MASKS

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With special thanks to C.M. Cline for writing "The 7-Sentence NPC" in DRAGON® Magazine #184 (August 1992), which inspired this book

In memory of Jack Vasel and Amber Blackburn

DEDICATIONS

John—To the characters whose lives I have shared over the years—time in your shoes gave me perspective on my life and helped me shape myself into the person I wanted to be.

Patrick—Dedicated to my wife Karen whom marrying was the best thing that I ever did, my daughter Calen for teaching me serenity, and my son Liam who is a character unto himself.

Walt—To my parents, who encouraged me to harness my creativity. Without their support, I may have missed out on an enjoyable and fascinating hobby. My contribution to *Masks* would not be possible without them.

Scott—I dedicate this book to all the characters in my life—from Dad, to Jennifer, Eric, and my game groups. None of my characters are you, I swear!

Matthew—To my wife, the best GM ever, and my daughter, whose imagination is limitless, and to the rest of the gnomes for being a positive influence on both my games and my projects list.

Martin—To my wife, Alysia, who puts up with my many quirks; my mom and dad, who raised a huge geek; and my daughter, Lark, who will grow up thinking that publishing books is normal.

Kurt—For my mother, who encouraged my gaming. For my non-gaming wife, who selflessly enables my gaming. For our children and all the players out there, here is a plaything that will never wear out.

Troy—To the Betty Boopster, my sounding board and anchor; and the Central Illinois Gamers Alliance, whose members bring their fantastic characters to life every Saturday morning.

Phil—To all the great characters that have inspired and entertained me in the games I have run and played: Alex, Arion, Erland, Drake, Gabe, Merik, Spenser, Owen, Tai-Nu, and Tessa. Thank you.

We'd also like to collectively dedicate this book to the readers of Gnome Stew and all of the GMs who bought our first book, *Eureka*. Without all of you, *Masks* wouldn't exist. You rock!

Contents

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Mastering
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When you portray a character, it's like putting on a mask: your mannerisms change, and your players perceive you differently in their imaginations. In this chapter, we'll show you how to put on the 1,000 "masks" in this book and how to deliver a performance your players will never forget.

This is a big book, but it's also designed to be as easy to use on the fly as it is during game prep: Just flip to any NPC page, read some or all of one entry, and you'll have enough information to play that NPC to the hilt. The template we designed for *Masks* makes it a breeze to use the book this way.

To help you get the most out of *Masks*, we've provided GMing advice, tips, tricks, and tools in the seven sections of this chapter: How to Use this Book, Anatomy of a *Masks* NPC, Adapting and Re-Skinning Characters, Making Your Characters Memorable, Genres, Traits, and The Invisible Keywords.

We wrote these characters, but it's you who will bring them to life, work them into your games, and hopefully use *Masks* for the rest of your GMing career.

How to Use This Book

If you want to dive in and start using *Masks: 1,000 Memorable NPCs for Any Roleplaying Game* right away, you can skip this chapter—this book is designed to be used on the fly, with no prep or delays. But if you're not in a hurry, you'll find a wealth of GMing advice, as well as information on how get the most out of *Masks*, in this chapter.

What Is a Mask?

When you portray a character in a roleplaying game, it's like putting on a mask. You act differently, assuming a persona to match the mask, and your players perceive you differently in their mind's eyes—just as if you were actually wearing a mask. This book provides 1,000 masks—a thousand vivid, memorable characters and the details you need to portray them convincingly to your players.

Finding the Perfect NPC

Whether you need a non-player character (NPC) right this hot minute or for next week's game night, we've made it easy for you to find the kind of character you're looking for. Here's how *Masks* NPCs are organized:

- **Genre:** Characters in *Masks* are divided into three intentionally broad genres: fantasy (334), sci-fi (333), and modern (333). Because the core elements of a great character have nothing to do with genre, you can use almost every character in this book in your game regardless of genre. Genre makes a good starting point, though, especially if you're in a hurry.

- **Role:** *Masks* NPCs fall into one of three general roles: villain, neutral, or ally. Villains are likely to be opposed to the PCs, while allies are inclined to be friendly or helpful to the party. Neutrals aren't positioned in relation to the PCs in the same way that villains and allies are, and make up the bulk of any campaign world. With a little tweaking, though, you can turn any neutral NPC into an ally or villain—which is why *Masks* is 50% neutrals, 25% villains, and 25% allies.

- **Traits:** Traits are brief descriptors like *beautiful*, *police*, and *charming*, and every NPC has at least two of them. Traits come in three general flavors—description, organization, and skill set—and all 47 traits are described in this chapter. You can also use the trait index (p. 319) to find NPCs with specific traits.

The Name Ribbon

If you need a name on the fly, or for inspiration, you can always pull one from any NPC entry in the book—but you can also use the "name ribbon" that appears at the bottom of every page in chapters 2, 3, and 4. Just flip to any page in the

chapter of the appropriate genre—fantasy for fantasy names, for example—and you'll find given names and nicknames on the left-hand, even-numbered pages and surnames and titles on the right-hand, odd-numbered pages.

