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THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

BY MARION G. HARMON



Cape (plural capes): literally, a sleeveless garment hanging from the neck over the back and shoulders; figuratively, a superhuman who has chosen to act as a superhero. Synonyms: hero, mask, super, superhero. Connotations: 'cape' is used as both a familiar and derogatory term for superheroes, who often casually refer to themselves as capes but generally consider it a demeaning term when applied to them by the press.

— Barlow's Guide to Superhumans

WHAT IF THE WORLD CHANGED?

Ten years ago, everything did. The world we knew ended with The Event and the appearance of hundreds, thousands of superhuman individuals—ordinary men and women empowered in the blink of an eye, between one breath and the next, transformed or given extraordinary gifts. With this gamebook, you can take on the role of a superhuman—a *breakthrough*—who has chosen to “wear the cape” and become a superhero; or at least come as close to one as you can in a world with legal institutions that are adverse to the idea of super-powered vigilantes!

Wearing the Cape: The Roleplaying Game contains everything needed to create superhuman characters, whether capes, villains, or super-civilians, assemble a team, and make a difference. Built on the Fate Core system, by Evil Hat Productions, *Wearing the Cape: The Roleplaying Game* uses an open system of Aspects, Ratings, and Stunts to describe any conceivable character and superhuman power, as well as organizations, cities, regions, and any kind of environment the heroes may encounter. With 30 dense pages of Post-Event World background to provide endless ideas for locations and threats, *Wearing the Cape: The Roleplaying Game* is a gateway for anyone who wishes to adventure in the world of the novels, or who wishes to make a world of their own!



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WEARING THE CAPE

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



BY MARION G. HARMON

*To my family, who have been playtesters, sounding boards,
proofreaders, and cheerleaders through the long process of moving
my world and characters from my books and into the game.*

Thank you.

Introduction



Hello, I am Marion G. Harmon, author of the *Wearing the Cape* series of superhero novels, and the writer of this gamebook. That's right, I'm multi-talented. I grew up playing tabletop roleplaying games like GURPS SUPERS, CHAMPIONS, and the MARVEL and DC UNIVERSE games, and when my superhero stories found acceptance with a large and growing fan base, I promised myself that I would eventually pay it back by returning to the roleplaying game platform that inspired me. That return, the game you hold in your hands, *Wearing the Cape: The Roleplaying Game*, is two things.

First, *Wearing the Cape: The RPG* is a complete and stand-alone tabletop roleplaying game written for fans of my books. If you enjoyed my stories and want to play in my world, this game is for you.

Second, *Wearing the Cape: The RPG* is a superhero RPG for players who have ever asked themselves what the Real World might be like with superheroes added. If you ever wanted superhero action in a setting where actions have rules-enforced consequences, this game is for you.

I'm a writer, not a game-designer; I couldn't do it alone. *Wearing the Cape: The RPG* is built on Evil Hat's Ennie Award-winning open source FATE CORE game system, and will be very familiar (with some modifications) to veteran Fate players. But previous experience with FATE CORE or other Fate-built games is not required; the rulebook is written with newcomers to Fate-system games and even to tabletop roleplaying games in mind, and contains all the information needed to begin making your own heroes for playing in the world of my books or in any superhero world. I think that you will find the Fate system an incredible platform for creating your own heroes and worlds.

So, how should you read this gamebook? First, do not read it from cover to cover before beginning play, unless you're the gamemaster (GM). **Chapter One** is the history and background of the Post-Event World; some players will want to know every detail before they create their heroes, but if you just want to get to the rules then I recommend reading ***The Event* (p.2)**, ***A New World* (p.3)**, ***The Breakthrough* (p.10–12)**, and ***Real World Superheroes* (p.24–28)** and coming back for the rest later. **Chapter Three** is a *must*; an overview of gameplay, it presents all the basic concepts of the Fate system. For the rest of the book, the GM may want to read through it himself and then teach the rest of the group as the game progresses. The Fate system is "rules-light" compared to many RPGs, lacking pages of tables and charts that must be consulted to play. **Chapter Four** and **Chapter Five**, the hero-creation chapters, contain descriptive sections you may like to read (all about Attributes, Skills, Resources, and Power Types) although having the GM walk you through it as you make your first heroes may work better. **Chapter Six** and **Chapter Seven** are all about the action, and good for everyone to read, but the rest of the book is about the broader game and almost exclusively for the GM.

If I have any advice, it's not to expect to master *Wearing the Cape: RPG* in the first read through; many rules will require sitting down and playing, with much referencing and re-reading, to sink in. If you have played other RPGs, but not a Fate-system game, the whole concept of **ASPECTS** takes a while to click (once it does click you'll have a hard time imagining playing without them).

So here is my tribute to my roleplaying game roots. Enjoy.

Marion G. Harmon





TABLE OF CONTENTS

ALL HEADINGS ARE LINKED ~ CLICK THE STAR AT BOTTOM CORNER TO RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: THE NEW HEROIC AGE.....	1	<i>Biology and Medicine</i>	<i>22</i>
THE EVENT.....	2	<i>Space Exploration and Exploitation</i>	<i>22</i>
A New World.....	3	Extra-Reality Worlds	23
Turning Points	4	REAL-WORLD SUPERHEROES	24
BREAKTHROUGHS	9	Professional Heroes.....	24
Measuring the Miraculous	9	CRISIS AID AND INTERVENTION TEAMS	25
The Breakthrough.....	10	Street-Heroes and Power-Capes	25
Classifying Breakthrough Powers	11	<i>Superhero Codenames</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Power Types.....</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>Secret Identities.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Power Classes</i>	<i>11</i>	Superhero Couture.....	26
<i>Unclassifiable Powers.....</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>Superhero Crests</i>	<i>27</i>
POST EVENT HISTORY	13	<i>Superhero Masks</i>	<i>27</i>
The China War.....	13	WHERE TO GO	27
The Rise and Fall of the Caliphate	14	<i>Capes.....</i>	<i>27</i>
OTHER COUNTRIES.....	15	Supersoldiers, Supercops, & Supercivilians.....	27
Breakthroughs and the Balance of Power	15	SUPERHEROES ELSEWHERE:	
SUPERHEROES AT WAR	16	THE UNITED KINGDOMS.....	28
<i>The Pax Americana and</i>		REAL-WORLD SUPERVILLAINS	29
<i>League of Democratic States</i>	<i>16</i>	Professional Villains	29
THE POST-EVENT WORLD.....	17	VILLAINS INC.....	30
<i>Hollywood Heroes</i>	<i>17</i>	Cause Villains	30
<i>Superhero Conventions</i>	<i>17</i>	THE TEATIME ANARCHIST	30
<i>Origin Chasers.....</i>	<i>17</i>	Thrill Villains	31
Anti-Superhero Groups	18	Supervillain Culture	31
Law and Politics	18	WEARING THE CAPE.....	32
<i>Secret Identities and the Law.....</i>	<i>18</i>	CHAPTER 2: THE SENTINELS	33
<i>Reasonable Restraint</i>	<i>19</i>	USING THIS CHAPTER	34
<i>Law Enforcement and Accountability.....</i>	<i>19</i>	Sentinels Team File.....	34
AFTER-ACTION REPORTS & REVIEW BOARDS	19	Atlas ~ John Chandler	36
<i>Vigilantes</i>	<i>20</i>	The Harlequin ~ Jacquin Torres.....	38
THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS.....	20	Blackstone ~ Henry Roix.....	40
<i>Government Agencies</i>	<i>20</i>	Chakra ~ Dr. Helen Ramasubramanian	42
Religion.....	20	Ajax ~ Charles Gibbons	44
THE PANTHEON.....	21	Nimbus ~ Anita Farrès.....	46
<i>Magic and the Supernatural.....</i>	<i>21</i>	Rush ~ Scott Baker	48
Science and Technology.....	22	Astra ~ Hope Corrigan	50
PSIS AND ALIEN VISITORS.....	22		



Artemis ~ Jacqueline Siggler	52	The Character Worksheet and the Character Ratings Pyramid.....	74
CAMPAIGN EXAMPLE: CHICAGO SENTINELS....	54	STEP 3: DETERMINE STARTING FATE POINTS..	74
CHAPTER 3: PLAY OVERVIEW	55	STEP 4: CHOOSING POWER STUNTS.....	75
GETTING STARTED	56	Modifying the Pyramid with Stunts.....	75
A Little Wearing the Cape Terminology	57	Gear	75
Reading this Chapter	57	Gear as Aspects	76
THE SCENE	58	STEP 5: DETERMINE STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES.....	76
Situation Aspects.....	58	Resource Stress and Consequences	76
Character Aspects.....	58	Finishing Up	76
Gaming with Aspects	58	THE LIST: ATTRIBUTES, SKILLS, & RESOURCES... 77	
Aspects Describe What's Important.....	58	The Attributes	77
Aspects Can Always Change.....	59	Alertness	77
Other Aspects.....	59	Athleticism.....	77
Aspect Difficulty.....	59	Physique.....	78
Created Situation Aspects	60	Discernment	78
A MILLION ASPECTS	60	Willpower	79
Using Aspects	60	Presence.....	79
Invoking Aspects	60	The Skills	80
Compelling Aspects	60	Academics.....	80
Fate Points.....	60	Aid	80
Character Ratings.....	61	Deceive.....	80
THE LADDER – CHARACTER RATINGS	61	Drive	81
Attributes.....	61	DRIVE SKILL AND WARCRAFT.....	81
Skills.....	61	Engineering.....	82
Resources	61	Fight.....	82
THE ACTION.....	62	Investigate	83
Moving the Action.....	62	Larceny.....	83
Taking Action	62	Provoke	83
Overcome.....	62	Rapport.....	84
Create an Advantage.....	62	Shoot.....	84
Attack.....	63	Stealth.....	84
React.....	63	Survival.....	85
Describing Actions	63	Resources.....	85
Rolling the Fate Dice	64	Contacts.....	85
The Five Outcomes	64	Reputation.....	86
RE-ROLL INVOKES, SINGLE-ROLL RESOLUTION, AND FATE CORE	64	Wealth.....	86
Ending The Action.....	64	USING RESOURCES.....	86
SCENES FROM THE POST-EVENT WORLD	65	CHAPTER 5:	
A Day Not Like Any Other	65	BARLOW'S GUIDE TO SUPERPOWERS.....	87
There's Always Someone.....	67	CREATING POWER ASPECTS	88
CHAPTER 4: BUILDING YOUR HERO	69	Permission and Denial	88
STEP 1: CHOOSE CHARACTER ASPECTS	70	Invokes and Compels.....	88
The Power Aspect.....	70	Power Attributes	88
The Hero Aspect.....	70	Power Class.....	88
The Trouble Aspect.....	71	NEW RULE: POWER CLASS ADVANTAGE.....	89
Background Aspects	71	Power Skills:	89
MORE CHARACTER ASPECTS.....	71	THE DEFAULT RULE	90
STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER RATINGS..	72	Power Stunts.....	90
The Attributes	72	Add a New Action to an Attribute, Skill, or Resource.....	91
The Attribute Bonus	72	ADDING ACTIONS AND BALANCE	91
The Skills	73	Grant a Stunt Bonus to an Action	91
Resources.....	73	Raise Superhuman Attributes.....	91



Buy Weapon and Armor Ratings	91	SCENES AND THE ORDER OF ACTION	114
WEAPON RATINGS AND COLLATERAL DAMAGE...	92	The Setup Phase.....	114
Create a Special Rule	92	The Action Phase	114
Spend an <i>Additional</i> SFP When You		TURN ORDER STRATEGY	114
Buy the Stunt	92	<i>Turn Order</i>	114
Spend a Fate Point to Use the Stunt	92	The Resolution Phase	114
Limit the Stunt's Use to Once per		ROLLING FATE DICE.....	115
Scene/Session.....	93	Passive Opposition	115
Create an Unfavorable Aspect When the		Active Opposition	115
Stunt is Used	93	<i>When do you Roll?</i>	115
Gear as Stunts.....	93	EXAMPLE HERO & OPPOSITION DICE ROLLS....	115
POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS		The Five Outcomes	116
VS. POWER STUNTS.....	93	<i>Fail Epically</i>	116
POWER SCALE IN POST-EVENT WORLD.....	94	<i>Fail</i>	116
POWER SCALE.....	94	<i>Tie</i>	116
ULTRA AND OMEGA CLASS:		<i>Succeed</i>	116
ULTIMATE COSMIC POWER	94	<i>Succeed with Style</i>	116
POWER TYPE TEMPLATES	95	The Four Actions.....	116
Ajax-Types	95	Overcome.....	116
Atlas-Types	96	Create an Advantage.....	117
Dragon-Types	97	Attack	117
Kinetic-Types.....	98	React.....	118
Mentalist-Types	99	<i>Counter and Defend</i>	118
POWER-TYPES AND CATEGORY ERRORS	99	<i>Block</i>	118
MAGIC ACTS.....	100	FATE POINTS: THE CURRENCY OF ACTION	119
Merlin-Types	100	Invoke an Aspect	119
EXAMPLE MAGIC TRADITION: RITUAL MAGIC...	101	Power a Stunt.....	119
Metamorph-Types	102	Refuse a Compel	119
Paragon-Types	103	Declare a Story Detail	119
MORPH-DYNAMICS	103	Take the Next Turn	120
Projector-Types.....	104	Accept a Compel.....	120
Redux-Types.....	105	<i>Self-Compels</i>	120
NUMBERS AND TIME	105	USING SELF-COMPELS	120
Speedster-Types	106	Have One of Your Aspects	
Verne-Types	107	Invoked Against You.....	120
GOING CRAZY	107	Concede in a Conflict	120
EXAMPLE BREAKTHROUGH CREATION:		Roll 0 Pluses on Your Hero Dice	120
THE INCANTER	108	THE FATE POOL: THE GM'S FATE RESERVE	121
CHAPTER 6: ACTION.....	109	<i>Threat Level</i>	121
ASPECTS: THE SCENE OF THE ACTION.....	110	Succeed at a Deferred Cost	121
Creating Aspects	110	Banked Success.....	121
Narrative Addition	110	FATE POOL STRATEGY.....	121
Declare a Story Detail	111	Using the Fate Pool.....	122
Create an Advantage.....	111	Declare a Story Detail	122
Collateral Damage	111	Increase Opposition	122
Compelling an Aspect	111	Compel a Player Character Aspect	122
CREATED ASPECTS AND DIFFICULTY RATINGS... 111		Take the Next Turn	122
Removing Aspects.....	112	Pay Stunt Costs.....	122
Narrative Elimination.....	112	Forcing a Scene Concede.....	122
Overcome.....	112	FATE POOL STRATEGY II: THE CLIFFHANGER 122	
Create an Advantage.....	112	CHAPTER 7: ACTION LENSES.....	123
Using Aspects	112	CHALLENGES: WHEN IT GETS COMPLICATED...124	
Invoking Aspects	113	EXAMPLE CHALLENGES	125
Boosts.....	113	Creating Advantages in a Challenge	125
Compelling Aspects.....	113	Attacks During a Challenge	125
Aspect Difficulty Ratings	113	CONTESTS: WHEN GOALS COLLIDE.....	126
Defending with Aspect Difficulty Ratings.....	113		





A RACE AGAINST TIME	126
Creating Advantages in a Contest	126
Attacks in a Contest	127
NEGOTIATIONS: TALKING IT OUT	127
ASTRA VS. GANTRY	128
CONFLICTS: YOU'RE CAPES – EXPECT THEM...128	
Setting the Scene	128
Establishing Sides	129
Position and Movement in Conflicts	129
THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY	129
Conflict Actions	130
Full Defense.....	130
Teamwork.....	130
Resolving Attacks.....	130
WEAPON AND ARMOR RATINGS	130
Multiple Targets and Area Effects.....	131
<i>Multiple Targets</i>	131
<i>Attacking an Area</i>	131
<i>Creating an Advantage Against an Area</i>	131
Taking Stress.....	132
Consequences.....	132
Writing Consequences	132
Living with a Consequence.....	133
Recovering from a Consequence	133
<i>Recovery Rolls</i>	133
LIFE-THREATENING INJURIES.....	133
<i>Recovery Time</i>	133
Being Taken Out	134
USING AID	134
Taking Other Actions.....	134
Resource Conflicts.....	134
Ending a Conflict	134
THE SCENE RESOLUTION PHASE	135
Determining Scene Consequences.....	135
EXAMPLE SCENE CONSEQUENCES.....	136
Optional Rule: Finishing Compels.....	136

CHAPTER 8: RUNNING THE GAME 137**WHAT THE GAME MASTER DOES** 138

Start and End Scenes.....	138
Play the World and the NPC's.....	138
DRAMA IS BETTER THAN REALISM	138
LET THE PLAYERS HELP	139
USING A RULES REFEREE.....	139
Judge the Use of the Rules.....	139
Create Scenarios (and Nearly Everything Else) ...	139

WHAT TO DO DURING GAME CREATION 140

Out There vs. Down Here.....	140
ALTERNATE NEW HEROIC AGES.....	140
Top Down vs. Bottom Up	141
Small Scale vs. Large Scale.....	141

WHAT TO DO DURING PLAY 142

The Golden Rule.....	142
The Silver Rule.....	142
When to Roll Dice	143
Making Failure Awesome	143
<i>Blame the Circumstances</i>	143
<i>Use Succeed at a Cost</i>	144
<i>Let the Players Do the Work</i>	144

SETTING DIFFICULTY RATINGS 145

MORE FUN WITH DIFFICULTY RATINGS.....	145
Justify Your Choices.....	145
Dealing with Extraordinary Success.....	146
Dealing with Time	146
Game Time.....	146
Story Time.....	147
HOW MUCH TIME IS A SHIFT WORTH?.....	148
<i>Story Time and the Scope of an Action</i>	148
<i>Zoom In, Zoom Out</i>	149
Judging the Use of Skills and Stunts	149
Aspects and Details: Discovery vs. Creation ...	150
<i>When is Information an Advantage?</i>	150
Character Ratings and Specific Measurements...	150

DEALING WITH ASPECTS..... 151

Invokes	151
ALL THE WORLD'S YOUR STAGE	151
Compels.....	152
<i>Weak Compels</i>	152
Encouraging Self-Compels.....	152

CHAPTER 9: HOW TO DESCRIBE ANYTHING.... 153**STAGING SCENES** 154

Aspects and Staging	154
Permission or Denial.....	154
Situation Aspects and Difficulty Ratings.....	154
Situation Aspects as Hazards	155

WRITING UP THE OPPOSITION 156

Describing the NPC	156
THE HIGH CONCEPT CHARACTER ASPECT	156
Scene Extras.....	156
<i>Scene Extras and Power Levels</i>	157
<i>Scene Extras as Obstacles</i>	157
MOBS.....	157



Table of Contents

CREATIONS AND CONJURATIONS.....	158	CHAPTER 11: THE LONG GAME	177
Supporting Characters.....	158	ARCS AND CAMPAIGNS.....	178
THE 2-RATING CHARACTER.....	159	How to Build an Arc.....	178
Main Characters.....	159	Building a Campaign.....	179
EXAMPLE MAIN CHARACTER: BARK	159	ADVANCEMENT AND CHANGE.....	179
CREATING ORGANIZATIONS.....	160	Defining Milestones.....	179
Organization Type.....	160	Minor Milestones.....	180
Organization Aspects.....	160	Significant Milestones.....	181
Organization Skills and Resources	160	GAME BALANCE AND THE COLUMN	181
Organization Stress and Consequences	161	Major Milestones.....	182
Using Organizations	161	POWER CLASSES AND NEW STUNTS.....	182
Organizations and Resource Conflicts.....	161	GOING BACK TO CHARACTER CREATION	183
EXAMPLE RESOURCE CONFLICT:		World Advancement.....	183
HUMANITY FIRST VS THE SENTINELS	162	For Minor Milestones	183
PCs vs. Organizations.....	162	For Significant Milestones.....	183
Putting a Face on It.....	162	For Major Milestones.....	183
ASSAULT ON MAGGENI TOWER	163	Dealing with NPCs.....	184
Setup: Maggeni Tower	163	Recurring NPCs.....	184
Running Maggeni Tower	164	Advancing Organizations.....	184
CHAPTER 10:		CHAPTER 12: SUPERHEROIC REALISM... 185	
CAMPAIGNS, SCENARIOS, & SCENES.....	165	WHAT IS SUPERHEROIC REALISM?.....	186
CREATING THE CAMPAIGN.....	166	ASTRA.....	186
<i>Using the Campaign Worksheet</i>	<i>166</i>	Playing with Superheroic Realism	187
Campaign Setting.....	166	Power and Consequences.....	187
Heroic Scale	166	Heroic vs. Average Abilities	187
Campaign Issues	167	THE SUBCANIS CAMPAIGN	187
Current Issues	167	The Problem with Powers	187
Impending Issues	167	Power and Opposition.....	188
<i>Making Issues into Game Aspects</i>	<i>167</i>	Motivations.....	188
Staging and Casting	168	THE HELL REAVERS CAMPAIGN	188
General Notes.....	168	Death.....	188
CREATING SCENARIOS.....	168	And Life	189
The Scenario Problem.....	169	SUPERHERO THEMES	189
Scenario Stages.....	169	The Vigilante	189
INCITING INCIDENTS	169	ARTEMIS: CHICAGO'S OWN NIGHT-STALKER....	189
First Scene.....	169	Superteams	190
Story Questions	170	SPICE AND VARIETY	190
Creating the Opposition.....	170	Nemesis	190
Playing the Opposition.....	171	THE MEDIA OR GOVERNMENT NEMESIS.....	190
Right-sizing NPCs	171	And Super-Civilians.....	191
Creating Advantages for NPCs.....	171	CHANGE THE WORLD	191
Changing Modes of Conflict	171	OR DO SOMETHING ELSE	192
PLAYING OUT SCENES AND SCENARIOS	172	Option 1: Lighten Up.....	192
Set Up the First Scene.....	172	Option 2: Change the World.....	192
POWERFUL SESSION-STARTING		APPENDICES	193
NINJA GM TRICK.....	172	APPENDIX A: POWER SCALE, THE LADDER,	
Defining Scenes	172	& WEAPON/ARMOR RATINGS.....	194
Starting Scenes.....	173	APPENDIX B: THE OTHER STUNT LIST	195
VILLAINOUS PLANS	173	APPENDIX C: ONCE MORE WITH EVERYTHING... 198	
<i>Hit Competence, Proactivity, and Drama—Hard ...</i>	<i>174</i>	INDEX.....	200
<i>Hit Their Aspects (It's what they're there for.) ...</i>	<i>174</i>	WORKSHEETS	204
End Scenes with Forward Momentum.....	174		
The Scenario in Play	174		
Resolving the Scenario.....	175		
CAMPAIGN EXAMPLE 2: OCEANUS SOUTH.....	176		



THE NEW HEROIC AGE





On August 18th, for 3.2 seconds, every human being in the world simultaneously experienced total sensory deprivation—no sight, hearing, or physical sensation. A small percentage of individuals did later claim to have heard something, what one person described as “the sound of God striking a cosmic tuning fork.” However, when people remember the Event, what they most remember is not the sensory blackout or the worldwide power failure that came with it, but what happened next. They remember where they were when the first superhumans appeared.

—Prof. Charles Gibbons, **THE NEW HEROIC AGE**

The Event

The world ended on August 18th, at least the old one did. At work, at home, high in the sky, wherever we were, everyone in the world blacked out for 3.2 seconds. The world went away, and when it came back, everything was changed. We have been trying to adapt ever since, but first we had to survive.

Along with our personal blackouts everything running on electricity died too, at least temporarily and that was long enough. On the freeways unguided cars—the ones with the newer computer-regulated engines suddenly unpowered—became death-traps and instruments of destruction. Planes fell from the skies, cratering downtowns and suburban neighborhoods and spreading fuel-fires we couldn't put out because we couldn't get the firefighters and equipment to them in the instant gridlock. Hospitals were overwhelmed by the injured who could reach them, carried or on foot. Most power grids completely collapsed and, in many places, power was not restored for days. Worldwide, the death-toll climbed into the hundreds of thousands with urban centers becoming the biggest death-traps. To many it looked like the end of the world.

It would have been much worse for all of us except for the superhumans.

Whatever those 3.2 seconds were, they divided our world into Pre-Event and Post-Event history. The old world was sane, if not always nice. The new world is something unbelievable, crazy, a world out of the comic books. Yes, hundreds of thousands died, and lots more were injured and traumatized. But around the world, thousands responded to the chaos and death with spontaneous breakthroughs, displays of superhuman power ranging from walking through fire unburned or ghosting through fallen walls to the power to fly, lift away tons of wreckage, ignore all physical injury. They survived, sometimes in what seemed like the heart of Hell, and helped the rest of us survive.

Which didn't make them any less scary.

And not all of them helped; some of them took their new powers as license to loot along with the many others who took advantage of the breakdown of everything to get something for themselves. Those were the first “supervillains,” breakthroughs like James Earl Barth, a gangbanger who decided that the sonic powers that let him shatter brick were perfect for the bank-job he'd always wanted to do. While others were saving lives, he tried to rob First Chicago Bank. The media named him Aftershock and his battle with John Chandler—Atlas—is remembered as the first superhero-supervillain fight. Cellphone and security cameras caught it all and the world saw just what unleashed breakthrough powers could do.

It was a brave new world.

Yeah, I saw Atlas that day, though he didn't call himself that yet. I was in the business tower next to what's the new Prescott Building now when Flight 216 from New York dropped on it. We had all still been standing around trying to figure out why everyone had "zoned out" for a second and what it had to do with the power blackout. All I remember of the plane hitting was a sound so loud it didn't sound like an explosion. All the windows blew in on us—I got a couple dozen stitches later when a doctor was finally able to get around to me—and then I was walking out through the lobby, staggering, really, and I don't remember how I got downstairs. That's when I saw him, diving out of the Sun and into the burning wreckage. First I just sat down in the plaza and watched; but when people started coming out with burns or covered in blood I got busy.

Eventually we had to walk the wounded who could stay on their feet to the hospital emergency rooms and the "aid stations" the city was throwing up all over. We carried the rest on whatever we could use, but Atlas flew the worst to where they could get help, always going back in for more until he couldn't find any more bodies. By then some of the others had shown up too.

Minuteman, a guy moving so fast you had a hard time seeing him. Touches Clouds, literally blowing out fires. Iron Jack, clearing wreckage right alongside them. We didn't know their names until later, but we didn't care. A dude made out of iron? Who cared—he was saving your kid or your sister. You can say what you want about superhumans these days, but the capes? Spit on them, and you'll have a problem with me. A serious problem.

—Anonymous Blogger

A New World

Hindu scholars claim that the world has entered the next Vedic age. Many Shia and Sufi Muslims believe the Event a sign of the appearance of the Mahdi. The Catholic Church has declared the Event a Mystery, while many fundamentalist Christian sects consider it a sign of the End of Times. Scientists have no idea, although multiverse theory suggests some possibilities. The Awakened believe that the Event is evidence that the universe as we know it is a virtual reality inside a hypercomputer, most of us are simulations, and somebody changed the reality settings.

—Prof. Charles Gibbons, **THE NEW HEROIC AGE**

In the first Post-Event days, superhumans of all kinds helped to save lives, clean up, and get things going again. As scary as they were, they were needed, but when the crisis passed reaction set in. Nobody knew the cause of the Event or what it meant, but End of the World hysteria spread, and not just in religious circles. Could the Blackout happen again? Nobody knew. The travel and shipping industries took a hit beyond the loss of hundreds of planes, as many people refused to fly and some cities closed their airspaces to commercial traffic. Just as mysterious as the Event, superhumans were linked to the disaster in many people's minds. Certainly they weren't the cause, but they were a constant reminder of the trauma and crisis. And as more breakthroughs emerged in the days that followed it became apparent that, whatever *their* cause, they were here to stay. What did they mean for the world?

Almost worse, nobody knew *who* they all were. Many superhumans had gone public, even if their breakthroughs hadn't been open and spectacular, but many more hadn't; and breakthroughs like Aftershock proved that human nature hadn't been changed by the Event.

And if breakthroughs didn't publicly out themselves, they simply couldn't be identified; scientists scrambling to come up with a "breakthrough detector" came up short; they couldn't even detect breakthrough powers in action unless they were measuring for specific results. The only way to spot a breakthrough was to see him use his powers; until he started shooting lightning or flew away or did whatever else he could do, there was no way to pick him out of a crowd. Only a minority of breakthroughs decided to use their powers to do whatever they wanted and to Hell with everyone else, but paranoia rose as superhuman crime stories pushed disaster recovery out of the news.

Understandably, people reacted badly. After the first couple of times that violent breakthroughs perpetrated high body-count attacks on police or bystanders, public sentiment began to shift from gratitude to apprehension and fear. *Anti-breakthrough* crimes began to be reported, attacks on and even killings of public breakthroughs not powerful enough or quick enough to protect themselves. Many breakthroughs *could* protect themselves of course, with fatal consequences for their attackers, and other breakthroughs retaliated, often indiscriminately.



1: The New Heroic Age – The Event

Just two weeks after the Event, many states were passing Public Safety Laws allowing law enforcement agencies to indefinitely detain breakthroughs with powers that “present a threat to life and health.” The United States Congress passed the Containment Act in a bipartisan and bitterly fought vote that split party lines. The law empowered federal officials and courts to create national “containment centers” for breakthroughs arrested by state police or federal agents.

Air Force One had been one of the hundreds of planes that fell from the sky the day of the Event, leaving an untried Vice President to be sworn in as the new Commander In Chief. President Kayle’s first act had been to declare a State of Emergency, but he vetoed the Containment Act. The same day, he went on TV to talk to the American people about their civil liberties and to appeal to all breakthroughs willing to serve. Dozens of breakthroughs stepped forward and were sworn in as US Marshals, forming ad-hoc teams to act as first responders in incidents involving other breakthroughs—both criminals and victims—under the direction of local authorities. It was a temporary solution, but it helped stem the rising hysteria while Congress tried to formulate a new response.



Turning Points

Sam checked his watch for the fifth time in five minutes, and wondered again why he’d thought it was a good idea to use his juice to get a ringside seat to the hearings. Sure, President Kayle had surprised everybody when he stomped on the Containment Act—the guy had been a complete nonentity as a vice president, and watching him grow a backbone after his emergency swearing-in had been like watching a poodle decide it was a Doberman—but watching the new round of Emergency Security meetings, while senators from both parties droned on about what to do now, was turning out to be about as interesting as watching paint dry.

Normally Sam handled the Corruption Beat, but the Senate Ethics Committee hadn’t convened since the day of what everyone was calling The Event. That had been an interesting day, and Sam had missed all the action—he’d been in upstate New York for a nephew’s Bar Mitzvah and, other than the weirdness of the Blackout and the tense wait until the power, phones, and cable came back up, it had been a quiet day for his small hometown. Sam had been a wondering spectator along with the rest of the world and by the time he’d gotten back to Washington word had already come that Air Force One had made a big hole in the South Dakota prairie; he’d managed to miss Kayle’s emergency swearing-in.

Things had gotten really interesting then, but now...

“Isn’t democracy wonderful?” Linda whispered beside him, suppressing a yawn. He grinned at her echo of his thoughts.

“Shut up, both of you,” Simon hissed. Their fellow Associated Press reporter was usually good for a beer and a laugh, but today he wasn’t giving them any slack; he’d been focused on the speakers with raptor-like intensity since the press had been ushered in. Sam shook his head.

Since Kayle had stamped a big old veto all over the Containment Act and begun sending the Justice Department after state law enforcement agencies who’d started using their new laws to begin indiscriminately rounding up “dangerous breakthroughs,” neither party could decide whether to support him or impeach him. It made for great political theater, but only on the talk-shows; inside the hearings, since neither party had picked a side yet, speaker after speaker grabbed his turn at the mic and droned on about the need for security or the need to protect the public. They huddled with aides and trawled the internet for the latest opinion polls in between speeches, trying to get a feel for what their constituents wanted so they could lead the mob the way it already wanted to go.



“C’mon, Simon.” Sam nodded towards Senator Barker, who was living up to her name but seemed to be winding down. Just one minute left in her time, and the chairman was ruthlessly enforcing the hearing rules. “You think we’re going to get a byline out of any of this? Nothing’s going to get decided here, not even a decision about how to make a decision—you notice nobody is talking solutions, just gassing on that something has to be done. Nobody wants to be caught on the wrong side of their party’s eventual policy, whatever it is.”

Simon scowled, not ready to let it go even though Linda was rolling her eyes and Sam knew he’d been trying to get her to go out with him for weeks.

“You’re both wrong. I think everyone here is talking to their voters, laying the groundwork so they’ll look reasonable when they announce a decision they’ve already made.”

“Which is?”

“They’re going to go after Kayle. They’ve got to, he’s not playing ball. At least half the public thinks he’s standing in the way of even commonsense safety measures, and the other half is split between backing him and only half-agreeing. The half that thinks he’s being a complete dumbass is putting pressure on their congressmen to make them safe, and it’s an election year. They’ve got to—”

He cut himself off when the hearing room doors opened. Senator Barker had sat down, and now the Capitol Police were ushering some new people in.

“Elvis on a bike—” Linda sat up.

The newcomers who walked through the doors weren’t on the speaker list.

Sam had seen pictures and video—they all had. They knew the names they’d given themselves: Atlas, Ajax, Minuteman, Blackstone, Touches Clouds. Seeing them led into the hearing chamber, watched by Capitol Police, was a different experience, and the room exploded into noise as the chairman pounded his gavel and every reporter and journalist scrambled to take pictures with their phone-cams.

“Holy shit.” Sam added his own commentary.

Pictures really didn’t cover it. Atlas—John somebody—was a kid. Tall and rangy, he’d found a shiny blue racecar driver’s jumpsuit somewhere and stuck a white cape on it. Even under the mask, you could tell he was young, and he led the way but didn’t get more than a step ahead of the big guy at his back. Somewhere since their last Chicago press conference, Ajax had managed to get ahold of an actual suit of Greek armor, helmet and all. He didn’t have his maul—he’d probably set it down outside, and Sam gave a laugh at the quick thought of any of the Capitol Police trying to move it from wherever he’d put it.

Someone had found Minuteman a patriotic-themed red-white-and-blue spandex bodysuit; an Olympics aficionado, Sam thought it looked like the kind of suit worn by speedskaters and the man did have the stripped and ripped physique to actually look good in it. Blackstone, who Sam had heard really was a stage magician, was dressed for his act in a black tux and opera cape. Only Touches Clouds wasn’t in a costume—just a black business suit; but as fine and regal as she looked she could wear anything.

“The outfits are new...” Sam trailed off. Simon wasn’t listening and Linda was too busy watching. Damn, Atlas might be a kid, but he didn’t look like walking into a room full of media and some of the most powerful politicians in the country was any kind of a problem for him. The rest didn’t look bothered any, either. The Blackstone guy looked amused at the noise.

And Linda was edging back in her seat, checking the exits. Sam shrugged. Linda had made her opinion of breakthroughs who could ignore anything short of anti-armor artillery, forget about the guns and tasers of the Capitol Police, real plain in her last few articles: “Put them where they can’t hurt normal people” pretty much summed it up.

Sam was still having a hard time believing the things they could do, but maybe being able to do those things explained the confidence he saw.

The chairman welcomed the colorful group as soon as the crowd-noise died, and they took their seats. Everyone waited while aides checked their microphones, dialing one down when a spike of feedback made everyone wince. He thanked them all for accepting the Senate’s invitation while cameras flashed and Simon frantically checked his recorder. Sam had never turned his on; he knew Simon was good for a copy.

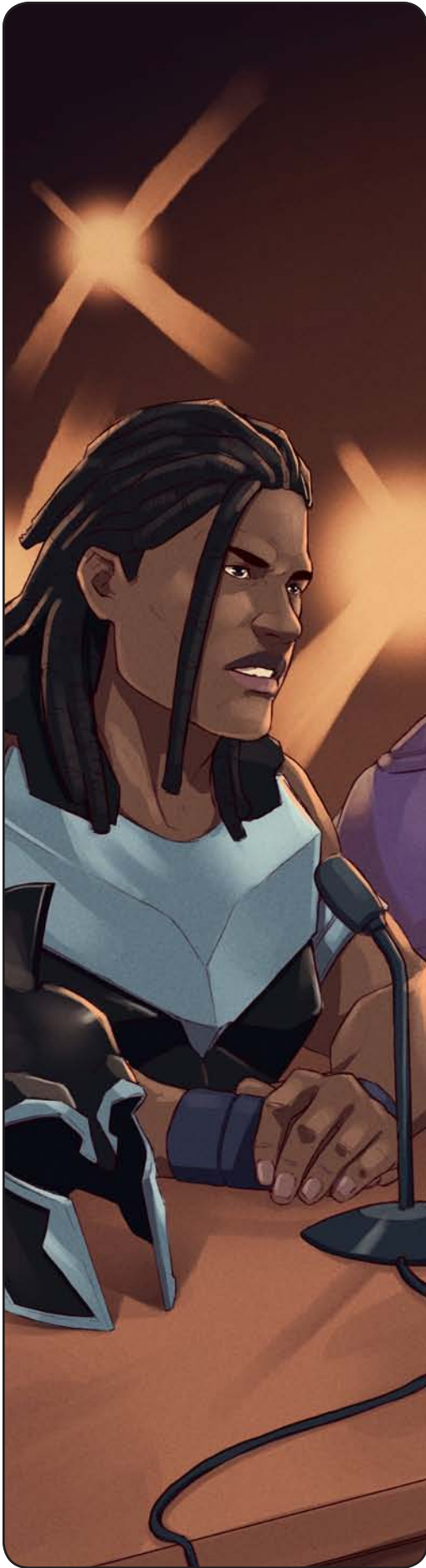
“Thank you again for coming,” the chairman concluded. “Now, this is not a formal hearing but could you give us your backgrounds for my colleagues and the press?”

Atlas gave his real name and “codename” in a clear voice and they went around the group. Minuteman was the only one who didn’t give his real name or say what he did, and the face-obscuring bike helmet he wore meant the media was still guessing at it. The chairman’s mouth tightened at the obvious omission—Sam made a note to ask what he thought of “mystery men” if there was a question and answer session afterward—but the senior senator let it pass.

When they finished, he nodded.

“Now, I understand that, agreeing to appear here today, you have asked to have Ajax—Professor Gibbons—speak for you, that is correct?”





“That is, indeed, correct.” The big man took off his Greek helmet, displaying a head-full of tight dark dreadlocks. He looked more like the kind of guy Sam was used to seeing keeping rowdy club-lines in line than a tenured university professor.

He set the helmet on the table beside his mic, and continued in his cultured but deep bass voice. “Blackstone is a veteran performer, but as a teacher I am much more used to taking questions and clarifying points.”

“And what do you teach?”

“For undergraduates, classical and early Western history. For graduate students, political history.”

“You have, of course, been following the current debates?”

“It is history.”

“Certainly. History in the making. A decision about who we are and who we want to be.” The chairman searched the small stack of papers beside him, pulling a sheet. “I believe that, last Thursday, you answered a question from gentlemen of the Chicago press by saying, and I quote, ‘Attempting to regulate or control the new superhuman population through any form of extraordinary measures would be a tragic mistake, for our citizens and our nation.’”

“Yes.”

“And this was just after the, let’s see, Diamond Street Caper? A ‘supervillain’ calling himself Rickets had just successfully robbed three of Diamond Street’s jeweler boutiques for half a million in jewelry and stones?”

“That is correct. The police will find him, and the Sentinels will apprehend him.”

“Which will not help the five dead employees or their families. Yet Rickets was a known breakthrough, or at least the police knew about him. Isn’t that true?”

“It is.”

“And Mr. Rickets was already known to have a questionable past. Assault. Petty theft. Drug possession. Nations around the world are seeing outbreaks of lawlessness committed by breakthroughs, often with a tragic cost of life. And you suggest that we treat this as merely a police matter? That we wait for the tragedies?”

“Yes, senator, I am. We all are.”

That was all. Sam could see the chairman, the distinguished and long-serving senator from New York, struggling with it. And with Ajax and the rest of them. The big guy wasn’t being rude, or impatient, but they were in a room with some of the most powerful power-players of Washington, and he sounded like he was answering questions from a student. Sam had seen CEOs melt into puddles in this room, or go up in flames, and Ajax wasn’t even sweating, just sitting there like a fricken’ Greek hero—sure one out of Africa but with at least one god in his family tree. The others beside him didn’t look any more worried. Was this what happened when you realized you were strong enough nobody could touch you?

The chairman took a sip of water, tested his smile, and finally gave up waiting for Ajax to elaborate.

“What is the expression, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure? Can you tell us why you don’t agree?”

Ajax looked at his teammates, faced front again. Sam held his breath. So did the rest of the room.

“Senator, are you familiar with the social theory of force?”

“Excuse me?”

“Karl Marx famously defined the power-relationships in society as dictated by the ownership and control of the means of production. Ownership of the means of production and control over the product generated is the fundamental factor in delineating different economic systems. Capitalism is defined as private ownership and control over the means of production, where the surplus value of the product becomes a source of income, deserved or not, for its owners. Socialism is defined as public ownership and control of the means of production so that the surplus value benefits everybody, not just the capitalist.”

Simon looked like he'd swallowed something sideways, and at least half the room had too. The guy was sitting in the Capitol, in front of a hostile audience, and talking Marxism?

The lecture continued. “However valuable Karl Marx’s social and economic theories might be, his prescriptions were fundamentally flawed. He was also not looking at the true source of power. Mao Tse-tung less famously said, ‘Power is in the barrel of a gun,’ and he was closer to the truth.

“Historically, gentlemen, force—military and police power—has been the defining power of a state. Call it the socialization of force, if you will. The leader of any state is the man or woman who can point most of its guns at someone. This is true whether the state is democratic or despotic, and the modern age has produced military weapons with power far beyond what any merely private citizen can hope to possess or wield. Tanks. Artillery. Missiles. Planes and bombs. Modern industry has given the modern state an almost complete monopoly on force, even in nations where citizens retain the right to keep and bear arms.

“But that was before the Event.”

“I don’t understand.” The chairman spoke for everybody.

“Gentlemen, my new friend Atlas—the young man sitting beside me who can punch through walls, outfly jets, shrug off hits that would drop an elephant—is a tactical weapon capable of matching an armor division. You cannot stop him from going where he wants to go, or doing what he wants to do when he gets there. And he is only one of the more extreme examples of superhuman power we are seeing every day. And you cannot disarm him.

“And that last fact, gentlemen, is what makes this moment so dangerous for all of us. You cannot disarm him. You can only try and contain him, at great cost, or kill him, at greater cost. And although most breakthroughs are not like him, or like myself, many of us are exhibiting powers which make us weapons in one way or another, at least as deadly as a gun. Many more of us, like Minuteman and Blackstone here, can go where they want to go and do not have to stay anywhere they don’t want to stay, which makes even passive restraint impossible. We are armed and dangerous and you cannot restrain or disarm us—you can only deal with us. On the day of the Event, force was randomly, capriciously, privatized.”

The mic spiked again as at least half the sitting senators erupted and the chairman banged his gavel.

“Order! Order! Be quiet! Mr. Gibbons, you are not reassuring us.”

“With respect, we are not trying to reassure you. We are trying to scare you. Many of you are scared right now, but you are not scared enough to consider anything beyond your political careers. Your constituents want to be safe, gentlemen. Well, so do your newly empowered constituents. Right now, all that we have to deal with are a few criminals among us who are suddenly gifted, a few emboldened by their breakthroughs who think they can take what they want now, do what they want. But their numbers are small, and the Sentinels and the other teams that are forming will show them differently. Working with the law, gentlemen, because we have as much interest as anybody in preserving the law.

“And this, gentlemen, is because we know that the law is the only thing that protects us from bloody necessity, from the need to exercise the force that we have been given to preserve our lives and our liberties. If our government makes us criminal, then our numbers will not be small. If you force us to decide between dying on our feet or living on our knees, then you will destroy this country. Something might survive, but it won’t be an America where the Bill of Rights has any meaning. It will not be the Land of the Free.

“I have named myself for a Greek hero of the Trojan War, but now I would like to play the oracle—hopefully not Cassandra. Many, most, governments around the world have enacted their versions of the



1: The New Heroic Age – The Event

Containment Act, and are now implementing them. Some of them will repent of their actions quickly enough to preserve themselves. Many will not. Some of them are otherwise liberal and lawful enough that their new laws will not be so oppressive as to breed immediate and deep opposition. Many are not. Nations who already persecute their religious and ethnic minorities will suddenly find that their victims have powerful champions. Despotism governments will not even try to restrain their impulse to control the breakthroughs they can trust and kill the breakthroughs they cannot, and people already fighting rebellions and civil wars will find that losses will grant power to the losers.

“A few nations may successfully co-opt their breakthroughs, turn them into a new arm of police and military power. Those nations will survive in something like their current forms. America may be one of them, but only if this country keeps the faith and trust of its newly empowered citizens, if it allows us to serve the greater good, or not, as we see fit and within the law, rather than attempting to coerce our obedience. No man or woman will keep faith with a nation that does not keep faith with them.”

Simon’s mouth formed a silent “wow” as the room erupted again. Lisa looked like she was going to be sick, frozen in her chair, and Sam knew Simon, geeky-cute as he was, was going to be looking somewhere else for female company. She didn’t get it. They’d all heard the same speech, but all she’d heard was a declaration of war. A lot of people would, and this bit of hearing testimony was going viral before dark. But Sam had just heard a declaration of allegiance, provisionally. Simon had heard it too, he was nodding. They exchanged looks past Lisa’s head.

They both knew what Lisa’s next byline was going to be like, and if they wanted the people that counted right now—the people who were going to decide what America was going to be—to make the right choice, then those people were going to have to hear what Sam and Simon had just heard. They were going to have to hear it from their constituents, which meant their constituents were going to have to hear it first.

“Beers later?” Simon asked, an invitation meant for one.

“Hell yes. I’m really eloquent when I’m too drunk to drive.”

“Works for me. We’ll spell-check in the morning.”

Years after the fact, historians generally credit the Sentinels’ senate panel appearance as the moment that swung the public’s support behind the self-declared superheroes.

An unsung hero in the whole affair is Alex Chandler, Atlas’ older brother, who may have done more than anybody else to shape the Post-Event world. Possessing a low opinion of how people thought (at least in herds, and as a partner at one of Chicago’s premier marketing and public-relations agencies, he would know), he got to his brother and his brother’s new friends before their first press conference and talked fast and hard about branding, image, and public relations.

Alex Chandler pointed out that a superhuman in a ski mask was a menace, but a helpful superhuman in a colorful costume, masked or not, was a superhero. He also pointed out that it would probably be harder for the government to lock away well-known superheroes than frightening superhumans. Thanks to Alex, the Saviors of Chicago debuted with codenames and costumes when we saw them in their first media events and, when President Kayle sent out his appeal, the group named themselves the Sentinels and publically offered their services to the City of Chicago before making their appearance in Washington.

The Sentinels were the first but other teams quickly followed suit, and as positive stories of the teams’ efforts hit the news, the atmosphere tipped from near mass-hysteria to mass adulation. President Kayle continued to block any proposed “federal solution” beyond the creation of the Department of Superhuman Affairs—which he controlled—and he used the Justice Department as a blunt-force weapon, taking the states to court and forcing them to rescind their superhuman detainment laws. The state governments gradually came to terms with the superheroes among them—largely because the Marshal Initiative breakthroughs and the capes (as they were already being called) simply left states that continued to try and legislate against them to deal with their “supervillains” themselves.

President Kayle’s Marshal Initiative helped, but it was the breakthroughs who dressed up, gave themselves superhero codenames, placed themselves at the service of local law enforcement, and later formed the first Crisis Aid and Intervention Teams (the CAIs) that really helped to calm us down. Sure the world was a lot stranger than it had been just weeks ago, but we had superheroes now. Heroes who would watch over us.

—Terry Reinhold, *RISE OF THE CAPES*



Breakthroughs

A breakthrough is an unpredictable survival mechanism, and the degree of empowerment it provides varies widely. Sometimes it's just enough to deal with the situation, other times far beyond that. For example, accidental electrocution kills and injures hundreds if not thousands of people every year, so electrokinetic breakthroughs are relatively common. But a breakthrough could simply make you immune to electrical shock, or give you taser-like abilities. Or, as it did for Volt, it could give you the power to drain electrical systems, generate electromagnetic pulses, fly by electrostatic levitation, and throw ball lightning.

—BARLOW'S GUIDE TO SUPERHUMANS

Measuring the Miraculous

(By Dr. Jonathan Beth, presented at the Fifth Annual Geneva Symposium.)

I like to tell my colleagues that science is hosed, that we are back in the days of the Greek Philosophers who argued that the world was made of fire, or water, or atoms, but could not advance beyond these arguments because they had no means to test their theories, no way to create falsifiable experiments. For the scientifically uninitiated, “falsifiable” means “able to be proven true or false by observational results.” And let's be clear: after ten years theories on the origin and enabling laws of breakthroughs abound. Indeed they proliferate like kittens, and like kittens they are often truly adorable. The quantum field is often invoked, and collective unconscious, and multiverse probability function. But the test of falsifiability has yet to be passed, we have not yet been able to prove or disprove any theory observationally.

So where does that leave us? It leaves us where science started; with observation and measurement. I will now talk about what we do know.

We know that breakthroughs appear to have no genetic source. Pulling apart the genome, we find no Breakthrough Gene. Genetic samples taken from breakthroughs show no changes to their genetic codes, no “flight” or “electrical control” genes. Even physically transformed breakthroughs show no genetic alterations to accompany their new forms. The fact that animals have not also begun expressing breakthroughs does give us one inferential clue; if breakthrough powers are not genetic, but the phenomena is confined to humans, the source may lie in the one thing we have that the rest of the animal kingdom lacks: sapience. Breakthroughs appear linked to human self-awareness.

This link is bolstered by the way we know breakthroughs appear. We know that breakthroughs express themselves in moments of high stress. Stress here is a broad term, and the sources of stress are multiple. Physical stress brought on by pain or extraordinary exertion, emotional stress created by extremes of fear or anger, intense grief or hope. These stressors are generally “negative” events, but not always; sudden extremes of determination, moments of spiritual or intellectual epiphany, have also triggered the expression of breakthroughs. What they all have in common is a “spike” of mental effort, a significant deviation from the normal brain function—confirmed both anecdotally and, in a few rare incidents, recorded.

Naturally not every “spike” expresses a breakthrough—if it did we would be buried in superhumans today. Individuals may experience many “spike” moments in their lives before one results in expression, and most never do. “One in one thousand” is a number loosely bandied about, and overly optimistic; the odds of a trauma resulting in the expression of a breakthrough is one in thousands, but all breakthroughs have the same general aim. Which brings us to our next observation of the link between self-awareness and breakthrough expression: purposefulness.

The obvious observation is that breakthroughs are most often expressions of our survival instincts; whatever a breakthrough's manifestation, it is immediately preservative—if the new superhuman's life is in danger the breakthrough will save it. This is, in fact, why many if not most breakthrough powers are not terribly useful in the normal conduct of day to day life; most often they are oriented to dealing with dangerous circumstances, situations outside the norm.

Beyond purposefulness, we come to more psychological actors. The strength of the mental response appears to determine the intensity and scope of the breakthrough, although this observation is highly subjective and therefore largely unverifiable. The personality of the new superhuman is also strongly determinative; aggressive individuals will express aggressive powers allowing them to “strike back,” while passive or less confrontational individuals will likely express powers that allow them to survive or escape the situation. Again, these are largely subjective observations, but the Fight, Survive, or Evade paradigm appears to be broadly true.

Beyond our focus on the situation and psychology of the breakthrough, there is the learned element, by which I mean the cultural matrix and expectations that surround the breakthrough. In the United States, especially after the first weeks following the Event, breakthroughs have tended to follow the Superhero Paradigm; the more powerful breakthrough expressions most often conform to superhero archetypes—superhuman strength, flight, control of the elements, various forms of energy control and projection, physical transformations, etcetera. Over the past decade, the public visibility of and media and entertainment focus on superheroes with these “traditional” powers has



1: The New Heroic Age – The Breakthrough

strengthened the Superhero Paradigm, both throughout the US and in the nations which broadly share what we refer to as Western Culture—certainly in all places where Hollywood and the American entertainment industry have deep penetration and hold on the public imagination.

But there are other cultural matrixes and breakthrough paradigms. In older cultures more in touch with what we condescendingly call folklore and myth, breakthroughs also express as supernaturals—again a somewhat condescending term, but descriptive of the embodied myths that have appeared. Djinn, dragons, fairy folk, witches and wizards, and numerous projections of less pleasant things—demons, monsters, creatures of old nightmares. Deeply religious breakthroughs are also as likely to express miracles and holy powers, and even become divine avatars shaped by their religious traditions.

Perhaps the most disturbing breakthroughs for scientists are scientific expressions of breakthrough powers, researchers and scientists who are suddenly able to make amazing scientific

breakthroughs and build technologies based on them; because of course these wonders of science only work when the breakthrough builds them himself.

So we see purposefulness, psychological determinativeness, cultural programming. The inescapable conclusion is that breakthroughs rise from the wellsprings of our own humanity. Some philosophers have hypothesized that the human race, reaching levels of population beyond any in history, and with the Information Revolution enabling the broadcasting of shared memes like never before, has achieved a kind of Human Singularity in which our ability to perceive and shape our own reality, collectively and individually, has taken a great leap forward. Or not. The quantum stuff and multiverse probability theory, which at least has math to support it, is more attractive to a scientist like myself.

But we don't know. And won't know until the correct theory presents an actual experimental structure that can allow falsification.

The Breakthrough

The Event may have been a one-time thing, but breakthroughs appear to be here to stay. Modern historians have coined the phrase the “New Heroic Age,” and have suggested that all this happened at least once before in human history to give rise to our oldest myths and legends. If this is true, then the New Heroic Age may have an end. Regardless, we live with superhuman powers in the here and now. So what can we say about them?

Every superhuman has an origin story, a moment that changed everything. One minute you're normal, the next you are doing impossible things. Let's look at some of the reported causes.

Physical trauma, pain, and fear are the biggies; probably three in four breakthroughs are triggered by accidents and other events that would likely result in maiming or death. Trauma-breakthroughs tend to result in the most *physical* powers; superhuman strength and toughness, superhuman speed, intangibility, teleportation, telekinesis, electrokinesis, physical transformations, etc. They are oriented first at immediate survival.

Extreme physical exertions, days of continual physical stress, sleep deprivation and other stressors that can alter the body and mind's chemistry, have also been known to trigger breakthroughs. Mind-altering drugs such as LSD and PCP have also triggered breakthroughs, but origin chasing through chemical experimentation is *not* advised; drug-induced breakthroughs tend to be very strange, often result in psychotic breaks, and are the most likely to result in weird physical transformations.

Enlightenment breakthroughs, spiritual awakenings or moments of epiphany, are sometimes experienced by religious believers, practitioners of magic traditions, and seekers of spiritual enlightenment. Also called Eureka Moment breakthroughs, they are often triggered by “vigils”—hours, days, or months of purification, prayer, meditation, or ritual—but they can also

be sparked by a transient but ecstatic spiritual experience. Enlightenment breakthroughs are the most likely breakthroughs to manifest purely beneficial powers, such as healing the body and spirit and enlightened awareness.

Then there are the breakthroughs that defy categorization. A few very rare people have reported experiencing effortless and trauma-free breakthroughs—they may not even know when it happened. Some children have achieved breakthroughs just by *wishing* real hard for something. These sorts of breakthroughs tend to resemble Eureka Moment breakthroughs, but are usually much more physical and less “spiritually elevated.”

Gasping, pulse pounding, I pushed against the roof above me and felt something deep inside me change. Cold fire ran through my bones. I shrieked and my next breath filled me with the whole world. Tearing through the crushed roof of my car, I heaved aside the chunk of roadway above my head as easily as clearing cheap drywall, and stood, blinking at the disaster around me.

—Astra, **WEARING THE CAPE**



Classifying Breakthrough Powers

Kinetics make up one of the largest superhuman categories, with many sub-categories. Each kinetic type controls, shapes, or even creates a single substance or force. There are, for example, the elemental kinetics: aerokinetics, hydrokinetics, pyrokinetics, and terrakinetics, who can manipulate air, water, fire, and earth. Electrokinetics are more common, cryokinetics less so. Telekinetics can move anything with their mind they could otherwise manipulate manually.

—BARLOW'S GUIDE TO SUPERHUMANS

Breakthrough powers are so distinct and often unique that it would almost be easier to say what they *can't* do than what they can—which would be unwise since human variety is infinite and so are breakthrough powers; call something impossible and you are likely to be proven wrong. Since the Event, scientists have been scrambling to identify and classify types of breakthrough powers, and although there is as yet no unified system there are some accepted terms used pretty much universally. The one ironclad rule appears to be that breakthrough powers cannot reproduce themselves by triggering new breakthroughs (at least directly).

Power Types

The first big public breakthroughs, the ones who gave themselves superhero names, have had types named after them. Alternatively, distinctive power types have been given their own names. For example; today any breakthrough who exhibits superhuman strength, durability, and the ability to fly is an Atlas-Type. Ajax-Types display “mere” superhuman strength and durability, and breakthroughs who *transform* into their strong and durable form are transforming Ajax-Types. *Two* superfast breakthroughs appeared in a big way the day of the Event, Minuteman and Redshift, so their power got named Speedster-Type.

These power names were media creations that stuck; as reports continued to proliferate and scientists began ordering powers into groups, classification became more orderly and often involved Greek or Latin. A whole category of types were named “—kinetic” types. *Kinetic* means movement or to move. *Telekinesis* (*tele* meaning distant) has long been the accepted description for the power to move something by pure mental power, so naturally superhumans whose core power is the ability to control an element or force in some way are included in this category.

Today any of these three methods; iconic hero name, descriptive name, or Latin name are used interchangeably. For example, Volt is the named hero of the Volt-Type power, but he could also be called an electrokinetic, and the public will recognize the power type of a new hero or villain described with either term.

Power Classes

Not all breakthrough powers are equal. *Barlow's Guide to Superhumans* is the source of the A to D classification system and, although scientists find it woefully inexact, the public loves it since it reduces everything to a descriptive letter-rating.

The ratings run from D Class (not much above normal human ability in terms of strength, and equal to civilian weapons in terms of damage) to A Class (able to bench-press tanks and maybe toss them a few yards, or able to deal damage equal to military artillery). C Class durability means immunity to most small-arms fire, while A Class durability means being able to survive direct hits from field artillery. Speed, in the case of flight and other movement-enabling powers, has a similar scale. Outside of strength



1: The New Heroic Age – The Breakthrough

and the ability to inflict and survive damage or run fast, the classes describe such things as depth and breadth of power (see the previous *Barlow's Guide* electrokinetic entry). This can be very subjective.

Breakthrough intensity may range from “just enough to handle the situation” to “near godlike power,” but most superhumans occupy the low end of the intensity scale. So for every A Class Atlas-Type known, there are roughly two B Class Atlas-Types and five C Class Atlas Types (there are no D Class Atlas Types since the power of flight seems to drop away below C Class). The letter-rating system was scaled to place the original and iconic breakthroughs such as Atlas at the top, and at the time nobody imagined *stronger* breakthroughs. They should have; in recent years a few rare A+ and A++ types have begun to appear. *Barlow's Guide* has taken to referring to these superhumans as Ultra Class and Omega Class.

Unclassifiable Powers

Some powers defy typing or classification. How does someone classify a superhuman's ability to apparently disappear into another, probably imaginary, world? Or the ability to instantly recover if he is killed, but not if sick or injured? Or godlike serendipity? In these cases D to Ultra reflects a sliding scale of Interesting to Completely Freaking Unbelievable, or A Little Useful to The Greatest Power Ever. No legally recognized power scale has ever been codified; it's mostly *Barlow's Guide* and subjective opinion—a hopeful hero might represent himself as A Class, but recruiters will have their own way of determining power scale. Still, if you hear that someone is an A Class Wishcrafter-Type, respect him like you would an A Class Atlas-Type and you can't go too far wrong.



Post-Event History

As much as breakthroughs have reshaped societies around the world, they have also changed the fates of nations and forever reshaped the geopolitical balance of power struck in the 20th Century.

Political historians looking back at the first weeks and months after the Event acknowledge that America’s anti-breakthrough moment could have easily continued with disastrous consequences. The Kayle Veto and the Sentinel’s nation-grabbing senate appearance are generally credited for breaking the country’s growing anti-breakthrough hysteria. Many nations didn’t have a President Kayle to put the brakes on, and they implemented superhuman registration and internment laws only to reverse course later. Other nations didn’t get the chance to regret their choices, and the reasons for the difference in outcomes are instructive.

In both Canada and Mexico the national governments passed registration and internment laws aimed at “dangerous” breakthroughs. In Canada, many supported the law and many opposed it but dozens of Canadian breakthroughs fled south across the US border—where President Kayle granted them political asylum. Breakthroughs that stayed fought the laws in court while their families appealed to political leaders and the public, and within a year the worst aspects of the new laws had been struck down as civil rights violations and were rescinded by legislation. Most of the refugees went home.

In Mexico, the government policy of drafting or interning known and dangerous breakthroughs left new superhumans with no support from law enforcement when the Mexican drug cartels came to “enlist” them by threatening their families. A few fought back, and were even able to get themselves and their families out of the country, but if they didn’t get out then corrupt local officials often handed them over to the cartels. Either way they were drafted by the federales or the drug lords. By the time the Mexican government realized its mistake it was too late: the already powerful cartels now had their own superhuman forces in what became a three-way civil war of the government vs. the cartels vs. independent breakthroughs. Mexico City completely lost control of several of its northern provinces.

This dynamic played itself out around the world. Governments that depended upon elections for their legitimacy, had strong civil rights protections, and who weren’t already fighting or oppressing restive populations, tended to come through the Event and its aftermath intact. Of the others, Mexico wasn’t the worst.

North Korea simply imploded as breakthrough inmates tore apart its chain of hellish concentration camps and led mass escapes to the countryside and the cities, where more breakthroughs joined them. The North Korean military held together until one general attempted to use his division’s nerve gas arsenal on the city of Kanggye after it declared itself with the rebels, and was shot by his immediate subordinate. The Great Leader and his family disappeared in the ensuing chaos, and most government officials were massacred by government troops under commanders trying to seize local control and stay on top. China had problems of its own, and only the swift military invasion of North Korea by South Korea—ineffectually opposed as army units switched sides and local populations hailed them as liberators—followed by massive economic aid from the south, from Japan (food only), and from the United States, kept the citizens of the collapsed state from swift starvation. North Korea formed a provisional representative body, and officially merged with South Korea on the first day of the Korean New Year.

The China War

China stayed out of the Korean mess because it had its own problems. Although the nation had been gradually liberalizing its economy before the Event happened, its Communist Party leadership still ruled with an iron fist. With the memory of Tiananmen Square still fresh, after the Event, the government attempted to round up all revealed superhumans and quietly began executing any who proved “politically unreliable”—including “Chinese Nationals” of suspect ethnicity or religion. The Tibetan Uprising came within weeks of the Event. Following an Uyghur massacre, Xinjiang also went into breakthrough-led revolt.

In response, the Chinese government began purging all breakthroughs not already members of the Communist Party of China or the military. Before the end of the year flash-revolts had blown up all across China and in some regions the local military commanders joined the revolution. After weeks of trying to bring the insurrectionist regions back into line, the Chinese government resorted to nuclear strikes on three new “capitals”: Hotan, Lhasa, and Chengdu. The strikes killed millions, and created thousands of new breakthroughs. The United Nations Security Council condemned China, and United Nations forces—mainly NATO, Indian, and Russian troops—moved into Tibet, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Anhui, and other breakaway regions. President Kayle threatened unrestricted nuclear reprisal if the CPC bombed any more of its cities.

China fell apart and the CPC managed to hold on to only a wide strip of northern China around Beijing, from Liaoning to Shandong on the east coast to Hubei and Gansu in central China. The rest, including a recreated Manchuria, declared independence and was recognized by the UN. Staring at a humanitarian crisis of indescribable proportions, the Sentinels and many of the US’s fledgling



1: The New Heroic Age – History

superteams sent heroes to China to keep the worst fighting out of its urban centers and get aid to the shattered and in many cases starving regions.

United Nations bases (mostly manned by Indian and NATO troops) remain in many of the Secession States to guarantee their independence and provide economic support. The China War killed millions of normals and hundreds of breakthroughs (while creating many more), and today the Chinese states have the highest population of superhumans in the world.

What is left of the People's Republic of China is failing economically while fighting ongoing lowgrade insurgencies and a tendency towards local superhuman warlords (a problem shared by some of the Secession States). This state of affairs is unstable, and while the Secession States hate the PRC, the Chinese aren't thrilled to be even *protectively* occupied by foreign troops. Most students of history expect the PRC to end One Party Rule, reconstitute its government into a more open democracy, and to join with the Secession States (with the probable exceptions of Tibet, Xinjiang, Manchuria, and Hong Kong) in forming a new Chinese Confederation.

With both Mexico and China, President Kayle moved swiftly but carefully. He asked for and received permission from Congress to send troops to China with the UN intervention, and, after pressuring Mexico to rewrite its new laws, was able to send advisors and material to aid the Mexican government in regaining control of its northern provinces.

In both actions, the US Military paid close attention to the way Mexican and Chinese super-insurgents fought with their country's regular militaries, and took notes. All branches of the armed forces offered huge recruitment bonuses to breakthroughs with militarily useful powers, and boosted enlistment bonuses for recruits who experienced breakthroughs during the stress of basic training (what they call Boot Camp Breakthroughs). At the President's insistence, they worked hard to develop a modern military doctrine capable of meeting the new challenges, which was a very good thing; it was needed very soon. President Kayle finished his partial first term and was reelected by a grateful public, which meant he was Commander in Chief when the Caliphate War began.



The Rise and Fall of the Caliphate

At its height, the old Ottoman Empire stretched from the heart of the Middle East to encompass modern-day Turkey and much of North Africa. It held Baghdad and the holy cities of Islam under its rule, but also Egypt and Constantinople. It conquered Greece and Hungary in Europe, and even laid siege to Vienna. The Ottoman Sultan ruled over most of the Muslim world as the Caliph, the leader of the Ummah (the Muslim community). Glorious Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, the capitol of the Eastern Roman Empire and center of the Eastern Orthodox Church until its conquest in 1453, could justifiably claim to be the greatest city in the world. The rising power of Europe, and of growing nationalist movements within the empire's borders, led to its decline. After World War One, the greatly reduced empire collapsed completely. The Sultanate was abolished, and what remained became modern day Turkey.

In post-Event Turkey, Armagan Acar, an army officer and ardent nationalist, found himself possessed with the secret gift of superhuman persuasion; he could turn the loyalties of whole regiments and crowds with his words. Descended from old Turkish nobility, Armagan believed himself destined to be the new Sultan of a resurgent Ottoman Empire and Caliph of a united Muslim polity. Leaving the army and entering politics, he rose to be elected Prime Minister. He reformed the constitution of Turkey to make Islam the state religion, and called for a "reunification of the Ummah". Traveling to address the parliaments of the states of the Arab League, he built a diplomatic-military alliance with Turkey at its head, ratified by treaty as the Caliphate.



The Caliphate might have evolved into a true Turkic-Arabic federation given time, but when the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank demanded to join, Israel refused to even consider it. After several years of worsening diplomatic relations and mutual threats, superhuman-led terrorist groups—the PLO, Hezbollah, and Al-Qaeda—staged a popular rising against the Jewish West Bank settlements while calling for aid from the Caliphate. The Caliphate militaries had been prepared, and Turkey and Lebanon attacked northern Israel while Egypt and Saudi Arabia attacked from the south.

The Caliphate War lasted five days, during which two-thirds of Israel was overrun, holding out only because of its citizen supersoldiers. After the initial massacres and expulsion from the West Bank and northern Israel, the supersoldier-stiffened Israeli military, supported by US air power and the first arriving US Marine supersoldier squads and mobilized American superteams, was able to rally and push back into the West Bank to rescue what few Jewish residents remained alive.

Then somebody detonated a nuclear device in the Israeli port of Tel Aviv. No nation or group has ever claimed credit, but Israel responded by launching nuclear missiles from its submarine fleet, nuking Ankara and killing Prime Minister Acar. The United States, already fully mobilizing to fulfill its treaty obligations, demanded the unconditional surrender of all Caliphate member-states with a threat of unrestricted warfare. The Caliphate States surrendered two days later.

The Treaty of Jerusalem broke up the Caliphate. It turned West Istanbul and the wedge of Turkish territory on the west side of the Bosphorus into a territory of the United States, created the state of Kurdistan from portions of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, and forced the former member-states to recognize the state of Eretz Israel—which now included Gaza and the West Bank. The neighboring Arab states were required, with the aid of US and Israeli money, to absorb the expelled refugee Palestinian populations into full citizenship.

The outcome of the Caliphate War settled nothing; Turkey and the Arab League states claim they were enslaved by Prime Minister Acar’s “powers” (never proven, but suggested by personal observation, statistical analysis, and his meteoric rise from an unknown military officer to leader of Turkey in only four years). Many claim that *Israel* nuked Tel Aviv to justify going nuclear, and call the Palestinian Expulsion an act of ethnic cleansing. Israel points at the nearly 200,000 dead Jews massacred in the West Bank, and refuses to reconsider its policy. Islamic-fundamentalist groups continue to rise across the Muslim world, and hundreds of thousands of persecuted Christians and “heretical” Muslims are fleeing to the refuge of Israel, Kurdistan, and the US Territory of Byzantium.

OTHER COUNTRIES

Every country in the world had its post-Event Authoritarian Moment, and as per Ajax’ prediction, many didn’t recover from it. There is hardly space here to discuss each country or region, but for a good indication of outcomes, look at the Democracy Index (available on Wikipedia). Issued by The Economist Intelligence Unit (a UK group), it focuses on the presence of free and fair elections, civil rights protections, government accountability, political culture, and other factors. Checking the DI, it’s a good bet that most if not all countries rated as Full Democracies and many that are rated as Flawed Democracies came through the post-Event year intact. On the other hand, Flawed Democracies and Hybrid Democracies may easily have suffered revolutions, ending the next decade as Full Democracies or more likely as Authoritarian Regimes. With few exceptions, Hybrid Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes suffered at least low-grade insurgencies, many all-out civil wars.

Breakthroughs and the Balance of Power

Both the China War and Caliphate War demonstrated the new post-Event military realities; conventional troops simply cannot stand up to superhuman and superhuman-stiffened troops. Nations without sufficient supersoldier (or superhero) assets are helpless against even irregular superhuman fighters. And even nations with strong superhuman forces remain vulnerable to attack by superhuman terrorists; since superpowers are generally undetectable until they are used, super-terrorists can easily remain undiscovered until they strike and they are often strong enough to stand off or even assault military forces.

At the same time, as seen with China, Israel, and Turkey, large-scale massacres and nuclear attacks instantly create dozens if not hundreds of new superhumans, many of whom hold a grudge. The Dragon’s Teeth Effect means that the strategic use of weapons of mass destruction, and even conventional warfare involving mass casualties, ultimately strengthens the enemy through the creation of more, tactically powerful, superhumans.

Lastly, since breakthrough numbers mainly depend on the size of the parent population, less developed but larger nations like India (1.2 billion people) and China (1.35 billion people before its fragmentation) have the advantage in sheer number of breakthroughs. What this means regionally is yet to be seen, but although the United States’ military power has not diminished, its relative advantage has. This may be good news or bad news, depending on one’s point of view, but one thing is certain: a new balance is being struck and, while it is being worked out, the world is a much more dangerous place. The US has been working hard to ensure that the new balance remains in its favor.



SUPERHEROES AT WAR

Since Crisis Aid and Intervention heroes like the Sentinels are members of their respective state militias, they are exempt from national military mobilization without their state governor's approval—and so far that approval has never been given. However, many heroes served in both the China War and the Caliphate War, acting through Héros Sans Frontières, Heroes Without Borders. The HSF began as and remains a branch of Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and has made the MSF even more effective. HSF volunteers mobilize to humanitarian disaster sites and help their medical counterparts bring in medicine and food, build temporary hospitals and refugee shelters, and enforce the safety of the MSF's sanctuary centers. Most of the time, HSF work is to the sites of natural disasters—floods, earthquakes, typhoons, etc.—but other times it is to regions devastated by war or genocide. In such cases the HSF heroes leave fighting the war to whatever militaries are engaged, focusing instead on rescuing threatened civilians and creating and supplying secure refugee sanctuaries. Combatants around the world have learned to keep the fighting away from these sanctuaries, although HSF heroes from the US occasionally have to deal with enemies who consider American superheroes valid targets no matter how neutral they are. The MSF and HSF are directed from their joint headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Pax Americana and League of Democratic States

Today America's enemies refer to it as the American Empire, but if it is an imperial power then it is a stretched and reluctant one as it tries to adapt to the realities of the Post-Event World. In the case of the Chinese states, the US has made abundantly clear and written into its treaties its willingness to completely withdraw at the first request of an allied state's government. Despite this, the US military still remains heavily engaged in Asia, enforcing the UN Resolutions that keep the peace between Beijing and the Successor States (what some call the Pax Americana). This leaves the US little means of employing fight-and-stay methods elsewhere, even if it was willing to do so.

Worse, after the Caliphate War the US set up a territorial government for Constantinople and the annexed Turkish provinces to its west. As the capital of the declared US Territory of Byzantium, Constantinople lives under US federal law with the constitutionally guaranteed right to vote on secession after 50 years—by which time most observers expect it to be majority Christian Orthodox and Coptic Christian due to the influx of refugees and the departure of Muslim Turks. Guaranteeing the security of the Territory of Byzantium ties up the largest portion of the United States' military outside of Asia, even after closing most of its European and Middle Eastern bases.

Militarily, this has left the US severely stretched, and under the Kayle and Touches Clouds administrations it has chosen to involve itself with a new alliance, the League of Democratic States. Initially begun as a Pacific alliance (America, Australia, India, Japan, and unified Korea were the first signatories), the League quickly broadened to include Brazil, England, Canada, Ireland, and Israel. A League member must have a democratic form of government that recognizes and protects core civil rights—Law, Liberty, and Democracy is the trifecta that must be observed in practice and not just on paper—and once each year the League meets in the capital of a different member state so that no League state is perceived as its ruling state. In addition to a mutual defense pact, the League is a free trade zone, and it has established a new doctrine of trade, diplomacy, and warfare which favors cooperation, deterrence, and united military operations.

The United States' enemies consider the League a puppet-alliance buttressing US hegemony, and it is true that the US contributes a third of all military forces mobilized in joint League actions. Rather than expanding its own military forces, however, the US has begun bolstering the armed forces of the League's member-states, selling its allies arms and providing joint training. As the League continues to add states who meet its strict membership qualifications, a greater percentage of League troops are allied military.

Externally, outside of the Chinese States and the Territory of Constantinople, the US maintains no non-League obligations other than its commitment to the Reform Government in Mexico City (it does not want to see the Northern provinces devolve into cartel-ruled warlord states). The formation of the League meant the dissolution of NATO, forcing the European Union to see to its own defense.

One of The League's most powerful tools is its Unified Superhuman Command; its member militaries engage in extensive joint training for its supersoldier units, and regularly engage in joint-command exercises and League deployments as mixed USC unit. All USC units share a joint mission-patch and unified chain of command, member-state officers serving in a single USC officer corps during deployment. With most League member states offering citizenship to foreign superhumans and their families in return for sworn loyalty and military enlistment, USC forces are growing in both international character and unit strength. All of this means that the League is a growing force for world stability; nonetheless, enforcing the Pax Americana and supporting the League means that, for every friend, the United States has made more enemies.



The Post-Event World

The moment Atlas put on a cape comics fans transferred their allegiance to the “real superheroes” filling the news, and today superheroes saturate pop culture. The comics publishers moved fast to negotiate with the most visible and marketable capes to produce their own lines of comics, books, even TV series and movies. Advertisers try to recruit them as product spokespersons, politicians seek their endorsements and celebrities seek their company. Capes are the It People of the Post-Event years.

Just two years after the Event, Crooner—a sound-controlling breakthrough—sang at the Emmys to celebrate the win of the first Sentinels movie, *Day One*. The music industry went nuts and started a talent search that turned up Burnout, a pyrokinetic with a growly voice and a lot of attitude. The rivalry between the two reached epic proportions, but just a few years later Have No Fear, an all-breakthrough band of Hillwood Academy alumni, passed them both in record sales and event tickets.

Superhero-glam is a huge industry. Two cable channels, Powers TV and Breakthrough TV, are All Capes, All The Time channels, mixing news, gossip, docudramas and entertainment of varying quality. Magazines like Hero Beat and Power Week cater to cape-watchers of all ages, Hero Beat pitching particularly to the teen crowd. Even serious publications, like *Barlow’s Guide to Superhumans*, are gobbled up by an avid public.

It almost goes without saying that superhero celebrities have had a huge cultural impact, extending even as far as trivial things like fashion. Ajax’ popularity made dreadlocks and cornrowing the manly hairstyle for African-American men who didn’t shave their heads instead. Blackstone single handedly brought gentlemen’s canes back into fashion. Tights, even full bodysuits, are the current fashion-trend for women who look good in the style. The world loves superheroes.

Hollywood Heroes

Wearing the cape pays better than most jobs, but it can be dangerous work and won’t make you rich unless you belong to one of the media-property teams like the Sentinels, so lots of breakthroughs blessed with both superpowers *and* good looks head for Hollywood. Most of Los Angeles’ CAI heroes are wannabe Hollywood Heroes with agents and actor’s glossies and résumés. Some get lucky and get cast in the roles of more powerful celebrity capes. Others get luckier and get to play original characters themselves in cape-procedural shows. Many more get bits in superhero reality shows or work as stuntmen in the industry. One team, the Hollywood Knights, straddles the line between cape and actor by filling its ranks with fully certified CAI heroes, working heroes who make a movie a year playing *themselves*.



Superhero Conventions

“Capecons” are the biggest events in the cape-watcher’s calendar. The biggest annual capecon is Chicago’s Metrocon, which combines with the biggest annual CAI training and expo conference in the country; three days of serious training and lectures, three days of inter-team competition and fun. New York and LA hold sister-conventions and each year sees a much wider second tier of smaller capecons across the country hosting regional training and events.

Of course fans flock to the capecons to see the capes, buy merchandise, and have fun with cosplay, but the conventions are also job fairs for breakthroughs seeking to introduce themselves to local teams and pass qualifications, and even professional CAI heroes seeking to move up into bigger and more visible teams.

Origin Chasers

There is a dark side to superhero celebrity. Idolization breeds obsession, heroes can be stalked by paparazzi or obsessed fans, and celebrity capes can certainly abuse their status. But the real tragedy lies in the origin-chasers.

Psychologists blame Cape Envy for the rising trend of origin-chasing. For thousands of people, life has no purpose if you aren’t a cape. “Breakthrough management” is a multimillion dollar industry, one riddled with fraud. Every year thousands of hopefuls attend Stress Camps and undergo a punishing



physical training regimen in hopes of triggering a breakthrough. Others attend seminars purporting to help them achieve “softer” breakthroughs through meditation, yogic practices, etc. Some take psychoactive drugs (completely illegal), hoping to trigger theirs. And hundreds die every year courting sudden-death situations they believe will bring out their destined gifts. Origin-chaser deaths are mostly teens, with the next largest group being 20-30, and they are a tragic statistic.

Every concentration of power creates its own opposition, whether that power is military, political, monetary, or social. Opposition groups may or may not be violent, largely depending upon their aims and whether or not they believe the political environment favors them. Citizen-militia groups existed previous to the Event, and their membership has grown in the wake of each superhuman-caused disaster.

—Department of Superhuman Affairs,
Threat Assessment 10.4, Summary

Anti-Superhero Groups

Not everyone loves superheroes; some see superhumans as freaks, threats, or even subhuman. While most of their opposition at least grants them their humanity, they firmly subscribe to the adage that “power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Most anti-hero groups are outspoken but law abiding, calling for legal restrictions to make the public safer and to keep superhumans from acquiring political and social power to match their superpowers. Some groups continue with the original calls to “identify and isolate” superhumans for their own, and for the public’s, safety.

Other groups, like the Paladins, take a more direct approach; membership in militia groups is increasing, “normal” people stockpiling weapons and ammunition against the day when superhumans throw off their Good Guy masks and try and take over. A few groups field secret “action arms” to preemptively fight the coming war.

Law and Politics

In a 5-4 decision today, the US Supreme Court ruled in favor of General Arrest Warrants, the hugely controversial warrants that may be issued on especially dangerous superhumans with the inclusion of a dead or alive provision. Commonly called Death Warrants, they are posted publicly and may be exercised by any citizen, and are opposed by the ACLU on the grounds that they violate a suspect’s right to a fair trial. The controlling language of the majority opinion, however, rests on the argument that the constitutional guarantee of a trial depends upon a successful arrest—something either impossible or suicidal to attempt in the case of many superhumans.

—Tom Atkins, **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

Ten years after the Event, laws surrounding breakthroughs are still in flux. President Touches Clouds is a former Chicago Sentinel and hugely popular public figure. The DSA and Justice Departments of both the Kayle and Touches Clouds administrations have consistently defended the civil rights of breakthroughs and pushed to have them declared a Protected Class, which would give them the same civil rights protections against discrimination as are currently enjoyed by women and minorities. But breakthroughs are categorically different from other protected classes; they are often “armed,” and some of them are very dangerous. It is true that a large percentage of the population idolizes capes, but a sizable portion of the public has never trusted breakthroughs—often with good reason.

The tension between breakthroughs’ civil rights and the public’s right to safety is unresolvable. Courts have consistently ruled that no breakthrough is obligated to out himself, but courts have also ruled that in some cases public safety trumps a breakthrough’s rights. One case in point is schools; courts have ruled that parental rights and student’s safety requires that parents be told if their child is in school with superhuman children. The worst school slaying since the Event was perpetrated by Cocytus, a high school sophomore; the victim of extreme bullying, she maimed or killed half the football team and cheerleading squad at a pregame pep-rally. The school administration had been aware of her powers and not shared their knowledge with the public, and the families sued the school system for millions. Since the tragedy many states have required separate facilities for known breakthrough children, whatever their powers and juvenile history.

Secret Identities and the Law

The right of the accused to confront his accuser is enshrined in constitutional law. It is a basic civil right, and in many states this precludes a superhero with a secret identity from testifying in court. Since the state can compel a person’s testimony except on grounds of self-incrimination, this puts secret identities in legal jeopardy. Criminal charges and lawsuits can do the same. Some



states solve this with Mask Laws which allow masked superheroes to register their true identities with the DSA and enjoy full privacy; they essentially establish a second, fully legal, public identity. Other states have created Anti-Mask Laws, making the wearing of a mask in public a misdemeanor, and refusal to remove one at the request of law enforcement officials a felony!

Reasonable Restraint

One area in which the law has gone against breakthroughs is laws governing reasonable restraint. If a suspect resists arrest and is a telekinetic, how do you restrain him? Care and *really* heavy cuffs can work with simply super-strong breakthroughs, but it is impossible to restrain some breakthroughs without drugging them or using shock-inducing restraints, and keeping them locked up presents more problems. If required methods of restraint are detrimental to a suspect's health, the police are free of any civil liability. Some superhumans are so dangerous that restraining them against their will is impossible for normal law enforcement and risky even for capes, and the Supreme Court has consistently ruled in favor of whatever level of force may be necessary to "arrest and detain" a dangerous suspect—up to and including lethal force. General Arrest Warrants allow anyone exercising them to offer no more than a minimal opportunity for the subjects of such warrants to surrender before proceeding to lethal force.

Law Enforcement and Accountability

Many breakthroughs can bring firepower equivalent to military ordnance, making superhuman combat potentially very destructive, so naturally after the Event insurance companies began offering new and enhanced lines of damage insurance. Superhuman Damage riders have proven very profitable, since even in the big cities the insured's chances of injury or property loss from superhuman combat is low—and of course insurance company lawyers will sue to recover damages in cases where a superhero's negligence has added to the damage. Which brings us to liability and the scope of superhero liability insurance.

—A Harvard Law School colloquium text

Most CAI heroes are not police, and law enforcement is not their first priority. However, while they are subject to the same legal restraints as the police, they have their own departmental procedures and accountability process—something many police departments resent. Since capes routinely work with the police they must be careful to maintain good relations; cop-cape rivalries have developed before, always to the detriment of law enforcement and the community. If anything, screening, review, and accountability procedures for CAI heroes are even more stringent than they are for police officers—and the political and public consequences of screwing up are potentially even higher.



AFTER-ACTION REPORTS AND REVIEW BOARDS

Many CAI heroes are hired precisely because their powers may allow them to restrain a suspect without the use of lethal force, but all official uses of superhuman powers are subject to review. If a CAI hero is involved in an encounter that leads to the use of force, he writes up an After-Action Report as soon as he can (this is a simple extension of modern police procedure). The report and relevant dispatch recordings are reviewed by appointed officials—often judges—to determine if it is necessary to empanel a review board. Usually it is not, but city governments who sponsor CAI teams are liable for hero's actions and are understandably cautious; when in doubt, better to bench the hero while his actions are reviewed and he is, hopefully, cleared. If someone died due to his actions, he will be benched until cleared. If a review board decides that the hero has in fact broken the law or shown criminal negligence, then all information and evidence are turned over to the prosecutor's office and the hero will need the services of his CAI team's attorney.



Vigilantes

Most superheroes are certified and, depending on the state, licensed. Since they work for the government although they are not sworn law enforcement officers, they are legally State Actors—subject to the same restrictions that require police to display Probable Cause before detaining or searching someone, or searching private property. Superheroes who don't work for law enforcement don't have the same legal restrictions, but that doesn't mean they can do whatever they want; as private citizens they may be charged with trespassing or breaking-and-entering if they go onto private property in pursuit of bad guys. They can be charged with unlawful detainment and even kidnapping if they make citizen's arrests the wrong way. In many states, *pursuing* a criminal fleeing a crime scene is illegal if you are not the police. This means private superheroes must be very careful and mindful of the law, and some of them just don't bother; their powers give them a responsibility and a right to act, regardless of legalities.

There are a few known and active vigilante superheroes in Post-Event America, and they are *criminals*, pursued by the law and other superheroes when they can be identified. In real life, the police do not cooperate with them like they do in the comics. The most successful vigilante superheroes walk a careful line, staying in the shadows and, whatever else they do, not committing crimes the police *have* to take official notice of.

Government Agencies

City and state governments, and of course the federal government, are networks of departments and agencies; Post-Event, many of these agencies found that their jurisdiction required them to deal with superheroes—and not just in law enforcement. Just as one example, local Departments of Education may have to deal with the issue of superhuman students. Most local governments responded by following Washington's lead and creating local agencies responsible for "superhuman affairs."

THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPERHUMAN AFFAIRS

The DSA is a department, like the Department of the Interior, rather than an agency, like the FBI. This is important; the Secretary of Superhuman Affairs is a member of the President's cabinet and reports to him directly. Without its own law-enforcement arm, the DSA relies on the US Marshals Service, which has its own chain of command. The US Marshal's Service has developed DSA Response Teams composed of heavily trained and equipped "normal" agents as well as equally well trained and equipped breakthroughs with appropriate powers. They are placed at the disposal of local courts and police departments at their request whenever states or cities face superhuman situations they can't effectively respond to on their own. The DSA also directs a branch of the Secret Service, fielding breakthrough agents whose main responsibility is the protection of the President and the federal government from superhuman threats.

Perhaps more important, the DSA acts to arbitrate legal issues surrounding breakthroughs. Its legal department sends investigators and lawyers to investigate civil rights violations against breakthroughs, and if need be offer them legal aid. They at least insure fair and open trials. They also send the same investigators and lawyers, along with super-marshals, when it looks like supervillains might be compromising local government and law enforcement.

Lastly, the DSA works closely with the FBI on counter-terrorism and counter-intelligence operations, and aids the Justice Department in its mission to prosecute civil rights violations and public corruption when breakthroughs are involved. All of this creates something of a mess of competing missions, but it also means that the officials and agents of the DSA work very closely with the other federal departments and the Secretary of Superhuman Affairs (called the Director in-house and by the media) is senior to the directors of the various agencies.

There are no DSA "superheroes." DSA superhumans always dress civilian or in DSA uniforms.

Religion

I dreamed and in my dream I found Aladdin's lamp of old, and the fearful djinn I released bowed to me and asked what my heart desired. Fame, riches, power and palaces, the most beautiful women in the world? And I said to the djinn, I wish to be a sword in Allah's hands, to smite the unbelievers, to bring sorrow to the House of War that they may weep knowing that God is great. And the djinn laughed, and burst forth brighter than the sun that blinds to look upon, and revealed himself to be an angel of unspeakable beauty. And he breathed upon me, breath with the scents of Paradise, so that when I awoke I found I had become the Sword of the Faith.

—Seif-al-Din (Sword of the Faith)

The impact of the Event on the world's religions has been both profound and trivial. On the one hand, Biblical is a pretty good definition of the Event—a world-wide miracle after all—but nobody can agree on what it *means*. Various fundamentalist Christian sects believe the Event to be a sign of the End Times, but appeals to scripture cannot identify a specific "trump" that has been sounded or Seal that has been broken. Apocalyptic Muslim sects have the same problem. As to the Catholic magisterium, the Pope,



THE PANTHEON

The Pantheon is probably one of the strangest superhero teams. Founded by Hyperion, Gaea, and Cernunnos, it claims to be a gathering of divine avatars. It identifies itself with various New Age Wiccan and Druidic sects, and actively proselytizes its beliefs. The Pantheon is supported by its own private foundation, and its members do not generally engage in the usual superhero first responder and crime-fighter roles; instead it works to “raise awareness of humanity’s divinity and its oneness with itself and nature.” It funds a basket of charities and causes, teams up with Heroes without Borders to bring relief to disaster-stricken places in the world, and generally tries to be a force for peaceful beneficence and good. Needless to say, the attitudes of the more traditionally religious towards the Pantheon are mixed at best.

flexing his papal infallibility to speak *ex cathedra* from the Throne of Saint Peter, has definitively announced that the Event and breakthrough powers are...a holy mystery.

On the other hand, the world is now full of the miraculous; in more traditional and less secularized societies, sacred gifts—along with “supernatural powers”—are more common than superpowers. Saints and sorcerers abound. In India, breakthroughs often take the form of avatars of the extensive Hindu pantheon, and even religiously fundamentalist Hindus have no problem with it. In the US, there are New Age pagans who believe themselves to be avatars of Hyperion, Gaea, and Cernunnos.

All of this has been a bit polarizing. Anyone who believes that sacred gifts are proof of the divine must also account for apparent “profane gifts” as well. Skeptics and agnostics who, before the Event, might have been inclined to give miraculous manifestations at least a little thoughtful consideration, now dismiss all miraculous powers as “natural,” whatever the claims made for them.

In modern democratic and liberal nations, differences of religious beliefs over the Event and breakthroughs remain only differences; people are free to believe as they like, although breakthroughs claiming to be gods, angels, prophets, or saints (or for that matter devils), garner skeptical or negative

reactions from a large part of the population. Elsewhere in the world, breakthroughs making religious claims—or refusing to agree with officially state-sanctioned religious claims—are hunted, persecuted, and often killed. In the Middle East and much of North Africa, non-Muslim breakthroughs often become fugitives and refugees. Throughout South Asia and the Indian sub-continent, nations with large and mixed religious populations are seeing rising violence between Hindu and Muslim breakthroughs—and violence directed towards them by opposing believers.

Magic and the Supernatural

Supernatural (plural: *supernaturals*): literally, a phenomenon departing from what is usual or normal, especially so as to appear to transcend the laws of nature. Modern connotation: a breakthrough patterned after elements of myth, folklore, and fantasy rather than fitting the superhero mold. Documented supernaturals include vampires, witches, fairies, ghosts, angels, devils, etc. It is often difficult to determine which supernaturals are breakthroughs and which are the projections of unknown breakthroughs.

—BARLOW’S GUIDE TO SUPERHUMANS

Many breakthroughs have followed religious memes, but supernatural breakthroughs are even more common. There is some natural overlap—belief in magic says something towards one’s religious beliefs as well. Psychologists hypothesize that breakthroughs that take the form of magical abilities or even transformations into creatures of folklore are more common than “divine” breakthroughs because they are more psychologically normative; generally, more people have believed themselves capable of practicing magic than of wielding divine gifts.

Despite the tendency for stronger breakthroughs in America and the Western world to be shaped by superhero tropes, a non-trivial percentage of western breakthroughs have been supernaturals. This shouldn’t be too surprising; Pre-Event popular literature and media was already awash in the supernatural. Fairies were big and not just with the New Age community, and vampires, fairies, werewolves, and witches had their own literary genres, television series, cosplayers, etc. All this practically guaranteed that, even in the modern and secular societies for whom old myths and folklore were fading memories, a small percentage of breakthroughs would follow the old (and modernized) folktales and myths.

Magic is alive, the mythic is real, and religion and society must deal with it.

St. Michael, defender of man, stand with us in the day of battle.

St. Jude, giver of hope, be with us in our desperate hour.

St. Christopher, bearer of burdens, lift us when we fall.

—Unattributed prayer for heroes.



Science and Technology

It's easy to mistake Verne-tech for the real deal, until you realize that it's only as real as a Merlin-type's magic. There's no difference between a talisman that protects you from possession and a psychic shield that runs on triple-A batteries, or between a fireball throwing wizard and a guy in powered armor firing an impulse cannon. I still prefer Verne-tech; magic is just weird.

—Astra, **THE CHICAGO INTERVIEWS**

Yes, the Post-Event world now has robots—even giant robots. And death-rays, antigravity, jet-packs, and powered armor. But since each piece of Verne-tech is a one-off item (or if more than one, still at least in part made with personal attention and care by a Verne-type), the skies aren't filled with flying cars and you can't buy a laser pistol at your local gun store. Also, no known breakthrough has emerged transformed into a super-genius (although some Verne-types are completely convinced that they are unspeakably brilliant). Consequently, the decade since the Event has not seen a tremendous leap in scientific knowledge or technological industrial advancement. However, it has seen some—with all the things breakthroughs can do, it is hardly surprising that they have advanced mankind's abilities in some areas by enabling discoveries or activities that advance science. Two examples are below.

Biology and Medicine

Some breakthroughs possess the power to change *life*, creating species the world has never seen before. This is not always a good thing; the most obvious downside is the Godzilla Plague. But the ability to create new species of anything means the possibility of creating beneficial species, from the very large to the microscopically small. Naturally governments are very careful with this kind of thing, since life has a way of breaking free of restraints and doing its own thing, often to the detriment of existing ecosystems (think rabbits in Australia, kudzu in North America...). One of the examples of revolutionized biological medicine is the creation of Second Skin, a symbiotic *fungus* that, properly triggered, will colonize and replace a host's epidermis, forming a layer of perfect, velvety skin. Since its long-term effects are not yet known, it is currently being given only to extreme burn victims who would not otherwise survive.

Space Exploration and Exploitation

Get out of a planet's gravity well, and you are halfway to anywhere in the Solar System. NASA and a host of aerospace companies pay Atlas-types big money to fly payloads up into Earth orbit and beyond. One Verne-type has also made sets of Quantum Ports—

paired platforms for teleporting payloads to each other—for use in space development. The QPs need several thousand miles separation to work at all, but in theory they have an infinite range and the halves of two QPs are on their way to Mars.

With the cost of payload lift hugely reduced, several companies have built their own research stations in orbit (and one ring-shaped luxury tourist hotel) and are mastering the benefits of near-perfect vacuum and zero-gravity conditions to make new miracle materials like room temperature superconductors and cheap and long-scale nanotubes.

PSIS AND ALIEN VISITORS

The flip-side to traditional folklore is modern folklore—what many now call folk-science. Folk-science has also strongly shaped breakthroughs, and not just of Verne-types. Some breakthroughs are strongly influenced by early and mid-20th Century psychic research; Psi-type breakthroughs manifest telekinetic, telepathic, precognitive, extra-sensory, and projective gifts of the sort hypothesized by serious scientists. And believers in UFOs and ETs have experienced breakthroughs featuring “transportive visions” where they were taken up into flying saucers, or transported to another planet or dimension, returning with alien-bestowed gifts (powers and even alien artifacts) and often a new mission—generally Save the World From (fill in the blank). The public looks at a Server of Ganymede with a message of universal beinghood as agnostically as it looks at an incarnated seraphim delivering new holy writ; both may attract believers, but many more people consider them deluded breakthroughs and most prefer to withhold judgment until they at least see what the claimants do.

Of course some people believe that ETs are responsible for the Event and all breakthroughs are chosen by them and gifted for inscrutable purposes we can't understand, but probably have to do with saving the world.





Extra-Reality Worlds

Today, we live in a world where Alice can fall down the rabbit hole and come back with the Jabberwocky's head, and sooner or later someone is going to raise Atlantis from its watery grave. Superheroes are the modern world's least odd oddity.

—Dr. Jonathan Beth, addressing the Eleventh Annual Conference on Breakthrough Science.

Mars isn't the only world that breakthrough powers are opening up, just the first one in our own reality. Long before the Event, quantum-physicists postulated a Many Worlds Cosmology, populated by an infinite number of discrete universes in which different physical laws might exist. The Holographic Multiverse theory, which someone added because the original theory wasn't complicated enough, stated that the solid and "real" three dimensional universe that we perceive might in fact be a "holographic projection" onto a two dimensional cosmological substrate—an infinite number of which could be stacked like deli meat on a sandwich with zero depth. Since the theory also stated that, however many other universes might exist, there was no way to prove their existence or get there from here, nobody but physicists and science-fiction writers were interested in any of this stuff. That situation quickly changed when researchers first realized that some breakthroughs (fortunately very, very few) were, in fact, traveling to other realities!

Researchers first became aware of extra-reality worlds when they tried to figure out what was happening when Speedster-types went into "Hypertime," the frozen world between each moment of time. They came to the conclusion that Hypertime wasn't our world without time but instead a discrete extra-reality world that touched our own on every point—if it existed in a real sense at all! Documented cases of time-travel have also opened up the "reality" of pasts and potential futures accessible by breakthroughs. Hypertime and visitable pasts and futures can be called *folk-science worlds*—they can be "explained" under modern science's theory of multiverse materialism and so they might actually exist in a rational world. But other realities have since been documented that have much more to do with much older beliefs about the world.

Since researchers have begun documenting reports of various extra-reality worlds, accounts of visits to and artifacts or visitors from Avalon, the Kingdom of Prester John, Fairyland, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Pellucidar, Barsoom, and Oz have been verified—and that's just in the English-speaking world. One breakthrough, the Traveler, has documented dozens of alternate-history Earths ranging from mundane (many where the Event never happened) to bizarre (including one where Nikola Tesla invented, patented, and successfully marketed broadcast power, resulting in an early 20th Century science-led utopia).

This has forced scientists to consider two possibilities—both deeply disturbing to the scientific community. The first possibility is that the Multiverse may have always existed and the Event somehow "opened" our reality to allow us access to realities we were previously only able to travel to in dreams or in spirit. This would mean that our religious beliefs and cultural myths were always more real than we thought. Alternatively, according to the second hypothesis some breakthroughs are *creating* extra-reality worlds as their delusions allow them to access or visit them. But if the first is true, can we confidently say that anything isn't real somewhere? If the second, how do we confidently separate what is reality from what isn't?

Either way, governments need to deal with extra-realities and the people or things that come from them. Ironically, this is one area where taking claims of extra-reality origin at face value makes things much more clear cut. Incursions made by "visitors" can be considered violations of national sovereignty and security, so you can deal with them in ways you can't deal with citizens. You can always *deport* someone who claims to be from Oz, unless they are claiming political asylum and even then if they don't behave...

Of course extrarealities can also be havens from persecution.



Real-World Superheroes

“The entertainment industry gives most people a skewed idea of what superheroes really do. We’re not the police. Even in Chicago, the Metropolis of the superhero world, we have only eight CAI teams plus independents. That’s less than a hundred card-carrying capes, most of them B and C-class, covering 8 million people. Sometimes the CPD deploys us like SWAT teams, but mostly we’re emergency-response. Fires. Bad accidents. We rarely fight ‘supervillains,’ but we are called in whenever a disturbance involves other superhumans.”

—Terry Reinhold, quoting Astra in “THIS IS A JOB FOR...”

Ten years after the Event, day to day life hasn’t changed much. Capes don’t fill the sky, but if you live in the big city then on a bright day you can usually spot at least one flying a patrol pattern. In places with larger breakthrough populations (magnet-cities like Chicago, L.A., and New York), the public has adapted to the occasional superpowered fight and area evacuation has become, if not routine, at least orderly and effective.

But the world is not the same. Breakthroughs generally, and superheroes specifically, have hugely impacted American society culturally, politically, intellectually, even religiously. Ten years after the first breakthrough, society continues to struggle to accommodate their existence. How do normal people live and seek meaning in a world shared with superhumans of sometimes godlike power?

Also, capes aren’t *quite* comic-book heroes, even if they’re close enough for most people. They wear colorful costumes and masks, adopt codenames, and some even have secret identities protected by the government. The public sees the capes doing good and protecting them from breakthroughs who use their powers to victimize and terrorize, and that earns a lot of good will. Successful superheroes often build on that with marketing and by turning themselves into media-properties; the Sentinels have their own comic series, TV series, and movie franchise (they also sell a *lot* of merchandise). Which is good because, while Chicago pays for their headquarters and salaries, their paychecks aren’t much bigger than a CPD police officer’s and insurance and legal retainer fees are *expensive*.

*Look, up in the sky! It’s a bird! It’s a plane!
No it’s...Atlas? Red Robin? Armistice? Is
the President in town?*
—Terry Reinhold, CITYWATCH

Professional Heroes

Rules of Engagement in a Civilian Environment: avoid an encounter-with-force if at all possible, use only powers that can be applied without collateral damage, use all powers that can be applied without collateral damage, do not escalate, stop any escalation, and neutralize civilian risks as quickly as possible.

—CHICAGO SENTINELS TRAINING MANUAL

When the public thinks of superheroes, they think of Atlas, Astra, and other traditional capes, and “wearing the cape” is a valid career choice for sufficiently powerful breakthroughs. Post-Event, they are a new breed of first-responder—and like police and paramedics, they are highly trained. Most CAI heroes test into a training program designed to help them focus and maximize their breakthrough powers while teaching them what they need to know when they hit the streets. Different powers call for different programs; for example, outside of the US Army, the best national training program for Atlas-types is the US Marshals Atlas Program in Maryland.

CAI training programs typically run from one to two years, and end with certification. Alternatively, breakthroughs whose powers make them especially sought after may enter an apprenticeship program with an active CAI team—often pitched to the public as a “sidekick” position and, again, completed with certification. If a hero achieves certification without having a CAI slot waiting for him, he can pursue placement through the application-trials that take place around the country, usually at associated

Celebrity superheroes are like Hollywood stars: we have entourages, agents, image and publicity people, legions of fans, and we get into trouble any time we don’t speak from a script.
—Astra, NOTES FROM A LIFE

“capecons” like the Chicago Metrocon.

Most professional capes are CAI heroes. There is, however, an alternative: freelance work. Freelance capework is a growing industry, and capes who freelance are generally known as “agency capes”. Nearly every major city has an agency and Chicago has two—POWERS (Hire a Hero!), and SPECIAL SOLUTIONS. Agency jobs cover the spectrum, from private investigation work (which may require more licenses) to bouncer jobs and security details to public events and parties, and agency capes may engage in solo jobs or



scratch-team contracts. With the right connections, less legitimate work is also available (although most agency heroes are very careful not to cross the legal line). Although the US government frowns on it, mercenary work is also available for agency capes willing to travel. A certain moral flexibility may be required, and CAI capes tend to look down on agency capes—often with good reason—but agency capes can be just as principled and able as their “permanently contracted” counterparts.

CRISIS AID AND INTERVENTION TEAMS

Often called the “Chicago Model,” Crisis Aid and Intervention teams are private first-responder companies and, while usually sponsored by state or city governments, CAI heroes are not normally sworn police officers or civil servants. In some states, such as Illinois, certified CAI superheroes must be members of the state militia. This places them under the authority of the state’s governor in times of declared emergency (and also makes them immune from federal call-up without their governor’s approval).

There are now two multi-city CAI franchises: the Guardians and the Knights teams. These franchises provide their members with common training and services (the services, which include liability insurance, health benefits, and legal aid, are very important). Chicago has seven Guardians teams, which provide backup to the Sentinels as well as patrolling their own zones.

CAI superheroes do not engage in normal law enforcement; they are called in only when the situation involves a superhuman, when “normal” criminals are armed and an immediate danger to civilian lives, or when their powers can make the difference in accidents, fires, and other emergencies. The method of coordination varies from city to city, but in Chicago all of the CAI teams are coordinated through a dedicated dispatch department headquartered in the Chicago Dome and under the nominal command of the Sentinels.

Street-Heroes and Power-Capes

B, C, and D Class breakthroughs far outnumber their A Class brethren, and most CAI heroes are B and C Class, but sometimes a D Class power is just too useful not to use. Street-heroes can be a derogatory term, but it’s one that some capes wear proudly, and a CAI hero with D Class force-control powers that lets him deflect lighter civilian firearms and knock about bad guys in bunches works just as well against a shooter as an A Class Atlas-type. New York City makes excellent use of its street-hero supercops, and street-heroes are becoming popular subjects of TV series and movies—largely because less powerful breakthroughs find more normal, if heavily armed, criminals more of a challenge.

At the other end of the scale are the A and B Class superheroes, sometimes called power-capes. When a Godzilla stomps ashore, or an A Class supervillain or a villain team start a fight, they are the ones police dispatch sends in. They get the big bucks and media coverage, are the subjects of endlessly debated “fantasy fights,” are hounded by the paparazzi, see every rumor about them spread across the tabloids, and often wish they were less the focus of public attention.

*No backing down, no giving in.
I pick my fights, but I fight to win.
Though the Reaper draws near me I cry,
Conquer or die!*
—From *Conquer or Die*, by Have No Fear

Superhero Codenames

Only a decade into the superhero era, we are already seeing recycled names. Possibly this is because there are only so many cool superhero codenames. Certainly in the case of Watchman, Chicago’s new Sentinel, it’s not a legacy-name; its previous owner was a B Class aerokinetic who worked for Night Patrol in San Francisco. The Sentinels paid Watchman’s estate an undisclosed sum to acquire all trademark rights to the name, just so their newest Atlas-type recruit wouldn’t be called Awesome Man.

—Terry Reinhold’s **CITY WATCH**

For superhumans and a public raised on decades of comic book superheroes, codenames are a *must*. From the very first, the new superheroes and supervillains either named themselves or lived with whatever name the press gave them. Today superhero names are protected under trademark law, and most superheroes keep the same name throughout their careers.

Popular codenames today include increasingly obscure references to mythology, Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology being the most popular (the newest water-controlling superheroine has named herself Neaera), natural elements or objects (Tachyon, Brick), forces (Riptide and Jetstream), and combination-names (Dark Tide, Red Sky, etc.). An interesting trend among the new generation of superheroes is iconoclastic codenames mocking superhero conventions with less-than-heroic names: The Mailman (because he always delivers), Superdude (because why not?), Dark Farce (a goth comedian), and Rainbow Unicorn (neither a light-projector nor a unicorn). Fortunately, most up-and-coming superheroes still want to be taken seriously.





Secret Identities

Secret identities sound cool, but are a pain in the butt to maintain. Most of the time the problem isn't being recognized in costume—it's being tripped up in your civilian life. Even the comic books recognized this; it's the reason Clark Kent was a reporter and Bruce Wayne was a gazillionaire. In the real world most heroes with secret identities wind up spending almost all their time in costume anyway, with no private life, no time for a nine-to-five job. And if you're a career hero, unless you make a special effort you hang with other capes, on the job and off.

—Astra, **NOTES FROM A LIFE**

Most superheroes don't keep secret identities; for one thing, many if not most breakthroughs are *public* and it's hard to hide your new powers when you were caught on film or at least seen and described by witnesses. Most superhero "mystery-men" are part-time heroes, people who only put on the mask when called up to respond to serious emergencies; superheroing normally only impacts their lives about as much as serving in the Army Reserve or National Guard.

That said, some full-time heroes do go the secret-identity route. They may want to protect friends and loved ones, or just want to preserve their privacy. In these cases, it is perfectly legal to maintain a public superhero identity and a secret private identity; done right, a superhero identity is a *legal* identity (perhaps your real name is on file with the DSA and your local government, but nobody else has to know it). Superheroes who have been "outed" have even successfully sued journalists and media companies for serious damages under Violation of Privacy and Personal Injury laws for emotional pain and suffering, so news agencies do not send investigative reporters to dig into the true identities of mystery-men.

Which doesn't mean secret identities are truly safe and secure. Somebody always knows somewhere, and under the right circumstances any hero's private identity can be made public. It can happen legally, through arrest and legal proceedings, or simply by someone dumping a videofile on the internet.

Superhero Couture

Atlas' first costume was a blue cotton jumpsuit, a cape, and a Lone Ranger mask. In the early days even the best costumes looked like high-end Halloween stuff, but the fashion industry got in on the new market fast. Today, superhero costumes range from serviceable fieldwear (sometimes incorporating personal armor) to fancy dress clubwear of the highest quality—with lots of heroes owning sets of both! Spandex, latex, and leather are common costume materials, but so is cotton and synthetics. Today there are whole boutique designer studios dedicated to superhero fashion, with most costumes bespoke rather than off-the-rack. The most famous studio is *Andrew's Designs* in Chicago.

Since, outside of Hollywood, not all heroes have physiques that look good in tights or skimpy two-pieces; most costumes are combination pieces and (despite many cape's use of personal dieticians and trainers) fewer wear spandex than you would think. Vests are common (they can hide support boning and ballistic armor), as are tailored leather jackets. Cargo pants and boots are a favored street-hero look among male capes. Regardless of style, virtually all superhero costumes are distinctive and colorful, intended to leave anyone who sees the hero in no doubt as to who he is. Regardless of design, there are always several elements that appear in them—or are noted in their absence.

Sure, costumes are flamboyant acts of self-expression, but they're useful, too. The PR benefits aside, everyone knows you on sight—important if you need instant trust in a crisis. And recognizing friendlies is deadly important on the fast-moving superhuman battlefield.

—The Harlequin, **THE CITYWATCH INTERVIEWS**

Superhero Crests

Beyond the colorful styles they use to distinguish themselves, many superheroes also adopt a *crest*. A superhero crest is a fully trademarked symbol that designates the hero, and superhero crests are as carefully tracked today as heraldic crests were in the Middle Ages. Even if a crest isn't always worn, it's still a marketing tool; superheroes may change up their costume style all the time or just based on the occasion, but with few exceptions (such as when adopting a brand new superhero persona) they stick with the same crest and color-scheme.

Superhero Masks

A half-mask that at least covers the top half of the face, and preferably the hair, is the *minimum* a superhero needs if he is keeping his private identity secret. Masks that don't block the wearer's peripheral vision require wide eye-holes, and "warpaint" around the eyes in matching color is a current trend. Some capes go with face obscuring helmets or visored half-helmets instead. Heroes whose true identities are public knowledge will often still opt for a mask, most often a domino mask (think Zorro or the Lone Ranger) and warpaint so that their faces aren't instantly recognizable when they're off duty and out of costume. An interesting clubwear trend is to dispense with the domino mask and expand the warpaint, often airbrushing it on.

Capes

Despite *cape* being synonymous with superhero, most heroes don't wear them—at least not as part of their fieldwear. Field capes are traditionally worn only by flyers, and not even by a majority of those. Cape length and style varies tremendously, from calf-length to butt-length, and even off-the-shoulder musketeer style. Needless to say, however stylish they are, they are usually fireproof, durable, and designed to easily separate from the hero's suit.

WHERE TO GO

Brandon and Hollister is the Chicago law firm that trademarked the Sentinels' codenames and crests on their behalf, and since then it has specialized in trademark law. Today the firm handles the codename and crest trademarks for hundreds of clients, and most of its income comes from its 20% cut of all judgment awards for trademark infractions. It also provides bidding services when a retiring hero (or his estate) wishes to sell a trademarked name. Registering at Brandon and Hollister is practically the first thing a new American superhero does.



Supersoldiers, Supercops, and Supercivilians

Not all powerful breakthroughs become superheroes. The US Military is always recruiting for superhumans with tactically useful powers and pays better than most CAI teams—with the bonus of *intense* training and amazing medical and retirement benefits. Lots of top-line CAI heroes get their initial training and experience in the military.

One city, New York, doesn't allow CAI heroes to operate independently of the regular police; instead, it has a supercop division, organized much like a group of SWAT Teams. Codenames, yes, but blue uniform jumpsuits with the NYPD badge and *no* masks; supercops are just the branch of the NYPD tasked with responding to superhuman threats and helping other first-responders.

And then there are those breakthroughs who, whatever their powers, just aren't suited for or interested in wearing the cape as a career. Some just bury their powers, and agencies handle part-time capes or match unusual powers to jobs, but there are many unique and highly remunerative full-time opportunities available. A good example is the Crew, Chicago's fast-recovery team.



1: The New Heroic Age – Real World Heroes

Composed of B Class and C Class telekinetics, Ajax-types, and other useful types, the Crew can clear an accident site (or fight zone) of rubble and restore power in hours rather than days. When not working a job in Chicago, the Crew travels the country to work cleanup zones for everything from natural disasters and industrial accidents to the more attention getting after-fight cleanups. Atlas-Types can make millions lifting payloads into orbit or to the Moon, and other super tough or pressure-resistant types can make big bucks doing deep-sea construction.



SUPERHEROES ELSEWHERE: THE UNITED KINGDOM

America isn't the only nation to create superheroes out of breakthroughs after the Event, but capes are more regulated in most places. A good example of the way in which breakthroughs outside the US wear the cape is the United Kingdom.

The UK had a rough time on the day of the Event and in the first weeks thereafter. The urban density of London (1 in 6 UK citizens reside in the capital) increased the overall percentage of injuries and fatalities from the Black Out that came with the Event. Worse, the UK got unlucky; a couple of extremely powerful breakthroughs decided to take advantage of the chaos, creating a second-order disaster in London with more loss of life and damage to city infrastructure. An Ulster breakthrough (calling himself The Twelfth) single-handedly restarted the Troubles with an attack that killed several dozen British soldiers and torched and leveled the Shackleton Barracks at Ballykelly. Consequently, the initial public reaction was a good deal less positive and more hysterical than in America.

The UK response was an initial crackdown—a national draft of all known breakthroughs, with all who gave any trouble packed off to Camp Acorn, a base in the Shetland Islands. Breakthroughs suspected of committing crimes were subjected to extended detention even if cases could not be made.

However, once the initial panic subsided, English civil rights traditions reasserted themselves. The draft was rescinded, although breakthroughs deemed “dangerous to public safety” were still required to go to Camp Acorn for assessment and training to minimize accidents. Although breakthroughs were officially required by law to register themselves, failure to do so generally didn't result in penalties unless the secret breakthrough broke the law in other ways. No requirement of public disclosure was made.

The UK solution to law-breaking superhumans was the creation of a new division, Special Police Forces, comprised of breakthroughs of all levels of power and of “normals” specially trained and equipped to handle breakthroughs (norms in UK slang, where superhumans are supes). A few years after the Event, as the situation normalized and the cost of it all became politically dangerous, the Special Police Forces was divided. The government kept the trained and equipped norms, while the superhuman teams were put out to tender as a public private partnership (P3) and won by the Enhanced Securities Group.

The Enhanced Security Group (ESG) sports British Racing Green and Black uniforms, no costumes or masks, call signs (codenames) but no secret IDs. Charged with maintaining countrywide security in as dignified and professional a manner as possible, it is run like a security company and coordinated across the UK to maximize effectiveness, keep costs down, and value for money up. They're someone to blame (not the government) if things go pear shaped.

London is the sole exception to the No Capes! UK policy. Quite recently a Northern Irish supervillain made the ESG look very bad indeed and cost London a lot of money. The Mayor of London, politically popular and with his sights set firmly on the Prime Minister's seat, figured out a loophole in government policy; his office allowed him to appoint special metropolitan police advisers and, with The City of London Corporation to foot the bill he had deep pockets for signing bonuses. So, the Mayor set up a masked and caped Super Team for London following the Chicago Model—employing top marketing consultants and image specialists—with costs to be recouped by merchandising and everything that the ESG was NOT allowed to do.

The public loves it, but the ESG doesn't. The Mayor can't stop the ESG from responding to crises in his jurisdiction, but the ESG also has no right to interfere with Metro police advisers. Which is making things...interesting.



Real-World Supervillains

Consider the psychology of the superhuman. Breakthroughs are generally triggered by severe physical stress or emotional shocks, but they are also sometimes the result of monomaniacal focus or psychotic drive. To say the least, a great many superhumans start with issues. Is suddenly being granted a large dose of wish fulfillment supposed to make them better adjusted?

—Dr. Alice Mendel, **SUPERHUMAN PSYCHOLOGY**

Supervillain is a blanket media term for any superhuman criminal or terrorist; capes usually shorten it to “villain,” so the Old English word is in common use again. In the comics, every superhero has his “rogue’s gallery” of supervillain nemeses—after all, he has to fight *somebody* every month. By extension supervillains outnumber superheroes. In the real world, things are a little more nuanced.

First, not all breakthrough powers are “nice.” Some are purely lethal weapons, for which there is no legitimate use other than self-defense and sometimes not even then. Breakthroughs with these kinds of powers are unlikely to find legal gainful employment, but they now possess completely undetectable “concealed weapons.” The temptation to find gainful *criminal* uses of such gifts is undeniable.

Second, a truth that organizations like Humanity First regularly seize upon is the fact that more extreme, imbalanced, and driven personality types are statistically more likely to experience breakthroughs—and experience more extreme, aggressive, or lethal breakthroughs. Add to this the fact that FBI psychologists claim that fully 3% of men and 1% of women possess “sociopathic personalities” (SP).

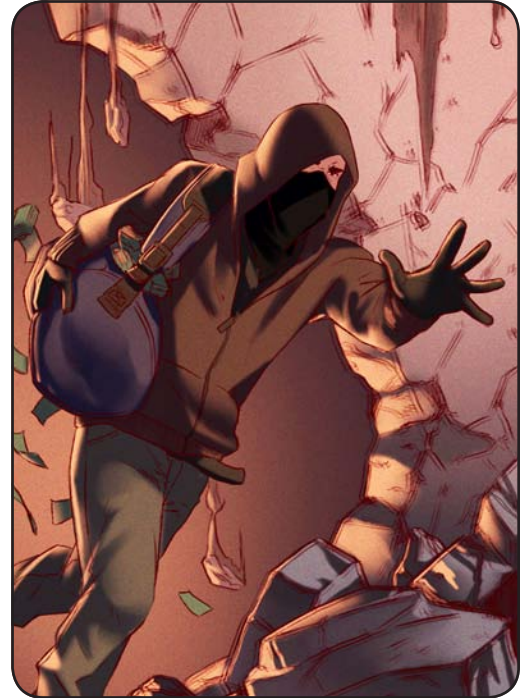
SPs range along a continuum from “self-centered and narcissistic” to “cold blooded serial killer,” and it has been hypothesized that not only are such personalities more likely to experience breakthroughs, the breakthrough experience is likely to heighten their sociopathic tendencies and even trigger psychotic breaks. While they are still a minority, when controlling for variables like education, history, wealth, race, and gender, there are five times more SP types diagnosed among breakthroughs than in the general population. And of course a lot of these turn supervillain.

Setting aside questions of their personality, there are basically three kinds of supervillains in the Post-Event world: professional villains, cause villains, and thrill-villains.

Professional Villains

Aftershock could have been the first “professional supervillain” had he not been so bad at it. In the early Post Event years, a number of colorful Bonnie and Clyde supervillains—high-conflict bandits—appeared, and were mostly either killed or incarcerated. They have been followed by more professional supervillain teams that operate along the lines of successful bank-job crews; whatever diverse powers they employ, they fill the roles of weapons man, safecracker or demolitionist, security expert, and most important—driver (the villain with a power that enables the crew to break contact completely and escape). They may even wear “supervillain costumes,” *if* they are identity-concealing and able to be ditched *quickly*. Although there have been a few exceptions, a supervillain crew is usually only successful if it manages to leave before the capes arrive; if it turns into a hero vs. villain fight, the villains have lost.

Bandit-style villains get the most media attention, and villains whose heists are colorful even enjoy some serious celebrity, but supervillains have also moved into just about every niche of organized crime, street-gang level and up. From extortion and drugs to sex-trafficking and contracted killing, they are now either muscle for Pre-Event organizations or leaders *in* those organizations. This means that police and federal operations against criminal gangs and organizations *always* involve superheroes in the break-down-the-door phase of the game.



Even when they know who we are, if they come after us they come after us, in uniform, without involving our families. And when we go after them, we stick to the law and usually try and bring them in alive, even if a general warrant’s been issued. When both sides play by the rules, the bodies don’t start piling up.

—Blackstone, **VILLAINS INC.**



1: The New Heroic Age – Real World Villainy

As thoroughly as supervillains have penetrated organized crime, one of the few things that keeps it tolerable is that they have a strong incentive to abide by The Rules—which are really an extension of the way organized crime deals with the police. Cop-killing is *bad*. The gloves come off when a cop goes down, and so professional criminals don't hunt cops. Even when the police raid a drug lab or gang shop, professional criminals don't often go down shooting. Surrender means arrest, trials, and sentences, which they can live with; their guns are for defense against *other criminals*. The same rule applies to supervillains; they don't normally target superheroes—becoming a known *cape-killer* is one step away from Suicide by Cape—and they *especially* don't come after them when they are out of costume and off duty, or go after their families if their private identities are known. In a hero vs. villain fight, they will often try and incapacitate the hero and escape, and unless the villain has a cape-killer reputation, heroes generally show reciprocal restraint. More supervillains are killed by other supervillains than die in hero vs. villain fights.

Note that The Rules are not universal to all organized crime; in Mexico, the Cartels routinely strike at the families of government superhumans. In the US, the Russian Mafia has displayed a willingness to hunt capes in reprisal for interference with their operations—they will fly in Russian supervillains for the job and then fly them home to thwart investigations—but even they refrain from going after cape's families.

Cause Villains

Breakthrough powers cannot be detected except in action, and this creates a whole new nightmare for national security agencies. Post-Event, every fanatical action-group and terrorist organization has its own superhuman members; again, the driven, imbalanced nature of many breakthroughs attracts them to extreme solutions to the injustices they see in the world. Their actions range from extreme vandalism to physical assaults, random slayings, assassinations, and even hostage-taking.

In the US, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and Deep Green (hardcore zero-growth environmentalists) have both fielded super-terrorists. Deep Green has so far limited itself to extreme property damage—destroying construction equipment, unoccupied housing developments, power plants, and other infrastructure. ALF has destroyed slaughterhouses and animal-testing laboratories, and has also gruesomely assassinated a handful of scientists and company CEOs. The Order, a white supremacist

group, fields a team of “superhero” vigilantes who target black, Asian, and Hispanic supervillains. Los Salvadores, a militant superhero branch of La Raza in the American Southwest, fights for “racial justice.” It is funded by the Mexican drug cartels and targets “hostile Anglos” and border patrol and INS agents.

Internationally, most nationalist and ideological terrorist organizations have superhuman arms. Mexico Libre, a revolutionary group in Northern Mexico funded by the cartels, stages attacks on the Mexican government as well as across the border against American officials and law enforcement officers in retaliation for American support for the “criminal regime.” Surviving supersoldiers of the short-lived Caliphate have coalesced into independent but cooperative Islamo-fascist organizations, and while they spend most of their time fighting at home (Turkey and Egypt are especially dedicated to rooting them out wherever they find them), they also target Israel, the United States, and the new League of Democratic States. The Chinese Secession States are fighting to suppress nobody knows how many Maoist revolutionary groups dedicated to bringing back the People's Republic of China, and some of these groups have targeted US and allied bases outside of China as well.

VILLAINS INC.

Probably the most famous professional supervillain team in the early Post-Event period was Villains Inc. The Chicago Mob responded to the threat posed by supervillains by killing the ones that might have successfully challenged them and paying the others to keep a lid on the villains that ran with the street gangs. Never people to waste an asset, they began hiring “mob” villains out, nationally and even internationally, for contracted hits and other jobs. Villains Inc. came to the attention of the DSA and the Chicago Sentinels, which led to a roundup operation involving an elaborate setup to get all the Villains Inc. villains together in one place. Outside of the comics, supervillains don't usually sit around a table in a secret lair, so the Sentinels vs. Villains Inc. fight was one of the few cases of a climactic all-in hero vs. villain battle in real life. Of course they made a movie out of it, and the surviving Villains Inc. members, Undertaker, Stricture, and The Message, are celebrity inmates at Detroit Supermax.

THE TEATIME ANARCHIST

With the exception of Seif-al-Din—an ex-Caliphate jihadist who has died at least once—the Teatime Anarchist is the single most infamous supervillain terrorist. A conspiracy-theory fanatic who has written a manifesto claiming that the United States Government intends to gain control of the nation's superhuman population and use them to establish a fascist police-state, the Teatime Anarchist has single-handedly carried out lethal pranks and bombing assassinations against judges, lawmakers, US Marshals, and military officers, with dozens of collateral victims. After each attack, he releases a doctored video-file claiming responsibility and explaining what his targets “would have done” if he hadn't stopped them. He has always hidden his face behind a nylon mask and never given himself a name; the media dubbed him the Teatime Anarchist because his doctored voice sounds vaguely English.

Cause-driven supervillains are far more likely than professional supervillains to go after superheroes who get in their way. However, they are even less likely to kill a cape's family or take them hostage, partly because of the gloves-off result but mostly because it's horrible publicity. They wish to be seen as righteous guerilla fighters rather than terrorists, and in the public eye capes are somewhat legitimate "military targets." Most cause-driven supervillains will even refrain from attacking capes when they're "out of uniform."

Thrill Villains

Then there are the supervillains who are in it for the kicks. Thrill-villains range from colorful but harmless (the Pieman is a good example; his victims get nothing more than a face-full of fruity pie filling) to horrifying psychotics. They may sometimes engage in the same crimes as professional villains or cause villains, but they are far more flamboyant about it and for them the hero vs. villain faceoff is often the whole *point*. Unless they have good escape-powers, their careers are usually relatively short. Professional and cause-driven villains avoid them like the plague, but they often find each other and form "supervillain teams" so they can put on bigger shows.

"Good" thrill-villains come closest to the classic comic-book supervillains: high drama, colorful heists with no body count, challenging rather than targeting superheroes. *Bad* thrill-villains are often complete psychos; they may be invisible serial killers or very public mass murderers who measure success by body count. They *may* follow The Rules out of a sense of sporting behavior, but they are just as likely to consider killing a superhero's loved ones a valid way to incentivize him. Fortunately, despite the impression given by Hollywood's serial action-thrillers, the incidence of utterly psychotic and unrestrained thrill-villains has so far been very low.

Supervillain Culture

Supervillain culture worships power; by definition, a supervillain is strong enough to do what he wants and lawbreaking is a display of strength. Fans of villain rap and fashion are attracted to what it represents: total self-empowerment and a challenge to the system. Because superheroes stand for the system, they and supervillains are literally Homeric enemies, like Hector and Achilles of old.

—Prof. Charles Gibbons, **THE NEW HEROIC AGE**

Every generation has its counterculture, and while American pop culture has gone overboard with superhero worship, Post-Event counterculture has gone...the other way. It began with supervillains' penetration of the drug gangs and then the appearance of supervillain and "minion" street gangs. Urban street-villains began adopting a distinctive "styletribe" costume: heavy boots, jeans, cargo, or leather pants, a leather jacket or long duster, and a bright colored shirt with a symbol hand-painted on it—tats or face-paint optional. Freakshow, a rapping "supervillain" shapeshifter, took gangsta rap and made it villain rap, vaulting both the new music style and the clothing style into popularity.

Part of supervillain culture is a denial of the validity of superhero worship and hero's claims of righteousness. After all, CAI capes and other professional superheroes support and defend The System, which oppresses minorities with legal brutality and systematized discrimination. You can't be a hero and the oppressor. On the other side, villain culture worships actualized power—displayed through law-breaking—and this often makes supervillains victimizers in their own communities.

*No we're not your daddy's villins/
we're not chillin' then we're killin'/
we want you, best be willin'*
—From *Murder Night*, by Freakzone

Villain culture is not defined by race, but it does have strong racial and class elements; urban street culture condemns "brothers" who become superheroes—traitors selling out their own. Fashion villains have their minions and their groupies, and there is a strong bleed-over between fashion villains and gang villains; Chicago's two supervillain gangs, the Brotherhood and the Sanguinary Boys, are full-on fashion villains—they do extortion and drugs and prostitution and look *good* doing it. Their minions even wear their symbols as tats, but their flamboyant fashion-sense doesn't make them any less dangerous.

Villain-culture is a refuge for both professional and thrill-villains, and for some cause-driven villains if it's the right cause. Villain-culture's open display allows them to be completely public while making it very hard for law enforcement to pin anything on them, with groupies ready to alibi for them and minions ready to assist them. For a villain to be "authentic," he needs to be able to boast at least one successful tag—villain vs. hero fight. Win or lose a fight, do a little prison time if you can't get off on a technicality, and you're in. Inside their circles, the most hardcore boast of their toe-tags: *hero kills*.





Wearing the Cape

Civilization is not an inevitable good or a natural state; it is enabling good over evil, imposing justice over nature, and it must be always defended.

—Professor Charles Gibbons, **THE NEW HEROIC AGE.**

Today's capes have a lot on their plates. Capes may not be “crime fighters” in the classical comic-book vigilante sense, but they are humanity's first line of defense against superhumans who, for whatever reason, have “gone supervillain” (and there are more than enough of those). When not fighting supervillains, professional capes are training, using their powers to help others where possible, training, managing their public perceptions, training, trying to have a life, and, oh yeah, training. Because, while they aren't fighting supervillains every day, or even every month, when they do go into a fight there are far too many ways to die. And unlike in the comic-books, death is final.

And if anything, it is getting worse. Supervillains are *evolving*, getting more organized whether as criminals or as cause-driven fanatics, putting pressure on governments to compromise superhuman rights in the name of national security and public safety. Threat-levels are rising with the appearance of more and more Ultra-Class villains capable of causing tremendous damage, as well as breakthrough-created threats like the Godzilla Plague. Once the world just had to worry about religious fanatics or rogue regimes getting their hands on nuclear or biological weapons. Now it has to worry about bio-engineered monsters and other superscience threats, not to mention the occasional insane Person of Mass Destruction capable of leveling whole blocks and killing tens of thousands of people.

Nor can American capes afford to remain safely at home and let the rest of the world take care of itself; while many capes would like to simply protect their own, much of the rest of the world is increasingly unstable if not on the brink. Worse, each nation that collapses into a totalitarian regime or failed state becomes a breeding ground for misery and for chaos that can easily spread beyond its borders. And that is merely the cynical argument for going abroad; for many capes, especially the capes who answer the call of Heroes Without Borders, *not* using their powers to help wherever they can is simply unthinkable, even when intervention might be disastrous.

And while capes have carved out a high place for themselves in society, with many perks, they are also under the public eye. Combining as they do the accountability of public servants with the fascination of celebrities, their mistakes are rarely forgiven and outright bad behavior never is. While the general public approves of them and a significant percentage idolize them, others regard them with suspicion if not outright hostility, ever ready to attack them when they fall (or give them a push). Capes rigorously police themselves, knowing that all it will take is a few of them going bad in a big way to ruin it for the rest of them.

The truth is, even in developed nations governed by liberal democracies and blessed with the rule of law, in nations that welcome superhumans and encourage them to make the most of their powers that they can, capes know that they are just one Bad Day from stepping to the brink of disaster themselves. The Post-Event World is surfing the crest of the disaster-curve, deep into interesting times, and if capes are going to save the world then they are going to do it one day and one fight at a time.

Still want to wear the cape? Then buckle up; it's going to be a bumpy ride. Whether you're just making your city safe for non-breakthroughs and for breakthroughs who weren't as blessed as you, or going out to meet danger and to do good abroad, you're going to have good days and bad days and even days when victory feels like failure. But unlike so many, you do have an opportunity to make a real and immediate difference, to impact countless lives and to make the world a better place. Make it worth it.

2

THE SENTINELS





“It’s hard to imagine what the Post-Event World would be like without the Chicago Sentinels. Almost from day one, they grabbed the superhero mantle with both hands and wouldn’t let it go. They wore the costumes, used the codenames, hired marketing and public relations specialists. And lawyers. Lots of lawyers, and eventually lobbyists in Springfield and Washington. They franchised private superhuman security as a business model, one accepted in practically every state but New York.

“Other nations think we’re crazy to have most of our domestic superhuman security provided by non-government associations strong enough to give police and military forces an ass-kicking if they decided they needed to. And we are, but any attempt to fix it runs up against the Sentinels.”

—From an internal People for Law and Order document

Using This Chapter

The team is presented here so that you can read the team and hero bios and reference to them for Stunt examples as you work your way through **Chapter 5**. When you’re ready to make your hero, if you need inspiration and examples of how to write Character Aspects or put together powers, then come back here. And of course you may want to play these heroes, or have them appear in your own games as interesting drop-ins! Note, however, that except for Artemis and Astra (who is used extensively as an example of hero creation in **Chapter 4**), the Sentinels shown here *are not examples of beginning characters*. Players beginning their adventures will not have the Sentinels’ Rating Levels, Starting Fate Points, or number of Stunts, again with the exception of Astra, who is presented here at the beginning of her own adventures.

The Chicago Sentinels		Crisis Aid and Intervention Team	
Headquarters: The Chicago Sentinels Building AKA The Dome		Area of Operation: Chicago, Illinois, USA	
Mission Statement	Team Resources	Team Roster	
Protect and Serve the People of Chicago.	Epic (+7) Reputation	Atlas	
Background Aspects	Epic (+7) Wealth	Ajax	
America’s Premier Superteam.	Superb (+5) Contacts	Blackstone	
Strained Relationship with the Chicago PD.	Stress & Consequences	Nimbus	
Team Skills	Resource Stress	Rush	
Superb (+5) Information	1 2 3 4 5	The Harlequin	
Superb (+5) Security	Resource Consequence	Chakra	
Great (+4) Legal Resources	_____ 2	Astra	
Great (+4) Public Relations	_____ 2	Artemis	
Good (+3) Investigate	_____ 4		



Team Notes

History

Five future superheroes met on the day of The Event: Atlas, Touches Clouds, Minuteman, Ajax, and Blackstone. They were hardly the only breakthroughs to appear in Chicago, but they were certainly the most powerful. Five days after The Event, they incorporated themselves as the Chicago Sentinels, trademarked their chosen codenames, and never looked back. A shaken American public went wild for its new, colorful, and real superheroes, and the mayor of Chicago rammed an emergency bill through the city council that hired the Chicago Sentinels under the same codes as city-contracted services.

When President Kayle called for the emergency formation of superhuman US Marshalls teams, the Chicago Sentinels signed up and were assigned a temporary federal handler, but they had no intention of becoming agents of the federal government; after their famous meeting with the committee on Capitol Hill, they made an offer to the governor of Illinois that resulted in his granting them officer's commissions in the reactivated Illinois Reserve Militia (under current US laws, this move protects them from any national draft or call-up). The Illinois State Government came to an agreement with the City of Chicago that acknowledged that the Sentinels were first and foremost a city team—their reserve commissions could be activated by the governor only in time of a declared state of emergency—and this became the pattern for Crisis Aid and Intervention teams that built on the Sentinels model.

Once Chicago got more CAI teams to help protect it (the Guardians franchise), the team widened its activities to also protect civilians in war zones and disaster areas around the world as members of Heroes without Borders. The team's most famous domestic "adventure" was its takedown of Villains Inc., a group of "villains for hire" run by the Chicago Mob.

The team has suffered losses. Minuteman was killed by a psychotic supervillain who saw himself as the speedster's nemesis. Impact was killed in Israel, when he and the rest of the Sentinels mobilized with Heroes Without Borders to defend Jewish communities during the Caliphate War. Touches Clouds left the team for a political career that took her to the White House. The Sentinel's roster has grown and shrunk over the years, but with three of its founding members still active it remains the iconic American superhero team.

The Sentinels control their own multi-media properties: movies, comics, a TV series, and massive merchandising. Other teams are similarly marketed, but even a decade after The Event, the Sentinels still capture the public imagination and define what it means to be superheroes. The team currently has a strained relationship with the Chicago PD—mainly because the current commissioner, Tony Hoey, believes that the CAI teams should be under direct control of the police department.

Image and Activities

The Sentinels consciously mold their image, for the most part recruiting heroes who are seasoned, professional, and media-effective (Astra is an exception since Atlas-Types are practically unkillable and she's a perfect image fit). They also pay attention to the tactical power-mix of the team, working for a striking-mobility-defense balance, with teammates who can operate on physical and psychic levels of conflict. A huge part of their marketing and PR people's job is making somewhat marginal teammates more acceptable to the public, but after ten years of Doing Good the team's reputation (and the wealth it can use to protect its reputation) is one of its biggest assets. The Sentinels' family-friendly image is only enhanced by careful use of its comic-book and movie properties—its fictionalized adventures (as well as the fictional backgrounds of teammates with secret identities) are what much of the public actually associates with the team. Which doesn't mean that the Sentinels aren't as good as they are portrayed—they're just not quite as perfect or powerful as their media image.

The Sentinels is Chicago's senior team, with chief responsibility for the Loop, and through Dispatch it directs the city's seven Guardian teams as well as its own members. Sentinels and Guardians respond to superhuman emergencies throughout the city; although they are not police, they also respond to more "normal" situations—especially to high-risk shooter situations where officers request backup, but also to other emergency situations where their powers can help. When not on watch or patrol, or abroad responding to civil emergencies or working with Heroes without Borders, Sentinels train. A lot. They cross-train with the Guardians teams, with shared facilities in the Dome and outside city limits, and also nationally; they host the annual CAI training and expo conference that is the serious side to Capecon.

Their position of prestige in the cape community also makes the Sentinels the main public mouthpiece for Crisis Aid and Intervention teams nationally, often representing their interests in Washington. NCAI, the national organization which supplies oversight as well as legal, mediation, and insurance services to CAI teams across the country, is based in Chicago and three Sentinels members (currently Atlas, Ajax, and Blackstone) sit on its board.



Atlas ~ John Chandler



Power Aspect

A Class Atlas-Type

Hero Aspect

Iconic American Hero

Trouble

Getting Burned Out

Background Aspect

The Sentinels' Public Figurehead

Background Aspect

"Been there, seen that, done it twice."

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences

_____	2
_____	4
_____	6

(Physical Only)

_____	2
_____	4
_____	6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____	2
_____	4

Attributes

Great (+4)	Alertness	Mythic (+9)	Physique	Great (+4)	Willpower
Superb (+5)	Athleticism	Good (+3)	Discernment	Good (+3)	Presence

Skills

Superb (+5)	Fight	Fair (+2)	Survival
Good (+3)	Provoke	Average (+1)	Aid
Fair (+2)	Academics	Average (+1)	Engineering
Fair (+2)	Rapport	Average (+1)	Shoot

Resources

Legendary (+8)	Reputation	Great (+4)	Wealth	Fantastic (+6)	Contacts
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +1, Athleticism +2, Physique +4 (WR8/AR4), Discernment +1, Willpower +1, Presence +1.

SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE +4. From +5 to +9. (8)

TOP OF YOUR CLASS. When Atlas invokes his Power Aspect he gets a +3 instead of a +2.

IRON BLOWS. Atlas gets a +2 to Attack with Fight when using his bare fists.

MIGHTY. Atlas adds a +2 to Physique when using Overcome to try and lift heavy loads or break through barriers.

FAST FLYER. Atlas adds +1 to Actions involving Dodge and Movement when flying.

SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY. Atlas may spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical Stress during a Scene.

HARD AS NAILS. Atlas automatically succeeds at his Recovery Action for Physical Consequences short of Extreme, and once per session, he may spend 1 Fate Point to change a Moderate Physical Consequence to a Mild Physical Consequence, or eliminate one Mild Physical Consequence completely.

SUPERSENSES. Atlas gets a +2 to Alertness when attempting to Overcome, Create Advantage, or React with his heightened sight and hearing.

YOUR OWN MISSILE. Atlas' Movement (but not Dodge) depends upon Physique when flying, and he may use Physique to Overcome barriers he is attempting to fly through.

COSTUME ENHANCEMENTS. Atlas has a +2 to Create an Advantage with Presence when he is in costume!

STARTING FATE POINTS: 6

Profile

Breakthrough Powers

John is *the* Atlas after which the type is named. He is strong enough to bench press a tank, tough enough to take a hit from anti-armor artillery and survive, and he can outfly all but the fastest military jets. See the Atlas-Type Power Kit (p.96) for a full description of his powers.

History

John Chandler was born the youngest of three brothers and grew up on the Chandler Ranch in West Texas. The Chandler family is an Old Texas Family, tracing its roots back to The Old Three Hundred who settled in Texas with Austin, but also to older Tejano families and the Comanche. John's father likes to joke "There's been a Chandler of some name or other in Texas since God first laid it out."

Only John's oldest brother, Cory, stayed in Texas to work the family ranch. Alex left for college in Dallas and for a career in marketing that took him to one of Chicago's biggest firms and to eventually opening his own marketing firm. John was the stereotypical cowboy until graduating high school—even a young champion of the local rodeo circuit—but after graduation he surprised his parents by taking his savings and his old Ford truck and hitting the road.

John spent the summer on the road, driving around the Gulf to New Orleans, then to Atlanta and from there up the East Coast to Boston, from there west to Chicago where he ran out of cash. In Chicago his brother Alex knew a guy who knew a guy, and John got a job as a baggage-monkey at O'Hare International Airport. He planned to work hard, live light, save his money, and hit the road again the next spring. Then the Event happened.

Opening his eyes after The Blackout to see a private jet dropping for his end of the runway, without thinking John jumped and *flew*. He'd preferred comic books to textbooks when he read at all.

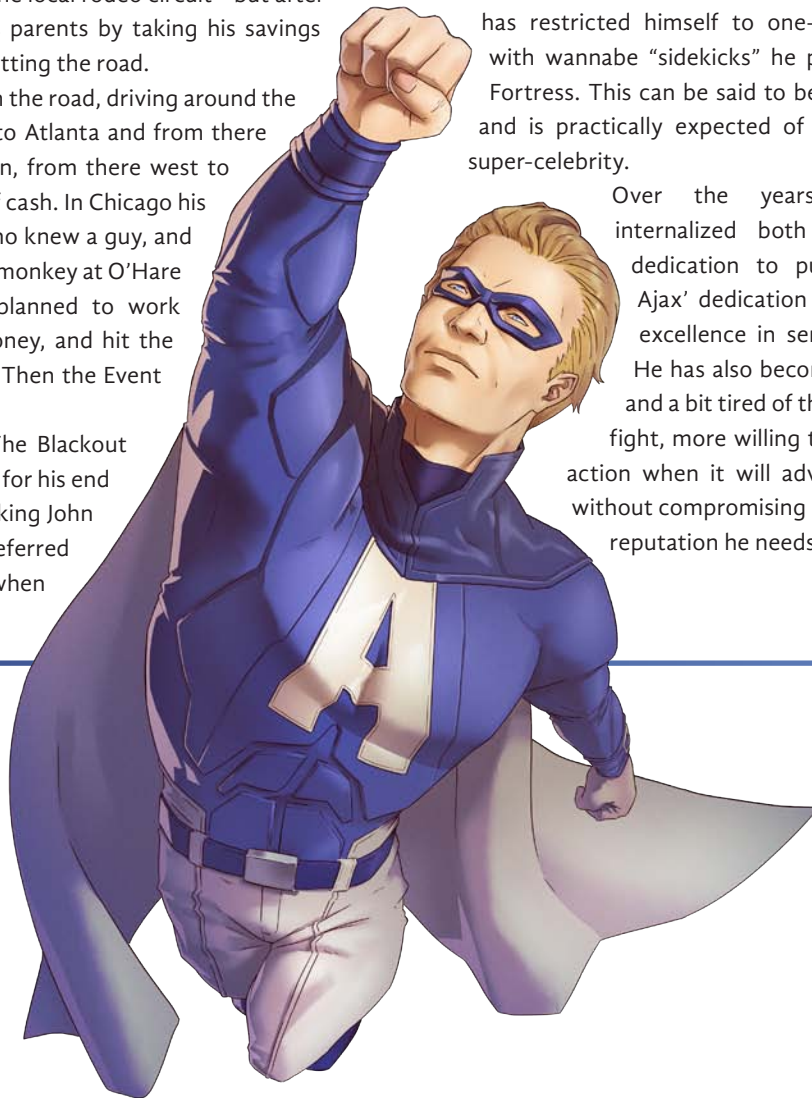
John caught the plane and set it on the tarmac, then flew up to meet the string of incoming planes that had been lined up in landing patterns and that, without power, had the aerodynamics of bricks with wings. He managed to provide enough lift to get one passenger plane down safely. He didn't have time for the rest, and he spent the rest of the day of the Event pulling people out of buildings hit by falling planes. The video images of his catching the planes, and of his later rescues in the city and his fight with Aftershock, made him instantly world famous and the best-known Sentinel.

Appearance and Personality

Ten years after the Event, with hundreds of capes in the US alone, Atlas is still the iconic "cape" others are measured by. Square jawed and hard-eyed, he looks the part although he owes his heavily muscled appearance in part to careful enhancements in his uniform/costume.

Trained to fight by Ajax and trained in tactics by Blackstone, he is a veteran of dozens of superhuman battles. He also has no private life anymore; after an early and brief marriage to a model-actress who tired of his work ethic, he has restricted himself to one-night hookups with wannabe "sidekicks" he picks up at the Fortress. This can be said to be his only vice—and is practically expected of an unattached super-celebrity.

Over the years, Atlas has internalized both his brother's dedication to public spin and Ajax' dedication to the ideal of excellence in service of others. He has also become both harder and a bit tired of the never ending fight, more willing to take ruthless action when it will advance his goals without compromising his ideals or the reputation he needs to do his job.



The Harlequin ~ Jacquin Torres



Power Aspect

A Class Ovid-Type

Hero Aspect

Acrobat Adventurer

Trouble

Living Doll

Background Aspect

Heroes without Borders veteran.

Background Aspect

Consummate image-spinner.

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences

_____ 2
 _____ 4
 _____ 6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____ 4

Attributes

Great (+4)	Alertness	Great (+4)	Physique	Good (+3)	Willpower
Superb (+5)	Athleticism	Good (+3)	Discernment	Fair (+2)	Presence

Skills

Great (+4)	Fight	Fair (+2)	Academics
Great (+4)	Rapport	Average (+1)	Provoke
Good (+3)	Aid	Average (+1)	Stealth
Fair (+2)	Deceive	Average (+1)	Survival
Fair (+2)	Shoot	Average (+1)	Drive

Resources

Great (+4)	Reputation	Good (+3)	Wealth	Superb (+5)	Contacts
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +1, Athleticism +2, Physique +1 (WR2/AR1), Discernment +1, Willpower +1, Presence +1.

+10 ARMOR RATING. (5) Quin has an **Armor Rating 11** against most physical attacks.

ACROBATIC ATTACK +2. Quin gains a +2 to Attack with Fight, using herself as the projectile, when she closes from Shoot to Fight Range.

ACROBATIC DODGE. When she has room to move and knows the Attack is coming, Quin gets a +2 to React.

BOUNCE RANGE. The Harlequin can *move*. In a scene with lots of room she can gain speed and height by bouncing, allowing her to move from Shoot to Fight range and the reverse without taking an Action to do so. She can use Acrobatic Attack as she bounces in first, and then return to Shoot range if she chooses to and isn't countered (stopped, entangled, etc.), as part of the same Action.

SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY. Quin may spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical Stress during a Scene.

STUNNERS. +2 WR/+1 ATTACK. When using stunners, Quin Attacks with Fight as normal, but all Consequence Slots she fills only require 2 shifts to fill and are counted as Mild Consequences. (2)

STARTING FATE POINTS: 7

Profile

Breakthrough Powers

The Ovid-Type is a catchall category for permanently transformed breakthroughs whose powers don't put them in some other grouping. The Harlequin is considered A Class because her sheer physical toughness puts her in the same league with A Class powers of other physical types.

Quin can invoke her Power Aspect when the situation allows her room to *bounce*; helping her absorb hits, cover ground faster, etc. Her rubber body is immune to biological attacks (gas, toxins, etc.) and extremes of pressure, decompression, and heat. Her bones bend under hard impacts and she can twist like a contortionist, but she is not a "stretchy" cape. Extreme cold can make her brittle, and she is too dense to float in water. Also, she is visibly inhuman; her skin has the feel and appearance of smooth latex.

History

Quin was always an adventurer; as a child, this meant "joining the circus"—in her case Cirque du Soliel. Winning a premier high-wire aerobatics role in one of Las Vegas' biggest shows, she experienced her breakthrough when a wire broke and she plummeted fifty feet to the hard stage during a performance. She *bounced*, which disqualified her for that "normals-only" show.

She could have moved to another show (Vegas has plenty of superhuman shows), but instead she sought new adventures. She achieved CAI certification, but then joined Heroes without Borders—her new form making her invaluable for hostile-environment rescue. She helped protect refugee camps in Eastern Europe and Africa during both regions' flare-ups of ethnic cleansing, eventually meeting Blackstone on an HWB mission in Southeast Asia. There to protect a camp, she had begun operating as a nameless vigilante against several sex-trafficking organizations preying on poverty stricken locals; Blackstone talked her into signing on with the Sentinels rather than continuing her vigilante career until local "superheroes" identified and killed her. Now she uses much of her earnings to covertly help privately funded "justice teams" who target the enormous international sex-trafficking industry.

Everyone on the team fills supporting positions when not training or in the field, and Quin found her second, secret superpower with the team; public relations. Always able to read a crowd and spin a great yarn, she has found herself a natural in front of a mic and also at "building story" for her team through the news media. She liaises with Alex Chandler, the team's marketing director, and is the team's media relations director.

Appearance and Personality

The Harlequin has a huge range of harlequin costumes, all designed and stitched to be combat-rugged or at least to stay on and not get in her way, and she never dresses civilian in public. She is gleefully impulsive in combat—mainly because she is virtually immune from harm. However, her first role in the field is medical support and civilian protection; she is now a trained paramedic, and she will not hesitate to put herself between bystanders and harm, counting on her near invulnerability to protect her.

Although Quin loves what her breakthrough now allows her to do, she hates that she has become a living doll. She tells herself it could have been worse; she might not have been able to eat or drink anymore, or no longer been "anatomically correct." She had a serious boyfriend when her breakthrough transformed her, and that didn't last. Since then Quin has been very careful of romantic entanglements; she is not interested in guys who are only attracted to her because she fits a fetish.



Blackstone ~ Henry Roix



Power Aspect

A Class Mentalist-Type

Hero Aspect

Gentleman Magician

Trouble

Old Injuries

Background Aspect

Retired Marine and Intelligence Officer.

Background Aspect

"All the world's a stage!"

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences

_____	2
_____	4
_____	6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____	2
_____	4

Attributes

Good (+3)	Alertness	Fair (+2)	Physique	Great (+4)	Willpower
Fair (+2)	Athleticism	Great (+4)	Discernment	Great (+4)	Presence

Skills

Superb (+5)	Deceive	Fair (+2)	Shoot
Superb (+5)	Provoke	Average (+1)	Aid
Great (+4)	Investigate	Average (+1)	Drive
Good (+3)	Fight	Average (+1)	Engineering
Good (+3)	Rapport	Average (+1)	Survival
Fair (+2)	Academics		

Resources

Superb (+5)	Reputation	Good (+3)	Wealth	Epic (+7)	Contacts
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +1, Athleticism +0, Physique +0, Discernment +1, Willpower +1, Presence +1.

PSYCHIC STRENGTH +4. When using his "stage magic" powers, Blackstone adds +1 per level (+4 max.) to his Willpower rating when using the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for his linked Skills. (8)

"NOTHING UP MY SLEEVES." Once per Scene, Blackstone may Declare a Story Detail for free to pull something out of the air or his hat. This allows him to create any Situation Aspect that will fit his "stage magic," from explosive flashes to clouds of smoke or apparently limitless guns and ammo. (He can *always* do this by spending a Fate Point and invoking his Power Aspect.)

LEVITATION. Blackstone may use Willpower rather than Athleticism (to move) or Physique (to lift things) when levitating himself or other objects.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS. Blackstone may use Deceive to React (creating illusory duplicates, blinding smoke, or otherwise befuddling opponents).

APPEARING/DISAPPEARING ACT. Once per Scene Blackstone can depart the Scene, even if restrained, by teleporting away in a puff of smoke. Additionally, he can always spend a Fate Point to *enter* any Scene if he knows its location and it is within the same general region (anywhere in Chicago, for example).

BLACK MAGIC. The name of Blackstone's customized pistol! It gives him a WR 2/+1 Shoot Skill to Attack (2).

LION-HEADED SWORD CANE. Blackstone gets a +2 Attack with Fight Skill when using his cane.

STARTING FATE POINTS: 9



Profile

Breakthrough Powers

Blackstone is the classic stage-magician—if stage-magicians could really levitate themselves and others, appear and disappear in puffs of smoke, and weave elaborate visual and auditory illusions without props and assistants. Blackstone has been known to pull guns and ammo out of his top hat, provide illusory smoke or decoy figures to help the team, teleport between locations, and of course levitate for significant distances.

History

From earliest childhood, Henry loved puzzles and mysteries. Stage magic and prestidigitation became an early obsession; he just had to know how magicians did it, and he proved very good at figuring things out. Henry joined the US Marines right out of high school, and his analytical mind made him invaluable as a recon and counterintelligence officer. He served in many of the most dangerous hot-spots in the pre-Event world, often in forward areas subject to attack, before moving up to division intelligence operations.

Henry never lost his love of magic; he could make playing cards do ungodly things and could steal your watch and replace it with his own (oftentimes without apparently being in the room). His stunts earned him the nickname of Blackstone, after one of history's most famous magicians. After completing his twenty-year stint, Henry could have gone to work for the national security or intelligence agency of his choice. Instead, he headed for the stage.

Starting as a lounge entertainer, Henry worked up into an opening act and eventually his own stage show, complete with beautiful assistants and major illusions, and was well on his way to making Roix a famous name in magic when the Event happened. Part of a plane landed on the theater during a school-sponsored matinee performance, and Henry found himself teleported away to the back of the theater with his assistant. In a fugue-state, he then used levitation to free much of the trapped audience and float the injured to safety, projecting multiple images of himself to calm and guide the young attendees. Continuing to help, he met Atlas, Ajax, and the Minuteman that day.

Blackstone assumed the intelligence and operations rolls needed for the new Sentinels, evolving much of the team's recruiting, training, and field doctrine. He works closely with the Department of Superhuman Affairs and the Chicago Police Department to track merging superhuman threats and work on countering tactics.

Appearance and Personality

Blackstone is a trimly built, distinguished older gentleman. His hair and close-trimmed beard are white, but his handsome face is full of laugh lines. He is almost always in costume—that being a tuxedo, cane, top hat, and sometimes an opera cloak.

A lifetime's experience has taught Blackstone the usefulness of misdirection; the public sees him as the team's flamboyant magician—a supporting cape when the big guys fight. In reality, he holds the team together. Long-divorced, Blackstone considers the team his family. Atlas in particular is almost a son, but he watches and guides all of the younger heroes with avuncular concern. When Astra appeared he took a lively interest in the possibilities she presented, but as always is content to let others take the spotlight. After all, he has his own stage with two shows a week, often for children.



Chakra ~ Dr. Helen Ramasubramanian



Power Aspect

A Class Mentalist

Hero Aspect

Mystic Protector

Trouble

Media Target

Background Aspect

Women's Rights Advocate

Background Aspect

Disciple of Neotantra

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress

1 2 3 4

Mental Stress

1 2 3 4

Consequences

_____ 2
 _____ 4
 _____ 6

(Mental Only)

_____ 2

Resource Stress

1 2 3 4 5

Resource Consequence

_____ 4

Attributes

Good (+3)	Alertness	Fair (+2)	Physique	Superb (+5)	Willpower
Good (+3)	Athleticism	Great (+4)	Discernment	Great (+4)	Presence

Skills

Superb (+5)	Aid	Average (+1)	Deceive
Great (+4)	Provoke	Average (+1)	Fight
Great (+4)	Rapport	Average (+1)	Investigate
Fair (+2)	Academics	Average (+1)	Shoot
Fair (+2)	Survival		

Resources

Good (+3)	Reputation	Good (+3)	Wealth	Fair (+2)	Contacts
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +1, Athleticism +1, Physique +0, Discernment +1, Willpower +2 (WR4/AR2), Presence +1.

PSYCHIC STRENGTH +4. When using her psychic powers, Chakra adds +1 per level (+4 max.) to her Willpower rating when using the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for her linked Skills. (8)

AURIC VISION. Chakra gains a +2 to Alertness rolls to see and read chakric auras. Chakra can read emotional and health states (both mental and physical), as well as detect superhuman powers and the presence of psychic or magical interference.

AURIC PRESENCE. Chakra can make others aware of her own chakric aura, giving her a +2 to Create an Advantage with her Presence.

ASTRAL PROJECTION. Chakra may spend one turn to create the **ASTRAL FORM** Situation Aspect (see p.99).

ASTRAL AID. When astral, Chakra may use Aid to help non-astral targets.

ASTRAL TRAVEL. Chakra can astrally “follow” individuals she possesses a strong link to, and locate and enter a scene in which they are present on a successful Overcome Action with Rapport (using the Willpower Attribute Bonus). The GM may modify the Difficulty Rating for distance and countermeasures.

STARTING FATE POINTS: 8

Profile

Breakthrough Powers

Chakra is a pure Mentalist-Type with exotic trappings, and a narrow focus on her ability to perceive and manipulate chakric auras (and therefore the physical and mental states of the auras' possessors). She is a functional telepath, able to project thoughts and hear projected thoughts, but not read minds and memories directly. Her control of auras allows her to use Aid, Provoke, and Rapport as a mentalist, enabling her to psychically heal, defend, manipulate, and even attack others. She also has some precognition ability—enough that the GM can relate occasional “visions” of near-future events that will have traumatic effects on her or those close to her—can project herself astrally (p.99) and can levitate herself (she still uses her Athleticism to move).

History

Dr. Helen Ramasubramanian is Indian-American by way of England (her grandfather taught at Oxford). She studied philosophy, psychology, sexual psychology, and sociology in college, becoming fascinated by the links between culture, religion, spirituality, and sexual health, and became a disciple of the neotantrism in the course of her studies (it didn't hurt that yoga and tantrism was part of her cultural heritage). Achieving her breakthrough quite by accident in the course of neotantra practice, Dr. Ramasubramanian quickly became a cult-figure in the neotantra community—even founding a neotantra “ashram” dedicated to teaching a course of guided yogic and meditative health and breakthrough pursuit (it has achieved several successes, none as powerful as her own). She also wrote several best-selling books, but three years after her breakthrough, Blackstone recruited her for a Heroes without Borders mission to Indonesia.

Dr. Ramasubramanian's experiences there completely changed her priorities. While she continued to support her discipline, she threw most of her efforts into raising

awareness of horrific and systemic human rights abuses in the still poverty-mired nations of Southeast Asia, Indochina, and the Indian subcontinent; especially the victimization of women and young girls by the sex-trafficking industry. She directs and is the public figurehead of her own NGO (non-government organization), and became Chakra, a Sentinel, to further raise her public profile.

Chakra has proven an extraordinarily valuable “field-support” member of the team; in a fight, she follows the team astrally—providing a backup link between Sentinels if their Dispatch links fail, and giving psychic support with her Aid Skill. She is also a physical trainer (using yoga), teaches techniques for resisting psychic influence (through breathing control and meditation), and acts as an unofficial spiritual councilor for the team.

Since Chakra does not go into the field herself, most people are not aware that she is even more formidable in person; she can directly manipulate chakras with Rapport and make direct chakric attacks to do mental or physical harm with Provoke! Raising her own chakric aura until it is visible to the mind's eye of even the blindest uninitiated, she can influence others through sheer superhuman presence.

Appearance and Personality

Even without auric enhancement, Chakra is a beautiful and charismatic woman. Of obvious mixed Indian-European descent, she make her exotic looks one of her tools and dresses in a neo-Hindu fashion most of the time. She tends toward the dramatic and flamboyant gesture, but behind the diva act is a deeply caring person; it is impossible for her to not care—everyone around her wears their emotions and trials on their chakric auras for her to see and feel. When someone around her is in pain or turmoil, she does what she can. When she can do nothing, she withdraws into isolation and her disciplines for her own spiritual health.



Ajax ~ Charles Gibbons



Power Aspect

A Class Ajax-Type

Hero Aspect

Stoic Warrior

Trouble

Enraged by Abuses

Background Aspect

Profoundly respected scholar and teacher.

Background Aspect

“Arete is won only through labor and trial.”

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences

_____ 2
 _____ 4
 _____ 6

(Physical Only)

_____ 2
 _____ 4
 _____ 6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____ 4

Attributes

Good (+3) **Alertness** Mythic (+9) **Physique** Good (+3) **Willpower**
 Superb (+5) **Athleticism** Great (+4) **Discernment** Great (+4) **Presence**

Skills

Superb (+5)	Fight	Fair (+2)	Survival
Great (+4)	Academics	Fair (+2)	Aid
Good (+3)	Provoke	Average (+1)	Drive
Fair (+2)	Investigate	Average (+1)	Engineering
Fair (+2)	Rapport	Average (+1)	Stealth

Resources

Fantastic (+6) **Reputation** Good (+3) **Wealth** Average (+1) **Contacts**

Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +1, Athleticism +2, Physique +4 (WR8/AR4), Discernment +1, Willpower +1, Presence +1.

SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE +4. From +5 to +9. (8)

TOP OF YOUR CLASS. When Ajax invokes his Power Aspect he gets a +3 instead of a +2

IRON BLOWS. Ajax gets a +2 to Attack with Fight when using his bare fists (or a clubbing-type weapon).

MIGHTY. Ajax adds a +2 to Physique when using Overcome to try and lift heavy loads or break through barriers.

SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY. Ajax may spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical Stress during a Scene.

HARD AS NAILS. Ajax automatically succeeds at his Recovery Action for Physical Consequences short of Extreme, and once per session, he may spend 1 Fate Point to change a Moderate Physical Consequence to a Mild Physical Consequence, or eliminate one Mild Physical Consequence completely.

GREAT BATTLE MAUL. Ajax gets a Weapon Rating 2/+1 Attack with his maul, and may use Athleticism rather than Fight to throw it at a target (which also creates Unarmed Situation Aspect on Ajax). (2)

CERAMIC ALLOY ARMOR. Ajax gets an additional Armor Rating 2 when wearing his Ajax Armor.

STARTING FATE POINTS: 5



Profile

Breakthrough Powers

Ajax is the defining super strong, super tough breakthrough. See the Ajax-Type in Chapter Four for a complete description.

History

Charles Wendell Gibbons was born in the Cabrini–Green Projects and attended school at Lincoln Park High. His disabled father could not work and his uneducated mother worked where she could, but the Gibbons hunted out every academic opportunity and forced their kids to get top grades and enroll in every college-prep course available. Both big and fast, Charles played on the football team as an offensive tackle, and upon graduation his athleticism and grades got him a scholarship to the University of Illinois.

More attracted to academics than athletics, Charles studied history and sociology. Leaving football to complete his masters and doctoral degrees, he found mixed martial arts as a substitute; professional circuit winnings supplemented his meager adjunct professor's salary and let him help his family. The Event caught him riding the Chicago L on his way from the gym to class.

Charles' breakthrough came minutes after the blackout, when a hopped up fellow rider and his posse reacted badly to being stuck on the frozen train. Acting quickly to protect his fellow passengers, Charles learned he was now super strong and *bulletproof*.

Charles tested the limits of his toughness the day of the Event, rescuing hundreds alongside Atlas and others. A student of history, he immediately saw the dangers of public hysteria and backed Atlas' brother in his bid to turn breakthroughs into comic-book superheroes; he formulated the intellectual argument for being both colorfully public and free of government-mandated registration and controls. (Thanks to him, American capes in most jurisdictions work

with rather than *for* the government.) Charles took the name Ajax after one of the lesser-known heroes of the Trojan War, and became one of the founding Sentinels.

In the decade following, Charles has managed to balance his academic and superhero careers; he has become a full professor at the University of Chicago, studying and teaching the sociology of heroes and heroism and writing *the* book on the Post-Event years, THE NEW HEROIC AGE. The team's strongest member, he is also a trainer of other strong superhumans (including Atlas, Rook, and later Astra).

Appearance and Personality

Ajax is a big and muscular man and his deep bass voice fits his body, but he is soft-spoken (outside of a fight) and speaks with perfect grammar and diction. While not boastful or overbearing, he carries

himself with an unshakable confidence that tells others that, whatever the threat, he can Handle It. He's stopped many fights just by saying "You really don't want to do this," and *meaning* it. The fact that he carries a hundred pound titanium battle-maul like it was a policeman's nightstick lends credence to his statement. Ajax enhances his un-academic look with long dreadlocks—a hairstyle adopted by many black superheroes in imitation—and in-costume he dresses to fit his name in armor loosely modeled after ancient Greek styles. Teaching class, he's strictly suit-and-tie.

Beyond his dedication to his family and the Sentinels, Ajax is motivated by his adherence to the ancient Greek virtue of Arete: personal excellence, achieved in discovering one's purpose and using one's full human potential in service of the community. He considers Arete *the* heroic virtue, and the one thing that threatens his calm is seeing breakthroughs use their gifts to victimize others.



Nimbus ~ Anita Farrés



Power Aspect

Transformed A Class Projector-Type

Hero Aspect

Dedicated Defender

Trouble

Permanently Immaterial

Background Aspect

Lives in Light and Sound

Background Aspect

World Traveler

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences (Phys/Mental)

_____	2
_____	4
_____	6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____	4
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Attributes

Superb (+5)	Alertness	Good (+3)	Physique	Great (+4)	Willpower
Good (+3)	Athleticism	Fair (+2)	Discernment	Superb (+5)	Presence

Skills

Great (+4)	Provoke	Average (+1)	Engineering
Good (+3)	Shoot	Average (+1)	Rapport
Average (+1)	Academics		

Resources

Great (+4)	Reputation	Fair (+2)	Wealth	Fair (+2)	Contacts
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +2, Athleticism +1, Physique +1 (WR2/AR1), Discernment +0, Willpower +1, Presence +2.

MULTIPLE SHOTS. Nimbus may split her shifts of Shoot as evenly as possible, between as many targets as she likes in the same target area, down to one shift per target. With this Stunt she may add a +1 shift to the shifts on each target.

STROBE ATTACK. When Nimbus performs a strobing attack to temporarily **BLIND** everyone in a target area (Create an Advantage), her Shoot Skill is not reduced by half!

LONG RANGE. Nimbus can use her Shoot Skill from outside the normal Shoot Range.

INSTANT DODGE! Able to move at the speed of light, if Nimbus sees it she can dodge it. She uses Alertness rather than Athleticism when attempting to dodge an Attack or an attempt to Create an Advantage.

LIGHT SPEED. Once per Scene Nimbus may exit or enter a scene no matter how distant, so long as it is light-accessible. (She can *always* do this by spending a Fate Point and invoking her Power Aspect.)

FULL FIELD AWARENESS. Nimbus' field of awareness is global; she has no blind spots. This gives her a +2 to React against attempts to sneak up on or surprise her.

HIGH ENERGY LASER ATTACK. +8 Weapon Rating, +2 to Attack with Shoot. (3)

PRECISION SHOOTING. If Nimbus succeeds with an Attack Action, she may choose how many shifts of her Weapon Rating she will inflict on the target.

STARTING FATE POINTS: 4

Profile

Breakthrough Powers

Nimbus' breakthrough transformed her into a living energy field that interacts with electromagnetic fields around her and emits photons, a woman made of light. She can move her field by will alone and at the speed of light, which makes her effectively a teleporter (she can travel anywhere light can reach) for anything short of interplanetary distances. Her field is immaterial, which renders her immune to most sources of physical damage, but the mediums through which she moves do interact with her field. This interaction allows her to perceive soundwaves with her entire "body"—and also renders her vulnerable to sonic as well as to energy attacks (electricity, photons, magnetic fields, etc.), which can disrupt the cohesiveness of her field.

Nimbus' field interactions allow her to holistically "see" and "hear" everything around her—her senses span the entire electromagnetic spectrum and audial range. She can also control the intensity of her photon emissions, varying intensity from a soft glow to high-intensity bursts of blinding brightness, and can focus her high-intensity bursts into laser beams capable of cutting steel. Her speed, immaterial invulnerability to most physical attacks, and lethal beams make her the Sentinels' most deadly member.

History

Anita was a country girl. The Farrés family owns a vineyard and winery in Sonoma Valley winery and vineyards known for its excellent wines. Anita loved the family business, but a fire at the winery is what triggered her breakthrough; trapped trying to rescue the winery cats, she remembers burning, her last purely physical sensation.

Anita's transformation saved her, and condemned her to a life of alienation from physical human interaction. Her fields also only allow her the sense of sight and sound—both amped to levels equal to the most sensitive instruments—but leaving her without a sense of taste or smell. It was too much for Anita to take, and her family didn't know how to help her, so they sought the aid of the DSA.

The agency assigned scientists and therapists to helping her understand what she had become, deal with it, and use it. Anita learned sign language so that she could speak (work continues on a "translator" sensor and program that converts Morse code flashes to speech). She has also learned the full potential of her "field senses," extending her full-body sensitivity to the point where she experiences light and sound with a depth and texture that is comparable to taste and touch.

She also found a purpose; although the military tried to recruit her, Blackstone convinced her that she could use her gifts to do tremendous good with the Sentinels. When not

on duty or socializing with the team, she is out experiencing music. It's all tasty to her, from pop and rap to classical philharmonic, so long as the sound systems and acoustics are great and the instruments are varied; strong enough immersion gives her something between an adrenaline high and a good wine buzz.

Appearance and Personality

Nimbus appears as a softly glowing figure of a nude woman, details obscured sufficiently by the light that images of her need not come with an adult-content warning (most camera-shots get flooded out by her emitted light anyway). Visually she is stunning, and when she brightens up and begins throwing high-energy beams around she has been called an "Angel of Death," but Nimbus hates hurting people. She prefers non-lethal measures, going for blinding attacks, and when she focuses her light to a steel-cutting laser then she tries to target weapons or limbs instead of killing outright. Her glow makes her expressions hard to read, and that plus the communication barrier makes her a bit of an enigma to most people around her, but she is a friendly girl who is always happy to engage with those who engage with her.



Rush ~ Scott Baker



Power Aspect

A Class Speedster-Type

Hero Aspect

Flashy Professional

Trouble

Cocky and Impulsive

Background Aspect

An Easy Charmer

Background Aspect

"I've got your back."

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences

_____ 2
 _____ 4
 _____ 6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____ 4

Attributes

Superb (+5)	<u>Alertness</u>	Great (+4)	<u>Physique</u>	Fair (+2)	<u>Willpower</u>
Superb (+5)	<u>Athleticism</u>	Fair (+2)	<u>Discernment</u>	Good (+3)	<u>Presence</u>

Skills

Great (+4)	<u>Drive</u>	Average (+1)	<u>Rapport</u>
Good (+3)	<u>Fight</u>	Average (+1)	<u>Shoot</u>
Fair (+2)	<u>Aid</u>	Average (+1)	<u>Survival</u>
Fair (+2)	<u>Provoke</u>		

Resources

Great (+4)	<u>Reputation</u>	Good (+3)	<u>Wealth</u>	Average (+1)	<u>Contacts</u>
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +2, Athleticism +2, Physique +1 (WR2/AR1), Discernment +0, Willpower +0, Presence +1.

ABSOLUTE SPEED +4. When Rush is **SPEEDING**, he adds +4 to his Athleticism rating when using the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills with all Actions involving thinking, reacting, and moving *quickly*. (8)

PLENTY OF TIME. Dividing as evenly as possible, Rush can split his shifts with a Skill up between as many separate Actions or targets as he likes. He gets a +1 bonus to each Action, but must declare his targets/Actions *before* rolling the Fate Dice. Rush cannot attack a single target or perform a single Action multiple times, but this Stunt is great for clearing crowds of mooks.

EVERYONE'S A TURTLE. If Rush hasn't gone yet during a round, he may choose to take the next turn without spending a Fate Point to do so.

INTO HYPERTIME! Rush may spend 1 Fate Point to shift fully into Hypertime. While there, he may move as far as he wants to go (even leaving or arriving on a scene) so long as no physical barriers of any kind are in his way. Rush can perform long Actions that do not require die rolls in Hypertime, so long as he brought everything he needs into Hypertime with him and doesn't drop it.

FAST RECOVERY. If Rush is in Hypertime, he may Spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical *and* Mental Stress during a Scene.

STARTING FATE POINTS: 5

Profile

Breakthrough Powers

Rush is a classic A Class Speedster-Type. His +5 Alertness is due to the fact that when speeding he has time to notice *everything*. He maximizes his speed power by using a stripped-down custom motorbike with modular storage racks for delivering equipment, medical supplies, and even weapons where they need to go *quickly*. The bike has a passenger seat in back since he often gives EMTs a lift as well.

