

Chapter 4

Persona



The halls of our hive-like underground headquarters are covered with flyers displaying the acronym “WAGIYAN,” which stands for “Without a Great Identity, You Are Nothing.” We had nothing to do with them, but The Motivatron, the living brain of a shamed motivational speaker implanted into the stomach of a 15-foot-tall robot, insisted we put them up or threatened to hold a no-breaks nine-month seminar about how to unlock your inner monster. So we relented. (Incidentally, in the henchman barracks, “wagiyan” has become a slang term for the process of shoving one or more testicles into someone’s nostril.)

In spite of the overwhelming obnoxiousness of ubiquitous inspirational posters, the sentiment holds true. In supervillainy, image is everything. Experience, education and a foolproof plan can get you a long way in this game, but without a unique, head-turning persona and a bombastic presence, even the most capable villain is just another guy breaking into an embassy with a forty-foot energy sword.

But before you start sewing together your armored body suit, take some time to think about exactly how you want to be viewed in the supervillain and superhero communities, because you’re going to be stuck with whatever you come up with for pretty much the rest of your career. It’s like a band name. Do you think Hootie and the Blowfish still want to be Hootie and the Blowfish? No. No

they don't. But they came up with that name one night, presumably while high on turpentine, and had to spend the next several years of success plus the following lifetime's worth of obscurity living it down.

To make sure you don't become a supervillain equivalent of Hootie and the Blowfish, we present the following rundown of the key aspects of your supervillain identity.

Name

Some of us luck out. With a last name like von Doom or Horrible or Scorpio or Oblivion or Murderknife, our monikers are laid out there for us from the get-go (and

SUPERVILLAIN HISTORY CORNER

Three U.S. presidents of the 20th Century were, in fact, supervillains. Many believe that Richard Nixon was one of them. That is not true. Nixon was a henchman put into power by a cabal of supervillains who irrationally hated circular hotels. The three genuine supervillain presidents were: William Howard Taft (villain name: The Deathtub), Franklin D. Roosevelt (villain name: Poliulus), and Ronald Reagan (villain name: Oven Dutch).

it's kind of hard to go into accounting). Others get the benefit of a pitch-perfect, horrifying nickname. For instance, one of our members got the name The Brain Butcher when he was in high school. We're not sure how he got that title, but we have our guesses. (They all involve butchering brains.)

The lion's share of supervillains don't get that luxury. In large part, they're saddled with birth names like Greg Joly and Marlene

Thompson, like most other workaday schlubs out there punching a clock to make their daily dime. For them, the naming process is a little more difficult. But they also have

more freedom to create the evil image they think suits them best.

If you weren't blessed (cursed) with an automatic villain name at birth, keep these tips in mind as you develop your hellish handle:

- ❖ **Keep it as close to your real name if you can.** Say, for instance, your name is Ray Mantara. It's not that much of a stretch for you to stick a tail on yourself and become the Viciously Stinging Manta Ray. If your name's Roxy Smith, then consider becoming Lady Rock-Smith (you may also want to learn how to forge rocks into spears and horseshoes and stuff).
- ❖ **Avoid duplication.** Frankly, we don't give a shit about copyright law and all that garbage (though if we see any illegal copies of this book floating around on file-sharing sites, we will move quickly forward with our plans to destroy the internet by ridding the world of kitten pictures). No, our concern here has more to do with avoiding confusion than anything else. Look, we can't have two Jokers running around, unless that's part of a villainous plan he's got going where an impostor creates distractions while he wreaks havoc on Gotham or something. But outside of that circumstance, we try to avoid confusing the heroes (and they confuse easily), the media and each other as much as possible. So if you absolutely can't live without doing a clown shtick, look into becoming Jocular Jones or Clownicus or something like that. It'll just make everyone's life easier.
- ❖ **Fit your shtick.** Simply: If you're completely hairless and you shoot fireballs out of your fingertips, The Terrible Timberwolf isn't the name for you.

