

ALPHA PLAYTEST KIT 07.12.2009

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# PROFESSOR BRADBURY'S GUIDE TO THE STUFF YOU'LL NEED TO PLAY

- ▶ The **Character Sheets** printed from this PDF and cut in half to make 6 **Style** cards and 8 **Role** cards.
- ▶ The **GM sheets** and a **rules summary** for each player.
- **Poker chips** to use as **power tokens**. You'll need 6 per player.
- ▶ A bunch of **polyhedral dice**, from d4 to d12. (five of each size should do)
- ▶ A bunch of **red danger dice** (d6s). A dozen or so.
- ▶ A couple of **bowls** to hold the dice.

- ▶ 1 paperclip for each player (to slide on the danger meter to show their current danger level).
- ▶ Index cards. A whole bunch. You need these to create threat markers. I usually cut a 3x5 card in half for a threat marker. And a 1/4 card can be used for a PC marker.
- ▶ A **sharpie** to write on the cards.
- A **table** with space in the middle for the dice, poker chips, and the battle board (the space where you'll put the threat and PC markers). Ideally, everyone should be able to reach the two dice bowls.

# STEP 1: GATHER EVERYONE AT THE TABLE

Here's the opening speech:

We're going to play Danger Patrol, an action/adventure retro scifi game. The idea is to create the episodes of a 50s-style TV show in the vein of the old Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers serials (with maybe a dash of the Venture Bros., Star Wars, and Indiana Jones).

You're all going to play members of the elite Danger Patrol—special super-powered crime fighters who protect Rocket City from evil Stygian Adepts, the nefarious agents of the Crimson Republic, rampaging monsters set loose by mad scientists, and other crazy threats.

To make your Danger Patrol hero, you're going to pick a Style and a Role. Your style tells us what kind of being you are: A Robot, a Mystic, a cybernetic Atomic, or something else. Your role tells us what your job is on the team: A super-spy Agent, an elite soldier Commando, a wiley Detective, etc.

# STEP 2: PUT THE STYLE CARDS ON THE TABLE AND DESCRIBE THEM

**Alien**: The "make your own style" Style. Say which world you're from (yes, Pluto is a planet and so is Planet X). For your blank powers, you can choose any power from any other style.

**Atomic**: A cybernetic soldier created just before the end of the atomic wars that destroyed the Earth. You have an atomic reactor in your chest. You are Superman (or -woman!) essentially.

Mystic: Master of the occult, magic, and other dimensions.

**Psychic**: Mental powers of telepathy and telekinesis.

Robot: You're a Robot!

**Two-Fisted**: You're a human with no supernatural powers, but you are tough, strong, and ready for anything!

Each player picks a style. It's okay if two people choose the same one (assuming you printed extra sheets).

- ▶ Pick one power from the Style set. Fill in the little circle to show that you have that power. You also start with the "free" abilities for that Style (the ones under the style name that aren't in boxes).
- ▶ You'll get more powers later as you play (by going into danger!)

# STEP 3: HAND OUT THE ROLE CARDS AND SAY A BIT ABOUT EACH

**Agent**: The Super spy. Good at stealth, deception, and manipulation.

Commando: The Soldier. Good at tactics and shooting.

Daredevil: Athlete, stuntman, acrobat, and all-around risk-taker.

**Detective**: Strong-willed, insightful master of forensics, investigation, the criminal underworld and reading people.

**Explorer**: Experienced traveler of all 11 worlds of the solar system (including Planet X!). Expert in all things alien, especially animals, monsters, and strange ruins.

**Flyboy**: Male or female, an expert pilot, driver, astronaut, and dogfighter.

**Professor**: Master of all the sciences and a whiz with technology.

Warrior: Hand to hand combat expert.

Each player picks a role. It's okay if two people choose the same one (assuming you printed extra sheets). No two players should have the exact same Style/Role combo.

- ▶ Pick one of the two role **powers** (the ones with the fill-in circles).
- ▶ Distribute your **trait dice**. You get a d12 in your main role trait. Then you get 1d10, 2d8, 3d6, and 1d4 to distribute among the other seven traits (one die per trait).

- ▶ Choose your **uniform colors**. Every hero wears the two-tone Danger Patrol uniform.
- ▶ Choose your **weapon**. Each weapon has a special quality and a drawback listed in parentheses.
  - Raygun: Can be set to overload to do extra damage (+2 hits). But it burns out and can't be used after that.
  - **Electro-Blaster**: Can short out electronics or **stun** living beings. Good for capturing enemies. But some big, tough monsters (like a Venusian Terror Lizard) can **resist** its effects.
  - Turbo Pistol: Can shoot on autofire (+2d6) but must be reloaded after each burst.

You start with all of your **Stuff**. You can use your stuff as much as you like. You can also check off the box next to an item and get a bonus die to add to a roll.

# DANGER CADET BILLY SAYS: "WHAT DO THE SYMBOLS ON THE POWERS MEAN?"

The **DP "lightning" icon** means the power costs a power token to use. You start play with one power token and can earn more as you go. **When you spend a power token to activate a special power, it doesn't cost your action for the round** (you can still do something else).

- The **cross** symbol means the power helps you or an ally.
- The **shield** symbol means the power is defensive.
- The **crosshairs** symbol means the power is an attack.
- The **arrow** symbol means the power involves movement.
- **★** The **star** symbol stands for "miscellaneous" powers.

On any power, the [+] symbol means, "add a bonus die." When you add bonus dice, the first one is a d10, the second is a d8, and the third is a d6 (you can't have more than three).

