

DEVIL'S WORKSHOP PRESENTS

CHAOS EFFECT

# GODLIKE



LPJ9788

WRITTEN BY LEON COLLINS II



# WHAT IS "CHAOS EFFECTS"

Chaos Effects is a new line of roleplaying game supplements that offers guidelines for integrating major story events into superheroic adventure campaigns. Chaos Effects are not system-dependent. Each supplement can easily be dropped into any standard superhero game. As a result, the supplements are somewhat light in the way of rules information. The story, not the gaming system, is the focus of Chaos Effects.

## GODLIKE

*Godlike* is a *Chaos Effects* supplement introducing a major story event that greatly enhances a character's super-abilities, with sobering consequences. In the early stages of the arc, the character appears to be in control of her new powers, or at the very least, capable of learning control, but as time wears on, the situation worsens. The character's newfound abilities affect such profound change in her that her allies, even her closest friends, may no longer recognize her. As her powers continue to grow, her self-control dwindles, and her very humanity suffers. When, in a fit of madness, she steps over the line, using her newfound powers to commit some heinous crime, the other characters must decide whether their teammate is capable (*or even worthy*) of redemption.

Control is an important theme in the *Godlike* storyline. Without control, power is an extremely dangerous thing. A man with godlike powers and no control is little more than a force of nature, a random stroke of lightning. In order to maintain his sanity, he must struggle daily to be something more than a receptacle for power.

Love is another important theme. This does not necessarily refer to romantic love, as it also encompasses the familial sense of camaraderie that comes with a past of shared joys and hardships. As the campaign wears on, the characters' relationships with one another might be sorely tested, particularly when it comes time to decide how to handle the godlike character.

The final important concept in a *Godlike* storyline is that of sacrifice. It is this concept that holds the others together. Everything comes at a price, and sometimes, ultimate power demands the ultimate sacrifice. The choices the characters make will determine the final outcome.

The *Godlike* supplement gives advice for running a campaign in which a character is suddenly endowed with immense power. It also provides insight as to managing the potential effects on the game, the other characters, and the world at large.

## USING GODLIKE

*Godlike* is broken down into six chapters. The first, **Preparing**, describes the process of setting up the storyline, both in and out of the game. Here, the game master will find advice for choosing a desirable receptacle for the godlike power and predicting its potential effects on the other characters and their players. **Campaign Integration** contains hints for ensuring the smooth transition of the storyline into the campaign world. Here, the campaign premise and basic plot outline are provided in general terms. **Archetypes** is a chapter meant to help the game master classify the characters in the campaign, so as to better interpret and predict their behavior. **The Nature of the Power** describes a number of classifications and uses for powers that might turn up in the storyline, with particular attention given to the powers and abilities of the godlike receptacle. **Non-Player Characters** contains a number of character concepts for use in the campaign, either as allies or antagonists. **Adventure and Plot Hooks** presents a few potential adventure hooks, complications, and campaign events concerning the *Godlike* storyline.

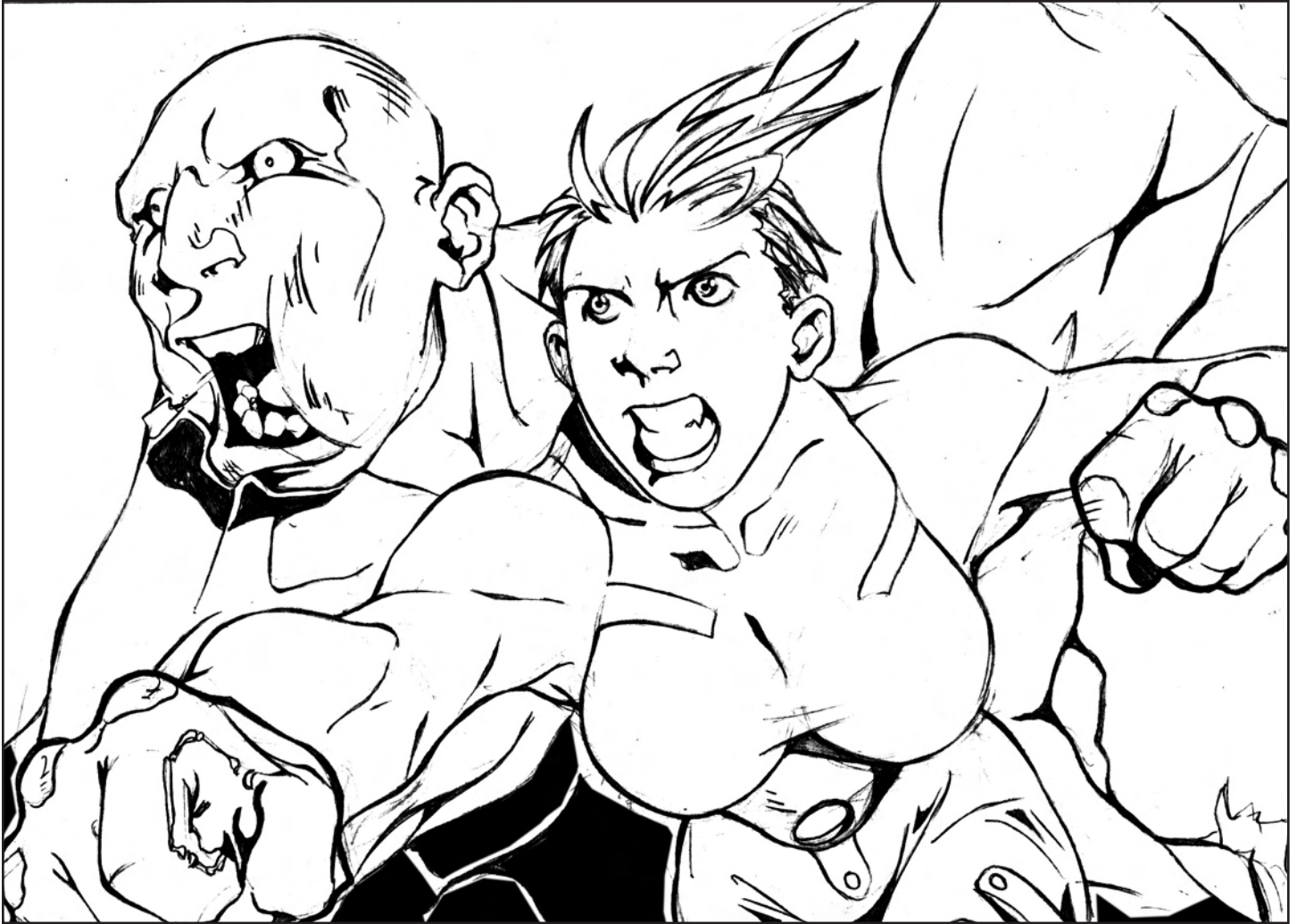
Sidebars are included throughout the supplement, with advice on possible game mechanics and examples of the chapter material in the context of actual gameplay. These sidebars are intended to serve as campaign aids, inspirations, or warnings to game masters hoping to run a *Godlike* campaign. If nothing else, they can provide interesting diversions for a casual reader.

## IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

Certain terms will be used repeatedly in this supplement, and the following entries are intended to aid readers who feel it might be beneficial to learn what exactly they mean in the context of this work.

**Control** – Control refers to a receptacle character's ability to use and control the Power. Control is measured in grades, from *tight control* to *no control*, where the latter sees the character completely overcome by her Dark Half. Control is described in further detail in **Campaign Integration**.

**Dark Half** – The Dark Half is the malicious, uncontrolled side of the receptacle that slowly eclipses the her person-



ality. As the magnitude of her powers increases, the receptacle's personality fades, and the Dark Half takes over, committing terrible acts through her. The Dark Half may be a previously-repressed personality, a possessing spirit, an overwhelming, yet natural, arrogance, the stereotypical murderous "voices," or something else entirely. It is not the receptacle, but her Dark Half that is the enemy in the *Godlike* storyline, and the characters' discovery of this fact is a significant aspect of the story. The Dark Half is described in further detail in **Archetypes**.

**Power** – The Power is the generic term for the abilities wielded by the receptacle. Its type, scale, descriptors, and capabilities are determined by the game master before play. The Power only refers to the receptacle's newfound large-scale abilities, those which she did not possess before the start of the storyline. The Power generally has a name, appropriate to its Source, potential, and capabilities. More details on the Power can be found in **The Nature of the Power**.

**Receptacle** – The receptacle is the character endowed with a Power. Whether she is a player character or non-player

character, she should be associated in some way with the player characters, either as a contact, friend, teammate, or some combination of the three.

**Scale** – The scale of a receptacle's Power is essentially the maximum area her effect descriptions can influence. In other words, it encompasses a Power's area of effect.

**Source** – The Source is, predictably enough, the source of the receptacle's Power. It might be a sentient entity, an energy form, a special dimension, or a pseudomystical language pattern. The Source is introduced to the receptacle character at the beginning of the storyline, and its incredible, alien power is the root of the problem posed by the Dark Half.

## CHAPTER ONE: PREPARING

Before beginning any major story event, it is important for a game master to know exactly what to expect from her story, her players, and herself. While a poorly prepared game can be fun with the right group, it can also be

outright disastrous. This chapter aims to help the game master plan ahead, so that her campaign runs as smoothly as possible.

## KNOWING THE PLAYERS

Undoubtedly, the players are the most important parts of any roleplaying game. Their enjoyment is every bit as important as the game master's, and given the traditional roleplaying game's power structure, as well as the wide variations in individual tastes and preferences, they are often much harder to please. For this reason, it is important that a game master interested in introducing a *Godlike* storyline take into account how her players might react. There are a number of ways in which she might go about introducing the event.

First, she may choose to go over the *Godlike* arc with the players, putting out in the open exactly what the campaign entails, her expectations of them, and theirs of the game. She may also be inclined to point out potential roleplaying opportunities and challenges, taking into account their characters' relationships with one another and the world at large. For example, she could point out the potential strain it might put on the already tumultuous relationship of two romantically involved characters when one suddenly develops world-shattering telekinetic powers influenced by his rapidly deteriorating emotional state.

Although some might consider this a sort of "hand-holding" gameplay style, it does work well for troupes with players new to roleplaying, as it allows novice gamers to plan certain actions, reactions, dialogs, monologues, and dramatic events in advance so that there is less pressure for on-the-spot decisions and less risk of problematic decisions or missed roleplaying opportunities. This option is also beneficial if the game master is not certain that the group is ready to run in the *Godlike* arc, as might be the case if the players feel they have enough going on with other story elements and would rather focus on tying up previously-established loose ends before embarking on a new, complex story. Finally, potential problems can be anticipated. If a player already feels slighted, ignored, or cheated somehow, freely handing godlike power to another character and revolving an entire campaign arc around her might create undue strain in the group. Due to the increased power scale involved, as well as the required focus on a single character, the game master is encouraged to ensure that player tensions are at a low and manageable level before initiating the *Godlike* storyline. This is particularly important in novice groups.

## ...OR FOREVER HOLD YOUR PEACE

It is at the initial stages of the *Godlike* campaign that the game master should go over the scale of the receptacle character's Power with her player. Even if the desired storyline involves the character, and thus the player, learning the particulars of her abilities as play goes on, by the time play begins, she needs to know approximately how great an area she can affect, how many people can be targeted at once by her abilities, and whether or not these qualities might change. This helps to reduce the chances of problems later, when it is time for the player to describe her character's use of her Power; if the game master has to "veto" effect after effect, she probably hasn't explained the scale of the character's Power very well.

Instead of giving details to everyone, the game master might just talk over the general premise of the *Godlike* arc with the player whose character is the intended receptacle for the Power. This option works well enough for more mature or experienced groups. In this case, the player of the receptacle has some idea of what is going on, and her character can react accordingly. By discussing the matter with the player, the game master lessens the chances of that player feeling her character is being unnecessarily tampered with, singled out, or "picked on" when things begin to unravel for her. Furthermore, the character can be prepared for the possibility of a tragic ending to the storyline, in which her character might be jailed or killed. This gives the player a chance to contest certain possible endings, voicing her own opinions of how far she's willing to let the story drive her character.

The other players are, for the most part, left in the dark as to the situation, which allows for a degree of excitement and mystery that many gaming groups enjoy. This way, their awe, confusion, and interest should ideally mirror that of their characters. The magnitude and general direction of the campaign need not be a secret; the receptacle's player just has more knowledge of the big picture than the other players. This can be accomplished by meeting separately with the receptacle's player, perhaps before or after sessions or through some other method of correspondence, such as email.

Finally, the game master might choose to spring the *Godlike* arc on the group without warning. This option is recommended only for relatively experienced groups, and even then, it may be beneficial to drop hints as to the nature of the situation beforehand. This method further enhances the excitement and novelty of the *Godlike* story arc, at the possible expense of group harmony. The game master should really know her players before attempting

to use this option, as it is a potential powder keg, where players can feel alternately changed, ignored, overshadowed, picked on, screwed over, and railroaded. The game master should always be on the lookout for signs of resentment, helplessness, or frustration and be prepared to deal with them with sensitivity and encouragement. If players start to roll their eyes, throw their hands in the air, or shrug noncommittally when it is time for action (*or, frankly, at any time*), the game master should be prepared to adjust accordingly, either by coming out and giving more information about the intended storyline, or by being willing to make concessions to keep frustrated players happy.

## KNOWING THE CHARACTERS

It is advisable to consider one's characters when planning any major campaign event. The characters, particularly the receptacle's character, should influence the nature of the Power to be introduced. The game master should ensure that the Power fits well enough into the game's setting, the appropriate characters' roles, and the players' play styles to make for an interesting, complex gaming experience. The characters' values, temperament, and motivation should all have a significant effect on the story and their roles in it.

For example, a Power involving spontaneous matter creation and manipulation would better serve a hedonistic, roguish thrillseeker character than an unimaginative and grim avenger of the night. Where the latter hero might use the Power to create weapons, prisons for evildoers, and possibly havens, the former can use the Power to create and indulge in a wide variety of pleasures, from perfectly-molded, scantily clad (*or unclad*) exotic women to great pleasure palaces stocked with fragrant, expensive wines. When deciding which character will be a receptacle for a given Power, the game master should consider very carefully the character's tendencies and potential to use the Power.

Other characters can also influence the game master's choice in Power and receptacle. A game master interested in providing an opportunity for rivalry between characters, for example, might choose a somewhat unpopular character, such as the team's obnoxious hotshot, bestial loner, or angst-ridden whiner, to be the receptacle, while a game master desiring to emphasize a sense of genuine fear, loss, or fear of loss in the storyline would do better to empower a particularly well-liked character whom the others will be loathe to see harmed in any way.

## DO IT YOURSELF

The default assumption in this product is that one of the player characters takes on the role of the receptacle for

a Power. Much of the advice for Power usage and character development assumes that the receptacle is a player character. This need not be the case, however. If the game master feels more comfortable taking on the role herself, or if she does not feel that any of her players will do so enthusiastically (*or effectively*), she might instead decide to make the receptacle a non-player character ally or teammate of the players. This puts a bit more pressure on the game master, but might allow for smoother gameplay in the end. The NPC receptacle can be used either as described in this supplement or as a simple plot device.

More information on the roleplaying potential of different sorts of characters can be found in **Archetypes**.

## CHAPTER TWO: CAMPAIGN INTEGRATION

The *Godlike* storyline is intended to help gaming groups emulate story elements involving the onset of immense power, such as those found in numerous popular storylines, from *The Uncanny X-Men* to *Green Lantern* to *Akira*. It is not, however, always easy to plan for every eventuality in a campaign, nor is it easy to have a set of specific events appropriate for all settings and play styles. This section is intended to provide the game master with a set of story guidelines that *are* modular and can be used in most, if not all, settings.

## POWER SCALE

Under narrative-based Power rules, it is important to establish a receptacle's Power scale. This represents the area she may affect with her abilities. Power scale is completely up to the game master, but it generally falls within one of four categories: immediate, local, regional, or global. Each category is briefly described below.

**Immediate:** *The Power generally only functions against targets in her immediate area, no more than a few hundred feet, and possibly as little as 30 feet.*

**Local:** *The Power can possibly affect a city-sized area, perhaps affecting everyone within city limits or manipulating or creating an object the size of a city.*

**Regional:** *The Power can affect a huge area, possibly the size of some countries.*

**Global:** *The Power can affect entire planets, possibly rearranging continents or changing the composition of the seas.*



It should be noted that even lower-scaled Powers can have large-scale effects. A character with a regional-area Power can wreak worldwide havoc with a single Texas-sized meteor.

### THE PREMISE

The *Godlike* storyline involves the endowment of some great Power on a character, a *receptacle*, in a superhero campaign. As a result, this receptacle gains new, impressive abilities to which she, her allies, and the world at large must adjust. Over time, her abilities, begin to mature, and her powers grow. Her self control, however, falters, whether due to the toll great power exacts on the mind or to the inability for any mere human to contain such energy. The end result, whatever the rationale, is that the receptacle is plagued by certain inconsistencies, particularly in relation to her abilities and personality traits. As her lapses become more frequent (*and more costly*), she is inevitably branded a menace. Other forces, good and evil, mobilize, uniting to neutralize the threat posed by the character. Her companions are left with the unenviable choice of whether to stand by her side or turn against her for the sake of the world. This is the core of the *Godlike* storyline.

