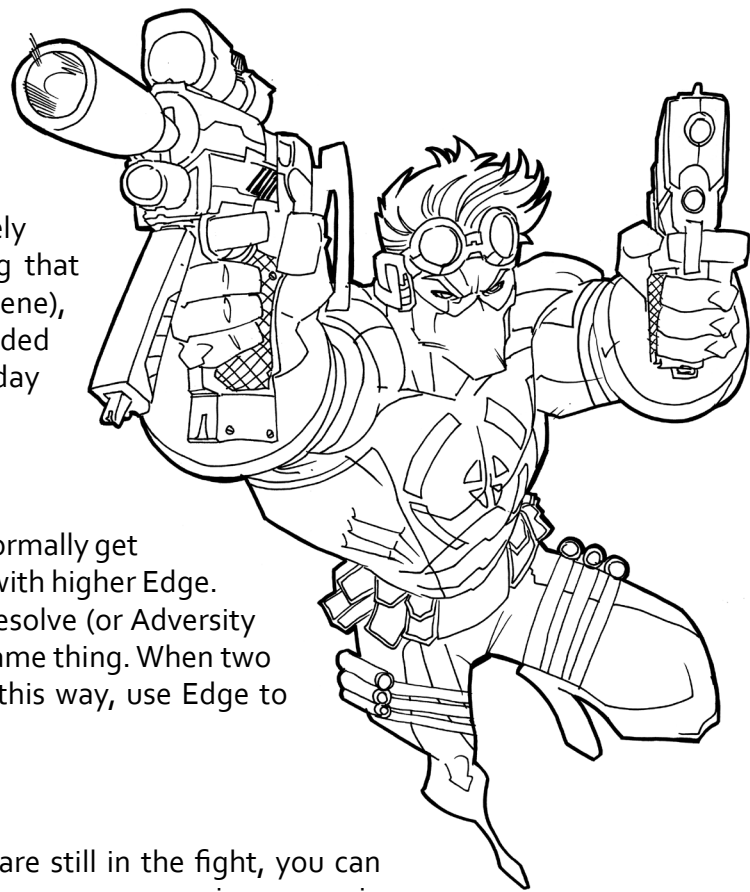
You can spend 1 Resolve to use your abilities to imitate ones you don't possess. As long as the GM thinks what you want to do makes sense (comic book sense, mind you), spending the Resolve grants you one use or one page worth of the imitated ability. Imitated traits have a rank 2d lower than the rank of the trait used to imitate them. For example, you might be able to use the Blast (energy) 9d trait to imitate a 7d version of the Flight trait for one page by focusing your energy blasts behind you. Imitated perks work normally, but you can only imitate perks that cost no more than half (round down) the rank of the trait used to imitate them. If the GM even allows it, you have to spend 2 Resolve to imitate a strong trait.

LUCKY BREAKS

You can spend 1 Resolve to make up some minor detail about the game world, often some lucky break that works in your favor. For example, if you get knocked off a rooftop, you can spend 1 Resolve to say that you land on a pile of discarded mattresses. Sometimes, however, it's fun to spice things up and add details that actually make things more difficult for you. If the GM likes your idea, he might refund your Resolve. If he thinks it's especially brilliant, he might even give you 1 extra point of Resolve to reward your creativity. This use of Resolve is always subject to the GM's approval.

ADVERSITY

In order to balance the fact that players have Resolve, the GM has Adversity. These points can be used to throw obstacles at the heroes and make them work even harder for their



CHAPTER 4

victories. The GM begins each story with 1 Adversity per player and earns more over the course of the game. The best way to keep track of Adversity is to use glass beads or poker chips in a bowl within easy reach of the GM. You should ideally use a different color or style than whatever you're using as Resolve.

EARNING ADVERSITY

Once the GM uses Adversity, it's gone forever. Fortunately, there are a number of ways in which he can earn more.

BUMBLING SUCCESS

As mentioned in Chapter 2, when a hero rolls less than 0 successes on a trait roll, the GM gets to narrate the result of that action however he wishes. If the GM allows the hero to accomplish whatever he was attempting, he immediately earns 1 Adversity. This is sometimes accompanied by insane cackling as the GM contemplates how that point of Adversity will come back to haunt the hero.

FLAWS

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the GM earns 1 Adversity whenever one of his villains or unfriendly npcs suffers some adverse effect as a result of his flaws. As with heroes, this can only happen when the character is in a situation where the flaw could reasonably be triggered and this would cause him problems.

UNHEROIC ACTIONS

The GM also earns Adversity any time a hero fails to act like a hero. Whenever a hero performs a cowardly, selfish, treacherous, or otherwise unheroic action, the GM earns 1 Adversity. The same applies when a hero does anything that contradicts his motivation. In either case, heroes have an affirmative responsibility to act like heroes, so the failure to act appropriately is just as bad and will earn the GM Adversity. These rules apply even when a hero is somehow forced or coerced into taking or permitting such actions. The universe cares little for excuses and less for semantics.

MAJOR VILLAINS & ARCHVILLAINS

Last but not least, there are the heavy-duty villains: **major villains** and **archvillains**. Unlike most villains, major villains and archvillains are recurring enemies that will challenge the heroes repeatedly over the course of a series. Major villains are usually encountered at the end of a story. Archvillains are normally reserved for the conclusion of a larger plotline that spans multiple stories or even an entire series. Whenever the heroes confront these special villains, the GM immediately earns Adversity. He earns 1 point per player when they confront a major villain or 2 points per player when they confront an archvillain. If the heroes are unlucky enough to encounter a group of major villains and archvillains, the GM earns 3 points per player. This Adversity can only be used during that encounter and vanishes once the encounter is over.

SPENDING ADVERSITY

Adversity can be spent in a number of different ways. Use the following examples as a guide, but feel free to get creative and come up with new and interesting uses for it.

TRAIT ROLLS

Like players, the GM can spend Adversity to improve his trait rolls. Spending 1 Adversity allows him to either add 1 success to his trait roll or reroll the whole thing. He can spend any amount of Adversity on a trait roll, and he can decide whether or not to spend Adversity after rolling the dice.

STATUS EFFECTS

As noted in Chapter 2, whenever a character run the by GM completely overwhelms a target with a status effect (meaning that the effect's duration will last for the rest of the scene), the GM can spend 1 Adversity to make it last for an extended duration. This can mean anything from an hour to a day or longer.

INSTANT ACTION

Like heroes, a villain can spend 1 Adversity to act before he would normally get to act on a page, cutting ahead of other characters with higher Edge. Those characters, however, can spend their own Adversity (or Resolve in the case of characters run by the players) to do the same thing. When two or more characters spend Adversity or Resolve in this way, use Edge to determine the order in which those characters act.

RECOVERY

Like players, the GM can spend Adversity to have defeated villains recover Health during a fight. As long as the villain remains unconscious or otherwise out of the action for an entire page, the GM can spend 1 Adversity to let the villain make a Toughness roll and recover a number of points of Health equal to the number of successes rolled. He can rejoin the battle on the following page or remain as he is and keep spending Adversity and recovering Health as long as he likes.

POWER STUNTS

The GM can spend Adversity to have his villains and npcs imitate abilities they don't possess. This works just like it does for heroes, but it costs the GM Adversity instead of Resolve.

MISFORTUNES

Adversity can also be spent to throw misfortunes at the heroes. Misfortunes are random obstacles and instances of bad luck that make a hero's life more difficult, whether at that moment or in general. For example, having your weapon malfunction, running out of ammo, and causing collateral damage that endangers civilians are examples of obstacles a hero might encounter in combat. Out of combat, obstacles can include things like having your roommate discover your hero costume, running out of gas on the way to an important meeting, or being introduced to your sister's fiancée, who also happens to be your nemesis. Go figure. Each obstacle costs the GM 1 Adversity.

PLOT PROGRESSION

Finally, the GM can spend 1 Adversity to have a villain automatically do anything necessary to further the plot of the story, no matter how unlikely. This is often used to allow a villain to throw a switch, grab a hostage, or escape the heroes rather than be defeated and captured. You should do this only when it really matters. If you overdo it, your players will get very frustrated, very quickly.



FIVE: WONDERFUL TOYS

GEARING UP

Players don't have to worry about buying mundane gear in P&P. Heroes automatically have whatever mundane gear they want as long as the GM thinks it's reasonable. This philosophy also applies to anything they want to buy during the course of the game. What's reasonable for a particular hero will typically depend on his resources, financial and otherwise. Perks like Contact, Patron, and Wealth should give a hero access to mundane gear unavailable to anyone else. Flaws like Broke and Restriction, on the other hand, should limit what a hero could reasonably own. For example, the average hero will probably own a car. A wealthy one might own several, plus a motorcycle or two and maybe even a jet. One with military contacts might have access to military vehicles, or know where he can find them for sale. And so on. Keeping that in mind, a hero can have whatever mundane gear he wants as long as the GM approves.

MUNDANE LIMITATIONS

Mundane gear often modifies a character's traits for specific purposes. For example, armor increases the wearer's Toughness for defense and weapons increase the wielder's Athletics or Might when attacking. Because it's designed for ordinary people, the maximum effective trait provided by any piece of mundane gear always equals its modifier +4d. For example, modern riot gear provides a +3d bonus to Toughness for defense, so the maximum effective Toughness the armor can provide is 7d. This makes it less useful to anyone with a Toughness of 5d and almost useless to anyone with a Toughness of 6d or higher. As in the comics, mundane gear is most effective when used by normal humans and street-level heroes.

MINIONS DON'T USE GEAR

That's right, minions don't use gear. Why not? Because minions don't really do anything other than fight heroes, or stand around waiting to fight heroes. And when they do that, they use their Threat rank to make trait rolls. A minion's Threat rank (as modified by the minion attack bonus) takes everything into account, including weapons, armor, and other equipment. While certain minions might have special gear like walkie-talkies or night vision goggles, these things are left entirely up to the GM's discretion.

ARMOR

Artificial armor has a Defense value that is added to the wearer's Toughness when defending against physical attacks. Some types of armor also have special features that mimic certain pros and cons.

CHAPTER 5

ARMOR	DEFENSE	SPECIAL
Ancient, Leather	+1d	—
Ancient, Mail	+2d	—
Ancient, Plate	+3d	—
Modern, Biker Leather	+1d	—
Modern, Bulletproof Cloth	+2d	Limited (only vs. firearms)
Modern, Military/Riot Gear	+3d	—
Sci-Fi, Padding	+2d	—
Sci-Fi, Plate	+4d	—
Sci-Fi, Powered	+6d	Impenetrable

POWERED ARMOR

Comic books are filled with supposedly mundane suits of powered armor that sport advanced weaponry and high-tech features like communications, life support, sensor systems, and servos that enhance the wearer's physical attributes. These features should be considered super traits, as discussed in Chapter 3.

SHIELDS

When used alone, shields have a +1d Defense (and Sci-Fi shields usually have the Impenetrable pro). When used in conjunction with artificial armor, however, shields add +1d to the armor's Defense.

WEAPONS

Most weapons have a Damage value that is added to the attacker's Athletics or Might, as applicable, when used to attack. Melee weapons (those lacking the Ranged special attribute) also add their Damage value to the wielder's active defense rolls against melee attacks (in effect, when used to parry). Some weapons also have special features that mimic certain pros and cons.

WEAPON	DAMAGE	SPECIAL
Bow/Crossbow	+3d	Ranged
Energy Grenade	+4d	Area, Ranged
Energy Pistol	+4d	Ranged
Energy Rifle	+5d	Ranged
Energy Rifle, Assault	+5d	Area, Ranged
Energy Rifle, Heavy	+6d	Area, Ranged
Grenade, Explosive	+3d	Area, Ranged
Grenade, Flash-Bang	—	Area, Dazzle 6d, Ranged
Heavy Machinegun	+5d	Area, Ranged
Heavy Rocket Launcher	+6d	Area, Ranged
Melee, Blunt	+2d	—
Melee, Edged/Exotic	+3d	—
Melee, Energy	+3d	Penetrating
Pistol	+3d	Ranged
Rifle, Assault	+4d	Area, Ranged
Rifle, Sniper	+4d	Ranged, Visual Range
Shotgun	+4d	Ranged, Limited (short range)

Submachine Gun	+3d	Area, Ranged
Thrown, Blunt	+1d	Ranged
Thrown, Edged/Exotic	+2d	Ranged
Thrown, Sling	+2d	Ranged

EQUIPMENT

Within reason, all heroes are assumed to carry whatever tools and equipment they need to use any of their traits that have a rank of 3d or higher. For example, a hero with Thievery of 3d or higher normally carries around some kind of thieves' tools. While that's normally enough for most heroes, some rely on other equipment as well. The following list is by no means exclusive, but it should get you started.

EQUIPMENT	DESCRIPTION
Binoculars	Grants the user Telescopic Vision; possibly Night Vision as well.
Bug Detector	Adds +4d bonus to trait when searching for bugs and transmitters.
Caltrops	Floor spikes that slow or stop pursuers; can also be poisoned.
Camera	An advanced camera; could have Night Vision and Telescopic Vision.
Cellphone	Ubiquitous means of communication, probably not traceable.
Climbing Claws	Adds +2d bonus to trait when climbing natural surfaces.
Climbing Gear, Ice	Adds +4d bonus to trait when climbing ice (3 Difficulty).
Climbing Gear, Urban	Adds +4d bonus to trait when climbing glass (3 Difficulty).
Computer	Small and wireless top-of-the-line system worthy of a hero.
Communicator	High-tech version of a cellphone common in sci-fi games.
Crowbar	Adds +4d bonus when forcing things open—hey, we can't all lift cars.
Explosives	Material and detonators for controlled demolitions.
Flashlight	A small but powerful flashlight with a variable-width beam.
Gas Mask	Protects the wearer against inhaled diseases, drugs, and poisons.
Geiger Counter	Detects and displays the level of environmental radiation.
Handcuffs, Metal	Used to bind villains; 4 Difficulty to break.
Handcuffs, Plastic	Used to bind villains; 3 Difficulty to break but easy to cut.
Lantern	Gives off light by burning oil; lasts for a few hours.
Light Stick	Chemical stick that glows for a few hours when activated.
Lockpick Gun	This device will quickly open most normal mechanical locks.
Night Vision Goggles	Grants the user Night Vision.
Parabolic Microphone	Grants user 8d Perception for hearing things in one direction.
Parachute	Allows safe falls from great heights; must be repacked after use.
Radio	An advanced, multi-channel, and very probably hands-free walkie-talkie.
Rappelling Gear	Allows rapid descent from heights with an Athletics roll.
Scuba Gear	Allows the user to operate underwater for up to 1 hour.
Scope	Mounted on a firearm; modern versions work like binoculars.
Silencer	More properly called a suppressor, it muffles the sound of a firearm.
Space Suit	Essential sci-fi gear that lets you operate in outer space for several hours.
Telescope	Primitive means to grant the user limited Telescopic Vision.
Tracer Bug	Small transmitter that emits a periodic signal identifying its location.
Transmitter	Transmits audible sounds to a predetermined receiver.
Wiretap	A transmitter affixed to a telephone line or fiber optic cable to tap calls.

MAKESHIFT INVENTIONS

It normally takes months or even years to design and build new inventions. When the need arises, however, heroes with superhuman intellect or talent can sometimes create original inventions in no time at all. In P&P, these hastily constructed items are called makeshift inventions.

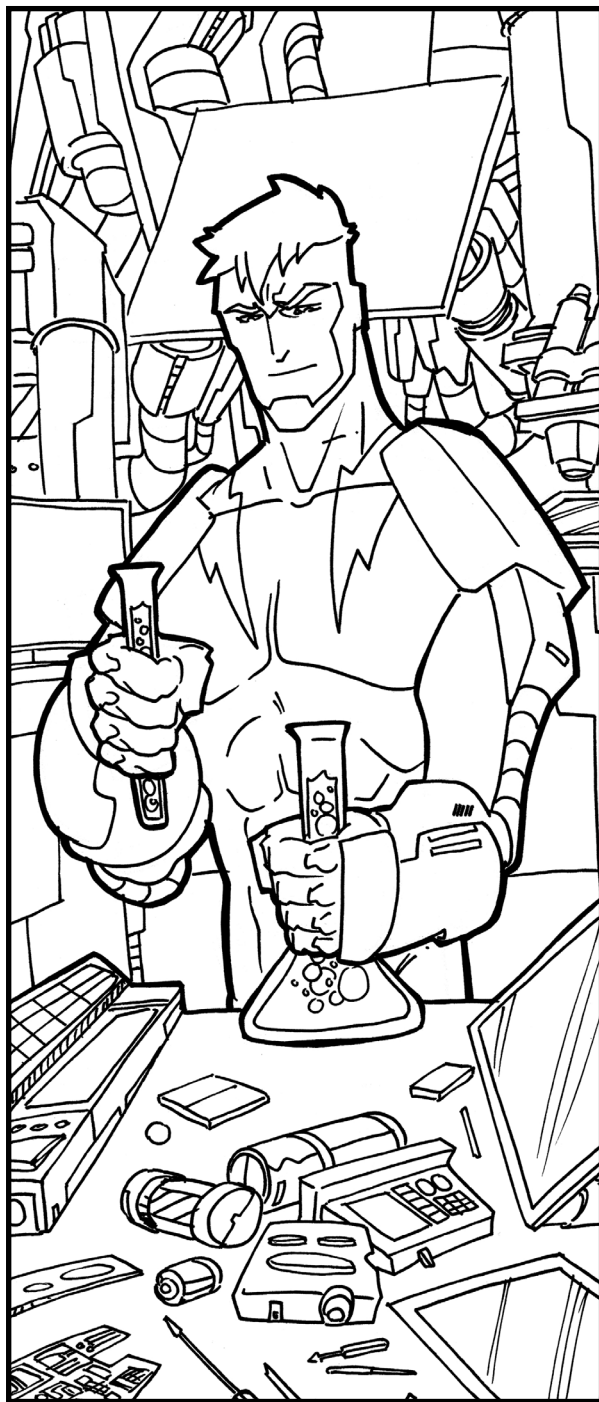
In order to create a makeshift invention, you need to have at least 6d in whatever trait applies to the thing you want to create: Medicine for a drug, Science for a compound, or Technology for a device. You also need access to the necessary tools, materials, and facilities. Assuming you have both, the process works as follows. First, spend 1 Resolve. Then select the invention's Difficulty, which determines how powerful it is and how hard it is to create. Now make a trait roll using the trait that applies to your makeshift invention; the Resolve you spent earlier doesn't affect this roll, but you can spend more if you like. If you make the roll with at least 1 net success, you immediately earn a number of hero dice equal to 3 times the invention's Difficulty. These hero dice are used to buy traits and perks that represent the invention. Makeshift inventions are inherently unstable and often temperamental. They can only be used once per net success rolled when creating them. However, you can double the number of uses you can get out of a makeshift invention by letting the GM give it some kind of side effect. The nature of the side effect, including whether or not it's obvious to the hero, is left up to the GM's discretion. Whether or not you succeed, the process of trying to create a makeshift invention takes one scene that lasts about 10 minutes times the invention's Difficulty.

VEHICLES

Vehicles have the following traits: Body, Speed, Handling, and Weaponry. Each is described below.

BODY

This measures a vehicle's durability and defenses. A vehicle's Body can be used to defend the vehicle and its passengers against attacks unless the vehicle has an open cockpit. Passengers in a vehicle with an open cockpit are unprotected and have to fend for themselves if attacked. Certain vehicles, called tactical vehicles, are much larger and harder to damage than standard vehicles.



SPEED

This determines how fast a vehicle can move, as per the speed table in Chapter 3. Speed is mainly used when determining how long it takes a vehicle to travel from one point to another. It can also be used in those rare instances when a pilot tries to chase or outrun an enemy through clear and unobstructed terrain.

HANDLING

This represents a vehicle's maneuverability. Handling is used whenever a pilot tries to chase or outrun an enemy through obstructed terrain, which is usually the case. It's also used to perform fancy maneuvers. A pilot can use his vehicle's Handling instead of its Body when defending the vehicle against attacks (this is the vehicular equivalent of an active defense). A pilot always adds his Vehicles trait to his vehicle's Handling trait. Some vehicles are so massive or ungainly that they have no Handling trait.

WEAPONRY

This trait reflects the offensive capabilities of a vehicle's weapons. It's used whenever a pilot makes vehicular attacks. A pilot always adds his Vehicles trait to his vehicle's Weaponry trait. Some vehicles carry extremely powerful weapons, called tactical weapons, designed to be used against massive targets.

AIR VEHICLES	BODY	SPEED	HANDLING	WEAPONRY
Attack Helicopter	7d	8d	6d	8d
Gravity Car	6d	8d	6d	—
Gravity Bike*	5d	8d	7d	—
Helicopter	6d	8d	6d	—
Jet Fighter	7d	10d	8d	8d
Jumbo Jet	9d	9d	2d	—
Lear Jet	7d	9d	4d	—
Mini-copter*	4d	8d	7d	—
Prop Plane	6d	8d	5d	—
Space Shuttle	10d	11d	0d	—
Starship, Cruiser**	18d	12d	—	16dx8
Starship, Destroyer**	16d	12d	—	14dx6
Starship, Frigate**	14d	12d	—	12dx4
Starship, Star Fighter	8d	13d	8d	8d
Starship, Transport	10d	12d	6d	8dx2
WWI Biplane	5d	7d	5d	5d
WWII Bomber	7d	8d	4d	6dx2
WWII Fighter	6d	9d	6d	6d
Zeppelin	6d	6d	—	—

*Body can't be used to defend this vehicle's passengers because it has an open cockpit.

