ROULADE: Vanilla
Version 1.2

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Introduction

1.1 What is ROULADE?

ROULADE is an acronym. It stands for "ReasOnably UniversaL ADventure Engine," a phrase which should roughly describe the intent of the game. ROULADE is a roleplaying game designed to support a wide range of different settings or "flavors," to use the standard parlance of the game. It is especially designed for those flavors in which there are a number of distinct power levels, or "layers," which are nonetheless expected to interact. Its priorities can also be very well described both by the word itself, and by the words that make up the acronym, described as follows:

ROULADE is a French word which roughly means "to roll" (such as one might do with dice in an RPG), and describes a dish composed of several layers rolled together and baked into a whole, just as each ROULADE "flavor" is composed of multiple layers that describe the genre and the different players that interact within it.

Reasonably Universal means that while ROULADE aims to emulate most genres, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution and in fact is likely not as good for some as it is for others. Nonetheless, the game still provides considerable flexibility and is thus hoped to be capable of emulating a wide range of different settings and game worlds.

Adventure is the chief aim of ROULADE: it aims to provide an experience suitable to worlds of high adventure and action, and not necessarily ones where a considerable deal of realism is expected or required.

Engine is used here in similar fashion to the phrase "game engine": in other words, it does not necessarily intend to provide a complete game out of the box (though many genres can probably be run with just this core). Instead, ROULADE's "Vanilla" flavor provides the basic tools and definitions on which other flavors can be built.

Through these goals, ROULADE provides a flexible core with which to run anything from TV mysteries, to superhero action, to stompy mecha fighting giant monsters, and even to galaxy-spanning wars between gods and men alike.

1.2 Flavors

ROULADE handles the difference between different possible worlds and settings for the game with "flavors." Flavors define the standard names for the different layers within a setting, what specific character talents, powers, and training are available, how many points the players start with when making new characters, and may also define additional optional rules that further aim to emulate the genre and set-

ting at hand. This book defines the "vanilla" flavor of ROULADE: essentially a standard ruleset on which to build other flavors. Future books will describe other flavors in a wide variety of genres and settings.

1.3 Layers

One of the key features of ROULADE is the layer system. ROULADE flavors are often oriented towards settings with a number of distinct tiers or scales of power, which the game refers to as "layers." Most games have three layers, but some that focus primarily on a specific power level might only use one, while others might add a fourth. The default rules of "Vanilla" use three, defined as follows:

Vanilla **(Va):** This is the level of normal mortal human beings like you and I, all the way up to the pinnacle of natural human capability. Pulp detectives, masked vigilantes, and adventuring archaeologists are all examples of vanilla characters. Weaponry of this layer means basic guns, swords, and knives.

Chocolate **(Ch):** This level is for those who are truly superhuman, whose abilities exceed what even the fastest or best human could on their own. Most superheroes fall into this category, as do many supernatural monsters, and this layer is also for things like tanks, planes, or mecha and their weaponry.

Strawberry **(St):** This layer describes those who defy not just human limits, but whose power is among the best in the universe, beings who can threaten entire galaxies or lay waste to cities. Strawberry characters are seemingly invincible heroes and gods, galaxy-threatening alien beings, and great titanic machines that stand as tall as skyscrapers and can level planets.

Within each layer, characters and objects have a variety of ratings that are rated from 1 to 8

and compared on the Universal Action Table to determine the difficulty of actions taken between characters on that layer. When dealing with relations between different layers, however, those numbers become irrelevant, and only serious training can overcome the difference in weight class. For the sake of ease of notation, ratings can be appended with the two letter abbreviation for their layer, such that a "Vanilla 5" Strength can simple be denoted with "Va5."

These layer names are used as a matter of convenience and neutrality, as befits the relatively generic nature of this core set of reference rules. Individual flavors of ROULADE may of course choose to describe them in more genre-specific terms. A superhero game might use "Vigilante, Superhero, Demigod" while a game of titanic monsters and robots might use "Human, Mecha, Kaiju."

1.4 The Universal Action Table

When taking an action, characters compare the relevant rating to that of the opposing character or a standard difficulty using the Universal Action Table. By cross-referencing the relevant ratings on the UAT, the character then finds their chance of success on a d100. If dealing with an opponent who is "out of layer" on the other hand, the character instead uses the column or row that indicates how far below or above the acting character's layer they are (indicated on the table as L +/- a number). If the character has any training relative to the action being taken, that will provide a bonus to the die roll, increasing their chance of success.

To use the UAT, look up the acting character's ability value on the left column of the table (or if the target is of a higher layer than them, the appropriate L+X value). From there, follow that row of table until the point where it meets the column for the opposing character's ability value (or difficulty level). If the target is of a lower layer than the acting character, instead use the rel-

		Opposing Value								
		L-2	L-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Acting Value	L+2	X	X	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
	L+1	X	X	24	22	20	18	16	14	12	10
	1	91	76	50	45	40	37	34	31	28	25
	2	92	78	55	50	45	40	37	34	31	28
	3	93	80	60	55	50	45	40	37	34	31
	4	94	82	63	60	55	50	45	40	37	34
	5	95	84	66	63	60	55	50	45	40	37
	6	96	86	69	66	63	60	55	50	45	40
	7	97	88	72	69	66	63	60	55	50	45
	8	98	90	75	72	69	66	63	60	55	50

Table 1.1: Universal Action Table

evant L-X column. The resulting number is the chance of success on a d100 roll. Roll d100, and if the result is lower than or equal to the target number, the character has succeeded.

1.5 The Strain Table

Some hostile actions taken against a character cause physical, spiritual, or psychological injury or stress, called "Strain." When resolving such actions, an additional step is taken to determine how much Strain the target recieves. The value of the attacking ability is compared to the value of the resisting ability on the Strain Table, with the result determining how much Strain the defender suffers from the blow. As always, layer factors into the proceedings: note the N and KO results in particular. N means the attack simply has no effect at all. A KO result means the target is knocked out automatically.

1.6 Standard Difficulty

Characters may not always be taking action that necessarily involves an intelligent opponent. In such cases, they instead oppose a standard difficulty, which provides the score to be used when referencing the UAT. The Standard

Rating	Difficulty
L-2	Effortless
L-1	Trivial
1	Very Easy
2	Easy
3	Routine
4	Challenging
5	Difficult
6	Hard
7	Very Hard
8	Incredible
L+1	Impossible
L+2	Inconceivable

Table 1.3: Standard Difficulties

Difficulty table provides some general terms which should help get a grip on what each number indicates in terms of difficulty. Note that difficulties can be out of layer too, especially those tasks that involve physical feats, but also tasks that might simply be either beyond or well below what a character's layer is otherwise capable of. As such, a general term for such tasks is included in the table as well.

		Resist Value									
		L-2	L-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect Value	L+2	X	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	L+1	X	X	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1	KO	9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2	KO	9	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3	KO	9	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
	4	KO	9	4	3	2	2	1	1	1	1
	5	KO	9	5	5	4	3	3	2	1	1
	6	KO	9	6	6	6	5	4	3	2	1
	7	KO	9	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	3
	8	KO	9	8	8	8	8	8	6	5	4

Table 1.2: Strain Table

1.7 Using the d100

ROULADE makes use of the d100, or "percentile" die. While dice of 100 sides do technically exist (the so-called "Zocchihedron"), they are of limited practicality, and as such it is far easier to use a pair of ten-sided dice (d10s) to generate a range of 100 values. One dice is designated as the "tens" digit, and the other die the "ones" digit. You may wish to use different colored dice for each, and some ten-sided dice are available pre-printed with a range of 00-90 to serve as the 10s value. For the purposes of ROULADE, a "00" result is equal to 100, thus giving a range of 1-100 as possible results on the die.

Should the "roll low" technique be unsatisfactory or deemed insufficiently intuitive for your group, an alternate method is possible. Rather than attempting to roll less than or equal to your chance of success, you may instead roll the d100 plus your chance of success, aiming to exceed a target number of 100. Note that when using this method, an equal-to result is no longer considered a success: this is necessary to ensure an equivalent mathematical result.

1.8 Licensing

ROULADE is a game about creativity. You are fully expected and encouraged to cook up your own flavors for your own games, and as such it is licensed to the public in such a means as to make that possible with minimal fuss. The contents of ROULADE: Vanilla are licensed under the GNU General Public License v3. You may find the full terms of this license here: http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html

In practical terms, this means that you can share, make copies, or even develop your own versions and flavors of Roulade, so long as they themselves are released under this license, and you make the source documents used to generate your work available.