- ❖ **Remember brevity.** Heroes aren't going to want to spend their time on you if, whenever they confront you, they have to say something like, "Stand down, Onerous, Obstructionist Orphan Oliver, Now-adult Protagonist of the Charles Dickens Book!" A name like that takes away from valuable fighting time. Plus, superheroes aren't all that good with polysyllabic words. So, for the sake of your own fame and to avoid having to regularly tell oafs with greasy hair how to pronounce your nom de plume, go with something simple, like "Evil Oliver Twist," and be done with it.

Powers/Expertise

Most supervillains don't get a say in this part of their personae. But if you do get that chance, like, say, you get to choose what powers you get as a subject of extensive, yet surprisingly democratic, government testing, then go for something unique and different. (We'll discuss this topic further in Chapter 6, "Abilities and Equipment.")

Methods

Your ultimate goal in villainy (see previous chapter) will obviously play some part in determining what type of supervillain you are, but you're also largely defined by the methods you use to achieve those goals. In fact, the six types of supervillain are chiefly defined by method:

1. **The Conqueror.** As the name implies, this villain is a ruthless power player who will use direct force to get what he or she wants. Often, he or she will use alien armies, flying tanks, giant gas bombs or assemblages of other villains to perform his or her dastardly, usually large-scale acts. Don't be fooled, though: This villain may not be in it only for power. Sometimes, the Conqueror simply likes to stomp as many people under his or her heel as possible, just for the hell of it.

2. **The Mastermind.** The Mastermind's goals are often identical to those of the Conqueror, but he or she is

subtler in methodology. Full plans for some villains amount to only distractions, decoys, complications or other types of kinks in the grand, drawn-out master plans of the Mastermind, many of which can take years or even decades to play out. Sometimes, they'll hire the Thug or the Wild Card to carry out one part of their plan, while another minion carries out another portion elsewhere. Precision and caution are key, despite the fact that some superhero will almost certainly swoop in and punch it all away, right as it's coming to fruition.

3. The

Madman. Here's how you define the Madman's methods: The Madman is impossible to define. One thing you can pretty much guarantee, though, is that whatever he's going to do, it'll be scary as shit. He (or if a

PROFILES IN LAME SUPERVILLAINY: TYPEFACE

History: War veteran Gordon Thomas became a sign maker after his wife left him. But when another guy bought the company he worked for and fired him, he got all upset and became a supervillain. Thomas drew letters all over his body with a grease pen and dubbed himself Typeface, because in addition to reacting to things inappropriately, he also lacked creativity, which could account for why he got fired.

M.O.: Thomas attacked the new owner of the sign-making business and Spider-Man (who is involved for some reason) with the giant letters he apparently stole from his old employer, again displaying his less-than-desirable attributes as an employee. He was defeated not by Spider-Man but by the new owner, when the guy set off a bomb destroying the building he had just bought. So essentially no superhero was necessary in this story of a bad employee and a terrible businessman.

madwoman, she) will always surprise you with how extraordinarily violent, sick and dangerous he or she can be. Often they desire only violence and destruction, but sometimes they love money or seek power. You can never really tell with those crazy fools.

4. **The Wild Card.** Not to be confused with the Madman, the Wild Card has very clear goals and, by all appearances, seems to be a well-adjusted individual. However, his or her loyalties are often fleeting, and The Wild Card will regularly stab anyone in the back in order to get what he or she wants, which is often money, but could also be other things, such as the keys to a bank where they can steal a lot of money or a counterfeiting machine. Often handsome, dashing fast-talkers, Wild Cards are the very definition of douchiness.

5. **The Thug.** The thug does one thing very well: Pound on superheroes (or anyone else who might need a pounding). But just because brute force is his or her stock in trade, the Thug is not necessarily a moron (though, let's face it, many are). He or she is often loyal, though it's not unheard of for a Thug to turn on a Mastermind or even a Conqueror for his or her own personal gain. Often they do this by trying to pound said Mastermind or Conqueror into submission.

