# Wearing the Cape

## The Roleplaying Game

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# Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Marion G. Harmon

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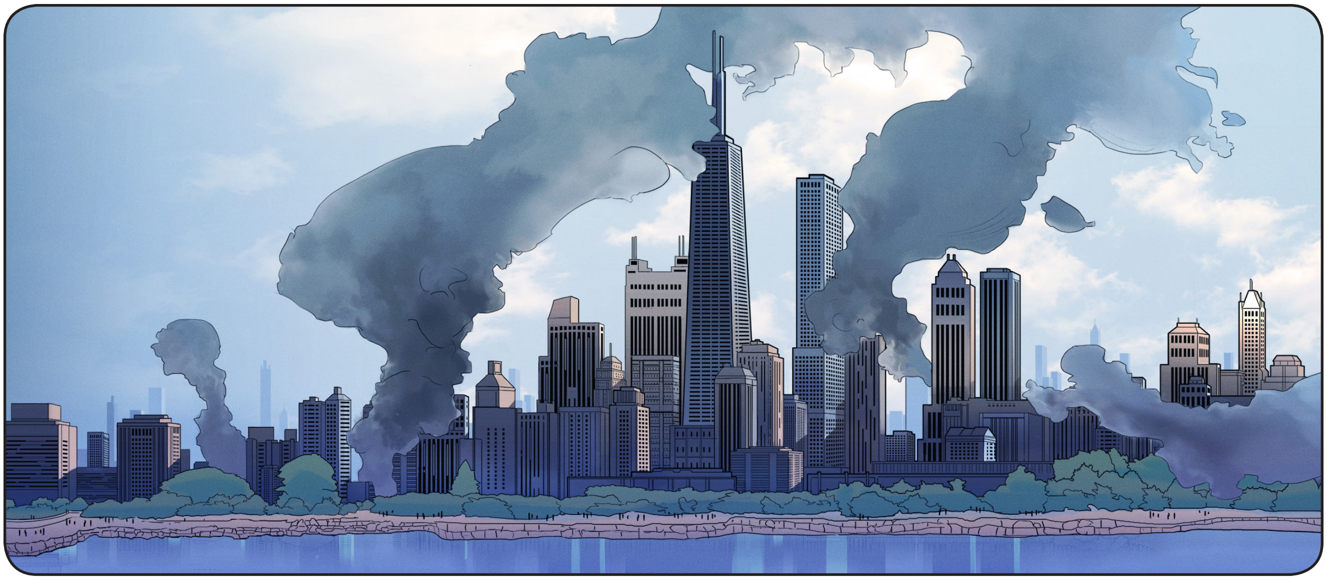
# 1

# THE NEW HEROIC AGE



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

—Prof. Charles Gibbons, **The New Heroic Age**

# The Event

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

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

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

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

Which didn't make them any less scary.

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

It was a brave new world.

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

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

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

—Anonymous Blogger

# A New World

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

—Prof. Charles Gibbons, **The New Heroic Age**

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

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

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

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

## Classifying Breakthrough Powers

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

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

### Power Types

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

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

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

### Power Classes

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

The ratings run from D Class (not much above normal human ability in terms of strength, and equal to civilian weapons in terms of damage) to A Class (able to bench-press tanks and maybe toss them a few yards, or able deal damage equal to military artillery). C Class durability means immunity to most small-arms fire, while A Class durability means being able to survive direct hits from field artillery. Speed, in the case of flight and other movement-enabling powers, has a similar scale. Outside of strength and the ability to inflict and survive damage or run fast, the classes describe such things as depth and breadth of power (see the previous *Barlow's Guide* electrokinetic entry). This can be very subjective.

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

## Unclassifiable Powers

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

# Post-Event History

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The China War

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

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

China fell apart and the CPC managed to hold on to only a wide strip of northern China around Beijing, from Laioning to Shandong on the east coast to Hubei and Gansu in central China. The rest, including a recreated Manchuria, declared independence and was recognized by the UN. Staring at a humanitarian crisis of indescribable proportions, the Sentinels and many of the US's fledgling superteams sent heroes to China to keep the worst fighting out of its urban centers and get aid to the shattered and in many cases starving regions.

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

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

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

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

## The Rise and Fall of the Caliphate

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### OTHER COUNTRIES

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

## Breakthroughs and the Balance of Power

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

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

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

# The Post-Event World

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

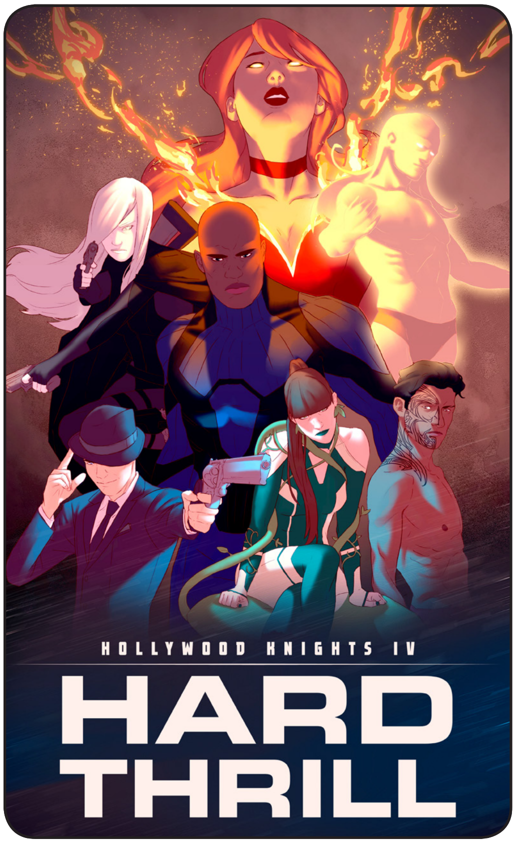
Just two years after the Event, Crooner—a sound-controlling breakthrough—sang at the Emmys to celebrate the win of the first Sentinels movie, *Day One*. The music industry went nuts and started a talent-search that turned up Burnout, a pyrokinetic with a growly voice and a lot of attitude. The rivalry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

