

HOUR OF **NEED** Issue Guide





ISSUE GUIDE

EACH ISSUE IN *HOURLY OF NEED* PROVIDES A CINEMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE HEROES' ENCOUNTER WITH A DASTARDLY VILLAIN. THIS SECTION PROVIDES NARRATIVE, CLARIFICATIONS, AND ANY OTHER NECESSARY INFORMATION ON EACH ISSUE INCLUDED IN THE GAME.

PLAYERS MAY USE THIS DURING THEIR GAMES TO READ ALOUD THE INDICATED "STORY MOMENTS" THAT HELP SET THE SCENE FOR THE ACTION TAKING PLACE. EACH STORY MOMENT HAS A **CUE EFFECT**; WHEN THAT **CUE EFFECT** OCCURS, PLAYERS CAN CHOOSE TO MOMENTARILY PAUSE THE GAME TO READ THE STORY MOMENT THAT EXPLAINS WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE STORY.

STORY MOMENTS ARE ENTIRELY OPTIONAL.

CENTURY HEIST

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★

SPECIAL COMPONENTS



Gabby Woods



Lox Lee



Abductor

SPECIAL RULES & CLARIFICATIONS

Don't forget to solve "The Vault" when it becomes *Opened*—it may be the only way to delay the villain before they escape with the gold!

Issue Introduction

The streets of New Crown City are as busy as any other day—average citizens pick up their morning coffee on their way to work, drop off their children at school, and report to their routine jobs. Downtown is the most thriving district, where executives and creatives alike stimulate the economy. At the heart of it all, is Century Bank.

"G'morning, Deb," Walter's voice echoes as he swipes his badge at the clerk entrance. The massive vault that is the centerpiece of the bank's cavernous lobby gleams as the morning light pours in from the high windows. "How's Michael?"

"He's good," Deborah says with a smile, blowing steam off her morning coffee. "No detention this week!" Walter laughs as she rests one hand on her holstered sidearm, never one to get too comfortable at her post. Even though Century Bank employs a guard at both entrances, Deborah was responsible for the entire lobby, and she took her job very seriously.

"Don't work too ha—" Walter's voice is suddenly cut off as the clerk's door closes on Deborah. His muffled voice sounds panicked. "How'd you get back here!?"

Deborah takes a step toward the teller's window, but hears the familiar click of a handgun behind her. She freezes, her hand jolting away from her own gun as if it were scalding hot.

"Take a break," a menacing voice instructs as an unfamiliar hand removes the gun from Deborah's holster. "It's going to be a long morning..."

Scheme Introductions

Before play begins, read the corresponding introduction for each Scheme card in play.

THE LOCKSMITH

Lox Lee knocked another arrow as his new employer laid out the plans over his wrist communicator. He released, sending another shaft through the spinning metal ring that hung from the goal posts at the other end of the empty stadium. "I can do it," Lox says, "I've never seen a vault I can't get into. You just worry about the pay... I'm not cheap... I'll meet you at the warehouse."

The lock-picking assassin clicked off his communicator and gathered his arrows, wondering if his employer knew just how little a mercenary can be trusted...

HOSTAGES

The armed figures in Century Bank strode back and forth, threatening each of the dozen hostages as they awaited instructions from their boss. Walter saw several openings to try to wrestle a gun away from one of the smaller-framed women holding them hostage, but he couldn't muster the courage. As if sensing Walter's thoughts, one of his captors stopped their pacing in front of him. "On your feet! The cops are gonna need to see how serious we are!"

Walter's fears of being shot by his captor were quickly put to rest as they led him back to his work phone. "Pick it up!" the captor commanded. "Call up one of the other clerks... tell them you're sick and they need to come in immediately." A wicked smile spread across the captor's face.

MANUFACTURED HYSTERIA

Gabby Woods finished the last drops of her latte as she looked over the latest news briefs. There were a lot—even by New Crown City standards. Reported sightings of aliens, ghosts in several homes being remodeled, and even several corroborated encounters with the deadly Dowager's late husband, Wiseguy, who has apparently returned from the dead!

Story Moments

The following story moments should only be read after the **Cue** effect occurs during the game.

"I HEAR THERE'S A LOCK NEEDS PICKIN' 'ROUND HERE"

CUE: "The Locksmith" Scheme card is solved.

