

JONATHAN GILMOUR & DOUG LEVANDOWSKI

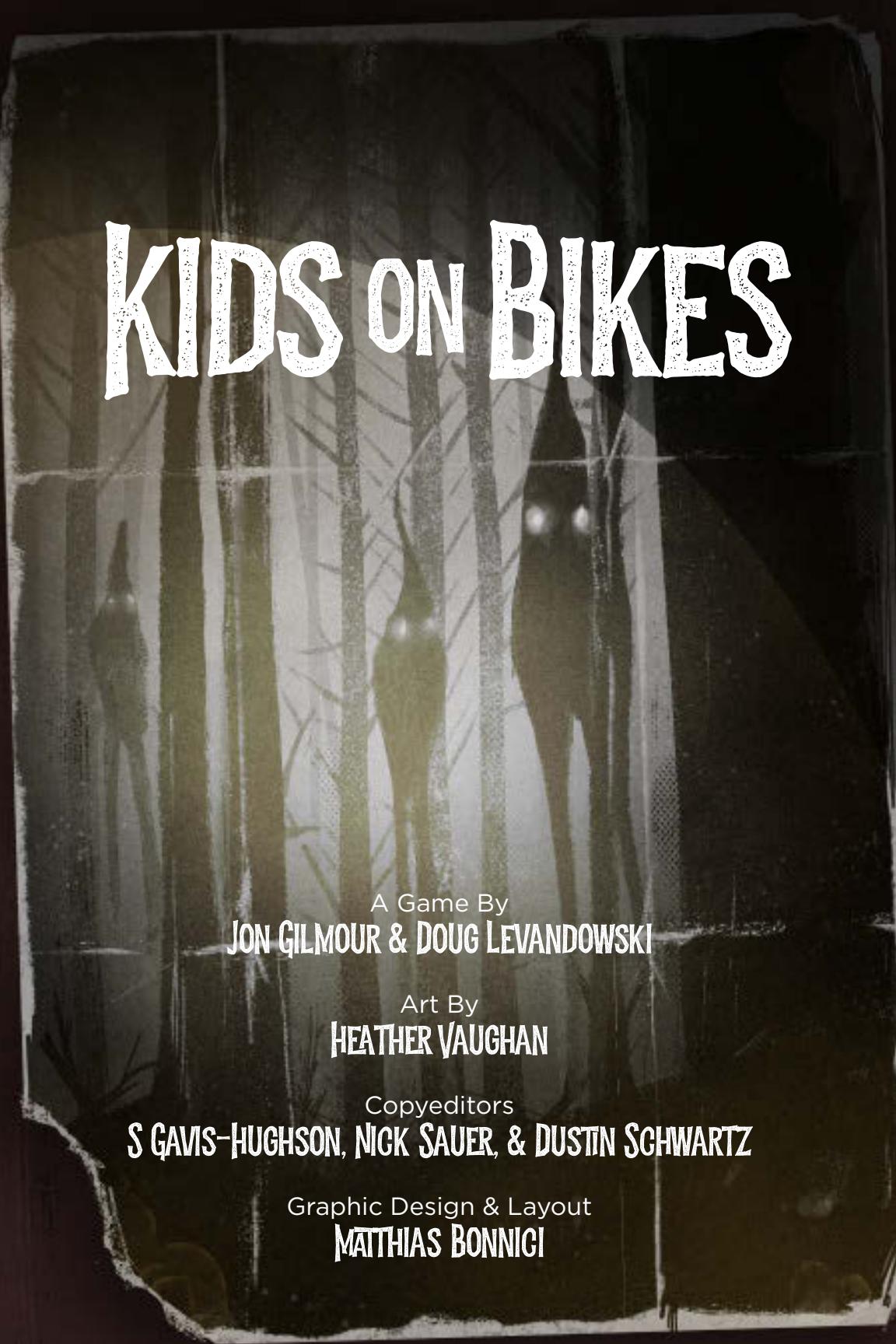
# KIDS ON BIKES



A ROLE PLAYING GAME ABOUT SMALL TOWNS AND BIG ADVENTURES!



# KIDS ON BIKES



A Game By  
**JON GILMOUR & DOUG LEVANDOWSKI**

Art By  
**HEATHER VAUGHAN**

Copyeditors  
**S GAVIS-HUGHSON, NICK SAUER, & DUSTIN SCHWARTZ**

Graphic Design & Layout  
**MATTHIAS BONNICI**

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# KIDS ON BIKES

The door to the old house creaks open, the rust on the hinges groaning as you see the dust floating like spores in the air inside. By the faint light of your cheap flashlights, you see the stairs to the upper floor, its railings gnarled and broken like crooked teeth. Their curve makes the stairs seem almost like a hungry grin, and you wonder if their age will support your weight. Still, you must go in.

The only question is who will go first?

In *Kids on Bikes*, you'll take on the roles of everyday people grappling with strange, terrifying, and exceptionally powerful forces that they cannot defeat, control, or even fully understand. The only way to face them is to work together, use your strengths, and know when you just have to run as fast as you can.

**NOTE:** Most of this book is written with players in mind and directed toward them. GMs, all of this information will be pertinent to you, too, and we've included more information for you at the end of the book, starting on page 47.



## - SETTING BOUNDARIES -

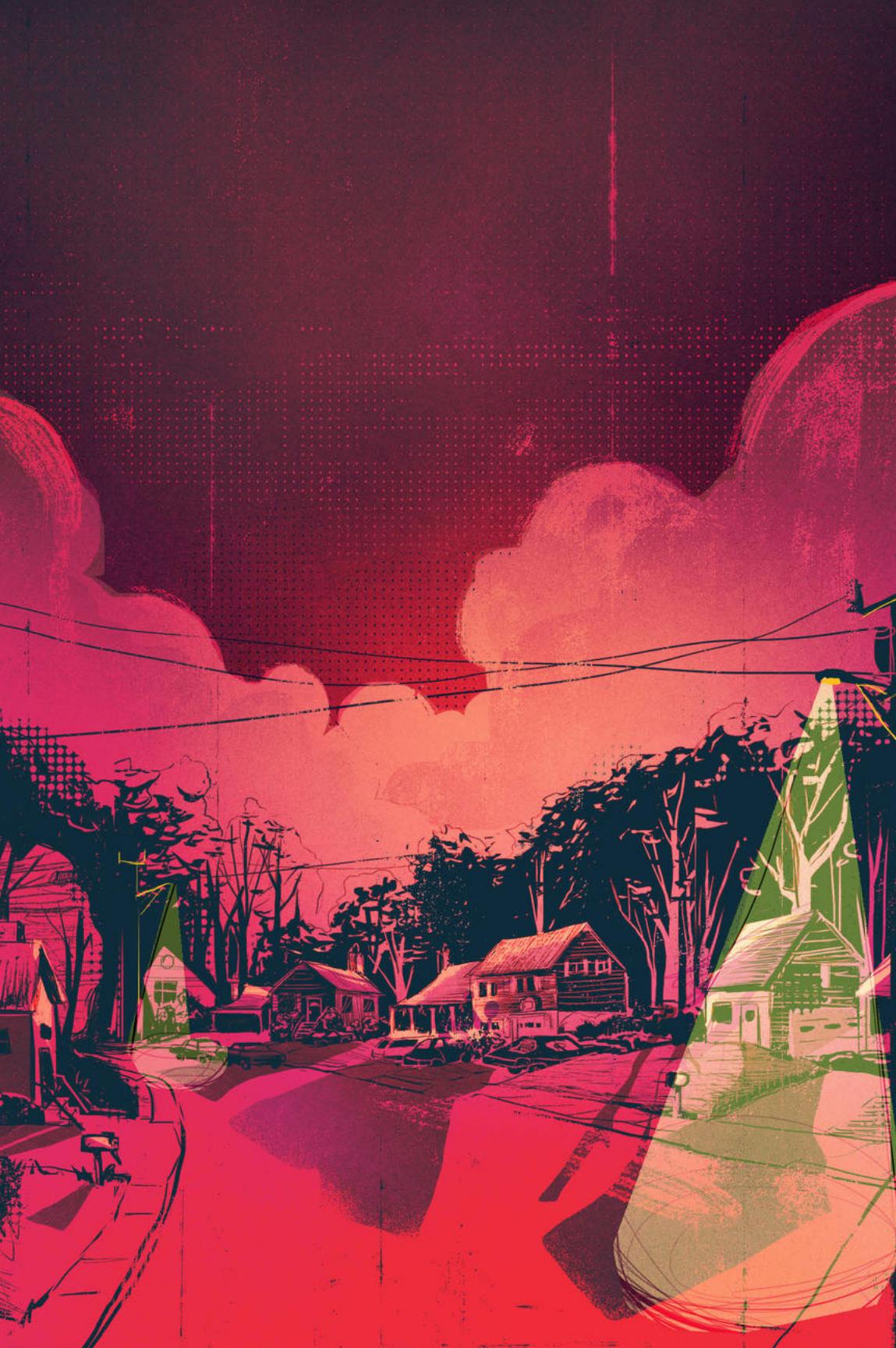
Before starting to create your characters, you and the gamemaster (GM) should address the kinds of things that the players want to see in the game and the things they don't want to see. You'll already have agreed on the overall tone you want the game to have, but it's important to know what narrative elements might upset players so the group can avoid them. Doing so will make the game more enjoyable for everyone. To start this process, the GM will ask whether the players would like to discuss these boundaries or simply give the GM lists.

If players agree to have a discussion, everyone will talk about what they're okay with and what they want to avoid. During this discussion, don't ask others to explain why they don't want certain elements in the game; take their requests at face value and respect them. However, do feel free to ask for clarification.

If players would rather give the GM lists, they'll each write down the topics they'd like to avoid, and the GM will compile that list anonymously. As with the other method, there shouldn't be discussion of why players don't want to address certain topics.

In addition to the group's comfort, another factor to consider while establishing boundaries is where you're playing the game. If you're playing in the privacy of your own home or in a conference room at a convention, you only need to consider the players' preferences. However, if you're in a public place, if you're around younger people, or if there are other factors beyond the preferences of the group, you should consider them when establishing boundaries. In general, you should be playing the game in a way that will be comfortable for everyone who may hear it. For example, your group may be comfortable addressing issues of race in '50s suburbia — but if you're in public, everyone who overhears you might not be. Try to keep this in mind and be respectful to anyone who might overhear your game.

If, during the game, someone accidentally brings up one of the topics that should be avoided — or if anything that is part of the story is making you uncomfortable — simply knock quickly and lightly on the table. Whoever is currently narrating should simply rewind and proceed down a different path. There is no need to discuss your request to go in a different direction; the group will just move on with the story in another direction.



## - WORLD BUILDING -

*Kids on Bikes* should probably be set in a small town at any point in history before everyone had a video camera in their pocket at all times. It should probably be a place remote enough that the rest of the world just doesn't care about it but close enough that black helicopters can be there within hours. Everyone in the town probably knows everyone else — for better or for worse. People look out for each other, but rumor also travels fast. Ultimately, though, this is all up to you.

We recommend letting the players work together to craft the town, possibly in a short session prior to playing, or even during the same session if the players are okay with the GM thinking on their feet.

For groups who aren't comfortable creating their world together or for groups who want to dive right into the gameplay, the GM can also create a setting for the group instead, answering the questions below ahead of time and then sharing the answers with the group to start the game.

### ***Collaborative Creation***

If you choose to collaboratively build the world, players should first agree on the tone they want the game to take — whether that's serious, goofy, or somewhere in the middle. This decision will help guide the decisions you'll make when creating the town. As with the rest of the game, there are no wrong answers here! It's whatever you want the game to be.

Second, all players should discuss the era in which you want the adventure to take place. Early '80s? Mid '60s? Present day? Since the time period will have such a strong impact on the course of the game, make this decision as a group, with as much discussion as you need.

If you choose to build the world together, answer the following questions to create the location, adapting the number of questions asked, as indicated below, so that each player is answering the same number of questions about the town.

1. Our adventure takes place in... (name of town and state)
2. The industry our location is best known for is...
3. Our town is famous for...
4. Our town is infamous for...
5. Economically, our town is... (prospering, floundering, stagnant, etc.)
6. A notable local organization is... (Duplicate in a five-player game.)
7. A notable local landmark is... (Duplicate in a three-player game or five-player game.)
8. Our school's sports team is called...

After constructing the town, each player shares one rumor about the town.

Especially in a small town, rumors drive a lot of what goes on. The GM writes these rumors down, keeping them in mind so that they can influence the upcoming game — though there may be sources for the rumor that the players can't even imagine. Also, not all rumors have any truth to them. Finally, keep in mind that as long as you're within the bounds of what the group has agreed to include in the game, there are no wrong answers.

**For Example:** Carlos goes first and says that they're in a town called Perkins, Colorado. Yasmin follows and says that the town is best known for mining. Emily then says that the town is famous for its candles, which it has made and sold to the world for years. Carlos then says that the town is infamous for a mining accident that trapped twelve miners underground a decade ago. Yasmin decides that the town is economically floundering as people move away from coal energy. Emily says that a notable local organization is the Elks, an organization that most of the adult men in the town belong to. Carlos says that one notable local landmark is the closed mine that no one is allowed to go near. Yasmin adds that another notable landmark is the diving cliff, a place where teens often jump into the river that surges during the late spring thaw. Emily rounds out the answers by saying that the high school's sports team is called the Mountain Lions.

As they move into the rumors, Carlos says that he heard that the Elks is really a front for a devil-worshipping cult. Yasmin says that she heard that Mr. Worthy, the principal of the high school, is carrying on an affair with Mrs. Yates, the principal of the middle school. Finally, Emily says that she heard that when they found the bodies of the trapped miners, two were missing — and that the ten that were recovered seemed to have been attacked by some sort of animal.

Gautier, the GM, should abide by the elements that the players created for the town. But over the course of the game, the GM and the players can decide together whether any — or all — of those rumors are true.

### ***Our Suggestions***

We suggest that the game takes place in a town where children can ride their bicycles from one side of town to the other relatively quickly, probably in under an hour — so a town that's no more than ten miles across. A town this size also allows non-player characters (NPCs) to spread information and rumors more quickly — and for NPCs who are important to the characters to hear about these rumors just as quickly. And, more frighteningly, it prevents the characters from having a lot of places to hide. It's also important that there will be parts of town that are empty, especially at night. In a place like New York City, nothing could happen without at least a few people seeing it...



A note about historical accuracy: While avoiding anachronisms makes the experience more realistic, nobody likes that person at the table who says, “Well, actually, the Millennium Falcon toy in question wasn’t released until 1978!” Just roll with it — unless a person in 1973 whips out a smartphone. In general, leave it to the GM to correct any necessary anachronisms.

### **Multiple Sessions**

We hope that you’ll enjoy *Kids on Bikes* enough to play it over multiple sessions, developing and growing your characters and the world around them. Assuming that time has elapsed in the world of the game between sessions, before you start a new session, each player should explain one thing that has changed in the town between then and now — big or small. Perhaps it’s a new rumor that’s floating around. Perhaps in the time between the last adventure and the new one, things have changed about the town, like the mill that was struggling finally closed, or the school mysteriously burned down. These new events can help to drive the narrative of the new game — and give the players some control over where the story goes.

