

# **GROWING PAINS**

**A GAME OF TEENAGE HEROES**

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**BASED ON A CHARACTER SHEET BY JOE PRINCE**

# GROWING PAINS

*“Bions are transitional forms between non-living and living matter. The bion is the elemental functioning unit of all living matter.”*

*Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957)*

*“Like its politicians and its war, society has the teenagers it deserves.”*

*J.B. Priestley*

Growing Pains is a game about super powered teenage heroes, battling with giant monsters, evil villains, schoolwork and parents.

It is meant to be both light hearted, with the heroes facing down cardboard cutout villains, and serious, with the heroes facing down the angst and emotional challenges in their real lives. It is supposed to be played in the style of *Power Rangers* meets *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

## THE WAY THE GAME PLAYS

*“Teenage heroes fight evil baddies and giant monsters, as a metaphor for growing up and dealing with relationships and emotions.”*

That’s the one sentence sell for Growing Pains. It tells us what the game is about, but not necessarily what you do over the course of the game, but that too is fairly simple, so I’m going to lay it out like it is.

The heroes go about their mundane lives, in which they face mundane challenges in the form of overblown teachers, overprotective parents or overbearing bullies. In facing these challenges they find themselves facing ever more dangerous challenges in the form of evil minions and monsters. The heroes might fail in facing these, but in doing so gain the ability to transform into greater beings and face down the threat. By fighting and overcoming the supernatural challenge, they also manage to fight and overcome their personal problems.

The game is played out in a series of discrete scenes, where the players choose whether to face supernatural or personal challenges, and success or failure escalates the stakes higher and higher until a final and decisive victory can be won.

From a metagame perspective, the players try to reduce transformation score as much as possible and increase their angst as high as possible by facing a variety of increasingly-difficult challenges, so that they enter the final battle as powerful as possible.

## BEFORE YOU START

Before you start a game of Growing Pains, you will need a few things. Each player needs a character sheet, a range of dice (d4s, d6s, d8s and d10s) and a handful of counters, coins or tokens.

## PLAYERS, HEROES AND THE NEMESIS

In Growing Pains, the people who sit down and play the game are known as the players. Nothing new there.

The characters who the players control are called Heroes.

The player tasked with creating the story, challenging the heroes and playing the villains is called the Nemesis. It is entirely possible for the player with this role to change from game to game.

## DICE RANKS

Heroes in Growing Pains are made up of a variety of different attributes, powers and relationships, each with a rank. This rank corresponds to a die type – either a d4, d6, d8, d10 or d12. The bigger the die type, the more powerful the attribute and the higher the rank.

Sometimes an attribute is described as going up or down a rank. Going up a rank means increasing the die type to the next biggest type. A d4 becomes a d6, a d6 a d8, a d8 a d10, and a d10 a d12. A d12 rank can never be increased. Similarly, going down a rank means decreasing the die type to the next smallest

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type. A d12 becomes a d10, a d10 a d8, a d8 a d6 and a d6 a d4. An attribute with a rank of d4 that is reduced further is usually lost entirely.

## THE HEROES DETERMINE THEIR OWN FATE

Just in case there is ever any doubt, the player always rolls the dice to determine what happens to his hero. A hero may be at the whims of fate and the roll of a dice, but it is always his player who gets to roll those dice. Challenges are mostly internal struggles against fear and self-doubt, as represented by angst, and therefore it is inappropriate for success or failure to be determined by another player.

## NO 1 IN TEAM

At the start of a campaign, the first thing you need to do is create the setting: the school, the bad guys, the heroes. The whole shebang. It's your game, so make it what you want it to be! Sit down as a group and discuss the world and the setting, before stepping up and saying what sort of a character you'd like to play. Tweak the setting to accommodate all the players' concepts. Then when you've come to an agreement throw some numbers about and voila – time to play!

## BIO-N, ORIGIN AND POWER SOURCE

Bio-N (pronounced bio-en, bion or bione, whichever takes your fancy), is the mystical power that each hero possesses. Or rather, it is the mystical power that possesses each hero – bio-n transcends the limits of the mortal form, and similarly lets the hero transcend those limits too! In other words, it's the magic dust that makes each hero better than everyone else!

When creating a team, discuss what form this bio-n takes. What does it let the heroes do? What does it let them become? With bio-n, do the heroes transform into giant robots or nasty werewolves? Do they suit up into magical armour or morph into elemental beings?

The bio-n is the same for each hero in a team – every member of the team can turn into the same thing, roughly. In other words, its giant robots for all, or not

at all.

When you're settled on a theme, go into it in a bit more detail. Where does this power come from? An ancient amulet, magical rings, snazzy cloaks or some sort of mystical curse? This is your power source. Again, you all share a power source, sometimes literally (your powers all come from the same glowing rock in your secret base) or thematically (your powers all come from magic rings, but you each have your own).

So what is this bio-n stuff anyway? What does it stand for? What does it mean? Look, I'll lay it straight with you, it means what you want it to mean. It's a word that has as much meaning and significance as chi, karma, energy, magic or the Force. It's your game, make it mean what you want it to!

*For our example we'll follow Rob's group as they make their first team. They've decided that their bio-n lets the heroes summon giant suits of armour that let them kick ass. They get their powers from magical weapons, handed down from parent to child, and each of them has a different one.*

## THE MAKING OF A HERO

Once the shared setting has been created, it's time to turn your attention to your own piece of the world – your hero. Grab a blank character sheet and fill in some details about yourself: your designation, attributes, powers and relationships. It's a fairly quick process, and you should be able to make a hero in a few minutes. You'll benefit from sitting down with your fellow players and making heroes together.

