

The League Of Senseless Superheroes

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By Clint Ladd

INTRODUCTION

The League of Senseless Superheroes is a tragicomedy freeform larp for 3-5 people and a Game Master (GM) that lasts approximately 2 hours, including character creation and debrief. It follows a group of budding heroes with unconventional superpowers, as they try to convince a talent evaluator that the mega superhero contracting firm, HeroCorp, needs to hire them.

BACKGROUND

In a parallel universe, superpowers exist. And one company controls a majority share of this precious resource—HeroCorp. HeroCorp is the primary contractor of superhuman support to governments around the world. They are akin to the National Football League and a defense contractor all rolled into one. Their founder won a World Peace Prize. Their heroes have massive endorsement deals with shoe companies, toy companies, nutrition companies, and the like. Everyone wishes they could work for HeroCorp.

The corporate headquarters of HeroCorp is in Metropolyplex, which is the largest city in the world. Because of this, anyone with even a shred of superhuman ability flecks to the city in the hopes of getting noticed by the mega corporation. This results in a larger than normal concentration of somewhat super-powered people who don't quite make it to the big leagues and turn to crime in order to survive in the unforgiving big city. Ironically, only then do they draw the attention of HeroCorp. Currently, a villain called "Professor Boom" has rallied these rejects to terrorize the city.

Within this context we find the protagonists of our game. You all play a group of people with "unusual" (*some* might even say senseless) superpowers, who recently decided to team-up against the "forces of darkness," by creating a start-up superhero firm. Luckily, one of the members of your group had access to part of their trust fund, so this was actually possible. However, that trust fund is now gone and fiscal realities are starting to catch-up to your firm. What you all secretly hope, though, is to be hired by HeroCorp and become rock stars of the superhero world.

ROLES

The game supports from 3-5 superhero players and GM, who also plays the roles of the *Talent Evaluator* and the *Messenger*. The roles are as follows:

- **HeroCorp Talent Evaluator (GM):** Given a sudden and pressing need for new warm bodies at HeroCorp, the *Talent Evaluator* has been sent throughout the entire godforsaken city to interview EVERY. SINGLE. HACK. claiming to have superpowers. The *Talent Evaluator* is corporate, patronizing, uninterested. They have interviewed countless "superheroes" and have pre-determined that the characters do not measure up to HeroCorp standards. This role only appears in Scene III.
- **The Messenger (GM):** In Scene IV, the *Messenger* delivers a newspaper and a letter to the hero characters.
- **The Radiological Accident:** This character was exposed to a radiological source at a young age, which caused them to develop powers.
- **The Mutant:** This character is the child of two superheroes and was born with powers.
- **The Technologically Advanced Rich Kid:** This character was left with massive amounts of money after the death of their parents. Only a portion of the funds currently can be accessed via a trust fund. And most of that money has been spent creating super-powered technology and opening the start-up hero firm.
- **The Laboratory Experiment:** This character was the subject of several experiments that altered them.
- **The Lucky Recipient:** This character found something special that bestowed power upon them.

CHARACTER CREATION

Character creation is in the form of an interactive story, similar to *Mad Libs*. Players will be given a character template, which they will complete by filling-in blanks with requested nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. (see *Attachment 1*). The resulting story will help outline the character's powers, background, and appearance. If the combination created does not work, for whatever reason, the player may opt to replace a word or words with new ones of their choosing. However, changes should be kept to a minimum. The heroes are meant to be unusual or even silly.