You shove the informant to the ground, weighing his words carefully. If Lox Lee was indeed hired for the heist, then that safe is as good as opened. As if in response, police sirens wail outside. Nearby, the villain's police scanner picks up the radio chatter. "That Robin Hood guy is at it again! All units to Century Bank, immediately! And watch out for arrows!"

"THEY'RE TAKING HUMAN SHIELDS!"

CUE: The "Hostages" Scheme card is solved.

"Please, I have children," Walter begged as he was dragged through an underground tunnel.

"If you want to see them again, you'll keep moving," the armed woman instructed. "You should know killing you won't help me at all. I just want to get paid. And the more hostages I have, the better chance I have of cashing that check."

She pushed Walter again as they neared a starwell. "Where are we going?" he asked.

"To make some news," she said with a smile.

"These can't be real," Gabby muttered to herself.

"That's what I thought," replied her editor Rose, who was carrying even more briefs. "But we've checked into each of these. There are legitimate claims here, as astounding as many of them seem." Rose dropped the briefs onto Gabby's desk. "Whatever is going on, I want you to look into it."

ESCAPE ROUTES

Marty slammed the phone down, taking a puff from his quickly depleting cigarette. He mashed it into an ashtray as he stared at the flashing lights of the subway tunnel display in the control room of the New Crown City Department of Transportation. "What's going on down there?!" he demanded to know from no one in particular.

"Sir," a young man in a suit said as he approached cautiously, "we have three teams down in the east tunnels, and there seems to be some unauthorized construction equipment blocking several routes. We're working on clearing them."

"Well work harder," Marty shouted, lighting another cigarette. While those trains sit idle we can't get anyone out of downtown!"

"WE NEED TO GET THE TRUTH OUT THERE!"

CUE: The "Manufactured Hysteria" Scheme card is solved.

"You can't go out there," Rose warned, panic rising in her voice. "I wouldn't be surprised if there were riots soon!"

Gabby put on her jacket, looking for her keys. "Someone has to report on this. Whoever is hacking into our programming is going to create absolute anarchy. We need some people in the field, someone telling the truth."

"Why's it have to be you?" Rose asked, incredulous. "I need you here!" But Gabby was already making for the elevator, ordering her camera crew to follow.

"THEY'RE USING THE TRAINS!"

CUE: The "Escape Routes" Scheme card is solved.

The New Crown City subway system has become an absolute catastrophe. A series of unauthorized construction projects have blocked various routes, and the trains that are running are not stopping where they're supposed to. There's something going on deeper in the tunnels, but there's no way to find out while the trains are still running and stopping wherever they wish.

While there's no pattern to when and where the trains stop, there has to be a reason they are stopping where they are...

NEW CENTURY BANK'S VAULT CLEANED OUT

CUE: The heroes lose.

"...and our big story tonight is the Century Bank heist that sent downtown New Crown City into complete chaos. While there are many theories on who was behind the robbery, no one knows who was actually pulling the strings. What we do know is that all the gold in the Century Bank vaults has been taken, and is now in the hands of a very dangerous individual..."

HEIST OF THE CENTURY FOILED

CUE: The heroes win.

"...for those of you downtown today, you might have witnessed first-hand the heroic efforts of our local police department as they prevented a large-scale robbery of Century Bank. The perpetrators had taken many hostages and threatened to harm them if their demands weren't met. Fortunately, the police presence managed to deescalate the situation and we're told that no money was actually taken from the Century Bank vaults. A big congratulations and thank you to our brave officers! And, in other news, another masked vigilante sighting..."

MAKING WAVES

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★

SPECIAL COMPONENTS



The Foreman



Lowtider

*The Foreman token has an inactive and active side, similar to issue tokens. It enters play inactive.

SPECIAL RULES & CLARIFICATIONS

DOCK WORKERS

Issue tokens are dock workers that are attempting to deliver mysterious cargo to the scheme spaces where they will be prepped and loaded for shipment. As per the normal rules for issue tokens, dock workers enter play inactive side up. Dock workers can move into (and end their movement in) spaces containing figures.

Each time a dock worker enters a crate space, they become active (flip the issue token to its active side) to represent that they are carrying cargo.

Heroes may target dock workers with attacks, but may not otherwise damage them. Each time a dock worker carrying cargo suffers any amount of damage from an attack, they drop the cargo, flipping back to their inactive side. Each time a dock worker not carrying cargo suffers any amount of damage from an attack, move that issue token to the scheme space nearest it.

