

The logo for 'HEARTS AND SOULS' features a large, stylized 'HS' in a yellow-to-orange gradient with a black outline. To the right, the words 'EARTS' and 'SOULS' are written in a bold, red, blocky font with black outlines, and the word 'AND' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font between them.

**A Superheroic RPG
Timothy Kirk**

**The following game is a prototype and beta playset, not the final version
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Hearts & Souls 2E Incomplete Draft

Introduction

Welcome to Hearts & Souls,

For those of you who are just joining us, H&S, is at its core about the nature of character. We focus on super heroes, their drama, action, and emotional turbulence. We are not about being an exact concrete model of superhero physics. Nor are going to approach things with wargame ideas of movement and positioning. Those things can be awesome, and plenty of games do them well. In Hearts & Souls, however, we are more worried about the important part of any story, the characters.

At the core of any superhero lie the motivations that make them strive for their goals, and make the world a better place, to suffer in doing whats right and come out in the end on top.

Of course that's why we have a bizarre name for a super heroic game, because we are taking a different tack on superheroes and how they do things.

“With great power, comes great responsibility:”
-Ben Parker to Peter Parker in Spider-man

Spider-man's Uncle Ben had it right. That is the element of character we care about here in Hearts & Souls, what makes your hero choose to do the crazy things they do? Why do they dress up in brightly colored clothes, and risk their lives for others?

We're going to skip the what is role-playing. If you don't know, email me: tim@silverlionstudios.com

It hass been gone over in virtually every role-playing game since they began, and it takes a bit of finagling to still get it right. Plus no sense wasting the space on it, yet again.

Capabilities

Each hero has a number of capabilities that cover their ability to do things in the world around them. All of these traits use the same rank and scale system, which even extends to special skills and superpowers. Many games call these things attributes, ability scores, or something else. I picked a different term explicitly to point out they are handled more as flexible tools for the hero and not fixed numbers.

Each capability is covered below and many common uses are discussed. These uses are merely examples given to let both player and Editor know some of their options. Often a player will come up with some unique use or need that doesn't fall under these examples. In this case it is often a good idea as an Editor for you to say "Yes...try it!" Superheroes are coming up with unique uses of their capabilities, powers, and the like. They may only appear in one comic issue and never be mentioned or used again. It's alright to be flexible here. Make it fun and interesting, and keep an eye on things getting off the style and feel you want for the game.

Those who picked up or looked at Hearts & Souls 1E will notice a change to simpler terms for the capabilities. They still cover the same things as before, but I ditched the ten-dollar words, and went with handy names. It's a matter of me not seeing that simple names worked.

Might and Might Actions

Might represents the raw physical strength and power a character is capable of applying with brute force. One might call it strength but that is too mundane a term. Heroes aren't strength-y! They are MIGHTY!

The basic things Might can do is Lifting, Throwing, Bending and Breaking. **See how these terms are capitalized? That means we'll cover them in a heading at some point in this book.** Attacks can be made using Might but do not tend to be accurate. Even a high Might capability doesn't imply that. If you want accuracy use Agility. Might however is the sheer force being applied so absolutely that it drives foes out of its path to avoid being squashed flat. Stress inflicted by might doesn't mean a blow connected. (Like nigh everything in this game.) It just means the blow got close enough to threaten, worry, and put the character in danger. *Only when stress is triggered into fallout does Might make the tremendous blow truly felt.*

Attack:

Might can be used to strike out at a foe. A failed attack simply misses without inflicting stress. A successful means stress is applied, and there is a good chance it causes fallout representing a physical blow. Bruises, broken limbs, soft tissue damage, knockouts, Slams and Stuns can all be triggered as fallout from a Might attack.

Blocking

Might can be used to block attacks. However, it is limited to taking physical attacks generated with might of a certain type. You can block punches, kicks, and most blunt object attacks. This only applies to things of your heroes scale. If its out of scale, you are out of luck. It is also worth noting that some attacks simply cannot be blocked without something to be put in between the hero and the attack.

Strikes with most edged weapons, projectiles, and energy weapons simply can't be blocked without something strong enough between the hero and the attack. Such things can be gained from Might quite readily. Lifting up part of the asphalt of a street, a car, or a sewer access lid? Those things work just like armor equal to their own Might! However, they can't last forever, and give way if an attack is used of any sort that is stronger than their own Might trait. Body Armor (or equivalent powers) are a good way to protect oneself from attacks one can't block.

Bending & Breaking

A high enough Might score, and one can break or bend just about anything they get their hands on. There are certain malleable materials (and people.) Who, that might not be true for, but usually if you are strong enough changing how its shaped or attached is easy.

In order to bend or break something a hero must have a Might on the same (or higher) scale as the objects Toughness, and must roll a success. The Toughness of the object of course opposes this meaning it gets to act against the hero, making an "attack" on them in return. If successful it of course causes stress, and can even trigger minor injuries if that stress is triggered! *A hernia just isn't fun, any day of the week.*

Lifting & Throwing

A hero can lift objects whose rough weight is covered by the scale of his Might attribute. Objects heavier than this require stress for scaling up. That doesn't mean the object stays completely together. In fact if its Weight Scale is higher than its own Might? It starts to fall apart rapidly. Why does this happen? Gravity. Certain comic book eras ignore this, and you certainly can for your game. It does make things interesting at times as the heroic moment must be redoubled because of falling debris!

Throwing is a bit more complicated, the hero must be on the same scale as the object, but they must be within equal to the objects Weight or Higher. Someone with Average Human Might can lift a heavy household trash bin. They cannot throw it effectively because its weight scale is Average Human. Someone with Exceptional Human Might or higher however can throw it and a good distance. What is a "good distance?" We'll cover that in the Rank/Scale chart at the end of this chapter. Short answer: Near if its the same scale, Far if it is not.

Other stuff:

Well Might can do a lot more. Heroes with a high Might score can perform feats of strength that those we mere mortals possess cannot. They can cause tremors with a stomp to the ground, or create a deafening thunderclap like noise with a clap of their might hands. They can take a breath and blow pushing over people, and at some scales vehicles! In general these are capability tests like all other and require at least Superhuman Might or higher. Where that exact line is drawn depends on a few things. Have they done it before? If so it is done just by a roll and paying a stress to their wheel of doom,

because they are essentially scaling up the range aspect of strength. . If they haven't they must buy the action with a point of stress, as well as pay one point for the scaling effect! A couple points of stress won't hurt. At least to start out with!

Of course this is not all of the ingenious ways Might can be used. There are thousands of examples through the history of comic books, and there may be a few enterprising players can surprise you with, keep an open mind as Editor, and roll with it!

How do you challenge Might?

Might as a capability can easily be challenged by stronger or heavier things. Expanding on that to make it interesting for dramatic purposes can be difficult, but there are several ways to do so: Holding up a falling roof of a collapsing building, or cave. Stopping a train from flinging itself of the gap created by damage to the rails. Lifting rubble from an earthquake off of trapped innocents.

In addition to sticking with things Might is good at one can challenge heroes by impairing this trait and forcing them to think there way out of situations as well as just smashing through. A prison of super-elastic material that stretches no matter how much force is applied. Nullifying gravity (and “Zero” gravity environments) can make utilizing Might difficult. If you can't hold yourself down to leverage your mass and strength, might can be removed from the equation.

Other high Might character can be foils themselves to the hero. One might consider that to easily done, but it gives the heroes something to struggle against without robbing them of their advantages, just making it one others have as well.

Agility and Agility Actions

Agility represents a number of things: manual and body dexterity, fine motor responses, hand-eye coordination and more. Notably Agility also covers the Attack, Dodge, Rolls and Falls, Catching objects as well as covering the trained use of Agility and acrobatic feats.

Attacks

Like Might, Agility can be used to land attacks. Its a bit more broad in some ways as it is the directing ability to land physical blows with finesse, as well use numerous ranged weaponry humanity can and has produced over the years.

If it is a question between using Might to land a blow or Agility, the deciding factor should always be the situation and the player's choice.

Powers, Super Skills, and Powered equipment may use their rank instead of Agility, if the player chooses. As with might a blow does not actually land on a target until stress is triggered. Rolls in H&S with any attack will be discussed later, but hey always represent the potential to do significant harm—not actually doing it until their foe or target can no longer avoid a solid strike.

Dodge

The primary defensive action for most heroes is dodging. They attempt to evade a blow, get out of the way of a energy blast and so on. Dodges cover leaping for cover, acrobatic escapes from harm, and other effects that mean not being in the way of a strike when it lands.

There are no hard rules as to “what” a person can dodge. However, area of effect attacks like explosions, tend to be in the “not bloody likely” realm of the fantastic. If the Editor allows it, it should be something that everyone is aware of going into a game. If not, it is best to simply run for it, and be out of range of an explosion before it comes close. A more realistic game may want to set certain other effects as the sort one cannot make a dodge roll for. I suggest not doing this, since no single attack can normally take out a hero, not without a lot of stress already built up to use to knock them out or down.

Rolls and Falls

Most everyone stumbles and falls at some point in there life. Learning how to roll with a fall makes it easier to survive without seriously injury.

However, we're talking of short falls, not much higher than the characters own height. Beyond that it is more challenging. A superhero can attempt to roll with a fall when they make impact and mitigate some of the damage they are likely to take. Yes, here we mean damage via fallout. A fall without some mitigating force (Powers, a superhuman or higher Might) can mean serious stress, and immediate fallout as broken bones, serious injury or death.

Redirecting the force on their bodies, and rolling one can use agility to reduce the fallout. One can't stop the stress, but they can reduce fallout by half if the height is reasonable (to scale) to their Toughness.

Particularly agile heroes might be allowed to reduce the fallout even further, by grabbing on to passing flagpoles, tree branches and so on. It depends on the Editor, what level of fall they can do this reasonably.

In order to reduce damage, the hero must roll an Agility test vs the general scale if falls under. A simple suggestion would be:

Human Scale: Less than 10'

Superhuman Scale: Less than 50'

Planetary Scale: Greater than 50'

Don't worry too much about changing this to fit the specifics of your campaign! Just do it!

Catching Objects

Agility allows someone to snatch objects out of the air. Thrown objects are easiest to grab, weapons driven by muscle powered devices are harder, and firearms are even more difficult. The Editor as normal should set the difficulty appropriate to the scale. Snatching an item from the air is not terribly difficult for superheroes but that doesn't mean they won't take stress trying.

Catching People is a little bit more problematic. If they're falling, it requires enough strength to stop their fall, and the agility to do so. It happens but should probably be a bit of a challenge if the fall is more than a few feet.

How do you challenge Agility?

Agility is best challenged by difficult tasks that utilize agility. High Wire work, crossing a lava pool using slowly melting rock stepping stones, dodging rapid fire attacks and so on. An editor can also circumvent agility in some ways to make some things more difficult.

Villains can often inflict vertigo, cause fear, and otherwise make ordinary Agility challenges far more of a test of a hero if the villain cheats and alters their effectiveness. Changing the speed of the conflict can also make an issue—walking a tight rope may be easy for a hero, but running across it while being attacked by robotic crows intent on tearing the hero apart? BwaHAHA! Er, excuse me. I let that one slip out.

Toughness and Toughness Actions

Toughness is not much of an active ability. It physical resistance to outside changes rather than something a hero can do. That doesn't mean it isn't highly useful! Just the opposite. It is pretty much one of the more useful capabilities, because heroes tend to be tough! Of course there drive pays a lot into their ability to keep going while facing harm, so it isn't toughness alone that does the work.

Toughness covers Recovery, Resistance as well as the basic Threshold for stress levels they can take before they must seriously worry. Most of this is very much just as it was in the previous edition, but I'm explaining it with more specifics to help others get a grasp on just what these things mean.

Holding Ones Breath:

A hero can hold their breath a number of panels equal to half there die rating, as is usual for this game system. After that they'll need to make a Toughness roll every panel or take one stress.

Recovery

Recovery is the ability to reduce fallout over time and eventually erase it completely as the hero heals.