### DESIGNATION

This is who you are, what your friends call you, and perhaps most importantly, what name appears in the papers after you've saved the day ... again! It need not be your real name, however, and could be something as ambiguous as Red Guardian.

*Rob's team are all going to be known by code names and decide to use chess as their motif, so Rob decides he wants to be known as ... the White Knight!*

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## TEEN TRACKERS

Central to the game are the two tracks that run down each side of the heroes' character sheets – transformation and angst. As the game progresses angst and transformation will go up and down, and their numbers affect how the game plays in various ways. Angst can go both up and down, whereas transformation only ever goes down.

## TRANSFORMATION

Transformation starts the game high and ends up low. It tracks the transformation of a character from his normal school kid self to his super-powered bio-n form, both physically and emotionally.

When a hero fails at a challenge, he picks himself up, brushes himself down and resolves to do better next time, taking a step closer to becoming more. When a hero fails a dice roll, his transformation is reduced by a notch.

Transformation is used as the target number needed for a hero to transform. The lower it gets, the more likely it is that transformation will occur.

## ANGST

Angst starts the game low and ends up high. It tracks the emotional turbulence and self-doubt that a character must battle to become the hero he is destined to be. It is also a measure of the psychic upheaval the hero is undergoing, and as such helps him manifest his powers in times of great need.

When a hero succeeds at a challenge, he questions himself and his motivations. The more successful he becomes, the more capacity a hero has for despair and self-destruction. When a hero succeeds a dice roll, his angst increases by a notch.

A hero's current angst is used as the target number for a challenge. The higher it gets, the harder it becomes for a hero to succeed at challenges.

A hero may not use his powers until his angst reaches 4 or more – up until

that point they are too emotionally stable and unable to harness their psychic energy.

Angst is something of a paradox. On the one hand, the higher it gets, the harder challenges become and the more a hero will get pushed around. But, equally, the harder challenges become, the quicker the hero will be able to transform as he racks up failures and reduces his transformation notches. And when that transformation does occur, the hero's angst is used to determine his power – the higher the angst, the more powerful he becomes when he transforms. So a high angst can be both good and bad, and careful angst management through angst scenes is important.

## STARTING TRANSFORMATION AND ANGST

By default, transformation starts at 13 and angst starts at 1.

A player may choose to decrease starting transformation by 1 or 2, but must also increase angst by the same amount.

## ATTRIBUTES

At their core, a hero is made up of three attributes – brain, brawn and bio-n.

Brain is a measure of a hero's mental strength, their intelligence, reasoning, cunning and knowledge.

Brawn is a measure of a hero's physical strength, their fitness, resilience and muscle.

Bio-n is a measure of a hero's psychic energy, their supernatural abilities and superheroic powers, as well as representing their ability to transform from mundane teenager to superpowerful hero.

When a hero is called upon to make a challenge, he rolls one of these dice to see if he is successful or not.

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## STARTING ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are measured by a type of dice. The larger the die, the more powerful that attribute.

Players must split a d4, a d6 and a d8 between their brain, brawn or bio-n, as desired.

*Rob's hero, the White Knight, is going to be a jock. Big on the brawn, less so on the brains. So he plants his d8 in brawn, his d6 in bio-n and his d4 in brain.*

## POWERS

As well as allowing them to transform into mighty beings, bio-n energy gives heroes supernatural abilities, allowing them to punch through walls, throw fireballs or leap between buildings. These supernatural abilities are known as powers.

Pretty much anything could be a power, so long as it is some sort of supernatural, superheroic or mystical ability that surpasses the mundane. The other players may veto a power if they think it too excessive or silly.

Powers are dependent on psychic turbulence and emotional turmoil, manifestations of a hero's inner angst and energy. A hero may not use their powers until their angst reaches 4 or more. Only then does a hero become emotionally active enough to manifest their powers.

When a hero is called upon to make a challenge, he may add the dice from one (and only one) of his powers to the roll. He must describe how he is using the power to help him overcome the challenge.

At the start of the game, a hero's full potential has not yet been realised. Some of their mystical powers have yet to manifest themselves and remain unknown. These unknown powers can be brought to the fore over the course of the game with the help of a hero's mentor (see training montages, below).

## STARTING POWERS

Much like attributes, powers are measured by a type of dice. The larger the die, the more powerful that power.

A hero begins the game with 5 powers. A player decides how many of these powers begin the game as known powers, and how many begin the game as unknown powers.

A hero may begin the game with 1 known power with a rank of d8, 2 known powers with a rank of d6 or 3 known powers with a rank of d4. Any remaining powers are unknown powers at the start of the game and have no rank.

*The White Knight is going to be super-fast, super-athletic, able to teleport short distances, be able to deflect missiles with an invisible shield and be armed with a sword of white light, so with those themes in mind Rob sets about deciding on his powers. Rob wants 2 of these powers to be known, so chooses super-fast and sword of white light as his known powers, writing them down with a rank of d6 each. He writes down the remainder of his powers as unknown powers, which he'll save until later.*

## RELATIONSHIPS

A hero is more than just psychic energy and super powers. The true strength of a hero is in the friends and allies he can rely upon in the face of adversity. Relationships help a hero pull through the worst of situations and overcome the greatest of challenges.

When a hero makes a challenge, he may add dice in from any relationships. He must describe how the relationship is helping him overcome the challenge.

Using a relationship can cause more harm than good, for it puts strain on the relationship. See Placing Relationships Under Threat and In Peril for more information.

There are four different types of relationships: affiliations, mentors, plot hooks and connections. Each works in much the same way, with several subtle

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differences.