The names in each chapter are drawn from the NPCs found in *Masks*, and by combining a given name and a surname you can quickly generate a complete name on the spot. Naming conventions vary widely from game to game, so you may find names you like in chapters outside of your campaign's genre, too—and with over 1,900 given names, surnames, and nicknames/titles in the name ribbon, there are a lot of names to choose from.

Abbreviations and Terminology

You'll find a handful of common abbreviations used throughout *Masks*:

- GM: Game Master
- PC: Player Character
- NPC: Non-Player Character
- RPG: Roleplaying Game

In writing *Masks*, we used the most universal terms for the person who runs the game ("GM" or "game master"), the events of one gaming session ("adventure") or a linked series of sessions ("campaign"), and the PCs ("party"). Some games use different terms, like "scenario" instead of adventure, but we're all talking about the same things.

We also used gender-neutral terminology wherever possible, like "actor" to refer to both male and female actors, rather than "actor" for men and "actress" for women. The only exception is the *outdoorsman* trait—we couldn't find an alternative term that was as elegant and efficient as "outdoorsman."

Gender and Ethnicity

Masks features 500 female and 500 male NPCs, following roughly the same population split as the real world. For layout reasons, you won't find strict male/female alternation from NPC to NPC, but the overall breakdown in each genre (and the whole book) is 50/50. The core elements of each NPC, however—their personality, motivations, quirks, and background—are almost entirely gender-neutral. You can use virtually any *Masks* NPC as a character of the opposite gender with little or no tweaking, apart from changing the pronouns.

Most *Masks* NPCs are described without making any specific reference to their ethnicity, or to their skin color, although we didn't explicitly avoid mentioning either element. This is intentional, as these characters are designed to be easy to fit into your game without a lot of work on your part. You can make them members of any ethnic group you like, or change any other aspect of these characters, to make them suit your game.

Race

100% of the NPCs in *Masks* are written as human characters. We took this approach because virtually every RPG includes humans, but not every RPG features characters of other races, like elves, orcs, gnomes, or sentient dolphins. We want this book to be as useful as possible to as many GMs as possible, and it's much easier to convert a human NPC to a character of another race than it is to go in the other direction. If you want to make any NPC in this book a member of another race, it's usually as simple as saying "She's an elf" or "He's a Martian" and making a cosmetic change or two. Your players will never know that the character was originally written as a human.

To provide inspiration for transforming *Masks* NPCs into members of other races, the artwork found throughout this book depicts both humans and non-humans. Every portrait in *Masks* illustrates a specific NPC, sometimes as written (as a human) and sometimes as a non-human.

Masks: A Table Book and a Prep Book

Masks is intended be used both as a "table book" and as a "prep book." A table book is a resource you can bring to every gaming session to refer to during play, while a prep book is one that you use primarily between sessions, when you're prepping for an adventure or a campaign. Many game mastering resources fill one role or the other; *Masks* fills them both.

If you want to use *Masks* on the fly, there's more than enough information in every NPC entry to enable you to portray a convincing, memorable character with zero prep. At the same time, not having pages and pages of information for each character makes it easy to bring these characters to life in a way that suits your game world—each NPC is a solid foundation for you to build on.

What's in the Book?

Here's what you'll find in each chapter of *Masks*.

Chapter 1: GMing Advice

In the first section of this chapter, **Anatomy of a Masks NPC**, you'll find a breakdown of the simple-yet-powerful template we use to describe every character in this book. We look at the common structure of each NPC in detail, and give you the tools you need to make the most of that format. You can also use our template in your campaign, adapting it to suit your GMing style.

Adapting and Re-Skinning Characters gives you the tools you need to turn a fantasy NPC into a modern one, a modern NPC into a sci-fi character, a sci-fi NPC into a fantasy one, and so forth. With relatively little work, you can use any NPC in this book with any genre, and in any RPG.

In **Making Your Characters Memorable**, we'll explore how to wring every drop of roleplaying goodness out of your NPCs. The best character is a memorable character, whether you love them or hate them. Your players will remember how your NPCs act, look, and interact with them, not how high their Strength scores are. We'll cover how to make your portrayals as vivid as possible in this section.

The **Genres** section offers a brief discussion of the three broad genres in *Masks* (fantasy, sci-fi, and modern), and touches on the sub-genres that fall under each larger genre.

In the **Traits** section, you'll find complete descriptions of all 47 traits used in *Masks*. Every NPC is described in shorthand by two or more traits, from *aggressive* to *dilettante* to *medic*, and you can look characters up by trait in the index (p. 319).

The Invisible Keywords rounds out the first chapter with a peek behind the curtain at the 83 personality keywords that were used as seeds to create every NPC in *Masks*. They don't appear in the NPC entries because, having served their purpose, they were no longer useful—but they can be a handy tool when you want to create an NPC of your own.

out of the book, without having read the entry beforehand, you can usually skip this section; if you're fleshing out a character in detail, you'll definitely want to read it.

TRAITS

Finally, each NPC entry includes two or more traits—short tags like *humorous*, *political*, and *pilot*—as well as a tag denoting the author of that character (in parentheses). Traits convey information in their own right, but they're primarily useful as a tool to find the kind of character you need. Every trait has its own entry in the index (p. 319), so you can easily locate characters that share that trait. Traits are also described in detail in the **Traits** section in this chapter.