### THE POWER

The Power is a catch-all term for the massive-scale abilities bestowed upon a receptacle at the start of the *Godlike* storyline. Every Power has some unifying motif that should, in some way, be tailored to the abilities and characteristics of the receptacle. It is essentially a theme, often related to a form of energy or an extreme version of a lesser super-power. The game master, not the player, creates and defines the receptacle's Power. This allows the game master to tailor its scope, scale, and concept to fit the setting and desired story direction.

The abilities provided by the Power are primarily narrative. It does not just add new super-powers to a character's abilities. The defining quality of a Power is its ability to affect things in numerous ways on a large scale. A Power does not generally manifest solely as additional, comparatively mundane, super-powers, such as flight or energy projection. Nor is it simply an enhancement to such powers. While certainly impressive, the ability to topple a skyscraper or a mountain with a disintegration beam does not constitute godlike power. Similarly, a character who can read minds from across the world is "just" a powerful

telepath. Even simple masteries of energy forms do not necessarily qualify.

The Power is less a sphere of influence than it is a vehicle for manipulating reality. Its capabilities are not confined to a single sphere of mastery or influence; rather, it can be used to do anything dramatically appropriate, provided the player and game master have the necessary imagination. An appropriate Power, for example, might be described as “null energy,” capable of negating or nullifying anything, from gravity (*which could allow for effects as simple as flight or complex as metropolis theft*) to emotional states (*which could be used to dissipate an individual’s love for his wife or eliminate all fear in an entire city*) to others’ powers (*which could allow a receptacle to rob other heroes and villains of their superhuman abilities, perhaps on a continental scale!*).

The Power’s uses are tied tightly to its concept, so it is important for the game master to clearly express to the character the narrative limitations of the Power’s effects. For example, it is important for the character to know her *scale*, or how large an area her powers can affect. Can she influence an entire continent? A planet? A city? The scale will depend greatly on the game master’s desires for the story. A character with an energy-based, continent-spanning Power could conceivably put all of Africa or South America to the torch, which could have massive, possibly unforeseen, ecological effects on the rest of the world. While appropriate for many campaigns, such drastic changes could alter the tone of the game forever. The game master is encouraged to consider carefully the potential galactic, global, and local consequences when deciding on a scale for a receptacle’s Power.

## POWER/USE

A receptacle’s Power is far and away more impressive than abilities available in most superhero roleplaying games, and as such, it might be helpful for the game master to “model” it differently. A Power can be handled in a couple of ways, depending on the desires of the game master and the specifics of the gaming system involved.

## POWER/USE: ABILITY POOL

The more complicated method has the game master develop a set of rotating abilities available to the receptacle when she taps her Power. These abilities are defined in terms of the gaming system, often in the form of immensely high-leveled or advanced versions of the super-powers presented in those rulebooks that ignore most level caps and limitations established for game balance. The receptacle can then access this extra “pool” of expanded

powers any time she taps her Power. Although it makes for decent compatibility, this method is somewhat limiting in that the powers in a given gaming system may not always match up with what a player wants her supposedly “godlike” character to do. Also, in crunch-heavy games, this can be quite cumbersome, as the game master might need to come up with a huge set of fairly comprehensive abilities for the character.

**Example:** *Terrence, the game master, has decided that Lady Lazar, a ghostly, undead avenger in his campaign, will be the receptacle for a Power called the Long Silence. The Long Silence, in Terrence’s mind, is a mystical energy field powered by the accumulated deaths that have occurred in a given area. He sets to defining it in terms of the HeroMesh Roleplaying Game, which he and his players are currently using. The HeroMesh rulebook has such impressive and appropriate super-powers as Alternate Form, Animate Dead, Blast, Fear Aura, Manipulate (Object), Obscure Sound, and Resurrection, using a numeric rating between 1 and 20 to measure powers. He decides that Lady Lazar has each of these powers at a rating of 18 and makes some modifications for range (basically bending the rules to allow her to affect her entire scale, which, Terrence has already decided, will be regional). When the Lady’s player decides to tap the receptacle’s full Power, she can access these powers in addition to those she already possesses. Also, Terrence decides, with a good explanation and a solid description, she can substitute any of these powers for equal ratings in other appropriate super-powers in the HeroMesh rulebook, though doing so tires her. He opts to explain this to Lady Lazar’s player over coffee on Wednesday before beginning the storyline that weekend.*

## POWER/USE: NARRATIVE-BASED

If the previously-mentioned Ability Pool method sounds undesirable, the game master might choose to make the effects of the receptacle’s Power narrative-based, where the individual playing the character (*whether it be a player or the game master*) describes the effects of her own Power, provided the descriptions are within the bounds of the Power’s scale and given in terms of its concept. Although at first, this method may seem almost ridiculously permissive, it does limit the Power to the player’s imagination and descriptive talents. In order to achieve a desired effect, the player must be able to describe what she wants to do using terminology related to her Power’s concept. This is why it is so important for the game master to go over the Power and its scale with the receptacle’s player. Essentially, the character becomes capable of nearly any effect, provided she can justify it.

The game master decides on a basic, artificial “score” or “level” for the Power, however, to better judge others’ ability to resist certain effects (*such as mind control, energy blasts, and body modifications*). This score primarily applies to important characters (*particularly player characters*), who should always stand some chance of resisting or avoiding the effects of a Power. When a Power is used against such characters, it should be treated as an appropriate effect or power detailed in the gaming system, at a level, rank, or rating equal to this artificial score.

Less important characters, such as NPC “normals” and mundane soldiers, and objects can be altered, destroyed, or modified at will by the receptacle, based on her descriptions. Particularly good descriptions of effects and activities, at the game master’s discretion, might result in a bonus to the Power’s score. Poor descriptions and attempts to create effects ill-suited to a Power’s concept are simply denied, or “vetoed” by the game master. She basically notifies the player that the desired effect does not happen (*or, in some cases, that it doesn’t happen as intended*).

At the game master’s discretion, the score might also provide the receptacle with some form of force field or similar defensive power against attacks she is aware of, at no additional cost.

This method is much simpler than the one mentioned above, although it requires a little more effort on the part of the receptacle’s player.

**Example:** *Terrence, from the above example, has spoken to Amee, Lady Lazar’s player. It turns out that she is not particularly fond of the idea of her character’s supposedly “godlike” Power being represented by a set number of specific super-powers. Given Amee’s respectfulness and eloquence, Terrence decides to try a different route. He rules that Lady Lazar can essentially do anything appropriately related to the energies derived from death, otherwise known as the Long Silence, and that Amee will be responsible for coming up with imaginative uses for this ability. He sets the Power score of the Long Silence at 18, explains a few acceptable examples of use, and notes that her Power’s scale is regional.*

## CONTROL

Although the receptacle’s Power is incredible, it should be noted that she does not necessarily have consistent access to it. A major theme in a *Godlike* storyline involves control. In the comics, characters with amazing, godlike powers, often limited by arrogance, ignorance, inexperience, infirmity, or some other problem, only rarely use

them to their fullest extent. This is where a receptacle’s control comes into play. Control is a measure of how often a receptacle has access to her Power. Higher levels of control result in diminished access to the Power, and as the Power is used more frequently, control decreases in stages. While this may at first seem counterintuitive, it is meant to represent the corrupting nature of ultimate power. A receptacle who uses a Power too often slowly incorporates it into her self-concept, her being, and the effects on her mind can be devastating. As the Power is used with increasing frequency and decreasing restraint, it is eventually the Power, not the character, at the helm.

Control is measured in several distinct, descriptive stages, detailed as follows: *tight control, basic control, diminished control, and no control*.

**Tight Control:** A character with tight control on the Power really doesn’t need or use it much. She can access its full power once per game session if desired, though it tires her to do so. She retains this access for up to one minute or a full scene, whichever seems most appropriate. A receptacle with tight control on her Power is run, for the most part, like any other character. This stage should generally last longer than the others, as it might be rewarding for the characters to slowly investigate and discover the insidious source of what at first appears to be a blessing. The receptacle’s newfound abilities can aid her and her allies in escaping particularly dangerous situations and overcoming seemingly unconquerable obstacles, and they should be grateful for it. If, after a couple of sessions in the tight control stage, the receptacle appears to have come to rely on the Power to get her out of dangerous situations, it is time to reduce her level of control. Whatever the circumstances, a receptacle should rarely maintain tight control for more than five or six gaming sessions.

**Basic Control:** Eventually, the receptacle grows comfortable, if not proficient, with her Power. Upon reaching this level of control, the player may choose to re-imagine her character (*during downtime, of course*), perhaps trading old abilities and super-powers for new ones more closely tied to the Power. In game systems that incorporate major, incremental “levels” of character advancement (*such as character levels, power stages, etc.*), it may be beneficial for the game master to time the receptacle’s acquisition of basic control so that it coincides with one such advancement. This allows the character to not just trade out old abilities, but it also provides an in-game rationale for her increase in strength and possibly allows her to develop new abilities in addition to her old ones. The Power is now an integral part of her character concept and should play a role in any new abilities chosen. Also, a receptacle with



basic control can tap her full power once per game session, and doing so does not tire her in the least (*she can use the power for a full scene*). Attempting to tap the Power more than once in a session, however, could send it spiraling out of control, an event which allows the game master, rather than the player to describe the effects. These effects should be inconvenient and potentially dangerous, though not, at this stage, incredibly so.

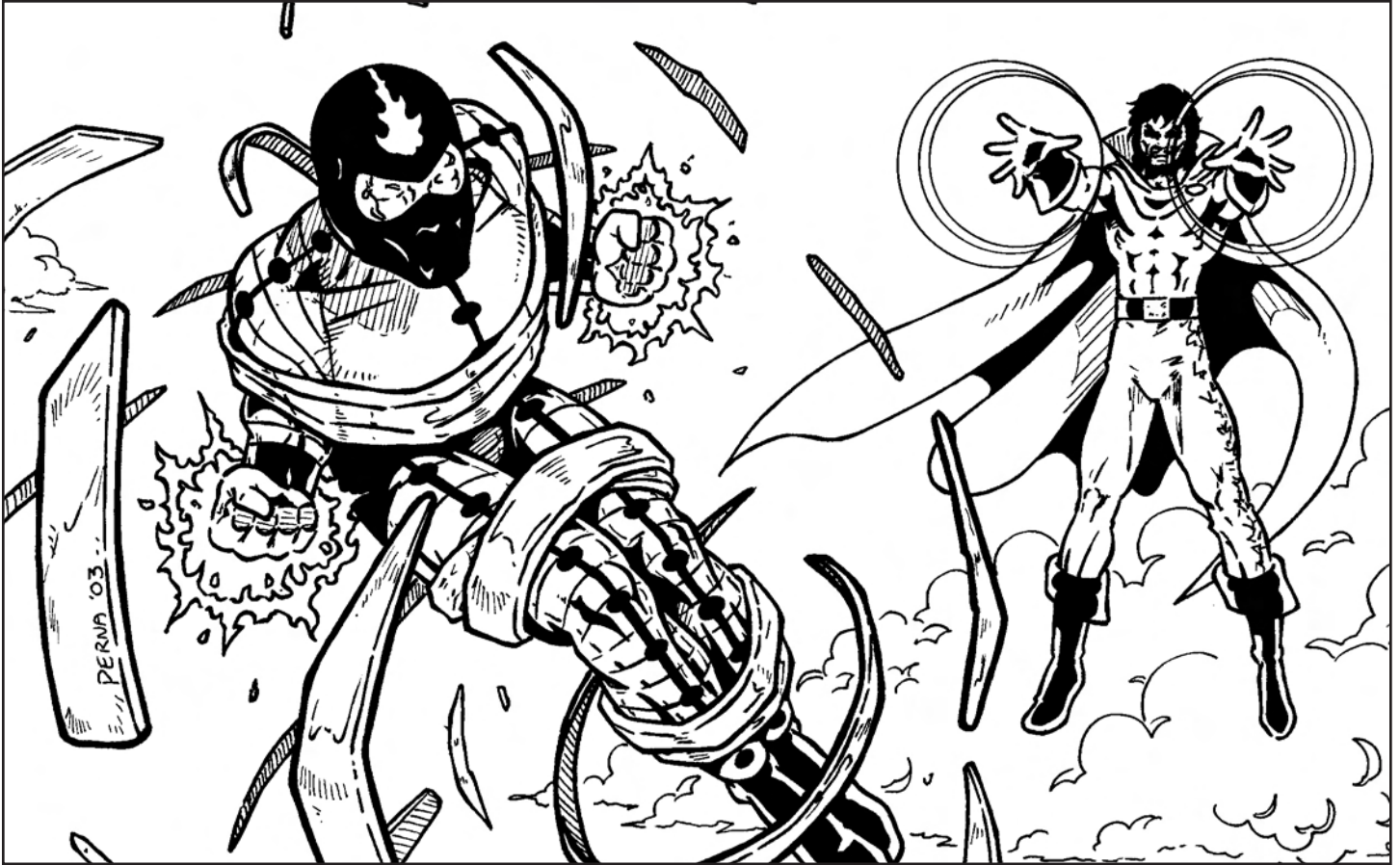
**Diminished Control:** Diminished control represents the point at which the Receptacle begins to slip, not only in terms of controlling her Power, but also in terms of controlling herself. At this stage, the Power becomes extremely risky to use. More importantly, the Dark Half, the receptacle's evil self, makes itself known. The first time in a session that the receptacle attempts to tap the Power, the Dark Half might surface for the duration of the scene. The Dark Half's abilities and temperament are determined by the game master (*details on the latter can be found in the Archetypes chapter of this supplement*), and it is very likely that she, too, has some access to the Power. Under the influence of the Dark Half, the receptacle may injure those friends and allies who oppose her, but the core of the original character's subconscious is enough to prevent her from killing them outright. This stage of control should generally last for two to three sessions, or until the Dark Half does something for which the receptacle feels incredible remorse (*This latter is a terrible blow to the receptacle's psyche that forces it to recede, to retreat from reality, further strengthening the Dark Half and reducing the level of control to no control, below.*).

**No Control:** A character with no control over her Power is essentially ruled by her Dark Half, which has few qualms about using its godlike abilities to pursue its own terrible agenda. Under most circumstances, the Dark Half will still not use the Power to outright kill the receptacle's closest friends (*at least not until threatened*) but allies, acquaintances, enemies, and strangers enjoy no such boon, and even close friends may be injured, crippled, or placed in deadly situations if they threaten her or interfere with her plans. It is at this stage that most interested parties agree that the character must be stopped. These parties join forces, hoping that their combined might and pooled resources might be enough to stand against the receptacle's Power.

## THE ACHILLES HEEL

Even the gods of old had weaknesses, and the receptacle is no exception. Despite her amazing Power (*or perhaps, due to that Power*), she has a critical weakness that can





be exploited by other, less powerful characters. Like the Power, it should be chosen by the game master, rather than the player, though the two can certainly confer in order to come up with one that keeps both individuals happy. The weakness gives the receptacle's opponents a chance to defeat her. In comics, it often manifests in one or more of the following ways, though the game master is encouraged to come up with her own if so compelled.

## ON WEAKNESSES

Many superhero roleplaying games include mechanics for character weaknesses, particularly those involving power loss and vulnerabilities to substances or situations. In such games, the game master is encouraged to incorporate some of these weaknesses for the receptacle. In games without such mechanics, it might be beneficial for the game master to develop some.

In the case of behavioral weaknesses, such as emotional imbalance or hubris, the game master might consider simply giving mechanical bonuses to other characters who use them against the receptacle. A hero attempting to taunt an emotionally unbalanced receptacle into a frenzy might, for example, receive a slight bonus to dodge her victim's (*inevitable*) attacks for a scene. If the system calls for rolls

to taunt, characters might receive a taunt bonus against the receptacle. Ultimately, the game master should ensure that smart players who attempt to take advantage of a receptacle's weaknesses are rewarded, even if said weaknesses involve behavior.

**Dormancy:** At regular intervals, for set periods of time, the receptacle goes dormant. Perhaps, like a vampire, she must sleep during the daylight hours, or perhaps certain periods of planetary alignment produce a cosmic effect that sends her into a kind of torpor to maintain her godlike state. She might have to spend time in a trance, performing a psychic feeding ritual, wherein she drains emotional energy from all living creatures on the planet. The possibilities are numerous. While dormant, the character is not necessarily any more vulnerable to attack than usual, but she is definitely less aware, and parties who exploit the element of surprise may well gain the upper hand in any conflict. If they have the means to destroy the receptacle, they would be wise to wait for her dormant period before making the attempt.

