



# PANDEMONIUM SETTING BIBLE



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## **Welcome to Gotham City**

Gotham started as a port city, the home of whaling and trading fleets. While the whalers have vanished into history, this east-coast port is still a transit hub for shipping, airlines, trucks, and even a few green startup transport companies that are using experimental airships.

Once renowned as a clean, beautiful city, dominated by vast architectural marvels, Gotham now is a watch-word for faded majesty and corruption. The gleaming buildings are soiled, the picturesque streets have become twisting labyrinths, and the once-fanciful gargoyles and gigantic sculptures are now leering monstrosities waiting to startle the traveler around every corner. Oh, some buildings do still gleam: the headquarters of Chimaera Systems towers above downtown, all glass and light, and the shining marble exterior of City Hall belies the corruption that stains city politics.

And the danger in Gotham has never been greater. It's not widely known, but strange occurrences in the depths of Gotham's darkest places point to a weakening of barriers between dimensions. Incursions of strange – and not-so-strange – beings are rumoured, and people whisper about spots where the laws of reality are... wrong.

This time of danger is making another change. Here and there, people are starting to display... let's call them "abilities." No one uses the word "superhero," because that's a term from kids' books and comics. It's not appropriate for serious adults dealing with serious issues. But there are a few – a very, very few – people with abilities that make them able to do something about the rising problems.

A few of them have banded together, working to bring order to the chaos, fighting the pandimensional incursions. Because it's not just unpredictable on the streets of Gotham these days.

**These days, it's pandemonium.**



# Gotham City Map







## Issues

### Dimensional Incursions (Impending Issue)

There have always been rumours of weird things happening in the alleys and catacombs of Gotham City. Mostly, they are dismissed as urban legends, or hoaxes, or some other mundane thing. And, mostly, they are.

But a few of the rumours, a couple of the ghost stories, one or two of the whispers, are true. There are holes in the world, letting in things from outside, and letting people in this world drop through into other places. It's been going on for a long, long time, but the holes are getting bigger. More frequent. More stable. Soon, these incursions are going to be too big to ignore. It's not going to be a secret anymore.

**Distinction:** Pandimensional Chaos

### Pandimensional Turf War (Impending Issue)

Not everything that comes through the dimensional incursions is a lone, mysterious creature or a collection of refugees fleeing an oppressive realm. Some are criminals every bit as dark and unpleasant as the Council, and they want what the Council has: dominance of the Gotham City underworld.

The incursives have abilities, technology, and magic that make them a serious threat to the more numerous, deeply entrenched Council. For a considerable time, the Council didn't even know there was a threat; now that they do, they are fighting back with every nasty weapon in their warchest. They still don't know for sure who the enemy is, but with the strange attacks, the defecting sub-gangs, and the sudden disappearances of key figures, they know for certain that they are under attack.

**Distinction:** Shadow War

### Widespread Corruption (Current Issue)

The whole of the history of Gotham City is one of rich men buying control of the politicians and civil institutions that run the city. Politicians legislated favourable tax arrangements, police turned a blind eye to the gambling and prostitutes serving the sailors and teamsters of the wealthy transport and shipping companies. Over the years, as often happens, gangs arose and tried to take control of the criminal enterprises.

In Gotham, though, it didn't result in a bloody turf war. The people running things were businessmen, and they treated the whole thing as a business. Instead of fighting over the various rackets, they co-opted the gangs to run them as sub-contractors, and retired to management positions.

Now, the Council, as they call themselves, runs all the crime in the city, owns all the politicians, manipulates the press, and uses the police force to run their errands.

**Distinction:** The Council Runs Things in This Town



## Locations

### The Bizarre

Hidden down blind alleys, tucked into abandoned warehouses, masquerading as office block floors that don't exist, there are entrances to the Bizarre. The Bizarre is a pocket dimension that houses a warren of shops and stalls, of stores and carts. It is peopled by many odd vendors, selling many odd goods, for many odd sorts of payment.

It's not easy to get to the Bizarre. The entries don't always stay where you found them last time, and there are usually doormen to screen those who want admittance. If you can find your way here, you can probably find what you need. But can you afford it?

**Distinction:** Everything Has Its Price

### Bleak Island Research Facility

Bleak Island sits in Great Bay, out near the breakwater. As its name suggests, it is a mostly-bare island, with some patches of scrub that can withstand the salt spray when the winds come in off the Atlantic Ocean. There's a small concrete pier, a tall fence surrounding the shoreline, and a three-story, blocky building sitting in the centre with a heliport on the roof. The only access to the island is via boat or helicopter, and a company ferry makes a trip out in the morning and back in the evening.

The company in question is Chimaera Systems. Bleak Island is its secure research facility. Chimaera claims that they need a secure research facility because of threats of industrial espionage. Urban legend, however, holds that Bleak Island has extensive underground labs, where horrific experiments are carried out, and the results of those experiments are imprisoned. Many of the staff who work in the Bleak Island facility report that the place has a disturbing, unnatural feel to it.