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

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

## Hollywood Heroes

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



### Superhero Conventions

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

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

### Origin Chasers

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

Psychologists blame Cape Envy for the rising trend of origin-chasing. For thousands of people, life has no purpose if you aren't a cape. "Breakthrough management" is a multimillion dollar industry, one riddled with fraud. Every year thousands of hopefuls attend Stress Camps and undergo a punishing physical training regimen in hopes of triggering a breakthrough. Others attend seminars purporting to help them achieve "softer" breakthroughs through meditation, yogic practices, etc. Some take psychoactive drugs (completely illegal), hoping to trigger theirs. And hundreds die every year courting sudden-death situations they believe will bring out their destined gifts. Origin-chaser deaths are mostly teens, with the next largest group being 20-30, and they are a tragic statistic.

> *Every concentration of power creates its own opposition, whether that power is military, political, monetary, or social. Opposition groups may or may not be violent, largely depending upon their aims and whether or not they believe the political environment favors them. Citizen-militia groups existed previous to the Event, and their membership has grown in the wake of each superhuman-caused disaster.*
>
> —Department of Superhuman Affairs,
> **Threat Assessment 10.4, Summary**

## Anti-Superhero Groups

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

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

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

# Law and Politics

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

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

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

## *Secret Identities and the Law*

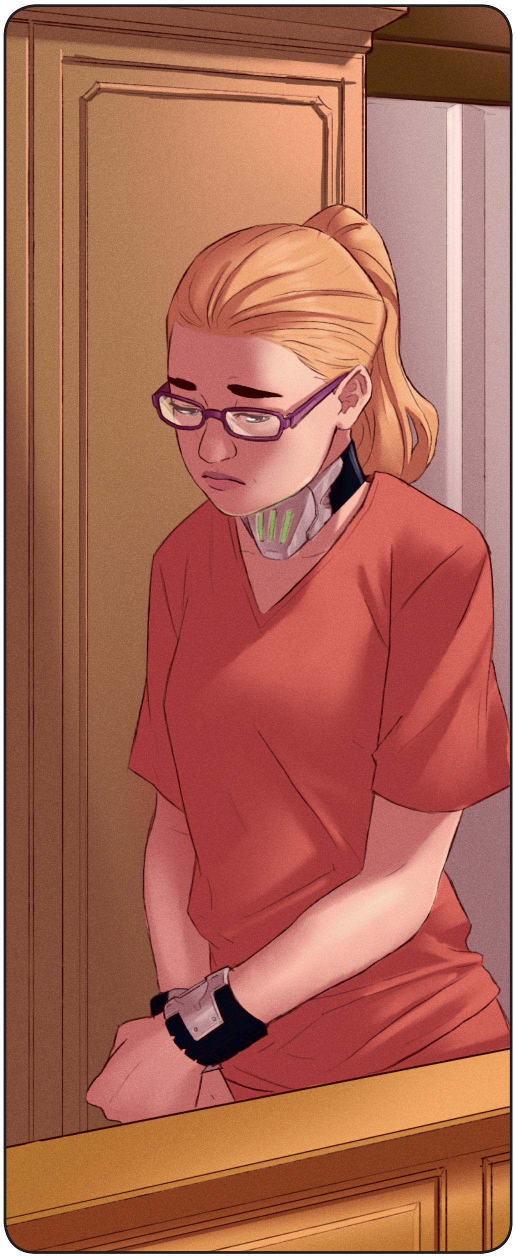
The right of the accused to confront his accuser is enshrined in constitutional law. It is a basic civil right, and in many states this precludes a superhero with a secret identity from testifying in court. Since the state can compel a person's testimony except on grounds of self-incrimination, this puts secret identities in legal jeopardy. Criminal charges and lawsuits can do the same. Some states solve this with Mask Laws which allow masked superheroes to register their true identities with the DSA and enjoy full privacy; they essentially establish a second, fully legal, public identity. Other states have created Anti-Mask Laws, making the wearing of a mask in public a misdemeanor, and refusal to remove one at the request of law enforcement officials a felony!

## Reasonable Restraint

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

## Law Enforcement and Accountability

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



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

### AFTER-ACTION REPORTS AND REVIEW BOARDS

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

# Real-World Supervillains

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

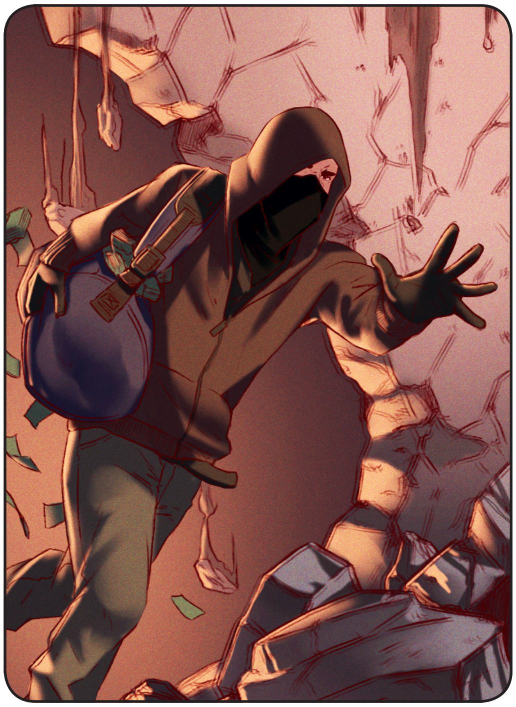
*Supervillain* is a blanket media term for any superhuman criminal or terrorist; capes usually shorten it to "villain," so the Old English word is in common use again. In the comics, every superhero has his "rogue's gallery" of supervillain nemeses—after all, he has to fight *somebody* every month. By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

