Tokyo Heroes

Sentai RPG
By Ewen Cluney

Credits

Designed and written by Ewen Cluney

This is the **pre-release version** of Tokyo Heroes; it's complete and theoretically playable, but it hasn't been tested much just yet. (On the plus side, it's free!) If you try it, let me know how it goes, okay?

Table of Contents

Introduction

This game is about heroes. As a player you take on the role of a hero. Somewhere in the streets of Tokyo a monster—a servant of the terrible Enemy you'll have to face one day—is going to hurt innocent people. He must be stopped. Luckily you're not alone; you're part of an elite team with the power to stand up to the bad guys, to find and extinguish the flame of evil.

This game is specifically about "sentai" heroes. Sentai literally means "fighting team" in Japanese. It calls to mind Toei's *Super Sentai Series* of tokusatsu (live action special effects) shows that has been going on since 1975, and *Power Rangers*, the American adaptation that launched in 1993 and is still going. There are many other titles, tokusatsu, anime, and otherwise, that it inspired, in Japan and elsewhere.

In particular, this book devotes a fair amount of text to including fighting magical girls, as seen in anime series like *Sailor Moon* and *Tokyo Mew Mew*. This is partly just because I happen to like magical girl anime (shut up), and partly because for the purposes of this game what's important about sentai isn't the spandex or the cheesy rubber monsters or the pyrotechnics, but rather the way a team of heroes work together to fend off the forces of evil. In this respect, *Dekaranger* and *Sailor Moon* are a lot closer to each other than they are to *Kamen Rider*.

This game is about cool, fast-paced action, and rolling dice. Lots of dice.

Text Conventions

In the text of this book I've taken a cue from *Fudge* in that players and player characters are referred to with masculine pronouns and the GM and GM characters with female pronouns.

Throughout the text, there are examples to illustrate how the game works. All of these use the same characters that appear starting on page 6, and they are always enclosed in boxes to indicate their example-ness. Some of these explain things in game terms, and some illustrate the genre with a piece of prose. You'll survive.

If You Don't Know The Genre...

...I highly recommend getting yourself acquainted. Knowing the genre really well isn't a requirement per se, especially for an individual player, but it does help.

For **magical girls** there are a fair number of anime series available on DVD. *Sailor Moon* is far and away the most appropriate for *Tokyo Heroes*, but *Wedding Peach* will do in a pinch, and *Tokyo Mew Mew* (re-titled *Mew Mew Power* in the English dub) is ideal too. *Tokyo Heroes* deals with *fighting* magical girls, however, so the likes of *Fancy Lala* and *Minky Momo* would be better served by some other RPG (like HeartQuest, BESM, or OAV).

The original, Japanese **sentai** series are hard to come by in the U.S., but there is of course *Power Rangers*, which currently airs on several basic cable channels, and is available on DVD. As for the original Japanese sentai shows, if you're super hardcore you can get the Region 2 DVDs; Amazon Japan has plenty of them and ships to the

U.S., though it's all *really* expensive. If you're amoral you can get the Hong Kong DVDs with questionable English subtitles. For the rest of us there are some fansubs, such as from TV-Nihon (www.tvnihon.com).

For both, see the Appendix (p. 83) for some more specific recommendations.

Game Basics

Stuff You'll Need

Since this is a tabletop RPG, the most important things are a group of friends and imagination. However, you'll also want pencil and paper (preferably including a character sheet for each player and a session sheet for the GM) and lots of six-sided dice.

Rolling Dice

Tokyo Heroes uses pools of dice; when you attempt something where the outcome is in question, you roll a number of six-sided dice, usually equal to an Attribute, but frequently modified by other stuff. The dice aren't added up though. A given roll has a Target; each die that is equal to or above the Target counts as a Success. The default Target is 4, which gives each die a 50/50 chance of being a success. The more Successes you score, the better the result will be. For simple stuff you can get by with just one Success, but for tougher stuff you'll need more, and if someone is directly opposing you you'll need to get more Successes than them. This is explained in detail on p. 40.

Measuring Time

In this game time is tracked in a fairly cinematic way; the campaign is divided into **episodes**, and episodes are divided up into **scenes**. These are first and foremost a way to keep up the pace and concentrate on stuff that's relevant to the story.

An episode is one incident, carried from beginning to end. There can be a little extra stuff thrown in, but in this game each episode is basically about a given monster causing problems and the heroes defeating the monster and solving those problems. An episode can sometimes take up more than one session of play, but one episode per session is the norm, and sometimes two if the episodes are short.

For the purposes of this game a scene is a step along the way, where one or more of the heroes (player characters) are doing something significant in a given place. The GM usually decides when a scene begins and ends, but the players can give input too; a scene should get directly into a situation where the heroes have to take action and make choices, and end before things start to drag. Unimportant stuff can happen outside of scenes, summarized in a sentence or two. Going to visit a victim's house can be a very important scene, but the drive there can be skipped over more often than not.

Example Heroes

Before we jump into things, here are two example hero teams, one sentai team and one magical girl team. They're used constantly as examples in this book, both to create a semblance of continuity, and to let you come back here to look at the stats involved more closely. Admittedly they're a bit generic, but that's intentional. Their stats are set up to represent where they'll be at the beginning of a campaign/series, and in actual play they'd be getting some considerable new toys over time.

Kidou Sentai Dynaranger

Kidou Sentai Dynaranger (Mobile Fighting Team Dynaranger) is meant to be a very typical sentai show, though it particularly draws on *Dekaranger*, *Hurricanger*, and *Timeranger*, with a little bit of cheesy sci-fi thrown in for good measure

The Space Lord Zalbus has been traveling from world to world, bringing death and devastation everywhere he and his minions go. And his next target is Earth. The League of Planets is desperate to stop him at any cost, and their strategy involves luring him into a trap—at the planet they believe he'll turn to *after* Earth.

Captain Soren Starforge of the starship *Cortana* was unwilling to let six billion lives be abandoned, so he disobeyed orders and went to Earth in the hopes of warning the inhabitants and perhaps helping mount a defense. His ship was ambushed and crash-landed, and most of his crew has been killed or scattered across the planet via escape pods. By some stroke of luck, it turns out that on Earth Zalbus is acting in secret, searching for something. Against a frontal assault there is little that could be done, but in this situation there's a chance.

Starforge's only choice is to recruit the most capable natives he can find and provide them with Dynamic Metal combat suits and other equipment so they can take up the fight defending their own world. For the time being he has to ask them to act in secret; otherwise Zalbus' minions may begin targeting their loved ones. Moreover, he knows that eventually he'll have to face the music and answer to his superiors.

Soundtrack

My dream soundtrack for *Dynaranger* would be mostly melodramatic power metal. The opening theme would be "Tyranny of Steel" by Iron Savior.

Dynamic Equipment

Dynamic Metal is a relatively new invention, a semi-sentient liquid metal that conforms to the user's thoughts and desires. For this reason, when using a Dynamic Metal suit willpower is more important than actual combat abilities. Starforge knows this, and his recruits are not trained soldiers, but people who are exceptional for their passions and pursuits. The Dynamic Metal is contained inside "Dyna-Gyros" worn on the wrist; it's activated with a verbal command (the user's heroic designation followed by "Activate!"), releasing the Dynamic Metal to cover their body.

Each of them wields their own special Dynamic Arms, a personalized weapon designed to suit their unique strengths. By putting these together, they can form the Dynamic Bazooka, a powerful weapon that delivers a devastating finishing blow to enemies. This is a Group Asset Finishing Attack worth 5 Edges; it adds 12 Attack dice, but costs 6 Hero Dice.

What remains of the *Cortana* is hidden in a mountainside on the outskirts of Tokyo. The ship will likely never fly again, but its main reactor is still functioning, as well as the central computer and some of the weapons, so it makes a good base of operations for the team. While the others live their normal lives in Tokyo and are heroes in secret, Captain Starforge still lives in his ship, along with Zazu, the chief engineer. It is here that the team's Dyna-Machines (Vehicle Defenders) are stored. Starforge spends much of his time strategizing and trying to locate his other surviving crew members, while Zazu works on the ship and providing the Dynarangers with the equipment necessary for their mission. Using the ship's sensors, they can usually find the approximate location where one of Zalbus' minions has landed, enabling them to send the Dynarangers into action when danger strikes.

There are five Dyna-Machines: the Red Racer (a super-fast race car), Blue Flyer (a supersonic jet with VTOL capabilities), Green Tanker (a heavy tank), Yellow Diver (an amphibious vehicle), and Pink Heli (a helicopter). These combine to form Dyna-Robo; in game terms this is a Group Asset Robot worth 5 Edges. It has Resistance 10, 48 Stamina, Basic Attack (hand-to-hand combat), Finishing Attack (Dynamic Spectrum Shooter; +4 Attack dice, 2 Hero Dice), Special Attack (Dynamic Lance; +2 Attack dice). This is just the stats for it at the start of the series; it will undoubtedly be upgraded many times, and also combined with Dynamic Knight's Dyna-Wing.

In game terms, the group's Team Edges are Basic Attack (Dynamic Blaster), Group Asset (Robot: Dyna-Robo), Group Asset (Finishing Attack: Dynamic Bazooka), Special Attack, and Vehicle Defender. Each individual character gets two Personal Edges.

Dynamic Red

"This stuff about stopping the Space Lord Zalbus from destroying the galaxy is way too big for me to fit in my head, you know? But protecting innocent people when they're in danger, that I can get behind 110%."

Real Name: Hikaru Inoue (井上光)
Concept: Enthusiastic and dedicated high school P.E. teacher turned hero
Aspect: Red
Keys: Belief (No one is beyond saving), Cause (Protect Earth), Pride
Attributes: Attack 5, Defense 2, Athletics 4 (very fit), Brains 1, Spirit 3
Secondary Values: Initiative 6, Resistance 6, Stamina 24
Edges: Basic Attack (Dynamic Blaster), Group Asset (Dyna-Robo), Group Asset (Finishing Attack: Dynamic Bazooka), Profession (P.E. Teacher), Special Attack (Dynamic Blade; +4 Attack dice), Vehicle Defender (Red Racer)

Heroic Flaw: Hikaru has a hard time really believing people are bad; if someone shows a hint of humanity he'll try to save them.

Notes: Hikaru is a P.E. teacher at Juuban High. He loves children and he loves his job; the only thing he needs to make his life complete is a wife and kids of his own. His luck with the ladies hasn't been the greatest, though he's managed to ask the school nurse out for coffee once or twice as the story unfolds. (Being a Dynaranger and having to run off to secretly save the world won't help matters though). He's nice to a fault, and as a teacher he's willing to work with anyone to help them succeed. He can't get through to everyone, but he's constantly going above and beyond the call of duty, especially for students everyone else is convinced are a lost cause.

For Hikaru, becoming Dynamic Red is partly a childhood fantasy and partly a chance to protect the things he cares about. He jumps into the role without hesitation, and is constantly trying everything he can to become friends with his teammates.

Hikaru prefers things to be up close and personal, plus he's had a good amount of kendo training, so naturally as Dynamic Red his personal weapon is the Dynamic Sword.

Dynamic Blue

"Don't get cocky. Your idiotic stunt may have worked this time, but it put us all in danger."

Real Name: Itsuki Murakami (村上樹)

Concept: A famous and driven novelist who is constantly looking for new challenges and experiences.

Aspect: Blue

Keys: Cause (Protect Earth), Pride, Specialty (Perfectionist)

Attributes: Attack 2, Defense 5 (saw it coming), Athletics 2, Brains 4 (smart and articulate), Spirit 2

Secondary Values: Initiative 6, Resistance 7, Stamina 27

Edges: Basic Attack (Dynamic Blaster), Group Asset (Dyna-Robo), Group Asset (Finishing Attack: Dynamic Bazooka), Perk (Fame), Profession (Novelist), Special Attack (Dynamic Shooter; +2 Attack dice), Vehicle Defender (Blue Flyer)

Heroic Flaw: Itsuki is impossibly hard on himself; he won't accept anything but perfection from himself and will work as hard as it takes.

Notes: Itsuki Murakami is recognized nationally and even internationally as one of Japan's most important up and coming authors. His first novel debuted to rave reviews and impressive sales, and his second only expanded his fame. His third is taking much longer than he expected, and it's driving him crazy. When Starforge first asks him to become a Dynaranger he flatly refuses, but he finally decides he can afford to take some time off from writing and maybe even get some ideas that will help him work through his writer's block.

He is a perfectionist, through and through, and he wields a long-range precision rifle. Naturally, he's the polar opposite of Hikaru, and is very harsh on his teammates when they screw up, especially if they do so by not listening to him.

Dynamic Green

"Look at this! This ship actually creates its own gravitational field so that the crew can walk around normally! This is incredible!*"*

Real Name: Keiichi Kobayashi (小林恵一)
Concept: Dedicated genius engineer
Aspect: Green
Keys: Cause (Protect Earth), Pride, Specialty (Technical Guy)
Attributes: Attack 3, Defense 3, Athletics 2, Brains 5 (genius engineer), Spirit 2
Secondary Values: Initiative 8, Resistance 5, Stamina 21
Edges: Basic Attack (Dynamic Blaster), Group Asset (Dyna-Robo), Group Asset (Finishing Attack: Dynamic Bazooka), Knack (Good With Machines), Perk (Wealth), Special Attack (Dynamic Knuckles; +2 Attack dice), Vehicle Defender (Green Tanker)

Heroic Flaw: When it comes to technology, Keiichi is curious to a fault. He'll drop everything if he comes across a sufficiently intriguing gadget.

Notes: Keiichi is an extremely talented engineer, and his skills are in high demand with countless high tech companies. Although he's doing very well for himself financially, it's his passion for machines that drives him. From an early age he was always taking things apart just to see how they worked, and he was building his own gadgets by the time he was in middle school.

When Captain Starforge came to him, Keiichi jumped at the chance to become a Dynaranger. He is completely enamored of alien technology, and quickly gets into the habit of skipping work just to spend hours and hours hanging around the *Cortana* and talking with Zazu.

One of Keiichi's flaws is that he's lacking in people skills, and being part of the Dynaranger team forces him to work hard to get better at such things, lest Captain Starforge decides that someone else should become Dynamic Green. He's basically a good-natured guy, and when he annoys or hurts people it's almost always by accident.

Dynamic Yellow

"What're you doing? The Captain told us not to split up!"

Real Name: Sae Ayanami (彩波冴)
Concept: A reserved, dedicated, cool professional swimmer
Aspect: Yellow
Keys: Bond (Sees Captain Starforge as a mentor), Cause (Protect Earth), Goal (avenge her coach and move on with her life), Pride
Attributes: Attack 3, Defense 2, Athletics 5 (in peak physical condition), Brains 2, Spirit 3

Secondary Values: Initiative 5, Resistance 8, Stamina 30

Edges: Basic Attack (Dynamic Blaster), Group Asset (Dyna-Robo), Group Asset (Finishing Attack: Dynamic Bazooka), Personal Key, Profession (Olympic-caliber swimmer), Special Attack (Dynamic Wave; +2 Attack dice), Vehicle Defender (Yellow Diver)

Heroic Flaw: Sae is afraid of losing people, and thus has a hard time reaching out to others.

Notes: Outwardly, Sae comes off as a cold, reserved person. She has dedicated her life to become a professional athlete, and has had little time for anything else. She originally threw herself into swimming as a way to deal with the death of her parents in a train accident, and her coach was the one person she could really open up to. He was one of the first victims of the Zalbus Force's invasion of Earth.

When Captain Starforge offered her the chance to become a Dynaranger, she refused. She was overcome with grief, and was retreating away from the world again. Hikaru desperately tried to convince her that there is life beyond grief, and that she could make a difference, but it was the Captain, who used a more gentle approach, that got through to her.

Since then, she has come to see Starforge as her mentor, a new coach of sorts. More than any of the other Dynarangers, she takes his advice and orders very seriously, to the point where she will berate her teammates for deviating from his commands. It takes some time for her to fully understand that he is not infallible, and that he has placed his trust in Hikaru as the leader of the team in the field.

Dynamic Pink

"Come on guys! We can do this! Remember how we beat that guy with the weird… thingy… on his head?"

Real Name: Miki Sakuraba (桜庭美樹)

Concept: Cute and charismatic future idol singer

Aspect: Pink

Keys: Cause (Protect Earth), Love, Pride

Attributes: Attack 2, Defense 2, Athletics 3 (in good shape), Brains 3 (surprisingly clever), Spirit 5 (extremely cheerful)

Secondary Values: Initiative 5, Resistance 7, Stamina 30

Edges: Basic Attack (Dynamic Blaster), Group Asset (Dyna-Robo), Group Asset (Finishing Attack: Dynamic Bazooka), Knack (Attractive), Perk (Fame), Special Attack (Dynamic Ribbon; +2 Attack dice), Vehicle Defender (Pink Heli)

Heroic Flaw: Miki has a "talent" for developing hopeless, even dangerous crushes on guys she meets.

Notes: Miki is an up-and-coming star; she's already done a handful of television commercials, and is hoping to hook up with a talent agency that can get her more work. In fact she was so anxious for her big break that she assumed Captain Starforge was inviting her to take part in a TV show rather than the real thing.

Miki is smarter and more calculating than people give her credit for, but still basically a cute, cheerful young woman. She has an infectious enthusiasm and a knack for cheering people up even when she isn't feeling that great herself. Although finding out that it's all real is quite a shock to her, Miki decides to stick with being a Dynaranger partly to help others, and partly in the hopes that it'll give her career a boost. She's more than a little disappointed when the captain tells them that they have to keep their powers a secret, and along the way she'll learn the hard way why he was so insistent.

She lives in an apartment with a roommate and former classmate who's currently in college named Saori, and works as a waitress to pay the bills. Saori is more than a little suspicious of Miki's sudden change—suddenly disappearing all the time and all—and doesn't entirely approve of the new crowd she's hanging out with. This is partly because even at the age of 19 Miki still develops crushes easily, and she's suddenly started hanging around with *three* reasonably good-looking guys, two of which are wealthy and successful, and one of which looks like an ideal family man.

Dynamic Knight (Ally Character)

"I don't need your pity, and I don't need your help. This is my battle, and mine alone!"

Real Name: Jax Goldwraith

Concept: Last survivor of his homeworld, a powerful warrior totally consumed by vengeance.

Aspect: Black

Keys: Cause (destroy evil), Goal (destroy Zalbus at any cost), Pride

Attributes: Attack 6 (brutally powerful), Defense 4, Athletics 3, Brains 2, Spirit 3

Secondary Values: Initiative 8, Resistance 7, Stamina 30

Edges: Basic Attack (Dynamic Fist), Finishing Attack (Dynamic Fire; +4 Attack dice, 2 Hero Dice), Robot (Dyna-Wing; 40 Stamina, Resistance 12, Finishing Attack [King Slasher; +6 Attack dice, 3 Hero Dice]), Special Attack (Dynamic Excalibur; +4 Attack dice)

Heroic Flaw: Jax is consumed by vengeance; nothing else matters to him anymore, and it frequently clouds his judgment.

Notes: Jax is the last survivor of Planet Garren after Zalbus' forces came. While the other Dynarangers are trying to protect earth, Jax is totally consumed by hatred and vengeance. When he first appears, he cares nothing for protecting people or working with his fellow rangers, only causing pain to Zalbus and any who side with him. Although he's a skilled warrior in his own right, he uses a Dynamic Metal combat suit to augment his own abilities to the point where he can take on Zalbus' minions.

Jax looks mostly human, but his short, spiky black "hair" is actually made of small spines, and he has a small red gemstone on his forehead. It was because of these gems that Zalbus attacked Planet Garren and slaughtered its people. His Dynamic Metal

suit is colored silver and black, with heavy shoulder pads and a long sword sheathed at his side.

Dynamic Captain (Ally Character)

"I do this because I cannot stand by and let innocent lives be snuffed out. I know I'm asking a lot of you, but I do this because I must."

Real Name: Soren Starforge

Concept: Veteran soldier and starship captain leading a desperate crusade to save a world he doesn't really know anything about.

Aspect: Master

Keys: Cause (protect the innocent from Zalbus and his ilk), Pride

Attributes: Attack 5 (solid fighter), Defense 6 (impossible to knock down), Athletics 3, Brains 4 (Veteran), Spirit 2

Secondary Values: Initiative 9, Resistance 8, Stamina 30

Edges: Basic Attack (Hand-to-Hand Combat), Finishing Attack (Dynamic Buster; +8 Attack dice, 4 Hero Dice), Profession (Veteran Starship Captain), Special Attack (Dynamic Magnum; +4 Attack dice)

Heroic Flaw: Starforge is getting old, and starting to feel the effects of a lifetime of battle scars.

Notes: Captain Starforge hails from Planet Reamus. He appears human apart from his pointed ears and mane of snow-white hair, but his physiology is actually fairly different, designed for colder weather and higher gravity. He is a certifiable war hero, who worked his way up through the ranks to finally become the captain of the *Cortana*. In the service of the League's military forces he's served in so many campaigns his dress uniform looks like one big mass of medals. The only reason he's not an admiral or higher is that he's upheld his principles at the expense of following orders on occasion.

However, now he's getting on in years; he gets aches and pains, and his doctors have told him to stay out of direct battles for his health. He has incredible combat skills, and he can sync almost perfectly with his own Dynamic Metal suit, but he knows he needs to avoid using it except in emergencies.

