

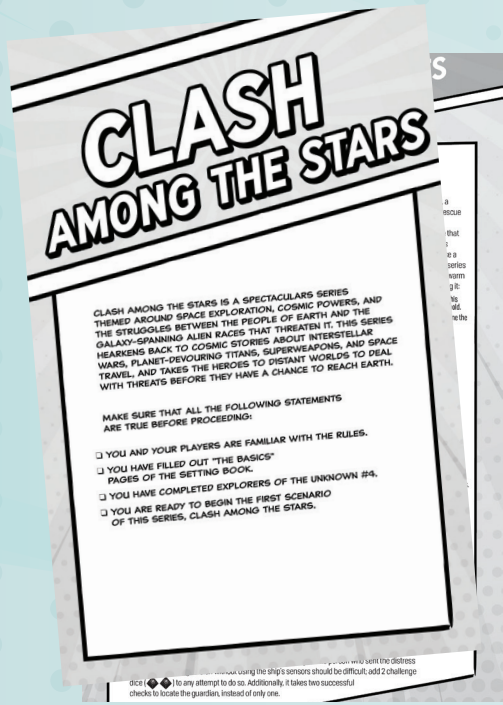
SPECTACULARS



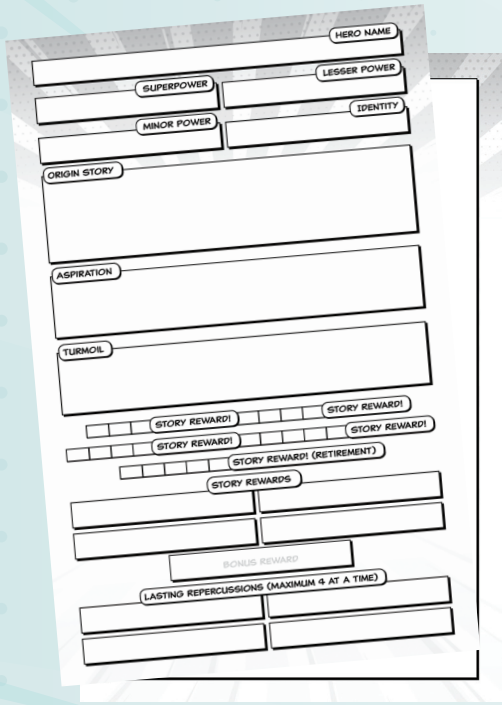
RULEBOOK

***A TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME
OF COMIC BOOK HEROES***

COMPONENTS



4 series pads (Clash Among the Stars, Eldritch Mysteries, Explorers of the Unknown, Streetlight Knights)



1 hero progress pad



1 Game Rulebook



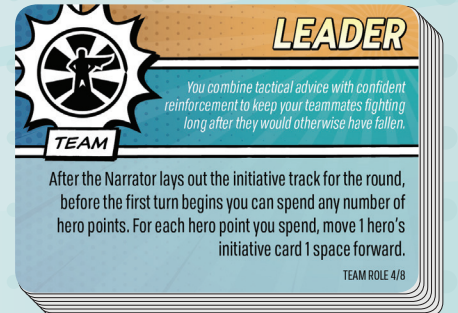
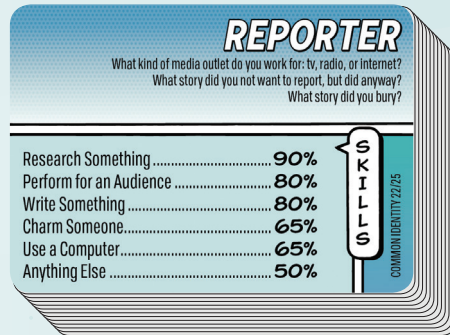
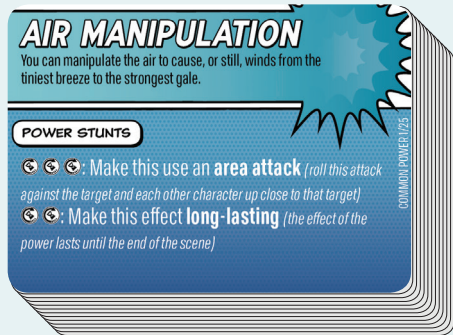
1 52-card Deck of Initiative



1 40-card Deck of Complications



1 Setting Book



1105-card Deck of Powers

185-card Deck of Identities

18-card Deck of Team Roles



4 advantage dice

7 sets of percentile dice

4 challenge dice

Tokens

Spectaculars is a roleplaying game for three to seven players in which you and your friends take on the roles of superpowered heroes and struggle against the forces of evil. More than that, **Spectaculars** is an entire comic book universe packed into a single box, and it's one that you create from scratch as you play the game. You define the setting's most important aspects, you create teams of heroes to populate that world, and you tell incredible comic book stories set against a backdrop that you have crafted. Each **Spectaculars** box set is the equivalent of a unique comic book imprint, one that grows and evolves as you play through the stories it contains.

THE SERIES PADS

In the box you'll find four **series pads**, tear-off pads containing the teams, heroes, villains, and scenarios (called **issues**) that you are going to play through. These series pads are:

- ◆ **Clash Among the Stars** (a pad containing stories of cosmic heroes and villains set far out in the cosmos)
- ◆ **Eldritch Mysteries** (a pad all about sorcery, the occult, and supernatural threats from beyond our plane of existence)
- ◆ **Explorers of the Unknown** (a pad containing stories about super science, larger-than-life heroes, and mad scientists)
- ◆ **Streetlight Knights** (a pad for stories about street-level heroes and vigilantes)

You can play through these pads in any order you like, and you can jump back and forth between pads whenever you feel like it. If you're not sure where to start, **Explorers of the Unknown** and **Streetlight Knights** are the two pads whose stories are most likely to feel familiar to even casual fans of comic book heroes.

THE SETTING BOOK

The **Setting Book** contains pages covering a variety of topics, each one representing some iconic aspect of your comic-book universe. The first few pages, labeled "The Basics," define the fundamental elements of the setting you build as you play through the game. Before you start your first session, you and your players should go through "The Basics" pages and answer the questions therein. As you play through the issues in the series pads, they occasionally reference pages in the Setting Book (the title will be in bold with the entry's identifier next to it, such as **SE01: The Powerful Artifact**). The first time you encounter a reference to a page in your Setting Book, all the players (including the Narrator) should collaborate to answer the questions on that page. When in a future session another issue references that page, use that setting element as you have defined it. As you play through the series pads, over time you define more and more elements of your universe.

GETTING STARTED

One player takes on the role of the Narrator who directs each issue. The Narrator presents each situation, adjudicates the action, and runs the villains and their minions. The other players take on the roles of the heroes. If you can, it's a good idea to have at least one person in the group read this rulebook to get a basic handle on the rules.

IF YOU ARE THE NARRATOR . . .

- ◆ Make sure the Setting Book pages labeled "The Basics" have been filled out. Read over them to refresh yourself on the setting.
- ◆ Choose a series pad for the issue you are going to play.
- ◆ Tear off sheets in that pad until you reach the next issue and stop there. The next set of pages are for use with the next issue.
- ◆ Give any team rosters or archetype sheets to the players, in case any of them want to create a new hero or team.
- ◆ Read the issue and familiarize yourself with its story and mechanics.
- ◆ If you want or need to create villains or minions for this issue, do so at this time (the issue may have been preceded by villain or minion sheets specifically intended for use with that issue).
- ◆ Take one set of percentile dice for your use.

IF YOU ARE A HERO PLAYER . . .

- ◆ Create a new hero, or choose an existing hero to play for this session. You do not have to use heroes who were created specifically for this pad (that's how crossovers happen!).
- ◆ If you're playing an existing hero, retrieve your power and identity cards.
- ◆ Choose a team role for this issue and take the team role card, placing it face-up in the appropriate slot on your archetype. Give the associated initiative card to the Narrator.
- ◆ Take one set of percentile dice for your use.
- ◆ Take hero point tokens equal to your Hero Points per Conflict.

A ROTATING CAST OF CHARACTERS

Thanks to the nature of the series pads and the Setting Book, you don't always have to play this copy of **Spectaculars** with the same players, and returning players do not have to play the same characters. You can create entirely new heroes each session, or play heroes created by other players in previous issues. Think of it like a new creative team taking over a popular title! Players can take turns as the Narrator, since each issue is self-contained and there is no secret information to be hidden from the other players. You might even choose to have entirely different groups of players for each of the series pads, running them in parallel. As one group of players defines a setting element, another might encounter that setting element and add to it, or deal with the unexpected consequences of those other players' decisions. **Spectaculars** is at its best when you treat it like a comic book imprint, using the heroes and villains you create as a stable of characters that many "creative teams" (read: players) use to tell a wide variety of different stories.

THE OPENING SCENE

Most issues start with an opening scene, where the Narrator lays out the first hints of the conflict at the heart of the issue. Usually, an opening scene is a conflict scene, one where the heroes must leap into action to deal with some threat to their safety or to the people they have sworn to protect.

INTERLUDES

After the opening scene concludes, the heroes are likely left with some questions about the villains they encountered, the scheme they foiled, or the mysteries they uncovered. In most issues, the players can then create interlude scenes that give them a chance to seek out answers or prepare for future conflicts.

Interludes are short scenes initially framed by the players, based on what they want their heroes to pursue and how they want them to go about it. The Narrator then fleshes out the scene, introduces other characters, and possibly also adds some obstacles to the heroes' success. Most interludes are resolved with a little bit of roleplaying and maybe a few dice rolls, since they rarely involve much conflict.

SUBSEQUENT SCENES

The world doesn't sit still while the heroes try to figure things out. Each issue includes a section that describes how the story continues to progress in the background while the heroes participate in interludes. These sections are labeled either "The Villain's Plan" (indicating the active works of the issue's villain) or "The Sequence of Events" (which describes events that occur, which may or may not have a villain driving them).

Each time the heroes create a new interlude, the Narrator fills in one of the blank circles next to the title of the topmost incomplete steps in the sequence. When all the circles next to a step's title have been filled in, that step in the sequence has been completed without the heroes' intervention. The Narrator moves on to the next step in the sequence the next time the heroes create an interlude.

When the heroes finally decide to take action in a way that causes them to collide with the sequence of events, the Narrator knows which of the steps in the sequence have been completed and can craft the scene based on the situation.

OPENING WITH ASPIRATIONS AND TURMOILS

If any of the heroes taking part in the issue have appeared in previous issues, they likely have aspirations and turmoils. At the start of each session of play, before the opening scene of the first issue, the Narrator can allow each player of such a hero to create a single interlude associated with either their aspiration or their turmoil and play it out. This is a fairly common rhythm for many comic book stories: opening with a peek at the challenges the heroes face in their personal lives before they're unceremoniously drawn back into the conflicts that make them don their costumes in the first place. See p. 22 for more information on aspirations and turmoils, and p. 20 for more information on interludes.

WRAPPING UP

When the heroes defeat the issue's villain or otherwise resolve the threat at the heart of the issue, the Narrator follows the instructions in the "Wrapping Up" section of the issue.

TEAMS

All heroes are a member of a team. Each series pad includes at least two options for teams. When you first start a series pad, players create at least one team for the heroes to belong to. Answer the questions on the front side of that team roster and then fill in the roster on the back with the names of the heroes created for that session. During subsequent sessions, you can use the same team, adding any newly created heroes to the roster, or create entirely new teams. Either way, the heroes must represent a team for each session. The team rosters are a handy way to flesh out the bonds between the heroes quickly and easily, and they give you a place to track the team's members. Each team roster also includes a Truths section, where you can write down setting-defining facts about that team.

TEAM REPUTATIONS

Each team roster includes three reputation tracks, which reflect how other people in the setting view and react to the team. When you first create a team, these reputation tracks have default values as defined by your answers to the questions in "The Basics" section of your Setting Book.

Each session, the actions of the heroes may have an impact on these reputation tracks, increasing or decreasing their scores as defined in the specific issue being played. Similarly, the scenarios presented in some issues change depending on whether a particular team reputation track is above or below a certain threshold.

Additionally, a team's reputation affects their interactions with the people those tracks represent. Members of a team with a reputation of 3 or higher add 1 advantage die () to rolls made to interact with people represented by that track, or 2 advantage dice ( ) if that reputation is 5. Members of a team with a reputation of -3 or lower add 1 challenge die () to rolls made to interact with people represented by that track, or 2 challenge dice ( ) if that reputation is 5.

A team's public reputation represents how the average citizen (of the city, world, or even galaxy) feels about the team. It represents the perspective of the bystanders, the victims, and the people endangered by their heroics.

A team's media reputation represents the heroes' portrayal in print, on the radio and TV, or on the Internet, either flattering or unfavorable.

A team's government reputation represents whether the government actively seeks to crack down and control the heroes or allows them to operate independently.

CREATING CHARACTERS

Creating a hero for **Spectaculars** involves making some choices from several options. To get started:

- ◆ Choose one of the available archetypes from the series pad.
- ◆ Draw five cards from the Deck of Powers and select between one and three of these as your character's powers.
- ◆ Draw three cards from the Deck of Identities and select one of these as your character's identity.
- ◆ Choose one team role card.

ARCHETYPES

Your archetype is the center of your character, both figuratively and literally. The archetype sheets included in the series pads (labeled hero sheets) represent your hero's core idiom. They provide high-level descriptions of your hero, based around iconic and common character tropes from popular comics.

The front side of the sheet features a brief description of the archetype, followed by several multiple choice questions that help define some of the most important aspects of your hero. Answer all these questions before beginning play.

At the bottom of the front side of the archetype is a box labeled Truths. Here you write down any miscellaneous but important facts about your hero. It's okay if you don't write anything in this box when you create your hero; you can note details important to your hero when they occur to you.

On the back of your archetype sheet, record your hero's name (their heroic moniker), their real name (who they are when not in costume), the team they belong to, and the hero's first appearance (the series and issue number the first time you play that hero), along with a few other important pieces of information.

During play, keep the back side of your archetype sheet face-up on the table.

HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT (A)

Your archetype sheet has a box labeled **Hero Points per Conflict**. This is the minimum number of hero points you have at the start of any conflict scene. Fill this box out last, once you have chosen your powers. This number is equal to the number of hero point icons (🌀) visible on your power cards or open power card slots, plus 1 (represented by the hero point icon in the bottom-right box of the archetype sheet).

PRINTING MORE SHEETS

Though each series pad includes some number of hero archetypes, team rosters, villain sheets, and minion sheets, you are not limited by these physical components. You can download all these sheets for free, and print out as many as you need. Visit <http://scratchpadpublishing.com/spectaculars> to download these files.

RESISTANCE (B)

Your archetype sheet includes a box where you can track your current resistance, and also tells you what your maximum resistance is.

ARCHETYPE BENEFIT (C)

All heroes have a special benefit that is unique to their archetype. Its mechanics are described in detail here.

TURN REFERENCE (D)

In the section labeled "On Your Turn" you will find a brief description of the order of operations for taking your turn. This is merely a reminder of the way that time tokens, actions, and movement work on your turn.

Hero Name: _____ Team: _____	
Real Name: _____ First Appearance: _____	
I IDENTITY SKILLS	C I CAN MAKE IT WORK At the start of each conflict scene, draw three cards from the Deck of Powers and set them aside where you can see them. At any time during that scene, you can describe your hero improvising a use of one of those powers by jury-rigging some piece of technology. You can make a check or attack using that power with an 80% chance of success. You cannot use power stunts with this use of the power. After you make the roll, return that card to the bottom of the deck. At the end of the conflict scene, return any of these cards you still have to the bottom of the Deck of Powers.
J TEAM ROLE	H SUPERPOWER 80%
HERO POINTS PER CONFLICT A _____	
RESISTANCE B _____ / 100	
D ON YOUR TURN When it is your turn, you do the following: ◆ Remove 1 time token (🕒) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it.) ◆ Move and take one action, in any order.	F TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT When you roll 4 boons (👑👑👑👑) on a single roll during a conflict scene, you can take the spotlight to gain the following benefits until the end of the scene: ◆ You regain 20 resistance every time you perform a teamwork maneuver. ◆ You gain 5 hero points (🌀🌀🌀🌀🌀). ◆ You add the Spotlight initiative card to the initiative track and act on its turns.
E SPENDING HERO POINTS You can spend hero points (🌀) in the following ways: ◆ Heroic Effort: After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (🎲) to the roll for each point spent. ◆ Teamwork Maneuver: You can spend 1 hero point (🌀) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (🎲🎲) to their roll. ◆ Team Role: Use your team role's benefit.	G DISTANCES There are three distances between things in a scene: ◆ Up Close: You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (🎲) to all melee attack rolls. ◆ Near: You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to. ◆ Far Away: You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (🎲) to the roll.
	H MINOR POWER 60%

SPENDING HERO POINTS (E)

The section below your archetype benefit describes ways in which you can spend hero points. This section is the same for most heroes and is a quick reference for the rules on hero point use, which are explained in greater detail in this rulebook.

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT (F)

Each archetype includes a section that explains what happens when your hero takes the spotlight. These effects vary from hero to hero, though the means of taking the spotlight are always the same. Taking the spotlight is explained in greater detail later in this rulebook.

DISTANCES (G)

Each archetype includes a section that explains the three distances that are relevant during a conflict scene: up close, near, and far away.

POWER CARDS

Your power cards form the core of your character's abilities and are the most commonly used part of your hero. Each power card includes a name for the power, a brief description of the power, and any mechanical benefits you gain for having that power.

When you make a character, build the Deck of Powers by combining the twenty-five Common Powers with the fifteen powers associated with the series pad that you are playing to form a forty-card deck. Draw your power cards from this combined deck.

If some players are playing existing heroes and others are playing new heroes, the players playing existing heroes should retrieve their power cards first so that a player creating a new character does not accidentally choose a power another hero possesses.

BASIC POWERS

There are five Basic powers included with the game (Energy Blast, Flight, Signature Weapon, Super Strength, and Super Toughness), with four copies of each card. You can always choose from these five powers when selecting your hero's powers, provided there is a card remaining for you to take. All Basic powers have a single hero point icon; each such power adds 1 hero point (🦋) to your Hero Points per Conflict.

CARD PLACEMENT (H)

You must choose at least one power card to place on your archetype sheet, aligning the card with the guides on the right edge of the sheet in the superpower slot. You may choose a second or third power if you wish, placing them in the lesser power or minor power slots respectively. A card placed in either the lesser power or minor power slot should be placed such that the card completely covers up the hero point icons in those card

slots. If you take a lesser or minor power, you do not gain the hero points indicated for those slots. (A Basic power in those slots grants 1 hero point.)

IDENTITY

Your identity card describes who your character is in their civilian life, when they are not fighting villains in costume. For some, this identity might be a secret, with the costume they wear as a hero protecting their friends and family from the retribution of villains. For others, there may be no separation between their civilian identity and their hero identity; these heroes are often celebrities, deputized agents sanctioned by the government, or the like.

Your identity card includes a name, a series of questions meant to inspire you when creating your vision for the character, and a list of skills, including a chance of success when using each one.

When you make a character, build the Deck of Identities by combining the twenty-five Common identities with the fifteen identities associated with the series pad that you are playing to form a forty-card deck. Draw your identity cards from this combined deck.

CARD PLACEMENT (I)

Place your chosen identity card so that it aligns with the identity slot along the left edge of your archetype sheet.

TEAM ROLE

Your team role describes the tactical responsibility you have when your team fights enemies. It includes a name, a brief description of the role, and a mechanical benefit that expands the ways that you can spend hero points.

You can choose a different team role at the start of each session.

CARD PLACEMENT (J)

Place your chosen team role card so that it aligns with the team role slot along the left edge of your archetype sheet.

MULTIPLE HEROES WITH THE SAME POWER OR IDENTITY

If some of the players are playing existing heroes, two of them might have the same power or identity, especially if they were created during different sessions. If this happens, the players decide between themselves which hero gets to use the duplicated power(s), and the other players temporarily replace that power with an available Basic power card for this session. In the case of duplicated identities, the players decide which hero gets to use the identity for this session, and the other player draws five identity cards and picks one to use for their hero for this session only.

GETTING THINGS DONE

As play progresses, the Narrator sets up a scene for the players by outlining the villains, schemes, and complications involved, and then the players describe what they want to do in that scene. Many times, the Narrator simply agrees that what the players want to happen does, in fact, happen, and then the Narrator reveals the consequences of the characters' actions and how that affects the scene. Sometimes, though, the outcome of the characters' efforts is not certain, requiring the players to roll dice to determine the results of their actions.

When you want your character to take action within a scene, you tell the Narrator what you want to do. The Narrator then determines which of the three results is most appropriate based on what you described:

- ◆ There is no chance that your character fails to accomplish the task or action, so you automatically succeed and move on.
- ◆ Your character might be able to succeed on the task or action, but there's also a chance of failure. The game's mechanics decide the outcome.
- ◆ There is no chance for your character to successfully accomplish the task or action, so you must choose another course of action.

The most commonly used mechanic is the **check**. You make a check when you attempt a task that the Narrator decides has a chance to fail.

Your powers and the skills on your identity card all have a numerical rating, ranging from 0 to 100%. This rating is called your **chance of success**, because the number tells you exactly how much of a chance you have to succeed on a task when rolling that skill. So, if you have the Fire Manipulation power in the lesser power slot with a rating of 70%, you know that when the Narrator asks for a roll you have an 70% chance to successfully use your Fire Manipulation power in some way, meaning you're likely to succeed about three out of every four tries.

Your Narrator can advise you which power or skill to use, although the choice is often obvious. Roll **percentile dice**, and if the number rolled is equal to or less than your chance of success, you succeed! If it is greater than your chance of success, you fail.

Tara is playing the Influencer, a construct with super speed. She wants to scout out the building where some villains are holding hostages by turning on the speed and dashing quickly through the building, never stopping long enough for the enemies to see her. She has a 60% chance of success to use her Super Speed power, which is in her minor power slot. She rolls the percentile dice and gets a 47. Since a 47 is less than 60 (her chance of success with that power), she succeeds, and the Narrator provides her with information regarding the number and placement of enemies inside the building.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

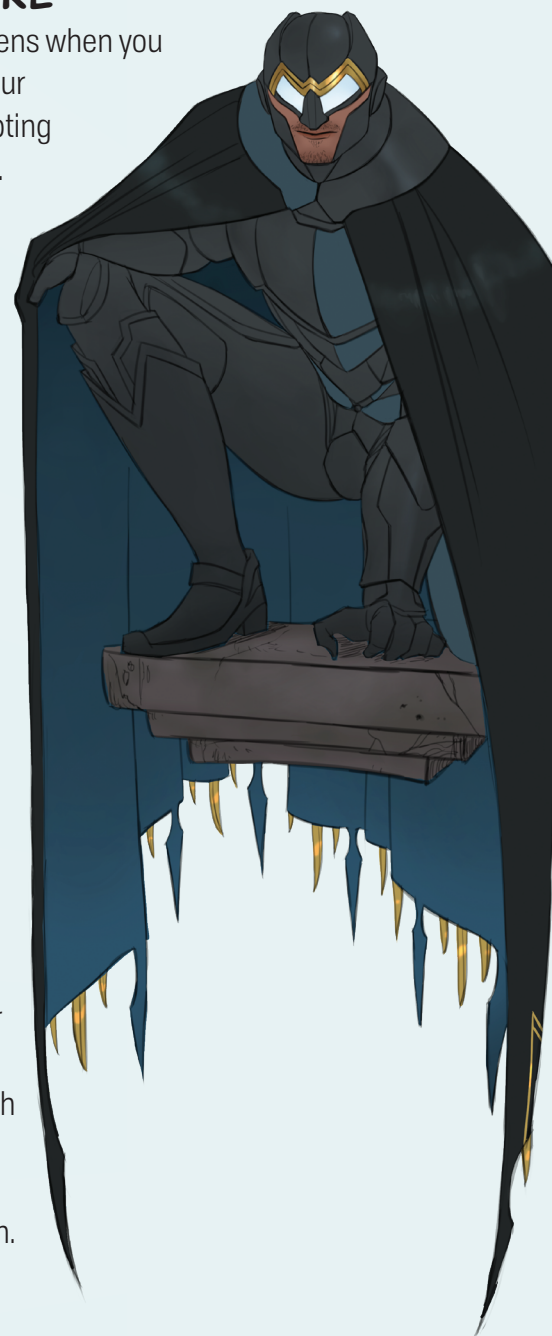
The Narrator determines what happens when you succeed or fail on a roll, based on your description of what you were attempting and the circumstances of the scene. If you were making an attack, you usually deal damage.

TRYING AGAIN

In general, there is no "try again." If you roll and fail, you fail. Further attempts at the same task should be fruitless, unless you invent a radically different approach to the same task and the Narrator agrees to allow it. Once a roll has been failed, that usually means the task is beyond the character's skill, and no amount of trial-and-error can bring it within the player's grasp.

There are two exceptions to this rule:

- ◆ **Attacks:** Failing to attack someone successfully does not mean that it is beyond your ability, only that this attempt failed. You can try again, though if you are making the attack during a conflict scene you need to wait until your next turn.
- ◆ **Narrator's Discretion:** If the situation changes mid-scene, perhaps as a result of other players' actions, and makes the circumstances of your attempt significantly different. The Narrator can let you attempt the roll again on a subsequent turn, usually with extra challenge dice as the pressure starts to build or time begins to run out.



USING YOUR POWERS

When you take an action in a conflict scene, chances are you will use one of your powers. All your powers have a chance of success associated with them. You use your powers just like you do skills, by describing what you want to do and then rolling dice to see if you succeed. You use your powers to make checks and attacks, and most powers also have additional mechanical benefits listed on the card.

When you use a power, you come up with a creative description for what your hero is doing with that power, and what the intended outcome is. This is where you get to flex your creative muscle, and you should try to come up with a description that is interesting, clever, or exciting and fits the scene at hand. Few things are more exciting at the table than when a player comes up with a particularly inspiring use for one of their powers!

When you use one of your powers to attack an enemy, most of the time you do so with the intent of dealing damage. However, you can also attack enemies in ways that hinder them instead of damaging them. Against particularly powerful villains, this can be a great way to make sure that you and your allies don't fall prey to the strength of the villain's counterattack.

When you use a power, the effect is instantaneous and is not assumed to last longer than the duration of your turn. Conjured elemental forces dissipate, summoned creatures disappear, and animated objects return to their inert form by the time your action is over. Take into account the temporary nature of your powers' effects when you create your description of how you are using them.

Tifa is playing Atomic Bombshell, an energy battery with atomic energy control. In a battle at a nuclear power plant, she decides that she is going to absorb ambient radiation out of the air and focus it into a blast directed at her enemies, attacking them. Later in that same scene, needing to protect some of the workers who had been taken hostage, she decides to create a barrier that repels harmful radiation, shielding the civilians from harm.

TIME TOKENS

Many powers have special benefits that you activate by placing one or more **time tokens** on the card. Time tokens represent the time that must pass before you can attack with the power or use the card's power stunts. Time tokens represent many different things, abstracting various parts of the chaos of a superpowered battle. When you place time tokens on a card, you decide why your hero cannot use those benefits for a while. You might decide that it's because your hero needs to rest and recharge a moment, or simply that using the power again so soon would be tactically ineffective.

You place time tokens on a power card when the card's mechanics tell you to. For example, the Healing power's benefit tells you to put time tokens on the card when you use the benefit to help an ally regain additional resistance.