During the showdown, the villain is treated as a dock worker—but only when resolving the Overtime effect on “Cargo.” This means that the villain cannot be forced to drop cargo by dealing them damage. The villain will still deliver cargo when moving into a scheme space while they have an active issue token on the Villain card (placing 1 issue token in the corresponding scheme panel).

SPECIAL RULES & CLARIFICATIONS

OCEAN SPACES

All figures treat ocean spaces as blocked spaces, meaning they cannot enter or move through them. During a hero’s Move or movement effect, they may reveal (not discard) a card with a mobility heroic feat icon to treat ocean spaces as normal spaces during that movement. The “Lowtider” Ally treats all ocean spaces as normal spaces for movement purposes.

Issue Introduction

The Holden Docks have been a privately owned front for the Russo crime family for decades. It’s no secret that shady deals pass through these ports regularly, but it is troubling when the Hooked—the brainwashed cult followers of Baronette—start working the night shift at the docks...

Baronette’s dark grip on illegal trade hasn’t typically reached this far up the east coast, but the voodoo queen’s influence is clearly at work. There’s nothing really to gain by openly breaking up the operations, so discretion is the only option to find out what those large crates are, where they’re going, and what Baronette’s ultimate plan is...

Scheme Introductions

Before play begins, read the corresponding introduction for each Scheme card in play.

FAMILIAR ANCHOR

The ocean is Lowtider’s domain—but he is a prickly ruler. Some would call him a hero, others might call him an apathetic obstacle. However he is viewed, his powers are undeniable.

The familiar anchor hanging from the stern of the cargo ship is a clear indication that Lowtider has taken an interest in the evening's proceedings. Whose side he is on is the real question...

MANIFEST

The shipping bay processes all the cargo coming in and out of Holden Docks. Typically, you would expect that questionable goods getting illegally moved at night wouldn't leave a paper trail, but if Baronette is truly working through the Russo mob, things are definitely getting played by the books—if only out of sheer arrogance.

But you'll need to move cautiously and avoid detection to find what you need.

DEPARTING

"Move it!" a slurred voice shouts from one of the smaller eastbound ships. Several figures stumble around to prepare for departure. They are clearly the hooked—possessed addicts of the magically concocted drugs distributed by Baronette—doing their master's bidding.

You're more and more certain that the cargo being loaded tonight is Baronette's latest creation. Which means it'll have to be handled with care. You can't let any of her dreadful drugs escape into the city... or wherever else these ships are planning on taking it.

LOADING

The rickety container crane at the south end of the docks is bustling with activity. "Get it in working order, now!" The commanding voice comes from a pacing figure—the Foreman!

"We've gotta move this shipment," the Foreman bellows. "If it's not on the water before sun up, you can kiss your pay goodbye!"

Story Moments

The following story moments should only be read after the **Cue** effect occurs during the game.

SAMPLING THE PRODUCT

CUE: The "Manifest" Scheme card is solved.

While the shipping manifests for tonight's cargo look innocuous, the crew responsible for loading it are showing familiar signs of Baronette's meddling—glossed-over eyes, staggered shambling, constant moaning.

The docks are alive with zombie thralls, working—or, if necessary, killing—for their next fix...

ANCHORS AWAY

CUE: The "Departing" Scheme card is solved.

The smaller ship on the north side of the dock is fully loaded and ready to depart. As you race to stall it, several of the Baronette's loyal addicts leap to block your way. The Hooked have unseeing eyes that bore through any threat that stands between them and their master's will.

A LITTLE CAN-DO ATTITUDE

CUE: The "Loading" Scheme card is solved.

The Foreman approaches, spinning her hammer as if it were nothing more than a twig. "You'll have to excuse my staff," she says coolly. "They don't like to take breaks. So allow me to tend to any complaints you might have with our labor. The work doesn't stop." She raises her hammer in challenge.

BACK TO THE SEA

CUE: The "Familiar Anchor" Scheme card is solved.

"I appreciate the assistance," Lowtider says, shaking the bindings off as you finish rescuing him. "But I have to get back. These mindless thralls have already polluted my realm with their wicked excesses, I care not to dwell amongst them any longer."