GAME MECHANICS

The following mechanics may be used throughout the game:

- **Super Powers:** Players should create specific motions that represent each of their powers. If a power is ever used in game, the player should use the motion and concurrently narrate in detail how the power affects the environment.
- **Thought Projector:** At any time during the job interview in Scene III, the *Talent Evaluator* can request the superheroes to show a past memory through the use of a "Thought Projector." This triggers a flashback scene. The designated superhero should walk to a location designated for flashbacks and point to other heroes to join, as appropriate. Those heroes may either play themselves or other characters in the flashback, per the instructions of the person whose flashback it is.
- **Monologues:** In Scene IV, each superhero will be prompted to perform a monologue. This means the players must give a speech describing their character's inner thoughts regarding the current situation. During a monologue, all players should freeze except the person speaking. To signal this, the words "**Time Freeze**" should be stated. Once the monologue is finished, the player should then state "**Time Resumes.**"
- **"OK" Check-in:** As needed, players should flash the "OK" sign in intense scenes to ask another player if they are fine. A thumbs-up response means good. A thumbs down or a flat, shaky palm means to stop the scene and discuss.

WORKSHOP

After character creation, but prior to starting the larp, the group should consider performing one or more of the following workshop activities:

- **Name Associations:** The players should stand in a circle. Each person should then state their superhero name and perform the body movement that represents their super power.
- **Ball of Yarn:** The players should remain in their circle. They should then pass a ball of yarn around/across the circle. Every time a player gives the yarn to another person, they should describe their hero's relationship/tie with that character. Character ties can be either positive or negative. Keep doing this until every person has 2 ties.
- **Costume Creation:** Optionally, players can choose to make homemade superhero costumes together prior to the larp. For instance, pieces of fabric can be cut for capes, t-shirts can be painted with logos, etc. Alternatively, the players can draw their superhero characters.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLAY

The game is divided into 4 scenes and an epilogue:

- **Scene I: The Formation of the Team**
This scene is to allow the characters to get to know each other. It recreates the first day everyone met. The premise is that the *Technologically Advanced Rich Kid* used their trust fund to start a superhero firm and the other heroes are responding to that character's

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add in the newspaper. The scene should consist of each hero, in turn, arriving at the *Technologically Advanced Rich Kid's* "base" and introducing them self. But beyond that, each character feels the need to "show-off" in order to get accepted to the team. As such, the scene should initially be played like the improv game called "Party Quirks," whereby the characters portray their powers without actually saying what they are. It is the job of the *Technologically Advanced Rich Kid* to guess each character's powers. Eventually, characters should discuss the organization/functioning of the team, team roles, the base, character backgrounds, etc. Finally, the *Technologically Advanced Rich Kid* should introduce the idea that HeroCorp is looking for talented superhero teams. The scene will end once this final topic is discussed.

– **Scene II: Hero Training**

In Scene II, the characters should practice using their superpowers in order to improve their abilities and learn how to work as a team. The characters should explore creative ways to use their powers, both individually and in combination with one another. This should also involve sparring (though players should refrain from physical contact, unless negotiated).

– **Scene III: The HeroCorp Interview**

Scene III should be played in a large room where half the room can be used for the interview and half the room can be used to recreate flashback scenes. The interview room should consist of chairs placed in a circle or around a table. The flashback room should be an open space.

Roleplay during the act will feature the HeroCorp *Talent Evaluator* arriving at the heroes' firm to conduct a group job interview with the superheroes. The *Talent Evaluator* should ask each of the heroes various stereotypical job interview questions (examples: <https://www.thebalance.com/top-job-interview-questions-2061228>). The tone should be corporate and a bit tense. Players should react and answer appropriately to what's being asked of them.

Additionally, the *Talent Evaluator* should prompt characters to perform one or more flashbacks by asking them to answer a question using the "Thought Projector" device. When this happens, the *Talent Evaluator* will hand a hero a Thought Projector prop. The designated hero then should proceed to narrate and act out the requested scene in the flashback portion of the play space. If another character is needed during the story, the flashback narrator should speak a role and point at another person. That person should then leave their chair and enter the story—roleplaying any actions the narrator describes. When the flashback is over, the hero should return the Thought Projector prop to the *Talent Evaluator*. At some point, the *Talent Evaluator* also should use the Thought Projector to initiate a simulated duel between heroes.

Once the *Talent Evaluator* completes the interview, the superheroes will be informed of the results. The *Talent Evaluator* will then leave. The scene should end after the superheroes have a chance to react to the hiring decision that was given.