Each player also has a fifth relationship, which works in a rather different way. This is the nemesis, the hero's sworn foe and the bane of their lives.

## **AFFILIATIONS**

Every hero is part of a team, and can count on his team mates for aid in times of trouble. When the going gets tough, the team is there to help each other pull through and beat the baddies.

A hero's affiliation is a measure of this camaraderie and team spirit, but just like other relationships, team mates can be a source of friction and angst.

A hero may have more than one affiliation, in which case he owes his loyalty to more than one group. The player should decide which affiliation commands the greatest loyalty, and which team he works for most of the time.

Affiliations are almost always a shared relationship, and therefore start the game at a higher rank. However this has the drawback that each hero can only expect to use the relationship once during the game, or place it under threat or in peril for the rest of the group.

An affiliation might be of help in a challenge whenever a hero's team mates are involved in the same fight, when a team mate can lend a hand or step in to help double team a baddie.

## **MENTORS**

Your mentor is the character that a hero looks up to in life, who has taught the hero about his powers and helped to assemble the heroes into a team. The mentor remains a constant in the hero's life, and continues to teach a hero as the game progresses.

Every hero has a mentor, who can be anyone or anything of the player's choosing. The mentor doesn't need to be any more than a name at this point and a couple of descriptive words. In fact, the more enigmatic your mentor, the better.

In addition to acting as a regular relationship, a mentor is also the means by which a hero learns about his unknown powers. See Training Montages for more information on this.

A mentor could take the form of a retired superhero, a mysterious ninja, a wise old rat who lives in the sewers or an intelligent artificial intelligence from the future.

A mentor might be of help in a challenge when the hero recalls whispered words of wisdom, remembers a secret manoeuvre learnt during training or when the mentor offers sound tactical advice. A mentor might even come to a hero's rescue, although he usually remains a background figure.

## **CONNECTIONS**

A connection is a friend or relative that the hero can call on when times are hard. They might not know about the hero's alter ego or his super powers, but they can still be of use when things take a turn for the worse.

A connection could be a parent or sibling, a girlfriend or best friend.

A connection might be of help in a challenge by providing some equipment or a ride (the heroes aren't old enough to drive, remember?), by offering some advice or helping smooth over problems with another character.

## **PLOT HOOKS**

Plot hooks are a strange sort of relationship. They don't represent a character at all, but rather a secret, a clue or a situation that is likely to get the hero into all sorts of trouble – and out of it again! Think of them as a catch all category for important nuggets of information that don't fit in anywhere else.

A hero who uses a plot hook to help him out is giving his nemesis a nudge and a wink to make use of the plot hook and bring it into the game somehow. In fact, when he places it under threat or in peril, he practically compels them to do so!

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A plot hook need not be defined by any more than a few words, and need not have any explicit relationship or use to anything else at all. The meaning and use of the plot hook will become apparent when used in play and incorporated into the game!

Possible examples include: knows how to get in and out of the sewers, saw the principal turn into a giant bat, found a musty tome in an ancient language.

A plot hook might be if help in a challenge by providing the hero an important clue or useful resource.

## **NeMesis**

Your nemesis is your sworn enemy, the character who constantly strives to make the hero's life a misery, and who the hero constantly fights to take down. Both, of course, are ultimately unsuccessful, the villain's plans never coming to fruition, but the hero never quite catching them and stopping them escaping once more!

Every hero has a single nemesis, who might take the form of an evil villain, a foul cult or a shadowy conspiracy.

Unlike other relationships, the nemesis does not have a rank. Instead they have a threat level, which represents the danger they present to the heroes' lives. The threat level is measured by a type of dice, as with any other rank.

A hero may add the dice from their nemesis to a challenge, only if the nemesis is the featured villain of the game. If the nemesis is not featured in this game, then the nemesis dice may not be rolled. See the Nemesis section, later, for more information.

## **STARTING RELATIONSHIPS**

Relationships include a hero's mentors, plot hooks, connections and affiliations.

A hero begins the game with seven d4 ranks of relationships. A player must put have at least one relationship of each type, and define the character with whom

the hero has the relationship. A hero can only have one mentor, but can have any number of affiliations, plot hooks and connections. Each separate relationship has its own rank.

If a hero shares any of his relationships with another hero, then he may increase the rank of the relationship by one rank. A shared relationship is only ever increased by one rank, regardless of how many other heroes it is shared with. Shared relationships have both benefits and drawbacks, as described later.

A hero also has a single nemesis, who begins play with a threat level of d4. If a hero shares his nemesis with another hero, then the threat level increases by a rank for each hero it is shared with. Unlike other relationships, this can increase the threat level several times over, rather than just the once.

*Rob thinks carefully about the White Knight's friends and allies, and jots down some ideas. He decides he wants his grandfather, a retired hero, to be his mentor, so writes Grandfather down with a rank of d4. Later on it turns out he shares his mentor with another team mate, so Grandfather's rank increases to d6.*

*White Knight is going to have 2 affiliations, one to the team, and one to the football team. Both start with a rank of d4 also.*

*Rob wants a little familial conflict, so makes the troubled relationship with his father a connection, as well as a more straightforward connection with his sister, both at d4. He toys with a relationship with a teacher, but because White Knight is decidedly unacademic decides to make a third relationship with the coach of the football team.*

*Rob has a single d4 left to assign, so decides to make some juicy plot hooks to drive conflict later. Rob decides the White Knight's father was meant to be a hero, but turned his back on his powers, locking his magic weapon in the attic. He writes down 'Father's sword – d4' as a plot hook.*

*White Knight now has the task of creating his nemesis and he'll be done. He's close to running out of ideas, so decides to keep his enemy an enigmatic character who sums up the opposite ideals to the White Knight. He writes the Dark Knight down for his nemesis.*

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## HERO CREATION SUMMARY

Once you've created a team, it's time to create the team mates! Don't be afraid to chat amongst yourselves for this part and to build heroes together.