He takes a moment to consider your words. "I do agree I could be of use here, but there's much to be done below. I'll consider your words, but the deals up here are best left to the many defenders of the dry realm. My place is down there..."

A WORLD ON THE HOOK

CUE: The heroes lose.

Baronette walked barefoot through the sand on a small, picturesque island. The beach was desolate and isolated, but further down the shore was a sterile, militaristic installation. Bells rang in the distance and Baronette smiled, crushing a strange herb between her fingers, flaking it into a leather pouch. As she reached the installation, General Domain stood at attention near the rising tide, binoculars held to his face as he watched the distance.

"The ship is coming in," Domain declared. "You have satisfied your end of the deal. We should be able to weaponize your drugs according to the original plan." Baronette smiled, imagining her new global empire...

JUST SAY NO

CUE: The heroes win.

"Captain, over here!" the officer shouted, leading Captain Melanie Barnes towards the shipping office. "We found 'em like this..."

Melanie took a sip of her coffee, trying to maintain her composure in front of the assembled squad. She wanted to spit out her drink, but she swallowed hard as she took in the sight. Struggling against their bindings, the junkies known as the "Hooked" made a chaotic lineup.

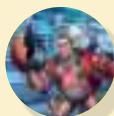
"We also found this." The officer handed Barnes a stack of shipping papers with a note scrawled on top. "Baronette is back in business. This won't be the first time she tries to ship her product out of the city. Give them twenty-four hours for the stuff to wear off, then question them. You can get back to us later..."

Melanie scowled as she read, taking another drink. She didn't like them doing her job, but she couldn't deny this bust would really look good for her...

AUTOMATED CHAOS

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★

SPECIAL COMPONENTS



Crabman



Dr. Vivian
Graham



Phase II
Brinkbots x4

SPECIAL RULES & CLARIFICATIONS

MAINFRAME

The "Mainframe" problem corresponds to each scheme panel, meaning each hero in a scheme panel may target "Mainframe" during **SOLVE** effects.

PHASE II BRINKBOTS

Players should track individual damage dealt to Phase II Brinkbots by placing damage tokens under their individual enemy tokens. Phase II Brinkbots cannot be flipped inactive (they are always active).

Issue Introduction

Vivian looked up from the computer, spinning her chair around to see where the noise came from. The door to the office was still shut, and the janitor had left about half an hour ago. She was alone in the lab—as far as she knew—and this wasn't the first time she had become paranoid while working late. She shrugged and rolled her chair toward the printer to reload it with paper.

CLICK

She froze. This time she knew she heard something. "Hello, Dr. Graham," came a familiar, mechanical voice.

Vivian slowly spun her wheels to see the hulking form of Crabman opening the door to her office. "...Paul? What are you doing here?" Memories flashed through her mind like a strobe light—her younger brother running with her through the woods, competing against each other in the high school science fair, and Paul shattering her spine with one of those massive claws he now wielded.

Crabman smiled. "You know I don't like that name, sis. Now, how about you help me get some of those fancy suits your boss left with you? I got a job and my associate could use their assistance..."

Scheme Introductions

Before play begins, read the corresponding introduction for each Scheme card in play.

COMPROMISE NETWORK

Brink Labs has one of the city's largest independent networks—an intricate system created by Joshua Brink and his team to help automate the lab. Due to the nature of the government contracts that Brink Labs works on, security has always been of the utmost priority.

But, unfortunately, since Joshua's disappearance, the mainframe's security has become less scrutinized, leaving it open for malicious attacks...

REPROGRAMMING

Vivian watched in horror as Crabman's goons easily hacked into the Brink Lab mainframe where the remote programming for the Brinkbots could be accessed. "How...", she thought to herself, "they must have gotten to Joshua somehow. There's no way they should be able to reprogram his creations..."

Even as she speculated, the sound of the Brinkbots powering up in the main lab could be heard. "These can't fall into the wrong hands," Vivian thought desperately, wondering how she could stop it from happening.

MODIFICATIONS

"Oh my..." Crabman said with wonder as he threw open the doors to the R&D wing of Brink Labs. Behind him he heard the commands of his employer—"Let them have their fun, thinking they're actually in charge," Crabman thought to himself—but he only had eyes for the treasure trove of technology he just discovered.

"Thank you, Josh," he said aloud with a laugh. "These will do nicely..."