# STEP 4: CREATE NAMES FOR THE HEROES

#### You have a choice:

- If your hero has a **secret identity**, create a superhero code name that you use when you're patrolling. Something like Dr. Midnight or Commander Atom.
- If your hero doesn't have a secret identity, create your real name. Try to make it punchy and pulpy. Like Cindy Cannon, Chet Hefner, Buzz Dixon, Jack Bradbury, Nick Timber, etc.

# STEP 5: GO AROUND AND HAVE EACH PLAYER INTRODUCE THEIR HERO

Say your style + role combo, your name, your powers, your best traits, and your uniform colors. Plus any other fun details (maybe your Robot Detective has a cyborg girlfriend).

This might also be a good time to say something about your hero's relationship to the other characters (romantic, rivals, old friends, or something else). Some groups like to avoid making a lot of backstory before they play, but if your group wants to do it, you can come up with all kinds of background details now, including why you joined the Danger Patrol, what you did before, what goals you have for the future, etc.

My own preference is to let that stuff come out during play. So After very brief character introductions, I jump right ahead to **Step 6: Introduce Rocket City and the Solar System**.

#### **GAME SETUP CHECKLIST**

- ☑ Each player has a character sheet, made up of a **Style** card (the left half) and a **Role** card (the right half).
- ☑ Each player has distributed their **trait dice**. d12 in their Role trait, plus 1d10, 2d8, 3d6, and 1d4 distributed among the other seven traits (one die per trait).
- ☑ Each player has chosen one Style power, one Role power, a weapon, and made up their uniform colors.
- ☑ Each player has a Rules Summary sheet.
- ☑ Each player has a **paperclip** (it starts on the word DANGER on the Danger Meter).
- ☑ Each player has one **Power token** (a poker chip).
- ☑ Each player has a marker for his or her PC (a piece of an index card with the character's name on it)
- ☑ The GM has the **GM Jobs & Threat Moves** sheet.
- ☑ The GM has **index cards** to use for threat markers and a **sharpie** to write on them.
- ☑ There's a bowl full of **polyhedral dice** (d4s, d6s, d8s, d10s, and d12s).
- ☑ There's a bowl full of red danger dice (d6s).
- ☑ Everyone has introduced their heroes and said a few details about them.

# STEP 6: INTRODUCE ROCKET CITY AND THE SOLAR SYSTEM

The Earth was destroyed 50 years ago in the **atomic wars**. Just before the end, hundreds of rocket-ships escaped Earth. Most of them went to Mars, where the richest man in the Solar System, *millionaire* Hamilton Hawks, had built a giant utopian "city of the future"—called **Rocket City**.

Rocket City is all art-deco silvery spires, glass, chrome, and steel. It's a vertical city of many levels with skyscrapers thousands of feet tall, sprawling across Olympus Mons. Everyone gets around via rocket-car, funneled into magnetically controlled traffic lanes. Magna-Zeppelins cruise majestically at the highest altitudes, carrying heavy cargo across the massive city (100 times larger than New York).

Everything has retro style, including the robotic service station attendants who wear smart white uniforms and wash your windshield while they gas up your rocket car. *The Mighty Atom* newspaper is delivered every morning to most homes and is sold on floating traffic islands by boys in newsie caps. Radio dramas are very popular as are the brand-new Videoscope programs. Motion picture theaters show films in black and white (with sound!) for five cents a pop.

Rocket City is the crossroads of the solar system, where all the human colonies on the other worlds come to trade, along with aliens of all sorts.

The other major human settlement is the **Crimson Republic**, in Jupiter's red spot. The CR is a militaristic nation ruled by the despot, Grand Commander Zukov (a head in a jar attached to a robotic spider body). The CR is obsessed with perfecting atomic technology (now banned in Rocket City) and turning their population into atomic super soldiers with which to conquer the solar system. The CR is the catch-all commie/red-scare/evil-empire bad-guy group. They are

technically at peace with Rocket City, but an invisible cold war rages, with enemy agents hidden everywhere.

Each planet is earth-like (except for dark and cold Pluto), with normal gravity and breathable air. Each is home to native alien life, as well as strange plants and animals. Mars has ruins of some former great civilization (with links to Atlantis on Earth) but no one knows what became of them. The Neptunians claim to be descendants of this Elder Race, but Neptunians claim lots of crazy things.

Pluto is home to the **Stygian Adepts**, an evil cult from the 5th Dimension who worship entropy. They're the hooded dudes (made out of living shadow?) with wicked curved daggers—perfect for sacrifice scenes and creepy dark magic.



#### **Q&A WITH PROFESSOR BRADBURY**

**Q.** Is that it, Professor? Isn't there more to the setting?

**A.** Good question, Billy! The answer is yes, there's a lot more! The Solar System is a big place, with lots of planets to explore, aliens to meet, and dangerous phenomena to encounter. When you play *Danger Patrol*, the players and the GM will "fill in the map," so to speak, adding details as they go. You start out with a simple overview and create details as you need them.

Don't be afraid to be creative! Maybe Venus is a dense jungleplanet teeming with giant insects and dinosaurs or maybe it's a mist-shrouded world inhabited by intelligent rock-men. It's up to you!

**Q.** What about the rampant sexism and racism that were part of most classic pulp stories? Does Rocket City have such things?

**A.** Thankfully, Billy, those things vanished along with the Earth after the atomic wars. In Rocket City, all people are equal, regardless of race or sex.

# **STEP 7: START THE SHOW!**

To start the game, the GM will describe the opening sequence to this episode of *Danger Patrol*. Then, the players will do their "Previously, on Danger Patrol..." narrations. Then the first action scene will begin.