INSPIRATION AND CONCISENESS

Masks was inspired by "The 7-Sentence NPC," an article by C.M. Cline in the August 1992 issue of DRAGON® *Magazine*, #184. Two decades on, this remains one of the best DRAGON® articles ever published—it's well worth tracking down. As you might guess from the title, it lays out a template for describing NPCs in just seven sentences, using one sentence apiece in categories like Occupation & History, Attributes & Skills, and Distinguishing Feature.

Both our approach and C.M. Cline's share the mission of providing a lot of useful, inspiring information about a character in as little space as possible. Both templates constrain character length, as well—ours by word count, C.M. Cline's by sentences—and that constraint is important. Without a hard limit on how long each entry can be, it's easy to find yourself writing a three-page NPC background that turns out to be all but useless as a reference during play.

Having a constrained length for each entry avoids this problem, forcing you as the GM (and us, as authors) to find efficient, expressive, and concise ways of conveying a lot about a character in a small space. Movies do this all the time: They introduce a new character in such a way that, in one brief scene, you get a pretty complete picture of what that person is like, what they want, and what they're all about.

Combine that with the structure that comes from having to complete every element of the *Masks* template—which forces you to think about the character from multiple angles, and to really consider what makes them stand out—and you have a powerful tool for creating your own NPCs. It might seem difficult to use a template like this at first, since you have to fight the instinct to always write more—but it works. We hope you'll put our template to use when creating characters in your home game.

ADAPTING AND RE-SKINNING CHARACTERS

Even with 1,000 characters to choose from, it's still possible that you won't find an exact match for your game. We understand that your game is unique, and with a few simple tricks you can alter any of the characters in *Masks* to create a custom character to fit your needs. We like to refer to these tricks as "re-skinning." Much like a video game uses skins over a polygonal wireframe model to create its visuals, you can customize any *Masks* character with the "skin" of your choice.

There are three easy ways to re-skin a *Masks* character:

- Change the character's genre
- Convert the character from human to non-human
- Polarize the character—replace one of the NPC's traits with its polar opposite

These methods take no more than a few minutes to employ, and with enough practice, you will be able to use them on the fly. Let's tackle them in order.
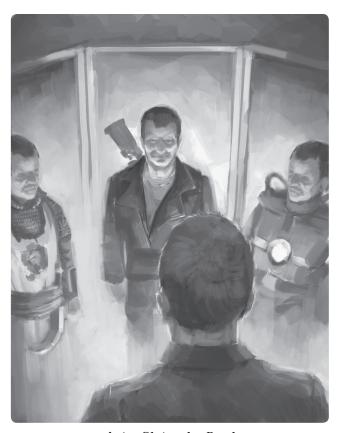
GENRE: EXPLAINING THE "HOW"

The three genres that are covered in *Masks*—fantasy, modern, and sci-fi—represent just a few of many possibilities for the setting of your game. Each genre is such a unique and wonderful animal that it may be hard to imagine that a character written for one genre can be used in another with just a few minor tweaks. Yet changing the genre of a character is the easiest of these three tricks to apply. You just need to understand what it is that the genre provides in your game: Genre explains how things are accomplished within the game world.

Let's take a simple premise, like a ranged attack, and modify it to fit each of the three broad genres in *Masks*. In the fantasy genre, a crossbow could explain how a character might have a ranged attack. In a modern game, that same attack could be accomplished using a pistol. The ranged attack might be in the form of a ray gun in a sci-fi adventure. None of these devices need a great deal of explanation as to how they work within their associated genre—each one sufficiently, and simply, explains how a ranged attack can be made in that genre.

Now we need to take a step back and apply that same logic to the characters in a game. Characters fulfill different roles within the game world. To convert a *Masks* character from one genre to another, you just need to identify the role they filled in their original genre, and then re-skin the character with the equivalent role in your game.

For example, "constable" is a common role in the fantasy genre. The constable walks the streets of the town or village to prevent wrongdoing and to protect the locals. The items that the constable uses might be a simple club for intimidation purposes (and actual use against the more lively troublemakers) as well as some rope for restraining people when needed. Swap that club for a police baton and the rope for handcuffs, add a revolver and a badge, and now that fantasy constable character is the local beat cop in a modern game. Upgrade the baton to a stun rod, change the handcuffs to neural inhibitor restraints, and replace the revolver with a plasma pistol (but keep the badge), and that beat cop is now the security enforcer for Space Sector Seven in your sci-fi campaign.

It's that easy to change the genre of a *Masks* character. Identify the role the character was originally written to fill and an equivalent role in your game; then, identify what tools and traits need to be altered to fit the new genre. Change those tools and traits, and you're set.

Artist: Christopher Reach

SPECIES: A REFLECTION OF HUMAN NATURE

Fantasy games feature elves, dwarves, orcs, and goblins, just to name a few of the many species that are common to the genre. Sci-fi stories often focus on alien beings and highly advanced robots. Even a modern game can push the envelope with vampires, intelligent chimps that speak in sign language, and artificial intelligence. Obviously, many RPGs feature non-human characters—so why are all of the NPCs in *Masks* written as humans?