PROTOTYPE WEAPONS

Six weeks ago...

Vivian pushed her wheelchair forward, keeping pace with Major Sinclair. "I trust Dr. Brink brought you up to speed on our arrangement before his... disappearance?" Sinclair scratched at his neck, keeping his eyes on the mounted weapons in the armory.

Vivian nodded, not wanting to reveal everything she knew. "I know how delicate the situation is. And rest assured, we are sticking to the agreed-upon plans. Joshua liked to blaze his own trail, but none of his remaining team wishes to play with the fire in here."

Sinclair nodded. "Good. There's enough firepower in here to level the city. It needs to be relocated immediately if the Brinkbots aren't capable of safely wielding them."

"Baby steps," Vivian agreed. "I see no reason to press our luck with the government's arsenal."

Story Moments

The following story moments should only be read after the **Cue** effect occurs during the game.

CONTINGENCIES

CUE: The "Compromise Network" Scheme card is solved.

Chaos still continued in the main lab—the Brinkbots were being programmed to evacuate the lab via the main lift. Thankfully, where villains show up in this city, heroes are never far behind. The battle outside had given Vivian the chance she needed to start rebooting the mainframe. It was a long process, and required manual interface at each of the main stations of the lab. But it was the least she could do to prevent the Brinkbots from being used for who-knows-what kind of nefarious purposes.

BOOTED UP

CUE: The "Reprogramming" Scheme card is solved.

"Attention," a sterile voice announced over the Brink Lab intercom system. "Please evacuate the ground level of the laboratory. I repeat, please evacuate the ground level of the laboratory. The automated Brinkbot power cycle has begun. Keep clear of the power stations. I repeat—"

As the announcement continues, a large console boots up in the control room...

RISE OF THE...CRAB-BOTS?

CUE: The “Modifications” Scheme card is solved.

The doors to R&D are violently thrown open as Crabman lurches forward in a massive stomp. “My work here is done!” he laughs, pointing a massive claw at you. “You can’t stop the Brinkbots now. They are mine, and I shall repurpose them in my own lab—say hello to my own Crab-bots, pathetic hero!”

FIELD TEST

CUE: The “Prototype Weapons” Scheme card is solved.

An explosion rocked the south end of the lab as alarms began to blare. Vivian was knocked from her chair, but quickly pulled herself back up. She checked the main display in the control room and a schematic appeared that she had never seen...

“Oh god...” Vivian said, catching her breath as she read the words displayed above the schematics. She knew exactly what the words “PHASE II” meant but couldn’t believe there was actually a protocol in place to initiate it.

“Attention,” the voice on the lab’s intercom system declared. Vivian still held her breath as it said, “weapons are active. Initiating Brinkbot Phase II now.”

EXECUTIVE DECISION

CUE: The heroes lose.

The President of the United States hung up the phone, her eyes narrowing the dossier on her desk—more specifically, on the name Joshua Brink. “You know what to do,” the president said, closing Joshua’s file and looking up to her chief of staff, Preston Wallace.

Preston nodded. “Yes, Madame President. I’ve already asked the Pentagon to clean its records of any mention of Brink Labs. There will be no ties to this event. But the Air Force will need to move immediately to destroy all of the Brinkbots—if we can find them.”

Laura Donoghue arose and looked out the window of the Oval Office. “If we can find them. What are the chances of that—finding them before the technology is no longer our secret?”

Preston didn’t respond, but Laura already knew the answer...

CRAB TRAP

CUE: The heroes win.

“Wait!” Vivian calls out just as you’re about to shatter Crabman’s cracking helmet with a final blow. “Just wait...” She took the ramp down to where the fallen Brinkbots littered the ground around you. “Paul,” she said, her voice weak, “why? Please tell me why? Isn’t that the least you can do?”

Crabman laughed. “I could ask you the same thing. Why’d you make that deal with Sinclair? Why are the world’s most dangerous weapons safer in your hands than mine? Get some perspective, sis.”

Vivian shook her head. “Let the cops deal with him. I’ve got some robots to reprogram...”

VOLUME XVIII

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★



SPECIAL COMPONENTS






Mr. Meaner



Ji-yoo Rhee

SPECIAL RULES & CLARIFICATIONS

Each  space on the map can only contain at most one minion. If for any reason a figure occupies a  space when a minion would be placed in it, the figure in that space is moved to the empty space nearest that  space before placing the minion.