**This is a tactical vehicle and its weapons are considered tactical weapons.

CHAPTER 5

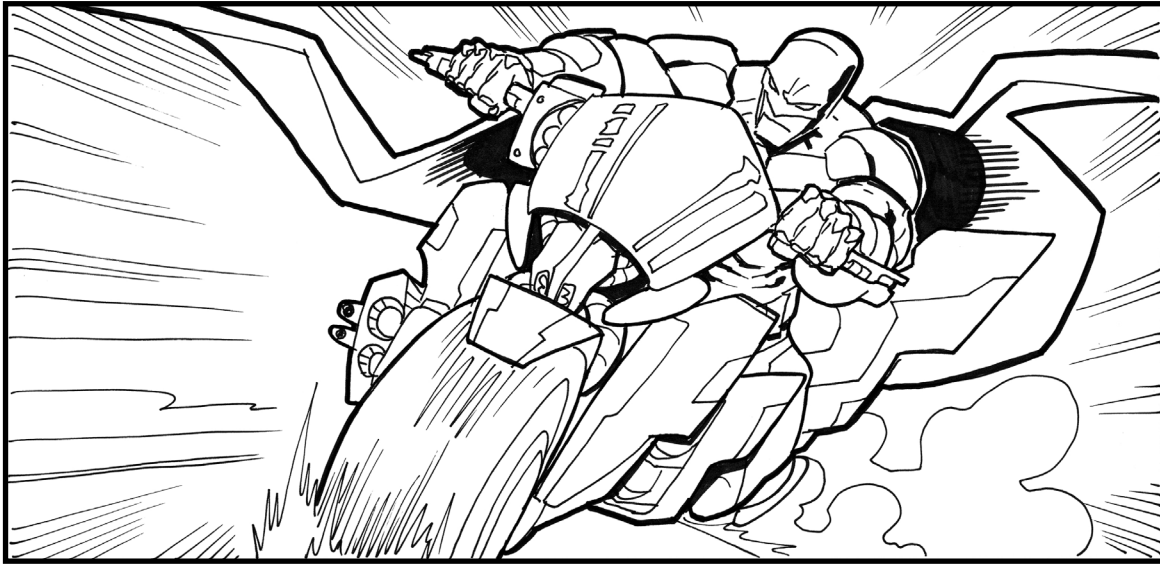
LAND VEHICLES	BODY	SPEED	HANDLING	WEAPONRY
APC	9d	6d	2d	6d
Armored Car	8d	6d	1d	—
Big Rig	9d	7d	0d	—
Bus	8d	7d	0d	—
Car, Sedan	6d	7d	2d	—
Car, Sports	6d	8d	3d	—
Car, SUV	7d	7d	1d	—
Dune Buggy*	5d	6d	2d	—
Limousine	6d	7d	1d	—
Mecha	12d	7d	4d	10d
Motorcycle*	5d	8d	3d	—
Scooter*	4d	6d	2d	—
Tank	10d	6d	2d	8d
Train Engine	9d	7d	—	—
Truck	7d	7d	0d	—

*Body can't be used to defend this vehicle's passengers because it has an open cockpit.

WATER VEHICLES	BODY	SPEED	HANDLING	WEAPONRY
Battleship**	16d	6d	—	16dx4
Carrier**	16d	6d	—	12dx4
Destroyer**	15d	6d	—	14dx4
Frigate**	12d	6d	—	12dx2
Mini-Sub	8d	6d	1d	—
Nuclear Sub**	16d	6d	—	14d
Ocean Liner	15d	6d	—	—
Sailboat*	6d	5d	0d	—
Sailing Ship	10d	4d	0d	8dx2
Speedboat*	5d	7d	2d	—
Submarine**	12d	5d	—	12d
Tanker**	15d	5d	—	—
Wave Runner*	4d	6d	2d	—
Yacht	8d	6d	1d	—
Yacht, Huge	10d	6d	0d	—

*Body can't be used to defend this vehicle's passengers because it has an open cockpit.

**This is a tactical vehicle and its weapons are considered tactical weapons.



SPECIAL VEHICLES

As mentioned in Chapter 3, each time you buy the Special Vehicle perk, you can select either 18 hero dice that must be used to create a new vehicle, or 6 hero dice that can be used to improve your existing vehicles. You can have as many vehicles as you wish. You spend these hero dice to purchase or enhance your vehicle's Body, Speed, Handling, and Weaponry traits. Unlike character traits, vehicular traits start at 0d—the first hero die put into a trait gives the vehicle 1d in that trait. You can also spend the hero dice granted by the Special Vehicle perk to buy any other traits and perks you want the vehicle to have.

The default special vehicle is a standard vehicle. If you wish, you can add +6d to your vehicle's Body by making it a **tactical vehicle**. This doesn't cost you anything, but it means that the vehicle is a massive affair along the lines of a modern-day warship and requires a large crew to operate effectively. It also means that the vehicle lacks a Handling trait, rendering it incapable of performing fancy maneuvers. Finally, this makes the vehicle vulnerable to tactical weapons. A vehicle must have a Body of at least 6d before you can make it a tactical vehicle, so no tactical vehicle will have a Body of less than 12d.

The default special vehicle has a Handling trait. If you create an ungainly vehicle that lacks a Handling trait even though it isn't a tactical vehicle, you get 3 extra hero dice to spend on your vehicle. Tactical vehicles automatically lack a Handling trait, but this provides them with no extra hero dice.

The default special vehicle is a land vehicle. Water vehicles are less expensive than land vehicles because they see less action. If you create an aquatic special vehicle, you get 3 extra hero dice to spend on your vehicle. Conversely, vehicles that fly are more expensive than land vehicles because, well, they can fly. If you want to create a special vehicle that can fly, you have to spend 3 extra hero dice.

The default special vehicle has a closed cockpit, but you can choose to have a vehicle with an open cockpit if you wish. This means that the pilot and passengers can't use the vehicle's Body as a passive defense. Because this is a definite disadvantage, this gives you 3 extra hero dice to spend on the vehicle.

The default special vehicle has no weapons unless you give it a Weaponry trait of at least 1d. You only buy this trait once. Every extra gunnery station on a vehicle costs you 3 extra hero dice. If you wish, you can add +6d to your vehicle's Weaponry rank by giving it **tactical weapons**. This doesn't cost you anything, but it makes the vehicle's weapons much less effective against anything other than massive targets. A vehicle must have a Weaponry trait of at least 6d before you can give it tactical weapons.

VEHICLE COMBAT

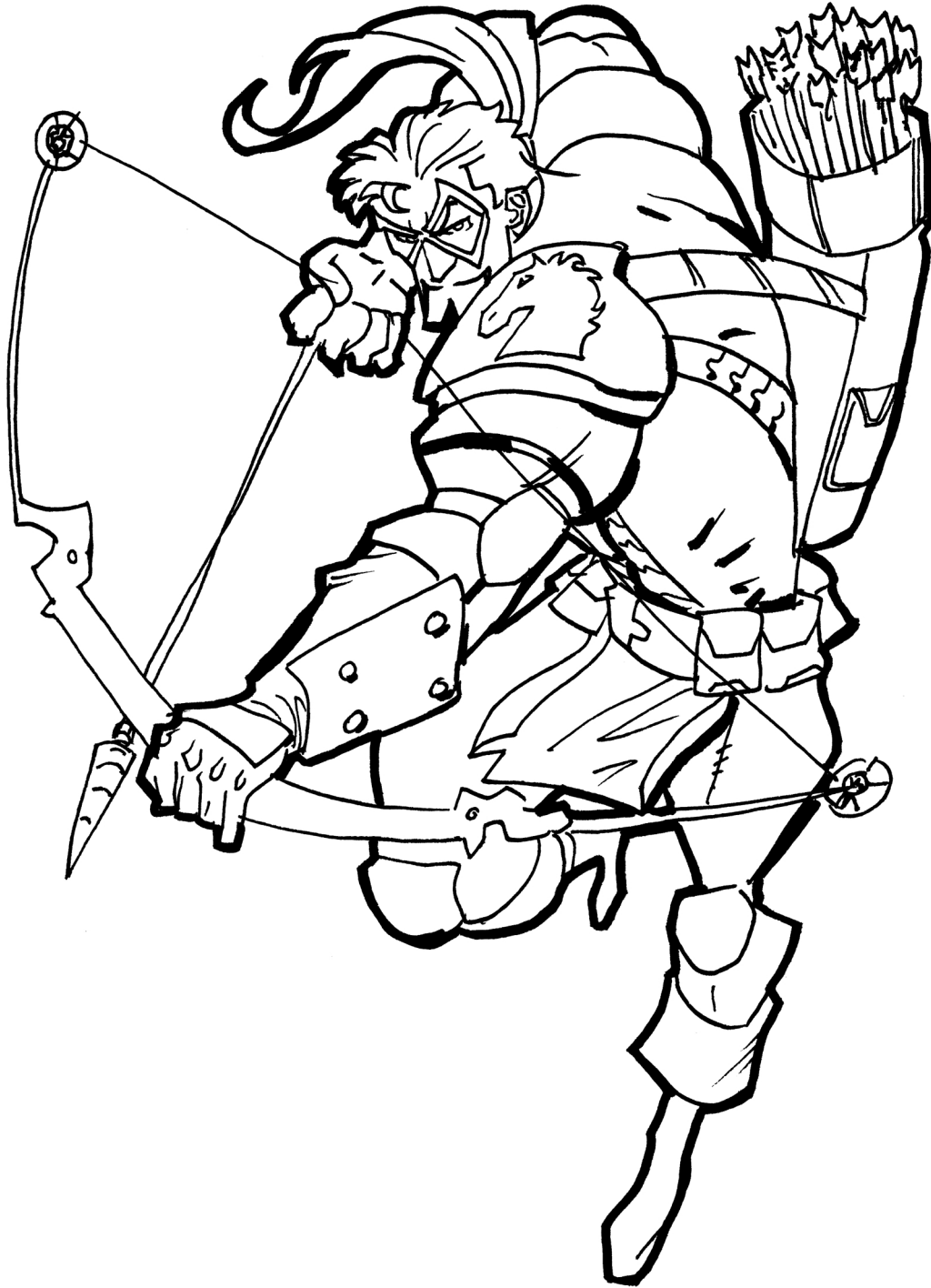
As in normal combat, vehicular initiative is based on Edge. However, everyone in a vehicle acts according to the Edge of that vehicle's pilot or captain. When piloting or commanding a vehicle, a character's Edge equals his Vehicles + Perception + Willpower traits. In other words, you substitute Vehicles for Athletics.

To attack with a vehicle's weapons, use the vehicle's Weaponry trait plus the Vehicles trait of the character firing the weapon. Halve this total if using tactical weapons against anything other than tactical vehicles or structures. To ram another vehicle, use the vehicle's Handling trait plus the pilot's Vehicles trait. Vehicles that lack a Handling trait can only attempt to ram stationary targets or other vehicles that lack a Handling trait. In that case, use the vehicle's Body trait plus the pilot's Vehicles trait when making the attack.

When two vehicles collide, the one with the lower Body trait will suffer damage. If they have the same Body trait, both vehicles will suffer damage. A character with the Armor or Force Field traits can use those traits as his effective Body rank for these purposes. Toughness, however, doesn't apply.

Like characters, vehicles suffer 1 point of damage per net success scored against them when attacked. A vehicle is rendered inoperable when the total damage it has suffered equals or exceeds its Body rank. This is the vehicular equivalent of being defeated, disabling the vehicle and taking it out of the fight. As in normal combat, this doesn't mean that you've destroyed the vehicle or killed its crew, especially not if they're heroes, villains, or important npcs. As always, minions are the exception to how damage works: A hero's vehicular attacks will disable, destroy, or otherwise defeat one minion-mobile per net success.

Vehicles don't heal themselves unless they have a very high creepy-factor. Instead, they must be repaired. Assuming he has the necessary equipment, a character with a Technology rank of 3d or more can attempt to perform field repairs on a damaged vehicle. A successful Technology roll will let him repair 1 point damage per success. A vehicle can only be field-repaired once before needing to be taken to a proper repair facility.





SIX: BIG BAD WORLD

DISASTERS

Heroes don't just fight villains. With their unique abilities, heroes are often called upon to help the victims of natural and manmade disasters. Catastrophic events like avalanches, broken dams, burning buildings, collapsing structures, earthquakes, flash floods, mudslides, power plant failures, rockslides, sinkholes, tidal waves, tornadoes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and wildfires can provide heroes with more than enough to worry about, even if the villains have taken the day off.

Disasters are made up of goals. More specifically, minor disasters have 3 goals and major disasters have 9 goals. A goal can be anything the heroes need to accomplish while fighting the disaster. Goals include things like rescuing people, diverting floodwaters, fighting fires, supporting collapsing buildings, and so on. Unless the disaster is the focal point of the entire issue, the heroes should be able to accomplish most goals with a good idea and a successful trait roll. Some goals, however, might be complex enough to demand their own scene. Again, it depends on whether the disaster is a minor interlude or the focus of story. It's highly recommended that the GM make up 2 of the 3 goals in a minor disaster or 6 of the 9 goals in a major one and let the players come up with the rest. Once all of the goals have been accomplished or failed, check below to determine who gets to narrate the disaster's resolution and aftermath.

GOALS ACCOMPLISHED	RESULTS
0 if minor • 0 to 1 if major	GM narrates
1 if minor • 2 to 4 if major	GM narrates with Player embellishment
2 if minor • 5 to 7 if major	Players narrate with GM embellishment
3 if minor • 8 to 9 if major	Players narrate

DISEASES AND DRUGS

Exposure to mundane agents like diseases and drugs is handled like an attack. You make an attack roll using the agent's **Potency**, which indicates how difficult it is to resist, against that target's Toughness. The net successes rolled determine the agent's effect, as shown below.

SUCCESSSES	EFFECT
Less than 0	No effect
0 or 1	Partial effect
2 or more	Full effect

Use the following table as a guide when determining the effects of common diseases and drugs. Although the specifics can vary, diseases typically last for the rest of the story, while drugs usually last for the rest of the scene. You can also use this information as a springboard when making up your own agents.

CHAPTER 6

DISEASE/DRUG	POTENCY	PARTIAL EFFECT	FULL EFFECT
Alcohol	4d	Impaired (-1d)	Impaired (-3d)
Anthrax, Smallpox	8d	Impaired (-3d)	Overcome
Ebola, Plague	9d	Impaired (-3d)	Overcome
Knockout Drops/Gas	7d	Impaired (-3d)	Incapacitated
Laughing Gas	6d	Impaired (-1d)	Impaired (-3d)
Mace, Tear Gas	5d	Impaired (-3d)	Incapacitated
Malaria	5d	Impaired (-1d)	Impaired (-3d)
Tranquilizer	8d	Impaired (-3d)	Incapacitated
Truth Serum	7d	Impaired (-1d)	Impaired (-3d)

For these purposes, **Impaired** means you suffer the indicated penalty to all trait rolls for the agent's duration, **Incapacitated** means you fall unconscious for the agent's duration, and **Overcome** means you drop to 0 Health and fall unconscious for the agent's duration (this will kill a mundane npc).

POISONS

As you may have noticed in Chapter 3, poison is just another type of damage in P&P. An attack that inflicts poison damage can be avoided or resisted like any other. However, characters will sometimes be exposed to a poison by inhaling it, ingesting it, or coming in direct contact with it. When that happens, Toughness is the only effective defense against the poison. Use the following table as a guide when determining how much damage a character should suffer when exposed to common poisons.

POISON	DAMAGE
Arsenic, Hemlock, Venom (weak)	4d
Belladonna, Curare, Venom (typical)	6d
Mustard Gas, Strychnine, Venom (strong)	8d
Blowfish Toxin	10d
Cyanide	12d
Nerve Gas	14d

FALLS

Falls are considered attacks that can only be resisted with passive defenses (unless a player comes up with a really creative way of using one of his active defenses). The number of dice rolled to determine falling damage depends on the distance fallen, as shown below. Roll +2d if landing on an especially deadly surface like spikes or sharp rocks, or -2d if landing on a forgiving surface like cushions, garbage, or water. A character landing on a soft surface can use his Athletics trait as his defense against falling damage.

DISTANCE FALLEN	DAMAGE
10 feet	2d
25 feet	4d
50 feet	6d
100 feet	8d
250 feet	10d
Any farther	12d

Why isn't falling deadly? Technically, it is. When you consider that the average person has a 2d Toughness and maybe 3 Health, falling is actually pretty scary. But when you bring heroes with an average of 12 Health into the mix, falling does become less worrisome. That's intentional. We wanted falling to be in line with the rest of the game, meaning not nearly as deadly as it is in real life. We also wanted to encourage the kind of high-flying acrobatics you see in comic books. Accordingly, the rules assume that your average hero will probably survive most falls thanks to a combination of skill, resilience, and dumb luck.

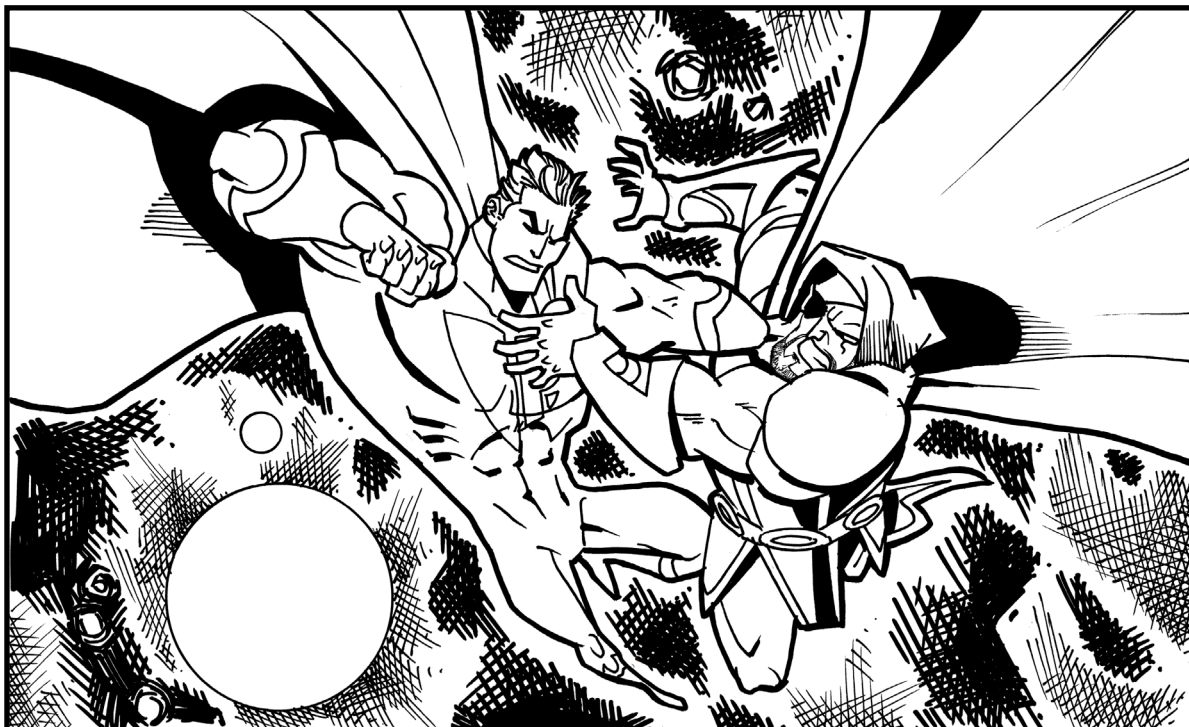
HEAT, ELECTRICITY, AND RADIATION

Like falls, exposure to energy is considered an attack that can only be resisted with passive defenses (unless a player comes up with a really creative way of using one of his active defenses). Use the following table as a guide when determining how much damage a character should suffer when exposed to intense heat, electricity, or radiation. This number is sometimes referred to as the **Intensity** of the energy source.

HEAT	ELECTRICITY	RADIATION	DAMAGE
Campfire	Wall Socket	Minor Accident	2d
Building Fire	Car Battery	Major Accident	4d
Chemical Fire	Power Line	Catastrophe	6d
Incinerator	Power Main	Ancient Blast Site	8d
Lava	Generator	Old Blast Site	10d
Blast Furnace	Lightning	Recent Blast Site	12d

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS

Not breathing is probably the most common problem faced by heroes in hostile environments. A hero operating underwater, in outer space, or anywhere else that lacks a breathable atmosphere will have to hold his breath unless he has some ability that says otherwise. A hero can hold his breath for a number of minutes equal to his Toughness. After that, he'll start suffering 1 point of damage per page until he can breathe again. As



CHAPTER 6

usual, a hero will be defeated but not killed if he reaches 0 Health. Exactly how a hero who runs out of Health manages to survive asphyxiation is up to you. Unless he doesn't.