- Write your name, call sign, secret identity or chat handle as your Designation.
- Take a d4, a d6 and a d8 and place one in each of brain, brawn and bio-n.
- You decided your origin and power source during team creation – fill them in now!
- Think up some cool Powers that fit with the theme of the team – 5 in total. Then decide if you want 1 Known Power with a rank of d8, 2 Known Powers with a rank of d6, or 3 Known Powers with a rank of d4. All remaining powers without a rank are Unknown Powers.
- Think up some ideas and characters to have as your hero's relationships – that is, your Mentor, Affiliation, Connections and Plot Hooks. Then split 7 d4 between the various relationships, making sure you have at least 1 rank in each type. You can have no more than 1 Mentor, but any number of other relationships.
- Decide on your hero's Nemesis and write them on your sheet – they start with a threat level of d4.
- Check with your fellow heroes to see if they share any relationships with you. If they do, increase the rank of the relationship by 1, but do this only once.
- Check to see if your Nemesis is the same as another hero's. If so, increase the threat level by 1 rank. Do this for each hero you share the nemesis with.
- You haven't killed anyone yet, nor have you been killed, so both Kill-Count and Re-incarnations begin at 0.

- Place a counter on the angst and transformation trackers – angst defaults to 1, transformation to 13.

- Get ready team, to move out, power up and save the world! Go go go!

*Rob has finished hero creation, and his hero looks something like this:*

*Designation: White Knight*

*Brain d4*

*Brawn d8*

*Bio-N d6*

*Origin: inherited powers*

*Power Source: magical sword*

*Known Powers: white sword d6, super-fast d6*

*Unknown Powers: teleportation, super-athletic, invisible shield*

*Affiliation: the team d4, football team d4*

*Mentor: grandfather d6*

*Nemesis: the Dark Knight, threat level d4*

*Plot hooks: father's sword d4*

*Connections: father d4, sister d4*

*Kill Count: 0*

*Reincarnations: 0*

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## PLAYING THE GAME, SAVING THE WORLD

At its heart, Growing Pains is a game. It has rules and mechanisms for handling conflicts and challenges, and ensuring that everybody has a fair shot at success and failure.

### CHALLENGES

The mechanism of task resolution in Growing Pains is called challenges. A challenge determines whether a hero succeeds or fails at a task.

Challenges are what makes a hero stronger. They allow a hero to lay his beliefs on the line for the greater good and to reap great rewards if successful.

A challenge is simply a dice roll made against a target number. The target number for a challenge is equal to the hero's current angst.

A hero rolls the die associated with either brain (for challenges involving reasoning, cunning, wits or some other mental attribute) or brawn (for challenges involving strength, agility, toughness or some other physical attribute). Bio-n may be used much more rarely, typically for challenges directly involving the hero's psyche and his psychic powers. Bio-n is also used once a hero has transformed.

A hero can add the die for one applicable power. Powers may only be added to a dice roll once a hero has accrued 4 or more angst. Any less and his challenges must be resolved by brain or brawn alone.

A hero may also add dice for any number of affiliations, mentors, plot hooks or connections, if he so chooses. Doing so has the added risk that these will be put under threat or in peril (see below).

If the total of the dice is equal or greater than the target number, then the challenge is a success. The hero has successfully overcome the challenge, but his angst increases by a notch.

If the total of the dice is less than the target number, then the challenge is a failure. The hero has failed to overcome the challenge, but his transformation decreases by a notch.

*Rob's character, the White Knight, is chasing down one of the Dark Knight's minions that has robbed the bank. His angst is currently 5, so he needs to roll 5 or more on his dice. He rolls a d8 for his brawn, but decides to add in a d6 for his super-fast power too, for a total of  $d8 + d6$ . He rolls a 3 and a 4, for a total of 7 – a success!*

*Because he was successful, Rob gains a notch of angst. The White Knight might catch the minion, but begins to question what he's doing running about the streets chasing criminals when he should be at school training for tonight's game.*

### CHALLENGE THRESHOLDS

The target number for a challenge is usually the hero's current angst. There may be some situations where tough just isn't tough enough. Certain challenges may be tougher than the hero might currently be able to deal with. This is especially true when facing down giant monsters or especially tough villains.

In situations where a challenge is tougher than normal, it may be appropriate to give it a challenge threshold. This is a number, from 1 to 13, that is the minimum target number for the challenge. In a challenge with a challenge threshold, the target number is the higher of a hero's angst and the challenge threshold.

If the hero has an angst less than the challenge threshold, then instead of using his angst for the target number, he uses the challenge threshold. If the hero's angst is greater than the challenge threshold, then he uses his angst.

*Later in the game, the White Knight is facing down one of the Dark Knight's monstrous creations, a ferocious demonic horse called Knightmare. Knightmare has a challenge threshold of 10. The White Knight's angst is only at 7, so when he faces a challenge against Knightmare his target will be 10, rather than 7.*

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## HAZARDOUS CHALLENGES, INJURY,

## MORTAL DANGER AND DEATH

A hazardous challenge is one in which the hero faces very real danger. Fighting an evil villain atop a swinging suspension bridge is a hazardous challenge, as is wrestling with a 40 foot dinosaur climbing up the side of a tower.

Most challenges are not hazardous, including battling against mooks and minions. Mundane challenges should never be hazardous.

A hazardous challenge is handled in exactly the same way as a normal challenge, except the consequences for failure are far worse.