6. **The Trickster.** One might say the Trickster is essentially a neutered version of the Madman, but that is to underestimate the Trickster. Yes, both may laugh often and wear colorful outfits, but the Trickster, like the Mastermind, has very specific goals in mind when he or she places clues at the scene of a crime for a superhero or affixes the police commissioner to the handle of a giant jack-in-the-box. Also, the Trickster is less interested in killing than the Madman. Often, he or she simply wants to best everyone else in a match of wits, but has lost his or her Trivial Pursuit game in the back of the closet.

Attire

Your clothes, especially if they cover any and all facial features and exposed skin (and we recommend that for most of you), are the first things most people will notice about you. That is, until you become a national legend whose mere name sparks instant fear and pants-urination in the teeming masses. But one thing at a time.

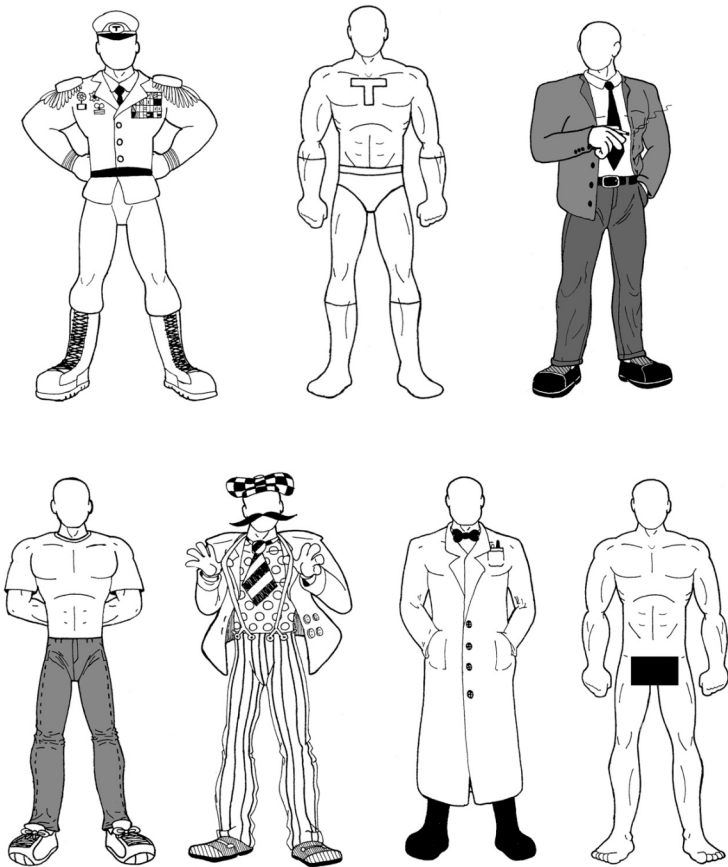
You must make sure that your clothing matches your villainous style and the image you want to put across. You have some leeway with what you want to wear, but certain fashion choices are outright no-nos for certain villain types. (Example: It's pretty much a no-no for a male villain to wear anything a female villain would wear.) The helpful chart below will clue you in to what you should and shouldn't be rockin'.

| | Best for... | Not for... | Pro-tip |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Battle armor / military uniform | The Thug, The Conqueror, The Wild Card | The Mastermind, The Madman, The Trickster | Best (worst) for villains who will be in the field, crushing skulls. |
| Spandex / leather | The Mastermind, The Trickster, The Thug, The Madman, The Wild Card | The Conqueror | Standard dress, but keep in mind that it's sometimes hard to be menacing with your junk showing. |

