MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS

MASTERMIND'S MANUAL

STEVE KENSON · GREEN RONIN PUBLISHING

MASTERMIND'S MANUAL

A GREEN RONIN PRODUCTION

MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS

Printed in Canada

T A B L E   O F   C O N T E N T S

REFERENCE TABLES

INTRODUCTION

Most comic book universes are actually multiverses, infinities of parallel worlds where anything is possible. One of the goals of *Mutants & Masterminds* is to allow for infinite worlds of superhero roleplaying, where different rules may apply in each world. Of course, the task of creating entire worlds can be a daunting one, even for the experienced Gamemaster.

Enter the *Mastermind's Manual*. This book is a collection of expanded, optional, and more-detailed rules for your *M&M* games, along with helpful advice and suggestions for Gamemasters. With this book you can create exactly the kind of *M&M* game you want to run.

RULES OPTIONS & VARIANTS

No single game system suits everyone's needs and interests, and *M&M* is no exception. As you read and play *M&M* you may find some rules or game systems work better for you and your group than others do. You might wish to modify or add to the rules given in the core rulebook, adjusting them to better suit your preferred style of play. By all means, please do! One of the advantages of roleplaying games is that the rules are not fixed, and you can change them to suit you.

With the goal of modifying and fine-tuning the *M&M* rules in mind, the *Mastermind's Manual* presents a wide range of rules options and variants for your consideration. In general terms, an option is an additional rule, usually providing more detail and depth at the cost of some additional complexity, dice rolling, or bookkeeping (or all of the above). A variant is a way of handling certain aspects differently from the standard rules, which may suit alternate campaigns or styles of play. Options work in conjunction with the core rules given in the *M&M* rulebook, while variants change them in different ways.

Feel free to try any or all of these options and variants to see if they suit your game. Keep in mind you don't need to use any of the rules options or variants contained in this book. They are ultimately all optional. While other *M&M* products may refer to these optional or variant rules in cases where they're appropriate, they will otherwise assume the options and variants discussed in this book are not in use, focusing on the core game rules.

Don't let the wealth of options in this book overwhelm you. There are a lot here, but there's also no way you can possibly use them all, if only for the fact that some of the options are mutually exclusive! Don't try plugging everything in the *Mastermind's Manual* into your *M&M* game at once; you'll just overload it (and your players!). Take the time to read the book over carefully, and select the specific rules options and variants you feel will enhance your game. Add them in gradually and feel free to "playtest" them a bit before you make them a regular part of your *M&M* series.

OPTIONAL RULES AND FIRST EDITION M&M

The *Mastermind's Manual* contains all the options and variants necessary to use your first-edition *M&M* characters and materials in conjunction with the second edition of the game; just plug in the right rules. In general, if a rules option is based on something from the first edition of the game, this is noted in the text. This allows you to choose which elements of the second edition of *M&M* to use in your game and stick to the way the first edition did things in some cases, if you prefer. You might use some, all, or even none of the new or optional rules in this book, as best fits your game and your group's play style.

RULES FROM OTHER GAMES

On occasion, you might want to borrow rules or traits from other games to use in *M&M*. This is just fine, so long as you keep in mind that rules balanced for different games aren't always suited to *M&M*. You may have to do some tinkering and playtesting to make the borrowed rule a good fit and to make sure that it doesn't unbalance things. That said, it's fairly easy to import other rules from similar RPGs, especially traits like skills and feats, giving you additional resources you can use in your *M&M* games.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Like *Mutants & Masterminds*, the *Mastermind's Manual* is organized into chapters covering the major aspects of the game, starting with hero creation, proceeding through equipment and devices, then combat and finally gamemastering and related topics. The breakdown of the book is as follows.

Chapter 1 covers the basic game rules and mechanics and looks at options for changing these, including using different sorts of dice and even playing cards as randomizers.

Chapter 2 looks at ability scores, including saving throws and modifiers associated with abilities. It provides different ways of calculating and using those modifiers.

Chapter 3 focuses on skills, including new uses for old skills, optional new skills (and how to add new skills to your game), and a number of skill options and variants, including skill synergy and extended checks.

Chapter 4 is about feats, from creating your own feats to using some powers as feats and importing feats from other games. It also offers a number of optional feats for use with some of the other options in this book.

Chapter 5 looks at powers in greater detail. In particular, it covers power design and creation and more advanced options like variable powers.

Chapter 6 is on various characteristics, including hero points and extra effort. It also offers options like reputation and taint (the slow deterioration of a character for various reasons).

Chapter 7 has devices and equipment, from technology levels to vehicle combat, pursuit, and options for inventing, proficiency, and wealth.

Chapter 8 offers options for customizing combat, including tactical movement, attacks of opportunity, combat challenges, and damage variants.

Chapter 9 looks at gamemastering, the effects of the environment, the legal system, and how to run the game.

The *Mastermind's Manual* concludes with Frequently Asked Questions and Errata & Corrections appendices to update the core rulebook with the latest information and a checklist of all the options and variants in the book.

CHAPTER 1: THE BASICS

This chapter focuses on the basic elements of *M&M*, from using only the bare bones of the game system to a number of add-ons and variations on the basic rules you can utilize to change the style and flow of the game. This includes some variant resolution rules, using different types of die rolls, different dice, or alternate randomizers like playing cards.

This chapter also includes templates, hero creation and advancement options, and a look at power level variations, from different power point totals to doing away with power level altogether!

JUST THE BASICS

It's quite possible to play *M&M* using just the basic systems given in the Introduction of the rulebook, along with the essential combat rules from Chapter 8, ignoring the more detailed modifiers and rules options. Take a look at the Essentials of *Mutants & Masterminds* section at the beginning of the Gamemastering chapter of *M&M* for a summary of the game's core mechanics.

In this rather freewheeling style of play, you can ignore the specifics of more detailed mechanics like combat modifiers and certain powers. Just apply modifiers for circumstances as needed in combat and use the power descriptions as broad guidelines rather than specific limits on what characters can and can't do. In particular, you can use the guidelines for opposed checks to resolve many conflicts just by choosing two opposing traits (abilities, skills, powers, and so forth).

BASIC RULES OPTIONS & VARIANTS

The options and variants in this section have a significant impact because they alter some of the fundamental ways in which the game is played. A few (like stunt bonuses and automatic success and failure) are fairly minor, but most affect nearly every game situation. Consider these options carefully before adopting them. You may want to try a "test" game or two using a variant before including it in the campaign permanently.

STUNT BONUSES

Exciting descriptions and actions are part of what makes *M&M* games enjoyable. Characters in *M&M* are heroes, so they should do the kinds of things heroes do in the comic books. Awarding hero points is one way of promoting this; the more challenges the heroes face with aplomb, the more hero points they earn.

Another means of encouraging interesting actions and descriptions is by awarding stunt bonuses. Essentially, when a player comes up with an interesting action or describes a hero's action in a fun and exciting way, the GM can assign a bonus for "positive conditions" between +1 and +3 (or so) to any check associated with the action. For defensive actions, the GM may assign the stunt bonus to the character's Defense score instead.

Alternately, in place of a check or defense bonus, the Gamemaster can choose to grant a free use of extra effort (see the Characteristics chapter of *M&M*) as a bonus for a particularly innovative or well-described stunt. Among other things, this can provide free power stunts to the heroes, encouraging players to attempt them more often and giving the game a more freewheeling style.

Assignment of stunt bonuses is entirely at the GM's discretion, but Gamemasters should be liberal in handing them out to encourage dramatic action in the game. The more stunt bonuses you grant, the more likely players are to take actions to earn them.

AUTOMATIC SUCCESS AND FAILURE

When a player rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, it's an automatic miss. When a natural 20 is rolled, it's an automatic hit. This is not normally the case with other kinds of checks. A natural 1 will probably result in a failure, but not necessarily if the character has a bonus of +20! Likewise, a natural 20 will probably result in a success, but not if the DC is 40 and the character has only a +3 bonus.

If you want to add an additional element of chance to the game, use this variant: a natural roll of 1 on a check is always a failure, regardless of the character's bonuses, while a natural roll of 20 is always a success. That means characters always have a 5% chance to fail and a 5% chance to succeed, no matter what the odds. Among other effects, it always allows weaker characters to have a chance of success while making skilled characters more cautious, since there's always a chance they could fail. However, this variant may slow down play a bit or result in improbable outcomes (like an ordinary person being able to accomplish a nearly impossible task), so consider it carefully before implementing it.

–10/+30 ROLLS

Rather than automatic success or failure, you can choose to treat a roll of a natural 1 as a –10 modifier for a check or roll and a natural 20 as a +30 modifier. This means characters are more likely to fail on a natural 1 and succeed on a natural 20, but are not *guaranteed* to do so, depending on their relevant traits. So, an especially capable character could generate a modifier of –10 and still succeed on a check, while a character with a poor or average trait could generate a modifier of +30 and still fail a check with a high enough Difficulty.

ALTERNATE DICE

Mutants & Masterminds is designed so the players and the GM only need a single 20-sided die, and all rolls are resolved using that die. This has certain effects on game play: A 20-sided die produces what is known as a "flat" probability curve; the chances of rolling a 20 on the die are the same as rolling a 1, 7, 12, or any other number: 1-in-20 or 5%. The chances of rolling a particular number or better differ, of course (which is where Difficulty Classes and modifiers come in), but the chances of any particular number coming up on the die are identical.

This produces a certain amount of randomness in the flow of the game. A character might make several saving throws in a row only to

IN STEP (1) WE BEGIN WITH THE ACTION LINE, GIVING IT A DYNAMIC CURVE. WE THEN BUILD OFF OF THAT, INDICATING THE GENERAL SKELETON.
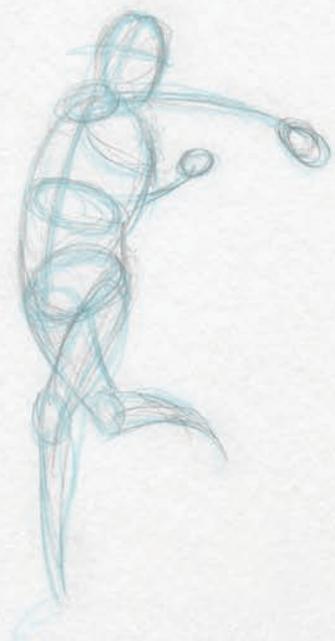
WE CAN NOW BEGIN FILLING IN THE GENERAL SHAPE OF THE FIGURE IN STEP (2). WE INDICATE THE LIMBS AND TRUNK WITH BUBBLES, KEEPING THE DRAWING FLUID AND DYNAMIC.

1

2

IN STEP (3) WE BEGIN TO ADD DETAILS, PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE FIGURE'S CONTOUR. WE'RE NOT REALLY CONCERNED WIH THE SPECIFIC DETAILS IN THIS STEP, JUST THE GENERAL FORM.

3

IN STEP (4) WE BEGIN TO ROUGH IN THE FINER DETAILING AND MUSCULATURE BASED OFF THE SKELETON AND CONTOUR FRAMEWORK WE'VE ALREADY ESTABLISHED. AT THIS POINT, START DETERMINING LIGHT SOURCES FOR ACCURATE SHADOWS.

AND VOILA! WITH A LITTLE DETAILING AND RENDERING IN STEP (5), WE NOW HAVE GHOST TIGER IN ALL HIS GLORY.

4

5

fail a save unexpectedly. Anyone might get a lucky shot (or, conversely, manage to miss the mark). Things like hero points and the ability to take 10 and take 20 on certain checks help to limit this randomness in some cases. There are also situations where the difficulty or difference in abilities is so great the die roll hardly matters. The "wildness" of the d20 roll contributes to the comic book feel of the game, where sudden strokes of luck or reversals of fortune are common.

Some groups may prefer a less random distribution of probabilities. In this case, they may substitute a different die roll for the d20, such as three six-sided dice (3d6) or two ten-sided dice (2d10) with the results on the individual dice added together. These rolls produce a "bell" curve, with results in the middle or average being more likely to occur. For example, you're likely to roll a 10 or 11 on 3d6 about one-quarter of the time, while a roll of 3 (all 1s) or 18 (all 6s) shows up only about 0.4% of the time (1-in-216).

These alternate die-rolling methods (either 3d6 or 2d10) produce more predictable results, with less of the randomness (and, to a degree, suspense) of a flat roll like 1d20. These more reliable results make certain aspects of the game more predictable and routine.

Gamemasters who want to switch to an alternate die-rolling method may wish to change the DCs of some tasks slightly, since the chances of achieving a very high roll are somewhat less with a bell curve system. For example, if using 3d6 instead of 1d20, reduce DCs about 20% to reflect the generally lower rolls that will occur (plus the fact that 3d6 only goes to 18 rather than 20).

In place of a natural 20, use a natural 18. You can't take 20 in the 3d6 variant. Instead, you can take 16, which takes ten times as long, or you can take 18, which takes one hundred times as long. As with taking 20, you can only take 16 or 18 if the task carries no penalty

for failure. For a check normally requiring a standard action, taking 16 takes a minute and taking 18 takes 10 minutes. Rules for taking 10 remain unchanged.

Because it's impossible to roll a 19 or 20 in the 3d6 variant, the threat range of critical hits needs to change. Refer to the following table.

3D6 THREAT RANGES

OLD THREAT RANGE	NEW THREAT RANGE
20	16-18
19-20	15-18
18-20	14-18
17-20	14-18
16-20	14-18
15-20	13-18

Also note that combats tend to last longer using a bell-curve die roll, since the chances are lower that characters will fail saving throws badly enough to knock them out or disable them quickly. These results tend to occur after characters have taken some hits, unless overwhelming amounts of damage are involved.

All the game systems in this book assume a single d20 as the die roll. Simply substitute the alternate dice (3d6 or 2d10) and adjust DCs as needed to change the die-rolling system.

HIGH-LOW ROLLS

Another means of adding a "curve" to *M&M* die rolling is by using high-low rolls: in place of any single d20 roll, roll three 20-sided dice and take the middle number (dropping the highest and lowest). If two or more dice come up the same number, use that number (since the third die is by definition higher or lower).

This method tends to produce results weighted more toward the middle range, with 10 as the average. Rolling a "natural 20" requires two of the dice to come up 20 (a 29-in-4000 chance, or 0.725%; rather than 1-in-20, or 5%). The same is the case for a "natural" 1. Generally, this means characters achieve the effect of taking 10 more often, but succeed at high Difficulty tasks less often, and have fewer critical successes or failures. High-low rolls involve more dice, but are only slightly more involved than rolling and reading a single d20.

Spending a hero point with high-low rolls allows the player to keep the best die roll of the three dice rather than the middle roll. So a roll of 4, 11, and 18 would normally count as an 11. Spending a hero point makes it an 18 instead. If all three d20 rolls are below 11, take the highest and add 10 to get the result of spending a hero point on that roll.

You may wish to have something special occur on the rare occasion that a high-low roll comes up with the same result on all three dice: a major or automatic success on a high roll or a serious or automatic failure on a low roll, for example.

PLAYERS MAKE ALL ROLLS

In this variant, the GM doesn't make any rolls except for results that need to be kept secret from the players (such as some Notice or inventing skill checks, for example). Otherwise, the players make all rolls from their characters' perspective, while the NPCs only provide fixed Difficulty Classes for those rolls.

This variant uses several of the variants elsewhere in this book, including damage rolls (see Chapter 8). Essentially, any time an NPC interacting with a PC would make a roll, the player makes a roll instead. So instead of an NPC making a Fortitude save to resist the hero's power, the player makes a power check with a DC of (10 + the NPC's Fortitude save bonus). Instead of an NPC Toughness save, the player makes a damage roll (1d20 + damage bonus) vs. (DC 15 + NPC's Toughness save bonus). In cases where NPCs oppose each other, assume they all take 10 and apply the results normally (or roll dice in that case, if you prefer).

This variant greatly reduces the amount of die rolling performed by the GM, and gives the players a bit more control over the flow of the game, since they can influence more die rolls by spending hero points. It can be a bit of work in figuring out the Difficulty Classes for "reversed" rolls (things normally rolled by the GM) but becomes easier once you've done it a few times.

CARD-BASED RESOLUTION

Another possible resolution mechanic is to give players cards instead of dice. Each player decides when to use any given card in his hand, giving them more control over the success and failure of their heroes. Players can time dramatic speeches to coincide with success and skew their characters' results to match their character concept. For example, a player who wants his hero to be hard to hurt or capture can save high cards for saving throws and Escape Artist checks, spending lower cards on other rolls and checks.

Obviously, the GM must get a deck of cards with an even distribution of numbers from 1 to 20. This can be done with a standard deck of playing cards. Remove all jokers and face cards. Treat an ace as a "1." All red cards are worth the value shown; all black cards are worth the value shown +10. Some games designed around card mechanics have their own numbered decks that also work well, as long as there are enough cards for good, random distribution.

A 52-card deck culled of face cards produces 40 cards, which is about right for three players and a GM. If more players are present, two decks may need to be shuffled together. All players are dealt a five-card hand. Whenever a d20 roll is called for, the player decides which card from his hand to use instead. Thus, a player having his character make an attack roll adds the value of one card played to the character's attack bonus to determine the result.

Once a player has spent all the cards in his hand, he's dealt a new hand. This forces players to use all the cards in their hands, so characters don't escape bad results (though players have some control over when they do well and when they do poorly).

Situations where a player is allowed to re-roll a die roll—such as spending a hero point—allow the player to discard his hand and draw a new one.

If players are allowed to spend cards whenever they want, this system can be abused. Players simply expend hands with lots of low cards on unimportant things and hoard hands with high cards for combat and saving throws. There are three ways to handle these issues. The first is to ignore them: warn players you don't want to see abuse and trust them to be mature enough to respect that. The second is to forbid frivolous card spending: anytime a character can take 10 on a check, he must, and cards are not played for unimportant actions (such as target practice). The third option is to gather all hands between scenes and deal out new ones—this way, there's no point in trying to save a good hand for a fight, as a new hand gets dealt out before each fight anyway.

Whatever system is used, it should apply to you and your players equally. You may be given a slightly larger hand (up to eight cards), since you frequently run multiple NPCs in each encounter, and allied NPCs may draw from a separate deck than adversarial NPCs, but otherwise the same rules apply. Be careful not to "pick on" a particular hero, but otherwise play out your cards in whatever way that seems appropriate.

This system can be used to help set up a higher level of drama: villains who need to escape are given high card results to do so, and those designed as cannon fodder are stuck with lower results, without players feeling the GM decides everything by fiat. Everyone is generally more effective, which tends to favor PCs since they have more opportunity to maximize their card results than you. On the other hand, the system also tends to favor whoever is more powerful, so be careful if designing an encounter with a foe of a higher power level than the heroes.

CARD-BASED HERO POINTS

Another option using playing cards is for replacing the standard hero points in *M&M*. Instead of tracking hero points with counters or marks on a character sheet, use a deck of cards. Each player is dealt one card for each hero point the character has at the start of the game and earns a new card each time the character earns a hero point.

Players may "spend" cards from their hands for any of the hero point benefits given in *M&M*, with the following changes:

- **Numbered Cards:** If used to improve a roll, don't re-roll the die. Instead, add 10 to the face value of the card and treat that as your roll.

- **Jack:** If used for a heroic feat, the emulated feat lasts two rounds rather than one.

- **Queen:** If used to recover, you can make two recovery checks rather than one, gaining the benefits of both.

- **King:** If used to dodge, a king doubles your entire defense bonus for the round rather than just your dodge bonus.

- **Ace:** If used for an instant counter, your power check is rolled like an improve roll use of hero points: add +10 if the roll is 10 or less.

- **Joker:** Can duplicate the effect of any other card, or you can discard it and draw two new cards.

Spent cards go into a common discard pile. When there are no more cards left to draw from the deck, shuffle the discard pile and start again.

TRADING CARDS

If using card-based hero points, you may wish to allow players to trade cards between them under certain circumstances. Generally, card trading should be limited to situations where one character provides aid to another, in some way justifying the trade-off of cards. Encourage players to come up with in-game explanations for how their characters are helping each other. For example, one character might call out a warning to another, providing a reason for that player to trade a king card (allowing the other player to double the character's defense bonus) in exchange for a lower-value card.

CHALLENGES

Challenges reflect a capable character's ability to perform some tasks with superior panache and efficiency. They allow heroes to achieve greater results by making already difficult checks harder.

To take a challenge, increase a check's Difficulty Class by 5 or suffer a –5 penalty to the check result. In return, you gain an extra benefit in addition to the normal effects of a successful check. If you fail due to the penalty or increased DC, however, you suffer the normal results of failure. Note that, if failing by more than a certain margin imposes a particular outcome, you suffer that outcome as normal if you fail to meet your newly increased Difficulty Class. So, for example, a character who misses a Disable Device check by 10 or more accidentally sets off the device. If the standard Difficulty is 20 and your challenge increases it to 25, then you accidentally set off the device with a skill check result of 15 or less, instead of the usual 10 or less.

You can accept more than on challenge to a check. In some cases, you can take a challenge more than once to gain its benefits multiple times. These are noted in the challenge descriptions.

Generally, challenges allow you to gain added benefits when you face a relatively low DC and have a high modifier. You can also use challenges to attempt heroic actions, even when faced with a high DC. In these cases, spending a hero point can help ensure success with all the added benefits of the successful challenge.

STANDARD CHALLENGES

The challenges in this section apply to any ability or skill check. The Gamemaster has final say whether a challenge applies to a specific situation. Each challenge imposes either a +5 modifier to a check's DC or a –5 penalty to the check result.

- **Fast Task:** You reduce the time needed to complete the check. If the check is normally a full-round action, it becomes a standard action. A standard action becomes a move action, while a move action becomes a free action. For checks requiring time in rounds, minutes, or longer, reduce the time needed by 25 percent per challenge. You cannot make a check as a free action via challenges if it normally requires a standard action or longer.

- **Calculated Risk:** You can take a calculated risk on one check to make a follow-up check easier. For example, you could use Disable Device to overcome an initial safeguard to make disarming the whole trap easier. If you succeed at this challenge, you gain a bonus on the second check equal to the total penalty you accepted on the first. The two checks must be related and the first, penalized, check must carry some consequence for failure (that is, it cannot be a check where you can take 20).

- **Simultaneous Tasks** You can accept a challenge in order to perform two checks simultaneously. To attempt simultaneous checks, make the challenge check, followed by a second check using the same or a different trait. Your secondary check suffers a –10 penalty or a +10 increase in Difficulty. The combined task requires the same time as the longest normal task, so if both tasks require a standard action, you accomplish the simultaneous use in a single standard action rather than two.

In addition to these standard challenges, various skills have specific challenges associated with them, described in the following section.

ACROBATICS CHALLENGES

- **Accelerated Acrobatics:** You can try to cross a precarious surface faster than normal. If you increase the Difficulty Class by 5, you can move your full speed as a move action. Moving twice your speed in a round requires the penalty plus two skill checks, one for each move action. You can also accept this penalty to charge across a precarious surface; this requires one skill check per multiple of your speed (or fraction thereof) that you charge.

- **Perfect Balance:** In return for increasing the Difficulty Class by 5, you move with such grace and agility that you maintain your dodge bonus to defense while balancing.

- **Perilous Balance:** You can shake or disturb the surface on which you are balancing (e.g., swaying on a tightrope). If your check succeeds after increasing the Difficulty Class by 5, you keep your balance and impose a +5 modifier on the Difficulty Classes of all Acrobatics checks that others must make on the surface until the next round.

BLUFF CHALLENGES

- **Conversational Paralysis:** In return for a –5 penalty to your Bluff check, a successful check dazes your target for one round. Your claims are so strange or outlandish that the target can do nothing but sputter or reel in confusion. This skill challenge does not work in combat situations (for that, see the **Distract** feat in the **Feats** chapter of *M&M*). Each additional –5 check penalty you accept increases the duration of the effect by one round.

- **Durable Lie:** In return for a –5 penalty on your check, your target believes your bluff longer than usual. The target continues to act as you wish for an additional round. You can apply another –5 penalty to extend this to two rounds. This skill challenge does not work with the feint use of Bluff.

CLIMB CHALLENGES

- **Accelerated Climb:** You can try to climb more quickly than normal. By accepting a +5 DC modifier to your check, you can move half your speed instead of one-quarter your speed while climbing. You can accept this challenge twice, for a total DC modifier of +10, to move at your normal speed while climbing.

- **Fighting Climb:** By accepting a +5 DC modifier to a Climb check, you can maintain your dodge bonus to defense while climbing.

- **Secured Climb:** If you take a +5 DC modifier to your Climb check, you do not have to make a Climb check to maintain your position if you take damage. You climb in such a way as to brace yourself for any attacks.

CRAFT CHALLENGES

- **Fast Work:** You may add +5 or +10 to the indicated Difficulty Class to craft an item. This increase allows you to make the item faster than usual, reducing the time to half or one-quarter normal, respectively.

DIPLOMACY CHALLENGES

- **Combat Diplomacy:** You can make a Diplomacy check in combat as a full-round action by accepting a +10 modifier to the

Difficulty Class. Opponents in combat with you are considered hostile. An unfriendly opponent doesn't attack you unless you give him reason to do so. An indifferent foe stops fighting altogether, while a helpful one actually joins your side, even turning against former allies.

DISABLE DEVICE CHALLENGES

- **Hide Tampering:** If you add +5 to your Difficulty Class, you can conceal any tampering with a device. Anyone who inspects the device must make a check against your Disable Device check result to notice your tampering. On a failed check, it goes unnoticed.

DISGUISE CHALLENGES

- **Face in the Crowd:** With a –5 penalty to your check result, you can craft a disguise that is less likely to draw attention. Only people who specifically single you out and try to notice your deception receive Notice checks to do so. Guards and other passive observers take no special notice of you unless you draw attention to yourself or interact directly with them.

- **Quick Change:** You can adopt a disguise as a full-round action by taking a –5 penalty to your check. However, anyone who comes within one visual range increment of you (usually 10 feet) automatically sees through your disguise due to its hurried and makeshift nature.

ESCAPE ARTIST CHALLENGES

- **Conceal Efforts:** In exchange for a +5 to the DC, you can conceal your efforts to escape. Anyone who inspects your bindings must make a Notice check with a Difficulty Class equal to your Escape Artist check result. If the Notice check fails, they do not notice your efforts to escape. So, for example, you could leave your bonds seemingly intact so a villain doesn't realize that you're actually free.

DRIVE CHALLENGES

- **One Hand on the Wheel:** By taking a +5 Difficulty increase to your Drive check, you can perform a standard action in the same round as your Drive check with no penalty.

GATHER INFORMATION CHALLENGES

- **Discrete Inquiry:** While looking for news and information, you keep a low profile. You increase your Gather Information check DC by +5, but you avoid leaving any clues about the information you seek. If your check fails, you may be detected as normal, but you still avoid spreading clues about what you were trying to find.

INTIMIDATE CHALLENGES

- **Forceful Intimidation:** By taking a –5 penalty on your Intimidate check, you can force your subject to take an action that is against his interests (but not life threatening).

- **Mass Intimidation:** You can attempt to intimidate more than one subject at a time. You suffer a –2 penalty to your check per opponent beyond the first (instead of the usual -5 penalty for a skill challenge).

- **Powerful Intimidation:** In return for a –5 penalty to your Intimidate check, you can either increase the penalty you inflict for demoralizing a foe by –1. You can take this challenge multiple times to increase the demoralize penalty.

NOTICE CHALLENGES

- **Accurate:** In return for a –5 penalty to your Notice check, you can treat a normally inaccurate sense (such as hearing) as accurate for one round. A successful check tells you the exact spot a subject occupies. A failed check means you don't notice anything.

CHALLENGES AND OPPOSED CHECKS

Some challenges, if successful, use the result as the Difficulty Class of the opposed roll (such as Hide Tampering for Disable Devices and Conceal Efforts for Escape Artist). This has the unusual side effect that the more difficult a task was for the person doing the challenge, the more difficult it is to undo that effort if the hero was successful. This can be especially compounded if a character accepts multiple challenges; for example, if a character takes two Fast Task challenges and a Hide Tampering challenge on a Disable Device check, and he's successful, he will have made it *more* difficult by +10 for his work to be noticed, because his final DC was raised by +10!

If this seems counterintuitive, you may want to add the modifiers from any challenges that don't specifically affect the opposed check as a bonus to the opposed check. In the previous example, the +10 from the Fast Task challenges would be added to any Notice checks to spot the Hide Tampering efforts.

- **Lip Reading:** By careful observation of the movements of someone's mouth and lips, you can tell what he is saying. Lip reading is a +5 increase to the DC of your Notice check.

  You must be within three Notice range increments of the speaker and be able to accurately see him speak. You must also be able to understand the speaker's language. You have to concentrate on reading lips for a full minute before making the Notice check, and can't perform some other action during this time. You can move at half speed but not any faster, and must maintain a line of sight to the lips being read. If the check suc-

ceeds, you understand the general content of a minute's worth of speech, but may still miss certain details.
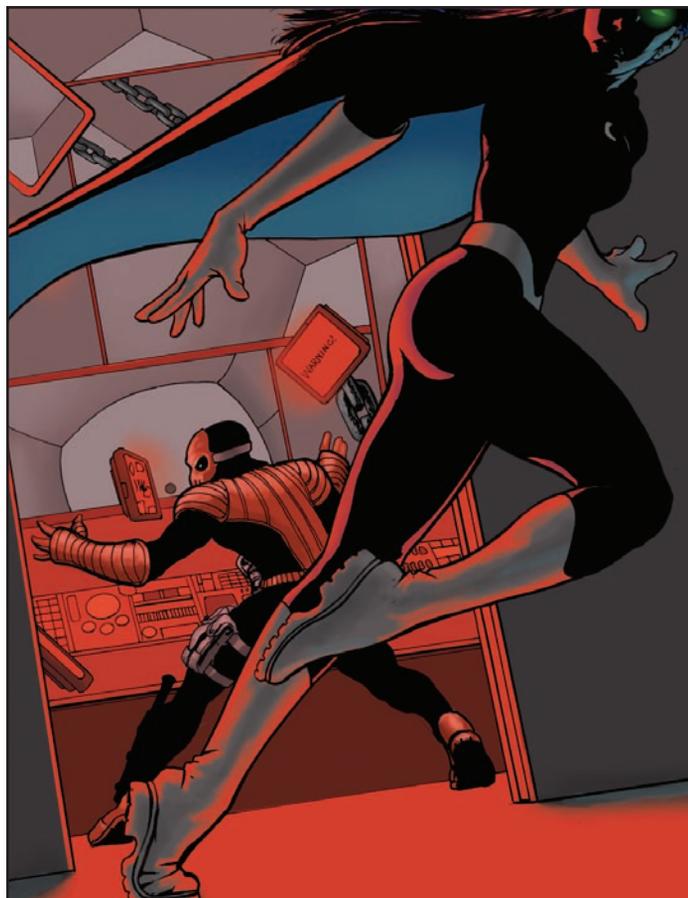
If the check fails, you can't read the speaker's lips. If the check fails by 5 or more, you draw some incorrect conclusion about the speech.

The GM rolls the Notice check so you don't know whether you succeeded or failed and therefore don't know whether or not any information you picked up is accurate. You can spend a hero point to re-roll a lip reading attempt, but you do so "blind," not knowing what the original die roll result was (and therefore whether or not you can do better).. You can retry a failed attempt at lip reading once per minute.

PILOT CHALLENGES

- **One Hand on the Wheel:** By taking a +5 Difficulty increase to your Pilot check, you can perform a standard action in the same round as your Pilot check with no penalty.

SENSE MOTIVE CHALLENGES

- **Combat Clarity:** For a –5 penalty to your skill check, you increase the bonuses provided by the combat sense use of Sense Motive by +1. You can take this challenge up to twice on a single check. The penalties you suffer for a failed check do not increase.

- **Read Situation:** For every +5 you increase the DC of your Sense Motive check, you learn one fact about the situation at hand when evaluating a situation (see **Sense Motive** in the **Skills** chapter of *M&M*). The GM may tell you things like someone's apparent goal(s), the nature of an interaction, and so forth.

STEALTH CHALLENGES

- **Accelerated Stealth:** You can move up to your normal speed in exchange for a –5 penalty to your Stealth check. In return for a –20 penalty to your check, you can move faster than your normal speed, such as by running or charging.

- **Slip Between Cover:** You can make a Stealth check at a penalty to quickly cross an area lacking cover or concealment without automatically revealing yourself. For every 5 feet of open space you cross, you take a –5 penalty to your Stealth check. You also take the normal Stealth penalties for moving faster than half your normal speed and such. For example, you could slip past a 5-foot open doorway without being seen, or duck from shadow to shadow. Characters with the Hide in Plain Sight feat don't need cover or concealment to hide, so these rules do not apply to them. The same is true for characters with the Concealment power, since they're capable of making their own concealment.

- **Vanishing:** Stealthy characters in the comics regularly "disappear" when no one is watching them. This is essentially a use of Stealth to hide when the character has some concealment or a distraction (no one looking directly at him, essentially). It requires a Stealth check with a –5 penalty, and the character must be within a normal move action of an exit, or some cover or concealment (a window, skylight, ventilation duct, etc.). A successful check means the character seems to disappear; an observer looks only to discover he is gone. Characters can use Bluff or Intimidate to gain the momentary distraction needed to vanish in this way. Those with the Hide in Plain Sight feat

do not need this challenge, as they can already make Stealth checks without the need for cover or concealment.

SWIM CHALLENGES

- **Accelerated Swim:** For a +5 DC increase, you increase your swimming speed by one-quarter your normal speed. You can take this challenge up to three times to increase your swimming speed up to your normal speed. You suffer the normal effects of failing your Swim check.

OPTION: CHALLENGES AS FEATS

Optionally, the GM may wish to allow characters to spend 1 power point to acquire any listed challenge as a feat. This allows the character to use that challenge at any time without a check penalty or increase in Difficulty Class.

For example, Raven takes the Perfect Balance challenge as a feat, paying 1 power point for it, as usual. Now Raven maintains her dodge bonus to defense while balancing at all times, with no increase in the Difficulty Class of her Acrobatics checks.

For standard challenges acquired as feats, the feat only applies to a specific task. So, for example, if you choose the Fast Completion challenge, you need to specify a task, such as the feint application of Bluff, or making an item with Craft. If you take Risky Prospect, you need to specify the two checks (and the skills used for them) and if you take Simultaneous Action, you need to specify the two tasks. Once specified, these things do not change.

For challenges you can take multiple times, the GM may allow a ranked feat that works in the same way. However, beware of such feats providing too much of a routine bonus; keep in mind that even with a skill challenge feat, the character must first succeed on the necessary skill check to gain the bonus.

If skill challenges are available as feats, then players can also spend hero points to acquire them temporarily for their characters. In essence, a player can choose to spend a hero point to allow a character to perform one particular skill challenge without a check penalty or DC increase. You may choose to allow the option to spend a hero point in this way even if skill challenges are not available as feats, just as a new feature of hero points, if you wish.

TEAM CHECKS

Sometimes an entire team performs a task as a unit and individual success is irrelevant. In this case, the GM may call for a *team check* for the task.

A team check works just like a normal check, except only one character makes the check for the entire team. The situation at hand determines the character who makes the check, as follows:

- If only one character must succeed for the entire team to gain the benefits (e.g., one character can make a Notice check and inform others of what he finds), the character with the *highest* relevant bonus makes the check.

- If every member of the team must succeed to gain the benefits of the check (e.g., every member of the team must succeed on a Stealth check to slip past a sentry), the character with the *lowest* relevant bonus makes the check.

In either case, if two or more characters qualify to make the check, the team can jointly choose which of them makes it. If a character goes solo, then the character is no longer a part of the team for

purposes of the team check (good reason for the stealthy character to scout ahead, for example, making Stealth checks independent of the rest of the team).

The character making the team skill check may spend hero points on it normally. Also, a character with the Leadership feat can spend a hero point on a team check, even if he is not the character making the check, so long as he's a part of the team making the check, and able to interact with the character making it (to offer direction and encouragement).

TEMPLATES

Templates are tools for faster character creation. They are collections of "pre-packaged" traits representing a particular type of character with the total cost of the traits already figured out. So a "Martian" template has all the traits common to every Martian all together with a single total cost. Likewise a "soldier" template has all the traits common to every soldier (or every soldier of a particular army, at least) put together with a single cost. You just pay the cost of the template and give the character all of those traits.

The various archetypes in *M&M* can be seen as templates covering all aspects of a character. By picking an archetype, you get a pre-packaged set of traits, a complete character. Templates may also be less complete, covering just an aspect of the character and leaving the rest for the player to design.

Templates may include any traits suitable to the type of character they describe: abilities, skills, feats, powers, combat bonuses, save bonuses, or drawbacks. Generally speaking, if a template consists of nothing more than one or two traits, it's probably not worth creating a template; it's better suited as a new trait.

TEMPLATE FORMAT

A template starts out with a listing of the template's power point cost—how many points a character pays to acquire the template and all of its traits. Generally, templates are added "wholesale," rather than allowing players to pick traits "a la carte," but the cost is the same in either case, so the GM is free to bend this guideline as needed.

Following the cost are the template's various traits, beginning with adjustments to abilities (positive or negative), then skill ranks, feats, powers, equipment or devices, and finally any drawbacks that come with the template. Template drawbacks reduce the template's cost and affect the character normally. They may or may not count against any campaign limit on drawbacks as the GM sees fit. The default assumption is that template drawbacks count normally against any such limit.

TEMPLATE STACKING

In general, traits acquired from templates stack, that is, add together to give a total bonus. So if one template grants ranks in a particular skill or feat, and another template provides ranks in the same trait, the ranks are added together to determine the character's final rank in that trait. For example, a character with a racial template that grants Stealth 4 who acquires a vocational template with Stealth 4 gets a total of 8 ranks in Stealth.

The GM may decide in certain cases that a template trait does not stack. If a character already has that trait, simply subtract it (and its cost) from the template, since the character doesn't need to take it.

RACIAL TEMPLATES

A racial template represents the traits of a particular race or species other than human (as the "average" human forms the baseline for

character traits in *M&M*). What constitutes a "race" is up to the GM in the context of the campaign, but it generally means non-humans, whether fantasy races like elves and dwarves or alien races from other planets. In some campaigns, racial templates may also represent variant "human" races.

EXAMPLE TEMPLATE: ATLANTEAN

Atlanteans look much like surface humans with a mixture of features (mostly European). They tend toward Roman noses and jaw-lines. Atlanteans are generally sleek, muscular swimmers, and have denser muscle tissue than humans, giving them super-strength (the average Atlantean can lift 1,400 lbs.).

These Atlanteans do not have gills. Instead, the lining of their lungs has adapted to allow them to extract oxygen from water and to withstand considerable water pressure. Atlanteans can also breathe air, although they're most comfortable in an aquatic environment.

ATLANTEAN	TEMPLATE
Abilities: Strength +4	
Feats: Environmental Adaptation (aquatic)	
Powers: Immunity 3 (cold, drowning, pressure), Swimming 2, Super-Senses 1 (low-light vision), Super-Strength 2	
Cost: 15 power points	

VOCATIONAL TEMPLATES

Vocational templates represent the traits possessed by characters of a particular profession or position. Usually they are "packages" of skills, representing the typical or minimum training of someone with that vocation. Sometimes they include certain ability modifiers or feats necessary for that profession. Vocational templates rarely include powers unless they're designed for a job requiring them. For example, a "telepathic investigator" template would include the Telepathy or Mind Reading power, obviously. The skill sets of the various supporting cast archetypes in *M&M* can be considered vocational templates for characters belonging to those professions, such as firefighter, police officer, soldier, and so forth.

POWER TEMPLATES

A power template is a collection of particular powers (along with power modifiers and power feats) to represent a particular power-set or type of character. The power-sets of the hero archetypes in the *M&M* rulebook can be considered power templates of those archetypes, for example. The primary use of power templates is to create quick "pre-packaged" sets of powers for creating characters.

ADVANCEMENT

As an *M&M* campaign progresses, characters can be expected to advance in overall capability, improving their various traits. In the standard *M&M* rules, advancement is through power points awarded during play. These points are spent exactly like power points during character creation to improve a character's traits. This section looks at some additional details of advancement that Gamemasters may wish to use in their games.

SKILLS AND FEATS

Improvement in a skill or acquisition of a feat usually comes through training and practice. The GM may require a particular training time in addition to spending power points to improve an existing skill or

to acquire an additional rank of an existing feat. As a rule of thumb, four weeks per power point is sufficient; that's one week per skill rank. For more realistic games, the GM can stretch this time out (to as much as 12 weeks for a single skill rank, and almost a year for an entire power point). Until the character has completed the needed training time, no power points can be spent.

Acquiring an entirely new skill or feat may require more time than simply improving an existing one. You can use the same base time, or double or triple it. The GM may also require some special circumstance in order for a character to learn a new skill or feat, such as an instructor, or a use of the trait during play via a hero point to emulate the feat. This provides the "push" the character needs to start learning that trait.

Finally, some feats may only be available during character creation and not through advancement, at the GM's discretion. Generally, all feats can be learned traits, but the Gamemaster may decide in certain settings that acquiring something like Attractive or Eidetic Memory later on is unrealistic or not suited to the style of the game.

POWERS

Improving powers is usually just a matter of spending power points for the appropriate traits. You can improve powers by adding ranks, adding new power feats, or applying modifiers, if the GM allows. You may also be able to add entirely new powers to a character, but the GM could place additional restrictions on this.

The simplest way of improving a power is to spend earned power points to increase its rank. This has the same cost as buying ranks of the power during character creation, and remains limited by the game's power level and whatever other restrictions the GM chooses to apply. Some of a character's powers may be "maxed out" at the power level limit already; you cannot improve these powers until the GM chooses to raise the game's power level. If the GM allows, players can set aside power points for such improvements, waiting for when the power level increases.

Alternatively, improving a power could require things like training, practice, or a minimum number of uses of extra effort to represent "stretching" the power's capabilities (see the **Characteristics** chapter of *M&M*). The GM sets the guidelines to best suit the style of the game.

You can also improve a power by adding various power feats to it. These often represent characters learning to apply their existing powers in different ways or refining their capabilities. Since using power feats is optional, they expand a power's flexibility and utility. Adding a power feat may just require spending a power point, or the GM can call for some prerequisites. Examples include training time, a capable instructor, or spending a hero point in play to gain that feat at least once, allowing the hero to get a "feel" for it enough to acquire it permanently.

DOWNTIME AND ADVANCEMENT

If advancement demands a set amount of time, then the Gamemaster may wish to plan in a certain amount of "downtime" between adventures to allow players the opportunity to spend their earned power points or to at least work towards that goal by having their heroes spend time training, meditating, or doing whatever else they need to do to advance their traits or gain new ones.

Generally, a certain amount of downtime between major adventures is a good idea to allow for the advancement of subplots and recovery from the events of the previous adventure as well as character advancement and improvement. A series of adventures with little or no downtime will tend to cause heroes to accumulate unspent power points (or encourage players to spend them on enhancements requiring little or no time). Conversely, adventures with lots of downtime in between allow heroes plenty of opportunities to spend their earned power points and improve.

ADVANCEMENT DURING PLAY

It's up to the GM to decide whether or not players can spend earned power points for their heroes during play to improve traits or even acquire new ones. Even if no downtime is normally required for advancement, the GM may still wish to put a limit on character improvement during play.

Nevertheless, things like extra effort might lead to opportunities for advancement. Perhaps a hero performs a power stunt the player especially likes. Since the hero has an unspent power point, the player asks if he can spend it to make the power stunt a regular power feat for the character rather than a one-time ability. This is a good example of advancement during play that shouldn't overly affect the game (provided the Gamemaster wants to allow the power stunt as a regular character trait at all).

HERO CREATION OPTIONS & VARIANTS

This section presents options and variants involving hero creation and spending power points on advancement.

ADDITIONAL POWER LEVEL LIMITS

Gamemasters may choose to use power level as a means of limiting other character traits, to help ensure characters are balanced and well rounded. The more power level limits applied, the more heroes will need to fall within specific parameters. Some examples include:

- **Grapple Bonus:** While a character's grappling bonus is already somewhat limited by restrictions on attack and damage (Strength) bonus, the GM may wish to set a limit on additional power modifiers, say a total grapple bonus of no more than PL x 3, for example.

- **Feats:** Characters may be limited to a set number of feats per power level, such as only one or two.

- **Power Cost:** The power level may be a limit on the number of points players can spend on a single power (including modifiers), such as no more than PL x 2. This will limit (in some cases severely limit) the rank of more expensive powers.

- **Power Rank:** Instead of (or in addition to) total cost, power level can apply a limit on the total number of ranks a character can have in a particular power. This doesn't take into account power modifiers and their effect on overall power cost.

- **Drawbacks:** Gamemasters may set a limit on the number of bonus power points characters can have from taking drawbacks. This is generally equal to the campaign's power level, or twice the power level.

Note that more power level limits may make certain hero concepts difficult or impossible to create at certain power levels, and may prove too limiting for some players and groups. Additional power level limits can be useful for new players or groups in need of more strict character creation guidelines, however.

UNDER THE HOOD: LEVEL-BASED ADVANCEMENT IN OTHER GAMES

Gamemasters can use the level-based advancement option to make *M&M* more compatible with other d20-based games. In this case, you can treat "Hero" as a character "class" or "role" of its own—albeit a powerful one—which provides bonus feats and power points the player can spend to give the character suitable traits. This makes *M&M* and the *Mastermind's Manual* useful as supplements for games like Green Ronin's *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*.

UNDER THE HOOD: WHY ADVANCEMENT?

Character advancement is intended to model a certain type of story, one in which a fairly insignificant nobody learns and grows over time to become an important or epic hero. You can see this kind of story in lots of myths, novels, and films.

However, you rarely see it in comic books. Why is that? Because ongoing comic book series are open-ended. There isn't a predetermined ending, a pinnacle for the main character to achieve. On the contrary, comic books try to maintain a certain status quo among their characters: they might change names, costumes, and powers from time to time, for one story or even for years (until another writer comes along and alters the character again). However, comic book heroes and villains rarely advance in incremental levels of ability over time. They're more likely to undergo complete "revisions," getting rebuilt from the ground up.

This difference in expectations can affect superhero RPGs. Whereas a fantasy hero (for example) who's a "farmboy with potential" and goes on to become a powerful champion logically progresses through levels of achievement, advancement in a superhero game like *M&M* can sometimes seem contrived and artificial. After all, if your favorite comic book hero accumulated another 20 power points, how would you spend them?

One solution, if advancement feels forced in your game, is to eliminate it altogether. Characters in the game don't earn power points, and their traits don't improve over time. You can still allow players to re-design their characters sometimes, redistributing their powers to give them different powers and other traits (as happens with comic book characters) but a "world's greatest" martial artist doesn't get "greater-er" and a super-strong character doesn't get significantly stronger.

This option works best with some variation of **Unlimited Power Points**, since players need to be able to create the kind of heroes they want right from the start; they won't be improving much (if at all) during the game! This removes any "delayed gratification" from advancement: Your hero doesn't need to start out small-time; you can play the character you want right from the get-go.

Also, just because the characters don't regularly earn power points and advance doesn't mean the Gamemaster can't occasionally hand out some power points or raise the campaign's power level and allow everyone to rework their characters to fit. It just makes such changes significant events rather than routine aspects of the game for everyone to track.

RE-ALLOCATING POWER POINTS

Normally a hero's traits are relatively fixed; once power points are spent on traits, they remain there. In some cases, however, the Gamemaster may allow players to re-allocate their character's points, changing their traits within the limits of their power level, perhaps even losing some traits and gaining entirely new ones. This change may come about as the result of events in the series, such as a hero encountering something that alters his powers (intense radiation, mutagenic chemicals, cosmic power sources, and so forth).

It's up to the GM when these character-altering events occur, but they should be fairly rare happenings in a series unless their effects are intended to be strictly temporary (lasting only for one adventure, for example). Very few players enjoy changes to their characters made without their consent, so GMs should be very careful when implementing this type of change.

LEVEL-BASED ADVANCEMENT

In place of the free-form system presented in this chapter, where players spend their power points however they desire within the limits of the campaign's power level, Gamemasters may wish to use a power level system that provides certain standardized abilities for each power level, leaving the rest for players to customize as they see fit. This variant creates a certain reliability among player characters, but also a degrees of sameness.

Good save refers to one of the three saving throw modifiers the character chooses as his primary one at the time of character creation.

The GM may specify other level-based traits, such as a minimum 4-8 skill ranks per level (reducing the bonus power points per level by 1 or 2) or a +1 increase to an ability score every four levels, starting at 4th (reducing the available power points for those levels by 1). This system can be used in conjunction with the standard power level limits as well as the optional limits and the power level trade-off guidelines (allowing players to trade a point of attack bonus for a point of defense bonus, for example).

FASTER OR SLOWER ADVANCEMENT

The Gamemaster controls the pace of advancement in a *M&M* game by the awarding of power points. Normally, this is fairly conservative—one or two points per game session. Still, even a single power point can go a fair way in *M&M,* paying for a new feat or 4 skill ranks, for example—even a new rank in some powers.

Some GMs may prefer to set a faster or slower rate of advancement (even to the point of *no* regular advancement; see the **Under the Hood** sidebar in this section for details). This is a simple matter of adjusting the number of power points you award to the player characters at the end of each game session.

For faster advancement, award more points, as many as 5 per game session. This will allow players to quickly fill out their heroes' capabilities and acquire new traits for them. Note that such a quick pace of advancement tends to butt up against the game's power level limit, so you may want to consider raising it by 1 for every 15-20 power points awarded, allowing the heroes a little "elbow room" to improve their existing traits rather than having to spread their points out into diverse new traits.

For slower advancement, you might not even award power points for every game session, but only for every second, third, or even fourth session. This reduces the number of points the players have to spend and allows you to keep the game at the same overall power level for much longer without the heroes becoming too limited by it.

LEVEL-BASED ADVANCEMENT

Power Level	Attack Bonus	Defense Bonus	Good Save	Other Saves	Feats	Other
1	+1	+1	+2	+0	+1 feat	+8 power points
2	+2	+2	+3	+0	–	+10 power points
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	+1 feat	+8 power points
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	–	+10 power points
5	+5	+5	+4	+1	+1 feat	+10 power points
6	+6	+6	+5	+2	–	+8 power points
7	+7	+7	+5	+2	+1 feat	+10 power points
8	+8	+8	+6	+2	–	+10 power points
9	+9	+9	+6	+3	+1 feat	+8 power points
10	+10	+10	+7	+3	–	+10 power points
11	+11	+11	+7	+3	+1 feat	+10 power points
12	+12	+12	+8	+4	–	+8 power points
13	+13	+13	+8	+4	+1 feat	+10 power points
14	+14	+14	+9	+4	–	+10 power points
15	+15	+15	+9	+5	+1 feat	+8 power points
16	+16	+16	+10	+5	–	+10 power points
17	+17	+17	+10	+5	+1 feat	+10 power points
18	+18	+18	+11	+6	–	+8 power points
19	+19	+19	+11	+6	+1 feat	+10 power points
20	+20	+20	+12	+6	–	+10 power points

Some players may find the pace of slower advancement frustrating. To help alleviate this, consider allowing them to spend fractional power points on things like individual skill ranks or powers with fractional costs due to modifiers (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M* for details). This helps give the players a bit more of a sense of advancement even when the pace is slow.

UNLIMITED POWER LEVEL

This variant is recommend only for fairly experienced groups interested in setting aside some of the limitations of the character creation system. The Gamemaster may choose to remove the power level and all its associated restrictions from the campaign, allowing players to spend their power points in any way they wish (with the GM's final approval). This allows for considerable freedom in character design, but may lead to unforeseen problems in game balance or in some characters having major advantages over others in play. The Gamemaster should carefully monitor such free-form character creation (even more than usual), and players should be prepared to modify their character designs as needed to fit the Gamemaster's guidelines for the campaign.

UNLIMITED POWER POINTS

This is another variant recommend only for fairly experienced groups interested in setting aside some of the limitations of the character creation system. The Gamemaster sets the power level for the campaign, with its limits on character traits. However, players are given an unlimited number of power points to create their characters within those limits. This provides considerable flexibility, of course, since some character concepts may be more or less expensive than others. It also has considerable potential for abuse, so Gamemasters should review the players' characters carefully, discouraging those able to do anything in order to encourage teamwork and cooperation.

Groups using this variant should consider the **Temporary Drawbacks as Complications** option from the **Characteristics** chapter of *M&M*, since the bonus power points drawbacks normally provide have little use in this variation, giving drawbacks no effective value. The GM may choose not to award power points for advancement, either leaving the characters where they began or just advancing them when the campaign calls for it (see the **Why Advancement?** sidebar for details).

This variant is somewhat like the approach taken with non-player characters in *M&M:* given an unlimited number of power points (as many as the GM sees fit) but usually designed with an eye toward a particular power level. It has the virtue of freeing up the imagination from the restrictions of power point costs as well as lessening the need for "efficient" character design, while keeping power points as useful in-game tools for measuring the effects of some powers.

CHAPTER 2: ABILITIES

Ability scores form the foundation for characters in *Mutants & Masterminds,* defining their most basic qualities. Therefore, changes to ability scores can have a wide-reaching influence on the game and how it plays. This chapter looks at some different ways of applying ability scores and modifiers and some options for expanding the influence of abilities over other traits, such as combat bonuses and skills, if so desired.

ABILITY OPTIONS & VARIANTS

This section presents optional and variant rules involving the basic abilities. Most of these rules relate to how you apply or interpret the ability scores rather than changing the actual numeric values of the scores.

RANDOM ABILITY SCORES

The standard system of allocating power points to ability scores allows players to choose which scores their heroes will have within the limits of the points they have to spend. Alternately, Gamemasters may wish to have players generate their character's ability scores randomly. Fate provides the hero's basic abilities. Then experience allows the hero to improve on those abilities.

Roll four six-sided dice and drop the lowest die roll, adding the other three together. Do this six times, then assign the rolls to the six abilities in whatever order desired. Total up the character's ability scores, subtract 60 from this total, and subtract the remainder from the character's total power points, reflecting the cost of the ability scores. So, for example, if you generate ability scores of 12, 9, 16, 11, 15, and 14, they total 77. Subtracting 60 from this total leaves 17, so the character has spent 17 points on ability scores.

SHORTHAND ABILITIES

This variant drops the numerical ability scores and uses only the ability score's modifier, set at a default of +0 for starting characters. So characters have ability scores of –1, 0, +1, +2, and so forth. An ability score bonus can be increased at a cost of 2 power points per +1 or decreased, giving back 2 power points per –1.

The maximum ability score bonus remains based on the campaign's power level with the minimum score at –5. So a character's ability scores might be Str +2, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +8, Wis +4, Cha +0, for example. In cases where characters normally gain or lose ability score points, they lose 1 power point from an ability modifier instead (with every 2 points shifting the modifier up or down by 1).

This variant has the same effect on Enhanced Abilities: instead of costing 1 point per rank and adding +1 ability point per rank, they cost 2 points per rank and add a +1 ability *bonus* per rank.

CASUAL STRENGTH

Especially strong characters may be able to achieve some effects with greater ease; a super-strong hero may be able to snap steel chains as easily as thread, for example. To simulate this, you can use the option for challenges in **Chapter 1** in conjunction with Strength checks: by taking a –5 penalty to the check result, a character can perform a Strength check in less than normal, accomplishing a stan-

dard action in a move action, for example, and a Strength check normally requiring a move action as a free action.

MANDATORY SUPER-STRENGTH

Mutants & Masterminds separates lifting and controlled applications of muscle power somewhat from the raw Strength score, allowing for a wide range of lifting capabilities within the narrower range of Strength bonuses allowed at a particular power level. Some Gamemasters may prefer a more direct correlation between Strength and Super-Strength, in which case the following option can be used.

For each point of Strength bonus over +5, a character must also have 1 rank of the Super-Strength power. So a character with Strength 22 (a +6 bonus) must also have Super-Strength 1; Strength 24, Super-Strength 2; and so forth. Characters can have more than the required amount of Super-Strength, but must have at least that amount. Since Super-Strength costs 2 points per rank, this effectively doubles the cost of Strength past Strength 20 to 2 power points per point rather than 1 (or 4 power points per +1 Strength bonus).

ABILITY STRAIN

With this option, characters can choose to suffer a temporary reduction in an ability score in order to gain a brief, one-time bonus with an ability score check, essentially pushing the ability beyond its normal limits, resulting in some strain from which the character must recover. Ability strain is in addition to the effects of spending hero points in play, allowing characters to go that extra distance when the odds are against them.

When attempting an ability check, you can accept a temporary –1 penalty to your ability score to receive a +1 bonus on your check. The penalty goes into effect the round after the results of the check (successful or not). You can gain up to a maximum bonus of +5 (and therefore a maximum penalty of –5) in this way, but you cannot suffer a penalty great enough to debilitate the ability score (lowering it to 0 or less).

Once you've strained an ability score to its limit (having taken the full +5 bonus and resultant penalty over one or more checks), you can't do so again until it is fully recovered. The length of recovery depends on the ability: strained Strength and Dexterity recover in an hour, strained Constitution recovers in six hours, and strained mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) recover in four hours.

ABILITY STRAIN AND EXTRA EFFORT

Additionally, at the Gamemaster's option, ability strain can serve as a substitute for the fatigue caused by extra effort (see the **Characteristics** chapter of *M&M*); one rank of fatigue is equal to the maximum penalty of -5. This may be across the board or only for particular abilities (such as physical abilities or only Constitution). Allowing ability strain for extra effort in conjunction with fatigue gives players some additional options and the opportunity to use extra effort more without their heroes passing out from the fatigue. It can also be combined with the options for extra effort, like extraordinary effort. See **Chapter 6** of this book for details.

INNATE ATTACK AND DODGE MODIFIERS

Strength and Dexterity don't provide attack and dodge modifiers in *M&M*. Those traits are bought separately with power points, and may or may not reflect capability based on high ability scores. Some may prefer to include a measure of innate bonus in these abilities.

In this case, increase the cost of Strength to 3 power points for every 2 points of Strength. The character's Strength modifier now applies to all melee attack rolls (and counts toward power level limits on attack bonus). Increase the cost of Dexterity to 2 points per ability score point (4 points per +1 Dexterity bonus). Dexterity modifier now applies to all ranged attack rolls and provides a dodge bonus (and counts toward power level limits on attack and defense bonus).

Optionally, Strength might provide *no* bonus, while Dexterity provides both an attack and *defense* (not dodge) bonus. In this case, Strength has its normal cost, but Dexterity costs 3 power points per ability score point (6 points per +1 Dexterity bonus).

Likewise, a Strength or Dexterity *penalty* in this variant imposes a negative modifier to attack or defense. So if Strength modifier applies to melee attack rolls, for example, then a negative Strength modifier imposes a penalty on those rolls. If Strength and Dexterity have a higher cost per point, then lowering either ability below 10 should also return more power points per point, since the lower ability is a greater drawback.

In this variant, attack and defense bonus should still be available separate from ability scores, so characters don't *have* to have high abilities to have a good attack or defense modifier. You may find players more inclined to give characters high ability scores simply for

the combat bonuses in this variant, which can lead to "inflation" of abilities beyond the usual benchmarks given in *M&M*.

ATTACK FOCUS AND ATTACK SPECIALIZATION

Rather than having these traits as feats (as they are in *M&M*), you can allow players to buy specific increases to attack bonus directly with power points: 1 point per +1 with a specific type of attack (ranged or melee) or per +2 with a single specific attack. The mechanics are the same; the bonus is just bought directly rather than being considered a feat. The key difference is players can spend hero points to perform Attack Focus and Attack Specialization feats, but cannot do so if the bonuses are no longer considered feats.

The GM should decide if the Accurate power feat is available or not using this option, since it is essentially a type of Attack Specialization (associated with a particular power).

SPECIALIZED ATTACK BONUS LIMIT

In addition to the power level limits on attack bonus, you may choose to limit the additional bonus from the Attack Focus and Attack Specialization feats to no greater than the appropriate ability score bonus: Strength for melee attacks and Dexterity for ranged attacks. Alternately, you can make Dexterity the limit for both types of attacks (to emphasize Dexterity further).

DODGE BONUS LIMIT

In addition to the power level limits placed on defense bonus, you may choose to limit any additional dodge bonus from the Dodge Focus feat to no greater than the character's Dexterity bonus. Thus high-Dexterity characters can have a higher dodge bonus, while low-Dexterity characters have a reduced maximum dodge bonus available from the Dodge Focus feat.

INTELLIGENCE AND SKILLS

Normally, Intelligence only affects skills that have it as a key ability. In this variant, smarter characters know more skills in general. Each point of Intelligence bonus provides a free skill rank. So, a character with Intelligence 16 (+3 bonus) has 3 extra skill ranks for free. You can increase this bonus to 2 free skill ranks per point of Int bonus, or even a free skill rank per point of Intelligence score, so even characters with a +0 or negative Int modifier get some free skill ranks.

AGING AND ABILITIES

Ability scores do not remain constant over a character's lifetime. As characters age, they may undergo changes in their abilities, like reductions in physical abilities, but gains in mental abilities like Wisdom.

Gamemasters who wish to reflect this can use the following guidelines: when a character is middle-aged, subtract 1 from all physical abilities and add 1 to all mental abilities. An old character subtracts 2 from all physical abilities and adds 1 to all mental abilities, and a venerable character subtracts 3 from all physical abilities and adds 1 to all mental abilities. These effects are cumulative; a decades-long hero who became middle-aged and then old would have subtracted 3 from all physical abilities and added 2 to all mental abilities, all told. Humans are middle-aged around 40, old around 60, and venerable around 70 or so. Other races may vary.

Characters with Immunity to Aging gain the benefits of age, but none of the penalties (so immortal characters tend to have higher than average mental abilities due to their considerable life experi-

ence). For player characters, these benefits can only be gained during the game; a player can't declare his hero with Immunity to Aging is a thousand years old, and expect to get +3 to all his mental abilities!

SUPER-ABILITIES

Enhanced Abilities in *M&M* allow you to treat some or all of an ability score as a power. This variant *requires* ability scores greater than 20 be considered powers, costing 2 points per rank. Each rank in a super-ability grants a +1 bonus to that ability's modifier, as in the **Shorthand Abilities** option in this chapter. Characters can combine normal and super-abilities, so a hero might have Dex 16 and Super-Dexterity +5, for example (for a total Dexterity modifier of +8). This variant was in use in the first edition of *Mutants & Masterminds.*

You can vary the "threshold" where a super-ability is required. For example, *M&M* places "maximum human ability" at around an ability score of 24, so you can require super-abilities for higher bonuses than +7 under this variant. You can also lower the threshold, making 18 the maximum "normal" ability score, for example.

SAVES BASED ON DIFFERENT ABILITIES

In certain situations, you may want to apply different ability score modifiers to particular saving throws to more accurately model how certain abilities affect certain saves. This gives you broader options for saves, but is also more complicated, since you have to not only decide what save is appropriate, but what ability should go with it. In all of these cases, the assumption is the base bonus for the save purchased with power points always applies, just with a different ability modifier.

Fortitude saves against pain, mental effects, or other hazards where willpower is as much a factor as endurance can substitute Wisdom for Constitution, use the higher of the two modifiers, or just substitute Will save for Fortitude.

Reflex saves involving mental rather than physical acuity and reaction time can substitute Intelligence for Dexterity, representing the importance of quick wits and perception.

Will saves against certain mental powers or interaction skills can substitute Charisma for Wisdom, representing the character's force of personality. Will saves against illusions and similar deceptions can substitute Intelligence, for the character's ability to see through trickery to the truth.

Generally speaking, Toughness saves shouldn't be based on another ability score unless dealing with a power with the Alternate Save modifier (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*).

BEST OF TWO SAVING THROWS

In the default *M&M* rules, Reflex save is based on Dexterity and Will save is based on Wisdom. In this option, the player can choose the better of *two* ability scores for the bonuses for these saving throws. Reflex save is based on the better of Dexterity or Intelligence bonus (representing the character's quick-thinking), while Will save is based on the better of Wisdom or Charisma bonus (representing the character's force of personality). The costs of ability scores and saves do not change with this option, although characters will tend to have slightly higher save bonuses overall, since they can choose the best of two options.

WORST OF TWO SAVING THROWS

Similar to the previous variant, except the character uses the *worse* of the two ability score modifiers. So, for example, Reflex saves are based on the lesser of Dexterity or Intelligence modifier, so those that are slow (in body or mind) have lower saves. This variant tends to create lower save modifiers across the board, except for characters good at *everything*, and it encourages those sorts of characters in order to cover all the bases. It may suit some more realistic settings, however.

ADDITIONAL SAVING THROWS

Mutants & Masterminds characters use one of the four main saving throws (Toughness, Fortitude, Reflex, or Will) to resist all effects in the game. Groups looking for a little additional detail, particularly in differentiating effects normally requiring Will saves, may wish to add other saving throws.

If you use these optional saving throws, decide whether or not their bonuses are purchased separately (at the normal cost of 1 point per +1 save bonus) or if they merely substitute a different ability modifier with an existing save (generally Will), as in **Saves Based on Different Abilities**. In the former case, you may want to give the players an additional number of starting power points equal to the campaign's power level to cover the cost of the extra save(s). In the latter, additional points are generally not necessary, since characters with a bonus to one save gain it on these other saves as well.

INSIGHT SAVE (INT)

An *Insight save* represents applying quick and clear thinking to a problem, either to pick out a vital clue or avoid a hazard through intellect. Insight saves may replace Reflex saves in some situations where quick thinking is more important than fast reflexes. They can also replace Will saves in cases where penetrating insight is more important than strength of will, such as in recognizing illusions.

STABILITY SAVE (CHA)

A *Stability save* represents force of personality and strength of character, along with a touch of healthy ego and sense of self. Stability saves can replace Will saves in situations involving social interaction as well as powers or feats affecting the personality or emotions (such as Emotion Control or Fearsome Presence).

SPEED & JUMPING

In the basic *M&M* rules, how fast you're moving has no real effect on how far you can jump; this is simple, but not as realistic as it could be. In this variant, if you're using the Speed power before you jump, treat your ranks of speed as ranks in the Leaping power for that jump only. So if you have Speed 5 and get up to full speed before you make your jump, you can jump 50 times your normal jumping distance! Note this does not affect your standing or vertical jumps—only long jumps after you've gotten up to speed. If you can only attain a lesser degree of speed (in the GM's judgment) use the lowered rank for your increasing jumping distance rather than your full rank.

CHAPTER 3: SKILLS

Skills are often overlooked traits in superhero settings, less glamorous than amazing powers or feats. However, many heroes and villains rely heavily on their skills to get the job done and skills in *M&M* provide a number of basic and essential bonuses. This chapter looks at some ways of expanding the capabilities of skills, and even adding entirely new skills to the game, along with a number of skill options and variants.

NEW USES FOR SKILLS

While the *M&M* rulebook covers the most common uses for the various skills, there are a potentially limitless number of situations heroes can encounter. This section offers some ideas for new uses of existing skills in the game and new ways to apply them.

BLUFF

Bluff is used for any attempt to trick, fool, or otherwise deceive someone. There are a number of ways clever characters can attempt to Bluff opponents to gain an advantage.

FAKING MIND CONTROL

A subject who successfully saves against Mind Control can make a Bluff skill check against the result of the mind controller's Sense Motive check. A successful Bluff means the subject fools the attacker into *believing* he has succumbed to the Mind Control, which may buy the subject both time and the opportunity to make a surprise attack by catching opponents off guard.

Mind controllers with the Mental Link power feat get a +10 bonus on the Sense Motive check (they're more sensitive to the subject's reactions). Mind Control with the Subtle feat doesn't allow the opportunity to try and fake being controlled on a successful Will save unless the subject is aware of the attempt in some other way.

GLOATING

A hero can make a Bluff skill check against the result of a villain's Sense Motive check to encourage the villain to waste time gloating, giving the hero an opportunity to do something. This works like the Fascinate feat (see the **Feats** chapter of *M&M*), except the hero doesn't need to do anything to maintain it. Each round, make a new Sense Motive check or Will save for the villain; if it fails, the villain goes on gloating. The GM can apply modifiers to the check for villains particularly prone to gloating over their foes. Generally, any attack or other threatening action from the hero ends the villain's gloating. Players can (and often should) spend hero points on the Bluff check to encourage villains to gloat.

This option is best-suited to Golden Age and Silver Age campaign styles rather than Iron Age or Modern campaign settings.

COMPUTERS

The Computers skill description in *M&M* covers the essential uses, but challenges involving more detailed use of Computers, particularly to "hack" into secure systems or networks, can use the following guidelines.

COMPUTER HACKING

Breaking into a secure computer or network is often called *hacking*. Here are some more detailed rules for GMs who want to include computer hacking in the game.

When you hack, you attempt to invade a *site*. A site is a virtual location containing files, data, or applications. A site can be as small as a single computer, or as large as a corporate network connecting computers and data archives all over the world—the important thing is access to the site connects the user to everything within it. Some sites can be accessed via the Internet; others are not connected to any outside network and are only accessible from particular locations.

A system administrator is in charge of a site and maintains its security. Often, the system administrator is the only person with access to all of a site's functions and data. A site can have more than one administrator; large sites have a system administrator on duty at all times. You are the system administrator of your own personal computer.

When you hack into a site, the visit is called a session. Once you stop accessing the site, the session is over. You can go back to the site in the future; when you do, it's a new session.

Several steps are required to hack into a site:

COVERING YOUR TRACKS

This step is optional (albeit often a good idea. By making a Computers check (DC 20), you can alter your identifying information. This imposes a –5 penalty on any attempt made to identify you if your activity is detected.

ACCESS THE SITE

There are two ways to do this: physically or over the Internet.

- **Physical Access:** You gain physical access to the computer, or a computer connected to the site. If the site being hacked is not connected to the Internet, this is probably the only way you can access it. A variety of skill checks may be required, depending on the method used to gain access.

- **Internet Access:** Reaching a site over the net requires two Computers checks. The first check (DC 10) is needed to find the site on the net. Increase the DC for hidden or concealed sites. The second is to defeat the site's security (see the Computers skill description). Once you have succeeded in both checks, you have accessed the site.

LOCATE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

To find the data (or application or remote device) you want, make a Computers check. See Find File under the skill description.

DEFEAT FILE SECURITY

Many networks have additional file security. If so, you need to make another check to overcome it.

DO YOUR STUFF

Finally, you can actually do what you came to do. If you just want to look at records, no additional check is needed. (You can also download data, although that often takes several rounds—or even several minutes, for especially large amounts of information—to complete.) Altering or deleting records sometimes requires another check to defeat computer security. Other operations can be carried out according to the Computers skill description.

NOTICE

In addition to the basic use for noticing things, the Notice skill can be used in any situation where careful observation or general awareness of one's environment is a factor.

WAKING UP

Characters can make auditory Notice checks while they are asleep, but with a +10 increase in the Difficulty. A successful Notice check to detect a noise is sufficient to wake the character up, but characters are dazed (defending normally, but unable to act) on the round they wake up. Characters with the Light Sleeper feat are not affected by either of these modifiers: they make Notice checks normally while asleep and are not dazed upon awakening (see **Optional Feats** in **Chapter 4**).

SENSE MOTIVE

Along with resisting the effects of interaction skills and getting a general feel for an individual or situation, Sense Motive can have some additional combat applications:

ANTICIPATE ACTION

You can anticipate the actions of an opponent. Make a Sense Motive check (DC 10 + opponent's attack bonus) as a full-round action against an opponent you can accurately sense. If successful, you gain a +1 dodge bonus to your defense for the next round against attacks made by that opponent for every 5 points your check result exceeds the DC.

COMBAT READINESS

You can anticipate when a fight is about to break out. Make a Sense Motive check against the result of an opponent's Bluff check result as a full-round action. If the check is successful and combat with that opponent breaks out during the encounter, you gain a +1 bonus on your initiative check per 5 points your check result exceeds the DC. You can only use combat readiness *before* a fight breaks out. Once initiative has been rolled, you can't use it.

MENTAL NOTICE

You can make Sense Motive rather than Notice the skill used for checks involving the mental sense type. There's some precedent for this; Sense Motive already involves a measure of "sixth sense" and empathy, an awareness of what other's are thinking or feeling. It works in line with division of sense types in *M&M* and separates mental senses from the physical senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell.