**Emotional Imbalance:** The receptacle's emotions, for whatever reason, are not completely under her control. She is almost childlike in temperament, easily frightened, quick to anger, and slow to learn. This character

is easily manipulated and tends to respond to others in extreme, almost comically exaggerated ways. If taunted, she becomes inordinately angry, aggressive to the point of stupidity. If somehow frightened, she can be reduced to a state of complete helplessness. An individual she likes is unquestionably an individual she *really* likes. In combat situations, a person she hates will be attacked to the exclusion of all other available targets, even if it puts the character herself at risk.

**Fading:** The receptacle is slowly dying. Her Power may be eating away at her body or soul, or she may be afflicted with a deadly condition that, for whatever reason, she is powerless to change. On a long enough timeline, the problem posed by this receptacle solves itself. Unfortunately, owing to her short life span, this receptacle tends to be much more dangerous than others. A common mentality among fading characters involves a general sense of anger at the world for inevitably outlasting oneself, and many fading characters, in a fit of jealousy, will eventually resolve to drag the world down with them into Oblivion (*or Hell, or wherever else an individual believes she is bound*). Other fading characters might resolve to do one thing “right” or make a significant impact on the world before departing. Such characters are often made particularly dangerous by their fanaticism.

**Hubris:** The receptacle’s weakness is that of the arrogance born of power. This character is so sure, so secure in her own power, she has difficulty recognizing potential threats. She tends to underestimate those who oppose her, often repeatedly. This character often toys with her enemies, and by default, she never sees danger coming. She does not anticipate threats, she simply reacts to them. This weakness can be exploited by smart characters, and those characters without superhuman powers, in particular, can wreak havoc with the receptacle. Her powers are generally much less effective against such normal, “insignificant” individuals, not because her Power is weak, but because she does not deem it necessary to expend any kind of effort on them.

## POWER RESISTANCES

Certain types of characters or materials might benefit from a degree of resistance to a receptacle’s Power due to some ineffectuality or unwillingness on the receptacle’s part. Characters with certain archetypes (*see Archetypes*), such as best friends and lovers, certainly fit the bill. In games using narrative-based Power rules, the game master can either explain to the receptacle’s player the various instances in which her Power will not work, or allow the

player to find out during play, “vetoing” certain effects targeting particular materials or characters.

**Susceptible:** The receptacle is weakened by exposure to some substance or event. The cause might be a particular type of energy, a metal or mineral, or even an emotion diametrically opposed to the receptacle’s Power or Source. Exactly what constitutes a weakened state will vary from campaign to campaign, but it generally entails a decrease in health, mobility, or power. A health susceptibility indicates that the weakness actually causes harm to the character, possibly to enough to kill her. A mobility susceptibility involves a weakness that in some way incapacitates the character or limits her movement. A particular environmental condition, such as cold weather, or a stake through the heart may paralyze the character, for example, or she may sink into the earth if her feet touch the ground. Finally, a power susceptibility refers to a weakness that impedes the character’s capabilities, either her superhuman powers, her physical attributes, or her mental faculties. The most common power susceptibility is that which robs the character of her godlike Power, rendering her more vulnerable to potential attackers and less capable of effective retaliation. In addition to determining the cause and effects of the receptacle’s susceptibility, the game master should determine the proximity required for it to function. Where one receptacle might grow weak standing in the same room as the strange, glowing stone mined from the dark side of the moon, another might not be affected at all unless wounded by the same stone, and yet another might be weakened in the light of the moon.

## STORYLINE PHASES: PLOT EVENTS

The *Godlike* storyline will undoubtedly turn out differently for each gaming group. The particulars will depend a great deal on the characters’ relationships, abilities, values, and individual choices. The game master is encouraged to run things as she feels best suits her players, as ultimately, they lie at the heart of the campaign. Rather than provide a blow-by-blow presentation of encounters, characters, and important locations, *Chaos Effects: Godlike* is intended to introduce an outline of general events that can fit into any campaign. The following plot event outline is an attempt to help the game master model the basic storyline, while leaving particulars open enough for the story to be told around individual player characters, whoever they may be. Ideally, this approach encourages the game master to introduce more rewarding, personal story elements geared toward individual gamers. Each of the following plot events, or *phases*, includes a summary and possible examples of the event introduced.

## ORIGINS

---

This is the point in the story at which the game master first introduces the Source of a character's Power, if not the Power itself. Often, these beginnings take place over the course of other, completely unrelated adventures, usually at a time when the character destined to be the receptacle is in some kind of danger. Often, the Source intervenes surreptitiously in the character's favor, snatching her or her allies from the jaws of defeat or death. This event is important, a defining moment in the receptacle's career that ties her destiny to that of the Source. It is important, however, that the other characters, (*and, in some circumstances, the other players*) do not realize this, yet. The Source is not obvious to anyone at this stage; it simply latches on to the character.

**Examples:** *While the team is investigating an ancient ruin once populated by a community of rogue Atlantean sorcerers, a sentient arcane Source bonds with one character's soul. During a pitched battle on the heroes' orbital space station headquarters, a psionic cosmic entity, seeking a living host, imprints itself on a telekinetic character's psyche, giving him just the psychic boost he needs to prevent the heavily-damaged platform from disintegrating in the Earth's atmosphere and "safely" crash-land it on a previously undiscovered, uninhabited island in the Pacific. A character with sonic powers slowly begins to perceive a rhythm in all things, a sort of cosmic sound; in a battle against a vastly superior foe, he matches the frequency of his own sonic blast to the cosmic pulse of his opponent, to great effect, opening his eyes to the true potential of his abilities.*

## A MORE SPECTACULAR ENTRANCE

---

It might be desirable, in some campaigns, to have the Power arrive on the scene in a spectacular, extremely obvious manner. Perhaps the Blood of Valor, a Power involving warrior-worship, past heroes, and bygone demigod heroics, manifests through the receptacle for the first time with her summoning an army of ghostly soldiers from Valhalla to a fevered and televised battle taking place in Times Square. This, however, means that the game master must take into account how others perceive the Power. Does it seem malevolent, exposing to characters from the start its potential for trouble? Or does it present itself in a more beneficial light? In what colors does the Power manifest? Color, unsurprisingly, often plays a large role in players' interpretations of things. For many American gamers, for example, colors like white, silver, and blue are often associated with goodness, while red

and black are generally interpreted as somewhat more ominous.

## RISING FORCE

---

This stage of the campaign consists primarily of the receptacle slowly discovering her new abilities. The Source, at some point, becomes known to her, and she begins to experiment with her Power (*It is at this stage that the game master should time a character's advancement, improvement, or similar system-based ability increase, as described in the Basic Control entry earlier in this chapter, so that the receptacle can both re-define her existing character abilities and increase in strength.*). The game master should slowly increase the difficulty and danger of the characters' adventures, so as to tempt the receptacle to resort to her Power more frequently. At the beginning of the *Rising Force* phase of the campaign, the character has tight control over the Power, though over time, it will definitely diminish to basic control. The receptacle's eventual fall to diminished control heralds the start of the the next phase of the storyline.

**Examples:** *A mystic receptacle for a sentient arcane Source slowly begins to experiment with new, more powerful incantations that come to him in his dreams; eventually, his powers increase greatly, though he becomes prone to inconvenient mystical backlashes as the arcane energies occasionally wax out of control. A psychic receptacle slowly spontaneously develops more impressive telekinetic powers, such that he can move almost anything if he puts his mind to it; this character greatly expands the scope of his abilities, learning to manipulate matter on a molecular, perhaps atomic, level, creating and manipulating energies previously unavailable to him. A child sidekick hero, visited by his divine father, lord of the skies, discovers his godling heritage. He begins to tentatively issue orders to birds, the clouds, and the very air on his father's authority; where once, the child had no powers, he can now adventure without his mentor.*

## BREAKDOWN

---

Eventually, the receptacle suffers a massive breakdown, typically owing to a number of factors, including the rising tide of her own powers, guilt over the actions of the Dark Half, and, in some cases, the diminishing faith her allies have in her. At some point, the receptacle's lessening control over the Power allows the Dark Half to emerge at an extremely inopportune moment, with sufficient influence to make her do something so terrible that even her closest friends question her potential for redemption. This act can be anything appropriate to the setting and play



style, but it should have serious consequences. It will definitely haunt the character for the rest of her days.

In this phase, when the Dark Half takes over, it is recommended that the game master control the character, even if the player has been permitted to retain control up to this point. This not only allows the game master to channel the story in the desired direction, but it drives home the loss of self-control and the receptacle's potential for unforeseen destruction. As a result, the player characters should seriously consider whether or not the receptacle's apprehension (*and possible destruction*) might be in everyone's best interests. Their reaction to the receptacle's breakdown will influence the rest of the story. Though difficult, support and forgiveness give the receptacle a better chance at redemption. Condemnation, fury (*however well-placed*), and aggression will only push her further into the jaws of madness.

**Examples:** *In a fury over a recently discovered act of anti-mutant terrorism, a telepathic mutant receptacle psychically lobotomizes hundreds of participants in a (peaceful) public anti-mutant rally; he is instantly branded a villain.*

## **MOBILIZATION**

After the receptacle's breakdown, it often becomes obvious that she is a significant threat to a lot of people. As a result, a number of entities, from law enforcement personnel to military and paramilitary units to former allies to old enemies, join forces in the hopes of overcoming her. The other player characters can stand with or against their teammate, as their consciences dictate. This might even be a divisive issue for a team of superheroes, where some intend to help their friend, while others want her brought to justice.

In any case, characters interested in saving their teammate must find a way to neutralize the Dark Half, and by extension, the Power that gave rise to it. Often, this means locating some entity or object capable of neutralizing the Power. Exactly how a Power can be neutralized depends a great deal on its Source and type (*more details on this can be found in **The Nature of the Power***).

While some characters work to save the receptacle, others aim to destroy her for the greater good. Those in the latter group will likely work with the assembled group of heroes,

villains, and others to find some way to bring her down. Any coalition including individuals who would normally be enemies is likely held together by a thread, and small fights and minor confrontations within the group's ranks might be common. These individuals embark on a search for the receptacle's weakness (see *The Achilles Heel*, previous) and a way to exploit it for everyone's benefit.

If any of the heroes choose to try to save the receptacle, it is a race against time to see whether they can find a way to do so before the other group solidifies a plan to destroy her.

Whatever her comrades choose to do, at this stage, the receptacle, under the influence of the Dark Half, does what she can to cement her power, separating herself from her teammates and seeking out allies, servants, and one or more headquarters. The game master should feel free to allow the player to detail the game statistics for these things, though certain guidelines will undoubtedly be necessary. It is these forces which will prove to be the other player characters' primary opposition in the final phase of the storyline.

**Examples:** *A team of corporate superheroes must join forces with the pet supers of a rival corporation in order to stand a chance against their teammate, who has gone mad, taken over their headquarters, and converted the mundane corporate staff into nanotech zombies capable of infecting anyone they touch. A team of superheroes consults the world's master magus to discover what it is that has their teammate acting so malevolently; it is revealed that the force is the result of a powerful ritual enacted by a group of renegade Atlantean archmages that went terribly wrong; though the ritual was intended to collect and exponentially expand all of their mystical knowledge, it also robbed them of their souls, and now remnants of a dozen bitter sorcerers reside within the character; the team must find the last remaining Atlantean high priest and convince him to guide these lost souls to the afterlife. After learning to manipulate the cosmic rhythm, a sonic-powered superhero wracks the region with earthquakes, leveling cities and creating for himself a complex network of canyons and caverns in which to lair.*

## ENDGAME!

At last, the characters, having found a way to defeat or recover their lost teammate, move in for the final confrontation. This generally takes place at a suitably dramatic location, often the receptacle's new headquarters, large enough and epic enough to accommodate all of the pertinent players. Here, the player characters must put their

plan into action, competing with the receptacle, her allies, and, if they are not attempting to destroy her, those who are. As a result, this chapter can get quite busy, and the game master is encouraged to compartmentalize encounters, perhaps by allowing a few characters at a time to meet. Also, it might be beneficial to allow the receptacle's player to help run certain non-player characters, particularly her own servants and allies. This not only keeps her involved, but also lightens the load for the game master.

## FINAL BATTLE LOCATIONS

Climatic final confrontations with entities of great evil tend to occur in locations that are either very high (such as floating cities, mountaintops, skyscraper roofs, and towers) or very low (such as lava-filled cavern complexes or undersea arcologies). The game master and the receptacle's player would do well to take into account location when planning for a final confrontation. Environment also adds tension. Collapsing walls, crumbling floors, falling lightning, and great steam-belching machines can all be effective hazards that instill a sense of danger and urgency to the encounter, as well as introduce a degree of randomness particularly useful in offsetting imbalances caused by an outnumbered combatant.

It is recommended that the receptacle herself not be involved until the end of the adventure. At this point, when it is down to her, her conscious surviving friends (or former friends), and a couple of other individuals aiming to kill her, the receptacle joins the fray. If able, she will put up a fight, although this might mean different things for different gaming systems. This is where the success or failure of the adventure is decided.

## AFTERMATH

What happens next depends on the path chosen by the characters. If they have killed their comrade, the victory is likely to be bittersweet. Characters will cope with this as best suits their personalities. If they have managed to save her, she might still have to answer for her crimes. The effects of her actions on the world at large and the public opinion of her and her allies can provide a number of storytelling hooks for future games. For now, though, the game master can end the campaign well by driving home the duality of the situation, the good tempered by the bad.

## CHAPTER THREE: ARCHETYPES

The *Godlike* storyline should suit most gaming groups. Even the characters who do not receive godlike power have the opportunity for interesting, rewarding roles. The

game master should pay particular attention to the characters' personality traits, as many can be conducive to the story arc. This section provides details on how particular personality types and character roles might be used effectively in the *Godlike* story. The roleplaying hints and guidelines provided in this chapter are merely suggestions, frameworks for game masters and players to work from while writing their own stories.

Although the best characters are much more than mere archetypes, archetype character roles are presented here to aid the game master in focusing on playing up particular aspects of the player characters' natures to enhance their roles in the story.

## THE RECEPTACLE

Although she should not be mistaken for the most important character in the storyline, the receptacle should at least be considered its centerpiece. The story events revolve around her, and the success or failure of the campaign will be determined, in large part, by how this character is played.

The receptacle is a character suddenly possessed of immense power, even more impressive than those typical in the superhero genre. Although the exact nature of the Power will vary depending on campaign and character, it should always be of impressive scope. But more important than the Power itself is how that Power affects the character, and it is here that the receptacle's role comes into play.

The following personality types can serve as examples to a game master looking for a suitable receptacle for a Power. Also provided are guidelines for running the receptacle's Dark Half, based on her archetype. The Dark Half is a malevolent, more destructive aspect of the receptacle's personality that surfaces periodically at first, but with increasing frequency as the Power grows. It might be anything from a separate, possessing entity to a repressed personality.

## THE DARK HALF

However the Dark Half is defined, whatever its source, it is essentially a darker, evil personality that takes control of the receptacle. Generally speaking, the Dark Half is the primary antagonist in the *Godlike* storyline. The fact that it eventually takes control of the receptacle can be troublesome, as it begs the question, "Who plays this character?" The game master can handle this in one of two ways. First, the game master may play the character herself when the Dark Half is in control. This emphasizes the receptacle's

loss of control and helps funnel the story in a desired direction. Unfortunately, it also tends to leave the receptacle's player with nothing to do, possibly for extended periods of time, which isn't fun. If the game master chooses this route, she is encouraged to introduce another character for the receptacle's player to play, either in the form of one of the receptacle's more noteworthy henchmen (*for a change of pace*) or another hero character, likely one the player creates herself (*in this case, the player might continue using this character if the receptacle dies or is incarcerated as a result of the events of the storyline*).

The second option involves allowing the player to keep control of the character under the Dark Half's influence. In this case, the game master should give some guidance as to the Dark Half's nature (*possibly reading her the Dark Half description from the appropriate receptacle archetype entry*), encouraging the player to be as selfish, arrogant, or even "eeevil" as appropriate for the character and campaign. The only exception is for the breakdown phase of the storyline, described previously in **Campaign Integration**, where the receptacle goes out of control and commits some terrible deed. Here, the player *does not* maintain control of her character, although afterward, she can play the Dark Half as normal.

**The Chosen:** The chosen is a special character, arguably more special than most. She believes she has been selected for her current role by some force, be it God, Fate, king, or country. This belief may or may not be accurate; the character's self-concept is the important thing. The chosen is a good candidate for Powers aligned with or related to a given force, particularly any force aligned with that which the character believes is responsible for her current role. The game master might wish to spin the endowment of the Power in such a way that it seems to be a great gift from the chosen's patron. The chosen character can generally be prepared for her role as receptacle by playing up her sense of duty or responsibility to this patron.

The game master might instead choose to play on the concept of destiny. A chosen character might be prophesied to wield or become a powerful force, and the receptacle status might be (*or just appear to be*) the fulfillment of that particular destiny. The nature of this force, as well as the predicted beneficence of the prophesied character, will depend on the needs of the campaign. A character confronted with a bright future consisting of great and righteous deeds is much more likely to embrace it and succumb to the temptation to abuse her new abilities, but a darker future, one of evil, murder, and more, has its own appeal, as it raises all sorts of questions regarding free will, fate, and the corrupting nature of power. Introducing



a character or artifact that reveals a chosen character's destiny (*to her or to others*) is a great way to set up the *Godlike* story arc.