Chapter 2

Characters

2.1 Character Creation

Characters in ROULADE are created with points. These points are then spent to buy ranks in their basic ratings, buy extra training, acquire special talents, and choose paranormal powers. By customizing the number of points characters start with and setting a default layer for PCs, GMs can also thus control how powerful characters are when they start the game, from simple mortals to galactic demigods. Some suggested starting points values relative to the default layers and different levels of expected character competence are described in the Character Points table. Each points value is derived from the cost of purchasing a character's SPECS at an average level (from 3 for Average to 6 for Heroic), plus ~20% with which to purchase training, talents, and powers.

Each of the following sections will further detail the costs involved in purchasing individual character statistics. Only a character's SPECS are absolutely mandatory to create a playable character (and sticking to just these can be a very quick way to generate NPCs), but it is recommended that player characters be further developed by at least spending some points on training and a talent or two.

2.2 Concept

Every character should have some kind of basic concept. This is a simple descriptive statement or phrase that ideally describes what the character does, what their personality is like, and possibly what their goals might be. This concept can change later, but will provide a basis of inspiration on which to build them. Some examples might be:

- Brooding vigilante seeking vengeance

- Noble paladin fighting for peace

- Fearless reporter looking for a big scoop

- Simple farmer forced to defend their home

- Heartless bounty hunter tracking a new target

Concept should of course suit the flavor and the campaign being played: you wouldn't necessarily play a star-hopping bounty hunter in a game about 1930s street thugs unless that kind of sudden intrusion is exactly what your group is going for. Be sure to discuss your character concept with the GM and the other players so that you can work together to build a cohesive group from the start.

	Vanilla	Chocolate	Strawberry
Average	20	85	225
Competent	25	100	250
Heroic	30	115	275
Expert	40	130	300

Table 2.1: Character Points Values

2.3 SPECS

Every character is defined by certain basic ratings, described by the acronym "SPECS," which stands for "Smarts, Psyche, Endurance, Celerity, Strength." Each ability is rated between 1 to 8, and placed within a given layer. These stats are described as follows:

Smarts: Measures the character's intelligence, knowledge, and perceptiveness, and is used for most mental actions.

Psyche: Measures the character's willpower, mental fortitude, and force of personality, and is used for resisting mental attacks or making social actions.

Endurance: Measures a character's ability to withstand physical punishment and stress, and is used to resist most damage.

Celerity: Measure's a characters agility, dexterity, and reflexes, and is used for many physical actions as well as avoiding attacks.

Strength: Measure's a character's raw physical power and muscle tone, and is used for determining damage from melee attacks.

Each ability costs a certain number of points to buy at a given rating. These costs are summarized in the SPECS Cost table. Note that if the GM has a specific layer in mind for the game, you may not be able to buy out of layer, or may find yourself often outclassed (or "over"-classed) if you do. Be sure to discuss your character concept with the GM and get permission when buying out-of-layer SPECS.

	Vanilla	Chocolate	Strawberry
1	1	10	28
2	2	12	32
3	3	14	36
4	4	16	40
5	5	18	44
6	6	20	48
7	7	22	52
8	8	24	56

Table 2.2: SPECS Cost

2.4 Training

Training represents areas of a character's expertise, subjects they have studied and practiced extensively enough that they gain an additional bonus to actions involving that field. Training can be purchased for 2 points per level of training, to a maximum of 3 levels. Training essentially improves the odds of success for actions involving that training, even against out-of-layer difficulties. For example, a character with Computer training would apply their bonus to the roll for an action to hack into a secure server.

There is a wide range of possible types of training a character might possess, and so no list could possibly be exhaustive, but the following should provide some standard examples common to many different flavors. If a particular type of training is appended with "(specify)," it means that it applies only to specific applications within that field. The character acquiring it must specify which specific expression of that field they are trained in, and additional subjects must be purchased separately.

Arcana The character has studied magical, supernatural, and religious lore extensively.

Artist The character is skilled at artistic expression, whether through visual or textual means (specify).

Athletics The character has extensive athletics training, either at professional sport or Olympic athletics.

Computer The character is an expert at advanced computer operation, capable of hacking them, programming them, and otherwise very skilled at their use.

Firearms The character has considerable weapons training with firearms of all types.

Investigation The character is a skilled investigator, with training in forensics, interrogation, and observation.

Manipulation The character is a master of deception and manipulation, trained at getting what they want through words.

Melee The character is skilled at the use of close-combat weapons from knives to swords and beyond.

Performance The character is a trained performer, be it through dance, song, or voice (specify).

Piloting The character is trained in the operation of a specific class of vehicle, such as boats, starships, automobiles, tanks, or mecha (specify).

Repair The character is trained in the repair of mechanical or electrical apparatuses, such as vehicles, electronics, or computers (specify).

Research The character has skill at digital, library, and archival research.

Science The character is a trained scientist in a specific field, such as biology, astrophysics, or xenotherology (specify).

Security The character is well schooled in the operation and circumvention of security measures such as locks, traps, and alarms.

Stealth The character is a trained sneak, capable of avoiding detection and moving unnoticed with considerable skill.

Survival The character has trained at surviving in wilderness and other dangerous environments.

Unarmed The character is skilled in the art of hand-to-hand combat, whether through fisticuffs, wrestling, or martial arts.

2.5 Talents

Talents are those natural gifts that stand a character out a bit from the rest of us, the ones that seem to make certain things come easy that others would have to struggle to learn. In game terms, talents make certain kinds of actions easier for the actor by increasing their relevant SPECS by 1 for a specific type of action, or a +1/-1 bonus to Strain delivered or recieved from a specific type of attack. Each talent costs 2 point if the base SPECS is Vanilla, 4 if it is Chocolate, and 8 if it is Strawberry. Note that this shift cannot transit layers: if the character's SPECS is already 8, they will gain no benefit from the talent, and talents thus provide no assistance against out-of-layer difficulties and stats.

The list of possible talents is quite vast, and characters are encouraged to invent their own. Each talent should reflect the character's unique gift, and explain what type of action it affects. Talents should not necessarily involve superhuman power, that's what powers are for, but it might reflect the natural abilities of other humanoid species. Each talent should reflect the kind of unique trait that an otherwise ordinary person of their species might possess. Some examples follow.

Attractive The character is especially good-looking, giving them a +1 to Psyche when taking actions that rely on natural charm.

Crack Shot The character is exceptionally good at delivering precise shots, giving +1 to Strain dealt with a ranged weapon.

Dim Mak The character strikes with unarmed blows to lethal effect, providing +1 to Strain dealt with hand-to-hand attacks.

Direction Sense The character has a natural sense of true north, giving them a +1 to Smarts for actions involving navigation without aid of a compass or other navigational instrument.

Eidetic Memory The character has an exceptional memory, and gains a +1 to Smarts for actions that require memory recall.

Focused Mind The character's mind is very difficult to assail with mental force, giving them a +1 to Smarts when avoiding psychic attack.

Martial Reflexes The character has an innate knack for dodging dangerous blows, and thus has a +1 to Celerity when avoiding strikes in close combat.

Natural Armor The character has a naturally thick hide that makes them slightly more resistant to damage, reducing Strain from physical damage by 1.

Night Vision The character's night vision is especially acute, giving them a +1 to Smarts when attempting to detect things in the dark.

Thick Fur The character is covered in a layer of fur that gives them +1 Endurance to resist the effects of cold.

Vorpal Blade The character's blade swings true and hard, giving them +1 to Strain dealt with a melee weapon.

	Vanilla	*Chocolate*	*Strawberry*
1	2	20	56
2	4	24	64
3	6	28	72
4	8	32	80
5	10	36	88
6	12	40	96
7	14	44	104
8	16	48	112

Table 2.3: Power Cost

2.6 Powers

While training and talents make characters better at things they are mostly already capable of, powers represent truly new, supernatural capabilities, even in the case of Vanilla-level powers. Every power has a layer and a rating, which is the number used for its acting or opposing value whenever the character employs it. Such powers can range from magical ability and flight, to energy projection and laser-beam eyes. They are all bought in a similar fashion to stats, costing a certain amount of points based on their layer and rating as indicated on the Power Cost table.

Like talents, there's an almost infinite range of possible powers, but many such powers fall into a number of common categories, which the following descriptions will explain.

