THE VILLAINOMICON!

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ICONS
SUPERPOWERED ROLEPLAYING

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INTRODUCTION

BRING ON THE BAD GUYS!

Villains are the most interesting part of any hero's story.   Over the course of a standard superhero comic book, the main character may change slightly (or even drastically, although such major changes are usually reset back to the status quo after a while has passed).   The same hero, with the same powers... the same overall concept remains from issue to issue.   But the villains... the villains are a neverending parade of new powers, new ideas, new concepts rolled out to keep things fresh and interesting and to continue to challenge the hero.

The same thing should hold true for your **Icons** games as well. You've spent the time to create compelling heroes, and to pit them against all manner of foes.   Some of the villains you use will become recurring threats, the sort of opponents that your players will love to hate, just as readers thrill to see the return of the classic foes in their favorite comics.   But you need a steady diet of the worst threats that your campaign setting has ever seen -- that's the way to keep things interesting, and to keep your players on their toes.

The Villainomicon is more than just a "Monster Manual" of new villains for your game, however. Yes, there are dozens of new threats contained within these pages, but **The Villainomicon** also provides new powers, new specialties, optional rules and dozens of adventure hooks as well.

So, proceed at your own risk.   The fate of your campaign world may lie within these pages -- and only your heroes can save it.

Villain Creation

The **Icons** core rulebook covers the steps of creating a hero *(p. 9–15)* and putting those heroes together as a team *(p. 18–21)*, but what about the villains?

Icons Game Masters are, of course, free to simply make up villains out of whole cloth. It's an easy matter to assign whatever levels you want to a villain's abilities, choose the appropriate specialties and powers and assign levels to them as needed, too, then give the villain some aspects, and you're good to go. That's how most of the villains in this book (and the sample villains in **Icons**) were created.

However, you can also add an additional phase to the Hero and Team Creation process outline in Icons: that of Villain Creation.

Any player who has chosen an Enemy challenge should pass the hero to the player the left. That player then rolls on the Villain Role table to determine how to generate the hero's Enemy:

2D6 Villain Role

2–5 **Adversary:** Roll to generate the villain's Origin and other traits the same as a hero.

6–7 **Nemesis:** Do not roll the villain's Origin; the villain has an Origin "opposite" to that of the hero on the Origin table: Trained = Unearthly, Transformed = Artificial, and Birthright = Gimmick and vice-versa. Generate the rest of the villain's traits the same as you would a hero.

8–9 **Opposite:** The villain has the same Origin as the hero. Do not roll the villain's powers. Instead, assign the villain the same number of powers as the hero, but choose "opposing" powers. So if the hero has Elemental Control (Fire), for example, the villain could have Elemental Control (Cold) or (Water). The creating player gets to interpret "opposite" with the GM's approval.

10–12 **Reflection:** The villain has the same Origin and powers as the hero—including abilities above level 6—but differing aspects, and possibly differing descriptions of the powers' "special effects". For example, a hero with Wizardry (Magic) might have a Reflection who also has Magic, but evil magic rather than good magic. The villain may choose different Specialties than the hero.

Villain creation then follows the guidelines given for hero creation in Icons (p. 9–15). If the villain is a team Enemy, the Game Master rolls on the Villain Role table and creates the villain. If using the optional point-build creation systems, roll to determine the villain's role and then spend points accordingly, or simply choose a role.

Game Masters may wish to make villain creation mandatory for all players; those whose heroes do not have an Enemy challenge are simply creating additional villains for the series. Their heroes do not earn Determination for the villain(s) entering play, but neither do those villains have a particular vendetta against their heroes.

Villain Creation Example

Andy sits to the left of Branden, who has just created the hero Saguaro, the Man-Cactus (**Icons**, p. 15–16) and Saguaro has an Enemy complication. So Branden passes his hero's character sheet over to Andy, who grabs the dice to start coming up with a villain!

Rolling an 8 on the Villain Role Table, Andy comes up with an Opposite villain; he has the same Origin as Saguaro (Transformed) but opposing powers. Andy notes the bad guy is Transformed (and therefore has one power or ability at +2) and moves on to the next phase.

Andy rolls six times for the villain's abilities, getting the following:

Prowess	3
Coordination	4
Strength	4
Intellect	4
Awareness	6
Willpower	5

The villain could use his Origin bonus to improve one of these abilities, but Andy decides to wait and see how the powers come up.

He knows from the villain's role that he has three powers (same as Saguaro) and that they are opposite in some way. He looks at Saguaro's list: Aura (his spines), Immunity, and Leaping, but also considers Saguaro's themes: that he's a plant-man and a desert creature. Andy considers something like a cold-based villain or someone associated with a more lush environment, but thinks it would be more interesting if Saguaro's Enemy is closer to home. So he considers an animal-based, rather than plant-based character, who is more sly and cunning than Saguaro's close-up, spiny, super-strength. Considering the "opposite" of Saguaro's Immunity he thinks about Affliction, and poisonous powers.

Animals, poisons, desert ... reptiles! Andy picks the following powers: Affliction and Animal Control (Reptiles). Rolling levels for them, he gets 6 for Affliction and 5 for Animal Control, raised to 7 because it is limited to Reptiles. He also adds the bonus power of Close Range to Affliction, since the villain isn't going to want to touch Saguaro!

Looking over the villain's traits, Andy decides to apply the +2 Origin bonus to Coordination, making the villain quick and agile. He then rolls for Specialties, getting a total of 3. He picks Acrobatics and Stealth right off, and decides to add Occult as the third, ideas beginning to come together.