**The Dark Half:** The chosen character's Dark Half generally manifests as an exaggerated manifestation of others' expectations. A receptacle "meant" to be the divinely-powered savior of a forgotten people will go to great lengths to preserve that people, possibly committing heinous acts in their defense or even imprisoning them for their own protection. This Dark Half tends to be self-righteous, arrogant and fanatical in its goals, which tend to involve domination of an area or sphere of influence, the elimination of a particular type of threat, or the protection of a particular group or interest.

**The Driven:** Similar to the chosen, the driven character is an individual motivated by some idea. The driven works tirelessly in the pursuit of this ideal, whether it be justice, physical perfection, or social harmony. This character is often more severe than most, utterly immersed in her goals. The driven character makes a good receptacle for more open-ended Powers, as they make even the most inane, unreachable goals possible, and as a result, the character becomes very dangerous. The driven archetype works particularly well for a game master desiring to introduce challenging moral dilemmas into the campaign. The results-based mentality of the driven character is fertile soil for seeds of temptation involving coercion, the limits of responsibility, acceptable use of power, and the issue of autonomy. Potentially destructive Powers work very well in tandem with the driven character, as the individual is especially like to utterly eradicate her opposition, however, close, numerous, or non-threatening that opposition may be, so long as it draws her closer to realizing her goals.

The driven character can often be prepared for the *Godlike* storyline by introducing a significant threat to her goals or beliefs. A dark-cowled, two-fisted crimefighter, for example, dedicated to ridding "his" city of vice and crime, is confronted by a new cartel headed by a seemingly untouchable drug czar with superhuman powers. The law won't touch him, and the character cannot beat him.

Whatever the case, the driven character's most powerful hook is her motivation, which can be a veritable storytelling playground for an attentive and creative game master.

**The Dark Half:** The driven character's Dark Half manifests itself as an "ends-justify-the-means" mentality. When the Dark Half surfaces, the character is willing to put anything to the flame if it would aid her in her mission. Anything. Ideals, innocents, relationships, and even her



very soul are all acceptable sacrifices for the character. This Dark Half is easy to see in numerous comic titles and literary works.

**The Haunted:** This character is haunted by some great failure or mishap. This is the healer who, despite all of her powers, could not save her lover from the debilitating disease that took his life. She is the mutant whose powers were burned out in a pitched battle with life-draining, parasitic aliens. The haunted character typically has something to prove, either to herself, her teammates, or the world at large. She hopes to redeem herself, either spiritually, physically, or morally, and upon becoming a receptacle for a Power, her primary goal is to compensate for her earlier failures. The game master should encourage roleplaying that involves such compensation, either by using non-player characters or related situations to remind the character of her past. The corrupting nature of power ensures that the character will overcompensate.

The game master might consider adding an element of choice to come into play concerning the endowment of the haunted character's Power. By introducing the Power in a Faustian manner, she allows the character to damn herself, so to speak, which should drive home the story arc that much more.

**The Dark Half:** The haunted character's Dark Half generally manifests in one of two ways. It either involves the character overcompensating in her attempt to make amends, or giving herself wholly to the despair that comes with failure. The former manifestation may result in the Dark Half taking extreme steps to prove the receptacle's value or to prevent others from duplicating her mistake(s). This might result in a receptacle predisposed to dominating others. If the receptacle gives up and surrenders to failure, on the other hand, she becomes possessed of a singular nihilism that affects all of her interactions. She stops caring for others entirely, and they become little more than insects or animate objects to her. In this case, the Dark Half inevitably grows destructive, out of apathy if nothing else.

**The Meager:** The meager character is a fairly common sight in comicdom. She is the weakest member of the team, the individual with the least spectacular abilities, or the one most socially inept. Even if she has been with the group from the beginning, it seems that she is trailing behind the others. This is the character that tends to require the most rescuing, who always fails at holding off the raging enemy alone, or who tends to shout and collapse after every mildly taxing use of her abilities. She might be taunted by her teammates, or her comparative weakness might instead elicit more paternalistic, protective attitudes.

The game master should watch for signs of resentment or frustration in the meager character. Gracing the character with a major Power gives her a chance in the limelight, which can not only be a great roleplaying opportunity and change of pace for the entire group, but can also precipitate an "upgrade" to the character as something more than the group's little sibling, running joke, or sideliners. The meager character is likely to leap at the chance for a little power, particularly after spending so much time in the shadow of her allies.

**The Dark Half:** No one enjoys hanging from the lowest rung on the ladder. The meager character, being no exception, manifests a Dark Half that aims to improve her situation. Under the influence of the Dark Half, the meager receptacle will relish in her new abilities, using them as much as possible to prove her newfound superiority. She seeks out and punishes those who she feels wronged her before (*this may include teammates, though at first, they are not hurt too badly, only humiliated*). It should be noted that this Dark Nature can be particularly cruel, motivated as it is by a desire for revenge, and it is not above physical or psychological torture.

**The Thrillseeker:** This character is on a perpetual search for excitement. Whether she is bored of mundane life or enamored by every aspect of it, new things are her bread and butter. Interesting locations, people, and situations provide great roleplaying opportunities, moreso for this character than for others, and the introduction of a Power and Source should prove extremely exciting for the thrillseeker. This character leaps at the chance to become a receptacle. To her, access to a Power means access to unlimited new possibilities. The test of the character will come when it comes time to decide which possibilities to pursue. The archetype might include super-team hotshots, media darlings, millionaire playboys, and smooth, "bad girl" seductress types.

**The Dark Half:** Power is the ultimate thrill, and when her Dark Half manifests, the thrillseeker not only basks in it, but also seeks out more of it. This character uses her Power to pursue her wildest dreams. While at first, this might seem harmless, her pleasures slowly grow increasingly decadent. A roguish attention-seeker, for example, might become jaded with admirers and sycophants and move first to concubines, then to crafting and remaking humans into "flesh toys." As the receptacle experiences more, it becomes increasingly difficult to excite her, and her desires become more dangerous and costly for others. Eventually she breaks down into a deep depression from which she lashes out at all those who feel the joy denied her.

**The Wise:** The wise character is particularly intelligent, consistently able to solve problems with clear and creative thinking. This archetype often includes tacticians, robots, and inventors. The wise character typically relies a great deal on her own intelligence, and she might feel vexed when others do not, or cannot, do the same. Presumably, it is her intellect that paves the way to her godlike status. Perhaps only she can comprehend the magical mysteries that come with her Power. Or perhaps her research unlocks a secret universal language that gives her access to the Power.

Often the wise character falls into one of two categories. Either she is seen as somewhat distant and mechanically cold (*particularly appropriate for machines and aliens*), or she is a veritable fount of creative energy. The defining factor of the wise involves the use of the mind to overcome obstacles. The wise character often suffers from the Hubris weakness.

**The Dark Half:** The wise character knows what's best and under the influence of her Dark Half, she won't hesitate to take any steps necessary to ensure her rule. The wise receptacle plays the role of a mastermind, a puppet master pursuing a clandestine agenda for utter domination. This character sincerely believes that only she is equipped, intellectually and morally, to ensure that all things function properly. She takes steps to establish her rule over the world, dominating influential leaders and organizations behind the scenes, taking care not to draw attention to herself until it is too late to stop her. Her allies might not even realize her intentions until she announces to the world that she owns it.

**The Fluke:** The fluke receptacle is something of an anomaly. Some things are just never meant to happen. And when they happen anyway (*and in comics, they inevitably do*), things get... strange. The fluke character, in becoming a receptacle, is one example of such strangeness. In this case, a Power is thrust upon an individual suddenly and with no discernible purpose, (*or in some cases, Source*) and little in the way of in-story rationale. She might be a simple masked crimefighter's sidekick who suddenly discovers he's a god, or she might just be a hero with totemic animal powers who just happens to be in the right place at just the right time to absorb a dying cosmic entity's draining life force. In short, the fluke is a character given a Power by the game master with little thought as to the relationship between her character and the Power. Use of a fluke receptacle is generally more appropriate for light-hearted, comical games or sessions than it is for more serious, modern-age campaigns. The godlike state for the fluke is unlikely to last long, and other characters tend to

forget the entire debacle with surprising speed. It should be assumed that fluke receptacles are the stuff of retcon legend.

**The Dark Half:** Due to the wide variety of possibilities involved in a fluke character's qualities, it is anyone's guess as to what her Dark Half might be like. Since the character herself is likely to resemble another of the previous archetypes, it might be beneficial to look to them for inspiration.

## OTHER ARCHETYPES

---

The receptacle is not the only character with a significant role to play in the *Godlike* storyline. The other characters will interact with the receptacle and the world at large, too, and how they do so will have an effect on the campaign. A character can certainly fit into more than one of the archetypes. A number of sample player character archetypes follow, along with hints for introducing roleplaying opportunities for that character type and suggested game mechanics modifications related to the receptacle. Entries referring to the receptacle's Power do not include her "normal" super-powers.

## BEST FRIEND

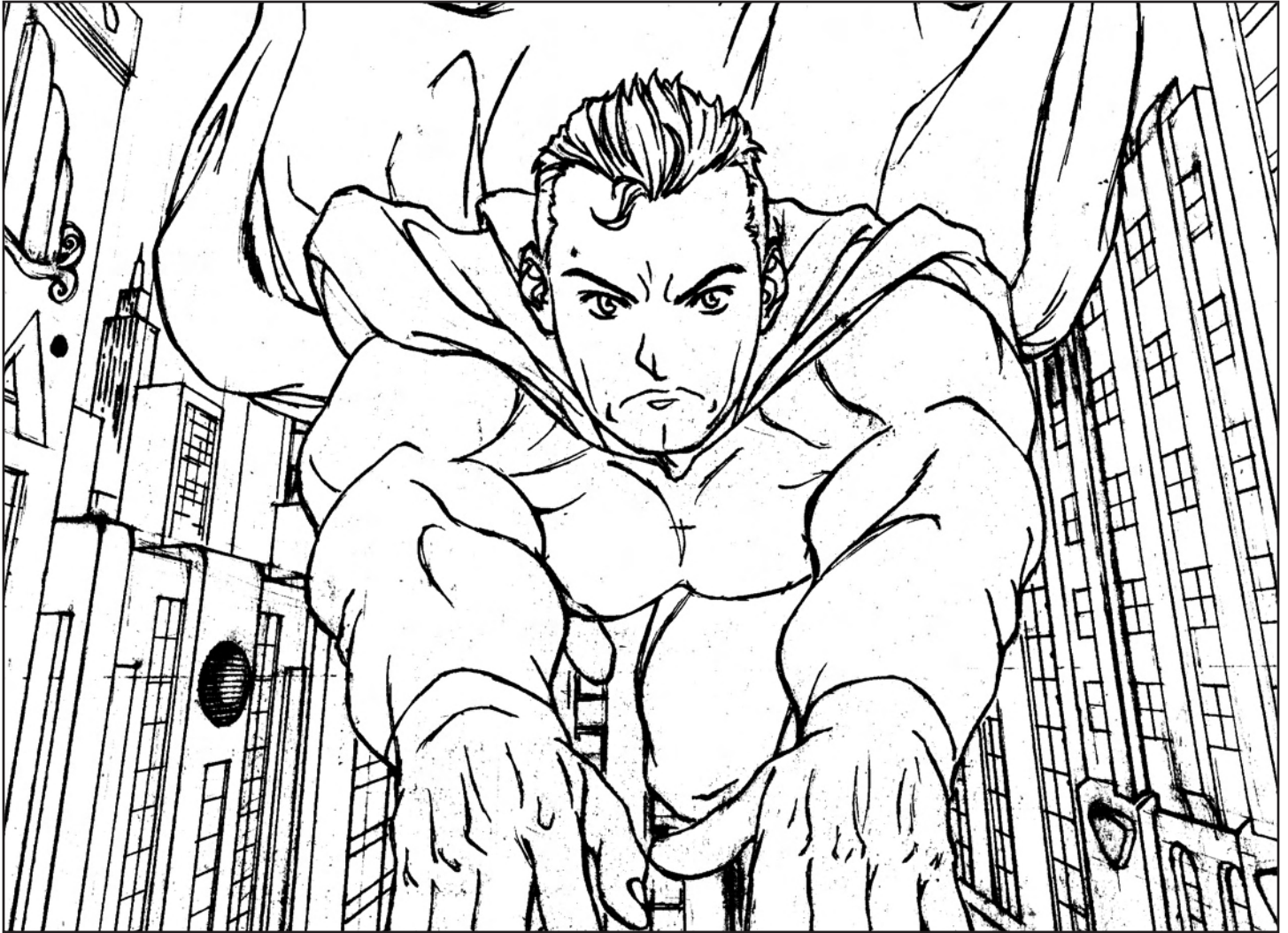
---

This character is arguably the individual closest to the receptacle, perhaps a childhood friend, or maybe just a kindred spirit. The best friend knows the receptacle better than anyone, perhaps even better than she knows herself. The receptacle's relationship with the best friend after the change may or may not remain the same, but when the Dark Half comes into full view, the best friend has the unenviable decision of whether or not to stay by the character's side.

**Hints:** Storytelling opportunities involving this character are numerous. A close relationship with a godlike being certainly has its benefits. To the receptacle, the relationship is still in place, if a bit strained. As a result, the best friend can count on a measure of protection from her powers.

More importantly, until proven otherwise, the receptacle is certain that the best friend is still just that. Even under the Dark Half's influence, she often feels she can safely lower her guard in the best friend's presence. She will interact amiably with him, offer advice, and act in his best interests when they do not conflict with her own. The best friend elicits the receptacle's trust where no one else can.

This relationship can prove to be problematic, however, when one considers other characters who know the truth of their friendship. The game master is encouraged to have



non-player characters privy to the best friend's relationship with the receptacle ask him to use his influence with her to help destroy or neutralize her, particularly after the point in the story at which the Dark Half takes over completely. This brings up a number of interesting questions as to whether or not the character is willing to betray his friendship. Alternately, characters may hold the best friend partially responsible for the receptacle's actions (particularly if he has turned down the opportunity to take her down), and he might have to win the trust of other characters, compensating for the actions of his friend.

**Game Mechanics:** A best friend receives a small bonus to avoid or resist any effects of the receptacle's Power. Also, once per campaign, the best friend may ignore any defensive effect derived from the receptacle's Power-based ability pool or artificial Power score (*both mentioned in Campaign Integration sidebars*).

## LOVER

Similar to the best friend, the lover was very close to the receptacle prior to her empowerment. This character is one for whom the receptacle feels an intense romantic connection, real or imagined. That is, the lover need not necessarily reciprocate the receptacle's feelings. The intensity of the receptacle's emotions protects the lover from many of the same dangers as the best friend, but it also poses a number of significant risks. Love is perhaps the most dangerous human emotion, and that danger is amplified in proportion to a given individual's power.

**Hints:** For the most part, the lover's potential story arcs mirror those of the best friend. He is generally trusted and protected by the receptacle, even under the Dark Half's influence. He is likely approached for aid by parties interested in her destruction. Unfortunately for the lover, there are some added complications. The receptacle loves the character and, unlike the case involving the best friend, might not be satisfied with merely leaving him alone or ensuring his protection. She might, for example, seek to



allow him to rule the world at her side, or if her love has previously been unrequited, she might seek to “earn” it (*by force, if necessary*). If the lover has a romantic interest in another individual (*or if the receptacle believes, or even suspects, he does*), that individual might be slated for abduction, humiliation, maiming, or murder. This might make for excellent dramatic conflict involving the receptacle and the lover.

**Game Mechanics:** A lover cannot be harmed by the receptacle’s Power at all; however, the receptacle receives a bonus to any use of Power (*mind control, damaging effects versus lovers, etc.*) intended to make the lover character her own.

## **MENTOR**

The mentor is a character to whom the receptacle once looked for advice or training. He may be another superhero, an old teacher or trainer, or simply a father figure who helped her out at a bad time. Living in another’s shadow, by another’s rules, however, is never easy, and it could be that the receptacle still harbors some residual resentment from the time spent under this character’s wing. The mentor character might be able to muster some small amount of authority or respect from the receptacle, or even the Dark Half, but he risks her anger by even attempting.

**Hints:** The mentor character was once an authority figure in the receptacle’s life, and some of the old respect for him may remain. This character may be able to periodically draw on that respect to command or halt the receptacle, as she might have in the days of old. The receptacle, though, particularly the Dark Half, often feels a need to prove herself to the mentor, either by standing on her own or by proving she is better than he is. The latter could prove dangerous for the mentor, as the receptacle might choose to single him out for humiliation, possibly even destruction, if he gets in her way.

The mentor may have some unique insights as to the receptacle’s personality and habits, a fact that some may choose to exploit. As is the case with the best friend and the lover, the mentor may be sought for help in destroying the receptacle.

**Game Mechanics:** A mentor receives a bonus to any rolls involving intimidating the receptacle. Also, once per campaign, a mentor can say something to cow or shame the receptacle into retreating to some distant place. This ability can function both in and out of combat. The duration of the receptacle’s stay depends on how badly she was affected by her mentor’s words.