Sometimes a sentence or entire paragraph is preceded by 1 or more time token symbols. This means that to gain the benefits that follow that icon, you must place that many time tokens on the card immediately. For example, to use the benefit of Super Senses, you place 2 time tokens ( ) on the power card first, then move your initiative card immediately.

While a power card has any time tokens on it, you cannot make checks or attacks using that power, or use any benefit that requires you to put more time tokens on it. You remove 1 time token from each power card that has any such tokens on it at the start of your turn.

Some powers have benefits that can be used even when there are time tokens on the card. If a benefit does not require you to place time tokens, you can still gain its effect while there are time tokens on the card.



TIME TOKEN
ICON

POWER STUNTS

Many power cards have power stunts listed on them. These are additional modifiers you can apply to attacks and checks you make with the power, changing their effect. They require you to place time tokens on the card, and you cannot use power stunts if there are any time tokens on the card. Power stunts are described in more detail in the "Conflicts" section.

CAN I ATTACK WITH THIS POWER?

Some powers may, at first, seem more passive or defensive than others. You can make an attack using any power, unless it explicitly says that it cannot be used to make an attack. Attacking with a power doesn't necessarily imply that the power itself is being used to strike or injure the enemy. Rather, it means that the power was an integral part of some maneuver you used to get close enough to the enemy to hit them, or that your use of the power gave you the leverage you needed to make the attack in the first place.

Take the Invisibility power, for example. You use this power to make yourself or something else become invisible, which cannot itself directly harm an enemy. You could still use the power to attack someone by describing that attack in such a way that the invisibility was critical to the attack's success, even if the actual harm comes from another source. You might describe yourself as turning invisible and sneaking up on the enemy to strike them with your fists or a baton, or you could describe your hero turning a runaway garbage truck invisible so the enemy doesn't see it coming. Even though in those cases it's fists, a weapon, or a careening vehicle that actually harms the enemy, your use of Invisibility is what facilitates the attack's success, allowing you to make the attack roll using that power's chance of success.

ADVANTAGE DICE AND CHALLENGE DICE

The details of a given situation can affect the likelihood of your success, regardless of your skills or powers. These circumstances include environmental factors (extreme temperatures, driving rain, distracting noises, and so on), good planning, the repercussions of previous actions, and even simply being particularly bold or foolhardy.

These circumstances affect what additional dice you roll when making an attack or a check. Most of the time, the Narrator determines when a circumstance comes into play.

If the Narrator determines that you have positive circumstances working in your favor, you roll a number of **advantage dice** along with your percentile dice. Advantage dice are custom 8-sided dice included with this game. The Narrator can choose to add up to a maximum of 4 advantage dice to your roll, to express the circumstances in your favor. The more advantage dice you roll, the greater the chances of elements in the scene turning in your favor. Advantage dice represent the fruits of the team's efforts to prepare for certain aspects of the mission, and also apply when a team member's background or history perfectly aligns with the situation.

Similarly, when the Narrator determines that negative circumstances are working against you, you roll a number of **challenge dice** along with your percentile dice. Challenge dice are custom 10-sided dice included with this game. The Narrator can choose to add up to a maximum of 4 challenge dice to your roll, to express the circumstances working against you. The more challenge dice you roll, the greater the chances of elements in the scene going wrong. Challenge dice represent the risks associated with the task being attempted, as well as times when the circumstances of the scene are weighted against the team member.

Advantage dice and challenge dice don't affect your chances of success. Instead, they represent the possibility of unexpected positive and negative outcomes, regardless of whether you succeed.

Character abilities or other game mechanics can add advantage dice or challenge dice to your roll. Regardless of how many factors tell you to add a number of advantage dice or challenge dice, including the Narrator's determination of the difficulty of a situation, you never roll more than 4 advantage dice or 4 challenge dice on any given attack or check.

Mike is playing Road Rash, a speedster with kinetic energy control. He wants to use his power to accelerate himself to a sufficient speed that he can jump up to a helicopter overhead. The Narrator adds 1 challenge die to the roll, since the landscape is flat and there is nothing that Road Rash can use for a ramp.



ADVANTAGE
DIE



CHALLENGE
DIE

BOONS AND DRAWBACKS

Advantage dice and challenge dice don't determine whether you succeed or fail; that's determined by the roll of the percentile dice compared against your chance of success. Instead, these dice provide an additional twist, an unexpected side effect of the action you attempt to accomplish.

If at least one of your advantage dice comes up showing the **boon** symbol, you have a boon in addition to the outcome of your check or attack. A boon is a positive twist on the situation, an unexpected turn of events in your favor. If you roll a boon, an unexpected positive consequence results from your action, in addition to your success or failure at the attempt. The most common boons involve gaining additional information that can help your team on the mission or dealing extra damage to an enemy.

If at least one of your challenge dice comes up showing the **drawback** symbol, you have a drawback in addition to the outcome of your check or attack. A drawback is a negative side effect of the action you are attempting, a twist of fate that can mean trouble for you or your allies. If you roll a drawback, an unexpected negative consequence results from your action, in addition to your success or failure at the attempt. The most common drawbacks involve taking some extra damage or the Narrator introducing an additional complication that the heroes need to deal with.

It's possible to end up with both boons and drawbacks on the same roll, especially when you have advantage dice and challenge dice added to your roll from different sources. When this happens, each rolled boon cancels out a rolled drawback, and vice versa; once you roll the dice, simply set aside each boon-and-drawback pair, as though you never rolled those dice, and then resolve the check or attack as usual with whatever dice remain.

The Narrator determines the outcome of the boons and drawbacks that you roll. Boons and drawbacks do not change the fact that you succeeded or failed, but they do alter the way you succeeded or failed. Typically, the Narrator uses boons and drawbacks as a way to heighten the tension of a scene, change the tone of a scene, or propel the action into a new scene entirely.

Continuing the previous example, when Road Rash makes the jump up to the helicopter, another player reminds the Narrator that, on a previous turn, another hero had pulled the helicopter lower to the ground using telekinesis. The Narrator also gives Mike 2 advantage dice on the roll. Mike rolls a 25 on the percentile dice (success!) plus 1 boon on each of the advantage dice and 1 drawback on the challenge die. The drawback and 1 boon cancel each other out, leaving Mike with 1 boon. The Narrator describes Road Rash landing in the helicopter, and as the added boon the hero deals 10 damage to the villain inside.



BOON
ICON



DRAWBACK
ICON

FOR THE NARRATOR: ADVANTAGE AND CHALLENGE DICE

Here are some examples of how to use advantage and challenge dice.

WHEN TO GRANT ADVANTAGE DICE

Add these dice to a roll in these common situations:

Is the player using the environment in a creative way? Grant 2 advantage dice ( ). Any time a character hits something with a telephone pole, bounces a laser blast off a satellite dish, or performs some other feat that uses the scene's setting as a tool, that has the potential to be an iconic comic book hero moment.

Is the player doing something entertaining? Grant 1 advantage die (). Any time a player does something that you or the rest of the players at the table find to be thrilling, funny, or pleasingly dramatic, reward that behavior with an advantage die.

Is the player doing something bold, daring, or risky in an exciting way? Grant 1 advantage die (). Taking risks and bold actions is critical to comic book stories. Many elements in the game encourage characters to play it safe (time limitations, complications, and so on), but excitement rises only when players take a risk and it pays off—or they get into hot water.

Is the player creatively using knowledge gained during an interlude in some way? Grant 2 advantage dice ( ). Interludes provide the players with a chance to show their creativity and ingenuity, and you should reward them when they use what they learn in clever ways.

WHEN TO IMPOSE CHALLENGE DICE

Add these dice to a roll in these common situations:

Is the hero behaving in a cowardly or reckless manner? Impose 1 challenge die (). When a hero does something that they might regret later, it distracts them from achieving their goals.

Are there any environmental or circumstantial details that make the task harder? Impose 1 challenge die () for each such circumstance. Examples include thick fog that obscures vision, being within the area of a villain's pain-inducing aura, or trying to fight in hand-to-hand combat in the middle of an earthquake.

BEING GENEROUS

In your role as the Narrator, be generous with the features you hand out: advantage dice and challenge dice, hero points, and other game elements. Doing so gives the players a sense that their actions and descriptions have a strong impact on the game. As long as the players act in good faith and attempt to emulate the comic book heroes genre, reward them for the effort. Each time you do so, accompany it with a description of what happens in the world to warrant it.

BOONS

When a player rolls a boon, work with the player to invent a positive outcome of the task they were trying to accomplish and that makes sense in the context of the scene. Below are some examples of how Narrators can interpret boons; the most common uses are in **bold**.

When creating your own boons, try to think of things that not only help the player who rolled the dice, but also can give another member of the team a leg up in that scene, or a future one, to reinforce the idea that succeeding is a team effort. Good boons often provide the heroes with new opportunities or angles of attack they would not otherwise have noticed.

EXAMPLE BOON APPLICATIONS

- ◆ **Add 10 damage to a hit against a villain or a hero**
- ◆ **For each boon, reduce the size of a squad of minions by 1 more than normal on a hit**
- ◆ The attack forcefully moves the target in some way, like knocking them back through a wall
- ◆ The attack causes the target to stagger, fall down, or drop something they are holding
- ◆ On a roll with 2 or more boons ( ), progress a complication in the scene by 1 step, earning 1 hero point ()
- ◆ Give another hero 2 advantage dice ( ) on an upcoming roll
- ◆ Regain 10 resistance per boon due to a surge of confidence or an unexpected respite
- ◆ Gain an additional insight into an enemy's nature, perks, or weaknesses

DRAWBACKS

When a player rolls a drawback, work with the player to determine what negative consequence occurs, beyond the results of the attempted task. You can choose any of the options below or create new drawbacks, though a drawback should always make sense in the context of the task being attempted. The most common interpretations of drawbacks are in **bold**. The best drawbacks increase the tension of the moment and push the team members involved in the scene to take bigger risks and attempt more extreme actions. Drawbacks should spur the players to action, not deter them from trying risky things.

EXAMPLE DRAWBACK APPLICATIONS

- ◆ **Subtract 10 damage from the damage of a hit against a hero or villain**
- ◆ **The character takes 10 damage from a glancing blow from an unexpected source**
- ◆ **The character takes 20 damage from a surprise attack when up close to enemies**
- ◆ On a roll with 2 or more drawbacks ( ), introduce a new complication into the scene by drawing 3 cards from the Deck of Complications and choosing one
- ◆ A future attempt of the same task imposes 2 challenge dice ( ) on the roll

HERO POINTS

You aren't just a person with special powers, you're a hero. To represent your capacity for heroism, your character gains and uses **hero points**. Hero points are a resource that you can spend to do exceptional things.

On your archetype sheet, you have a box that tells you the minimum number of hero points you have for each conflict scene. At the start of a conflict scene, if you have fewer than that number of hero points, you gain hero points until you reach your minimum. If you have more hero points than your minimum, you do not gain any more at the start of the conflict scene.

You can earn more hero points during a scene by dealing with complications. If you take time to protect innocent citizens, put out fires, and do things other than punching or shooting the villain, you are being heroic, putting the needs of the people over your own satisfaction. Any time you successfully progress a complication or an objective, you gain 1 hero point (🌀).

At the end of the play session, any unspent hero points are lost. If you play multiple issues in a single session, you can carry over your hero points from one issue to the next.

Generally, you cannot spend hero points outside of a conflict scene, unless the Narrator makes a special exception for you. You spend hero points as described below.



HERO
POINT

INCREASE YOUR CHANCE OF SUCCESS

After you roll a check or attack and would fail, you can spend any number of hero points. For each hero point (🌀) you spend, you increase your chance of success on that roll by 10%, but you must add 1 challenge die (🎲) to the roll. If you cannot add any more challenge dice to the roll due to already having the maximum number of 4 challenge dice on that roll, you cannot spend more hero points in this way.

Erica is playing Ms. Mole, a monster with super senses and natural weapons. She wants to burrow up underneath the villain and attack him with her claws. The Narrator gives her 1 advantage die for making a melee attack, plus one more for the element of surprise. However, he also gives her 1 challenge die on the roll, because the villain is moving quickly and pinpointing his position from underground could be tricky. Erica rolls the percentile dice, 2 advantage dice, and 1 challenge die. On her percentile dice, she rolls an 83, and her chance of success with her natural weapons was only 60%. She would need to spend 3 hero points to increase her chance of success to 90% to hit, and would add 3 more challenge dice to the roll. If she had instead rolled a 93, she could not spend hero points to increase her chance of success, since she already has 1 challenge die on the roll and could not add four more.

PERFORM A TEAMWORK MANEUVER WITH ANOTHER HERO

Before another hero rolls dice, you and that hero's player can describe some way that your two heroes are combining their powers to perform a special maneuver, or some way you are using one of your powers to help that hero in their attempt. When you do, you spend 1 hero point (🌀) and add 2 advantage dice (🏠 🏠) to the roll. You cannot spend more than 1 hero point when performing a maneuver with another hero. You must choose a specific power to use in the maneuver, and it can be one that has time tokens on it.

Performing a teamwork maneuver with another hero doesn't cost you an action or add time tokens to any cards. Teamwork maneuvers are a great way to add more advantage dice to any roll, which is especially useful for attacks or other critical situations.

Luke is playing Steel Scorpion, a vigilante with a signature weapon, her bladed whip. One of her allies, a street sentinel called the All Nighter, is about to charge at a villain and try to shove the villain off of the rooftop. Luke decides to spend a hero point to perform a teamwork maneuver with the All Nighter, and describes how Steel Scorpion lashes out with her whip, wrapping it around the villain's ankle and yanking it back as All Nighter puts a shoulder into the villain's chest. This gives the All Nighter 2 advantage dice on their attack roll against the villain.

USE YOUR TEAM ROLE BENEFIT

Each team role grants a benefit that requires the player to spend hero points to use. You simply state that you are spending hero points to use this benefit, and then describe what your hero does in that moment to grant them the mechanical benefit listed on the card. Unless otherwise specified, you can spend as many hero points as you wish for a single use of a team role benefit.

Regina is playing the Battlemaster, a warrior with an arsenal who has also chosen the Striker team role. One her next turn, she attacks the villain using her Arsenal power, describing how she unlimbers a battle axe from her shoulder and takes a big swing at the villain. She rolls a 37, a successful attack, but really wants to dish out some damage to this villain in the hopes that her allies can take the villain out before the end of the round. She decides to spend 2 of her hero points on her Striker team role benefit, which lets her add +20 to the damage of melee attacks for each hero point spent. She adds +40 to her initial roll of 37, dealing 77 damage to the villain.



CONFLICTS

When two or more characters want different things, a conflict arises. Any time you fight a villain or some minions, you are engaged in a conflict.

TAKING TURNS

During some scenes, like conflict scenes, the intensity of the action requires each character to take **turns**. To resolve fights between heroes and villains, chases through city streets, and other exciting sequences, taking turns allows each character involved in the scene to take actions, alternating with other characters to give everyone a chance to get involved.

At the start of a scene, the Narrator builds the **initiative deck**. The initiative deck has one **initiative card** in it representing each hero, and one card for each villain, squad of minions, and secondary character. Some villains might have more than one card in the initiative deck, and some complications and objectives may also have initiative cards. There are multiple colors for each type of initiative card; choose a color for each character, complication, event, or other scene element, and use the initiative cards of that color for that scene element. The Narrator shuffles the deck and then deals them out face-up one at a time in a line, called the **initiative track**. Once the initiative track is assembled, it represents one **round** of the conflict scene.

The heroes Mr. Spirits, Verdict, Blackheart, and the Arcanist face off against the villainous Lady Banshee and a squad of mind-controlled citizen minions. The Narrator builds the initiative deck for the scene by adding one card for each hero, one card for the mind-controlled minions, and two cards for Lady Banshee (per the instructions in the issue they are playing). Based on the description in the issue, the Narrator also adds a card for the complication in the scene: a mind-controlling ritual that Lady Banshee has started. The Narrator shuffles the cards, then deals them out left-to-right.

MANIPULATING THE INITIATIVE TRACK

When all the cards have been placed in the initiative track, the Narrator makes any changes to the track based on the special benefits the villains or minions in the scene, or any benefits described in the issue (if there are multiple such alterations to be made, the Narrator chooses in which order to make them).

Then, the hero players can make any changes to the initiative track based on their powers or benefits; as with the Narrator, the hero players choose in which order to make such alterations if there are multiple alterations to be made.

Any time an initiative card is moved forward (left, toward the beginning) or backward (right, toward the end) on the initiative track, for each position it moves, it swaps places with the card immediately adjacent to it.

If a player benefit allows them to move, flip over, or otherwise manipulate an enemy's initiative card, and that enemy has multiple face-up initiative cards, the player chooses which card to manipulate.

The Narrator has no adjustments to make to the track, but the Arcanist uses his Time Manipulation power to move Verdict's initiative card 2 spaces forward (to the left) on the initiative track. The Narrator swaps Verdict's initiative card with the one to its left (one of Lady Banshee's cards), and then swaps it again with the next card to its left (Blackheart's card).

TURN ORDER

In order from left (the beginning of the track) to right (the end of the track), each hero or villain takes a single turn. At the end of that turn, flip the initiative card face-down to indicate which turns have been taken. The next turn always belongs to the character, hazard, or event whose initiative card is face-up and closest to the beginning of the track.

If a new character, squad of minions, complication, or obstacle enters the scene in the middle of a round, add its initiative card face-up to the end of the track.

WHAT HAPPENS ON A TURN

At the start of your turn, you remove one time token from each power card that has any such tokens on it. During your turn, you can take one **action** and, in most cases, move. Since the time span of a scene is variable, the nature of the action you take depends on the situation. In a fight scene, an action can be a single swing of a fist, firing a bolt of energy at an enemy, or protecting civilians from a villain's attack. During some scenes, a single action can encompass more complex efforts; a single action (and usually a single check or attack) might represent what your character does over a lengthier period of time, such as what transpires over several minutes of a chase.

When your turn comes up, you describe the action you want to take. The Narrator then determines if you need to make any checks or attacks and, once those are resolved, describes the outcome of your action.

The Arcanist's initiative card is the next one on the track, so on his turn he decides to try to break Lady Banshee's grasp on the minions by using his own Mind Control power. He first moves to get closer to the minions, and then makes a roll to attack the minions with Mind Control.

ENDING A ROUND AND STARTING A NEW ONE

When the last turn on the initiative track has finished, the round ends, and a new one begins. The Narrator scoops up all the initiative cards, shuffles them, and deals them out again to form a new initiative track for the new round. Play continues as described above.

DISTANCES AND MOVEMENT

Comic book action sequences tend to play fast-and-loose with the concepts of distance and movement. When you are in a conflict, you use measurements of distance that are relatively abstract, for the sake of simplicity.

When you are **up close** to an enemy, you are within physical striking distance. You can make attacks with your fists and feet, swords, parking meters you rip out of the ground, and generally any weapon (improvised, or otherwise) that you can use to stab, slash, or bludgeon.

When you are **near** to an enemy, you are close enough that, with your normal movement, you can get up close to them. When you are near to an enemy, you can attack that enemy only if you have some means of attacking at range, or if you can strike someone with an exceptionally large object (such as a lamp post or telephone pole).

When you are **far** from an enemy, you can move to get near them this turn, but not up close. If you are too far away from an enemy to get near them by moving, this is an exceptional circumstance that the Narrator or the scenario must specify. You can attack an enemy that is far from you only if you have some means of attacking at range, such as shooting a beam of energy or throwing a car.

Generally, you move away from things by going from being up close to near, and then from near to far.

Meridian, a vigilante with time manipulation powers, is stealthily approaching the villainous Lady Banshee. He starts far away from her, and chooses to move to be near to her before attacking. Once he is near, he makes a ranged attack against her as he throws an explosive orb to daze her. On her turn, Lady Banshee moves from being near to Meridian to get up close to him so she can slash with her claws, a melee attack. On his next turn, Meridian moves away from her and is considered to be near to her once more. He then uses his action to move a second time, retreating to be far from her.

GETTING AROUND

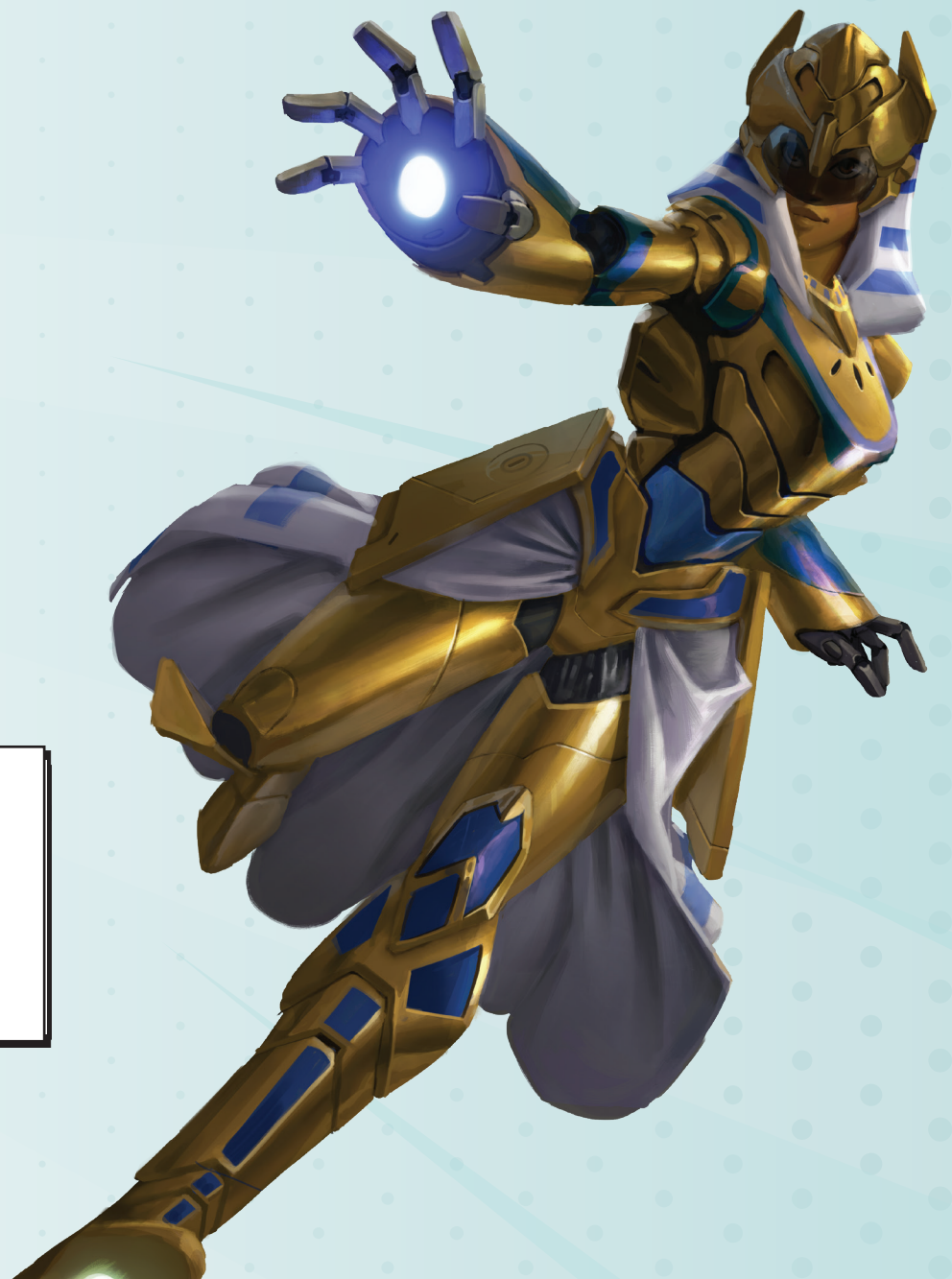
Among the questions on the front of each hero archetype sheet is one that asks how the heroes get from place to place. In general, this question is asking how the heroes arrive in a scene, or how they travel between scenes. It does not represent a method of moving around in a conflict scene. Of course, a player can always choose a power that reflects their answer to this question, which could in turn provide them with new means of moving while in a conflict scene.

MULTIPLE CHARACTERS UP CLOSE

Typically, if you move to be up close to an enemy, you also become up close to any other characters that were already up close to that enemy. Essentially, you become a part of a cluster of characters that are all up close to each other.

Similarly, any character that is near one member of such a cluster of up close characters is considered to be near to all of them, and the same goes for being far away from that cluster of characters.

The hero Blackjack and the magically enhanced villain, Bloodstalker, are up close to each other trading melee attacks. A squad of bat-winged demon minions moves to get up close to Blackjack and begin attacking him; next, the hero Count Zero moves up close to the demons to keep them off of Blackjack's back. Blackjack, Bloodstalker, the demons, and Count Zero are all up close to each other.



ATTACKS

When you oppose someone directly, sometimes you want to make an **attack** against them. Making an attack is exactly like making a check—your Narrator can help establish what power (or even, occasionally, your identity) you are using to make the attack, and you roll percentile dice to determine if the attack succeeds.

You make **mental attacks** against people to try to get them to do something that you want; the attack can represent a telepathic attack on the mind of an enemy, or it can represent coercion, intimidation, lying, or even seduction. Mental attacks don't cause physical harm and are usually used in scenes when you want to coax something out of a Narrator-controlled character that he or she doesn't want to give up; many of the skills on your identity card can be used to make mental attacks.

You make **physical attacks** with the intent to physically harm people: stabbing them, shooting them, punching them in the face, and so forth.

Succeeding on an attack is called a **hit**. If you fail on the attack, it is called a **miss**. On a hit, the number you rolled is also the **damage** of the attack. Successful attacks reduce resistance if they deal damage.

Darren is playing Archimedes Jones, a scoundrel with light manipulation. Archimedes and his starship crew are facing off against space pirates who have boarded their ship, and Darren wants to use his Light Manipulation superpower to create a blast of solid light to take down the space pirate boarding party leader. Darren is making a physical attack using the power, with which he has an 80% chance of success. Darren is making a physical attack against the pirate, so he rolls percentile dice and gets a 55. This is a hit, since it is lower than his chance of success with the power, and he deals 55 damage to the pirate. This isn't enough to take the pirate out, but Darren has made some progress, and he hopes that another hero might come to his aid on their turn to finish the pirate off with a subsequent attack.

MELEE ATTACKS

A **melee attack** involves physically striking an enemy with an object you are holding, or with a limb or a natural weapon (like a claw or bite). Melee attacks can be made only when up close to an enemy, and you automatically add 1 advantage die () to rolls for melee attacks.

RANGED ATTACKS

A **ranged attack** involves shooting someone, throwing something at them, or otherwise attacking from a distance (there is no minimum range). You automatically add 1 challenge die () to rolls for ranged attacks made against enemies that are far from you.

ALTERNATIVES TO DAMAGE

Sometimes, you might describe your attacks against an enemy in such a way that dealing damage isn't the intent or doesn't make sense. This most often occurs when you and your fellow team members are fighting tactically, trying to keep one of your number from being knocked out of a fight, and so on. Instead of dealing damage on a successful attack, based on your description the Narrator could choose one of the following alternative effects for a hit on an attack:

- ◆ The hit target cannot move on their next turn (a good choice for attacks described as being intended to bind or immobilize a target).
- ◆ The hit target adds 4 challenge dice (   ) to one specific roll they might make on their next turn (a good choice for attacks described as being intended to hinder a target attempting that specific action).
- ◆ The hit target is forcibly moved, knocked down, staggered, or drops something they are holding (these effects can also be applied as additional benefits on top of damage if boons are rolled).
- ◆ The hit target loses one step of progress toward an objective they are attempting to complete (a good choice for when an attack somehow interferes with an objective that is otherwise not an opposed objective).