Magical Girl Rose

Magical Girl Rose (named for the lead character) is about a team of magical girls. It takes a cue from *Abaranger* in that there are five heroines total, but at the start of the game one is a mentor who can't often use her powers, and another is a villain who'll eventually come around and join the good guys.

There is another world, a place of magic that has long been under the sway of the Dark Queen, and she has long desired the rich magical energy of Earth. Now, she's managed to create a tiny breach in the walls between dimensions. It's just enough to slip through seeds that can grow into minions, but as they collect more energy they'll be able to widen the gap, until finally the Dark Queen herself can ride through with her army.

When the Dark Queen originally took over the magical world, it was a young sorceress named Winter who sacrificed herself to seal that world away from the rest of the cosmos. Winter has returned, reincarnated as a human girl, and recovered the Valkyrie Pendants she and her allies once used to fend off the Dark Queen's hordes. By recruiting new Magical Girls it might be possible to fend them off, but it will be a long, difficult fight.

The Valkyrie Pendants let the girls transform; there is a pendant for each of the four elements, and a Soul Pendant. In order to transform, the girl has to hold the pendant over her head and shout out, "Vakyrie Change!" Unfortunately, the Earth Pendant has fallen into the hands of the enemy, and the Soul Pendant is damaged and unsafe to use. For some reason when transformed, they're referred to as "Magical Girl" plus their first name. Rose thinks this is kind of lame, but is too polite to say anything.

As the story unfolds Faith and April have already been recruited by Winter as magical girls; the first episode concerns how Rose becomes part of their team.

Soundtrack

My dream soundtrack for *Magical Girl Rose* would be very much like a typical magical girl soundtrack, but with more of an epic feel (think Nobuo Uematsu and John Williams) for the more dramatic parts, plus dramatic J-pop music here and there, and some heavy metal riffs for some of the especially dark parts. For the opening theme I'd go for "Resolution of Soul" by KOTOKO, or possibly "CHANCE!" by UVERworld.

Character Creation

For this game the Team Keys are Cause (help those in danger) and Pride. The Team Edges are a 3-Edge Special Attack (Rose was allowed to trade for a Finishing Attack and Winter used one of those Edges for a Special Defense) and one Special Power, but each character gets only one Personal Edge. Magical Girl Destiny is a special case, to say the least.

Magical Girl Rose

"Come on guys, I really think we should worry less about who messed up on what, and more about… about that big green thing over there!"

Real Name: Rose Valentine ("Yes, that's my real name…")
Concept: Good-natured karate girl.
Aspect: Red (Fire Element)
Keys: Belief (Friendship is the most important thing in the world), Cause (help those in danger), Pride
Attributes: Attack 4 (well-trained in close combat), Defense 3, Athletics 3 (fit), Brains 2, Spirit 3 (seldom gives up)
Secondary Values: Initiative 6, Resistance 6, Stamina 27

Edges: Basic Attack (Karate), Finishing Attack (Flame Soul; +8 Attack dice, 4 Hero Dice), Special Power (ignite fires)

Heroic Flaw: Rose is a little too nice; she has a hard time believing that people are bad, and will take unnecessary risks to try to reach out to people.

Notes: Rose's family runs a karate dojo, and she has three extremely strong older brothers (and woe is to any boy who so much as looks at her the wrong way). She started learning karate when she was very little, and she takes her father's advice about only using it for self-defense very seriously. Rose has a very pure heart and at times a simplistic way of looking at the world. Because of her family she's used to being at that weird place where you're the center of attention without actually being listened to, so most of the time she tends to go with the flow. When she does decide to stand up for something she surprises people with her unbending, iron determination.

Rose is mostly well known and well liked around Lily Glen Academy, and she has two very close, very good friends, Ventura Ventura ("My real name. Shut up.") and Christine Ngyuen ("You say it like 'win' but with an N in front.") How they became best friends is kind of a long story, and people wonder at how it is that Rose is always hanging out with a tall, pale, quietly cynical goth girl and a short, pampered Vietnamese-American girl, but they're inseparable.

Magical Girl Winter (Ally Character)

"Something is coming. I can feel it. Please, be careful."

Real Name: Winter (or Annabelle Sadlowski)

Concept: Too-young reincarnated sorceress.

Aspect: Master (Soul Element)

Keys: Cause (help those in danger), Pride, Specialty (keeper of arcane lore)

Attributes: Attack 3, Defense 2, Athletics 1, Brains 5 (keeper of lore and strategist), Spirit 4 (iron determination)

Secondary Values: Initiative 8, Resistance 6, Stamina 21

Edges: Profession (Ancient Sorceress), Special Attack (Spirit Wave; +4 Attack dice), Special Defense (Spirit Shield; Defensive Power, +3 Defense dice, 1 Hero Die), Special Power (limited sorcery)

Heroic Flaw: Using the Soul Pendant is dangerous and draining. Normally, Winter can only use it for one scene per episode, and even then she is completely exhausted afterwards and if she loses more than half her Stamina she'll have to be hospitalized for at least a week.

Notes: The Sadlowski family was a bit surprised that their baby daughter was so well-behaved, that she always sat quietly and never cried. When Annabelle did finally speak, it was in a lost tongue of a forgotten age. In the struggle against the Dark Queen, the sorceress Winter sacrificed her own life, and has only now returned to the world, reincarnated. She did finally learn to speak English (much to her new parents' relief), but she retains most of her memories from her previous life and (to her new parents' disappointment and concern) remains stolid and joyless, burdened by memo-

ries of the past and worries about the future. She has begun to regain some of former her magical power, but her 8-year-old body can only handle so much at a time. She has succeeded in locating the case with the five Valkyrie Pendants—they were on display at a local museum—and although the Wood Pendant was stolen and the Soul Pendant is damaged, she began recruiting girls to use the remaining three.

Winter can be a cold person, but spending time with Rose will do a lot to change that. She will always have a powerful sense of duty though; she has witnessed what the Dark Queen is capable of and will do anything to keep it from returning. Although the damaged Soul Pendant is unstable and potentially dangerous to whomever uses it, if she feels the other magical girls are in too much danger she will use it without hesitation, even if she'll be hospitalized afterwards. Still, she hopes that one day she'll have a good reason to use it; it is said that when the five pendants are brought together the power of miracles will appear. She's not sure what that means exactly, except that in the upcoming fight it will make all the difference.

Otherwise her powers are very limited; she can sense magical presences and discern the nature of magic, but creating actual effects requires her to set up time-consuming rituals.

Magical Girl Faith

"I know I'm hard on you guys, but I'm twice as hard on myself. I have to be."
Real Name: Faith Vasquez
Concept: Haughty, rich star tennis player
Aspect: Blue (Water Element)
Keys: Cause (help those in danger), Cause (prove herself to others), Pride
Attributes: Attack 4 (knows how to pressure an opponent), Defense 2, Athletics 3, Brains 2, Spirit 4 (self-confidence)
Secondary Values: Initiative 6, Resistance 6, Stamina 27
Edges: Perk (Wealthy), Special Attack (Aqua Shoot), Special Power (swim like a fish; can move very quickly and breathe underwater)
Heroic Flaw: Faith is a perfectionist; she's very hard on her teammates, but even harder on herself.
Notes: At first glance Faith doesn't exactly come off as being hero material. She tends to be haughty and arrogant, and spends a lot of time perfecting her tennis game as well as playing more social "games." But underneath that, she really does believe in protecting the innocent from harm. Still, her perfectionist streak shows through and she's pretty hard on her teammates, especially April. She's used to being in charge and at the center of attention, and she's good at staying that way, but as soon as Rose becomes a part of the group things start to change. While April tries to do whatever Faith says, Rose always does what she herself thinks is right. Eventually dealing with this situation is going to force Faith to grow up a little, and teach her the value of real friendship.

Faith's family is fairly wealthy, owing to her father's success in business and accumulated stock options. They're not filthy rich or anything, but definitely a cut

above the rest even for a student of Lily Glen Academy, and she likes to flaunt this by wearing designer clothes and getting picked up in her mom's BMW. While her parents let her have a lot of the things she wants, they also expect her to work very hard in return, and become something special through her own efforts. At times she pushes herself too hard out of the belief that failure is not an option, and as a result being a magical girl on top of everything else in her life is exhausting. She's a very strong girl, but she does have a breaking point.

Magical Girl April

"Please, listen to me. If this monster really is reptilian, then it's exothermic, and heat will make it faster, but cold will make it slower."

Real Name: April Calloway

Concept: Shy but surprisingly attractive bookworm

Aspect: Green (Air Element)

Keys: Bond (her teammates), Cause (help those in danger), Pride

Attributes: Attack 3, Defense 4 (good at hiding from danger), Athletics 1, Brains 5 (brainy bookworm), Spirit 2

Secondary Values: Initiative 8, Resistance 6, Stamina 21

Edges: Knack (Book Knowledge), Special Attack (Thunder Arrow; +6 Attack dice), Special Power (control weather)

Heroic Flaw: April lacks confidence; she hesitates at critical moments, and sometimes has a hard time accepting when good things happen to her.

Notes: April is not the kind of girl who gets noticed, at least not in a good way. She dresses plainly, with a hair band in her long hair and thick, round glasses. People around school mostly know her as that girl who's always in the library reading some thick hardback book, and wouldn't be surprised to find that the parents she comes home to each day are a college professor and a doctor, who have high hopes that she will follow in their footsteps. April herself is unsure about where her life is going. She does share her father's profound love of books and learning, but she also feels very lonely at times.

When Winter came along, her life was turned upside-down. She suddenly had two people (Winter and Faith) that she had to spend a great deal of time with, and a mission that involved getting into mortal danger on a regular basis. At first she's hesitant and timid, and as a result constantly has Faith badgering her to do as she says *right now*. Rose does a lot to make April feel more appreciated, but even Faith can show appreciation when the mood strikes her. Although April's tendency to choke at critical moments is a problem, her book knowledge is at times exceedingly valuable, something that does a lot to boost her confidence.

The way April dresses is largely inspired by her parents, and it never really occurred to her to try something different. It takes a while for everyone to figure out why she's so pretty as Magical Girl April; it's simply her natural beauty showing through, something that could happen in everyday life with a good makeover. Oh,

and in typical magical girl fashion, her glasses disappear when she transforms, yet she can see just fine.

Magical Girl Destiny (Enemy)

"Everything I ever believed, everything I am, turned out to be a lie. I hate that woman more than you will ever know. But you are really starting to get on my nerves, Magical Girl Rose."

Real Name: Destiny Fontaine (but once upon a time it was Jessica Taylor)

Concept: Corrupted but still redeemable magical girl villain.

Aspect: Black (Earth Element)

Keys: As a villain, Destiny has no Keys. When she becomes a hero, these will be Cause (punish the guilty), Goal (defeat the Dark Queen), Goal (learn the truth of her own past)

Attributes: Attack 5 (fights with overwhelming power), Defense 3, Athletics 2, Brains 3 (cunning), Spirit 2

Secondary Values: Initiative 8, Resistance 8, Stamina 21

Edges: Always Transformed, Corrupt (Control Plants), Escape (Returning Stone), Finishing Attack (Iron Cross; +6 Attack dice, 3 Hero Dice), Hard To Kill, Knack (find and exploit people's weaknesses), Special Attack (Green Rage; +4 Attack dice)

Villainous Flaw: Obsessed with proving herself to her "mother." When she becomes good, her Heroic Flaw is that she's overly cruel to those she perceives as wrongdoers.

Notes: Destiny was raised by the Dark Queen as a daughter and elite warrior, and given the stolen Earth Amulet. She doesn't know that the amulet, herself, and even her name were all stolen. Being exposed to high levels of dark magic from an early age has changed her, and while she's about the same age as Rose and the others, she is small and pale, with light blue hair and deep red eyes. She was raised by a twisted and merciless mother, and she wants only to serve the Dark Queen without fail. Unlike the monsters the Queen's generals send to wreak havoc, Magical Girl Destiny is human enough to understand how the girls think, and this makes her their most dangerous and hated foe. Her attacks are anything but random; she knows too well how to hit them where it hurts, and has no compunctions about hurting their friends and family.

Some day Destiny is going to learn the truth about where she came from. It was nearly ten years ago that the Dark Queen sent one of her minions to kidnap a very young girl from the human world, risking a great amount of power in order to raise a servant capable of using the stolen Earth Pendant. Some day she is going to learn that the Dark Queen does not love her—because love is an anathema to everything the Queen represents—and it is going to break her.

She emerges as an enemy of the Dark Queen and those who serve her, but not necessarily on the side of good. She retains every bit of her cruelty, and she has trou-

ble trusting anyone anymore. Whether or not Rose or anyone else can get through to her could change the fate of the entire world.

As a villain, Destiny has the Edges of Corrupt and Escape. Corrupt lets her put evil energy into plants, causing them to become animated and attack people. In game terms, she can cause plants to act like mooks. Escape represents a magical item called a Returning Stone that lets her teleport back to the magical world at will. When she leaves the Dark Queen's service, she loses access to the necessary negative energy and loses both of these Edges. She also gains the ability to revert to a normal form, and thus loses Always Transformed, though because of her decade-long exposure to magical energy, she doesn't look any different apart from her change of costume.

Hero Creation

A campaign starts with creating a team of heroes. As a player you might want to have some inkling of what you want your character to be like, but try not to get too attached to any particular idea, and *absolutely do not* make your character ahead of time. In this game the entire group should meet together to discuss specifics and create their various hero characters all at the same time.

By default this game assumes that the group will be meeting and not only making characters but devising the whole concept of the hero team and the campaign during the first session. These details can determine a lot of what goes into each character, and a lot of what they can actually do, so ideally everyone should have some input. However, it can also be time consuming; if you want to jump into playing the game quickly, it's better for the GM to come up with the necessary details (team concept, Keys, Edges, etc.) ahead of time and have the players make characters to match.

Character as Communication

As a player, how you put your character together is a way to tell the GM what you want out of the game. (Telling them directly doesn't hurt though). Your character's Keys and Heroic Flaw in particular show what's important to your character, and you get rewarded for playing your character in a way that highlights them. However, everything on the character sheet is potentially a message to the GM; a character with has a high Brains attribute needs mental challenges to overcome, a character with Profession: Doctor as an edge should get opportunities to heal people and maybe even moral dilemmas stemming from that ability, and so on. This is discussed further in the GM section (see p. 63), but in general the GM needs to be well aware of what's on each player's character sheet and take those into account when preparing the game.

The other thing about this game is that a fair number of character traits are purposely a bit vague. To a certain extent it's up to you to play your character so that the group has the image of him that you want. One of the five basic attributes is called *Attack*; while that's partly just because this isn't the kind of genre where a character can be proficient with swords but not guns (much less swords but not knives), if you want your character to be a rough and tumble brawler or an elite sniper, the distinction is more a matter of how you choose to have your character handle himself in a fight. Similarly, if you have a Special Attack, it's up to you to describe what it does. Where a sentai hero might have a special electric sword, a magical girl could have a water blast attack that comes out of her magic wand. Both are "Special Attack." However, all of those differences can matter in the game; if you want to use your electric sword to short out a computer or use your water blast to put out a fire, go for it!

Descriptors

As an aid to all of the above, players can add **Descriptors** to traits. A descriptor gives us a little more detail about how the trait is expressed in the character. I highly recommend these for your character's attack Edges (we should know what they are!) and higher attributes, but they're optional. When a character uses a trait with a descriptor in a situation where it's highly appropriate you'll get an extra die or two to roll, but if you try something that really goes against the descriptor you could be penalized;

For example, if a character's Attack attribute has "Elite Sniper" as a descriptor he'll get bonuses when he tries precise, targeted shots with guns, but he could be penalized if he's getting into an especially down-and-dirty brawl. More often than not, however, the descriptor won't come into play unless the player is purposely trying to make it happen.

Step 1: Team Concept

The first thing you need to do is come up with a concept for what the team is going to be like. The first and most obvious question is whether they'll be sentai heroes or magical girls (or some other variation), but there are plenty more than need to be addressed.

Origins

Take some time to figure out what the heroes' powers are and how they got them.

Magical girls' powers are nearly always, well, magical. Sentai heroes sometimes use magic, but their special powers often come from some kind of super-science, or granted by aliens, or odd combinations of two or even all three. Since *Himitsu Sentai Goranger* started in 1975, sentai series in particular have made good use of different themes for heroes and their powers. Sentai heroes have been ninjas, rescue workers, police officers, magicians, martial artists, race car drivers, time travelers, and so on. Others have had mystical powers based on some kind of totem animal, such as dinosaurs, wildcats, and birds. Just about anything can make be a theme for a hero team, depending on how silly you're willing to let things get. One of the funny things about sentai is that regardless of the source of their powers, their gear always has a technological look.

How normal people become heroes is another factor to consider. It might be a job, whether one comes to it deliberately through training or by some weird accident. The power could be a birthright, either as a result of the character's lineage or a past life, a destiny the character can't hope to avoid. Sometimes there's a certain potential—something not everyone has enough of—that's required in order to become a hero.

Transformation Item

All of the heroes in *Tokyo Heroes* have to "transform" (*henshin*) in order use their full powers. For sentai heroes this means activating a special device that covers them

in their jumpsuit and helmet, and for magical girls a similar magical item dresses them in their special costume and possibly makes some small cosmetic changes to their appearance. In the TV shows the transformation sequence shows the character in an elaborate and sometimes time-consuming ritual as a battle outfit forms around his or her body, but in the actual story the transformation itself is almost instantaneous. Transformed characters tend to become more athletic, and are capable of superhuman jumps.

When not transformed, a character loses access to most Edges pertaining to special powers, and is also less effective in combat. See p. 47 for more details.

Magical girls have a "protected identity" feature too; although the physical changes they undergo are usually mostly cosmetic, people never realize that the magical girl and the normal girl are one and the same *unless* they happen to witness the transformation. In fact a magical girl would have a hard time deliberately convincing someone of this without demonstrating her transformation. Sentai heroes don't have this protection generally, but then they wear masks and they're less likely to be asked to keep their powers a secret.

Sentai heroes' transformation items are usually some kind of bracelet or cell phone, while magical girls favor pendants and makeup compacts. It's possible for a character to lose the transformation item, but this should always be temporary.

Costume

Take some time to think about what the team's costumes are going to be like, and what they say about the heroes who wear them.

The costume of a sentai hero consists of a spandex jumpsuit and a full-coverage helmet with a tinted visor. Female rangers frequently have skirts integrated into their costumes in some way, and rangers with short capes are not unknown. The whole outfit is one color, with some white or gold highlights. Think about any patterns or symbols on the outfit, as well as the design of the helmet. Some sentai heroes, especially the more powerful ones, have some kind of armor that goes over the jumpsuit.

I don't know about you, but I find magical girl costumes *incredibly* hard to design. Sentai heroes have a clearly defined stereotypical outfit, but a "standard" magical girl outfit is basically a short, girly dress of some kind that's a bit more ornate than usual. (And there are those who wear shorts or long dresses). They can be very simple, like *Sailor Moon*'s modified school uniforms, deliberately outlandish, like *Pretty Sammy*'s kimono top and pleated skirt, or gratuitously accessorized, like *Nurse Witch Komugi-chan*. If the character has a strong theme, be sure to express it as much as possible in the costume. A magical girl team will *usually* have each member's costume be minor variations on a theme, especially in terms of color, but unlike sentai teams they can sometimes be wildly different from each other.

Step 2: Aspects

An "Aspect" is an archetype of the character's personality and style of fighting. Aspects are set up along the lines of the stereotypical rangers of a given color, but

especially for magical girls the personality doesn't have to directly correspond to the actual color of the character's outfit.

You'll notice there are a total of ten different aspects here—twice the number of people in a standard 5-person team. A standard sentai team would consist of Red, Blue, Yellow, Pink, and either Green or Black, and the other Aspects would be for "special" rangers that show up later on in the series.

If you're sticking close to the sentai clichés, female heroes are kind of limited in what Aspects they can pick. Pink is the only exclusively female Aspect (we're not judging or anything), and Yellow is also commonly used for female characters, and Blue and White on occasion. Naturally, once you go outside of the bounds of sentai clichés, all bets are off. A magical girl team can (and should) run the gamut of Aspects.

Regardless, no two heroes on the same team should have the same Aspect. If two players are dead-set on having the same aspect, you could:
a. Have each player write down a character concept. The GM reads these aloud and the rest of the group votes on who should get that Aspect.
b. Use a randomizer—roll dice, flip a coin, play Rock-Paper-Scissors, etc.
c. Whoever is willing to start with the most negative Karma (so they have to earn up to be able to spend any at all) gets that Aspect.
d. Just let them both have it already.

If there's no Aspect that works for you, the GM can either help you create a new one (because who says there can't be Orange or Purple rangers?), or just skip the use of an Aspect and give the character a Personal Key and one extra Personal Edge.

Each Aspect description lists a **Virtue** (something good about a typical hero of that aspect), a **Fault** (something bad about them), some **Example Character Concepts** (which will hopefully help with the next step of hero creation), and **Keys** (your choices for Aspect Keys if you take this Aspect; see p. 25). Each also includes a **special ability**, which lets heroes of that Aspect spend Karma points for some special benefit during the game.

Red/Fireball Hero

Virtue: You're self-assured and seldom hesitate.