SLEIGHT OF HAND

In addition to Sleight of Hand's non-combat applications, the art of prestidigitation has several uses for those who find themselves in a fight.

FEINT

You can use Sleight of Hand to feint in combat with quick and clever moves. Make a Sleight of Hand check as a standard action against the results of your opponent's Notice check. If you are successful, your opponent is flat-footed against your next attack, losing his dodge bonus to Defense. Except for the difference in skill checks, this works just like feinting in combat using Bluff (see the **Skills** chapter of *M&M*), but may be better suited to agile characters and fighting styles.

QUICKER THAN THE EYE

In melee combat, you can make a Sleight of Hand check as a move action to slip past an opponent's defenses. Your foe opposes this check with a Notice or attack bonus check. If you succeed, your opponent loses his dodge bonus against your next attack. If you fail, you suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls for the next round.

CREATING SKILLS

While the skills in *M&M*—coupled with the new uses provided in the previous section—cover most situations, you may occasionally wish to add a new skill to the game. There are several reasons to do so. First, a new skill may combine tasks normally handled by two or more different skills under a single heading, allowing characters to be skilled solely in that aspect without any training or ability in the other skills. Second, a new skill may be useful with certain rules options or new systems (including those detailed in this book).

Lastly, a new skill can provide additional detail or may be important in a particular sub-genre or style of campaign.

SAMPLE NEW SKILLS

The following skills are all optional. Their functions are covered by other skills in *M&M*. However, in some settings it may be worthwhile to break these capabilities out into their own distinctive skills, in which case the GM may adopt any or all of the skills given here.

APPRAISE   INT

You can estimate the value of an item.

Check: You can appraise common or well-known objects within 10% of their value (DC 12). Failure means you estimate the value at 50% to 150% of actual value, off by 5% (plus or minus) per point you missed the DC.

Rare or exotic items require a successful check against DC 15, 20, or higher. If successful, you estimate the value within 30% of its actual value. Failure means you cannot estimate the item's value. Proper tools like a magnifying glass, scales, reference materials, and so forth grant a +2 bonus on appraising an item's value.

Try Again: Not for the same object.

Action: Appraising an item takes 1 minute.

Special: If the character is making the Appraise check untrained, for common items, failure means no estimate, and for rare items, success means an estimate within 50% of the item's actual value.

Normal: Appraising items can normally be handled as a Craft or Knowledge skill check, using the same guidelines.

DEMOLITIONS   INT, MANIPULATION, TRAINED ONLY

This still encompasses all of the Demolitions uses of Craft in the **Skills** chapter of *M&M.* It replaces both Craft (chemical) and Craft (mechanical) for making, setting, and disarming explosive devices. It also replaces Craft (structural) for setting explosives for maximum effect against structures. At the GM's discretion, Demolitions can replace the Knowledge and Craft checks for inventing explosive devices using the inventing rules in the **Devices & Equipment** chapter of *M&M.*

FORGERY   INT, MANIPULATION, REQUIRES TOOLS

Forgery breaks the ability to make believable forgeries of documents or artwork out of Craft and into a separate skill. It works the same way as given in the description of Craft in the **Skills** chapter of *M&M.*

GAMBLE   WIS

Use this skill to win games involving both skill and luck. Games based solely only luck—such as flipping a coin—or skill—such as chess—don't involve Gamble checks, unless the character cheats.

Check: To join or start a game, you must first pay a stake. You set the stake if you start the game, while the GM sets it if you join a game in progress. The other participants also pay a stake, which may be equal to yours or a different amount, depending on the rules of the game.

Your Gamble check opposes the Gamble checks of all other participants in the game. If there are many NPCs participating, the GM can opt to make a single check for all of them, using the highest Gamble skill modifier and adding a +2 bonus on the check.

If you beat all of the other participants, you win and claim all the stakes in the game. Otherwise, the gambler with the highest check result claims the prize pool.

- *Cheating:* A skilled character can attempt to cheat while gambling. To cheat, you must make a Bluff check as a free action before making your Gamble check. This Bluff check is opposed by the Sense Motive checks of the other gamblers. If the Bluff check succeeds, you gain a +2 bonus on your Gamble check. If the Bluff check fails, the attempt to cheat did not gain you anything; if the Bluff check fails by 5 or more against any opposing Sense Motive check, that gambler spots your attempt to cheat and reacts accordingly.

Action: A Gamble check requires anywhere from a few minutes to an hour, depending on the game being played.

Try Again: No, unless you want to put up another stake and keep playing.

Special: You can't take 10 or take 20 when making a Gamble check.

Normal: In most campaigns you can use Bluff and Sense Motive checks to resolve games of chance.

NAVIGATE   INT

You're trained in finding directions and plotting courses from place to place.

Check: Make a Navigate check when trying to find your way to a distant location without directions or other specific guidance. Generally, you do not need to make a check to find a local street or other common urban site, or to follow an accurate map. However, you might make a check to wend your way through a dense forest or a labyrinth of underground storm drains.

For movement over a great distance, make a Navigate check. The DC depends on the length of the trip: DC 20 for a few hours, 22 for a few days, 25 for up to a week, and 28 for more than a week. If you succeed, you follow the best reasonable course toward your goal. If you fail, you still reach the goal, but it takes twice as long, since you lose time backtracking and correcting your course. If you fail by more than 5, you travel the expected time, but only get halfway to the destination, at which point you become lost.

You can make a second Navigate check (DC 20) to find the right path. If you succeed, you continue on to your destination; the total time for the trip is twice the normal time. If you fail, you lose the normal time of the trip before you can try again. You can keep trying until you succeed, losing the normal time of the trip each time.

When faced with multiple choices, such as at a branch in a tunnel, you can make a Navigate check (DC 20) to intuit the right choice. If unsuccessful, you choose the wrong path, but at the next juncture, with a successful check, you realize your mistake and can correct it.

You cannot use this function of Navigate to find a path to a site if you have no idea where the site is. The GM may choose to make the Navigate check in secret, so you don't know from the result whether you are following the right or wrong path.

You can use Navigate to determine your location without the use of any high-tech equipment by checking the constellations or other natural landmarks. You must have a clear view of the night sky to make this check. The DC is 15.

Time: A Navigate check is a full-round action.

Special: You can take 10 when making a Navigate check. You can take 20 only when determining your location, not when traveling.

UNDER THE HOOD: NEW SKILLS VS. NEW USES OF SKILLS

When should you create a new skill and when should you create a new use for an existing skill?

It's largely a matter of taste. Generally, adding a new use to a skill is easier in terms of game structure and balance; you don't have to worry about adding another skill to existing characters who ought to have it, or retroactively redesigning any characters to fit the new skill. Instead, it just becomes a less-often used aspect of an existing skill. It's easier to integrate new uses for skills into an ongoing game than it is to add entirely new skills.

If you want to create a new use for an existing skill, but don't necessarily want everyone trained in that skill to have access to it, you can create a feat that grants access. Examples in *M&M* include the Startle and Taunt feats, opening up new options for the Intimidate and Bluff skills, but only for characters with the feats. This is a good middle ground between creating a new skill and a new use for an existing skill, plus it becomes something characters lacking the feat can still do occasionally, if they're willing to spend a hero point to emulate the feat.

Another middle-ground option is the Skill Challenge system in the **Skill Options & Variants** section of this chapter, which allows certain "advanced" uses of skills at a penalty to the skill check or Difficulty Class. This ties in with the previously mentioned feat option if there are also feats for performing certain skill challenges without penalty.

Still, there may be cases when you want to create an entirely new skill. This is especially so for esoteric or unusual skills that don't match up with any existing skill and aren't suitable as new aspects of a skill, even with an enabling feat.

Normal: The functions of Navigate are normally covered by the Survival skill (see the **Skills** chapter of *M&M*). Some navigation may also be covered by appropriate Profession skills like sailor or, obviously, navigator. This skill is intended to break those functions off into an independent skill.

POWER USE
ABILITY VARIES, SPECIALTY

This skill covers proper and careful use of a power. It incorporates many of the functions of Concentration given in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*. It's most useful for campaigns where you want to differentiate between a power's effectiveness (determined by its rank) and a character's skill in applying the power (determined by rank in this skill).

There is a different Power Use specialty for each power, although you can allow a single Power Use skill for an array of Alternate Powers, since they are all essentially aspects of the same power (see **Alternate Powers** in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*).

Check: You may make Power Use checks for the following:

- *Activate Power:* A Power Use check may be required to activate a power. The DC of the check is usually 10 + power ranks activated, and characters may choose to activate fewer than a power's maximum number of ranks in order to make the check easier (at the cost of making the power less effective). If a Power Use to check to activate a power fails, then the power doesn't work, but any effects on the character for activating the power (action required, fatigue, side-effects, etc.) occur.

    If a Power Use check isn't normally required to activate powers, needing one is a very common, minor power drawback, worth 3 power points (enough to pick up some ranks in Power Use…).

- *Extra Effort:* The GM may require a Power Use check in order to use extra effort with a power with a DC of 10 + power rank. A successful check means you can use extra effort, a failed check means you cannot.

- *Maintain Power:* Power Use can take the place of the Concentration skill for maintaining powers with a Concentration or Sustained duration. Substitute a Power Use check where a Concentration check would normally be required.

- *Power Stunts:* At the GM's option, a Power Use check can substitute for extra effort to perform a power stunt (see **Extra Effort** in the **Characteristics** chapter of *M&M*). The DC is usually 15 + the power's rank, although the GM can modify it depending on the desired power stunt. If the check is successful, the hero can perform that power stunt without fatigue or spending a hero point. If the check fails, the attempt to perform the power stunt fails, but the hero uses up the normal action the power stunt would have taken. Making a Power Use check to perform a power stunt takes no time in and of itself and is a free action.

    A harsher option is requiring a Power Use check in *addition* to the extra effort normally required for a power stunt. If the check succeeds, the extra effort is successful. If it fails, the power stunt doesn't work, but the character suffers the fatigue (or spends a hero point to avoid it) normally.

- *Precision:* You can make a Power Use check (DC 10 + power rank) to apply the benefits of the Precise power feat to the power (see **Power Feats** in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*). In fact, the GM may *require* a Power Use check to use a power precisely, and can either ban acquisition of the Precise power feat, or have it apply a +5 bonus to the Power Use check result rather than granting automatic precision with a power. This approach makes powers less precise and controlling them less certain.

Action: A Power Use check is normally a free action associated with some other action in which a power is used.

Normal: Any of the applications of Power Use can be Concentration checks instead, if the GM prefers not to add a new skill.

Option: If you prefer, you can make Power Use checks based on a power's cost rather than rank. Where it says "power rank" in the skill's description, substitute "one-half power point cost" instead. This keeps DCs the same for powers costing 2 points per rank, but makes them slightly easier for lower-cost powers and harder for higher-cost powers.

REPAIR
INT, MANIPULATION, REQUIRES TOOLS

This skill essentially takes the repair functions of Craft (see the **Skills** chapter of *M&M*) and makes them a separate skill, covering all five Craft specialties. Thus you can use Repair to fix any item, regardless of the Craft skill used to make it. This also includes the jury-rigging function of Craft.
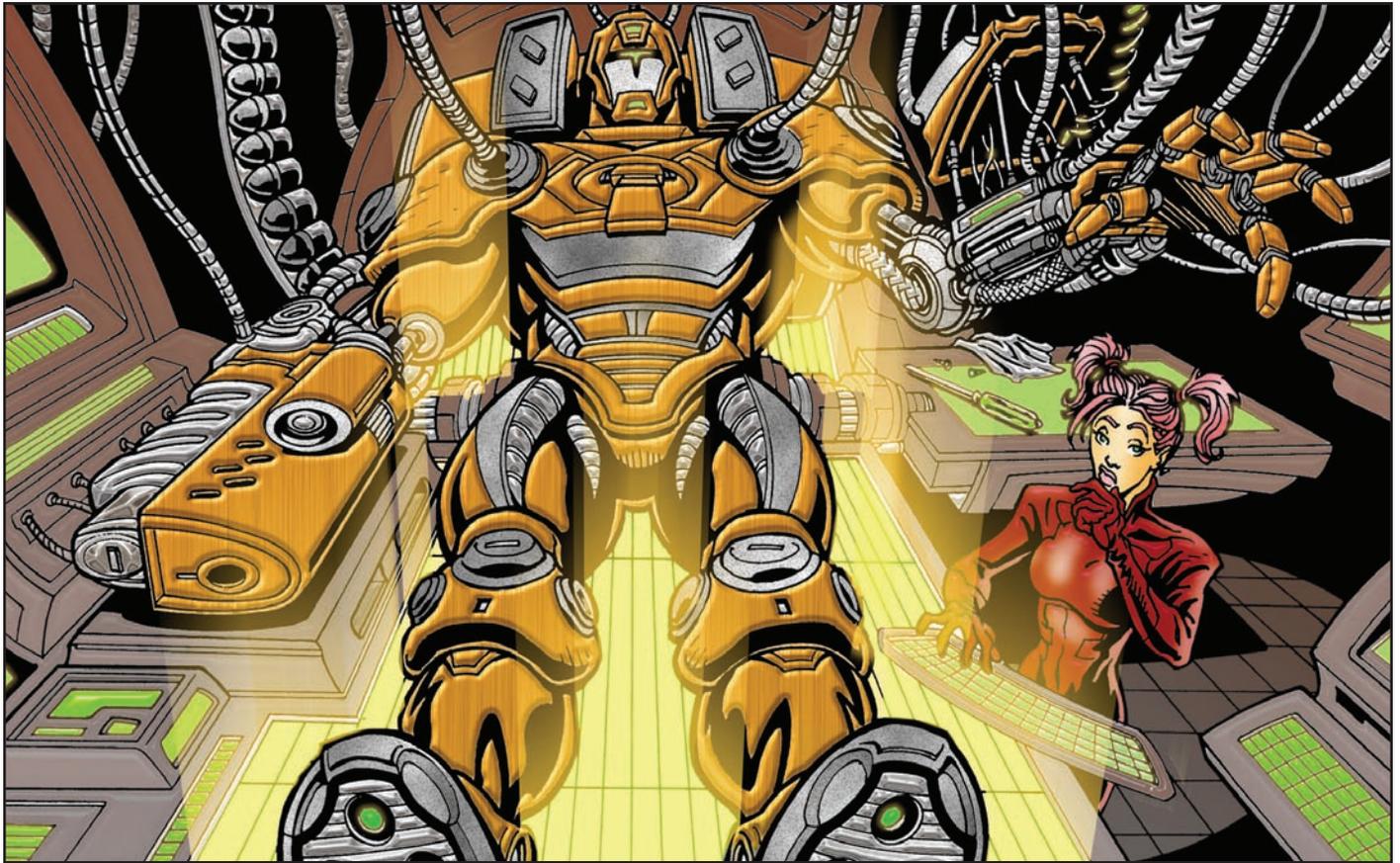
Repair is useful for modeling characters able to fix things and get them working again, but not particularly skilled at designing or making entirely new items.

RESEARCH   INT

You are skilled in researching and finding information on various topics.

Check: Researching a topic takes time, skill, and some luck. The GM determines how obscure a particular topic is (the more obscure, the higher the DC) and what kind of information might be available depending on where the character is conducting his research.

Information ranges from general to protected. Given enough time (usually a few hours) and a successful skill check, you get a general idea about a given topic. This assumes no obvious reasons exist why such information would be unavailable, and you have a way to acquire restricted or protected information.

The higher the check result, the better and more complete the information. If you want to discover a specific fact, date, map, or similar bit of information, add +5 to +15 to the DC.

Try Again: Yes.

Action: A Research check takes at least an hour, maybe more depending on the information.

Special: You can take 10 or take 20 on a Research check.

Normal: In *M&M*, research is normally taking 20 on a Knowledge check to consult various resources. If this skill is in use, characters cannot take 20 on Knowledge checks, but must use Research instead.

SKILL OPTIONS & VARIANTS

This section presents optional rules and variants for skills in *M&M*.

SIMPLE SKILLS

Skills in *M&M* are normally 4 skill ranks per 1 power point, but those skill ranks can be distributed among different skills as desired. This option requires all 4 skill ranks to apply to a single skill, thus skills are bought up in increments of 4 ranks for 1 point per increment. This tends to simplify the acquisition of skills at the cost of some flexibility.

BACKGROUND SKILLS

While the skills in this chapter cover most of the abilities characters are likely to have, there are a handful of miscellaneous skills involving specialized knowledge or ability that exist primarily as background elements. These are called *background skills*. Background skills include things like Knowledge of a particular city or locale, trivia like comic books, movie quotes, or world's records, hobbies, games, and things like sports. Background skills are acquired at a cost of 1 power point per 8 skill ranks. The Gamemaster should approve any background skills, and skills in the core *M&M* rules cannot be considered background skills.

COMBAT SKILLS

Rather than acquiring attack and defense bonus using power points, you may prefer to treat combat abilities like other skills. In this case, a character's attack or defense bonus is based off his ranks in the appropriate skill for the situation.

There are four combat skills: Melee Attack, Ranged Attack, Melee Defense, and Ranged Defense. Combat skills cost four times as much as normal skills (4 skill ranks per rank in a combat skill, or 1 power point per rank) and maximum rank in a combat skill is determined by the power level limits on attack and defense bonus rather than skill rank (see the **Hero Creation** chapter of *M&M* for details).

VARIABLE SKILL COSTS

Gamemasters may wish to adjust the cost of skills to better suit the campaign. There are two main ways of doing this. The first is to change the overall costs of skills, providing more or fewer skill ranks per power point—anywhere from 5 ranks per power point to only 2 per point. This makes skills more or less common in the game. Having skills be more expensive also tends to emphasize the value of ability scores over skills (at least for those skills usable untrained).

The other option is to change the costs of individual skills, making some more expensive than others, so ranks in a particular skill might costs 2, 3, or more skill points per rank whereas other skills still cost 1 skill point. Background and Combat Skills (previously) are both examples of skills with different costs from the norm.

Gamemasters looking to duplicate the skill cost of the first edition of *M&M* can change skills to 1 power point per skill rank, but this puts their cost out of balance with ability scores, which have the same cost but are considerably more effective and broadly useful. A minimum of 2 skill ranks per power point is recommended when using this option.

MIX-AND-MATCH KEY ABILITIES

While each skill in *M&M* has a key ability score, the GM may choose to apply whatever key ability seems appropriate for the task, rather than having a set ability for each skill. Thus a character might use Ride + Dex modifier to maneuver a mount, but Ride + Charisma to gentle a panicked mount and Ride + Wisdom to judge the value of a potential mount, and so forth. The cost of skills and their ranks remain the same; the key ability just changes from situation to situation.

BROAD SKILLS

Skills in *M&M* are fairly specific, while characters in the comic books are often good at a broad range of things, particularly in their areas of specialty. It may be useful shorthand in some campaigns to allow characters to have broader skills that incorporate several different skills into one.

The broad skill list cuts the number of skills by more than half, down to an even dozen, two per ability score. Characters get 1 rank in a broad skill per power point rather than 4 ranks in skills as usual. At the GM's option, characters can also acquire any sub-skill of a broad skill at a cost of 4 ranks per power point or two sub-skills at a cost of 2 ranks per power point (to create a character who's only a good swimmer or escape artist, for example). Suggested broad skill groupings follow, although the GM is free to create new ones customized to suit the campaign.

- **Athletics:** Includes the Acrobatics, Climb, Ride, and Swim sub-skills.

- **Awareness:** Includes the Concentration, Notice, Search, and Sense Motive sub-skills.

- **Interaction:** Includes the Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate sub-skills.

- **Knowledge:** Includes the Arcane Lore, Art, Business, Civics, Current Events, History, Popular Culture, Streetwise, and Theology and Philosophy sub-skills of Knowledge.

- **Languages:** Instead of choosing a language per rank, characters make language checks to determine if they understand a particular language (see **Language Checks** in the following section). This simulates a broad knowledge of languages and linguistics.

- **Science:** Includes the Behavior Sciences, Earth and Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences sub-skills of Knowledge and the Medicine sub-skill.

- **Performance:** Includes Craft (artistic), Disguise, and all Perform sub-skills.

- **Profession:** Includes all Professional sub-skills.

- **Technology:** Includes the Computers, Craft (electronic, mechanical, and structural), and Knowledge (technology) sub-skills.

- **Thievery:** Includes the Disable Device, Escape Artist, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth sub-skills.

- **Vehicles:** Includes the Drive and Pilot sub-skills for all vehicles.

- **Wilderness:** Includes the Handle Animal, Ride, and Survival sub-skills.

NARROW SKILLS

The opposite of **Broad Skills**, this option sub-divides many of the skills in *M&M* into more specialized skills with a narrower focus. It's best for skill-intensive games where the heroes are expected to rely heavily on their skills (and may not even have powers), since it allows a group of heroes to further specialize and diversify without everyone having the same skill-set.

An example of ways to split up the existing skills is given here, but feel free to sub-divide them as you wish. The base skill retains any functions not specifically given to the listed sub-skills. You might find some of the new skills in this chapter useful additions to the list as well.

- **Acrobatics:** Acrobatics, Balance (for balancing actions and avoiding being tripped), Jump (for jumping actions).

- **Bluff:** Bluff, Innuendo (for sending secret messages), Taunt (for taunting, in place of the Taunt feat), Trick (for trick actions).

- **Computers:** Computer Use, Computer Programming (find file, write program, operate remote), Computer Hacking (defeat or defend security).

- **Concentration:** Each power requires its own specific Power Use skill. The general Concentration skill is used for situations where a character must focus on a task not involving power use.

- **Craft:** Each Craft type can be sub-divided into more specific skills, such as Craft (automotive), Craft (carpentry), Craft (computers), and so forth.

- **Disable Device:** Open Lock (for locks), Disable Security (for security devices).

- **Drive:** Each vehicle type becomes a separate Drive skill: Drive (cars), Drive (boats), Drive (tanks), etc.

- **Knowledge:** Each Knowledge type can be sub-divided into more specific skills, such as Knowledge (physics), Knowledge (modern art), Knowledge (urban legends), and so forth.

- **Medicine:** First-Aid, Medicine, Surgery (for performing operations, Medicine retains the other functions).

- **Notice:** Each sense type has its own separate Notice skill: Notice (spot), Notice (listen), Notice (smell), etc.

- **Perform:** Each Perform type can be sub-divided into more specific skills, like Perform (guitar), Perform (opera), Perform (drama), and so forth.

- **Pilot:** Each vehicle type becomes a separate Pilot skill: Pilot (helicopter), Pilot (jet), Pilot (starfighter), etc.

- **Ride:** Each type of mount becomes a separate Ride skill: Ride (horse), Ride (camel), Ride (dragon), etc.

- **Stealth:** Each sense type has its own Stealth skill: Stealth (hide), Stealth (move silently), Stealth (mental), and so forth. Tailing also becomes a separate skill.

- **Survival:** The skill must specialize in a particular type of terrain: Survival (arctic), Survival (desert), Survival (forested), etc.

FULL AND HALF SKILLS

While skills are handled fairly simply in *M&M* (1 power point buys 4 skill ranks), this variant further simplifies skill acquisition. In it, skills are either "half skills," costing 2 power points, or "full skills" costing 4 power points. A half skill always has half the maximum ranks for the campaign's power level (or power level +5, divided by 2, and rounded down) while full skills always have a rank equal to the maximum allowed by the campaign's power level (or power level +5). This makes the allocation of points to skills simpler; they all cost either 2 or 4 power points. So in a PL10 campaign, half skills are all rank 7 and full skills are all rank 15.

In any campaign over PL7, this makes skills somewhat less expensive, but also sacrifices some flexibility, since players cannot allocate skill ranks as they wish among their characters' skills. It's useful for quick and easy applications of skill ranks, particularly for introductory games. In games below PL7, you may want to lower the cost of half and full skills to 1 and 2 power points, respectively, to keep skill costs at a reasonable level.

ACTIVE, SECRET & PASSIVE SKILL CHECKS

Skill checks may be defined as *active, secret,* or *passive,* with particular effects on die rolling and the application of hero points and modifiers.

With an active skill check, the player rolls the die to determine the outcome, and the result is therefore obvious. The player may spend hero points to enhance the result, and the character may take 10 or take 20 on the check.

With a secret skill check, the Gamemaster rolls the die to determine the outcome, and the player is not informed of the result of the check unless it becomes obvious (when a sabotaged item fails to function, for example). The player may spend a hero point on a passive check, but does so without knowing the outcome of the die

roll. The character may take 10 or take 20 on the check as circumstances allow.

With a passive skill check, the Gamemaster rolls to determine the outcome and the player is not informed of the result unless its success informs the character of something (such as a Notice check revealing something to the character). The player may *not* spend hero points to enhance a passive check and may not take 10 or take 20 on a passive skill check. This grants the GM a bit more leeway in dealing with the results of passive checks.

MULTITASKING

Sometimes a character must complete more than one task at once: simultaneously performing two computer operations at once, or opening a lock while balancing on a precarious surface, for example. In these situations, the character can perform up to two actions at once. Neither task can require more than a full action and the character must be reasonably able to perform them together (e.g., the character cannot attempt two skill checks each requiring the use of both hands, drive two vehicles at once, etc.). What a character can reasonably accomplish depends greatly on the character's traits: someone with more than two hands could attempt simultaneous tasks someone else couldn't!

When multitasking, the character can attempt an additional standard action skill check per round, but suffers a –5 penalty to both

complication (awarding you a hero point). A failure has the normal effects, while a critical failure has the worst possible effects for the situation.

CRITICAL RESULTS AND HERO POINTS

At the GM's option, spending a hero point can automatically confirm a critical success or avoid a critical failure (converting it to a normal failure). The hero point is spent after a critical threat is scored but before the roll to confirm. The hero point has no effect except to automatically confirm or avoid the critical result.

SKILL SYNERGY

Characters may have two skills that work particularly well together. In general, having 5 or more ranks in one skill gives the character a +2 bonus for favorable conditions on skill checks with its synergistic skills. This is a situational bonus and therefore does not count toward power level limits. Multiple bonuses applied to the same skill do stack. If a skill cannot be used untrained, then the character must have at least 1 rank in the skill to benefit from any synergy bonuses to it. The GM should feel free to assign other synergy bonuses to skills as appropriate for the game.

SKILL SYNERGIES

5 OR MORE RANKS IN...	GIVES A +2 BONUS ON...
Bluff	Diplomacy checks
Bluff	Disguise checks to act in character
Bluff	Intimidate checks
Bluff	Sleight of Hand checks
Disguise	Intimidate checks with an appropriate disguise
Disguise	Stealth checks with an appropriate disguise
Handle Animal	Ride checks
Knowledge (streetwise)	Gather Information checks
Search	Survival checks to follow tracks
Sense Motive	Diplomacy checks
Survival	Knowledge (earth and life sciences)

HIGH SYNERGY

Optionally, especially high ranks in a skill may grant an even greater synergy bonus. Every additional 5 skill ranks in this option grants an additional +1 synergy bonus (+3 at 10 ranks, +4 at 15 ranks, and so forth). The Gamemaster may set a maximum synergy bonus as desired; +6 at 25 ranks is recommended.

EXTENDED SKILL CHECKS

With most skill checks, a single die roll immediately determines whether or not a character succeeds. If a character wants to make something or recall a specific fact, success or failure is apparent after a single skill check.

For complicated and time-consuming tasks (such as disabling a complex device or researching an obscure bit of knowledge), or at times when the GM wants to build tension and suspense, you can use the extended skill check variant described here.

In an extended skill check, a specific number of successful skills checks must be achieved to complete the task. The complexity of the task is reflected in the DC of the required check, the number

skill checks attempted that round. Alternately, the player can choose to take a –10 penalty on one check, designated as the secondary skill check, and no penalty on the first (designated as the primary skill check). This is essentially the same as the simultaneous action challenge (see **Challenges** in **Chapter 1**).

CRITICAL SKILLS

In this variant, a natural 1 on a skill check is always considered a failure and a natural 20 is always considered a success, regardless of the task's DC. A natural 20 may also be considered a critical success, while a natural 1 may be a critical failure.

CRITICAL SUCCESS

When you roll a natural 20 on a skill check, you automatically succeed and score a *threat*, much like a critical hit. To turn the threat into a critical success, you must make another skill check against the original Difficulty Class. (This is a re-roll of the die, unlike the critical hit rules.) If that check is also a success, you have scored a critical success. Otherwise, the threat is just a normal success. You can spend a hero point to automatically confirm a critical success with a skill check. An automatic success is always at the check total or minimal result required for success. A critical success is the best possible for the situation.

CRITICAL FAILURE

When you roll a natural 1 on a skill check, you automatically fail; you may also critically fail. Roll the check again against the same Difficulty Class; if the second check fails, the failure is critical. The Gamemaster may also automatically confirm a critical failure as a

of successful rolls required to complete the task, and the maximum number of failed rolls that can occur before the attempt fails. In most cases, one or two failed rolls do not mean an extended skill check has failed; however, if three failed rolls occur before the character makes the required number of successful rolls, the attempt fails. Although three failures is a common baseline, GMs are encouraged to change the number if the situation warrants it.

The GM can also apply a penalty to future rolls in the extended check if the player rolls one or more failures. For instance, an intricate negotiation requiring an extended Diplomacy check might assess a –2 penalty on checks for each failed check made as part of the extended check for poor conditions.

The Difficulty Class of an extended skill check should usually be 5 to 10 less than a standard skill check to allow for the number of additional successful checks required and the possibility of failure. So a normally formidable task (DC 25) should only be DC 15–20 for an extended check.

EXTENDED SKILL CHECK EXAMPLES

Successes	Complexity	Example
2 or 3	Slight	Training a horse (Handle Animal)
4 to 6	Ordinary	Making a common item (Craft)
7 to 9	Good	Bypassing a fiendishly complex trap (Disable Device)
10 or more	Amazing	Figuring out an alien device (Knowledge (technology))

TRYING AGAIN

Extended skill checks can usually be retried. However, like normal skill checks, some extended skill checks have consequences and those consequences must be taken into account. For example, a trap that requires an extended Disable Device check to disarm is triggered if the attempt fails, just as with a normal trap and a normal Disable Device check.

Some skills are virtually useless for a particular task once an attempt has failed, and this includes extended skill checks. The Extended Skill Use section describes which skills can be used in extended skill checks and which allow retries after failed attempts.

Like skill checks, ability checks and even power checks can also be complex.

Extended skill checks are rarely used in situations calling for opposed checks.

INTERRUPTING AN EXTENDED CHECK

Most extended skill checks can be interrupted without adversely affecting the outcome of the check. However, the Gamemaster is free to decide that an interruption affects the outcome. An interruption can count as one failed roll in the check's progression or it can mean the extended check fails altogether.

AID AND EXTENDED CHECKS

You can aid another as normal with an extended skill check. Characters aiding the one making the attempt must roll their aid attempts each time the character makes a new roll as part of the extended skill check, and only apply the aid bonus to those rolls they're available to aid. Assisting characters don't have to aid the entire extended check unless the GM rules otherwise.

TAKING 10 AND 20

You can take 10 on any die roll during an extended skill check in any situation where you could normally take 10 on a check using that skill.

You can't take 20 when making an extended skill check. Taking 20 represents making the same check repeatedly until you succeed, but each successful roll in an extended skill check represents only a portion of the success you must achieve to complete the task.

OPTION: UNDER PRESSURE

If a character is under pressure or stress during an extended skill check (trying to disarm a bomb as the timer ticks down, performing a complex magical rite in the midst of a roaring battle, deciphering the combination to unlock a door before a guard discovers her, etc.), you can require a Concentration check at each stage of the extended check with the same DC as the skill check for that stage. If the Concentration check succeeds, the character can attempt the skill check normally, if the Concentration check fails, the character suffers a –4 penalty on the skill check, making it more likely to fail.

Optionally, a certain number of failed Concentration checks (three or more) may result in failure with the entire extended task, forcing the character to start over again from the beginning. Conversely, a higher level of success with the Concentration check might apply a bonus to the corresponding skill check, like a use of aid (+1 bonus per 5 points the Concentration check result exceeds the required DC).

To really pile on the pressure, you can also require Fortitude or Will saving throws during especially stressful extended checks to avoid suffering fatigue from the effort involved, with the DC of the save rising as the extended check progresses.

COMBINED EFFORT AND EXTENDED CHECKS

At the GM's discretion, some extended checks can allow multiple characters to combine their effects. All the participating characters make the check and combine their successes toward the requirements of the extended check. For example, a group of four characters combine their effort to work on a project requiring six successful checks. Each makes the necessary check, adding up the results. The goal is still the same—to accumulate six successful checks before three failures.

If a group achieves the number of successes it needs at the same time it gets three or more failures, the extended check is considered a success.

TIMED EXTENDED CHECKS

The previous rules for extended checks assume time is not a factor; the process goes on until the character accumulates enough successful checks to complete the task or accumulates enough failed checks to fail. However, some extended checks may also feature a time-limit, such as disabling a device before it goes off, or fixing a starship's engines before it crashes into the sun. The GM can use a time-limit as an additional source of tension for an extended check.

If the time involved is as long or longer than the required number of successes plus three, then it isn't relevant, since the character will either have succeeded or failed before the time runs out. If you want to stretch this out, remove the automatic failure for three failed skill checks.

EXTENDED SKILL USE

The following section provides general guidelines for using extended skill checks with the skills in *M&M*. If a skill is not listed, you can assume it is not suitable for extended checks.

BLUFF

Almost all uses of Bluff require only a single check to indicate success or failure. However, in certain complex situations, the GM might want to use an extended Bluff check in place of several simple checks. For example, a hero spends several days undercover trying to infiltrate a criminal gang. Rather than play out the entire series of interactions, the GM decides to use an extended Bluff check, setting the DC at 25 and requiring five successful rolls before rolling three failures. This is sufficient for the hero to infiltrate the gang, but the GM decides to play out the hero's meeting with the gang leader, since he's a more important character.

CONCENTRATION

Typically the Concentration skill doesn't require extended checks, but special circumstances might use them. For example, navigating through a mental puzzle or maze, or meditating for a long period of time under difficult conditions, could require an extended Concentration check.

CRAFT

Normal use of Craft resembles an extended check in many ways. If you want, you can replace the standard Craft check rules with an extended Craft check. In this case, a single failed check doesn't ruin the project; instead, rolling three failures before achieving the requisite number of successes does.

DIPLOMACY

The GM might simulate long and involved negotiations for an extended period of time with an extended Diplomacy check.

DISABLE DEVICE

Nearly any device can require an extended check rather than a simple one. A device requiring an extended check may have a lower Difficulty Class (say between 5 and 10 lower) to represent the additional work required. Extended Disable Device checks are especially useful for heroes with skill bonuses unable to reach the highest DCs; they trade off time for a better chance of success in the long run.

ESCAPE ARTIST

A few specific situations might call for an extended Escape Artist check. An obvious example is a long, narrow passage only wide enough to let a character wiggle through. In this case, each successful roll represents navigating a portion of the passage, and a failed roll means the character is stuck for a moment. Escaping from involved restraints (such as being bound in a straitjacket and chains, upside-down in a tank rapidly filling with water) may also be an extended check.

GATHER INFORMATION

Gather Information allows characters to get a general impression of the news or find the answer to a specific question. As long as the character only has a few questions or rumors to follow up on, a simple skill check should be used. In situations where heroes are following a half dozen or more leads, the GM might want to use one extended skill check to resolve the information-gathering attempt. In this case, the number of successes required equals the number of leads or questions pursued, and the GM determines the number of failures that can ruin the extended check. In an extended Gather Information check, each die roll represents 2 hours spent pursuing the investigation.

HANDLE ANIMAL

Extended skill checks work well with the extended times required to train animals. Each roll in the check represents a week of work, and three failed rolls mean the training fails and must start over again.

INTIMIDATE

Intimidate doesn't usually lend itself to extended checks, although the GM can allow them in situations similar to those described for Bluff and Diplomacy.

KNOWLEDGE

Researching particular information is a good use of extended skill checks. To attempt an extended Knowledge check, a character must have access to research materials (just like taking 20 on a simple Knowledge check). The GM is also free to rule that several successful rolls using particular research materials exhausts their useful information, sending the character to find other resources. In this way, an extended Knowledge check can become the basis for an adventure as the heroes seek out information.

MEDICINE

The GM might require an extended Medicine skill check to treat a particularly virulent disease or similar complex medical condition.

SEARCH

Certain hidden items might require an extended Search check, particularly if they are obscured with layers of concealment. An extended Search can also represent searching a large area for something (compare with the extended Search rules in the *M&M* core rules).

SENSE MOTIVE

Most uses of Sense Motive are simple checks, but the GM can allow extended checks in situations similar to those described for Bluff and Diplomacy.

SLEIGHT OF HAND

A character performing a lengthy demonstration of sleight of hand, consisting of many smaller tricks (such as a magic show) might have to make an extended skill check to accomplish it properly.

STEALTH

Stealth doesn't normally lend itself to extended checks. However, the GM might call for an extended Stealth check to simulate navigating through an area, such as a crowded urban environment, without being noticed (and without needing to make opposed checks for every single person the character might encounter).

SURVIVAL

An extended Survival check might be required for long-term survival in a particular climate or terrain.

EXTENDED CHECKS USING MULTIPLE SKILLS

While extended checks usually involve a single skill, you can use the same guidelines for extended checks involving multiple skills, where each stage of the check requires a certain number of successes before moving on to the next stage. Examples include research and development of a device using Knowledge, followed by a check using Craft to actually build a prototype; or tracking someone down using Gather Information, followed by an extended Stealth check to establish a tail or surveillance. As with other extended checks, the GM sets the Difficulty Class and the number of successes required.

MASTERFUL TACTICS

The Knowledge (tactics) skill is largely a background skill in *M&M:* concerned primarily with theory, but providing no direct in-game benefits. Gamemasters who wish to beef up the skill can apply one or both of the following options.

First, characters can make a Knowledge (tactics) check in place of a Stealth or related skill check to set up an attempt to surprise opponents in combat (see **Surprise** in **Chapter 8** of *M&M*). Likewise, characters can substitute a Knowledge skill check for the Notice or Sense Motive check needed to detect an ambush or to avoid a feint in combat.

Second, the GM can allow a Knowledge (tactics) skill check to substitute for the Intelligence check normally associated with the Master Plan feat to represent the character's greater tactical planning (see the feat description in **Chapter 3** of *M&M*).

GRADED LANGUAGE RANKS

The default assumption of the Language skill is a character either speaks a language or does not; a rank in a language grants complete fluency.

Optionally, Language skills may be graded, with rank 1 in a language granting only poor fluency (simple words and phrases). Rank 2 provides fair fluency, rank 3 is good fluency, and rank 4 is complete fluency, with no discernable accent. Characters begin with good fluency in their native language for free. For languages with different regional dialects, fluency is considered one level lower than fluency in the basic language. A language rank applied to a dialect eliminates this penalty.

LANGUAGE MODIFIERS

Having less than good fluency with a language may impose penalties on a character's interaction skills for unfavorable circumstances, while complete fluency may provide a bonus for favorable circumstances when interacting with speakers of that language likely to be impressed by the character's command of it (at the GM's discretion). A language penalty may also apply to tasks involving reading material in a language, like technical instructions or research materials.

LANGUAGE MODIFIERS

Fluency	Modifier
Poor	–4 (This includes a translator with good or fair fluency.)
Fair	–2 (This includes a translator with complete fluency.)
Good	+0
Complete	+2

LANGUAGE CHECKS

Normally, there are no Language skill checks. However, Gamemasters may allow a character who knows a number of languages a check to see if the character understands some of an unknown language when encountering it. The DC of the check is 15 for a language similar to one the character already knows (such as another Romance language for a character who already speaks one), 20 for languages different from those the character already knows, and 30 for completely different languages. Complex or technical subject matter increases the DC by 5 while very simple words and phrases may decrease it by 5. Make a skill check using Intelligence as the key ability and the number of languages the character speaks as the skill rank. A successful check means the character understands the gist of the communication or gets his meaning across, although it's by no means exact. A failure by 5 or more means a miscommunication or misunderstanding.

NOTICE SPECIALTIES

The GM may choose to treat each sense type as a separate specialty of the Notice skill (see **Sense Types** in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*). Thus characters could have ranks in Notice (listen), Notice (spot), Notice (mental), and so forth, acquired as separate skills. This allows for some fine-tuning of the character's sensory abilities at the cost of some added complexity. See **Narrow Skills** in this chapter for one application of this option.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

The Profession skill given in the **Skills** chapter of *M&M* generally provides background flavor for characters and may occasionally see use in the game. Gamemasters who feel the skill doesn't really serve any purpose can choose to eliminate it, replacing its function in the Wealth system with a *professional skill.* This is essentially any other regular skill a character uses to earn a living. For example, a diplomat would choose Diplomacy as his professional skill and a doctor would use Medicine. A lawyer might use Knowledge (civics), or possibly Bluff or Diplomacy, depending on the type of law practice. The chosen professional skill is used for all Profession skill checks for performing the character's job and influencing Wealth.

STEALTH SPECIALTIES

Just as characters use Stealth to avoid being seen and heard, the Gamemaster may choose to allow some characters to take Stealth specialties in avoiding other forms of the Notice skill. These other specialties work the same way as Stealth: make an opposed check between the Notice skill and the Stealth skill, with modifiers for "cover" and distractions. For example, a character with a Stealth specialty in radar will find it easier to hide amidst a cloud of metallic chaff, a character hiding from Notice (mental) can more easily do so in a crowd of other minds, and so forth.

A Stealth specialty should generally apply to an entire sense type, although in some cases a single sense may be more appropriate. It's up to the GM what, if any, other Stealth specialties are available in the campaign. Stealth specialties have the same cost as normal ranks in Stealth.

CHAPTER 4: FEATS

Feats help to round out *M&M* characters, providing options and resources. With the right feats, a character with no powers can often take on superhuman opponents and challenges and succeed. This chapter looks at ways of expanding the available feats in the game, how to package them together to create distinct fighting styles, and optional feats for defining characters in different ways associated with the variant rules in this book.

CREATING FEATS

Players and Gamemasters may want to expand the list of feats in *M&M* by coming up with their own. Some general guidelines for new feats include:

- A feat improving a character's base attack or defense bonus with no corresponding penalty should only add a +1 bonus usable about half the time (like the Attack Focus and Dodge Focus feats).

- A feat improving common die rolls should only add a +2 bonus.

- A feat improving a narrowly defined or uncommon die roll can add up to a +4 bonus.

- A feat improving a single skill should generally add +4, while feats improving two skills should add +2 to each (equivalent to putting 1 power point into skills). Such skill bonuses count against the power level limit on skill ranks.

- A feat cannot apply a bonus to a roll more than once for any given roll.

- A feat can negate up to a –5 penalty from an action. This includes things like the various challenges given in **Chapter 1** (see the **Challenges** option).

- A feat can allow a character to ignore some of the restrictions on an action (such as Improved Disarm or Improved Trip).

- A feat can allow a character a bonus action by succeeding at some other action (such as downing an opponent with Takedown Attack or making a grapple check after an unarmed attack with Improved Grab). The bonus action should be specified rather than an open-ended "free" action.

- A feat can allow a character to substitute one skill check for another in certain circumstances (such as with Taunt or Acrobatic Bluff).

- A fortune feat allows characters to spend hero points in different ways (as with Seize Initiative and Ultimate Effort).

Some of the things new feats should *not* (or need not) do include:

- Provide a general bonus to an ability score, skill, attack bonus, defense bonus, or saving throw. Characters can already acquire these by spending additional power points on those traits.

- Provide a variable bonus based on another trait, such as adding the character's Intelligence bonus to attack rolls or Wisdom bonus to Defense. This grants a potentially huge bonus to some for a bargain price (1 point). (A feat where one trait *substitutes* for another is more acceptable, provided the two traits are roughly equivalent.)

- Grant a benefit greater than another similar trait for less cost.

As always, the Gamemaster has the final say whether or not a particular feat is suitable, and may veto any proposed feat, or request the player modify it to make it acceptable.

POWERS AS FEATS

At the GM's discretion, a power with a final cost of 1 power point can be made into a feat. The difference is primarily stylistic, since it doesn't affect the trait's cost or usage whether it's called a feat or a power. The key difference is the new feat cannot be nullified, but also can't be used in conjunction with extra effort; it's a permanent capability—a feat and not an actual "power." It also has different descriptors, which can affect interaction with other traits.

Players and Gamemasters can use various minor powers to create new feats, particularly if the GM has decided to restrict the availability of powers in the campaign. In fact, for a low-powered action-hero game of *M&M*, the Gamemaster may choose to allow *only* 1-point powers, treating them all as feats (some of which characters may be able to acquire in ranks) and disallowing all other powers.

SAMPLE POWERS AS FEATS

The following are some examples of 1-point powers suitable for use as feats. They're by no means the only ones, and you should feel free to come up with your own.

COMBAT CONCEALMENT   COMBAT

Make a Stealth check against your opponent's Notice check as a move action. If you win, you gain partial concealment from sight until your next round. If you make the check as a full-round action, you gain total concealment. This is based on Concealment (visual) with the flaws Partial and Action (Move), for a cost of 1 power point per 2 ranks.

DEFLECT ARROWS   COMBAT, RANKED

You can make block rolls to deflect thrown weapons and projectiles like arrows with an effective attack bonus of +1 per rank. This is 1 rank of the Deflect power.

DIRECTION SENSE   GENERAL

You have an innate sense of direction. You always know which way is north and can retrace your steps through any place you've been (1 rank of Super-Senses).

UNDER THE HOOD: FEATS FROM OTHER GAMES

Players and Gamemasters may wish to import feats from other games into *M&M*. Some will work just fine, but others may have requirements (including particular traits or mechanics) that don't exist in the *M&M* system, while others grant benefits—such as general skill bonuses—already available to *M&M* characters by spending power points. Some feats from other games may also violate the guidelines given under **Creating Feats**. The Gamemaster should carefully evaluate any such feats using these guidelines and compare them to the existing feats in *M&M* to ensure they fit into the game and don't provide too great (or too little) of an advantage for their cost.

UNDER THE HOOD: ACCESS TO FEATS

Feats in *M&M* come in two levels of accessibility (and therefore usability). First there are fortune feats, which require you to have a power point invested in the feat and spend a hero point to use the feat. Then come standard feats, which require you to either invest a power point in the feat to use it on a regular basis or spend a hero point to get a single use of the feat in a particular situation. Finally, there are various options and maneuvers, which require neither an investment of power points nor an expenditure of hero points to use (meaning they're not really feats, but options open to everyone).

You can control access to certain capabilities in the game by changing where they fall in this hierarchy of feats. For example, if you want to restrict certain feats, then you can make them fortune feats, preventing characters who don't have them from emulating them and requiring the characters who do have them to spend hero points to use them (so they're see use less often). Likewise, you can make some options into feats, or some feats into standard options available to everyone, as discussed in other sections of this chapter.

EAGLE EYES   GENERAL

Exceptionally sharp-eyed, your visual Notice checks have a range increment of 100 feet rather than 10 feet. This is 1 rank of Super-Senses (extended vision).

EXTRA LIMB   GENERAL

You have an additional limb, like a prehensile tail. This feat is likely only available at character creation (1 point of the Additional Limbs power).

IMMUNITY TO DISEASE   GENERAL

You are unaffected by diseases and pathogens. Other 1-point Immunities (such as aging, fatigue, fear, or poison) may also be suitable as feats.

IMPROVED STRIKE   GENERAL

Your martial prowess makes you a formidible hand-to-hand fighter. Your unarmed attacks can inflict lethal rather than non-lethal damage and count as armed attacks for all purposes (essentially an Alternate Power feat for your unarmed damage). This feat is only suited for campaigns that distinguish the ability to inflict lethal and non-lethal damage.

LIGHTNING CALCULATOR   GENERAL

You can perform mathematical functions in your head ten times faster than normal, like a human calculator. This feat is 3 ranks of Quickness, limited to doing calculations (a –2 modifier) for a total cost of 1 point for 3 ranks using the guidelines for fractional costs in the "Power Modifiers" section of the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*. You can use it as the basis for similar feats allowing for quick performance of certain routine tasks.

LOW-LIGHT VISION   GENERAL

You can see twice as far in low-light conditions as normal (1 rank of Super-Senses).

MENTAL GRAPPLE   GENERAL, RANKED

You can reach out and affect others with your mental power. You can initiate a mental grapple with an opponent you can accurately sense. The target makes a Will save (DC 10 + your Mental Grapple rank). If it fails, you have started the mental grapple.

RAPID HEALING   GENERAL

Your body posseses amazing powers of physical recovery. You make a check to recover from being disabled once every 5 hours rather than once a day (1 rank of Regeneration).

SPEAK WITH (ANIMAL)   GENERAL

You can speak and understand the language of a particular type of animal, such as birds, cetaceans, equines, and so forth. This is a 1-point version of the Comprehend power.

STEADFAST   GENERAL, RANKED

You have a +4 bonus per rank in this feat against all attempts to push, rush, trip, or throw you, and also add your rank to your knockback modifier to determine how far you're thrown by an attack (1 point of the Immovable power).

TALENTED   SKILL

You are especially adept at a certain type of activity. You have a +2 bonus with two related skills, the same as buying 4 additional skill ranks.

TIME SENSE   GENERAL

You always know what time it is and have an accurate idea of the passage of time (1 rank of Super-Senses).

TOUGH   GENERAL, RANKED

You have a +1 bonus on Toughness saving throws per rank in this feat. This is the same as 1 rank of the Protection power.

OPTIONS AS FEATS

As a halfway point between allowing some of the options given in this book to everyone and not allowing them at all, Gamemasters can make some options into feats, charging players 1 power point to give a character the ability to use that option (or 1 hero point for a one-time use).

So, for example, the extraordinary effort option in **Chapter 6** might not be available in the campaign in general, but any character with the Extraordinary Effort feat can do it, and anyone spending a hero point to emulate the Extraordinary Effort feat can do it. The same can apply to options like Last-Ditch Effort, Heroic Inspiration, or any other discrete option in this book.

Naturally, not all options are suitable for use as feats, particularly variant rules that significantly change how the game works. It's up to the GM to decide what, if any, options become available in the campaign, as feats or otherwise.

FIGHTING STYLES

Mutants & Masterminds presents the idea of using various collections of feats to duplicate different fighting styles, including various styles of martial arts. This section expands upon that idea and offers some suggestions for creating your own fighting styles.

UNARMED VS. WEAPON STYLES

Some fighting styles focus on fighting unarmed, others with a particular weapon or weapons, and a few with both. The distinction between unarmed and armed fighting styles is largely one of flavor and description. Combat feats work the same whether you're using them unarmed, armed, or with super-human powers. The GM may choose to apply certain situational modifiers based on a style's usual weapons as needed.

OPTION: WEAPON ELEMENTS

If you want a more detailed way of defining what weapons or attacks are usable with what fighting styles, you can use the following guidelines.

Each fighting style gets one "weapon element," an attack it's intended to work with, automatically at no cost. So an unarmed style works automatically with unarmed attacks. An armed style must choose a particular weapon (or narrow category of weapons, like blades, at the GM's discretion). Adding another weapon element to the style is a feat (called Weapon Element), allowing you to use that style with an additional type of attack.

> *Example:* The kung fu style is defined as unarmed, so all of its feats are usable with unarmed attacks automatically. However, various types of kung fu also teach the use of weapons, including nunchaku, swords, and staves. Each of these types of weapons is considered a Weapon Element feat for the style. A character must have the feat in order to use the style's combat feats in conjunction with those weapons.

Note that characters can spend a hero point to emulate the Weapon Element feat like any other feat, granting a one-time use of a different attack in conjunction with a particular fighting style when the character doesn't have that attack as a standard weapon element.

This option is best for fairly realistic games where it's important to differentiate between otherwise similar martial artists. For more
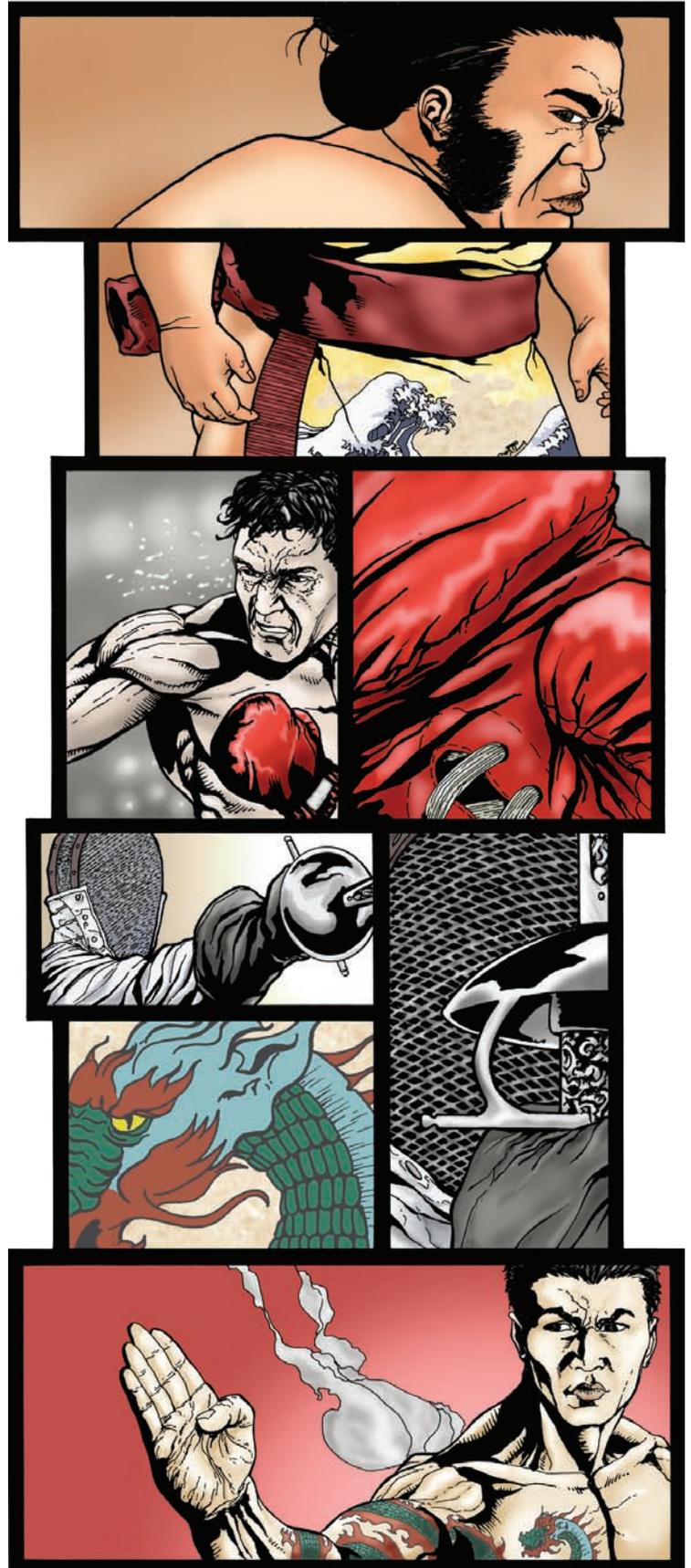
general superhero settings, it's probably more detail than the setting or characters require.

SKILLS AND STYLES

Some fighting styles teach particular skills in addition to feats. A true expert in the style is likely to have at least some training in these associated skills although, like the style's feats, you can choose how many points (if any) to invest in them.

The most common skills for fighting styles are Acrobatics, Bluff (primarily aimed at feinting in combat), Intimidate (primarily aimed at demoralizing an opponent in combat), Sense Motive (primarily aimed at detecting and avoiding the previous two effects), and Sleight of Hand (for quick hand movements and feinting dependent upon them).

ATTACK AND DEFENSE AND STYLES

Note that none of the fighting styles in this section have any specific bonuses to attack or defense other than those granted by their feats, although some may have the Attack Focus or Dodge Focus feats. You might also decide that a particular fighting style calls for the Attack Specialization feat for a particular type of attack associated with the style. Like other ranked feats associated with a fighting style, these feats are available in multiple ranks, up to the campaign's normal power level limit.

CREATING FIGHTING STYLES

Creating a fighting style is a simple matter of building a list of the style's feats, plus any associated skills and weapon elements (if that option is in use). Characters trained in a style invest power points into its traits. They don't have to take all of them at once; indeed, most students do not gain complete mastery of a fighting style all at once.

Generally speaking, a complete style should consist of between a half dozen and a dozen or so feats; fewer usually isn't enough to constitute a coherent style, while more tends to represent branching out to master multiple styles of combat, unless you want to create a "master style" or secret martial art for your game encompassing *every* combat feat (true masters of such a style should be rare indeed!).

SAMPLE FIGHTING STYLES

A number of sample fighting styles are presented here. You can use them in your game as-is, modify them to suit your own view of the style, and use them as models for creating new fighting styles of your own.

A note to real-world students of these and other martial arts: the material here isn't intended for a detailed simulation of martial arts combat, but a general set of fighting styles usable in a superhero RPG. Feel free to modify these styles as you like and to create your own, but keep in mind they're intended to provide a useful shorthand for collections of fighting feats.

AIKIDO

Aikido is a Japanese martial art school founded by Sensei Morihei Uyeshiba in the 1920s. It is the epitome of a "soft" martial arts style, strongly focusing on "flowing" with an attack and using the attacker's momentum against him. Aikido emphasizes throws and evading attacks, along with a few holds for "guiding" an attacker to the ground.

Feats: Defensive Attack, Dodge Focus, Evasion, Grappling Finesse, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Improved Throw, Improved Trip, Uncanny Dodge

BOXING

Called "the sweet science" by some, modern boxing is a fairly brutal and direct fighting style involving powerful punches and evasive footwork, usually close in with an opponent. Feinting is a common skill, used to get an opponent to lower his guard for a devastating attack.

Skills: Bluff. Sense Motive
Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Focus (melee), Defensive Attack, Elusive Target, Improved Block, Power Attack, Takedown Attack.

CAPOEIRA

The national martial art of Brazil, capoeira originated with ritual dancing among African slaves. When these slaves rebelled, they developed an unarmed fighting style and disguised it as folk dancing. Capoeira involves many handstand moves, allowing practitioners to use it while their hands were bound or chained. It's usually practiced to music like a dance form.

Skills: Acrobatics, Performance (dance)
Feats: Acrobatic Bluff, Dodge Focus, Improved Grab, Improved Throw, Power Attack, Prone Fighting

ESCRIMA

This Philippine stick-fighting style typically uses a pair of short batons, but is also practiced with a balisong knife or unarmed (and may include either as a weapon element at the GM's discretion). It focuses on deflecting or blocking attacks and fast strikes to the body.

Feats: Accurate Attack, Defensive Attack, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Pin, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Stunning Attack

FENCING

"Fencing" is used here to describe western sword-fighting styles in general. Traditional fencing uses a slim, slight sword like a foil, but characters in *M&M* can fence with whatever sort of sword the GM approves. Fencing focuses on speed, with a combination of defensive blocks and offensive strikes and thrusts, along with feints to fake-out your opponent. The more "swashbuckling" style of fencing also involves Acrobatics and Acrobatic Bluff.

Skills: Sleight of Hand
Feats: Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (melee), Defensive Attack, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Taunt

JUJUTSU

This style, also known as judo, grew out of a number of Japanese fighting styles over hundreds of years, and spread to the western world in the 19th and 20th centuries. Its primary techniques focus on throws and holds to put an opponent on the ground and keep him there. There are hundreds of modern sub-styles teaching variant

techniques, allowing you to justify including most unarmed combat feats in it.

Feats: Accurate Attack, Defensive Attack, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Pin, Improved Trip, Stunning Attack

KARATE

Karate originated on the Okinawa Islands. When Japanese conquerors forbade the natives from carrying weapons, they focused on this style of unarmed combat. Karate incorporated various farming tools that could be discretely carried as weapons, including the staff, *nunchaku* (threshing flail), *kama* (sickle), rope or chain, and *tonfa* (mill-wheel handle). Modern karate tends to focus on unarmed techniques. It spread widely to the west after American soldiers learned it in Japan after World War II. Karate is a "hard" style focusing on powerful punches and kicks. A karate teacher is called *sensei* and the practice hall or school is a *dojo*.

Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Focus (melee), Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Instant Up, Power Attack, Stunning Attack

KRAV MAGA

Krav Maga developed about 40 years ago for use by the Israeli Defense Forces (and later Israeli police and Mossad intelligence agents). It's a highly practical style borrowing moves from many different fighting styles and focused entirely on quickly and efficiently disabling an opponent. It lacks the "forms" of other fighting styles, since it's intended solely for fighting, not for show. This fighting style can be used for other modern, constructed styles taught to commandos and military personnel.

Feats: All-out Attack, Chokehold, Dodge Focus, Improved Block, Improved Disarm, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, Power Attack

KUNG FU

Kung fu means, essentially, "hard work" or "great skill." It is the common name of an ancient Chinese style of martial arts dating back a thousand years or more. It's most famously associated with the Shaolin Temple, where it was taught beginning in the sixth century AD. It spread to the west with Chinese immigration in the 1800s, but did not become popular among westerners until the mid-1900s. There are hundreds of kung fu variants and styles, many based on the movements of animals (Crane, Dragon, Leopard, Mantis, Monkey, Snake, and Tiger, to name some). A kung fu teacher is called a *sifu* and the practice hall is called a *kwoon*.

Skills: Concentration
Feats: Defensive Attack, Improved Block, Improved Critical, Improved Sunder, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Power Attack, Startle

MUAY THAI

Also known as Thai kickboxing, Muay Thai is a brutal fighting style of kicks, knee- and elbow-strikes, and punches. It relies on blocks for defense and has no holds or throws, the intention being to beat an opponent to a pulp as quickly as possible.

Feats: All-out Attack, Improved Block, Improved Critical, Power Attack, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack

NINJUTSU

Not a "fighting style" per se, ninjutsu is associated with Japanese ninja and similar stealthy assassins. The ninja fighting style is technically called *taijutsu*, but the style here assumes the broad range of "ninja" training. It does not include whatever superhuman capabilities the GM wishes to grant ninja; those are better acquired as powers.

Skills: Acrobatics, Climb, Stealth
Feats: Blind-Fight, Chokehold, Dodge Focus, Evasion, Hide in Plain Sight, Sneak Attack, Startle, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack

SUMO

Sumo wrestling is a Japanese martial art, usually practiced by large, heavy fighters. The object of a match is to push the opponent out of the fighting ring or pin him down within the ring. Sumo matches tend to be short, but involve a great deal of lengthy ritual. Unlike most Asian martial arts, sumo focuses heavily on strength and size.

Feats: Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, Improved Pin, Improved Trip, Power Attack, Stunning Attack

TAE KWAN DO

The name of this Korean martial art means "the way of kicking and punching." It's a forceful fighting style, widely taught in schools throughout the world. As its name implies, tae kwan do relies on both powerful strikes and various types of kicks, including side and flying kicks.

Feats: All-out Attack, Defensive Roll, Improved Block, Power Attack, Takedown Attack

WRESTLING

Wrestling includes numerous grappling techniques, ranging from Greco-Roman style to modern televised wrestling matches (which may involve more uses of Perform than fighting feats).

Feats: Chokehold, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Pin, Power Attack, Weapon Bind

FEAT OPTIONS & VARIANTS

The following are optional and variant systems for use with feats in *M&M*. It includes various optional feats used in conjunction with other optional rules in this book.

FEATS AS OPTIONS

Although hero points allow characters to access virtually any feat in the game on at least a temporary basis, Gamemasters may wish to create a different style of game by making certain feats "innate" options available to everyone without the need to spend power points or hero points to acquire them on a permanent or temporary basis.

For example, combat feats—such as Defensive Attack and Power Attack—can become "combat maneuvers" available to all characters. Fortune feats become regular options for spending hero points, and so forth. Such "free" feats should be removed from the campaign's list of available feats (since there's no reason to spend power points to acquire them; everyone has them). Turning feats into options tends to create a higher-powered game, and adds a bit of complexity because they give players more options to choose from during play.

ACCESS FEATS

As the reverse of feats as options, the GM can take existing maneuvers and options in *M&M* and require specialized feats to "unlock" them for characters. For example, perhaps the ability to spend hero

points to temporarily acquire feats is *not* open to everyone, but requires a fortune feat, or even several, each applying to a different list of feats. This variant is suitable to more realistic settings and genres, where special abilities and options are more limited.

COMBAT FEATS AND POWER LEVEL

In the standard *M&M* rules, permanent bonuses from combat feats are limited by power level just like any other trait, even when they only apply in certain situations (such as Favored Opponent or Sneak Attack). This variant treats such situational combat bonuses as half their actual value (round down) when determining their effect on power level. So a +2 damage bonus from Sneak Attack counts as only a +1 damage bonus when determining the character's power level. This approach is a bit more complex, but allows a bit more "breathing space" for characters with lots of limited situational bonuses. This variant may also open up loopholes encouraging players to stack on situational bonuses, and GMs may want to monitor their use closely.

ALL-OUT ATTACK AND DEFENSIVE ROLL

Rather than reducing defense bonus, you can allow the option of All-out Attack reducing the save bonus from a character's Defensive Roll feat. If this option is in use, the character can apply the penalty from All-out Attack to defense bonus or Defensive Roll, or possibly split it between both (although the total penalty should still not be greater than –5). This gives agile fighters with Defensive Roll an additional option in combat, by potentially opening themselves up to some additional damage.

LOWER-POWER-LEVEL SIDEKICKS

Sidekicks normally have the same power level as heroes in a campaign. This option sets a lower power level for sidekicks, requiring them to be a little (or a lot) less powerful than the heroes; this doesn't necessarily limit ranks in Sidekick or how many points sidekicks can have, since power level is independent from power point total. The Gamemaster can set the power level for sidekicks anywhere from the general PL for the campaign to 4-5 levels lower (or a fraction, like half the campaign's power level). Any lower than this isn't recommended unless sidekicks are intended to be *much* less powerful than the heroes and remain mostly on the sidelines.

REVERSE SIDEKICKS

On rare occasions a sidekick may actually be *more* powerful than the main character, rather than less! For example, a character might have a powerful genie as his servant. The main character has no powers at all, while the genie has considerable powers. How do you handle this in the game?

Since a sidekick is fanatically loyal, there's no reason not to allow the player to control both the sidekick and the main character. The player makes the character with the lower point total the other character's sidekick and plays them both! In the preceding example the higher-point genie would actually be the "main" character, with the genie's lower-level master bought as his "sidekick."

If the main character and sidekick are both NPCs, you don't need to worry about it. The more powerful character just happens to work for the less powerful one for some reason. The exact game terms of who is the sidekick aren't that important.

ULTIMATE EFFORT AND NICHE PROTECTION

One potential use for the Ultimate Effort feat (see the **Feats** chapter of *M&M*) is "niche protection," that is to say, allowing certain characters to have an "ace in the hole" when it comes to their particular specialty. For example, a speedster hero might want Ultimate Effort (Super-Speed) to have an edge over the character with Speed as a secondary trait. When pulling out all the stops and making a Super-Speed check, the speedster can spend a hero point to ensure the best result.

In some campaigns the GM may even wish to allow each hero to pick a thematic Ultimate Effort feat for free (or require each hero to pay the 1 power point to have one). So long as they're all different, this ensures all characters have a particular "niche" where they can shine like no one else, at least for as long as their hero points hold out.

OPTIONAL FEATS

The feats in this section are not in standard use in *M&M* but are presented for Gamemasters interested in additional detail or using certain other options in this book to create a more realistic or detailed feel to the game. The GM decides when and if these feats are available and if they are suited for the campaign based on the optional rules in use. In particular, some of these feats rely on the optional rules for **Proficiency** and **Attacks of Opportunity** found in this book.

AIRCRAFT OPERATION	PROFICIENCY, RANKED

Select a class of aircraft (heavy aircraft, helicopters, jet fighters, or spacecraft). You are proficient at operating that class of aircraft.

The heavy aircraft class includes jumbo passenger airplanes, large cargo planes, heavy bombers, and any other aircraft with three or more engines. Helicopters include transport and combat helicopters of all types. Jet fighters include military fighter and ground attack jets. Spacecraft are vehicles such as space shuttles.

You take no penalty on Pilot checks or attack rolls made when operating an aircraft of the selected class. Characters without this feat take a –4 penalty on Pilot checks made to operate an aircraft that falls in any of these classes, and on attacks made with aircraft weapons. There is no penalty when a character operates a general-purpose aircraft.

Each time you acquire this feat, select a different class of aircraft.

ARCHAIC WEAPONS PROFICIENCY	PROFICIENCY

You take no penalty on attack rolls when using any kind of archaic weapon. Characters without this feat take the –4 non-proficient penalty when making attacks with archaic weapons. If this feat is available in the campaign, it should be considered a prerequisite for learning any armed fighting style (see **Fighting Styles** in this chapter).

ARMOR PROFICIENCY	PROFICIENCY

You take no penalty to your attack or defense bonus for wearing armor. Characters without this feat take a penalty to attack and defense bonus equal to the armor's Protection bonus.

CHALLENGE	GENERAL, RANKED

Choose a specific challenge (see **Challenges** in **Chapter 1**). You can pick a standard challenge or a particular skill challenge. For standard challenges, the challenge only applies to a *specific* task. So, for exam-

OPTIONAL FEATS

OPTIONAL COMBAT FEATS	
FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
Crushing Pin	Inflict grapple damage on any target you have pinned.
Defensive Strike	+4 attack bonus against an opponent that misses you in melee.
Finishing Blow	Perform a coup de grace as a standard action.
First Strike (+)	+2 damage when you attack a flat-footed opponent.
Improved Flank	+4 attack bonus when flanking an opponent.
Improved Ranged Disarm	No penalty on ranged attack rolls to disarm.
Martial Artist	Treat your unarmed attacks as armed.
Martial Strike (+)	+1 unarmed damage per rank.
Oathbound	+1 to aid others of your allegiance, +1 to attack foes of an opposing allegiance.
Speed of Thought	Use your Int bonus for initiative checks.
Sweeping Strike	Combine a successful unarmed attack with a free trip attack.
Unbalancing Strike	Remove an opponent's dodge bonus with a melee attack.

OPTIONAL GENERAL FEATS	
FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
Challenge (+)	Gain the benefits of a challenge without a penalty.
Dedication	+4 on Will saves and Sense Motive checks when your allegiance is challenged.
Improved Concealment	Improved miss chance from concealment.
Improved Mental Grapple	+2 bonus on mental grapple checks.
Light Sleeper	No Notice check penalty for being asleep. Act immediately upon waking.
Tough (+)	Add your rank to your Toughness saves.

OPTIONAL OPPORTUNITY FEATS	
FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
Combat Reflexes (+)	Gain attacks of opportunity per round equal to your Dex bonus.
Counterattack	Gain an attack of opportunity against an opponent that misses you in melee.
Defensive Throw	Trip an opponent that misses you in melee.
Follow-up Strike	Follow up a critical hit with a free attack action.
Grappling Block	Initiate a grapple as a free action after blocking a melee attack.
Improved Opportunity	+4 attack bonus with attacks of opportunity.
Opportunist	Gain an attack of opportunity against an opponent affected by an ally.
Mobility	+4 dodge bonus against attacks of opportunity when you move out of a square.
Sidestep	Take a 5-foot step in place of an attack of opportunity.

OPTIONAL PROFICIENCY FEATS	
FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
Aircraft Operation (+)	Pilot different classes of aircraft.
Archaic Weapons Proficiency	Use archaic weapons without penalty.
Armor Proficiency	Use armor without penalty.
Exotic Weapons Proficiency (+)	Use an exotic weapon without penalty.
Improvised Weapon Proficiency	Use improvised weapons without penalty.
Personal Firearms Proficiency	Use personal firearms without penalty.
Simple Weapons Proficiency	Use simple weapons without penalty.
Surface Vehicle Operation	Drive different classes of surface vehicles.

OptionalReputation FEATS	
FEAT NAME	BENEFIT
Low-profile (+)	–3 reputation bonus.
Renown (+)	+3 reputation bonus.

ple, if you choose the Fast Task challenge, you need to specify a task, such as the feint application of Bluff, or making an item with Craft. If you take Calculated Risk, you need to specify the two checks (and the skills used for them) and if you take Simultaneous Tasks, you need to specify the two tasks. Once specified, these things do not change.