Recovery is different than Hearts & Souls1E so if you played it, pay attention to this heading. In this edition of Hearts & Souls Toughness determines how quickly a hero recovers Fallout under restful conditions. **Toughness only covers physical fallout.**

A hero may make a recovery test per “week” or “issue” if they succeed they reduce the the Fallout by one half their maximum scale value. Example: The Moth, our erstwhile example hero has a broken arm (Fallout 6) he has Exceptional Human Toughness. Since Human Toughness means he uses a D6, He reduces the Fallout by 3, on every recovery test he passes. Stress naturally fades away at the heroes recovery value per issue. Man are we now tough on our heroes! Thankfully, it is now going to be a bit easier to not get stress when you roll, so long as you use Banter or Monologues!

Of course since time is malleable in comics, an Editor can simply wipe out fallout and stress at anytime they choose. However, as a rule, keeping it slower helps keep heroes from pushing a bit TOO hard, at least without facing more significant penalties.

Resistance

Quite a few effects from powers, and the environment simply overwhelm a hero without stressing them out in a normal conflict.

A hero has some resistance to these effects via there toughness. Essentially things like: Toxins, gases, smoke, drugs, and the like. Each of these effects are given a a Might of there own which they make an “attack” with directly to the heroes toughness. A hero can attempt to resist a number of ways (holding their breath against inhaled effects is a good one.)

However, they all come down to a toughness test versus the effects Might. Most of these things will be covered in “Hazards” later, but as an example we'll take a loot and standard comic book knock out gas—a generic soporific inhalant.

In this case the standard is Superhuman in scale. Exceptional Superhuman if you want to be more specific. Since this causes one stress to anyone of Superhuman scale, and two to human scale victims, they'll have to make a test to avoid that stress knocking them out. They can't dodge it. Can't take it on most armor. Only a power, gas mask, or holding one's breath works to prevent its exposure.

Threshold

The Threshold is determined by one-half the heroes Toughness die. That is the scale by which you can trigger physical fallout for the hero. Someone with a Human Toughness, can take Three stress on the Wheel of Doom, before they have to start worrying. Below that anything will be minor scratches, bruises, and other non-impairing Fallout.

Once it passes that threshold, anything can happen. Broken bones, internal injuries, coma's and even death can happen. Every hero, regardless of their Toughness, Resolve or Thresholds, can take Ten stress, before it traumatically dumps into some form of Fallout immediately into something long term and very life threatening or life effecting. Since stress is scaled to the scale the hero operates on this keeps a solid balance.

How do you challenge Toughness?

Heroes all have some resistance to heat and cold. There is no hard number for the temperatures, but without powers they tend to be similar. Toughness rolls can cover anything within normal range. There of course are heroes with powers or whose innate nature (which we'll describe as "powers") are more resistance to such environmental Hazards. Such resistance doesn't protect them from out and out directed attacks of heat and cold.

Much the same goes for diseases, although your average cold or flu isn't going to tangle with someone with a Superhuman Toughness, at least not without some effort! Sadly, even the most powerful heroes can get sick. What makes them sick will differ. Although, Immunity to Diseases, can fix that right up. No more colds for your hero! Although being immune to smallpox is a good thing, it isn't quite as flashy as being able to create flickering force fields to stop bullets.

Brains and Brain Actions

Brains represents the raw creative and reasoning ability of a hero. It is the raw strength of the mind (as opposed to Willpower which is the raw toughness of the mind.) In many ways heroes tend to use Brains a great deal, as their foes challenge them to death traps, locked doors and more.

Brains doesn't cover skilled use of mental abilities. The difference between the two is less clear than Strength and Agility. However, the separation is there. Brains is the ability to solve puzzles, perform mental gymnastics to solve problems, to learn new things. It is the ability to reason out cause and effect. The difference between a knowledgeable hero and an Intellectual hero is the Intellectual hero will be coming up with wild workable theories, strange new solutions to old problems—but isn't going to apply them without some knowledge to back it up. A smart hero can adapt faster mentally than a merely skilled hero as their brain power is what is behind their ability, rather than their training. High Brains means the person is cutting new ground, creating new fields, and generally mucking up all we know.

Solving Problems

An intelligent hero gets to roll to come up with solutions to problems facing the hero of a mental sort. They can resolve riddles from quirky foes, solve puzzles and mathematical formula and the like. An Brains roll is also useful for picking up clues at crime scenes when one is not a trained investigator.

Strategy & Tactics

An Brains and focused mind can change the course of battles. While they can train someone in certain skills that help. The change conflict that happen in superhero battles and challenges need a keen mind as well.

A hero can use their mind to come up with ways to confound enemies, trick them into giving away clues, and generally showing their hand to the hero who succeeds at an Intellect Roll. Of course like most things, how much information is revealed depends on stress. A hero may use their mind to inflict stress by coming up with tricks, and taunts and making a roll. These tricks and taunts might also double as Banter, but keep an eye on them being too overused. New tricks and taunts should always be more effective than old ones.

How do challenge Brains?

Complex puzzles/problems. Tests of physical ability that intellect and reasoning might aid in (using a lever for example.) Solving problems while being blasted by sensory distorting noises or effects. Seemingly nonsensical clues/rhymes or puzzles. Dealing with a mad super villain who doesn't think linearly (One who jumps from idea to idea, often without finishing one.)

Knowledge and Knowledge Actions

Knowledge is the store of information and mental skills a hero has in comparison to Intellect it is the data, and Brains is the computations. That doesn't mean that Knowledge can't be applied. Someone who has a lot of life experience, a lot of training, and can do a lot of things is someone with a high knowledge. They don't have to be highly intelligent, although that does help them utilize their skills and often high intellect and knowledge go hand in hand for some heroes.

As an example: Someone with a high Intellect can tell you the chemical components in dry martini. While the guy with high knowledge can make one, mix a dozen other drinks, listen to the patrons' problems, and comment on current world affairs. Knowledge is breadth, Intellect is depth.

Agility and Knowledge also have some overlap. A Brain surgeon needs both to perform his job. Whenever the skill could be both—use the highest capability.

Skill Checks

A skill check is the most common kind of roll under knowledge. Whenever the hero needs to perform some skill that is mental or primary mental in nature the Editor asks for a Knowledge roll. If they pass they manage to perform the skill. Heroes tend to be effective, even if they don't have a specific degree or lots of training they may have skills that help them deal with the problem anyway.

Information

Sometimes a player will want to know if their hero knows something about people, places, and things that aren't covered earlier in character creation or play. There is a chance of everyone stumbling upon to strange information, even more so with the power of the modern internet. Even if your game is set in some other era, you can give the heroes a chance to know something about the subject. Even if it isn't a full skill, or a lot of information. Things like “What's his Secret Identity?” should require real in game work. On the other hand “Who is my senator?” should just be a simple check. If they don't pass they can always ask, or research it—but the roll is for things off the top of their head that may be relatively common knowledge.

It is a solid method for giving them details they think they need without handing them two hundred page setting book and demanding they memorize it. Who has the time or wants to spend the effort on that?

How do you challenge Knowledge?

Particularly obscure topics. Recent topics that have not yet been widespread. Forcing the hero to dig deep for the information. Obscuring the details requiring Brains instead of knowledge. Requiring other attributes involved in the situation. (Brain Surgery requires both knowledge and agility.)

Willpower and Willpower Actions

Willpower is the mental brother to Toughness. It represents the ability of a mind to Resist mental influence, Recover from stress, and generally deal with all the crazy things that involve super-heroes. Like Toughness it isn't very active, instead being more of a passive capability that helps the hero cope.

Resisting Mental Influence

There are skills and powers in the super heroic world that can impact the heroes mind. Hypnotism, mental attacks, attempts to see and control the mind or emotions. All of these attacks are defended against by willpower, which resists rather than avoids the effect of such actions. When a hero is suffers the attack of one of these powers, they may roll to resist. Using the same general rules for all defenses in terms of rank and scale.

Even if a power seizes control in some manner of there mind or emotions, the hero may try to resist again after several panels of action in the scene. Ordinarily the effect lasts for a number of panels equal the the stress triggered to engage the effect. After that amount of time the hero may then make a roll every other panel (turn) to escape the influence. They may even get a bonus roll if someone they know and love is endangered., or an ally can Rally them using their drive.

Threshold

Akin to Toughness, the Mental Threshold of the hero is equal to half the heroes maximum die value for Willpower. It represents how much stress the hero can resist without issue, before a mental impairment or effect can impact them. An unstable hero might resist their issues, a mental power might merely stress them more, but until the total stress is higher than their Threshold for Willpower, nothing can be triggered.

Recovery

Just like Toughness, but covering the recovery of mental Fallout. Recovery represents the time it takes a hero to recover from a Fallout event.

A hero may make a recovery test per “week” or “issue” if they succeed they reduce the the Fallout by one half there maximum scale value. When it is gone they have removed the fallout, and no longer suffer the problem.

How do you challenge Willpower?

As usual changing the contest to a physical one can make Willpower less important. Utilizing powers that are more effective against the mind than normal. Weakening a hero physically before applying mental influence, all of these things can work against the heroes high Willpower.

Attribute Rank and Scale

Hearts & Souls continues to use the simple rank and scale system created for first edition. For those of you just joining us, we'll give a rundown of what that means.

Each capability, power, super skill and the like in this game has two primary factors: Rank representing how good an attribute is within a scale, and Scale representing just where that ability falls along the Human-Cosmic scale of super beings.

Why do we use Rank and Scale?

There are heroes in Lone Star City and other settings are incredibly effective at their scale, but a bit over shadowed by those who are of a different scale. We measure them in two ways to make sure there is both a clan way to measure your heroes against each other and against their foes, as well as to represent potentially different scaled games.

Rank has three values

Average: Meaning the hero is a mere average member of this scale

Exceptional: Meaning the hero has a respectable and notable level of ability at her scale

Spectacular: Representing the hero being one of the best at this ability at her scale.

Each rank shows how functional a hero is at there scale. It determined the number of dice the hero rolls to test that ability: Whether its a superpower, a super skill, a special gadget. They roll a number of dice provided by their rank.

Average abilities roll 1 die.

Exceptional abilities roll 2 dice.

Spectacular abilities roll 3 dice.

In Hearts & Souls, only the highest dice value of all the dice rolled is kept. Consider the extra dice "more chances to get it right, without having to push as hard." In fact that is exactly what they represent. A heroes ability to get things right by discarding all the wrong ways of doing them first. Since only the top die matters, it is also the only one who makes an impact on events "on the page." No matter how any dice are roll, or how often. Only the final result is what we care about. Because that is the only roll that counts. Of course you can't keep rolling until you get the best result. Why bother rolling dice then? No, you've got limits on your re-rolls but we'll talk about that when we talk about Banter.

Scale:

Scales represent the degree of overall impact the hero makes on the world. It doesn't mean someone with Human Scale abilities don't make a difference, just that they tend to make a difference over a smaller area or impact the environment around them with less power.

There are 5 Scales in Hearts & Souls 2nd edition. A somewhat minor change from 1E as two of them are optional and can be ditched for your game. We will make use of them here because it allows a little bit more range in describing heroes and villains and allows us to make them look (and play.) A little different. Each scale has a different die type assigned to it. Right after the scale we've noted the die you use with that scale. We'll often note that in the future. Especially on the example heroes and villains.

You'll note after the die type we mark the Target number required for each roll to be successful. The number never varies on that die. It has changed from 1E where a single die had a 50% chance to a small range around 30% (give or take some.)

The purpose of this change is to make sure that rolls can generate stress. Stress is now more important to the game! It becomes the currency of play for many bad and some good things that can happen.

If a heroes doesn't gain stress, he can't very well be dramatic can he?

The Scales are:

Low (Optional): D4 (TN 4)

The Low scale has NO ranks. It simply exists at the very bottom of the five scales we use, and is meant to represent characters who fall off even human scales, like some animals, small children, and so on. We can use it to represent bestial characters whose minds no longer understand human technology or interactions, or those debilitated by serious illness.

Human: D6 (TN 5+)

The human scale is an example of the scale we exist on in the plain old non-super world. There are times and people who might push past this scale for a moment, or with luck, and there are many objects which can apply higher forces to us such as our vehicles, some tools, and weapons.

Superhuman: D8 (TN 6+)

Many of the heroes of Lone Star City fit here, they are heroes with local impact on the city or sometimes province or state scale. Many countries may have heroes at this level. They're the bulk of the superhero world in most settings. They make changes but they rarely impact the entire world.