Hostile environments also include those that subject a hero to hazards like pressure extremes, radiation, and poisons. Pressure extremes are a common problem; very deep water has extremely high pressure, while the vacuum of space has none. Dangerous levels of radiation can be found in and around nuclear power plants and blast sites, as well as in outer space. And poison atmospheres choked with corrosive or toxic gases exist on Earth and on any number of alien worlds. Whatever the specifics, there are minor hazards and major hazards. A hero can withstand exposure to a **minor hazard** for a number of minutes equal to his Toughness. After that, he'll start suffering 1 point of damage per minute of exposure. A hero can withstand exposure to a **major hazard** for a number of pages equal to his Toughness. After that, he'll start suffering 1 point of damage per page of exposure. A hero can't suffer more than 1 point of damage per minute or page, as applicable, even if exposed to multiple hazards at the same time (such as in outer space). As above, a hero who runs out of Health is merely defeated. Assuming he survives, you have to describe exactly how that happens.

LEAPING

Distances are intentionally abstract in P&P. Nevertheless, it can sometimes be helpful to have a more concrete idea of how far a character can jump. You can use the table below as a guide when judging leaping distances. Even though characters with a high Might rank can leap as far as those with the Leaping trait, you need Leaping to make this an effective form of long-distance travel.

MIGHT/LEAPING	JUMP UP	JUMP ACROSS
1d	1 foot	5 feet
2d	2 feet	10 feet
3d	4 feet	15 feet
4d	6 feet	20 feet
5d	8 feet	25 feet
6d	1 story	50 feet
7d	2 stories	100 feet
8d	5 stories	250 feet
9d	10 stories	500 feet
10d	25 stories	1,000 feet
11d	50 stories	2,500 feet
12d	100 stories	1 mile
13d	250 stories	2 miles
14d	1 mile	5 miles
15d	2 miles	10 miles
16d	5 miles	25 miles
17d	10 miles	50 miles
18d	25 miles	100 miles

**One story of a building equals approximately 10 to 12 feet.*

LIFTING

Although a hero's maximum lift is normally a static value, lifting something especially heavy can be difficult when you can't concentrate. When a hero wants to lift a heavy object in combat or any other stressful situation, he may have to make a successful Might roll. The Difficulty applied to this roll depends on how much the object weighs, as shown below.

WEIGHT	EXAMPLES	DIFFICULTY
Under 100 pounds	Scooter, Wolf	1
100 to 500 pounds	Motorcycle, Lion	2
500 to 2,000 pounds	Car, Bear	3
1 to 5 tons	Truck, Hippo	4
5 to 25 tons	Lear Jet, Elephant	5
25 to 100 tons	Commercial Jet, Blue Whale	6
100 to 500 tons	Jumbo Jet	7
500 tons to 2 kilotons	Small Freighter	8
2 to 10 kilotons	Frigate	9
10 to 50 kilotons	Battleship, Small Building	10
50 to 250 kilotons	Aircraft Carrier, Tall Building	11
250 kilotons to 1 megaton	Skyscraper	12

SMASHING

What would this game be without rules for smashing things? Depressing, that's what. Every object has a **Hardness** that determines its durability, as shown below. When a hero wants to bend, break, smash through, or otherwise damage an object, he should make a trait roll using one of his traits that inflicts physical damage (often Might) and apply a Difficulty equal to the object's Hardness. You need to roll at least 1 net success to break or punch through a thin object, 2 net successes to break or punch through a normal object, and 3 or more net successes to break or punch through a thick or reinforced object, and you have to do this all at once—you can't combine successes generated over multiple attempts.

MATERIAL	HARDNESS
Cloth, Drywall, Glass, Ice, Rope	1
Plastic, Rubber, Wood	2
Brick, Bulletproof Glass, Machinery	3
Asphalt, Concrete, Iron, Stone	4
Steel	5
Diamond, Titanium	6
Ozymandium Alloy*	7
Ozymandium*	∞

**Most comic book universes have at least one substance that's all-but-invulnerable to physical harm. Ours is called Ozymandium—Metal of Metals!—and it's impervious only in its pure form.*



The FRANCISE 2012!

SEVEN: FRIENDS & FOES

USING THIS CHAPTER

This chapter includes entries for various stock characters the heroes might encounter. You can use these entries as-is or modify them to suit your needs. You can also “reskin” them, using the stats as presented but calling them something else. For example, if the heroes wind up in a fantasy world and get attacked by an ogre, you can use the Caveman stats and call it an ogre. We promise, we won’t tell.

ASSIGNING HEALTH

The only thing we haven’t included in the stat blocks is Health. That’s up to you, depending on how powerful you want the character to be. Unlike heroes, who have to spend hero dice to purchase their abilities, villains and npcs are just assigned whatever abilities the GM wants them to have, including Health. Use the table below as a guide when determining about how much Health to assign a villain or npc.

POWER LEVEL	HEALTH
Mundane	3
Competent Mundane	6
Minor Villain or Ally	9
Standard Villain or Ally	12
Major Villain or Ally	15 to 18
Archvillain	21 or more

EXTRAS

The following section includes some generic extras for your use and amusement. Being stock characters, only their most relevant abilities are listed. Feel free to add anything you think we missed. If you want to use these characters as minions, forget about their stats and just give them a Threat of 2d to 6d, depending on how powerful you want them to be. Remember that, as minions, their abilities and equipment won’t matter.



CHAPTER 7

ATHLETE

Edge 7 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Might 3d, Toughness 3d

Perks: Fame, Wealth

CAVEMAN

Edge 6 Health ?

Traits: Might 4d, Toughness 4d

Flaws: Outsider (primitive), Quirk (not too bright)

Gear: Club (+2d), Heavy Rocks (+1d ranged)

CIVILIAN

Edge 6 Health ?

Traits: One trait at 3d (usually job-related)

COMMANDO

Edge 9 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Perception 3d, Stealth 3d, Survival 3d, Toughness 3d, Vehicles 3d, Willpower 3d

Gear: Assault Rifle (+4d ranged, area), Pistol (+3d ranged), Knife (+3d), Military Armor (+3d)

COP

Edge 7 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Might 3d, Perception 2d (Investigation), Toughness 3d

Perks: Authority (law enforcement)

Gear: Pistol (+3d ranged), Baton (+2d), Handcuffs, Mace Spray

CRIME LORD

Edge 8 Health ?

Traits: Academics 3d, Charm 3d, Command 3d, Might 3d, Perception 3d, Toughness 3d, Willpower 3d

Gear: Pistol (+3d ranged), Cane (+2d)

CULTIST

Edge 7 Health ?

Traits: Academics 3d, Willpower 3d

Gear: Ceremonial Dagger (+3d)

Flaws: Quirk (big time zealot)

DEMON

Edge 7 Health ?

Traits: Armor 6d, Blast (fire) 6d, Might 5d, Strike (edged) 6d, Willpower 4d

HENCHMAN

Edge 9 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Might 3d, Perception 3d, Toughness 3d, Willpower 3d

Gear: Submachine Gun (+3d ranged, area)

LOST WORLD NATIVE

Edge 8 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Perception 3d, Riding 3d, Stealth 3d, Survival 3d, Toughness 3d

Gear: Spear (+3d)

NINJA

Edge 10 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Perception 4d, Stealth 4d, Thievery 4d

Perks: Super Senses (Night Vision), Vanish

Gear: Ninja Outfit, Various Exotic Weapons (+3d/+2d ranged)

ROBOT

Edge 6 Health ?

Traits: Armor 5d, Blast (energy) 6d, Might 5d

Perks: Communicator, Super Senses (Night Vision), Unliving (Automaton)

Flaws: Compulsion (must follow programming), Emotionless, Repair

SKELETON

Edge 6 Health ?

Perks: Unliving (Automaton)

Flaws: Frightening, Mute, Quirk (mindless)

Gear: Sword (+3d), Chainmail and Shield (+3d)

SOLDIER

Edge 7 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Survival 3d, Vehicles 3d

Gear: Assault Rifle (+4d ranged, area), Pistol (+3d ranged), Military Armor (+3d)

SPY

Edge 8 Health ?

Traits: Academics 3d (Languages), Athletics 3d, Charm 3d, Perception 3d, Professional (espionage) 3d, Stealth 3d, Thievery 3d, Vehicles 3d

Perk: Authority (license to kill)

Gear: Pistol (+3d ranged), Various Spy Gadgets

THUG

Edge 6

Health ?

Traits: Toughness 3d

Gear: Pistol (+3d ranged), Various Blunt Weapons (+2d)

VAMPIRE

Edge 11

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 4d, Perception 4d, Strike (edged) 5d, Transform Other (into vampire) 6d (Requirement: drain target of blood using Strike), Toughness 4d, Willpower 3d

Perks: Immunity (all types of damage except as noted below), Super Senses (Night Vision, Tracking Scent)

Flaws: Compulsion and Requirement (blood), Reaction to Holy Water (inflicts 1 point of damage), Reaction to Sunlight (inflicts 1 point of damage per page), Reaction (wood is fatal if rammed through heart, a +2 Difficulty attack), Vulnerability (fire and silver weapons can inflict normal damage and even kill a vampire)

WEREWOLF

Edge 11

Health ?

Traits: Armor 9d (Limited: not against fire or silver weapons), Athletics 5d, Might 5d, Perception 4d (Acute Smell +4d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 6d, Toughness 4d

Perks: Regeneration (per minute), Super Senses (Tracking Scent), Unkillable (except by fire or silver weapons)

Flaws: Beast, Frightening, Frenzy

ZOMBIE

Edge 5

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 1d (weak trait), Might 3d, Strike (edged) 4d, Toughness 6d

Perks: Unliving (Automaton)

Flaws: Frightening, Quirk (mindless), Slow

ZOMBIE, TURBO-CHARGED

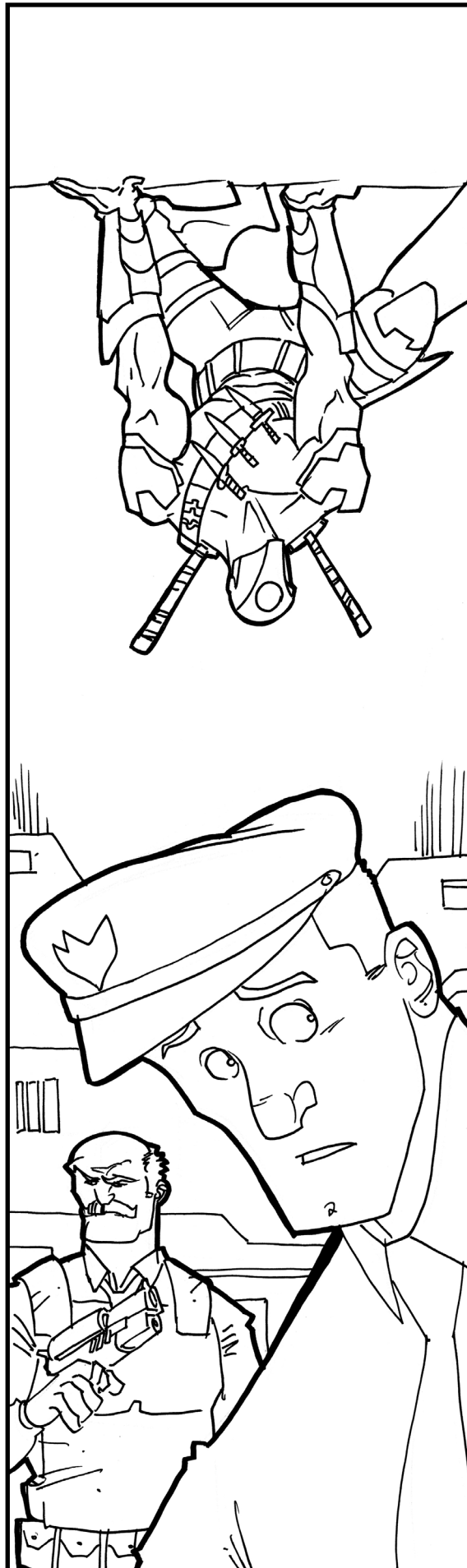
Edge 7

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Might 3d, Strike (edged) 4d, Toughness 6d

Perks: Unliving (Automaton)

Flaws: Frightening, Quirk (mindless)



ANIMALS

The following section provides stats for a variety of common and not-so-common animals. You can easily tweak and reskin these entries to turn them into alien creatures or mythical monsters. Although not listed below, most animals can be assumed to have the *Beast*, *Disabled* (can't grasp or manipulate objects effectively), *Restriction* (no rights), and *Unusual Shape* (animal) flaws. Apes and monkeys don't have the *Disabled* flaw because they can grasp and manipulate objects well enough.

As with all npcs, animals are assigned as much Health as you want them to have, depending on how tough you want them to be. However, comic book animals are usually about as tough as you'd expect: generally speaking, ferrets tend to be frail and elephants tend to be hardy. If you want to keep with this convention, you can use the following rule of thumb: most animals should have 1 to 2 Health per Toughness rank, depending on how tough they're supposed to be. For example, wolves have a 3d Toughness, so a wolf will usually have 3 to 6 Health. Animals with a *od* Toughness always have 1 Health.

BAT

Edge 10

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 6d, Flight 5d (Wings), Might *od*, Stealth 5d, Toughness *od*

Perks: Super Senses (Radar, Ultra Hearing), Wall-Crawling

BRONTOSAURUS

Edge 8

Health ?

Traits: Might 11d, Perception 4d, Strike (blunt) 11d (Area), Toughness 11d

BUFFALO/BULL

Edge 8

Health ?

Traits: Might 6d, Perception 4d (Acute Smell +4d), Running 5d, Strike 7d, Toughness 5d

CAMEL

Edge 10

Health ?

Traits: Might 4d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +6d), Running 4d, Toughness 4d

Perks: Life Support (Limited: only allows for long periods without drinking water)

CHEETAH

Edge 16

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 5d, Might 3d, Perception 6d, Running 6d, Stealth 4d, Strike (edged) 4d, Toughness 3d

Perks: Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Night Vision, Ultra Hearing)

CROCODILE

Edge 9

Health ?

Traits: Might 5d, Running 5d, Strike (edged) 7d, Swimming 3d (Limited: only holds breath), Toughness 6d

Perks: Blending (Limited: only in water), Lightning Reflexes

DOLPHIN

Edge 10

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 4d, Perception 4d, Swimming 5d (Limited: only holds breath), Toughness 4d

EAGLE/HAWK

Edge 15

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 6d, Flight 6d (Wings), Might *od*, Perception 4d, Stealth 4d, Strike (edged) 1d, Toughness *od*

Perks: Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Telescopic Vision)

ELEPHANT

Edge 10

Health ?

Traits: Might 9d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +4d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 10d, Toughness 10d

Perks: Super Senses (Tracking Scent, Ultra Hearing)

GIRAFFE

Edge 8

Health ?

Traits: Might 5d, Perception 4d (Acute Hearing +4d), Running 5d, Toughness 4d

Perks: Super Senses (Telescopic Vision; Ultra Hearing)

GORILLA

Edge 10 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 5d, Perception 4d, Toughness 5d

GRIZZLY BEAR

Edge 10 Health ?

Traits: Might 5d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +6d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 6d, Toughness 6d

Perks: Super Senses (Tracking Scent)

Special: Lower Might, Strike, and Toughness by -1d for Black and Brown Bears. Raise Might, Strike, and Toughness by +1d for Kodiak, Polar, and Prehistoric Bears.

HIPPOPOTAMUS

Edge 6 Health ?

Traits: Might 7d, Running 5d, Strike (blunt) 8d, Swimming 3d (Limited: only holds breath), Toughness 7d

HORSE

Edge 11 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Might 4d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +6d), Running 5d, Toughness 4d

HYENA

Edge 14 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 3d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +2d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 5d, Toughness 4d

Perks: Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Night Vision, Tracking Scent, Ultra Hearing)

KILLER WHALE

Edge 10 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 8d, Perception 4d, Swimming 5d (Limited: only holds breath), Toughness 8d

LEOPARD/PANTHER

Edge 16 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 5d, Blending, Might 3d, Perception 6d, Running 5d, Stealth 4d, Strike (edged) 4d, Toughness 3d

Perks: Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Night Vision, Ultra Hearing)

LION/TIGER

Edge 15 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 5d, Perception 6d, Running 5d, Stealth 4d, Strike (edged) 6d, Toughness 5d

Perks: Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Night Vision, Ultra Hearing)

MONGOOSE

Edge 17 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 6d, Might 0d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +6d), Stealth 6d, Strike 1d, Toughness 0d

Perks: Immunity (cobra venom), Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Tracking Scent)

MONKEY

Edge 12 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 6d, Might 0d, Perception 4d, Stealth 6d, Toughness 0d

Perks: Extra Limbs (tail)

PLESIOSAUR

Edge 8 Health ?

Traits: Might 6d, Perception 4d, Strike (edged) 7d, Swimming 4d (Limited: only holds breath), Toughness 6d

Perks: Super Senses (Radar)

PTERODACTYL

Edge 10 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Flight 6d (Wings), Might 3d, Perception 4d, Strike (edged) 4d, Toughness 3d

Perks: Super Senses (Telescopic Vision)

RAPTOR DINOSAURS

Edge 15 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 5d, Perception 6d, Running 5d, Strike (edged) 7d, Toughness 6d

Perks: Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Tracking Scent)

Special: Lower Might, Strike, and Toughness by -2d for a Deinonychus or -4d for a Velociraptor (the real ones, not the ones from the movie).

RHINOCEROS

Edge 6 Health ?

Traits: Might 7d, Running 5d, Strike (edged) 8d, Toughness 7d

SCORPION/SPIDER

Edge 10 Health ?

Traits: Athletics 6d, Might 0d, Stealth 6d, Strike (poison) 6d, Toughness 0d

Perks: Wall-Crawling

SHARK

Edge 10

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 5d, Perception 4d (Acute Smell +6d), Stealth 4d, Strike (edged) 7d, Swimming 5d, Toughness 5d

Perks: Super Senses (Tracking Scent)

Special: Raise Might, Strike, and Toughness by +1d for big sharks or +2d for Great Whites.

SNAKE, CONSTRUCTOR

Edge 10

Health ?

Traits: Might 6d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +4d), Stealth 4d, Toughness 6d

Perks: Radar (Limited: to things on the ground)

SNAKE, VENOMOUS

Edge 15

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 10d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +4d), Stealth 6d, Strike (poison) 8d, Toughness 10d

Perks: Lightning Reflexes, Radar (Limited: to things on the ground)

STEGOSAURUS

Edge 8

Health ?

Traits: Might 8d, Perception 4d (Acute Smell +4d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 9d, Toughness 8d

TRICERATOPS

Edge 8

Health ?

Traits: Might 8d, Perception 4d (Acute Smell +4d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 10d, Toughness 9d

TYRANNOSAURUS REX

Edge 8

Health ?

Traits: Might 8d, Perception 4d (Acute Smell +2d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 10d, Toughness 8d

Perks: Super Senses (Tracking Scent)

Special: Lower Might, Strike, and Toughness by -1d for an Allosaurus. Raise Might, Strike, and Toughness by +1d for a Spinosaurus.

WHALE

Edge 5

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 1d, Might 12d, Swimming 4d (Limited: only holds breath), Toughness 12d

WOLF

Edge 15

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 3d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +6d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 4d, Toughness 3d

Perks: Immunity (fatigue) (Limited: eventually tires), Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Night Vision, Tracking Scent, Ultra Hearing)

Special: Lower Might, Strike, and Toughness by -1d for most large dogs. Raise Might, Strike, and Toughness by +1d for Dire Wolves.

WOLVERINE

Edge 13

Health ?

Traits: Might 2d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +6d), Running 5d, Strike (edged) 5d, Toughness 4d

Perks: Immunity (venom) (Limited: animal venom will incapacitate, but probably won't kill), Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Tracking Scent)

Special: Lower Might, Strike, and Toughness by -1d for Badgers.

ZEBRA

Edge 11

Health ?

Traits: Athletics 3d, Might 3d, Perception 6d (Acute Smell +6d), Running 5d, Toughness 3d



ARCHETYPES

The following section includes archetypal comic book heroes and villains. As always, you can use these characters as they are or alter them to suit your needs. Unlike the other characters in this chapter, each of these archetypes was created using 36 hero dice. That means you can use them as standard power level heroes in a pinch. If you want a hero that's more or less powerful, just add or subtract hero dice to taste.