Andy describes a former student of Saguaro's mentor, Tom Crow (pulling in the hero's other aspects). Jealous of Saguaro being "the chosen one," he went out into the desert looking for some of that same irradiated cactus, but got bitten by an irradiated snake instead. The venom and the sinister spirits he called upon transformed him into a lizard-man able to spit acidic poison and control reptiles. He took on the name of "The Gila-Master" and swore to destroy Saguaro and to steal his mentor's mystic secrets for himself!

Branden likes his hero's new Enemy and the Game Master looks over Andy's work and approves. He decides to add the small additional touch of giving Gila-Master the Wall-Crawling power as well (he can climb sheer surfaces like a gecko) at level 5. The Mighty Man-Cactus has his work cut out for him dealing with the sinister and scaly skulker of the Painted Desert!

Don't Sweat The Details

One thing about **Icons** is that it paints characters in broad strokes. Especially when you are creating villains and other non-player characters, don't worry too much about the little details, so long as you have an overall sense of what the character is like and how the game traits are supposed to work in play.

If there's a particular detail not covered by a specific specialty, power, or other game trait, but important to the character overall, consider making it an aspect. Examples include things like Alien, Android, Disembodied Spirit, or Brain in a Jar, just to name a few. These quickly and easily sum up things about the character and allow players to potentially tag them during the game in order to spend Determination. You don't have to worry about the specifics, just deal with them as needed as the game unfolds.

DISASTER STRIKES!

Villains are not the only challenges heroes face. They also save people from a wide range of disasters, from fires and floods to earthquakes and train wrecks. Sometimes these are natural disasters, while others are the work of villains, intended to blackmail a population or distract heroes from their true goals. The following are some disasters you can use as challenges to spice up your **Icons** games.

AVALANCHE

An avalanche occurs when a large mass of snow slides down a mountain slope, often dislodged by a sudden shock or vibration. The heavy, fast-moving mass can crush and bury anything in its path.

The wave of an avalanche does bashing damage to anything hit by it, typically from level 6 to 8. Those in the path are also buried by the avalanche, requiring a Strength level equal to the avalanche's damage in order to dig free. (At your discretion, lesser levels of Strength may be able to dig free by accumulating successes; see the Success Pyramid in Alternate Rules). Buried victims begin to suffocate (see Swimming on p. 59 of **Icons**).

Heroes most often move targets quickly out of an avalanche's path (perhaps requiring a Coordination or movement power test) or find ways to stop or divert it, typically using a suitable control power. For example, Element Control to create a protective barrier or redirect the falling material.

The guidelines for avalanches also serve for landslides, rockslides, and mudslides in other terrain.

CRASH

Heroes may find themselves in need of stopping an out-of-control vehicle before it can crash, ranging from a small passenger car to a jumbo jet, cruise ship, or star-liner! Typically, stopping the vehicle is a test of Strength or some similar power (such as Telekinesis) although clever heroes may use different powers or power stunts to prevent a crash. The difficulty of the test is the greater of the vehicle's approximate Strength or speed, plus any intervening conditions: catching a falling plane obviously requires a hero able to fly!

A massive success halts the vehicle and brings it under the hero's control, to stop or set it down safely. Lesser success slows the vehicle, but does not stop it. It takes a total of four moderate successes or two major successes to bring the vehicle under control. A failed test means the hero not only fails to stop the vehicle, but damages it in the process!

A crashing vehicle inflicts damage equal to its speed upon all passengers and anything that it hits.

A variation on the crash disaster is a damaged bridge or train track. Heroes may be able to prevent this disaster by holding up the damaged portion of the bridge or track rather than stopping the vehicle(s). This, too, requires a Strength test appropriate to the difficulty of the weight the hero must hold up: from 8 to support a train as it speeds overhead to 9 or 10 to hold up an entire collapsing bridge!

EARTHQUAKE

You can estimate an earthquake's level as equal to its Richter Scale rating: by this standard, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake is level 8 (the one in 1989 was level 7) while the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake was level 9.

Much of the challenge for heroes comes after an earthquake: moving debris to get at trapped victims, supporting collapsing structures, fighting resulting fires (see Fire), and so forth. Earthquakes are also known to trigger other disasters like avalanches and tsunamis (see their descriptions). Still, heroes with the appropriate powers (especially Earth Control) might be able to quell or lessen the quake itself with a power test against the earthquake's level.

Anyone caught in an earthquake has to resist a slam result (Icons, p. 70) based on the quake's level, except failure only results in a knockdown and damage equal to the quake's level rather than flinging the character over a distance. At the GM's option failure on the slam test could result in the character falling into a crevasse (perhaps even leading to some adventure deep within the Earth).

FIRE

Fires—from building fires to forest fires—pose two primary challenges: the heat and flames, and thick clouds of choking smoke. Fires vary in intensity from level 1 (that of a candle flame) to massive conflagrations at level 7+. A typical building fire is level 5–6. The smoke from the fire forces anyone in the area to hold their breath, making Strength tests to avoid passing out.

Heroes may be able to use their powers to douse a fire, testing against the fire's level as the difficulty. Putting out a large fire requires a power able to cover a suitably large area (although extending a power's area is a suitable power stunt). As with other disasters, you may want to use the Success Pyramid (p. 17) as a guideline.

One other hazard of fires is that of collapsing structures, or things like falling trees in the midst of a forest fire. Ask heroes to make Coordination tests to avoid being hit and pinned by falling debris. Those who fail suffer some Stamina damage and need sufficient Strength to extricate themselves, while also dealing with the fire and smoke. Primary goals in dealing with fires are getting trapped victims to safety and containing the blaze before trying to put it out.

Flood

Storms, rapid snow-melts, and similar situations can cause rivers and other bodies of water to overflow their banks. Low-lying areas fill with water, causing considerable damage and other hazards.

A flash-flood, wherein a large amount of water pours quickly into an area, has effects like an avalanche of water (see Avalanche), except targets are swept away rather than buried and may potentially drown rather than suffocate. See Swimming on p. 59 of Icons for more information.

