



PDQ

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PROSE DESCRIPTIVE QUALITIES SYSTEM CORE RULES

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PDQ MASTER CHART

LEVEL	As Quality Rank	MODIFIER TO 2D6 ROLL	AS DIFFICULTY RANK	TARGET NUMBER
<i>Poor</i>	Notably inept.	-2	A trivial task.	5
<i>Average</i>	Typical human capability.	0	Straightforward task.	7
<i>Good</i>	Better than usual; most professionals or talented newcomers.	+2	Complex task, requiring attention to detail.	9
<i>Expert</i>	Noted/famed professional; talent with skill to back it up.	+4	Intricate task, difficult and requiring sharp concentration, hard for a typical untrained person (Average).	11
<i>Master</i>	Acclaimed genius: talent with substantial skill behind it.	+6	Extremely difficult task, hard for most professionals in the field (Good).	13

ABOUT THE PDQ SYSTEM

The *Prose Descriptive Qualities (PDQ) System* has been designed for evocative simplicity, speed, and flexibility in play. Three levels of resolution, suitable for any type of situation.

CREATING CHARACTERS

A *PDQ* character is made up of several elements; in different games, different elements can -- and should -- be used. For example, *Dead Inside (DI)* uses 8 elements (Personality, Backstory, Soul Loss, Discovery, Qualities, Type, Soul Point Pool, and Miscellany). On the other hand, *Monkey, Ninja, Pirate, Robot: the Roleplaying Game (MNPR:RPG)* only uses 6 elements (Type, Goal, Name, Qualities, Mojo Points, and Challenge Rating).

The core element of *PDQ* is the concept of a prose, descriptive, do-it-yourself, wide-ranging *Quality* standing in as attribute, advantage, merit, flaw, skill, or incapability. Other subsystems within a game -- like *DI*'s Virtue & Vice System and *MNPR:RPG*'s Mojo Powers -- can affect this core, or operate independently, but in either case, should be represented in character generation somehow.

QUALITIES

Qualities help further describe your character's particular talents, skills, and flaw(s). They also provide game mechanics for how those abilities or disabilities work in play (see below, *Task Resolution*). *Qualities* should grow out of the character concept and game setting.

Qualities represent a broad skill or field of knowledge; if a particular *Quality* is relevant at all to an action or topic, the character may apply that *Quality* when attempting that action or understanding that topic. This is called the *penumbra* (or "shadow") of the *Quality*. Therefore, a player shouldn't choose *Qualities* that are too narrow or its *penumbra* will cast too narrow a shadow; too broad, and identifying the sorts of things that should fall under the *penumbra* becomes pointless. The parameters for what's "too broad" or "too narrow" are up to the individual GM.

For example, consider a character who has the *Quality* of "Teacher." For some *PDQ* games, that will be perfectly fine; for others, too broad. The GM might ask the player to refine the *Quality*, to give a better idea of the sorts of things that will fall under the *Teacher Quality's penumbra*. So: "Teacher"



could become “College History Prof,” “High School Chemistry Teacher,” or “Grade School Teacher.” While all would cover the basic concept of education, each individual choice will bring different skills under the Quality penumbra – not just their fields of interest, but also supplementary knowledge: the College History Prof would have more experience with (academic) politics, the High School Chemistry Teacher would know more about adolescent fads, and the Grade School Teacher would be better at dealing with kids on a sugar high.

Take another example: “Gunplay.” This Quality would be useful not just in shooting at things, but also in cleaning and repairing guns, discovering the location of nearby gun dealers and shooting ranges, knowing the history of firearms, and so forth. If the player had instead selected a Quality of “.44 Magnum,” the Quality would only be useful in shooting that individual model of gun, and involve knowledge surrounding .44 Magnums exclusively.

Qualities are often drawn from five general areas:

- ◆ **Physical.** Having to do with the body, athleticism, or natural talents;
- ◆ **Mental.** Areas of study, intellectual acuity, education;
- ◆ **Social.** Groups the character is a member of or associates with, skills in dealing with people;
- ◆ **Professional.** Knowledge and skills picked up on the job; and
- ◆ **Other.** Esoteric skills, psychic talents, physical resources, or superpowers.

Qualities have Ranks, which indicate increasing proficiency. From lowest to highest, the Ranks are:

- ◆ **Poor [-2];**
- ◆ **Average [0];**
- ◆ **Good [+2];**
- ◆ **Expert [+4];** and
- ◆ **Master [+6].**

The numbers in square brackets following the Rank of the Quality show the Rank’s Modifier – how much is added to or subtracted from a 2d6 dice roll (see below).

Characters have some things going for them (Strengths), and at least one thing working against them (Weakness). At everything else, characters are

neither noteworthy nor inept – that is, they’re Average [0].

QUALITY EXAMPLES

Physical: Gunplay, Kung Fu, Roguishly Handsome, Weightlifting, Ballroom Dance, Perseverance.

Mental: Oriental Philosophy, Fine Food and Drink, Sports Trivia, Speed-reading, Strategy & Tactics, Computer Programming.

Social: Wu-Shen Monks, MI6, Football Team, Conversationalist, Intimidating Guy, Charmingly Effusive.

Professional: Teacher, Martial Artist, Spy, Professional Athlete, Freelance Writer, Bounty Hunter, Mad Scientist.

A *Strength* is an inherent positive aspect (benefit, skill, talent, attribute, or power) of a character. Come up with a word or a pithy phrase to sum up the Strength. Examples include Fighting, Credit Rating, Fly Like A Bird, Find Bargains, and Run Away!

A *Weakness* is an inherent negative aspect of the character, stemming from ignorance, flawed understanding, physical or mental incapability, or some other vulnerability. A word of advice: pick something that will be fun or entertaining (for you the player, not necessarily you the character) to flub at! Come up with a word or a pithy phrase to sum up the Weakness. Examples here include Glass Jaw, Bad Credit Rating, Slow As Molasses, and Wallflower. Weaknesses are always Poor [-2] Rank.

Depending upon the conception of what a character is like, *any* Quality (other than that gained from Type) can be a Strength or a Weakness. For example, suppose a character has “Hook-Handed” as a Quality. If it’s ranked Average [0] or above, it’s a Strength: the character can use his Hook as a weapon (in physical conflicts) or as a threat (in social conflicts) – or even wackier things picking a lock or sliding down a rope – with an increased chance of success. But if the character has “Poor [-2] Hook-Handed,” this is a Weakness: the character keeps getting his Hook stuck into things, forgets about it when he tries to scratch his head, has problems holding onto things that require two hands, and so forth. It’s all in the way you spin it.