#### THE OPENING TEASER

Each episode of *Danger Patrol* begins with an opening teaser, which shows the Patrol in some perilous, life-or-death situation that looks hopeless. A cliffhanger, if you will.

The GM creates the opening teaser as part of game prep (or use the one provided below). They should be short and punchy, establishing what the opening action scene will be about.

#### **EXAMPLE TEASER**

#### Episode 11: Attack of the Crimson Apes

The patrol is cruising over rocket city in the Danger Car (a custom-built Hawks 5000 rocketcar). Citizens are leaning out of their flying cars and snapping photos and cheering the patrol. This is a PR cruise more than anything.

SUDDENLY—a giant Crimson Ape, freshly escaped from the Rocket City Zoo, lands on the trunk of the car. It rips the back bumper off in a dominance display, roars, and hurls the bumper over its head—right into traffic! The bumper smashes into a citizen's car, sending it tumbling out of control, with smoke pouring from the engine. Across the city, the heroes can see other Crimson Apes, leaping from car to car in the traffic lanes, smashing windows, scaring citizens, and generally causing havoe! **This looks like a job for the Danger Patrol!** 

#### "PREVIOUSLY, ON DANGER PATROL..."

Now it's the player's turn to narrate. Each player should describe a quick sequence from the previous episode, spotlighting their hero (plus another hero or invented NPC if they wish). What previous episode, you may ask? The one you're about to make up. By narrating action from an earlier episode that you didn't actually play, each player has the chance to introduce an element or two that they're interested in seeing in the current episode.

Maybe someone is playing a Mystic hero and wants the Stygian Adepts to be involved in the Crimson Ape attack. That player could include a "Previously on..." moment in which we see his hero exploring an old Martian ruin, with strange hieroglyphics on the walls depicting Stygians controlling animals with dark magic. "The Stygians," he whispers. "I knew it!"

While the players are doing their "Previously On" narrations, the GM will be furiously taking notes. GM, it's your job to work these elements into the upcoming episode in some way. They don't all have to be in the first scene, but you should start to introduce some of them, with clues and leads that point to the others.

During the "Previously On," sequence, the GM grabs an index card and writes STYGIAN ADEPTS on it and puts it off to the side. The players see it and know that the evil Stygians are involved and waiting in the wings.

Another player creates the Anti-Robot League during his "Previously On," so the GM makes a card for them, too, along with a location card (Ludd's Bar) as a reminder to do something with the League and the bar later.

This may seem challenging, but think of it this way: The players are creating your threats and dangers for you! Just take a few notes and you'll end up with all the prep materials you need for the session.

Once each player has done their "Previously On," it's time to start the action scene....

# STEP 8: SET UP THE BATTLE BOARD

The first action scene starts at the moment the opening teaser ended. The Crimson Ape is clinging to the back of the Danger Car, a citizen's rocket car is going down in flames, other apes are terrorizing the city, and the traffic control system is overloading.

#### **MARKERS AND THREATS**

Now the GM sets up the battle board. There's no "board" actually—it's just the clear space in the middle of the table.

For the "Attack of the Crimson Apes" episode, first put down a **marker** for the Hawks 5000 (a "marker" is a half index card, with a name written on it). Then, have each player place their hero marker on the car. You can use minis, colored tokens, or little cards with the heroes' names.

If you have a Flyboy character, definitely use their custom vehicle instead of the Hawks 5000!

Next the GM creates the **Threats**. A threat is anything that presents a dangerous challenge to the heroes, from a monstrous Crimson Ape to a raging fire to a seductive enemy agent.

Creating a threat is easy. Just put a marker on the battle board and write the name of the threat on the top.

NATASHA GANYMEDSKA CR AGENT



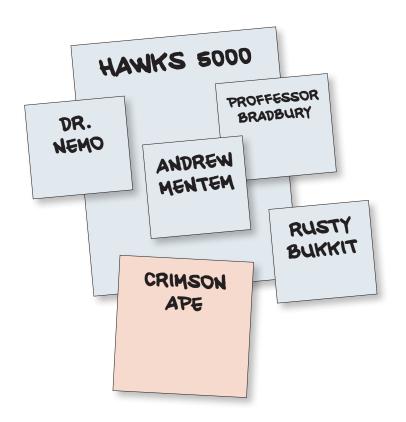
#### **EXAMPLE THREATS**

#### Episode 11: Attack of the Crimson Apes

For Attack of the Crimson Apes, we start with six threats:

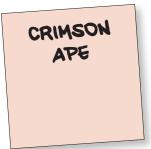
- 1. **One Crimson Ape** on the back of the Hawks 5000 (put the ape threat marker on the back of the marker for the car, to show the relative position to the heroes)
- 2-4. **Three more Crimson Apes.** Place these around the board to show how they're scattered around the area. (The battle board is abstract, but the GM should move the markers around as needed to show where things are relative to each other, so we can tell what's close or far, above, below.)
- 5. **Rocketcar in trouble!** This is the citizen's car that was hit by the flying bumper. It's gonna crash!
- 6. **Traffic Control overload!** This threat marker represents the taxed traffic control system that is malfunctioning because all the drivers in the local area are all swerving recklessly at the same time (to get away from the apes!). Put it in the center of the board. This card also gets a **countdown** number, starting at 2 (put the countdown number inside a circle). This means, after 2 rounds, if the threat is still on the board, it will come true. When the system overloads, lots of cars will crash and people will die.