**For Example:** In the story, the characters go into the mine to see if there’s any truth to the rumors. They find another body down there, another one of the miners, but it has been very badly attacked... by what seem like human teeth. And they swear that they hear something down there with them, but it is too dark to really see. At the start of their next game, Emily says that she heard that some of the livestock around town have started to go missing — victims of strange, midnight attacks. Yasmin says that one change to the town is that government agents have come in to investigate the mine further after the group’s discovery. Carlos says that a new restaurant has opened up, and the food isn’t very good — but all of the Elks seem to always be there. Again, the rumors may be true or they may not be. But the changes to the town (in this case, the arrival of government agents and the opening of a new restaurant) should be taken as fact.



# - CHARACTER CREATION -

The core of any RPG is the character you'll be embodying. You and your GM should work together to agree upon a character you'll be excited to play. One who reminds you of yourself in important ways — but who also is different enough from you to be an escape from the real world.

If there are boundaries that you want the characters to have or modifications that you want to make to the creation process, as a player or GM, please do! The core of the game is the experience that the players will have, and anything you want to do to augment that experience is great.

## **Process Overview**

When creating your character, you'll move through the following steps, likely in this order:

1. Select a trope from the Playbook and take the appropriate character sheet.
2. Make trope selections for your character: age, strengths, flaws, first name.
3. Introduce your character to the rest of the group.
4. Answer questions about your character's relationship with the other characters in the game.
5. Complete the finishing touches for your character: motivations, fears, backpacks, last name, trope-specific questions.

## **Selecting a Trope**

To streamline the character creation process, we've created a set of tropes that you can use at the start of game to get into character more quickly. These tropes, which fall into categories like Loner Weirdo, Stoic Professional, or Brilliant Mathlete, will determine your character's stat dice and streamline some choices for you. Tropes can be found in the Playbook, which is available at [huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes](http://huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes). Alternatively, you can find the information for these tropes in Appendix E on page 66.

Choose the trope that you're most interested in playing. There's no right or wrong answers here, and your GM will work with you to make sure that, whatever character you choose, you'll be central to the story of the game. And remember, selecting a trope does not mean that you'll be forced into a certain style of play. True, the Brutish Jock isn't going to be as charming as the Popular Kid, but, as in life, be careful not to assume too much about a personality based on only a few descriptors.

If you don't find a trope that fits your sense of your character, feel free to work with the GM to create your character from the ground up! This will take more time, but for players who already have a clear vision of who they want their character to be — or for players who don't want their character to fit into one trope or another — this might be the most satisfying way to create a character. (For more details on this process, refer to "Creating a Character from Scratch" on page 24.)

In the bottom right corner of your trope sheet, you'll find two questions specific to your trope and, likely, your age. These will help you flesh out who you are. You don't need to answer these out loud, but by the end of the character creation process, you should know what your answers are.

## **Character Stats**

The trope you choose will determine how you assign dice to your six stats. The higher the possible value on a die, the better your character is with that stat. The six stats are:

**Brains:** This stat determines how book-smart a character is. This will determine how well they understand problems, how well they did or are doing in school, and how quickly they're able to solve academic problems.

**Brawn:** This stat determines how much brute strength a character has. It does not determine how well they can fight — just how well they can lift things and how much physical damage they can take. It also determines how physically intimidating a character is.

**Fight:** This stat determines how good a combatant a character is with whatever weapons or fighting skills you decide your character knows. While a character with a high Fight stat won't be able to pick up a gun and use it effectively if they have never fired one before, this stat will make them good with weapons that they do have experience with. Also, they'll be able to learn how to use new weapons and fighting skills more easily, if given proper training.

**Flight:** This stat determines how fast a character is — as well as how skilled they are at evading their problems (both literally and figuratively). Characters with a high Flight stat will be fast and tough to trap both physically and verbally.

**Charm:** This stat determines how socially adept a character is and how good they are at reading the emotions of another person or group of people. Characters with a high Charm stat will be able to talk themselves out of tough situations and into good ones with relative ease — within reason.

**Grit:** This stat determines how hard it is to break a character emotionally or physically. Characters with a high Grit stat will be able to keep a level head in the worst of situations and will be able to keep their cool even when pushed hard. Finally, this stat also determines how street-smart a character is.

The higher a stat is, the better a character is at skills involving that stat — and the more likely they are to succeed when using that stat. While there's no guarantee that you'll roll your maximum, generally, characters will be better able to pass checks with their higher dice.

<b>d20</b>	<b>Superb</b> — Even upon first meeting you, anyone would be able to readily tell that this is a strength of yours. You are remarkably good with respect to this stat.
<b>d12</b>	<b>Impressive</b> — People who know you would say that you're pretty good with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter.
<b>d10</b>	<b>Above Average</b> — You aren't remarkably good in terms of this stat, but you're slightly above average.
<b>d8</b>	<b>Below Average</b> — You aren't too bad in terms of this stat, but you're certainly not good, either. You're just slightly worse than average.
<b>d6</b>	<b>Bad</b> — People who know you would say that you're pretty bad with respect to this stat, but it wouldn't be something that's obvious during a first encounter.
<b>d4</b>	<b>Terrible</b> — Upon first meeting you, people would immediately be able to tell that this is a weakness of yours. You are remarkably bad with respect to this stat.

When creating your character, think carefully about how your d20 stat and your d4 stat balance each other out. If your character has a d20 in Charm and a d4 in Flight, consider what that means for your character. Have they always talked their way out of their problems instead of having to run from them — including gym class? Or were they always so slow that they had to use humor and kindness to compensate for their inability to escape? Think about how your other stats relate to this balance, too.

Stats will also be used to resolve skill checks and combat, which we'll address in "Stat Checks" on page 27 and "Combat Encounters" on page 34.

### Character Ages

For some of the tropes, you'll also need to pick your character's age: child, teen, or adult. Groups of characters can certainly be a mixture of all three ages. The GM and the players will just need to establish early on what draws their characters together for their first adventure. For future adventures, you'll be linked by the events of the first session. The age of the characters has implications throughout the character creation process and during gameplay. The rules will discuss these implications as they become important.

At the start of the character creation process, the character's age determines what strengths each character gets for free — and what modifiers they have to roll with their stat dice.

Children automatically receive the Quick Healing strength, and they cannot take the Rebellious strength. When rolling stat checks (described in the "Stat

Checks” section, starting on page 27), children add +1 to their Flight and Charm checks, as they’re fast and likeable.

Teens automatically receive the Rebellious strength. When rolling stat checks, teens add +1 to their Fight and Brawn checks, as they’re pugnacious and in their prime.

Adults automatically receive the Skilled at \_\_\_ strength. This skill will correspond to their profession — either legal or illegal. When rolling stat checks, adults add +1 to their Brains and Grit checks. Even if they aren’t always geniuses, they’ve seen enough of the world to know what it’s about and to not get shaken by much.

### ***Selecting Strengths and Flaws***

Once you’ve selected your trope and age, choose from the strengths and flaws associated with that character. Strengths are mechanical advantages that your character will have when playing the game. Flaws are not mechanical, but they’ll help you develop your character’s personality. Choose two strengths and two flaws from those associated with your character’s trope. Or, if you want to draw from the larger list when deciding, you may. The full lists can be found in Appendix B: Strengths (page 59) and Appendix C: Flaws (page 61).

Once you have done this, give your character a first name — or a nickname that they go by. Hold off on a last name for now just in case you find out, as you’re introducing your characters, that they’re related to another character.

### ***Including Characters Who Are Disabled or Neuroatypical***

For some players, a traditionally “able-bodied” or “neurotypical” character might not fit their vision of their character. Instead, a player may want to play a character who is physically disabled or whose brain functions differently. As long as the players and the GM agree that you will be appropriately sensitive in playing the character, you can play any kind of character you want to play. When embracing these differences, keep in mind all of the likely consequences, both positive and negative. Fleshying out these traits will help you play your character better.

**For Example:** If Helene’s character has been using crutches to get around for most of her life, she won’t be quite as mobile, but her upper body might be accordingly stronger. If Raj is deaf, he may have picked up the ability to read lips. Also, think about what your character needs to do in response to their difference. If Hana is on the autism spectrum, she might need time after experiencing sensory overload before she can focus again, and she might have a process that helps her refocus more quickly.

Remember that the limitations that accompany these differences should consistently develop the role-playing experience. Some differences may present situations that require more complex problem solving — or may lead

to easier solutions to others. Remember, the GM and player should both carefully consider whether or not a player is ready to embrace this role-playing respectfully before agreeing — and you should make sure that everyone at the table is comfortable with the direction of the character.

Also, remember that things that would make a character disabled or neuroatypical are almost always on a spectrum, not a binary. To the casual observer, a character with autism, for example, might be indistinguishable from other members of the party — or that character may be non-verbal. If the character is hearing-impaired, they might be able to hear normally with hearing aids — or they may be completely deaf. It's up to you where you put your character along any spectrum.



Two words of caution about these changes, though: First, make sure that you're playing them in order to develop the character and the story, not for jokes or for novelty. Second, the GM should take care to not consistently exclude characters from events based on any agreed-upon changes.

As stated before, playing a character with limitations provides you with an opportunity to problem-solve or think about a situation that you may not have considered. How would Raj problem-solve in a scenario where he couldn't see the lips of a person who is trying to communicate with him? How would Helene problem-solve if the only way of a situation is to run away? As in real life, differing abilities provide an opportunity for what could be considered non-traditional problem solving.

There may be a few moments when a character who is confined to a wheelchair might not be able to stay with the group. However, since the GM agreed to a player's modifications to their character, they should take care not to make these moments frequent. And the GM should encourage players to feel good about the choices they made for their characters, especially if they made those choices to deepen the role-playing in the game.

**For Example:** Priya chooses to create a character named Becky, who is on the autism spectrum. All of the players and the GM agree that they're comfortable with Priya's ability to play this character thoughtfully. Priya decides that Becky is a Scout who knows quite a lot about the great outdoors. She can identify all local vegetation by sight, knows which plants are edible and which are poisonous, knows when they flower, and can vividly describe all of these plants from memory. One of Becky's favorite things is to be outside, away from lots of people and loud noises, both of which make her very uncomfortable. Sometimes, Becky gets overwhelmed if too much is going on around her, and as a consequence, she has learned every inch of the wilderness in and around Perkins. When Becky gets overstimulated, which often happens if she's around too many people or if it gets too noisy, she starts to have trouble focusing. She needs to go to a quiet place and, if possible, spend time grounding herself by looking at plants and studying their details for a few minutes. That's usually enough to help her feel like herself again.

### **Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality**

When creating your character, carefully consider their race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. These parts of your own identity are important to who you are — and they will be important to who your character is, too.

As a group, you will need to decide to what extent historical accuracy influences the treatment of different races, non-local ethnicities, and LGBTQIA people within your game. However, keep in mind that historical accuracy is not an excuse to be horrible. “But this is how people would have talked back then” doesn’t go far when you’ve established boundaries. If paranormal events can happen regularly in the town, then a mining town in the 1950s can be accepting of all people.

If handled appropriately, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality contribute quite meaningfully to your sense of the character and to narrative elements in the game. As long as your group agrees on the way these elements will be addressed and everyone is comfortable with these decisions — and as long as you are addressing these issues seriously and compassionately — you’ll be playing within the spirit of the game.

**For Example:** Dale creates Harper, a gender-queer character who is out to their closest friends and their family, but not to the town at large. As with Priya's character Becky, all of the players and the GM agree that they're comfortable with Dale's ability to portray this character well. Based on the ground rules that they set — during which they agreed that there would be no slurs related to, or mistreatment of, LGBTQIA people — they agree that they aren't going to make Harper's gender identity something that non-player characters really take much note of. The players and the GM agree that it won't be something that non-player characters address unless Harper brings it up.



## ***Introductions and Questions***

Now that you have the basics of your character sketched out, think about how they're related to the other characters at the table. We encourage you to make these decisions based on what the players tell you about their characters. While it probably wouldn't make much sense for every character in a five-player game to know every other character at the table well, each character should have at least one meaningful connection to another character. This will give your GM ways to bring your characters together in the narrative.

If you're feeling stuck, some possible relationships include parents and children; siblings, step-siblings, and half-siblings; cousins; classmates, teachers and students; best friends or worst enemies; neighbors; mentors and mentees; bosses and employees; and significant others or spouses.

This is a good time to start talking as your character would: "We know each other from back when we were in high school" rather than "My character dated their character for a few years."

**For Example:** Oswald, Isabella, and Yoon are talking about how they know each other. Oswald is a teen with the Lone Weirdo trope, Isabella is a teen with the Wannabe trope, and Yoon is an adult with the Blue-Collar Worker trope. Isabella says that she and Oswald used to be close friends, since they're neighbors, but when she started trying to be one of the cool kids a few years ago, she stopped hanging out with Oswald completely and quite suddenly. Oswald adds that since they started out as friends because they're neighbors, he wasn't all that hurt when they stopped hanging out. He just kind of shifted to hanging out with other people, and it was fine.

Yoon says that she knows Oswald because he's friends with her son, Daniel, who's also not that popular in school. She says that Oswald often sleeps over, so she knows him well enough to know what he likes on his pizza. Oswald adds that he feels comfortable talking to Yoon — moreso than his parents sometimes, so he often confides in her. Yoon and Isabella agree that they don't know each other well. Since it's a small town, though, they know each other by sight. Everyone in their small town knows everyone else in their small town by sight.

Having broadly established how you know and don't know each other, each player will answer questions about the other characters. You'll do this one at a time, passing the list of questions around the table and collaborating to make the established relationships more complex and to hint at information about who you don't know. This process will make the story of the game richer, even before the strange events start happening.

Depending on the length of time that you have for character creation, you could take one of three approaches to answering the questions: quick start, one sided, or complete.

## **Quick Start Questions** (2 minutes per player)

In the shortest version of setup, each player will answer one question about the character clockwise from them at the table. Before answering the questions, you should move so that you are sitting next to someone you have a close relationship with.

We do not recommend this setup — though if you're trying to get a group up and running for a demo of the game, this can cut down on the time needed to start playing.

### *For a character you know:*

- Decide whether your relationship with that character is mostly positive or mostly negative.
- Roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Know - Positive” list on page 56 in Appendix A or the “Character You Know - Negative” list on page 57 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the relationship that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.

### *For a character you don’t know:*

- Roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Don’t Know” list on page 58 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the concept of that character that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.

Once each player has answered a question about the person to their left, this part of the setup is complete.

**For Example:** Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald are answering the Quick Start Questions about each other. Oswald goes first and feels mostly positive about Yoon and rolls a 15: “What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?” He decides that they both really like fantasy novels. Yoon was reading *The Hobbit* when he was over at Daniel’s house a few years ago, and he borrowed it, read it, and couldn’t get enough fantasy novels. In Arkansas in the early ’80s, where the game takes place, there aren’t that many people who read those kinds of books.

Next, Yoon rolls for Isabella, whom she doesn’t know. She rolls a 6: “Why is this character’s family so important in town?” Yoon tells the group that Isabella’s mom is the sheriff in town and her dad owns the grocery store, so both of them are pillars of the community. They’re both good people, and they’re well respected in town.

Finally, Isabella feels more negative than positive about Oswald and rolls a 20: “How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?” Isabella and Oswald agree that he’s not the type to betray people easily, and Oswald pointed out earlier that he’d have to want something pretty badly to betray her — so Isabella decides that it was unintentional. A few years ago, Isabella told Oswald about how much pressure her parents were putting on her, and Oswald talked to Daniel about it. A few of the cool kids overheard, and they made fun of Isabella for even talking to Oswald.