## RIVAL

Perhaps one of the most interesting characters related to the receptacle is the rival. The rival is a character with whom the receptacle once competed regularly, whether athletically, intellectually, or otherwise. Perhaps the rival competed with the receptacle for attention, love, money, or a particular role on a given team. The two individuals clearly have a score to settle, even at the start of the storyline, and by the end, the kid gloves should come off, with all prior obligations of friendship or affiliation dissolved completely. The rivalry need not be friendly. Enemies also have the potential to be effective rivals for a receptacle, particularly archenemies. A hated criminal mastermind who constantly matched wits with the receptacle is also a potential rival. Whatever its purpose, the rivalry is still as strong as ever after the receptacle becomes godlike. If the competition was fierce enough, or if the receptacle wound up on the losing end, the rival can count on a reckoning.

**Hints:** In all likelihood, the receptacle hates her rival. In any conflict, the rival can expect the worst, most humiliating, and most immediate response. In some cases, particularly if the rival has somehow come out ahead in their competition, the receptacle may actively seek him out in the hopes of teaching him a lesson, proving once and for all her own superiority. The rival has it rough, as it is unlikely that he has the power to match the receptacle, but he might be capable of bluffing her into a more fair, even fight by playing off her pride. The rival is often in favor of destroying the receptacle, for obvious reasons.

**Game Mechanics:** Once per game, a rival can “call out” the receptacle, forcing her to fight him fair, without the use of her Power.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATURE OF THE POWER

As was mentioned earlier in the supplement, the godlike receptacle’s Power is not simply one super-power intensified; rather, it is a super-power expanded. A character with energy projection powers, for example, does not receive a more devastating energy blast; she becomes capable of commanding every aspect of the energy. The Power is the name for a set of related, wide-ranging abilities a receptacle develops as a direct result of a given Source. It is this Power that makes the character godlike. From a metagame standpoint, the Power represents a character’s ability to manipulate campaign events. The game master determines the type and scope of a given receptacle’s Power.

## NAMING POWERS

With Powers, as with characters, a good name can go a long way. The game master is encouraged to name any Power introduced in the campaign. A Power’s name may or may not sound impressive, but it should give some hint as to its origin, nature, and capabilities. In games incorporating narrative-based Power use, a suitably named Power can aid players in their effect descriptions.

## POWER TYPES

Powers are an extremely varied lot. In most cases, no two receptacles will share the same Power. It should, however, be noted that receptacles’ Powers do generally conform to certain types. These types are best identified in association with their respective Sources. Power types and Sources are important because they are the primary (*possibly the only*) determiners of the boundaries of a receptacle’s abilities. A receptacle’s Power has one or more influences, vehicles for in-game effects chosen by the game master. An influence could range from the strange, such as telekinetic flame, to the specific, such as the human mind, to the overly broad, such as mankind. The influence determines exactly what it is that the Power manipulates.

When using her full Power, a receptacle must describe her desired effect in terms pertaining to the Power type and its influences. In this way, her ability to affect the game world is dependent on how effectively her (*and her player’s*) imagination exploits the nature of the Power at her command. When choosing the Power type, the game master should definitely consider the player’s ability to describe its effects.

A number of Power types and their influences are given below.

## SAMPLE POWERS & POWER TYPES

### COSMIC POWERS

**The Motive:** The Motive is the Power, the force behind all things, both physical and intangible. The Motive is essentially a vehicle for ultimate manipulation, used to generate causes, or *motives*, for particular events.

**Star Fire:** Star Fire is conceptually centered around the physics of stars (*at least, from a comic book standpoint*). With it, the character can manipulate light, heat, and gravity to impressive degrees. Star Fire manifests as brilliant, blinding light surrounding the receptacle and her

targets. For some, Star Fire might be better suited as an elemental type Power, considering its relatively tight focus.

## DIVINE POWERS

**The Green:** The Green embodies life and all that comes with it. Using the Green, a receptacle can manipulate and create life of all sorts. Spiritual matters, however, are questionable, and at the game master's discretion, the character might not have the same power over *souls* (*if such things exist in terms of the setting*), which might limit the receptacle's creative abilities to plant (*and, in some campaigns, beast*) life.

**The Soul Sea:** The Soul Sea is the domain of oceans, particularly ocean life and ecology. The receptacle has creative and manipulative authority over huge quantities of water and all ocean-dwelling life.

## ELEMENTAL POWERS

**Azure:** This Power is a complex energy form that gives off a strange, blue light. Azure can burn, illuminate, or become solid at the receptacle's command. With enough precision, the receptacle can create nearly anything out of it.

**Reflex Force:** Reflex Force is a Power of opposites involving the creation of forces opposed to an initial, or "base" subject. With it, a receptacle can create anything that physically or philosophically counters an existing object or condition within her range.

## MYSTICAL POWERS

**The Old Magic:** This is a primordial magical style using the somatic components that first shaped the cosmos. These ancient words of magic are used to create and shape reality according to the receptacle's will.

**The Rune Chains:** The Rune Chains involve the basic building blocks of matter, the shapes and forms that hold them together. A receptacle with this Power may alter the basic runic templates of existing matter, altering composition and qualities at will.

## PSIONIC POWERS

**The Eye of Ether:** A receptacle with this Power can use her psychic "third eye" to play witness to anything, real or imagined, past, present, or future (*although this last is always changing*) and psionically cause others to do the same. She can create complex, even deadly, mindscapes in which to entrap any creature capable of thought.

**The Universal Mind:** This Power allows the receptacle to access the river of all conscious thought, directing its flows in trickles or great waves, as desired.

## COSMIC

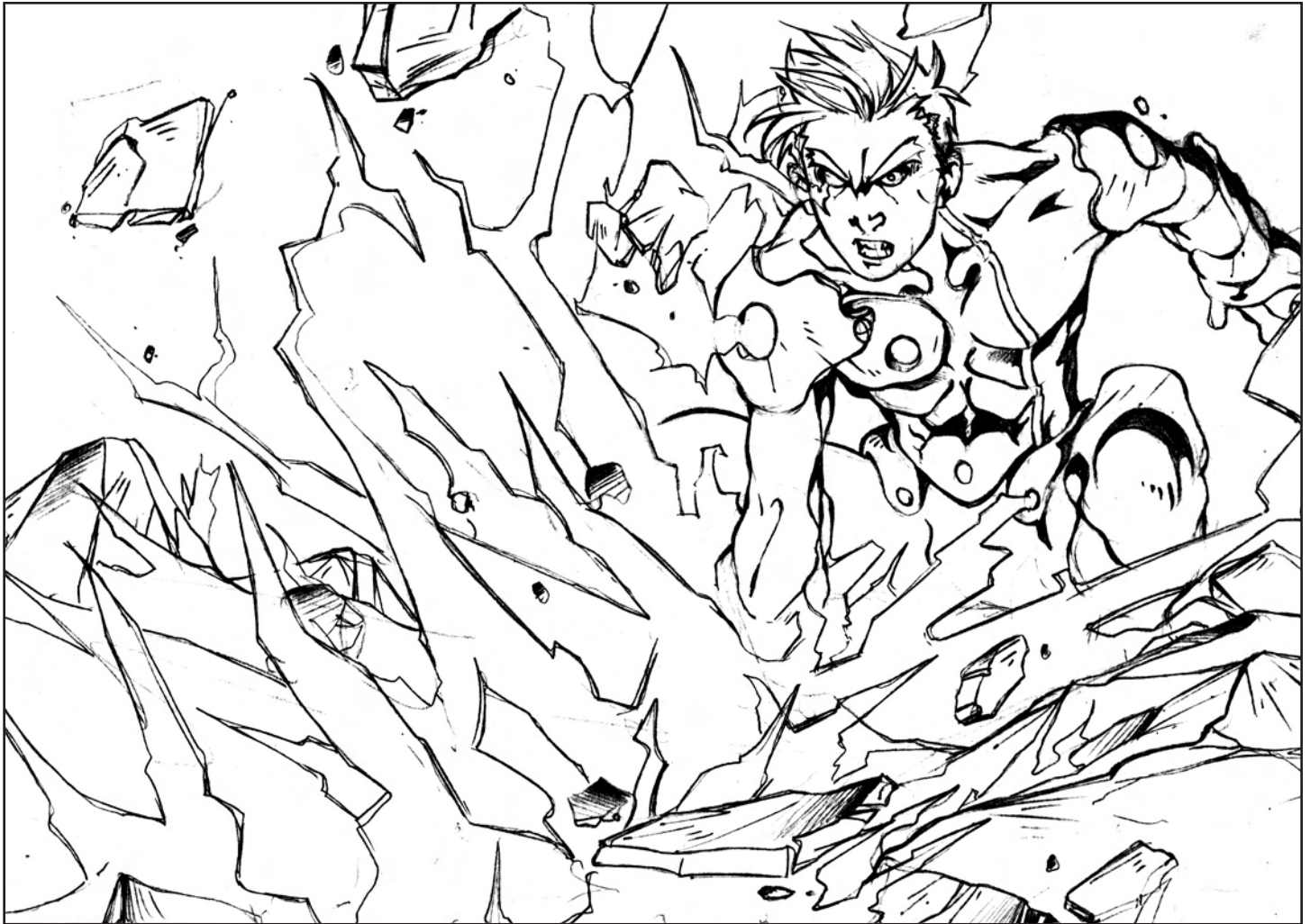
Cosmic Powers allow a character to bend one or more aspects of reality to her will by manipulating one or more aspects of the very forces of the cosmos. This is arguably the most versatile, wide-ranging Power type, partially due to its extremely loose (*some might venture illogical*) definition. In comics, cosmic powers are generally "catch-all" abilities that involve characters doing whatever seems appropriate at a given time. In the same way, a cosmic Power (*subtly different from cosmic powers in its range and scope*) is similarly ill-defined in terms of influences. A cosmic Power's influence is often somewhat broad, such as "reality," and in general, it allows a character to make gross alterations to nearly anything. Composition, density, shape, size, state, weight, and more can be modified as desired by a character with a cosmic Power. In this way, a receptacle with this Power type can affect incredible changes to a wide variety of things.

## DIVINE

Divine Powers are those tied to one or more godly entities or sources. The divine Power taps some spiritual force, one which might even have been involved in the creation of all things. It is the Power wielded by gods and great spiritual beings to affect the world. Influences can include types of creatures, matter, emotions, environments, or even activities. The receptacle's Power manifests as godlike authority over her influences. These influences respond to her desires, whether those desires involve action, belief, or even seemingly impossible change. Creation also plays a major role in divine Powers. A receptacle has the ability to create anything related to her influences on a scale determined by the game master. The divine Power may not be appropriate for all campaigns.

## ELEMENTAL

Elemental Powers are those which influence natural or unnatural forces, such as energy, matter, and weather conditions, and all aspects of their existence. A given force need not be particularly prevalent, or even known. An elemental Power might allow a character to harness previously undiscovered energies. The game master may choose to invent a new, fictional or unproven force (*perhaps similar to comic book "unified field" energies*). The exact parameters of the force should be determined by the game master before play begins, and the player should have at



least a basic understanding of the workings of her character's Power. This is particularly important in the case of fictional forces. Many elemental Powers are tied in some way to primal elements that some believe are the building blocks of existence. From the traditional western components containing air, earth, fire, and water, to other cultural variations involving wood, iron, or other materials, the elemental Power likely has some tie to reality's perceived composition or some aspect thereof.

## ***MYSTICAL***

Mystical Powers, predictably enough, involve the supernatural. The mystical Power tends to involve influence over huge, sweeping concepts, from simple adjectives to broadly-defined nouns or verbs. While it may seem at first that it should be the Power with the most flexible boundaries, this is not always the case. Unlike other Powers, magic tends to conform to certain inexplicable, arcane rules that few can make sense of. At any time, the game master may choose to introduce rules, limitations, or requirements related to a given mystical Power, provided

he is consistent. The mystical Power generally involves alteration and creation of its influences.

## ***PSIONIC***

Psionic Powers refer to those based on and focused by the mind. Large-scale psychic abilities, including everything from clairvoyance to mind control to telepathy, fall into the realm of the psionic Power. The psionic Power can be used to make a nearly limitless number of alterations to minds. Unlike similar powers possessed by more mundane individuals, the psionic Power involves not only manipulating mental faculties, but also completely restructuring minds. While this may, at first, seem a relatively limited Power, top-tier telepathy, one should consider that its primary function involves bolstering one's own psionic potential, expanding it exponentially, likely to the point at which new, more powerful psychic abilities develop.

## ***THE SOURCE***

Arguably one of the most important facets of the Power is its Source. The Source is inextricably tied to the Power

type. Certain Sources, for example, are more likely to be responsible for certain types of Power. It would be difficult, though not impossible, to justify a Power's divine origins with simple character knowledge. When determining the Source of a Power, the game master should consider carefully the desired tone for the campaign and make certain the explanation fits that tone.

Many Powers can be neutralized in some way. Exactly how this can happen will depend in part on the Source. At the game master's discretion, some Sources might be more vulnerable to particular effects than others.

## ENTITY

In this case, the receptacle has gained her Power through some contact with a given entity, likely a god, cosmically powered alien, spirit, or similar creature of immense power. The entity might have taken up residence in the character's body, mind, or soul (*perhaps accounting for the Dark Half*). Alternately, the entity might simply have bestowed (*or have been forced to bestow*) its Power, or a fraction thereof, on the receptacle for some purpose. Whatever the case, the receptacle begins to take on certain aspects of the entity.

## INFUSION

The receptacle has been infused with a great deal of energy, which has given her godlike powers. This Source works very well in conjunction with the elemental Power type, as the Source and the Power can, in essence, be the same thing.

## KNOWLEDGE

The receptacle's Power is tied to some area of knowledge. Unlike other receptacles who often experience some form of change or event that grants them the Power, a receptacle with a knowledge Power Source has learned to tap its amazing potential. Perhaps she is a powerful sorceress who has discovered a new, more powerful language for her incantations. This Power Source is particularly appropriate for those who wield mystical Powers, as popular media has long associated mystic and sorcerous power with forbidden or obscure knowledge.

## OBJECT

An object of some sort, perhaps an ancient artifact or alien device, is the Source of the receptacle's Power. Fueled by the character's will, this object affects the changes desired. This Source can literally apply to any of the Power types, and examples of each in comics abound. Objects that

provide Powers are often the subjects of huge crossover battles where heroes struggle to keep them out of the wrong hands.

## ULTRA-MUTATION

The Power is a result of a biological condition or mutation that results in a dramatic increase in the receptacle's abilities. This Source is generally applied to elemental or psionic Powers, for which a biological rationale is fairly plausible, but individuals with some divine (*or infernal*) heritage might also draw their powers from this Source.

# CHAPTER FIVE: NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Like the player characters, non-player characters are essential to the *Godlike* storyline. Their responses to the character's actions will, for the most part, serve as a sort of ruler by which players can measure the effect their characters have had on the campaign world. Non-player characters can be categorized by their relationship with the receptacle. In general, a non-player character will either be subservient to, in opposition to, or unaffiliated with the receptacle character.

## HENCHMEN

Those non-player characters who serve the receptacle, whether by choice or by force, are considered henchmen. In terms of the storyline, these are the individuals who stand between the other characters and their former friend's destruction or redemption. Henchmen can come in a variety of types, depending on the needs of the receptacle. The game master should definitely consider allowing the receptacle's player character a measure of control over many, if not all, of the non-player characters in her service. A receptacle's henchmen generally come in three flavors: creations, dominated characters, and modified characters.

## NPC HENCHMEN

When creating henchmen, one should consider carefully their initial capabilities and desired function. Usually, dominated characters are meant to be fodder, something to place between the receptacle and her enemies. Created characters and modified characters, on the other hand, actually stand a chance of thwarting, or at least softening up the receptacle's foes. These henchmen generally boast certain special abilities, most often in the form of extraordinary strength and endurance.



A game master might wish to limit the number of created characters a receptacle can have at one time. Also, it might be beneficial to have the receptacle's player roleplay her acquisition of henchmen, rather than have it occur during downtime, off-camera, or behind the scenes (at least, until a certain point... watching a player psychically dominate character after character can certainly get old after the first couple). In particular, the planning for locating, modifying, and crafting henchmen should conceivably occur during play, perhaps so that other characters can get wind of it and try to stop the receptacle.

Henchmen are by no means necessary to the storyline, but they can be beneficial for any evil antagonist, since otherwise, a team of heroes is sure to outnumber him. Also, during later phases of the game, in scenes that do not include the receptacle character, allowing the player to play and roll for some or all of her henchmen might help to keep her "in the game."