Issue Introduction

Of the thirty-six mapped realms of the Astrallacy, the thirty-sixth—the last to be mapped—is the most dangerous. There’s a reason that even the Jade Kid could not press on further than the realm simply known as Astasia. While Jade Kid kept all of her learnings of Astasia to herself, hoping knowledge of the place would never expand past the void in which it existed, others were not so selfish with this knowledge...

The dread book known as “Volume XXXVI” has become something of a myth—a holy grail for power-hungry villains who hope to tap into the limitless powers flowing from the Astrallacy into Astasia. It is believed Volume XXXVI can open a rift in Earth’s dimension to Astasia, releasing the harnessed powers that have been lost in that swirling vortex for eons.

A secret organization has managed to recover the lost book and have chosen a mundane library to hide it in while they research how to successfully destroy it. Unfortunately, the secret is out...



Scheme Introductions

Before play begins, read the corresponding introduction for each Scheme card in play.

MISSING LIBRARIAN

Ji-yoo Rhee only worked at the library part time, but she knew most of the regulars that hung out there. Because of this, she kept a watchful eye on the man in the yellow suit that spun his cane around as he walked. There was something obviously suspicious about him.

"Miss," a voice came from behind Ji-yoo, startling her. "Can you help me find the next book in this series?"

Ji-yoo turned to face a woman shoving a gun in her face. "Let's take a walk...," the armed woman said, shoving her toward the back offices.

SEARCH RECORDS

The acquisitions office dominates the back end of the library—a sprawling office-turned-storeroom that's flooding with new arrivals in desperate need of sorting and shelving.

"Get in there and find it!"

Two figures burst into the office, weapons drawn. "No one here," one of them says flatly. "How we 'gone find that book in this mess?!"

The other figure holsters their weapon. "I don't know, but I don't want to ask the boss, so let's get reading..."

CYBER SCRIPTS

While predominantly used to search through old newspaper articles, the microfilm readers in the digital collections also contain almost forty percent of the library's volumes in digital form.

One of the library intruders shoved a chair out of the way and leaned over one of the machines. "There's no way we'll find anything here..."

A second figure bent over the other machine. "Leave no stone unturned, the boss said..."

REORGANIZATION

As he whistled and clicked his cane rhythmically on the ground, Mr. Meaner looked over his shoulder to see the young librarian shuffled toward the back offices. He clicked his heels and turned to the stairs leading to the archives. As the meticulously stacked and organized shelves came into view, Mr. Meaner's eyes lit up.

"Oh, mischief beckons!"

Story Moments

The following story moments should only be read after the **Cue** effect occurs during the game.

THE BOOKKEEPER

CUE: The "Missing Librarian" Scheme card is solved.

"I don't know," Ji-yoo said nervously, "my grandfather spoke of the volume, but never showed me. It could be anywhere! I can help find it, but you'll have to protect me—if they see me find it, I can't stop them from taking it!"

A PAGE OUT OF THE BOOK

CUE: The "Search Records" Scheme card is solved.

As you scattered the villain's forces from the acquisitions office, you hear a triumphant cry: "It's here, boss, it's here!"

Clearly, evidence had been found. If this organization was so set on keeping their possession of this book secret, why would they copy a page out of it?!

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

CUE: The “Cyber Scripts” Scheme card is solved.

You flip off the microfilm reader as it continues making an eerie screeching noise. But the light within doesn't shut off...

You are compelled to look into the viewer, and what you see is a horrific vision of blackness—utter blackness, nothingness. You can't shake the vision even after you turn away. Certainly the book is near...

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!

CUE: The “Reorganization” Scheme card is solved.

“Whoop! Sorry for any inconvenience, friends!” Mr. Meaner danced away from the scene of his—does it count as a crime? The rascally elusive fiend managed to reorganize the entire archives, confounding both you and your foes. You're not sure whether to thank him or curse him, but one thing's for certain...

He won't get away this time!

THE UNRAVELLING

CUE: The heroes lose.

The ceiling of the library exploded into an extradimensional chasm. Black tentacles reached through into Earth's realm, impossibly large and maddening to mortal eyes. This is the beginning of the end—the fathomless void that is the realm of Astasia has breached our reality, and it cannot be undone.

The final battle has begun.

SAFE HANDS

CUE: The heroes win.