History

Scott Baker got his codename long before his breakthrough. A Colorado State athlete on a football scholarship, his capacity for amazing bursts of speed on the field and his ability to slip through or go over any offensive line to sack the quarter back—and his penchant for jumping the gun and incurring at least one rushing foul per game—earned him the nickname *The Rush*. He was slated to be a first-round draft pick the year he went pro. In the final game of his senior season, with Colorado State down by three points in the last seconds of the game and the ball in the other team's hands, he went for the sack against an offensive line stacked to keep him out while the quarterback ran out the clock. Rush, on the other hand, was going for a new college record and when the ball snapped he went through the line like it wasn't even there as the world slowed down and froze. His breakthrough ended his sports career.

Of course there was no question of what he would do next; if he couldn't be a football star, he was going to be a superhero and the biggest super-celebrity he could be. He took CAI training, achieved certification, and was recruited by the LA Guardians. After a year with them, despite loving LA as much as it loved him, he signed on with the Sentinels to fill their empty speedster-slot.

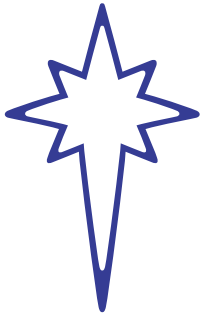
He has since both delighted Sentinels fans with his flair and ability, and scandalized many with his flamboyantly hedonistic lifestyle.

Appearance and Personality

Rush is a golden boy; always told he was the best—because he was— he is supremely confident and more than a bit self-centered. He trains hard and is a team player because if he wasn't he wouldn't be the best, which is all that matters to him. That said, he carries his arrogance with a cheerful, flamboyant charm that makes him a favorite with the media (his blond buzz-cut and tanned surfer boy face is a familiar sight in the tabloid photos). And with women, judging by his many known affairs and multiple short marriages. Moving through hypertime as he does, when not so accelerated that he is an eye-hurting blur, he is often not so much seen as felt in a fight or emergency. But he is always there for the cameras.



Astra ~ Hope Corrigan



Power Aspect

A Class Atlas-Type

Hero Aspect

Atlas' Teen Sidekick

Trouble

Uncertain Newbie Hero

Background Aspect

Blueblood Child of Privilege

Background Aspect

"I look like an underdeveloped teenage Tinkerbell."

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences

_____ 2
 _____ 4
 _____ 6

(Physical Only)

_____ 2
 _____ 4
 _____ 6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____ 4

Attributes

Great (+4)	Alertness	Mythic (+9)	Physique	Great (+4)	Willpower
Good (+3)	Athleticism	Good (+3)	Discernment	Fair (+2)	Presence

Skills

Fair (+2)	Fight	Average (+1)	Aid
Fair (+2)	Rapport	Average (+1)	Investigate
Average (+1)	Academics	Average (+1)	Survival

Resources

Fair (+2)	Reputation	Average (+1)	Wealth	Good (+3)	Contacts
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +1, Athleticism +1, Physique +4 (WR8/AR4), Discernment +1, Willpower +1, Presence +0.

SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE +4. From +5 to +9. (8)

SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY. Astra may spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical Stress during a Scene.

HARD AS NAILS. Astra automatically succeeds at her Recovery Action for Physical Consequences short of Extreme, and once per session she may spend 1 Fate Point to change a Moderate Physical Consequence to a Mild Physical Consequence (if the Consequence Slot is available) or eliminate one Mild Physical Consequence completely.

SUPERSENSES. Astra gets a +2 to Alertness when attempting to Overcome using her supersenses.

YOUR OWN MISSILE. Astra's Movement (but not Dodge) depends upon Physique when flying, and she may use Physique to Overcome barriers she is attempting to fly through.

STARTING FATE POINTS: 2



Profile

Breakthrough Powers

Astra is an A Class Atlas-Type—a “flying brick.” See Chapter Six: Barlow’s Guide to Superpowers (p.96) for a complete description.

History

The child of Chicago blue-bloods, Hope Corrigan started with more than a few advantages but her early life was not without tragedy; her sister Faith died of a rare and terminal childhood disease, and Hope herself was later diagnosed with childhood cancer. An apprehensive child, Hope found a fearless friend in Shelly Boyar the day that Shelly punched a boy during school recess for making Hope cry. Shelly would tease Hope relentlessly for her fears and get her into a lot of trouble she never would have imagined herself.

Entering their teen years, Hope and Shelly fell into a cape obsession complete with childhood crushes focused on celebrity capes like Burnout, Volt, Atlas, and the boys of No Fear. For Hope it was more about the cute guys and the costumes, but Shelly was obsessed with breakthrough powers and became convinced that she was destined to gain her own. When Hope was fifteen, Shelly jumped from the roof of an apartment tower. She believed that the fall would trigger her breakthrough and turn her into a superhero. It didn’t.

Shelly’s death nearly destroyed Hope, and she withdrew into herself. Hope’s mother occupied her by making her her assistant in her work for the Faith Corrigan Foundation, but most of the credit for bringing Hope out of her withdrawal belonged to the Bees (Julie Brennan, Annabeth Bauman, and Megan Brock), who made her one of their circle. The four of them worked hard to make sure they all got into the University of Chicago together after graduation, intending to room together and pledge Phi Mu as Sisters. Then everything changed.

Just one week before Orientation Day, Hope was driving into town when the Teatime Anarchist blew up the Ashland Avenue Overpass.

The Anarchist got his target, an anti-breakthrough US Senator being driven to a conference, but the explosion also buried Hope and others under the rubble of the overpass. The explosion and the trauma and panic of being trapped in her car triggered Hope’s breakthrough, gifting her with superhuman strength, durability, and stamina, as well as heightened senses and the power of flight. The Chicago Sentinels found Hope digging through the rubble for more survivors, and invited her to join the team as Astra and train to be a superhero.

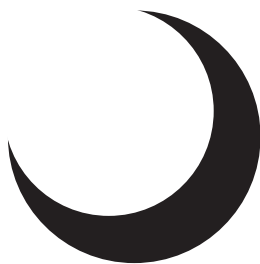
Appearance and Personality

Now eighteen, Hope remains petit and pixyish (in her words “an underdeveloped teenage Tinkerbell”). She prefers to like others, tries to see the best in people, and is, in a word, hopeful. She was raised Catholic and is devout, and working for her mother further shaped her into a classical society debutante to the point where she can’t even swear without feeling guilty. Her religious and family upbringing has given Hope a strong sense of responsibility, but she prefers to be a follower; she followed Shelly, then helped Julie and the

Bees, and she intended to work for her mom after graduation. To wear the cape, she now finds herself having to change the plans that everybody made for her.



Artemis ~ Jacqueline Siggler



Power Aspect

Fiend of The Night (Supernatural/
C Class Transformer)

Hero Aspect

Hooded Mystery

Trouble

Anger Issues

Background Aspect

Ruthless Fighter

Background Aspect

Keeps her streets safe.

Stress & Consequences

Physical Stress



Mental Stress



Consequences (Phys/Mental)

_____	2
_____	4
_____	6

Resource Stress



Resource Consequence

_____	4
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Attributes

Great (+4)	Alertness	Superb (+5)	Physique	Great (+4)	Willpower
Good (+3)	Athleticism	Good (+3)	Discernment	Good (+3)	Presence

Skills

Fair (+2)	Provoke	Fair (+2)	Shoot
Fair (+2)	Stealth	Average (+1)	Rapport
Fair (+2)	Fight	Average (+1)	Investigate

Resources

Average (+1)	Reputation	Average (+1)	Wealth	Average (+1)	Contacts
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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Attribute Bonuses: Alertness +1, Athleticism +1, Physique +2 (WR4/AR2), Discernment +1, Willpower +1, Presence +1.

MESMERIC WILL +2. Artemis adds +2 to Willpower for purposes of calculating the Attribute Bonus when she uses Provoke or Rapport to impose mesmeric mental control to plant commands, sway emotions, or rewrite memories, or when she Reacts to attempted mental influence.

BLOODHOUND. Artemis has a nose for blood and can easily track someone who is wounded (she can even deduce a target's diet and state of health from a taste). She adds +2 to attempts to Overcome with Alertness or Investigate when blood is involved.

RISE TO MIST. Artemis uses Willpower to create the **MIST FORM** Advantage (this allows her to take an Action to transform without spending a Fate Point).

INTO THE NIGHT. Artemis can change into mist quickly enough to React with Willpower if she sees an Attack coming.

SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY. Artemis may spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical Stress during a Scene.

HARD AS NAILS. Artemis automatically succeeds at her Recovery Action for Physical Consequences short of Extreme, and gets a +4 Bonus to recover from Extreme Consequences. Also, once per Session she may change a Severe Physical Consequence to a Moderate Physical Consequence (if the Consequence Slot is available), or a Moderate Physical Consequence to a Mild Physical Consequence.

HOODED MENACE. Artemis gains a +2 to Provoke when wearing her masked and hooded costume.

THERAPY. Therapy is Artemis' nickname for her array of guns, which give her a blanket +2 WR and +1 Shoot when using them.

STARTING FATE POINTS: 6



Profile

Breakthrough Powers

Jacky is a classic vampire, with the traditional array of vampire powers: supernatural strength, the ability to mesmerize victims with her gaze (magnified through drinking their blood), and the power to transform into mist. Already “dead,” she is nearly unkillable. She is also flammably allergic to sunlight, but because of the way she was made she lacks the other traditional vampire aversions (holy water, garlic, etc.) and compulsions (needing an invitation to enter, sleeping only on her “home earth,” etc.).

History

In high school, Jacky had been one of the It Girls; her family wasn’t wealthy or connected, but Jacky had been athletic, pretty, and smart, which translated into being part of the cheer-leading squad and exclusive in-crowd. She’d also apparently had a fan she’d never noticed—a budding sociopath emo-goth boy who’d become convinced that he was a vampire and Jacky was the eternal mate of his dark soul. A few years after their graduation, he killed himself in a dark ritual meant to “free his vampire soul from the weakness of his flesh.”

He should have died. Instead it triggered his supernatural breakthrough and after spending some time preparing his lair, he tricked his way into Jacky’s house, slaughtered her parents and the family dog, and kidnapped her—using his mesmeric power to turn her into his slave while he drank her blood and made her taste his. When she died of hypothermia and blood loss two weeks later, she rose as a vampire as well.

At which point she somehow broke his mesmeric hold on her mind, staked him, cut his head off, and scattered his ashes on Lake Michigan.

Jacky *hates* being a vampire, and hides what she is by always wiping her blood donors’ memories of the event. She plays the role of a dark vigilante to the hilt, however; everyone expects dark vigilantes to work at night. Living in the basement of her parent’s boarded up house on the south side of Chicago, she patrolled her neighborhood when darkness fell. None of the local gangs recruited or did business on her streets—if they hurt anyone in “her” territory, she found out about it and made night a terrifying time wherever they were. She never killed anybody, but she could show up any time after dark, anywhere. She also used her stealthy mist-form to infiltrate gang bases, plant bugs or take pictures, and leave the evidence in envelopes on police detective’s desks. She was an urban myth the police resolutely refuse to give credit to, since she made their jobs easier and she didn’t do anything they couldn’t ignore.

After her exposure in the Michigan Avenue Riot, the Sentinels arranged to “bring her in from the cold” and made her a member of the team (mainly because of Hope’s wishes). Needless to say, Jacky is not a part of the regular first response team unless something happens after dark. Because she lacks the traditional vampire phobias, even with public exposure she has still managed to hide her true nature; Barlow’s Guide actually lists her as a *Metamorph-Type* (possessing a single alternate form) with serious gun skills. Since joining the Sentinels, she has arranged to be seen during the daytime (indoors) to further obscure the truth.

Appearance and Personality

Hope once described Jacky as looking like “an evil Snow White.” As *Artemis*—deathly pale, all in black and wearing multiple side-arms while moving like a predator—she’s terrifying. Jacky’s experiences have left her a cold and cynical person, with anger issues she likes to work out by shooting people—or by terrifying them until they lose control of themselves. Thankfully she picks her targets carefully, but she may have a hard time restraining herself against supervillains who use their powers to abuse helpless victims.

Strangely she gets along best with the optimistic, cheerful Hope. She calls Hope Little Miss Sunshine, and Hope calls her an “undead fiend of the night.”



Campaign Example

Chicago Sentinels

Campaign Setting

The city of Chicago, 10 years post-Event. The group is playing the Chicago Sentinels, America's premier superhero team.

Campaign Dials

Power Class	A
Skill Pyramid	+5
Starting Fate Points	14

Current Issues

IN THE CROSS-HAIRS OF THE PUBLIC EYE.

Impending Issues

RISING SUPERVILLAIN CRIME.

Faces & Places

Name: Chicago

Issues/Aspects: *REAL-WORLD METROPOLIS.*

Name: The Dome

Issues/Aspects: *TOUGHER THAN FORT KNOX.
HAS ONE OF EVERYTHING.*

Name: Southside

Issues/Aspects: *RIVAL VILLAIN GANGS.*

Name: The Fortress

Issues/Aspects: *THE CLUB FOR CAPE-CHIC.
EVERYBODY COMES THERE.*

Name: Terry Reinhold

Issues/Aspects: *GO-TO CITYWATCH REPORTER.*

Name: Andrew's Designs

Issues/Aspects: *CAPE COUTURERS.
ON PERMENENT RETAINER.*

Name:

Issues/Aspects:

Name:

Issues/Aspects:

Campaign Notes

The Chicago Sentinels are at the top of their game and the center of the superhero-world. But fame means attention; if they screw up, they have a long way to fall. A Chicago Sentinels campaign is as close to comic-book superheroing as it gets in the Post-Event World, with colorful costumes and code-names, a rocking team base, and the support of law enforcement. Give players the heavy smash of super-fights and clear wins—and the hassle with bureaucracy, the media, the courts, and even the fans. And as they know, every new supervillain who wants fame comes to Chicago to tag his cape...

Note that although the Campaign Dial is set at A/+5/14, as previously mention only Astra, the team's newbie, is built on 14 Campaign Starting Fate Points (p.74). The rest of the Sentinels' numbers describe heroes who have advanced through many campaign arcs and milestones between the Event and the beginning of *WEARING THE CAPE*. Players who want to create *new* Sentinels will begin with 14 CSFP. Since the Sentinels' team roster has changed many times over the years (with only Atlas, Ajax, and Blackstone remaining of the founding members), a partly or completely new team lineup makes perfect sense. (A grim campaign might have all the previous Sentinels dead, vanished, or invalidated out, with the PCs playing a desperately assembled new lineup attempting to pick up the pieces.)

A Chicago *Guardians* campaign could also be an interesting variation on a Sentinels campaign; the PC heroes are members of one of Chicago's seven Guardians teams. Since Guardians are, overall, less powerful breakthroughs or less experienced capes, the GM should play with the campaign's scale (p.166)—adjusting the number of CSFP, the Rating Pyramid, or both.



3

PLAY OVERVIEW





Rules of Engagement in a Civilian Environment: avoid an encounter-with-force if at all possible, use only powers that can be applied without collateral damage, use all powers that can be applied without collateral damage, do not escalate, stop any escalation, and neutralize civilian risks as quickly as possible.

—CHICAGO SENTINELS TRAINING MANUAL

Getting Started

Role-playing: The act of assuming a new role, acting out the role of someone who is not yourself, in a different—often fanciful—situation.

Just in case you've never played a roleplaying game before, here's what you need to know. It's improv structured by rules. *Wearing the Cape: The Roleplaying Game* is what is called a tabletop roleplaying game. To play it, all you need is this rulebook, paper, pencils, two distinct sets of four dice (standard six-sided dice are fine but Fate Dice are better), some kind of tokens (pennies, poker chips, etc.) to use as counters for Fate Point tokens (p.60), and lots of imagination.

Almost all tabletop RPGs require one participant to be a **gamemaster** (who we will call the GM). He manages the setting and determines much of the action. Any number of other participants, **players**, can take on roles as characters in the story. While any number can play, 3-5 is usually best.

The best way to think about it is that if you are a player, you make decisions only for your character and control his actions. If you are the GM, you control everything else, including the huge cast of NPCs (non-player characters) that your player's characters will meet. Don't worry, this is easier than it sounds (some gamers consider GMing the funnest part!).

The GM is also the final arbiter of the rules and of the outcomes of actions taken by player characters (PCs) and non-player characters. He keeps the action on track.

In traditional games, like chess or *Monopoly*™, the goal is to win. In roleplaying games like this one, the goal is to *have fun*. This means working together to tell a great story, share the spotlight, and help everybody look good. All the rules in this book are here only to provide structure for players engaged in an enjoyable evening of cooperative storytelling.

What is Rule #1 of roleplaying? If you're not having fun, you're not doing it right.

TO BE REALLY PREPARED, YOU MIGHT WANT THESE:

WORKSHEETS: You can photocopy the Cape File and other sheets at the back of the book or download and print copies here—
<http://www.wearingthecape.com/#!downloads/i0m9r>

FATE DICE: You can order them on Amazon, sold by Evil Hat and others.








INDEX CARDS: Handy for recording Aspects on during play. Sticky notes work too.

TURN TOKENS: One for each player. Any token with two distinct sides will do—in a pinch you can simply take coins and paint one side!



A Little *WEARING THE CAPE* Terminology

We have already mentioned GMs and players, and player characters (PCs) and non-player characters (NPCs). There are a few terms used in *WEARING THE CAPE: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME* (hereafter abbreviated as *WTC: RPG*) that are handy to know going into this section.

FATE DICE: Fate system games use special dice. These are six-sided dice, but instead of being marked with 1 to 6 pips, two sides are marked with a minus sign  worth -1, two sides are blank  and worth 0, and two sides are marked with a plus sign  worth +1. Rolling eight Fate Dice together gives you a total value ranging from -8 to +8. Example:  = +2. You can always use regular dice for this, with 1-2 pips being a , 3-4 pips a , and 5-6 pips a .

HERO DICE: The four Fate Dice rolled by the player when his hero attempts an action where failure is a possibility.

OPPOSITION DICE: The four Fate Dice the player rolls with the Hero Dice when his hero is facing Active Opposition.

SHIFTS: The number by which you succeed when rolling dice to attempt an Action. Often referred to as shifts of success, shifts of failure, or shifts of Stress depending on what's going on.

TURN: Each player's turn, in which his character does something which may or may not require an Action. When each character—PC or NPC—has had a turn, the next round begins. Turns (and rounds) do not take any measured period of time; they run on *narrative time*. Turn-time moves faster in a fight, slower in negotiations, investigations, and so on.

Reading This Chapter

Chapter Three does not cover the rules in a linear fashion, drilling down on each concept before moving on to the next one. Instead, *The Scene* and *The Action* are intended to give you an overview of how gameplay works, much as if you were sitting down with an experienced player or GM who was walking you through it. Chapters Four and Five take you through the steps of building your own hero. Chapters Six and Seven return to filling in the taking-action details. Chapters Eight through Twelve are directed to the GM, more details in building scenes, filling out the opposition the players face, and running the game.

As you go through Chapter Three, you will see a lot of words given page references. Turn to them and read if you like, but the first time through it is probably best to ignore them. You'll see them all again.

Ready?



You look up from the crowded street and see a powerless passenger jet falling from the clear blue sky. What do you do?

What do you do? That is the question that turns stories into games. The storyteller (the GM) invites the players into his story; as he tells the story of the world, they tell the story of their heroes. Stories are built out of two things: *scene* and *action*. Later in the game we will capitalize both “Scene” and “Action”—and when capitalized they will have more specific meanings. Here we are talking about *scene* as the story's environment plus the characters and things that populate it, and *action* as the scene in motion. So let's look at the rules for describing the scene and the action that begins the moment the GM asks *What do you do?*



The Scene

Aspect (noun): A characteristic or feature of something.

The Fate system has many moving parts (which we'll begin to see in the section on action), but it is all built on a way of using the rules to describe any scene in ways the heroes can interact with. The building blocks of all scenes and everything in them are **ASPECTS** (p.110). An Aspect is nothing more than a description of something or someone that is significant to the story the players and GM are telling.

Situation Aspects

When the GM presents a scene to the players, he will usually name three to five **Situation Aspects** significant to the scene. Situation Aspects can be **physical features of a scene**; in the scene above, we have **TALL BUILDINGS** and **CLEAR SKIES**. They can be **dynamic situations** the heroes want to do something about, such as a **FALLING PASSENGER JET**. They can be **obstacles**, like **CROWDED STREETS**. *Situation Aspects come and go, and often change rapidly in the course of a scene.*

Character Aspects

Character Aspects describe characters, obviously. Player Characters will always have 5 Character Aspects in their Cape File, but non-player characters will usually have fewer unless they are major characters. If they are capes they will have a **Power Aspect** (p.70), a **Hero Aspect** (p.70), a **Trouble Aspect** (p.71), and two **Background Aspects** (p.71).

For example, looking at Astra's Cape File (p.50), her Character Aspects are: A CLASS ATLAS-TYPE, ATLAS' TEEN SIDEKICK, UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO, BLUEBLOOD CHILD OF PRIVILEGE, and "I LOOK LIKE AN UNDERDEVELOPED TEENAGE TINKERBELL."

Character Aspects change slowly, as the result of experiences (good and bad) and growth.

Gaming with Aspects

There are two rules to keep in mind about Aspects: 1.) **Aspects Describe What's Important**, and 2.) **Aspects Can Always Change**.

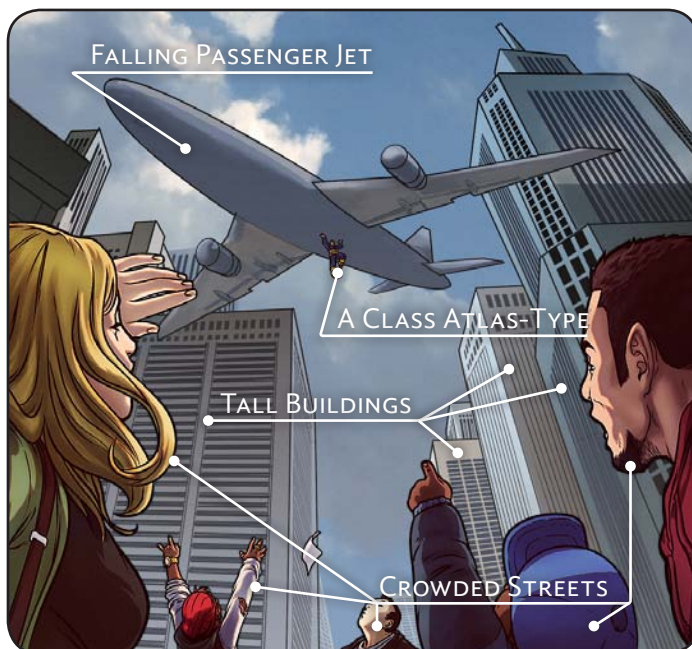
Aspects Describe What's Important

What does this mean? When the GM sets the scene, he tells the players what they see and lays out the relevant Aspects.

"You look up from the crowded street and see a powerless passenger jet falling from the clear blue sky."

Now, what can you do as a player? If you are playing Atlas on the day of The Event and have just been given the **A CLASS ATLAS-TYPE** Power Aspect (making you able to fly and lift *really* heavy objects), you can say "I'm going to intercept the **FALLING PASSENGER JET**, and try to bring it down in one piece without hitting any of the **TALL BUILDINGS** or landing on top of anyone in the **CROWDED STREETS**." If on the other hand your hero is an **A CLASS SPEEDSTER-TYPE** (Minuteman, that same day), then you can attempt to use your super-speed to clear the **CROWDED STREETS** where the falling plane is going to hit. If you are playing a powerless bystander (or a breakthrough with no Power Aspect that can affect the situation), you may want to run. Grab anyone who falls in front of you as you sprint for safety.

This is the principle of **Aspect Permission**. As GM and players you are telling a story together, using Aspects as guideposts. *How those Aspects interact must make sense before anything else happens.* The players declare what they want to do, and if the Aspects allow it then the GM agrees. The GM always has the final say on whether Aspect Permission is granted.



The inverse of Aspect Permission is **Aspect Denial**; an Aspect can also *prevent* you from doing something. The **A CLASS ATLAS-TYPE** has heightened senses (especially vision and hearing) as part of his Power Aspect description; with clear skies he can see very, very far. But what if the smoke and dust clouds from already burning and collapsed buildings had created the **CHOKING CLOUDS OF ASH AND DUST SITUATION** Aspect? The GM could rule that the Atlas-Type could not see the jet falling until it was too late to do anything about it!

Aspects Can Always Change

Scenes are fluid. Many Situation Aspects in play at the beginning of a scene will be changed or gone by the end of a scene, and new Aspects may be in play. *How* they change is often dictated by the results of player's choices. The scene above is hardly static: if Atlas brings the plane down safely it will change the **FALLING PASSENGER JET** Situation Aspect into a **DOWNED PASSENGER JET** Situation Aspect. If he *fails*, the GM may decide to change it to a **CRASHED AND BURNING PASSENGER JET** Situation Aspect. If Minuteman is successful, his player may turn **CROWDED STREETS** into **CLEARED STREET** where the jet will be set down (or make a crater). Changed Aspects can continue to evolve or even create more Aspects; for example, the **CRASHED AND BURNING PASSENGER JET** may explode unless the heroes do something about the **BURNING** part of the Aspect, creating the **STREETS AFLAME** Situation Aspect.

Character Aspects don't usually change during a scene (although things like breakthroughs or shapeshifting powers may change them *instantly*). Instead, Character Aspects will change with experience (good or bad). For example, Astra's Trouble Aspect, **UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO**, will certainly change as she trains and gets field experience. Her Hero Aspect, **ATLAS' TEEN SIDEKICK**, will change as she finishes her training and builds her own reputation. Needless to say, the Power Aspect almost never changes!

Other Aspects

Scene and Character Aspects are not the only Aspects the players will deal with. **Game Aspects (p.167)** are Aspects that shape the whole campaign in interesting ways. Game Aspects can be applied to a local community, a nation, or even the whole world. For example Chicago, the center of the superhero world, has the **REAL-WORLD METROPOLIS** Game Aspect—as well as **RIISING SUPERVILLAIN CRIME!** Also, **Consequences (p.132)** are a personal type of Aspect applied to characters to reflect physical and mental wear, shock, and injury; heroes are always dealing with Consequences!

Aspect Difficulty

Most Aspects require nothing more than their description; they are simply present and affect what the heroes can and cannot do merely by being in play. But some Aspects come with a Difficulty Rating attached, or the GM may choose to attach one later.

A Difficulty Rating is simply a number on the Ladder, ranging from -2 to +10 or higher. The DR reflects the difficulty of changing, using, or overcoming the Aspect. In the scene described earlier Atlas is trying to catch and land a **FALLING PASSENGER JET**, and this means he is trying to overcome the jet's weight. When looking at The Weight of Things, the Difficulty Ratings might look like this:

EXAMPLE DIFFICULTY

+10	A commercial jet.
+9	A main battle tank.
+8	A loaded semi-truck.
+7	A city bus.
+6	A loaded pickup truck.
+5	A town car.
+4	A Harley Davidson motorcycle.
+3	Heavy furniture
+2	A grown man.
+1	A teenager.
0	An eight-year old.
-1	An infant.
-2	A bunny.

So the GM assigns the **FALLING PASSENGER JET** a +10 Difficulty Rating. Other examples of assigned Difficulty Ratings are:

CUTTING EDGE CYBER-SECURITY SYSTEM. "Cutting Edge" implies the newest and strongest protection, justifying a +6 or higher Difficulty Rating against attempts to hack the system.

BUNKER WALL. Designed to withstand artillery fire, the wall of the big bunker will probably have a low Difficulty Rating against attempts to *strike* it, but an added **Armor Rating** (which we'll see in action later).

ANGRY MOB. The angry mob could have a high (+3 or even +4) Difficulty Rating against attempts to calm it down or intimidate it into dispersing.

RAGING BUILDING FIRE. The fire might have a +4 or higher Difficulty Rating and require special equipment or powers (i.e., Aspects) to put it out!

NO MASKED CAPES! MEDIA CAMPAIGN. The Difficulty Rating would represent the campaign's popularity, and the difficulty the heroes will experience if they are trying to fight it. A fiendish GM can build on a Difficulty Rating like this to use it *against* the heroes as well!

For a more full description of **Difficulty Rating and the Ladder**, see **Appendix A (p.194)**.



Created Situation Aspects

Players can also *create* Situation Aspects with Difficulty Ratings attached. For example, a pyrokinetic breakthrough might set a row of police cars on fire, creating an **ENGULFED IN FLAMES** Situation Aspect. The new Aspect will come with a Difficulty Rating equal to the Skill used to create it.

Using Aspects

Just like in fiction and in real life, when someone is attempting to take an action then the elements of the scene—whether Character Aspects or Situation Aspects—can have a powerful influence on his chance of success. Beyond Aspect Permission and Aspect Denial, Aspects come into play by being **invoked** (p.113) or **compelled** (p.113).

Invoking Aspects

Aspects can be **invoked** by the player to help the hero succeed—or invoked by the GM to lessen the hero's chances! An Aspect can be invoked once per Action (plus any Free Invokes, p.117), and will either grant a +2 bonus or a reroll of the Fate Dice.

*Atlas' player wants to catch the **FALLING PASSENGER JET** and bring it down in a controlled crash without landing it on anybody. The GM says that the **CROWDED STREETS** are going to make that hard to do; when Atlas makes the attempt he could invoke the Aspect to add a +2 to the **FALLING PASSENGER JET'S** +10 DR! But if Minuteman cleared the way first, changing the **CROWDED STREETS** Scene Aspect into **CLEARED STREET** where the plane is coming down, then Atlas' player could invoke the changed Scene Aspect to take the +2 bonus for himself.*

*Also in the same scene, Atlas' player could invoke his **A CLASS ATLAS-TYPE** Power Aspect, declaring that he is pushing his limits. The GM could also decide to invoke the **TALL BUILDINGS** to make it harder for Atlas to land the falling plane.*

Looking to Astra's Character Aspects for examples, let's see what can happen when she wants to avoid a fight by intimidating somebody (call this the Training Day scene).

*Astra's player could invoke her reputation as **ATLAS' TEEN SIDEKICK** for the recognition boost: "Hi! I'm Atlas' new sidekick and it won't hurt as much if you give up. Really." The GM could invoke both her **UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO** and **"I LOOK LIKE AN UNDERDEVELOPED TEENAGE TINKERBELL."** Character Aspects to use her obvious inexperience and completely unintimidating appearance to make it that much harder.*

Compelling Aspects

Aspects can also be compelled to make Bad Things Happen. The Bad Things are called **Complications**. Compelling an Aspect triggers a narrative twist: "Because of [the compelled Aspect], the [complication] happens."

*Because the Crashed Passenger Jet is **ON FIRE**, it explodes and scatters burning jet fuel down Michigan Avenue. (Generating more nasty Scene Aspects for the heroes to deal with.)*

*Because of an **ATLAS-TYPE'S** sensory vulnerability, Atlas is flash-blinded by Silver Rocket, allowing the thrill-villain to escape. (Ending the scene with failure.)*

*Because Astra is an **UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO**, she makes the wrong tactical decision and puts a roomful of bystanders at risk. (Raising the stakes of the scene.)*

Both the players and GM can compel Aspects, but Compels don't give bonuses—instead Compels *always* change the scene's narrative in ways that complicate the hero's story, multiplying his obstacles, widening the scope for drama and struggle, and making victory sweeter—what good roleplaying is all about.

Fate Points (p.119)

Players and GMs begin each scene with their own pools of Fate Points (which they keep track of with tokens), which they use to influence the course of a scene—mostly through spending them on Invokes but sometimes spending them to declare new scene details (p.119) or to pay to use powerful Stunts (p.119). When a player invokes an Aspect to help his hero succeed, he pays a Fate Point to do it, passing it to the GM. When the GM invokes a hero's Character Aspect in opposition to the hero, he passes a Fate Point to the hero's player. GMs will also use Fate Points to reward players for accepting Compels. Players usually start a game session with 5 Fate Points (p.75) to draw on, and will spend and receive them throughout the course of a scene.

A MILLION ASPECTS

A GM only puts down 3-5 Situation Aspects for a scene, but those named Aspects hardly define all of the scene's possibilities. GMs and players may always "promote" mere facts to Aspects by pointing out (or discovering) their presence and making them important in the scene.



Character Ratings

Aspects do a lot of work in the Fate system, but they can't do everything. For anything to *happen*, action must take place—and action in Fate comes with numbers (some of which we've seen already) and prayerful die rolls. Players will find most of their numbers on the Cape File.

How do players actually perform actions? Using Astra's Cape File (p.50) as an example, we have already looked at her Character Aspects and seen how they can affect her player's choices; now let's look at her **Attributes, Skills, and Resources**.

Like Difficulty Ratings, all Attributes, Skills, and Resources—collectively called Character Ratings—range from -2 to +10 or higher on the **Ladder**. They look like this:

THE LADDER – CHARACTER RATINGS		
+10	SUPREME	Ultra Class breakthroughs.
+9	MYTHIC	A Class peak ability.
+8	LEGENDARY	B Class peak ability.
+7	EPIC	C Class peak ability.
+6	FANTASTIC	D Class peak ability.
+5	SUPERB	Peak human ability.
+4	GREAT	Top-shelf athletes, scientists, performers, etc.
+3	GOOD	Stand-outs.
+2	FAIR	Professionals.
+1	AVERAGE	Average adult.
0	MEDIOCRE	Average teen.
-1	POOR	Average child.
-2	TERRIBLE	Human minimum.

ALERTNESS

The senses and situational awareness.

ATHLETICISM

Grace and movement.

PHYSIQUE

Strength and health.

DISCERNMENT

Intelligence, perceptiveness, and wisdom.

WILLPOWER

Fortitude, resoluteness, inner strength.

PRESENCE

Charisma or sheer physical impressiveness.

Attributes (p.77)

The six Attributes are: **Alertness, Athleticism, Physique, Discernment, Willpower, and Presence**. They are measures of raw and trained ability. Attributes peak as (+5) Superb for non-powered people.

Hope was a school athlete and good student before her breakthrough, which boosted her in all ways physically but especially her strength. While attractive in a wholesomely cute sort of way, she is unassuming and physically unintimidating, and her breakthrough hasn't changed that. Looking at her Attributes, she has a Great (+4) Alertness, Good (+3) Athleticism, Mythic (+9) Physique, Good (+3) Discernment, Great (+4) Willpower, and Fair (+2) Presence.

Skills (p.80)

Skills are the things characters learn how to do through experience, training, or study. There are thirteen broad Skills, and a theoretically infinite number of player-designed Power Skills (p.89). The players will only list Skills that have been raised to +1 or greater in their Cape Files. All Skills peak at (+5) Superb, but they benefit from the Attribute Bonus (p.72); for every 2 Attribute steps above Average, Skills relying on the Attribute get a +1. (When Attacking/Defending, Physique bonuses are +2 Weapon Rating / +1 Armor Rating per level of bonus instead).

Astra's Good (+3) Athleticism gives a +1 to her Fight Skill, raising it from Fair (+2) to Good (+3) and increasing her chances of hitting, blocking, or dodging. Her Mythic (+9) Physique raises the damage she does if she hits by +8 and the damage she can shrug off when hit by +4!

Resources (p.85)

Resources are the monetary and social resources characters can draw on. Attributes and Skills peak at Superb (+5) for non-powered people; Resource Ratings do not. Resource Ratings +6 or higher are the domain of successful politicians, multi-millionaires and billionaires, world-famous entertainers, corporate CEOs, and super-celebrity capes.

Astra's resources are a Fair (+2) Reputation, Average (+1) Wealth, and Good (+3) Contacts. Her lower numbers reflect the fact that she is a new superhero with no big deeds to her name yet, and is still only a Sentinel-in-training. Her Good (+3) Contacts are mostly because of her family's Chicago connections.



The Action

“Action!” The last word the director shouts before the cameras roll, often accompanied by a silent prayer to the fickle gods of movie productions that the take will go well or at least not injure anyone.

The GM is a lot like the director of an improv acting company: he sets the scene, yells “Action!”, and hopes that the players don’t blow it up or start doing Groucho Marx imitations. Given their cue (some variation of “What do you do?”), the players now get to play with the scene the GM has handed to them.

Moving the Action

Once the GM has described the scene, the action moves along in **rounds** (p.114). Who goes first? The first round begins with whoever acts first in the narrative (it’s usually self-evident and most often it’s the speedster). As the round proceeds a player will take his character’s turn (or the GM will take a turn for a non-player character), flip over his character’s Turn Token, then pass the turn to another character (any PC or NPC who has not already had a turn). Every character gets an action, and when all characters have performed actions or passed, the round is over. The person who finished the round decides who starts the next one.



Taking Action

It’s time to hit something. Or take some wannabe bank robber’s guns away. Or do whatever your hero wants to do. Again, you can try anything that the narrative and Aspects of the scene make reasonable (or even just possible). But there are four *Actions* that all acts can be defined as: **Overcome** (p.116), **Create Advantage** (p.117), **Attack** (p.117), and **React** (p.118). Each Skill (and Power Skill) description will include a list of which of the four Actions it can be used to perform.

Overcome

Punching through a wall. Defeating a computer system’s cyber-security. Patching a dangerous wound. Putting out a fire. You have a goal and an obstacle to be overcome, often an Aspect (**CONCRETE WALL**, **CUTTING EDGE CYBER-SECURITY**, **HEMORRHAGING GUNSHOT WOUND**, **GASOLINE FIRE**).

*Called in by the police and facing a **DRUNK AND MAD SUPERHUMAN** (the intoxicated Gantry, a B Class Ajax-Type), Astra wants to calm him down (Overcome the Aspect). She must make a successful Overcome Action: her Fair (+2) Rapport Skill against Gantry’s Fair (+2) Willpower (he wants to stay mad), possibly modified by invoking the actual above Aspect.*

Overcoming an Aspect often means eliminating or modifying the Aspect, but not always. If Astra succeeded in calming Gantry then he would simply be a **DRUNK SUPERHUMAN**. But defeating the computer’s cyber-security wouldn’t remove the **CUTTING EDGE CYBER-SECURITY** Aspect for anyone else unless the hacker then decided to remove it—which could involve...

Create an Advantage

Hit someone with a car. Lay down a sheet of rim-ice for opponents to slip on. Generate a force-field bubble to contain a villain. Insert a security worm in the computer system. **ARMED WITH A CAR**, **FROSTED STREET**, **FORCE-FIELD BUBBLE**, and **SECURITY WORM** are all Situation Aspects that you create for your own advantage. When you create Situation Aspects in this way (or Create an Advantage on an existing Aspect), you get one Free Invoke on the Aspect (more if you Succeed with Style). When appropriate, you can also assign the new Aspect a Difficulty Rating equal to the Character Rating you used to create it, or use it to create *Aspect Permission*.

*Atlas decides that Junker, his A Class Ajax-type opponent, needs to go down hard. He picks up the pickup truck beside him and gets a good grip (creating the advantage). On his next turn he can swat the villain with it, free-invoking **ARMED WITH A CAR** for the +2.*

Jack Frost wants to stop the gang he's caught in the act from scattering and escaping, so he freezes the moisture in the air into a slick layer of thick hoar frost on the street around them. Now they must overcome the **FROSTED STREET'S** Difficulty Rating to stay on their feet and scramble away.

Variforce traps a toxin-spewing villain in a thick and air-impermeable bubble of his shaped fields. Now the villain must free himself from the **FORCE-FIELD BUBBLE** (overcoming its DR) before he can attack anyone.

Anyone the hacker gives the **SECURITY WORM'S** key to can use the new Aspect to bypass **CUTTING EDGE CYBER-SECURITY**, no invoking or dice-rolling necessary (an example of creating Aspect Permission).

Attack

"If there's going to be a fight, hit them first. Do it right, and you'll only have to do it once."

—Atlas

Toe to Toe, blow for blow, *mano a mano*; the classic hero vs. villain slug-fest where you are trying to pound or otherwise force your opponent into submission, and if necessary to take him out of the fight entirely. You use the Attack Action to do physical or mental harm, piling **Consequences** (p.132) on your opponent while shrugging off or fighting through your own, until you have won.

Atlas smacks Junker with the truck. Consequence: **SHAKEN, HIT HARD**, or even **CONCUSSED** as the pile deepens.

Variforce shrinks his forcefield bubble to squeeze the toxic villain until he asphyxiates and passes out. Consequences: **DIZZY, FADING**, eventually **PASSED OUT**.

Jack Frost "frosts" fallen gang members to bring on flash-hypothermia and render them unconscious (and possibly dead if he doesn't let them warm up). Consequences: **CHILLED, TORPID, HYPOTHERMIC SHOCK**.

The purpose of an Attack is to inflict **Stress** (p.132) and Consequences (p.132) or **Take Out** (p.134) your opponent.



React

React is a slightly odd Action: you never *React* on your own turn, and you can use the React Action as often as narratively appropriate during a round. React actually comes in two forms: **Defend/Counter**, and **Block** (p.118). Defend and Counter are mechanically the same—Defend is how you react to Attack Actions, Counter is how you react to Overcome or Create an Advantage attempts involving you. Block works slightly differently, and is how you React on behalf of someone else!

Atlas uses the pickup he's swinging to absorb a plasma bolt from Sunstrike (it's a busy day).

Minuteman dodges a hail of bullets from Sunstrike and Junker's minions.

Chakra resists an attempt at mental influence by Psirate.

React is also used to counter social pressure, intimidation, persuasion, interrogation, or deception attempts—anything that *pushes* a hero in a way the player doesn't want him to go.

Describing Actions

When taking Actions, don't say "I'm using my Fight Skill to take an Attack Action against Brick." Say "I'm doing a hard-drop on Brick to pound him into the concrete before he knows I'm here." The GM will confirm it's an Attack Action (it might've been a Create an Advantage Action intended to create a **SURPRISED AND KNOCKED DOWN** Situation Aspect on Brick), but it's important to establish the narrative of the Action first. If nothing else, it's better roleplaying to give the exciting visual first before detailing what it means in terms of rules. If your narrated Action would affect more than one target, there are rules for Attacking or Creating an Advantage affecting multiple targets or a whole area too.



Rolling the Fate Dice (p.115)

As previously said, any time your hero does something that a) has a chance of failure, and b) is important to the story, you roll Fate Dice. If an Action is not facing Active Opposition (p.115), then only the four **Hero Dice** are rolled for a result ranging from -4 to +4.

The Hero Dice are always rolled by the player whose character is taking his turn (attempting an Overcome, Create an Advantage, or Attack Action), or who is Reacting. When PC heroes fight PC heroes, *both* players roll their own Hero Dice.

If Active Opposition is involved (often through a React Action), then the second set of dice, the **Opposition Dice**, are also rolled with the **Hero Dice**—expanding the range to -8 to +8. This reflects the increased randomness and opportunities for lucky chances or catastrophe that Active Opposition creates.

The steps are:

- 1 Choose your hero's appropriate Attribute, Skill, or Resource, and the appropriate Action. The GM will choose your opposition's corresponding Character Rating or the Aspect or situation's Difficulty Rating.
- 2 Invoke any Aspects that can help you succeed (paying the Fate Point cost); the result is your **Action Rating** (Character Rating + Aspect Bonus). The GM (or opposing player) may also invoke any Aspects he wishes to add bonuses to the opposing Character Rating or Difficulty Rating, for a final **Opposition Rating**.
- 3 Roll the Fate Dice, rolling both the Hero and Opposition Dice together if the opposition is active.
- 4 Add their Total Value (from -4 to +4 or -8 to +8) to your Action Rating. If your Character Rating + Invoke Bonus(es) + Fate Die Roll (your **Final Action Rating**) is higher than the Opposition Rating, you have succeeded.
- 5 If you failed (or just want to try for a better result) and you have any applicable and un-invoked Aspects and a Fate Point left to invoke them, you may invoke a final Aspect and reroll your Hero Dice, recalculating your Final Action Rating. The GM or opposing player may do the same with the Opposition Dice.

The Five Outcomes (p.116)

The Five Outcomes are determined by counting the number of steps between the Final Action Rating and Opposition Rating; the result will be a number expressing positive or negative **shifts**. The effects of some results vary slightly for each different Action.

-3 Or More Shifts: FAIL EPICALLY. You not only fail, you fail epically and the GM is free to create a nasty Aspect off of that failure and then compel it.

-1 to -2 Shifts: FAIL. You fail to get the result you want. Alternatively, the GM may allow you to succeed (especially if success is vital to the game), but levy a major cost or incurred consequence. Something is sacrificed or complicates your situation. (**Note:** this option is not available for the Attack/React Actions.)

+0 Shifts: TIE. You succeed but incompletely, or succeed at a minor cost.

+1 or +2 Shifts: SUCCEED. You overcome the obstacle, create the advantage, attack, defend, or counter successfully.

+3 Or More Shifts: SUCCEED WITH STYLE. Not only do you succeed, you succeed to an extent that gives you bonuses.

PRE-ROLL INVOKES, SINGLE-ROLL RESOLUTION, AND FATE CORE

Players who have played Fate games before this will notice that WtC: RPG changes the roll-invoke order (in Fate Core, Aspects are invoked for bonuses after the dice are rolled). The separate die rolls (the Action roll and Opposition roll) have also been pushed together. Don't panic: these minor rules changes have been added here to create more uncertainty and speed things along a little, but they do not affect the math in any way—if you wish to invoke and roll the traditional way, go right ahead!

Ending the Action

Players and the GM will continue taking turns for the heroes and opposition until one side or the other cannot act anymore or the scene is pushed to the point where success/failure is resolved. This does *not* mean that most fight-scenes continue until one side or the other is incapacitated or dead—in Real Life, other options like escape or surrender are just as likely and *Wearing the Cape* does try and be socially realistic.



Scenes from the Post-Event World

This brings us to the end of our walkthrough of Scene and Action. The following chapters will drill deeper into everything, beginning with how to create your own hero. Before we do, however, let's look at two action scenes to lock in the sense of what we've covered: Atlas' plane-catching efforts on the day of the Event (and his first team-up with Minuteman), and a team-up between Atlas and Rush, Minuteman's successor, ten years later. Refer to **Chapter 2** for Atlas' and Rush's Cape Files.

A Day Unlike Any Other

GM: "You have no idea what happened. One second you were jogging down Michigan Avenue, weaving through the midmorning crowd on your way to your favorite run, the next you and everyone else are looking up from the pavement. You hurt in every spot that made contact with the sidewalk, and you're lucky—you can see pedestrians still lying where blacked-out drivers ran into them. Around you everyone seems in shock at the sudden blackout and change of scene from busy morning to incomprehensible disaster. What do you do?"

MINUTEMAN: "I see if I can help anyone."

GM: "You could take your pick."

MINUTEMAN: "Okay, I go into the street to see if I can help anybody out of the snarl of crashed or stalled cars."

GM: "Good idea. You spend the next several minutes helping the injured who can walk to get out of the street. Moans and cries are a pretty constant low background now, but people start screaming. You look up from the crowded street and see a powerless passenger jet falling from the clear blue sky. As people start to run, you lift the limping woman you were carrying into a shoulder carry even though you know it's hopeless. The oncoming disaster fills your mind, and you move. The world around you slows to a crawl. You look up and the falling jet seems to be almost hanging there. Underneath it you see the impossible—a flying man rising to meet it."

MINUTEMAN: "Right. Atlas is catching that plane."

GM: "It won't be like at the airport—bringing it down where you won't crush someone will be tricky. And it's not that small corporate jet you landed before; it's a big airbus."

ATLAS: "Right, but I don't want to lift it—just slow its decent and guide it to a controlled crash where nobody will get hurt."

GM: "Then that will be two Actions, each taking a turn: first to muscle it out of its dive, then to guide it down. The passenger jet has a +10 Difficulty Rating just for its tonnage. It's falling fast which adds to that—"

ATLAS: "But I'm not trying to stop and lift it, just slow it down. That should be easier."

GM: "Right. So since it's not a 'lift,' we'll leave it at +10 for **FALLING PASSENGER JET**. Atlas' Physique is +9, Mythic?"



ATLAS: "Yes. And I'm spending a Fate Point to invoke and push my power to its limit, that'll give me a +11 before rolling."

GM: "Okay. And this is an Overcome Action since you're not trying to create a new and advantageous Aspect here. Roll." Atlas rolls a **++■-**.

ATLAS: "I got a +1 die total. Added to my +11, I succeeded by 2 shifts."

GM: "Great! Not high enough to earn a bonus, but you've slowed the plane. Minuteman, it's your turn. You can see this flying guy has flattened himself to the bottom of the plane and is actually lifting its nose to turn it into a landing instead of a smash."

MINUTEMAN: "Can I tell where it's going to come down?"

GM: "If it doesn't take out a building? South of you on Michigan Avenue."

MINUTEMAN: "I carefully set my passenger down and head for what's going to be ground zero. I want to get as many people out of the way as I can in this crazy slow-motion world."

GM: "Okay then. As you start running everything around you completely freezes. It will take you your turn to get there, which ends the round and begins the next one. Normally you can't start a turn after ending the previous one, but you can use your **CAN'T STOP ME** Stunt if you want to go first."

MINUTEMAN: "If I go first then I can clear as much of ground zero as possible, so I'll go."



3: Play Overview – Examples of Play

GM: “Good call. There are fewer car-crunches at this end of the avenue, but more frozen pedestrians.”

MINUTEMAN: “How can I move them if they’re frozen?”

GM: “You touch one and realize that as you’ve paused the world has started to move again, but still very slowly.”

MINUTEMAN: “Fantastic. I’m not going to be gentle—just grab people in a shoulder-support and walk—jog—them away from ground zero and down the cross-streets. The mobile ones first, then anyone who can’t move themselves.”

GM: “Okay...I’m going to call this Action an Overcome; you’re trying to get rid of Crowded Streets, at least right here.”

MINUTEMAN: “Exactly. Now my Athleticism is (+5) Superb, and with the +4 Speed Stunt that’s part of my power, I’ve got a +9 Action Rating without invoking my Power Aspect.”

GM: “There’s a lot of people, so I’m giving **CROWDED STREETS** a +8 Difficulty Level for this. But going with the freeze-creep effect you’re seeing, it looks like you’ve got lots and lots of time...”

MINUTEMAN: “Got it, but to be safe I’m going to do what Atlas did—spend a Fate Point to really push my newfound speed.”

GM: “Okay, that gives you a +11 vs. the +8 before rolling. Go ahead.” Minuteman rolls a **▬▬▬▬**. “A -2, you could have done better, but because of your invoke you still succeeded by 1 shift and that’s all you needed.” (He writes **CLEAR GROUND ZERO** on an index card and places it by the other Scene Aspects. “Excellent. Now, Atlas? You’ve got what feels like the weight of the whole world on your back, and however it is you’re flying the plane is trying to push you into the ground. But you can see where you’re going to come down, and you can see that people are disappearing.”

ATLAS: “Disappearing.”

GM: “Like popped soap-bubbles. At the rate it’s happening, all that’s going to be left where you hit is empty cars and a lot of them aren’t in great shape now anyway.”

ATLAS: “Fantastic. I don’t care how it’s happening, but I’m crashing—I mean landing—this beast right there. How much wing room have I got?”

GM: “Not a lot. I’m invoking **TALL BUILDINGS** for the +2—you’re going to be lucky if your wings don’t bury themselves in a Miracle

Mile skyscraper. Your Difficulty Rating is still +10 since the plane hasn’t gotten any lighter, so you’re looking at a total Opposition rating of +12.” He spends a Fate Point, removing the token from his own pile.

ATLAS: “And I’m going to spend two Fate Points. I’m invoking my Power Aspect for the +2 again, and invoking **CLEAR GROUND ZERO** for another +2.” He passes over his tokens. “That gives me a pre-roll number of +13!”

GM: “Okay, roll.” Atlas rolls **▬▬▬▬**. “A -2. Thirteen minus two is +11, and subtracting the +12 Opposition Rating gives -1 shifts so you failed though not by much.”

ATLAS: “So what happens?”

GM: “Hmm, got it. You ‘succeed at a cost’—the passenger jet’s right wing hooks one of the towers coming in, shattering windows and raining dangerous shards down on the street in your wake. Your landing is more a skidding crash that stretches for a city block, but you just manage to turn what would have been fireball impact into a controlled crash and keep it in the cleared zone. The passengers inside are probably badly shaken and some will definitely need medical attention. And you smell airplane fuel.” He writes out a new **RUPTURED FUEL TANKS** Aspect and puts it down, and changes the **FALLING PASSENGER JET** Aspect to **HALF-CRASHED PASSENGER JET**. “Mr. Li, you’ve just watched the jet do a slow-mo slide, snatched the last few potential victims out of harm’s way as the thing turns a couple of dozen empty cars into insurance claims. You did it. Now what?”

Being eight meant that to me a flying man catching a plane was amazing but not impossible. The news that Air Force One had made a crater and that the newly sworn in President Kayle had declared a State of Emergency didn’t mean much to me at the time, either. I did see the news clips of Atlas and the others who followed, and later the TV shows, movies, and even comic books fictionalizing their adventures. We had real live superheroes now, and we gave them codenames if they didn’t hurry up and pick their own.

—Astra, **WEARING THE CAPE**



There's Always Someone

Atlas and Rush have responded to a Dispatch alert of a superhuman jewelry-heist.

GM: “Rush, you arrive at the broken-into jewelry store first. Someone has taken advantage of Cyberstrike’s citywide blackout to do a little midnight shopping.”

RUSH: “So what do I see?”

GM: “A lot. You recognize one of the shoppers; the one glowing like an incandescent bulb is Bobby “Redflare” Cranston, a B Class Photokinetic with a wicked laser attack. There are five other guys inside with him, and one of them is bigger than anyone has a right to be; he’s wearing what looks like an emergency jacket and his muscles are splitting its shoulders. He could be an Ajax-Type—or just a ‘roided-up bodybuilder. The others look normal enough, but you know their type—chances are they’re armed, maybe just knives but they’ve got to have at least one concealed firearm for bang if they need it.”

He sets down index cards with the following Aspects: **POWER BLACKOUT, BROKEN JEWELRY STORE SECURITY DOOR, CLOSE QUARTERS, SHATTERED AND LOOTED DISPLAY CASES.**

RUSH: “No victims or hostages?”

GM: “None that you can see from outside. The gang looks focused on cleaning out the displays.”

RUSH: “Since I don’t see any victims I’m hanging back and waiting for Atlas.” He flips his Turn Token.

GM: “Okay, Atlas you drop out of the sky to find Rush waiting for you just down from the lit-up store and he tells you what’s inside.”

ATLAS: “Can I see or hear anything else? I’ll use my super-senses, try and Create an Advantage; I’ve got a Great (+4) Alertness, and the +2 **SUPERSENSES** stunt bonus.”

GM: “A +6 then. With the distance and since you’re looking in from the street I’ll give it a +3 Difficulty Rating on the Action. Roll.” Atlas rolls **⊕⊕⊕⊕**. “A +2, so your final number is +8—you succeed by +5 shifts, a Succeed with Style that earns you two Free Invokes. We’ll call the advantage **I SEE YOU**. It represents total surprise and will last until they know about you.” He writes it on a sticky-note and passes it to Atlas. “You see what Rush saw, but with your better vision you recognize the big guy from recent Dispatch alerts. It’s Grinder—an **A CLASS AJAX-TYPE**, ex-army, occasional mercenary, seen hanging with the Brotherhood. He’s a seasoned veteran, he’s going to be tough. You also smell gunpowder, even from here. Someone shot something.”

ATLAS: “These are awfully high-powered types for a simple jewelry store heist, but whatever. I tell Rush.”

RUSH: “A fired gun? Why? They’ve got a human tank with them. I’m going to do a frozen-time recon, get in and out through the smashed-open door without them knowing I was there.”



GM: “We’ll call that an Overcome Action. You can roll for your Stealth Skill with your +4 **ABSOLUTE SPEED** Stunt bonus. You didn’t put any points into Stealth, so it defaults to +0, but you can take the Athleticism bonus for a +2 since this is all about moving carefully so as not to leave traces like a wake of crunching glass across the floor. That gives you a +6 before rolling. With all the display-case glass on the floor and the worked-up and alert minions I’m giving the Action an Opposition Difficulty Rating of +5. You’re speeding fast enough that, if you fail, you’ll still be in and out but someone’s going to hear you.”

RUSH: “A +2 spread before I roll is good enough for me.” He rolls **⊕⊖⊕⊕**. “+1, for +2 shifts—a success! They never notice me.”

GM: “Okay, there’s a bystander in there. An older guy, maybe the store owner. He doesn’t look hurt except for some blood on his face—they have him sitting in a corner and Atlas couldn’t see him behind the counters. Maybe he’s the one who fired the gun defending the store?”

Atlas flips over his Turn Token, and since the robbers in the store are doing their own thing, the GM decides it’s time for a new Round and Atlas and Rush unflip their Turn Tokens.

GM: “Rush, you go first.”



3: Play Overview – Examples of Play



RUSH: “Okay. Atlas, I’ll get the bystander out while you take the big guy?”

GM: “As an **A CLASS SPEEDSTER** it’s going to take only one Action for you to get back in and carefully extract the civilian—but you could lose Atlas the element of surprise doing it.”

ATLAS: “Then I’ll go first to get their attention.”

RUSH: “Works for me, I’ll go in right after him to get the old man out and then hit Redflare—might as well get my kicks in fast.”

ATLAS: “Right then. I’m going through the store window to get everyone focused on me while Rush does his thing. I’ll aim for Grinder, see if I can nail him to the wall, take him out. I’ve got +5 Fight to Attack, with a +2 for my Athleticism Bonus for a total +7 Action Rating.”

GM: “Okay, I’ll use Grinder’s +4 Fight with his +1 Athleticism Bonus for a +5 Opposition Rating, and since you’ve got complete surprise this will be against Passive Opposition. Do you want to use your Free Invokes? They’ll go away once everyone has had a chance to recover from the surprise.”

ATLAS: “I’ll use one for the +2, for a total of +9.” He rolls **⊕ ⊖ ⊖ ⊖**. “A -1—that gives me a +8 Final Action Rating, minus the +5 Opposition Rating, that’s 3 shifts for another Succeed with Style!”

GM: “Right. You burst through the window as a flying ram and smash the big guy into the wall. His Armor Rating 4 will soak up 4 of those shifts, but your Weapon Rating 8 gives you a net 7 shifts against him. I’m checking his Physical 3-Stress Box and filling one of his Moderate Consequence Slots with **HIT HARD** to soak it up. Since a Consequence is an Aspect, you get a Free Invoke on it.”

ATLAS: “I pass the round to Rush for his turn.” He flips his Turn Token.

RUSH: “My **PLENTY OF TIME** Stunt lets me take as many Actions as I want to try. I’m in—through the door and beside the injured old man to carefully pick him up and speed out of there—then back to give Redflare and one of the minion boots to the head. My lowest applicable Skill is +3 Fight. Adding my **ABSOLUTE SPEED** bonus gives me a +7—split three ways and with the Stunt’s +1 bonus, that’s a +3/+3/+4.”

ATLAS: I’m passing him the second Free Invoke from **I SEE YOU**.

GM: “Then that’s a +9, split into +4/+4/+4 Action Rating. For the opposition, extracting the old man safely is a +3 Difficulty Rating, Redflare has a +3 Fight, and the minion a +2 Fight. This is against Active Opposition. Roll.”

RUSH: “Great!” He rolls the Hero and Opposition Dice, for a **⊕ ⊕ ⊖ ⊖ / ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕**. “That’s a +2, splitting gives me a +5/+5/+4 Final Action Rating—success with all three Actions with 2 shifts each!”

GM: “Okay, you shielded the old man from the flying window-glass, got him out safe. You have a Weapon Rating 2 for your Physique Attribute Bonus, so you punch pretty hard; both of your targets take 4 shifts they need to absorb with Stress or Consequences. The minion was a Scene Extra with just one Stress Box, so you took him out easy. Redflare checked off his 3-Stress Box and absorbed the last shift as a Mild Consequence—**STUNNED**. You’ve got a Free Invoke on it to use against him.”

RUSH: “That’s my turn then.” He flips his Turn Token and sits back. “I pass to Grinder—let’s see what he does.”

GM: “Grinder comes off the wall with a roar, shaking his head but not slowing down. He sends a whistling swing at your face. It’s an Attack with a +5 for Grinder, vs. your +7 if you React with Fight, and I’m invoking his **LOVES A GOOD FIGHT** Aspect for another +2. +7 vs. +7.”

ATLAS: “I’m spending my Free Invoke of his **HIT HARD** Consequence, bumping my React up to +9 as I duck his swing. Roll?” The GM nods and Atlas rolls the Hero and Opposition Dice for a **⊕ ⊕ ⊖ ⊖ / ⊖ ⊖ ⊖ ⊕**. “That’s a +1 roll—again not great, but that’s a +10 vs. +7 for +3 shifts of success—a Succeed with Style!”

GM: “Okay! You not only dodge his swing, you redirect it to send him crashing off balance! I’m going to give you an **OFF BALANCE** boost on him as a bonus. It’s not an Aspect, just an extra +2 bonus to whatever Action you try on him next—use it before he recovers! And I’m passing the turn to Redflare.”



4 BUILDING YOUR HERO





We've looked at *Scene and Action*, and now we're going to look at how to create a Cape File. The easiest way to begin is to start with a Character Worksheet and Cape File (back of the book), and refer to Astra's Cape File (p.50–51) as you fill them out.

Step 1: Choose Character Aspects

In Chapter Three we talked about Aspects and how they describe what is important in a situation or character. You need to choose five Character Aspects with which to describe your hero: a Power Aspect, a Hero Aspect, a Trouble Aspect, and two Background Aspects. For Astra these are **A CLASS ATLAS-TYPE**, **ATLAS' TEEN SIDEKICK**, **UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO**, **BLUEBLOOD CHILD OF PRIVILEGE**, and **"I LOOK LIKE AN UNDERDEVELOPED TEENAGE TINKERBELL."** respectively.

The Power Aspect

The Power Aspect is the Character Aspect that defines your hero's *breakthrough*. This gamebook includes twelve defined Power Aspects (matching entries in Chapter Five: *Barlow's Guide to Superhumans*, p.95–107). This is the one Character Aspect which will likely never change, and if you cannot find the Power-Type you want in Chapter Five and want to create a new Power Aspect, go right ahead! The description must meet with the GM's approval, since he needs to balance it with the Power Aspects in play in his campaign. Since there is great variation within Power Types, you will also need to make sure that the GM and other players are on the same page with the fine details of your Power Aspect (Kinetic-Types and Mentalist-Types, especially, have huge variety inside their Type). Usually one or two small Power Description paragraphs defining your power and what you can do with it will do. Study Chapter Five for worked examples of Power Aspect Descriptions.

The Hero Aspect

"What possesses a person, already a freak to begin with, to put on a cape and mask and let people give her a funny name?"

—Astra, **NOTES FROM A LIFE**

You're not just a superhuman—you've decided to wear the cape and this Character Aspect is devoted to describing *how* you wear it. Are you a shining paladin of justice? A vigilante and mystery-man? A total professional? Your Hero Aspect says a lot about how the public and authorities see you, and also how you see yourself. It's about image, but also about *you*. Atlas is **THE ICONIC AMERICAN HERO**, Rush is a **FLASHY PROFESSIONAL**, and Artemis is **HOODED MYSTERY**.

You will often invoke your Hero Aspect to give a bonus to your Provoke or Rapport Skills, since so much of it is about people's reaction to you. It can also be compelled for the same purposes; cops don't like mystery-men, and Astra's "teen sidekick" rep might get her recognized but can also keep people from taking her seriously. Even **THE ICONIC AMERICAN HERO** can be a turnoff for the suspicious type who is sure that Atlas is too good to be true (or resents him as a tool of The Man), and any mistake Atlas makes publicly is likely to be *magnified* by his Hero Aspect. The Aspect can also contain the seed of a personal flaw or two that can be compelled or invoked against you; Rush's "flashy" Aspect could get him in trouble if he grandstands at the wrong time. Atlas' Hero Aspect could lead to overconfidence or make him a target, good sources of trouble.



The Trouble Aspect

“We make half our griefs for ourselves. God does not punish, he consoles.”

—Father Nolan

Any writer will tell you that there are two types of conflict—internal conflict, and external conflict; the Trouble Aspect is all about both. Trouble Aspects can be about internal struggles or weaknesses—a potentially fatal flaw like **GETTING BURNED OUT**, or **GLORY HOUND**. Or they can be about external problems like **HOUNDED BY THE MEDIA**, **ON THE DSA’S RADAR**, or **I HAVE A SUPERVILLAIN NEMESIS**. Your hero will almost certainly have many sources of conflict in his life, but the Trouble Aspect focuses on just one problem that is both serious and persistent. When you choose your Trouble Aspect, keep in mind that it only pulls its weight if it’s compelled or invoked against your hero on a fairly regular basis; it earns you Fate Points, but more importantly it’s an active source of drama and complications. Often it’s the foundation of whole scenes or even adventures—adventures which can result in retiring your current Trouble Aspect and choosing another.

Background Aspects

The first three Character Aspects are dedicated to your power, your hero personae, and your biggest game-effecting problem, but your two Background Aspects are entirely up to you. One of them could describe a physical Aspect of your hero (and his attitude about it), as does Astra’s **“I LOOK LIKE A TEENAGE TINKERBELL!”** Or it could reflect your hero’s years of experience (and its effect on his attitude): **“BEEN THERE, SEEN THAT, DONE IT TWICE.”** They could be about actual character background, building off of details of his family history, breakthrough experience, or police, political, or social connections. They could even reflect other “aspects” of your hero’s training and abilities, like **MASTER OF GUN-FU**.

Ideally, Background Aspects should be both useful (or you won’t invoke them often) and double-edged (or they can’t be occasionally invoked or compelled against your hero for the Fate Points you need), but don’t worry if you can’t think of something that has both an upside and a downside; if you have an idea for your hero that’s just too cool to pass up, don’t. **MASTER OF GUN-FU** has no drawbacks, but is a goldmine for invoke bonuses and declaring story details.

So look at the Background Aspects in the Sentinels’ Cape Files. Toss ideas around with your group. If you can’t think of anything that’s both descriptive and useful, leave them blank and fill them in later as you clarify your conception of your hero and his relationships. Here are some ideas.

- A personal connection that can be both a resource and an obligation.
- An ideal that is both a strength and occasional liability.
- A special talent.
- A driving goal.

And remember that Background Aspects can be changed pretty easily as what is important enough to merit the Permission/Denial and +2 Bonus of Aspects changes for your hero. Some you will never change; others you may change with each new storyline.

MORE CHARACTER ASPECTS

No list can come close to being exhaustive, but here are a few more Character Aspects to use for inspiration; remember, the best Character Aspects are double-edged, or at least come in handy in more than one situation. That said, if you come up with an Aspect that absolutely *defines* your hero, go ahead and use it!

ARCHETYPES

ACE REPORTER, BAD BOY/GIRL, CONSPIRACY THEORIST, COMPUTER GEEK, CON ARTIST, CYNICAL DETECTIVE, DRIFTER, DRIVEN IDEALIST, EMO-GOTH, ECCENTRIC GENIUS, FEM-FATALE, MASTER OF [], PLAYBOY, WAR HERO, WISE MENTOR.

BELIEFS/MOTIVATIONS

ALL WILL BE WELL, “DEUS VULT!”, EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF, “I WILL PUNISH THE GUILTY”, PATIENCE IS EVERYTHING, PROTECT THE INNOCENT, “SEMPER FI!”, “THE CAPES ARE IN LEAGUE WITH OUR SECRET MASTERS”, TANSTAAFL, THE LAND IS OUR MOTHER.

PROBLEMS

ADRENALIN JUNKY, BRILLIANT BUT DUMB, COMPULSIVE GAMBLER, CONTROL FREAK, CRIPPLING INJURIES, DARK AND SECRET HISTORY, DELUSIONAL, DESPERATE DRUG ADDICT, “ENOUGH TALK!”, FEARFUL, HORRIFICALLY SCARRED, HURTS FOR THE WORLD, “I HAVE AN ARCH-ENEMY?”, IMPULSE-CONTROL ISSUES, KNOWN SUPERVILLAIN HISTORY, LOW SELF-ESTEEM, PARALYZED BY CHOICES, “OOH, SHINY!”, SUBJECT OF A GENERAL ARREST WARRANT, SERIOUS PTSD, TRADITION-BASED GEIS, UNLUCKY.

PERSONALITY

CANDIDATE FOR SAINTHOOD, CHARISMATIC SOCIOPATH, COLD AS ICE, DRIVEN BY DEMONS, FEARLESS, HATES CONFLICT, INTENSELY FOCUSED, IRREPRESSIBLY CHEERFUL, MASTER MANIPULATOR, TOTAL TEAM PLAYER, WATCHFUL AND CONSIDERING.

ADVANTAGES

A FACE EVERYONE FORGETS, ALWAYS SPOTS THE ANGLES, BUILT LIKE A TANK, CATLIKE GRACE, “EVERYBODY KNOWS MY NAME”, FACE OF ADONIS, IMPOSSIBLE TO READ, PRACTICALLY SUPERNATURAL LUCK, TINY BUT MIGHTY, TRUST FUND CHILD, VORACIOUS POLYMATH.

CONNECTIONS

AGENT OF [], BAND OF BROTHERS, FAMILY IN THE BUSINESS, HAS FRIENDS EVERYWHERE, “HEY, I KNOW A GUY”, NETWORK OF COLLEAGUES.

GEAR

MERLIN’S RING, MICHELANGELO’S NOTEBOOKS, MORE GUNS THAN A PRECINCT ARMORY, QUADROPTER BIKE, TRULY UNIVERSAL TOOL, VORPAL BLADE.



Step 2: Choose Your Character Ratings

Now that you have at least three of your five Character Aspects written out on your Cape File, it's time to look at your Character Ratings—your Attributes, Skills, and Resources. These give you the base values you will be adding bonuses and die rolls to when you perform Actions.

You will start with one Superb (+5) rating, two Great (+4) ratings, three Good (+3) ratings, four Fair (+2) ratings, and five Average (+1) ratings, giving you fifteen Character Ratings to assign and write in on your Hero File. You have six Attributes (p.77–79), thirteen broad Skills (p.80–85), and three Resources (p.85–86) to choose from. Between the Attributes, Skills, and Resources, there are a total of 22 defined Character Ratings Slots, and you have only 15 positive ratings to invest; any Attribute, Skill, or Resource you choose not to invest a rating in will have a Default Rating of Mediocre (+0). Remember what The Ladder says about Character Ratings:

For more detail on what these ratings can translate into (especially at superhuman levels), see **Appendix A: Power Scale, the Ladder, and Weapon/Armor Ratings** (p.194–195).

THE LADDER – CHARACTER RATINGS		
+10	SUPREME	Ultra Class breakthroughs.
+9	MYTHIC	A Class peak ability.
+8	LEGENDARY	B Class peak ability.
+7	EPIC	C Class peak ability.
+6	FANTASTIC	D Class peak ability.
+5	SUPERB	Peak human ability.
+4	GREAT	Top-shelf athletes, scientists, performers, etc.
+3	GOOD	Stand-outs.
+2	FAIR	Professionals.
+1	AVERAGE	Average adult.
0	MEDIOCRE	Average teen.
-1	POOR	Average child.
-2	TERRIBLE	Human minimum.

The Attributes

The Attributes represent the hero's physical and mental gifts, but also his trained abilities. They are inherent traits of the character, apart from his learned Skills and acquired Resources. Look at the Character Ratings Ladder before choosing how to rate your Attributes. The description of each Attribute lists what Actions the Attribute can normally be used to perform, as well as what Skills benefit from the Attribute Bonus. Two Attributes, Physique and Willpower, also determine how many **Stress Boxes** and **Consequence Slots** your hero has (p.76).

*I gave Astra a +5 Physique since high Physique, boosted by **SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE** (p.95), are key to Atlas-Types, and I made Presence her lowest Attribute since she is completely unthreatening physically unless she displays her power.*

The Attribute Bonus

Your physical and mental abilities make a difference when you use Skills, and the bonuses for your hero will be listed in the big **Attribute Bonuses/Stunts/Extras** box in your Cape File. List these bonuses in the big box on your Cape File. The Attribute Bonus is:

- +1 for a Good (+3) Attribute.
- +2 for a Superb (+5) Attribute.
- +3 for an Epic (+7) Attribute
- +4 for a Mythic (+9) Attribute

Apply an additional +1 for every two Attribute Rating levels above Mythic.

You may add one Attribute Bonus to any Action using an appropriate Skill; if more than one Attribute could apply, choose the highest and add it to your Skill Rating and any invoked Aspect Bonuses to get your Action Rating (p.64). When **Attacking** or **Defending** against an Attack (p.130), Physique and Willpower Attribute Bonuses are treated as **Weapon/Armor Ratings** (p.91) rather than Attribute Bonuses, **giving a WR 2 and AR 1 for each +1 Attribute Bonus**. When they are used this way, another Attribute may contribute an Attribute Bonus to your Action Rating.

ATTRIBUTES

ALERTNESS

The senses and situational awareness.

ATHLETICISM

Grace and movement.

PHYSIQUE

Strength and health.

DISCERNMENT

Intelligence, perceptiveness, and wisdom.

WILLPOWER

Fortitude, resoluteness, inner strength.

PRESENCE

Charisma or sheer physical impressiveness.

Astra can use her +1 Athleticism Attribute Bonus for her Attack Action—and her Weapon Rating 8 from her +4 Physique Attribute Bonus for extra shifts if she succeeds. A smart and beautiful woman could use her Discernment Attribute Bonus or her Presence Attribute Bonus when attempting a Create an Advantage Action with her Rapport Skill (which she picked would depend on what she was trying to do).

The Skills

Where Attributes are about what you are, the Skills (p.80–85) are about what you do; some situations call directly for an Attribute (running, lifting something, resisting compulsion, etc.), but you will be using your Skills much of the time. Choose the Skills that reflect your hero's areas of competency; if you give positive Character Ratings to all 6 Attributes and all 3 Resources, you will be able to start with 6 Skills. As your hero gains experience, you will be able to add Skills and increase their ratings (p.179–181).

I gave Astra fairly low Skills for a cape—a Fair (+2) Fight and Fair (+2) Rapport, and Average (+1) Ratings for Academics, Aid, Investigate, and Survival. She is a newbie, after all, and her Attribute Bonuses will help.

There are three important things to know about Skills.

- 1 Skills are *general*. You need to flesh them out with the character description in your Hero File. If your hero has high Academics, what sorts of things does he know? If he has Fight, does he fight bare-handed or use a weapon or breakthrough power? Does he study a martial-arts style? If he has Larceny, is he a cat-burglar or a computer hacker, a spy or a security specialist? Or is he a breakthrough, able to walk through walls? Your Character Aspects and Character Description give your hero's Skills context.
- 2 Skills also give *permission*. For example, if you have Aid and you are not a breakthrough using your power then you carry or have access to the tools to use your Aid Skill to help people. The same goes for all of the Skills; if you have Shoot and it's not part of your power, then you are carrying a gun unless there's a narrative reason for you not to be carrying it.
- 3 Skills represent *activities*, not professions. A scholar will need both Academics and Investigate to cover his existing knowledge and his skill at acquiring more. A computer hacker—or a telepath—should have Deceive, Larceny, Investigate, and Stealth (and the telepath will find Aid, Provoke, and Rapport handy as well). At minimum a police officer should have Fight, Provoke, Rapport, Shoot, and probably Survival.

NOTE: because they represent broad activities, there is some overlap between Skills. For example, you can use both Engineering and Fight to break something, depending on how you go about breaking it. In a fight, you can feint with either Fight or Deceive. Examining a security-breach, you could use either Investigate or Larceny to figure out how it was done. And this is okay; the GM should generally approve any narratively convincing uses of a Skill, even if they move into the territory of another Skill.

RESOURCES

CONTACTS

You Know a Guy.

REPUTATION

Does Everybody Know Your Name?

WEALTH

Your Pile.

Resources

And last we come to Resources (p.85–86). Big piles of money, deep connections, and high fame are their own kind of power. Most capes will have positive ratings in all three Resources (if they have any Mediocre (+0) ratings, there is usually some reason for it in their background).

Resources are treated differently than Attributes and Skills. For one thing, it is easier to raise Resource Ratings than either Attribute or Skill Ratings (Milestones, p.179). You can also lose Resources as the result of a Resource Attack. Resources also come

THE SKILL LIST

ACADEMICS

Knowing Things

AID

Relieving, Ministering, Treating.

DECEIVE

Lying and Misleading.

DRIVE

Getting There.

ENGINEERING

Building, Fixing, and Breaking Stuff.

FIGHT

Doing Bodily Harm.

INVESTIGATE

Researching, Snooping, Chasing Leads.

LARCENY

Breaking In and Taking Stuff.

PROVOKE

Breeding Fear and Loathing

RAPPORT

Making Friends and Influencing People.

SHOOT

Reaching Out to Touch Someone.

STEALTH

Being Mist and Shadow.

SURVIVAL

Beating the Alternative.



4: Building Your Hero – Stunts

with their own combined Resource Stress Track and Consequence slots, and just to use Resources requires taking Resource Stress (p.86).

Although she is just beginning her career as a cape, I gave Astra a Fine (+2) Reputation, an Average (+1) Wealth, and Good (+3) Contacts due to her affiliation with the Sentinels and her family connections.

On the Ladder, higher Resource levels may look like the following example.

EXAMPLE

+9	MYTHIC	Multi-billionaires, heads of state, world-famous celebrities and pop stars.
+8	LEGENDARY	Billionaires, national political leaders, media celebrities.
+7	EPIC	Mega-millionaires, agency/military heads, media personalities.
+6	FANTASTIC	Multimillionaires, high-ranking law enforcement/military/government officials.

Keep in mind that Wealth is a measure of how much money you can apply to situations; *not* how much capital you possess! Likewise, Reputation and Contacts measure both the likelihood of being able to apply them to a situation and the degree of leverage they give you; a private citizen with Fantastic (+6) Reputation or contacts has a good chance at swaying public opinion and influencing governments; a citizen with Legendary (+8) Reputation is a citizen that governments cannot ignore!

The Character Worksheet and the Character Ratings Pyramid

Although you can write your Attribute Ratings directly on your Cape File, it is a good idea to first list them on the Character Worksheet. Astra's Character Ratings would look like this on the worksheet:

ASTRA						
+5	SUPERB	Physique				
+4	GREAT	Alertness	Willpower			
+3	GOOD	Athleticism	Discernment	Contacts		
+2	FAIR	Presence	Fight	Rapport	Reputation	
+1	AVERAGE	Academics	Aid	Investigate	Survival	Wealth

Note that the stacked Character Ratings make a “pyramid”; by doing this you can make sure that there are no gaps or too many of any one rating level before you write them all on your Cape File. There is another reason for starting with the Character Worksheet, as you will see when we get to **Power Stunts** (p.90–93) and **Milestones** (p.179–182).

Step 3: Determine Starting Fate Points

Now that you've got your Character Ratings sorted, let's look at Starting Fate Points. **The amount of Campaign Starting Fate Points you will begin with will depend on your Campaign Level, which is determined by the highest Power Class Rating available to your heroes.**

14 CSFP in an A Class campaign.

12 CSFP in a B Class campaign.

10 CSFP in a C Class campaign.

8 CSFP in a D Class campaign.

(See Chapter 10 (p.165) to read more about campaigns.)

Starting Fate Points can be spent to purchase Stunts, and the number of CSFP the players are given is set to leave them around 3 to 5 SFP once they have purchased the necessary Stunts for their power. This is because the number of unspent Starting Fate Points listed in the SFP box in the Cape File is the number of Fate Point Tokens the hero starts every new game Session with! A cape whose Power Class is lower than the Campaign Level will likely have more SFP left—which you'll see is an advantage by itself. You'll learn all about using Fate Points in Chapter Six; for now, we're just going to talk about buying Stunts with them. List your CSFP on your Character Worksheet.

I would put 14 CSFP on Astra's Character Worksheet since a Sentinels campaign is definitely an A Class campaign!



Step 4: Choosing Power Stunts

Power Stunts are “flavoring,” the final tool for building on your Power Aspect in ways that impact the rules and gameplay. As your campaign progresses, you will have the opportunity to change Stunts out or add new Stunts, insuring that your hero does not remain static. **Unless otherwise stated, a Stunt will always cost 1 SFP to purchase.**

Every Power-Type comes with its own list of Power Stunts, but those lists are hardly all-inclusive; players may think of novel uses of their powers which require new Power Stunts—or whole new Power-Types with new Power-Stunt lists! For picking Power Stunts and creating your own, see **Chapter 5: Barlow’s Guide to Superpowers (p.87–108)**. For non-power Stunts (useful for NPCs but also for PC capes), see **Appendix B**. List your chosen Power or Non-Power Stunts in the big box on your Cape File.

All the Power Stunts in the big box on Astra’s Cape file are listed under the Atlas-Type Power Template (p.96). I spent 12 CSFP to buy the required Power Stunts for her type and class cost, so I would write that in on the worksheet. 14 Campaign Starting Fate Points minus 12 Starting Fate Points leaves her 2 SFP, which I note on her worksheet and in the box on her Cape File.

Modifying the Pyramid with Stunts

If you choose a Power Stunt that boosts one or more of your Attributes, Skills, or Resources (See **SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE, p.95**, and **PEAK HUMAN ABILITY, p.103**), you need to reflect it on the Character Worksheet. Using Astra as the example, your Ratings Pyramid would now look like this:

ASTRA						
+10	SUPREME					
+9	MYTHIC	Super Physique				
+8	LEGENDARY					
+7	EPIC					
+6	FANTASTIC					
+5	SUPERB	(Base Physique)				
+4	GREAT	Alertness	Willpower			
+3	GOOD	Athleticism	Discernment	Contacts		
+2	FAIR	Presence	Fight	Rapport	Reputation	
+1	AVERAGE	Academics	Aid	Investigate	Survival	Wealth

Raising a Character Rating with a Power Stunt does not empty the space on the Ratings Pyramid, so it cannot be filled by other Character Ratings; this is important to remember as you advance through Milestones (p.179).

Gear

“Superheroes don’t use guns. Old-fashioned weapons—swords, warhammers, maces, even bows—those are traditional. Guns are for soldiers and the police. And bad guys.”

—Prof. Charles Gibbons, aka Ajax

Powers aren’t the only things that can be modeled with Stunts.

You don’t need gear. As stated in the Skills section, your Skills act like Aspect Permission; you have whatever you need to use your Skills if the narrative of the situation allows it—the police officer is carrying his pistol, the EMT arrives with his van full of Emergency Stuff, the Verne-Type will go into the field with his utility belt full of tools/instruments/sensors, etcetera. If your hero’s Shoot Skill is described as “Archery” or his Fight Skill is described as “Kenjutsu” (Japanese swordsmanship), then he’s armed with a bow or katana and ready to use his Skill unless the situation says otherwise.

But Gear is cool. And narratively, a Shoot Skill backed by a Big Freaking Gun should do more grievous harm than a Shoot Skill backed by a bow (unless it has explosive arrows). And there are lots of heroes who rely on gadgetry or magic that isn’t intrinsically a part of them. If you want to give your hero special gear, it can be “bought” in three ways: as Gear Stunts (p.93), Gear Aspects (see next page), or extra Weapon or Armor Ratings (p.91).



Gear as Aspects

It's always possible to describe a character-defining piece of equipment with a Character Aspect, but you can also spend a Starting Fate Point to write it up as a separate Gear Aspect. For example, Ajax has given his battle maul a **GREAT BATTLE MAUL** Gear Aspect and his Greek-style breastplate and helmet a **CERAMIC ALLOY ARMOR** Gear Aspect, each with attached Gear Stunts.

Don't go crazy with Gear Aspects, and remember—they're *Aspects*; yes you can spend a Fate Point to invoke them for a bonus or a desperate reroll, but the GM can invoke them too and even *compel* them if the narrative calls for it; you can always get disarmed, find yourself out of ammunition, or have something malfunction. (Which does also mean an additional source of Fate Points...)

Astra doesn't have any Gear Stunts or Aspects, but several Sentinels do: look at Stunts assigned to The Harlequin (p.38), Ajax (p.44), and Artemis (p.52).

Step 5: Determine Stress and Consequences

Lastly you need to determine just how much stress and injury your cape can take and keep fighting. The **Stress Boxes** on your Cape File represent the degree to which your hero can be “pushed” in a Conflict before he starts taking Consequences. Stress is not *damage*; stress is fatigue, confusion, fear, loss of equilibrium. Your hero has a number of Stress Boxes, determined by his Physique and his Willpower, which he can check off to stay in a fight. When your Stress Boxes are all checked off—or you take a hit too big to absorb—you begin taking **Consequences (p.132)**. Stress is reset at the end of a Scene, but Consequence recovery takes longer (p.133).

Every player character starts with two **1-Point** Stress Boxes and two **2-Point** Stress Boxes (one each for Physical and Mental Stress), as well as **1 Mild** (2-Point) Consequence Slot, **1 Moderate** (4-Point) Consequence Slot, and **1 Severe** (6-Point) Consequence Slot.

AVERAGE (+1) Physique adds a 3-Point Physical Stress Box.

GOOD (+3) Physique adds a 4-Point Physical Stress Box.

SUPERB (+5), Epic (+7), and Mythic (+9) Physique, give an additional **Mild**, **Moderate**, and **Severe Consequence Slot**, respectively, for Physical Consequences only.

The same numbers apply to Willpower, for Mental Stress and Consequences only. The maximum number of extra Consequence Slots, however, is one of each; a hero cannot have three Mild Consequence slots, even if he has a Superb (+5) Physique and a Superb (+5) Willpower. If she should get an extra Physical Consequence Slot *and* an extra Mental Consequence Slot, she will instead get an additional “open” Consequence Slot which can take both Physical and Mental Consequences.

Resource Stress and Consequences

Resources also come with Stress Boxes and Consequence Slots; a cape's Reputation, Contacts, and Wealth can also be attacked (p.134)! *Using Resources* also creates Resource Stress and Consequences, as does the fallout of **Collateral Damage (p.111)**. Your hero starts the game with **1 Resource Stress Box** and **1 Moderate Resource Consequence Slot**. Each of your Resources gives you a second Stress Box at Good (+3), and a third at Superb (+5). **You cannot have more than 5 Resource Stress Boxes**. Everyone also starts with one **Moderate Resource Consequence Slot**, but an Epic (+7) Resource will give you 1 Mild Resource Consequence Slot, and a Mythic (+9) Resource gives you 1 Severe Resource Consequence Slot. **You cannot get more than one of each Resource Consequence slot.**

Because Astra's Superhuman Physique gives her a +9 Physique, she gets 4 Physical Stress Boxes as well as two sets of Mild, Moderate, and Severe Physical Consequence Slots (one set for Physical Consequences only). Her Great (+4) Willpower gives her 4 Mental Stress Boxes. Her Good (+3) Contacts grants her a 2-point Resource Stress Box, giving her two Resource Stress Boxes and a Moderate Resource Consequence Slot.

Finishing Up

Your cape should now be ready to play! Make sure the ratings on your Character Worksheet have all been copied to your Cape File, and that your Starting Fate Points (CSFP minus everything spent on Stunts) have been recorded on your Cape File as well. You may still have one or both Background Aspects blank; that's okay—you can fill them in between game sessions (but not during play), as they come to you.