**Distinction:** Monster Island

### The Catacombs

It started with basements that then became linked as smuggling tunnels. Steam tunnels augmented the network, along with sewers and subways, underground malls and hidden speakeasies and, yes, even some actual church catacombs. As with a lot of underground networks, they attracted communities of homeless people and criminals, runaways and refugees.

The tunnels extend under the entire city, even under the rivers that divide the islands of the city. Entire communities of the lost and the hiding live in the depths and the darkness, including (lately) refugees from some of the dimensions impinging on our world.

Strangely, there have been no recorded incursions in the Catacombs.

**Distinction:** A World of its Own

## Coldhaven Asylum

A rambling, civil-war-era mansion, the asylum was the family seat of the Coldhavens, one of Gotham City's founding families. Shortly after the Second World War, the Coldhavens converted their now-mostly-empty home to an asylum to treat returning soldiers suffering from battle fatigue. One of the first patients was Adrian Coldhaven, who came back from the war a broken man.

Over the years, Coldhaven Asylum has become one of the foremost research and treatment facilities for combat stress reaction and post-traumatic stress disorder. Silas Coldhaven currently oversees the administration of the asylum, and guides the research and treatment philosophies of the medical staff.

**Distinction:** If These Walls Could Talk...

## The Enclave

A world with technology slightly in advance of our own, dominated by a strict military society. The Enclave is, in fact, only a single city; it is a displaced part of another world, stranded in the extradimensional limbo for so long that its original name has long been forgotten by its inhabitants.

Cut off from its home dimension, the Enclave has become a dangerous and polluted industrial jungle. The advanced medical treatment and technology available within has led to increased longevity and population growth that has begun to strain its narrow confines. The city has built upward in an attempt to adapt to population pressures, and enormous spires housing millions stretch into a smog-choked sky.

After being stranded in this dimensional bubble, the scientists of the Enclave are understandably interested in interdimensional travel. They have had some success in stabilizing dimensional incursions, allowing them to send special Inquisitor units to scout the neighbouring dimensions, looking for home or, failing that, a compatible dimension that they can colonize.

The humans of the Enclave appear slightly odd to our eyes, but not enough to instantly mark them as from somewhere else. They have long been engaged in a subtle, quiet war on their world with a species of psychic parasites.

Lately, a faction of these parasites calling itself the Chant has spread through an incursion to our world.

**Distinction:** Enlightened Self-Interest

## The Fyxx

The Fyxx is a stretch of the Catacombs where Magus the Maggot holds sway. It's a collection of pimps, pushers, fences, and other criminals that have set up their own marketplace. The Fyxx is reminiscent of the Bizarre, but is completely mundane and totally depraved. But if you need an unlicensed gun, a kilo of heroin, or a skilled second-story man, this is the place to come.

**Distinction:** Hell's Banquet

## Gotham City

Spread over a few islands in the harbor, the old town of Gotham is a fanciful art-deco labyrinth, with gargoyle-bedecked buildings, towering sculptures, and twisted secondary streets and alleys. The divide between the haves and the have-nots is greater here than almost anywhere else in the nation, and the city name is a watchword for corruption and crime.

Most of the common folk in Gotham lead small lives, with little hope for better lives. They take a perverse pride in surviving the crime and desperation of the city, knowing that, if they can live here, it means they are the toughest people in the world.

Still, the streets are filled with petty crime, and the boardrooms are filled with major corruption. It is a dark place, even in daylight.

**Distinction:** The City That Dare Not Sleep

## The Narrows

Tucked in between Midtown and Downtown is the Narrows. It's a small island, and the worst slum in Gotham City – quite an accomplishment. The poor are stacked in tenement blocks in a scene that would look more at home in Hong Kong or Rio de Janeiro. Drug dealers, muggers, car thieves, and regular thieves haunt the streets, alleys, and residences, and the GCPD don't come in here in groups smaller than six.

Still, there are honest families here. Often recent immigrants, they find the criminal oppression here to be at least as bad as in their home countries, and the police just as corrupt. They make do as best they can, and do their best to look out for each other.

**Distinction:** Dark Heart of Gotham

## Rackham House

Financier and amateur medium of nineteenth Century Gotham, Josiah Rackham defied society even as he created it. Almost single-handed he engendered an interest in the supernatural among the city's elite, popularizing séances and other spiritual activities as a means to telling, and increasing, fortunes.

A dynamic personality, he was plagued by illness from childhood. He grew up poor in London, fourth son to a hat-maker who went mad and left the family penniless. After some time spent in various poorhouses, the remaining Rackhams somehow found passage to the new world. Landing in Gotham in the 1850s as a young man, Josiah almost immediately left his family to begin his financial empire. Beginning with shadowy, quasi-legal enterprises like betting pools, he quickly expanded to the buying and selling of weapons. His skill in such cutthroat commerce made him a wizard at the stock exchange when he began trading there in the early 1870s.