Ji-yoo Rhee nervously accepted the hefty tome. Darkness seemed to hang around it. “I'll take it to my grandfather,” she said assertively. “He'll know what to do. It won't be found again, now that we know there are those still looking for it. Thank you for all your help!”



HEROES & VILLAINS

MAJESTY

COMPLEXITY: ★☆☆

Bridget Walsh was born under a baleful sign—a streak of abyssal black cutting through the morning sky; a tear in our reality. The anomaly that marked Bridget’s birthday was studied fervently by scientists for decades to follow, but was destined to become tabloid fodder printed on the same pages as reports of U.F.O. and Bigfoot sightings. However, the occurrence left its mark on Bridget permanently. As a child, Bridget’s parents observed what they convinced themselves were hallucinations—explosions of brilliant light, levitation, and bouts of inexplicable euphoria. Unbeknownst to them, an interstellar force had escaped its dimension through the tear and found a host in Bridget, granting her a set of powers that would be crucial in the saving of not just her world, but her entire reality. By the time Bridget reached adolescence, she became fully aware of her abilities, and did everything she could to hide them at her parents’ instruction. Fearing their daughter might be taken from them, Lynn and Arthur Walsh moved frequently, relocating any time their daughter’s abilities drew unwanted attention. Bridget wouldn’t become a hero until the day her parents sacrificed themselves to the Galactic Emissary of Mythora—who was destined to become the hero known as Gem—in an effort to hide the Parity Shards, which would certainly fall into the wrong hands and lead to the world’s demise should they remain on Earth. Lynn and Arthur became lost in the web of cosmic gates known as the Astrallacy so Bridget could protect the Earth as Majesty, using the powers she inherited from the ancient, interdimensional spirit of hope and positivity within her—powers that her world so desperately lacked.





STRIDE

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★

Mackenzie Jones was never fast, or even athletic. She spent most of her time buried in books or tinkering with broken electronics. The most excitement she got was typically provided by video games or medical dramas. Despite her professional pursuit of engineering, she always had a passion for medicine and anatomy—which would unfortunately prove to be a useful interest for her. The accident that paralyzed Mackenzie happened on the way to work, as she was crossing the street. A speeding car nearly ran her over, but she dove out of the way to save everything but her legs. After adjusting to life in a wheelchair, Mackenzie devoted her life to medicine, finding balance in coping with her new life while understanding its cause—and secretly studying ways to reverse her condition. But nothing worked. Not until the night Refuser broke into her lab. The scavenging villain was a master tinkerer, to a level that impressed Mackenzie—though her revulsion of his criminal ways outweighed any professional regard she may have had for him. Refuser demanded to use her lab's equipment to unlock the secret of a device he had found—though he didn't say where he found it, Mackenzie could tell that the object was not from this world... or even this reality! It was alien in design, and Mackenzie watched as Refuser failed in trying to unlock its purposes. Fortunately, the police managed to foil Refuser and end the hostage situation that she had found herself in... but she managed to hide the device from the police. Afterward, after months of studying the thing, Mackenzie finally opened the device. Visions exploded into her mind of its origin and purpose—it came from another dimension, tied to her own through a place called the Astrallacy. But none of that mattered to her—Mackenzie had found a solution to her condition, and used the device to repair her damaged body. Unfortunately, the process did not go as smoothly as she had hoped, and she "overcorrected" her injury, shattering the device in the process. Now, her legs could move at blinding speeds, and she eventually chose to use her newfound powers to help others as the hero Stride.

GUERRILLA

COMPLEXITY: ★☆☆

Warren Reed has no real memory of his time in the military—he was an elite commando in a highly-classified branch of the military, that much he knows, but he retained no working knowledge of any actual missions he undertook. What Warren does remember is the testing facility. He was kept sedated and restrained, but remained fully aware of the procedures performed on him. Days of sickness and pain stretched into months, then years. How many years he was kept in that facility, he can't say, but he will always remember his escape. The explosion that rocked the facility gave Warren the opening he needed. It was during his escape that he truly learned of his new abilities—whatever they did to him there, he was now able to create a sonic dampening field around him, making him virtually undetectable by sound. His body remembered his commando training, but the experiments performed on him elevated him from a master of stealth to a ghost. This made his escape simple, but he decided to take his time and repay the kind scientists there for their treatment of him. The slaughter that followed continued to haunt Warren as he lived life on the run, avoiding any interaction with any government persons. But he soon came to grips with the violence he was reborn in, and focused his aggression on things that were worth fighting for. The hero Majesty took him under her wing, helping him build his hero persona of Guerrilla while working through his past trauma.





