CORE GM REFERENCE

AGENDAS
- Make Halcyon City feel like a comic book
- Make the player characters' lives superheroic
- Play to find out what changes
- _____

ALWAYS SAY…
- What the principles demand
- What the rules demand
- What honesty demands
- What your prep demands
- _____

PRINCIPLES
- Describe like a comic book
- Address yourself to the heroes, not the players
- Make your move, but misdirect
- Make threats real
- Give up to fight another day
- Treat human life as meaningful
- Make supers seem outlandish, creative, and cool
- Give villains drives to feature their humanity
- Make adults seem childish and short-sighted
- Support people, but only conditionally
- Ask provocative questions and build on the answers
- Be a fan of the PCs
- Treat your NPCs like hammers: square peg, round hole
- Remind them of the generations that came before
- Think in the gutters between panels
- Sometimes, disclaim decision-making
- _____

MOVES
- Inflict a condition
- Take Influence over someone
- Bring them together
- Capture someone
- Put innocents in danger
- Show the costs of collateral damage
- Reveal the future, subtly or directly
- Announce between-panel threats
- Make them pay a price for victory
- Turn their move back on them
- Tell them the possible consequences and ask
- Tell them who they are or who they should be
- Bring an NPC to rash decisions and hard conclusions
- Activate the downsides of their abilities and relationships
- Make a playbook move
- Make a villain move
- After every move: "What do you do?"
- _____

WHEN YOU'RE NOT BUSY…
- Use splash panels
- Draw maps
- Fill in the backstory
- Use time jumps
- Share the spotlight
- Take breaks

PLAYBOOK MOVES

THE BEACON
- Draw attention to their inadequacies
- Praise their best traits
- Make them pay for their audacity
- Compare them to the others
- Play to their drives

THE BULL
- Endanger their love
- Bolster their rival
- Reveal dark secrets of their past
- Attack with someone just like them
- Swarm with mundane forces

THE DELINQUENT
- Put them in chains
- Give or take an audience
- Give them conditional love
- Show them the line
- Offer a helping hand

THE DOOMED
- Mark their doom track
- Offer a chance to further their cause
- Remind them of what they could lose
- Push them to the brink
- Offer temporary relief with a cost

THE JANUS
- Bring their obligations to bear
- Endanger someone from either life
- Make their lives cross over
- Put more obligations on them
- Take away their mask

THE LEGACY
- Remind them of their traditions
- Compare them to the past
- Make them answer their family's concerns
- Raise expectations on them
- Honor them

THE NOVA
- Remind them of past collateral damage
- Reveal a terrible truth of their powers
- Make their powers flare out of control
- Stoke their conditions
- Introduce threats only they can tackle

THE OUTSIDER
- Draw attention to their differences
- Make a request from home
- Introduce a monitor from home
- Accept and support them in their moments of weakness
- Provoke their beliefs and practices in tense situations

THE PROTÉGÉ
- Convey their mistakes
- Bestow wisdom, wanted or unwanted
- Hold up a mirror to them
- Give them exactly what they need at a cost
- Endanger their mentor

THE TRANSFORMED
- Reject them
- Show how they are feared or hated
- Attack them with unthinking hordes
- Remind them of what they've lost
- See their true self

1ST SESSION GOALS
- Help your players create their characters
- Prime Halcyon City with plenty of cool material and events to build on
- Show off who these characters are
- Go through most of the mechanics of the game (and definitely all the basic moves)
- Create an awesome first issue of your comic

DO THESE…
- Bring on the action
- Build on character creation
- Ask questions constantly
- Call out moves when they happen
- Offer moves when the players flinch
- Frame scenes with multiple characters
- Shift their Labels
- Display the adaptations to the superhuman
- Give them a chance to talk

CHARACTER CREATION
- Hand out the playbooks. Have each player take turns reading the description of each.
- Have each player pick a playbook.
- Ask questions during the process. Keep the players talking about their characters and their decisions.
- After they have chosen names, looks, abilities, starting labels, answers to backstory questions, moves, and any special pieces of their playbooks, go around and ask them to introduce their characters, one at a time. Ask questions all the while.
- Once all characters are introduced, ask them to read out loud their "When our team first came together…" section, without answering the questions. Then have them answer those questions one at a time. The recommended order of questions is: Bull * Nova * Outsider * Janus * Delinquent * Doomed * Legacy * Transformed * Protégé * Beacon
- Ask questions of them the whole time. Weave together their answers to paint a picture of the incident.
- Afterward, do relationships and Influence.