Various mansions of the nineteenth century have claimed to be Rackham House, but only two can do so with any sort of honesty. The second, in which Rackham lived out the last decades of his life is now the home of socialite, philanthropist and renowned new-age spiritualist, Janine Bromson. But the first, with its widow's walk, high-gabled roof, shuttered windows and extensive grounds, fell into ruin nearly a century ago. It has been barely maintained by a trust fund, and has reached a state of advanced dilapidation that discourages all but the most intrepid of thieves or urban explorers. Any who concerned themselves with the fate of this former stately home were certain that it would eventually fall in upon itself.

But apparently, the trust fund stipulated that anyone who appeared before the probate magistrate with a particular ring upon his finger, would be given the house, the grounds and the entirety of the multimillion dollar trust fund. When Brand Kendal did just that, he became the first master of Rackham House in the better part of a century. It is no exaggeration to say that Mr. Kendal and the House are perfectly suited to one another. Renovations to the property have begun, and will likely continue for decades.

**Distinction:** Reclaimed Splendour

## Groups

### The Azak

An expansionistic draconic race of dimensional conquerors, the Azak have been on earth before a few thousand years ago. They were defeated and forced out of our world by King Shamash and his immortal Chosen, who are remembered as the gods and goddesses of the Babylonians, Hittites and Assyrians. Awaiting their chance to return and take vengeance, the Azak have conquered and ruined a dozen worlds. Now the stars are right. The dragons have returned, eager but more cautious than in the past. This invasion will begin with reconnaissance.

The Azak are a morphic race or numerous castes. Only the Ascendant are true shapeshifters, but the Azak have mutated many of their own and subject races to suit their purposes. In addition to the Ascendant – who can adopt many shapes, but are most comfortable as dragons, there are lower castes of warriors, explorers, scholars and, the lowest rank – the Serviles, composed of stock from conquered peoples now sworn to various Ascendant lords and ladies.

For a Servile – one of the subject races, it is a great honour to be gifted with Azak blood and the power it represents. Often this means a change in caste, allowing the former Servile to enter the warrior or other castes.

The Azak are not truly evil as a race, though there are many evil Azak. But the survival of the Azak is based on conquest, not unlike the Roman Empire with expanding borders, a steady flow of slaves and other goods, and a powerful army.

### The Council

Gotham's answer to the Boston Brahmins, the eleven founding families of the city run both the main businesses of the city and all of the crime and corruption. Each family appoints a member to sit on the Council, which oversees the activities of the various gangs that actually commit the crimes in the city.

The strength of the Council is that it runs everything in Gotham City as a business – optimizing profits, dealing with territorial disputes, and making sure that its employees are well-paid and loyal. Though the Council doesn't go out of its way to hurt those outside its umbrella, it also has no interest in making their lives better. And it's completely ruthless when it comes to those who get in the way.

**Distinction:** Crime is Money

## The Chant

The Chant are an extremist faction in the Enclave. They are guided by a doctrine of manifest destiny and Enclave superiority, and are not content to wait for the Enclave scientists to find a way home or an empty world to colonize. They feel that it is their divine right to conquer another world, and have set their sights on Gotham City.

This faction has been heavily infiltrated by phageworms, psychic parasites that have plagued the Enclave for generations. These creatures can possess human hosts and bestow a range of powers and abilities on their host, moving on if the vessel becomes damaged or threatened.

They are led by Whisper, the original phageworm-possessed Chant terrorist. Indeed, much of the doctrine of the Chant originates with the phageworms and their desire to escape the poisoned environment of the Enclave and find new hosts and sustenance. Whisper, who acts as mob boss, parental figure, and prophet for the Chant faction. Under Whisper's leadership, they plan carefully from the shadows and have begun trying to wrest control of the Gotham City underworld from the Council.

**Distinction:** Danger From Beyond

## Chimaera Systems

A three-sided tower of glass and steel rising out of downtown Gotham houses Chimaera Systems, the largest company and employer in Gotham City. Chimaera, under their various subsidiaries, produces a wide range of pharmaceuticals, technology products, and GMO strains. There are some protests against Chimaera products and business practices, but nothing to equal what would happen if Chimaera's secret and far-reaching agenda became public.

Chimaera Systems recruits idealistic young science, medicine, and technology grads, providing ample funding and support for their research, no matter how radical or strange. This unconditional support, and relaxed attitude towards scientific ethics, slowly and subtly erodes the moral centre of the Chimaera scientists.

**Distinction:** Innovation Without Limits



## GCPD

The Gotham City Police Department is almost stereotypically corrupt police department. Payoffs and bribes are commonplace, justice is for sale, and orders more often come from the Council than from the commissioner. Not that the commissioner doesn't give orders; they just originate with the Council.