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

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

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

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



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

## Professional Villains

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

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

# **Astra** ~ Hope Corrigan

## Power Aspect

A Class Atlas-Type

## Hero Aspect

Atlas' Teen Sidekick

## Trouble

Uncertain Newbie Hero

## Background Aspect

Blueblood Child of Privilege

## Background Aspect

"I look like an underdeveloped teenage Tinkerbell."

## Stress & Consequences

*Physical Stress*

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐

*Mental Stress*

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐

*Consequences*

__________ 2

__________ 4

__________ 6

*(Physical Only)*

__________ 2

__________ 4

__________ 6

*Resource Stress*

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

*Resource Consequence*

__________ 4

## Attributes

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

## Skills

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

## Resources

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fair (+2) | **Reputation** | Average (+1) | **Wealth** | Good (+3) | **Contacts** |

## Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

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

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

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

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

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

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

**STARTING FATE POINTS: 2**

## Profile

### Breakthrough Powers

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

### History

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

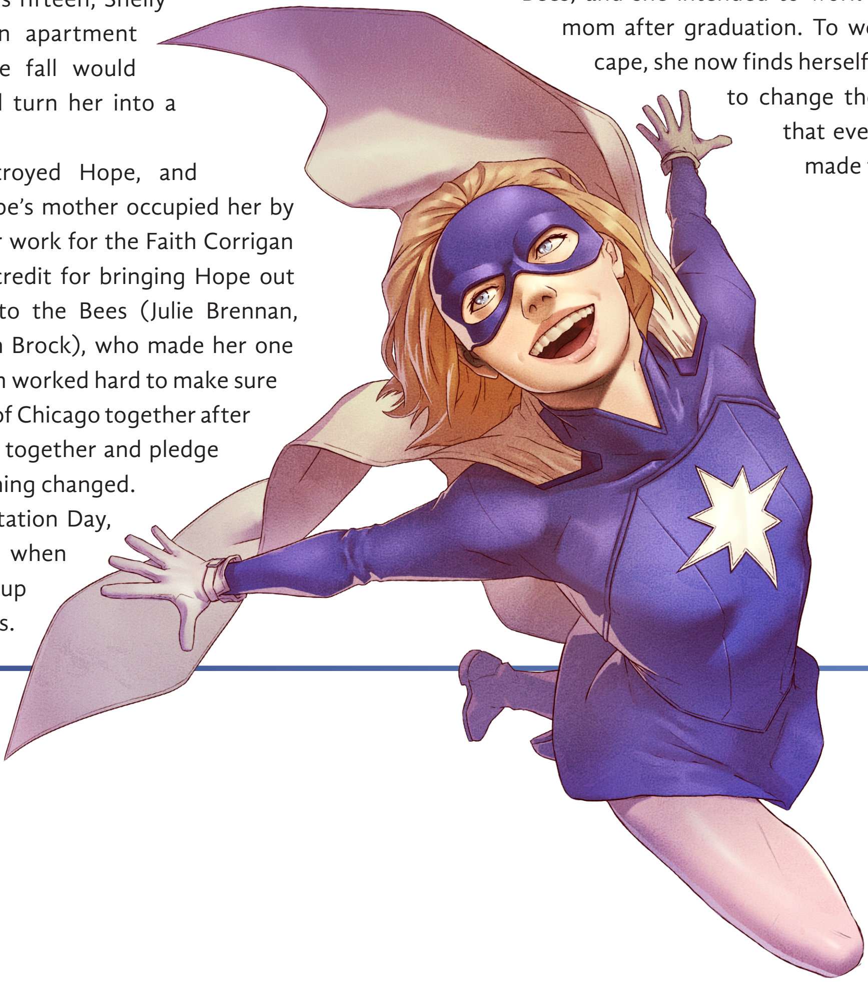
Entering their teen years, Hope and Shelly fell into a cape obsession complete with childhood crushes focused on celebrity capes like Burnout, Volt, Atlas, and the boys of No Fear. For Hope it was more about the cute guys and the costumes, but Shelly was obsessed with breakthrough powers and became convinced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

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

Just one week before Orientation Day, Hope was driving into town when the Teatime Anarchist blew up the Ashland Avenue Overpass. The Anarchist got his target, an anti-breakthrough US Senator being driven to a conference, but the explosion also buried Hope and others under the rubble of the overpass. The explosion and the trauma and panic of being trapped in her car triggered Hope's breakthrough, gifting her with superhuman strength, durability, and stamina, as well as heightened senses and the power of flight. The Chicago Sentinels found Hope digging through the rubble for more survivors, and invited her to join the team as Astra and train to be a superhero.