Slower floods, wherein water creeps up, allows for more evacuation time. Heroes with the right powers might be able to do something about the flood, creating makeshift dams or directly controlling the water to divert it elsewhere.

Storm

Hurricanes, tornadoes, and other powerful atmospheric disturbances cause damage with high winds and associated precipitation. Like other disasters, storms have a level. In game terms, a hurricane's Saffir-Simpson Category (from 1 to 5), added to 5, equals its level. So a Category 1 storm is level 6, while a massive Category 5 hurricane is level 10.

Heroes can use powers like Elemental Control (particularly air and weather) to try and quell a storm (testing against its level). They may also be able to use powers like Flight or Super-Speed creating reverse air currents to disperse or disrupt a hurricane or tornado funnel.

Beyond dealing with the storm directly, there are plenty of opportunities to avert and deal with storm-related damage: things from lawn ornaments to entire cars are thrown through the air, while high winds may tear off roofs or flatten buildings. Heroes fighting against the wind make Strength or movement power level tests against the wind's level to make headway and avoid being swept away, much like resisting a slam outcome from an attack (**Icons**, p. 70).

Tsunami

A tsunami is a massive wave, typically caused by an underwater earthquake or eruption. The wall of water may stand dozens or even hundreds of feet tall and it hits the shoreline with devastating force, crushing everything in its path and flooding coastal areas with salt-water (tsunami are an ocean phenomenon, although in a comic book world they could also occur in fresh-water lakes).

For game purposes, a tsunami is much like an avalanche of water (see Avalanche), inflicting its level in bashing damage, and inundating the area, requiring trapped characters to make Coordination tests to swim to safety and possibly Strength tests to hold their breath.

Powers like Elemental Control can potentially disrupt or deflect a tsunami, and heroes can attempt various power stunts to try and hold off the wave, from sonic booms using movement powers to whirlpools created with Swimming, or Strength-based shockwaves to smash the incoming

wave. Dealing with the aftermath of a tsunami involves finding an rescuing trapped victims, bracing damaged structures, and even dealing with sea-life—such as sharks—trapped in flooded areas by the wave.

Volcano

A volcanic eruption creates a powerful explosion (damage 8 or more) along with a cascade of lava that is similar to a slow-moving avalanche (see Avalanche) except that it is hot enough to inflict level 7-8 burning damage each page! A volcano also spews rocks and large amounts of ash into the air and releases choking and poisonous gases (Affliction 5).

Heroes faced with an eruption may try various means to relieve the buildup of pressure from the subterranean magma, anything from Earth Control to drilling pressure-relief wells, allowing the lava to vent safely elsewhere. Once an eruption occurs, the primary job is to get people out of the lava flow's path, and possibly divert the flow away from inhabited areas.

Disasters and the Big Picture

When running a disaster in your **Icons** game, you don't have to deal with every element and aspect of it. Disasters are big, often covering entire cities or states, and the heroes can only be in so many places at once. It is generally easiest to focus on the ends of the spectrum when describing a disaster: either the high-level side of stopping the disaster as a whole (such as using Weather Control to disrupt a storm) or the low-level side of helping individual victims and dealing with side-effects of the disaster, like rescuing cars on a damaged bridge during or after a quake, for example.

You can gloss over the long-term process of fighting the disaster, basing your overall description on how the heroes do at either end of the spectrum. If their efforts are largely successful, then assume they pretty much deal with the disaster. If they are not successful, describe how the disaster overwhelms them and even their powers have limits.

ALTERNATE RULES

One size rarely ever fits all, and that is true with game rules as much as anything else. Roleplaying games like **Icons** are meant to be tinkered with, taken apart, rebuilt, and "adjusted" to fit your own play style and preferences and those of your gaming group. This section offers some ideas and suggestions towards that end. It also provides a few additions to the rules offered in the main **Icons** book. Use them (or not) as you see fit.

DAMAGE VARIANTS

Alternate ways of handling damage (and the general effects of conflict) in Icons.

0 STAMINA = MASSIVE SUCCESS

Rather than the standard effect of rendering the target unconscious, reducing a target to 0 or less Stamina counts as an automatic massive success with that attack, with no resistance test by the target. For bashing and blasting attacks, the outcome is the same: the target is rendered unconscious. With slashing and shooting attacks, however, this results in an automatic killing outcome and the target is dead!

This makes slashing and shooting attacks considerably more lethal (since they kill at 0 Stamina as well as on rolled killing outcomes). You can soften this somewhat by allowing the usual Strength test against the killing outcome at 0 Stamina, as if it were rolled as a normal massive success.

NEWTON'S REVENGE: ALTERNATE SLAMS AND STUNS

The default rules for Slam and Stun outcomes in **Icons** (p. 70) assume a massive strong target acts like a truly massive target: you test damage (force) versus Strength (mass) to see if the target is affected. Thus really strong types can potentially stand their ground when hit by powerful impacts. This is often, but not always, the way it works for superheroes.

A variation that spices things up is to ignore the 0 or greater damage requirement for a slam or stun outcome; so long as the attack results in a major or massive success, then there has to be a test for a slam or stun. So relatively invulnerable targets can get tossed around, perhaps even stunned or knocked out, by a sufficiently successful attack without taking any Stamina damage at all!

In this variation, you may want to use the higher of the target's Strength or armor level (from Invulnerability) to resist the slam or stun outcome. So, for example, if a Strength 3, Invulnerability 6 target is hit with a damage 5 attack, normally it would have no result: 5 damage, minus 6 armor, results in –1 damage, not enough to do anything. In the variant, with a major or massive success, the attack could slam or stun the target. Then it is a test of 4 (damage) versus either 3 (the target's Strength) or 6 (the target's Invulnerability) depending on the approach. You can even split the difference: testing slams solely against Strength (to represent bracing ability, mass, etc.) and stuns against the better of Strength or armor.