**You might also put a countdown on the crashing rocketcar.** Make it 1 if you really want to kick the heroes into gear.



# ATTACK OF THE CRIMSON APES!

**BATTLE BOARD SETUP** 



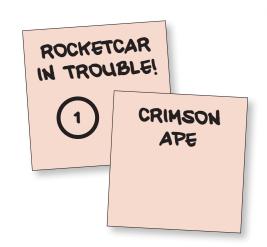
TRAFFIC OVERLOAD!

2

CRIMSON

# DANGER CADET BILLY SAYS: "YOU CAN DO NEAT STUFF WITH THREATS!"

It's true! At the Cadet Clubhouse where we play, we've seen all kinds of crazy things on threat cards, including "Buzz Dixon's Troubled Past," "The Courage to Fight Your Own Brother," and "Is It Really True Love?" Jeepers!



#### **SCALING THE THREATS**

The *Crimson Apes* setup assumes you have 4 players. If you have fewer players, reduce the number of starting threats. For 3 players, remove two of the apes. For two players, remove three of the apes.

This will make for a faster-playing opening scene, which is good. For later battles, feel free to make them longer and tougher. Sometimes the Patrol gets in way over their heads!

# **STEP 9: ACTION!**

Now ask who wants to go first. Several people should be leaning forward, desperate to jump in to action and save Rocket City. Let the players work out who among them will go first.

When a player takes her turn, she says what heroic action her hero takes. The action should be short and punchy, with an added detail to give some color.

I jump onto the back of the Hawks 5000 and level my raygun at the ape. "Sorry, shaggy, but this ride is full." I zap him off the car and on to the rooftop patio of a passing restaurant.

#### **ROLL THE DICE!**

#### The Trait Die

Now, the GM says which trait needs to be tested for that action, based on what the hero did. For example, shooting a raygun falls under the **Commando** trait. Piloting a rocketcar would be a test of **Flyboy**. Attempting to communicate with an ape and tell it what to do would call for **Explorer**.

The player picks up the die they assigned to that trait. But don't roll yet! You need more dice.

#### **DANGER DICE**

Now the fun stuff. The player can now add 1-3 **danger dice** (the red d6s in the bowl) to her roll. To do so, she adds details to her action that show just how dangerous it is.

Well, I'm leaping out of the seat of a moving rocket car (1 danger die). I balance on the sloping trunk and duck as other rocket cars whiz narrowly by my head (2nd die). And oh yeah, I'm facing down a 12 foot tall Crimson Ape, who is raising both fists to smash my head in (3rd danger die).

You can add one detail per die, or just say your danger and pick up 1-3 dice from the bowl (either way is fine).

#### **Still Want More Danger?**

Ask the other players and the GM to give you more. One player can give you one more die by adding another dangerous detail. The GM can also give one die by adding a detail. So you can end up with 5 danger dice, total.

The other players and GM add more danger to the action. "Just as you jump on to the trunk of the rocket car, Dr. Nemo (who's driving) has to swerve to avoid hitting a school bus!"

"Also, everyone knows that Crimson Apes hate the color yellow. Oh, your uniform is yellow, isn't it?"

#### **BONUS DICE**

You can get bonus dice from your Role and Style powers, indicated by a [+] on the card. You can also get a bonus die by checking the box on one of your Stuff items. When you roll bonus dice, the first one is a d10, the second is a d8, and the third is a d6. You can't have more than three bonus dice on a roll.

### THE RESULTS: HITS AND DANGER

Now roll all the dice you have.

- ▶ Each die that shows 4 or higher is a **success**!
- ▶ Each die that shows 1, 2, or 3 is **danger**!

#### **HITS**

If you're fighting a threat, you do a **hit** for each success you rolled. The GM will mark an **X** on the threat card for each hit you did.

#### Threats can take hits in multiples of 3.

- ▶ A **normal threat** (a minion, a monster, a problem) is defeated after **3 hits**.
- A major threat (a tough monster, a serious problem) is defeated after 6 hits.
- An **elite threat** (a boss monster, a disaster, a highly trained bad quy) is defeated after **9 hits**.
- ▶ A master threat (a super villain, a giant vehicle, a cataclysmic event) is defeated after 12 hits.

GM, you don't have to tell the players what level a threat is. Just mark hits as you go and remove it when it takes the right amount. Yes, this means you can fudge and make something weaker or tougher on the fly. That's totally in the spirit of the game.

#### **THREAT LEVELS**

#### Episode 11: Attack of the Crimson Apes

For Attack of the Crimson Apes, I recommend making the Apes normal threats. The Traffic Overload can be a major threat. The rocketcar in trouble can be a major threat, too.

#### **DANGER**

For each **danger** result you rolled, your danger meter goes up by one. Slide the paper clip "up" (to the right) one dot per danger.

#### **Danger Meter Rewards**

As your meter goes up, you get rewards. When your meter crosses a dot with the DP **lightning icon**, you earn a **power token**.

- You can spend **one power token** to **activate a special power**.
- You can spend two power tokens to take an extra turn at any point during a round.

However, as your meter goes up, you risk taking higher-level hits which have worse consequences for your hero. Such is the life of a Danger Patrol officer.

If you get your danger level all the way to the end, it stays there for the rest of the scene. Then (assuming you're still alive) **you earn a new power** from your Role or Style. Your danger meter then resets to zero.

#### **ACTION RESULT**

Now the GM will describe the results of your action as well as saying what threat move happens (see **threat moves** in the next section). Your turn is over, and play passes to the next player.



