FireBlade Publications Presents

THE BRAND X HERO'S GUIDE

Men and Supermen™

The Owner's Manual for the Hero Kind

Foreword

This is the campaign book for the **Men and Supermen** Super Hero Role-Playing Game**.** If you like this, you'll love the game. **Men and Supermen** should be available where you found the *Hero's Guide*.

If you have comments or suggestions, you can reach me via the web site at http://www.menandsupermen.com/

The **Brand X Hero's Guide** is freeware.

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Welcome Home

Welcome to the world of **Men and Supermen**. As you travel through the world of super-powered fantasy, there is one rule you should keep in mind:

There are **no** rules.

Big Words

So, what's this book about? The rest of the rules tell you how to create a superhero, what your numbers mean, and the rest of that shit. This book gives you some pointers on how to play the damn game.

Consider this a primer on the physics, sociology, and politics of a world with super heroes. This is a world where anything can happen, and, sooner or later, everything does.

Men and Supermen

The *Hero's Guide* was designed expressly for the *Men and Supermen* superhero role-playing game. If you aren't playing *Men and Supermen*, you may still find a lot of this information useful.

Artists

Black Cat and Tween by Rory Keating.

Torm, Goggles, Cyber, and Stalker by Thor Brickman.

Assumed Cosmology

These rules detail a fairly complete, if general, cosmology. There are fictional planets, civilizations, and organizations. There are other universes and multiverses, and the astral planes. There are other realities and higher dimensions. There are time lines, localized time lines, and there is time travel and time entropy, as well as the Astral, Universal, and the Dimensional Matrices.

I have included all of these because it is hard to create a game system without also making assumptions about the world surrounding the rules. At the same time, I have attempted to make it simple for you to change these assumptions. As I said in the introduction to the game, **Men and Supermen** is a *modular* game system. If you wish to detail a different cosmology, do so. You are the owner, publisher, editor, writers, and artists of your comic company.

Use whichever parts of this book you desire in your campaign. Replace everything else. Expand on it however you feel necessary. There will be two more supplements to expand on the framework given in the Editor's section of the *Hero's Guide*: The *Brand X Travel Guide*, and the *Brand X Guide to Time*.

Above all else, to thine own self be true.

Contents

Bibliography and Sources

If you want to know what we were thinking about during the playtesting of this game, here are some clues. The first list is a *Role-Playing Bibliography*, a list of adventures and articles that we found useful while playing and creating **Men and Supermen**. The second is a list of the comics, movies, and books that have influenced the things I want **Men and Supermen** to do.

Role-Playing Bibliography

Ancient and Modern: <u>White Dwarf</u> Magazine 80-81, August & September, Graeme Staplehurst. This is a wild first adventure for experienced players, if you wish to create a *darker*, *mystical* campaign.

Beyond the Rule Book: <u>Dragon</u> Magazine, July 1983, Lew Pulsipher. This article was written for the prospective fantasy game referee. Mr. Pulsipher's tips apply to any game. If you've never refereed a role-playing game before, I recommend reading this article.

Creeks and Crawdads: Martin M. Costa, Crustacean Games. Just in case you're taking yourself too seriously. *The* Beer and Pretzels Role-Playing Game™. The most realistic post-holocaust game on the market. Nobody lives.

Heroes are Made Like This!: <u>Dragon</u> Magazine #135, August 1988, Jerold M. Stratton. Players need to remember that the game world differs from the real world in important ways. And sometimes, they also need to be reminded that their characters are not just collections of numbers.

One From the H.A.R.T: <u>Space Gamer</u> #70, July/August 1984, Gregg Sharp. This is an easy to run, low-powered introductory adventure. Give the characters their powers from the exploding truck. Use ROC as the major crime organization. Or, make up your own.

Square Pegs and Round Holes: <u>Dragon</u> Magazine #165, January 1991, Jerold M. Stratton. A good adventure is hard to find. Don't throw one out just because it's not written for your game system or your world.

Stayin' Alive: <u>Dragon</u> Magazine, November 1986, John J. Terra. This article was written for Espionage game players, but the basic information is useful for any player who wants a surviving character.

United States v. the Lizard Thing: <u>White Wolf</u> Magazine #31, May/June 1992, Steven Long. This *very* informative article covers questions of constitutional law in a world of super powers. *Highly* recommended.

Comics Today

Just take a look at where comics are going today. We're finally getting beyond the setbacks of the fifties, and delving into some real hard-core shit.

Independent companies are sprouting up everywhere, and even the mainstream companies occasionally take a few chances with non-standard ideas.

So start getting into this stuff! Robot rights? Space-Mutant Rights? Abortion? Sexism? Racism? New World Language Barriers? You won't solve the problems of the world playing a role-playing game over beer and pizza, but you will have a damn good time.

You know, you can do whatever you want with this game system. You want a game where men run around like testosterone-crazed idiots, and women have large breast sizes and no mental capacity? Hey, it's your world. But…

Take a look at what can *really* be done in the superhero genre. Take a look at Grant Morrison's **Doom Patrol**, or Perez's **Wonder Woman**. And for God's sake, take a look at some of the independents out there.

Volturnus Series: TSR Inc., SF0-SF2. This is a well-crafted epic space adventure. With only a little work, you can use it to brilliant effect in your Men and Supermen campaign. See *Square Pegs and Round Holes.*

When GMs Go Bad: <u>Dragon</u> Magazine #134, July 1988, Sherri Gilbert. As a game referee, you have to remember to pace yourself. Of all the players, you alone have the power to make or break the night's game. And the mistakes you make can carry over from night to night. Heavy load, eh?

There is a <u>What's New</u> collection now, covering the earlier issues. It doesn't include the superhero strip. Volume 2, perhaps?

What's New: <u>Dragon</u> Magazine comic strip, Phil Foglio. This running strip gave a tongue-in-cheek representation of the failings and foibles of role-playing and role-players. See especially issue #75 for tips on role-playing superheroes. Still no *Sex and D & D*. Next issue, Scout's Honor!

Wings of the Valkyrie: ICE adventure for the Hero System. Very easy to modify for use with Men and Supermen. If you want an adventure with heavy moral overtones, this one's for you.

Fiction Bibliography

Action Comics Number 1: DC Comics, Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster. This is the one that started it all. If you can't locate a copy of Action Comics Number 1, DC has reprinted it a number of times. Look for an oversize comic called Famous First Edition. It features the entire issue. If you just want to look at the Superman part, it was reprinted in the *Superman Anthology* (see below).

All-Star Squadron, issues 17-33: DC Comics, Roy Thomas and Jerry Ordway. A good look at handling *large* super hero groups.

Brother from Another Planet: John Carpenter, A-Train Productions. An interesting twist on science fiction.

Doom Patrol, 1968-1971: DC Comics, Arnold Drake and Bruno Permiani. One of the first silver age superhero groups.

Doom Patrol, issues 19-?: DC Comics, Grant Morrison, various artists. Quintessential weirdness in the Doom Patrol style. If you're looking for something *different* to flavor your superhero campaign, take a look at the new Doom Patrol.

The Greatest American Hero: Stephen J. Cannell Television series, Robert Culp, Connie Selleca, William Katt. Want to see the Percent Control roll in action? Ralph Hinckley receives an incredibly powerful superhero suit from strange aliens, but loses the instruction booklet…

Highlander: Christopher Lambert, Roxanne Hart, Clancy Brown, Davis/Panzer production. I recommend checking out the European release. A very good look at the effects of immortality on a basically super-heroic character.

The Incredible Hulk: Bill Bixby, Lou Ferrigno. Great soap-opera in the superhero tradition.

Justice League International: DC Comics, Giffen and DeMatteis. Super heroes behind the scenes. Take a look especially at the first couple of issues. DC has published a trade paperback, reprinting them.

Last Son of Krypton and **Miracle Monday:** Elliot S! Maggin, Warner Books. The author takes a good look at the most powerful hero of all, and how he views the world he protects.

The New Teen Titans, issues 1-18: DC Comics, George Perez and Marv Wolfman. The interactions between the DC Universe sidekicks and other young heroes was well-handled during this run of the New Teen Titans.

The Judas Contract has been reprinted in a trade paperback.

Nightstalker: Darrin Mcgavin, Carl Rigby. This television series looked at the darker side of a large city, in a world where the supernatural exists, and is commonplace.

Origins of Marvel Comics: Stan Lee, Simon and Schuster. This collection describes the classic origins of Marvel's most famous heroes.

Remington Steele: Pierce Brosnan, Stephanie Zimbalist, Doris Roberts, Butler and Gleason production. This television show is a first-rate course in how to use ideas from other sources.

Robin Hood: Errol Flynn. Need I say more?

Sherlock Holmes, and **The Return of Sherlock Holmes:** Jeremy Brett, Edward Hardwicke, Grenada Television. Sherlock Holmes would've made a great mad scientist, and Jeremy Brett plays the character wonderfully.

Six Million Dollar Man: Lee Majors, Richard Anderson, Martin E. Brooks. This television series mixed mystery, espionage, and science fiction. Find out what OSI would have done in a world without super heroes.

Son of Origins: Stan Lee, Simon and Schuster. This sequel to Origins of Marvel Comics describes the origins of more of Marvel's early heroes.

Superman: From the 30s to the 80s: Crown Publishers. A collection of Superman stories from Action Comics Number 1 through the forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies. Watch the *oldest* superhero grow in characterization and power.

Superman II was great as well. The combat scenes are <u>heroic</u>.

Superman, The Movie: Warner Bros., 1978, Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder, Gene Hackman. This was the movie that really started putting super heroes on the screen again. It's both kinds of movies: great special effects and great writing.

Watchmen: DC Comics limited series, Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons. Read it less for its strange plot devices than for its treatment of middle-aged super heroes.

The Perez issues are 1 through 61.

Wonder Woman: DC Comics, George Perez. Perez re-unites Wonder Woman with her Greek origin. Many of these stories are classic examples of how a superhero campaign can be run *without* violence.

Players

Creating Your Character

It seems to take a lot of dice rolling to create a character in **Men and Supermen**. In the original rules, there was very little dice rolling. Players basically chose the powers that they wanted. I quickly discovered that this method did not work very well with inexperienced players, or even with experienced players who were not familiar with superheroes. But if *you* want to create a superhero without any dice rolling, do it. Create a concept, and put the concept into writing using these rules. The only limitations are the limitations that you and your Editor place on the character.

*Remember, you'll only **need** to create a character **once**.* If that character dies, you may want to play a new character while waiting for the first character to come back to life (via *Fate Points*).

Why Are We Here?

In most role-playing games, the guiding force behind what the players have their characters do is *survival*. Besides role-playing and wandering about the world, there is a real possibility that the characters will simply not survive the game session.

In **Men and Supermen**, survival is no longer a problem. Unless the character does something really stupid or incredibly noble, the player may very well never need more than one character!

So take care when creating your character. Make sure you are going to have fun playing this character, because it may be the last character you ever play. Creating a character is time-consuming, but you won't be doing it very often.

Also, you'll need other crutches for your role-playing. Rather than worrying about survival, you'll need to worry about other people's survival. You'll also want to worry about your character's image to the public, (dark and dour, happy-go-lucky, noble) and you'll want to make sure your character acts the way you want your character to be perceived. You'll want to trade witty repartee with your partners, and more importantly, you'll want to match wits with your enemies and thrill to the danger of life as a superhero.

Savor a good enemy! Without the villains, your character couldn't be a hero. What good is an ultra-modern headquarters, a masterful character conception, and a spazzed-out costume if there's nobody to fight?

When you have more than one character to play, you can choose, at the beginning of each adventure/campaign, which character you wish to play for the duration. You'll need the Editor's approval, of course.

What if they scheduled a fight and no one came?

Or even worse, what if you're the only one who shows up in costume? Take a look at the **Watchmen** miniseries.

"Now, I know Darth Vader's really got you annoyed, but remember if you kill him then you'll be unemployed."

—Al Yankovic, **Yoda**

Retcons

Role-playing and comics have a lot in common, and role-playing super heroes even more so. When you first play **Men and Supermen**, your main concern will be having fun, and that is as it should be. After a while, however, you may decide to take a more serious attitude towards your role-playing. What to do with all those merely fun characters you've been playing? Do what <u>DC Comics</u> did. Take them and update them. *Retroactively* change the *continuity* of your character. Modify the characters' motivations, powers, and history. Make that campy crime-fighter *darker*. Take that female bombshell and turn her into a powerful statement on today's society. Rewrite your entire history, or just parts of it.

Connections

A Player's Work is Never Done

There's a lot of work in creating a real comic book character. Just ask any comic writer or artist. Months can sometimes go into the creation of just one series.

Obviously, you don't have months. You want to play *tonight*.

So, don't worry about it. Take *one* connection—your parents, a sibling, or a roommate—and write a short, one paragraph description of that connection.

Before the next time you play, do two more. Keep your Editor informed, of course. Eventually, you'll have all the connections you need.

Your character is not an island alone. Your character has friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors, most of whom are not super heroes. They have *real* jobs.

Your most important connections are your family. The game rules tell you whether your parents are still around, how many siblings you have, and how old they are. But they don't tell you what your parents, sisters, brothers, actually do, where they live, and what their names are. That's up to you.

You'll also want to write down the names of your friends and coworkers at your workplace.

Maybe a few teachers, some extra-heroic organizations. You know. Are you a member of the PTA? Do you attend college? When you *did* attend college, what were you a member of? Who was your most influential professor? If you were a vegetable, what kind would want you be?

A *Connections* description should include the following:

1. What the person is like.
2. What the person does.
3. Your relationship with the person.

That's really all you need. If you want to do more, well, do it!

Connections can be described with pictures instead of words. People can be described with a simple picture showing them doing something. Events can be described in comic-book format.

Sample Connections:

Mark Wattell (Father): Mark Wattell is a machinist at Westinghouse. He is a hard-working man who wants the best for his family. My decision to drive stock cars has strained our father-daughter relationship.

James Maxwell (Close Friend): James is a physicist at the University of Waterloo. His intellect often gets in the way of his emotions. We have dated occasionally, but I don't like to go out with him. I think that sometimes he still wants to go out with me.

Obtuse Connections

The best connections are the obtuse connections between two or more heroes that may *never* be discovered. It has been shown that, on the average, every person in the United States is no more than 5 friends away from any other person in the United States.

When you read comics, you'll see these obtuse connections all over the place. Fanboys thrive on them. Sometimes it'll be a connection to a long-canceled comic. Sometimes it'll be a connection to one of the writers of the comic, or to the main characters of another company's comic!

When you decide to make a connection like this, be creative. Talk to some of the other players, and make connections between your character and their characters.

Personality

Your character is just a piece of paper. But it doesn't have to be. You have the power to make your character live and breathe. On your list of connections, write down your character's personality. There's no need to make it too detailed. One paragraph will suffice. You'll be expanding the description as you play the game.

When you create your character's personality, keep in mind your character's powers and origin.

Origin

How did your character gain super powers? Discuss this with your Editor. You might want to start the game without powers, playing through your origin in the first game session. If you do start the game with powers, figure out why, where, and how you received them. Your character may not know, but you should. Your origin should, somehow, take into account all of your powers.

A friend of a friend of Professor Star knows the Enforcer in her secret identity.

Your character is dating someone whose ex-boyfriend once dated Molly Freebarten, alias the hero Dark Shadow.

In college, you joined the USD branch of Eta Phi Eta. In your senior year, you lost the Eta Phi Eta National election to someone from Cornell. You may never find out that he has become your best friend in the super-biz, Saint Squid, the Octo-Man.

Now *that's* a connection to write home about.

Remember that origins don't have to be extremely precise. This is *comic book* science, not real science.

Past

Your origin doesn't just cover how your character's *powers* were gained. It covers all the salient chapters in your character's life. Think about your character's personality. What kind of upbringing might have formed this person? Write down one *specific event* from your character's childhood.

Look at your character's skills and knowledge, and take these into account also. Does your character have a college degree? From what college? Does your character remain in touch with college friends and professors? If so, name one of each. Don't worry about writing a description yet. You can do that later.

Present

What is your character's occupation? Make sure you take your character's income into account. Now, does your character like this occupation? Is it fulfilling? What kind of co-workers are there? Name one. What kind of superiors? Name a superior, also.

Name one influential relative, or friend of the family. Often, an aunt or uncle fits in best here.

Who is your character's best friend? Who does your character hang out with when not adventuring or working? Name one person.

Now, how were your character's powers received? At birth? How did this affect your character's upbringing? If the powers were recently received, how did this affect your character's life, relationship with family and friends, job, and leisure time?

Future

Finally, what are your character's aspirations? What do you want to be doing in 5, 10, 20, or even 40 years?

When you know the answers to these questions, you will find it much easier to role-play and have even more fun. You will be much more involved with your character, and should even be able to give your Editor ideas for subplots to liven up the main adventures.

The Ten Part Plan to a Great Origin

1. Personality
2. Favorite Activities
3. Occupation
   a) Co-workers
   b) Superior
4. Influential Relative
5. Best Friend
6. Influential Childhood Event
7. Old Friend
8. Affiliations
   a) Hometown (Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, Street Gang, etc.)
   b) High School (Sports, Band, Clubs, etc.)
   c) College (Sports, Fraternities, Sororities, Clubs, etc.)
   d) Professional (Societies, Unions)
   e) Recreational (Health Clubs, Neighborhood Sports, etc.)
9. Effects of Gaining Powers on the Character's Life
10. Motivations and Aspirations

Theme Groups

Many superhero groups are simply random collections of super heroes. This is fun, and a good way of doing things. However, it isn't the *only* way. Superhero groups can have a theme. You'll need to discuss this with the rest of the players to construct a real theme.

Everyone might have to take a Knowledge Score in some form of music, and everyone in the group is in a band. You might decide that everyone should create heroes with *Animal*-based powers, Elemental powers, or Cosmic powers, and work that theme into your origin. Or, you might choose a religious pantheon of legend and play members of that pantheon.

The *Lugnuts*, mentioned in the credits, were a Jazz/Hard Rock/Anti-Pop band who ended up getting in trouble with ROC.

What the Ability Scores Mean

The range of ability scores in the general population is 6 to 15 for the 3d6 abilities, and 8 to 20 for the 4d6 abilities/attributes. This gives you an idea of how horrible and great your 3d6 and 4d6 scores are. Without even having any powers or weaknesses, your abilities may be beyond human norms.

3d6 Score	Description	4d6 Score
1-2	inhumanly low	1-3
3	partially handicapped	4
4	horrible	5-6
5-6	very low	7-8
7-8	low	9-10
9	low average	11-12
10-11	average	13-15
12-13	good	16-18
14-15	very good	19-20
16-18	specially trained, outstanding	21-24
19-20	the best	25-28

What Combat Means

This combat system was designed to simulate comic book combat. First, there is a random chance to hit your opponent, depending on your skill vs. their ability to dodge. Second, you have both Damage Points (real flesh) and Virtual Damage Points (no actual loss of flesh).

You still know how powerful the attack was. If you had 70 VP, and the attack took 65 away, your character *knows* that another attack like that will kill. It shows in your thought balloon.

When your opponent's Attack Score is greater than or equal to your Defense Score, you have been hit. However, if no actual Damage Points were lost, the attack didn't *really* hit. Your opponent's fist just grazed your stomach, or the sword just barely sliced your costume, or the fire blast singed the hair on your finely shaved face, but missed actually hitting *you*.

In the same way, when you lose DP, the attack hit, and it hurt. Even if you have 30 DP, and you only lose 1 point, you feel that point. Your opponent's fist has left a nasty welt, or the sword has sliced into your flesh, or the fire blast has left burns on your body.

When you go below 0 DP, you're *really* hurt. You may very well have broken bones or damaged organs. You don't care, though, because unless you're a real masochist, you're unconscious.

Murphy's Laws of Combat

1. If the enemy is in range, so are you.
2. Don't look conspicuous. It draws fire.
3. Try to look unimportant. They might be low on ammo.
4. The enemy invariable attacks on two occasions. When you're ready for them. And when you're not ready for them.
5. Teamwork is essential. It gives them someone else to shoot at.
6. A sucking chest wound is Nature's way of telling you to slow down.
7. Never draw fire. It irritates everyone around you.
8. Never share a foxhole with anyone braver than yourself.
9. When you have secured an area, don't forget to tell the enemy.
10. Never forget that your weapons are made by the lowest bidder.

Exposure

Men and Supermen Editing Points are based on the concept that your character will grow more if more people read your comic. That's why you get Editing Points for the amount of time you spend playing your character. A character who appears in two comic books, a couple of limited series, an animated cartoon on Saturdays, and a feature film will have more skills and background than a character who just appears once in the middle of another group's comic. No matter what the characters actually *do*.

Characters can also receive Editing Points for game work their players do. A player can draw a group photo of the supergroup, or get together with other players and write a history of the group.

The Editor determines how many Editing Points are received. Divide by the number of characters who get Editing Points. Each character gets this many Editing Points. The character(s) of the player(s) who did the work will receive double the Editing Points. So, if all players worked on it, the effective Editing Points for the work is doubled.