Afflict The power afflicts the target with an ongoing painful or injurious effect, requiring regular Strain checks until it expires. The rating provides the initial opposing value to resist it, and if resistance fails, it can be divided up over multiple rounds to provide the effect value for Strain. *Examples:* Venomous Bite, Pyrokinesis, Induce Madness

Alter The power alters the properties of an object or even a character into something else, with the rating serving to oppose the target's attempt to resist or used against a

difficulty based on the object. *Examples:* Healing, Transmutation, Flesh-to-Stone

Attack The power can attack and deal damage to a target. The power rating serves as the acting value when rolling to hit, and as the effect value for dealing Strain. *Examples:* Claws, Energy Blast, Rocket Punch

Command This power gives the character command over certain natural forces, and the rating is used both to determine success and to determine damage if it is used to injure. *Examples:* Weather Mastery, Mind Control, Magnetism

Conceal The character can conceal themselves from the senses of others, with the rating serving as the difficulty to detect them. *Examples:* Invisibility, Mind Blank, Silence

Create The character can create something from nothing, summoning into being some object, force, or substance. *Examples:* Call Storm, Create Food and Drink, Weapon Pocket.

Defense The power actively defends against external attacks and thus makes it more difficult to attack the character, essentially acting as their opposing value on opponent's attack rolls. *Examples:* Energy Shield, Super-speed Dodge, Clairvoyance

Empower The character can boost the abilities of their allies, allowing an ally to use this power's rating instead of their own for some type of actions. *Examples:* Bardic Song, Healing Boost, Lend Strength

Perceive The character possesses senses beyond the usual range, able to perceive things others can't. The rating is used whenever the sense is employed or if the sense can be resisted (such as with telepathic ability). *Examples:* Telepathy, Infra-vision, Supersonic Hearing

Project The power can project images or effects that can deceive or dazzle, with the rating being used to oppose those seeking to see through it, or against a difficulty based on the size and complexity of it. *Examples:* Conceal Object, Fireworks, Illusory Enemy

Resistance The power makes the character more difficult to kill, substituting for their resistance value against certain kinds of Strain. *Examples:* Invulnerability, Armor Plating, Mental Ward

Restrain The power can deliberately hamper, grapple, or ensnare an opponent, and the rating serves as the acting value to restrain the target and the opposing value if the opponent attempts to escape the snare. *Examples:* Web-shooting, Tentacles, Psycho-paralysis

Split The character can make multiple attacks or actions in a single round, splitting the power's rating across each to serve as the acting value and damage of each. *Examples*: Split Image, Super-speed Attack, Extra Limbs

Summon The character can summon into being another being to assist them, which acts using the power rating as its SPECS. Multiple creatures can instead be summoned by splitting the rating between them. *Examples:* Clone Self, Summon Monster, Robot Drones

Transform The character can change themselves or others (pick one) into some other shape, using the power's ratings instead of their own while in changed form. *Examples:* Lycanthropy, Ghostly Form, Mecha Mode

Travel The power allows the character to travel by supernatural means, and the rating serves as the acting value on any relevant rolls while doing so. *Examples:* Flight, Wall Climbing, Teleportation

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Weaken The character can project their power to weaken others, forcing them to make a roll against the power's rating to use that type of action. *Example:* Cloud Mind, Dampen Power, Drain Strength

Each power must also specify whether its action is Physical or Mental. Physical powers are those whose effect deals physical damage or work through purely material means (such as fire projection or bladed arms), while mental powers are those with psychic or mystical properties that afflict or act through the properties of the mind and thought. Mainly, this affects what SPECS are used to avoid or resist its effects. Physical powers are avoided with Celerity and their Strain resisted with Endurance, while mental powers are avoided with Smarts and their Strain resisted with Psyche.

There are likely as well many other powers that do not necessarily fall within the categories above, and players are encouraged to invent their own. All powers still use a core rating that is bought as usual, and must be specified to be a Physical or Mental power as usual.

Each power should also specify the element or nature which powers it, as this can have effects on the game world. For instance, a Fire-based power might set fire to things it contacts, while an Electrical-based power might cause damage to electronics. Try to consider how your power works and where it comes from, and at least spend a word or two explaining its nature and source of power. Likewise, GMs should employ their common sense in how the nature of a power might apply to the world.

The use of powers is also subject to limitation from the GM and the setting or flavor being played. Some games may choose simply to limit characters only to SPECS, training, and talents, or limit the kinds of powers available. A modern-day detective game is unlikely to see much use for powers, and a fantasy setting might only see use of limited magical powers or monster abilities.

2.6.1 Meta-Powers

Some characters possess a power that is not in itself a single effect, but rather provides the ability to create widely varying power effects with relative ease, limited largely only by the player's imagination. While some combination of relatively flexible powers, and judicious use of flexible description can cover such talents, powers such as magical ability, scientific or inventing acumen, or the awesome power of a magical ring may require a more flexible approach.

Instead of buying individual powers, a character can instead buy a rating in a Meta-power at double the normal cost. This Meta-power allows the character to manifest temporary powers on the fly, with a maximum rating equal to the rating in Meta-power. The Meta-power must be taken with a limitation, as described in the following sub-section, but this affords no discount to the cost.

Subject to GM permission, a character may instead take a limited form of Meta-power that can only manifest a specific list of effects. This costs only 50% extra over the cost of the rating, but the character may only know as many sub-powers as the rating in question, and must still take a limitation with no resultant discount. This method is common for magical ability in worlds where there are only specific, proscribed spells available.

2.6.2 Limitations

Some character powers have certain limitations on their use or side-effects upon the user. Taking a limitation allows a power to be purchased as if it were rated 1 point lower than it is. Rating 1 powers cannot purchase limitations as a result. Each limitation has various effects that limit when it can be used, how it can be used, or causes side-effects when the power is used, as detailed below.

Built The power is actually in the form of a constructed gadget, device, or incantation,

which takes time to build. The power takes as many hours as its rating to prepare, but once done can be used as many times as its rating before a new preparation must be made.

Channeled The power requires time to focus. The character must concentrate completely for a number of rounds equal to its rating, after which the effect will commence.

Drain Each time the power is used, its rating is drained by 1. Downtime or a rest period is required to restore it.

Fatiguing The use of the power takes its toll on the character physically. Each time the character uses it, they must make a test of Endurance or Psyche (choose one) against the rating of the power. On a failure, they take a level of Strain.

Fuel The power requires the presence of a particular substance or element to fuel itself, without which the power cannot manifest.

Limited The power can only be used a number of times equal to its rating before it must be recharged, during downtime or a rest period.

Rules The power has certain rules for its use that must be obeyed absolutely, or the power will refuse to function.

Touch The power cannot be applied except by direct physical contact to the target.

Weakness The power is weak against a particular element, substance, or type of target, and will not function against it.

Willful The power is difficult to wield, and requires the utmost concentration from the character in order to successfully manifest. The character must make a test of Psyche against the rating of the power, and on a failure the effect simply does not work.

2.7 Gear and Gadgets

For the most part, characters are assumed to possess whatever basic tools are required for their concept, relying instead on SPECS and powers to provide the relevant statistics for such things as giving and receiving damage or the various actions they might take in pursuit of their training and talents.

However, for distinctive objects that provide unique powers or out-of-layer attributes, you can instead create a gadget. Gadgets are essentially special powers attached to an object, and cost fewer points than normal powers, at the expense of being physical artifacts that can be lost, damaged, or destroyed. Gadgets are purchased as powers, but cost half the normal points (to a minimum of 1). Multiple powers can be combined into a single gadget with multiple traits or functions, at a further discount of 25%. Vehicles, for example, are essentially just large gadgets.

Simple gadgets use their power rating to resist damage, and to determine how much Strain they may take before breaking. Multi-power gadgets use the highest rating, or a relevant Resistance power.

If a gadget is lost, the device must be recovered to regain access to its capabilities. If it is destroyed, then a new one can be acquired or built given enough time (at least 1 day per point of its highest rating).

2.8 Strain Limit

Strain is the physical and mental toll a character takes from damage, fatigue, or stress, most often in combat. Each character can withstand an amount of Strain equal to the average of their Psyche and Endurance ratings, rounded up. For convenience, the Strain Limit table indicates how much the character receives for a given level of both Psyche and Endurance. Strain is received from failed Psy-

		Endurance							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Psyche	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5
	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5
	3	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	6
	4	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6
	5	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	7
	6	4	4	5	5	6	6	7	7
	7	4	5	5	6	6	7	7	8
	8	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8

Table 2.4: Strain Limit

che or Endurance tests against attacks or other stresses, and should the character reach their limit they are considered to be down for the count, unable to act further without rest.

