

# BULLETPROOF BLUES



Sample file



KALOS  
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BLACKMOOR • SIMS • WEIR

# **BULLETPROOF BLUES**

*Sample file*

**BLACKMOOR • SIMS • WEIR**

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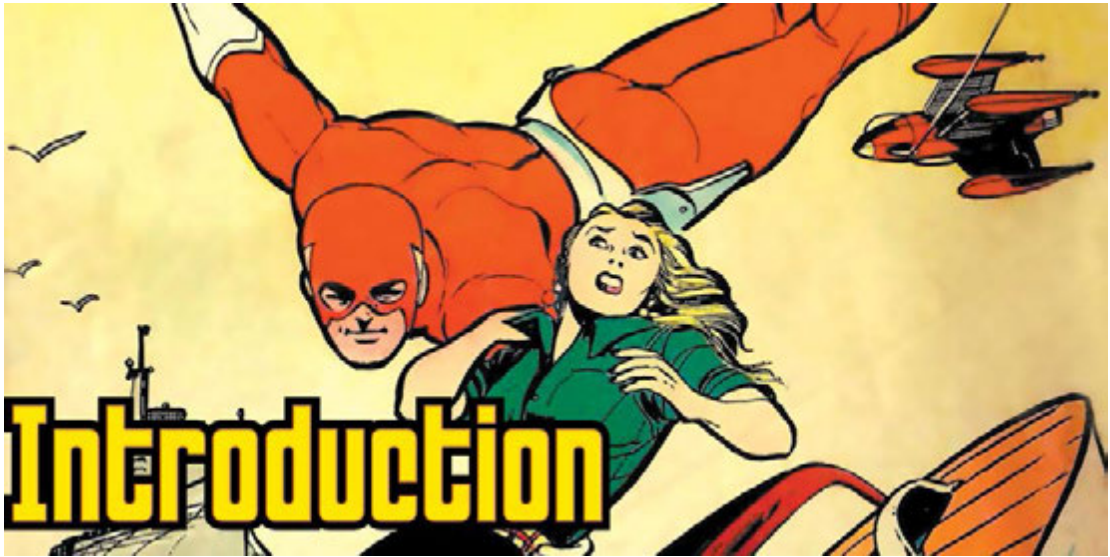
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Welcome to *Bulletproof Blues*: a “rules light” superhero roleplaying game set in the universe of Kalos Comics. If you’ve seen any of the Spider-Man, Batman, or Kick-Ass movies, you know what a superhero is: an individual with great determination who chooses to use their abilities to make the world a better place. And, of course, everyone is familiar with Kalos Comics.

## The Kalos Universe

*Bulletproof Blues* takes place in the world-famous universe of Kalos Comics, creators of Paragon (who first appeared in *Amazing Adventure Magazine* in 1938), Rook (who first appeared in *Tales Of Mystery* in 1939), Antiope, Doctor Arcane, and the rest of the Justifiers, as well as sinister organizations like Aegis and GORGON, and mysterious entities like The Bride. From the ancient ruins of Lemuria to the far reaches of the Hausdorff Dimension, the Kalos Universe is now yours to explore. If you are unfamiliar with the Kalos Universe, you will find more information in the World chapter.

## The World We Know

On the surface, the Kalos Universe closely resembles our own. The outlines of the continents are the same, and the names of the nations that humans have created within those borders are familiar. Much as in our own world, extremes of good and evil exist, but the gulf between them is a murky area where those of good will can and do disagree.

However, the Kalos Universe can be a strange place. There are ancient civilizations deep below the surface of the earth and extraterrestrials in the sky above it. Strange forces are at work, and hidden powers manipulate world events and the news reports of those events. Still, few people encounter this strangeness in their day-to-day lives or recognize it when they do. For the vast majority of humanity, the world of the Kalos Universe is virtually the same as the world you live in.