Example: Exposing Professor Star

Professor Star's player writes a book report on "The Penguin Abridged History of Time," as if Professor Star had written it in 3rd grade. The book report is two pages. That makes 2 Editing Points. It was written by Professor Star, so that's times 1.1, and the Editor accepts it as existing in the campaign world, so that's times 1.4. The Editor gives it a usefulness multiplier of 1, the standard. So, the total Editing Points are 2.64. There are 4 players in the current game adventure, so the Training Points are divided by 4, for .76 Editing

No matter who does the work, everybody who plays that adventure gets Editing Points. Why? Anything that increases the exposure of one member of the group increases the exposure of the rest of the group.

In general, one page of double-spaced work is worth 1 Editing Point. Non-written work gives equivalent Editing Points as decided by the Editor.

There are multipliers applied to the Editing Points gained, depending on how useful the work is. If the work is done from the viewpoint of the player's character, there is a multiplier of 1.1. If the Editor accepts the work as existing in the campaign world, there is a multiplier of 1.4. The Editor can also apply a multiplier of from .5 to 1.5, depending on how useful the Editor perceives the work to be.

Points each. Because Professor Star's player wrote it, she gets double that, or 1.52 Editing Points.

While Professor Star's player was writing the book report, the players of the Rainbow Wizard, Seraph, and Michael Doolittle write a 10 page history of their group's origin, complete with art and newspaper clippings, as written by *Spy* Magazine. It is 10 pages, making it 10 Editing Points. The Editor accepts it as existing in the world, so that's times 1.4. The Editor gives it a usefulness rating of 1.2, bringing the total Editing Points to 16.8. Divide this by 4 (the number of players in the game), for 4.2 Editing Points each. The Rainbow Wizard, Seraph, and Michael Doolittle each get double that, since their players worked on it. They each get 8.4 Editing Points.

Using Your Editing Points

What do you do with Editing Points? You use them to build your character conception over time. Editing Points can be used to increase abilities, skills, and powers. Wizards can use them to make it easier to learn magic. And it can even be used for Knowledge at opportune moments, through the use of your *Discretionary Knowledge* points.

Editing Points can be used at any time. However, sometimes it takes a while for the Editing Points to take full effect. This will be most often true when editing an ability. When your character uses Editing Points to increase an ability, you should not do any calculations until the game session is over with. You can take advantage of the higher ability score when making saving throws vs. that ability, but your derived abilities will not increase until the game session is over. When you use Editing Points for a skill or a power, you will gain all benefits of the new skill level or power roll. However, if the new level/power roll indicates a change in Mass or a change in Damage Points, these changes will not take effect until the end of the game session.

You can also use Editing Points to directly affect an Action Roll. Each Editing Point gives you a bonus of 1 *directly to the roll*. Half of the Editing Points you use will be applied to Editing the skill for which the Action Roll was made. The other half are lost. (They still go to Experience, of course.)

Taking Control of Your Fate Points

The most common use of Fate Points is to bring a character back to life, or save a trapped character. But Fate Points aren't limited to just that. They can be used as an escape from any situation the character is in. If you really feel you need to use a Fate Point to escape from a dinner party with your girlfriend's parents, you can do it. You have to be careful, though. You start out with what seems like a lot of Fate Points, but you don't get very many

afterwards. Use your Fate Points as sparingly as possible, and only when the fate of your character hangs in the balance.

New Characters

What to Do When Your Character Dies

You mean, your character's *really* dead? Give yourself a pat on the back. You've done something most people are unable to do. You've killed a superhero. Now it really is time to create a new character.

As you are creating this new character, think about the world. You know a lot more about this world now than you did for your first character. Make this character *really* count. Talk with some other players. Maybe you can start out as a sidekick of a more experienced character. Of course, you'll eventually leave the nest, as you slowly accumulate as many press clippings as your mentor.

You can be related to another character. Get some concessions here. Every *famous* superhero has superhero relatives. It's a true status symbol. Playing the nephew of one of their characters should be worth at least a slice of pizza. *Maybe even two*.

You might even be the long-lost son of your old character. Now, you've sworn to avenge your father's death. Of course, you'll need a costume first…

Trying Something Different

A lot of times we unconsciously limit ourselves when we create new characters. We ignore the possibilities in playing characters from other cultures, playing characters of the opposite sex, and characters of a different sexual preference.

Of course, it's easy to fall into a stereotype when branching out like this. Use common sense, and if you have the time, do a little research at the library. Especially when playing a character from another culture, it helps to get a feel for the history of the culture.

Playing the Same Character in Different Worlds

In general, I don't recommend using the same character in different campaigns, under different Editors. There is precedence for this in comics, however: alternate worlds and imaginary stories. These are tools for examining different aspects of a character's personality and destiny.

If you do decide to use a character in more than one world, give the character a slightly (or greatly) different history, and examine how the character will have developed differently in a different world.

What is a Superhero?

Different people in the world will answer this question differently. As far as the public is concerned, a superhero is someone who runs around in a funny costume and isn't a supervillain. Some people *hate* superheroes. Some people practically *worship* them. Many don't even believe they exist. Make sure you ask your Editor how people in this world feel about super heroes.

I've done a lot,
God knows I've tried
to find the truth,
I've even lied;
But all I know is,
deep down inside
I'm bleeding.
And super heroes
come to feast,
to taste the flesh,
not yet deceased,
And all I know is
still the beast is feeding.
        —Rocky Horror

In general, this is what makes someone a superhero, as far as the public is concerned:

1. A funny costume.
2. Usually fights super villains; preferably on camera.
3. Occasionally fights crime.
4. Doesn't lie, steal, or cheat.
5. Probably doesn't pay taxes.

Notice that a superhero doesn't have to have superpowers. But anyone who has superpowers but isn't a superhero is generally going to be considered a super villain. Boo. Hiss.

Sleepers

What people really worry about are the *sleepers*—those who hide their powers and use them in *normal* professions. If someone uses their ability to see the future as a way to do slightly better than average on the stock market, who's going to know it's not because of their superior knowledge? Who's going to know if an Olympic runner is really super-powered? Who's going to know if the guy next door could wake up one night and blow the neighborhood away with an energy blast?

Some people really resent the existence of super heroes. Many a fine super villain came into being because someone felt that super heroes were taking the spotlight away from the common person.

Experienced Superheroes

Are you experienced? Have you ever been experienced? Some of the following paragraphs discuss things that your character probably should do in order to be a successful superhero. But your character's not necessarily going to know these things at first. Some are obvious, but others aren't so obvious. You may want to make a few mistakes as you start out, until you gain the experience that comes with a few hard knocks.

Secret Identities

Why do you need a secret identity? Ask Mick Jagger. It's nice to be able to get around without having people mob you. More importantly, you need to protect your friends. Many villains will have no compunction against taking revenge on those who are close to you. And, your secret identity gives you a chance to rest, and get away from a particularly nasty super villain.

Protecting Your Identity

In order to protect your identity, you need to change your appearance. The easiest way to do this is with a costume. Costumes serve two purposes. They hide your identity, and they make you easily recognizable. If you're slugging it out with a costumed villain on the streets of New York City, the police are much less likely to arrest the both of you if you are wearing a flashy,
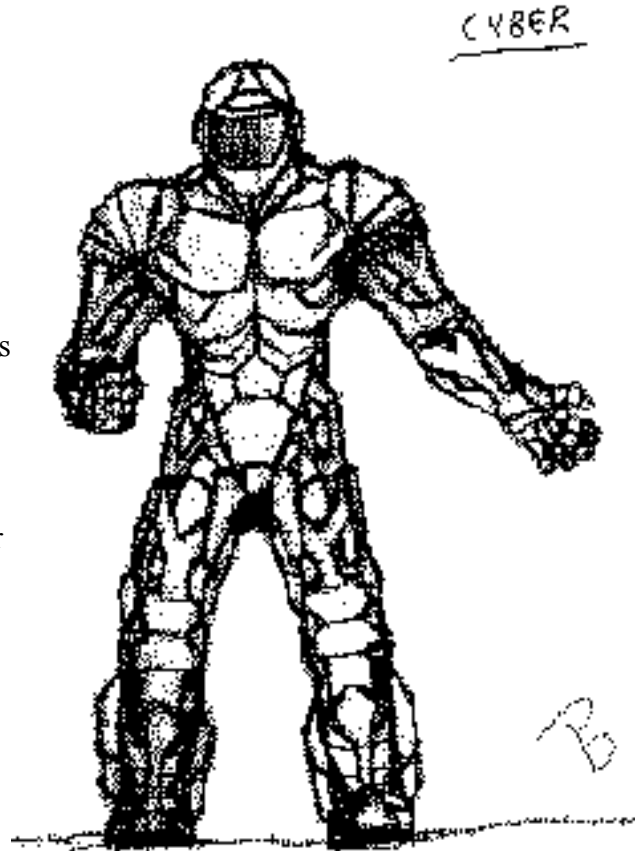
superhero costume. If they recognize who you are, they may even help you. Costumes also identify you to other heroes, making it easier to get their cooperation as well. Finally, your costume identifies you to the public. Can you imagine the panic that would result if an anonymous stranger suddenly burst into flame in their midst?

Designing Your Costume

Okay, so you need a costume. What makes your costume both hip *and* functional? First, you need a mask. Preferably a full face mask. If you hide your face, you've hidden most of what people use to identify you. Make sure you can breathe, speak, see, and hear through the mask.

If you really don't want to wear a full facial mask, use a Lone Ranger mask. It's not perfect, but it does cover the most important parts of the face.

It's probably best to stay away from capes, unless you can fly. Capes can be grabbed onto by villains. They get dirty. They're hard to sit down in, and unless you happened to be posing when someone takes your picture, they look pretty stupid, too.

Of course, if you can fly, there's nothing like a cape to add a bit of dash to your take-offs and landings. A cape can be the difference between the front page and the recipe section.

Hair is also important. If you have a distinctive hair style or color, hide this. Beards and mustaches can make masks nearly useless. If you use hair correctly, though, it can be invaluable in changing your appearance. Wigs, fake beards and mustaches can drastically change what you look like. Don't wear these aids as a superhero: in an all-out battle they are far too easy to lose. Instead, wear them in your secret identity.

Be careful. Both glasses and contacts have an annoying tendency to fall out in a real fight.

Glasses are great. If you wore glasses before you got your powers, keep them, even if you don't need them anymore. If you do still need them, use contacts or goggles in your superhero identity, and glasses in your normal life. Because of the stereotypes surrounding glasses, wearing glasses will change your appearance drastically.

The basic idea is to look different as a superhero. Anything you can do to change your appearance will help. If you have a power that can do this, use it. The effect must be permanent, and not dependent on concentration. It will not do to return to normal every time you are knocked out or surprised.

If you can, disguise your voice. A face mask that covers the mouth can muffle your voice slightly. If you are a good actor or impressionist, change your voice when switching identities. It helps to be more dramatic as a hero, anyway. Make sure that your new voice sounds convincing, and make sure that you always use it as a hero, and never in your secret identity.

If you use uncommon expressions (such as "Wild, man!" or "Righteous Ducks!") make it a point not to use these in your heroic identity. You may

even want to make up some unique expressions to use as a hero. Not only does this help keep your secret identity, it makes the parents of all your little fans a lot happier when you don't swear and cuss all the time.

Gloves, of course, are a necessary part of any costume. Fingerprints can identify almost anyone.

Remember, chance and human nature are on your side. Villains who know you as a hero will find it hard to connect you with your normal personality, unless you unwittingly help them. Likewise, the thought that you could be a superhero will never occur to your friends and relatives, unless you make them suspicious. It is up to you to make sure that others simply have no reason to make the connection between your two (or more) identities.

Be careful where you appear. You have one built in disadvantage. You cannot appear in both your secret identity and your heroic identity at the same time. Do not compound this problem by appearing as a hero everywhere you happen to be as a normal. You don't always have to change into costume to combat crime. Many powers can be used quietly and quickly, without arousing suspicion. Use a little imagination.

If you *can* appear in both identities at the same time, *do it*. A little *Generate Self* or *Speed* can go a long way towards protecting your identity.

Vacations are nothing but trouble for super heroes. Your friends are going to get *awfully* suspicious when Captain Avenger shows up in Tahiti at the same time that *you* do.

When friends and relatives get into trouble, and you must save them, try to do so surreptitiously. Not only will extended contact with people you know tend to make *them* suspicious, others will recognize that you are paying too much attention to certain people. Villains will be able to get at your friends and relatives without even knowing who you are!

If you can mislead people who are searching for your identity, do so. If you can fly, or run at high speeds, choose one part of the city, and often appear from that part of the city. People will come to think you live in that area. If you usually swoop down from the northeast when confronting villains, people will eventually come to assume that you live in the northeast part of the city. Tricks such as these are not hard to develop, and can be tailored to your skills and powers.

Who To Tell

Occasionally, you'll want to trust someone with your secret. Some people even have a right to know. Spouses should be told. So should your parents, if you are living at home. In both of these cases, even the decision to become a superhero should be made in consultation with those affected. These people will be strongly affected by the decision. They can be sources of support when times get tough.

If you don't tell your husband/wife or parents, you'd better be good at making excuses. You'll need to explain why you're consistently late for work or school, why you must cancel engagements at a moment's notice, and why you must disappear for hours at a time.

You will occasionally feel the need to tell a close friend, or a lover. You probably shouldn't. Not only must they be implicitly trustworthy *now*, they must be trustworthy *years* from now. And even if they *can* be trusted, they can still get themselves and you in a lot of trouble. If they feel you can rescue them, they might take more chances doing stupid things. Anyone who knows your secret identity will also try to contact you when they think you're needed. This can be useful, but when one of your enemies realizes that this person has the ability to contact you, both you and your friend will be in grave danger.

You might even feel it necessary to tell the secret to government agencies or other super heroes. Government agencies should never be told. Everything they know is on file somewhere, and anyone with the know-how can access that information. And, just because the agency is friendly now doesn't mean it will always be friendly. Leadership changes, legislation changes, and public opinion changes. Any one of these could put you and your loved ones in danger.

Super heroes, now, are another story. If you end up working with the same hero or group for a long period, you'll find it useful to be able to relax with these heroes as friends. You'll be able to invite them to your parties, and they will understand when you have to leave. They can cover for you; they know what you're going through.

Practice

Back in character, now, get to know your powers. Sure, as player you know exactly what powers you have. But your character doesn't. And even you probably aren't quite clear on the limits of these powers. Practice using your powers at maximum and at less than maximum potential. In the field, it is often best to use attacks at half-strength or less, depending on who is being fought. You are not going to make brownie points with anyone—press, public, or police—if everybody you fight ends up either dead or maimed for life. Real heroes rarely need to kill.

You'll also want to practice *tricks*—special uses for your powers and abilities that may not be very obvious. A trick may involve more than one skill or power. Keep on the lookout for new and interesting tricks. When you want to do something, but don't have the required power or skill, see if you can fake it with another skill or power.

Using telekinesis to fiddle around with the inside of a lock is a trick. Not only do you need to learn fine telekinetic manipulation, you must also learn lockpicking skills.

Group Techniques

At some point in your career, you'll become involved with a *group* of heroes. Groups should make a point of practicing *together*. This way, everyone is familiar with what everyone else's powers do. Groups should develop tricks, also. These tricks can combine the powers and skills of multiple heroes.

A *group* of heroes is also occasionally referred to as a team, a squad, or more often, a *pain* in the *butt*.

Special *maneuvers* should also be developed. Maneuvers are general, nonspecific plans for the group to follow. They work in many situations. By calling for *maneuver A*, or *maneuver B*, the leader can give instructions without informing the opposition. For example, if the group has entered combat with some villains in the downtown area at rush hour, the leader might tell the group to execute *maneuver A*. The group then knows to perform a series of feints and retreats designed to move the fight to a less populated area. This works much better than just yelling, "We gotta move the fight away from all these people!" thus reminding the villains that there are dozens of possible diversions and hostages just walking around.

Maneuvers should be limited to easily remembered, generally applicable instructions. Useful maneuvers can often be found by recalling what happened in a fight after the action is over. If someone must often repeat a set of instructions, those instructions are a candidate for a maneuver. Likewise, if a simple plan failed because the villains heard the leader yelling it out, that plan is also a candidate for a maneuver.

Group Leader

Choosing a leader is a very important part of being in a group. Every group of more than three heroes should have a leader to make quick decisions when speed is necessary. The basic candidate for a leader must be able to think fast under stress, be able to command, and have a good public presence.

Choosing a leader can often become a popularity contest between the players. In a sense, this is realistic, since that's also the way it works in real life. But even super heroes can die, and it'll often be because of a leader who couldn't lead, or who enforced an absolutely stupid plan.

The ability to think fast is most important. It won't hurt if your leader is also highly intelligent, but quick thinking comes first. The leader must be able to make important decisions at a moment's notice. If plan A goes wrong, should the group switch to plan B? If the group is attacked unexpectedly, are they going to be able to deal with the threat? If not, the group must get out immediately, and the leader must find the best means of retreat.

This falls on the *player's* shoulders. There's no game mechanic that forces players to follow another player's orders. Whoever plays the leader will need patience, persistence, and charisma.

Of course, all the intelligence and quick thinking in the world will do no good if no one follows the leader's orders. The leader should be able to command, either through respect or friendship. The group *must* be willing to follow the leader's orders.

Finally, the group will be interacting with the public, through innocents, officials, and the media. The leader will usually be the group member who communicates with the public, because people want to talk with the leader of a group more than they do the members. A leader with high charisma will greatly enhance these interactions. It is the leader who keeps the group on the good side of the local public, the media, and the government.

If you decide that *you* want to be leader, keep these things in mind. Do you want the responsibility of everyone's lives on your shoulders? Can you handle that responsibility?

Getting Into Your Role

So you've described your character, you know how the character thinks, what the character looks like, and whether or not the character prefers pistachio

over vanilla. But how do you really sink your teeth into the role you've created?

Some Cheap Tricks

There are a number of cheap tricks you can use to help immerse yourself into your role. All of these, by nature of being cheap, must be used with caution. They can become annoying and silly if used in excess.

One of the easiest, and closest to the genre, is the use of specific, **generic sayings**. In the old days (silver age), heroes and villains weren't allowed to swear on panel. So the writers developed all sorts of now classic swear replacements. You can do the same thing.

You can also develop some special **mannerisms** (tics). Maybe you have a tendency to pace the floor when speaking to the group. Or you always take off your glasses when you're worried, and wipe them clean. Any number of psychological mannerisms can be stolen for use with your character.

Accents can be used to differentiate your character from yourself. It doesn't even really matter if you don't get your accent right, though it helps to try. Go watch a movie that takes place in the area your character's from. If your character is a complete alien, devise a strange accent.

Clothes and other **props** can help get your character description across. If you're a generic detective, wear the generic detective hat. Maybe even a trench coat. If you're playing a scientist, bring a calculator, and fiddle with it during the adventure. If your character is a graduate of Cornell University, see if you can get your hands on a Cornell T-Shirt, and wear that.

Tie it All Together

Write your character's résumé. A résumé will give you a concise description of your character's history. It's a great thing to spring on an unsuspecting Editor, as well.

Plan Ahead

If you have time, try to think about what's going to happen in the next game session. You should have a pretty good idea of what's going to happen, from what happened last time. Then, think about how your character will respond if any of those possible situations arise. What will you do, and what will you say? You won't always be right about what's going to happen, but you will gain practice getting into character.

As often as not, you can do this while waiting for whoever's late to arrive. Unless, of course, you're the one who's late.

Take a Step Back

After your first adventure, and every couple of months afterwards, describe your character from the viewpoint of a non-player character you've met during the adventure. Try to be honest—describe what this person saw in your character. Describe how this person probably reacted to your character. Put yourself in the place of this person, and see how you would have reacted to your character and your character's actions.

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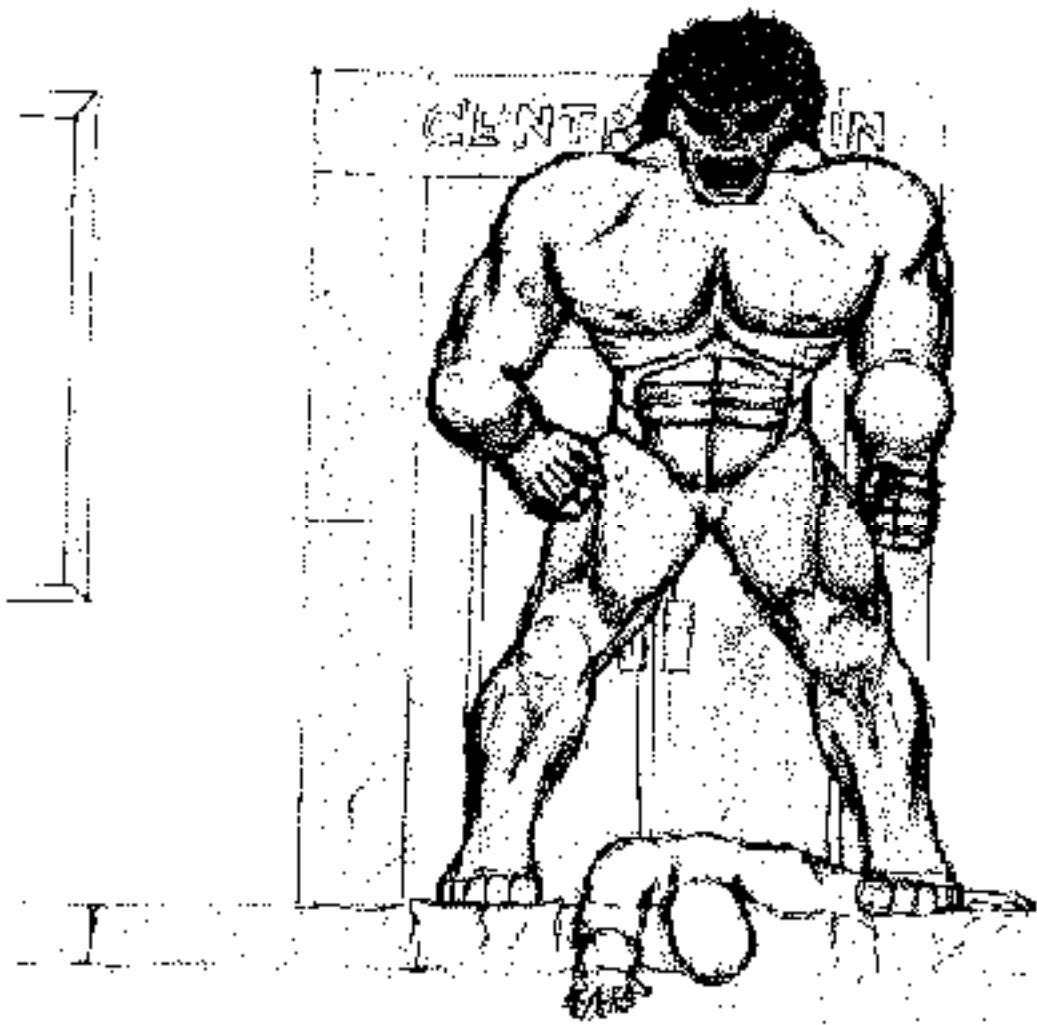
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Sniff the Game World Roses

When you start playing, find out about the campaign world. What other heroes and villains exist? Take special notice of the non-player character heroes and villains taken from comic books. They are likely to play a prominent role in the game world. Also, keep up-to-date on current events in the real world. Some of these may also occur in the game world, if your Editor is on the ball.