You can perform the challenge chosen under this feat with a 5-point lesser modifier than usual. So, for challenges with a –5 penalty or a +5 DC, you perform them like normal checks. For challenges with a greater modifier, reduce the modifier accordingly. So a hero with Fast Feint, for example, can feint in combat as a move action with no Bluff check modifier (since the normal modifier is –5).

You can take this feat multiple times. Each time, it applies to a different challenge or reduces the penalty with an existing challenge by 5 more.

COMBAT REFLEXES   OPPORTUNITY, RANKED

The maximum number of attacks of opportunity you can make each round is increased by your rank in this feat. You can still only make one attack of opportunity against a single opponent. You can also make attacks of opportunity when flat-footed. A character without this feat can make only one attack of opportunity per round and can't make attacks of opportunity while flat-footed (see **Attacks of Opportunity** in **Chapter 8**).

COUNTERATTACK   OPPORTUNITY

If an opponent attacks you in melee combat and misses, you get an immediate melee attack against that opponent as a free action at your full attack bonus. This counts toward your attacks of opportunity for that round.

CRUSHING PIN   COMBAT

While grappling, if you pin an opponent, you can also inflict your normal unarmed damage against that opponent each round for as long as you maintain the pin. You hold your opponent immobile as normal, but must remain immobile yourself to continue the crushing pin. You suffer a –4 defense penalty while maintaining a Crushing Pin, in addition to losing your dodge bonus against anyone you aren't grappling, as normal.

DEDICATION   GENERAL

Your dedication to your allegiance makes it very difficult to sway you. You receive a +4 bonus on Will saving throws and Sense Motive checks for any effect causing you to act against your allegiance.

DEFENSIVE STRIKE   COMBAT

If an opponent attacks you in melee combat and misses, your next melee attack against that opponent has a +4 bonus to hit. You gain no bonus against opponents who do not attack you or who attack and hit you successfully (whether or not the attack has any effect).

DEFENSIVE THROW   OPPORTUNITY

If an opponent attacks you in melee combat and misses, you can make an immediate trip attack against them as a free action at your full attack bonus. This counts towards your attacks of opportunity for that round.

EXOTIC WEAPON PROFICIENCY   PROFICIENCY, RANKED

Choose one exotic weapon. You are proficient in that weapon and suffer no penalty to attack rolls when using it. Characters without this feat take the –4 non-proficient penalty when making attacks with exotic weapons. You can take this feat multiple times, applying it each time to a different exotic weapon.

FINISHING BLOW   COMBAT

You can perform a coup de grace as a standard rather than a full-round action. (See **Helpless Defenders** in the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*.)

FIRST STRIKE   COMBAT, RANKED

When you make an attack against a flat-footed opponent (someone who hasn't yet acted in combat) whose initiative is lower than yours, increase your attack's damage bonus by +2. Opponents immune to critical hits suffer no additional damage. Additional ranks increase your First Strike damage bonus by +1, to a maximum of +5. First Strike damage stacks with the Sneak Attack feat. Your total damage bonus is limited by the campaign's power level.

FOLLOW-UP STRIKE   OPPORTUNITY

If you score a critical hit with a melee attack, you can make an additional melee attack against the same opponent immediately as a free action, with the same attack bonus as the attack that scored the critical hit.

GRAPPLING BLOCK   OPPORTUNITY

When you successfully block a melee attack while unarmed you can initiate a grapple against your attacker as a free action without an initial attack roll.

IMPROVED CONCEALMENT   GENERAL

When you have concealment, the miss chance for attacks against you is improved by 2 (from 17 to 15 in the case of normal concealment). The miss chance cannot be lower than an 11 (on 1d20), so this feat does not improve total concealment.

IMPROVED FLANK   COMBAT

When you and another character flank an opponent, you gain a +4 attack roll bonus rather than the usual +2 bonus (see **Chapter 8**).

IMPROVED MENTAL GRAPPLE   GENERAL

You have a +2 bonus on mental grapple checks.

IMPROVED OPPORTUNITY   OPPORTUNITY

When you make an attack of opportunity, you receive a +4 bonus on your attack roll. This bonus only applies to attacks of opportunity; it doesn't count for other attacks such as surprise attacks or situations where your opponent is flat-footed.

IMPROVED RANGED DISARM   COMBAT

You have no penalty to your attack roll when making a disarm attempt at range.

IMPROVED TRICK   COMBAT

You can use Bluff to trick an opponent in combat as a move action rather than a standard action without the usual –5 penalty.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS PROFICIENCY   PROFICIENCY

You can use an improvised weapon (an ordinary object reasonably sized and shaped for use as a weapon) without penalty. Characters without this feat take a –4 non-proficient penalty on attack rolls made with improvised weapons. Note that characters who are strong enough may use nearly any large, heavy object as an improvised weapon (see **Improvised Weapons** in the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*).

LIGHT SLEEPER   GENERAL

You do not suffer the +10 DC modifier to Notice checks for being asleep. This means you're much less likely to be caught by surprise while sleeping. You can also act immediately upon waking (characters are normally dazed for one round after waking).

LOW-PROFILE   REPUTATION, RANKED

You're less well known than your capabilities would suggest. Lower your reputation bonus by 3 for each rank in this feat (see **Reputation** in **Chapter 6**).

MARTIAL ARTIST   COMBAT

Your unarmed attacks are considered armed, meaning you do not provoke attacks of opportunity for attacking unarmed, and opponents attacking you unarmed may provoke attacks of opportunity from you (see **Attacks of Opportunity** in **Chapter 8**). If this feat is available, it should be considered a prerequisite for learning any unarmed fighting style (see **Fighting Styles** in this chapter).

MARTIAL STRIKE   COMBAT, RANKED

Prerequisite: Martial Artist
Your unarmed attacks inflict additional damage: +1 per rank in this feat. Your maximum damage is still limited by the campaign's power level, and the GM may set an additional limit on the number of ranks you can have in this feat based on things like fighting style and other campaign limits.

MOBILITY   OPPORTUNITY

You get a +4 dodge bonus against attacks of opportunity provoked when you move out of a threatened area.

OATHBOUND   COMBAT

Your strong devotion to your allegiance gives you an additional +1 modifier on aid another actions for allies who share your allegiance (providing a +3 bonus rather than a +2 bonus). You also gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls against opponents with an allegiance opposed to your own.

OPPORTUNIST   OPPORTUNITY

When an ally successfully attacks an opponent in an area you threaten, you get an immediate attack of opportunity against that opponent. This counts against your normal attacks of opportunity for the round. A successful attack is one that hits and against which the opponent fails a saving throw. (Thus a successful Dazzle or Snare attack would count for purposes of this feat.)

PERSONAL FIREARMS PROFICIENCY   PROFICIENCY

You can fire any personal firearm without penalty. Characters without this feat take a –4 non-proficient penalty on attack rolls made with personal firearms.

RENOWN   REPUTATION, RANKED

Your reputation precedes you. For each rank in this feat, increase your reputation bonus by +3 (see **Reputation** in **Chapter 6**).

SIDESTEP   OPPORTUNITY

When you are eligible to take an attack of opportunity, you can instead choose to take a 5-foot step without provoking an attack of opportunity. This counts toward your attacks of opportunity for the round.

SIMPLE WEAPONS PROFICIENCY   PROFICIENCY

You make attack rolls with simple weapons normally. A character without this feat takes the –4 non-proficient penalty when making attacks with simple weapons.

SPEED OF THOUGHT   COMBAT

You can use your Intelligence modifier rather than your Dexterity modifier when making initiative checks. Other initiative modifiers stack with your Int modifier normally.

SURFACE VEHICLE OPERATION   PROFICIENCY, RANKED

Select a class of surface vehicle (heavy wheeled, powerboat, sailboat, ship, or tracked). You are proficient at operating that class of vehicle.

The heavy wheeled class includes all kinds of semi-trucks and tractor-trailers, as well as wheeled construction vehicles (such as earth movers) and wheeled armored vehicles (such as some armored personnel carriers). Powerboats are engine-powered water vessels designed for operation by a single person and usually no more than 100 feet in length. Sailboats are wind-powered water vessels. Ships are large water vessels. Tracked vehicles include bulldozers and tanks and other military vehicles.

You take no penalty on Drive checks or attack rolls made when operating a surface vehicle of the selected class. Characters without this feat take a –4 penalty on Drive checks made to operate a surface vehicle that falls under any of these classes, and to attacks made with vehicle weapons. There is no penalty when you operate a general-purpose surface vehicle.

You can gain this feat multiple times, selecting a different class of surface vehicle each time.

SWEEPING STRIKE   COMBAT

When you make a successful unarmed attack against an opponent, you can split your damage bonus between damaging your opponent and a free and immediate trip attack. So, for example, if you have a +4 unarmed damage bonus, you can inflict +1 damage and make a trip attack with a +3 bonus in place of your normal Str bonus, or +2 damage and +2 trip, or any such combination. You must assign at least a +1 bonus each to damage and trip to use Sweeping Strike. The trip attack is resolved normally, including your opponent potentially having the opportunity to trip you.

TOUGH   GENERAL, RANKED

You are unusually tough; add your rank in this feat as a bonus to your Toughness saving throws. Your maximum Toughness save bonus is limited by power level as normal. The GM may choose to set a limit on how many ranks you can have in this feat; Tough is an innate talent or knack, as opposed to the Protection power, which is a superhuman trait. A maximum of three ranks of Tough is usually a fair limit for semi-realistic games.

UNBALANCING STRIKE   COMBAT

When you hit an opponent with a melee attack, you can choose to throw him off balance rather than inflicting damage. Your opponent makes a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + your attack's damage bonus). A failure means he loses his dodge bonus to defense for the next round.

CHAPTER 5: POWERS

Super-powers are at the heart of the *Mutants & Masterminds* system, the first thing most people think of when they consider a superhero character. Powers can also be the most complex element of the game, so this chapter looks at how to create your own powers, how to handle potentially problematic powers, and how to modify the way in which powers work to fit a variety of different styles and settings.

POWER CREATION

The material in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M* allows you to create virtually any power using existing powers, power modifiers, and power feats. This chapter provides more detailed guidelines for creating and modifying powers to customize your *M&M* characters.

The power creation guidelines in this chapter are the underlying logic used to build the existing powers in the *M&M* rulebook (as shown later in the chapter). They add some additional complexity to the power rules to provide more flexibility and customization. As with all of the rules in this book, you can choose to use these guidelines, or not, as you see fit for your own *M&M* game.

EFFECTS

Powers are made up of different types of *effects*. Some powers have only one effect, while other powers have several.

Effects come in types: Alteration, Attack, Defense, General, Mental, Movement, Sensory, and Trait effects. These are given and explained in greater detail in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*. An effect's type determines the general rules governing it and is used for effect interactions, particularly involving things like Immunity to certain effects.

Effects also come in three basic levels: minor effects cost 1 power point per rank, moderate effects cost 2 power points per rank, and major effects cost 3 power points per rank. Power modifiers can change these costs, and some powers have higher costs per rank based on broader effects or multiple combined effects.

MINOR

A minor effect costs 1 power point per rank. Minor effects with personal range (affecting only the user) are usually sustained or permanent in duration and provide an effect equivalent to a +1 bonus to an ability score or saving throw per rank. Minor effects that work on others usually have touch range and a +1 damage bonus or saving throw DC modifier per rank.

MODERATE

A moderate effect costs 2 power points per rank. Moderate effects with personal range tend to have broader applications or benefits than minor effects, benefiting multiple traits or useful in a wider range of situations. Moderate effects that work on others are either ranged versions of minor effects or have a broader or more debilitating effect, such Nauseate, Paralyze, or Stun.

MAJOR

A major effect costs 3 power points per rank and has a significant impact. Major personal effects may completely transform the character in some fashion; major effects that work on others may be perception-range versions of minor effects, ranged versions of moderate effects, or other powers that significantly impact their target or the surrounding environment.

Some *M&M* powers are based on a "variable" effect, an effect that simulates or duplicates other effects, depending on circumstances. It works as follows:

VARIABLE POWER

Effect: General	**Action:** Standard
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Sustained
Cost: 4–8 points per rank	

You have a pool of (rank x 5) power points you can use to acquire certain other traits. No trait can have a rank greater than your Variable Power rank. The cost per rank determines what types of traits you can acquire:

- **4 points:** One trait of a particular type (ability scores, skills, feats, or powers of a particular type or descriptor) at a time. Thus you could acquire any one skill at a time, for example, or any one power.

- **5 points:** Any one trait at a time.

- **6 points:** Multiple traits of a particular type (ability scores, skills, feats, or powers of a particular type or descriptor), so long as the total traits do not add up to more than (rank x 5) power points.

- **7 points:** Multiple powers of any type or descriptor at once, so long as the total traits do not add up to more than (rank x 5) power points.

- **8 points:** Any combination of traits adding up to (rank x 5) total power points.

It takes a standard action to change the allocation of your Variable Power's points. The allocation of those points is sustained, so if you stop maintaining your Variable Power for any reason (failing a Concentration check, for example), your allocated points "reset" to a "null" value: you lose any acquired traits and you must use the Variable Power again to regain them.

Any Variable Power points you are unable to spend due to your power's limitations are "wasted" and not usable. So, for example, a character with Variable Power 1 (any one skill, 4 points/rank) can acquire 1 rank in any one skill at a time (since the trait is limited to the power's rank). This costs only a fraction of a power point, but the remaining points can't be allocated to anything, since the power is also limited to one skill at a time. The same is true with feats and some low-cost powers.

WITH VARIABLE POWER COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

Powers based off Variable Power are obviously very flexible, capable of duplicating a potentially wide range of different traits. Responsibility for controlling Variable Power use in the campaign is placed largely in the hands of the Gamemaster and responsible players. To do otherwise would require weighing the power down with numerous limitations, which would keep it from doing what it is supposed to do, namely create a wide range of effects.

Keep in mind that Variable Power is *not* supposed to be an "anything I want" power. That kind of unlimited power doesn't belong in the hands of the player characters, and is better reserved as an X-trait for NPCs. The limits of power flexibility in *M&M* are deliberately set by Variable Power, the use of extra effort, and hero points.

Many comic book heroes who *appear* to have the power to do anything are actually using one of those options in *M&M* terms. For example, the master mage or the hero with the all-powerful wishing ring can do *practically* anything. However, generally speaking, those characters have certain abilities they use all the time (powers and power feats they've bought with power points) and "tricks" they only do from time to time, essentially power stunts performed with extra effort (and possibly hero points). This is why the Magic power, for example, isn't a Variable Power in *M&M*: all powers in the game have the potential to do "stunts" via extra effort, so the "variability" of Magic as seen in the comics is already built-in without having to give players license to duplicate any effect in the game at will (which is likely to slow things down and cause game balance issues).

While you can certainly allow unlimited Variable Powers in your own *M&M* game if you wish, be aware of the consequences of doing so. In particular, the need for extra effort and hero points for power stunts becomes much less, and players are encouraged to "customize" their characters' powers to suit every challenge and situation, making it that much harder to properly challenge them. Unlimited Variable Powers also reduce the need for teams and teamwork. If every hero can do *everything*, why do they need to work together?

You must also place a particular descriptor on your Variable Power, limiting its scope to traits suited to that descriptor. For example, a Variable Power that mimics other traits is limited to the traits its subjects possesses, a Variable Power providing adaptations is limited to the stimulus to which it adapts, and so forth. This descriptor does not reduce the cost of Variable Power unless it's particularly narrow, and the GM is the final arbiter of what constitutes a suitable Variable Power descriptor and what descriptors are narrow enough to be considered flaws. Use the powers based on Variable Power in this chapter as examples of good descriptors.

At the Gamemaster's option, you can trade-off maximum trait rank with a Variable Power for additional power points on a 1-to-5 basis (that is, a 1 rank change in maximum trait value equals a 5-point change in available power points). For example, Variable Power 4 is normally 20 power points up to rank 4 traits, but you could lower the maximum rank to 1 to increase available power points to 35, or lower power points to 10 to increase maximum rank to 6. Narrowing the points available to a Variable Power can limit the rank it can reach simply based on cost. Maximum trait rank can't be lowered below 1 and maximum power points can't be lowered below 5.

Here's an example of a new variable power: creating different sorts of Devices largely at will.

GADGETS

Effect: General	**Action:** Standard
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Continuous
Cost: 6–7 points per rank	

You can produce a wide variety of Devices (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) essentially at will. As with Device, Gadgets gives you 5 power points per rank to create these items, and you can split your points among multiple devices, if desired. Changing your Gadget points around is a standard action and lasts until you choose to change them again. (The power has a continuous duration, although the powers of the individual devices themselves may have different durations.)

Your gadgets function in all ways like normal Devices (see the **Devices & Equipment** chapter of *M&M* for details).

The cost of Gadgets depends on how easily they can be taken away from you. If your gadgets are easy to lose (can be taken away with a successful disarm) then the power is 6 points per rank. If they're hard to lose (can only be taken away from you while you're helpless), the power is 7 points per rank. If you cannot lose your gadgets at all (they are an integral part of you in some way), then you actually have a different sort of power, possibly Shapeshift (allowing you to transform parts of yourself into different devices, for example).

MODIFYING EXISTING POWERS

The easiest way to create a "new" power in *M&M* is to modify or customize one of the existing powers from the rulebook, giving it a new name and description.

For example, you want to create a "Pain" power that inflicts debilitating pain on a target. You look through the existing powers in *M&M* and come up with some pre-existing possibilities, mainly Nauseate and Stun. Looking the descriptions over, Stun does more of what you want, since it renders the target unable to act, and the Fortitude save works well.

You can simply re-name the power "Pain" and use it as-is or modify it slightly. Perhaps you decide a Will save works better for it (a +0 Alternate Save modifier since the power's save is normally Fortitude). If you want it to work at range (Stun is normally touch range) then another modifier is called for. For example, if you can mentally inflict pain on any target you can perceive, that's a +2 modifier for Perception range; if you can concentrate to maintain the effect, that's a +1 modifier for Concentration duration; and so forth.

You can list the power as a modification of the existing power, or create an entirely new power description for it, as best suits your game. Sometimes simply creating a new description for a power helps to establish it as a new and "independent" power rather than simply a modification of an existing one, such as the following example:

PAIN

Effect: Attack	**Action:** Standard
Range: Perception	**Duration:** Concentration (lasting)
Cost: 4 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Will

You can mentally inflict debilitating pain on any target you can accurately perceive. Take a standard action to use the power. The target makes a Will saving throw (DC 10 + power rank). A failed save means the target is dazed. A save that fails by 5 or more means the target is stunned, while a save that fails by 10 or more means the target is rendered unconscious by the pain. The target gets a new saving throw to shake off the effects of Pain for each interval that passes on the **Time and Value Progression** table, beginning one minute after it takes effect, or until you stop concentrating on the power.

CREATING NEW POWERS

In some cases, modifying existing powers, even with the use of power modifiers and feats, can't create the effect you want. In these cases, the first thing to ask is if the effect is one you even want to allow in the game. The reason the existing powers can't model it might be due to it being impractical, even for the scale of a super-hero comic book. For example, modeling a power like the ability to shift the positions of celestial bodies (planets, suns, etc.) is largely beyond the scope of the *M&M* system. You could theoretically do it with enough ranks of Telekinesis or a similar power, but overall it's a capability best left as a plot device in the hands of the GM (where it doesn't really need game stats).

If the power is just unusual, and doesn't fit smoothly with the existing powers, your best option is to simply create a new power out of whole cloth. Use the guidelines for effect levels in this chapter and the existing powers as models. Try and use pre-existing power mechanics where you can, and compare the new power's cost against the costs of existing powers.

POWER EXAMPLE: MENTAL DUPLICATION

For example, a player wants a character with an unusual power: the ability to mentally duplicate the minds of other people. Essentially, the character "absorbs" and "copies" the subject's mind, gaining all of the subject's memories and knowledge. This is well beyond the scope of simple Mind Reading, as given in the *M&M* rulebook, and calls for a new power.

Talking it over with the GM, the player concludes that the Mimic power is probably the best model for this power. After all, the character is essentially "mimicking" the subject's entire mind. The GM decides that in game terms, this means the character gains all the subject's mental skills (which includes Knowledge, or "everything the subject knows"). This is like the 3-point level of Mimic ("all traits of a particular type") but narrower than "all skills," so the GM says 2 power points per rank sounds about right. So the character gains 5 power points of mental skills per rank of the power, up to the subject's total ranks in skills.

Looking at the other qualities of Mimic, they use them as a basis: it's touch range and sustained in duration. The player wants it to be ranged, but the GM vetoes this, saying a ranged power able to "take" all of a subject's knowledge is just too effective for the game. So it remains touch range. Additionally, the GM says the power has to allow for a Will saving throw; if successful, it has no effect. The player wants the power's duration to be continuous: the character can hold on to the knowledge as long as desired. The GM agrees, and that bumps its cost up by 1 to 3 power points per rank.

EXISTING POWER DESIGNS

This section takes a look at the existing powers from the *M&M* rulebook, breaking them down into their component parts so you can see how they were constructed. This allows you to reconstruct or revise these powers as you see fit and also offers various examples of power design when it comes to creating your own unique powers, as described in the following sections.

Cost	Effect
	ABSORPTION (PHYSICAL/ENERGY)
1	Minor Defense Effect (Impervious Protection to Physical or Energy Damage)
	plus one of:
3	Boost (Trait, 1 point), Linked to Defense (+0), Reaction (+3), Self Only (–1)
3	Healing (2 points), Linked to Defense (+0), Reaction (+4), Self Only (–1), Cannot cure disease or poison (–1), Cannot cure stunned conditions (–1)
	Since the two additional effects aren't usable simultaneously, characters can take the other as an Alternate Power of the first.
	ADAPTATION
6	Variable Power (multiple traits of a particular descriptor, 6 points), Action (full, –1), Duration (Continuous, +1)
	ADDITIONAL LIMBS
1	Minor Alteration Effect
	(ALTERNATE) FORM
5	A collection of powers totaling 5 points per rank. You could buy Alternate Form powers individually for much the same effect, but grouping them together into a single power provides some strong thematic unity and ease of reference.
	ANATOMIC SEPARATION
2	Moderate Alteration Effect
	ANIMAL CONTROL
2	Moderate Mental Effect, Duration (Sustained, +1), Limited (animals, –1)
	ANIMAL MIMICRY
9	Variable Power (any combination of traits, 8 points), Action (free, +2), Duration (Continuous, +1), Limited (animal traits, –1), Limited (physical traits, –1), Doesn't assume subject's appearance (+0)
	ANIMATE OBJECTS
3	Major General Effect
	ASTRAL FORM
5	Communication (mental, 1 point), ESP (three senses, 4 points)
	BLAST
2	Moderate Attack Effect
	BOOST (TRAIT)
1–5	Minor Trait Effect, plus enhancements (at higher levels)
	BURROWING
1	Minor Movement Effect
	COLD CONTROL
2	Moderate General Effect, equivalent to Environmental Control (cold)

Cost	Effect
	COMMUNICATION
1	Minor Sensory Effect
	COLD CONTROL
2	Moderate General Effect, equivalent to Environmental Control (cold)
	COMMUNICATION
1	Minor Sensory Effect
	COMPREHEND
2	Moderate Sensory Effect
	CONCEALMENT
2	Moderate Sensory Effect
	CONFUSE
1	Minor Mental Effect
	CORROSION
2	Minor Attack Effect (Damage) linked to Minor Alteration Effect (Drain Toughness)
	COSMIC ENERGY CONTROL
2	Moderate Attack Effect (Blast)
	CREATE OBJECT
2	Moderate General Effect
	DARKNESS CONTROL
2	Moderate Sensory Effect (Obscure)
	DATALINK
1	Minor Sensory Effect
	DAZZLE
1	Minor Sensory Effect (for one sense type, +1 point per additional sense type)
	DEFLECT
1–3	Minor, Moderate, or Major Defense Effect
	DENSITY
3	Major Alteration Effect: Each rank provides: +2 Strength (2 points), half a rank of Impervious Protection (1 point), and one-third of a rank of Immovable and Super-Strength (3 points, or 1 point per rank), 4 points total, with a –1 modifier for overall limitations.
	DEVICE
3–4	5 power points per rank used to acquire device traits, with a –1 or –2 modifier for device type.

Cost	Effect
	DIMENSIONAL POCKET
2	Super-Movement (Dimensional), Attack (+0) = 2 points for rank 1. Each additional rank is +1 Progression (mass) and +1 save DC (2 points).
	DISINTEGRATION
4	Moderate Attack Effect plus Moderate Alteration Effect (Drain Toughness, Ranged)
	DRAIN (TRAIT)
1–5	Minor Trait Effect, plus enhancements (at higher levels)
	DUPLICATION
2	Moderate General Effect (based off Summon)
	ELECTRICAL CONTROL
2	Moderate Attack Effect (Blast)
	(ELEMENT) CONTROL
2	Moderate General Effect (Telekinesis), Limited (only element –1), Range (perception +1)
	ELONGATION
1	Minor Alteration Effect
	EMOTION CONTROL
2	Minor Mental Effect, Duration (sustained +1)
	ENHANCED ABILITY
1	Minor Trait Effect
	ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL
1–2	Minor or Moderate General Effect
	ESP
1–4	Minor Sensory Effect, plus enhancements (at higher levels)
	FATIGUE
2	Moderate Attack Effect
	FLIGHT
2	Moderate Movement Effect
	FORCE FIELD
1	Minor Defense Effect
	FRICTION CONTROL
3	Minor Attack Effect, Area (burst +1), Range (ranged +1)
	GESTALT
1	Minor General Effect equal to Summon (2), Duration (continuous +1), Heroic (+1), Action (full –1), Limited (no simultaneous existence –1), Range (personal –1)
	GRAVITY CONTROL
2	Moderate General Effect similar to Telekinesis (2), Area (burst +1), Limited (only up or down –1)
	GROWTH
3	Major Alteration Effect: each rank grants +2 Strength (2), +1 Con (1), and one-fourth of a rank of Super-Strength, a +5 ft. move, and an area attack against smaller foes (worth 1 point per rank total), with a –1 modifier for overall limitations.
	HEALING
2	Moderate Alteration Effect

Cost	Effect
	HELLFIRE CONTROL
2	Moderate Attack Effect
	ILLUSION
1–4	Minor Sensory Effect with enhancements (at higher levels)
	IMMOVABLE
1	Minor Defense Effect
	IMMUNITY
1	Minor Defense Effect
	INSUBSTANTIAL
5	Major Alteration Effect plus some enhancements. Similar to Alternate Form, but more generalized.
	INVISIBILITY
4	Two moderate sensory effects equal to 2 ranks of Concealment
	KINETIC CONTROL
2	Minor Attack Effect
	LEAPING
1	Minor Movement Effect
	LIFE CONTROL
4	Moderate Attack Effect (Nauseate), Range (perception +2)
	LIGHT CONTROL
2	Moderate General Effect equal to Environmental Control (illumination)
	LUCK CONTROL
3	Minor General Effect, Range (perception +2)
	MAGIC
2	Moderate General Effect
	MAGNETIC CONTROL
2	Moderate General Effect (Telekinesis), Limited (metals only –1), Range (perception +1)
	MENTAL BLAST
4	Moderate Attack Effect, Alternate Save (Will +1), Range (perception +1)
	MIMIC (TRAIT)
1–5	Variable Power, Range (touch –2), Requires Subject (–1)
	MIND CONTROL
2	Moderate Mental Effect
	MIND READING
1	Minor Mental Effect
	MIND SHIELD
1	Minor Defense/Mental Effect (Will save bonus), Impervious (+1), Limited (only mental powers –1)
	MIND SWITCH
2	Moderate Mental Effect, Duration (sustained +1), Side-Effect (target controls your body –1)
	MORPH
1–3	Minor to Major Alteration Effect
	NAUSEATE
2	Moderate Attack Effect

Cost	Effect
NEMESIS	
8	Variable Power (7 points), Action (free +2), Duration (continuous +1), Limited (nemesis powers only –1), Requires Subject (–1)
NULLIFY (POWER)	
1–3	Minor to Major Trait Effect
OBJECT MIMICRY	
6	Variable Power (7 points), Action (move +1), Limited (object powers only –1), Requires Subject (–1)
OBSCURE	
1–4	Minor Sensory Effect with enhancements (at higher levels)
PARALYZE	
2	Moderate Attack Effect
PLANT CONTROL	
2	Moderate Attack Effect, Area (burst +1), Limited (requires plants –1)
PLASMA CONTROL	
2	Moderate Attack Effect
POSSESSION	
4	Moderate Mental Effect, Duration (sustained +1) plus a Minor Alteration Effect (merging with the target)
POWER CONTROL	
2	Moderate Mental Effect, Duration (sustained +1), Limited (only controls subject's powers –1)
PROTECTION	
1	Minor Defense Effect (Toughness save bonus)
QUICKNESS	
1	Minor General Effect
RADIATION CONTROL	
2	Moderate Attack Effect
REGENERATION	
1	Minor Alteration Effect
SENSORY SHIELD	
1-2	Minor Defense Effect, Impervious (+1), Limited (only Dazzle attacks –2), for a cost of 1 point per 2 ranks (or a bonus of +2 per rank, essentially). Moderate Defense Effect for all senses (increasing cost by 1 point)
SHAPESHIFT	
8	Variable Power (8 points), Action (move +1), Limited (physical traits only –1)
SHIELD	
1	Minor Defense Effect (dodge bonus)
SHRINKING	
1	Minor Alteration Effect
SNARE	
2	Moderate Attack Effect
SONIC CONTROL	
2	Minor Attack/Sensory Effect (Dazzle), Area (burst +1)
SPACE TRAVEL	
1	Minor Movement Effect

Cost	Effect
SPATIAL CONTROL	
2	Moderate Movement Effect
SPEED	
1	Minor Movement Effect
SPINNING	
2	Two Minor Defense Effects
STRIKE	
1	Minor Attack Effect
STUN	
2	Moderate Attack Effect
SUFFOCATE	
2	Moderate Attack Effect
SUMMON (MINION)	
2	Moderate General Effect
SUPER-MOVEMENT	
2	Moderate Movement Effect
SUPER-SENSES	
1	Minor Sensory Effect
SUPER-SPEED	
5	Moderate Attack or General Effect (array) plus Minor Trait (Initiative), Minor General (Quickness), Minor Movement (Speed)
SUPER-STRENGTH	
2	Moderate Trait Effect
SWIMMING	
1	Minor Movement Effect
TELEKINESIS	
2	Moderate General Effect (equivalent of Strength with Range and Limited to no damage)
TELEPATHY	
2	Minor Mental Effect (Mind Reading) plus Minor Sensory Effect (Mental Communication)
TELEPORT	
2	Moderate Movement Effect
TIME CONTROL	
7	Super-Speed, Affects Others (+1), Range (ranged +1)
TRANSFER	
2–10	Drain plus linked Boost
TRANSFORM	
3–6	Moderate Alteration Effect, Range (ranged +1), with enhancements at higher levels.
TRIP	
1	Minor Attack Effect
VIBRATION CONTROL	
2	Moderate Attack Effect (Blast)
WEATHER CONTROL	
2	Moderate General Effect equal to Environmental Control

In exchange for the Will save requirement, the player wants the power to be able to duplicate more than one mind at once. The GM is agreeable and says it can duplicate up to two minds simultaneously, like one application of the Extra Subject modifier of Mimic, with no change in cost. Additional minds require application of the Extra Subject modifier, but are not made part of the base power.

Taking this foundation, the player goes away and writes up the new power, submitting it to the GM for approval.

MENTAL DUPLICATION

Effect: Alteration	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Continuous
Cost: 3 points per rank	

You can "duplicate" the qualities of another character's mind. You must touch the subject, who makes a Will saving throw. If the save succeeds, there's no effect. If it fails, you gain mental skills equal to the subject's, up to a total value in skills equal to your power rank x 5 in power points. So Mental Duplication 8, for example, allows you to gain up to 40 power points in skills.

Since this power duplicates Knowledge skills, you know everything the subject knows, although the GM may require a Knowledge skill check (using the subject's skill rank but your Int modifier) to recall a particular fact. You retain the duplicate of the subject's mind and knowledge for as long as you choose.

You can duplicate up to two minds at once, and your power points in skills per rank applies to each mind separately. So, again, with Mental Duplication 8, you can gain up to 40 power points in skills *each* from two different characters at once. You must use your power separately against each subject.

FLAWS

- **Split Personality (–1):** The minds you duplicate can overwhelm your own on occasion. An absorbed mind can initiate a mental grapple (See the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*) against you, using the subject's original mental traits. If it wins, it controls your body like a use of the Possession power. You need to make a successful Will save with a DC of 10 + the possessing mind's Will save bonus to wrest back control. You also regain control if your Mental Duplication power is nullified in some way.

POWER EXAMPLE: PROBABILITY CONTROL

For another example, a player wants a character with control over the forces of chance. While the player could create a character with lots of ranks of the Luck feat and the Luck Control power, neither is exactly the effect the player is looking for. Talking things over with the GM, they come up with the idea that the character can affect die rolls, since they represent "chance" in game terms.

This is an example of a power created from whole cloth, just using existing mechanics (like taking 10) and other powers as examples for how much the new power should cost. While many new powers can be based on existing ones, sometimes it's necessary—or just more effective—to create something entirely new.

Initially, the player suggests a "floating" bonus to die rolls; essentially adding a power's rank to one die roll a round. The GM has concerns about this because it adds to the die roll. It's good for improving poor die rolls, but it makes the good ones amazingly good, especially when added to the character's existing modifiers,

and it might throw the game out of whack. It also doesn't work well with taking 10 and taking 20, the usual ways characters deal with random chance.

So the GM proposes a slight variation; instead of a bonus to die rolls, the character gains a certain "reliability factor" when it comes to "random" rolls. Luck isn't so much "luck" where the character is concerned, but a degree of certainty. Considering the broad benefits this grants, the GM looks over existing powers, particularly the Variable Power, and decides a cost of 4 points per rank is reasonable. Most checks and rolls don't have a cost of greater than 2 points per rank for modifiers (e.g., attack and defense) and 4 points is the Variable Power level for "any one trait at a time." The GM says the effect is instant, only lasting for that one roll, but also makes it so the power only requires a free action. The Gamemaster writes it up and the player agrees that it suits the concept of the character.

PROBABILITY CONTROL

Effect: Alteration	**Action:** Free
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 4 points per rank	

You have some control over the otherwise random whims of chance. Each round, you can make your Probability Control rank the *minimum* result of any one die roll you make. If the die comes up with a lower result, use your power rank instead. So if you have Probability Control 12, you can choose a die roll and be ensured a minimum result of 12 on the die, treating any roll of less than a 12 as a 12. A
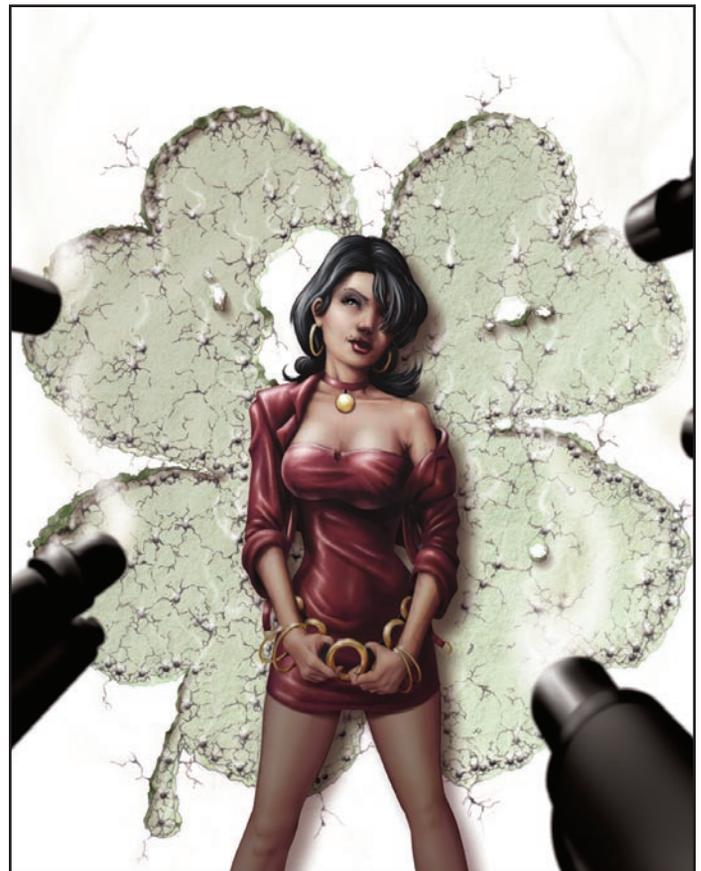
20 on the die roll acquired through Probability Control is *not* considered a "natural 20."

At rank 1, Probability Control only ensures that a natural 1 on an attack roll is *not* an automatic miss, if the total attack roll would still hit the target's Defense. Higher ranks increasingly ensure reliably good outcomes (or at least a degree of immunity to poor ones) while the highest ranks ensure the character can regularly accomplish amazing things. Probability Control's maximum rank is the campaign's power level or 20 (whichever is less).

At the Gamemaster's discretion, you can split your Probability Control among multiple die rolls in the same round, having a lesser effect. So, for example, you could split Probability Control 12 into two minimum die rolls of 6, for example, or any other combination adding up to 12. In this case, the GM may wish to allow Probability Control ranks greater than 20, but with no more than 20 ranks assigned to any particular die roll in a round.

EXTRAS

- **Fortune (+1):** You can grant the benefits of your Probability Control to someone else by touch.

- **Jinx (+1):** You can affect someone else with bad luck by touch (requiring a successful melee attack roll for an unwilling subject). The target gets a Will saving throw to avoid the effect. If it fails, on one of the subject's die rolls for the next round (chosen by you), a roll equal to or less than your Probability Control rank is treated as a 1, or any other number up to your power rank (so having 6 ranks would allow you to declare any roll of between 1 and 6). A 1 on the die roll acquired through Probability Control is *not* considered a "natural 1."

- **Range (+1):** You can use Fortune and/or Jinx at normal range as a +1 extra. For a +2 extra, you can use either at perception range. You must have the Fortune or Jinx extra(s) to benefit from this extra.

FLAWS

- **Limited (–1):** You can only use the Fortune or Jinx ability of Probability Control; the power doesn't benefit you. You must have the appropriate extra (Fortune or Jinx) to take this flaw.

OTHER TRAITS AS POWERS

Enhanced Abilities in *M&M* offers a guideline for turning other traits in the game into powers, including combat bonuses, saving throw bonuses, skills, and feats.

At the Gamemaster's discretion, any or all of these traits can become powers using the same guidelines as Enhanced Abilities: the chosen trait has the same cost, but is a continuous duration trait power, meaning it can be enhanced using extra effort but also countered or nullified by other powers.

This suits certain concepts, such as characters gaining unusual Fortitude or Reflexes from their powers (outside of having Enhanced Constitution or Dexterity), powers granting unusual combat skill, or skills or feats granted to characters by outside forces like Devices, enchantments, or super-human "talents." For example, a particular character might be an incredible inventor—with the Inventor feat and ranks in the appropriate Craft and Knowledge skills—due to an innate mutant power rather than talent or training. This character can "push" his skills through extra effort, but can also lose them to mutant-power nullifiers, for example.

POWER CREATION EXAMPLES: MARTIAL ARTS POWERS

A number of legendary powers are attributed to martial arts masters. These are beyond the scope of the fighting styles described in **Chapter 4**, but may be suitable powers for martial arts heroes and villains in a *M&M* game. Some common martial arts powers are described here, and Gamemasters can use the power design guidelines in this chapter to create others as desired.

CHI

Many legendary martial arts abilities are based on the cultivation and control of *chi* or *ki,* meaning "life force." It is the vital energy flowing through living beings, and true adepts learn to strengthen and harness it for various effects. In particular, masters of *chi* can increase their physical abilities to superhuman levels. They heal rapidly, and are highly resistant to diseases and poisons. They may even be immortal.

Looking over these qualities associated with *chi* we see several *M&M* powers: Boost for physical ability scores, the power of Healing, and various types of Immunity. One could create a perfectly effective *chi* master by simply taking these three powers and giving them a "chi" or "life force" descriptor. However, the GM wants to build a customized Chi power for the game, and starts looking at the basics of the powers.

Boost affecting any one physical ability score at a time costs 2 points per rank. However, chi is a personal force, so the GM decides the Personal modifier is appropriate, lowering it to 1 point per rank. Healing also costs 2 points per rank, and the GM decides to apply a Personal modifier to it as well. Since the two powers have the same cost per rank and the same descriptors, they make natural Alternate Powers for an array.

Looking to Immunity, the GM sees a few suited to a chi master: aging; disease; poison; and environmental conditions like cold and heat, to reflect the kind of yogic adepts who shrug off temperature extremes. Given the nature of chi, the GM decides these immunities should be sustained in nature, rather than permanent. This is a net +0 modifier, but it has two important effects: first, it makes the chi-user's concentration important, as it appears to be in the source material. Second, it allows a character with Chi power to enhance his Immunity through extra effort, perhaps even gaining another Immunity temporarily. This, too, fits with the source material.

Taken all together, the GM writes up the new power:

CHI

Effect: Alteration/Trait	**Action:** Standard/Full
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 1 point per rank	

You can control and channel your *chi* or life force. Choose one of the following effects when you acquire this power:

- As a standard action, you can temporarily improve one of your physical ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution) like a use of Boost (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*). You gain ability score points equal to your power rank, which fade at a rate of 1 point per round until gone.

- As a full action, you can heal yourself, like a use of Healing (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*).

You can acquire the other effect of Chi as an Alternate Power feat of your primary effect.

POWER FEATS

- **Immunity:** You can acquire any of the following Immunities (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) as power feats of Chi: aging, cold, disease, heat, poison, starvation and thirst, sleep, or suffocation. These immunities are sustained in duration, meaning you must take a free action to activate them, a free action each round to maintain them, and may enhance them using extra effort. If you are unable to maintain your immunity, it lapses.

DIM MAK

Dim mak is the legendary "death touch" ability of some martial artists: capable of only lightly touching an opponent to cause instantaneous death, or to inflict an effect like a terrible wasting disease. The GM decides the Dim Mak power should have both abilities: near-instant death and causing a victim to slowly waste away. While the former could simply be a huge damage bonus, it doesn't really reflect how the power works, through a manipulation of life force. Instead, the GM looks over the existing powers and decides Drain fits the bill, particularly Drain Constitution.

A target completely drained of Constitution is left dying, with a penalty on the check required to survive. That sounds exactly like the effect of a "death touch." Additionally, the power would have no effect on targets lacking a Constitution score, like constructs or nonliving objects, which also suits the legends surrounding the power.

Draining a single ability score costs 1 point per rank. Since Drain has a saving throw, maximum power rank will be limited by the campaign's power level. Drain has a range of Touch already, which fits a lethal melee attack, and its saving throw is Fortitude, which the GM decides fits the powers concept, representing the health of the target's *chi*.

For the other aspect of the power, the GM looks over the power modifiers and comes upon the Disease modifier (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*). It sounds just like a "wasting disease": a daily effect on the victim. It can even be countered by Healing, just as some Chinese healers were said to be able to counteract a death touch.

Since an attacker by definition won't use both aspects of Dim Mak at once, they can be Alternate Powers of an array. With that in mind, along with the greater cost of Drain with the Disease modifier, the GM writes up the power.

DIM MAK (DEATH TOUCH)

Effect: Trait	**Action:** Standard
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 1 point per rank	**Saving Throw:** Fortitude

Your martial arts mastery is so well trained and focussed that you can inflict potential death with a mere touch! You must touch your opponent in combat with a melee attack roll as a standard action. If successful, the victim makes a Fortitude saving throw to avoid losing Constitution points equal to your power rank. Targets reduced to Con 0 are dying and suffer a –5 penalty on checks to stabilize. Lost Constitution otherwise returns at a rate of 1 point per round if the target does not die.

POWER FEATS

- **Wasting:** Instead of inflicting instant lost of Constitution, your touch can cause a slow, wasting disease. Your effective power rank is one-third normal (rounded down). The target makes a Fortitude save against your touch. If it is successful, there is no effect. If it fails, on the following day the target makes another Fortitude save against the same DC. If it also fails, the target loses Constitution points equal to your reduced rank. The target makes another save each day; failure means loss of additional Constitution, while success means no effect for that day. Two successful saves in a row stops the wasting entirely. Healing can also cure it with a power check (DC 10 + 1/3 your Dim Mark rank). The target cannot recover lost Constitution until the wasting is halted or the target's condition becomes dying at Con 0.

Looking over the power, the GM decides that Dim Mak is indeed a dangerous ability and so it will be a "secret technique" in the context of the campaign. To learn it, a character must first achieve worthiness by meeting a series of requirements, not the least of which is mastery of a suitable fighting style (see **Chapter 4**), and study under a capable teacher. This allows the GM to control which characters acquire the power, and at what rank, and is an example of an instance where the Gamemaster may need to exert additional control over a power's acquisition and use in the context of a campaign.

KIAI

The *kiai* or "spirit shout" is a technique used by martial artists to channel *ki* (life force) into their voices. By giving a powerful, forceful yell, the adept can put opponents off-balance, strengthen their own attacks, and more. Truly powerful *kiai* shouts can deafen foes, heal the injured, or even smash objects.

This is quite an array of powers, and the GM decides it should be just that: an array of Alternate Powers all connected to the common descriptor and effect of *kiai.*

Looking over the source material, the Gamemaster comes up with the following list of effects for the Kiai power: deafening, stunning, shattering, and healing, plus the enhancement of martial arts attacks.

A quick look through the **Powers** chapter of *M&M* turns up most of the suitable powers: an auditory Dazzle, a ranged Stun, Disintegration against inanimate objects, and Healing. For the enhancement of attacks, the GM decides to go with the Strike power, which enhances melee damage.

Those power effects are just the beginning, however. The GM considers that a Kiai shout affects a cone-shaped area in front of the user (the Area modifier). However, it's limited to that area immediately in front of the user, meaning the powers are effectively touch range (a flaw for Dazzle and Disintegration, but not Healing or Stun). Since Kiai Healing is usually focused on one subject, the GM decides the two power modifiers don't apply to it, or to Strike, which enhances the user of the power. Also, since the effect is touch range, the GM decides to go with Corrosion rather than Disintegration, since it is the touch range version. With these things in mind, he writes up the following:

KIAI (SPIRIT SHOUT)

Effect: Trait	**Action:** Standard or more
Range: Touch	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 2 points per rank	**Saving Throw:** Varies (see following)

You can emit a powerful "spirit shout" with various effects. Choose one of the following effects when you acquire this power. You can acquire the other effects as Alternate Power feats.

- **Deafen:** You can make an auditory Dazzle attack (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) against all opponents in a cone-shaped area in front of you with a length and width (at its end) of 10 feet per power rank. Targets receive a Reflex save, as usual, and a Fortitude save to recover.

- **Stun:** You can make a Stun attack (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) against all opponents in a cone-shaped area in front of you with a length and width (at its end) of 10 feet per power rank. The DC of the Fortitude save is 10 + two-thirds your Kiai rank (rounded down).

- **Shatter:** You can smash inanimate objects with the sound of your voice. This affects a cone-shaped area, as previously, like a use of the Corrosion power (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) at your Kiai power rank, but only affects inanimate objects, not living creatures or constructs.

- **Heal:** You can use the power of your spirit shout to heal injuries. This works exactly like a use of the Healing power (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) at your Kiai power rank.

- **Strike:** By emitting a forceful shout, you enhance the force of your unarmed attacks. Add your Kiai rank to your unarmed damage like a Mighty Strike (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*). Your total unarmed damage is limited by the campaign's power level.

If you are mute, silenced, or otherwise unable to shout, you cannot use your Kiai power.

Glancing over the power, the GM decides that the minor drawback of having to be able to shout to use the power balances out not charging a point for the Mighty power feat for Strike and is easier than fiddling over 1 power point, and so leaves it as-is. As with Dim Mak, the GM may choose to limit access to Kiai to characters with certain training in a fighting style or other prerequisites, as best suits the campaign.

SPECIALTY STRIKES

Like the fabled death touch (previously), many martial arts have esoteric lore about special touch attacks able to cause many different effects, from blindness to pain to disease-like symptoms. It's fairly easy to create these kinds of specialty attacks as touch-range powers, like the following:

BLINDING STRIKE

By striking the right nerve points or the like, the attacker can cause temporary blindness in the target. This is a visual Dazzle attack, which normally costs 2 points per rank. The touch range modifier reduces this to 1 point per rank, requiring a melee attack roll rather than a ranged attack. The GM also decides to apply the Alternate Save modifier, changing the initial Reflex save against the attack to a Fortitude save to better represent the attack's effect. This is a +0 modifier, so it has no effect on cost, leaving it at 1 point per rank. Rank (and therefore saving throw DC) is limited by power level.

CHI STRIKE

Rather than striking at the target's body, the attacker strikes the *chi* or life force directly. The GM decides this will be a damaging Strike, but with the Alternate Save power modifier, shifting the saving throw from Toughness to Will (representing the spirit or psyche). This is a +1 modifier. Since the strike isn't reliant on the attacker's physical strength, the Mighty power feat doesn't apply in the GM's judgment. This gives a final cost of 2 points per power rank. The Mind Shield power (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) protects against this sort of strike like any other mental power.

COBRA STRIKE

This is a damaging strike that works like a cobra's venom, affecting the target like a poison. Looking over the powers and modifiers, the GM decides that Strike with the Poison power modifier fits the desired effect. Poison is a +1 modifier and requires the power to have a Fortitude saving throw, so the Alternate Save modifier is also required. Since Strike is a Toughness save effect, that's another +1 modifier, for a total of +2. This makes the strike cost 3 points per rank (1 for Strike, plus a +2 total modifier). Because the technique doesn't rely on the attacker's Strength, the GM decides against applying the Mighty power feat (which also saves some complication in terms of applying the power modifiers to the attacker's Strength score). So the final cost is 3 power points per rank. The victim of the attack makes a Fortitude save against the initial damage, then

another Fortitude save one minute later against the same damage; Healing can help against the secondary damage by clearing away the "negative chi" the strike inflicts.

PARALYZING STRIKE

Striking against certain nerves or muscles, the attacker can induce paralysis. This is an application of the Paralyze power; since it is already touch range, it's a straightforward use of the existing power at 2 points per rank.

SICKENING STRIKE

Rather than inflicting normal damage, the strike disorients or sickens the target. This is a direct application of the Nauseate power; it's already touch range, and requires a melee attack roll and a Fortitude saving throw, so it costs 2 power points per rank, as usual.

SPECIALTY STRIKES AS ALTERNATE POWERS

In addition to the various strikes being available individually, the GM also decides they can be Alternate Powers of an array of strikes. So once a character learns one specialty strike, he can acquire others as Alternate Power feats, although the cost per rank may limit the ranks available to some of them, depending on how many points the character invests in the primary power (and the campaign's power level limits, as usual).

THE ART OF POWER DESIGN

Power design in *M&M* is more than just a matter of crunching numbers to come up with the most efficient, effective, and useful power possible, or at least it *should* be about more than that, and it's part of the Gamemaster's job to handle it.

You'll note that many of the power design guidelines in this chapter are just that: guidelines, deliberately vague in many cases to allow for the sort of judgment calls and "eyeballing" necessary to accommodate the breadth of powers found in the comic books and in various *M&M* campaigns. There isn't always a single "right" answer to a power design question; there may be multiple right answers, and not every answer is right for every game.

CONTROLLING POWER ABUSE

Any purely mechanistic power-creation system is open to abuse. Sooner or later, players will find and exploit loopholes in the system to create the "killer app," a power that is overwhelmingly efficient, and most likely completely unfair to everyone else in the game. As Gamemaster, you've basically got three options when that happens.

The first is to shrug, saying, "Well, it's in the rules," and accept that your game is going to be ruined. The other players will be forced to adopt similar "optimizing" tactics, coming up with other game-breaking powers for their heroes in an "arms race" of improvement; things will quickly break down into arguments over the rules, or whole adventures will be over in just a single die roll. Not much fun.

The second is to bluntly wield GM Fiat like a club and toss out villains with Immunity to the problematic power(s), effectively neutering the unbalancing trait(s). This leads to understandably frustrated players who feel they've spent points on a capability they're never allowed to actually use. The same is true of an "arms race" where the GM comes up with other killer-powers to trump those of the heroes, who in turn come up with still better defenses and powers. The game degenerates into a debate of what's "legal" according to the rules.

The third, and most effective, option is to exercise some GM control and oversight over power design, whether it's choosing powers and modifiers out of the core rulebook or creating entirely new powers from scratch. If you feel a particular trait will become a problem in your game, or discover that it has, inform the players of this and politely—but firmly—tell them you have decided to limit that trait. This may be in the form of required flaws, a maximum power rank, or an outright ban on heroes having the trait at all. There's absolutely nothing "unfair" about this, so long as the rules apply equally to all of the players.

In all cases refer back to Rule Number One (see the **Introduction** of *M&M*): **do whatever is the most fun for your game!** The power creation system—or any of the game rules—shouldn't trump common sense, and they certainly shouldn't overrule Gamemaster judgment about what's best for the series. Do not allow players to steamroll you with the argument "but it's legal." Just because it's in the rulebook doesn't mean you're bound to allow it in your game. By the same token, just because a particular power or concept shows up in the comic books, you don't have to allow that type of character or power in your *M&M* game! You set the guidelines and ultimately you need to make the decisions about what will be the most fun for everyone (including yourself).

Note that it's not "favoritism" if power restrictions on the heroes don't apply to the villains! The villains are often *supposed* to have capabilities the heroes do not. So long as you're not creating an overwhelming challenge without any means for the heroes to win, you're not being unfair. Thus, even if you ban any heroes from having, say, the Summon Minions power, it doesn't mean a villain can't have it, if it suits the villain's concept. So long as you show proper restraint and provide the players with sufficient challenges, there shouldn't be any problem.

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF POWER ARRAYS

Power arrays—collections of Alternate Powers—are one of the more complex power constructs in *M&M* and require some special care in terms of their creation and use in the game. Players should take these things into account when creating characters with power arrays, and GMs should consider them when approving such characters and dealing with them in play.

The main reason for the Alternate Power feat is to allow a degree of flexibility in terms of a character's powers within the cost restrictions laid down by having a finite number of power points. It's based on the assumption that a wide range of powers has a diminishing return in terms of value, since characters can only use so many powers at once. A power with various "settings" usable one at a time is more valuable than a power with only one use, but not as valuable as various powers all usable at once.

The Alternate Power feat also forms the basis of the power-stunt use of extra effort in *M&M*. Alternate Power is the most often-used power feat via extra effort. It gives players a lot of flexibility in coming up with novel applications of their heroes' powers while also providing a built-in limit in the form of fatigue and cost in hero points (to avoid said fatigue). This helps encourage creative play and simulate the feel of the comic books.

However, Alternate Powers can be abused to try and squeeze the most "efficiency" out of the character's power points, gaining the most powers from the lowest cost. The guidelines for Alternate Powers are intended to help limit this somewhat, but there is no way they can eliminate the possibility entirely and still provide the benefits of flexibility they're intended to offer. Some Gamemaster

oversight is therefore necessary when it comes to the creation and use of power arrays.

CREATING AN ARRAY

Before creating an array, it's wise to ask, "Is a power array needed for this concept?" Some concepts, such as a variety of different attacks, clearly call for an array. Others, like a power with a few rarely used stunts, may not call for an array. Such a power may be better served by acquiring such occasional stunts through extra effort and the spending of hero points rather than the creation of a permanent set of Alternate Powers.

If it's decided that a power array will be appropriate, the first thing to decide is its overall theme and associated descriptors. Is it an array of different attacks, like a "weapons array" of a battlesuit? Is it a collection of regular power stunts for a themed power like Earth Control, or spells for Magic? Is it a series of Alternate Forms for a metamorph character? And so forth. Power arrays should have some unifying them beyond "all the powers I want," and Gamemasters should feel free to veto inappropriate arrays or collections of powers lacking a strong theme.

The next thing to determine about a power array is its *base power.* This is the power that technically has all the Alternate Power feats. The two key things about the base power are: 1) its total cost, *not* including the Alternate Power feats, but including any other power modifiers or feats, and; 2) the base power must qualify as an alternate power itself, meaning it cannot be permanent in duration.

Once the base power is chosen, you can add Alternate Powers to the array. As outlined in its Power Feat description in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M,* each Alternate Power can cost a total number of power points equal to the cost of the base power (including all of its power modifiers and feats other than Alternate Power feats). So if the base power costs 24 power points, each of its Alternate Powers may cost up to 24 power points. If the base power has six Alternate Powers, the total cost of the *array* is 30 points, but the base power and its alternates are still only based on 24 points each.

Cost is not the only factor limiting the Alternate Powers, however. They are also still subject to the power level limits of the series, as well as Gamemaster approval. For example, 24 power points are sufficient for a power like Blast 12. However, if the character's power level limit for damage is 10, the alternate cannot have a Blast rank greater than 10. The player may want to spend the "extra" power points on power feats, or the GM may just choose to cap the power at rank 10. Likewise, while 24 power points are enough to get Speed or Swimming 24, the GM may judge those powers too strong and require a lower maximum power rank.

In some cases this may result in "wasted" power points; that is, the Alternate Power may cost *less* than the base power. So long as it's more than 1 power point, however, the character is still getting a bargain in terms of the Alternate Power's cost ; players should be reminded of this and encouraged not to nitpick or insist on squeezing out all the points they're "entitled" to for that Alternate Power. Remember that any Alternate Power should have GM approval, and the Gamemaster can feel free to set any reasonable limits.

The base power of a power array or one of its alternates may be used one at a time, switching the "setting" of the array once per round as a free action. An additional power point per Alternate Power can make any of them Dynamic, allowing the player to mix-and-match, splitting the available power points between them. Keep in mind that it costs 1 point to make the base power Dynamic as
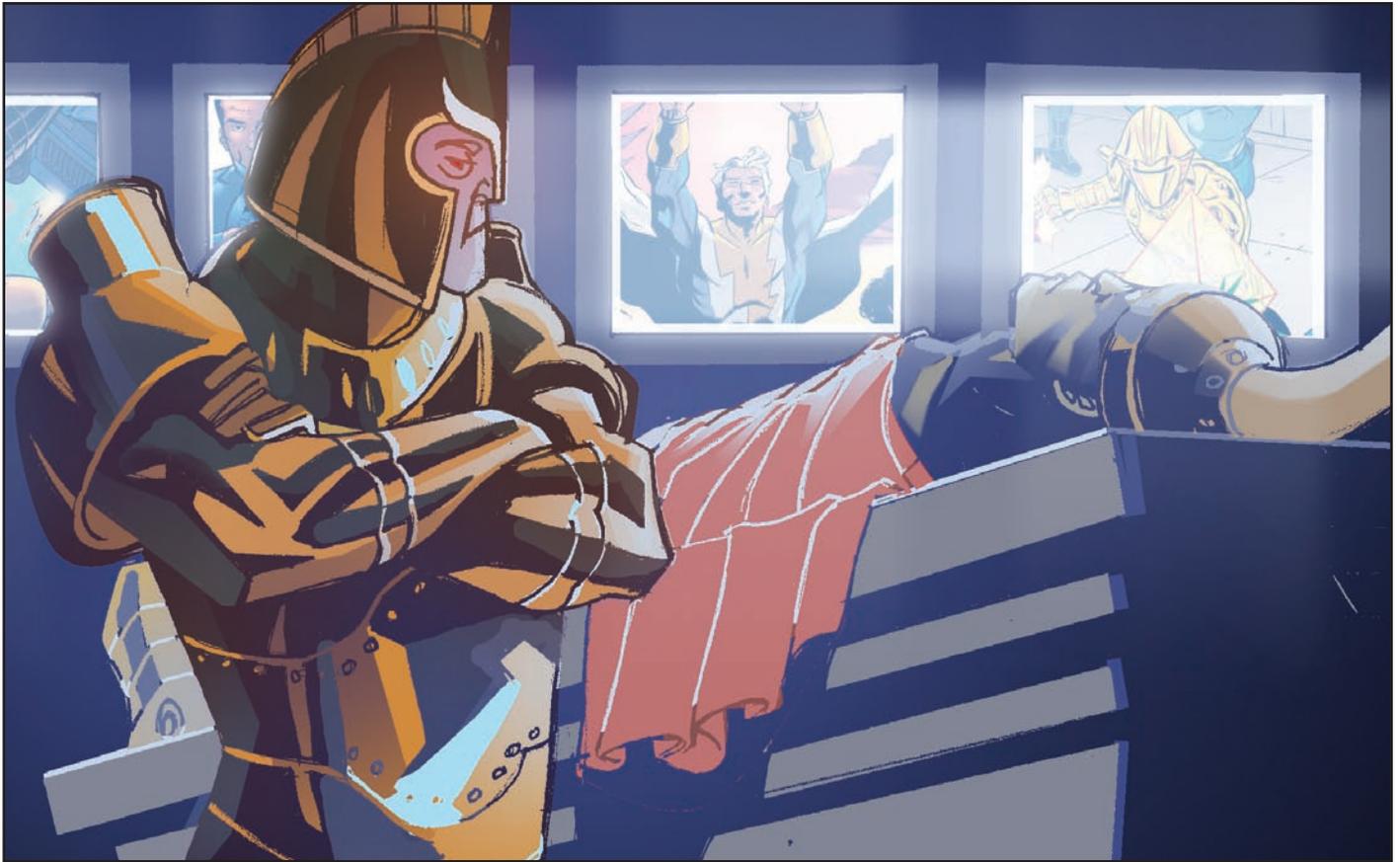
well. A Dynamic array is still limited to the total points of the base power. In the previous example, the player would be limited to dividing 24 power points among the powers in the array from round to round.

OVERALL MODIFIERS AND POWER FEATS

Some power modifiers and power feats may apply to an array overall, that is to the array as a whole rather than to any of its individual powers. These modifiers and feats go "on top" of the array and do *not* change when the characters shifts the array's setting.

A good example of this is the Innate power feat. If an array is Innate, then the feat is applied *once* to the array as a whole. The array's active power may change from round to round, but the array remains Innate. So if a character has an array with a 24-point base power, three Alternate Power feats, and Innate, the entire array costs (24 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1) or 28 power points, and all of its powers are Innate.

The GM should be certain that an overall modifier or feat actually applies to *all* the array's powers before allowing it. For example, while many powers in an array might have the Area modifier, unless all of them do, it's best to apply the modifier on an individual basis rather than as an overall modifier on the array itself.

IMPROVING A POWER ARRAY

The cost of the Alternate Power feat assumes the Alternate Power has a total value equal to or less than that of the base power in the array. Therefore, when the value of the base power increases, the value of any Alternate Powers may do so as well at no additional cost.

For example, if a character has a 24 point array (value of the base power) and spend power points to increase the value of the base power to 27 points, then all of the array's Alternate Powers may increase to a value of 27 points, while their actual cost remains 1 power point each. This reflects improvement in all aspects of an array, as if the array were a single large power with multiple effects (which, essentially, it is).

ARRAYS IN PLAY

The primary issues concerning power arrays in play are when the individual powers can be used and how long they last if the player switches to another alternate in the array.

The Gamemaster may wish to have the players declare on their characters' turns the setting of any power arrays. A fair assumption is that an array defaults to the base power before an encounter and that it remains set on the last power used during an encounter, unless the player specifically states otherwise.

Changing a power array's setting, whether it is Dynamic or not, is a free action performed on the characters turn and available only once per round. This is an important limitation, since it prevents things like having a Force Field power, switching to an alternate Blast or other attack power (as a free action) then immediately switching back to the Force Field (also as a free action), all in the same round. Gamemasters should be very cautious about any proposal to allow changing an array's setting multiple times in the same round.

When a character is using a power in an array, the other powers are effectively "turned off." This is primarily relevant when it comes to power duration. When a character uses a power, then switches to an alternate, what happens to the effect of the original power?

The answer depends somewhat on the original power's duration. If it's instant, then the effect remains. If you hit someone with a Blast power and inflict damage, then switch to an Alternate Power, the Blast damage doesn't go away. The target still has to recover normally. The same is true of other instant powers like Dazzle and Snare.

Powers with a concentration or sustained duration stop working if you switch to an Alternate Power. For example, if you have a Force Field up (a sustained power) and switch to an Alternate Power, the Force Field disappears and you no longer receive its benefits. Permanent powers cannot be in power arrays, since they can't be turned off voluntarily.

Powers with lasting durations *do* continue working after your switch to an alternate power, provided you continue doing whatever is necessary to maintain them (if anything). So, for example, Mind Control has a lasting duration, normally concentration. So long as you continue concentrating to maintain your Mind Control effect, you can switch to an alternate of your Mind Control power, and even use it, while still maintaining the Mind Control. Note that the required action(s) for any lasting powers may limit your ability to do other things (you can't take another standard action while concentrating, for example, because concentrate is a standard action). Still, this built-in limit doesn't prevent you from changing the setting of your array.

In cases where it's unclear whether or not a particular power effect continues after the characters switches an array, the Gamemaster decides. Use common sense and the guidelines given here. For example, if a fiery Blast sets a wooden building ablaze, switching to an Alternate Power of that Blast isn't going to put out the fire;

it's burning on its own. On the other hand, if a character's sustained Telekinesis is holding up a building, then switching to an Alternate Power will cause that effect to end and the building to collapse unless it's braced to stand on its own in some way (even for just a few moments).

POWER-UPS

Characters in comic books and fiction often have higher levels or ranks of power they can only access with difficulty, or that have particular limitations to them. One way *M&M* simulates this is through extra effort (and the additional options for it given in **Chapter 6**): in exchange for some fatigue (or a hero point), the character gets a small boost in power or a power stunt. However, some concepts and games may call for additional options for "power-ups"—ways characters can push their powers to the limit.

A power-up is essentially additional ranks in a power (applied on top of the power's usual rank) with one or more power flaws governing them. When the character accesses the extra ranks, the flaw comes into play. So, for example, a character might have Blast 8 and, as a power-up, Blast 4 with the Distracting flaw (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*). When the character "powers-up" to use his full Blast (at rank 12) he has to concentrate more than usual and loses his dodge bonus for the round. He can use his normal Blast rank of 8 without being distracted.

This makes power-ups cost less than the regular power, but also limits their usefulness. Good flaws for power-up ranks include Action, Distracting, Fades, Limited (by time, circumstance, etc.), Side-Effect, Tiring, Uncontrolled (the power-up only happens at the GM's discretion), and Unreliable (the power-up doesn't always work).

> **Example:** *Mind Mistress has Mental Blast 6. In times of great stress, when a friend or loved one is threatened, she's capable of throwing out a rank 12 Mental Blast, but she has no control over when this happens (Uncontrolled) and doing so fatigues her (Tiring). The additional 6 power-up ranks of Mental Blast cost only 12 points, or 2 power points per rank, since there is a total –2 power modifier on the usual 4 points per rank cost.*

POWER-UPS AND POWER LEVEL

It's up to the Gamemaster to decide whether or not power-ups in the campaign are affected by the power level limit and, if not, what the limits on them actually are.

If power-ups are affected by the campaign's power level, then the power's *total* rank, including all power-ups, should be taken into account. For example, a Blast power with a power-up should use the total maximum damage, including the power-up, for determining if the power falls within the limit. This tends to make power-ups rare, since players are less likely to create characters that are routinely weaker than the power level limits.

If power-ups can exceed the campaign's power level limits, you need to decide by how much. This makes power-ups more like extra effort, which can also exceed PL limits. A good guideline is to set a fraction of the normal power level, such as one-quarter or one-half, and allow power-ups to go up to that limit. So in a PL 10 game, for example, power-ups might be able to go up to PL 12 or 15, while the normal powers are limited to PL 10.

RANDOM POWER GENERATION

To randomly determine a super-power or set of super-powers, use the tables found in this section, which list the major powers from the *M&M* rulebook, broken up by category. Either assign the power's rank as you see fit or roll 1d20 to determine it randomly.

D20	CATEGORY
1–2	Attack
3–4	Body Control
5–6	Defense
7–8	Energy Control
9–10	Magical
11–12	Matter Control
13-14	Mental
15-16	Movement
17-18	Power Control
19-20	Sensory

D20	ATTACK
1–3	Blast
4	Corrosion
5	Disintegration
6	Fatigue
7	Mental Blast
8–9	Nauseate
10–11	Paralyze
12–14	Snare
15–17	Strike
18	Stun
19	Suffocate
20	Trip

D20	BODY CONTROL
1	Additional Limbs
2–3	Alternate Form
4	Anatomic Separation
5	Boost
6	Density
7	Drain
8	Duplication
9–10	Elongation
11	Enhanced Ability
12–13	Growth
14	Healing
15	Insubstantial
16	Morph
17	Shapeshift
18	Shrinking
19–20	Super-Strength

D20	DEFENSE
1–2	Absorption
3	Adaptation
4–5	Deflect
6–8	Force Field
9–10	Immovable
11–13	Immunity
14–15	Mind Shield
16–18	Protection
19	Sensory Shield
20	Spinning

D20	ENERGY CONTROL
1–2	Cold Control
3	Cosmic Energy Control
4–5	Darkness Control
6–7	Electrical Control
8	Friction Control
9	Gravity Control
10	Kinetic Control
11–12	Light Control
13–14	Magnetic Control
15	Plasma Control
16	Radiation Control
17	Sonic Control
18	Spatial Control
19	Time Control
20	Vibration Control

D20	MAGICAL
1–3	Animate Objects
4–8	Astral Form
9–12	Hellfire Control
13–14	Luck Control
15-20	Magic

D20	MATTER CONTROL
1–3	Air Control
4–6	Earth Control
7–10	Fire Control
11	Life Control
12–13	Plant Control
14	Transform
15–17	Water Control
18–20	Weather Control

D20	MENTAL
1	Animal Control
2	Confuse
3–4	Emotion Control
5–6	Mental Blast
7–8	Mind Control
9–10	Mind Reading
11–12	Mind Shield
13	Mind Switch
14–15	Possession
16	Power Control
17–18	Telekinesis
19–20	Telepathy

D20	MOVEMENT
1–2	Burrowing
3	Dimensional Pocket
4–6	Flight
7–8	Leaping
9–10	Quickness
11	Space Travel
12–13	Speed
14–16	Super-Speed
17–18	Swimming
19–20	Teleport

D20	POWER CONTROL
1–2	Animal Mimicry
3	Gestalt
4–6	Mimic
7–8	Nemesis
9–11	Nullify
12–13	Object Mimicry
14–15	Power Control
16–18	Summon
19–20	Transfer

D20	SENSORY
1–2	Communication
3–4	Comprehend
5–6	Concealment
7–8	Datalink
9–10	Dazzle
11–12	ESP
13–14	Illusion
15–16	Obscure
17–20	Super-Senses

GAMEMASTERING POWERS

One of the most difficult aspects of running *M&M* is handling all the various effects of the diverse powers heroes may have. This section offers some advice to Gamemasters on handling powers in the context of the game.

MANAGING POWER STUNTS

The option of performing power stunts in *M&M* gives players considerable room for creativity, often allowing them to come up with stunts or solutions to problems you haven't foreseen. One unexpected power stunt can turn your well-crafted obstacle into little more than an inconvenience for the heroes. How do you keep the use of power stunts under control in your game?

First consider if you *need* to "control" power stunts. If a player comes up with a clever stunt as a solution to a problem, great! That's what they're for! It's better to have your players coming up with interesting applications of their powers rather than relying on the same old saws all the time. If the players managed to overcome a particular challenge faster than you'd expected, you can always put another one in their path, perhaps giving them another opportunity to earn hero points before the final scene of the adventure.

The trouble usually comes in when a power stunt either really pushes the bounds of credulity (even for a superhero setting) or else proves so effective the player begins relying on it, perhaps even wanting it as a regular power that would only compound the problem.

Keep in mind that power stunts are *not* license for characters to gain any power feat the player wants. The stunt has to fit with the power's descriptors and overall theme, and the GM is the final authority on when that's the case. If you feel a particular stunt isn't appropriate, tell the player so and ask for a different one.

