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## Details, Details, Details by Rodney Ruff

I had the opportunity to serve as editor for a collection of character write-ups as part of a joint project by the members of the *Haymaker!* APA I belonged to. Unfortunately, the project didn't see the light of day, as hoped, but it did give me the chance to be part of something larger than myself, the chance to use the writing and editing skills I had developed on my regular job and apply them to something I loved. When I began working on the project, I sat down and read the write-ups as they had appeared originally in our APAzine, made notes, and then E-mailed a list of suggested changes to the writers.

When I began receiving revised write-ups and started to read them individually, I found that I hadn't read them as carefully the first time as I thought and went back to the individual authors with further suggestions and requests for clarification. Although I was looking for different things from each writer based on the character I was reviewing, there was one thing I was looking for from each of them.

More detail.

Whether it was adding a couple of Limitations to one character's Powers or asking what kind of sign language another character was conversant in, I wanted more details to make the characters more interesting to the people who were going to buy our book and use our material in their own adventures. I wanted the Powers and Disadvantages to be grounded in the characters, not just chosen for point balancing. I wanted the details that would show the statistics and the write-up to be integrated with each other – and I got them.

The need for detail isn't limited to published materials, however. The presence and presentation of details is key to making the elements of a good role-playing adventure – campaign world, story, and characters – live in the mind of the readers and players. The presence of detail communicates the elements the GM has created to the players and their characters, allowing them to feel a part of the campaign world.

A consistent attention to detail links the campaign world, story, and characters together into a strong, vibrant campaign that everyone is eager to take part in. The absence of detail, however, communicates a lack of effort and interest that the players will take their cue to do likewise from.

I call myself "The Man of Trivia," but that name goes well beyond just the memorization of obscure factual knowledge. I am by nature a person who pays attention to details, whether on the job or off of it. I appreciate a work of fiction like Asimov's Foundation series not just for its

encompassing view of the future history of mankind, but also for such individual elements as First Foundation's personal force-field generators, the Second Foundation's communication by gestures, and the Solarians' ability to perform telekinetic feats by manipulating thermal energy. I appreciate knowing that Asimov's all-human universe stems from Earth being the only planet with a sizable moon in orbit around it.

I also appreciate a well thought-out role-playing adventure and characters. Although the number of basic plots for an adventure is small, varying the details in the story can make each adventure based on that plot different from the others. The plot of victim getting revenge on those who wronged him forms the basis of the origin stories of both Batman and the Punisher, but the two men saw different scopes to their goals and chose different paths to meet those goals. Likewise, while characters may share similar powers and/or origins, they can often be distinctive characters in their own rights. Green Lantern's foes Evil Star and Black Hand each invented devices that gave them roughly the same powers as each other, but Evil Star sought to conquer planets, while Black Hand was content to commit crimes on a much smaller scale.

In this article, I will explain the importance of detail and how to incorporate it in both role-playing adventures and the characters used in them. I will cite examples from games I have run and played in, as well as use some of my editorial decisions as examples for putting detail into characters.

### The Importance of Detail

"I am a hero without fail.  
 I can't be bothered with such details."  
 — Underdog

That was how Underdog reacted when he thought he was too busy to help someone because he felt he had a more pressing duty to attend to. This usually brought an agitated reaction of "Details? Details?" from the person who asked for his help, after which Underdog would relent and do what was asked of him before returning to his other duties.

As the GM in a role-playing game, however, you *have* to be bothered with the details. You have to know all of the details that can be part of your adventure, decide which ones are relevant, and determine the best way to present those details to your players.

## CONVERTING THIS SCENARIO TO TEEN CHAMPIONS

Converting this scenario to *Teen Champions* is very easy. Simply replace St. Swithins academy with the PCs school, unless they belong to a Superhero Specific Academy, in which case the scenario can be run as written.

In this version, the girls are the long-term nemeses of the PCs, and grow in power with them, starting at as low a power level as the PCs do. It will start with low level pranks, and grow into something far, far worse. Woe to the poor heroine on the cheerleading squad! Save the final battle for prom night or graduation during Senior Year. Can the heroes get back in time after saving the day?