IMPORTANT NOTE - If a PC wants to be particularly better at some Quality that might normally fall under the penumbra of another Quality (for example, taking “Soldier” and “Rifle” separately), it’s perfectly okay to do so, provided that the player realizes that in exchange



for a benefit up-front, their character generation choice will affect future Improvement (see below, *Improvement*).

Players should have several options when designing the Qualities of their character. They may choose between having more Qualities at a lower level of competency, or having fewer Qualities at a higher level of competency.

It's a good idea to first determine how many ranks of Strengths and Weaknesses you wish characters to have, and then to lay the possibilities out simply for the players. For example, *DI* characters have 8 Ranks of Strengths and 1 Rank of Weakness, which breaks down this way:

- A. 4 Good [+2] Strengths and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.
- B. 1 Expert [+4] Strength, 2 Good [+2] Strengths, and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.
- C. 2 Expert [+4] Strengths and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.
- D. 1 Master [+6] Strength, 1 Good [+2] Strength, and 1 Poor [-2] Weakness.

Never fear: if after play begins, a particular Quality sees no use and doesn't really add to the characterization of a PC, a player should feel free to change it to something that fits better - but only after talking to the GM first.

TASK RESOLUTION

When your character tries to do something, the GM will determine if the situation is *simple*, *complicated*, or *conflict*. Let's take each in turn.

SIMPLE SITUATIONS

In *simple situations*, the task is clear-cut, there are no outstanding issues interfering with the attempted action, or randomness would bog down the game. In a simple situation, the GM looks at the *Master Chart* (see below), and determines the Difficulty Rank of the task. Then, the GM compares that Difficulty Rank to the character's most appropriate Quality Rank. The higher Rank of the two "wins." If the Difficulty Rank of the task is equal to or higher than the character's relevant Quality Rank, the task becomes a *complicated situation* (see below).

Examples: Jefferson wants to climb a wall using his Good [+2] Outdoorsman Quality (he successfully convinces the GM that climbing a cliff face is similar enough to climbing a wall for it to count), he'll automatically succeed in scaling Poor [5] and Average [7] Difficulty walls.

If Kristov wanted to climb a wall, he has no applicable Quality, and so would have the default Quality Rank of Average [0]. This means he can only automatically succeed in climbing Poor [5] Difficulty walls.

For Jefferson, Good [9] or higher Difficulty Rank walls are complicated; for Kristov, Average [7] or higher Difficulty Rank walls are complicated.

Upshifts (Being Badass)

This is how PCs get more bang for their buck. If the player describes his character's attempt to perform an action in a graphic, flavorful, and entertaining way, the GM can give them an *Upshift*. An Upshift means that for that particular action, the PC rolls as if their Quality were one level higher (essentially giving him an additional +2 to their roll). So, rather than "I hit the sailor" (or "I haggle"), the player says something like "I grab the sailor's shirt with one hand and pull him closer to punch him in the face with my other fist - arr, matey!" (or says, in character, "May the fleas from a thousand camels infest the beds of your children if you try and rob me in this way!"). If the PC had a Good [+2] Pirate (or Bargaining) Quality, this would change his roll in attempting to hit the sailor (or haggle with the merchant) from 2d6+2 to 2d6+4, as if he were Expert [+4] Rank.

NOTE - Upshifts above Master Rank add *an extra die* to the character's roll (i.e., instead of rolling 2d6+6+2, the character rolls 3d6+6).

COMPLICATED SITUATIONS

Dice rolls are made in *complicated situations*: where comparisons of Rank are inconclusive, or when randomness is desired. Complicated situations are when Quality and Difficulty Ranks are tied, or when Quality Rank is lower than Difficulty Rank. To attempt a complicated situation, the PC rolls two regular six-sided dice (2d6), and adds the Modifier for their Quality Rank. To succeed, the PC must



match or roll higher than the Target Number of the task's Difficulty Rank.

NOTE - Some failures - like attempting to walk a skinny building ledge - may carry the chance of getting hurt. For more on that topic, see below, *Environmental Damage*.

Examples: Jefferson is trying to climb a Good [9] Difficulty wall using his Good [+2] Outdoorsman Quality. The Target Number of Good [9] Difficulty - as noted in the brackets - is 9. Jefferson must roll 2d6 and add his Modifier of +2, trying to match or beat a 9. He rolls a 3 and a 5, giving him $3+5+2 = 10!$ He succeeds in climbing the wall.

Kristov wants to follow Jefferson up that Good [9] Difficulty wall: again, he has no applicable Quality, and so must use the default Quality Rank of Average [0]. He must match or beat a 9 when rolling 2d6. He rolls exactly the same thing that Jefferson did: a 3 and a 5, and since Average Rank Qualities have no Modifier, that's a total of 8. This is below the Target Number of the wall, so Kristov fails.

When a character's Qualities are set against the Qualities of other characters, this isn't just complicated, it's a *conflict situation* (see below).

CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Conflict situations involve active resistance by another to a character's attempts to perform a task: trying to punch a guy in the face, out-thinking a chess player, running a race, or convincing a cop that you weren't really speeding. Conflict situations in *PDQ* include more than just the immediate success or failure of an attempted action; here, conflict includes the back and forth of an active contest, out-maneuvering the competition, and wearing down an opponent's resistance. Examples of conflict situations include combat, seduction, haggling, debating, and so forth. (Note that some groups won't necessarily want to use the conflict situation mechanics to resolve social interactions, and will want to rely on pure roleplaying instead; this is fine - the rules structure is there if a group wishes to use it.)

In conflict situations, the characters involved compare the results of 2d6 plus Modifier rolls; the highest successful result wins. However, there are a few refinements of conflict requiring closer attention. These are *Initiative*, *Moment of Truth*, and *Damage*.

NOTE - In addition to the in-line examples in each section, two detailed examples of conflict situations - with all the bells and whistles - appear at the end of this chapter.

INITIATIVE

First, figure out who goes first - that is, who has *Initiative*. Most of the time, the flow of the situation will indicate who acts first, but in some cases, this order may need to be determined. Here's how to do it:

1. If a character attacks without warning - taking the victim by surprise - the attacker automatically goes first. (At the GM's discretion, he might even get a free turn, if the target is caught totally unawares.)

Downshifts

While *functionally* the same thing (a -2 to a 2d6 plus Modifiers roll), the reasons behind having a Weakness or incurring Downshifts are different.

For example, Jefferson has a *Weakness* of Poor [-2] Reader. If he needs to do a really complicated and unusual repair on Declaration (his hog), requiring reading the bike's manual, this Weakness will affect his overall competence (Expert [+4] Biker Dude) in the repair. Instead of rolling 2d6+4, Jefferson will be rolling 2d6+2. That's just par for the course, an effect of his Strength and Weakness interacting in that particular situation.