### **One-Sided Questions** (5 minutes per player)

In the mid-range version of the setup, each of you will answer a question about each other character. Seating arrangement is not important for this version of character questions.

We recommend this approach if you want to jump into the game, especially if you are running a one-off session of the game.

#### *For a character you know:*

- If you feel mostly positive about them, roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Know - Positive” list on page 56 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the relationship that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- If you feel mostly negative about them, roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Know - Negative” list on page 57 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the relationship that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.
- Now have them answer a question about you from the other list: Negative if you answered a Positive question about them, or vice versa.
- Cross out that question.

#### *For a character you don’t know:*

- Roll a d20 and answer the appropriate question from the “Character You Don’t Know” list on page 58 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the concept of that character that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.
- Now have them answer a question about you from the same list.
- Cross out that question.

Once each player has answered one question about each other character at the table, this part of the setup is complete.

**For Example:** Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald are answering the One-Sided Questions about each other. Oswald goes first, since he knows both characters well. He starts with Isabella and a positive question and rolls a 5: “Why do you care about this character more than they care about you?” He decides that Isabella really seems to have forgotten about him, and he misses hanging out with her — but his few overtures to her have been misinterpreted, he thinks.

Isabella then rolls for a negative question about Oswald (since he rolled a positive one for her) and gets a 16: “What would losing this character mean to you?” Isabella says that she and Oswald don’t have much of a relationship anymore, but that Oswald reminds her of her past. Even though she wants to be a cool kid, every once in awhile she wants to go back to not caring about what other people think about her. Hanging out with Oswald would definitely be that.

Next, Oswald rolls for a positive question about Yoon and gets a 15: “What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?” He decides that they both really, really like fantasy novels. Yoon was reading *The Hobbit* when he was over at Daniel’s house a few years ago, and he borrowed it, read it, and couldn’t get enough fantasy novels. In Arkansas in the early ’80s, where the game takes place, there aren’t that many people who read those kinds of books.

Yoon then rolls a negative question for Oswald, and gets an 18: “You hurt this character years ago. Why can’t you apologize?” Yoon decides that, about a year ago, Yoon and Oswald’s father nearly had an affair. Though nothing more than a few kisses happened, it caused serious tension between Oswald’s parents. Yoon doesn’t know if Oswald’s mother knows or if Yoon just projected the concerns. She’s fairly sure that Oswald has no idea even though he has said that things have been weird between his parents. (This would be something that the player controlling Oswald would know but, in the game, Oswald would not.) Because he doesn’t know, she can’t apologize to him for what she assumes is her role in that tension.

Next, Yoon rolls for Isabella, whom she doesn’t know. She gets a 6: “Why is this character’s family so important in town?” Yoon tells the group that Isabella’s mom is the sheriff in town and her dad owns the grocery store, so both of them are pillars of the community. They’re both good people, and they’re well respected in town.

As a final question, Isabella rolls an 18 for her question about Yoon, whom she doesn’t know well: “What is this character doing to threaten their family’s reputation?” Since Yoon is a first-generation immigrant, her family doesn’t have a reputation in the town, so she rerolls and



gets a 14: "Who does this character have a very public feud with?" Isabella asks Yoon what she did before she moved to America, and Yoon tells her that she was training to be a pharmacist. Isabella decides that, some years ago, Mr. Talbot the local pharmacist was giving bad advice to people about what's dangerous for children. Yoon heard about it and warned parents. Though she was right, Mr. Talbot said some unkind things about her, both about her level of training and her race. Mr. Talbot isn't a particularly good person, Isabella says — and most people think he's wrong on this one.



## **Complete Questions** (8 minutes per player)

In the long version of the setup, each player will answer two questions about each character they know at the table and one question about each character they do not know.

For multi-session plays of *Kids on Bikes*, this is the approach we recommend. It takes a while, but it helps you to develop rich, interesting relationships with each other, and it can lead to good directions for the story to take as you play. To foster this, while others are establishing their relationships, start thinking about how you could insert yourself into their dramas. For example, if Hector thinks Esme stole his bicycle even though she didn't, perhaps you were the one who actually did. Or, if Hank cheated on Morris, perhaps you were the other man... or you know who was.

Remember, this is a big part of the world building of the game. As long as you're within the bounds of what everyone wants from the game, there are no wrong answers here. Create the game you want to play by answering these questions!

### *For a character you know:*

- Roll a d20 and answer the appropriate question from the “Character You Know - Positive” list on page 56 in Appendix or the “Character You Know - Negative” list on page 57 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the relationship you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.
- Roll a d20 and answer the appropriate question from the “Character You Know - Negatives” list in Appendix A. (Same caveats as above.)
- Cross out that question.

### *For a character you don’t know:*

- Roll a d20 and answer the corresponding question from the “Character You Don’t Know” list on page 58 in Appendix A. (If the question doesn’t fit the concept of that character that you have in mind or if the question you roll has already been answered, you may answer a question above or below the one you rolled that hasn’t been answered yet or reroll.)
- Cross out that question.

Once you answer questions about all other characters, pass the sheets to your left, and that player repeats the process until every player has answered questions about all other characters.

**For Example:** Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald are answering the questions about each other. Oswald goes first, since he knows both characters well. He starts with Isabella and a positive question and rolls a 5: “Why do you care about this character more than they care about you?” He decides that Isabella really seems to have forgotten about him, and he

misses hanging out with her — but his few overtures to her have been misinterpreted, he thinks.

Next, he rolls for a negative question about her and gets a 3: “What could make you betray this character?” He decides that he’s feeling kind of disconnected from her, so it wouldn’t take much. The last time he tried to talk to her at school, she was really nasty to him, so if it would get him something he wanted, he’d betray her — but not in a major way.

Next, he rolls for a positive question about Yoon and gets a 15: “What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?” He decides that they both really, really like fantasy novels. Yoon was reading *The Hobbit* when he was over at Daniel’s house a few years ago, and he borrowed it, read it, and couldn’t get enough fantasy novels. In Arkansas in the early ’80s, where the game takes place, there aren’t that many people who read those kinds of books. Then he rolls a negative question about her and gets an 11: “What does this character do that makes you immediately lose your temper?” Oswald decides that doesn’t really fit their relationship and rerolls, getting a 15: “What insanity has this character shown warning signs of?” Oswald has seen Yoon be a little bit too fastidious and worries that she might be tending toward compulsive behavior — but he’s a teen and doesn’t necessarily know what all of the warning signs are.

Next, Yoon rolls for Isabella, whom she doesn’t know. She gets a 6: “Why is this character’s family so important in town?” Yoon tells the group that Isabella’s mom is the sheriff in town and her dad owns the grocery store, so both of them are pillars of the community. They’re both good people, and they’re well respected in town.

Yoon then rolls a positive question for Oswald, a 10: “What is this character sacrificing to protect you?” She decides that it isn’t protecting her, per se, but Oswald is always willing to talk to Yoon about what’s going on at the high school, something that her son isn’t usually willing to do. He’s giving up some of his time to let her know what’s going on.

Yoon then rolls a negative question for Oswald, and gets an 18: “You hurt this character years ago. Why can’t you apologize?” Yoon decides that, about a year ago, Yoon and Oswald’s father nearly had an affair. Though nothing more than a few kisses happened, it caused serious tension between Oswald’s parents. Yoon doesn’t know if Oswald’s mother knows or if Yoon just projected the concerns. She’s fairly sure that Oswald has no idea even though he has said that things have been weird between his parents. (This would be something that the player controlling Oswald would know but, in the game, Oswald would not.) Because he doesn’t know, she can’t apologize to him for what she assumes is her role in that tension.

Lastly, Isabella rolls a positive question for Oswald, a 16: “What would losing this character mean to you?” Isabella says that she and Oswald don’t have much of a relationship anymore, but that Oswald reminds her of her past. Even though she wants to be a cool kid, every once in a while she wants to go back to not caring about what other people think about her. Hanging out with Oswald would definitely be that.

She then rolls a 20 for the negative question about him: “How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?” Isabella and Oswald agree that he’s not the type to betray people easily, and Oswald pointed out earlier that he hadn’t betrayed her yet — so Isabella decides that it was unintentional. A few years ago, Isabella told Oswald about how much pressure her parents were putting on her, and Oswald talked to Daniel about it. A few of the cool kids overheard, and they made fun of Isabella for even talking to Oswald.

As a final question, Isabella rolls an 18 for her question about Yoon, whom she doesn’t know well: “What is this character doing to threaten their family’s reputation?” Since Yoon is a first-generation immigrant, her family doesn’t have a reputation in the town, so she rerolls and gets a 14: “Who does this character have a very public feud with?” Isabella asks Yoon what she did before she moved to America, and Yoon tells her that she was training to be a pharmacist. Isabella decides that, some years ago, Mr. Talbot the local pharmacist was giving bad advice to people about what’s dangerous for children. Yoon heard about it and warned parents. Though she was right, Mr. Talbot said some unkind things about her, both about her level of training and her race. Mr. Talbot isn’t a particularly good person, Isabella says — and most people think he’s wrong on this one.

### ***Finishing Touches***

**Full Name:** Now that you’ve fleshed out your character and your relationship with the other characters, you’ll add the finishing touches. If you were waiting to complete your name, do that now, keeping in mind that relatives probably have the same last name — but maybe not. Remember, try to keep your name in line with the tone that you and the other players have agreed to for the game.

**Motivation:** Write down something that strongly motivates you. It might not be the thing that drives all of your decisions, but it should certainly drive most of them — and especially the big decisions. It could be a specific motivation (e.g., “find my son no matter what it costs me” or “impress Tom so that he’ll go out with me”), it could be more general (e.g., “look cool” or “learn”), or it could have to do with concealing some information (e.g., “don’t let the others find out that my business is failing” or “don’t let my children learn that I killed their father”). If appropriate, share these with other players — but most likely, you’ll just be sharing this motivation with the GM.

Typically, children will be motivated by their curiosity. Teens will often be motivated by social factors like fitting in or finding and maintaining a romantic relationship. Adults will be motivated by holding onto or protecting what they have, whether that's a business or family. And all ages can be motivated by something or someone that they've lost.

**Fears:** Think about what it is that scares you. There will be some mechanical implications for this fear that will be addressed in "Planned Actions and Snap Decisions" on page 29. In terms of role-playing the fears, you will, of course, want to avoid your fears, and when faced with them, you'll behave more irrationally. Ultimately, what you fear in the game is up to you.

Children usually fear things that, rationally, they shouldn't fear — and don't fear things that they ought to. They're more likely to walk up to a stranger covered in blood to make sure they're okay than they are to open up their closets in the middle of the night. Generally, children fear the unknown and what they can't see. Children are also generally not ashamed of their fears; they'll gladly declare them to friends and strangers alike.

Teens are all over the place. Some teens are still scared of the things that scared them as children, but they'll tend to be very tight-lipped about these fears. No teen wants to admit that they're still scared of the dark. Often, though, teens are more scared of social isolation, losing friends, or embarrassing themselves. But sometimes, more mature teens — or ones whose lives have been rough — will have fears more like an adult's.

Few adults have the fears that children have — and most of them aren't worried about the kinds of social things that concern teens. Rather, they're typically afraid of things being taken from them, whether that's their families, their homes, or their livelihoods. Some adults also fear realistic things going wrong — and there's nothing saying that an adult can't be afraid of something that most adults aren't.

**Backpack:** The final finishing touch is indicating what you have in your backpack, literally and figuratively. What items are you never without? For children or teens, these might literally be in their backpack. For adults, these might be in the trunk of their car. Ultimately, though, they're wherever would make the most sense for you.

Figuratively speaking, the backpack is also a good place to list advantages that you have over other people. While this doesn't have to consider all of the ways in which you are privileged, it would be a good place to think about the more intangible resources you have at your disposal. For example, Azra's backpack might indicate that her parents are exceptionally supportive and do everything they can to give her the resources to succeed at school. Ade-wale's backpack, on the other hand, might indicate that his bad relationship with his parents has given him a strong sense of self-reliance and ability to do for himself. The intangible resources in your backpack won't have a me-

chanical impact on the game, but they should give you places to turn if you need help in getting out of a problem — or create tension if that resource is suddenly not available.

**Trope-Specific Questions:** Each trope sheet in the Playbook has two questions about your character that should be answered at some point during the character creation process. So, if you haven't yet answered them, make sure to do so now!

The answers to these questions do not need to be shared with the other players at the table — but they can be if you would like to. Certainly, though, your responses should be shared with the GM.

Now, you're ready to start your adventure in *Kids on Bikes*!

### ***Creating a Character from Scratch***

Some players may wish to create their character entirely from scratch rather than beginning with a trope. Doing so takes longer, but it allows for truly unique characters that don't fit into any specific mold. If this is a route you're interested in, we encourage you to take it!

Using the blank character sheet in the Playbook ([huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes](http://huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes)) or on page 75 of this rulebook, begin by assigning the dice that you'll use for your stats. The best way to do this is to assign your d20 stat and d4 stat, then think about how those stats complement each other. Then, assign the other dice to the other stats.

Next, select your age: child, teen, or adult. Remember to give yourself the appropriate bonuses based on your age. Children get +1 to Charm and Flight and get Quick Healing for free. Teens get +1 to Brawn and Fight and get Rebellious for free. Adults get +1 to Brains and Grit and Skilled at \_\_\_\_ for free.

Then, select your other two strengths. Referring to the list in Appendix B on page 59, select two that fit with your vision for your character. Then, select your flaws. You may select any two from the list in Appendix C on page 61.

Finally, give your character a first name. From this point on, character creation continues as normal. Refer to the section titled "Introductions and Questions" on page 15.

### ***Changes to Your Character Across Multiple Sessions***

While it's unlikely that characters will change much over the course of a single game, in the case of longer campaigns, there might be changes to a character based on what happens during play. A character who nearly drowns might develop a fear of water — just as a character who manages to overcome their fear of water in a critical moment might find that they aren't as afraid of it

anymore. At the end of each session, the GM and players should discuss the ways in which the characters grew — or regressed — over the course of the game. Each time you play, you should learn more about your character. They should never be static. These changes will likely come in the form of new skills, new fears or flaws, or changed answers to the trope-specific questions.

Except in extreme cases, losses should be counterbalanced by gains. A character who conquered their fear of dogs at a critical moment might become boastful, which could cause tension with friends who previously appreciated their humility. The players and the GM should decide collaboratively what gains and losses occur at the end of one game or before the next one. Again, though, except in the strangest cases, there should always be a balance of what is lost and what is gained.

**For Example:** In the first game, Yoon, Isabella, and Oswald work together to go looking for Yoon's son, Daniel, who disappeared before the game began. They were able to find him, but he's currently in a coma, and doctors aren't sure if he'll recover. As a result of seeing the measures that Oswald and even Isabella went to in order to save her son, Yoon has gained the "Protective" strength when it comes to those two; however, because she found her son covered in some kind of strange webbing, she has added "Spiders" as a fear. Oswald and the GM agree that not much has changed for him. Isabella and the GM agree that she's feeling closer to Oswald again and remembers why she valued him as a friend when they were younger — but there aren't any mechanical changes for her, either.



## - PLAYING THE GAME -

The game will take the form of a story that you, the other players, and the GM tell together. The GM will help guide the action of the story and will make the “big picture” stuff happen, but you’ll have a lot of control over what you do and how you face the situations the GM throws in your way.

You’ll even have control over which parts you skip over. If your characters are going to have a pretty run-of-the-mill day at school, you don’t need to tell the story of all nine periods. Think of the game as the important scenes that will carry the narrative forward. Focus on the parts that promote action, excitement, and intrigue.