About ten years ago, a crusading new police captain came in, determined to clean up his division, and spread the new honesty to the rest of the department. The whispers about what happened to him and his family are still used to terrify new recruits and teach them the way things work.

It's not like the police don't do their job, however; most low-level crime is handled with cheerful and brutal efficiency. They do what they need to do to keep the streets relatively safe for the common citizens – the little people of Gotham – more because they want to throw their power around than because it's the right thing to do. Amounts to the same thing, for the most part.

**Distinction:** All the Justice You Can Afford

## Styx

Styx is Magus the Maggot's gang. They control most of the commonly known entrances to the Catacombs, and they extract a fee from anyone who wants to pass in either direction. They also offer guide services from the entrance to the Fyxx, guaranteeing the safety of their charges on the journey. It is certain that those who don't purchase this guide service often run into unexpected dangers.

**Distinction:** Eyes in the Shadows



## Faces

### Tiffany Afolayan

Part of the game of keeping a city completely under the thumb of a criminal empire is maintaining at least the appearance of openness, and Tiffany Afolayan is part of the Council's mask. She's an investigative reporter for the Gotham Times, and has written a number of well-received exposés of the corruption in the city.

What frustrates her is that she knows she's a good reporter, but also knows that she has only uncovered the pieces of the network that the Council has allowed her to see. Despite her dedication and her skill and her determination to do right, the system of corruption that holds Gotham City in its grips is too big and too practiced to allow her to truly break a meaningful story.

Needless to say, anyone who could point her to such a story would receive her deepest gratitude and complete co-operation.

**Distinction:** The Power of the Press

### Lovro Brankovic

Life in Chechnya was rough on young Lovro Brankovic, and he still bears the scars on his face and body. Here in Gotham, these scars make his job as enforcer for the Council that much easier. He wears a custom-tailored Italian suit most days, though he prefers dark track suits for the messy parts of his business.

Lovro came up in the local Bratva, but got recruited to work directly for the Council, who admired his cold-blooded control, ruthlessness, and business acumen. Lovro isn't ruled by his passions – he is completely goal-focused, and does whatever seems most likely to get him to his objective. Sometimes, that's negotiation, sometimes it's horrific violence. He is careful, expressionless, and effective.

**Distinction:** Iron Fist of the Council

### Dr. Silas Coldhaven

Dr. Silas Coldhaven runs the asylum in his family's former home. His early interest in PTSD stems from his grandfather Adrian's plight following WWII. Lately, he's been finding some strange cases of people whose minds have been shattered and broken by encounters with... something. An encounter with a strange person who spoke no known language unlocked something inside his mind, and he began to be able to see what his patients had seen.

Silas has stepped up his research into the new, strange patients, using his new awareness. What he's found so far, and what he plans to do about it, he's keeping very much to himself.

**Distinction:** Keeper of Secrets

## Esmerelda Lopez

Detective Lieutenant with the GCPD. While she's not willing to run some of the dirtier errands – she won't kill, or turn her back on innocents – she's not above faking evidence, beating prisoners, and accepting the occasional bribe or kickback. She's far from squeaky clean, but is one of the few officers on the GCPD that has a line she will not cross.

Unlike most other cops, she's willing to at least give a fair hearing to strange stories and weird characters. This is because her younger brother, Luis, has always been able to do weird, unexplainable things.

**Distinction:** Bent But Not Broken

## Luis Lopez

Always a troubled young man, Luis vanished into the Catacombs two years ago. Only his sister, Esmerelda, has been able to maintain any contact with him at all, and even for her, it is intermittent and generally only when he wants it. Because Luis has some strange abilities; he can come and go unseen, and always seems to know things that he should not be able to.

In the Catacombs, Luis is a figure of legend, a spectre that helps those who need it most, and punishes those who prey on the weak. Of course, no one knows that it's Luis; they just talk about the Unseen Hand.

**Distinction:** The Unseen Hand

## Magus the Maggot

Magus is a rather unpleasant – but well-connected – underworld businessman who runs the Styxx and the Fyxx, under the purview of the Council. He's always on the lookout for an edge, and is quite skilled at manipulating people to provide that edge for him.

In fact, Magus is something of a collector of people who have strange talents and nowhere else to go. He has a stable of people with impressive gifts under his direct control, and an even more extensive list of contacts that owe him a favour. Owing Magus a favour is not a good position to be in, but reneging when he asks for payment is even worse.

**Distinction:** A Favour Owed

## Whisper

A rumour among rumours. An urban legend, even to other urban legends. Whisper is the leader of the Chant, the Enclave extremists who have invaded our world and seek to wrest control of the underworld from the Council. With its ability to jump from host to host body, Whisper moves among the people of Gotham, using and discarding vessels as its goals direct.

Whisper is a phageworm, and is a sentient and highly intelligent extra-dimensional life form. When not hiding within a host body, Whisper's physical appearance is that of a nightmarish, three-foot-long combination of humanoid and worm.