### **CREATIONS**

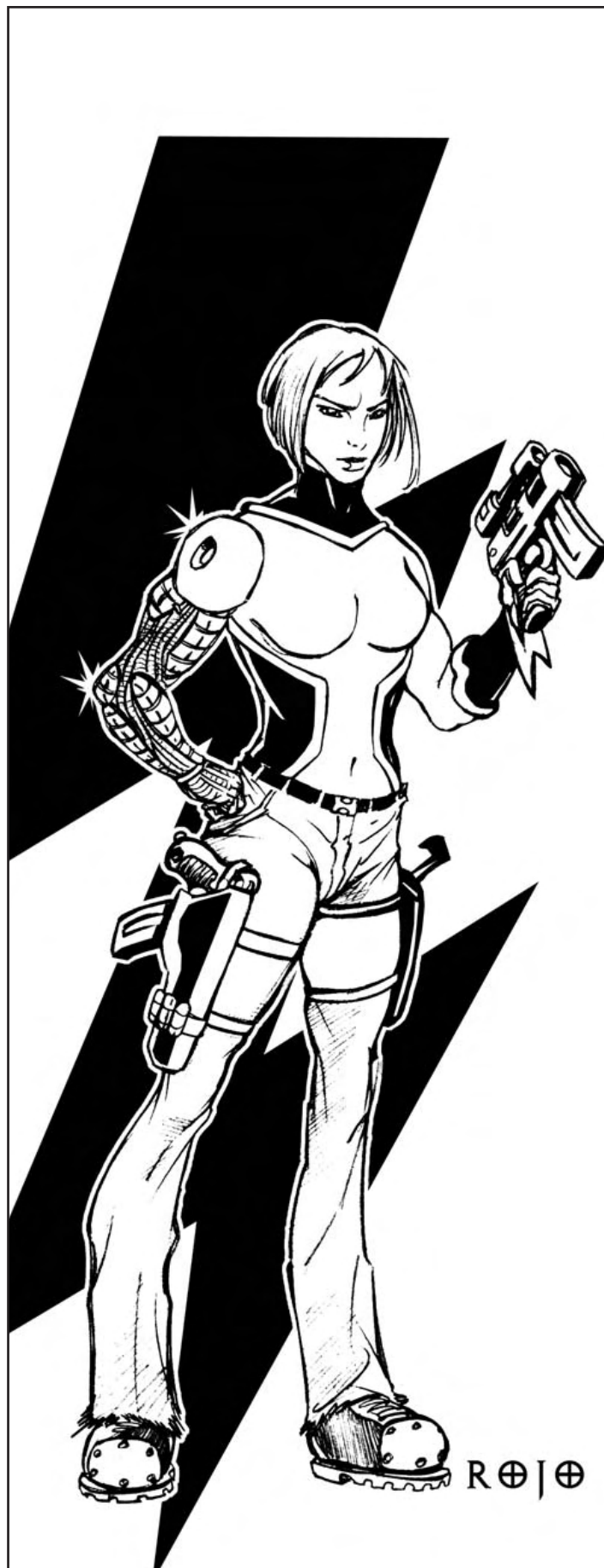
Creations are just that: creatures, constructs, or entities that the receptacle has created to aid her. Creations are typically used to guard locations, retrieve objects or (*normal*) individuals, and, when necessary, neutralize opponents. A receptacle's creations will depend a great deal on the nature of her Power and her needs at a given point in time. A creation might be anything from a massive, floating octopus of psionically-powered flame to a brood of mindless, but physically perfect, super-soldiers.

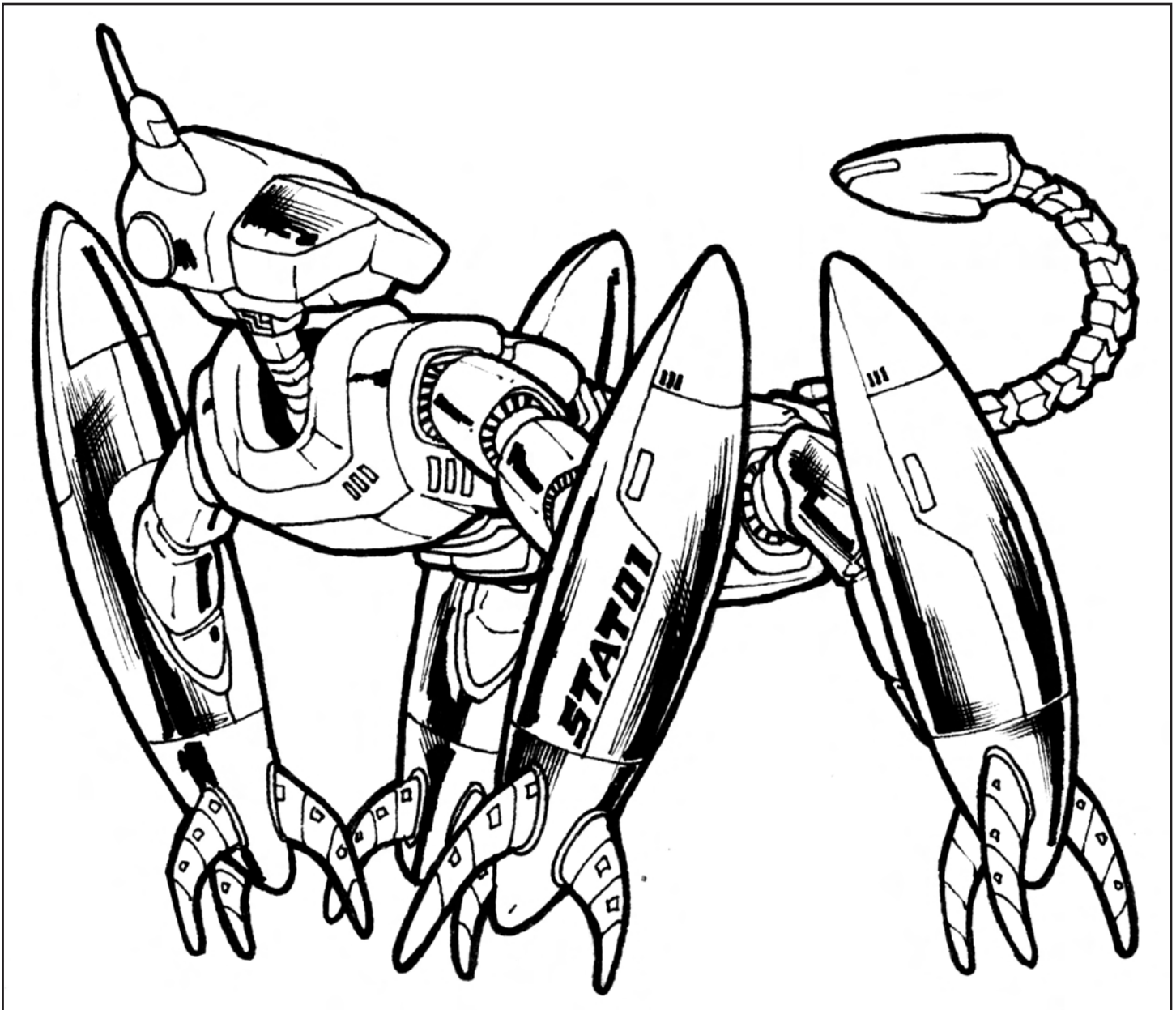
### **DOMINATED CHARACTERS**

Dominated characters are the simplest form of henchmen, as they are generally the same as they were before the campaign begins. Most often, these henchmen are enlisted with a psionic Power type, but this is not always the case. A receptacle could conceivably dominate characters using anything from mystic rituals to divine authority to simple coercion. However these characters are recruited, they tend to be somewhat more integrated into existing society, and they can often be used as saboteurs, spies, and informants; however, they also tend to be a bit more vulnerable to defection, as particular circumstances, such as those involving strong emotion or other super-powers, might be able to break the receptacle's hold.

### **MODIFIED CHARACTERS**

Similar to dominated characters, modified characters are those forced into the receptacle's service and altered in such a way as to become better suited for it. Examples include dominated criminals given animal qualities to





aid them in combating a receptacles enemies, a maggot grown to a size at which to make a suitable mount, and the plants outside a receptacle's palace given sentience and made carnivorous. Modified characters can be some of the most interesting henchmen, given that they walk a the line between creations and dominated characters. Heroic characters will definitely be loathe to kill modified normal characters, but their powers will make them somewhat more formidable than dominated characters.

### **OPPOSITION**

Nothing draws individuals closer together than shared hardship, and an incarnate god bent on ruling or destroying the world definitely qualifies. The receptacle's opposition consists of those who band together to destroy her. Such

parties might be specific organizations, other superheroes, worried supervillains.

### **ORGANIZATIONS**

Any organization that has taken an interest in stopping the receptacle is, in all likelihood, either fairly powerful, duty-bound to do so, or both. Popular organizations in similar comic book arcs include government or law enforcement agencies, secret societies, and organized criminal empires. These organizations can exist on a local, regional, national, planetary, or even galactic scale, bringing to bear however much might and manpower seems appropriate to the threat. These organizations often move first to contain the receptacle, hoping to use the Power for themselves; if that

does not work, they resolve to destroy her, by any means necessary.

## SUPERHEROES

Misunderstandings between superheroes are a common theme in comics, and the resulting battles tend to be fast, furious, and quickly resolved once the facts are straightened out. A receptacle's situation, however, precludes such quick fixes. Any conflict with other superheroes as a result of her Dark Half's influence will likely have long-term effects, particularly since the issue to be "cleared up" likely involves a receptacle's reformation or destruction. Superheroes are generally willing to make attempts at the former, but they tend to become utterly ruthless the instant innocents are compromised. Superheroes mobilize quickly to confront a receptacle that threatens to spiral out of control, and it is not unheard of for dozens (*or more!*) to band together, risking their lives to face down a single godlike character.

## SUPERVILLAINS

The selfish nature of supervillains somewhat lessens the likelihood of their involvement in a *Godlike* storyline. Generally, if a supervillain does get involved, he is seeking a way to claim the receptacle's Power for himself, perhaps using other like-minded characters to aid him. Sometimes, if a situation is dire enough (*for example, if there is no other party qualified to deal with the receptacle*), supervillains may take the field against the receptacle, but only the most disciplined will hold fast when the receptacle's full power is unleashed. Most supervillains and supervillain groups are, at best, a momentary distraction for the receptacle, and many of the worst of them might join her, possibly turning against their own worlds to save themselves. Supervillains often become dominated or modified henchmen.

# CHAPTER SIX: ADVENTURE AND PLOT HOOKS

*Chaos Effects:* *Godlike* is intended to provide game masters with a complete model for the popular storyline involving the sudden onset of immense power; however, this storyline has a great deal of room for variation. Individual characters, themes, and events will be wildly different from game to game. Each phase of the story will play out differently, depending on these factors. The following sample plot hooks, separated according to their respective phases, may be introduced into a

given campaign, altered slightly, used for inspiration, or completely ignored, at the game master's discretion.

## ORIGINS

The following hooks generally take place during the origins phase of the *Godlike* campaign. Since most revolve around the circumstances under which a receptacle receives her powers, they tend to be mutually exclusive.

## DREAMS OF BLOOD

A psychic receptacle begins to have terrible dreams of committing atrocious, murderous acts. She sees herself brutally murdering men and women, sometimes with knives or guns, though often with cruder implements and always wearing a different face. At the same time, the city is struck by a slew of murders. It seems that many previously "normal" citizens have become murderous. If the receptacle sees any of the murderers, perhaps on television or in the papers, she recognizes their faces as her own in the dreams. It should not take much to discover that she, in some way, is causing these murders. The character should seek out aid, perhaps in the form of some psychologist, mystic, or inventor. In some way, her dreams, emotions, or powers must be controlled during sleep. Else the murders continue. The receptacle might choose instead to keep her dreams a secret. This also results in more murders and more arrests. Eventually, if nothing is stopped, a psychic hero discovers the truth and comes for the character.

**Pitfalls:** If the character seeks help, the game master should ensure that she finds it. The purpose of this hook is primarily to establish the receptacle's motivations as either selfish or selfless and give her a solid character foundation upon which to run the rest of the storyline. If she seeks out a psychologist to better understand her role in the murders, she should (*eventually*) be directed to one who can actually help rid her of the dreams, perhaps by forcing her to confront some aspect of her personality (*perhaps embodied by her Dark Half*). If she instead goes to the setting's premier parahuman biologist, that character should be able to eventually whip up a sort of restraining helmet for her to sleep in that blocks the psychic seepage that is driving people to kill.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook can be used in conjunction with any receptacle archetype and Power type, but it is best suited for a character with a psionic Power.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** There is a great deal of potential, here, particularly for establishing a receptacle's weakness. Whatever method is used to control the character's murderous psychic influence might be used in later

storyline phases to restrain her Power use. The character responsible, whether it be a parapsychologist, scientist, or Zen martial artist, might play an instrumental role in the mobilization phase of the storyline.

## AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

At the climax of a pitched battle, perhaps with innocents at stake, several of the player characters and their allies lay beaten or incapacitated. Time freezes, leaving only one of the characters active, and a well-dressed man steps from the shadows to approach her. Identifying himself as Mr. Hargraves, he offers the character the power to turn the tide of the battle. If asked the price of such power, Hargraves clearly states that the price is included in the benefit; he asks nothing of the character. If the character accepts his terms, she becomes a receptacle for an appropriate Power of the game master's choice (*likely of a divine, elemental, or mystical bent*). If she refuses (*and survives the current encounter*), Hargraves remarks that his offer is on the table and promptly fades from view. He continues to turn up in times of hardship with the same offer. Alternately, he may turn his attention to another character who might be more willing (*or more desperate*). When the deal is finished or refused, Hargraves disappears, and the encounter continues as though he was never there. Only the character who spoke to him has any knowledge of his existence.

**Pitfalls:** The game master should be wary of railroading a potential receptacle. It is important to remember that there will always be other opportunities to lure in a receptacle. A character should be tempted, not forced, to accept the terms of Hargraves' arrangement. The game master should introduce Hargraves in a situation where characters face defeat, not certain death, without his help. If a character *has* to choose to be a receptacle, it not only diminishes her player's sense of control, it also diminishes her responsibility for what she eventually becomes, which, in some ways, defeats the purpose of this hook.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook can be used for any receptacle archetype, but is particularly effective for engaging chosen, meager, and wise receptacles. As was previously noted, it is most likely to bestow a divine, elemental, or mystical Power.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** Hargraves can be a demon prince from the pits of Hell, a powerful spirit, or an ancient Lovecraftian god. He could be an influential recurring villain or a sort of evil mentor for the receptacle (*or her Dark Half*). Perhaps Hargraves himself must be defeated or dominated in order to free the receptacle from her Power.

## HARGRAVES

Whatever his origins, Hargraves is impeccable. He wears a crisp, immaculately clean, black suit with a sharp, black tie. His black hair is always neatly combed, and his baritone voice radiates kindness and understanding. He is polite, gentle, and unnaturally charming. Hargraves' stats should not be needed in the initial encounter, and unless he is somehow the Source of the receptacle's Power, the characters are unlikely to have an opportunity to fight him.

## RIISING FORCE

The following events might occur during the rising force phase of the campaign. They involve the Power, either directly or indirectly, and might result in the receptacle eventually growing too comfortable with it.

## DANCING ON THE STRINGS OF EVIL

Word of the receptacle's immense potential has reached the ears of the Puppeteer (*or an equivalent character previously established in the campaign world*), a powerful psychic and self-described criminal mastermind. The Puppeteer sets into motion a plan that involves mentally dominating the receptacle, using her as a trump card against other super-powered individuals to expand his already-powerful criminal empire.

**Pitfalls:** The Puppeteer's attempt to "get" the receptacle need not be successful. Give her and her colleagues a chance to thwart him, as doing so can be every bit as rewarding as having him succeed. Even if he does capture the receptacle, though, it is important to allow her short spans of lucidity, where she can play her character normally. It is recommended that she be able to continue to play her character under the Puppeteer's influence, in a manner similar to that suggested for the Dark Half, if only to keep her player involved.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook works particularly well for a meager receptacle, as her weakness gives the Puppeteer a sort of "in" for drawing her into his plans. Although the receptacle might have any of the given Power types, a psionically-Powered receptacle might expect to be able to overpower the Puppeteer with ease; this expectation could cause problems if the game master does not agree.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** A receptacle successfully dominated by the Puppeteer is ripe for an "enemy of the state" ruling, wherein she is hunted by one or more government agencies for crimes. Her Dark Half may or may not be favorably inclined to the Puppeteer. The villain

may even be instrumental in its development, serving as a sort of father figure for it.

## BREAKDOWN

Any of the following hooks can occur in the breakdown phase of the storyline, possibly serving as the instrument for the receptacle's failure.

## BREAKOUT

A massive breakout at a paranormal correctional facility results prompts citywide panic and enough chaos to last for several gaming sessions. Most of the prisoners get loose, and while some disappear into the woodwork (*perhaps for use in later stories*), others are anxious to have a more... *immediate* effect on the city. The player characters, particularly the receptacle, should be pushed to their limits in dealing with all of the supervillains, many of whom they have tangled with before.