ACROBAT

Edge 19 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 10d, Might 8d, Perception 4d, Professional (student) 3d, Stealth 5d, Swing Line 5d, Toughness 5d, Willpower 5d

Perks: Enhanced Defense (Athletics), Super Senses (Night Vision), Wall-Crawling

ARMOR

Edge 8 Health 12

Traits: Armor 10d (Item), Blast (energy) 9d (Item), Flight 8d (Item), Might 7d (Item), Science 5d, Technology 8d, Willpower 4d

Perks: Communicator, Super Senses (Night Vision, Telescopic Vision)

COPYCAT

Edge 11 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 3d, Perception 4d, Stealth 4d, Toughness 4d, Willpower 4d

Perks: Morph (Doppelganger), Power Mimicry or Power Theft (all abilities)

DETECTIVE

Edge 15 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 5d, Might 4d, Omni Power (Gadgets) 4d (Item), Perception 5d (Investigation +4d), Science 5d, Stealth 5d, Strike (blunt) 6d (unarmed combat), Swing Line 5d (Item), Thievery 5d, Toughness 5d, Willpower 5d

Perks: Special Vehicle

DUPLICATOR

Edge 12 Health 12

Traits: Academics 4d, Athletics 4d, Command 4d, Medical 4d, Might 4d, Perception 4d, Stealth 4d, Toughness 4d, Willpower 4d

Perks: Duplication (Legion)

ELEMENTAL

Edge 9 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 4d, Blast (energy "X") 10d, Charm 4d, Energy Field (energy "X") 8d, Flight 8d, Professional (model) 3d, Willpower 3d

Perks: Fame, Wealth

ENERGY VAMPIRE

Edge 15 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 5d, Life Drain 10d, Might 6d, Perception 6d, Stealth 4d, Toughness 6d, Willpower 4d

Perks: Super Senses (Night Vision)

FERAL

Edge 15 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 6d, Might 4d, Perception 4d (Acute Smell +8d), Stealth 6d, Strike (edged) 9d, Survival 4d, Toughness 6d, Willpower 5d

Perks: Animal Empathy, Super Senses (Night Vision, Tracking Scent)

GADGETEER

Edge 8 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 4d, Omni Power (Gadgets) 8d (Item), Omni Power (Projectiles) 8d (Item), Science 6d, Technology 10d

MAGICIAN

Edge 16 Health 12

Traits: Academics 4d, Armor 8d, Blast (magic) 8d, Flight 7d, Illusions 9d, Perception 4d, Willpower 10d

MARKSMAN

Edge 14 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 7d, Blast (varies) 9d (Marksmanship: guns), Omni Power (Projectiles) 9d (Item), Perception 5d, Professional (soldier) 4d, Stealth 5d, Technology 5d

Perks: Super Senses (Night Vision)

MARTIAL ARTIST

Edge 18 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 8d, Might 3d, Perception 4d, Stealth 5d, Strike (blunt) 10d (unarmed combat), Toughness 3d, Willpower 6d

Perks: Blind Fighting, Enhanced Defense (Strike), Weakness Detection

CHAPTER 7

MASTERMIND

Edge 12

Health 12

Traits: Academics 8d (Languages: knows 8 extra languages), Charm 4d, Command 6d, Perception 4d (Investigation +4d), Professional (tactics) 6d, Science 8d, Willpower 6d

Perks: Leadership (x4)

PLANT

Edge 6

Health 12

Traits: Might 5d, Plasticity 8d, Telekinesis 9d (Requirement: moves things with plants, so must have plants nearby), Toughness 5d

Perks: Life Support (total), Unliving (plant)

POWERHOUSE

Edge 10

Health 12

Traits: Armor 10d, Athletics 4d, Charm 4d, Flight 8d, Might 10d, Toughness 10d, Willpower 4d

ROBOT

Edge 6

Health 12

Traits: Armor 8d, Blast (heat) 8d, Might 6d

Perks: Photographic Memory (Recording), Super Senses (Circular Vision, Night Vision), Unliving (Automaton)

SEARO

Edge 12

Health 12

Traits: Athletics 4d, Charm 4d, Might 10d, Mind Control 8d (Animal Control: aquatic animals), Perception 4d, Professional (activist) 4d, Swimming 6d, Toughness 10d, Willpower 4d

Perks: Animal Empathy (Limited: aquatic animals), Super Senses (Night Vision)

SHAPESHIFTER

Edge 8

Health 12

Traits: Omni Power (Shapeshifting) 10d, Perception 4d, Survival 4d

Perks: Animals Forms (Xenomorph), Morph

SPEEDSTER

Edge 30

Health 12

Traits: Athletics 8d, Charm 4d, Perception 5d, Super Speed 10d, Toughness 4d, Willpower 3d

Perks: Quick Change, Enhanced Defense (Super Speed), Super Senses (Circular Vision)

SUPER NINJA

Edge 19

Health 12

Traits: Athletics 8d (Martial Arts), Leaping 6d, Perception 4d, Stealth 8d, Strike (varies) 8d (Fighting), Willpower 4d

Perks: Blind Fighting, Enhanced Defense (Athletics), Lightning Reflexes, Super Senses (Night Vision), Vanish, Wall-Crawling

TELEKINETIC

Edge 12

Health 12

Traits: Flight 8d, Force Field 10d, Telekinesis 10d, Willpower 8d

TELEPATH

Edge 13

Health 12

Traits: Academics 4d, Command 4d, Mind Control 9d, Telepathy 10d (Alter Memory, Cloak Mind, Dream Travel, Sense Minds), Willpower 9d

WARRIOR

Edge 14

Health 12

Traits: Armor 9d (Item), Athletics 6d, Command 4d, Might 6d, Perception 4d, Stealth 4d, Strike (varies) 10d (Blocking, Fighting), Toughness 6d, Willpower 4d

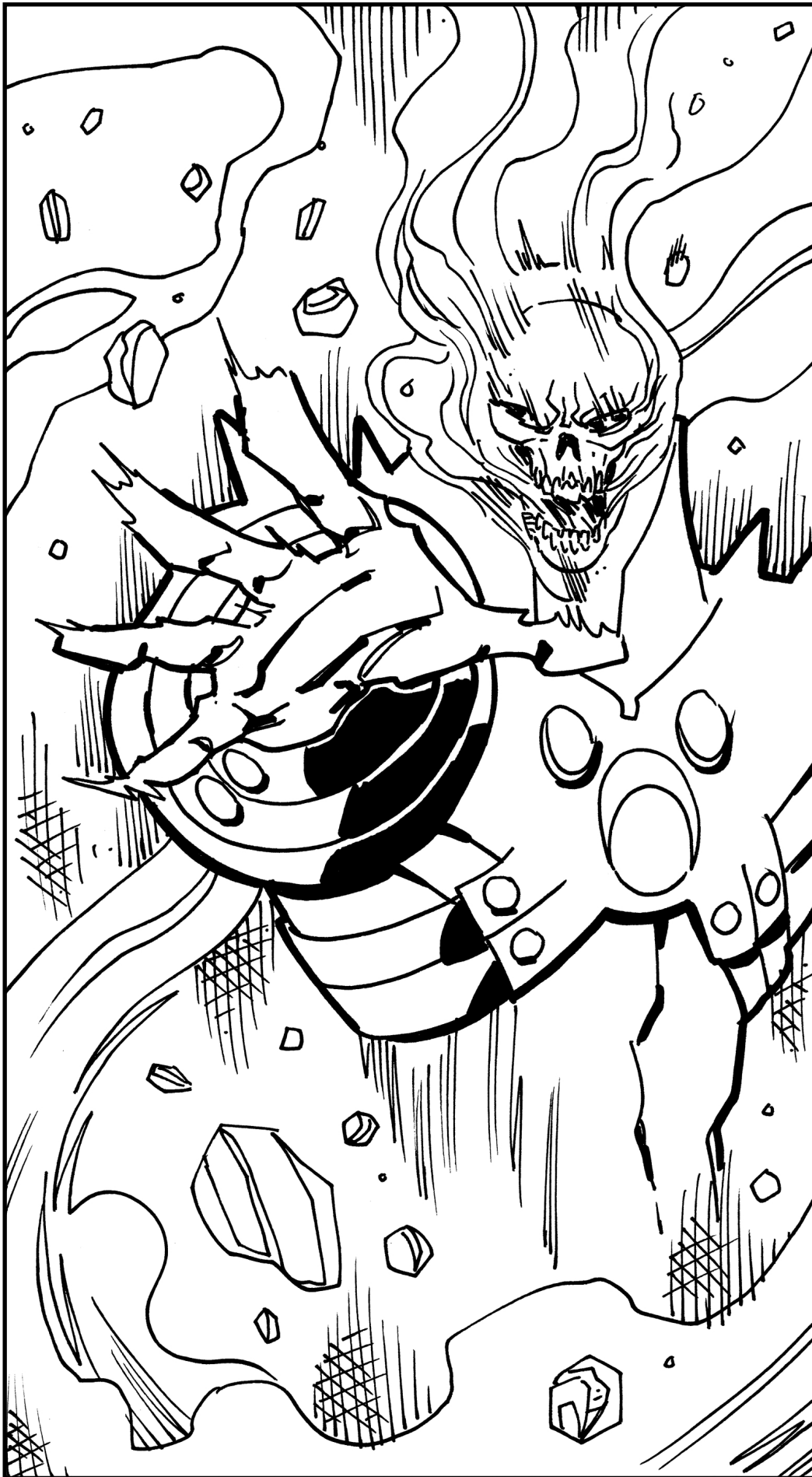
Perks: Blind Fighting

WEATHER CONTROLLER

Edge 10

Health 12

Traits: Athletics 4d, Blast (lightning) 10d (Area), Flight 8d, Omni Power (Control Weather) 10d, Willpower 4d





EIGHT: PLAYING THE GAME

ROLLING DICE AND MOVING MICE

Armed with some dice and some rules, you now have everything you need to play the game. The thing about roleplaying, however, is that there's a whole lot more to the game than what you find in any book. Like chess or poker, knowing the rules is only the first step when it comes to playing a roleplaying game. Unlike those games, however, you can have a lot of fun learning to roleplay as you go along, and there's very little chance of losing your house to a straight flush in the process.

PLAYER TIPS

Most of the information in this chapter is intended for the GM. However, this section includes some tips that every good player should keep in mind and every good GM should expect.

USE YOUR IMAGINATION

Roleplaying is an exercise in make-believe. If you use your imagination, it can take you anywhere you want to go and let you do anything you want to do. If you don't, it will bore you to tears. Imagination is crucial when roleplaying. Unlike video games, which display imaginary worlds, roleplaying games *suggest* them. Just like when reading a book, many of the details are left up to you. Always be using your imagination to picture what's happening in the game while roleplaying. Otherwise, the experience becomes nothing more than a few hours spent rolling dice and doing math.

ROLEPLAY

It's called a *roleplaying* game for a reason. The whole point of the game is to pretend to be someone else. So go for it. Get into your hero's head and try to act, think, and even talk like he does. The beauty of roleplaying is that it lets you step into someone else's shoes, someone who may be very different from you. Take the opportunity and play that other person to the hilt, even if this leads you to do or say things you never would. That's what roleplaying is all about.

GO WITH THE STORY

Creating a memorable roleplaying experience takes cooperation between the GM and the players. In most games, the GM is going to do his best to come up with interesting stories for the heroes. When he throws plot hooks your way, take the bait and help him move the narrative along. If you know the GM wants your hero to do something or go somewhere, try to go with the narrative rather than resisting it. Of course, your hero shouldn't do anything he wouldn't normally do. But he should be inclined to do the kinds of things you'd expect to see in a comic book.

PAY ATTENTION

Follow along with what happens during the game, even when your hero isn't involved in the action. Nothing makes a GM feel less appreciated than a player who spends his time flipping through the book, watching TV, or playing around on his laptop or phone.

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Additionally, a player who tunes out of the game will often miss important clues and information. The GM has a tough job, and the players should let him know they appreciate his efforts by paying attention. If you aren't interested in the game, don't play. If you need a breather, call for a short break. But if you're there to play, then pay attention.

PARTICIPATE, DON'T DOMINATE

The GM can't be expected to do everything. It's up to you to participate. Don't sit there silently waiting for someone to tell you what to do. Speak up and interact with the GM and the other players. Play your hero, suggest solutions to the problems the GM throws at you, and get into the game. If you're new to the game, don't worry about the rules; the GM and the other players will help you along. Be an active participant, not a passive observer. However, be careful not to go too far in the other direction and hog the spotlight or the GM's attention. Let the other players, especially new players, play their heroes, come up with ideas, and participate in the game as well.

DON'T GET FRUSTRATED

The GM is supposed to challenge you. When things get tough, don't get so frustrated that you just toss your hands in the air and concede defeat. Don't get mad at the GM, even if things look bleak or you find yourself out of ideas. The GM isn't trying to make your life miserable (well, probably not). He's just trying to create an exciting story, and that means it can't be a cakewalk. Sometimes things are going to look very bad for the heroes. When that happens, don't fight it. Enjoy the tension and run with it. Don't lose sight of the fact that it's just a game, don't take things personally, and don't forget that the actual goal of the game is to have a good time with your friends. Keep that in mind and you'll be fine.

DON'T CHEAT

It's amazing how many people cheat while roleplaying. It's especially mind-boggling when you consider the fact that there's nothing at stake and no way to "win" the game. It's natural not to want to see your hero fall on his face, be made the fool, or get killed. But don't cheat. First, it's stupid. Honestly, it just is. Besides that, the longer you play roleplaying games, the more you come to realize that failure is often more interesting than success. Some of your best gaming stories are going to come from when your hero really blows it. Trust us: Roll the dice and let them fall where they may. You'll have a lot more fun in the long run.

DON'T ARGUE

Right behind cheating, arguing with the GM is probably one of the biggest signs of someone who desperately needs to get a life. As the game referee, the GM is constantly deciding how to apply the rules, what is and isn't possible within the game, and so on. If you think the GM has made a mistake in how he's applying the rules, or if you disagree with one of his judgment calls, then tell him and explain why. But once you've shared your opinion and he's made a final decision, shut up and deal with it. If you disagree, talk to him during the next break or after the game session is over. Never bring the game to a grinding halt by debating any point at the table. Even if you're right, it isn't worth the delay.

HAVE PITY

The GM has a hard job. He has to come up with stories for the heroes to experience, he has to create and run all of the npcs, and he has to oversee the application of the rules. Try to help the poor guy out whenever you can. If the GM is struggling to keep everyone's attention focused on the game, help him get the other players on track. If you see him flipping through the rules, ask him about it. Maybe you know where to find what he needs. If he seems to be unsure about how to handle a particular situation, throw out some suggestions. In short, have pity on the GM and help him out whenever you can.

CREATING A SERIES

There's no one right way to create a series. Everyone's creative process is different, and all that matters is the end result. With that in mind, the following section is just intended to help you organize your thoughts about the kind of series you want to play. Every great series has six elements: setting, premise, heroes, metaplot, mood, and goals. Each of these elements is discussed below.

SETTING

The setting describes the world or universe where the game takes place. We suggest picking a setting that both you and your players find interesting. If you're the only one of your friends who grooves on a particular setting, don't set your game there. Common settings include the following:

Alternate History: The series will take place in a world like ours might have been had history been different, probably the most common example being if the Axis powers had won World War II.

Contemporary: Probably the easiest and most common setting for traditional comic book heroes. The series takes place in our modern world.

Cyberpunk: The series is set in a dystopian near-future ruled by corporations and the wealthy elite and characterized by the ubiquity of cybernetics (that often have dehumanizing effects).

Cyberpunk Fantasy: Take a cyberpunk setting. Add magic and monsters to taste.

Dieselpunk: The series is set in an often dystopian pulp era between the World Wars and characterized by retro-futuristic diesel-powered technology and a pervasive art deco style.

Eastern Fantasy: The series is set in a medieval fantasy world based on Eastern mythology.

High Fantasy: The series is set in a medieval fantasy world based on Western mythology.

Historic: The series is set in our world during some period in history. Popular historic settings for comic book heroes include the American Old West, Europe and the Americas during the Age of Sail, Great Britain and her colonies during the Victorian Era, and World War II.

Post-Apocalyptic: The series is set on our world or another after a devastating catastrophe.

Pulp: The series takes place in that two-fisted time between the 1920s and the 1930s.

Retro-Future: The series is set in the somewhat whimsical future envisioned in much early sci-fi.

Sci-Fi: The series is set either in Earth's far future or on a futuristic world that isn't our own.

Steampunk: The series is set in an often dystopian Victorian Era ruled by the wealthy elite and characterized by magic and fantastical steam-powered technology.

Sword-and-Planet: The series is set on a primitive and barbaric world, often Mars or Venus, and characterized by quaint retro sci-fi technology envisioned by early twentieth-century authors.

Sword-and-Sorcery: The series is set in an often grim and barbaric fantasy world.

Urban Fantasy: The series is set in the modern day, but magic and monsters are real.

World-Hopping: The heroes travel to different worlds and/or times over the course of the series.

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WORLD BUILDING

If your game is going to take place on another world, you'll need to create it. Exactly how much detail you want to include is up to you, but use the following as a quick-and-dirty guide when world-building. Don't drive yourself crazy: create only what you need and make up the rest as you go.

Geography: What does the world look like? If you're so inclined, draw a map.

Politics: What countries (planets, dimensions, etc.) are there, how do their governments work, and how do they get along with each other. Are they allies, at war, or somewhere in between?

Inhabitants: What about the people that inhabit them? How do they look, how do they think, and what language or languages do they speak? If they aren't human, then what are they?

Society: Consider each society's art, food, clothing, music, values, and customs. Also consider what part political, religious, and social institutions play in the daily lives of its members.

Technology: What technology exists in the game world? Are there major differences between countries, planets, etc.? What about fantastical technologies like steampunk clockwork or machines fueled by magic?

PREMISE

The premise describes what the heroes are doing running around the game world. Some of the more common premises for series are described below.

Adventuring: The heroes are adventurers, traveling wherever their fortunes may lead them.

Conspiracy: The heroes are going to expose, get enmeshed in, or be trampled by The Conspiracy.

Detectives: The heroes are some type of private investigators or heroes for hire.

Gothic: The heroes are monsters like vampires or werewolves making their way in the world.

Law Enforcement: The heroes are members of some sort of law enforcement agency.

Mercenaries: The heroes are professional soldiers of fortune.

Military/Paramilitary: The heroes are members of a military or paramilitary organization.

Nobility: The heroes are carrying out their responsibilities as nobles in the game world.

Oppressed: Members of an oppressed group, the heroes are simply trying to survive.

Quest: The heroes are on a quest, each story bringing them one step closer to their ultimate goal.

Rebels: The heroes are members of a rebellion attempting to overthrow an unjust government.

Secret War: The heroes are involved in a secret war, often against alien or otherworldly invaders.

Spies: The heroes, who look great in tuxedos and evening gowns, are super spies.

Supers: The heroes have banded together to protect the innocent and combat the forces of evil.

Thieves: The heroes steal from rich oppressors and give to the downtrodden masses.

War: The heroes are involved in a major war between worlds, nations, or whatever is appropriate.

Wrongfully Accused: The heroes must evade capture long enough to prove their innocence.

HEROES

No, this isn't where you create the heroes. You might create heroes for a one-shot game, or maybe for a game you plan to run at a convention. Otherwise, it's usually best to let the players create their own heroes. You, however, have to decide what kind of heroes will be suitable for your game.

The first thing you need to do is select a power level. Will the heroes be street-level prowlers, paragons with godlike abilities, or something in between? This will depend on what the heroes will be doing and what kind of adversaries they'll be facing in your game. As discussed in Chapter 3, this also determines how many hero dice the players will have to create their heroes and limits their starting trait ranks.

Keep an eye on abilities that work in tandem. Even when a hero's trait ranks fall within the limits, he might have abilities with cumulative effects that push him over the edge. For example, a hero with a 10d Might and a 3d Strike will effectively have an 11d attack because Strike lets you substitute Might +1d for your Strike rank. As the GM, feel free to restrict any combination of traits and perks that pushes a hero's effective ranks past the limits set by the game's power level.

You also need to determine what kinds of heroes fit in your series. You may not want an alien hero in your American Old West game or a cowboy hero in your sci-fi game. Similarly, you may not want an especially goofy hero in a moody game or a dangerously unbalanced hero in a lighthearted game. Or maybe you do. Make sure the players know what does and doesn't work, and always leave them with plenty of options.



METAPLOT

The next thing you need to decide is whether your game will have a metaplot, meaning an overarching storyline that will unfold over the course of the series. If so, you should give some thought to how structured you want that metaplot to be. As with everything else, the choice is up to you. In terms of metaplot, there are three basic types of series: structured, unstructured, and hybrid.

STRUCTURED SERIES

Structured series have a tight plotline that unfolds over the course of the series. Most games will involve the larger storyline, advancing it towards its inevitable climax and resolution. The series may include occasional interludes that aren't related to the metaplot, but these will be few and far between.

The advantage of a structured series is the ability to tell an epic story. By slowly moving the heroes from one metaplot point to the next, the GM can weave a compelling story with a very satisfying conclusion. The disadvantage of a structured series is that players can feel like they're being railroaded, forced to follow a specific course of action and prohibited from really doing what they want. And in fact, a certain amount of railroading is necessary if you want to run a truly structured series.

UNSTRUCTURED SERIES

Unstructured series, on the other hand, don't have a metaplot. In an unstructured series, the game moves from one story to the next and ends when everyone tires of it. The stories

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in an unstructured series are self-contained, having little connection to those that come before and those that follow. The only common threads in these stories are the heroes themselves and maybe some recurring villains and npcs.