Using host bodies as a conduit, phageworms feed off the psychic energy of human victims, leaving withered husks.

Whisper led the Chant from the Enclave to our world, and serves as prophet, leader, general, and de-facto parent to its followers. It seeks to build a base in this land, away from the humans of the Enclave who know how to detect and combat these parasites. Gotham is the Promised Land to the Chant, and Whisper is the prophet that leads its people to paradise.

**Distinction:** To Reign in Hell



## **Pandemonium Milestones**

Below are some milestones that are particularly appropriate for this setting. I've pulled a lot of them from the various datafiles and events that have been published, tweaking them for our purposes, and made up a couple of others. You can use these as written, tweak them for your character, or just use them for inspiration.

### **Clear Your Name**

You were wrongly imprisoned and have either escaped or been paroled. Though it may seem hopeless, you're determined to clear your name of the charges.

- 1 XP When you protest your innocence to your alleged crimes.
- 3 XP When you create an asset in order to help clear your name.
- 10 XP When you either clear your name or take full responsibility for your crimes.

### **Crusader**

Gotham is dirty, and has been dirty since the first docks were built. It is controlled by the families of the Council, and they own the cops and the papers and the politics. You want to fix that, long uphill slog though you know it will be.

- 1 XP When you talk about the corruption in Gotham City, naming names.
- 3 XP When you inflict stress on or take stress from an agent of the corruption in Gotham: a dirty cop, a member of one of the Council's gangs, etc.
- 10 XP When you either take down and expose a prominent corrupt individual – gang leader, police captain, politician, etc. – or you decide to start fighting the corruption from the inside as a cop, politician, etc.

### **BAMF**

You're a criminal, fugitive, and/or all-around nasty piece of work, and you're proud of it.

- 1 XP When you use your Menace specialty to inflict emotional stress.
- 3 XP When you add a d12 to the doom pool.
- 10 XP When you perform a truly heroic act in front of witnesses, or switch sides suddenly to ally with someone who's nastier than you are.

### **Explorer of Worlds**

You've been working on not just mapping the unpredictable incursion sites in Gotham, but also popping through when you can to see what's on the other side. It's not just curiosity, of course – you need to know what's on the other side of these things if you're going to be ready for what's coming. But the curiosity is a part of it.

- 1 XP When you encounter a new creature from another dimension.
- 3 XP When you pass through an incursion site, either going to or returning from another world.
- 10 XP When you either give up your explorations to settle permanently in Gotham, or abandon Gotham to settle on another world.

## Hard\_Nosed With Criminals

Gotham is not a place where you can take the high road. The criminals don't understand anything less than overwhelming force, and deserve no mercy, for they will show none. You understand this, and fight fire with fire.

- 1 XP When you threaten a criminal or discuss the best way to bring down a criminal.
- 3 XP When you inflict physical stress on a criminal.
- 10 XP When you either bring down a mob with a super villain leader or take over a mob and become its super villain mob boss.

## Hero for Hire

Leave saving puppies and orphans to the fire department. If you don't get paid, what's the point?

- 1 XP Whenever you demand financial compensation for your actions.
- 3 XP When you put a teammate or the team's goals in jeopardy because you see a way to get a bigger payout.
- 10 XP When your mercenary attitude gets you fired from the team, or you heroically risk yourself without expectation of payment.

## I Was a Chimaera

You know you owe some or all of your superpowers to Chimaera Systems developments. While you may not share the organization's objectives or agenda, you remain grateful for them and seek to know more about your origins in order to fully exploit your powers.

- 1 XP When you mention the Chimaera origin of one of your powers while using it.
- 3 XP When you learn a new piece of information about how you were created.
- 10 XP When you discover the truth about the project that created you or you destroy a Chimaera facility even though it means you'll lose that information forever.

## In It to Save Lives

No matter how much damage someone has caused, you believe all lives are worth saving.

- 1 XP When you state the case that all lives are worth saving.
- 3 XP When you put yourself in direct danger to save someone's life.
- 10 XP When you save a life that you know will lead to more death, or you're forced to take a life to save many others.



## It's Not That Complicated

Sometimes – most times – things just aren't as complicated as most people try to make them. A simple, straightforward approach can solve a lot of problems. And if that approach causes some more problems? Well, direct action can fix that, too.

- 1 XP When you offer a direct, blunt approach to a complicated problem.
- 3 XP When you start trouble by punching a bad guy in the face or inflect mental stress on a hero who is over-thinking his problems and being an angst-ridden idiot.
- 10 XP When you either defeat an enemy through direct physical confrontation or take a step back and elect to use more subtle methods.

## Learning About Power

Abilities like yours are a relatively new thing in this world. There is no one you know with the experience necessary to teach you how to use it. It's up to you to figure out how all this works.