The List: Attributes, Skills, and Resources


For convenience' sake, all Attributes, Skills, and Resources are listed here. If you don't find a Skill you are looking for here, remember that you can always rename Skills to fit your needs; Engineering becoming Sculpting or Chemistry, or Deception becoming Forgery, for example. For designing **Power Skills** see [p.89–90](#).


The Attributes


Alertness

Alertness represents your awareness of your immediate environment, as perceived through your five senses (or your psychic impressions, radar or sonar-senses, limited omniscience, or whatever). High Alertness reflects sharp senses or high situational awareness and pattern-recognition.

 **Overcome:** You don't often use Alertness to overcome obstacles; when you do then Alertness is usually about noticing something important in a scene, such as spotting the concealed gun in that guy's waistband; it gives you information, possibly even revealing a hidden Aspect. The GM should call for Alertness rolls only when succeeding would result in something interesting happening and failing would result in something just as interesting (but see Alertness Bonuses, below). You reveal the ambush or don't reveal the ambush; either way, something's happening.

 **Create an Advantage:** You use Alertness to create Aspects based on direct observation—looking over a room for details that stand out, finding an escape route in a debris-filled building, noticing someone sticking out in a crowd, etc. When you're watching people, Alertness can tell you what's going on with them *externally* (for internal changes, see the Discernment Attribute). You might also use Alertness to declare that your hero spots something you can use to your advantage in a situation, such as a convenient **SECURITY PATTERN** when you're trying to avoid detection, or a **STRUCTURAL WEAKNESS** when you're preparing to make a hole for yourself. Or you're in a hero vs. villain fight and you see a wall likely to come down if you throw your target into it. You might want it to.

 **Attack:** Alertness isn't used for direct Attacks (but may create Aspects needed to enable attacks).

 **React:** Alertness is used to Counter any uses of Stealth to get the drop on you or ambush you, to discover that you are being observed, and even to Counter uses of Deceive involving visual deception.


Alertness Bonuses: Instead of always rolling Alertness to discover something (either as an Overcome or Create an Advantage), if discovery would depend on experience or specialized knowledge then the GM should require the hero to roll a related Skill—for example Drive to spot the best route, Shoot to trace the sound of the gunshot, and so on. If he does, Alertness will lend its bonus to the discovery attempt.


So in a dimly lit room full of people I sat surrounded by softly glowing human light bulbs, and she wasn't one of them. She was room temperature. And as I focused I realized she wasn't breathing and I couldn't hear the soft percussion of a heartbeat, either. A corpse sat next to me drinking a margarita. Even for The Fortress on a Friday night, that was weird.


—Astra, **WEARING THE CAPE**

Athleticism

The Athleticism Attribute measures how good you are at *moving*, encompassing physical grace, speed, and hand-eye coordination.

 **Overcome:** Athleticism allows you to overcome any obstacle that requires physical movement—jumping, running, climbing, swimming, and even *flying* for those with the right Power Aspect! If it resembles something you would do in the decathlon, you roll vs. Athleticism. You use Overcome Actions with Athleticism to change ranges ([p.129](#)) in a conflict if there is a Situation Aspect of other obstacle in your way. You also roll Athleticism to chase or race in any contests or challenges that rely on these types of activities.

 **Create an Advantage:** You create advantages with Athleticism by jumping or climbing to high ground, running faster than an opponent can keep up with, or performing dazzling acrobatic maneuvers to weave and dodge through combat.

 **Attack:** Athleticism is not used to perform Attack Actions.





React: Athleticism can be used to Defend in physical conflicts, against both close-quarters and ranged attacks (this is essentially Dodge). You can also use Athleticism to Counter characters trying to move past you, if you are physically capable and in a position to interfere with whoever is making the attempt.

Athleticism Bonuses: Athleticism will lend its bonus to Fight, Larceny, and Stealth where grace and movement is a factor.

Physique

The Physique Attribute represents your strength and toughness, what kind of weight you can lift or move, how hard you can hit, and how hard you can be hit.

Overcome: You can use Physique to Overcome any obstacle requiring the application of physical force—a Situation Aspect on a scene or other physical impedance (prison bars, locked gates, brick walls, etc.). Physique is the go-to to Overcome any lifting challenge, and it is also the Attribute for direct contests of strength and endurance (arm-wrestling, marathons, etc.).

Create an Advantage: Physique has wide application for creating advantages in physical conflict, from more traditional grappling and holding for **PINNED** or **GRAPPLE LOCK** Situation Aspects, to using Situation Aspects like **ARMED WITH A CAR** to add force to a hit.

Attack: Physique is not used for Attacks.

React: Physique can be used to Counter someone else's movement, provided you are in a small enough space that you can effectively use your body to block access and leverage your strength to stop them from getting through. It is also the Attribute used to Counter or Defend against poisons, drugs, heat, cold, and other physical but non-kinetic assaults.

Physique Bonus: Fight is the main skill that benefits from Physique's Attribute Bonus, but Provoke (attempts to intimidate) can certainly justify it. There may be occasions using other Skills when physical strength is useful. Physique gives the normal Attribute Bonus when attempting to Overcome or Create an Advantage, but when using the **Attack** Action or defending against a physical attack it gives a Weapon/Armor Rating boost instead (p.91).

Discernment

The Discernment Attribute represents your powers of insight and judgment, whether you call it intuition, reason, or common sense.

Overcome: You can use Discernment to pit yourself against obstacles that require applied reason and creativity, such as puzzles and riddles. Contests of Discernment include riddle-games, chess, and even competitive exams. You can also use Discernment to “read people,” allowing you to detect emotional states and changes in someone's attitude or intent.

Create an Advantage: You can use Discernment to create advantages when making plans, mapping strategy and tactics, trying to anticipate opponent's moves, and so on. **OKAY, HERE'S THE PLAN** is a perfectly valid Situation Aspect for a team to invoke for bonuses! Reading people, you

can also use Discernment to assess them, discovering Character Aspects you can use to your advantage.

Attack: Discernment isn't used for Attacks.

React: Discernment can be used to Counter attempts to Deceive. You can also use it to Counter attempts to create social advantages against you in general.

Discernment Bonus: Discernment lends its bonus to Academics, Deceive, Engineering, Fight, Investigate, Rapport, Shoot—any use of a Skill in an Action focused on thought and planning! It also takes the place of the Athleticism Bonus when using powers directed by the mind (using a telepathy power to Create an Advantage or Attack, for example).

Putting all the influence I could into it, I whispered "Goodnight Steve, now go home and don't come back," and pushed him out the door. He went straight down the hall without looking back, walking fast and without answering any of the calls sent his way. Two shakes and he was past Sable's looming doorman and out the front door. Obviously the suggestion had taken, at least for now.

—Artemis, **BITE ME**

Willpower

Willpower is the mental counterpart to Physique, representing the ability to ignore fear and pain and to overcome fatigue or focus on a task.

Overcome: Willpower is not normally used to directly Overcome obstacles (but may be for mental powers).

Create an Advantage: You can use Willpower to create Situation Aspects on yourself, representing a state of deep concentration or focus. Willpower also takes the place of Physique in strength-based Actions using mental powers.

Attack: Willpower is not used for Attacks.

React: Willpower is the main Attribute used to Defend against mental attacks from Provoke, representing control over your reactions. It is also the universal defense against direct psychic attacks or psychic attempts to Create an Advantage against you (from mind-reading, for example).

Willpower Bonus: Willpower seldom grants a direct Attribute Bonus unless a breakthrough power is involved—in which case it becomes the go-to Attribute for psis and many mystics, and can lend its bonus to just about anything. Willpower will also grant Weapon/Armor Ratings when appropriate to the power.



Presence

The Presence Attribute reflects your physical appearance, dress, bearing, manners, and in general the degree to which you impress others. Elevated to a superhuman power, Presence might be more directly useful but will mostly serve as a source of high Attribute Bonuses.

Overcome: Presence is not normally used to Overcome obstacles, but may occasionally be used in a Contest (such as a beauty contest).

Create an Advantage: Presence is very useful in creating “social” advantages, from **OBVIOUS SOPHISTICATE** or **PERSUASIVE SPEAKER**, to **SCARY AS HELL**.

Attack: Presence is not normally used to Attack, but Power Stunts allowing mere appearance to inflict Mental Stress and Consequences are certainly possible.

React: Presence is not used to React.


Presence Bonus: Presence will lend its bonus to Deceive, Provoke, and Rapport when narratively appropriate (in the right situations, good looks, intimidating appearance, or charm can all help you get what you want).





The Skills


Academics

Astronomy, Breakthrough Psychology, Chemistry, Theology, Economics, Forensics, Geology, Herbolgy—you get the picture. Most advanced fields of knowledge, including fields with “practical” uses like Medicine and occult fields like The Great Art of Thaumaturgy or the Wise Craft, fall under the Academics Skill. Verne-Types will often have weird fields of knowledge like Trans-Physics. A Mediocre (+0) Academics Skill represents knowledge equivalent to a high-school diploma, a Fair (+2) a liberal arts degree. For Good (+3) and up, you should be noting fields of expertise in your character description. It can be a single field or many related or unrelated fields, self-taught or formally studied, so long as it works with the character concept.

 **Overcome:** You can use Academics to Overcome any obstacle that requires applying your character’s knowledge to achieve a goal. For example, you might roll Academics to diagnose an illness or break a code, depending on your field of knowledge. Academics is the go-to Skill when knowing something is important and you might not know the answer.

 **Create an Advantage:** With Academics, you can turn knowledge into an advantage. “As you know, [fill in the known weakness or highly useful fact],” or “I know that if I ground the current then...” These kinds of statements often precede a Verne-Type Creating an Advantage like *I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED!* and using the Free Invoke to boost some mad-libbed technical feat of Engineering Skill like building an impromptu psi-damper out of a smartphone and a broken TV.


 **Attack:** Academics is not used to Attack.


 **React:** Academics is not used to React.


Aid


In traditional medicine, the Aid Skill represents everything from competently applied First-Aid (+1) or stabilizing EMT treatment (+2) to computer-assisted microsurgery and genetic therapies (+6 and above). It can also represent applied herbal knowledge, psychiatric medicine, chi healing, and of course breakthrough-power applied healing.

Aid comes into play in two ways. First, Recovery from Consequences (p.133) requires an Overcome against the Consequence. Characters with the Aid Skill can aid with that Overcome Action. Second, in a “high-realism” campaign, some Moderate Consequences and many Severe Consequences (+6) may be *life-threatening* (box, p.133). Extreme Consequences (+8!) will almost always be life-threatening, and the GM can Compel the Moderate, Severe, or Extreme Consequence to elevate the injury from a simple Aspect to something the aid provider must win a serious Contest against (p.126) before it kills the patient. When non-player characters are involved then the GM may simply rule that failure to Overcome their life-threatening Consequences results in death.

 **Overcome:** Sometimes before Recovery is attempted the character must *first not die*; this may involve a Contest in which the aid-provider attempts to keep the Consequence from creating a full-blown Hazard (p.155). Diagnostic and Forensic efforts, as well as attempts to counteract drugs, poisons, curses, psychic pressure...anything placing adverse mental, physical, or even magical Aspects on the character, will also require an Overcome Action. See **Using Aid (p.134)** for an example.

 **Create an Advantage:** Aid can be used to Create an Advantage, passing the Free Invoke to patients to help with their Recovery rolls. It can also be used to create “masking” Aspects that allow the patient to function while injured, using permissions and invokes. See **Using Aid (p.134)** for an example.


 **Attack:** Aid is not used to Attack.


 **React:** Aid is not normally used to React, although some powers may allow you to give aid that acts to Counter or Defend the subject from the harm as it is being attempted.


Deceive


Deception is the art of presenting a false reality. The most common deception is the verbal lie, but it can cover so much more than that. For example, it can be creating a false identity with a physical disguise, with forged documents, with digital records, or all three. Mentalist-Types may be able to create false impressions or even full-blown mental illusions, while Merlin-Types may spin fully recordable visual, auditory, and even tactile illusions. Shapeshifters can imitate others, sometimes with perfect mimicry. A stage magician’s sleight-of-hand and misdirection is part of Deceive, as is laying down a false trail for hunters.



 **Overcome:** Lying to, bluffing, or misdirecting someone is an Overcome. For example, convincing the bad guys that reinforcements are coming. Against NPCs, an unopposed Overcome roll is fine; against PCs it will always be Opposed.

 **Create an Advantage:** You can use Deceive for a feint, faking a punch or sword-lunge to throw your opponent **OFF BALANCE**, or fake a **MIMICKED INJURY**. You can make a false impression that convinces your target that you are **MR. RELIABLE** or **VERY CONCERNED** before you feed them the Big Lie, or forge that **HIGH-LEVEL SECURITY CLEARANCE** that will get you into the government base. Anything you create or set up in advance, be it a false impression, a disguise, fake papers, or even the sniper's **HIDDEN NEST**, counts as Creating an Advantage.

 **Attack:** Deceive is not used to directly Attack.

 **React:** If it's in your heroes described "skill set," you can Counter with Deceive to put a hunter off your trail, throw off a detective's investigation, or misdirect a computer security specialist running a trace. Deception can Counter attempts with Discernment to perceive your true motives or read your character. Superhumans may be able to *Defend* with Deceive using illusions and decoys to direct hits elsewhere (although these can just as easily be modeled with Create an Advantage).

DRIVE SKILL AND WARCRAFT

The description of Drive covers its primary function—getting you from Point A to Point B and overcoming obstacles along the way. But what about vehicles whose purpose is to *fight*? In these cases, you can add a Fight or Shoot Skill to your Skill list, the Skill applying to what you can do with the vehicle. For example, a fighter pilot would have a Pilot Skill and Shoot Skill together describing what he does with his F-15. Alternatively, you can use Stunts to add Attack Actions to your Drive Skill (p.91). These Skills/Stunts apply only when you are in the vehicle (See **POWERED ARMOR**, p.96). If warcraft are central to the game, they should also be represented with Character or Gear Aspects.

Skill Example: *Mighty Fred (yes, that's his codename) is a D Class Ajax-Type who pilots a Verne-Type prototype powersuit. He has the Pilot Skill, and he renames his Fight Skill as Powersuit Fighting (see p.89–90). His Shoot Skill covers a wide range of weapons he can mount on his armor chassis or fire without it. One of his Background Aspects is **GOD OF BATTLE IN AN ARES 3 SUIT**.*


Stunt Example: *Mighty Fred's player wants to make him more versatile out of the suit, so instead of using the extra Skills, he spends 2 SFP to give Fred two Gear Stunts allowing additional Actions: **HEAVY METAL FIGHTING** (he can use his Pilot Skill to Attack at Fight Range), and **ONBOARD WEAPONS** (he can use his Pilot Skill to Attack at Shoot Range).*


Combined Example: *Mighty Fred's player decides to give him a **GOD OF BATTLE** Background Aspect (reflecting his mad powersuit-fighting Skills), and dedicated Pilot, Fight, and Shoot (with powersuit) Skills, using up three of his positive Skill Ratings. None of these choices cost an SFP, leaving him free to spend an SFP for the **ARES 3 SUIT** Gear Aspect and a SFP to take the **ONBOARD WEAPONS** Stunt for it.*


The total "cost" of Mighty Fred's awesome powersuit and abilities with it comes to 1 Character Aspect, 3 Skill slots, and 2 SFP.


Drive

Lots of capes have powers that let them get to the action under their own steam, but most need to use more normal methods of transportation. If you take the Drive Skill, then explain what it is you drive. Remember that most people have a Mediocre (+0) or Average (+1); if you're not going to be the team's driver (or wheelman), then just assume you can drive most commuter vehicles. Higher Drive ratings are for professionals, who often specialize in racecars, planes, quadcopters, powersuits, or other "non-civilian" rides, or for stunt-drivers and wheelmen. If you're flying something, call it the Pilot Skill.

 **Overcome:** Drive is the equivalent of Athleticism when you're in a vehicle—you use it to accomplish forward (or backward) movement in the face of "difficult circumstances." Rough terrain, bad weather, and tight clearance all count as difficult circumstances; so does stunt-driving, and more to the point, so does getting shot at or being the focus of hostile supervillain action.

 **Create an Advantage:** You can use Drive to determine the best way of getting somewhere in the vehicle—a good enough roll might tell you what features of the route get expressed as Aspects, or declare that you know a **CONVENIENT SHORTCUT** or something similar. With a nimble enough vehicle you can also use Drive to create advantages like **JINXING** to make you harder to hit.

 **Attack:** Drive is not normally used to Attack. If you use Drive to ram then you can attack with Drive, but you take the same shifts of harm you inflict if the target is of comparable or greater mass (Armor Ratings will help absorb these shifts). If you are piloting a powersuit, you may want to take a Stunt to change this!

 **React:** Avoiding damage to a vehicle in a physical conflict is one of the commonest uses of Drive (swerving to avoid obstacles or incoming fire, presenting less vulnerable parts of the car as target or impact point, etc). You can also use it to Counter advantages being created against you or Overcome attempted Actions of someone trying to move past you in a vehicle.





Engineering

This is the skill of making stuff, fixing it, and *breaking* it. Since there are so many fields of engineering (computer, mechanical, electrical, chemical, etc.), you will need to describe exactly what fields your character is focused on. If your character is a Verne-Type (p.107), it is *especially* important. (Note that this can also be called the *Craft* skill.)

Overcome: Engineering allows you to build, fix, or break anything given the time and required tools and materials. Engineering Actions are often one step in a multi-step plan, making it a popular Skill for Challenges (p.124); *only roll if success is in doubt*. If the task is trivial, use your turn to mark it “done” and move on. But if you’re trying to complete the trivial task while under fire and using just the stuff in your pocket or lying around...

Create an Advantage: You can use Engineering to create Aspects representing tech, weapons—anything, really, even if it is only advantageous for the Aspect Permissions it gives. Even for Verne-Types, this takes more time than Conflicts usually grant (see **Story Time**, p.147). Engineering can also be used to point out vulnerabilities to Attack or exploit (**STRESS-SENSITIVE JOINTS, HEAT-DUMP PROBLEM...**), or to commit acts of sabotage that *create* exploitable vulnerabilities.

Attack: Engineering is not normally used to Attack in a Conflict, although up-close and personal sabotage may certainly qualify if the target is a giant robot.

React: Engineering is not used to React.

Fight

The Fight Skill covers all forms of combat that involve doing bodily harm, whether with your bare fists or with weapons (batons, swords, bullwhips, power-jolts, swung vehicles...). It covers all fighting disciplines; wrestling, boxing, Kung Fu, fencing, etc., and the fighting use of powers. Most of the time the range is **Fight Range** (p.129).

Anyone can try and fight, and some have simply picked up tricks and know what a situation calls for; an Average (+1) or even Fair (+2) Fight Skill can represent general brawling ability. For anything higher, details in your character description should say what *kind* of fighter you are. Even better, make the description a Character Aspect—you will be able to invoke it for the Aspect bonus when you use your fancy Kung-Fu moves!

Overcome: Fight is seldom used to Overcome. You might use it to display your skills in a demonstration, or participate in a regulated bout or sport-fighting (a Contest rather than a Conflict). Rather than opening a new Conflict Scene, the GM may allow an Overcome Action against low-level NPCs when the fight would be an easy win.

Create an Advantage: Set-up moves or combinations can be used to Create an Advantage. Examples are **TARGETED STUNNING STRIKE, DIRTY MOVE, DISARM**, and so on. You could use Fight to assess an opposing fighter’s form, creating an Aspect like **HE FAVORS HIS LEFT**, or assess the flow of whole the skirmish to pursue the best tactic and create a **SUPERIOR POSITION** advantage (you would use the Discernment Bonus in these cases, rather than Athleticism).

Attack: Remember, Attack responsibly.


React: You can use Fight to Defend against or Counter any Attack or Create an Advantage made with Fight. You may also Counter most any Action where violently interposing yourself could prevent it from happening. You cannot use Fight to Defend against Shoot Attacks—unless your Power Aspect or a Stunt enables it!


Thickness is armor. Mass is armor. Inertia is armor. If you hit something hard enough and don’t break or move it, it’ll probably break you. Simple physics: you hit, you take a hit.

—Atlas, **WEARING THE CAPE**


Investigate


The Investigate Skill is the skill of *finding things out* (just seeing something, like a clue at a crime scene, is covered by **Alertness**). If you're a journalist chasing a story, a detective chasing a lead, a security-specialist chasing a leak, or even a scientist chasing a theory, you use the Investigate Skill to get that piece of information you need.

 **Overcome:** Obstacles to Investigate reflect the difficulty of getting the needed information; the obscurity of the clue, the difficulty of translating the forgotten language of the ancient text you are reading. Time-pressure can also increase the Difficulty Level.

 **Create an Advantage:** As long as you are willing to take the time you can find out just about anything about anyone, discover nearly any detail about a place or object, or otherwise make up Aspects about nearly anything in the game world that your character could reasonably unearth. You could: eavesdrop on a conversation (or thoughts) to gather intel, search records (physically and through cyberspace), verify rumors, conduct surveillance, etc.


And knowledge is power.


 **Attack:** Investigate is not used to Attack.


 **React:** Investigate is not used to React.


Larceny

The Larceny Skill covers any activity (often criminal) that gets you into places you aren't supposed to be or helps you take stuff that isn't yours. This may involve physical breaking-and-entering, hacking your way in through cyberspace, or even getting past another telepath's mental defenses (a normal person won't have any). More mundanely, it's all about climbing walls and jimmying windows, cracking safes, and bypassing security—but it can also be about pickpocketing and shoplifting (don't do it). Again, describe your specialties—or just use a Character Aspect to declare yourself a Master Thief.

 **Overcome:** You use Larceny to overcome an Obstacle by theft or infiltration—basically all the activities listed above—with the GM opposing with the Difficulty Ratings of whatever obstacles you encounter.


 **Create an Advantage:** Larceny can also be used for reconnaissance, scoping out security and people-hazards before doing a job and coming up with **A PLAN AND PLAN B** (see Investigate about “Knowledge is Power.”). You can also use Larceny to examine the work of others to determine how it was done—or *build* a security system yourself!


 **Attack:** Larceny is not used to Attack.


 **React:** Larceny is not normally used to React (but may be if you are in position to detect someone *else's* use of Larceny).

Provoke

The Provoke Skill is about eliciting a strong and negative emotional response: anger, shame, fear. Using it requires a strong narrative justification. Are you trying to intimidate someone? Goading them into a rash verbal or physical response? Guilting them into changing course? Applying psychic pressure to directly instill negative emotions? Spinning horrific illusions? Hanging them upside down over the street? (Don't do that last one, but you get the picture.)

 **Overcome:** The Provoke Skill can be used to intimidate someone into giving up the information, surrendering, running for it, or any of the above—an easy way to resolve a situation with minions, henchmen, and other nameless NPCs. Against major NPCs and PCs, you'll need to win a Contest of Provoke vs. Willpower.

 **Create an Advantage:** You can create advantages representing momentary but powerful emotional states like **GUILT RIDDEN**, **TERRIFIED**, or **FREAKING FURIOUS**. These states don't usually last long and can be ended by any interrupting incident that makes you less terrifying or focuses the victim on something else, so use the Aspects while you've got them.


 **Attack:** You can use Provoke to make *Mental Attacks*, doing emotional or psychic harm to an opponent. If it's not a breakthrough power (magic, psi, etc.), the effect depends heavily on the circumstances—you need a *strong* narrative justification.


 **React:** You cannot React with Provoke.





Rapport

The Rapport Skill is all about making *positive* connections and eliciting positive emotions. It's the skill of being liked and trusted. Like Provoke, it requires narrative justification; you *act* in ways that elicit positive responses, or you create them with a superhuman power. Or alcohol.

 **Overcome:** Straightforwardly, Rapport can Overcome negative emotions and attitudes: burying suspicions, calming the enraged, convincing the guy with the anger issues and new breakthrough power that he doesn't want to hurt anybody. It's also about charming your way past the guard, gaining willing cooperation from unhelpful police, bringing your news station interviewer over onto your side. As with Provoke, it can often be a quick and unopposed Overcome vs. Difficulty Rating, but with PCs and major NPCs it may require an opposed roll or full Contest.


 **Create an Advantage:** With Rapport, creating advantages is all about setting up positive Aspects on individuals or crowds. A team-leader's pep talk can send the team into the fight with **LET'S GET THESE GUYS**. Making someone feel good can help them be **TALKATIVE** or **COOPERATIVE**.


 **Attack:** Rapport cannot cause harm, and so is not used as an Attack.


 **React:** You can use Rapport to Counter Provoke attempts on others if you are in a position to rally or calm them. You can also Counter any skill used to damage your reputation, the mood you've created, or attempts to make you look bad.


Shoot

Shoot is the ranged counterpart of Fight. Guns, bows, plasma-blasts, lightning bolts, kinetically flung steel marbles, thrown hexes, thrown cars...if the target is not in Fight Range then you will use the Shoot Skill when you try and hit him. It is important to note in your character description exactly what it is you shoot; as with Fight, if you have the Skill then you have the weapon—at least when it is narratively appropriate to be carrying it.

 **Overcome:** Shoot is seldom used to Overcome, but there are situations where you are shooting at a target in a non-Conflict situation and tracking damage is not an issue—shooting a lock or security light to overcome their **LOCKED DOOR** or **BRIGHTLY LIT** Aspects, for example. Overcome would also cover shooting contests.


 **Create an Advantage:** Shoot can be used to create all sorts of advantages, from Gun Fu moves like **SUDDENLY AND SURPRISINGLY ARMED**, to using powers to **BURN IT WITH FIRE!**, lay down **SUPPRESSING FIRE** to discourage others from moving through your targeted area, or otherwise create interesting Situation Aspects to provide advantages in your fight.


 **Attack:** You can make attacks from Shoot Range (and often from Fight Range). Aspects may justify longer ranges and Stunts can buy them.


 **React:** You do not normally Defend with Shoot, but in a firefight where you and your target are firing from behind cover, then shooting back to force your opponent to take wild shots instead of aiming could justify a Defend Action. You can similarly use it to Counter in some situations—countering an attacker's attempt to close with you or your teammates, or to move through an area in your range, by laying down suppressing fire.


Stealth

Stealth is all about getting into places undetected, whether you are physically infiltrating a villain's "lair" or telepathically slipping into a target's unshielded mind, and avoiding detection by others who may be looking for you or for evidence of your passing.

 **Overcome:** You can use Stealth to get past any situation that primarily depends on your not being detected. Sneaking past guards, hiding from pursuers, covering your tracks, are all part of the Stealth Skill.

 **Create an Advantage:** There are a lot of advantages to being able to Attack undetected or at least unseen, with Aspects like **COMPLETE SURPRISE** when opening fire from a secret position, or **HARD TO SEE** if your power (or sniper's ghillie suit) makes you hard to spot or follow visually.


 **Attack:** Stealth is not used to Attack.


 **React:** Stealth is not normally used to Defend, but can be used to Counter attempts to pinpoint or find you, as well as attempts to follow your tracks.





Survival

Survival is the art of staying alive in adverse environments and situations. This is a *broad* Skill that must be narrowed by the character description; the environment could be the Arctic, the Amazon, or the “mean streets,” while the adverse situation could be the 21st Century battlefield or general disaster situations (fire, flood, earthquake, an A Class hero-vs.-villain battle in or over your neighborhood...). Survival can be a Skill picked up through self-education, training, or rough experience, allowing its scope to expand with time. Cops and capes who develop “instincts” have it, often to a high degree. So do veteran criminals.

 **Overcome:** Survival can be rolled to Overcome physical obstacles between you and safety, navigate dangerous terrain and find food, supplies, contacts, and other resources that will help you, well, survive. It can be rolled to discover a hidden or developing threat in your area of experience, find help, and otherwise not get caught flat-footed and unprepared. There is some overlap with Alertness, Skills that allow you to detect dangers, and Contacts; if you have a choice, choose the highest-rated.

 **Create an Advantage:** Survival allows you to create Aspects based on your knowledge of the environment or danger; taking Actions like declaring that your hero spots the safest way past a dangerous slope (*I CAN READ THE GROUND*), preparing traps to capture or injure targets (*NASTY SURPRISE*), knows the best local people to contact (*I KNOW A GUY*), or knows the best way to find/take advantage of [fill in the blank]. Survival means experience with threats, be they environmental, animal, or human—allowing you to “read” the situation. A street-wise character could predict from visual and other cues when the thug is carrying a gun and looking for trouble, while a wilderness survivalist might know when the lion thinks he’s lunch or is protecting her young, or the weather is about to turn *interesting*. And to be **PREPARED**.

 **Attack:** Survival isn’t used for Attacks.


 **React:** Survival can be used to Defend against Shoot if you are aware of being shot at and can use the terrain to take cover. Survival can also be used to Counter attempts at Stealth in an environment you are familiar with.


Resources

Resources are used a bit differently than Attributes and Skills; see Using Resources (p.86 box). Attributes and Skills are largely internal, while Resources are largely *external* (the reason why you can more easily gain—but also *lose*—Resource ratings (see Resource Conflicts, p.134). Remember that you only need to *roll* to take an Action when your hero does something that a) has a chance of failure, and b) is important to the story. This applies equally to Resources.


Contacts

Contacts represents your network of useful acquaintances and your ability to leverage that network for information, expertise, even further contacts. Generating new contacts *outside* your existing network and unrelated to your field is more likely to require Survival or a combination of Investigate and Rapport, but Contacts might be able to help even there. The exact nature of your contacts should be evident from your hero background or even your Background Aspects.

 **Overcome:** You can use Contacts to overcome an Obstacle where a phone-call to the right person will open the door or get things done or provide the information you need. If you are a Merlin-Type, you might also use it to summon supernatural beings!

 **Create an Advantage:** Contacts also allows you to tap your connections for leverage: Contact Aspects like *I HAVE THE MAYOR ON SPEED-DIAL*, *I KNOW A GUY WHO KNOWS A GUY*, or *JOE OWES ME A STORY*. Contact Aspects are generally used to provide bonuses to Skills like Investigate, Rapport, Survival, and even Provoke, but they can also conjure up help in the form of experts with Skill Levels at least equaling your Contact Resource Level—higher levels on a Succeed with Style.


 **Attack:** Contacts isn’t used for Attacks (but you may know a guy...).


 **React:** Contacts can be used to defend against Resource Attacks, if your contacts would be useful in context of the situation. You can also use Contacts to counter attempts to use Deceive or Investigate on you—again if your contacts are appropriate.




Reputation

Reputation represents your hero's good name as a hero, including both his "hero-rep" and his reputation for probity, honesty, and general good character (a supervillain could invert this and use it to give his threats credibility...). Your hero's Reputation rating covers both how impressive his Reputation is and how widespread it is—in the modern media environment, *everybody* hears about the big ones.

 **Overcome:** You can use Reputation to gain cooperation from others in situations where your Reputation is relevant (for heroes this is mostly emergency situations).


 **Create an Advantage:** You can use Reputation to create advantages on NPCs such as **HE'S A FAN**, or lean on your rep for such Aspects as **ABOVE REPROACH** or **COMPLETE BADASS** to help you when using Rapport, Deceive, or Provoke.


 **Attack:** Reputation is only used for Resource Attacks.

 **React:** Reputation may be used to Defend against Resource Attacks or Counter attempts to Create Advantage based on lies or other attempts to "besmirch" your reputation.

Wealth

Wealth describes your hero's general level of material wealth and his ability to use it—an ancestral manor doesn't count as much "wealth" unless he wants to sell it (although he could lease it out or use it to hide his secret base/lair). Wealth is the resource you tap whenever money will solve or at least smooth the problem. New Equipment? Plane tickets? Extra Security? A good lawyer? Bail? Bribes? Get out that bank card.

 **Overcome:** Wealth is seldom used to *directly* Overcome a problem—exceptions might be truly substantial bribes, or auctions (a Contest). It can be used to flat-out buy that rare antiquity you need to get your hands on (or it might help you get it *quietly*).

 **Create an Advantage:** Wealth can provide advantages for coming Deceit, Provoke, or Rapport rolls, whether it's by paying bribes, giving gifts, or throwing impressive parties in the ancestral manor. At higher ratings, wealth can make statements like **I BUY AND SELL MEN LIKE YOU** or **I CAN HAVE YOU KILLED/SUED/PAINTED BLUE**. You can always use Wealth to declare that you have something needed on hand or can acquire it quickly, which will give you a Situation Aspect representing the item (**VERY GOOD LAWYER, BOX-SEATS METS TICKETS, UNREGISTERED GUN AND SILENCER, PRIVATE JET...**).

 **Attack:** Wealth can be used to make Resource Attacks.

 **React:** Wealth can be used to Defend against Resource Attacks.

USING RESOURCES

Resources work a bit differently than Attributes and Skills. Most significantly, Resources have a cost attached to performing Actions with them. **Whenever you use a Resource to perform an Action, you check the *highest available* Resource Stress Box; once all the boxes are filled, you can only tap a Resource by accepting a Resource Consequence.** This may feel very limiting, but remember that you only roll to attempt an Action when the outcome is in doubt; Resource Ratings also tell you when no roll is necessary!

The easiest way to think about it is in the context of wealth: a cape with Great (+4) Wealth is not going to need to roll the Fate Dice to buy a plane ticket, but she'd probably need to roll to quickly charter a private flight. Likewise, a hero with Fantastic (+6) Contacts is not going to need to roll to secure the services of a good lawyer, but will probably need to roll to call in a favor from the governor. Yes, the rich really are different; **high Resource Ratings act as permission to do a lot of things automatically.**

Resource Stress and Consequences shouldn't be tapped lightly; in addition to helping your hero accomplish things, they're used to protect her during Resource Conflicts (p.134) and help her deal with Scene Consequences (p.135). Without sufficient personal or team Resources and reserves of Resource Stress and Consequences, your hero can easily find herself in a Bad Place; her powers probably won't do her much good against legal challenges, public opinion, and powerful organizations willing to use money and connections to do her harm. Increasing Resources also means enhancing your hero's or team's ability to act on the larger national and even world stage. Reputation is the most important Resource for a hero, and as the campaign progresses, you should raise your hero's Resources to reflect her growing fame and the connections she has made during her adventures or public activities, even if her income remains the same or doesn't change that much (she could always be contributing her princely salary to charities and causes, behavior likely to further raise her Reputation and Contacts...).

Lastly, it's easier to gain Resource increases from Milestones than Attributes or Skills; which makes sense—your hero can get a pay raise or make new contacts or experience great publicity more quickly and easily than she can "raise her game." But there is a flip side to this easy advancement; if Resource Stress and Consequences (p.76) are inflicted to the point that she takes an Extreme Consequence, then Recovery requires sacrificing Resource levels! The only way to regain sacrificed levels is to earn them back in the normal course of Milestones and advancement (p.134).





BARLOW'S GUIDE TO SUPERPOWERS



We come at last to the heart of any superhero RPG: the superpowers. Here we will cover Power Aspects, Power Skills, and Power Stunts. While this gamebook contains only twelve fully detailed (but still expandable) Power Sets, these tools can be used to create any Power Set you can imagine.

Creating Power Aspects

As with all other Aspects, the Power Aspect sets up permissions and denials as well as ways it can be invoked or compelled. It will also let you know what superhuman Attributes it may require, how Skills allow you to use the power, and what Stunts are available for the power. That's quite a list, so let's break it down.

Permission and Denial

Aspect permission and denial works just the same for Power Aspects; the description of the power encapsulated in the Power Aspect is a set of "special rules" for that power. Atlas-Types and many Mentalist-Types fly (permission), invisible heroes can use Stealth in "plain sight" (permission), a Triton-Type (which I just made up) will be able to breath both air and water, swim through the water at great speed, and dive to any depth. A gunman can't even try and harm an Atlas-Type unless he's firing something that can penetrate military-grade armor (denial), and can't take aim at an Invisible Man unless he finds some way to detect his location first (denial). None of these permission/denial powers require additional Skills or Stunts to justify them; see the Power-Type Templates (p.95) for more permission/denial examples.

Invokes and Compels

All Power Aspects can be invoked for a bonus in the right circumstances; the **ATLAS-TYPE** Power Aspect can be invoked for a bonus to any use of strength, senses, or toughness. The **PHANTOM** Power Aspect can't be invoked to make the breakthrough *more* invisible, but it can add a bonus to Stealth or other activities that benefit from invisibility (like Fighting). Few Power Aspects come with serious compels: Atlas-Types suffer from relative sensory sensitivity; Triton-Types could have a problem with "drying out" if they're out of the water too long.

Power Attributes

The peak of merely human Attributes and Skills is Superb (+5), and heroes will normally start with only one Attribute, Skill, or Resource at +5. But some Power Aspects justify permission for a Superhuman Attribute or multiple peak-Attributes. The most obvious are the Atlas and Ajax-Types, but the Paragon-Type also allows for boosted Attributes and others may too.

Power Class

When you are finished, your Power Class (A, B, C, or D) will be part of your Power Aspect. To possess a Power Class, you *must fulfill the requirements of the Power Class*; for example, an A Class Atlas-Type must have a Mythic (+9) Physique to qualify. Other Power Class requirements might be Weapon Ratings or specific Power Stunts.



NEW RULE: POWER CLASS ADVANTAGE

In the Post-Event World, differences between Power Classes are great enough that an A Class breakthrough will have a significant advantage over even a B Class breakthrough of the same or similar Power-Type when matched in a straight up power-vs.-power fight. The advantage is big enough that Atlas matched Astra, an A Class Atlas-Type but still a probationary trainee, against Gantry, a B Class Ajax-Type and war veteran, for her first real fight! (Admittedly, Gantry was drunk.)

In Exchanges, Contests, and Conflicts between two breakthroughs of the same or similar Power Types (as in the Astra vs. Gantry example, or two Psi-Types engaged in a mutual mental struggle), the breakthrough with the higher Power Class gains a Scale Benefit. When his Action is opposed by the weaker breakthrough, a Tie in any Action (including React) against a lesser-Class power will be treated as a Success, and a Success as a Success with Style (he will gain the Boost, second Free Invoke, or whatever is given by the Action).

The rule also applies to the same situation between breakthroughs and unpowered humans, where the match is based on Attributes (such as Athleticism or Physique). Unpowered humans possess the same Attributes, just not on the same scale—even a D Class Ajax-Type will physically overwhelm the strongest unpowered opponent in a match of strength.

Power Skills

Many Power-Types (such as the Atlas-Type and Paragon-Type) don't require specific Skills. But others, such as the Kinetic-Type, will use one or more of the thirteen Skills to express their power.

As previously discussed, Skills do not define specific skill-sets (like Computer Programming or Kung Fu); rather, Skills describe *what* you are trying to do and leave *how* to your Character Aspects (with the Aspect permissions that they grant) and character description. This extends to the Power Aspect; one or more of the thirteen Skills will work just fine with powers much of the time, no serious work needed. For example, a lightning-throwing breakthrough would simply use the Shoot Skill (likely modified by Power Stunts).

Even so, it is a good idea to define what each of a useful Skill's Actions do in the context of your power. Sometimes this means renaming the Skill to create a specialized Power Skill. Going back to your Power Aspect, let's see how it is done:

- Describe your Power Aspect, with attention to things it allows you to do.
- Pick the Skills that cover the things you can do with your power.
- Make sure you and the GM are on the same page with the Actions your powers are able to take, and what Attribute Bonuses help them.
- If you need additional Actions for a specific Skill, purchase them as Stunts (p.91).


Let's look at an example of applying your Power Aspect to your Skills, step by step.

POWER ASPECT: FORCE FIELD MANIPULATION.

You have the power to generate and manipulate powerful luminous force fields as a projection of your own personal aura. You may change their density, malleability, topography, and even opacity to create numerous effects, one of the few limits being that the fields remain physically attached to you no matter how far you spread them out. You can wield your variable fields both aggressively and defensively, within the limits of your will and your imagination's ability to shape them.

So, which Skills should you build it on? *Build* may be the proper word, since the fundamental effect of the power is the ability to create all sorts of forms with varying properties out of thin air. So you'll start with the Engineering Skill, focusing on the making, part of Making, Fixing, and Breaking Things. Engineering conjures images of a lab or shops, and is not normally used in a Conflict, but it allows both Overcome and Create an Advantage Actions, so we can make it fit. It helps to actually re-state the description of a Skill's Actions when doing this.


First, focusing on making/breaking, your hero can use his fields as leverage to go over or through obstacles. He can lift himself over obstacles by building up field layers beneath him or by thinning the density of his surrounding fields until they are lighter than air and can float him up, up, and away. He can go through obstacles by wedging his fields in the cracks or joints and then expanding them (the way plants can crack rocks with their roots, but much faster), or by battering against them (with proper leverage). Getting fancier, he could layer his fields and change the layers' relationship to each other to create dynamic and moving shapes like fans to blow away smoke, or air-impermeable sheets of fields to smother fires with. So:

 **Overcome:** *You can manipulate your generated fields to lift or float yourself over obstacles or dig or lever your way through them. You can use oscillating fields to blow away smoke or create smothering layered fields to extinguish fires. Other imaginative ways of using variable field forms and properties to Overcome are certainly possible.*



5: Barlow's Guide – Power Aspects

What about creating advantages? Your hero can use varying forms to create all sorts of things, from solid barriers to shock-absorbing airbags to lighter-than-air balloons to weaves of force that allow him to immobilize opponents or hide himself from sight. So:

 **Create an Advantage:** *You can create shapes and objects that can block movement, form substantial barriers, bind targets, and shield you from sight (although your fields are themselves unmistakable). You can even create variform “wings” for flight! Creative uses are legion, with the Aspect's Difficulty Rating attached to Overcoming your created Aspects being no greater than your Skill Rating (you may attach any Free Invokes or Boosts your field-forms may have acquired during creation).*

So there we have the Force Field Manipulation power applied to the Engineering Skill—renamed as the new **Variable Field Projection** Skill. But what about Attack and React? A force field is defensive almost by definition, and can you use it to *fight*?

In the Fight Skill description it states that Fight covers the use of bare fists, weapons, and even powers at close range. Fast extension of his fields to allow striking and even wrestling and grappling certainly falls within the Fight Skill. If he doesn't have time to generate complete barriers (Create an Advantage with Engineering Skill) he should be able to selectively harden points in his surrounding field to block Fight Attacks he can see coming. This will allow him to Attack and Defend with the Fight Skill, using his Alertness Bonus rather than Athleticism since he directs the fields with his mind. He will use Willpower rather than Physique to determine the strength of his fields.

Since these are all normal applications of Fight Skill Attack/React Actions, he decides to simply record it as Fight on his Skill list. After some additional thought, he also decides to use one of his two Background Aspects to buff it—the **VETERAN VARIFIELD FIGHTER** Aspect! This way, if he's in a desperate fight and has the Fate Points to spend, he can invoke both his Power Aspect and the Background Aspect for an added +4—or a desperate reroll after already invoking his Power Aspect!

NOTE: this process extends further than just powers. If you were making a non-powered computer hacker supreme, you could give him an Aspect like **GOD OF THE MACHINE** and describe how he uses Larceny to break into secure systems and suck up data, Stealth when avoiding electronic detection, Deceive to lay false trails or create fake identities through electronic records, Investigate to track somebody's electronic footprints, and so on.

But our player isn't finished: he decides he also wants his hero to have a good chance of blocking Shoot Attacks—something Fight doesn't cover. But he doesn't see his fields as being able to reach so far as to justify the Shoot Skill (and doesn't want to dedicate another Skill Rating to his power) so he expands his Fight Skill's React applications with a **Stunt** instead...

Power Stunts

Each Power-Type listed here comes with a menu of Power Stunts. Some of these Stunts are a requirement of the Power-Type; others are optional and reflect variations of experience or powers within the type.

*For example, Atlas (p.36) and Astra (p.50) are both A Class Atlas-Types, but only Atlas has the **MIGHTY** Stunt—reflecting the fact that he represents the peak of his Power Class.*

There is no definitive Stunt list; you can “choose off the menu” as it were, or make your own. The easiest way to create your own Stunt is to take an existing Stunt that does what you want it to do and just rename it to suit your own power concept or character. For example, **NINJA VANISH** (Appendix B, p. 197) could be renamed **CLOAKING FIELD**. It is important to remember that, while the mechanical effects will remain the same, by changing the name you may be changing the Narrative Permissions that apply to the Stunt.

If you create your own Stunts, here's what is important to know: *Every Stunt gives you something and costs something.*

THE DEFAULT RULE

What if your force-field projecting hero finds that he needs to fight with his fists rather than his power? His Fight Skill is here assumed to deal with his power—not with unarmed combat or fighting with batons, swords, Tasers, etc. In a situation like this, he must resort to the Default Rule.

THE DEFAULT RULE: *Treat any use of a Skill that is not covered in your hero's Character Aspects or Skill description as if it had a Mediocre (+0) Skill Rating.*

In other words, when using his fists, he fights like he has no Fight Skill at all. If you want him to have some “normal” martial arts training, then you need to give him a second Fight Skill to cover it (in which case you would probably want to rename the Skill he uses for his power something like Variable Field Fighting).

The same applies for Skills like Shoot, Stealth, etc.; if you use them for your powers, non-powered uses will be attempted at the Mediocre (+0) Skill Rating if they can be attempted at all. You aren't assumed to have the weapons or tools needed to use default Skills without your powers, and so won't have what you need to use Skills like Aid, Engineering, and Shoot in a lot of situations.



That might sound stunningly obvious, but at minimum **1 Stunt always costs 1 Starting Fate Point**. That means that, by buying the Stunt, you have given up one SFP that you could have used during a Session to invoke an Aspect for a +2 boost (or Hero Dice reroll) when you need it. Each Stunt you choose or create *must be worth that foregone* +2. If it's worth more, you need to pay more.

USE STUNTS TO:

Add a new Action to an Attribute, Skill, or Resource.

Grant a Stunt Bonus to an Action.

Raise Superhuman Attributes.

Buy Weapon/Armor Ratings

Create a special rule.

PAY FOR MORE POWERFUL STUNTS BY:

Spending an *additional* SFP when you buy the Stunt.

Spending a Fate Point to use the Stunt.

Limiting the Stunt's use to once per Scene, or even once per Session.

Creating an unfavorable Aspect when the Stunt is used.

Add a New Action to an Attribute, Skill, or Resource

The simplest use of a Stunt is to attach an Action that would normally happen under one Character Rating onto another. Alternatively, you may attach a new *Application* of an Action onto a Character Rating; for example, a projective telepath might be able to both manipulate emotions *and* create mental illusions only his targets can see. Normally you might cover those with the Rapport for the emotion manipulation and Deceive for the illusions—both of them Create an Advantage Actions—but if you wanted to create a single Telepathic Projection Skill then you could start with Rapport for the emotion manipulation and then switch Create an Advantage with illusions from Deceive to Rapport. Thus, spending 1 SFP gives you two very different Applications of the same Action.

*Going back to our force field manipulating hero, his player also wants him to have the ability to Defend against Shoot Attacks with his Fight Skill. For 1 SFP, he creates a **POWERFUL POINT-DEFENSE** stunt that allows the hero to use his fields to try and block or deflect incoming Shoot Attacks with a Fight Skill Defense Action. (In this case, he definitely wants to rename the Skill Variable-Field Fighting).*

ADDING ACTIONS AND BALANCE

Players and GMs should be careful when using Stunts to add or switch Actions. The most dangerously unbalancing use is to attach an Attack or React Action to an Attribute that has been boosted by a Power Aspect. For example, adding an Attack Action to an A Class Atlas-Type's Mythic (+9) Physique would break the game—he would have a +9 Attack before invoking an Aspect, making him almost impossible to defend against! The GM has absolute veto over any proposed Stunt he feels harms game balance.

Grant a Stunt Bonus to an Action

Another use of Stunts is to give a +2 Bonus to a *specific use of an Attribute, Skill, or Resource*. Pick one Action to receive the +2 Bonus, or pick two or more Actions united by a theme (not necessarily in the same Attribute, Skill, or Resource) to receive +1 Bonuses. The generic template for this is:

You get a +2 to [Attribute/Skill/Resource] when attempting to [Action] using your [fill in the blank].

These bonuses will always cost 1 SFP to buy. Narrowing the *circumstances* in which you use the bonus compensates for being able to use it without spending a Fate Point. Some examples:

SUPERSENSES. *You get a +1 to Alertness when attempting to Overcome, Create Advantage, or React with your heightened sight and hearing.*

MENTAL FORTRESS. *You gain a +2 to Willpower when Reacting to psychic assaults or manipulation.*

Raise Superhuman Attributes

This is the only way to take Attributes above Superb (+5). Raising an Attribute this way costs **2 SFP/level**, and requires Power Aspect permission. Once set during hero creation, Superhuman Attributes are virtually never changed (especially if it would change your Power Class). There are, however, plenty of Stunts that can take Attributes above peak human ability for specific Actions, such as **ABSOLUTE SPEED** (p.106).

Buy Weapon and Armor Ratings

Defense is a use of Skill, and sometimes it makes sense that you have protection that doesn't rely on a die roll (for example, if you can't Defend against Shoot but you're wearing body armor). And while the power to take a hit is good, an extra layer of armor never hurt anybody. Likewise, Big Freaking Guns usually don't always increase your chances of *hitting* so much as they elevate



5: Barlow's Guide – Power Aspects

the damage you do to a new level, and of course two Superhuman Attributes (Physique and Willpower) can make you naturally tougher and harder-hitting, physically or mentally.

To reflect this, there are two special ratings: Weapon Ratings and Armor Ratings. These Stunts aren't linked to a Character Rating. They cost 1 SFP per level, and can be stacked. Remember the following things about Weapon/Armor Ratings.

WEAPON RATINGS AND COLLATERAL DAMAGE

High Weapon Ratings can be powerful action-enders; a single successful shot from an A Class Projector-Type can inflict 4 Stress and a Mild and Moderate Consequence to a previously unstressed hero! Armor Ratings tends to be weaker than Weapon Ratings, only partly mitigating the hits. But there is a downside to a hero throwing around high-WR hits: Collateral Damage (p.111).

If a hero makes an Attack Action and misses, then depending on the nature of his attack the GM may be justified in creating a negative Situation Aspect—sometimes even if the attack succeeds (or especially if the attack succeeds)! If the GM does this, he may also be perfectly justified in using the Weapon Rating when assigning a Difficulty Rating to the Collateral Damage.

Remember, WR 6-8 is equivalent to heavy infantry or field artillery fire; damage to the local environment is a perfectly reasonable consequence.

- Weapon and Armor Ratings take effect *after* you determine success or failure with your dice roll.
- 1 SFP will buy you a Weapon Rating 4 or an Armor Rating 2.
- Weapon and Armor Ratings can be stacked (the GM is free to put a limit on how high).
- Weapon/Armor Ratings can be split and mixed with each other and with Stunt Bonuses.

*Example: Your hero is wearing the latest DARPA-made suit of light powered infantry armor (with weapon and computer-targeting enhancements). You spend 2 SFP to give your **DARPA ARMOR** Stunt an AR2, WR2, and +1 to Attack with Shoot Skill when using its targeting-assist function. Breaking it down, that's one SFP for an AR2, plus a second SFP for half of a WR4 and half of a +2 Skill Bonus.*

Note: Civilian weapons don't normally get more deadly than Weapon Rating 2 unless you're packing something like an H&K Nitro Express (with armor-piercing rounds you could punch an A Class Atlas-Type with it, but it's not a rifle you can shorten and hide in your pants). Most handguns and long guns (rifles, shotguns, assault weapons, etc.) will provide a split Weapon Rating 2 /+1 Skill, with the long gun giving you a Distant Range (beyond normal Shoot Range) Attack Stunt for a second Starting Fate Point.

Create a Special Rule

Lastly, you can use Stunts to create special rules that reflect your superhuman power, the way you use your Skills, or any other Aspect of your hero. We have used one "special rule" Stunt in an example so far; Minuteman's **CAN'T STOP ME** Stunt in *A Day Unlike Any Other* (p.65). For other examples, see The Harlequin's **BOUNCE RANGE** (p.38), Blackstone's **"NOTHING UP MY SLEEVES."** (p.40), and Nimbus' **LIGHT SPEED** (p.46). These are often purely narrative effects, completely new abilities as shown with the Sentinels' Stunts above. Whatever Stunts you build, remember to name them! Named Stunts really personalize your cape and that once-per-Session Stunt sounds much better as **"I'M ALL IN."** or **POWER RESERVE**. There are many more examples of Stunts creating special rules in the Power-Type Templates (p.95-108) and in Appendix B: The Other Stunt List (p.196-197). Two more examples of Stunts creating special rules:

HEALING HANDS. A successful Aid roll counts as a successful Recovery roll made by the subject. Once per session, you can reduce someone else's Consequence by one level of Severity (Severe to Moderate, Moderate to Mild, Mild to nothing at all) by Succeeding on a Willpower roll with a Difficulty Rating of Fair (+2) for a Mild Consequence, Good (+4) for Moderate, or Great (+6) for Severe. **Common Power Uses:** Dragon, Mentalist, Merlin.

STRONG ADVANTAGE. When you use your Skill to Create an Advantage, increase your new Aspect's Difficulty Rating by +2. (This is especially useful for summoning.) **Common Power Uses:** Kinetic, Mentalist, Merlin.

Spend an Additional SFP When You Buy the Stunt

The two most common cases where an additional SFP is payed are raising Attributes and creating composite Stunts (look at Raising Superhuman Attributes and the WR/Skill Bonus example in Buy Weapon and Armor Ratings). For other Stunts, especially Special Rule Stunts, it's probably best to use another means of paying for it.

Spend a Fate Point to use the Stunt

If a Stunt is so powerful that it should be able to be used all the time, a simple added cost is to require a Fate Point to use it. However, if a Stunt also costs an FP to use, *then it must do something more than just create a one-shot +2 bonus or a favorable Aspect.*



You can already do that by spending an FP to invoke an Aspect for the bonus or declare a story detail, no Stunt required! The best way to think about it is as a bonus or permission plus.

Examples: When you spend the FP to invoke an opponent's Character Aspect or Consequence, you gain a +3 instead of a +2. Or when your Stunt creates an advantageous Aspect, it come with one or two Free Invokes attached to it.

Limit the Stunt's use to once per Scene/Session

Some Stunts feel like they should be available if you need them, but require a “recharge” or a waiting period before using them again; the bigger the Stunt, the longer the wait. If you're going to limit a Stunt to once per Scene, then make it a Stunt you're likely to want to use every Scene (or every Conflict Scene, anyway)—something with punch but not a Scene-changer. Once per Session is a more significant limit, so you can make the Stunt more powerful, enough to dominate your tactics for a Scene. Some examples:

Once per Scene, invoke [Aspect] for free.

Once per Session, raise [Skill] by +2 for the duration of the Scene.

Once per Session, gain AR4 vs. Attacks (either physical or mental) for the duration of the Scene.

Create an Unfavorable Aspect When the Stunt is Used

Succeed or fail, your use of the Stunt creates an unfavorable Aspect that affects your part in the Scene. It could be a personal Situation Aspect like Tapped Out, an Aspect on the scene like Now Everything's on Fire, or even a Minor Consequence like Exhausted. This makes perfect sense for a Stunt like Raise your WR for the shot by +8!

Gear as Stunts

The easiest way to model gear is to treat it as a Stunt attached to the gear you describe. As with regular Stunts, Gear Stunts can allow you to apply a new Action to a Skill, get a +1 or +2 with one or two Actions, or use a special rule.

VULCAN-FORGED BLADE. This superscience-alloy sword with its razor sharp and unbreakable edge gives you a +2 to Attack with your Fight Skill when you wield it.

OMNI-VISION GOGGLES. You can “see” to any distance within range of your normal vision, ignoring objects/barriers in between. Your omni-sight only shows shapes so you can't use it to read through a wall, but you see objects at varying ranges as overlays and can perceive the density of objects (metal looks denser than flesh, etc.), allowing you to ignore most obscuring Aspects (likely including **INVISIBLE**).

M16A4 ASSAULT RIFLE. You get a +1 to Attack per target, even when dividing your Attack among multiple targets.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS VS. POWER STUNTS

When designing a new Power-Type, it can sometimes be difficult to decide whether a cool ability is a Permission covered by the Power Aspect or a Stunt you should pay for. If you're not sure, ask “**Does this require a rule change?**” If it does, it's a Stunt. Let's look at some examples:

WAYS OF GETTING THERE.

Under the **ATLAS-TYPE** Power Aspect, the power of flight is an Aspect Permission that provides a few obvious benefits, like ignoring some Situation Aspects that are obstacles to others. *The power to fly means being able to fly over barriers*; the **ATLAS-TYPE** Power Aspect trumps the **WALL** Situation Aspect if the hero's player can simply say “I'm flying over the wall.” But movement is still a function of the Athleticism Attribute, so for the Atlas-Type to determine movement using his Physique Attribute instead requires a Stunt.

Some Mentalist-Types can teleport. The **JUMPER** Power Aspect would allow the porter, like the flyer, to ignore many obstacles; he could even Dodge area attacks (porting out of the way of a bomb-blast) within a Scene. Stunts like **CAN'T STOP ME!** (see Speedster-Type) or **BLINK!** (the ability to Defend against Shoot with your Fight Skill) would still be needed to bend the rules for Actions taken.

SUPERSENSES.

Most supersenses will be covered by Power Aspect Permissions. Again, the Atlas-Type is the classic example, but a telepath might be able to “hear” mental noise and therefore “see” the minds around him and even know something about their state (sleeping, terrified, etc.) on a successful Alertness roll. He could identify a mind he knew even if he couldn't physically see the person

INVULNERABILITY.

A lot of superhumans are flat-out invulnerable to many things. Atlas and Ajax-Types can ignore all physical attacks that don't rise to a loosely defined high level of force. An immaterial breakthrough can often ignore physical damage, but can't inflict it either! It really comes down to game balance and the narrative; heroes whose powers give them immunity to a narrower class of harm—for example immunity to heat or to chemical/nerve-agent attacks that bypass normal superhuman toughness— can still be attacked in commonly available ways.



Power Scale in the Post-Event World

Being more concerned with drama than crunchy realism, Fate System games do not typically use absolute measurements for determining the effects of powers (for more on why read *Character Ratings and Specific Measurements*, p.150). This is because Character Ratings, Difficulty Ratings, and Weapon/Armor Ratings, are not measurements of absolute quantities or qualities; they are measures of the *effect on the narrative*. It is a subtle but very important distinction. However, a few benchmarks need to be noted so that players have an idea of the superhuman scale of the setting.

Remember the Ladder (p.61), which puts the peak of human ability at **Superb (+5)**—the rating that represents the strongest, fastest, most intelligent, or supremely skilled human being without breakthrough powers. Above that, you have this:

POWER SCALE

+10	GODLIKE	Ultra Class breakthroughs.
+9	MYTHIC	A Class peak ability.
+8	LEGENDARY	B Class peak ability.
+7	EPIC	C Class peak ability.
+6	FANTASTIC	D Class peak ability.

ULTRA AND OMEGA CLASS: ULTIMATE COSMIC POWER

No hero is going to be higher than A Class unless you are playing a very different game, but if you are playing an A Class Campaign then your heroes may occasionally meet an Ultra Class threat (+10 to +11). Use Ultra Class threats sparingly and carefully; an Ultra Class Ajax-Type might be stoppable—an Ultra Class Merlin Type might not be! When matching Ultra Class threats against A Class and below, it is important to remember the *Power Class Advantage* (p.89).

Beyond Ultra Class is *Omega Class*. An Omega Class breakthrough wields *truly* godlike, even cosmic power within his sphere, and they are not on the Ladder; a rating is generally superfluous since they never need to roll the Fate Dice to use their cosmic powers—whatever their limits are, if they are within them, *it happens*.

A telepath might generally be able to effect groups that fit into spaces of the same size—but if it's an especially potent/destructive power then the GM may want to seriously shrink that upper limit! Thus an A Class Telepath could possibly sway the emotions of a stadium full of people but couldn't take full mental control of them and turn them into a mentally enslaved army. An A Class Aerokinetic might be able to control a stadium-sized volume of air, but an A Class Telekinetic couldn't lift the stadium! (He'd be more likely to go by an Atlas-Type's weight limit.) So long as both the player and the GM have a good idea of the limits of the power, that's the important thing. Most often what really matters in a Conflict is the Attribute or Skill Rating; the crowd numbers or area of effect is simply a descriptive addition.

Keep in mind that none of these are absolutes, nor do they translate from one situation to another. For example, an A-Class Atlas Type may have a Mythic (+9) Physique, but that does not mean he can throw something to the horizon! The relative ratings given are intended to guide the GM in determining whether or not to grant permission, and as a guide for determining Difficulty Ratings on the fly. You should be guided by 1.) Your Power Description, and 2.) What you consider the limits of superhuman possibility in the setting.

In Wearing the Cape, Chakra uses her mental powers and Aid Skill to contest a controlling mentalist's hold on the minds of thousands of rioting concert-goers (treated as a single large group), spread out over several city blocks—something only possible for an A Class Mentalist-Type.

Applying the Ladder and Power Classes to some general situations, here are some relative statements for comparison purposes.

Weight. See the -2 to +10 Ladder description on p.59.

Speed. Fantastic (+6) Speed is Cheetah-speed (accelerates 4x as fast as the fastest human sprinter, top speed 75 miles an hour). Legendary (+8) Speed is bullet-train speed. Godlike (+10) Speed is supersonic flight speeds. (But for space-traveling breakthroughs, absolute speeds will be much higher.)

Damage. Expressed purely in terms of Weapon Ratings, melee weapons (nightstick, bat, sword, etc.) do 2WR, civilian firearms (pistols, shotguns) do 2-4 WR, military firearms (from battlefield rifles to anti-armor rockets) do 4-8 WR, and battlefield artillery does 8-12 WR! Yes, there is overlap, and high Skill can inflict as much damage (when narratively appropriate) as heavy weapons.

Range. Skill Rating/Power Class may determine just how far Shoot or Distant Range extends. All else being equal, an A Class Projector should have a longer Range than a B, C, or D Class Projector (possibly a “to the horizon” range, or just the limits of reasonable accuracy). In extreme cases, “Shoot Range” might mean any distance within line of sight, while “Distant Range” might mean over-the-horizon!

Area and Numbers Affected. This one can be hugely different from power to power, even with the same ratings! The GM could decide that a D Class (+6) Kinetic's area-effect power might be able to fill a classroom, a C Class a school cafeteria, a B Class an auditorium, and an A Class (+9) a stadium.



Power-Type Templates

The following Power-Type templates have been completely worked up, with suggested variations. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but should provide plenty of inspiration.

Ajax-Types

The Ajax-Type is the most common breakthrough type in the Post-Event world. Ajax-Type breakthroughs have had their strength, endurance, and sheer physical toughness enhanced to superhuman levels; the most powerful Ajax-Types can go head-to-head with *tanks*. An A Class Ajax-Type couldn't pick up a tank unless he was standing on a surface strong enough to support him, but he could certainly destroy its mobility and ability to fire before opening it up to get to the crew.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Ajax-Types can simply ignore damage caused by weapons not designed to penetrate military-grade armored vehicles, and from fists and muscle-powered weapons wielded by anyone of less than superhuman strength (+5 Physique or less).

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Ajax-Types regularly Invoke their Power Aspects to lift or move things at the limits of their strength, unleash mighty attacks, or take powerful hits. Ajax-Types can be compelled to create problems caused by forgetting their own strength, or to create Collateral Damage if they miss (or hit) targets.

POWER STUNTS: All of an Ajax-Type's Power Stunts center around his strength, toughness, and ability to heal.

SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE. Spend 2 Starting Fate Points for each +1 to your Physique Rating when building your hero. (At least one level of this Stunt is *required*.)

TOP OF YOUR CLASS. When you Invoke your Power Aspect you get a +3 instead of a +2. (This Stunt is often used to distinguish a breakthrough at the top of his Power Class.)

MIGHTY. Add a +2 to Physique when using Overcome to try and lift heavy loads or break through barriers.

CHARGE. You may charge in from Shoot to Fight Range and Attack as a single Action, gaining a +2 to Attack when you do.

SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY. Spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical Stress taken during the Scene.

HARD AS NAILS. This Stunt requires **SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY**. You *automatically* succeed at your Recovery Action for Physical Consequences short of Extreme, and get a +2 bonus to recover from Extreme Consequences. Also, once per Session you may change a Severe Physical Consequence to a Moderate Physical Consequence (if the Consequence Slot is available), or treat a Moderate Physical Consequence as a Mild Physical Consequence when Recovering.

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Since an Ajax-Type is defined by his Physique Attribute, a D Class Ajax-Type will have a Fantastic (+6) Physique, a C Class will have an Epic (+7) Physique, a B Class a Legendary (+8) Physique, and A Class a Mythic (+9) Physique. Remember the Power Class Advantage (p.89)! Ajax-Types will constantly be matching themselves in head-to-head fights with other bruisers of lesser and greater power classes.

VARIATIONS: A majority of Ajax-Type breakthroughs present no additional changes, but some of them find their bodies physically transformed by their breakthrough into something other than flesh and bone! Some of these transformed Ajax-Types can transform back; others can't. If your Ajax-Type hero is a "Transforming Ajax-Type" then to switch forms during a scene you must spend 1 Fate Point and Invoke your Power Aspect (it's a good idea to track which form you are in with a Situation Aspect such as **TRANSFORMED** or **UNPOWERED** Form). Note that a physical transformation can create new permissions, denials, invokes, and compels; for example, an Ajax-Type formed of living metal is going to find swimming impossible and may be vulnerable to magnetism...

Even "normal" looking Ajax-Types will sometimes find themselves transformed into specimens of obvious physical strength (breakthroughs are shaped by human psychology, and the Mr. or Ms. Universe look is *expected* to come with superhuman strength). If they can change back, then maintaining secret identities (or just going unnoticed in public when they want anonymity) becomes easier—but it can leave them vulnerable to "ambushes" that hit them in their unpowered forms.

The Ajax-Type (commonly called Bricks) almost invariably present as bulking muscle-men and women, but also as humans transformed into stone or steel or into "mutated" and exotic forms.

—BARLOW'S GUIDE TO SUPERHUMANS





Atlas-Types

Almost as physically powerful as the Ajax-Type, able to fly and possessing superhuman senses, the Atlas-Type breakthrough resembles one of the most common Pre-Event comic book superhero archetypes (they're often called "flying bricks"). A strong enough Atlas-Type can pick up a tank and fly off with it, although he'll be flying pretty slowly. An A Class Atlas-Type can race military jets.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Atlas-Types share Ajax-Types' physical near-invulnerability. Atlas-Types can also fly without effort, and can see in the dark with their ability to see into the infrared wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum (they see heat radiation).

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Atlas-Types share all of the Ajax-Type's Invokes and Compels; additionally, Atlas-Type's can invoke their Power Aspect to push their flying speed and boost their senses—and they are vulnerable to invokes and compels targeting their heightened senses (especially surprise flash and bang assaults).

POWER STUNTS: Atlas-Types may choose all of the Power Stunts available to Ajax-Types. Additionally, they can choose the following Stunts:

YOUR OWN MISSILE. Your movement (but not dodge) depends upon Physique rather than Athleticism when flying, and you may use Physique to Attack barriers you are attempting to fly through (and potentially take damage, as per the Drive Skill, [p.81](#)).

SUPERSENSES. You get a +1 to Alertness when attempting to Overcome, Create Advantage, or React with your heightened sight and hearing.

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Atlas-Types match Ajax-Types in rating Power Class based on Physique. However, there are no D Class Atlas-Types (the weakest "flying bricks" are a match for C Class Ajax-Types).

VARIATIONS: There are no significant variations adding extra powers and so forth, and researchers studying superhuman psychology believe that the Atlas-Type archetype may be so strongly fixed in the public mind that flashy variations just don't happen. One common variation is the Atlas-Type who gains a Mr. Universe muscled form when he experiences his breakthrough! Atlas-Types don't "muscle up" as often as Ajax-Types do, which means you can't always tell someone is an Atlas-Type by looking at them. A small percentage of transformed Atlas-Types can actually switch back and forth between buffed powered and normal unpowered forms—very handy for keeping a secret identity!

POWERED ARMOR. The superscience of Verne-Tech has been applied to duplicating superhuman powers and one common result is Powered Armor, which can give normal humans Atlas and Ajax-Type powers. If you want to go with this type of hero, simply take **POWERED ARMOR** as the Power Aspect. Additional compels can be malfunctions or power drains, and an additional Power Stunt might be to, when you take physical Stress or Consequences, spend a Fate Point to earmark it as damage to your Armor (which the Verne-Type who built it can repair with an Overcome). Powered Armor cannot match full A Class strength and toughness, but will often compensate with extra Vern-Tech attacks (such as a Projector-Type's, below).

Dragon-Types

Disciples of the Eastern martial arts styles, especially styles such as Pa Kua Chuan (Bagua) that focus on developing and channeling one's chi, train and toughen the body (a stressful and often painful activity) and strengthen the spirit (using passive and active meditation-techniques). Breakthroughs are known to happen under both conditions, and with their intense focus such breakthroughs are almost always Dragon-Types (named after *The Dragon*, San Francisco's most famous cape).

Dragon-Type breakthroughs, more commonly called *chi users*, can raise and channel chi in exactly the ways described by the stories. They can strengthen their bodies and minds through balancing their inner chi, and project forceful chi to give power to their strikes, armor themselves, and even subtly influence others through interaction with their chi.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Subtle manipulation of chi allows its users to act as Mentalists to a certain extent; they can attempt Provoke or Rapport without words, influencing others through their own chi, and they can detect other “mental” forces (even magical and psychic forces traditionally unrelated to chi) with Alertness. Dragons are masters of *qinggong*, the power of chi-assisted movement that allows them to ignore many environmental Situation Aspects; they can move swiftly and lightly past obstacles and across broken surfaces with an ease parkour disciples envy, leap as far as a normal person might run in the same Action, and perform gravity-defying moves such as gliding on water surfaces, running up high walls and across treetops.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Like Paragons, Chi users can Invoke their Power Aspect to boost *any* of their Attributes. Most chi user's extreme dedication and martial arts code leads to many opportunities for Compels—from issued challenges to restrictive vows and requests for aid that they cannot ignore.

POWER STUNTS: The stories ascribe all kinds of powers to chi masters, many of which can be covered by the Invokes and permissions that go with the Power Aspect. Others are best taken as Power Stunts, and if the GM wants to differentiate between different martial arts traditions he may decide to draw up a list of Chi Power Stunts appropriate to each. These are just a few:

DANCE WITH BULLETS. Your chi-mastery allows you to anticipate and deflect or dodge Shoot Attacks! Use your Fight Skill to Defend against Shoot, even against shots you don't “see” coming.

DISRUPT CHI. You can project chi to disrupt a target's chi and “stun” him. Use the Stun Attack (Projector Power Stunts) and Provoke Skill. (Alternatively, attach it to your Fight Skill and require physical contact).

HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN. When using chi, add +1 per level (+4 max.) to your Willpower rating when you use the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills. (Cost: 2 SFP/level.)

REFLECTED FORCE. You can reflect an Attack back on itself! If you succeed with Defend against Fight Attacks, you may spend 1 Fate Point to reflect your shifts of success against your attacker as Stress/Consequences, ignoring Armor Rating.

THUNDER FIST. You can channel chi into powerful blows. If you succeed in your Attack, you may spend 1 FP to ignore the target's AR.

STRENGTH OF THE DRAGON. Channeling chi, you swap Willpower for Physique to determine physical Attribute Bonuses (including Weapon/Armor Ratings), and make physical Recovery rolls.

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Dragon-Type Power Classes are determined by chi-strength, which is measured by how many levels of **HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN** the hero possesses; an A Class Dragon will have 4 levels, making him a monster of chi!

VARIANTS: Players can tilt their Dragon-Types towards being Masters of Battle (with the Power Stunts above), or Masters of Stealth or some other emphasis by choice of Power Stunts; there is more than enough room in the legends for any interpretation, from the unarmed fighter capable of dropping dozens of opponents to chi-powered mystics, or a mix of both.

NOTES: Like Merlin and Verne-Types, Dragon-Types are often shaped by an obsessive focus. They should be played as dedicated students or wise masters and their martial arts discipline, with all of its attached ethical tenants and obligations, should play a large part in their lives. Dragon-Types are visibly cinematic chi users and their more physical uses of chi tend to be signaled with glowing fists or even full-body auras (chi armor), making them easy to spot in action. This can be something of a drawback, but “calling up one's dragon” is great for intimidation...

The Dragon, the first Post-Event chi using martial artist to appear in San Francisco, named the Power-Type. A second generation Asian-American, she displayed the power to “roof-run,” dodge bullets, deflect and reflect physical attacks, and even take on Ajax with incredible “chi-punches.” She remains the heart of San Francisco's martial arts superhuman community, and has recently turned her attention to recruiting and training a new young team of Righteous Fists.

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Kinetic-Types

Kinetics are *movers*; they have the power to move and manipulate whatever is the focus of their breakthrough power. Kinetic-Types are related to Projector-Types; many Kinetics can generate and project force offensively as well, but they also *shape* it. This is a list of powers displayed by the common Kinetic-Types.

Aerokinesis: *the power to move large volumes of air around, creating air-blasts, small whirlwinds, and even to fly by pushing against the air.*

Cryokinesis: *the power to lower the thermal properties of objects and areas, suppressing combustion, freezing liquids, and at low enough temperatures even freezing solids.*

Electrokinesis: *the power to absorb, generate, and direct electricity, both in electrical systems and in open and conductive environments (including air at sufficient electrical field strengths). Electrokinetics are called Volt-Types.*

Gravikinesis: *the power to increase, decrease, or redirect the effect of Earth's gravitational field upon specific targets or even whole areas.*

Hydrokinesis: *the power to move and shape large masses of water, and condense water from the air.*

Magnetokinesis: *the power to strengthen, weaken, and direct magnetic fields, allowing control of ferrous metals (metal alloys with iron content) and secondarily some control over electrical fields (fluctuating magnetic fields can generate electricity or disrupt electrical currents).*

Photokinesis: *the ability to concentrate, attenuate, generate, and otherwise manipulate light to create bright flashes, holograms, or laser beams.*

Pyrokinesis: *the power to generate heat, cause spontaneous combustion, and control existent flames. Pyros may be personally immune to fire and heat, and be able to suppress as well as generate it.*

Telekinesis: *the power to move and manipulate physical objects with the power of your mind—usually limited to solid objects, excluding control of liquids and gasses.*

Terrakinesis: *the power to move and manipulate large volumes of rock, dirt, sand, and earth.*

Possibly the commonest breakthrough manifestation is immunity to a source of trauma; more potent responses tend to establish the power to shape, control, and manifest the element.

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Not all Kinetics create the material they control; Telekinetics and Terrakinetics specifically work with what they have available.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Kinetics are often partly immune to harm from their “element” (similar to Atlas and Ajax-Types’ simple immunity to a degree of physical harm). This immunity will not block “element” Attacks by breakthroughs of similar or opposing powers (but see the Power Class Advantage, box, p.89). Some may be able to use their control to fly.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Kinetics can always Invoke their Power Aspects to push their powers. Compels will depend on specific weaknesses if any (for example, a charged-up Electrokinetic may well be vulnerable to contact with *water*). Collateral Damage is a strong possibility with several of them—Terrakinesis is likely to tear up streets or knock down buildings, while Pyrokinesis is all about setting stuff on fire.

POWER STUNTS: All of the Projection Stunts are available to Kinetics. Additionally, many Stunt options for Overcome and Create an Advantage can be considered. Here are a few:

GREAT CONTROL. When using your power, add +1 per level (+4 max.) to your Willpower rating when you use the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills. (Cost: 2 SFP/level.)

STRONG WALLS. +2 to Kinetic rolls when using Create an Advantage or Defend to create force barriers or generate walls.

GREAT FORCE. +2 to kinetic rolls to Overcome (used for lifting heavy loads, manipulating great volumes of material, or breaking through barriers with your power).

SHAPE THE FIELD. +2 to Kinetic rolls made to Create an Advantage establishing a dangerous, obscuring, or impeding environment in the target area. (This includes creating Hazards.)

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Willpower is the go-to Attribute when determining how much material or force the kinetic controls with his mind—an A Class Telekinetic will have 4 levels of **GREAT CONTROL**.



VARIANTS: A few Kinetics can actually *transform* into the force or material they control. This requires Invoking their Power Aspect to create a **TRANSFORMED** Situation Aspect. The description of the Situation Aspect will create its own set of permissions and may enable new Power Stunts. See Metamorph-Type for more detail.

NOTES: Kinetic capes can have a good balance of offense, defense, and mobility. This makes them extremely versatile, but they still have their weaknesses and possibly vulnerabilities to “opposing elements.” Some of them, such as Pyrokinetics and Terrakinetics, will be prone to inflicting extreme property damage if not very careful and this may limit their playability as PCs.

Mentalist-Types

Mentalist-Types belong to the category of manifestations matching Pre-Event beliefs about mental powers; ESP, telepathy, astral projection, all are breakthrough powers shaped by “folk science.” Some Kinetic-Types (telekinesis, pyrokinesis, and cryokinetics) also belong to this group, but Mentalist-Types are focused on the mental plane.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Mentalist-Types are sensitives—seeing the unseen is what they do, so Alertness covers more than the five senses. They can sense other minds (including astral projections and “ghosts”) even if they can’t read them, pick up residual vibes in a location the way others would lingering smells, and often experience vague hunches and premonitions with no discernable source. Full telepaths will be able to communicate without speaking and “hear” deliberately projected thoughts or memories from non-telepaths.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Mentalist-Types can Invoke their Power Aspect when taking any Action related to psychic powers, whether putting extra force behind a telepathic attack or focusing to open their mental perceptions. They can Declare a Story Detail (p.111) based on psychic knowledge. Compels are often disturbing psychic sensitivity and unwanted intrusions.

POWER STUNTS: Beliefs about psi-powers give wide latitude for lots of Power Stunts, so feel free to mine the other Power-Types for mentalist-versions of their Stunts. Mentalist Stunts will often be bonuses to psychic powers using Alertness, Deceive, Provoke, Rapport, Shoot, Stealth, and other Skills on the mental plane. Truly unique applications are also possible.

ASTRAL PROJECTION. Psychics with astral projection as part of their Power Description can spend 1 Fate Point to create the **ASTRAL FORM** Situation Aspect as a Story Detail; with this Stunt, you may take one turn and do it for free. **ASTRAL FORM** allows you to “step out” of your body and wander at your normal travel speeds, ignoring gravity and barriers and snapping back to your body at any time. Your astral form is completely immaterial and cannot affect the physical world in any way, nor can you be detected through material means. Psychically sensitive types may be able to detect you. In this form you may only inflict and receive Mental Stress and Consequences—but affecting non-astral targets mentally requires a Stunt!

PSYCHIC STRENGTH. When using your psychic powers, add +1 per level (+4 max.) to your Willpower rating when you use the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills. (Cost: 2 SFP/level.)

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Mentalist-Type Power Classes are based on measured psychic strength—a D Class Mentalist-Type will have 1 level of **PSYCHIC STRENGTH**, a C Class will have 2 levels, etc.

VARIANTS: The description above fits a Mentalist-Type who possesses the full range of traditional ESP (Extra-Sensory Perception) gifts; players may want a character who focuses on only one ESP power—for example a pure and powerful telepath. If they go this route, the GM should allow more potent permissions in their area of focus (like using Provoke to Attack).

NOTES: Mentalist-Types can be hard for the GM to balance if played to the full extent of their abilities, but not many of them are capes. Their powers aren’t exactly flashy, and the public has trust issues with known telepaths (who tend to find themselves targets of endless frivolous “mental invasion” accusations). However, they make great consultants and support-characters, and the non-telepath types are more accepted.

POWER-TYPES AND CATEGORY ERRORS

Some powers are very hard to classify, and others are misleading. Take Blackstone and Chakra as examples; one works stage magic, the other tantric magic, yet both are classed as Mentalist-Types. Partly this is because the powers that both display look more like what is commonly classed as psychic powers than like folk magic. Also, in the West there is a conceptual divide between psychic and supernatural phenomena, even while folk-science conflates the two. But what really matters is not what something looks like, but what the breakthrough *thinks* it is, because that determines its rules. Thus, neither Blackstone’s nor Chakra’s magic is actual *magic*; both of them use “psionic powers” rather than spells or enchantments, and that should be kept in mind when attempting to detect or counter powers like theirs.



MAGIC ACTS

Two powers almost unique to magical types are the power to summon various supernatural beings to their aid (spirits, demons, elementals, etc.), and to transform one thing into another (a gun into a rubber chicken, for random example). With common sense and attention to a few rules, these open-ended powers can be accommodated fairly easily.

Summoning: Summoning can be simply a matter of creating a new Situation Aspect, either by Declaring a Story Detail or by succeeding at a Create an Advantage Action (p.111). Variations of the **SUMMONED CRITTER** Situation Aspect can grant all sorts of permissions, and if the player wants to create more than just a useful Aspect then she can spend SFP for dedicated Summoning Stunts. She can also summon more fully statted-out creatures, written up as Supporting Characters, but this is more complicated (see box, p.158).

Transformations: Turning a mugger's gun into a rubber chicken is simply a matter of Create an Advantage: **TRY SHOOTING A RUBBER CHICKEN**. Turning a useless object into a useful one can be trivial (but the GM may want to use Appendix A to set limits on size, mass, or number of things transformed). The GM *might* allow turning muggers into frogs if they were just average Scene Extras, but for characters that are supposed to be tougher to Take Out, additional Stunts should be required—perhaps something modeled on **STUN ATTACK** (p.104).

Merlin-Types

Anyone can wave a wand or say a spell but when *they* do it, it *works*. A Merlin-Type's breakthrough unlocks a gift for true magic, one limited only by what she thinks magic is. Merlin-Types come in many flavors: **INITIATED AGRIPPAN MAGUS**, for example, or **WAND WAVING SPELL-SLINGER**. The first thing to consider is whether your tradition of magic is Classical or Modern. Classical traditions are based on beliefs in the Laws of Magic (the metaphysical mirror of the Laws of Physics), the powers of spirits and the power to command them, words of power, and other kinds of magic believed to be accessible to anyone with the knowledge and materials needed; think of magic as a discipline like chemistry or medicine. Modern systems, formed or reformulated during the 20th Century, tend to incorporate psychic theory and modern notions of magic as phenomena powered by an exotic energy source (mana or psychic energy). In Classical magic traditions, the source of the Attribute Bonus will be Discernment, while in Modern magic traditions Willpower will provide the bonus.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Magic Power Aspects define the limits of a Merlin-Type's powers—an alchemist will have different constraints than a hermetic magician, who will do things differently than a witch or voodooist. Permissions for just what you can and can't do need to be worked out in advance, but will vary significantly from magic system to magic system. One virtually universal permission is the power to sense the *presence* of magic on a successful Alertness roll, as a smell, a color, a pricking of your thumbs...

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Merlin-Types will Invoke their Power Aspect for that needed bit of magic lore, contacts in the magic world, or for greater ability to perform or resist magic. Compels may take the form of extra sensitivity or vulnerability, recognition by supernatural elements (of the bad kind), lack of needed tools or ingredients, or even lack of needed power (mana, psychic reserves, ley line energy...).

POWER STUNTS: With so many magic traditions available, just about any Power Stunt from any source can be used if narratively appropriate to the Merlin-Type's brand of magic. Here are five that go well with magic:

MAGICAL CUNNING (OR MAGICAL STRENGTH). When performing magical operations, add +1 per level (+4 max.) to your Discernment (or Willpower) rating when you use the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills. (Cost: 2 SFP/level.)

SEVENTH SENSE. +2 to rolls to sense the presence of magic and discern its magical nature.

MEMORY PALACE. +2 to Overcome or Create an Advantage from remembering some obscure magic text, legend, or tradition that will help you.


WORDS OF POWER. Take one shift of Mental Stress per +2 WR/+1 AR you add to a magical Attack or React, or per +1 you add to Overcome, Create Advantage, or React. If this exceeds your Stress Boxes, you will take Mental Consequences.


ARTIFICE. If you are using the Ritual Magic Skill (next page), you can use Artifices (charms, talismans, wands, etc.) created through your art to allow you to do magic without requiring a lengthy ritual and Create an Advantage. Each artifice adds a new Action/Application to your Ritual Magic Skill. For example, a crafted wand would allow you to "fire" a Hex as a fast Ritual Magic Attack, while a protective talisman would let you React against attempts to Attack or Create Advantage against you. The magician-thief in the example might have a Hand of Glory prepared, which would allow him to attempt a quick and direct Overcome Action, his Ritual Magic Skill vs. the Difficulty Rating of the lock, security system, and guards instead of spending several minutes (and risking attention) with a ritual to build up +2 bonuses. Of course Artifices are almost always very obvious pieces of equipment which can be found and confiscated!



Example Magic Tradition: Ritual Magic

Your system of magic takes *time*. Time to draw complex symbols, incant spells, gather your power or perform elaborate rituals (unless you want the wand-wavy stuff, in which case see *Artifice*, above). The Ritual Magic Skill (built on the Engineering Skill) plays to the methodical approach to magic by allowing only Overcome and Create an Advantage Actions with the Skill.

 **Overcome:** Ritual Magic allows you to detect and dispel semi-permanent Ritual Aspects (below). Simple detection is usually an Average Difficulty Action (linked to Alertness for the Attribute Bonus). Dispelling magic requires an Overcome vs. the Difficulty Rating set when the magician who invoked the Ritual Aspect made his final Skill roll (also below).

 **Create an Advantage:** Ritual Magic allows you to perform the *magical* version of an Action **with any other Skill** by creating a **RITUAL** Aspect for that Skill. You may then boost your chance of success by repeating Create an Advantage **on that Aspect**, gaining additional Free Invokes for the **RITUAL** Aspect each time. When you have the Ritual Aspect and number of Free Invokes you want, you may attempt the intended Action without regard for any normal requirements or limits, burning the **RITUAL** Aspect and all of your stacked Free Invokes as you do.

*Example: a magician wants to pick a lock, but his Larceny Skill is Mediocre (+0) and he has no tools. He performs a ritual on the locked door, creating an **OPEN THE WAY** Ritual Aspect, and repeats the Action twice (protracting the ritual). He succeeds each time, stacking up three Free Invokes for a +6 bonus. He then touches the lock and rolls vs. Larceny to “pick the lock,” adding the +6 bonus.*

Create an Advantage can also be used to create semi-permanent Aspects; for example the magician could instead do the reverse, creating a **BAR THE WAY** Ritual Aspect to magically *lock* the door, or a **THRESHOLD GUARDIAN** Ritual Aspect to put a magical alarm on the door. Either of these could be defeated through an Overcome Action, rolling against the magician's original +6 (which would now be the Situation Aspect's DR). A second example: the magician performs a ritual to create a **VEILING ILLUSION** Ritual Aspect, allowing an immediate disguise attempt with Deceive. Success means he now has an **UNRECOGNIZABLE** Situation Aspect on himself which could last for the full scene!