Planetary: D10 (TN 7+)

Planetary heroes, may also be considered global, or world-spanning. Their impact shakes the world, saves not just nations but the whole planet! They're the heroes that make comic book legends and often journey beyond our world to protect other worlds from harm.

Cosmic: d12 (TN 8+)

Cosmic heroes traverse the galaxy. They shape entire stellar regions with their action. Do not confuse Cosmic heroes with entities *Beyond*. They may impact star systems, but for the most part they are still vulnerable to harm of some form. They face planet eaters, living stars, and legions of things from

hidden dark places in the universe.

Beyond.

Not really a scale, just a place beyond it. There are no Beyond heroes or technically villains. Beyond creatures goals and aims tend to march in strange ways and for strange aims that don't impact mortals.

Although a few of these forces of super nature do from time to time play games with mortals, test them, or challenge them, or even face them down. They cannot be fought—only confounded, or deterred.

Rank, Scales and Stress

Stress, being the currency of the game, it becomes important to point out how it works to help out a hero. We'll cover more options under Banter, Monologues, and Thought Bubbles. Right now we're going to focus on the most important aspect as it relates to rank and scale.

Re-rolls

A hero may re-roll their dice at any time, **prior to the resolution of the event**, by taking a point of stress. They may take a single point of stress, or pay for several additional re-rolls in advance by taking several stress, or they may wait to see the initial roll's outcome. Whenever a hero takes stress, the player can roll their entire dice set for the attribute. Meaning someone with an Exceptional ranked ability will get to roll both dice again!

The effect is similar to them taking stress to up their Scale, but only applies to the rank level of rolls.

Scaling

A hero can always bump their Scale up to the lowest level of the next scale by taking one additional point of stress. After that they fall into having to do re-rolls as above.

In some instances the hero will be forced to up their roll a scale anyway—this occurs when facing an opponent is of a the next nearest scale up from them. If they want to be successful against them in this sort of action. If their foe is two scales higher. They don't really have a chance to face them down. Not without changing their actions to test another attribute or power. Except of course if they use a monologue. ***Not just banter but a full on monologue. In this case the hero may roll at the next rank above them, and if successful, avoids Fallout, but they suffer stress regardless equal to the scale difference.***

A hero or villain generates 1 stress for each rank they surpass the hero's ability being used to defend. Scaling up is done first. Meaning an Exceptional Human dodging a Spectacular Planetary hero takes two stress. One for scaling up and one for the rank shift.

It is important to remember that superheroes on occasion (but not routinely) take on forces way more powerful than themselves.

Rank	Throwing Distance	Speed	Lifting	Material Strength
Low	Touch	Crawl	Child's Toy	Paper
Average Human	Several Rooms	Average Walk	Small Child	Plastic
Exceptional Human	Several Yards	Olympic Runner	Heavy Box	Good Wood
Spectacular Human	Sports Field	Bobsled	Own weight	Light Brick
Average Superhuman	City Block	Motorcycle	Motorcycle	Concrete
Exceptional Superhuman	City Section	Car	Car	Stone
Spectacular Superhuman	City	Sports Car	Tank	Iron/Heptizon
Average Planetary	Region	Airplane	Small Ship	Steel
Exceptional Planetary	LEO	Jet	Large Ship/Building	Titanium
Spectacular Planetary		Rocket/Low FTL	Mountain	Diamond
Average Cosmic	Lunar Orbit	Moderate FTL	Planetoid	Hypervium
Exceptional Cosmic		Extreme FTL	Planet	
Spectacular Cosmic		Cross the Galaxy	Gas Giant	
Beyond	Galactic	Instant (Teleport)	Unlimited	Unbreakable

Drives and Motivation

Hearts & Souls, as a superhero game is focused a bit differently than your traditional superhero role-playing game. I'm not going to say its a huge difference, but it is a noticeable one. Hearts & Souls focuses on the heroes motivation, on the risks and choices he or she makes in play—those little things that matter and create drama.

Drives:

The chief way we indicate what a hero is about is their drive. Its a short hand form of explaining what is important to that hero, and how they can push themselves to succeed when all other hope is lost.

There are numerous possible drives, from heroic to villainous and everything in between. We'll cover the most common here, and let each Editor decide what other drives may be suitable for their game.

It is notable that not all drives are singular clear cut motivations that stand alone. Much of the time a drive has shades of other drives lurking within it, meaning there may be more complexity than the simple short hand allows for—if the shading is important for a hero or a villain, it might be wise to list the primary drive and its strongest most important secondary drive.

Heroic Drives:

Community:

The hero is driven by a strong need to belong. They may be outsiders to the community attempting to fit in. They might belong to the community but be hated for some factor beyond their control, so they try and change the communities opinion of them (or those like them.) Some heroes motivated by community simply wish to have the camaraderie of other heroes, they connect to them more fully than your common man.

Guardian:

The heroine with this drive is protective of those beings she sees as under her care. The degree and scope can vary from a single small group or narrow type such as only sea born mammals on up to significant reaching concepts such as protect all sentient life. The heroine will put her life in danger, risk injury, death, and more simply to defend those things she guards.

Guilt

The heroine feels responsible for some terrible crime or happenstance, she is driven to make sure such things do not happen again if at all possible. Some heroines feel guilt for tragedy's that weren't even things under their control: the death of loved one when they were a child, an accident they witnessed. Others take this very personal, a direct action they chose left deep feelings of guilt, and they seek to redress the issue for others.

Love

Love is a complicated drive, the hero with it cares deeply about something and seeks to show it at its most glorious. Guardian's have a significant piece of the love drive, but it alone doesn't cover it. A Guardian may stand firm to protect another, but a hero who deeply loves something may have learned that it is sometimes necessary to step back, and let that which they love grow and defend itself. The difference is a subtle one to be sure. If a player is confused, let them pick one but make note of the other drive as a secondary one. Love is patient, kind, and encouraging, not just protective like someone motivated by the guardian drive. It takes a bit more of step in some ways and puts the hero at some greater risks emotionally.

Responsibility

A heroine driven by responsibility, has a need to use their abilities in service of others. It may be direct in that their powers derive from their willingness to serve, or it may be a distinction of social order, a soldier given powers may feel responsible use his powers for his nation. At its greatest edge, someone may realize that the powers they have makes them dangerous, and the only good use is to use them for others. Often the burdens the hero takes upon themselves creates a very interesting path, they struggle with having powers but not being infinitely powerful. Struggling with just being heroine trying to do good, while still having a life.

Revenge

The only drive that appears under both the heroic and villainous categories, and even then its a significant stretch to put it on the heroic list. Vengeance is the strong desire to extract some form of satisfaction or inflict some form of punishment on the person(s) being pursued. It is often wound in hatred, and is entirely self-serving, which runs significantly at odds with most heroes.

Pursuing revenge toes a difficult line. The boundaries one must struggle not to cross can make for interesting play, but it can also pull a game to far away from the "hero" side of thing. Just make sure such a struggle is one the Editor is willing to allow.

Spirit of Adventure

The hero with this drives is a hero because its fun, because it exposes them to a wild ride of wondrous things. It isn't from the good of their heart that they do heroic things, although that is definitely a huge perk. They tend to be decent human beings who care for others, it just isn't why they do the heroic thing. They seek out trouble for the delight of it, look for things that excite them and keep pushing forward for the sheer joy of experiencing things.

Villainous Drives

Greed

The villain desires primarily wealth. They aren't out to make it personal most of the time, they just want cold hard cash. Everyone from small time crooks to powered heavy hitters often have this drive. Villains with this drive can be redirected away from doing harm, when it is no longer profitable.

Hate

The opposite of love. As common as love as a drive is, you'd expect more villains to use hatred as their own, but quite often villains are either more practical and less romantic, or they make it far far more personal. Most villains with this have few redeeming features, they've let rage and anger direct them more than their minds no matter how brutish or canny. Villains with hatred as their drive focus on destruction, devastation, and desolation without any further aims.

Megalomania

A villain with this drive is out for power, not just wealth, not just because they have unresolved issues, but because they want absolute power and control. Nothing short of it will ever sooth their motivated spirit. Quite often this leads the villain into unsafe thinking, after all to be in control means to actually be responsible for the conditions that surround them. Megalomaniacs rarely think that far ahead, although a few have shown that they are truly cable of ruling, but the price for whoever they rule, is often simply too high.

Revenge

Just as vengeance drives heroes, it can drive villains as well. They lack the restraint that heroes must show, and fall to greater extremes of behavior without any concern for the repercussions. It tends to awry quickly, and become awfully close to hatred, but usually with a much narrower target. Some villains out for revenge will spend years and years plotting against their victim(s), weaving web upon web of plots in order to make sure they suffer.

Editor Note

When is a Drive used?

A drive is used in play as the basis for banter or monologue that allows the hero to re-roll the dice used in a task.. Only the final success is counted when the day is done. While this is a somewhat difficult concept to understand. We'll give some examples to help it make sense. Neither banter nor monologues have to be complex, they merely have to be suitable for the player and the editor. However, it is usually best if they somehow tie back to the drive.

Stress and Fallout

You'll note in a previous chapter we discussed attributes and how stress can work with them. We mentioned that Stress is by and far the currency of the game. We really mean that. How you use the currency varies hero to hero, and situation to situation.

On every character sheet you make, or print out there should be a way to mark stress a hero takes. In order to keep terms separate and not confuse people with “Stress Triggers, Stress, Stress Track,” we've decided on the official sheets to call this the “**Wheel of Doom.**” Obvious references to deathtraps is intentional. Just remember its a simple way to track your stress, and explain tracking stress to people just picking up the game for the first time.

Stress

Stress as the currency of this game starts out at zero (or if you prefer to think of it positively you have ten Stress-free points to spend.) The effect is the same. A hero can take 10 Stress on her Wheel of Doom, before he has a serious, long lasting, and truly career changing event. We don't mean that in a good way though. 10 Stress means seriously negative things happen to the heroine.

However, that is 10 stress at once. Ordinarily, the player or the Editor shouldn't let it get that far. Instead you should take Fallout, to reduce the chance of that happening. How and when you shift Stress from the Wheel of Doom to Fallout is flexible. It depends a lot on the situation that is going on at the time. If nothing is happening, it isn't a good idea to move the Stress to Fallout at that time. Instead stress should move as well, Fallout, for events going on in play. A fist finally connects, a heroine's nosy boyfriend confronts her about her never being around, and so on.

Stress is essentially all the bad things which weigh upon the mind, body, and spirit of the hero. They themselves don't directly penalize the hero in anyway. Stress is simply the fact that things are stacking against the hero internally and may go wrong.

In the previous edition of the game we may not have made it clear, but Stress is NOT the impact of the fist, or the twisted ankle, or broken relationship. Instead it is the building chance that those things may happen. Fallout is what represents those things happening to the hero. Stress builds up and when the watershed breaks, more than a little water will fall.

Any hero who tried to defend themselves is going to be partially successful. They manage to avoid the strike, the emotional manipulation, or whatever is being applied to them on the page—at least so long they make the effort to do so. A hero who refused to make a roll to defend themselves, is immediately suffering whatever the villain or even is trying to land on them.

That means if they don't resist or defend, that the amount of stress they've accrued doesn't matter. For the purposes of Fallout this usually means that Fallout's value is equal to the maximum value of the opposing forces Scale. Simply put if a Planetary hero hit you, and you don't even try to defend. You suffer an immediate 10 Fallout. Not a fun situation to be in as that could be a crushed skull, a broken back, knocked into orbit, or so on.

Ordinarily, stress accrues by “near misses.” **The hero rolls against the Task Number, and if they pass, they avoid the stress. If they fail. They must re-roll using one of the methods provided or suffer the Fallout for not defending themselves. Pretty rough isn't it? Even a physically restrained hero can be confronted with stress rather than Fallout!**

Yes the hero has the option to defend themselves at all times, in some way. They accrue stress by re-rolls, to avoid Fallout, or use monologues, banter, and the like to get those re-rolls for free.

Should the hero be unable to defend themselves, already being unconscious, or choose not for some reason, they take Fallout. What kind of reasons would they choose NOT to defend themselves? Triggering stress of course.