Also, find out about the differences between the real world and the game world. Are there lots of super-powered beings, or only a few? Is public opinion for super heroes favorable or unfavorable? Does the public even know that these beings exist? You will have much more fun and a greater chance of a surviving character, if you know what is going on around you.

The Real World

Most important of all, when you are playing the game, play as if it is real. If something seems strange to you, assume it truly *is* strange. Do not assume it's just an Editorial error or an artifact of the game rules. And never take events in the real world as reasons for events in the game world.

If you think the Editor misspoke or the game system broke down, point this out immediately. The Editor will tell you whether or not the event actually occurred.

The tendency to take real-world needs and actions as causes for game-world events can be much more subtle. One of the most obvious is the assumption that players need characters. This is, of course, true. But that's still no reason for you to accept a complete stranger into your group, immediately, and with no questions asked. Accept the new hero with caution. You won't want to divulge secret identities right away, for example.

You Are Co-Writer

Remember, you are the co-writer of your character's adventures. Your Editor has final say, but if you have ideas for something that should happen regarding your character or some of your connections, talk to your Editor about it.

Editors

Let There Be Fights!

Campaign World Possibilities

There are many possible worlds in which to base your campaign. The most common world is one that is like the real world in all ways except that super-powered beings exist. A variation on this makes the player characters the first (or the only) super-powered beings on Earth.

Just to give you some ideas, here's a list of other campaign possibilities:

Dictatorship: The world is under the control of an oppressive government, and the characters are (or will be) part of the rebellion.

Future: The game is set in Earth's future—a decade, a century, or even a millennium or two.

Literary Worlds: Your world can be based on the world(s) of another author, or a comic book company. The players might even play characters from that fiction.

Nuclear Holocaust: The world has been all but destroyed by a great world war. The characters might have actually lived through the holocaust, or the holocaust could have occurred sometime in the past.

Other Planets: The game is set on another planet, with different completely different cultures from Earth.

Paranoia: The world is similar to Earth's, except that super-powered beings are viewed with suspicion and hate. They are subversive, dangerous, and undeserving of basic human rights.

Past: There are many interesting times in our history where a game can be set. You might set your game in the dark ages, in the Civil War, one of the World Wars, the roaring twenties, the Cold War, or the civil rights movements of the fifties or sixties.

Space Travelers: The game can be set in an area of the galaxy where space travel is fairly common, and the player characters are a roving band of adventurers. Or, the player characters could be part of an organization, or even on a mission for a galactic government.

Time Travelers: Time Travel is hard to do, but it can be enormously fun. The player characters don't even have to have control over what times they

The world in which we live may not be the best of all possible worlds; it is certainly the most fantastic.

Aldous Huxley, At Sea

You can combine these. Set the game in Earth's future, where an evil dictatorship has just conquered Earth, and the characters hijack (or find) a spaceship, and try to lead a rebellion to free Earth.

Be careful, though. You don't want your word processor to explode.

You can change settings as the game goes on. Characters who are lost oscillating between times might find a way to re-orient themselves in a future Earth. Later, they decide to try to return to their normal time, and have a few more time-traveling adventures, before arriving in their normal time, Earth circa 1991, where super heroes are normal.

end up in—it might be completely random, due to some freakish accident. Or, they might be minions of the Time Patrol.

Comic Books: The characters are all comic-book characters, and some even know it. This can be both serious or silly, though it most often is silly. When characters know they're in a comic, they'll turn to the fourth wall and talk to the readers. They may attempt to take advantage of or threaten the writers and artists. They will certainly complain if they aren't drawn correctly.

Scripters don't usually exist in these worlds. That is, the characters have control over what they say, and some control over what they do. You can certainly experiment with a world where that isn't the case, of course.

Game World Scope

As you design your nations, worlds, solar systems, and galaxies, don't lose sight of the neighborhood. If the players know the street names near their headquarters; if they know their neighbor in the apartment across the hall; if they know the cop who patrols their block, or the clerks at the corner convenience store, they'll feel more satisfaction than knowing which alien races live within 350 light years.

Introduce next-door neighbors, police officers, mail deliverers, ice-cream truck and hot-truck operators, and twenty-four hour supermarkets to the characters. These non-player characters will do more to enhance your campaign than any government agencies or weirdo super villains.

Infixes

Heroes, villains, organizations, cities, and countries from other works of fiction that you steal to use in your campaign are infixes. You can choose infixes from comic book worlds, television shows, movies, and even reality.

Fictional cities and countries can cause even more problems. Especially in the main comic book worlds, even the writers have no exact idea where these made-up places exist. But your players are going to want to drive there from their base in Poughkeepsie.

See Grant Morrison's *Animal Man* or Marvel Comics' *She-Hulk* for comic-book characters who know they are in a comic. Also, any DC Comic with Ambush Bug in it.

"And when worlds collide," said George Pal to his bride, "I'm gonna give you some terrible thrills."

Rocky Horror

Where *does* someone go for a quick pizza at four in the morning after defeating three super villains, rescuing thirteen nuns and a dog, and saving the world twice?

How to Use Infixes

When combining heroes, villains, objects, and places from other sources, you can mold them into a cohesive whole using some very simple techniques. First, you need to ask yourself a few questions:

⟨Does the infix fit with your campaign?
⟨How should you modify the infix for your campaign?
⟨Do you want the infix in your campaign?

Does the Infix Fit? It is important to keep the style of the infix intact. If you are importing a comedic or serious infix, be sure not to lose the style that attracted you to the infix in the first place. Some campaigns will simply not be compatible with some infixes.

Also, some of the attractiveness of an infix is due to the world surrounding the infix. If Ultraman is the only super-powered creature in his world, will he be an interesting character in a world with dozens or hundreds of super-heroes?

How Should The Infix be Modified? You need to look at the totality of the infix. If you are importing a hero or villain, what is their origin? Does it include other heroes/villains? Do you include these in your campaign also? Some you will, some you won't. What about the network of events, objects, and people surrounding the infix? Sounds like a lot of work. There are three important ways to simplify using infixes.

Flow of Time in Comics
Fictionalizations of the Infix
Recycle Your Infixes

The Flow of Time in Comics: The major comic companies *compress* the passage of time in their worlds. So, you'll probably need to update any origins involved with the infix. Especially if they involve major world events. World War II origins will need to be updated to Vietnam, and Vietnam will need to be updated to South America or even the Persian Gulf.

Incidentally, compressing time is fine for comic books. It'd probably be better if they didn't, but since continuity isn't continuous across writers, there's no reason for it to be continuous across time. You, of course, are always going to be using the same players; and if you do use different players, you'll also be using different characters. Your players will expect that their meeting with the then-President of the United States in 1984 actually happened as they remember it. When you change continuity, you'll need to do so with the player's cooperation and consent. Compressing time just isn't going to be worth it.

There are those who say that using ideas from established fiction is, in some way, copping out. I don't agree. Certainly you may want to use your own ideas as the basis for your world, but even that is not necessary. And I firmly believe that a rationally determined conglomeration of fictional characters will strengthen and add fun to any super-hero campaign.

Besides, twenty years down the line, you'll want your character to have grown as much as you have.

Fictionalizations of the Infix: Another problem with playing in the real world are all the books, movies, and radio shows involving the infix. What to do? Well, there are a couple of easy ways of dealing with it. You can *delete* all offending fictionalizations from your campaign. The infix is real, and none of the movies or books were ever created. You can claim that the fictionalizations are really *documentaries* or *docudramas* based on the infix, or *diaries* created by the infix. You can *replace* the fictionalizations with another creation. You can make up the replacement yourself, or find something suitable from the real world, a creation that never became really successful here, but in the absence of its competition (the infix's fictionalizations), became successful in your campaign world.

Recycle Your Infixes: Every infix has a built-in network of friends, events, and objects. If you keep all of your infixes separate, your campaign planet will eventually have so many extraneous people and things that it'll reach critical density and implode into a black hole. You can prevent this by combining parts of the supporting cast surrounding different infixes. If two of your infixes are members of a different scientific research organization, combine the organizations into one, and the infixes are both members of the same one. After all, there's hardly room in the world for two benevolent research groups with unlimited funds. Two infixes with similar parents might be related. Basically, any similarities can be combined.

Tying It All Together: Your Campaign

It's a good idea to devote your first game session to a group pow-wow. You'll want to discuss the world with the players before they make up their characters. You'll want the players to discuss what kinds of characters they want to play.

Give the players fifteen to twenty minutes to scribble and discuss ideas for their characters, the world, and the campaign. If a player wants to play someone who can fly, they should write that down. If another player wants to play an Iraqi spy who's defected to the west, they should write that down. If they think it might be fun to play in a post-holocaust world, hey, write that down as well.

Once you've gotten a bunch of random ideas down, it's time to organize them. Start from the top and work down: the world, the group, and the characters.

The World: Remember that, as Editor, you'll be doing the lion's share of the work on the campaign world once the campaign starts. So don't hesitate to make things easier for yourself here. If you've already got a world that you want to use, use it. Replace the 'world creation' part of the night with a

'world description,' and describe that world. If you have two or three worlds you'd like to run, give the players a choice.

The Group: Now, the players will start homing in on the kind of campaign they want to play. They'll need to place limits on the kinds of powers the group will have, the kinds of skills, and the kinds of backgrounds. They might decide to play an all-animal group, or a group of spies.

The Characters: When the players start creating their characters, encourage them to work together. Encourage them to create characters that will interact in interesting ways. Encourage them to make *connections* (see the Players' section) between their characters, and to insert plot hooks for future adventures.

Divergence from the Real World

If you set your game on Earth, in the past or the present, your history will eventually diverge from what's really going on. Don't worry about it. See the discussion of *Time Travel* for ways of dealing with this. Use this divergence as a source for new adventures—things will remain similar to, but not exactly the same as, the real world.

~~Stealing~~ Discovering Adventure Ideas

As Editor, you should be well-versed in comic books and heroic literature. Always be alert for new adventure ideas. Movies, comics, novels, and even real life, are all full of adventure ideas.

Keep current with what is happening in the fields of science. Many advancements provide marvelous opportunities for Mad Scientists.

Commercial Adventures

Don't limit yourself just to the adventures published by FireBlade Publications. There are many other superhero role-playing games, and some of their adventures are very well written. A little work can easily fit them into your campaign.

You shouldn't even limit yourself to the superhero genre. Horror, espionage, detective, and even fantasy adventures can all be used by the versatile Editor.

Brave New Worlds

Very few, if any, comic book companies have *all* of their work authored by the same individual. Likewise, there's nothing wrong with having two or more Editors running campaigns within the same world. You'll need to compare notes occasionally, just to keep things in sync, but it's not really that hard.

In order to keep out of each other's hair, you may want to assign a different part of the world to each Editor. One can run an adventure in space, another can run a group of Soviet super heroes, and you can run a group of Jamaican super heroes.

Occasionally, you *will* want to do team-ups, bringing the different teams together for a huge, limited series adventure. And, your players will want their characters to *cross over* into another campaign in the same world. Besides being fun, this will give players a different perspective on their own characters. Powers, skills, and knowledge will all act slightly differently under different Editors.

All the Universes in the World

First, there was this egg, see. It was as big as the universe, but that wasn't very large, since the universe had barely formed…

Well, perhaps we should go *before* the egg.

First, there was this universe. It was an old universe, decrepit and dying. As it collapsed…

Well, perhaps we should start at the beginning of *that* universe.

First, there was this egg, see. It was as big as the universe, but that wasn't very large, since the universe had barely formed. It consisted of all the debris of the previous universe, which had collapsed in on itself. It is impossible to measure the age of that universe. All knowledge of that universe was lost in the primordial matter of the great, seething, egg.

The egg explodes, and as it expands, so does the new ultraverse. This ultraverse consists of universes within multiverses, and is a single time stream.

Which Universe?

There are many universes within this multiverse. All universes within the same multiverse have similar physical laws. The laws of nature may be slightly different, but each universe will be familiar to visitors from neighboring universes. Many times, the differences will be completely unnoticeable. In other universes within *our* multiverse for example, the speed of light might be retarded, or gravity may be a stronger force, but light and gravity still exist, and will be recognizable for what they are.

The *universal interface* is not as important as the *multiversal interface* (see below). Travelers who do not pass through the interface will probably not be in any danger. They'll retain their native physicality, and will probably look slightly odd to natives of the new universe, perhaps gaining new powers or weaknesses while there.

A theory making the rounds now is that the universe is a huge continually growing factal. Different parts of this fractal have different fundamental laws ("their own order of space and time", right, Jor-El?). The 'big bang' is a *local* event occurring all over the place on this fractal.

Under this theory, the universe is a hell of a lot bigger than we thought it was.

The Uni-Point Code
All matter is marked by its point of origin. This code involves the Universe, Multiverses, time, and time stream of origin. There is a separate coding for the planes of origin.

There's a hell of a universe next door. Let's go!

E.E. Cummings

Every universe has a Time Differential and a Space Differential. These Differentials determine the ratio between space and time between different universes. The Differentials are best explained with an example. The Dark Universe has a Space Differential of 65. The Cloud Universe has a Space Differential of .5. This means that 65 meters in the Dark Universe is equal to a half meter in the Cloud Universe. If a traveler from the Dark Universe goes to the Cloud Universe, walks 20 meters, and comes back, the traveler has moved 20 meters, times 65, divided by .5, or 2,600 meters in the Dark Universe.

The Time Differential works in the same way. The Dark Universe has a Time Differential of 57. The Cloud Universe has a Time Differential of 48. If a traveler from the Dark Universe goes to the Cloud Universe, waits 100 minutes, and returns, the traveler will discover that nearly 120 minutes has passed in the Dark Universe.

In general, universes in the same multiverse will have similar gross features. Where there is a large amount of mass in one universe, there will be a large amount of mass in the others. See Dr. von Windleband's lecture, Physics and Us, following this section.

Multiverse

A *multiverse* is a group of universes with similar physical laws. Different multiverses have radically different physical laws. Most universes within one multiverse will have convergent physical (and magical) laws. You can have a lot of fun, sending the characters to another multiverse, and re-writing how their powers and magic work.

When characters travel to a different multiverse, they may take on a new aspect in the new multiverse. It depends on whether or not they traveled through the *multiversal interface*, or bypassed the interface. For example, if the new multiverse is based on anti-matter, characters *must* travel through the interface. This transforms their matter to anti-matter. Otherwise, their matter will interact with the anti-matter, and create a tremendous explosion.

Other multiverses might be energy-based, instead of matter-based. Passing through the multiversal interface, the characters and their equipment will be transformed to coherent energy, and will be returned to normal when they pass through the interface on the way back.

The Space Differential does not apply to two universes each in a different multiverse. There is no spatial interface between multiverses, so travel between multiverses must be to specific places.

Ultraverse

The Ultraverse is the collection of all multiverses. The multiverses of the Ultraverse are separated by true Void. Between the multiverses, there are no laws. That is, physical laws do not exist, except within a multiverse.

If matter travels into the Void, the physical laws of its universe will come with it. They quickly disperse into the Void and die away, and as the matter's Uni-Point Code laws die away, the matter itself fades from existence.

There are civilizations within the Void. When the multiverses collapse into each other at the end of time, there are occasionally civilizations that have attained a level of technology and magic which allows them to escape their dying universe into the Void between the multiverses. They carry their physical laws with them, and bind them to their new, created world. From the Void, these civilizations can observe the end of time, and the beginning of a new time.

The Mickey Mouse Conjecture

Why is it possible to travel from one universe to another? Research in this area has evolved directly from Professor Einstein's seminal work in Space and Time. As many of you no doubt know, from the popular space fiction movies and literature, space bends when it encounters mass. It has been assumed that mass causes space to warp, though there are those who claim that warped space causes energy/mass to take the form of mass.

During the problems of last December, I was able to conduct many experiments to confirm and modify our knowledge about other universes.

Whereas it was previously conjectured that multiple universes were a form of dimensions beyond height, width, and depth, this has not been born out. Separate universes are not separate dimensions, at least as we define dimensions in physics today.

There *are* other dimensions co-existing with our own. Because our concept of the laws of the universe is influenced by the dimensions we see, these worlds based on different dimensions seem quite foreign and strange.

More From Dr. Windelband

In an interview I conducted with Dr. Windelband in January of 1988, for *Omni*, he clarified the point about masses and space:

"It is not that large masses make it easy for travel to occur, though it does make it easier for useful travel to occur. It is differences in mass across universes that make it hard for travel to occur. Generally, larger masses will allow for more spectacular breakdowns. Picture a large rock on a 20 foot diving board, and a similar rock on a 5 foot diving board. The same energy is required to push each rock into the pool, but the higher rock's display will be much more spectacular. And so, large bodies across universes correspond to the higher rock."

Time Travel

It is possible to travel *through* and *across* time. There are many time streams (time lines) in various parts of the Ultraverse. These streams can intercept each other, and some streams are larger than others. Traveling *across* time is the term for traveling from one time stream to another, yet staying in the same location in space and time.

Traveling *through* time involves going to another time within the same time stream.

A character will travel *across* time to find a word in which Napoleon conquered and held all of Europe. A character will travel *through* time to travel to the eighteenth century.

Time Streams

It is possible to change history. Or, more precisely, it is possible to travel into the past and cause specific events to happen in different ways. This creates a new time stream at that point. The new stream branches away from the old stream. As far as the time traveler is concerned, this new stream is history. The time traveler will return home via the new stream, not the old one.

Creating a new time stream does not necessarily create an entire new ultraverse for that time stream. Only the part of the ultraverse that is different will be created.

Temporal Alpha

There is a force that attempts to reduce the differences between different time streams. This force, called the *Temporal Alpha*, results in different time streams joining together. When there are two or more time streams in a particular location, random events in those time streams will tend to occur so as to minimize the differences between the streams. Since the smaller stream is made up only of the parts of the larger time stream that are different, when there are no differences, there is no separate time stream.

An example will help. Suppose DGK agent Bob goes back in time to observe an empty room. He goes back, stays there for 15 seconds, and returns home. This creates a new time stream. His body displaced air molecules when he appeared in the past. This creates a very small divergent time stream—only the part of the universe which is different is needed for the new stream. This will consist simply of the part of space where he appeared and displaced the air. When he leaves, the random motion of the air molecules will tend to occur so that those air molecules are in the exact same place as their corresponding air molecules in the main time stream. As that happens, the new time stream gets smaller and smaller, until it finally disappears. Since this is a very simple

occurrence, the new time stream probably exists for no more than 10 or 15 minutes.

The Space-Time Continuum

Where a new time stream is created, the Universal Continuum is disrupted. At the exact point in time when the stream diverged, increase the Continuum. Look up the spatial radius of the new time stream (how far it exists in space), in tens of meters, on the Doubling Chart. Add this to the Universal Continuum at the time of divergence.

Matrices and Dimensions

Discussing dimensions gets a little confusing. When I say *a dimension*, I'm really talking about a *group* of spatial/ temporal dimensions.

Physics tells us that there are numerous dimensions besides the dimensions of height, width, and depth. These invisible measurements are *small* dimensions. They only allow for tiny, invisible shifts in amplitude. There are two types of dimensions: the standard dimensions, which seem to be entire universes unto themselves, and the matrices, sub-dimensions of the standard dimensions.

Another way of thinking about dimensions is that each dimension is a different way of viewing the same universe. All of the dimensions exist in the same space, though space may well act differently in different dimensions, depending on how many *spatial* or *temporal* dimensions are shared between the dimensions. Things that exist in one dimension may well exist in the other dimensions. Taking Earth as an example, the Empire State Building of our dimensions is a large castle in the Faerie Dimension.