Fault: You have a way of letting your emotions cloud your judgment.

Example Character Concepts: Blazing Rookie, Brash Kid, Courageous Firefighter, Enthusiastic Chief, Karate Expert, Kind Veterinarian, Single Father

Keys: Belief, Bond

Righteous Fury: When there's a wrong to the righted, you can spend Karma points as though they were Hero Dice.

Blue/Calculating Hero

Virtue: You can remain calm under pressure, and are good at devising and sticking to a plan.

Fault: You have a hard time dealing with failure, and you're overly critical of people who won't do things your way.

Example Character Concepts: Aspiring Athlete, Ballet Dancer, Dedicated Priestess, Perfect Elite, Prodigy, Professional Racer, Rich Doctor, Strict Policeman

Keys: Cause, Specialty

Perfect: You can spend 2 Karma to re-roll a failed action. If you spent Hero Dice on the action the first time around, they don't count for the re-roll, though you can spend more Hero Dice if you want. You can only re-roll a given action once.

Green/The Wildcard

Virtue: You have a knack for looking at a situation in a different way and finding solutions that others might miss.

Fault: Your strong focus and unconventional ways sometimes lead you astray.

Example Character Concepts: Careful Thinker, Dedicated Musician, Expert Pilot, Serious Scholar, Technical Wizard, Timid Genius

Keys: Bond, Specialty

Eureka: You can spend 2 Karma to have your character find a clue or reach some kind of insight about the problem at hand. The GM doesn't have to let you do this, but she may decide to let you (the player) decide what the clue is.

Pink/Cute Heroine

Virtue: Your enthusiasm is inspirational, and you have a warm, caring nature.

Fault: You can be selfish, and sometimes you want to be coddled.

Example Character Concepts: Aerobics Instructor, Airhead, Aspiring Idol, Feminine Elite, Kind Nurse

Keys: Bond, Love

Girl Power: If you're in a mixed-gender team, you can spend 5 Karma to get a –1 Target modifier for a scene when you and all the other female team members are working together (you can use this by yourself if you are the only female team member). If you're on an all-female team (magical girls or whatever) you can get the same effect for yourself when something "feminine" that's important to you is at stake.

Yellow/The Pillar

Virtue: You're reliable, and a source of strength to those around you.

Fault: You tend to focus on the things in front of you a little too much, and try too hard to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Example Character Concepts: Big Brother, Charismatic Friend, Kindergarten Teacher, Rational Hero, Silly Child, Well-Intentioned Prankster

Keys: Bond, Cause

I Won't Let You Down: If you've made a promise to someone, you can spend Karma points as Hero Dice for any action related to keeping that promise.

Black/Dutiful Hero

Virtue: You have the drive to accomplish your mission at any cost, letting nothing stand in your way.

Fault: You too readily stand alone, and take on too much by yourself.

Example Character Concepts: Aloof Celebrity, Expert Loner, Gentle Bear, Otherworld Survivor

Keys: Cause, Goal

Never Give Up: You can use Karma points as Hero Dice for the purpose of restoring Stamina.

White/The Paladin

Virtue: Your absolute sense of justice lends you courage to face any adversary.

Fault: Sometimes you're too quick to criticize the faults in others, and sometimes you too readily put your principles before everything else.

Example Character Concepts: Arrogant Elite, Avenger, Dedicated Warrior, Protector

Keys: Cause, Goal

Righteous Blade: You can use Karma points as Hero Dice for Special or Finishing Attacks.

Gold/The Final Weapon

Virtue: You've trained long and hard before entering the field of battle. You might not be the most experienced warrior, but you've honed your skills well and are confident in yourself.

Fault: You're isolated, and however skilled, still inexperienced, especially when it comes to working effectively with others.

Example Character Concepts: Elite Hermit, Isolated Prince, Last of His Kind

Keys: Goal, Specialty

Fruits Of My Training: You can spend 6 Karma to get a –1 Target modifier for one fight scene.

Silver/The Hidden Weapon

Virtue: You're a professional; you're good at keeping a cool head and getting the job done.

Fault: You find yourself forced to keep secrets from your allies.

Example Character Concepts: Cursed Immortal, Guardian Angel, Paragon of Efficiency

Keys: Cause, Specialty

Secret Agent Man: You can spend 1 Karma to slip away from the scene, undetected by friend or foe.

Master/The Mentor

Virtue: Your long experience has given you wisdom; you know how to choose your battles, and you know the strengths of your team.

Fault: You can't or won't use your full power very often.

Example Character Concepts: The Boss, The Chief, Tired Veteran

Keys: Bond, Specialty

Let Me Handle This: You can spend 4 Karma to get a –1 Target modifier for one fight scene, but only if you're fighting by yourself.

Step 3: Character Concept

With your hero's Aspect chosen, you should be well on your way towards figuring out what your character is going to be like. Take a moment to think up a more specific concept. This doesn't have to be anything fancy—a single sentence at most—so long as it gives you a starting point for who's behind the mask (holding the magic wand, etc.).

Combat Ability?

Even though fighting is a big part of this game, a hero doesn't need to be an accomplished fighter to be an effective character. It's just as important, if not more so, to be able to contribute to the group's pool of Hero Dice with your Keys, not to mention helping out with the investigation and such that leads up to actually fighting the bad guys.

Step 4: Attributes

Every character has five attributes: Attack, Defense, Athletics, Brains, and Spirit. Distribute 15 points among the five; you have to put at least 1 in each, and 5 is the maximum at the start of the campaign.

- **Attack** represents a hero's general ability to dish out the hurt on opponents. It can represent raw physical strength, accuracy to hit a target where it counts, spiritual energy, etc. When attacking an opponent, this is what you roll.
- **Defense** is a hero's general ability to avoid being hurt, whether by puffing up his chest and brushing off pain, being quick enough to slip out of the way, etc.
- **Athletics** is a hero's overall level of physical ability, good for stuff like climbing, swimming, running, jumping, and so on. It doesn't necessarily represent physical strength or agility, but it can incorporate those things, especially with Descriptors.
- **Brains** represents the hero's general mental acuity. A brainy hero probably gets good grades, can operate a computer, and analyze what the enemy is doing to find patterns and decode puzzles.
- **Spirit** is a hero's willpower and enthusiasm. It's his ability to keep going even when things look bleak, and to convince his teammates not to give up either.

Derived Values

Each character also has three **Derived Values**, calculated based on attributes. Write them down on your character sheet in the spaces provided.

Initiative is used to determine who acts when in combat (see p. 43). Initiative is *Attack + Brains*.

Resistance is the number of successes it takes for a finishing attack to finally knock the character out: *Defense + Spirit*.

Stamina is how much damage your character can take; the less Stamina a character has left, the more vulnerable to finishing attacks he becomes. Stamina is calculated as *(Defense + Athletics + Spirit) x 3*.

Initiative: 6
Resistance: 6
Stamina: 21
Distribute 8 points. Each point put into Stamina adds +3. No more than 4 can be put into any single value.

Step 5: Keys

A *Key* is something the hero believes in especially strongly; during the game they determine how each hero earns Hero Dice for the group. The team will have two **Team Keys**, which every member of the team has. Although nearly any Key could be used as a Team Key, Pride and Cause are particularly appropriate, and Love is good for magical girls. Each hero also selects an **Aspect Key** from one of the two listed in the Aspect description.

Keys are relatively broad, and with the exceptions of Pride and Love, it's necessary to make them a little bit more specific. If the team has a Cause, you'll have to decide what that cause is. The specifics of a Key can be broad or narrow, but they should be something that stays pertinent during the campaign. Each Key lists Benefits, and those that require further defining have Examples. The benefits of a key are guidelines; the GM can and should give out Hero Dice for other things that seem appropriate to a hero's Keys.

Belief

There's a principle you believe in, and upholding it gives shape and meaning to your existence.

Examples: Justice will always prevail in the end. No one is beyond saving.

Benefits: Once per episode you can gain 1 Hero Die by stating your belief in context. Gain 2-3 Hero Dice each time you stand up for your belief at a personal risk. Gain 3 Hero Dice each time you convince someone else to believe as you do.

Bond

You have a strong bond with a particular person, whether a significant other, a teammate, a friend, an idol, etc. That person is a source of strength to you, and you would do whatever it takes to protect them or stand up for their beliefs.

Examples: Respected Mentor, Girlfriend/Boyfriend, Beloved Pet, Kid Brother, Mother

Benefits: Gain 1 Hero Die every time you're in a scene with that person. Gain 2 Hero Dice whenever you become closer to them or learn something from them. Gain 3 Hero Dice when you put yourself at risk to protect them or what you believe they stand for.

Cause

There is a cause you believe in, something that shapes the way you live. A cause is different from a goal in that it's something that cannot necessarily be "fixed" on a permanent basis.

Examples: Protect the innocent. Protect the environment.

Benefits: Once per session you can gain 1 Hero Die by stating the nature of your cause in context. Gain 2-3 Hero Dice each time you pursue your cause even though it puts you at personal risk. Gain 3 or more Hero Dice if you convince someone else to take up the same cause.

Goal

There's a specific goal you're working towards that gives you purpose and drive.

Examples: Take revenge for the death of a friend. Become a successful painter. Invent something that will revolutionize people's lives. Defeat the evil overlord. Restore the magical kingdom to prosperity.

Benefits: Gain 1 Hero Die each time you get closer to your goal. Gain 2-3 Hero Dice each time you pursue your goal even though it puts you at personal risk. Gain 3 or more Hero Dice if you convince someone else to pursue the same goal.

Love

You gain strength from love. What kind of love is up to you, but romantic love is the most powerful, if the most difficult.

Benefits: Gain 1 Hero Die when you have a scene with someone you love. Gain 2 Hero Dice each time you move closer to finding love. Gain 3 Hero Dice when you find love for real, or when you put yourself at personal risk to protect the object of your love.

Pride

You draw strength from pride in your status as a hero and a member of the team, and you're invigorated by shows of solidarity and teamwork.

Benefits: Gain 1 Hero Die when your team does a brief pose. Gain 2 Hero Dice when your whole team shows off with an extended pose. Gain 3 Hero Dice when your team is recognized for its heroism.

Specialty

There's something you're good at, and having the opportunity to display those skills and be praised for them matters to you. If you have this Key you may wish to take Profession or Knack as a Personal Edge (see below).

Examples: Perfectionist, Ace Pilot, Skilled Chef, Police Detective

Benefits: Gain 1-3 Hero Dice every time you successfully use your specialty (for something that matters to the plot). Gain 2 Hero Dice when you get praised for it by someone you admire. Gain 3 Hero Dice when you use your specialty and it has a major benefit to the team's goals.

Step 6: Heroic Flaws

No hero is perfect; he'd be too boring otherwise. That's why each character has a Heroic Flaw. Below are some guidelines for different types of Heroic Flaws, but a flaw must have a substantial effect when it comes into play. Usually, it's up to the player to make a Heroic Flaw matter in the game, and the GM will reward you with Karma points when you do (see p. 49).

That said, a Heroic Flaw isn't meant to burden the character throughout the whole campaign; on the contrary, they're specifically meant to eventually be resolved or at least reduced. If you're totally stumped as to what to pick, check out the table on p. 79.

A character *could* have more than one Heroic Flaw, but there's no reward for it.

- **Blindness:** Not literal blindness, but rather there's something the character is destined never to realize, at least not until it's too late.
- **Dark Secret:** You have a secret that, if revealed, you're sure would tear your life apart. Perhaps you used to work for the other side, or maybe you aren't human.
- **Health Problem:** No matter how hard you fight, there's something wrong with your body that you can't avoid.
- **Hidden Truth:** There's a secret about you or something you've dedicated yourself to that even you don't know about—and when it's revealed it could break you.
- **Obsession:** There's something you enjoy to the point where you'll let it distract you from your duties from time to time. A hero's obsession doesn't have to be something bad per se—he or she easily could be easily distracted by food or caring for children or karaoke instead of alcoholism or a heroin addiction.
- **Personality Flaw:** You have some basic problem with your personality that gets you in trouble at times. This can be things like being overconfident, greedy, lazy, bossy, shy, etc. "Lone wolf" isn't a good choice for this game; a character like that would have to work though his tendencies to go solo pretty quickly in order to keep participating in the game.

Step 7: Edges

Edges are a character's other assets—skills, perks, and special powers. Unlike Attributes, with Edges you either have them or you don't, but many can be bought multiple times for a cumulative effect.

Characters have both **Team Edges** and **Personal Edges**. The group needs to agree on a set of Team Edges that will be possessed by each member of the team (though they can have different Descriptors on these Edges). The GM has final say on how many edges worth of stuff the team gets, but five is plenty for a starting team, or at most ten for a very powerful group.

For a typical sentai group the Team Edges will be along the lines of Basic Attack, Special Attack, Vehicle Defender, Group Asset: Finishing Attack, and Group Asset: Robot.

A typical magical girl group can have just Special Attack as a Team Edge (though possibly 2 or 3 Edges worth of Special Attack), and Special Power is a definite possibility.

Personal Edges are specific to each individual hero. The GM also decides how many each hero gets, but one to three is typical. Most of a character's actual powers will be covered by Team Edges, so Knack, Perk, and Profession are the most common Personal Edges. Still, these can be spent on any Edges you want.

You don't have to use all of your available Edges, but you can't trade them for Attributes or anything like that. You *can* give them to other players though.

Guidelines For Team Edges

Sentai Special Attacks

On foot, sentai heroes use three different kinds of special attacks. All of the rangers have the same **Basic Weapon**, a sidearm of some kind that's mainly good for taking out mooks. A basic weapon can be just about anything—swords, guns, shuriken, etc., and some teams have more than one. In game terms this is a *Basic Attack*.

They also have some kind of **Personal Weapon**, a beefier gadget that's personalized for each ranger, matching the character's theme more closely. Personal weapons are good for taking on lots of mooks at once, or for defeating weak monsters. These count as a *Special Attack*.

Finally, there's the **Finishing Attack** (use the Edge of the same name), which can take out a monster-of-the-week, and is the heroes' best hope against the bigger bad guys. The finishing attack is usually either a special weapon the team leader carries or a weapon made by physically combining all of the team members' personal weapons.

Magical Girl Special Attacks

Magical girls very rarely mix it up in close combat, so they'll seldom have a Basic Attack. Instead, each girl will have a Special Attack appropriate to her theme, and typically only the team leader will have a Finishing Attack. Regardless, magical girls tend to have powers that shoot some kind of magical energy or other elemental attack from their wands.

Especially for finishing attacks they don't necessarily do "damage" per se, but can instead project some kind of purifying or healing energy that can remove evil influences and is harmless or even beneficial to normal people. This is especially important if the girls have to confront enemies that make monsters by corrupting innocent people or animals. Having this kind of attack instead of a more typical one is just a matter of description.

Vehicles

Sentai heroes are big on special vehicles; how else are they going to deal with giant-sized monsters? Typically each hero has a **Vehicle Defender**, a personalized vehicle that has a limited ability to attack. The heroes can then combine all of their vehicle defenders into a single **Giant Robot** that can go toe-to-toe with whatever giant mon-

sters might be threatening the city. In sentai shows they *love* to bring out new robots; the Sixth Ranger often has a special vehicle defender that can become a robot on its own, and however many robots and vehicles there are, someone will try to find a way to combine them into one big robot.

Sentai heroes tend to have these regardless of the theme of their powers, though they can take other forms. They might be a form of sentient creature or even something the heroes transform into if it fits the theme of their powers better. Or you can just not worry about it and let the ninjas have Secret Ninja Robots. In case you couldn't tell by now, capturing the feel of sentai is a matter of doing really ridiculous stuff with conviction.

Edge Descriptions

Tokyo Heroes has a grand total of 18 Edges, and almost all of them require at least a little bit of explanation/flavor text to show what they do in the game. Dimensional Arena, Empowered Hero, and Secondary Transformation are for special powers that tend to be introduced late in a sentai series, while Always Transformed and Giant Form are pretty atypical for both sentai heroes and magical girls, and are meant for more unusual characters.

Always Transformed

The majority of *Tokyo Heroes* characters have to transform to have access to their special powers, but a hero with this Edge for some reason *always* has access to his full abilities. This may have some drawbacks in terms of the character's appearance or other oddities.

Basic Attack

This is a simple, commonly used mode of attack. Unlike Special Attack and Finishing attack it can be used at will, but the character just rolls his base Attack attribute. A Basic Attack can be a weapon—whether a melee weapon, a firearm, or something else—or simply the ability to make effective hand-to-hand attacks. Characters can also have more than one type of basic attack without spending any additional Edges. Without a Basic Attack edge, the character has to either use a Special Attack or attack as though not transformed (see p. 47).

Dimensional Arena

Some heroes have the power to draw their enemies into a tiny pocket dimension. The hero has to make a successful Attack roll, and then spend 3 Hero Dice to trap the enemy (no dice are spent if the roll fails). Within the Dimensional Arena the hero gets a –1 Target modifier and the enemy gets a +1 Target modifier and has his Resistance reduced by a third. Enemies can attempt to "break" the pocket dimension with a sufficiently powerful attack; a Special or Finishing Attack against the walls of the arena that scores as many Successes as the hero's Resistance will break the arena and return both of them to normal space.

A Dimensional Arena can be used to bring multiple allies in, in which case it costs an extra Hero Die per 2 allies. These allies gain the same benefits as the main hero. Extra enemies cost an extra 2 Hero Dice each to bring into the Dimensional Arena (for these purposes a crowd of mooks counts as a single enemy), and a separate Attack roll (use the same dice as the main roll, including any Hero Dice spent) is required to bring them in.

Empowered Hero

This Edge has to be bought as a Group Asset, with every member contributing one Edge. One hero, usually the leader (Red), is designated as the recipient. When this Edge is used, each team member lends the recipient a portion of their power. The other team members suffer a +1 Target modifier, but the recipient gets any two of the following benefits:

- −1 Target modifier to all actions.
- A number of Edges equal to the number of contributing team members. This can be taken twice for double that amount.
- Hero Dice spent count double; each die adds two dice to a roll, restores 16 Stamina, or provides 2 dice towards using Edges that cost Hero Dice.

The Empowered Hero transformation lasts until the scene ends or the hero decides to cancel it. In either case, his allies immediately get their energy back and no longer have the +1 Target modifier.

Finishing Attack

A finishing attack is a step above a Special Attack, a *hisatsuwaza* (killer move) used to finish off opponents. A basic Finishing Attack adds 4 dice to the attack roll but costs 2 Hero Dice. Each extra Edge spent on a Finishing Attack adds 2 attack dice and +1 to the Hero Die cost. A finishing attack can be used just to wear an opponent down (it still takes off Stamina points), though this isn't necessarily the best use of it.

Unlike Special Attacks, there's no penalty for using it to finish off an opponent. A Finishing Attack that scores at least as many successes as the target's Resistance finishes them off, but every point of Stamina the target has counts against those successes for that purpose.

Giant Form

Not unlike *Ultraman*, a hero with this Edge has the power to temporarily become giant-sized on his own. By spending 4 Hero Dice, the hero effectively becomes able to use his normal Attributes, Edges, and so forth in Robot scale (see p. 47) for one scene/battle.

Group Asset

A Group Asset is an Edge shared by all members of the team. It can only be used by all of them working together, and often requires them to physically combine stuff gained from other Edges. A group Finishing Attack could be a result of heroes inter-

locking each of their Special Attack weapons, Robots are almost always a result of Vehicle Defenders linking up, etc. You don't get any point bonus/credit for doing it this way; it just looks cool.

If even one team member is missing, a Group Asset can't be used, though the GM can make exceptions, and a Group Assets usually use up an entire turn from each member to assemble. Group Assets always allow all of the team members to at least **assist** in actions requiring that asset; they're never limited to **encouraging** (see Cooperative Actions, p. 41).

At character creation, the GM can set the effective value of a Group Asset to be higher or lower than the number contributed as Team Edges by the heroes if desired. While a robot probably needs all those Edges to be sufficiently powerful, a Finishing Attack can be unwieldy if it consumes too many Hero Dice when it's used. However, if the players are spending Karma points they should always get the full benefit of any Edges purchased.

Hard To Kill

Some characters are unusually determined to stay standing. Permanently add +3 to the character's Resistance. This Edge can only be taken once.

Knack

A Knack is some general thing the character is good at, ranging from legitimate skills ("Knack: Hacking") to cinematic fluff ("Knack: Show up in the nick of time when Kaori is in trouble"). Regardless, a Knack provides 2 Bonus Dice to rolls where it's pertinent. You can have more than one Knack, but you can only have one Knack for a particular thing. Also see Profession, below.

Mentor/Mascot

You have some kind of mentor that's specific to your hero. That doesn't necessarily mean she won't help out your teammates, just that her main job is to help you.

Perk

A perk is some kind of social advantage. Perks don't have any effect on the rules, but during the game they can potentially open all kinds of doors.

- **Authority:** While most heroes have to operate in secret, or are recognized only unofficially, there are those who have actual government authority, as police officers, military personnel, or some such. Not everyone will be cooperative, but people are legally obliged to recognize the heroes' authority.
- **Fame:** Some heroes are famous, whether they're celebrities in public, famous for their special skills, or simply known to the world as great heroes. Fame can be a burden at times too.
- **Property:** Owning real estate has its benefits. Heroes are always assumed to have somewhere to live, so Property means the character has either some kind of establishment (a restaurant or store or something), a base of operations for

the heroes, or a combination thereof. This can be taken as a Group Asset if the team wants to have a really elaborate base.