TAKING THE SPOTLIGHT

If you roll 4 boons (   ) on a single roll, you can take the spotlight. Taking the spotlight represents your hero stepping to the forefront and becoming the focal point of the scene. It usually is the payoff for having swung the tide of battle strongly in your favor, though the conflict is far from resolved. Only one hero can take the spotlight in any single scene. Your archetype describes the mechanics associated with taking the spotlight.

When you take the spotlight, something exceptional happens to your hero, and this should be reflected in their appearance. A power armor pilot might activate an entire second exosuit to surround them so they can go toe-to-toe with a rampaging brute; a powerhouse might activate her alternate form inspired by the power of binary stars, wreathing herself in flame to represent her surge in power. You and the Narrator should agree on the way in which your hero's appearance changes for the scene.

BOONS AND DRAWBACKS WITH MULTIPLE ROLLS

You roll the advantage and challenge dice only once, no matter how many rolls you are making to attack enemies in a single action. You can choose a single attack to apply the benefits of any boons you roll to. Similarly, the Narrator chooses which attack roll to apply the effects of any drawback to. If it is an enemy making a special attack, the Narrator decides which rolls both the boons and drawbacks apply to.

POWER STUNTS

Power stunts are modifiers you can apply to powers when you use them to make attacks or checks. If a card has a power stunt listed on it, you can place some number of time tokens (as described on the card) on the power card to use that power stunt.

You can use a power stunt only as a part of making a check or attack with a power. You can decide to use a power stunt after you roll the dice for the attack or check, but before the Narrator describes the outcome, and you can use only one power stunt at a time.

Most power stunts follow the rules described in their entries below. Some powers may have additional mechanics applied to a power stunt when used with that power. For example, the Explosions power adds advantage dice to the roll when making an area attack with that power.

AREA ATTACKS

When you attack with a power and choose to make it an **area attack**, you describe your use of the power in such a way that it catches a large area in the space it affects, such as creating an explosion or laying a psychic wave across a crowd of people. You then make the attack against one enemy, plus every other character (ally, enemy, or bystander) that is up close to that enemy (except for you, if you are up close to them). You make separate rolls against each target or squad or minions.

An area attack made against a squad of minions reduces the squad's size by 3, instead of by 1, if it is successful.

FEATS OF HEROISM

When you make a check using one of your powers to progress a complication or an objective, if you choose to make it a **feat of heroism** you add 2 advantage dice ( ) to your roll.

HINDERING ATTACKS

When you attack with a power and choose to make it a **hindering attack**, you describe your use of the power in such a way that it would daze or stun an enemy, or otherwise prevent them from taking actions. If the attack hits, you deal no damage. Instead turn the target's initiative card face-down, causing them to be unable to act for a turn. If the target has multiple initiative cards, you choose which card to turn face-down.

LONG-LASTING POWERS

Some powers have an power stunt that allows you to make them **long-lasting**. When you choose this option, the effect of your use of the power lingers until the end of the scene, until you are knocked out of the scene, or until you choose to end that use of the power, whichever comes first. You don't need to do anything on subsequent turns for the power's effect to remain. Describe your use of the power in such a way that it makes sense for the effect to last for a long time.

The effect you choose to be long-lasting must be something that can reasonably persist that long. For example, things that happen instantaneously, like damaging someone with an energy blast, cannot have a long-lasting effect. The Narrator must agree that the power's effect could reasonably be made into something that remains present for the duration of the scene.

If the effect directly affects an enemy, that enemy can end the effect by taking an action that could reasonably end it and succeeding on an appropriate check or attack roll. You can choose to end any long-lasting effect you create at any time.

OBSTRUCTING ATTACKS

When you attack with a power and choose to make it an **obstructing attack**, you describe your use of the power in such a way that it interfered with whatever the enemy is trying to do. If the attack hits, deal damage as normal and the enemy adds 2 challenge dice ( ) to their next roll.

POWERFUL ATTACKS

When you attack with a power and choose to make it a **powerful attack**, you describe your use of the power in a way that explains why this attack is much more powerful than other times when you have attacked with it. If the attack hits a villain, add +20 to the damage you deal to that villain. If the attack hits a squad of minions, you reduce the squad's size by 2 more minions than you otherwise would.

PRECISION ATTACKS

When you attack with a power and choose to make it a **precision attack**, describing your use of the power in a way that is careful or cautious. You can then swap the digits of the number you rolled on the percentile dice (so a 37 becomes a 73, a 92 becomes a 29, and so forth).

QUICK POWERS

When you use a power and choose to make it a **quick power**, you describe your character using that power quickly and briefly, as though it required little effort, then move your initiative card to the end of the initiative track. Keep your initiative card face-up when you do this, and you may take another turn when your initiative card is next on the track.

RESISTANCE

Almost all heroes start each scene with 100 resistance. Resistance simultaneously represents your general level of awareness, resolve, and willpower, and also your physical resilience against damage. It is an abstracted amalgamation of everything that keeps a character moving forward when motivated and able.

When you're being shot at or stabbed, resistance partially represents your ability to avoid physical damage. Losing resistance when attacked with a weapon doesn't mean that the attack physically harmed you, but it does mean that you had a close call. Additionally, each hero archetype includes a question on its front side about what resistance means for that hero, to help you visualize the way resistance helps protect your hero from harm.

When you fail a check to attempt something that puts your character at risk of physical harm (for example, leaping across the wide alleyway between the rooftops of two buildings), the Narrator can rule that a failure deals damage to you. Usually, the Narrator simply rolls a physical attack against you with a 50% chance of success; if successful, you take damage equal to the number rolled.

When you take any amount of damage, you reduce your current resistance by that amount. If you take damage greater than the amount of resistance you have, reduce your resistance to 0. When you have 0 resistance, you are typically knocked out of the scene and unable to participate in it any longer.

RECOVERING RESISTANCE

At the end of each scene, all heroes regain all their lost resistance. You can also recover resistance if something happens in the scene that would bolster or reinvigorate you.

WHAT DOES BEING KNOCKED OUT OF THE SCENE MEAN?

When you lose all your resistance and are knocked out of the scene, it's up to you to describe what keeps you from participating further. The simplest explanation is that you are knocked unconscious, but that's not always the most logical choice given the circumstances. Your exit could be cinematic (being buried under a collapsing wall or hurled out into the bay to splash down far from shore), or it could be mysterious (simply nowhere to be found when the smoke clears after an explosion, or falling through a strange portal conjured by a villain). Since your character will rejoin the team at the start of the next scene, you should make sure that, whatever explanation you come up with, your return makes as much sense as your exit did.

HERO DEATH

In general, heroes rarely die in combat. The determining factor is your answer to one of the first questions you must answer in the Setting Book. Essentially, a hero can die only if a villain rolled any advantage dice on an attack that would otherwise knock a hero out of the scene.

If a villain rolls any boons on the attack roll that reduced a hero to 0 resistance, that hero might die instead of being knocked out of the scene. The number of boons necessary to result in a hero's death is determined by your campaign's answer to the Setting Book question, "How Often do Superheroes Die in the Line of Duty," as described below:

- ◆ **Rarely, if Ever:** If the villain rolls 4 boons (   ) on the attack that reduces a hero to 0 resistance, the hero dies.
- ◆ **It Happens Every Now and Then:** If the villain rolls 3 boons (  ) on the attack that reduces a hero to 0 resistance, the hero dies.
- ◆ **All the Time:** If the villain rolls 2 boons ( ) on the attack that reduces a hero to 0 resistance, the hero dies.

When a hero dies, remove the hero from any team rosters and mark them as deceased on their archetype sheet and hero progress sheet. If your hero dies, you must create a new hero for the next scene or issue, or choose another hero from your team's roster.

COMPLICATIONS

When heroes and villains clash, innocent bystanders often end up in danger, infrastructure becomes smashed to the brink of collapse, and collateral damage puts people at risk in unforeseen ways. These are **complications**, and they are situations that exist within conflict scenes that the heroes can choose to deal with, in addition to whatever their primary goal is in the scene. Complications represent opportunities for the heroes to be heroic, to actively protect the people and places they seek to defend.

When you do something that resolves the situation created by that complication in a heroic way, you **progress** the complication. If the Narrator determines that you need to make a check to see if you succeed in your attempt, you must succeed on the check to progress the complication. Each time a hero progresses a complication, that hero gains 1 hero point (). Each complication can be progressed some number of times. Most complications can be progressed only twice, but some might require more progressions to completely resolve, as described in the issue.

For some complications, the heroes gain an additional benefit if they completely resolve the complication before the scene ends. These benefits are listed under the "Fully Resolved" entry for that complication.

Unless otherwise noted, you cannot progress a complication if you are up close to an enemy.

Miranda is playing as the Raconteur, a teenage hero with telepathy. During a battle in the streets of downtown, one of the office buildings right in the thick of things has become badly damaged and threatens to collapse. Miranda decides that the Raconteur is going to get the people inside to safety, so she describes her hero as using her telepathy to touch the minds of all the bystanders inside the building, directing them toward safe exits and coordinating their escape. She rolls her percentile dice and gets a 26, a success. She progresses the complication and gains 1 hero point as a reward. The Narrator describes about half of the building's denizens making their way to safety, but indicates that the complication has not yet been fully resolved.

CRITICAL COMPLICATIONS

Some complications are labeled as critical complications. If a complication is critical, each round the complication gets worse. There will be a negative consequence should things go too badly, listed under the Failure entry for that complication. For each critical complication, add a Complication initiative card to the initiative deck. Whenever a Complication initiative card comes up, mark off the right-most empty box of the progress boxes of that critical complication, and do so in a way that indicates a negative (for example, marking it with an X instead of a check mark). Each progress box marked with a negative removes one opportunity to progress the complication for the rest of the scene. If a complication has more than half of its progress boxes marked with a negative at the end of the scene, the heroes gain the failure condition listed for the complication.

Alex is playing the Boatwright, an inventor with a combat vehicle (a speedboat called the Wavechaser). A barge carrying nuclear weapons stolen by one of the villains in Boatwright's rogues' gallery is taking on water, threatening to sink beneath the waves and drop the stolen nukes into the sea. This is a critical complication with three progression boxes, so the Narrator adds the Complication initiative card to the initiative deck.

On the first round of the scene, the Boatwright gets to act first, and he uses his combat vehicle to successfully unload some of the stolen weapons, progressing the complication once and gaining one hero point. Unfortunately, the Complication initiative card comes up next, and the Narrator describes several crates with nuclear devices spilling out of the barge and into the dark waters. Now, the complication has been progressed once, and can only be progressed once more, since the third progression box is marked with a negative mark. Alex knows that the Boatwright needs to progress the complication the final time before the Complication initiative card comes up again, lest the team have to deal with the consequences of failing the complication.

OBJECTIVES

Some scenes have a goal other than to simply defeat the enemies. Similar to complications in many ways, **objectives** are elements of a conflict scene that can be progressed multiple times before they are resolved. Unlike complications, objectives must be dealt with; they are critical to determining the outcome of the scene. The scene describes both the nature of the objective and the way it affects the scene's outcome. Each time a hero progresses an objective, that hero gains 1 hero point (🎯).

Unless otherwise noted, you cannot progress an objective if you are up close to an enemy, and only villains (not minions) can progress opposed or enemy objectives (see below), and then only once each round.

The Exemplars, a prodigy team, have responded to reports that alien ships are entering the atmosphere in pursuit of a fleeing passenger plane. The Exemplars need to protect the airplane from the pursuing ships, which is their objective in the scene. Each time one of the heroes does something to help the airplane escape (for example, a flying hero might try to boost the plane's speed by adding their own force to its propulsion), they progress the objective. When they progress the objective enough times to fill all its progress boxes, the passenger jet escapes to safety, and the objective is complete.

OPPOSED OBJECTIVES

Some objectives are opposed, meaning that the enemies are trying to accomplish something related to that goal while the heroes are trying to stop them, or vice versa. An opposed objective has two sets of progressions, one for the heroes and one for the enemies. Whichever side fully progresses the objective first succeeds in accomplishing their goal and resolving the objective. The enemies in a scene can progress an opposed objective only once per round, no matter how many enemies participate in the scene.

In the previous example, if it was an opposed objective, the alien ships could progress the objective by taking shots at the passenger jets with their weapons. If the aliens fully progress the objective before the heroes do, they destroy the passenger jet.

ENEMY OBJECTIVES

Some objectives are just for enemies. These objectives usually represent some aspect of a villain's plan and usually mean that the heroes need to take down the villain before they can fully resolve the objective. The enemies in a scene can progress an enemy objective only once per round, no matter how many enemies participate in the scene, and they do so in the same way that heroes progress objectives, by taking actions and potentially making checks to see if they succeed.

INTERLUDES

Interlude scenes are great opportunities for your heroes to learn information, prepare themselves for future confrontations, and make headway in countering the schemes of their enemies.

When you decide to pursue one of your (or your team's) goals proactively, interlude scenes are the way you make that happen.

When you decide to create an interlude in which your hero is the focus, you'll want to choose one piece of knowledge they want to obtain or one goal they want to accomplish as the primary driver behind the scene. You also get to describe where the scene takes place (working with the Narrator to craft a new location, if need be), and, if necessary, any other Narrator-controlled characters that need to be present for the scene. You can use the following template to help you describe your interlude succinctly:

Specify one **goal you want to accomplish during the scene** (a specific piece of information, some asset or resource, the cooperation or aid of an individual, and so on), and describe **the place you are going** to get it. You then **explain how you are going to get it** and, if necessary, **who you will interact with** to get what you want.

From there, the Narrator can expand the description of the scene, and may present some obstacle to your success in achieving the scene's goal. Other players can also choose to have their heroes participate in the scene.

Zoe is playing as Shadowsbane, a monster hunter with the Archaeologist identity. Following an encounter with a werewolf on the streets of her city, she decides that she isn't going to wait for the werewolf to make the next move and intends to track the monster down herself. Zoe tells the Narrator that she wants to create an interlude scene to try to track the werewolf back to its lair, starting at the scene of the last attack. She tells the Narrator that she is going to use her years of monster hunting experience to quickly, but stealthily, follow the trail left by the werewolf as it fled the scene. She doesn't want the werewolf to know that she is on its trail, so she describes her pursuit as being very cautious, and the Narrator suggests that she make a roll for her Sneak Around skill. Since she is trying to be sneaky, Zoe decides that Shadowsbane won't seek out the help of any Narrator-controlled characters for this scene.

Generally, interludes are free-form and play out mostly through dialogue and your descriptions of your heroes' interactions with the environment, other characters, and each other. If necessary, you might need to make a check of some kind (and sometimes more than one) to determine whether you succeed in getting what you want. Even if you fail, you might come away with clues that another player can use in their own interlude.

BOONS AND DRAWBACKS IN INTERLUDES

If you roll 1 or more boons on your roll to determine the outcome of an interlude, regardless of whether you succeed the Narrator can grant you 1 hero point (🎲) as a bonus to the scene's outcome. When this happens, describe something that happens during, or after, the scene that bolsters your resolve as a hero, which could be some event, or it could simply be your character's own inner monologue as they come to grips with what happened. If you instead roll drawbacks, the Narrator decides their impact based on the scene.

PARTICIPATING IN OTHER HEROES' INTERLUDE SCENES

When another player creates an interlude scene, with that player's permission and the Narrator's agreement your hero can accompany that player's hero for the scene. You can participate in any number of interlude scenes and can engage in dialogue with Narrator-controlled characters, help out on difficult tasks, and apply your skills and powers when relevant in the scene. If you think your hero can be of some assistance in that scene, there is no reason not to get involved in the scene, assuming it makes sense for your hero to do so.

WHAT CAN I GET OUT OF AN INTERLUDE?

One of the best ways to ensure that your heroes have a leg up on their enemies is to use interludes to learn more about the villains' schemes, capabilities, and allies. If you aren't sure how to proceed after the first scene of an issue, here are some common questions you might ask yourself, which can then be used as the basis for crafting your own hero-led interludes.

- ◆ Who is responsible for what happened in the opening scene?
- ◆ Is this an isolated incident, or merely the first in a series of such events?
- ◆ Has anything like what happened in the first scene happened before? If so, when and where?
- ◆ Is there an obvious villain at work here?
- ◆ If so, what is the villain's goal? What is their plan?
- ◆ Where is the villain likely to strike next, and when?
- ◆ Does the villain have a lair or headquarters from which they are operating?
- ◆ Is there strange technology or magic in play? What can the heroes do to counter it?
- ◆ What can I learn about the villain, or the villain's minions? What are their histories and capabilities?

Armed with this information, you can intervene in the villain's plans or use this knowledge to gain an edge on your enemies. Remember, one of the best ways to gain advantage dice on rolls is to use your description of what you are doing to illustrate the advantage you have at that moment, and you can describe how you use the knowledge you gain in interlude scenes to give yourself an edge.

ASPIRATION AND TURMOIL INTERLUDES

Interludes are also the way that you proactively pursue your aspirations or deal with your turmoils. (Aspirations and turmoils are described in greater detail on page 22). Aspiration and turmoil interlude scenes always occur at the start or end of a session, and they don't affect the sequence of events tracking. You can create an interlude that is meant to positively impact one of your aspirations or turmoils, and should describe a situation that could improve that aspect of your character's life. In essence, your goal for the scene is to further your aspiration or lessen your turmoil.

Once you describe which aspiration or turmoil you want to pursue with the scene and how you're going to do it, the Narrator describes some obstacle that arises that would prevent you from succeeding, and the scene begins. This obstacle likely changes the situation somewhat, requiring you to describe how your character is going to deal with that obstacle. You also engage in dialogue with other characters, if relevant, which gives you additional opportunities to frame your character's approach.

Most of the time, you also make a roll using one of the skills listed on your identity card to overcome that obstacle. Additionally, the Narrator may add advantage or challenge dice to the roll, based on your description of how you deal with this turn of events. Like any other scene, the additional consequences (positive or negative) that result from these dice can have an impact on future scenes, including conflict scenes.

James is playing as Flare, a blaster with the power of solar energy manipulation. Flare's turmoil is "I am on the run from the law for a crime I didn't commit." James decides that, for a turmoil interlude scene, Flare is going to try to approach one of the space police force member that he knows is pursuing him and convince him to help clear Flare's name. The Narrator introduces an obstacle: the space police officer Flare picked out is undercover, trying to pry the location of a slaver ship out of some dangerous criminals at a starport cantina, and he thinks Flare is going to blow his cover. Doing some quick thinking, James describes Flare barging into the cantina, pretending to be one of the space police, giving the undercover officer a chance to solidify his cover story by "taking Flare out."

If you succeed in achieving your goal for an aspiration or turmoil interlude, you mark off the next empty box on your character's story progress track (see page 22). If you fail, nothing bad happens as a result; you simply have spent time that has no effect. You work with the Narrator to describe what happens during the scene that produces these results.



AFTER YOUR FIRST SESSION . . .

After you play your first session with a new hero, take one of the hero progress sheets from the tear-off pad included with the game and fill it out for that hero. This provides a permanent place to track your hero's powers and identity and allows you to expand the hero's history and future.

ORIGIN STORIES

Invent a brief origin story for your hero, explaining how they got their powers or what pushed them to become a hero. This is mostly for your benefit, helping you create a more well-rounded view of your hero, and you can reference it during future issues.

If you are struggling to come up with an origin story for your hero, pages 36–39 have some random tables you can consult for inspiration, rolling dice to get a result.

TYING INTO SETTING ELEMENTS

When you create your origin story, if you can tie your origin story into one of the setting elements you have defined for your campaign (i.e., one of the pages in the Setting Book), you mark off one box of your story progress track.

THE STORY PROGRESS TRACK

As your hero participates in the ongoing fight against villainy, their story evolves and they become more savvy, more skilled, and more likely to have learned from their experiences. To track this growth for your hero, each hero progress sheet includes a **story progress track**.

At the end of each issue, if your hero survives, mark off the next empty box on your story progress track. You also mark off a box if you succeed in an aspiration or turmoil interlude scene (see page 21).

When you have marked off all the boxes leading up to a story reward space on the story progress track, you gain a **story reward**. Story rewards (which are detailed on pages 24–27) represent evolutions for your character and usually include a mechanical benefit as well as a narrative impact.

ASPIRATIONS AND TURMOILS

Though costumed heroes might stand above the crowd thanks to their incredible powers, inside they are people with hopes, dreams, fears, anxieties, and doubts. In popular comics, we see this manifest in a costumed hero's struggle to maintain a relationship with the person they are dating, in their attempts to juggle the life of a vigilante and the responsibility to care for an elderly loved one, or in their efforts to earn a college degree and hold down a job while staying out all night keeping the streets safe from criminals.

These struggles are represented in the game by the hero's **aspiration** and **turmoil**, which you describe after the first session in which you play the hero. An aspiration or turmoil is usually a short sentence, written in the first person, that encapsulates the nature of some goal or struggle, respectively, in the hero's life.

ASPIRATIONS

Your hero's aspirations represent their life goals, which may be more associated with their civilian identity than their life as a costumed hero. Aspirations are ambitions your hero wants to achieve and actively works toward making them happen.

Here are examples of what aspirations might look like:

- ◆ I want to invent something that makes the world a better place.
- ◆ I seek to bring down the crime lord who is the mayor of our city.
- ◆ I want to marry my high school sweetheart, Martin Matthews.
- ◆ I want to be the first person from Earth to visit another star system.
- ◆ I want to grow my deceased father's company into the success he always wanted it to be.
- ◆ I want to find the lost city of an ancient civilization rumored to be in this region.

The most successful aspirations are those that could eventually become a triumphant success, or that, should fate intervene, could take an unexpectedly tragic or dangerous turn.

TURMOILS

Turmoils represent things in your hero's personal and professional life that they worry about and lose sleep over, relationships they struggle to maintain, and inner conflicts that fill them with doubt and indecision. Turmoils are troubles your hero struggles with, while taking steps to improve or mitigate them.

Here are examples of what turmoils might look like:

- ◆ I want to succeed in my profession, but nobody takes me seriously.
- ◆ I am in a love triangle with Commander Phantom and Ricochet.
- ◆ My ailing father needs money for medical bills, but I am already struggling to make ends meet.
- ◆ I question whether I belong on this world or should return to my home dimension.
- ◆ If my parents ever find out that I have powers, they will disown me.
- ◆ My powers and wealth isolate me, and loneliness consumes me.

The most successful turmoils are those that potentially have both a positive resolution and a negative one, depending on how much effort your hero puts into improving the situation.

CONTINUITY TOKENS

After players have finished creating aspiration and turmoil interludes at the start of a session, for each player that created such a scene, place one **continuity token** in reach of all players. At any time, any hero player can choose to spend one of the continuity tokens. You can spend continuity tokens in two ways: to reference a back issue, or to introduce a retcon. When you use a continuity token, return it to game box to indicate that it has been spent. Unspent continuity tokens do not carry over from session to session.



BACK ISSUES

Most heroes are assumed to have been around for a while, starring in their own solo series or other team books in the fictional comic book universe you and the other players create. During an issue, you can use a continuity token to create a **back issue**, a reference to some previous event that you make up on the spot. Essentially, back issues provide flashbacks to things that happened in other comics that come to exist in the moment you reference them, which you use to establish some aspect of your hero's history on the spur of the moment.

When a player wants to use a back issue in the current scene, that player should make up the series name and number of a fictional back issue (which could be a solo title, team-up, annual, or other comic). Then, the player describes what happened in that issue, as it pertains to the current scene. The Narrator then decides how that back issue affects any knowledge the players have or rolls they make from that point forward. Most back issues do not have relevance beyond the scene at hand, so each time you make a reference to a back issue, you create a new event to refer to.

Trevor is playing Commander Phantom, a super soldier pilot with hyper intelligence. As his team squares off against Dr. Osmosis, Trevor decides to create a back issue to get more information about the villain. Trevor describes a scene (which, according to him, comes from Commander Phantom and the Phantom Brigade #23) in which Commander Phantom battled Dr. Osmosis inside a genetic engineering laboratory. Since the description establishes some familiarity with Dr. Osmosis, the Narrator determines that Commander Phantom knows some basic information about the villain and his powers, and gives that information to Trevor.

Some good uses for back issue flashbacks include:

- ◆ Describe a prior conflict with a villain, allowing your character to know some basic information about them.
- ◆ Describe a prior meeting with a Narrator-controlled character, allowing your character to have basic knowledge of that person.

- ◆ Establish a prior relationship with a Narrator-controlled character, giving you an edge in your interaction with them.
- ◆ Describe an event that happened some time in the past that gives you an edge in the current scene.

In some cases, the Narrator may wish to say that a back issue is not possible (for example, to preserve a surprise or in a situation where the heroes could not reasonably have encountered the intended subject of that back issue flashback).

RETCONS

During an issue, you can use a continuity token to create a **retcon**, establishing some new fact about a setting element, character, villain, team, or enemy group, which becomes forevermore true in your setting.

The fact that you choose to establish about the subject should be something that affects the subject as a whole and is true in a long-term sense; your retcon cannot be something temporary or situational. You describe the fact and, provided the Narrator and other players agree that the fact is appropriate to both the subject and your setting, the Narrator writes that fact down in the subject's Truths box.

Daniel is playing Professor Quantum, an inventor scientist with atomic energy manipulation powers. After recovering a powerful extraterrestrial artifact, the Void Egg, from the clutches of a villain, Daniel decides to introduce a retcon related to that artifact. He states that the one flaw in the Void Egg is that it is susceptible to pure atomic energy, and that anything that is created by the artifact, or powered by it, gains that same susceptibility. Later, when the Void Egg causes chittering demonlike creatures to leap from portals in the air, the retcon comes fully into play and the Narrator rules that these creatures are especially vulnerable to Professor Quantum's atomic energy blasts.

Generally, retcons should be used to give the heroes some edge in a fight or help them get out of a tough situation. Retcons that completely negate entire characters, events, or villains are inappropriate; you could not, for example, retcon that the major villain of the current issue has a brain condition that causes them to become paralyzed any time someone claps their hands.

Retcons can also be used to help heroes overcome obstacles in interlude scenes, including turmoil interludes, in the same way.

Carrie is playing Red Mary, a powerhouse with super strength and flight powers. During one of her turmoil interludes where Red Mary attempts to improve her public image by going on a press tour, Carrie introduces a retcon that the head of the city's major media outlet is a huge collector of Red Mary memorabilia, which she brings to him to get more favorable coverage.

STORY REWARDS

As your hero participates in the issues of a series, they grow more experienced and more intimately tied to the world in which they live. Periodically, your hero will earn **story rewards**, which usually provide mechanical benefits as well as evolve that hero's story in some way.

When you gain a story reward, you choose one of the options listed on the following pages and follow the instructions it contains. You also write the name of the story reward on your hero progress sheet. Many story rewards will give you a choice about how that reward affects your hero's ongoing story, or the setting you are playing in.

CHANGING YOUR ASPIRATIONS AND TURMOILS

When you select a story reward, you can also change either your aspiration or your turmoil, writing an entirely new one. Some story rewards may require you to do so as a part of selecting that reward.

When you choose a new aspiration as a result of gaining a new story reward, work with the Narrator to describe some way in which your previous aspiration was fulfilled, tying that fulfillment into your story reward in some way.

When you choose a new turmoil as a result of gaining a new story reward, work with the Narrator to come up with an explanation of why that part of your life no longer troubles you, either because you have resolved that turmoil's conflict in some way, or because some tragedy befell you that caused that turmoil to no longer be a part of your life. If you choose the latter option, you can also opt to have the Narrator introduce that explanation at a later time, possibly by integrating that turmoil's ending into a future issue.