Difficulty Rating: stacking Free Invokes onto the Ritual Aspect requires rolling vs. a higher Difficulty Rating, starting at Fair (+2) Difficulty and increasing at a rate of +1 DR for each additional roll attempted. Success with Style at any attempt to create or stack a Ritual Aspect adds two Free Invokes, but failure *removes* the Ritual Aspect and its Free Invokes completely and you must start over. You can always Invoke helpful Situation Aspects to make it easier to succeed with the ritual: auspicious times, magically significant places, useful tools and ingredients, can all boost your chances.

 **Attack:** Ritual Magic is not meant as an Attack Skill (but see the **ARTIFICE** Stunt).

 **React:** Ritual Magic is not meant as a React Skill (but see the **ARTIFICE** Stunt).

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Merlin-Types are so diverse that it's hard to pin their powers down to classes. Probably the easiest way is to assign one level of Class per level of Magical Cunning/Magical Strength.

VARIANTS: Some supernatural breakthroughs will be able to work magic but spellcasting will be secondary to their core power. For example, a witch might be first and foremost a powerful Metamorph, or a sorcerer might have bound a powerful demon that gives him tremendous powers (the classic Deal with The Devil).

NOTES: Because Merlin-Types can do just about anything, they are also the most easily unbalancing. On the other hand, they are also often not geared towards the crash and crunch of superhero combat (but for a combat oriented Merlin-Type, see *Example Breakthrough Creation: The Incanter*, p.108). Although they can redress this weakness through Stunts like Artifices, they are vulnerable to being disarmed and even completely neutralized in a way that most capes are not (a pat-down and a pair of handcuffs will go a long way to rendering many Merlin-Types harmless). For something completely different, it might be interesting to run an All Merlin-Type campaign. San Francisco or New Orleans would be natural settings for a supernatural superhero campaign.

Adept, alchemist, conjurer, mage, shaman, spiritualist, sorcerer, witch—every past culture gave names to their wonder-workers and set them firmly in the framework of their spiritual cosmologies. New Age mysticism freely appropriated from all of them, fantasy literature gave them new life, and now we live with them.

—BARLOW'S GUIDE TO SUPERHUMANS



Metamorph-Types

Many superhumans possess the power to change everything about themselves, starting with appearance—very handy for keeping secret identities. While there are all sorts of Metamorphs, they generally fall into one of three categories: Transformers, Shapeshifters, and Doppelgangers.

Transformer: A Metamorph with one form into which he changes. Transformers most often have a normal human form, with no apparent powers, and a superhuman form which is startlingly different. Some Transformers have several intermediary forms, stages between the “before” and “after” forms. Examples: Iron Jack, who transforms into a powerful metal-man form, and the werewolf who goes from man to man-wolf to wolf.

Shapeshifter: A Metamorph capable of taking on multiple final forms. Shapeshifter forms are generally unified by a theme, the most common being animals. Some Shapeshifters have a defined suite of forms, others are open to any within the theme. Interestingly, most will also have a “mark” of some kind identifying them whatever form they are in. All known Shapeshifters are only capable of “living” forms, although there are stories of Shapeshifters who change into inanimate objects.

Doppelganger: A Metamorph capable of mimicking other human beings, often all the way down to the clothes they are currently wearing. Some rare Doppelgangers mimic other superhuman's powers rather than their physical form.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Metamorph Power Aspects must be clearly spelled out. How many forms? How long does the change take? Are outside triggers needed? How does the power work with Deceive? Changed forms are *full* of permissions; bird-forms will be able to fly, cat-forms will have great night vision, etc. The player and GM should work these out in advance so as not to slow down the game.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Metamorphs must Invoke their Power Aspects to create the **SHAPESHIFTED** Aspect that describes their changed states, and the description given to the **SHAPESHIFTED** Aspects will open other opportunities for Invokes. Compels vary; Shapeshifters who take animal forms may be subject to animal instincts and will certainly be bound by physical limitations that may create trouble. Doppelgangers who spend too long in a copied form may take on the target's personality.

To me the most disturbing breakthroughs are metamorphs. If the mind is the brain, then how do metamorphs think when they're suddenly a cat, or a gas? How are they even them anymore?

—Dr. Jonathan Beth

POWER STUNTS: Possible Stunts include:

THE CHANGE. Use your Willpower to take a Create an Advantage Action—the created Aspect being your new form. This allows you to change without spending a Fate Point, and is made against an Average (+2) DR unless something is passively or actively opposing your change.

SLIPPERY. You are able to change so fast that you can use The Change to React (requires **THE CHANGE**).

COPYCAT. +2 to Deceive rolls to pass as a copied subject by faking their appearance and manners.

EXCHANGEABLE ATTRIBUTE LEVELS. For every level of the Stunt you buy, you may choose one Attribute to raise +2 levels during play by lowering another Attribute by -2 or two Attributes by -1. No Attributes may go below Terrible (-2). For a cost of 2 SFP per level, you do not need to preset these exchanges—during play you may raise any Attribute +2 per purchased level by lowering any others. The exchange is an automatic Action requiring one Turn, unless it is part of a greater transformation (changing to an animal-form, for example).

STUNT POOL. You can set aside a number of Starting Fate Points specifically for Power Stunts appropriate to different forms (Weapon/Armor Ratings, +2 Bonuses, and so on). Create a Power Stunt Package in advance for each form. This pool is also used by mimics to copy other superhuman's powers.

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: For Metamorphs, their Power Aspect *description* is more important to determining their Power Class than any rating; D Class Metamorphs will often be Doppelgangers or animal-metamorphs with a single alternate form. Shapeshifters with no form limits within the bounds of their theme are A Class Metamorphs!

VARIANTS: It has been mentioned that some Ajax-Types and Kinetic-Types are also Transformers. If so, write it into their Power Aspect. They can either spend a Fate Point to Invoke their Power Aspect to change, or buy The Change as a Power Stunt.

NOTES: Shapeshifter-Types can easily require more preparatory discussion and paperwork than any other Power Type except possibly Merlin-Types. Players and GMs should be ready with a thorough understanding of what they can and cannot do; if the power is open-ended, then the player must be prepared to accept the GM's veto on some ideas during play.



Paragon-Types

Rather than spontaneously manifesting obviously superhuman powers, a breakthrough will occasionally be transformed into an idealized version of himself. This is particularly likely to happen with athletes who are already all about becoming their best possible selves—they are suddenly able to perform at or near the limit of human capacity in every field of ability. They are the best of the best, paragons of humanity.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Paragons can't do anything a normal human being can't do—they just do it *better*. Because of this, no Paragon may have an Attribute lower than Good +3!

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Paragons can Invoke their Power Aspect to push the limits of *any* Attribute, even Presence (they tend to look like the physical ideal). Compels tend to be psychological; arrogance or at least overconfidence can be hard to avoid when You're Just That Good. A surprising number of them are also **MORAL PARAGONS** or **PARAGONS OF FAITH**, a psychological feature that can be both Invoked and Compelled. It's also hard to blend in when you are the **PHYSICAL HUMAN IDEAL**—even people who don't know you will recognize that you're something special.

POWER STUNTS: Paragon Stunts are all related to their physical perfection. Here are a few possibilities.

PEAK HUMAN ABILITY. When creating your Paragon-Type, You may pay 2 Starting Fate Points for each level of Attribute rating boost (Attribute maximums are still Superb +5). These boosts do not empty their Attribute Slots in the Pyramid (for example, a Paragon with +5 Alertness, +5 Athleticism, and +5 Physique, would be counted as +5/+4/+4 for determining what slots remain available).

LIGHTNING REFLEXES. +2 to Defend when you can see the hit coming and are free to move.

PERFECTION. Roll vs. Presence rather than Provoke or Rapport when attempting to intimidate or seduce.

SUPERHUMAN RECOVERY. See Ajax-Type Power Stunts.

HARD AS NAILS. See Ajax-Type Power Stunts.

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Paragons don't fit into the Breakthrough Class model (they are considered "normal" when comparing Scale (p.166). To make up for it, they can invoke their Power Aspect for just about any physical or mental endeavor!

VARIANTS: Superb (+5) Alertness, Athleticism, and Physique are the peak Attributes for most Paragons, but some Paragons more resemble fictional heroes like Doc Savage—who was a genius inventor as well as a specimen of physical perfection! A peak-ability Alertness/Discernment/Willpower Paragon is another possibility, and could be a very scary master-villain!

NOTES: In an A Class campaign, a Paragon is likely to spend 6 SFP to set up +5/+5/+5/+4/+3/+3 Attribute Ratings (in whatever order), buy 3 related Stunts, and save the rest to begin play with 5 SFP—enough Fate Points to give him a serious edge in Conflicts and Contests since he can burn them in virtually any Action he takes!

MORPH-DYNAMICS

The Metamorph-Type, on the previous page, is one of the most versatile types there is—and the most open to abuse. The GM should not allow open-ended use of the type, but insist that the player give his use of the power a solid theme. The GM can also set limits himself; for example, he could decide that **THE CHANGE** is *mandatory*—that a simple Invoke can't create the metamorph Aspect—or he could rule that possession of **THE CHANGE** precludes the option of spending an FP and invoking the Power Aspect to change without taking an Action!

It's important to keep in mind that while morph Aspects do create new permissions and denials, they don't change Character Ratings or create Stunts. A morph able to turn into **THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM** doesn't gain extra levels of Physique, with added Physical Stress Boxes or Consequence Slots; he must pay for them with Power Stunts. But changing into a fly means he can attempt to hide in plain sight or stroll through the gap at the bottom of a door—that's just a permission!

Edge cases should be treated leniently but creatively. For example, a metamorph whose power was **SIZE TRANSFORMATION** could probably shrink to escape from a set of handcuffs without needing to do more than succeed with **THE CHANGE**—no "escape roll" needed—but the GM should also feel free to increase the Difficulty Ratings of all sorts of opposition, or load on Aspect Denials, due to size differences.

OTHER MORPH-MODES

Verne-Types can take advantage of a couple of Metamorph Stunts. **EXCHANGEABLE ATTRIBUTE LEVELS** could be used to build a suit of powered armor with variable Strength/Speed modes. A Verne-Type who specializes in transformable armored forms, or who uses some kind of superscience gadget to physically transform himself, can *be* a Metamorph-Type. Additionally, the **STUNT POOL** Stunt could easily represent more effects of the transforming armor, his transforming biology, or the stuff he can create in his lab or with a proper toolkit and raw materials in the field! Merlin-Types have the same options.

The key to fun play with Metamorph-Types is restraint. Potentially, a superhuman of this type could be modeled to possess several modes from which he can choose to become the toughest opponent in any situation. This is not fun for the players—unless the Super-Morph is the big bad guy the team is facing! Again, work it all out in advance, so both the GM and player have a good grounding in just what the metamorph's Power Aspect and Stunts will allow.



Projector-Types

Projector-Types are able to generate and project some type of force: kinetic force, sonic waves, gamma rays, lasers, superheated plasma, etc. Most project their force from their hands, point-and-shoot style, but some project eyebeams and others generate a projection point in proximity with but not connected to themselves. Specific uses of the projected force vary significantly; some Projectors are able to use their projected force to fly, much like a rocket. Some can shape their blasts for area-affecting Attacks, or refine their blasts for incredible precision.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Flight is often covered by the Power Aspect, as is any “routine” use of the power (it might be handy as a flashlight, cigarette lighter, snow-blower...). The most important permission is the fact that the Projector-Type is Always Armed unless some Situation Aspect is presented to counter it, and Projectors are also often partly immune to damage from the type of force they project (a Projector who shot superheated plasma would be immune to damage from the heat he generates and anything less intense).

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Projector-Types can always Invoke their Power Aspect for that extra punch in their blasts, or for extra push in their flight if they have it. Energy Projection is a visually impressive power and Invoking it for Shock and Awe (a bonus to Provoke) is certainly doable. Compels are generally damage-related, often for Collateral Damage from misses, but the Projector-Type may also present a high “energy signature” or other inconvenient side-effect of his power that can be invoked *against* him.

POWER STUNTS: Projectors build on the Shoot Skill, naturally, and these are just some of the possible Power Stunts that can affect the Skill.

HUMAN ROCKET. Use Shoot rather than Athleticism to determine Movement and Dodge when flying.

BEAM ATTACK. Add +2 to Shoot when Attacking a target you successfully Attacked last turn. Your continuous beam “sweeps” to follow your target.

HARD HITTING. When you Attack and Succeed with Style with your projection power, you can normally reduce your shifts by 1 to gain a Boost. Instead, when you reduce your shifts by 1 you gain a Situation Aspect against the target or his immediate environment with a Free Invoke.

LETHAL ATTACK. Once each scene, if you inflict a Consequence on a target, you can spend one Fate Point to increase its severity by one step. If your target was already going to receive a Severe Consequence, he must also take an additional Consequence or be Taken Out.

AREA ATTACK. You can attack everyone in the same target area without halving your Power Skill or Weapon Rating to do it!

MULTIPLE TARGETS. Per the rules, given the right circumstances you can split your shifts of Shoot as evenly as possible, between as many targets as you like in the same target area, down to one shift per target (p.131). With this Stunt you add a +1 shift to each attack (giving you a minimum +2 per target).

LONG RANGE. You can fire from Distant Range, outside the normal Conflict Shoot Range. The GM defines what Distant Range is with this Stunt and what it takes for an opponent to close to Shoot Range (a sniper is the perfect example).

STUN ATTACK. Your Attack deals Stress normally, but will treat each Consequence slot as if it were a Mild Consequence, each slot taking only 2 shifts to fill. Thus 7 shifts of stun will fill the Mild, Moderate, and Severe Consequence slots, the last shift Taking Out the target. Treat stun Consequences as Mild Consequences for Recovery. The result of being Taken Out cannot be more serious than a knockout lasting until the end of the Scene or for more than a few hours.

WEAPON AND ARMOR RATINGS: Force projectors can do *serious* damage, and the way to play this is to purchase Weapon Ratings. Projectors are sometimes called *glass cannons*—they are heavy on the firepower, but often as fragile as norms themselves: many projectors compensate by spending Starting Fate Points to purchase Armor Ratings as Body Armor (see p.91).

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: D Class Projector-Types will have Weapon Rating 2, C Class will have WR4, B Class WR6, and A Class WR8.

VARIANTS: Projector-Types come in many flavors, and they are another of the Power Types often matched with Verne-Tech; power suits (see Ajax and Atlas-Type variants, above) will often include a Projector power of some degree.

NOTES: Projectors can be thought of as artillery; ranged and hard-hitting, but vulnerable when up close and unprotected. Playing a Projector can be a challenge, but they can be a devastating part of a balanced team.



Redux-Types

Also called Duplicators, Redux-Types are breakthroughs with the power to multiply themselves. The classic Redux-Type can spontaneously “split” into multiples herself, all selves united by a group-mind.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Duplicators can combine to get tasks done faster, whether it's research or a hands-on project, and they can combine efforts to perform feats that only people working together can do. What one Duplicator knows, all of them know.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Duplicators must usually invoke their Power Aspect to create a **DUPLICATED** Aspect. They can also invoke their Power Aspect in any situation where more than two hands (or fist, eyes, etc.) would be a benefit. Duplicators may suffer from sensory-overload or scattered focus if there are a lot of them and they are mind-linked, and the GM could invoke or compel this handicap.

POWER STUNTS: Duplicators bring an interesting set of problems to the Fate system. Logically each Dupe should be treated as a Major NPC (controlled by the player). This is unworkable, so the following Stunts attempt to simulate the *effect* of the power rather than play it out literally. These are not the only Redux-Type Power Stunts possible.

WE ARE ONE. (Required.) When **DUPLICATED**, the Redux-Type's Physical Stress Boxes are broken down into a row of single-shift Stress Boxes. *Example, a hero with 3 Physical Stress Boxes (one 1-shift, one 2-shift, and one 3-shift) would instead have six 1-shift Stress Boxes.* The number of Physical Stress Boxes equals the number of “selves” now present.

INSTANT TEAM! (Required.) If you are **DUPLICATED**, any time a combined effort would help, replace the normal Teamwork Bonus with a +1 to your Skill for every two of you there are attempting the Action (this replaces the normal Mob rule). You may also perform multiple Actions, making one Fate Dice roll and splitting your Final Action Rating (p.64) among the attempted Actions to determine success. *Example: six of you, attempting two Actions, would have a +2 to each Action or a +3 to one Action and a +1 to the other, resolved in a single roll.*

WE ARE LEGION. For each level of this Stunt, you gain an additional 1-shift Stress Box when you are **DUPLICATED**, representing an additional self/dupe! There is no maximum. Removing **DUPLICATED** clears and removes the additional Stress Boxes.

NUMBERLESS. When you are Duplicated, once per Conflict you may recover all Physical Stress Boxes (and therefore regenerate lost/incapacitated selves).

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: The Redux-Type doesn't benefit from the Power Scale Rule. There are many variations on the Redux-Type; some of them possess *permanent* multiple selves, but generate new selves slowly (possibly over weeks or months). The bottom-line unifier of the type is multiple selves and a group mind. Duplicators who are permanently duplicated (usually with 2-3 selves) are D Class. An A Class Duplicator would have all of the above Stunts and at least 10+ duplicates!

NUMBERS AND TIME

Redux-Types, Speedster-Types, Merlin-Types, and Verne Types all have one thing in common; their powers will (or at least can) give them the ability to perform more than a single Action in a turn. With the Redux-Type it's the natural result of more than one body, with the speedster it's all the extra subjective time speeding gives, and with the Merlins and Vernes it's the ability conjure up supernatural aid or build and field drones and other robot-helpers.

Under no conditions should the GM allow players with capes of these types to take extra Turns. That way lies frustration, boredom, and madness. The best way to handle it is through a Power Stunt that allows two or more Actions, *with success or failure determined by a single roll.* See **INSTANT TEAM** on this page and **PLENTY OF TIME** on page 106. Merlins and Vernes with assistants created by their powers will likely use **INSTANT TEAM** or some variant.

Both speed and additional helpers can affect Turns in another way, by widening the scope of just how much can get done in a single Turn when the action would otherwise be moving too quickly. This is a purely narrative effect, enabling the heroes to perform tasks that would require only a single Action but would take too long for the current speed of game-time. For example, assembling a gadget with a single Action Roll *and Turn* in the middle of a fast moving fire-fight; if the gadgeteering Verne has a dozen little robot helpers programmed to work as one, why not?

Moving beyond Turns, the GM should let the added work speedsters and Redux-Types can pack into the same amount of time impact how they relate to **Story Time (p.147)**. This allows them great opportunities to Be Awesome. If time-pressure is part of the Difficulty Rating of an Action, they can Invoke their Power Aspects for the +2 bonus or reroll. If they are under Deadline Pressure (p.147), their Power Aspects should give them permission to take more Actions in less time. This can also be used to move the baseline when calculating how much time a shift is worth (p.148 box).

NEW STUNT: TIME-HACK.

This Power Stunt is appropriate for someone who manipulates the flow of time. It gives him the ability to “reuse” seconds or minutes *without paradox* (the steps he takes at each stage of the loop remain taken even though he reuses the time) to make more use of the time that is his Turn. He gains a +2 to any Overcome or Create an Advantage Action in which extra time to perform the Action would be beneficial.



Speedster-Types

Speedsters in the Post-Event World somewhat disappoint people used to the comic-book image of them; they can't run around the world (or even the city) without stopping, run up walls, or pulverize rock by hitting it a thousand times a second. What they do is shift between "real time" and Hypertime, speeding up their personal time rate as they approach Hypertime, experiencing time at an accelerated relative rate as they approach The Wall. A Class speedsters can go *over* The Wall, entering fully into Hypertime where they move in a time-frozen world between seconds.

Fully inside Hypertime, Speedster-Types can move and act freely but cannot in any way directly affect the frozen world around them—not even to open a door or pick up a rock. They can carry things and even people with them while speeding, weight limited by their Physique or their physical connection (speedsters often use motorcycles for travel through Hypertime, and are able to take passengers with them). Staying fully inside Hypertime is a mentally stressful balancing act; Speedster-Types cannot stop and rest or do anything *tricky* while there, although the GM may allow them to do any number of things that do not require a roll.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: One speedster cliché is true; a speedster can run on water and other surfaces that would sink under a person moving at normal speeds (if completely in Hypertime, he can *stop* and still be supported). One odd artifact of the "step" between Hypertime and Realtime is that Shoot Attacks made by speedsters don't work—the transition from Hypertime to Realtime robs the projectile of most of its inertia. This Aspect Denial doesn't limit speedster's effectiveness much.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Unless the Speedster's power is always on, he must invoke his Power Aspect to create a **SPEEDING** Situation Aspect in a Scene. He must be **SPEEDING** to use any of the Speedster Power Stunts, and he can also invoke the Aspect when dodging, pushing for extra speed to finish a job faster, etc. **SPEEDING** can be Compelled to create complications based on his accelerated time-rate (communication problems, for example). GMs should allow Speedsters to routinely perform longer Actions more quickly.

POWER STUNTS: Speedster Power Stunts are, naturally, all about the speed:

ABSOLUTE SPEED. When you are **SPEEDING**, add +1 per level (+4 max.) to your Athleticism rating when you use the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills with all Actions involving thinking, reacting, and moving *quickly*. (Cost: 2 SFP/level.)

PLENTY OF TIME. Dividing as evenly as possible, you can split your shifts with a Skill between as many separate Actions or targets as you like. You get a +1 bonus to each Action or target, but you must declare your targets/Actions **before** rolling the dice. You cannot attack a single target or perform a single Action multiple times, but this Stunt is great for clearing crowds of mooks.

*A Speedster with a modified Fight Skill of +7, could Attack two targets with +4 and +3 shifts respectively, adding a +1 to each for **PLENTY OF TIME**. Extending the +1 bonus, he could Attack three targets with +4, +3, and +3 shifts, four targets with +3, +3, +3, and +2 shifts—even up to seven targets with +2 shifts for each!*

CAN'T STOP ME! If you haven't gone yet during a round, you may choose to take the next turn without spending a Fate Point to do so, even if it is the first turn and your last turn ended the previous round.

INTO HYPERTIME! ABSOLUTE SPEED +4 is required. You may spend one Fate Point to shift fully into Hypertime. While there, you may move as far as you want to go (even leaving or arriving on a scene) so long as no physical barriers of any kind are in your way. You can perform long Actions that do not require die rolls in Hypertime, so long as you brought everything you need in with you and don't drop it. Only A Class Speedsters may take this Stunt.

FAST RECOVERY. If you are fully in Hypertime, you may recover from all Physical and Mental Stress once per Conflict.

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: : For speedsters, D Class through A Class is measured by levels of **ABSOLUTE SPEED**. A Class Speedsters will have **ABSOLUTE SPEED** +4 and **INTO HYPERTIME!**

VARIANTS: Like Atlas-Types, Speedsters tend to vary only in degree.

NOTES: Speedsters can be *terrifying*. **ABSOLUTE SPEED** gives an A Class Speedster with a Superb (+5) Athleticism Rating an effective Mythic (+9) Athleticism and so a +4 Athleticism Attribute Bonus. Assuming a higher than average Fight Skill (+3 or +4), the speedster is nearly impossible to hit with Attacks she can see coming to dodge and almost as impossible to defend against—often with a +8 to Attack! Able to move into and out of a scene at will, so long as she has room to run there is little that can counter her as she creates favorable Situation Aspects and gets set to mess her enemies up. Area-affecting Attacks, mental Attacks, traps, and other less direct methods must often be employed to stop Speedsters.



Verne-Types

When Merlin-Types cast spells, those spells are defined by metaphysical systems that describe how reality works on a *magical* level. Verne-Types build gadgets, tools, weapons, power sources, and whatever else they can imagine, based on a “discovered” superscience that describes how reality works on some *material* level (sub-atomic, quantum, extra-dimensional, psionic, etc.). Verne-Types will specialize in one or a few disciplines, where they will stretch modern science into superscience and in which they can do things only considered theoretically possible (if not flat-out impossible) at the current state of technology. Verne-Types who wear the cape are usually driven by the need to make and field-test their own stuff, or to study superhumans in action and try and duplicate what they can do.

POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS: Vernes-Types can use the Engineering Skill to make stuff that simply isn't within the current realm of possibility and may never be, which allows them to access any other Power-Type's permissions (flight, near-invulnerability, etc.) when using their creations.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: Vernes can always Invoke their Power Aspects for the bonus when field-tuning one of their pieces of equipment to deal with an unexpected requirement or threat, or trying to jury-rig something on the fly. GMs can always Compel their new creations or adjustments to their gear for anything from power drains to strange side-effects to sudden and totally unanticipated failure.

POWER STUNTS: Most Verne Power Stunts will be gadgets they've whipped up, many of them allowing Verne-Types, or those who use their creations, to use the Stunts of any other Power-Type. For example Stun Attack (see Projector Power Stunts). At the extreme, Verne-Types may go all out and kit themselves up with flight-capable powered armor...

There are also a couple of Power Stunts unique to Verne-Types.

EUREKA! Add +1 per level purchased (+4 max) to your Discernment when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills when attempting to Overcome or Create an Advantage in your field of scientific expertise.

JUST GIVE ME A MOMENT! You may take an Overcome Action to repair damaged equipment or gear during a Scene, with the Difficulty Rating determined by the Situation Aspect or Consequence level you are trying to fix. Success with a fixing a Situation Aspect or Mild Consequence will remove the Aspect or Consequence, while success fixing a Moderate or Severe Consequence will only put the Consequence into Recovery.

POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS: D Class Verne-Types have a Discernment+Eureka! rating of +6, C Class Types a +7, B Class Types a +8, and A Class Types a +9.

VARIANTS: As many as there are fields of learning to twist into Superscience.

NOTES: If the GM isn't careful, Vernes can create game-breaking (or world-breaking) stuff. A good rule of thumb for the GM is to not let Verne capes use any power they wouldn't let other breakthrough characters have. Played properly, Vernes won't be as strong as other cape PCs in their particular areas of specialty; instead they will be more versatile and able to fill in the gaps for the team. Most Verne-Types haunt laboratories and research facilities (or their backyard garages); Verne-Types who actively wear the cape are usually driven by the need to make and field-test their own stuff, or to study superhumans in action and try and duplicate what they can do. Verne-Types make great villains as well, arming minions with their gadgets and stealing equipment they need. Needless to say, they are also much sought after by governments!

GOING CRAZY

As mentioned, this collection of Power-Types hardly represents all possible Power-Types. More, some superhuman powers can combine types; the Merlin-Type whose main power is a personal bodily transformation, for example, could have a **MAGICAL SHAPESHIFTER** Power Aspect. Her power description might mention that she can also talk to the animal she turns into, and that she possesses some of the powers associated with that animal-totem.

But why stop there? Go crazy. Make your superhuman a Paragon-Type who got permanently transformed into a cat-girl on one adventure (don't ask, she doesn't like to talk about it), and who now buffs her abilities with Verne-Tech gadgets supplied by a teammate or ally. There is absolutely no reason to stick with a stock superhero theme when creating your character, and there is every reason for GMs to keep their players guessing.

I know! How about a reality-hopping psychic with a collection/armory full of extrareality goodies? Call the Power Aspect **REALITY JUMPER** and give him the **“I PICKED THESE UP ON ALDERAAN.”** Background Aspect. Do you need a blaster? He's got one of those. You want a what potion? He won't judge. And don't touch the floating blue ball, he keeps it in a glass case for a reason.

Hmm, nice concept but probably best saved for a really interesting non-player character...



Example Breakthrough Creation: The Incanter

One of my playtesters took the Fate Core system as a challenge to create the hero she'd always wanted and could never really describe with any other RPG. She wanted to play a Merlin-Type but not a traditional wizard or witch—her breakthrough was to be a Cossack Battle-Mage (a *kharakternyk* or “incanter”).

Legends of the incanters abounded in Eastern Europe, being particularly popular in the region now known as Ukraine, and they seemed able to perform any miracle. Incanters could heal even the mortally injured by removing their patient's spirits and then treating their injuries before returning their spirits to their bodies; they could make a cloudy day clear up or bring the rain; they could shapeshift into animal forms (typically wolves but also others) or multiply themselves; they could turn to mist to cross rivers or pass through barriers to slip by sentries; they could enchant glass to “see” far away, and reeds to scream warning if trespassers stepped on them; they could brew healing potions from common cookery; they could whisper to arrows or bullets, which then would not strike them; they could mesmerize with their gaze and create illusions.

They also maintained their power through sexual and spiritual purity; they could not love.

The player broke it down like this.

Power Aspect: Incanter

POWER ASPECT PERMISSION: The incanter speaks to the world in whispers, imposing his will upon it with his secret words. He can work his magic so long as he can speak and possesses the materials he needs. His magic is restricted to changing himself, healing others or bending their minds, and limited control over inanimate things (and to a degree, the weather). Academics (Secret Words) and other magical uses of Skills depends upon Willpower for the Attribute Bonus.

INVOKES AND COMPELS: The incanter can invoke his Power Aspect to create the **CLEAR SKY** or **SUDDEN RAIN** Aspect if it is cloudy, to shapeshift into a pre-determined **ANIMAL FORM** (often a wolf or a crow), or to take on an **INTANGIBLE** or **DUPLICATED** form. Incanters cannot control silver, making them vulnerable to it. They are also weakened by lust (an interesting possibility for hostile Invokes and Compels...).

INCANTER SKILLS: Academics (the Secret Words of the incanter's art), Aid (standard but exotic, with the added power to put patients into preserving comas), Deceive (to spin mental illusions), Larceny (control over locks and bonds), Provoke (direct mental “horror” attacks), Stealth (to pass silently and invisibly in his intangible form), and Survival (a blessed sixth-sense that lets him take advantage of every chance around him).

INCANTER STUNTS:

CREATE ARTIFICE. He may Create an Advantage with Academics to “incant” a common item to give it a magic power for the duration of a Scene.

WEAPON WARD. He may use Academics to Defend against Fight and Shoot Attacks *with weapons*—they don't want to hit him when he whispers to them.

THE CHANGE. Academics, see Metamorph-Type.

SLIPPERY. Academics, see Metamorph-Type.

BODY OF SPIRIT. When **INTANGIBLE** the Incanter may Defend against physical attacks with Willpower, and will take physical hits as Mental Stress and Consequences.

BLESS AND CURSE. He may use Create an Advantage with Willpower to give a target **BLESSED** or **CURSED LUCK** until the end of the Scene.

WE ARE ONE. (see Redux-Type)

INSTANT TEAM. (see Redux-Type),

MESMERISM. Instant hypnosis; he may use Rapport to Overcome or Create an Advantage with eye-contact and whispered words.

NOTES: Taking all nine Incanter Stunts leaves 5 Starting Fate Points. The incanter only needs common materials when creating temporary artifices and sometimes when using his Aid Skill (even healing potions are mixed from common ingredients). He always needs to be able to speak to incant his spells although the target doesn't need to hear him, which severely limits his abilities when he is a crow or intangible!





ACTION



With a Cape File in your hand at last we come to *action*, the act of getting things done. We're going to start by talking about what happens in a Scene, beginning with Aspects and then go into a scene's Phases, Rounds and Turn Order. Then we will review how to use the Fate Dice and determine the outcomes of dice rolls, and learn more about Actions in detail. The second half of the chapter is devoted to working with Fate Points—other than the dice the strongest driver of outcomes in the game.

Aspects: The Scene of the Action

It all comes back to Aspects, the first thing you learn about any scene. Let's start by recalling the two previously stated rules of Aspects:

THE FIRST RULE OF ASPECTS
Aspects Describe What's Important

THE SECOND RULE OF ASPECTS
Aspects can Always Change.

The Aspects heroes will most commonly deal with are **Character Aspects** and **Situation Aspects**. There are two other types of Aspects that regularly come into play: Game Aspects, and Consequences (p.132). Boosts (p.113) give a +2 bonus, like invoked Aspects, but are only created by Outcomes (you either don't succeed well enough to create a new Aspect, or succeed especially well and get the extra Boost as an extra) or by Stunts, and they cannot be invoked with a Fate Point or compelled. They are otherwise identical to other Aspects although very short-lived.

Creating Aspects

Aspects can come into play in a number of ways. From the easiest to the most costly, these are 1.) Narrative Addition, 2.) Declare a Story Detail, 3.) Create an Advantage, 4.) Collateral Damage, and 5.) Compel an Aspect.

Narrative Addition

Although the GM opens a scene with a list of Situation Aspects (usually 3 to 5), that list is far from all-inclusive; it merely reflects what the GM feels is most important going into the scene. As players interact with the scene they and the GM can suggest new Situation Aspects if the scene description or developing narrative makes it reasonable that they should be there. If the GM and players agree, write them down.

*Example: As the crisis of The Event continues and Atlas makes it his mission to get emergency vehicles where they need to go, his player asks about the traffic situation on Chicago's streets. Given previous descriptions, the GM decides that **STREETS FULL OF DEAD OR CRASHED VEHICLES** is now a relevant Situation Aspect for Atlas to overcome or work around. Atlas' player suggests that, with lots of Chicagoans eager to help, they could also add **LOTS OF VOLUNTEERS** to the scene. The other player and the GM feel this makes a lot of sense.*



Declare a Story Detail

Sometimes you want to directly shape the scene’s narrative to your benefit. One way to do this is to spend a Fate Point and declare a story detail based on one of your hero’s Aspects. For example, Hope’s player spends a Fate Point and declares that because of her **BLUEBLOOD CHILD OF PRIVILEGE** Aspect, she knows a convenient municipal judge; Hope and the judge’s daughter attended the same coming-out ball and the judge regularly attends her mom’s foundation events and knows Hope well enough to even take her seriously. Her player writes this up as a new and beneficial Situation Aspect: **I KNOW A FRIENDLY JUDGE**. Note that many Power Aspects allow transformations that are performed by simply declaring the new story detail (**INVISIBLE, MADE OF IRON**, etc.).

Create an Advantage

Instead of spending a Fate Point and declaring a story detail, you can introduce one using the **Create an Advantage Action (p.117)**. For example, instead of simply *declaring* that Astra knows a judge through her upper-crust connections, Astra’s player might have taken the Action and rolled with Astra’s Good (+3) Connections to create the **I KNOW A FRIENDLY JUDGE** Aspect as an advantage—complete with a Free Invoke.

Besides the difference in process (rolling vs. an Attribute, Skill, or Resource rather than spending a Fate Point), the main distinction between declaring a story detail and creating an advantage is simply that the process of creating an advantage is *active*; your hero must *take an Action* and describe what she is doing to create the new Aspect (in this case, Astra trying to reach the judge). And there is always the possibility of failure or incomplete success.

Collateral Damage

Negative Situation Aspects can also be created as Collateral Damage in a Scene. Most of the time this happens when an attempted Action results in an Epic Fail (p.116), but it may also result from a success if, narratively, a use of a weapon or power calls for it.

*A Projector attacks everyone in a target area with a wide-effect concussive blast. He hits his targets, Taking Out many minions, but also does indiscriminate damage to the area. The GM decides that it takes the form of **RUPTURED ELECTRICAL LINES**.*

Negative Situation Aspects can vary in seriousness, from Aspects like **INJURED BYSTANDERS** and **FIRE DAMAGE to DEAD BYSTANDERS** or **COLLAPSED STRUCTURE**. “Stacked” Collateral Damage can also change negative Situation Aspects from mild to extreme; one way of judging this is by using the shifts of failure or success to create a Difficulty Rating for the seriousness of the damage. The GM may also use a weapon or power’s Weapon Rating to the same effect.

*The Projector is an A Class (Weapon Rating 8). Since it was an Area Attack, with dispersed effect, the GM decides to split the rating and assign **RUPTURED ELECTRICAL LINES** a +4 Difficulty Rating.*

The negative Situation Aspect’s DR may be used in the Scene Resolution Phase (p.135), or earlier if any of the heroes wish to try and Overcome (p.116) the new Aspect—or if the GM wishes to turn the Aspect into a full-blown Hazard (p.155)! All of this should make heroes *very* careful when using powers with high Weapon Ratings.

Compelling an Aspect

Much of the time a Compel (p.113) will end a scene altogether and launch a new one or simply present a complication in the form of new opponents, a significantly changed situation, etc. However, the GM can just as easily use it to create a new Situation Aspect or Hazard that the heroes will now have to overcome to obtain their objective!

*In the Chapter Two example of Atlas landing the falling plane, the “controlled crash” resulted in a **RUPTURED FUEL TANKS** Aspect. The GM could compel the Aspect to create a **BURNING FUEL SPILL** Aspect on the scene for Atlas and Minuteman to deal with!*

CREATED ASPECTS AND DIFFICULTY RATINGS

Powers can create Aspects out of thin air—literally. For example, a force-field projector might use Create an Advantage to create a barrier. If he succeeds then the DR assigned to the **FORCE-FIELD BARRIER** will equal his **Force Field Projection Skill + Attribute Bonus**, no matter how well he rolls or what other bonuses he gives it. These sorts of power-created Aspects cannot be layered—he could not put a second barrier behind the first with its own DR to overcome, or raise the DR of the existing **FORCE-FIELD BARRIER**. However, repeated Create an Advantage Actions can layer on more Free Invokes! Non-powered Actions to create Aspects are not limited by this rule: if narratively appropriate, the GM may assign a higher DR to the new Aspect than the Skill used to create it.





Removing Aspects

Just as there is more than one way to create new Aspects, there is more than one way to remove them. In order of complexity, they are; Narrative Elimination, Overcome, and Create an Advantage.

Narrative Elimination

Since Aspects reflect the circumstances of a scene, *any* actions which change those circumstances can modify or eliminate Aspects—often without requiring a Fate Point or a die roll! The classic example is the **PITCH BLACK ROOM**; turning on the lights might be so trivial an act that the player says “I flip the lights on and [take an Action].” Alternatively, he could use Create an Advantage when flipping the switch to create a **SUDDEN LIGHT!** Situation Aspect that affects the occupants of the room and gives him a Free Invoke (p.117); either way, the **PITCH BLACK ROOM** Aspect has gone away.

Overcome

A lot of Situation Aspects represent obstacles which, when overcome once, no longer affect the scene. A **LOCKED STEEL DOOR**, whether jimmied, picked, smashed down, or disintegrated, is no longer a **LOCKED STEEL DOOR**. It may not even be a door. Note however, that some methods of going through the door may well create new Situation Aspects; a hero could go through the door in a way that creates an advantage, such as battering through it in one punch/kick/dive to make a **SHOCKING ENTRANCE** Aspect affecting everyone in the room beyond. The GM would probably treat this as Create an Advantage on an area (p.131). Which brings us to...

Create an Advantage

Often Create an Advantage eliminates an existing Situation Aspect with no additional Action or cost required. The GM should encourage this! When the heroes perform Actions that replace rather than simply remove Aspects they make the scene more dynamic. Tactically, they want to control the pace of the action, forcing their opponents to respond to their moves.

Using Aspects

The most important function of Aspects is to reflect and guide a scene’s narrative; thus the **First Rule of Aspects**—they act as Permission and Denial for Actions before Character Ratings or Difficulty Ratings are even consulted. You can’t hurt Atlas with a bow and arrow, no matter how high your Shoot Skill is. You can’t shoot an invisible man unless you can provide a very good reason why your attempt would have even a half-reasonable chance of success. You can use Shoot to cast curses if your Power Aspect says you’re a wand-waving sorceress (and the right curse could circumvent Atlas’ physical near-invulnerability...). Situation Aspects are the same; if your Shoot Skill relies on your **CUTTING-EDGE AUTOPISTOL**, and the GM compels your Gear Aspect to create a **HARD-JAMMED** Aspect on your gun, then you will need to overcome that Aspect (unjam the gun) before you can use your Shoot Skill to actually shoot someone again. (Unless, as a **MASTER OF GUN-FU**, you disarm-and-shoot the minion standing next to you with his own gun with your **MULTI-ACTION GUN KATAS** Stunt!)

Invoking Aspects

The narrative also rules when invoking Aspects; you might have the Fate Point to spend, but you need to describe what happens in a way that makes narrative sense. Different game groups have different rules about this; some require table-consensus on questionable Invokes, others leave the final decision to the GM. Invoking an Aspect is *not* an Action; you can do it at any time. You cannot invoke Aspects to help other player's heroes, but you can pass them Free Invokes or Boosts if you can explain how the advantage you earned helps them too. If you don't want to pay to invoke the Aspect (or don't have the FP), you can use Create an Advantage first to attach one or two Free Invokes to it (p.117).

Using Boosts

Boosts are not Aspects, but they act like a Free Invoke on one (p.117). Boosts can be extremely ephemeral; they don't *need* to be named so don't slow down the action to think of one if you're stumped, and they go away without being used if the situation changes. Pay attention to the Boost's context/description and use it before it's no longer relevant. Example named Boosts: **SURPRISE!**, **LEVERAGE**, **HARD HIT**, etc.

Compelling Aspects

Most of the time it will be the GM who makes Compels. If the Compel is against one of a hero's Aspects, he pays the player an FP out of his Fate Pool. If the Compel is against a Situation Aspect, then the FP comes out of the Bottomless Fate Pool; who gets the FP then depends on *whose hero got hosed*.

*In the above example where the GM compelled **RUPTURED FUEL TANKS** to create the **BURNING FUEL SPILL** Scene Aspect, it severely complicates the scene for both Atlas and Minuteman—they now must evacuate civilians more quickly and try to keep the flames from reaching back to the jet's vapor-filled fuel tanks and igniting a massive fuel-air explosion—so he would give their players a Fate Point each!*

Aspect Difficulty Ratings

As mentioned elsewhere, Situation Aspects can be created with Difficulty Ratings or have them added later. If a hero creates an Aspect with his power then it comes into existence with a specified Difficulty Rating, but for many Situation Aspects the DR can be highly situational and multifaceted. For example, a **HEAVY BANK VAULT** would certainly have two possible Difficulty Ratings: one DR for attempts to “crack the vault” using Larceny, the other DR for attempts to *crack* the vault using superhuman strength or lots of semtex. Similarly, heroes faced with an **ANGRY MOB** might face one DR when attempting to calm the potential rioters down (using Rapport), and another when attempting to intimidate the mob into dispersing (using Provoke).

The GM is under no obligation to present all possible Difficulty Ratings attachable to a new Situation Aspect when he creates it, but he must let the players know what it is when an Action is being attempted (and what the likely consequences of both success and failure will be).

Defending with Aspect Difficulty Ratings

There is one final way in which Difficulty Ratings can strongly affect an exchange; it is possible to use an Aspect's Difficulty Rating in opposition or defense. You may choose to do this in one of two ways: to actively React, or rely on Passive Opposition. When you use an Aspect's DR to actively React, you substitute the Aspect Difficulty Rating for the Attribute or Skill you would otherwise use to counter or defend against your opponent's Action. If you cannot actively React for some reason, you can still rely on the Aspect's Passive Opposition: the person attempting to Attack or Create an Advantage against you only rolls 4 Fate Dice—but his total must be equal to or higher than the Aspect's DR.

*Example: Artemis attacks The Max, a B Class Brotherhood villain, and four of his minions in a **LIGHTLESS ALLEYWAY** (it wasn't so dark until she shot out the one decent light). Rather than attempting to dodge The Max's wild attack and those of his followers (treated as a single Attack buffed by Teamwork, p 130), she relies on the cover of darkness as she presses her attack against him. The GM gives the **LIGHTLESS ALLEYWAY** a +5 Difficulty Rating for hitting a target in the near pitch-darkness—a DR that Artemis' vampire night vision allows her to ignore, but which renders The Max and his people nearly blind. She can use the +5 as Passive Opposition (not even trying React to the blind Attacks), or she can use it plus any Invokes (possibly invoking **FIEND OF THE NIGHT** or **RUTHLESS FIGHTER**) as the Action Rating for her React Action. Once she deals with The Max, she can turn her attention to his minions.*



Scenes and the Order of Action

Now that we've gone over Aspects (again), we can finally talk about Action, beginning with the Scene. In writing, a *scene* is more than a setting or location; it is an event or situation that presents a problem the characters must resolve. In *Wearing the Cape: the Roleplaying Game*, a Scene is much the same thing—it begins with the GM presenting a situation (the **Setup Phase**), and the players must decide what they are going to do. They will accomplish (or fail to accomplish) their goal in the Scene (during the **Action Phase**), finish with a **Resolution Phase**, and move on to the next Scene.

The Setup Phase

The Setup Phase sets the stage for the coming action. It may *involve* action on the heroes' parts, but it is all descriptive, interaction without formal turns being taken. It could begin with a team briefing or an alert that mobilizes the heroes to head to the "scene of the action." It could begin with the GM saying "It's the next morning. What does everyone intend to do?" The Setup Phase may involve some individual or team preparations: **During the Setup Phase, if the players know what kind of action they are going into and want to prep, the GM may allow them to attempt one or more Create an Advantage Actions.** Alternatively, the end of the previous Scene may dictate how the new Scene will open, with little or no "prep time" between the end of the last Scene and the beginning of the new Scene's action.

Regardless, the Setup Phase ends when everyone knows what's going down, the GM has refilled his **Fate Pool (p.121)**, set out the new Situation Aspects, and decided who gets to take the first Action. If it is the first Scene of a new Session, the players will be ready with all of their Starting Fate Points.

The Action Phase

The Action Phase is divided into *rounds*. A round ends when every player character and non-player character (or group) has taken a turn or passed. Ending a round begins the next round, if players still have Actions they want to take, or ends the Action Phase of the Scene.

Turn Order

At the beginning of the Action Phase, the GM determines who gets to go first. Most of the time this will be easy; the player who announces what she's going to do first goes first. Sometimes a superhuman power (such as Speed) might preempt a proactive player's first turn. Sometimes the Setup Phase ends with the non-player characters in the scene taking a preemptive action of their own (moving to the Action Phase with an ambush, for example).

At the end of each hero's turn, her player flips over her Turn Token and decides who goes next; she can pass the turn to any PC or NPC who hasn't gone yet. At the end of an NPC's turn, the GM decides who to pass the turn to. If a player wants to "jump in" to take the next turn, or even preempt the first turn, they may pay a FP to make it happen *if they can explain it*. The GM may do so as well, but can be blocked (p.122). Each PC and NPC may perform *one* Action on their turn.

Whoever controls the PC or NPC who goes last in the round, chooses the PC or NPC who begins the next round (it cannot be the same character).

The Resolution Phase

The Action Phase of the scene ends when no more Actions can or need to be taken to resolve the central problem presented by the scene. In the typical hero vs. villain fight this will happen when either the heroes or villains cannot continue (or have escaped). The scene then moves to the Resolution Phase, which will generally involve making Recovery Rolls (p.133), determining the effects of Collateral Damage (p.111), and even resolving consequent Resource Attacks (p.134).

TURN ORDER STRATEGY

Players will naturally feel the temptation to take their hero's turn and then pass the turn to the next player, so that when their heroes act they act as a solid block to get their hits in as early as possible in the round. But this creates a problem; if all of the heroes go first, then their opposition can all take two turns each before a hero gets to act again! That's a huge tactical advantage in a fight, which the players can only break up by having someone spend a Fate Point to jump in, so it's usually best to trade off PC/NPC turns.

That said, there most certainly *are* times when concentrating PC turns together is a very good idea! Sometimes you are in position to set up a 1-2 or even 1-2-3 combination where you Create an Advantage and then pass the Free Invoke to the next player to Take Out the opposition before they can respond effectively to what you set up. That's sound tactical thinking; go for it! And sometimes it's worth the Fate Point to break up an unfolding combination of the opposition's as well. As always, when you spend an FP to jump into the natural turn-sequence, make sure to justify it with narrative!



Rolling Fate Dice

There are two types of Fate Dice: **Hero Dice** and **Opposition Dice**. Players will always roll the Hero Dice when taking an Action, but whether they also roll Opposition Dice depends on what they face.

Passive Opposition

Many Actions are performed against opposition that is not *actively* trying thwart you or keep you from your goal: a cliff face, a locked door, a wall in your way, a living target that is unaware of you or your actions, etc. **Opposition that doesn't react in any way to your attempt is Passive Opposition.** The GM assigns a **Difficulty Rating** to the opposition if one isn't already provided as part of an Aspect. He may also invoke relevant Aspects for bonuses, creating a final **Opposition Rating**. You roll your four Hero Dice, add the resulting positive or negative number to your **Character Rating** (the Attribute, Skill, or Resource you are using) and any Invoke bonuses you may have added, and compare the total—your **Final Action Rating**—to the **Opposition Rating** to determine the Outcome. An example is Atlas' "catching" the plane in Chapter Two.

*Many powers can create new Situation Aspects that then act as Passive Opposition; for example, an aerokinetic who generates a mini-tornado covering the area, creating **100 MILE-AN-HOUR WINDS**. Anyone trying to close to Fight Range against him will now need to Overcome the new Situation Aspect against Passive Opposition!*

Active Opposition

If you are performing an Action against targets that are aware of you and trying to counter your Action (such as other characters), or are naturally reactive, dynamic, or unpredictable (active security systems, large fires, automated countermeasures, etc.) then you are facing **Active Opposition** and will add the four **Opposition Dice** to your roll. This increases the range of possible results from -4/+4 to -8/+8 and makes outcomes far less predictable!

The same aerokinetic, seeing someone trying to push through his mini-tornado, could focus the brunt of his winds on them. He would then be Reacting against Active Opposition.

NOTE: be sure to make your Hero Dice and Opposition Dice distinctly different. I suggest white or blue for the Hero Dice, red or black for the Opposition Dice. Making the dice the same base color with different-colored symbols can get too confusing.

When do You Roll?

You will always roll the Hero Dice when you take an Action on your turn, and will roll the Hero Dice and Opposition Dice together when your Action is faced with Active Opposition. You will also roll both your Hero Dice and the Opposition Dice if required when your hero is Reacting to an Overcome, Create an Advantage, or Attack Action made against him by an NPC or Hazard. **The only time that you will not roll all of the called-for Fate Dice in an Action you are either taking or Reacting to, is when the character you are making an Action against or Reacting to is a fellow player character!** Then each of you will only roll your four Fate Dice.

EXAMPLE HERO AND OPPOSITION DICE ROLLS

The following situations apply to Overcome, Create an Advantage, and Attack Actions.

PC Hero vs. Vault Door: Passive Opposition, player rolls Hero Dice.

PC Hero vs. Landslide: Active Opposition (the slide is dynamic), player rolls Hero Dice + Opposition Dice.

PC Hero vs. Villain—Undetected: Passive Opposition, player rolls Hero Dice.

PC Hero vs. Villain—Detected: Active Opposition, player rolls Hero Dice + Opposition Dice.

Villain vs. PC Hero—Undetected: Passive Opposition, GM rolls Hero Dice (Villain Dice?).

Villain vs. PC Hero—Detected: Active Opposition (React Action), player rolls Hero Dice + Opposition Dice.

PC Hero vs. PC Hero—Undetected: Passive Opposition, acting hero's player rolls Hero Dice.

PC Hero vs. PC Hero—Detected: Active Opposition (React Action), *both* players roll their Hero dice.

In a nutshell, except in the case of player character vs. player character exchanges, only *one* roll is made in any Action/React exchange; if a player's hero acts *or reacts* to an NPC's Action, the player alone rolls the Hero Dice+Opposition Dice to determine the Action's success. The only time the GM rolls dice is when an NPC is taking an Action unopposed by a PC; for example, when NPCs React to Hazards created by PCs (see *Creating an Advantage Against an Area*, p.131).



The Five Outcomes

When you roll the Fate Dice, add the total to your applicable rating and bonuses, and compare your Final Action Rating to the Opposition Rating, there are five potential outcomes: you will Fail Epically, Fail, Tie, Succeed, or Succeed with Style.

Fail Epically

If you roll badly enough that your total is 3 or more shifts lower than the total you needed to tie the opposing rating, you didn't just fail, you failed epically (also called an **Epic Fail**). The GM can reduce your shifts of failure by 2 for each Fate Point he banks in his Fate Pool (p.121), without turning your failure into a Tie or Succeed (he must leave at least 1 shift of failure). Alternatively he can decline 1 banked Fate Point and immediately Compel your failure as if it were a temporary Aspect, with no Fate Point to you, to create Collateral Damage (p.111). You cannot refuse to accept the Compel and you still fail.

Fail

If after your roll your Final Action Rating is 1 or 2 shifts lower than the Opposition Rating, you have failed. Sometimes you can choose instead to **Succeed at a Cost**. That cost may be paying a Fate Point into the GM's Fate Pool (p.121–122) or allowing the GM to create a negative Situation Aspect (Collateral Damage). For more examples, see Use Succeed at a Cost (p.144).

NOTE: if the narrative allows, an Epic Fail can be reduced to a mere Fail and then converted to Succeed at a Cost. This can make success very problematic; if the player doesn't agree to the cost, he can simply fail.

Tie

If your Final Action Rating is equal to the Opposition Rating then you tie; you succeed, but either you don't succeed completely or you succeed at a **minor** cost. A minor cost can be a new and problematic story detail—possibly in the form of a new Situation Aspect—a Boost for an opposing NPC, a point or two of Stress, or anything else the GM decides represents a “close thing.” Different Actions present different possibilities for Ties.

Succeed

If your Final Action Rating is higher than the Opposition Rating by 1 or 2 shifts, you have succeeded. You get what you want with no cost.

Succeed with Style

If your Action Rating is higher by 3 or more shifts, you succeed and gain an added benefit determined by the type of Action attempted.

The Four Actions

When you roll the Fate Dice, you are taking one of four Actions: **Overcome**, **Create an Advantage**, **Attack**, or **React**. The Attribute, Skill, and Resource descriptions tell you which Actions are available for each and under what circumstances.

Chapter Three gives good general definitions of the four Actions and a few working examples (p.65); here we are going to go into detail to show what outcomes mean for each Action.

Overcome

You use Overcome to achieve stated goals: “I'm going to go through this wall.” Overcome covers a broad category of goals—essentially, if you're acting (rather than reacting), and not doing something that can create an advantage or inflict Stress or Consequences, then you're using Overcome. The opposition you must Overcome may be Passive or Active, depending on its nature. When attempting an Overcome Action, the result of rolled Outcomes will be:

FAIL EPICALLY: As per normal.

FAIL: As per normal; you may choose instead to Succeed at a Cost.

TIE: You fully attain your goal, but at a minor cost.

SUCCEED: As per normal.

SUCCEED WITH STYLE: You get a Boost (p.113) in addition to attaining your goal.

Create an Advantage

When you Create an Advantage you are either creating a new Situation Aspect that gives you a benefit, or you are use an existing Situation Aspect to your advantage. As with Overcome, opposition to Create an Advantage may be either Passive or Active. When attempting a Create an Advantage Action, the result of rolled Outcomes will be:

FAIL EPICALLY: As normal.

FAIL: You either fail completely or someone on the opposite side gets the Free Invoke on the new or existing Aspect! You may need to reword the new Aspect to fit the less than optimal situation you have created.

TIE: You get a Boost instead of a Situation Aspect and Free Invoke. (If you are creating an advantage on an *existing* Aspect, you get 1 Free Invoke to use on the Aspect instead.)

SUCCEED: You get 1 Free Invoke on an existing or new Situation Aspect.

SUCCEED WITH STYLE: You get 2 Free Invokes on an existing or new Situation Aspect!

FREE INVOKES

When you use Create an Advantage to create a Situation Aspect, you stick a Free Invoke to it (two Free Invokes if you Succeed with Style). **You also get to stick a Free Invoke on any Consequences you inflict in a Conflict (p.128)**, since a Consequence is an Aspect and you just created it.

Free Invokes are different from regular Invokes in two ways: 1.) you do not pay a Fate Point to use the Free Invoke, and 2.) Free Invokes can be stacked on each other and on normal Invokes. Thus, if you Succeed with Style at Creating an Advantage, when you subsequently invoke the new Situation Aspect you can choose to pay a Fate Point for a total of +6! That's +2 for the Invoke, and +4 for the two Free Invokes; if you didn't have the Fate Point to spend, you could still invoke the Aspect for the +4.

You don't have to stack Free Invokes, and can split stacked Free Invokes any way you like. So you could take a +4, or use one for a +2 before the die roll and the second to reroll your Hero Dice after the roll, or use one Free Invoke and save the second for your next Action. You can also pass the Free Invoke(s) to other characters if the narrative allows it ("stunning" an opponent, and then passing the Free Invoke needed to take easy advantage of his stunned state to the next character attacking him, is a routine use of Free Invokes).

Attack

You use the Attack Action in a Conflict (p.128) to do harm to someone (inflict Stress or Consequences) or cause them to be **Taken Out** of a scene (p.134). Harm can be physical, mental, and even *social* (against your target's Resources). Attack will be met by Active Opposition most of the time; Passive Opposition means you have either achieved complete surprise or your target is restrained, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to react effectively. When attempting an Attack Action, the result of rolled Outcomes will be:

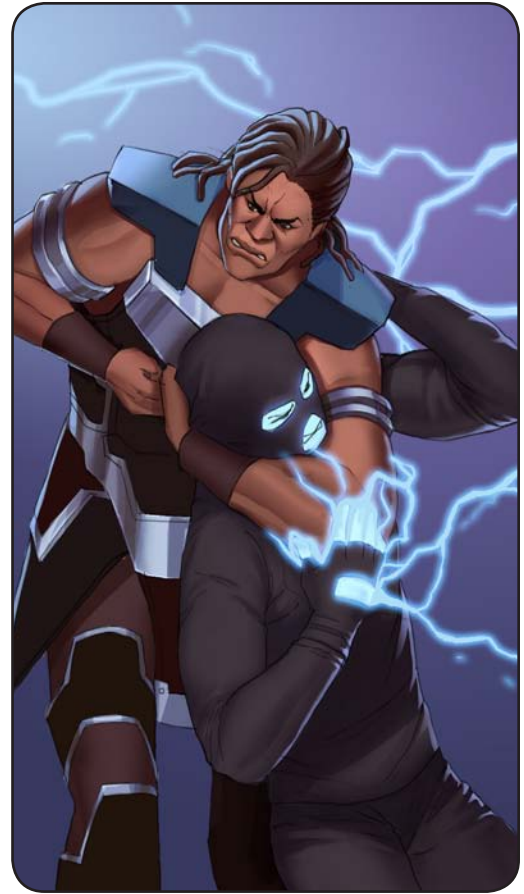
FAIL EPICALLY: You fail so badly that either the GM creates a negative Situation Aspect—Collateral Damage (p.111)—or your opponent gains a Boost for his successful Defend.

FAIL: You fail. You may not opt to Succeed at a Cost.

TIE: You don't inflict any shifts, but gain a Boost.

SUCCEED: You inflict a number of shifts equal to the degree of your success. Your target must absorb those shifts by taking Stress or Consequences. If he has no Stress Boxes or Consequence Slots left to absorb those shifts with, then he is Taken Out.

SUCCEED WITH STYLE: You may reduce the number of shifts you inflict by 1 to take a Boost (p.113) as well.



React

When someone attempts a Create an Advantage Action against you, or Attacks you, or attempts an Overcome Action and you are in a position that would allow an attempt to stop them, you may perform a React Action. **You can attempt a React Action (as a Block, Counter, or Defend) against any Action the scene’s narrative puts you into a position to oppose.** If the GM agrees that you are in position to React, you may announce what you are doing and become the part of the opposition. The outcome depends on just what you are reacting to.

Counter and Defend

If an opponent is trying to Create an Advantage aimed at you, or attempting to Overcome a Situation Aspect that you created and are still in a position to support, or attempting to Attack you and you are able to React, you may attempt to Counter (against Overcome or Create an Advantage) or Defend (against Attack) with Active Opposition. You will then roll the Hero Dice and the Opposition Dice together to see if your React Action was successful. The effects of the five Outcomes are:

FAIL EPICALLY: Your opponent Succeeds with Style (see Action’s Outcome).

FAIL: Your opponent Succeeds.

TIE: Your opponent gains a Boost for his tied Attack or Create an Advantage attempt, or pays a minor cost to Overcome.

SUCCEED: You successfully Defend against the Attack or Counter the attempt to Create an Advantage against you.

SUCCEED WITH STYLE: You successfully Defend or Counter and receive an Action-related Boost as you momentarily turn the tables!

*Blackstone has previously created an array of **BLACKSTONE DECOYS** around him (an Aspect with a DR equal to his +5 Deceive Skill). When a shooter targets Blackstone he Defends with Active Opposition. The player invokes any relevant Aspects and rolls the Hero Dice and Opposition Dice to see if he successfully misdirected the shooter. If Blackstone was unaware of the shooter, his player could not take a React Action and the GM would roll the Villain Dice against Passive Opposition instead to see if the shooter hit, still against the +5 DR set up by the **BLACKSTONE DECOYS**.*

Block

Things work a bit differently for Block. If you are attempting to block an Action not aimed at you, for example stepping in the way of a bullet or attempting to block someone’s attempt to move past you or through an area in your range (physical reach or even Shoot Range if using an appropriate power), your React Action is a Block.

To attempt a Block, compare Opposition Ratings. If the original Opposition Rating is higher, just add your effort as a +1 Teamwork Bonus (p.130). If your Character Rating is higher than the original Opposition Rating, you substitute your rating and then you get to roll (if the un-blocked Action was against Passive Opposition, this will make it against your Active Opposition).

Either way, if you fail then you suffer the negative effect of the Action as well. If the Action was an Overcome and the succeeding character got a Boost from it, that Boost may be used against you. Alternatively, the GM may create a new Situation Aspect that works against you (without any Boost or Free Invoke attached). If you were trying to physically Block someone’s movement and they pushed right past you, the GM could be justified in handing you a **KNOCKED ON YOUR BUTT** Aspect.

If your Block succeeds, then the result will depend on how you blocked and to what degree the acting character would have otherwise succeeded. Super-tough heroes using their bodies to shield civilians is an old superhero trope, but the GM might require you to suffer from the results of a success unless the blocked Action would have failed against even the original Opposition Rating!

Atlas attempts to shield a civilian being targeted by a rampaging supervillain, using his own body. The Villain has +3 Shoot/WR 5, while the civilian has +0 Athleticism (dodge). Atlas’ Athleticism is +5, so that becomes the new Opposition Rating (Atlas is dodging into the way of the villain’s shot). If the villain fails, but would have succeeded against the original +0, then unless the weapon used was one Atlas can ignore, he must absorb at least the shifts of success (including the villain’s WR and minus his own Armor Rating) as if he’d been the target of a successful Attack Action.

You get no special benefits for successfully Blocking an Action—although you may be the recipient of the Free Invoke from your opponent’s failed Create an Advantage!

Now that we’ve gone through the phases of a Scene, Action Order, and Actions and Outcomes, let’s take a closer look at Fate Points and Aspects and how they affect the Action.





Fate Points: The Currency of Action

Fate Points allow you to influence the game with more than just dice rolls. You begin a Session with a pile of Fate Tokens equal to your Starting Fate Points (unless you ended a Session with more than your SFP, in which case the “extra” will have carried over to the new Session). The Fate Point Economy works slightly differently for the GM; he uses a small Fate Pool instead of Starting Fate Points. He gains and loses Fate Points differently, and replenishes his Fate Pool at the beginning of every Scene. But first let’s examine the ways players can spend and earn Fate Points during a Scene.

THE PLAYER’S FATE POINT ECONOMY

You spend a Fate Point to do one of five things:

- Invoke an Aspect.*
- Power a Stunt.*
- Refuse a Compel.*
- Declare a Story Detail.*
- Take the Next Turn.*

You earn a Fate Point for one of four things:

- Accept a Compel.*
- Have One of Your Aspects Invoked Against You.*
- Concede in a Conflict.*
- Roll 0 Pluses (⊕) On Your Hero Dice.*

Invoke an Aspect

Unless you are using a Free Invoke (p.117), you must spend a Fate Point when you invoke an Aspect. The Aspect may belong to you (one of your Character or Gear Aspects), to the scene (a Situation Aspect or even a Game Aspect), or even to another character! Regardless of the source of the Aspect, the benefit from the invoke goes to your hero.

You may invoke an Aspect *before* you roll the Fate Dice to take a +2 Bonus, or *after* you have rolled if you wish to reroll your Hero Dice. *Any one Aspect may only be invoked once per Action* (not including stacked Free Invokes). However, you may invoke as many different Aspects per Action as you have Fate Points!

Regardless of whether or not you have Fate Points to spend, you may only invoke an Aspect if it makes narrative sense! Astra’s player cannot invoke her **“I LOOK LIKE AN UNDERDEVELOPED TEENAGE TINKERBELL.”** Aspect to give her a bonus on her *Fight* roll (unless Astra is fighting a villain who has completely underestimated her because of her harmless appearance—and then her player might get away with it with her first Attack).

Power a Stunt

Most Stunts do not cost anything to use—you have “prepaid” for them by giving up a Starting Fate Point during character creation—but some Stunts are powerful enough to cost a Fate Point to power them (the FP cost will be part of the Stunt description).

Refuse a Compel

Sometimes the GM will Compel one of your hero’s Aspects to complicate the situation in a way you don’t want to accept (p.113); this might be because he is suggesting your hero is doing something you think is out of character, or you just don’t want to see it happen. If so, you are not required to accept the Compel; if you and the GM cannot come to an acceptable compromise, you may pay a Fate Point to refuse it as a last resort (the FP does not go into the GM’s Fate Pool).

Declare a Story Detail

Often this means triggering a Power Aspect-permitted transformation (p.111).



Take the Next Turn

Normally the player whose turn just ended decides which player character or non-player character gets to take the next turn. However, if your hero hasn't already had a turn and you really want her to go next then you can pay a Fate Point to jump in and take your turn.

Accept a Compel

In writing we call them *complications* and *plot-twists*. They take the story in interesting directions and throw new obstacles into hero's paths to make them work for their Good Ending. Accept the complication the GM has in store for you and you are rewarded with a Fate Point to help you deal with it or to save for doing Cool Stuff you want to do.

Self-Compels

It is possible for you to self-compel—in fact it is encouraged; it's called *good roleplaying*. If you have your hero act in ways that are true to his Aspects (especially his Trouble Aspect) and complicate the situation, the GM should award you a Fate Point after the fact.

Have One of Your Aspects Invoked Against You

Like you, the GM can spend Fate Points to invoke Aspects for bonuses. If he spends an FP to invoke one of your *hero's* Aspects (a Character Aspect, Gear Aspect, or Consequence), the FP he spends goes to *you* instead of back into the bottomless pool from which he pays for Compels. The gained FP cannot be spent until your hero's next turn.

Concede in a Conflict

There are two ways to end participation a Conflict; your hero gets Taken Out (is unable to absorb the shifts of "hits" he has just taken with his remaining available Stress Boxes or Consequence Slots) or you concede. More on Consequences later (p.132).

Conceding does not mean your *hero* concedes! It means you the player declare that, narratively, your hero has either left the scene or has been rendered somehow unable to continue to participate in the action. If you Concede rather than take additional Consequences (and you can make that decision any time during an Action *before* the dice are rolled), then you and the GM will negotiate what happens to your hero. He may have been stunned or incapacitated long enough to allow the villain to escape, or he may have been captured, or he may just be out of the fight, but whatever happens ends the Conflict for him with no way of coming back.

The upside to conceding is three-fold: 1.) You move on to the next Scene with fewer Consequences on your hero, 2.) You gain one Fate Point for conceding, plus an additional Fate Point per Consequence already put on your hero during the Scene, and 3.) Most importantly, *if you concede then you get a say over what happens to your hero*. The GM cannot simply have a villain kill him, and he will receive no further Consequences in the Scene. Your description of what happens cannot negate the villain's victory—within reason the winner gets what he wanted out of the conflict—but may mean the difference between being knocked out of a fight just long enough for the villain to attain his objective and leave, or being killed or taken hostage and starting the next scene completely helpless. These are things that can happen if your hero is Taken Out, and conceding allows you to avoid them (if the villain's goal was to capture your hero, then conceding won't allow you to negate that, but it should then lessen the direness of the situation in which you find yourself).

Roll 0 Pluses (⊕) On Your Hero Dice

The final way to earn Fate Points during a scene is to roll only ⊖ and ■ with your **Hero Dice**. If you do this, then you're very possibly in a world of hurt and can use all the help you can get; you earn one Fate Point but cannot use it before your next Action. You cannot take the Fate Point if you spend a Fate Point to reroll the Hero Dice, and you cannot take a Fate Point as the result of a Hero Dice reroll. (Essentially, you're earning a Fate Point for refraining from rerolling a crappy Hero Dice roll.)

USING SELF-COMPELS

Sometimes good roleplaying means having your hero behave in ways that create serious complications. For example Ajax, **ENRAGED BY ABUSES**, might be provoked into engaging in excessive use of force against villains—excessive enough to warrant **SUSPENDED PENDING INVESTIGATION** or **PUBLIC BACKLASH** if his actions didn't immediately and seriously compromise his or the team's tactical position in the actual fight. Go for it! But remember that you get the Fate Point for the Compel because of the bad *result* of your hero's action, not the action itself; when you say what your hero is going to do, suggest the consequence as well—the GM can approve it or make a counter-proposal and the other players can always chime in.



The Fate Pool: The GM's Fate Reserve

Instead beginning with a fresh pile of Starting Fate Points at the beginning of a Session, the GM begins each *Scene* with a topped-up Fate Pool. **The Fate Pool contains 1 Fate Point for each player character in the scene, plus a number of Fate Points reflecting the seriousness of the threat and the potential for serious collateral damage (civilian casualties, etc).**

THREAT LEVEL

Low: -1 Fate Point per 2 PCs (rounding up).

Normal: 0 Fate Points.

High: +1 Fate Point per 2 PCs.

Catastrophic: +1 Fate Point per PC.

The Fate Pool acts as both a *resource* and a *countdown* on the scene! If the number of points in the Fate Pool rises to double its starting amount (Number of PCs + Threat Level Points), then the GM can force a **Scene Concede**. A Scene Concede is identical to a regular Concede, except that 1.) it affects all PCs remaining in play, 2.) it cannot be resisted—the GM ends the scene in whatever way the narrative indicates likely (with player input as with a normal Concede), and 3.) he gives 2 Fate Points to every PC still in play and uses the remainder for the Scene Resolution phase (p.135). The GM may add FP to the Fate Pool in the following ways:

Succeed at a Deferred Cost

When a hero misses his roll and takes the option of *succeeding at a cost* (p.144), the GM may defer the cost; instead of having something concrete and bad happen immediately, he can add a Fate Point to the Fate Pool to represent the rising instability of the situation. *Something* still happens, but its full effects are yet to come or may be rendered moot.

Example: Atlas fails in his attempt to bring the falling plane down intact. The GM banks a Fate Point and decides that Success At a Cost means that Atlas lands the plane with severe structural damage but with the cabin intact; the passengers are saved, but many are injured and the hidden damage may spark a new disaster at any moment.

Banked Success

In addition to banking Fate Points by reducing Epic Failure to mere Failure or even Succeed at a Cost (p.116), the GM may reduce a number of shifts of *Success* made by an NPC against a PC, banking 1 Fate Point per every 2 shifts decrease of inflicted Stress/Consequences in an Attack, or 1 Fate Point for turning a Succeed with Style into a mere Success in an Overcome, Create an Advantage, or React. (The tradeoff is giving up inflicted Stress/Consequences, extra Free Invokes, or Boosts!)

Example: An A-Class Ajax Type lands a serious blow on Atlas, with 4 shifts of success! Instead of doing 4 shifts of Stress (before factoring in WR and AR) and taking the Boost, the GM explains that the punch threw Atlas through the nearest wall and trades the 4 shifts of inflicted Stress for 2 points added to his Fate Pool.

As seen in the example, the GM can bank Fate Points as a way of reducing successes against player characters that might otherwise Take Out the hero! This isn't a giveaway—merely a means of shifting the effects of success. It also allows the GM to prolong a conflict if he has reason to.

FATE POOL STRATEGY

Remember that *WtC:RPG* isn't a game with two sides; the GM's "side" isn't the opposition, and he doesn't *win* if the player's heroes *lose*. This means that the Fate Pool isn't ammunition; it's a pacing tool. The GM should burn Fate Points if he decides he needs to make the current situation more challenging—players don't really want a cake-walk—but he doesn't *need* to burn Fate Points when he sees an opportunity to help the opposition win. Likewise, just because he gets enough FP in the Fate Pool to force a Scene Concede, there is no reason why he should unless it suits his plans for building into the next exciting Scene.

That said, one handy use of the Fate Pool is as a *threat*. The GM should keep the Fate Pool where the players can see it and track it as it builds, and he can let the players know that when it builds to a certain point Something Will Happen. It could be dropping a bunch of new and bad Situation Aspects on the heroes. It could be a forced Scene Concede without the heroes accomplishing all that they want to. (Using it like this, he might want to let the players use Succeed with Style as an opportunity to shave Fate Points off of the Fate Pool instead of for a bonus.) Like the rest of the GM's toolbox, the Fate Pool is there as an option for increasing excitement and drama; use it accordingly. If nothing else, saving a massive Fate Pool for the Resolution Phase can keep the players on their toes and concerned for all of the negative Situation Aspects they might have created in the course of a fight...



Using the Fate Pool

Just like the players, the GM can always spend a Fate Point to create a new and narratively justified Situation Aspect. Of course if he “burns” FP then he will be deferring or foreclosing the opportunity to force a Scene Concede!

Declare a Story Detail

The GM can spend a Fate Point to create a new Situation Aspect.

Increase Opposition

The GM can spend a Fate Point to invoke an Aspect and increase the Difficulty Rating opposing a hero’s Action by +2—or he can create Fair (+2) opposition where none existed! If the GM invokes one of a hero’s Aspects to increase opposition, the FP goes to the hero’s player. Otherwise it goes into the bottomless Fate Point reserve.

Compel a Player Character Aspect

If the GM compels a hero’s Character Aspect, he pays for it out of the Fate Pool rather than the bottomless Fate Point reserve normally used to pay players for Compels (p.113).

Take the Next Turn

The GM may spend a Fate Point to give the next turn to the NPC of his choice instead of the previous turn-taker’s pick. The NPC cannot have previously taken a turn during the round. The GM pays the Fate Point to the player whose hero would have gone next. The player may refuse to accept the GM’s preemption, in which case he treats it like a refused Compel and pays a point into the Fate Pool instead!

Pay Stunt Costs

The GM can spend points from the Fate Pool to pay Stunt costs for any of his NPCs. Note: be careful to keep the depth of your Fate Pool in mind when fielding NPCs against the heroes, and if key Power Stunts require FPs, then use them sparingly!

Forcing a Scene Concede

If the number of tokens in the Fate Pool rises high enough for the GM to force a Scene Concede, the GM can pay each player 2 FP out of the Fate Pool and then move from Action exchanges to a narrative windup of the scene. If the PCs are winning or at least in an advantageous position, then the GM should ask them what they want the wrap-up of the scene to look like. They won’t get everything their way, but if they are winning then the result should feel like a victory! If they are losing, then the GM should ask them what they feel the consequences and cost of failure should be, the same as a normal Concede.

After paying out the player’s FP, there may be FP remaining in the Fate Pool. If there is, then the GM can use the remaining FP to 1.) invoke negative Situation Aspects when the players play out the Scene Resolution phase (p.135), or 2.) declare new story details rising from the way the scene ended; this can include new negative Situation Aspects the heroes must deal with!

FATE POOL STRATEGY II: THE CLIFFHANGER

An exciting way to use a Scene Concede is to set up a Cliffhanger! Instead of going into the Scene Resolution Phase, end the Scene and the Session together, with the heroes still in peril after the GM throws a major complication at them (spending a Fate Point or two to establish new and nasty Story Details or compelling one or more current Situation Aspects to do it). Instead of using the remaining FP in the Fate Pool for a Scene Resolution Phase, he will keep them for the next Session.

The next Session will begin with the cliffhanger-interrupted Scene. This means that the PCs will not have had time to recover either Stress or Consequences or renew their Starting Fate Points—but the GM will also begin the Scene with only the FP from the previous Scene’s Fate Pool. All still-relevant Situation Aspects from the previous Scene will also remain.

This can be a fun change from ending a final Scene with a Scene Concede—or simply “pausing” the Scene until the next Session—because the playing group has run out of time and need to end the night’s gaming. Players miss out on normal end-of-Session activities, but they get the suspense and anticipation of the next Session’s resolution of the cliffhanger. They open the next Session by resolving the cliffhanger Scene, then move to the Scene Resolution Phase they would have performed the previous game night. Recovery is performed, Milestones are taken care of, and Starting Fate Points are renewed.





7

ACTION LENSES



A lot of the time the Action Phase of a scene (moving from recognizing a goal to achieving it or failing to achieve it) can be resolved in a single Attribute, Skill, or Resource Roll. A single Investigate Skill roll might represent days of research or finding and questioning witnesses, a Rapport Skill roll could resolve a week-long publicity campaign (or a one-minute attempt to talk another person into “doing it your way”). A single Stealth Skill roll could determine if you remained undetected while tailing your suspect in hopes that he will lead you to the location of a secret meeting. In short, a single dice roll can encompass a *lot* of action.

But scenes aren’t just about getting to the end and to the next scene; if the heroes are doing something interesting and pivotal, then it should be more dramatic than a single dice roll, with many opportunities for player’s decisions and tactics to affect the outcome. If nothing else, the more opportunities you present to roll the dice, the more opportunities you create for the interesting and unexpected to take your game in new and dramatic directions (and nobody wants a one-roll fight resolution unless it’s an *awesome* finishing move).

The Action Lenses, more focused ways of resolving Action Phases, are **Challenges**, **Contests**, **Negotiations**, and **Conflicts**. We’ll take them one at a time.

CHALLENGE

A series of Overcome Actions that you use to resolve a complex or dynamic situation.

CONTEST

You and someone else attempting to achieve mutually exclusive goals without trying to harm each other.

NEGOTIATION

You and someone else attempting to negotiate mutually exclusive outcomes in their favor.

CONFLICT

You and someone else interacting with the intent and ability to inflict physical or mental harm on each other.

Challenges: When It Gets Complicated

Sometimes achieving a goal will require more than one Overcome Action and the successful application of several different Attributes, Skills, or Resources to perform different tasks. To determine whether a situation rises to the level of a Challenge, ask these two questions:

- **Is each separate task something that can generate tension and drama independently of the other tasks?**
- **Do the tasks require different Attributes, Skills, or Resources to complete?**

If the answer to both questions is yes, then the GM may want to set it up as a structured Challenge.

Setting up a Challenge means identifying the needed tasks or goals that must be Overcome to successfully complete the Challenge. Depending on the situation, one hero might make all the rolls, or teammates may be involved—each contributing their strengths.

To conduct a Challenge, perform each Overcome Action in the most narratively logical order; the Challenge’s outcome is not decided until you know the results of each Action. If you get a Boost on one of your rolls, you may use it on any subsequent roll in the Challenge, provided you can justify it.



Once all of the rolls have been made (at least two Overcome Actions, generally best to have no more than five), the GM considers the successes, failures, and costs of each Action to decide how the Scene will proceed. The results might be a definitive end to the Scene, another Challenge, a Contest, a Negotiation, or even a Conflict! If any Boosts went unused in the Challenge, feel free to keep them for the rest of the Scene, or for whatever Scene you're transitioning into if the events of the Challenge connect directly to the next Scene!

Example Challenges

EXAMPLE 1

On the day of The Event, one crashed plane has brought down part of a business building in the Chicago Loop. Atlas' player announces that he is engaging in rescue operations in the **HALF-COLLAPSED BUILDING**. The GM sets up the challenge in three parts: Overcomes with Alertness to find still-living victims in the collapsed building with his supersenses, Survival for dealing with a dangerously unsafe structure, and Physique for the heavy lifting.

Atlas Succeeds with Style on his Alertness roll, giving him a +2 Boost which he applies to his Average (+1) Survival roll (failure would not endanger him, but would probably cost lives). Lastly he rolls with his new superhuman Physique against the Difficulty Rating; failure with either Survival or Physique could result in his collapsing more of the building in his attempts to get to trapped victims or clear paths to safety.

The GM decides that failure on any one of these Overcome rolls will simply mean fewer victims saved—and possibly Stress or even a Mental Consequence on an Epic Failure.

EXAMPLE 2

The newly formed Sentinels launch a publicity campaign to cement the idea of them as a no-kidding Superhero Team in the public mind. The GM decides the success of the campaign will depend on Contacts (mobilizing necessary expertise), Reputation (anything earned in the first post-Event week), Presence (for the video and sound-bites), and Rapport (the Skill for public communication). They rely on Atlas' Contacts (in this case his brother in one of Chicago's top marketing firms), and on teamwork with the Reputation (Atlas), Presence (Blackstone) and Rapport (Ajax) rolls. The GM rules that Succeed with Style in at least two of the three Overcomes will lead to a new Game Aspect, **WE HAVE SUPERHEROES!** response by much of the public—while an Epic Failure will result in a **FREAKY-SCARY SUPERHUMANS** Game Aspect. Mere success or failure will result in both Game Aspects.

EXAMPLE 3

A telepath is trying to read the mind of a target to learn a vital piece of information. The GM sets it up as Overcomes with Stealth (success means the target doesn't notice the intrusion), Rapport (to gently nudge the target's thoughts in the direction the telepath wishes to observe), and Investigate (for the telepath to pick the vital pieces of information out of the stream-of-conscious thoughts of his target). The GM also decides that Stealth must overcome the target's Alertness, that Rapport must overcome the target's Discernment, and that Investigate must overcome a +3 DR **CONFUSING STREAM OF MEMORIES** Aspect. A Tie with Stealth or Rapport will give the target a Boost, and Failure with Stealth or Rapport will Succeed at a Cost, raising the final DR.

Creating Advantages in a Challenge

The Overcome Actions that make up a Challenge need not be rolled sequentially; when narratively appropriate, you can attempt one Create an Advantage Action before or between each Overcome Action—which you can then invoke to increase your odds of success. In the above Example 2, the new Sentinels could hire a fashion studio to quickly throw together and sew together costumes for them, to try and give a bonus to their Presence roll.

However, there is a risk; failure can create a cost or complication that negatively impacts your ability to achieve your goals! (The costume designs could look silly instead of dramatic...)

Attacks During a Challenge

Challenges can certainly stretch out over hours or even days; if a twist in the situation creates a Conflict situation, table the Challenge until the Conflict has been resolved—the resolution may well influence the Challenge! Alternatively, the GM may stage Challenges alongside Conflicts if they are happening in the same timeframe; the above Example 3 might be happening turn-by-turn during combat!



Contests: When Goals Collide

Sometimes two or more opponents are attempting to achieve a mutually exclusive goal, in a way that doesn't involve hurting each other. The most obvious kind of Contest is a one-on-one competition of some kind. A wrestling or fencing match. A race or a chase (flying, foot, stock-car, etc.). Even a public debate. They might be competing to directly score on the other person, cross a finish line first, or even to perform the best in the eyes of third-party judges. Other Contests are far less formal; any set of Actions in pursuit of mutually exclusive goals can be framed as a Contest.

A Race Against Time

Terrox, a Verne-Type supervillain, has held up a local bank. The heroes arrive to find that, completely ignoring the money outside with the tellers, and without even bothering to take hostages, he and his minions have locked themselves in the vault! Security monitors show the heroes that Terrox' minions are stripping the vault while he assembles his Quantum-Tunneling Displacement Frame; assembled and activated, it will jump them all away, presumably to his hideout. The heroes immediately begin trying to crack the vault open before Terrox finishes assembly and displaces himself and his minions away, so it becomes a mutual race against time with each side engaged in very different activities.

When setting up a Contest, the GM needs to answer the following questions:

- **What are the “sides?”** Is every character in the Contest in it for himself, or are there groups opposing other groups? If you have multiple characters on a side, they roll using the Teamwork rules (p.130).
- **What is the environment of the Contest?** List any significant or useful features that might influence the Contest as Situation Aspects.
- **Are the participants attempting to Overcome each other directly, or are they trying to Overcome the environment?** A fencing match or chess game are examples of Active Opposition, while an obstacle course or a panel of judges are environmental—contestants rolling against Passive Opposition.
- **What Attributes, Skills, or Resources are appropriate to the Contest?** Is everyone rolling the same one, or do several apply?
- **What will happen if each side wins?**

Once you've decided on the Contest outline, you run the Contest in a series of exchanges. Each participant gets to make one Attribute, Skill, or Resource roll to determine how well they do in that stage of the Contest. Direct PC vs. NPC Contests are made against Active Opposition (the player rolls all 8 dice, as normal). Indirect PC vs. NPC Contests, are made with separate rolls by both PCs and NPCs against Passive or Active Opposition (in the above

example, the rolls would be vs. the strength of the bank vault and the difficulty of assembling the gadget quickly and correctly). In direct PC vs. PC Contests, each player rolls only his 4 Hero Dice.

CONTEST EXCHANGE OUTCOMES

- **If you get the highest result, you win the exchange.** Against a PC opponent, in a contest of Rating vs. Rating (as in a fencing match or chess game) this means you scored the highest rank on the ladder. Against an NPC opponent, after rolling vs. Active Opposition you scored higher than his Opposition Total. If both characters are rolling against the environment (as in an obstacle course or race track), it means your character got the most shifts of success. Winning the exchange means you score a victory (recorded as a chip or a mark on a sticky-note) and can describe how you take the lead.
- **If you Succeed with Style and no one else does,** then you score two victories.
- **If the result is a Tie, no one gets a victory and a “twist” occurs.** The twist could be a change in the environment, the parameters of the Contest may change, or a new variable shows up and affects all of the participants. GMs may create a new Situation Aspect to reflect the change.
- **The first participant to score three victories wins the Contest.**

Creating Advantages in a Contest

As with Challenges, you can always try to Create an Advantage before making any Contest exchange roll. You roll against Passive or Active opposition as normal, and others in a position to may provide opposition as normal.

Attempting the Create an Advantage Action in a Contest carries a risk beyond the normal consequences of failure; **if you fail to create an advantage, then you forfeit the next roll in your exchange.** If you at least tie, you make the exchange roll as normal. If you are part of a group and providing a bonus via Teamwork (p.130), failing to Create an Advantage deprives the lead hero of your help for this exchange.



Attacks in a Contest

If someone takes an Attack Action during a Contest, the usual mode is to suspend the Contest and move directly into a Conflict instead. However, some Contests could conceivably continue during or be woven into a Conflict; for example, a chase where one side is trying to break contact and get away while the other is trying to stop his flight. In such a scenario, Shoot Attacks might not end the Contest and the GM could interspace Conflict rounds between the exchanges (with no Conflict rounds being used for movement—the part covered by the Contest).

Alternatively, a Contest could commence during a Conflict, with the two sides using their turns to pursue the Contest; the Conflict becomes a hazardous piece of the Contest's environment!

Negotiations: Talking It Out

Negotiation gets its own lens because, in both fiction and the real world, it precedes the punches or shots more often than not. A Negotiation could be a formal arbitration, a business negotiation—or an exchange of threats and promises if the other guys don't give up *right now* that is more drawn out than "Stop or I'll shoot!" The key to deciding whether the Scene calls for a Negotiation is in answering the question "Are both sides willing to talk?"