– **Scene IV: The Interview Aftermath**

Scene IV will start with the delivery of a newspaper (Attachment 2) by the *Messenger*, who then promptly leaves. After the superheroes have had an opportunity to respond to the newspaper, the *Messenger* will reappear and deliver a letter from HeroCorp (Attachment 3). At this point, the characters will be instructed to provide a monologue of their current thoughts. The scene will end once the HeroCorp letter has been

delivered and the characters have made a final group decision regarding how to react to it.

– **Epilogue**

This short scene allows each character an opportunity to share what the future held for them. The hero that died also may offer their final thoughts, based on a Thought Projector recording found in the rubble.

OPTIONAL COSTUMES AND PROPS

- **Thought Projector:** headbands or wristbands are suggested
- Newspaper Article (see *Attachment 2*)
- Offer Letter from HeroCorp (see *Attachment 3*)
- **Talent Evaluator:** business attire, brief case, business cards, company freebies, and a notepad with pen
- **Messenger:** any casual attire
- **Superheroes:** Homemade, silly costumes, consisting of things like hand-painted t-shirts, colored underwear worn over the top of tights, fabric capes tied around the neck, etc.
- Suggested playlist for before and after each scene: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzylxUoDqiEwwke2IZdRofery7zrkxlgp>

Warning! Spoilers ahead! This section is intended for the GM.

GAME MASTER INSTRUCTIONS

- **Pre-Game**
 - Print the rules
 - Read or provide the players the *Background, Roles, Character Creation, Game Mechanics, and Instructions for Play* sections.
 - Ask each player to choose a superhero character in the *Roles* section. Alternatively, the characters can be randomly assigned.
 - Cut out and provide a character template to each player. Follow the character creation instructions to complete each superhero's background story.
 - Perform one or more workshop activities, as preferred.
- **Scene III Instructions:** After the interview, the *Talent Evaluator* should notify the players that HeroCorp is looking for different qualities than they possess. Just as the *Talent Evaluator* is about to leave, however, they should receive a phone call from HeroCorp informing them of how dire the situation is. After the phone call, the *Talent Evaluator* will change their tune and inform the players that HeroCorp has decided to hire one of them, but the players must choose who gets the job. The scene ends once one character (no more, no less) is chosen.
- **Scene IV Instructions:** The GM should inform the "chosen" hero that they died shortly after joining HeroCorp and will not be in the scene. HeroCorp sent them on a suicide mission to act as bait, while other heroes took Professor Boom by surprise and won fame and glory.
- **Insider Information:**
 - A villain named Professor Boom has gathered reject heroes together and is waging a war against HeroCorp. Many of these reject heroes hold grudges against HeroCorp for perceived mistreatment. As a result of the war, HeroCorp has taken heavy losses (which they are hiding) and is hurting. Also, there has been collateral damage, which has caused excitement with the media and public. However, the general public doesn't realize yet that the attacks are directed specifically against HeroCorp.
 - HeroCorp wants to use the hired hero as bait for Professor Boom.
- **Post-Game:** It is recommended that the GM facilitate a debriefing to solicit feedback, discuss memorable interactions, and talk through any troubling aspects of the game.

ATTACHMENT 1: CHARACTER TEMPLATES

Instructions: Cut out the following superhero templates and distribute one to each player. Without fully reading the template, the player should fill in the blanks with words provided by another player who wants to portray that hero. Then give the description to that player. After all players have completed and received a superhero template, they can read their completed background stories and character descriptions aloud.

Please note, these heroes are intended to be a bit silly/pointless. However, if the combination of words that were inserted into the paragraph does not work, for whatever reason, the player may choose to replace one or more words with new ones of their choosing. Changes should be kept to a minimum, though.