"WHEN OUR TEAM FIRST CAME TOGETHER…" QUESTIONS

Bull: We defeated a dangerous enemy. Who or what was it?

Nova: We destroyed our surroundings in the fight. Where was it? What did we destroy?

Outsider: We didn't trust each other at first, but that changed. How? Why?

Janus: We saved the life of someone important, either to the city, or to us. Who was it? Why are they important?

Delinquent: We totally broke some major rules to win the fight. What rules did we break? Whose rules were they?

Doomed: We paid a high cost for victory. What was it?

Legacy: All things considered, we did well and impressed an established hero. Who was it?

Transformed: We drew attention and ire from plenty during the fight. One important person in particular now hates and fears us. Who is it?

Protégé: We stuck together after all was said and done. Why? How'd we keep in contact?

Beacon: We found signs that this incident was just the start of something bigger. What were the signs?

HOW TO MAKE A VILLAIN

Follow these steps to set up a villain, whether making one from scratch or writing up an existing character as a villain:

Choose a name and generation

Choose a drive

Choose one to five villain moves

Choose one to five conditions

VILLAIN NAMES

Choose a name that's fun and exciting to you, and that signals the generation of the villain.

Gold: Goofy, fun, light-hearted names

Silver: Grandiose, cosmic, epic names

Bronze: Down-to-earth, simple, catchy names

Modern: Meme-worthy, "unique," clever names

When it's appropriate, pick a real name for the villain, too.

VILLAIN DRIVES

Give your villain a drive, a purpose or goal that leads them to action, in the form of a statement:

"To _____." Make your drives point at the villain's underlying humanity. Make the drives comprehensible and empathetic whenever possible.

VILLAIN MOVES

Create three or so villain moves, things the villain does, both in and out of fights. Make them descriptive and interesting, active and direct.

CONDITIONS

Choose one to five conditions for the villain. You choose from the PC's regular conditions list: Afraid, Angry, Guilty, Hopeless, and Insecure. The more conditions you give a villain, the greater their capacity to stay in the fight, and the more dangerous they'll be.

- 1 condition: Barely a threat
- 2 conditions: A bit of a fight
- 3 conditions: A threatening villain
- 4 conditions: A dangerous villain
- 5 conditions: A true arch-villain

You can always adjust a villain's danger and longevity by giving them more conditions or taking away conditions.

VILLAINS IN A FIGHT

Here are the core guidelines that villains follow in fights:

- When a villain gets hit hard, by trading blows or in other situations, they mark a condition as appropriate.
- When a villain marks a condition, they make a move from the condition moves list immediately, before the PCs act again.
- When you need to say what the villain does next, look to your GM moves, their villain moves, and the condition moves.
- When a villain needs to mark a condition but can't, they are definitively defeated.
- Villains can flee or give up long before all their conditions are filled—don't think they have to fight to the bitter end.
- Villains, and NPCs in general, always try to clear conditions—they always choose to open up after a PC's successful comfort or support move.

CONDITION MOVES

These are GM moves for villains to make immediately after they've marked a condition, and any time you'd make a GM move after that.

AFRAID

- Hide out of harm's way
- Flee from danger or difficulty
- Lash out without thought at a threat
- Plead for mercy
- Throw up blocks and walls

ANGRY

- Vent through unthinking violence
- Break the environment
- Shut down conversation
- Lash out at any vulnerability
- Escalate the situation dangerously

GUILTY

- Seek forgiveness
- Sacrifice anything or everything for redemption
- Turn to the unthinkable
- Implicate others in guilt
- Reveal the nature of their drive

HOPELESS

- Give up without a fight
- Burn down the world around them
- Seek any light in the dark
- Undermine others' beliefs
- Veer toward drastic and terrible action

INSECURE

- Double down on broken plans or ideas
- Follow the lead of someone else
- Doubt and question their own allies and plans
- Admit wrongful action
- Recede into the background