Triggering in this way is simply saying “Darn! I am going to suffer for dramatic purposes, and to make the game fun.” Its simply moving stress from the Wheel of Doom, to the Fallout box, and connecting that amount of stress to an effect. Why would you want your hero to skate through everything without harm? That's not fun at all. It isn't even comic book like! Now, sure some people won't buy into this concept as much as others—which is why we give the Editor the power to trigger stress as well. Of course, Editors. Feel free to make player's character who don't trigger their own stress from time to time, suffer more. Yep. No killing unless that's agreed to in the Pitch, and is dramatically appropriate. Still there are a lot of bad things that can help that aren't “dying.” in a superhero game.

Players, I know your thinking “Great, now he's telling us that the heroes can be screwed by either the Editor or themselves, what do we get out of it? “

Well, not entirely. The player can also can trigger stress on the villains! Now, before you rush off demanding to cold-cock the Shadow Sovereign with one blow, you'll have to generate enough stress to impact them. Remember thresholds? They have them too. Also like everything else, the currency of stress has an economy to it. How much you do impacts how much effect you can have. A little stress isn't going to drop a mastermind of grand schemes. Maybe a thug, perhaps two. You'll have to guess and hope its enough. Otherwise they'll simply dodge, avoid, or resist the heroes awesome abilities. A serious fallout means serious stress to begin with. 1 or 2 points won't matter much, so be willing to fight, argue, taunt, and otherwise face powerful villains for a while. Your hero can whittle them down over time with effort.

The Editor of course has final say on what you happens when you trigger stress on a foe. He can prevent blatant abuses of too little stress. He can also suggest better fallout for the amount of stress the characters foe has, and should do so. Yes, Editor. You can help the players. You have permission. **It is all about making dramatic and exciting play, not simply bashing the heroes into the dirt. So have at it!**

Banter. Monologues and Thought Bubbles

Hearts & Souls is a game driven by the character and their strengths and weaknesses. One of the ways we implement this is already mentioned a characters Drive.

However, the drive requires a push, a stimulus to make it work. There are two major kinds of pushes in Hearts & Souls. The first kind is the most subtle, and sometimes the most difficult to adjudicate— Banter. The second type is the Monologue.

Banter

Banter is the gentle mocking humor a heroes uses when talking to, or thinking of a villains actions. Banter allows the hero to draw out a villain, get him to make mistakes and makes it easier for the hero to succeed. Banter can play up both the hero's drive, and the villains in there context of the moment. In other words they're designed to play against each other.

Banter as a game mechanic allows the hero to re-roll the dice, in the same manner as if they had used a monologue, but using the current situations context, and the general tone of their drive as opposed to the Drive's exact nature. It is fundamentally allowing the hero to “pay forward” the stress relief they get from the humor on their next roll.

Example:

The Moth, our exemplar hero is busy weaving and dodging between two well armed foes. The sound of gunfire nearly deafens him and he's worried but is still a stubborn Community driven hero. The missing thugs curse at him using foul language. Then suddenly he can't get a success on his dice!

Bravely he says “Your vocabulary stinks almost as much as this lair, what did you do rent it from the local sewer monster?” Since he banter with this he gets to re-roll the dice much in the manner of a monologue. He rolls the dice this time and gets a success. Missing him thanks to his roll he continues. “Your aim stinks too, I'd call you skunks, but I've too much respect for those gland laden mammals!”

Banter mocks, taunts, goads and does lots of fun things to villains. It doesn't just give the hero a reroll, but using it if the hero doesn't need a re-roll, he can use it to enrage a foe, drawing them off from there own actions and getting them to attack him. Alternately, the hero can use Banter to distract a foe who has their own Drive from using a monologue, preventing them from ignoring their stress, and lengthening the battle. Usually this is done as a Resolve roll against there villain, if they can generate more stress quickly enough it may cause the villain to attack rather than waste time with a monologue.

Not all Banter must be heard to function. Only when Banter is used explicitly to taunt and challenge a foe, if it is used simply for dice re-rolls, it can be done as a thought bubble. However, it is a lot more fun if the banter is spoken to the villains, so they can get their own banter in as well.

Like Monologues. Banter as a mechanic doesn't work for villains exactly the same way. They can use it to taunt the hero and draw him into a rage, or distract him from his dice re-rolls from monologues. (But not Banter.)

Monologues

Monologues function a bit like Banter but with a little more oomph to them. We covered a bit of that when talking about Stress. A monologue allows the hero to do a little more than simple Banter, and for that reason it has a few stricter rules.

A Monologue needs to tie itself a bit tighter to the Drive. It doesn't need to be spoken aloud, “on page” as it were, but the player must still say it aloud to the rest of the group as if they were the audience reading her though bubble.

Your players may come from an enjoyment of different kinds of comic books and superheroes, and may have different views on how Monologues sound. It is a good idea to discuss this with them before you even get to the Pitch session. How they feel the monologue should sound. Some feel the over and detailed Monologues feel distinctly Silver Age, and while the idea does come from there in part. There are plenty of comic books from all the eras that utilize them, sometimes so subtly they go unnoticed.

Monologues generally refer to the Drive. They tie the heroes actions directly back to why the hero is out doing heroic things with their abilities. Generally speaking this is important to the game. Amusingly, that this is where the games name comes from—discussing the heart and soul of superhero comic books. What makes them and their stories unique, and interesting.

Monologues allow the hero to re-roll the dice for any action. Barring stress being triggered prior to the roll. Stress is mitigated through other mechanics in the game. Powers, Blocking, Dodging, etc. There is no true way to ignore stress being triggered in the long run. No dice roll to get out of that event forever. Something players and Editors need to remember.

Keeping the above in mind, Monologues do allow both heroes and villains to temporarily ignore a stress event. So long as they can monologue each panel in which they try and take action. If they refuse, pause, forget, or are distracted, the Stress continues on and becomes Fallout. Of course this does not prevent them from continuing to take more stress, suffering more potential harm in the long run.

The Big Push

Heroes as we have mentioned can push to achieve tasks that are a scale above them. Sometimes however, a hero find it necessary to push beyond this limit, and do things no one of their capabilities should seemingly be able to do. A mere human dodging the punch of a Planetary scale villain, a Superhuman scale hero holding up just enough of a Cosmic weight to survive and so on.

In this case a hero can Monologue, but still takes stress, and they can manage the bare minimum necessary to “succeed” at the action. It alone is notable and memorable, it is not perhaps the stellar heights someone already in that scale might manage, but it is enough to keep them alive, protect others, and so on.

They will suffer fallout, immediately when done with the moment. They may manage to dodge that Planetary scale villain for a page, and then once he's distracted pass out from the strain. They may hold up the crumbling remains of a fallen starship, forming a tiny open area for themselves and other survivors, but have punctured a lung.

Heroes can do amazing things, even when heavily outmatched that doesn't mean they won't suffer for it. Of course given the choice between being flattened by a starship, or Cosmic class villain like Expurgas, which would you choose?

A *Thought Bubble* is the same as Banter or Monologues, however they are not verbalized in the “comic,” however since we as players need to know what was thought, you need to speak them aloud, expressing them with terms like “I am thinking” or “A concerned look is on my face,” and so on.

Fallout

We've discussed stress and the Wheel of Doom above. Now, we're going to focus on what Fallout is—how it works, and how to recover from it..

There are some notable changes in recovery of what we're calling Fallout (formerly Stress Events.)

First and foremost it is important to remember that all Fallout is temporary in superhero games. All except one: Death. Death is a type of fallout that significantly depends on the Pitch. The themes and style of game you want to run and play. Classically speaking death in most comics is temporary, and eventually will be undone. However, not everyone wants to play a “Classic” style superhero game. So its important to decide during setting up the Pitch if death is an option.

What is fallout?

Fallout is all the bad things that have a somewhat lasting impact on the hero. Usually this means more than a few panels or “character turns.” We don't mean that it is meant to last years either. Duration should be scaled to the stress triggered. The more stress in the Wheel of Doom, the longer the fallout should last.

Fallout is: Being stunned, Knock-out blows, knock back that takes several game panels to return, sprains, broken bones, ruptured organs, suspicion directed to a hero's private life or secret identity, lasting threats to ones job, damage to relationships, being captured, being mind controlled, being emotion controlled, losing ones cool, losing one or more of the heroes senses, losing a loved one, having a loved one captured, injured and so on. Almost any bad thing you've seen a superhero go through can be had through Fallout. Although some can happen by Editor Fiat, and yes, she is empowered to use Fiat from time to time.

Wait, our loved ones can suffer the effects of our Fallout? Yes and no. Your hero suffers the fallout—the self-doubts, the recriminations, and so on but the effect is that the loved one are removed temporarily from the picture, and the hero suffers for that lack in their lives.

Recovery

Recovering from fallout can take a very short time, or a very long one depending on the nature of the Fallout. Physical and Mental fallout recovers with a capability test each game session, if it is successful the hero drops the stress value associated with the fallout by half their die rating. Note, this is different than first edition, and deliberately so. An editor can always wipe stress and Fallout away at anytime. She is explicitly given that permission. However, if they don't choose to use it, a hero recovers based on their capabilities as above.

Other Fallout can be recovered based on the heroes actions. A lost loved one must be sought out, a broken relationship can be repaired, or eventually vanishes as the hero's broken heart heals. Duration on these elements simply take time and effort. No hard numbers can be given.

How do we keep track of Fallout?

When a Fallout is triggered from stress, all the current stress is dumped, only it doesn't vanish. Instead each fallout event should be recorded in the Fallout box on the character sheet with a parenthetical notation of how much stress that Fallout event “cost.” As the hero recovers from physical or mental stress they reduce that fallout value by half their die value of either Toughness or Willpower, depending on the nature of the Fallout. If the stress is something more amorphous like relationship troubles. Actions they take can reduce the fallout by a number decided by the Editor based on the actions they take. When there is no stress left with the Fallout they have completely recovered.

Each Fallout item can be tested, to see if it recovers each time a new test cycle comes up. Healing doesn't happen one injury at a time.

Permanent Fallout does not recover without intervention of super powers, super science, or experimental medical procedures., unless ruled otherwise by the Editor. (Things like Blindness, Lost Limbs etc.)

What does Fallout due in regards to new stress?

Your hero has a Fallout: Broken Arm (5), he hasn't yet healed anything and gets into a fight as a superhero and takes 3 more stress, how do fallout and stress interact? Quite simply. The normal threshold of the character is moved up to the Stress level of the Fallout. ***(It is never moved down in this situation.)*** So a hero with Broken Arm (5) would have to take 6 stress before his stress can be triggered except ***by player decision or his consent.*** Of course this only applies if the Fallout types are the same. A broken arm doesn't stop someone from having a bad day in a relationship, although they might get some sympathy for it. Most Fallout types are obvious—if there is a question discuss it with the Editor and make note of what type of Fallout they think their event covers.

Villains and Fallout

For the most part. Keeping track of villains Fallout is easy, they usually won't show back up after an adventure until they've recovered. If the adventure isn't over—being several issue arc, a huge crossover, or the like, it is up to the Editor to keep track of their Fallout. Easy enough to simply make a notation on his villain write-ups.

What happens to Stress that isn't turned into Fallout?

Unless the game session ends before the end of an “issue.” The stress is erased between game sessions. If the game ends early for whatever reason, it depends on the in-game time difference between the two game sessions. If the next game session takes place immediately after the previous one stress remains, otherwise it is erased. Not the Fallout levels though!

What does each Fallout level mean?

Since the amount of stress triggered for each even varies based on the Toughness/Resolve of the character. You should always look at these as “over” the Threshold of the character. Stress can be triggered before the Threshold level, but there is very little reason to do so, as it has little impacts.

Fallout Level	Suggested Fallout
Equal to or less than Threshold	Physical Bruises/Scratches Mental Distraction
Threshold +1	Bruised ribs, Temporarily stunned Knocked a short distance from conflict Jammed fingers, Unable to open eyes Ringing in the ears Tension Headache, Serious Distraction Emotional Distress (Weeping, Anger at wrong)

targets)

Threshold +2-+3	Serious Sprain/Minor Break Blinded or Deafened. Knocked far from conflict Uncontrollable rage or weeping, Withdrawing from current actions, unwilling or unable to respond. Stunned for several minutes Serious concussion
Threshold +4-+6	Serious break/Fracture Long term sensory impairment (Weeks/Months) Mentally Catatonic or Coma Temporary Mental Illness (Phobia, Depression, others lasting a week+)
Threshold +7 or Higher	Lost limb/Ruptured Organ Permanent loss of Sense (Barring super powers super science etc.) Death Permanent Mental Illness.