They're all written as humans because just as changing the genre of a character is a simple matter, it's also easy to switch a character from human to non-human. It's easy because all characters are reflections of humanity. Think of the non-human characters that are found in books, television, and film and you'll notice that many of them exhibit isolated and exaggerated human qualities.

Elves tend to exemplify human grace, and in some cases, elves also represent the vanity of the human race. Dwarves, on the other hand, display strength and tenacity and embrace labor and craftsmanship, but they also exhibit the stubbornness and close-mindedness found in humans. Orcs are the symbol of our barbaric sides, and goblins are examples of the vile trickery that we are capable of. And those are just a few examples from certain styles of fantasy games—you will find examples of this trend in other genres, as well.

In order to convert a *Masks* character to another species, use the NPC's traits as a starting point and combine them with the genre of your game. Perhaps you are running a sci-fi game and the character that you wish to convert has the *primal* trait. The *primal* trait might suggest an alien that lives on a hostile world where survival of the fittest is the only rule, so you decide to re-skin that NPC as an alien.

The character is described as having exceptional reflexes and athletic abilities, so you decide that the NPC is an alien whose species resembles the large jungle cats of Earth—only humanoid in appearance. They have developed high-tech hunting gear to take down the massive beasts that inhabit their home world.

With just the genre, a keyword—the trait—and a quick read-through of the NPC's entry, we have transformed him from a human being into a member of a powerful feline species with cunning intelligence and a fierce nature. We simply exaggerated certain qualities and then transformed them from human to non-human, while keeping them applicable to the genre. Take a few moments to apply this technique to any of the characters in *Masks* and you will quickly discover just how simple it is to turn them into something no one would recognize as human.

Carissa Lawbringer `7`
Iron-Fisted Guard Captain

"To the stocks for disrespect; overnight should cure him."

Appearance: She sways in beautifully polished boots, an ermine-trimmed half-cape hinting at soft curves...and wears the badge of a guard captain. Classically beautiful, her pale features and ruby lips excite strangers and terrify the people of her district.

Roleplaying: Carissa loves to provoke people and make them jump. She slaps gloves into her hand and sensuously teases before cracking a club against a desk or wagon, always watching the eyes. Is this one prey or a fellow predator?

Personality: She revels in control, pushing ruthlessly when she has the advantage. If she lacks the edge, she quips a one-liner and exits, arranging for the next meeting to be on her terms. Unpredictability keeps her foes wary and on their back foot. An advantage must be exploited to its limit before it's spent.

Motivation: Carissa burns to eradicate criminals, who are barely better than beasts.

Background: A highwayman killed her father. Her mother was abused by the whoremonger she turned to for bread to feed her family. Carissa swore to end vice and enlisted with the guard, garnered respect for her determination, and rocketed up to the position of captain over the city's poor district. Lacking the funding and men to keep her rough district in order, Carissa uses fear to make up the difference.

Traits: *(SM) Beautiful, notorious, police*

Thaddeus Quickmire `8`
Evil Alchemist

"Here you go, lad! Drink up, it's on the house!"

Appearance: A short, stout elderly man with a bald scalp and full white beard, Thaddeus wears a number of charms around his neck for various travel deities, all gifts from travelers. Thaddeus wears an apron and, when not serving patrons, is constantly wiping glasses.

Roleplaying: Thaddeus acts as if every patron is an old friend, even if meeting one for the first time. He is always cheery and upbeat, consoling hurting patrons that nothing is as bad as it seems.

Personality: He is almost giddy, but that's because of what he's secretly doing to transient patrons.

Motivation: Thaddeus wants to create monsters in order to make his tavern a more popular destination for adventurers.

Background: Thaddeus is a frustrated alchemist who was unappreciated by his previous employers due to his lack of ethics. He settled down as an innkeeper in a new land. His inn is located in a quiet village that did not sit on any main roads. Thaddeus has decided to drum up business by poisoning travelers with magical beverages, turning them into monsters. The monsters have attracted adventurers from all around and have made the inn quite popular. Thaddeus' drinks are harmless unless the second component, a morning beverage, is taken the next day. As the two drinks are inert otherwise, Thaddeus has managed to fool the few investigators who took notice of the drinks.

Traits: *(WC) Abhorrent, business, criminal, magical, merchant*

High Priest Cyron `9`
Unholy Priest

"The gods demand your penance. I give you a path to achieve it. Come with me, either as part of my crew or as part of the vessel itself."

Appearance: His black velvet cloak covers his brilliant crimson robes. His profile is angelic, but his eyes are cold and distant.

Roleplaying: Cyron listens to his surroundings with his eyes closed, as if he were meditating. When he addresses someone, he will turn towards the sound of that person's voice, open his eyes calmly, and will proceed to speak softly and gently of the horrible fates awaiting all sinners.

Personality: He is a sociopath. Guilt and remorse are unknown to him. He will kill without hesitation and believes that all of his actions are divine providence; he can do no wrong.

Motivation: Cyron's ship is his only concern, and its crew is composed only of souls loyal to Cyron. The ship itself is built from the corpses of his victims, bound and shaped by dark magicks. Like all ships, though, it requires regular maintenance.