You may wish to limit stun outcomes in this variant to one page. That is, unless the damage is 0 or higher, the best stun result is one page, rather than a knockout. This gives the invulnerable types some benefit; they might get shaken up, but not taken out by attacks to which they should be invulnerable.

Likewise, note that this variant does not include killing outcomes, which still have to inflict 0 or more damage (that is, have damage at least equal to the target's armor) in order to have a chance of killing. You may want to treat a killing outcome in this variant as a stun or slam instead when the damage is less than the target's armor and a major or massive success is scored on the attack test.

Innate Invulnerability

Invulnerability (p. 41) is a big factor in damage and combat in **Icons**: An invulnerable character can often go much longer in a fight: for example, a Stamina 8 hero hit by two damage 4 attacks is out of the fight, whereas a Stamina 8, Invulnerability 3 hero can withstand eight such attacks! This benefit of Invulnerability is intended; the invulnerable-types are the ones in the comics who hang in fights longer, soaking up damage, while most heroes do their best to avoid getting hit.

If you want to extend damage resistance in your **Icons** game, assign all characters a level of Invulnerability. Half the character's Strength level (rounded down) is a good guideline. So a Strength 7 hero has armor 3 (7 divided by 2 equals 3.5, rounded down to 3). If you want to further differentiate, a character's innate damage resistance from Strength should apply only to bashing and blasting damage, not slashing or shooting damage. The Invulnerability power still applies to all forms of damage, and characters use the higher of the two levels (Strength-derived armor or Invulnerability) against bashing and blasting damage. So a Strength 10, Invulnerability 3 hero would have armor 5 against bashing/blasting damage (from Strength) and armor 3 against slashing and shooting damage (from Invulnerability).
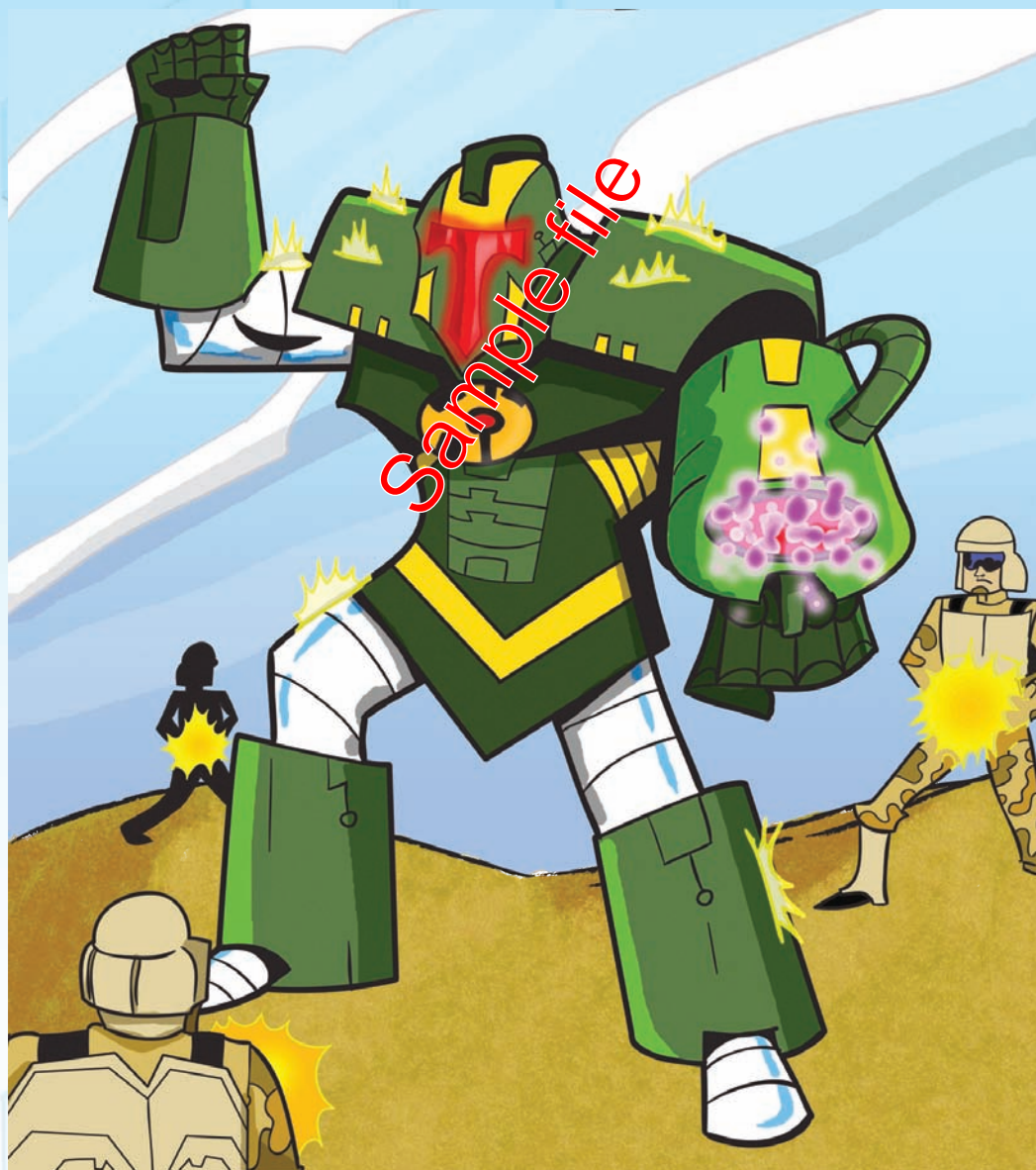
Spending Determination

The following are some alternative ways of spending Determination from those given in the **Icons** rules.