#### **GM ACTIONS**

GM, here's a funny thing about *Danger Patrol*: Your threats take action only as a result of what the players do (or fail to do). You don't get a "turn" of your own. Here's how it works.

When a player rolls and gets danger, take a look at the **threat moves** menu and choose a move that matches the number of danger results they rolled (you can also choose a few things with lower danger values if you want).

Also keep an eye on any threats that are unharmed during a round (i.e. no PC does a hit against them). Before the round ends, these threats can make moves from the menu. Generally speaking, an ignored threat should make a move equal to its **threat level plus one** (count up from Danger 2 for a normal threat to Danger 5 for a master threat). Yeah, this means that if you ignore a super-villain, she gets to inflict a disaster on the PCs. Fun!

If a player rolls zero danger, they just got a perfect roll! Offer them an opportunity or a beneficial consequence (e.g. give them a bonus die to their next action). You might give them a major clue, too.

#### **HITS AGAINST PCS**

When a PC gets hit, it will be one of these:

- ▶ A **reduced hit**—means the player can mark any lower hit box on their danger meter (marked Bashed if you have any left).
- ▶ A **full hit**—means the player must mark a hit box at the current level of their danger meter.

The danger meter has 13 hit boxes (which are like hit points with names). When you mark a box, the name tells you what condition happens to your character.

**Bashed** is just getting knocked around. But you're okay.

**Stunned** means you're woozy. You have to roll 5s or better to succeed on your next action (so rolling 1-4 means danger).

**Injured** means you have a specific, ongoing injury. As long as you have that injury, you need to roll 5s or better to succeed.

#### **THREAT MOVES**

- **DANGER 1: Escalate the threat.** Have the threat take some action to raise the stakes or make the situation worse in some way. **Leave a danger die on the threat card.** The next player to fight this threat has to take the danger die in addition to any others they get (so their max is 6 danger dice, not 5).
- **DANGER 2:** Do a *reduced hit* to the PC. This can be from an attack the threat makes or from the consequences of one of the dangers the players narrated before the action.
- **DANGER 3: Introduce a new threat** as a consequence of the action. This should usually be **one threat level lower** than the threat the PC was facing. This move is good for things like fires that start, electrical surges, summoned demons, etc. Fallout from the action at hand.
  - If there are plenty of threats in play already, do both the DANGER 2 and DANGER 1 moves instead.
- **DANGER 4:** Do a *full hit* to the PC. This can be from an attack the threat makes or from the consequences of one of the dangers the players narrated before the action.
- **DANGER 5: Total Disaster!** The threat does the worst possible thing. Be ruthless and destructive in your descriptions. Kill citizens if you want to. Blow up buildings. **A hero can mitigate a disaster** by taking a full hit, then getting locked in battle with a new, major threat. Put the hero marker on this new threat, spun off from the threat they were facing. It might be something like "Trapped in burning wreckage." The player gets to say how their hero stops the disaster from coming true, and how they end up trapped by the new threat as a result. That hero can't do anything but fight the new threat until it is defeated.

K.O.'d means you're knocked unconscious.

**Vaporized** means... well, you know. How permanent "vaporized" is depends on the group and what can be done about the circumstances around your vaporization. A trip to the 5th Dimension may be required to save you.

If a player gets hit and the named condition at that level doesn't seem to fit the action, you can write a new condition name on the blank line provided. Sometimes you just need to write in "Seduced" when "Stunned" won't do.

If all the boxes in a section are full, damage "rolls up" to the next higher section.

# STEP 10: ROUND TWO! (AND BEYOND)

So, continue around the circle, with each player taking turns. **Once everyone has taken a turn, the round is over.** Then start the next round. Players can take turns in any order they like.

Keep going, taking turns and playing rounds. The PCs will do hits to the threats and the GM will make threat moves. The GM should move the marker cards around to reflect the changing positions of the heroes and threats as the action plays out.

(By the way, if someone needs to move far across the board, this usually takes a whole action. If it's risky, it will also call for a roll. It's up to the GM what constitutes "far" and when to ask for a roll to move around.)

Eventually, all the threats will be defeated. Good job, Danger Patrol! The citizens cheer, the heroes sign autographs, and bad guys are locked up.

#### You get to keep any power tokens you've earned.

Now it's time for Interludes.

### **STEP 11: INTERLUDES**

Between action scenes, we play **interlude** scenes. An interlude is a short moment of roleplaying or narration by a player, similar to the "Previously On" moments at the beginning of the episode. They should be short and punchy (no more than a minute or two). They're a chance for the players to narrate cool actions, roleplay with each other, and give the GM new material to work with.

Think of it this way: The first action scene is an *in media res* slambang thing, but we don't know why it's happening exactly. Then, we get the first batch of interludes. The players will introduce little moments and ideas, which the GM can use to create the batch of threats for the second action scene coming up next.