GENERAL REWARDS

The story rewards in this section are suitable for selection any time you gain a new story reward. Some of these rewards are also granted when you select other story rewards.

DEVELOP A NEW SKILL

Choose a skill that you do not have on your identity card (you can either select a skill from another identity, or work with the Narrator to create your own skill). You can use that skill with a 65% chance of success. Write the name of your skill, and the chance of success, as the name of your story reward.

You can choose this reward multiple times. Each time you do so, choose a different skill to gain.

EXTRA HERO POINT

You add 1 to your Hero Points per Conflict number. You can choose this reward multiple times.

GET BACK IN THE FIGHT

When you have this story reward, once per issue when you are knocked out of a fight, at the start of the round (before the Narrator lays out the initiative track) you can choose to reenter the scene with 50 resistance. Your initiative card is placed at the end of the initiative track this round.

IMPROVED SURVIVABILITY

When you have this story reward, once per conflict scene at any time you can regain 25 resistance (you cannot exceed your normal maximum resistance). If you would be reduced to 0 resistance, you can use this benefit to regain 25 resistance immediately and are not knocked out of the scene.

INSPIRING PRESENCE

On your turn, you can give any number of your hero points to other heroes who can hear you.

PRACTICED POWER

Choose one of your powers when you choose this story reward. During a conflict scene, you can place 1 time token () on that power card to use that power with an 90% chance of success. You can decide to use this benefit after you roll the dice, but before you resolve the roll. If you use a power stunt when you use this benefit, you add the time token placed by this benefit on top of the time tokens from the power stunt.

You can choose this reward multiple times. Each time you do so, choose a different power to become a practiced power.

PREDICTABLE POWERS

When you have this story reward, once per issue you can remove any 2 time tokens ( ) from your powers at any time.

TEAM PLAYER

When you have this story reward, you can choose a new team role card between scenes, returning your current team role to the box and placing the new team role you have chosen in the appropriate slot on your hero archetype sheet.

TEAM-UP

Choose a hero who is not on the same team roster as you. You can spend a continuity token to introduce that hero into a single scene before the scene begins, provided that no other player is playing as that hero at that time. When you do so, you play that hero, and your original hero, for the duration of the scene. After the scene ends, you and the Narrator work to describe what happens when the hero you teamed up with departs for the rest of the session. Once you have spent a continuity token to introduce this other hero into a scene, you cannot do so again for the rest of the session.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the hero you chose for this story reward in some way.

You can choose this reward multiple times. Each time you do so, choose a different hero as the one you team up with.

TRUE NEMESIS

You may select this reward only if you have the "Nemesis: [the name of some villain from your setting]" lasting repercussion. You gain 2 hero points ( ) at the start of any conflict scene that includes your nemesis as an enemy. Additionally, whenever you complete an issue in which your nemesis was involved in at least one scene (interlude or conflict), you mark off one extra box on your story progress track.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the villain associated with the above lasting repercussion in some way.

REVAMP REWARDS

From time to time you may decide that you want to change up your character a little bit. Revamp rewards are the way you can make changes to your hero without creating an entirely new one. Many of these rewards share the same benefit or effect; the differences between them define their impact on your hero and on the setting.

ADDING NEW POWERS

When you select any of the following story rewards, you can draw five cards from the Deck of Powers and pick one of them to slot into one of your empty power slots. Alternatively, you can choose one of the Basic powers and slot it into one of your empty power slots.

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE

The technology that you use gets a serious upgrade, either one you implement yourself or as a gift from another hero. Alternatively, you might receive the new technology from **SE02: The Super Science Lab**.

SECONDARY MUTATION

Whatever incident or genetic difference that gave you your powers is not done changing you, and you spontaneously manifest a new power.

MYSTIC TECHNIQUE

You learn a new spell, fighting style, or other supernatural technique that you can use in your fight against villainy. You might teach yourself this technique through intense research and practice, or perhaps the knowledge was imparted to you by **SE13: The Mystic Order**.

COSMIC/SUPERNATURAL ASPECT

You discover some previously unknown supernatural or cosmic aspect to your heritage. Perhaps one of your parents was an extraterrestrial (maybe even one that hailed from **SE22: The Distant World**), or from another dimension (such as **SE06: The Nether Realm**). Maybe you are secretly an angel, demon, or other immortal, and simply did not realize it until now. Or perhaps you have recently been changed; you could have been bitten by a vampire or contracted lycanthropy. Also change your aspiration to something related to this story reward.

TECHNOLOGICAL AUGMENTATION

You have been augmented technologically, such as by receiving cybernetic implants or genome therapy. If you are a member of **SE19: The Pariahs**, perhaps you gained your augmentations from **SE24: Pariah Experiments**. If so, change your turmoil to be somehow related to that program. Alternatively, you might have willingly received those augmentations from **SE02: The Super Science Lab**.

CHANGING POWERS

When you select any of the following story rewards, you can draw five cards from the Deck of Powers and pick one of them to replace one of your existing powers. Alternatively, you can choose a Basic power instead of drawing cards from the Deck of Powers. You can also rearrange the slots that your power cards occupy, though you must always have a superpower.

NEW COSTUME

You debut a new costume, representing a radical departure from your typical style. Accompanying this new costume are changes in the powers at your disposal; perhaps you changed costumes to reflect your new powers, or perhaps your costume provides you with those powers in some way.

When you choose this story reward, keep in mind some of the tropes of costumes for the genre your hero archetype is drawn from, and also the decade in which your world is set. For example, if your setting is in the 1990s, your costume might be covered in bandoleers and pouches of indeterminate function or incorporate armor plating and oversized guns, while a setting in the 1970s might produce costumes featuring bell bottoms and paisley.

MUTATION

Your body's genetic makeup mutates in some way, altering the way your powers work and interact. This should be accompanied by a description of a physical change that results from the mutation.

POWER DEGRADATION/CORRUPTION

One of your powers become corrupted in some way, or begins to show signs of degrading. While it fades from your repertoire, your other powers strengthen to compensate.

TRANSFORMATION

You are physically transformed by some outside force, and not necessarily for your benefit. Your physical description changes based on the nature of this transformation. Choose one of the following sources for your transformation, or come up with your own.

- ◆ You are kidnapped by a villain and subjected to your transformation in an effort to make you into one of the villain's loyal servants. Choose a new turmoil that is tied to that villain in some way.
- ◆ If you are a member of **SE19: The Pariahs**, you are captured and subjected to **SE24: Pariah Experiments**.
- ◆ If you have the "Tainted by [**SE01: The Powerful Artifact**]" lasting repercussion, the Artifact's corruption causes you to transform.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the transformation that you have endured.

CHANGING IDENTITIES

When you select any of the following story rewards, you can draw three cards from the Deck of Identities and pick one of them to replace your existing identity.

CHANGE YOUR JOB

You have a career change. Perhaps you finally graduate from college, get that promotion you've been angling for, or secure the job you've been training for but could never quite seem to land.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your aspiration. Your new aspiration must be tied to your new identity in some way.

DISCOVER YOUR TRUE PAST

Revelations come to light about your past, filling in gaps in your personal history that were blank even to you, or that were perhaps concealed under a layer of false memories. When you make this discovery, you also discover that you possess certain skills gained during those lost years of your life. Some suggestions for the nature of your revelation include:

- ◆ You are secretly an extraterrestrial from **SE22: The Distant World**, a traveler from **SE09: The Lost Civilization**, or a supernatural creature from **SE06: The Nether Realm**. The passage to Earth blocked out your memories from the time before.
- ◆ You are a member of **SE19: The Pariahs**, and your knowledge of your true past was blocked out by trauma you suffered. What you believe to be your origin story is just a story you tell to hide your amnesia of your true origin. Alternatively, perhaps you have false memories that were implanted when you were subjected to **SE24: Pariah Experiments**.
- ◆ You were once a villain or another hero entirely. You suffered a traumatic event that left you near death and with total amnesia. The memories of your past, including your origin story, were fabrications by your own mind filling in the gaps.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the revelations you uncovered about your past.

FAKE YOUR CIVILIAN IDENTITY'S DEATH

Your civilian identity is compromised in some way; perhaps a villain discovered your identity, or a tabloid magazine printed photos of your undisguised face. You fake your own death and create an entirely new identity for yourself. You're still the same person on the inside, you just lead a totally different life.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the past that you are trying to escape.

PASS THE MANTLE TO ANOTHER

You pass your heroic identity off to someone else. If your powers come from some external source (a power suit, specific technology) you hand that source off to the new person bearing your heroic mantle. If your powers are intrinsic, you hand off your heroic mantle to someone else who has identical powers to your own.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change both your aspiration and your turmoil. Your new aspiration and turmoil should reflect the life and history of the new person inside the costume. If appropriate, you can also rewrite your origin story to reflect the new identity's history.

SETTLE DOWN

You get married, and with your marriage comes a change in your lifestyle and even your profession, as you and your spouse find a home and take the next steps of your life together.

CHANGING ARCHETYPES

When you select any of the following story rewards, you can choose a new hero archetype from among all those that have been revealed by playing through any series, as fits your vision for your hero. Copy any Truths over to your new archetype sheet.

CHANGE YOUR PSEUDONYM

One of the most common expressions of a hero changing their archetype is a change in the name they go by. Changing your heroic pseudonym gives you a chance to reflect your new archetype and attitude with the name that the world calls you by. You can choose to make this name change public knowledge, or you can choose for the connection between your old heroic identity and your new one to remain a secret from the public at large.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the reason you change your pseudonym, or the consequences of your pseudonym change. Additionally, add the following to your hero's Truths box: "Formerly known as [your previous pseudonym]." Examples for reasons and ways you could change your pseudonym include:

- ◆ You renounce your current heroic mantle, abandoning your pseudonym and your hero motif out of principle, grief, anger, or due to a change in your team or allegiances.
- ◆ If part of your name is a title (Captain, Professor, Doctor) or a reference to age or gender (Mister, Miss, Boy, Girl, Lad, Ms.), you change that part of your heroic pseudonym to reflect personal growth, life changes, or your shifting role in the world.
- ◆ Due to a personal or world tragedy, your outlook on the world dims, and your life as a hero takes a dark and gritty turn. You rebrand yourself to reflect the guilt, cynicism, or grimness you now feel.

REPLACE ANOTHER HERO

When a hero leaves the world stage, the loss often leaves behind a vacuum that demands to be filled. You step up and take on that hero's pseudonym and costume, filling in for that hero for a time. Perhaps you do this as a favor to that hero, or perhaps because you recognize that having that the world needs someone wearing that hero's mantle to go on. Regardless of your reasoning, the world considers you to be that hero and has no idea that the person underneath the costume is any different. When you choose this story reward, you must choose a hero who has any of the following phrases in their Truths box:

- ◆ Incarcerated at [the name of **SE05: The Super Prison**]
- ◆ Exiled to [the name of one of your setting elements]
- ◆ Formerly known as [a particular hero's name]

You change your archetype to the same archetype as that hero. You take up that hero's costume and pseudonym, and as far as the rest of the world knows you are that hero.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the consequences of impersonating that other hero.

TAKE UP A FALLEN HERO'S MANTLE

You decide to resurrect a dead hero, if not in body then at least in spirit. Choose a hero who is dead. You change your archetype to the same archetype as that hero. You take up that hero's costume and pseudonym, and as far as the rest of the world knows you are that hero.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your turmoil. Your new turmoil must be tied to the consequences of impersonating the deceased hero.

TIME LAPSE

Something happens that causes large amounts of time to pass for you, but not the world. Suggestions for how this happens include:

- ◆ You are visited by **NC05: The Mystic Sage**, who uses sorcery to draw you into **SE28: The Sacred Site**, where they impart upon you over the course of weeks or months training and wisdom that allows you to emerge as a different person. When you do, you find that only minutes have passed in the real world.
- ◆ You are pulled into **SE06: The Nether Realm** or **SE11: The Parallel Dimension**, where time flows differently than it does in the real world. When you emerge, mere minutes may have passed in the real world, though for you it may have been years or decades.
- ◆ You travel forward in time to **SE26: The Dystopian Future**. After spending years or decades there, you travel back in time to the exact moment of your departure. For the rest of the world, you have been gone for only seconds.

SETTING REWARDS

The story rewards in this section change not only your hero, but the setting itself in some way. Unlike other types of story rewards, many of these story awards affect the team, another hero, or a setting element and do not affect you directly, though some of the awards do benefit you personally. When selecting one of these setting rewards, work with the Narrator to ensure that the choice makes sense in the context of the setting and the events that your hero has participated in up to this point.

ACCOLADES FROM THE GOVERNMENT

Your team is given an award, the key to the city, or some other accolade from the government, presented to you in a public ceremony where important figures in the government give speeches full of praise. When you choose this reward, increase your team's Public Reputation by +2.

ACTIVE NEMESIS

You may only select this reward if you have the "Nemesis: [the name of some villain from your setting]" lasting repercussion. At the start of each issue, instead of creating an aspiration or turmoil interlude scene for yourself, you can instead create a villain interlude featuring your nemesis. When you create this interlude, use the following format to describe the nature of the interlude.

Specify one **goal the villain wants to accomplish during the scene** (a specific piece of information, some asset or resource, the coercion of an individual, and so on) in the pursuit of a larger plan, and describe **the place where they are going to get it**. You then **explain what crime or evil act they are going to commit to get it** and, if necessary, **who they will interact with** to get what they want.

The Narrator then describes any other relevant details of the scene, and then chooses one minor character or asset of the team's that is put in danger by the scene you describe. You (and any other heroes who wish to participate) then describe briefly how you intervene to foil the villain's plan. You make a roll (just as you would for overcoming obstacles in any other interlude scene). If you succeed, you foil the villain's plan. In addition to checking off another box on your story progress track, you place 2 continuity tokens (instead of 1, as normal) in reach of all players. If you fail the roll, the villain counts as having appeared in another issue, gaining another villain perk. The Narrator describes how the conclusion of the scene plays out, based on your roll.

Despite featuring villains, heroes, and the possible description of violence, this scene is an interlude scene and not a conflict scene. You do not take turns or use the initiative track, and once you have made your roll for the scene, both you and the villain depart the scene safely.

CREATE A SENTIENT BEING

You create a new life form. The nature of this life form should be shaped by your hero's identity, archetype, and powers; for example, an inventor scientist might create an android or artificial intelligence, while a sorcerer librarian might conjure or create a golem or arcane spirit. For the time being, the Narrator should create a new minor character entry for this life form.

One time in the future when a player other than you creates a new hero, they can choose the "Created by Another Hero" origin reward (see p. 34) as a bonus story reward, choosing your hero as the hero they were created by, and basing the hero on the minor character mentioned above.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your aspiration or your turmoil. Your new aspiration or turmoil must be tied to the new being.

GAIN A NEW HEADQUARTERS

Your team gains a new, upgraded headquarters that provides you with more comfort, better amenities, more resources, and a better position from which to launch your heroic sorties. You work with the Narrator to determine the nature of your new headquarters.

On your team roster sheet, describe in a few words the nature of your team's new headquarters.

GAIN A VEHICLE

Your team gains a new, specialized vehicle custom-designed to fit your team's activities and motifs. You describe the nature of this vehicle when you choose this story reward; it could be a flying car, an SR-71 Blackbird capable of operating in low Earth orbit, a VTOL-enabled fixed-wing aircraft, or some other vehicle the Narrator agrees is suitable.

On your team roster sheet, describe in a few words the nature of your team's new vehicle. Your team can travel together in this vehicle when responding to danger, and once per session when you or anyone on your team uses this vehicle to help achieve their goal in an interlude scene, you automatically succeed without having to roll any dice.

STORY REWARDS THAT AFFECT THE WHOLE TEAM

Some setting rewards affect entire teams. Before you choose a story reward that is going to have repercussions for other players and their heroes, consult those players first to make sure they are okay with the story reward you choose and the resulting change to the team's story. For example, choosing Under Government Authority might cause a conflict with a hero on the team who has the Fugitive identity, or one who has a turmoil that involves being at odds with the government. Then again, this might be a good opportunity for that player to choose a story reward that changes that aspect of their hero in a way that works well with your choice, so it's always a good idea to have these kinds of discussions with the other players to see what they are thinking.

GAIN A WARD

You take on a ward, a younger aspiring hero who becomes your sidekick. You can add the Companion power card into one of your empty power slots, or replace your lesser power or minor power with the Companion power card. Your companion represents your sidekick.

One time in the future when a player other than you creates a new hero, they can choose the “Inspired by Another Hero” origin reward (see p. 34) as a bonus story reward, choosing your hero as the hero they were inspired by. When this happens, you remove the Companion power card from your hero if you still have it, and can replace it with a Basic power of your choice.

GOVERNMENT AGENCY-SANCTIONED

You receive special status with **SE03: The Government Agency**, providing you with certain privileges and benefits. If you are the first hero to gain this story reward, describe the nature of this status and give it an official name (something like “Sentinel Status” or “Paragon Standing”) and write it in the Truths box of **SE03: The Government Agency**. From this point on, you are considered to be a state-approved agent and are offered legal protections by your status.

When you choose this reward, increase your team’s Government Reputation by +1; if your hero joins another team in the future, increase that team’s Government Reputation by +1, and decrease the Government Reputation of the team you are leaving by –1. Add the following to the Truths box of your hero archetype: “Sanctioned by [the name of **SE03: The Government Agency**]” and “+1 to team’s Government Reputation” (to remind you to adjust teams’ reputation tracks when you join them).

GO PUBLIC WITH YOUR IDENTITY

You can select this reward only if you previously treated your personal identity as a secret. You reveal your secret identity to the public (in a press conference or some other widely broadcast form) and as a result earn the trust of many average citizens, who recognize your transparency as a move to allow yourself to be held accountable for your actions.

When you choose this reward, increase your team’s Public Reputation by +1; if your hero joins another team in the future, increase that team’s Public Reputation by +1, and decrease the Public Reputation of the team you are leaving by –1. Add the following to the Truths box of your hero archetype: “Identity is Public Knowledge” and “+1 to team’s Public Reputation” (to remind you to adjust teams’ reputation tracks when you join them).

You must also change your turmoil when you choose this story reward. Your new turmoil should be in some way related to the revelation of your identity, either due to newfound celebrity or with the danger having a public identity puts you and your loved ones in.

MEDIA BLITZ

Your team is the subject of a media and promotional blitz, either an incidental one that results from visible, daring heroics on your part, or one you commission to improve your team’s public relations. When you choose this reward, increase your team’s Media Reputation by +2.

NEWFOUND CELEBRITY

Your recent exploits cause you to be publicly endorsed by **NC01: The Media Personality** and the media outlet they represent; you receive a constant stream of positive coverage from them from that point forward.

When you choose this reward, increase your team’s Media Reputation by +1; if your hero joins another team in the future, increase that team’s Media Reputation by +1, and decrease the Media Reputation of the team you are leaving by –1. Add the following to the Truths box of your hero archetype: “Endorsed by [the name of **NC01: The Media Personality**]” and “+1 to team’s Media Reputation” (to remind you to adjust teams’ reputation tracks when you join them).

SCIENTIFIC OR SORCEROUS BREAKTHROUGH

Some scientific or arcane research you have been performing finally pays off, and you develop a new scientific revelation or a new spell. The nature of this discovery (which might be named after your hero’s civilian identity) is up to you. Work with the Narrator to create something suitably setting-altering, choosing a single card from the Deck of Powers that best represents the discovery. In the future, in the future when a player other than you creates a new hero, they can base that hero’s origin story on your breakthrough and choose that power as their superpower.

UNDER GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

Your team is brought fully under the authority of local, state, or national government, and now answers directly to those authorities. While you give up your team’s autonomy, you gain access to resources and a trusted status with that government. When you choose this reward, increase your team’s Government Reputation by +2, and add the following to the team roster’s Truths box: “Under [the name of a particular government agency]’s Authority.”

WINDFALL

You receive an unexpected increase in your personal wealth, either as a result of your professional successes or through circumstances outside of your control (for example, an inheritance from the passing of a distant relative). You gain the Throw Money at the Problem skill with an 80% chance of success.

When you choose this story reward, you must also change your aspiration or your turmoil. Your new aspiration or turmoil must be tied to your newfound wealth.

RETIREMENT REWARDS

Retirement rewards are a bit different from other rewards in that they don't necessarily improve your hero, but rather give your hero a creative send-off that evolves their role in the setting. When you reach the end of your hero's story progress track, you must choose a retirement reward for your hero. You can always choose a retirement reward for your hero before your fifth reward, if you want; this is a great way to retire a hero who you are tired of playing, or not entirely happy with, without just letting that hero fade into the background.

After doing so, your hero will no longer be available for play, and you will need to create a new hero. However, this is neither the end of your original hero's story, nor the last time you will ever play them. Each retirement reward describes what happens to your hero and changes their role in your setting. It may also change something about the nature of your setting or one of the elements therein, and you may need to add things to the Truths section of a setting element, hero, villain, minion, or team.

SIDELINED

Each of the following retirement rewards involves your hero being removed as a prominent player in the setting, making them no longer relevant to the ongoing stories you tell.

DEPOWERED

Something strips you of your powers, leaving you incapable of the amazing feats of heroism you rely on to fight against evil. Describe the event, villain, or object that robbed you of your powers. As the cosmic forces of creation demand balance in all things, the next hero you create starts with the Practiced Power general story reward as a bonus reward.

GO UNDERGROUND

You are forced to go into hiding for some reason, seeking deep cover for your safety or that of your family. Some suggestions for why you might go underground include:

- ◆ **SE14: The Crime Syndicate**, **SE18: The Terrorist Group**, or **SE25: The Secret Society** discovers your true identity and puts a price on your head, causing assassins to pursue you.
- ◆ You did something that violates **SE26: The Superhuman Edict** and the government places you on a Most Wanted list.
- ◆ A specific villain starts targeting your loved ones, forcing you to move far away for their safety. In that villain's Truths box, write: Forced [your retiring hero's name] into retirement.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.

HEROIC DEATH

Your hero makes the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, dying a heroic death. When you choose this story reward, inform the Narrator that you have done so. You continue to play this hero but gain no further advancements on your hero's story reward track. Discuss your ideas about when this should happen, and under what kinds of circumstances, so your Narrator can help create a death for your hero that fits your vision for the character's end.

During a conflict scene, the Narrator can choose an appropriately dramatic moment for your hero to die. When this happens, your hero dies; give any hero points you have remaining to other players, and each player who receives a hero point from you also takes one extra hero point from the supply.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.

IMPRISONED OR EXILED

You are jailed or banished for a crime. You determine the nature of the charges against you, and whether your hero is guilty or simply a victim of false accusation.

If your hero is jailed, they are incarcerated in **SE05: The Super Prison**; write "Incarcerated at [the name of your setting's super prison]" in the Truths box of your hero's archetype sheet.

If your hero is exiled, choose one of the following setting elements to be the place to which your hero is exiled, and write "Exiled to [the name of the chosen setting element]" in the Truths box of your hero archetype sheet:

- ◆ **SE06: The Nether Realm**
- ◆ **SE08: The War-Torn Nation**
- ◆ **SE11: The Parallel Dimension**
- ◆ **SE22: The Distant World**
- ◆ **SE23: The Lawless City**

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero as a bonus reward.

WHEN TO INTRODUCE A STORY REWARD

Given the tumultuous nature of some story rewards, it may not make sense to introduce the changes in the middle of a multipart storyline, or even between standalone issues.

For example, it may make perfect sense for your hero to gain a new costume between issues; perhaps your previous costume was badly damaged in a fight, and you found a mysterious alien machine that provides you with a fresh costume that seems to be alive in some way.

In other cases, especially in the case of retirement rewards, you should work with the Narrator to weave the reward naturally into the next issue. For example, if you have chosen a story reward that causes your hero to be depowered or to die a heroic death, inform the Narrator at the start of the session, giving them the opportunity to weave that event into the issue's narrative at the appropriate time.

LOSE CONTROL OF YOUR POWERS

You lose the ability to control one or more of your powers, making you a danger to yourself and those around you. You are forced to seek aid in bringing your powers under control. Choose one of the following options:

- ◆ You seek the aid of **SE02: The Super Science Lab**. They place you in stasis. Time halts for you while the lab's scientists continue to perform tests, seeking some way to bring your powers back under control.
- ◆ You seek the aid of **SE03: The Government Agency**. They lock you away in a secure, remote facility, leaving you functionally imprisoned to keep you from harming those around you.
- ◆ You seek the aid of **SE13: The Mystic Order**. You are invited to live at their sanctuary, where **NC05: The Mystic Sage** works with you to calm the storm within you, helping you master your powers once more.

As the cosmic forces of creation demand balance in all things, the next hero you create starts with the Predictable Powers general story reward as a bonus reward.

MALIGN TRANSFORMATION

You are transformed, against your will, into a form that makes it impossible for you to act as a hero any longer. This could be an inanimate form (a statue, a painting), the form of an animal (a frog, a cat), or simply a different age (a baby, an elderly person). You describe the source of your transformation; some suggestions include:

- ◆ An existing villain transforms you as a part of some scheme or as revenge for your previous intervention in their plots.
- ◆ You are exposed to **SE01: The Powerful Artifact**, which causes your transformation.
- ◆ You are subjected to magic leaking out of **SE06: The Nether Realm**, which transforms you.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.

RETIRE TO CIVILIAN LIFE

You simply grow too old, or too tired, to continue life as a hero. You hang up your cape and cowl, mothball your lair, and put away your crime-fighting gear to retire to civilian life, giving up your heroic identity.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.

PASS THE TORCH

Each of the following retirement rewards involves your hero passing on their heroic mantle to someone else, allowing them to carry on in your stead while you retire from an active life of heroism.

BECOME THE NEW HEAD OF AN ORGANIZATION

You are promoted to become the new head of an organization, company, agency, or other group, forcing you to set aside your life as a costumed hero to assume the responsibilities of your office. Choose one of the following organizations to be the one you are put in charge of, or choose another organization from your setting that the Narrator deems appropriate:

- ◆ **SE02: The Super Science Lab**
- ◆ **SE03: The Government Agency**
- ◆ **SE13: The Mystic Order**
- ◆ **SE17: The Hero Academy**
- ◆ **SE20: The Space Police Force**

If there is an existing Narrator character that is the head of that organization, you supplant that character as leader.

FORM A NEW TEAM

You form a new team of heroes, with you acting more as the team's mentor and instructor than as a field leader. You can describe the general nature for this team, determine where it operates, and name it now. In the future, when you and other players create a new team, you can have this new team be the one that your former hero founded. Each founding member of this new team starts with the Team Player story reward.

PASS YOUR MANTLE ON TO ANOTHER

You choose to hand off your heroic mantle to someone else, allowing them to take up the role from which your hero retires. You can choose to pass your mantle to either another existing hero, or to a Narrator-controlled character.

If you choose another hero, that hero gains the Replace Another Hero revamp reward immediately as a bonus reward.

If you choose a Narrator-controlled character, when you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward as a bonus reward for that hero.

KEEPING STORY REWARDS SECRET

For some retirement rewards, such as Heroic Death, it may spoil a bit of the dramatic surprise to reveal to the other players that you have chosen that reward. On the other hand, most story rewards have interesting effects on the setting that you do want to share, so that everyone else at the table knows that something has changed. Ultimately, it is up to you to decide whether you let the other heroes know about the story rewards you choose. You should always let the Narrator know, so that they can make sure they are keeping those story rewards in mind when running the game.