Determined Damage

Determination does not directly aid the amount of damage a hero inflicts, apart for improving the chances of achieving a greater outcome like a stun or slam. With this option, players may also declare Determined Effort to overcome a target's armor. Similar guidelines apply: the hero must have first failed to overcome the target's armor with an attack in order to declare the next attempt a Determined Effort. Each point of Determination spent effectively increases the attack's damage level by +2. The player chooses the desired damage, between a minimum amount needed to exceed the target's armor by 1, to a maximum of 11. The other outcomes of the attack, such as possible stun, slam, or killing results, occur normally.

Determined Effort

You can simplify determined effort by allowing players to spend Determination for a flat +2 bonus to any test per point of Determination spent. The players may spend points to modify tests after the die roll and the initial result, essentially "retconning" the test result with Determination. The player must still tag an aspect (one of the hero's or an aspect of the subject of the test) to spend Determination.

While more straightforward, this approach allows players to manage their Determination use in a much more calculated and planned way; they don't need to decide a test is important until after they see the result, and there is no requirement for an initial failure or one-chance-only to spend Determination, which may encourage players to do more up-front spending. This may shorten some tests or challenges; for example, upon encountering the villain, the players immediately spend Determination on their first attacks to get the maximum possible result.

Free Tags

A concept used in some FATE games is that of "free" tags, wherein certain actions or test outcomes provide a hero with what amounts of a free point of Determination for a later test related to the earlier action. For example, an Awareness test that gives a hero insight into one of a foe's Challenges may provide a free tag, allowing the hero to spend a point of Determination to compel that Challenge without actually spending any Determination. Likewise, an effective Presence test might grant a free tag in dealing with impressed, persuaded, or overawed targets, or an effective Coordination test to pull off a particularly difficult maneuver (granting a tactical advantage) can grant a free tag against an opponent.

Free tags are a good way of providing quick bonuses and encouraging players to use their heroes' other abilities in order to garner them. They're a good option for Determination-poor (or simply frugal) players. They also encourage creativity, since coming up with a clever action, maneuver, or addition to the story may be good for a bonus.

Limited Tagging

Normally, players have to tag only one quality to spend Determination. In this variant, tagging a quality is limited to spending only one point of Determination. To spend more than one point, the player must tag one quality per point spent. So a determined effort involving three points of Determination, for example, would also require bringing at least three qualities into play. This effectively limits Determination spending to five points at a time, since characters have only five qualities at most. It also makes spending multiple points of Determination more involved, since the players have to come up with more complex justifications to bring multiple qualities into play.

Sacrifice Play

Although mentioned briefly on p. 81 of **Icons** (under Gaining Determination), it is worth noting specifically that players can potentially offer to "trade" the Game Master a temporary challenge for their hero in exchange for some immediate Determination. In essence, the player suggests a suitable "sacrifice" (the challenge) which the GM then rewards with Determination.

Example: Electric Judy's player is tapped out for Determination but really needs some in order to figure out a way to take down the rampaging Troll. Judy's player suggests to the GM that one of the Troll's hits does some serious damage to the android's arm servos, leaving it immobilized. The GM agrees and slides her a point of Determination. The next round, Judy's player ups the ante by suggesting that Troll actually tears Electric Judy's damage arm off altogether, leaving exposed wiring and circuits sparking! The GM grins, nods, and passes her another point of Determination. Then Electric Judy makes a desperate last bid to use the sparking electricity and some of the water mains broken in the Troll's rampage to take him down...

"Here Take My..."

As an option for the "Last Hero Standing" rule from **Icons**, the Game Master can permit a defeated character, rather than adding Determination to the team pool, to provide a more tangible benefit to the remaining hero. This might be use of a device, temporary access to a power or power stunt, or even specific words of advice or inspiration that grant the benefit of spending a point of Determination, such a Recover ("You can do it! You have to!") or a Focused Effort ("You have to use your wits, not just brute strength!"). The effect is essentially the same, the defeated hero's player simply has more input as to how the added Determination is used.

STARTING DETERMINATION

The standard system in **Icons** sets starting Determination based on the hero's number of powers, counting abilities above level 6 as powers and some powers as double. Here are some variant ways of calculating starting Determination:

BY POWER LEVELS

Add up the levels of all of the hero's powers, along with any abilities above level 6, and divide the sum by 6, rounding down. Subtract this value from a starting value of 6, with a minimum of 1, to determine the hero's starting Determination. Powers that count double in Icons have their power level doubled before they are added to the total.

For example, a hero with Strength 8, Blast 7, Flight 5, and Invulnerability 8 has a sum total of 28 levels. This total, divided by 6, equals 4.66, which rounds down to 4. Subtracted from a starting value of 6, this provides a starting Determination of 2. On the other hand, if the hero's Flight level were 7 (for a total of 30 levels), then dividing by 6 yields a value of 5, for a starting Determination of 1. Likewise, if the three powers were all level 4, for a total of 20, it yields a value of 3.33, rounded down to 3, for starting Determination 3.

This approach takes relative power level into account, with averages similar to the default approach, but providing a slight edge to heroes with lower overall power levels and charging a premium for those with relatively few powers at high levels.

BY POWER TYPES

In this approach, for each of the following power types where a hero a hero has one or more powers, reduce starting Determination by 1: defensive, movement, offensive, sensory, and miscellaneous (all other power types). So having powers in all five types, yields starting Determination of 1.

Having more than one power of a given type does not count. So having any number of offensive powers only reduces starting Determination by 1; only the first power of that type matters. Powers normally treated as two powers still count as double, unless the power fills more than one type, in which case it only applies to those types). For example, Teleportation counts as double, reducing starting Determination by 2, but only as a movement power. Elemental Control, on the other hand, may count as a defensive, movement, or offensive power (or all of those, depending on the power effects chosen).