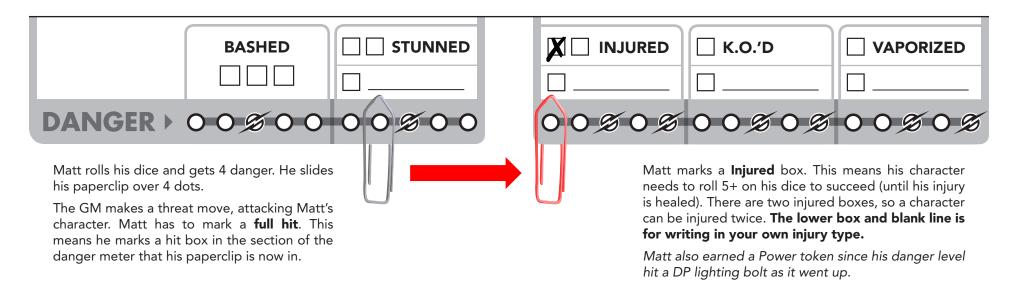
#### When you do an Interlude scene:

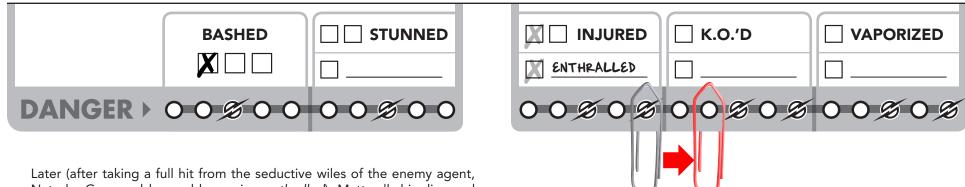
- Include your PC, plus another PC and/or an NPC.
- ▶ Say where you are (or ask for ideas) and what's happening when the scene starts.
- Roleplay! Reveal your relationship with the other characters.
- Introduce a clue, plot point, or possible future threat. (optional)
- Restore a used Stuff box
- ▶ Reduce your danger level by 5. Heal all the hit boxes in the highest section of the danger meter where you have harm. (optional)

Tread lightly! Don't resolve a bunch of stuff yet. The second action scene usually involves a couple of Mystery threats that you'll "fight" using Agent, Detective, and Professor actions (in addition to the normal combat threats). So you'll defeat those and find clues during the next scene. But feel free to introduce leads and elements that the GM can use to seed that next batch of threat cards.

Locations, enemy groups, weird objects, found evidence, NPCs that you force to talk... all good fodder for the second action scene coming up. If you want to jet off to Saturn and meet with the Ring Knights, now's the time to lay that groundwork.

# PC HITS & DANGER EXAMPLES





Later (after taking a full hit from the seductive wiles of the enemy agent, Natasha Ganymedska, and becoming *enthralled*), Matt rolls his dice and gets 2 danger. He slides his paperclip over 2 dots.

The GM makes a threat move, attacking Matt's character. Matt has to mark a **reduced hit**. This means he marks a hit box anywhere to the left of the paperclip. Since he still has un-checked Bashed boxes, Matt puts the hit there. If all the Bashed boxes were full, the hit would "roll-up" to the next section, meaning he would be Stunned.

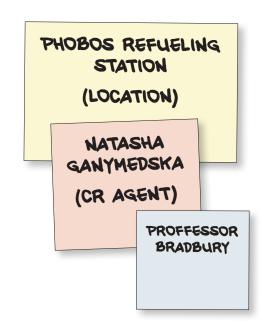
# **INTERLUDE & ACTION SCENE 2 EXAMPLE**

During the interlude scenes, the players introduced several new elements, which the GM fleshed out a bit and added as threat cards.

Now the group moves into action scene two, where the heroes will fight these new threats, some of which represent mysteries that will be solved as they are defeated.

The martian runes and the Stygian Adepts were originally introduced during the "Previously On" sequences. The GM had cards for them already, so Dr. Nemo's player narrated a quick sequence about following a lead back to the Martian pyramids—the source of the strange energy that controlled the Crimson Apes.

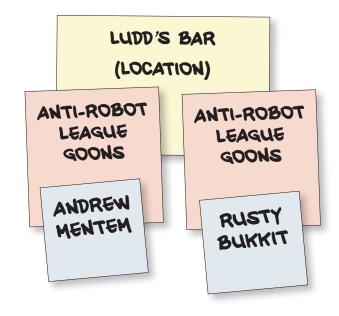




During his interlude, Professor Bradbury questioned the scientist who was helping the Crimson Republic smuggle atomic research out of Rocket City (the ape attack was just a diversion, which was revealed by the GM as the threats were defeated in the first scene). During the interlude roleplaying, the scientist (played by the GM) told Professor Bradbury that **Natasha Ganymedska** (the CR agent) had escaped with the research papers, but must have gone to **Phobos** to refuel her rocket before returning to Jupiter.

Suspicious of Crimson Republic involvement, Andrew Mentem and Rusty Bukkit spent their interlude scene together, trawling the criminal underworld of the lower levels of Rocket City, looking for informants.

They found Ludd's Bar, a hangout for the **Anti-Robot league** (introduced by Rusty's player during a Previously On). During the interlude, Rusty's player revealed that one of the **Anti-Robot League goons** was wearing a Crimson Republic ring. Just then, a bunch more goons burst through the doors!



# **OTHER STUFF**

#### **HELPING**

Take an action to set up another hero, or use your next turn to jump in and help someone who is acting now. Test a trait (GM chooses as usual), and give your hits as helping dice (d8s) to another player.

#### **GENERIC USE FOR POWER TOKENS**

If you think of a cool power stunt, just spend a power token and say how your Style lets you do something cool and superhuman. Take a bonus d8 to your action roll, right now.

#### **RESISTANCE**

A threat can have resistance (1, 2, or 3) which means it ignores that many hits from each attack. Use sparingly. You can also link a threat's resistance to another threat, such that when the main threat is defeated, all the linked threats lose their resistance (a Force Field generator or something similar is good for this). Resistance doesn't have to represent physical toughness, of course.

#### **STAGED THREATS**

You have to defeat Threat A before you can do hits to Threat B. The nastiest setup: Have minions that are staged between the master villain and the heroes. The PCs have to beat the minions before they can attack the master villain, and every round the villain is untouched, he can inflict a Disaster! *Ouch*.