A *Downshift* means that for the action in question, the PC rolls as if his Quality were one level lower (essentially giving him a -2 to their roll). Downshifts can come from a number of sources: if a combatant decides to Play It Caggy (see below, *Conflict Jazz*), the effects of Failure or Damage Ranks (see below, *Taking It On the Chin*), or -- in *Dead Inside* -- the general penalty to social situations that the *Dead Inside* have in the Real World.

While judicious use of Downshifts to reflect a sudden or unexpected change in the complexity of a situation can work very well, GMs should resist the temptation to *overuse* Downshifts as situational modifiers. *PDQ* games tend to run smoother if the GM simply sets the Difficulty Rank (and thus, Target Number) of a task appropriately. For example, if the PCs are attempting to climb a Average [7] Difficulty wall and it begins to rain, a Downshift to each of their relevant Qualities makes sense. However, if it's already raining when they begin their attempt, simply make the wall Good [9] difficulty from the get-go.

NOTE - Downshifts below Poor Rank mean automatic failure in the use of that Quality.



- The character with the highest Rank in a “speed” or “reaction time” Quality relevant to the situation (Fastest Gun in the East, Jumpy, Quick Wits) goes first, followed in order by those with relevant Qualities of lower Ranks.
- The character with the highest Rank in a Quality not relevant to the situation goes next, followed by those of lower Ranks.

Being Lameass

Being Lameass is – in some ways – the opposite of Being Badass. Boring, uncharacteristic, or disruptive roleplaying can ruin everybody else’s fun, and after all, the point of roleplaying is to have a good time. If a player is reading, refusing to pay attention, watching TV, pedantically rules-lawyering, utterly ignoring the characterization of their PC, being pointlessly abusive or distracting to other players, or – saints preserve us! – *sleeping* at the gaming table, they are working against the overall good time. In these cases, the GM *could* give the offending PC a Downshift based on the *player’s* behavior. . . but what’s the point? If the player’s not interested enough in the game to even pay attention, penalizing this character will probably have little effect on his behavior.

Try to discover the cause of the player’s Being Lameass. Maybe it’s something about the focus or subject matter of the campaign, a difference of roleplaying style, or even an unrelated personal issue that’s bugging the player. The answer to Being Lameass is to discuss the situation outside of the game – either by taking a break or talking between sessions – and try to work through it like grown-ups. A little bit of open communication can do wonders for these sorts of issues.

Ties can be broken by either:

- ◆ Stating that tied characters resolve their actions simultaneously; or
- ◆ Rolling a die, with the highest number winning Initiative.

Once Initiative is determined, conflict resolution can proceed. Characters with a higher Initiative may “hold their actions” for as long as they want, but after the last character has done something, they need to take that held action or lose it. After everyone involved in the conflict situation has taken an action (or chosen not to), the characters can act again, in the same order. Lather, rinse, repeat.

Example: Jimbo and Salty Dave are sparring, getting ready for a big combat Challenge next week with the Roboto Brothers. Jimbo is using his Expert [+4] Rasslin’ Quality here, while Salty Dave is using his Good [+2] Cutlass Quality. Jimbo’s Rank is higher, so he goes first.

Zandra is using her Expert [+4] Marketing Executive Quality here (she’s used to picking up business lunches) and Jefferson’s using his Expert [+4] Biker Dude Quality (he’s used to intimidating people into doing what he wants them to).

Zandra and Jefferson are both at Expert Rank, and thus tied. The GM decides that Initiative between them will be determined with a die roll. Zandra rolls a 3 and Jefferson rolls a 4. Jefferson has Initiative.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

The character whose turn it is will be called the *attacker*; the character who is the target of the attacker’s action is called the *defender*. The attacker explains what his attempted action is, and the defender explains how he’d try to counter that action. Then, the attacker rolls 2d6 for his relevant Quality and adds the appropriate Modifier for Quality Rank. The defender does the same. The character with the higher total wins.

If the attacker is successful, *damage* (see below) is applied to the defender; if the attacker fails, no damage is done. A tie is just that – nobody wins, nobody loses. . . but they both muss each other up a little.

Example: As the Turn starts, Jimbo is the attacker and Salty Dave is the defender. Jimbo is going to grapple the Pirate using his Expert [+4] Rasslin’ and Average [0] Monkey Qualities, and Salty Dave decides to try and hold him off using his Good [+2] Cutlass and Average [0] Pirate Qualities. Jimbo rolls 2d6+4+0 for a result of 10, Salty Dave rolls 2d6+2+0 for a result of 8. Thus, Jimbo does damage to Salty Dave this turn – see below – and has grabbed the scurvy dog. (If Salty Dave had been a better Pirate, this would give a different result: if he were a Good [+2] Pirate, the characters would have tied and done each other damage; if he were an Expert [+4] Pirate, Jimbo’s attack would fail and he’d take no damage.)

On his action, Salty Dave wants to escape from Jimbo’s monkey-hug. He gets a result of 11, while the Monkey gets a result of 6. Salty Dave does a *lot* of damage to Jimbo in getting free.



TIME IN CONFLICT

The terms used in *PDQ* for identifying the passage of time:

Scenes are the entire conflict; starting with determining Initiative and ending with someone winning, losing, surrendering, or leaving the situation.

Each character takes a *turn* or *action*: that's when they make their move, say their piece, throw a punch, etc. (If Turn is capitalized, it generally means the set of all character's next actions and reactions.)

Other characters *react* during a character's turn – saying something back or performing a defense, usually – but their reactions can only be in response to the actions of the character whose turn it currently is. They cannot initiate actions until their turn.

RANGE IN CONFLICT

In general, GMs can be really flexible with distance in a *PDQ* game. Ranges are either *Near* (can punch it), *Middling* (can run up and punch it), *Far* (can throw or shoot at it), or *Too Far* (out of range). If one really wants to connect numbers to this, Near would be any distance up to a yard, Middling would be between 1 and 3 yards, Far would be between 3 and 60 yards, and Too Far is anything over 60 yards.

MOVEMENT IN CONFLICT

While *PDQ* tends to leave movement rates for characters abstract and up to the discretion of the GM (like by requiring a character to make a roll using a speed or movement Quality vs. a reasonable Difficulty Rank), some folks like a concrete movement rate. So here it is: characters have a movement rate equal to 2 yards plus twice the sum of all involved Qualities per turn. Half of this (i.e., the sum of their Qualities being used) is taken on their action of their Turn, and the other half is taken during their reactions. This means that a Good [+2] Robot with Qualities of Expert [+4] Hover-Jets and Good [+2] Fast would have a movement rate of 10 yards per Turn (base 2, +2+4+2); they can move up to 5 yards on their action and 5 yards on their reactions.

