

THE HENCH UNION LARP

Twelve days ago, the henchfolk of renowned supervillain Professor Von Doctor voted to unionize. PVD threatened to fire everyone if they tried, so they stole one of his doomsday devices and demanded a contract negotiation.

Today's the day. Time to bargain.

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Content warnings: *abusive work environments and relationships, flesh-eating fish, doomsday.*

You Will Need

- 4-6 players
- ~90 minutes
- A copy of The Issues for everyone (page 2)
- Private character sheets for everyone (pages 3-4)
- Two private spaces to talk in (maybe Discord channels or physical rooms), one of which to double as a space for the whole group.

Before Play

Gather together, get familiar with the premise of the game, review the content warnings, and know you might be asked to play as a character whose views you dislike. Confirm that everyone's on board to play.

Review the safety tools your group has chosen to use. A solid list of tools can be found [here](#), at the Big Bad Con site. I recommend using at minimum:

- A tool for people to slow or stop play as needed, such as Cut/Brake.
- The Door is Always Open: if you need to leave, you are welcome to do so.
- A tool for checking in on how other people are doing, such as the [OK Check-In](#).
- Most importantly, people are more important than the game. Don't be a jerk.

If playing digitally, one person should be prepared to screenshot and send character sheets to people privately. If that's you, do your best not to read the sheets ahead of time.

Character Selection

Introduce the characters, and decide who will play who. The characters are:

- (Management) Professor Von Doctor, supervillain
- (Management) Merv, lawyer / accountant
- (Union) Fran, young hot-shot
- (Union) Greer, seasoned pragmatist
- (Union, 5+ players only) Ollie, piranha caretaker
- (Union, 6 players only) Sal, worry-wort

Gameplay

Separate into private groups for the union and company. Take 15 minutes to introduce yourselves and decide on an initial offer for the other side (i.e. for the union, a list of demands that if enacted would let you feel good about getting back to work). Be specific.

The union must also elect someone to be the union's representative during group meetings. Merv is the company's rep.

Next, come together for your first group meeting. Each side presents its offer. (Conventionally, only Reps talk during these meetings.) If everyone agree on a proposal, it's accepted, and the game is over. Otherwise, break again into separate groups and devise new proposals.

While separate, a side can detonate their doomsday device:

- It takes the union four votes to detonate, minus one vote per group meeting held.
- PVD can detonate unilaterally; Merv has no say.

If a doomsday device is detonated, the game is over.

Once both sides have revised proposals, come together, present your new offers, and repeat.

At any time, anyone may invite anyone to speak privately by text, Discord DMing, side-barring in a hallway, or whatever.

During play, players might invent details about their characters, their lives, or the world around them. Assume any such invented fiction is true as long as players are cool with it.

The Issues

Leading up to negotiations, the bargaining committee surveyed membership about what issues are important to them and created this list. This is a list of high priority issues, per the results of that survey, along with rough sentiment about each issue and a few additional facts.

1

Wages

Union membership wants annual cost of living raises. Notable facts:

- Inflation is exactly 2% annually (thanks to the nefarious schemes of the Attacktuary).
- Union dues are 4% of a member's salary once a contract is in place.

2

Uniforms

Union membership wants a uniform redesign. Most think the current uniforms are uncomfortable and embarrassing. Membership would also like uniforms to be laundered on-site rather than having to take them home to wash.

Superhero Bounty System

Currently, to incentivise henchpersons to help in the event of a superhero attack, PVD has instituted a "bounty" system that pays a \$5,000 bonus to any employee who downs or "significantly hinders" an intruder. Membership does not like this policy, but is unclear on what they'd like to replace it with.

3

Parking

Union membership would like for on-site parking to be complimentary, and for the giant super-intelligent lobster currently living in the parking garage to be ousted.

4

Professor Von Doctor

The legend himself. Owner of the largest skull lair in the midwest. You've given your henchmen everything. Sick outfits. Incineration rays. Even *health insurance*. And still they turn on you? Ingrates.

But also, without them, who would pull your levers and push your buttons, care for your many mutant plants, and take bullets for you while you escape? You're certainly not going back to the boring "take readings" part of super-science.