- **Wealth:** Money makes the world go round and all that. Player characters are assumed to have an average amount of money available for whatever type of people they are (an average adult probably has more cash on hand than an average middle school girl), but with Wealth the character is pretty well off. Characters can take this one multiple times to be even wealthier, though that kind of money seldom comes without strings attached.

Profession

A character with this Edge has the skills necessary for a certain profession, such as a doctor, scientist, detective, chef, etc. In rolls where that profession's skills are useful the character gets 2 Bonus Dice. This Edge can be taken multiple times for different professions, but only once for the same profession.

Robot

Everyone loves giant robots! A robot lets characters function normally in robot-scale action (see p. 47). By default a robot has 24 Stamina, Resistance 10, and can do a Basic Attack. Each additional Edge spent on the robot to provide one of the following:

- 2 additional Edges; Finishing Attack, Special Attack, Special Defense, and Special Power (usually stuff like Special Movement) are typical.
- +8 to Stamina
- +2 to Resistance (to a maximum of 16)

Secondary Transformation

Some heroes can transform a second time, usually into a "heavy combat form" of some kind that gives them enhanced abilities. For each Edge spent on it, a Secondary Transformation costs 1 Hero Die and provides the character with 2 additional Edges only available when the transformation is active. For a more powerful secondary transformation, take the Edge again, increasing the Hero Dice cost by 1, but adding 2 more Edges.

Special Attack

Special Attacks are moderately powerful attacks that heroes can use against enemies. The form that a special attack takes is left up to your imagination, though each hero should have a different variation. For sentai heroes a Special Attack is usually a special personalized weapon, while for magical girls it's a magical attack spell.

Regardless, a Special Attack works like a Basic Attack, but adds +2 dice to the Attack roll. Additional Edges can be added to a Special Attack to make it more powerful; each Edge adds another 2 dice, or 3 dice if the Special Attack costs a Hero Die to use.

Special Attacks can be used to try for a finishing attack, but this has to be declared in advance and it has a +1 Target modifier to the roll.

When creating a special attack be sure to think about what exactly it does in the game world.

- **Combat Technique:** A special attack could simply be a way of using an existing the character's existing weapons or even his fists.
- **Elemental:** Lots of special attacks are "elemental," made up of a certain element. Most of the time this doesn't make too much difference, but every now and then it'll be really effective or ineffective against a particular enemy ("Fire heals it!"), or it'll come in handy for its elemental properties (using a water attack to put out a fire). Although you can stick to the Western four elements if you want to, anime often has electricity, ice, and gravity as elements (check out *Tokyo Underground* for lots of that kind of stuff), and magical girls have been known to use Love-elemental attacks too.
- **Weapon:** Sentai heroes in particular routinely have their special attacks as weapons. These can be just about anything you can think up, though it should be at least somewhat consistent with the team's theme.

Special Defense

A Special Defense gives a hero a way to avoid getting hurt that goes beyond making basic Defense rolls. Heroes shouldn't have access to much in the way of Special Defenses (*especially* Passive Defense) early on; Special Defenses are better used as part of an Empowered Hero or Secondary Transformation.

There are three different kinds of Special Defenses; each can be taken multiple times to add the same effect on top, and if appropriate multiple types can be combined. Like other character traits, the player should define what the heck a Special Defense is, from body armor to a special shield to making a force field or a wall of fire.

- **Passive Defense:** This represents some kind of armor or some such; each Edge spent on a Passive Defense provides one die worth of defense that is applied regardless of whether the character is actively defending.
- **Defensive Technique:** The character has some means of mounting an active defense. Add 2 dice to defense rolls where the character specifically uses this special defensive technique.
- **Defensive Power:** The hero has some special means of defending himself that burns up energy (i.e. uses Hero Dice). The hero can spend 1 Hero Die to get an additional 3 dice of defense on an active defense action. In the story this usually takes the form of some kind of force field or other unique defense.

Special Power

Characters and teams sometimes have special powers that go beyond the usual stuff with attacking and defending and having giant robots. If a character wants a special power the GM decides how many Edges it counts as and how many Hero Dice have to be spent to use it; usually both are the same.

- **Esper:** The hero can read the emotions and thoughts of others.

- **Healing:** For healing injuries, treat this as the ability to use Hero Dice to restore the Stamina of others, at the usual rate. For other kinds of ailments, the cost depends on the severity of the problems the character can handle.
- **Magical Disguise:** The character has a way to quickly disguise himself. This costs 1 for producing different outfits and hairstyles, 2-3 for imitating specific people.
- **Special Movement:** The hero can move in a way that would be difficult or impossible for a normal human—ice skating, flying, brachiating, water-walking, etc.
- **Special Senses:** Sometimes heroes have special ways of detecting things, whether technological sensors or mystical senses. Not a few magical heroes can sense the presence of evil, and stuff like thermal imaging can be incredibly useful.

Vehicle Defender

The character has a "super-vehicle." It affords extra mobility appropriate to whatever kind of vehicle it happens to be, and it can attempt a robot-scale Basic Attack, albeit with a +1 Target modifier. Vehicle Defenders are almost always combined to become a Group Asset Robot (see above).

Step 8: Profile

For both the team and the heroes it's time to fill out any other information you might want.

Names

Stuff should have names. Heroes typically have their own "civilian" name and a special heroic name. Hero names should follow a general pattern for the team, such as the Dynarangers having Dynamic + [aspect color]. When a hero is transformed, people tend to treat his heroic identity as his main identity and address him by his heroic name. Attacks, vehicle defenders, and especially robots should likewise have names.

Looks

More so that in real life, and even more so than in anime and manga, a hero's looks can tell you a lot about them. Sentai heroes have an odd penchant for wearing normal clothes of the same color as their heroic attire, sometimes even before they become heroes. Magical girls tend to be relatively normal in their everyday lives, though unusual hair colors (which in real life are forbidden by the rules of most Japanese schools) are common. A simple and easy way to come up with a solid description of a character's appearance is to come up with three significant details, and leave it at that.

Personality

What kind of guy (or girl) is your hero? Your Aspect can provide a starting point, but they leave more room for interpretation than you might think. While there are sentai heroes who are almost wholly defined by their color, others are more subtle.

Vital Statistics

For a particularly manga-style character profile, you could go so far as to list off your character's height, weight, birth date/zodiac sign, blood type, likes, dislikes, favorite food, etc. And measurements, if that's your thing.

Ally Characters

Ally Characters ("ACs") are a midpoint between player characters and GM characters. They're assumed to be friends and allies of the heroes, and while the GM controls them most of the time, players can invest Karma to take on the role of an AC for a scene (see p. 49). The group should discuss which ally characters will be a part of the campaign. ACs should be capable at what they do, but also relatively passive most of the time, so the GM doesn't have to roll dice for them that often.

One use for Ally Characters is to fill out a roster of heroes if you happen to have less than five players in your group, not to mention allowing for the introduction of new heroes later on. Mentors, assistants, and mascots can all be considered Ally Characters as well, and if a player is unable to attend a session he can consent to allow his hero to be considered an AC for that session. Also, if you have a guest player who wants to jump in for a session or two, taking control of an AC can be a great way for them to participate.

Players can volunteer to generate stats for Ally Characters—especially if they're going to be regular team members—or it can be left up to the GM. Depending on their nature, ACs can sometimes go outside of the usual parameters for character creation, especially in the case of a Sixth Ranger or Master Ranger. They can ignore the Team Keys and Edges, and for that matter have more points for Attributes and more Edges, if the GM feels it appropriate. For examples of such characters, see Dynamic Knight (p. 11) and Dynamic Captain (p. 12).

Connected People

In addition to Ally Characters, each hero probably has a bunch of other people connected to them—relatives, friends, co-workers, etc. If you want, note down any your character has that you think might be interesting. If the GM is paying attention at all, these characters will make their way into the campaign at some point.

Base of Operations

Heroes will usually have some kind of headquarters, or at least a place to meet up. This could be a place where they all live, a base where they all work, or even a restaurant or some such (an athletic club with a juice bar?) where they meet to hang out and talk.

For sentai heroes in particular, a "base of operations" doesn't have to be a mere inert building. Sentai bases can be equipped with all sorts of equipment, or even take the form of a special giant-sized vehicle. A few can even become a robot! Of course, the full power of the base doesn't have to be revealed at the start of the series.

Magical girls are more likely to have a place to hang out, such as a restaurant or cafe, a karaoke place, someone's house, etc., where they can meet up to talk about what's going on, and maybe do some detective work on the internet. They *could* all go to the same school, but in actual magical girl anime they usually don't, and have to take extra time to meet up and do hero stuff.

Enemies

Although coming up with bad guys is mostly the GM's job, players are welcome to contribute ideas too. The bad guys usually have some kind of connection or at least commonality with the heroes. If the good guys are heroic magic users it's pretty much a given that the bad guys are evil magic users. It doesn't have to be that simple though; maybe the heroes were created specifically to fight the enemy (or vice versa), or maybe they're two forms of the same thing that have split off in different directions.

Adventures

Episodes and Scenes

A *Tokyo Heroes* campaign is like a TV series in that it's broken up into **episodes**, which are in turn divided into **scenes**.

Episodes

An episode is one incident and its resolution, so most of the time you'll be playing through one episode per session. Sometimes you might wind up doing multiple short episodes in a session, or having a long episode take multiple sessions to finish. That's fine; episodes end when the GM says they do.

At the beginning of each episode the team's Hero Dice are reset, and at the end of the episode the characters regain any lost Stamina and are awarded Karma.

Scenes

Episodes are broken up into scenes. Like episodes, there aren't any hard and fast rules for when they begin and end, but the end of a scene can matter in game terms— because there are certain things that last "until the end of the scene." Thinking in terms of scenes is also a tool to help keep the right pace for the game. When you take a typical sentai episode and subtract the commercials you wind up with about 24 minutes of footage, but if you cut out the opening and ending themes and the preview of the next episode it's more like 20 minutes, and that 20 minutes has to keep the attention of an audience of hyperactive little kids. In contrast, when playing a roleplaying game it's entirely too easy to get lost in pointless minutiae. By playing out only the scenes that actually matter, the game can become faster and more focused.

New scenes can be initiated by the GM or requested by the players. For maximum effectiveness, the framing of a scene should be mentioned explicitly, and stuff that happens in an actual scene should be important and move the plot forward. Events that aren't sufficiently important are considered "off-camera," and these can be summarized and/or handled with a quick dice roll. The start of a scene should dump the heroes into a situation where they need take action—it should have an *objective* and give the players opportunities to make *choices*—and end once that objective is completed, before it has a chance to drag. A scene will definitely end with the passage of time, a change of location, or the departure of all of the heroes. The end of a battle usually means the scene is going to end soon, but the heroes often spend some time investigating the aftermath of the location of a battle. A battle can also shift location or scale without a scene ending.

A typical session might begin with a scene of the Dynarangers meeting on board the *Cortana*. There's a little time for them to chatter, but things get down to business when Captain Starforge tells them they've detected a Zalbus Force spacecraft landing in the city. They nod to each other and move out.

Bam. End of scene. Off-camera, he gives them the coordinates, they get into their cars, and they drive there.

Scene 2 of this episode begins when they've arrived at a construction site and are looking at a crashed shuttle that's sending a plume of smoke into the sky.

Appearance Rolls

It should be fairly obvious what PCs are going to be in the scene, but when it's in doubt the player can make an "**appearance roll**" to see if the character can reach the scene. What Attribute is rolled on varies; stuff like Athletics to see if the character can run/drive there in time, Brains to navigate, clear red tape, etc. For battle scenes any character can spend 1 Karma or 1 Hero Die to automatically pop up at the scene of a battle, but only after other teammates have arrived and been hit with at least one attack.

Set Pieces

It pays to think in terms of sets and locations. *Where* is the action taking place, and what's there that could potentially make scenes more interesting? This could be as simple as the magical girls' favorite hangout having a karaoke machine, or as grandiose as an evil overlord's giant skull-shaped space fortress.

Battles can benefit immensely from having things around for the combatants to interact with. They can take cover, try for ambushes, throw things, get thrown into things, blow things up, and general blend cleverness and property damage into a smooth mixture of badassitude. While there is that cliché sentai rock quarry fight scene, an epic battle taking place in a steel refinery among catwalks and machines that are constantly shooting sparks and pouring molten metal could be pretty damn cool.

Cut Scenes

This is sort of an advanced technique. In the TV shows the audience is always getting glimpses of what the bad guys are up to. Sometimes this is just to let us know what's going on, and if done well it's entertaining too. Using this in the game requires that the players be able to keep from acting on information that their characters shouldn't know. To take it a step further, the GM can even go so far as to let players play out a scene controlling enemy characters as though they were Ally Characters (see p. 49).

Preview

At the end of each episode, it's time for the "preview." In a TV show, the creators give us a small snippet of what's coming up for next time. In *Tokyo Heroes* the preview is everything that comes after the episode's final scene and before the group either finishes with the gaming session or moves onto another episode.

First, it's time for some paperwork. The GM assigns the players Karma points (see p. 48), and if the players want to spend those on improving Attributes or buying new Edges, this is the time.

Second, it's time to deal just a little bit with what will be coming up in the next episode. The GM can give as much or as little information about as she wishes, but a sen-

tence or so is sufficient. Naturally, this requires the GM to have some inkling of what the following episode is going to be about (which would mean your GM is a lot better organized than me). This is a way to get the players primed for what kind of stuff their heroes will be facing next episode, and to get them thinking about neat stuff for their characters to do.

The players don't have to be passive here, however. They can make suggestions, give feedback, and also ask the GM to let them invest Karma in a spotlight episode (see p. 50). Not a few TV episodes have a plot that's basically instigated by the protagonists anyway; this way you can have your cake and eat it too. The adventure is player-led, but it can benefit from some extra planning on the GM's part.

Seasons

If a campaign/series is long enough it can go into multiple seasons. For *Tokyo Heroes*, a season is going to cover a conflict between the heroes and a particular group of villains. Your average sentai series does just fine with a single group of baddies for a whole 51 episodes or so, but you can do whatever you want with your game. *Sailor Moon* and *Power Rangers* both periodically introduced new story arcs and new villains, and for that matter each of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*'s seven seasons had its own "big bad." Sometimes these differing groups of bad guys are connected to each other, and other times they have absolutely nothing in common. New seasons are also an opportunity to introduce new allies and new toys for the heroes.

Action Resolution

If a hero wants to do something and the outcome is (1) important and (2) in question, it's time to break out the dice.

First, the player explains what it is his character wants to do. The GM decides what attribute the action should be based on; that attribute is how many dice you roll for the action. You can get Bonus Dice (see below) from certain Edges, from doing stuff that's really cool, and sometimes from doing stuff that works with a Descriptor (see p. 20) your character has. Sometimes you can get a penalty too.

Anyway, whatever the action is, it has a **Target**; this is the number you have to match or exceed on a six-sided die in order for that die to count as a **Success**. The more successes you get the better the action turns out. Most of the time the Target is 4 (so each die counts as a Success 50% of the time). In a given action the Target is always the same for all the dice rolled for a given character, regardless of whether they're from attributes, Bonus Dice, or Hero Dice.

If your action is in direct opposition to someone—this happens constantly in combat—whoever gets the most successes wins, and a tie is a tie. If you don't have another character opposing you, you'll need to achieve a number of successes set by the GM, depending on how hard the action is.

Particularly in combat, the GM is encouraged to let the player explain how his hero's action turns out based on the dice. Say something like, "You hit him; how?" and the player gets to come up with a result that's consistent with the game mechanics.

If everyone is at a loss for what attribute to use for an action, the GM can make up an attribute level appropriate to the character's concept.

Bonus Dice (And Penalties)

An Attribute rank is the starting point for how many dice a player gets to roll, but a lot of things can change it. When something adds to the number of dice, these are called Bonus Dice. When something impairs the character and makes them roll fewer dice, they're Penalties. No matter how many penalties a hero gets, he always gets to roll at least one die for an action.

GMs should feel free to award one or two bonus dice whenever a player describes an action in a particularly cool or inventive way. It's possible to penalize players for particularly bland, uninspiring actions, but try to keep this to a minimum.

When a Descriptor is attached to a character trait, the hero gets one Bonus Die for actions that epitomize the descriptor, and a one die penalty for actions that totally go against it.

Finally, some Edges can add Bonus Dice to actions. There are some that add a bonus to any action where certain skills come into play (like Profession and Knack), and also special powers that add bonus dice when they're used.

Hero Dice also work very much like Bonus Dice when they're used; see below.

Cooperative Actions

When multiple characters work together on an action, first designate one of them as the "leader." The leader rolls his dice normally, while everyone else gets Target modifiers, reducing the chances of getting Successes. If it's not clear who should be the leader, it defaults to the character who is rolling the most dice for the action.

If a character is able to tangibly help out they get to **assist**. Rolls made for assisting have +1 to the Target (so the basic Target becomes 5). If a hero can't directly help his teammate out, he can still **encourage** them, by offering moral support, cheering them on, showing solidarity, or in some cases just kibitzing. Rolls for encouragement have +2 to the Target (base 6), and are usually a Spirit roll.

Regardless, *everyone's* Successes are added together.

Hero Dice

Hero Dice are one of the most important, central game mechanics in *Tokyo Heroes*, so pay close attention. Hero Dice are a pool of extra dice that all of the heroes on the team can use, and all of them contribute to. When playing the game, ideally the Hero Dice should be a physical pile of dice in the middle of the table, where everyone playing can reach. All of the player characters have the responsibility of doing stuff in during the game that contributes to the group's available Hero Dice, and this lets every character contribute to the group's success, even if they aren't necessarily all that useful in a fight.

However, Hero Dice do not carry over from one episode to the next, so you should try to get the most out of them during the episode.

Earning Hero Dice

Characters earn Hero Dice using *Keys*. A Key is something the character strongly believes in, that makes them feel more alive. By default, a team has two Team Keys, and each character has an additional Aspect Key.

There are also some "universal keys" that apply to *all* heroes:

- **Being There:** At the start of the session the pool is always empty; when the first scene begins, each hero automatically contributes one Hero Die.
- **Being Heroic:** This should go without saying, but doing heroic things is worth Hero Dice. Gain 1 Hero Die for helping someone out. Gain 2-3 Hero Dice for helping someone at a substantial personal risk.
- **Fun Factor:** Having fun is important, so players are rewarded for doing stuff that makes the game more fun to play.
- **Cool Factor:** Finally, players can earn Hero Dice for doing stuff that's just plain cool.

When a character does something that fulfills one of his Keys the GM awards 1-3 Hero Dice to the pool. It's not necessary to announce what it's for or even from whom, but go for it if you're so inclined. The GM should have a list of each hero's Keys on hand.

Team Keys are slightly different from Aspect and Personal Keys in that if the whole team gets a benefit from the Key the reward in Hero Dice isn't multiplied by the number of heroes. Instead it's just doubled. If the whole team with Pride does a big pose you'll usually get 4 Hero Dice total (which is nothing to sneeze at) rather than 2 per member.

Using Hero Dice

There are four ways to use Hero Dice; the simplest and most common is for rolling dice. A hero can normally only use 5 Hero Dice on an action at a time, though if the relevant attribute is over 5 he can use as many as his attribute level. However, multiple characters can assist or encourage a teammate and spend Hero Dice themselves. Once a Hero Die is rolled, it's gone from the group's pool. You have to declare that you're using Hero Dice before you roll any dice for an action.

Hero Dice can also be *spent* on using certain Edges. Spending a Hero Die means you give it up without rolling it for anything and get a certain benefit for it.

Heroes can spend Hero Dice to **restore lost Stamina**; this is *really* important in longer battles. Each Hero Die spent restores 8 Stamina to one hero.

Finally, a hero can sometimes use them on *temporary Edges*; see below.

Ally Characters can earn Hero Dice if the GM sees fit, but only players can use Hero Dice. If an AC is being controlled by the GM any player can grant them to that character for any of the usual purposes. This also means that a GM-controlled AC needs a player's permission to use any Edges that consume Hero Dice.

Temporary Edges

If the GM allows, players can sometimes use Hero Dice or Karma points to gain a single use of an Edge they don't normally have. This can happen for any number of reasons, but it's especially appropriate for heroes that have some kind of flexible power at their disposal, such as magic.

A temporary Edge costs 3 Hero Dice/Karma per Edge selection. However, if the character has some kind of character trait (an Edge, Descriptor, etc.) that relates to the temporary Edge, the cost should be reduced to 2 or even 1. For example, if a character wants to fly for some reason, ordinarily it would cost 3 Hero Dice, but if he had Special Power: Wind Sorcery, a discount could be in order.

Going Solo

Sometimes a hero will split off from the team—not merely splitting up to cover more ground, but legitimately breaking from them. When this happens, regardless of the solo hero's motivations or how long this separation lasts, he loses access to the team's Hero Dice. However, he can still earn Hero Dice of his own, and he can spend Karma points in place of Hero Dice. If/when he rejoins the group, he gets access to their Hero Dice again, and any personal Hero Dice he has become part of the team's pool.