### ***Stat Checks***

While you’re playing, any time you do something that runs the risk of failure, the GM will set a numerical difficulty for the action. You will then roll the appropriate stat die and check the value of that die against the difficulty. If you roll the maximum value of the die and that isn’t enough to succeed at the check, your die will “explode” — meaning that you reroll the die and add the maximum value that you rolled the first time to the new roll. Your die may explode multiple times on a check — but once you succeed at that check, your die no longer explodes for that check.

Keep in mind that the most you can roll (without the luck of exploding a die) is 20, and that number is extraordinarily unlikely. However, that doesn’t mean that the difficulty can’t be higher than 20 in cases where a feat seems truly impossible for mere mortals.

### ***Choosing a Stat for the Check***

As in life, there are always multiple ways to solve a problem. If a character is being confronted by bullies, it may seem like they have to start swinging and hope it goes well (Fight) or turn heel and run and hope they’re faster than the bullies (Flight). But depending on who the character is, they might use other stats instead.

A character with high Charm might convince the bullies that he’ll show them a secret entrance into the movie theater if they don’t beat him up. A character with high Grit might tell them that she has taken worse beatings before breakfast and make it not seem worth their time. A character with high Brains might talk the bullies in circles until they let her go because they’re too confused to throw a punch. A character with high Brawn might physically intimidate their aggressors to get them to back down. There are always multiple ways you can solve your problems.

When you’re not sure what kind of check something will call for, you can always just describe what you’re doing and the GM will tell you what check to make. For things like deceit and lying, it’s probably going to be Charm.

**DIFFICULTY****EXPLANATION & EXAMPLE**

<b>20</b>	A task at which only the most incredible could even possibly succeed — but if they succeed, it will be one of the most impressive things a character has ever done. This is a nearly guaranteed failure.  <i>Examples: Lifting a car off of someone trapped under it; solving a nearly impossible math problem just by glancing at it.</i>
<b>17-19</b>	A task for which success would be incredible and impressive. This, too, is a nearly guaranteed failure.  <i>Examples: Talking a police officer out of arresting you when you have clearly broken the law and have no relationship with the officer; breaking a school record in track.</i>
<b>13-16</b>	A task where success is extraordinary — but decidedly possible for characters who are truly skilled at it.  <i>Examples: A lucky character finding the right item on the first try; someone trained in espionage withstanding police interrogation.</i>
<b>10-12</b>	A task where success is impressive — but completely expected for characters skilled at it.  <i>Examples: A strong person prying open a heavy, locked door; a computer whiz repairing a computer quickly under pressure.</i>
<b>7-9</b>	A task where success is certain for characters who are very skilled at it — but not for those who aren't.  <i>Examples: Convincing the principal that it wasn't you and your friends who started the cafeteria food fight; running a message from one end of a building to the other in a very short time.</i>
<b>3-6</b>	A task where success is likely for all characters except those who aren't skilled or who have a low stat in that field.  <i>Examples: A lucky person drawing a non-face card from a deck; a character silently withstanding a verbal berating.</i>
<b>1-2</b>	A task where success is guaranteed, except in extreme cases.  <i>Examples: A character lifting a 10-pound weight over their head; a character reciting a multiplication table.</i>



But if you're throwing around a lot of science-y words to convince the sheriff that the mine shaft where you're actually hiding the half-goat, half-child creature is structurally unsound so he should stay away, that might be Brains. Or if you're threatening your way into a secure area past a young, scared guard, that might be Brawn — or Fight if you're describing what you'll do to him if he doesn't step aside. The bottom line is that the stats are here to help guide your storytelling and help you have fun. If you aren't sure what to do, ask the table — and if they aren't sure, go with your gut.

**For Example:** Ana has been cornered while she was snooping around an abandoned warehouse that she and her friends noticed a lot of the town's adults going to. The three deranged members of a cult who cornered her seem intent on sacrificing her to the elder god they worship, and they're all brandishing really big knives. Ana is a child with the Bully trope, so Fight is her best stat. However, the GM tells her that to fight her way out of this situation would be a very tough Fight check, a difficulty of 14. It's not impossible, but Ana doesn't feel good about her odds there. Since the cult members are completely deranged, intimidating them with Brawn (Ana's d12 stat) is a difficulty of 22. Similarly, charming them would also be a 22, and since Charm is Ana's d4 stat, that's unlikely to work. The cult members, though, are on the older side and thus a bit slower than children. The GM tells Ana that a Flight check would be a difficulty of 7. Ana decides that her chances are best if she goes with that — especially since she gets +1 to her Flight checks as a child and she has a few Adversity Tokens to spend if need be.

### **Planned Actions and Snap Decisions**

Although the GM always sets a numerical difficulty, there are two distinct kinds of stat checks: Planned Actions and Snap Decisions. Planned Actions are stat checks when you have time to think about the best course of action and, perhaps, work with your friends. If the characters are sitting at a kitchen table trying to break a coded message that someone left for them and have all night to do it, that's definitely a Planned Action. If your character needs to climb up a wall to sneak into an abandoned factory and has the cover of night and no one in pursuit, that's a Planned Action. In short, Planned Actions are when the conditions are relatively optimal to achieve something.

Snap Decisions, on the other hand, are choices that have to be made quickly under bad conditions — and are thus more chaotic and unpredictable. If your character is being chased through a cave, stat checks they make while fleeing in panic will definitely be Snap Decisions. If your character is under any kind of great pressure, that would likely be a Snap Decision, too.

Ultimately, it's the GM's call whether something is a Planned Action or a Snap Decision. Players, though, should feel free to try to convince the GM of how they can get a moment of calm to make a Planned Action in a setting that would seem to call for a Snap Decision.

### **In order to make a check for a Planned Action, do the following steps:**

- Once you decide to resolve a problem with a particular stat, the GM sets a numerical difficulty. For example, if you are trying to crack a safe in the privacy of your own home with the right tools, you might try to muscle your way in (Brawn), crack the safe (Brains), or sweet talk a buddy of yours to apply their safe-cracking skills (Charm).
- Either roll the appropriate die or, because you have time to think and react calmly, take half the value of that stat's die. For example, if you have a d20 in Flight, you may choose to take a score of 10 for Planned Actions involving Flight instead of risking a roll.
- If the value of the first die rolled is the maximum value of the die, but still below the difficulty level, the roll “explodes.” Roll the same die again, adding both values together. This may be repeated as many times as you roll the maximum, though you must stop as soon as you succeed at the check.
- After determining whether the roll explodes, add any age bonuses to the roll. Age bonuses cannot cause a roll to explode.
  - Children: +1 Charm, +1 Flight
  - Teens: +1 Brawn, +1 Fight
  - Adults: +1 Grit, +1 Brains
- You may also spend Adversity Tokens (earned from failed checks), with each token adding +1 to the roll. As with age bonuses, Adversity Tokens cannot cause a roll to explode.
- Other players may also spend Adversity Tokens to help you, with each token adding +1 to the roll, though they must also narrate how their actions are also helping your cause. This is at the GM’s discretion.
- If the total roll is greater than or equal to the difficulty level, you have succeeded. You and the GM will narrate the success collaboratively.
- If not, you have failed. The GM will direct the narration with minimal input from you (the greater the failure, the less input from you). The more you miss by, the worse the failure. You also receive one Adversity Token, which can be used on future rolls.



**When things are dicier and you're under more duress and stress, you'll have to make a Snap Decision. In most ways, the process works as with Planned Actions but with the following changes:**

- First, you cannot take half of the value of the appropriate die. You must roll to see if you succeed since this is a rushed attempt that you cannot plan.
- Second, although you may spend Adversity Tokens to help yourself, other players cannot spend Adversity Tokens to help you. There's no time for the kind of planning that collaboration requires.
- Third, the GM should make the consequences for failing a Snap Decision less weighty than failing a Planned Action, though you may still gain an Adversity Token. Narratively, when everything's on the line, the tension is already there, and you aren't doing something stupid — you're just in a bad spot. (On the other hand, when you have time to plan and still fail, that usually means you've decided to take a risk.)

**For Example:** Two characters have been captured by government forces and are being aggressively interrogated in different cells to try to get information out of them. Certainly, this is a Snap Decision — the characters are under pressure, and the interrogators aren't going to wait patiently while the characters plan their responses. The GM might decide that in order to withstand this level of interrogation, each character will need a score of 12.

Rebecca, one of the characters, has a Grit stat of d20. She has seen some rough things in her life, and nothing scares her. She rolls a 13, succeeding. The GM and the player controlling Rebecca narrate her success at holding up under questioning. She just barely held up, though, so there won't be any benefits beyond the fact that she did succeed.

The other character, Tricia, has a Grit stat of d6. She rolls a 3, failing by 9 points — fairly badly, but not a complete disaster. Perhaps Tricia gives



up more information than the interrogator even knew she had. Perhaps she breaks quickly, giving them time to act on that information and prevent other characters from being able to do what they need to do, forcing them to scramble to come up with another way to get done what they need to get done. Perhaps she gives them more information than she should have, revealing the identity of her accomplices. Ultimately, this will be up to the GM with minimal input from the player.

### ***Failing a Roll***

Remember, in *Kids on Bikes*, failing a roll isn't all bad. First and foremost, it gives you an Adversity Token, which you can use to succeed when you really need it — especially if you pool it with other Adversity Tokens — or to activate your character's strengths. Adversity Tokens give you more options later on, so failing a few times at the beginning is actually a good thing.

Second, failure can and should push the narrative forward. A failed roll means that what the character wants to happen doesn't happen — but that doesn't mean that what happens is bad for the story. For example, if the characters try to hack a computer but aren't able to, it might mean that they have to seek out an NPC to help them with it. That character might, in turn, inadvertently give them a clue that helps them puzzle out a mystery. Or, if a character tries to escape on foot from government forces pursuing her, she might be brought to a facility that holds the secret to the next part of the game.

So, while failures won't be what your character wants, they should almost always feel good for the story — and should give the group more directions to take the narrative you're building together.

***For Example:*** Tricia rolls a 3 when trying to hold up against the interrogation, but she needed a 12. The result is bad — but not a disaster. As the agent starts applying verbal pressure to her, she cracks and tells the agent everything: where her friends are hiding and enough details about the strange animal she and her friends found in the forest to let the agent know that they're indeed the children that the government agents are looking for. That agent quickly tells his supervisor, but in his rush to tell the others what's happening, Tricia manages to not tell him that the animal seems to be able to teleport short distances. Thus, when the agents arrive at the house of Tricia's friend, the strange animal is able to get to safety.

When deciding on the consequences of a stat check, the GM should consult the following guide:

<b>+10 or higher</b>	<i>The character succeeds smoothly and easily.</i> Likely, it looks like the character is just showing off, or that the task is done so readily that it happens without any effort at all. At the GM's discretion (and certainly not necessarily), there could be some unexpected positive results from a success of this degree.
<b>+5 to +9</b>	<i>The character succeeds quite impressively.</i> At the GM's discretion, the character might have some additional benefits beyond the success, but these will be slight — and only if important for pushing the game forward.
<b>+1 to +4</b>	<i>The character succeeds, but not impressively.</i> Any benefits the character gains above and beyond the success should be quite limited — if present at all.
<b>0</b>	<i>The character succeeds, but just barely.</i> Decidedly, nothing surprising happens — and the player and the GM should make this success as skin-of-the-teeth as possible.
<b>-1 to -4</b>	<i>The character fails, but not too badly.</i> There might be some very, very minor short-term consequences, but these won't shift the story for more than a minute or two. The character has tried and almost succeeded.
<b>-5 to -9</b>	<i>The failure is bad, but not a disaster.</i> There will be some short-term consequences that might lead to some immediate difficulties — but nothing that the character can't handle if they focus on them. The character has tried to do or has been forced to do something beyond their capabilities. And, not surprisingly, they've failed.
<b>-10 to -14</b>	<i>The failure is profound.</i> There will be consequences for this failure, likely in keeping with what would be expected, but that doesn't mean that those consequences won't be very bad. These consequences may strongly influence the course of the current play session. Generally, though, a character will only find themselves failing this badly when they bite off more than they can probably chew — or because of the cruelty of the GM.
<b>-15 or lower</b>	<i>The failure is staggering and catastrophic.</i> There will be both immediate and long-term consequences for this failure, above and beyond what might be expected. These consequences might lead to serious changes in the course of the long-term arc of the story — especially because the character should only find themselves failing this badly through total recklessness or because the GM has purposefully put them in a staggeringly difficult situation.

## **Exploding Rolls and Narrative**

When you roll the highest value of the die and thus roll again (when the roll “explodes”), the narrative should reflect that you have done something beyond what you could accomplish on your own. As the GM works with a player to narrate an “exploding” roll, the outcome should be influenced, in part, by external forces.

**For Example:** Take Tricia from the previous example, the character being interrogated. She has a Grit stat of d6 and needs a 12. Since her maximum possible Grit roll is a 6, she will need external forces to intercede for her to succeed. Instead of the 3 she rolled in the previous example, she rolled a 6 on her first roll. She rolls again, getting a 5, and adds that roll to the first result, making her total 11. She only fails by 1, meaning that there are very, very minor short-term consequences. Tricia holds out long enough to give her friends time to do what they need to do — but the government agents show up just as they’re finishing. Tricia’s friends then have to flee quickly, making checks to ensure that they escape. Narratively, you could say that Tricia holds up as well as she possibly could, and there is something else that happens to prevent her from failing badly. Just as Tricia reaches her limit and is about to tell the agent what he wants to know, that agent gets called out of the room by a supervisor, buying Tricia some time to collect herself.

Or perhaps it’s Penelope who is trying to run away from a group of government agents who are pursuing her on foot. She has a Flight stat of d8, and the GM sets the difficulty at 12: impressive, but certainly possible for someone skilled. She rolls an 8 on her first roll, then 6 on her next roll for a total of 14 — a success! Perhaps, as she’s running from the agents, a gate comes down, separating them. Perhaps as she’s running she knocks over and spills a container of motor oil, on which the pursuing agents then slip and fall, allowing her to escape. Whatever the outcome, it’s not that Penelope simply outruns them.

## **Combat Encounters**

Combat in this game functions in the same way as other stat checks, though sometimes you will be rolling against another character to determine success or failure.

As with the other checks in the game, combat can be resolved in multiple ways. Suppose you are about to be physically attacked. You could stand firm and take the hit (Brawn check). You could attack first and hope to be a better fighter (Fight check). You could try to talk the attacker out of it before the punches start flying (very difficult Charm check). You could try to intimidate the attacker from carrying out the assault (Brawn check or very difficult Grit check). You could run (Flight check) or stand your ground and dodge the punches (difficult Flight check).

For combat between two player characters, the GM must confirm that both players are comfortable with their characters combating each other. Because of the possible consequences of in-game physical violence, if both players do not agree to it, the story will need to take a different direction.



***Physical Damage:*** Physical attacks are more direct combat, either a fistfight or, if things have gotten really bad, knives and bats.

Roll the attacker's Fight against the defender's Brawn (if they're planning to stay and fight back) or Flight (if they're planning to dodge or flee). Presumably, in a physical fight, both characters will be attacking each other, and assuming that's the case, roll separate attack and defense for each character.

At the GM's discretion, weapons like knives, baseball bats, and so forth might lead to successful hand-to-hand hit being treated like a projectile hit — or a slingshot or thrown object might be treated like a hand-to-hand hit. Still, whether the hit occurs or not should be calculated the same way.