2.9 Fatigue Threshold

Characters can only withstand the stress of action for so long before their will begins to give out and they risk serious fatigue. Fatigue Threshold essentially defines how many turns a character can keep going during certain kinds of action sequences before their will to continue depletes and they risk Strain if they press further. A character's Stress Threshold is equal to the total of their Endurance and Psyche.

2.10 Destiny

Destiny is a special rating the simulates a character's heroic destiny, their fate to succeed, at least as long as their luck holds out. Destiny always begins with a value of 7. When a character fails on a roll or otherwise wishes to dispute a result involving one of their ratings, they can "challenge fate" by substituting their current Destiny value for their rating and repeating the attempt. Should they still fail this challenge, however, Destiny is reduced by 1. Destiny is also used when a character wishes to continue acting despite reaching their Strain limit. The character makes a test of Destiny against an opposing value equal to the damage taken: success means they take no Strain instead, but on a failure, Destiny is reduced by the amount of Strain taken.

2.11 Goals

The final piece of a character's profile is to set them a Goal. Goals are how characters refresh their Destiny scores: by completing a Goal, a character's Destiny resets to 7 once again, thus allowing them to face the next hurdle anew. At any given time, a character should have one Goal, and the party as a whole that character is part of should have a Goal. These Goals should be relatively difficult to achieve: they should not be something that can be achieved in a single session, but rather within at least an adventure arc.

Individual character Goals will most often represent some specific want or need of the character, or even some kind of character growth (in the narrative sense). Goals are the stuff of heroic destiny, missions and quests and desires that once achieved will open up a new chapter in the character's life. This could be something like avenging a parent's murder, proving one's bravery against a truly dangerous foe, or collecting enough treasure to buy a ship to sail the seas. Avoid Goals that don't necessarily lead to another new phase of adventure without contrivance, unless the campaign aims to be a short one. If a character's Goal is to retire, for instance, then it will require some new impetus to action to create a new Goal after he does so.

Party Goals are likely to be the main mission which the group's characters are tasked with. Defeating Doctor Squid before his ink-bomb turns the whole city to black, rescuing the Prince of Althea from the clutches of the Dragon-

Witch, or just getting together enough credits to pay off the mortgage on the SS Star Tradesman, could all be examples of party Goals. Often, these goals will be set by the adventure, essentially making the Goal to complete its primary task. Other times though, in more open-ended or sandbox-type campaigns, the players will need to decide as a group what their next move is, and do what they must to complete it.

Once a character's Goal has been achieved, any Goal, the character's Destiny is restored to 7. If a party Goal is completed, then all the members of the party reset their Destiny to 7. The character or party must then choose a new Goal to pursue.

2.12 Experience (Optional)

In addition to refreshing Destiny, Goals can also serve an additional, optional purpose. Some GMs may choose to award additional character points to the player characters on the completion of Goals, or allow the character an option to reshuffle their points. The former allows for mechanical character growth, meaning the character gains knowledge and power by completing Goals, while the latter represents retooling or refocusing of a character such as might occur through a change in priorities or training. The following subsections describe how these work.

2.12.1 Awarding Character Points

In some genres characters improve notably over time, even rising from rank amateurs to heroic legends over the course of an adventure or campaign arc. In the case of such campaigns, the GM can award additional character points for the players to spend buying up their character's abilities. Each time a character completes a personal or party Goal, they gain points based on the default layer of the game: 2 for Vanilla, 4 for Chocolate, and 8 for Strawberry.

2.12.2 Character Redesign

In other genres, characters don't necessarily get better over time, so much as they change. Some skills might improve while others might be forgotten, and sometimes characters might take on a whole new focus entirely, even transforming almost into another being entirely. This can be a particularly great way to represent Goals that mark a significant turn in the character's nature. Essentially, the character's points remain the same, but upon achieving a new Goal they may reshuffle them more or less at will within certain reasonable limitations.

A character should not deviate their SPECS more than 2 points in either direction from their original values, change the layer of a SPECS or power, gain a new power, or change out a power for a new one, without reasonable in-character reason. Otherwise, they may move about their points as desired to reflect the character's new nature. For more restrained results, the GM may limit the character to shuffling only one rating, training, talent, or power for each Goal achieved.

Chapter 3

Action

3.1   Action Tests

Whenever a character must attempt an important action which has a chance of failure or is opposed by another character, they make a test of the relevant rating against that of a target difficulty or the relevant opposite rating of the character. The acting character's rating is called the "acting value" or AV, while the opposing difficulty or rating is called the "opposing value" or OV. Resolving a test of AV vs. OV follows a simple order of operations using the Universal Action Table (UAT), like so:

1. Add any relevant Talent bonuses to the AV and OV.

2. Find the row for the AV along the right-hand side of the UAT.

    (a) If the RV is of a higher layer than the acting character, use instead the L+1 or L+2 row, depending on whether there is a one or two layer difference between them.

3. Follow the row until you reach where it intersects with the correct column for the OV.

    (a) If the RV is of a lower layer than the acting character, use instead the L-1 or L-2 columns, depending on whether there is a one or two layer difference between them.

4. If there is Training that applies to the action, shift left one box on the table for each point of Training. If you reach the OV 1 column, stop, and use the left-most value in the row.

5. The resulting box on the table is the target chance on a roll of d100.

If the character rolls equal to or less than the target number from the UAT, then their action succeeds.

3.2   Standard Difficulties

When characters attempt actions that are opposed not by another character, but by the challenge presented by the circumstances involved, a difficulty must be assigned to that action. This difficulty acts as the RV rating for the action test to perform the task in question, and is in theory to be selected based on a standard scale based on the difficulty of a task to individuals within a particular layer. Difficulties of an action can be written by their name, layer, and rating as presented on the Standard Difficulty table. For example, lifting a bus might be described as "Difficult (Ch5)".

When assigning a difficulty, start by thinking of it in terms of layer: is this task within the capability of a representative being from which layer? To use the default layers as an example, Vanilla

		Opposing Value								
		L-2	*L-1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*
	L+2	X	X	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
	L+1	X	X	24	22	20	18	16	14	12	10
	1	91	76	50	45	40	37	34	31	28	25
	2	92	78	55	50	45	40	37	34	31	28
Acting Value	*3*	93	80	60	55	50	45	40	37	34	31
	4	94	82	63	60	55	50	45	40	37	34
	5	95	84	66	63	60	55	50	45	40	37
	6	96	86	69	66	63	60	55	50	45	40
	7	97	88	72	69	66	63	60	55	50	45
	8	98	90	75	72	69	66	63	60	55	50

Table 3.1: Universal Action Table

represents tasks within the limits of normal human beings, while Chocolate would represent a task that even the best humans would not really have much chance of accomplishing, such as the "lifting a bus" example mentioned in the previous paragraph. Lifting the entire building, meanwhile, might be reserved for those of the Strawberry layer.

Once you have decided what general "league" or layer the task falls under, the descriptions of each difficulty level should provide reasonably informative descriptors from which to select the difficulty for the task. In general, these adjectives have been selected as being relative to the skill of an "average" practitioner of rating 4 at the task in question. So when deciding the difficulty of a computer task, for instance, a "Routine" task is something that would be part of an average work day for a professional programmer of moderate skill.

3.3   Action Sequences

Most of the time, individual actions and their time frames might only be important in the broader scope of the adventure, but sometimes who is doing what, when, and how quickly becomes very important indeed. We call such moments "action sequences." During an action se-

Rating	*Difficulty*
L-2	Effortless
L-1	Trivial
1	Very Easy
2	Easy
3	Routine
4	Challenging
5	Difficult
6	Hard
7	Very Hard
8	Incredible
L+1	Impossible
L+2	Inconceivable

Table 3.2: Standard Difficulty

quence, the game breaks down the actions of all the participating characters into turns, with each character taking their action in order so that the chaos of an action sequence can be more carefully tracked. Combat is one kind of action sequence, but an action sequence can represent any number of other moments of time-sensitive excitement, from bomb defusal to car chases, and beyond.

3.3.1 Turns

During an action sequence, time is broken apart into a series of "turns," units of time vaguely defined as the amount of time it takes for all participants in the action sequence to take a single action. The "real world" length of the turn thus depends on the nature of the action sequence. In combat this is usually around 5 to 15 seconds, but for an extended car chase it might be 1 minute at a time. One could even model something like a wilderness trek as an extended action sequence where each turn is a day of travel. It all depends on the nature of the action scene, and it should be explained by the GM at the beginning of the sequence.