DAMAGE

Damage (be it physical, mental, emotional, or social) is the loss of capability. As a character takes damage, he is less likely to be able to perform at peak efficiency. This is shown by a temporary Downshift applied to the character's listed Qualities called

either a *Failure Rank* or a *Damage Rank*, depending upon the nature of the conflict.

In mental, social, and some physical conflicts, loss of capability is usually temporary, and is represented by Failure Ranks. Examples include a chess match, witty repartee, or running a race.

In many physical conflicts (and even some physical complicated situations), loss of capability is more enduring, and is represented by Damage Ranks. Examples here include combat, running through fire, or falling off of a wall.

Dishing It Out

In a successful attack, the difference between the attacking and defending rolls determines how many Failure or Damage Ranks are done to the defender. If the attacker has any Upshifts or Downshifts on their successful attack, that shift will carry through to damage resolution.

If the roll results are tied, *both* characters take a single Downshift.

NOTE - Qualities Upshifted above Master Rank provide an additional Rank of Damage to be applied.

Example: Following on the first example under *Moment of Truth*, on Jimbo's action, the difference between his roll and Salty Dave's was 2, so he does 2 Damage Ranks to the Pirate.

On Salty Dave's action, he did a whopping 5 Damage Ranks to Jimbo.

Environmental damage – like that taken from falling, jumping through a fire, drowning, or other complicated situations – works by comparing the Target Number of the task against the total of the character's failed roll. The difference between roll and Target Number is the Damage Ranks taken.

Example: Say that in the example above from *Complicated Situations*, where Kristov wants to follow Jefferson up a Good [9] Difficulty wall, our rockstar is instead trying to follow the biker down the wall. As he has no applicable Quality, he must use the default Rank of Average [0], and match or beat a 9 when rolling 2d6. He rolls a 3 and a 5, for a total of 8. This is below the Target Number of the wall, so Kristov fails, falls, and takes 1 Damage Rank from the sudden stop.



Taking It On the Chin

Firstly, if – in the GM’s opinion – a character has relevant Qualities of Good [+2] Rank or better that could feasibly allow him to ignore or resist damage in the situation (like Armor-Plating, Iron Will, True Love, or Impeccable Pedigree), the character can not only add it to his reaction rolls (to dodge, parry, block, evade, etc.), but he can choose to *sacrifice* a Rank of this protection in order to ignore Failure or Damage Ranks.

In each Scene (not per turn or reaction; see boxed text, *Time in Conflict*), a character can choose to Downshift the Quality; by doing so, the character can ignore *all* Failure or Damage Ranks from one action. The player chooses if and when to use these freebies. That means that if somebody is trying to pry a donation out of a PC who has Expert [+4] Rank Iron Will, the PC can in theory ignore 2 turns of Failure Ranks over the course of the conflict by reducing his Iron Will once for each attack against him that is successful. However, once a Quality reaches Average [0] Rank (through Downshifting to ignore or resist or from taking Failure or Damage Ranks), it can no longer be used in this fashion.

Secondly, any character that has a Weakness related to the type of conflict (for example, Glass Jaw in a combat, Math is Hard! in an arithmetic test, or Can’t Say No to a Pretty Face in a seduction attempt), will have to take *two extra* Damage Ranks the *first* time – and only the first time – they get tagged in a relevant situation. (That’s why it’s a Weakness; if they have an off-setting Strength that allows them to ignore or resist as above, they can use that to ameliorate the badness.)

NOTE - Qualities reduced to Poor [-2] Rank during a conflict situation by Failure or Damage Ranks are not Weaknesses; Weaknesses are character flaws decided upon at character generation. There’s a difference between a Weakness of Poor [-2] Athlete (the character’s never been that into sports) versus someone in a race who’s Good [+2] Athlete has been temporarily reduced to Poor [-2] Rank by accumulating Failure Ranks (he’s out of breath and feeling the burn).

Lastly, if a defender is caught totally and utterly by surprise by an attacker – to the extent of getting a free turn (see *Initiative*) – or makes not the slightest effort to defend himself, that could add an additional Rank to what he Takes On the Chin.

On the positive side, the player of the defending PC decides *where* to apply the Damage Ranks (see the textbox, *The Key to Understanding Conflict Abstraction*). They may only be applied to those Qualities listed on the character’s sheet (that is, not any one of the character’s infinite number of “default” Average Qualities). When any one of a character’s Qualities drops below Poor Rank, the character is out of the Scene – that could mean they’ve totally flubbed their seduction attempt, been knocked unconscious (or killed) in combat, or run out of test-taking time and must put down their #2 pencil. The GM describes how and why the PC is out of the Scene, and lets the player know if/when they can return (see below, *Recovering from Damage*).

Example: From the first *Dishing It Out* example, Jimbo did 2 Damage Ranks to Salty Dave. The Pirate chooses to reduce his Good [+2] Accountant and Good [+2] Climbing Rigging Qualities, placing them both temporarily at Average [0] Rank.

Salty Dave slammed Jimbo for 5 Damage Ranks. The Monkey chooses to drop his Good [+2] Chef to Poor [-2] Chef (2 Damage Ranks) and his Good [+2] Brachiator to Poor [-2] Brachiator (2 more Damage Ranks). Unfortunately, this leaves one more Damage Rank to be accounted for, so Jimbo is forced to drop his Expert [+4] Rasslin’ to Good [+2] Rasslin’.

Both characters have now taken a turn, and can choose to continue the conflict or not. Jimbo decides to call a time-out.

If Salty Dave had somehow used a banana in his action, Jimbo’s Weakness of Poor [-2] Banana Addict would have made things much, much worse for our Monkey. If so, Salty Dave would have done 7 Damage Ranks to Jimbo, instead of just 5, bringing the Monkey closer to losing the conflict.

Out for Blood?

For physical conflicts, the default assumption in PDQ is that characters can only be killed once they are unconscious or otherwise helpless. This requires no roll, check, or action, simply a statement on the attacker’s next turn that the he wishes to kill the victim. (GMs should feel free to change this rule if they desire. Perhaps characters pick whether they are doing “bruising” damage or “killing” damage at the beginning of a conflict situation.)



Recovering from Damage

Once a Scene ends, the injured character will begin to recover lost Ranks. How many he gets back depends upon whether he was in *momentary danger* or is still in *continuing danger*.

The Key to Understanding Conflict Abstraction

Basically, in any conflict, some of a character's Qualities can be thought of as useful for either "attack," "defense," or "absorption."