Remember, there are no safe fights in this game. Any time physical conflict occurs, a character might die. Once players decide to attack each other, a misplaced blow could hit a temple or a throat. There are no "pulled punches" or "called shots." Every fight could be fatal. That said, of course the GM should allow a playful (or even somewhat aggressive) shove or a nuggie — or even somewhat hostile wrestling — without risk of anything serious.

***Projectile Damage:*** Most of the time in the game, projectiles will take the form of guns, which are terribly dangerous for all characters. But, children sometimes throw rocks or have bows and arrows, which could land just right and be bad — but most likely won't be all that bad. Keep in mind, though, that all projectile weapons are potentially lethal.

When projectile combat occurs, roll the attacker's Fight against the defender's appropriate stat (likely Flight or Brawn, depending on whether the character is diving out of the way or taking the shot). If both characters are shooting or throwing at each other, roll separate attack and defense for each character. Remember, high differences between attack and defense with projectiles are much more dangerous than the same difference for physical combat.

### ***Injuries & Death***

During the course of the game, one or more of the characters will likely be injured. In this game, there are no hit points — but none of you are immortal. Far from it. Compared to the forces you will probably come into contact with, you're exceptionally fragile. A well-aimed bullet from a government agent, the quick flick of a monster's jaws, or a telekinetic character could end things in a moment.

In this game, violence should never be without consequence. Rather than trading blow after blow, stat rolls and applicable skill rolls should determine the outcome of a fight before it starts. Players and the GM should then narrate the outcome. The difference between the rolls (and applicable modifications) should determine the amount of damage that a player sustains (refer to chart below) and who gains narrative control over the encounter.

# RESULT OF ROLLS

(with applicable modifiers)

# NARRATIVE RESULT

<b>defender's roll is greater than or equal to attacker's roll</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The defender narrates the outcome.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is uninjured; the projectiles miss or the blows don't land or hurt them enough to matter.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 1 to 3</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker explains how they attack, and the defender narrates what they do to mitigate the harm to them.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is hurt, but only temporarily; the bullet grazes them, but they're okay; the punch stuns them, but they can shake it off.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 4 to 6</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker then explains how this barely mitigates the harm.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is fairly hurt; the bullet hits them and they need medical attention soon to prevent it from causing permanent damage; they're dazed and likely concussed, but they can keep going; their ribs are going to hurt for a few days and breathing might sting for a few hours.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 7 to 9</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker can alter any of these details as the defender explains them. Then, the attacker explains how this response fails to prevent harm.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is badly hurt; the bullet hits them dead on, and they're losing a lot of blood and need professional care immediately or they'll die; they're unconscious and will be badly concussed when they wake up; the bone is broken.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 10 or more</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker has full control over the narrative. They explain what the defender does in response to the attack — and how ineffective this response is.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is dead or quite nearly dead; the bullet hits them between the eyes and nothing can save them; they're beaten so badly that only immediate medical attention can help — but there will be permanent effects.</p>



**For Example:** Elena and Jordan get into a physical fight over the car keys, since Elena thinks that they need to drive away and Jordan thinks that they need to stay and wait for their friends to get back. Both players agree that they're comfortable with physical combat and that Jordan is going to attack Elena to try to take the keys from her. Jordan rolls their Fight (d12) and gets a 7. In response, Elena rolls her Brawn (d8) to see how bad the damage is to her. She rolls a 6, a difference of 1. Elena will be injured, but not badly. Since the fighting is mutual, Elena rolls her Fight (d10) and gets a 3. Jordan rolls their Brawn (d20), since they're taking the hit, and gets a 9. Jordan won't be injured, since their roll is greater than Elena's attack roll.

At this point, they narrate what happens. Jordan describes that they try to sucker-punch Elena, but Elena says that she notices at the last second and moves her head to avoid taking too much of a hit. She then says that she swings back, but because Elena was startled, Jordan, the better fighter, is able to easily deflect the blow and land a few shots to Elena's ribs, causing her to drop the key. While Elena is stunned, Jordan takes the key and puts it in their pocket. "We're. Not. Going. Anywhere. At least not until they get back," they say. "Clear?" Elena, not badly hurt at all but winded, coughs a few times and nods.



## **Spending Money**

Since your game is likely going to take place in a town with a functioning monetary economy, you might, at some points, want to buy something to help you in your efforts.

It should be assumed that you have access to money. However, the degree of access you have depends on your age and in-game socio-economic status.

Children cannot have jobs and thus have almost no access to money beyond what is given to them. If they need to buy something, they almost certainly need to find someone to get it for them. Under rare circumstances, they might have saved enough to buy a small item. Remember, the exact amount depends on the era in which you're playing and whether or not you have the Wealthy strength. It also is likely to depend on the age of the child. A six-year-old won't have the same access to money that an eleven-year-old will.

Teens have limited access to money, but they can afford necessities for a few days, depending on their socio-economic status. Teens will not be able to buy a car, but they could certainly have enough saved to get a hotel room for a few nights — though that'd likely be about it. They might, though, be able to convince their parents to give them some money.

Adults have much more access to money than teens and can, within reason, buy what they want to buy. If they needed to buy a car in a pinch, they most likely could — though that might represent a significant sacrifice for them. In terms of money for adults, their group will have the most variance, which will be based on their job. But remember, in order to be wealthy, even an adult with a traditionally high-paying job must take the Wealthy strength.

## **Playing Multiple Sessions**

While *Kids on Bikes* can be played as a single-session game, you and the other players might decide that you want to keep playing. If you do, the GM will have more time to plan the story and can throw some more orchestrated surprises your way.

If you have decided to play multiple sessions, the GM might decide to end the session's events on a cliffhanger (perhaps literally) so that you can pick up right where you left — or fell — off. That's great, and will keep you anxious about the resolution from one session to the next! If you're taking this approach, ignore the rest of this section.

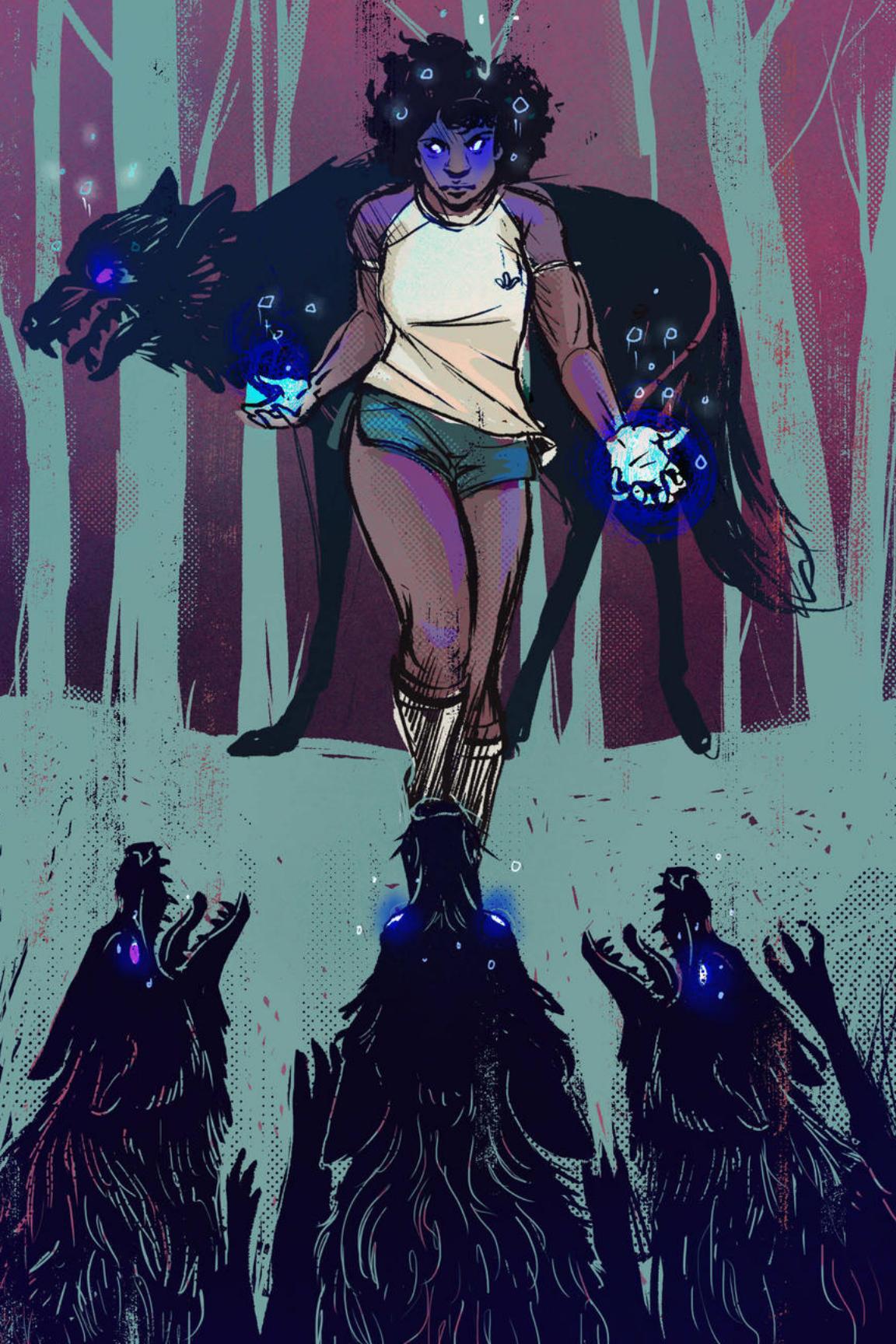
But if at the end of your session you've reached a point where there will be some in-game time between the end of this session and the start of the next, you should work as a group to create a "coda" for the story. In classical music, a coda is the final portion of the work, one that brings the work to a close. Here, you'll do the same by telling everyone else how the events in the game thus far affect you in the weeks following the events. What changes for you? Are you suddenly more confident and willing to walk back into middle school with your head held high? Does a rift between you and the other characters

manifest in the form of you sitting by your locker to eat lunch instead of with them? Are your children happier to have dinner all together now? Do you finally have the courage to leave him and not come back?

After developing your story, if you are planning to play multiple sessions, you and the GM should agree upon changes to the character as a result of the session (or sessions). There isn't a "leveling up" mechanic in this game, but no interesting character is static over a series of sessions. Think carefully about what changes about you as a result of the session, as it relates to the mechanics of the game. Did you face a big fear that won't be as much of a problem for you anymore? Or did something almost kill you that will now be a fear in the future? Does it make sense to keep the strengths that you had at the start, or did you learn a new trick? And, of course, if you sustained any serious injuries, how will those affect you going forward?

After discussing with the GM, if you both agree, make the changes to your character's sheet.

Remember, if it makes narrative sense, gaining a strength does not mean losing another — but by the same token, losing a strength doesn't mean gaining another, either. You and the GM should take care to make sure that you aren't becoming too weak or too strong to face what comes next. Fear and tension can be fun, but hopelessness usually isn't. So, be sure to keep your strengths, flaws, and fears in the right range — which will be different for each player and each game.



## - POWERED CHARACTERS -

Players cannot create a character with powers to play throughout the campaign. But, early in the first session, the GM will introduce a powered character that will then be co-controlled by all of the players.

### ***Introducing & Playing Powered Characters***

When the powered character is first introduced, the GM will give each player a few deliberately selected traits for that character. These traits, called aspects, should be written on separate notecards. These aspects will provide information that helps players play the powered character, such as their personality traits, patterns in their behaviors, and, of course, their powers. We recommend two per player to start, but the GM can adapt that as they see fit.

The GM also establishes how much psychic energy the powered character has, represented by Psychic Energy Tokens (PE Tokens), and puts that many PE Tokens in the middle of the table. We suggest starting with 7.

When situations come up that relate to the aspects in front of a player, they'll be in charge of the narration. In any other situations, players will share control of that character. As with the rest of the game, players share control of the narrative. If the GM gives you an aspect that you think you would have a difficult time incorporating, you can ask the GM to give that aspect to another player.

When an aspect becomes relevant, turn the card featuring that aspect sideways. This action helps to focus the table on who will be controlling the powered character. Any player may activate any aspect at the table, even one in front of another player, but the player with that aspect in front of them should be in charge of the narration related to that aspect. Thus, when another player activates an aspect in front of another player, they're handing narrative control over to that player.

**For Example:** Sofia thinks that it would be a particularly good time for the powered character to use his telekinesis, but Gyasi controls that aspect. Sofia reaches over and turns the notecard indicating that power sideways, thus indicating that Gyasi has narrative control of the powered character and making a suggestion of what to do with that control. (If Gyasi disagrees, he could narrate without using the powered character's telekinesis. Ultimately, it is up to the player controlling each aspect to determine how and when it is used.)

For a table of suggestions for the powered characters' aspects, see Appendix D on page 62. You may, of course, create your own as you see fit — and the GM should remember that the initial narrative path of the story should guide what powered character the players meet! When the players do meet them, the GM should also establish d4 and d20 stats for the powered character. The other four stats will be filled in by players as they discover who the powered character is and what they can do.

Characters may flesh out the powered character as they see fit, adding desires, fears, and motivations as they go. Once a player introduces a new aspect to the powered character, players should go along with it unless there are issues with established behaviors or cards that players have. It also might be a good idea to create a notecard for that aspect, especially if you are planning to play multiple sessions. Remember, though: the only way new psychic powers can be added is through intervention of the GM. Players cannot, under any circumstances, give the powered character new powers.

**For Example:** The GM narrates a young boy, covered in blood, walking into a police station where the characters are. The GM then hands two cards to each player. To Andrea, the GM gives the aspects “loves kittens” and “scared of bright lights.” To Doug, she gives the aspects “lashes out when touched” and “communicates only through grunts and gestures.” To Jamie, she gives “this character mimics Andrea’s behavior.” and “able to move objects with his mind.” To Jon, she gives “loves a member of the group platонically” and “fiercely loyal to the group.” Finally, the GM puts 8 PE Tokens in the middle of the table. Jon, Jamie, Doug, and Andrea will now narrate what the powered character does throughout the game in accord with what is on the cards they know about — and with correction from other players and the GM whenever necessary.

When playing the powered character, there should ideally be roughly equal input from each player and the GM. As a player, you should have enough information to make decisions about what the powered character does. If you don’t, ask the GM for more guidance — and remember that *Kids on Bikes* is a game where players have strong input over the direction of the narrative of the game. As long as you’re within the bounds of what other players want out of the game, your decisions are right!

As a GM, your control over the powered character should be used to drive the narrative toward exciting encounters and stressful situations. If players are unsure what to do or seem stuck, the GM could certainly have the powered character figure something out. If the characters need to be pushed toward the revelation of a secret that only the GM knows, the powered character could be very useful in this respect, too. Remember, though, that players’ input is important in the game — and if their ideas conflict with the plan, try to adapt.

### **Options for the Powered Character**

Alternatively, for the element of surprise, the GM could wait to give out some aspects, especially the powered character’s powers, until they’re relevant. For example, the young boy covered in blood walks into the police station. While the characters are getting to know the powered character, they might not have access to the aspects dealing with his psychic powers. When the need to use them arises, though, the GM could hand out the notecards.

The GM should also feel free to give out additional aspects as the game goes on. Perhaps it is, as above, that the players discover a new aspect of

the powered character's personality. But this could also be to get a player more involved with the control of the character. For example, if a player isn't participating as much with narrating the powered character, the GM could give that player a new aspect card to give them more to do with the character, especially if that aspect is immediately relevant. Changes on the fly are a big part of what this game is all about, so as a player, expect to have those thrown at you!