3.3.2 Turn Order

Characters within an action sequence act in order according to their layer and their Celerity, in descending order. Thus the order of action goes from St8 down through St1, Ch8 to Ch1, and finally Va8 to Va1. Each character may take one action at their point in the sequence, and characters with the same Celerity are considered to act simultaneously.

Once all characters have made their action, the turn order begins again from the top at St8, and this process is followed until the goal of the action sequence is resolved or the turn limit ends and any resulting consequences are enacted.

3.3.2.1 Powers and Turn Order

Some characters may have movement powers that would affect their speed, such as a Haste spell or Super-speed, and in such cases the relevant power rating can be substituted for their Celerity for the purposes of turn order.

3.3.2.2 Variable Initiative (Optional)

Fixed turn order can be somewhat predictable and even cause high Celerity or speed powers to provide an unfair advantage. For those who prefer a bit more variability from turn to turn, or at least from action sequence to action sequence, the GM can call for an initiative roll. Each character rolls 1d6 and adds it to their Celerity or relevant power. Turn order still resolves in layer order, but within each layer, characters act in descending order of initiative total. GMs can choose to require this roll per sequence, or per turn, depending on how much they wish to change up the turn order.

3.3.3 Turn Limits

In some cases, the use of an action sequence might be because an impending deadline or consequence looms after a specific period of time. In such cases, the GM can choose to set a limit on the number of turns in an action sequence, and keep track of the number of turns taken. One can even set multiple limits as thresholds for different consequences: in an ongoing battle, for instance, enemy or friendly reinforcements might arrive at given turns. Once the turn limit is reached, the consequence takes effect and either ends the action sequence, or introduces new effects to the ongoing action.

3.3.4 Fatigue

One particularly common kind of turn limit is fatigue. Fatigue is caused when the action runs

longer than the participants can physically withstand, the stress or exertion of ongoing action taking its toll on the characters in the form of an increased risk of Strain. This can be an excellent means to keep an action sequence from dragging out longer than is believable or desired, and is such a common effect on combat that it has its own rule, Combat Stress, discussed later in this chapter.

When the fatigue rule is in effect, each character's Fatigue Threshold serves as a personal turn limit, after which the characters must suffer Strain each round unless a test of Psyche or Endurance is made against a progressive difficulty, starting at 1, and increasing by 1 each round until it reaches 8, or even continuing through L+1 and L+2. Failure of the roll means the character suffers from the ongoing exhaustion of action, and takes 1 Strain.

3.3.5 Extended Actions

A common reason for an action sequence is because the characters are performing an action that takes longer than a single turn might, but which nonetheless must be completed within a certain amount of time or while under threat of external consequences. For example, the characters might need to repair the hyper-drive quickly before the incoming Imperial destroyer catches up to them and engages a tractor beam.

In such cases, the GM decides how long the task needed *should* take under ordinary circumstances, and divides that up by the amount of time within each turn, to find the number of rolls that must succeed for the characters to reach their goal. Once the characters complete that many successful rolls, the action succeeds, hopefully before any relevant turn limit is reached!

Extended actions can be a great way of handling competitive action sequences. In such cases, all parties involved are attempting to reach a target number of rolls before the other

parties can. A race, for instance, is simply a matter of the winner reaching a target number of rolls before all the other racers can.

3.3.5.1 Parties and Extended Action

Extended actions can be a combination of action tests from multiple parties adding up to a single total number of successful rolls. This can be a case of multiple characters with shared skill contributing to a single project, such as multiple computer hackers taking a part of the code needed to write an exploit, or it could be various skill-sets contributing to a collective project, each applying their skills towards the collective success. In the latter case, the GM could break this down into individual targets for each different task, but it can be an easier and faster in play to simply assume everyone is doing their part and working towards a single total.

3.3.5.2 Give and Take Actions

Other times, an ongoing action is less a question of a race to the finish, and more a matter of two or more parties wrestling for advantage in a situation. Such scenarios work essentially like a special kind of extended action. There is a target number of successes, as normal, but rather than each party maintaining a total independently, success of their rival party removes successes unless no side currently possesses any, in which case they begin accruing successes themselves.

For instance, rival generals giving commands to their troops in a battle might need 3 successes to take full control of a hill and establish a solid defensive position. General A wins some early victories, accruing 2 successes, but his rival General B makes a successful strategy of his own, lowering General A's successes first to 1, then back to 0, then finally gaining 1 success for General B. This interplay goes back and forth, each side contributing to their party's successes

until one side reaches the target and can declare victory.

3.3.6 Combining Tools

The action sequence is a powerful tool for playing out a host of different possible game scenarios, especially by using different portions of the tools in concert to handle events. Be creative with your turn lengths, the use of limits, and extended actions. Describing and creating common types of action sequences can even be a key part of defining a new flavor of ROULADE.

Try to make sure that the result is not so time-consuming as to induce Strain on your players instead of their characters! The use of the tools should try to serve the adventure and the action, not become too fiddly in and of itself.

3.4 Conflict

Conflict is essentially an action sequence where the participants are deliberately trying to inflict Strain upon each other. Each participant employs their abilities and powers against their rivals in order to induce enough Strain on their foe that they are forced to bow out of the conflict. Physical combat is one use of conflict, but a conflict could also be mental or even social in nature, from a psychic duel to a courtroom drama. It's all a matter of the powers being employed and the type of scene being played out.

Conflict is resolved by the usual action sequence process, with each character acting in turn as normal, and making attacks or other actions on their turn with the intent of driving their opponents out of the conflict by afflicting them with enough Strain that they are forced out of the confrontation.

3.4.1 Attacks

Attacks are the main method of resolution in a conflict. On their turn, a character can target a chosen character within the fray and declare an attack, describing how they are doing so and with what SPECS or powers they will be attacking. The success or failure of the attack is then based on an opposed action test between the relevant AV and OV values between the targets.

In physical conflict, this is most often going to be a test of opposing Celerity values unless a given participant is attacking with a power instead. In a war of words, however, this might be a test of Psyche instead, while a psionic duel might employ Smarts (if the flavor being played is one where all characters possess some psychic ability).

3.4.2 Strain

If the attacker succeeds in their action test to attack the target, the defender now suffers Strain. Use the attacker's relevant SPECS or damaging power as the effect value (EV), and the defender's relevant SPECS or defensive power as the resist value (RV), and consult the table to find the amount of Strain recieved.

Remember that layer applies as always; an N result means the attack has no effect regardless of any bonuses, while a KO result means that the target is automatically knocked out.

For most physical combat, Strength provides the EV of melee attacks, Celerity the EV of ranged attacks, while Endurance acts as the RV for either. Magical or supernatural attacks and defenses will generally be provided through powers, and their own ratings apply in those cases. Creativity is encouraged here, however! Think of the potential for other kinds of "attacks": remember that Strain is an aggregation of both physical and mental resistance. A character might "attack" with Psyche in an attempt to intimidate an opponent into fleeing.

		Resist Value									
		L-2	L-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect Value	L+2	X	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	L+1	X	X	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1	KO	9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2	KO	9	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
	3	KO	9	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
	4	KO	9	4	3	2	2	1	1	1	1
	5	KO	9	5	5	4	3	3	2	1	1
	6	KO	9	6	6	6	5	4	3	2	1
	7	KO	9	7	7	7	7	6	5	4	3
	8	KO	9	8	8	8	8	8	6	5	4

Table 3.3: Strain Table

3.4.3   Knock-Out

When a character takes as much Strain as their Strain Limit, they are effectively knocked out of the conflict, with whatever that may entail for the conflict being played out and the attack that drove them to their limit. Characters in a physical confrontation may be knocked out, forced to retreat, or even killed, while in a social conflict the character may be simple forced to concede or exit in embarrassment.

Ultimately, the stakes are up to the scene and the flavor being played: a gritty game of violent criminals may accept only death as a knock-out result, but in a game of spandex-clad super-heroes a knock-out may simply be quite literal, and in a game of military strategy a knock-out might mean the defeated general has simply fled. It can also be a factor of what character is being knocked out: a random street thug might simply be killed, but player characters are not necessarily slain unless their Destiny has run its course. Individual flavors and their GMs will need to define the stakes of a given type of conflict clearly.

3.4.4   Destiny

As mentioned above and in the previous chapter, player characters have an exception to the usual knock-out rules: Destiny. When a player character reaches their Strain Limit, they can instead choose to continue by relying instead on their Destiny to avoid further blows. The player may declare they are continuing to fight, and in so doing, now risk their Destiny to continue. Whenever Strain would be taken, make a test with Destiny as the AV, and the amount of Strain as the OV. Should they fail one of these tests, they will lose a point of Destiny, and should they reach 0 Destiny, the character must be retired, their fate sealed.