Standard dimensions are complete dimensional shifts. Entirely new cultures exist within different standard dimensions. Two dimensions that are know to us are the Faerie Dimension and the Demon Dimension.

There are sub levels within each of these matrices as well. The communal mind, for example, is divided up by cultures and communities.

Each *matrix* is a special shift in a dimension. Some of the known matrices include the Animal Matrix, the Plant Matrix, the Electromagnetic Matrix, the Gravitational Matrix, and the Nuclear Matrix. Some consider the Animal Matrix and the Plant Matrix the same, and call it the Living Matrix. There's also Jung's *communal mind*, the Sentience Matrix.

In order to reach a matrix, there must be something besides you nearby, that is hooked into the matrix. When in a matrix, a person *rides* members of the matrix. You must also, of course, have the power to reach the matrix.

Senses in a matrix are vastly different from our normal senses. In the animal matrix you'll use the senses of the animal being ridden. In the Electromagnetic

Matrix, you'll sense the shifts in magnetism and power fluctuations that are apparent to whatever appliance or device you are riding.

Control of the Matrix

Characters inside a Matrix can attempt to control the matrix. They can train in Matrix Control (for a specific Matrix), as a standard skill, and their skill level acts as a level in Weaving magic. Only the bases of Physical, Energy, and Mind can be used.

Computer Nets and the Electromagnetic Matrix

There is not a grain of sand on the surface of the Earth that isn't sliced every second by hundreds of man-made electromagnetic signals.

Even the most mundane of kitchen appliances today uses electronics as powerful as what went into entire computers a decade ago.

Home computers regularly connect with other home computers and with larger, mainframe computers. A permanent link connects almost all non-security mainframes in the United States, and in the world. This conglomeration of computers is known as the *net*.

The net is an unwieldy monster. If you want to send a message from San Diego to Germany, that message might go from San Diego, to Los Angeles, to Colorado, then New York, and on through a satellite link to France, and then to Germany. This can take anywhere from a minute to a day or more. Messages can get lost in the net. If that message was accidentally rerouted to Singapore, it might take weeks to get back on track.

"Computers rule the world. The net rules computers. Control the net, and you control the world."

Unknown Hacker

The Matrix is different. The net is physical. The matrix is an electronic astral space. Every electric wire, every computer chip, every radio signal affects and is affected by the matrix. The matrix is primal and untamed. Link in to a VCR. Travel through the AC lines to the switching station, from the station to a radio tower. Ride the radio waves to a household in Milwaukee, and feel the web of appliances. This is the Electromagnetic Matrix.

Dimensional Shift

Things that shift to another dimension or matrix will always take on the outward appearance that the dimension requires. In some cases, the change will be nearly invisible. Shifting to the Faerie Dimension or the Demon Dimension will cause no visible change. Shifting to the Electromagnetic Matrix

will cause a great and obvious change—the traveler will take on an electronic/computer aspect.

Time and Space are variable between dimensions. When someone returns from another dimension or matrix, roll d100 for the effective Space Differential, and again for the effective Time Differential. Add 50 to the Base Differentials for those dimensions, and subtract the d100 roll. These effective differentials apply to the character for that trip only. For results less than 1, make it positive, add 1, and divide into 1. A -5 is 1/6, for example.

Dimensional Shifts exist in the world in various places. Faerie rings can lead to the Faerie Dimension, and there are rumors of openings into the Demon Dimensions. These openings will be closely guarded secrets on both sides.

> Time and Space are not actually *random*. Inhabitants of the dimension who are familiar with both sides can use this to their advantage. The *Faerie Parties*, where someone disappears for one night, but returns a hundred years later, are classic examples of this.

Faerie Dimension

The Faerie Dimension is a shift in which the Faerie of legend exist. The Base Time Differential is 18, and the Base Space Differential is 12.

Demon Dimension

The Demon Dimension is a shift in which the demons of legend exist. The Base Time Differential is 36, and the Base Space Differential is 6.

The Universe and Everything

The universe is not infinite, except in the sense that a circle is infinite. It is a sphere, elliptical in shape, and bends inwards upon itself. This means that a space traveler who goes far enough (and lives long enough), will return to their starting position.

> Current estimates of the diameter of the universe range around 10^{20} light years.

Our Galaxy

Our galaxy is the Milky Way galaxy, and is shaped like a spiral. The inner bulge has a radius of 2000 parsecs, and is 5 parsecs thick. If you include the arms of the spiral, the galaxy's radius is 15,000 parsecs.

Our Solar System

Our solar system consists of a yellow sun and more than nine planets.

The Sun

Radius:	696,000,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	618,000 m/s
Rotation:	26 to 37 days	Revolution:	250 million years
Galactic Center:	9 Parsecs	Velocity:	250,000 m/s
Mass:	$1.99 \text{ times } 10^{30}$ kg	Gravity:	27.9 g
Surface Temperature:	5500°	Center Temperature:	15 million°
Pressure:	0 to 124,000 atms		
Make-Up:	90% Hydrogen		
	10% Helium		

Mercury

Radius:	2,439,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	4,300 m/s
Day:	58.7 days	Year:	87.97 days
Distance to Sun:	57.9×10^9 meters	Velocity:	47,730 m/s
Mass:	3.32×10^{23} kg	Gravity:	.38 g
Day Temperature:	425°	Night Temperature:	425°-185°
Air Pressure:	0 atmospheres		
Atmosphere:	None		

Due to the solar winds (composed of Hydrogen and Helium), the night temperature of Mercury varies widely. Mercury's gravity attracts the solar wind into a thin atmosphere.

Venus

Radius:	6,052,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	10,300 m/s
Day:	243 days (reverse)	Year:	224.7 days
Distance to Sun:	108.2×10^9 meters	Velocity:	47,730 m/s
Mass:	4.89×10^{24} kg	Gravity:	.879 g
Avg. Temperature:	477°		
Air Pressure:	90 atmospheres		
Atmosphere:	96% Carbon Dioxide		
	3.5% Nitrogen		

Venus is a planet of huge craters and continent-sized highlands. Surface winds of up to 400 kilometers per hour help keep the night side warm. Sulfuric reactions in the clouds give light to the planet below. Venus is always covered in clouds.

Earth

Radius:	6,378,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	11,200 m/s
Day:	23 hours, 56 minutes	Year:	365.256 days
Distance to Sun:	149.6 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	29,800 m/s
Mass:	6.04 X 10^{24} kg	Gravity:	1 g
Avg. Temperature:	13°		
Air Pressure:	1 atmosphere		
Atmosphere:	78% Nitrogen	Satellites:	Moon
	21% Oxygen		

Earth's Moon

Radius:	1,738,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	2,380 m/s
Day:	27.3 days	Year:	27.3 days
Distance to Earth:	384,500,000 meters	Velocity:	2,380 m/s
Mass:	7.35 X 10^{22} kg	Gravity:	.166 g
Day Temperature:	132°	Night Temperature:	-156°
Air Pressure:	0 atmospheres		
Atmosphere:	None		

Mars

Phobos is 1400 by 1000 meters in radius. Its mass is 9.6 X 10^{15} kg, and it circles Mars every 7.7 hours at 9,380,000 meters. *Deimos* is 8000 by 6000 meters in radius, mass 2 X 10^{15} kg, and circles in 30.3 hours at 23,500,000 meters.

Radius:	3,398,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	5,000 m/s
Day:	24 hours, 37 minutes	Year:	686.98 days
Distance to Sun:	227.9 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	2,413 m/s
Mass:	6.42 X 10^{23} kg	Gravity:	.38 g
Day Temperature:	28°	Night Temperature:	-68°
Air Pressure:	.007 atmospheres		
Atmosphere:	95% Carbon Dioxide	Satellites:	Phobos
	2.7% Nitrogen		Deimos
	1.6% Argon		

Mars has no magnetic field. This allows 100% of the cosmic radiation of outer space to reach the surface of Mars. Over half of the Martian surface is a reddish desert and rock. The rest is a gray-green. The white caps are water and carbon dioxide, and the carbon dioxide grows in the Martian winter.

In the past, flowing water and glaciers shaped much of the Martian surface.

Asteroid Belt

The *Future Study* space station is on the far side of the asteroid belt. It circles the sun every 1598 days.

The asteroid belt consists of many large and small asteroids, and a lot of dust. Larger asteroids can run about 200,000 meters in radius, and take 4 years to circle the sun, at a distance of approximately 400 X 10^9 meters.

Jupiter

Radius:	71,398,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	595,000 m/s
Day:	9 hours, 50 minutes	Year:	4331.98 days
Distance to Sun:	778.7×10^9 meters	Velocity:	12,730 m/s
Mass:	1.92×10^{27} kg	Gravity:	2.34 g
Temperature:	0 to 25,000°		
Air Pressure:	0 to 80,000,000 atms		
Atmosphere:	90% Hydrogen	Satellites:	Io, Europa,
	10% Helium		Ganymede,
			Callisto, and
			many others

Jupiter's rings are 6,300,000 meters wide, and the inner edge is 122,800,000 meters from Jupiter. It is minus 160° at the top of the clouds, which are made of ammonia ice crystals, becoming droplets further down.

The Major Moons of Jupiter

Io		**Europa**	
Radius:	1,816,000 meters	Radius:	1,563,000 meters
Distance to Jupiter:	412.6×10^6 meters	Distance to Jupiter:	670.9×10^6 meters
Mass:	8.92×10^{22} kg	Mass:	4.87×10^{22} kg
Revolution:	1.769 days	Revolution:	3.551 days
Ganymede		**Callisto**	
Radius:	2,638,000 meters	Radius:	2,410,000 meters
Distance to Jupiter:	$1,070 \times 10^6$ meters	Distance to Jupiter:	$1,880 \times 10^6$ meters
Mass:	1.49×10^{23} kg	Mass:	1.064×10^{23} kg
Revolution:	7.155 days	Revolution:	16.689 days

Io is covered by huge volcanoes. *Europa* is covered in a 75,000-100,000 meter thick crust of ice.

Saturn

Radius:	60,010,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	35,600 m/s
Day:	10 hours, 14 minutes	Year:	10760.56 days
Distance to Sun:	1427.7×10^9 meters	Velocity:	9,450 m/s
Mass:	5.75×10^{26} kg	Gravity:	1.32 g
Temperature:	0 to 20,000°		
Air Pressure:	0 to 50,000,000 atms		
Atmosphere:	94% Hydrogen	Satellites:	Titan and many
	6% Helium		others

Saturn's rings are 100,000,000 meters wide, and the inner edge is 7,000,000 meters from Saturn. They consist of rocks averaging 1 meter across. The temperature at the top of Saturn's clouds is minus 240°.

Titan

Titan's temperature is at the triple point of methane. This allows gaseous, liquid, and solid methane to coexist, in the same way that gaseous, liquid, and solid water coexist on Earth.

Radius:	2,570,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	3,800 m/s
Day:	20 hours, 3 minutes	Year:	15.9 days
Distance to Saturn:	1.22 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	5,580 m/s
Mass:	1.35 X 10^{23} kg	Gravity:	.147 g
Avg. Temperature:	-180°		
Air Pressure:	1.6 atmospheres		
Atmosphere:	80-95% Nitrogen Methane Argon		

Uranus

Uranus has faint rings as well. Very little is known about the moons of Uranus. Due to its extreme tip, when the sun rises at Uranus' north pole, it stays up for 42 Earth years. When it sets, it stays dark for the same period.

Radius:	25,450,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	21,200 m/s
Day:	10 hours, 49 minutes	Year:	30,685.49 days
Distance to Sun:	2870.5 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	6,360 m/s
Mass:	8.82 X 10^{25} kg	Gravity:	.93 g
Temperature:	0 to 7,000°		
Air Pressure:	0 to 20,000,000 atms		
		Satellites:	Miranda, Ariel, Umbriel, Titania, Oberon

Neptune

As the furthest known *real* planet, little is known about Neptune's moons. It is possible that Pluto was a moon of Neptune in the past.

Radius:	24,300,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	23,600 m/s
Day:	15 hours, 48 minutes	Year:	60191.2 days
Distance to Sun:	4498.8 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	5,430 m/s
Mass:	1.0389 X 10^{26} kg	Gravity:	1.23 g
Temperature:	0 to 7,000°		
Air Pressure:	0 to 20,000,000 atms		
		Satellites:	Triton, Nereid

Triton is in a precarious position. In 100,000,000 years, Triton's tidal forces will tear Triton apart.

Pluto

Pluto is a tiny, cold double planet. Charon's radius is 400,000 meters and it is only 16,000,000 meters from Pluto. Pluto's orbit is quite eccentric, and until 1999 is closer to the sun than Neptune. Pluto was probably a Neptunian moon in the past.

Radius:	1,200,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	1,100 m/s
Day:	159 hours, 19 minutes	Year:	90474.9 days
Distance to Sun:	5902.8 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	4.77 m/s (max)
Mass:	6 X 10^{22} kg	Gravity:	.03 g
Temperature:	-200°		
Air Pressure:	0		
Atmosphere	None	Satellites:	Charon

Planet X

There is a large, rocky planet somewhere out past Pluto and Neptune, but it's so far away it simply can't be seen.

Planetary Systems Near Earth

These planets are all parts of solar systems near our solar system, and inhabitants of these planets are likely to be the most common visitors to our solar system. The *Star Location* entry is the location in light years of the main star of the system, in relation to Earth's Sol (which is at 0,0,0).

Algren

Radius:	4,596,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	8,400 m/s
Day:	21 hrs 25 minutes	Year:	371 Algrenian days
Distance to Sun:	141×10^9 meters	Velocity:	30,950 m/s
Mass:	2.3×10^{24} kg	Gravity:	.9 g
Avg. Temperature:	12°	Name for Sun:	Dapet (sun)
Air Pressure:	.8 atm	Star Location:	50,2,22
Atmosphere	77% Nitrogen 20% Oxygen 2% Carbon Dioxide	Satellites:	Tensen, Divers

Dapet is 55 light years from Earth.

Algren is currently under the control of the Armidians. There is a rebellion, but it is very low-key and not widely known of. Algren is very much an Earth-like planet, though it has odd tides.

People of Algren
    Strength+1   Constitution+1 Height +3 cm   Build-2
    Sexes: 3 (Two impregnators [male], one child-bearer [woman])
    One of the impregnators has +2 Strength. The other has +2 Constitution
    Age Multiplier: 1.1

Arik

Radius:	7,100,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	1,200 m/s
Day:	26 hours, 8 minutes	Year:	395 Arikian days
Distance to Sun:	145×10^9 meters	Velocity:	24,800 m/s
Mass:	7.9×10^{24} kg	Gravity:	1.24 g
Avg. Temperature:	14°	Name for Sun:	Margan (sun)
Air Pressure:	1.05 atm	Star Location:	0,0,21
Atmosphere	73% Nitrogen 20% Oxygen 6% Carbon Dioxide	Satellites:	None

Margan is 21 light years from Earth, and shares with Earth the fame of producing super heroes, although there are very few compared to the amount on Earth.

Arik is a planet much like Earth. It has water covering 60% of its surface. There is one major continent extending equally from both sides of the equator, and two poles, fairly small because of Arik's higher temperature.

One popularly elected government governs the entire continent. The governing bodies are the Science Council, the Regulatory Council, and the Leading Council (consisting of the leaders of police, Science Council, Regulatory Council, and the judicial system). The Science Council governs not just science

but where tax money is allocated. In order to vote for members of the Science Council, a poll tax is required, limiting this to the wealthier members of the society. The Regulatory Council passes the laws of the land. Members of this council are elected by popular vote of all citizens of Arik.

Arik has no armed forces other than its police. The technological level is similar to that of Earth right now, except that their space travel technology is at a higher level of development. There are 6 other planets in the Arikian system. They are used for mining, and the only colonization is by miners.

People of Arik
  Constitution+1 Height + 8 cm
  Sexes: 2
  Age Multiplier: .9
  Normals: Strength 3d6+3
  Specials: *Strength* 3d8

Armid

Senar is 55 light years from Earth.

The five moons of Armid were named after the five gods of war who destroyed each other to create the planet.

Radius:	6,000,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	16,300 m/s
Day:	14 hours, 5 minutes	Year:	958 Armidian days
Distance to Sun:	121×10^9 meters	Velocity:	15,700 m/s
Mass:	6.78×10^{24} kg	Gravity:	1.07 g
Avg. Temperature:	11°	Name for Sun:	Senar (Day God)
Air Pressure:	1.5 atm	Star Location:	51,2,21
Atmosphere	83% Nitrogen 17% Oxygen	Satellites:	Criar, Fega, Milo, Sentar, Samto

After the Great War, the Armidian economy spurted, then fell into ruin. An outspoken organization of nationalists took control of the government of Armid and proceeded to build up the armed forces of the planet, ostensibly for defense. Five and ten Earth years ago, respectively, they conquered the neighboring systems of Algren and Noslen, to strengthen their defensive position. The nationalistic fervor on Armid has only grown since then, and they will soon attempt revenge on the nations of the Great War. Armid has built up an incredibly large force of arms.

Armid has full space travel capability, with hyperspatial travel via Type I linear gravity drives.

Cair

Radius:	24,100,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	45,000 m/s
Day:	53 hours, 45 minutes	Year:	701 Cairan days
Distance to Sun:	400 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	18,600 m/s
Mass:	4.98 X 10^{26} kg	Gravity:	2.55 g
Avg. Temperature:	25°	Name for Sun:	Biran (sun)
Air Pressure:	5.98 atm	Star Location:	28,5,12
Atmosphere	72% Nitrogen	Satellites:	Markl, Sidein
	10% Oxygen		Approximately 52
	17% Helium		other, small
			moons

Biran is 31 light years from Earth.

Cair is composed of many city-states, and vast tracts of rural, ungoverned areas.

Cair is a very large planet. Its people, though superficially similar to the humanoid standard, are very different. Due to their near inability to cause physical harm to each other, war as we know it is entirely unknown to them. Technologically, the Cair are very primitive, though they have developed primitive techniques, such as light and whistle communications, to a very high degree. Their society is quite old, but has developed along different lines as most humanoid societies. Cair was invaded by Armid in the Great War.

Carion

Radius:	5,800,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	8,000 m/s
Day:	23 hrs 58 minutes	Year:	561 Carion days
Distance to Sun:	120-210 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	30,100 m/s
Mass:	4.29 X 10^{24} kg	Gravity:	.93 g
Avg. Temperature:	13°	Name for Sun:	Caria (sun)
Air Pressure:	.85 atm	Star Location:	-15,-8,-18
Atmosphere	70% Nitrogen	Satellites:	Satro
	29% Oxygen		

Saria is 25 light years from Earth.

Satro is about the size of our moon, and has a relatively larger tidal effect due to Carion's smaller size.

Carion, like its sister planet Miria, is in a highly elliptical orbit.

This system consists of 4 gas giants, besides Carion and Miria.