Battles

In sentai and magical girl anime alike the situation inevitably comes down to a battle. In *Tokyo Heroes* battles are big and flashy and a really big deal, but tactics aren't all that important.

For battles it's *extremely* helpful for the GM to have some kind of scratch paper or notepad handy. While a certain amount of the necessary paperwork can be diverted elsewhere—Hero Dice are represented by actual dice, and players can keep track of their own characters' current Stamina—the GM gets to keep track of the rest. This is especially important for initiative; I recommend writing each participating character's name and initiative roll result, then writing a horizontal line as they declare their actions, and a vertical line through it once they actually perform those actions.

Initiative

Things start off with **rolling initiative**. Rather than rolling a bunch of dice, roll one, and take the actual number on the die and add it to the character's Initiative Value. Characters can spend one and only one Hero Die on initiative and add that number to the total, on top of the first die. During rounds after the first, players have the option of rolling initiative again to see if they can get a higher result, but they can only roll once each round, and have to stick with the new result.

Declaring Actions

Battles are divided into **rounds**; this is the amount of time it takes for everyone involved in the battle to take one turn. How long this takes in actual seconds in the

game world is deliberately ambiguous; no one is penalized for taking time to banter with enemies. The round begins with **declaring actions** for each participating character; this is done in reverse initiative order, from lowest to highest, giving the characters that rolled higher an advantage planning out what they want to do. Players only need to give the generalities of their intended actions; saying who you want to attack is sufficient, and it's not yet necessary to explain how you're going to jump into the air, kick off the wall, and do a spinning strike with your twin swords. If your hero is defending himself, you don't need to declare who he's defending against.

If a character wants to attempt a normal action—running, climbing, shouting, driving, carrying, decoding, etc.—just use the normal Action Resolution rules, assuming it's something where dice even need to be rolled. If the character is trying a combat action, things get a little more complicated.

Regardless, sometimes a character's declared action will be rendered pointless or impossible by the time his actual turn comes around. When this happens, he doesn't have to go through the motions of the action, and he can opt to do a basic defense action instead.

Attacking and Defending

The two most common actions taken by characters in combat are attacking and defending. Attacking usually means using an Edge (Basic Attack, Special Attack, or Finishing Attack). Any character can defend using the basic Defense attribute, and there are also Special Defense Edges.

Attacking

To attack, the player names who or what he's attacking and with what kind of attack during the Declaring Actions step. From there we get the number of dice to be rolled, and in turn the number of successes. Most attacks take off an amount of Stamina points (see below) equal to the number of Successes they score.

If **two characters are attacking each other** in the same round, the one with the most successes lands his attack so quickly and so hard that the opponent's attack misses or doesn't even come out! The guy who rolled higher does full damage and takes none himself.

If **a character is attacking a character who is attacking someone else**, it depends on initiative order. If the new attacker can go first, he can prevent his target from attacking if he gets more Successes, but otherwise his attack hits after.

Chained Attacks

Magical girls in particular like to assail an opponent with their special attacks one after the other, often in a single turn. In game terms the advantage to be had here is that it can temporarily lower an enemy's Resistance, making them that much easier to finish off.

The heroes need to declare that they're chaining attacks before attacking; a successfully chained attack against an opponent with no Stamina left will lower the target's Resistance by 1 (or 2 if it's a Finishing Attack), but characters regain Resistance

lost in this way at a rate of 1 per round. An opponent's Resistance cannot be reduced below half (rounded up) its base in this fashion.

Worrying

"Worrying" (transitive verb) an opponent means giving chase and throwing out attacks that are more threats and harassment than actual damage. Bad guys love to do this to magical girls, but since it's a good way to keep someone busy without hurting them too much it can also be a handy tool for the good guys every now and then. You can worry an opponent with any non-finishing attack. Worrying works just like an ordinary attack (and to the target is initially indistinguishable from such), but no matter how many successes are scored it only knocks of 1 point of Stamina if it hits.

Defending

Defending takes up a character's entire action, and the player needs to explain how the character is defending. Is he weaving and dodging? Ducking for cover? Or just being really, really tough? Regardless, the number of successes scored on the attack is actually directly subtracted from the successes (damage) scored by the opponent, so defending will *always* reduce damage as long as the character has managed to get one or more successes. Defenders do not have to declare who or what they're defending against, but they may get penalties trying to defend against attacks they can't see. Defending lets a character resist damage from multiple attacks, but you use the number of successes rolled for the first one, and subtract one from the effective number of successes for each attack after the first.

Another option for defending is to try for a **counterattack**. Whether this can be pulled off depends on the nature of the attacks being used, but it usually takes something that can somehow clash with the enemy's attack. Using an energy blast against another energy blast is the simplest kind of counterattack. The defender has to declare a counterattack after the opponent has declared an attack (and thus the defender has to have a better initiative roll). If one of the two attacks has double the successes of the other, it goes through and does full damage. Otherwise they clash and fizzle out, but it looks *really* cool.

Heroes also occasionally have to **defend someone else**. If the hero is just putting himself in the way of an attack (and thus taking full damage himself), he can pull it off *automatically*, unless there's too much distance to clear or some such (make an Athletics roll?). Pulling the victim out of the way or doing something fancy to knock the attack out of the air works as a normal defense or counterattack.

Split Actions

If a character is really determined to do *two* (or more) things in one turn, he can. The catch is that every action gets a penalty equal to the number of actions being performed (two actions gets a –2 penalty, 3 gets a –3 penalty, etc.). This can be used to attack and defend, make two attacks, attack and assist a teammate, etc. Bad guys should be using this a lot when they have to deal with several heroes at once.

Taking Damage

When an attack hits successfully it knocks off as many points of Stamina as it gets Successes. A character can never go below zero Stamina, and for heroes and villains getting down there means the character is a bit beat up and winded, but not yet defeated or even slowed down much. However, being at zero stamina makes a character much more vulnerable to being knocked out or destroyed by a finishing attack.

When an attack hits, the player should narrate a result that's consistent with the in-game effects of the attack (how many Stamina points are lost, whether it was a finishing attack, etc.) as well as the "flavor text" of the attack. In sentai shows any halfway decent hit makes "sentai sparks" (pyrotechnics) fly out of the target, while magical girls tend to take light injuries and get constricted or winded by attacks.

Finishing Attacks

Taking an opponent down requires attempting an extra-forceful attack that knocks them out or destroys them. An attack bought with the Finishing Attack edge is the optimum way to do this, but a Special Attack can be used in a pinch. This has to be declared in advance, and suffers a +1 Target modifier.

If an attack being used as a finisher hits, it finishes the target off if it gets at least as many successes as their Resistance. If the target has any Stamina left, the Finishing Attack takes the Stamina off, but every point of Stamina removed counts against the Successes of the Finishing Attack for the purpose of determining whether it scores a KO. If a character is knocked out while they still have Stamina left, his Stamina is automatically brought down to 0.

Bad guys who are finished are usually outright destroyed. If it's appropriate to the campaign, it's possible that certain special attacks can purify things that have been corrupted into monsters and return them to normal. In sentai, generals often have ways of making their monsters become giant-sized after being defeated (see p. 54).

Heroes who are "finished" are knocked clean out of their transformations and are usually too beat up and winded to do more than crawl on the ground until they have time to rest.

Death

As you can see, *Tokyo Heroes* is not a deadly game at all. In fact, even though monsters can cause suffering to thousands of people, those effects magically vanish when the monster is defeated. In *Kamen Rider* the extras don't have it so easy; people hurt by monsters stay hurt, and often die from it.

Heroes are even less likely to die. A hero can only die if at least one of the following conditions is met:

1. The player *wants* the hero to die because it'll make the game more interesting.
2. The series is ending within a couple of scenes.
3. The hero is definitely going to come back within an episode or two (even if in-game it doesn't look that way at the time).

If you want to make the game more deadly, simply have finishing attacks finish characters off. Heroes who are successfully finished are put into critical condition and require immediate medical attention to survive, or (if the attack scores 5 or more successes above the hero's Resistance) killed outright.

If a player voluntarily had his hero die and wants to make a new one, the new guy gets the original hero's total Attribute points to distribute however desired, keeps the same number of open Personal Edges, and gets 10 Karma.

Transforming

The city is in trouble; an evil monster is blowing shit up, the police are totally powerless, and everyone else is just running around screaming. Except you. You coolly pull up your sleeve to reveal the special bracelet on your right wrist. This bracelet is proof of who you are; you shout and wave your arms, and suddenly you become someone else. You become a hero, a hero dressed in red. And you go in there and kick some ass, because at the end of the day justice has to win.

In this game heroes have to transform in order to use their full powers. Without transforming, a character is just an unusually good-looking and competent human being. That's great and all, but when it comes time to fend off armor-plated killing machines from outer space you'll be at a bit of a disadvantage. Non-transformed heroes (not to mention normal people—they still have those) get a +1 Target modifier for all combat-related actions, take double damage to Stamina, and do half damage themselves (halve/double after the dice are rolled).

Edges relating to the hero's powers also become unavailable, although the actual Special Power Edge is often an exception, and *occasionally* Basic Attack (in the form of a sidearm). Sentai heroes are never seen piloting their robots without transforming first. It might be that the robot is too dangerous to pilot otherwise.

Transforming typically requires the use of some kind of item—a bracelet, a magic wand, a pendant, a cell phone, etc. Some of these amplify the hero's natural power, while others are a source of power unto themselves. A hero would probably be unable to transform without this item, but it should never get lost for any length of time.

Especially when it comes to magical girl anime, the infamous transformation sequence is specifically meant to take up time and save on production costs. However in the actual story the transformation is almost instantaneous; heroes can literally transform so fast that they can interrupt an attack with it.

Transforming Defense

When an attack is flying towards a non-transformed hero, he can spend a Hero Die to transform a split-second before the attack hits and emerge from it completely unscathed. This can only be used once per episode.

Robots

In *Tokyo Heroes* the action happens at one of two different *scales*. Most of the time things are at *human scale*, but occasionally there's a need to shift to *robot scale*.

Any action that takes place using Vehicle Defenders (but not with mundane vehicles) or Giant Robots is considered to be at robot scale.

Truth be told the two scales seldom interact; sentai heroes traditionally only bring out their robots when they're presented with a robot scale opponent, and they're good at doing so before the enemy has a chance to attack them. When robot scale things fight other robot scale things, the rules work normally, even though the action is assumed to be big enough that the combatants are tall enough to stand above the buildings of downtown Tokyo.

Between Scales

When robot scale things interact with human scale things, there's a 1:5 damage ratio; if a robot scores 4 successes on an attack, it takes 20 Stamina off of a human scale target, while a human scale attacker would have to get 5 successes just to take 1 Stamina off of a robot. However, human scale things get a –1 Target modifier for trying to dodge stuff thrown at them by robots.

Ignoring Scale

Every now and then a hero operating at human scale manages to do some serious damage to a robot. Instead of requiring astronomical numbers of successes, the GM can let a hero do this by spending Hero Dice or Karma (3 total, in any combination). This is good for one *action* only, so it pays to pick your opening very carefully, but it looks damn impressive.

Piloting Robots

When piloting a robot, a hero uses his usual attributes for everything; robots first are foremost serve to bring a hero's natural abilities into a bigger scale. A robot has its own Stamina and Resistance ratings, and it needs its own Edges to do attacks; characters can't use their own attack Edges through a robot.

If a robot is a Group Asset everyone in the team works together to pilot the thing. Most of the time whoever is taking the lead rolls normally and everyone else is assisting him; no one ever has to merely encourage if they're helping pilot. If two heroes should disagree on what they want the robot to do, they roll and whoever gets more successes wins, but his opponent's successes subtract from his own.

Karma Points

While Hero Dice represent the group's overall performance and the individual heroes' contributions to it, Karma is a character's individual achievements.

There are two general ways in which Karma can be used; it can be **spent** or **invested.** When you spend Karma, you give it up and get some benefit in return, such as improving a character trait or using your Aspect's special ability. When you invest Karma, what you're doing is temporarily surrendering a certain amount of Karma points while you do something, and getting back some of it, all of it, or all of it plus a bonus, depending on how well that panned out, as per the following table:

Performance	Return
Crap	0-25%
Mediocre	50%
Fair	100%
Good	125%
Great	150%
Excellent	200%
Legendary!	300%

Gaining Karma

There are a few different ways to gain Karma points. Starting characters get 5 Karma of course, and the amount they have can be increased by investing it, but characters get additional Karma mainly when the GM hands it out at the end of each episode. Karma point awards should be specific; don't give everyone the same amount!

The characters gets 1 Karma just for the player showing up to the game. He also gets 1-3 Karma each time his Heroic Flaw comes into play. Additional Karma should be awarded for roleplaying, for taking the initiative in succeeding at whatever the episode is about, and for generally making the game more fun.

Unlike Hero Dice, Karma can be saved up between episodes, but a character can't have more than 40 Karma stored at a time; anything more has to be either spent at the end of the session or lost.

Improving Attributes and Buying Edges

The only way for a character's attributes to get better is to spend Karma points on them. Edges can sometimes be gained by other means (see New Toys, p. 50), but they can also be bought by spending Karma. An individual attribute can only go up by 1 point per episode and only 1 point at a time, no matter how many Karma points you have handy to spend on it.

The GM has final say on whether a character can improve/buy something; it should be consistent with what's plausible for the campaign. Characters can pick up new stuff as they go along, undergo special training (which can be a good plot for an episode), or just reveal some new talent that the character "always" had but never used before.

Improving an attribute by 1 point costs Karma points equal to the new attribute level, times 4. So, raising Brains from 4 to 5 costs (5x4) = 20 Karma points.

Buying a new Edge costs 8 Karma.

Using Ally Characters

Players have the option of investing Karma in order to control an Ally Character for one scene. The player assumes the role of that AC and controls his actions, and the return on the Karma investment depends on how that performance went. This works best for scenes where the Ally Character is operating independently, but a

player can opt to either juggle both characters at once or let his regular character be treated as an AC for a while.

Aspect Abilities

Each Aspect includes a special ability that lets the character use Karma for a special effect. See the Aspect descriptions (p. 21) for more details.

Spotlight Episodes

During the Preview phase of an episode (see p. 39) a player can invest Karma (minimum 8) to give his character a "spotlight episode" next time. For that episode, that character is going to be at the center of the story; he gets a –1 Target modifier, and any time that character earns Hero Dice he nets one extra Hero Die. Also, other players are allowed and encouraged to kibitz, offering up ideas and advice to that hero's player. Players wanting a spotlight episode should announce this at the end of the session before (during the Preview) to give the GM time to plan. The GM has final say on whether or not to grant a spotlight episode, and a given character can never have two in a row.

Normally only one player can get a spotlight episode at a time; if more than one player wants one, whoever is willing to invest more Karma gets their way. However, there can occasionally be spotlight episodes about a pairing of heroes, meant to show and develop their relationship. Both players must invest the same amount of Karma and will get the same return, and both get the usual benefits.

If a new character is being introduced, that character gets a spotlight episode for free, though if it's an Ally Character, he should be controlled by players for the majority of the episode's scenes. New robots also get the effects of a spotlight episode applied to everyone piloting them during their debut battle—just the one battle though, not the whole episode.

Also, a character doesn't have to have paid for a Spotlight Episode for a given episode to be about them.

New Toys

"I've finished the modifications; Dyna-Robo will now be able to combine with Dyna-Wing. The new Dyna-Wing Robo will be five times as strong!"

Especially in the more toyetic sentai series, heroes will be getting new gear all the time. Their robots seem to get upgrades—new weapons, transformations, combinations, etc.—all the time. If the players had to spend Karma on these it'd be too expensive, but they don't. While players *can* spend Karma on new Edges for their characters, the big new toys simply come when the GM decides to play Santa Claus. This can be a result of the heroes completing some task, or simply some kind of random windfall or development.

Robots!

In sentai this is especially important for robots. Sentai heroes are constantly acquiring completely new robots, new ways to combine more of their existing robots, and occasionally finding out that there was yet another robot under their noses the whole time. When the sixth ranger shows up with his one-man robot, it's just a matter of time before they work out a way to combine it with the team's original robot.

Newly acquired robots (including ones that are actually new combinations of existing robots) act as though everyone piloting them is having a spotlight episode for the robot's first battle scene.

The Empowered Ranger

One fun "toy" that sentai heroes sometimes get is the "empowered ranger." Essentially, it lets all of the team members give a portion of their power to the leader (Red Ranger), giving him a boost in power and access to some new powers. Using this ability weakens the other rangers somewhat, but it can give the Red Ranger the boost he needs to take out a bad guy that seemed unbeatable before. In game terms this is represented by the *Empowered Hero* Edge (see p. 31).

Bad Guys

Naturally, the good guys need bad guys to fight. When it comes to creating and fielding bad guys, this is the section you need. Before we begin in earnest, there are some things we need to make clear about how bad guys are handled in this game:

First of all, with a couple exceptions, in this game **bad guys don't roll dice**. Instead, their Attributes are used as a static number of Successes. This is partly just so the GM has a lot less die-rolling and paperwork to do, and partly a thematic/genre thing. The heroes are the waves and the enemies are the mountain; the good guys are passionate and chaotic in an otherwise coldly ordered universe. There's also no villainous equivalent of Hero Dice. If you really want you can have bad guys that use dice and have a Villain Dice pool—and it would be especially appropriate for enemy rangers/magical girls—but it's not the default for the game. To make this clearer in the text, when a GM character has this kind of Attribute the number is written in square brackets (e.g., "Attack [7]"), and if you want to have that enemy roll dice instead the number should be increased by a third. There are two exceptions to this rule: bad guys still roll for initiative, and Mooks work totally differently and do use dice.

Also, **bad guys are strong**. It's a practical concern, really. Old-school *Kamen Rider* villains only had to fight the one hero, but sentai villains in particular need to be able to stand up to a team of heroes working together like a well-oiled machine. This isn't as true of magical girl villains, but that's mainly because magical girls mostly use Special Attacks and don't mix it up with Basic Attack that knock off lots of Stamina. Smart bad guys will frequently use **Split Actions** (see p. 45) to attack and defend during the same round when fighting a team of heroes.

And finally, bad guys' Stamina and Resistance aren't balanced the same way as for heroes. Stamina in particular is based on how long the battle is supposed to last.

Villain Character Traits

Villains have many of the same traits as heroes, but not all. In particular, they don't have Keys, Aspects, Karma, or Hero Dice.

Energy, Initiative, Resistance, Stamina

Energy: Villains don't have Hero Dice, or even a bad-guy equivalent (no "Villain Dice" in this game), so any time they happen to have a trait that would ordinarily call for spending Hero Dice (or Karma), they spend points of Energy instead. Bad guys can have any number of Energy, but half their Resistance is a good starting point. Admittedly, Energy is kind of arbitrary in the first place, but if a villain runs out and you still want him to keep using Edges that require spending Energy, one way to be somewhat fair about it is to give the players a Hero Die for every 4 Energy the villain gets restored.

Initiative: Initiative is the one thing where bad guys still should roll dice. Calculate their Initiative rating as *Attack + Brains*, just like a hero.

Resistance: For villains, Resistance is a measure of how much power the heroes need to bring to bear all at once to take them out. A weak villain could have as little as 5, but 8-12 is typical, and anything over 16 is insanely powerful.

Stamina: For villains, Stamina is basically a measure of how long the GM wants the battle to last, and can range anywhere from as low as 20 or so, into the hundreds for ludicrously powerful major villains.

Villain Edges

Bad guys have Edges just like heroes do; they can use normal hero Edges and/or the special villain-only Edges below in any combination. Bad guys really have all kinds of different powers, and you should feel free to make up new Edges if it suits your game.

Influencing Powers

Bad guys have access to a lot of Edges that transform or control people, notably **Corrupt**, **Drain**, **Enslave**, and **Reduce**. These can generally only be used on one person at a time, unless the villain has some special means of spreading them to multiple people over time. So for example a villain with Enslave could control people one at a time by touching his tentacle sucker to their foreheads, or she could get dozens by running an evil cram school, or thousands by selling a popular evil card game, but each step up in magnitude makes it require more time.

Normal people are pretty much defenseless against this kind of power; a monster runs around town using it, and leaves behind screwed-up people wherever he goes. Heroes fare a little better; they can defend against such as though they were a Special Attacks. However, if a player thinks it would make the game more interesting, he can opt to have his character automatically be affected, in exchange for some Karma points.

Regardless, in most sentai genres the effects of these kinds of powers magically disappear when the villain that caused them is defeated. People who were mind controlled snap out of it, people who were turned into gemstones change back to normal, etc.

Blast Attack

Because life isn't fair, unlike heroes bad guys can have area effect attacks, allowing them to repel an entire team with one shot. A blast works like a Basic Attack, but can hit up to a ten-foot area (so a sentai team standing too close together is easy to hit all at once) and costs one point of Energy. Each target can defend separately.

For a more powerful Blast Attack, you can spend an extra Edge to add either +2 dice to the Attack roll, or +3 for a cost of 1 additional Energy.

Corrupt

This is the power to put negative energy into things, making them turn bad in some way. A given villain usually only has one particular way in which to corrupt things, and this should be specified when the villain is created. Particularly when it

can affect people, Corrupt often has to do with a monster's theme; a money-monster might make people greedy, for example. Corrupt is pretty flexible, and the GM should decide whether a given monster needs to touch someone, shoot them with a beam, sprinkle them with spores, etc. in order to cause the effect.