How this retirement manifests is up to the nature of the conflict and the flavor in play. In a physical conflict this is likely to be death, but in a social or mental conflict this may even be a literal retirement or permanent disgrace. A character's retirement is often best left as a matter for the player to decide. They may thus present the desired closure for their character, so long as it is a reasonable conclusion to the stakes of the conflict at hand. Some groups may even wish to give the character a denouement of sorts, returning in a following scene unable to act on the ongoing events but present long enough to tie up the consequences of their retirement.

3.4.5 Combat Stress

The act of prolonged violence is incredibly draining both physically and mentally. The Fatigue rule is always in effect during conflicts involving any form of combat. The maximum difficulty of combat stress induced fatigue is 8. If a character reaches their Strain Limit from combat stress, it means their will to fight has failed, and they will immediately flee the fight.

3.4.6 Morale Boost

At the end of any conflict where the players' party is victorious, they receive an immediate morale boost that can remove some Strain levels. Using the Strain Table, compare the character's Endurance as the EV, and the amount of current Strain as the RV. The resulting value is immediately healed.

3.4.7 Healing Powers

Some characters may have powers that can heal Strain in others. Such powers are resolved by way of a special "recovery test" between an AV of the power's rating, and an OV of the target's level of Strain. On a success, these values are similarly used as the EV and RV on the Strain Table to determine how much Strain is healed.

3.5 Downtime

In order to fully recover Strain, characters need downtime to rest and recuperate from their physical and mental injuries. During a downtime period, each player should declare what their character is doing to recover their strength, and can then make a test of the relevant SPECS or power against their current amount of Strain to completely recover their current Strain level.

How long the downtime period takes is a product of both the main cause of the Strain,

and of the flavor being played. By default, however, it is assumed to take at least a full in-game day to fully heal Strain, and at least two days if the character was knocked-out.

Downtime periods can be declared either by the players or the GM depending on the circumstances. Players declaring their intent to take a period of downtime are wise to consider any ongoing time constraints involved in the adventure: a day lost could be the difference in success or failure of their Goal. Other times, a GM may declare downtime during lulls in the action, or even allow one as a possible action during an extended action sequence with a very long turn length (such as a journey taken on 1-day turns).

3.5.1 Rest Period (Optional)

Optionally, the GM and the flavor may define a shorter rest period that allows for partial recovery of Strain. A good night's sleep is a good example of a shorter rest period, but in a game of mostly psychological stress it might be as simple as a few hours relaxation or even a stop for a pint. During a rest period, each player can describe their method of recuperation, and make a relevant SPECS or power test against their Strain level. On a successful test, they check the Strain Table for the amount healed, with EV of their relevant SPECS, and RV equal to their Strain level.

Chapter 4

Game-Mastering

4.1 Goals

The main tool that drives all adventures is Goals. The GM will need to decide which approach they are going for regarding Party Goals: pre-defined, or player-chosen. Pre-defined Party Goals means that the objectives of the game's adventures will be up to the adventure the GM is presenting: this can be a great way to handle flavors and campaigns where the PCs are expected to take and perform orders or quests such as military or fantasy campaigns. Player-chosen Party Goals means the GM leans back and let the players as a group decide what they want, the perfect approach for running a more free-wheeling sandbox or even "tinder box" campaign where the GM sets up the variables and the world and the players take charge from there.

Important NPCs should also have Goals of their own. While few, if any, NPCs will possess Destiny, defining Goals for the NPCs and NPC factions within your game world is a useful way to give them character and drive the events of the game forward. It is especially useful for sandbox-type games, where you can establish a game world, the Goals of players and NPCs alike, and set them against one another. With NPC Goals defined, you will have a useful grounding on which to make decisions and decide how an NPC might act.

4.2 NPCs

ROULADE character generation for PCs is a points-based system, but while this process can be enjoyable and excellently flexible for player characters who only have to build one character at a time, it can be quickly cumbersome for a GM who may need dozens of NPCs in order to run his adventures. It is suggested that GMs reserve the full process of point-based generation for the most important NPCs and major villains, those who are given Goals of their own and even Destiny.

For the rest, it can simplify the process considerably to instead rely on an average rating as the base value for their SPECS and work from there. Each of the default points values are based around the cost of an average rating value, which means you can quickly generate serious threats to the PCs by working off that average to determine an NPC's stats.

Begin by setting their SPECS equal to the rating average for the PCs. Layer will be the same as the default layer of the PCs as well. From there you may raise a rating by lowering another rating by the same amount, adjusting the values to suit the nature of the NPC. You can also simply start with the points value in the NPC Ratings table and assign them 1:1 to the NPC's SPECS.

Strain and Fatigue Threshold can be calculated as normal using the tables in Chapter 2.

	Rating	*Points*	*Training*
Weak	2	10	0
Average	3	15	+1
Competent	4	20	+1
Heroic	5	25	+2
Expert	6	30	+2
Epic	7	35	+3
Legendary	8	40	+3

Table 4.1: NPC Ratings

Talents and Training can be added as needed, though it is advisable to give each NPC no more than 1 Talent, and Training is best not to exceed the values mentioned in the final column of the NPC Ratings table.

Powers should generally as well be capped at the same value as the PCs' rating average, and any powers beyond the first should count against the average total. So a 20 point NPC could have one Power at 4 for free, but a further Power 4 would leave them with 16 points remaining for SPECS.

More powerful or weaker NPCs can of course be created, and additional values have been added to the NPC Ratings table to suit such beings. Some especially monstrous or otherworldly foes might even be of a higher layer than the PCs, providing a truly dangerous threat that will really require the PCs to take full advantage of their Training to have a chance of success.

4.2.1 Extras

Extras are NPCs that exist to fill a scene or even just provide an easily produced foe for the PCs. They may not even have names, and will likely only be around for a single scene or action sequence, and as such don't really warrant too much effort in terms of generation. Extras can be assigned a standard SPECS average that serves as the default rating for all rolls involving them, and all Extras have a Strain Limit of 1, es-sentially meaning they are knocked-out in one failed damage save.

4.3 Vehicles

Vehicles are essentially just a package of powers in ROULADE terms, with a base rating and layer for the vehicles Speed and Durability. The former replaces the Celerity of its passengers for the purposes of their movement, while the latter serves as both its rating when resisting damage to itself, and its Strain Limit. Knocked-out vehicles are considered to be disabled or destroyed. Vehicles will usually be of a higher layer than that of mere mortals, at least Chocolate in both Speed and Durability.

However, additional powers can then be added, such as armor in the form of Resistance powers to further protect both its own durability and its passengers, Attack powers to represent weapons, Perceive powers to represent on-board sensors, or even a Transform power to simulate transformable mecha (though this could also be modeled as an interchangeable power package instead).

Vehicles however, cannot act on their own, and so rolls involving piloting and targeting their weapons are still a factor of the PC or NPC operating them. Training and even some Talents may apply to these rolls as usual. Generally most piloting and operation rolls will be based on the pilot's Celerity, but a neural-linked vehicle (like mecha in some genres) might instead use Smarts.

4.4 Loot

For the most part, ROULADE abstracts out the question of character wealth and mundane equipment. From time to time and in certain genres however, the GM may wish to reward players with unique pieces of equipment with special properties. Some adventures may even

focus on recovering or constructing such artifacts, serving as the MacGuffin in an ongoing tale.

There are two kinds of possible "loot" in this case. Gadgets are devices or objects that provide additional abilities or powers to the user, and are discussed in Chapter 2. The other, simpler option is "exceptional equipment," which is for basic items that are nonetheless of exceptional enough make that they improve the abilities of the user for certain tasks. These devices essentially work like a Talent, providing a +1 to the appropriate SPECS when used as intended. A legendary sword, for instance, might provide +1 Strength when dealing damage, while the Sandals of Hermes might provide a +1 to Celerity when avoiding attacks.

4.5 Crossovers

ROULADE Vanilla provides a relatively flexible core which can be quickly modified or even run as-is to model a wide array of different genres and settings. However, the layer system is not intended to be universal, and in other flavors the layers may be defined differently than those presented in the Vanilla version of ROULADE. As such, it can be important to take that fact into consideration when translating material from one flavor to the other.

The simplest method is to ignore the power difference and use the layers as is, translating directly. This might result in some characters and objects becoming more or less powerful, but may be plenty sufficient for the purpose of play and even simulate a natural effect of the game world (think of a certain caped hero and how he responded to our yellow sun).