If a hero fails at a hazardous challenge, then he is injured in some way. Place a token on either brain, brawn or bio-n to show that he is injured.

The nature of this injury should be agreed upon by the players, but could be mental, physical or emotional.

If a hero is injured for a second or third time, then a token must be placed on an uninjured attribute.

Once each attribute is injured, then the hero is in mortal danger. Should the hero fail a subsequent hazardous challenge then his life is threatened. Place a second counter on one of the attributes to show that he is in mortal danger.

A hero with an attribute in mortal danger reduces its rank by 1. If the attribute is at a rank of d4 then he is in danger of death. He may attempt to stave off death by rolling a d4. If it comes up as a 4 then he is merely mortally wounded and must spend the rest of the game in hospital. If he rolls anything else, then the hero dies at the end of the challenge in a suitably dramatic and heroic fashion. The hero may opt to make a final challenge to go out with a bang.

With the death of a hero, his surviving team mates increase their angst by one notch and reduce their transformation by one notch. They must also place a counter on any affiliation shared with the hero, to represent the strain placed on

surviving team mates.

*White Knight is chasing a hideous winged horror across the rooftops of downtown, leaping between buildings and desperate not to lose the monster. Rob currently has an angst of 8 and this is a hazardous challenge. He rolls brawn and adds an extra dice from his relationship with his Coach, calling on all his athletics training. He rolls a 4 and a 2, 6 in total – a failure! The White Knight slips and plummets to the ground, taking an injury. Rob places a counter on his brain attribute – the fall didn't break anything but seriously bruised his pride ... and his noggin.*

## COMBAT

Combat sometimes counts as a hazardous challenge, such as when the heroes are facing down giant monsters or diabolical villains, and sometimes doesn't, such as when the heroes are being roughed up by bullies or the villains' mooks.

Combat plays out using the challenge rules above, with the heroes rolling dice to determine the outcome of their actions until either the heroes or their foes lie bleeding or dead.

In the case of hazardous challenges and combat, if the hero fails the challenge they sustain an injury. If they succeed at the hazardous challenge, then their opponent sustains an injury instead.

*The White Knight is facing down Nightmare, which has a challenge threshold of 10 and is considered a hazardous challenge. Rob rolls his brawn and adds an extra d6 from his white sword and a d4 from his Mentor, for a total of d8 + d6 + d6. He rolls 4, 3 and 3 – success! Nightmare suffers an injury.*

## GUNS AND KNIVES

The world of Growing Pains might seem a dangerous place, what with giant robots and laser beams and huge apes leaping about the place, but it is important to ensure that the violence remains somewhat fantastical. Heroes might wield weapons, but they should be laser beams and magical axes, rather than guns and knives. The presence of a gun is a big deal, a source of conflict in itself, not a tool to be wielded by the heroes.

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## REINCARNATION

Never fear, for death does not mean the end for our fallen hero, merely a slight inconvenience. Bio-n is a powerful energy and possesses the hero, not the other way round. In all but the gravest of deaths, bio-n can survive the death of a hero, possessing another teenager and creating a new hero.

A reincarnated hero is effectively a new character, but with some of the characteristics and powers of its predecessor.

The new hero may opt to retain any of the following, albeit reduced by one rank to a minimum of d4: known powers, affiliation, mentor, nemesis and plot hooks. Attributes, unknown powers and connections must be determined anew.

*Should the unthinkable happen and White Knight actually die, then Rob can create a new character that shares the same bio-n as White Knight. He creates Blue Rook, White Knight's little sister. He assigns new attributes to her as normal, but decides to keep one of White Knight's known powers, but at one less rank, writing White Sword d4 on her character sheet. He opts to keep the same mentor and nemesis as well, but creates new plot hooks, affiliations and connections afresh.*

## PLACING RELATIONSHIPS UNDER THREAT

### AND IN PERIL

As the game progresses, a character will be forced to rely on his relationships more and more, and as a consequence will find himself pushing them away or endangering them in some way.

If a hero rolls dice from his affiliation, mentor, plot hooks or connections (collectively called relationships), then he is somehow putting the relationship in harms way (whether metaphorically, emotionally or physically) so that he can succeed at his own challenges. Sometimes a relationship will become stronger as a result, sometimes it will falter and break.

If dice from a relationship are used in a challenge, and that challenge is

successful, then the highest die relationship becomes under threat. If more than one relationship is eligible, then the player may choose which is under threat. Place a counter on the relationship to show that it is under threat.

The angst gained from the successful challenge is intrinsically tied to the relationship that is under threat, so that rather than being solely internal angst it manifests in fraying tempers and strained relationships. The nature of the threat is for the players to decide – it could be something as simple as getting grounded by a parent for coming home late or being given detention by a teacher for missing class, or as complicated as embroiling a girlfriend in the machinations of an evil villain or inadvertently revealing the secret identity of a mentor.

A relationship that is under threat may not be used again without serious consequences. If dice from a relationship that is under threat are rolled in a challenge, then that relationship immediately becomes in peril, regardless of the outcome of the challenge. Place a second counter on the power to show that it is in peril.

A relationship that is in peril may not be used again this game. The nature of the relationship has changed and it has actually been placed in real danger as a result of the hero's actions. This is a golden opportunity for the nemesis to kidnap parents, hold guns to the heads of friends and dangle girlfriends over the side of buildings.

The next challenge a hero faces must revolve around the relationship in peril. The outcome of this challenge determines the very fate of the hero's nearest and dearest. Any dice from the relationship may not be added to the roll – the relationship is in no position to help!