- 1 XP When you discuss your powers with someone else.
- 3 XP When you use your powers to create an asset or complication.
- 10 XP When you either seek out a hero or villain with similar powers to help you gain mastery over your powers, or refuse any further aid or instruction in controlling your powers.

## Mo' Money

Money can't buy happiness, but it sure as hell buys a whole mess of problems.

- 1 XP When you try to solve a problem by throwing money at it.
- 3 XP When your attempt to solve a problem with money blows up in your face.
- 10 XP When you give it all up for something simpler or withdraw from your friends to surround yourself with the trappings of wealth.

## Pay it Forward

You got into trouble when you were younger, but you've since made good, thanks to some timely interventions by good people. You owe them, so you pay others.

- 1 XP When you help out a kid mixed up in the same kind of trouble that tempted you in the past.
- 3 XP When you make amends for something you did in your past, or help another do the same.
- 10 XP When you help a fellow hero make the world a better place through an act of kindness, or convince a villain to turn over a new leaf as a hero.

## Power House

Strong, brave, and resilient – you are a power house, and you know it. And you act like it.

- 1 XP When you discuss a battle plan in which you take point, leading the charge.
- 3 XP When you inflict physical stress on the most potent threat on the battlefield.
- 10 XP When you either end a global threat with your fists, or find a more subtle way to save the world.

## Questionable Ethics

This is Gotham. Not everything is black and white. Usually, it's black and a grey that is just slightly lighter than black. That's just the way of the world, and you have to live in it.

- 1 XP When you lie to someone who trusts you.
- 3 XP When you continue to hold on to a lie even though it will cause heroes to get into conflicts.
- 10 XP When you abandon a hero to his enemies for monetary gain, or you break an agreement in order to save another hero.

## Rebel

If ever there was a perfect case study of why you shouldn't trust the people in power, it's Gotham City. Politics and the police have been so corrupt for so long that people just accept it. You, however, don't.

- 1 XP When you question authority.
- 3 XP When you inflict stress on an authority figure who you see as abusing his or her power.
- 10 XP When you either take down an authority figure who was abusing his or her power, or you join the government/police and try to make it better from the inside.

## Rough Childhood

You grew up on the streets. It was hard, and you saw things no child should, but there was also amazing kindness and joy every now and then. You're safe, now, with a home and friends, but your childhood left its mark.

- 1 XP When you discuss something horrid you have seen while living on the streets.
- 3 XP When you discuss something helpful or wonderful that you saw while living on the streets.
- 10 XP When you either put your life on the streets behind you, or leave your safe home to make your living back on the streets.

## Runaway

You're a runaway.

- 1 XP When you talk with your closest friend about an exit strategy from your current living situation.
- 3 XP When you use your powers to defend your current home.
- 10 XP When you either set down roots and decide to call this place your home, or run away again, taking only your closest friend with you when you go.

## Sins of the Parents

When I walk in a room, I can see everyone looking. They're trying to figure out if the apple falls far from the tree.

- 1 XP When your actions demonstrate that you don't stand for what your parents believed in.
- 3 XP When you successfully use your parents' reputation to achieve what you want (whether intentionally or not).
- 10 XP When you defeat a member of your family in front of the media or when you publicly take responsibility for your family's criminal acts to protect them.

## Small World

It's a big city, but you keep running into the same people over and over again.

- 1 XP When you first declare that you have a history with a Watcher character in the current scene.
- 3 XP When you cause stress on another character because of your past history.
- 10 XP When you betray someone you have a history with or you discover that your historical links run far deeper than you first knew.

## Uneasy Champion

You have chosen to dedicate yourself to defending your chosen people. This might be a community, a race, a species, or any other group that identifies itself as a unit. It is your job to keep them safe.

- 1 XP When you discuss your role as champion with a member of the group you protect, or with someone who has a similar role within another group.
- 3 XP When you inflict stress on an enemy of your group.
- 10 XP When you either begin training your successor, or declare yourself leader of your group so that you can lead your people from the top.

## **Vigilante**

It's not that you don't trust the cops – you don't trust the cops, but that's not the point – it's that justice is just too important to leave to others. You see injustice, you act. You do what you can to correct it. And sometimes that can lead to problems.

- 1 XP When you discuss the apprehension of a criminal.
- 3 XP When you deal stress to a villain who victimizes the weak and the helpless.
- 10 XP When you either bring in a major villain to the authorities, or decide to take justice into your own hands.

## Pandemonium Unlockables

You can spend XP on advancing your character as in most games. It's not as rewarding as you might imagine – this is a comic book game, and characters change and evolve in different ways, not always just increasing in power.

There are other ways to improve you character, though; ways that tie him or her more tightly into the story and the setting, filling in detail and coolness (and a little bit of power) without just racing to pump up your powers. Here's how you can spend your XP.

### You can spend 5 XP to do the following...

- Replace an existing distinction with a new one. <sup>1</sup>
- Add or replace a limit in a Power Set. <sup>2</sup>
- Switch two affiliation traits.
- Unlock a minor campaign resource.