The Radiological Accident

While your friends call you _____ (First Name) _____, the rest of the world knows you as _____ (Title for a Person) _____ (Adjective) _____!! Once a normal kid, your life changed when you were inadvertently exposed to a radioactive _____ (Real or Fictitious Organism) _____. Now you can _____ (Silly Verb) _____ better than everyone! You're also quite proud of your ability to shoot _____ (Non-Solid Substance) _____ from your _____ (Body Part) _____. Known for your _____ (Adjective) _____ (Facial Feature) _____ and your _____ (Color) _____ and _____ (Color) _____ costume with the _____ (Adjective) _____ (Article of Clothing) _____, it's your time to glow... as long as your enemies don't discover your weakness to _____ (Plural Noun) _____.

The Mutant

While your friends call you _____ (First Name) _____, the rest of the world knows you as _____ (Title for a Person) _____ (Adjective) _____!! You were born with _____ (Real or Fictitious Animal) _____ powers, as the love child of _____ (Adjective) _____ Man and _____ (Adjective) _____ Woman. However, to keep your secret from their arch enemies, your parents gave you to a _____ (Profession) _____, who raised you as her own. At first you thought you were "normal," but once you hit puberty, you learned you could _____ (Something an animal does) _____ better than everyone! You're also quite proud of your super _____ (Adjective) _____ (Body Part) _____. Known for your _____ (Adjective) _____ (Facial Feature) _____ and your _____ (Color) _____ and _____ (Color) _____ costume with the _____ (Adjective) _____ (Article of Clothing) _____, it's your time to go beast mode on supervillains... just hope they don't discover your weakness to _____ (Plural Noun) _____.

The Technologically-Advanced Rich Kid

While your friends call you _____ (First Name) _____, the rest of the world knows you as the _____ (Title for a Person) _____ (Adjective) _____!! You were born into the life of luxury, but tragically, your wealthy parents were killed by a _____ (Noun) _____ when you were just a child. With limited supervision, all that money, and a love of comic books, what else would you do but develop technology that allows you to _____ (Silly Verb) _____ better than everyone! You're particularly proud of your _____ (Adjective) _____ (Tool/Device/Sports Equipment) _____. Known for your _____ (Adjective) _____ (Facial Feature) _____ and your _____ (Color) _____ and _____ (Color) _____ costume with the _____ (Adjective) _____ (Article of Clothing) _____, it's your time to go gadget on the world... But beware your weakness to _____ (Plural Noun) _____.

The Laboratory Experiment

While your friends call you _____ (First Name) _____, the rest of the world knows you as the _____ (Title for a Person) _____ (Adjective) _____!! You always knew what you wanted to do with your life—become a hero! So at the age of 18, you responded to a restroom flier looking for test subjects to try a new serum guaranteed to unlock your hidden potential. However, the techniques used were more extreme than you imagined. After reporting to an abandoned warehouse, "doctors" in blood- and dirt-stained aprons injected you with massive doses of chemicals, including _____ (Chemical/Liquid) _____ and _____ (Chemical/Liquid) _____. Now you can _____ (Silly Verb) _____ better than everyone! You're also quite proud of the new bionic _____ (Body Part) _____ that was installed. It works *most* of the time. Known for your _____ (Adjective) _____ (Facial Feature) _____ and your _____ (Color) _____ and _____ (Color) _____ costume with the _____ (Adjective) _____ (Article of Clothing) _____, it's time to demonstrate the marvels of science... as long as your enemies don't discover your new, severe allergy to _____ (Plural Noun) _____.

The Lucky Recipient

While your friends call you _____ (First Name) _____, the rest of the world knows you as the _____ (Title for a Person) _____ (Adjective) _____!! You stumbled across an ancient and mystical _____ (Noun) _____ that bestowed a gift upon you. Now you can _____ (Silly Verb) _____ better than everyone! You also have the ability to conjure _____ (Plural Noun) _____ out of thin air. Known for your _____ (Adjective) _____ (Facial Feature) _____ and your _____ (Color) _____ and _____ (Color) _____ costume with the _____ (Adjective) _____ (Article of Clothing) _____, it's time to put your luck to the test... However, don't forget the magical contract you signed that said to avoid _____ (Plural Noun) _____.