SUPER NAMES

Anarch, The Antediluvian, The August, The Duke of Bone, Captain Shadow, Cygnus, Doctor Infinity, Dread Queen, Dream Tiger, Emerald Lance, Gehenna, Ghostheart, Glacier, Gravestone, Handyman, Hashtag, Hourglass, Kingfisher, Knuckleduster, The Lawman, Mirror Beast, Mr. Everywhere, Myrmidon, Mystic Mistress, Panthalassa the Sea-Sovereign, Quill, Superbia, Photovore, Rime, Rockhammer, Scarlet Songbird, Silent Storm, The Spider, Starlyte, Steel Mask, Vixxis the Timebreaker, Warpstar, Vortex, Zero Hour

REAL NAMES

Alexander, Amrit, Betty, Brandon, Chadwick, Chun, Damon, Dipali, Dustin, Faith, Hayley, Ida, Imran, Ismael, Josefina, Joy, Juanita, Julius, Jun, King, Kyo, Leticia, Lina, Luz, Marcos, Nadine, Orlando, Patricia, Paul, Prasad, Ren, Rochelle, Salman, Salvador, Sita, Sushila, Santiago, Tyler, Vicky, Yi, Yuki

Amjad, Ash, Bass, Benitez, El-Amin, Fernandez, Chan, Corbitt, Dumas, Gallagher, Hartwell, Espinoza, Kane, Li, Locklear, McCloud, Mireles, Murray, Parr, Pasternak, Rayburn, Reaves, Serrano, Starling, Treadwell, Trujillo, Tyson, Wong, Woodcomb, Zheng

SAMPLE DRIVES

- To bring justice to the guilty
- To create and enforce order
- To defend those like them
- To defeat a hated archenemy
- To demand attention and focus
- To destroy threats to peace
- To free those in chains
- To obtain massive wealth
- To overturn an unjust system
- To protect their home and loved ones
- To prove the failures of corrupt heroes
- To rally and inspire others to action
- To seize control of threats and dangers
- To take vengeance for past wrongs
- To uncover the secrets of the world

SAMPLE VILLAIN MOVES

- Summon robotic minions
- Open a gate to another dimension/the future
- Create a weapon or bomb
- Hide behind a lieutenant
- Threaten innocents
- Explain their true purpose
- Implicate or tarnish heroes
- Steal away something valuable
- Transform into a more dangerous form
- Reveal the nature of a trap

VILLAIN RECORD SHEET

NAME

DRIVE

CONDITIONS
- ❑ Afraid
- ❑ Angry
- ❑ Guilty
- ❑ Insecure
- ❑ Hopeless

MOVES
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DESCRIPTION
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NAME

DRIVE

CONDITIONS
- ❑ Afraid
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MOVES
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DESCRIPTION
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NAME

DRIVE

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MOVES
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DESCRIPTION
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NAME

DRIVE

CONDITIONS
- ❑ Afraid
- ❑ Angry
- ❑ Guilty
- ❑ Insecure
- ❑ Hopeless

MOVES
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DESCRIPTION
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HOOKS

PAIRING: DANGER VS FREAK

Hook Impulse - Danger: To remind them of collateral damage

Hook Impulse - Freak: To play up their strangeness and capabilities

PAIRING: DANGER VS MUNDANE

Hook Impulse - Danger: To mistrust and provoke

Hook Impulse - Mundane: To interrupt dangerous situations

PAIRING: DANGER VS SAVIOR

Hook Impulse - Danger: To push towards a fight

Hook Impulse - Savior: To push away from a straight fight, towards saving lives

PAIRING: DANGER VS SUPERIOR

Hook Impulse - Danger: To infuriate and provoke

Hook Impulse - Superior: To point out failures of control and planning

PAIRING: FREAK VS MUNDANE

Hook Impulse - Freak: To isolate and drive away

Hook Impulse - Mundane: To make normal

PAIRING: FREAK VS SAVIOR

Hook Impulse - Freak: To praise immense power and abilities

Hook Impulse - Savior: To place responsibility

PAIRING: FREAK VS SUPERIOR

Hook Impulse - Freak: To call out the flaws of strangeness

Hook Impulse - Superior: To praise the power and ability of strangeness

PAIRING: MUNDANE VS SAVIOR

Hook Impulse - Mundane: To ask for empathy and mercy

Hook Impulse - Savior: To demand defense and protection for innocents

PAIRING: MUNDANE VS SUPERIOR

Hook Impulse - Mundane: To require compromise for connection

Hook Impulse - Superior: To detach and distance from others

PAIRING: SAVIOR VS SUPERIOR

Hook Impulse - Savior: To highlight impending threats

Hook Impulse - Superior: To present opportunities for action

ARCS

To build an arc, follow these steps:
- Choose an arc type
- Build out the cast
- Fill in the phases
- Create custom moves (optional)
- Give it a name and description