You have unlimited cash and a comparable amount of pride. Bribe, threaten, and harangue employees to get what you want (*though respect the players playing them*). Talk during group meetings. Don't listen to your buzzkill lawyer / accountant. Remind your underlings why working here is great. Failing that, threaten to detonate your doomsday device.

But don't actually do so. Dying would stink more than a wounded pride. Probably.

Here are your thoughts on the main issues:

Wages: You could pay them more, but you shouldn't have to. At least get their raises less than union dues so they resent the union.

Superhero Bounty System: This is a great system that you devised yourself. It has no flaws. Any implication otherwise is a personal attack on you.

Uniforms: See Superhero Bounty System. These look amazing.

Parking: You haven't been down to the parking lot since the 80s, so whatever trouble people are having down there is their fault. You could make parking free, but why would you?

Note: Portraying an asshole doesn't mean you should be an asshole. You especially should liberally use safety tools to check in on your peers.

Merv Underhill

You are Professor Von Doctor's buzzkill lawyer slash accountant. Your thankless job for the past several decades has been to try and keep the runaway freight train of PVD's villainous schemes under budget. You are paid very well. It is very hard to succeed, and you often do not. PVD's coffers don't run as deep as he thinks.

For each of the main issues, you care about one thing and one thing only: cost. Keep it down.

Wages: Keep them down. Ideally below 2% annually, and below 4% if you're any good at your job.

Superhero Bounty System: The current system is great because it never pays out any money.

Uniforms: A redesign would be a large expense, but a one time thing you could manage. Laundering uniforms on site would be a permanent increase in costs, and therefore much worse.

Parking: Whatever. You make pennies on parking. They can have their parking.

4+

Fran Blobwell

You are a relatively new henchperson. Your duties include lever pulling, button mashing, and widget farming.

You were the first organizer for a union, and this fight has been the greatest accomplishment of your life. Without the lot of you, who around here is going to watch for superheroes, care for the mutant plants, and do the boring “take readings” part of super-science? Not PVD. He needs you more than you need him.

Also, it’s not that you *want* to detonate a doomsday device. It’s just, what a way to go out. Stick it to the man. You’d be legends.

Besides the default positions on issues, you believe the following:

Superhero Bounty System: Everyone should get hazard pay when a superhero invades. You’re all putting your health on the line; you should all be rewarded.

5+

Ollie Downspout

Decades: that’s how much longer you’ve been here than anyone else. Someone’s always had to feed the flesh-eating mutant piranha in the lair’s various moats, and that someone is Ollie Downspout.

Instead of the default positions on issues, you believe...

Moat Piranha: They eat the walls, they eat each other, they even nip at you. They were bioengineered so a handful of them could take a person apart in minutes, so what do we need truckloads of them for? It’s not fair to them, and it’s not fair to you.

These kids want to unionize, and to that you say great, as long as it can get you the on thing you’ve been asking for all this time: fewer piranha in the moats.

Everything else sounds fine, whatever.

4+

Greer Porter

You are a seasoned henchperson with a couple years under your belt. You run the henchfolk equipment locker.

Unionizing is tough. You were part of the effort under Colonel Panic a few years back. It did not go well—half of your former co-workers are still learning to breathe through their new gills. Plus, a lot of the folks here can’t go a month without a job. They have families to support and rent to pay. They need health insurance.

So it’s not that you’re against the efforts here, it’s just that you know better than all these kids you work with what the stakes are.

Besides the default positions on issues, you believe the following:

Parking: The giant super-intelligent lobster is definitely in there because Fran feeds it lunch every day. You don’t have proof, but you’re sure it would leave if Fran would just cut it out.

6

Sal Durmot

You are a mid-tier henchperson. You mostly turn dials.

You don’t like this whole union thing. We’re supposed to get better conditions by... threatening doomsday? We’d never go through with it. And what’s to keep PVD, a supervillain, from just firing everyone? You can’t afford health insurance without this job.

Plus, things are basically fine. It’s not like you enjoy late nights cleaning up the victims of escaped experiments, but it’s a living.

That’s why, when word got around about the union, you gave PVD a heads up. You thought he deserved to know. The rest of the union doesn’t know, and they’d be livid if they found out. But maybe that favor will buy you a little goodwill. Maybe *you* can keep *your* job.

All the default positions on issues sound great. You just have doubts about the union’s ability to get any of them.