The nations of Carion are governed by a strong central authority. This central government desires to annex the planet Miria, and then Earth as well. Carion has developed FTL technology, Type I linear drives. Carion's space

technology lags somewhat behind Mirian space technology, but they have a more advanced understanding of genetic engineering.

```
People of Carion
    Height: .8 m + 3d20 cm
    Build: +5
    Sexes: 2: males +1 Strength, females -1 Build
    Age Multiplier: 1.2
    Normals:  Agility 3d2+7        Constitution 2d4+8 Strength 2d4+8
    Specials:  Agility 3d4+4       Constitution 2d6+6 Strength 2d6+6
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Frishni

Radius:	6,500,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	7,000 m/s
Day:	22 hours, 34 minutes	Year:	315 Frishnian days
Distance to Sun:	118×10^9 meters	Velocity:	29,000 m/s
Mass:	4.7×10^{26} kg	Gravity:	.622 g
Avg. Temperature:	15°	Name for Sun:	Makeem (Disc)
Air Pressure:	.65 atm	Star Location:	8,2,27
Atmosphere	70% Nitrogen	Satellites:	Mika
	19% Oxygen		
	5% Neon		
	3% Argon		
	2% Krypton		

The Frishnian people are, physically, very pliable. They can stretch to four or five times their normal size.

Frishni is governed by one ruling Imperial government. The Great War strengthened the power of the Imperial government over the princes ruling the various provinces. There are three continents on Frishni. Technologically the Frishni are many years ahead of us. They use Type II linear gravity drives.

Visitors to Frishni often come away unimpressed with the Frishnian level of technology, since the Frishni, for traditional reasons, still use animals for travel within urban areas. Vehicles are only used by the rich, for travel between urban areas or into the countryside.

People of Frishni

Height: 1.4 m + 2d20 cm
Build: -4
Sexes: 1
Age Multiplier: 1.3
Stretch, PR d2+1

Normals:	Strength 2d6+3	Constitution 2d6+4	Agility 4d4+4
Specials:	Strength 2d8+1	Constitution 2d8+2	Agility 4d6

Miria

Radius:	6,350,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	10,300 m/s
Day:	24 hrs 1 minute	Year:	569 Mirian days
Distance to Sun:	142-161 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	29,950 m/s
Mass:	5.9 X 10^{24} kg	Gravity:	.95 g
Avg. Temperature:	14°	Name for Sun:	Saria (sun)
Air Pressure:	1 atm	Star Location:	-15,-8,-18
Atmosphere	77% Nitrogen	Satellites:	Marn
	21% Oxygen		

Saria is 25 light years from Earth. Miria is in an elliptical orbit around Saria, causing greater seasonal weather shifts than are seen on Earth.

Marn is about half the size of our moon, and has a much smaller tidal effect.

Miria is constantly at odds with its sister planet, Carion.

Miria is very Earth-like, in climate, culture, and inhabitants. They are so similar, that some pop scientists believe there must be some connection between the two. Miria's many nations, governed by a United Nations somewhat more powerful than ours. Miria has developed FTL technology, Type I linear drives.

Mirianites have the same ability ranges as Earthlings.

Noslen

Radius:	7,456,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	15,100 m/s
Day:	32 hrs 5 minutes	Year:	265 Noslenian days
Distance to Sun:	158 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	32,500 m/s
Mass:	9.72 X 10^{24} kg	Gravity:	1.15 g
Avg. Temperature:	13°	Name for Sun:	Sirch (Demon)
Air Pressure:	1.2 atm	Star Location:	47,3,20
Atmosphere	75% Nitrogen	Satellites:	Laocrinemt
	19% Oxygen		
	5% Carbon Dioxide		

Sirch is 51 light years from Earth.

Laocrinemt is fully half the size of Noslen, but it has very little water, and no life. Due to its mass, however, Noslen has very unpredictable seasons.

Noslen is currently under the control of the Armidians, though there is a decent guerrilla force opposing the Armidian regime. Noslen is slightly warmer than Earth, and its many thin continents and island chains are warm, humid, and covered in plant-life. The cities of Noslen are built with wood, despite the Noslen technological accomplishments, because wood is plentiful, and it doesn't rust.

People of Noslen

Constitution-2 Height -3 cm   Build+2
Age Multiplier 1.1
Sexes: 2

Orhgisyert

Radius:	70,000,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	59,000 m/s
Day:	10 hours, 26 minutes	Year:	9112.5 Org. days
Distance to Sun:	653×10^9 meters	Velocity:	15,900 m/s
Mass:	1.9×10^{27} kg	Gravity:	2.04 g
Avg. Temperature:	40°	Name for Sun:	unnamed
Air Pressure:	1,000 atm	Star Location:	25,-5,35
Atmosphere	81% Hydrogen	Satellites:	Approximately
	15% Helium		15, all unnamed.
	3% Oxygen		

Orhgisyert is a gas giant, and is inhabited by a wide variety of very strange life forms, mostly plant-like. The Orhgisyertans are large and bat-like, and invisible to the human eye, though they can cause themselves to be visible in the upper end of the red part of the spectrum. This is the oldest race in this area of space, and their culture is highly advanced, though nearly incomprehensible to humanoids. They have developed Type II square gravity drives, and Type III linear gravity drives.

People of Orhgisyert

    Intelligence+5   Build-6

    Height: 1 m + d20 cm

    Wings, PR 2d4+5

    Sexes: unknown

    Age Multiplier: 3.35

    Infrared Vision, No normal vision

    Invisibility, PR 12, can be seen in infra-red, X-ray, and radar.

    EP is required only to shift from invisible to non-invisible, and the normal state is invisible.

    Orhgisyertans have no legs.

    Normals: Strength 2d4+10   Constitution 2d4+10   Agility 2d4+10

    Specials: Strength 2d6+8   Constitution 2d6+8 Agility 2d6+8

Satchen

Radius:	7,160,000 meters	Escape Velocity:	14,900 m/s
Day:	28 hrs 29 minutes	Year:	295 Satchenese days
Distance to Sun:	153 X 10^9 meters	Velocity:	31,800 m/s
Mass:	8.95 X 10^{24} kg	Gravity:	1.11 g
Avg. Temperature:	13°	Name for Sun:	Tarchen (sun)
Air Pressure:	1.05 atm	Star Location:	25,7,14
Atmosphere	76% Nitrogen	Satellites:	Meerchen,
	20% Oxygen		Oorchen, and
	1% Nitrous Oxide		Munchen

Tarchen is 30 light years from Earth.

The surface of Satchen and its artificial moons are covered with strange devices.

Satchen is a dead world. Its civilization died out approximately 20,000 years ago. They were very advanced technologically, but never developed any kind of star drive. They did develop field technology to an advanced level, and used stasis fields for many things. There are still many criminals held in stasis, in the orbiting prison satellites.

People of Satchen

    Sight+3   Hearing-2   Agility+4   Height+12 cm   Build-8

    Sexes: 2

    Age Multiplier: 1.3

    Vision extends to Ultraviolet range

Travel Chart (light years)

	Algren	Arik	Armid	Cair	Frishni	Noslen	Orhgisyert	Satchen	Earth	Miria
Algren	0	50	2.2	24	42	3.7	29	27	55	66
Arik	50	0	52	30	10	47	29	27	21	43
Armid	2.2	52	0	17	44	5.2	31	28	56	78
Cair	24	30	17	0	25	21	25	4	31	54
Frishni	42	10	44	25	0	40	20	22	28	52
Noslen	3.7	47	5.2	21	40	0	28	23	51	74
Orhgisyert	29	29	31	25	20	28	0	24	43	66
Satchen	27	27	28	4	22	23	24	0	29	53
Earth	55	21	56	31	28	51	43	29	0	25
Miria	66	43	78	54	52	74	66	53	25	0

Great War

The Great War was the first combined interstellar exercise undertaken by any of the peoples involved. It started with a political argument between Noslen and Algren. Armid and Algren joined together and conquered Noslen, and then moved to take Cair. When Arik and Orhgisyert heard of the invasion of Noslen, they mobilized forces to aid the planet, and convinced Frishni to join them. When they arrived at Noslen, most of the Armid army was at Cair, and the combined Arik, Orhgisyert, and Frishni forces freed Noslen, went on to 'liberate' Algren, and surrounded Armid.

When the Armid forces returned, after having set up war satellites at key points orbiting Cair, a fierce battle ensued to re-take Armid, during which the liberated Algren forces shifted to side with Armid. The Armid navy forced the others to flee, but only after heavy losses on both sides.

Orhgisyert left the coalition, but some Frishni admirals convinced the Arik forces to continue on to Cair, where, after a short battle, they destroyed the Armid satellites and the Armid contingent left there. They recruited large numbers of Cair as marines, replenished their supplies, and repaired their ships.

They returned to Armid space, where a low-key war was being fought between Noslen and Algren. They left Noslen and Algren to fight each other, and once again surrounded Armid. With the help of the Cair marine force they destroyed the Armidian ground installations, and then they destroyed the Armidian manufacturing base from orbit, with both CPR cannons and dirty nuclears.

All this took place over a period of about 18 Earth years, from start to finish—approximately 1954 to 1972.

Genetics and Superpowers

There are a couple areas where genetics (or association with Specials) comes into play. If the character has brothers and sisters, and parents, read over the section on Normals. This will, among other things, tell you the chance that members of the character's family are Special. If the character has a twin, or the character has children, you'll want to know what powers and mutations are carried over.

Twins and Children

Powers: If a character has a twin or children, roll d100 on the following table for the twin's or child's powers.

01-25	Same powers, with the same power rolls.
26-50	Same Powers, with different power rolls.
51-65	Different powers, but the same Type of Hero.
66-75	Different powers, different Type of Hero.
76-00	No powers.

Mutations: If one twin is mutated, use the following chart to see if and how the other twin is mutated:

01-25	Same mutations, with the same mutation%.
26-50	Same mutations, with a different mutation%.
51-65	Different mutations, but the same mutation%.
66-75	Different mutations, different mutation%.
76-00	No mutation%.

If a mutated character has children, each child has a 50% chance, rolled for each mutation, of having that mutation. If both parents have a specific mutation, the child has a 95% chance of having that mutation. The child has a 50% chance of having the largest of the parents' mutation percentages. If not, the child has a 50% chance of having the average of the parents' mutation percentages. If the child doesn't have this, the child has the lower of the parents' mutation percentages. It is possible, in this case, for a child to have no mutation%, but still have specific mutations inherited from one of the parents.

True Twins: If the twin is a true, zygotic, twin, subtract 10 from the above d100 rolls. Also, true twins have the same build, height, and physical beauty. They have a 50% chance of having the same mental abilities, and a 50% chance of having the same physical abilities. Mental abilities are intelligence and

charisma, and physical abilities are strength, dexterity, constitution, hearing, and sight.

Both Parents: If both parents have super powers, add 25 to the d100 roll for powers, above, and roll twice—once for each parent. Do the same for mutations if both parents are mutated. In this case, average the resulting mutation percentages, for the child's mutation%.

Magic in a Superhero World

The Ways of Magic

There are many Ways that can be used to focus and create the powers called *magic*. Of these, there are three main types. Most Ways are one of these, or a combination of these:

Invocation: When performing magic, the wizard invokes the power of extra-planar, extra-dimensional, or extra-universal entities.

Continuum/Matrix: The wizard utilizes the force within another plane, dimensional matrix, or universe, and focuses this raw force into magical power.

Psionics: Magical power comes solely from the wizard's mind. The wizard's strict training and discipline allow the wizard to call forth the forces that can be created by the mind.

The *Elven Way* of magic utilizes disturbances between the normal and the Astral planes. The *Goblin Way* uses a combination of the Elven Way and Invocation of Extra-Planar Entities.

History of Magic

Far back in the history of mankind, 250 millennia ago, travelers from another star found themselves lost on Earth. This people became the Elves of our legends. They called their planet Orrión. The people of Orrión had developed magic in much the same way that we now have developed technology, and their entire culture was based upon a magical struggle between good and evil.

A space warp brought a small number of the Elves to Earth, in the Ural Mountains. There were three intelligent races in the area at that time: Humans, Dwarves, and Goblins. The Dwarves and Goblins were constantly at war, and each side was helped by the primitive humans in the area, as different tribes and individuals allied with different sides in the battles.

When the Elves first appeared on Earth, they were attacked by Goblins, who were subsequently attacked by a band of Dwarves. Elves and Dwarves forged a loose alliance from that point on. It was the Humans that gained the Elven wizards' attention. Dwarves had no liking for magic, but Humans, taken at an early age, could learn much about the arcane art. This Elven magic is the main ancestor of most modern magical Ways.

Human wizards did not always maintain good ties with their teachers, and after many generations there were powerful wizards on both sides of the fight. Goblins, like Dwarves, had no affinity for magic, but what magic they did learn was twisted. It is possible that there was an older form of magic that, with the new Elven magic, formed a hybrid that they used well. The years and decades that followed brought war the likes of which had never been seen in the history of the Earth. Magical battles and mundane battles raged across that small area of the planet.

In the end, the Elven/Dwarven alliance was victorious, but few Dwarves or Goblins survived. Those who did survive could not halt the extinction of their races. The Elves finally discovered how to return to their homeland. Within a few centuries, only humans were left. This had been prophesied from the start by the Elf Farra-Min. He was the only Elf to die of old age on Earth. The trip to Earth somehow made him mortal, and gave him the gift of prophecy. His prophecies filled tomes, and detailed the history of the Earth through three circles.

Pronounce Farra-Min Fá-Ruh-Mén. That's *Fa* as in *Fact*, and *Ru* as in *Rug*.

The First Circle detailed the Elven arrival, and ends with the arrival of super heroes. The first verses of the First Circle of Earth translate as follows:

Translated to English by Carol Channing

> The Elves shall enter wonder
> > in the midst of war and strife.
> They shall strive to aid the weary,
> > bringing magic in for life.
> But the forces shall be stolen,
> > and become a two-edged knife—
> In the end the land engulfs it,
> > through their blood and sacrifice.
>
> And the land it causes wonder
> > for the wonder is the land,
> And two races that inhabit
> > shall be mixed up in the sand.
> Yet the lowly shall be greater—
> > the race that is called man.
> They shall make their mark and flourish

all alone upon the sand.

The final verse of the First Circle translates as:

And again there shall be wonder,
    as the singer draws the pen,
And legends fill the story,
    as the Eagle learns its ken -
As heroes fight for freedom,
    on the planet, end to end,
They shall strive a fight for justice—
    Men, and Supermen.

History of Magic
on Earth

Approximate Date

Label	Date
	400,000 BC
	200,000 BC
	5000 BC
	1500 BC
	1000 BC
	800 BC
	500 BC
	100 AD
	600 AD
	1500 AD

Faerie

Old Ones

Elvish

Spirit

Abu Nah

Worship

Egyptian

Druidic

Greek

Judaic

Latin

Witchcraft

Medieval

Voodoo

Modern
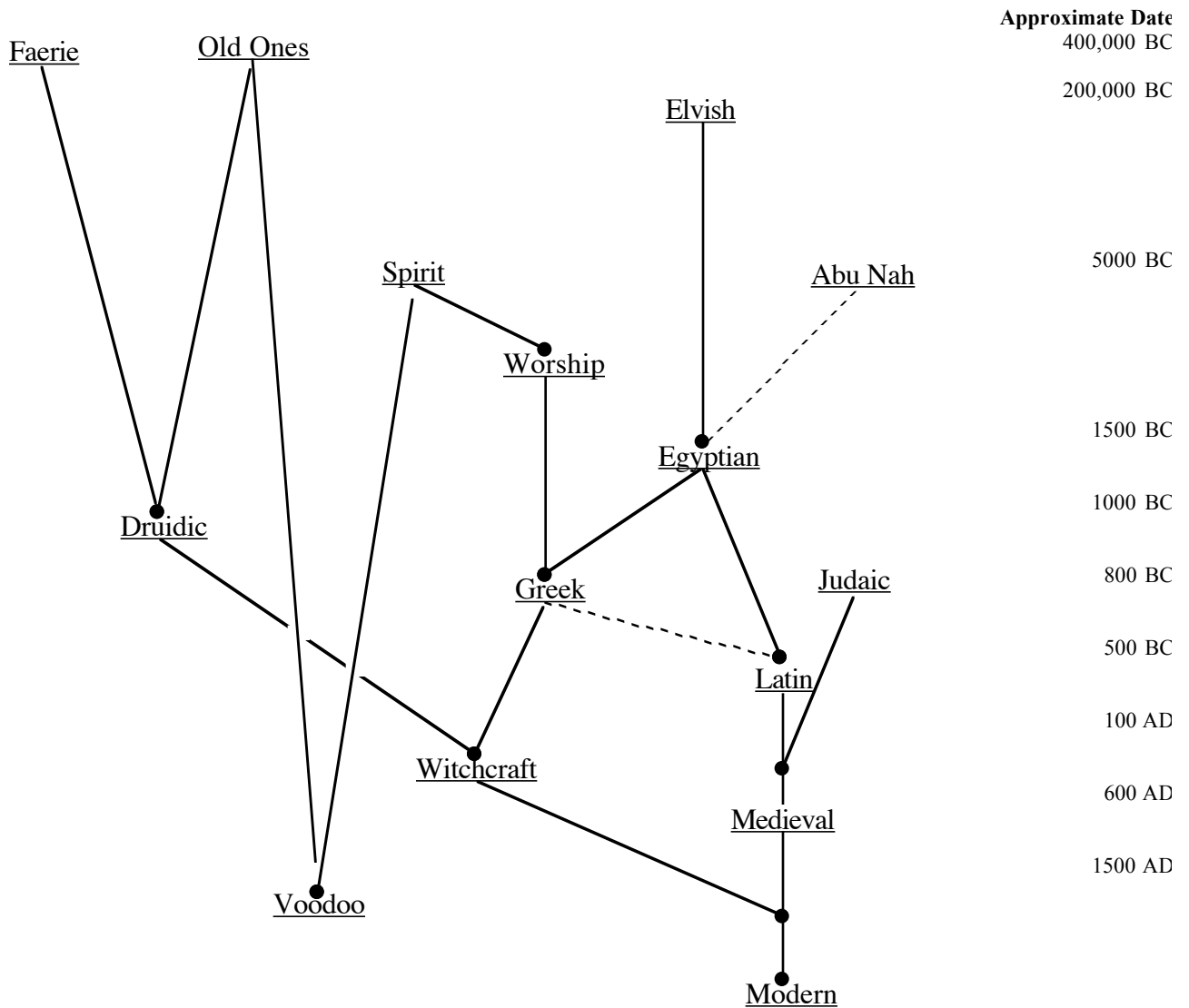
There have been many traditions of magic, both on Earth and elsewhere. These are a few of the traditions that have existed on, or been known by the people of, Earth.

The Magic of Abu Nah

No one knows where Abu Nah came from. Regxol'lent believes he is an alien energy being. Mr. Weird never said where he believed Abu Nah came from. Abu's magic is General Classical, and it utilizes the Universal Continuum and

the Living Matrix. It is believed that Abu Nah greatly influenced Egyptian magic, and through that, the modern Western tradition.

The Council of Twelve

The Council of Twelve rules over a portion of another reality (dimension) adjacent to ours. The Council consists of twelve wizards. Other wizards in their domain are strictly regulated. The magic of this culture is Special Classical, taking its power from the astral continuum and innate psionics.

Magic of the Dark Universe

The Magic of the Dark Universe is General Mnemonic, and involves the invocation of extra-universal beings and the universal continuum.

> Actually, this is only the magic from one planet of the Dark Universe. The planet's ruler is Darksën, master of the night.

The Druidic Tradition

Druidic magic was a direct descendent of both Faerie magic and the Old magic. This magic involved psionic ability and the invocation of extra-planar beings to a small extent, but was largely dependent on the power of the Earth and the biosphere—the ambient energy of life. Druidic magic is Special Classical.

The Egyptian Tradition

Most of the Egyptian Tradition was lost when Alexandria was destroyed. This magic is a forerunner of the Medieval tradition, and is directly descended from the Elvish. It was influenced by another alien tradition, through the wizard Abu Nah. This version of the Elvish magic added the invocation of deities and a limited use of psionics. Egyptian wizards are General Classical.

> Abu Nah is the force inside the helmet worn by Mr. Weird, the wizard hero of the allies in World War II.

The Elven Tradition

The natives of the planet Orrión have followed a social evolution that developed magic, rather than technology. Their magicians are General Classical, and most Elves are at least skill level 0 or 1. In the same way that we use a television or a car without even thinking about it, the Elves use magic.

Elven magic involves the use of the planar and universal continuum to power spells. There was a period on Earth, after the Elves left, but before the artificially created human civilization of the time died out, when this tradition was General Mnemonic.

> Probably the most famous Elven mage on Earth was Merlin, the Red Wizard. The Rainbow Wizard is the only modern practitioner of the Elven Tradition.

Faerie Magic

Faerie magic is one of the two oldest forms of magic on Earth. Practiced originally by the extra-dimensional Faerie who have inhabited our psyche since the beginning of human memory, Faerie magic utilizes extra-dimensional pockets of power, as well as ambient psionic energy. Faerie magicians are General Classical.

The Greek Tradition

Greek magic was developed almost directly from the Egyptian tradition, with the worship of their own deities playing a very important part. Greek magic involves the invocation of deities, and a somewhat stronger use of innate psychic ability than its Egyptian heritage. The Greek tradition is also General Classical.

The Kabalic Tradition

The origin of Hebrew magic is unknown. It may have developed independently of other magics on Earth. The Kabalic tradition involves the invocation of deities and extra-planar beings. It is a Special Classical form of magic.

Latin Magic (Roman)

The Roman wizards changed the Egyptian magic to a much more 'traditional' and scholarly approach, and developed with only a little influence from the Greek tradition. Their magic used the astral and universal continuums to power their enchantments and spells. Latin mages were General Classical, Special Classical, and General Mnemonic.

The Old Magic

Before even the Elves, there were two forms of magic. The Old magic was practiced by non-human creatures who died or were imprisoned hundreds of thousands of years ago. Some of our stranger forebears helped keep this magic alive, and parts of it have survived in Voodoo and Druidic Magic. The Old Magic still exists in a more pure form among the strange beings, who still haunt the forbidden parts of the world.

Old Magic utilizes invocation of extra-planar beings, psionics, and ambient cosmic energy. The Old Magic is Special Classical.

Spirit Magic

Spirit magic often develops in the early stages of an area's cultural development. Usually, it then dies out. Sometimes it metamorphoses into Worship magic, and sometimes it remains as spirit magic and develops along with the culture. Spirit magic involves the invocation of either extra-planar entities (often spirits of the dead) or the invocation of extra-dimensional creatures (plant, earth, and object spirits). Spirit magic is usually Special Classical.

Ian McKellan is the most famous modern practitioner of this tradition. The Dream Sorceress also practices this magic.

The Western European Medieval Tradition

The standard magic of Earth is descended almost directly from the Elvish tradition, combined with Jewish Mysticism. The modern version of this is also influenced by the Witchcraft tradition.

This tradition combines planar barrier disturbances, psionics, and the invocation of extra-dimensional, extra-planar creatures. It is a General Classical tradition.

Witchcraft: Traditional, Imagined, and Modern

The Witches of the medieval world used a magic tradition that combined the Greek and Druidic traditions. Witchcraft involved the invocation of extra-planar deities and spirits, and the power of life and death. These witches are Special Classical mages.

The witchcraft as envisioned by the witch hunters seemed to be a combination of Faerie magic and Kabalic mysticism. It probably never existed.

Today, many people are joining together in groups, and calling themselves Witches. The techniques they use may soon develop into a form of magic based on innate psionics and the communal mind.

Most worship magics, as performed by priests, are spells that contact deities. The deity is then implored to perform some boon.

Worship Magic

Worship magic doesn't always occur in a culture, but it has often occurred on Earth, from Sumeria through the early Greeks. It involves general worship of a pantheon of representative deities, and often develops from spirit magic that involves belief in spirits inhabiting specific objects and controlling specific events. Worship magic usually doesn't use spells at all. The priest will have certain powers, depending on the god's spheres of influence, and will then have some form of *Godlike Ability* (see *Power Enhancements)* on those powers. The priest will have the *weakness* of having to ask permission from

the god in order to use the power. Priests invoke the power of their pantheon or specific deity to perform their miracles.

Voodoo and Slave Magic of the Americas

A very distinct magical tradition arose among the African slaves taken to the Americas. It was influenced heavily by their native spirit magic and the old magic that still existed in the deep recesses of the South and Central American jungles.

Voodoo mages are General Classical, and invoke extra-planar entities, and twist the extra-dimensional Living Matrix.

Gods, Pantheons, and other Heresies

How do you account for the ancient pantheons of legend? You have at least five choices, not counting simply claiming that the pantheons and gods don't exist, which is certainly a viable option.

You can decide that gods are the psychic projections of their worshippers. Or, gods can be from societies who existed in previous Ultra-Multiverses, and now live in the Void between the Multiverses. You'll find this to be a very Kirby-esque approach to gods. Or, you can take a cue from Douglas Adams, and put your gods in other Dimensions. The traditional approach places each pantheon in another Astral Plane. Asgard, Olympus, and the Happy Hunting Grounds are examples of such planes. Finally, gods may very well exist in out-of-the-way places on this plane, in this dimension, and on this planet. In many legends it was assumed that Olympus was just a mountain. The gods of the Yoruba simply lived in the sky. Asgard was across the Bifrost Bridge.

Faith and God in Comic Books

There is some concept of a supreme divine entity in the world of super heroes. Faith in such an entity can turn away, even hurt, certain evil spiritual creatures. Some good extra-planar entities claim to serve a single divine entity, although different servants often have a different conception of this divinity.

In some descriptions, this supreme divinity is ultimate good. In others, it is an anthropomorphic entity of generally good intentions, yet still subject to the flaws and failings of mortalkind.

There is the less defined concept of a supremely evil entity to oppose the supremely good entity. This opposition seems to be described anthropomorphically more often than its good counterpart, and is often

The foremost *public* practitioner of this magic is Madame Power, of New Orleans.

Talk of the devil…

It has been firmly established in comics that a devout Christian can turn away vampires with a Christian Cross, and a devout Jew can turn away vampires with a Star of David. But the faithful of one religion cannot use another religion's symbols.

Oddly enough, the faith of the *vampire* rarely matters.

I've placed my gods in the Void. I use the Astral Planes for more concrete denizens of goodness and evilness.

considered less powerful than the good counterpart. This may be because there are creatures who find it to their advantage to impersonate the supreme evil in order to get what they want.

Planes

Whereas Dimensions are physical shifts in physical (however abstract) dimensions, the planes of existence are psychic shifts in psychic dimensions. There are three levels of planes. These are the *dream* planes, the *medium* planes, and the *major* planes.

Dream Planes

There are either an infinite number of these planes or only a few which are used differently by different people. People's dreams do not always take place in a dream dimension. Only rarely, under great need or stress, does someone's astral form leave the body during sleep.

When in a dream plane, whatever a person thinks of comes into existence. There are a very few planes which are nightmare planes. Most nightmares are simply results of a distraught mind impressing itself on the dream plane, but the nightmare planes create nightmares themselves, nightmares worse than anything that anyone can think up alone. Very rarely does someone's astral form wander into one of these, but when it happens it is an experience which will never be forgotten.