The other approach is to provide a layer shift bonus or penalty, essentially shifting the layer of the character or object up or down in accordance with the difference in layer definition as needed. Some published flavors may even provide a standard layer shift modifier, based on

the categories in Vanilla, or otherwise provide notes on converting.

Ultimately, the layer system is meant to provide a unique tool for individual game worlds, not as a universal power scale. Take that in consideration when sharing material.

Chapter 5

Cooking

5.1 Recipes

ROULADE comes in flavors, and those flavors are defined by their recipes. Recipes define the mechanical details of a specific flavor, defining the layers involved, available character abilities, common action sequences, and optional rules in play. Much of the "cooking" process is just a matter of deciding which of the options and tools in Vanilla flavor ROULADE to use, and laying them out as needed for your players or even a reading audience. The following sections will present the usual choices that need to be made when putting together your own flavor of ROULADE, either for the public or your players.

5.2 Layers

For starters, one must define the layers within the flavor. This can be as simple as providing them with suitable names to replace the placeholder ice-cream flavor names used within this book. Vanilla, Chocolate, and Strawberry can thus become Human, Fighter, Starship in a science fiction game, for example.

Some settings might not need a full three layers. A film noir game of PIs and criminals might only need the basic Vanilla layer, with perhaps the addition of a second layer for the occasional vehicle or weapon. Other settings may entail the presence of dangerous cosmic powers, in which case you can introduce the Neapolitan layer.

Your layers may also not necessarily be defined in power level in the same fashion as the ones within the standard flavor. Experimenting with the gap in power can produce better simulation of certain genres. In a game where guns and knives are much more lethal than they are in Vanilla, you could make the damage from such instruments of a higher layer, ensuring a greater amount of lethality for such weapons when employed against the basic human layer. The Neapolitan layer can be an excellent way to handle a setting with mostly humans, but weapons capable of vaporizing even the hardiest of mortals. Conversely, in a world of powerful heroes and superhuman beings, even the basic Vanilla layer might represent creatures far more powerful than real world modern humans, with the other layers stronger still.

5.2.1 Layer Shift

When dealing with a flavor where the power diverges this heavily from the core, you can define a Layer Shift value. By defining a Layer Shift, other players wishing to crossover your flavor with their own Vanilla flavors of ROULADE will have a clear modifier they can simply apply to the layer to fit it into their setting. A world where even the base layer is more powerful than normal would have a +1 or even +2 Layer Shift,

while one in which the layers are more closely defined or lower in power would have a -1 or -2 Layer Shift. This number will thus provide a guide on how to line up the flavor's layer with those of ROULADE Vanilla.

5.2.2 Default Layer

In addition to defining the layers themselves, the cook can also define the default layer which the PCs are expected to begin at. This need not necessarily be the Vanilla layer: in a game centered around superheroic characters, PCs may instead be built as Chocolate characters from the start. Deciding the default layer will mostly affect how many starting character points a character is built on in this flavor of ROULADE.

5.3 Characters

Any world is ultimately defined at least in part by the characters within it, and there are thus a number of key decisions which must be made when defining a new flavor, such as the number of character points the PCs are built with, and what tools are available to purchase with them.

5.3.1 Character Points

An expanded version of the table at the beginning of Chapter 2 is provided here, giving some standard points values with which to build a character within each layer, and these remain the same regardless of how the layers are defined in your flavor. Once you have decided on a default layer for PCs, you can also then decide on a level of expected competence for the characters, and this will giving you the standard starting points value for such characters.

5.3.1.1 Points Limits

A given flavor can define limits on how many points can be spent on the different charac-

	Vanilla	Chocolate	Strawberry
Weak	15	70	200
Average	20	85	225
Competent	25	100	250
Heroic	30	115	275
Expert	40	130	300
Epic	50	145	325
Legendary	60	160	350

Table 5.1: Character Points Values

	Vanilla	Chocolate	Strawberry
Weak	10	60	160
Average	15	70	180
Competent	20	80	200
Heroic	25	90	220
Expert	30	100	240
Epic	35	110	260
Legendary	40	120	280

Table 5.2: SPECS Cap

ter abilities. This can help to ensure that players cannot spend too much or too few of their points on certain aspects of the character, and thus create more consistent results. The default values on the table have been calculated based on the cost of an average SPECS rating (2 to 8), plus an added cushion with which to purchase additional Talents, Training, and Powers.

One common limit, therefore, is to cap the amount of points to be spent on SPECS to the amount of the aforementioned average, limiting SPECS expenditure to 5 times the cost of that SPECS rating. This way, PC SPECS will remain at least no higher than the standard average. A summary of this is on the SPECS Cap table.

Other common points limits might involve setting a standard cap for the number of Talents that can be taken, or the amount of points spent on Training or Powers.

5.3.2 SPECS

SPECS are standard across all flavors, and should remain as is, but you may wish to define limits for player character SPECS if you are attempting a lower powered setting. Capping player stats at 6, for instance, would leave the 7 and 8 values open solely to non-human creatures or at least to Talent effects.

5.3.3 Talents and Training

For the most part, Talents and Training should be available in all flavors unless a very rules-light variant is desired. It will be useful, however, in defining your setting to present a basic list of the most Talents and Training available. For those interested in a less free-wheeling approach, or wanting to simplify player decision making, you can even restrict Talent or Training selection to the pre-defined list.

5.3.4 Powers

Powers are among the most flexible and powerful of instruments in the ROULADE tool set, and how they can be used and what powers are available will do much to shape the nature of a given flavor. For starters, it must be decided if Powers are available at all. Some relatively "realistic" settings may simply not have them present.

In addition, you will want to decide what Powers are available. Are the players free to imagine powers to their hearts desire so long as they fit within the setting, or are they restricted to certain types or power, or even to a pre-defined list? Are meta-powers available, or gadgets? Are limitations available, or even mandatory?

5.3.4.1 Spell Lists

Many, many settings, especially fantasy ones, involve regular access to magical or supernatural powers that are commonly available. In such cases, rather than requiring a magic-wielding character to buy a meta-power or even individual lists of powers, you can instead provide a "spell list" which contains an array of available powers of different ratings. A character can learn spells from this list by first purchasing a basic Talent like "Magery" that grants them access to spells, and they can then learn and cast spells and powers from the list so long as the rating of the spell in question is not greater than the relevant SPECS for spell-casting in this world. Spells learned in this way should *always* involve a limitation still, usually Channeled, Fatiguing, or Willful.

5.3.4.2 Common Gadgets

While basic gear should generally be left up to abstraction, some settings may contain pretty commonly available gadgets that can be purchased for characters. The most common such are uniquely powerful weapons and armor that might provide out-of-scale abilities, or else special devices that provide uniquely useful powers to the setting and nature of the adventures. Vehicles are also an important element of any setting, and you may define them with points values for player acquisition (purchasing basic Speed and Durability at SPECS cost for the layer).

5.3.5 Strain Limit and Fatigue

The default Strain and Fatigue Threshold calculations should be abstract enough to suit most games with some creative interpretation, but if you wish to create more or less dangerous games you can tweak the formulas for these values. For example, you could make a game less lethal by making the Strain Limit a total rather than an average, or shorten the length of combat by having Fatigue Threshold use the same average table as the Strain Limit. You could also provide a simple multiplier to the standard formulas, such as .5x or 2x.

5.3.6 Destiny

Destiny is the tool that allows ROULADE characters to maintain a certain heroic fate, to survive where mere NPCs might simply fail, and to challenge the randomness of life as a character in a roleplaying game. Of course, for some games, this added layer of "plot immunity" may not be acceptable. A gritty game of front-line soldiers in WWI might require its PCs to be a bit more doomed, with death always looming at the end of their Strain Limit. As such, you may wish to set Destiny at a lower value, or remove it altogether and force PCs to let the dice fall where they may.

Another option is to make Destiny purchasable, requiring levels of it to be bought for an amoint of points per level. It is recommended in such cases that this value be at 4 points per Destiny point.

5.3.7 Goals

Goals are how characters regain their Destiny, and if you're using that rule, earn experience. As a result, how they work has a powerful effect on the flow of the game and on the players' priorities. When laying out your recipe, you will need to decide how freeform to be with player Goals, as well as decide whether or not to use pre-defined or player-chosen Party Goals.

