

APPENDIX III: PARAGON CREATION

Although *A More Perfect Union* is set up for play with the characters provided, it's also a suitable adventure for kicking off your own *Paragons* series, in which case the players might want to create their own *M&M* characters for use in the game, rather than choosing from a selection of pre-generated characters.

This section takes a look at creating *Paragons* characters suitable for use in the adventure and in an ongoing series. The *Paragons* campaign setting sourcebook goes into more detail on paranormal character creation suitable for a wide range of different series and styles. This section focuses on characters like those designed for this adventure: power level 6, built with 90 starting power points, and fairly focused.

To use this material, you'll want a copy of either the *Mutants & Masterminds* rulebook or the *M&M Pocket Player's Guide* for reference.

STAGE ONE: NORMAL

At this stage of character creation, consider your character's life before breaking out. Take up to 50 power points and create that character. Consider the character's early life, professional experience, hobbies, and so forth and choose the appropriate traits.

Your character doesn't have *any* powers at this stage, and don't choose unusual or heroic traits without a good reason for them. Perhaps your character was a police officer, soldier, government agent, or the like before breaking out, but

paranormals come from all walks of life, most of them fairly ordinary.

Note you can spend *up to* 50 power points creating your character at this stage, but you're under no obligation to spend *all* of them. Any unspent points from this stage simply "roll over" to Stage Two, where you can spend them normally. So don't feel compelled to create a 50-point normal character if everything you have in mind comes to, say, 28 points, and that's it.

ABILITIES

Keep in mind the ability benchmarks on page 30 of *M&M*: unless a character is a truly extraordinary person to begin with, an ability score above 14-15 is unlikely, and the GM may well prohibit scores above 20 or so (although 24-25 is rated the peak of "human achievement"). The guidelines in the **Under the Hood** sidebar on page 31 of *M&M* may also be helpful in assigning mental abilities to your character based on his or her personality traits and your conception.

SKILLS

When choosing your character's skills, keep the **Skill Benchmarks** and **Under the Hood** sidebars on pages 38 and 40 of *M&M* in mind: 5-8 ranks in a skill is a "professional" level of training, while 9-12 qualifies the character as a true expert. A power level 6 character is limited to no more than 11 ranks in a skill. Likewise, consider the character's life skills; most new paragons aren't "adventurers" as

EMPOWERING YOURSELF

One option for a *Paragons* series is for the players to take the roles of fictionalized versions of *themselves*, who awaken to the potential for paranormal powers and have to deal with the impact those extraordinary abilities have on their lives and on the world.

The first step in such a character creation process is largely the same: creating non-powered versions of the players as *M&M* characters and determining their relevant game traits. The benchmarks given for ability scores and skills in *Mutants & Masterminds* may be helpful, and the GM should encourage the players to be objective (but also not too harsh) in figuring out what their own game traits should be. The GM should exercise good judgment in helping the players in balancing out the right trait ratings.

It's likely the characters won't all have the same point totals at this stage, which is just fine, so long as the players all have the same number of points to spend total. As with normal character creation, the GM should decide if the players will determine their characters' paranormal traits or if they will be decided for them, and kept a secret until the characters learn more about what they can do.

Playing yourself in a *Paragons* game can be fun, but groups should also be aware this sort of roleplaying can be intensely personal, and some players may take offense at either discussion of what their game traits should be or at things that happen to the fictional versions of themselves in play, identifying with them even more so than with entirely fictional characters. If any of the players are uncomfortable with the idea of playing themselves, they should be encouraged to create fictional characters using the regular guidelines instead.

SECRET POWERS

Of course, paranormals don't necessarily break out with complete and comprehensive knowledge of what they can do, or even what their powers *are* initially. Some Gamemasters may wish to keep knowledge of the characters' paranormal powers secret from the players, either choosing them based on player input or even choosing them *for* the players and revealing them over the course of play. Naturally, this should be done with the players' foreknowledge and permission, and players who prefer to choose their characters' own powers should be allowed to do so.

If this option is in use, you can allow players to spend a hero point for inspiration (*M&M*, page 122) to learn more about what their powers do, or what power (if any) applies to their current situation. So, for example, a character cornered at the edge of a precipice might get a sudden "instinctive" urge to jump to escape from pursuers, discovering in the process the ability to fly!

If you play out the characters' breakouts, you might want to keep their powers secret during just that scene, allowing players full knowledge of their characters' paranormal traits once regular play has begun. This also allows the opportunity to "fine-tune" paranormal traits between the prelude and the actual start of the series, if the players wish.

such. They might have ranks in skills like Craft or Profession, various types of Knowledge, and some interaction skills like Diplomacy and Sense Motive.

FEATS

Apart from skill feats like Connected, Contacts, and Well-Informed, and general feats like Equipment or Benefit, most normal characters aren't likely to have many feats at all. Combat feats and combat-applicable feats are more likely to show up after a character's breakout than before, unless the character was involved in a combat-intensive profession.

CHARACTERISTICS

A normal character's saving throws and attack and defense bonus should generally reflect his or her prior experience, although saves in particular might have an amount of "untapped potential" the character hasn't yet drawn upon simply because of not having the need to make many saving throws in life! Like other traits, you can set these at a reasonable rating for your character's normal life with an eye towards increasing them later on.

Once you've created your normal character, it's time for a breakout....

STAGE TWO: PARANORMAL

Now spend 40 power points, plus any remaining power points you have left over from Stage One, to give your character paranormal powers and other suitable traits resulting from the breakout and becoming a paragon.

Not all of your power points at this stage need to be applied to powers: you can also use them to enhance your character's abilities, and acquire new or improved skills and feats, representing either training following the character's awakening or direct savant-like enhancement. The same goes for things like Benefits or Equipment your character acquires as a paragon, perhaps from belonging to a particular faction or organization.

Don't overlook things like attack and defense bonus or saving throws, which are probably also enhanced from the

character's normal values, closer to the power level limits. Again, this might reflect training and experience or simply a benefit of becoming paranormal.

OPTION: PLAYING THE BREAKOUT

As a prelude to a *Paragons* series, you and the GM may wish to roleplay the circumstances of your character's breakout and discovery of any paranormal powers. Essentially, you start out playing the Stage One (normal) version of your character, then during the course of the scene, something happens and your character becomes a paragon, gaining some or all of the additional traits from Stage Two of the character creation process.

Players may have a great deal of input in advance into how this breakout scene occurs or the GM can set the stage and allow the scene to unfold, creating the character's background in play. This is a useful means for fleshing out a character's history and motivations in the game.

A breakout prelude can also include whatever post-awakening training or other benefits a character receives. For example, if a character joins a particular faction or organization after the breakout, the prelude can include the invitation to join, or a "training montage" describing the character going through whatever additional training or education is needed to acquire the remaining traits from Stage Two of the design process.

IMPROVED AND ENHANCED TRAITS

Changes to traits like abilities, skills, feats, and characteristics during Stage Two come in two forms: improved and enhanced.

Improved traits are just that: improvements on the existing traits from Stage One. So a character might learn some wisdom from experience, gain confidence (and therefore Charisma), pick up some new skills (or improvements in existing ones) from training, or acquire additional feats, combat training (attack and defense bonus), or learn some hard lessons about avoiding certain hazards (with commensurate improvements in saving throws).