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| | Best for... | Not for... | Pro-tip |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Business suit | The Mastermind, The Conqueror, The Trickster | The Madman, The Thug, The Wild Card | For when you're attempting to give the appearance of "legitimacy." |
| Brightly colored, ill-fitting suit | The Madman, The Wild Card, The Trickster | The Thug, The Mastermind, The Conqueror | A good (bad) indicator that you don't give a shit about "legitimacy." |
| Street clothes | The Trickster, The Thug, The Wild Card | The Conqueror, The Mastermind, The Madman | People won't remember just a t-shirt and jeans, so try to make your ensemble as ugly and memorable as possible. |
| Lab coat and goggles | The Mastermind, The Wild Card, The Madman | The Thug, The Conqueror, The Wild Card | For when you want it to look like you actually invent stuff rather than making henchmen do all your R & D. |
| Nothing | The Thug, The Wild Card | The Trickster, The Madman, The Conqueror, The Mastermind | Appropriate only for animal-hybrid villains, those with no genitals and characters in <i>Heavy Metal</i> . |



*Your attire options.
(Seriously, though, don't go nude.)*

Once you've picked your type of attire, you're going to want to answer four remaining questions regarding your supervillain look:

1. Mask or no mask? To answer this question, ask yourself another: Would I want my mother knowing I was flying around on a personal gliding device, heaving bombs shaped like skulls at men with bug powers? If your mother wouldn't care, then don't worry about it. If she would, you better go with the mask. If you killed your own mother, it probably doesn't matter. Go with your gut, or with her ghost, who regularly speaks to you.

2. Cape or no cape? If you saw the startlingly inaccurate propaganda film *The Incredibles*, you may think capes are just an accident waiting to happen, what with all the gruesome imagery of cape-wearing people getting sucked into plane engines and such. But we have a counterpoint to that argument: Sometimes, they look *really cool*. Especially when they've got awesome hoods and stuff. So if you want to look awesome, you're probably going to want to look into getting a cape.

3. What about a logo on my chest or belt buckle? This one depends. Are you willing to put a giant target on yourself simply so that everyone can know all about your nuclear-based superpowers or that your name begins with an R? In most cases, the answer will be yes.

4. What colors should I wear? Here are your answers: Green, purple, black, yellow and possibly red. Metallic is also acceptable. But, unless you really want to push the envelope, blue is discouraged. That's a hero color. (And really, so is red, but some supervillains have managed to make it work. Yellow goes both ways.) Wear blue at your own risk. Superheroes are kind of like Crips who do really nice shit for people, and we're kind of like every other gang, if they had giant death rays.

Completing the Circle: Picking a Nemesis

Now that you've mostly completed the process of developing your supervillain persona, there's one thing left to do to cement your identity, and that's picking the superhero who best fits your unique style of menace. Keep the following tips in mind when picking the superhero or superheroes you plan to torment for the majority of your career (some crossover is allowed, but only with prior approval), so you don't get stuck with someone you might end up being friends with or something.

- ❖ **Find your opposite number.** If there happens to be a superhero out there who has the same powers as you – that is, they're the good version of you – or if he or she has the opposite powers as you, then they're pretty much tailor-made for you, dogg. Speaking of dogs, it's also neat if you can find a hero with whom you can recreate natural enmities. So if you're The Rott-Wilder, then you should seek out Tabby Terrific, like, now.
- ❖ **Avoid those who would neutralize you.** You want to find your thematic adversary, sure, but it's just plain stupid to go toe-to-toe with superheroes who basically cancel you out. Like, if your powers are based solely on getting people to believe the things you say are true, then you're probably not going want to have any battles with Mr. Existential. And don't get me started talking about the time The Volt tussled with Hydrant Man. There was steam and squirrel carcasses everywhere.
- ❖ **Think long and hard about taking on a team.** Superheroes team up way more than villains do, and some of them, you can't get as anything but a combo package. Pros: Variety. The possibility

that they'll get into an argument with each other and you won't even have to do anything. Considerably more disposable. Cons: Punching from six or seven rather than one. Banter. Severe henchman loss.