It should be noted again: Players can always trigger stress at any time for themselves to prevent it accruing to more serious levels and become long lasting Fallout. Of course these things also act as ongoing Trouble, each new piece of Fallout adding 1 stress per item. (Note: This is not per point of stress in the Fallout, merely for each fallout element.)

So Serious Bruise (2), Broken Arm (5), and Broken Rib (4) can only add 3 stress per action the hero takes. Together they form an impressive impairment until he heals a few of these.

Death

Death as mentioned elsewhere is an element we must consider uniquely to superhero comic book stories. In Hearts & Souls, death is set at the pitch (campaign creation.) Normally the switch is set one way and it isn't altered. Of course that doesn't mean that heroes (or villains) can't choose to die. Merely that the editor cannot kill off player characters, nor can the heroes kill off villains. Stages can be set and villains may look like they did, but should be examined closely—its probably a clone, robot, alternate reality duplicate, alien shapeshifter, or some other mad scheme to survive on the part of the villain.

Yet with death off the table, that doesn't mean characters can't be impaired for a long time with injuries: comas, broken backs, being trapped in another dimension, and so on. Many such things can happen, even when death is off the table. As usual it is good to discuss this too during the pitch.

Trouble

Trouble (formally Stress triggers) is a unique mechanical element you'll run into during character generation, something that can be rolled randomly, 'built' with the rules, only fashioned by the imagination of the player.

Trouble are essentially the game rules element that covers the character weaknesses, flaws, or problems. A Stress Trigger can be physical, emotional, mental, or social, essentially covering every aspect of a character. Normally speaking, they come along and make things more difficult for the hero, some not only make things more difficult but can also cause immediate Fallout that doesn't recover so long as the hero or villains Stress Trigger is present.

Below you'll find examples of Trouble, we'll also discuss how Trouble can be used positively by heroes against villains, or by heroes to help themselves get that last little push they need to face down a villain.

Physical Trouble:

Physical Limitations: Examples include poor eyesight, poor hearing, reduce movement from a limp, or paralysis and even blanket problems such as clumsiness with the hands can be covered.

. These weaknesses may be reduced by devices to assist them, but can't be eliminated by powers. Otherwise it wouldn't be a Stress Trigger. Albeit, having poor vision and wearing glasses or something similar is alright so long as the glasses are necessary even in heroic form, and can be lost or stolen in combat, thus activating the Trigger.

These Triggers simply cause more stress whenever the hero performs an action. One additional stress to any action they take.

Weaknesses: Such as weakness to certain elements both classical (Air, Earth, Fire and Water), or Scientific (Weakness to Iron, Silver, Uranium) as well as being weakened by exposure to special toxins, plants, animals, colors, and so on.

Although some weaknesses are unusual they all generate stress when the hero is exposed to it.

Typically this means they take One additional stress when exposed to the element and it ignores any defenses they have.

In some cases weapons fashioned of the material instantly cause Fallout as a wound, and exposure continues so long as it is in or near their body even when no actions are taken.

Additionally, some elements are so dangerous they generate stress that becomes accruing Fallout, generating stress for every mundane (and normally not rolled action) negating their powers, and debilitating as well as slowly killing the hero. Considering how dangerous this is, it is strongly considered the player choose a rare material or element to be considered. Handling this in play means as soon as the hero gains one stress it triggers Fallout, and this continues each time stress goes up, once per panel or scene.

Mental/Emotional Trouble:

Mental and Emotional Trouble are often harder to pin down and less obvious. Usually they cover phobias, social anxiety, mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder and so on. Rather than have specific rules for each of numerous mental issues, it is best to assume when they come up and effect play they cause additional stress. Since they overlap to a great degree they fall under the same heading.

It is a good idea to discuss these triggers at length with the entire play group. They can be dangerous to healthy, generous, game play, and in fact harm peoples fun.

Often such Trouble activate as Fallout that the hero cannot face. For example an extreme arachnophobia or fear of spiders, might stress the hero out and cause him to flee the area as soon as enough stress is accrued to over come his Willpower threshold.

In other cases the effect simply continues accruing stress and making things harder on the hero until some other event occurs. For ample social anxiety might cause a hero to flee, but might also cause them to curl up in the fetal position, break down and cry, or even over react to a situation causing negative consequences. What mental illness or limitations are allowed should be watched carefully, as at its core superhero games are about being heroes, exploring what that means in the human condition, and over coming the odds. Few people want to delve into these things too deeply.

It should also be noted that you can use real world versions of these illnesses, or simply take the common fictional versions. For example Multiple-Personality Disorder tends to be much more “fun” for villains in a story than the real world version. Allowing them to have both a good personality that is mild and helpful, and a malevolent one that is cruel and plotting to do evil. Real world versions rarely have such clear distinctions, and are not very fun at all.

For most Mental Trouble it is wise to have them generate the normal one stress when appropriate, plus have a Trigger.

Other Trouble in this category can be things such as Rage, Frenzy, and Emotional Problems, and the like.

Rage for example is the inability to control anger and lash out when stressed, often a common problem for villains, and a few border case heroes.

Frenzy is similar in many ways but usually is tied to lashing out once in battle and being unable to control oneself well, lashing out and numerous targets with extreme ferocity. Unlike other games, this does not mean a hero will take out allies, but does mean they may begin to lash out only to be stopped at the last second by returning control.

Emotional Problems are difficult, like mental problems above and have significant overlap. Many of these cause a character to be unable to judge appropriate limits in relationships, form good relationships, or know when to end one.

Sadly, often these kinds of problems tend to be used to plague female characters more often than male ones. Don't be that Editor! In fact if a player chooses such a trigger discuss with them what they want to do and how they want to handle it.

Examples of these emotional problems usually come from heroes choosing dangerous villains, their alter egos, or even heroes who don't really treat them right. Other problems can be similar such as not ending a relationship that is abusive with a Non-player character. **If your heroes are doing this, its not likely to be a fun game for someone! So as always, make sure first.**

Triggers like these are difficult to adjudicate, so as usual caution reigns supreme. In most circumstance these issues cause stress when active. One stress per panel/action the hero takes while present, but also have Fallout attached often similar to Mental problems. Causing uncontrollable Rage, Crying, or self destructive tendencies.

Social Triggers:

Every hero is required to have three Social Triggers of sorts. Two Personal relationships and One professional. These relationships are social triggers, but they aren't the only ones.

Powers

Powers are the special tricks, skills, and abilities a hero has that sets them apart from an ordinary action hero. They can be many and varied but tend to be thematic. In order to help characters fit their themes, a hero can replace a rolled power, or empty power choice with a bonus power. A hero may always trade any power for a power movement specific power (Teleport, Superspeed, etc.) If they do not already have one.

Absorption

Absorption allows the hero to draw energy of some form into themselves and have it do no harm. The mechanical handling of this is akin to most defense powers. They roll their power rank/scale and beat the incoming energies assigned Task Number.

Once absorbed a hero may then use this power to either boost an attribute, fire an energy attack of the same type (attack), and/or heal themselves (manipulation). How extensive the power is should be discussed with the Editor. Most heroes with this power can absorb a single type of energy. Rare instances occur where a broad spectrum of energy: Such as all kinetic energy or all radiant energy. Such extreme instances of the power should be watched closely.

Challenging a hero with this power is rather simple, utilize a form of attack they cannot absorb. It should be noted that certain kinds of martial arts (pressure points) and most grappling, despite using kinetic energy in limited form, are still functional against those who can absorb kinetic energy, due to their extra effects.

Bonus Powers: None.

Adaption

A hero with this power can adapt to extreme environmental variants. Primarily this applies to atmosphere, pressure, and temperature extremes. It can also defend against some environmental based attacks. Those that alter the above conditions in some way or mimic their effects. It works like most defensive powers. It is rolled against the incoming source of stress, and if it beats the assigned task number the stress from that source is ignored. *However, it can only adapt the hero after they've been exposed to the first incoming stress from an environmental effect.*

Some variants of the power allow the hero to adapt physically to some extremes that push the above boundaries. Such as adapting them physically to moving on top of snow, or swimming through magma. Other versions of this power allow them to adapt and resist to physical and energy attacks that are related to environmental hazards. Cold attacks, fire, and so on.

These extra effects can be discussed with the Editor.

Challenging heroes with this power is rather simple, they can only adapt to one environment/effect at a time, and switching the effect allows the Editor to make their life difficult.

Bonus Power:

Additional Limb

The hero possesses an extra limb. The form of this limb can vary from hero to hero. It can be extra arms, legs, a tail, wings and so on. The additional limb should have an effect comparable to other powers. Wings for example provide flight. Extra legs may provide increased running speed (superspeed) or leaping. A tail may allow a powerful bludgeon attack or allow the hero to manipulate things like a flexible extra arm. Utilize common sense, here with what a limb can do and how it works.

Generally speaking, when a hero has an extra limb it should be worked out with the Editor to make an interesting looking hero for comic book pages, not a disturbing one. Someone with extra legs may be a centaur, or they may have a fur covered tail. For the most part, heroes are impressive, and awe-inspiring not frightening. However, in some cases frightening may be the goal. Make sure it fits the pitch.

Challenging the wielders of extra limbs varies extensively depending on the way the limb works and what kind of limb they possess.

Bonus Power:

Affliction:

Typically this power is found more often in villains than heroes, Affliction, covers the ability to introduce poison, disease, aging, or similar effects to a character. Generally speaking the hero or villain should generate a specific Affliction, such as Affliction: Venom, or Affliction: Disease. How powerful the impact of the Affliction is depends on the power rank/scale and the stress it generates on an attack.

Often Affliction powers are tied to other attacks, such as touch, bites, stingers, and so on.

Bonus Power: Strike (to deliver the affliction), Additional Limb (to deliver the affliction)

Alternate Form:

Alternate form comes in a few varieties which we will discuss here. The primary concept of the power is that the hero becomes something else.

Animal Form:

A hero with the ability to take a single animal form with all their innate abilities, or a hybrid form mixing human features and animal traits. They tend to keep the best of both sets of features. Claws, wings, fangs, speech, whatever.

Players can choose to have either a single (all animal or all hybrid form) and their normal human form or have their hero able switch between their three forms: human, animal, and hybrid.

Animal form can be used to cover heroes who simply duplicate animal abilities (flight, strike, etc.) This version of the power usually has qualifiers such as 'only duplicate animal abilities nearby' or similar ideas.

Bonus Power: Growth or Shrinking for larger/smaller animals

Alter Ego:

The hero possesses an ordinary human form that has no powers and has human scale abilities. Typically the hero will have no physical abilities higher than Exceptional human rank.

However, their other form is a powered being with all the powers and enhanced attributes they normally possess.

Alter Ego provides several advantages, the notable ones being able to transform into costume when they wish, normally their human form shows no signs of superpowers to those looking for such traces, making hiding their superhuman nature easier.

The superhuman form also overcomes any physical weaknesses they normally possess. Since this also has aspects of being a weakness it is fair to let the hero pick another power to go along with this one that is owned by the powered alter ego.

For those wanting to simply change size. They should look to either Growth or Shrinking powers respectively.

Animal Communication:

A hero which has ability to speak with and understand animal forms of communication. Animals will tend to react favorably to those who can speak with them, but only marginally so if they don't have other reasons to trust the hero. The smarter the animal the easier it is to communicate with, however, even then most animals can only communicate basic information, and tend to be oriented to details tied to their nature and gathered with their better senses.

Higher ranks of course make it easier to get specific details, or ask for specific things.

Bonus Power: Alternate Form (Animal Form), Strike (Claws/Teeth),

Aquatic Powers

Aquatic abilities are a short set of powers that are commonly found on aquatic heroes, they can breathe underwater, swim efficiently, and have an easier time functioning underwater due to their powers. The rank is only important in those environments when challenged. However, typically aquatic heroes have enhanced Might and/or Toughness to go along with this so they can deal with pressure. It is suggested if they roll this power you use its rank for those capabilities, unless they've already been set higher than this power.