Background: As a young man, he was a sailor who was shipwrecked upon a rocky and desolate island. For days, he languished under the hot sun with no fresh water. Feeling his life and his mind slipping away, he offered his soul to any god that would save him. At that moment his ghastly ship rose from the sea, shattering his psyche and beginning his journey.

Traits: *(PB) Abhorrent, beautiful, pilot, religious*

Amina Fawneye `10`
Social Chameleon

"That necklace she wears? See how beautifully it catches the light? It will be mine."

Appearance: Her large, innocent-looking eyes project integrity and honesty.

Roleplaying: She will say or do whatever it takes to build trust in her target.

Personality: She doesn't care for others; they exist to be manipulated.

Motivation: Amina gets her thrills from both a successful theft and the pretty baubles that are her reward.

Background: Born into a moderately wealthy merchant family, Amina always appreciated the pretty trinkets her father brought home from his travels. When her father's return trips became less and less frequent and the flow of gifts halted altogether, Amina decided to steal them for herself. When she was caught trying to steal from one of her father's clients—a scandal that nearly destroyed the family business—she was disowned, and she's been working the streets ever since. She's quite stealthy, and competent with traps and locks, but her real talent is her social grace. A natural chameleon, she's able to blend into nearly any situation and expertly manipulate others. She could go far in politics, espionage, or business, but Amina doesn't want success or money. She's content with her modest lifestyle, but occasionally will fixate on a piece of jewelry and use her considerable abilities to take it. Afraid that selling her trophies will get her caught, she either melts them down or keeps them well-hidden. She only wears them in private.

Traits: *(KS) Charming, criminal, stealthy*

Agnor • Aileen • Albertus • Aldus • Alexandra • Alvina • Alyssa

Najir Matrell `11`
Inspired Tracker

"Don't hold back your fear, it makes everything sweeter."

Appearance: Bulky and strong, Najir bears the scars of many battles and carries many cruel looking weapons. The cold and calculating look on his face is enough to intimidate most of his targets. His wild and dirty appearance belies his intelligence, another of his strengths.

Roleplaying: Najir will track anything for anyone, so long as they are paying. Those who get on the wrong side of his deductive mind and cruel, calculating ways rarely escape.

Personality: Born to a life of cruelty, he has little sympathy for his quarry and remains focused on his work at all times. Any close interaction with Najir quickly reveals his sharp mind.

Motivation: Najir loves the thrill of the hunt, seeing it like a fatal chess game for his body and mind. He would love to find an adversary who could outwit and outfight him.

Background: There was no love for Najir in his filthy hovel and there was rarely enough food for the entire family—until Najir started hunting, that is. In the woods, Najir learned to watch and learn the patterns of his prey before striking. He studied animals and other hunters, picking up techniques and developing incredible new ones. He quickly got bored hunting animals and moved to hunting people. He never cares who he hunts, just that they provide challenge and he gets paid. Najir studies his quarry for many days before striking.

Traits: *(JA) Criminal, focal, genius, outdoorsman, warrior*

The Reverend Icabod Fraimd `12`
Puritanical Priest

"Why can't you harlots get a decent job like respectable folk?"

Appearance: Even the most recently pressed black frock hangs disheveled on his pudgy frame. His oval face is sweaty and some part of his greasy hair is always askew.

Roleplaying: He will harangue, accuse, insult, and badger anyone he thinks is giving in to their vices.

Personality: Bluntly put, he is an idealist. Reverend Fraimd envisions a day when his district is no longer assailed by ills that result from the corruption of indulgence. He is indignant and confrontational in the face of these ills. He doesn't hate people in unfortunate circumstances; he just hates what they do.

Motivation: He would save his section of the city by shutting down all the brothels, breweries, and gambling dens. He makes trouble for anyone who frequents the red-lantern district for its many "charms."

Background: A second son born to privilege, he sought a clerical education when it was clear he wouldn't inherit a title. He was an astute student of religious theory, whose superiors thought he needed to experience pastoral ministry before receiving an appointment in the church hierarchy. Confronted by the poverty, misery, and depravity in the area of his assignment, he accepted his calling with zeal. However, he was ill-equipped to serve his parish, with his righteous judgment winning out over any impulse for compassion and understanding.

Traits: *(TT) Aggressive, religious*

Najir Matrell
Artist: Matt Morrow

Rose "Ace" Dakota 610
Merciless Pilot

"If they're in your sights, you fire!"

Appearance: Rose is trim and athletic, with a sleepy face that belies her killer instinct. When engaged in mercenary work, she wears her old pilot's uniform.

Roleplaying: Constantly gauging the talents and abilities of those around her, Rose pesters people with questions about experience, challenges them to competitions, and otherwise tests their abilities. She is confident, in your face, and ready to prove her mettle at a moment's notice.

Personality: Cold and merciless, Rose does what she's paid to do without question. She lets others worry about ethical implications.