**Pitfalls:** The game master should be careful not to introduce this hook too lightly. It is a big deal when criminals escape from prison, and when those criminals have superpowers, things are bound to get ugly. The situation should receive nationwide (*perhaps worldwide*) media attention, and government intervention should probably play a serious role. The initial spat of violence and chaos might only last for a day or so, but the fallout from the breakout could be much more enduring. Recapturing the fugitive criminals could take a very long time, perhaps years, and even then, a few might yet slip through the grasps of interested parties. As a result, the game master should ensure that the world treats the situation with the gravity it deserves.

**Adventure Notes:** Any receptacle type could effectively play through this event, though driven characters may find it most rewarding.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** This is the game master's chance to release some previously captured villains, not just for rematches, but also, in the case of those who escape, for all-new capers. The breakout itself should be a raucous, no-holds-barred event, catering primarily to those who love to mix it up. The sheer number of supervillains on the scene might mean the receptacle has to tap her full Power, perhaps releasing her Dark Half, which might do terrible, terrible things to attacking supercriminals and panicked guards alike.

## CEASE AND DESIST

The receptacle's Dark Half takes over at an inopportune moment, resulting in a decidedly careless display of power that leaves a boy hospitalized. In response to the resulting media circus and public outcry, the government orders the character and her allies to cease their crimefighting efforts immediately, under penalty of criminal charges. The characters may or may not comply, but if they don't, they will become fugitives (*if they aren't already*) if discovered, hunted by government-sponsored organizations and paranormals.

Unfortunately, it is at this time that the murderous Vizier (*or a similarly powered supercriminal previously established in the campaign world*) decides to make his move. Vizier, an ultra-intelligent, armored megalomaniac, demands that the government (*or an individual, or an astronomical sum of money, or a particular state... the possibilities are endless*) be surrendered to him, else he will begin destroying the country one city at a time. He makes an example of a small town in Texas, and on a live news feed, the world watches as the whole thing shoots upward into the sky and out of sight. The fate of the residents is unknown, but the situation does not look promising. Vizier has created a powerful gravitational device capable of ripping entire cities from the earth and launching them into orbit. To function, this device requires that a set of gravitic columns be positioned in strategic locations around the target. And he has made it known that the player characters' city is his next target.

The characters must either find the columns in their mundane identities or risk the government's wrath by taking up the mantles of their super-powered selves. Whatever the case, if they fail, the receptacle might have to resort to her Power to save the city from Vizier's powerful device.

**Pitfalls:** While it may be tempting to focus a great deal on the portion of the hook involving Vizier, the game master is cautioned to refrain from neglecting the first half of the story involving the tragic situation of the wounded boy and the resulting media coverage. The potential effect on the receptacle cannot be ignored. Also, there is a great deal of opportunity for the characters to be subject to varying types of media coverage, from touching, concerned monitoring of the young man's condition, to the blatant attention-mongering hype much of mainstream media is known for. The characters could be the subjects of books, lectures, and talk shows for a long time to come. Also, the game master should flesh out the character of the boy and his situation to suit the needs of the story. It might



be easy to simply classify him as “some kid who stood around at a fire fight gaping and got hit by a stray millenium-blast,” but his effect on the story (*and thus, the characters*) will be much greater if he is “Aaron, a 5<sup>th</sup>-grader at Thom Pederson Elementary School, a troubled student with a loving, but overworked, single father and a mop of tangled, dirty-blond hair.” The more details the character’s have as to the boy’s identity, the more human he becomes, and the better they understand the danger posed by the Dark Half.

**Adventure Notes:** The often-wild nature of elemental Powers makes them particularly suited for this hook, although a stray psionic blast can also result in some particularly tragic injury involving brain damage or some untreatable injury.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** Vizier could definitely make a useful recurring supervillain. The injured boy, on the other hand, might play a much more interesting role, perhaps as a “control” or calming factor for the receptacle.

Perhaps the memory of what she did to him so wracks her with guilt that his very presence can momentarily dispel her Dark Half later in the storyline. This does assume that he survives. If the boy somehow dies, the repercussions could be devastating, and the characters’ status with the world at large could be irrevocably changed. It should be noted that the receptacle might use her Power to heal or “fix” the injured boy, which could result in a changed (*perhaps unnaturally so...?*) young man.

### **THE FRATERNITY OF MAN**

A political organization calling itself the Fraternity of Man rallies against the nation’s reliance on super-powered vigilantism. This organization lobbies for local and federal government controls on individuals like the characters. Sometimes, the Fraternity carries out its own brand of vigilante justice against paranormals, although the disparity in power between normal humans and parahumans generally means that they target lone mutants (*or suspected mutants*) and novice heroes and villains. This

time, the Fraternity targets a hero close to the player characters, putting the character in a hospital and ending his career forever, if not outright killing him (*depending on the needs of the campaign*). The characters may or may not be able to bring the responsible party to justice, since the crippled hero is the only witness aside from the guilty Fraternity members. An interesting twist on this hook involves the wounded hero being particularly close to the receptacle. This might prompt her to do something *drastic*.

**Pitfalls:** The Fraternity should not just come out of nowhere. It is recommended that they be introduced at least a few sessions before this hook. The game master is advised to emphasize the Fraternity's fear, perhaps foreshadowing certain parallels between the organization's members and those who later move against the receptacle in the mobilization phase of the storyline.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook is not geared toward any particular receptacle archetype, though a haunted receptacle might deal with the Fraternity in the most interesting manner. This hook is usable regardless of the receptacle's Power type. It revolves less around her abilities than it does her reaction to a tragic event.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** The Fraternity of Man makes a great recurring group of antagonists. If not utterly destroyed by the receptacle's Dark Half, the group may gain enough political momentum to actually affect the country, especially if the receptacle herself gets too far out of hand. This hook is meant to give the receptacle and her teammates an example of what humankind is capable of when sufficiently frightened. It should serve as a warning to the characters to keep the Dark Half in check.

## THE FRATERNITY OF MAN

The Fraternity of Man consists mostly of average urban and suburban men and women. Although initially composed primarily of the wealthy, the perception of crimefighters "targeting" poorer neighborhoods and street crime over corporate and political corruption has earned the group a great deal more influence among those less affluent.

The political leaders of the Fraternity of Man are charismatic, eloquent speakers, all sense-and-common-sense. They know enough to push for "paranormal control" measures in legislation before pursuing outright extermination methods (*although the latter is the desired end result*).

Although most members of the Fraternity are perfectly normal, those who prove themselves particularly dedicated are invited to the training camps, where they are taught the

combat techniques necessary to hunt paranormals. After an intense 6- to 12-month training regime at one of the Fraternity's camps, the individual, now called a Soldier, is attached to a cell of other Soldiers in a city known for some paranormal influence and ordered to hunt as best he can.

The average Fraternity Soldier is highly-trained in marksmanship and hand-to-hand combat techniques. He is a good urban tracker with some skill at shadowing prey in urban environments. Most are equipped with high-powered rifles and stylish sunglasses electronically fitted with light amplification lenses (*for nighttime hunting*). They carry smoke bombs and communicate with one another using short-range transceivers. They tend not to wear body armor, as it doesn't help much against the types of foes they face.

## TO CATCH A THIEF, TO KILL A THIEF

Shadowlark (*or a similar non-powered character previously established in the campaign world*) is widely regarded as the world's greatest thief. And unfortunately, he has discovered the Source of the receptacle's power. He steals the object and takes for himself the Power, wreaking havoc (*he is a thrillseeker archetype, if the game master requires some direction for him*) in the underworld. Even more unfortunate is the fact that he was hired by Madam Hand (*or a similar master of an organized crime empire previously established in the campaign world*), the head of a massive, globe-spanning organized crime family, to steal the object. Noting Shadowlark's betrayal, Hand puts into action a plan to get the object from him. The characters must not only locate and overpower or outsmart the thieving Shadowlark, they must also compete with Madam Hand's group of enhanced hitmen.

**Pitfalls:** As is always the case with chases and urban tracking, the real trick is ensuring that the investigation segment of the story neither ends too soon, nor drags on too long. While the characters search for Shadowlark, the game master should be certain to watch the players for signs of anxiety or restlessness. This assumes, of course, that the characters go looking for the object and do not simply "let it go," so to speak. If they do seem to be willing to release the object (*and the Power*) to its new master, don't force them to take it back. Shadowlark might come to them for aid in fending off Madam Hand's assassins, particularly if he thinks the former receptacle might have some hints on using the Power more effectively. Alternately, Shadowlark could grow to become a much more dangerous character, perhaps the major antagonist in an entirely new type of campaign.



**Adventure Notes:** This hook is not geared toward any particular receptacle archetype, though one that appreciates and treasures the Power, such as the driven or meager receptacle, is much more likely to actually pursue Shadowlark. Any Power type will do, but this hook relies on the receptacle's Source being an object.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** Madam Hand and her criminal empire could be a group of recurring villains interested in capturing the receptacle's Power for the remainder of the storyline. Shadowlark's indulgences can show the receptacle and her allies her potential for depravity through the Power.

## INVASION

A race of powerful alien entities stages a direct attack on the characters' city, resulting in dozens, perhaps hundreds, of deaths and even more injuries. The aliens are a preliminary scouting unit sent to test the human race's defenses; a much larger invasion force waits in Jupiter's shadow for the order to attack. If the scouts are repelled strongly enough, the main force will likely retreat, expecting such resistance worldwide. While the fighters and the soldiers themselves are very vulnerable to attack, the scouts' warship may require a Power, some degree of infiltration and espionage, or both to destroy.

**Pitfalls:** Alien invasions always run the risk of coming off as silly or campy, which is fine for some campaigns. Game masters with more serious campaigns in mind, however, will need to take some degree of care. It would definitely be beneficial to detail the aliens' culture and technology beforehand, rather than relying on stereotypes. The game master should know why they want to conquer the earth (*perhaps some religious expansionist drive or previous encounter with hostile humanity?*) and exactly what their technology is capable of. Also important is exactly what the aliens plan to do with the Earth. Are they out for slaves, resources, or just pure, unadulterated destruction? No amount of death and mayhem can sufficiently sober players in the face of a group of silly aliens. Flying saucers, at least "traditional" ones, are right out. And if the aliens are just little gray (*or, worse, green*) men, they had better have very interesting gear, a hell of a backstory, or both.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook is not geared toward a particular receptacle archetype or Power type, although cosmic, elemental, and psionic Powers best fit the "feel."

**Storytelling Opportunities:** As is, the invasion might require all the power the characters can muster and more, resulting in the receptacle tapping her own Power, which



unleashes the Dark Half. The Dark Half might very well kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of the aliens. Perhaps it doesn't distinguish friend from foe or visits the alien homeworld to embark on a genocidal campaign. If the receptacle leaves even some of the aliens alive, the full-force alien invasion might come at any time. Even if the invaders are frightened away by the receptacle's Power, they might come back with an even larger invasion force. This hook is meant to confront the receptacle with the very real possibility of the fact that her Power may well be needed.

## MOBILIZATION

During the mobilization phase, the story hooks generally involve the instrument of one of two things: the receptacle's redemption or her destruction.

### ARCShadow: PRIME

A group of top-tier special agents infiltrates the characters' headquarters (*or simply locates them if they do not have one*). These agents are members of Arcshadow: Prime, a government-sponsored black-ops unit employing enhanced and paranormal individuals to perform the jobs mainstream forces are too public or ill-equipped to handle. The agents request the characters' aid in moving against the receptacle, emphasizing their desire to take her in alive. Unfortunately, the agents are not so forthcoming about their plans for the receptacle once they acquire her. They have orders to immobilize her (*using a special chemical compound that may or may not work, at the game master's discretion*) and bring her in. The agency hopes to convert her into a controllable weapon. If the characters take Arcshadow: Prime up on its offer, the agents will turn against them as soon as they have the receptacle in custody. If the characters refuse, the agents instead attempt to arrange for their deaths, perhaps by booby trapping the headquarters, reprogramming the defense mechanisms, or attacking outright.

**Pitfalls:** The game master should be wary of playing the agents as menacing from the get-go. They are intelligent and incredibly skilled in their field, which involves espionage, infiltration, misinformation, stealth. These characters are expert liars and introducing them as mere thugs might diminish their storytelling value.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook is not geared toward any particular receptacle archetype or Power type.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** The characters' exposure to the agency might initiate them into the world of

conspiracy, murder, and spy games, if they are not already involved. Also, Arcshadow: Prime could surface again in later stories. If the characters hold their own fairly well, they might be offered positions in the agency, although after this adventure, they might not readily trust anyone from Arcshadow: Prime.

### FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

It becomes known to the characters that powerful psychic blocks may be able prevent the receptacle from accessing her Power and seal off the Dark Half from her consciousness. If the characters lack access to a sufficiently capable psychic, they may be directed to Mason, a psionic serial killer famous for killing his victims slowly, cutting on them over the course of days, blocking out their memories of his actions so that they went about their daily routines unaware of why they were bandaged and sometimes disfigured; these individuals always returned home, where he waited to continue his work. Mason is currently on death row in a Texas prison, and he has no logical reason to aid the characters. The characters, for that matter, might be uncomfortable allowing this sort of individual to muck around with their comrade's mind. He might, however, be persuaded to help, for a price. If the characters can get the state's cooperation.

**Pitfalls:** Mason is a serial killer, not a lunatic. As such, he should probably not be portrayed as a run-of-the-mill psycho who eats people, drools all over himself, and babbles incoherently. He might definitely be a more rewarding, full character if he is played intelligently, and treated as a three-dimensional, if sick, individual.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook might work best with haunted receptacles, who might benefit from psychic blocks that prevent or lessen the sting of certain memories. Other archetypes, however, are definitely viable. The most obvious Power type for this hook is that of a psionic receptacle, though judicious "comic book" science or psychology might be used to justify other Power types.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** This is the game master's chance to get the characters to do something, anything, out of the ordinary. Mason's request could literally be anything, and it need not necessarily be legal.

### THE LOST GOD

Deep beneath the waves near some coastal town, in the forgotten, sunken city of Berian'xiatr, an ancient god awakes. It is an alien, tentacled thing of immense power and unknowable motivations. All around the city, people begin turning, changing into strange scaled creatures,

attacking some normal humans and infecting others with the same strange affliction. It is up to characters to investigate and discover the nature of the Lost God. While its servants can be thwarted, and its prison re-built (*with great effort*), only the receptacle has the power to truly destroy it. And, depending on how the storyline has gone, thus far, she might have already been driven off.

**Pitfalls:** The panic that comes with entire populations turning into monstrous, murderous amphibians cannot be overstated. The public, if it gets wind of this, should be utterly panicked. The temptation to make this kind of event a run-of-the-mill encounter should likely be resisted. Also, the game master is cautioned against allowing the player characters to forget that the Lost God's new servants were once human. Killing them indiscriminately or in some casual manner should make for extremely bad press if anyone finds out. And then, there is the question of returning them to normal. When the Lost God is defeated or re-imprisoned, do his servants return to normal, or might that take more of the receptacle's awesome Power?

**Adventure Notes:** This hook is particularly well-suited for chosen receptacles, those destined to defeat some great force. Perhaps this is the great destiny that awaited the character. A divine Power makes for the best "match-up" between the receptacle and the Lost God, but any Power is viable.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** The alien nature of the Lost God and its warped powers should be indicative of what the receptacle might one day become, if the Dark Half is allowed to take control. The Lost God itself could also provide the receptacle with a chance for redemption, a threat even greater than herself, against which she can battle on somewhat even terms for her friends. Perhaps this Lost God takes over as the primary antagonist in the storyline, with the receptacle becoming the characters' unpredictable trump card.

## THE LOST

Men and women transformed by the Lost God develop strange, snake-like qualities over time. Their skin becomes black and scaly, and their eyes shrink and grow farther apart. They sprout two prominent fangs, and their hair falls out. In all, the change takes between one and four days. When the process is completely, these individuals join the ranks of the Lost. Those bitten by the Lost (*at least, those who survive*), slowly begin their own change. The Lost boast tough, scaly hides and great, though not quite supernatural, strength.

## SIDEBAR: BATTLE OF THE TITANS

In the event of the introduction of greater evil (*such as that described in *The Lost God**) to the campaign, the receptacle might have to battle an entity with powers of a magnitude similar to her own. This might be difficult for many game masters to adjudicate, particularly if they are using the narrative-based Power use option described earlier. The default assumption is that the combat is broken up into "narrative rounds," in which the game master and player take turns describing a series of events, wherein one's character ideally attempts to attack, confound, and weaken her opponent, and each character resists effects as normal (*based on her opponent's artificial Power score*).

Other options, however, do exist. For example, if the group is not already using one, the game master might consider temporarily switching over to an easily-learned, very simple, rules-light system for this combat. "Easily-learned" is the trick, however, and any system that takes more than a couple of minutes to explain and implement might be too complicated. Some players might resent being expected to suddenly learn and effectively use an entirely new gaming system, particularly after all the time they spent learning the one already in use.

Whatever the case, it is important to remember the other characters. Even in a conflict between virtual gods, super-powered characters should be able to influence the outcome in some ways. The easiest way to handle this is to introduce minions (*such as the Lost, found in *The Lost God**). In most circumstances, at least some of these minions should be a match for the characters. This gives them a sense of being involved in the conflict, rather than playing spectators.