Abilities above 6 typically count as miscellaneous, so –1 starting Determination for any number of abilities above 6, although the GM may wish to count Strength as an offensive "power" and high Prowess and/or Coordination as a "defensive" power, given their typical uses.

Success Pyramid

When heroes are confronted with a complex task, rather than requiring a single pass/fail test, the GM can set up a success "pyramid" for the task, where in a single test can succeed, but multiple smaller successes can also accomplish the task, allowing for teamwork and the combination of different abilities or approaches.

Essentially, accomplishing the task requires a massive success against the chosen difficulty. However, lesser outcomes can add up to greater outcomes to build a "pyramid" of success. Two major outcomes add up to a massive success, while two moderate outcomes add up to a major success. Thus four moderate outcomes add up to two major outcomes, which add up to the needed massive success.

The tests used to achieve the outcomes can be whatever the players think up and the GM permits. So if the task involves an investigation, for example, some of the tests might be Intellect-based analyses of evidence, while others are Awareness-based searches for clues, and still others are Willpower-based interrogations or efforts at persuasion. The tests can be carried out by one hero in success or several heroes all at once.

You can extend this approach to successful outcomes to conflicts as well. Rather than simply beating-down an opponent's Stamina, a massive success could also overcome an opponent, with different abilities and tests contributing. This could be a matter of psyching-out a foe, using technical skills to defeat a device, performing a mystic ritual, or some other form of indirect conflict. In this fashion, the success pyramid works similarly to the stress track in FATE: the moderate outcomes are like individual "boxes" and when a sufficient number are "checked off" the hero is successful and the foe or challenge is overcome.

You can get a lot of flexibility out of varying the difficulties involved in a success pyramid test, perhaps even making some approaches easier or harder than others. You can also "widen" the pyramid, either by increasing the total successes required (doubling them, for example, to two massive, four major, and eight moderate) or changing the ratios (so it requires three or four lower-degree successes to add up to a higher degree, for example). Combine that with choosing different abilities to make the actual tests, and you can cover a wide range of situations and challenges.

Running Mastermind Villains

Masterminds are challenging NPCs. They are super-geniuses who are always ahead of their opponents and have plans for every eventuality. However, the GM is unlikely to be a super-genius and probably has better things to do than sit around for days thinking up devious plans to outwit the heroes. How can you create the feeling of a mastermind without going to excessive lengths?

Firstly, remember that a big part of the role-playing game experience is how things come across. Do everything you can to make these characters feel like masterminds. Have them use big words wherever possible. Have them explain everything they do, gloating and pointing out their cleverness. Have them eagerly draw attention to their own genius and disparage the intelligence of everyone else. Describe everything they do in such a way that shows them to be very clever and very resourceful.

There is often a temptation in supers games to have villains be buffoons, but resist that temptation for the masterminds. Don't have them put a foot wrong – they can be victims of bad luck, and they can be outwitted by the heroes, but other than that they should do everything right.

Secondly, there are some mechanical tricks to call upon: cheating, and paying out determination.

Cheat

Normally, when a GM is running a game, they have a model of the situation in their head and they try to apply it fairly and honestly. If they've decided there's a spare atmosphere suit in the cupboard, then when a character opens the cupboard, an atmosphere suit will be found.

When it comes to masterminds, these unspoken rules of play can be suspended. Perhaps a hero takes the atmosphere suit and wears it. Only then does the GM have the idea that the suit has been booby-trapped all along. This is perfectly legitimate. Mastermind villains are smarter than anyone around the table, and you can use that to justify almost anything.

Pay Out Determination

The approach above is good for small things or to add the occasional exciting moment. For bigger things, or for changes that would frustrate the players, even the score by awarding the players with Determination. Say you decide to have the heroes captured and put in a deathtrap. Tell the players that a hidden shock-grid in the villain's lair knocks them all unconscious, and give them Determination for going along with it. Then tell them what happens when they wake up.

If a player really doesn't want to go along, and is willing to pay out the Determination needed, then perhaps his character manages to escape and is working to free his friends while the villain is ranting and telling them his evil scheme."
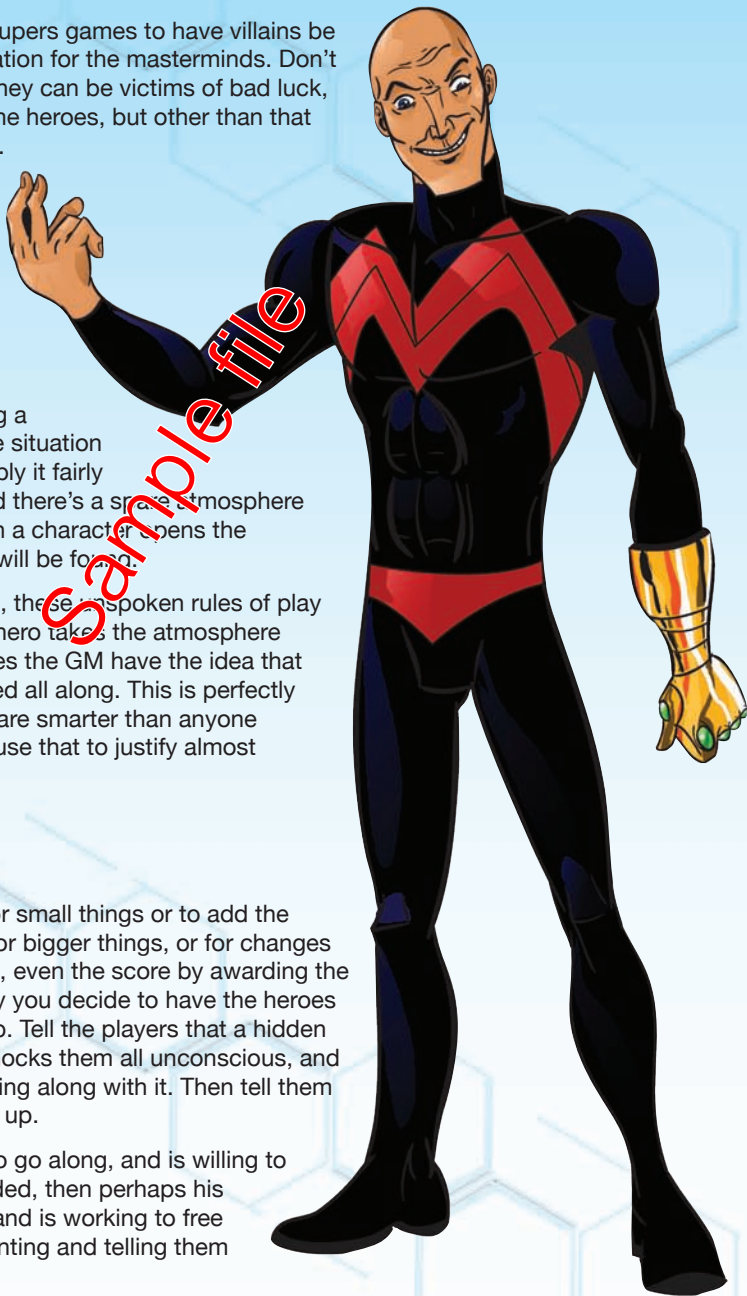
SPECIALTIES