Control of the Dream Planes

The Dream Planes can be controlled in powerful ways. Travelers to the Dream Planes can train in Dream Control, as a standard skill, which acts as a skill level in Weavers' magic. Only the bases of Physical, Energy, and Mind can be used.

Medium Planes

Note that while the astral form is in another universe, the perception of time and space are for that universe.

The Medium Planes are planes that border on physical effects. There is a plane that borders on time, a plane that borders on universes, a plane that borders on multiverses, and a plane that borders on time lines. There may be other planes as well. In these planes, the astral traveler can view other times, other universes, other multiverses, or other time lines.

Many strange creatures live in the medium planes, though there are few, if any, societies.

Major Planes

In the Major Planes, spiritual values take on real form. The Planes of Light and the Planes of Darkness encompass vast cultures and societies. The societies of the Planes of Neutrality are nearly incomprehensible to us.

For each of those planes, there is one *pure* plane that is the bastion and heart of that plane's ethos.

The Planar Barrier

The barrier between the astral and the real is known by many names. It has been called the Sea of Fate, the River Lethe, the World Tree, and the Caverns of Life, among many names. This barrier exists everywhere, and must be crossed to enter the Major Planes.

Places of Power

Ley lines and places of power once existed across this entire planet. The only remaining places of power are certain areas of the rapidly diminishing rain forests, a privately owned area of Appalachia, and one American Indian reservation in Arizona. Stonehenge is no longer a place of power, but a few of the lesser-known monoliths retain some power, and the ley-lines connecting them do as well.

In general, as a people become 'civilized,' they ignore and then destroy these places of power. Places of power are in delicate balance with the earth itself. Any upset, such as an influx of people, mining, or drilling, will remove the power from the earth. Arabia was once a land of magic, but that magic now drives our cars and powers our lights.

In the United States, there were perhaps 5 or 6 places of power known to the American Indians. But the musket and whiskey of the invaders caused much of this knowledge to be lost. Later generations, not knowing the power of the land they controlled, left or were forced off the shrines. Even those southwestern tribes who retained a shrine on their reservation no longer understood the true power within the earth. They allowed, or were forced to allow, oil and mining companies in, upsetting the delicate balance of the shrine, and draining the area of its magic.

There are three kinds of places of power, and these often overlap. There are places of *magic* power, places of *psychic* power, and places of *cosmic* power. At a place of power (or along a ley line), it is easier to use that type of power, and it's also easier for strange things to happen.

Loci of Magical Power: Using magic shifts down a certain number of rows on the EP Use Chart, reducing EP cost. This same shift is applied as an addition to the Astral Continuum in the area of the loci. Ley lines and monoliths are loci of magical power.

Loci of Psychic Power: Psychic and mental powers are shifted down on the EP Use Chart a specific amount in the area. This amount is also the chance that the power in question is unable to be controlled by the user, and follows the importance of the locus. The Arizona area is a locus of psychic power. Some monoliths are loci of psychic power. Stonehenge used to be one. Loci of psychic power are often places where dimensions meet.

Loci of Cosmic Power: Powers that affect the universal continuum, such as cosmic rays, time travel, time-line travel, and universal travel, are shifted down on the EP Use Chart, and the Universal Continuum is shifted up that amount. The Appalachian area is a locus of cosmic power.

Known Places of Power

Allegheny: In the Allegheny Mountains, perhaps the most powerful loci of power still exists nearly untouched. The central part of this area is approximately 100 square kilometers owned by one Melias Kramer, who is the mystical caretaker of the forest there. His land is approximately 15 kilometers east of Poplar Hill, West Virginia. See the adventure *A Taste of Jasmine*. This forest is a locus of cosmic and psychic power.

Arizona: There is a reservation in central Arizona which retains the natural balance of its shrine. Michael Dannbird is Shaman of this Navajo tribe. Sparrowhawk (a winged Apache) has been seen in that area as well, and there have been reports of a strange super-baby in the region. The origin of this shrine is murky, and may have been Apache before the Europeans resettled the American Indians.

Why Superheroes?

Why, indeed. First, you need to figure out what you're explaining. Are you explaining why super-powered beings exist? Or why they seem to exist in such large supply on *Earth?* You'll need to think about the future. Will there be as many super heroes around in the future as there are now? Were there so many super heroes around in the past?

The easiest way to explain super heroes is to turn the radio up whenever anyone asks about it.

An Outside Experiment: Humans are the result of experimentation by an outside individual or group. These can be extra-dimensional, extra-terrestrial, or extra-universal. Or whatever. Usually, the experiment is a *genetic* experiment, but it's not necessary. Humans could be part of some great, organic computer, and super heroes are part of the data being spewed out.

Of course, garbage in, garbage out.

Punctuated Evolution: One real-world theory of evolution postulates periods of relative genetic stability, punctuated by short, rapid bursts of genetic change. While this theory hasn't much of a following in the real world, the sudden presence of super heroes can give it added status in yours.

The Superhero Anomaly: There is a physical anomaly somewhere near the Earth. This anomaly is often a space/time *and* an astral anomaly. This explains the weird mutations in genetics, as well as minor alterations to the basic laws of physics. It also allows those annoying space warps that bring so many aliens into the area. If you use this option, add 1 (or more) to the space/time continuum and/or the astral continuum, in the area of Earth and our solar system.

The Supernatural: Something beyond normal science is creating super-heroes. Various supernatural beings are blamed, including God, the Devil, and various specific pantheons.

Society and Superheroes

Traditionally, civil authorities take a dim view of vigilantes. In a world of super heroes, the line between vigilante and superhero can be very thin. Which side of that line a character is on will affect how that hero is treated by authorities.

Classes of Heroes and Villains

In the public's eye, there are five classes of heroes and villains. Civil authorities generally make the same distinction.

People don't necessarily make these distinctions on a *conscious* level. But they usually do treat these classes distinctly.

Adventurers: Adventurers are people who don't look for trouble, but usually end up finding it anyway. Adventurers often become super heroes once they

decide to do more than wait for trouble to come to them. Adventurers usually have a real occupation—journalist, archaeologist, even politician.

Superheroes: Superheroes wear costumes. They have special powers or abilities, and they cooperate with authorities. When a superhero *doesn't* cooperate, there's usually a reason. If this becomes habitual, however, the superhero may well cross over into vigilantism. Super heroes do not take the law into their own hands.

Supervillains: Any costumed person who is not a superhero is a supervillain. Anyone with super powers who does not wear a costume is probably a supervillain. Costumed vigilantes are often treated as supervillains at first. Vigilantes with super powers are almost always treated as supervillains at first, and often for quite a while.

These guidelines are for cities where super heroes and villains are relatively common. Inexperienced authorities often treat super villains just like any other criminal.

A police officer will never try to stop a super villain without first calling for backup. Even if there are innocents endangered by the super villain, the officer will call for backup first, because the average police officer is simply no match for a super villain. A police officer always uses a firearm (preferably a shotgun) when stopping a suspected or confirmed super villain. The firearm will be drawn and aimed before the officer makes any threats. A police officer will not give a suspected super villain 'the benefit of the doubt.' It's simply too dangerous.

Sleepers: Some individuals with super powers hide their powers, and use them to advance within a normal career. Sleepers don't break the law, and thus aren't super villains. Most people believe there should be some law against them, however.

There will often be individual members of the civilian police force who do believe in what the vigilante is doing.

Vigilantes: Vigilantes often do not wear costumes. They take the law into their own hands. Vigilantes do not cooperate with authorities unless it's in their best interest. Authorities will not generally cooperate with a vigilante, and will, if at all safe, harass them. If they can arrest the vigilante, they will do so. Vigilantes who kill or maim will be treated as criminals, and possibly as super villains.

Civilians fear vigilantes in much the same way that they fear a corrupt police force, but more so, since vigilantes are under no control whatsoever.

Jailing Supervillains

In order to jail a supervillain, the villain must be *wanted* for a specific crime, or the superhero must have *proof* of a specific crime. If the superhero is supplying proof, the superhero must appear in court.

Supervillains are no longer jailed for assault on super heroes. As far as the public is concerned, that is the natural order of things. Prosecutors will rarely prosecute a super villain simply for assault against a superhero. When they do, they rarely get a conviction. When they get a conviction, it is rarely for more than time served. There is just too much to ask the courts to deal with. As often as not, the defense can present evidence that the assault was partially brought on by the superhero. The superhero, as integral to the case, must appear in court. And, since the superhero is the accuser, the defense will usually succeed in getting a court unmasking order—confrontation with the accuser is a very important part of due process. Finally, of course, there's simply the matter that nobody cares. Any super villain who hasn't done more than beat up on a superhero isn't a super villain worth worrying about.

Super villains can, of course, be convicted for *killing* super heroes. That's one of the reasons villains don't do it that often.

Prejudice and the Majority of Mutants

Most people with special powers don't have the real flashy ones. For every person with *Fire Coat*, at a super-powerful level, there will be 10 or more with *Fire Coat*, PR 1. There is a person in Russia with the ability to call forth a light, pastel shade of blue.

These people are often shunned by polite society. People are more likely to have prejudice against these types of abilities because they are closer to home. Also, with super heroes and super villains in the news every day, how can they know that these little powers aren't actually *big* powers in disguise?

Organizations

There are many strange organizations in most superhero worlds. When playing a member of an organization, remember that there are different levels of goals to keep track of. The organization has its goals, and so do the individuals involved in the organization. These goals will not always be the same, though they will usually be complementary.

When designing your own organizations, make sure you know the organization's goals, origins, and status. The state of the organization will include its financial status, the kind of members it attracts, and its legal status.

All of the following organizations will not necessarily exist at the same time. SIT may be formed before AIM, and the necessity of both PNEST and Project Prometheus may not be evident to the government for quite a while. Still later, a subsidiary project like Project Prometheus may well lose its funding, depending on the climate, the perceived need, and the past results.

Private organizations such as NAMES will be prominent during times conducive to their platform, and will be confined to the fringes when the atmosphere is not so well suited to them.

Agency for the Investigation of Mutants: AIM was founded to keep track of superhero and super villain activity around the world, and especially monitors the number of super heroes in potential U.S. enemies.

Carlog Enterprises: Carlog Enterprises was founded by Emmanuel Carlog in 1919. Carlog Enterprises is primarily a trading company. Carlog has offices and warehouses in every part of the world, and is ready to capitalize on any windfall or shortfall of goods. Emmanuel Carlog was a close friend of Louis Jasmine. Emmanuel's daughter, Louise Carlog, has been in control of the company since 1976. Louse and Lorelei Jasmine are close associates.

OSS: **O**ffice of **S**trategic **S**ervices

Central Intelligence Agency: The CIA was formed out of a World War II spy organization known as OSS. Originally meant as a clearinghouse for U.S. intelligence, the CIA takes part in covert operations throughout the world, both for information gathering and political manipulations. AIM is part of the CIA. The CIA has close ties with OSI also.

Federal Bureau of Investigation: The FBI is responsible for domestic intelligence and investigation of federal crimes. SIT is part of the FBI.

Future Study: This is a private organization, set up in 1973 by multi-billionaire John Champion. He secretly launched a self-supporting space

station past the asteroid belt. Since then, Future Study has grown haphazardly, and now resembles nothing more than a large, lopsided asteroid itself.

Future Study serves as a space-side watch station and guard post for Earth. It also conducts advanced electronic, computer, medical, and chemical research.

Interpol: Interpol is the police organization of the United Nations. In theory, Interpol's jurisdiction covers crime of international scope, but in practice Interpol is hampered by political machinations in most countries. The United Nations is not above it's own politics, either, so it isn't unlikely that Interpol's investigation choices might reflect the desire of the U.N. for greater power over individual countries.

Jasmine Oil: Jasmine Oil was founded by Louis Jasmine in 1935. A relative late-comer, Jasmine Oil has already grown and expanded to include much more than just oil. Jasmine Oil's research division is second only to that of Future Study, and its scientists are the best, and the best-paid, in the world. Louis Jasmine was a close friend of Emmanuel Carlog. His daughter, Lorelei Jasmine, has controlled Jasmine Oil since his death in 1979.

Jasmine-Carlog Electronics: JC Electronics was started in the early fifties in order to capitalize on defense spending. JC Electronics, then, specialized in high-technology research. They were instrumental in developing today's robotics technology. Today, Jasmine-Carlog is mainly a high-technology parts supplier for other defense and high-technology researchers.

Military Intelligence-6: Known colloquially as Her Majesty's Secret Service (at least, until there's a king to outrank Her Majesty), MI-6 is Britain's main overseas intelligence organization.

North American Mutant Eradication Society (NAMES): NAMES is a small organization operating out of Fargo, North Dakota. They are attempting to bring public support to the idea of confining super-powered beings for the common protection. To this end, they also strongly support laws requiring registration of all super powers. NAMES sporadically publishes a small newsletter, The Herald of NAMES, which is distributed to all members, contributors, as well as members of the House and Senate, and any superhero groups with public addresses. They also send the newsletter to any state or local officials who are considering bills that further the purpose of NAMES. Finally, they send a few thousand out to a random sampling of the United States population, with addresses taken from various phone books.

Office of Scientific Intelligence: The OSI is a branch of the National Security Administration, and it works closely with the CIA. OSI's purpose is scientific intelligence—its operatives search out and collect information about research into the fringes of high technology. OSI also conducts its own research, and funds private researchers. OSI provides weaponry and equipment for the PNEST branch of SIT. OSI also conducts Project Prometheus, in close consultation with AIM.

Organized Crime: There are many forms of organized crime nowadays. Besides the old Italian Mafia standby, there are other crime organizations sprouting up where other recent immigrants live together in relative poverty. Thus, there exists Chinese and Korean Mafia in the Chinese and Korean sections of some cities. A Greek Mafia has been rumored, and there are undoubtedly others. How organized these organizations are is subject to speculation, but it is recognized that the Italian Mafia has connections, at least, spanning the United States (New York, Las Vegas, and Atlantic City).

Project Prometheus: Project Prometheus is a subsidiary project of OSI. The main facility is beneath the quiet suburb of North Platt, Nebraska. That facility includes huge research areas, training rooms, administrative facilities, and surveillance equipment. Project Prometheus studies the means in which powers are gained, as well as the training that can bring humans to the limit of their abilities. The director of Project Prometheus is William Katt.

Radial Outer Congress (ROC): ROC is a vast, well organized criminal organization. They operate in industrial espionage, technological crime, assassinations, and crack mercenary operations. ROC always operates surreptitiously, behind the scenes. ROC is a world-wide operation, and has divided the world into 6 divisions, or Aviaries. The Eleventh Aviary is Aviary 100, consisting of all unmonitored land, islands, and space. Each Aviary is run by an Eagle, and all eleven Eagles make up the ROC Congress. The Congress is chaired by the One-hundredth Eagle.

There are two teams (Wings) which answer only to the Congress. One is a highly trained assault team, and the other is a specially trained Psychological Operations team. One of the PsyOp team's duties is the recruitment and training of new members.

Each Aviary is further divided into up to six Nests. Each Nest is controlled by a Sparrow. The Sparrow overseas the operations of the Operations Wing, the Infiltration Wing, and the Research Wing. The Operations Wing exists for covert, usually short-term operations. The Research Wing exists for the collection of all data of any value—political, scientific, and anything else that

may come in handy someday. The Infiltration Wing exists for long term operations requiring undercover agents and moles.

The Aviaries of ROC	
First Aviary	Middle East: Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India
Second Aviary	Pacific: Australia, Antarctica
Third Aviary	Orient: China, Mongolia, Japan
Fourth Aviary	Soviet: The old U.S.S.R
Fifth Aviary	North: Canada, Greenland, Iceland, the Arctic,
Sixth Aviary	U.S.A.
Seventh Aviary	Central America: Mexico, Central America, Caribbean
Eighth Aviary	South America
Ninth Aviary	Western Europe, Spain, Portugal, England
Tenth Aviary	Africa, Malagasy Republic
Hundredth Aviary	Otherwise unmonitored land, islands, and space.

The *Sixth Aviary* is divided up into four *Nests*:

First Nest	Eastern U.S.
Second Nest	Midwest
Third Nest	Southwest
Fourth Nest	Western U.S.

The Congress will discuss redrawing Aviary and Nest lines during 1996. It is suspected that the Aviaries will be redistributed along borders similar to the emerging economic blocks. Thus, Mexico and Canada will become part of the same Aviary as the United States, and the Western Europe Aviary will consist of the European Common Market.

There will undoubtedly be a power struggle to determine the re-organization of the Fourth Aviary.

Superhero Investigation Team: SIT was created for the surveillance of super heroes, super villains, and anyone who shows signs of super powers. Their main goal, however, is keeping track of super heroes. The government is worried that super heroes may someday get out of control, and also wants to be able to call on super heroes in times of national emergency.

SIT also overseas the two major super villain incarceration sites: SITRAAS (SIT Retention Area, Atlantic Side), and SITRAPS (SIT Retention Area, Pacific Side). SITRAAS is on a small island about 2 kilometers off the coast of New Jersey. SITRAPS is in an underwater bubble about 2 kilometers off of Los Angeles.

A SIT squad is set up in any city that has an infestation of superhero phenomena. The squad is headed by a Field Director, and each will consist of from 4 to 20 Field Operatives. In New York City, Miami, San Francisco, and San Diego, the SIT headquarters also run PNEST (Para-Normal Elite Strike Team). PNEST consists of very well trained commandos, equipped with the best in technological weaponry and protection straight from OSI research.

With the advent of super heroes, Developing Assistant Director of Acronyms has become a very prestigious post.

The Time Patrol: The Time Patrol is actually the Interdimensional Police of the interdimensional city of Twir, at the crossroads of time and space, where different dimensions and times collide. The DáGaKa (DiGoraKata, or DGK) duties do not normally include time travel, but if a major corporation's contracts are nullified because of someone messing with the time stream, or if a needed reality disappears because of that, the DGK is likely to step in to fix things.

The two best kept secrets of the DGK are the Reality Collider (GornRlok), which allows the wearer to retain a useful set of physical laws while dimension hopping, and the Interdimensional Web (DiGoraTane), a map of most of the known entry points to various time lines, times, and dimensions.

A few white supremacist organizations today are labeling themselves 'anti-politically correct' organizations.

White Supremacist Organizations: There has been a minor resurgence of bigotry recently, and supremacist organizations, under the guise of *white pride* or *anti-pc*, are making a comeback in parts of the United States. The most famous of these is the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Some openly advocate terrorist activity, some secretly advocate it, and some try to support oppressive laws. The range of individuals within each group tends to vary widely along that line.

When the FBI dredged the lake near where three activists disappeared in 1964, they didn't find the activists, but they did find the bodies of nine lynched black men.

Groups such as the KKK arose after the Civil War. Their purpose was to take over where the law no longer went—to keep Blacks from exercising their franchise to vote and run for office. Except for those cases where blacks armed themselves in contravention of local laws aimed at keeping them defenseless, terrorist activities by such groups was often very bloody and effective.

The Players of the Game

"The person running the world makes no difference, from the world's point of view, it is the legend of various characters that matter. The characters are the suns about which the worlds and games revolve."

Michael A. Stackpole
My Life and Roleplaying
Different Worlds #27

It is the Editor's *responsibility* to ask the players to expand on their characters. Specifically, you should ask for a short paragraph from each player approximately once a month. Normally, you'll ask for a *Connection*. Occasionally, you'll want a childhood event, a description of a hobby or favorite book, or a description of the character's views on a current event. You'll also want to know what the character's motivations and aspirations are. These needn't be long descriptions, and you shouldn't expect that of your players. The *Connections*, for example, could very well consist of three simple sentences—who they are, what they're like, and what their relationship is.

You shouldn't specifically ask for anything extensive. Some people, after all, have jobs and other obligations. However, three sentences can be easily whipped out on the fly. Anyone can be expected to do that. If they can't, or are unable to write, allow them to use a tape recorder or your answering machine.

If they're too lazy to come up with three sentences, don't worry about it. It's their loss, so let it pass.

Connections

Once you have a good list of Connections, use them in your adventures. You no longer need to make up relations and friends for the heroes to rescue—use the ones they've created. Connections can be hostages, targets, victims, and villains.

Be careful about killing them, though, especially off-scene. The character's Connections are part of the player's conception of the character. Changing them capriciously is like changing the character's origin, background, or powers. You *might* do it once, but do it too often and it gets annoying, and takes away from the game's fun.

Use Connections in non-adventurous settings as well. Friends will invite the character to dinner. Lovers will call the character in the middle of the night. Bosses will need extra work done quickly.

Look at Grant Morrison's run of Animal Man for an example of killing off lots of Connections in a good way. But realize that something like that can only happen once. Players are simply not going to stand for too much of it. And they shouldn't have to.

Past Events

You can use things that happened in the character's past to make current adventures more interesting. Past events can be reasons for current events. Things and people mentioned in passing can become important to an adventure.