Motivation: Rose works to improve her reputation as a mercenary and to size up potential future employees for when she forms her own mercenary company

Background: A star pupil in all disciplines at the military academy, Rose excelled as a fighter pilot. During training exercises and her initial forays in the field, she set new records that are still on the books today. However, early in her career, Rose noticed that some allied ships were behaving strangely. When she could not confirm they had not been compromised, Rose opened fire and destroyed them. Later, diagnostics of the wreckage confirmed that the pilots had in fact been spies, and their ships had been outfitted with unlicensed weapons. Even so, Rose was politely discharged for destroying apparently friendly ships, during negotiations, on a hunch, with no orders.

Traits: *(MN) Adventurer, aggressive, military, pilot*

The Muse 611
Seductive Hacker

"Of course I can get the Red Mars Corporate files on Project Haley for you, darling. Shall we sit by the fire and share a drink first?"

Appearance: The Muse is utterly gorgeous, devastatingly fashionable, flirtatious, and promiscuous. She changes her hair, eyes, skin, and even body shape as it suits her, although she prefers unnatural colors such as neon green hair and copper skin. The Muse can accomplish all this because she's just a virtual creation.

Roleplaying: She is always playful and seductive. The Muse always mixes business with pleasure and prefers to negotiate in bed in a secluded mountain cabin, or lying on the beach.

Personality: In real life, the Muse is an average person with a bureaucratic job that grants access to sensitive information. In the virtual world, the Muse is flirty and carefree, although she does have a strong sense of justice.

Motivation: She just wants to enjoy her fantasies (she has many) while aiding others in the real world.

Background: The person behind the Muse is shrouded in mystery; age, gender, and location are all unknown. What is known is that the Muse appeared on the galactic network about four years ago, offering information to adventurers that were seeking justice. She asks for no money in return, only that those she helps indulge in her fantasies with her on occasion. She is a master hacker and can get into almost any system.

Traits: *(WC) Beautiful, business, charming, criminal, mysterious*

Reverend Zedekiah 612
Post-Apocalyptic Preacher

"Repent, sinners! For I am the Reverend Zedekiah, the Gun Hand of God, and I will wreak his terrible vengeance upon ye!"

Appearance: A lean and haggard older man, he wears a priest's collar under his patchwork armor. Crosses are carved into the handles of his pistols.

Roleplaying: He quotes violent Bible verses that nobody's ever heard before, and has a penchant for hard liquor.

Personality: At least half-crazed, he drifts across the wastelands, looking for sinners to redeem, or at least to send to their final resting place.

Motivation: He lives to give sinners a chance to convert, although sometimes only a brief chance. If they don't, he's more than comfortable sending them to their maker.

Background: Nobody really knows where Zedekiah (Hebrew for "Justice of God") came from. He claims to have once been a sinner, and his excellent combat skills attest to at least one sin he's familiar with. He shows up in a town and starts preaching from his book, claiming that he's sent to give people one last chance to redeem themselves. He's subjective in his judgments: In one town, he'll tear up a bar for gambling, but walk right past the bordello; in the next town, he may reverse that. But he has no problem with alcohol, and regularly takes a pull from his flask. Regardless of what people may think, wherever he goes, he usually uncovers something wicked going on, and puts a stop to it.

Traits: *(KS) Adventurer, aggressive, mysterious, outdoorsman, religious, warrior, zealot*

Lieutenant Ulit Bayen 613
Poised Sniper

"No, he's not too far away to hit. See that satellite? That's too far. He's practically up my ass, he's so close."

Appearance: All hard edges and taut muscles, Ulit has white-blond hair and pale blue eyes. Her posture is erect and alert, and even when out of uniform, her clothes are practical and military in style.

Roleplaying: Ulit has a foul mouth that seems at odds with her cool, poised demeanor. She speaks only when she must.

Personality: Lt. Bayen doesn't "get" people, so she's made herself into a weapon. She prefers to be alone, scouting kill sites and stalking her targets, but she parties hard after missions. When she lets her hair down, she becomes an entirely different person.

Motivation: Ulit is the best at what she does, and means to stay that way. She wants to be known throughout the galaxy as the ultimate sniper.

Background: Raised as a space marine brat, Lt. Bayen joined the military as soon as she was old enough. Her marksmanship put her at the top of her class, but her personality kept her from starting out as an officer—and as a loner, she doesn't much care about rank. She lives to shoot—for the clean, pure, line that is a solo mission accomplished flawlessly from insertion to extraction. Ulit can bag targets in zero-gee, while firing from and at moving spaceships, on high and low gravity worlds—anywhere, anytime.

Traits: *(MR) Military, stealthy, warrior*

Kevin Cooper

Deep Space Explorer

"Just go do your damn job, or at least get out of the way so I can do mine."

Appearance: Though he's well into retirement age, Kevin's physique would make a man 40 years his junior jealous. He crops his receding blond hair close to his skull and wears a military uniform in a style last produced 30 years ago.

Roleplaying: Kevin rarely speaks, even when spoken to. If prodded to share his insights, he does so, but his speech is an unfiltered stream of consciousness, rife with unnecessary commentary on surroundings and unrelated tangents on matters that most would consider personal.

Personality: An explorer at heart, Kevin is curious, bold, and fearless. He is precise and careful and tries to quantify things exactly.

Motivation: Kevin wants to prove his worth to military command despite his age and communication handicaps, so that he can reenlist and go on another long-term exploration mission.