Dark Dimension

Dark Dimension is a power similar to Dimensional Arena (see p. 30). It draws targets into a small pocket dimension, where the villain has the advantage. The villain has to make a successful Attack roll and spend 2 Energy per target being drawn in (no Energy is spent if the roll fails). This works more or less the same as Dimensional Arena, though instead of a –1 Target modifier the villain gets two additional successes on all her actions.

Drain

Drain lets a villain pull energy out of people; victims are weakened, and the villain grows stronger and can use the energy for nefarious purposes. Treat this like a Special Attack or Blast Attack (pick one), but each Success over the target takes a point of "energy" from them. Normal people have 6 points of energy, and when they lose all of these they fall unconscious. Heroes can choose to have the drain come from their Hero Dice or Stamina. A villain who has successfully drained people can use the energy as though it were his own Energy points, or hold onto it and take it back to his superiors.

Enlarge

This is the power to change oneself or a monster into a giant size (robot scale) version. A general with this Edge usually has some power that lets him turn monsters into giants, while a monster with this Edge automatically changes into a giant when defeated. If this is a power that can be used on other creatures, or if it can be switched on and off at will, it costs 6 Energy. Sentai villains usually use this on a monster after it's been defeated in human-scale combat, though *Power Rangers* villains tend to do it whenever they feel like it.

Enslave

Enslave is a powerful Edge that lets the villain control someone's mind. He can usually only put his mind control onto one person at a time, but can accumulate any number of mind-controlled drones. How people act when mind-controlled varies depending on the nature of the mind control. Some become completely mindless, while others remain themselves apart from being eager (at times a little too eager) to serve their new master. Regardless, a mind-controlled character can sometimes be made to snap out of it—or at least hesitate—if they're forced to do something that goes too strongly against their own nature.

Entangling Attack

Many bad guys have the ability to launch tentacles, nets, etc. to bind a hero. This acts like a typical Special Attack (and adds +2 Attack dice per Edge spent on it), except that instead of inflicting damage it restricts the victim's movement. For each Success scored on an Entangling Attack above the target's defense roll (if any), the victim suffers a penalty of one die to all physical actions. The entanglement can be destroyed by inflicting as many damage points as it originally scored Successes, but this does not damage the attacker.

Escape

Certain bad guys have a unique knack for leaving the scene before the heroes can mess them up too much. Escape costs 4 Energy, and unless extraordinary means are brought to bear, the villain will escape, and for the moment the heroes will be unable to follow. This could take the form of teleporting, digging into the ground, or just about anything else.

Human Form

A bad guy with this Edge has the ability to take on a convincing human form. Most use this to infiltrate human society to wreak havoc or just lie in wait, but there are those who want to live peacefully too.

Hyper-Speed

Every now and then, heroes encounter a villain who is a speed demon. He moves so damn fast that they can scarcely see the sucker, much less defeat him. A villain with Hyper-Speed can spend 2 Energy to get a –1 Target modifier and one extra action for one round. This can only be done once per round, but a villain can purchase Hyper-Speed multiple times to use it more than once in a single round.

Mimic

Mimics can be particularly obnoxious and dangerous villains. In addition to whatever powers he might have on his own, a villain with this Edge can copy the abilities of others, friend or foe. For every Edge spent on Mimic, the villain can copy one Edge worth of special abilities.

Minions

A villain with this Edge has some minions he can call at a moment's notice, whether they're guys standing by to be teleported, or a part of the villain's body, or something else. Buying this Edge once nets the villain either 8 mooks or one monster.

Reduce

Reduce is the power to turn people into something less than people. They could be dehydrated and turned into powder, transformed into trees, or whatever. Usually this requires a direct attack against a single target.

Regeneration

Some particularly dangerous bad guys can automatically heal damage done to them. For each Edge spent on Regeneration, the villain can either automatically regain 4 Stamina per round, or spend 1 Energy to regain 8 Stamina in one round (select one of these when the Edge is taken).

Villainous Flaws

Like heroes, villains too are imperfect, and as such each villain should have a Villainous Flaw. Most of the Heroic Flaws described on p. 28 can be used as Villainous Flaws, but below are a few that are largely specific to bad guys.

- **Cold Logic:** Some villains are too calculating for their own good; they *always* do what they believe will net them the biggest advantage. No sacrifice is too great for the ultimate cause, and if allies must fall by the wayside, so be it.
- **Egotism:** Some villains are just too caught up in their own awesomeness, real or imagined. They detest being questioned by those they consider beneath them, and tend to assume that they've done things perfectly, only to blame others when things go wrong.
- **Gloating:** Quite a few villains just can't keep their big toothy maws shut. Left to their own devices they'll talk to themselves about their villainous plans, and if they think they've got the heroes incapacitated, they're twice as likely to gloat, spilling everything to their enemies.
- **Obsession:** Some villains, especially monsters with a strong theme, are obsessed with something to the point where it defines their whole existence.
- **Sniveling Coward:** There are those bad guys who got into the villainy business in spite of having a strong aversion to pain. If a Sniveling Coward thinks he's going to lose, he'll do whatever he can to escape the situation, and isn't above sucking up, begging for his life, or betraying his allies (unless they scare him even more).
- **Twisted Infatuation:** This villain is in love with one of the heroes, but it's a dark, twisted kind of love. She could be completely willing to kill him, but will do anything to make sure that *she* gets to do it when and how she chooses. Regardless, for one particular hero, she will sometimes hesitate or have her judgment clouded.

Types of Bad Guys

Mooks (Sentai)

"Mooks" are the minor bit-part bad guys who get mowed through by the heroes. The term "mook" is from Hong Kong action movies, and Extra, Faceless Minion, Generic Ninja, and other terms will work just as well in a pinch. Sentai villains routinely send a big crowd of them against the heroes, and most sentai series feature only one type of mook. Mooks are really weak—when an attack is directed at a group, *every* success wipes one out—and their purpose is really more as a distraction. How-

ever, normal people are mostly helpless against them, so the heroes really are needed to take care of them.

When heroes are fighting a group of mooks, roll one die for each mook a hero or group of hero is dealing with. Each success scored by a mook is a potential point of damage done to one of the heroes, but each success scored on a hero attacking them negates one of those successes and takes out a single mook, while each success scored on a hero defending against them negates *two* of their successes.

Monsters

As in, "monster of the week." These are creatures sent by the more powerful bad guys to wreak havoc. At this level there's usually some special term used for the monsters, either a relatively generic Japanese word like *youma* or *mamono*, or some special made-up word specific to the type of bad guy in that series (Alienizer, Jakanja, etc.). The generals (see below) usually have either a stock of various monsters to call on, or a special power that lets them create a new one for each episode.

Attributes: A typical monster is on par with an individual hero in terms of attributes, even if their attributes are likely skewed more towards fighting (Attack and Defense). 15 points worth of Attributes should be sufficient.

Energy: A typical monster's Energy should be about half of its Stamina.

Resistance: A typical monster has a Resistance of 6-10.

Stamina: A typical monster has 20-40 Stamina, though it could have more if the battle is meant to be especially protracted, or all the way down to *zero* if it's a throwaway monster meant to be beaten quickly.

Edges: A monster's Edges are the main thing that lets him really make himself a nuisance to the heroes, especially if he can use area effect attacks to knock all of them down at once. 3-5 Edges should be sufficient for a typical monster.

Generals

The "generals" are the main boss bad guy's right-hand men, and they're usually spearheading the organization's efforts to wreak havoc on Earth. At the start of the series, generals will be much too powerful for the heroes to take on themselves, but, conveniently, something or other keeps them from engaging the heroes directly very often. Instead, they have some means of sending monsters down to do their bidding. Some generals just have a "staff" of monsters that's waiting to be called on, while others have some special power that lets them create monsters.

Generals usually don't get along with each other. Even though they ostensibly are serving the same master in pursuit of the same goals, evil overlords tend to create a high-pressure, competitive work environment where failure is severely punished. Sometimes generals just don't like each other, and once in a while there's a schemer who wants to become the next big boss. All kinds of crazy situations can pop up through their scheming and politicking, but remember that this all needs to take a back seat to the heroes.

Attributes: Generals are much stronger than starting heroes, and should have 20+ points worth of attributes.

Energy: This depends on how the particular general operates, but half of his Stamina is a good figure here as well.

Resistance: A typical general has a Resistance of 12 or more.

Stamina: Generals usually have 50 or more Stamina.

Edges: A typical general can have as many as 10 Edges, though unlike the monsters that serve them they're less likely to bother with stuff like Corrupt or Reduce.

The Boss

The boss is the main bad guy in charge of the whole operation. Bosses are exceedingly powerful, and heroes inevitably can't fight them until the very end of the series (or season). Fortunately, even more so than their generals, bosses can't or won't get into the action directly.

Attributes: A boss' attributes are nuts. 30 points worth isn't out of the question.

Energy: For a final boss villain, don't even bother with Energy. He can use any of his Edges are much as he wants, unless the heroes figure out some way of stopping him.

Resistance: Taking out a boss usually requires extreme measures, and possibly doing something crazy to make him weaker. Otherwise he'll be a tough cookie, with a Resistance of 15 or more.

Stamina: Taking out a boss can also be time-consuming, and Stamina of 100 or more isn't out of the question.

Edges: Defeating a boss villain takes really extraordinary effort, and his overwhelming strength is reflected in his potent Edges as well as elsewhere. Heavily stacked Special Attacks and Special Defenses are typical, though some dangerous special powers will help too.

Evil Rangers

In manga and other Japanese media there's a cliché that pops up every now and then where a team of heroes encountered a team of villains where each of them is meant to be a sort of evil reflection of one of the good guys. While in, say, martial arts anime the connections between the two rivals tends to be more subtle, in sentai there are occasionally teams of "evil rangers," monsters deliberately created as dark parodies of the heroes. These creatures are color coded and have their own special attacks and such, but they're not anywhere near human, and usually lack vehicles. Apart from rival magical girls (see *The Fractured Team*, p. 69), it's rare (but not unknown) for similar monster teams to show up in magical girl anime.

Bad guy rangers should generally have the same stats as their heroic counterparts. Having a villain's static Attributes should give them enough of an advantage to be a challenge while lacking Hero Dice.

What Bad Guys Do

Goals

In sentai and magical girl series alike, the bad guys usually have pretty simple motivations. Destroying Earth is the most popular goal, whether by outright blowing it up or by changing it into something else more suitable to their needs. Sometimes there's something they want/need to get from Earth, a gizmo that will grant godlike power or allow a dying tyrant to become immortal. Plenty of bad guys also need to harvest something—energy or fear—from the people of Earth, which is a good way to give their monsters something to do.

You might be wondering why it is that if the heroes are operating out of Tokyo, the villains don't just go about their evil business in some part of the world that isn't Tokyo. A bunch of magical girls who are still in middle school would have a hard time getting to Kyoto on short notice, much less London or San Francisco, and even sentai heroes *usually* don't have a supersonic jet just sitting around. But really, if you're asking that kind of question you're probably thinking too hard. This is a genre where "just because" is a good enough answer sometimes. If there is a reason, it probably has to do with the bad guys either not being able to operate outside of a certain area (they have a base to operate out of too, or they can only go a certain distance from a dimensional portal). Or better yet, for some contrived reason they actually need something from the good guys that they can't just charge in and take.

Monster as Metaphor

Villains—especially the monster of the week—are often metaphors for whatever a hero is going through. This can be "coincidental," or there could be a villain watching the hero and creating monsters specifically to torment them, or anything between. The "DJ Neos" monster included below as an example would be great for a magical girl episode about fitting in and conformity. The *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* TV series, while usually a bit more subtle about it, did this kind of thing all the time.

Monster as Puzzle

Some monsters can't be beaten with brute force, and the task before the heroes becomes solving the puzzle of how to beat him. Sometimes the monster has only a single weakness that the heroes have to discover, and other times it's a matter of figuring out how to beat him without endangering innocents.

Sympathy for the Devil

I really wish things could be simple and black and white again. I know the world doesn't work that way, but the war against the Dark Queen at least seemed like it for a little while.

There was the time General Fate actually crossed swords with General Blaze after Blaze's monster tried to crush a bus full of elementary school kids. Fate sliced the monster in two, looked his ally right in the eye and said, "That isn't how we fight." I

really do think that he would've killed Blaze. He actually apologized to us. "I wish it didn't have to be like this," he said. I'd like that very much.

General Cross, the youngest of them, really just wanted to be a painter. If not for the Dark Queen using him, imbuing his paintings with magic to create monsters, he could've been a friend. And for April, more than a friend. Instead Blaze himself took Cross out; he literally stabbed him in the back. We should've known the Queen wouldn't have just let him go; that trap nearly put an end to everything.

And then there's Magical Girl Destiny. She should be fighting with us. I think she knows it too, but it's not like we can just become friends all of a sudden. Even if she was being tricked by the Dark Queen, Destiny has been our most dangerous enemy. Blaze is an evil bastard, but Destiny understands humanity just well enough to use it against us. However much I want to trust her, now that she's broken off from the Dark Queen, as soon as I remember that my brother Mick is still in the hospital…

Winter keeps saying that we might need her to survive—"when the five come together the Power of Miracles will appear"—but the idea of fighting alongside someone like that scares me. April says, "Rose isn't scared of anything," but she's wrong. Destiny scares me, because she knows how to hurt us in ways General Blaze could never imagine.

Sample Villains

Below are a handful of examples of different types of villains: a monster, a general, and a boss. There isn't any real need to have examples or stats of mooks per se, since they always function pretty much the same. Also, see p. 17 for Magical Girl Destiny, an example of a heroic character type turned to evil.

DJ Neos

"This is my kind of party! The deadly *kind of party! Let's raise the roof!"*
Concept: Mind-controlling DJ monster
Motivation: Control people, play music, break stuff
Attributes: Attack [4], Defense [3], Athletics [3], Brains [3], Spirit [2]
Energy: 20
Initiative: 7
Resistance: 8
Stamina: 40
Edges: Blast Attack (Bass Boom), Enslave (Musical Hypnotism), Human Form, Special Attack (Vinyl Shoot)
Villainous Flaw: Neos is obsessed with music to a fault, and can easily be distracted by interesting songs, or tortured by music he strongly dislikes.
Notes: There's a new DJ in town who's really heating up the scene. Every time he goes to an event and spins, people are entranced, and they go home and try to get all of their friends to attend his next event. So far no one suspects the truth, that "DJ Neos" is actually a monster sent to gather an army of mind-controlled humans. When the heroes do finally manage to corner him, they're confronted by a throng of people,

all dancing in unison to the music of this DJ monster. He can disguise himself as a cool DJ guy with a leather jacket and sunglasses, but when he reveals himself he's a 7-foot-tall creature made of black leather and metal, with speakers on either side of his head, in his stomach, and a few more all over this body, plus a cannon on his right arm that shoots vinyl records.

People who listen to his music for more than 30 minutes or so will fall under his spell. Outwardly they seem perfectly normal, apart from their insistence that his music is the greatest thing ever and hey, we should totally go to his next show on Wednesday. However, people who have been thus affected can be commanded by his music to do his bidding, provided they can still hear the music. His enslaved minions always dance while they're under his direct control.

General Cross

"Go away! I… I have to paint! She told me I have to paint!"
Concept: Tortured artist forced to create monsters
Motivation: Art. Everything is art!
Attributes: Attack [6], Defense [3], Athletics [3], Brains [6], Spirit [4]
Energy: 25
Initiative: 12
Resistance: 9
Stamina: 50
Edges: Blast Attack (Art Blast; +8 Attack dice), Dark Dimension (Painter's Imagination), Minions (Painting Monsters), Special Power (Magical Painting)
Villainous Flaw: Cross is emotionally unstable, and his grasp of reality is a little tenuous.
Notes: Cross is the youngest of the Dark Queen's generals, and the most pitiful. In spite of having grown up under the Dark Queen's savage rule, he was born with an eye for beauty that blossomed into a passion for painting. He would have been content to sit in his room and paint for the rest of his life, but the Queen, seeing the latent magical power in him, took him from his home and imprisoned him in her castle. Forced to paint monsters that come to life, he is in effect a general in name only, and being faced with these horrors on a regular basis has eroded his sanity.

He is a young man, about 17 years old, with short, wild white hair. He wears the uniform of the Dark Queen's generals, but his is worn and splattered with paint. He is never without a paintbrush.

When Cross does visit the human world—the Queen hoped he would find some inspiration at an art gallery showing of the macabre—he is caught off guard by April's beauty, and this is the beginning of an infatuation that could be his salvation, or bring about his end.

Cross hates to fight, but if he feels cornered or threatened he will fight back, bringing the full force of his painting magic to bear. While he detests being forced to work quickly, he can produce weapons, monsters, or even small worlds on the fly, or simply blast opponents with the full force of his tortured imagination.

Space Lord Zalbus

"Pathetic fools! You've come far, and your abilities are most impressive, but in the end… In the end it all comes to naught against my might!"

Concept: The Evil Space Emperor

Motivation: Conquer the universe and crush all who stand in my way!

Attributes: Attack [8], Defense [6], Athletics [4], Brains [6], Spirit [6]

Energy: Unlimited

Initiative: 14

Resistance: 15

Stamina: 90

Villainous Flaw: Zalbus enjoys a good challenge a little too much; he'll throw caution to the wind if he thinks there's an interesting fight to be had.

Edges: Basic Attack (weapons arsenal), Blast Attack (Missile Blaster; +4 Attack dice), Enlarge (can grow to Robot Scale), Finishing Attack (Supernova Blitz; +10 Attack dice, 5 Energy), Minions (lots), Special Attack (Lance of Despair; +6 Attack dice), Special Defense (Force Field; +6 Defense dice, 2 Energy)

Notes: The Space Lord Zalbus is the leader of the Zalbus Force, a marauding army that has thus far crushed everyone who stands in their way, and conquered every world that in their path. No one is quite sure what race he once was, because Zalbus has replaced much of his body with machine parts. This is his greatest strength and his only weakness; he has no capacity for mercy, none of the frailties of biological creatures, but he needs to spend time each day connected to a massive generator.

While Zalbus lets his minions do most of the work, he loves a good fight. He typically fights with a mixture of the various weapons integrated into his body (missile launchers, lasers, etc.), and swinging around his "Lance of Despair," a pole arm with a blade made of glowing blue energy. He is capable of using all of his weapons at once, an attack he calls "Supernova Blitz," but he will only use it when he's satisfied that he's utterly defeated his opponents.

Campaigns and Adventures

This chapter is full of squishy flavor text details. It's mainly for the GM, but you're more than welcome to read it even if you're not the GM.

Things to Learn (And Not Learn) From TV Shows

You Don't Have To...

- Have the heroes be cardboard cutouts based on their colors.
- Have a Monster of the Week in every episode.
- Use things a lot to get the most out of a prop or a bit of stock footage.
- Introduce new, marketable toys all the time.
- Throw in goofy jokes just to keep the attention of little kids.
- Tack on a robot battle on the end of every fight just so the robots can get more screen time.
- Resort to weird coincidences or deus ex machina to get the heroes into the action.

But Try To...

- Start the campaign on a turning point.
- Be utterly shameless about playing to the audience's emotions.
- Make things action-packed and fast-paced.
- Reward cleverness and quick thinking.
- Create a memorable supporting cast.
- Enjoy what comes between battles.
- Make having fun a priority.
- Make the villains fun and memorable too!
- Give individual characters chances to shine.

Characters In The Middle

Back at the start of the character creation rules I talked a bit about the idea of "character as communication" (p. 19), and as promised, we're talking about it more here, from the GM's perspective. As a GM it's easy to come up with a totally awesome, ginormous plot with all kinds of action before the game even begins. Stop that already. You should still think about what would make the game fun for you, but the player characters are still the stars, and they need to be in the driver's seat of the action. So first of all, before the game starts, try to keep your planning to a minimum. Think about a few things you really want to put in the game, including some to give to the players as suggestions or criteria when you all sit down to create the hero team.

The character sheets should tell you a lot about what the players want out of the game. If a hero has a nemesis, the player is *demanding* that you have that guy show up to cause trouble. If one of his Keys is "Specialty: Perfect Elite" (must be the Blue Ranger), he's telling you the particular ways in which he wants his character to look

like a badass. I highly recommend having a "cheat sheet" listing each hero's stats (fitting a full team onto one sheet of paper isn't too hard) on hand both while planning out the plot and during the game. Especially for Keys and Heroic Flaws, you'll need to both look at ways for character traits to come into play while preparing the game and be on the lookout for when to award Hero Dice and Karma during play.

Getting Started

The first episode of a series usually deals with how the heroes became heroes. In the standard, cliché version, the bad guys show up and start causing problems, and in the midst of this crisis the mentor character shows up and tells the soon-to-be heroes that they're the chosen ones, and gives them their transformation devices, just in the nick of time.

Also, heroes have a way of intuitively figuring out how their new powers work. The crazy moves and power words that go with their heroic powers just come naturally, with little to no prompting from their mentor or anyone else.

Creative Heroes

Heroes do at times face very straightforward situations where there's a bad guy and their job is to beat him up. The rest of the time they need to use their brains—and other talents—to figure out how to beat the bad guy. The game should always encourage creativity on the part of the player, even when it isn't necessarily met with success.