- ❖ **Match your aptitude.** If you're an incredibly powerful monarch seeking to assume control over entire continents or planets, then you may want to aim higher than an aging acrobat with no superpowers and a biting wit. Likewise, it may be a good idea for you not to take on nigh-omnipotent, invulnerable types if you're an embezzler who lifts weights once every couple of months.
- ❖ **Personal is better.** Think back over the course of your life. At any point, did you do anything that may have created a superhero? Or did a superhero do anything that might have caused you to go into villainy? If so, find them. Have a little reunion. Then beat the shit out of each other.

Branding Baseness: 9 Corporations To Emulate

You know who's great at getting people to believe all the shit they tell them while still carrying on heinous deeds? Major multinational corporations, that's who. Even I, the master of all villainy, could learn a thing or two from those guys, especially these nine, who have really taken evil PR to new levels.

McDonald's

What they get right: Think back to when you were four years old. Where did you want to eat all day, every day? That's right. Under those big yellow arches. So many impressionable children have been sucked in to the vortex of McDonald's fat and sodium that it's almost magical. And, as a bonus, creepy clown mascot! (And creepy purple monstrosity mascot and creepy perverted burglar mascot.)

What needs work: It's great public relations, but really, McDonald's did you have to go and start your own huge charity for kids? That ain't evil, man.

Google

What they get right: In addition to creating web applications that invade just about every portion of users' personal lives, from their phone messages to their website ads and stats to their travel, Google has also created the greatest database of private personal interests in history. Every search anyone types into Google's search engine is recorded and logged somewhere, and forever attached to that user. It's a *blackmail goldmine*.

What needs work: The company is far too kind to its employees. Gourmet food? On-site recreation? Come on, Google. Much more of that and our henchmen are going to expect to be treated like human beings or something.

Volkswagen

What they get right: Taking a car basically *created by Hitler* and making it trendy? Ballsy.

What needs work: Their unshakable connection to hippie-stink takes away a lot of their evil viability.

Apple

What they get right: They've littered the whole globe with tiny little portable machines designed to pump sound into people's ears. Loads of potential there. Also, they're great at childishly assaulting their competition while still seeming to keep the high ground. It's like a bully that quotes Proust while beating kids up.

What needs work: They've done a great job of setting the groundwork, but it's time to snap the plan into action, Apple! Start pumping secret messages of anarchy into peoples' ears already, guys!

AIG

What they get right: Despite completely mismanaging themselves, greedily grabbing cash hand over fist and showing no concern for their clients, they managed to convince the government to give them billions of dollars. That's the dream, folks.

What needs work: Why only rely on one government? It's time to pick up, move to France, and start the whole thing over, AIG. That racket's just too beautiful not to try again.

RJ Reynolds

What they get right: Continuing to sell cigarettes that are known to cause cancer while trying to excuse it by making half-assed anti-smoking ads? That's slimy with a capital S. And brilliant.

What needs work: Cigarettes are great and all, but why not develop something that kills people more quickly? Like,

maybe a little stick that sends thousands of tiny man-eating gorillas down someone's throat?

Walmart

What they get right: They have a beautiful vicious cycle in place. Wal-Mart comes in, undercuts everyone, and makes all the businesses close. So everyone has to get jobs at Walmart. Then, Walmart pays their employees so little that they can't possibly buy things anywhere else. Genius.

What needs work: It's hard to find fault in their evil plot, but maybe they could occasionally poison someone or something, you know, for the hell of it.

NewsCorp

What they get right: The company that owns the Fox networks and several right-wing newspapers manages to constantly criticize our trash culture while simultaneously contributing to it more than just about anyone else. Obviously, this is a plan to confuse the populace into submission.

What needs work: Couldn't you guys get a better spokesman for your world takeover plot than Glenn Beck?

Blizzard

What they get right: World of Warcraft was and remains the finest evil plot ever concocted. It makes people inert, suggestible and unproductive.

What needs work: Not a thing.