Regardless of the outcome of the challenge, the relationship is lost or diminished in some way. Reduce the relationship rank by one dice (d8 to d6, d6 to d4 and so on). If the relationship is already a d4, then it is in danger of being lost entirely. Roll a d4. If a 4 is rolled, the hero clings onto the relationship against all odds. If anything else is rolled, then the relationship is lost.

This does not necessarily mean that the relationship in question has been killed – the hero might still save them, but they no longer want anything to do with

# GROWING PAINS

the hero. There are only so many times a relationship is prepared to be stood up, messed about or put in danger before they want out.

*In the earlier example, White Knight drew on his relationship with his mentor to fight Nightmare. Because he was successful in this roll, he must place a counter on the highest rank relationship involved in the fight – his mentor is now under threat in some way.*

*If in a later fight he decides to draw on his mentor again, he must place another counter on his mentor to show that he is in peril. His mentor's rank is reduced by one, to d4. Perhaps in revenge for the death of Nightmare, the Dark Knight sent minions to kidnap White Knight's grandfather!*

## SHARED RELATIONSHIPS

Sometimes a relationship is shared between several characters. A shared relationship begins the game at a higher rank than normal, but to balance this it can be placed under threat by another hero's actions.

If a shared relationship is ever placed in peril by a hero, then every hero that shares that relationship must add a counter to it, either placing it under threat or in peril too.

When White Knight's mentor, Grandfather, was placed in peril by White Knight, every other hero who also has Grandfather as their mentor places a counter on him too, because they share the relationship with White Knight.

## FORMING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

A hero is not limited to the relationships that he started the game with. Over the course of a game new friendships might be formed, new love kindled.

To create a new relationship, a hero must spend at least one scene fostering and building the relationship during the game.

At the end of the game, the player may test for advancement for the new relationship by rolling a d4. If a 4 is rolled, the relationship becomes tangible and gains a rank of d4.

Alternatively, a hero may opt to forego another relationship in favour of this new one, letting old friendships crumble and fade. A hero may reduce an existing relationship by one rank to automatically create a new relationship with a rank of d4. If the reduced relationship has a rank of d4, it is immediately removed with no test allowed.

*White Knight gets himself a girlfriend and decides to add her as a relationship. He could take a chance and roll a d4 to see if he can add her, but instead he decides that girlfriends aren't good for training for the football team. So he reduces his relationship with the Coach from d4 by a rank, losing it entirely, and replacing it with a relationship with his girlfriend at d4.*

## EXHAUSTED AND BURNT OUT POWERS

Just as with their relationships, a hero who comes to rely on his powers runs the risk of exhausting the energies associated with them.

If dice from a power is used in a challenge, and that challenge is successful, then that power becomes exhausted. Place a counter on the power to show that it is exhausted.

A power remains exhausted until a hero gains more angst. The next time the hero gains any angst from a challenge he may opt to gain an additional notch of angst and remove an exhausted counter from a single power.

A power that is exhausted may not be used again without serious consequences. If dice from an exhausted power are rolled in a challenge, then that power is immediately burnt out, regardless of the outcome of the challenge. Place a second counter on the power to show that it is burnt out.

A burnt out power may not be used again this game. In addition, the power is lost or diminished in some way. Reduce the power rank by one dice (d8 to d6, d6 to d4 and so on). If the power is already a d4, then it may be lost entirely. Roll a d4. If a 4 is rolled then somehow the hero stubbornly clings onto the power. If anything else is rolled then the hero has over used his power and it has been burnt out forever, seared from his very neurones through overuse.

# GROWING PAINS

*After White Knight has chased down the minion in the earlier example, he places a counter on his super-fast power to show that it is exhausted. If he uses it again, it will be burnt out and its rank reduced.*

## REPLENISHING LOST POWERS

Never fear, for a lost power can be replaced! At the end of a game, if any powers have been lost, then the player may simply write in a new unknown power. This unknown power can be similar to the lost power, but cannot be identical.

## TRANSFORM!

To transform, roll your bio-n die, using transformation as the target number. No other dice may be used in this challenge. Just as with any other challenge, success increases angst by a notch, and failure reduces transformation a notch.

In addition, if a hero is successful, he transforms into his bio-n powered self and the endgame begins.

When one hero successfully transforms, so too do the rest of the team, whether ready or not.

To calculate the hero's attributes after transformation, reduce their current angst score by their current transformation score. Round this down to the nearest die type (ie 4, 6, 8, 10 or 12). This is the die rank for the transformed hero, and is used in all challenges once they've transformed.

A transformed hero may disregard angst or transformation. Angst remains the same, but is not used for challenges. Transformation is reset to 13 after transformation.

A transformed hero may use any and all powers and relationships in challenges once transformed, but may not only use his bio-n attribute.

The target number for challenges once a hero has transformed is determined by the villain's threat level.

Towards the end of the game, Rob calls for the end game and rolls to see if he

transforms. His angst is currently 10 and his transformation is 3. He rolls a d6 for his bio-n attribute and needs to get equal to or more than his transformation. He rolls a 6 and transforms! Because he was successful, his angst goes up to 11.

*Drawing on the power of his sword, White Knight is cloaked in white light and shining armour forms around him. He reduces his angst by his current transformation, taking it down to 8. He rounds this down to the nearest die type – a d8. Therefore when he is involved in a challenge he rolls a d8 + d6 – a d8 for his transformation and a d6 for his bio-n.*

## CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

At the end of a game, take a look at everybody's character sheets. Each attribute, power or relationship that has a counter on it is eligible for advancement. Remove a counter and roll the relevant die. If the die comes up as its highest number, then the die increases in rank. So if a d4 comes up a 4, a d6 a 6 and so forth, then it increases in rank.