As an example, say a character has Good [+2] Rank in the Qualities of Kung Fu, Debating, and Accountant. In combat (a physical conflict), the character will probably opt to keep Kung Fu at Good [+2], and apply Damage Ranks to Debating and Accountant. In an argument (a social conflict), the character will want to keep Debating high for as long as possible, and take Failure Ranks on Kung Fu and Accountant first. If being audited by the IRS (could be a mental, a social, or even a professional conflict, depending on how the GM spins the situation), the character would protect Accountant, try to keep Debating at Good [+2] as long as he could, and sacrifice Kung Fu.

This abstraction of how Failure or Damage Ranks are applied isn't meant to be a one-to-one relation ("Hey, why does getting punched in the face lower my Florist Quality?"), but amusing justifications can be made up anyway ("Well, your black eye makes it hard to arrange peonies...").

- ◆ **Momentary Danger.** If nothing else is going on, and the character is otherwise safe, relaxed, and lacking any time constraints. Examples of momentary danger include playing Go Fish with a six year old, a car chase (though some Environmental Damage could happen. . .), or a seduction attempt. At the end of the Scene, all Failure or Damage Ranks are removed, restoring Qualities to their appropriate levels.
- ◆ **Continuing Danger.** Danger is continuing if the overarching situation that the conflict happened in is risky, stressful, or under deadline. An example of continuing danger would be playing poker in a seedy dive bar with three Mafiosi. Characters will recover 1d6 lost Ranks of Quality at the end of the

conflict Scene. The player selects which Qualities' Ranks are restored. However, the character will not recover any more Ranks until the GM tells them to roll again.

NOTE - A Strength like "Quick Healer" should allow the character to gain back the standard 1d6 roll, plus their Modifier. A Weakness like "Slow Healer" would mean that the character rolls 1d6-2 (the Modifier for Poor), with a minimum of zero Ranks regained.

Example: Jefferson's been beaten up and stuffed in a garbage can by a Zombi. At the end of the conflict, all of his Qualities were Downshifted to Poor, except for Biker Dude, which he had zeroed. Since this happened in a bad part of Zombitown, he's still in continuing danger. He rolls for damage recovery and gets a 3. He puts 1 Rank into bringing Biker Dude to Poor [-2] (now he's conscious), and uses the remaining 2 to get Toughness back to Good [+2], since he figures it'll be the most useful if someone else jumps him.

OPTIONAL RULE: INCREASING DAMAGE

PDQ assumes that one is using an appropriate tool alongside a Quality - a spreadsheet program with Accounting, a pistol with Gunplay, a little black dress with Seduction, etc. If the GM so chooses, this assumption can be changed such that specialized equipment provides 1 Upshift, limited to Damage Rank determination only.

Under this optional rule, if a character with Good [+2] Kung-Fu uses nunchucks when breaking heads, while he'd be rolling for success at Good [+2] Rank, but when comparing roll results for damage purposes, he'd treat his Kung-Fu as if it were Expert [+4] Rank. (This boils down to an extra 2 Failure or Damage Ranks.)

CONFLICT JAZZ

Here are some methods to get even more of your tactical or strategic ya-yas out. Any character can choose to use them in the course of their conflicts.

CONFLICT STRATEGIES

There are two additional strategies that a character can use in conflicts, depending upon if he wants to specifically concentrate on attack or defense. One can only be used by an attacker and the other only by a defender. If a PC wishes to utilize either of these strategies, they must announce it at the beginning of their turn. They cannot be used on the same turn.



- ◆ **Flip Out.** The attacker flips out all over the target, making strong attacks (physical, mental, or social) without much heed to defense. A Flip-Out grants an Upshift for the attack (and any subsequent damage) and a Downshift on all defensive reactions and other non-conflict-related actions until his next turn.
- ◆ **Play It Cagey.** The defender plays it cagey, opting for safety by not taking any chances, holding back in the conflict. Playing It Cagey grants an Upshift for all defensives reaction and a Downshift on all the character's non-conflict-related actions until their next turn; unfortunately, Playing It Cagey means that the character's *next* attack action will suffer from this Downshift.

OPTIONAL RULE: ABSTRACTING CONFLICT FURTHER

You could streamline conflict situations further by treating them as complicated situations. That is, instead of having character roll using their Qualities against each other to determine success, simply treat their Quality Rank as a Difficulty Rank. Then, the attacker uses the Target Number of that Difficulty Rank to roll against for success; as with Environmental Damage, the difference between roll result and Target Number gives the Damage Rank. No fuss, no muss (especially for faceless henchmen, if your *PDQ* game is in the cinematic idiom).

Example: Salty Dave has gotten to the treasure chamber of a Ninja Hut. His path is blocked by a Henchman Ninja (Average [0] Henchman). Salty Dave rolls his Good [+2] Cutlass Quality against the henchman's Target Number of 7. He rolls a 3 and a 6, plus 2 from Good [+2] Cutlass, giving him a total of 11: Eleven easily beats 7, so Salty Dave slices the henchman from stem to stern in one blow and continues walking toward his prize – the Ninjas' sweet, sweet uranium.

Shift Accumulation

In *PDQ*, all Upshifts, Downshifts, and bonus dice are cumulative. That means that if a character is Being Badass and Flipping Out simultaneously, he would have 2 Upshifts (or a Modifier of +4) on the attack and damage. This means if the starting Quality was of Average [0] Rank (2d6), it would temporarily become Expert Rank (2d6+4); if the Quality was Good [+2], the roll would be 2d6+6, and if the Quality was Expert [+4], the roll would be 3d6+6, because one of the Upshifts would take the Rank above Master and translate into an extra die to roll.

USING MULTIPLE QUALITIES IN SIMPLE, COMPLICATED, OR CONFLICT SITUATIONS

If the GM agrees that more than one Quality can be brought to bear on a task, simply combine the Modifiers for the relevant Qualities. (If a character spent one of their choices in character generation on buying something under their penumbra as a separate Quality, this is where they reap the benefit.) Furthermore, this case includes not just the Qualities of a single character, but also if *multiple characters* team-up to perform a task. If multiple characters are joining forces, only one of them needs to roll, and that's the character with the higher Initiative.

Example 1: Standing on the second floor of the food court, Salty Dave sees some Ninjas attacking his buddy Jimbo on the ground floor. He decides to join the fray, and grabs a decorative garland to swing down all Errol Flynn-like while slicing with his cutlass. Salty Dave can combine his Good [+2] Cutlass and Good [+2] Swinging Qualities (as well as his Average [0] Pirate Quality) in his attack on one of the Ninjas. He'll be rolling 2d6+2+2+0, or 2d6+4, for this swashbuckling maneuver.

Example 2: Zandra (Expert [+4] Marketing Exec) and Kristov (Good [+2] Rockstar) decide to work together in a pitch meeting to try and convince an Expert [+4] Record Company Exec that Kristov is worth re-signing. Zandra will roll 2d6+4+2; the GM rolls for the Record Company Exec. She rolls a 4 and a 6, for a total of 16, and the GM rolls a 4 and a 6 for a total of 14. Zandra and Kristov successfully convince the NPC that Kristov's career is making a comeback!