SWITCH SIDES

Each of the following retirement rewards involves your hero taking a villainous turn, becoming an enemy that other heroes will fight against in the future. When you choose one of these rewards, you also work with the Narrator to create a new villain, using any of the villain archetypes that have been revealed in the series thus far.

BRAINWASHED BY AN ENEMY

Your hero falls under the sway of evil and is brainwashed, forgetting your life as a hero and becoming a villain. Choose one of the following explanations for how your hero is brainwashed, or come up with your own with the help of the Narrator:

- ◆ Your hero is captured by **SE18: The Terrorist Group** and has their mind scrambled and reprogrammed.
- ◆ Your hero is lured into a trap set by **SE25: The Secret Society**, which bends your hero's mind to their will.
- ◆ Your hero is defeated by a villain with mind control or enchantment powers, and when the rest of the team next sees your hero it is in the thrall of that villain.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.

GO ROGUE

In a stunning betrayal, your hero, of their own free will, takes a turn toward villainy. You describe what event or circumstances pushes your hero over the edge; this could be a reaction to a tragedy your hero faced, or simply reaching the breaking point after years of enduring the stress of being a hero. Whatever the reason, your hero abandons their heroic identity and takes on a new, villainous mantle.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.

POSSESSED BY A COSMIC/SUPERNATURAL FORCE

A powerful but incorporeal entity, something from deep in the recesses of space or from another plane of existence entirely, chooses your hero as its new host, and your hero's consciousness is suppressed as it takes over your body. Now, this supernaturally or cosmically powerful force has a corporeal body and becomes a villain capable of menacing the world, or the galaxy, once more.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.



REVEAL YOU WERE A SHAPESHIFTER

You reveal that your hero was never actually your hero, but rather a shapeshifter all along, posing as your hero. Alternatively, at one point your hero was not a shapeshifter, but at some point was captured or killed and replaced by the shapeshifter, with no one else the wiser. Ideally, this revelation should come at a point where it creates dramatic tension, pitting the shapeshifter villain against the other heroes at a moment when the stakes are already high.

When you create your next new hero, if your description of the shapeshifter's assumption of your heroic identity reveals that your hero was captured or killed and then replaced, you can choose the Back in Action or Resurrection origin reward as a bonus reward for your new hero, creating your new hero using the same powers, identity, and archetype as the hero you are retiring. Otherwise, the new hero you create starts with a lasting repercussion ("Nemesis: [the name of the shapeshifter villain]") and gains the True Nemesis general reward as a bonus reward.

SPLIT INTO TWO

Whether through an accident or the plot of some villain, your hero separates into two entities. One is a depowered version of your hero's identity, and the other, possessing all your hero's knowledge and powers, becomes a villain. It is as though your hero's powers took on a life of their own, and now menace the world. Choose one of the following explanations for how this happened, or come up with one of your own:

- ◆ An experiment involving your hero at **SE02: The Super Science Lab** goes horribly wrong, resulting in the villain's creation.
- ◆ You are subjected against your will to **SE24: Pariah Experiments**, which causes the split.
- ◆ You are subjected by a villain you are fighting to technology or magic that triggers the separation.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.

SWAP WITH ALTERNATE REALITY SELF

You are shunted into **SE16: The Alternate Reality**, and an evil version of your hero from that reality appears in your world, taking your place. The cause of this swap is up to you to describe; it might be a part of some plan hatched by your evil alternate reality version, or simply a fluke occurrence resulting from you and your alternate version being exposed to powerful sources of reality-bending energies at the same time.

When you create your next new hero, you can choose one origin reward for that hero, writing it in the Bonus Reward box on that character's hero progress sheet.



ORIGIN REWARDS

Origin rewards are special story rewards your hero gains at the moment you create them. You gain an origin reward only when another story reward tells you that you do. Usually, origin rewards are granted by retirement rewards; as you see your previous hero off, your new hero gains access to special narrative options. When you select your origin reward, it defines some aspect of your new hero's origin story.

AMALGAMATION

Your new hero is from an alternate reality (perhaps **SE16: The Alternate Reality**, if you so choose) where two characters from your world that you choose did not exist. Instead, your hero is a combination of those two heroes, a fusion of their identities, powers, and motifs. Alternatively, you can choose one character from your setting and one character from another comic book universe (such as those published by the major comic book imprints), or two characters from two different universes belonging to other publishers. Instead of gaining your powers by drawing from the Deck of Powers, choose from powers possessed by the heroes of whom you are an amalgamation, provided the Narrator agrees with your assessment of what powers those heroes possess; the same goes for your identity.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

ARTIFACT FROM ANOTHER REALITY

You gained your powers from a source that originates in a reality other than your own. When you create this hero, choose one object from another comic book universe (such as those published by the major comic book publishers) that bestows powers upon its possessor. Examples might include a ring of power worn by a spacefaring protector corps, a helmet of destiny full of arcane power, a hammer of powerful Norse god, a living alien costume that bonds with its wearer, and so forth. That object becomes the source of your powers.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

BACK IN ACTION

Instead of creating an entirely new hero, choose a retired hero for your new character. Work with the Narrator to come up with an explanation of how and why your hero comes out of retirement. If that hero was imprisoned, exiled, placed in stasis, depowered, or otherwise in a position where their return to the life of a hero was not fully under their control, you must come up with an explanation for how they overcame that predicament and were restored to some semblance of their old selves.

Adjust the Public, Media, and Government Reputation tracks of any team this hero joins by +1 at the time the hero joins the team.

CREATED BY ANOTHER HERO

You are the product not of random chance or outside intervention, but rather the creation of one of the world's heroes. You might be an android, whose artificial intelligence was crafted by the hero, or the result of genetic manipulation and accelerated growth. On that hero's archetype sheet, write "Creator of [your new hero's name]" in their Truths box. On your hero archetype sheet, write "Created by [the name of your creator hero]" in the Truths box.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

CLONE

You are a clone of a hero or villain. As a part of your origin story, describe who is responsible for cloning you, why they cloned you, and how you broke free of their control. You can (if appropriate) have the same powers as the hero or villain you are cloned from; when you create this hero, consider those powers to be among the powers you can choose from, in addition to the five power cards you draw from the Deck of Powers during hero creation.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

FROM ANOTHER TIMELINE

Your hero is from **SE16: The Alternate Reality**. You choose a hero or villain from your reality and create a new version of that character as your hero, rewriting their origin story and personal history to create your new hero. You can choose any powers and identity necessary to accurately represent that character's capabilities, instead of drawing cards from the Deck of Identities and the Deck of Powers.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

INSPIRED BY ANOTHER HERO

Your hero's motifs and methods were heavily inspired by another hero; perhaps you are a disciple or a family member or that hero, or maybe you were simply inspired by some act of heroism that you witnessed that hero perform. Choose another hero and model your hero's description after that hero. When you create this hero, you can choose one power possessed by the hero who inspired you, in addition to choosing powers drawn from the Deck of Powers or the Basic powers.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

A RIFT IN REALITY

Your hero is a known hero from another reality. When you create this hero, choose a hero from another comic book universe (such as those published by the major comic book publishers) to be your hero. In your origin story, explain how it is that your hero came to be in this setting's reality, instead of the reality from which they originate.

You can choose any archetype, powers, and identity necessary to accurately represent that hero's capabilities, instead of drawing cards from the Deck of Identities and the Deck of Powers.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

RESURRECTION

Instead of creating an entirely new hero, choose a dead hero for your new character. Work with a Narrator to come up with an explanation for how your hero returned to life. If you so choose, you can have the Narrator introduce your new hero at an appropriate moment during the play of an issue.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

TIME TRAVELER

You are a hero from another era, brought into the present by a twist of fate or a specific effort. When you create your hero, your origin story takes place in another time period altogether, and you also describe the circumstances that caused you to travel through time to the present. This can include actual time travel (disappearing from one time and appearing in another) or being placed in stasis or some other suspended state and having a large amount of time pass before you awaken in a future you do not recognize. Suggestions for the time period you come from include:

- ◆ **SE26: The Dystopian Future**
- ◆ **SE27: The Golden Age**
- ◆ A Civilization of Antiquity: Ancient Rome, ancient Egypt, the Aztec Empire, or other ancient civilization

Your turmoil should be in some way related to your struggles to adapt to life in an entirely new time period. If your origin indicates that you traveled to this time period with a purpose, your aspiration should touch on that purpose as well.

Additionally, because you were a hero before you traveled through time to the present, you have some experience that rookie heroes do not. When you create this hero, automatically check off three story progress boxes.

TURN OVER A NEW LEAF

When you choose this origin reward, you choose a villain or minor villain who has appeared previously in an issue. Your hero is that villain, attempting to turn over a new leaf. Instead of drawing cards randomly to create your hero, work with the Narrator to choose powers and an identity that best fit that villain. You also decide if your hero chooses a new moniker and motif, hiding their past as a villain, or operates under their villainous pseudonym, openly seeking redemption. Your hero's turmoil should be connected to their past as a villain in some appropriate way.

Additionally, increase this hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1.

FOURTH WALL-BREAKING REWARDS

These rewards treat your setting like a real comic book imprint, and allow the players to break the fourth wall and to pretend that their heroes are appearing in real comic series being published by a real company, with all the business decisions, creator conflicts, and editorial meddling that entails. These rewards may not be suitable for every group; decide as a group whether to allow them.

ACTION FIGURE LINE

Your hero is so popular that the publisher licenses your hero's likeness for a line of action figures. As a part of the deal, the publisher agrees to feature some of the accessories created for those action figures in issues of the comic. At the start of each issue, draw a card from the Deck of Powers. Once during that issue, you can gain the use of that power for the duration of one scene, describing some outlandish action figure accessory that the power represents and introducing it into the scene. Your chance of success with that power is 70%.

ANIMATED SERIES

The publisher creates an animated series featuring your team as the protagonists. Write the name of the animated series on in the Truths box of your team roster sheet. When anyone on the team spends a continuity token to create a back issue, they can instead reference an episode of the animated series.

BACK TO BASICS REBOOT

The publisher decides to reboot your team, clearing away the craft of continuity and bringing your heroes back to their purest or most popular form. Each member of the team can swap any of their story rewards for general rewards, undoing any changes introduced by revamp rewards they swap out.

SOLO TITLE/SPIN-OFF SERIES

Your hero gets their own comic book title, where they appear as the lone protagonist in their own stories. When you spend a continuity token to create a back issue, if you reference this solo series you also gain 1 hero point (🌀), in addition to the other benefits of the back issue.

SPONSORSHIP DEAL

The publisher sells advertising space in your team's series, integrating the product into the panels of the comic. Choose a product (real or fictional) and write "Sponsored by [the product name]" in the Truths box of the team roster sheet. At the end of each issue, one player must endorse this product in-character; if they do, they check off one extra box on their story reward track.

ORIGIN STORY SEEDS

This section contains several tables filled with potential ideas that you can use when you craft your hero's origin story. These ideas, called origin seeds throughout the rest of the section, should serve as a starting point for your to modify and expand upon to create a origin story that best fits your vision for the character and the tone of the series you are playing through. Many of these origin seeds overlap thematically, offering different angles for the same heroic origin stories. Additionally, many of the origin seeds offer suggestions for setting elements of major Narrator characters that you can tie into your origin story, if you so choose.

Method 1: An Origin Suitable to the Genre. Using this method, you should get an origin story seed that is close to the genre of the series that you are playing. Pick one or two of the origin tables that best matches the genre of the series you are playing. For example, if you were planning on playing through *Streetlight Knights*, you might choose both Magic Heroes and Street Level Heroes as your possible origin seed tables, adding a dash of the supernatural to your otherwise street-level game.

Once you have picked the genres you will use, roll a d10. If the d10 result is one of the numbers listed next to All Heroes table header, or the table header for a genre you chose, you roll a d10 again and use the number you roll to pick an origin seed from that table. Otherwise, roll the d10 again until you get a result that corresponds to one of those tables.

Method 2: Totally Random. If you don't care about matching the genre, you can use this method to get an origin from any of the tables. Just roll your percentile dice; each table has a percentile entry in the first column. Find the entry that matches your percentile dice roll and you have your origin seed.

Method 3: Just Pick One. If you don't like the idea of randomly being assigned an origin story seed, you can always just skim through all these tables and pick our an origin seed that works best for you.

SPECIAL ORIGIN TABLES

There are two additional tables of origin seeds. The first is for heroes who are members of your settings pariah group (from **SE19: The Pariahs**). Since all pariahs have a shared origin for their powers, this table instead focuses on major events that happened before your character became a hero. The second is for strange heroes; this table is full of weird, genre-breaking origin stories that produce more off-beat heroes. You can roll on either of these tables if the Narrator agrees that it is appropriate.

ALL HEROES (1-2)

%	d10	Origin Seed
01-02	1	Tragic Accident: You were in a vehicle accident (car, train, or airplane) where many people lost their lives, yet you survived and came out alive and with powers. What kind of accident was it? What happened during the accident that gave you powers?
03-04	2	Childhood Trauma: Something bad happened to you during your childhood, and it led directly to your transformation into a hero. This could have been an incident during which you were physically harmed, or it could simply have been something so traumatic that it put you on the path to becoming a hero of your own volition. What happened that put you on your heroic path? Was it intentional, or an accident?
05-06	3	Adolescent Onset: You were born different in some way, and the seeds of your powers were in you from the beginning. It was not until you reached adolescence that your powers emerged and your life changed forever.
07-08	4	Amnesia: You don't know how you got your powers; you woke up in a hospital one day and discovered that you could do things that other people could not. The source of your powers is a complete mystery.
09-10	5	Disaster Survivor: You were present at a major disaster that inflicted great damage and loss of life. When the dust settled, you found that you could do things other people could not. SE27: The Catastrophe is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
11-12	6	Exposed to Radioactive Materials: You were accidentally exposed to high amounts of radiation during an accident involving the transport or storage of radioactive waste, or indirect exposure through contact with some radioactive object or creature. Rather than dying a slow and painful death, the radiation mutated your DNA, causing you to develop your powers.
13-14	7	Immortal: You are immortal, in the sense that you do not die due to old age. At some point, you were an inhabitant of an ancient civilization, and you simply stopped aging. Over the course of many lifetimes, you developed the ability to use your powers, which are learned, not inherent.
15-16	8	Chosen by a Higher Power: A higher power, such as a god or demon, a powerful cosmic force or an alien, or an interdimensional being chose you to receive your powers. They selected you to be their emissary and agent on Earth, and your powers are the blessing you received to fulfill the mission they have chosen for you.
17-18	9	Encountered a Mysterious Object: You had an unexpected brush with a strange object, its origin and purpose unknown to you, that transformed you and gave you powers. This object was alien to you, and you likely were not even aware that it had such power when you encountered it. SE01: The Powerful Artifact is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
19-20	0	Creation: You are the product of an individual's genius and were made with intent by that individual. Your powers were engineered specifically for you, a part of that lone creator's master plan. The method of your creation depends on your fundamental nature; you might be a robot constructed in a lab or a living being who was genetically engineered.

SUPER SCIENCE HEROES (3–4)

%	d10	Origin Seed
21–22	1	Government Experiment: You were part of a government experiment, either as a willing participant or an unwilling guinea pig. You were one of many subjects in a government program designed to give regular humans powers. SE03: The Government Agency and SE24: Pariah Experiments are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
23–24	2	Serum/Chemical/Drug: You discovered or were given a special serum, exposed to a particular chemical, or dosed with a certain drug that caused you to develop your powers. You may even require a constant supply of that compound to maintain your powered state, which could be the source of your hero’s turmoil.
25–26	3	Lab Accident: You were in a science laboratory when an accident occurred and unstable chemicals or energies were unleashed. Though you could have easily died, you somehow came through not only alive but bestowed with your powers. SE02: The Super Science Lab and SE15: The Megacorporation are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
27–28	4	Willing Test Subject: You volunteered to be a test subject for an experimental drug, therapy, or medical treatment. Something went wrong, and the side effect of the experiment is the manifestation of your powers. SE02: The Super Science Lab is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
29–30	5	Invention/Discovery: You personally made a scientific breakthrough, successfully making a discovery or producing some invention that grants you your powers. This discovery could be something that powers the technology that you use (such as a new subatomic particle), or it could be a piece of technology itself (such as a suit of power armor or a weapon of your own design).
31–32	6	Cybernetically Enhanced: You have cybernetic parts, enhancements, or replacements for your natural body, that grant you your powers. SE02: The Super Science Lab is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
33–34	7	Genetic Engineering/Gene Splicing: You underwent gene therapy to overwrite your DNA, or were genetically engineered before your birth. Your custom genetic sequence may even have material spliced in from other animals, giving you animal-like qualities that manifest themselves as your powers. SE02: The Super Science Lab is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
35–36	8	Time Traveler: You traveled through time, coming from another period when the things that modern people label as your “powers” are commonplace and available to many people. SE28: The Dystopian Future and SE29: The Golden Age are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
37–38	9	Dimensional Traveler: You used technology to travel to and from other dimensions, exploring the different planes of existence. During one such journey, something (perhaps merely passing through the veil between dimensions) bestowed incredible powers upon you. SE11: The Parallel Dimension and SE16: The Alternate Reality are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
39–40	0	Stolen Technology: You stole a piece of valuable and experimental technology from another person or organization, or obtained it on the black market. Though the tech doesn’t belong to you, you have learned to use it, turning it to a heroic purpose. SE15: The Megacorporation and SE23: The Lawless City are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.

MAGIC HEROES (5–6)

%	d10	Origin Seed
41–42	1	Totem Spirit: You are imbued with powers by the spirit or spirits of an animal or abstract concept that has significance to your culture, religion, or personal beliefs. Your devotion to that spirit made you worthy of it, and the spirit allows you to draw upon its power to fuel yours.
43–44	2	Inherited/Supernatural Bloodline: You have the blood of some supernatural being in your veins. Perhaps you are half-vampire, descended from ancient gods, sired by a demon, or inherited lycanthropy from one of your parents. Regardless of the source of your supernatural blood, you manifested powers as a result of your not-quite-human heritage. SE06: The Nether Realm is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
45–46	3	Magic Tome: You sought out or stumbled across a magic tome. Upon reading the words inside, you gained incredible sorcerous powers and put yourself on the path to becoming a powered hero. S06: The Nether Realm and NC05: The Mystic Sage are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
47–48	4	Reincarnated: You have lived before. In the past, you were a powerful hero, standing above the rest of your kind. You died, and have been reborn in your current body. When you discovered that you are a reincarnated soul, your powers were awakened. S12: The Forgotten City is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
49–50	5	Back from the Dead: You died. And then you came back. You were miraculously resurrected, not the same as you were before you expired but something more. Something empowered. What caused your death? By what means were you resurrected, and by who? S06: The Nether Realm and NC05: The Mystic Sage are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
51–52	6	Cursed: A curse was placed upon you, and along with it you gained incredible supernatural powers. This curse bestows a command upon you that binds your very soul, driving you to pursue that command at all costs. Who placed the curse upon you? What does the curse demand of you? Did you deserve it, and if so, what did you do to warrant it?
53–54	7	Magical Misfire: You were caught up in a spell or magical effect that went wrong in some way. Unexpected magical forces transformed you, giving you your powers. You might have gotten your powers from a spell gone wrong, or you might have mishandled a magical artifact, speaking the wrong words to the incantation used to activate it.
55–56	8	Found an Item of Legend: You found a legendary item, thought lost to the mists of time, but which was in reality only waiting for the right person to find it. You decide which legendary item it is that you found. It could be an ancient weapon, such as King Arthur’s sword Excalibur or the blade Durendal, the famous weapon of the paladin Roland. It could also be a suit of armor worn by an ancient hero, a ring or other piece of jewelry belonging to a famous sorcerer, or something else of that ilk.
57–58	9	Possessed: You are possessed by a powerful spirit, a creature from another plane of existence that inhabits your body alongside you. This could be the ghost of a famous sorcerer, the spiritual embodiment of a concept or force (such as the spirit of vengeance or the spirit of justice), an angel, a demon, or a fey creature. This possessing spirit grants your powers to you.
59–60	0	Made a Pact with an Entity: You forged a pact with an ancient, powerful entity. Its side of the bargain involved bestowing your powers upon you. It carved off a fraction of its own power and invested you with it, or simply taught you the forbidden knowledge it possesses. What kind of entity did you bargain with? What did you have to promise to that entity in exchange for the power that you gained?

COSMIC HEROES (7–8)

%	d10	Origin Seed
61–62	1	Exposed to Cosmic Rays: You were exposed to cosmic rays, consisting of high-intensity radiation that originates from outside of the solar system. When your body was bombarded by cosmic rays, it was transformed in some way, which resulted in the powers that you gained.
63–64	2	Abducted by Aliens: You were kidnapped by aliens and taken away from your home from some time. During your time in alien captivity, those aliens altered you in some way, changing you from an ordinary person into someone with powers. SE07: The Star Empire is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
65–66	3	Born in Space: Though you might have terrestrial parentage, you were born in space, either aboard a space ship or some kind of space station, and lived much of your young life away from the world that your people are native to. As a result of your spacefaring early life, you grew up with powers that others of your kind do not possess. SE07: The Star Empire and SE21: The Starport are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
67–68	4	Strange Alien Artifact: You found a strange artifact of alien origin. Clearly not native to your world, it drew you in somehow, and when you came into contact with it the object granted you magnificent powers. SE01: The Powerful Artifact is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
69–70	5	Cosmic Refugee: You are a native of a planet far from Earth, an alien in your own right. You came to Earth fleeing persecution or the destruction of your home world. When you arrived, you found that your natural physiological functions gave you powers that the natives of the Earth did not possess. SE02: The Super Science Lab and SE22: The Distant World are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
71–72	6	Alien Visitor: You are not from the Earth, but came to the planet on a mission of some kind. Perhaps you were sent to spy on the Earth by your superiors, or were accidentally drawn to the Earth by a terrestrial science experiment gone wrong. When you arrived, you found that your natural physiological functions gave you powers that the natives of the Earth did not possess. SE03: The Government Agency and NC08: The Cosmic Liaison are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
73–74	7	Alien Lineage: You may look human, but there is alien blood in you. Somewhere in your ancestry you can find nonterrestrial blood, and through this lineage you have inherited the special powers from the alien physiology of your ancestor. SE07: The Star Empire and SE22: The Distant World are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
75–76	8	Strange Meteorite: A meteorite, burning brightly in the night sky, fell to Earth near you. When you encountered it, the glowing rock transformed you, granting you the powers that you use to become a hero. SE02: The Super Science Lab is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
77–78	9	Bestowed by a Cosmic Power: A powerful cosmic being, either an alien or some godlike cosmic force, deemed you worthy of possessing a fraction of its power. When this being's energy flowed into you, it granted you powers not possessed by other mortals. This cosmic power may have also demanded your service or loyalty in exchange for the powers you were granted.
79–80	0	Bonded to an Alien: You encountered an alien creature, perhaps one that was nonsentient or semisentient at best, and it bonded to you. Now you and the alien creature have a symbiotic relationship, with your terrestrial body playing host to the creature. In exchange, the creature provides you with the incredible powers that you use to be a hero.

STREET LEVEL HEROES (9–0)

%	d10	Origin Seed
81–82	1	Left for Dead: You did something to someone that made them want to kill you. They thought they had succeeded and left you for dead. Yet you miraculously survived, and when you fully recovered you discovered new powers, or a new drive to become powerful enough to be a hero. SE08: The War-Torn Nation and SE14: The Crime Syndicate are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
83–84	2	Family Tragedy: Something terrible happened to your family, and though you survived, you were filled with a drive for justice or vengeance that prompted you to become a hero. Which members of your family were killed in this tragedy, and did anyone besides you survive?
85–86	3	Trained by a Master: You were trained as an apprentice by a master, who instilled in you the skills and experience you needed to become a hero. This master might have taught you a fighting style, trained you in military tactics, or simply gave you the control you needed to master the powers you already possessed when you entered their tutelage. NC04: The Team Mentor and NC05: The Mystic Sage are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
87–88	4	Raised by a Secret Organization: You were raised not by parents, but by a secret organization, which trained you from an early age to be their agent in the world. Your upbringing included extensive training and unorthodox lessons designed to help you fulfill the organization's mission. SE13: The Mystic Order and SE25: The Secret Society are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
89–90	5	Self-Fashioned Hero: One day, you looked around at how bad things had gotten in your neighborhood and wanted to do something about it. You decided to become a hero and sought out the training, technology, or resources to fight against villainy on your own.
91–92	6	Betrayed by Superiors/Authorities: You were betrayed by those who you worked for, or by an authority figure. Up to that point, you thought that you were safe, a loyal subject helping to further the mission. When things went wrong you were an easy scapegoat, and suddenly you found yourself fighting for your life. SE15: The Megacorporation and NC03: The Hateful Authority are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
93–94	7	Wrong Place, Right Time: Your life as a hero is the result of dumb luck. You were simply going about your day when suddenly you were exposed to chemicals or radiation, or stumbled across a piece of technology, or witnessed something that urged your transformation into a hero. SE02: The Super Science Lab and SE14: The Crime Syndicate are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
95–96	8	Delusions of Grandeur: You saw other powered heroes helping to save the world and decided that you could do the same thing, powers or no. You fashioned a heroic identity for yourself and set about making yourself into a hero, even though you did not possess the incredible powers displayed by most heroes.
97–98	9	Natural Phenomenon: You were subject to some natural phenomenon, such as being struck by lightning, caught in a landslide, or trapped in a wildfire that gave you your powers through some miraculous stroke of luck.
99–100	0	Ill-Gotten Gains: You received your powers from a criminal, who had in turn obtained the means of granting you your powers through illegal means (theft, black market sales, or the like). SE05: The Super Prison and SE14: The Crime Syndicate are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.

SPECIAL ORIGINS: PARIAH HEROES	
d10	Origin Seed
1	Tragic Accident: There was a horrible accident caused by your powers, and though you survived, other people (perhaps even people close to you) did not. You carry with you the guilt from causing that accident and are constantly haunted by your memories of the tragedy. SE27: The Catastrophe is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
2	Former Anti-Human Terrorist: Normal humans hate and fear you, so for a while you decided to hate them right back, joining up with other pariahs and forming an anti-human organization. You lived alongside these militant pariahs for a time, but eventually realized that the life of an extremist wasn't for you. You abandoned your former comrades, instead taking up the life of a hero to try to change the hearts and minds of those who you once railed against.
3	Victim of Anti-Pariah Violence: You were caught by an angry mob, wounded in a bombing or shooting, or were otherwise the victim of a violent act that specifically targeted you or other pariahs in an act of bigotry and hate. Though you eventually recovered physically from the attack, the emotional wounds still remain, and you struggle with flashbacks every time some stimulus reminds you of the attack. NC02: The Celebrity Bigot and NC03: The Hateful Authority are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
4	Experimented Upon by the Government: You were caught up in a government program where you and other pariahs were test subjects in various physical and psychological experiments. For a time, you were a guinea pig, treated as less than human by the government that should have been protecting your rights. SE24: Pariah Experiments is a possible setting element that you can tie into your origin story.
5	Normal Life: You lived such a normal life that you didn't even know you were a member of a controversial group, sheltered from prejudice by your family. You are a wide-eyed innocent compared to other pariahs.
6	Cast Out: You once led a relatively normal life, but that all came crashing to a halt when you were cast out by those who cared for you. Perhaps your family disowned you upon learning that you were a pariah, or the people you called your friends and colleagues ended their relationships with you when anti-pariah sentiment reached a heated peak.
7	Escaped Imprisonment: You were held captive for many years, and only became a hero once you escaped. You may have been unjustly jailed by bigoted small-town police or locked away in a basement by your hateful family. SE05: The Super Prison and NC03: The Hateful Authority are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
8	Rescued from the Streets: You lived on the streets for many years, homeless and poor, with nowhere to call home and no one to rely on for aid. Eventually, you were rescued from your impoverished life and given a place to live, food, and the stability you needed to eventually become a hero. SE17: The Hero Academy and NC04: The Team Mentor are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
9	God or Hero: Unlike other pariahs, you were not subject to the fear, hatred, and bigotry that most of your kind faces on a daily basis. Instead, you lived in a place far from the center of modern politics, such as in a third-world country or in a deeply rural community. There, your incredible powers made you special, someone to be lauded or perhaps even worshipped as a god or powerful spirit. It was only when you left your community that you realized the prejudices faced by other pariahs. SE08: The War-Torn Nation and SE10: The Evil Dictatorship are possible setting elements that you can tie into your origin story.
0	Woke Up in the Hospital: Something very bad happened to you, but you do not know what. You awoke one day in a hospital bed, recovering from serious wounds or a deadly disease, completely unaware of what happened to you. In fact, you have no memory of your life before waking up in the hospital, or perhaps only shadowy recollections and fragmented knowledge, leaving you with mysteries about your life before now.