If an attribute has two counters on it – in other words, it was in mortal danger, in peril or burnt out – then remove both counters and roll a die for advancement. This may mean that the attribute remains at the same rank, instead of being reduced in rank.

An attribute that had a counter on it over the course of the game but subsequently removed it through a montage or angst scene is still eligible for advancement – it is up to the player to remember which attributes had counters on.

A hero's nemesis is also eligible for advancement in exactly the same way, potentially increasing their threat level as a result. If a nemesis' threat level increases, it increases for everybody who shares that nemesis.

*At the end of the game Rob has a counter on brain, super-fast, Coach and two counters on his Grandfather. He may remove each of these counters and make a test to see if he advances at all. He removes the counter from brain and rolls a d4, getting a 4! His brain attribute advances by a rank, to d6. He rolls again for super-fast, Coach and Grandfather.*

# GROWING PAINS

## GROWING UP FAST

In Growing Pains everybody takes a share of the storytelling duties, everyone has a shot at describing what's going on. The nemesis gets to come up with a plot, based on the heroes' relationships, and throws baddies at the heroes. But the heroes in turn get to call for scenes and describe what they're doing, and how they're doing it. It really is one big happy family!

## THE SCENE SHUFFLE

A game of Growing Pains takes place over a series of discrete scenes, described by both the nemesis and the heroes.

There are several types of scene, and a player can call for any type. A hero may not have the same type of scene twice in a row. Scenes may evolve in a more fluid manner as the game progresses, but to start with at least a more rigid scene structure allows the plot to develop and the characters to face various challenges.

The nemesis starts the game by describing one or more of the heroes in a scene of some kind, before presenting them with a challenge. The players then take it in turns to call for scenes for their heroes, and the nemesis works with them to describe the scene, before gameplay begins.

*The nemesis calls for scene requests. Rob wants to start with action, so calls for a challenge scene. The nemesis sets the scene, with White Knight playing football against a rival team! The scene is played out and dice are rolled, and then the nemesis turns to the next player and asks them to choose a scene.*

## CHALLENGE SCENES

A challenge scene is the most common type of scene. Challenge scenes focus on a single (or sometimes more) challenge, with the heroes faced with a problem of some sort. The purpose of a challenge scene is to drive the story forwards, and allow the hero to build up angst and transformation in preparation for the climax.

A challenge scene could revolve around a mundane challenge, such as a parent grounding the hero and forcing them to find a way of sneaking out after dark, or a bully picking on one of the hero's friends.

A challenge scene might also revolve around a more supernatural challenge, such as a hero being attacked by one of their nemesis' demonic minions on the way home from school, or the hero's little sister being abducted by a giant monkey.

## ANGST SCENES

An angst scene is a useful way of managing a hero's angst score and removing under threat counters from a relationship. Angst scenes revolve around a hero's attempts to deal with their angst and work through some of their emotional issues, typically by smoothing over a problem with one of their relationships.

An angst scene has a mechanical effect. At the end of the angst scene, the hero may reduce his angst by a notch. If the source of angst was with a relationship that is under threat, the hero may remove the under threat counter as well.

*White Knight's sister is still under threat from a previous challenge, so Rob calls for an angst scene with her. The nemesis sets the scene, with White Knight's sister fuming at him for not collecting her from school like he promised. White Knight was fighting monsters in the sewers at the time, but can't tell her that. Instead he takes her for ice cream and promises not to let her down again. He reduces his angst by one, and removes the counter from little sis'.*

## MONTAGE SCENES

A montage is really a series of scenes all linked together, describing a few hours worth of time in the space of a minute or so. A montage scene can be used to describe the heroes or the nemesis putting their plans into action or preparing for their next challenge.

A montage scene might be used to describe a hero hitting the library and researching everything there is to know about a monstrous foe, or perhaps hitting the streets to find out more information about a missing child's last

# GROWING PAINS

whereabouts. A montage scene might show more physical scenes, describing a hero working out at the gym and at the track in preparation for a big game.

At the end of a montage scene, the hero may reduce his transformation score by one notch.

In addition to regular montage scenes, each hero may have a single training montage each game, describing them training with their mentor and their team mates. As well as reducing their transformation tracker by one notch, the hero must also place a counter on their mentor relationship, either placing them under threat or in peril.

At the end of the training montage, the hero may change one of their unknown powers to a known power with a rank of d4, as they unlock a hitherto hidden ability.

*In preparation for the showdown with the Dark Knight, Rob calls for a training montage with his mentor. He describes White Knight meditating, punching dummies and running through the sewers with Grandfather on his back. He then reduces his transformation by a notch, places a counter on Grandfather to show that he is under threat, and moves super-athletic from unknown powers to known powers with a rank of d4.*

## THE END GAME SCENE

The end game scene will only occur once over the course of the game. It represents the climax of the story and the thwarting of the villain's plans.

At any point, for their scene, a player may call for an end game scene. The player must then make a transform challenge, as detailed in Transform! above. If successful, the entire team transforms and the end game begins properly. If the transform challenge fails, then the end game does not occur and play passes to the next player.

The end game scene starts with each of the heroes transforming, as described earlier, and engaging in the final conflict with their foe. This typically takes the form of a challenge against one or more of the villain's supersized monsters, and may pose a serious problem for the heroes unless they pool all their

resources.

The defeat of the monsters should also see the foiling of the villain's plans, and possibly the defeat of the villain themselves, if only temporarily.

## EPILOGUE SCENES

After the end scene, there is one thing left to do – to resolve any lingering challenges and conflicts from earlier in the game in the epilogue scene.

Each hero may have a single epilogue scene, or they may share their scene with another hero.