The Specialties that appear in the main **Icons** book are certainly enough to cover most needs for a superheroic campaign, but there are sometimes when you want to throw something unusual at your players -- some of the villains presented in this book have been given unusual Specialities for this very reason, and the new Specialties are presented here for ease of reference, and for the use of any Game Masters who wish to make them available to their players.

ANIMALS

You are skilled in handling and dealing with animal life. Add your speciality bonus to tests involving training animals, influencing or predicting their behavior, etc. If you wish to specify a single particular species, which bestows an increasing level of aptitude beyond specialist, but you lose the general benefit of the specialty for all other species.

AREA   ❖

You are knowledgeable about a particular location (which must be specified), and can add your specialty bonus to Intellect and Awareness tests based on your familiarity with that location.

> *"I BELIEVE IN GOTHAM CITY."*
>
> *- Bruce Wayne, Batman: The Long Halloween*

DECEPTION

You are skilled in the arts of lying, bluffing, trickery and subterfuge. You may add your specialty bonus to tests that involve deceiving others -- including Persuading (**Icons,** page 66) or even combat maneuvers involving feint or misdirection.

NATURE

Add your specialty bonus to tests involving the wildnerness, including tracking and survival.

POWERS

The core **Icons** book provides powers that are wide-ranging enough to cover most common superheroic archetypes and variations. The powers presented here are optional -- either alterations or additions to existing powers, or powers that can function as optional replacements for those found in the core book, at a Game Master's discretion. This section also includes rules clarifications on existing powers.

AFFECTS INCORPOREAL

As a bonus power, any attack power that inflicts damage can have the ability to affect incorporeal targets (such as those using the Phasing power on page 32 of **Icons**) as if they were solid. This typically applies to attack powers with a magical, multi-dimensional, or exotic energy type.

ANIMAL MIMICRY   (x2)

You can duplicate their powers of any animal within sight and use them yourself. Unlike Power Duplication (on page 33 of **Icons**), touch is not required.

You gain all the target's powers at their existing level or your Animal Mimicry level, whichever is less. So if you have Animal Mimicry 4, any powers you duplicate are limited to a level no greater than 4.

You retain any duplicated powers until you choose to duplicate another set or you are rendered unconscious, in which case you lose any previously duplicated powers.

As a bonus power, you can mimic a number of animals without them being within sight. The number of animals in your repertoire is equal to half your power level. So if you have Animal Mimicry 6, you can have a list of three animals whose powers you can duplicate without those animals being present.

Additionally, a character can choose to be limited to only a single animal, in return for a +2 bonus to your power level, but you may not mimic any other creature (and if you wish to mimic your chosen animal without it being in sight, that still must be taken as a bonus power).

When randomly rolling characters, Animal Mimicry can be taken in place of Power Duplication.

DREAM CONTROL

You can exert a kind of Mind Control (see **Icons**, page 45), influencing complete control over the target's dreams. To influence someone with Dream Control, they must be asleep, in visual range and you need a successful power test with the target's Awareness as the difficulty. If you fail an Dream Control test against someone, you must make a determined effort to attempt to control them again in the same scene (see **Icons**, page 73), and the target may make an Awareness test with your Willpower as the difficulty. If the target's test succeeds, they wake up.

A successful power test gives you total control over the reality of the target's dream -- any effect can be created, although if the target has any reason to suspect that they are dreaming, they may make an Awareness test with your Dream Control as the difficulty. If they succeed in breaking your control, they may resume control of their own dream, or wake up (as they choose).

You may use other mental powers while sustaining control of a dream, but only against the dreaming target. If you are distracted (such as being attacked in the real world), you must make another Dream Control roll to maintain the effect.

You can take Dream Travel as a bonus power. When randomly rolling characters, Dream Control can be taken in place of Emotion Control.

DREAM TRAVEL

Using a limited form of Astral Projection, you can separate your astral form (the vessel of the mind and spirit) from your physical body, allowing it to travel into dreams. Your body remains in a coma-like state, although you are aware of any harm befalling it. Should your body perish while your astral form is away, you remain trapped in the dream state.