If a power stunt you approve turns out to be far more effective than you'd anticipated, tell the players so and inform that that you're suspending the availability of the power stunt, either temporarily while you re-evaluate it or permanently because it's unbalancing the game. Again, just because a particular power stunt is possible "by the book" doesn't mean you are in any way required to allow it in your game. Make your decision and be firm about it.

GAMING POWERS VS. POWER GAMING

Powers give players a *lot* of additional options for solving problems. Unfortunately, players sometimes go for the easiest or most obvious solution rather than the most dramatic or interesting in terms of the overall story. More importantly, some players try to solve all the problems in the adventure by themselves, making the other players' heroes superfluous!

This can turn adventures into tactical problem-solving exercises, where the powers are more important than the heroes wielding them. It can also become a headache for the GM who forgets about a particular power when planning or running the adventure. So what keeps heroes from using their powers to the greatest possible effect all the time?

FORGETFULNESS

Heroes in fiction often seem to "forget" about their most useful powers whenever it's dramatically appropriate. Players, on the other hand, rarely do so. Having paid powers points for a hero's special abilities, players rightly expect to use them, which may create some problems for the Gamemaster who happens to forget about a particular hero's power! How do you, as the GM, simulate this aspect of fiction and occasionally restrain player use of powers when dramatically appropriate?

One way is outright bribery. If players are willing to play along for a little while—long enough for the villain to make his dramatic speech (or to get away at the last minute)—they get a hero point award they can use later. This rewards players for staying in-genre and cooperating, but it only works if everyone is willing to play along.

Another option is to make the heroes *literally* forgetful! Various hazards and traps may addle them enough to forget to use some or all of their powers at the opportune moment. Under the right circumstances, you can call for an Intelligence check or a Will save to simulate the hero struggling to cope with circumstances. Keep in mind while the *players* tend to be completely clear-headed during play (one would hope), their heroes may not be. A hero just waking up from unconsciousness, for example, or drugged and bound in a trap, may take some time to come up with a clever plan, even if the player grasps the solution immediately. Use this option sparingly, since it can make players feel frustrated and not in control of their characters. Again, hero points may make them feel better.

Finally, under some circumstances you can simply take away the heroes' powers, or just the problematic ones. Smart opponents are sure to take full advantage of any countermeasures available to them, and solutions obvious to the players are probably obvious to the villains as well. You can even do this retroactively. When players surprise you with a power you forgot they had or a new power stunt, just smile and tell them how the villain apparently thought of that, and arranged an appropriate countermeasure to thwart them. While this may seem like cheating, it's really just giving prepared and intelligent bad guys their due. You can award players a hero point for this use of GM Fiat as compensation for their otherwise clever plan not succeeding, if you want.

Again, you don't want to take away the heroes' powers too often, since having and using them is part of the fun of the game! Still, you can occasionally confront the heroes with challenges their powers can't immediately solve.

COMPLICATIONS

Personal codes of behavior may keep some heroes from using their powers in certain circumstances. For example, many superheroes won't use their power to gain an unfair advantage. Even if it would make sense for the hero to use his power to make himself fabulously wealthy, for example, he doesn't do it because it's against his beliefs. The same is true of personal codes calling for fair fights, or forbidding the illegal or dishonest use of some powers.

Most true heroes aren't going to use their powers illegally, whether the authorities are likely to find out about it or not! Since the GM largely defines the legal and illegal uses of powers in the setting, this provides some control over those powers.

Pacifist heroes aren't going to use their powers violently, at least not casually. Most four-color heroes won't use their powers if it means the possible death of an opponent, even if that solution is the most expedient. Such characters forced into situations where they have no choice but to kill have a serious moral dilemma. For example, does the hero save a hostage held at gunpoint by killing the criminal, or does he attempt a riskier plan that won't kill the criminal, but might result in the death of the hostage?

Certain other complications may limit a hero's use of powers. Perhaps an inexperienced or reluctant super has a phobia about certain aspects of his power (imagine someone with the power to fly who's afraid of heights!). Conversely, a hero may feel compelled to use a power in certain situations, even if that's not the wisest course of action. For example, a divine healer with a sense of duty to all living creatures won't refuse his healing touch to any being in need, and would even aid a villain so long as there's the slightest hope of redemption.

Some may simply not use their powers as efficiently as they could because it wouldn't be "fun" or "right" (whatever those things may mean to the individual). For example, impulsive heroes aren't likely to go along with plans requiring patience and slow, deliberate action. Those with a particular trademark are going to want to leave it, even if it doesn't make sense or is risky to do so.

As an upside to these complications, when players choose to do things the hard way because it suits their characters and makes for good roleplaying, they get hero points, so they have reasons to act in-character.

CONSEQUENCES

Even if heroes have no particular reasons to limit the use of their powers, there are still consequences to consider. Things like social pressure and a negative reputation (see **Chapter 6**) can be powerful tools to convince players of the wisdom of restraint when it comes to their heroes' powers. Possible consequences include a bad reputation, legal entanglements, acquiring enemies, and so forth.

First come the immediate repercussions of uncontrolled power use. Heroes demonstrating no restraint in combat, for example, may accidentally hurt innocent bystanders (or each other)! They can cause collateral damage, endangering not only the general area, but also historical sites, monuments, priceless artifacts or artwork on display in museums or private collections, and so on.

Then come the immediate reactions. Blatant disregard for the law invites arrest (or at least outlawry, if the local authorities are unable to arrest the heroes). Reports of the heroes' misdeeds are broadcast far and wide. Witnesses may be shocked or outraged, and bystanders might flee, turn away in disgust, or even swell into an angry mob! This can lead to further fumbles from the heroes, compounding the problem.

There are long-term consequences. Abuses of power are virtually certain to give heroes a bad reputation. People mistrust them and avoid them (lest they become the next victims of their disregard for public safety). The groups' superiors (if any) may take punitive action. If crimes were committed, charges are pressed. Otherwise, civil suits may still be brought against the characters for their negligence.

In addition to the official reaction, the heroes' victims (real or perceived) may take it upon themselves to do something. They may seek revenge, ranging from all manner of legal hassles to outright attempts at killing or maiming the heroes.

At the same time, peers shun and disdain the characters. They may get lectures about proper behavior or just the cold shoulder from people they respect (and who once respected them). In extreme cases, they may find themselves hunted by former allies who now see the heroes as fugitives to be brought to justice.

Finally, some misuses of power can have far-reaching effects. Heroes who abuse their power to read and control minds, for example, may bring about draconian laws banning the use of such powers, and per-

haps even resulting in the imprisonment or execution of everyone with mental powers! Irresponsible supers worsen public opinion toward supers in general, and can create a backlash against them.

The key to using consequences to control power use (and abuse) in a game is to allow players the opportunity to atone for their mistakes and fix things before they go too far. There should always be a way for the players to reform their behavior and get rid of most, if not all, of the problems they have caused. It doesn't have to be easy or immediate, but it should at least be possible, otherwise the players feel arbitrarily punished and aren't encouraged to do anything differently. After all, if they're going to be reviled social outcasts, why *shouldn't* they do whatever they want? Repercussions without hope of reparation can ruin a campaign.

Also, this approach assumes the players actually care about the consequences of their actions. If they don't, they have no reason to reform, and may use a backlash as an excuse to escalate things ("I had to do it! That cop shot at me first!"). In these cases, one of the other methods in this section may work better.

OVERSIGHT

A "higher power" might be monitoring the heroes, be it a government, organization, or cosmic entity, with the authority to discipline them and perhaps even strip them of their powers. For example, an authority may force criminal psionicists to wear "psionic dampeners" that nullify their powers, and a secret society of wizards may have spells or rituals to remove a wrongdoer's magical abilities (maybe even permanently).

In some cases, heroes may not even know they are being monitored! As a last resort you can have a previously unknown higher

power intervene to deal with out-of-control powers in the campaign. The gods might remove a particularly problematic power, or a cosmic regulatory organization might show up to place limits on a hero's power "in accordance with intergalactic statutes." This is a heavy-handed approach, but an effective one.

When the authority is satisfied the violator has learned his lesson, any removed powers are restored, although there may be crimes serious enough to result in permanent removal of powers! Just the threat of such punishment may be enough to keep wayward heroes under control. For first-time or minor infractions, you should be lenient, applying sufficient punishment to teach violators a lesson, without spoiling or ending the campaign altogether. Encourage players to see the situation as a roleplaying opportunity, and remind them it is a situation they can avoid in the future through proper behavior.

GENRE ENFORCEMENT

A more nebulous, but still effective, means of controlling powers is simple agreement between the players and the GM to respect the conventions of the genre. The Gamemaster has the right to veto any action on the part of the players if he feels it does not suit the genre. A simple, "No, I don't think that's appropriate; why don't you try something else?" is usually sufficient.

While this is a rather heavy-handed approach to controlling power-gaming, it can be effective, so long as everyone in the group is comfortable with it. It becomes a problem when the players feel stifled or "railroaded" by the Gamemaster. If they can't do anything except what the GM wants, they may wonder why they need to be involved in the game at all. The GM could simply tell them what their heroes do from round to round!

Try to keep genre enforcement to polite suggestions and helpful advice rather than heavy-handed control over the players and the campaign. Instead of simply forbidding actions, offer suggestions for things heroes can do instead. Create some "table rules" ahead of time so players know what's expected, such as lethal combat being considered out-of-bounds for true heroes in the campaign, no blatant misuses of Mind Control, or the like.

CONSISTENCY VS. REALISM

Comic book super-powers aren't very realistic; they often violate physical laws as we understand them! However, powers can (and generally should) feature a measure of consistency. That is, powers follow certain reliable rules, even if they allow characters to do fantastic things people normally cannot. The *M&M* game rules provide some consistency for powers, but the rest comes from the nature of the setting and the guidelines set by the Gamemaster.

Unless powers in the setting are particularly mysterious, players should at least know what they can expect from their own heroes' powers, and generally those of typical NPCs. Thus, for example, if you plan on restricting certain powers and abilities solely to NPCs, you should tell the players so up front. The same is true if there are any exceptions to the way powers work in the setting. If there are no divinely granted powers except for one unique hero and his nemesis, for example, then there needs to be a very good reason for another divinely empowered character to appear.

While you can change the way powers work or reveal what the heroes thought they knew was entirely wrong, you shouldn't do it often unless you specifically want to undermine the players' sense of comfort and familiarity with the setting. This may be appropriate in some horror or conspiracy-themed settings, but should otherwise be avoided.

KEEPIN' IT REAL

How do you reconcile a superficially realistic setting with powers that should turn the world on its head? There are a number of ways you can limit the influence of powers on the overall setting, allowing you to keep things fairly realistic, if you wish (at least as realistic as a setting with super-powers can be).

EMERGING POWERS

An emerging-powers setting hasn't really had time to change significantly due to the existence of powers; they've only just appeared! While the setting may eventually become quite different due to the influence of powers, right now it's similar to a world without any powers, so most things remain realistic.

RARE POWERS

The rarer powers are, the less overall impact they have on the setting (unless they're especially powerful). A small handful of individuals with powers is quite different from hundreds or thousands. Powers with accidental and mysterious origins reinforce this. If powers are difficult or impossible to replicate, they tend to stay rare.

HIDDEN POWERS

Powers have less effect on the setting if they're kept secret and only used behind the scenes. Powers have to be either subtle enough to remain hidden or supers need a good reason to conceal them from the rest of the world. For example, a setting with low-level psychic powers limited primarily to things like ESP and Telepathy may not be all that different from our world, especially if psychics have deliberately misled research in the field (or skeptical researchers are actually psis with Nullify powers!).

UNRELIABLE POWERS

The less reliable powers are, the less they affect the setting, since people can't always count on them. People aren't going to create institutions around powers that only work occasionally. If powers are especially unreliable, people might not even believe they exist! It certainly makes scientific investigation of powers difficult, since the scientific method requires a degree of reliability.

COSTLY POWERS

Likewise, if powers are dangerous, difficult, or costly to use, they're less likely to be used casually, and therefore less likely to affect daily life. If it's more cost-effective to use an X-ray machine rather than a super's X-ray vision, then X-ray machines will remain in wide use. If powers are expensive to grant (assuming they can be granted), then the process won't be used often. This is particularly true of powers with a cost other than money or material resources. For example, if there's a dependable process to grant powers, but it always results in the subject's death within a year, a lot fewer subjects will be eager to undergo it.

DEPENDENT POWERS

Making power effects heavily dependent on their wielders for maintenance helps to limit the "reach" of a power to change the setting. For example, a particular person can transmute matter, but the transmutations only last for a short time or until the transmuter stops maintaining them (having a sustained duration). So the possibilities of mass-producing rare elements, plutonium, or valuable materials like gold or diamonds (and their effects on the world) are limited. Settings featuring super-intelligent inventors often posit a "power" component to their Devices; they only work for them and other supers like them. Attempts to mass-market them, or even to get normal scientists and engineers to understand them, always fail.

SEMI-REALISTIC POWERS

Some powers become less effective, or less likely to change things, if they are restricted to more realistic results. Take super-human strength, for example. The general assumption is that characters can apply their Strength and carrying capacity freely; a person strong enough to lift up a tank can do so, despite the fact that a human-sized and -shaped figure can't exert the kind of leverage needed to lift something so large and heavy (to say nothing of the lifter sinking into the ground or the strain breaking the object apart). The more realistic and practical restrictions placed on powers, the less overall impact they have. The GM may decide these restrictions are simply +0 modifier (since they affect everyone) but can also consider a flaw value for them if they limit some powers more than others.

REALISTIC IMPLICATIONS

While most powers are themselves unrealistic, their effects—on individuals and on the world—may or may not be. Some worlds, like the four-color comic books, are remarkably like our own despite the existence of superhumans with tremendous powers. Things like the social and legal implications of certain powers may help keep them under control and prevent them from changing the world too much. Indeed, laws and social mores may develop with that intention in mind. If functional telepaths exist, laws may appear to protect the privacy and rights of "mundanes" unable to shield themselves against mind-readers, for example.

PLOT-STOPPING POWERS

Powers in general complicate plots. They provide weapons and defenses that aren't easily taken away, and give players many additional options. Some powers are particularly problematic, however, and have the potential to completely derail plots if they're not taken into account. Give some thought to these powers when creating your adventures. Keep in mind: even if the heroes don't have them on their character sheets, they may be able to acquire some or all of them as one-use power stunts!

ESP AND X-RAY VISION

If a mystery or secret is behind a barrier of some sort, these and similar sensory powers can short-circuit the entire plot.

Keep in mind the guidelines for extended searches given for the Search skill in *M&M*. Just because a character can see through walls and other barriers doesn't mean he automatically knows where to look for something! Searching a large area can be like looking for a needle in a haystack even with the advantage of sensory powers.

Certain things may be able to block X-Ray Vision and do the same to ESP. Neither power grants additional sensory abilities; they just overcome distance and physical barriers. Of course, simply being able to see something doesn't mean heroes can understand it. Things like codes, ciphers, and even obscure or secret languages can foil super-powered voyeurs.

If there are means of detecting the use of ESP, X-Ray Vision, and similar sensory powers (such as Detect), then characters are likely

to be more cautious about using them. Such detection might come from others with similar powers, technology, or devices (such as crystals that glow in the presence of magical or psychic energies, for example).

HEALING

With the ability to allow characters to instantly recover from injury, Healing can reduce otherwise serious hazards to minor inconveniences. This may encourage heroes to take risks because the players know they can get patched up immediately.

Of course, while the players are aware of this, it may still be difficult for the *heroes* to knowingly hurl themselves in harm's way. Just because you know your group's healer can fix up your injuries in an instant doesn't make getting hurt any less painful or traumatic. In realistic campaigns, the GM may want to require Will saves for heroes to put themselves into deliberate danger of serious injury (such as "I'll just let the trap crush my arm, then the healer can fix it!"). A failed save means the character loses his nerve at the last moment and can't go through with the plan.

A useful limitation for Healing is the Empathic flaw: the healer takes on the patient's damage conditions, and must recover from them. This can make healers wary about healing massive injuries, since they take a risk when doing so. The GM may want to keep the exact nature of a subject's injuries secret; healers are less likely to take on a victim's wounds when they don't know their severity. A successful Medicine check (DC 10) can give a healer a general idea of the seriousness of a patient's injuries.

Another problem with Healing is it can save characters who are supposed to die: the mysterious stranger who gasps out a dying message, the target of an assassination intended to set the plot in motion, and so forth. If a healer is on-hand, the victim may recover, throwing the plot off completely.

This is only a problem if the healer has time to react, however. An attack that instantly kills its target leaves no opportunity for a

rescue attempt. On the other hand, if the target has to gasp out those last few words, that's also enough time for a healer to intervene. In those cases, you may need to stack things against the healer. Some options include having the attack that fatally wounds the target also stun (or even knock out) the healer, arranging for the healer to be elsewhere when the dying stranger shows up, or having the subject die from something the healer can't immediately treat.

Lastly, it's usually best if the ability to raise the dead (via the Resurrection extra) is kept out of the hands of the heroes. It should be more of a plot device, under the Gamemaster's direct control and used only when appropriate.

INCORPOREAL

The Incorporeal level of the Insubstantial power allows heroes to go virtually anywhere, bypassing most barriers, and becoming virtually invulnerable at will. The price is that incorporeal characters can't affect the physical world, for the most part.

A general countermeasure against incorporeal beings is some form of harm other than a physical or energy attack, such as poison gas or vacuum. The same is true of mental effects. These countermeasures work against most incorporeal targets (unless they have the other appropriate powers like Immunity).

Power stunts are a useful means of keeping characters with incorporeal from becoming overconfident. Extra effort can permit characters with the appropriate powers to fire off a one-time Affects Incorporeal attack, which may be all that's needed, if being incorporeal is the target's primary defense.

Carefully control the Affects Corporeal enhancement, since it overcomes the primary drawback of the power, allowing characters to use their abilities freely while incorporeal. A potential compromise is to require limitations on the Affects Corporeal extra. Perhaps heroes can only acquire or use Affects Corporeal powers as power stunts.

INVISIBILITY

Invisibility bypasses many common problems and may eliminate the need for skills like Stealth. Invisible heroes can simply walk past sentries, listen in on conversations, strike from surprise, and so forth. In many cases it's right to allow them to do so, but the power can also short-circuit some challenges in an adventure.

The first thing to keep in mind is there are other means of detecting an invisible character. The basic version of Invisibility is *visual* concealment, meaning it doesn't affect things like sonar (or normal hearing, for that matter), scent, or exotic methods of detection, including high-tech scanners and mental senses.

Common tricks for foiling invisibility include coating the target with flour, soot, paint, or the like. The target is visible only for a second, then the foreign material becomes invisible as well. Things like spreading water or flour on the floor (so the invisible character leaves visible footprints) may be more effective.

As a last-ditch effort when confronted by an invisible opponent, turn out the lights! Plunging an area into darkness (or filling it with fog, smoke, etc.) doesn't overcome the invisibility, but it can even the odds; you can't see them, but they can't see you, either.

MIND CONTROL AND POSSESSION

These advantages can force cooperation from NPCs and not only neutralize an enemy in combat, but turn him into an (unwilling) ally! This is especially problematic with major antagonists; the heroes have their final confrontation with the villain and one hero wraps it up by dominating the dastard's will so he surrenders. Rather anticlimactic, isn't it?

One means of dealing with these powers is to ensure your major villains have sufficient Will save bonuses to ward them off most of the time. You can even grant them Mind Shields for an extra bonus on Will saves to avoid being controlled. This is perfectly in character for world-conquering megalomaniacs and other master villains, especially if the antagonist has some mental powers of his own.

If a hero does use Mind Control on a major adversary, it doesn't have to end the adventure. Instead of being the decisive move, you can have a struggle of wills, essentially a Mental Grapple (since most enemies will be strongly opposed to simply giving up!). The hero's Mind Control serves as a momentary distraction and may weaken the villain, adding to the drama of the struggle rather than taking away from it.

On the other hand, feel free to allow the heroes to control or possess minor antagonists. Indeed, many of a villain's lackeys are likely to have fairly low Will saves, making them vulnerable to this tactic. If you want to challenge a mind controlling hero, either use a group of adversaries too large to control at once, or opponents with essentially no living minds to control: undead, robots, or the like.

You may even want to grant a cost-break on Mind Control and Possession if they effectively carry the flaw "Limited to Unimportant Characters." You may also find the option **Mental Grappling for Effect** in **Chapter 8** useful for limiting these powers.

MIND READING

If a mystery or secret hinges on something the NPCs know and the PCs don't, Mind Reading can end the adventure in a single power check. Heroes may have personal codes keeping them from using mind reading powers casually. However, even that may not restrain a hero when the need is great enough.

As with Mind Control, you can give important characters sufficient Will save bonuses to resist mind reading attempts, but this can be something of a cheat. It's fair for some opponents, but if it happens all the time, the player is likely to become understandably frustrated. The same is true of using opponents immune to mind reading by virtue of being machines, undead, or other non-human creatures.

A middle ground in settings where mind reading is a known ability is to allow antagonists to take precautions, but present them as challenges rather than insurmountable obstacles. For example, opponents might use their own mental abilities to condition their agents to forget certain sensitive information, requiring an opposed power check against the conditioner's check total to retrieve the information. The same is true of villains who condition their minions to die or otherwise self-destruct rather than yield to a mental probe. Can the hero recover some useful fragment of knowledge in time?

Antagonists with mind-reading enemies are likely to hand out information sparingly; a lackey can't reveal what he doesn't know. Instead of immediately getting the answer to a question, a mind reader might instead pick up further clues to lead the heroes deeper into the adventure. Reading the mind of the would-be assassin provides clues about his employer, who in turn is connected to the mastermind's lieutenant, who can lead the heroes to the main antagonist, who all the while is plotting to eliminate them before they get too close.

MENTAL GRAPPLING

Another potentially problematic aspect of Mind Reading is the ability to initiate mental grapples (detailed in **Chapter 6** of M&M). A mental grapple is a potential means for a mind-reader to incapacitate an opponent, or at least provide a hefty distraction while teammates pound on the hapless villain. The mechanics are meant to represent a mental struggle, common in comics with mentalist characters, but cunning players may try to abuse it.

One option for managing mental grapples is to rule that the require the normal effort and actions from the aggressor, but *none* for the defender; that is, the target of a mental grapple defends against it as a free action, so players cannot use mental grapples as a way of psychically "tying up" an opponent and keeping them from acting in a fight. Note that mentally pinning a target is still effective, but up until that point, the defender is not at all limited in his options, up to and including launching a physical attack against the mental grappler.

Freeing the targets of mental grapples up in this way makes initiating a mental grapple a much riskier proposition, and encourages the grappler's allies to spend time safeguarding their friend from counterattack. It doesn't limit the defender's option unless he is mentally pinned, putting the effect more on par with various other mental powers.

MORPH

The ability to look like anyone (or anything) can be as useful as invisibility in many situations, more so when a hero can impersonate someone; for example, the metamorph can gain access to restricted information or order enemy subordinates around.

Morph requires a Disguise check to determine its effectiveness, and allows a Notice check to overcome it, or at least perceive something is amiss. Although Morph may allow you to look and even sound like anyone, it doesn't provide the ability to act like them. Bluff and Perform (acting) checks are entirely appropriate when trying to fool someone into believing you are the genuine article, especially when you're acting in a manner inconsistent with the original. So when someone who looks exactly like the Evil Overlord orders his guards the let him out of the cell, a skill check should be required to get the guards to buy it (with a substantial penalty if they know they just locked a metamorph in that cell!).

POSTCOGNITION

The ability to "read" the past of a place or object can provide heroes with considerable information. Want to know who the murderer is? Trying to figure out what happened in a locked room? Just use Postcognition and its secrets are revealed.

The Gamemaster can keep some psychometric readings vague, providing enough clues to move the plot along without giving everything away. Postcognition may provide unclear images or visions, perhaps colored by the points of view of the people involved in the events.

Savvy criminals may use certain countermeasures to cover their tracks, erasing or "blurring" psychic traces, perhaps even leaving magical or psychic "traps" for any would-be postcognitive investigators, triggered by an attempt to view the events in the future. For example, a mastermind who killed a would-be informant of a coming plot might assassinate a random person in the same spot 24 hours later, creating psychic disturbances that obscure the earlier crime and leading any postcogs on a wild goose chase.

PRECOGNITIVE DO-OVERS

One option for handling Precognition is to give the player of a precognitive hero the meta-game ability to use that foresight. For example, with a successful use of Precognition, the player can spend a hero point to declare a "do-over" of a particular scene, "resetting" things to a point in the past, like the "save point" in a video game. The events that occurred in the game after that point were nothing more than a precognitive vision!

So, for example, when the group falls into a trap, the precog player declares a use of Precognition and spends a hero point. Events "roll back" to just before the heroes set off the trap. The precog grabs the arm of his teammate, saying, "Wait, there's a trap!" Note the hero still loses the hero point even though those events "never happened." The GM can likewise use this as an "escape hatch" if things go awry in the adventure; declare the problematic events a precognitive warning and reset the adventure to a previous moment so the heroes can try again.

Be careful not to let this ability become problematic in and of itself. If players feel they have an "escape clause" for every bad situation, they may adopt a videogame-like system of exploring every possible option, knowing they can return to their "save point" when things go badly. Available hero points should limit precognitive "do-overs," but you should also feel free to use GM Fiat to limit them as needed.

PRECOGNITION

Precognition is a particularly problematic ability, since the players have to have free will to make decisions about their heroes' future actions, or the game isn't much fun! Therefore Precognition is rarely reliable.

Gamemasters should often couch precognitive visions in symbolism and dream-like imagery, leaving them open to interpretation. This gives you the most possible latitude to make the vision fit the events of the game as they unfold. You should consider whether or not a precognitive vision is something that *must* happen or something that *may* happen, but might not if the heroes take a different path. The latter choice is far easier to deal with, but encourages the use of precognition as a means of detecting and avoiding problems.

TELEPORT

This power allows heroes to bypass the normal limitations of distance as well as overcoming many barriers. It renders many challenges—locked doors, cages, and chasms, for example—largely moot.

This isn't a problem so long as adventures don't rely on those sorts of challenges. If they do, you need to find a way of limiting the hero's mobility. This can be as simple as using an appropriate countermeasure for the power, or as involved as creating other challenges for the hero to overcome. As a simple but effective obstacle, remember that Teleport requires being able to accurately sense the destination; placing the teleporter's cage hanging over a pit in a dark room will stop him from teleporting blindly outside.

GAME-STOPPING POWERS

In addition to the previous powers able to train-wreck plots, some powers can bring the game itself to a screeching halt as players fiddle with their mechanics.

The worst offenders in this category are the "pool" powers that allow players to allocate various power points to different traits,

often from round-to-round. Examples include Adaptation, Animate Objects, Mimic, Nemesis, and Shapeshift. How do you keep the game from grinding to a stop while players calculate and re-calculate the points in their various powers?

One way is to encourage players to pre-figure many of the configurations of their powers in advance. Come up with lists of animated objects or established forms a shapechanger uses often. Have the player with the Animal Mimicry character put together a list of animals and the costs of their powers, and so forth. A little prep work can cut down the time lag for these powers tremendously.

You can then treat the pool powers as open-ended power arrays; the character has a list of established traits, but can do "power stunts" essentially without extra effort by re-allocating points to a new set of traits. Treat this like a power stunt in terms of frequency. Don't let players dither over deciding what to do or where to put their points, but encourage them to use their established shticks and come up with only a few truly new things each game. Then have them write out those new things after the game, so they've got them for later.

You can also "ballpark" the effects of pool powers as needed, using the power rank as a general guideline for how effective the character's allocated traits will be. If things are off by a few power points plus or minus, so what? The point is to keep the game moving along rather than arguing over the allocation of a couple of imaginary points here and there. Take a look at the **Dynamic Variable Powers** option later in this chapter, which explores this idea in a bit more detail.

POWER OPTIONS & VARIANTS

The following options and variants can modify the way powers work in *M&M* to suit particular games and styles of play.

POWER LEVEL POINT LIMITS

In the standard *M&M* rules, power level limits the rank of some powers by the limitations is places on save DCs and traits like ability and saving throw modifiers, but does not otherwise restrict the availability of powers.

In this variant, in addition to the normal limits, power level also restricts powers that provoke saving throws to a point value, based solely on power rank, of no more than (PL x 2) points. Note this does *not* include the addition of power feats, but does include extras and flaws; the limit is final power point cost.

> ***Example:*** *In a PL 11 game, powers with saving throws are limited to a (cost x rank) total of 22 points. So a character could have at most 11 ranks in a power costing 2 points per rank, 7 ranks in a 3/rank power, and 5 ranks in a 4/rank power. Since the save DC limit also applies, a 1-point per rank power is also limited to 11 ranks (+11 to save DC).*

UNRELIABLE POWERS

While some powers require an attack roll or check to succeed, powers in *M&M* don't normally require a roll in order to use them. Gamemasters interested in making power use less reliable can require a power check with a Difficulty Class of 10 + the number of power ranks the player wishes to use. If the check succeeds, the power works normally (requiring whatever rolls or checks it does nor-

mally). If the check fails, then the power doesn't work and the action required to use it is wasted.
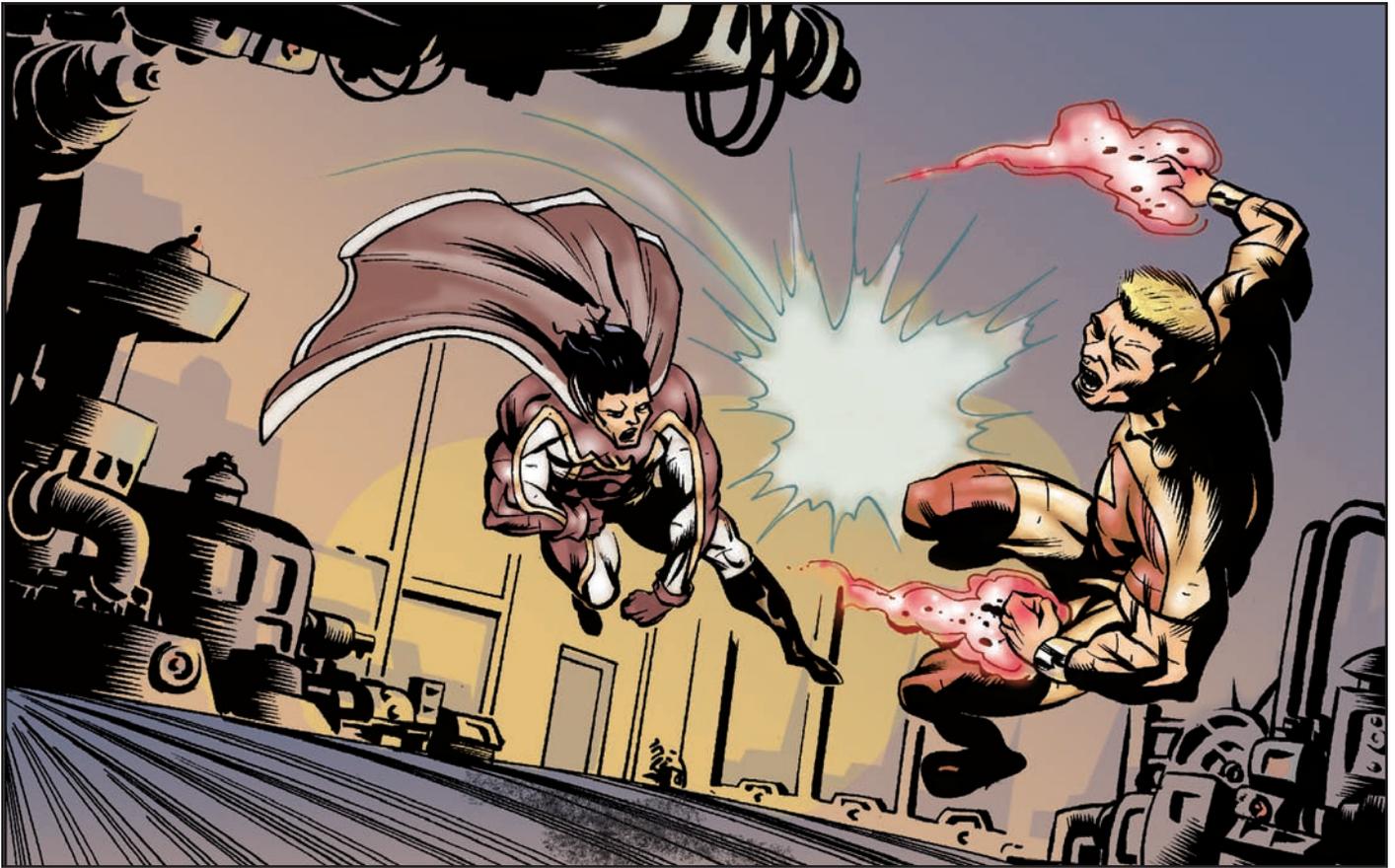
This means using a power at full-strength has a 50/50 chance of success, since the DC is always equal to the power rank +10, but more powerful characters have a better chance of success using their powers at a lower level. It also means spending a hero point on the power's reliability check ensures success (since a hero point re-roll is always at least an 11).

Naturally, this option is best suited to campaigns where powers are supposed to be less reliable than in most superhero comic books. Possibilities include untrained young supers, comedic campaigns, secret psychics, and similar settings.

If only some characters' powers are unreliable while others are not, then this can be treated as a –1 power flaw for the unreliable power(s).

PARTIAL CONCENTRATION CHECKS

Normally a Concentration check to maintain a power is all-or-nothing; either the check succeeds or it fails. With this option, a Concentration check may *partially* succeed: for each point the check result exceeds DC 10, the character manages to maintain one rank of the power, up to its full rank (if the check result equals DC 10 + power rank). This makes it less likely for a character's power to completely fail.

> *Example: Sonic, flying overhead, gets stunned by a hurled subcompact car. He needs to make Concentration checks to maintain his Flight and Force Field powers, both DC 19 (10 + power rank). He rolls a 10 on his first check and a 14 on his second. The first check doesn't exceed DC 10, so Sonic's*

Flight power shuts off. Fortunately for him, his second check exceeds DC 10 by 4, so he retains 4 ranks of his Force Field. He's gonna need them as the ground comes rushing up toward him…

STUN TIMING

When a character is stunned, the effects of that condition, particularly the Concentration check necessary to maintain any sustained powers, are applied immediately. The stun condition is removed on the initiative count just before it occurred, but the hero cannot restore any lost powers until his next action.

In this variation, the Concentration check to maintain a power doesn't come until the character's action. When a character is stunned, any sustained powers remain active until the character's action, when a free action is required to maintain them. If the character is incapable of taking actions due to being stunned (or some other condition), only then is a Concentration check required to keep the sustained powers going. If it fails, the power shuts off, but the amount of time the character must do without the power's benefits is generally shorter—exactly one round rather than somewhere between one round and two.

PARTIAL COUNTERING

Normally, an attempt to counter a power is all or nothing—it either succeeds or fails. With this option, a countering attempt may *partially* succeed: even if the countering attempt fails to exceed the opposing power's check result, the effects of the opposing power are reduced to the difference between the check results, if that amount is lower than the power's normal rank or bonus.

Example: Siren attempts to counter White Knight's flame Blast 11 with her Water Control 10. Both make opposed power checks: Siren gets a result of 18, White Knight 23. Normally Siren's attempt would fail and White Knight's Blast would have its full effect. In this variant, the racist villain's Blast effect is reduced to 5 (23 – 18), the difference between the power checks. If Siren's check result had been an 11 (for a difference of 13), White Knight's Blast would have remained 11, since the difference would be greater than his normal power rank.

ENERGY POINTS

Normally, using a power or effect requires no more effort than using a skill or other trait. In some campaigns, the Gamemaster may wish to institute the use of *energy points* to measure how long and how often characters can use their powers.

Characters have energy points equal to 10 times their Constitution score, so a character with Con 11 has 110 energy points. Using an instant, concentration, sustained, or continuous duration power costs energy points equal to half the power's total power point cost, rounded down. So using Blast 11, for example, costs 11 energy points (half of 22). Energy cost is paid each round the effect is in use, at the start of the character's action. Characters regain their Constitution score in energy points every minute (10 rounds).

Characters can increase their base energy powers at a cost of 1 power point per additional 20 energy points. These additional energy points are used and regained normally.

Characters with 10 or fewer energy points are fatigued. Characters with 0 energy points are exhausted. If a character with 0 energy points spends further energy, the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 5 + total additional energy spent) at the start of each round to remain conscious.

If the energy points option is in use, the GM may allow power modifiers to change energy point cost, as follows:

- **Reduced Energy Cost:** For a +1 modifier, an effect costs half the normal amount of energy (one-quarter the effect's total point cost without the modifier). For a +2 modifier, the effect costs *no* energy.

- **Increased Energy Cost:** An effect costing 50% more energy than usual has a –1 modifier. An effect costing +100% (or double) the normal amount of energy has a –2 modifier. Every additional 100% increase in energy cost is another –1 modifier.

Characters with no Constitution score have no energy points. Their powers must have the Reduced Energy Cost extra, but a +1 modifier is sufficient for a power to cost no energy for them. Characters lacking Constitution cannot be fatigued or exhausted, since they have no energy to deplete.

Devices either draw on the user's energy points or must have their own independent source, costing 1 power point per 20 energy points, as usual. A device that can draw on either the user's energy or its own is a power feat on the Device power called Dual Energy Source.

FATIGUE SAVES

As an alternative to energy points, the GM can rule that some or all powers in the campaign require a saving throw against a Fatigue effect when the power is used. The type of save is determined by how the powers work: Fortitude for powers placing a physical strain on the user, Will for powers requiring mental strain or effort. All powers may require the same save, or the GM may set different saves for different powers and descriptors.

The DC of the save is (10 + number of power ranks used), so players can deliberately limit their characters' power use to make it easier to overcome the fatigue. A successful save means there is no effect, while a failed save means the character is fatigued. A save that fails by 5 or more means the character is exhausted and a save that fails by 10 or more renders the character unconscious. Fatigue results also accumulate, so three fatigue results render the character unconscious as well. The GM may wish to limit the effects to no more than a fatigue result regardless of how much the save fails. This keeps any single power use from exhausting or knocking out a character; at least three failed saves are required for a power user to become unconscious due to fatigue.

This approach better suits settings where power use isn't supposed to be effortless, and needs to be more balanced against mundane skills and feats, such as many fantasy worlds or modern-day "psychic powers" settings. As with the other options in this chapter, the GM decides if required fatigue saves counts as a flaw to reduce power cost or not.

POWER BOOSTERS

The extra effort rules describe specific ways of improving a hero's traits in exchange for a measure of fatigue, limiting how often heroes can push themselves. Hero points can help alleviate this fatigue, encouraging players to use extra effort more often.

This option allows for further uses of extra effort by substituting some component for the fatigue normally required. The exact nature of this component is left up to the Gamemaster, but it should be something rare and kept under control, so as not to become too easily accessible in the campaign. Examples of power boosters include designer drugs or biochemicals, mystic crystals, super-science energy sources, and so forth.

Example: Chris decides certain rare crystals act as boosters for psionic powers in his campaign. Focusing power through the crystalline matrix causes it to crack and "burn out," however, so each crystal is only usable once. A psionicist using a booster-crystal can apply extra effort to his powers without suffering any fatigue.

Note that power boosters only allow certain uses of extra effort; things like improving carrying capacity or movement speed may not work, depending on the booster and the kind of traits it affects.

Several things can limit power boosters in a setting, including rarity, cost, and side-effects.

- **Rarity:** Power boosters shouldn't be easily available at any corner store. Consider making them things heroes need to specifically seek out and acquire. Getting the booster can be a challenge for heroes to overcome in an adventure just like any other hurdle. Supplies should also be limited enough so heroes can't stockpile a lot of boosters; they should have only a little on-hand at any given time. Boosters aren't quite as valuable as hero points (they can't do as much) but should be provided on a similar basis.

- **Cost:** One way of making boosters rare is by making them expensive. A purchase DC of 25-30 makes getting boosters dif-

ficult for most people. Unless a hero is wealthy, or has a patron with extensive resources, boosters will tend to be in short supply. Expensive boosters may become valuable contraband and the targets of theft.

- **Side-Effects:** Some power boosters may cause different side-effects, ranging from the relatively harmless to serious problems like addiction, ability damage, and such. Fatigue is obviously a poor side-effect, since power boosters are supposed to *substitute* for the fatigue caused by extra effort. Other side-effects should usually be less severe, or more long-term, offering the trade-off of short-term advantage (not suffering fatigue) for long-term disadvantage (like addiction to the booster). One possible side-effect of a power booster is taint (see **Taint** in **Chapter 6**).

ALTERNATE PROGRESSIONS

While the Time and Value Progression Table in *M&M* provides a fairly wide range of improvement for various effects in the game, some groups may want a slower or faster progression, to suit a particular style of play, either low-powered or high-powered "cosmic" level characters. The easiest way to achieve this without severely limiting effect ranks, or requiring huge numbers of them is to change the rate of the Time and Value Progression Table.

- **Slow Progression:** A slow progression is 1.5 times the previous value on the table, rounding up to the nearest whole number. So it progresses 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 18, 27, 41, and so forth.

- **Fast Progression:** A fast progression removes all the entries on the Progression Table starting with 2 and progresses like this: 1, 5, 10, 50, 100, 500, 1,000, and so forth.

- **Epic Progression:** An epic progression removes all the entries starting with 2 or 5 and increases by factors of 10: 1, 10, 100, 1,000, 10,000, and so forth.

PARTIAL SAVES VS. TRAIT POWERS

In this variant, trait powers allowing a saving throw (such as Drain and Transfer) may have a reduced effect based on the result of the target's save. Rather than a failed save automatically resulting in the power's full effect, it instead has ranks of effect equal to the power rank or the amount by which the saving throw failed, whichever is less.

> **Example:** *A character is hit with Drain Wisdom 8. Normally, this power requires a DC 18 (10 + 8) saving throw, and drains 8 power points' worth of Wisdom score if the save fails. In this variant, the Drain still has a save DC of 18, but the character suffers only 1 point of Wisdom drain per point the save fails by, to a maximum of 8 (on a save total of 10 or less). A save total of 15 still fails, but results in only 3 points of Wisdom drain.*

DYNAMIC VARIABLE POWERS

Variable power effects (given earlier in this chapter) generally grant a "pool" of power points that can be assigned to different powers as suits the power's effects from use to use. For example, the Animal Mimicry power grants a pool of points the player can assign to different powers to duplicate animal traits. While this gives a clear

definition of exactly what traits a variable power can grant to a character, it can require a certain amount of "on the fly" math to allocate those points, which can take time away from the game unless a lot of the work has been done in advance.

Groups that find variable powers too time consuming or detailed can use this option, which allows a variable power (any power that normally grants a variable pool of points) to simply give the character ranks in any powers equal to twice the variable power's ranks, with no single power have more ranks than the variable power. So a character with Shapeshift 10, for example, could gain up to 20 ranks in other powers, with no single power having more than 10 ranks. This option is generally faster and easier to handle in play, but sacrifices some precision, since powers obviously vary in cost per rank. The GM may need to monitor the allocation of power ranks and veto certain uses, such as acquiring a power with many extras applied for a truly "bargain" cost. Still, for groups comfortable

FLIGHT MANEUVERABILITY

Manuever	Perfect	Good	Average	Poor	Clumsy
Minimum Speed	None	None	Half	Half	Half
Hover	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Fly Backward	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Reverse	Free	–5 ft.	No	No	No
Turn	Any	90˚/5 ft.	45˚/5 ft.	45˚/5 ft.	45˚/10 ft.
Turn in Place	Any	+90˚/-5 ft.	+45˚/-5 ft.	No	No
Maximum Turn	Any	Any	90˚	45˚	45˚
Up Angle	Any	Any	60˚	45˚	45˚
Up Speed	Full	Half	Half	Half	Half
Down Angle	Any	Any	Any	45˚	45˚
Down Speed	Double	Double	Double	Double	Double
Between Up and Down	0	0	5 ft.	10 ft.	20 ft.

- **Minimum Speed:** A flying character who fails to maintain minimum speed must land at the end of the round. Characters who cannot land will stall and fall 150 feet on the following round. Characters hitting the ground suffer normal falling damage. Otherwise, the character can attempt to pull out of the stall by making a Reflex saving throw (DC 20). A failed save means the character falls again on the following round, and so forth until the character recovers or hits the ground.
- **Hover:** The ability to stay in one place while airborne.
- **Fly Backward:** The ability to fly backward.
- **Reverse:** A character with good maneuverability uses up 5 feet of its movement to start flying backward.
- **Turn:** How much the character can turn after covering the stated distance.
- **Turn in Place:** A character with good or average maneuverability can "spend" some of its movement to turn in place.
- **Maximum Turn:** How much the character can turn in any one space.
- **Up Angle:** The angle at which the character can climb.
- **Up Speed:** How fast the character can climb.
- **Down Angle:** The angle at which the character can descend.
- **Down Speed:** A flying character can fly downward at twice normal speed.
- **Between Up and Down:** An average, poor, or clumsy flyer must fly level for a minimum distance after descending and before attempting to climb again. Any flyer can begin descending at any time without an intervening distance.

playing a bit fast and loose with power allocations, it works well enough for general uses.

This arrangement is also similar to how the first edition of *M&M* handled variable powers, and may suit groups looking to duplicate it.

FLIGHT MANEUVERABILITY

Flying movement is assumed to be the same as other forms of movement in *M&M*, for simplicity's sake. Those interested in a more detailed system of flight movement can use the following optional rules.

Flying characters have a *maneuverability rating* measuring how graceful they are in the air. Maneuverability starts out at average (clumsy for gliders) and can be increased through the use of power feats: each power feat increases maneuverability by one level. Reduced flight maneuverability is an uncommon physical drawback: mild (–1 point) for poor maneuverability, moderate (–2 points) for clumsy. Gliders cannot have more than average maneuverability. Consult the **Flight Maneuverability** table for information on the effects of different maneuverability ratings.

MANEUVERABILITY CHECKS

Optionally, the GM can have players make Acrobatics checks for their characters to perform maneuvers listed on the previous table. This is a kind of skill challenge for flight maneuvering (see **Skill Challenges** in **Chapter 3**). A maneuver at the character's maneuverability level is DC 10, each increase in level is +5 DC, and each decrease is –5 DC. So an average flier must succeed on a DC 20 Acrobatics (or Dexterity) check to climb at full speed (requiring perfect maneuverability). On the other hand, the same character can make a 45˚/10 ft. turn automatically (DC 0) since it requires only clumsy maneuverability. Characters can take 10 on maneuverability checks, but can't take 20.

FLIGHT DRAWBACKS

As a halfway option between using the Flight Maneuverability system and not using it at all, you can make elements of maneuverability into drawbacks for the Flight power, as follows:

As a default, Flight has essentially perfect maneuverability. Limitations of a flier's maneuverability are handled as drawbacks, with the usual requirement that the total value in drawbacks cannot equal the Flight power's cost (that is, cannot reduce its effective cost below 1 power point). The following drawbacks are each worth –1 point.

- **Minimum Speed:** You must fly no less than half your maximum speed or you stall and begin falling. You can restart your Flight power as a move action unless other circumstances prevent it (including other drawbacks).

- **Forward Only:** You cannot back up while flying; you can only fly ahead.
- **Wide Turns:** You cannot execute a greater than 45 degree turn per move action while flying, although you can slow your flying speed while turning, if you wish.
- **Runway Required:** You need a level runway to take off and land. You can't take off or land vertically or hover.

POINT-BASED NULLIFY

Normally, a use of Nullify (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) is an opposed check between the Nullify power rank and the opposing power rank (or the subject's Will save, whichever is greater). This is somewhat advantageous when nullifying powers with a cost per rank greater than 2 points, since such powers are disproportionately easy to overcome in comparison to their cost. Gamemasters concerned by this may wish to use the following variant:

Roll the Nullify power check as usual, but for the opposing power check, use a bonus of the power's total cost in power points divided by 2. Thus a power with a total cost of 30 power points has a +15 bonus on checks against being nullified. For power arrays, add up the total cost of the base power and all the array's Alternate Power feats and divide by 2 to get the bonus.

This makes the difficulty to nullify a power proportionate to its cost. It's somewhat easier to nullify powers costing 1 point per rank (because their effective bonus is halved), the same difficulty with powers costing 2 points per rank, and more difficult for other powers. This option is a bit more complicated than the default and may slow down play when Nullify is in use.

POWER COMBOS

This variant encourages players to group together similar powers into singular powers with common descriptors and offers an overall discount for doing so.

To create a power combo, take a group of effects that constitute a single power, such as "Weather Control." Reduce the cost of each effect by 1 point per rank, but not lower than 1 point per rank, then sum the effects' costs and add 1 to the total to determine the total cost per rank for the combo. Power flaws that apply to *all* effects in the combo may be applied to its final cost, reducing it further.

The drawback of a power combo is it is treated as a single effect with regard to alteration effects like Drain and Nullify. So, an alteration effect works on the entire combo at once, even if it normally only works on a single effect at a time.

NULL ARRAYS

The default power array in *M&M* is made up of a base power and a series of Alternate Power feats that can substitute for that base power.

In this variant, the "base" power for an array is a "null" power, a collection of power points that make up a blank slate. The array then requires at least one Alternate Power feat to make it useful. In essence, Power Array becomes a power unto itself, like so:

POWER ARRAY

Effect: Trait	**Action:** Free
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Continuous
Cost: 1 point per rank	

You have a collection or *array* of power points you can use to duplicate the effects of other powers. You have 1 power point per rank in Power Array you can allocate once per round as a free action to any powers your array may have.

Each power configuration you can give your array is a separate power feat. So being able to spend your Power Array points to duplicate the Blast power is one power feat. To duplicate Blast with the Area extra is another power feat, to duplicate the Flight power is a third feat, and so forth.

You can only change the point allocation of your Power Array once per round, although it is normally a free action for you to do so.

This approach makes arrays more of a discrete power of their own. If it's used, then the Alternate Power feat should not exist, except perhaps as an option for extra effort. If you want to remove this capability from extra effort as well, then this Array variant is a good option.

UNDER THE HOOD: POWER COMBOS

Power combos are essentially how powers were constructed in the first edition of *M&M* and they're offered for players who prefer that method. It rewards coherent character concepts, but may also make powers too inexpensive as well as making some concepts more costly than others because they lack the same unified theme.

WIDE ARRAYS

As given in the core *M&M* rules, an array of Alternate Powers is normally a base power and one or more Alternate Power feats. The points of the base power can be shifted between it and the Alternate Power(s). Dynamic Alternate Powers allow those points to be shared, but they still cannot exceed the value of the base power. A wide array increases the number of power points available to distribute among powers in the array, using the following power modifier.

WIDE	+1 MODIFIER

When applied to the base power of an array of Alternate Powers, this modifier provides an additional 2 power points per power rank to distribute among the powers of the array. No power can have more power points allocated to it than the base power's total cost without the Wide modifier, but points can be shared among the Dynamic Alternate Powers of the array. You can apply the Wide modifier multiple times; each time, it increases the number of power points available to the array by 2 per rank in the base power. You can apply Wide as a partial modifier to fine-tune the number of additional power points it grants (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M* for details on partial modifiers).

Example: Daedalus' player Rich creates a wide array of powers for his power-armor. The base power is the armor's Blast 12 power (24 power points). The array's Dynamic Alternate Powers are Dazzle 12, Snare 12, and Telekinesis 12, each costing 2 power points (for 2 ranks of the Alternate

Power feat). Rich then applies the Wide modifier to Blast (the base power). This allows Daedalus to distribute a total of 48 power points among the powers in his array: 24 for the base power, plus 24 for the Wide modifier. This means Daedalus can use two of the powers in his array simultaneously at full power.

ALTERNATE POWER AS A FLAW

Alternate Powers are power feats, granting an alternate option or "setting" for a power. In this variant, Alternate Power is not a feat, but a –1 flaw applied to each power in an array except for the base power. The Alternate Powers cannot exceed the base power's cost *before* the Alternate Power flaw is applied. So a 20 point base power can have Alternate Powers where their cost does not exceed 20 points before the application of the Alternate Power flaw.

The flaw has the same limitations and guidelines as the Alternate Power feat from *M&M*, the primary changes are: 1) Alternate Powers are more expensive, and; 2) Alternate Powers are no longer available as power stunts, since power stunts can only add power feats to a power, not modifiers.

Gamemasters may wish to still allow Alternate Power power stunts, since they're a significant element of *M&M*, but disallowing them can help restrict the range of power effects available to heroes, if that suits the style of your campaign.

In this variant, a dynamic Alternate Power (normally 2 ranks in the Alternate Power power feat) is a power feat (called Dynamic) applied to a power with the Alternate Power flaw, giving it the usual benefit of being able to split power points between different Alternate Powers in an array. Dynamic can also be applied to the base power in an Alternate Power Array, as normal.

ALTERNATE EFFECTS

In this variant, the Alternate Power feat is replaced with a power feat called "Alternate Effect" because it is limited to replacing a power with another power of the same type. For example, it can only replace an attack power with another attack power, or a movement power with another movement power. This limits the range of potential alternates for any given power array and makes them more controllable.

An even more restrictive variant is to limit Alternate Power to only alternate versions of the *same* power. That is, the only alternate powers you can have for Blast are other Blast powers, presumably with different power feats and modifiers. So you could have an array with a standard Blast, Blast with the Area modifier, Blast with ranks of Homing, etc., but no power other than Blast. This option provides a small measure of flexibility and cost-savings (reflecting the "diminishing returns" of having multiple types of Blasts, for example) while lacking the breadth and options of standard power arrays.

By default, the modifications to Alternate Power also apply to emulating the feat using extra effort for power stunts, although the GM can decide to allow more or less leeway there, as desired.

AREA KNOCKBACK

At the Gamemaster's discretion, an area attack can apply a +0 modifier for its knockback to send a target flying *inward*, toward the source of the effect, rather than outward away from the source of the effect. The benefits and drawbacks of this modifier generally even out and, like other power modifiers, it is a permanent modification
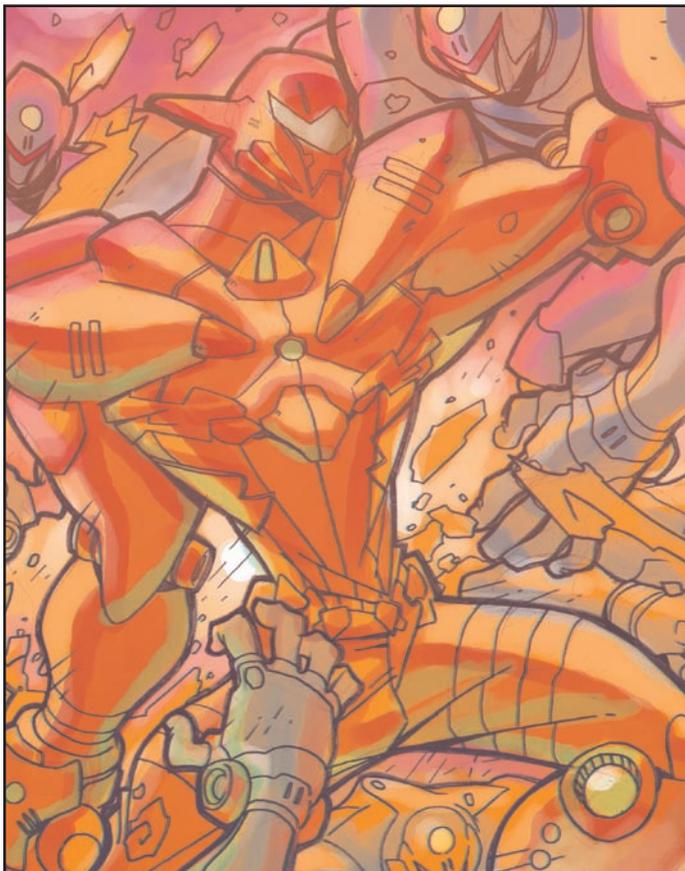
to how the power works (so for an area attack that has both inward and outward knockback, you need to acquire one as an Alternate Power of the other).

This option can simulate attacks like implosions, gravity fields, and area attacks that originate from outside the area and move inward rather than bursting outward from a common origin point.

AURA AND STACKING EFFECTS

Generally speaking, *M&M* works to minimize effects and powers that involve multiple saving throws, particularly multiple saves to avoid essentially the same effect (such as damage). The reason for this is that multiple saves favor the attacker, since there is an increasingly greater chance of the target failing a save. So, for example, an attack power that requires two saves against damage is disproportionately effective compared to a power that requires only one, since there's more of a chance of the target suffering damage.

However, the Aura power modifier (see the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*) allows for just that because it allows any touch range power to affect anyone touching the character automatically. Thus, a Strike Aura can allow a character to "hit twice" forcing two Toughness saves: one against the unarmed attack, the other against the aura's Strike power. This can create the problem described before: the aura is disproportionately effective, particularly when it and the unarmed attack are relatively close in damage bonus.

Should this problem arise in your game, there are a number of options for addressing it, including stacking the power level limits for aura attacks, using the combined attacks rule, and limiting the circumstances where auras are effective. Use these options as you see fit in your game.

STACKING AURA POWER LEVELS

In this option, an aura power with a Toughness saving throw (that is, one that has the same save as an unarmed attack) stacks with the character's unarmed attack for purposes of the power level limits on damage. So if a character has +2 unarmed damage in a PL10 game, then, assuming no trade-offs, the character's aura can't have a damage bonus greater than +8 (for a total of +10 with the base unarmed damage).

The target still saves against the damage separately, but the stacking limit means the average save DC will be lower, and it prohibits characters from having two "attacks" both at the PL limit for damage. This favors low melee damage characters with auras, which actually fits the source material fairly well. Most comic book characters with aura powers tend to rely on them rather than brute melee damage and rarely stack the two.

COMBINED AURA ATTACKS

You can treat an instance where a damaging (Toughness save) aura and an unarmed attack stack as a combined attack (see the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*). Essentially, use the highest damage, increasing it by +2 if the other damage bonus is within 5 points. If not, just use the highest bonus. This shifts aura/unarmed attacks back to a single Toughness save and tends to "factor out" a small unarmed bonus in comparison to a high aura damage bonus (and vice versa).

GRAPPLING AURAS

Lastly, you can apply a variant that says powers with the Aura extra don't work in conjunction with unarmed attacks (use the Linked

power modifier for that instead); a quick punch isn't enough to affect someone else with your aura. Instead, the aura only takes effect if someone touches you (including making an unarmed attack against you) or if you successfully grapple someone (ensuring more long-term contact). This makes the aura more defensive and less of a stacked bonus.

OTHER IMPERVIOUS SAVING THROWS

The Impervious modifier normally applies only to Toughness saves. However, it can also be applied to the other three saving throws in the same manner. It costs 1 point per +1 save bonus made Impervious, and effects with a save DC modifier less than the saving throw's Impervious bonus are automatically ignored (saved against). So a hero with Impervious Will +5 ignores effects with a Will save DC modifier of +4 or less, saving against them automatically.

This can speed up certain aspects of play, but broad use of the Impervious modifier may result in "spot defense," where characters become impervious to virtually *everything* (everything below a particular threshold, at least). You may wish to limit its use to only one or two of a character's saving throws, or decide the amount of a save that can be made Impervious cannot exceed the campaign's power level (allowing powers at the same level to still affect the character).

If Impervious is applied to other saves, the Penetrating modifier should be available for non-damaging attacks as a countermeasure.

STACKED IMPERVIOUS & PENETRATING

With this option, Impervious and Penetrating modifiers may be "stacked" on powers, with the following effects:

- A defense with one more Impervious modifier than an attack's Penetrating modifiers ignores the attack completely if the attack's save DC modifier is less than the defense's save bonus (the way Impervious defenses normally work).

- An attack with one more Penetrating modifier than a defense's Impervious modifiers forces a saving throw against the attack even if the attack's save DC modifier is less than the defense's save bonus (the way Penetrating attacks normally work).

So, an attack with Penetrating 3 (a +3 modifier) versus a defense with Impervious 2 (a +2 modifier) still overcomes the Impervious modifiers because it has one more Penetrating modifier. Conversely, a defense with Impervious 2 ignores the damage from an attack with Penetrating 1 and a lower bonus, because its Impervious modifier is more than the attack's Penetrating modifier.

IMPERVIOUS & PENETRATING PROGRESSION

Since the returns on additional Impervious and Penetrating modifiers is somewhat limited, the Gamemaster may choose to make them an application of the Progression power feat rather than additional modifiers to keep costs under control. Keep in mind, however, this variant encourages players to stack multiple levels of Impervious and Penetrating on powers because it is more cost-efficient to do so.

LINKED POWER SAVES

When a character makes saving throws against a set of Linked powers with different saves (see the **Linked** power modifier in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*), you can allow the spending of a single hero point to re-roll *all* of the saving throws, since the Linked powers constitute a single "attack," even if they require different saves.

This includes any power that requires two or more different saves at once, such as Corrosion and Disintegration, or powers with the Aura modifier. This helps make hero points equally as effective against these powers.

NO SAVING THROW POWER MODIFIER

Some particular power concepts may not allow for a saving throw: for example, consider a Drain power that always works on contact with the target, regardless of Fortitude (or other saves). This modifier is somewhat like a perception range power, which doesn't require an attack roll and bypasses normal Defense. Therefore, it should be considered at least equal in cost to applying the Perception Range modifier to a touch range power: a +2 modifier to power rank cost. Thus a Drain costing 2 points per rank would cost 4 points per rank if no saving throw is allowed against the Drain's effect.

No Saving Throw is a *very* powerful modifier, and the Gamemaster should be especially cautious about allowing it for heroes in a *M&M* game. It should never apply to any effect requiring a Toughness save, only Fortitude, Reflex, and Will saves, and it's usually best if it applies to powers with other limitations, particularly Uncontrollable, since that places the power largely under the GM's control and helps prevent any abuse of the capability to bypass most saves. It should also never apply to a power that doesn't require an attack roll, such as an area effect or perception range power. A power that automatically hits *and* doesn't allow a save is an almost certain game-breaker for anyone but a plot device non-player character.

Also note that a No Saving Throw power should still *have* a saving throw; the target is simply not entitled to one in normal situations. However, any effect allowing a target to automatically succeed on a saving throw, such as the Immunity power, *does* protect against a No Saving Throw effect. So if a character has Immunity 30 (Fortitude), then Drain 5 (No Saving Throw) still has no effect against that character.

> **Example:** *Absorbine has the uncontrolled ability to drain the life-force of anyone she touches. She has Drain All Ability Scores 5 with the following modifiers: Aura (+1, her power affects anyone she touches automatically), Permanent (+0, rather than Sustained, she can't turn her Aura off), and No Saving Throw (+2). This is a total cost of 5 points per rank (2 point base + 1 +0 + 2) or 25 power points total. Any time Absorbine touches someone, that character loses 5 points from his ability scores; the only defense is not to touch her. Subjects immune to Fortitude effects—such as those with no Constitution score—are unaffected by her life-force drain because they have no "life-force" as such. So, she can't drain robots or zombies, for example.*

POWER SURGES

Sometimes superhuman powers surge out of control, often with serious consequences. This is a new power drawback, known as a *power surge*. The Power Surge drawback is generally Common and Strong, worth 4 power points. Power surges are optional, since they're somewhat complex and require a separate system of tracking surge points, outlined here.

BUT DO I GET POINTS FOR IT?

It's up to the Gamemaster whether or not characters get the drawback points for Power Surge. If Power Surge is required of all superhumans in the setting, the GM can simply say it isn't worth any points, since it's campaign-specific and all superhumans suffer from it. On the other hand, the GM can also decide characters deserve the extra points for having to deal with the risks of power surges.

WHEN POWER SURGES OCCUR

A power surge may occur when any of the following conditions are met:

- The hero uses extra effort to enhance a power in some way, whether increasing the power's rank temporarily, or gaining a temporary power feat. The chance of a power surge is the same whether or not the player spends a hero point to ignore the fatigue of extra effort.

- A player rolls a natural 1 on any roll involving an active use of a power (including attack rolls, and skill, ability, or power checks). This does not apply to passive uses of powers, such as Protection.

- The character is stunned. This may occur in combat or from other effects.

- When the character is under extreme emotional stress. This may be due to mental or psychological complications, or decided by roleplaying and the Gamemaster's judgment. It's also possible to goad someone into a power surge using interaction skills like Bluff and Intimidate, but the GM should require at least two successful checks against the target, and may wish to give the character a +2 or better bonus on checks to avoid this sort of manipulation.

When any of the previous conditions are met, the player makes a Will saving throw, with a Difficulty Class of 10 plus the character's power level (the campaign's power level for player character heroes or an NPC's calculated power level). Thus as superhumans become more powerful, their powers become more difficult to control, although their Will save bonus may also increase.

In cases where multiple conditions apply, each additional condition increases the DC of the saving throw by +2. A character is only required to make one Will save per round to avoid power surges, regardless of the number of conditions, and makes only one save per condition for as long as that condition applies. So only one saving throw is required for a particular emotional stress or stunned condition, for example, even if it lasts longer than a round.

A successful Will save means no power surge but the character gains a *surge point*. A failed Will save means a power surge occurs. Players may spend hero points to improve Will saves and avoid power surges.

POWER SURGE EFFECTS

A power surge causes the character's powers to go out of control. It is much like an uncontrolled use of extra effort, with results dictated by the Gamemaster.

The character is stunned by the power surge with the usual effects: loss of the character's next action and loss of dodge bonus to Defense, with an additional –2 to Defense. The player can spend a hero point to shake off this stun condition normally, although this does not prevent the power surge from occurring.

On the round after the power surge ends, the character is fatigued and recovers from this fatigue normally. If the character was already fatigued (such as from a previous use of extra effort), then he is exhausted, if exhausted, then he becomes unconscious. The player may also spend a hero point to ignore the fatigue of a power surge.

For a normal power surge, apply the effects of extra effort and the Uncontrolled flaw to one of the character's powers. The Gamemaster decides the exact effects of any given power surge, with input from the players, as desired. Possible power surge effects include:

• A power is used for an immediate attack against a random target with a +2 bonus to power rank. The attack is rolled normally, using the character's normal attack bonus.

• The character acquires a new power feat (like a normal use of extra effort) that activates wildly on its own. A superhuman with Energy Blast might suddenly acquire an area version as a power stunt, emitting an omni-directional blast of power, or a Dazzle effect as a power stunt, releasing a cascade of blinding light.

• One of the character's other powers activates at random and at +2 power rank, such as a flying character suddenly taking off at full speed or a teleporter vanishing into thin air.

CONTINUOUS POWER SURGES

If a power surge involves an instant power like Energy Blast, then its effects occur and end immediately, although the after-effects may linger for some time. A surge involving a sustained or continuous power may continue after the initial round. Each round after the initial surge, the player makes another Will save for the character with the same DC, but a +1 bonus for each round. A successful save means the superhuman gets the surge under control and its effects stop.

A failed save means the surge continues another round. The surge may continue with the same effects as before, or it may change, depending on the Gamemaster's whim. The surge doesn't grow any more powerful, but an out-of-control flier may suddenly change direction, or a character uncontrollably broadcasting his emotions may change the feeling he's generating.

A successful Will save to stop an ongoing power surge does not earn a surge point, unlike a save to prevent a power surge from occurring.

SURGE POINTS

The previous section describes the normal effects of a power surge. Those change if the character has garnered any surge points from resisting previous power surges. Each successful Will saving throw to avoid a power surge causes the character to acquire a surge point. Characters can accumulate an unlimited number of these points and they are difficult to get rid of (see following). Surge points represent a build-up of power; by resisting a power surge the character only delays it, and ensures the surge will be more severe when it finally does happen.

When a character with surge points fails a Will save to avoid a power surge, the surge points augment the effects of the surge. The Gamemaster applies all accumulated surge points as if they were hero points, except surge points must be spent at all once and their effects are cumulative. Surge points can have any of the effects hero
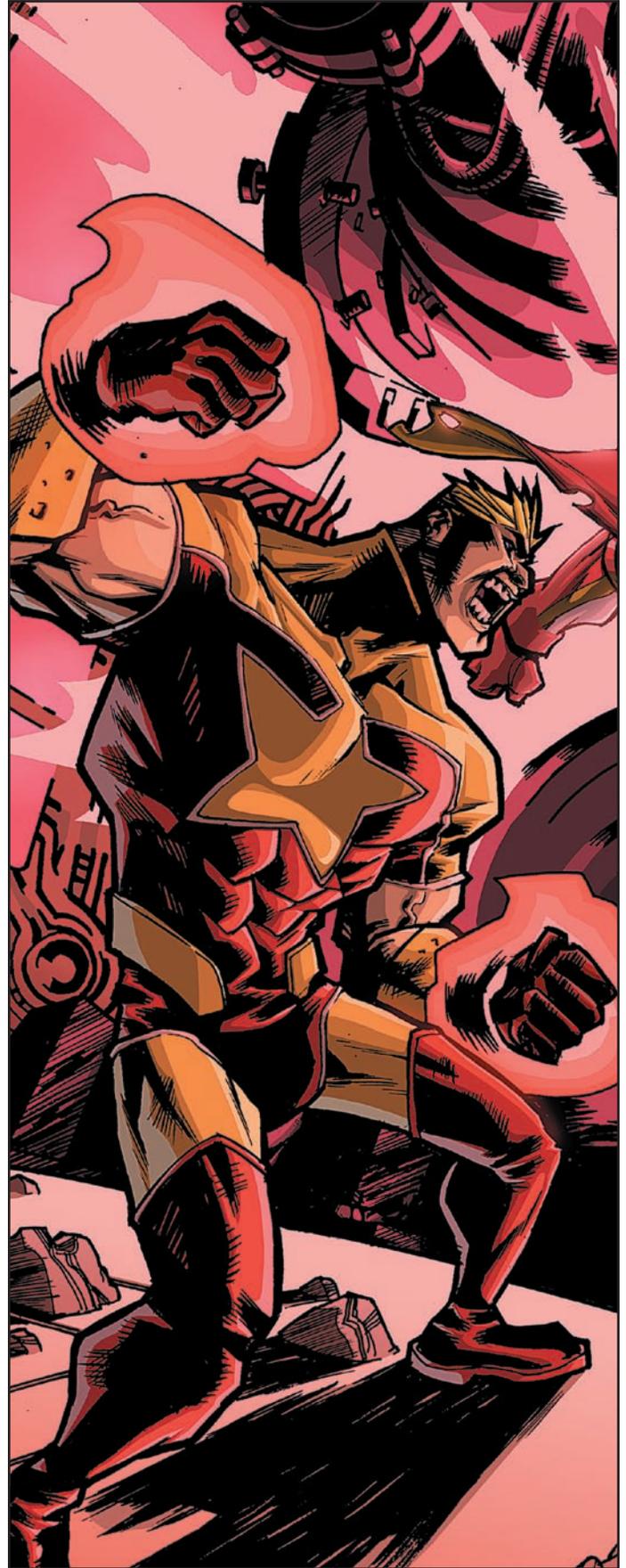
points do and enable a power surge to apply multiple levels of extra effort (much like **Extraordinary Effort** in **Chapter 6**).
Some examples of the effects of surge points include:

- Applying additional increases to the affected power's rank: +2 per surge point. As a general rule, most powers won't exceed twice their normal rank, but this is at the GM's discretion.

- Applying additional power feats. The most common is the Progression feat (see **Power Feats** in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M*).

- Improving die rolls associated with the power surge. One surge point allows the GM to add +10 any die roll associated with the surge that's 10 or less. Two surge points turn any such die roll into an automatic 20 (although not a natural 20). This only applies to rolls made by the Gamemaster for the affected power, not things like saving throws or other checks made against the power's effects.

After a character suffers a power surge, the character's surge point total is reset to 0 and he begins building up surge points again from successful Will saves until a new power surge occurs.

ELIMINATING SURGE POINTS

Naturally, characters try to avoid power surges as much as possible. However, the more you avoid a power surge, the worse it will be when you inevitably succumb and lose control. A character with enough surge points built up can do considerable damage.

Therefore, character may try to find ways to "bleed off" their excess power, developing various sorts of "pressure valves" to keep them under control.

One means is for the character to trigger a *deliberate* power surge, under controlled conditions. You can always choose not to make a saving throw to prevent a power surge, so some may choose to go somewhere suitably isolated, where they can trigger a power surge with a measure of safety and "blow off steam" before they lose control.