MICRO-GUY

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★

Despite his lifelong devotion to quantum engineering, Joshua Brink never dreamed of being small—his ego alone was enough to fill an entire room. But he was cut down to size by an experiment gone wrong when his team decided to delve too deep into the Astrallacy, the inter-dimensional space that had recently become a playground for all open-minded scientists that were brave enough to attempt to comprehend its existence. Joshua's small team of acclaimed researchers were granted clearance to work on a government-funded project focused on studying—what they were told were—remains of a crashed satellite found off the coast. Joshua soon discovered the material was not of this world, and as his team probed the atomic makeup of it, they unknowingly opened a gate that released a mysterious energy. Whatever it was shrank Joshua to the size of a toy action figure while also drastically increasing his strength, agility, and even his already staggering intellect. While Joshua had no way to return to his normal size, he was always one to make the best out of situations and used his new understanding of alien tech to create a suit to pilot. Jokingly calling himself Micro-guy, the name quickly stuck as he continually sought the spotlight by performing various heroic feats on the crime-ridden streets of New Crown City. Despite his narcissistic nature, and an ego that a body his size should not be able to hold, Joshua has proven to be a valuable protector of Earth and its reality.

DOWAGER

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★

Cassandra Russo was not always infested with an otherworldly menace, pushing her to sinister lengths in a blinding pursuit of power and wealth. She was once a devoted wife to Luigi Russo—better known as the criminal mastermind Wiseguy—who was head of the mob in New Crown City. Villainous ambition was born within Cassandra when a surprise police raid drove Luigi's crew from their usual place of operations. The Russo mansion became the temporary home for the mob, and it was due to this happenstance that Cassandra was one night drawn into her husband's study. She was alone in the house, and a strange sensation compelled her to enter the one room of their home that she had never stepped foot in. It was there she found the capsule—a smooth device that looked like it was swiped off the set of a science fiction film. The compelling sensation pushed her on, and when she opened the device, the entity within found a new host. The being known as Rampant was from a remote corner of the Astrallacy, and existed only to break barriers. Once Rampant merged with Cassandra, every one of her deepest, darkest desires were suddenly untethered, and she became the woman she was born to be: Dowager. It wasn't long after her union with Rampant that Dowager arranged for the death of her controlling husband, leaving her in full control of the mob. Not only is Dowager a criminal mastermind that spent years learning mob tactics and methods from her husband, but Rampant imbues her with inhuman strength and other powers that can manifest in different ways, depending on various alignments within the Astrallacy.



CURTAINS

COMPLEXITY: ★ ★ ★

Stacy McGaver was a classically trained actor destined for the stage. He had always felt a penchant for dramatic flair, and gave everything he had to his chosen craft. After a series of successful tours on the popular stage adaptation of "Twice by Midnight," Stacy was cast in a low-budget motion picture from an independent horror director. While Stacy found the subject matter slightly base and the pay a little embarrassing, he needed to continue expanding his body of work, so he took it on. It wasn't long after "Murder Babes" was released that it became a cult classic, and Stacy McGaver's name became synonymous with B-movies. While there were no shortage of offers, Stacy resented his new-found place, and longed for more serious roles—the ones he had been born for! He began using his new fame and passable excuse for a "fortune" to further studying the classic tropes of the theater he so loved. He soon became a master illusionist and sleight of hand practitioner—talents that he unfortunately couldn't use in his daily work. The years passed, and Stacy became more and more withdrawn from his reality, until his agent presented him with a script that changed his life. It was an unnamed film based on the experience of a man who awoke to find his life a distorted parody of its former self. Stacy became obsessed with the story and began method acting almost immediately. He didn't break character for months until he finally got an audition. Despite delivering his best work, Stacy was not called back. Not even this caused Stacy to break character—he became even more lost in the world of the script, driving him to complete madness. Now Stacy has become completely consumed by the role and lives his entire life as Curtains, a man fully convinced this reality is a broken visage of the real world, and it is up to him to lift the curtains to reveal the truth to the audience.