Setting up the Negotiation, take the following steps:

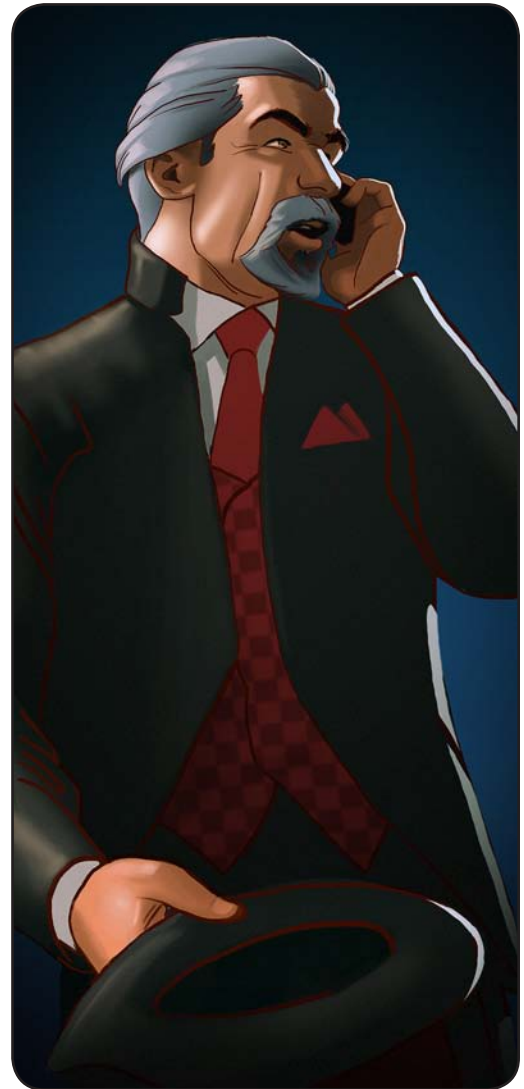
- **Set up the stakes.** What does each side want? Both sides need to agree on what happens if either side Succeeds or Succeeds with Style—the result is *binding*. Between heroes and villains, Success for the heroes often means the villains don't take hostages (or let them go)—while Success with Style might mean peaceful surrender depending on the situation and what the balance of force looks like. For villains, Success might mean the heroes pulling back and giving them room to try and make a getaway, Success with Style could be allowing them transportation with a hostage! It's basically the "Give up?" vs. "Let's all walk away and nobody gets hurt," scenario, but the stakes can be anything, from extra time to a phone call or other concession so long as both sides agree to the potential outcomes.
- **Select the lead negotiators.** These will be the characters doing the talking and whose players will make the Negotiation rolls. There will always only be one lead negotiator for each side.

Once you have settled on the stakes and negotiators, the Negotiation proceeds in two phases: the Leverage Phase and the Resolution Phase.

- **Create Leverage.** Each character in the Negotiation—including the lead negotiators—gets to take *one* Create an Advantage Action to attempt to influence the outcome. Each Action must square with the logic of the situation; Provoke and Rapport are used quite often, but other Skills or Attributes might be appropriate.

Instead of trying to Create an Advantage, participating characters can use Teamwork (p.130) to help other teammates succeed. Anyone can also spend Fate Points to give a bonus to someone's roll if they have an appropriate Aspect to invoke. Mobs, who often have very low ratings, are usually best suited to supporting one NPC (their lead negotiator) instead of trying to create advantages on their own.

- **Resolve the Negotiation.** Once the Leverage phase is complete, the two lead negotiators make a single-exchange Contest roll with their Rapport Skills, adding all bonuses for Free Invokes earned during the Leverage Phase, to determine the outcome of the negotiation. (A PC vs. NPC negotiation will be a single roll against Active Opposition.) Both sides are bound to act out the agreed-upon stakes of the Negotiation. On a *Tie*, neither side wins; you either get a twist, as happens in a Contest exchange, or the Negotiation falls apart and you must find a new way forward.



Astra vs. Gantry

In Chapter Three we used an early scene from *Wearing the Cape* where Hope/Astra is called upon to face down an intoxicated Gantry. We treated it as an example of using the Overcome Action, but we could as easily stretch it into a full and more interesting Negotiation.

SETUP

Atlas and Astra want Gantry to calm down and let the police take him in or at least write him up. Gantry wants to stay mad and be left alone (preferably completely alone, but he'll settle for the cops going away). At the opening of the scene, Atlas nominates Astra to talk to Gantry, so that makes her and Gantry the lead negotiators.


LEVERAGING

Astra's player decides to use her Fair (+2) Rapport Skill (rolling vs. Gantry's Fair (+2) Willpower) to create a **WE'RE ALL FRIENDS HERE** Situation Aspect. Since she only has a 50/50 chance of success, she invokes Astra's **"I LOOK LIKE AN UNDERDEVELOPED TEENAGE TINKERBELL."** Character Aspect for a +2 bonus (she's absolutely trying to look friendly and non-threatening). She Succeeds, but does not Succeed with Style so she gets only a single Free Invoke.

Atlas' player uses his Reputation Resource to convince the police to pull back and stop irritating Gantry. Succeeding, he creates a **THE POLICE PULL BACK** Situation Aspect for a second Free Invoke.

The GM rolls to Create an Advantage on **DRUNK AND MAD SUPERHUMAN** using Gantry's Willpower vs. a default Average (+1) Difficulty (Gantry wants to stay mad). Succeeding, allows him to put a Free Invoke on the Situation Aspect for Gantry.

RESOLUTION

Astra's player now matches her +6 Action Rating (+2 Rapport and two +2s for Astra and Atlas' Free Invokes) against a +3 Opposition Rating (Gantry's +1 Rapport and the +2 for his Free Invoke of **DRUNK AND MAD SUPERHUMAN**). Unfortunately she rolls a , a -3, and adding it all together (2+2+2-3) gives her only a +3 Final Action Rating, for a Tie! Now the GM needs to get fiendish; he decides that Astra's friendly and calm approach was working—until a new police cruiser pulled up, lights flashing, and set Gantry off again. Gantry is done talking and decides (if he's thinking at all) that, since the cops aren't leaving him alone, he's going to work out his anger-issues on them. Neither side got what it wanted, and it's time to set up a Conflict!

Conflicts: You're Capes—Expect Them

In literature, a conflict is “the central struggle between characters or competing forces,” but that definition could cover all of the previously detailed Action Lenses. In Fate, a capital-C *Conflict* is a struggle fought with the intent and ability to inflict harm on an opponent. The harm can be physical or mental; it can even be *social*. By definition, if you use the Attack Action, you are engaged in a Conflict.

A Conflict will be Physical, Mental, or Social in nature, based on the form of harm you are attempting to inflict. Physical conflicts can inflict bruises, scrapes, cuts, and more serious injuries. Mental conflicts can inflict loss of confidence or self-esteem, loss of composure, and even serious psychological trauma. Social conflicts can inflict loss of actual Resources!

Once you've decided that a Conflict is about to occur, take the following steps:

- **Set the scene and establish who is participating and what side they're on.**
- **Determine who opens the first Round.**
- **Once everyone has had a Turn, begin a new Round.** Continue until one of three things happens: at the end of a round nobody left is able to, or intends to, Attack; everyone on one side has been Taken Out (p.134) or Conceded (p.120); or the GM forces a Scene Concede with the Fate Pool (p.122).

Setting the Scene

As always, setting the Scene begins with a general description and some named Situation Aspects. The players need to have a good feel for what's around them and what they might be able to use (or must Overcome to prevail). With cape vs. villain battles, one vital thing to know is the bystander situation; bystanders are often a Situation Aspect that can be invoked, compelled, changed, or removed—and can easily be changed into **INJURED BYSTANDERS** Situation Aspects!



In conflicts, good Situation Aspects can include:

- **Anything that can affect or restrict movement:** crowds, debris, broken ground or more active dangers like floods or fire.
- **Anything that can affect the senses:** darkness, smoke, fog, rain and lightning, sirens, explosions, etc.
- **Stuff to hide behind or use as shields:** vehicles, walls, counters, furniture, etc.
- **Stuff you can as improvised weapons:** vehicles, walls, counters, furniture, etc.
- **Stuff you can knock over, wreck, or burn:** vehicles, walls, counters, furniture, etc.
- **Broader features**, such as tight quarters, open space, high ground, low ground, forested, steaming swamps, etc.

Note that while it is suggested that most scenes feature no more than 3-5 initial Situation Aspects, it isn't a hard rule; you can always seed more into a scene, including some that you don't expect players to use but add atmosphere. Being miserly with Situation Aspects is worse than being overly generous.

Establishing Sides

In addition to knowing the lay of the land, heroes also need to know who they are facing so take time to make sure they're introduced; if they don't know anything about their opponents yet, at least give a basic description like Leather-Clad Bruiser or Ice Cold Gunman. It's a good idea to use a blank sheet of paper to quickly sketch out the scene (some GMs print up locations in advance) and indicate general positions so the players know where their heroes are in relation to their opponents.

Most of the time it will be the player's hero PCs vs. villain NPCs directed by the GM, but this is not always the case; sometimes the PCs have NPCs fighting alongside them. Occasionally—for whatever reason—PCs may be fighting each other!

Position and Movement in Conflicts

Some roleplaying games use grids or measure exact distances and ranges that players need to track as they move around in a Conflict's location. In *WtC:RPG*, there are only two ranges that players need to keep track of: Fight Range and Shoot Range.

- **Fight Range** is close enough to use the Fight Skill, and also for Skills that require hands-on proximity. You can use Shoot in Fight Range—but being so close opens the possibility of the target (or anyone else close enough to Block) using Fight to Defend! Think of it as knocking the gun away.
- **Shoot Range** is close enough to use the Shoot Skill. It could go from point-blank range with some weapons or powers (overlapping Fight Range) out to 30 yards, more if there is good line-of-sight and the shooter has a decent weapon.

Changing ranges to a target will not take an Action if the scene places even Shoot Range as fairly close; often it's a matter of "I step and—" or even "I charge forward and—". As a rule of thumb, if the narrative makes the distance long enough that closing to Fight Range could give the target time for an Action of his own, then the GM can declare that closing that distance takes an Overcome Action (Athleticism vs. a Difficulty Rating reflecting the distance crossed and obstacles in the way). Other characters may provide Active Opposition (Reacting with suppressing fire, physically blocking the way, etc.) if in position to do so.

Setting Turn Order

For Turn Order, see [p.114](#).

THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY

WtC:RPG doesn't worry about measuring distances closely enough to require maps that split the area of a Scene into zones as other Fate games do; maps are used if the GM and players want more than just a handful of Situation Aspects to help them visualize the territory. Put down a good plan of the Conflict space and lay down Situation Aspects on stickies, and you've got a well-defined space in which players can eyeball distances for themselves (you can even use tokens of some kind to indicate where your heroes and their opposition are placed).

But sometimes you may want to take distance into account when factoring movement or ranged Actions. For ranged Actions, an easy way to do this is to give ranges a Situation Aspect and Difficulty Rating. **Close Range** might be +2 DR, **Mid Range** +4 DR, and **Long Range** +6 DR. The Range Aspect can be used to Defend ([p.113](#)), or invoked for the +2!

For movement, you can assign distance a row of 1-point Stress Boxes. For example, you decide that the distance needed for a hero to close to Fight Range with his target equals 5 Stress Boxes. The hero's player rolls Athleticism vs. +0 DR, with the shifts of success ticking off multiple Stress Boxes as if he were making an Attack Action against a Mob ([p.157](#)). If his Athleticism is equal to or greater than 2x the number of distance Stress Boxes, he does it automatically and can still take a full Action. If he wants to split his Action to "Move and Overcome/Create an Advantage/Attack" then he may treat the *distance* and the *target* as Multiple Targets ([p.131](#)). Instead of being split evenly, the excess shifts after checking off the distance are applied to the target to determine success as normal. Distance Stress is relative; you could give thirty feet of open ground just two Distance Stress Boxes, or broken or dangerous ground three or more Stress Boxes.



Conflict Actions

Attack and React are the most common Actions during a Conflict, but you can use Overcome or Create an Advantage Actions on your turn instead if the situation calls for it. You normally only get one Action per turn; some Stunts allow multiple Actions, but these Actions are still resolved by a single Fate Dice roll.

You may make React Actions at any time and as many times as the scene narrative allows it. There are two Special Conflict Rules for Actions: Full Defense and Teamwork.

Full Defense

If you are pressed or overmatched, you can decide to give up your Action for the round and concentrate on defense. If you do this then you cannot do anything proactive; you can still move around if it doesn't require a Fate Dice roll, and you can React only to counter or defend against threats to you or anyone you are protecting. The upside to declaring a Full Defense is that **your hero gets a +2 bonus on all React rolls you make until your next turn!** Sometimes you just need to hold out till the cavalry arrives.

Teamwork

Players can use Teamwork in Contests and Negotiations as well as Conflicts, but the special rule is most often applied here. A player (or the GM) may have her hero perform a Create an Advantage Action, and then pass the resulting Free Invoke(s) to another player on his hero's turn (the Free Invoke from an inflicted Consequence works too). **The receiving player can then use those Free Invokes to give the bonuses to his own character's attempted Action.**

In Conflicts this is a common one-two setup; the first character distracts the target, giving the second character a better chance of performing a successful Attack against him. But there is no reason that this can't be used by three or more characters, and Teamwork can be just as easily used to ultimately benefit a React or Overcome, or a final Create an Advantage Action!

A second form of Teamwork is the **Teamwork Bonus**.

The Teamwork Bonus

To use the Teamwork Bonus, two or more players agree to unite their turns and Actions (all participants must have not yet used their turn for the present round). The player whose character has the highest rank with the Action's applicable Attribute, Skill, or Resource will make the single Fate Dice roll. **Each additional participant whose character has at least an Average (+1) in the applied Character Rating will add a +1 Teamwork Bonus to the dice roll.**

Combining for a Teamwork Bonus requires narrative justification; two thieves can't combine to pick the same lock just because they both have the Larceny Skill, for example. Teamwork moves can be actions like concentrating a team's firepower; any time it makes sense that more hands (or more minds) would improve the chances of or benefits from success, the GM should allow it.

There is also a *risk* attached to combining for a Teamwork Bonus; if you fail in the Action despite the Teamwork Bonus, all participants share in the potential costs of failure. Whatever complication affects one character affects all of them, or everyone has to take Consequences. Alternatively, the GM can impose a cost that affects all characters the same. (Which does not mean that the effects of failure are necessarily *divided* among the participants; if the normal result of the failure would have been five shifts to be soaked up by Armor Ratings, Stress, and Consequences, then each of the participating characters might be required to take five shifts!)

Resolving Attacks

A successful Attack Action will inflict a hit equal to its shifts of success on your target; see the Attack Action (p.117) for all possible Attack results.

When you take a hit from an Attack Action, if you can *absorb* the shifts then you can stay in the Conflict. If you can't absorb the shifts, you are **Taken Out (p.134)**. There are two ways to absorb shifts inflicted on your hero; **you can convert the shifts into Stress or into Consequences**. If you think that you are likely to be successfully Attacked and can't absorb enough shifts to avoid being Taken Out (or don't want to take the Consequences), you can Concede any time before the dice are rolled. It is always best to Concede before being Taken Out if you can!

WEAPON AND ARMOR RATINGS

When calculating shifts of success, remember Weapon and Armor Ratings (p.91); Weapon Ratings (WR) will add shifts if the Attack Action Succeeds or is at least a Tie, *but the additional shifts do not change the degree of success!* Additionally, if a target's Armor Rating causes the number of shifts of success to drop to 0 or below, the attacker will still get a Boost, as if he had Tied. Yes, this means that performing an Attack Action against a target, even if you know that you can't get through his Armor Rating, is a viable option—the Boost from your first hit might allow you to hurt him with your next hit.



Example: Nimbus fires a high energy laser beam at an A Class Ajax-Type. She succeeds by +2 shifts (a Succeed, but not Succeed with Style). She then adds her own WR8 and subtracts her target's AR4, to do 6 shifts of "damage" that must be absorbed with Stress or Consequences.

Multiple Targets and Area Effects

While the whole Attack/React, Single-Roll Resolution system works well against single targets, against multiple targets things become a little more interesting. How you handle it depends on whether you are trying to attack an area or to specifically attack multiple targets, and whether you are performing an Attack or Create an Advantage Action.

Multiple Targets

Attacking or Creating an Advantage against *specific* multiple targets is straightforward; the player declares his targets, assigns the Rating and Bonuses and then rolls the dice. However, he then divides the resulting number by the number of identified targets, evenly applying the divided shifts to each. Obviously, doing this can be a good way to turn an easy hit into multiple misses! Some Power Stunts give bonuses to multiple attacks to help offset this, as in this example.

*Nimbus declares an Attack on 3 targets with her +3 Shoot. She invokes her Power Aspect for the +2, and she rolls another +1 with her Hero and Opposition Dice for a +6 Final Action Rating. This becomes +2/+2/+2 when divided among her targets, a +3/+3/+3 when adding her +1 **MULTIPLE SHOTS** Power Stunt bonus. Targets 1 and 2 have a +1 Opposition Rating and Target 3 a +4 Opposition Rating, so she hit with two of her shots and missed with the third.*



Attacking an Area

Some powers or conventional weapons may Attack an area rather than a specific target (grenades are a good example; another might be a telekinetic sweeping an area with a storm of debris). When you target a whole area with an Attack, you divide your Attack Skill and Weapon Rating in half (rounding up). The Area Attack Stunt (p.104) allows you to Attack with your full Skill and Weapon Ratings. You will roll the Hero and Opposition Dice only once, as normal, but match the result against multiple Opposition Ratings for everyone Defending. You may succeed against some and fail against others.

Confronted by several bank security guards, Aftershock projects a destructive cone of sound capable of inflicting massive cellular disruption with its vibrations. He rolls and adds the result to his Action Rating, giving him a +3 Final Action Rating (to which he adds 2 shifts of WR if successful). All of the guards have only +1 Opposition Ratings, and since they are "mooks" the GM simply rules that they are all Taken Out.

Note that when characters inflict damage on a whole area, the GM is free to create negative Situation Aspects off of it as Collateral Damage (p.111) when the type of damage calls for it (a good reason to be selective in throwing your power around).

Creating an Advantage Against an Area

Many powers will let the hero use Create an Advantage to create a Situation Aspect which affects everyone in an area (flash or sonic assaults, pheromone attacks, mental projections, etc.). The hero uses the same procedure as above.

*Faced with a destructive riot being driven by psi-amped rage and boiling out of a theater through its parking access, Nimbus positions herself in the entry tunnel and lights up, blinding the oncoming mob with strobing flashes. Her **STROBE ATTACK** Power Stunt allows her to use her Shoot Skill without reduction for this and she gets a +2 total on her role, for a +5 Final Action Rating! Unless there are superhumans with high Opposition Ratings in the crowd, the GM may simply declare the whole crowd temporarily **BLINDED**.*

Taking Stress

The best way to absorb shifts from a hit is to take Stress. Stress represents all the many reasons why you *just* avoided taking the full force from an Attack. It could be luck. It could be the mental and physical fatigue accrued as you fight your way, adrenaline rushing and hyper-alert, through the danger around you. It could be that move that turned what would have been a real injury into a flesh-wound. Whatever it is, luck, adrenaline, moves, you've only got so much of it before it runs out and you start taking real injury, physical or mental.

On your Cape File you have a number of Stress Boxes, each with a different shift value. By default all characters start with 1-point and 2-point Stress Boxes. You will probably have additional, higher-value Stress Boxes granted by higher Physique or Willpower.

To absorb shifts with Stress, check off a Stress Box that is equal to the shift-value of the hit. If that box is already checked, check off a higher-value box. If there is no available higher-value box, and you cannot take any Consequences, then you are Taken Out of the Conflict. You can only check off one Stress Box per hit (you cannot divide the shifts into separate Stress Boxes).

Remember that you have two sets of Stress Boxes—one Physical and one Mental. If you take stress from a physical source, you check a Physical Stress Box, if you take stress from a mental source, you check a Mental Stress Box (and there are some Power Stunts that allow you to absorb a physical hit as mental Stress).

After a Conflict, when you get a minute to breathe, any Stress Boxes you checked off become available again.

Consequences

The second way that you can absorb shifts is by taking a Consequence. **A Consequence is a special Situation Aspect; like any Aspect, Consequences can be invoked or compelled, grant permission, and create denial.**

Consequences come in four levels of severity: **Mild**, **Moderate**, **Severe**, and **Extreme** (only the first three appear on your Cape File sheet). Characters usually only have one slot for each, but some superhuman Attributes grant more.

Once you have checked off a Stress Box, you must absorb all remaining shifts by filling Consequence Slots or be Taken Out. You may fill as many Consequence slots as you need to do so; for example, if you took an incredible hit and still have 6 shifts to absorb, you could apply 2 shifts for a Mild Consequence and 4 shifts for a Moderate Consequence—if one of those two Consequence Slots was already full, you would need to fill the Severe Consequence Slot, accept an Extreme Consequence, or be Taken Out. And there is an added penalty: **the opponent who forces you to take a Consequence, gains a Free Invoke on it!**

- **Mild Consequences.** You can absorb up to **2 shifts** by filling a Mild Consequence Slot. Mild Consequences are fairly transient; they may be Aspects like **BLACK EYE**, **BRUISED HAND**, **WINDED**, **SHAKEN**, or **HALF-BLINDED**.
- **Moderate Consequences.** You can absorb up to 4 shifts by filling a Moderate Consequence Slot. Moderate Consequences will last longer (and often require medical attention); representing fairly serious injuries, they might be Aspects like **SAVAGE CUT**, **FIRST DEGREE BURN**, **EXHAUSTED**, **DRUNK**, or **TERRIFIED**.
- **Severe Consequences.** You can absorb up to **6 shifts** by filling a Severe Consequence Slot. Severe Consequences will linger, and in the meantime are very likely to be invoked or compelled against your hero even when not calling for serious Aspect denials. They might be Aspects like **BAD BURNS**, **COMPOUND FRACTURE**, **INTERNAL DAMAGE**, or **TRAUMA-INDUCED NERVES**.
- **Extreme Consequences.** If your hero *absolutely must not be Taken Out*, you can opt to absorb up to **8 shifts** with an Extreme Consequence; you can only do this once between each **Major Milestone** (p.183). An Extreme Consequence might be something like **MAJOR HEAD INJURY**, **LOST/CRUSHED LIMB**, **MAJOR THIRD DEGREE BURNS**, **CRIPPLING MENTAL TRAUMA**, and so on. Instead of recording the Extreme Consequence in a slot, you replace one of your Character Aspects (other than your Power or Hero Aspect) with it!

Writing Consequences

Much of the time a hero or villain is attempting to inflict a specific form of damage; if he succeeds, then the Consequence almost writes itself. Usually physical damage will create physical Consequences, and mental damage will create mental Consequences, but not always. For example, a player could narrate a near miss or indirect result on a physical attack that still creates a psychological Consequence!

It should go without saying that the description of the Consequence should match its severity; a player cannot describe a Severe Consequence as **SHAKEN** or some other Aspect that would logically go away by the end of the next scene. Likewise, **CRIPPLING MENTAL TRAUMA** cannot be a Minor Consequence—the rules for a Minor Consequence don't match up to the Aspect. What matters is that the shifts are absorbed and the described Consequence fits the narrative.



Living with a Consequence

A Consequence is treated as a *Character Aspect*, so the player will receive Fate Points if it is invoked or compelled against his hero (this does not count the one Free Invoke that came with inflicting it). Even when not invoked or compelled, the injury represented by the Consequence can keep a hero from doing things; for example, a **COMPOUND FRACTURE** can keep your hero from running, climbing, or breaking a villain's hold on him. This is treated as a standard Aspect Denial. Alternatively, you could try to Overcome the denial created by the Consequence; for example, a **TERRIFIED** hero might Overcome his terror, allowing him to Attack! **When rolling to Overcome a Consequence's Aspect Denial, its Difficulty Rating is equal to its severity.**

Recovering from Consequences

In order to clear a Consequence Slot, you must fully **recover** from the Consequence. Recovery requires two things; 1.) Succeed at an Overcome Action that justifies the beginnings of recovery, and 2.) Wait out the required game time (below) for recovery to take place. Note; this being a superhero game, there are Power Stunts that will greatly aid or speed up recovery. Otherwise, heroes will need to wait until they have sufficient time to tend to their injuries before recovery can begin.

Recovery Rolls

The Difficulty Rating opposing the Overcome Action is equal to the severity of the Consequence—a Minor Consequence will have a +2 DR, while an Extreme Consequence will have a +8 DR! The nature of the action must match the injury; most Mild Consequences might simply require resting a few minutes and then rolling vs Physique for physical Consequences or Willpower for mental Consequences. If basic first-aid is required, make an Aid roll. **For Moderate, Severe, or Extreme Consequences, if you are trying to recover by yourself, increase the recovery Difficulty Rating by +2!** Aid roll Difficulty Ratings may be similarly difficult, but need not be.

Most of the time you will need to make the Recovery Roll yourself. However, anyone with the Aid Skill can also attempt to Create an Advantage and then pass the Free Invoke(s) to you to help with your roll. The Recovery Roll will usually be attempted at the end of a scene, since that is when distractions are fewest. You normally only make one Recovery Roll per scene, but if you fail the only consequence is that you must wait until the next scene to attempt another Recovery Roll.

Once you succeed in the Recovery Roll, you get to rename the Consequence Aspect if appropriate to show that it's "in recovery." So a **BROKEN LEG** could be renamed as **STUCK IN A CAST**. It doesn't always make sense to change the Aspect name; for example you're **EXHAUSTED** until you've had a good night's sleep, and then you're not. When you don't change the name, put an **(R)** beside the Consequence so that you don't forget you made the Recovery Roll. Consequences in recovery are not quite so restrictive; if you still need to Overcome a Consequence's Aspect Denial in order to do something, give it a Difficulty Rating equal to the next Consequence down (a Mild Consequence in Recovery has a Mediocre (+0) DR).

LIFE-THREATENING INJURIES

As mentioned under the Aid Skill (p.80), if the GM wants to add extra drama and fear to injuries, he can Compel a Moderate, Severe, or Extreme Consequence to declare it *life-threatening*. This will turn it into a Hazard (p.155). Essentially, the injury acts like a character; it gets one Action: Attack! Its "Skill Rating" will be equal to its severity, and it will Attack once per round on its own turn until a successful Recovery Action is made. Its Attack can be Defended against, usually by Physique but possibly by a narratively appropriate use of the Aid Skill. For added drama, the GM can treat the Recovery Action as a full Contest—in which case the Aid Skill could be used indirectly to create advantages for it, or directly as the aiding character fights for the life of his patient!

Recovery Time

As stated, even after you've made your Recovery roll, Consequences still take time to recover. Once the time has passed, you may clear the Consequence Slot.

- **Minor Consequences** remain until **one full Scene** has passed. (p.146)
- **Moderate Consequences** remain until **one whole Session** has passed (which means if you make the Recovery roll in the middle of a session, the Consequence will not clear until the middle of the next Session).
- **Severe Consequences** remain for **one whole Scenario** after the Recovery Action.
- **Extreme Consequences** don't go away for a long time, if ever; once you reach your next Major Milestone (p.182), if you have an Extreme Consequence then you get to rename it to reflect a more permanent result of the trauma—for example **ONE-EYED**, **CRIPPLED KNEE**, **HORRIFICALLY SCARRED**, or **MAJOR PTSD**. After that you can replace it when next you change a Character Aspect (see Minor Milestones, p.180) if you can justify it narratively.



Being Taken Out

As should now be obvious, Consequences can be serious stuff; oftentimes it is better to Concede and collect the Fate Points rather than risk taking more severe Consequences. If at any time you take shifts from a successful Attack and cannot absorb all of them with your Stress Boxes (remember you can only check one Stress Box per Attack) and Consequence Slots, then you either take an Extreme Consequence to stay in or you get Taken Out.

When you are Taken Out, not only can't you fight anymore, but whoever took you out gets to decide what your loss looks like and what happens to you after the Conflict; they can even announce that the hit that took you out killed you! They are limited to what is narratively permitted by the scene's resolution, but you get no control and you don't receive any Fate Points for being Taken Out.

Taking Other Actions

As mentioned previously, although the point of a Conflict is to Attack, all other Actions can be used as appropriate! Create an Advantage, especially, is often used to supplement Attack and React Actions. Some examples of Create an Advantage are:

Temporarily blinding, deafening, disorienting, disarming, or otherwise impeding someone. Depending on the strength of the power used, the GM may rule that the Situation Aspect only sticks around for a round or two, or require the target to Overcome the Situation Aspect to get rid of it.

Creating tactical advantages like holding the high-ground, defending a doorway or corner, or attacking with surprise. Some of these will be one-use advantages, others will remain until your opponent does something to remove it.

Inflicting transient pain or shock. Hits to nerve-clusters, or more exotically, direct neural attacks, could easily inflict temporary but incapacitating agony, numbness, limb-paralysis, etc., allowing you to follow up with a truly devastating strike more easily.

Using or altering the environment. Tactical use of cover (walls, cars, rubble, etc.) is a time-honored practice; so is changing the environment to your benefit by creating obstacles or cover.

Resource Conflicts

Resource Conflicts follow most of the rules of mental or physical Conflicts, but the stakes are a little different.

A character can be Taken Out by a Resource Attack. He can also Concede one. The point of a Resource Conflict is to deal Resource Consequences; most characters only have a single, Moderate Consequence although extremely high Resource Ratings can give them more. If all of their Resource Consequence Slots are filled and they have more shifts to absorb, they must take an Extreme Consequence if they don't want to be Taken Out. Extreme Resource Consequences work the same way as normal Extreme Consequences, with one exception; **in addition to waiting for the next Milestone before beginning Recovery, the player must sacrifice two steps of his hero's Resource Ratings (together or split, whichever Resources are narratively appropriate to the damage) to move the Extreme Consequence into Recovery and rename it.**

Ending a Conflict

As previously stated, a Conflict ends when one of three things has happened: 1.) All characters on one side have been Taken Out or Conceded, 2.) The GM forces a Scene Concede, or 3.) Nobody intends to, or is able to, Attack.

Ending a Conflict does not automatically end the Scene; you proceed to the Resolution Phase only once everyone is done taking Actions and the goal of the Scene has been attained or thwarted. This may mean transitioning straight from a Conflict to a Challenge, Contest, or Negotiation that ends the Scene with its outcome. If the Conflict does not end the Scene, the GM will hold off on paying out Fate Points for Concedes or Scene Concedes.

USING AID

The Aid Skill (p.80) also allows someone to help during a Scene by using Overcome or Create an Advantage to engage in Contests or create beneficial Aspects. Here are two examples.

In her out-of-body trance, Chakra senses a malevolent force smothering the natural spirits of a rioting crowd and filling them with RAGE. She engages in a Contest (p.126) against the dark mind, her Aid Skill vs. its Provoke Skill, to break its hold on the rioters. Victory would remove the RAGE Situation Aspect.

Astra is losing a nasty fight, and has incurred the EXHAUSTED AND IN PAIN Moderate Consequence. Chakra sends her an infusion of kundalini energy, creating a BURST OF ENERGY Aspect which gives Astra narrative permission to temporarily ignore the Consequence. It does not clear that Consequence-slot, but the EXHAUSTED AND IN PAIN Consequence cannot be invoked or compelled against her while the BURST OF ENERGY lasts.



The Scene Resolution Phase

Once the Action Phase of a Scene is finished, the GM and players move into the Scene Resolution Phase. There are still some things that they can do before definitively narrating the end of the Scene and moving on to the next one. The most involved after-action step is to determine if there are any Scene Consequences. Once that has been done (or passed on), the players may make Recovery rolls and clear their Stress Boxes if they haven't already. The GM will also award any Fate Points given for Concedes or Scene Concedes. Between Scene Consequences and Recovery Rolls, the Resolution Phase can actually become quite involved, turning into a bridging scene of its own; you know the Resolution Phase is over when you are no longer doing cleanup and are asking *What now?*

Determining Scene Consequences

A lot can happen during a Scene—especially during a Conflict Scene—and an important part of the resolution phase is determining if there are any Scene Consequences. Much of the time the GM will look at the Situation Aspects and the events of the Scene and decide that a Scene Consequence check isn't needed; if only minor property damage has occurred or what damage and injury has occurred was clearly not the hero's faults, feel free to skip the Scene Consequences step. Remember, you only roll dice in this game if the outcome is uncertain and the consequences would be interesting!

A Scene Consequence is created through a quick Resource Conflict (p.134). The GM and players will take the following steps:

- 1 **Look over the negative Situation Aspects that have been created during the scene.** This includes Collateral Damage (p.111), but also any incidental Situation Aspects the heroes may have created with the use of their powers (for example, when flying through a wall creates a **HOLED WALL** Situation Aspect) or which have been created by Create an Advantage or Compels.
- 2 **The GM Determines a Scene Consequence Difficulty Rating.** The Difficulty Rating should be based partly on the cumulative severity of the negative Situation Aspects and partly on how responsible for the damage the public may judge the heroes. For example, a low-impact cape vs. villain battle (some damage to property, a few injuries but no deaths) that your heroes could have obviously avoided or minimized, could weigh almost as heavily as a massive downtown battle that levels buildings and kills bystanders. Indeed, in such an extreme case unless the heroes are utterly and obviously not to blame for any of it, they are likely to face a powerful public reaction.
- 3 **The players determine who will Defend against the Resource Attack.** If the heroes are part of an Organization (p.160), they will use their team's applicable Resource (usually Reputation, but sometimes Wealth or Connections) to Defend against the Attack. If they do not belong to an organization (or if they are engaged in activities the organization might disavow, leaving them to take the blame), the players choose one of their heroes—usually the one with the best applicable Resource Rating. All of the players may invoke Aspects that might help, and may add their Teamwork Bonus to the rolling hero's Resource (or to the organization's, if their own Resource is equal to or higher than the organization's).
- 4 **The GM invokes any Aspects (including Game Aspects) he judges appropriate.** The GM pays for the invokes from his Fate Pool; if he ended the scene with a Scene Concede, he is limited to any extra Fate Points that would remain in his Fate Pool after rewarding the players for the Scene Concede.
- 6 **The GM and the hero or organization resolve a single Attack/Defend exchange.** If the hero or organization fails in the exchange, then the shifts of Scene Consequence are absorbed as Resource Stress Boxes and Consequence Slots. If the chosen hero or organization does not have enough boxes and slots to absorb the shifts, then **he/it will either take an Extreme Resource Consequence, or the GM will change or add a Game Aspect to reflect the fallout of the event.** If he still has shifts left after taking an Extreme Consequence, then the GM will *also* use the failure to create or change a Game Aspect to reflect what has happened.
- 7 **Any characters who contributed through Teamwork shares the Consequences.** If they don't have the open Consequence slots needed to absorb all of them, they don't suffer an Extreme Consequence.



Example Scene Consequences

EXAMPLE 1: A VERY BAD NIGHT

In *Wearing the Cape*, even with forewarning the Sentinels fail to prevent a flash-riot from doing significant damage to Michigan Avenue, injuring many bystanders and killing three. The GM decides to run a Scene Consequence check to determine the extent of the media circus and public dissatisfaction.

The GM looks at the Situation Aspects present at the end of the Conflict, and gives the situation a +10 Difficulty Rating. The players decide to use the Sentinel's Epic (+7) Reputation, and Atlas contributes a +1 Team Bonus. The GM invokes the Sentinel's Aspect, **STRAINED RELATIONSHIP WITH CHICAGO PD**, for another +2. Atlas then rolls a **+++-/++++** for a -1—the Sentinels fail by 4 shifts! The Sentinels team absorbs the shifts with its 3-Stress Box (they previously checked two boxes using team resources) and one of their two Mild Consequence Slots. The GM decides that the Mild Resource Consequence is **NEWS AT 11!** Since Atlas put his Reputation on the line, the GM gives him a Minor Resource Consequence, **WHERE WERE YOU?** With Recovery both will go away at the end of the next Scene, but not before parties wishing the Sentinels ill can invoke them to Create an Advantage or make direct Resource Attacks on the team's Reputation or Connections!

EXAMPLE 2: FOR JUSTICE!

Scene Consequences need not merely afflict the heroes—the players themselves can use Scene Consequences against their opposition! For example, the heroes' goal in a Scene is to find and take out a major distribution node belonging to the local drug cartel. In the process of the Scene, they arrest a lot of the cartel's muscle and one of its senior lieutenants while seizing massive amounts of drugs. The GM decides this is worth checking for a Scene Consequence against the cartel!

He assigns the damage a +8 DR, and decides that the Cartel will use its +5 Reputation (sending a threatening message to the captured lieutenant to keep him from cooperating) to Defend. Rolling for the Cartel (vs. Active Opposition), the GM scores a +2 for a Tie. Thinking it over, he decides that the cartel lieutenant isn't cooperating fully, but was tricked into providing some **DAMAGING INTEL**; this Boost will carry over into the next Scene (or Session if this Scene ended the Session). The players can use it once in their continuing campaign against the cartel (perhaps they pass it to the Feds to use, or use it themselves to make their next move) and then it will go away.

Optional Rule: Finishing Compels

Notice that Concedes are mechanically similar to Compels; the player voluntarily allows something narratively complicating to happen to her hero (like being knocked out and possibly captured), and she is then rewarded by a Fate Point and gets some say in the outcome. If it works with the narrative, a Compel can remove someone from involvement in a Scene as easily as a Concede. This can easily happen in scenes outside of a Conflict, but it can also happen during a Conflict. You can describe these sorts of Compels as *Finishing Compels*.

Finishing Compels can be employed by the GM when someone uses Create an Advantage to inflict some sort of incapacitating Situation Aspect on a target (for example **HYPNOTIZED**, **BOUND**, or **TEMPORARILY BLINDED**), or uses Attack to inflict an incapacitating Mild Consequence like **BLINDED**, **DRUGGED**, or **STUNNED** (a Mild Consequence because while it could end effective participation in the Conflict, it can be recovered from quickly afterward). In such cases the GM can always "Concede" for an NPC target and move on, changing the Aspects to reflect the move if necessary; for example, **BOUND** becomes **IMMOBILIZED**, **DRUGGED** becomes **DRUGGED UNCONSCIOUS**, and **STUNNED** becomes **KNOCKED OUT**. But what if the target is a PC hero?

If the target is a player character, then the GM can pay a Fate Point to immediately Compel the new Situation Aspect on the hero and remove her from participation in the Scene as the Complication. This is identical to a Concede except that, since there will be no lingering Consequence that lasts even for a full Scene, the player earns no additional Fate Points beyond the FP for accepting the Compel. (As always, GMs should use Compels sparingly and not force the issue if the player is dead set against it.)

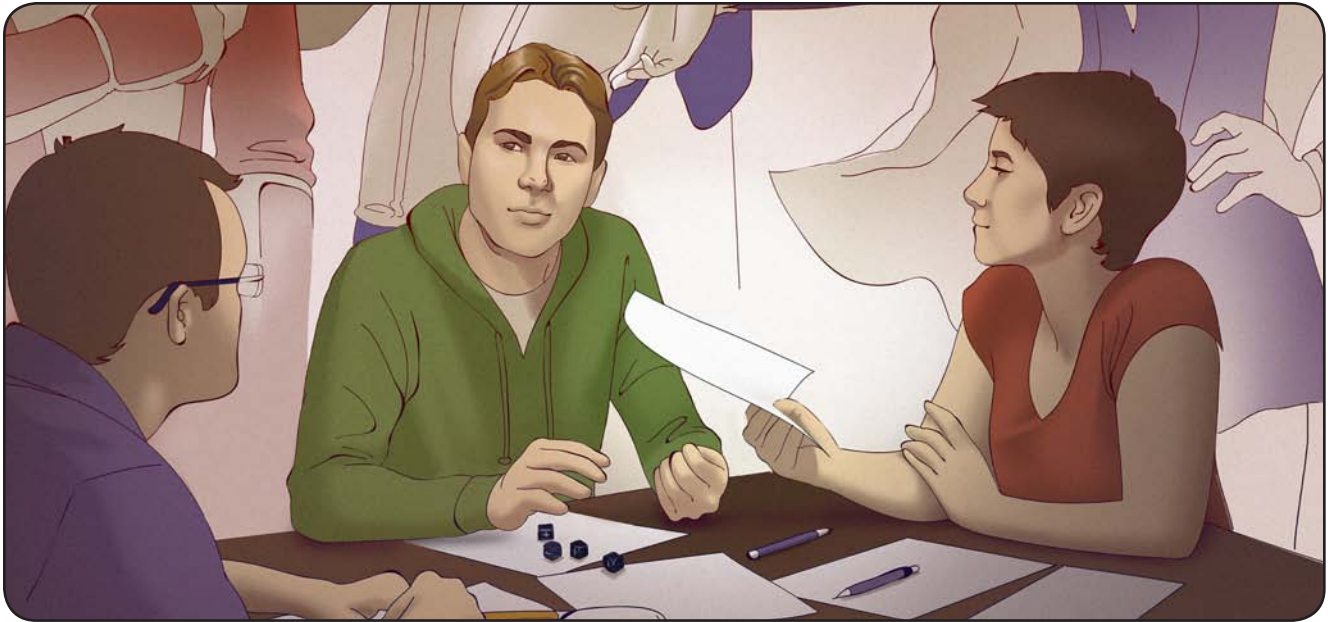
And optionally, if a PC *character* Succeeds with Style when creating the same kind of Aspect, then the *player* can use the Free Invoke for a Finishing Compel that ends the target's involvement in the Scene. (The GM might even allow spending an FP to do the Finishing Compel on a normal Success.)

This is really just a way of using Situation Aspects and linked Compels to enable finishing moves in any kind of Scene, and is already implicit in the Compel rules. It also provides a good alternative to using the hero's Fight or Shoot Skill to Attack to inflict Stress and Consequences with a power intended to only stun the target. If the GM doesn't want to make it a general rule, he may allow it as a Power Stunt!





∞ **RUNNING THE GAME**



Chapters Three through Seven have been all about the nuts-and-bolts rules both the GM and players need to master to play the game. Chapter Eight is the first GM chapter, the one about what he uniquely does to make the game run.

What the Game-Master Does

If you're the GM, then your job is a little different from everyone else's. The GM starts and ends Scenes, judges use of the rules, and creates and plays the part of both the opposition and the world the player characters act in. This chapter is going to give you a bunch of tools to make that job easier during play.

Start and End Scenes

One of your primary responsibilities during the game is to decide when a Scene begins and ends. As the GM, you're the one primarily responsible for the pacing of each game Session. If you start Scenes too early, it takes a long time to get to the main action. If you don't end them soon enough, then they drag on and it takes you a long time to get anything significant done.

We go into more detail on running Scenes in Chapter Ten, *Campaigns, Scenarios, and Scenes*.

Play the World and the NPCs

As the GM, it's your job to decide how everyone and everything else in the world responds to what the heroes do, as well as what the heroes' environment is like. If a PC hero botches a roll, you're the one who gets to decide the consequences. When an NPC villain attempts to kill one of your hero's *friends*, you're the one who gets to decide how they go about it. When the heroes go into that local villain hangout in search of information, you get to decide what the local villains and minions think of that and if the heroes are going to get what they came for with or without a fight.

Fortunately, you won't be doing this in a vacuum—you have a lot of tools to help you decide what will be appropriate. The process we outline in Chapter Ten should provide you with a lot of context about the game you're running, whether it's in the form of Aspects like current and impending issues, specific locations that you might visit, or NPCs with strong agendas that you can use.

DRAMA IS BETTER THAN REALISM

Real Life is made up of long stretches of *necessary but routine* stuff, with short bits of *interesting stuff*. In Fate games, telling a good story is more important than sticking to the Iron Law of Realism. The Fate system operates by the rules of drama and fiction; use that to your advantage. There should be very few moments in the game where the PCs are free of conflicts or problems to deal with, even if it'd be more "realistic" for them to get a long breather.

So when you're trying to decide what happens, and the answer that makes the most sense is also kind of boring, go with something that's more exciting than sensible! You can always find a way later on to justify something that doesn't make immediate sense.

LET THE PLAYERS HELP

You don't need to shoulder the whole burden of making up campaign details yourself. As you'll see in Chapter 10, the whole group is encouraged to work together to develop your *Wearing the Cape* campaign; the more collaborative the group is, the more emotional investment your players are going to have in the result. It will be their baby, too.

How does this play out? If a hero has an Aspect that connects them to someone or something in the world, make that hero's player your resident "expert" on whatever the Aspect refers to. So if a hero has *PTSD FROM THE CHINA WAR*, poll her player for information whenever stuff possibly related to the China War comes up in conversation. "You notice that this guy has a Marine supersoldier-unit tattoo. What do you know about it?" Some players will defer back to you, and that's okay; making the offer encourages a collaborative atmosphere. As they get used to having the option of adding to the world themselves, they'll join in.

Also, one of the main uses of the Create an Advantage Action (p.117) is precisely to give players a way to add details to the world through their characters! Use that to *your* advantage when you draw a blank or simply want to delegate more control. One good way to do this during play is to answer the player's question with a question, if they ask for information.

Becky: "Is there a way to stop this bio-robot without killing the pilot melded into it?"

Guy: "Well, you know that the Verne who grew it would want a way to stop it if the pilot betrayed him. What would you do?"

Becky: "...I think there'd be some kind of shut-off switch. If we can find the communication-control unit maybe I could figure it out?"

Guy: "Yeah, that sounds good. Roll for Alertness, let's see what you can find in this mess."

The heroes' Character Aspects also help you decide how to make the world respond to them. As stated in Chapter Four, the best Character Aspects have a double edge to them. You have a lot of power to exploit that double edge by using event-based Compels (p.113). That way, you kill two birds with one stone—you add detail and surprise to your game world, but you also keep the heroes at the center of the story you're telling.

This facet of your job also means that when you have NPCs in a scene, you speak and make decisions for them like the players do for their PCs—you decide when they're taking an action that requires dice, and you follow the same rules the players do for determining how that turns out. Your NPCs are going to be written up a little differently than the PCs, however, depending on how important they are to the story.

Just remember that the NPCs aren't "your side." You're not there to make the NPCs look good, except when doing that helps the PCs look awesome or makes the players sweat for their victory.

USING A RULES REFEREE

Sometimes a GM is new to the Fate System. Or sometimes one of the group knows the system inside and out (or is just better at mastering new rules systems), but she wants to play rather than GM. That's okay, in fact it can be a good thing; go ahead and create the position of **Rules Ref**. The Rules Ref takes over the task of judging how the rules should be applied on a case-by-case basis. The GM and other players can resort to him when creating Stunts and doing the other things mentioned above, and this frees the GM up to focus more on the narrative than its nuts and bolts. It's a position that can go away once the GM is comfortable enough with the Fate system—or not, if the GM and players find continued value in it.

Judge the Use of the Rules

It's also your job to make most of the moment-to-moment decisions about what's legit and what's not regarding the rules. Most often, you're going to decide when something in the game deserves a roll, what type of Action that is (Overcome, Attack, etc.) and how difficult that roll is. In Conflicts, this can get a little more complicated, like determining if a Situation Aspect should force someone to make an Overcome Action, or deciding whether or not a player can justify a particular advantage they're trying to create.

You also judge the appropriateness of any Invokes or Compels that come up during play, and make sure that everyone at the table is clear on what's going on. With Invokes, this is pretty easy—as long as the player can explain why the Aspect is relevant, you're good to go. With Compels, it can get a little more complicated, because you need to articulate precisely what complication the player is agreeing to.

We provide some more tips on judging the use of rules below.

Create Scenarios (and Nearly Everything Else)

Finally, you're responsible for making all of the stuff that the PCs encounter and react to in the game. That not only includes NPCs with Skills and Aspects, but it also includes the Aspects on Scenes, environments, and objects, as well as the dilemmas and challenges that make up a Scenario. You provide the prompts that give your group a reason to play this game to begin with—what problems they face, what issues they have to resolve, whom they're opposing, and what they'll have to go through in order to win the day.

This job gets a whole chapter all on its own. See *Creating Campaigns, Scenarios, and Scenes*.



What to Do During Game Creation

As will be outlined in Game Creation, inventing or deciding on a setting is often a collaborative effort between you and your players. In that sense, the best thing you can do as GM during the game-creation process is to be open to new ideas and be generous with your own, just like everyone else. (You may have a brilliant campaign idea, but if the players aren't invested in it, you will find the experience a frustrating one.) Play off of and expand upon the suggestions that the others offer up. Your players will be more invested in the game if they had a hand in building it and it includes elements that spark their enthusiasm.

Of course, if everyone's amenable then there's nothing stopping you from showing up with a clear vision of exactly what you want to run. "Okay, this is going to be a Dark Post-Event setting; superhumans are registered and drafted, and your characters are wanted fugitives. Go!" Just make sure everyone's on board if you go that route. Even one player who isn't into it, and doesn't really feel inclined to get into it, can really affect the game.

Out There vs. Down Here

Speaking of dark mirrors of the Post-Event World, it's a good idea to consider just how "out there" you want to get. High-concept ideas are a lot of fun, but if they're too difficult to relate to then your players may have trouble wrapping their heads around the game you're proposing. Where that line is exactly will vary from group to group (and player to player), so there's no definitive answer here. Just be aware that every departure from the familiar—whether that's the real world or well-established genre conventions—has the potential to be a conceptual hurdle for your players.

Get everyone on the same page and make sure to go over any questions in advance. The opposite approach is of course to use the "vanilla" Post-Event World as detailed in Chapter One; in which case, all you need to do is have the players read Chapter 1: *The Post Event World* (a good idea even if they're already familiar with the books) and then sit down to brainstorm over what possibilities in the setting most interest them. Even if they want to do a canon Post-Event campaign, there's still a lot of room for them to pick a corner of the Sentinels' world—or even of the city of Chicago—and make it their own.

ALTERNATE NEW HEROIC AGES.

A dark mirror alternate reality is practically mandatory in superhero settings, and might be an interesting place to visit. GMs and players who want to shake it up a bit have plenty of other options, as well. They can basically be broken down into three broad categories: Contingent Realities, Variant Realities, and Unrealities.

CONTINGENT REALITIES

These are more colloquially known as the what-ifs. For example, what if Lee had won at Gettysburg? The result might be a timeline in which the South won the Civil War, or one in which the war merely dragged on longer and cost many more lives. Because of the Teatime Anarchist's presence in *Wearing the Cape*, the reader is very much aware of alternative possibilities; in one potential timeline, Astra died. In another, the master-vampire who created Artemis kicked off a Vampire Armageddon that burned whole cities. In yet another, the disaster which comes towards the end of *Wearing the Cape* never happened, and if the group is interested in taking any of these paths or finding another then subsequent events may play out very differently than they do in the book series.

If the group is playing a Chicago or Sentinels-centric game that takes place contemporaneously with events of the books, then the GM should either twist the stories or throw them out entirely. Unexplored what-ifs will be far more interesting than a reread of events the players already know about.

VARIANT REALITIES

A variant reality is one where the difference is something other than simple historic divergence. For example, what if The Event took place sooner? Or later? A pre-World War Two or even Classical Age Event might be very interesting (there are theories that the ancient gods were products of a previous Event...). What if The Event did something different? What if it affected only part of the world? Or didn't come with the Blackout? Superhumans would have still begun appearing, but not in the same immediate numbers and without the lasting social trauma; how would that have changed things?

UNREALITIES

Lewis Carroll knew the happy truth that, while you only have one birthday, you have 364 unbirthdays filled with possibility. The GM and players have absolutely no reason whatsoever to stick with the somewhat mundane superheroic reality portrayed in the books; the possible unrealities are infinite. Want to fracture the single-source origin of all of the Post-Event World's weirdness? Then redefine magic and superscience as *real*, place more emphasis on the plausible independent reality of gods, monsters, aliens, and extra-dimensional beings who have nothing to do with breakthrough powers; you don't need to change the rules (or even much of the history) in the slightest to make the Post-Event World into one as fantastical as in the comic books. The ultimate unreality campaign would simply toss out the whole first chapter and use the rules for superhero gaming presented here to launch a completely original superhero campaign. And why not?



Top Down vs. Bottom Up

There's also the matter of how broad the scope of the game will be. Some like to start with the big picture first and drill down to the details, while others prefer to start with the here and now and develop the big picture as they go. These are often called "top down" and "bottom up," respectively. Neither one's better than the other, but each has its pros and cons.

With the top-down approach, you'll determine most of the setting in advance—stuff like who the movers and shakers are, the locations of important cities, the nature of important organizations, and so on. Chapter One does much of this job for the group, but if you are playing with an alternate setting (see box, above) then you need to rework details.

The advantage of this approach is that everyone in the group knows how the world fits together. The downside, of course, is that even with Chapter One as a resource there remains a fair amount of work to connect the broader Post-Event World to your local setting. It also requires the players to show up with a pretty thorough understanding of it all, which can be daunting. But if everyone's up to speed, it can make for a very enjoyable and rewarding game.

If you're going bottom-up instead, you'll start only with whatever's immediately important to the PCs. That might be anything from a few notable NPCs in their hometown to the name of your team's government liaison. The group figures out the details as the story goes along and there's no need to have an idea of how things fit into the world, because everyone will make that up as you go. If you're playing an alternate setting then the world can just spiral out from whatever you start with, and if you're playing the vanilla Post-Event setting the GM can introduce the players to new details as their story broadens.

The potential downside here is that it requires quite a bit of improvisation and thinking on your feet. That goes for everyone at the table, GM and players alike. For you, the GM, that might not be such a big deal—running a game almost always involves a degree of flying by the seat of one's pants—but not all players are going to be ready for that sort of responsibility. In addition, if your players like to immerse themselves in their characters and see the game world through their eyes, they may find it jarring to occasionally break from that perspective to, say, learn about the China War or tell you what happened to the last wannabee Master Villain.

Wearing the Cape: the Roleplaying Game can handle either, but the Fate system's support for player-driven contributions to the narrative in the form of aspects and story details really makes the bottom-up method sing. If that's the way you like to play anyway, great! If not, no pressure—but give it a try sometime.

Small Scale vs. Large Scale

Scale will be discussed further in Chapter Ten, but it's worth some early discussion here.

As laid out in that chapter, small-scale stories concern events closely connected to the PCs, probably within a very limited geographical area. Large-scale games are the opposite: epic tales spanning nations and possibly whole extrarealities, with world(s)-shaking consequences. Both types of stories can be a lot of fun; saving the world can be as rewarding as saving your hometown.

However, don't be fooled into thinking the two are mutually exclusive. Here are a couple ways to combine them.

START SMALL AND GROW

This is the classic zero-to-hero story in which an unassuming individual with no pretensions to glory is suddenly swept up in events beyond the scope of his experience. Consider Astra/Hope Corrigan in *Wearing the Cape*. She starts off as a sidekick-trainee, learning the scope of her new powers and fighting the odd local villains with the Sentinels. Over the course of the book she's introduced to more mysteries; who is the Teatime Anarchist really, and can she trust him? In the last big arc of the book she's catapulted into the fight vs. The Ring and then the Dark Anarchist—conflicts with the highest stakes for the world.

PEAKS AND VALLEYS

Here, you're alternating the large-scale with the small, using the latter almost as something of a breather. Typically, the large-scale storylines will deal with matters of national security, the defeat of master villains, exploration of extrarealities, and the like, while the small-scale storylines will be of a more personal nature, with few if any connections to the earth-shaking events transpiring in the characters' lives. For example, you might spend a session or two fighting with The Ring, then change focus to a character reconnecting with her father or coming to the aid of a friend in need.

The small-scale sessions serve as something of a breather between all that epic action, and give the players a chance to delve into some unexplored corners of their characters. Plus, if you want to connect the small and large-scale stories down the line, you can—and the payoff will be all the more satisfying for the players.



What to Do During Play

Once you've gone through the process of game creation with the players, as GM you wear the referee and storyteller hats. Sometimes juggling fidelity to the rules with the needs of the story gets interesting. Sometimes what the players want to do sounds good, but doesn't fit into a neat Action box. So let's talk about that.

The Golden Rule

Before we go into specifics, here's the Golden Rule of Fate:

Decide what you're trying to accomplish first, then consult the rules to help you do it.

This might seem like common sense, but we call it out because the order is important. In other words, don't look at the rules as a straitjacket or a hard limit on an action. Instead, use them as a variety of potential tools to model whatever you're trying to do. *Your intent, whatever it is, always takes precedence over the mechanics.*

Most of the time, the very definition of an Action makes this easy—any time your intent is to harm someone, you know that's an Attack. Any time you're trying to avoid harm, you know that's a Defend.

But sometimes, you're going to get into situations where it's not immediately clear what type of Action is the most appropriate. As a GM, don't respond to these situations by forbidding the Action. Instead, try to nail down a specific intent, in order to point more clearly to one (or more) of the basic game Actions.

The Silver Rule

The corollary to the Golden Rule is as follows:

Never let the rules get in the way of what makes narrative sense.

If you or the players narrate something in the game and it makes sense to apply a certain rule outside of the normal circumstances where you would do so, go ahead and do it.

Example 1: *The rules say that, by default, a Consequence is something a player chooses to take after getting hit by an Attack in a Conflict. But imagine that you're in a scene where a player with a Verne-Type hero decides that, to replace a blown up power relay, he needs to think outside the box and pull some circuits from his power suit to use as a jury-rigged relay. He's going to McGyver it.*

Everyone likes the idea and thinks it's cool, so no one's interested in what happens if the hero fails the roll. However, everyone agrees that it also makes sense that the hero would lose some functionality in his armor until he can get back to base and repair it.

*This could create an **IMPAIRED SUIT FUNCTION** Situation Aspect—but since he's already declared that he's going to need to get where he can replace the used circuits it's not going to go away at the end of the Scene; it's more "sticky" than the usual Situation Aspect.*

*So instead make **IMPAIRED SUIT FUNCTION** a Mild Consequence; it fits with the narrative since, even though there's no Conflict and nothing technically Attacked the hero, he is "injuring" himself to pull off a nifty move and keep the action going.*

Example 2: *Further on, our Verne-Type is faced with a burning energy barrier blocking the final gateway. There's no way to finesse this one—he needs to get through the gate so that he can access the controls and power the barrier down so the rest of the team can follow him.*

Our hero must push through the barrier, a classic Overcome Action, here against Passive Opposition. But the barrier isn't just trying to stop him, it's trying to fry him—an Attack Action. Our hero would need to Defend himself.

Although it could be done with two rolls—an Overcome to push through and a Defend for the possible damage—the GM decides to treat it as a single Overcome Action; our hero must roll his Physique (as amplified by his suit) against the field's Opposition to push through it. But if he fails then the shifts of failure will be treated as damage from an Attack and he will take Stress or Consequences if his Armor Rating cannot absorb it.

If you're ever in doubt during play, come back to the Golden Rule and remember that the rules are tools, not constraints. Just make sure that when you apply a rule differently to fit a rare or unique situation, you and the players are on the same page. And take notes afterwards! If the one-off method worked well, you may decide to use it again in similar circumstances.





When to Roll Dice

You should roll the dice only when succeeding or failing at the Action could each contribute something interesting to the game.

This is pretty easy to figure out in regards to success, most of the time—the PCs overcome a significant obstacle, win a conflict, or succeed at a goal, which creates fodder for the next thing. With failure, however, it's a little more difficult, because it's easy to look at failure in strictly negative terms—you fail, you lose, you don't get what you want. If there's nothing to build on after that failure, play can grind to a halt in a hurry.

The worst, *worst* thing you can do is have a failed roll that means *nothing happens*—no new knowledge, no new course of action to take, and no change in the situation. That is totally boring, and it discourages players from investing in failure—something you absolutely want them to do, given how important Compels and the Concession mechanic are. **Do not do this.**

If you can't imagine an interesting outcome from both results, then don't call for that roll. If failure is the uninteresting option, just give the PCs what they want and call for a roll later, when you can think of an interesting failure. If *success* is the boring option, then see if you can turn your idea for failure into a Compel instead! You can use it as an opportunity to funnel Fate Points to the players.

Moving is the classic example of roll vs. no roll questions. Moving from Point A to Point B does not normally require an Overcome roll unless failure means something interesting happens. You don't make it before the bomb goes off, or you fall off the ledge you're walking. Not getting to cover fast enough means you're attacked, etc. Even in a Conflict, closing from Shoot to Fight range won't require a roll unless distance or terrain is an obstacle—if it's not, then the GM can just approve the Overcome and burn the turn if the move takes the whole Action. On the other hand, if closing the range successfully means bringing the Scene to a premature and unsatisfying end, the GM should feel free to try and come up with a narratively convincing Compel that either stops you or introduces another complication!

Making Failure Awesome

If the PCs fail a roll in the game and you're not sure how to make that interesting, try one of the following ideas.

Blame the Circumstances

The PCs are extremely competent people (unless you're playing a *very* deconstructive superhero campaign); they aren't supposed to look like fools on a regular or even semi-regular basis. But sometimes all it takes is the right description to make failure into something dynamic—instead of narrating that the PC just botched things up, blame the failure on something that the PC couldn't have prevented. There's a backup security circuit on the lock that you couldn't see to bypass (Larceny), or the contact broke his promise to show up on time (Contacts), or the Cyrillic writing on the stone is too weathered to read (Academics), or a sudden explosion throws off your shot to take out the control junction (Shoot).

That way, the PCs still look competent and awesome, even though they don't get what they want. More importantly, shifting the blame to the circumstances gives you an opportunity to suggest a new course of action, which allows the failure to create forward momentum in your story. The contact didn't make his appointment? Where is he? Who was following him to the rendezvous? The carvings on the stone are weathered? Maybe a computer-reconstruction can make them clear. That way, you don't spend time dwelling on the failure and can move on to something new.



Use Succeed at a Cost

With Overcome Actions you can also offer to give the PCs what they want, but at a price—in this case, the failed roll means they weren't able to achieve their goals without consequence. A **Minor Cost** (which may happen with a Tie) should complicate the PC's life but be pretty transient. Like the above suggestion, this focuses on using failure as a means to change up the situation, rather than just negating whatever the PC wanted. Some suggestions:

- **Foreshadow some imminent peril.** *“The lock turns with a soft click of tumblers and the door swings open, but the building’s security alarms goes off. If they didn’t know you were here before, they sure do now.”* The PC's job just got more complicated, but they haven't failed yet.
- **Present the player with a tough choice.** *“You brace the collapsing ceiling long enough for two of the others to get through safely, but not the rest. Who’s it going to be?”* Don't kill off those left behind—this is a superhero game after all—just make it tougher to save them.
- **Place an Aspect on the PC or the scene.** *“You make the shot with your plasma-bolt, but the killer-drone’s spectacular explosion has left you momentarily **STUNNED AND DISORIENTED**.”* The player succeeds too well, creating a problem for his hero.
- **Give an opposing NPC a Boost.** *“Nikolai surprises you a bit by agreeing to your offer, but he does so with a wry smile that makes you uneasy. Clearly, Nikolai **HAS A PLAN**.”* The player succeeds, but...
- **Check one of the PC's stress boxes.** Careful with this one—it's only a real cost if the PC's likely to take more hits in the same Scene. If you don't think that's going to happen (or this just isn't a Conflict Scene and not likely to turn into one), go with another choice.
- **Pay a Fate Point into the GM's Fate Pool (p.121).** Careful with this one also—it's only a real cost if the FP may seriously help the GM tip the balance of the Scene. If the GM is already swimming in FP, or has zero FP and getting a single FP isn't likely to help, go with another choice.

A **Serious Cost** does more than complicate the PC's life or promise something worse to come—it takes a serious and possibly irrevocable toll, right now.

One way you can do this is by taking a Minor Cost to the next level. Instead of an alarm going off, guards burst in the room, weapons drawn. Instead of being merely cut off from their allies by a collapsing ceiling, one or more of those allies ends up buried in the debris.

Other options could include:

- **Reinforce the opposition.** You might clear one of an NPC's stress boxes, improve one of their Skills by one step for the scene, or give them a new Aspect with a free Invoke!
- **Bring in new opposition or a new obstacle,** such as additional enemies or a Situation Aspect that worsens the situation.
- **Delay success.** The task at hand will take much longer than expected.
- **Give the PC a Consequence** that follows logically from the circumstances—complete with a Free Invoke for the opposition.

*Ajax grapples with G-Shock, an electrokinetic thief, attempting to create an **UNSHAKABLE GRIP** advantage. He fails, and to Succeed at A Cost he accepts a Mild Consequence, **HIGH-VOLTAGE SHOCKS**, with G-Shock getting the Free Invoke.*

Note that the cost of success with a Tie is Minor, while the cost of success with Failure is Serious. Remember that you can convert even an Epic Fail into a Succeed at a Cost if you wish! If you're stuck for just how serious a Serious Cost should be, you may want to use the margin of failure as a gauge. For instance, in the vault-opening example, above—the one where the guards burst in the room—if the player failed their Larceny roll by 3 to 5, it's an even match, one that's likely to use up resources like Fate Points or Consequences. But if they failed by 6 or more, they're outnumbered (or outgunned or outpowered) and in real danger.

Let the Players Do the Work

You can also kick the question back to the players, and let them decide what the context of their own failure is. This is a great move to foster a collaborative spirit, and some players will be surprisingly eager to hose their own characters in order to further the story, especially if it means they can keep control of their own narrative.

It's also a great thing to do if you just plain can't think of anything. “Okay, so, you failed that Larceny roll by 2. So you're working the lock, and something goes wrong. What is it?” “You missed that Alertness roll. What don't you notice as you're busting into the villain's hideout?” It's better if the question is specific, like these examples; just saying, “Okay, tell me how you fail!” can easily stall things by putting a player on the spot unnecessarily. You want to **let** the player do the work, not *make* them.



Setting Difficulty Ratings

When you're setting Passive Opposition for an Action, keep in mind the Difficulty Rating "break points."

THE +2/-2 RULE

Anything that's two or more steps above the PC's skill is probably going to cost them Fate Points to succeed at, and anything that's two or more below the PC's skill will be a breeze.

Rather than "modeling the world" or going for "realism," try setting Difficulty Ratings according to dramatic necessity—things should generally be more challenging when the stakes are high and less challenging when they aren't; if there are no stakes then they shouldn't be rolling at all—let them succeed or fail automatically, as narratively appropriate.

(Functionally, this is the same as setting a consistent difficulty and assessing a circumstantial penalty to the roll to reflect rushing the task or some other unfavorable condition. But psychologically, the difference between a high Difficulty Rating and a lower difficulty with a penalty is vast and shouldn't be underestimated. A player facing a higher difficulty will often feel like they're being properly challenged, while that same player facing a large penalty, likely chosen at the GM's discretion, will often feel discouraged by it.)

Setting a Difficulty Rating low is about showcasing PC awesomeness, letting them shine in a particular moment and reminding us why this character is in the spotlight. You can also set lower difficulties when you know the PCs are low on Fate Points, giving them the chance to take Compels in order to get more. You should also lower difficulties on anything in the way of the PC's getting to the main action of a Scene—you don't want them to be unable to make it to the Boss Fight with the supervillain mastermind!

Finally, some actions should take lower Difficulty Ratings by default, especially if no one's contesting or resisting them. **Unopposed efforts to create advantages in a conflict should never be harder than Average (+1) or Fair (+2), and neither should most attempts to put an Aspect on your own character, an object, or a location.** But remember that opposition doesn't have to always take the form of an NPC getting in the way—if the villain mastermind has hidden the evidence in his office away from prying eyes, you might consider that a form of Passive or even Active Opposition (the mastermind Reacts with his Skill at hiding it), even though he might not be physically present.

If the PCs are overflowing in Fate Points, or it's a crucial moment in the story when someone's life is on the line, or the fate of many is at stake, or they're finally going against foes that they've been building up to for a scenario or two, feel free to raise Difficulty Ratings across the board. You should also raise difficulties to indicate when a particular opponent is extremely prepared for the PCs, or to reflect situations that aren't ideal—if the PC's are not prepared, or don't have the right tools for the job, or are in a time crunch, etc.

Setting the Difficulty Rating right at the PC's skill level is, as you might imagine, sort of a middle ground between these two extremes. Do this when you want some tension without turning things up to 11, or when the odds are slightly in the PC's favor but you want a tangible element of risk.

Justify Your Choices

Your only other constraint in setting Difficulty Ratings goes back to the Silver Rule above—you need to make sure that your choices make sense in the context of the narrative you're creating. While you shouldn't get crazy with trying to model the world too closely and thus box yourself into a useless set of constraints ("Locks in this area of town are generally Good (+2) because of the higher crime rates."), don't look at this purely as a numbers game either. If the only reason for setting a Difficulty Rating at Superb (+5) is because it's two higher than the PC's skill level and you want to bleed his Fate Points off, you're straining credibility.

In that sense, you can look at setting Difficulty Ratings as being a lot like invoking Aspects—there needs to be a good reason that backs up your choice in the story. It's totally okay if that justification is something you make up on the spot, rather than something you know beforehand; Situation Aspects are a great tool for this—if the players already know that the sub-cellar

MORE FUN WITH DIFFICULTY RATINGS

It's possible to give an obstacle more than a single Difficulty Rating! For example, the heroes are faced with a **HEAVY BUNKER DOOR** they need to get through. The GM could rate its physical toughness at +8, its computer-locking mechanism at +5, and its air-impermeability at +2. The Atlas-Type hero, the hacking wizard, and the hero who can turn into gas are going to have different experiences with the door! Another example might be an **ANGRY MOB**. The GM could rule that attempts to use Rapport to calm them down, or Provoke to scare them or work them up into taking action, will have very different Difficulty Ratings.

All this may sound complicated, but keep in mind that you aren't required to set every Difficulty Rating attached to an obstacle or Aspect when you create it; you can give it none at all, or one representing the most likely mode of opposition, and add more as they become needed. So don't overthink it.



8: Running the Game – Setting Difficulty

they're in is **PITCH BLACK** and full of **CRAMPED SPACES**, it's easy to justify why it's so hard to stay quiet as they sneak through the tunnels. No one will bat an eye at you looking at the relevant Situation Aspects and giving a +2 to the opposition for each one, because it mirrors the Invoke Bonus they get.

Either way, don't skip the justification part—either let the players know what it is immediately when you tell them the Difficulty Rating, or shrug mysteriously and then let them find out soon thereafter (as in, the time it takes to think it up).

You might also try using “out of place” Difficulty Ratings to indicate the presence of unanswered questions during the game—for some odd reason, the lab you're trying to break into has an Epic (+7) security system. What could be so important in there that you don't know about?

Dealing with Extraordinary Success

Sometimes a PC will roll far in excess of the Difficulty Rating, getting a *lot* of shifts on the roll. Some of the basic Actions already have a built-in effect for rolling really well, like hitting harder on a good Attack roll. But for others, it's not so clear. What happens when you get a lot of shifts on an Engineering roll or an Investigate roll? You want to make sure those results have some kind of meaning and reflect how competent the PC's are.

Here are a few choice options.

GO NUTS WITH THE NARRATION

It might seem superfluous, but it's important to celebrate a great roll with a suitable narration of over the top success. This is a great time to take the suggestions above for Making Failure Awesome and applying them here. Let the success affect something else, in addition to what the PC was going for, and bring the player into the process of selling it by prompting them to make up cool details. “Three extra shifts on that Investigate roll—you don't just know where he was last Thursday, you know what he had for breakfast and how much he didn't tip the waitress.” “So you got five shifts on that Contacts roll—tell me, where does Roger the Rat usually go when he's cutting deals on the side, and what do you say when you find him there?”

ADD AN ASPECT

You can express additional effects of a good roll by placing an Aspect on the PC or on the scene, essentially letting them Create an Advantage for free. “So your Rapport roll to talk the guard into letting you in succeeded with four shifts. She'll let you inside to search the warehouse all right, and she'll also act as **AVAILABLE BACKUP** if you should need some help later.”

REDUCE TIME

If it's important to get something done fast, then you can use extra shifts to decrease the time that it takes to do an action.

Which brings us to...

Dealing with Time

We recognize two kinds of time in Fate: **game time** and **story time**.

Game Time

Game time is how we organize play in terms of the real players sitting at the table. Each unit of game time corresponds to a certain amount of real time. They are:

ROUND: The amount of time it takes all participants in a Conflict to take a turn, which includes performing and Action and reacting to any Actions taken against them. This usually doesn't take longer than a few minutes.

SCENE: The amount of time it takes to resolve a Conflict, deal with a single prominent situation, or accomplish a goal. Scenes vary in length, from a minute or two if it's just a quick description and some dialogue, to a half hour or more in the case of a major set-piece battle against a main NPC.

SESSION: The sum total of all the Scenes you run through in a single sitting. A Session ends when you and your friends pack it up for the night and go home. For most people, a Session is about 2 to 4 hours, but there is no theoretical limit—if you have few obligations, then you're only really limited by the need for food and sleep. A Minor Milestone usually occurs once per Session and is part of the wrap-up.



SCENARIO: One or more Sessions of play, but usually no more than four. Most of the time, the Sessions that make up a Scenario will definitively resolve some kind of problem or dilemma presented by the GM, or wrap up a storyline (see Scenes, Sessions, and Scenarios for more on Scenarios). A Scenario usually ends with a Significant Milestone. A Scenario is akin to a single TV episode.

ARC: Several Scenarios, usually between two and four. An Arc typically culminates in an event that brings great change to the game world, building up from the resolution of the Scenarios. You can look at an Arc like a season of a television show, where individual episodes lead to a tumultuous climax. You're not always guaranteed to have a recognizable Arc, just like not all TV shows have a plotline that carries through the whole season—it's possible to bounce from situation to situation without having a defined plot structure. Major Milestones usually happen at the end of an Arc.

CAMPAIGN: The sum of all the time you've sat at a table playing this particular game of *Wearing the Cape*—every Session, every Scenario, every Arc. Technically, there's no upper limit to how long a Campaign can be. Some groups go for years; others get to the end of an Arc and then stop. You might set up your Campaign as a kind of "Super-Arc," where there's one massive conflict that everything else is a smaller part of, or it might simply consist of the smaller individual stories that you tell in your Scenarios.

Story Time

Story time is time as the *player characters* perceive it, from the perspective of being "in the story." Story time is the amount of time it takes for them to accomplish any of the stuff you and the players say that they do during play. Most of the time, you'll reference story time as an afterthought, mentioning it in passing ("Okay, so it takes you an hour to get to the airport by cab") or as part of a Skill roll ("Cool, so after 20 minutes of sweeping the room, you find the following...").

Under most circumstances, story time has no actual relation to real time. For example, a round of combat might take a few minutes to play out in real time, but only cover what happens in the first few seconds of a Conflict, while a round of negotiations might take a couple of real-time minutes but play out hours of story time. Likewise, you can cover long swaths of time simply by saying that it happens ("The contact takes two weeks to get back to you—are you doing anything while you wait, or can we just skip to the meeting?"). When used this way, it's really just a convenience, a narrative device in order to add verisimilitude and some consistency to your story.

Sometimes, though, you can use story time in creative ways to build tension and add surprises during the game. Here's how.

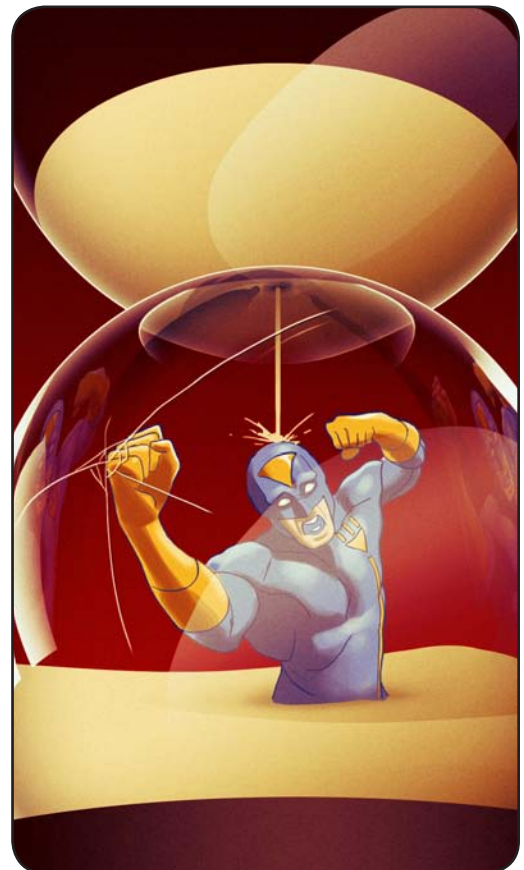
DEADLINE PRESSURE

Nothing creates tension like a good deadline. The heroes only have a certain number of minutes to disable the death trap, or a certain amount of time to get across the city before something blows up, or a certain amount of time to deliver the ransom before loved ones get aced by the bad guys, and so on.

Some of the game's default actions are made to take advantage of deadline pressure, such as Challenges or Contests—they each limit the number of rolls that a player can make before something happens, for better or for worse.

You don't have to limit yourself to using just those two, though. If you set a hard deadline for something bad in one of your Scenarios, you can start keeping track of the amount of time everything takes, and use it as a way to keep the pressure on. ("Oh, so you want to browse through the precinct's cold-case archives? Well, you have three days until the trial—I can give you an Academics roll, but just the attempt is probably going to eat up one of those days.") Remember, nearly everything takes time. Even a basic attempt to Create an Advantage using Rapport requires you to sit with the target for a little while, and if every action the PCs are taking is chipping away at a clock, it may be time they don't have.

Of course, it'd be no fun if there was nothing they could do to improve a deadline situation, and it'd be no fun if the crawl toward the deadline was predictable.



8: Running the Game – Setting Difficulty

USING STORY TIME IN SUCCESS AND FAILURE

When you're using story time to create deadline pressure, feel free to incorporate unpredictable jumps in time when the PCs do really well or really badly on a roll.

Taking extra time is a great way to make failure awesome as per the guidelines above, especially using the "Success at a Cost" option—give the players exactly what they want, but at the cost of taking more time than they were trying to spend, thus risking that their efforts will come too late. Or it could be the thing that pushes a deadline over the edge—maybe things aren't completely hopeless, but now there are extra problems to deal with.

Likewise, reward extreme success by reducing the amount of time it takes to do something while the PCs are under deadline. That research (Academics) that was going to take a day gets wrapped up in a few hours. While looking for a good middleman (Contacts) to get you the equipment you need, you manage to find another one who can fulfill your order that same day rather than in a week.

If time is a factor, you should also be able to use *Invokes* and *Compels* to manipulate time, to make things easier or more complicated respectively. ("Hey, I'm a **GARAGE BUNNY**, so fixing this car shouldn't take me that long, right?" "Oh, you know what? Your sheet says **I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF THE FUN AND GAMES...** doesn't it make sense that if you're looking for a guy in a casino, it'd be easy to get caught up in distractions? All those slot machines and stuff...")

HOW MUCH TIME IS A SHIFT WORTH?

As with any other roll, the number of shifts you get (or the amount you fail by) should serve as a barometer for just how severe the time jump is. So, how do you decide just how much to award or penalize?

It really depends on how much time you decide the initial action is going to take. Time is usually expressed as "a few days," "twenty seconds," "three weeks," and so on. It works best to measure in the abstract and express all the game actions as taking **half, one, a few,** or **several** of a given unit of time. So if you imagine something taking six hours, think of it as "several hours." If you imagine something taking twenty minutes, you can either call that "several minutes" or round up to "half an hour," whichever feels closest.

This gives you a starting point for moving up and down. Each shift is worth one jump from wherever your starting point is. So if your starting point is "several hours," and it benefits the PCs to speed things up, then it works like this: one shift jumps the time down to "a few hours," two shifts down to "one hour," and three shifts down to "a half hour."

Going past either end of the spectrum moves you down to several increments of the next unit of time or up to half the next unit of time, depending on which direction you're going. So four shifts on the aforementioned roll might jump you from "several hours" to "several minutes." Failing by one, conversely, might jump you from "several hours" to "half a day."

This allows you to quickly deal with time jumps no matter where you're starting from, whether the actions you have in mind are going to take moments or generations.

Story Time and the Scope of an Action

Most Actions a hero performs will be contained within Scenes narrated during a game Session. But what if the hero wants to use a Skill to perform an Action that takes *time*? Lead a Heroes Without Borders delegation negotiating with a foreign government for access and support? Study the equipment and designs of a Verne-Type villain in an effort to understand the domain and limits of his "science"? Carry out a weeks-long covert surveillance of a suspect to learn every detail of his routine? These actions using Rapport, Engineering, and Investigate can unfold with a single Skill roll representing protracted effort over a long period of time.

By allowing each roll to represent a longer period of time, you can "zoom out" to handle events that reach far beyond the individual player character making the roll, and affect the setting in a big way. That month-long Rapport roll might result in charting a new political course for the country the PC is negotiating with. That Investigate roll might be the start of bringing in one of the most notorious international master villains in the Post-Event World, one that's been hounding the PCs for the whole campaign.

This is a great way to make long breaks in story time more interactive, rather than bogging the game down with long narration or trying to retroactively come up with what happened during that time. If the PCs have long-term goals they want to accomplish, see if you can find a way to turn that into a Contest, Challenge, or Conflict that covers the whole break, or just have them make a single Skill roll to see if something unexpected happens. If they happen to fail the roll, whatever you invent as a Consequence will make good material for the game going forward.

If you do this with a Conflict or a Contest, scale each Exchange appropriately—if a Conflict is taking place over the course of a year, then each Round might be a month or two, and everyone should describe their Actions and the results of their Actions in that context.



In *Wearing the Cape*, after *The Brotherhood* and *The Sanguinary Boys* are released, *Blackstone* and *Artemis* devote weeks to investigation and surveillance in an attempt to learn what happened and find actionable evidence of foul play that will allow the team to re-arrest both gangs. This effort could be run as a Challenge using *Larceny* (planting bugs and cameras), *Stealth* (avoiding detection while doing it), *Rapport/Provoke* (developing human intel sources by persuasion or intimidation), and *Investigate* (sifting through thousands of pages of documents and hundreds of hours of footage). The result of success could easily be new warrants and an initial advantage in the take down based on their now-intimate knowledge of their enemy.

Zoom In, Zoom Out

There's no rule that says you are required to keep your rolls consistent in terms of story time. One cool trick you can do is use the result of one roll to segue into another roll that takes place over a much smaller period in time, or vice versa. This is a great way to open a new Scene, Contest, or Conflict, or just introduce a change of pace.

Artemis Succeeds with Style at her Stealth roll (being able to float into and out of places as mist helps big-time), and the GM says "On your fifth insertion into the tenement building the Sanguinary Boys have made their base, you not only retrieve all the cards from your cameras, you overhear a deal going down to commit arson in your neighborhood so that the guy paying them can collect the insurance money."

Artemis decides that taking this to the police would jeopardize her and Blackstone's project, so she trails the villain given the job (another Stealth roll), breaks into his apartment to search it (Larceny and Alertness). She turns up a building blueprint and security codes and schedule, but leaves everything undisturbed; she's going to catch him in the act while "patrolling"—cue the Conflict Scene.

GOING WITH THE FLOW

As the example shows, you don't need to end a Challenge/Contest/Negotiation/Conflict before beginning another one. If you are in the middle of a Challenge that may take minutes, hours, or days, and a possible Conflict threatens to impede or derail the Challenge, help it, or just happen during the time period covered by the Challenge, make a note of where you stand in the Challenge and come back to it. Use common sense when nesting Scenes inside each other! Ending an intervening Conflict Scene would not cause your Resource Stress to reset if you're using it for an ongoing Challenge Scene.

Judging the Use of Skills and Stunts

By now, you pretty much have all the advice you need to deal with Skill and Stunt use—all of Chapter Three, the Action descriptions and examples in Chapters Six and Seven, and the advice immediately above about setting Difficulty Ratings and how to handle success and failure to keep things dynamic.

The only other major problem you'll have to worry about is when you run into an "edge case" with a Skill—a player wants to use it for an Action that seems like a bit of a stretch, or a situation comes up in your game where it makes sense to use a Skill for something that's not normally a part of its description.

When you run into this, talk it over with the group and see what everyone thinks. It's going to end up one of three ways:

- **It's too much of a stretch. Consider creating a new Skill.**
- **It's not a stretch, and anyone can use the Skill that way from now on under the same conditions.**
- **It wouldn't be a stretch if the character had a Stunt that allowed it.**

See Chapters Four and Five for advice on figuring out what the limits are for a Skill and what the dividing line between a Skill and a Stunt is. **If you decide that a certain use of a Skill needs a Stunt, allow the player in question the chance to spend a Fate Point to temporarily "borrow" that Stunt for the current roll if he or she wants.** If they then want to keep the Stunt, they must commit to spend a Starting Fate Point to buy it at the next Minor Milestone (otherwise they keep paying an FP each time they use it).

Example: a hero with Kinetic Force (Shoot) normally uses his Power Skill to "fire" small objects at targets using telekinesis. He's jumped by a goon swinging a crowbar, and wants to Defend by catching and pushing the crowbar away with his power. The other players decide that the Action is justified by his power description, but would need a new Kinetic Force (Fight) Skill or a Stunt allowing him to Defend with Shoot. He pays the Fate Point to borrow the Stunt—a "Hey, look what I did!" move in the heat of the action—and then adds it by spending an SFP at the next Minor Milestone.



Aspects and Details: Discovery vs. Creation

From the player's point of view, there's almost no way to know what you've prepared beforehand and what you're inventing in the moment, especially if you're the kind of GM who doesn't display or consult any notes at the table. Thus, when a player tries to discover something you haven't come up with yet, you can treat it as if they were making a new Aspect or story detail (an Overcome or Create an Advantage Action). If they succeed, they find what they're looking for. If they fail, you can use what they were looking for as inspiration to help you come up with the real information.

If you're really comfortable with improvising, this means that you can come to the table with very little prepared beforehand, and let the players' reactions and questions build everything for you. You may need to ask some prompting questions first, to narrow down the scope of what information the player's looking for, but after that, the sky's the limit.

When is Information an Advantage?

Both the Overcome and Create an Advantage Actions can be used to discover needed information or create new Aspects about a Scene. So which do you use? Most of the time, you can decide by asking "Does it make narrative sense for this to give an *advantage* on a future roll?" For example, if you're looking for a street-level way into a building, the GM can have you roll vs. Alertness to find the trash-covered basement window you can enter through. That's an Overcome which creates/discovers the **LOOSE BASEMENT WINDOW** Aspect. But what if you were looking for a back way in so that you could gain a **COME FROM BEHIND** Aspect with a Free Invoke when you open the can of Conflict on the guys you know are inside? The GM could rule that finding the loose basement window you can enter through to achieve surprise is a Create an Advantage Action. Either Action works. In one case the goal was finding a way (achieved with Overcome), in the other case, the goal was ambushing targets inside (achieved with Create an Advantage).

So the goal determines the Action; "I'm looking for something to use as a weapon!" would be an Alertness roll to Create an Advantage, while "I'm searching for the password so I can access this guy's computer—he has to have written it down somewhere!" is an Overcome since discovery would allow access without requiring or aiding a subsequent roll.

As always, as the GM you decide edge cases. Usually if information gives permission for the players to do something, but grants no obvious immediate advantage, it's an Overcome; if they're looking for an advantage, it's a Create an Advantage.