#### **VEHICLE HITS**

Vehicles can take hits, too. Most vehicles can take 3 hits before they're crippled and 6 hits destroys them. When the GM hits a PC vehicle with a threat move, a reduced hit equals 1 vehicle hit and a full hit equals 2.

#### **MORE STARTING POWERS**

You can start with more than two powers if you want. Three, four, or even all of them! If a character has all their available powers, maybe they get to add another Style or Role card when they "level up." So you could have an Alien Psychic Detective, for example. Crazy!

### **THANKS**

Matt Wilson, Ben Robbins, Wilhelm Fitzpatrick, Phil LaRose, Doug Bartlett, Ryan Dunleavy, Jonathan Walton, Blake Hutchins, Lukas Myhan, Christian Griffen, Matthew Gagan, Matthew Klein, John Aegard, Jackson Tegu, Joe McDonald, Brendan Adkins, Kingston Cassidy, Daniel Wood, Michael Decuir, James Cunningham, Alan Barclay, John Powell, Clinton R. Nixon, Tony Dowler, Brandon Amancio, Shannon East, Paul Riddle, Sage LaTorra, Fred Hicks, Rob Donoghue, Leonard Balsera, Jonathan Tweet, Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, Robin Laws, Steve Sechi, Jonathan Elliott, Gregor Hutton, Tony Lower-Basch, Bruce Timm, Alex Raymond, Philip Nowlan, John Dille, Edgar Burroughs, and Vincent Baker.

The Olkahoma City All-Stars: Joshua Unruh, Jeff Williams, Chris Harmon, Chris Masters, Paul Crowell

The Compleat Strategists: Sam Zeitlin, George Austin, Jonathan Davis, Joe Iglesias, Nick X, Danger Cadet Billy

The North Carolina Irregulars: Jason Morningstar, Steve Segedy, Joel Coldren, Mike Graves

StoryGames Boston: Jonathan Walton and the Mystery Gang.

The Garden Statesmen: Matt Wilson, Brennan Taylor, Gil Hova, Rich Flynn

# **CREDITS**

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This is the alpha playtest version written for Go Play NW 2009 and played there by Matt Wilson, Matthew Gagan, Christian Griffen, Lukas Myhan, Blake Hutchins, Wilhelm Fitzpatrick, Brendan Adkins, Phil LaRose, Doug Bartlett, Alan Barclay, Michael Decuir, Kingston Cassidy, Daniel Wood and John Powell. Their enthusiam and support was invaluable in getting this document finished.

Ben Robbins, Wilhelm Fitzpatrick, Ryan Dunleavy, and Jonathan Walton gave me lots of excellent feedback and helped refine the system from its rough early state.

Shannon East, Paul Riddle, and Sage LaTorra are some of the best gorram gamers in Seattle and they gave me the play time and encouragement to get this game off the ground.

# **RULES SUMMARY**

#### **CHARACTER CREATION**

1. Put 1d12 in your Role trait. 2. Distribute 1d10, 2d8, 3d6, and 1d4 among your other traits (one die per trait). 3. Choose one power from your Role and one power from your Style (fill in the circle next to a power to indicate that you have it). 4. Choose your Weapon. 5. Choose your two uniform colors. 6. Give your hero a cool, pulpy name.

#### **TURNS AND DICE**

When you take action, say what exciting move your hero does. The GM will tell you which **trait** to test. Roll the die for that trait, plus a bonus die if your action matches your Role's ability (marked with [+] on your Role card).

**Add 1-3 danger dice** (red d6s) to your roll if your hero's action is risky or dangerous. Say what makes it risky or dangerous by adding details to the scene.

You can ask the players and GM to give you up to 2 more danger dice. They'll add in details to the action that make it even more dangerous. You can roll up to **5 danger dice**, total.

#### Roll all of your dice:

- ▶ Each die that shows 4+ is a **success**.
- ▶ Each die that shows 1-3 is **danger**.

If your action was an attack, each success your rolled does a **hit** to the threat you're fighting. A threat can take 3, 6, 9, or 12 hits before being defeated (depending on its level). The GM won't usually tell you exactly what level a threat is (but may drop hints). If your action wasn't an attack, it was probably a movement or helping roll (see **Helping**, below).

Advance the level of your danger meter by one for each danger result you rolled.

The GM will say the results of your action, then make a **threat move** based on how many danger you got on your roll.

Once everyone has taken their turn (the players can go in any order they want), the GM makes threat moves with any threats that were ignored during the round. Then the round is over and another round starts.

#### **HELPING**

Take an action to set up another hero, or use your next turn to jump in and help someone who is acting now. Test a trait (GM chooses as usual), and give your hits as helping dice (d8s) to another player.

#### DANGER METER

When the level of your meter hits a **DP lightning icon**, you get a **Power token**.

- You can spend one Power token to activate one of your powers.
- You can spend two Power tokens to take an extra turn during the round.

When you spend a power token to activate a special power, it doesn't cost your action for the round (you can still do something else).

If you raise your danger level all the way to the end of the meter, you can **add a new power** to your character when the battle is over (your meter resets to zero).

#### **HITS**

When the GM tells you to take a **reduced hit**, you can mark any lower hit box on your danger meter (to the left of your paperclip). You'll probably want to mark a Bashed box if you have any left. When the GM tells you to take a **full hit**, you must mark a hit box at the current level of your danger meter.