The drawback is the unpredictable nature of power surges. The character doesn't have any control over *how* the surge manifests and, the broader the character's powers, the more unpredictable the surge becomes. Since power surges can add power feats to a power (including Alternate Powers), there's no telling what might happen. Therefore, it's questionable whether or not any place is entirely "safe" for setting off a surge. For example, a character out in an isolated area like the Sahara Desert or Antarctica might trigger a power surge that creates an environmental catastrophe, such as a massive shockwave creating a desert storm or a heat pulse melting a tremendous amount of polar ice or turning desert sand into a sheet of glass.

Characters capable of surviving in space and leaving Earth have an additional option: they can trigger a power surge in deep space, with nothing nearby for millions of miles. This is the safest possible alternative, but there's still no way of knowing what might happen. A space-faring character is still capable of generating energy pulses that might affect Earth in some way, from interfering with communications to bombarding the planet with increased levels of radiation, for example. Bring things like mental powers into play, and almost anything could happen.

The other drawback to deliberate power surges is a surge stuns the character (unless the player uses a hero point to overcome this). This means characters may be momentarily bereft of their protective powers after they surge. So a space-faring character must have appropriate Immunities; otherwise the cure is far worse than the malady as the character is exposed to the vacuum of space. An opponent may lie in wait and try to take advantage of the character's momentary disorientation and fatigue. There's also the possibility of encountering trouble on the way to an isolated locale to safely trigger a power surge. This may cause the character to surge prematurely.

The other means of eliminating surge points is the opposite of a deliberate power surge. A character who refrains from using any powers *at all* for a length of time can slowly "bleed off" the excess energies leading to power surges. This takes considerable time: a character must not use any powers for a full week to eliminate a single surge point. This includes continuous powers, which must be "switched off" during this time. Permanent powers still function, but the character cannot use any other powers during this time. Use of *any* power, even for a moment, means he has to start the process all over again.

The difficulty with this approach is it renders the character an ordinary mortal while eliminating surge points. This leaves superhumans vulnerable to their enemies, although they don't necessarily advertise their vulnerability (and their enemies may not *know* the character's powers are "on hold"). It also generally keeps them from pursing any goals or activities requiring their powers. In fact, some superhumans simply *can't* take a week off when there's so much for them to do. The GM may call for Will saves to resist the temptation to use powers while trying to shed surge points.

A character trying to avoid using any powers, but forced into a situation where power use is necessary, may be considered under the kind of stress that can cause a power surge. So, the effort of trying to desperately refrain from power use may actually trigger the power surge the character is hoping to avoid in the first place!

POWER SURGE VARIANTS

The default assumption is power surges are potentially harmful to everyone *except* the character causing them. That doesn't have to be the case, however. Gamemasters wanting to add a different element of risk to power surges may decide the characters are at the greatest risk. Surging powers may destroy their users or alter them beyond recognition.

FORTITUDE SURGES

In this variant, substitute Fortitude saving throws where power surges normally call for Will saving throws. This makes controlling power surges more a matter of health, endurance, and constitution rather than willpower and self-control. Strong, healthy characters are less prone to power surges than physical weaklings, and mental discipline has nothing to do with controlling a power surge. This typically means surges are more of a biological process, perhaps even linked to a kind of degenerative illness or physical defect more likely to affect those with less Fortitude.

SURGE POINT PENALTY

The default assumption is the buildup of surge points has no adverse effects on characters until they fail a Will save and a power surge occurs. Some Gamemasters may wish to have the buildup make characters more prone to power surges. In this case, apply a penalty to the Will save against power surges equal to his current surge point total. So a character with 3 surge points suffers a –3 penalty on saves to avoid further power surges. This means there's a finite number of surge points a character can build up before inevitably failing a Will save, and it makes racking up surge points a more serious matter.

SURGE DAMAGE

Instead of or in addition to their other effects, power surges are potentially harmful and may cause lasting or permanent damage to the characters causing them, even leading to death. When a damaging power surge occurs, the player must make a Fortitude saving throw against a lethal damage bonus equal to half the character's power level. Players can spend hero points normally on the save against a damaging power surge. You can also choose to have damaging power surges resisted by a different save, such as Will.

At the GM's option, the number of surge points the character possesses may increase the damaging effects of a power surge. Increase the surge's damage bonus by 1 per surge point. This means massive power surges are more likely to seriously injure or kill.

SURGE TAINT

Out-of-control powers may reshape or warp their wielders in various ways. Instead of or in addition to its normal effects, a power surge gives the character taint (see **Taint** in **Chapter 6**). Each failed power surge check usually results in 1 point of taint, although the GM can vary this amount to achieve the desired effect.

Taint caused by power surges may be of any type found in the campaign, although mutations and psychological taint are the most common results. If super-powers are innately "immoral" in some way (all derived from an evil source, for example), then even moral taint is an option.

DEATH SURGES

A superhuman's death throes can potentially unleash a catastrophe. The default assumption is a character's death *doesn't* cause a power surge if the superhuman dies instantly or is unconscious at the time of death. If there's no chance to react, there's no chance of provoking a power surge. On the other hand, a prolonged or painful death almost certainly requires a Will save to prevent a surge, and some may choose to forgo the saving throw, hoping to get a last chance at revenge against their killers.

At the Gamemaster's option, a power surge may occur when a character dies under *any* conditions. This approach may actually decrease the amount of violence in the campaign if Power Surge is a common or default drawback, since superhumans won't be so quick to kill each other if they know each of them is essentially a bomb waiting to go off. Better to defeat or overpower a foe and then dispose of them somewhere relatively safe, where the resultant power surge isn't as dangerous, such as leaving them in a "sure-fire" deathtrap...

Finally, there's always the possibility of a superhuman's dying power surge doing something unusual. Perhaps a dying curse is given life by the power surge, or maybe that last surge of power creates an incorporeal "ghost" to cause more trouble in the future. Is it really the spirit of the deceased character or just some power construct? Only the Gamemaster knows for sure.

Death surges, if they exist, may also be far more intense than normal power surges. Gamemasters may decide to apply additional surge points to a death surge, using the guidelines for last-ditch effort in **Chapter 6**; this will ensure the death of any superhuman becomes a spectacular (and potentially cataclysmic) event.

CHAPTER 6: CHARACTERISTICS

Many characteristics go into bringing a *Mutants & Masterminds* character to life, and this chapter looks at different ways of handling them. It focuses on options for extra effort and hero points, two major character resources, but also includes definition of a character's motivation and reputation, as well as a system for handling different kinds of "taint" ranging from physical mutation to creeping madness or moral corruption.

CHARACTERISTIC OPTIONS & VARIANTS

This section describes optional and variant rules for different characteristics, including extra effort, hero points, allegiance, complications, and drawbacks.

CALLING

A character's *calling* is his purpose, motivation, or reason for being. It's often what motivates a hero to become a hero—the defining aspect of the character's personality.

In game terms, a hero's calling represents a kind of complication, influencing the hero's behavior and presenting opportunities for the player to earn hero points. When heroes do things in accordance with their calling, they earn hero points. This encourages players to establish clear personalities for every hero and to roleplay each character's motivation and personality traits. Examples of possible callings include:

- **Patriotism:** "My country, right or wrong," is the character's motto. Duty and obligation to country supercedes other concerns, and may cause complications when the character's patriotism conflicts with other goals or motives.

- **Responsibility:** It comes with great power; the hero feels a responsibility to others, enough to make personal sacrifices when necessary, along with the associated complications.

- **Seeks Justice:** The hero puts justice above all else, including the law at those times when the two conflict. The hero might go outside the law to see that justice is done, or violate unjust laws, creating conflict with those sworn to uphold them.

- **Vengeance:** A character with this calling seeks revenge for some slight, real or imagined. A hero may want to avenge the death of a loved one, unjust treatment, a terrible accident, or a similar wrong.

Gamemasters should feel free to create callings, and to encourage players to do the same for their characters.

EXTRA EFFORT AND ADVANCEMENT

With this variant, extra effort is required for advancement using earned power points. Since you can't really improve without challenging yourself, you must use extra effort at least once, if not more

often, on a trait before you can spend power points to acquire it. This only applies to character advancement after play begins, of course.

For example, to acquire a new power feat, you must have acquired the feat at least once through extra effort during play. Likewise, you may need to use extra effort to improve your Strength to buy a Strength increase, or to improve your movement to increase your rank in a movement power. The Gamemaster decides how many uses of extra effort are required before you can buy a trait, depending on the speed of advancement in the campaign. It might be only once or it could be as many as ten times!

Once you've used extra effort enough times on a trait, you can spend power points to improve that trait. See **Advancement** in **Chapter 1** for more information about this and other advancement options.

CONCENTRATING ON EXTRA EFFORT

Normally, extra effort requires no, well, effort to use. The player simply declares the character is using extra effort and the character automatically gains the bonus as well as suffering the fatigue (or spends a hero point to overcome the fatigue condition). Alternately, the Gamemaster may require players to make Concentration checks to allow their characters to use extra effort. The Difficulty Class of the Concentration check should be at least 15, with a successful check allowing a normal use of extra effort. A failed check means no extra effort but also no fatigue. The Concentration check itself is a reaction. This option not only encourages characters to develop Concentration but also reflects how important a hero's concentration is in some comic book stories. This option makes extra effort a bit less dependable, so players may rely on it less. Characters cannot take 10 or take 20 on the Concentration check, since extra effort is by definition not a "routine" check.

EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT

Extra effort and hero points allow characters to accomplish a lot. However, there are those times when even extra effort isn't enough and *extraordinary* effort is called for. In these cases, you may wish to use the following option.

Once per adventure (more or less at the GM's discretion) a player can decide to use extraordinary effort. The player may spend any or all of the character's remaining hero points as well as up to three fatigue results (which renders a normal character unconscious). These can apply to any of their normal uses, and the benefits stack. So a hero who uses extraordinary effort, expending three hero points and suffering two fatigue results, can apply five levels of extra effort to a task. The player *cannot* spend hero points (if there are any remaining) to offset the fatigue from extraordinary effort.

LAST-DITCH EFFORT

This option goes beyond even extraordinary effort (previously): in addition to all the effects of extraordinary effort, characters can also suffer damage from pushing beyond the limits of their abilities. The progres-

to extra effort. Each power point lost *permanently* from the power grants the character a free use of extra effort, up to a limit set by the Gamemaster. Points equal to the power's total value or the power level of the campaign, whichever is less, is a good guideline.

Gamemasters who feel this is too powerful may wish to have each additional use of power strain cost twice as much as the first; thus the first costs 1 power point, the second costs 2, the third costs 4, and so on. In addition, the Gamemaster might also allow the hero a Last-Ditch Effort (see previously) for an additional boost.

Power strain is suited to situations where heroes exert their powers to the utmost, but lose some or all of their power as a result of the tremendous strain. It's well suited for the "great trick, but you can only do it once" situations of literally moving mountains, or achieving similar amazing effects. It's a particularly spectacular way for a hero to go out in a blaze of glory, saving the world (or the universe, for that matter) but having to quit the superhero game after it's all said and done.

TEMPORARY POWER STRAIN

A variation on the permanent loss of power points is the temporary imposition of the Power Loss drawback (see **Chapter 6** of *M&M*). Essentially, the player chooses for the hero to suffer Power Loss as a complication immediately *after* a power use in order to get an "advance" loan of a hero point. This is good for those situations where a hero strains his powers to the utmost, temporarily disabling them, but without the unconsciousness that usually accompanies things like Extraordinary Effort.

HERO POINTS & DRAWBACKS

One difficulty heroes have to overcome is their drawbacks. To reflect this, the GM may wish to adopt the following option. When taking a drawback for a character, the player may choose between either the drawback's bonus power points, or an additional hero point every time the drawback enters play (above and beyond any other hero points the character might earn from circumstances). In effect, you're handing the GM a weapon to use against your character in exchange for the understanding that you get hero points when the GM takes advantage of your character's weakness.

Example: A hero is Vulnerable to Fire, and the player chooses not to give the hero any additional power points for that drawback. Any time the hero faces an opponent with fire powers, or has to overcome a challenge involving fire, the hero gets a hero point. If a villain uses a flame blast to defeat the hero and put him in a flaming death-trap, that's four hero points (one for defeat, one for the death-trap, and one for each use of the fire Weakness).

sion is staggered, disabled, unconscious, dying, dead; each grants an additional level of extra effort. This extra effort can be combined with hero points and the expenditure of fatigue levels as desired. So a hero could gain up to five additional levels, but it means the character dies at the end of the effort. Last-ditch effort is usually reserved for truly dramatic situations where the heroes sacrifice all in order to succeed.

POWER STRAIN

With this option, characters can choose to suffer a permanent loss of power points invested in a power for a one-time bonus equivalent

Generally, multiple invocations of a drawback must occur over separate encounters for them to count for hero points: you don't get a hero

point for each *attack* an opponent makes using your Vulnerability, for example, just for it being in that particular encounter.

This option may encourage players to give their heroes drawbacks, although the GM should be careful in not allowing too many; a maximum limit of the campaign's power level in drawbacks is reasonable.

PROXY HERO POINTS

Finally, rather than actual hero points, the GM may occasionally choose to reward players with something similar when conditions call for giving them a hero point. Usually this is something of equal value that gives the heroes an advantage in a later encounter and may be the equivalent of a hero point; the GM has just chosen to "pre-spend" it on an advantage or opportunity for the heroes.

For example, instead of a hero point, the GM may give the players the equivalent of Heroic Inspiration, handing them a vital clue to the villain's plans, the location of his base, or perhaps the villain's secret weakness.

The GM can choose to give the heroes a free use of extra effort in dealing with a particular challenge. Perhaps if one of the hero's loved ones is kidnapped or threatened, the hero gets a free extra effort to help that person or overcome the danger to them. This may encourage heroes to push to the limit or develop new and innovative power stunts more often.

MAXIMUM HERO POINTS

Using this optional hero point system, the Gamemaster can still set a limit on the number of hero points characters can accumulate during an adventure. Typically this is half the character's power level, plus any extra hero points granted by the Luck feat. Players should be encouraged to spend some hero points if they reach their maximum before the end of the adventure, since they will be unable to acquire any additional hero points and any unspent points are lost at the end of the adventure.

If some or all of the heroes have reached their limit of hero points, the GM may wish to provide additional hero point awards in the form of proxy hero points (previously).

STANDARD HERO POINTS

In this variant, the GM does not award hero points during play. Instead, heroes start out each adventure with a set number of hero points, generally half the campaign's power level, plus any bonus points for the Luck feat, with a maximum number of hero points equal to the campaign's power level. That's all they have for the duration of the adventure.

This variant can speed up play, since the GM doesn't need to worry about handing out hero points during the game, and it makes hero points more of a manageable resource, since the players know exactly how many they have to last the entire adventure. Players should be encouraged to conserve hero points at the start of the game so they'll have some left over by the end. The temptation with standard hero points is to spend them all right away, leaving none when the heroes really need them. On the other hand, this nicely models situations where a hero's luck "runs out" if he relies on it too often.

This variant is essentially how hero points work in the first edition of *Mutants & Masterminds* and may be used to capture the feel of that edition.

NONRENEWABLE HERO POINTS

Standard hero points recover at the start of each adventure (or each game session, as the GM sees fit). In this variant, hero points do not renew *at all*; once spent, they're gone permanently. Therefore, characters must earn hero points through game play in order to gain more (see **Awarding Hero Points** for some ideas on this). The goods news is earned hero points carry over from one adventure to another. Making hero points nonrenewable tends to make them more valuable, curbing hero point spending in game. Players will be less likely to spend hero points if they're not sure they'll get them back.

HERO POINTS FOR ADVANCEMENT

When awarding hero points, the GM may choose *not* to give the characters additional power points at the end of a game session. Instead, the GM can allow players to convert any or all remaining hero points into power points on a 1-for-1 basis. This leaves players with the choice of spending a hero point in play or saving it for later advancement. It tends to slow advancement, which may suit certain styles of play, since heroes who regularly use their hero points in play don't advance as quickly as those who don't (and suffer the drawbacks thereof).

HERO POINT PENALTIES

Awarding hero points serves as a "carrot," encouraging players to do things in character (and within the spirit of the game) to accumulate hero points. The GM can also use hero points as a "stick" to discourage "bad behavior" by taking hero points *away* from characters who do certain things. For example, in a four-color game, a hero who kills or even makes a lethal attack against an opponent may lose a hero point (or even *all* of his hero points!). Essentially, the player pays a hero point "premium" for stepping outside the bounds of the game. Gamemasters should use this variant sparingly, and should always warn players before imposing a hero point penalty, allowing them the opportunity to change their mind and take a different (non-penalizing) action.

ENHANCED HERO POINTS

Hero points are an effective resource, but Gamemasters may wish to enhance their usefulness in some campaigns, especially over-the-top four color settings or adventures like the pulp serials or Saturday morning cartoons. To do so, apply one or more of the following options:

- Rather than just re-rolling and adding +10 to a low roll, spending a hero point allows the player to roll the die again and add the result to the previous roll. If the second roll is less than a 10, treat it as a 10. So, a hero point always ensures at *least* a +10 bonus on any check, possibly more.

- A player can spend a hero point and treat any die roll as a 20. This is not considered a natural 20, but acts like a roll of 20 on the die for all other purposes. Essentially, this allows the player to spend a hero point to "take 20" on *any* roll, even those where taking 20 is not normally possible. This option makes the Ultimate Effort feat obsolete, since it does the same thing.

- By spending a hero point, the character automatically succeeds on one saving throw against a particular effect, including

Toughness saves. This lets a hero point provide a free chance to completely avoid an undesired effect.

- Players can spend hero points to dramatically alter or "edit" the events of the story to suit their characters. What degree of "editing" is permitted is up to the GM. More extreme changes may even cost multiple hero points.

VILLAIN POINTS

Another option Gamemasters can use to enforce a comic book feel in a *M&M* game is to assign "villain points" to characters for villainous or evil actions on their part; in other words, they act more like villains than heroes. This option is most suitable for campaigns where the lines between good and evil are fairly clear, although it may be suited for campaigns with moral grays; it doesn't work well for campaigns where there's little clear difference between heroes and villains.

ACQUIRING VILLAIN POINTS

Characters can acquire a villain point when they do something clearly villainous, including killing an opponent, committing a crime, needlessly endangering innocent lives, and so forth. Generally, the Gamemaster should warn players when their planned course of action will earn them a villain point, allowing them the opportunity to change it, if they want.

If a hero earns a villain point, that hero's maximum hero points are reduced by one point. Each additional villain point further reduces the hero's available hero points by one point. A hero whose accumulated villain points equal or exceed the hero's original hero points goes over to villainy entirely.

Heroes who have some villain points have a reduced number of hero points to spend. The hero's player *can* choose to spend the hero's villain points. However, spending a villain point earns the character *another* villain point (and the original villain point doesn't go away), so the hero's slide into villainy accelerates.

ELIMINATING VILLAIN POINTS

Heroes can eliminate earned villain points through acts of heroism and redemption. The player can choose not to accept a hero point award for a heroic action and remove a villain point instead. If using the standard hero point system, the Gamemaster decides when the hero has performed a sufficiently heroic act to eliminate an earned villain point.

REPUTATION

This system models how well known a character is and how that reputation affects interaction with others. A good reputation can be a useful advantage, but a bad one can be a troublesome hindrance.

Reputation affects non-combat interaction checks between characters by providing a modifier. A positive reputation makes others more likely to favor and help the character, while a negative reputation makes the character's social entreaties less effective.

FAME OR INFAMY

Reputation bonus represents a character's notoriety. Those with a Reputation of +4 or higher can be considered well known within their professional and social circle. Whether the character is famous or infamous depends on the point of view of the person recognizing the character.

REPUTATION AND SECRET IDENTITIES

Characters with secret identities effectively have two separate reputation bonuses: one for the costumed identity and another for the secret identity. The character should use whichever bonus is appropriate. One reason many supers maintain secret identities is to leave their Reputation (and the recognition that comes with it) behind for a while to live a "normal" life.

REPUTATION CHECKS

Most of the time, the character doesn't decide to use reputation; instead, the GM decides when your reputation is relevant to the scene or encounter. When it becomes relevant, the GM makes a reputation check for an NPC that might be influenced in some fashion by your character's notoriety.

A reputation check is d20 + reputation bonus + the NPC's Int modifier. The GM may substitute a Knowledge skill bonus for the Int modifier if your activities apply to a particular field. Knowledge (popular culture) is particularly appropriate for known superheroes and supervillains, while Knowledge (arcane lore) might apply to a hero with magical powers, and Knowledge of the various sciences could apply to characters known as leaders in various scientific fields.

The standard DC for a reputation check is 25. If the NPC succeeds on the check, he recognizes the character. That recognition grants a bonus or penalty on subsequent interaction skill checks based on the NPC's reaction. A character with a Reputation bonus of +24 or more is instantly recognizable and known to virtually everyone.

SKILL CHECKS

When an NPC with an Intelligence of 5 or higher has a positive opinion of your reputation, you get a bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Perform checks equal to half your reputation bonus, rounded down.

When an NPC with an Intelligence of 5 or higher has a negative opinion of your reputation, you get a penalty on Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Perform checks equal to half your reputation bonus, rounded down, but gain a bonus of the same amount to your Intimidate checks.

The bonus or penalty only applies when you are interacting outside of combat with an NPC who recognizes you and is therefore aware of your reputation. Those unaware of your reputation are unaffected by it either way.

NPC REPUTATIONS

Players decide how their characters act. Sometimes, however, it's appropriate for the GM to call for a skill check using an interaction skill affected by reputation. For example, an NPC might use Bluff to lie to the heroes, who, in turn, use Sense Motive to detect the lie. If an NPC tries to intimidate a hero, the GM can use the NPC's Intimidate check result to determine which heroes see the NPC as intimidating and which don't. Similarly, a Diplomacy check can tell the GM which characters find an NPC persuasive and which don't. Players may also want to know if their heroes recognize a particular NPC. Reputation checks can be useful in these situations.

The GM should make a reputation check in secret to see if player characters recognize an NPC. This prevents the players from using the results of reputation checks as a means of measuring the importance of every NPC they encounter.

Modify the results of the NPC's interaction skill checks by their reputation bonuses when they interact with characters who recognize them.

DETERMINING REPUTATION

Determining a character's reputation is based on two factors: power level and points invested in the Renown and Low-Profile feats.

As a default, all characters have a reputation bonus equal to their power level. For heroes, this is the power level of the campaign. For NPCs, it is their power level relative to the campaign; more powerful characters tend to be better known. So, heroes in a PL11 campaign have a base reputation bonus of +11 (meaning their reputation comes into play on a roll of 14 or better with a DC 25 reputation check).

The GM may wish to vary the base reputation bonus according to the needs of the campaign. If the heroes are some of the only super-powered individuals in the setting, for example, they may have greater reputations, perhaps one-and-a-half to twice the campaign's power level. If they are covert agents or otherwise out of the public eye, their reputation bonus may be lower or even a base of +0.

Each rank in the Renown feat increases a character's reputation by +3. Each rank in the Low-profile feat reduced a character's reputation by –3. See **Chapter 4** for descriptions of these feats.

EVENT-BASED REPUTATION

Reputation also changes based on the things characters do... at least, the things other people know about. When a character performs

some important action, the Gamemaster can assign a Reputation modifier based on it. This can range from +1 for acts of local fame (saving the city, stopping a major crime wave, etc.) to +4 or more for things like saving (or trying to take over) the world. Keep in mind that the Reputation bonus only measures how well known a character is, not how people feel.

The GM can likewise decrease a character's Reputation for staying out of the limelight, lying low, and otherwise not attracting attention for a while. People move on and forget about old headlines. Still, a hero or villain with a significant Reputation usually has to be out of circulation for years before most people forget.

TAINT

Some characters in the comics suffer from progressive problems, from some sort of *taint*, whether it's the corruption of pure evil, uncontrolled mutation, chaos energy, or some sort of progressive disease. The optional rules in this section look at ways to model these and other kinds of taint in a *M&M* game.

TYPES OF TAINT

"Taint" is just a general term for some imbalance or progressive problem a character faces. It can come in many different forms and it's up to the Gamemaster which, if any, forms of taint exist in the campaign setting. Some possible types of taint include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **Biological** taint is some sort of mutation or transformation of the victim's body. It can be anything from a rampant disease to a kind of "evolution" toward some other form, something other than human.

- **Moral** taint is sometimes referred to as corruption. It is essentially the taint of evil on the character's mind, heart, or soul (or all three). It represents an erosion of the character's morals; moral taint paves the path to wickedness and villainy, whether willingly or unwittingly.

- **Psychological** taint is the touch of madness, a creeping lunacy intruding on the character's psyche. The more it progresses, the more the individual's grip on reality weakens, sliding down the slope toward complete and utter insanity.

CAUSES OF TAINT

Any number of things can cause taint, but ultimately, taint in the game should be caused by the character's choices in some way for it to be anything other than an arbitrary punishment. That is, taint should be a side-effect of a choice the player makes on behalf of the character. This makes taint into a mechanism to give that choice a definite consequence.

So, for example, moral taint may result from the moral choices someone makes. If you choose to do evil, then you risk becoming tainted by that choice. Likewise, if someone does something psychologically scarring, then psychological taint may result. Even biological taint can occur as the result of a choice to use certain devices or powers with mutational or toxic side-effects, or to go into an area filled with dangerous energies, for example. Of course, the choice to avoid taint isn't always easy—heroes may need to use those dangerous devices, go into that forbidden area, or bargain with evil forces—but it should still be a choice, in order to be meaningful.

The only real occasion when taint should be imposed from without is in a horror-themed game, where a slow and inevitable progression into corruption and madness are important elements of the genre. There, taint can be used to emphasize feelings of helplessness and unfairness. In most *M&M* games, however, it's best restricted to a matter of choice.

ACQUIRING TAINT

Taint is measured, like most things in *M&M*, in terms of points, similar to ability score points or power points. How do characters acquire taint points?

Once you've decided on the cause of a particular kind of taint, it may just happen. That is, if you make a choice that causes taint, you get a taint point automatically. This makes the consequences of that choice certain (at least in terms of taint). This may make some players especially cautious, however. If they know they'll get taint from doing something, they can (and likely will) just avoid doing it.

Alternately, doing something that causes taint may only lead to a *possibility* of acquiring a taint point. The best mechanic for this is a saving throw: if the save succeeds, the character acquires no taint; if it fails the character acquires 1 (or more) taint points. The type of save—and the difficulty class—depends on the type of taint, and often the cause.

Fortitude saves are best suited to biological taint affecting the character's body and health. Will saves are better for taint that's moral, psychological, or spiritual in nature, and can also be suited for biological taint caused by willful actions (such as the psychic feedback from a device causing biological taint). Reflex and Toughness saves generally aren't suitable for resisting taint.

The Difficulty Class of the saving throw is based on the cause of the taint. Did the character commit a minor infraction or a terrible, mortal, sin? Was it a small dose of mutagenic energy or a massive one? Was the action disturbing or sanity-shattering? As a general guideline, the DC for a taint saving throw should be 10 + half the campaign's power level on average, giving most heroes a fair chance of success.

Another good way for characters to acquire taint is through extra effort. Some or all of the uses of extra effort, particularly those involving powers, may cause taint. So, for example, whenever you use extra effort to perform a power stunt or enhance a power, you may incur taint. Alternately, you can make taint an alterative to suffering fatigue from extra effort; then players have a choice of a level of fatigue or a point of taint. In this case, you may want to rule that hero points cannot reduce the fatigue from extra effort; only taking taint points can. This keeps extra effort useful, but gives the edge to those willing to suffer taint.

EFFECTS OF TAINT

So what do taint points do once you've acquired them? Generally, taint imposes some sort of disadvantage (or, again, there would be no reason to avoid it). Taint may also provide some *benefit*, although it's usually outweighed by the drawbacks.

DRAWBACKS

The most common effect of taint is the imposition of drawbacks. These drawbacks may include things normally considered complications, like personality quirks, unusual appearance, addictions, and so forth (see **Drawbacks vs. Complications** in the **Characteristics** chapter of *M&M* for details).

As a general rule, the drawbacks imposed by taint should have a power point value equal to the total taint points. So a character with 3 points of taint has 3 power points' worth of drawbacks. Note that characters don't get any additional power points for these drawbacks, nor do they count as complications for awarding hero points; they're the price the character pays for having taint.

It's up to the GM whether or not characters have to acquire taint-related drawbacks immediately, or if they can "defer" some taint and not acquire a drawback until their taint reaches a certain total. A good guideline is to allow the player to choose, but to require a drawback when taint reaches a total of 5 points and to require the drawback to have a value equal to the unallocated taint points. So, the longer you put off acquiring a taint-related drawback, the worse it becomes, going from an uncommon, minor (1-point) drawback to a very common, major (5-point) drawback.

Gamemasters can also create particular structures for taint-related drawbacks, such as a "pyramid" structure, where the first drawback can be as little as 1 point, but each successive drawback must be worth 1 point more. So the second taint drawback must be 2 points, then 3 points, and so forth. The time between acquiring drawbacks increases, but so does their severity.

The GM also decides what kinds of drawbacks are appropriate and may allow players to choose them, or impose them directly. Certain kinds of drawbacks suit particular kinds of taint, as shown in the **Examples of Taint** section.

ABILITY LOSS

A particular drawback of taint may be loss of ability score points. For example, a character may lose a point of Wisdom (or some other ability) for every point of taint acquired. This loss affects the character normally, and if a score is debilitated, the effects become more severe. This effect is best for taint representing a kind of disease or other slow erosion of the character's physical or mental health.

BENEFITS

Taint may also have some beneficial side-effects, although the drawbacks should generally outweigh them. The most common benefit, apart from the benefits encouraging characters to risk taint in the first place, is to make taint points a prerequisite for acquiring certain traits.

For example, if you want to make magic a "forbidden power" if your campaign (perhaps including some other troublesome powers

like Mind Control and Summon), you can decide a character must have a certain level of moral or psychological taint before being able to invest power points in magical powers. This makes all sorcerers tainted by their arts, whatever their original intentions for learning magic might have been.

This kind of "taint prerequisite" is an effective tool for controlling access to certain traits and creating the right feel for certain kinds of settings, particularly those where power (or certain kinds of power) comes at a price.

TAINT LIMITS

The Gamemaster should decide if there's a limit to how much taint you can accumulate and, if so, what it is and what happens when you reach the limit.

The effects of taint may create an inherent limit. For example, if each point of taint results in the loss of a point of Constitution, then victims die when the reach Con 0, so they can't have more taint than their Constitution score, minus 1. On the other hand, some taint effects don't have built-in limits. Theoretically, a character could continue accumulating taint-related drawbacks indefinitely, for example.

It can be useful to set a maximum taint limit for two reasons. The first is to keep taint undesirable and give players reasons to avoid it. The other is to provide some dramatic tension as characters draw closer to an ultimate effect of accumulating taint.

Whatever the exact effect of reaching the taint limit, the game system effect is the character is taken out of the player's hands, becoming a non-player character. This can be due to permanent insanity, irredeemable corruption, total physical (or psychological) transformation, or even death.

Where to set the taint limit depends on how soon you want characters to get there, but a limit of between 10 and 20 taint points is a good guideline. A lower limit (around 10 points) is best for settings where any taint is a serious concern and tainted characters often hover close to the limit. A higher limit is better for those campaigns where taint is a problem, but rarely gets so out of hand that a character succumbs to it completely.

ELIMINATING TAINT

Once you have taint, can you get rid of it and, if so, how? Generally, getting rid of taint should be possible, but difficult, and it should again be a choice made by players to do what's necessary to rid their characters of their taint.

The process of eliminating taint should be difficult enough for taint to remain a significant risk. If it were easy to get rid of, everyone would do it. Some possible means of eliminating taint include the following.

- **Abstinence:** The character must abstain from some activity to get rid of the taint, usually whatever caused the taint in the first place. For example, if using certain powers causes taint, then the character has to abstain from using those powers for a time (which may be an inconvenience). A minimum of a week per point of taint is recommended, although it could be longer.

- **Penance:** The character has to take some action to address the cause of the taint in order to get rid of it. For example, taint caused by wrongdoing might require the character redress those wrongs and seek forgiveness to remove the taint, while taint reflecting a character out of tune with his nature might require

actions more in tune with the character's true self to eliminate the problem.

- **Treatment:** There is some treatment able to remove taint. Generally, it should be time-consuming, difficult, expensive, or all three. Physical taint might be treatable using medicine, and characters could remove psychological taint through therapy. The Gamemaster should decide the course of treatment, any check(s) required, and how much taint each treatment removes.

EXAMPLES OF TAINT

Here are three examples of how taint can work. These are by no means the only ones, and Gamemasters should feel free to come up with their own variations. Any or all of these examples could coexist in a setting, providing multiple forms of taint that characters can incur!

CORRUPTION

In this application of taint, good and evil are more than just abstract moral concepts—or at least evil is, anyway. Those who do especially wicked deeds have a stain upon their souls. This darkness can eat away at the spirit, until there's nothing left inside but emptiness and corruption.

ACQUIRING CORRUPTION

Characters acquire corruption by doing evil deeds. The exact definition of "evil" is left up to the Gamemaster, but generally means any deliberately harmful action undertaken for reasons other than the

defense of one's self or others. In some cases, you may want to limit the list of potential "sins." For example, perhaps murder and torture are corrupting, while simple theft is not.

EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION

Corruption points impose mental drawbacks associated with sociopathic or even psychopathic behavior. The more corruption the character accumulates, the worse (or more numerous) the drawbacks become, and the more likely the character is to acquire further corruption, continuing the cycle. A corrupt character also loses the ability to use powers with a holy or good descriptor; the character is simply too tainted. On the other hand, a corrupt character may gain the ability to use unholy or evil powers.

ELIMINATING CORRUPTION

Corruption is removed not only by refraining from doing evil deeds, but also by actively doing good deeds in an effort of redemption. A truly good and noble act removes a point of corruption from the character's tally. Of course, any corruption-induced drawbacks will make it more difficult to stay on the straight and narrow; the player may need to spend hero points to allow the character to overcome the drawback long enough to do the right thing.

MADNESS

The mind can only stand so much pressure before it breaks. There are things no one was meant to see, or do, or know, and they can bring on a creeping madness, leading to total insanity.

ACQUIRING MADNESS

Characters suffer madness from exposure to traumatic events. These events require a Will saving throw (or a Stability save if you are using that variant—see **Chapter 1**) with the Difficulty Class of the save set by the intensity of the trauma, ranging from DC 10 (suffering a painful injury or receiving a sudden shock) to DC 30 or more (prolonged torture or witnessing Things Man Was Not Meant to Know). A failed save results in a madness point. A successful save means there's no effect this time.

EFFECTS OF MADNESS

Accumulated madness points result in mental drawbacks with a point value equal to the total madness points. The player and GM should choose these drawbacks to reflect the effects of the trauma(s) causing the madness: being attacked by a swarm of spiders may cause arachnophobia, for example. As madness points accumulate, the character may acquire new drawbacks, or existing ones may become more severe.

In settings where madness is linked to certain powers—particularly psychic or magical powers—madness points may increase a character's level of power. For example, perhaps magical powers in the setting are only available to characters with madness points and any individual power can't have a rank or point cost greater than the character's madness point total (or total times some multiplier like x2, x5, etc.).

ELIMINATING MADNESS

Eliminating madness points takes time, rest, and usually some form of psychotherapy or psychological treatment. The Gamemaster can set an amount of time or treatment for characters to eliminate accu-
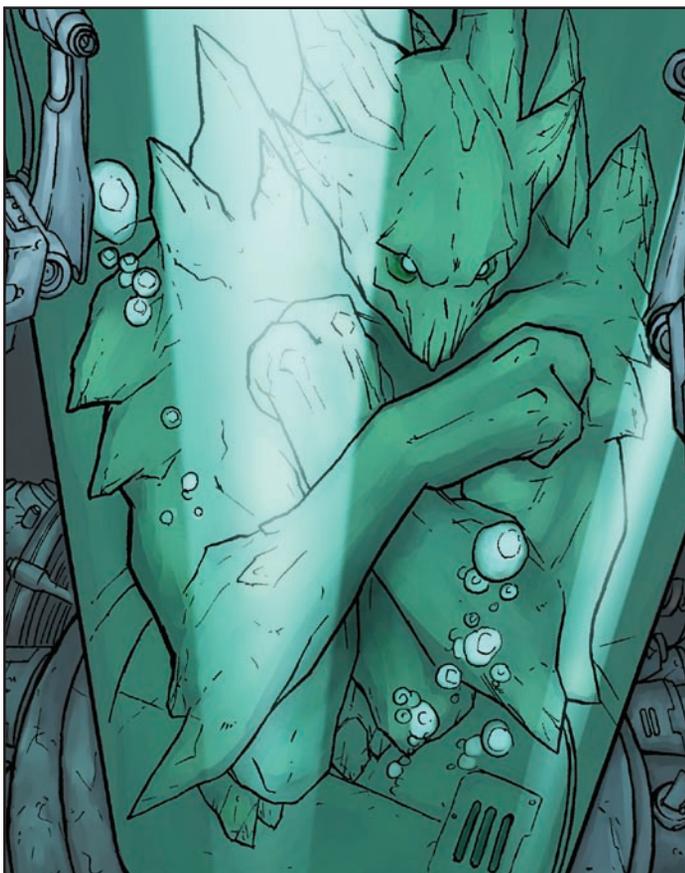
UNDER THE HOOD: TAINT

Taint is pretty nasty stuff, not especially suited for traditional four-color *M&M* games. However, it is useful for more realistic settings with superhuman powers, particularly when it comes to dealing with the effects of those powers on the people wielding them. Many tales of people with power involve the risk of taint: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," as they say. Taint provides a tool for exploring that and similar themes in the game.

The trick with balancing taint is to make it difficult, but not impossible, to avoid. After all, if it was easy to avoid, it wouldn't be much of a problem, would it? There should be reasons why heroes might incur taint, even if they don't want to. Extra effort is one good example. There's a clear benefit to risking or taking on taint: you're not fatigued by extra effort where everyone else is. That's a useful edge, if you're willing to suffer the consequences. The same is the case with moral taint. Certain actions may be more expedient, but if they run the risk of taint, then there's also a price to pay for taking "the quick and easy path."

Taint is a useful tool for balancing some problematic traits, particularly powers. If you want to limit the effectiveness of a power like Mind Reading or Precognition, for example, attach a taint "price tag" to it. Maybe reading someone's mind without permission (the most useful application of that power) leads to corruption. Seeing into the future might expose precogs to things "outside of time" the mortal mind wasn't meant to see. Time travel might cause "quantum breakdown" of the traveler's molecules, resulting in any number of side-effects. And so forth. You don't have to ban the troublesome powers outright, but players have good reason to approach and use them with caution.

Alternately, you can make taint a prerequisite for even *having* certain powers, limiting them to tainted characters only (which is a good way to limit them to the bad guys without flatly saying you're limiting them to the bad guys only). See **Benefits** under **Effects of Taint** for more on this.

mulated madness points, such as a month's quiet rest, or a week (or more) of therapy. Depending on the style of the game, these times could be even longer, like months of therapy per madness point, with rest alone having no real effect. Any occasion where the patient has to make a Will save against madness again means no progress during that time.

MUTATION

Life is impossibly complex, a galaxy of countless cells. It takes so little: just a small change in a DNA strand for things to alter. Such changes can spread, transforming an ordinary person into something ... else. Something unnatural.

ACQUIRING MUTATION

Characters usually acquire mutation points from exposure to mutagens like radiation or certain chemicals. In some settings exposure to things like "chaos energy" or certain powers may also cause mutations. Characters usually get a Fortitude saving throw to avoid accumulating mutation points, with the DC determined by the intensity of the mutagen: DC 10 for a fairly mild to 30 or more for especially intense mutagenic sources.

EFFECTS OF MUTATION

Mutations generally cause physical drawbacks equal in value to the accumulated mutation points. Note that multiple mutations affecting appearance don't count separately but are treated as a single more intense version of the same mutation (so long as their sole effect is the reaction others have to the character's unusual appearance).

Mutations might also grant new or additional powers, depending on their nature, although the character doesn't usually get much say in the nature of these powers; they may come with certain flaws or power drawbacks like Side-Effect, Uncontrolled, or Full Power. Exposure to mutagens can be the origin for a character's powers without necessarily accumulating any mutation points. This is a plot device rather than an application of taint.

ELIMINATING MUTATION

Mutation points are difficult to eliminate, since they are permanent changes in the character's physical makeup. Short of the character getting an entirely new body, the only means of removing mutation points may be extensive (and complex) gene therapy or the use of certain powers. Perhaps Healing with the Regrowth feat (or a customized power feat or extra) can remove mutation points on a 1-for-1 basis. In some settings there may be *no* way of eliminating mutation points!

CHAPTER 7: DEVICES & EQUIPMENT

The *Mutants & Masterminds* rulebook provides the essentials of devices and the various equipment characters are likely to use. This chapter looks more in-depth at things like the overall "technology level" of a setting (defining the availability of "common" equipment), a more detailed system of vehicle combat, pursuits and chase scenes, and various options involving equipment, particularly proficiency (training in the proper use of certain equipment).

TECH LEVELS

Tech Levels provide a more detailed means of tracking and describing differences in technological development, and are presented here as a Gamemaster tool for settings where technology is an especially important element.

A Tech Level (TL) is an indication of the technological progress of a particular society or civilization (which may be located on a planet other than Earth). This state of technological progress generally pervades all aspects of a culture, particularly at higher levels (TL 5 and beyond) when long-range communication is virtually instantaneous. Even at lower levels, it's unlikely—but not impossible—for a group of humans (or other sentient beings) to be at one Tech Level in some respects and at another level in other respects.

Tech Level may vary widely from place to place on the same world or even the same continent.

TL 0: STONE AGE

The major achievements of a Stone Age society are the use of fire, the domestication of animals, and the invention of agriculture. An individual living in a Stone Age society is primitive, but isn't necessarily gullible, stupid, or easily frightened by advanced technology. Common weapons in a TL 0 civilization include the club, the dagger, the spear, and the bow. Armor made from hide or leather is possible, as are wicker shields. Communication beyond the local tribe or settlement doesn't exist. Travel is accomplished by foot or by simple rafts or canoes. Simple pottery, stoneworking, and woodworking are possible.

TL 1: METAL AGE

Early human civilizations began to work metal toward the end of the Stone Age. The malleability of copper led to its becoming the first metal to be "tamed." Adding tin to copper created a much stronger alloy: bronze. This advance allowed for the crafting of tools and weapons of great durability. In turn, those improved tools made possible the working of iron, which replaced bronze as the metal of choice for tools and weapons.

In a Metal Age society, advances in pottery, construction, and agriculture allow for the concentration of populations into larger groups, with a corresponding upswing in the accumulation and sharing of knowledge. The rise of nations, city-states, and empires begins in the Metal Age. Organized efforts to improve communications allow regional societies to exist. Galleys and small sailing vessels are capable of relatively long voyages, and some cultures build extensive road or canal networks to link distant places. Improvements in agricultural efficiency permit the rise of artisans, craftsmen, professional soldiers, and other occupations not directly concerned with gathering food.

The sword replaces the club and the dagger as the preferred weapon of infantry. Chariots briefly dominate warfare before cavalry (aided by the introduction of the stirrup) renders them obsolete. The first true military forces or tactical systems appear. Armor can now be made from sewn plates or scales, metal links, or even forged breastplates, and a variety of metal melee weapons dominate the battlefield.

TL 2: MIDDLE AGES

Maturing civilizations experience a period of turmoil and adjustment at this Tech Level. Developments continue in architecture, commerce, metallurgy, and mathematics. Wider dissemination of information becomes possible thanks to more advanced printing techniques. Sea communications dominate in the later part of this stage of development, and sturdy seafaring carracks and galleons open the door to the next Tech Level.

As the number of people increases and knowledge of agriculture evolves, an increasing percentage of the population relocates to cities and towns. Toward the end of this Tech Level, the feudal system—in which a small class of nobles rules a large population of agricultural workers—begins to collapse. Specialized crafts develop, universities appear, and the middle class is born. The first corporations emerge in the form of trade guilds. The evolution of strong systems of trade and finance distribute a society's wealth more evenly among its members, diluting the power of the nobility.

Tools of warfare undergo a significant revolution. Sophisticated chain and plate armors protect warriors from harm, and elaborate fortifications become something of an art form. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the introduction of simple gunpowder weapons signals the end of knights, heavy armor, and organized armies of swordsmen.

TL 3: AGE OF REASON

The Age of Reason is an era in human history when the development of ideas and systems of thought takes precedence over technological invention. The scientific method improves understanding of the world. Experimentation becomes the means by which the physical properties of nature are systematically examined. The study of the various scientific disciplines—chemistry, electromagnetics, medicine, biology, and astronomy—flourishes. Instruments such as microscopes and telescopes enable scientists to extend the range of their observations and discoveries greatly. The new reliance on science generates waves on all levels of society. Superstition falls away, and exploration of the world reaches its apex. Society begins to experiment with new forms of organization, such as democracy. Corporations and economic alliances continue to evolve. Economically, this Tech Level is a transition from the cottage industries of the Middle Ages to industrialization.

VARIANT TECH LEVELS

The Tech Levels and progression presented here are obviously by no means the only possibilities, particularly with regard to "future" technology that hasn't been invented yet! Gamemasters should feel free to reorganize or restructure Tech Levels to suit their own settings and games. Some may call for a more detailed set of TLs, extending beyond TL 9, while others may substitute the "Diamond Age" of nanotechnology for the TL 8 Energy Age or even TL 7 or 6. The basic structure of Tech Levels is to provide a way of comparing the relative technological sophistication of settings (and parts of settings) and determining what can be considered "common" equipment for the setting.

The cannon becomes the dominant factor in naval warfare, while massed musket fire and horse-pulled field pieces rule the battlefield. Even the reliable bow vanishes, replaced by the flintlock. Light melee weapons remain common.

TL 4: INDUSTRIAL AGE

In the fourth Tech Level, the theoretical knowledge of the previous era matures into widespread practical application. The harnessing of hydraulic, steam, and electric power creates an explosion of commerce and industry. Developments such as the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio make global communication possible. Breakthroughs in manufacturing techniques allow the construction of heavy ironclad vessels, rail transportation, and architecture of previously unimaginable size. Pioneers venture high into the atmosphere and descend into the sea's depths.

Urbanization is complete as individuals gather in smaller environments where they can more easily exchange goods and information. Corporations expand in power, many establishing themselves throughout the explored world. Governments are based on political and economic factors.
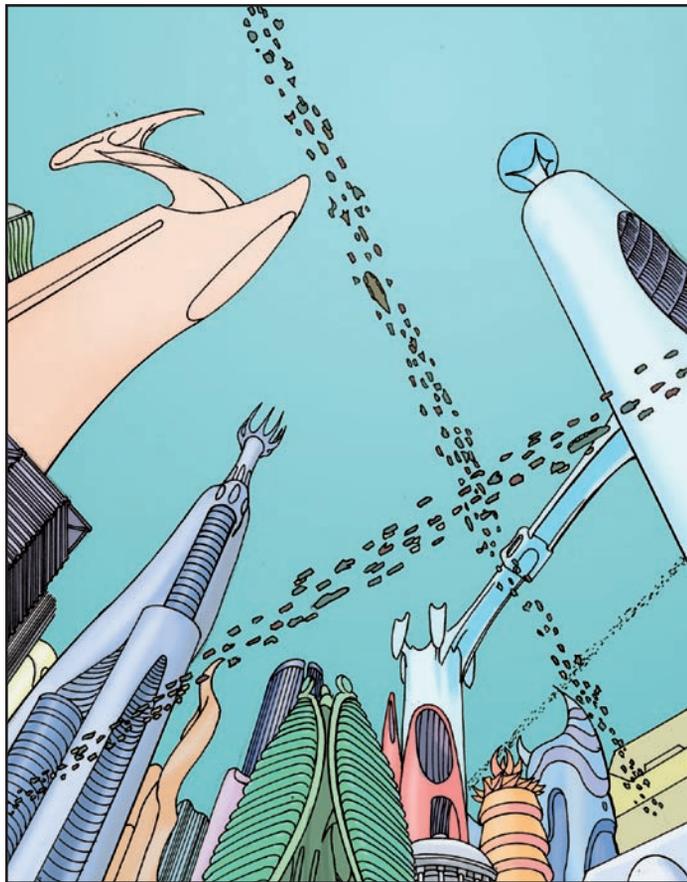
The means of war change swiftly through the period. Aircraft and submersibles join the list of military assets. Reliable and accurate rifles, pistols, and machine guns become common. Mechanized war machines herald the first great change in the art of battle since the end of the knight.

TL 5: INFORMATION AGE

The Industrial Age relied on chemical power, but in the Information Age, computer technology and electronics rule the day. Satellite information systems and the Internet connect the globe digitally. This Tech Level also sees the introduction of fission power, reducing the importance of fossil fuels. The automobile replaces the locomotive as the common form of travel. The first steps toward space travel involve massive chemical rockets, unmanned probes and satellites, and short-term manned missions.

The technology of the era allows greater citizen participation in government. The emergence of international alliances begins to dissolve borders between nations. Corporations gather power and begin to threaten governmental authority. Technology has a greater effect on individual lifestyles than on society as a whole. Most weapons at this time are refined versions of Industrial Age equipment. Rifles, machine guns, and heavy howitzers are still used by the world's soldiers. Computerized targeting systems and guided weapons make warfare much more precise and efficient. Strategic weapons, tested but never used, exhibit the species' power to exterminate itself in minutes.

TL 6: FUSION AGE

The development of fusion power provides an efficient, nonexpendable energy source, almost completely eliminating the need for chemical fuel sources. Advanced space exploration and colonization become possible. Computers become even more accessible, reliable, and powerful, leading to the development of virtual systems and widespread access to a global Internet.

Slowly, society experiences another revolution as individual nations are replaced by world powers. Megacorporations number among these new super-powers as the line between national citizen and corporate employee is rendered indistinct. Armed with the means to eradicate the entire species, the world powers keep conflicts to the level of skirmishing and posturing, and integration of the Information Age's improvements proceed peacefully.

Scientific advances in genetic engineering lead to artificial evolution and the first government- and corporate-sanctioned attempts to genetically manipulate the species. Early results are encouraging, with the manifestation of positive and negative mutations in the species toward the end of the age. Scientists also perfect cloning technology, and the first full-fledged clones are created.

In the later years of this age, the first crude applications of gravity induction technology appear, in the form of civilian and military vehicles that can move through the air without physical propulsion or the consumption of fuel.

Chemical explosives and firearms remain the weapons of choice; fusion technology can't be effectively miniaturized for personal combat. Nevertheless, advanced chemistry and superconducting technology change the materials and capabilities of many weapons. True spaceships become possible, propelled by powerful fusion drives, but still require a reaction mass to traverse space.

The age sees the tenuous settlement of other planets and asteroids within the same star system.

TL 7: GRAVITY AGE

As this Tech Level opens, the invention of two key technologies heralds the climb to the stars. The gravity induction reactor replaces fusion power as an even more efficient energy source, which can be miniaturized with ease. With the use of mass reactors, world powers explore, divide, and colonize the entirety of the local star system. For the most part, life on the home world is unchanged.

The introduction and integration of gravity induction technology leads to the creation of the induction engine, allowing starships to bridge the gap between the stars. Political and economic reorganization occurs as the species spreads far from home.

Projectile firearms are in their last days, as crude energy weapons become available. Powered armor is available to warriors of this age. Personal (melee) weapons enjoy a resurgence, due in large part to a shift in military tactics—armed conflict between individuals seldom occurs on an army scale, but more frequently involves engagements of small units in conditions where ranged weapons are not the most effective.

Computer technology links every society, settlement, and outpost of a star system in a single information net, creating an unparalleled exchange of information for business, entertainment, and research.

TL 8: ENERGY AGE

The continuing miniaturization of induction engine technology allows power plants the size of marbles to harness the primal forces of creation. Powerful personal force fields and energy weapons dominate the battlefield, as projectile weapons finally disappear. Miniaturized sensors, shields, and engines allow mass production of small, practical starfighters. At the other end of the spectrum, advanced construction techniques allow for the construction of enormous, self-sustaining cities in space.

TL 9 AND BEYOND

Generally, these Tech Levels are beyond reach or comprehension, although isolated worlds or undiscovered species may exist that have access to them. In many cases, the signature technologies of an earlier age are abandoned in favor of more elegant and powerful technologies.

Practical control of matter at the subatomic level, total conversion of matter to energy and back, the ability to travel through time or other dimensions, and the power to "fold space" to shorten travel distances may all be possible at this stage of development.

SKILLS AND TECH LEVEL

Generally speaking, attempting to use a technological skill (such as Computers, Disable Device, or Knowledge) on a subject of a higher Tech Level is more difficult. Increase the DC of the task by +5 per additional Tech Level. In some cases, using a technological skill on a subject of a *lower* TL may also impose a +2 DC penalty per difference in TL. (A modern computer programmer would have a difficult time working with one of the first vacuum-tube-based machines.) The GM may wish to waive or reduce this modifier in some *M&M* campaigns. Keep in mind: superheroes in the comics regularly work with advanced alien technology, so the overall Tech Level of the *campaign* may actually be higher (perhaps even *much* higher) than the Tech Level of Earth itself.

EQUIPMENT AND TECH LEVEL

At the GM's discretion, the Tech Level of the campaign or primary campaign setting (such as the planet Earth) may dictate what items are available as Equipment as opposed to Devices. For example, on an Earth at TL 5 (the same as the modern world), more advanced technology is not considered Equipment, even if it's common on alien worlds with a higher Tech Level. On the other hand, in a futuristic, star-spanning campaign setting, TL 7 items may be considered Equipment, with only technology from the Energy Age and beyond considered "super-science" Devices.

PURCHASING ITEMS OF LOWER OR HIGHER TECH LEVEL

Tech Levels are relative, and depending on the economics of a campaign, a GM may choose to make certain items of a higher or lower Tech Level unavailable, cheaper, or more expensive to purchase. For the sake of game balance, GMs who want to make lower-TL and higher-TL items available to characters should adjust the purchase DCs of items as follows.

- –2 to Purchase DC for each Tech Level lower than the current Tech Level, except in the case of valuable antiques.

- +5 to Purchase DC for equipment from the next highest Tech Level (the limit for purchasing cutting-edge technology).

LOWER TECH LEVELS

Most modern campaigns are set at Tech Level 5. Consequently, campaigns set in Earth's future typically feature societies with access to Tech Level 6 technology or higher. However, characters may still encounter technologically backward societies, possibly through the exploration of time travel, a visit to another world (or an undeveloped area of their homeworld), or some other plot device. For this reason, the lower Tech Levels are included here. Also, as previously mentioned, superhero campaign settings often have a higher overall Tech Level (owing to super-geniuses and alien cultures), even if the Tech Level of Earth is largely unchanged.

VEHICLE COMBAT

This section lists some general modifiers you can use when dealing with vehicles in combat, leaving the specifics up to the Gamemaster and common sense. When some or all participants in combat are in vehicles, use the following guidelines.

PASSENGER ACTIONS

Passengers in a vehicle (anyone who's not piloting the vehicle) suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls while the vehicle is in motion. The GM may require Acrobatics checks for characters to maintain their balance in fast-moving vehicles.

PILOT ACTIONS

The pilot (or driver) of a vehicle must take a move action each round to handle and direct the vehicle. The pilot can also take a standard action each round, but suffers a –4 to any maneuver check that round when doing so.

VEHICLE SPEED

Vehicle speed should be handled in all ways like character speed, including modifiers to defense for fast-moving vehicles. Note that a vehicle's speed is its *only* speed value, since vehicles don't take multiple move actions for accelerated or all-out movement (but vehicles also don't suffer from fatigue).

ATTACK RANGE

Attacks made from vehicles have their normal range. You can only use a melee attack from a vehicle if the target is in the same vehicle with you, or the lead to another vehicle is 0 lengths (see **Pursuit** for details).

FALLING FROM A VEHICLE

Falling from a vehicle inflicts damage equal to the vehicle's speed rank, to a maximum of +20 damage, or based on the distance fallen (whichever is greater), and is treated like falling damage in all other respects.

VEHICLE COMBAT ACTIONS

Actions during vehicle combat are handled the same way as actions during personal combat. In general, a character can take two move actions, one move action and one standard action, or one full-round action in a round. Free actions can be performed normally, in conjunction with other actions. If not specified otherwise, actions take the same time in vehicles as outside of them.

- **Free Actions:** Communicating and ducking down behind a door are examples of free actions. Characters can perform as many free actions as the GM permits in a single round.

- **Move Actions:** Changing position within a vehicle is usually a move action, especially if the character has to trade places with another character. If the character's movement is short and unobstructed, the character can do it as the equivalent of a 5-foot step. Otherwise, it requires a move action.

- **Standard actions:** Anyone aboard a vehicle can make an attack with a personal weapon, and drivers and gunners can make attacks with any vehicle-mounted weapons controlled from their positions.

- **Full-Round Actions:** Since the driver must use a move action to control the vehicle, he can't take a full-round action unless starting it in one round and completing it on the next turn.

ATTACKING VEHICLES

Attacking a vehicle is just like attacking a character. Vehicles generally have an applicable size modifier included in their Defense, and tend to be easier to hit than characters overall.

The driver of a vehicle can take a standard action for "evasive maneuvers" during a round. If so, substitute the result of the char-

acter's relevant skill check (Drive or Pilot), modified by the vehicle's size, for the vehicle's normal Defense that round. For example, a character piloting a gargantuan fighter jet (–4 size modifier) takes evasive action and gets a Pilot check result of 22. Subtracting the jet's size modifier gives a Defense score of 18 for that round (much better than the jet's default Defense of 6).

Just as in melee combat, one can also "fight defensively" while driving a vehicle, which grants a +2 dodge bonus to the vehicle's Defense and applies a –4 penalty on attack rolls made by any occupants of the vehicle.

TARGETING OCCUPANTS

An attack against a vehicle occupant is made like any other attack. Remember, however, that a character in a vehicle gains bonuses to Defense from both the vehicle's speed and any cover it provides. The speed bonus to Defense does not apply to attackers moving at the same or greater relative speed to the vehicle.

VEHICLE DAMAGE

Vehicles suffer damage like equipment (see **Damaging Equipment** in the **Devices & Equipment** chapter and **Damaging Objects** in the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*): an "injured" vehicle suffers the normal –1 penalty to Toughness saves per injured result plus either a –1 penalty to checks involving the vehicle or the loss of a feature or a point's worth of capability per injured result. A "disabled" vehicle no longer functions. A vehicle that is disabled while moving drops one speed rank each round until it comes to a stop. The driver cannot attempt any maneuvers except a 45-degree turn. A disabled water vehicle may begin to sink slowly. A "dying" vehicle is destroyed.

REPAIRING VEHICLES

Repairing vehicle damage requires the proper tools and a garage, hangar, or similar facility. A character without the proper tools suffers a –4 penalty on the Craft (mechanical) skill check, as usual. Repairing an injured result is a simple Craft check (DC 15, one hour), and repairing a disabled result is an extended Craft check (DC 25, one day). Destroyed vehicles cannot be repaired; they must be rebuilt from scratch.

CRASH CHECKS

Crash checks are required when a maneuver calls for a crash check, or the vehicle suffers damage that causes a crash check.

The crash check is a maneuver check, DC 15 for ground and water vehicles, DC 10 for air and space vehicles. You make only one crash check per round per vehicle even if more than one is called for: every additional crash check required increases the check DC by +5. Open terrain is –5 DC, tight terrain is +5 DC, and close terrain is at the normal Difficulty.

On a failed check, the vehicle crashes into an obstacle (or another vehicle, if a maneuver specifies). The vehicle and the obstacle (and any occupants of either) suffer +1 damage per rank of vehicle speed, and +1 per point the maneuver check failed. Occupants can make Reflex saves (DC equal to the DC of the crash check) to suffer half damage from the crash.

An air or space vehicle may stall on a failed crash check if there is no hard terrain or other obstacle to crash into. The pilot can restart the vehicle with a successful Craft (mechanical) check (DC equal to the crash check).

A failed crash check for a character is the same as for a vehicle: the character collides with an obstacle and suffers damage. A character failing the Reflex save against crash damage is considered prone after the collision.

MOUNTED COMBAT

Characters may ride into combat on various sorts of mounts, from horses to dragons, griffons, or sea-monsters. Such mounts are generally minions, although some can be sidekicks (see the **Feats** chapter of *M&M*). Use the following guidelines for mounted characters in combat.

Your mount acts on your initiative count as you direct. You move at the mount's speed, but the mount uses its action to move.

COMBAT WHILE MOUNTED

With a DC 5 Ride check, you can guide your mount with your knees and use both hands to attack or defend yourself. This is a free action.

You can "ride defensively" while mounted, using the evasive maneuvers and defensive options for vehicles, but substituting a Ride skill check for a Drive or Pilot skill check. See **Attacking Vehicles** in the previous section for details.

When you attack a creature smaller than your mount that is on foot, you get the +1 bonus on melee attacks for being on higher ground. Even at your mount's full speed, you don't take any penalty on melee attacks while mounted.

If your mount charges, you take the Defense penalty associated with the charge as well. If you make an attack at the end of the charge, you receive the bonus gained from the charge.

You can use ranged weapons while your mount is taking a double move, but at a –4 penalty on the attack roll. You can use ranged weapons while your mount is moving all-out at a –8 penalty. In either case, you make the attack roll when your mount has completed half its movement. You can take move actions (such as drawing a weapon or using a skill) normally while your mount is moving.

If your mount falls, you have to make a DC 15 Ride check to make a soft fall and take no damage. If the check fails, you take +1 falling damage when you hit the ground (more if your mount is higher off the ground).

If you are knocked unconscious while riding, you have a 50% chance to stay in the saddle. Otherwise you fall and take +1 falling damage (more if your mount is higher off the ground). Without you to guide it, a mount generally avoids combat.

INTELLIGENT MOUNTS

The guidelines for mounted combat assume mounts of animal-level intelligence, like horses. If you're riding an intelligent being (one with an Intelligence score higher than 3), then the GM may want to give your mount greater freedom of action.

The normal assumption is your mount acts on your initiative count as you direct, and nothing more. At the GM's discretion, roll initiative separately for you and your mount. The mount carries you automatically and moves using its own actions on its own initiative count and can take other actions as it sees fit or as you direct. So a mount could move and then take a standard action (such as making an attack) on its initiative, then you can take your actions on your initiative.

This option is more detailed but involves keeping track of both your and the mount's initiative and actions in combat.

PURSUIT

Action involving vehicles often involves pursuit, with characters and vehicles chasing each other. Pursuit in this system is handled abstractly, making it easier to run without a map, counters, and similar tools. It's intended to provide quick and simple results.

STARTING PURSUIT

During a pursuit, one party—the pursuer—is assumed to be trying to catch the other—the target. The distance between the two is called the *lead*, measured in *lengths*, abstract units adjustable to the situation. A length may only be a matter of feet in a pursuit on foot, but it could be hundreds or even thousands of miles for a pursuit in deep space!

A pursuit starts out with a lead of 8 lengths, although the GM can adjust this as desired to fit the conditions. The lead may never be less than 0 or greater than 30. If any maneuver puts the lead beyond those bounds, adjust the lead to the closest number.

The pursuer wants to decrease the lead enough to perform a finishing maneuver and catch the target, while the target wants to increase the lead enough to perform a finishing maneuver and escape. Pursuit continues until a successful finishing maneuver, a crash, or the pursuers choose to break off pursuit.

PURSUIT STEPS

Follow these steps during a pursuit:

1. CHOOSE MANEUVERS

Each character or vehicle involved in the pursuit chooses a maneuver from those available.

2. MANEUVER CHECKS

The participants reveal their maneuvers. Each then makes a maneuver check using the appropriate trait, including any modifiers. This is an opposed check between the pursuer and the target. If one's check succeeds, apply the effects of the maneuver. If neither succeeds, or their check results are tied, the chase continues. If both succeed, apply the maneuver effect with the higher check result.

The trait used for a maneuver check depends on the conditions of the pursuit. For characters in vehicles, the maneuver check is usually a Drive or Pilot skill check. For individuals, it's usually an Acrobatics skill check. The GM may call for different skill checks for maneuvers as suits the situation and the particular pursuit.

3. RESOLVE MANEUVERS

Apply the winner's maneuver to the pursuit and adjust the lengths between the pursuer and the target as necessary.

4. OBSTACLES

Obstacles may crop up during a pursuit. Obstacles are intended to provide flavor during the pursuit, with frequency depending on terrain. The GM should feel free to add obstacles to help liven up otherwise uninteresting pursuits.

When an obstacle occurs, the target and then the pursuer make an obstacle check. This may be a Reflex save or a skill check, as appropriate, against the obstacle's DC. The GM may further apply a +2 or –2 modifier for circumstances. On a failed obstacle check, make a crash check.

5. OTHER ACTIONS

Whether pursuit has ended due to a finishing maneuver or not, those involved now perform any actions open to them.

6. DAMAGE AND CRASH CHECKS

Apply any damage inflicted against participants in the pursuit (from attacks and so forth) and see if any participants must make a crash check. Situations requiring crash checks are given in the text.

TERRAIN

Terrain falls into three categories for pursuits: open, close, and tight. Each applies certain conditions to the pursuit, including how often obstacles crop up and the Difficulty Class of checks to avoid them.

OPEN TERRAIN

Open terrain is easy to traverse, with few obstacles. Examples include open highways and salt flats on the ground, open and calm water, and clear skies and mostly empty space.

Speed: Pursuit in open terrain begins at three-quarters maximum speed. The fastest participant receives a +2 bonus on maneuver checks. If only one participant is in open terrain, then that participant receives the +2 bonus.
Obstacle Chance: 18 or better on d20
Obstacle Difficulty: 12

CLOSE TERRAIN

Close terrain is generally narrow and filled with things to run into, sideswipe, or burst through. Examples include city streets, winding dirt roads, narrow rivers, busy docks, cloudy mountaintops, scattered asteroids, and so forth.

Speed: Pursuit in close terrain begins at half maximum speed.
Obstacle Chance: 17 or better on d20
Obstacle Difficulty: 18

TIGHT TERRAIN

The most dangerous terrain type, tight terrain is filled with obstacles and conditions that change from moment to moment. Examples include busy highways, steep inclines, rapids, indoor parking garages, asteroid and debris fields, and such.

Speed: Pursuit in tight terrain begins at one-quarter maximum speed.
Obstacle Chance: 16 or better on d20
Obstacle Difficulty: 24

SPEED

Obviously, faster characters and vehicles have an advantage in a pursuit. The type of terrain determines the starting speed, based on the speed of the fastest participant. Speed changes during the pursuit according to the various maneuvers selected.

Whenever pursuit speed exceeds a participant's all-out speed or a vehicle's listed speed, a character suffers a level of fatigue, while a vehicle suffers a level of stress (see the **Device** power in the **Powers** chapter of *M&M* for details of item stress). Participants can choose
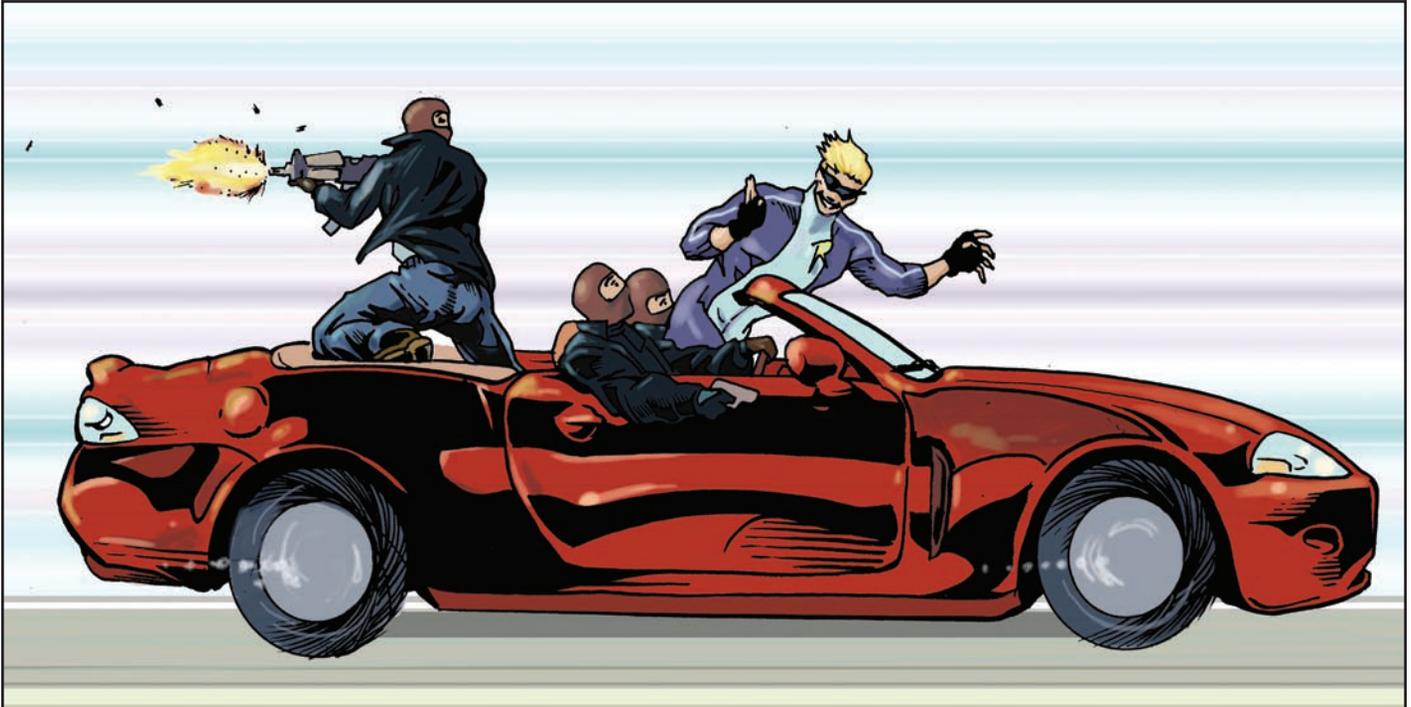
to avoid this by decreasing speed, but this imposes a –2 maneuver check modifier per rank of speed decrease to reflect the tricky maneuvering needed to make up for the lost speed. Hero points can eliminate this fatigue or stress as usual.

> **Example:** *Johnny Rocket is chasing after a getaway car. Johnny has Super-Speed 10 (with a speed of 10,000 MPH) while the car has Speed 4 (a speed of 100 MPH). Pursuit begins in close terrain on the city streets, so starting speed is half Johnny's maximum, or 5,000 MPH. That's well above the car's maximum speed, so the driver either has to let the vehicle take a level of stress each round, or suffers a –10 maneuver check penalty, since there's a difference of 5 ranks between 5,000 MPH and 100 MPH. Either way, the car's speed doesn't really increase: the stress or maneuver penalty reflects the wear-and-tear or tricky maneuvers needed to try and avoid such a fast pursuer. Odds are Johnny is going to catch the crooks pretty easily, or their car will conk out after a few rounds of stress. Still, a daring driver might be able to pull something off in a couple rounds with the right maneuvers (risking a crash in the process).*

MANEUVERS

Since pursuit is left abstract, the distance covered and specific locations of each participant are left to your imagination. What's really important is the lead—the distance between the pursuer and the target at any given time. Many maneuvers require a certain lead, so make sure to update the lead at the start of each round.

MANEUVER DESCRIPTIONS

Maneuvers are split into pursuer and target categories. Each maneuver has a general description you can modify to suit the particular conditions of a pursuit. Maneuvers include the following information:

- **Finishing:** A finishing maneuver has prerequisites that must be met before it can be attempted, but ends the pursuit if performed successfully.

- **Lead:** The minimum or maximum lead required to perform the maneuver.

- **Speed:** Some maneuvers modify current pursuit speed. If both pursuer and target choose maneuvers that alter speed, only the highest modifier (positive or negative) applies.

- **Success:** The maneuver's effect if the character wins the opposed maneuver check for the round.

- **Special:** Any additional information about the maneuver.

PURSUER MANEUVERS

Pursuer maneuvers are aimed toward slowing down and catching the target.