Allowing the players to define their own Goals gives them an excellent space in which to define their characters and their own personal motivations for play, but setting pre-defined goals can be a great way of simulating the nature of fate or how characters improve themselves in the game world. You can even use pre-defined goals to simulate the levelling or experience systems of other roleplaying games: a game of plundering pirates or dungeoneering adventurers could simply set a standard Goal of acquiring X amount of treasure, upon which the character gains new character points and the value resets.

As discussed in Chapter 4, whether the party or the adventure defines the Party Goal similarly is a function of the type of game at hand. In a very mission-driven game, it's likely that the PCs will mostly be carrying out specific quests or assignments as a group, such as the members of a special forces squad. On the other hand, a more open world sort of game such as a flavor about space exploration, might be entirely driven by player-determined Party Goals.

5.3.8 Experience

The main decision to be had with the experience system is simply whether to use it, and if so, which one. This is an important decision for the long-term of the game and for the style and genre being emulated. Many characters in some fictitious genres change very little over time in terms of their capabilities, and are thus more suited to the default mode of no experience system. However, other adventure milieus are all about the rise from "zero to hero," or about the possibility that characters can at least change over time and become something other than they once were. Keep in mind too that especially when rewarding character points, this can make for a case where long-term campaigns can see GMs facing ever more powerful PCs to try and challenge.

5.3.9 Packages

For certain flavors, there may be a number of common abilities which characters either possess or at least might have access to as a single, group of abilities or powers. For such situations, one can use packages. Packages are predefined lists of Training, Talents, and Powers, and come in two forms: default packages, and purchasable packages.

Default packages are groups of abilities that all characters created for the flavor automatically possess for free. For example, in a game about fighter pilots, all PCs might automatically

gain Training in Piloting and Navigation. Default packages are applied to all player characters, and thus are most suited to abilities that are considered "the norm" in the game world, or to flavors in which all PCs are expected to play the same basic character type.

Purchasable packages are groups of abilities with pre-figured points costs that a PC can choose purchase at character creation. This is a great way to present common character types without making them mandatory. A purchasable package might contain a group of Talents and Powers to represent a common non-human species in a SF game. Another package might contain a selection Training categories to represent a common occupation. Purchasable packages are a great tool for speeding up the process of chargen for players without necessarily taking the full flexibility of ROULADE character creation off the table.

5.3.10   Abandoning Points

Of course, the most drastic of changes one can employ is simply the abandonment of the point buy method altogether. By discarding the point-buy system you can instead provide a more proscribed order of character creation. This can be less flexible, but be advantageous for certain types of games where character abilities are expected to be a bit more standardized, such as one where players are expected to have an array of powers that is difficult to accomplish with even the highest standard point values.

In non-point buy chargen, the process follows something like this:

1. SPECS are assigned either by a random roll (1d8), or by starting at an average and moving values from there (use the NPC Ratings table in Chapter 4).

2. Characters have X number of points to distribute among Training. This X may be a flat value, or based on one of the SPECS (usually Smarts).

3. Characters recieve a number of Talent picks, usually from 1 to 3.

4. If allowed, Powers can be selected simply as a pool of points, with a 1:1 ratio to those points (2:1 for meta-power, or 1:2 for gadgets). Limitations may provide a free point of rating. Point total here can be calculated from a multiplier to the average SPECS based on the number of powers PCs are expected to have. A default layer can be set seperately for Powers as well.

5. Strain Limit, Fatigue Threshold, Destiny, and Goals are all determined as normal.

This method is considerably less flexible than the default method, but can also be quicker and allow for a more guided approach to the process, especially if paired further with default packages in specific categories.

5.4   Action

Another important factor in any flavor is creating and describing the kinds of actions and action sequences that are commonplace in the setting. Action sequences are an incredibly powerful and flexible mechanical tool, and can be used as everything from a tool for adjudicating key focuses of the game, to even defining the very flow of the game itself. In theory, an entire game session could consist entirely of carefully defined action sequences and conflicts, punctuated by downtime.

At the least, one should define the standard features of the most common kinds of action sequences and conflicts within the setting, as well as any of the options that are in play, such as variable initiative, fatigue, and rest periods. Chapter 3 provides much of the hows and whys of this process already, but the following subsections will present a brief summary.

5.4.1 Action Sequences

When defining an action sequence, you need to know what kind of action the sequence centers around first and foremost, and thus what SPECS or Powers will be involved. The type of action will also inform how long the turns are, as these will be based on the time scale such actions generally take place in. If the action has a certain time by which it must be completed, you will want to set the turn limit to the appropriate number based on the length of the turns. If the action is one that will cause the participants to endure fatigue, be sure to specify this, and specify any modification to the normal Fatigue Threshold rules. Finally, if it is to be an extended or "give and take" action, be sure to define the target number of successful actions that must be made to succeed.

5.4.2 Conflict

Defining the most common kinds of conflict, and what is involved, is especially important. You will need to define the turn length once again, as well as the nature of the conflict, and thus what SPECS apply to both "attack" rolls, and to tests against Strain. You must declare the stakes for knock-outs as well: this tells you what happens to characters or NPCs who hit their Strain Limit. Stakes can be defined separately for PCs and NPCs in a conflict, if you wish one or the other to be more threatened by the conflict. You may also wish to pre-define some probable results of a PC's retirement from lost Destiny, if only as a general guideline.

5.4.3 Downtime

Not technically a kind of action sequence, but an important factor nonetheless, as this is how your PCs will be able to recover from Strain taken in the course of the previous actions. You will want to define the standard downtime period, and also decide whether rest periods are allowed, and how long they last as well. You may also wish to define limits or triggers on when downtime and rest can occur.

5.5 Setting

Besides mechanics, the meat of any flavor of ROULADE is the remaining setting material. A lot of this will already be defined by the decisions you've made earlier in the cooking process, especially by what options are available to characters. Depending on your intent, you can thus make your setting material here as simple as a few paragraphs of exposition, to an entire volume. In general, if you're aiming for a concrete world, however, you'll want to see about defining important NPCs and NPC factions, species, geography, common technology and equipment, and so on and so forth. The breadth of detail possible here is limited only by the imagination, but should be alt least enough detail so that the PCs can develop characters to fit within it.

5.6 Sample Flavor

The following is a simple example of what is possible with creative use of the tools outlined above, and also provides a sample outline of how to organize such flavors. Note, for instance, that it's only necessary to define where rules diverge from the standard Vanilla core, in order to conserve space and time for the reader!

5.6.1 Void Strikers

Layers Human (Hu), Mecha (Me), Starship (Sh)

Layer Shift None

Default Layer Human

Characters

Points 30

Powers None

> **Gadgets** *Void Strikers*: Vehicle (Mecha). Speed Me6, Endurance Me5. Powers: Armor (Resistance Me6, Drain), Void Blade (Melee Attack Me4, Cannot use in Fighter Form), Main Cannon (Ranged Attack Me5), Anti-Ship Missile (Ranged Attack Sh2, Limited), Fighter Form (Transform Me7, Affects Speed only). Free to Void Pilots.

> **Package** *Default Package*: Training: Firearms 1, Melee 1, Piloting (Mecha) 1, Astronavigation 1.

Action Variable Initiative, Combat Stress

> **Mecha Combat** Conflict. 5 second turns. Celerity or Smarts to attack, Armor or Endurance vs. incoming Attack Power for Strain Tests. Knock-out destroys Mecha, forces PC to eject.

> **Downtime** 2 days. Rest period allowed, 8 hours.

When mankind sailed into the stars, it found nothing. Void. Then, from the void, came monsters. Horrifying bioweapons of an advanced race that had already wiped out half of the known galaxy, spreading its ships and biomechs across the stars and consuming all in their path. They were the Kiiraga, the Death of a Thousand Worlds, and they knew only hunger and conquest.

To face this tremendous evil the Void Strikers were created: advanced, transformable mecha that could face the biomechs on their own terms. The Void Pilots who operate these mecha serve aboard space carriers, which patrol the edges of civilized space and face the threat of the Kiiraga wherever they rear their head and threaten humanity's borders. The advanced neural link within the Void Striker system allows the pilot to react to enemy attacks at the speed of thought, far faster than a normal space fighter ever could, and it has given humanity the chance to survive once again.

But the Kiiraga are not easily thwarted, and the Death Fleet itself is rumored to be headed for human space ...

Common Foes

> **Chitters** Extra. SPECS Me3.

> **Bladekin** SPECS Me4. Strain Limit 4. Blade Slash (Attack Me5).

> **Death Carrier** Vehicle. Speed Me3. Endurance Sh6. Powers: Void Cannon (Attack Sh7), Anti-Mech Missiles (Attack Me6), Nega-Shield (Defense Sh5).