Armor:

The Armor power is the primary defensive power of many heroes. It covers those whose body is simply resilient to harm, on up to those heroes who utilize technological wonders such as power armor to protect them. Depending on the type of hero. Armor as a defensive power works as usual. Incoming attacks are rolled against, and if successful the hero avoids the effect, and any stress called for it so long as it is in the same scale.

Astral Projection:

An unusual power that allows the hero to project their astral form outside their body. The two are linked tightly. The heroes body goes into physiological state resembling a coma or very deep sleep.

Their astral form can fly, pass through solid objects, including most energy barriers and force fields unless they include psychic defenses, or magical ones.

In this form they have access to all their senses, but cannot interact with solid matter in any way. They cannot be heard, or perceived by anyone unless they possess mystic or psychic powers. The range of how far they may wander, or how long they may stay in this state depends on their power ranks. It should be noted that disturbing their body makes them instantly aware of the disturbance. If their body dies while they are outside it they become a spirit or ghost, trapped between life and death. If their Astral form dies, their body remains in an unbreakable coma.

Body Transformation:

The following powers are a close cousin in “Material Mimic” later on in this chapter. If you want your hero to become any material he can touch, use that power instead. The standard “Body Transformation” is the ability to take on the form of a substance that fits into one of the four categories of matter. Although the three most common are solids, liquids, and gases. A few heroes can also transform into a plasma state. A player may wish to shift into all possible states of matter, or may choose a single one. The single form Body Transformation if chosen should be bumped up to being comparable to a hero who has all forms of matter as an option.

The exact makeup of the forms they take are up to the player, with the Editors input and balancing of course. There are extreme variants that pop up in comics all the time.

For example: Red Army, a former Russian Communist, has this power. He body has been permanently transformed into that of a hundred thousand plus army ants, that mimic a human shape when needed. This provides him with all the abilities that implies. Allowing him to change his shape in limited ways, slink through cracks, and burrow into the Earth. It also provides him defenses and attacks a that meet up with being a horde of angry communist ants.

A hero may be permanently altered into one of the forms, but generally speaking that limits them in significant ways.

Gaseous Form:

The hero takes on the form of a gas, they can move at normal speeds in any direction, but may have difficulties with the wind. They can slide through tiny openings as a gas, they can choke (or drug/poison) their foes with their form if they can take on the form of those substances. Physical attacks tend to pass right through them, but energy, mental, and magical attacks still work normally. A powerful enough gust of wind can act as a harmful attack as well.

Liquid Form

The hero becomes amorphous and fluid, they can slither along the floor or walls at regular speeds, and can slip through small permeable membranes, and narrow openings. They have difficulty moving through other liquids. Physical attacks are ignored, but they still suffer from physical, mental, and magical attacks. They can be imprisoned in non-permeable containers, and electrical attacks tend to be improved against them in this form.

Plasma Form:

Rare in comics the heroes can become a living field of plasma. Free ions and electrons that carry and generate energy. The type of plasma can vary. A hero with plasma form can fly fairly swiftly, and deliver a powerful energy attack with a touch. They may also be able to unleash powerful bolts of energy as well.

Solid Form

A hero with this power can become a solid material, metal, wood, stone or similar substances. They can stay in that form for significant lengths of time. They tend to be slower than human form but still mobile, but this is not required (it can make a good Stress Trigger.) In this form the hero is very resilient to harm, and usually has enhanced Might.

All of these powers can be broken down in the normal format: Attack, Defense, Movement and Manipulation, with the proper explanations on the players part. Movement and Manipulation are rarer, but they can be explained.

Chameleon:

Also sometimes referred to as Blending the hero can match their skin (and in some cases their clothing) to the environment around them, essentially allowing them to blend in with near perfect camouflage. Heroes with this power can still be detected by means of scent, thermographic cameras, and the like. Typical use pits their power against the normal visual sense of their foe.

Computer Communication:

Through some means the hero can communicate to a computer at a distance. They may utilize the computer very much like someone on broadcast network. They tend to be quicker, and able to access slightly more data than traditional computer devices allow, but usually not by much.

Density Manipulation:

Density Manipulation allows the hero to alter their density by their power rank/scale. They can increase it gaining Armor and Might equal to their power rank/scale. Alternately, they can reduce their density, gaining a version of Phasing, and being able to float on air or walk on materials like water. When their density is reduced their Might ranks are reduced to human scale, even if they do not utilize the phasing component of this power.

Duplication

Duplication lets the hero, essentially spawn numerous copies of themselves, how many they can produce is dependent on the Rank/Scale and is reasonably abdicated by the Editor. Creating more than the "normal" number agreed upon, causes the hero stress like all power pushing. The duplicate has all skills, powers, and Trouble of the original. However, all stress they generate, goes back to their prime form, and can eventually overload the hero, or force them to drop clones to reduce stress.

Earthquake

Earthquake powers allow the hero to create artificial Earthquakes, as well as to trigger natural faults. They also possess the ability to negate those quakes, when needed. Natural quakes behave fairly typically. Artificial ones, tend to have some unique effects in comic books—typically allowing the hero to create sinkholes, surges of Earth, crevasses, and the like on demand. Unfortunately created these causes damage to the surrounding environment, and may get the hero in trouble. Materials that are not natural Earth and stone, may be effected if they take stress and roll their power rank/scale against a normal difficulty.

Elasticity:

Heroes blessed with Elasticity have malleable, putty or rubber like forms, they can stretch their limbs, bounce, perform limited changes to their shape and are highly resistant to physical harm. One of the classic superpowers that is rarely used because it seems “silly,” it is actually very robust and functional. How far a hero can stretch is determined by their rank/scale, as well as their resistance to harm.

Elemental/Energy Powers:

In most comics these powers work very similar to each other, they give the hero to control some elemental material, or some form of energy which they can use for a variety of varied effects. They may use the power to travel, to attack, to defend, and so on (use the traditional Attack, Defend, Movement, and Manipulation breakdown.)

Of course all effects are limited by both the Pitch, the player and the Editor, and of course power rank/scale.

There are numerous types of this power such as:

- Classic Elements (Air, Earth, Fire, Water)
- Broad Types (Atomic, Electrical, Light, Sound)
- Unusual Forms (Darkness, Weather, Gravity)

A hero should generally pick one effect and stick with it. It is unusual for heroes to possess more than one Elemental/Energy power, if they do it should of course be approved by the Editor, and make sense for the Pitch.

Empathy

The hero can sense emotions, this give them significant advantages in conversations, the ability to roughly detect truth from falsehood and go gauge a persons mental state with some accuracy. It does not allow them to control those emotions, for that they need the Emotion Control power. However, the two powers are often found together in the same hero.

Emotion Control

Emotion Control lets the hero seize control of another characters emotion and change them as they see fit. They can influence them subtly, or force change suddenly, depending on their personal style. It is common for some hero types to have a specific version of this power. Most often fear, and villains may have fear and/or love/lust influences—other forms of emotional control exist including the overarching power that allows the hero whatever emotional change they want, tampering with emotions much like mind control is best done in limited situations or the hero may find themselves sliding to more

villainous means. Changes to the emotional state are resisted by Willpower

Energy Blast

A classic power found in the power suites of numerous heroes. The power may generate a fine beam, a wide blast, an area explosion—all depending on the heroes initial choice (or as additional power stunts later.) What kind of energy makes up the blasts are as variable as its visual form—kinetic/force, lasers, heat, plasma, electricity, and so on. Generally speaking this is just a straightforward attack power, although some heroes have mastered its use for welding, moving objects or even defending themselves from others. Energy blasts work as all attack powers—generating stress until the defender fails to protect themselves, and then triggering Fallout in the forms of knock-back, stunning, and serious injury

Enhanced Senses

Enhanced Senses is the catch all power for sensory abilities that extend beyond the normal sense range, and type of sensory information that normal humans possess. The hero should be specific as to whether they possess an improved sense or senses, an unusual sensory ability (such as Radar Sense letting them “see” objects in a 360 degree area around them, or ESP letting them perceive things at great distances. In general all sensory abilities fall under this power. Typically speaking they have range and perceptual acuity based on the rank/scale of the power.

Entangle

A hero with this power can unleash a tangling attack. The form of the attack may be a net, sticky webbing, colorful streamers, or other visual special effect; which should be chosen at character creation. As usual the attack generates stress first, and the foe must have fallout (Entagled) triggered in order to capture a foe. Until that time the webbing either misses, or is torn through in an instant. Once captured the Entanglement will last until a new scene, or until the target generates enough Stress against the substance all at once to tear free. Treat the material as having the heroes power rank/scale as its toughness and defense.

Flight

Flight allows the hero to move through the air at speeds equal to their power rank/scale. If the rank/scale is sufficiently high (Exceptional Superhuman), they may generate sonic booms, or similar air burst effects as well as just flying as an power stunt.

Force Field

Force Field allows a hero to generate a defensive field of pure force—it can be defined as “stiffened air”, an energy screen, a telekinetic wall, and so on. It protect the hero from harm as other defensive powers, however the first Fallout a hero takes is applied to this power shutting down, before anything else occurs.

Healing

An unusual power in comic books, although it does occur it is not a common one. It operates by letting the heroes rank/scale be used as a recovery test against any injury related Fallout a person has, if successful they can wipe out all the Fallout accrued from an injury.

A form of this that allows mental healing as well as physical also occurs, and is often found tied to Telepathy.

Illusions

Heroes blessed with this power can generate Illusions, usually these impact all their foes senses. A limited form can be taken as a Stress Trigger. Visual or Visual/Auditory only could be called Holograms for example. In general they are true to the victim so long as the hero can pass test versus their resolve using this powers rank/scale as their Task Number.

Since powerful illusionist may trap a foe for some length of time, the victim should force re-tests every scene, if not more often due to too failure to take into account certain features or senses. (Don't forget to make the illusion have scents or it won't make any sense.)

Mental illusions also exist that project their “truth” directly into the targets mind. They function exactly the same way for all intents and purposes, but cannot be recorded by electronic sensors.

Invisibility

The hero becomes Invisible. It can be physical, mental, or work in another way but the effect means that they can't be seen. Under most circumstances the power does not protect them from other senses, but those can be added to make this power more robust if the Editor agrees. It is a normal test versus the foes senses/Resolve to see if they notice the hero.

Invulnerability to X

A hero with this power is absolutely immune to the defined effect. Generally speaking the effect is narrow, making them immune to a small number of hazards or powers. Common invulnerabilities are: Heat, Cold, Diseases, and Toxins. More broad versions of this ability do exist as well but the Editor has final approval on how much coverage they will allow this power to have. Examples of the broader forms cover: Psychic abilities, kinetics, and similar broader sources of harm. Unlike most powers this power has no rank or scale. While the power itself can be tampered with by outside forces, as long as the power is in effect the hero is immune to all things which fall under the powers immunities.

Immortality

A rare power found only rarely in comic books, typically its short hand for simply “long lived,” but true immortality as a power means both long lived, and eternally youthful. In general terms a hero with this power does not age past the prime of their youth. For human-like beings that generally means around the visual age of twenty, although exceptions exist. Immortality does not prevent further harm to the hero by outside forces, albeit most Immortals possess additional powers related to Immortality that help keep them alive, or even recover from wounds at an increased rate.

Leaping

Leaping allows the hero to make superhuman jumps and cover a great amount of distance with each leap. This power is always equal or greater in rank and scale than the heroes Might, as it also allows them to make enhanced jumps.

Life Support

A hero blessed with this power can survive in extreme pressures, and needs no additional atmospheric support. Meaning they can survive in space, underwater, or in other environments without harm. The power can be used as a defense at its rank and scale, against attacks which simulate those effects. Some versions of this power also prevent the need for eating, and sleeping.

Magic

Magic is a shorthand form for any number of powers with a vast amount of flexibility. In most circumstances the power can do anything, but is required to have a few limitations put on it to keep it interesting in both comic books and role-playing games. Magic Powers may be called Magic, Cosmic Energy Manipulation, Gadgetry, or the like, depending on the particular heroes theme and other powers.