Motivations and Aspirations

When you know what the characters are planning to do in the distant future, you can plan your campaign accordingly.

Activities Between Issues

At the end of an adventure, ask the players if there is anything their characters will be doing. Lab experiments and private investigations often require that the Editor have time to think about the results.

The Editor's Journal

I recommend that each Editor keep a short account of each gaming session. This should include what happened, who the characters met, and what was left undone.

The *Real*-World date

[June 5, 1991]

What Happened

In May, the Lurking Grue decided to apply to Miskatonic University for the coming semester (September). Bouncer continues his quest for the better beer. Jason invents the CyberNerve™ and looks for a marketer. Should net many bucks in the future.

In early June, the police inform Stephen that the grave of Huili Njoa was robbed. Stephen, as the Grue, follows the trail of the grave robbers to Boston Harbor, and discovers that their ship, which has since left, is from Rio de Janeiro.

If you take careful notes, your *Editor's Record Sheet* for each adventure can be your journal.

Dealing With Players

Editing Wars

If players get into Editing wars with each other, try to intervene peacefully. The two players should discuss their character conception and come to an agreement over who should succeed. When two player character conceptions clash, the result shouldn't be determined by who has the most Editing Points.

The Loner

One of the hardest character conceptions to work into a role-playing game is the *loner*. Loners make for great movies, but they don't tend to fit into groups very easily.

Often, loners make great tactical leaders. They know how to intimidate.

There should be no more than one loner per group. This character should have some strong link that keeps the character in the group.

If you do end up running one character separate from the others, there are two ways to deal with it. Most simply, you can give the loner's outside work a percent chance of success or failure. If you want to play the outside work, you should follow the guidelines given for running separate groups. Make sure that you give more time to the group than to the loner. If there are 4 characters in the main party, that group should get four times the amount of playing time as the single character.

Walk-On Parts

Sometimes, new players will arrive and want to play in your group, without having a character ready. Have some pre-generated heroes ready, with pre-generated links to the adventure and campaign, in case this happens. If a player decides to continue playing with the group, give that player the option of continuing to use the walk-on character, or create a new character. If they choose the walk-on, that character becomes their Player Character, and you'll need a new walk-on to take it's place.

Having these walk-ons helps keep your campaign from being cluttered up with heroes that were used once, and then discarded when their players decided not to continue with the campaign.

Plotting

There are quite a few techniques that can be used to move the plot ahead. Most of these are stolen from script writing or comic book writing. In developing your own style, take a look at movies and books, and watch how the story is developed and told. When you see something interesting, think about whether or not you can incorporate it into your games. For example, look at the many ways good comics open their stories. You don't always have to start your adventure in a bar. You can start it at the end of a fight. You can start it in the middle of a public appearance by the characters. You can start it in the middle of an argument over who dirtied the last clean fork. It's up to you.

You might also try different plot devices. A real dream sequence (as opposed to a dream caused by mind control or psychic impressions) can give you the opportunity to run a completely different adventure, while the players think it's still the same.

When Should the Adventures Occur?

I recommend running your campaign from one to four weeks behind. This way you know what has happened in the world, and you can use real world events in the adventures you create. It is highly unlikely that the players will have detailed knowledge about the specific events, from one or more weeks previous, that you choose to use.

Do not attempt to make it the player characters' fault that the event happened. This can be cute once or twice, but detracts from the sense that what is happening could be real, especially when the true reason is known. When using real-world events as bases for adventures, the line between realistic and silly can be a very thin one.

As it is, players will often have an inflated view of their characters' influence anyway. I once ran an adventure where a United States Government clandestine organization used the bombing of Libya as an opportunity to sneak some super heroes into Libya to recover a certain object. The players actually came to the conclusion that in this world, the bombing was designed simply as a cover for them.

You can use this tendency in your plots—other people in the campaign world may well believe the same thing.

Research

You don't want to do to much research—this is supposed to be fun, not work. Still, there are a couple of things you can use to do quick and dirty research. World Almanacs are pretty good. They often have time lines, as well as detail on many things that happened during the year the Almanac is for. Specialized encyclopedias can be useful when you are creating an adventure with a special hook. If the hook is baseball, use a baseball encyclopedia. If the hook is the European witch madness, use the Encyclopedia of Demonology and Witchcraft.

Remember that just as science in comics is comic-book science, research is comic-book research. If a player contradicts your facts, you've got two choices: Use the information, or explain that things are different in this world.

Props

Props can make your game much more fun and interesting. When using props, sparseness is the key word. Use a few simple props to stimulate your players' imaginations. I like to use one or two pencil drawings of the areas where the adventure takes place, just to give the players an idea of the layout. This will show mountains in the background, hills, large buildings and trees, but nothing elaborate. I also try to limit myself to using only one or two props per adventure.

Think of your adventure as a version of black-box theater.

News articles or broadcasts are nice. If you have access to a computer, printer, and page layout program, you can actually write up the newspaper article or classified ad you normally would simply recite to the players. Find a real newspaper from the day you want, choose a place to locate the article, and type it in with the surrounding articles. Then, print it out and you have a newspaper fragment to hand the players.

For **news broadcasts**, write up the broadcast and have a friend read it into a tape recorder. If you have some skills with recording, you might try to surround it with a real broadcast, and/or some real (or game world) advertisements.

Journal fragments are very useful. Start the journal a couple of weeks (game time) before the 'important' date, and end it whenever you feel like. Instead of telling the players "you find a journal; the handwriting is very bad, but you can make out…", you can hand them the fragment.

You can also use **mood-building** props. For example, if the characters are adventuring during the day, turn all the lights on. If it is overcast or dusk, turn the lights down. Make sure you still have enough light to read by. If someone in the background (game world) is blaring music, put something appropriate in your stereo and play it. You might even tape a radio station and add some game world advertisements and news reports. Don't get elaborate. A guideline I like to use is simply whether or not using the prop wastes time. If I think it

takes more time to play the scene with the prop than without it, I usually won't use it. Obviously, how much the prop enhances the scene will mediate this.

VCRs are useful if you have access to one. You can use it like a tape recorder for background TV shows, or even white noise—the characters walk into an apartment at 2 in the morning, and find a dead body and the TV still on. As the players say 'We enter the room', you turn down the lights and hit the remote control to turn the white noise videotape on. Then, you describe the scene.

Telephone calls can really add to your game. You'll need an accomplice to call while you are playing—and ask for one of the player characters. The accomplice pretends to be a non-player character. Make sure that your accomplice is familiar with what the NPC is supposed to say, and how the NPC is supposed to act. And be very clear that the accomplice must stay in character, since the player will probably, at first, think it's all a joke, and even be embarrassed to play along.

If you're really feeling ambitious, set up a costume night. During this game session, players should wear something that evokes the image of their character. Obviously, a human player can't easily look like an alien serpent. But that player can bring a toy laser, or use green facial dye. Players should be encouraged to use their imagination.

Links With Real Life

These can also be thought of as *game world* props. They add flavor to an adventure, and link the campaign to the real world. Characters in Hollywood might run across a shoot for a film that is actually being filmed, or might be caught in an earthquake that actually happened. There are four basic types of real-world links—things, events, places, and people. These generally only work in games set in the modern world.

Things can involve anything that has a reputation in the real world. The Mona Lisa, the Hope Diamond, the Declaration of Independence, Johnny's Hot Truck, or a Billy Bones T-Shirt. Anything that involves the characters with something that actually exists in the real world can provide links to enhance the feel of the game.

Events are useful to place the characters in time, and add an extra dimension to your descriptions. If the characters are in the same area as a major fire, or earthquake, or parade that actually happened, give them a brief description. This enhances the feeling of *being there*—of being in a world that exists.

Events can also be used more directly within the adventure. A current war can become the setting for an adventure.

Places add mood to an adventure, and add realism to the campaign. The occasional Las Vegas or Hollywood adventure is fun. You might also try an adventure or two in the players' home town, or at least the town where you are playing. Feel free to use your imagination when describing areas you are not familiar with. If somebody who does know the place corrects you, just say "Oh, yeah, I forgot", or be honest and say "Thanks." Depending on how much the corrections bother you, you can always surreptitiously move the action elsewhere.

People can be a little harder to deal with. When you put real people in an adventure, you have to be careful of a couple of things. Cameos require motivation and realism.

Cameos require motivation for being there. You can use real people randomly if just in passing, but if there is interaction with the players, there must be a reason for the person to be there. Don't just bring famous people in out of the blue, or your campaign will start to look like a sitcom. Also, try bringing some not so famous people in, such as a classmate, a professor you know, or maybe a local bartender. These add real and lasting flavor to your campaign.

Use some objectivity when presenting the real person. Try to keep both the situation and the person realistic. Characters are not likely to have an extended meeting with the President. Such a meeting will probably be five minutes or less in length, and strictly controlled. If the President is appearing with the characters as a public relations event, there is likely to be even less interaction. And don't let your own personal opinions cause you to make a person seem silly or ridiculous. This makes your campaign silly and ridiculous, even if only for a moment.

Stolen Plots

This isn't stealing, it's borrowing. It's like a classical musician taking a flamenco piece and incorporating it into a sonata.

Anchor the Plot

Explicably link the adventure involving the stolen plot to something in your world. Don't just force it into your campaign like a square peg in a round hole. Instead of using completely new non-player characters, find some non-player characters who already exist who fit the requirements for the adventure. If there were some events in the past that lead up to the adventure, see if you

can use some events the players were involved in. This is much better than simply saying, *you weren't around, but this happened, and it led to this, now let's start the adventure…* It is a good idea in any adventure to include links to the player characters' pasts and futures.

Let Time Pass

Also, allow some time to pass between deciding that it's a great idea and using the great idea. Do this for two reasons. First, it allows the idea to percolate in your brain for a while. You'll start thinking about how it will affect your campaign, what is needed for the idea to work, and how the characters will react to it. It will also give some time for the novelty of the idea to wear off, so that you will be able to make a more unbiased judgment on whether it will work for you.

Second, if you got the idea from one of the more popular mediums (hit movies, comics, etc.), your players may have seen the movie or read the book also. Waiting gives them time to forget it. This is important. If they pick up immediately that a movie plot is being used, that takes away a bit of the feeling of reality you are trying to create.

Timely Plots

Sometimes you will want to involve real issues in your campaign, whether it be hunger, abortion, or the right to die. This is good. To do it well, however, takes some work and objectivity.

You can't be *completely* objective. Nobody can. So don't worry. But don't use the moral as if it were a baseball bat in a street fight.

So, *know your facts*. This goes along very heavily with being objective. If you're going to use an issue you feel strongly about, build the adventure from facts, not from your own opinion. Especially take a good look at the opinions you want to get across, and make sure they are based on facts. Write these facts, and the opinions, and the reasoning connecting the two down. If you do not write them down you will make jumps of logic that will not stand up under the scrutiny the players will give, whether your conclusions are correct or not.

And, *let the characters form their own opinions*. This does not mean that non-player characters will not try to convince or even force an opinion on the characters, but never say, as game master, that something is stupid, no matter how stupid it is! Keep the player and the character separate in your mind. If you wish to argue with a player, wait until the game is finished. Be ready to accept that the characters (and even players) may come to different conclusions than you, no matter how obvious things seem. If you can't accept this, do not use the issue in the adventure. Period. This is a game, not a war.

Be careful of disputes arising between players. If it looks like an argument is developing between two players or between a player and a character, remind the players to keep players' actions and characters' actions separate. Do not take sides. Ever. No matter how ridiculous one side is.

Be subtle. This goes along with letting the characters form their own opinions. Do not use the game equivalent of a 16 ton brick to mark the 'correct' opinions. Do not shove the facts in the characters' faces. It is almost always unrealistic and will probably result in unrealistic reactions from the characters. Give the characters just as much of an option to ignore the problem as the players have in real life.

Be ready when the characters ignore the issue. Some will. It happens all the time in real life. That is their right. If you want all the characters to do things your way, write a book. This is role-playing.

Variations on a Theme

A good adventure is like a well crafted sonata. They exist in infinite variety. One composer can use the same ideas as another—and create a beautiful piece where the first was mediocre. All, however, are basically the same—Allegro, Adagio, Scherzo, Allegro. All music is like this, whether it's the I-IV-V progression, the twelve-bar blues, or the AABA verse form. Everything within the genre is a variation on the pattern, but the pattern is always evident.

Game mastering is the same. Most groups find a pattern they like, and stick with it. The pattern will be varied across adventures, but the pattern will remain evident. Here are some ways to add variations to your sonata, while retaining the integrity of the theme. Most of these ideas are taken from movies, television, novels, and comics—not plots, but ideas on presentation and direction.

Un-adventures are often called *Slice of Life* adventures.

Un-adventure

Take the cola out of a cola, and what do you have? Well, most people still call it a cola. It might be flavored differently, but the definition of 'cola' has been modified over the years to include most carbonated, flavored beverages. The same is true of adventures. Take all the adventure out of an adventure, and what do you have? A different flavor of adventure, and one that can occasionally refresh.

An un-adventure is a game in which very little actual adventure occurs. Characters are allowed to do mundane things, such as wash their laundry, see a movie, and order out for pizza. Loose ends from previous adventures can also be cleared up. The un-adventure should never be forced on the players. You should have another adventure ready in case some players get bored.

The Spontaneous Un-Adventure

I have found that the best un-adventures are not planned at all. The players all decide in unison that it is time for a break. Characters will quickly move to do things on their own, until everyone is off in pairs or alone, half of them doing things of little or no consequence. This most often happens after a series of major adventures. The players realize, consciously or subconsciously, that their characters need a night of completely mundane action to balance out the world-shaking events of the previous night. When this occurs, just let it happen. Your job is to keep it interesting. Add a few simple spices, such as a traffic jam or an annoying salesperson.

The Planned Un-Adventure

You can plan an un-adventure around a specific event, such as Thanksgiving dinner or the Rose Bowl. The difference between this and the above type is that here, the players are pretty much all in the same place, and the game master should have some interesting sub-adventures planned. The players have to deal with something they hadn't planned on dealing with.

This type of un-adventure can still be serious. In fact, un-adventures are often better for dealing with serious issues than 'real' adventures. There isn't so much extraneous information to cloud the issue. If you do decide to inject that kind of seriousness into your adventures, un-adventure or not, let the players decide what their characters think and believe. Don't make judgments on their decisions based on your personal beliefs. Certainly don't criticize them for their characters' actions.

Talk Shows—A Special Un-Adventure

As heroes and celebrities, the characters are likely to be asked to give interviews, both for news shows and talk shows. A talk show can be especially fun to play out—it's only going to take about fifteen minutes (the length of time the host is likely to give the heroes), and gives the characters a chance to answer really mundane questions. The heroes may even meet other celebrities who are interviewed on that show.

The Concurrent Adventure

You will sometimes want to run two or more groups of PCs in separate adventures, or in separate parts of the same adventure, at the same time. This is difficult. It takes concentration and skill.

Designing Concurrent Adventures

Most often, concurrent adventures occur because the players split up. On the rare occasions when you are designing a concurrent adventure, think about these guidelines:

Suspense: Use it mainly for suspense. Concurrent adventures work best to raise tension, when two or more groups are rushing separately towards the same goal.

Break it Up

You should keep the groups apart for short periods of time, rather than long periods. If possible, don't design the adventure so that both groups are separate for the whole game. Start with them separate and bring them together, or separate them for the final, dramatic rush towards the end goal. If you must keep them separate for the whole adventure, think about bringing some of them together for short periods and then separating them again—the groups, or perhaps individuals from the groups, can meet occasionally at crossroads in the adventure. Short periods of separation build tension more dramatically than long periods.

Running Concurrent Adventures

When running a concurrent adventure, keep three things in mind:

> Try not to get the various adventures mixed up.
> Try not to let the groups get out of sync.
> Don't allow the dormant group to get bored while you are running the active group.

Try not to get the adventures mixed up.

If you've tried running concurrent adventures before, you probably know what I'm talking about. When you have two, three, or even four separate groups going, it is very easy to forget which player characters and non-player characters are involved in each adventure. It is also easy to forget where you left off, and what happened. Events in one adventure have a tendency to slip over to the other(s).

There are two things you can do to minimize this. Keep notes, and do not allow players from one group to distract you while you are running another group. Other than that, it simply takes experience.

Try not to let the groups get out of sync.

If, by the end of the night, one group has spent three months of game time, and the other group has spent only three days, you'll know you're in trouble. Know that you can't keep the groups on exactly the same timetable, but use whatever chance you get to keep them close. If one group is getting behind, explain that you would rather not role-play the less important sections quite as much (such as buying equipment, finding a place to live, etc.) in order to catch up with the other group. Likewise, spend more time roleplaying these less important sections with the group that is getting ahead.

Don't allow one group to get bored.

Actually, the worst is when they sit watching for five minutes, and then start ironing or doing laundry. It's hard to accept that laundry is more interesting than gaming to some people.

Face it. How often has a friend asked to sit in- on a game, only to wander away towards the TV or stereo after five minutes? RPGs tend to be less exciting for observers than for participants.

When running concurrent adventures, you have to take turns with each group. This means that one or two groups are going to be observing either half or two-thirds of the time. I don't recommend running more than three groups at a time.

There are two solutions to this. Neither is perfect. The best is to somehow involve the other groups in the adventure being run. When this is not possible, however, allot a specific amount of time per group, and stick with it. Use a timer, or tell one of the players in a 'dormant' group to keep time.

Try not to let any group wait longer than 12 minutes between playing times. With two groups, I recommend giving each group five to eight minutes. With three groups, try three to six minutes. When you decide on a time, stick with it. When the timer goes off, stop—even if you are in the middle of something. Write down what just happened and is happening, and switch to the next group. You will almost always be in the middle of something when the time is up. By breaking in the middle, you keep the players in anticipation, so that hopefully their attention won't wander too far during their dormant period.

When training yourself to do this, think about some of the movies you've seen that switch between two or more groups working towards the same or different goals. Skillfully executed, it is very exciting. Note especially the use of cliff-hangers. Scenes rarely shift when nothing is happening. They shift

when there is uncertainty about what is going to happen next. That's what I mean when I say it is best to stop in the middle of something.

You should always try to involve the dormant players in the active group whenever possible. There are two ways to do this. The first is to have some NPCs that can be played. You might give two or more players control of one NPC if there aren't enough to go around. Or, you might try the second means of getting the players involved. Simply allow and encourage them to offer advice and comments to the players who are running the PCs. Normally, this is considered bad role-playing, so you will need the consent of both groups before you allow this. Some players find that this detracts from their playing experience. Experiment to find the right feel for your players.

Mood Breaks

Running Mood Breaks

Mood Breaks are used to break up an ongoing game and enhance the mood of the adventure. They can also be used to give players special clues. There are three simple guidelines that you should follow while using these ideas:

> Make sure everyone has a part.
> Know what is going to happen.
> Keep it short.

Give Everyone a Part

If each player's character is not present within the break, have some non-player characters ready for them to play. Make sure they are interesting non-player characters. Give the players a short description of the characters available, and hand them out, or allow the players to choose from a pool of available NPCs. When you design the break, be flexible as to which NPCs are the pivot characters, so that you can make the PC NPCs pivotal to the action.