### Appearance and Personality

Now eighteen, Hope remains petit and pixyish (in her words "an underdeveloped teenage Tinkerbell"). She prefers to like others, tries to see the best in people, and is, in a word, hopeful. She was raised Catholic and is devout, and working for her mother further shaped her into a classical society debutante to the point where she can't even swear without feeling guilty. Her religious and family upbringing has given Hope a strong sense of responsibility, but she prefers to be a follower; she followed Shelly, then helped Julie and the Bees, and she intended to work for her mom after graduation. To wear the cape, she now finds herself having to change the plans that everybody made for her.



# **Artemis** ~ Jacqueline Siggler

## Power Aspect

Fiend of The Night (Supernatural/ C Class Transformer)

## Hero Aspect

Hooded Mystery

## Trouble

Secret Vampire

## Background Aspect

Ruthless Fighter

## Background Aspect

Keeps her streets safe.

## Stress & Consequences

*Physical Stress*

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐

*Mental Stress*

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐

*Consequences (Phys/Mental)*

____________ **2**

____________ **4**

____________ **6**

*Resource Stress*

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

*Resource Consequence*

____________ **4**

## Attributes

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

## Skills

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Great (+4) | **Provoke** | Fair (+2) | **Shoot** |
| Great (+4) | **Rapport** | Fair (+2) | **Survival** |
| Good (+3) | **Stealth** | Average (+1) | **Aid** |
| Fair (+2) | **Fight** | Average (+1) | **Larceny** |
| Fair (+2) | **Investigate** | | |

## Resources

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average (+1) | **Reputation** | Average (+1) | **Wealth** | Average (+1) | **Contacts** |

## Attribute Bonuses / Power Stunts / Extras

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

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

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

***Rise to Mist.*** Artemis uses Willpower to create the ***Mist Form*** Advantage (this allows her to take an Action to transform without spending a Fate Point).

***Into the Night.*** Artemis can change into mist quickly enough to React with Willpower if she sees an Attack coming.

***Superhuman Recovery.*** Artemis may spend 1 Fate Point to recover from all Physical Stress during a Scene.

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

***Hooded Menace.*** Artemis gains a +2 to Provoke when wearing her masked and hooded costume.

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

**Starting Fate Points: 6**

## Profile

### Breakthrough Powers

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

### History

In high school, Jacky had been one of the It Girls; her family wasn't wealthy or connected, but Jacky had been athletic, pretty, and smart, which translated into being part of the cheerleading squad and exclusive in-crowd. She'd also apparently had a fan she'd never noticed—a budding sociopath emo-goth boy who'd become convinced that he was a vampire and Jacky was the eternal mate of his dark soul. A few years after their graduation, he killed himself in a dark ritual meant to "free his vampire soul from the weakness of his flesh." He should have died, but instead it triggered his supernatural breakthrough and after spending some time preparing his lair, he tricked his way into Jacky's house, slaughtered her parents and the family dog, and kidnapped her—using his mesmeric power to turn her into his slave while he drank her blood and made her taste his. When she died of hypothermia and blood loss two weeks later, she rose as a vampire as well.

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

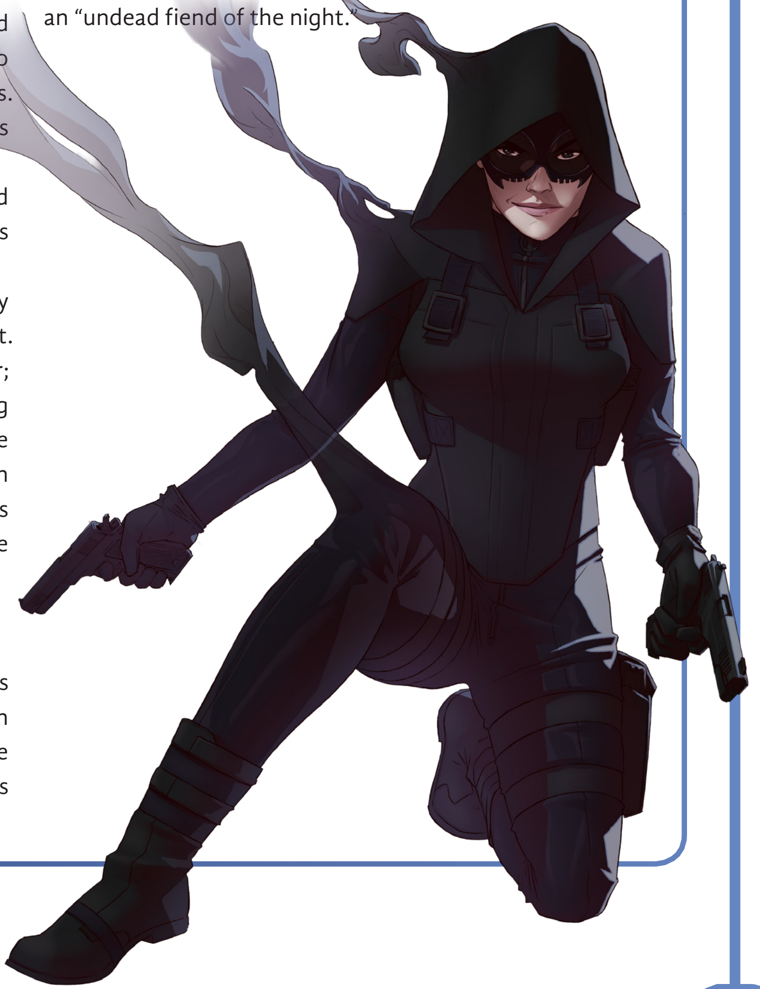
Jacky *hates* being a vampire, and hides what she is by always wiping her blood donors' memories of the event. She plays the role of a dark vigilante to the hilt, however; everyone expects dark vigilantes to work at night. Living in the basement of her parent's boarded up house on the south side of Chicago, she patrols her neighborhood when darkness falls; none of the local gangs recruit or do business on her streets—if they do anything out of line during the day, she finds out about it and makes night a terrifying time wherever they are. She never kills anybody, but she can show up any time after dark, anywhere. She also uses her stealthy mist-form to infiltrate gang bases, plant bugs or take pictures, and leave the evidence in envelopes on police detective's desks. She was an urban myth the police resolutely refuse to give credit to, since she made their jobs easier and she didn't do anything they couldn't ignore.