Background: Recently returned from one of the first long-term exploration missions with a decade's worth of scientific readings, Kevin is a military hero. Age, outdated skills, and the impact of long-term isolation on his psyche all combined to force Kevin into retirement against his will. He faces a world that he doesn't understand, people with whom he can't communicate, and an aimless future. Desperate to reenlist and return to his mission of exploration, Kevin is trying to prove he still has what it takes.

Traits: *(MN) Adventurer, eccentric, military, pilot, scientist*

Katrina Impulse

Aggressive Journalist

"So what you're saying is that this is where you perform unsanctioned experiments on people from 'lost' colony ships? Um, why are you pointing that at me?"

Appearance: Katrina is a young, perky woman who wears trendy clothes that hug her curves and is constantly plugged into devices that stream information to her. She's always moving and appears slightly distracted.

Roleplaying: She gets right into people's faces with the cameras running. She can be quite pleasant, but quickly moves into probing, direct questions if she believes that her interviewee is hiding something. Eventually, she gets red-faced and accusatory if her interviewee doesn't crack first.

Personality: When not investigating, Katrina has a fun, bubbly personality. She holds strong opinions on many topics and loves to share them, but gets adversarial if people don't agree with her.

Motivation: She wants to expose all the ills of the universe, no matter what the cost.

Background: Katrina is a news journalist who specializes in uncovering unethical and illegal acts. Unfortunately, she tends to get too attached to her stories and, when going undercover to expose something, often outs herself due to her righteous hot-headedness. Fortunately, the universe is a big place, and when Katrina inevitably gets fired she can always find another network willing to take a chance on her. She is a font of information for adventurers, who often have to bail her out of trouble.

Traits: *(WC) Aggressive, political, zealot*

Kevin Cooper

Artist: Christopher Reach

Tabatha Claypool 870
Distinguished Sniper

"Anyone can spray a burst into the air and randomly kill someone. But to have your target in your sights and to see his face the moment before you extinguish his life, that is being a true warrior. Respect the craft and the work you do."

Appearance: In her mid-thirties, Tabatha is a woman with a strong build, with wide hips and toned legs. She has light brown hair, which she wears pulled back.

Roleplaying: Tabatha is very perceptive of her surroundings. She is relaxed and speaks with a faint Southern accent.

Personality: She is an honest and dependable person who is well-respected by her peers. She acts to maintain that respect at all times.

Motivation: Tabatha strongly believes in duty to her country, to the family business, and to the students she trains.

Background: The daughter of a highly decorated sniper and gunsmith, Tabatha grew up in the South and was raised to shoot from an early age. She served in the Marine Corps, where she trained with snipers but was unable to be classified as one. She left the Marines after eight years and returned to family business. Today, Tabatha helps to design some of the best custom sniper rifles in the world, and she is an excellent competitive sharpshooter. She is frequently hired by private security firms to train sharpshooters. She has performed covert operations for private security firms against high profile targets on several occasions.

Traits: *(PV) Crafter, focal, military, warrior*

Nadia Benares 871
Unlucky Reporter

"This is Nadia Benares reporting live from the Jersey shore. If you look down at these cracked shells you can see…I just split my skirt, didn't I?"

Appearance: Nadia is a young, slim woman who's very photogenic. She usually wears tight, impractical clothes that look good but rarely survive a broadcast or interview.

Roleplaying: On camera, Nadia is overly friendly and responsive. Off camera, she's short-tempered and prone to snapping, largely due to her frustration over whatever bad luck she's having today.

Personality: She is a cheery but cynical person. Her family brought her up to be optimistic, but Nadia's luck has seriously challenged that upbringing. She walks into every situation expecting the worst and is rarely disappointed.

Motivation: She would just like her bad luck to end. Failing that, she wants to be the best journalist she can.

Background: Brought up in a culture of isolation, Nadia was initially very shy. She purged her shyness by becoming a news reporter. She was soon a regular fixture on evening telecasts. Unfortunately, she also quickly became an Internet sensation as many of her reports went hilariously wrong. She's been blasted by the blown snow of a passing plow, lost a heel while on the boardwalk, and took a baseball to the side of the head while reporting on a little league controversy. So far, Nadia's antics have not jeopardized her job, but she worries that it's only a matter of time.

Traits: *(WC) Beautiful, entertainment, humorous, white collar*

Tabatha Claypool
Artist: Avery Liell-Kok

David Fox 872
Generous Pathfinder

"You're right; the dollar goes far in Vietnam. If you instead visit Xianglieb in Laos, you get much the same experience— but less overrun by tourists, and with great hosts."

Appearance: David is still healthy and fit at 38; brown hair and green eyes top a rugby player's build. He tends toward shorts and pants with lots of pockets, filled with maps, power bars, and lots of keys.

Roleplaying: David speaks clearly and avoids slang—a lifetime of confused looks has whittled his English down to an economical core. He supplements this with gestures and a lot of smiling.

Personality: The world needs saving, one well and farming technique at a time. David has been all over the globe, trading wells, filters, and knowledge for local handicrafts, laying the groundwork for tourism and a leg up for the locals.

Motivation: As first contact he gets to stay outdoors, where he's happy. He loves meeting new people, learning new lifestyles— and making the world a better place.