From point-and-click adventure games on computers we get the term "pixelbitching," where you can't progress in a game because there's something you have to click on but you can't even see it because it's tiny to the point of invisibility. This is a good metaphor for a situation that arises sometimes in roleplaying games, where the GM has a specific solution in mind and the PCs wind up sitting around being stymied and bored until they happen to stumble on it. It's always a bad thing, and it's poisonous to the atmosphere that's supposed to be part of sentai.

For this game I prefer to do the opposite of pixelbitching, which is to come up with a problem for the heroes to solve, but leave the solution open-ended, letting the players figure out something suitably entertaining. They don't have to succeed on the first try, but if it takes more than three attempts things are probably going to get boring.

Anatomy of an Episode

In the West there are three- and five-act structures for putting stories together. In Japan there is a four-act structure, called *kishoutenketsu* (起承転結), and for some gratuitous authenticity I'm going to outline a typical sentai episode in terms of this structure. Just like other models, it's really nothing more than training wheels. The four acts don't correspond to scenes particularly, though each should definitely get at least one scene.

Introduction (Ki): This is where we set up the situation, establishing the setting and characters. In a typical sentai episode this means introducing whatever new characters or widgets might be important to the plot. If the thing that leads the heroes into the story is one of them auditioning for a part in a TV show, this is the time to introduce the auditions. This part usually takes only one or two scenes, though sometimes is can be as short as the teaser before the opening credits.

Development (Shou): Here the story starts moving, taking the elements brought to light in the introduction and setting them up somewhat. The heroes may catch sight of the monster of the week, but mostly they're investigating, either to find the bugger in the first place, or to figure out how they can beat him.

Turning Point (Ten): This is the climax of the story, where everything comes to a head and something has to happen. The monster of the week is confronted head-on, and ultimately defeated. If he's going to become giant-sized and require a second robot-scale battle, that fits in here too.

Resolution (Ketsu): Once the climax is done, it's time to release tension. With the bad guys dealt with for that episode, you can have a scene or so for the heroes to discuss what they found out, what lessons they might have learned, and enjoy whatever reward they might've earned. If one of the heroes rescued a beautiful woman (or a handsome guy for that matter) and was hoping for a date, this is where the date starts… or where the hero gets turned down.

Themes

"Justice will prevail. As a Dynaranger I believe that, because every day I make it happen. See, the world can be an unfair place sometimes, so it's our job to help fix it."
—Dynamic Red

The genres covered by *Tokyo Heroes* are grounded in passionate melodrama. You aren't going to get much literary depth out of a sentai show, but that isn't the point. This game is about stuff that's *fun*, about enjoying the ride. Still, there are a few other things it's about.

Teamwork

Teamwork is *really* important in this game. In RPG design you're supposed to have a clear answer of to the question "What do you do?" In *Tokyo Heroes* the answer to that is, "Teams of heroes work together to stop monsters from hurting people." Teamwork is very much ingrained into this game, and frankly without it the heroes are screwed.

Of course, for teamwork to be a *theme* it can't be as simple as that. In most sentai series, there's at least some time devoted to the heroes quarreling and learning how to work together. If it was easy it wouldn't be nearly as cool when the team finally emerges as a well-oiled implement of justice. In sentai the conflict between the Red and Blue rangers is all but built-in, and plenty of magical girl teams have had a "teammate" who starts off as aloof, convinced that the other heroines would merely be a burden to her.

Things That Matter

While heroes spend a lot of time fighting monsters, that doesn't define who they are or what they want out of life. They, and everyone around them, have hopes, needs, and ambitions. Sentai heroes tend to be adults, and they have to come to terms with what they want out of life and how to reconcile it with being a hero. Magical girls tend to be focused on what they want and hope for, whether happiness, love and friendship in the short term, or their ambitions for the future. In both cases the people around them often show them different views of what matters in life, hopes and dreams.

For both themselves and those around them, these are things that the heroes are charged with defending from evil. Not a few episodes center around a particular character's achievement or opportunity (audition, date, award ceremony, performance, masterpiece, etc.) being nearly ruined by the main villains. Bad guys don't necessarily care that your hero's championship tennis match is going to be interrupted, but any pain they can cause the heroes is icing on the cake. A cake made of suffering.

Coming of Age

While sentai heroes tend to be grown up (some more so than others), magical girls are at a very tender point in their lives, where they're just starting to emerge from childhood. As the series progresses they learn—sometimes the hard way—what it means to become an adult, and start making those things a part of their lives.

Duty

Being a hero is not an easy thing. Even though sentai is not a genre where heroes get killed off very often, there are still risks. It can put a wedge between you and the people you care about, it can take you away from other things you might want out of life, and it involves such responsibility that failure can break your heart. Different heroes have different reasons for doing what they do, but all are eventually bound by a sense of duty. When the enemy acts, lives are in danger, and nothing is more important than protecting the lives of the innocent. Sometimes heroes want to get away from this duty, but they are trapped by it.

Friendship and Love

Very few heroes can stand alone. Even the Kamen Rider types who fight alone have friends who remind them of what it is they're fighting for. A team of heroes almost always becomes tightly bound by friendship, even if there's friction at the start of the story, and occasional ups and downs.

Magical girl anime is mostly shoujo anime, and carries with it the characteristic focus on people and relationships. For a character in love, it is the most important thing in the world, and the stakes are higher than any battle against evil. It's wonderful and terrifying, and worrying about whether you can get a certain someone is a million times harder than merely feeling lonely. Very few magical girl series avoid having at least one romantic entanglement that plays into the main plot somehow. A

magical girl's love interest could turn out to be an ally, an enemy, or a target for the villains. In the unlikely event that a magical girl's love interest isn't caught up in their battles, there's still the distinct possibility that the poor guy will find himself on the wrong end of the monster of the week now and then. This isn't any different from anyone else who happens to associate with a magical girl, except that as usual the stakes are that much higher for her.

In contrast, for sentai heroes love tends to be ephemeral and fleeting, doubly so compared to the camaraderie between teammates. While there are exceptions, a typical sentai hero is lucky if he can manage to get a date as a reward for rescuing the damsel in distress, and a serious relationship is usually only hinted at as the series is drawing to a close.

Gender

Gender isn't really an issue for sentai heroes—the female heroes are just a part of the team, and their male teammates should know better than to underestimate them based on something as trivial as gender—but for magical girls femininity is a key theme.

Naïveté and Cynicism

A key theme in sentai and magical girl shows is the contrast between naïveté and cynicism. A lot of what sets the red and blue rangers against each other arises from this conflict. The red ranger approaches the situation with starry-eyed optimism; he dives into battle with a raucous shout and does whatever it takes to turn dreams into reality. The blue ranger is more rational and calculating; he wants to think things through and act carefully, achieving success with finesse and a minimum of unnecessary risk.

What sentai shows teach us is that each of them only has a piece of the equation. You need to use your head and think clearly, but it's a hero's drive that lends his actions the power necessary to persevere through whatever storms may come. Here, as elsewhere, the team is greater than the sum of its parts.

Hope

Dynamic Red put the Dynamic Sword back into its sheath and let out a long breath.

Touji looked up, and pointed his camera at the scene: After a long battle, the hero, silhouetted by the setting sun, looking out across the city he had just protected. Today the city could've been destroyed by Zalbus' Neocore Bombs, and instead it was silence that had exploded through the streets. Every one of the millions of Tokyo could've been snuffed out, millions of hopes and dreams extinguished in an instant by the terrible fist of God—or the Devil. Instead they were alive and well. Dreams would continue on, shaping the world.

When the hero spoke, Touji jumped.

> "It all matters. *All* of it. That's why I keep doing this. If these people lose hope, then it'll all be for nothing."
>
> He turned around, and gave Touji a thumbs-up. There was no way to know, but Touji was sure he must've been grinning under that black visor.

Friends and Allies

Heroes also have friends, we hope, ordinary people who highlight their connection to the world around them, the place they have to defend from evil. Friends of the heroes are a routine source of plot hooks too. There are also any number of other allies who could be a part of the campaign.

Allies

While heroes may have to keep their powers a secret from close friends, they can also have other allies who are a part of the fight against evil, in a supporting role.

They often have some kind of **mentor** that helps them with information about themselves and their enemies. A mentor could also be an older, more experienced hero (a retiree?) or a mysterious representative of the higher powers of good, or something else entirely. Mentors tend to avoid taking a direct hand in things if they can help it; they're more valuable to the team as advisors anyway.

Magical girls usually have **mascots**, adorable talking animals (or animated plushies, or whatever) that give them their powers and provide much-needed advice. Mascots are virtually powerless by themselves, though they may be able to get places where a normal human could not.

Sentai heroes sometimes have an "assistant," an older woman who generally helps out by providing maintenance and occasional upgrades to their gadgets and robots.

It isn't inconceivable for there to be mooks (see p. 56) on the side of good too. In old-school sentai shows the heroes' organization would sometimes have lots of human foot soldiers who'd wind up being cannon fodder if they ever went against any serious opposition.

New Teammates

Teams often find themselves getting new members. In sentai it's become a standard cliché for a "sixth ranger" to show up partway through the series. In magical girl series it's more typical for the heroines to be introduced one at a time over the course of a dozen episodes, which might not be practical for roleplaying.

In sentai and magical girl anime alike newly introduced heroes always get to really show off for an episode, letting them make a deeper impression on everyone. If a hero is being introduced, that character gets the effects of a spotlight episode (see p. 50) for free. If the new hero is an Ally Character, players should be investing Karma to control that character for most of his major scenes.

Trusting a new "teammate" isn't necessarily easy though. Just because someone has the same powers and the same mission doesn't mean they'll work as a part of the

team. Usually everyone comes around and becomes friends in the end, but not without some grief and struggle along the way.

The Sixth Ranger

> "Looks like I got here just in time. You amateurs nearly screwed everything up."
> "Who the heck are you?"
> "No time to explain. DYNAMIC KNIGHT! ACTIVATE!"

Sentai series often feature the arrival of a "sixth ranger," a new and powerful ally who comes in later in the series. The sixth ranger is usually very powerful on his own, and shows up just in time to pull the heroes out of a jam with his devastating special attacks and his own robot. Sixth rangers usually have white, gold, or silver as their Aspect. He's often in some way isolated from his allies, such as by being the only alien in the group, or having a secret he has to keep from them.

The Fractured Team

In some sentai series the audience starts out seeing a team of three heroes, who wind up fighting a pair of evil rangers that eventually come around to the side of good; *Hurricanger* is a perfect example of this. This changing of sides often happens because the enemy rangers aren't inherently evil, but have a conflict of interest that puts them on the same side as the real villains.

In the case of magical girls, the fractured team concept hasn't really been tried (though it's potentially really cool when you think about it). The closest that's been done is for shows with a single heroine to have a single magical girl rival that comes around near the end of the series, like in *Magical Girl Pretty Sammy* and *Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha*.

The Master Ranger

> "You go on ahead. *I'll* deal with him."
> "But boss!"
> "Go! While there's still time! DYNAMIC CAPTAIN! ACTIVATE!"

The "master ranger" is a powerful ally who can only appear occasionally, when his overwhelming strength is truly needed. Usually he is in fact the heroes' mentor, who suddenly unveils his full strength in an hour of need. Using his power too much will likely cost him, and besides, the team needs to find its own strength without relying on him.

Genre Variations

Even though *Tokyo Heroes* is mainly aimed at sentai and fighting magical girls, it can potentially be used for most any genre where the overall feel of the game fits reasonably well. This can range from subtle variations like having what amounts to sentai heroes without robots (like in *Goranger* and *Ronin Warriors*) or sentai heroes with nothing but robots (*Voltron*), to more drastic changes in style and scenery. For example, sometimes the heroes only have their powers in a specific realm—dreams, vir-

tual reality, the astral plane, etc.—and otherwise they're just normal people (*Corrector Yui* did this). The game's emphasis on teamwork and its finishing blow-based battles mean it could work well for many combat-oriented anime, or even pro wrestling.

Working with characters who don't operate in close-knit teams is a little trickier, but doable. If you have either a group of more individualistic heroes or just one hero (because sometimes you can't get five friends together), the game's default notions of teamwork kind of go out the window, which means fewer characters working together and no big group pool of Hero Dice. A solo hero in particular needs to have either really powerful special/finishing attacks, or relatively weak enemies. Team Keys, naturally, would go out the window entirely, so heroes would get two Personal Keys. Aspects *could* be useful as archetypes, but it's easier to just give the hero another Personal Key and a free Edge.

The Toybox

Especially with a genre like sentai it can be fun to bring in elements other than the usual paper and dice.

Mini-Games

The idea with "mini-games" is to give the players a small game challenge thingy that goes outside of the normal rules of the game for some specific task. Any number of mini-games are possible, but here are a few ideas:

- **Card Chase:** This is a way to determine the outcome of a chase scene using a deck of cards. Each side of the chase is dealt 20 cards (or 20 cards minus their average Athletics), and one card is dealt at random to be the start of the pile. Each participant takes turns placing cards on top of the pile; the card has to be of the same suit or number/face as the one on top, and has to be played within a few second, or the player says "Pass" and the opponent goes. Whoever gets rid of all of their cards first wins the chase!
- **Combining Robots:** In some of the older sentai series, getting the vehicle defenders to combine into a giant robot took some practice to get right. Get an oversized six-sided die, and the first few times the heroes try to combine their robot, it's time to bust out this monster d6. Each player has to roll it until it comes up with a 6, then pass it on to the next player, until everyone has done it once.
- **Final Circle:** Draw a circle in the middle of the table (or wherever), and when the time comes for the finishing attack, the players try to roll their usual dice so that they land in the circle. A die that lands inside the circle and comes up as a success counts as two successes.
- **Hero-Libs:** There are a lot of details that are traditionally left up to the GM, and especially when they're primarily for flavor it can be fun to let the players come up with details. Instead of saying "Dynamic Red's little sister is going to be in a school production of *Romeo & Juliet*," you could say, "Dynamic Red's little sister's class is putting on a play. What play is it, and what uber-cool

leading role did she get?" Instead of deciding that the monster of the week is going to be a cross between a cougar and a jet fighter, ask the players for an animal and a vehicle the week before.

Music

If used right, music can add a lot to an RPG session. The music should be carefully chosen and not too recognizable (unless your campaign is directly based off of something and you want to evoke that), and played with a minimum of fuss on the GM's part. I like to bring a laptop and play mp3s in WinAmp, but do whatever works for you.

A typical sentai soundtrack is a weird mix of bright, melodramatic J-rock and bits of gratuitous power chords and jazz. Using songs from actual sentai series is a little tricky since the lyrics are usually constantly mentioning the name of the hero team in case you forgot. Power metal (I'm partial to Iron Savior and Blind Guardian myself) could be a good fit for this general style. *Power Rangers* is very much an American equivalent, with the most shameless, awesomely bad power metal riffs imaginable.

Magical girl series have standard anime soundtracks: bouncy J-pop songs for opening and ending themes (and the occasional insert song during an episode) and a smattering of melodramatic background music, mostly done with synthesizers.

Power Words

The heroes in this game have a lot of things where they need to shout out the name of whatever it is they're doing/using/piloting. So, do that shouting at the table. If you feel stupid saying "DYNA-CHANGE GO!" it just means that your group has come up with good power words.

Be considerate of people around where you're playing though.

Heroes usually have incantations/power words for transforming, for each special attack, and for combining/revealing their giant robot.

Props

Let's face it, one of the major purposes of sentai is merchandising. For recent sentai series there are zillions of toys being made, something you could take advantage of. If you're being practical they can be a visual aid, or if you're being goofy they can be something for the players to mess with.

Game Seeds

If you're really desperately strapped for ideas, or you just want to read even more of my brain drool, this section might be for you. It has brief summaries of possible *Tokyo Heroes* campaigns, a mixture of sentai and magical girl stuff, plus some other weirdness here and there.

Cyber Princess Omega-chan

While there are those who live out their mundane lives in the real world, many people more or less live in the shimmering worldwide simulation that is the Grid. The internet and virtual reality have merged and changed, and today the Grid is a world unto itself. Most people now access the Grid by means of a Data Immersion Interface implant that has to be plugged into a terminal, providing a "realer-than-real" mental link into the Grid.

The world of the Grid is vast beyond comprehension; within its borders knowledge is very literally power, and powerful human minds have provided this simulated world with mysteries beyond human comprehension. One of these mysteries is known as "Cyber Princess Omega-chan." Her name is whispered of and revered all across the Grid; time and again when some unfortunate individual has been accosted by a rogue virus or virtual weapon program, this mysterious sailor-suited heroine appears to save the day.

Theories abound as to who and what Omega-chan might really be; a super-hacker, an idiot savant with multiple personalities, a virtual ghost, a uniquely heroic A.I. program, or something else beyond comprehension. No one really knows, but the rumors say she's looking for others to join her fight.

Dark Family Values

The Dark Family has severed the Emperor Xenorach for generations as he traveled the galaxy seeking new worlds to conquer. On Earth the empire encountered unusual resistance in the form of "Rangers." Xenorach decided to take a more subtle approach to the conquest of Earth, launching a plan that could take over a year to complete. Part of the plan involved having the Dark Family disguised as humans and sent to pose as a normal human family, carrying out a series of special missions in secret.

Xenorach underestimated the effect that contact with humans would have on his servants. They begin to understand and value love and friendship, and to sympathize with their Ranger enemies—especially since, unknown to them, the Red Ranger and his adopted daughter are their next-door neighbors. When they fail one mission too many the Emperor himself slays the family's youngest child, and finally goes too far. The remaining family members vow revenge, but until they can gain the trust of the Rangers they'll still have enemies on all sides. Xenorach has survived through the endless centuries partly because he's always maintained a healthy suspicion of his subordinates, and he has Grandfather Dark available to deal with any hint of betrayal.

Dynaranger: Hanagumi

The original Dynarangers were the greatest heroes the world has ever known, but in the final defeat of the Space Lord Zalbus they fell. The power contained in the Dyna-Gyros was broken apart and scattered across the world, planting the seeds for new teams of Dynarangers to be born. The American Dynaranger Neo team is by far the most famous, but in Japan a new legend is about to be born. The fragments of the

gyro belonging to the original Dynamic Pink are found on the grounds of an all-girls high school in Tokyo, and the first all-female sentai team is formed. These girls only want to do what's right, but they're hampered not only by trying to keep up with school, but the Dynaranger Firebrand team looking at the Hanagumi team as amateurs infringing on their territory.

Dynaranger: Hyperforce

No one could have guessed that the Space Lord Zalbus was but a pale shadow of his own master, the Space Emperor Omnus. If Earth is to have a future, Omnus and his minions will have to be stopped, but the sheer power of these new foes is overwhelming. None of the new generation of Dynarangers seems to be able to stand up to this threat. After endless defeats, the five teams—Firebrand, Thunderbolt, Hanagumi, Neo, and Technoforce—come together and try to devise some kind of plan before it's too late. Zazu, the woman who was responsible for designing the original Dyna-Machines, comes to them with a plan. It's risky and audacious, but it could be Earth's only hope.

The original Dynarangers once used a technique called Dynamic Fusion that allowed each member of the team to give some of his or her power to the team leader. If each team were to use this technique and send their leader to battle Omnus, victory might just be possible. Zazu had a plan to modify their Dyna-Machines so that each of the leaders' Machines can combine into a single Ultimate Dyna-Robo. The biggest risk is that while this new team, "Dynaranger Hyperforce," is fighting Omnus, Earth's protectors would be severely weakened. It's a big gamble, and the survival of mankind is what's at stake.

One question remains though; what became of the other two original Dynarangers? No one ever learned the fate of Dynamic Captain or Dynamic Knight. The answer to *that* question could change everything.

Idol Defense Team Lovely Five

The government's special Monster Elimination Task Force isn't doing so well. Monsters are getting away with stuff all the time, and the public doesn't seem to care much about whether or not the METF is short of funds. The director decides to take desperate measures; he pulls in some favors from the self-defense forces and obtains a set of five skimpy power armor suits and holds auditions for girls to become a team of "magical girls" to protect the public. Still, the operating costs remain high, and they'll have to find some way to get more money coming in. The director decides to try something crazy, and arranges for the team to debut as an idol group.

What started out as a fun (if kind of dangerous) job is about to get a lot more stressful, as the girls' schedules get more and more filled up with recording sessions, TV spots, and interviews. As they start getting noticed, it becomes clear that the METF's mixed reputation in the government is going to be a big problem, and furthermore there's something fishy about the talent agency they've signed on with.

Sentai Ikkoku

Keiichi was not only given the power to use the Dragon Medal to become Dragon Red, but charged with the mission of recruiting four other Dragon Rangers to protect Earth from the evil Space Wyrms. This whole thing presents a dilemma for Keiichi, since he's busy studying to take en Tokyo University entrance exam (for the third time) and he doesn't really have the time go to searching everywhere. Add to that the fact that the other tenants of the boarding house here he lives are really amazingly nosy and meddlesome, and before long there's a full team of Dragon Rangers. In fact there are a couple of extra people who want to become Dragon Rangers, but their mentor insists that there aren't any more Dragon Medals to be had. The Dragon Rangers are probably one of the least cohesive sentai teams the world has ever seen.