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

### Appearance and Personality

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

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



# Campaign Example Chicago Sentinels

## Campaign Setting

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

## Campaign Dials

| | |
|---|---|
| Power Class | A |
| Skill Pyramid | +5 |
| Starting Fate Points | 14 |

## Current Issues

*In the Cross-Hairs of the Public Eye.*

## Impending Issues

*Rising Supervillain Crime.*

## Faces & Places

**Name:** Chicago
**Issues/Aspects:** *Real-World Metropolis.*

**Name:** The Dome
**Issues/Aspects:** *Tougher than Fort Knox.*
*Has one of everything.*

**Name:** Southside
**Issues/Aspects:** *Rival Villain Gangs.*

**Name:** The Fortress
**Issues/Aspects:** *The Club For Cape-Chic.*
*Everybody Comes There.*

**Name:** Terry Reinhold
**Issues/Aspects:** *Go-To Citywatch Reporter.*

**Name:** Andrew's Designs
**Issues/Aspects:** *Cape Couturers.*
*On Permenent Retainer.*

**Name:**
**Issues/Aspects:**

**Name:**
**Issues/Aspects:**

## Campaign Notes

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

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

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

# 3

# PLAY OVERVIEW

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

—**CHICAGO SENTINELS TRAINING MANUAL**

# Getting Started

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### TO BE *REALLY* PREPARED, YOU MIGHT WANT THESE:

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

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

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

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

## A Little *Wearing the Cape* Terminology

We have already mentioned GMs and players, and player characters (PCs) and non-player characters (NPCs). There are a few terms used in *Wearing the Cape: the Roleplaying Game* (hereafter abbreviated as *WtC: RPG*) that are handy to know going into this section.

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

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

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

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

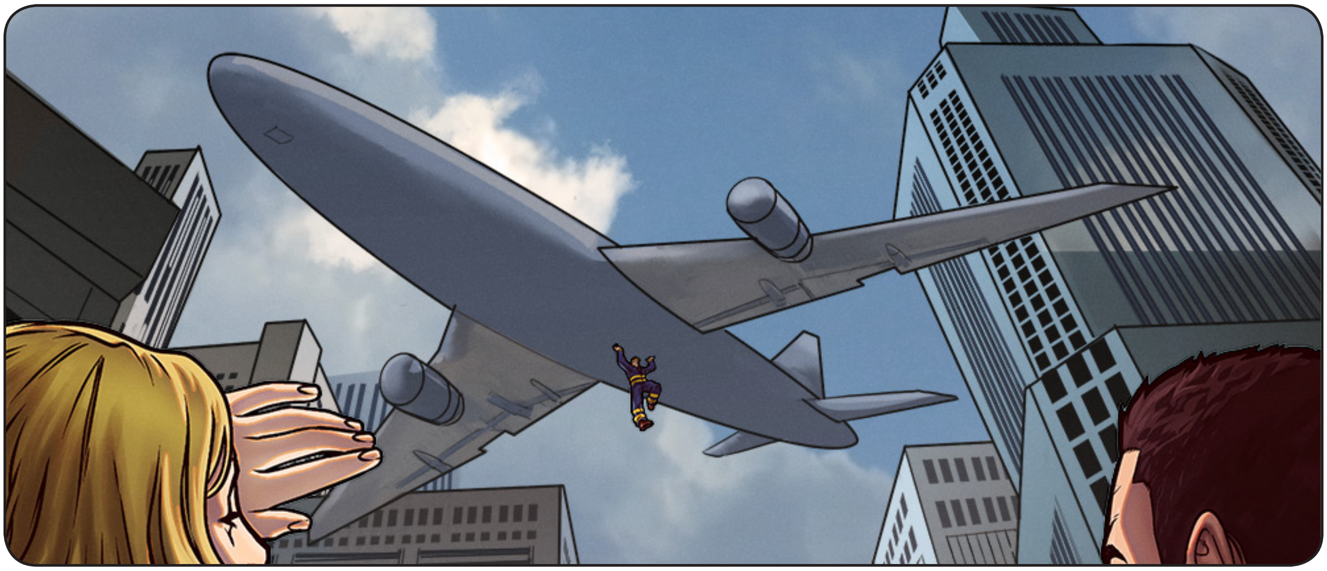
**Turn:** Each player's turn, in which his character does something which may or may not require an Action. When each character—PC or NPC—has had a turn, the next round begins. Turns (and rounds) do not take any measured period of time; they run on *narrative time*. Turn-time moves faster in a fight,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

## Reading This Chapter

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

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

Ready?