The advantage of an unstructured series is that the heroes are free to do anything they want without fear of derailing the game. Because each story is self-contained, the worst thing the heroes can do is fail to accomplish their goals. That can be frustrating, but it isn't game-breaking. The disadvantage of an unstructured series is that the game can feel aimless. Without a larger story, unstructured games run the risk of feeling like a mindless exercise in beating up one villain after another.

SANDBOX SERIES

There's a special type of unstructured series worth mentioning separately: the sandbox series. In a sandbox series, not only is there no metaplot, but there are also almost no preset stories. Instead, the players are completely free to do whatever they want. Through the actions of their heroes, the players are the ones who decide what kind of stories they want to play and what kind of villains they want to tackle. The GM doesn't so much create stories as complicate those created by the players. Sandbox series are the ultimate type of unstructured series and give the players the most freedom. However, without a clear trail of plotcrumbs to follow, the players have to be very proactive for a sandbox series to work. Additionally, the freedom of a sandbox series means the GM has to have a ton of material prepared ahead of time, and has to be ready to wing it at any moment if (when) the heroes do something completely unexpected.

HYBRID SERIES

Finally, hybrid series fall somewhere between structured and unstructured ones. They tend to have loose metaplots that evolve over the course of the series, whether or not the heroes get directly involved. This lets the GM tell an epic story while also allowing the players to have their freedom. Because some stories will involve the metaplot and others won't, hybrid series are a great choice for groups that like giving both the GM and the players an equal say in what happens in the game. Being a blend of the two, hybrid series share the advantages and disadvantages of both structured and unstructured series.

MOOD

Mood determines the general tone and feel of your series. Is it silly and lighthearted, dark and serious, or somewhere in between? As with setting, this should be discussed with your players. If everyone wants lots of angst, they won't be satisfied with a four-color heroic slugfest. To keep things simple, P&P breaks moods down into five categories: bleak, dark, standard, light, and comic. Each is described below.

Bleak: The series is extremely grim and all but hopeless; nevertheless, the heroes carry on.

Dark: The series is somber or at least serious; victories are hard-fought and by no means assured.

Standard: The series is neither especially dark nor light, but individual stories may vary.

Light: The series is lighthearted; there may be ups and downs, but everything will turn out fine.

Comic: The series is not at all serious and may well be played purely for laughs.

GRITTY COMBAT

The default combat rules for P&P are extremely unrealistic: Characters get defeated, but they don't get killed and they recover from injuries very quickly. Because these rules affect the feel of the game, they might be suited to a darker series. Accordingly, you may wish to use one or more of the following rules to make combat grittier when the basic rules don't fit your needs.

GRITTY FATALITY

Injuries can push a character's Health into the negative. A character will die if his negative Health ever equals his actual Health. For example, a hero with 9 Health will die if his Health ever reaches -9.

GRITTY HEALTH

A character's Health equals his Toughness rank plus 1. For example, a 3d Toughness gives you 4 Health. Be warned: This makes combat incredibly deadly when combined with the Gritty Fatality rule described above. If you're going to use this rule, it should apply to all characters, including animals. In other words, this trumps the rule of thumb found in Chapter 7 for assigning Health to animal npcs.

GRITTY RECOVERY

Heroes are only allowed to make a Toughness roll once per week to recover from their injuries. Serious medical attention and complete bed rest will allow you one additional roll per week. Additionally, you can't spend Resolve to recover from your injuries and rejoin a battle once you've been defeated in combat.

GOALS

The last step in designing a series is to consider its goals. The goals of a series describe what the heroes are supposed to accomplish over the course of the game. They help the GM determine what kind of rewards to give out and tell the players what kind of rewards to expect. Goals also give a series a sense of continuity and evolution that keeps players coming back for more. Whatever they might be, every story should advance the goals of the series. Common goals include the following:

Advancement: The heroes will become more powerful over the course of the series by gaining and spending extra hero dice. This goal is common to almost every series (and almost every roleplaying game).

Development: The heroes will mature or somehow become better people over the course of the series. This goal can cover any number of things and may even vary between heroes.

Metaplot: If the series has a metaplot, then the advancement and eventual resolution of that storyline should obviously be one of the goals of the series.

Success: The heroes will become rich, famous, and/or influential over the course of the series and may even have to learn to deal with the responsibilities that accompany these blessings.

Tragedy: This might not be the system to use for a deep and tragic game, but what the heck: The heroes will slowly fall from grace, possibly becoming villains or even losing their lives by the end of the series.

Not all goals are obvious. In fact, it can sometimes be more meaningful to misdirect your players, letting them think the goal is one thing when it's really something else. This is very common in fiction: A character starts out with a small-minded or selfish goal that slowly evolves into something more noble and heroic as he makes his way through the story. Just be sure your players will enjoy the actual goal of the series if you do this.

CREATING A STORY

The GM's second job is creating stories. As with the previous section, this isn't intended to teach you the one and only way to go about doing that. Instead, it's designed to provide you with guidelines and suggestions to help you create the best story possible. In that regard, consider the following elements when creating a new story: blurb, hook, body, finale, characters, and sets.

BLURB

The blurb is a simple phrase or sentence that describes what the story will be about. Don't worry about characters, plot, sets, or anything like that when making up a blurb. That stuff comes later. For now, just find something that interests you. There are as many different blurbs as there are stories, but we've listed some common ones below.

Amnesia: The heroes have lost their memories and are in some kind of pickle.

Assault the Stronghold: The heroes have to plan and execute an attack on an enemy stronghold.

Back from the Dead 1: An old nemesis the heroes thought was dead is back to cause them trouble.

Back from the Dead 2: It's actually someone modeling himself after the old nemesis.

Back from the Dead 3: The old nemesis will in fact reappear to smack that fool down.

The Battle: The heroes have to lead troops into a large-scale battle.

Behind Enemy Lines: The heroes have to sneak in somewhere, do something, and get out alive.

Captured: The heroes have been captured and must find a way to escape and defeat their captors.

Combination: The best stories often combine several blurbs into one big juicy mess.

The Contest 1: The heroes have to participate in some sort of high-stakes contest.

The Contest 2: The contest involves something silly and/or embarrassing, like singing or dancing.

Crime, Assassination: The heroes have to prevent or solve an assassination or a murder.

Crime, Drugs: The heroes have to prevent or solve a crime involving drugs.

Crime, Espionage: The heroes have to prevent or solve some espionage-related crime.

Crime, Extortion: The heroes have to prevent or solve a crime involving blackmail or extortion.

Crime, Gang Activity: The heroes have to prevent or solve some gang-related crime.

Crime, Kidnapping: The heroes have to prevent or solve a kidnapping or hostage crisis.

Crime, Super: The heroes have to foil some villain's comic book super-crime.

Crime, Terrorism: The heroes have to prevent or solve some terror-related crime.

Crime, Theft: The heroes have to prevent or solve a heist or a theft.

Crime, Weapons: The heroes have to prevent or solve a crime involving illegal weapons.

Diplomacy: The heroes have to resolve some problem without resorting to violence. Really!

Disaster: The heroes have to avert and/or rescue victims of a natural or manmade disaster.

Double-Cross: Add this to any other blurb: The heroes have been lied to or are being manipulated.

Double Trouble 1: One or more of the heroes encounters an exact duplicate who needs his help.

Double Trouble 2: Inevitably, this lost twin needs the hero to take his place for a while.

Double Trouble 3: Once the hero takes his place, the lost twin vanishes and can't be found.

The Entity: The heroes are faced with a cosmic villain who would crush them in a straight fight.

Escape: The heroes must escape from adversaries they simply can't defeat.

Evil Duplicates 1: The heroes confront and have to defeat their evil duplicates.

Evil Duplicates 2: The evil duplicates impersonate the heroes, ruining their lives and reputations.

Exploration: The heroes are simply exploring the unknown or uncharted.

Framed: Wrongly accused of a crime, the heroes must bring the true criminals to justice.

Guard Duty 1: The heroes are asked to protect someone or something important.

Guard Duty 2: The person being guarded cannot know that the heroes are guarding him.

Guard Duty 3: The person being guarded is actually in league with the villains.

The Invasion: Aliens, demons, or some such otherworldly menace is invading Earth.

The Lost World 1: The heroes stumble into a lost primeval world and must find a way home.

The Lost World 2: The heroes must protect a tribe of peaceful natives from some threat.

The Lost World 3: The heroes must protect the lost world and its inhabitants from exploitation.

Manhunt: The heroes are trying to find someone, from a missing person to a renegade criminal.

The Mini-Series: Many series premises can work equally well as blurbs for long stories.

The Monster 1: The heroes have to hunt down and defeat a powerful monster.

The Monster 2: The monster isn't really evil, just frightened or misunderstood.

The Mystery: The heroes have to unravel a mystery or uncover a conspiracy.

Powerless: The heroes find themselves powerless. Often used with other blurbs.

The Race: The heroes are racing to do something or get somewhere in time or before others.

Recon: The heroes have to spy on some person, place, or thing and report their findings.

Reverse World 1: The heroes go to an alternate world where the good and bad guys are reversed.

Reverse World 2: While there, the heroes must team up with their “enemies” to fight their “allies.”

Seriously Lost: The heroes find themselves lost in an alien land, time, or dimension.

Stealing 1: The heroes have to recover some object by actually breaking the law and stealing it.

Stealing 2: Being goody-goodies, the heroes need to enlist the assistance of a villain.

Strange Bedfellows 1: The heroes are approached by an old nemesis who asks them for assistance.

Strange Bedfellows 2: This will be a turning point for the villain, who will eventually change his ways.

Strange Bedfellows 3: Dream on! The whole thing is nothing more than an intricate double-cross.

Time Slip: The heroes have to travel through time to fix something a villain mucked up.

Treasure Hunt: The heroes are trying to recover some important item; others may be as well.

Undercover Work: The heroes have to go undercover to accomplish some task.

Unwilling Victim: Add this to blurbs involving rescue. The victim doesn't want to be saved.

HOOK

The hook is the introduction to the story. Every hook has to do three things: get the players interested, pull the heroes into the story, and tell the players what they need to know. These are listed in order of importance. Getting the players interested is much more important than the other two. If the players aren't excited about the story right from the start, you're in trouble. While you want to be sure the introduction also gives the heroes a reason to take part in the story and tells the players what they need to know, these are less critical. If the players are interested in the story, they'll find a way to get their heroes involved. If you discover you've left out some relevant information, you can easily remedy this by telling the players what they need to know. Interest, however, is much tougher to cultivate after the fact.

Most hooks occur at the beginning of the story. The heroes are doing their own thing when someone or something comes along and pulls them into the action. This gives the players all the information they need right at the start. When starting a story at the beginning, get the heroes into the action as soon as possible. Never start a game with a painfully long narrative. Any introduction that demands more than five minutes is probably a bust. The players will lose interest before the story has even started. Get things moving and get the players playing as quickly as you can.

If you want to try something different, start a story smack in the middle of the first action scene, often a fight or a chase. Give the players just enough information to understand what they need to accomplish in that scene, but nothing more. Only when the scene is over do you tell the players how their heroes got into the situation and what they need to do from there. While this does involve some railroading, it's a great way to get the players interested and the heroes into the action. When starting a story like this, however, you must be sure that whatever happened before that first action scene makes sense and is true to the heroes. It also helps if whatever happened before that first scene puts the heroes in a good light. You will have a much harder time getting the players to go along with you if your story involves their heroes having done something stupid or out of character.

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Finally, if you're really feeling brave, try starting a story at the end. Have the heroes play out the final scene, leave them at some critical cliffhanger moment, then go back in time and have them play out the rest of the story so they can see how they got where they ended up. Once you get to the final scene, return to where you left off and finish the game. Or you can do this a different way: Give the players scripts to read in which the heroes talk about the terrible experience (meaning anything from humiliating to tragic) they just went through. Then go back in time and play out the story from start to finish, ending at the scene in which the heroes recite the scripted dialogue. This is the hardest way to start a story. It requires a strong idea of how the story will go and a really accommodating group of players who are willing to go along with it. But when it works, it's extremely cool and everyone around the table will appreciate the effort.

BODY

The body is the main part of the story, where the heroes face the challenges you throw at them in one scene after another. This is where you have to use your imagination and turn your blurb into an actual story. Again, there's no real step-by-step here, but we can give you a few suggestions.

Remember that each story is made up of scenes. Each scene is like one chapter of a book or one scene of a movie or TV show. While scenes help the GM break a story into manageable parts during play, they also help when creating a story in the first place. Don't try to create a whole story all at once. Instead, create a bunch of scenes. As you know, the first scene of every story is the hook. After that, move from one scene to the next. Take one scene at a time and see where your imagination leads you.

While it's by no means mandatory, the typical structure for a story often goes like this: introduction (the hook), investigation, action, investigation, setback, climax (collectively, the body), conclusion (the finale). This will vary by story, but you'd be surprised at how much mileage you can get out of that basic structure. Whatever the structure of your story, make sure your scenes are flexible so you won't be caught off guard if (when) the players do something unexpected.

The plot of any good story should start slowly, gain steam over time, and be cooking with gas by the time it reaches its climax. Similarly, the challenges faced by the heroes should become more daunting as they progress through the story. The toughest fight, most demanding roleplaying, most devious puzzles, and so on should all be saved for the end of the story.

Scenes should be of varying lengths and involve different kinds of content. Some scenes are action oriented, often involving combat and a lot of dice rolling. Others are intellectually oriented, with the players unraveling mysteries, solving puzzles, or carefully planning ahead. And others are socially oriented, filled with a lot of character interaction and intense roleplaying. Different players enjoy different things, but everyone appreciates variety, so make sure your stories have a little something for everyone.

If you want to make some aspect of a scene (mood, pacing, tension, etc.) really stand out, do the exact opposite with that same aspect in the preceding scene. For example, if the heroes are supposed to be saddened when they hear some tragic news in one scene, make sure they're happy and having fun in the immediately preceding scene. Similarly, if the heroes are going to be pulled into a frantic chase in one scene, make sure the preceding scene isn't nearly as fast-paced. This contrast intensifies the effect of whatever it is you want to highlight. Yes, this is kind of artsy, but it works well when you do it right.

New GMs often wonder how much detail is required for a good story. The answer is simple: As much as you need to feel comfortable. This varies by GM and by story. An experienced GM may be comfortable running a complex story with only sketchy details, while a novice may want to do a lot of prep work for even a very simple story. In the end, it all boils down to what you need to feel comfortable and run a good game.

FINALE

This is where you wrap things up, tell the players how they did (at least to the extent that their heroes are aware), and maybe sow the seeds for future stories. There's no magic formula here other than to try to keep things short and sweet. The story is over, so there's no reason to linger. Think of the finale as the final scene of a TV show, where the heroes stand around contemplating what just happened. If everything turned out all right, everyone's happy and relaxed. If not, the heroes will probably be licking their wounds and wondering when the other shoe will drop. Either way, the finale should provide closure and remind the players of any loose ends and unanswered questions that may (will) come back to haunt them in the future.

CHARACTERS

The next step in designing a story is creating the villains, minions, and other npcs that will play a role in the game. As with everything else, only include as much detail as you need. Major villains and important npcs should be fully fleshed-out characters. A group of minions, on the other hand, rarely needs more than a simple tag line. As for characters that fall between these two extremes, that's up to you.

VILLAINS

As the most important npcs in the game, villains deserve special attention. Interesting, believable, and even sympathetic villains make a game much more enjoyable. This is especially true when those villains are recurring characters in the series. Mechanically speaking, you create villains just like you create heroes. But mechanics aren't what makes villains interesting—it's the finishing touches that make them special. Consider the following ways in which a villain's finishing touches should be different from a hero's.

MOTIVATION

Like heroes, villains have motivations that make them do what they do. Most are very different from the motivations available to heroes. A few, however, are almost identical (Justice and Revenge, for example). A villain's motivation, then, isn't necessarily what makes him a villain. But it often is. Common villainous motivations are listed below, but feel free to get creative and make up your own.

Chaos: The villain is an agent of chaos and desires nothing more than complete anarchy.

Corruption: The villain is driven to corrupt others and make them turn to evil.

Destruction: The villain is a mindless engine of suffering, death, and/or mayhem.

Domination: The villain seeks to rule over others or to expand the scope of his dominion.

Excitement: The villain craves the kind of thrills he can only find in villainy.

Experimentation: Often more amoral than evil, the villain will do anything in the name of science.

Greed: The villain will do whatever it takes to become extremely rich.

Infamy: The villain wants to be known all over the world and remembered long after he's gone.

Instinct: The villain is a mindless creature and acts on pure instinct (often hunger) or programming.

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Madness: The villain is completely insane; his actions make sense to him alone.

Necessity: This often-sympathetic villain has been forced into a life of villainy.

Profession: The villain is a mercenary or professional criminal; villainy is just his job.

Revenge: The villain wants vengeance for some real or imagined wrong.

Solitude: Another sympathetic motivation, the villain simply wants to be left alone and in peace.

Zealotry: The villain does what he does out of slavish loyalty to some cause or belief.



METHODS

Instead of details, villains have methods. A villain's methods describe how he accomplishes his goals and how far he's willing to go to see his plans realized. Does the villain prefer to act himself or through others? If he prefers using others, are they allies, henchmen, or clueless dupes? Does he operate openly or in secret? Does he generally approach challenges physically, mentally, or socially? Does he prefer to tackle matters head-on or indirectly? Finally, what are his usual tactics in combat?

You also need to think about how far the villain will go to get what he wants. Obviously, being a villain, breaking the law isn't an issue. But how about endangering innocents? Will the villain jeopardize or even kill innocent civilians? Does he actively seek to avoid

hurting others? Or does he fall somewhere in between? And what happens to those who try to stop him? Does the villain distinguish between civilians, mundane law enforcement personnel, and heroes when they get in his way?

ORIGIN

The villain's last finishing touch involves his origin. As with heroes, it explains who he is and describes how he acquired his unique abilities. The best villain origins, however, do one thing that heroes don't need to worry about: They make even the worst villain relatable or sympathetic. A truly evil or despicable villain is perfectly fine. But a truly evil or despicable villain with whom we can relate or sympathize is an absolute masterpiece. It works that way in comic books, and it works that way in roleplaying games. The most interesting villains are always those whose methods we abhor but whose goals or intentions we at least understand. If you can add this element to your villains, you will blow your players away.

NPCS

On the opposite end of the spectrum are mundane npcs. Being either less important to the story or less interesting overall, mundane npcs tend to get little creative attention. There're often bland nobodies who only serve to pass information to the heroes or fall into the villain's clutches. But that doesn't have to be the case. One quick-and-dirty way of making an npc who doesn't wear a costume distinct and memorable is to assign him some signature traits. A few signature traits can go a long way to bringing even the most mundane npc to life. Use the ones provided below or make up your own.

Adornment: The character always wears an unusual piece of jewelry or fashion accessory.

Aroma: For better or worse, there is something distinctive about how the character smells.

Attire: The character wears clothing of a certain type, brand, or color.

Bald: The character is partially or totally bald; if partially bald, he may or may not have a comb-over.

Blemishes: The character has warts, moles, patches of discolored skin, or acne.

Disfigurement: The character has been permanently disfigured or scarred in some way.

Facial Hair: The character sports a beard, moustache, goatee, or sideburns.

Family Man/Woman: The character is devoted to his family and talks about them constantly.

Fan: The character is a rabid fan of one celebrity, team, group, et cetera and can't shut up about it.

Fashion: The character is either a fashion plate or an absolute fashion nightmare.

Fastidious: The character is always immaculately neat and well-groomed; he seems to repel dirt.

Hair: The character sports a slick, weird, or downright absurd looking hairstyle or hair color.

Health Nightmare: The character eats like he's looking forward to the next heart attack.

Health Nut: The character is in great shape and is always careful about what he eats and drinks.

Humor: The character has a very strange or dark sense of humor that most people don't get.

Hyper: The character is always running around and can't sit still for more than a few moments.

Jerk: The character is totally devoid of social skills and comes off as an insensitive boor.

Nervous Habit: The character has a nervous habit like biting his nails or drumming his fingers.

Personal Troubles: Everyone knows that the character's personal life is always in shambles.

Personality: For better or worse, the character has a very distinct personality or outlook.

Pet: The character is totally devoted to his pet or pets and talks about them constantly.

Prejudice: The character dislikes members of a certain race, religion, gender, or other group.

Religious: The character is deeply religious; he may or may not be a fanatic (see Zealot).

Restricted Diet: Everyone knows the character abides by a strict set of dietary restrictions.

Smoker: The character is always smoking a cigarette, cigar, or pipe.

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Speech: The character's speech is distinctive: he might have a lisp, a stutter, or an accent.

Timing: No matter the situation, the character is either always late or always early.

Tattoos: The character sports one or more visible tattoos.

Unkempt: The character looks perpetually messy and unshaven; his clothes are always wrinkled.

Voice: The character's voice is distinctive: especially deep, high, loud, soft, or irritating.