## CONVERTING TO FANTASY HERO

In *Fantasy Hero*, Calendar Girl becomes a sorcerer, the dwarf remains the same in most Norse Fantasy settings, Hound becomes a werewolf, Snow Tiger becomes a Weretiger, and the Model becomes a powerful warrior renowned for her beauty. Gianni Orlande becomes the head of the local thieves' guild, and Das Blitzkrieg becomes a greedy storm wizard.



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# Chains of Doom

by Michael Satran

“Not all that tempts your wand’ring eyes,  
And heedless hearts, is lawful prize,  
Nor all that glisters, gold...”  
— Thomas Grey

## Adventure Background

Long ago, in the kingdom of the Holy Roman Empire, there lived a young woman who was the greatest weaver in the known world. Rumor had it that she could spin straw into gold, and unfortunately, the King of the Holy Roman Empire took her literally, for she was becoming one of the richest weavers in Europe. As the story is usually told, the King demanded of her that she spin straw into gold for him, and the helpless girl did not know what to do. The weaver was visited by a wicked dwarf, who told her that he would give her the ability to spin the straw into gold, if only she would give up her firstborn child. The girl, helpless and terrified, reluctantly agreed. The King and the weaver fell in love, and married, and the poor helpless queen was pregnant. Eventually, the queen’s fairy godmother appeared, telling her how to banish the wicked dwarf, by speaking his name, and hurling him into the black pits from whence he came. The time had come, and she spoke his name, and the dwarf was hurled back into the netherworld through a horrifying black crack in the Earth. Most children have heard this story before...

But that isn’t what happened at all...

In truth, Alberich, the wicked dwarf smith of Nephilheim, wished to bring ill to the humans of the world, seeking revenge for the indignities heaped upon him by Wotan and other Norse deities, and sought out those with exceptional skills and talents, that he might acquire their children, or have them himself, and use those children to wreak havoc with Wotan’s favorite people, humanity. He wandered the world, seeking out people in desperate need of his aid, and his powerful earth magic. When he found the weaver to be queen, he hoped that the child would be his, and that his power over those children would grow with the power of their bloodlines. However, his power wasn’t in their blood. It was in the straw that the weaver had spun into gold. The beautiful mortals and nymphs who taunted him would be punished, the curse of the gold of Nephilheim upon all who coveted it. And so, banished, Alberich waited, as the gold changed hands from ruler to ruler. Eventually, the last king of the Hollenzollherns (Pronounced Horn-zorn) gave way to the Weimar Republic, and

the Weimar Republic to the Nazi regime. In the closing days of World War II, the supervillain Das Blitzkrieg acquired the gold, and carried it to the campaign city under an assumed name, where he locked it in a safety deposit box, a safety deposit box that was never opened, paying the local Mafia to conceal the gold for him until he was ready to come for it.

Alberich could sense his gold, but was unable to find a way out of Nephilheim. Though the black elves of Nephilheim and his dwarven brethren struggled mightily, there was no way to lift the spell of banishment until someone else spoke his name. Until a small group of high school girls, playing with a Ouija board, decided to try and contact the characters from old fairy tales.

From the very stone of the earth, Alberich was free. And one by one, he approached the girls, and asked them what they wanted. They wanted magic powers, they said jokingly. They wanted to be paranormals. Alberich laughed, and began brewing potions and alchemy to grant their wishes. All they had to do was retrieve the gold from the safety deposit boxes, and perhaps give him some other favors to be named later, and they would receive gifts beyond price. Alberich changed them into the superbeings they imagined they would be like: The furry and clawed Snow Tiger, the vicious dog-girl Hound, the ubiquitous and clever Calendar Girl, and the super-strong “The Model.” Alberich knew he would be much more powerful once he had his gold back, and turned the gold to straw. He did not think that it would last forever. He did not think the girls would either. But as long as they did, the world would pay for mocking his stout brutish form. And the humans would pay for the sins of the Gods....

## Notes for the GM

This adventure is designed for five or six PCs built on 200+150 in disadvantages, otherwise, you may have to adjust the level of the villains by giving them more skill levels or raising their overall power level. It can easily be inserted into any campaign. The plot works best if the heroes are members of a public team, but can easily be reworked for members of a more secretive superteam. All parts of the adventure with the exception of the finale are somewhat interchangeable, in order to allow the GM flexibility and the ability to deal with unexpected actions by the Player Characters.

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