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

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

# The Scene

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

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

## Situation Aspects

When the GM presents a scene to the players, he will usually name three to five **Situation Aspects** significant to the scene. Situation Aspects can be **physical features of a scene**; in the scene above, we have ***Tall Buildings*** and ***Clear Skies***. They can be **dynamic situations** the heroes want to do something about, such as a ***Falling Passenger Jet***. They can be **obstacles**, like ***Crowded Streets***. *Situation Aspects come and go, and often change rapidly in the course of a scene.*

## Character Aspects

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

> *For example, looking at Astra's Cape File (p.50), her Character Aspects are:* ***A Class Atlas-Type***, ***Atlas' Teen Sidekick***, ***Uncertain Newbie Hero***, ***Blueblood Child of Privilege***, *and* ***"I look like an underdeveloped teenage Tinkerbell."***

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

# Gaming with Aspects

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

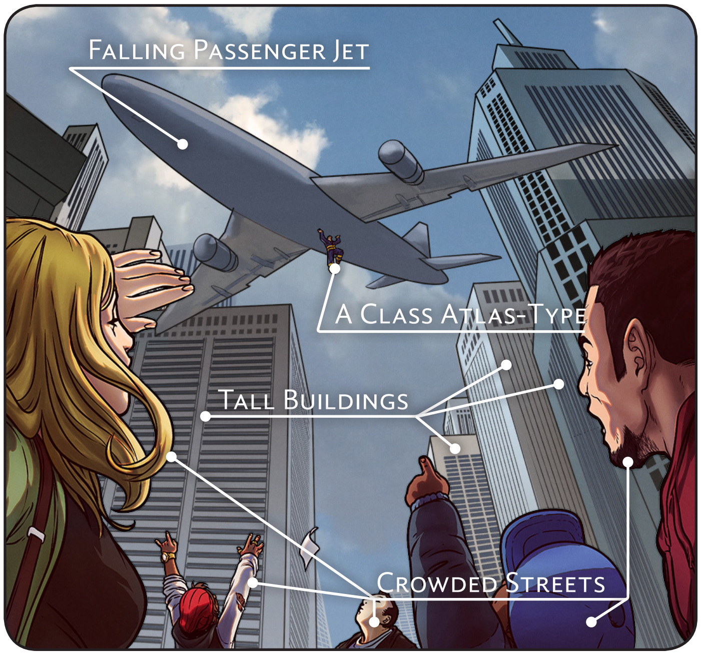
## Aspects Describe What's Important

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

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

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

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



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

## Aspects Can Always Change

Scenes are fluid. Many Situation Aspects in play at the beginning of a scene will be changed or gone by the end of a scene, and new Aspects may be in play. *How* they change is often dictated by the results of player's choices. The scene above is hardly static: if Atlas brings the plane down safely it will change the ***Falling Passenger Jet*** Situation Aspect into a ***Downed Passenger Jet*** Situation Aspect. If he *fails*, the GM may decide to change it to a ***Crashed and Burning Passenger Jet*** Situation Aspect. If Minuteman is successful, his player may turn ***Crowded Streets*** into ***Cleared Street*** where the jet will be set down (or make a crater). Changed Aspects can continue to evolve or even create more Aspects; for example, the ***Crashed and Burning Passenger Jet*** may explode unless the heroes do something about the ***Burning*** part of the Aspect, creating the ***Streets Aflame*** Situation Aspect.

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

## Other Aspects

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

## Aspect Difficulty

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

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

So the GM assigns the ***Falling Passenger Jet*** a +10 Difficulty Rating. Other examples of assigned Difficulty Ratings are:

**EXAMPLE DIFFICULTY**

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

***Cutting Edge Cyber-Security System***. "Cutting Edge" implies the newest and strongest protection, justifying a +6 or higher Difficulty Rating against attempts to hack the system.

***Bunker Wall***. Designed to withstand artillery fire, the wall of the bunker will probably have a +8 or higher Difficulty Rating against attempts to penetrate it.

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

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

***NO MASKED CAPES! Media Campaign***. The Difficulty Rating would represent the campaign's popularity.

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

## Created Situation Aspects

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

### A MILLION ASPECTS

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

## Using Aspects

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

## Invoking Aspects

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

> *Atlas' player wants to catch the* ***FALLING PASSENGER JET*** *and bring it down in a controlled crash without landing it on anybody. The GM says that the* ***CROWDED STREETS*** *are going to make that hard to do; when Atlas makes the attempt he could invoke the Aspect to add a +2 to the* ***FALLING PASSENGER JET'S*** *+10 DR! But if Minuteman cleared the way first, changing the* ***CROWDED STREETS*** *Scene Aspect into* ***CLEARED STREET*** *where the plane is coming down, then Atlas' player could invoke the changed Scene Aspect to take the +2 bonus for himself.*
>
> *Also in the same scene, Atlas' player could invoke his* ***A CLASS ATLAS-TYPE*** *Power Aspect, declaring that he is pushing his limits. The GM could also decide to invoke the* ***TALL BUILDINGS*** *to make it harder for Atlas to land the falling plane.*

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

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

## Compelling Aspects

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

> *Because the Crashed Passenger Jet is* ***ON FIRE****, it explodes and scatters burning jet fuel down Michigan Avenue. (Generating more nasty Scene Aspects for the heroes to deal with.)*
>
> *Because of an* ***ATLAS-TYPE'S*** *sensory vulnerability, Atlas is flash-blinded by Silver Rocket, allowing the thrill-villain to escape. (Ending the scene with failure.)*
>
> *Because Astra is an* ***UNCERTAIN NEWBIE HERO****, she makes the wrong tactical decision and puts a roomful of bystanders at risk. (Raising the stakes of the scene.)*

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

## Fate Points (p.119)

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

# Character Ratings

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

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

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

**The Ladder – Character Ratings**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| +10 | **Supreme** | Ultra Class breakthroughs. |
| +9 | **Mythic** | A Class peak ability. |
| +8 | **Legendary** | B Class peak ability. |
| +7 | **Epic** | C Class peak ability. |
| +6 | **Fantastic** | D Class peak ability. |
| +5 | **Superb** | Peak human ability. |
| +4 | **Great** | Top-shelf athletes, scientists, performers, etc. |
| +3 | **Good** | Stand-outs. |
| +2 | **Fair** | Professionals. |
| +1 | **Average** | Average adult. |
| 0 | **Mediocre** | Average teen. |
| -1 | **Poor** | Average child. |
| -2 | **Terrible** | Human minimum. |

**Alertness**

The senses and situational awareness.