Know What Is Supposed to Happen

These breaks usually are very integral to the adventure. Certain things must happen in order for the adventure to happen. Simply make sure you know what these things are, and don't allow the players a chance to change them.

Keep It Short

Because the players don't have as much control as normal, they are going to get bored if the break takes too long. Keep it short and this won't happen.

Feel free at any time to call it to a halt or move it ahead with a summary of what happens next.

Go With The Flow

All of these techniques add excitement and direction to adventures, using simple techniques culled from movies, books, comics, and television. Gaming is a creative literary enterprise, and is closely related to video and print media. Much of our plot ideas come from there; why not flow ideas as well?

The Introduction

The Introduction is also sometimes known as the *Prologue*, or *Opening Scene*.

One of the best examples of this is in Psycho—Hitchcock used a long introduction (ending at the shower scene) to set the tone for the rest of the movie. The introduction works well for horror based games, because it is best not to give the players too much real information. Here is an example of how it can be used:

> At the start of the game, hand out character sheets for a janitor, a professor, and two students, each working late in the biology lab. They notice odd noises throughout the evening. Suddenly, the power goes out. Take the janitor's sheet. He's dead, and never knew what hit him. One of the students goes downstairs for a coke, and sees the janitor's mangled body. He hears something sloshing behind him, turns, and sees a huge shape in the darkness just before he dies. The other student goes to find the first, sees both mangled bodies, and runs back to the professor. They call the police, and the intro is over.

The Interlude

Interludes are very useful for Foreshadowing.

Interludes are great for setting up the next adventure, and whetting the players' appetites for it. They can be used to set up adventures two, three, or more adventures later. The reasons behind most adventures do not begin with the player characters coming onto the scene. You can dispel the feeling that adventures come full-blown for the player characters by involving the players in the adventure's build-up. Some comics have been known to build up storylines years before the storyline was actually used.

Here's an example that might take 1 or 2 minutes to complete:

> It takes two players, playing a husband and wife. It's short, so let the other players watch. It is late in the evening, and they are cleaning up after dinner. There's knock on the door. John goes to answer. Mary yells from the kitchen.
>
> "Who is it?"
>
> "An elf…" John replies… " with a gun!"
>
> And the Editor abruptly ends the interlude.

Interludes are also nice for playing out a character's personal life. Allow the other players to play the character's boss, mother, or boyfriend. The player's character might or might not be involved in an interlude like this.

The Epilogue

Epilogues are very similar to interludes. Because they are designed to bring the reader/viewer back for the next installment, epilogues are usually more dramatic than interludes. Try to leave the players with a strong desire to know what happens next. Epilogues usually occur at the end of a game session where the adventure also ends, to set up the next adventure.

The Cliffhanger: The cliffhanger is a very clichéd but useful epilogue. Cliffhangers usually occur at the end of a game session that does not end the adventure, leaving the players in anticipation of the next session. The players may even desire to continue playing 'for just a few more minutes' in order to resolve the cliffhanger. Do not overuse this device, however, or it will become as clichéd in your game as it has in other literary genres.

Flashbacks are very useful when Retconning characters.

The Flashback

> The heroes have been captured by minions of the evil Green Hood. After being placed in a cell, they are met by Green Hood himself. Insults are exchanged. Green Hood turns to Major Ewing and snorts: "Don't you recognize me, Private?" and unmasks himself. Major Ewing gasps. "Captain Stark!" he cries, and suddenly he is flooded with memories of that dark night in Vietnam…

Sound familiar? Of course it does. The flashback has been used to death in countless movies and novels. When using a flashback, however, you must pay close attention to the second guideline—you must know what is going to happen. This is a flashback, not time travel. The player characters can't win Vietnam for the United States, because the United States didn't win in Vietnam. And Green Hood can't be killed, because he's looking at the characters in the present time. It can look like he died, but the death can't be lasting. Whether or not you allow time travelers to change history, this isn't time travel.

The Reminiscence: The reminiscence is a form of flashback which is much more narrative than active. In this case a character will tell a story about the past event. It is best to let the player make up the reminiscence on the spot, or talk to the player beforehand and give them a copy of the reminiscence to study. Reminiscences work best after the action, when tension is down. Standard role-played flashbacks work best in the middle of the action, when tension is up.

Alternate Time Lines and Imaginary Stories

For a *real* break, you can play an entirely different game using the same characters. Or *almost* the same characters. Take the normal characters and put them in a different world, modifying them for that world. Some characters might become non-powered; others might end up with different powers.

If you decide that this new story takes place in an alternate time line, then it really happened in the continuity. In this case, characters are likely to have similar powers, origins, and personalities.

If you decide to run an *imaginary story*, you can go wild. Characters can become *completely* different, even to the point of becoming a villain. You can create adventures that use the characters the players are familiar with, but set in a fantasy, romance, or cartoon style. These stories don't exist anywhere in the continuity. They're just a chance to break out and have fun in a new way.

Group Writing Session

A comparison between gaming and writing is often made. We get together, the Editor has created a backdrop for adventure, and we use our characters to write an adventure. Why not—just once—make it a *real* writing session? Some night before starting a new adventure, give the players the option of writing an adventure instead. Make it a communal project—everybody's characters are used, and each player has control over what their character does in the story. Let the players describe the non-player characters, as well. Let *them* deal with villain motivation for a change. Spend the entire session writing a story involving the players' characters. Don't worry too much about whether or not the story fits into the campaign. You can deal with that later.

Confine your role to that of an editor: encourage the players' creativity and maintain continuity with the campaign.

The One Night Stand

Many times you've got a group together for one night and one night only. They're in from out of town or you just don't get together very often. For best results, you want to *finish* the adventure in one night. And not only that, you want the adventure to last the entire night. It's Abraham Lincoln's legs all over again.

The adventure needs to be as long as it takes to reach the night's end. That's going to mean that you'll have to continually adjust its length. As the editor, you'll have to keep track of the time, and keep track of how far the players have to go. And you'll have to adjust the rest of the adventure depending on how much time has to be filled.

How can you do this?

1. *Time everything.* If you have time to work out an outline for the adventure before starting the game, mark off exactly *when* you expect the players to reach each major point. You will then know exactly when to start cutting the adventure down or start building it up.

2. *Keep it simple.* The 'main story' has to be simple, so that it will be flexible. No matter how many strange tangents you've gone off on, at any point you should be able to return to the main storyline when time is running short.

3. *Have optional tangents.* If you've already outlined the story, have a list of possible extra options at each of the major points. If you're running ahead, you can include some of those extras. If you haven't outlined the story, keep a couple of extras—villains, heroes, and normals—that you can use to liven up play if the players manage to move more quickly through the adventure than you thought they would.

4. *Have alternate endings in mind.* If you've managed to outline the adventure first, think about how the adventure could plausibly be completed at each of the plot developments in the latter part of the outline. You should also strive to make sure the *players* are the cause of the ending, not your non-player characters.

You might also keep a file of pre-created player characters for use on such nights. If players want to create their own character, you should encourage them to do so before they arrive. Use the optional rule, *How to Make a Hero*

in Half an Hour from the rulebook, if you have to make the character on the night of play.

Sit back and relax! Don't get too stressed out about the whole thing. Most of them probably aren't there to game anyway, they're there to have fun with their friends.

Your Non-Player Characters

Just as the non-player characters will define the world the player characters live in, use the player characters to define the world of the non-player characters. Look at things from a player's perspective when determining the motives of non-player characters. There is a tendency, sometimes, to treat your non-player characters as automaton that exist solely to go up against the player characters. In a sense, this is true. But the NPCs don't *know* that that's their only reason for existence, so they shouldn't act like it.

Villains will have families that they're worried about. They'll have motivations for their actions. They'll usually want to leave when it looks like they could be captured.

Normals

Generally, I assume approximately one out of every million people are *Special.*

The first type are the kidnap victims, the police liaison, the reporter who covers the superhero beat, and other Normals who are still active in the story.

A *Normal* is anyone who is not given special consideration by the game system. Normals tend to die easily. They may fall unconscious from a single heavy punch. Normals are easily controlled by magic and mind-control.

There are two types of Normals. Those who occasionally interact with non-Normals, and those who don't. Usually, you'll be dealing with the first type.

Random Normals

You will occasionally need a normal very quickly. When a stray shot goes into a crowd, when a villain decides to take a hostage or two, or when a hero gets mugged. When you are randomly creating a normal, use d100 divided by d4 for the age. For abilities, use 3d4+3 for 3d6 abilities, and 4d4+4 for the 4d6 abilities and attributes.

If these are Normals of the second type, and you have the time, roll *twice* for each ability and attribute, and take the roll that is closest to the average (10/11 for 3d6, and 14 for 4d6).

Normal Differences

First, Normals are more likely to die if they get hit for DP. If a Normal is hit for DP, the Editor must make an injury/death roll even if the Normal still has more than 0 DP. Use the number of DP lost, not the number of DP less than 0.

All attacks against Normals are Death Shots, with no saving throw allowed to bypass the DP portion of the attack. Use the Random Body Location chart to determine the kind of Death Shot. If a Normal gets hit by a Death Shot (from an attacker or a Massive Body Attack), the Normal does not use VP to reduce the Death Shot.

Normals subjected to mind control attacks, mind probes, illusions, and similar effects must save vs. Willpower *before* being allowed the normal saving throw applicable to the effect.

Normals do not get to re-roll ones when they make Action Rolls, although they do re-roll for 'passive rolls' such as the Injury Roll.

Special Relations

If one person in a family is *Special* (not Normal), others are more likely to be Special also. Parents and siblings of a Special character have a 1 in 10 chance of being Special themselves. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, step-brothers, and step-sisters have a 1 in 100 chance of being Special. Great grandparents, great uncles, great aunts, and cousins have a 1 in 1000 chance.

If both parents are Special, each child has a 50% chance of being Special. A true zygotic twin is 50% likely to be Special if the other twin is Special

Villains and Non-Player Character Heroes

When you are creating villains and NPC heroes randomly, don't roll three sets of abilities. Just roll one set.

More Detail for Non-Player Characters

You can use these rules as needed to randomly flesh out your non-player characters.

Personality

There are four aspects to a non-player character's personality. These do not, of course, completely define a personality. They do provide a good measure of

If a group of Normals are being affected, the entire group gets only one save vs. Willpower.

You can follow the progression further out if you want, but why bother?

how the non-player character will act in a comic book. Normals will be more average. For them, use 3d4+3, instead of 3d6.

Sociability (3d6): This measures how *sociable* the character is. At 3, the character always prefers to be alone. At 18, the character always prefers to be in a large group of people.

Morality (3d6): This measures the character's *moral code*, or how far the character is willing to go to get what he or she wants. At 3, the character is motivated entirely by self-interest. At 18, the character is unlikely to harm others at any cost.

Honor (3d6): This measures the degree to which the character will keep his or her word. A character with an honor of 3 is completely dishonorable. A character with an honor of 18 is completely honorable and trustworthy.

Outlook (3d6): A character with a low *outlook* is pessimistic. Such a character will complain that the situation can only get worse. A character with a high *outlook* is optimistic, and believes that things will always get better.

Sex and Sexual Preference

Please, don't succumb to harmful stereotypes when playing non-player characters of a different sex or sexual preference.

Half of human non-player characters are female, and the other half male. You'll have to decide what percentage of alien races are what sexes.

Four out of a hundred non-player characters will be homosexual. Or, if you want to take a cue from Bem (1985), use a *Sexuality* roll of 3d6. A score of 8 to 18 indicates heterosexuality. This will be different in different cultures, but follows from the generally strong societal pressure towards heterosexuality. Scores of 6 or 7 indicate homosexuality, and scores of 3 to 5 indicate bisexuality. This will also vary from society to society, as there may also be pressures to prefer mates of exclusively one sex, or there may be pressures towards bisexuality. Again, you'll have to decide what homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual mean, if anything, for alien races.

Family

Marriage: Non-player characters older than 16 have a chance of being married. Subtract their age from 16, and multiply by 2, for the chance that the character is married. This chance will never be greater than 50%. If the character is married, divide the roll by 4 and add to 16. This tells you how old the character was when the character married.

An non-player character who is married may have children. This chance is 50% plus the number of years the character has been married, but can be no greater than 65%.

What Makes a Supervillain Tick?

Money, fame, pride. All the standard motivations are there. Some are in it for the money, some for the glory, some because it's a challenge.

Supervillains and Superheroes

Some supervillains try to avoid super heroes. Some plan for superheroes, but don't care. Some actively seek out superheroes. When a villains beat a hero, they'll usually finish what they came for and leave. A villain will rarely kidnap or kill an opponent unless that was the purpose all along. Doing so incurs the wrath of the hero's friends.

Supervillains and Normals

Despite their horrible reputation, super villains tend to leave Normals alone. Normal people have this horrible tendency to die, and that means long jail terms. Beating up on super heroes is much more satisfying. This isn't to say, of course, that a desperate super villain won't take hostages to avoid being caught. But it's only the really desperate or really crazy villains who actively seek non-super heroes to harm.

Archenemies

In the course of a super hero's career, some villains will start showing up more and more often. When a super villain starts showing up just to get revenge on a superhero, the villain is well on the way to becoming an *archenemy*.

Archenemies can wreak havoc on a superhero. Especially the intelligent ones. These are the super villains who will take advantage of super heroes without secret identities. The really smart ones will also take advantage of a flimsy secret identity. They will collect generally known information on the superhero, and make whatever conclusions they can.

Some super villains will collect such information on *any* possible enemy—basically, every superhero in their area. Such villains will have files with whatever information they can find. They will often have underlings whose sole purpose is seeking out more information, in the newspapers, libraries, and office of records.

Motivations

Why are heroes heroes? Why are villains villains? Without delving too far into philosophy and psychology, there are still many levels to that question.

Why the Damn Costumes?

Why do heroes and villains wear costumes? Because they can. Fashion is very important in today's society. Every year fashion shows parade lines of clothing that no one will dare wear in public. As a superhero or villain, you can wear whatever you want to. Unless you're really out of line, the only people to laugh at your costume will be other heroes and villains. And you can blast them.

Tradition

The first super-powered being to go public put on a costume and ran around bashing criminals. So the second super-powered being put on a costume and ran around bashing him. Thus you have the first superhero and supervillain. After that, it just seemed like the normal thing to do. If you had superpowers, you put on a costume and either fought criminals or became one.

Different Types of Heroes

Heroes have different reasons for being heroes. Depending on their origin, heroes may defend law and order, they may simply help people, they may specifically go after supervillains, or they may be on the run from someone else.

Different Types of Villains

MadStar wants to create a world based on peace, love, and order. To do so, he must first destroy the old world. Oh, well.

Villains usually have more clearly defined goals. Some are monomaniacs. They want one thing, and don't care how they get it. Most monomaniacs want to rule the world.

Greed is the most common villainous motivation. Villains want money, or power, or both.

Other villains are on the run from someone, and they'll do anything they can to get away or throw their pursuers off the trail.

Why Criminals?

Hoo, boy. Now we're into *deep* doo-doo. Many people like to think that the majority of criminals choose to be criminals. And, of course, they do. But the

choice may not be completely up to them. If crime were based solely on the individual, rather than the environment, we would expect criminals to be spread throughout the socioeconomic layers of our society. Instead, most criminals, especially those involved in violent crimes, are, were, and probably always will be, poor. Just a healthy note of reality as you design villains for your players to bash.

Retconning Villains

When you create your villains and other non-player characters, leave some room for retcons. As your campaign grows, you'll probably want to add depth to the characters that the players meet. The best way to do this is to make your existing non-player characters more complex.

Villains, Editing Points, and Fate Points

Only Archenemies and Master Villains should use Editing Points to modify die rolls. And the only time they'll actually use them will be to escape those pesky heroes once it becomes obvious they're about to lose. As Editor, you'll have to decide how often you'll use Editing Points to help archenemies and master villains escape. Usually, you'll want to make it mysterious, or make it seem as if the villain planned ahead, if the villain successfully escapes. Remember to keep track of when you use Editing Points for a non-player character—this will increase the character's skill levels, power rolls, or ability scores.

Technically, as Editor, you have an unlimited number of Editing Points at your disposal. However, you should never use Editing Points on a roll for which a player is using Editing Points. This interferes with the player's concept for the character.

All Special characters can use Fate Points, even villains. When you do use a non-player character's Fate Points to get that character out of a jam, make sure you have an explanation. Explanations of this type don't have to be reasonable, they just have to work. Sure, it's improbable that a meteor will strike the small outer space prison the villain's body was stored in after she died, but in comics, it happens. Now she's back, and she's ready to party.

Remember that villains get Fate Points for the adventures they appear in (at the same rate as Player Characters).

Converting Characters From Other Sources

When you convert heroes and villains from movies, comics, or novels, the most important aspect to convert is the *style* that drew you to that character in the first place. With that in mind, here are a few tips to use when you convert these heroes and villains to Men and Supermen game statistics.

Abilities

Generally, the easiest ability to determine is *strength*. If you know the approximate mass and carrying capacity of the character, it's simple enough to determine the character's strength. *Build* is nearly as easy. All you need to determine that is height and mass. You do have to take into account constitution, though. Constitution, agility, charisma, learning, and newoen you'll have to estimate from what you know of the character.

Other Game Systems

Remember that Men and Supermen abilities and powers are open ended and unlimited. You'll find it easiest to convert characters from other superhero games, which also, usually, place no limits on ability scores.

If you're converting a character from a *non-heroic* game, you'll need to take quite a few liberties with the character's ability scores. The ability to lift 1,000 kilograms makes a character superhumanly strong in many, if not most, non-superhero game systems. You'll have to decide whether you want the character to be stronger than most *normals* or stronger than most *super heroes*.

The Concept of Q

Most action rolls use Q to determine how well the character performed the action. What is Q? Let's take combat as an example, since the combat roll is often the most common action roll.

The idea is that the higher the Q, the more control the attacker has over the attack. The attacker can decide that speed is more important than accuracy, or assign a higher priority to defense, all within the constraints of Q.

Remember that non-player characters shouldn't use the options you haven't told the players about.

All of those options can be a bit confusing at first. You may well want to inform the players only of the attack/defense options at first. When they're comfortable with that, describe the rest: performance time, damage, and multiple opponents.

Once the players understand the use of Q for combat, they should understand its use for all actions.

Dice and the Player Character

Remember, the players are co-writers of your comic book.

You should be very careful applying dice rolls to player characters. You should usually, if not always, discuss the topics described here with the player, when it comes time to use these options.

Useless Facts:

Area of Circle: Π times Radius squared

Area of Rectangle: Width times Length

Area of Sphere: 4 times Π times Radius squared

Area of Triangle: $^1/_2$ base times height

Circumference of Circle: 2 times Π times radius

Degree of Latitude at 40 Degrees: 110 km

Density of Air: .0012929 g/cc (divide by 3 per 10 km of height)

Density of Flesh: 1.4 $^g/_{cc}$

Density of Water: 1 $^g/_{cc}$

Diameter of the Universe: 10^{20} Light Years

Gravity: 9.81 $^m/_{second/second}$ (approximately 10 $^m/_{second/second}$)

Knot: 1.852 $^{km}/_{hr}$

Light Year: 946 X 10^{10} Kilometers

Liter: .26 gallons

Parsec: 308 X 10^{13} Kilometers, or 326 light years

Solar Wind: 400 $^{km}/_{second}$ (at the earth)

Terminal Velocity: about 54 $^m/_{second}$, 193 kmph, 13 $^m/_{segment}$, or 3.2 $^{km}/_{minute}$. This is reached after approximately 1 round, or about 150 meters. This only applies to Earth.

Velocity of Light: 1080 $^{billion\ meters}/_{hour}$, 300,000,000 $^m/_{second}$

Velocity of Sound (in air): .331 $^{km}/_{second}$, 331 $^m/_{second}$

Velocity of Sound (in water): 1460 $^m/_{second}$

Volume of Box: Width times Height times Length

Volume of Cone: $^1/_3$ area of base times height

Volume of Cylinder: Π times Radius squared times height

Volume of Pyramid: $^1/_3$ area of base times height

Volume of Sphere: $^4/_3$ Π times Radius cubed

Wavelength: 300 divided by frequency in MHz

Π: 3.141592653589793238462643383279 (or thereabouts)

Sir, I send a rhyme excelling in sacred truth and rigid spelling. Numerical sprites elucidate, for me, the lexicon's full weight. If nature gain, who can complain, tho' Dr. Johnson fulminate?

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— James Blaylock —