HOW DOES IT FIT TOGETHER?

Once you've got all these ideas firmly in mind (which can take a while), the structure of Capes is simple. The story is told in Scenes, which are arbitrary divisions of "Let's do something here, with these characters, for a while". For instance, a scene at a bank, with some heroes and some villains, is probably a robbery. Every player gets at least one character in each scene. Sometimes they play heroes, sometimes they play villains, sometimes they play bystanders.

In each Scene there are Goals on the table: "Break into the vault", "Hurt Hostages", "Arrest Magnetron", "Impress Ace Reporter Sheila Star" and so on. Each Goal has two sets of dice, one in favor of it succeeding, one in favor of it failing. When the Goal resolves, whichever side has the highest total on their dice triumphs. Either the Goal succeeds or it fails.

But, of course, people want to change the values on those dice. They get Actions in order to do this. The Actions are organized into Pages. So a Scene is split up into Pages, and every Page each character gets an Action. They may use this Action to declare a new Goal ("Hey, I just realized that I'm trying to convince Taurus to turn on his heroic allies and join us villains! Let's make that a Goal!") Or, if they would rather, they may use one of their Abilities (like "Super-strength", "Escape without a Scratch", or "Obnoxious") to roll one of the dice that are out on the Goals. This lets them drive the values on their preferred side up, or drive the values on the opposing side down.

I CAN'T LET HIM KILL PEGGY-SUE... I JUST *CAN'T!*

Taken as a whole, players actions let them gain control of the Goals that mean most to them, often at the expense of Goals that matter less. In the bank robbery example above, for instance, the heroes have to decide whether it's more important to succeed in arresting the villain, or to thwart his plan to harm the hostages. They may very well not get to do both.

Players show what is important to them and their characters by deciding what to act on. They also show what is important by Staking Debt for or against Goals. Debt is a resource (measured in chips or other tokens) that the characters gain each time they use their super-powers. It is, in essence, their moral responsibility to prove that they are worthy of their powers. As such it is both a resource and a penalty. Staking it on a Goal makes it much easier to win that Goal (since heroes and villains are always more powerful when acting in accord with their principles). But having too much will make it hard to be effective (as the character is assailed with self-doubt).

Actions and Stakes together make it easy to tell when a Goal is grabbing the interest of the play group. An interesting Goal will have piles of debt, and high dice totals. An uninteresting one will have no debt, and a low total. And, again, there is no Game Master. Players are rewarded for taking on that role by earning Story Tokens (useful for lots of things later in the game) whenever they are on the losing side of a Goal that is important to other players. In short, players get rewarded for being defeated by a morally vested character. So they are encouraged to challenge other characters in ways that play to their moral stature.

LET'S GIVE IT A WHIRL

So you've read the first two pages, and decided you want to introduce your group of players to Capes? Great! That's the only solid way to see whether it will really work for your group. The patterns that make Capes what it is emerge in play, so what you need to do is to get them playing, even before you're done explaining the rules.

This will put you in a position that's unknown in long-term Capes play. There is no Game Master in the Capes rules, no single player who is privileged over any others. But for the sake of getting your group playing quickly you will take the lead on imparting the rules and providing adversity. You will, in short, be doing many of the things that a Game Master does in other games, until the other players learn enough to take an equal part in doing so.

So this document is written to give you the tools to boss people around and tell them what to do. And if you want to call the shots, you have to do some preparatory work. Gather the equipment in the box to the right.

And last, but certainly not least, you need to cut out a whole batch of Click And Lock modules. Go to the Downloads section of the Capes website:

http://www.museoffire.com/Games/

... and start printing. You can either print the entire Click and Lock PDF, or you can use the Flash character generator to create sheets with just the modules you think will be most interesting to the players in your game. But you should have enough for every player to make several characters. Cut them out along the curvy, hard-to-cut lines, and then you're ready to play.

> A package of 3x5 cards, for writing and tracking Goals
>
> A lot of dice, the six-sided sugar-cube variety, in two distinct colors (assumed to be "red" and "blue" for the rest of this document)
>
> A bunch of poker chips, or some other appropriate "token" for Debt.
>
> Pencils or pens