Whack-Job: The character is downright loco: exactly how is up to you.

Zealot: The character is totally, slavishly, and very vocally devoted to some cause.

SETS

The last thing to consider are the sets, the locations the heroes will visit during the story. Although sets are often mapped out, this doesn't have to be the case. Some sets, such as those where you expect a fight or other action scene to occur, will probably demand a good bit of detail (in which case having at least a rough map isn't a bad idea). Others, however, will require nothing more than a few choice descriptors. And many sets will fall somewhere between these two extremes. As with everything else, you should do only as much prep work as you need in order to GM the scene effectively and feel comfortable doing so.

Whenever possible, chose dramatic, exotic, or unusual locations for your sets. Watch action movies and notice where the action scenes happen. Keep your eyes open for interesting places you can use as the basis for your sets. If you're having trouble coming up with interesting sets, scan the tables below for inspiration: The first includes generic locations and the second includes specific real-world locales.

GENERIC SETS

Airplanes	Hotels	Parking Lots
Airport Terminals	Hydroelectric Dams	Police Stations
Alleys	Inside the Hollow Earth	Pyramids
Amusement Parks	Jungles	Research Labs
Ancient Ruins	Junkyards	Restaurants
Archeological Sites	Lost Worlds	Rooftops
Arenas	Libraries	Runways
Asteroids	Malls	Secret Headquarters
Atlantis	Mansions	Sewers
Bars	Mausoleums	Skyscrapers
Beach Resorts	Military Compounds	Spaceports
Bridges	Mines	Spaceships
Bullet Trains	Monasteries	Submarines
Buses	The Moon	Stadiums
Bus Terminals	Movie Theaters	Subway Cars
Casinos	Museums	Subway Stations
Castles	National Monuments	Subway Tunnels
Caves	National Parks	Swamps
Churches	Nightclubs	Temples
City Streets	Oases	Tenements
Construction Sites	Ocean Liners	Tourist Attractions
Craters	Oil Refineries	Trains
Dense Forests	Oil Rigs	Train Terminals

Deserts	On Moving Vehicles	Train Yards
Docks	Open Air Markets	Tunnels
Dungeons	Opera Houses	Under Overpasses
Elevated Trains	Orbital Bases	Underwater
Elevator Shafts	Other Dimensions	Universities
Factories	Other Planets	Utility Plants
Fairgrounds	Outdoor Cafes	Volcanoes
Government Buildings	Outdoor Festivals	Warehouses
Graveyards	Palaces	Waterfalls
Hospitals	Parking Garages	Waterfront Markets

SPECIFIC SETS		
The Acropolis	The Grand Canyon	The Panama Canal
Angkor Wat	The Great Sphinx	The Pentagon
The Basilica of Saint Peter	The Great Wall of China	The Pyramids of Giza
The Brandenburg Gate	The Hollywood Sign	The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
The Burj Khalifa	The Hoover Dam	Sears (Willis) Tower
Chichén Itzá	The Kremlin	The Smithsonian
The Clock Tower of London	The Leaning Tower of Pisa	The South Pole
The CN Tower	The Lincoln Memorial	The Space Needle
The Colosseum	The London Underground	The Statue of Liberty
Easter Island	The Louvre	Stonehenge
The Eiffel Tower	Machu Picchu	The Sydney Opera House
The Empire State Building	Mount Rushmore	The Taj Mahal
The Forbidden City	The Museum of Natural History	The Washington Monument
The Gateway Arch	The North Pole	The White House
Golden Gate Bridge	The Palace of Versailles	Windsor Castle

DRESSING THE SET

An interesting set is often enough for most scenes. However, if you really want to do something special, you can make your sets even more dramatic by adding one or more of the following elements.

Abandonment and Disrepair: A long-abandoned set that has fallen into a state of disrepair is both creepy and potentially dangerous. It can also do wonders to create a moody environment.

Civilians: Crowds and traffic can make it difficult to get anywhere in a hurry and almost impossible to have a super brawl without putting people in serious jeopardy. And don't forget the animals!

Dangers: Sets can include hazards such as barbed wire, downed power lines, explosive gas, hidden landmines, pools of lava, sheer drops, weak floors, traps, and tripwires.

Elevations: Always remember things like stairways, balconies, catwalks, ramps, and overpasses. A set with varied elevations can make a rather boring fight scene much more interesting.

Lighting and Smoke: Lighting (or the lack of it) and smoke can affect both the atmosphere and the tactical aspects of a set. And don't forget strobe, pulsating, and colored lights.

Movement: Factories, assembly lines, and other industrial sets should contain moving parts, busily (and often dangerously) going on about their business while the heroes do their thing.

Noise: Background noise can add realism, underscore the mood, and act as another variable. A loud set can hamper communication and perception; a quiet one can create an eerie or unsettling mood.

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Obstacles: The heroes may need to cross treacherous bridges, scale or tunnel under thick walls, swing across chasms, swim through water-filled passages, or squeeze through narrow spaces.

Weather: Weather can affect both mood and game mechanics. Wind, rain, snow, ice, and fog all convey a certain mood and make things more difficult for the heroes.

RUNNING THE GAME

A great GM can make any story interesting and fun to play. Unfortunately, the art of being a great GM is just that: an art. It's something you learn over time and never perfect. And because everyone has their own style, no one can really tell you how to become a great GM. The best way to hone your skills as a GM is to run a lot of games, make a lot of mistakes, and get a lot of feedback. With that in mind, the following tips and suggestions should be considered guidelines, not rules. Use the ones you like and ignore the rest.

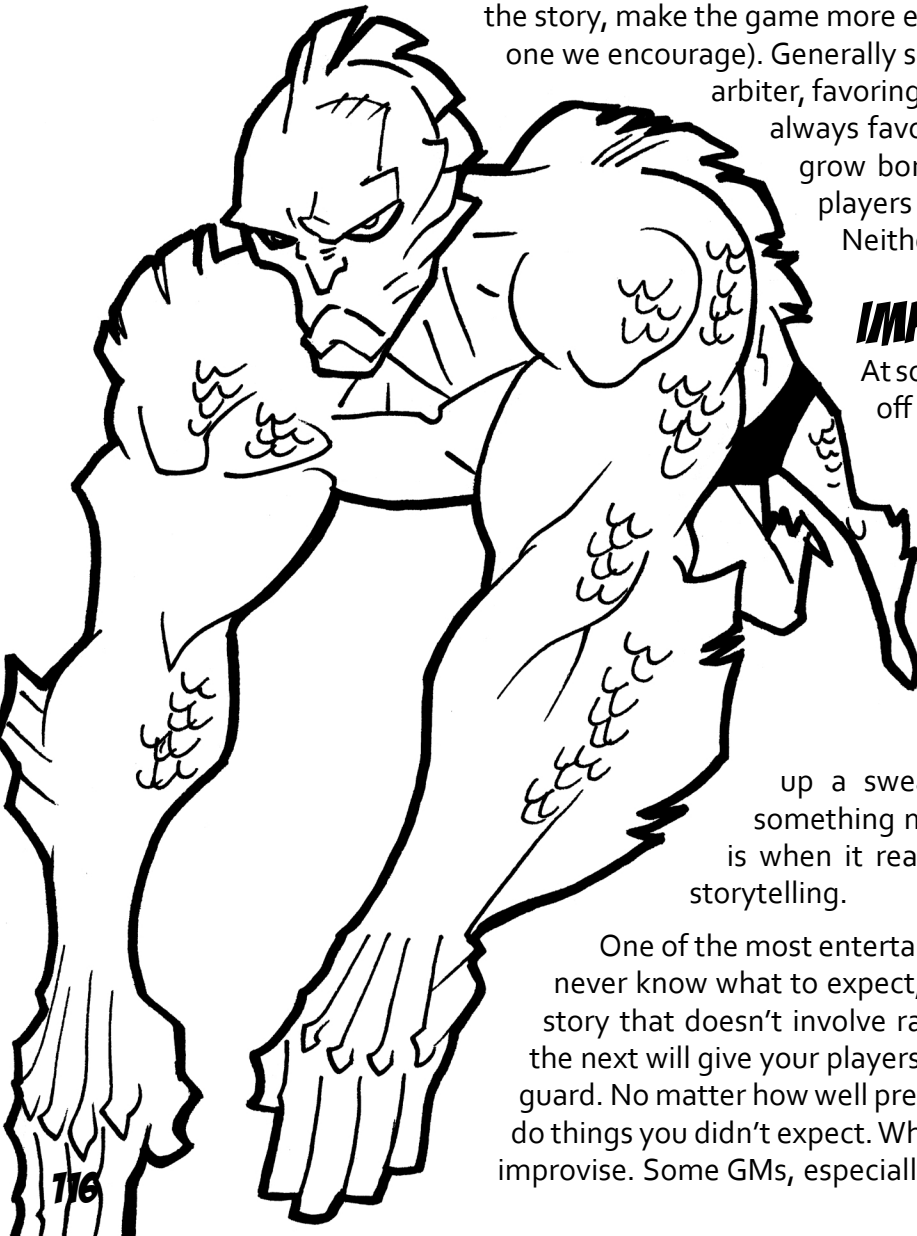
FAIRNESS

As GM, you are the referee of the game. You oversee the application of the rules and determine when they need to be bent, broken, or ignored. This means you have to be fair and consistent. While you might occasionally bend the rules, this should be to further the story, make the game more exciting, or give a new player a break (this one we encourage). Generally speaking, however, you must be a neutral arbiter, favoring neither the heroes nor the villains. If you always favor the heroes, the players will eventually grow bored. If you always favor the villains, the players will eventually grow disheartened. Neither result is good.

IMPROVISING

At some point, your players will go completely off the rails. They'll breeze through what should have been a whole night's worth of story in one hour, or they'll spend an entire night following one red herring. They'll be stumped by a simple puzzle, or they'll solve a whole mystery the moment they find the first clue. And they'll struggle against a sad little group of minions, then plow through your toughest villains without working up a sweat. This is when roleplaying becomes something more than just acting or wargaming; this is when it really becomes an exercise in cooperative storytelling.

One of the most entertaining things about roleplaying is that you never know what to expect, whether as a player or a GM. Any good story that doesn't involve railroading the heroes from one scene to the next will give your players countless opportunities to catch you off guard. No matter how well prepared you think you are, your players will do things you didn't expect. When that happens, you're going to have to improvise. Some GMs, especially novices, dread this. The more you GM,



however, the more you grow to relish these moments. They will happen, so be flexible and be ready to improvise. And enjoy.

IT'S ABOUT THEM

Always remember that the heroes are the main characters of the series. No other characters should be anywhere near as important to the game. The heroes must be the ones to save the world, even if they aren't the ones running it. They must be the ones to fire the shot that destroys the giant space station, even if they aren't the ones who planned the attack. And they must be the ones to fend off the evil cosmic entity, even if they aren't nearly as powerful as the good cosmic entity who, for whatever reason, can only advise them.

The heroes don't have to be the most powerful or influential people in the world. In fact, they almost certainly won't be. What they must be, however, is the axis around which the series revolves. If the players ever tell you that they feel overshadowed by any of your npcs, listen to them. And kill off that npc.

METAGAMING

Metagaming means using information you know but your character doesn't when playing the game. The term is often applied to players, but a GM can also be accused of metagaming when running his villains and other npcs. Although this opinion isn't universal, metagaming is usually considered a big no-no in the world of roleplaying. After all, the whole idea is to play an imaginary character in an imaginary world. When characters act on information they have no way of knowing or even suspecting, the game loses any kind of internal consistency and begins to fall apart.

For example, if one of your players accidentally glimpses your notes and learns where to find a villain's secret lair, that player's hero shouldn't act on that information. Similarly, even though the GM knows all there is to know about the heroes, it would be unfair for the npcs to act on that information. In both cases, metagaming is basically cheating, taking advantage of things a character shouldn't know.

Because this is a game, however, there are times when metagaming is not only acceptable but almost necessary. For example, when all of the heroes meet for the first time, everyone should understand they're going to need to come together. Sure, they may not all like or trust each other right from the get-go. But the heroes are going to have to band together eventually, and everyone has to be willing to nudge their heroes in that direction. Other examples of good metagaming include taking plot hooks the GM gives you, and trying not to split the party (although splitting up is often a good way to get things done in real life, it's usually a bad idea in a roleplaying game). In cases like this, metagaming isn't cheating and doesn't have a negative impact on the game. In fact, it serves to help the game along and is therefore encouraged.

PROPS

Although they're entirely optional, physical props can add a wonderful touch to almost any game. Because most of what happens in the game takes place in the imagination, there's something very powerful about what amounts to pulling a tangible object out of the game world and handing it the players. Story elements like written orders, newspaper clippings, photographs, letters, torn scraps of paper, half-burned journal entries, and encoded messages are more interesting when players can actually hold them in their hands and read them for themselves. And players always appreciate the effort that went

into buying or making even the cheesiest prop. If you have the time and inclination, you should always consider how you might bring a prop or two into your games.

ROLLING DICE

It may sound strange, but knowing when you shouldn't roll dice is at least as important as knowing when you should. Obviously, a player rolls dice whenever he needs to determine the result of an action whose outcome is uncertain. Uncertainty, however, isn't the only thing to consider when determining when to roll dice. The other things to keep in mind are whether the action is relevant to the game and whether the result of that action will keep the game moving forward, regardless of the outcome.

Don't make a player roll dice to determine the result of a trivial action. Lousy games are full of rolls to see if a hero knows some meaningless bit of information, notices some minor detail, or accomplishes some inconsequential task. Don't run a lousy game. Have players roll dice when it's important, when the outcome actually matters. Don't make them roll for fluff.

On the flipside, don't bother asking for a roll when a hero has to succeed or fail to keep the game moving forward. Whether or not that should ever happen is a different question, but if it does, don't go through the motions of rolling dice. For example, if a hero has to find a hidden clue to get to the next part of a mystery story, don't bother rolling when he searches the room in which the clue is hidden. He has to find the clue or the game will come to a crashing halt, so let him find it. Similarly, if a story requires a hero to succumb to knockout gas and get captured by the villain, then just make it happen. Understand: You should do your best to avoid situations like this. Stories should be flexible, and there should always be multiple avenues and options to make your way through the plot. But even the best GMs sometimes paint themselves into a corner. If that happens and the whole game hinges on some action, don't bother asking the player to make a roll.

SAYING YES

When a player asks if his hero can do something, your impulse should be to say yes. In fact, the best thing you can do is say, "Yes, and . . .," letting the hero do what he wants and then carrying the narrative forward from there. This is especially true if what the player wants to attempt is really cool (this Rule of Cool should apply to all but the most realistic of games). If your impulse is to say no, ask yourself why. Are you saying no because what the player is asking is really out of the question? Usually, that's not the case.

Most of the time a GM tells a player he can't do something, it's because the player caught him off guard. The GM isn't prepared or flat out doesn't know how to handle what the player suggested. Sometimes, what the player suggested may even throw a massive monkey wrench into the GM's plans. While the impulse to say no in these situations is perfectly understandable, don't give in. Instead, take a few minutes to collect your thoughts and then let the player try to do whatever he wants.

Not only is saying no boring, it also limits the game. You want players to come up with their own ideas, not guess which ideas you "blessed" when you designed your story. Even if a hero wants to try something you consider unlikely, it's better to give him a chance and assign the task a high Difficulty than to simply shut him down. If you do have to say no, see if you can offer an alternative; a "No, but . . .," is always better than a blanket refusal.

SPEED

You're going to have to make snap decisions when running a game. Your goal should always be to spend as little time as possible flipping through the rules or your story notes. Your job is to facilitate the game, not delay it. Know the rules and understand how they work. Know the story you plan on running during the game session. And be ready to make judgment calls on the fly. If you have to make a snap decision, make it and move on. Don't let yourself be rushed, but be confident in your judgment and ability to make decisions. This isn't surgery, so no one's going to die if you make a mistake.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

Writers use a variety of techniques to make their stories more interesting, and several translate well into roleplaying. While you shouldn't overuse them, these techniques can make your stories more interesting and entertaining for you and your players. Consider the following ideas.

CLIFFHANGERS

There's no better way to end an issue than with a cliffhanger. A cliffhanger is a finale in which the heroes find themselves in serious trouble or discover some shocking revelation. Because this happens at the very end of a game session, the players can't do anything about it until the next time they play. Ideally, this should create excitement and anticipation for the next session. When done right, one issue's cliffhanger will get the next issue off to a great start.

CUT-SCENES

A cut-scene is a brief scene that isn't about the heroes. It tells the players something about the story that the heroes don't know and can't act on. Just like when you're reading a comic book where you know something the hero doesn't, this can create tension and make the story more interesting.

For example, you can have a cut-scene that lets the players know that their heroes have only a limited amount of time to accomplish some objective. Or you can have a cut-scene that shows the main villain doing something that lets the players know how powerful, evil, or even—and this will throw your players for a loop—sympathetic a character he is. You might even try to get all artsy and use cut-scenes to juxtapose something that happens elsewhere in the game world with what the heroes are doing. Juxtaposition can be tricky and has a very high potential cheese factor, so be careful with it.

Whatever the case, most cut-scenes should be very brief. Give the players a quick description of what happens and then get right back to the heroes. No one wants to watch you put on a one-man show, not even your mother. If you really want to engage your players, hand them other characters and have them actually play out the cut-scene (see *Playing Other Characters* below).

FORESHADOWING

Foreshadowing is a tricky technique that's easy to use but hard to use well. Good foreshadowing involves hinting at something that will happen later in the game without making the hint obvious. And that's the trick: Foreshadowing should only be obvious when looking back at it. In other words, good foreshadowing has to be very subtle. This makes the game feel like a well-written story and gives the foreshadowed event that much more dramatic power.

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INTERLUDES

An interlude is a scene that involves one or more of the heroes but isn't in any way related to the plot of the story. Interludes provide a break in the action and afford the players an opportunity to roleplay their heroes, giving them more depth by having them do things in the game world that aren't connected to some larger plot. Interludes can range from brief moments of comic relief to major subplots that get played out over multiple stories and forever alter a hero's life.

Unlike the other techniques in this section, interludes are created by players. Each player is encouraged to design interludes for his hero and present them to the GM. The GM should run these interludes by fitting them into his game whenever he can and adding his own ideas to the mix. If a player disapproves of how an interlude is going, he can put it on hold and discuss it with the GM at the end of the session. The two can then either modify the interlude or cancel it, at the player's discretion.

As you can see, players have a lot of power over their interludes. As a reward for their creativity, a player earns 1 Resolve whenever his interlude gets played out during a game session. Each hero is allowed only one interlude per story, and the GM should make sure that everyone who wants to play one has played their first interlude before anyone gets to play a second. There are many different types of interludes, but we've listed some of the more common ones below.

Civic Duty: This interlude involves minor heroics that aren't related to some grand plot, things like foiling a minor street crime, making a charity appearance, or getting a cat out of a tree. We get to see the character be a hero in an everyday setting.

Comic Relief: Something funny or embarrassing happens to the hero. This is a great way to add depth to a very serious (maybe overly serious) hero. You may be the best there is at what you do, but if you have to do it in a pink bunny suit, we're still going to laugh at you.

Flashback: This interlude can involve just about anything, but it's always a situation that happened in the past and tells us something we didn't know about the hero.

Friend in Need: A friend of the hero needs mundane help. Maybe the friend is addicted to drugs, has been left by his spouse, got kicked out of school, or was fired from his job. This kind of interlude helps us get to know the person behind the mask.

Personal Triumph: Something wonderful occurs in the hero's personal life. Perhaps he gets married, has a child, gets accepted into the college of his dreams, wins that big promotion, or finally finishes that stupid roleplaying game he's been writing for so long.

Personal Trouble: The hero faces a tragedy like the death or severe illness of a loved one. Or maybe he has to deal with a challenge in his personal life such as marital troubles, getting fired, or being kicked out of school. Again, we get to see the real person in this kind of interlude.

Romance: Ah, *l'amour*. The hero meets someone who makes him feel all warm and fuzzy inside. His crush may or may not reciprocate. And as you know, if they do, they're probably a villain.

OTHER CHARACTERS

While it may sound strange, occasionally having the players run characters other than their heroes can be really fun. Depending on the game, the players might run these other characters for one scene, several scenes, or even an entire issue. You shouldn't do this too often, but it can be a wonderful change of pace. Consider the following ways of using this technique.

Altered States: The players run different versions of their heroes living in an alternate time, world, or dimension. Often, the idea behind an altered states story is that the heroes have to fix whatever went wrong with the world so that it will return to normal.

Flashback: The heroes relive something that happened in the past. This is sometimes done in cut-scenes spread over the course of a story happening in the present day. The connection between the flashback and present day can be obvious from the start or revealed as the story progresses.

Past/Future Lives: Often used for an entire story, the players run other characters in the past or the future and eventually learn that those characters are their heroes in past or future lives. Yes, it's corny, but this is a game about comic book heroes and the technique can make for some neat storytelling.

Victims: The players begin a new story running characters other than their heroes. These characters are eventually killed, kidnapped, or whatever. Once this happens, the players switch over to their regular heroes, who get tasked with finding out what happened to the original characters.