PURSUIT AND GM FIAT: CLEAN GETAWAYS

You can choose to have a fleeing NPC automatically escape pursuit by exercising GM Fiat. You should award players a hero point when this happens, usually ensuring a villain's getaway to appear in a later scene of the adventure.

You can also help ensure a clean getaway for certain targets by giving the heroes other things to worry about. If a fleeing villain blasts the support cables of a bridge, for example, the heroes should break off pursuit to help the people endangered by the bridge's imminent collapse. Players should also get a hero point for this sort of setback and allowing the villain to escape (as well as any great acts of heroism during the rescue attempt).

BOX-IN FINISHING

It takes skill to trap an opponent without any damage, but sometimes it's essential to do so.

Lead: 5 lengths or less.
Success: The pursuer wins the chase, forcing the target into a corner where there's nowhere left to run.

CROWD FINISHING

The pursuer comes up behind the target and forces him into a crash.

Lead: 2 lengths or less
Success: The pursuer wins the chase. If the pursuer's maneuver check result exceeds the target's by 5 or more, the target collides with an obstacle. The target is assumed to have failed a crash check and the pursuer comes to a safe stop.

CUT OFF FINISHING

The pursuer surges forward and cuts in front of the target, forcing him to stop.

Lead: 0 lengths
Speed: The pursuer wins the chase, cutting off the target. If the target fails his maneuver check, he collides with the pursuer. The pursuer may make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid the collision. In the case of the vehicle, the pursuer ejects or leaps clear as the target collides with his (now vacant) vehicle.

HERD

By keeping the pressure on and cutting off the target's options, the pursuer drives the target into difficult terrain.

Lead: 10 lengths or less
Success: Reduce the lead by 1 length. Each participant must make a crash check, but the target's DC is increased by the difference between the maneuver check results.
Special: If the pursuer's maneuver check result exceeds the target's by 5 or more, the pursuer may shift the terrain by one step at the end of the round (open or tight becomes close, or vice versa); this also reduces or increases the crash check DC by 5.

INTERCEPT

Coming at the target from another angle can be a useful shortcut, but also often involves losing line of sight and unforeseen obstacles.

Lead: Any
Success: Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between the maneuver check results. The pursuer must make a crash check.

MATCH

The pursuer matches the target's speed and movement, forcing the relative speeds down to almost nothing and stabilizing pursuit for others to attack.

Lead: 10 lengths or less
Success: Reduce the lead by 1 length. The pursuer (and any passengers) gain the benefit of an aid action for the round when making attacks against the target.

RAM FINISHING

The pursuer speeds up and rams into the target.

Lead: 5 lengths or less
Success: The pursuer wins the chase, colliding with the target like a slam attack (see the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*).
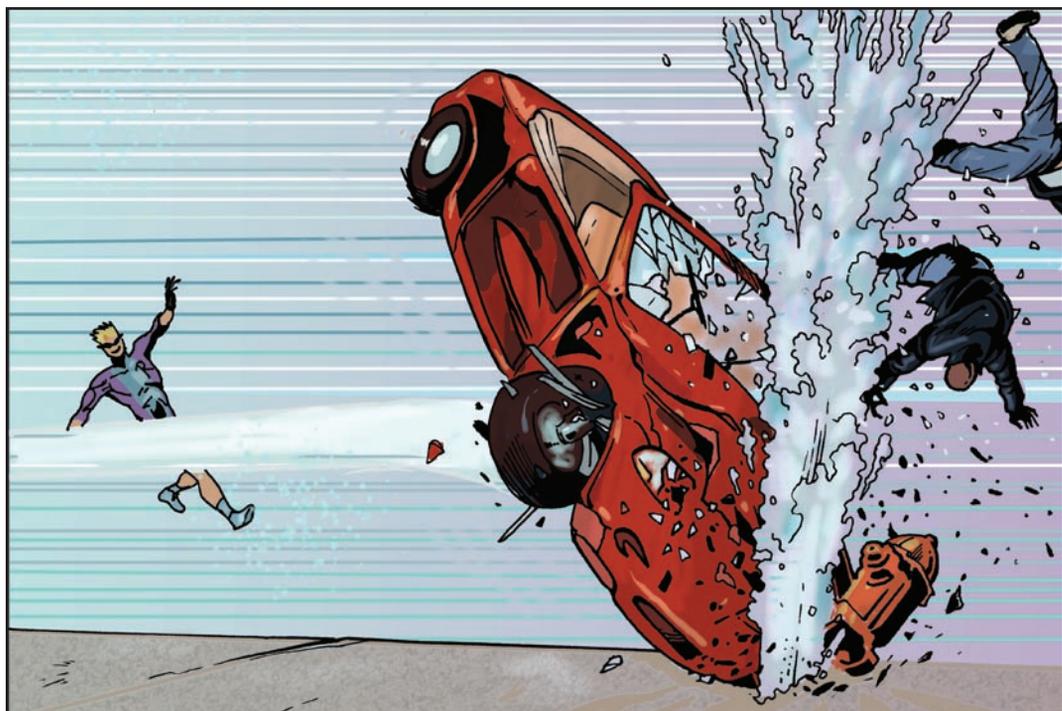
SURGE

The pursuer puts on a burst of speed to catch up to the target.

Lead: Any
Speed: Increase pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down)
Success: Reduce the lead by a number of lengths equal to the difference between the maneuver check results.
Special: If the pursuer chooses to use extra effort with a surge maneuver, then increase pursuit speed by one-third and reduce the lead by twice the difference between the maneuver check results. However, the pursuer (or his vehicle) suffers the effects of the extra effort.

TARGET MANEUVERS

Target maneuvers are aimed toward escaping the pursuer.

LURE

The target controls the direction of pursuit, leading the pursuer into all kinds of trouble.

Lead: Any
Success: Increase lead by 1 length. Each participant must make a crash check, but the pursuer's DC is increased by the difference between the maneuver check results.
Special: If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 4 or more, the target can become the pursuer until the end of this round (letting the target use forward-mounted weapons on the pursuer, for example). If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 5 or more, the target can shift the terrain by one step at the end of the round (open or tight becomes close, and vice versa); this also reduces or increases the DC of each participant's crash check by 5.

OBSTACLE COURSE   FINISHING

The target barrels through a cluttered area to evade pursuit.

Lead: 25 lengths or more
Success: The target wins the chase. Both participants must make crash checks.

PULL AHEAD

A straightforward maneuver where the target puts on as much speed as possible to widen the distance.

Lead: Any
Speed: Increase pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down).
Success: Increase the lead by a number of lengths equal to the difference between maneuver check results.

REVERSE

As the pursuer closes in, the target slows and turns suddenly in the opposite direction!

Lead: 10 lengths or less
Speed: Reduce pursuit speed by one-quarter (round down)
Success: Increase lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between the maneuver check results.

PURSUIT AND HOMING ATTACKS

You can use the pursuit system for attacks using the Homing power feat if a target attempts to flee the attack. The homing attack is the pursuer and uses maneuvers to attempt to catch up to the target. It has a speed rank equal to its power rank. If it successfully catches the target, the attack hits. If the target successfully gets away, the homing attack misses. The homing attack gets as many maneuvers as it normally would get attack rolls; when it runs out of rolls, it loses the pursuit. If the homing attack "crashes" for any reason, it misses its intended target and hits something else (usually an obstacle of some sort).

SET UP

Instead of running, the target leads the pursuer on a merry chase, usually right into an ambush.

Lead: 10 lengths or less
Success: Increase the lead by 1 length. The target and all passengers gain the benefit of aid (+2 bonus) for any attacks against the pursuer this round.
Special: If the target's maneuver check exceeds the pursuer's by 4 or more, the target may become the pursuer for this round (letting the target use forward-mounted weapons on the pursuer, for example).

STUNT   FINISHING

The target pulls off a daring stunt, hoping the pursuer can't match it.

Lead: 20 lengths or more
Success: The target wins the chase. If the target's maneuver check result exceeds the pursuer's by 5 or more, the pursuer must make a crash check.

TIGHT TURN   FINISHING

The target leads the pursuer at high speed into a tight turn until one falls out of the pursuit.

Lead: 20 lengths or more
Speed: Reduce pursuit speed by one-third (round down)
Success: The target wins the chase, taking one or more turns the pursuer can't match. Both participants make crash checks.

VANISH   FINISHING

The target disappears in a burst of speed, leaving all pursuers eating dust.

Lead: 30 lengths
Speed: Increase pursuit speed by one-third (round down)
Success: The target wins the chase and gets away.

ZIG-ZAG

The target clips obstacles, terrain, or even other vehicles to send them into the pursuer's path.

Lead: Any
Success: Increase lead by a number of lengths equal to twice the difference between the maneuver check results. The target must also make a crash check.

DEVICE AND EQUIPMENT OPTIONS & VARIANTS

The following are optional and variant rules systems for use with devices and equipment.

MONEY TALKS

Wealth can be quite influential in some circles. To reflect this, the GM might wish to allow a character's Wealth bonus to substitute for an interaction skill bonus like Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate in situations where the character's considerable wealth and influence can be brought to bear, either through bribery, more subtle shows of wealth, or "charitable donations."

> *Example: Hieronymus King is fabulously wealthy (Wealth +30). When negotiating with certain balky government officials, Mr. King makes it clear he can compensate them for their trouble. The GM decides to use King's Wealth bonus in place of his Diplomacy bonus, allowing him to seal the deal quickly and easily.*

Alternately, instead of substituting Wealth bonus for a skill bonus, you can choose to treat Wealth as either a synergy bonus (from **Chapter 3**) or an aid bonus (see the **Introduction** of *M&M*) to a relevant skill check. This works particularly well with the option for high synergy, allowing great levels of wealth to grant higher bonuses.

Regardless of which option the GM allows, each use reduces your Wealth bonus by 1 point, which recovers normally (see **The Wealth Check** in the **Devices & Equipment** chapter of *M&M*).

PROFICIENCY

The standard *M&M* rules assume characters know how to use their equipment within the limits of their skill ranks and bonuses. The Gamemaster may choose to include rules for *proficiency* to reflect characters' knowledge of particular aspects of more complex tasks like wielding weapons or operating vehicles. Characters acquire proficiency in different tasks through specialized feats (see **Chapter 4**). Characters who are not proficient in a particular task suffer a –4 penalty when performing it, either a –4 to attack rolls or to skill checks made with the non-proficient item. Proficient characters suffer no penalty.

Characters who aren't proficient with wearing armor suffer a penalty to attack and defense bonus equal to the armor's Protection bonus, since the character isn't used to fighting in confining armor. Proficient characters still suffer a skill check penalty from wearing armor, but no penalty to their attack or defense bonus.

FREE EQUIPMENT

In some campaign settings, the GM may wish to give equipment *no* cost in power points, just a monetary cost using Wealth. Characters can have whatever equipment they can afford and the GM allows, keeping in mind some items may be legally restricted or simply unavailable. This option is best suited to campaigns where equipment doesn't need to compete with innate powers, balancing the cost of a gun or bullet-proof vest against being able to shoot energy blasts or being invulnerable. Examples include super-spy games or pulp era adventures where powers and devices are fairly rare, and most characters have equipment or some sort.

Devices may still exist in this type of campaign, and the GM may still charge power points for them, since devices are unique items that exceed the capabilities of normal equipment. Note, however, that some campaign settings may consider some devices "equipment." For example, a high-tech setting in the far future may have advanced equipment (see **Tech Levels** in this chapter for more on the subject). Likewise, a fantasy setting may have magical equipment that doesn't exist in our world but is common there. These things aren't devices if they're commonly available to everyone in those settings.

AMMUNITION

Ammunition has generally been disregarded for the ranged weapons in *M&M,* much as tracking ammunition is ignored in comic books most of the time. Assume a weapon's ammo capacity is great enough that it doesn't constitute a significant power modifier. Reloading a weapon is mostly for effect and characters rarely run out of ammo, except as an occasional setback.

Gamemasters interested in more realistic weapons may require players to keep track of ammunition. Generally pistols have clips or cylinders with 6-15 shots, machine pistols and submachine guns between 15-30 shots, and assault rifles 30 or so. Blasters have between 30-50 shots before they deplete their power packs. Reloading a weapon is generally a move action, except for characters with the Quick Draw feat, who can reload as a free action.

Ammunition is simply one of the normal drawbacks of equipment, worth no discount in cost. At the GM's discretion, having to count ammo may be a power drawback for a Device: 25 uses before reloading is a 1-point drawback, 10 uses is a 2-point drawback, and 5 is a 3-point drawback. In this case, running out of ammo is not considered a complication, since the character already has additional points from the drawback.

For a self-sustaining effect that fades over a set amount of time, such as that of a rocket burst or a gas grenade, apply the Duration modifier to a sustained power to make it continuous, then apply the Fades flaw to its continuous use: the self-sustaining power loses 1 power point of effectiveness per round, slowly weakening until its effect is entirely gone. So, for example, a smoke grenade might provide Obscure 3 (visual) with the previous modifiers, lasting for a minute (1 round per power point) but diminishing in size from 15 feet in radius to 5 feet before fading out altogether.

ARMOR PENALTIES

Armor tends to be heavy and bulky, making it difficult to move and act freely. If the GM wishes, characters wearing armor have a penalty on all Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Stealth, and Swim checks equal to the armor's Toughness bonus.

Additionally, characters not proficient in wearing armor suffer the same penalty to their attack and dodge bonus (since it is difficult for them to maneuver properly). Proficiency eliminates the attack and dodge penalties but not the skill check penalty. Armor devices do not impose these penalties, being as easy to move in as ordinary clothing.

REDUCED ARMOR PENALTIES

If a penalty equal to the armor's Toughness bonus seems too severe, you can reduce it to a fraction (half or one-quarter) of the bonus. You can also have proficiency either reduce the armor penalty to skill checks or eliminate it altogether.

REQUISITIONING EQUIPMENT

In some settings, characters may have limited access to a variety of equipment from a patron or organization. In these types of games, you may wish to use one of the following rules options for characters acquiring equipment from their organization.

The simplest option is to allow players to reassign their characters' equipment points (from the Equipment feat) at the start of each new adventure or "mission." For example, if a character has 30 points in equipment (6 ranks of the feat), the player can choose a total of 30 points of equipment at the start of each adventure. The equipment that survives the mission is returned at the end, and the character draws new equipment at the start of the next adventure.

Another option is to use a system of "requisitioning" equipment that measures the character's influence with the organization. The character makes a Diplomacy check (DC 10 + the equipment's point cost) for each desired piece of equipment. If the check is successful, the agency or patron agrees to assign that equipment. If it fails, the equipment is restricted or otherwise unavailable. Since the character can take 10 on the check, equipment with a point cost equal to or less than the character's Diplomacy bonus is automatically available.

Reputation bonus can substitute for Diplomacy if that option is in use in the game (see **Reputation** in **Chapter 6** of this book). This bases requisitions on how well known the character is rather than how persuasive. Allow players to choose if you want both to be equally effective.

You can mix-and-match options to suit the game. For example, characters may have some equipment they always carry, some equipment points they redistribute from one adventure to another, and some restricted equipment they have to requisition (making a Diplomacy check to access it).

ALTERNATE RITUAL SKILLS

At the GM's discretion, skills other than Knowledge (arcane lore) may be used to prepare and perform magical rituals. Examples of suitable research skills include Knowledge (theology) for religious rituals, Notice for awareness of local conditions, or Concentration for mental focus. Possible performance skills include Craft, Knowledge, Perform, Profession, or Sleight of Hand. By allowing different combinations of skills, you can create different styles of rituals. Each style may be governed by a different Ritualist feat. Examples include the following:

- **Priest:** Use Knowledge (theology and philosophy) for the design and performance checks.

- **Psychic:** Use Concentration or Knowledge (behavioral sciences) for the design check and Concentration for the performance check.

- **Shaman:** Use Notice for the design check, representing awareness of spiritual and natural forces, and Perform for the performance check, representing earning the favor of the spirit world.

- **Stage Magician:** Use Perform (acting or stage magic) for the design check and Sleight of Hand for the performance check.

- **Technomancer:** Use Knowledge (technology) for the design check and Computers skill for the performance check, representing a character able to do amazing things through the medium of computers or the Internet.

CHAPTER 8: COMBAT

Combat can be a major element of *M&M* adventures: what comic book story doesn't feature a showdown between the heroes and villains? Combat is designed to be fast-paced and reflect the "reality" of the comic books. The options in this chapter allow you to modify the combat rules to suit styles from realistically deadly to very simple.

COMBAT PACING AND GAMEMASTER FIAT

One of the uses of Gamemaster Fiat is to help ensure combat is exciting and paced according to the needs of the adventure. It's anticlimactic for the heroes to burst into the villain's control room and down him with their first attack! Likewise, it's not much fun if the villain's supposedly "pushover" minions are beating the heroes soundly due to poor luck on the die rolls.

You can use Gamemaster Fiat to help guide the combat in the desired direction, awarding the players additional hero points accordingly. For example, if the first lucky attack would take out the major villain, decide that it only stuns the villain long enough for the heroes to stop his Doomsday Machine and award the lucky player an extra hero point, which he may be able to spend on that vital Disable Device check!

USING MAPS AND FIGURES

Some game groups may want to use maps with a grid or hex pattern and miniature figures to mark out the movement and position of characters during a combat, either to use the tactical movement rules (see later this chapter) or simply to more easily keep track of and visualize the entire combat. This is particularly useful for fights in complex settings or involving a large number of combatants.

COMBAT OPTIONS & VARIANTS

This section presents a number of optional and variant combat, movement, and damage rules, allowing you to customize the flow and style of combat in your *M&M* game. Some of the combat variants shift *M&M* combat more toward the style of other games, while others can simulate the style of combat found in the first edition of *M&M*.

As with all of the optional rules in this book, consider carefully before adopting any particular option or set of options in your game.

RE-ROLLING INITIATIVE

Normally, a single initiative roll determines a character's place in the initiative order for the duration of the combat. If some variability is desired, you can have everyone make a new initiative roll each round, creating a new initiative order. This means characters can move up and down the order over a series of rounds and makes it harder to know who's going to act when in terms of planning out

actions. Re-rolling initiative each round does add an additional roll, however, and tends to make combats play out slower.

Characters not acting on a particular round (because they are stunned, helpless, etc.) still roll for initiative, in case circumstances should change to allow them to act (through spending hero points, outside effects, and so forth).

AUTOMATIC HITS

In cases where the attacker's attack bonus is equal to or greater than the target's Defense (not defense bonus), the GM may wish to rule the attack hits automatically, without the need for an attack roll. This eliminates the small chance of an automatic miss (from rolling a 1) as well as the chance of a critical hit. Alternately, the GM may give the *option* of rolling in such a case (risking an automatic miss for a chance to get a critical hit). This option cuts down on the number of die rolls necessary in such an uneven combat.

COMBAT CHALLENGES

You can apply the skill challenge option from **Chapter 3** to attack rolls as well, allowing characters to accept a penalty to their roll or an increase to their target's defense in exchange for an additional effect if their attack roll succeeds.

Some existing *M&M* feats can be considered "combat challenges." Power Attack, for example, accepts a penalty on attack rolls for an increase in damage. So if power attack is a combat challenge, no one needs the feat, since anyone can do it. The same is true of the other feat options given here. The standard options for combat challenges are:

- **Accurate Attack:** When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to –5 on your attack's save DC and add the same number (up to +5) to your attack roll. Your save DC modifier cannot be reduced below +0 and your attack bonus cannot more than double. The changes are declared before you make your attack roll and last until your next round.

- **All-out Attack:** When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to –5 on your defense bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your attack roll. Your defense bonus cannot be reduced below +0 and your attack bonus cannot more than double. The changes are declared before you make your attack roll and last until your next round.

- **Defensive Attack:** When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to –5 on your attack bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your dodge bonus. Your attack bonus cannot be reduced below +0 and your dodge bonus cannot more than double. The changes are declared before you make your attack roll and last until your next round.

- **Power Attack:** When you make an attack, you can take a penalty of up to –5 on your attack bonus and add the same number (up to +5) to your attack's saving throw DC. Your attack bonus cannot be reduced below +0 and your attack's save DC modifier

cannot more than double. The changes are declared before you make your attack roll and last until your next round.

- **Counter:** When making an attack like a disarm or trip, where the target normally gets the opportunity to attempt that same attack on you, you can take a –5 penalty to your attack roll to deny your target that opportunity. So if you take a –5 on your attack roll to disarm someone, they don't get the opportunity to disarm you. This works much like the Improved Disarm or Improved Trip feats, but without the attack bonus or the requirement that you have the feat.

- **Emulate Feat:** By accepting a –5 penalty on your attack roll, you gain the benefits of one feat for that attack, or until your next action for feats that don't apply to a specific attack. The feats you can emulate with a combat challenge are: Blind-Fight, Critical Strike, Elusive Target, Move-by Action, Quick Draw, Ranged Pin, Sneak Attack, Stunning Attack, Takedown Attack, Weapon Bind, and Weapon Break. Emulating Critical Strike does not require you to have Favored Opponent. The GM may choose to add other suitable feats to this list, as desired.

MARGIN OF SUCCESS

Normally a successful attack roll in *M&M* has no effect on an attack's damage except on a critical hit (which does +5 damage). In this variant, add the difference between the attacker's attack roll total and the defender's Defense to the saving throw DC of the attack to represent the effect of precise targeting. Critical hits no longer inflict +5 damage (that benefit is included in the margin of success bonus). So an attack roll total of 25 against Defense 18 is +7 to the attack's save DC.

In this variant, you may want to decrease the base save DC a bit to compensate for the increased bonus granted by margin of success.

For example, using a base 5 + rank DC for powers and 10 + damage bonus DC for Toughness saves will help ensure that extremely successful attacks aren't so overwhelming.

You should also decide whether to apply the margin of success before or after the target's Impervious defenses are taken into account. If it's after, then Impervious defense becomes more valuable in resisting attacks, since margin of success can't overcome it. If it's before, then Impervious becomes slightly less effective, since any hit with a high enough margin of success will overcome it.

DEFENSE ROLL

More randomness in combat can sometimes take away those "foregone conclusions" about a hero who always hits or a lowly opponent who never has a chance to. A good way to introduce this is to allow defense rolls. Every time a character is attacked, rather than just using his normal Defense, he rolls 1d20 and adds his Defense modifiers. Every attack becomes an opposed roll, with attacker and defender matching their modified rolls against one another. (One way to look at it is that without the defense roll, characters are taking 10 on their defense roll each round, and thus are using a base of 10 for Defense.)

The Defense roll can be expressed like this:

> **Defense Roll = 1d20 + defense bonus + size modifier**

This variant adds some excitement to combats, particularly at higher attack bonuses when heroes seem to hit almost every time. Unfortunately, it can slow down play because it doubles the number of rolls in any given combat. A compromise might be to have each defender make a defense roll once each round, using that same total against all attacks made against him that round, rather than once
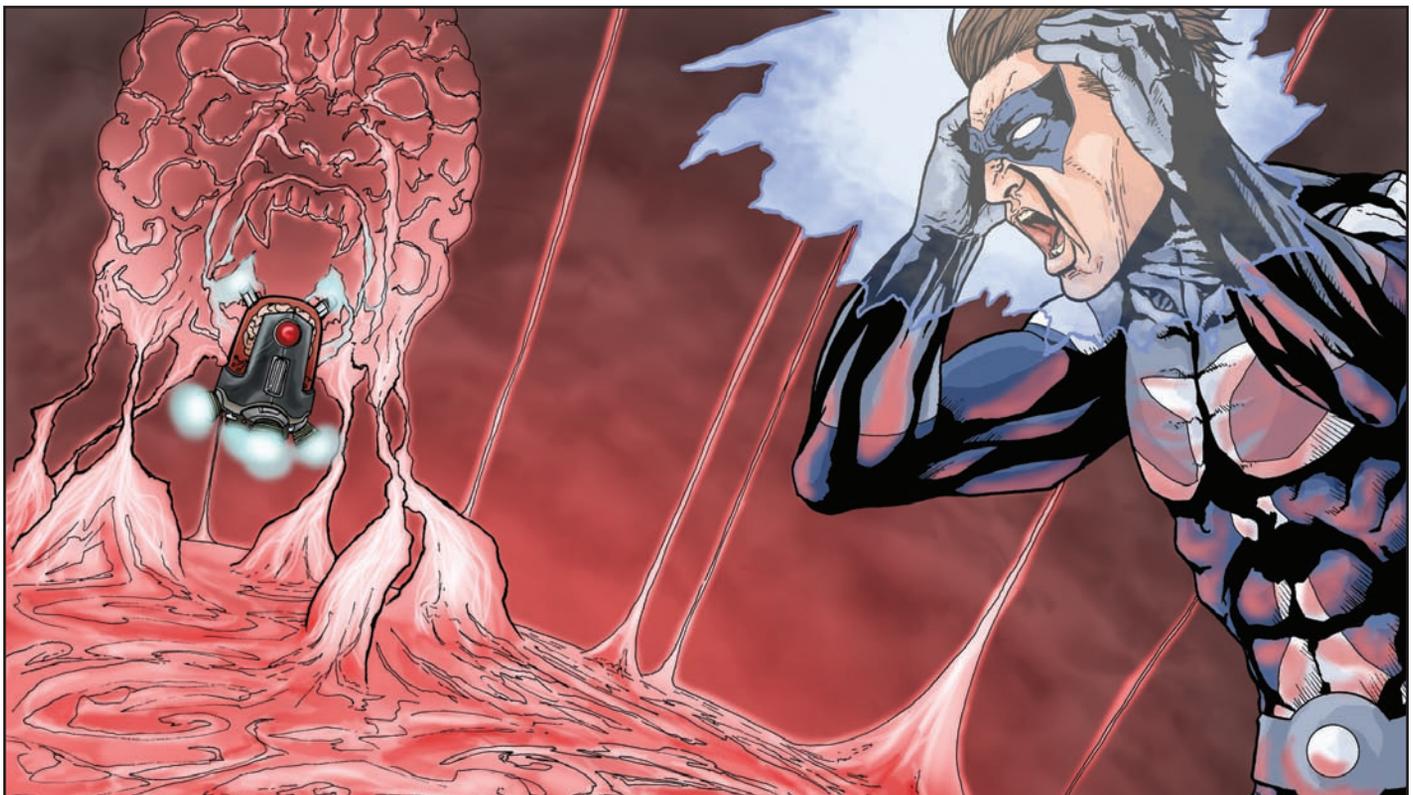
per attack. As an alternative, make a Defense roll once at the start of combat and use it against all attacks in that combat. However, these options can penalize players who roll poorly (and reward those who roll well), so they should be used with care.

OUT-OF-TURN DEFENSE

Any time you are about to be attacked, you can give up your next turn to take the total defense action, gaining a +4 dodge bonus to Defense (so you can't out-of-turn defend if you're flat-footed at the beginning of combat). You must declare an out-of-turn defense before the attack roll is made. Your initiative does not change; you simply don't act on your next turn. You retain the dodge bonus until your initiative comes up after your skipped turn.

This allows characters to defend out of turn and provides an additional tactical option. It works well for several attackers fighting one opponent: whomever the target retaliates against can out-of-turn defend to avoid it, while everyone else attacks the opponent.

MENTAL COMBAT

In this variant, perception range powers do not affect subjects automatically, but require a "mental attack roll" to target. This is like a normal attack roll, except it uses a mental attack bonus, and possibly a mental defense bonus. These bonuses are acquired in the same way as normal attack and defense bonus, but cost only 1 power point per +1 bonus, and apply only to mental combat.

Normal attack and defense bonus do not apply to mental combat at all. Mental attack and defense bonus are limited by power level just like normal attack and defense bonus: the average of mental attack bonus and save DC modifier with a mental effect cannot exceed power level, nor can the average of mental defense bonus and Will save bonus.

Mental combat proceeds just like ordinary combat: the attacker makes a mental attack roll against a DC of (10 + the target's mental defense). If the attack is successful, the target makes a saving throw against the effect.

This variant slows combat a bit, since mental powers take more rolls to resolve, and it adds some complexity to character creation, since players must account for both physical and mental attack and defense bonuses. It's best reserved for campaigns were mental powers are particularly common or if you want to make mental combat feel more like physical combat.

TOUGHNESS SAVE FAILURE

Normally, only the result of a Toughness save determines the result. With this option, a natural 1 on a Toughness saving throw *always* results in at least a minimal result (bruised or injured) even if the save would otherwise normally succeed. This means no target is truly immune to damage so long as a saving throw is required. It makes Impervious Toughness slightly more valuable, since it eliminates the need for a save against some damage (and therefore the risk of rolling a 1).

AUTOMATIC DAMAGE

In this variant, any time a character must make a Toughness save, the character will suffer *some* damage. Essentially, even a *successful* Toughness save results in a bruised or injured result, with failure having its normal effects. This means the only way a character will suffer *no* damage from an attack is by having an Impervious defense and not having to make a Toughness save at all.

In this variation, it's possible to wear down even the toughest characters with small attacks, since every successful attack is a Toughness save modifier; even a foe with Toughness +50 will accumulate enough penalties to badly fail a save eventually. Impervious Toughness becomes more valuable as a means of truly ignoring damage, and the GM may want to restrict access to it or increase its cost (or place limits on how much of it characters can have).

TOUGHER MINIONS

A failed Toughness save normally leaves a minion unconscious or dead. In this variant, minions suffer only a stunned result from a failed Toughness save and must fail by 5 or more to be rendered unconscious or dead. This allows for occasions when heroes merely stun minions with an attack and makes minions a bit more difficult to take out in combat. It's best suited for genres where minions are supposed to be a bit more of a threat.

DAMAGE ROLL

Instead of or in addition to having the target make a Toughness save to resist damage, you can have the attacker make a damage roll to see if the damage overcomes the target's defenses. The damage roll is:

Damage Roll = 1d20 + damage bonus

The Difficulty Class of the damage roll is calculated as follows:

Damage roll DC = 16 + Toughness save bonus

The attacker makes a damage roll after a successful attack and consults the **Damage Roll** table for the outcome. Otherwise damage works exactly as given under **Damage and Recovery** in the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*. This option does tend to take a little of the ability to avoid damage out of the players' hands (since they can't spend hero points like they can on Toughness saves). However, it does give them a bit more ability to inflict damage (since they can now spend hero points on damage rolls), so it tends to even out. It's also more suitable for gritty series in which the ability to deal out damage is more important than the ability to resist it.

DAMAGE ROLL

	Result	
DAMAGE ROLL...	**STUN ATTACK**	**LETHAL ATTACK**
Succeeds	Unconscious	Dying
Fails	Staggered	Disabled
Fails by 5 or more	Bruised + Stunned	Injured + Stunned
Fails by 10 or more	Bruised	Injured
Fails by 15 or more	No Effect	No Effect

SAVE VS. STUN

With this option, rather than automatically suffering a stun result from damage, the character makes a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + attack's damage bonus) to avoid being stunned. This adds some variability to the chances of a stun, and provides a slight edge to characters with better Fortitude saves, but also adds another die roll to combat, which may slow things down.

INSTANT DEATH

At the GM's option, a Toughness saving throw against lethal damage that fails by 20 or more can result in immediate death, rather than changing the character's condition to dying. This is suitable for campaigns with more realistic lethal damage; such massive damage is almost certain to kill poorly protected or unlucky characters. The players can, of course, still spend hero points to improve such poor Toughness saves.

DOUBLE CRITICAL HITS

Ordinarily, an attack roll of a natural 20 that would have hit the opponent's Defense is normally a critical hit, increasing the attack's damage by +5. Optionally, when a critical hit is scored, make an additional d20 roll. If this second roll comes up a 20, then the target of the attack is immediately rendered unconscious or dying, depending on whether the attack is non-lethal or lethal. Alternately, a double critical hit can increase the attack's damage by +10, which often has the same result but takes into account the greater Toughness of some targets.

CRITICAL MISSES

In this variant, if a player rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll, there's the possibility of a critical miss. The player makes a DC 10 Dexterity check. If it fails, the attacker fumbles in some way and is effectively dazed for one round (losing the ability to act, but defending normally). The exact nature of the fumble is up to the Gamemaster; it may involve dropping a weapon, losing your balance, accidentally striking an object (resulting in a round of hand-wringing, but no real damage), and so forth.

Critical misses tend to suit more realistic campaigns best. The GM should decide if a critical miss constitutes a setback (and therefore earns the player a hero point when it comes up).

LETHAL KNOCKBACK

For greater realism, you may wish to have lethal attacks use only half their damage bonus when determining knockback. This reflects that lethal attacks tend to have less overall "push" compared to non-lethal attacks.

LETHAL PENETRATION

To make lethal damage more dangerous and effective, you may choose to consider lethal attacks Penetrating at no additional cost (other than the normal cost for an attack to be lethal, see the **Lethal Attack Cost** section). This means lethal attacks can overcome Impervious defenses unless "stacked" levels of Impervious are available (see **Chapter 5** for details).

LETHAL ATTACK COST

The default given in *M&M* is to allow any attack to inflict non-lethal or lethal damage, depending on the attacker's intent. This variant requires characters to pay for the ability to make lethal attacks in one way or another.

ATTACK ROLL PENALTY

With this option, characters choose a primary damage type for each attack when it's acquired. They can freely use the other type, but suffer a –4 penalty to attack rolls. So, for example, you can use a lethal attack to inflict non-lethal damage (or vice versa) but you take a –4 penalty on your attack roll when doing so. At the GM's option, a power feat may be available to remove this penalty (the equivalent of the Alternate Damage option that follows).

ALTERNATE DAMAGE

With this option, the type of damage an attack does (lethal or non-lethal) is set when the attack is created or acquired. So, when a weapon is created, when a character acquires a power like Blast, and so forth, choose what type of damage the attack does and that choice is fixed. Effectively all damaging powers (like Blast and Strike) have two versions—one non-lethal and one lethal. These can be treated as separate powers; if you want the capability to use both, take one as an Alternate Power of the other. Since it's a power feat, you can acquire the alternate type of damage using extra effort.

LETHAL EXTRA

Lastly, the ability to inflict lethal damage with an attack can be defined as an extra (called "Lethal") applied to any attack able to inflict damage. So lethal attacks cost 1 power point more per rank than non-lethal attacks and can be considered separate powers (since extras permanently change how powers work). This option makes lethal attacks the more expensive and less accessible, since you cannot apply extras via extra effort, although you could acquire a lethal version of a non-lethal attack as a power stunt (at a lower rank, since the lethal version costs more).

> **Example:** *In a campaign using the Lethal Extra option, Captain Thunder's lightning is defined as a Blast 12 doing non-lethal damage. If Cap wants to inflict lethal damage with it, he can acquire Blast with the Lethal extra as a power stunt of his normal Blast. The base Blast power costs 24 points (2 x 12 ranks). A Lethal Blast costs 3 points per rank, so Cap can only gain up to Blast 8 (Lethal) as a power stunt.*

SAVE VS. FATIGUE

Normally, when characters suffer fatigue results due to extra effort, the result is automatic unless the player spends a hero point to offset the fatigue. In this variant, when characters use extra effort, the player makes a saving throw against the fatigue result. If the save is successful, the character suffers no fatigue. If it fails, fatigue is applied normally. The Difficulty Class for the saving throw is (10 + power level) and the save can be either Fortitude or Will, as the GM prefers. You can even give players the option of choosing which save to use (making it easier for characters to succeed overall).

ADDITIONAL FATIGUE LEVELS

In the *M&M* rules, there are only two levels of fatigue: fatigued and exhausted, after which the character is unconscious. This is intended to make fatiguing actions significant in the context of the game: when a character exerts real effort, there's a real effect, and characters can't go "all out" for very long since by definition they're stretching themselves to their limits.

However, if you want to encourage a more epic style of game or simply make extra effort more available to the players, you can extend the levels of fatigue available, adding one or more. This allows charac-

ters to exert themselves longer and more often without passing out. An example is to add a "Winded" level of fatigue before fatigued: a –1 to effective Strength and Dexterity to represent a modest level of effort. Likewise, you can add a "Weary" level after exhausted: –8 to effective Strength and Dexterity along with being limited to either a standard or move action each round (like being staggered).

ACTIVE DEFENSE

In place of the flat +4 bonus for the total defense action, the GM may allow a defense roll, with a minimum roll of 12 (that is, the base bonus of 10 all characters get for Defense and a +2 bonus for the defense action). Any roll of less than 12 is treated as a 12. This adds some variability to total defense, making it essentially an opposed roll against the attacker's attack roll, but adds another roll to combat. Characters with the Improved Defense feat add another +2 to this roll.

ATTACKS OF OPPORTUNITY

The standard combat rules assume combatants actively avoid attacks. You don't have to declare anything special for your character to be on the defensive. Sometimes, however, a combatant lets his guard down, and doesn't maintain a defensive posture as usual. In this case, combatants near him can take advantage of this lapse in defense to attack for free. These attacks are called *attacks of opportunity*.

Attacks of opportunity add an element of complexity to combat not appropriate for all *M&M* campaigns. Therefore the Gamemaster can decide whether or not attacks of opportunity are allowed in the game. They add a realistic edge to combat but also tend to slow things down and make combatants more cautious. Attacks of opportunity are most appropriate for gritty or realistic campaign settings.

WEAPON TYPE

You can use a melee weapon to make attacks of opportunity whenever the conditions for such an attack are met (see **Provoking an Attack of Opportunity**). In addition, you can make attacks of opportunity with unarmed attacks if your unarmed attacks count as armed.

THREATENED AREAS

You threaten the squares into which you can make a melee attack, even when it is not your action. Generally, that's all squares adjacent to your position, but some characters may have an extended reach for melee attacks due to powers or feats. An enemy taking certain actions in a threatened square provokes an attack of opportunity from you. You can only make attacks of opportunity with melee attacks, never with ranged attacks.

PROVOKING AN ATTACK OF OPPORTUNITY

Two actions provoke attacks of opportunity: moving out of a threatened square, and performing an action in a threatened square that lets your guard down.

MOVING OUT OF A THREATENED SQUARE

When you move out of a threatened square, you generally provoke an attack of opportunity. There are two important exceptions, however. You don't provoke an attack of opportunity if only moving a 5-foot step, or if you withdraw, moving directly away from all opponents threatening the area you are in.
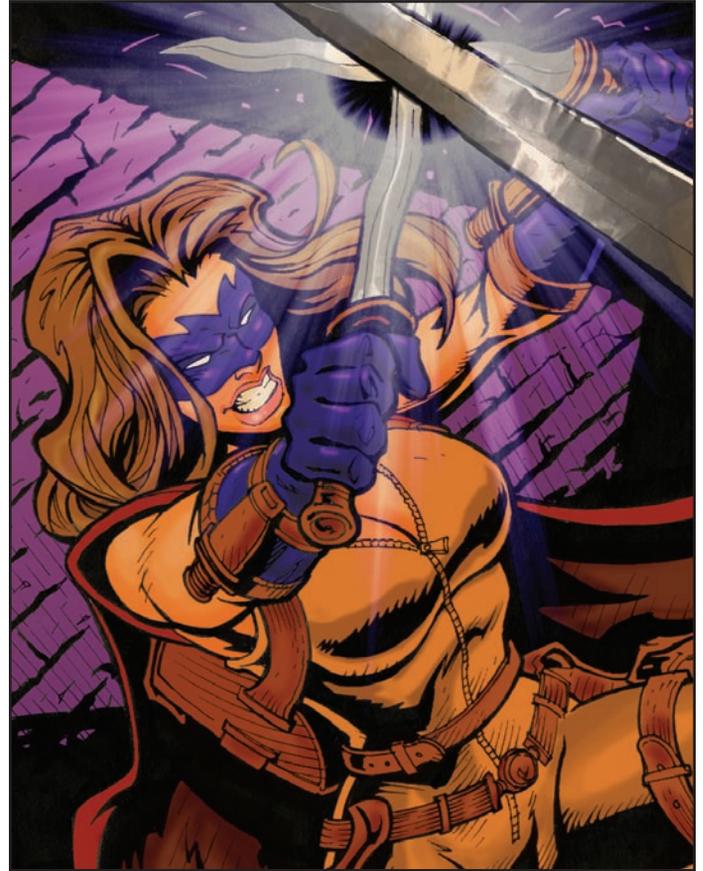
If you don't start in a threatened square, but move into one, you have to stop there, or else you provoke an attack of opportunity as you leave that square.

PERFORMING A DISTRACTING ACTION

Performing some actions in a threatened square provoke attacks of opportunity, because they divert your attention from the fight. The following actions provoke attacks of opportunity:

- **Unarmed attacks:** Making an unarmed attack against an armed opponent provokes an attack of opportunity. If you have the Improved Unarmed Strike feat, your unarmed attacks are considered armed.

- **Striking a weapon:** If you have the Improved Sunder feat, striking an opponent's weapon does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

- **Using a skill or effect requiring a full action:** This includes various powers requiring a full-round action, such as Healing or a long-range Teleport.

- **Manipulating objects:** Picking up, putting away, or retrieving an object provokes an attack of opportunity as does drawing, putting away, or reloading a weapon.

- **All Out Move:** Moving all out draws an attack of opportunity if you move out of a threatened area (see previous).

- **Disarm:** Attempting to disarm an opponent provokes an attack of opportunity.

- **Grapple:** Grappling with an opponent—physically or mentally—provokes an attack of opportunity from any other opponent threatening the area you are in. If you have the Improved Grab feat, starting a grapple does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

- **Aim:** Aiming an attack provokes an attack of opportunity.

You can "fine tune" the use of attacks of opportunity in your campaign by varying the list of actions that provoke them. So, if you want to make certain effects less useful in combat, have them provoke attacks of opportunity when used. Then characters will be less inclined to use them. For example, if all powers requiring a standard action or more provoke an attack of opportunity, things become very different, with Concentration a much more vital combat skill.

MAKING AN ATTACK OF OPPORTUNITY

An attack of opportunity is a single melee attack, and you can only make one per round. You do not have to make an attack of opportunity if you don't want to.

ACTING ON THE DEFENSIVE

As an option, you can allow characters to make a Concentration check to "act on the defensive" and avoid the normal distraction caused by performing a distracting action, thereby avoiding any attacks of opportunity that action would normally provoke. The DC of the Concentration check is normally at least 15, more for particularly distracting actions, in the GM's opinion. Using a power that provokes an attack of opportunity on the defensive usually requires a check with a DC of 10 + the power's rank. Characters can lower a power's effective rank to make it easier to concentrate.

The drawback to acting on the defensive is, if the Concentration check fails, the character does not accomplish the intended action, the time it would have normally required is simply wasted and nothing happens. The character does not provoke an attack of opportunity, however. So an attempt to aim on the defensive, for example, requires a Concentration check. If it succeeds, the character has successfully aimed without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the check fails, the character has failed to aim, but has wasted the full-round action normally required to do so.

OPTIONAL FEATS

Some of the optional feats in **Chapter 4** apply to making or avoiding attacks of opportunity. See the individual feat descriptions for details.

MULTIPLE ATTACKS

The standard *M&M* rules allow for only one attack per round (as a standard action). Characters can achieve some of the effect of multiple attacks using the Autofire modifier or Linked attack effects.

One of the key reasons why multiple attacks are limited in *M&M* is they have a disproportionately greater effect on their targets. Since multiple attacks require multiple saving throws, there is an increasingly greater chance the target will fail one of the saving throws, and fail badly, resulting in some sort of take-down (unconsciousness, complete paralysis, transformation, and so forth).

One way of compensating for this is to allow a player spending a hero point to re-roll a save against an opponent's attack to re-roll *all* saves against that opponent's attacks for the entire round, taking the better of the two save results (with the usual +10 modifier for second rolls of 10 or less). This means a hero point provides the same benefit against an opponent with a single attack as it does against an opponent with multiple or linked attacks, making those multiple attacks somewhat less effective.

If you want to include some sort of multiple attack actions in your *M&M* game, you have several options: characters may be able to make multiple attacks based on effect, combat skill (attack bonus), or making off-hand attacks. All of these options complicate and slow down combat somewhat, since characters can each make multiple attack rolls in a round (and their opponents must make multiple saving throws).
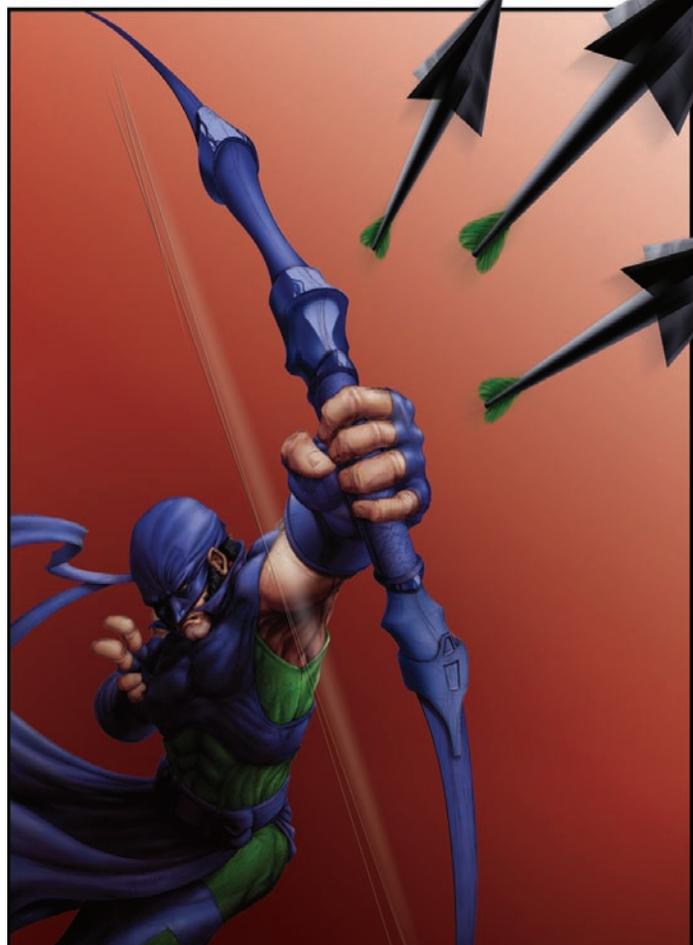
EXTRA ATTACKS

Effect: General	**Action:** Full
Range: Personal	**Duration:** Instant
Cost: 5 points per rank	

You can make multiple attacks in a round. By taking a full-round action, you can make a total number of attacks equal to your Extra Attacks power rank +1, all at your full attack bonus. All the attacks

must be made with the same weapon or power, but do not have to be directed at the same target. You cannot move more than a 5-foot step between your attacks unless you have the Move-by Action feat; regardless, your total movement can never exceed your normal speed.

> **Example:** *Combator is a robot designed to move with blinding speed and fight entire groups of opponents. It has Extra Attacks 3 for 15 power points, allowing Combator to make up to 4 attacks per round as a full-round action.*

Note that Extra Attacks can be tremendously effective when combined with the Takedown Attack feat, which grants additional attacks when you incapacitate an opponent. A character with both could attack, incapacitate an opponent, use Takedown Attack, incapacitate another opponent, use Takedown Attack again and fail to incapacitate the target, but then move on to his second attack for the round (from Extra Attacks), and so forth. Extra Attacks/Takedown characters can be "one-person armies," able to take on huge groups of opponents at once.

ITERATIVE ATTACKS

With the iterative attack option, you gain an additional attack each round, with an attack bonus equal to your base attack bonus –5. If the attack bonus for the extra attack is +0 or less, you do not gain an additional attack, meaning you must have a minimum attack bonus of +6 to use iterative attacks. You can make a third attack at an additional –5 modifier, and so forth. Thus a character with a +16 attack bonus could make up to four attacks, with the attack bonus decreasing by 5 with each (+16/+11/+6/+1).

Using iterative attacks requires a full round action, so you cannot move other than taking a 5-foot step, and cannot take a standard or move action that round. All the iterative attacks must be the same attack, but not necessarily at the same target, so the attacker cannot change attacks or weapons during the sequence. Characters eligible for iterative attacks can choose not to use them and just take a normal attack as a standard action during the round.

Modifiers from feats such as Accurate Attack and Power Attack are applied to the first attack in the sequence and then apply equally to every other attack in that sequence for the round. If a modification to attack bonus reduces the characters bonus with an attack to less than +0, the character loses that and any remaining iterative attacks. So, for example, applying a full Power Attack (–5 modifier to attack bonus) means the character automatically sacrifices one iterative attack (since it is also a –5 modifier).

Optionally, the GM can allow iterative attacks, but require players to have a feat (Iterative Attack) or spend a hero point in order to use them (see **Options as Feats** in **Chapter 4**).

OFF-HAND ATTACKS

With the off-hand attacks option, you can make one additional attack each round with your off hand (that is, your non-dominant hand). Fighting this way is difficult, however, so you suffer a –6 penalty with your regular attack, and a –10 penalty with your off hand attack. You can reduce these penalties in two ways.

First, If your off-hand weapon is light, the penalties are reduced by 2 each. (An unarmed attack or an attack using a power is always considered a light weapon.) Secondly, the Ambidexterity feat lessens the primary hand penalty by 2 and the off hand penalty by 6.

The **Off Hand Attack Penalties Table**, below, summarizes these factors.

OFF HAND ATTACK PENALTIES

CIRCUMSTANCES	PRIMARY HAND	OFF HAND
Normal penalties	–6	–10
Off-hand weapon is light	–4	–8
Ambidexterity feat	–4	–4
Off-hand weapon is light and Ambidexterity feat	–2	–2

IMMEDIATE RECOVERY

At the end of a combat or encounter, characters that have sustained damage may make an immediate recovery check for each damage condition, starting with the most serious and progressing to the least serious. These checks take no time and occur immediately. If the check succeeds, erase that condition from the character's damage track. If it fails, the condition remains; stop making recovery checks for the character (since lesser conditions cannot recover until more serious ones do). The character then recovers from any remaining conditions at the normal rate.

This option allows characters to suffer normal damage during an encounter, but recover quickly for the next fight, particularly from relatively minor bruises and injuries. This immediate recovery is in addition to the benefits of effects like Healing and Recovery or spending hero points to recover faster.

HIT POINTS

The damage rules in *M&M* are intended to speed play and simulate the kind of damage characters suffer in superhero comic books. Some players may prefer a damage system more compatible with other games, in which case the variant rules presented here may be used. They require the use of additional dice used in other roleplaying games, available at game and hobby stores.

HIT POINTS

Characters in this system have *hit points*, which are a measure of the character's capacity to take damage. Characters have hit points equal to their Constitution score plus their Constitution bonus multiplied by 3. So a Con 10 character has 10 hit points and a Con 30 character has 60 hit points. Characters with no Con score have hit points equal to five times their Toughness. Minions have half the normal hit points of regular characters; determine the minion's hit point total normally, then divide it by two and round down.

When the character suffers lethal damage, hit points are marked off. Characters are disabled at 0 hit points, dying at –1 or fewer hit points, and dead at –10 hit points. If a single lethal attack does more damage than the character's Constitution score, he must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or immediately go to –1 hit points and dying.

Stun attacks do not inflict damage to hit points. Instead, they do *subdual damage*. When the total subdual damage equals the character's hit points, he is staggered. When the total subdual damage exceeds his current hit points, he is unconscious. If a single attack does more damage (subdual or hit points) than the character's Constitution score, he is stunned for one round.

RECOVERY

Characters reduce their subdual damage by their Constitution bonus for each minute of rest, with a minimum of 1 point per minute. They recover their Constitution bonus in hit points for each day of rest with

a minimum of 1 point per day. Recovery speeds up these recovery rates as usual, while a use of the Healing power allows the character to recover 1d6 hit points (or eliminate 1d6 subdual damage) per power rank. Proper medical treatment doubles recovery rates, as usual.

DAMAGE DICE

Instead of having a damage bonus, attacks inflict a certain number of dice of damage. An attack with a +1 damage bonus does 1d4 hit points of damage, +2 = 1d6, +3 = 1d8, and +4 or higher equals a number of d6s equal to the attack's bonus, minus 2. So, an attack with a damage bonus of +8 does 6d6 hit points of damage instead. Stun and lethal damage remain the same. Attacks that do not inflict damage, including Dazzle or Snare attacks, still require the normal saving throw and have their normal effects.

A critical hit doubles the amount of damage an attack inflicts. Roll the normal dice and multiply the total by two before applying the damage to the target.

DAMAGE REDUCTION

Instead of adding to the character's Toughness saving throws, powers offering a Toughness save bonus provide *damage reduction*, reducing the amount of damage inflicted. Multiply the power's Toughness bonus by 2 and reduce the damage inflicted by each attack on the character by this amount. If the damage is reduced to 0 or less, it has no effect on the character. For example, a hero with Protection 11 ignores the first 22 points of damage from each attack.

Impervious defenses multiply their Toughness bonus by 3 rather than 2 to determine their Damage Reduction. So Impervious Protection 11 provides damage reduction 33.

The Toughness save bonus from Defensive Roll also becomes Damage Reduction, but with the same limitations as before.

DAMAGING OBJECTS

Objects have hit points equal to their Toughness x 5 and hardness (damage reduction) equal to twice their Toughness. When an object reaches 0 hit points, it is broken or destroyed.

HERO POINTS

Heroes can spend hero points to recover from damage just as they can in the regular *M&M* system. A hero point allows immediate recovery of (Con bonus) hit points or subdual damage.

FIXED RESULTS

Rather than rolling for damage, the GM may choose to make it a fixed result, such as 3 hit points of damage per point of damage bonus (so +12 damage does 36 hit points of damage). You can even combine fixed results with dice, such as having all but the last two dice of an attack fixed (in which case +12 damage does 30 + 2d6 points of damage). Fixed results can speed things up, since players won't have to roll and add up as many dice.

WOUND & VITALITY POINTS

Wound & Vitality (W&V) points are a variant of hit points. Instead of a single pool of points to reflect damage, characters have two values.

Wound points represent the character's ability to sustain injury. Loss of wound points represents actual physical harm the character suffers. Characters have wound points equal to their Constitution score (or twice their Toughness for characters with no Con score). Wound points operate like hit points in terms of the characters condition (see the **Hit Points** section, previously).

Vitality points represent a character's ability to avoid harm: ducking, weaving, or otherwise escaping injury. As vitality points are lost away, the character is being worn down to the point where a wrong move will result in injury. Characters have vitality points equal to twice their Constitution score (four times their Toughness for characters with no Con score). Characters with no vitality points remaining suffer wound damage from attacks.

Minions in the W&V system have no vitality points; they have only wound points, so all attacks injure them and they're more likely to be taken out by an attack.

CRITICAL HITS & WOUNDS POINTS

As an optional rule, a critical hit in the W&V system bypasses vitality to deal damage directly to the target's wound points, instead of inflicting additional damage. This makes critical hits a serious matter, since they're far more likely to badly injure or even kill characters, and this option is best suited to fairly realistic settings where characters can expect to suffer such serious injuries from critical hits.

ONE-HIT INSURANCE

It's possible in an evenly matched fight for a character to fail a Toughness save badly and get staggered or disabled by the first successful attack. Spending a hero point generally eliminates this danger, since it assures a minimum die result of 10, and an average result between evenly matched opponents means no more than a hit.

Some players may simply not care for any possibility of "one-hit" staggered or disabled results between evenly matched foes (although they're actually fairly common in the comics). If you want to provide "one-hit insurance" for characters, try the following variant.

The first failed Toughness save a character makes in any given encounter cannot inflict more than a bruised or injured condition, regardless of the Toughness save result. Thereafter, the character's Toughness saves have their normal results. You can even extend this so the character's second failed Toughness save never does more than a stunned result; then it requires at least *three* failed Toughness saves (probably more) for a character to be staggered or disabled, and at least four for a character to be unconscious or dying.

This "insurance" only applies when the character is aware and able to react to the attack. If the character is flat-footed or the attack is a surprise (coming from an invisible opponent, for example) then it has its normal effect, regardless or whether or not it is the first attack; ambushes and surprise attacks can still have substantial effects.

ALL-OR-NOTHING DAMAGE

In this variant, the only damage conditions are bruised, injured, unconscious, dying, and dead; remove the staggered and disabled conditions. A failed Toughness save results in a bruised condition. A save that fails by 15 or more results in unconsciousness. If the attack does lethal damage, then a failed save also results in an injured condition and a failure by 15 or more results leaves the character dying and unconscious. There is no stunned result from a failed Toughness save.

All-or-nothing damage imposes essentially no modifiers or other conditions. Characters suffer no ill effects from damage until they drop, and they tend to recover faster (since they don't have to recover from any intermediate conditions). Characters can also suffer more

damage, since there are no intermediate conditions to escalate what might be a lesser attack into a takedown. In the standard damage system, a character who is staggered and suffers another staggered result is unconscious. A character in this variant who has suffered several bruised conditions and fails a Toughness save by 10 is still only bruised, not KO'ed.

Combats tend to last longer in this variant, and sustained duration powers are more effective, since the most common source of stun conditions (damaging attacks) is removed. You can add stun results on a Toughness save failure of 5 or more back into this variant to address that issue.

THRESHOLD MODIFIERS

Rather than applying directly to the Toughness saving throw, the modifier from bruised and injured conditions applies to the result only if the save *fails*, increasing the margin (and severity) of the failure.

> **Example:** *If Captain Thunder has three bruised conditions, he normally suffers a –3 on Toughness saves. In this variant, there's no modifier to the Captain's Toughness save, but if he fails a save, the player subtracts 3 from the result. So if Cap is making a DC 28 Toughness save and rolls a 26 (a failure), the modifier makes the roll a 23 (a failure by 5) which means the hero is not only bruised but also stunned. On the other hand, if the result had been a 28 (just enough to succeed) the modifier wouldn't have affected it.*

This variant makes it a bit more difficult to wear down opponents and puts a bit more predictability into a failed Toughness save, since a –4 modifier ensures a failure by at least 5 if the save fails at all. Likewise, a –9 modifier ensures failure by at least 10, and so forth.

CHANGING DAMAGE THRESHOLDS

The Gamemaster can change the existing damage thresholds for a Toughness saving throw to get different results. For example, the GM might change the results of Toughness saving throws so that a save that fails still results in a hit, but a character must fail a Toughness save by more than 10 in order to be stunned, and more than 15 (or even 20) in order to be staggered or disabled. This will mean characters can suffer more hits and generally fight longer before accumulated damage or a bad Toughness saving throw takes them down.

Alternately, a save that fails by more than 5 still results in a stun, but the character must fail the Toughness save by more than 15 to be staggered; this means that stun results are more common, but one-hit knockouts are less common and require more accumulated damage. Perhaps the damage thresholds are: success = no damage, failure = 1 hit, failure by more than 5 = dazed (take only a half action next round), failure by more than 10 = stunned, failure by more than 15 = staggered, failure by more than 20 = unconscious. The potential combinations are almost endless.

Gamemasters can also change the Difficulty Class for Toughness saving throws, making them easier or more difficult, such as a base DC of 10 + damage bonus or 20 + damage bonus (instead of the standard 15 + damage bonus DC).

VARIABLE DAMAGE THRESHOLDS

Some may find the fixed Difficulty Class for Toughness saving throws too predictable, since it doesn't change from one attack to the next. One way to vary this slightly is to make the DC for a Toughness save

equal to damage bonus + 10 + the roll of a six-sided die (d6). This tends to give average Toughness save DCs similar to the standard damage bonus + 15 method, but with a bit more variability.

PERCENTILE THRESHOLDS

Rather than determining the severity of a Toughness save by whether the Toughness saving throw fails by 5, 10, or 15 points, the severity of damage is determined by the *percentage* of the Difficulty Class by which the save fails. This is shown on the **Percentile Toughness Saving Throws** table.

PERCENTILE TOUGHNESS SAVING THROWS

	Result	
Saving Throw...	Stun Attack	Lethal Attack
is 100%+ of DC	No Effect	No Effect
less than 100% of DC	Bruised	Injured
75% or less than DC	Stunned	Stunned
50% or less than DC	Staggered	Disabled
25% or less than DC	Unconscious	Dying

PERCENTILE DAMAGE DIFFICULTY

Save DC	<100%	75%	50%	25%
15	14	11	7	3
16	15	12	8	4
17	16	12	8	4
18	17	13	9	4
19	18	14	9	4
20	19	15	10	5
21	20	15	10	5
22	21	16	11	5
23	22	17	11	5
24	23	18	12	6
25	24	18	12	6
26	25	19	13	6
27	26	20	13	6
28	27	21	14	7
29	28	21	14	7
30	29	22	15	7
31	30	23	15	7
32	31	24	16	8
33	32	24	16	8
34	33	25	17	8
35	34	26	17	8
36	35	27	18	9
37	36	27	18	9
38	37	28	19	9
39	38	29	19	9
40	39	30	20	10

So, for example, a +10 damage attack has a save DC of 25 (15 + 10). A save total of 25 or more (100% or more of the DC) results in no damage. A save total between 24 and 19 is a bruised result, 18 to 13 is a stunned result, 12 to 7 is a staggered result and 6 or less is an unconscious result (compared to the standard ranges of 25+, 24-21, 20-16, 15-11, and 10 or less).

This approach smoothes out some of the more extreme effects of high and low damage bonuses. However, it requires more calculation of Toughness save DCs in advance and more involved math during play. Gamemasters using this option can consult the **Percentile Damage Difficulty** chart for quick reference.

MAXIMUM HIT TOTALS

The normal *M&M* damage rules assume characters can accumulate an unlimited number of hits, although in practice hits eventually reach a point where the character cannot possibly make a Toughness saving throw without being taken out of the fight. Gamemasters may wish to use this idea of a maximum number of accumulated hits to modify the damage system.

In this variant, the only result of a failed Toughness save is a hit; are no additional effects for failing a save by 5 or more. Instead, characters suffer additional damage conditions when their hits accumulate to a particular level set by the Gamemaster: three hits for relatively quick combat, as many as five hits (or more) for extended combat. Unless the maximum hit total is 1, there is no way to "one-punch" a character under this system, since an attack never inflicts more than a single hit. Effectively, the GM chooses the number of successful, damage-inflicting attacks that it takes to defeat a character.

DETERMINING MAXIMUM HITS

A character's maximum number of hits may be determined in various ways, depending on how the GM wishes to use the system:

NARRATIVE

The maximum hit total may vary depending on the character's importance to the story. For example, heroes and most villains may have up to 3 hits while minions have only 1 (meaning any successful attack takes out a minion). Conversely, master villains might have 5 or more hits, requiring more successful attacks—and the combined efforts of several heroes—to defeat them. The number of hits needed to take down a character may even vary from adventure to adventure or scene to scene. For example, in the initial scene of an adventure, the GM sets the characters' maximum hits at 2, but in the climactic scene of the adventure the GM increases them to 5, making the heroes much more of a fight for the master villain who trounced them in the earlier scene.

ABILITY SCORE

Maximum hits may be equal to a character's Constitution bonus. Alternately, the GM may decide to use half the appropriate bonus (so fights will go quicker). A single hit takes out characters with an ability score modifier less than +1.

POWER POINTS

A character's maximum hits may be based on total power points, usually the character's power point total divided by 30 and rounded down. This means more powerful characters can take more hits, similar to the optional hit points system.

HERO POINTS

A player character's maximum hits may be equal to the character's hero points. The twist here is that hits suffered by the character actually *reduce* the character's available hero points. When the character is at 0 hero points, he's unconscious or disabled; spending hero points effectively inflicts "damage" on the character, reducing his ability to suffer damage in combat. This option is best suited to gritty games that force players to carefully manage their hero point resources.

MULTI-HIT ATTACKS

The default assumption is a successful attack never does more than one hit of damage, regardless of how much the Toughness save failed. While this may suit some four-color styles of play, Gamemasters may prefer to allow attacks to do multiple hits of damage. In this case, for every 5 points the Toughness save missed the DC, the characters suffers one hit of damage. So, a Toughness save that fails does one hit; if it fails by more than 5, it does two hits; more than 10, three hits, and so forth. In this case a single attack may still knock out or disable a character with multiple hits if the Toughness save fails by a sufficient amount.

HERO POINTS AND MAXIMUM HITS

Gamemasters using this system for tracking damage in *M&M* should modify the spending of hero points slightly. Spending a hero point eliminates a single hit, stun or lethal, from the character's current total. This reflects the greater importance of total hits under this system.

VARIABLE CRITICAL HITS

A critical hit normally imposes a +5 to the attack's save DC, likely increasing damage from the attack to the next highest result on the Toughness save. This variant allows a successful critical hit to have one of a number of different effects, depending on the intentions and wishes of the attacker.

Essentially, when a critical hit is scored with a particular attack, the attacker can choose for the hit to have a different additional effect of up to 10 power points in value (in place of the normal +5 bonus to saving throw DC). This includes any power effect the GM judges suitable for the attack. Particular effects most likely to be associated with critical hits include Dazzle, Drain, Fatigue, Nauseate, or Stun, but others may be appropriate at the GM's discretion.

> **Example:** *The Bowman scores a critical hit with a boxing-glove arrow. Rather than the additional damage, he decides to inflict an additional Stun effect along with the arrow's normal damage. The GM finds this reasonable and agrees. Since the Stun power costs 2 points/rank, Bowman can force the target to make a DC 15 Fortitude save against the Stun effect along with the normal Toughness save for the arrow's damage.*

This variant adds some variety to the effects of critical hits in the game, and allows players to choose them for greater effectiveness. If desired, you can make this an option only available to players willing to spend a hero point to change the critical hit into some effect other than just additional damage, making it less frequent and keeping decisions about the effects of critical hits from bogging down game-play.

TACTICAL MOVEMENT

Mutants & Masterminds combat is fairly freeform in terms of character movement. However, some players may prefer to track character movement using miniature figures and a tactical grid map. You can do this using the basic *M&M* rules, but characters with movement powers can easily go anywhere in the map in a single move action! This may not suit a tactical fighting style; in this case, you can implement the following option.

Characters have three modes of movement under the tactical variant: normal, accelerated, and all-out. These are the same for most characters (30 feet, 60 feet, and 120 feet). The difference is for movement powers. The power's movement rank becomes its all-out movement. Its normal movement is 30 feet, plus 5 feet per rank, and its accelerated movement is twice that, 60 feet plus 10 feet per rank. So a character with Flight 6 has a normal tactical movement of 60 feet ((6 x 5) + 30), accelerated movement of 120 feet, and all-out movement of 500 MPH.

Movement and position are most easily handled using miniature figures representing the characters and opponents. The standard scale equates one inch on the tabletop to five feet in the game world. Use units of five feet for movement and position whenever possible. Calculating distance any more precisely is generally more trouble than it is worth.

If you want to use superhero action figures instead of miniatures, adjust the scale proportionally. Action figures five times the size of 30mm miniatures would use a scale of five inches equals five feet, for example.
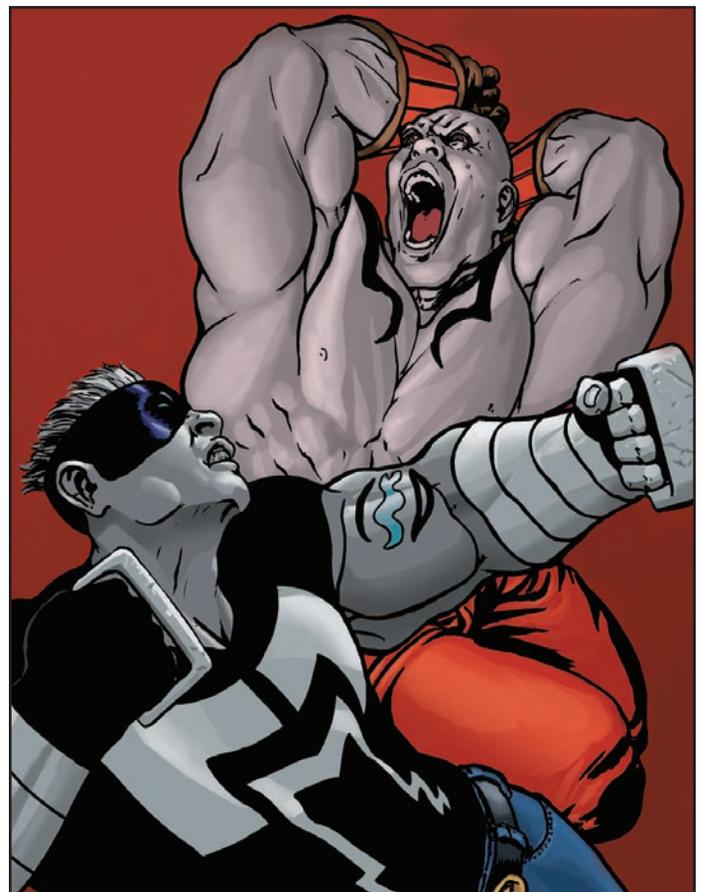
STANDARD SCALE

One inch = Five feet
"Next to" or "adjacent" = One inch (five feet) away
30 mm figure = A six-foot-tall (medium-size) character

A medium-size character occupies an area one inch (five feet) across.

HOW FAR CAN YOUR CHARACTER MOVE?

Generally, you can move your speed in a round (as a move action) and still do something, such as making an attack. You can move double your speed as a full action (two move actions). If you move all out (also a full action), you can quadruple your movement rate or more, but lose your dodge bonus to Defense. If you do something else requiring a full action, you can only take a 5-foot step.

Encumbrance: A character carrying a large amount of additional weight moves slower than normal (see **Carrying Capacity** in the **Abilities** chapter of *M&M*).

PASSING THROUGH

You cannot normally pass through an area occupied by an opponent, since they are ready to fight you. The only way to pass through the area is to overcome the opponent first. Sometimes you can pass through an area occupied by another character.

- **Friendly Character:** You can move through an area occupied by a friendly character, since they don't oppose you.

- **Unfriendly Character Not an Obstacle:** You can move through an area occupied by an unfriendly character who doesn't present an obstacle, such as one who is dead, unconscious, bound, stunned, grappled, or just cowering. The character must be unable to take actions to be considered no obstacle.

- **Acrobatics:** You can use Acrobatics to move through an area occupied by an enemy.

- **Area Occupied by Target Three Sizes Larger or Smaller:** You can move through an area occupied by an opponent three size categories larger or smaller than you.

LARGER AND SMALLER CHARACTERS IN COMBAT

Characters smaller than Small or bigger than Medium have special rules relating to tactical position. These rules concern the characters' "faces," or sides.

FACE

"Face" is how wide a profile a character presents in combat. This width determines how many characters can fight side by side in an enclosed space and how many characters can attack a target at the same time. A face is essentially the border between the square or rectangular space a character occupies and the space next to it. These faces are abstract, not "front, back, left, and right," because combatants are constantly moving and turning in battle. Unless a character is immobile, he practically doesn't have a front or a left side—at least not one you can locate on the tabletop.

BIG OPPONENTS

Big characters (long, Large creatures, and Huge, Gargantuan, or Colossal creatures) take up more space on the battlefield than

Medium-size ones. More combatants can attack them because more combatants can surround them. As a rule of thumb, assume one Small or Medium combatant can get to each 5-foot length of the creature and four more combatants can fit into the "corners" where one side meets another. (This rule is why you can get eight people around a Medium-size creature at once: One fits on each 5-foot face, and one fits on each corner.)

VERY SMALL CREATURES

Very small creatures (Fine, Diminutive, Tiny, and Miniscule) must be in your area to attack you. You can attack into your own area if you need to with a melee attack, so you can attack very small opponents normally.

VARIANT: HEX-GRID MOVEMENT

Tactical affairs such as movement are best handled on a grid, but the grid need not be a bunch of squares. This variant replaces squares with hexagons. (Hex-grid paper and mats are available at many game and hobby stores.)

The primary advantage of this variant is it eliminates the "every other square counts as double" rule for diagonal movement on the grid, because it eliminates diagonal movement. Characters simply move from hex to adjacent hex, changing direction as they like. To determine the distance between two hexagons, just count hexes by the shortest path (in most cases, there will be a number of equally short paths).

Using a hex-based grid changes relatively little about the game, but it poses a mapping dilemma for the GM. Most buildings are based on 90-degree and 45-degree angles, so superimposing a hex-grid on a structure leaves partial hexagons, not all of which are big enough for a medium-sized character. Use this variant only if you're comfortable adjudicating partial spaces on the fly.

Areas of effect are counted in hexagons rather than squares in a hex-grid, but otherwise remain the same.

FLANKING

If you are attacking an opponent and an ally directly opposite you is attacking the same opponent, you and your ally *flank* the opponent. You both gain a +2 bonus on your attack roll. Characters with at least 2 ranks of the Uncanny Dodge feat cannot be flanked.