SPECIAL ORIGINS: STRANGE HEROES	
d10	Origin Seed
1	Conjured: You were once a spirit, ghost, demon, or other being from another plane of existence. Through sorcery or science, you were dragged into this world and given a corporeal form, making you mortal but leaving you with many of your supernatural powers, which you now use in your life as a hero.
2	Animal: You were a normal, everyday animal, going about your life as others of your kind do, when you were exposed to the same events that created another hero. Like that hero, you gained your powers, along with increased intelligence, and became a powered hero in your own right. You may or may not be able to speak the languages of humanity, but you serve right alongside their heroes, even if they sometimes refer to you as a “wonder pet” or some other endearing moniker.
3	Cartoon: You are a cartoon character, an animated version of a well-known hero from this world. You were drawn into this reality by some means, coming from another reality populated by other cartoons like yourself. Though you now adhere to the physics of this reality, you still retain some of your cartoonish properties, including occasional genre-savvy quips.
4	The Good Twin: You are the identical or fraternal twin of a powered villain, someone who the world reviles but you call family. Choose a villain from your setting who had their powers (or the seeds of their powers) from birth, or at least a very young age. Your origin story mirrors theirs, and you grew up together, sharing a childhood with a person who would go on to become a villain. Your origin story is intimately tied into that villain's story, and you should build your origin story as an expansion of that villain's origins.
5	There Is Another: You have the same origin story as another hero, but where that hero was in the spotlight, you were in the background, overlooked by most people who witnessed the origin event. You are the other test subject in the government experiment, the person just out of frame who was also splashed with radioactive waste, or the second child sent in an escape pod fleeing your dying home world. Choose another hero and write yourself into that hero's background, casting your origin as an expansion of that hero's origin story.
6	Psychotic Break: You suffered some trauma or mental illness that resulted in a psychotic break. You lost touch with reality and fashioned yourself into a hero as either a defense mechanism or as a result of believing you have powers or some special origin, when in reality you may not.
7	International Version: You were made into a superhero by your home country as a means of producing your peoples' version of a popular hero from another country. You were created for propaganda, or perhaps just as a means of showing that your country is capable of producing great heroes, despite the fact that your power set, costume, and hero moniker are clearly riffs on those possessed by a hero from another country.
8	Public Domain Character: You come from another reality entirely, one where you had your own allies and enemies and had been a hero in your own right for many years. Then suddenly, everything changed. You woke up in this reality, finding that you suddenly had a history that seemed to stretch back to your earliest days as a hero. You have since encountered other versions of yourself who claim to be from other realities, and have come to understand that your original reality was cannibalized and copied into many other realities.
9	Fell Into the Comic World: You weren't born in this world, but rather in the “real” world, where you read about this world in comic books. One day, you fell through a portal or were sucked into a comic book, only to emerge in this world. Finding yourself with vast knowledge of the world from your previously omniscient perspective, you turned that knowledge to your advantage and began a successful career as a superhero.
0	Fourth-Wall-Breaker: You are a writer or artist who wrote yourself into a comic book, fashioning yourself into a hero in this world. Now, you fight alongside the other heroes, yet you remain genre-savvy and frequently break the fourth wall by talking about comic book tropes and addressing an audience that may or may not be there. Other heroes likely find you strange and may be concerned about your mental health as a result of your frequent references to a world beyond this one.

FOR THE NARRATOR

As the Narrator, you present your players with threats and conflicts and keep the session moving along smoothly. While running the game involves managing a lot of things at once, a number of simple methods can help you to run a fun, entertaining game set in your own comic book universe.

This section contains explanations of those methods, as well as advice on how to avoid some common pitfalls you might encounter while running the game. It also contains recommendations for ways you can make the game better fit the setting you create for your version of **Spectaculars**.

WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

To keep the game moving, share the responsibility to be creative with the players. When a player asks, "Is there a restaurant in the city where the big organized crime family hangs out?" you respond, "Yes. Can you tell me the name of the place and what it looks like inside?" When a player asks if there are any scientists in the super science lab who are sympathetic to the heroes' cause, you say, "Sure. There's one. What's her name, and why does she risk losing her job to help costumed heroes?"

Not every player is going to be comfortable improvising, so be prepared to step in when necessary. If a player hesitates, appears overwhelmed, or isn't feeling particularly creative, you can pose the question to the group of players as a whole. If you do need to come up with the details yourself, go with whatever come to mind; you can always change those details later and inform the players.

An entire comic book universe is enormous, and no Narrator can reasonably be expected to learn every aspect of it. Instead of worrying about the minor details, when you find yourself needing a name, a character, a location, or a description, turn the question back on the players and let them shape the details of the setting so you can focus on the bigger picture. If the players create a compelling piece of the setting, be sure to add it to the Truths section of the relevant Setting Book page, or, in the case of characters, add it to the minor character roster in the back of the Setting Book for easy reference later.

INTERPRETING THE SITUATION

As the Narrator, you listen to what the players want to do, determine the right mechanics to use (if any), and then describe the outcome of the attempt. In many cases, the scope of skills or powers and the wording of player abilities have intentionally been left vague and open to interpretation. The game relies on the players to provide the narrative context of scenes and events in the game, using their characters' aptitudes as they see fit. As a general guideline, if characters attempt to use skills or powers to perform exciting, compelling, or particularly in-genre feats, allow them to do so, even if their particular interpretation of a skill or power isn't obvious. Err on the side of saying "Yes" to your players and use advantage dice and challenge dice (see below) to reward or offset an unusual interpretation.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

It's important to keep the flow of play grounded in the narrative, both during conflict scenes and more abstract interlude scenes. Ask the players questions about their goals, their methods, and their reactions during these scenes so the course of what happens becomes clear to everyone. Encourage players to provide details that help everyone at the table picture how the scene plays out. Ask questions at these points:

- ◆ When players describe an interlude scene they are creating, ask for a clear picture of the result they hope to achieve.
- ◆ When players state that they want to use a skill or power, ask them to describe what their characters do to warrant the use of that skill or power. Ask for further details about how they are going to get what they want out of a scene.
- ◆ When a player is being vague or doesn't have a great idea of what they want to accomplish, it's okay to both ask for more details and invite other players to pitch in and help flesh out the scene.
- ◆ When players succeed or fail on a physical attack, ask them to describe what the attack looked like.
- ◆ When a character is knocked out of a conflict scene, ask the players to describe how the character exits the scene in a way that makes sense.

KEEP INTERLUDES MOVING

It's easy for an interlude scene to consume a lot of game time. While that's not necessarily a bad thing (in some ways, it means that the players are enjoying the scene so much that they want to continue), it can slow down the momentum of the issue. If you feel that an interlude scene is going on too long, or if the other players at the table have spent a long time disengaged from the action, refocus the scene on whatever the player stated was the original goal of the scene. This should put the scene back on a path toward conclusion.

ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK

Spectaculars is not a game about being a costumed hero; it is about being a *team* of costumed heroes. As the Narrator, you can do certain things to help remind the players that they are a team that succeeds best when working together:

- ◆ Encourage players to spend hero points to perform teamwork maneuvers. Offer suggestions for how such maneuvers could work if a player is struggling to come up with one. Remind them that adding advantage dice to other heroes' rolls is a great way to take down villains faster, and spending hero points in this way does not require them to take an action or place time tokens.
- ◆ Remind the heroes when they have powers that can be used on other players' turns. At the start of the session, quickly glance over the heroes' powers, just so you know what they are capable of doing.
- ◆ Likewise, remind heroes about their team role benefits if they have one that can be used to benefit the other heroes.
- ◆ As the heroes take damage from villains' attacks, remind the heroes that they can protect one another by playing tactically. Encourage some heroes to focus on stopping the villains from attacking their damaged allies.

MAINTAINING ENERGY FOR LARGE GROUPS

With large groups (those with five or six hero players), the time between player turns can often be quite long, especially since each additional hero in the group usually also means an extra turn for the villains. With a group of that size, it's important to keep players actively engaged in the scene when it isn't their turn, since an unlucky deal of the initiative track could create even larger gaps between turns.

When the villain takes a turn, have them deliver some brief dialogue to one of the heroes whose turn is far off, and give that hero's player a chance to respond in turn. Spread villain attacks around, so that players who have not been engaged for a while get a few moments in the spotlight; if such an attack misses, encourage the player to describe what their hero did to avoid the attack.

HANDLING CREATIVE USES OF POWERS

The heroes' powers are designed give the players the ability to describe attacks and effects with a high degree of freedom of creativity and few restrictions. These powers have limitless possibilities, which can be liberating for some players but paralyzing for others. When a player struggles to come up with something to do, consider offering a suggestion for how they can use one of their powers. Eventually, the players will get the hang of utilizing their powers' blank canvas of creativity.

A player might try to describe a use of a power that seems to circumvent whole challenges with ease, or even the entire issue's conflict. For example, a hero with the Time Manipulation power might decide to go back in time to when the villain was first turning to evil and stop them then. When this happens, remember that despite the player's description, a power's effect is instantaneous unless it is made long-lasting, and even then the power lasts only until the end of the scene. Furthermore, enemies have resistance just as the heroes do, which serves as an abstract catch-all to protect them from harm. Even with a clever plan, an enemy is not defeated until the hero reduces their resistance to 0.

In extreme cases, if a player comes up with such a clever use of a power that it could circumvent the entire scenario, as the Narrator you can simply state that such a use of the power is beyond the scope of the hero's capability.

AREA ATTACKS AND LONG-LASTING EFFECTS

Many powers allow the player to make the effect of that power long-lasting or turn it into an area attack. If a player describes a use of a power that seems like it should last for a while or that it should affect multiple targets, but the power does not normally allow the player to do so, you can always determine that it becomes an area attack or long-lasting anyway. When you do, have the player spend 1 hero point () since they are using the power in an unconventional way.

ATTACKS THAT SHOULD HIT MULTIPLE MINIONS

Generally, attacks are made against a single enemy. However, some attacks (usually area attacks, like explosions, clouds of poison, illusions, or lies and distractions likely to deceive an entire group) just feel like they should take out multiple minions at once. When a player makes such an attack, be generous in handing out advantage dice and consider having drawbacks not cancel advantages for that attack, to increase the chances for the player to roll boons and take out multiple minions at once.

RECURRING NONHERO CHARACTERS

Heroes and villains might be the stars of your comic book universe, but it's the other Narrator-controlled characters who make it feel like a real, fully detailed setting. Look for opportunities to use characters you and your players have created whenever it would not seem contrived—especially during interlude scenes, when your players have time for dialogue and interaction. You can also periodically integrate these characters into conflict scenes; nothing says that the innocent bystanders described in a complication cannot include a named character your players have previously interacted with.

While some Narrator-controlled characters get full setting element entries in the Setting Book, many of these characters will be created as the needs of certain scenes dictate. If a character catches some of your players' interest or is a part of a particularly fun or memorable scene, record the relevant information about the character in the minor character logs at the back of the Setting Book. When you need a character to participate in a scene, flip through these pages and select one that makes sense.

Remember, recurring characters aren't just familiar faces and references to past issues; they are another avenue for reinforcing your setting's themes and traits. When you create a character, use the choices that you and your players made when developing "The Basics" pages of your Setting Book to inform that character. If you decided that costumed heroes and the media have a contentious relationship, create a bombastic media pundit whose ratings soar when they badmouth the heroes. Later, when you reintroduce that character, you are simultaneously reminding your players of that very contentious relationship, in addition to giving them another chance to interact with a known character.

HANDLING RETCONS AND BACK ISSUES

Continuity tokens give players a chance to "break the fourth wall" and exercise creative control over a scene by fully embracing the idea that the game they are playing is an ongoing comic series. When a player does so, lean into this premise. For a back issue flashback, ask the player to name the other, fictional comic book series they are flashing back to and use that as an opportunity to reference tropes of comics from other time periods. In describing a flashback to a comic book from the 1990s, reference the collector's craze and gimmicky cover options, or the abundance of gritty, gun-toting "edgy" heroes. Alternatively, in a flashback to a comic book from the 1970s, reference the dark turns that many series took, including melodramatic covers touting storylines featuring drug use or the deaths of characters.

Retcons are an opportunity for players to make an impact on the nature of the setting and its characters beyond the questions posed by one of the pages of the Setting Book. They give players creative agency and let them directly shape the setting. When a player uses a continuity token to introduce a retcon, work with them to carefully word the information they add to the setting. Ideally, any new items written in a Truths section have a greater impact than just affecting the current scene, and should be fodder for future stories and scenes. Adding information to the Truths section of a villain, minion, Setting Book page, or other key element has long-lasting repercussions and fundamentally changes the nature of that setting element. That information should frequently come back into play in future issues.

Both retcons and back issues should serve to give the heroes some advantage in their current scene, reveal some piece of information that they might not otherwise have access to, or give them a resource that helps them accomplish some goal. What they should not do is entirely obviate scenes or issues or eliminate challenges entirely. If a player attempts to use a continuity token in a way that seems more effective than intended, you can suggest an alternative version of that use that is more in line with their intent.

IMPACT OF A RETCON OR BACK ISSUE FLASHBACK

Ultimately, the Narrator decides how much impact the use of a continuity token has on a scene. If it is not obvious how the retcon or back issue flashback impacts the story of the scene, encourage the player who used the continuity token to elaborate on what they think the expected impact would be. When it comes to determining any mechanical impact from the use of a continuity token, here are a few examples of ways you can interpret the retcon or flashback's effect:

- ◆ A hero (usually the hero who spent the continuity token) adds 2 to 4 advantage dice to a roll they make during the scene.
- ◆ A villain adds 2 to 4 challenge dice to a roll they attempt during the scene.
- ◆ A villain gains an additional weakness.
- ◆ The player who used the continuity token learns the exact mechanics of the villain's perks and weaknesses.
- ◆ A hero in the scene gains 2 to 4 hero points.
- ◆ A single attack deals no damage.
- ◆ A player automatically succeeds on a roll they would make during an interlude scene.

EMBRACE THE SETTING YOU CREATE

The setting that you and the other players create is one of your most valuable tools as a Narrator. Not only will your players already be invested in the setting, since they helped create and shape it, but there is a certain degree of excitement that comes with knowing that during any given session, the players might make decisions that shape some aspect of the setting for the rest of the series, and even in other series. Given this, when crafting obstacles and scenes, you should frequently reference setting elements that the players have defined. Not only does this allow the heroes to interact with familiar elements of the setting, it also gives those setting elements more value, and makes the players feel like the decisions they made were important.

DECADE, DETAILS, AND TONE

One of the first choices you make when building your setting is the decade in which it takes place. In addition to providing you with fodder for the details you can use when describing scenes in your setting, it also serves a secondary purpose of pointing toward genre tropes that you can weave into your group's ongoing narrative and helps you define the tone for your game.

If you have the inclination, familiarize yourself with the historical details of the decade. Specifically, look for moments of crisis, moments of great human achievement, and moments that shifted the cultural landscape. Think about the impact they had, and use those ideas to shape elements of the setting. For example, in a game set during the 1960s—the height of the Cold War between the US and the USSR, a time when the Space Race became symbolic of the conflict between the nations—consider creating villains who are themed around space exploration and the technologies associated with it.

Similarly, the comics being published at the time should serve as inspiration for the tone of the game as you run it. If your setting comes from a decade where the Comics Code Authority still holds sway, your game is likely to be tamer than, say, a game set at the height of the Bronze Age. Though the Ages of comic book publishing don't perfectly line up with the decades, you can decide from which Age your series draws its tropes.

USING THE PUBLICATION HISTORY

At the back of the Setting Book you will find several pages dedicated to a Publication History. This is where you can chronicle how things played out as your heroes work their way through the various series. Each entry contains a space where you can write the series and issue number for each issue you play through, a section where you can write

notes on important events (including which villains appeared in the issue, the outcome of the issue, any significant events that occurred, and which heroes received lasting repercussions or chose story rewards), and a section where you can write down any references to fictional back issues your players made when spending continuity tokens. If you are playing through multiple series, alternating between them from session to session, writing down these notes also helps you create a continuity timeline for your comic book universe.



RUNNING ISSUES

Once you have the issue you are going to play in hand, read through it while the players select, create, and refamiliarize themselves with their heroes. You don't have to read every word of the issue, but you should have a good idea about how the issue flows and what the villains, if any, are trying to accomplish.

Pay special attention to places where the issue calls for Narrator-controlled characters, references team reputation tracks, or calls upon specific lasting repercussions. Being prepared and familiar with the issues helps you quickly answer questions and makes your setting feel more like a real comic book universe. Each of these elements serves as a callback to something that has happened in a previous issue, or provides a means of fitting the heroes into a world that is, at least partially, of their own creation.

CHOOSING OR CREATING VILLAINS AND MINIONS

Most issues feature one or more villains who initiate and then drive the conflict. Many issues are preceded in their series pads by several new **villain sheets** and **minion sheets**. In most cases, the issue either instructs you to create new villains or minions (using those sheets), or gives you the option of creating new villains or choosing an existing villain. When it comes to minions, most of the time the scenario calls for you to either create or use a specific type of minion, though you should always feel free to swap out the recommended minions for another type of minions if it makes sense.

Choosing an existing villain has a few advantages. First, it reduces the amount of time you need to prepare before you start playing the issue. Additionally, that villain may already be familiar to your hero players, giving them an emotional connection to the conflict at hand. Lastly, like heroes, villains grow more powerful and more versatile the more times they appear in issues, making that villain a more compelling and dangerous threat than before.

If you want or need to create a new villain, start by drawing the recommended number of power cards from the Deck of Powers (all villains have instructions on their back on how to assign them). Then, with those powers in mind, answer the multiple-choice questions on the front of the sheet. Having the villain's potential powers on hand should inspire your answers to these questions. Once you've answered all the questions, go ahead and choose your villain's powers, perks, and weaknesses on the back of the sheet.

Minions are simpler to create than villains. After you've skimmed over the issue and created or chosen your villains, start on the front of the minion sheet, answer the multiple-choice questions, then choose the minions' mechanics by following the instructions on the back.

THE OPENING SCENE

Most issues open with a conflict scene. Usually, this is some event or attack that draws the heroes away from their base of operations and into the action. It's up to you to frame the opening of the issue in such a way that the heroes reasonably become aware of the impending conflict; this could be as simple as seeing a news broadcast.

Opening scenes are a great place to lay out the stakes of the issue. If you see a good way to integrate a Narrator-controlled character from a past issue or a particular truth or element of your setting, do so! Because the issues are designed with no foreknowledge about what makes your particular **Spectaculars** universe unique, it's up to the Narrator to weave in those elements whenever possible. Always keep an eye out for places where you can make specific, impactful references to things that have come before in your setting.

INTERLUDES

Once the issue's opening scene is complete, most issues then allow opportunities for the hero players to lead the creation of interlude scenes. At the end of the opening scene, prompt the players into action; a simple "What do you do?" often spurs them to start creating interlude scenes.

An issue usually has some number of suggestions for things that the heroes can learn or do during interlude scenes. If the players seem unsure of what to do next, offer small nudges toward these suggestions to inspire the heroes to start moving toward the issue's ultimate goal. Use a friendly character from a previous issue or an allied organization to present this information to the players.

You may need to gently remind players from time to time about what they can gain or learn from interlude scenes. Additionally, it's important to instill in them both a sense of time pressure, if not urgency, and make them aware that though they may have had an early victory there is still work to be done to deal with the threat at hand. Reminders that there are still villains on the loose, hostages to rescue, or stolen goods to track down give your players goals to aim for in their interludes: tracking the villain to their lair, learning the location where the hostages are being kept, investigating the crime scenes from which the goods were stolen, and so on.

HOW POWERFUL ARE THESE HEROES?

Spectaculars is designed to let players freely move heroes between series, but this can create some dissonance when comparing the apparent power levels of those heroes. For example, a cosmic powerhouse and a street-level vigilante seem to have a stark disparity between the strengths of their powers. In order for these disparate heroes to play well together, **Spectaculars** assumes that all heroes are equal in their effectiveness. As Narrator, you should encourage all hero players to scale the descriptions they use for their powers to fit the series that they are playing. In this way, the strength of the heroes is more defined by the nature of the series than by the series that their archetype comes from.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN/ THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

After the opening scene ends, most issues are a bit more ambiguous as to where, when, and how the conclusion of the issue will play out. Once the heroes have become aware of the threat, mystery, or challenge standing in front of them, it's up to the players to figure out how to deal with it. From the conclusion of the opening scene onward, the players have total control over how their heroes proceed.

Of course, villains don't just sit still while the heroes pursue their investigations, and impending disasters don't put themselves on hold while the heroes prepare for it. To represent this, most issues present a section called "The Villain's Plan" or "The Sequence of Events" that details, story beat by story beat, how things progress in the world while the heroes engage in interlude scenes.

Each high-level entry in the list has a check box (☐) next to it; these boxes allow you to track the forward movement of time and events. Starting with the top-most entry with an empty box and proceeding down, for each interlude scene any heroes participate in mark off one of the boxes. If an entry has all the boxes next to it filled in, that part of the sequence has been completed and events have moved on from there. This way, time passes as the heroes engage in scenes, and you always know the state of events and can frame subsequent scenes to match.

ADDITIONAL CONFLICT SCENES

At some point, the heroes will make a decision that brings them into direct conflict with the villain or the sequence of events. When this happens, create the conflict scene using the information presented in the most current entry in this sequence. Most entries include specific information, including objectives, complications, enemy composition, and locations, that informs what happens in that scene.

DEALING WITH HERO FAILURE

If the heroes are all defeated or otherwise fail to completely deal with the conflict the issue sets up, you may need to create and run additional conflict scenes to fully resolve the issue's plot. If the villain's plan or the sequence of events had not been advanced all the way to its concluding point, you can simply have the failed conflict scene count as another moment of passing time. You can fill in all remaining circles for the current entry and then create a new conflict scene, framing it around the current step in the sequence.

Alternatively, if the conflict took place at the end of the sequence, the heroes simply fail, which may have an effect on future issues.

AMBIGUOUS VILLAIN DEFEAT

When a villain is defeated, unless the method of their defeat is completely unambiguous, feel free to describe their defeat in such a way that it allows for the villain's fate to be a mystery. Use your best judgment when creating such a description; in cases where it is very clear what the villain's defeat means, players will feel cheated of their victory if your description alters the expected outcome.

Below are several suggestions for ways that you can leave a villain's fate in question, even if they were defeated.

- ◆ The villain falls off of the edge of the building or into a body of water and their body is never found.
- ◆ The villain is revealed to be a robot, clone, simulacrum, or other impostor.
- ◆ The villain is mysteriously teleported or disintegrated.
- ◆ An explosion obscures the heroes' view of the villain for a moment, and when the smoke clears they are gone.
- ◆ A building collapses on the villain, yet no body is found once the rubble is cleared.

WRAPPING UP

Once the final conflict scene ends, provide some closure to the issue, working with the players to describe what happens in the immediate aftermath of the scene. Depending on the team's government reputation, they might stick around waiting for the authorities to arrive, or they may wish to make a hasty exit before the blame for the conflict can be pinned on them.

Each issue contains a section that describes any relevant information you need to convey to the heroes, any lasting repercussions the heroes might gain, and any truths or changes to team reputation tracks you need to make. Dispense this information to the players in a way that makes sense in the context of what happened, and feel free to make adjustments to this section as fits your setting and the way events played out.

MULTI-ISSUE STORYLINES

If an issue is part of a multiple-issue story arc, its "Wrapping Up" section likely includes basic information that leads to the next issue.

ADVANCING VILLAINS

At the end of every issue, advance the villain or villains as described on the back side of their villain sheet. Even if the villain died or was incarcerated, go ahead and fill out these advancements; you never know when, in a future issue, a villain might be released from jail or come back from the grave.

RUNNING INTERLUDE SCENES

Interlude scenes give the hero players a way to drive the narrative for a while. Since most comic book stories put the heroes in a reactive position (responding to a threat that appears unexpectedly), it's important to give players the opportunity to help shape the story you are playing. Interludes provide one of the best ways to do that.

If some of your players have played the game before and you have heroes who already have aspirations and turmoils, start the session by allowing each such player to create interludes dealing with either their aspirations or turmoils (see "Aspiration and Turmoil Interludes" on page 21). Generally, you run these scenes after you have skimmed the issue and created or chosen your villains, so players have time to refamiliarize themselves with their heroes.

Each such interlude scene should be brief; aim to keep each scene's time below 5 minutes if possible. Since most such interludes feature a single hero, the other players at the table will be sitting idle during these scenes, so you'll want to get through them as quickly as possible while still allowing them to have an impact on the hero and the world.

Also remember that each such interlude represents time passing in the story as well. Even if the players claim that their interludes take place at the same time, ***Spectaculars*** abstracts the passage of time such that there is no such thing as an interlude where time does not pass.

OBSTACLES FOR INTERLUDE SCENES

Whenever a hero player creates an interlude scene, especially an aspiration and turmoil interlude scene, come up with one obstacle that the hero needs to deal with to accomplish the goal they set out to achieve. This obstacle doesn't need to involve high stakes, but it should require the player to exercise some skill and creativity to overcome. Such obstacles are best when they provide more opportunities for the heroes to use the skills on their identities, as opposed to their powers.

When creating an obstacle for a scene, start by asking yourself, "What could get in the way of the hero accomplishing their goal for the scene?" This could be innate risk from something in the scene, resistance on behalf of any characters the hero might interact with, or interference from a third party that threatens to throw a wrench in the hero's plan.

In addition to the obstacle itself, consider other factors in the scene that could add advantage or challenge dice to the hero's roll, and describe those at the outset of the scene. Then, leave it up to the hero player to decide if they want to engage with that element or simply go after their primary goal directly.

The next section offers some suggestions for how to create obstacles that reinforce the continuity of your setting and remind players of the decisions they made when creating and playing in the setting.

REINFORCE THE BASICS OF YOUR SETTING

Think about "The Basics" section of your Setting Book and the answers you gave to the questions about the fundamental nature of the setting. Use these answers to inspire obstacles; doing so will help your players feel as though the setting they created has a real impact on the stories for their heroes.

REFERENCE THE HERO'S LASTING REPERCUSSIONS

If any hero has a lasting repercussion from a previous scene, draw inspiration from it and directly reference it when presenting the hero with an obstacle. Lasting repercussions are more than just tags on the characters that future issues will reference; they also represent the impact that a hero's past exploit had on them.