#### **BONUS DICE**

A bonus die is written as [+] in several powers and abilities. When you get bonus dice, the first one is a d10, the second is a d8, and the third is a d6. You can't have more than three bonus dice on a roll.

#### **STUFF**

You can use your character's Stuff as much as you want as part of your actions. You can also check off a Stuff box to take a bonus die on a roll.

#### **INTERLUDES**

When all the threats are defeated, an action scene is over and we now play **Interludes**. An Interlude is a short moment of roleplaying or narration of action by a player, similar to the "Previously On" moments at the beginning of the episode. They should be short and punchy (no more than a minute or two).

- Include your PC, plus another PC and/or an NPC.
- ▶ Say where you are (or ask for ideas) and what's happening when it starts.
- Roleplay! Reveal your relationship with the other characters.
- Restore a used Stuff box
- Introduce a clue, plot point, or possible future threat. (optional)
- Reduce your danger level by 5. Heal any hit boxes in the highest section of the danger meter where you have harm. (optional)

# **GM JOBS**

▶ Keep the fictional action at the forefront. You should be asking questions like, "How do you do that?" "What does it look like when you use your Psychic Blast?" "When the burning wreckage crashes down, what do you do to get out of the way?" "Does your raygun shoot a beam or a bolt of energy?"

The idea is to paint a picture of the action in everyone's mind. Think of it like you're making an action/adventure movie. **What does the audience see on the screen right now?** 

Whenever someone rolls dice, or uses a power, or takes danger dice, or moves a marker on the board, or does anything with the game system, something happens on screen. Don't skimp on the details!

- ▶ **Move the game markers** around and establish positions to reflect the fiction.
- **Bring threats into play** that are waiting in the wings.
- ▶ **Keep the game moving at a brisk pace.** Keep turns short and punchy. Don't linger too long in speculation or "what if" scenarios. If a situation can be played as a threat and battle, move into that as quickly as possible. Mysteries, investigations, seductions, chases, experiments and other situations work great as threats (and bring the "non-combat" traits like Agent, Detective, and Professor to the fore)
- Judge if an action constitutes an "attack" (to determine if a roll does hits to a threat). Make sure the fictional actions match the threats! For example, a shooting action with Commando would certainly do hits against a Crimson Ape, but would not work to put out a raging fire threat. Use your best judgment and say 'no' if you need to. Pick the trait you feel is best for the action, and stick to your guns.

If an action doesn't count as an attack, it should never be "wasted." Treat it as a helping roll or let the player revise their action if they want to.

# THREAT MOVES

#### **DANGER 1: Escalate the threat.**

Have the threat take some action to raise the stakes or make the situation worse in some way. **Leave a danger die on the threat card.** The next player to fight this threat has to take the danger die in addition to any others they get (so their max is 6 danger dice, not 5).

#### DANGER 2: Do a reduced hit to the PC.

This can be from an attack the threat makes or from the consequences of one of the dangers the players narrated before the action.

#### **DANGER 3: Introduce a new threat** as a consequence.

This should usually be **one threat level lower** than the threat the PC was facing. This move is good for things like fires that start, electrical surges, summoned demons, etc. Fallout from the action at hand.

If there are plenty of threats in play already, do both the DANGER 2 and DANGER 1 moves instead.

#### DANGER 4: Do a full hit to the PC.

This can be from an attack the threat makes or from the consequences of one of the dangers the players narrated before the action.

#### **DANGER 5: Total Disaster!**

The threat does the worst possible thing. Be ruthless and destructive in your descriptions. Kill citizens if you want to. Blow up buildings. A hero can mitigate a disaster by taking a full hit, then getting locked in battle with a new, major threat. Put the hero marker on this new threat, spun off from the threat they were facing. It might be something like "Trapped in burning wreckage." The player gets to say how their hero stops the disaster from coming true, and how they end up trapped by the new threat as a result. That hero can't do anything but fight the new threat until it is defeated.

# **HEROIC ACTIONS**

#### FIGHT | HELP | MOVE | SPECIAL

**AGENT** ▶ Sneak around and ambush bad guys. ▶ Trick an enemy and lead them into a trap. ▶ Disguise yourself. ▶ Spy on secret villain meetings. ▶ Infiltrate an evil fortress. ▶ Use your network of contacts to get something you need.

**COMMANDO** ➤ Shoot enemies. ➤ Shoot a lot to keep them pinned down. ➤ Throw grenades. ➤ Come up with battle tactics for the team.

**DAREDEVIL** → Run, jump, swing, and flip. → Jump off of something tall. → Draw fire so a threat attacks you instead of doing something else. → Escape certain death.

**DETECTIVE** ▶ Find a useful clue. ▶ Resist evil with your indomitable will. ▶ Use your network of contacts to find information. ▶ Notice details and sense danger. ▶ See through lies. ▶ Investigate a mystery.

**EXPLORER** → Tame a wild beast and have it fight alongside you. → Endure extreme conditions. → Deal with alien cultures and speak languages. → Give first aid. → Find your way through an alien jungle.

**FLYBOY** ► Fly a rocket-car upside down through a narrow opening. ► Zip around with your custom rocketpack. ► Get into a dogfight. ► Swoop in and rescue someone from a dangerous spot.

**PROFESSOR** ▶ Re-program a robot to do what you want. ▶ Build a quick gadget to solve a problem. ▶ Defuse a ticking bomb. ▶ Repair broken technology. ▶ Remember useful facts and get information from computers.

**WARRIOR** ▶ Punch evil in the face. ▶ Throw bad guys off of high places. ▶ Fight with melee weapons. ▶ Intimidate someone.



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