### ***Using the Character's Powers***

Using powers always has consequences. When using powers, the GM will establish a numerical difficulty for the action being attempted. This number should take into account how practiced the powered character is with using their psychic powers in this way and how significant an expenditure of psychic energy it would represent. Then, if the player choosing to take that action with the powered character wishes to still take that action, the powered character immediately spends one psychic energy (represented and tracked by PE Tokens) and the player rolls 2d4.

Subtract the roll on the dice from the GM-established difficulty value. If the result is zero or negative, the powered character suffers a very minor physical result (e.g., a very brief nosebleed, a muscle twitch, a momentary but painful headache). If, however, the result is one or greater, the player taking the action has two options: either the attempt fails or the player chooses to spend more PE Tokens to increase the roll, spending one PE Token for each +1 to the roll. As soon as the roll plus the PE Tokens spent is equal to the difficulty value, the result becomes a success.

***For Example:*** Jamie is controlling the powered character's telekinesis. She wants to use his powers to move a set of keys off a desk and over to Jamie's hands so that she can let herself out of a pair of handcuffs. The GM tells Jamie that the precision required for this task sets the difficulty at 5. Jamie spends one of the powered character's PE Tokens and rolls 2d4, getting 4. She then has to decide whether the attempt fails (in which case the GM narrates the failure) or whether she wants to spend an additional PE Token (in which case she narrates the success).

If completing such an action reduces the powered character to zero or fewer PE Tokens (which could happen with the GM's permission), very bad things happen to the character. Whatever their standard physical reaction to using powers is will be far worse (e.g., a violent, full-body seizure instead of a muscle twitch) and they will lapse into unconsciousness — or even die if they drop too far into negatives. The exact effects are up to the GM.

### ***Replenishing Mental Energy***

In order to replenish their mental energy, the powered character needs to rest, eat, or take other appropriate action. A full night's rest should restore the character to full mental energy — unless they have dipped below zero. In that case, recovery should take more time, though the exact duration is up to the GM's discretion.



Also, there should be one or two things that can help the character recover without sleeping — or recover more quickly if they've dipped into negative psychic energy. Do they have a particular sweet tooth? Do foods that are high in iron help them more than other foods? Maybe it's meditation or direct sunlight helps them to recover. In all situations, the powered character should be subtly drawn to these things to give players clues — but the GM should feel free to throw in some red herrings.

### ***Powered Character Checkpoints***

Just as your personal character develops, your powered character should develop in some way, too. And just as the individually controlled characters will develop through reaching goals that they've set for themselves and through the natural and unpredictable turns of the story, the same will happen for the powered character.

In terms of the natural changes to the character over the course of the story, a character the powered character fears standing up for them is likely to change how they feel about him. One of the characters betraying the powered character to save herself is likely to make the powered character mistrust the traitor. The GM should modify the character's details as appropriate.

In terms of major changes to the powered character, though, the GM should consider, when creating the character what the “Character Checkpoints” will be for the powered character. Character Checkpoints should be elements that are both narratively and mechanically significant, places where something triggers a meaningful change in the character. When determining these Checkpoints, think about how the causal event would influence the character.

**For Example:** If the powered character was given their powers in a lab, returning to that lab might be a Character Checkpoint. It could be that the character discovers a way to augment their powers — either gaining a new power or increasing the number of dice they roll in checks. Perhaps they discover an important object or undergo a process similar to what they underwent to gain their powers. It could also be that, if the powered character had false memories, seeing the lab might reveal the old, actual ones to the character — which could trigger new powers or give the powered character a clearer understanding of what the next step in their journey is.

The GM should use these Checkpoints as some of the “big” moments of the game, moments when things change — but not necessarily for the better. Such Checkpoints should be used to complicate the players’ lives. Perhaps they meet a key villain who is now aware of them, too. Perhaps the powered character becomes less stable — maybe rolling a d10 instead of 2d4 when making checks.

What’s important is that players, even though they’ll be pushed toward these Character Checkpoints, feel a sense of dread as they approach these pivotal moments. The clues that lead players to these moments will give their experience a structure, so that they aren’t just fumbling around in the world they helped to create — but they’ll also create the edge-of-your-seat, anything-could-happen moments that make games memorable.



## - INFORMATION FOR THE GM -

So, you've agreed to run the game for your friends. Thank you for facilitating their experience with the game! In this section, you'll find some advice for how to best make that happen. If you're an experienced GM, a lot of this section will cover material that you've probably heard of or thought through before. If you're reading a section that seems like something you already know, feel free to skip to the next one. We won't know — and if we did, we wouldn't be hurt.

### **Player Safety**

A key part of any role-playing experience is pulling players out of their comfort zones and, often, forcing them to make difficult decisions for their character. Will Arthur choose to disobey his parents and dive into the river, or will he let the raft that they'd tied off to a rock float away when it comes loose? Will Alex lie to their children or let them know just how much danger they're all really in? However, as discussed in the "Setting Boundaries" section, you don't want to address any issue that players have agreed are out of bounds. So where's the line between pushing players and overstepping the agreed-upon boundaries?

Our suggestion is to make sure that you're steering quite clear of the topics players have agreed to avoid. If players feel strongly enough about them to mention them at the start, it might make them nervous to even approach them — but that's something that you and the group should discuss at the start. However, if that conversation doesn't happen at the beginning of the game, feel free to pause the action.

Also, even if you're using a method to ensure that players have the chance to stop anything they're finding unpleasant, don't hesitate to take a step out of the game to make sure that everyone is still okay with things. When players get caught up in the story, they can sometimes roll right into things people find troubling, even if those things weren't covered in the discussion of those boundaries. If it seems like this might be happening, it's a good idea to pause, check in with everyone, and either continue or adjust as needed.

For example, some conflict between characters will help to drive the story and create tension. However, if there is increasing tension at the table and players — not just characters — seem to be getting frustrated with each other, it's a good idea to make sure everyone's still enjoying themselves.

Also, give some thought to the safety methods your group is using. We've recommended a slightly modified version of John Stavropoulos's x-card for *Kids on Bikes*, but there are many others that can work well. Here are just two examples we like, but use what works best for your players:

- Brie Sheldon's Script Change Tool — When something players want to avoid is occurring, they say "rewind," "pause," or "fast forward." "Rewind" means that a player is telling the group they want to go back a bit and

head in a different direction to avoid elements they don't want in the game. "Pause" means that a player needs a break but that the game may continue in the same direction it was going. "Fast forward" means that a player wants to skip over a part of the game — that they're okay with the event happening in the world of the game, but they're not okay in hearing it described or playing it out. For more information, visit <http://www.briebs.com/p/script-change-rpg-tool.html>

- Ron Edwards's Lines & Veils — Rather than establishing firm "off-limits" topics at the start of play, players can address issues as they come up, drawing a "line" (a topic that a player does not want to address in the game) or drawing a "veil" (a topic that can occur in a game so long as it is "off camera" (similar to the fast forward described above). This is best used with players who are comfortable enough with each other and with role-playing to pause the game and address issues as they arise. It comes from Edwards's 2003 game, *Sex & Sorcery*.

We're sure there are numerous other approaches to making sure that everyone at the table feels safe and enjoys their experience. We encourage you to use whatever techniques work best for you — and adapt them as necessary.



## **Starting to Craft the Story**

In *Kids on Bikes*, the setup at the start of the game, where players create the town and establish the connections between each character, is vital to helping them craft a good story later. Let's talk about the elements to pay attention to during the setup in order to have more hooks for the adventure and to get the inspiration you need for the upcoming game. Here are some questions to think about (and possibly take notes about) during the setup:

- **Notable organizations:** What are these organizations hiding? Is there something sinister about one of these organizations — or is one of them holding back a great evil?
- **Notable landmarks:** Is there more than meets the eye to one of these landmarks? What happened in the past that made this place such a nexus of attention — and how does it factor into the powered character's backstory? Or how is the evil entity the characters will face trying to use this landmark for their own nefarious ends?
- **Rumors about the town:** Which rumor is true? Which rumor is completely false? Which rumor is only part of a much more complex story? Probably most importantly, which rumor gets all of the players excited? Is there one where other players almost involuntarily chime in to add to it — or say, “Oooh! That’s good!” If so, that’s the rumor to lean into, but in some unexpected way.
- **Strengths and tropes:** What are the characters going to generally be good at based on their strengths and tropes, either as a group or individually? For the things that multiple members of the group will be good at, those are a good way for the group to form at the start of the game, giving them all something that they can be successful at together. For things that only one member of the group will be good at, later in the game, once the characters have learned to rely on each other more, this can be a good opportunity for specific characters to shine, especially if they haven’t had the chance to yet or if their player has been taking more of a passive role in the game.
- **Relationship questions:** Especially with the negative questions about how characters are connected, what are some “pressure points” you could press for the group to create tension? For questions about characters who don’t know each other, what truth is there to what they’ve heard — and what isn’t true at all?

**For Example:** Think back to the sample responses to questions given on pages 6-7. Gautier, the GM for that game, might have jotted down the following questions about the game, listing possible points of tension and story elements as Carlos, Yasmin, and Emily collaboratively created the town:

- Mining: Do they unearth something while mining? What caused the mining accident? Will it happen again? Will the characters need to explore that collapsed mine for some reason? When they found the bodies, were there really bite marks? Did one of the men really do that to the others? Where are the other two bodies?

- Candles: Why does the town want to drive out the darkness? Are they afraid of something?
- Economy: As characters get hard up for money, what starts to influence them?
- Elks: Why so popular? “Most of the adult men” is an interesting amount. What keeps some of the men out of the Elks? Is it really a front? Or is it actually the opposite, that they’re actually a powerful but secret force for good in the town?
- Diving cliff: Good place for a strong moment of tension? What time of year are we going to be playing in?
- Worthy/Yates: Are they actually an item? What if they’re meeting frequently to cook up some evil — or to share notes on some evil that they’re keeping an eye on? Does that have anything to do with the mining accident?

In thinking over his notes, Gautier thinks that making the rumor about only finding ten of the twelve miners the central part of the first story could be really cool. He noticed that there wasn't much reaction from the other players when Carlos mentioned that the Elks might be a front, so that doesn't seem to grab the players the way the mine did. But, he thinks that he'll see if players start bringing it up in the game. If so, that might be something to lean into. Other than that, he sees the relationship between the two principals as something that might be worth pursuing — but he decides that taking it in a very different direction than the players might be expecting could be cool. He only has a rough idea: there are students in the schools who need to be kept under surveillance, which could be an interesting twist. If the characters follow them, he decides that he'll let the characters see them meeting at the local diner and talking, but not in the way lovers might. That, he thinks, might be enough to interest them in sneaking in to find out more. He'll see where things go, but he figures having two hooks is a good start.

As you look for ways to draw ideas out of the character creation, think back to the relationships established between Oswald, Isabella, and Yoon from pages 20-22. For the sake of this example, we'll say they did the Complete Questions, where each character answers two questions about each other character they know and one question about each character they don't know.

For each pairing, Maya, the GM, takes notes about points of tension in the relationship — or about ways to draw the characters together:

- Oswald/Yoon: Oswald is comfortable talking to Yoon, the mother of his best friend (if something happened to Daniel, they'd likely work together to fix it), similar love of fantasy novels, deep secret about the near affair between Yoon and Oswald's dad (Oswald doesn't know. Does Oswald's mom? Probably.)
- Oswald/Isabella: Isabella as a Wannabe and Oswald as a Loner Weirdo means that she wouldn't want to be seen with him, old friends but not anymore, sweet that Oswald reminds Isabella of who she was, she



might be willing to help if Oswald needed her (especially if no one else would ever find out), Oswald seems like he would definitely be willing to help her if she asked

- Yoon/Isabella: Yoon as a Blue-Collar Worker and Isabella as a Wannabe who doesn't know her means there's not much here — Oswald seems to be the nexus, Isabella's mom being the sheriff might be a way to connect the two (if Yoon goes to Isabella's house to find her mom off hours, Isabella might overhear — good if something happens to Daniel)

As you start to think about these possible hooks and points of tension, you'll start to see directions to take the story. That's good! You don't need to narrow it down to just one, and you can dangle a few different hints and see which direction the players take. With the shared narrative control, it's important to let the players also have a strong role in the direction that the story takes. So if you're feeling stuck in where to take the story to make it interesting for players, ask your players questions — even very open-ended ones, like, "Who are you surprised to find in the cave with you?" or "When the door creaks open, what do you find on the other side?" You don't have to do all the work setting up the story!



### **Narrative Control**

Depending on how many role-playing games you've enjoyed over the years, you might be used to different approaches for the GM (or DM, MC, or any number of other titles). In traditional role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons*, the GM directs a lot of the action and is almost always responsible for telling players what happens in response to their actions. As a result, with these approaches, each player is responsible for their own character's actions, but not for the world around them. For example, "You reach into the dark portal that just opened on the wall and your hand feels warm suddenly. Although you want to withdraw your hand, you cannot. Something is holding you there, something that feels like a strong, skeletal hand."

Many contemporary role-playing games take a different approach, letting players tell more of the story, with the GM as more of a facilitator. Rather than telling players what happens, the GM will often ask players what happens, relying on them to co-create the world they're interacting with. As such, each player is responsible for their own character's actions and some aspects of

the world around them. For example, “As you reach your hand through the dark portal that just opened on the wall, what do you feel that surprises you — and why don’t you pull your hand out of the portal when you feel it?”

Typically, *Kids on Bikes* takes this approach. Sure, there will be times when you present something to the table that’s entirely from your imagination, but whenever possible, try to encourage the players to create the story with you, not just react to what’s going on around them. Continuing the example above, there might be a very good reason that there has to be a skeletal hand on the other side of the portal — and if there is, make sure that’s part of the story. But for the incidentals, leave those up to the players. Heck, even for the big stuff, sometimes, players should get to decide what happens.

Another way in *Kids on Bikes* that narrative control is removed from the GM and players is through the dice rolls. When a character fails a stat check, both you and your players are bound in your decisions by an unalterable truth: that character failed the stat check.

As the GM, you can take some small liberties with the harshness of the penalties for failure, and that character’s player can spend Adversity Tokens to the same end — but unless the player has enough Adversity Tokens to get over the needed value, the character has failed. Go with it. Take the story in unexpected directions when the most intimidating character at the table brandishes a gun at a small child and the child laughs at them. Think about why that is — and ask the player to explain. Maybe they decide that they try to smoothly pull the gun from its holster menacingly but it gets stuck. Maybe the child is distracted by the large stain on the character’s pants from when they fell earlier. Players will surprise you with their creativity within these bounds.

All of this is especially true when it comes to the powered character. Each player will be controlling part of that character’s actions and reactions, and you’ll know things about the powered character that they don’t. Even if something doesn’t fit with your idea of the powered character, try to adapt to the changes players make to them. If you’d planned on having them hate chocolate but a player declares that they stuff an entire bar into their mouth and smile, ask yourself if that detail matters or if they could just as easily hate peanut butter.

To boil this section down to two main, simplified ideas: roll with the punches, and, as the GM, let your players throw some of those punches, too.

That said, some players really prefer a game where they only control their own character. As long as everyone agrees that’s how the players want to play the game, there’s nothing wrong with that! You could even control the powered character if that’s what all of the players want for their experience from the game.