MENTAL GRAPPLING FOR EFFECT

If you want to limit the usefulness of mental powers in your campaign, you can require the user to mentally grapple the target and establish a mental pin before any mental power requiring a saving throw can be applied. The target does not suffer the normal –4 modifier for being mentally pinned; the save is at the normal bonus.

For example, a character with Mind Control has to first engage a target in a struggle of wills (a mental grapple); only when the target is mentally pinned does the save against the Mind Control take place. In this variant, any character with a mental power requiring a saving throw can initiate a mental grapple, but only for purposes of using that power on a target.

This variant makes mental powers more difficult to use in the midst of combat unless you have overwhelming mental superiority (enough to mentally pin your target immediately). Even then, characters can't establish a mental pin in less than a round, so all mental effects essentially take at least an extra round (if not more) to use.

UNDER THE HOOD: GRAPPLING FOR EFFECT

Mental grappling for effect is for when you want the use of certain powers in your game to be a struggle, more than just an attack roll and saving throw, but a real back-and-forth effort. It's useful, for example, if you want to make mental powers less effective and simulate the "must… not… give… in…!" struggle often seen in the comics as two characters are locked in mental combat. It's also good for settings where all powers involve a similar source or effect—manipulating reality or primal magic, for example—where other superhumans automatically have some innate resistance or ability to counter an opponent's powers. It encourages subtlety and a degree of caution, which aren't necessarily earmarks of a four-color superhero setting, but work quite well in more realistic ones.

You can mitigate this if you wish by saying the mental grapple itself takes no time; the struggle takes place instantly in the minds of the attacker and defender. Even then, mental effects become less reliable, since the target effectively gains two (or more) chances to avoid the effect, rather than just one.

VARIANT: MENTAL GRAPPLING FOR ALL POWERS

If you want to *really* limit the use of powers in the campaign, you can require a successful mental grapple for *any* power use against an intelligent target. So, not only do you have to mentally grapple in order to mind control a target, you also have to do so to affect him with a Blast, Transform, or any other direct power permitting a saving throw. Perhaps all supers have some sort of innate reflexive defense against others' powers; the mental grapple represents overcoming that defense.

This requirement may extend to all intelligent targets or only a subset. For example, perhaps mental grappling is only required to affect other supers; normal people are affected normally. This gives supers—even ones with otherwise minor powers—some innate resistance to powers. Resistance could be limited solely to living beings: intelligent machines or the undead, for example, don't qualify.

This option is best reserved to create a particular style of play, wherein powers require more effort and rely heavily on force of will to overcome resistance. It will tend to limit direct power effects (which require mental grappling) and encourage indirect power effects (which don't). For example, it's more efficient in this variant to pick up a heavy object with your Super-Strength or Telekinesis and clobber an opponent with it than it is to just Blast him (since the latter provokes a mental grapple).

MENTAL STRAIN

Mental strain represents the psychological damage caused by terrible experiences: horror, violence, and trauma. When confronted by these things, some people collapse under the strain. This variant is most appropriate for very realistic settings where characters are expected to deal with terrible situations and their consequences. When confronted with a particularly stressful situation, characters make Will saves. The DC of the save depends on the circumstances.

MENTAL STRAIN

DC	SITUATION
10	Witness a friend killed. Kill an enemy in the heat of battle.
15	Witness a gruesome death or torture. Suffer torture.
20	Witness a friend or loved one killed in a terrible manner. Commit murder.
25	Commit cold-blooded murder. Witness death and destruction on a vast scale.
30	Encounter a terrible horror of cosmic proportions.

If you succeed on the Will save, nothing happens; you manage to deal with the circumstances and move on. If you fail the save, then your character momentarily loses control. You, the player, have three choices:

- The character becomes panicked and attempts to flee as quickly as possible. If unable to do so, the character cowers, helpless.

- The character becomes helpless, cowering, curled up in the fetal position, or just standing dumbstruck and unaware.

- You spend a hero point and the character is dazed for one round, taking no action, but defending normally. The character then shakes off the horror of the situation and acts normally.

The first two effects last for the duration of the encounter (more or less at the GM's discretion). Spending a hero point at any time during either effect allows the hero to shake it off immediately.

MENTAL STRAIN AND COMPLICATIONS

If desired, mental strain can have a long term impact as well as a short-term one. When a character fails a Will save, in addition to the normal effects, the character racks up a number of psychological complications equal to the save's DC/10. So, a failed Will save vs. a DC of 20 results in two complications. The character suffers the effects of these complications but does *not* gain hero points for them. The complications are permanent, although the GM can allow characters to eliminate them with time and psychological treatment; a minimum of one month per complication is recommended. The player and Gamemaster should cooperate to come up with complications suited to the nature of the mental strain that caused them.

MENTAL STRAIN AND POWER SURGES

If you're using the Power Surge rules from **Chapter 5**, a failed mental strain save can trigger a power surge in addition to the three choices listed for a failed save. A combination of mental strain and power surges makes for a grim setting where heroes struggle to maintain control over their emotions and powers.

MENTAL STRAIN AND TAINT

If you're using the Taint rules from **Chapter 6**, a failed mental strain save can cause psychological (or even other forms) of taint.

MENTAL STRAIN AND STABILITY SAVES

If you're using Stability saving throws based on Charisma (see **Chapter 1**), you may wish to use them in place of Will saves for mental strain.

CHAPTER 9: GAMEMASTERING

There are a great many elements that go into running a *M&M* game. This chapter provides additional tools and advice for *M&M* GMs to use in running their games, in particular how to make more use of the environment, how to handle various hazards, the legal system and trials, creating adventures, providing challenges for the heroes, and offering suitable rewards for their efforts. It also looks at the role of super-powers in world-building and offers some ideas on various ways they can impact your setting.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment of the world can challenge *M&M* heroes in a number of ways, providing threats to the general public as well as hazards to the heroes themselves. This section provides additional details on such environmental hazards along with some options you can use alongside the Environmental Control and Weather Control powers.

GETTING LOST IN THE WILD

There are lots of ways to get lost in the wild. Following an obvious road, trail, or feature such as a stream or shoreline prevents any possibility of becoming lost, but travelers striking off cross-country may become disoriented, especially in conditions of poor visibility or difficult terrain.

POOR VISIBILITY

Any time characters cannot see at least 60 feet in the prevailing conditions of visibility, they may become lost. Characters traveling through fog, snow, or a downpour might lose the ability to see any landmarks not in their immediate vicinity. Similarly, characters traveling at night may be at risk, too, depending on the quality of their light sources, the amount of moonlight, and whether they have any Super-Senses like darkvision or low-light vision.

DIFFICULT TERRAIN

Character in forest, moor, hill, or mountain terrain may become lost if they move away from a trail, road, stream, or other obvious path or track. Forests are especially dangerous because they obscure far-off landmarks and make it hard to see the sun or stars.

CHANCE TO GET LOST

Condition	DC
Moor or hill, map	6
Mountain, map	8
Moor or hill, no map	10
Mountain, no map	12
Poor visibility	12
Forest	15

CHANCE TO GET LOST

If getting lost is a possibility, the character leading the way must succeed on a Survival check or become lost. The difficulty varies based on the terrain, the visibility, and whether or not the character has a map of the area. Refer to the **Chance to Get Lost** table and use the highest DC that applies. Check once per hour (or portion of an hour) spent in local or overland movement to see if travelers have become lost. In the case of a group moving together, only the character leading the way makes the check.

EFFECTS OF BEING LOST

If a group becomes lost, it is no longer certain of moving in the direction it intended to travel. Randomly determine the direction in which the group actually travels each hour. The characters' movement continues to be random until they blunder into a landmark, or until they recognize they are lost and make an effort to regain their bearings.

RECOGNIZING YOU'RE LOST

Once per hour of random travel, each character in the group may make a Survival check (DC 20, –1 per hour of random travel) to recognize they are no longer certain of their direction of travel. Some circumstances may make it obvious the characters are lost.

SETTING A NEW COURSE

A lost group is also uncertain of determining direction to a desired objective. Determining the correct direction once a group becomes lost requires a Survival check (DC 15, +2 per hour of random travel). If a character fails this check, he chooses a random direction as the "correct" direction for resuming travel.

Once the characters are traveling along their new course, correct or incorrect, they may get lost again. If the conditions still make it possible for travelers to become lost, check once per hour of travel as described in **Chance to Get Lost**, previously, to see if the group maintains its new course or begins to move at random again.

CONFLICTING DIRECTIONS

It's possible several characters may attempt to determine the right direction to proceed after becoming lost. Make a Survival check for each character in secret; tell the correct direction to the players whose characters succeeded , and tell the players whose characters failed a random direction they *think* is right. The players get to decide which one to choose.

REGAINING YOUR BEARINGS

There are several ways to become un-lost. First, if characters successfully set a new course and follow it to the destination they're trying to reach, they're not lost anymore. Second, the characters might run into an unmistakable landmark through random movement. Third, if conditions improve—fog lifts or the sun comes up—lost characters may attempt to set a new course, as described previously, with a +4 bonus on the Survival check. Finally, certain powers may make their location and direction clear.

ALTITUDE

The thin air at high altitudes can be tiring, even dangerous. In general, there are three possible levels of altitude: low, high, and peak. In addition to the effects of the thinner air, high altitudes are often quite cold.

ACCLIMATION

Characters with Environmental Adaptation (high altitude) have greater resistance to the effects of altitude and are considered acclimated to it. Characters with Immunity (suffocation) are unaffected by altitude, since they don't need to breathe.

LOW ALTITUDE (LOWER THAN 5,000 FEET)

Most travel in low mountains takes place in low passes, a zone consisting largely of alpine meadows and forests. Travelers may find the going difficult, but the altitude itself has no game effect.

HIGH ALTITUDE (5,000 TO 15,000 FEET)

Ascending to the highest slopes of low mountains, or most normal travel through high mountains, falls into this category. All non-acclimated creatures labor to breathe in the thin air at this altitude. Each Character must succeed on a Fortitude save each hour (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or become fatigued. The fatigue ends when the character descends to an altitude with more air.

Acclimated characters do not have to attempt the Fortitude save.

PEAK ALTITUDE (MORE THAN 15,000 FEET)

The highest mountains exceed 20,000 feet in height. At these elevations, characters are subject to both high altitude fatigue (as described earlier) and altitude sickness, whether or not they're acclimated to high altitudes.

Altitude sickness represents long-term oxygen deprivation, and affects mental and physical ability scores. After each six-hour period a character spends at an altitude of over 15,000 feet, he must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or take 1 point of damage to all ability scores.

Characters acclimated to high altitude receive a +4 bonus on their saving throws to resist high altitude effects and altitude sickness.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Mutants & Masterminds covers the basic environmental hazards heroes may encounter. This section expands on those dangers with other disasters that can befall a group of heroes. These hazards also provide some ideas for rescue missions, allowing heroes to save innocent people threatened by disaster.

AVALANCHES

The combination of high peaks and heavy snowfalls means avalanches are a deadly peril in many mountainous areas. While avalanches of snow and ice are common, it's also possible to have an avalanche of loose rock and soil.

An avalanche can be spotted from down slope like a colossal object(reducing the DC of the Notice check by 16). It's possible to hear an avalanche coming even if you can't see it. Under optimum conditions (no other loud noises occurring), a character who makes a DC 15 Notice check can hear an approaching avalanche or landslide.

A landslide or avalanche consists of two distinct areas: the bury zone (in the direct path of the falling debris) and the slide zone (the area the debris spreads out to encompass). Characters in the bury zone of a cave-in take +8 damage, half that amount if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. They are subsequently buried. Characters in the slide zone take +4 damage, or none at all if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. Characters in the slide zone who fail their saves are also buried.

Characters must make an additional Toughness save per minute while buried. The initial DC is 15, increasing by +1 per save. If a character falls unconscious, further damage becomes lethal.

Characters who aren't buried can try to dig out their friends. In one minute, a character can clear rocks and debris equal to five times his heavy load limit. Loose stone and rubble filling a 5-foot-by-5-foot area weighs about a ton (2,000 pounds). Armed with an appropriate digging tool, a character can clear loose stone twice as fast as by hand. You may also allow a buried character to free himself with a DC 25 Strength check. Super-Strength bonus applies to this check.

The typical avalanche has a width of 1oo to 500 feet, from one edge of the slide zone to the opposite edge. The bury zone in the center of the avalanche is half as wide as the avalanche's full width. Avalanches of snow and ice advance at a speed of 500 feet per round, and rock avalanches travel at a speed of 250 feet per round.

CAVE-INS AND COLLAPSES

Cave-ins and collapsing tunnels are extremely dangerous. Not only is there the danger of being crushed by tons of falling rock, even if characters survive they may be buried beneath a pile of rubble or cut off from the only exit. A cave-in buries anyone in the middle of the collapsing area, and sliding debris damages anyone in the periphery of the collapse. The slide zone is generally about half the radius of the bury zone.

Characters in the bury zone of a cave-in take +8 damage, half that amount if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. They are subsequently buried. Characters in the slide zone take +4 damage, or none at all if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. Characters in the slide zone who fail their saves are also buried.

Characters must make an additional Toughness save per minute while buried. The initial DC is 15, increasing by +1 per save. If a character falls unconscious, further damage becomes lethal.

Characters who aren't buried can try to dig out their friends. In one minute, a character can clear rocks and debris equal to five times his heavy load limit. Loose stone and rubble filling a 5-foot-by-5-foot area weighs about a ton (2,000 pounds). Armed with an appropriate digging tool, a character can clear loose stone twice as fast as by hand. You may also allow a buried character to free himself with a DC 25 Strength check. Super-Strength bonus applies to this check.

EARTHQUAKES

An earthquake knocks people down, collapses structures, opens cracks and fissures in the ground, and more. The specific effects depend on the nature of the terrain:

- *Cave, Cavern, or Tunnel:* The roof collapses (see **Cave-ins and Collapses**, previously).

- *Cliffs:* Cliffs crumble, creating a landslide that travels horizontally as far as it falls vertically. See **Avalanches**, previously.

- *Open Ground:* Each person standing in the area of the quake must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall prone. Fissures may open in the earth, and anyone in the area has a chance to fall in (Difficulty 20 Reflex save to avoid such a fissure).

- *Structure:* Any wooden or masonry structure standing on open ground is destroyed. Sturdier buildings are damaged. See **Cave-ins and Collapses**, previously, for anyone caught inside a collapsing structure. Building fires also often follow in the wake of an earthquake; see the following section for details.

FIRES

Large fires, such as house fires or forest fires, post three main dangers: heat, catching on fire, and smoke.

HEAT DAMAGE

Characters caught in a large fire are exposed to extreme heat. Those wearing heavy clothing or armor take a –4 penalty on their saving throws. Characters with Immunity (heat) are unaffected.

CATCHING ON FIRE

Characters engulfed in an inferno are at risk of catching on fire when the leading edge of the blaze overtakes them, and at further risk once per minute thereafter.

Characters at risk of catching fire are allowed a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid it. A failed save results in +1 fire damage immediately. In each subsequent round, the burning character must make another Reflex saving throw. Failure means he takes another +1 fire damage. Success means that the fire has gone out. (In other words, once he succeeds on his saving throw, he's no longer on fire.)

A character on fire may automatically extinguish the flames by jumping into enough water to douse them. If no body of water is at hand, rolling on the ground or smothering the fire with blankets or the like grants the character another save with a +4 bonus.

SMOKE INHALATION

Forest fires naturally produce a great deal of smoke. A character breathing heavy smoke must make a Fortitude save each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend that round choking and coughing. A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds makes a Fortitude save against +1 damage. Also, smoke obscures vision, providing concealment to characters within it.

A forest fire can be spotted as a colossal object (reducing the DC of the Notice check by 16). Characters who are blinded or otherwise unable to make visual Notice checks can still feel the heat of the fire (and automatically notice it) when it is 100 feet away or less.

The leading edge of a forest fire (the downwind side) can advance faster than a normal human can run (assume 120 feet per round for winds of moderate strength). Once a particular portion of the forest is ablaze, it remains so for 20 to 80 minutes before dying to a smoking smolder. Characters overtaken by a forest fire may find the leading edge of the fire advancing away from them faster than they can keep up, trapping them deeper and deeper within it.

LAVA

Lava or magma deals +2 lethal points of damage per round of exposure, except in the case of total immersion (such as when a character falls into the crater of an active volcano), which deals +20 lethal damage per round.

Immunity (fire damage) also serves as immunity to damage from lava or magma. However, a creature immune to fire damage might still suffocate if completely immersed in lava.

QUICKSAND

Patches of quicksand are deceptively solid looking. A character approaching a patch of quicksand at a normal pace is entitled to a DC 8 Survival check to spot the danger before stepping in, but characters moving at an accelerated or all-out pace don't have a chance to detect quicksand before blundering in.

EFFECTS OF QUICKSAND

Characters in quicksand must make a DC 10 Swim check every round simply to tread water in place, or a DC 15 Swim check to move 5 feet in whatever direction is desired. If a trapped character fails this check by 5 or more, he sinks below the surface and begins to drown whenever he can no longer hold his breath (see **Swim** in the **Skills** chapter of *M&M*).

Characters below the surface of quicksand may swim back to the surface with a successful Swim check (DC 15, +1 per consecutive round of being under the surface).

RESCUE

Pulling out a character trapped in quicksand can be difficult. A rescuer needs a branch, pole, rope, or similar tool to reach the victim. The rescuer makes a DC 15 Strength check to successfully pull the victim, and the victim makes a DC 10 Strength check to hold on.

If the victim fails to hold on, he must make a DC 15 Swim check to stay above the surface. If both checks succeed, the victim is pulled 5 feet closer to safety. Powers like Flight or Elongation naturally make quicksand rescues easier.

WEATHER

Sometimes weather can play an important role in an adventure, either as a backdrop or due to the weather-controlling powers of a hero or villain.

RAIN, SNOW, SLEET, AND HAIL

Bad weather frequently slows or halts travel and makes it virtually impossible to navigate from one spot to another. Torrential downpours and blizzards obscure vision as effectively as a dense fog.

Most precipitation is rain, but in cold conditions it can manifest as snow, sleet, or hail. Precipitation of any kind followed by a cold snap in which the temperature dips from above freezing to 32° F or below may produce ice.

RAIN

Rain reduces visibility by half, resulting in a –4 penalty on Notice and Search checks.

SNOW

Falling snow has the same effects on visibility and skill checks as rain, and creates a bad surface for movement (see **Hampered Movement** in the **Abilities** chapter of *M&M*).

HEAVY SNOW

Heavy snow has the same effects as normal snowfall, but also restricts visibility like fog does (see **Fog** in the following section). It creates a very bad surface for movement, restricting movement speeds to one-quarter.

SLEET

Essentially frozen rain, sleet has the same effect as rain while falling (except that its chance to extinguish protected flames is 75%) and the same effect as snow once on the ground.

HAIL

Hail does not reduce visibility, but the sound of falling hail makes auditory Notice checks more difficult (–4 penalty). Sometimes (1-in-20 chance) hail can become large enough to deal +0 damage (per storm) to anything out in the open. Once on the ground, hail has the same effect on movement as snow.

STORMS

The combined effects of precipitation (or dust) and wind that accompany storms reduce visibility ranges by three-quarters, imposing a –8 penalty on Notice and Search checks. Storms make ranged attacks with muscle-propelled weapons impossible, while other ranged attacks have a –4 penalty on attack rolls. Storms automatically

extinguish unprotected flames. They cause protected flames, such as those of lanterns, to dance wildly, and have a 50% chance to extinguish them. Storms are divided into the following types.

DUST STORM

These desert storms differ in that they have no precipitation. A dust storm blows fine grains of sand that obscure vision, smother unprotected flames, and can even choke protected flames (50% chance). There is a 10% (2-in-20) chance for a dust storm to be powerful enough to inflict +0 damage each round to anyone caught out in the open without shelter and to also pose a choking hazard (the same as suffocation, as per the rules in the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*).

SANDSTORM

A sandstorm reduces visibility and provides a –4 penalty on Notice and Search checks. A sandstorm deals +0 damage per hour to anyone caught in the open, and leaves a thin coating of sand in its wake. Driving sand creeps in through all but the most secure seals and seams, to chafe skin and contaminate carried gear.

THUNDERSTORM

In addition to wind and precipitation (usually rain, but sometimes also hail), thunderstorms are accompanied by lightning that can pose a hazard to characters without proper shelter (especially those in metallic armor). As a rule of thumb, assume one bolt per minute for a one-hour period at the center of the storm. Each bolt causes electrical damage equal to a rank 1 to 10 Blast (roll d20 and divide by 2, rounding up, to determine effective rank). One in ten thunderstorms (a 19 or 20 on a d20 roll) are accompanied by a tornado (see the following).

FOG

Whether in the form of a low-lying cloud or a mist rising from the ground, fog obscures all visual senses, including darkvision, beyond 5 feet. Creatures 5 feet away have concealment (attacks by or against them have a 20% miss chance).

WIND

The wind can create a stinging spray of sand or dust, fan a large fire, and blow gases or vapors away. If powerful enough, it can even knock characters down, interfere with ranged attacks, or impose penalties on some skill checks.

LIGHT WIND

A gentle breeze, having little or no game effect.

MODERATE WIND

A steady wind with a 50% chance of extinguishing small, unprotected flames, such as candles.

STRONG WIND

Gusts that automatically extinguish unprotected flames (candles, torches, and the like). Such gusts impose a –2 penalty on ranged attack rolls with thrown weapons and on auditory Notice checks.

SEVERE WIND

In addition to automatically extinguishing any unprotected flames, winds of this magnitude cause protected flames (such as those of lanterns) to dance wildly, and have a 50% chance of extinguishing them as well. Ranged weapon attacks and auditory Notice checks are at a –4 penalty.

WINDSTORM

Powerful enough to bring down branches if not whole trees, windstorms automatically extinguish unprotected flames and have a 75% chance of blowing out protected flames. Ranged attacks with thrown or muscle-powered weapons are impossible, and other ranged attacks are at a –4 penalty. Auditory Notice checks are at a –8 penalty due to the howling of the wind.

HURRICANE-FORCE WIND

All non-powered flames are extinguished. Ranged attacks with thrown or muscle-powered weapons are impossible, and other ranged attacks are at a –8 penalty. Auditory Notice checks are at a –20 penalty: all characters can hear is the roaring of the wind. Hurricane-force winds often fell trees and even buildings.

TORNADO

All flames are extinguished. All ranged attacks are impossible, as are auditory Notice checks. Characters in close proximity to a tornado who fail a DC 20 Strength check are sucked toward the tornado. Those who come in contact with the actual funnel cloud are picked up and whirled around for 1d10 (d20/2) rounds, taking +4 damage per round, before being violently expelled (falling damage may also apply). While a tornado's rotational speed can be as great as 300 mph, the funnel itself moves forward at an average of 25 mph (a Speed rank of 2). A tornado uproots trees, destroys buildings, and causes other similar forms of major destruction.

URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

A great many *M&M* adventures take place in an urban environment, whether fighting crime in the streets and alleys of the city or an epic battle against supervillains or alien invaders among the skyscrapers of downtown.

CROWDS

City streets are usually filled with people going about their daily lives. Most of the time, you can generalize about the activity of crowds of bystanders without worrying about the individual traits of each person. If a crowd sees something dangerous (like a super-battle), assume they move away from it at a rate of 30 feet per round on initiative count 0 each round.

Such fleeing from battle presumes a city filled with mildly realistic citizens. However, some four-color cities might become jaded and complacent, secure that the heroes of their city will save them; to simulate this, assume that 50% of the crowd moves away at 30 feet per round, 40% of the crowd remains in place to watch the action, and 10% move *closer* to the battle to get a better look!

Crowds provide cover for characters within them, but also count as a moderate obstruction, reducing movement speed to three-quarters. You can make Stealth checks to hide normally while within a crowd of people.

It takes a DC 15 Diplomacy check or a DC 20 Intimidate check to get a crowd to move in a particular direction. It takes a full-round action to make the Diplomacy check but only a free action to make the Intimidate check. If multiple characters attempt to direct a crowd, the character with the highest check result succeeds. The crowd ignores everyone if none of the checks exceed the base required Difficulty.

ABOVE AND BELOW THE STREETS

Getting to a rooftop usually requires climbing, unless the character can reach a roof by jumping or using a movement power. Flat roofs, relatively uncommon, are easy to move across. Moving along the peak of a roof requires a DC 15 Acrobatics check each round. Moving on an angled roof surface without changing altitude (moving parallel to the peak, in other words) requires a DC 10 Acrobatics check. Moving up and down across the peak of a roof requires a DC 5 Acrobatics check.

Eventually a character runs out of roof, requiring a jump across to the next roof or down to the ground. Use the jumping guidelines from the **Abilities** chapter of *M&M* to determine if the character can make the jump. Keep in mind an Acrobatics check can increase this distance, and characters can take 10 on the check under normal conditions.

To get into the sewer tunnels below the streets, most characters open a grate (a full-round action) and jump down 10 feet. Comic book cities virtually always have sewer tunnels large enough to move around in, like a network of passages under the city, suitable for villains to hide or try to escape. Most sewer tunnels are bad surfaces, reducing movement speeds by half.

PATROLLING

Oftentimes, heroes may wish to patrol the streets of the city, on the lookout for crime or unusual incidents. Rather than make a long series of Notice or Search checks, you can handle a hero's patrol using the guidelines for extended searches (see the **Skills** chapter of *M&M*), determining how much area the hero covers in a given amount of time. If the hero is just generally patrolling, on the lookout for trouble, move the final area's diameter two steps up the Progression Table.

The hero's player makes a Notice or Search check (whichever has the higher bonus). The hero can take 10 on this check. Anyone in the patrol area attempting to conceal their activities must make a Stealth check against the hero's check result to go unnoticed, and cannot take 10 or take 20 on the check. This is in addition to any work the criminal must do to avoid other sorts of detection such as alarms.

AQUATIC ENVIRONMENTS

Of the locales most common for characters to encounter, aquatic environments are the least hospitable because most heroes can't breathe underwater. These rules divide aquatic terrain into two categories: flowing water (such as streams and rivers) and non-flowing water (such as lakes and oceans).

FLOWING WATER

Large, placid rivers move at only a few miles per hour, so they function as still water for most purposes. But some rivers and streams are swifter; anything floating in them moves downstream at a speed of 10 to 40 feet per round. The fastest rapids send swimmers bobbing downstream at 60 to 90 feet per round. Fast rivers are always at least rough water (Swim DC 15), and whitewater rapids are stormy water (Swim DC 20). Characters in flowing water move downstream the indicated distance at the end of their turn. Character trying to maintain their position relative to the riverbank can spend some or all of their turn swimming upstream.

Swept Away: Characters swept away by a river moving 60 feet per round or faster must make DC 20 Swim checks every round to avoid going under. Characters with a check result of 5 or more over
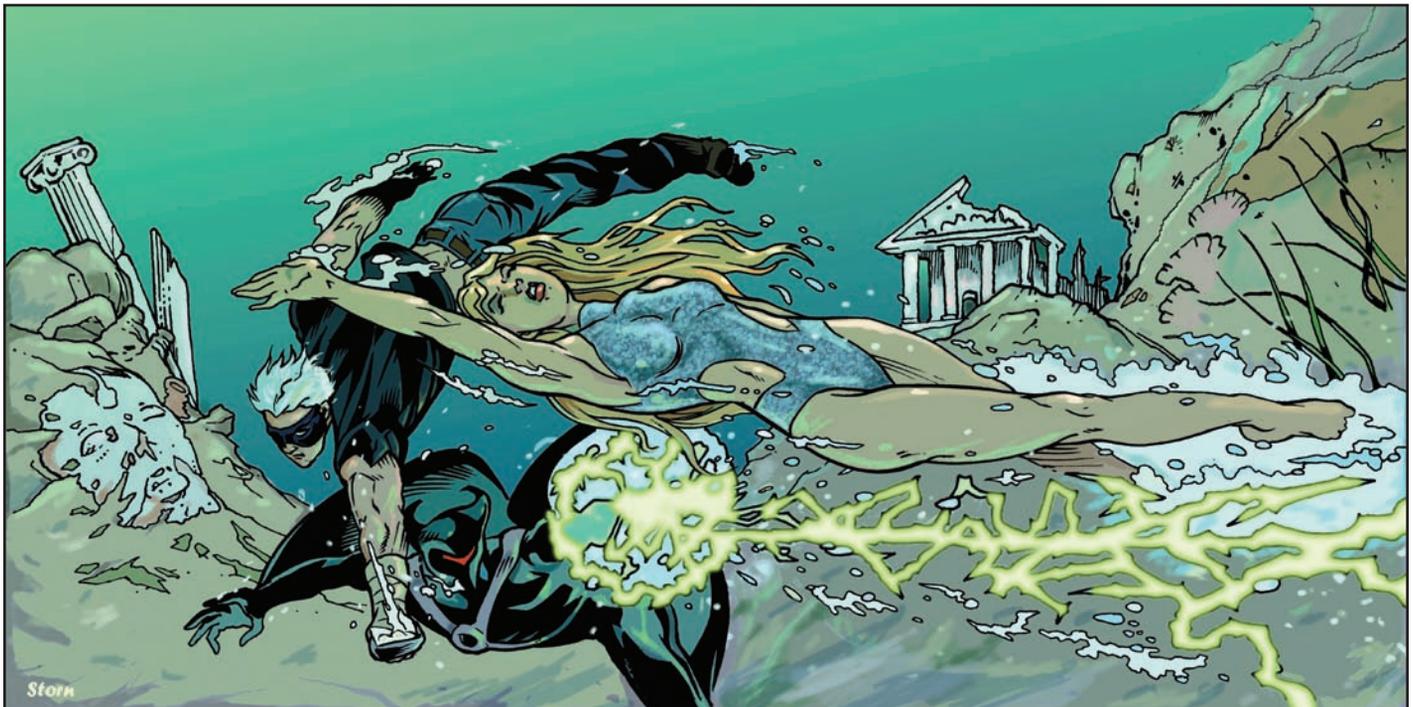
COMBAT ADJUSTMENTS UNDERWATER

Condition	Attack	Damage	Movement	Dodge Bonus?
Environmental Adaptation	normal	normal	normal	Yes
Swimming power	–2	half	normal	Yes
Successful Swim check	–2	half	quarter or half	Yes
Firm footing	–2	half	half	Yes
None of the above	–2	half	normal	No

the Difficulty arrest their motion by catching a rock, tree limb, or bottom snag—they are no longer being carried along by the flow of the water. Escaping the rapids by reaching the bank requires three DC 20 Swim checks in a row. Characters arrested by a rock, limb, or snag can't escape under their own power unless they strike out into the water and attempt to swim their way clear. Other characters can rescue them as if they were trapped in quicksand.

NON-FLOWING WATER

Lakes and oceans simply require a successful Swim check or the Swimming power to move through. Characters need a way to breathe if they're underwater; failing that, they risk drowning. When underwater, characters can move in any direction as if they were flying (with good maneuverability, if that option is in use, except for the inability to swim backward).

STEALTH AND DETECTION UNDERWATER

How far you can see underwater depends on the water's clarity. As a guideline, creatures can see 60 feet if the water is clear, and 30 feet if it's murky. Moving water is always murky, unless it's in a particularly large, slow-moving river.

INVISIBILITY

A solid invisible creature displaces water and leaves a visible, body-shaped "bubble" in the water. The creature still has concealment (20% miss chance), but not total concealment (50% miss chance). At the GM's option certain power descriptors may be unaffected by this, and a power feat may be available to extend invisibility to aquatic environments.

UNDERWATER COMBAT

Land-based creatures have difficulty when fighting in water. Water affects a creature's Defense, attack rolls, damage, and movement. In some cases opponents may get a bonus on attacks. The effects are summarized in the accompanying **Combat Adjustments Underwater** table. They apply whenever a character is swimming, walking in chest-deep water, or walking along the bottom.

RANGED ATTACKS UNDERWATER

Thrown weapons are ineffective underwater, even when launched from land. Attacks with other ranged weapons take a –2 penalty on attack rolls for every 5 feet of water they pass through, in addition to the normal penalties for range.

ATTACKS FROM LAND

Characters swimming, floating, or treading water on the surface, or wading in water at least chest deep, have improved cover (+8 bonus to Defense, +4 bonus on Reflex saves) from opponents on land. A completely submerged creature has total cover against opponents on land.

FIRE

Powers and effects with a fire descriptor are ineffective underwater. The surface of a body of water also blocks the effect of any such power.

FLOODS

In spring, an enormous snowmelt can engorge the streams and rivers it feeds. Other catastrophic events such as massive rainstorms or the destruction of a dam can create floods as well.

During a flood, rivers become wider, deeper, and swifter. Fords may disappear for days, bridges may be swept away, and even ferries might not be able to manage the crossing of a flooded river. A river in flood makes Swim checks one category harder (calm water becomes rough, and rough water becomes stormy). Rivers also become 50% swifter.

RADIATION SICKNESS

The basic guidelines for radiation exposure (see the **Combat** chapter of *M&M*) assume "comic book" radiation, which is usually treated as a damaging energy (like electricity or heat). For more realistic radiation exposure guidelines, you can use the following, best reserved for high-realism settings.

When characters are exposed to radiation, they may be afflicted with radiation sickness. Radiation sickness functions like exposure to any other disease, following the normal rules for diseases. The Fortitude save DC and the effects of radiation sickness vary with the dose of radiation.

Radiation exposure has five degrees: mild, low, moderate, high, and severe. To determine the degree of exposure, start with the type of exposure: either an irradiated area (such as the area near a nuclear explosion, after the fact, or a lab that has been flooded with radioactive gas), or a specific source of radiation (such as a lump of radioactive material). Then consult the **Radiation Exposure** table to determine the degree of exposure based on the total time of exposure within a given 24-hour period (rounding up).

The degree of the exposure determines the severity of the radiation sickness, as indicated on the **Radiation Sickness** table.

> **Example:** *Patriot, in recovering some cracked canisters of highly radioactive material, suffers a high degree of radiation exposure. At the end of the day, the GM has Patriot's player make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 21 for high exposure). If the save fails, Patriot loses 3 points of Constitution six hours later (the "incubation period" for high exposure).*

RADIATION EXPOSURE

	TIME OF EXPOSURE (MINIMUM)				
SITUATION	**1 ROUND**	**1 MINUTE**	**10 MINUTES**	**1 HOUR**	**1 DAY**
Character in irradiated area:					
Lightly irradiated	mild	mild	mild	mild	low
Moderately irradiated	mild	mild	low	low	moderate
Highly irradiated	low	low	moderate	moderate	high
Severely irradiated	moderate	moderate	high	high	severe
Character exposed to radiation source:					
Lightly radioactive materials	mild	mild	low	low	low
Moderately radioactive materials	low	low	moderate	moderate	moderate
Highly radioactive materials	moderate	moderate	high	high	high
Severely radioactive materials	high	high	severe	severe	severe

RADIATION SICKNESS

DEGREE OF EXPOSURE	FORTITUDE SAVE DC	INCUBATION PERIOD	INITIAL AND SECONDARY DAMAGE
Mild	12	1 day	1 Con
Low	15	12 hours	1 Con
Moderate	18	9 hours	2 Con
High	21	6 hours	3 Con
Severe	24	3 hours	6 Con

Each day thereafter, Patriot's player makes another DC 21 Fortitude save, and Patriot loses another 3 points of Constitution per failed save. A successful save means no Con loss that day, while two successful saves in a row mean the radiation sickness has run its course.

TREATING RADIATION SICKNESS

Radiation sickness is considered a treatable disease that can be cured using the "treat disease" aspect of the Medicine skill and by the Healing and Regeneration powers. Advanced medicine and advanced technology can also eliminate radiation sickness or obviate its harmful effects, at the GM's discretion.

THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The old adage "crime never pays" is more wishful thinking than gospel truth. If crime never paid, there would be no criminals, and yet there are plenty of people willing to go outside the law to get what they want. More importantly, without criminals, *M&M* heroes would have a lot less to do.

Even in a world of superheroes, it's not difficult to imagine why a villain might embark on a life of crime, especially when lots of money is involved. Fame (or rather infamy) may also be a factor. Think of the media attention focused on famous real-world crimes and criminals, and imagine the same types of crimes committed by villains in colorful costumes with superhuman powers and larger-than-life personalities. Think a lot of people were glued to their television sets to watch some of the sensationalist trails of the past decade? Put a super-criminal on trail and you have a ready-made

"reality show" sure to send cable news channel ratings into the stratosphere.

Superheroic involvement in crime fighting usually ends after the villain is handed over to the authorities, but what happens when the criminal justice system goes into action? These optional rules look at handling criminal trials in the context of the game. They focus on the American legal system (the setting for most superhero comics) but can be modified to work with similar criminal justice systems featuring adversarial trials.

Mutants & Masterminds is a superhero RPG, not a game of playing lawyers. Your players will have the most fun fighting the supervillains rather than sitting in a courtroom listening to attorneys wrangle over forensic evidence. Memorable superhero games focus on action and leave the uninteresting details in the background. That doesn't mean, however, that you can't include the occasional courtroom drama in your series.

The system in this section allows you to quickly determine the outcome of a criminal trial without a lot of effort or preparation. It's not a detailed model of the criminal justice system, but should suffice to determine if this week's supervillain is going to prison and how long before he'll be able to exact revenge on the heroes who sent him there.

Keeping track of the legal status of your campaign villains has the added benefit of providing your players with clear evidence of their heroes' successes. and can aid their future cases. If Dr. Stratos just broke out of prison, and a new crime bears his *modus operandi,* then chances are he's involved. More interesting still, what if Dr. Stratos is still *in* prison? Could he still be responsible for this new crime, or is someone else imitating his M.O. and his powers? This kind of detail can help bring your setting to life.

TRIAL CHECKS

So your players' heroes have turned over the villain-of-the-week to the authorities. With a single d20 roll, you can make a trial check to determine the villain's fate. First, however, you need to determine the severity of the villain's crime (or crimes) and the circumstances surrounding it.

STEP 1: SEVERITY

A mass murderer is looking at a more severe sentence than the costumed kid who knocked over a liquor store. Consult the **Crime Severity** table to determine the severity of the character's alleged crime. Use only the most severe crime to determine the modifier, falling back on grand theft or mass murder for crimes in which a lot of stuff was stolen or a lot of people were killed. While the villain may stand trial for many crimes at once, only the most serious matters for purposes of the trial check.

CRIME SEVERITY

Examples	Severity	Modifier
Corruption, possession, pandering, theft, vice	Minor	–0
Arson, assault, burglary, grand theft, larceny, trafficking	Moderate	–2
Kidnapping, murder, rape	Newsworthy	–4
Mass murder, serial murder, terrorism, treason, war crimes	Memorable	–6
Genocide, world dominations	Infamous	–8

STEP 2: MODIFIERS

If facts were all that mattered in a trial, prison populations would look a lot different. Circumstantial factors such as good lawyers, biased juries, and even physical appearance can affect a trial one way or another. To determine if these factors apply, consult the following chart. All applicable modifiers stack to determine a total modifier.

For simplicity's sake, you can use a shorthand of a +2 modifier for favorable conditions and a –2 modifier for unfavorable conditions, as usual. You can also apply other modifiers as you see fit for conditions not given on the table. For example, if a particular type of superhuman in your setting is viewed with greater suspicion (mutants, mystics, etc.) then such characters may suffer a negative modifier when they come to trial.

CIRCUMSTANCE MODIFIERS

Circumstance	Modifier
Attractive feat	+1
Benefit feat	+1 or more
Connected feat	+2
Wealth	+1 per 5 points over 10
Prior convictions	–2 each
Prior retrials (this trial only)	–2 each
Unusual-looking	–1 or more

STEP 3: TRIAL MODIFIER

Determine the defendant's trial modifier by adding the severity modifier to any circumstantial modifiers that apply. Remember only the most severe crime adds to the severity modifier, while all applicable circumstance modifiers stack.

STEP 4: CHECK RESULT

Simulate the trial with a *trial check:* a d20 roll plus the defendant's total trial modifier. Consult the **Trial Results** table to determine the defendant's fate.

Remember, just because a judge sentences a villain to a certain time behind bars doesn't mean the character will be out of circulation that long. Prison breaks are a staple of comic book stories, and should appear pretty regularly in most *M&M* games.

TRIAL RESULTS

Check Result	Trial Result
20+	Found innocent and released
19–15	Commuted sentence (counts as "prior conviction" for future checks), released.
14–10	Convicted and sentenced to 1d20 weeks in prison.
9–5	Convicted and sentenced to 1d20 months in prison.
4–0	Convicted and sentenced to 1d20 years in prison.
–1 or less	Convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment or death (GM's option).

ADVENTURES

It's harder to provide challenges for heroes able to fly and ignore gunfire, and some powers can short-circuit plots altogether, if they are not handled properly. On the other hand, super-powers also provide plot hooks and opportunities for new rewards players can earn during the game.

There are a couple things to keep in mind running *M&M* adventures. The first is to allow heroes the opportunity to actually use their abilities. The second is to keep the game from becoming entirely about those abilities and not the heroes.

SPOTLIGHT TIME

An important part of having powers is the opportunity to use them. After all, each player has devoted points to powers, so they should be able to have fun with them. Therefore, every adventure should ideally offer "spotlight time" to each hero, letting them all show off their abilities.

This means spotlighting the particular abilities of each hero, which may differ considerably. You can spotlight combat-related abilities with a fight, but that doesn't necessarily suit the skulker, who needs an opportunity to sneak around, or the clairvoyant, who wants a chance to demonstrate his unique insight. It also includes any non-powered characters in the group. They need spotlight time just as much (if not more!) than the ones with powers.

Try and ensure each adventure has opportunities for all of the heroes to shine, whatever their powers and abilities may be. This usually means some get to take center stage in one scene, then step aside for others in another part of the adventure. Sometimes it's impossible (or just impractical) to include spotlight time for everyone

in the same adventure. When this happens, at least try and balance things out over the course of multiple adventures. If you run a combat-intensive game where the skulkers and thinkers don't have much to do, try to have an espionage-style adventure not long thereafter to give them their time in the spotlight.

If there are particular powers or abilities you don't think you'll be able to spotlight in the campaign at all—either because you don't like the type of adventures involving them or because they don't fit into your idea of the campaign's style—you're better off asking players not to create heroes with those powers right from the beginning. That way, you can be sure to include everyone and the players won't feel neglected or cheated of opportunities for their characters to shine.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

While it's important to allow the heroes to show off their powers, it is equally important to have adventures and encounters where the heroes' powers don't really matter, where it's the human and not the superhuman element that's significant.

Focusing on interpersonal relationships and subplots is a good way of doing this. Provide a recurring supporting cast for the campaign to give the heroes opportunities to interact and form relationships. Encourage the players to roleplay and interact in-character during the game. Then you can include subplots to give the heroes a human touch: a powerful wizard worries about his ailing mentor and hopes to find a cure for the ravages of age; a teen superhero is hiding her powers from her family and trying to get a date for the prom while battling supervillains downtown; the monster-slaying hero has to reconcile his love for a beautiful and seductive vampire, who may or may not be leading him on; and so forth.

You can also introduce challenges in adventures where the heroes' powers don't make any real difference. Being immune to bullets and able to pick up buses doesn't necessarily give a hero an immediate solution to a tense hostage or rescue situation. Divinely granted powers may not help a hero resolve a schism over religious doctrine. Being able to read minds may actually *complicate* matters for a heroine trying to have a "normal" relationship with a non-psychic... especially when she suspects there's something her significant other isn't telling her.

When creating adventures, ask yourself these two questions: What are the best opportunities to spotlight the characters' capabilities, and what are the best opportunities to spotlight the characters as individuals?

POWERS AS PLOTS

Powers also serve as plot hooks, providing ideas for different adventures and complications. Some of the more common power-based plots include the following:

SECRET ORIGIN

Clues may arise about the true origin or source of a mysterious power. Perhaps someone turns up claiming to be a long-lost relative with similar or identical powers and knowledge of a character's true origins. A religious cult might attach itself to a hero, proclaiming him their messiah and fervently believing his powers are divinely given (whether they are or not). Conversely, monster-hunters may attack, claiming the hero's powers are actually a sign of demonic influence, or even possession. Some claims may be misguided, delusional, or attempts to scam the hero, but others may be true (at least, from a certain point of view).

POWER ALTERATION

Some incident alters a hero's powers in some way, creating new opportunities and headaches. Examples include sudden temporary increases or decreases in power rank, shifts in power focus (a fire-controller switches over to harnessing cold or water for a time), temporary loss of powers altogether, or the sudden acquisition of new powers. An accident may even cause a group of characters to switch powers! Such alterations are usually temporary, lasting no more than one or two adventures, and resolved by the end of the story. Still, some power alterations may be permanent, or lead to less serious lasting changes once they're resolved.

POWER IMPROVEMENT

Chances to improve powers can lead to adventures. Heroes may seek out teachers, guides, or experts to assist them. They may need rare elements or devices to expand or alter their powers, and some improvements may only be possible under certain conditions or at specific times. A patron may require a quest or similar undertaking before granting additional power. Conversely, heroes may take up a task to remove flaws or even rid themselves of an unwanted or uncontrolled power. Antagonists may dangle opportunities for power improvement in front of the heroes as bribes or temptations.

UNCONTROLLED POWER

An uncontrolled power can certainly cause complications. A normally controlled power can also *become* uncontrolled as a complication due to accident, injury, and so forth. This can create problems during an otherwise routine adventure, as the hero and his allies try to cope with the unpredictable power. Perhaps a particularly inauspicious event (celestial alignment, passing comet, holy day, sunspots, dimensional shift, or whatever) causes some or even *all* powers to become uncontrolled for a while!

MEANINGFUL CHALLENGES

How do you offer meaningful challenges to heroes able to shrug off bullets, fly through the air, see through walls, or read minds? (Or all of the above!) Some traditional adventure challenges become almost meaningless when super-powers get involved, so you need to either adjust the level of challenge according to the powers or find new things to challenge the heroes.

THREAT OF FORCE

In many settings a gunshot or dagger thrust is a serious concern. This isn't the case when you've got sufficient Toughness to shrug off such puny weapons, or even greater attacks, without even flinching. How do you threaten heroes who are practically invulnerable, or possess combat traits great enough to win any fight they get into?

The first, and most obvious, way is using overwhelming force. A hero is immune to bullets? How well can he handle a bazooka or a shoulder-fired missile? He is one of the world's greatest martial artists? What about one of his close rivals, or even one of the handful of fighters in the world *better* than him?

Oftentimes threats of force are a matter of scale: there's nearly always a greater force to use against the character, although it's difficult to justify that force all the time. An ordinary mugger isn't going to be carrying hand-grenades, and the guards at a top-secret facility aren't all going to be among the top ten unarmed fighters in the world. Such routine challenges just aren't challenging for someone with extraordinary powers, which is just as it should be.

One concern with overwhelming force is it can be *too* overwhelming; the hero virtually immune to gunfire might be seriously hurt by an anti-tank rocket. This becomes especially true when dealing with very powerful attacks and defenses. There's a huge difference between a conventional weapon and a tacnuke, for example. Beware that you don't overwhelm characters when trying to challenge them.

When high Impervious Toughness scores are an obstacle, you can use more exotic sorts of attacks, either with extras like Alternate Save, Disease, or Poison, or powers like Dazzle, Drain, Nauseate, and Stun. Tough heroes may still need to breathe, or have other weak spots. Again, be careful attacks bypassing the target's Toughness aren't too powerful. Still, having unusual attacks show up from time to time can keep players on their toes and prevent them from becoming complacent in their invulnerability.

Then there are always threats of force against others. Sure, the hero may be nigh-invulnerable, but odds are his friends and loved ones, or even his teammates, aren't. Enemies may take hostages, or threaten the hero with attacks he could surely survive, but which will also devastate the surrounding area. Even if you can walk away unharmed from a nuclear blast, do you really want one to go off in the middle of your home town? The collateral damage around an otherwise invulnerable target can be as serious as personal injury in some ways, perhaps even worse. This is typically an advantage villains have over heroes; many care nothing for collateral damage or harm to others and so take full advantage of their own invulnerability.

MYSTERIES

Powers like ESP and Telepathy can make a mockery of any mystery in an adventure. With a single successful check, the hero has it all figured out. Game over. How do you pose a mystery for such abilities?

The most straightforward means is to prevent the powers from solving the problem. For example, perhaps the murderer has amnesia and doesn't know he's the guilty party (keeping a telepath from solving it). Or the criminal has powers of his own and uses them to cover his tracks with, for example, a version of Nullify, clearing any trace evidence that powers like Postcognition or Super-Senses might pick up later. These tend to be rather brute-force methods, since they render the powers the player paid points for relatively useless. You shouldn't over-use them or players may rightly feel cheated.

A more complex option is to make the powers key to solving the mystery without making it an easy solution. Perhaps it's a crime or riddle so baffling that powers are required to even have a chance of figuring it out (a good reason for the heroes to get involved in the first place: the problem is beyond the conventional authorities). Perhaps a medium can contact the spirit of a murder victim, but there are spiritual obstacles in the way. A special ritual is necessary to contact the victim, and even then things are not what they appear. For example, the victim may have actually committed suicide, but a guilty relative arranged things to look like murder to cover up the truth.

Finally, you can start a mystery based on an extrasensory ability. Perhaps someone has a precognitive vision of his own death, and has to figure out how and when it will happen in order to prevent it. A telepath may pick up a stray thought from someone in a crowd, suggesting a threat of violence. Now he must find the criminal before his scheme can go forward, and also find solid evidence to take to

the authorities, since telepathic scans aren't sufficient to arrest or convict someone!

TIME AND DISTANCE

Many challenges in adventures involve issues of time and distance: heroes have to travel from place to place (often through perilous terrain), cross yawning chasms, ford rushing rivers, and get where they're going in the nick of time. Such challenges are far less serious for those able to fly, teleport, or walk through solid walls, to say nothing of heroes able to travel through time or jump across dimensional barriers!

In some cases, the ability to ignore trifles (like travel time) suits *M&M* campaigns just fine. For example, superheroes rarely worry about getting from place to place; they make the trip "between panels" in a negligible amount of time. On the other hand, some challenges rely on travel to one degree or another. If heroes can bypass every wall, fence, gate, and locked door with ease, then those things aren't viable challenges.

While lesser challenges of time and distance are simply irrelevant to those with the right powers, you can pose others. For example, if a teleporter needs to see or properly visualize his destination, then a maze or a location an indeterminate distance underground may make it more difficult (and risky) to make the jump. Perhaps a hero can assume insubstantial form to pass through a wall, but risks drawing the attention of evil wraiths, able to attack him in that form; and should one of them happen to stun him while he's inside the wall...

SOCIAL TABOOS

Tremendous power allows its wielder to ignore many of the rules of society, both written and unwritten. This is particularly true for those largely immune to harm and having no need of society's protection or support. With the power to do as they please, heroes may wonder: why should they follow society's rules? Who's going to stop them, if they don't?

Probably no one, if the violations of social taboo are relatively minor and infrequent. Throughout history, the powerful have been able to get away with a great deal more than the weak and powerless. Odds are the same is true of those with superhuman powers. However, the greater the violation, the more likely someone or something will intervene to put a stop to it. Possibilities include the following:

PEERS

he first, and most likely, reaction comes from the character's close friends, family, and associates (possibly including other player characters). Unless the violator is a hermit with no social life, and his violations are comparatively minor, he will face the disapproval of those close to him. The GM can use the reactions of these characters to tell players they're making inappropriate choices.

ROLE MODELS

A useful way of getting the message about socially unacceptable behavior across to players is through a role model, someone the character looks up to or respects. This might be a teacher, mentor, elder statesman, or other experienced NPC. The reprimand might come in the form of a stern lecture, the cold shoulder, or even stronger measures. For example, an experienced hero might feel compelled

to bring a wayward peer back to the straight-and-narrow (or to the justice of a court!).

SOCIAL OUTCRY

After the people closest to the offender, society in general reacts to any misdeeds. The offender may be shunned in polite society at best, or face legal prosecution at worst. A negative reputation is a virtual certainty, affecting reactions toward the character accordingly. In the extreme, there may even be an entire social movement against the character (or supers in general).

HIGHER POWERS

The ultimate social arbiters may be higher beings, either actual gods or others acting in their stead. In settings where higher powers intervene, they may do so to prevent abuses of power, especially if they control those forces! Characters with divine abilities may lose them for misbehaving, and wielders of other powers may still face higher judgment if they flout social and moral codes. GMs should feel free to give players due warning of such punishment, either in the form of tales of others who have suffered it in the past or a "first warning" from the Powers That Be when they stray too close to crossing the line. (See **Oversight** in Chapter 5.)

NORMALS

When the heroes have powers, it can be difficult to make normal people much of a challenge. That's in keeping with the comic book superhero genre, where heroes mow through hordes of minions and lesser opponents, and stand head-and-shoulders above ordinary humanity. However, when you want to have an otherwise normal person pose a challenge, how do you do it?

The solution lies in the definition of "normal." While someone may be entirely normal physically, and have no powers of any kind, that doesn't mean he can't challenge a super-powered character, or even a group of them. Just consider some of the advantages a normal person might have:

NUMBERS

One advantage of normal people: there sure are a lot of them. No matter how powerful a hero is, the normal population outnumbers him by a considerable amount. He may be able to take down one soldier easily, but what about ten, a hundred, or even a thousand? What about an entire army? While throwing armies at the heroes shouldn't be commonplace (except in the most over-the-top adventures), it is a potential threat leveled against supers who get out of hand. Even on a smaller scale, numbers can make a difference. Trained fighters will use flanking techniques, try and gang up on their opponents, and otherwise seek to take advantage of their superior numbers.

RESOURCES

Wealth (and associated resources) can be a great leveler. While a normal antagonist might not have the power to face the heroes in a head-on confrontation, he may be able to hire people who can, as well as bodyguards to keep any super enemies at bay. A wealthy foe can buy out businesses (or simply ruin them), bribe people to cause trouble, and spend money on things like media smear campaigns and whatever countermeasures are available for powers in the campaign.

EQUIPMENT

Wealth and resources can also provide all sorts of useful technology. This includes countermeasures against powers and other things that help even out a mismatch. How much equipment can help depends on what's available: a normal person might only have access to common equipment, but some could also afford various devices, edging into the realm of having artificial powers of a sort.

INFLUENCE

As useful, as material resources, if not more so, is the goodwill of the community. A normal adversary with a good reputation and a lot of influence can cause plenty of trouble, and there's very little the heroes can do about it unless they want to provoke a tremendous public backlash. For example, they may know a certain philanthropic businessman secretly hates them and is trying to ruin them, but if they move openly against him, they'll only support his claim that they are a menace to society, and the authorities will try to protect him! The same can be true of an ambitious politician, or a crime-lord masquerading as an "honest citizen."

BLACKMAIL

Many people have skeletons in their closet, and the powerful can have *very* dark secrets. Perhaps someone uncovers a secret about the heroes important enough to provide leverage, especially if the blackmailer had the foresight to ensure it will get out should something happen to him.

DEPENDENTS

A hero's dependents—friends, family, and loved ones—can become targets of foes looking for leverage or influence over him. A foe simply out for revenge may resort to striking at his target's loved ones, knowing it will hurt far worse than if he simply killed the hero outright!

VULNERABILITIES

Powers often come with weaknesses. In addition to the various countermeasures that might take away or neutralize a hero's powers, there may be other things a knowledgeable enemy can use against him. A demon vulnerable to holy relics might confront a normal foe who has surrounded himself with them, for example, and who seeks refuge on holy ground. A hero weakened by a mysterious glowing mineral finds his worst foe has acquired a supply he keeps close at hand. A vampire hero must deal with a crusading priest supplied with garlic, holy water, and wooden stakes, and so forth.

Normal adversaries may combine some or all of these advantages. For example, a government official designed as a foil may wield the influence of the law and have the support of public opinion (as well as law enforcement). A criminal businessman may have considerable wealth, some equipment, and the willingness to use both to ferret out his enemies' secrets. The "demon-hunting" priest combines the resources of the church with intimate knowledge of his prey's weaknesses and a flock of fanatically loyal followers.

OPPOSITION POWER LEVEL

Power level in *M&M* is used as a general guideline to balance heroes against each other and to provide the Gamemaster with an idea of what constitutes a suitable challenge for those heroes.

Generally speaking, an opponent of the same power level as a hero should provide a reasonable challenge: able to affect the hero in some fashion, with traits—particularly skill and powers—sufficient to challenge the hero's capabilities. Likewise, a similar sized group of opponents of the same power level should provide a reasonable challenge: four power level 10 villains against four PL 10 heroes, for example.

Differences in power level provide different challenges. As a rough guideline, each additional power level over the campaign's PL makes a character suitable for taking on one additional opponent. So a PL 14 villain in a PL 10 campaign is a suitable foe for a group of five heroes; a PL 19 villain can likely take on many more! Note that beyond a difference of five or so power levels, a foe's power can increase *dramatically.* The aforementioned PL 19 villain could potentially take on dozens of PL 10 heroes, with the right selection of powers (such as Immunity and Impervious Toughness) and saving throw bonuses making him nigh invulnerable to their abilities.

Likewise, lower power level foes are less of a challenge: for every decrease in power level, an additional foe of the same PL can be added to provide a sufficient challenge. Four PL 7 villains can go up against a single PL 10 hero, for example (although they can expect to take some losses in doing so).

These guidelines are estimates only: the liberal awarding of hero points and use of GM Fiat (see **Chapter 6** of *M&M*) allow you to fine-tune a particular encounter. Keep in mind that you generally want the early encounters of an adventure to be more difficult, allowing the players opportunities to earn hero points they can carry forward to the later encounters and the adventure's climax.

Finally there are plot device characters (page 211, *M&M*), the ultimate challenge, since they are exactly as powerful as you, the Gamemaster, want and need them to be. Even the most powerful hero pales in comparison to cosmic forces able to alter reality as they see fit. Plot device characters aren't even on the power level scale, since nobody has a chance in any sort of convention conflict against them. Overcoming such a foe is usually more a matter of cleverness or overcoming whatever other challenge(s) you pose to the players, such as winning a riddle contest, or being willing to make a great sacrifice (thereby robbing the villain of his power), for example.

MEANINGFUL REWARDS

Just like many challenges seem insignificant to heroes with the power to move mountains, so too the rewards of wealth, influence, and so forth may not matter much to them. What's the use of wealth when a hero has no material wants or needs? What influence equals the power to control minds? Game Masters need to consider appropriate rewards for powerful heroes.

These rewards are in addition to the simple enjoyment of playing the game, of course, which is a reward everyone gets! It may well be enough for some players, who don't really care about getting rewards other than having fun. This section addresses options for those players who *do* care, and might find rewards otherwise lacking in a *M&M* game.

ACHIEVEMENT

Those with great power are capable of achieving great things, and players may want those achievements for their heroes. If so, you can make accomplishing a particular goal a reward of sorts. Encourage the players to come up with lists of goals or things the heroes want to

accomplish. You can then work them into the overall campaign, introducing them as subplots or even building adventures around them.

The best goals for this purpose are ones you can break down into steps, allowing the heroes to accomplish them a little at a time until they reach the ultimate goal. Some goals may be short-term and others long-term, possibly lasting for the duration of the campaign.

For example, a group of heroes may have cleaning up crime in a city as their overall goal. Each also has individual goals: vengeance against an old enemy, attaining honor and recognition, redemption, finding a lost parent, and so forth. Achieving each goal provides a sense of accomplishment. The goals also suggest stories and may even create conflict in the game; for example, maybe they learn that the hero's lost parent has ties to another hero's nemesis. Gamemasters can use goals as story hooks while players can use them as roleplaying cues, and they may suggestion complications for earning hero points.

KNOWLEDGE

Most stories have their mysteries and unanswered questions. Finding the answers to those questions can be a suitable reward. What is the secret source of powers in the world? What is the true origin of a hero or villain? What happened to the mentor who vanished years ago? What is the real nature of the conspiracy?

Like other achievements, knowledge may come in stages. You learn the name of a higher-up in the conspiracy, leading you to his superior, and so forth toward the heart of the matter. Investigations of an ancient ruin turn up fragments of information about a lost artifact, pointing toward additional clues as to its whereabouts, and so forth.

Knowledge can also come in the form of useful facts: things like a true name of a spirit, a villain's secret weakness, or a clue to a hero's missing past. These rewards help guide adventures and plots: once the heroes uncover the villain's weakness, or learn the secret to unlocking their own hidden powers, then they're ready for the big confrontation. Before that point, their nemesis may seem all but invincible.

POWER IMPROVEMENT

In a game focused on powers, opportunities for power improvement make suitable rewards, particularly unusual or limited opportunities. For example, if power improvement is normally a slow and steady process, then a transformation granting additional power makes an excellent and immediate reward. The same is true of things like finding a teacher, discovering information necessary to learn a new ability, or earning the favor of a higher power, who grants access to new abilities or powers.

PREVALENCE OF POWERS

Although *M&M* campaigns usually feature powers of one sort or another, the prevalence of powers among the general populace can vary greatly from setting to setting. In some, only the main heroes and a few antagonists have any powers at all, while in others nearly everyone has powers!

Not all powers or origins need be equally prevalent, either. Indeed, in many settings some powers are more common than others. A world could have common superhuman physical powers but rare mental powers, with divine and magical powers being unique or unknown.]

UNIQUE POWERS

In a unique powers setting, only a small handful of characters have powers. This may not include the heroes! Usually, though, it means the heroes and a small group of antagonists are the only ones in the world with strange abilities. This may mean everyone gained their powers in the same way, even at the same time. It may also mean all powers come from the same source, although neither has to be the case.

For example, perhaps everyone in the world with powers was present when one of the gods fell to earth and died, with each of them gaining a portion of the god's essence (and power). When one power-wielder slays another, he gets that portion of divine essence, thereby increasing his power, and setting the scions of divine power at each others' throats. As another example, perhaps the small number of super-powered characters in the setting are all from alternate worlds, brought together in a single place and time on a world where no one else has powers (perhaps even our world!). The heroes may come from diverse backgrounds with virtually any origin or power, and the same is true of the antagonists.

Unique powers may not remain so, depending on their origin. In some settings, unique powers are just a stage the world passes through on its way toward powers becoming more widespread.

RARE POWERS

Powers in this setting are rare; everyone may have heard of someone with powers, but hasn't necessarily met one. This tends to be the default for most *M&M* settings; there are a substantial number of super-powered individuals, but few enough that they're not everywhere.

COMMON POWERS

Common powers show up often enough that nearly everyone knows someone with powers. The empowered population is a sizeable minority, perhaps even the majority. This may affect how powers are perceived (see **Powers and Society** in the following section).

Common powers may be homogeneous, coming from a single source or origin. Everyone may even have the same power! For example, a world might have common mental powers, or even just Telepathy as a common power. On the other hand, a setting with common powers might have diverse smaller populations from multiple power sources and origins: there are people with divine powers, psionic powers, magical powers, and other powers they acquired in various ways.

UNIVERSAL POWERS

In some unusual settings, *everyone* has powers! This can range from everyone having the same power to everyone having their own unique power, from one origin or power source to multiple ones.

For example, in a far future setting, humanity may become a psionic species, with mental powers universal (although some individuals have different degrees of power and talent, the same as with any innate ability). A fantasy setting may feature inborn magical knacks, with individual talents determined by the position of the stars, the time of the year, phase of the moon, or some other mystic tide in the universe.

Note that "universal" is also relative. For example, if the campaign takes place in a hidden city where everyone has super-powers, and adventures take place there primarily, then it seems to be a universal powers setting, even if the no one in the rest of the world has any powers.

POWERS AND SOCIETY

How does society at large react to super-powers and those who wield them? Do people with powers hold a special place in society, or are they treated just like everyone else? If the latter, then why? (They're definitely *not* "just like everyone else!")

Society can react in a number of different ways to powers, and these are not all mutually exclusive. Some segments of society and particular individuals react differently, and there may be different attitudes toward different powers. A culture regarding divine power as a sign of great favor may at the same time see magical powers as a mark of evil. Some powers may be lauded as "natural" while others are seen as "unnatural" or "perverse." The classic example is mutant powers, often looked upon with suspicion compared to other sorts of super-powers.

Society may view super-humans as ordinary citizens, special talents, or outcasts. Some super-humans may even set themselves up as rulers of society! Certainly, that's the wish of many super-villains.

ORDINARY CITIZENS

People with powers are no different from anyone else, at least in terms of society and its laws. There are three reasons for this: first, society is simply unaware anyone has powers, so there are no laws or social mores concerning them. How society reacts if and when powers become known is up to the GM. Second, society has deliberately chosen to treat power-users equally and fairly (or at least relatively so); third is everyone has powers, so they're not "unusual!"

This does not mean there are no laws concerning the use of powers, only that they're no more restrictive than the laws concerning everyone else. For example, a crime committed using powers is still a crime. It also means the empowered have no special privileges; they're not immune to prosecution for misusing their powers.

SPECIAL TALENTS

Society acknowledges the "special talents" of supers in some fashion. Of course, this acknowledgement isn't always positive, since it may entail legal or social restrictions on powers and their use. Powers may also affect society as supers find different ways to use their talents. Powers may completely transform some professions and social institutions, including the following.

COMMUNICATION

Although technological forms of communication are common in the modern world, they don't exist in earlier societies. This power may greatly speed up communication, especially in settings where the speed of messages is that of the fastest horse or ship. Instantaneous communication can hold together a large civilization, but can also dog the heroes wherever they may go.

EDUCATION

Some mental powers may be effective in providing education and monitoring the progress of students.

ENTERTAINMENT

A wide range of powers have entertainment value, ranging from putting on shows to using powers to provide special effects. Some powers even create entirely new forms of entertainment, or addictions, for that matter.

EXPLORATION

Super-explorers can reach places others cannot, at least not easily. Movement powers like Flight or Teleport expand the bounds of exploration. Powers like Dimensional and Temporal Movement expand it even further. Sensory powers allow explorers to perceive entirely new things about the places and things they explore.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Various combat-related powers are useful to police officers, giving them innate weapons and protection. Even more likely to transform law enforcement are mental powers. Imagine "thought police" able to read a suspect's mind to know whether or not he's guilty, or empowered to arrest people just *thinking* about committing a crime! Abilities like Detect and Postcognition are useful for gathering evidence and, with the aid of someone with Precognition, police may even stop crimes *before* they happen. Of course, this raises questions like: if you intend to commit a crime, and a telepath or precognitive senses you will, are you just as guilty as if you had actually done it?

MEDICINE

While the Healing power is likely to have the greatest impact on the practice of medicine, other powers may also be useful to empowered physicians. For example, X-Ray Vision or ESP can replace X-ray machines, Telekinesis can perform surgery without cutting open the body, and the ability to place a subject into a deep sleep or coma can replace the use of anesthetics. There's also the issue of how traditional medicine reacts to the existence of super-powered healers. Are they practicing medicine without a license? How do you license them?

POLITICS

The political implications of powers are vast, but some can affect the political process directly. In addition to simply using super-powers to grab political power (see **Overlords** in the following section), abilities like superhuman Charisma or outright Mind Control can have a significant impact. Conversely, powers like Mind Reading and Detect (truth) change the character of political hearings, allowing society to know if their politicians are being honest!

PSYCHOLOGY

Mental Transform with a Continuous duration can be a tremendous boon to psychology, allowing neuroses and even psychoses to simply be wiped away. Of course, there may be long-term side-effects to such a "brute force" approach to mental health. There's also the danger of unrestricted "editing" of minds. It's one thing for someone to volunteer to have his antisocial tendencies corrected, but what about convicted criminals? For that matter, what happens when society begins "correcting" other behavior, such as rebelliousness, unacceptable religious beliefs, or "sexual deviancy" (which may all have far-ranging meanings, depending on who defines them).

RELIGION

The existence of divine super-powers may or may not prove the existence of a God or gods (or various other supernatural entities like spirits and demons). At the very least, many powers and power sources have religious implications. Clerics can benefit from the use of powers in their roles as healers, intermediaries, spiritual leaders,
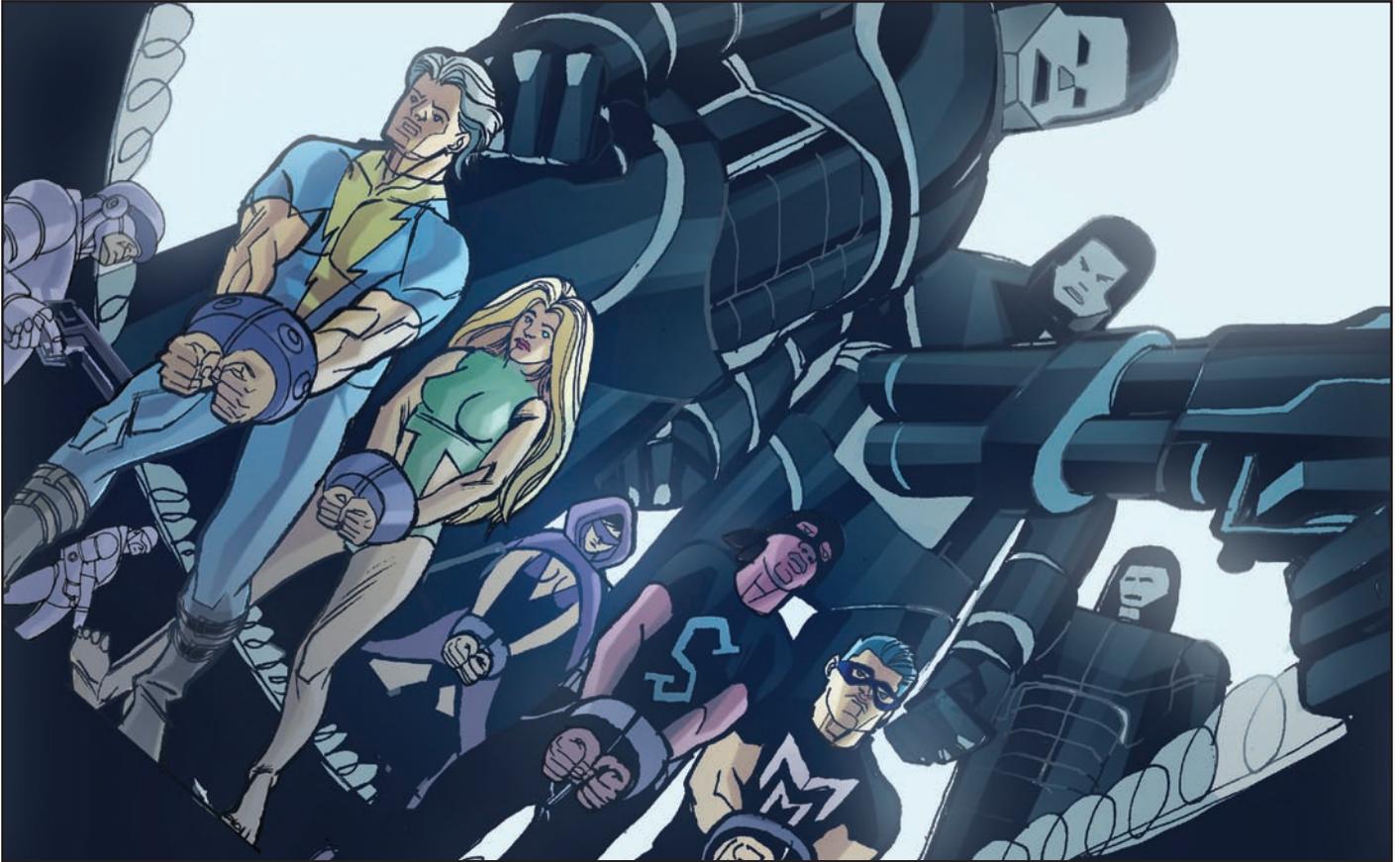
and counselors. Some may claim their powers give them special insight into people's souls, and they may be right! Just as many might claim a super-powered religious figure is false and misleading. Powers could lead to a new era of religious understanding and tolerance or one of schism and holy war.