**Athleticism**

Grace and movement.

**Physique**

Strength and health.

**Discernment**

Intelligence, perceptiveness, and wisdom.

**Willpower**

Fortitude, resoluteness, inner strength.

**Presence**

Charisma or sheer physical impressiveness.

## *Attributes* (p.77)

The six Attributes are: **Alertness**, **Athleticism**, **Physique**, **Discernment**, **Willpower**, and **Presence**. They are measures of raw and trained ability.

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

## *Skills* (p.80)

Skills are the things characters learn how to do through experience, training, or study. There are thirteen broad Skills, and a theoretically infinite number of player-designed Power Skills (p.89). The players will only list Skills that have been raised to +1 or greater in their Cape Files; all others default to Mediocre (+0). Skills benefit from the Attribute Bonus (p.72); for every 2 Attribute steps above Average, Skills relying on the Attribute get a +1. (When Attacking/Defending, Physique bonuses are +2 Weapon Rating / +1 Armor Rating per level of bonus instead).

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

## *Resources* (p.85)

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

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

# The Action

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

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

## Moving the Action

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

## Taking Action

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

### *Overcome*

Punching through a wall. Defeating a computer system's cyber-security. Patching a dangerous wound. Putting out a fire. You have a goal and an obstacle to be overcome, often an Aspect (***Concrete Wall***, ***Cutting Edge Cyber-Security***, ***Hemorrhaging Gunshot Wound***, ***Gasoline Fire***).

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

Overcoming an Aspect often means eliminating or modifying the Aspect, but not always. If Astra succeeded in calming Gantry then he would simply be a ***Drunk Superhuman***. But defeating the computer's cyber-security wouldn't remove the ***Cutting Edge Cyber-Security*** Aspect for anyone else unless the hacker then decided to remove it—which could involve...

### *Create an Advantage*

Hit someone with a *car*. Lay down a sheet of rim-ice for opponents to slip on. Generate a force-field bubble to contain a villain. Insert a security worm in the computer system. ***Armed with a Car***, ***Frosted Street***, ***Force-Field Bubble***, and ***Security Worm*** are all Situation Aspects that you create for your own advantage. When you create Situation Aspects in this way (or Create an Advantage on an existing Aspect), you get one Free Invoke on the Aspect (more if you Succeed with Style). When appropriate, you can also assign the new Aspect a Difficulty Rating equal to the Character Rating you used to create it, or use it to create *Aspect Permission*.

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

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

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

*Anyone the hacker gives the* ***Security Worm's*** *key to can use the new Aspect to bypass* ***Cutting Edge Cyber-Security****, no invoking or dice-rolling necessary (an example of creating Aspect Permission).*

## Attack

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

—Atlas

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

*Atlas smacks Junker with the truck. Consequence:* ***Shaken****,* ***Hit Hard****, or even* ***Concussed*** *as the pile deepens.*

*Variforce shrinks his forcefield bubble to squeeze the toxic villain until he asphyxiates and passes out. Consequences:* ***Dizzy****,* ***Fading****, eventually* ***Passed Out****.*

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

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

## React

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

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

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

*Chakra resists an attempt at mental influence by Psirate.*

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

# Describing Actions

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

## Rolling the Fate Dice (p.115)

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

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

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

The steps are:

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

### The Five Outcomes (p.116)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Ending the Action

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

# Scenes from the Post-Event World

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

## *A Day Unlike Any Other*

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

Minuteman: *"I see if I can help anyone."*

GM: *"You could take your pick."*

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

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

Minuteman: *"Right. Atlas is catching that plane."*

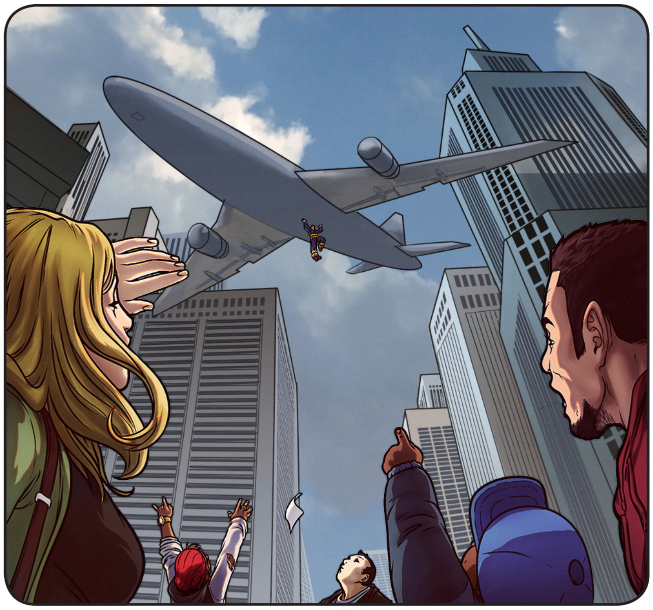
GM: *"It won't be like at the airport—bringing it down where you won't crush someone will be tricky. And it's not that small corporate jet you landed before; it's a big airbus.*