Background: David was hired by a backpacking/tourism company out of college. His path finding has added dozens of new destinations to the route-map, keeping the company ahead of the competition—and giving him a chance to meet new people and spread knowledge. Children fascinate him; they're the one thing that he wants that doesn't fit his current lifestyle. For now, he's content to be a favorite uncle in dozens of villages.

Traits: *(SM) Adventurer, merchant, saintly*

Caleb Greenwood 873
Narcissistic "Actor"

"I've been kidnapped, seduced by my wife's twin sister, abducted by aliens, and shot—twice— and that was only in the last month!"

Appearance: Shockingly handsome, he wears an open dress shirt, revealing his hairy chest, with a sports coat and slacks. His brilliant blue eyes are hidden behind designer sunglasses and his sun-kissed blond hair is neatly trimmed and parted to the side. His lips curl into a small kiss that he tosses to his adoring fans.

Roleplaying: Caleb is suave and handles his fame with practiced ease. His answers seem practiced and artificial—much like his smile.

Personality: Used to everything being tightly controlled and structured, Caleb doesn't handle surprises well. In fact, if caught off guard, he melts down and throws the equivalent of a five-year-old's tantrum. When the cameras are off, Caleb is a narcissistic and backstabbing person.

Motivation: He claims he just wants to perfect his craft and "open the window to the emotions of his character's pain." In fact, Caleb revels in his fame and fortune and seeks to obtain even more.

Background: A college dropout, Caleb quite accidentally fell into modeling and low-budget commercials. This was enough to get his good looks noticed and win him a reoccurring role on the TV soap "As My Children's Hospital Turns." He was so popular that his character, Todd Valentine, attended medical school and became chief surgeon…in just one week.

Traits: *(DM) Artist, beautiful, famous, entertainment*

Dr. Kelli O'Leary 874
Philosophical Fortune-Writer

"'Stay alert for new opportunities in the future' …in bed. Yep, that's vague enough."

Appearance: Dr. O'Leary is fascinated by the notion of "self," so she challenges herself to look as different as possible from day to day. Sometimes, even her own parents don't recognize her.

Roleplaying: Kelli gets lost in thought at the slightest provocation, wanders into things, and thinks "football" is a medical condition.

Personality: She views the real world as a fascinating theory, and rarely inhabits it. She's quite intelligent, but almost entirely lacking in common sense or a grasp on how normal people behave. It's not surprising, given her parents raised her as part of a cult that worships aardvarks and only eats cucumber slices.

Motivation: Dr. O'Leary wants to change people's lives through fortune cookies.

Background: Kelli writes fortune cookie fortunes for a living. She's not paid particularly well, but she prides herself on her ability to create fortunes so vague that they can apply to anyone—and that work well when you add "…in bed" to the end of them. She has a Ph.D. in philosophy but no inclination towards teaching or serious scholarship, and she loves what she does. If she ever loses her job, she could have a bright future in costuming or special effects: her ever-shifting appearance is much like wearing a new disguise every day.

Traits: *(MR) Counselor, crafter, humorous, white collar*

Garvin Massing 875
Anti-Government Survivalist

"Bad times are coming. You'd better be ready, pal. That's all I'm gonna say. You'd better be ready."

Appearance: A broad-shouldered middle-aged man with a bit of a paunch, he wears an army-green or beige T-shirt, matching cap, camouflage pants, and sturdy military-issue boots. The only weapon he wears openly is a hunting knife kept in plain sheath at his belt, but he keeps a sidearm locked in a case in the glove box in his truck, which also features an elaborate gun rack.

Roleplaying: When making a point, he'll hook his meaty thumbs inside the belt at his waist and stand with shoulders back, chest and gut forward and elbows pointed out.

Personality: He's dour, but protective of his few like-minded friends and his family.

Motivation: He believes he's the last of the true patriots. He'll bleed red, white, and blue, but he thinks the government is corrupt, overreaching, and undermined by a massive conspiracy whose ultimate goal is the enslavement of American citizens. He stockpiles supplies and heavy arms for the day that actually happens.

Background: He is an Army combat veteran who saw "some crazy stuff" while serving in military engagements in Panama and Kuwait. He's convinced that some of the contradicting orders his unit received during those engagements are evidence of the wider and growing conspiracy that threatens to overthrow his country. Ever since, he's made preparations for that eventuality.

Traits: *(TT) Military, outdoorsman, zealot*

INDEXES

As designers and authors, but more importantly as GMs, the team behind *Masks* has a thing for indexes. We want to marry them, settle down, and have their babies, because indexes are awesome.

In all seriousness, though, we really do love indexes—and we hate that so many gaming books don't include them. The longer or more involved the book, the more it needs an index, and *Masks* is both lengthy and information-dense.

To make it as easy as possible for you to use this book, we've included three indexes in this chapter—NPCs by Trait, NPCs by Name, and NPCs by Author—as well as an appendix, NPC Groups. The indexes will help you find exactly the character you need, while the appendix makes populating taverns, starships, and towns a breeze.

Index: NPCs by Trait

A bolded page number indicates more than one character on that page features the listed trait.