## **Tone and Pace**

One of the most difficult elements of GMing is keeping consistency for the players without the game getting boring. There are two key elements that can be particularly difficult: tone and pace.

With respect to tone, players will discuss at the beginning of the game whether they want a serious game, a silly one, or something in the middle. However, especially in campaign-style games, having only serious, morose characters glumly struggling against the forces of evil can get old. So too can a cartoonish hodge-podge of characters absurdly gallivanting through unrealistic scenario after unrealistic scenario. Figuring out what the right balance is part of the art of GMing.

The same is true of the pace of the game. The world you're helping to create will feel disjointed if it throws the players right into a conflict with a powered monster without any preamble every time they play. Spending twenty hours establishing characters and their relationships before they get even a hint as to any central conflict, too, will get boring. Again, variety is vital.

As a result, GMing often relies heavily on your ability to read the group and adjust the tone of the game. There are, however, a few suggestions that have generally worked for us in the past:

- Don't feel like you have to role-play everything that happens in the world of the game. If the characters are driving for two hours to a neighboring town, you don't need to have the characters narrate their conversation for those two hours. If the characters are going their separate ways, you can have them give quick snapshots of what they did during that time. Don't feel like every moment has to be accounted for.
- Encourage players to tell you whether they want more or less of something, both before games and even during sessions. If the group is getting bored with the way the current game is going, work to give them more of what they want.
- Even more, encourage players to actively push the narrative toward what they want. In *Kids on Bikes*, players have control over more than just their characters' reactions, so if they want some action to happen, let them make that action happen.
- If players seem to want different things, feel free to pause the game, discuss what's happening on a meta level, and then step back into the game. For example, if Riku is really enjoying the slower-paced role-playing but Yasmin wants some action, discuss this. Is there a way for both of them to get what they want — or can one of them agree to hold off on what they want in exchange for more of that later on? Trust your players' maturity.
- After particularly intense sessions (or parts of sessions), try to give the players a bit of a break. You've probably noticed in film that after big action scenes there's usually a bit of a lull — especially if a character has suffered a big loss. Not only does this give the audience a break from frenetic action, but it also gives them time to process what the loss means going forward. Especially in a game where you want your players to take

ownership of the direction of the story, you need to give them time to think about what big events will mean going forward. However, you also don't want to jump from a loss in the party to screwball comedy. Again, a big part of GMing is reading the room.

- You're a player in the game, too. If you're enjoying the pace and the tone, chances are the group is, too. When in doubt, just ask the other players if they are enjoying themselves as much as you are.

### ***Failing a Stat Check***

One of the key differences between *Kids on Bikes* and role-playing games that focus on combat is that, as in all stories, failure isn't necessarily bad. While it certainly means that the thing the character was trying to do doesn't happen, it doesn't mean that players have failed.

Think back to the source material that you've enjoyed and that you're probably drawing inspiration from to run the game. In those stories, the characters don't always succeed at what they're trying to do right off the bat. If they did, it wouldn't be a very interesting story. So when players aren't successful, remember that this is an opportunity for creativity on their part (and, if necessary, on your part) to approach the problem from another angle. It is also a chance for the story to take an unexpected twist.

***For Example:*** If Ida and Lucas are trying to break a coded message that they found in a secret government lab and fail their Brains rolls to solve it, what else could they do? Perhaps the code remains secret to them and they need to figure out another way to get to the bottom of what's going on. Alternatively, though, they might seek out a non-player character who's well-versed in codes... or one of their parents might walk by and notice something that gets them started. Don't be afraid to use a little deus ex machina to keep things moving!

Or if Ida, Lucas, and the strange young girl they met in the woods are running from the men in dark suits chasing them, but their Flight rolls don't come up the way they wanted, that might force a confrontation with the men in suits. As a result, the strange young girl might reveal that she can create and control fire sooner than you had been expecting her to. There's nothing wrong with changing plans in the game, either!

### ***Changing the Rules***

As you know if you've looked at the modules that some of our amazingly creative friends have made for the game, we're 100% okay with people changing the rules of the game. The purpose of playing is to make sure that everyone has fun and, with that in mind, if there's something that would make it more fun for your group, we encourage you to add, alter, or discard rules to make *Kids on Bikes* the best experience it can be for you and your players.



Early in the development process, our friend Nicholas Malinowski, whose work we consistently love and encourage everyone to check out, said, “I have an idea — but it would need to have a single player controlling the powered character. Is that okay?” It turned out to be one of the coolest early playtests we had of the game, and it really reinforced that if the experience is going to be made better through the addition, modification, or removal of rules, you should absolutely run with it.

Small changes, though, can have big consequences — so while it’s not possible to imagine all of the potential ripple effects, try to imagine them. And if you do change something and a clever player figures out an unexpected exploit, feel free either to tell them not to do that or to change the rule back or tweak it again.



# APPENDIX A - RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

## Character You Know - POSITIVE

1. What did this character do for you that makes you owe them a debt you can't repay?
2. What do you admire about this character — but would never tell them?
3. What great kindness did this character do for you that they don't even remember but you do?
4. What trait about this character that they despise do you genuinely appreciate?
5. Why do you care about this character more than they care about you?
6. What role did this character play in the best day of your life?
7. What plan do you and this character have that most excites you?
8. What is your private nickname for this character and why?
9. What is the kindest thing this character has ever done for you?
10. What is this character sacrificing to protect you?
11. What lengths would you go to in order to defend this character?
12. Why do you have a bond with this character that can never be broken?
13. What about this character always makes you happy?
14. What is the bravest thing you've ever seen this character do?
15. What do you and this character have a mutual, weird love of?
16. What would losing this character mean to you?
17. What aspect of this character's personality do you try to use as a model for your own?
18. When did you first realize that you loved this character — either platonically or romantically?
19. What's your first memory of this character?
20. What item did this character give you that you treasure?

### Reminders:

- Roll a d20 and answer that question about the character you're establishing a relationship with. If the question doesn't fit what you have in mind for that relationship, feel free to reroll or choose another question.
- Once you've answered, remember to cross out the question so that you don't answer that question about another character — and so that other players don't answer the same question.
- If you roll a question that has already been answered, choose the question above or below, choose any question on the list, or reroll.

# APPENDIX A - RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

## Character You Know - NEGATIVE

1. What did this character do in the past that you still resent them for?
2. What secret are you keeping from this character that you would be devastated if they found out?
3. What could make you betray this character?
4. What are you sure this character is hiding from you?
5. What does this character have that you want to take from them?
6. What is this character doing, either knowingly or unknowingly, that hurts you?
7. What do you need to take from this character for their own good?
8. What role did this character play in the worst day of your life?
9. What is the most dishonest thing you've seen this character do?
10. What is this character doing that's putting you both at risk?
11. What does this character do that makes you immediately lose your temper?
12. How far would you go to avoid being alone with this character?
13. What part of this character's personality scares you?
14. What would this character have to do to get you to forgive them?
15. What insanity has this character shown warning signs of?
16. How far would you go to make this character suffer?
17. Why do you dislike this character when all the other characters seem to love them?
18. You hurt this character years ago. Why can't you apologize?
19. What do you do to intentionally annoy this character?
20. How did this character betray you the last time you confided in them?

Reminders:

- Roll a d20 and answer that question about the character you're establishing a relationship with. If the question doesn't fit what you have in mind for that relationship, feel free to reroll or choose another question.
- Once you've answered, remember to cross out the question so that you don't answer that question about another character — and so that other players don't answer the same question.
- If you roll a question that has already been answered, choose the question above or below, choose any question on the list, or reroll.

# APPENDIX A – RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

## Character You Don't Know

1. What good thing have you heard about this character that you can't believe is true?
2. Why do some members of the town seek out this character?
3. What wonderful thing did this character do that the whole town was talking about?
4. What charming habit is this character known for throughout the town?
5. What strange record does this character hold in the town?
6. Why is this character's family so important in the town?
7. Why was your only brief interaction with this character so positive?
8. Based on what you know, how is this character different from the rest of their family?
9. What volunteer work have you heard that this character does?
10. How far would you go to get to know this character and why?
11. What bad thing have you heard about this character that you can't believe is true?
12. What do you hope to gain by humiliating this relative stranger?
13. What bad reputation does this character have around the town?
14. Who does this character have a very public feud with?
15. Why are so many townspeople afraid of this character?
16. What terrible loss did this character suffer?
17. What do you hope to learn about this character to manipulate them?
18. What is this character doing to threaten their family's reputation?
19. What scandal in the town was this character involved with?
20. Why don't you want to associate with this character?

Reminders:

- Roll a d20 and answer that question about the character you're establishing a relationship with. If the question doesn't fit what you have in mind for that relationship, feel free to reroll or choose another question.
- Once you've answered, remember to cross out the question so that you don't answer that question about another character — and so that other players don't answer the same question.
- If you roll a question that has already been answered, choose the question above or below, choose any question on the list, or reroll.



## APPENDIX B - STRENGTHS

The strengths commonly associated with your trope can be found on their sheet in the Playbook. In discussion with the GM, you may instead choose from the list below. Remember, you start the game with two strengths.

STRENGTH	DESCRIPTION
Cool Under Pressure	May spend 1 Adversity Token to take half of your die's value instead of rolling on a Snap Decision.
Easygoing	Gain 2 Adversity Tokens when you fail, instead of 1.
Gross	You have some kind of gross bodily trick (loud, quiet, smelly... up to you) that you can do on command.
Heroic	You do not need the GM's permission to spend Adversity Tokens to ignore fears.
Intuitive	May spend 1 Adversity Token to ask the GM about your surroundings, an NPC, or the like. The GM must answer honestly.
Loyal	Each of the Adversity Tokens you spend to help your friends gives them a +2 instead of a +1.
Lucky	May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to reroll a stat check.
Prepared	May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to just happen to have one commonplace item with you (GM's discretion).
Protective	Add +3 to rolls when defending one of your friends.
Quick Healing (free for children; available to teens & adults)	You recover from injuries more quickly, and don't suffer lasting effects from most injuries.
Rebellious (free for and available only to teens)	Add +3 to rolls when persuading or resisting persuasion from children. Add +3 to rolls when resisting persuasion from adults.

## STRENGTH

## DESCRIPTION

Skilled at _____ (free for adults; available to teens and, at GM's discretion, to children)	Choose a skill (GM's discretion). You are assumed to succeed when making even moderately difficult checks (9 or less) involving this skill. If the GM determines that you do need to roll for a more difficult check, add up to +3 to your roll.
Tough	If you lose a combat roll, add +3 to the negative number. You still lose the roll no matter what, but could reduce your loss to -1.
Treasure Hunter	May spend 1 Adversity Token to find a useful item in your surroundings.
Unassuming	May spend 2 Adversity Tokens to not be seen, within reason (GM's discretion).
Wealthy	May spend money as though you were in a higher age bracket. For example, a wealthy child is considered to have the disposable income of a typical teen, and a wealthy teen is considered to have the disposable income of a typical adult. A wealthy adult is considered to not have to worry too much about money — they would certainly be able to buy anything they need, and likely able to spend their way out of a lot of situations.

## APPENDIX C - FLAWS

The flaws commonly associated with your trope can be found on their sheet in the Playbook. In discussion with the GM, you may instead choose from the list below. Remember, you start the game with two flaws.

FLAWS	
Absent-Minded	Neurotic
Blunt	Obnoxious
Boastful	Paranoid
Clumsy	Patronizing
Conceited	Perverse
Cowardly	Petty
Deceitful	Picky
Demanding	Prejudiced
Disloyal	Prim
Disobedient	Reckless
Dogmatic	Resentful
Envious	Restless
Flippant	Rude
Gloomy	Secretive
Greedy	Self-Centered
Hot-Tempered	Self-Pitying
Ignorant	Slovenly
Inconsiderate	Superstitious
Insecure	Vain
Irrational	Vindictive

## APPENDIX D – POSSIBLE ASPECTS FOR POWERED CHARACTERS

TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
	Aggressive
	Borderline Pyromaniac
	Communicates Only Through Grunts and Gestures
	Creative
	Dexterous
	Fascinated by Shiny Objects
	Frequently Bursts Into Song
	Gentle (Unless Provoked)
	Good at Calming Others Down
	Good at Hiding
	Good at Reading People
	Good Listener
	Good Sense of Humor
	Highly Concerned With Others
	Ignorant of Social Norms
	Impulsive
	Lacks an Internal Monologue
	Lashes Out When Touched
	Loves Animals
	Naive
	Nearly Complete Amnesia
	Never Wants to Be Alone
	Obsessed With Cleanliness
	Obsessed With Music
	Obsessed With Solving Puzzles
	Outgoing
	Perfect Memory
	Profoundly Claustrophobic
	Quick (d20 Flight)
	Rambles in an Unknown Language
	Sarcastic
	Scared of Being Inside
	Scared of Bright Lights

## PERSONALITY TRAIT



## TYPE OF CARD

## PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS

Scared of Dogs
Scared of Loud Noises
Scared of Middle-Aged Men, Especially in Suits
Scared of the Dark
Scared of the Outdoors
Scrappy (d20 Fight)
Socially Adept (D20 Charm)
Strong (d20 Brawn)
Thinks They Are Being Pursued by a Cult
Thinks They Are Being Pursued by a Shadowy Corporation
Thinks They Are Being Pursued by an Evil, Supernatural Force
Tough (d20 Grit)
Usually Hungry
Very Fidgety
Very Intelligent (d20 Brains)
Well Spoken

## TYPE OF CARD

## PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS

Afraid of a Member of the Group
Asks a Lot of Questions
Believes a Member of the Group Is Also Being Pursued
Believes a Member of the Group Is the “Chosen One”
Believes the Entire Group Has a Special Destiny — But Only Together
Compelled to Help the Group Solve Mundane Problems
Completely Trusting of a Member of the Group
Demands Complete Respect or Worship From the Group

# PERSONALITY TRAIT

# RELATIONSHIP TO GROUP



# RELATIONSHIP TO GROUP

TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
	Distrusts a Member of the Group
	Feigns Indifference Toward the Group
	Highly Protective of a Member of the Group
	Highly Protective of the Entire Group
	Immediately Bonded to a Member of the Group
	In Love, Platonically or Romantically, With a Member of the Group
	Insists That the Group Remain Non-Violent
	Mimics a Member of the Group
	Openly, but Not Physically, Hostile Toward a Member of the Group
	Playfully Aggressive With a Member of the Group
	Talkative With Members of the Group
	Tries to Spread Forbidden Knowledge
	Tries to Turn Members of the Group Against Each Other
	Very Shy Around a Member of the Group
	Wants to Bring the Group to Another Realm
	Wants to Help a Member of the Group
	Willing to Sell the Use of Their Powers

TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
PSYCHIC POWER	Able to Affect the Speed of Time
	Able to Astrally Project
	Able to Become Invisible
	Able to Block Others' Senses



# PSYCHIC POWER

TYPE OF CARD	PRE-GENERATED OPTIONS
	Able to Change Their Body's Density
	Able to Change Their Physical Appearance
	Able To Communicate Telepathically With Animals
	Able to Communicate Telepathically With People
	Able to Control Fire Telepathically
	Able to Control Plants Telepathically
	Able To Control Technology Telepathically
	Able to Control the Weather
	Able to Create False Memories
	Able to Create Illusions
	Able to Evoke Vivid (Often Painful) Memories
	Able to Fire Bursts of Energy From Their Hands
	Able to Harm Others by Touching Them
	Able to Heal by Touching
	Able to Hypnotize With Their Gaze
	Able to Know an Object's History by Touch
	Able to Lift Much More Than Normal
	Able to Move Faster Than Sight for Short Bursts
	Able to Move Objects With Their Mind
	Able to See Confusing Glimpses of the Future
	Able to Teleport Short Distances

These pre-generated options are the ones found in the Powered Character Deck. As the GM, you should feel free to add any options that make sense for your game. Don't feel confined by these suggestions.