USING A QUALITY AGAINST MULTIPLE TARGETS

If it's necessary for a character to take on multiple targets simultaneously in a single action, he can split his attentions (and relevant Quality Ranks) between them. Of course, this leads to a commensurate decrease in effective skill. For each additional target selected, apply a Downshift to the Quality Rank.

Example: Say that Jimbo (Expert [+4] Rasslin') is fighting two Ninja Bikers. If he tries to take them both on, he'll only be at an effective Rank of Good [+2] for his attacks on each. If there were 3 Ninja Bikers, he'd have an effective Rank of Average [0]; if 4, Poor [-2]. If there were 5 Ninja Bikers, he'd automatically fail all five attacks, since his split Rank would bottom out with



another Downshift. Better to take them on one or two at a time.

But wait! Jimbo has Chef at Good [+2] Rank. Perhaps if the melee took place in a restaurant kitchen, the GM might agree that Jimbo could add in his culinary know-how (grabbing cleavers, throwing pots and pans, creative use of the Fryolator, etc.). This circumstance would allow Jimbo to take on 2 Ninja at Expert [+4], 3 Ninja at Good [+2], 4 Ninja at Average [0], 5 Ninja at Poor [-2], and auto-fail only when facing 6 Ninja in the kitchen at once.

IMPROVEMENT

If the game provides them, characters can use their Experience Points for *Improvement*, reflecting the gaining of skill and experience. To Improve a Quality, a character must spend 4 Experience Points per Rank improved. When a character reaches Master Rank in a Quality, it cannot be improved further.

Thus, to turn a Weakness into a powerful Strength:

- ◆ Raising Poor [-2] Rank Sailor to Average [0] Rank Sailor costs 4 Experience Points.
- ◆ Raising Poor [-2] Rank Sailor to Good [+2] Rank Sailor costs 8 Experience Points (4 for Poor to Average and 4 for Average to Good).
- ◆ Raising Poor [-2] Rank Sailor to Expert [+4] Rank Sailor costs 12 Experience Points (4 for Poor to Average, 4 for Average to Good, and 4 for Good to Expert).
- ◆ Raising Poor [-2] Rank Sailor to Master [+6] Rank Sailor costs 16 Experience Points (4 for Poor to Average, 4 for Average to Good, and 4 for Good to Expert, and 4 for Expert to Master).

NOTE - If a character wishes to gain a totally new Quality, they need to spend 4 Experience Points to gain it at Good [+2] Rank.

When a character reaches Master Rank in a Type or Quality, it cannot normally be improved further.

CONFLICT EXAMPLE I

Let's say that Kristov (Good [+2] Dirty Fighter) and Jefferson (Expert [+4] Biker Dude) get into a fight. Jefferson's going to go first, since his fighting-relevant Quality Rank is higher than Kristov's.

KRISTOV WOLFF, HAS-BEEN ROCK-AND-ROLLER

Personality: Sensual. Kristov understands the world through his senses, especially hearing, touch, and taste (all of his hit songs drew strongly on at least one of those elements).

Backstory: *Virtue:* Generous. *Vice:* Avarice. At age sixteen, Kristov Wolff was on top of the world with two platinum albums, a legion of screaming fans, sold-out concerts, and more money than a small bank. After a ten-year whirl of drugs, drinking, promiscuity, and CPT (Caviar, Paté, & Truffle) sandwiches, the albums aren't selling like they used to, and now the fans, the concerts, and the money are gone.

Soul Loss: Kristov let his soul rot first by the cruddy things he did to get to the top, and then chipped away big chunks of it as he indulged in celebrity-scope excesses. As things started falling apart, instead of taking control, he numbed himself with drugs, food, and mindless television. One day, his soul was just gone.

Discovery: Between drunken binges, Kristov ran out of vodka. On the way to the corner liquor store, he passed a fortune teller's shop. Thinking it'd be a hoot, he decided to drop in and see if the palmist recognized him: maybe she'd be a cute Goth-type owned his albums before Sisters of Mercy took its place on her turntable. He got more than he bargained for.

The old woman with the scarves on her head threw him out before he even sat down, calling him names like "demon," "dybbuk," and "monster." He was so shocked, he almost forgot to get his Stoli. Almost.

In the checkout line, a young guy with tats covering his bald head touched him on the shoulder. "I know what's wrong with you, buddy. You're Dead Inside. I can help."

Qualities: Good [+2] Rockstar, Good [+2] Songwriter, Good [+2] Dirty Fighter, Good [+2] Second Sight, Poor [-2] at Accounting.

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside.

Soul Point Pool: 1

Notes: Kristov's a short guy with long ratty blonde hair. He's got a skinny frame, but is growing a little potbelly. His band was called "the Wolff Pak," and was made up of 4 guys: Kristov, "Chubby" Bill Boro, Jimmy Carlosi, and Sammy "SoCo" Rogers. SoCo's gone on to a successful solo career. The group's biggest #1 was "Be My Love Bunny, Honey."

JEFFERSON, BIKER BRUISER

Personality: Grizzly Adams. Live and let live, or else.

Backstory: *Virtue:* Integrity. *Vice:* Cruelty. Jefferson's a big bear of a Hell's Angel: while most of the time he's like Gentle Ben, he'll flip out Kodiak-style on someone who pushes him too hard. Luckily, he can take a lot of guff before snapping.

Soul Loss: Jefferson sold his soul to get out of a tight spot that he doesn't discuss: he almost killed his own brother in a bar fight, and traded his soul to a man who had no eyes to heal Stevie. The next day, Stevie killed a convenience store clerk and severely wounded a little kid during a hold-up. Then, the punk *laughed* about it to his brother. Now, Jefferson wants to change the deal he struck with the Eyeless Guy... undo Stevie's healing and give it to the kid in the ICU. And if that means Stevie gets put into the cold, cold ground, so be it.

Discovery: Jefferson sold it, on purpose, to the Eyeless Guy. He knew exactly what he was doing... but now he's not happy he did it.

Qualities: Expert [+4] Biker Dude, Good [+2] Toughness, Good [+2] Outdoorsman, Poor [-2] Reader.

Type: Average [0] Dead Inside,

Soul Points Pool: 1

Miscellany: Jefferson calls his Harley "Declaration," and prefers denim to leather.