### You can spend 10 XP to do the following...

- Add a new SFX to a power set. <sup>3</sup>
- Step up a d6 or d8 power trait by one step.
- Add a new d6 power trait to a power set.
- Remove a limit from a power set that has two or more limits. <sup>4</sup>
- Unlock a major campaign resource.

### You can spend 15 XP to do the following...

- Step up a d10 power strait by one step.
- Replace an existing power set with a new one. <sup>5</sup>
- Add a new expert specialty or upgrade an existing expert to master.
- Unlock a superior campaign resource.

You can also spend an XP at any time to add one plot point to your current pool. Once you do that, you start each game with an extra plot point, up to a total five plot points to start each game. To be clear, you can still spend the XP to get the plot point, but it doesn't increase your starting pool of plot points beyond five.

These starting points go away at the start of a new act. When does that happen? Pretty much whenever I say it does. It'll be every few adventures, probably, and will certainly happen after a big event that changes things significantly in the setting. I'll try not to screw you over with this, but I'm also not going to cry too much if you just spent an XP and then I start a new act next session.

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<sup>1</sup> Why do this? It shows your character growing and changing based on your adventures.

<sup>2</sup> Why add a limit? It's another way to generate plot points.

<sup>3</sup> Why do this? Because you've learned a tricky new way to use your powers.

<sup>4</sup> Why remove a limit? Because it makes you a little less vulnerable.

<sup>5</sup> Why do this? To reflect something that changes your characters' powers in play.

## Campaign Resources

The list above mentions minor and major campaign resources. I'm listing several examples below – minor resources cost 5 XP, major campaign resources cost 10 XP, and superior resources cost 15 XP. You can tell which is which by the cost. Many will have multiple versions at different costs. The higher cost version is usually better, if that logic wasn't apparent.

Some of these have requirements that must be met narratively for them to take effect. For example, if you aren't on good terms with at least one extra-dimensional power, you can't unlock Dimensional Assistance.

You can view this as both a shopping list and as a source of inspiration. That is, you're free to purchase stuff from the list, subject to the requirements mentioned above, but you're also free to come up with your own campaign resources and pitch them to me. If I approve them, you've got them.

- **[5 XP/10 XP] Hero/Villain Reputation:** An action you've taken has made you a public face, giving you a reputation either for heroism or villainy. Any hero can spend 5 XP to gain a fourth reputation-based distinction until the end of the next act. For 10 XP, this distinction lasts for the entire game (unless something happens to change it). Examples of such distinctions are *One of the Good Guys*, or *Dangerous Lunatic*.
- **[10 XP/15 XP] Unlock a Hero:** You've met and befriended another hero. For 10 XP, you can call on that hero for a favour once per session. For 15 XP, that hero becomes a playable character and will assist you whenever you require.
- **[5 XP/10 XP] Dimensional Assistance:** You've met and worked with forces from another dimension. Though they generally don't have much interest in the affairs of Gotham, you can call on them for some assistance. For 5 XP, you can stave off a small incursion with their help, or gain some other relatively minor favour. For 10 XP, your allies will offer troops, weapons, vital information, or other forms of assistance to aid you.
- **[5 XP/10 XP] Dimensional Heritage:** Not everyone knows their true bloodlines. For 5 XP, you learn you might have some family connection to another dimension, and will find favour there. For 10 XP, you can add a new power set based on your heritage to your character to reflect your inhuman origins. Be aware that I will be designing the power set based on what the inhabitants of the dimension seem like from the game – you don't get to pick and choose the powers. But I will let you see the power set before you decide to spend the XP.
- **[5 XP/10 XP] Dimensional Arsenal:** For 5 XP, any hero can gain a small arsenal of devices from another dimension. This will be a small power set that I create, and will have the *Gear* limit. If the limit is ever put into play, the arsenal is broken or stolen, and must be fixed by a scientist from the appropriate dimension. For 10 XP, you get the same power set, but are also trained in the upkeep of the arsenal, so you can recover from the *Gear* limit by taking an action against the Doom Pool.