## APPENDIX E - TROPS

### BLUE-COLLAR WORKER

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Adult	Brawn	Fight	Grit	Charm	Brains	Flight
Possible Strengths	Likely Flaws			Question 1	Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Treasure Hunter	Blunt, Boastful, Disloyal, Disobedient, Dogmatic, Envious, Greedy, Ignorant, Prejudiced, Reckless, Slovenly, Superstitious			To what extent do you enjoy the work you do?	What would it mean for you if you lost your job?	

### BRILLIANT MATHLETE

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Brains	Flight	Grit	Charm	Fight	Brawn
Possible Strengths	Likely Flaws			Question 1	Question 2	
Gross, Intuitive, Loyal, Prepared, Skilled at..., Wealthy	Absent-Minded, Clumsy, Conceited, Cowardly, Insecure, Neurotic, Obnoxious, Patronizing, Resentful, Rude, Self-Pitying, Slovenly			Why do you get satisfaction from being good at math (or your other area of expertise)?	How does your social isolation manifest itself?	

### BRUTISH JOCK

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen	Brawn	Fight	Grit	Flight	Charm	Brains
Possible Strengths	Likely Flaws			Question 1	Question 2	
Gross, Heroic, Loyal, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough	Boastful, Hot-Tempered, Ignorant, Inconsiderate, Perverse, Petty, Prejudiced, Reckless, Restless, Rude, Self-Centered, Vindictive			Why do you get satisfaction from being good at sports?	What does your involvement with sports keep you from doing that you wish you could do?	



Instead of using this chart, you can also download the PDF Playbook from [huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes](http://huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes).

<b>BULLY</b>								
<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>		<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>		<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Child/Teen	Fight		Brawn	Flight		Grit	Brains	Charm
Possible Strengths	<b>Likely Flaws</b>			<b>Question 1</b>			<b>Question 2</b>	
Gross, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Wealthy	Demanding, Disobedient, Envious, Hot-Tempered, Ignorant, Inconsiderate, Insecure, Irrational, Obnoxious, Perverse, Petty, Vindictive			What motivates your bullying?			How do you feel when you hurt others?	

<b>CONSPIRACY THEORIST</b>								
<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>		<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>		<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Teen/Adult	Brains		Fight	Flight		Grit	Charm	Brawn
Possible Strengths	<b>Likely Flaws</b>			<b>Question 1</b>			<b>Question 2</b>	
Heroic, Intuitive, Prepared, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Unassuming	Blunt, Deceitful, Demanding, Inconsiderate, Irrational, Neurotic, Paranoid, Prejudiced, Restless, Secretive, Slovenly, Superstitious			What do you think is happening in the town that no one knows about?			How far will you go to prove that you're right?	

<b>FUNNY SIDEKICK</b>								
<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>		<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>		<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Child/Teen	Charm		Brawn	Flight		Brains	Grit	Fight
Possible Strengths	<b>Likely Flaws</b>			<b>Question 1</b>			<b>Question 2</b>	
Easygoing, Gross, Heroic, Protective, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter	Absent-Minded, Boastful, Clumsy, Flippant, Neurotic, Obnoxious, Perverse, Picky, Reckless, Restless, Slovenly, Superstitious			What do you do that always lightens your friends' moods?			When does being in the "sidekick" role frustrate you?	

## APPENDIX E - TROPS

### LAID-BACK SLACKER

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen/Adult	Flight	Charm	Brains	Grit	Brawn	Fight
Possible Strengths	Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy	Absent-Minded, Blunt, Clumsy, Cowardly, Disloyal, Disobedient, Flippant, Ignorant, Irrational, Reckless, Secretive, Slovenly		What do you think of people who try much harder than you do?		What are you willing to go the extra mile for?	

### LONER WEIRDO

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Child/Teen	Grit	Fight	Brawn	Brains	Flight	Charm
Possible Strengths	Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2	
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Unassuming	Blunt, Deceitful, Disloyal, Disobedient, Gloomy, Hot-Tempered, Inconsiderate, Obnoxious, Paranoid, Reckless, Rude, Secretive		Why are you happier fending for yourself?		What part of the "cool kid" life do you wish you had, just a little bit?	

### OVERPROTECTIVE PARENT

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Adult	Fight	Brains	Brawn	Charm	Flight	Grit
Possible Strengths	Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2	
Heroic, Loyal, Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Wealthy	Demanding, Dogmatic, Gloomy, Insecure, Irrational, Neurotic, Paranoid, Patronizing, Prim, Self-Pitying, Superstitious, Vain		When do you feel appreciated by your child/children?		What would losing your child/children mean to you?	



Instead of using this chart, you can also download the PDF Playbook from [huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes](http://huntersbooks.com/downloads-kidsonbikes).

<b>PLASTIC BEAUTY</b>								
<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>		<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>		<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Teen	Charm		Flight	Fight		Brains	Brawn	Grit
<b>Possible Strengths</b>		<b>Likely Flaws</b>			<b>Question 1</b>		<b>Question 2</b>	
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Wealthy	Boastful, Conceited, Demanding, Flippant, Inconsiderate, Petty, Picky, Prim, Rude, Self-Centered, Vain, Vindictive			How does it feel to have others think that you're "beautiful but terrible"?			What do you sacrifice to remain beautiful?	

<b>POPULAR KID</b>								
<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>		<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>		<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Child/Teen	Charm		Flight	Brains		Grit	Brawn	Fight
<b>Possible Strengths</b>		<b>Likely Flaws</b>			<b>Question 1</b>		<b>Question 2</b>	
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Loyal, Lucky, Skilled at..., Wealthy	Conceited, Cowardly, Deceitful, Demanding, Disloyal, Flippant, Patronizing, Petty, Picky, Prim, Self-Centered, Vain			Beyond people wanting to impress you and the social capital that brings, what do you like about being popular?			How do you treat the unpopular kids?	

<b>RECLUSIVE EGOCENTRIC</b>								
<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>		<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>		<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Adult	Flight		Brains	Grit		Brawn	Fight	Charm
<b>Possible Strengths</b>		<b>Likely Flaws</b>			<b>Question 1</b>		<b>Question 2</b>	
Prepared, Skilled at..., Tough, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming, Wealthy	Absent-Minded, Blunt, Clumsy, Dogmatic, Gloomy, Inconsiderate, Neurotic, Obnoxious, Paranoid, Rude, Secretive, Self-Centered			What drove you away from the world at large?			What do you miss about being out in the world?	

## APPENDIX E – TROPS

### SCOUT

<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>	<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>	<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Child/Teen	Brains	Grit	Charm	Brawn	Flight	Fight
<b>Possible Strengths</b>		<b>Likely Flaws</b>		<b>Question 1</b>		<b>Question 2</b>
Cool Under Pressure, Intuitive, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at..., Treasure Hunter		Absent-Minded, Blunt, Boastful, Conceited, Dogmatic, Inconsiderate, Patronizing, Restless, Slovenly, Superstitious, Vain, Vindictive		Who first got you into the Scouts (or, more generally, the great outdoors)?		What do you have to give up to spend as much time in nature as you do?

### STOIC PROFESSIONAL

<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>	<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>	<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Adult	Grit	Brains	Charm	Brawn	Flight	Fight
<b>Possible Strengths</b>		<b>Likely Flaws</b>		<b>Question 1</b>		<b>Question 2</b>
Cool Under Pressure, Easygoing, Heroic, Lucky, Prepared, Skilled at...		Clumsy, Conceited, Dogmatic, Flippant, Gloomy, Greedy, Patronizing, Petty, Resentful, Rude, Secretive, Vindictive		To what extent do you enjoy the work you do?		What would you rather be doing?

### WANNABE

<b>Age</b>	<b>d20</b>	<b>d12</b>	<b>d10</b>	<b>d8</b>	<b>d6</b>	<b>d4</b>
Teen	Flight	Brains	Charm	Grit	Brawn	Fight
<b>Possible Strengths</b>		<b>Likely Flaws</b>		<b>Question 1</b>		<b>Question 2</b>
Intuitive, Loyal, Prepared, Protective, Skilled at..., Unassuming		Cowardly, Deceitful, Disloyal, Envious, Gloomy, Insecure, Paranoid, Petty, Resentful, Secretive, Self-Pitying, Vain		What would it mean to be one of the popular kids?		What would you sacrifice to be one of the cool kids?



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## YOUNG PROVIDER

Age	d20	d12	d10	d8	d6	d4
Teen	Grit	Brawn	Charm	Brains	Fight	Flight
Possible Strengths	Likely Flaws		Question 1		Question 2	
Easygoing, Protective, Skilled at..., Tough, Treasure Hunter, Unassuming	Deceitful, Dogmatic, Greedy, Hot-Tempered, Ignorant, Insecure, Irrational, Prejudiced, Resentful, Restless, Self-Pitying, Superstitious		How has working to support your family improved you as a person?		What have you had to give up for your family?	



# APPENDIX F – DIFFICULTY RATINGS AND CONSEQUENCES

DIFFICULTY	EXPLANATION & EXAMPLE
<b>20</b>	A task at which only the most incredible could even possibly succeed — but if they succeed, it will be one of the most impressive things a character has ever done. This is a nearly guaranteed failure.  <i>Examples: Lifting a car off of someone trapped under it; solving a nearly impossible math problem just by glancing at it.</i>
<b>17-19</b>	A task for which success would be incredible and impressive. This, too, is a nearly guaranteed failure.  <i>Examples: Talking a police officer out of arresting you when you have clearly broken the law and have no relationship with the officer; breaking a school record in track.</i>
<b>13-16</b>	A task where success is extraordinary — but decidedly possible for characters who are truly skilled at it.  <i>Examples: A lucky character finding the right item on the first try; someone trained in espionage withstanding police interrogation.</i>
<b>10-12</b>	A task where success is impressive — but completely expected for characters skilled at it.  <i>Examples: A strong person prying open a heavy, locked door; a computer whiz repairing a computer quickly under pressure.</i>
<b>7-9</b>	A task where success is certain for characters who are very skilled at it — but not for those who aren't.  <i>Examples: Convincing the principal that it wasn't you and your friends who started the cafeteria food fight; running a message from one end of a building to the other in a very short time.</i>
<b>3-6</b>	A task where success is likely for all characters except those who aren't skilled or who have a low stat in that field.  <i>Examples: A lucky person drawing a non-face card from a deck; a character silently withstanding a verbal berating.</i>
<b>1-2</b>	A task where success is guaranteed, except in extreme cases.  <i>Examples: A character lifting a 10-pound weight over their head; a character reciting a multiplication table.</i>



<b>+10 or higher</b>	<i>The character succeeds smoothly and easily.</i> Likely, it looks like the character is just showing off, or that the task is done so readily that it happens without any effort at all. At the GM's discretion (and certainly not necessarily), there could be some unexpected positive results from a success of this degree.
<b>+5 to +9</b>	<i>The character succeeds quite impressively.</i> At the GM's discretion, the character might have some additional benefits beyond the success, but these will be slight — and only if important for pushing the game forward.
<b>+1 to +4</b>	<i>The character succeeds, but not impressively.</i> Any benefits the character gains above and beyond the success should be quite limited — if present at all.
<b>0</b>	<i>The character succeeds, but just barely.</i> Decidedly, nothing surprising happens — and the player and the GM should make this success as skin-of-the-teeth as possible.
<b>-4 to -1</b>	<i>The character fails, but not too badly.</i> There might be some very, very minor short-term consequences, but these won't shift the story for more than a minute or two. The character has tried and almost succeeded.
<b>-9 to -5</b>	<i>The failure is bad, but not a disaster.</i> There will be some short-term consequences that might lead to some immediate difficulties — but nothing that the character can't handle if they focus on them. The character has tried to do or has been forced to do something beyond their capabilities. And, not surprisingly, they've failed.
<b>-14 to -10</b>	<i>The failure is profound.</i> There will be consequences for this failure, likely in keeping with what would be expected, but that doesn't mean that those consequences won't be very bad. These consequences may strongly influence the course of the current play session. Generally, though, a character will only find themselves failing this badly when they bite off more than they can probably chew — or because of the cruelty of the GM.
<b>-15 or lower</b>	<i>The failure is staggering and catastrophic.</i> There will be both immediate and long-term consequences for this failure, above and beyond what might be expected. These consequences might lead to serious changes in the course of the long-term arc of the story — especially because the character should only find themselves failing this badly through total recklessness or because the GM has purposefully put them in a staggeringly difficult situation.

# RESULT OF ROLLS

(with applicable modifiers)

# NARRATIVE RESULT

<b>defender's roll is greater than or equal to attacker's roll</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The defender narrates the outcome.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is uninjured; the projectiles miss or the blows don't land or hurt them enough to matter.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 1 to 3</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker explains how they attack, and the defender narrates what they do to mitigate the harm to them.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is hurt, but only temporarily; the bullet grazes them, but they're okay; the punch stuns them, but they can shake it off.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 4 to 6</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker then explains how this barely mitigates the harm.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is fairly hurt; the bullet hits them and they need medical attention soon to prevent it from causing permanent damage; they're dazed and likely concussed, but they can keep going; their ribs are going to hurt for a few days and breathing might sting for a few hours.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 7 to 9</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker explains their attack, and the defender explains how they respond. The attacker can alter any of these details as the defender explains them. Then, the attacker explains how this response fails to prevent harm.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is badly hurt; the bullet hits them dead on, and they're losing a lot of blood and need professional care immediately or they'll die; they're unconscious and will be badly concussed when they wake up; the bone is broken.</p>
<b>attacker's roll is greater by 10 or more</b>	<p><b>Narrative Control:</b> The attacker has full control over the narrative. They explain what the defender does in response to the attack — and how ineffective this response is.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The defender is dead or quite nearly dead; the bullet hits them between the eyes and nothing can save them; they're beaten so badly that only immediate medical attention can help — but there will be permanent effects.</p>



# KIDS ON BIKES

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

FEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

MOTIVATION: \_\_\_\_\_

FLAWS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## STATS

Flight	_____	_____
Brains	_____	_____
Charm	_____	_____

- COOL UNDER PRESSURE
- EASYGOING
- GROSS
- HEROIC
- INTUITIVE
- LOYAL
- LUCKY
- PREPARED
- PROTECTIVE
- QUICK HEALING
- REBELLIOUS
- SKILLED AT:
- TOUGH
- TREASURE HUNTER
- UNASSUMING
- WEALTHY



ADVERSITY TOKENS:

## NOTES

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# KIDS ON BIKES

The door to the old house creaks open, the rust on the hinges groaning as you see the dust floating like spores in the air inside. By the faint light of your cheap flashlights, you see the stairs to the upper floor, its railings gnarled and broken like crooked teeth. Their curve makes the stairs seem almost like a hungry grin, and you wonder if their age will support your weight. Still, you must go in.

**The only question is who will go first?**

In *Kids on Bikes*, you'll take on the roles of everyday people grappling with strange, terrifying, and very, very powerful forces that they cannot defeat, control, or even fully understand. The only way to face them is to work together, use your strengths, and know when you just have to run as fast as you can.