JEFFERSON: "I punch at the little twerp."
 KRISTOV: "I'll try to duck under the big moose's punch."
 JEFFERSON (rolls 2d6+4; he rolls a 3 and a 1 for a total of 8):
 "Eight!"
 KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; he rolls a 4 and a 5 for a total of 11):
 "Eleven! Ha!"
 GM: "Kristov bends down, and Jefferson's punch misses the mark. Kristov's turn."
 KRISTOV: "I come up and try to sock him one in the nuts!"
 JEFFERSON: "OOoooh, not cool, dude. Why do you always go for the low-blow?"
 KRISTOV: "My Quality is Dirty Fighter, sport."
 JEFFERSON: "Well, I'll try to parry his punch away from my groin."
 KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2, he rolls a 4 and a 5 for a total of 11):
 "This one goes to *eleven!* Heh heh heh!"
 JEFFERSON (rolls 2d6+4; he rolls a 6 and a 3 for a total of 13):
 "Thirteen. Guess it's not your lucky day!"
 GM: "Jefferson knocks Kristov's low-blow aside, easily."
 KRISTOV: "Gulp."
 JEFFERSON (miming cracking his knuckles): "This is gonna hurt you a lot more than it hurts me, buddy." (to GM) "I'm gonna grab his shirt, throw him into the wall, and wind up my haymaker. When he bounces back, I'll connect. Hard."
 KRISTOV: "Hey, that's more than one action!" (looks at GM)
 JEFFERSON: "Nope, it's Being Badass." (looks at GM)
 GM (ponders): "Yeah, that's pretty badass. Jefferson gets an Upshift on the attack."
 KRISTOV (buries his head in his hands): "This is gonna hurt."
 GM: "What's your reaction to the attempt going to be?"
 KRISTOV (has a bright idea): "I'm gonna Play It Cagey."
 GM: "You know that'll screw up your next attack."
 KRISTOV (ponders): "Nah, it's not worth it. I need to tag this guy a couple times, and I'll need all the bonuses I can get. I won't Play it Cagey."
 GM: "Alright, Jefferson's rolling against an effective Master [+6] Biker Dude for this attack, or 2d6+6. Go for it."
 JEFFERSON (rolls 2d6+6; he rolls two 5s for a total of 16):
 "Sweet sixteen, baby!"
 KRISTOV (rolls 2d6+2; he rolls a 1 and a 3 for a total of 6):
 "Dammit. No go."
 GM (calculating, 16 minus 6 is a total of 10): "Jefferson throws Kristov against the wall and clocks him on the return for 10 Damage Ranks."
 JEFFERSON: "Take that, little buddy. Should've Played It Cagey."
 KRISTOV (glumly looking at his character sheet): "Well, I could drop all my Goods to Averages, that's 4 Damage Ranks. Drop them all to Poores, that's another 4. Two more... okay, I drop my Average Dead Inside to Poor. That leaves one Damage Rank, and everything I got is at Poor now. Crap. I'll take it on Dirty Fighter and bottom out. I'm unconscious."

GM (to Jefferson): "Now what do you do?"
 JEFFERSON: "I have a beer and wait for him to wake up, so he can take back what he said about my momma. Or else."
 GM (to Kristov): After a couple minutes, you come around. You're still in continuing danger because Jefferson could stomp your ass again. Roll 1d6 for Damage Recovery."
 KRISTOV (rolls 2d6; he rolls a 2 and a 4 for a total of 6): "Six Ranks back... Hmm, I'll put Dirty Fighter back to Good, that's 1 to hit Poor and 2 more to get to Good, total of 3. Dead Inside back to Average, that's 1. Rockstar back to Good, that's 2. There, that should do it."
 JEFFERSON (to Kristov): "Apologize for what you said about my momma."
 KRISTOV: "Sorry! Don't hit me again, okay?"

CONFLICT EXAMPLE 2

Jimbo and Mike Matsutake are having a cook-off Challenge in front of a live studio audience. (Sounds like a social conflict to me.) The Scene opens on the set of *Monkeying with Food*, Jimbo's cable-access show. (Take heed: this example includes *MNPR:RPG's* Mojo Powers!)

JIMBO OF THE JUNGLE, MONKEY CHEF

Gift: Funny. **Goal:** Have Fun. **Qualities:** Average [0] Monkey; Expert [+4] Rasslin', Good [+2] Chef, Good [+2] Brachiator, Poor [-2] Banana Addict. **Mojo:** 1M, 1N. **CR:** 1N.

MIKE MATSUTAKE, NINJA CHEF

Gift: Adept. **Goal:** Cause mischief. **Qualities:** Average [0] Ninja; Good [+2] Chef, Good [+2] Katana, Good [+2] Shuriken, Good [+2] Practical Joker, Poor [-2] Vain. **Mojo:** 1M, 1N. **CR:** 1M.

JIMBO: "And that, studio audience and viewers at home, is how you make a coconut omelet, or as the French call it, *Oeufs de Whack-kay!*"

GM: "The audience applauds - except for one guy, who's booing and hissing!"

JIMBO: "What the-? Who's trying to ruin my show?"

GM: "You see a Ninja stand up in the middle of the crowd. He shouts to you "Go back to the Jungle, Monkey, and leave the cooking to experts!"

JIMBO: "Jimbo starts bouncing up and down, beating his chest, and says 'Who the hell are you?'"

GM: "The Ninja says, 'This skilled one is Mike Matsutake, Ninja Chef! I Challenge *you*, Jimbo, to a duel of cuisine!' The audience seems to be holding its breath, waiting for Jimbo's response. . ."



JIMBO: "I accept your Challenge, Matsutake! Bring it on!"

GM: "The Ninja Chef leaps out of the stands, does a mid-air somersault, and lands next to you on the stage. The audience oohs and ahhs." (makes a note) "Okay, this will be a social Challenge, as you're trying to get the highest amount of audience applause through the dishes you produce. Sound good?"

JIMBO: "Sure."

GM: "Since you both are equally-Ranked at Chef, I could make you roll for Initiative, but since it's Jimbo's TV show, I say he should go first."

JIMBO: "Okay, I start to whip up a (um, what else do Monkeys eat?). . . Got it! Termite pie! Jimbo gets a pie shell, goes to the termite farm in the corner and scoops up a couple handfuls of bugs, throws them in the shell, covers it, and slams the tray into the oven! How does the crowd like that?"

GM: "Go ahead and roll."

JIMBO: (rolls 2d6+2, getting 2 and 6 for a total of 10) "I got a ten."

GM (rolling 2d6+2 for the Ninja, getting 2 and 2 for a total of 6): "Matsutake seems a bit flabbergasted by your use of insects! He takes 4 Failure Ranks!" (The GM applies the Failure Ranks, dropping Shuriken and Practical Joker 2 Ranks each; now both are at Poor [-2].)

JIMBO: "Don't mess with the Monkey, man!"