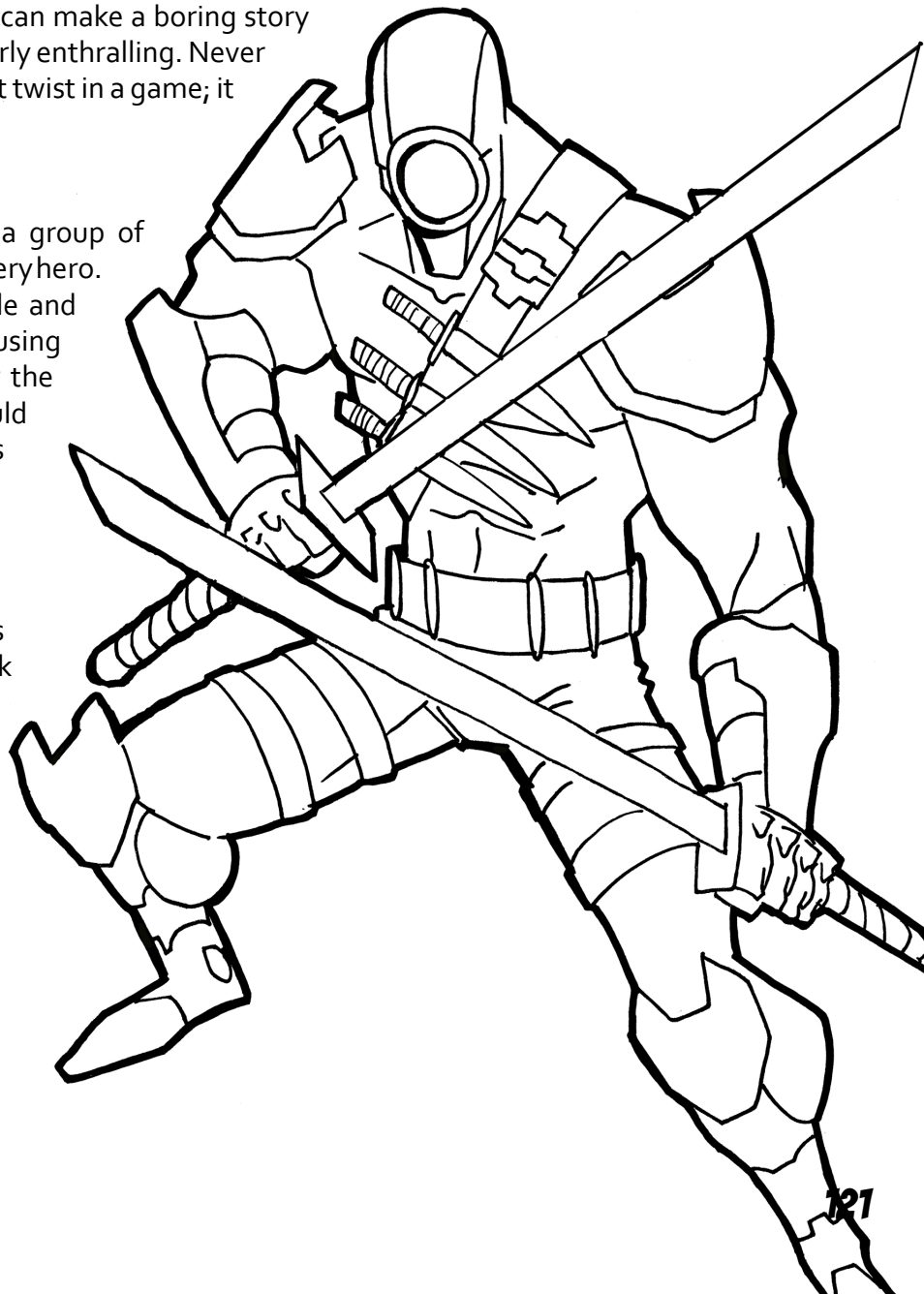
Villains: Some of the most interesting stories in comic books focus on the villains rather than the heroes. The same applies to roleplaying, especially when you have players running villains they really hate, villains who've made their lives miserable. Obviously, this one requires mature players.

PLOT TWISTS

Whether in comics or roleplaying, some of the most interesting stories contain a good plot twist or two. A plot twist is any unexpected development in the plot of the story. The shock and surprise inspired by a totally unforeseen turn of events always gets everyone's attention and draws them further into the game. Just one really good plot twist can make a boring story interesting or an interesting story utterly enthralling. Never underestimate the value of a good plot twist in a game; it can improve almost any story.

SPOTLIGHTING

Whenever you have a comic about a group of heroes, not every story can be about every hero. Some are about the group as a whole and others spotlight certain heroes, focusing primarily on that one character over the course of the story. Your games should work the same way. Some stories should involve all the heroes equally. Others should revolve around one specific hero, making him the main character of that particular story. This is much easier to do when your players give you lots of information to work with (this is one reason you want your players to give you details, connections, and an origin). Make sure to take turns when you use this technique so that everyone eventually gets to be in the spotlight.





NINE: FROM THE ASHES

INTRODUCTION

This is a lighthearted story designed for a group of 2 to 4 heroes of standard power level who may or may not know one another. Feel free to modify it as needed to make it suitable for your series.

THE BACKSTORY

Earlier this evening, Dr. Richard Montana's life became very complicated. While working in his office at Grubb Pharmacological, Dr. Montana accidentally entered the wrong password into his computer. Instead of his private files, Dr. Montana's monitor began displaying information about something called the Phoenix Agenda. Surprised to learn of any Grubb program he hadn't approved, Dr. Montana started reading the files. As he did, his surprise turned to shock, then to horror.

The Phoenix Agenda was a program whose goal was to create a drug that could trigger random genetic mutations similar to those found in super powered mutants. This drug, called Phoenix Agent, had actually been created, and had even been tested on human subjects. Most didn't survive exposure, but the few who did developed superhuman abilities. And more tests were scheduled.

Horrified, Dr. Montana downloaded everything onto a thumb drive he planned to take directly to the police. Unfortunately, he never got there. On his way to the elevators, pure survival instinct warned him that the usually friendly Grubb security personnel he saw coming down the hall were headed straight for him, and they weren't looking very friendly. Everything after that was a blur: a wheezing race down too many flights of stairs for a man his age, a cellphone dropped somewhere along the way, a chase through back alleys near the Grubb building, and gunshots—by God, they were actually *shooting* at him. Eventually, one of those back alleys spilled onto a main street, right in front of the Metropolitan Regency Hotel. Not knowing what else to do and desperate for a moment's respite, Dr. Montana checked himself into room 212. Unfortunately, the frazzled doctor used his credit card. The Grubb people zeroed in on him almost instantly.

Dr. Richard Montana, however, wasn't the only guest checking into the Metropolitan Regency Hotel that night. Freelance photojournalist Richie Montoya was also checking in, ready for the score of his life.

A few days earlier, Richie had snuck into a very private party hosted by none other than the incumbent Senator Ignatius Percival Daily, and had snapped some fantastic pictures of what could only be described as a bout of poor judgment on the senator's part. The least incriminating of the pictures involved the good senator, in a fit of tequila-induced bravado, relieving himself on a picture of his challenger in the upcoming election. Well, journalistic integrity is one thing, but this was an opportunity for something Richie wanted even more: cash, and lots of it. He contacted Senator Daily the next morning, explained the situation, and advised the still-woozy senator that he'd happily trade the thumb drive on which he'd stored the images for the right price. The senator agreed immediately, and a meeting was set to take place tonight, during a fundraiser being held at the Metropolitan Regency Hotel. Richie Montoya couldn't hold back his smile as the pretty young girl behind the counter gave him the keycard to room 221.

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Well, things might have turned out differently if the pretty young girl behind the counter hadn't been Candice. But it had. Normally an "on-the-ball" young lady, Candice had just gotten engaged. Mesmerized by the sparkly new rock on her finger and overwhelmed by the endless barrage of questions and complaints from the local politicians, society snots, and reporters attending the fundraiser for that smarmy Senator Daily, she made a teensy mistake. When two groups of men in black, arriving no more than five minutes apart, flashed badges and asked for Richard Montana's and Richie Montoya's room numbers, Candice accidentally gave each group the wrong room number. The group looking for Dr. Montana was directed to Richie Montoya's room, and the group looking for Richie Montoya went to Dr. Montana's room.

These things happen.

CHAPTER 1: MAYHEM AT THE METROPOLITAN

Moments before the story begins, Dr. Richard Montana and Richie Montoya are "receiving" visitors in their respective rooms. It's blunders and bad news all around.

The three goons standing outside Dr. Montana's door are there to deliver a briefcase filled with Senator Daily's payoff cash. But the peephole view of three big men in dark suits and sunglasses standing outside his door is too much for Dr. Montana's strained nerves. Believing the Grubb people have found him, the terrified doctor snaps. He grabs a tall lamp, flings the door open, and attacks the trio with the lamp, swinging it like an Art Deco halberd. Confronted by this wild-eyed lunatic, Senator Daily's goons panic, drop the briefcase, and run for their lives. A howling Dr. Montana chases after them, his adrenaline at the wheel.

Meanwhile, the three goons standing outside Richie Montoya's door are there to retrieve the person they believe to be Dr. Richard Montana. They drop their trench coats outside the door, revealing costumes underneath, and get down to business. The three supervillains easily smash open the door to room 221, catching a very surprised Richie Montoya just as he's about to shove another caviar-laden cracker into his mouth. Things go downhill from there.

The heroes, meanwhile, just happen to be in the lobby of the Metropolitan Regency Hotel while all of this is going on. They may be there to attend the fundraiser, to meet friends or family who are in town, or for whatever other reasons the players decide. The hotel is gorgeous. The lobby is a massive, two-story affair with long staircases on either side leading up to the second floor. Thanks to the fundraiser, it's also packed with people: the heroes are surrounded by a sea of tuxedos and evening gowns.

And as the story opens, all hell breaks loose.

Crashes, bangs, yells, slams, the sounds of many things breaking, and a slew of colorful curses all explode from above. It sounds like Word War III just erupted on the second floor. Before anyone can react, two groups of men burst into view and start racing down the staircases on either side of the lobby. Running down the left-hand staircase are three men in black suits. They're tripping over one another in an attempt to get away from a thin, bespectacled man in his late fifties who's chasing them down the stairs, wielding a floor lamp like a pole arm. Running down the right-hand staircase are three costumed villains carrying a struggling man sporting an obvious spray tan and a pencil-thin moustache. To his credit, the man's putting up one heck of a fight even though he's wrapped in some kind of energy lasso. Even over the noise and pandemonium, the man can clearly be heard screaming, "Help, I'm being kidnapped by Senator Daily's goons!"

But that's not all. Because the instant this happens, a group of fundraiser attendees wearing black suits and sunglasses presses buttons on their thin briefcases, causing them to flip open into what look a heck of a lot like black submachine guns. These are the Briefcase Boys, and there are two of them for every hero in the group. These high-tech mercenaries were brought in by Grubb to cause a distraction in case the supervillains sent to kidnap Dr. Montanaran into any problems. Figuring that a distraction is now definitely in order, the Briefcase Boys activate their weapons and start spraying bullets at the ceiling. This causes each and every local politician, society snot, and reporter attending Senator Daily's fundraiser to go into full-blown panic mode and stampede for the front doors.

Now it's up to the heroes.

The first order of business probably involves not getting swept along with the crown as it steamrolls its way towards the front doors. Right behind that, however, the Briefcase Boys seem to be the most immediate threat to the greatest number of people. They've started a panic, and they may well start shooting at the hysterical civilians or the police and security personnel trying to fight the tide and do something useful (they won't be able to; the police and security personnel are in way over their heads here). If the heroes don't stop them, the Briefcase Boys will start shooting people, beginning with the police and security personnel. Although they're carrying nonlethal ammunition, the heroes have no way of knowing this until the shooting starts.

The three villains on the right-hand staircase will make their way out of the hotel very quickly, even with their squirming kidnap victim in tow. Mobius,



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who seems to be their leader, will vanish when he realizes that things have gotten complicated. As their wheelman, he'll teleport himself into their getaway vehicle and pull up to the front of the hotel, ready to pick up his cohorts and their captive. As for the other two, Lariat carries the struggling man wrapped in tendrils of solid energy down the staircase, while Kirlian clears the way for them using blasts of kinetic energy that travel in waves along the ground. The blasts aren't lethal, but they're more than enough to knock people aside and blast an opening through the hotel's glass-walled front.

Within no more than three pages, the entire group will be in the vehicle and on their way. By the fourth page, the vehicle will be out of sight of the hotel and Mobius will activate its cloaking systems, completely changing the vehicle's appearance and making it almost impossible to find, follow, or track.

Of everything happening in the lobby, the goons running down the left-hand staircase with Dr. Montana hot on their heels are probably the least worthy of immediate attention. Despite the insanity on the ground floor, the crowd will actually get out of this group's way as they race down the stairs and out the door. Senator Daily's goons will make a break for it once they get outside, quickly outdistancing their winded pursuer and bringing Dr. Montana's adrenaline rush to a crashing end. The doctor will then vanish into the night. All of this will happen in no more than three or four pages.

Assuming the heroes engage the Briefcase Boys, both groups that came running down the staircases will probably be long gone by the time the Briefcase Boys have been defeated and the crowd has been calmed enough to let the heroes squeeze their way outside. Don't force it, but that's what's supposed to happen.

CHAPTER 2: DUSTING FOR PRINTS

As soon as the danger is over, Senator Daily's mind goes into overdrive. Things may have gone terribly wrong tonight, but Ignatius Percival Daily didn't reach his current station in life by failing to recognize opportunities. Realizing he has a group of heroes right in front of him, he sends his cronies to ask them for a private meeting.

Once they're alone, the senator will tell the heroes the following Big Fat Lie (yes, senators sometimes lie): Senator Daily will claim that he's being blackmailed by a man named Richie Montoya, who believes he has footage of the senator rendezvousing with a mistress. In fact, Daily will claim, the meeting was anything but illicit and the woman is actually an undercover agent whose identity must be kept secret. The senator will tell the heroes that he was going to pay the man off as it seemed the easiest way to resolve the matter. Unfortunately, the man was just carried off by three supervillains. Senator Daily has no idea who these costumed criminals are or why they kidnapped the man. But he does know that that it's vital to the safety of that agent and the United States that the thumb drive on which the images are stored be returned to the senator or destroyed. He'll then ask the heroes for help.

Although Senator Daily is a lying sack of cloying political aspiration, you can play him as sincere or as smarmy as you like. Even heroes who don't trust the senator, however, should be motivated to investigate and try to rescue the man who was just kidnapped in front of them. At this point in the story, the heroes should probably introduce themselves to one another if they haven't done so already, and agree to work together to figure out what happened. Eventually, the heroes are probably going to want to do some detective work.

QUESTIONING

The heroes can glean the following information from the following people.

The Briefcase Boys will say nothing unless the heroes use some really unheroic means of getting information out of them (*cough, Adversity, cough*). They're waiting to be arrested so they can call their lawyer (they have a very good lawyer on retainer; in fact, they have an army of them). Being normal humans, however, they're completely vulnerable to powers like telepathy. The only information they have is that they're international mercenaries and, as per their standard operating procedure, they were hired by an anonymous contact and paid via an untraceable wire to an offshore account. They were there to make sure at least one of the supervillains escaped the hotel with their kidnap victim. They don't know anything else.

Candice realizes she made a few mistakes tonight. She knows that even though the men in black displayed official-looking badges, she should have asked her manager before giving out any guest's room number. And she realizes that she gave each group the wrong room number. She'll try to avoid disclosing this, but she's a good kid and a lousy liar, so the fact that she's hiding something will be pretty obvious. Once pressed, however lightly, she'll 'fess up and tell the heroes everything. She'll beg them not to tell her manager and, in exchange, she'll give the heroes the names and billing addresses of the men who were staying in rooms 212 and 221. She'll even give the heroes keycards to those rooms, in case they want to investigate.

If the heroes manage to grab any of Senator Daily's goons, either at the hotel or by somehow following them, they'll spill their guts without hesitation. They'll tell the heroes that they work for the senator and that they were supposed to buy a thumb drive from a guy named Richie Montoya, who was staying at the hotel. They don't have a clue about what's on the drive. In fact, they don't really have a clue about much of anything.

If the heroes question the local politicians, society snots, and reporters, some of the folks who were near the left-hand staircase will think they heard the little man with the lamp yelling something about Phoenix (Arizona maybe?) and a thumb drive. People who were near the right-hand staircase, meanwhile, will recall that, in between really inventive expletives aimed at the senator, the guy kidnapped by those supervillains was yelling something about a thumb drive.

INVESTIGATION

In addition to questioning people, the heroes might want to take a look around the hotel. There are really only two places of interest: rooms 212 and 221, both on the second floor.

The first thing the heroes notice as they approach room 212, Dr. Montana's room, is a black briefcase lying a few feet from the door. The briefcase is closed and locked. If opened, the heroes will see that it contains a boatload of cash. The room itself is pretty much immaculate. Neither of the beds has been touched. The only evidence that anyone has been in this room is the jumble of hotel letterhead lying on the table. Someone was sitting at the table, writing notes. The notes are a mishmash of barely legible shorthand. The only things that stand out are the names of several government agencies, a few foreign cities and countries, the name "Gary," and the words "Phoenix Agent" and "Phoenix Agenda." There's nothing else of interest in the room.

As they approach room 221, Richie Montoya's room, the heroes will see crumpled trench coats outside the door and hear what sounds like soft whispers coming from inside. When they enter the room through what's left of the doorway, they'll discover that the

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whispers are coming from the TV, left tuned to an adult channel. The room is a mess, with bedding, clothes, and furniture scattered everywhere. Champagne and caviar lie spilled next to an overturned table. A careful investigation of the room will reveal a torn scrap of paper. Three words were written on the paper, but only the first few letters of each are visible: the heroes can make out an “FR” for the first word, a “TH” for the second, and an “ASH” for the third. There’s nothing else of interest in the room, unless the heroes feel like watching what’s left of the movie.

THE POLICE ARRIVE

The police will arrive at the hotel a short while later. The officers in charge of the investigation are Detectives Jack Dee and Jeff Herman. Jack’s a gruff former beat cop who really understands how people think. Jeff is young, but he’s an incredibly talented investigator who never misses anything. Whenever they’re on a case, Jack handles the witnesses and Jeff handles the crime scene. They’re very good at what they do, which is why they were put on this case. They can also be great contacts for heroes who play their cards right.

The moment they get there, the senator’s aides will take the detectives aside. Jack and Jeff will be advised that the heroes have begun their own investigation on a matter of national security. They’ll also be “asked” to assist the heroes in any way they can. This goes over exactly as well as you imagine it would. Nevertheless, if the heroes ask the detectives for help, they’ll provide it.

Although the detectives won’t uncover anything that hasn’t already been discussed, they can provide the heroes with any clues they missed. If asked, they can also do things like run background checks and request phone records for both Montana and Montoya. Among other things, this will tell the heroes where Montana and Montoya work and where they currently reside. Ah, sweet plotcrumbs.

CHAPTER 3: HITTING THE STREETS

Here is where the heroes really have free rein to do whatever they want and follow up on whatever leads they think they’ve uncovered. There’s no way we can address every possible avenue of investigation, but there are a few we should mention.

The information regarding Richie Montoya will lead the heroes to his condo, a surprisingly well-decorated bachelor pad in a middling but up-and-coming part of the city. Neither the condo nor its contents will provide the heroes with any useful information. If the heroes think of it, Richie’s cell phone records will confirm his having spoken with the senator recently.

The information regarding Dr. Richard Montana will lead the heroes to his employer, Grubb Pharmacological. Richard’s colleagues will be happy to speak with the heroes, but they won’t know anything. What probably will come up in at least a few conversations, however, is the hacker. It seems that some hacker attacked the company last night and, among other acts of mindless mischief, the cyber-vandals erased over an hour’s worth of security records—audio files, video files, access records, everything. The only person who knows the real story behind this is Grubb’s head of security, Ms. Helga Yggdottir. But if the heroes try to find her, they’ll learn that she flew out first thing that morning for a meeting at the company’s headquarters in Hamburg, Germany. Richard’s office is off limits (as is most of the building). Nevertheless, if the heroes somehow manage to sneak inside, they’ll find his computer missing. (They’ll also find a copy of the game *Prowlers & Paragons* sitting on his desk, autographed by the author: Quite a treasure!)

The heroes can also head to Dr. Montana's home. They'll be greeted by his wife, Dr. Veronica Lee-Montana. Veronica is a petite woman with penetrating eyes; she's also Chief of Psychiatry at a major local hospital. Desperately worried about her husband and having no reason to trust the heroes, she'll politely try to make them go away. If the heroes can earn Veronica's trust and convince her of their sincerity, she'll invite them in and tell them what she knows. Unfortunately, that's not much. In fact, the only useful bit of information she has is that Gary, the name written on the paper found in the hotel, might refer to Gary Arneson, a friend of Richard's. He owns a local game store, The Dragon's Den.