Magic lets you mimic any other power or capability in the game. It varies in flavor and form of course for example a Life Support Gadget may be a breathing mask, while the same power using magic, may be an incantation to primal force, and cosmic energy control its a manipulation of basic life functions.

In its simplest form, the hero can roll its rank and scale against a difficulty to generate/create a specific power like effect. Limited to its theme, and other elements that make up the power.

Common limits this power is usually given are: Power requires speaking (Magic), Power requires physical resources such as a utility belt (Gadgetry), power requires a Resolve Roll to activate (Magic, Cosmic Energy Manipulation.) Power will not work against a certain color, or certain material (Magic, Cosmic Energy Manipulation.) Power requires extra time (Gadgetry, Magic), Power can be easily countered by other powers/abilities (All forms.)

It is encouraged that all limits be worked out before play between the Editor and Player.

Material Mimic

Material Mimic allows the hero to duplicate the physical nature of any material they come in contact with, or in a few cases the hero may be able to mimic materials they have seen or simply heard about, depending of course on the powers description and fitting in with the Editors pitch.

A hero who mimics a material takes on the features of such a material within the limits of their power rank and scale. They cannot truly duplicate a material that has a strength higher than their power rank/scale, but they may copy it up to that point. Heroes who duplicate rubber may gain the Elasticity power, one who duplicates metal may become resilient as the metal and super strong. In general its wise to go with the rule of cool here. If it would be cool to become a flaming magma person (and it fits their rank/scale) let it happen.

Mind Control

Mind control is another one of those borderline cases, its most commonly found in super villains, not super heroes. Albeit there may be instances where a player may indeed have a good idea for a hero with mind control. Like most powers, the hero must stress out a foe in order to put them under their thrall. Once controlled the victim will do most things the hero commands without a second thought. However, things truly against the victims nature (surrendering, hurting themselves) will force the hero to have to roll again in order to maintain their control. Many heroes with Mind Control, also possess Telepathy.

Molecular Alteration

Molecular Alteration allows the hero to manipulate the molecular structure of objects. They can shift stats of matter, or rearrange molecules of materials into new materials. The exact methods vary from controlling atomic bindings to alchemical magic shifting with philosopher stone like influences. The exact effects of molecular manipulations should be determined by the Editor. However, like most powers the players desires should be accounted for in the powers use. Examples include: Nullifying radiation, imprisoning foes by turning the oxygen in the air into another substance, and so on. The

limits really are the imagination and the sense it makes for the game.

Paralysis

The hero can paralyze a foe, this can mean either making them fall limp to the ground, or essentially freeze in place, either way the character cannot move or react, but are usually aware of their surroundings and what is going on. Like other attacks a Paralysis attack must generate enough stress to trigger Fallout, notable in this case “Paralysis.”

Phasing

Phasing allows the hero or other character to become immaterial and pass through solid objects. They may also use this power as a defense. In effect the character is immune to damage from physical objects without special properties, and most energy attacks for as long as they are in a phased state. It is important to note that some energies may interrupt phasing (a common one is Electricity.) However such limits are Trouble as usual, and should be recorded. Mental and Magical attacks tend to ignore the defense aspect of phasing and injure the hero anyway.

Pilfer Power

Pilfer Power is sometimes called Power Theft, or Power Absorption, the power works the same way no matter what it is called. The hero can steal (temporarily) the powers that another posses. They lose access to their super powers, while the power is “stolen,” and the character with this power possesses it instead.

Of course this has limitations, its typical range is touch.

It cannot duplicate powers higher rank/scale than itself without causing stress to the character utilizing this power. Treat such circumstances as an attack of the stolen power for stress purposes but the Fallout knocks the pilferer unconscious if they take too much stress.

If they manage to stay conscious while the pilfer process is going on (one panel typically) the hero may use the pilfered power but only at the rank/scale of their own Pilfer Power. Powers absorbed by this ability vanish after a page or two of action returning to the original owner.

Multiple powers may be stolen in this way at a time, but for each additional power, an action they perform which causes stress adds an additional point of stress as the powers strain the users body.

Power Duplication

A hero possessing this power can copy any power they have witnessed in person, although a few rare occurrences of this power allows the person to also copy ability scores instead of or in addition to the powers they copy. Unlike Pilfer Power above, the hero doesn't steal the abilities but simply makes their own version of them. All powers they duplicate last a few pages at most, and have a rank/scale equal to either power duplication or the copies powers original rank/scale whichever is lower.

Plant Abilities

Plant abilities are a rather broad sort of powers loosely tied to the theme of being plant. Specifics vary but typically it gives one photosynthesis, the ability to communicate with plants, and often regeneration of limbs. Other powers such as pheromones, elasticity or thorns are possible. Its best to describe the sub powers clearly, but they all fall under the “Plant” theme. Heroes with this power often have Plant Control, below.

Plant Control

Plant control allows the hero to force plants to do their bidding. Since plants aren't usually considered sophonts, they usually do what is demanded without trouble. An intelligent plant would have to be stressed out as a character, unless they were asked or were already willing to act in the manner of the Plant Controller. Plant control also allows the user to imbue plants with additional abilities—most common are movement, and enough awareness to act much like mind controlled people. It also allows the controller to grow them from seed to full size in moments, or even make giant versions depending of course on the rank/scale of Plant Control.

Precognition

Precognition is the ability to see the future. How far into the future depends on the rank/scale of the power as well as the agreement of the Editor. One thing to note is that the future is changeable from the point it is seen, so what is seen may change as characters act. A common stunt of precognition is a form of forewarning of danger, letting a character know trouble is coming ahead of time. A rarer but often useful stunt is supplanting an attack skill or capabilities with precognition by for-seeing a foes actions.

Probability Control

Probability control is an unusual power in that it allows the hero to shift the odds in their favor. Most often this is used in a method to give them good luck. Some heroes can give an opposing character bad luck, and a few can do both.

When providing good luck, the hero adds an additional die to the heroes die pool for every scale (Human/Superhuman/Planetary/Cosmic) that he has in this power. Ranks do not matter in this circumstance because luck can only do so much.

When providing bad luck the power generates stress like any other attack power, and can be triggered to have catastrophic bad luck Fallout. Such as causing their foe to fall through the floor, their gun to jam, or other such cases of extreme bad luck.

Like any power when an NPC foe has it, it simply makes things harder on the heroes, raising the scale of their actions to this powers rank/scale, if it isn't already that level of difficulty or higher.

Reflection

Blessed with this power a hero can reflect ranged energy attacks, usually they are reflected away from the hero but not towards anyone else. In some circumstances the hero may perform a power stunt to reflect the attack back at the initiator. Usually, the hero can only reflect one specific form of directed energy, albeit if this is one of the heroes few powers the Editor may let them expand its ability to reflecting all energy types (except pure kinetic energy.) Depending on the power level of the game the Editor can off course allow the power to impact other types of attacks—kinetic attacks, melee strikes, and so on.

The power can never reflect wrestling style techniques, or powers which effect the environment of the hero (such as removing their air, or increasing gravity.)

It performs like other defensive powers in requiring a rank/scale roll in order to perform its functions.

Regeneration

The regeneration power is one of the passive powers that does not normally work until certain outside conditions are met, it can't be "turned on" because it is always active for the hero except in extreme circumstances. Regeneration speeds up the heroes recovery, reducing Fallout that is related to physical injury. They may roll this powers rank/scale against the injury the very next panel, and if successful they reduce the stress in the injury by their rank threshold. They may do this once per panel. Of course since stress may exceed their rank/scale, it may require them to heal some of their wounds naturally before regeneration can cope.

Resistance

Resistance works a lot like Armor, but usually against one specific type of power or condition. Its essentially a scaled down version of Invulnerability to X, for those who are simply resistant rather than completely immune. Functioning like armor mechanically it allows the hero to roll to resist the effect of whatever they've named as their resistance. Examples include: Resistance to Fire, Resistance to Cold, Resistance to Disease and so on.

Shapeshifting

A broad number of powers fall under the shapeshifting umbrella. Primarily they're a bunch of similar powers that usually allow for a limited type of changing shape. The most common are listed below, and generally should be used to as examples from which to extrapolate other types.

-Animal

Animal shapeshifting allows the hero to become an animal or animals. If they can become a variety of animals they gain the specific stats of that animal, and its general powers and abilities. A bird would gain flight and acute vision, and a lion would have claws, teeth and night vision among other abilities.

See the standard foes list for the capabilities of many animals.

In some cases the hero may only be able to take the form of a single animal. For this see the Alternate Form: Animal, for details.

-Individual Mimic

Sometimes this form of the power is simply called "Doppelganger," the hero in question can assume all the physical features of another human or near human being. How exact they become depends on their successfully rolling a check of this powers rank/scale, with a success indicating an exact duplicate down to retinal patterns and fingerprint. Unfortunately they cannot mimic the DNA, as any DNA they leave behind will tend to become corrupted very quickly as it returns to its natural state.

-Objects

Shapeshifting of this kind allows the hero to mimic mundane everyday objects, how functional those items may be depends on the rank/scale of the power, and the difficulty set by the Ed. Under most circumstances the hero can still perceive their surroundings, and damaging the item is treated as an attack on their normal form. (Example becoming a glass lamp doesn't make the hero more fragile.)

In high end games, a hero may possess all three versions of shapeshifting.

Size Change

Size change allows a hero to alter their physical size, either growing taller and gaining proportionate weight, or shrinking and losing proportionate weight for their size. A few heroes may both grow and shrink.

-Growth

The hero becomes larger, each rank/scale allows greater size alteration, albeit it isn't always easily fixed as a hero can take stress to push themselves to larger sized. A growing hero increases his strength to this powers rank/scale at his largest size. Lower increases may be allotted for smaller height increases.

Human Scale: Approx up to 12' Tall

Superhuman scale: Anywhere up to 30' Tall

Planetary Scale: 30+' Tall

Cosmic Scale: Larger than a Planet.

Remember these are approximations, and a hero may vary a bit from these examples. Typically their weight is unimportant, except for highly realistic takes on the comic book superhero genre.

Note: Cosmic Scale does not imply the hero growing larger than his or her planet can survive in space. They need other powers for that.

-Shrinking

Imbued with the ability to shrink a hero can reduce their size and weight proportionally. This tends to reduce their strength, but a few heroes (The Flea) still have significant strength thanks to their powers.

Human Scale: Down to 1' tall (Reduce Might by 3 ranks/Low)

Superhuman Scale: Down to 1/10 inch tall. (Reduce Might to Low)

Planetary Scale: Atomic Scale (Unable to interact with normal objects)

Cosmic Scale: Transfers to Protoverse. (Unable to interact with normal objects.)

Note: The reduction in Might is only in relation to normal objects. In the Protoverse, a hero would maintain his or her Might in proportion to Protoverse residents.

Strike

The hero has some ability to inflict more severe injuries than their Might indicates. It could be a special martial arts technique, razor sharp claws, goring horns, or whatever. Given that its more efficient way of harming someone it should be at least one rank higher than their Might.

They may use this as an attack power, and can use the power to damage objects and create wounds via stress and fallout.

Swinging

A movement power, often tied to Entangling. The power can be described as webs, grapple line, or even elastically stretching ones arms to swing through the local environment at a greater speed than walking. Typically the hero launches the swing-line (whatever it may be,) and then uses it to generate momentum and height as they swing. The power works best in an urban or forested environment, but it is not limited to that, so long as the player can come up with a way to make it function in less vertically congested environments.

Superspeed

A very flexible movement power. A hero blessed with superspeed can cover a great distance due to moving at high speeds. A hero can cross greater and greater distances at higher speeds depending on the rank of the power. If a comparison is needed the player or Ed, may take a look at the rank/scale chart to give you an idea of what a given rank and scale represent in this power. This power allows the hero to do more than just move, however, it allows for the general power breakdown—making attacks at superspeed, re-arranging the environment and so on.

Superskill

Super Skill power is not a true power in the normal sense of the word. In essence it represents a heroes supreme mastery of a skill or set of related skills, putting them on par with those who do have super powers. Superskill is applied to numerous things and should always be at least one rank higher than the heroes Agility Capability (if the skill relies on agility) or their Knowledge Capability (if it relies on that attribute.)