- **[5 XP] Chimaera Shutdown Codes:** If you have a contact within Chimaera systems, you can acquire shutdown codes for Chimaera weapons technology for 5 XP. This allows you to declare once that a villain with a technology-based power set is using Chimaera tech; your code acts as a new limit that shuts down one of the power sets and adds a d6 to the Doom Pool or steps up the lowest die. This limit lasts for one action scene.
- **[5 XP/10 XP] Shady Dealings:** Chimaera tech is sold on the black market to anyone who can pay. By buying this resource during a transition scene, you can create a resource as though you had one of the following specialties: Cosmic, Science, Tech, or Vehicle. For 5 XP, treat the resource as though you had an Expert specialty. For 10 XP, treat it as a Master specialty.
- **[5 XP/10 XP] Mysterious Agenda:** Both the Council and the Chant have subtle, far-reaching plans. Sometimes that means offering aid (or at least appearing to offer aid) to heroes. For 5 XP, a group of four soldiers from either the Council or the Chant shows out to help you out during a single action scene, then departs. For 10 XP, one of the named members of the chosen group, like Whisper or Lovro Brankovic, appears. Naturally, all of this will have repercussions down the line.
- **[10 XP] Chimaera Systems Upgrade:** For 10 XP, you receive a gadget, probably a costume, designed by Chimaera Systems to augment your abilities. You can step up two power traits in one of your power sets by +1, but the tech isn't 100% reliable. Whenever the Watcher adds a die to the doom pool by activating one of your opportunities, step up the die by +1.
- **[5 XP/10 XP/15 XP] Cement a Contact:** If you've used a resource die to indicate a contact, you may cement that contact, turning the person into a more complete character who is well-disposed towards your character (or has another reason to do what you want). For 5 XP, this person will do you little favours (search a database, delay a story, give you a tip, etc.) as long as there is little risk. For 10 XP, the person will do more elaborate favours (pass you classified information, kill a story, tamper with evidence, lie to the boss, etc.), up to risking his or her job for you. For 15 XP, the contact is totally devoted to you, and will risk his or her life (though possibly not the lives of loved ones) to help you with whatever you ask.
- **[5 XP/10 XP] Cement a Piece of Gear:** If you create a piece of gear as a resource, and want to keep it around, you can cement it by spending 5 XP if the die rating is d6, and 10 XP if the die rating is d8. You can also add features to an existing piece of gear, creating a new resource and then cementing it to the currently existing piece of gear. This includes creating secret hide-outs and bases.
- **[5 XP/10 XP] Stable IncurSION Point:** Incursions are dangerous and unpredictable. For 5 XP, you can declare that you've found an incursion point that will allow you to travel into or out of another dimension. For 10 XP, the incursion point remains stable for the rest of the act.

- **[5 XP/10 XP/15 XP] Favour From a Godlike Being:** If you meet and are of service to one of the many godlike beings from other dimensions, you can be sure that the debt will be paid. For 5 XP, the being will do a minor favour for you, like sending a servant to aid you or transport you where you need to go. For 10 XP, the being him- or herself will instantly teleport you anywhere you need to go, completely restore you and your allies, or loan you a piece of advanced technology. For 15 XP, the being will grant you a small portion of this godlike power for a short time. There may be strings attached to this last one, though.



## Pushes, Stunts, Resources, and Assets

There are a few ways to get extra dice to roll during your turn. The three big ones are Stunts, Assets, and Resources. We were using them a little loosely in the *Civil War* game, and that contributed to the power creep that caused me some problems when trying to come up with challenges for the group. So, we're going to go back to basics in this game, with very minor tweaks in the form of Flashbacks. I'm going to spell things out below, so that we're all on the same page.

### Pushes

This is about the least interesting, and the least powerful, way to get an extra die. You just pay a plot point, and you can add a generic d6 to your pool. It represents you just putting in extra effort. It lasts for one roll.

You can also add a Push die by buying an opportunity (i.e., a die that rolls a 1) from the Watcher's dice pool. These Push dice are d8s, and still last for one roll.

### Stunts

This is similar to a Push, but a little more powerful and interesting. You can add a d8 to your pool by spending a plot point, and telling us how you're doing something cool with your powers or specialties to earn it. It lasts for one roll.

You can also add a Stunt die by buying an opportunity (i.e., a die that rolls a 1) from the Watcher's dice pool. These Push dice are d10s, and still last for one roll.

### Resources

During a transition scene (i.e., a scene other than an action scene), you can spend a plot point to add a Resource die connected to one of your specialties. A resource is a temporary trait that represents a professional contact, a piece of equipment, or some kind of useful knowledge. If your specialty is Expert, the die is a d6. If your specialty is Master, the die is a d8. Resources last until the end of the next action scene.

### Assets

Assets are a little more complicated than the above. You create an Asset by succeeding in a roll, and using your effect die to declare some new element that benefits you. The Asset is equal to the effect die, and lasts for a single roll.

Rolling to create an Asset (like everything else in *MHR*) is an opposed roll. So, a villain can try to interfere with you, if one is present and aware. Otherwise, you're generally rolling against the Doom Pool, though I reserve the right to add some situational dice to represent increased difficulty if I think it's warranted.

The flipside of an Asset is a Complication. It works just the same, but it represents something bad for your opponent instead of something good for you. It also lasts for a single roll.

Assets and Complications can be made to last until the end of the scene instead of a single roll by paying a plot point.

## Flashbacks

Flashbacks are a house rule that allows you to step up the die for Stunts, Resources, and Assets. If you choose to use a Flashback to step up a die, you must declare it when you create the die, and then play out (solo or with someone else) a short scene that ties in to what you're trying to do and reveals something about your character's past.