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Atlas: *“Disappearing.”*

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

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

GM: *“Not a lot. I’m invoking* **Tall Buildings** *for the +2—you’re going to be lucky if your wings don’t bury themselves in a Miracle Mile skyscraper. Your Difficulty Rating is still +10 since the plane hasn’t gotten any lighter, so you’re looking at a total Opposition rating of +12.” He spends a Fate Point, removing the token from his own pile.*

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

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

Atlas: *“So what happens?”*

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

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

## Dragon-Types

Disciples of the Eastern martial arts styles, especially styles such as Pa Kua Chuan (Bagau) that focus on developing and channeling one's chi, train and toughen the body (a stressful and often painful activity) and strengthen the spirit (using passive and active meditation-techniques). Breakthroughs are known to happen under both conditions, and with their intense focus such breakthroughs are almost always Dragon-Types (named after *The Dragon*, San Francisco's most famous cape).

Dragon-Type breakthroughs, more commonly called *chi users*, can raise and channel chi in exactly the ways described by the stories. They can strengthen their bodies and minds through balancing their inner chi, and project forceful chi to give power to their strikes, armor themselves, and even subtly influence others through interaction with their chi.

**POWER ASPECT PERMISSIONS:** Subtle manipulation of chi allows its users to act as Mentalists to a certain extent; they can attempt Provoke or Rapport without words, influencing others through their own chi, and they can detect other "mental" forces (even magical and psychic forces traditionally unrelated to chi) with Alertness. Dragons are masters of *qinggong*, the power of chi-assisted movement that allows them to ignore many environmental Situation Aspects; they can move swiftly and lightly past obstacles and across broken surfaces with an ease parkour disciples envy, leap as far as a normal person might run in the same Action, and perform gravity-defying moves such as gliding on water surfaces, running up high walls and across treetops.

**INVOKES AND COMPELS:** Like Paragons, Chi users can Invoke their Power Aspect to boost *any* of their Attributes. Most chi user's extreme dedication and martial arts code leads to many opportunities for Compels—from issued challenges to restrictive vows and requests for aid that they cannot ignore.

**POWER STUNTS:** The stories ascribe all kinds of powers to chi masters, many of which can be covered by the Invokes and permissions that go with the Power Aspect. Others are best taken as Power Stunts, and if the GM wants to differentiate between different martial arts traditions he may decide to draw up a list of Chi Power Stunts appropriate to each. These are just a few:

> ***DANCE WITH BULLETS.*** Your chi-mastery allows you to anticipate and deflect or dodge Shoot Attacks! Use your Fight Skill to Defend against Shoot, even against shots you don't "see" coming.
>
> ***DISRUPT CHI.*** You can project chi to disrupt a target's chi and "stun" him. Use the Stun Attack (Projector Power Stunts) and Provoke Skill. (Alternatively, attach it to your Fight Skill and require physical contact).
>
> ***HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN.*** When using chi, add +1 per level (+4 max.) to your Willpower rating when you use the Attribute or when calculating Attribute Bonuses for linked Skills. (Cost: 2 SFP/level.)
>
> ***REFLECTED FORCE.*** You can reflect an Attack back on itself! If you succeed with Defend against Fight Attacks, you may spend 1 Fate Point to reflect your shifts of success against your attacker as Stress/Consequences, ignoring Armor Rating.
>
> ***THUNDER FIST.*** You can channel chi into powerful blows. If you succeed in your Attack, you may spend 1 FP to ignore the target's AR.
>
> ***STRENGTH OF THE DRAGON.*** Channeling chi, you swap Willpower for Physique to determine physical Attribute Bonuses (including Weapon/Armor Ratings), and make physical Recovery rolls.

> *The Dragon, the first Post-Event chi using martial artist to appear in San Francisco, named the Power-Type. A second generation Asian-American, she displayed the power to "roof-run," dodge bullets, deflect and reflect physical attacks, and even take on Ajax with incredible "chi-punches." She remains the heart of San Francisco's martial arts superhuman community, and has recently turned her attention to recruiting and training a new young team of Righteous Fists.*
>
> —**BARLOW'S GUIDE TO SUPERHUMANS**

**POWER CLASS REQUIREMENTS:** Dragon-Type Power Classes are determined by chi-strength, which is measured by how many levels of ***HEART OF THE MOUNTAIN*** the hero possesses; an A Class Dragon will have 4 levels, making him a monster of chi!

**VARIANTS:** Players can tilt their Dragon-Types towards being Masters of Battle (with the Power Stunts above), or Masters of Stealth or some other emphasis by choice of Power Stunts; there is more than enough room in the legends for any interpretation, from the unarmed fighter capable of dropping dozens of opponents to chi-powered mystics, or a mix of both.

**NOTES:** Like Merlin and Verne-Types, Dragon-Types are often shaped by an obsessive focus. They should be played as dedicated students or wise masters and their martial arts discipline, with all of its attached ethical tenants and obligations, should play a large part in their lives. Dragon-Types are visibly cinematic chi users and their more physical uses of chi tend to be signaled with glowing fists or even full-body auras (chi armor), making them easy to spot in action. This can be something of a drawback, but "calling up one's dragon" is great for intimidation…