Another way to involve the other characters is to introduce innocents to the battlefield. The sheer magnitude of the powers involved practically guarantees some collateral damage, which is sure to endanger bystanders. The receptacle's allies can be put to work saving others from the battle's fallout. Collapsing buildings, firestorms, grand earthquakes, meteor showers, typhoons, and numerous (*un*)natural disasters are all possibilities when Powers are involved.

Finally, the characters can actually *help* the receptacle by making their own contributions to the attack narrative (*which might earn her further Power bonuses in the narrative-based system*), making their own, often ineffectual, attacks against the opposing entity, either to distract it from the receptacle or weaken it, however minutely.



## POWERSCALE

Under narrative-based Power rules, it is important to establish a receptacle's Power scale. This represents the area she may affect with her abilities. Power scale is completely up to the game master, but it generally falls within one of four categories: immediate, local, regional, or global. Each category is briefly described below.

**Immediate:** *The Power generally only functions against targets in her immediate area, no more than a few hundred feet, and possibly as little as 30 feet.*

**Local:** *The Power can possibly affect a city-sized area, perhaps affecting everyone within city limits or manipulating or creating an object the size of a city.*

**Regional:** *The Power can affect a huge area, possibly the size of some countries.*

**Global:** *The Power can affect entire planets, possibly rearranging continents or changing the composition of the seas.*

It should be noted that even lower-scaled Powers can have large-scale effects. A character with a regional-area Power can wreak worldwide havoc with a single Texas-sized meteor.

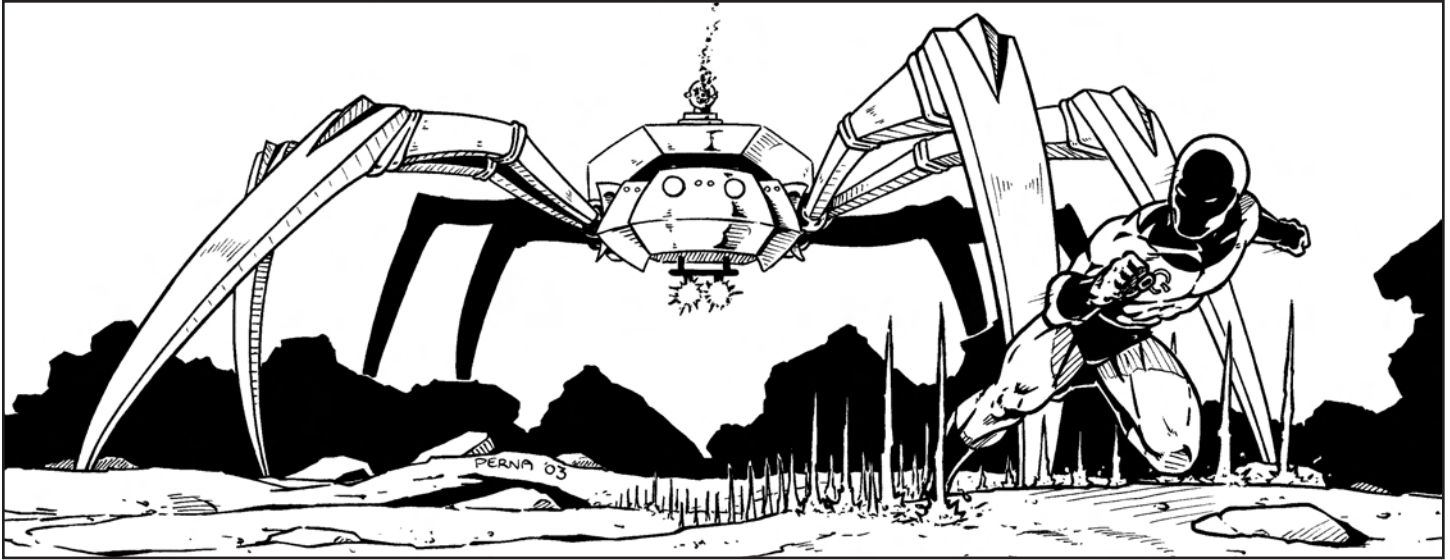
## MANHUNT

The receptacle's actions have made her and her erstwhile comrades fugitives, hunted by their country's military and law enforcement services. The public outcry caused by media influence essentially guarantees that none of the characters will receive fair treatment in a court of law, but if the situation gets desperate enough, captured characters, particularly lovers or best friends, might be forcibly enlisted to help hunt the receptacle. Characters seeking to help the receptacle must contend with heavily armed government forces and possibly paranormal operatives.

**Pitfalls:** It is always very easy to play governments similar organizations as monolithic "evil empires." An ambitious game master might wish to try confronting the characters with convincing evidence that their country is doing what they feel is best for their citizens, considering the unknown (*to them*) origins and sheer destructive potential of the threat (*the receptacle and her Power*). Perhaps a particularly human government operative is sent to bring in or recruit the characters peacefully in the hopes of discovering some way to counter the receptacle.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook is not geared toward any particular receptacle archetypes or Power types.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** This allows the characters to play on the law's bad side, if they haven't already. It also



presents a structure, in the form of the government, which could either be a help or a hindrance, depending on what the characters choose to do about the receptacle. If they are paralyzed with indecision, the military teams might be able to help them make up their minds.

## THE WELLSTONE

Characters interested in saving a receptacle must look everywhere for potential ways to help. Friendly mystics or scientists might help in the search. Someone's research turns up information on the Wellstone, a powerful artifact of immense arcane power capable of absorbing the Power that threatens to drive the receptacle mad. It just might save the character. Unfortunately, the clues point to the ruins of an ancient city deep in Subsaharan Africa. Within this city are the ruins of another, even older city of dubious origins (*which are left to the game master... perhaps this is a Lemurian metropolis or the site of an alien colony...*). Here, in the second city, the characters must face numerous challenges, such as ghostly remnants of the citizens, booby traps of magical or technological (*or techno-magical*) design. Here, in this second city, the characters will find the Wellstone.

**Pitfalls:** Very little can go wrong here, save making the quest too long or too short. The game master can incorporate just about anything into this one, from remnants of ancient peoples, to puzzles, to strange arcano-engineered creatures, to old-school-kick-in-the-door dungeon crawls. Cramming too much into this story, however, can prove detrimental to the flow (*and continuity*) of the game.

**Adventure Notes:** This hook works best for a receptacle with a divine or mystical Power, or, in the case of a more scientific ancient civilization, psionic Power. A little inge-

nuity, though, can justify the hook's use for almost any receptacle's Power type.

**Storytelling Opportunities:** As was mentioned above, there is a great deal of potential for varying gaming elements uncommon in the superhero genre. It's great for a change of pace. Also, artifacts, creatures, or writings found in the city might set certain characters on the trail of greater mysteries once the business with the receptacle is finished.

## ENDGAME!

The endgame phase is going to be based entirely on previous storyline events and the whims of the receptacle. The gaming group is encouraged to just have fun here. By this time, the storyline should have developed sufficient momentum to make this phase easy to determine and play out.

## AFTERMATH

The *Godlike* storyline can have a number of lasting effects on the characters and their campaign world, a few of which are listed below.

## PURGATORY

The receptacle, if she survives, is held accountable for her crimes, and must serve at least some time in a penitentiary for super-powered criminals. The character must serve her sentence, perhaps alongside many villains she put away herself. If the receptacle and her allies part ways at the end of the storyline, the game master might allow the receptacle's player to create a new character with advancements and experience equal to that of the jailed one.

Alternately, the character's previous heroic deeds may earn her a more *unconventional* sentence, in which she is free to continue her superheroic career on a provisional status, under the watchful eye of some government-sponsored probationer. This introduces a great deal of potential for conflict involving the expectations, motivations, and values of both the character and the watchdog.

## REBIRTH

A receptacle who does not survive the storyline may, at the game master's discretion, be reborn somehow. The troupe is encouraged to allow the character to explain her own rebirth, perhaps in- and out-of-character simultaneously, as coming up with comic book rationales that counter death can be very entertaining.

## RELAPSE

If the Source is not completely destroyed, it is possible that the receptacle again succumbs to its Power, particularly under very trying circumstances. In future stories, the game master might give the player character the option of "reactivating" her character's old Power, possibly initiating a *Godlike* storyline reboot. Smart players will refuse.

# NEW FEATS

## ARBOREAL

You can climb with exceptional agility and speed.

**Prerequisites:** 5+ ranks in the Climbing skill, Dexterity 15+

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 bonus to all climbing skill checks when ascending slopes or walls, and your rate of speed while climbing is doubled (*up to your normal ground speed*.) If you fall while climbing, you receive immediately receive two additional skill checks to try and catch yourself; if either succeeds you prevent yourself from falling. The DC for the skill checks are equal to the normal DC of the slope +5, or the normal DC for the wall +10.

## ALLEGIANCE

You are devoted to one particular cause.

**Benefit:** Choose one specific cause such as the environment, the well being of your nation, a philosophy, or your religious faith.

If you are facing opponents who directly oppose your cause, you gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and your defensive ability score. The Game Master must approve any cause you wish to adopt, and is the final arbiter of whether any enemies you face represent an opposing group. Care must be taken that this feat is narrowly defined.

**Example:** If you are select "the well-being of the American system" as your cause, Neo-Nazis and terrorists would be included as groups who directly oppose your cause, but super-villains who wish to conquer the U.S. as a first step to taking over the world would not.

## AVENGE FALLEN COMRADE

You ferociously attack enemies who cause harm to your sidekick.

**Prerequisites:** Must have a Sidekick

**Benefit:** If you witness your sidekick suffer grievous harm in combat (*critically hit, disabled, or killed*), you gain a +4 bonus to initiative and a +4 bonus on melee and unarmed attack rolls against the enemies who harmed him. These bonuses persist for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution bonus (*minimum of 1*), or until the combat is over. At the end of this period you become fatigued.

## ANALYZE OPPONENT

You can figure out how to slip past an opponent's defensive ability in close combat.

**Prerequisites:** Wisdom 15+.

**Benefit:** If you spend a full action studying an opponent for one round, you can add your Wisdom bonus as well as your Strength modifier to your melee and unarmed attack rolls against that opponent. This bonus persists for the length of the combat.

## BESTIAL NATURE

You enjoy an instinctive rapport with animals.

**Prerequisites:** Animal Affinity, Wisdom 13+.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 bonus on Handle Animal checks and a +4 bonus when making interaction checks with animals. You can also communicate with animals through grunts, snorts, whistles, and gestures. Such communication is limited to very basic commands and requests that animals can grasp, however. The GM must determine whether a given being is considered an animal or not, if

the character's statistics do make obviously indicate that it is.

**Special:** The Limited flaw may be taken to restrict this feat to only one type of animal (*canines, horses, dolphins, etc.*)

## GATHER

Your personal data is difficult for others to find out about

**Benefit:** Any skill checks made to discover information about you (*using the Computers skill, for example, or the Gather Information skill*) are made at a -5 penalty. No current photographs or video recordings of you exist at the start of the campaign.

## DISABLING STRIKE

Your attacks can temporarily cripple an opponent.

**Prerequisite:** Improved Critical, Intelligence 13+.

**Benefit:** If you confirm a critical hit against an opponent, you may choose to disable one of the opponent's limbs instead of inflicting extra damage. Disabling an arm or other limb an opponent uses to attack with may result in the enemy suffering off-hand penalties when attacking. Disabling an opponent's leg reduces base ground speed to 15 feet, and reduces jumping distances by three-quarters. Disabling both legs reduces movement to a five-foot crawl.

## ELUDE PURSUIT

You are particularly hard to track.

**Prerequisites:** Wisdom 13+, 5+ ranks in the Survival skill.

**Benefit:** The DC for others to follow your trail using the Scent or Track feats is increased by +5.

## FASCINATING APPEARANCE

Your physical appearance is such that opponents are unable to take any hostile actions upon first seeing you.

**Benefit:** Any opponent who sees you for the first time must attempt a Will saving throw (*DC 15*). If they fail, they are so mesmerized by your appearance that they cannot attack or move for that round, though they can still defend normally. Note that this feat does not necessarily mean you are beautiful; you could simply be very odd-looking or even fascinatingly ugly.

**Special:** This feat can usually only be taken at the time of character creation, except with the GM's permission (*due to mutation, etc.*)

## MASSIVE

You are inhumanly wide and broad of build.

**Prerequisites:** Constitution 15+.

**Benefit:** You are counted as one size category larger than you actually for the purposes of resisting bull rushes or grapple attempts, i.e., if you are of medium size, you would be considered large instead.

**Special:** This feat can usually only be taken at the time of character creation, except with the GM's permission (*due to mutation, etc.*)

## NERVES OF STEEL

You can use your best skills more effectively in difficult conditions.

**Prerequisites:** Skill Focus

**Benefit:** You may take 10 on any skills you have selected even if you are in combat or otherwise distracted.

**Normal:** Characters can normally take 10 on skill rolls if they are not in combat or otherwise distracted.

## NOBLE SACRIFICE

You can push yourself beyond normal limits to aid and protect others, but at the risk of your own life.

**Prerequisites:** Endurance, Constitution 13+

**Benefit:** If you are acting to directly aid another character (*taking on a clearly superior foe alone to prevent harm to innocent people, for example*) you may gain any one of the benefits listed below:

- **Strength check bonus:** You receive a +4 bonus to one Strength check (*but not Strength-based skill rolls.*)
- **Improve attack bonus:** You receive a +5 bonus to your attack rolls.
- **Increase carrying capacity:** Your carrying capacity is quadrupled.
- **Increase movement:** Your movement speed is increased four-fold.
- **Increase power:** You may increase any one power you possess by 50%. You cannot increase permanent powers, movement powers, and superabilities cannot be increased, however.

- **Resist damage:** You receive a +5 bonus to all your saving throws.

Using this feat is a free action. The effects of this feat persist for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution bonus (*minimum of 1*), and each round you may choose which of the above benefits to wish to use. After the feat's effects end, you immediately become disabled, and must succeed on a DC 10 Fortitude or begin dying the round thereafter. This feat may be used once per day.

## PACK MULE

You can lift and carry more than a normal individual with your Strength score.

**Prerequisites:** Strength 13+, Constitution 13+.

**Benefit:** Your carrying capacity is doubled. You also gain a +2 to checks to avoid becoming fatigued when carrying heavy loads long distances.

## SKILL MASTERY

You are supremely talented at using one skill.

**Prerequisites:** Skill Focus (*in the same skill*), 5+ ranks in the relevant skill, and a score of 18+ in the appropriate ability.

**Benefit:** Choose any skill to which you have applied the Skill Focus feat. You gain a +5 bonus on all skill checks with that skill, and you automatically win any opposed skill checks if your opponent. The skill bonus granted does not stack with that provided by Skill Focus.

## STURDY

You are unusually broad, heavy, or stout for your height.

**Prerequisite:** Constitution 13+.

**Benefit:** You receive a +2 bonus to resist being bull rushed, and opponents whom you have pinned in unarmed combat take a -4 penalty on all attempts to break you pin.

**Special:** This feat can usually only be taken at the time of character creation, except with the GM's permission.

## SUPERIOR LEADERSHIP

Your leadership abilities are truly extraordinary.

**Prerequisites:** Charisma 15+, Leadership.

**Benefit:** When directing others in combat, all of your allies receive a bonus equal to your Charisma modifier (*minimum of 1*) on any one type of check of your

choosing; they receive a +1 bonus to all other check, as per the Leadership feat. All the normal restrictions of that feat apply as well.

## WISE LEADER

You lead through the use of sound judgment and solid decision making skills.

**Prerequisite:** Wisdom 13+, Leadership

**Benefit:** You can use your Wisdom score with your Charisma score for all feats that involve leading others such as Leadership.

## UNRELENTING

Your grudge against a certain group of enemies allows you to withstand wounds that would otherwise fell you.

**Benefit:** You may choose narrowly defined group of opponents (*androids, mad scientists, Mafia goons, vampires, and so on*); you receive a +4 bonus on all saving throws when at least one member of that group is fighting against you and/or your allies. The Game Master must approve the opponent group you wish to select, and is the final arbiter of whether or not a particular enemy falls within the group. Categories such as "monsters" or "super-villains" are almost certainly too broad, for example, but "demons" might be acceptable, depending on the campaign.

**Special:** You should present a rationale for taking this feat to the GM; in most cases it should tie into your origin (*the Mafia killed your family; you were tortured by a group of mad scientists, etc.*)

## ZEN MOMENT

You can achieve greater success by allowing the world around you to guide your actions.

**Prerequisite:** Trance, Wisdom 13+.

**Benefit:** You may use this feat in two ways:

- First, whenever re-roll a die roll, you may treat any die rolls under 15 as if they were 15 instead.
- Second, you gain a bonus to your defensive ability equal to your Wisdom bonus +10

This feat may be used once per day for every four power levels. Using the feat may frequently than this causes you to become fatigued.

*All mechanics on all pages is Open Game Content as defined by the Open Gaming License. See page 40 for more information.*