Seriously.

Assuming the heroes eventually make their way into The Dragon's Den, they'll find Gary Arneson behind the counter. He'll be playing some sort of card game with one of the store's young patrons. Gary is an older, stocky fellow with long grey hair, a neat beard, and a youthful twinkle in his eye. Whether they're dressed as normal people or as heroes, Gary will welcome the heroes into his store, ask them if they need help finding anything, and warn them that he's currently sold out of *Prowlers & Paragons* because he just can't keep enough copies of such a great game in stock. If the heroes ask Gary about Dr. Montana, he'll tell them he hasn't seen Richard since last week.

Gary is lying. In fact, Richard Montana spent the night in the basement—he has his own key to the store—and is down there right now trying to determine what to do next. He's currently writing a note he's going to ask Gary to deliver to Veronica. Gary, however, will be very cool about the whole thing. Say what you will about Gary, but he's a great friend with an amazing poker face. He won't betray Richard under any circumstances, short of something like mind control.

If the heroes realize that Gary is lying, he'll actually try to hold them off as he yells a warning to his friend. Richard, meanwhile, will try to escape through the same back door he used to enter the place last night. Gary is neither stupid nor suicidal, but he is one heck of a friend and will do whatever he can to help Richard. If the heroes manage to convince Gary of their good intentions, he'll ask them for their contact information, just in case. Once he's sure they've gone, Gary will go downstairs, tell Richard what happened, and convince him to contact the heroes. Desperate for any assistance, Richard will do so almost immediately.

Although we've left the exact details up to you, we would like to remind you that we've given you a situation in which a bunch of heroes (maybe even *female* heroes) are in a roleplaying game store, a store very probably filled with, well, gamers. If this doesn't inspire at least one comedic roleplaying encounter between the store's patrons and the heroes, then shame on you.

CHAPTER 4: DR. MONTANA, I PRESUME

Sooner or later, the heroes will meet the skinny, bespectacled, and now sleep-deprived Dr. Richard Montana. The doctor will tell them what he discovered and help fill in the details about what happened at the hotel. Combined with what the heroes learned from Senator Daily, it should now be clear that last night's mix-up resulted in Dr. Montana chasing the senator's goons out of the hotel and Richie Montoya being kidnapped by supervillains. It should also be clear that Richie is probably in serious danger. If the heroes believed Senator Daily's Big Fat Lie, they may also be concerned that a thumb drive with classified information is now in the hands of a group of supervillains.

As a senior member of the company's management team, Dr. Montana is absolutely sure that the Phoenix Agenda is the work of a small group operating in secret within the

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company. Although he has no idea who might be involved, the information he recovered leads him to believe that Phoenix Agent was designed, manufactured, and tested in a special research facility called the Deep Lab, located underneath Grubb's local offices. Additionally, if someone were being held prisoner, the Deep Lab would be the perfect place to hold them. Accordingly, Dr. Montana will ask the heroes to reach the Deep Lab, see what information they can recover from the facility's closed computer network, and permanently shut down production of the drug.



Dr. Montana will tell the heroes that the Deep Lab can only be reached via a dedicated elevator found in the lobby of the Grubb building. The elevator isn't locked, but it does require a passcode. By now, the passcode will almost certainly have been changed and Dr. Montana has no idea what the new passcode might be. He will also describe the Deep Lab's basic layout. The facility is built around a single elliptical hallway, with administrative offices on the outside of the ellipse and labs and technical facilities on the inside. Two long hallways lead from the more distant ends of the ellipse to the Deep Lab's central power plant.

CHAPTER 5: DELVING TOO DEEP

The only thing left for the heroes to do is make their way down to the Deep Lab. The Grubb building is locked after hours, but getting into the lobby shouldn't be much of a problem. Above ground, the Grubb building is a mundane office building. However they're dressed, a janitor will look up from his mopping j u s t long enough to give the heroes a sour look for walking over the floor he just cleaned. Otherwise, he couldn't care less about who the heroes are or what they're up to. The heroes will have no trouble finding the elevator.

O n c e inside the elevator, the heroes will find an alphanumeric keypad. In order to activate the elevator, they have to enter the numbers 3, 7, 6, 6, 8, 4, 3, 2, 7, 4, 3 and 7. This corresponds to the phrase *from the ashes*, part of which was on the scrap of paper found in Richie Montoya's hotel room (Lariat had written the passcode on a piece of paper that got torn in the scuffle with Richie Montoya). If the players don't figure this out, laugh at them. Okay, that's not very constructive. Instead, let them try other options, like hotwiring the elevator (Difficulty 3) or smashing through it (Hardness 5) and climbing the long, long, long way down (the facility lies almost a mile below ground level). These methods, however, will set off silent alarms in the Deep Lab, letting the villains know that trouble's on its way and giving them time to prepare.

By the way, the janitor knows the passcode. If the heroes ask, he'll offer to tell them in exchange for them agreeing to owe him a favor, one he can collect in the future. The janitor won't volunteer any of this. In fact, even if approached, he'll be very low key about the whole thing. Do with this what you will.

As Dr. Montana described, the Deep Lab consists of a single elliptical level bisected by a hallway leading from the long ends of the ellipse to the central power plant. There are offices, storage facilities, labs, computer rooms, equipment rooms, testing rooms, and sleeping quarters, all deserted. After last night, most of the personnel who usually work here have been moved to other locations. There are also security cameras everywhere. Specific room-by-room descriptions of the Deep Lab aren't necessary. Instead, here are the highlights, all of which assume that the heroes didn't trip the silent alarm on their way down. If they did, make whatever adjustments you deem necessary.

THE COMPUTER HUB

This room is packed with incredibly advanced computer equipment. If the heroes do some digging around on the network (Difficulty 3, plus the person trying to hack the system must have at least 3d Technology), they can recover the supposedly missing security footage showing the coordinated effort to bring down Dr. Montana after he stumbled across the Phoenix Agenda. They'll also be able to download a lot of information about the design and manufacture of Phoenix Agent. If the heroes spend enough time sifting through this data once this story is over, they'll discover that although most of the drug was created and tested in this facility, one last batch—a refined version of Phoenix Agent—was shipped to an undisclosed location in Germany.

THE ANIMAL CAGES

This large room is lined with cages of all sizes. Richie Montoya can be found in one of those cages. He's sitting very quietly; even his spray tan seems muted. Sometime between yesterday and today, Richie finally realized that his kidnappers are supervillains who have nothing to do with Senator Daily. Since then, he has wisely kept his usually big mouth shut.

THE SECURITY CENTER

This is where the chief of security normally sits. At the moment, the villains Lariat, Mobius, and Kirlian are parked here, waiting for orders from their boss, security chief Helga Yggdottir. The villains are bored and distracted, but Mobius is keeping an eye on the security monitors. Needless to say, if he catches sight of the heroes, he'll gather his troops and try to stop them. Although he isn't a tactical genius, Mobius isn't a total stooge either. He and his fellow villains will wait for the best time and place to strike.

THE POWER PLANT

The following should happen whenever it's most dramatic. Whether that means before, during, or after the battle between the heroes and the villains is up to you.

At some point while the heroes are exploring the Deep Lab, a klaxon will suddenly begin sounding. A maddeningly calm voice will announce over the loudspeaker that there's been a malfunction in the power plant's cooling systems and that everyone in the facility should evacuate immediately. The power plant will overheat and explode, killing everyone in the Deep Lab, in ten pages. It seems that someone at Grubb (Helga Yggdottir, if you must know) is looking to tie up a few loose ends. At this point, the heroes can try to escape the facility or get to the power plant and prevent the cooling systems from failing.

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Escaping the facility will be difficult. The main elevator will be sealed shut behind a Hardness 6 blast door. And even if blasted or forced open, the elevator will be without power and completely non-functional. The heroes can try to blast through the roof of the elevator (Hardness 4), but they'll then have only a few pages left to climb far enough away to avoid getting cooked as the explosion blows its way up the shaft. Additionally, assuming the heroes are heroes, they can't just leave the villains behind to die in the blast.

As for the power plant, the heroes will have to find a way past Hardness 6 security doors to get there. Once there, a hero can make a Difficulty 2 Technology roll to realize the cooling systems were remotely deactivated and can be reactivated. The reactivation process requires a Difficulty 6 Technology roll, but that Difficulty drops by 1 per page spent working on reactivating the system. Only one hero can attempt this, and he must decide how many pages he wants to spend before making the Technology roll.

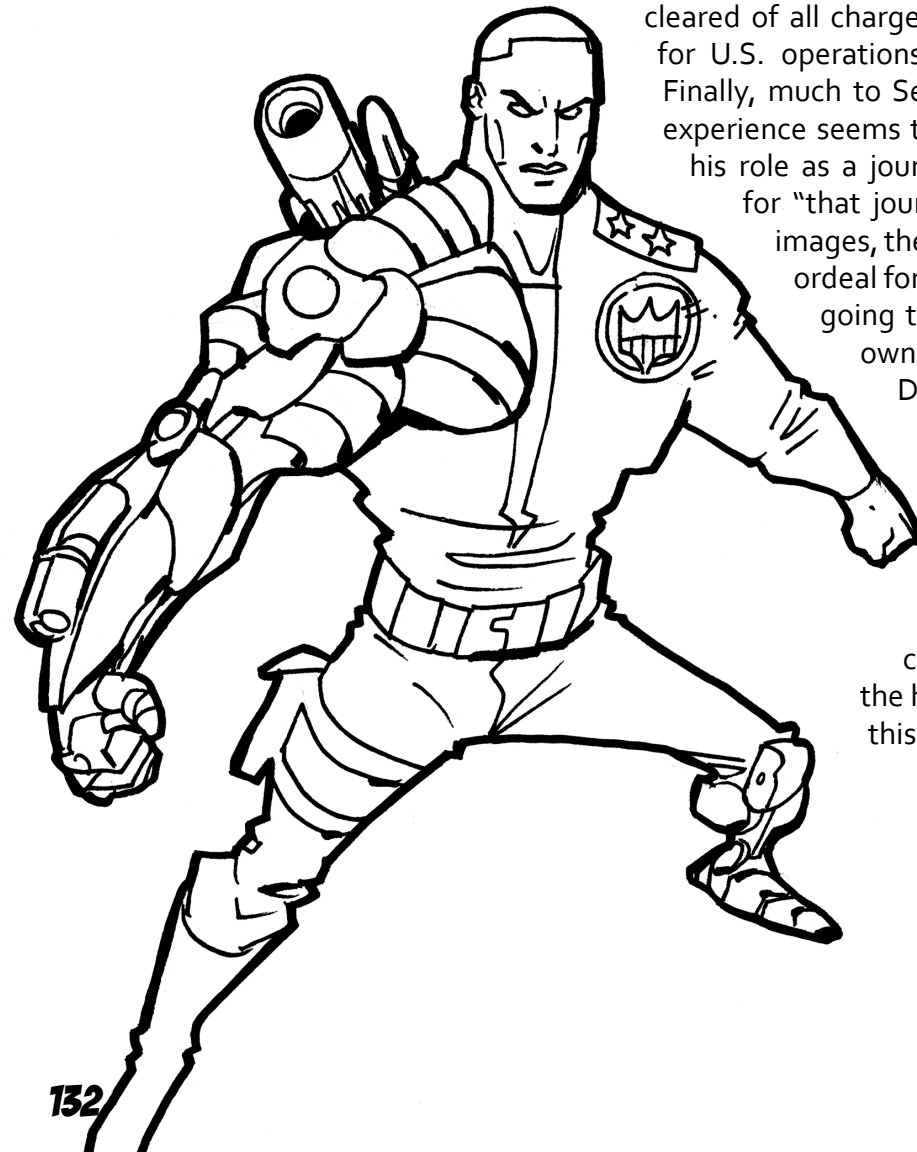
CHAPTER 6: RISING FROM THE ASHES

Assuming the heroes get out of there alive and uncooked, things turn out pretty well. The supervillains are arrested, the information about the Phoenix Agenda and Phoenix Agent is turned over to the police, and a deeply grateful Richard Montana is reunited with his relieved

wife. After an in-depth investigation, Grubb Pharmacological is cleared of all charges. However, its former head of security for U.S. operations, Helga Yggdottir, has gone missing. Finally, much to Senator Daily's dismay, Richie Montoya's experience seems to have given him a new perspective on his role as a journalist. Thanks to his newfound respect for "that journalistic integrity stuff," Richie sells the images, the story, and the movie rights to the whole ordeal for maybe fifty times what the Senator was going to pay him. Eventually, he even gets his own news show, *The Full Montoya*. Senator Daily, meanwhile, remains unavailable for comment. . . .

THE CHARACTERS

This story assumes you're playing with 2 to 4 heroes of standard power level. You may need to modify the characters below, especially the villains, if the heroes are much weaker or stronger than this.



LARIAT

Edge 8 Health 12

Traits: Armor 7d (Shield), Athletics 4d, Ensnare 10d, Might 3d, Streetwise 3d, Swing Line 6d, Telekinesis 9d (Tendrils), Thievery 3d
Perks: Extra Limbs

MOBIUS

Edge 12 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 4d, Might 4d, Perception 6d, Strike 8d, Teleportation 4d (500 feet) (Combat Porting (x2): +2d/+2d in combat), Toughness 4d
Perks: Time Stop

KIRLIAN

Edge 10 Health 12

Traits: Athletics 6d, Blast (energy) 10d (Limited: the energy blast must travel along the ground), Dazzle 9d, Power Slide 7d
Perks: Phasing, Super Senses (Radar)

THE BRIEFCASE BOYS

Edge 9 Health 6

Traits: Athletics 4d, Perception 3d, Stealth 3d, Survival 3d, Toughness 3d, Vehicles 3d
Gear: Briefcase Gun (+3d (blunt), Area, Ranged), Radio

DETECTIVE JACK DEE

Edge 7 Health 6

Traits: Charm 3d, Command 4d, Might 3d, Professional (cop) 4d, Perception 3d (Investigation), Toughness 3d
Perks: Authority (law enforcement)
Gear: Pistol (+3d ranged), Handcuffs, Mace Spray

DETECTIVE JEFF HERMAN

Edge 9 Health 6

Traits: Athletics 3d, Professional (cop) 4d, Perception 4d (Investigation), Technology 4d
Perks: Authority (law enforcement)
Gear: Pistol (+3d ranged), Handcuffs, Mace Spray

SENATOR DAILY

Edge 6 Health 3

Traits: Charm 3d, Command 3d, Professional (politics) 3d
Perks: Authority (senator), Contacts (many in the government), Wealth

SENATOR DAILY'S GOONS

Edge 7 Health 3

Traits: Athletics 3d, Might 3d
Perks: Contact (Senator Daily)

DR. RICHARD MONTANA

Edge 6 Health 3

Traits: Medical 3d, Professional (research scientist) 4d, Science 4d

RICHIE MONTOYA

Edge 8 Health 3

Traits: Athletics 3d, Charm 1d (weak trait), Perception 3d, Professional (paparazzi) 3d

GARY ARNESON

Edge 8 Health 3

Traits: Charm 3d, Perception 3d, Willpower 3d

HELGA YGGSDOTTIR

Edge 22 Health 25

Traits: Academics 5d (Languages: Finnish, German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish), Armor 14d (Item: Armor), Athletics 6d, Charm 4d, Command 5d, Might 14d, Perception 6d, Professional (business) 4d, Riding 4d, Strike (edged) 4d (Item: Long Spear), Toughness 12d, Willpower 10d
Perks: Immortality, Immunity (ambient cold), Life Support (total), Patron (wouldn't you like to know), Psi-Screen, Speak with Dead, Super Senses (Astral Sight), Unkillable
Flaws: Code of Conduct (loyalty to Patron), Code of Conduct (honorable combatant), Quirk (arrogance)

FINAL WORDS

The heroes should not encounter Helga Yggdottir during this story. Who is this mysterious woman, how is she involved in the Phoenix Agenda, and where will she turn up next? For answers to these questions and more, check out the next amazing issue of . . .



PROWLERS & PARAGONS

PROWLERS & PARAGONS

NAME: _____
ALIAS: _____
HERO GROUP: _____
MOTIVATION: _____

TRAITS & PERKS:

GEAR:

**HERO
DICE!**



FLAWS:

QUOTE:

HERO DESCRIPTION:

CIVILIAN DESCRIPTION:

DETAILS:

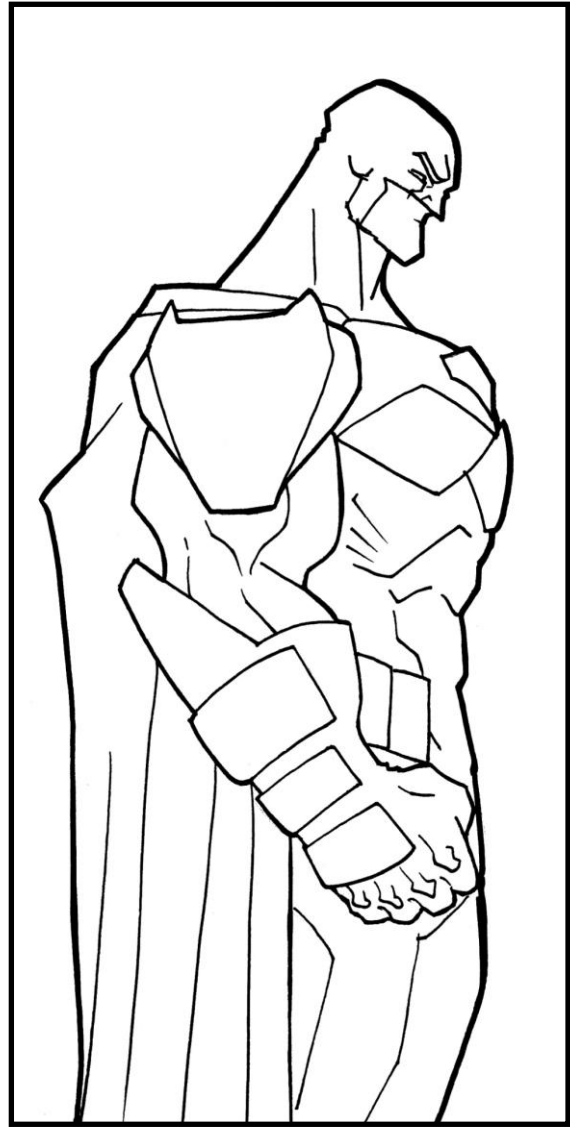
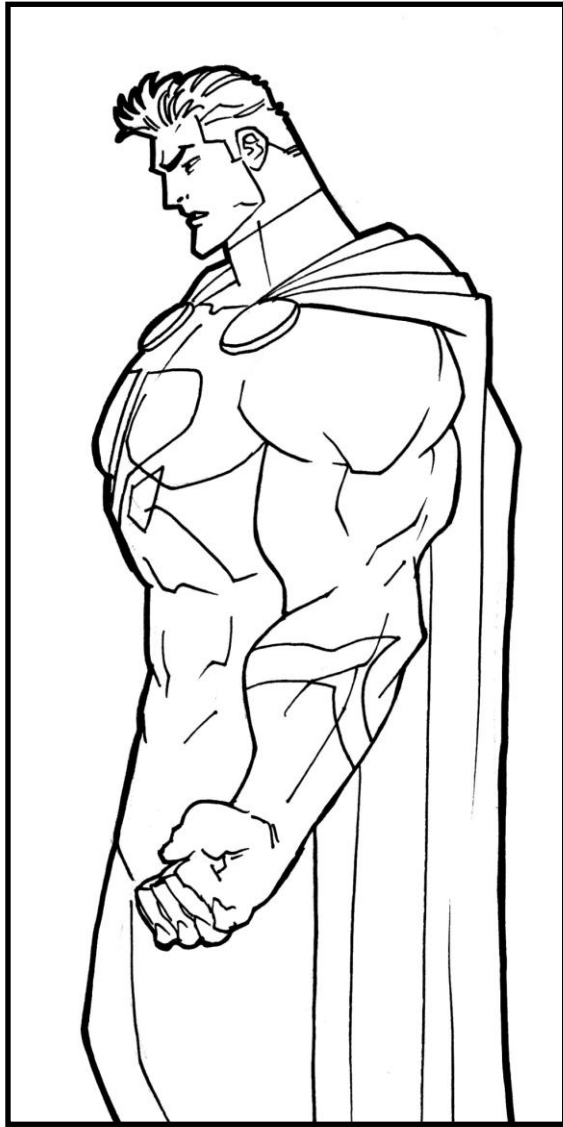
CONNECTIONS:

ORIGIN:

Mundane Traits (at 2d unless otherwise noted): Academics, Athletics, Charm, Command, Medical, Might, Perception, Professional, Riding, Science, Stealth, Streetwise, Survival, Technology, Thievery, Toughness, Vehicles, Willpower.

HEALTH:





THE WORLD NEEDS HEROES

Whether they're shadowy prowlers who protect us in the darkest night, upstanding paragons that we admire in the light of day, or something in between, the world has always needed exceptional men and women with the desire to combat injustice and the courage to act on their convictions.

Take a stand! Join the fight!

BE A HERO