Telekinesis

Telekinesis allows the hero to move objects with their mind. In general this means they can reach out and manipulate or move objects at a distance with ease, based on their powers rank and scale which shapes the effectiveness of all aspects of the power. Telekinesis like most powers can break down into the normal: Attack, Defense, Movement, and Manipulation aspects. Powerful telekinetics can fly, put up force fields and fire off kinetic bolts with some power.

Telepathy

Telepathy allows the hero to reach into other people's minds, they can read surface thoughts, probe memories, and ferry out secrets with ease. Albeit their opponent can resist with their Willpower and drive. Telepaths generally have a strong moral code against misuse of their power, and in some cases it may be considered criminal. The power can be broken down into the usual profiles, but slanted to the mental area. For example telepathic movement is a form of Astral Travel.

Teleportation

The ability to move without physically crossing the intervening space. The method of teleportation doesn't matter so much as its rank/scale in regards to how far and fast the hero can move. Some heroes simply vanish and reappear, other step through doorways, or jump via shadows. Teleportation can be broken down as normal into the Attack/Defense/Movement/Manipulation profiles.

Temporal Manipulation

An unusual power compared to many, the hero can alter time. The exact nature of “how much” is left to the Editor and player to work out as messing with time can seriously impact the game. Typical application include speeding up or slowing down time, allowing the hero to perform seemingly miraculous things in a small amount of time. Speeding up time they might cause a plant to grow, or an object to decay, they might cut a radioactive isotope's half-life and the like. Slowing down time (to everyone but them) would allow them to move and act as if they had superspeed. Other effects of course are possible like time travel and tampering with timelines and thwarting paradox. Of course there may be dangerous forces out there to derail or correct such tampering.

Often time travel is a common comic book happening, and it may change history, or it may generate alternate realities which splinter off from the original timeline—these are things in the purview of the Editor and how they see the game going.

Tunneling

Tunneling allows the hero move through the ground (stone, earth, or rock.) The power can either collapse the tunnel after them, or leave a tunnel others can use. The rank and power covers what materials and what speed they can move through. Lower ranks can move through softer/more loose materials where higher ranks can bore through solid materials at a decent speed.

Wall-Crawling

Wall Crawling allows the hero to move across vertical surface as normal speed. Similar to a gecko or a spider. A simple power but useful in the right environments.

Power Breakdowns:

Many powers can have multiple features or functions, so having just one power isn't all that limiting. A few powers work differently enough they can't be broken down into these features, but many of them can.

The power functions are: Attack, Defense, Movement, and Manipulation. Each one of these aspects tends to work as detailed below.

Attack

The power allows the hero to generate an attack of some form, the attack generates stress and fallout per the normal rules. The nature of the attack of course decides what powers or capabilities can resist, block or defend against it, as well as what kind of fallout the power is likely to generate. For example: Elemental Control (Fire) generates flame that can set things on fire and do serious fire and heat damage. Fire attacks can be resisted by many powers as normal, from phasing to resistances.

Defense

The defense function of a power allows the hero to resist stress and fallout generated by an attack.

Defenses can be fairly narrow for some powers and wide for others. The standard function of this aspect of a power is to roll vs incoming attacks. If successful, the hero takes no stress. If it fails they take the stress generated by the power or capability. If they don't defend they take the stress and immediate fallout based on the attack.

Movement:

Movement powers and movement aspects of powers allow the hero to move themselves, or in some cases others. The exact speed depends on the rank and scale. In some cases a power can limit or impair movement. (The Entangle power is an example of this.)

Manipulation:

Manipulation is a somewhat catch all aspect of the powers breakdowns. Typically it applies to shaping or impacting the environment. Brewing up fog with weather control to hide within, shaping a golem to attack your foes with Earth control, and so on. The Editor assigns a TN for the difficulty of the power, and the hero must match or exceed it to have the effect they want.

Character Generation

Hearts & Souls will provide multiple ways to generate superhero characters, w

Method 1: Guided Character Generation (INCOMPLETE)

Step One: Negotiate the Pitch.

Negotiate the style of play with the group. Paying heed to both the players desires and the Editor's Pitch. Alter details as necessary to create a plan for the optimal play experience. Decide whether the style of play will be Grim and Gritty, Cinematic, Four Color, Animated or some combination of those styles.

Grim and Gritty

Superheroes suffer real world problems, and struggle between their desire to do good, and all the limitations around them. Grim and Gritty games tend to be lower powered, and ordinary weapons can be dangerous, even lethal to the heroes. Powers often have side effects and operate in less fantastic manner. Heroes tend to be vigilantes, wanted by the law even as they fight (usually) worse criminals.

Morality tends to be flexible, and heroes often kill as well as break laws without restraint or regard for those around them. In this style of game a hero or villain who is killed they are not going to return unlike most stories.

Comics produced during the Dark Age (sometimes referred to the Iron Age), often fit this mold. They have an increased focus on the violence, sex and mature themes.

Cinematic

Cinematic style play refers to high energy, high action style of play, a focus on imagery in a style often found in films. Despite its often high energy and action style, cinematic style games often simplify details of things found in comic books. The plots are often simpler, and many things are glossed over in order to make play flow well. Things like travel time and distances are compressed. Cinematic style games tend to not refer to anything outside of their own presented continuity—thinks like characters are simplified to make sense within the terms of the “movie,” and won't refer to extraneous characters unless absolutely necessary. Technology may be advanced but presented a bit more believable by movie going offices. Jets rather than flying cars, organic web shooters instead of a teenager creating their own super science gadgets and so on. Now none of these things are absolute, but they are elements that trend true in certain styles of play. Cinematic play often has slightly less “black and white” morality, but it still usually presents the good guys as being correct, or if mistaken, able to correct their views and shine through against their malign foes.

Four Color

Four color play generally refers to Silver Age comic books, and those that follow similar stylings. They tend to have a black and white morality. Four Color play is both full of action, dialogue, soap opera elements, and gaudy super villains. Heroes win, in the end, and usually do not have to sacrifice their personal views in order to do so. Often the choices

Method 2: *Thumbnail Background Method*

Step 1: Choose or Roll Drive

Rank

Random H&S PC Generator Totally Random Chart

Roll 2d6 for each stats

Table 1: Ranks

2-8	Average
9-11	Exceptional
12	Spectacular

Scale:

Roll appropriate dice for the character as decided in the Pitch

1d6 for Human Scale Games,

1d8 for Superhuman,

1d10 for Planetary,

1d12 for Cosmic

Table 2: Scales

Roll appropriate dice for scale the GM has assigned for each attribute (1d6 for Human, 1d8 for superhuman, 1d10 for Planetary, 1d12 for cosmic)

1-5	Human
6-8	Superhuman
9-10	Planetary
11-12	Cosmic

Background Thumbnail

Each bracketed term should be filled in by choosing a word or term, or rolling one on the chart below. Choose or Roll 2d6 on the Table below.

Table 3: Background Thumbnail

2-3 Born with or developed {powers} and {Abilities} due to {Detail 3}

4-5 During an {Event} (name) was {Change} by a/an {Detail 1} which gave them {Powers} and {Abilities}

6-7 (Name) invented/created a/an {Device} which has/gives {Powers} and also gives {Abilities}

8-9 (Name) discovered/was given/stole a/an {Device} which grants them {Powers} and {Abilities}

10-11 After a {Tragic Event} (name) {detail 2} and now uses {Skills} and {Abilities} to fight crime

12 Combine two, rolling for powers/skills or abilities only once.

Once the player has generated their sentence go to the appropriate tables for the “blanks” as indicated above.

Event

- 2 Ordinary Day
- 3-4 Science Experiment/Fair
- 5-6 Military Test
- 7-8 Archeological Dig
- 9-10 Mystic Event
- 11-12 Cosmic Confluence

Change

- 2-3 Power Surge
- 4-5 Imbued/Transformed/Empowered
- 6-7 Bitten/Stung or Attacked
- 8-9 Empowered/Mutated
- 10-11 Driven to Discover
- 12 Killed and Reborn/Rebuilt

Detail 1

- 2-3 Alien Being
- 4-5 Animal/Creature
- 6-7 Natural Disaster
- 8-9 Device
- 10-11 Accident
- 12 Cosmic Forces

Detail 2

- 2 was trained by aliens
- 3-4 trained alone
- 5-6 trained with secret group
- 7-8 traveled the world
- 9-10 trained in the military
- 11-12 experiment on themselves

Detail 3

- 2 eugenics
- 3-4 natural mutation
- 5-6 genetic engineering
- 7-8 being exposed to event
- 9 inheriting it from parents
- 10 is an alien being

Abilities

- 2-5 Special Gear (See Gear table)
- 6-10 Superskill
- 11-12 Unusual Body Features

Device

- 2-4 Beam/Ray/Emission
- 5-7 Armored Suit
- 8-9 Weapon
- 10-11 Common Item (Vehicle, Jewelry, etc)
- 12 Other Device

Tragic Event

- 2 Home Destroyed
- 3-4 Family Killed/Seriously Injured
- 5-7 Significant Other Killed/Seriously Injured
- 8-9 Nearly Killed or Seriously Injured.
- 10-11 Imprisoned
- 12 Combine Two of the Tragedies below

Powers

Roll appropriate dice for the character as decided in the Pitch

1d6 for Human Scale Games,

1d8 for Superhuman,

1d10 for Planetary,

1d12 for Cosmic

Number of Powers

1-3 1 Power

4-5 2 Powers

6-8 3 Powers

9-10 4 Powers

11-12 5 Powers

In order to determine the power rank of a power see the Ranks/Scale charts above, it works just like a Capability roll. Although the Editor

Note: A Hero can always give up a power or an enhanced attribute for a Movement power.

Common Powers

Common Powers are those which occur fairly regularly in comic books. These powers are often fairly diverse in natures despite their regular appearances in the pages of comics.

Roll 2d6 to determine which power the hero possesses.

2-5 Defense Powers

6-9 Body Alteration Powers

10-11 Gear

12 Superskill

Uncommon Powers

Uncommon powers are a bit more unusual in nature, they are found in superhero comics often enough, but don't tend to have many occurrences on the page.

2-5 Energy/Elemental Powers

6-9 Psychic Powers

10-11 Animal/Plant Powers

12 Magic Powers

Rare Powers

The following powers usually require a specific character type, that the player must desire to play, it is suggested you let the player re-roll the following powers if they don't care for the hero they create.

- 2-5 Paralysis/Entangle
- 6-9 Power Duplication or Power Pilfer
- 10-11 Molecular Alteration
- 12 Temporal Manipulation

Unique Powers

- 2-5 Aquatic Powers
- 6-9 Strike
- 10-11 Probability Control
- 12 Create Your Own

Defensive Powers

- 2-5 Armor
- 6-9 Absorption
- 10-11 Adaptation
- 12 Reflection

Body Alteration Powers

- 2-4 Invisibility or Phasing
- 5-7 Alternate Form or Body Transformation
- 8-9 Size Change
- 10-11 Shape Changing
- 12 Material Mimic

Gear

- 2-5 Gadgets (see Magic)
- 6-9 Special Item
- 10-11 Vehicle
- 12 Pet/Companion

Movement Powers

- 2-3 Teleportation
- 4-5 Flight
- 6-7 Leaping
- 8-9 Swinging
- 10-11 Superspeed
- 12 Unusual Movement (Tunneling, Spinning)

Superskill

- 2-6 Combat Skill (Thrown Weapons, Archery, Firearms and so on.)
- 7-9 Acrobatics/Gymnastics
- 10-11 Invention/Engineering
- 12 Knowledge Skill (Surgery, Tactics, Lore, Physics, etc.)

Energy/Elemental Powers

- 1-5 Energy Blast
- 6-8 Energy Control
- 9-11 Elemental Control
- 12 Earthquake

Psychic Powers

- 1-4 Telepathy
- 5-7 Telekinesis
- 8-9 Enhanced Senses
- 10-11 Precognition
- 12 Astral Projection

Animal/Plant Power

- 2-6 Chameleon
- 7-8 Animal Communication
- 9-10 Alternate Form (Animal)
- 11-12 Plant Abilities

Once all attributes and powers are rolled the hero should create at least three Trouble—Relationships they have with others. Two personal and one professional. They may either be applied to superheroic or mundane identities.