In their epilogue scene, each hero selects one or more under threat relationships and describes a scene where they make things right, patching things up in time for the next story, possibly with the aid of the knowledge they have gained over the course of the game!

# GROWING PAINS

## THE NeMesis

The role of the nemesis is to provide the heroes with opposition, and to act as a foil and contrast for their emotional problems. The nemesis player controls the plot, arbitrates rules decisions and provides conflict and opponents for the heroes.

### THREAT LEVEL

The threat level of a nemesis determines how dangerous the villain is to the heroes and how much impact he has on their lives and the lives of their relationships.

At the start of a game where the nemesis is the featured villain, roll the threat level dice. The number rolled are the number of counters the nemesis may put to one side to menace the heroes with.

At any time during the game, the nemesis may announce that he is going to threaten one of the heroes, so long as that hero has the villain as his nemesis. The nemesis can place the counter on any relationship to make it under threat, so long as he describes how his plans effect that relationship. Alternatively the nemesis can place the counter on a power to exhaust it, so long as he puts some sort of plan into action that counters or inhibits the hero's power in some way.

The nemesis can only make a power or relationship exhausted or under threat, never in peril or burnt out.

A hero can attempt to undo the threat via an angst scene as normal, although this scene should revolve around the hero's efforts to oppose the villain and free his relationships from his shadow.

The threat level of a nemesis may advance over the course of the game, especially if the nemesis is pressed by the heroes use of nemesis dice.

In the end game, once the heroes have transformed, the nemesis may roll his threat dice and add it to the challenge threshold of any of his creatures.

*Dark Knight has a threat level of d4. At the start of the game he rolls a d4, rolling a 3. He may then place 3 counters on White Knights relationships and powers. He places one on a plot hook, Father's Sword, and another on his little sister. Dark Knight plans to steal the sword of White Knight's father; kidnapping his little sister in the process. He saves the remaining counter for later use.*

### NeMesis Dice

The ability of the nemesis to menace the heroes is a powerful tool. To offer the hero under threat some compensation for being victimised, when facing their nemesis, their plans or minions, they may make use of the threat level dice as any other relationship dice, adding them to a related challenge.

If the die from a nemesis is used in a challenge, and that challenge is successful, then the nemesis becomes pressed. The nemesis is threatened by the heroes and may choose to escalate their plans. This allows the nemesis to test for advancement at the end of the game, as with any other power or relationship.

A nemesis that is pressed by the heroes is a dangerous beast, and is liable to lash out if further pressed. If the nemesis is pressed and the nemesis dice are rolled again in a challenge, then the nemesis may place a second counter on the hero's relationships or powers. Contrary to threats made by the nemesis' threat level, this counter may cause a relationship or power to be put in peril or burnt out. The nemesis must describe how they have escalated their plans.

*When fighting to free his little sister, White Knight decides to roll an extra d4 from his nemesis. He is successful, so must place a counter on Dark Knight to show that he is pressed. At the end of the game he removes the counter and rolls a d4 to test for advancement. He rolls a 4 and Dark Knight's threat level increases to d6! Dark times indeed!*

### FEATURED VILLAIN

Each game has a featured villain, a villain of the week, if you will. This will normally be the nemesis of one of the heroes.

The nemesis player gets to use a number of counters as determined by their

# GROWING PAINS

threat dice to threaten the heroes and their relationships, as described under Threat Level. The best way to do this is to place a couple of counters at the start of the game on a plot hook and a relationship, and describe how the relationships that are under threat are embroiled in the villain's schemes.

*robotic armour that towers over the town, which has a challenge threshold of 13 and can take 4 injuries before being defeated. In the end game, Dark Knight may roll an extra d4 and increase the challenge thresholds of his monsters by that much.*

## MINIONS, MONSTERS AND MEGAFUNA

No self-respecting villain would actually go and attack the heroes directly. No, instead they send various minions and monsters after the heroes and to enact their diabolical plans. In game terms, the servants of a nemesis are divided into three rough categories: minions, monsters and megafauna.

The nemesis' servants are represented by challenges, sometimes with a challenge threshold, that must be beaten by the heroes. Each foe has a number of injuries they can sustain, much like a character.

Minions are the lowest of the low, servants tasked with carrying out menial tasks for the villains such as harassing heroes and crudely executing their master's plans. Encounters with minions take the form of basic challenges. Minions are typically defeated if a hero succeeds at a challenge against them.

Monsters are the bigger, harder hitting servants of the villain. They could be anything from gorillas to robots to ninjas. They are accomplished fighters and hit hard. Encounters with monsters take the form of hazardous challenges, possibly with a low to mid challenge threshold. Monsters can typically sustain two or three injuries before they are defeated.

Megafauna are what monsters transform into, the huge, lumbering beasts that threaten the entire town at the end of the game. They are a large and dangerous threat, and can usually only be defeated by transformed super heroes. Encounters with megafauna take the form of hazardous challenges with a high challenge threshold. Megafauna can typically sustain four, five or more injuries before they are defeated.

*The Dark Knight has three types of servant: Pawns, who have no challenge threshold and can only take a single injury before they are defeated; Nightmare, his monstrous horse, who has a challenge threshold of 10 and can take 2 injuries before being defeated; and the Dark Armor, a giant suit of*

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DESIGNATION:



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POWER SOURCE:

KNOWN POWERS

RANK

UNKNOWN POWERS:

AFFILIATION:

RANK:

TEAM MATES:

MENTOR:

RANK:

NEMESIS:

THREAT LEVEL:

KILL-COUNT:

RE-INCARNATIONS:

PLOT HOOKS

RANK

CONNECTIONS

RANK

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