ARC TYPES

There are 5 kinds of arc you could make:
- Corruption - something good, positive, or helpful is made dangerous and threatening
- Invasion - threats and enemies fight their way into control
- Restriction - those with power place constraints on those without
- Destruction - threats and enemies break and destroy what stands in their way
- Restoration - the heroes push to repair what damage has been done

CORRUPTION

CORRUPTION SUBTYPES:
- Falling Hero (impulse: to commit to a rigid code of ethics)
- Greedy Power (impulse: to wield power selfishly)
- Stolen Innocence (impulse: to make terrible decisions)
- Twisted Truth (impulse: to spin lies)
- Traitorous Ally (impulse: to betray)

CORRUPTION MOVES:
- Pontificate about the true nature of things
- Present enticing gifts with strings
- Offer a temporary alliance
- Twist the narrative publicly
- Make threats, subtle or not

INVASION

INVASION SUBTYPES:
- Aliens (impulse: to subvert or eliminate those in power)
- Criminals (impulse: to seize territory at any cost)
- Outsiders (impulse: to subvert or eliminate those without power)
- Time travelers (impulse: to control the actions of predecessors)
- Spies (impulse: to take control of valuable resources)

INVASION MOVES:
- Pour forth a horde of soldiers
- Directly assault a stronghold
- Secretly infiltrate a stronghold
- Demand submission
- Capture innocents

RESTRICTION

RESTRICTION SUBTYPES:
- Law (impulse: to outlaw and restrict)
- Military (impulse: to crack down on rampant elements)
- Agents (impulse: to control how others use power)
- Heroes (impulse: to uphold tradition)
- Corporations (impulse: to protect their interests from any threat)

RESTRICTION MOVES:
- Deploy surprising strength and force
- Offer a warning
- Interfere in heroic situations
- Create new rules and restrictions
- Reward obedience

DESTRUCTION

DESTRUCTION SUBTYPES:
- Defenders of the City (impulse: to draw out defenders with danger)
- Item of Power (impulse: to smash and grab)
- Prison (impulse: to free the restrained)
- Authorities of the City (impulse: to break tradition)
- Dangers to the City (impulse: to hunt and pursue doggedly)

DESTRUCTION MOVES:
- Leave a trail of rubble and fires
- Endanger innocents with collateral damage
- Break the bindings on a danger
- Destroy a public landmark
- Explain the necessity for destruction

RESTORATION

RESTORATION SUBTYPES:
- Redemption (impulse: to draw into the light)
- Reclamation (impulse: to repel through force and battle)
- Rebellion (impulse: to subvert through chaos and mayhem)
- Reconstruction (impulse: to rebuild despite danger)

RESTORATION MOVES:
- Reveal a rebuilt threat
- Uncover an old secret
- Rally the people to a cause
- Destroy the forces in power
- Share a vision of the future

HOOK RECORD SHEET

Label:_____ **VS** Label:_____
Hook:_____   Hook:_____

Label:_____ **VS** Label:_____
Hook:_____   Hook:_____

Label:_____ **VS** Label:_____
Hook:_____   Hook:_____

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Label:_____ **VS** Label:_____
Hook:_____   Hook:_____

Label:_____ **VS** Label:_____
Hook:_____   Hook:_____

ARC RECORD SHEET

Arc Type: _____

Cast: _____

Phase 1: _____

Phase 2: _____

Phase 3: _____

Description: _____
_____

Custom Moves: _____
_____

Arc Type: _____

Cast: _____

Phase 1: _____

Phase 2: _____

Phase 3: _____

Description: _____
_____

Custom Moves: _____
_____