USE NONHERO CHARACTERS

Integrating previously introduced characters into an interlude scene is a great way to give players a sense of continuity with past issues. A recurring character could directly stand in the hero's way, or might simply be a distraction, coming to the hero to beg for help at an inopportune time.

WHEN TO PLAY IT OUT

The Narrator gauges the mood around the table and adjusts the game to keep the players engaged. As the game proceeds, you decide either to handle each interlude scene on an abstract level or to focus in and describe what happens on a moment-to-moment basis.

If your players are strongly engaged in a scene, if they enjoy roleplaying dialogue and banter, or if every player at the table is involved in the same scene, it's okay to dedicate a little more table time to that scene. Give the players opportunities to engage in dialogue with the Narrator-controlled characters, and encourage them to describe their actions in ways that allow the scene to play out naturally.

If your players begin to lose their engagement with the scene, are unaccustomed to in-character roleplaying, or if several players are not involved in the current scene, consider narrating the scene quickly: use basic descriptions of the setup, roll necessary dice, and then describe a quick resolution. Skipping past mundane scenes keeps the players' attention from drifting and allows the game to move on to a scene that engages the full team.

Your players' preferences will become evident as you play. If your table is full of veteran roleplayers who love acting out every scene, by all means let them. If your players are more focused on moving things along and getting to the next conflict scene, that's fine too. Adjust the pace of scenes based on the desires of your players.

CRAFTING CONFLICT SCENES

After the opening scene of an issue, the Narrator crafts most of the subsequent conflict scenes, using advice and mechanics provided by the issue. Unlike the opening scene, these scenes require you to fill in a lot of the details of the scene yourself.

The most important thing to remember about creating a good conflict scene is that it should be full of opportunities for the heroes to make creative use of their powers. Make sure that the environment contains things that players can interact with creatively, and instill a real sense of risk and danger in the scene. Heroes and villains slugging it out in empty, open arenas isn't very interesting. The best comic book fight scenes put the heroes and villains in situations where they improvise and react to unexpected situations. More than that, they require heroes to be aware of the bystanders and infrastructure endangered by the battle.

Use the following template when crafting conflict scenes for the climactic moments of an issue. Take into account the general setting of the scene provided by the issue, briefly sketch out a description of the location at which the scene occurs, and then add in the following:

- ◆ Two or more environmental elements that can be used by the heroes in creative ways (many issues offer suggestions for such elements in entries labeled "Scene Details")
- ◆ At least one complication
- ◆ One means of escalating the danger in the scene

ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

Describing environmental elements does more than help the players form a good mental picture of what is happening in the scene. Detailing parts of the environment that can be opportunistically used during the conflict gives the players prompts for when they want to describe an attack and use the environment in an interesting or creative way. Some examples of environmental opportunities include:

- ◆ Something big and heavy that can be picked up and thrown as a weapon
- ◆ Something narrow but strong that could be wielded as an impromptu melee weapon
- ◆ A wall, bridge, or other structure that could be collapsed on top of someone
- ◆ Something that could be made to explode
- ◆ Something hazardous (like a power line or a steam pipe) that could be broken and turned into an improvised weapon

INHERENT COMPLICATIONS

Adding inherent complications to a scene not only helps make the scene more tense by asking the heroes to divide their attention between their primary goal and the complication, it also provides a much-needed source of additional hero points during the scene. Some questions you can ask to help create complications include:

- ◆ What is something in the scene that puts innocent bystanders in danger?
- ◆ What is something in the scene that threatens high amounts of property damage?
- ◆ What is something in the scene that the villain could use to escalate the danger (triggering one of the **Escalating Danger** elements in your scene)?

ESCALATING DANGER

Sow the seeds of possible escalations early in the scene. Nothing ramps up the tension like a ticking time bomb waiting to go off. Then, if you later need to add more complications to the scene, you already have something to expand on that makes sense in the context of what the heroes have already seen. Some examples of elements you can add that sow the seeds of later danger include:

- ◆ Something critical to the structural integrity of the setting is broken, frayed, thinned, or weakened in some way.
- ◆ Something keeping a major hazard contained or at bay is in danger of breaking down.
- ◆ Something volatile has been placed in an area of danger.

USING THE DECK OF COMPLICATIONS

There are two ways to use the Deck of Complications included with the game. While running a conflict scene, you can keep the Deck of Complications at hand. When the heroes roll two or more drawbacks (☠) on any roll, you can draw three cards off of the top of the deck, and at your discretion pick one to introduce into the scene. This is the mostly likely way that you will use the deck, as an aid to help with improvisation and raising the stakes during moments of action.

The other way to use the Deck of Complications is at the beginning of a conflict scene you are crafting. Usually, the issue you are running will offer suggestions for complications and objectives. However, if you wish to include more, or if there aren't any complications suggested for the scene, or if you are creating your own issue (or improvising one), you can use the Deck of Complications as inspiration for the complications in that scene. Draw five cards from the deck and look over them; if you don't see any you like, draw five more and repeat this process until you have enough complications for your scene. You can also just skim through the entire deck, but drawing a small number of cards might make it easier for you to choose one that fits your scene.

RUNNING ENEMIES

During a conflict scene, the Narrator controls all the enemies arrayed against the heroes. As the Narrator, you choose the enemies' actions and how they move, and roll all the dice for those enemies. Additionally, you are responsible for deciding when to use any villain perks that can be activated only at certain times. Beyond that, you breathe life into those enemies, giving them personalities and making them feel like powerful adversaries that the heroes pity, hate, or resent.

The Narrator rarely rolls dice for enemies outside of conflicts; usually, the steps in the villain's plan proceed apace until the heroes find a way to intervene. If there is some doubt about whether an enemy should succeed on a task outside of a conflict scene, use the following guidelines to determine the outcome:

- ◆ Is the action inconsequential, or would failure be uninteresting? The enemy succeeds.
- ◆ Is the enemy such an expert in the action being attempted that it makes no sense for the enemy to fail? The enemy succeeds.
- ◆ Is the attempted action within the enemy's areas of expertise? Roll a check with a 75% chance of success.
- ◆ If none of the above are true, roll a check with a 50% chance of success.

ENEMIES ATTACKING HEROES

The Narrator rolls percentile dice for enemies attacking heroes. If the attack succeeds, the hero takes damage as described on the enemy's sheet. For most villains, the number you roll is also the amount of damage the villain inflicts on their target, the same as with hero attacks. For minions, their primary attack determines their damage (usually also the number rolled, but with a maximum amount of damage determined by the number of minions remaining in that squad).

Most attacks made by villains are physical attacks, usually involving a power or weapon of some kind. In some cases, as with telepathic attacks or powers that induce strong emotions (such as fear), the villain might make a mental attack against a hero, though this is more rare.

When an enemy hits a hero with an attack, the hero's resistance is reduced by an amount equal to the damage dealt by the attack. An enemy who reduces a hero to 0 resistance knocks the hero out of the scene; when this happens, you work with that hero's player to craft an adequate explanation for why the hero is no longer involved in the scene.

ENEMIES OUTSIDE OF CONFLICT SCENES

Though enemies mostly appear in conflict scenes, you can use them as obstacles during interludes if you find a compelling reason why a known enemy would be involved. Generally, interludes don't involve fighting, so any appearance by an enemy in an interlude should make sense without the scene devolving into a battle. Heroes usually overcome obstacles in interlude scenes with a single roll, and the same is true when an enemy is the obstacle. This means you ignore the normal rules for resistance or attacking squads of minions and treat their interaction with the enemy as a normal check. This also means that it is easier to justify the use of a single minion as an obstacle in the scene, as opposed to an entire squad of minions, or even a villain.

Daniel is playing Count Zero, a monster hunter with telekinesis and super toughness. He is investigating the activity of a cult known as the Legion of Disciples and decides to visit an occult bookstore in an old part of town, where he hopes to find out more about the cult's dark aims. When he arrives, Count Zero discovers the obstacle to his success in the scene: a patron in the store who has the telltale signs of being mind-controlled by Lady Banshee, a villain who he has faced before. Count Zero needs to find a way to conduct his investigation without tipping off Lady Banshee to what he is doing, requiring him to deal with the mind-controlled patron (a lone minion) in some way.

If you do use a villain as an obstacle in an interlude scene, try to provide ways that a hero could reasonably deal with that villain without resorting to violence. You might describe the obstacle in such a way that it makes it seem like sneaking past the villain is the right move, or make it clear that the villain is best dealt with through intimidation, or simply convincing them to give way to the hero. It is also easier to use villains as obstacles during interludes where the hero is in their civilian identity and the villain does not recognize the hero, since the hero has more incentive to seek nonviolent solutions to maintain their cover.

Not every appearance of an enemy outside of a conflict scene needs to be antagonistic. Maybe one of the heroes needs information, so they go to the Super Prison to interrogate an incarcerated supervillain, or maybe they suspect the involvement of a supposedly reformed super criminal in an ongoing plot and they decide to pay the villain a visit to see what they know. Encourage scenes like this! They provide lots of opportunities for you to flesh out the personalities and the histories of your villains without all the distractions inherent in a conflict scene, and let your players engage in dialogue and other interactions that might be forgotten once a battle begins.

ENEMY MECHANICS

Enemies fall into two broad categories: villains and minions. Both villains and minions have their own sheets in the series pads, allowing you to shape their narrative and their mechanics to fit your setting and preferences.

A standard **villain** is a threat that challenges the entire team at once. They usually take multiple turns during a conflict scene and have enough resistance to withstand attacks from all the heroes while retaining a chance to accomplish their goal. Villains often have multiple initiative cards. These villains are usually the primary antagonists for an entire issue, and you can bring them back again and again in future issues with little difficulty.

A **major villain** is an incredibly powerful threat, one that is capable of unleashing untold devastation. Major villains usually appear only in issues that specifically call for them, due to the fact that they are tightly integrated into the plot of the issue. You shouldn't substitute a major villain for a standard villain, since they are significantly more powerful and are usually intended to be driven off but not truly defeated. They always have multiple initiative cards and have the potential to overwhelm an entire team of heroes whenever they appear.

A **minor villain** is usually grouped with other minor villains. Most of the time, a minor villain takes only a single turn during a round in a conflict scene and is a good challenge for a single hero. When an issue calls for a standard villain, you can use a group of minor villains; for each initiative card the issue would grant the villain, use one minor villain.

Minions embody groups of enemies meant to oppose the heroes en masse. They act in concert and are easily whittled down. They do not have resistance, and every attack against a squad of minions reduces their number and potency.

DEFEATING VILLAINS

Villains have resistance, just as the heroes do. When a hero hits them with an attack, reduce their current resistance by an amount equal to the damage of that attack. When a villain is reduced to 0 resistance, they are defeated. Describe the nature of their defeat in such a way that makes sense in the context of the scene and the attack that defeated them.

CONFLICT SCENES WITH MANY HEROES

Keep in mind that the more hero players you have, the more actions villains will take—actions that might happen back-to-back due to the luck of the deal on the initiative track. When you have a high number of heroes in a scene (say, five or six hero players), have your villain spread their attacks around among the heroes to reduce the chances of a hero going from full resistance to being knocked out of the scene in the span of a single round.

MINIONS

Minions are enemies that appear in large numbers. They are usually faceless goons in a scene: a group of brutish monsters, a gang of hired thugs working for a villain, brainwashed members of a cult, and so forth. Minions group up into **squads**, and a squad has a **size** rating equal to the number of minions in that squad. A group of ten rampaging monster minions is a size 10 squad.

A squad counts as a single opponent in a scene. Rather than depleting resistance, any successful attack against the squad reduces its size by 1. Additionally, if a player rolls any boons along with the attack roll, the player can reduce the squad's size by 1 for each boon spent to do so. When a player character attacks a squad, the player should be encouraged to describe how he or she is taking out one or more members of this group in a cinematic fashion.

When you first create a type of minions, choose those minions' primary method of attack, a perk, and a weakness.

BRING VILLAINS BACK FROM THE GRAVE

Over the course of the series, many of the villains the heroes face will be incarcerated or, in some cases, killed or destroyed. When that happens, that does not have to be the end of that villain's presence in the series. If you want to have a villain who is incarcerated or dead appear in an issue, you can have another person take up that villainous mantle, becoming that villain. For example, if you have a villain in your campaign who is a wealthy but insane technology mogul whose villainous identity is based around a mythical creature, the mogul's son might take up the mantle of that villain in a future issue. You need not reveal the true identity or nature of the returned villain right away; figuring out how they can be facing off against a villain they already defeated will be a great mystery for the heroes to solve.

If you use this technique, use the same villain sheet for the villain, and retain any perks earned by that villain across multiple appearances.

REBUILD VILLAINS

When you create a new villain, you do not always have to create that villain completely from scratch. Instead, from time to time consider using an existing villain as the base for the villain you are creating. Minor villains, who often appear as a part of groups of villains, are a good candidate for this technique. When creating a new villain, simply choose a minor villain who the heroes have encountered before, and that villain gets "upgraded" from minor villain to standard villain. Instead of drawing cards for the villain's superpower, you simply use the power they already have, and answer all the questions on the villain sheet and choose perks and weaknesses that best fit that villain. You can also do this with standard villains (rebuilding them as major villains).

CUSTOMIZING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Spectaculars comes with dozens of different heroes, villains, scenarios, and setting elements that, while meant to help you flesh out your own comic book universe, are designed to be very broad and easy to use regardless of the specific details of your campaign. The downside to this approach, of course, is that the contents of the game cannot be tailored to the tastes and history of your game group, or to the specific details of your ever-evolving comic book universe. This is part of the Narrator's job in shaping the game for each group.

As the Narrator, you should always feel empowered to change anything about any villain, issue, or setting element to make it better fit the expectations and needs of your group. Furthermore, you are encouraged to put as much effort as you would like into changing the issues and series pads as a whole to reflect the events of issues that your heroes play through. If the heroes fail to stop a villain from destroying a building in one issue, and a later issue calls for something to happen at that building, adapt the issue to take this change into account. The events of your campaign should always supersede the descriptions found in the series pads, and your players will enjoy the game more if they feel as though the campaign reflects their actions, instead of their actions being dictated by the game.

When reading over an issue before the session, keep the heroes' histories, identities, aspirations, turmoils, lasting repercussions, and relationships in mind, and look for opportunities to change the shape of the issue to integrate them. If you see a place where a small change can make a conflict more personal to a hero, call back to the events of a previous issue, or reintroduce one of the setting elements your players defined in a previous session, by all means make the change!

WHEN THINGS GO REALLY FAR AFIELD

It's entirely possible that events could take such a drastic turn during the play of an issue that the rest of the issue, or even subsequent issues, don't make sense. If this happens, try to roll with it. Though it might mean that you have to craft some scenes without a lot of guidance from the issue, or even create an entirely new issue of your own, it's better for the players to feel like they have control over the way their heroes' stories play out than to feel railroaded down a predetermined campaign path. See "Improvising an Issue" on page 55 for suggestions on how to handle an unexpected major twist in the story created by your players.

Eventually, you should find opportunities to realign the heroes' stories with the path laid out in the series pad. If you frequently change players or Narrators, make sure that you make adequate notes (usually in the form of adding Truths to setting elements and villains) so that someone else can continue to explore the same story threads.

RESHAPE AN ISSUE'S STRUCTURE

Most issues are designed with the same general structure: the heroes are presented with a problem, a danger, or a mystery (often in the form of an opening conflict scene), then must pursue their own investigations or find ways to overcome obstacles before finally confronting the villain or dealing with the imminent danger presented by that issue. This format is designed to get your players into the action quickly and usually presents the challenges the heroes must deal with in straightforward terms. This is useful in situations where you are playing the game on a moment's notice or have only sporadic gaming sessions. If your group meets regularly and plays through one or more issues per session on a consistent basis, you may wish to alter the issue's scenes to provide a less structured flow that feels more natural in the way the story plays out.

Specific suggestions for ways to alter the issue's flow to fit your group's preferred play style include:

- ◆ Ignore or reduce the division between interlude scenes. Don't worry so much about when one scene ends and another begins, and just describe the heroes moving from place to place and time passing naturally. For the purposes of "The Villain's Plan" or "The Sequence of Events," just check off progress on those tracks whenever you feel like a significant amount of time has passed.
- ◆ Delay the opening scene. After the heroes have crafted aspiration and turmoil scenes, instead of launching right into the issue's opening scene (if there is one) you can have the heroes come together and spend some time just interacting with one another in their hero identities. If things slow down, you can introduce the events that would otherwise kick off the issue's opening scene.

EMBRACING STORY REWARDS

As your players make story reward selections for their heroes, they may make choices that have an impact beyond their hero, affecting major setting elements. This is the desired result! If a player makes a choice that drastically alters a character, place, or organization, roll with it. Make the necessary alterations to pages in the Setting Book, and integrate the changes into future issues. To put it another way: it's okay to make plans for things you want to integrate into future issues, but hold onto those plans loosely. You never know when your players might choose story rewards that don't mesh with those plans, and you want your players to feel like they have agency in the shaping of the world.

One great way to make sure their story reward choices feel important is to constantly reference them in the context of the game: an offhanded comment by a minor character about the hero's new costume, a description of the city skyline featuring the heroes' new headquarters, or replacing a faceless background character with a minor character related to a hero's story reward can go a long way.

Many retirement rewards (which cause a hero to exit the world of heroes and villains, often permanently) offer ample opportunities for compelling moments. One of the most obvious examples of this is the death of the hero. The player might decide that the way their hero retires is by going out in a blaze of glory. When a player relays this to you, start thinking about ways to help set up a heroic, and tragic, moment during the session. It's your job to help the player achieve the impact of the story reward they have chosen, so try to find a moment when their decision will pay off in the most satisfying way.

INTRODUCING RESOLVED ASPIRATIONS & TURMOILS INTO ISSUES

From time to time, heroes will change their aspirations and turmoils, usually as a result of choosing a particular story reward. Changing aspirations and turmoils means that they are no longer relevant to that hero's life. Of course, why they are no longer relevant is a question that you may wish to answer in-game. Whenever a hero changes their aspiration or turmoil, look over the next issue and see if there are any opportunities to tie that change into the conflicts of the issue.

When a hero changes their aspiration, it probably means they either achieved what they were reaching for, or it somehow moved completely out of the hero's reach. If they achieved their goal (often reflected by the story reward they chose), you usually don't need to work that success into the issue. If the goal moved out of the hero's reach, describing the reason could be fodder for a compelling scene or obstacle. For example, if a hero had an aspiration to graduate from college as valedictorian, you might introduce an obstacle in that hero's next aspiration or turmoil scene that has them being expelled from their university for some reason.

Likewise, changing turmoils either represents a turmoil's internal conflict being resolved in a way that is a relief to the hero, or it means that something tragic happens, causing that part of the hero's life to become irreparably devastated. A hero changing their turmoil is a great opportunity to raise the stakes in the scene, since the prospect of a turmoil being no longer relevant introduces an easy avenue for truly life-or-death situations. For example, if a hero had a turmoil that described the hero struggling to maintain a romantic relationship with a fellow student, you could put that romantic partner in danger during the final conflict scene of the next issue, treating rescuing them as a critical complication. Even if the hero succeeds in rescuing their romantic interest, being in danger might just be too much for that person to handle, causing them to move to another city to escape the memories of their time in peril.

Heroes are defined by their triumphs and tragedies. Outside of the specific conflicts of the issues themselves, resolving aspirations and turmoils in-game provides a great opportunity to give texture to the heroes.

USE CONTENT FROM A DIFFERENT SERIES

Though each series plays out like its own, self-contained story, **Spectaculars** is a game about creating an entire comic book universe. As the Narrator, it's your job to remind the players that there is a lot more going on in their setting than the world right in front of them.

From time to time, you may wish to introduce elements from other series as a reminder of the interconnected nature of the setting. Though the villains are often thematically tied to the series they appear in, feel free to bring in another villain when there is a plausible explanation for that villain's involvement. This also has the added benefit of advancing that villain, making the villain a little more capable the next time the heroes face the villain.

Along similar lines, when starting a new series or forming a new team, you can encourage one or more of your players to choose an existing hero for the team instead of creating a new one. Alternatively, if there is an archetype from another series that has not yet been used to create a hero, encourage one of your players to use that archetype for their new hero, to add some connection to the other pad to the series you are playing.

USE THE TOOLS THE GAME GIVES YOU

The series pads included with the game make use of several tools that you can also use to help manage the impact that your players have on the setting, and the feedback they receive from the setting in turn.

- ◆ **Reputation Tracks:** Frequently reference the team's reputation tracks when deciding on the reactions and attitudes of nonhero characters. Many issues modify these reputation tracks based on hero actions, and they can provide you with guidance to help determine how an individual character would view the heroes. Likewise, you can hand out modifications to these reputation tracks as you see fit, even if the issue doesn't specifically call for it, based on your interpretation of the results of the heroes' actions.
- ◆ **Lasting Repercussions:** Lasting repercussions are short phrases that communicate how a hero has been affected by the events of an issue. Feel free to craft obstacles and complications based on a hero's lasting repercussions; this will emphasize the hero's history. Similarly, you can invent new lasting repercussions as you see fit. This is best done as a way of making it easy to repeatedly reference some important event that the hero participated in.
- ◆ **Truths:** When something feels like it should be impactful but there's no clear way for you to represent that mechanically, you can always add a short sentence to the Truths box of a hero, villain, or setting element. These are free-form ways of modifying the setting, and even if they are only used for roleplaying purposes they still remind the player that their past adventures had a lasting impact.

CREATING YOUR OWN ISSUES

As your group plays through the series included with **Spectaculars**, you will undoubtedly find opportunities to veer away from the path laid out in those issues. You may want to create your own issues, either for play by your group or to share with others. On the following pages, you'll find advice for crafting issues in the same vein as those presented in the series included with the game.

THE CORE STRUGGLE

The heart of every issue is some struggle that the heroes must engage in, something dangerous and exciting and threatening to the peace and prosperity of the world that they protect. Every issue is about something, and that something is the core struggle.

In most cases, the core struggle is obvious: the fight against a villain. When a clear antagonist with a diabolical plan for the perfect crime or world domination stands at the center of your issue, the heroes' general course of action is clear: stop the villain. In other cases, the threat might not be as clear to the heroes, nor is how to proceed. When creating your own issues, your job is to come up with a core struggle that the heroes can react to, creatively pursue, and use their powers, skills, bravery and intellect to overcome.

Some examples of the most common core struggles include:

- ◆ Stopping a villain from enacting a dastardly plan
- ◆ Hunt down a villain before they can strike again
- ◆ Stop a disaster (natural or otherwise) from harming the city
- ◆ Investigate a mystery surrounding a hidden threat
- ◆ Defend a person, place, or object against those that would harm it
- ◆ Rescue someone or retrieve a stolen object
- ◆ Escape a dangerous situation and get back to safety

Figuring out the core struggle of your issue is often the most challenging part of creating an issue; once you have that, the details will fall into place. It is often best to put the heroes entirely out of your mind when coming up with your core struggle, and instead focus on the bad things that could happen if the heroes don't intervene.

There are two primary ways for you to represent this struggle: the villain's plan, or a sequence of events. In each case, you are plotting out a series of narrative beats that represent what is happening behind the scenes, invisible to the heroes but still moving forward whether the heroes interact with them or not.

THE VILLAIN'S PLAN

If a villain with a plan is the core struggle of your issue, you can answer the following questions to provide inspiration for filling out the details of the issue.

What does the villain want? The villain's goal should always be at the forefront of the conflict. Each step in the villain's plan must bring them closer to their goal, and each decision the villain makes should either favor pursuit of the goal or be something that the villain would do to eliminate an obstacle standing in the way of achieving that goal. Decide why the villain wants that thing, and to what lengths they are willing to go to gain it.

What (overly) elaborate scheme must the villain pursue? You should concoct an elaborate scheme that your villain is trying to complete, full of mad science or clever crimes or dark magic or epic threats. Plot out each step of the plan; you want to have between three and five distinct steps, if possible. Each of these becomes an entry in the "The Villain's Plan" section of your scenario. Next to the header for each entry, write one to three check boxes (☐), representing how long this step takes; longer steps should take more check boxes.

The first step of the plan can serve as the basis of the opening scene. Or, if you don't want to put your villain in danger right away, the opening scene could be a distraction, or some auxiliary goal of the villain's, that makes the heroes aware of the danger.

What are at least three physical locations where the heroes could attempt to foil that plan? These locations will become the possible locations for the opening scene of the issue, and for the final showdowns with the villain. When coming up with these locations, think about locations that have lots of opportunity for heroes to use the environment in creative ways, and locations that are filled with potential complications the heroes need to deal with. Featureless deserts and empty parking lots aren't usually very compelling sites for a showdown, so look for places with inherent fragility or danger: atop a skyscraper, on a towering bridge over a river, or in the heart of a hydroelectric power plant.

For each of the steps in the villain's plan (which you should have already detailed, per the steps above), assign one of these locations to that step, so you know where the clash will occur should the heroes intervene at that point in the issue's progress.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

If the core struggle for your issue is a sequence of events, you can answer the following questions to provide inspiration for filling out the details of the issue.

Who or what is driving the events forward? Without a villain taking action, heedless of the heroes' intervention, your core conflict needs some means of moving forward. Typically, plots involving a sequence of events as the core struggle progress either due to the heroes' actions, or simply through the passage of time.

Usually, situations where the heroes' actions are what causes the struggle to progress involve obstacles that are placed before the heroes that they then need to overcome. For example, the heroes might be crossing a dangerous landscape littered with hazards before reaching their final destination, or searching for clues to a mystery that only unravels once they have all the pieces of the puzzle on-hand. In these kinds of issues, the heroes may or may not be racing against the clock to overcome these obstacles.

In other situations, the progressions of the sequence of events might be totally outside of the heroes' control. For example, a natural disaster, once set in motion, will inevitably come to its destructive conclusion, and the only question is at what point do the heroes attempt to intervene. These kinds of struggles are usually best when there is some force of nature, unnatural hazard, or other uncontrolled threat on an inevitable collision course with people or places the heroes care about.

What are three locations that would be threatened by the events?

Determine the order in which those locations would be threatened. The first location becomes the opening scene. If the heroes are racing against the clock, the remaining steps each become an entry in the "The Sequence of Events" section of your scenario. Next to the header for each entry, write one to three check boxes (☐), representing how long this step takes; longer steps should take more check boxes. If there are simply some number of obstacles the heroes need to overcome before reaching the issue's concluding scene, you do not need to track the passage of time; the heroes will always progress toward a fixed climactic scene.

THE OPENING SCENE

Each issue begins with a suggestion for an opening scene, which is usually a conflict scene. For your opening scene, keep in mind these goals:

- ◆ The scene should lead the heroes to the core struggle.
- ◆ The scene should introduce the villain(s), even if they are not present in the scene (though their henchmen might be).
- ◆ The scene should leave the heroes with some obvious questions and a sense of urgency that drives them to act.
- ◆ The scene should give the heroes a chance to use their powers.

DESIGNING CONFLICT SCENES

This section provides guidance for creating conflict scenes for your issues with the same level of detail as those presented in the series.

ENEMIES

Below are some guidelines for how many and what types of enemies to include in a typical conflict scene. These are only general guidelines, and many of the conflict scenes in the series included with **Spectaculars** do not adhere to these configurations. The best way to know if you have the right configuration of enemies for the challenge and duration that you want for the scene is to playtest it a few times and see if it meets your goals.