Your astral form can only observe things within the dream, and can travel from the dreams of one person into the dreams of another.   To affect things within the dream, or shape it in any way, requires Dream Control (see previous). Finding a particular dreamer requires familiarity with the target, and a Dream Travel roll against a difficulty equal to the targets' Willpower -- and the target must be asleep at the time, or they are undetectable.

When randomly rolling characters, Dream Travel can be taken in place of Astral Projection.

ELEMENTAL CONTROL ❖

The forms of Elemental Control listed on p. 36 of **Icons** are not the only possibilities. Players should feel free to invent their own forms of the power, influencing other elements, forces, or energies. A common example is Cold or Ice, with the ability to generate blasts of freezing cold or deadly icicles, form objects out of ice, and so forth. More exotic elements might include metals, chemicals, or even cosmic energies or forces.

EMOTION CONTROL

The list of emotion effects in **Icons** is expandable and players and GMs should feel free to do so to suit certain characters, basing new emotional effects off the ones given. For example, despair might work similarly to sadness while uncontrolled laughter is similar to pleasure. When in doubt, assume the emotional effect is strong enough to prevent the affected character from doing much of anything else.

EMPOWERMENT (x2)

You have the ability to bestow super powers upon a target (whether that target already possesses powers or not). Any target that you touch rolls randomly for a single power, and a random power level -- if the level rolled exceeds your Empowerment power level, the new power maxes out at the same level. If the level rolled is lower, an additional power is rolled, until the total power level of all powers rolled equals your Empowerment power.

The target keeps these new powers for ten times your Empowerment level in pages.

As an option, you may choose to bestow only one specific power, in return for a +2 bonus to your power level.

As a bonus power, you can make an Empowerment at extended range. You must make a Coordination test to hit the target.

When randomly rolling characters, Empowerment can be taken in place of Power Theft.

IMMORTALITY (x2)

As given in **Icons,** the Immortality power neither has nor needs a power level. Don't roll one for the power if it is generated for a character. In cases where a power level is needed, treat Immortality as level 10.

IMMUNITY ⓧ²

As given in **Icons**, the Immunity power neither has nor needs a power level. Don't roll one for the power if it is generated for a character. In cases where a power level is needed, treat Immunity as level 10.

MIND SHIELD

As a bonus power, your Mind Shield can also project a false façade, so that any attempt to read or influence your mind perceives what you want the intruder to perceive.

MIND SWITCH ⓧ²

You can take over someone else's body, much like Mind Control (see **Icons**, page 45) except your mind is "inside" the victim and controls their body, rather than issuing orders. This power works just like Possession (**Icons**, page 46), with a significant difference: You switch consciousness with your target -- you take control over their body, but they take control over yours.

A target of Mind Switch must be within visual range and have a Willpower level less than the level of this power or your own Willpower, whichever is greater. Those with greater Willpower are immune to your control unless you first tag one of their aspects (see **Tagging and Compelling** under **Determination, Icons** page 78).

To switch minds with a target, roll a Mind Swtich test with a difficulty of the target's Willpower. If successful, the target is under your control until you choose to release them, or until you are unconscious.

Since your mind is in control of the target's body, you can spend your own Determination for tests you make using the target's body. You have access to all of their powers -- except those of a mental nature, which travel with the consciousness to the new body. Conversely, they have access to your non-mental powers (if any) while occupying your body.

When randomly rolling characters, Mind Switch can be taken in place of Possession.

RESISTANCE ❖

The list of Resistances given in **Icons** is by no means the be-all and end-all. Players should feel free to come up with their own unique Resistances, with the approval of the Game Master. Examples include everything from Resistance to Physical Damage (a kind of limited form of armor) to Resistance to Emotion Control. The GM may wish to grant a particularly limited form of Resistance a bonus to rolled level.

SENSORY LINK

You are able to receive sensory input from another's senses.

A sensory link can be formed automatically with a willing target-- to form a link with an unwilling target requires a power test against their Willpower. The target must be within visual range for the link to be formed, but may travel out of range with an active sensory link.

A sensory link may be maintained through concentration. If you are distracted (attacked, for example), a Willpower test with a difficulty equal to your Sensory Link level is required to maintain the link.

If the subject of your sensory link is stunned or killed, roll a Willpower test with a difficulty equal to the damage of the attack, and read the result as a Mental Blast targeting you.

When randomly rolling characters, Sensory Link can be taken in place of ESP.

Sleep

You can force others into a deep sleep. A target of Sleep must be within visual range and have a Willpower level less than the level of this power or your own Willpower, whichever is greater. Those with greater Willpower are immune to the effect unless you first tag one of their aspects (see **Tagging and Compelling** under **Determination , Icons** page 78).

To put a target to sleep, roll a Sleep test with a difficulty of the target's Willpower. If successful, the target falls unconscious. A target can be woken by others as normal. Without outside assistance, the target will remain asleep for a period (in narrative time) equal to your power level in hours (although the target may spend Determination to awaken sooner, at the GM's discretion).

When randomly rolling characters, Sleep can be taken in place of Mind Control.

Transit

Using a limited form of teleportation, you can disappear in one spot and reappear in another some distance away, by traveling through a particular medium, which must be specified during character creation. A character who can transit through shadows, for example, can enter and exit through any existing shadow. Transit 5 is sufficient to go anywhere in visual range, while higher levels have ranges measured in tens, hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of miles. Transit 10 is enough to go virtually anywhere.

Transit requires a power level test at difficulty 2. Failure means you do not enter transit. Transit 7 or greater does not require a test (you automatically succeed).

When randomly rolling characters, Transit can be taken in place of Teleportation. Game Masters allowing this option should replace Arobas' "Alternate Form" power (**Icons** page 96) with Transit, and replace his Weakness with a different Challenge as a result.