Character Ratings and Specific Measurements

Looking over the Character Ratings descriptions, you might notice that there are a few places where we give an abstraction for something that in real life depends on precise measurement. Physique and Wealth are strong examples—many people who are into strength training have some idea of how much weight they can dead lift (something easily translatable into superhuman strength), and people spend specific amounts of money from a finite pool when they buy things.

So how much can a hero with Epic (+7) Physique bench press? How much can a millionaire with Superb (+5) Wealth spend before going broke? (The same question applies to Weapon Ratings: how much damage does an M72 LAW Rocket do?)

The truth is, we have no idea, and we're reluctant to pursue a specific answer.

Though it may seem counter-intuitive, we find that creating minutiae like that detracts from the verisimilitude of the game in play. As soon as you establish a detail like, "Epic Physique can dead lift a city bus for five seconds," then you're cutting out a lot of the variability that real life allows. Many factors allow people to reach beyond their normal limits or fall short of them—you can't factor every one of those things in without having it take up a large amount of focus at the table. It becomes a thing for people to discuss and even argue about, rather than participating in the scene.

It's also boring. If you decide that a Superb (+5) Wealth can buy anything that's \$100,000 or less, then you've removed a great deal of potential for tension and drama. Suddenly, every time you have a Wealth-based problem, it's going to hinge on the question of whether or not the cost is 100 grand, rather than whatever the point of the Scene is. It also turns everything into a simple pass/fail situation, which means you don't really have a good reason to roll the Skill at all. And again, this is not realistic—when people spend money, it's not about the raw dollar amount as much as it is a question of what someone can presently afford.

Remember, an Attribute, Skill, or Resource roll is a narrative tool, meant to answer the following question: "Can I solve X problem using Y means, right now?" When you get an unexpected result, use your sense of realism and drama to explain and justify it, using our guidelines above. "Oh, you failed that Wealth roll to purchase the broken piece of Verne-Tech memorabilia? A mystery buyer doubled what you offered to pay? Who is he and why does he want it, anyway?"

Having said that, it is important to establish a sense of scale—an idea of what is possible—especially at superhuman levels. For that, see *Power Classes and Scale in the Post-Event World* (p.94).



Dealing with Aspects

As the GM, you have a very important job in managing the flow of Fate Points to and from the players, giving them opportunities to spend freely in order to succeed and look awesome, and bringing in potential Complications to liven things up and help keep them stocked up on points. Doing this well is all about dealing with Aspects through Invokes and Compels.

Invokes

Remember, *moving Fate Points around is good*. You shouldn't apply exacting standards when the players want to invoke Aspects—you want them to spend in order to keep the flow going, and if you're too stringent on your requirements, it's going to discourage them from that free spending.

On the other hand, feel free to ask for more clarification if you don't get what a player is implying, in terms of how the Aspect relates to what's happening in play. Sometimes, what seems obvious to one person isn't to another, and you shouldn't let the desire to toss Fate Points lead to overlooking the narrative. If a player is having a hard time justifying the Invoke, ask them to elaborate on their Action more or unpack their thoughts.

You might also have the problem of players who get lost in the open ended nature of Aspects—they don't invoke because they aren't sure if it's too much of a stretch to apply an Aspect in a certain way. The more work you do beforehand making sure that everyone's clear on what an Aspect means, the less you'll run into this. To get the player talking about invoking Aspects, make it clear that invoking an Aspect is almost always an option on any roll, in order to try and get them talking about the possibilities. Eventually, once you get a consistent dialogue going, things should smooth out.

ALL THE WORLD'S YOUR STAGE

It helps to make sure that players understand that *any* Aspect can be invoked if they can explain how it helps them. Here's a quick recap of possibilities.

POWER ASPECTS

Players can *always* invoke their hero's Power Aspects when it means pushing their power's limit. Atlas and Ajax-Types invoke to lift those bigger multi-tonnage loads, hit harder, take hard hits. Speedster-Types invoke their Power Aspect to squeeze that extra speed-advantage out or simply Declare a Story Detail—"I went through hypertime to get that box of flash-bang grenades!"

CHARACTER ASPECTS

Players should have already had useful Invokes in mind when writing out the rest of their Character Aspects; before you begin play, make sure that you understand how they intend to use them (just asking how and when specific Character Aspects will come in handy may cause players to rethink and rewrite them). Remember; Character Aspects should be used. Not every Session perhaps, but they should affect play often enough to pull their weight; if they aren't they should be replaced.

OTHER CHARACTERS' CHARACTER ASPECTS

Players can always invoke NPCs' Trouble Aspects, and also the potential downsides of their Power Aspects and Background Aspects. If an Ajax-Type is a **HUGE BRUISER**, a player shooting at him can invoke his size against him for the +2, for example. Psychological weaknesses can always be invoked to help with Rapport or Provoke attempts.

ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION ASPECTS

When you provide a new scene description, you should list only Situation Aspects that you expect the PCs or NPCs to take advantage of (or need to overcome). If a player suggests a logical Situation Aspect that fits your scene description, feel free to add it; the player probably Has Plans and will be invoking it. Helping the players to appreciate the tactical usefulness of environmental Situation Aspects is always a good idea.

The same applies to your use of environmental Situation Aspects on behalf of the NPCs. Think *tactically*; you're not out to steamroll the PCs, but if players aren't making use of the scene's potential then you should show them the error of their ways. If their heroes get hammered a few times because they ignore their environment, they'll start using it.

CREATED SITUATION ASPECTS

Many powers create all sorts of Situation Aspects, each with a Free Invoke or two attached. *Exhausting the Free Invoke(s) doesn't remove the Situation Aspect*; players can always continue invoking the created Aspect by spending their own Fate Points. (And as the GM, you can sometimes find ways to invoke a power-created Situation Aspect against a PC...)

In the Fate System, Aspects really are king; the more you use them, the more dynamic and exciting gameplay will be.





Compels

During the game, you should look for opportunities to compel the heroes' Aspects at the following times:

- Whenever simply succeeding at a Skill roll would be bland.
- Whenever any player has one or no Fate Points.
- Whenever someone tries to do something, and you immediately think of some Aspect-related way it could go wrong.

Remember that there are essentially two types of Compels in the game: decision-based, where a complication occurs as a result of *something a character does*; and event-based, where a complication occurs simply as a result of the character being in the *wrong situation at the wrong time*.

Of the two, you're going to get the most mileage out of event-based Compels—it's already your job to decide how the world responds to the PCs, so you have a lot of leeway to bring unfortunate coincidence into their lives. Most of the time, players are just going to accept you doing this without any problems or minimal negotiation.

Decision-based compels are a little trickier. Try to refrain from suggesting decisions to the players, and focus on responding to their decisions with potential complications. It's important that the players retain their sense of autonomy over what their heroes say and do, so you don't want to dictate that to them. If the players are roleplaying their characters according to their Aspects, it shouldn't be hard to connect the complications you propose to one of them.

During play, you'll also need to make clear when a particular Compel is "set", meaning that there's no backing out without paying a Fate Point. When players propose their own Compels, this won't come up, because they're fishing for the FP to begin with. When you propose them, you need to give the players room to negotiate with you over what the complication is, before you make a final decision. Be transparent about this—let them know when the negotiation phase has ended.

Weak Compels

In order for the Compel mechanic to be effective, you have to take care that you're proposing complications of sufficient dramatic weight. Stay away from superficial consequences that don't really affect the character except to provide color for the scene. If you can't think of an *immediate and tangible* way that the complication changes what's going on in the game, if someone doesn't go "oh crap" or give you some similar visceral reaction, you probably need to turn up the heat. It's not good enough for someone to be angry at the PC—they *get angry and they're willing to do something about it in front of everyone*. It's not good enough for a business partner to cut them off—he *cuts them off and tells the rest of his associates to blacklist them*.

Also, keep in mind that some players may tend to offer weak Compels when they're fishing for Fate Points, because they don't really want to hose their character that badly. Feel free to push for something harder if their initial proposal doesn't actually make the situation that much more dramatic.

Encouraging Self-Compels

With five Aspects per player character, it's prohibitively difficult for you to take the sole responsibility for Compels at the table, because that's a lot of stuff to remember and keep track of. You need the players to be invested in looking for moments to compel their own characters.

Open-ended prompting can go a long way to create this habit in your players. If you see an opportunity for a potential Compel, instead of proposing it directly, ask a leading question instead. "So, you're at the Fortress trying to behave, and your hero has the **WEAKNESS FOR THE LADIES** Aspect. Dave, do you think this is going to go smoothly for him?" Let the player do the work of coming up with the Complication and then pass the Fate Point along.

🌀 HOW TO DESCRIBE ANYTHING





In the previous chapters we have gone over the mechanics of how the players create their heroes and use them in action, and explored the GM's several roles. In the following chapters we will discuss how the GM and players together can build a story for their heroes. In *this* chapter, we will dive into the GM's side of creation; how to create everything in the story—the villains the heroes will face, the environments they will act in, and more abstract things like superhero teams, local news agencies, criminal syndicates, and government departments; everything the heroes can see, interact with, and get punched by.

Staging Scenes

You already know about the structure of Scenes—the Setup Phase, Action Phase, and Resolution Phase; here we will talk about Scene *staging*. Scene staging is part of the Setup Phase, but staging continues through the Action Phase as the heroes' actions affect their environment and are affected by it.

Aspects and Staging

As previously mentioned, Scene environments are portrayed by description and with one or more Situation Aspects (usually 3-5). The appropriate Aspects are often apparent simply from the narrative description of the Scene: a “dark and stormy night” can easily be a **STORM SHROUDED NIGHT**, full of **SLEETING RAIN**, and **LIGHTNING-LIT**. The travelers might also be driving a **DANGEROUS ROAD** at **RECKLESS SPEED**.

Most environments aren't nearly so dramatic of course, but Situation Aspects should be potentially important—if you can't imagine invoking or compelling a Situation Aspect when staging the Scene then you should simply leave it part of the setting's description. Conversely, players may hear a setting's description and ask pointed questions about parts of it—inspiring you to promote bits of the setting to Situation Aspects. Not all Situation Aspects *must* be used, after all.

Permission or Denial

Much of the time a Situation Aspect won't affect anything unless invoked or compelled; other times it can be used to deny an Action or enable it. Say a hero decides to try an Alertness roll to see if he can spot a target he is looking for; in the dramatic setting above, you could rule that the **STORM SHROUDED NIGHT** and **SLEETING RAIN** makes it impossible for him to see more than ten feet in front of him! He will be similarly hard-pressed to start a fire unless he is a seriously strong pyrokinetic.

Situation Aspects and Difficulty Ratings

Besides being invoked or compelled, Situation Aspects in a setting may also become Obstacles. The classic examples are of course walls and locked doors, but if it is narratively appropriate then *any* Scene Aspects can be Obstacles; in the current setting example, you could make the **DANGEROUS ROAD** an Obstacle requiring an Overcome roll for the heroes to remain in pursuit of their target! This is an intermediary step between simply invoking the **DANGEROUS ROAD** to make their pursuit a little more difficult or compelling it to send them into the ditch so that they lose their target.



Situation Aspects as Hazards

A Hazard is a Situation Aspect that *bites*. One vital piece of the Fate system is **The Bronze Rule** (also called the Fate Fractal): **You can treat anything in the game world like it's a character.** What this means is that you can describe anything with Aspects, Character Ratings, Stress Boxes, Consequence Slots, Stunts, and Fate Points. You'll see more about that when we talk about Organizations, but here we're going to talk about how to use the Fate Fractal to create Hazards. Creating Hazards means giving a Situation Aspect—or even a Consequence if the GM decides to add real bite to injuries—one or more situational Difficulty Ratings that can act as Character Ratings and inflict consequences for failure. For example:

BUILDING EDIFICE. (+4 Climbing Difficulty Rating: Weapon Rating 3.) Special Rule: anyone scaling the building must Overcome its Climbing DR (Passive Opposition) to climb safely to the top. *Failure is treated as a successful Attack by the edifice*, with the WR 3 added to the shifts of failure to represent Stress/Consequence of a slip or fall. Hazards like this one allow the GM to make physical injury a consequence of failure in a non-Conflict Scene.

DANGEROUS ROAD. (+5 Driving Difficulty Rating: **IN A DITCH.**) This turns one of the example Scene's Situation Aspects into a Hazard that inflicts a seriously inconvenient Aspect on the player driving the road if he fails his Overcome roll. The high Difficulty Rating is because of the other Aspects (darkness, driving rain, flashing lightning) in the Scene!

MAZE. (+3 Discernment Difficulty Rating, React: **LOST.**) Anyone attempting to navigate to a specific destination in the maze (another person, back to the entrance, etc.) must Overcome the maze's complexity or be **LOST**. This works equally well for thick woods, a cavern-system, a target's dreamworld...

As shown, not every Hazard does damage; some inflict negative Aspects on the characters. When developing a Hazard, use the following guidelines.

- **Is the Hazard static or dynamic?** If it is static (it doesn't move, change, or react), then use Passive Opposition (roll the Hero Dice only). If it is dynamic (it does move, change, or react, often unpredictably), then use Active Opposition (roll both the Hero Dice and Opposition Dice). A raging fire might be an example of a dynamic hazard.
- **Is the Hazard's damage/condition a consequence of failure?** If so, the Hazard only Reacts (even if the React is a specialized Attack, as with the cliff example).
- **Can the Hazard take an Action against the character exposed to it?** Then give it a Character Rating. If it can Create an Advantage against the character, name the Situation Aspect. If it can Attack the character, give it a Character Rating and Weapon Rating if any.
- **Can the Hazard be destroyed/removed?** If so, detail how. Some Hazards can be attacked; give them one or more Stress Boxes. Others require the PC to create a countering Aspect or a narrative reason to remove the Hazard when it is Overcome.

Characters may sometimes create Situation Aspects that the GM decides to expand into a full-blown Hazard (possibly using a Compel). The classic example is a pyro who starts lighting the scenery on fire.

HOT COMBAT ZONE. (+2 Character Rating, WR 4, Active Opposition, Attack and React. Negated by a **COVER** Aspect, so long as you keep it.) The area is hot—full of flying rounds and stray shells (or flying plasma-bolts and other lethal powers). Nobody may be *trying* to hit you, but just staying in or moving through the area is risky and if you don't keep your head down you may lose it.

THICK SMOKE. (+5 Character Rating, Passive Opposition, Create an Advantage: **COUGHING AND HALF-BLINDED.**) The hero must Counter with Physique upon entering the smoke-filled area, and again for every round in with he remains in the area!

OXYGEN DEPRIVATION. (+0 Character Rating (stepped up +1 per turn of deprivation), Attack Action Roll opposed with Physique, Success only inflicts +1 shift each turn (unblockable), and all inflicted Consequences are treated as Mild unless character is Taken Out.) This Hazard is common to oxygen-poor environments created by big fires in enclosed spaces like burning buildings. Possession of some type of oxygen source negates the Hazard, and even temporary respite (access to oxygen) resets its Character Rating for the Reacting character.

RAGING FIRE. (+3 Character Rating, WR 1 to 5, Attack Action Roll each turn, oppose with Athleticism.) This is usually the kind of danger presented by an intense building fire. The GM should feel free to invoke the Raging Fire Aspect to intensify the risk, or even compel it to create more brief Hazards like **GAS EXPLOSION** or **STRUCTURAL COLLAPSE**.

And yes, more than one Hazard may be present in an area. Want to give your heroes a really hot time? How about a **HOT COMBAT ZONE** in what becomes a **FIRE-ENGULFED WAREHOUSE**? You *could* stat a Hazard out with multiple Aspects and Difficulty Ratings, an Armor Rating, Stress Boxes, etc. Just remember to keep its game-mechanics in line with its narrative description.



Writing up the Opposition

As interesting and possibly dangerous as the setting itself may be, the center of the game is the *fight*, the heroes going toe-to-toe with the supervillains; the situation might not always be black and white, but it is often win or die. So let's look at how you will write up the opposition.

Describing the NPC

Keep in mind that you're never obligated to give any non-player character a full file like the ones the heroes have. Most of the time, you're not going to need to have that much information, because the NPCs aren't going to be the center of attention like the PCs are. It's better to focus on writing down exactly what you need for that NPC's encounter with the PCs, and then fill in the blanks on the fly if they end up becoming more important in the Campaign.

NPCs come in three different flavors: **Scene Extras** (nameless NPCs), **Supporting Characters**, and **Main Characters**.

Scene Extras

The majority of the NPCs in your campaign world are often-nameless Scene Extras—people who are so incidental to the story that the heroes don't usually need to know their names or detailed descriptions; the local Starbucks barista and traffic cop, any number of bystanders and individuals the heroes may talk to and even save. Their role in the story is temporary and fleeting—most of the time, you will create them simply out of reflex when you describe an environment. “The plaza is beautiful at midday, and full of shoppers milling about. There's a busker giving a virtuoso violin performance and a ring of listeners. You want to stop and listen.”

On their own, Scene Extras usually aren't meant to provide much of a challenge to the PCs. You use them like you use a low-Difficulty Rating vs. Overcome, mainly as an opportunity to showcase the PCs' competence. In Conflicts, they serve as a distraction or a delay, forcing the PCs to work a little harder to get what they want. Superhero stories often feature master villains with an army of minions. These are the nameless minions.

For a Scene Extra, all you really need is two or three Character Ratings based on their role in the scene. Your average security guard might have Fight and Shoot, while your average clerk might only have Academics. They never get more than one or two Aspects. When using Scene Extra breakthroughs, just give them the minimum Stunts needed for their Power-Type. They only have one or two Stress Boxes, if any, to absorb both Physical and Mental hits. In other words, they're no match for a typical PC.

Scene Extras come in three varieties: **Average**, **Fair**, and **Good**.

AVERAGE

- **Competence:** Rank-and-file minions and gang members, non-specialists, even breakthroughs whose power and skills are unremarkable. When in doubt, a nameless NPC is Average.
- **Purpose:** Mostly there to make the PCs look more awesome.
- **Aspects:** One or two. (See High-Concept box, above.)
- **Character Ratings:** One or two Average (+1).
- **Stress:** No Stress Boxes—a one-shift hit is enough to take them out.

*Random minion: **STREET-TOUGH, ARMED WITH ATTITUDE.** +1 Fight/Shoot.*

FAIR

- **Competence:** Specialists and trained professionals, like mob enforcers and lieutenants or others whose role in the scene speaks to their experience. D and C Class villains with a little real skill or training can fit this category.
- **Purpose:** Drain a few of the players' resources (one or two Fate Points, Stress Boxes, possibly a Mild Consequence).
- **Aspects:** One or two.
- **Character Ratings:** One Fair (+2), and one or two Average (+1).
- **Stress:** One Stress Box—a two-shift hit is enough to take them out.

*Style-Villain: **D CLASS KINETIC-TYPE, AMBITIOUS.** +2 Shoot (Power), +1 Fight, +1 Provoke, Weapon Rating 2.*

THE HIGH CONCEPT CHARACTER ASPECT

In *Fate Core*, the role of Power Aspect and Hero Aspect is taken by the High Concept—a phrase that sums up what the character is about. Ideally, the High Concept tells you both the character's role in the story and something about his personality or behavior; for example, **CORRUPT POLICE DETECTIVE, NOSY AND NOISY JOURNALIST, FRIENDLY FIXER**, and so on. When you only use a single Character Aspect to describe an NPC—or when writing up a non-powered PC—go with the High Concept even if it's only one word (**BRUTE**, for example). Like all other Character Aspects, the High Concept is there to grant Permission/Denial, and to be invoked and compelled.



Good

- **Competence:** Tough opposition, especially in numbers. May be *trained* breakthroughs.
- **Purpose:** Drain the players' resources—as Fair, but more so. Provide a decent stumbling block (in numbers) on the way to a more significant encounter.
- **Aspects:** One or two.
- **Character Ratings:** One Good (+3), one Fair (+2), and one or two Average (+1).
- **Stress:** Two Stress Boxes—a three-shift hit is enough to take them out.

Cryo (Chicago street-villain). C CLASS CRYOKINETIC, HAPPY SADIST. +3 Shoot, +2 Provoke, +1 Fight, +1 Stealth. Power Stunts (Cold Attack): Stun, Ignores Physical AR, Weapon Rating 4. Cryo's main Attack is dropping target's core temperatures until they pass out from hypothermic shock.

Scene Extras and Power Levels

Note that D or C Class bad guys are described here as Scene Extras only because the default Campaign Power Level is A Class; for A Class heroes, D and C Class foes are usually not a big challenge—but they can be if their power set strikes at a hero's weakness, or if they are highly trained or the heroes are themselves written up for a lower-level Campaign! If the circumstances warrant, feel free to make C Class or even D Class villains Supporting or even Main Characters!

Scene Extras as Obstacles

An even easier way to handle Scene Extras is simply to treat them as Obstacles: give a Difficulty Rating for the PC to Overcome whatever threat the NPC presents, and just do it in one roll vs. Passive or Active Opposition. You don't even have to write anything down, just set the difficulty according to the guidelines in Chapter 6 (p.113), and assume that the PC defeats or gets past them on a Success. If the situation is a little more complicated than that, make it a Challenge instead.

This trick is useful when you want to represent a group of Scene Extras more as a feature of the Scene than as individuals (it certainly cuts down on paperwork). You are essentially making the NPCs a Scene Aspect with a Difficulty Rating attached; roll once to Overcome and move on—if you fail you can always update the obstacle to a full Hazard or to Scene Extras.

MOBS

In the comics and movies we see heroes routinely face and overcome whole crowds of minions, but gaming this can be exhausting; it is far easier to handle opposing groups as a single Mob. Instead of rolling for each Scene Extra's Action (especially when they're all Attacking), use Teamwork (p.130). Even a handful of Average minions can present a problem when a group of 3-5 or so are adding +1 Teamwork Bonuses to a single roll! Don't go overboard on grouping up; on paper, 6+ minions could flatten a hero where the narrative doesn't justify it, so for *big* crowds it's better to create two or more separate Mobs (or possibly make the mob a *Hazard*). When a crowd is attacking multiple heroes, divide it as evenly as possible into separate Mobs, one for each hero.

Keep in mind that the Teamwork Bonus only applies when, narratively, numbers help. Thus, Mobs often get the Teamwork Bonus for Fight or Shoot, but never get it for Stealth and often don't get it for Defend.

HITS AND OVERFLOW

When a Mob takes a hit, shifts in excess of what's needed to take out one Scene Extra are applied to the next Scene Extra in the mob, one at a time. In this way, it's entirely possible for a PC to take out a Mob of four or five nameless Scene Extras (or more!) in a single exchange. When a mob takes enough Stress to reduce it to a single Scene Extra, try to have that orphaned NPC join up with another Mob in the scene, if it makes sense. (If it doesn't, just have them flee. Scene Extras are good at that.)

Note: A hero with a +5 Attack and +4 Weapon Rating could take out a whole 5-minion mob on a single good roll, and this may not seem realistic. But remember that Exchanges don't always mean single shots or even hits; Actions can represent repeated hits. Also, Taking Out targets doesn't have to mean physically incapacitating them; faced with a Mob of minions, a hero might respond with an Attack and takedown on the Mob's leader so incredible that the rest of them simply break and run!

For convenience, a Mob of identical Scene Extras can be treated as a single NPC with a base Skill Rating boosted by a number equal to its number members—who are also represented by a row of unnumbered Stress Boxes. Each shift of stress against the Mob takes out a single Stress Box and drops the Skill Rating boost by 1 step!

MOBS AND MULTIPLE ATTACKS

A final note: GMs can keep big Mobs from being overwhelming simply by using the Multiple Targets Rules (p.131). Thus a 12-member Average Mob (+12 Fight, 12 Stress), attacking three heroes, will be dividing their total by 1/3rd; each hero will then need to Defend against a Difficulty Rating likely to be around +3 to +5—something much more manageable!



CREATIONS AND CONJURATIONS

New Stunt: ALLY. When you use Create an Advantage to summon a helper, instead of just a new Situation Aspect, you get a complete Supporting Character! Instead of a Situation Aspect, the ally will have 3 Character Aspects. Its Rating Column will peak at your applied Character Rating +Attribute Bonus or Peak Human Ability (+5), *whichever is lower*, and you determine Stress Boxes/Consequence Slots as for a normal Supporting Character.

You may buy Stunts to buff your ally, spending one SFP per two 1-SFP Stunts (half price since they'll only be usable when your ally is present). You may use Stunts to raise Character Attributes in the column, as per **SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE (p.95)** and **PEAK HUMAN ABILITY (p.103)**.

The conditions under which your ally will come into play are set when you buy the Stunt. When activated/brought into a Scene with the Create an Advantage Action, your ally will be run as an NPC under the GM's control but your direction (mostly).

Example Ally: Tiny. *Annjulie, a young Verne-Type, has built Tiny, an "autonomous assistant." Tiny looks like a floating steel Frisbee with retractable dangling appendages with modular attachments. Its Aspects are MIGHTY TINY, UNIVERSAL AID, and TRIGGER-HAPPY WATCH DOG, its Character Ratings are +5 Alertness, +4 Investigate, +3 Discernment, +2 Shoot, +1 Athleticism, and it has 2 Physical and 2 Mental Stress Boxes, plus 1 Mild and 1 Moderate Consequence Slot. Annjulie's player spent 2 SF on Tiny, giving it the STUN ATTACK, MULTIPLE TARGETS, SUPERSENSES, and WEAPON RATING 4.*

Tiny can't stay in active-mode for more than 15 minutes without needing to recharge, so Annjulie usually carries it around on a backpack charger-harness and needs to activate it (using Create an Advantage) before it will be active in a Scene.

Supporting Characters

Supporting Characters have proper names and are a little more detailed than Scene Extras, playing a supporting role in your Scenarios (hence the name). They often display some kind of strong distinguishing trait that sets them apart from the crowd, because of their relationship to a PC or NPC, a particular competence or unique ability, or simply the fact that they tend to appear in the game a great deal. Many action-adventure stories feature a "lieutenant" character who is the right-hand man of the lead villain; that's a Supporting Character! The faces that you assign to the locations you make during game creation are Supporting Characters, as are any characters who are named in one of the PCs' Aspects.

Supporting Characters are a great source of interpersonal drama, because they're usually the people that the PCs have a relationship with, such as friends, sidekicks, family, contacts, and noteworthy opponents. While they may never be central to resolving the main dilemma of a scenario, they're a significant part of the journey, either because they provide aid, present a problem, or figure into a subplot.

Supporting Characters are made much like Scene Extras, except they get to have a few more of the standard character elements. These include:

- **A High Concept/Power Aspect, a Trouble Aspect, one or more additional Aspects.**
- **Stunts as needed.**
- **Physical and Mental Stress Tracks with two boxes each.**
- **One Mild Consequence (plus one Moderate Consequence if you want them to be especially tough), and one Mild Resource Consequence.**

They should have a handful of Character Ratings (4 or 6). If they have an Attribute that entitles them to bonus Stress Boxes, award those as well.

A Supporting Character's top Character Rating can exceed your best PC's by one or two levels, but only if their role in the game is to provide serious opposition—Supporting Characters who are allied with the PCs should be their rough peers in in rating levels. (Another action-adventure trope is to make the "lieutenant" character better than the main villain at combat, contrasting brawn to the villain's brain.)

Character Ratings for a Supporting Character should follow a **column distribution**. Because you're only going to use four or five ratings, just treat it as a single column rather than a pyramid. What's a column? If your Supporting Character has a Peak Character Rating of Great (+4), fill in one Character Rating at each positive step below it—so one Good (+3), one Fair (+2), and one Average (+1) Character Rating.

SUPPORTING CHARACTER EXAMPLE: BRICK (ERNEST WINMAN, STREET-VILLAIN)

ASPECTS: HIGH B/LOW A CLASS AJAX-TYPE, BRAWLER, THICK AS A BRICK.

CHARACTER RATINGS: +8 Physique, +4 Provoke, +3 Fight, +2 Athleticism, +1 Larceny.

STUNTS: +3 Superhuman Strength (for +8 Physique), Superhuman Recovery, Top of Your Class, Hard as Nails.

STRESS: 4 Physical and 2 Mental Stress Boxes, 2 Mild and 2 Moderate Consequences (one of each Physical Consequences Only).

One last note: Supporting Characters opposing the heroes should not often fight to the bitter end (until they're Taken Out). Instead, you should Concede Conflicts often for them, especially early in a story, and especially if the Concede is something like "They had to leave the loot, but they got away." Conceding like this serves a few purposes. For one, it foreshadows a future, more significant encounter with the Supporting Character. Because Conceding comes with a reward of one or more Fate Points, it also makes them more of a threat the next time they show up. What's more, it's virtually guaranteed to pay off for the players in a



satisfying way the next time the Supporting Character makes an appearance. “Rematch! This time you’re going down.”

Finally, it implicitly demonstrates to the players that, when things are desperate, Conceding a Conflict is a viable course of action. A player character Concede here and there can raise the stakes and introduce new Complications organically, both of which make for a more dramatic, engaging story.

Main Characters

Main Characters are the closest you’re ever going to get to playing a PC yourself. They have full character files just like a hero does, with five Aspects, a full distribution of Character Ratings, and a selection of Stunts. They are the most significant characters in your PCs’ lives, because they represent pivotal forces of opposition or allies of crucial importance. Because they have a full spread of Aspects, they also offer the most nuanced options for interaction, and they have the most options to invoke and be compelled. Your primary “bad guys” in a Scenario or Arc should always be Main Characters, as should any NPCs who are the most vital pieces of your stories.

Because they have all the same things on their sheet as PCs do (substituting High Concept for Power and Hero Aspects if needed), Main Characters will require a lot more of your time and attention than other characters. If you know that a new Main Character is going to be involved in one of your Scenarios, prepare him ahead of time. Alternatively, you can always “promote” a Supporting Character or even Scene Extra to Main Character status between Sessions with a little work...

Main Characters who oppose the heroes will often fight to the bitter end if need be, making them work for every step. Regarding Character Rating levels, your Main Characters will come in one of two flavors—exact peers of the heroes who grow with them as the Campaign progresses, or superiors to the heroes who usually remain static while the heroes grow to sufficient strength to oppose them.

If it’s the former, just give them the exact same ratings distribution the PCs currently have. If it’s the latter, give them high enough ratings to go at least two steps higher than whatever the current peak Skill ratings are for the PCs (or Weapon/Armor Ratings, superhuman Attribute Ratings, or whatever is needed to make the Main Character the PC’s superior). So, if the PC’s Skills currently peak at Great (+4), your Main Character badass should be able to afford a couple of Superb (+5) columns or a pyramid that peaks at Superb (plus Stunts that give him reason to exceed the max human level). Don’t worry about hitting all the Attributes or factoring in Attribute Bonuses—just cover the ratings likely to be tapped in interactions with the heroes. Likewise, a particularly significant Main Character might have more than five Aspects to highlight their importance to the story!

THE 2-RATING CHARACTER

What if you need to work up an opposing NPC in a hurry? One that is intended to provide significant opposition to what the heroes want to do in a Scene, but may never be seen again? One thing you can do is give him one or two Aspects and a composite **Physical Rating** (Athleticism/ Physique/ Fight/ Shoot...) and **Mental Rating** (Alertness/ Discernment/ Willpower/ Provoke, etc.) rounded out by Power Stunts. Give him Physical and Mental Stress Tracks and Consequence Slots as normal for Supporting Characters (unless buffed by superhuman powers).

*Example: **B CLASS AJAX-TYPE, TOUGH CUSTOMER.** +4 Physical, +2 Mental, +4 Superhuman Strength. 4 Physical Stress Boxes, 3 Mental Stress Boxes, 2 Mild and 2 Moderate Consequence Slots (one of each are Physical Only).*

This gives you what you need for a quick Contest or Conflict Scene; throw in a Mob of minions, and your heroes are facing some serious resistance! If you then decide to “promote” the NPC, go ahead and fill in the details later, expanding “Physical” and “Mental” out to the whole array of ratings.

Example Main Character

BARK, LEADER OF THE SANGUINARY BOYS

ASPECTS: *B CLASS SONIC PROJECTOR, AMORAL LEADER, ICE COLD, NASTY FIGHTER, OFTEN CHARGED BUT NEVER CONVICTED.*

ATTRIBUTES/SKILLS/RESOURCES: +5 Shoot and Provoke, +4 Survival and Reputation, +3 Discernment and Contacts, +2 Physique and Fight, +1 Larceny and Willpower.

STRESS: 3 Physical and 3 Mental Stress Boxes, 1 Minor, 1 Moderate, and 1 Severe Consequence Slot.

STUNTS: *+6 WEAPON RATING, +1 CREATE AN ADVANTAGE WITH SHOOT, BEAM ATTACK, LETHAL ATTACK, AREA ATTACK, STUN ATTACK.*

POWER DESCRIPTION: A “screamer,” Bark attacks with focused and modulated pulsed sound waves (his “bark”). This limits his power’s full effects to living targets (Aspect Denial), striking through their auditory senses or by direct soft-tissue damage, but allows him to ignore types of Armor Rating that do not block soundwaves (Aspect Permission). A gag, sound damper, or something that paralyzes his vocal chords will neutralize his power.



Creating Organizations

Americans have seen a few solo heroes—both legal and vigilante—in the wake of *The Event*, but with the rise of the Crisis Aid and Intervention teams most capes operate in incorporated and funded organizations or chapters. Popularly, the collective noun for American capes is team. “A team of heroes.”

—BARLOW’S GUIDE TO SUPERHUMANS

Remember the **Bronze Rule** (the Fate Fractal): *You can treat anything in the game world like it’s a character.* Here we are going to apply it to Organizations.

An Organization is written up as a special kind of non-player character; refer to the Organization File document in the back of the gamebook. You’ll notice that it has only three Aspects (the **Mission Statement** and two Background Aspects) and only space for Skills and Resources. It also only has *Resource* Stress Boxes and Consequence Slots.

Organization Types

When you name your Organization, also fill in the Organization Type Box; the Organization Type is almost an uber-Aspect in that it creates a number of Permissions and Denials. For example, a CAI team may respond to disasters elsewhere but it will be imbedded in a local community, certified by the local government, and work closely with local law enforcement and emergency services. An international NGO (non-government organization such as Heroes without Borders) will be all over the map although constrained by local laws. Government Agencies (the DSA, FBI, Secret Service, etc.) will have tremendous powers within specific geographic or legal jurisdictions and constraints. The Organization Type says a lot at a glance.

Organization Aspects

You don’t need to get too creative in writing Organization Aspects, just enough to give a good feel for the team’s purpose and character. For example, the Sentinels’ Team Aspects are: **PROTECT AND SERVE THE PEOPLE OF CHICAGO** (the Mission Statement), and **AMERICA’S PREMIER SUPERTEAM** and **STRAINED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHICAGO PD** (Background Aspects). Organizations do not get Starting Fate Points; players or the GM provide them as needed to invoke or compel Organization Aspects.

Organization Skills and Resources

The starting default Character Ratings for starting PC organizations (specifically CAI teams) is **one +4, two +3s, two +2s, and three +1s**. Organizations don’t have Attributes, and not all Skills are commonly available (expect them to be renamed and often re-tasked). These Ratings often represent the abilities of consultants and support staff; the GM and players can use the following Organization Skills, and come up with their own if these do not entirely fit.

ORGANIZATION SKILLS

Information (Academics)

Espionage (Stealth)

Investigate (Investigate)

Legal Resources (Survival)

Public Relations (Rapport)

Security (Larceny)

Transportation (Drive)

CAI teams commonly possess Information, Legal Resources, Public Relations, Security, and Transportation in addition to the three Resources. The GM may want to raise the starting Skills/Resources available for a team if it represents a larger and older organization; for example, the DSA!

After ten years as America’s premier cape team, The Chicago Sentinels have deep assets of personnel and resources. They have +5 Information, +3 Investigate, +4 Legal Resources, +4 Public Relations, and +5 Security, as well as +7 Reputation, +5 Contacts, and +7 Wealth!



Organization Stress and Consequences

Organizations start with **2 Resource Stress Boxes**, and gain more as per normal for Resources. They start with **1 Moderate Resource Consequence**, and can also have more than one of each Resource Consequence; two Epic (+7) Resources gives an Organization 2 Mild Consequence Slots, while a *third* Epic (+7) Resource gives an additional Moderate Consequence Slot! So they are a lot more resilient than Player Characters at absorbing Resource Attacks and Scene Consequences (p.135). They also usually have more Resource Stress Boxes and so are better at tapping Resources than PCs (p.134).

The Chicago Sentinels have 5 Resource Stress Boxes, plus 2 Minor Resource Consequence Slots and 1 Moderate Resource Consequence Slot.

Using Organizations

If a character is a member of an Organization, and the narrative circumstances allow, then he may spend 1 Fate Point to invoke an **Organization Aspect** or use an **Organization Skill or Resource**; this represents mobilizing the organization's pool of professional knowledge and talents. The character may add his own Attribute Bonus to the Organization's Skill *if she also has the Skill* (for example with her Rapport Skill, The Harlequin can help the Sentinels with Public Relations). Tapping the organization's Resources will cost the organization 1 Resource Stress Box (check boxes from highest to lowest) or one Consequence Slot if all Resource Stress Boxes are full. The GM can also invoke or even compel an Organization Aspect against the character, however!

*For example, any Sentinel can invoke **AMERICA'S PREMIER SUPERTEAM** to boost a Rapport or Provoke roll if the target knows his affiliation—but the GM could likewise invoke **STRAINED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHICAGO PD** to make life harder.*

Note, however, that unless wholly owned by the PCs, organizations are NPCs! Even when they are superhero teams, they are under the GMs control to a great degree (CAI teams are usually a private/public partnership). This means that the GM must agree to the reasonableness of any use of Organization Skills or Resources. If PCs go rogue or otherwise act in ways that do not fit the Organization Type or Mission Statement, then the GM can play the organization as a *hostile* NPC. If nothing else, the organization need not always act to shield a PC cape when determining the outcome of Scene Consequences!

Also, keep in mind that while the heroes may only officially belong to one or two organizations, they may cooperate with many more! The relationship between the Chicago Sentinels and the Chicago Metropolitan Police Department is a good example.

Organizations and Resource Conflicts

Organizations are handled a little differently in Resource Conflicts (including Scene Consequence checks). All the standard rules apply, *except*:

- Individual characters cannot add their Teamwork Bonus to help the organization Attack or React unless they have an equal or higher applicable Skill or Resource Rating than the organization. Organizations can always apply their Teamwork Bonus to aid the character if applicable.
- Individual characters cannot substitute organization Resources for their own in Resource Conflicts—but organizations can use their Resources to create Advantages to spend helping member characters engaged in Resource Conflicts.
- In any Resource Contest, Challenge, or Conflict between characters and organizations, organizations get a **+2 Organization Scale Bonus**. This bonus is negated if another organization is also helping the character, represented by the organization applying the Teamwork Bonus or creating at least one Advantage for the Free Invoke.
- Organizations can resist being Taken Out as normal—remaining in the scene even with an Extreme Consequence on them. However, if they are subsequently Taken Out, they are effectively disrupted or *destroyed*, and are out of play until after the next Major Milestone. They can then return if narratively justified—*after having sacrificed 2 levels of Resource Ratings for Recovery if they also took an Extreme Resource Consequence*.

Organizations can and should play a huge part in your campaign; remember that governments are organizations, and so are media groups, activist networks, non-profits, terrorist groups, law firms, and gangs. Criminal organizations are organizations by definition. Note, however, these special Organization rules do not need to come into play every time the heroes interact with an organization; as with NPCs, you can also reduce organizations so a single Difficulty Rating if the hero's interactions with them are one-offs requiring a simple Overcome. You can also introduce a new organization with a simple Difficulty Rating (and possibly an Aspect) and build it into a full Organization later if necessary, so don't give yourself more work than you need to!



Example Resource Conflict: Humanity First vs. the Sentinels

Humanity First, an anti-superhuman group, launches a vicious media campaign against the Chicago Sentinels (p.34). The well-funded group prepares the ground by using its media connections (+5 Contacts) to spin several damning stories out of previous Sentinels actions that led to less-than-optimal outcomes (and civilian deaths), generating a **WHY AREN'T THEY MORE ACCOUNTABLE?** Situation Aspect with 2 Free Invokes. Then it uses its +7 Wealth to Attack the Sentinel's Reputation (paying for the TV spots), adding the +4 from the Free Invokes.

The players spend a Fate Point to invoke the Sentinels' **AMERICA'S PREMIER SUPERTEAM** Aspect for a +2 bonus to its +7 Reputation. The Harlequin's player uses her +4 Rapport (media-savvy) to pull together a team appearance highlighting its Heroes without Borders work and domestic building charities, for a further +1 Teamwork Bonus.

The Sentinels must beat a +11 Attack aimed at their Reputation. Rolling the Hero/Opposition Dice for the team, she rolls a **++■■■/ +■■■-**, giving them a +7 (Reputation) +2 (Aspect Bonus) +1 (Teamwork Bonus) +2 (Fate Roll) for a +12 Total! Succeeding in Defending against Humanity First's opening Attack, they then counter by running a series of Create an Advantage Actions with the more personable teammates' Rapport Skills (representing public appearances and interviews), while an Investigate Skill roll to Create an Advantage turn up lots of anti-superhuman statements by Humanity First leaders. All this becomes a pool of Free Invokes which they use to crush the anti-cape group with their own successful Reputation Attack, inflicting enough shifts to create an Extreme Consequence. The GM decides that the Extreme Consequence is **HUGELY NEGATIVE PUBLIC BACKLASH**. Even after the anti-cape group sacrifices a couple of Resource Rating levels to Recover, they'll be stuck with the **ANTI-SUPERHUMAN BIGOTS** label as one of their "Character Aspects" until they can remove it.

PCs vs. Organizations

While Resource Conflicts are all very well, they don't represent what the *heroes* do when they go after criminal and supervillain organizations. The way to do this is to play out Scenarios dedicated to going after an Organization; if the heroes are successful in whatever action they are attempting (hitting an organization base, sneaking around to gather intel, arresting street-villains working for the organization, etc.) use the Scene Resolution Phase to apply a Scene Consequence Check to the targeted organization!

A more involved method would be to have several Scenes or even Sessions devoted to building up a pool of Situation Aspects against the organization—stuff like **SEIZED ASSETS**, **INSIDE INFORMATION**, **HUMILIATING DEFEAT**, etc.—which is then used in the final Scene Consequence Check when the team arrests the organization's kingpin or otherwise plays out the Ultimate Boss Fight. Even if previous Scene Consequence Checks haven't already filled the Organization's Resource Consequence Slots, the stack of Situation Aspects and Free Invokes may then allow the heroes to inflict an Extreme Consequence—only one step from Taking Out an organization entirely!

THE PULLMAN FIGHT

In one of the early fights in Wearing the Cape, the Sentinels got word that the Sanguinary Boys and the Brotherhood (Chicago's two biggest supervillain gangs) were meeting to fight it out in the shadow of the old Pullman Clock Tower. The Sentinels scrambled to stop the fight and arrest the participants—but not until after the fight had started and the gangs had inflicted several fatalities on each other, which meant all participants could be hit with Homicide and Conspiracy to Commit charges! Playing out the Scene Resolution Phase, the GM would do Scene Consequence Checks for both of the villain teams and likely inflicting Extreme Resource Consequences on both!

In addition to grinding down an Organization's Resources, when successful, heroes can create narrative conditions that convince the GM to change an Organization's Aspects at appropriate Milestones (p.179), and even possibly lower the targeted Organization's Skills to reflect the new conditions.

Putting a Face on It

One last thing about Organizations; when adding them into a Campaign it is best to put a face—or faces—on them, just as you do with Campaign locations or Issues (p.167). The face is sometimes the organization's leader, but not always; the *best* face is the one the heroes will interact with the most! For example, in *Villains Inc.* the main face of the Chicago PD is Detective Fisher. Sometimes just a name and a Character Aspect will do to begin with, but the GM should be prepared to flesh out the "face" as needed. Such characters can strengthen their Organizations with their own Skills—and also give the heroes their main levers when attacking an Organization or seeking its help!



Assault on Maggeni Tower

To pound this nail one more time, in *Wearing the Cape: The Roleplaying Game* and all other Fate-system games, the Fate Fractal (The Golden Rule of Fate) is king: *You can treat anything in the game world like it's a character*—even if it's wildly different than the normal NPC template. To illustrate the full potential of the Fate Fractal, let's look at a universal superhero set-piece: attacking the master villain's lair.

Setup: Maggeni Tower

The GM is looking for an epic finish to his current Scenario, and the heroes have earned one by discovering the identity of the master villain behind a Verne-tech augmented arms dealer ring. They have secured a warrant and quietly arrested Albert Maggeni, but now they need to capture the secret Verne he has working for him, as well as neutralize the Verne's more dangerous and proactive stock. They must do it now, before the Verne or Maggeni's minions realize that he has been taken and Do Something Bad. The GM decides that the Verne's lab and fabrication center is imbedded in Maggeni's legitimate R&D facility, Maggeni Tower, and he splits the challenge into three parts:

- **External Defenses.** The heroes must breach the building.
- **Internal Security.** The heroes must defeat the tower's active defenses while removing bystanders, the legitimate researchers and staff, from harm's way.
- **Boss Fight.** In the Verne's lab, the heroes face the Verne, his guards and automated security, and Maggeni's superhuman security team.

The first three challenges will be fought against Maggeni Tower as an NPC. Three NPCs.

MAGGENI TOWER EXTERNAL DEFENSE

ASPECTS: *REINFORCED CONSTRUCTION, DRONE SWARM, SONIC PROJECTORS.*

CHARACTER RATINGS: +8 Physique, +3 Security, +2 Provoke, +1 Shoot.

STUNTS: +4 Superhuman Strength (for +8 Physique), Weapon Rating 2 (for Provoke), Weapon Rating 2 (Shoot), Mass is Armor (React to Physical Attacks with Physique), Area Attack (Provoke, sonic weapon), Hail of Bullets (Shoot Attack divided among targets, with a +1 to each target), Verne-Type Security (+2 to React to attempts gain entry through teleportation or ghosting).

STRESS: 10 unnumbered Physical Stress Boxes, 2 Moderate and 1 Severe Consequence Slot.

SPECIAL RULES: The Tower gets two Attack Actions per turn, one Provoke and one Shoot. The Provoke Skill represents its Sonic Area Attack (against everyone in the area, inflicting Mental Stress from nausea and vertigo). Security in, in this context, also covers anti-ghosting and teleporting entry (if a hero has a Stunt that allows automatic entry or relies on Larceny, he must instead roll to Overcome with Willpower). The 10 Stress Boxes represent the drones. They use Shoot to Attack with mini railguns (anti-armor weapons) and the Teamwork Advantage, divided among targets with the Multiple Targets Rule, and they can only be checked off at a rate of 1 Stress Box per Attack (unless the attacker has a Stunt that allows multiple targets). The Consequence Slots represent the building's armor: to break in, the heroes must inflict a Severe Consequence, **BREACHED**, on the building (it Defends against attacks on its armor with Physique (and so does not get an Attribute Bonus), but it absorbs those hits only with its Consequence Slots).

THE HALLS AND LABS

ASPECTS: *SECURITY DOORS, SECURITY TEAMS, INNOCENT STAFF.*

CHARACTER RATINGS: +4 Security, +3 Shoot, +2 Fight, +1 Provoke.

STUNTS: Weapon Rating 2 (for Provoke), Weapon Rating 2 (Shoot), Armor Rating 4 (Security Doors), Armor Rating 2 (Security Teams), Area Attack (Provoke, sonic weapon), Hail of Bullets (Attack divided among targets, with a +1 to each target), Tight Security (+2 to Counter attempts to hack the security system).

STRESS: 8 unnumbered Stress Boxes (they can be Physical or Mental), 4 Mild Consequence Slots.

SPECIAL RULES: As above. The Stress Boxes represent the security teams (who are shielded from the tower's sonic attack), and the Consequence Slots represent the heavy security doors that must be *individually* breached (shifts of damage over +2 are lost) to reach the inner labs.



9: Describing Everything – Maggeni Tower

BOSS FIGHT

ASPECTS: AUTO-STUNNER NODES, SECURITY TEAM, VOLATILE OBJECTS.

CHARACTER RATINGS: +4 Security, +3 Shoot, +2 Fight, +1 Deception.

STUNTS: Weapon Rating 2 (Shoot), Armor Rating 2 (Security Team), Hail of Beams and Bullets (Attack divided among targets, with a +1 to each target), Tight Security (+2 to Counter attempts to hack the security system), Elite Team (Double the Teamwork Bonus for the final 4-man security team), Stun (stunner nodes).

STRESS: 4 unnumbered Physical Stress Boxes, 3 Mild Consequence Slots.

SPECIAL RULES: As above. As normal, the Stress Boxes represent the remaining security team. The 3 Mild Consequence Slots represent the 3 stunner nodes—which will focus their fire on a single target each time for an undivided Attack. The GM should use any Epic Fails by anyone fighting in the inner labs to “detonate” **VOLATILE OBJECTS** for whatever Hazards he wishes to create.

Running Maggeni Tower

Assault on Maggeni Tower is intended to be one long-running Conflict Scene, a Wearing the Cape campaign take on Storming the Villain’s Lair (you could put the facility on a private island—possibly volcanic—but hiding it in a research facility in the city puts it inside your CAI team’s jurisdiction). If you wish, you can split it into three Conflict Scenes, one for each stage. Doing so means that you can refill your Fate Pool between each stage, but the players will also be able to clear their Stress Boxes before beginning the next stage.

You should begin each stage by describing the Scene (“A white, twelve-story research facility in the middle of a business park.”), presenting the relevant Scene Aspects, and letting the players take the initiative (unless they hesitate, in which case get proactive). Make sure they understand that the situation is dynamic; they need to be careful, but speed is of the essence—if they take too long, their target may have time to escape or retaliate in a big way!

You should tune the opposition up or down to match the capabilities of your team of heroes; the **External Defense** and **Halls** and **Labs** are intended to make them sweat, burning their Fate Points. If it is too easy, you can always introduce low-powered villains (superhuman security) to the fight for the Halls and Labs, or you can emphasize the peril to the outer lab’s researchers and staff.

If your heroes reach the **Boss Fight** too beat up, you should decrease the effectiveness of the final defenses so that they have a chance against the Verne and his minions, but the Boss Fight *should* be desperate. That said, the defenders are fighting to break away and escape—heroes whose players Concede or are Taken Out will be safe enough (albeit with Severe Consequences to deal with if they got Taken Out).

If you gain enough Fate Points to force a Scene Concede, then you can have the Verne escape. If the heroes are winning at the time, then they will still seize plenty of equipment and capture the rest of the bad guys. If the heroes are *losing*, they can be overwhelmed but the bad guys will still be more interested in grabbing vital data and equipment and bugging out—and not interested in hostages or dead heroes to motivate the rest with.





9 CAMPAIGNS, SCENARIOS & SCENES



This chapter details how you can come up with a **Campaign**, build **Scenarios**, and stage **Scenes**. The players will actually *help*, but most of it is up to you and this can seem very daunting. Fortunately most of it is built on top of what you already know. We'll start with creating a *Wearing the Cape* campaign, then focus down to Scenarios, Scenes, and the stuff that you put in them.

Creating the Campaign

With a world full of possibilities, before you start creating your heroes you must first decide what flavor of game you want to play. The New Heroic Age offers lots of choices; you can play a traditional CAI team of city heroes, a team of DSA agents (superhuman and normal), or supersoldiers, agency capes, even vigilantes in a gritty superhero-noir campaign.

Using the Campaign Creation Worksheet

The Campaign Creation Worksheet (back of the book) helps to put a framework around your Campaign. When using the CCW, it's best to work from the biggest questions first, then drill down to specifics. We'll start by talking about the setting.

Campaign Setting

The New Heroic Age is full of wonder, even if everyday life isn't hugely affected for most people. The players need to decide what aspect of the Post-Event World they want to focus on, what will be the background for most of their adventures. That will be the Campaign Setting. If you are playing traditional Crisis Aid and Intervention capes then it could be a specific city, like Chicago, San Francisco, or New Orleans. Or you could be superhuman agents with a whole country or the world as your setting. Here's where you put that in writing and say a few words about it.

Guy and his players are starting a new campaign. They decide that they want to keep it local to what they know, which is Southern California. They also decide that they want to play a newly incorporated team of San Diego Guardians (there are already three city teams serving San Diego County, making theirs the fourth). So Guy writes "City Protectors, shiny new Guardians team." in the Campaign Setting box.

Heroic Scale

Once you have a general idea of the setting, it's time to determine the Campaign Scale. The default assumption with this gamebook is that players will want to play A Class superhumans—powerful and professional capes operating on the same larger-than-life scale as *Wearing the Cape's* main characters—but some players may want a more "gritty" and "realistic" campaign. There are two ways to adjust the Heroic Scale of the campaign.

- **Reduce the Number of Starting Fate Points Given.** This is the option to take if your group wants to play lower-powered capes. The scale is: **A Class** Campaign, 14 Starting Fate Points; **B Class** Campaign, 12 Starting Fate Points; **C Class** Campaign, 10 Starting Fate Points; **D Class** Campaign, 8 Starting Fate Points.



- **Lower the Character Ratings Pyramid.** Instead of starting with one +5, two +4s, three +3s, and so on, your heroes could start with one +4, two +3s, four +2s, and five +1s. This would insure that the Attribute Bonus won't put anything over +5 to begin with. You can go lower—and can chop off the top, widen the base, start with four 3-step columns, etc., whatever fits your style.

*Example: Guy's players decide that while they are going to be City Protectors they also want to be effective on a larger stage. They opt for a B Class campaign (the team will be B and C Class capes), and this gives each of them 12 Starting Fate Points to begin with. They also want to play a new but second-string CAI team, with trained but not yet super-competent heroes, so they go with a Skill Pyramid starting at +4. All of these decisions (**B**, **+4**, and **12**) go in the Campaign Dials box on the Campaign Creation Worksheet.*

If the GM is introducing new players to the game, the three “dials” can be set simply by asking if they want it *Big and Cinematic*, *Local and Gritty*, or a combination. Whatever the players answer is, it can always be changed before or even during character creation as they understand just what their decision means in terms of play.

Campaign Issues

Once you've decided what your campaign's Setting and Heroic Scale is going to be, it's time to choose your Campaign Issues. If all you want from your Wearing the Cape campaign is to play a Session or two of foiling supervillain bank robbers or mad Verne-Types who want to hold the city hostage or destroy the world, then you can skip this part and go right to creating your heroes. But if you intend an extended Campaign then you need to decide what the Big Issues will be—the ongoing sources of tension and threats or the things your heroes want most to defend. To start, you should choose at least two game issues. These will become **Game Aspects**, always present in your game until something happens (or is made to happen) to change them.

Current Issues

A current issue is one that the heroes will be dealing with as the Campaign starts. Often it will be a problem that they simply have to live with; sometimes it will be a problem that they can do something about—fixing it may even be a goal of the campaign!

Guy's groups decides that the current local issue is a public-relations one. A year ago, one of the other San Diego Guardians teams was charged in the accidental deaths of a couple of young bystanders in a hero vs. villain fight gone bad. Although the community wanted a trial the grand jury did not indict; a week later a member of the team was shot in reprisal, shooter still unknown. This hasn't been the first incidence of cape vs. town in San Diego, and it makes for high news ratings; the local media is hot to expose any further missteps or wrongdoing by the city's official capes.



Impending Issues

An impending issue is something on the horizon, a growing threat that can turn into a full-blown crisis if the heroes aren't able to stop it in time. Or it could be Bad Stuff coming that the heroes can do absolutely nothing about but can only prepare for.

After more talk, Guy's players decide on a growing threat. They decide that San Diego and its sister municipalities have a fashion-villain gang presence that creates problems but can normally be handled—but in the past year supervillains and minions working for different drug cartels have begun infiltrating the fashion-villain scene. They are now fighting for dominance, and funding their war with new drugs as well as heists—raising local crime and threatening a war of guns and powers for the streets.

Making Issues into Game Aspects

Once you have your Issues, it's time to turn them into Game Aspects. These Aspects are available to every character, PC and NPC alike, able to be invoked or compelled any time they fit the narrative. Decide on what to call them and write them in on your Campaign Creation Worksheet.

*Example: Guy and his players decide to label their Game Aspects **HOSTILE MEDIA ATTENTION** and **BUBBLING SUPERVILLAIN WAR**. Guy writes the Aspects in the appropriate Issues boxes.*



Staging and Casting

With your Setting and your Game Aspects in front of you, you should have a good picture of the kinds of problems you are going to be facing in your Campaign. You are also going to have a good idea of some of the locations and people that will be important to your group. The next step is to take these places and ideas and give them Aspects and Issues, filling the Faces and Places boxes.

*Guy and company talk more about their setting and people they are likely to encounter, filling in the boxes as they go. San Diego would go in the first box, but Guy decides to narrow the beginning scope of the setting to just the center of the team's jurisdiction; a fictional municipality he names Oceanus. He gives the location the **MULTI-ETHNIC CITY** and **DEEPENING CLASS DIVISIONS** Aspects/Issues. To represent the Campaign's Current Issue, the group comes up with Nancy Jones, a motivated and mercenary local news anchor who wants to make her career by exposing the next big cape scandal. One of the group comes up with a Character Aspect for her, **IT'S NOT PERSONAL!** The group agrees, so Guy writes it beside her name and description. For the Impending Issue, Guy decides that Boots, a fashion-villain gang leader who hates the developing villain war, is a pipeline into the supervillain/minion community. He writes him in without filling any details.*

*Guy and his group talk it out, and decide that the locations need to tell them about the neighborhood. They come up with Oceanside, the newer and nicer side of town with the tourist shops and boutiques, restaurants, beach resorts, and a country-club gated community, and K-Street, several blocks from Main Street, a long street fronted by borderline businesses, working-class bars, thrift stores, pawn shops, and check-cashing agencies. They give these two locations the **UPSCALE HIPSTER HEAVEN** and **SEEDY SIDE** Aspects.*

*For their team headquarters, the group writes in San Diego Guardians South, with the Aspects **OLD REMODELED FIREHOUSE**, and **MIDDLE OF OLD TOWN** (noted for spotty garbage pickup and graffiti and gang tag-decorated walls).*

General Notes

The General Notes box is where the GM might put a few notes about the campaign's intent and themes. For example, Guy might use the space to note that the group is shooting for a cape-noire, underdog feel; they plan on playing either shiny but naïve newbies with zero experience or cynical veterans (who might have been given the post because of their attitudes or past actions).

Creating Scenarios

Scenario (definition): 1.) a sequence of events, real or imagined, 2.) a plot outline used by actors of the *commedia dell'arte*.

Now that you have the campaign more or less described, let's look at crafting individual Scenarios. In fiction and for game purposes, a Scenario can be simply defined as a *problem* and its *solution*. On a smaller scale this is also the definition of a Scene, but here we're talking about a story. The first *Wearing the Cape* books can be useful here as an illustration.

Wearing the Cape. Problem: At a capecon, Astra learns that an assassin is targeting one of the celebrity-cape guests.

Solution: Working with others, Astra foils the assassination attempt.

Villains Inc. Problem: Astra learns of a serious threat to another member of the team.

Solution: The team ends the threat.

Young Sentinels. Problem: A hugely powerful supervillain threatens Chicago.

Solution: The Sentinels defeat the supervillain.

Small Town Heroes. Problem: Astra receives warnings of disaster threatening a town that doesn't appear to exist.

Solution: Astra locates, gets to, and defends the town.

Ronin Games. Problem: Astra is threatened by a dream-tree (long story).

Solution: Astra doesn't actually "solve" this one...

The first Scenario (The Capecon Affair) is an example of a "mini-scenario" inside the larger arc of the story; it might only take one game Session to play out. The other four examples are more like the multi-session Scenarios that GMs and players will most often play out, but there is nothing wrong with the occasional single-session Scenario tucked into a larger story! Scenario-building is something of an art, but it's one that can be picked up quickly. Some GMs will have their own style and need no instruction, but since many GMs and players will have never played a Fate System game (or tabletop RPG) before, we'll break it down here using the **Scenario Worksheet** at the back of the book.



The Scenario Problem

After the title, the first box to fill in on the Scenario Worksheet is the **Problem**. How do you come up with a good problem? The writers of *Fate Core* defined a good problem as one that is “**relevant to the PCs, cannot be resolved without their involvement, and cannot be ignored without dire consequences.**” (This is actually a great description for strong “story problems” in fiction writing.)

So where do you find problems? For a lot of Wearing the Cape campaigns, the problem could be simply *Because you wear the cape, your job today is [fill in the mission-of-the-day]*. In fact, GMs are encouraged to run a few Scenarios of the Cape Procedural variety; after all, it’s what many players sign up for! Beyond that, remember all the work you’ve already put in; start with your Game Aspects! Then there are always your Organization Aspects and your heroes’ Character Aspects. You can think of a Scenario problem as a long and complicated Compel on any of these Aspects (no you don’t give Fate Points for it—you hand everyone their SFP and start the first Scene). For example, in a Sentinels campaign the GM could tap The Harlequin’s **HEROES WITHOUT BORDERS VETERAN** Aspect to introduce a nemesis who comes from Indonesia looking for her. Using the examples from the books, you could write the sample problems as:

An Assassin Stalks the Capecon!

Blackstone is doomed to die horribly if you don’t fix the future.

The Green Man is blackmailing Chicago.

The potential consequences are often baked right into the written problem; failure means “X” and X will be bad. If the heroes fail, the GM should look at using a horrible Scene Resolution to model the effects of the failure! Other times, failure may lead to follow-up Scenes playing out consequences in the form of charges and litigation, government reviews, media attacks and so on, using Resource Attacks.

Scenario Stages

The next thing to consider is the Scenario Stages. These mirror the general stages of story plotting: **Setup, Success/Failure, and Denouement**. Fill the Stage Boxes in on the Scenario Worksheet as you go.

The Setup Stage is simply the starting conditions before the problem presents itself. If it’s not the opening of a new Campaign, then Setup will be guided by the conditions established at the end of the last Scenario. Make sure the players are all onboard with what these conditions are; one trick is asking each player what his hero is doing now. This will reveal what they consider important, giving you more hooks!

In the Setup Box, list any Game Aspects that are going to play a part as well as any Consequences the heroes are carrying with them from the previous Scenario.

INCITING INCIDENTS

The Inciting Incident is simply the event in which the Scenario Problem introduces itself to the heroes. In writerly terms “inciting incident” is the event the hero *must* react to. It sets up the goals and stakes of the story. The Inciting Incident moves the Scenario from the often-static Setup Stage into the Success/Failure Stage. In an ongoing Campaign, the first Scene may be needed to tie up loose ends from the previous Session, but you should bring in the Inciting Incident as soon as possible to start the Scenario off hard and fast. The Inciting Incident box is for a thumbnail description of the event. This might be just two or three words: *The Villain strikes!*

In An Assassin Stalks the Capecon! The Inciting Incident is Astra and Seven’s encounter with the normally night-stalking vigilante, Artemis. She fills them in on the problem and the stakes.

First Scene

Once you know what the Inciting Incident will be, write up the location where it takes place in the First Scene Box, and list its Situation Aspects. One or two lines of description and 3-5 Situation Aspects are fine. Make note of any NPCs who will be appearing in the scene so that you will have them ready to go.

*The setting of the First Scene (and many of the subsequent Scenes) is Metrocon, a packed capecon full of capes, cape-fans, and cape cosplayers. We give it the **PACKED EVENT SPACES, CHEERFUL NOISE AND CONFUSION, CAPES EVERYWHERE, and SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE** Situation Aspects. We already know that Artemis will be the first introduced Main NPC, so we make sure that we have her Cape File fully worked up.*

Note that the Scene Aspects for this First Scene can easily be reused for later scenes—which are to take place in and around Metrocon; a new Scene does not always mean a new stage for the Scene!



Story Questions

Now that you have a really grabby problem, you can flesh the situation out a little and figure out precisely what your scenario is intended to resolve—in other words, what are the really grabby questions at the heart of this problem?

That's what you'll do in this step: create a series of questions that you want your Scenario to answer. We call these story questions, because the story will emerge naturally from the process of answering them.

The more story questions you have, the longer your Scenario's going to be. One to three story questions will probably wrap up in a Session. Four to eight might take you two or even three Sessions. More than eight or nine, and you might have to save some of those questions for the next Scenario, but that's not a bad thing at all.

We recommend asking story questions as yes/no questions, in the general format of, "Can/Will (character) accomplish (goal)?" You don't have to follow that phrasing exactly, and you can embellish on the basic question format in a number of ways, which we'll show you in a moment.

Every problem you come up with is going to have one very obvious story question: "Can the heroes resolve the problem?" You do need to know that eventually, but you don't want to skip straight to that—it's your finale for the Scenario, after all. Put other questions before that one to add nuance and complexity to the Scenario and build up to that final question. Figure out what makes the problem difficult to solve.

To come up with story questions, you're probably going to have to embellish on the problem that you came up with just a bit, and figure out some of the W-How (who, what, when, where, why, how) details. That's also fine, and part of what the process is for.

In The Capecon Affair, the Inciting Incident creates one obvious story question. Will Astra and Artemis be able to identify the assassin before he strikes? Since this is intended to be a short Scenario, really little more is required to get you to the Big Question: will they succeed in stopping the assassin? As a follow-on question: will they capture him?

Notice that the simple question has the potential to significantly shape the short Scenario's plot. If they figure out some way to identify the assassin before he makes his attempt, the circumstances under which they face him will be very different than if they wait for him to strike. Other questions are "Can they take the assassin alive without risking bystanders?" and "Can they succeed without collateral damage?"

Always try and ask a question in a way that points to an interesting answer whichever way it turns out. "Will they be able to identify the assassin *before he strikes*?" Without the emphasized part, it'd be kind of boring—but now we've emphasized that something interesting is going to happen whether they succeed in discovering the assassin's identity or not. It's a good general rule; if you begin with an idea of how it can go bad and what might happen next, you'll be much better prepared if it breaks that way.

Finally, note the last big question *Will they capture him*? Catching him could create a new story thread as they work to learn who employed him and why, and help the authorities go after them. Failing to capture him gives them cause to pursue the assassin—or leaves him free to cross their paths again someday; both are paths the GM and players can explore.

Creating the Opposition

The Scenario Problem and Story Question you've written up will have given you a good idea of who the opposition is. You may have already thought of a few for your First Scene. List them all in the Scenario NPCs box, noting if they are to be **Main Characters**, **Supporting Characters**, or **Scene Extras** (p.156–159). You also need to nail down their motivations and goals—why they're standing in opposition to the PCs' goals, and, most importantly *what they're after*.

At the very least, you should be able to answer the following questions for each *named* NPC in your scenario:

- **What does that NPC need?** How can the heroes help her get that, or (if a villain) how are the PCs in the way?
- **Why can't the NPC get what she needs through other means?** (In other words, why must the heroes be the ones to help her, or why is her goal contributing to a problem?)
- **Why can't she be ignored?**

Wherever you can, try and consolidate NPCs so that you don't have too many characters to keep track of. If one of your opposition NPCs is serving only one purpose in your scenario, consider getting rid of him and folding his role together with another NPC. This not only reduces your workload, but it also allows you to develop each NPC's personality a bit more, making him more multi-dimensional as you reconcile his whole set of motives. For each NPC that you create, once you know whether you need to make them a Scene Extra or a Supporting or Main Character, stat them up according to the guidelines given in Writing Up the Opposition (p.156).



Playing the Opposition

Here are some tips for using the opposition characters you create in play.

Right-sizing NPCs

Remember, you want a balancing act between obliterating the heroes and letting them walk all over your opposition (unless it's a minion horde, in which case that's pretty much what they're there for). It's important to keep in mind not just the rating levels of the NPCs in your Scenes, but their number and importance. Right-sizing the opposition is more of an art than a science, but here are some strategies to help.

- Don't outnumber the heroes unless your NPCs have comparatively lower skills. If they're going to team up against one big opponent, give that opponent a peak rating two levels higher than whatever the best PC can bring in that conflict if possible (if not, buff with boosting Stunts to give the effect of hitting two levels higher).
- Limit yourself to one Main Character per scene, unless it's a big climactic Conflict at the end of an arc. Remember, Supporting Characters can have ratings as high as you want.
- Most of the opposition the heroes encounter in a session should be Scene Extras, with one or two Supporting Characters and Main Characters along the way.
- Scene Extras and Supporting Characters mean shorter conflicts because they give up or lose sooner; Main Characters mean longer conflicts.



Creating Advantages for NPCs

It's easy to fall into the default mode of using the opposition as a direct means to get in the heroes' way, drawing them into a series of Conflict scenes until someone is defeated.

However, keep in mind that the NPCs can create advantages just like the heroes can. Feel free to use opposing characters to create Scenes that aren't necessarily about stopping the heroes from achieving a goal, but scouting out information about them and stacking up Free Invokes. Let your bad guys and good guys have tea together and then bring out the Rapport or Discernment rolls. Or instead of having that fight scene take place in the dark alley, let your NPCs show up, gauge the heroes' abilities, and *flee*.

Likewise, keep in mind that your NPCs have a home turf advantage in conflicts if the heroes go to them in order to resolve something. When you're setting up Situation Aspects, you can pre-load the NPCs with some Free Invokes if it's reasonable that they've had time to place those Aspects. (Use this trick in moderation—two or three such Aspects with Free Invokes is probably pushing the limit.)

Changing Modes of Conflict

Your opposition will be way more interesting if they try to get at the heroes in multiple modes of conflict, rather than just going for the most direct route. Remember that there are a lot of ways to get at someone, and that Mental Conflicts and Resource Conflicts are just as valid as Physical Conflicts as a mode of attack. If the opposition has a vastly different Skill set than one or more of your heroes, leverage their strengths and choose a conflict strategy that gives them the best advantage.

For example, someone going after Atlas probably doesn't want to confront him physically—Fight and Physique are his highest ratings! Atlas is not as well equipped to see through a clever deception, however, or handle a psychic assault on his mind. Blackstone, on the other hand, is most effectively threatened by the biggest, nastiest bruiser possible, someone who can strike at him before he has a chance to bring his "magic" to bear.

In *Wearing the Cape*, this is actually referred to as The Paper-Scissors-Rock Problem; a cape, no matter how strong, will be useless against some opponents and may be defenseless against others (another reason for *teams*). However, while switching up modes of Attack is a valuable GM tactic, it shouldn't be overused to the extent that the players rarely get to be awesome with their heroes!



Playing Out Scenes and Scenarios

It's one thing to fill out a Campaign and Scenario Worksheet, or to prepare the Situation Aspects and Opposition to be encountered in a Scene, and quite another to play them out at the table. We'll end the chapter by looking at how to do just that.

Set Up the First Scene

Start things off by being as unobtrusive as possible with whatever Inciting Incident you have chosen to open your new Scenario. That way, you're setting an example for the rest of the session and getting the momentum going, ensuring the players won't dither around. Remember, they're supposed to be proactive, competent people—give them something to be proactive and competent about right from the get-go.

If you're in an ongoing Campaign, you might need the first Scenes of a Session to resolve loose ends that were left hanging from a previous Session. It's okay to spend time on that, because it helps keep the sense of continuity going from Session to Session. As soon as there's a lull in momentum, though, hit them with your Inciting Incident.

You look up from the crowded street and see a powerless passenger jet falling from the clear blue sky. What do you do?

Sound familiar? Inciting Incidents don't need to be sudden impending disasters in the Scene; often for professional capes they are dispatch calls sending them out to respond to an incident, with their dispatch wingman feeding them intelligence as they go. Whatever form they take, Inciting Incidents must be calls to action.

Defining Scenes

We've already broken Scenes down elsewhere, but here it deserves a fuller definition. A "Scene" is a unit of game time lasting anywhere from a few minutes to a half hour or more, **during which the players try to achieve a goal or otherwise accomplish something significant in a Scenario**. Taken together, the collection of Scenes you play through make up a whole Session (sometimes as many Scenes as you can stand to play in one evening, other times a dramatically complete set of Scenes ending at a cliffhanger or denouement for the night), and by extension, also make up your Scenarios, Arcs, and Campaigns.

So you can look at it as the foundational unit of game time, and you probably already have a good idea of what one looks like. It's not all that different from a scene in a movie, a television show, or a novel—the main characters are doing stuff in continuous time, usually all in the same space. **Once the action shifts to a new goal, moves to a new place related to that goal, or jumps in time, you're in the next Scene.**

As a GM, one of your most important jobs is to manage the starting and ending of Scenes. The best way to control the pacing of what happens in your Session is to keep a tight rein on when Scenes start and end—let things continue as long as the players are all invested and enjoying themselves, but as soon as the momentum starts to flag, move on to the next thing. In that sense, you can look at it as being similar to what a good film editor does—you "cut" a Scene and start a new one to make sure the story continues to flow smoothly.

POWERFUL SESSION-STARTING NINJA GM TRICK

Asking the players to contribute something to the beginning of your first Scene is a great way to help get them invested in what's going on right off the bat. If there's anything that's flexible about your opening prompt, ask your players to fill in the blanks for you when you start the Scene. Clever players may try to use it as an opportunity to push for a Compel and get extra Fate Points right off the bat—we like to call this sort of play "awesome."

*The GM wants to start the Scenario with a quick brawl between Ajax and a new breakthrough. He asks Ajax' player where the Sentinel is when the action begins, and after thinking a moment the player says "Being a **SCHOLAR AND TEACHER**, he's on his way to the Dome after teaching class. He's in a suit and tie, and no his maul and armor is not stashed in the trunk!" The GM grins and hands him a Fate Point.*

Of course, you can also just have your Inciting Incidents count as "preloaded" Compels, and hand out one or two Fate Points at the start of a Session to start the PCs off with a spot of trouble they have to deal with immediately. This will help players with low Starting Fate Points out and can kick-start the spending of Fate Points right off the bat. Make sure your group is okay with giving you carte blanche authority to narrate them into a situation, though—some players find the loss of control problematic. (And they can always refuse the Compel.)

*As an alternate take on the above example, if the GM knew it was how he wanted the Scene to start then he could set the scene by simply compelling **SCHOLAR AND TEACHER** to declare that Ajax is driving to the Dome, in his civilian clothes and so without his maul and armor, when Dispatch sends him to respond to a 9-1-1 "Superhuman Threat" call.*

*As **ATLAS' TEEN SIDEKICK**, Astra finds herself targeted by someone with a beef against Atlas on her first solo patrol. As an **UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO**, she is easily ambushed, stunned unconscious and shot out of the sky. The GM tells Astra's player that she wakes up to find herself faced with a villain or two ready to truss her up as a hostage. She starts in a bad position, but with the Fate Points from two Compels to help her along...*



Starting Scenes

This is, of course, the Setup Phase (p.114). When you're starting a Scene, establish the following two things as clearly as you can:

- **What's the purpose of the Scene?**
- **What interesting thing is just about to happen?**

Answering the first question is super-important, because the more specific your Scene's purpose, the easier it is to know when the Scene is over. A good Scene revolves around resolving a specific conflict or achieving a specific goal—once the PCs have succeeded or failed at doing whatever they are trying to do, the Scene is finished. If your Scene doesn't have a clear purpose, you run the risk of letting it drag on longer than you intended and slow the pace of your Session down.

Most of the time—if you don't launch the Scene with a pressing problem of your own for them—the players are going to tell you what the purpose of the Scene is, because they're always going to be telling you what they want to do next as a matter of course. So if they say, "Well, we're going to tail and observe the bad guy to see if we can get some dirt on him," then you know the purpose of the Scene—it's over when the PCs either get the dirt, or get into a situation where it's impossible to get the dirt, or something happens that takes precedent over trying to get the dirt.

Sometimes, though, they're going to be pretty vague about it. If you don't have an intuitive understanding of their goals in context, ask questions until they state things directly. So if a player says, "Okay, I'm going to the bar to meet with my contact," that might be a too general—you know there's a meeting, but you don't know what it's for. You might ask, "What are you interested in finding out? Have you negotiated a price for the information yet?" or another question that'll help get the player to nail down what he's after. (Note that the Scene doesn't *need* to be about the player's stated goal, however; if you think of something more dramatic, something that changes the goal of the scene, go right ahead—players expect you to surprise them and, ideally, they should never be entirely sure if you didn't have your own plans going in.)

And of course many times you will be coming up with a Scene's purpose all on your own, such as the beginning of a new Scenario, or the next Scene following a cliffhanger, or a Scene initiated by the actions of the heroes' opponents. Whenever you need to do this, work it from the opposition's side; the heroes have acted—now how are the bad guys going to *react*? Or if the heroes haven't stopped them yet, what is the next step in their Big Plan? That way, whenever it's your job to start a Scene, you're always moving the story along.

The second question (What interesting thing is just about to happen?) is just as important—you want to start a Scene *just before* something interesting is going to take place. TV and movies are especially good at this—usually, you're not watching a particular Scene for more than thirty seconds before something happens to change the situation or shake things up.

"Cutting in" just before some new action starts helps keep the pace of your Session brisk and helps hold the players' attention. You don't want to chronicle every moment of the heroes' tailing after their target—that's a lot of play time where nothing interesting happens. Instead, you want to start the Scene just before the moment when they realize they've just lost him, or he goes into the villain bar and they need to decide what to do, or the minions whose trap he's led them into start shooting.

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If you get stumped by this question, just think of something that might complicate whatever the purpose is or make it problematic. You can also use the ninja trick mentioned earlier and ask the players leading questions to help you figure out the interesting thing that's about to happen. If you have a clear purpose going into every Scene and you start just before some significant piece of action, it's hard to go wrong.

VILLAINOUS PLANS

There are basically two kinds of Villainous Plans, and both are tremendous tools for starting and pacing Scenes. The first VP is The Crime; the villains want to do something bad (or at least illegal), and the heroes need to find out what it is and stop them. The Inciting Incident is usually the event that makes the heroes aware of The Plan and commits them to thwarting it. Obviously if it's something like a bank robbery and the heroes learn about it while it's in progress, it's going to be a short Scenario! But other times there are a lot of steps between becoming aware of The Plan (or at least becoming aware that something bad is happening or is going to happen) and actually stopping it. Then the steps of The Plan can become the basis of Scenes as it unfolds. These sorts of Scenes can offer the heroes additional motivation (they may be happening because the heroes have failed so far), as well as offering more hooks and leads for the heroes to follow if they're running out of steam.

The second VP is The Attack, and it is simply the first kind dialed up to 11: the *heroes* are The Plan. The villains are targeting the heroes (or a hero) specifically—they want to neutralize them, humiliate them, demoralize them, or Steal Their Socks. In this case, the heroes' motivation to stop the villains before they do whatever they're going to next is a given; every Scene not initiated by the players is a direct consequence of their not having stopped the bad guys yet.

There are other kinds of Scenarios, of course; especially if the heroes are more proactive about their goals than simply training and waiting around to thwart the next Villainous Plan. But players expect the thwarting to be a big part of the superhero experience; so give it to them.



Hit Competence, Proactivity, and Drama—Hard

Superheroes are practically *defined* as individuals who are super-competent and proactive, and of course their stories are full of drama or we wouldn't be interested. The Fate system's writers call these three things (competence, proactivity, and drama) the Three Pillars of roleplaying. Whenever you're trying to come up with ideas for what should happen in a Scene, you should ask yourself if your Scene is doing at least one of the following things:

- Giving your heroes the chance to **show off what they're good at**, whether by going up against people who don't hold a candle to them or by holding their own against worthy opponents.
- Giving your heroes the chance to **do something you can describe with a simple action**. "Trying to find out information" is too muddy, for example. "Breaking into the mayor's office" is actionable and specific. Not that it has to be physical—"convince the snitch to talk" is also a clear action.
- Creating some kind of **difficult choice or complication** for the heroes. Your best tool to do this with is a Compel, but if the situation is problematic enough, you might not need one.

Hit Their Aspects (It's what they're there for.)

Another good way to figure out the interesting action for a Scene is to turn to the Heroes' Aspects, and create a complication or an event-based Compel based on them. This is especially good to do for those heroes whose Aspects did not come into play when you made up your Scenario problem, because it allows them to have some of the spotlight despite the fact that the overall story does not focus on them as much.

End Scenes with Forward Momentum

You can end Scenes the way you start them, but in reverse: as soon as you've wrapped up whatever your Scene's purpose was—whether the heroes won, were forced into a Scene Concede, or otherwise accomplished or failed to accomplish their goal—move on, and shoot for ending the Scene immediately after the interesting action concludes.

This is an effective approach mainly because it helps you sustain interest for the next Scene. Again, you see this all the time in good movies—a Scene will usually end with a certain piece of action resolved, but also with a lingering bit of business that's left unresolved (or even created during the Scene Resolution Phase). That's where they cut to next; the next Scene must either resolve the unresolved business, take a step towards resolving it, or fail to resolve it—pushing the stakes higher for the next Scene!

A lot of your Scenes are going to end up the same way. The PCs might win (or lose) a Conflict or achieve a goal, but there's likely something else they're going to want to do after—talk about the outcome, figure out what they're going to do next, etc.

Instead of lingering at that Scene, though, suggest that they move on to a new Scene which helps answer one of the unresolved questions from the current Scene. Try to get them to state what they want to do next, and then go back to the two questions for starting Scenes above—what's the purpose of the next Scene, and what's the next bit of interesting action to come? Then dive right into that.

The one time you should exhibit restraint is if it's clear that the players are really, really enjoying their interactions. Sometimes people just want to interact in character, and that's okay as long as they're really into it. If you see interest starting to flag, though, take that opportunity to insert yourself and ask about the next Scene.

The Scenario in Play

So, you've filled out the Scenario Worksheet and your players are ready with their heroes. Now you should be ready to begin: you have a problem that can't be ignored, a core group of NPCs and their motivations, and a really dynamic first Scene that will get things cooking.

Everything should be smooth sailing from here, right? You present the questions, the players gradually answer them with their actions and outcomes, and your story rolls on to a nice, neat conclusion.

Yeah... trust us, it'll never happen that way.

Never.

The most important thing to remember when you actually get the Scenario off the ground is this: whatever happens will always be different from what you expect. The heroes will distrust an NPC you intended them to befriend, have wild successes that give away a master villain's secrets very early, suffer unexpected setbacks that change the course of their actions, or any one of another hundred different things that just don't end up the way you think they should.



Notice that we don't recommend predetermining every Scene and location that is going to be involved in your scenario—that's because we find that, most of the time, you're going to throw out a lot of that material anyway when you have a group of dynamic players.

Not all is lost, however—the stuff you have prepared should help you tremendously when players do something unexpected. Your story questions are vague enough that there are going to be multiple ways to answer each one, and you can very quickly axe one that isn't going to be relevant and replace it with something else on the fly without having to toss the rest of your work.

*In **An Assassin Stalks the Capecon!** the GM may have assumed that Astra and Seven would alert their teams and that a tense, covert, and successful manhunt through the convention spaces would follow. Instead they decided to go it alone—which almost guaranteed that they would not be able to identify the assassin before he struck; this significantly lowered the probability that they would be able to capture him.*

But remember that the big end-story question was whether or not the heroes would succeed in stopping the assassin; fortunately, the setup left several ways for the GM to alter subsequent Scenes a bit to make sure the assassination attempt failed whether or not the heroes were responsible. In the end the heroes thwarted the actual attempt (with a “clue” the GM fed them)—but still experienced a negative personal outcome of their failure to identify the assassin beforehand. It would have been even worse for them if they had failed to stop the assassin themselves, leaving the thwarting to the other Sentinels and Knights.

Also, knowing your NPC's motivations and goals allows you to adjust their behavior more easily than if you'd just placed them in a static scene waiting for the PCs to show up. When the players throw you a curveball, make the NPCs as dynamic and reactive as the heroes are, by having them take sudden, surprising action in pursuit of their goals.

Since the specifics of the assassin's plan was unknown to the players, if Astra, Seven, and Artemis had decided to bring in their teams then the GM could decide that the assassin had become aware that they were aware of him. This would allow the GM to adjust the assassin's plans to make things challengingly difficult for even two full teams of heroes.

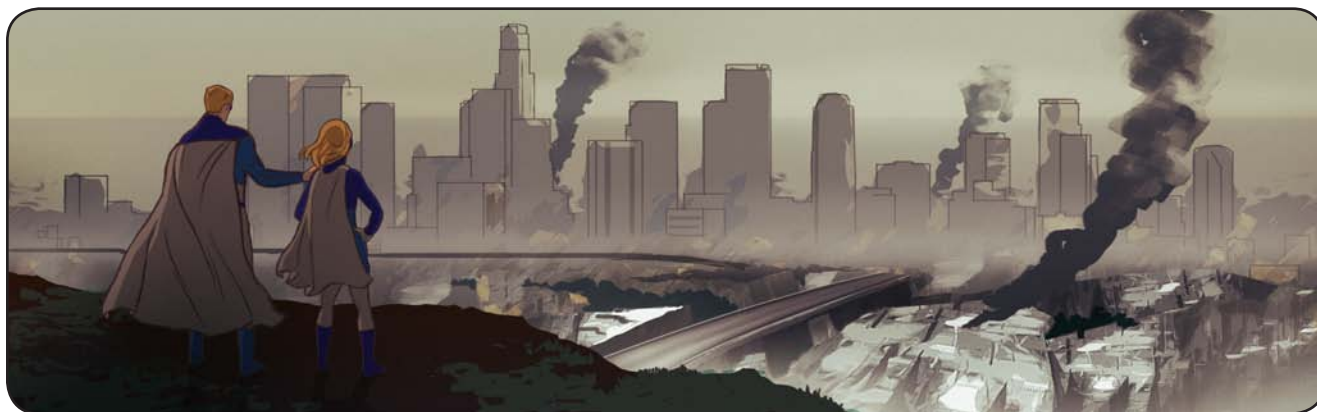
Note that changing the tactics and even the strength and resources of the opposition as the heroes' actions open up new possibilities in the Scenario (or close others) is not a cheat or a dodge; remember, this isn't a game where the GM “wins” if the players “lose.” Don't change anything the players already know (unless you can narrate a good reason why what they thought they knew just wasn't true), but it is your job to Make It Fun and that means *keeping it challenging*. If the players take an action that would short-circuit the villain's plans and turn the Scenario into a total cake walk—or they miss the clue or decision needed to make a win possible at all—it's your job to get the Scenario back onto a track that leads to a final Scene where the Big Question is still a question and the Scenario can still be lost if the heroes don't fight smart and give it their all.

Resolving the Scenario

A Scenario ends when you've run enough Scenes to definitively answer most of the story questions you came up with when you were preparing your scenario. Sometimes you'll be able to do that in a single Session if you have a lot of time or only a few questions. If you have a lot of questions, it'll probably take you two or three Sessions to get through them all.

Don't feel the need to answer every story question if you've brought things to a satisfying conclusion—you can either use unresolved story questions for future Scenarios or let them lie if they didn't get a whole lot of traction with the players.

The end of a scenario usually triggers a **Significant Milestone** (p.181). When this happens, you should also see if the game world needs advancing too. Which brings us to *The Long Game*.