SCIENCE

Scientific study and understanding of some powers may lead to major breakthroughs in science. For example, learning the mechanism of a teleportation power may lead to artificial teleporters, and the mechanism of telepathy can provide the key to faster-than-light communication (or even travel). Of course, some powers may be beyond the understanding of science, especially those powers without a scientific basis (such as magic). Many powers can also be helpful to scientists, allowing them to study phenomena directly without instruments or perform certain experiments without the need for expensive equipment.

TRANSPORTATION

Teleporters with enough carrying capacity could revolutionize travel, at least for some. Even if abilities like Teleport aren't widespread enough for general use, they remain an option for those with access to them in emergencies. Super-fast couriers can carry messages from place to place, or even transport items instantly.

OUTCASTS

In some settings those with powers are outcasts: feared, hated, or disdained by society. This becomes more likely if powers originate from something outside of society's control, making normal people jealous of abilities they can't have and fearful of what they can't understand or control.

Prejudice against supers may take many different forms. At the most basic level, society may institute draconian laws to keep powers under control and prevent supers from having an "unfair advantage." At greater levels, people might consider certain powers (and their wielders) innately evil or dangerous. Governments may ban the use of super-powers and closely monitor and known supers for infractions. The empowered may lose their civil rights, forced to wear identifying marks (clothing, tattoos, bracelets, even tracking implants) to warn "normal" people about them. In the extreme, supers are hunted down and imprisoned, enslaved, or killed.

Strict regulation and even oppression of powers is often justified by the greater good of society. Some supers may even buy into this, working to police their own kind, or becoming "hounds" to track down and imprison or kill other supers. Collaborators looking to advance their own lot, or trying to keep revolutionaries from rocking the boat, use their powers to support the existing structure.

Societal prejudice may inspire human rights organizations and political groups supporting supers. Some sort of resistance among those with super-powers is also likely. They may try to work within the system to educate and overcome fears toward them, or work in secret to escape from an oppressive society or to overthrow it! In the latter case, supers may one day find themselves in charge of the world that once oppressed them, whether they want to be or not.

OVERLORDS

Supers can use their abilities to set themselves up in charge of society, whether ordinary people like it or not (or whether the supers like it or not, for that matter). Superhuman overlords might be ruthless dictators or enlightened guardians of humanity, doing what they feel is best for everyone. The second type of overlord must always be on guard against turning into the first kind, abusing power and privilege, even if it seems justified at first.

If the overlords all draw their power from the same source, then control of that power source ensures rulership and may be a key weakness for rebels to target. Overlords with different power sources may come into conflict because of them. Perhaps there is a hierarchy or caste system of overlords based on different powers or origins.

Consider what powers overlords have at their disposal and how powerful they are individually. A small handful of overlords can rule the world if they're powerful enough to sweep away conventional military forces on their own, or if they have sufficient mental powers to pull the strings behind the scenes. "Power" does not always mean fighting ability, however. Less powerful overlords must be on their guard against mundane threats. Some overlords may even be physically weaker than normal humans, such as psionicists with atrophied bodies but powerful minds.

Settings with empowered overlords may have renegades of one sort or another. Perhaps a member of the ruling class has grown dissatisfied with the status quo, or a commoner has somehow tapped into the power reserved solely for the elite. Imagine a theocracy ruled by those empowered by the gods faced with a strange new prophet who claims to have the gods' favor, and the powers to prove it. Rebels among despotic overlords may try to create a rebellion to overthrow them while renegades from benevolent overlords may be corrupted by power, and even taint the whole of society with their schemes.

SECRECY

How well known are powers in the setting? In some settings, powers are a well-kept secret (although they may not stay that way). Powers in other settings are public knowledge (for good or ill). Knowledge of powers affects the style and tone of the campaign, since it determines how openly supers use their own abilities.

SECRET

The existence of powers may be kept secret for a number of reasons. Supers may fear society's reaction to their existence (and rightly so). Keeping powers secret provides the element of surprise. Powers may be inherently dangerous or corrupting, things best kept out of the wrong hands. A higher power or powers may forbid revealing their existence to anyone; secrecy may even be a requirement to keep powers functioning!

Whatever the case, a secret powers campaign has two "worlds": the mundane world where everyone is ignorant of the existence of powers, and the empowered world, hidden behind the scenes. The mundane world may be similar to our own (from any time in history) or it may not. Layers of secrecy are possible; imagine a setting with physical super-powers but secret mental powers. Psychics have concealed their existence and true nature out of fear others would hunt them down as threats.

Subtle powers are best suited to a secret campaign, since keeping powers secret is an important part of the setting. Therefore mental powers and others with little or no noticeable effect are best. Characters have to be careful how and when they use their powers to keep them a secret. Generally, the consequences of discovery should be grave enough to encourage them to do so.

PRIVATE

In some settings, powers aren't generally known, except to a particular subculture, usually made up of the empowered themselves. This subculture is large enough to constitute a kind of "world" of its own, where powers are used relatively freely. Supers only need to be careful when they are forced to interact with "normals." This approach allows for a bit more freedom than a secret setting, where characters are constantly looking over their shoulders to avoid discovery.

As an example of a private setting, imagine a "society of night" made up of various monsters and supernatural beings (including humans with supernatural powers). At night, among their own kind, they are free to use their powers as they wish, limited only by the laws of their culture. During the day, or among normal humans, they have to hide their true nature and rely on subtlety to get the job done.

A world may even have multiple empowered subcultures: a secret magical society, for example, as well as a hidden society of psis, another of genetic mutants, and so forth. These groups may be entirely open with each other or only barely aware of the others. Perhaps the different factions are all locked in a shadowy war behind the scenes with the mundane world none the wiser.

OPEN

On many worlds with powers, their existence is public knowledge. People have different opinions and ideas about powers, but pretty much everyone knows about them. This is usually the case in *M&M* settings.

Of course, just because the general public knows of powers doesn't mean they know everything about them. They may not know how they work, for example (in fact, it's possible nobody knows). Public beliefs about powers may even be entirely wrong. For example, a conspiracy may have convinced the general populace supers are the chosen of divine forces, when in fact their powers come from an entirely different source. In some cases even supers might not know that public beliefs about their powers are incorrect. Superstition, folk-beliefs, and urban legends may color the perception of powers.

APPENDIX I: M&M FAQ

Since the release of *Mutants & Masterminds Second Edition,* fans have posed many questions about the game and its rules. This Appendix address the most frequently asked of these questions to provide clarifications and additional information for *M&M* players and Gamemasters.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

ARE NPC HEROES CREATED LIKE VILLAINS (DETERMINING THEIR POWER LEVEL BASED ON THEIR TRAITS) OR LIKE PC HEROES (LIMITED BY THE CAMPAIGN'S POWER LEVEL)?

The former; *all* NPCs in a *Mutants & Masterminds* game have their power level determined by what traits they have. The campaign's power level limit is to keep the *player characters* on relatively even footing.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE COSTUMED ADVENTURER ARCHETYPE'S FEATS?

They were accidentally left out of the layout. See the **Errata** for them.

SOME ARCHETYPES HAVE "IMPERVIOUS TOUGHNESS," WHERE IS THIS POWER FOUND?

See the **Protection** power on page 96, in particular the description of the Impervious extra. It can specifically be applied to the Toughness save as well, which is the case with those archetypes.

WHY DO SOME ARCHETYPES HAVE ATTACK, DEFENSE, DAMAGE, OR TOUGHNESS BONUSES GREATER THAN POWER LEVEL 10?

As specified under **Hero Archetypes** (fourth paragraph, second sentence): "Several of the archetypes use the Attack/Defense trade-off rule (page 24) to adjust their maximum attack, defense, damage, and Toughness save bonuses, as determined by their power level."

ABILITIES

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR REFLEX SAVING THROWS WHEN YOU ARE FLAT-FOOTED?

Nothing. Being flat-footed has no effect on Reflex saves. A helpless character, however, is unable to make Reflex saving throws and automatically fails them. This includes other conditions that cause a character to become helpless, such as paralyzed or unconscious.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR WILL SAVING THROWS WHEN YOU ARE UNCONSCIOUS?

Also nothing, since it's assumed that Will saves are an "unconscious" process, requiring no effort on the character's part. In fact, unconscious characters are essentially immune to certain mental effects, since they're incapable of interaction or sensing much of anything.

FEATS

IS THERE A LIMIT TO THE NUMBER OF FEATS YOU CAN USE IN A ROUND?

There is no limit to the number of feats you can use per round or per action except for the time required (if any) to use those feats normally. If a feat doesn't list a time to use it, assume it is a free action.

CRITICAL STRIKE REQUIRES FAVORED OPPONENT AS A PREREQUISITE. IS IT THEN ONLY EFFECTIVE AGAINST YOUR FAVORED OPPONENTS?

That's correct. However, you only need to acquire the Critical Strike feat once to use it against any Favored Opponent(s) you may have.

THE MARTIAL ARTIST, WEAPON MASTER AND KUNG FU KILLER ARCHETYPES ALL HAVE THE CRITICAL STRIKE FEAT, BUT DO NOT HAVE A FAVORED OPPONENT. HOW IS IT THEY HAVE AND USE CRITICAL STRIKE?

In this case, Critical Strike essentially grants those characters the ability to spend hero points to emulate Favored Opponent and score a critical hit against an opponent normally immune to them. The player can choose to spend the hero point (or not) when a possible crit is rolled.

DOES THE TOUGHNESS BONUS FROM DEFENSIVE ROLL AFFECT KNOCKBACK MODIFIER?

Yes, since the character is assumed to take less of the brunt of the attack.

WITH THE FEARSOME PRESENCE FEAT, HOW LONG DOES THE EFFECT LAST?

Treat it as a sustained lasting effect, allowing for a new save for each time interval that passes after the initial saving throw.

CAN YOU TAKE 10 OR TAKE 20 ON THE INTELLIGENCE ROLL FOR MASTER PLAN?

No, you can't take 10 or 20.

UNCANNY DODGE SAYS YOU "RETAIN YOUR DODGE BONUS WHEN SURPRISED OR FLAT-FOOTED." DOES THIS MEAN YOU CAN STILL LOSE YOUR DODGE BONUS TO OTHER THINGS, LIKE WHEN YOU'RE CLIMBING OR BALANCING, FOR EXAMPLE?

Yes. As the feat description says, Uncanny Dodge does not prevent loss of dodge bonus under other conditions, just when flat-footed (at the start of combat) or when subject to a surprise attack.

POWERS

WHAT'S THE LIMIT ON MAXIMUM RANKS YOU CAN HAVE IN A POWER IN A CAMPAIGN?

There is no upper limit to power rank, except those limits specifically spelled out on page 24 of **M&M**. In particular, saving throw Difficulty Class and any effect on saving throw bonuses and ability scores are the primary limiters for powers. Powers with none of these effects are limited solely by how many points the character has to spend, and any series-specific limitations imposed by the Gamemaster.

HOW IS THE VALUE PROGRESSION TABLE APPLIED TO POWERS? IF A POWER STARTS OUT WITH A 5-FT. RADIUS, FOR EXAMPLE, HOW DOES IT PROGRESS?

The rank of a power isn't always equivalent to the rank on the **Time and Value Progression Table**, since it starts out at 1 = x1 to give it a baseline. Start out at whatever value the power begins at and count up from there. So, if a power starts out with a 5 ft. radius, and radius progresses one step up the table per rank, start counting at 5, going to 10, 25, 50, 100, 250, and so forth.

If you know the progression, you don't even really need the table. It's easy to remember: 1, 2.5, 5, then start over again but ×10: so it goes 1, 2 (with the .5 rounded down for simplicity), 5, then 10, 25, 50, then 100, 250, 500, 1000, 2500, 5000, and so on. So if you know that Flight starts out at 10 MPH and progresses from there you can just count ranks: 1 = 10 MPH, 2 = 25 MPH, 3 = 50 MPH, and so on.

THE VALUES OF THE VALUE PROGRESSION TABLE CAN BE KIND OF "GRAINY." HOW, FOR EXAMPLE, DO I GET A CHARACTER WHO HAS ONLY THREE ADDITIONAL LIMBS, OR WHO CAN ELONGATE ONLY 15 FT.?

The progression skips over some intermediate values simply so it can fit the necessary scale into a reasonable range. *Mutants & Masterminds* needs to cover powers able to affect a single room to those able to affect continents and planets. That results in a certain amount of "graininess" in the resolution of the progression chart.

There are basically two ways of handling intermediate values, and it's up to the GM to decide how they are handled in each individual game. The first is to charge for the next highest value and allow the player to voluntarily limit the character: you can take rank 3 Additional Limbs, for example (which is normally up to five extra limbs) and decide your character only has three. It's a minor difference, worth only a fraction of a power point, so hardly worth quibbling over.

Alternately, the GM can allow some characters to take a drawback to reflect that the power doesn't exploit its full value. This is a 1-point drawback at best, and its often problematic, since it's greater in actual value than the point difference. In the previous example, a character with Additional Limbs 3 with the drawback "Only three Additional Limbs," gets the power for an effective 2 power points, which is the normal cost for *two* additional limbs. The character is getting the benefit of the third limb for "free" (although it's a fairly minor benefit).

The GM should decide which approach is best, but generally it's easier to allow players to voluntarily limit their characters to fit their

concept and not worry about a fraction of a power point here or there than it is to assign tiny power drawbacks to "shave" points off various powers.

IF A PERCEPTION RANGE POWER IS REDUCED TO NORMAL OR TOUCH RANGE DOES IT REQUIRE AN ATTACK ROLL? CAN POWER ATTACK WORK WITH IT? CAN IT SCORE A CRITICAL HIT?

Yes to all. Not needing an attack roll is an inherent part of perception range. If the power's range is changed, it now needs an attack roll, and is subject to all the normal rules of powers that do so, including attack/save DC trade-offs, the Power Attack feat, and critical hits (along with an automatic miss on a natural 1).

YOU CAN'T PLACE A PERCEPTION RANGE POWER ANYWHERE YOU CAN'T ACCURATELY PERCEIVE, BUT CAN THE POWER'S EFFECT WORK ON TARGETS YOU CAN'T PERCEIVE IN THE POWER'S AREA OF EFFECT?

Essentially, no, they can't. Area powers are normally a "spread," which is to say the power spreads out from a starting point, but can be blocked by things like cover. So, for example, an Area Blast (like a fireball or explosion) spreads out from the starting or impact point. A character behind cover relative to the impact point gains its protection, and total cover lets him ignore the attack.

Perception range area effects *can* be spreads, in which case they work as mentioned previously: spreading out from a starting point, blocked by cover. They can also be "emanations" wherein the effect covers the entire area at once, but only affects targets the user can accurately perceive. As such, only concealment blocks the effect (although opaque total cover is also total concealment). Pick which type of area the power has when you build/buy it. Mental powers are always emanations, unless they have some physical effect.

For example, an Area Mental Blast can target the crooks in an alleyway. The people in the buildings on either side are unaffected, since the mental blaster can't perceive them. So is the crook hidden behind a dumpster, for the same reason, even though he's in the radius.

Now, if the mental blaster happens to have an accurate sense that perceives through solid objects (e.g., X-Ray Vision, ESP, an accurate mental sense, etc.) then the walls or the dumpster aren't necessarily barriers to his mental blast, and targets on the other side of them can be affected normally. Of course, in that case, he might want a Selective Attack so he can avoid affecting those innocent people inside the buildings.

HOW DO I CREATE A PERMANENT ALTERNATE FORM?

Make the duration of all of the Alternate Form's non-instant powers permanent and you've got it.

CAN YOU USE ANIMATE OBJECTS ON AN OPPONENT'S DEVICES OR EQUIPMENT?

You can't use Animate Objects on devices, since they are powers in their own right. Equipment is fair game, however. This is just one of the limitations of equipment vs. devices. If the GM wants to allow Animate Objects on devices, treat it like a use of Power Control (*M&M*, page 96) since it's essentially trying to seize control of one of the subject's powers.

DO CONSTRUCTS GET A SAVING THROW AGAINST CORROSION AND DISINTEGRATE?

They should get a Toughness save in place of the normal Fortitude saving throw against the Toughness reduction. Inanimate objects get no save against the Toughness reduction.

IS IMPERVIOUS TOUGHNESS MORE EFFECTIVE AGAINST CORROSION AND DISINTEGRATE?

Yes. Those powers reduce Impervious Toughness by half the usual amount (half the power's rank, rounded down, rather than the power's full rank).

CAN YOU USE DEFLECT TO BLOCK MELEE ATTACKS AS WELL AS RANGED ATTACKS?

Yes, you can use any level of Deflect (except for Deflect usable only against mental attacks) to deflect melee attacks as well. You still use your Deflect rank in place of your attack bonus, so for this to be useful, your Deflect rank should at least equal your melee attack bonus (or it should have some extras that make it superior in other ways).

IS DEFLECT RANK LIMITED BY POWER LEVEL?

Yes, the same as attack bonus (for characters with attack bonus trade-offs). Optionally, GMs may choose to consider it a defense bonus for characters, since its primary use is defensive.

CAN THE HEALING POWER REMOVE A DAZED OR STUNNED CONDITION?

Yes. It's a DC 15 Healing check, like the Revive use of the Medicine skill.

IF YOU USE ILLUSION TO CREATE AN IMAGE, THEN WHO CAN SEE IT?

Everyone who'd normally be able to sense the image if it were real can do so. The Illusion power creates images rather than affecting specific people, even through it technically "fools the senses." If the power has the Selective power feat, then the user can decide who senses the illusion and who does not. Likewise, if the power has the Phantasms modifier, then only intelligent beings (Int 1+) can sense the illusion.

DOES RANK 1 IMMUNITY TO COLD OR HEAT MEAN YOU DON'T TAKE ANY DAMAGE FROM COLD CONTROL OR FIRE CONTROL POWERS?

No. The rank 1 Immunities to cold and heat are to the *environmental* effects (as given on *M&M*, page 167). Immunity to cold or heat damage is a rank 5 Immunity for a "common power descriptor," while Immunity to "all cold effects" or "all fire effects" (including all powers with the appropriate descriptor, regardless of the type of saving throw) is 10 ranks for a "very common" power descriptor.

DOES IMMUNITY (FATIGUE) ALLOW YOU TO USE EXTRA EFFORT WITHOUT SUFFERING ANY FATIGUE?

No. The character is just immune to fatigue from normal exertion and fatigue-inducing powers and effects. Keep in mind that Immunity effectively provides automatic success on a saving throw

or ability check to resist an effect, and there is no such save against the fatigue of extra effort.

IS AN INSUBSTANTIAL CHARACTER IMMUNE TO SUFFOCATION?

No, you need Immunity 2 (suffocation) or Immunity 9 (life support) for that. Immunity is a recommended part of Alternate Forms for that reason.

CAN INCORPOREAL CREATURES INTERACT NORMALLY WITH OTHER INCORPOREAL CREATURES (AS IF THEY WERE BOTH SOLID)?

Depending on the power descriptors and the GM's judgment, yes.

IF AN INCORPOREAL CHARACTER THROWS A HELD OBJECT, WHAT HAPPENS?

The object becomes solid once it leaves the incorporeal character's grasp, and interacts with the world like a normal solid object.

Note, however, the character must have the Affects Others modifier in order to take objects other than clothing and personal Devices and Equipment incorporeal. He must then either:

- turn corporeal to pick up an object, and then turn incorporeal, taking the object into an incorporeal state with him, or

- have the Affects Corporeal modifier on Strength to pick up a solid object while incorporeal.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF BUYING MULTIPLE 3 POINT RANKS OF MORPH COMPARED TO JUST BUYING A SINGLE RANK, AND USING SKILL POINTS TO INCREASE MY DISGUISE SKILL?

Normal Disguise skill still takes the normal time to use, even if you have Morph. So, if you have both, you can:

- Use just your Morph bonus, taking the normal action it takes you to use Morph (a free action by default).

- Take 10 minutes of preparation and add your Disguise skill ranks to your Morph bonus; this means you're carefully observing, checking your work in a mirror, making small adjustments and the like.

So the Master of Disguise (*M&M,* page 219) can instantly (as a free action) assume a humanoid appearance with a +36 Disguise bonus (from just his Morph rank and Charisma). If he takes time to prepare a disguise, he adds his 12 ranks of Disguise to the bonus, for a total of +48 (making his disguise virtually impenetrable).

You can have an effective character with just **Morph 1** and lots of ranks in Disguise, provided the character has time to prepare; he still wouldn't need any tools like a disguise kit, for example. This approach might suit certain character concepts, especially in low-power campaigns.

DOES THE 1-POWER-POINT-PER-RANK VERSION OF NULLIFY ALLOW YOU TO NULLIFY ONE POWER PER USE OF ANY DESCRIPTOR, OR DO YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE THE DESCRIPTOR AT THE TIME THE POWER IS CHOSEN?

You have to choose the descriptor at the time the power is acquired. So, for example, if a character has **Nullify Magical Powers 6**, he can nullify any one magical power per use.

CAN POWER CONTROL TURN OFF POWERS? IF IT CAN, WHY TAKE NULLIFY RATHER THAN POWER CONTROL?

Power Control *does* let you turn off powers, but it's not as effective as Nullify for that purpose:

- Power Control only lets you turn a power off if the subject can normally do so; thus it cannot turn off Permanent or Uncontrolled powers, whereas Nullify can.

- Power Control doesn't let you counter powers; Nullify explicitly does.

- Power Control's lasting duration allows additional saves. If Nullify is made Sustained or Continuous, the target doesn't get additional saves; the power is off as long as the Nullify lasts.

- Power Control doesn't work on power *effects,* only power *users,* whereas Nullify does both. So you can Nullify a created object or a fire, for example, but Power Control doesn't work on either.

- Power Control only works on targets with conscious control over their powers. It doesn't affect targets immune to mental effects or lacking such control: you can Nullify a machine, but you can't use Power Control on it unless the machine is conscious (and affected by mental powers).

- Power Control is essentially Mind Control (*M&M,* page 92) Limited to controlling the subject's powers and sustained (lasting) in duration. The GM should feel free to enforce the requirements of Mind Control for it, particularly the required move action to issue commands. The description of Power Control leaves this deliberately vague, and assumes once established it only requires the normal action to use or control the target power (whatever it may be), but it's an option for the GM if Power Control is abused.

IF I USE MIMIC OR SHAPESHIFT TO COPY SOMEONE'S APPEARANCE, DO I GET THE BENEFITS OF THE MORPH POWER AUTOMATICALLY?

Yes. If you use Mimic or Shapeshift to copy the appearance of something, you get a +5 bonus to Disguise checks per power rank to pretend to be that something.

HOW DOES THE SHAPESHIFT POWER WORK?

Shapeshift allows a character to assume different physical forms. Changing form is a move action and maintaining a given form is sustained (requiring a free action each round, and a Concentration check if the character is stunned or otherwise unable to take free actions, but still conscious).

Now, when a shapeshifter assumes a new form, he has a "pool" of (Shapeshift rank x 5) power points to spend on any physical traits of that form. So, for example, if he turns into a bird, he'll need the Flight power, Super-Senses for the bird's keen sight, and so forth.

Additionally, the shapeshifter can "move around" his pre-existing physical traits: if he turns into a weaker form, he can shift points from her Strength score elsewhere, for example. So, essentially, the "physical traits" point pool is equal to the total cost of the shapeshifter's normal physical traits, plus 5 power points per Shapeshift rank, but this requires buying all the physical traits of the new form "from scratch."

Generally, it's a good idea to encourage players of shapeshifters to make notes on the costs of various forms in advance, to save time during play. It's also wise to limit Shapeshift from the "turn into anything I want" level down to a particular subset like animals, machines, etc. to help focus the player's choices (as noted in the power's description).

DO SUPER-SENSES HAVE TO BE CONTINUOUS DURATION (A +1 MODIFIER) IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO TURN THEM OFF? HOW DO CHARACTERS WITH SUPER-SENSES KEEP FROM BEING BOMBARDED BY SENSORY INPUT?

According to the letter of the rules, yes, Super-Senses have to be made continuous in order to turn them on and off at will. Although it's bending the rules slightly, you can allow characters to "switch off" Super-Senses even though they are permanent, much in the same way one can 'turn off' vision by closing one's eyes and such. Characters still can't use extra effort with Super-Senses (as they're still permanent duration), so it's a minor advantage at best. It's also reasonable to assume that characters acclimated to having Super-Senses have learned to filter out extraneous sensory input, just like we learn to do with our normal senses.

THE RAPID ATTACK FEAT OF SUPER-SPEED SAYS YOU CAN PERFORM AN ATTACK MANEUVER AGAINST ANY TARGET WITHIN POWER RANK X 5 FEET OF THE USER. CAN YOU APPLY DIFFERENT ATTACKS AGAINST EACH TARGET?

No, it has to be the same attack.

WHEN DETERMINING THE TOTAL COST OF THE BASE POWER OF AN ARRAY, DO THAT POWER'S POWER FEATS COUNT?

Yes, *except* for Alternate Power feats. The same is true for the Alternate Powers themselves. So if a power array has a base power that costs 20 power points and it has six power feats, three of which are Alternate Powers, then each Alternate Power can be built on up to 23 power points (the total value of the base power plus its non-Alternate Power feats).

IF YOU SPEND EARNED POWER POINTS TO IMPROVE THE BASE POWER OF AN ARRAY, DO THE ALTERNATE POWER'S INCREASE AS WELL?

Yes, they do. As the base power increases in total power point value, so do the array's Alternate Powers. So if you have a 23 point base power, and spend 2 power points to improve it to a 25 point power, then all of its Alternate Powers can be based on 25 power points as well.

ARE THE ALTERNATE POWER FEATS LISTED IN A POWER'S DESCRIPTION IN THE RULEBOOK THE ONLY ONES AVAILABLE OR CAN PLAYERS CREATE THEIR OWN?

Players can certainly create their own Alternate Powers with the GM's approval. The ones listed with the power description in the *M&M* rulebook are simply examples.

ALTERNATE POWERS CAN BE SWITCHED ONCE A ROUND. IS THAT THE GAME ROUND OR THE CHARACTER'S ROUND?

In this case, "a round" is measured from the character's place in the initiative order from one round to the next. So if a character goes on
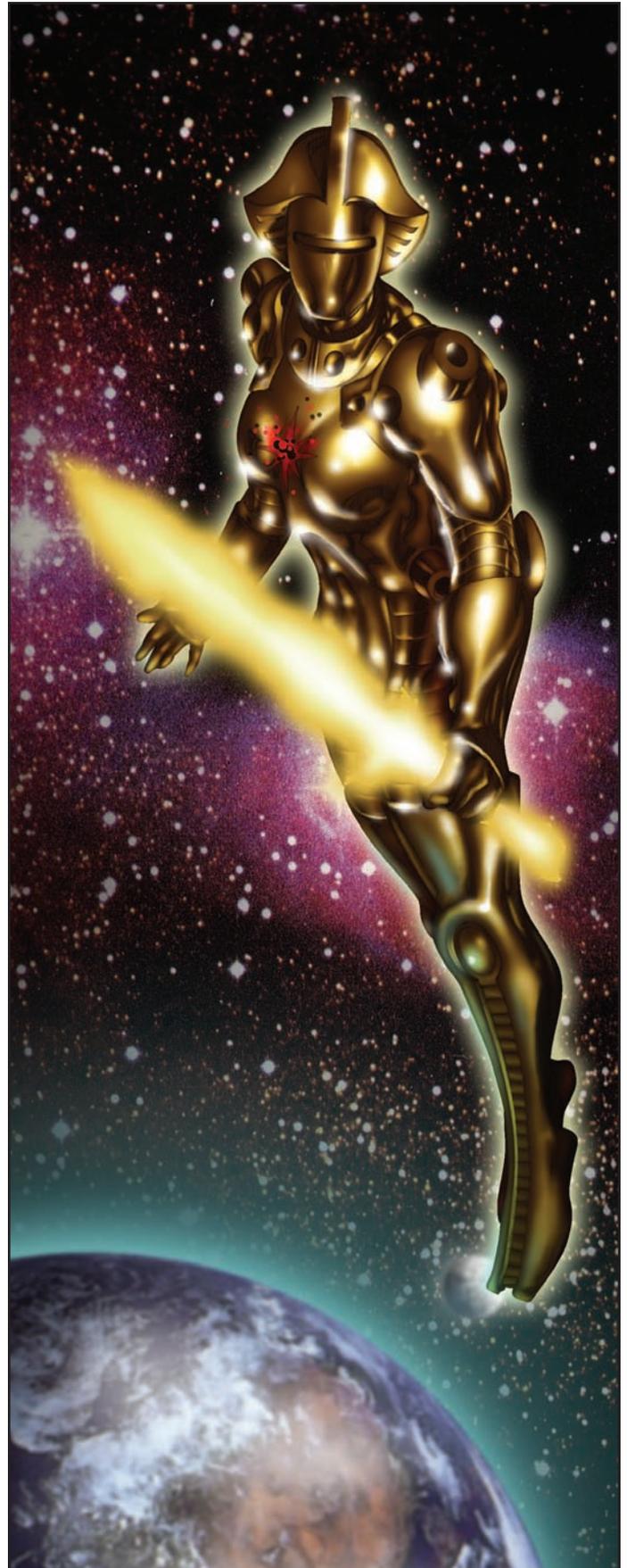
Initiative 14 and switches his power array, he can't do so again (even though it's a free action) until Initiative 14 on the following round.

IF I USE A POWER LIKE DAZZLE OR SNARE ON SOMEBODY AND THEN SWITCH IT TO AN ALTERNATE POWER, DOES THE DAZZLE OR SNARE EFFECT GO AWAY?

No. The effects of instant powers remain, since you don't have to be "using" the power to maintain them. The same is also true of lasting powers, so long as you meet the requirements of the power's duration. A power like Create Object, on the other hand, which has a sustained duration, will stop working if you switch to an Alternate Power. If your Create Object power is continuous, the objects will last, since they "remain until they are destroyed, nullified, or you choose to dismiss them" per the power description.

IF A CHARACTER HAS AN ALTERNATE POWER, AND THE PLAYER LATER DECIDES TO MAKE IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT POWER (SPENDING THE POWER POINTS TO DO IT), DOES THE CHARACTER GET THE POWER POINT FOR THE ALTERNATE POWER FEAT BACK?

Yes, unless the player wants to reinvest that point into another power fear (including another Alternate Power).

WHEN APPLYING THE PROGRESSION FEAT TO THE SIZE OF AN AREA, DOES IT INCREASE TOTAL SIZE OR SIZE PER RANK?

Size per rank. So a normal Burst Area is 5 ft. in radius per rank. One application of the Progression feat makes it 10 ft./rank, two makes it 25 ft./rank, and so forth.

IS THE USE OF EXTRAS ON A POWER OPTIONAL?

No. Extras (and flaws, for that matter) are a permanent part of a power and always apply when that power is used. If you want to be able to use a power both with and without a particular extra, take one version as an Alternate Power of the other. (Note: This differs from how extras were handled in the first edition of *Mutants & Masterminds*.)

HOW DO POWERS WITH PERCEPTION-RANGE AND THE AREA EXTRA WORK?

Perception-range area effects do differ from normal area effects (described on pages 159–160 of *Mutants & Mastermninds*). See the last sentence of the **Area Attack** section: "Area effects which don't normally require an attack roll do not allow for a Reflex save, they simply affect all targets in the specified area." Perception-range attacks (which don't require an attack roll) fall into this category and are treated accordingly

CHARACTERISTICS

IF A CHARACTER HAS A PERMANENT AND INNATE SIZE CHANGE, CAN THEY BUY ADDITIONAL POINTS OF ATTACK OR DEFENSE TO CANCEL OUT PENALTIES INCURRED BY THE SIZE CHANGE?

Yes, but keep in mind an increased-size character may need a trade-off to compensate for the increased Strength and Constitution (and therefore Toughness) of Growth.

CAN CONSTRUCTS USE EXTRA EFFORT? DO THEY SUFFER FATIGUE FROM DOING SO?

Yes and yes. Construct characters can use extra effort. The "fatigue" they suffer has the same effect as fatigue does on other characters, but in the case of constructs it represents damage or wear-and-tear on the construct. Since constructs have no Constitution, they cannot recover from fatigue, they must be repaired instead. Constructs with a recovery bonus—such as self-repairing constructs with Regeneration—can recover from fatigue normally. Like all characters, constructs can spend hero points to ignore the effects of a fatigue result.

IS THERE A LIMIT TO THE NUMBER OF HERO POINTS A CHARACTER CAN EARN IN AN ADVENTURE?

Only whatever limit the Gamemaster chooses to set. Since the GM is the one who awards hero points, the GM can simply choose to stop giving them out, if need be.

WHEN YOU SPEND A HERO POINT TO ENHANCE A TRAIT, CAN IT GO ABOVE THE POWER LEVEL LIMIT?

Yes. Hero point spending is not affected by power level limits.

CAN VILLAINS HAVE COMPLICATIONS?

No, because villains don't have or earn hero points, so they don't need complications. Generally, the heroes are complication enough for most villains!

DEVICES AND EQUIPMENT

CAN YOU USE THE QUICKNESS POWER TO SPEED UP INVENTING?

Yes and no. As specified in the power description, you can only use Quickness for "routine" tasks where you can take 20. You can take 20 on the design check to invent something, so you can use Quickness to speed up the design process; for example, a character with Quickness for mental tasks might be able to do much of the design work "in his head." On the other hand, you can't take 20 on the construction check for an invention, so Quickness can't speed up that check. The only way to do so is by taking a penalty on the Craft skill check, as given on page 131 of *M&M.*

IS THERE A LIMIT TO THE NUMBER OF INVENTIONS YOU CAN HAVE AT ONCE?

Generally one, although the GM should feel free to vary things according to the flow and style of the game. Requiring inventors to spend a hero point per extra invention at the same time is a useful balancing factor between one at a time and an unlimited number of inventions.

WHY DOES THE COMMLINK COST SO LITTLE (1 POINT) COMPARED TO THE COMMUNICATION POWER?

Because things like team commlinks (and other common communications devices like cell phones and walkie-talkies) are fairly commonplace, enough to make them the equivalent of a Benefit feat

or a Feature for a piece of equipment. GMs concerned with the cost differential can feel free to make commlinks and similar communication equipment considerably less reliable than the Communication power: affected by atmospheric disturbances, power outages, energy emissions from villains. Essentially, feel free to have such equipment fail whenever the plot calls for it without it being a complication (that is, without awarding any hero points); it's just the innate drawbacks of equipment.

CAN VEHICLES USE ACCELERATED OR ALL-OUT MOVEMENT?

No. Vehicles have one movement speed (listed as their speed) and it is the vehicle's top speed. Driving or piloting a vehicle is a move action regardless of the vehicle's speed. Vehicles do benefit from speed modifiers to their Defense (*M&M,* page 33) as if they were moving all-out. This modifier is relative; use the difference between speed ranks for two vehicles or a character pacing a moving vehicle.

COMBAT

IF YOU SPEND A HERO POINT TO RE-ROLL AN ATTACK ROLL AND GET A 10 ON THE SECOND ROLL, YOU ADD +10 TO IT AND IT BECOMES A 20. IS THIS CONSIDERED A CRITICAL HIT?

No. Only a "natural" 20, when the die roll actually comes up 20, counts as a possible critical hit.

HOW MANY TIMES CAN A CHARACTER BE STAGGERED?

Once. Staggered is a singular condition. Once a character is staggered, another staggered result means the character is rendered unconscious. This means a staggered character is closer to being out of the fight, even without any bruised results affecting Toughness saves.

IF YOU ARE STAGGERED OR DISABLED ARE YOU ALSO STUNNED?

No, the character only suffers the effect of the staggered or disabled condition and is not stunned.

IS THERE A POWER LEVEL LIMIT ON GRAPPLE CHECK BONUS?

No, although the power level limits do affect how much melee attack bonus and unarmed damage bonus a character can have (two major components of grapple checks). Grapple modifiers like size modifiers and Super-Strength can be limited as the GM sees fit for the game, although it makes sense for big, super-strong characters to be effective grapplers.

GAMEMASTERING

WHEN YOU USE GM FIAT, WHO GETS THE HERO POINT?

Generally speaking, it's the player whose hero is most directly affected by the use of GM Fiat (e.g., the one making or saving against the attack, affected by the feat or power, etc.). If, in the GM's opinion, everyone is equally affected, you can choose a player or award everyone a hero point.

EDITION CHANGES

WHY A SECOND EDITION?

When *Mutants & Masterminds* was first published, it was an experiment on many levels: it was one of the first RPGs published under the Open Game License, it took considerable liberties with the core d20 game system, and it was Green Ronin's first superhero product and first major product printed all in color.

When *Mutants & Masterminds* was conceived, there were few, if any, superhero RPGs in print. By the time it was published, there were several. While we hoped for the best, we had no idea at the time how *M&M* would fare in the RPG market.

The game exceeded our expectations: fans appreciated its innovative approach and found it captured the kind of superhero roleplaying they wanted. We sold out of the first printing of the rulebook, then a second, and a third. Supplementary *M&M* products like *Freedom City* also did quite well. Eventually Steve Kenson came on-board to oversee the *Mutants & Masterminds* line as its full-time developer.

In order to build on the success of *Mutants & Masterminds* and give it the kind of robust game line it deserves, we wanted a really solid foundation. So we went back to the basics, looked at the things people liked, and the things they didn't, and designed a new edition of *M&M,* not as an experiment this time, but as the flagship product of its line, a foundation we can build on with new settings and sourcebooks.

Mutants & Masterminds is here to stay, and with the upcoming second edition, we have some exciting plans for a game line worthy of the world's greatest superhero roleplaying game!

SO, HOW MUCH HAS CHANGED FROM THE FIRST EDITION?

It's still the *Mutants & Masterminds* game you know and love at its core. Most of the changes incorporate all we've learned from fans of the game and our own experience to make *M&M* cleaner, clearer, more robust, and more comprehensive than ever before.

We'll be giving you previews of how things have changed (and how they've stayed the same), leading up to the new edition's release. We think you'll like what we've got in store.

DOES M&M SECOND EDITION FIX [INSERT FIRST EDITION RULES QUESTION HERE]?

We certainly hope so! One of the primary influences on *M&M 2e* was feedback and questions from you, our fans, who play and know the game better than anyone else. While no game system is perfect, we want *Mutants & Masterminds* to live up to the moniker "World's Greatest Superhero RPG"!

Speaking of feedback, we've been rigorously playtesting *M&M 2e,* putting all the systems through their paces to ensure they meet the standards you've come to expect from Green Ronin. The extensive feedback we've gotten from our playtest groups has helped to refine, clarify, and polish the new edition.

WHY DID YOU CHANGE [INSERT FIRST EDITION RULE HERE]?

While *M&M 2e* tries to summarize the major changes, there's simply not room to go into the reasoning behind every single tweak, modification, and rules change. Sufficient to say, we felt the changes made the game better overall. We're certainly aware that not everyone may agree: the first edition of *Mutants & Masterminds* has plenty of fans, and you can't please everyone. Some people like all the changes, some like some changes and dislike others. Fortunately, the two editions use the same core system. So if you prefer an option from the first edition, by all means, please continue using it!

One of the reason's for the *Mastermind's Manual* for *M&M 2e* is to include as many options and ways to customize the game as possible. While we know that we can't please everyone, that's no reason not to give it our best shot! The *Mastermind's Manual* provides the tools needed to make *M&M* into the game that's best suited to you and your gaming group.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GADGETS POWER FROM FIRST EDITION?

The refinement of the extra effort and power stunt rules in *M&M 2e* made it largely redundant. Any character with a Device can potentially use extra effort to acquire an Alternate Power for one (or all) of the Device's powers, spending a hero point to ignore the fatigue (or strain on the Device), essentially the same mechanics as the Gadgets power.

The *Mastermind's Manual* includes a new version of Gadgets that's a bit broader and more flexible than the first edition version, but also not as limited. Gamemasters should consider the advice on handling Variable Powers before including this new Gadgets power in their games.

CAN I USE MY FIRST EDITION BOOKS WITH SECOND EDITION?

For the most part, yes, you can. First Edition character stats are still compatible with Second Edition (which naturally has the same abilities, saving throws, and so forth). Some First Edition specific rules, such as certain feats or powers, work slightly differently in Second Edition, but the basic material is compatible.

APPENDIX II: M&M ERRATA

Mistakes happen, but when they do, we try our best to correct them. This file provides errata and corrections for the first printing of the second edition of Green Ronin's *Mutants & Masterminds* superhero roleplaying game. Clarifications and answers to frequently asked questions are found in the *Mutants & Masterminds FAQ* file. For this and more information about *Mutants & Masterminds* in general, please visit our website: *www.mutantsandmasterminds.com.*

page 13 — dodge bonus: change "(rounded up)" to "(rounded down)".

page 16 — Doing the Math: Change "Costimed Adventurer" to "Costumed Adventurer"

page 17 — Martial Artist: In the last sentence, change "+11" and "+9" to "+12" and "+8".

page 17 — Battlesuit: Change heavy load under **Super-Strength** to "45 tons".

page 18 — Costumed Adventurer: The archetype's feats are not listed. They are: Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 4, Evasion 2, Jack-of-All-Trades, Power Attack, Skill Mastery (Acrobatics, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Stealth), Startle, Sneak Attack, Uncanny Dodge.

page 21 — Paragon: Change heavy load under **Super-Strength** to "90 tons".

page 21 — Powerhouse: Change heavy load under **Super-Strength** to "180 tons".

page 26 — Costumed Adventurer Example: In the third to last paragraph, change "Surprise Strike" in the last sentence to "Sneak Attack".

page 28 — Ability Modifiers: In the second paragraph, third sentence, insert a space between "modifier" and "comes". In the third paragraph, change the last sentence to read: "Strength and Constitution are affected by the power level limits on damage and Toughness, respectively (see page 24)."

page 32 — Debilitated Ability Scores: In the second paragraph on this page, change "Abilities" at the start of the first sentence to "Ability" so it reads: "Ability scores cannot..."

page 46 — Craft: Under **Action** change "on" in the first sentence to "to" so it reads: "The time to make something varies according to its complexity."

page 60 — Defensive Roll: Delete the extra period at the end of the second sentence.

page 61 — Fast Overrun: The page reference to the overrun action should be page 158.

page 62 — Improved Overrun: The page reference to the overrun action should be page 158.

page 65 — Ultimate Effort: Change "Fortuine" in the header to "Fortune".

page 65 — Fighting Styles: Under **Wrestling**, "Improved Escape" should be "Improved Grapple".

page 69 — Opposed Power Checks: The page reference in the last sentence is missing; it should be page 10. Also in the last sentence, change "who's" to "whose".

page 71 — Alternate Powers sidebar: In the second sentence, it should be "form sculptures of flame" rather than "forms sculptures of flame".

page 72 — Powers Table: Add "Fortitude" under **Save** for Life Control.

page 76 — Anatomic Separation: The last sentence should begin "You recover..." rather than "Your recover..."

page 84 — Emotion Control: Range should be "Perception". Saving Throw should be "Will" as correctly given on the Powers table on page 72.

page 86 — Gestalt: Change **Action** in the stat block to "Standard".

page 87 — Growth: Change **Cost** to 3 points per rank (as correctly given on the table on page 72).

page 88 — Illusion: Under **Extras** change **Action** to **Duration**.

page 90 — Leaping: In the next to last sentence, change "(x1,000 your normal distance)" to "(x2,500 your normal distance)".

page 90 — Life Control: Add "**Saving Throw:** Fortitude" to the power's statistics.

page 91 — Magic: Under **Alternate Powers**, remove "and rank" from the second half of the first sentence.

page 95 — Obscure: Change the **Power Feats** header to **Extras**.

page 96 — Plasma Control: Change **Cost** to 2 points per rank (as correctly given on the table on page 73).

page 97 — Regeneration: In the last paragraph (before **Power Feats**), change the cost of total Regeneration to 36 points, and 44 if it includes ability damage.

page 99 — Snare: In the last paragraph changes the damage bonuses to automatically break out of a snare to 10 or more than the Snare's rank and 15 or more, respectively.

page 100 — Spinning: In the last sentence, change the second "your" to "you" so it reads "...as long as you continue spinning."

page 100 — Strike: Under **Cost** change "points" to "point". Under **Thrown** change the first "Your" to "You".

page 108 — Alternate Power: In the sentence "Each Alternate Power can have a cost of up to 2 power points per Magic rank (or 32 points total) and a rank no greater than 16" delete everything after the parenthesis.

page 111 — Alternate Save: In paragraph three, first sentence, change "save" to "saves".

page 112 — Disease: In the last sentence, insert "on" after "effect".

page 115 — Feedback: Change the flaw's description to read as follows:

You suffer pain when a manifestation of your power is damaged. This flaw only applies to powers with physical manifestations, such as Create Object, Duplication, Snare, or Summon, for example. If your power's manifestation is damaged, make a Will save against damage equal to the attack's damage, with a bonus equal to the manifestation's Toughness. For example, if you create a Toughness 12 object and it is attacked for +15 damage, you must make a Will save against +15 damage with a +12 bonus (the object's Toughness) added to your normal Will save bonus.

page 132 — Wealth Bonus: Change the third sentence to read: "The Profession skill (see page 53) grants a bonus to Wealth: +1 per 5 full points of skill bonus."

page 137 — Sample Utility Belt: Change **Stun Pellets** to **Flash-Bangs**.

page 138 — Melee Weapons: Change the knife's equipment cost to 4 points.

page 139 — Ranged Weapons: Change the bow's equipment cost to 8 points.

page 140 — Grenades and Explosives: In the table, the effect of the smoke grenade should be "Obscure 2 (visual)".

page 141 — Archaic Armor: Under **Chain-mail**, change "hauberk" to "coif".

page 143 — Ground Vehicles Table: Change the **Cost** of the sports car to 7/2.

page 143 — Navigation System: Change "per additional power point" to "per additional equipment point".

page 144 — Immunity: Change the second sentence to read: "Vehicles that travel in space or underwater provide life support for their passengers at no additional cost."

page 149 — Damaging and Repairing Constructs: In the second paragraph, change "A construct" to "Constructs".

page 152 — Saving Throw Types: Under **Will**, change "Wisdom bonus" to "Wisdom modifier".

page 156 — Combined Attack: Remove the first line on this page, it's repeated from the previous page.

page 160 — Suppression Fire: "An opponent who chooses not to seek cover ignores the attack modifier from by suppression fire but is automatically attacked." Delete the word "by" in this sentence.

page 167 — Damage to Objects: In the last paragraph, change the last sentence to read:

If the attacker's damage bonus equals the object's Toughness, it's damaged. If damage equals (object Toughness +10), the object is broken, and if it is (object Toughness +15) or greater, the object is automatically destroyed.

page 168 — Poison: In the second paragraph, first sentence, delete "the" and "feat" before and after "Immunity to Poison".

page 170 — Vacuum: Where it says "Constitution check" in this section, substitute "Fortitude save".

page 171 — Staggered: Change the second sentence to read: "A staggered character who is staggered again is rendered unconscious."

page 186 — Futuristic: In the third paragraph, first sentence, change "stores" to "stories".

page 191 — Human Heroes: In the second paragraph, second sentence, change "martial" to "marital".

page 191 — Social Issues: Indent the second paragraph (starting with "The major social issues...").

page 210 — Why the Villain Gets Away: In the third paragraph, second sentence, change "changes" to "chances" so it reads "to improve their chances in the future..."

page 212 — Armored Megalomaniac: Change the header of the page and the stat block to "Megalomaniac". At the end of **The Enemy of My Enemy** add the word "else".

page 214 — Deal With the Devil: Change "power" in the first sentence to "powerful".

page 219 — Master of Disguise: Change "Mastre" in the stat block header to "Master".

page 221 — Puppeteer: Under *Variations and Capers,* "pheremones" should read "pheromones". Under *Only a Dream*, "the sleep" should read "their sleep". Under Pawns of the Puppeteer, "puppeteer" in the last sentence should be capitalized.

page 227 — Ninja: Add Defensive Roll to Feats, increase Feats cost to 3, lower Saves to 4, point total remains the same.

page 229 — Scientist: The archetype's ability scores should be: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 9

page 232 — Wolf: Replace the last line of the stat block with the following: **Abilities 3 + Skills 1 (4 ranks) + Feats 1 + Powers 3 + Combat 14 + Saves 6 – Drawbacks 8 = 20**

page 241 — Daedalus: Change the second sentence to: "The Greek gods granted him immortality after the death of his son, Icarus."

page 254 — character sheet: Change the second **Abilities** box to **Saving Throws**.

page 255 — character sheet: Add **Investigate** to the list of skills.

A F T E R W A R D

A great many roleplaying game books offer a variety of advice on how to run games, and this one is no exception. Ultimately, the biggest limitation of RPGs is the inability to package a great Gamemaster with every copy of the rulebook to ensure each game is creative, fair, balanced, and fun. Creating the rules, the settings, and the adventures—that's the easy part. Running the game and making it a fun experience for everyone, that's tricky, and there's only so much a book can do to help. We provide the tools, but it's up to the GM and the players to use them.

That's right, the Gamemaster *and* the players. It's not just the GM's job to make the game fun: it's the responsibility of the entire group. It's not about the GM coming up with unbeatable villains, or the players beating down the bad guys in the very first scene of the adventure. It's about working together to create interesting characters and fun adventures that hopefully make for some good memories to talk about later on.

Sometimes, that group cooperation requires setting aside our sense of disbelief as well as our sense of competitiveness. Someone once defined "geek" to me as one who uses his love and knowledge of something to ruin it for everyone else. While I've always personally been proud of my geek-hood, I can understand where this definition comes from. What gamer hasn't argued about how this, that, or another rule should work in theory? What group doesn't talk about which comic book heroes and villains would win in a fight, or how to duplicate their powers and abilities in the context of the game? Such theoretical discussions can be fun. I know I've had more than more share of them.

But there's also a point where you need to put them aside. Consider, whenever you start a statement with, "I know this probably isn't in the spirit of the game," or "This sounds kind of unfair, but..." that maybe you're better off keeping those things in the realm of theory. Sure, it's fun to figure out how to make a good, effective character, even to find that particular kink in the rules that might make your character unbeatable, but is that *really* what the game is about?

Consider, when you feel frustrated as a player because the GM has posed a problem that your hero's powers can't immediately solve, are you bothered because it's "unfair" to you, or because you're forgetting that the game is all about solving challenges, oftentimes in ways other than the direct use of power or force? When you're running the game and a player throws you a curveball, do you immediately say "no" and resent the players departing from and "ruining" your carefully planned adventure; or roll with it, say "yes, that might work," and see where it leads?
It's easy to get caught up in the game and mistake the Gamemaster for your opponent, just because the villains are under the GM's control. It's easy as Gamemaster to sympathize with "your" villains and want them to "win." It's easy to get involved in arguing some arcane point of the rules, because you feel they should be handled in one way and somebody else feels differently. It's even easy to create unbeatable, unstoppable characters that violate the spirit of the game and the superhero comics, easier still to create invincible villains with unlimited power points to trounce the heroes.

What's not always easy is to cooperate, to remember you're creating a story with your friends, and to remind each other that it's all just a game. On the other hand, it's infinitely more rewarding when all the elements come together, everyone is on the same page, and the game flows without anyone worrying about all the small stuff. You're creating a story you can share and remember for years to come, like your favorite comic books. It's magic.

The best advice this book can offer is to keep that spirit of cooperation and fun in mind when you play *M&M* or any other roleplaying game. It's more fun and effective working together; after all, isn't that how true heroes should act?

Have fun, help everyone else to have fun, and may your *Mutants & Masterminds* game be all that it can be. The tools, the imagination, and the power are all in your hands. Enjoy!

— Steve Kenson
December 2005

OPTIONAL RULES CHECKLIST

Gamemasters can use this checklist as a quick-reference to the optional and variant rules in this book and to show players which options and variants are in-use in their *Mutants & Masterminds* game. You can photocopy these three pages for ease of use.

BASIC RULES

Stunt Bonuses	❏
Automatic Success and Failure	❏
–10/+30 Rolls	❏
Alternate Dice (3d6/2d10)	❏
High-Low Rolls	❏
Players Make All Rolls	❏
Card-based Resolution	❏
Card-based Hero Points	❏
Challenges	❏
Challenges as Feats	❏
Team Checks	❏

CHARACTER CREATION

Additional Power Level Limits	❏
Re-allocating Power Points	❏
Level-Based Advancement	❏
Faster Advancement	❏
Slower Advancement	❏
Unlimited Power Level	❏
Unlimited Power Points	❏

ABILITIES

Random Ability Scores	❏
Shorthand Abilities	❏
Casual Strength	❏
Mandatory Super-Strength	❏
Ability Strain	❏
Ability Strain and Extra Effort	❏
Innate Attack & Dodge Modifiers	❏
Attack Focus and Specialization	❏
Specialized Attack Bonus Limit	❏
Dodge Bonus Limit	❏
Intelligence and Skills	❏

Aging and Abilities	❏
Super-Abilities	❏
Saves Based on Different Abilities	❏
Best of Two Saving Throws	❏
Worst of Two Saving Throws	❏
Additional Saving Throws	❏
Insight Save	❏
Stability Save	❏
Speed & Jumping	❏

SKILLS

New Skills	❏
Appraise	❏
Demolitions	❏
Forgery	❏
Gamble	❏
Navigate	❏
Power Use	❏
Repair	❏
Research	❏
Simple Skills	❏
Background Skills	❏
Combat Skills	❏
Variable Skill Costs	❏
Mix-and-Match Key Abilities	❏
Broad Skills	❏
Narrow Skills	❏
Full and Half Skills	❏
Active, Secret & Passive Skill Checks	❏
Multitasking	❏
Critical Skills	❏
Skill Synergy	❏
High Synergy	❏
Extended Skill Checks	❏

Under Pressure	❏
Graded Language Ranks	❏
Language Modifiers	❏
Language Checks	❏
Notice Specialties	❏
Professional Skills	❏
Stealth Specialties	❏

FEATS

Feats as Options	❏
Access Feats	❏
Combat Feats and Power Level	❏
All-out Attack and Defensive Roll	❏
Lower-power Sidekicks	❏
Reverse Sidekicks	❏
Ultimate Effort and Niche Protection	❏
Optional Feats	❏
Combat	❏
General	❏
Opportunity	❏
Proficiency	❏
Reputation	❏

POWERS

Unreliable Powers	❏
Partial Concentration Checks	❏
Stun Timing	❏
Partial Countering	❏
Energy Points	❏
Fatigue Saves	❏
Power Boosters	❏
Alternate Progressions	❏
Slow	❏
Fast	❏
Epic	❏
Partial Saves vs. Trait Powers	❏
Dynamic Variable Powers	❏

Flight Maneuverability	❏
Maneuverability Checks	❏
Flight Drawbacks	❏
Point-Based Nullify	❏
Power Combos	❏
Null Arrays	❏
Wide Arrays	❏
Alternate Power as a Flaw	❏
Alternate Effects	❏
Area Knockback	❏
Aura and Stacking Effects	❏
Stacking Aura Power Levels	❏
Combined Aura Attacks	❏
Grappling Auras	❏
Other Impervious Saving Throws	❏
Stacked Impervious & Penetrating Modifiers	❏
Impervious & Penetrating Progression	❏
Linked Power Saves	❏
No Saving Throw Power Modifier	❏
Power Surges	❏
Fortitude Surges	❏
Surge Point Penalty	❏
Surge Damage	❏
Surge Taint	❏
Death Surges	❏

CHARACTERISTICS

Calling	❏
Extra Effort and Advancement	❏
Concentrating on Extra Effort	❏
Extraordinary Effort	❏
Last-Ditch Effort	❏
Power Strain	❏
Temporary Power Strain	❏
HerPoints & Drawbacks	❏
Proxy HerPoints	❏
Maximum Hero Points	❏

Standard Hero Points	❑
Nonrenewable Hero Points	❑
Hero Points for Advancement	❑
Hero Point Penalties	❑
Enhanced Hero Points	❑
Villain Points	❑
Reputation	❑
Taint	❑

DEVICES & EQUIPMENT

Money Talks	❑
Proficiency	❑
Free Equipment	❑
Ammunition	❑
Armor Penalties	❑
Reduced Armor Penalties	❑
Requisitioning Equipment	❑
Alternate Ritual Skills	❑

COMBAT

Re-rolling Initiative	❑
Automatic Hits	❑
Combat Challenges	❑
Margin of Success	❑
Defense Roll	❑
Out-of-Turn Defense	❑
Mental Combat	❑
Toughness Save Failure	❑
Automatic Damage	❑
Tougher Minions	❑
Damage Roll	❑
Save vs. Stun	❑
Instant Death	❑
Double Critical Hits	❑

Critical Misses	❑
Lethal Knockback	❑
Lethal Penetration	❑
Lethal Attack Cost	❑
Attack Roll Penalty	❑
Alternate Damage	❑
Lethal Extra	❑
Save vs. Fatigue	❑
Additional Fatigue Levels	❑
Active Defense	❑
Attacks of Opportunity	❑
Multiple Attacks	❑
Extra Attacks	❑
Iterative Attacks	❑
Off-Hand Attacks	❑
Immediate Recovery	❑
Hit Points	❑
Wound & Vitality Points	❑
One-Hit Insurance	❑
All-or-Nothing Damage	❑
Threshold Modifiers	❑
Changing Damage Thresholds	❑
Variable Damage Thresholds	❑
Percentile Damage Thresholds	❑
Maximum Hit Totals	❑
Multi-hit Attacks	❑
Variable Critical Hits	❑
Tactical Movement	❑
Hex-Grid Movement	❑
Flanking	❑
Mental Grappling for Effect	❑
Mental Grappling for All Powers	❑
Mental Strain	❑

INDEX

CONTRIBUTORS

STEVE KENSON, DESIGNER & DEVELOPER

Rocketed to Earth from a dying world orbiting a pink sun, Steve was adopted by kindly parents who raised him in places all over the United States, showing him the diverse nature of his new home. Under Earth's yellow sun, he developed amazing powers of comic book trivia and game design and worked on over eighty different roleplaying game products. In 2002, Steve designed the first edition of *Mutants & Masterminds,* followed by *Freedom City* and the design and development of *Blue Rose* and *True20 Adventure Roleplaying.* He became Green Ronin's *Mutants & Masterminds* Line Developer in 2004. Steve maintains a mild-mannered identity in New Hampshire with his partner, Christopher Penczak, and has a website at *www.stevekenson.com.*

HAL MANGOLD, GRAPHIC DESIGN & ART DIRECTION

Hal has been involved with roleplaying games since he was 9 years old, and shows no sign of stopping now. His graphic design skills have been applied to over well over sixty gaming products, and he's written material for Pinnacle Entertainment Group, White Wolf Publishing, Atlas Games, Twilight Creations, and Green Ronin Publishing. Hal resides in Alexandria, VA.with a house full of books and music a rather tempermental cat.

STEVEN MARSH, EDITOR

Steven edited the book you're holding and he enjoyed every minute of it. He's worked in every tier of the gaming industry, plays a lot of games, and reads a lot of comics. He currently lives in Bellevue, Washington and works at WizKids as the Director of Game Design and the HeroClix Game Designer. He likes to keep busy.

ATTILA ADÓRJÁNY, ARTIST

Comicbook creator and sci-fi/fantasy artist Attila Adórjány was born in Canada. He spent many years in Australia before returning to Canada to attend OCAD. Since 1995 He has worked as an illustrator, conceptual artist, graphic designer and sculptor. He has worked in all areas of the print and entertainment industries from magazines, gaming and comicbooks to film, TV and Video Games. His credits include work for *Dungeon* Magazine, Wizards of the Coast, Image Comics, Udon Entertainment, White Wolf, Warner Bros, Mirimax, Sony Entertainment, EA Games, and BBDO. His upcoming comic projects include Breathe, and the Night. Attila collaborates regularly with his friends Tom Fowler, Eric Kim and Ramon Perez in a group called the Hive. They can be reached at www.enterthehive.com. Attila's website can be found at www.600poundgorilla.com

MICHAEL ATIYEH, COLORIST

Michael Atiyeh has been a colorist in the comic book industry for over 10 years. He has worked for every major comic publisher. His latest project is the upcoming *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic /Rebellion* flip comic, due out in February of 2006.

BRETT BARKLEY, ARTIST

Brett Barkley has always been driven to create. As a boy, drawing and writing occupied the majority of his energies, as a long list of disappointed teachers will attest. As he grew, he explored building and working with his hands. Today, a professional comic artist, illustrator and writer, as well as having served in the television and print advertising industries, he pulls from a wide spectrum of life experience and interests.From working on the home he and his wife share, to restoring his '67 Camaro RS, to building computers, illustrating and coloring comics, and through his writing, Brett seeks to discover the inherent expression of the Lord's work. It is his sincere hope and ambition this search can be evidenced in all he does.

ERIC CANETE, ARTIST

Eric Canete is an accomplished illustrator, designer, and storyboard artist. He began his career as designer and board artist on Peter Chung's highly-acclaimed MTV series *Aeon Flux*, currently in development as a live-action feature at Paramount with *Terminator* producer Gale Anne Hurd. He has since provided concept art, designs, and boards for projects including *Men In Black*, *Godzilla*, and *Starship Troopers* at Sony and the Cartoon Network's revival of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*. Select comics credits include *Mr. Majestic* and *Cybernary 2.0* at DC Comic's WildStorm imprint, *Superman* , and Marvel Comics' *Deathlok* (which is also in development as a feature at Paramount). He is once again working with director Peter Chung, this time on a brand new animated franchise at Universal Pictures. For more of Eric's talent and imagination, please visit his studio website at http://www.blackvelvetstudios.com.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER, ARTIST

John Christopher has worked as a commercial artist over the past several years. He has worked in a variety of mediums including print, multimedia, broadcast and videogames. He recently became the newest member at Studio Revolver, and is looking forward to having this opportunity to continue his growth as an artist. His passions include drawing and painting, and hopes to continue his work in illustration and conceptual art.

STORN A. COOK, ARTIST

Freelanced through art school, Columbus College of Art and Design, due to an insane love of Role Playing Games. Which I've been involved in since 1978. I strive to be a little bit better every day. I continue to freelance, wishing to get my artwork in every superhero (or villain) RPG possible.

TOM FEISTER, ARTIST

Tom Feister was raised in the wild plains of the Eastern Pennsylvania's famed Amish country. His work has appeared on the covers and in the pages of Legion, G.I. Joe Frontlines, Justice League Adventures, Legion, Fantastic Four, Iron Man, Exiles, and Captain Marvel. As you are reading this Tom is at his at his desk inking Ex-Machina. Or sleeping.

TARIQ HASSAN, ARTIST

Tariq Hassan or "Riq" can be found in the pages of Arkadian: No Witness, a book he pencilled, inked, and lettered. Arkadian is a one shot put out by Devils Due Publishing in April 2006. www.RiqArt.com

SCOTT JAMES, ARTIST

Scott graduated from Northern Illinois University in 1995, and hasn't looked back since. He began freelancing right out of collage. He began working for Fasa's *Battletech*, *Shadowrun*, and *Earthdawn*. At this time he began to do work for White Wolf and Pinnacle Entertainment Group

as well. He then began doing work for AEG, which he parlayed into a part time staff position for a year working on all their game lines. Aftre that, he did conceptual design for Hasbro on the movie *Small Solders* doing character designs, and creating the look for the toy and computer animated cartoon *Action Man*. He continues to freelance for a multitude of companies, along with teaching collage art classes**.**

GEORGES JEANTY, ARTIST

Celebrating his 10th year in comics, Georges has had a rollercoaster ride in the comic business. Studying fine arts in collage, but working as a comercial artist for various companies including the Miam Herald over the years, Georges has settled nicely in his dream proffession of creating comic books in the pages of *Superman*, *Wonder Woman*, and *Green Lantern* for DC Comics and *Bishop*, *Gambit*, *Deadpool* and *Wolverine* for Marvel. With future projects on the horizon, Georges is mostly thankful to his supporters and finally getting his web site up and running. www.kabalounge.com.

GREG KIRKPATRICK, ARTIST

Greg Kirkpatrick graduated from the University of Kansas with a BFA. He's worked on comic projects like *Occupational Hazards* for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, and self published *Novavolo* and *Big Bang* comics. His recent work includes *Living in Infamy* for Ludovico Technique. He currently resides in South Florida with his wife Maggie and his kids Jessica, Rick and Johnny.

"REY" LEWIS, ARTIST

Corey Lewis, "the rey," was born in Los Angeles, California in 1982. He relocated to Bremerton, Washington quickly thereafter. He spent about 21 years there learning how to live, and how to love. He lives a relatively peaceful life as a comic artist and illustrator and sometimes writer in Seattle, WA. He self-publishes his own comics and draws big, important things for big, important people. Soon he plans on unleashing a magnum renaissance opus of stories to totally blow your brain out the back of your skull.

TONY PARKER, ARTIST

Tony Parker is a Phoenix, Arizona based artist. He still loves giving hugs.

RAMON K PEREZ, ARTIST

The majority of Ramon's artistic catalogue can be found in Role-Playing Games, Collectible Card Games and related publications. A veteran of the industry he has worked on *Rifts*, *Mutants & Masterminds*, and *Star Wars* amongst many others. He is also a regular contributor in the pages of both *Dragon* and *Dungeon* agazines. Currently, Ramon is making his move into mainstream comics with his current monthly book *Spell Game* for Speak Easy Comics as well as his creator owned *Butternutsquash*. Other projects have seen him work on Marvel's elusive *Hulk: Gamma Games* and such high profile projects as *The Incredibles* for Dark Horse Comics. Check out his work at calaverastudio.com and butternutsquash.net.

KEVIN STOKES, ARTIST

Kevin Stokes has been published under various small press comic companies along with a short series under Image called *Shut Up and Die!*. He has assisted with the inks on Batman books while working on his own projects and cartoons for a local newspaper.

CRAIG TAILLIFER, ARTIST

Born November 29, 1968 in Ottawa Canada, Craig was raised on a diet of crayons, play-doh, and comic books. An early exposure to Uncle Scrooge, Asterix, Turok Son Of Stone, and the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs left an indelible impression on the budding young artist's psyche. Against the urgings of much saner voices, he chose to pursue art as a career. Stumbling into professional work at a very young age, Craig has made a living of sorts at drawing for the better part of the past two decades. His work has spanned the black and white boom at Aircel and Malibu to a long residency at WaRP Graphics working on the *ElfQuest* titles. Craig currently works in TV Animation, RPG Illustration, and selfpublishes *Wahoo Morris* through his company Too Hip Gotta Go Graphics. He splits his time between work with an unhealthy obsession for comic books, old records, and hammocks.

UDON WITH CHRIS STEVENS, ARTIST

Udon is a collective of artists formed in 2000 based out of Toronto, Canada. Udon provides top quality artwork and creative services to many fields including gaming, comic books, toy design, video games and advertising. Chris Stevens is a veteran Udon illustrator working out of Winterville, North Carolina. His detailed line work and dynamic action scenes have graced role-playing game books for White Wolf, Paizo and Hero Games as well as comic book series for Marvel and Devil's Due Publishing.

DEXTER VINES, ARTIST

Dexter Vines is a comic vet making this his 11th year in the biz. He has made a name for him self bye slinging a mean brush stroke over the likes of Leinil Yu, Ed McGuinness to name a few. On the weekends he likes to drive his car Fast & Furious at local Auto Cross events. Dexter lives in Atlanta with his wife Nikki.

KARL WALLER, ARTIST

An artist highly regarded for his amazing sense of design and a precision linework that hints of a Michael Golden influence, Karl Waller has been a comics professional since the mid-80s, breaking in with 1980s indy mainstay Eclipse on titles such as *New Wave* and *Alien Encounters*. Waller has been a part of a number of interesting creative teams during his diverse career. He was penciller on the 1987 John Ostrander / Tim Truman mini-series *Hotspur* at Eclipse; he pencilled the D.G. Chichester-written Dark Horse series Motorhead, on which he was inked by Tim Bradstreet; he teamed with Christopher Priest on a Legends of the DC Universe arc; and worked with Jay Faerber for Marvel's *X-Men the Movie: Wolverine* special. Karl makes his online home at http://www.karlwaller.com.

OPEN GAME LICENSE

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a)"Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b)"Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d)"Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content You Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document, Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Modern System Reference Document, Copyright 2002-2004, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Bill Slavicsek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, Charles Ryan, Eric Cagle, David Noonan, Stan!, Christopher Perkins, Rodney Thompson, and JD Wiker, based on material by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, Peter Adkison, Bruce R. Cordell, John Tynes, Andy Collins, and JD Wiker.

A Magical Medieval Society: Western Europe Copyright 2003, Expeditious Retreat Press; authors Suzi Yee and Joseph Browning.

Advanced Gamemaster's Guide, Copyright 2005, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC; Author Owen K.C. Stephens.

Advanced Player's Manual, Copyright 2005, Green Ronin Publishing: Author Skip Williams.

Crooks!, Copyright 2003, Green Ronin Publishing; Authors Sean Glenn, Kyle Hunter, and Erik Mona.

Cry Havoc © 2003 Skip Williams. All rights reserved.

Grim Tales, Copyright 2004, Benjamin R. Durbin, published by Bad Axe Games, LLC.

Hot Pursuit, Copyright 2005, Corey Reid, published by Adamant Entertainment, Inc.

Immortals Handbook, Copyright 2003, Craig Cochrane.

Modern Player's Companion, Copyright 2003, The Game Mechanics, Inc.; Author: Stan!

Monster's Handbook Copyright 2002, Fantasy Flight Publishing, Inc.

Monte Cook Presents: Iron Heroes, Copyright 2005, Monte J. Cook. All rights reserved.

Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed, Copyright 2003, Monte J. Cook. All rights reserved.

Mutants & Masterminds Annual #1, Copyright 2004, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC; Editor Erik Mona.

Mutants & Masterminds, Copyright 2002, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC; Author Steve Kenson.

Mutants & Masterminds, Second Edition, Copyright 2005, Green Ronin Publishing, LLC; Author Steve Kenson.

Possessors: Children of the Outer Gods Copyright 2003, Philip Reed and Christopher Shy, www.philipjreed.com and www.studioronin.com.

Silver Age Sentinels d20, Copyright 2002, Guardians of Order, Inc.; Authors Stephen Kenson, Mark C. Mackinnon, Jeff Mackintosh, Jesse Scoble.

Spycraft 1960s Decade Book, Copyright 2003, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Robert J. Defendi, B. D. Flory, Scott Gearin, Clayton A. Oliver.

Spycraft Agency, Copyright 2004, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Steve Crow, Alexander Flagg, B. D. Flory, Clayton A. Oliver, Steven Peterson.

Spycraft Battlegrounds, Copyright 2005, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Andy C. David, Alexander Flagg, Clayton A. Oliver, Jason Olsan, Patrick Parish.

Spycraft Copyright 2002, Alderac Entertainment Group.

Spycraft Espionage Handbook, Copyright 2002, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Patrick Kapera and Kevin Wilson.

Spycraft Faceman/Snoop Class Guide, Copyright 2003, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Alexander Flagg, Clayton A. Oliver.

Spycraft Fixer/Pointman Class Guide, Copyright 2003, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Scott Gearin.

Spycraft Mastermind Guide, Copyright 2004, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Steve Crow, Alexander Flagg, B. D. Flory, Clayton A. Oliver.

Spycraft Modern Arms Guide, Copyright 2002, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Chad Brunner, Tim D'Allard, Rob Drake, Michael Fish, Scott Gearin, Owen Hershey, Patrick Kapera, Michael Petrovich, Jim Wardrip, Stephen Wilcoxon.

Spycraft Soldier/Wheelman Class Guide, Copyright 2003, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Chad Brunner, Shawn Carman, B. D. Flory, Scott Gearin, Patrick Kapera.

Spycraft U.S. Militaries Guide, Copyright 2004, Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc.; Authors Dave McAlister, Clayton A. Oliver, Patrick Kapera.

Spycraft, Copyright 2005, Alderac Entertainment Group.

Swords of Our Fathers, Copyright 2003, The Game Mechanics.

Tome of Horrors, Copyright 2002, Necromancer Games., Inc.; Author Scott Greene, based on original material by Gary Gygax.

Ultramodern Firearms d20, Copyright 2002, Charles McManus Ryan.

Unearthed Arcana, Copyright 2003, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Andy Collins, Jesse Decker, David Noonan, Rich Redman.

The Mastermind's Manual, Copyright 2006, Green Ronin Publishing; Author Steve Kenson.

Rules are not necessarily sacred, principles are.
—Franklin D. Roosevelt