Shigen Senshi Andromeda

次元戦士アンドロメダ, or "Dimensional Guardian Andromeda" in the English version. The Dimensional Enforcement Taskforce has selected a group of the most promising young girls from the academy to take up a set of five Mana Artifacts. Each of these is a semi-sentient machine that stores is main body in an alternate dimensional space and draws on the user's natural magical potential to create various magical effects. The Andromeda team is based on a dimensional ship called the *Astraios*, and from there they'll be sent out into the field to deal with various threats, from monsters to rogue magic users to dimensional anomalies.

Souzou Sentai Imagiranger (想像戦隊イマジレンジャー)

Keisuke is a young boy who feels crushed by his mundane, pointless existence. His life is overwhelmed by silence and boredom; his parents are always away at work, he has no siblings, and no one at school really likes him. What keeps him going is something inside his head, a place very much like the world he lives in, except that there he's the Red Ranger, and along with his four allies he fights the forces of evil.

But maybe there's more to it than just daydreams. There's this new girl at school who seems like she might actually want to talk to him, and on the same day she transferred in a new Ranger—a female, Silver Ranger—invaded his daydreams all of a sudden.

Notes: The sentai stuff only works in Keisuke's imagination, but somehow this new girl is encroaching on it. The two of them are player characters, while the four rangers are Ally Characters.

Xeo-Rangers

Earth is well-protected by the Hyper-Rangers, so when a new sentai called the Xeo-Rangers comes along they get a rather mixed reception. The evil Kalindurya's Zyanoids fall easily before the Xeo-Rangers, but they have a way of causing unintended collateral damage as they fight. What they themselves don't know is that they're actually Zyanoids, intended to serve as undercover agents of chaos. Their re-

programming was too thorough though, and they fully believe themselves to be human heroes. Learning the truth could break them…

Or is there another layer of deception to Kalindurya's schemes?

Dynaranger Vs. Magical Girl Rose

With the Dark Queen defeated and the magical world slowly being restored to its former peace and prosperity, Rose and her friends have had little use for their magical powers, and a lot of new experiences to contend with as they begin their first year of high school.

Meanwhile, a different group of heroes has begun a different battle for the fate of the world. The Dynarangers fight tirelessly to fend of the minions of the evil Space Lord Zalbus, and for the moment the magical girls only hear vague, unsettling rumors in the news.

Then, Captain Starforge discovers a Zalbus Force craft is landing in America. One of Zalbus' generals, Cryodox, has discovered the dimensional rift between the human world and the magical one, and is planning to rip it open and siphon off the resulting energy. The effects of his plans will be catastrophic for both worlds, and even as the Dynarangers board a plane to America, the sudden appearance of a new breed of monsters forces the magical girls to become heroes once more.

There's no telling how the Dynarangers will react to working with 16-year-old girls with magical powers, or what the magical girls will think of five alleged adults running around in spandex, but the only way they can deal with this threat is together.

This is set up like a sentai-style crossover movie, and while the two teams of heroes might clash a little bit at first, the "Vs." in the title is more a matter of habit than a description of the story.

Magical Girl Shorts

- **Beautiful People:** When Kaori transferred into a new school, no one paid any attention to her at all. It was like she didn't even exist. There's a group of four girls in her class, however, who are the most popular girls in the school; they're beautiful, smart, and adored by everyone. The one thing she has in common with them, and the one thing they might not forgive her for, is magic. But they need a fifth magical girl to complete their team, so they bring her into the fold anyway.
- **Magical Replacements:** When the city's beloved sentai team is defeated, a new team of magical girls tries to fill their shoes.
- **Mahou Shoujo Gakuen (Magical Girl Academy):** There's a secret school meant to turn out teams of magical girls. New students are arranged into teams during orientation and over the course of the year they have to compete fiercely with other teams. The school is full of cliques and nonsense, and this new red-headed girl isn't planning to take any crap.
- **Say No To Magic:** So, there are these girls, and they're really close friends and they always hang out together, whether at school or out shopping and whatnot. And one day, this creepy guy (in a trench coat no less) just walks up to them and

says, "You're going to become magical girls and defend the world from evil." And *he won't take no for an answer*. He really does have the means to give them magical powers, and the world really is in danger, but for some reason this guy picked a bunch of normal girls and just won't leave them alone. Ick.

- **Shugotenshi-tai Evangel:** Angelic magical girls serve as a special magical "SWAT team" when the normal police are in over their heads with something magical. Needless to say, cops resent having to be bailed out by little girls.
- **Yousei Hime (Fairy Princesses):** Each magical girl is based on a fairy tale heroine (Snow White, Cinderella, Rapunzel, etc.), reincarnated and reinterpreted. Since there are no knights left in the world, it falls to them to fend off the nightmares.

Sentai Shorts

- **Densha Sentai Trainman:** In a sparkling metropolis where a massive network of supertrains has replaced all fossil fuel burning vehicles, a special team of heroes (a train-themed sentai) keeps order.
- **Karyuu Sentai Dracoranger:** In a fantasy setting, a select few humans are chosen by dragons as partners and granted the power to become Dracorangers and protect the land. Now the evil king has trapped all of the dragons and rangers in a magical prison. Five hatchling dragons must find five suitable humans and together they must turn the tide and liberate the land.
- **Garou Sentai Wolfenranger:** A specially selected team is injected with a modified form of lycanthropy that lets them use their new werewolf abilities for good.
- **Ishin Sentai Esperanger:** A psychic-themed sentai team. Everyone on the team has a different esper ability, and has been given a Psy-Amp to transform and a Psycho Machine (vehicle defender). The five Psycho Machines can combine into a robot called Psi-1, with a powerful "esper lens" that combines and magnifies the heroes' psychic energy to create extremely powerful effects.
- **Misses Five:** A team of twenty-something single women take up the fight against evil while working and staying on the lookout for potential husbands. So far they're not having much luck, but occasionally they get to team up with an all-male sentai team from Kyoto. Yes, I realize this is really tasteless.
- **Ongaku Sentai Rockin' Rangers:** They're not just heroes; they're a kickass rock band! And their guitars and stuff double as weapons! Cheese by the ton!

Random Tables

This section has some random tables you can use to figure out stuff if you're totally stumped. All of these use two six-sided dice, one for the ones digit and one for the tens. Hence, if your dice come up 2 and 4, the result is 24. On the Hero Team Themes table that would mean you got "Espers/Psychics."

Hero Team Themes: This table provides some ideas for themes for hero teams to base their powers and whatnot on. These days most hero teams use a combination of two different themes; having only one makes them a little too generic, and it's hard to blend together three. And four or more is just getting silly.

Heroic Flaws: The flaws listed here are roughly organized by Aspect/color; 1 is Red, 2 is Blue, 3 is Green, 4 is Yellow, 5 is Pink, and 6 is everything else.

Episode Ideas: This table gives a range of possible outlines for individual episodes, though those listen in 11-15 cover entirely too many sentai episodes. Another fun way to come up with episodes is to simply take a story from another medium and make the sentai/magical girl version of it. *Dekaranger* actually had a *Fight Club* episode—so much so that the main villain was called Tyler Seijin Durden. (I swear I am not making this up).

Monster Concepts: Some monster concepts will be more suitable than others for a given campaign, depending on what the monsters are actually supposed to be. Evil aliens can be just about anything, but if they're all Space Ninjas your options will be somewhat more limited.

Hero Team Themes

1	1	Aliens
1	2	Angels
1	3	Animals
1	4	Cards
1	5	Cars
1	6	Circus
2	1	Cosmic
2	2	Cyborgs
2	3	Elements
2	4	Espers/Psychics
2	5	Gaia
2	6	Gods
3	1	Gunslingers
3	2	High Tech
3	3	Holy
3	4	Knights
3	5	Magic
3	6	Martial Arts
4	1	Metal
4	2	Military
4	3	Music
4	4	Mythical Creatures
4	5	Ninjas
4	6	Planets/Stars
5	1	Police
5	2	Rescue Workers
5	3	Samurai
5	4	School
5	5	Science
5	6	Space
6	1	Time Travel
6	2	Treasure Hunters
6	3	TV
6	4	VR
6	5	Wuxia
6	6	Zodiac Signs

Heroic Flaws

1	1	Blinded by love
1	2	Can never back down from a challenge
1	3	Hotheaded
1	4	Too heroic; wants to save everyone
1	5	Overconfident
1	6	Hates killing, wants to redeem everyone
2	1	Bossy
2	2	Flashbacks
2	3	Cold and uncompromising
2	4	Absolutely can't stand own failures
2	5	Has many enemies
2	6	Consumed by vengeance
3	1	Sickly
3	2	Obsessed with a hobby
3	3	Very shy
3	4	"Real life" that interferes with being a hero
3	5	Has a severe phobia
3	6	Can't see the flaws in your own teammates
4	1	Feral/chaotic
4	2	Dedicated to duty at the expense of personal affairs
4	3	Overly dependent on teammates for self-worth
4	4	Has a dangerous, devastating secret
4	5	Aloof, can't connect with most other people.
4	6	Overprotective of loved ones
5	1	Lazy
5	2	Childish
5	3	Obsessed with the opposite sex
5	4	Too passive
5	5	Unrequited love
5	6	Forbidden love
6	1	Powers are dangerous to your health
6	2	Needlessly cruel
6	3	Doesn't trust anyone
6	4	Outcast from society
6	5	Poor at working with others
6	6	Stranger from another world

Episode Ideas

1	1	A hero gets a great opportunity that's spoiled by bad guys.
1	2	A hero gets a great opportunity that's actually a trap.
1	3	A hero makes a new friend that gets targeted.
1	4	A hero makes a new friend who is actually a villain in disguise.
1	5	One of the heroes' friends is captured.
1	6	A new craze is sweeping the town, and the bad guys are behind it.
2	1	The heroes' robot (or other important weapon) gets stolen and used for evil.
2	2	One of the heroes is tricked or mind-controlled to hurt his friends.
2	3	A powerful weapon is hidden somewhere; the heroes need to get to it before the bad guys do.
2	4	A new hero comes to town; is he really a friend, or is he an enemy in disguise? Or just a nuisance?
2	5	People everywhere are becoming sick; there heroes have to find out why and put a stop to it before time runs out.
2	6	A doomsday weapon is ready to go off!
3	1	To be able to stop an extremely powerful enemy the heroes must undergo a grueling training regimen.
3	2	A villain falls hopelessly in love with one of the heroes.
3	3	A close friend learns the hero's secret identity.
3	4	A villain learns the hero's secret identity.
3	5	Someone's potential love interest is in trouble—or could be the trouble.
3	6	A former comrade of one of the heroes comes for a visit, but it turns out he's gone bad.
4	1	One of the heroes is forced to pose as someone else in order to protect the original from harm.
4	2	One or more of the heroes lose their memories, and have to figure out who they are before the bad guys get away with their scheme.
4	3	What seems to be a villain is actually a monstrous-looking innocent who's being manipulated by someone else.
4	4	The heroes face a villain with connections and even fans; they have to figure out a way to meet him face-to-face before they can get a chance to fight him.
4	5	The heroes learn the location of a dangerous villain, except that he himself thinks he's human and that the heroes must be crazy.
4	6	One of the heroes accidentally gains a new special power that turns out to be more curse than blessing.
5	1	The villains are turning people into mooks. Surrounded by enemies they can't attack, the heroes have to stop the main villain behind it.
5	2	A well-meaning loser wants to be like the heroes; he follows them around, wears out his welcome, and gets annoying. And all the while, the enemy is moving.
5	3	A villain's scheme backfires and he winds up trapped with a hero.
5	4	A villain copies or replaces one of the heroes.
5	5	A villain forces the heroes to play a game… with lethal consequences for the losers.
5	6	One of the heroes' friends knows someone who has started acting strange. Is it part of a villainous plot, or is there something else going on here?
6	1	The heroes encounter a troubled child with a unique power that the bad guys want to use for their own nefarious purposes.
6	2	The bad guys figure out where the heroes' base is and how to get in and do bad stuff. The heroes are caught off-guard, and their own weapons are suddenly being used to terrorize innocent people.

6	3	One of the heroes is recognized for his exceptional bravery, and is given an opportunity for a promotion. The only problem? He'd have to leave the rest of the team behind.
6	4	A high-ranking member of the heroes' organization comes to evaluate them, and he seems oddly determined to give them poor marks. Is there something wrong with him, or is he just a jerk?
6	5	A villain switches bodies with one of the heroes. He has to find a way back into his own body while his friends think he's a bad guy.
6	6	The heroes lose most or all of their powers, and they're forced to find a way to fight back as themselves.

Monster Concepts

1	1	Berserker Athlete
1	2	Black Knight
1	3	Brash Gangster
1	4	Burrowing Menace
1	5	Coma Flower
1	6	Constricting Plant
2	1	Crazy Samurai
2	2	Creepy Undertaker
2	3	Cult Leader
2	4	Cunning Shapeshifter
2	5	Deadly Martial Artist
2	6	Digital Demon
3	1	Doll Master
3	2	Draining Vampire
3	3	Elite Assassin
3	4	Fake Hero
3	5	Ghost
3	6	Goddess of Death
4	1	Hypersonic Ninja
4	2	Hypnotic Musician
4	3	Impossibly Armored
4	4	Induced Berserker
4	5	Killer Toy
4	6	Mad Artist
5	1	Mad Bomber
5	2	Mind Control Teacher
5	3	Mischievous Comedian
5	4	Obnoxious Elitist
5	5	Ocean Peril
5	6	Seductive Siren
6	1	Shooting Porcupine
6	2	Spore Monster
6	3	Torturing Doctor
6	4	Vengeful Cyborg
6	5	Viral Menace
6	6	Werewolf

Appendix

Suggested Viewing

Here are some suggestions for stuff to check out to get ideas. I've listed off stuff without much regard to whether or not there's an English version (did I mention I really like knowing Japanese?). In some cases (like a lot of tokusatsu shows) the only English version available is a fan translation (which means BitTorrent is probably your best hope of getting it), but especially for magical girl anime and manga more stuff is being licensed all the time.

Magical Girls

Where *Tokyo Heroes* covers magical girls, it mainly deals with the kind that fight monsters and stuff. This is actually only a certain cross-section of the genre, so if you're wondering why titles like *St. Tail* and *Minky Momo* aren't on the list, now you know.

Sailor Moon (1992): *Sailor Moon* is almost solely responsible for "sentai" type fighting becoming a part of magical girl anime and manga, not to mention a massive success. Not only that, but more recently *Sailor Moon* became a successful live-action series, pushing the sentai elements even further than before.

Tokyo Mew Mew (2002): One of the newer magical girl series, *Tokyo Mew Mew*'s magical girls each draw their power from a sort of "totem" animal as they use their powers to fight a mysterious supernatural force and also to protect the planet's biodiversity. Thus this is both a typical fighting magical girl series, *and* one of the first to follow in the footsteps of live-action sentai in giving the heroines a strong theme. The story heavily emphasizes the main character Ichigo, but it has a surprising amount of moral ambiguity and depth for a magical girl show. The TV series had a brief life as *Mew Mew Power* in the U.S., and the manga is being released in English by Tokyopop.

Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha (2005): The first half of this cute and lavishly animated series is like an homage to the entire magical girl genre, while in the second half it becomes very different. Although it's not the main point of the series, Nanoha actually confronts the responsibility of protecting people and telling the truth to those she cares about. It was successful enough for a second season, *Magical Girl Lyrical Nanoha A's*, and a third, *StrikerS*, is planned.

Magical Girl Parodies: The magical girl genre has inspired not a few parodies. They're usually fun though not necessarily useful for inspiration. *Planet Guardian* is a weird manga by Kohsaka Rito that not too many other people seem to like besides me. *Puni Puni Poemi* is by the director of *Excel Saga* and potentially mentally scarring. *Nurse Witch Komugi-chan* is light and nonsensical.

Magic Knight Rayearth (1994): Even though it mostly takes place in the fantastic world of Cephiro, CLAMP's *Magic Knight Rayearth* is in many ways a typical fighting

magical girl series, and one of the most sentai-like of its kind, especially since the Magic Knights actually have giant robots.

Mermaid Melody Pichi Pichi Pitch: Cross *Tokyo Mew Mew* with *The Little Mermaid*. Very, very fluffy. ADV picked up the rights for this series, but has since dropped it for lack of a TV deal. The manga is being put out by Del Rey, however.

Nurse Angel Ririka SOS (1995): This series is about a 4th-grader who transforms into a heavenly guardian in order to fend off a terrible monster intent on destroying all life in the universe.

Pretear: In a definite twist on the genre, *Shin Shiroyuki-hime Densetsu Pretear* ("New Snow White Legend Pretear") has only one magical girl, but she finds herself with a cadre of "Leife Knights," each of whom can meld with her and thereby grant her a magnified version of his own powers.

Pretty Cure (2004): This series, which is now in its third season, is a somewhat different take on fighting magical girls in that there are only two heroines (a third shows up in the second season), and they tend to have an unusually physical style of fighting for magical girls, but otherwise the major clichés of the genre hold true. Fox has licensed this series for American television.

Pretty Sammy (1995): Originally a *Tenchi Muyo!* spinoff, *Magical Girl Pretty Sammy* has since been made into a full-length TV series (called *Magical Project S* in its American release), a lighthearted romp where Sammy faces a different "Love-Love Monster" created by her nemesis Pixy Misa each week. More recently (2006), AIC has released a new TV series called *Sasami: Magical Girl Club*, which tells a wholly new story (in a new art style) where Sasami becomes part of a team of five magical girls.

Wedding Peach (1995): If the *Sailor Moon* anime is too weird and fluffy for you, stay away from *Wedding Peach*.

Sentai

Super Sentai Series (1975-Present): The first Super Sentai Series, *Himitsu Sentai Goranger*, came out in 1975, and since then nearly every year as seen a new series aired in Japan. Although a bit hard to come by in the U.S., the Super Sentai Series is the main inspiration for *Tokyo Heroes* and a must if you can manage it.

Power Rangers (1993-Present): America has been experiencing the sentai genre for years without knowing it, in the form of *Power Rangers*. This long-running series was created by adapting different shows from the *Super Sentai Series* and adding extensive new footage. As of this writing it's in its 15th season, and while it's not the weekday afternoon powerhouse it once was, there's no end in sight.

Chouseishin Series (2003-Present): Toei recently launched its own tokusatsu team franchise, the "Super Star Gods" series. *Sazer-X* is painful and overly kiddified, but *JustiRisers* and *GranSazer* are surprisingly good. Chouseishin shows usually involve space or aliens in some way or other and deal a little more with the theme of a normal person becoming a chosen hero.

Imperfect Hero: This very obscure manga was put out in English by Dr Master. It's the story of Gakusei Green, the largely overlooked member of the Gakusei Five

team, and how he winds up tangled in some weird romantic comedy stuff with a girl who was supposed to be the main villainess. It actually does a great job of presenting exaggerated versions of the different colored rangers (Gakusei Red *never* takes his helmet off), and generally makes for some fluffy, silly fun.

Ronin Warriors (1989): Known as *Yoroiden Samurai Trooper* in Japan, this series very much an anime sentai show. The heroes are samurai-themed and don't have robots, but pretty much every sentai cliché is well-represented.

Shinesman (1996): Shinesman is an anime parody of sentai, an extremely silly 2-part OAV (there's also 9 volumes of manga in Japan) in which Shinesmen Red, Gray, Olive Green, Salmon Pink, and Sepia fight for what's right, and pull down a decent salary in the process.

Tangential Stuff

Tokusatsu (live-action Japanese shows with special effects) in general can be a good source of inspiration too. *Kamen Rider* in particular was a major influence on sentai shows. The mooks and the heroes' style of fighting, especially in the earlier series, give the impression that *Himitsu Sentai Goranger* was originally conceived as "Kamen Rider but with a team of five heroes." (Notice how the heroes always had motorcycles in the early sentai series). The two franchises have since evolved in different directions, with *Kamen Rider* being the darker of the two. Not only *Kamen Rider*, but *Ultraman* and other tokusatsu shows can all offer plenty of ideas, especially when it comes to monsters.

Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Say what you will, *Buffy* could be a great place to look for inspiration for a *Tokyo Heroes* campaign. Throughout the series (and the spinoff, *Angel*) there are a number of episodes that take a totally whacked-out, cliché Saturday morning cartoon plot and turn it into something at once fun and compelling. It also manages to find just the right middle ground between cheesy supernatural battles and very human soap opera. Eden Studios' RPG version is worth checking out too.

Nanaka 6/17: This cute little high school anime and manga is about two childhood friends; one has become a tough delinquent, and one has become obsessed with studying to the point where she neglects even her best friend. Being rejected is so hard on Nanaka that she mentally reverts to how she was as a six-year-old. Aside from being a really fun series in itself, *Nanaka 6/17* also brings fandom of magical girl anime and (in the manga) tokusatsu into the story. The anime only covers about half of the 12-volume manga's storyline.

Websites

Emily's Magical Girls Page (niko-niko.net/mg/)
GrnRngr.com (www.grnrngr.com)
Henshin: The Magical Girl Genre (henshin.anime-myth.com)
Japan Hero (www.japanhero.com): This site has info on not only sentai but countless other tokusatsu shows, as well as a fairly active forum.
RangerCentral (www.rangercentral.com)

Super Sentai (www.supersentai.com): This site is the single best English-language resource for sentai. It has a database of *every* Super Sentai Series with details on heroes, toys, bad guys, episodes, etc.