Campaign Example

Oceanus South

Campaign Setting

City Protectors, shiny new Guardians team.

Campaign Dials

Power Class	B
Skill Pyramid	+4
Starting Fate Points	12

Current Issues

HOSTILE MEDIA ATTENTION.

Impending Issues

BUBBLING SUPERVILLAIN WAR.

Faces & Places

Name: Oceanus

Issues/Aspects: *MULTI-ETHNIC CITY.*
DEEPENING CLASS DIVISIONS.

Name: Nancy Jones (Reporter)

Issues/Aspects: *IT'S NOT PERSONAL!*

Name: Oceanside

Issues/Aspects: *UPSCALE HIPSTER HEAVEN.*

Name: K-Street

Issues/Aspects: *SEEDY SIDE.*

Name: Team Headquarters

Issues/Aspects: *OLD REMODELED FIREHOUSE.*
MIDDLE OF OLD TOWN.

Name: Boots (Gang Leader)

Issues/Aspects: *LESSER EVIL.*

Name:

Issues/Aspects:

Name:

Issues/Aspects:

General Notes

The campaign is shooting for a cape-noire, underdog feel. The heroes should be either shiny but naïve newbies with zero experience, or cynical veterans who might have been given the Guardians South post because of their attitudes or past actions. None of them will be both experienced and pure.

Some of the villains will be genuinely, gut-wrenchingly evil, while others are merely bad guys or even decent human beings for criminals (the players should have a hard time telling which is which at first, and never be sure), and the same can be said for most people the heroes encounter in Oceanus' city government, court system, and police department.

Assume everyone has an agenda and most natives of Oceanus are morally or legally compromised or compromisable, with a few shining exceptions who have a hard time because of it. Make these exceptions *shine*, build relationships between them and your heroes, and then endanger them; in a noire campaign everybody is at risk and nobody is owed a happy ending just because they're the Good Guys.

Frustrate the heroes at every turn; if they turn a street-villain and it looks like he's going to give them the inside dirt they need to take down the bosses, he's either setting them up, gets killed in a way that makes it obviously the heroes' faults, or he almost gets killed and shuts up or gets out of town. Victory should be hard fought and bitter-sweet, with prices payed along the way. The heroes are doing good if they come out of it with their souls tarnished but intact.



THE LONG GAME





When you sit down to play a Fate game, you might just play a single Session. Foil a bank robbery. Serve warrant on a villain in his lair. That’s certainly a viable way to play a short game. For one with a developed adventure plot, what you need is a campaign **Arc**.

Arcs and Campaigns

An Arc is a complete storyline with its own themes, situations, antagonists, innocent bystanders, and endgame, told in the span of a few Sessions (somewhere between two and five, usually). You don’t need to have everything planned out (in fact, you probably shouldn’t, given that no meticulously planned story ever survives contact with the players), but you need to have an idea of where things begin and end, and what might happen in the middle.

To make an analogy to fiction, an arc is a lot like a single novel. It tells its own story that ends on the last page; you feel some form of closure and move on. Sometimes the novel is complete in itself, and sometimes it is just the first in a series of books. When you have multiple Arcs that are connected and told in a sequence, and that have an overarching story or theme that runs through all of them, you have a Campaign. Campaigns are long, taking months or even years to complete (if you ever do), and the longer the campaign, the more important it is to divide it up into recognizable Arcs; the better you are at concluding dynamic Arcs in a satisfying manner, the more you are likely to continue the campaign.

It doesn’t need to be as scary as it might sound. A Campaign is long and large and complex, but you don’t need to come up with the whole thing at once. As with an Arc, you may have an idea where it begins and ends, and that can be helpful, but you really only need to plan it an Arc at a time—in fact you *shouldn’t* plan ahead of your current Arc except in the most general way possible.

How to Build an Arc

“Make for yourself an ark of cypress wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.”

—GENESIS 6: 14-15

Humor aside, the easiest way to build an Arc is to *not build one*. We have suggested that if you have a lot of story questions in one of your Scenarios, you can reserve some of them for the next Scenario. Then, in your next Scenario, add some new questions to go with the unanswered ones. Lather, rinse, repeat as often as needed, and you’ll have material for three or four Scenarios without doing that much extra work. In addition, that lets you incorporate changes to the characters’ Aspects organically, rather than making a plan and having it disrupted.

That said, we know some GMs want to have a greater sense of structure for the long run. We recommend using the same method for building Scenarios in the previous chapter to build Arcs, but changing the scope of the story questions you come up with. Instead of focusing on immediate problems for the PCs to solve, come up with a more general problem, where the PCs are going to have to solve smaller problems first in order to have a chance at resolving the larger one.



The best places to look for arc-sized problems are the Current or Impending Issues of places or organizations that you came up with during game creation. If you haven't made any up yet for a particular place or group, now might be a good time to do that, so you have material for the Arc.

*Looking at Oceanus' Aspect/Issues, **MULTI-ETHNIC CITY** and **DEEPENING CLASS DIVISIONS**, Guy decides that the first arc is going to be about the new team settling in and establishing trust with the different groups that make up Oceanus' community. The two boys killed in the hero vs. villain crossfire were young Hispanic lads, and the community's anger and distrust will make the heroes' job especially hard. The team will need to be proactive, and the big question for the arc would be:*

- *Will the team be able to get the locals on their side, or will citizens continue to distrust city capes?*

Once you have an issue and question for the Arc, go through the same process of picking opposing NPCs, keeping in mind that their influence is supposed to be more far-reaching in an Arc than in a single Scenario. In the case of Guy's group, some of the NPCs would likely be community leaders and city government and law enforcement officials.

Building a Campaign

Again, the easiest way to do this is not to bother—just let your Scenarios and Arcs emergently create a story for the Campaign. Human beings are pattern-making machines, and it's very likely that you'll naturally pick up on what the long-term plot devices of your Campaign need to be by keying into unanswered questions from the Arcs and Scenarios.

However, if you want to do a little bit of focused planning, the advice is the same as for Arcs, except you're generalizing even more. Pick one story question to answer, which the PCs will spend their Scenarios and Arcs building to. Then, jot down some notes on what steps will lead to answering that question.

The very best Aspects to look at for a Campaign-level problem are your setting's Issues, because of their scope.

*Guy's gaming group has already worked up the Campaign Worksheet, and Guy has the **BUBBLING VILLAIN WAR** to play with. He decides that, beginning with the first Scenario, he's going to make fighting off the cartel supervillains and eventually eliminating their foothold in Southern California the main Arc of the Campaign. He comes up with a couple of story questions:*

- *Will the team be able to identify the cartel villains, and get enough intelligence on their organization to be able to begin hurting them?*
- *Will they be able to keep civilians safe when the cartel makes the team targets?*

Advancement and Change

Your heroes aren't going to remain static through the entire Campaign. As their stories play out, they'll have the chance to grow and change in response to the events that happen in play. The conflicts they face and the complications they overcome will alter your sense of who they are and push them toward new challenges.

In addition to your heroes, the game world will change also. You'll resolve threats as you play, or change the face of a location, or make such an impact on the world that one of the issues may need to change. We'll get more into world advancement later, merely noting here that the GM should always keep an eye on the effect the *heroes* have on the *world*.

Character advancement in Fate comes in one of two flavors: either you can change something on your Cape File to something else that's equivalent, or you can add new things to your Cape File. Both are ways of reflecting change and growth. The opportunities you get to do this are collectively called **Milestones**.

Defining Milestones

A Milestone is a moment during the game where you have the chance to change or advance your character. We call them Milestones because they usually happen at significant "break points" in the action of a game—the end of a Session, the end of a Scenario, and the end of a story arc, respectively.

Usually, those break points immediately follow some significant event in the story that justifies your character changing in response to events. You might reveal a significant plot detail or have a cliffhanger at the end of a Session. You might defeat a major villain or resolve a plotline at the end of a Scenario. You might resolve a major storyline that shakes up the campaign world at the end of an Arc.



11: The Long Game – Character Advancement

Obviously, things won't always line up that nicely, so GMs have some discretion in deciding when a certain level of Milestone occurs. If it seems satisfying to give out a Milestone in the middle of a Session, go ahead, but stick to the guidelines here to keep from handing out too many advancement opportunities too often.

Milestones come in three levels of importance: Minor, Significant, and Major. As you experience Milestones, record your choices in the appropriate column on the Character Worksheet before writing them on your Cape File. Among other things, this allows you to track your advancement throughout the campaign.



Minor Milestones

Minor Milestones usually occur at the end of a Session of play, or when one piece of a story has been resolved. These kinds of milestones are more about changing your hero rather than making him or her more powerful, about adjusting in response to whatever's going on in the story if you need to. Sometimes it won't really make sense to take advantage of a minor milestone, but you always have the opportunity if you should need to.

During a minor milestone, you can choose to do one (and only one) of the following:

- **You may switch the rank values of any two adjacent Character Ratings**—any two Attributes (but not Superhuman Attributes), Skills, or Resources—with each other (a +3 Fight and a +4 Athleticism, for example). This includes swapping an Average (+1) Character Rating and a Mediocre (+0) Character Rating which may not presently be on your Cape File (i.e., an unlisted Skill).
- **You may change any single Stunt for another Stunt** (while keeping any Stunts required by your Power Type).
- **You may purchase a new Stunt**, provided you have the Starting Fate Point to do so. (Remember, you can't go below 1 Starting Fate Point.)
- **You may rename one Character Aspect** that isn't your Power Aspect or Hero Aspect.

In addition, you can also rename any Moderate Consequences you have, so that you can start them on the road to recovery, presuming you have not already done so.

If it seems like something on your character isn't quite right, then this is a good way to make slight character adjustments; for example if you don't end up using that Stunt as often as you thought, or you resolved the **OUTSTANDING WARRANT** that you had on you and thus it's no longer appropriate, or any other changes that keep your character consistent with the events of play.

(In fact, you should almost always be required to justify the change you're making in terms of the game's story. You shouldn't be able to change **HOT TEMPERED** to **STAUNCH PACIFIST**, for example, unless something happened in the story to inspire a serious change of heart—you had a traumatic experience that made you want to hang up the cape, or whatever.)

GMs, you are the final arbiter on this, but don't be so much of a stickler that you sacrifice a player's fun for consistency.

*Running the Wearing the Cape novel as an Origin Story, Astra's player could have given her an initial Trouble Aspect of **HAPPY WITH WHAT OTHERS WANT**. At the end of the first Session, after Astra has decided to sign on for training as Atlas' sidekick, her player could then decide that a new Trouble Aspect—**UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO**—would be more appropriate.*



Significant Milestones

Significant Milestones usually occur at the end of a Scenario or the conclusion of a big plot event (or, when in doubt, at the end of every two or three Sessions). Unlike Minor Milestones, which are primarily about change, Significant Milestones are about learning new things—dealing with problems and challenges has made your character generally more capable at what they do.

In *addition* to the benefit of a Minor Milestone, you also gain both of the following:

- **One Character Rating Point.** Buying a new Skill at Average (+1), or increasing an existing Skill by one rank, costs one CRP. Doing the same for Attributes costs 2 CRPs (you can bank them). Raising a Resource one rank costs only ½ a CRP; you can raise a single Resource two ranks, or two Resources one rank for one CRP.
- **If you have any Severe Consequences, you can rename them to begin the recovery process if you haven't already.**

Keep in mind your Campaign limits; most of the time +5 is the limit for Attributes and Skills—there is no limit to Resources. Note also that the same question of narrative plausibility applies to Attribute, Skill, and Resource increases; the player should be able to tie the increase into the story! If he can't, it may be a good idea to bank the Character Rating Point.

THE COLUMN RULE

When raising Character Ratings, there is an important restriction: **you cannot have more Character Ratings at a higher rating level than you have at a lower rating level.** This means that if you have three +3 ratings, you cannot have four +4 ratings. (Over a long campaign, this restriction tends to change the starting pyramid shape into a vertical column, thus the name of the rule.) There are two exceptions to The Column Rule: Superhuman Attributes, and Resources.

- **Only the Superhuman Attribute's "unmodified rating" is considered to occupy a slot.** For example, Astra's 4 levels of Superhuman Physique give her a Mythic (+9) Physique, but for purposes of the column she counts her *unmodified* Superb (+5) Physique as filling a slot; because of that, she can't immediately raise one of her two Great (+4) ratings to Superb (+5)—if she did, she would officially have *two* +5s and only one +4!
- **Resources Ratings that get reduced by Extreme Resource Consequences leave a ghost "unmodified rating" in their slot to support the column.** If Resource Ratings reach the "top" of the pyramid, they may also rise higher and leave gaps, even between each other. Thus you can have a mega-millionaire character with Epic (+7) Wealth, when her next-highest Character Rating is +5!

So, how do you raise Character Ratings from their initial pyramid formation (rather than swapping), when a move would make an upper level of the column top-heavy? For example, what if a hero with a two +4 Character Ratings and three +3 Character Ratings wants to raise one of the +3s to a +4? This would give him three +4s and two +3s!

The first way to do it is to purchase a new Average (+1) Character Rating, then move it up a step with each successive Significant Milestone until you have four +3s. On the next Significant Milestone, you can move the desired Character Rating up to +4!

The second way is to simply bank Character Rating Points until you have enough to buy a new +3 Character Rating; slot it in, giving you four +3s, and then move the +3 Character Rating you wished to up to +4; this will give you three +4s and three +3s, keeping the column from becoming top-heavy.

Over the course of the Wearing the Cape story arc, Astra's player wants to raise Astra's +2 Fight to +3. Since this would give her four +3s and three +2s, she must first raise one of her other +1 Character Ratings to +2. This would support the Fight increase, which would give her one +5, two +4s, four +3s, four +2s, and four +1s.

Note that this rule holds true for Resources—Astra's player could raise both her +1 Wealth and +2 Reputation to a +2 Wealth and +3 Reputation simultaneously, *or* raise her +1 Reputation to a +3 Reputation, since neither move would create a top-heavy Character Rating level! Obviously all this can get complicated; use your Player Character Worksheet to ensure that your spread of Character Ratings conform to the Column Rule as you advance (noting the additions in your Significant Milestone box as you go).

GAME BALANCE AND THE COLUMN

The main purpose for the column rule is to maintain game balance over the long term; even seriously leveled-up heroes are going to be looking at something like three +5s, three +4s, three +3s, three +2s, and four or more +1s. While Attribute Bonuses may result in more proficiency (even a few effective +6's!), this means there will always be things the heroes are only good at—room for other heroes to shine. This also preserves the paper-scissors-rock theme with Attributes/Skills/Resources; no opponent the heroes face is going to be a monster in every area!

Players may find this restrictive, but there are some work-arounds. Carefully crafted Stunts can give bonuses in areas your hero is otherwise weak in, and raising Character Attribute Ratings to +5s and +4s gives a lot of Attribute Bonuses to spread around and effectively raise his Skills!



Major Milestones

A Major Milestone should only occur when something happens in the Campaign that shakes it up a lot—the end of a story arc (or around three Scenarios), the death of a main NPC villain, or any other large-scale change that reverberates around your game world.

These milestones are about gaining more power. The challenges of yesterday simply aren't sufficient to threaten these characters anymore, and the threats of tomorrow will need to be more adept, organized, and determined to stand against them in the future.

Achieving a Major Milestone confers the benefits of a Significant Milestone and a Minor Milestone, and all of the following additional options:

- **If you have an Extreme Consequence, rename it to reflect that you've moved past its most debilitating effects.** This allows you to take another Extreme Consequence in the future, if you desire.
- **Take an additional Starting Fate Point.** This allows you to immediately buy a new Stunt, or you may keep it in order to give yourself more Fate Points at the beginning of a Session.
- **Rename your character's Hero Aspect if you desire.** Events may have seriously altered public perception of you, or inspired a change in your own methods or goals as a cape.

Reaching a Major Milestone is a pretty big deal. Characters with more Stunts are going to have a diverse range of bonuses, making their Skills much more effective by default. Characters with higher Starting Fate Points will have a much larger fountain of FPs to work with when Sessions begin, which means they'll be less reliant on Compels for a while.

Most of all, a Major Milestone should signal that lots of things in the world of your game have changed. Some of that will probably be reflected in world advancement, but given the number of chances the heroes have had to revise their Aspects in response to the story, you could be looking at a group with a much different set of priorities and concerns than they had when they started.

*Late in the Wearing the Cape story arc a Major Event occurs that calls for a change to Astra's **ATLAS' TEEN SIDEKICK** Hero Aspect. Astra also takes an Extreme Consequence—**FRACTURED NEARLY EVERY BONE IN HER BODY**—in the same Scene, which replaces her Trouble Aspect. The scene ends a Session and the GM decides that, while it's not quite the end of Astra's first story arc, it counts as a Major Milestone.*

*Astra's player decides to change Astra's Hero Aspect to **TEEN HERO**. She isn't sure how to rewrite the Trouble Aspect to mark the Extreme Consequence's recovery; she only knows she's going to swap the physical Trouble Aspect out for a psychological or social Trouble Aspect (Chakra helped Astra to mostly heal from the physical injuries), to mark how the events changed her. She's got until the next Session to think about it.*

Power Classes and New Stunts

Part of the fun of leveling up is allowing your hero to do more with his power. There is, however, a significant limitation when it comes to using Starting Fate Points to purchase new Power Stunts: your hero's Power Class.

New Power Stunts may not change your hero's Power Class. For example, a player cannot take an additional level of **SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE** for his B Class Ajax-Type since his level of **SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE** defines his Power Class.

This does leave some options; for example, **TOP OF YOUR CLASS**, **IRON BLOWS**, and **MIGHTY** are all available if not already taken. Heroes with broader powers can always learn “tricks” that enhance their power uses (Merlin-Types can simply add more Actions to their magic Skills or craft more artifices). Another option is to invest the SFP in Gear Stunts; it makes perfect sense for heroes in the Post-Event World to enhance their powers or address their weaknesses with equipment! (Bullet-resistant costumes are very popular.) Finally, there is always the option of investing in Stunts that reflect intensive training or experience.

This is actually one area where the “realistic” Post-Event World closely reflects what happens in traditional superhero comics—no matter how many adventures most comic book superheroes survive, their power-set rarely changes at all.

*Example: At the end of Wearing the Cape, Astra's player could just give her a third Starting Fate Point. Instead she decides, based on Astra's actions, to give her a new Stunt, **ALL IN**. **ALL IN** allows her, once per Scene, to add her Willpower Bonus to any Overcome, Create an Advantage, or Attack Action, This is in addition to any Attribute Bonus she might already be using. At the end of Villain's Inc., Astra's player changes a Background Aspect to **ARMED AND ARMORED**, and takes a new Gear Stunt, **MALLEUS: DR2/+1 Attack with Fight Skill**, using her new battle-maul. She's leveling up to be a more kick-butt fighting cape!*



GOING BACK TO CHARACTER CREATION

One way of looking at a Major Milestone is that it's usually the equivalent of a season finale in a television show. Once you start the next Session, a lot of things have the potential to be fundamentally different about your game—you might be focused on new problems, several characters will have Aspects changed, there will be new threats in the setting, and so on.

When that happens, you might decide that it's a worthwhile endeavor to take a Session to sit down like you did at character creation and review all the PCs again, altering or adjusting anything that seems like it might need revision—new Skill configurations, a new set of Stunts, more changes to Aspects, etc. You may also want to examine the issues in your game and make sure they're still appropriate, revise location Aspects, or anything else that seems necessary to move your game forward.

So long as you keep them at the same level of Starting Fate Points and Character Ratings they had, reconvening like this might be exactly what you need to make sure everyone's still on the same page about the game. And GMs, remember—the more you give the players a chance to actively invest in the game world, the more it'll pay off for you when you're running the game.

World Advancement

The heroes are not the only ones who change in response to events in the game. PCs leave their mark on locations (and their NPC faces) with their passing. Things that were crises and major Issues at the start of a game get addressed, resolved, or changed. Things that weren't major problems before suddenly blossom with new severity and life. Old adversaries fall to the wayside and new ones rise.

GMs, when the players are changing their characters through Milestones, you should also be looking at whether or not the Aspects you originally placed on the game during game creation need to change in response to what they've done, or simply because of lack of use.

Here are some guidelines regarding each Milestone.

For Minor Milestones

- **Do you need to add a new location to the game, based on what the PCs have done?** If so, come up with some NPCs to help give more personality to the location and add an Issue to the place.
- **Have the PCs resolved an Issue in a Location?** Get rid of the Aspect, or maybe change it to represent how the Issue was resolved.

*With Guy's group, in their first fight the new Guardians wind up saving Nancy Jones (the crusading journalist), and she tapes an "introduction interview" with them as a thank you. The GM decides this calls for a new Location: WXPB, the TV station's offices. To give it its own face, Guy comes up with Enrique Taylor, the station's **RATINGS-OBSESSED** manager.*

For Significant Milestones

- **Did the heroes resolve an Issue that was on the whole game world?** If so, remove (or alter) the Aspect.
- **Did the heroes create permanent change in a location?** If so, create a new Issue to reflect this, for better or for worse (often, this is already the result of a bad Scene Resolution Phase).

*In the course of the first story arc, the San Diego Guardians have a string of successes, among other things helping the police to bring in a notorious cartel gang member—and then keeping him alive when cartel villains came to kill him before he could testify in court! This goes a long way to hurting one of the biggest cartels trying to muscle into San Diego, but more importantly it causes the local media to hail them as heroes. It's time to retire **HOSTILE MEDIA ATTENTION** for a new Issue.*

For Major Milestones

- **Did the heroes create permanent change in the game world?** If so, give it a new Issue to reflect this, for better or for worse.

You don't need to make these changes as precisely or as regularly as the players do—if anything, you should be as reactive as you can. Focus on changing those Aspects that the heroes have directly interacted with and caused the most change to.

If you have Aspects you haven't really explored yet, keep them around if you think they're just waiting their turn. However, you can also change them in order to make them more relevant to what's going on in the moment, or simply to give the heroes more of a sense of being in an evolving world (it's a great time to introduce a new Big Event, dropping new Game Aspects on the setting for the heroes to live with or do something about).



11: The Long Game – World Advancement

Also, keep in mind that if the heroes remove an Impending Issue, another one must arise to take its place. Don't worry about this immediately—you need to give your players a sense of enacting permanent change in the game world. But after a while, if you notice that you're low on impending Issues, it's probably a good time to introduce a new one, whether on the game world as a whole or on a specific Location.

*The final Session of the current arc sees Guy's group take part in a joint American-Mexican task force organized to arrest the cartel's leadership and bring them to the US for trials. The mission goes bad, with the task force getting hit by a superhuman cartel assassination squad. They survive, possibly with serious injuries or losses, and most of the cartel assassins are captured or killed along with the leadership. This ends the **BUBBLING SUPERVILLAIN WAR**. The GM leaves the Issue/Aspect blank for the next Session, which focuses on team recovery and a one-session Scenario, and in the next session uses serial incidents to illustrate the new Issue: a **SUPERVILLAIN CRIME SPIKE** as local villains brought in as muscle and kept in line by the cartel take advantage of the cartel's destruction.*

Dealing with NPCs

Remember, GMs, when you add a new Location to the game world, you want to add at least one new NPC to go with it. Sometimes, that might mean moving a person from a Location you're not going to use anymore.

Likewise, when there's a significant change in an Issue for a Location or the game world, you need to evaluate if the current NPCs are sufficient to express that change. If not, you might need to add one, or alter an NPC you have in a significant way—add more Aspects or revise existing Aspects to keep that character relevant to the Issue at hand.

Most of the time, it should be pretty obvious when you need a new face for a Location—when the old one dies or is somehow permanently removed from the game, or is boring now, it's probably time to change things up.

Recurring NPCs

There are essentially two ways to reuse NPCs. You can either use them to *show how the PCs have grown since they started*, or use them to show how the world is *responding to their growth*.

With the former, you don't change the NPC, because that's the point—the next time the heroes meet them, they've outclassed them, or they have new worries, or they've somehow grown past that NPC, who remains static. Maybe you even change the category they're in—where they were once a Main Character, now they're a Supporting Character because of how the heroes have grown.

With the latter, you allow the NPC to advance like the heroes have—you add new Skills, change their Aspects around, give them a Stunt or two, and otherwise do whatever is necessary to keep them relevant to the heroes' endeavors. This kind of NPC might be able to hang around as a nemesis for several story arcs, or at least provide some sense of continuity as the PCs become more powerful and influential.

The GM uses Nancy Jones several times over the course of the Guardians' first story arc. He fleshes her out a bit more each time with more Aspects and Character Ratings as he goes, even revealing late in the arc that she is a secret (though minor) breakthrough!

Advancing Organizations

Lastly, consider your setting's Organizations. Organizations are NPCs, but need to be treated a little differently. Most heroes will form a team, which is an Organization, and they need to be able to change and advance it.

- **The players can change one of their team's Background Aspects at any Milestone, and can change their team's Mission Statement at a Major Milestone.**
- **Players can spend 1 Character Rating Point to raise one of the team's Resources by one step, or 2 Character Rating Points (or 1 each from two heroes if they wish) to raise one of the team's Skills by one step.** These Character Rating Points are earned by the PCs, not the organization, so they are sacrificing a bit of their own progress for the team. But as a bonus, Organization Skill advancement is not bound by the Column Rule—there can be top-heavy levels or gaps!

The GM should treat most other Organizations as he does recurring NPCs—advancing and changing them as needed. If the heroes have severely degraded the Resources of an enemy organization, he should focus on rebuilding only if the inter-arc narrative justifies it—give the heroes breathing room and let them feel they've made a difference!





12 SUPERHEROIC REALISM



You can skip this chapter. Really.

The guidelines for laying out and running a Campaign are dealt with in Chapters Eight through Eleven, and many GMs and players will already come to the table with very firm ideas of how they want their games to go. Chapter Twelve is for GMs and players who aren't sure what they want just yet, or who have never tried a "realistic" superhero campaign, aren't certain what one might entail, and want to look over the pitfalls and possibilities.

What is Superheroic Realism?

Realism may seem an odd creature in a superhero setting—after all, nothing is more *unrealistic* than superpowers—but Superheroic Realism is an outgrowth of the comic books of the last thirty years, the period often called the Iron Age or Modern Age of comics. At heart, Superheroic Realism is a reconstruction of the much-loved themes, tropes, and clichés of Golden and Silver Age superhero comics.

Deconstruction: to literally take a genre apart to reveal its unrealistic elements.

Reconstruction: to rebuild the deconstructed genre in ways that remain faithful to the genre but reflect more realistic portrayals of those original elements.

The *Wearing the Cape* series of books is an affectionate reconstruction of the superhero genre, with all its signature elements: superpowers, costumes and codenames, superheroes battling supervillains and saving the world (or at least their parts of it). The series strives for a degree of legal and social realism, but not at the cost of *superheroism*—the vigorous idealism Ajax thought best expressed by the ancient Greek virtue of *arete*: personal excellence, achieved in discovering one's purpose and using one's full human (and now superhuman) potential in service to the community.

This idealism differentiates Superheroic Realism from the often dark or even "grimdark" (markedly dystopian, amoral, or violent) deconstructions of many superhero stories. The superheroes of the Post-Event World are human beings as fallible as anyone, but they are fighting the darkness with some degree of success. They and the reader have assurance that their fight isn't a doomed one; the capes are not the Norse gods, knowing that whatever they do they can only delay Ragnarok, nor are they the Knights of the Round Table, fighting to create a Camelot the reader knows is doomed.

A campaign played with Superheroic Realism is one of optimism and bright hope. It is a game where everything the heroes do *matters*.

ASTRA

Astra is probably the perfect example of a reconstructed and yet still idealized superhero; she exhibits one of the classic superhero power-sets, but constantly runs up against hard limits. Her public image, from her costume to her missions, is carefully managed by the Sentinels' public-relations people. She was recruited by the team because, despite her inexperience, she filled the media role of the plucky sidekick to the team's iconic leader. But this doesn't make her inauthentic; she genuinely wants to Do The Right Thing and (in Artemis' sarcastic words) "save everyone, ever." It hurts her that she can't, but she retains her cheer and is living proof that reconstructed heroes don't need to be dark and angsty.

Playing with Superheroic Realism

Now that we've defined it, let's look at ways to use it in your campaigns. A "realistic" superhero campaign doesn't require more rules; you can create any degree of campaign realism you are comfortable with by choosing from the pallet of options available.

Power and Consequences

Probably the easiest way to bring some realism to the game is to emphasize the potential destructiveness of high-level superhuman combat. If an A Class energy projector with a Weapon Rating 8 cuts loose and *misses*, the GM is perfectly justified in taking a look at the scene and spending a Fate Point to Declare a Story Detail (p.111) based on the *8 shifts of damage*. WR8 is equivalent to heavy field artillery, after all, and the possibility of a resulting and significantly negative Situation Aspect only makes sense. If the attack resulted in Epic Failure, the GM can do it for free (p.116). Likewise when an Atlas or Ajax-Type throws something big—even attacks that hit what they are supposed to (as when an Atlas-Type makes her entrance through a wall) can have a negative impact on the Scene.

The GM should not hit the heroes with massive collateral damage or bystander fatalities every time they get a little careless—but if they start acting too much like comic-book heroes, punching first and talking later, failing to secure bystander safety first, etc., he shouldn't be shy about hitting them with the consequences. An epic and real estate destroying fight, even without civilian casualties, can come back and bite the heroes if it looks like they started it or could have stopped it. The same holds true if the heroes are perceived to employ gratuitous violence (cape brutality), even in the course of making legitimate arrests. And lots of destructive battles, even if justified, can turn the media and public against local heroes. The Scene Resolution Phase (p.135) is the time to deal with these kinds of issues.

Heroic vs. Average Abilities

Whatever the Power Level chosen for the campaign, the default in this rulebook is for heroes to start with Character Ratings reflecting heroic levels of ability (one +5, two +4s, and so on). Their lowest Attributes are likely to be Fair or Average. But *realistically*, even A Class breakthroughs start, on average, as otherwise mostly average people. Reflecting this, GMs and players may want to go with a Normal Joe (or Jane) approach.

The best way to do this is to shrink the Character Rating pyramid you create your heroes with: one +4, two +3s, three +2s, and four +1s is going to create a competent but less epic hero, possibly a hero with one or two +0 Attributes! This kind of start might be appropriate to a group playing a team of B-list capes (possibly a CAI team in a smaller municipality somewhere), very young heroes, or a team of agency capes.

If a player wants to play a Normal Joe hero in a regular game, one sneaky way to do this is to "burn" the higher Character Ratings on stuff like Resources, leaving your hero's Attributes and Skills at mostly +3 and lower. (This would take an interesting explanation; perhaps his breakthrough was incredibly public and positive, and now he has a Reputation he's not sure he can live up to, or he's a trust-fund baby with deep wells of inherited Resources, but little natural ability or life experience.)

The Problem with Powers

Some breakthroughs create tremendous problems for the hero—permanent and life-altering transformations being the most obvious (see both The Harlequin and Nimbus). And some powers, used to their fullest, can be very destructive of the local environment. But lots of problems are available that might qualify as Trouble Aspects or simple but evocative power details.

Examples? What if you're a transformer, but your clothing doesn't transform with you (the old Pantsless Werewolf problem). Or your "rocket blast" flight power scorches stuff in your takeoff and landing zone? Or your electrical powers give you an uncontrollable static field that tends to shock people and shorts out unshielded electronics around you, and reacts spectacularly to water?

Showing some realistic problem or inconvenience created by a power is one more way to make the campaign feel real-world.

THE SUBCANIS CAMPAIGN

Not all breakthroughs have what it takes to wear the cape, but lots of them want to anyway. Imagine a group of Average Joe D Class breakthroughs who decide to form their own private neighborhood watch team; that's a *Subcanis* (Underdogs) Campaign.

This sort of campaign is less reconstructive and more deconstructive; the PCs may have powers, costumes, and codenames, but they are going to obviously fall short of the epic scale action of the comics. This can be a source of humor, and still have serious action; what if the Underdogs, operating at street-level in their spare time, stumble across a plot that the local CAI team doesn't spot?

PCs in a *Subcanis* Campaign should go low on Heroic Scale (p.166-167), starting with only three +3, three +2, and three +1 Character Ratings and 8 Starting Fate Points. Alternatively, if the PCs are the local CAI team, an annoying Underdogs team could make an interesting foil.



Power and Opposition

In the comics, the supervillains are heroes' greatest nemesis. In a realistic setting, public and private institutions and completely unpowered individuals may oftentimes be the heroes' worst headaches. Law enforcement, city hall, concerned citizens, hostile media, interest groups, *lawyers*, all of these can be sources of drama or caution for the heroes. And this doesn't include groups dedicated to their inconvenience or destruction by lawful or unlawful means.

This partly feeds back into **Power and Consequences**, above, but even if the heroes are careful, the GM is free to bring in vectors of opposition that the heroes can't simply punch in the face.

Motivations

Yes there are supervillains who just want to take what they can or watch the world burn. But often they fight society from a righteous sense of grievance. Some villains fight for others and want to Save the World—or at least make it a world more in line with their vision of the Good. Sometimes in the Post-Event World the only thing separating heroes from villains is the methods they are willing to employ to achieve their goals.

Likewise, some capes are in it for the money and fame; they have little interest in the morality of their actions, only their legality (and sometimes not even that so long as they don't get caught). Making sure the heroes know a few of these sorts of capes is a good idea. And sometimes the heroes will find that the *right* thing to do isn't always the legal one. What will they do then?

A sufficiently sadistic GM can really mess with his players here; what about a bank robbery-turned hostage situation, where the villain who can kill everybody in the building with his power is trying to get money for his child's operation? If the heroes must make the choice between taking him down lethally or risking a dozen innocent lives, what will they do? It's best not to go this direction very often, since it can suck the feeling of triumph even out of a solid "win," but there's nothing wrong with presenting the players with villains who aren't exactly Bad Guys—or even with Bad Guys whose motives the players can understand, even sympathize with if they weren't *killing people*. That's the Real World.

Death

One drawback to being first responders is heroes are *responding*. Much of the time this means that heroes arrive after bodies have already dropped—at the very least, they often arrive in the middle of an already dangerous and evolving situation. This means coming to grips with the knowledge that they can't save everyone. As with **Power and Consequences**, this isn't something the GM should hit the heroes with often; too much can make for a darker game than intended.

And then there is the psychological cost of killing; if heroes are *responsible* for deaths, even supervillain deaths, it is not inappropriate for them to change Character Aspects at the next Milestone to reflect the psychological toll this can impose.

NPC deaths aside, one thing to keep in mind is that, unlike in the comics, death in the Post-Event Universe is usually *final*. It happens when the heroes screw up. Sometimes it happens when they don't screw up. The rules ensure that player-character heroes will never die unless their players allow it (p.134), but if it happens then make the most of it because they're probably not coming back. (If they do come back, try and do it in a way that doesn't Break the World—unless that's what you want.)

THE HELL REAVERS CAMPAIGN

The Hell Reavers Campaign is a "supersoldier" campaign. The Hell Reavers are superhuman mercenaries that walk the line between superhero and supervillain; they specialize in "acquisition and retrieval" operations, and their name comes from their boast that they'd raid Hell if the money was good enough. They're not kidnappers, but they have occasionally been hired to use any means necessary to retrieve kidnapping victims unharmed or bring kidnappers justice. They have also been hired for "high-conflict thefts," forceful extraditions (willing and unwilling), and other jobs by corporations, governments, and even wealthy individuals. Many of them are ex-military, and they mostly live and operate under assumed identities, doing jobs in Central and South America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East.

Hell Reavers use codenames, their only resemblance to comic-book heroes. In a morally grey campaign, the players might take the role of Reavers; more often, the GM can use groups like the Hell Reavers to fill the role of sometimes-sympathetic Professional Villains (p.29). The Hell Reavers may be regular foils for the PCs (or occasional allies) in a *Héros Sans Frontières Campaign* (p.16). They're in it for the money, but there are some jobs they just won't take and some things they just won't do; their moral code is grimly pragmatic, but it's still a heroic code.

In a Hell Reavers Campaign, death would be a regular consequence of being Taken Out (and even Conceding might just result in a Heroic Death that saves the team). PCs in a Hell Reavers Campaign are likely to fall in the middle of the Heroic Scale (p.166–167), starting with one +4 at the peak of their Ratings Pyramid and 10-12 Starting Fate Points. Reaver PCs operate in grimmer and more lawless parts of the world than are usually seen by CAI teams, but the game can still partake of the themes of Superheroic Realism.



And Life

In the comics, once a popular hero's origin story is complete and he has passed the major events in his development, to a certain extent he's "finished." This is predicated by the realities of comic book franchises; changing a hero too much from his established baseline risks weakening the elements that made him popular. Players may also fall into this trap, and of course this is not how the Real World works.

One way the GM can help avoid this is to *make time pass*. If three to six months usually pass between the heroes' big adventures, this not only strengthens realism (much of a hero's job is training, paperwork, PR, and routine dispatch calls), but creates room for life to happen. Much of that life will be character drama, much will be the setting itself slowly changing. Most troubles don't blow up out of nowhere—major storms are usually preceded by gust fronts. And of course some Actions may take weeks or months (especially Actions involving Resource Conflicts, like legal battles).

A long and evolving campaign can see the heroes grow from newbies to veterans, while experiencing more normal life-events. They may even retire, or become trainers, or transition through different heroic careers.

Superhero Themes

Now that we've talked about Superheroic Realism generally, let's look at how it may apply to some of the standard superhero themes. You don't need to accept these guidelines, but they may be useful for sparking ideas.

The Vigilante

The masked vigilante is probably the most unrealistic trope of the superhero genre but does have a foundation in logic, especially with the introduction of superhuman powers. If you have supervillains that law enforcement can't handle, then tolerating the existence of a vigilante who *can* handle them sort of makes sense.

Where the logic breaks down is thinking that law enforcement would *continue* to not be able to handle supervillains—in Depression-era Chicago, when mobsters started using tommy guns the police and feds did too. Law enforcement agencies would tolerate vigilantes only until they acquired the equipment or recruited the superhumans necessary to take down the supervillains themselves. In the Post-Event World, most of the states in the US went with Crisis Aid and Intervention Teams—private but publicly accountable contractors—while New York went with straight-up supercops, but either way law enforcement *adapted*.

So where does this leave the masked vigilante? In the shadows, where he belongs.

Players who want to play vigilante superheroes in their traditional crime-fighting roll (non-government sanctioned superheroes), just need to keep in mind one important rule: *they are criminals*. Limited resources means that law enforcement agencies can't pursue all criminals, obviously, and this leaves vigilantes some space to operate. But it's a very small space; the police *will* go after vigilantes who cross the line. That line might be murder, but it is *certainly* public exposure; nothing will guarantee legal pursuit like becoming a publicly *known* vigilante hero—it's almost worse if the public approves of what you are doing; the government has a monopoly on legitimate force except in self-defense, and vigilantes who publicly act with force are a threat to legitimate authority.

If the players are going to run a vigilante campaign, choice of breakthrough types becomes extremely important. Conflict-worthy powers are needed of course, but so are stealth and movement-related powers. Powers that make identification difficult, that help the heroes cover their tracks, that allow them to break away quickly and move undetected, will keep them one step ahead of the law. With the right mix of powers and tactics, vigilantes can operate so deep in the shadows that the police barely know they're there and never have any actions they can definitively attribute to them. And if the heroes stay on the right side of the line, official deniability is all that matters.

None of this is to suggest that the heroes can't be vigilantes. But if they do, the GM should play it straight; secrecy will be their only safety, and they will need to be constantly vigilant in their activities. While they might fight for justice, the law will always be their enemy.

ARTEMIS

CHICAGO'S OWN NIGHT-STALKER

Artemis was intended as the uber-example of a successful Post-Event vigilante; she wore a traditional night-stalker vigilante costume and had a code name, but none of her vigilante actions could be traced to her, or rose to a level that would require the CPD to officially acknowledge her existence. Nobody was even sure what her powers *were*. She also only terrorized people that weren't about to report her activities to the police—or be taken seriously by the police if they did. In public, she might as well have been just a breakthrough who liked to dress up to go clubbing. Then she was seen by dozens during the Freakzone Riot. She even shot a few. This brought her to the CPD and DSA's official notice, and at that point the game was up unless she wanted to become a hunted fugitive.



Superteams

Possibly the second-most common superhero trope is the superteam. Even if he spent most of his time off protecting his own city (or even off-planet), every successful superhero seemed to get sucked into a superteam sooner or later. And then of course there are the hero groups that began as teams, with some members getting their own comics later.

With superhero RPGs, superteams are the default—the easiest way to explain why the heroes are sharing multiple adventures—but Superheroic Realism calls into question the independence of most comic-book superteams. The main difference between comic-book superteams and Post-Event teams is that these teams are *professional* and *accountable*. Crisis Aid and Intervention teams function as private government-contractors because that's the only way they would be allowed to function, and they are watch-dogged and their members are certified under the laws of the host state. Heroes Without Borders is an accredited Non-Government Organization that must obey the laws of the countries in which it operates. Agency-teams might have greater legal powers, but greater legal power comes with greater oversight. (It's okay to make that oversight somewhat cinematic—superiors looking the other way to let things get done—but the GM can and should use oversight as a leash on which he can yank if the players run their heroes as laws unto themselves.)

SPICE AND VARIETY

In the comics, all superteams are fighting teams. But it doesn't have to be that way. There is the Hollywood Knights—a team of breakthrough actors that makes a movie a year as well as dealing with disasters and civil emergencies. Powerteam is a reality show team. Other teams might be pure “show teams”—flashy powers, good looks, fantastic costumes—that engage entirely in publicity and advocacy for their causes. The point is that the first-responder team is not the only option available for players.

One thing that superteams can be extremely useful for in a realistic campaign is showing the effects of time and events. Players can introduce their heroes to the team, and change their relationships and roles on the team as the campaign progresses. Heroes can die, creating openings for replacements. They can also *retire*, or transfer to another team. This not only gives players opportunities to play new heroes if they feel their current PCs are getting stale, it allows them to build in both depth and variety—which can keep the campaign fresh.

Nemesis

In the comics, superheroes are practically defined by their enemies and heroes in long running comic series will accumulate a full rogue's gallery of them, with one becoming the hero's nemesis. (Both definitions of nemesis—an *opponent that cannot be beaten or overcome*, or *one that inflicts retribution or vengeance*—work here.) In the comics, this works because of the No Cell Can Hold Me! trope; when captured, sentenced, and put away, even minor supervillains show a distressing tendency to escape. Supervillains don't have to regularly cheat death (since most superheroes don't kill), but they've done that too. It's harder to pull off a real nemesis with Superheroic Realism unless you change the nature of the threat, but there are ways to manage it.

One way is to make the nemesis someone that the heroes can't legally touch. He's not a criminal (or at least nothing can be proved), but he bends his considerable brains and resources to harassing the heroes with a goal of taking them down. An enemy organization is a more realistic nemesis; you can defeat individual members or whole teams fielded by the organization, even take out the organization's current leadership, and the organization can recover and rebuild (modern criminal cartels and terrorist organizations are a good example of this type of nemesis). Nemesis might also be government organizations, activist groups, etc.

It is important to keep in mind that not all nemesis are out to *kill* the heroes; they won't be making straight-up physical attacks, at least not all the time. Nemesis' goals may be to merely ruin the heroes or to harm them in some other way. And they will always be implacable; that's what nemesis *are*.

A last note on nemesis. They are not coming after the heroes because the heroes are between them and what they want—for the nemesis, it's *personal*. Because of this, the GM should not simply spring a nemesis on his players; the heroes need to *make* their nemesis. They have to *earn* it. This doesn't mean the nemesis should be justified in his actions, but he must be justified in his own mind. It must trace back to something the heroes have done or allowed to happen, for which he holds them responsible. The heroes may be responsible, adding real moral weight to the fight and making every decision harder. It should be possible to finally defeat a nemesis, but only with the greatest effort or cost.

THE MEDIA OR GOVERNMENT NEMESIS

A hostile journalist is a personal nemesis that works very well with Superheroic Realism. She may be constantly dogging the heroes' steps, showing up at crime scenes, submitting public-information requests for their action reports, painting every misstep in as bad a light as possible. When the heroes give her an opening, she will make concerted Reputation Attacks. A hostile watchdog agency works equally as well.



And Super-Civilians

In the comics, a superpower origin story immediately leads to the uncontrollable urge to put on a pair of tights, adopt a codename, and fight crime or save the world. (There's less of this than there used to be, but it's still a solid superhero trope.) Superheroic Realism says that it just isn't so.

Lots of people have breakthroughs; all it takes is trauma and something nobody's identified yet. And for every A and B Class breakthrough there are ten to a couple dozen C and D Class breakthroughs. Most C and D Class breakthroughs don't wear the cape—many A and B Class breakthroughs don't. So what do they do?

A lot of them don't do anything with their powers, or use them only part-time. The Crew is a recovery-and-reconstruction company that employs breakthroughs of all Power Classes to use their gifts to speed up clearing and reconstruction after disasters and high-powered superhuman fights. Veritas is a DSA agent who uses his cosmic lie-detecting power to help police the superhuman community. Touches Clouds is a former Sentinel who took off the cape and went into politics to become President of the United States. Legal Eagle flies, but that's all he can do. Since a not-invulnerable flier without some other defensive power is nothing but a *target*, he runs a law firm catering to capes. The Fortress employs D Class Ajax-Types as bouncers (and may employ more discretely powered breakthroughs as well). A breakthrough capable of charming *anyone* uses his gift to sell high-end cars to rich customers, and Detective Fisher in Chicago has his own interesting secret.

Wearing the cape is only one of many choices. Have fun with them; if nothing else, introducing a few interestingly but not heroically powered superhumans into your campaign adds a dash of flavor (and may be a useful source of surprise).

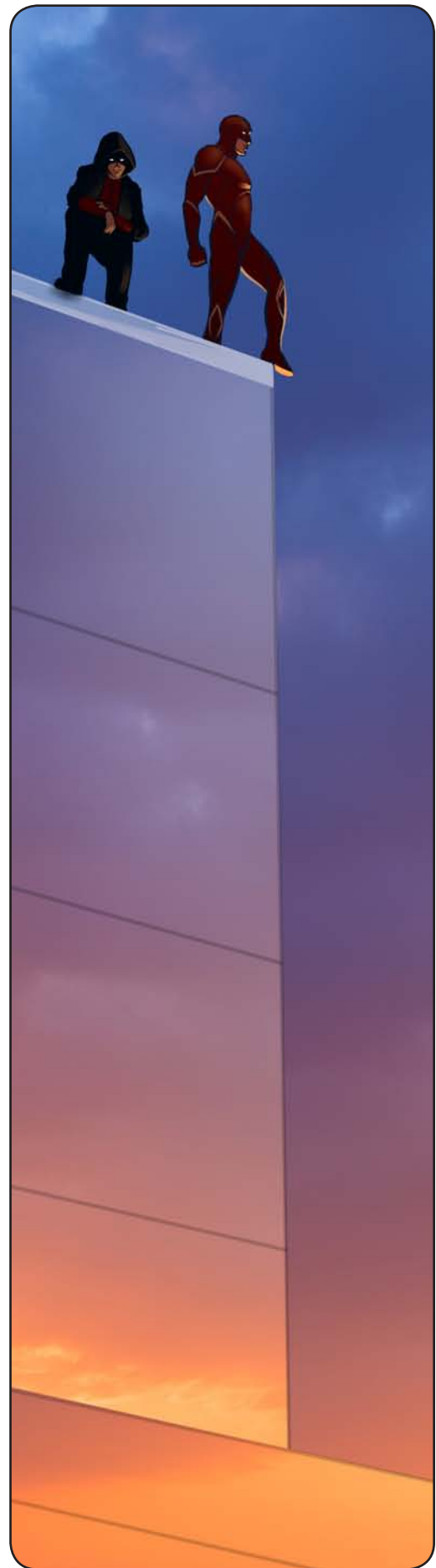
Change the World

After all of the previous discussions of “change,” “consequences,” and so on, this should go without saying but is the perfect beat to end on.

Change the World.

If the group is playing a long-running campaign, the actions of its heroes should *change things*. And the world around them should change as well, in ways that at least color the campaign, often in ways that the heroes need to react to. Think about how much change—political, economic, and social—has happened in the past five years. That's realism. If the GM wants to bring the events of the novels into it, she can certainly have fun with news bulletins for stuff that doesn't affect the heroes directly (“Godzilla Rampage on Chicago's Navy Pier!”), and use some of the scenes from the books as Scenes where the heroes have their own corner of the fight/emergency to nail down. But she should also feel free to chart her own list of changes that have nothing to do with the book series, and encourage the players to move the Post-Event world in the direction *they* think it should go.

After all, this is their game; if they're going to wear the cape, then they should make the most of it.



Or Do Something Else

Seriously; while the *WEARING THE CAPE* books try to be all about superheroic realism, a Post-Event campaign doesn't have to be *serious*. Superhero comics have shown how much fun largely un-serious stories can be; two of my favorite comic series were *WILDGUARD* and *YOUNG JUSTICE* by Todd Nauck—both often very unserious. Who remembers Phil Foglio's *ANGEL AND THE APE*? If you want to play a more light-hearted game, there are two easy ways to do it.

Option 1: Lighten Up

Rule that Being Taken Out just doesn't result in death. Downplay the depiction of Consequences and collateral damage (including civilian deaths). In the Scene Resolution Phase, don't beat up on PCs for the indiscriminate use of heavy firepower. The rules are a toolkit, not a straightjacket.

Your choice of focus also has a huge effect on the seriousness or unseriousness of a campaign; if you make it about a standard CAI, Heroes Without Borders, or Hell Reavers team, then you're naturally leaning towards a seriousish campaign. But you could just as easily make it about a reality show or underdog team, or even make it something else completely different. How about a group of PC high-school students attending the Hillwood Academy for Young Superhumans? Going this route only requires reframing a few things.

FOES: Most of the heroes' adversaries should be colorful cause villains and thrill villains who lean towards capers that are more performance art than serious destruction. Professional villains should work hard to avoid body-counts. Heroes' nemesis will be far more interested in humiliating or thwarting them than killing them.

POWERS: Breakthrough powers may not change—or could be used more cinematically and in more colorful ways. As mentioned, ease up on the downside of high-impact powers. The GM should feel free to introduce more strange and even silly breakthrough powers or Power-Type variants. Stretchy rubber-heroes comes to mind...

SOCIETY: Make society much more accepting of breakthrough powers generally and capes particularly. Downplay the dark side of fame, loosen up on the law-and-order side of things. Make right and wrong more black and white; fewer or no gray areas between the Good Guys and Bad Guys.

CAMPAIGNS: Sure the heroes are still going to save the world occasionally, but why not focus on other things? As mentioned in Chapter One, keeping a secret identity while wearing the cape can be problematic or impossible; why not try a campaign-setting with a bunch of teenage breakthroughs who decide to form an underdog team while keeping their powers and activities secret from their parents? Or make it about the misadventures of reality show bounty hunters that travel the country with a film crew?

You don't need to pick all these options, just tweak a few; the point is to emphasize the colorful adventures while dialing back on the realism. Just make sure the whole group is on the same page!

Option 2: Change the World

And I mean *really* change the world. Change the circumstances around The Event. Maybe no Blackout happened, so the Post-Event World didn't start with massive disasters and loss of life. Maybe breakthroughs have been around *forever*—or are just beginning to appear. Maybe you want to change the way breakthroughs happen to de-emphasize the trauma; perhaps breakthroughs only happen to boys and girls during puberty, so that all heroes start young. (Then it makes perfect sense that they all go off to super-school to learn and train, and get recruited by local and national teams when they reach eighteen.) *Wearing the Cape: The School Years*.

Or you can take the campaign somewhere else ([see p.140 box](#)); combine a new world with the items above to adventure in a more light-hearted setting, one that feels much more like superhero cartoons or manga and anime.

Drama is fine, but if all the world's a stage, put on a comedy now and again.





APPENDICES

Appendix A

Power Scale, the Ladder, & Weapon/Armor Ratings

All of this is scattered elsewhere in the rules, but here is an easy guide to how things as different as ability and skill, weight, speed, damage, and area or numbers effected can translate into Character Ratings, Difficulty Ratings, and Weapon/Armor Ratings.

THE LADDER					
#	RATING	HUMAN ABILITY	WEIGHT	SPEED	ATTRIBUTE BONUS, WR/AR
+10	SUPREME	Ultra Class	A Commercial Jet	Supersonic Flight †	
+9	MYTHIC	A Class	A Main Battle Tank		+4 (WR8/AR4)
+8	LEGENDARY	B Class	A Loaded Semi-Truck	Bullet Train	
+7	EPIC	C Class	A City Bus		+3 (WR6/AR3)
+6	FANTASTIC	D Class	A Loaded Pickup Truck	Cheetah	
+5	SUPERB	Peak Human Ability	A Town Car	Olympic Sprinter	+2 (WR4/AR2)
+4	GREAT	Top of Their Field	A Motorcycle		
+3	GOOD	Standouts	Heavy Furniture		+1 (WR2/AR1)
+2	FAIR	Professional	A Grown Man		
+1	AVERAGE	Average Adult	A Teenager		
0	MEDIOCRE	Average Teen	An 8-Year Old		
-1	POOR	Average Child	An Infant		
-2	TERRIBLE	Human Minimum	A Bunny		

† Note that for space-traveling breakthroughs, absolute speeds will be much higher.

AREA AND NUMBERS AFFECTED: This one can be hugely different from power to power, even with the same ratings! As a general rule, a D Class (+6) Kinetic's area-effect power can fill a classroom, a C Class the school cafeteria, a B Class the athletic field, and an A Class (+9) the entire school property. A telepath is generally able to effect groups that fit into spaces of the same size. But if it's an especially potent/destructive power, then the GM will want to seriously shrink those upper limits! Thus an A Class Telepath could possibly sway the *emotions* of a school full of people but couldn't take full mental control of them and turn them into a mentally enslaved army. An A Class Aerokinetic might be able to control a stadium-sized volume of air, but an A Class *Telekinetic* couldn't lift the stadium! (He'd be more likely to go by an Atlas-Type's weight limit.) So long as both the player and the GM have a good idea of the limits of the power, that's the important thing since most often what really matters in a Conflict is the Attribute or Skill Rating; the crowd numbers or area of effect is simply a descriptive addition.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR: Remember that weapons don't need their own numbers—a Fight or Shoot Skill Rating is all that is necessary for a sword or gun! If you want to add more bang, **Melee Weapons** (batons, swords, etc.) and **Pistols** can justify a WR2. AR2 **Civilian body-armor** is readily available. **Military Firearms** rate a WR4, while **Battlefield Artillery** may rate a WR8!

RANGE AND DISTANCE: Range can be a Situation Aspect, used for permission/denial, invokes, even given Difficulty Ratings. **Close Range** (beyond point-blank) +2 DR, **Mid Range** +4 DR, and **Long Range** +6 DR. The Range Aspect can be used to Defend (p.113), or invoked for the +2!

PLAYING WITH SCALE

As mentioned elsewhere, since the Fate system is descriptive, power scales don't need to be absolute—the ratings are important for determining success, but description is what grants permission. What if you want to run a superhero campaign where the A Class Atlas-Type can airlift a cruise liner, or the speedster can really run faster than the speed of sound? Just change the weight/speed attached to the Ladder Ratings, and remember to upgrade other categories like WR/AR (for example, with scaled up Atlas-Types, a WR 8 would now mean being able to hit as hard as a shell from a battlecruiser's main guns). The numbers stay the same, but the scale description changes.

If instead you just want to introduce higher-powered superhumans into the Post-Event scale world, then make use of the Ultra-Class designation and remember the Power Class Advantage (box p.89)!



Appendix B

The Other Stunt List

Wearing the Cape: The Roleplaying Game being about superheroes, with few exceptions all of the Stunts given in the body of the rules have been about powers or gear. But Stunts can also reflect a PC or NPC's training, assets, and other characteristics. Players with breakthrough characters will naturally use all or most of their Stunts on Power Stunts, but players who want to play super-competent but unpowered characters, and GMs who want to fill unpowered Major Characters out with Stunts, can use this list as a resource. Players playing lower class breakthroughs in higher class campaigns—D Class breakthrough in an A Class Campaign for example—may also want to spend Starting Fate Points on non-power Stunts.

This appendix is a list of Stunts from Fate Core, lightly modified for the setting and changes in the rules. It is by no means exhaustive, but should give you plenty of inspiration for non-powered Stunts—or even additional Power Stunts!

Stunts That Add a new Action to an Attribute/Skill/Resource

ARMOR OF FEAR. You're so intimidating that you can use *Provoke* to Defend against Fight attacks, but only until the first time you're dealt Stress in a Conflict. (You can make your opponents hesitate to attack, but when someone shows them that you're only human your advantage disappears.)

FACE-READER. What others discover through gut reactions and intuition, you learn through the gift of reading micro expressions and other physical cues, allowing you to use Alertness to Defend against Deceive attempts. A related Stunt is Body Language Reader: You can use Alertness to learn the less obvious Character Aspects of a target through observation on a successful Overcome (one important hidden Aspect per Success).

FORCE OF WILL. You can perform amazing feats of strength through sheer force of will, using Willpower instead of Physique on any Overcome rolls representing feats of strength. (Higher levels of Willpower make this extremely cinematic, but it's a common trope of action stories.)

GOT A NAME. In certain circles, your name means a *lot*. You can use Contacts (instead of Rapport or Provoke) to Create an Advantage based on the respect or fear generated by the reputation you've cultivated for yourself within a specific network or community (the criminal underworld, national-security organizations, etc.). You should have an appropriate Character Aspect to pair with this Stunt.

MIND GAMES. You know how to seriously mess up people's heads, and so can use Deceive to make mental Attacks as long as you can make a clever deception part of the Attack. Deception is most commonly verbal, but as a Power Stunt this could represent a mind-twisting use of illusions!

MONEY TALKS. You can use Wealth instead of Provoke or Rapport in any situation where ostentatious displays of material wealth might aid your cause.

POPULAR. If you're in an area where you're popular and well-liked, you can use Rapport in place of Contacts or Reputation. You may be able to establish your popularity by spending a Fate Point to declare a story detail, or because of prior justification.

PROVOKING. You can use Provoke in place of Discernment to learn a target's Character Aspects, by verbally bullying them until they reveal one to you. The target defends against this with Willpower. (If the GM thinks the Character Aspect is particularly vulnerable to your hostile approach, you get a +2 bonus.)

SHIELD OF REASON. As a committed rationalist you can use Discernment as a defense against Provoke attempts, provided you can justify your ability to overcome your fear through rational thought and reason.

SLIPPERY TARGET. Provided you have some means of concealment (natural and man-made cover, darkness/shadows, etc.), you can use Stealth to defend against Shoot Attacks from enemies at Shoot or Distant Range.

TAKE THE BLOW. With your physical toughness, you can use Physique to Defend against Fight attacks made with fists or blunt instruments—though you will always take 1 shift of Stress on a Tie. (This Stunt is *not* available for characters with Superhuman Physique.)



Stunts that Grant a Bonus to an Action

ALWAYS A WAY. You get a +2 on Larceny rolls made to Create an Advantage whenever you're trying to break into or out of a location. (This may represent a hacker getting past firewalls and into secured systems.)

DECEPTION UPON DECEPTION. You spin webs of deception, getting a +2 to Create an Advantage with Deceive against someone who has fallen for a previous deception of yours during this Session.

DEMAGOGUE. You speak powerfully and movingly, getting a +2 to Rapport when you're delivering an inspiring speech in front of a crowd. (If there are named NPCs or PCs in the scene, you may target them all simultaneously with one roll rather than dividing up your shifts.)

FACE IN THE CROWD. You can blend in anywhere, getting a +2 to any Stealth roll to blend into a crowd. What a "crowd" means will depend on the environment—a subway station requires more people to be crowded than a small bar.

GRAPPLER. You're trained to grasp and hold, getting a +2 to Physique rolls made to Create an Advantage on an enemy by wrestling or grappling with them.

HARD TO SHAKE. You get a +2 to Drive whenever you're pursuing another vehicle in a chase scene.

HARDCORE PARKOUR. You've mastered the art of efficiently and swiftly traversing obstacle-filled environments, getting a +2 to Overcome Actions with Athleticism if you are moving at speed across rooftops or a similarly precarious or obstruction-filled environment.

INDOMITABLE. You are stronger than your fears, getting a +2 to Defend against Provoke Attacks specifically related to intimidation and fear.

LIE WHISPERER. You get a +2 to all Discernment rolls made to discern or discover lies, whether they're directed at you or someone else.

SPECIALIST. Choose a field of specialization, such as chemistry, criminology, or zoology. You get a +2 to all of your Academics rolls relating to that field of specialization. Note: specialties can also be chosen for Engineering and even Investigate!

Stunts that Create a Special Rule for a Character Rating or Aspect

BEST FOOT FORWARD. Twice per Session, you may upgrade a Boost you receive with Rapport into a full situation aspect with a Free Invoke.

BETTER THAN NEW! Whenever you Succeed with Style on an Overcome Action to repair a piece of machinery, you can immediately give it a new Situation Aspect (with a Free Invoke) reflecting the improvements you've made, instead of just a Boost.

CALLED SHOT. Before you roll for a Shoot Attack, spend a Fate Point and declare a specific condition you want to inflict on a target, like **SHOT IN THE HAND**. If you succeed, you place that as a Situation Aspect on them in addition to hitting them for stress.

DAZING COUNTER. When you Succeed with Style on a Defend Action against an opponent's Fight roll, you automatically counter with some sort of nerve punch or stunning blow. You get to attach the **DAZED** Situation Aspect to your opponent with a Free Invoke instead of just getting a Boost.

HEAVY HITTER. When you Succeed with Style on a Fight Attack and choose to reduce the result by one to gain a Boost, you gain a full Situation Aspect with a Free Invoke instead.

I'VE READ ABOUT THAT! You've read hundreds—if not thousands—of books on a wide variety of topics. You can spend a Fate Point to use Academics in place of any other Skill for one roll or exchange, provided you can justify having read about the Action you're attempting.

KILLING STROKE. Once per Scene, when you force an opponent to take a Consequence, you can spend a Fate Point to increase the Consequence's severity (so Mild becomes Moderate, Moderate becomes Severe). If your opponent was already going to take a Severe Consequence, he must either take a Severe Consequence and a second Consequence or be Taken Out.

THE MACGYVER. You don't ever need to spend a Fate Point to declare that you have the proper tools for a particular job using Engineering, even in extreme situations (like being imprisoned and separated from all your stuff). If you don't have it, you can make something that does the job; this source of opposition is just off the table.



NINJA VANISH. Once per Scene, you can vanish while in plain sight by spending a Fate Point, using a smoke pellet or other mysterious technique. This places the **VANISHED** Boost on you. While you're **VANISHED**, no one can Attack or Create an Advantage on you until after they've succeeded at an Overcome roll with Alertness to suss out where you went (basically meaning they have to give up an exchange to try). This Aspect goes away as soon as you "free-invoke it" for the +2, or someone makes that Overcome roll (Difficulty based on your appropriate Power, Attribute, or Skill).

ONE PERSON, MANY FACES. Whenever you meet someone new, you can spend a Fate Point to declare that you've met that person before, but under a different name and identity. Create a Situation Aspect to represent your cover story, and you can use Deceive in place of Rapport whenever interacting with that person.

THE POWER OF DEDUCTION. Once per Scene you can spend a Fate Point (and a few minutes of observation) to make a special Investigate roll representing your potent deductive faculties. For each shift of success you make on this roll you discover or create an Aspect, on either the Scene or the target of your observations. You may only invoke one of them for free.

PSYCHOLOGIST. Once per Session you can reduce someone else's mental Consequence by one level of severity (Severe to Moderate, Moderate to Mild, Mild to nothing at all) by succeeding on an Aid roll with a difficulty of Fair (+2) for a Mild Consequence, Good (+3) for Moderate, or Great (+4) for Severe. You need to talk with the person you're treating for at least half an hour in order for them to receive the benefits of this Stunt, and you can't use it on yourself. (Normally, this roll would only start the recovery process, instead of changing the Consequence level.)

SECURITY SPECIALIST. You don't need to be present to provide Active Opposition to someone trying to Overcome security measures you put in place or worked on. (Normally, a character would roll against Passive Opposition for that.) Note that there are variations of this for anyone trying to Overcome something you have done or put in place—a forgery, a puzzle, tied bonds, etc.

SURGICAL STRIKES. When using Engineering in a Conflict involving machinery, you can filter out unwanted targets from Area Attacks without having to divide up your shifts (normally, you'd need to divide your roll between your targets).

TRUST FUND BABY. Twice per Session, you may take a Boost representing a windfall or influx of cash.

QUICK-DRAW. In the first Round of a physical Conflict, if your Action uses the Shoot Skill then you can choose to take the next Turn (or a preemptive first Turn!) without paying a Fate Point. Note: sword masters and other martial artists may have a version of this for their Fight Skill. Two fast-draw artists will compare Skills (and make a quick one-roll Contest of Skill if they are equal) to see who goes first.



Appendix C

Once More with Everything





The book has an extensive index, but sometimes it helps to put all the Action basics in one place (with page references). Appendix C can be downloaded from <http://www.wearingthecape.com/downloads> and printed out for everyone who wants a crib-sheet of the system handy during play.

THE LADDER	
+10	SUPREME
+9	MYTHIC
+8	LEGENDARY
+7	EPIC
+6	FANTASTIC
+5	SUPERB
+4	GREAT
+3	GOOD
+2	FAIR
+1	AVERAGE
0	MEDIOCRE
-1	POOR
-2	TERRIBLE

GAME TIME (P.146–147)

- **TURN:** the time it takes for one character to perform one Action.
- **ROUND:** the time it takes for all characters in a Scene to perform one Action or pass.
- **SCENE:** the time it takes to resolve a situation.
- **SESSION:** a single sitting of play.
- **SCENARIO:** a single “episode.”
- **ARC:** a campaign “season.”
- **CAMPAIGN:** the entire multi-arc game played in a setting.

THE FOUR ACTIONS (P.62–63, 116–118)

-  **OVERCOME:** attempt to get past an obstacle.
-  **CREATE AN ADVANTAGE:** attempt to create an Aspect or invoke an Aspect for free.
-  **ATTACK:** attempt to harm another character.
-  **REACT:** attempt to prevent Attacks or Create Advantages against you.

ACTION ROLL (P.64, 115)

Roll the dice, comparing the result to the Opposition Rating. For each step on the Ladder greater than the Opposition Rating, you earn 1 Shift of Success.

- **AGAINST PASSIVE OPPOSITION:** if nothing is actively opposing you, roll only the 4 Hero Dice.
- **AGAINST ACTIVE OPPOSITION:** if something or someone is actively opposing you, roll the 4 Hero Dice and 4 Opposition Dice together.

THE FIVE OUTCOMES (P.64, 116)

- **FAIL EPICALLY (-3 or more shifts):** you fail your Action Roll so badly you create a complication.
- **FAIL (-1 or -2 shifts):** if something or someone is actively opposing you, roll the 4 Hero Dice and 4 Opposition Dice together.
- **TIE (0 shifts):** you succeed, but not completely or at a minor cost.
- **SUCCEED (+1 or +2 shifts):** you succeed.
- **SUCCEED WITH STYLE (+3 or more shifts):** you succeed with additional benefits.

MITIGATING SHIFTS OF DAMAGE (P.132)

- 1) Check off one Stress Box great than or equal to the Attack’s Shifts of Success, or,
 - 2) Check off one Stress Box and/or fill one or more Consequence Slots to absorb remaining Shifts of Success.
- If you cannot absorb all Shifts of Success with a Stress Box and/or Consequence Slots, you are Taken Out.

CONSEQUENCE SLOTS (P.132)

- **MILD:** -2 to Shifts of Success. Recovery: Overcome Fair (+2), wait one whole Scene.
- **MODERATE:** -4 to Shifts of Success. Recovery: Overcome Great (+4), wait one whole Session.
- **SEVERE:** -6 to Shifts of Success. Recovery: Overcome Fantastic (+6), wait one whole Scenario.
- **EXTREME:** -8 to Shifts of Success, and Permanent Character Aspect. Recovery: wait till next Major Milestone, rename Character Aspect.



ASPECT TYPES (P.58–59)

- **GAME ASPECTS:** semi-permanent, made during campaign creation.
- **CHARACTER ASPECTS:** semi-permanent, made during character creation.
- **SITUATION ASPECTS:** remain for a Scene, until Overcome, or until irrelevant.
- **BOOSTS:** ephemeral semi-Aspects lasting until invoked once or no longer applicable or relevant.
- **CONSEQUENCES:** remain until recovered from.

INVOKING ASPECTS (P.60)

Spend a Fate Point or use a Free-Invoke. Choose One:

- +2 to your Action Roll.
- Reroll your Hero Dice.
- Teamwork: +2 to another character's Action Roll (for players and GM).
- Increase Opposition: +2 to opposition (for GM).

COMPELLING ASPECTS (P.60)

Accept a Complication to receive a Fate Point.

- **EVENT-BASED:** Because of ___ Aspect, and ___ situation, [complication] happens.
- **DECISION-BASED:** Because of your ___ Aspect, in ___ situation, it makes sense that you would ___, resulting in [complication].

STARTING FATE POINTS (P.74)

At the start of a new **Session**, you reset your pool of Fate Points to your number of Starting Fate Points (unless you ended your previous Session with *more* FP, in which case you begin with SPF + extra FP. At the end of a Scenario you reset to your SFP; all extra FP are lost.

EARNING FATE POINTS (P.119–120)

You earn Fate Points when you:

- Accept a Compel.
- Have your own Aspects invoked against you.
- Concede in a Conflict.
- Roll no +s with the Hero Dice.

SPENDING FATE POINTS (P.120)

You may spend Fate Points to:

- Invoke an Aspect.
- Power a Stunt.
- Refuse a Compel.
- Declare a Story Detail.

CHALLENGES (P.124)

- Each obstacle requiring a different Character Rating gets its own Overcome Action.
- The costs, successes, and failures of each roll are factored together to determine the Challenge's final outcome.

CONTESTS (P.126)

- Characters/teams roll appropriate Character Ratings.
- The side with the most shifts of success scores a Victory.
- If one side Succeeds with Style, they get 2 Victories.
- If there is a Tie, there is no Victory and a Twist occurs!
- The first side to achieve 3 Victories wins.

NEGOTIATIONS (P.127)

- Both sides set up the stakes.
- Each side selects a negotiator.
- Each side creates leverage.
- The PC negotiator rolls to resolve negotiation.

CONFLICTS (P.128)

The GM sets the scene, describing the Conflict's environment and naming appropriate Situation Aspects, establish who's participating and assigns the first Turn.

- On your Turn, choose and resolve an Action.
- On other's Turns, React to their Actions as necessary.
- Once everyone has taken a Turn, begin a new Round.

The Conflict is over when everyone on one side has Conceded or been Taken Out.



THE INDEX

Actions

Conflict Actions, 130

- describing Actions, 63
- ending the action, 64
- story time and Action scope, 148
- the four Actions, 62–63, 116–118

Active Opposition, 115

advancement (see Milestones for character advancement)

- Advancement and change, 179–182
- Advancing organizations, 184
- World Advancement, 183

Ajax

- Ajax Cape File, 44–45
- Ajax type, 95

Arcs

- Arcs and Campaigns, 178–179
- how to build an Arc, 178

Areas

- area Attacks and multiple targets, 131
- Create an Advantage against an area, 131

Armor Ratings, 130

- buying Weapon and Armor Ratings 91

Artemis

- Artemis Cape File, 52–53
- Chicago's Own Nightstalker, 189

Aspects

- Aspects and details: discovery and creation, 150
- Aspects and staging (Scenes), 154–55
- Aspects Describe What's Important, 58
- Background Aspects, 71
- Character Aspects, 58, 70–71
- Compelling Aspects, 60, 111, 113, 122
- created Situation Aspects, 60
- creating Aspects, 110–111
 - Creating Power Aspects, 88
- dealing with Aspects, 151
 - defending with Aspect Difficulty Ratings, 113
- Difficulty, 59, 111, 113
- gear as Aspects 76
- Hero Aspect, 70
- High Concept, 156
- invoking Aspects, 60, 113, 119, 120
- making Issues into Game Aspects, 167
- Organization Aspects, 160
- other Aspects, 59
- Permission and Denial, 58–59, 88, 154
- Power Aspect, 70
- Removing Aspects, 112
- Situation Aspects, 58, 154

Situational Aspects as Hazards, 155

- Trouble Aspect, 71
- using Aspects, 60, 112–113

Astra

- Astra Cape File, 50–51

Atlas

- A Day Not Like Any Other, 65–66
- Atlas Cape File, 36–37
- Atlas-Type, 96
- There's Always Someone, 67–68

Attack, 117

- area attacks and multiple targets, 131
- attack overview, 63, 117
- attacks during a Challenge, 125
- attacks in a Contest, 127
- resolving Attacks, 130

Attributes

- Alertness, 77
- Athleticism, 77
- Attribute Bonus, 72
- Attribute overview, 61, 72
- Discernment, 78
- Physique, 78
- Power Attributes, 88
- Presence, 79
- Raising superhuman Attributes, 91
- Willpower, 79

Breakthrough/Breakthroughs, 9–12

Blackstone

- Blackstone Cape File, 40–41
- Mentalist type, 99

Block, 118

Boosts, 113

Bronze Rule (The Fate Fractal), 155

CAI/Crisis Aid & Intervention Teams, 8, 25

Campaigns

- Arcs and Campaigns, 178–179
- Campaign Issues, 167
- Campaign setting, 166–167
- Campaign Worksheet, 207
- creating the Campaign, 166
- Building a Campaign, 179
- staging and casting, 168
- using the Campaign Worksheet, 166

Capes, 24

Cape File, 204

Chakra

- Chakra Cape File, 42–43
- Mentalist-Type, 99





- challenges, 124**
- character creation, 70–86**
 - Example Breakthrough Creation: The Incanter, 108
- Character Sheet (Cape File), 204**
- Collateral Damage, 111**
 - Fail/Succeed with Cost, 116
 - and Scene Consequences, 135
 - Weapon Ratings and Collateral Damage, 92
- Compel, 60, 152**
 - Compelling Power Aspects, 88
 - Refuse a Compel, 119
 - Self-Compels, 120, 152
 - Weak Compels, 152
- Conceding, 120**
- Conflicts, 128–134**
 - Changing modes of Conflict, 171
 - Organizations and Resource Conflicts, 161–162
 - Resource Conflicts, 134
- Consequences 132–133**
 - Determining Scene Consequences, 135
 - living with a Consequence, 133
 - Organization Stress and Consequences, 161
 - Physical and Mental Stress/Consequences, 76
 - Power and Consequences, 187
 - Recovering from a Consequence, 133
 - Resource Stress and Consequences, 76
 - Writing Consequences, 132
- Contests, 126**
- Counter, 118**
- Create an Advantage, 117**
 - Against an area, 131
 - Create an Advantage overview, 62, 117
 - creating advantages for NPCs, 171
 - creating Aspects as an advantage, 111
 - In a Challenge, 125
 - In a Contest, 126
 - In a Negotiation (Leverage), 127
- Death, 188**
- Defend, 118**
 - defending with an Aspect Difficulty Rating, 113
 - Full Defense, 130
- DSA/Department of Superhuman Affairs, 20**
- Environmental Hazards**
 - Situational Aspects as Hazards, 155
- Event, The, 2**
- Fail**
 - Fail, 116
 - Fail Epically, 116
 - making failure awesome, 143
- Fate Dice**
 - rolling the Fate Dice, 64, 115
 - when to roll dice, 143
- Fate Points, 119–120**
 - Fate Point overview, 60
 - Starting Fate Points, 74
- Fate Pool, 121–122**
 - using the Fate Pool, 122
- First and Second Rule of Aspects, 58–59, 110**
- Free Invokes, 117**
- Full Defense, 130**
- Game Aspects, 167**
- game creation, 140–141**
- Game-Master, (GM)**
 - what the GM does, 138–152
- Game time, 146**
- Gear, 75**
- General Warrant, 19**
- Golden Rule, 142**
- Harlequin, The, Cape File, 38–39**
- Hazards, 155**
- High Concept, 156**
- Hypertime, 106**
- Invoking an Aspect, 151**
 - Aspect invoked against you, 120
 - Invokes and Compels overview, 88
- Issues, 167**
- Ladder, The**
 - Character Ratings, 72
 - Power Scale Ladder, 94
 - Weight of Things, 59
- League of Democratic States, 16**
- Milestones, 179–182**
- Mobs, 157**
- Movement, 129**
 - Alternate Movement, 129
- Multiple targets, 131**
- Negotiations, 127**
- Nimbus**
 - Nimbus Cape File, 46–47
 - Projector-type, 104
- Non-player characters (NPCs), 156–159**



- creating advantages for NPCs, 171
- dealing with NPCs, 184
- describing the NPC, 156
- main characters, 159
- Scene Extras, 156
- Supporting Characters, 158
- the 2-rating character, 159
- writing up the opposition, 156
- Opposition**
 - Active Opposition, 115
 - increase Opposition using the Fate Pool, 122
 - Passive Opposition, 115
 - Opposition Dice, 64, 115
- Organizations, 160–162**
 - Advancing Organizations, 184
- Outcomes**
 - The Five Outcomes, 64, 116
 - in the Four Actions, 116–118
 - Overcome, 62, 116
 - Discovery vs. Creation, 150
- Permission, 58, 112**
 - Aspect Permission and Denial, 88
 - Power Aspect Permission vs Power Stunts, 93
- Player Character Worksheet, 74, 206**
- Power(s)**
 - Power and Consequences, 187
 - Power and Opposition, 188
 - Power Attributes, 88
- Power Classes, 11–12, 61, 88, 94**
 - Ultra Class, 12, 94
 - Omega Class, 12, 94
 - Power Class Advantage, 89
- Power scale in the post-event world, 94**
- Power Scale Ladder, 94**
- Power Skills, 89**
- Power Stunts, 90**
 - The problem with powers, 187
- Range**
 - Fight/Shoot Range, 129
 - Range as Aspects, 129
- Ratings**
 - Character Ratings and specific measurements, 150
 - Set Difficulty Ratings, 145
 - Aspect Difficulty, 59, 111, 113, 154
 - Physique/Willpower Attribute Bonus, and Weapon/Armor Ratings, 91
 - The Ladder – Character Ratings, 72
 - Weapon and Armor Ratings, 130
- React, 118**
 - React overview, 63
- Recovery, 133**
- Resources**
 - Resource Conflicts, 134
 - Contacts, 85
 - Organization Skills and Resources, 160
 - Organizations and Resource Conflicts, 161
 - Reputation, 86
 - Resource overview, 61, 73
 - Resource Stress and Consequences, 76
 - Using Resources, 86
 - Wealth, 86
- Rules**
 - The Bronze Rule (The Fate Fractal), 155
 - The Default Rule, 90
 - The First and Second Rule of Aspects, 58–59, 110
 - The Golden Rule, 142
 - Rule #1 of Roleplaying, 56
 - The Silver Rule, 142
- Rush**
 - Rush Cape File, 48–49
 - Speedster-type, 106
- Scale**
 - Heroic scale, 166
- Scenarios**
 - Creating Scenarios, 168–170
 - Playing out Scenes and Scenarios, 172–175
 - Resolving the Scenario, 175
 - Scenario Stages, 169
 - The Scenario in play, 174
 - The Scenario problem, 169
- Scenes**
 - Defining Scenes, 172
 - End Scenes with forward momentum, 174
 - First Scene, 169, 172
 - Playing out scenes and Scenarios, 172
 - Scene Extras, 156
 - Scene Extras and power levels, 157
 - Scene Extras as obstacles, 157
 - Scenes and the Order of Action, 114
 - Staging Scenes, 154
 - The Scene Resolution Phase, 135–136
- Scene Concedes**
 - Forcing a Scene Concede, 122
- Scene Consequences**
 - Determining Scene consequences, 135–136
- Scene Phases**
 - The Action Phase, 114
 - The Resolution Phase, 114, 135
 - The Setup Phase, 114
- Sentinels, The**
 - Sentinels Team File, 34
- Setting, 166**
- Silver Rule, 142**
- Situation Aspects, 58, 154**
 - Situational Aspects as Hazards, 155
- Skill Pyramid**
 - Choosing your Character Ratings, 72



Skills

Academics, 80
 Aid, 80
 Deceive, 80
 Drive, 81
 Engineering, 82
 Fight, 82
 Investigate, 83
 Larceny, 83
 Organization Skills and Resources, 160
 Power Skills, 89
 Provoke, 83
 Rapport, 84
 Shoot, 84
 Skills Overview, 61, 73
 Stealth, 84
 Survival, 85

Story Details

Declare a story detail, 111, 119, 122

Story questions, 170**Story Time, 147**

dealing with time, 146
 game time, 146
 Story Time and the scope of an Action, 148
 using Story Time in Success and Failure, 148

Stress

Organization Stress and Consequences, 161
 Physical and Mental Stress/Consequences, 76
 Using Resources, 86
 Stress Overview, 76
 Taking Stress, 132

Stunts

Power a Stunt, 119, 122
 Power Stunts, 90–93
 Stunts overview, 75

Succeed, 116

(GM) dealing with extraordinary success, 146
 (GM) use Succeed at a Cost, 144
 Banked success, 121
 Succeed at a Cost, 116
 Succeed at a Deferred Cost, 121
 Succeed with Style, 116

Superheroic realism, 187**Taken Out, 134****Teamwork, 130****Threat Level, 121****Tie, 116****Trouble Aspect, 71****turn order, 114**

setting turn order in Conflicts, 129
 use a Fate Point to take the next turn, 120, 122

Unified Superhuman Command, 16**Villains Inc, 30****Weapon Ratings, 130****Buy Weapon and Armor Ratings, 91****Physique/Willpower Attribute Bonus and Weapon/Armor Ratings, 72****Weapon Ratings and Collateral Damage, 92**

Character Name: _____

Code Name: _____

Power Aspect

Blank box for Power Aspect

Attributes

_____	<u>Alertness</u>	_____	<u>Physique</u>	_____	<u>Willpower</u>
_____	<u>Athleticism</u>	_____	<u>Discernment</u>	_____	<u>Presence</u>

Skills

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Hero Aspect

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Resources

_____	<u>Reputation</u>	_____	<u>Wealth</u>	_____	<u>Contacts</u>
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Trouble Aspect

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Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Large blank box for Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

Background Aspect

Blank box for Background Aspect

Background Aspect

Blank box for Background Aspect



STARTING FATE POINTS

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Stress & Consequences

<u>Physical Stress</u>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Mental Stress</u>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

<u>Consequences</u>	_____	2	_____
	_____	4	_____
	_____	6	_____

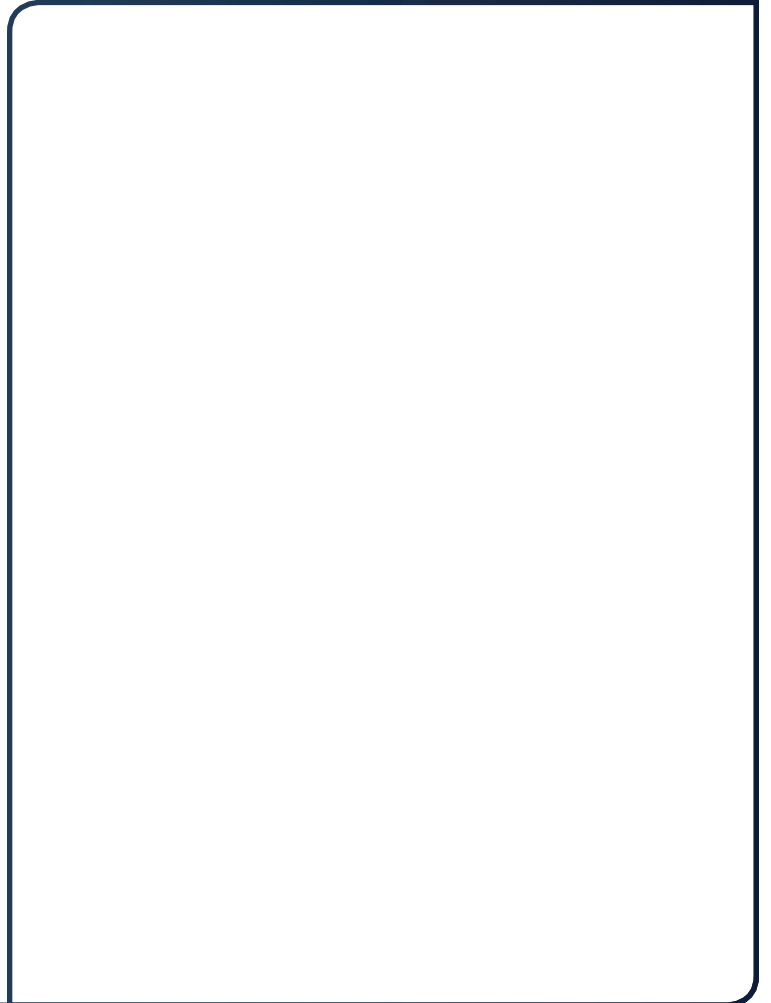
<u>Resource Stress</u>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Resource Consequence</u>	_____				

Character Profile

Breakthrough Powers:

Appearance & Personality:

History:



HERO NAME

SKILL PYRAMID

CAMPAIGN SFP

CAMPAIGN STARTING FATE POINTS:

MINUS STUNTS:

= STARTING FATE POINTS:

Attribute / Skills / Resources

+10	SUPREME						
+9	MYTHIC						
+8	LEGENDARY						
+7	EPIC						
+6	FANTASTIC						
+5	SUPERB						
+4	GREAT						
+3	GOOD						
+2	FAIR						
+1	AVERAGE						

Minor Milestones

Significant Milestones

Major Milestones

Organization Name: _____

Type: _____

Mission Statement

Background Aspect

Background Aspect

Organization Description

Organization Skills

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Organization Resources

_____ **Reputation** _____ **Wealth** _____ **Contacts**

Stress & Consequences

1 2 3 4 5

Consequences

_____ 2

_____ 4

_____ 6

Extreme

Organization Roster

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

General Notes

Campaign Name: _____

Campaign Setting

Blank area for Campaign Setting details.

Current Issues

Blank area for Current Issues.

Impending Issues

Blank area for Impending Issues.

Faces & Places

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Name:
Issues/Aspects:

Campaign Dials	
Power Class	
Skill Pyramid	
Starting Fate Points	

General Notes

Blank area for General Notes.

Scenario Name: _____

Scenario Problem: _____

Setup Stage

Game Aspects:

CONTINUING CONSEQUENCES

Inciting Incident

Story Questions

First Scene:

DESCRIPTION

SITUATION ASPECTS

NPC's

Additional Scene:

DESCRIPTION

SITUATION ASPECTS

NPC's

Additional Scene:

DESCRIPTION

SITUATION ASPECTS

NPC's

Additional Scene:

DESCRIPTION

SITUATION ASPECTS

NPC's

Scenario NPC's

Motivations

Goals

Main Characters

Supporting Characters

Scene Extras