GM (as the Ninja): "'Your jungle arts won't save you from my skills! And then he reaches down below the counter, grabs something in each hand, and flips them into the air. He draws his sword, screaming, 'Behold the power of my. . . Super! Banana Sushi!' Using his katana, he deftly peels the banana, slaps it onto the rice, then slices it into pieces which fall perfectly on the serving plate." (GM checks off the point of Ninja Mojo from Matsutake's write-up.)

JIMBO: "What the hell is that?"

GM: "He's using his Chef and Katana Qualities together, as well as spending a point of Mojo on the Universal Power of Super!"

JIMBO: "Damn."

GM: "Yup, he's pulling out all the stops, since you mused him pretty bad with your first attack. Oh, and you're at -2 for your reaction roll."

JIMBO: "What?! Why?"

GM: "Because Jimbo's a filthy Banana Addict. That's worth an extra 2 Failure Ranks on the first attack."

JIMBO (studies his character sheet) "Oh, right. That sucks."

GM (rolling 2d6+2+2 for the two Qualities, plus an additional Upshift - or +2, same difference - for the Ninja; he gets 2 and 5 for a total of 15): "13, plus 2 extra Failure Ranks is fifteen!"

JIMBO: "You're kidding." (studies sheet) "I only have 1 Mojo, so I can't use it for Bouncy!, because if I lose, my Expert [+4]

Rasslin' will suffer a Breakdown. Damn. Well, better get it over with." (picks up dice, shakes them, then stops.) "Hey wait, since this is a social conflict, I can use my Gift, right? Get the audience on my side? Maybe their cheers of 'Go, go, Jimbo!' and 'Show me the monkey!' keep me all focused and stuff?"

GM: "Sure, why not?"

JIMBO: "Cool. I'll Upshift my Chef from Good [+2] to Expert [+4]." (rolls 2d6+4-2, getting 5 and 6 for a total of 13) "Lucky thirteen! *Awesome!*" (to the Ninja) "Though my eyes glaze over and I start to drool over the Ninja's luscious Super Banana Sushi, I manage to pull myself away from the brink."

GM: "Well done. You only take 2 Failure Ranks. Where are you putting them?"

JIMBO (looking at sheet): "Okay, I'll drop Rasslin' voluntarily - and temporarily! - from Expert [+4] to Average [0]."

GM: "Your action."

JIMBO: (ponders) "Okay, I want to do something like the Ninja did, combining my Qualities. Let's see. . . Rasslin', Brachiator, and Chef. I got it! Okay, I'll make fresh pancakes - *upside down*, swinging from the light gantries of the studio, *by my feet!*"

GM: "I like it! Okay, you can use Chef and Brachiator on this action."

JIMBO: (rolls 2d6+2+2, getting 4 and 5 for a total of 13) "Thirteen again!"

GM (rolling 2d6+2, getting 1 and 2 for a total of 7) "Matsutake gets seven, and takes 6 Failure Ranks." (looks at sheet) "Six Ranks will cause Matsutake to zero out a Quality, so that means you win! The crowd goes wild, 'Aaaaahhhh!' while the Ninja cries all over his sushi." (scratches out the next to last Mojo point on the Ninja's sheet) "You feel the surge of power as you gain one of the Ninja's Mojo points for winning the Challenge!"

JIMBO: "What Flavor?"

GM: "Monkey Mojo."

JIMBO: "'That will teach you to steal Mojo from Monkeys!' I scream, then I beat my chest, bouncing up and down, and perform the traditional Monkey screech of ass-kicking victory!"

GM: "Like how?"

JIMBO: (demonstrates) "Like 'ooh-ooh-ow-ow-ow!'"

GM: (laughing) "Jimbo gets *another* new Monkey Mojo point."

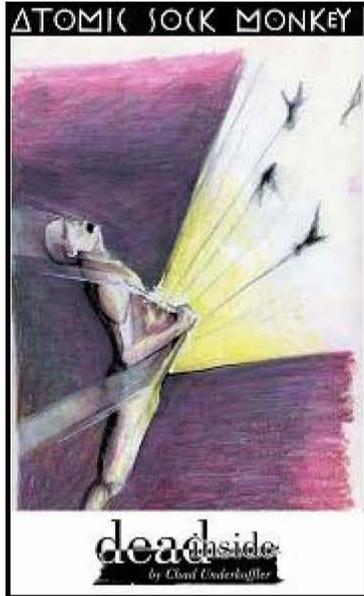
JIMBO: "Sweet!"



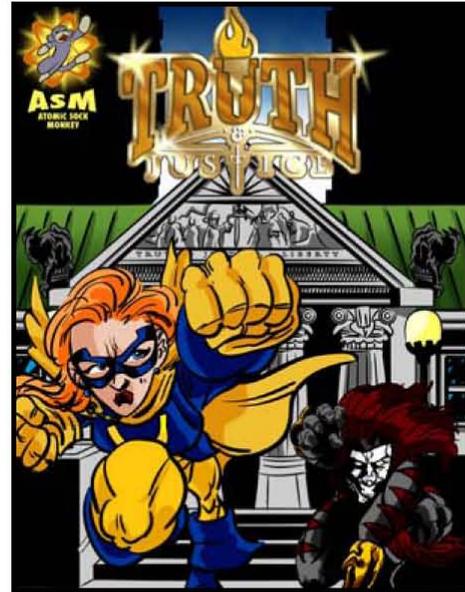


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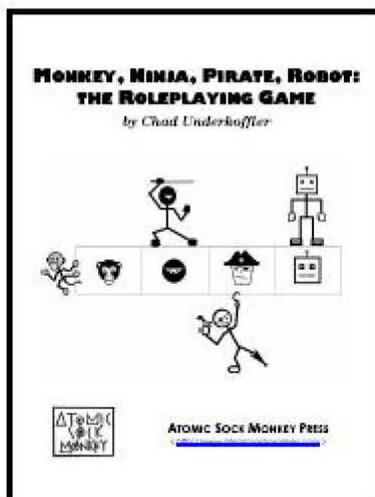
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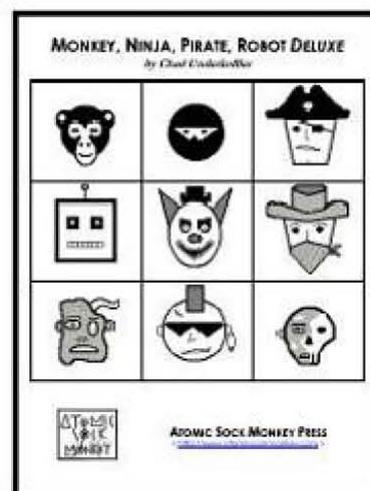
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TRUTH & JUSTICE



**MONKEY, NINJA, PIRATE, ROBOT:
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