The most common configurations of enemies in conflict scenes include:

- ◆ For a short and low-challenge conflict scene featuring only minions, include a single squad of minions of a size equal to $2 \times$ the number of heroes.
- ◆ For a conflict scene of moderate length and difficulty, the most common combinations are:
 - ✧ A single squad of minions of a size equal to $2 \times$ the number of heroes, plus two minor villains with a single initiative card per villain and 100 resistance each. If you are including a minor villain who does not have their own villain sheet (such as minor villains who are more powerful, but still faceless, henchmen), also be sure to include information on their attacks and chances of success.
 - ✧ A group of minor villains, with initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.
 - ✧ A single villain, with initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.
- ◆ For a conflict scene of greater length and difficulty (typically a climactic scene of a multi-issue story arc), the most common combinations are:
 - ✧ A single villain, with initiative cards equal to the number of heroes, plus two squads of minions each of a size equal to $2 \times$ the number of heroes.
 - ✧ A group of minor villains, with initiative cards equal to the number of heroes, plus two squads of minions of a size equal to $2 \times$ the number of heroes.
 - ✧ A single major villain, with initiative cards equal to the number of heroes.

HOW DOES THE SCENE END?

The most common way for the scene to end is with the defeat of all enemies. However, if you include an objective in the scene, the scene might end when the objective is completed. Be sure to describe how the scene ends, as a reminder of when to draw things to a conclusion.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives provide an alternative conclusion or escalation point for the scene. Instead of a scene ending or changing when all the heroes or villains are defeated, an objective lets you create end or escalation conditions that rely on players or villains taking specific actions. Add an objective to a scene under the following conditions:

- ◆ There is something the villain wants to accomplish, or the heroes need to accomplish, in order for the scene to reach a conclusion or for the scene to change in some significant way.
- ◆ That thing requires multiple actions across multiple turns to accomplish.
- ◆ That thing is involved enough that a character needs to devote their full attention (i.e. action) on their turn in order to move closer to completion.

If the objective is for the bad guys only, it is an enemy complication. If the objective could be progressed by both the heroes and their enemies, and the two sides are racing to complete the objective first, it is an opposed objective.

The number of successful actions require to complete the objective varies, depending on how important the scene should be. For opening scenes or scenes of lesser consequence, three successful actions should be enough to complete the objective. For climactic scenes, five successful actions should be enough to complete the objective. If you want more than one hero working toward that objective at a time, add two more to the number of required successes.

COMPLICATIONS

Complications help ensure that your conflict scenes aren't just wall-to-wall slugfests with the heroes repeatedly attacking the villains and vice-versa. You can either make up your own complications, or draw cards from the Deck of Complications until you find one or more complications that suits your scene. Usually, you should consider adding one to two complications to any given scene, since they are a critical source of hero points during conflict scenes.

If the complication is such that destruction or death is inevitable without the heroes' intervention, make it a critical complication.

HAZARDS AND EVENTS

If there is something in the scene that happens with some regularity but is not within the control of either the heroes or the villains, consider adding a hazard or an event to the scene. If the thing that keeps happening is dangerous to the heroes, treat it as a hazard. If it merely changes some aspect of the scene, treat it as an event.

SCENE DETAILS

Most opening scenes include an entry for scene details. This is a place where you can list a small number of details, described such that the Narrator can pepper them throughout their description of the scene. In general, when creating these details, focus on two main types of details:

- ◆ Details that provide the Narrator with atmospheric elements designed to help immerse the players in the scene.
- ◆ Details that describe environmental elements and objects that the heroes can use when improvising creative attacks using their powers.

ESCALATION

Each scene can optionally include an escalation entry, which raises the stakes in the scene while fundamentally transforming it in some way. Usually, an escalation entry describes what happens if the heroes fail to stop the villains from completing an objective, but the scene continues. The stakes get raised, the situation gets more dangerous, and something momentous, cinematic, or catastrophic happens. Escalation entries can introduce new objectives, enemies, or complications, and may also change the conditions under which the scene ends.

Escalation entries are also a good way to give the heroes a second chance, which can be especially useful in scenes with objectives that only require three successes to complete. A bad turn of the initiative cards could put success out of the heroes' reach, and an escalation moment allows them to recover and rally to pull victory from the jaws of defeat. They also serve as a great place to introduce awe-inspiring spectacles or fundamental changes to the scene or even the setting as a whole: the collapse of a major landmark, the destruction of the heroes' vehicle or home base, or the kidnapping of a major nonhero character.

ROUNDING OUT THE SCENE

Beyond the above suggestions, here are a few things you can include to better tie your issue into a larger series or campaign, and to help players feel like the issue is a seamless part of their heroes' ongoing stories.

REFERENCE TEAM REPUTATION

Since a team's reputation tracks fluctuate based on hero actions, try to find one or more places where one of those reputation tracks can affect the scenario, either positively or negatively. This helps reinforce that the heroes' actions have long-term consequences.

REFERENCE LASTING REPERCUSSIONS

If there is a good place to do so, consider having a lasting repercussion affect the scenario in some way. If a hero participating in that scenario should benefit, or be harmed by, the effects of a lasting repercussion, or if

the presence of a hero with a certain lasting repercussion would affect a scene or a villain in some way, reference that lasting repercussion here.

For an issue intended for play by a more experienced group, especially one that has played through some number of issues from more than one series, consider referencing a lasting repercussion from another series entirely. This reinforces the interconnectedness of the various series and helps make your comic book universe seem more like those found in real comic book imprints.

INTERLUDE SCENES

After the opening scene, usually the heroes have an opportunity to engage in interlude scenes, which gives them some agency over how to address the villain’s plan or impending disaster. Having set the heroes on the track toward the issue’s struggle, now is the time when you should pull back and give the heroes the freedom to choose how they proceed. You can still offer suggestions for avenues the heroes might pursue, in the “What the Heroes Can Learn or Do” section.

Point toward the danger. Ultimately, these interlude scenes should point the heroes toward the core struggle at the heart of the issue. Offer suggested avenues of investigation that can lead the heroes to one of the steps in “The Villain’s Plan” or “The Sequence of Events.” Clever players who hit upon one of these topics should feel good about discovering a clue that leads them directly to the confrontation with the villain, so it’s perfectly acceptable for one of these suggested interlude scenes to lead the heroes directly to the villain. Even if this is the first avenue the heroes pursue, they may hold off on chasing down the villain or intervening in the hazard until they have more information.

Let the heroes learn about the scenario. There are a lot of details that, while described in the issue itself, become invisible to the heroes in the heat of the conflict. Give opportunities for heroes to learn more about the history and nature of people, places, events, and other major elements of the plot. This is also a great way to let the heroes learn more about villains, their capabilities, and their histories, which are difficult to integrate into fast-moving conflict scenes.

Draw upon setting elements. Though you need not go overboard with them, references to the setting elements from the Setting Book provide mid-session opportunities to use, or even define, major parts of the setting.

MULTI-ISSUE STORY ARCS

Though most issues are designed to stand alone, you can design multi-issue story arcs using most of the same techniques you would use for a single-issue story. When creating issues that are part of a larger arc:

- ◆ Your “Wrapping Up” section(s) can point to the next issue in the arc, if one exists.
- ◆ You should make the heroes aware of the arc’s ultimate villain before the final issue.
- ◆ Try to provide more opportunities for player-led interlude scenes across all issues.

WRAPPING UP

In the “Wrapping Up” section at the conclusion of the adventure, consider including the following elements to help weave your issue into the larger setting and series.

- ◆ If some event in the issue should leave its mark on a hero, and this mark is something that could affect the hero in a future issue, have the issue grant a lasting repercussion. You can make up one of your own or use one you find in another issue.
- ◆ If there are any issue-wide goals or actions that could affect how the heroes are perceived by the public, by the government, or by the media, include an adjustment to the relevant reputation track here.
- ◆ If there is a setting element that it would be appropriate to introduce at the conclusion of the issue, you can reference it in this section; if the players have not yet described that setting element, they will do so once they finish playing through the issue.

IMPROVISING AN ISSUE

While the preceding guidelines will help you create an issue in the same fashion as those included in the series pads, if you don’t have any chance to prepare in advance you can always run an issue where you improvise the plot and scenes as you go along. Here’s a brief step-by-step method you can use to create the skeleton of an issue in just a few moments, which you can flesh out more as you play.

STEP 1: PICK A VILLAIN

Choose a villain from your existing roster of villains to be the source of the issue’s core struggle. If you are improvising an issue, it’s easier to use a familiar villain instead of trying to create a new one. Try to pick a villain with obvious or associated henchmen.

STEP 2: PUT SOMEONE, SOMETHING, OR SOME PLACE IN DANGER

To create your opening scene, pick a place, a person, or a valuable object in danger from the villain’s henchmen. Pick an interesting location with lots of bystanders and fun things for the heroes to use in a fight. Decide why the villain’s henchmen attack this site: as a distraction; as a test of their technology, their magic, or their plan; as a means of taking out an obstacle to the villain’s plan; or as a means of obtaining something necessary for their plan.

STEP 3: SKETCH OUT A THREE-STEP PLAN

Figure out what the villain wants: ransom, destruction, loot, some object of power, a person’s death, fame, or changing the landscape in some way. Sketch out three basic steps the villain will take to achieve that goal, each one dependent on the previous step.

CREATING YOUR OWN SERIES

Just as you might wish to create your own individual issues, you can create entire series for your own **Spectaculars** game, or to share with other people. Once you know how to create your own issues, creating a series is relatively easy. For the most part, the story of a series plays out over the course of about a dozen issues, so most of your work involves charting out the flow of the series's story, where major plot beats will occur, and how the events of that series will impact your setting as a whole.

The first step to creating a series is to figure out what it is going to be about. This could be something as simple as picking a genre of superhero comics to emulate, or it could be your personal take on a comic book story arc that you are particularly fond of. Each of the series included with the **Spectaculars** game takes the genre-emulating route, but your series could be a riff on a classic comic book event or series: the death and return of a beloved hero, the struggle against a major villain who wants to reshape all reality with a snap of the fingers, or an ideological war between two groups of superheroes. Your goal is to come up with a short statement that clearly defines what your series is going to be about, which will help you establish the tone and start identifying important tropes that you'll want to include.

Next, go through the Setting Book and identify any setting elements and major characters that you think should be important to the story of your series, and jot those down. Later, when you are plotting out your series or crafting the individual issues, you can refer back to this list. You don't necessarily want to include every setting element in your series, but instead bring the players' focus onto a small number of them, allowing those setting elements to be major influences on the way that your heroes perceive the story of the series. To put it another way, just as some heroes take the spotlight from time to time, a series is a good opportunity for a small number of your setting elements to take the spotlight in your setting.

The last major thing you'll want to start thinking about is how your setting will be changed by this series. Not every change made by the events of this series needs to be world-shaking, but they should be world-shaping. You can use a series you design to give the players a chance to define a setting element they have not yet defined, or to give the heroes more chances to interact with a major Narrator character. The climactic issues of the series included in the **Spectaculars** game usually include the possibility that a setting element or major Narrator character could be changed in some way, or even destroyed. Thinking about how your series is going to leave the setting changed will help assure that the players feel there are real stakes to be played for.

PLOT OUT THE ISSUES

Once you know what the major themes and elements of your series will be, it's time to start plotting out the issues themselves. Usually, you approach this just like you would if you were plotting out a comic series with a dozen issues. You want your series to build to an exciting climax that rests on top of story beats you introduced earlier in the series, and you want the series's story to unravel slowly over its full course, so that the heroes don't get overwhelmed by the intensity of the story.

If it's likely that the players who will be playing through this series will be making entirely new heroes, it's usually a good idea to start off the series with one or two one-off issues designed to give players a chance to get a handle on their heroes or get more comfortable with the game as a whole. These one-offs will often include the seeds of later plot-advancing issues and are also a good place to introduce the players to some of the setting elements that are going to be important throughout the series.

Next, you should figure out roughly four major beats for the larger plot of the series. Usually these beats involve: the introduction of the core conflict of the series, a chance for the heroes to make their impact on that conflict, something that raises the stakes, and a climactic resolution. Each of these story beats should be told through a plot-advancing issue or a major story arc; the climactic resolution should be a major story arc that encompasses the final two or three issues of the series.

Between those major story beats, sprinkle in a few one-off issues. These issues give a chance for the heroes to be heroes without feeling like their every action is being judged on the scale of the entire series, and keep the series from feeling too plot-heavy.

PLOT-ADVANCING ISSUES

A plot-advancing issue is a single issue that directly ties into the overarching plot of the series. Standalone issues that advance the plot are a good place to introduce a villain, group of minions, setting element, or major Narrator character for the first time in the series. The focus of the entire issue can be on introducing that important element of the series, giving it the spotlight time it needs without getting lost in the story of a multi-issue arc. Additionally, plot-advancing issues are a good place to introduce lasting repercussions that will pay off in later issues, or simply a place where you can remind the heroes about something from an earlier issue that will be important in the climactic arc.

THE NOTECARD TECHNIQUE

One method you can use for creating a new series is the notecard technique. This is the technique that the designers of this game used to create the issues included in its series, and it can make plotting out a series a little easier to manage.

First, you get a stack of notecards or sticky notes, or some other small pieces of paper to write on, along with several different-colored pens or markers. Assign a color to each of the following: setting elements and major Narrator characters, villains (either specific villains, or just archetypes of villains), issues (or, more accurately, ideas for the core conflicts in an issue), and flourishes (representing things like new hero archetypes and team rosters). Next, just brainstorm things that you think you would like to see appear in the series. Write those things on your notecards in the appropriate color, jotting down the ideas as they come to you. Don't think too hard about this part, and instead let your instincts and knowledge of comic book heroes provide you with inspiration. When you are done, you should have a stack of cards containing all the elements necessary to create a series.

Spread all those notecards out on a table. Then, start looking for connections. Look for villains who would go well with issue ideas. Look for issue ideas that could be grouped together to form multi-issue story arcs. Look for setting elements and major Narrator characters that would work well in the context of one of your issue ideas. Each time you find a good connection, put those notecards together. Each of those small stacks represents a single issue or a multi-issue story arc.

Then, start arranging these smaller stacks into a line, representing the progression through the series. Identify single issues that can be plot-advancing issues, and then arrange them and the multi-issue story arcs so that they create a string of story beats culminating in the climactic arc. Any remaining issues can then be scattered between these issues, acting as the one-offs for pacing purposes. When you are done, you should have a timeline of issues that represents your series, and you can then start fleshing out the individual issues.

MAJOR STORY ARCS

Major story arcs are two- or three-issue arcs of connected issues, intended to be played back-to-back. Major story arcs are a good place to play out significant story beats in the series. They give ample time for the story of that arc to unfold and will help you keep from feeling rushed when trying to make those issues both impactful and exciting. If you are going to introduce a major villain into the series, a major story arc is the place to do so. Major story arcs are also a good place to introduce new hero archetypes, since the first issues of the arc might debut setting elements that can naturally be represented by the new character archetype.

ONE-OFFS

One-offs are single issues that don't advance the series's ongoing story in a major way. They are usually a chance for the heroes to have adventures that are exciting and dangerous, but don't have much in the way of lasting impact. These issues are palate cleansers that give the heroes a chance to be heroes without worrying about how everything ties into the larger series plot. After each multi-issue story arc, try to include a one-off issue, which will offer the heroes a refreshing change of pace before diving back into the series plot.

VILLAIN AND MINION SHEETS

If you are creating your series just for your personal use, you can always use existing minions and villains (either ones you have already created for other series, or villain archetypes you have not yet used but will create during the course of playing through this series). For a series meant for other people to run, you probably want to include some new minion and villain sheets that other Narrators can use to create their own villains. If you want to create entirely new villain or minion types for your series, you can follow these basic steps:

- ◆ Come up with a name for this type of villain or minion, usually one or two words that distills the essence of that enemy's themes, motifs, and capabilities down to an easily understandable phrase. Look at the existing villain and minion sheets for some examples of how they are named.
- ◆ Create multiple-choice questions (three for villains, four for minions) and their answers that describe the nature of the enemy. Each question should be something that provokes the Narrator to come up with details about the villain's or minions' history, motivations, motifs, or capabilities. When crafting the suggested answers, think about the bad guys from popular comics that might fit your villain or minion archetype, and create answers that would be the ones you would choose if you were creating them.
- ◆ Comb through the other villain and minion sheets and pick out perks and weaknesses that would fit this villain or minion type. Again, a good technique is to pick out perks and weaknesses that you would choose if you were trying to create a specific villain or group of bad guys using this sheet.

FLOURISHES AND DETAILS

Once you have created the issues and villains for your series, all that remains is to fill out the rest of the series with small flourishes and details that can be found in other **Spectaculars** series. Look for a few places throughout your series where you can sprinkle in a few of the following details:

- ◆ Including a new hero archetype is a good way to make the series feel like it has a more lasting impact on the setting, since a hero created with that archetype can be directly tied to events the players experienced.
- ◆ If it's likely that the players will create entirely new heroes to play through the series, you can include a team roster sheet for a team that fits in with the themes and tropes of your series.
- ◆ If you need to guarantee that a particular issue from another series has been played before starting an issue in this one, include a STOP page like those in the other series included with the game.

DOWNLOAD THE DIGITAL CREATOR PACK

When you are ready to start creating your own game content, you can visit <http://scratchpadpublishing.com/spectaculars> to download the **Spectaculars Digital Creator Pack**, containing hi-res art, icons, and templates for almost every element found in the **Spectaculars** game, available for free.

OPTIONAL RULES

While **Spectaculars** is designed to provide you with easy-to-run issues and rules and content meant to require little to no effort to prepare for, as you become more comfortable with the game you may want to modify the game's rules to better fit your play style. This is not just okay; it's encouraged! This section details a number of optional rules you can use to change the way the game works. You should not feel limited to these optional rules, however; feel free to make your own rules changes beyond those suggested here.

HERO CREATION

NONRANDOM CHARACTER CREATION

Some players may feel restricted by the randomness of dealing out cards for powers and identities during hero creation. Instead of dealing out power and identity cards to each player, you can instead let each player go through the decks of cards to pick out their powers. If you choose to use this method, hand the full Deck of Powers to one player, and the Deck of Identities to another. The players can go through the decks and pick out the powers and identities they want for their heroes, then pass the remaining cards in each deck to the player to their left.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Hero creation will take significantly longer.
- ◆ Some players will sit idle while other players are looking through the decks.
- ◆ Players have a much higher degree of control over which powers they have access to and can more easily create powerful combinations of abilities.

DEALING WITH TOO-POWERFUL HEROES

With less randomness during hero creation, you are more likely to run into heroes who have been built for optimal power. Most of the time, this shouldn't be a problem, but occasionally you may run into a case where a particular hero's power level is so high that it becomes disruptive, either by trivializing enemies or by making it difficult for other players to feel like they are contributing equally. When this happens, you have a few options for how to handle the situation.

- ◆ First, try simply speaking with that hero's player and asking them how they would like to deal with the situation.
- ◆ You can allow the player to immediately choose a revamp reward without having to earn a story reward, letting them change the hero to reduce their disruptiveness.
- ◆ You can reduce the hero's Hero Points per Conflict by 1 to compensate for their higher-than-normal power.

USING ALL THE CARDS AT ONCE

Some players may not like that all possible hero creation options are not available to them using the standard character creation methods. Instead of building the Deck of Powers using the Common powers and additional powers based on the series you are playing, you can simply combine all the power cards (except for the Basic powers) together, forming a single 85-card deck. You can do the same with the Deck of Identities, combining all of them together to create an 85-card deck.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Some powers and identities that hero players choose might not gel tonally with the series you are playing through.
- ◆ Larger decks will be harder to shuffle and handle at the table.

BIG TEAMS

In comics, some superhero teams are so large that they are divided into smaller sub-teams, often with their own designations. To emulate this, you can allow players to create larger-than-normal teams. Each time you create a new team of heroes, each player creates two heroes. At the start of an issue featuring that team, each player chooses one of those heroes to play.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Creating a team of heroes will take longer.
- ◆ Players may be less attached to individual heroes during a series.
- ◆ Heroes may progress more slowly due to less frequent appearances.

CONFLICT SCENES

TURN-BY-TURN INITIATIVE CARD REVEALS

For more uncertainty in how turn order will play out in a given round, the Narrator lays out the initiative track with initiative cards face-down. Whenever the next turn comes up, the Narrator flips the next initiative card face-up, revealing the character or event that will take the turn. When using these rules, all other mechanics that refer to face-down initiative cards should be treated instead as pertaining to face-up initiative cards, and vice-versa.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Players will have less ability to plan their actions in advance, which could slow down individual turns.
- ◆ The heroes will find it more difficult to coordinate their actions tactically.

SNAKE INITIATIVE

For a more predictable turn order method, at the end of each round, instead of shuffling the initiative deck, simply turn all initiative cards face-up. Then, turn order plays out in the reverse of the previous round, starting with the initiative cards closest to the previous round's end of the initiative track and proceeding toward the previous round's start of the initiative track. Continue to alternate the direction of turn order each round.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Each hero and villain gets to act more predictably, with an equitable distribution of turns across multiple rounds.
- ◆ Initiative cards closer to the start or end of the track will have longer guaranteed wait times between their turns.
- ◆ Heroes and villains might get to take multiple turns in a row, resulting in battles that swing quickly in one side's favor.

IMPROVISED POWER STUNTS

Many powers have built-in power stunts, but certain descriptions of some other powers might seem to justify the use of power stunts not found on the card. As the Narrator, when a player describes a use of a power that seems like it would be best resolved by using a power stunt, you can allow that hero's player to spend 1 hero point (🎲) and use the power stunt as though it was on the card. That player should also place time tokens on the power; you can use the number of time tokens usually required by other cards with that power stunt to determine how many time tokens that player should place.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Players may try to argue to specific power stunt uses more often.
- ◆ The Narrator needs to make more frequent rulings on which power stunt should be used to resolve a power.
- ◆ Players may feel like choosing an individual power for its power stunts matters less, since they are now less restricted.

EASIER SPOTLIGHTS

In long-running campaigns, where you play through multiple issues in a series with the same heroes, different heroes should take the spotlight from time to time, though it won't be an every-issue occurrence. If, however, you are playing a single issue with new players, or players who aren't likely to play another session soon, you can make it easier for a hero to take the spotlight, increasing the chances that it will happen during that session. Instead of requiring a hero to roll 4 boons (👑👑👑👑), you can require a hero to roll 3 boons (👑👑👑) to take the spotlight.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Heroes will take the spotlight more often, and will be overall more powerful than they would be otherwise.

HERO POINTS

SHARED HERO POINT POOL

To make heroic moments more of a shared endeavor, you can use this optional rule. Instead of each hero having their own hero points per conflict, all hero points are shared among all players. Any hero can give any number of their hero points to another hero at any time.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Players will have more opportunity to tactically coordinate their hero point usage, making team role cards more potent.
- ◆ Players may be less tempted to spend time dealing with noncritical complications, especially if one hero contributes many hero points.
- ◆ The Inspiring Presence story reward should not be chosen.

PURELY EARNED HERO POINTS

Instead of assuming that all heroes have hero points at their disposal, this optional rule requires heroes to earn their hero points through heroic actions, treating those hero points purely as a reward for acting heroically instead of a basic hero resource. When you use this rule, a hero's Hero Points per Conflict represents the maximum number of hero points they can have at any given time. All heroes start each session with 0 hero points, and they do not gain any hero points automatically at the start of a conflict scene. Heroes earn hero points only by progressing complications and objectives; however, they gain 2 hero points (🎲🎲) each time they do so, instead of only 1.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Players will have fewer hero points at their disposal, and team role cards will be less potent.
- ◆ Players may race with each other to progress complications and objectives, leaving heroes who act later in the initiative low on hero point options.

PROGRESSION

REVAMPING AT ANY TIME

If you want to give players more freedom to modify their heroes as they see fit, you can allow players to change their powers and identity between issues. This will allow them to adjust their characters to their liking, without having to spend a story reward choice on the change.

IF YOU IMPLEMENT THIS OPTIONAL RULE...

- ◆ Revamp rewards will not be appealing to most players.
- ◆ Players might not have as solid a grasp on what other heroes on their team are capable of due to frequent revamps.

RULES REFERENCE

CREATING A HERO

Create a new hero to play by following these steps:

- ◆ Choose a hero archetype, and answer the multiple-choice questions on the front side of the sheet to start describing your hero.
- ◆ Draw 5 cards from the Deck of Powers, and choose between 1 and 3 of them; at least one power must be your superpower.
- ◆ Draw 3 cards from the Deck of Identities, and choose 1.
- ◆ Give your hero a name and a superhero moniker.
- ◆ Fill in the "First Appearance" line with the series name and issue number of the issue you are about to play.
- ◆ Choose a Team Role card. You can choose a different one each session, if you so choose.

Additionally, you determine your Hero Points per Conflict number. This number is equal to the number of hero point icons (🎲) visible on your power cards or open power card slots, plus 1 (represented by the hero point icon in the bottom-right box of the archetype sheet).

ROLLING THE DICE

When the Narrator asks a player to make a roll, follow these rules:

- ◆ The player rolls percentile dice, plus any advantage dice (🎲) or challenge dice (🎲) the Narrator added to the roll.
 - ✧ Rolled boons (👤) and drawbacks (🔥) cancel each other out on a one-for-one basis.
- ◆ If the player rolls equal to or under the chosen skill or power's chance of success, the player succeeds in what they are trying to do.
 - ✧ If the roll was an attack, the damage the attack deals is the number rolled.
- ◆ If the player rolls above the chosen skill's chance of success, the roll is a failure.

DAMAGE AND RESISTANCE

When a hero or enemy succeeds on an attack, they deal damage equal to the number rolled on the dice. When you take any amount of damage, you reduce your current resistance by that amount. If you take damage greater than the amount of resistance you have, reduce your resistance to 0. When you have 0 resistance, you are typically knocked out of the scene and unable to participate in it any longer.

At the end of each scene, all heroes regain all their lost resistance.

ON YOUR TURN

When it is your turn, you do the following:

- ◆ Remove 1 time token (🕒) from each of your power cards that has one. (You cannot make attacks or checks with a power that has any time tokens on it, or use any of its benefits that requires you to place more time tokens on it.)
- ◆ Move and take one action, in any order.

MOVING

When you move, describe how you are moving, and if you are moving closer or farther away from a person or object, you move one distance category closer or farther from them (see below).

DISTANCES

There are three distances between things in a scene:

- ◆ **Up Close:** You can make melee and ranged attacks against enemies you are up close to. Add 1 advantage die (👤) to all melee attack rolls.
- ◆ **Near:** You can make ranged attacks against enemies that you are near to.
- ◆ **Far Away:** You can make ranged attacks against enemies you are far away from, adding 1 challenge die (🎲) to the roll.

TAKING ACTIONS

For your action, describe something you want your hero to do. Common examples of actions include:

- ◆ Attacking a villain or a squad of minions
- ◆ Using a power or skill to progress an objective or complication
- ◆ Activating a power that requires an action

SPENDING HERO POINTS

You can spend hero points (🎲) in the following ways:

- ◆ **Heroic Effort:** After you roll dice, you can spend any number of hero points; increase your chance of success on that roll by 10 and add 1 challenge die (🎲) to the roll for each point spent.
- ◆ **Teamwork Maneuver:** You can spend 1 hero point (🎲) to perform a teamwork maneuver you describe with another hero, adding 2 advantage dice (👤👤) to their roll.
- ◆ **Team Role:** Use your team role's benefit.