## Posthumans

The first half-dozen posthumans who made their presence widely known appeared during World War 2, as part of the Red Army fighting the invading forces of Nazi Germany. Soon after, similar groups of posthumans appeared, fighting for the Axis in Europe and Africa and for the Allies in Europe and the Pacific.

Today there are fewer than 800 posthumans worldwide. Approximately 200 of these are in North America, roughly 100 of which are in the United States. Posthumans, particularly those who originate in the Americas, have a slightly greater than average tendency to migrate to the United States.

Despite their incredible powers, posthumans have had a subdued effect on world affairs. Posthuman geniuses have made extraordinary scientific and medical discoveries, but these advances have been kept from the public until the powerful have deemed society “ready”. In some cases, a posthuman invention has been reverse engineered so that less powerful versions of the device may be gradually introduced over the course of several decades. This was the case for lasers and nanotechnology, for example. The primary beneficiaries of these scientific breakthroughs have been the governments and corporations who rule the world, and the powerful people who secretly control them.

Similarly, at the insistence of conventional authorities, posthumans have generally refrained from involvement in everyday politics and diplomacy. The exceptions to this rule have been condemned as terrorists and threats to all of humanity. This phenomenon was most evident during the McCarthy era, when a small handful of politically active posthumans calling themselves the Committee For The Advancement Of Mankind were convicted *in absentia* of violating the Smith Act.

## The Fall Of Paragon

*Bulletproof Blues* is set shortly after the “Fall Of Paragon” crossover event, during which the Justifiers were killed by their former teammate, Paragon. The city of Atlanta, Georgia has been demolished, Singapore rests beneath the sea, and both the Keystone Pipeline System and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System have been destroyed. It is a difficult time for posthumans. Posthumans have never been completely trusted by humanity, and Paragon confirmed everyone’s worst fears. Although Paragon was ultimately defeated and killed by a small team of posthumans at the Justifiers’ headquarters in Antarctica, his actions have changed forever the relationship between humanity and posthumans.

In the Kalos Universe, much like in our own world, sometimes things don’t work out the way we’d like them to. Life is neither fair nor unfair, and the universe is indifferent to human suffering.

The struggle, then, is to make the best possible world with the tools at our command. Your character has great power. How will they use it?

# What Is A Roleplaying Game?

Every roleplaying game has a section at the beginning that attempts to explain what a roleplaying game is, and *Bulletproof Blues* is no different. So let's get started! As trivial as it sounds, two distinct elements set "roleplaying games" apart from other things which are not roleplaying games: roleplaying and game play.

First, a roleplaying game involves *roleplaying*. Generally speaking, roleplaying involves taking on a persona or character and making decisions based on what that character would do in a given situation. Does having a character in a game, by itself, make that a roleplaying game? No. The little dog token in a Monopoly game and a Blood Elf in World Of Warcraft are both characters, but Monopoly and World Of Warcraft are not roleplaying games. Can you roleplay as a dog while playing Monopoly? Yes, and you can roleplay as an elf while playing World Of Warcraft. What keeps these from being roleplaying games is that the *roleplaying* is not part of the *game* — you can't get your Monopoly dog out of jail through unscripted conversation with the jailer, nor can you use roleplaying to convince a cultist in World Of Warcraft to let you pass by without a fight. If the rules of the game do not allow for the possibility that a conflict *could* be resolved through unscripted conversation (however unlikely that might be), then it isn't a roleplaying game.

Second, a roleplaying game is a *game*. Roleplaying games are sometimes compared to improvisational theatre, and there are similarities, but improv theatre isn't a game. How can you tell if something is a game? Games have rules that govern things like conflicts between players and whether something a player attempts is successful. Improv theatre is fun, but there aren't any rules like that. As Drew Carey described "Whose Line Is It Anyway?", it's "the show where everything's made up and the points don't matter." It's fun, but it's not a game, and therefore it's not a roleplaying game.

*Bulletproof Blues* has more rules than some games, but less than others, and an essential part of conflict resolution involves making decisions that your character would make under the circumstances. Maybe those decisions aren't the most tactically advantageous, but if they are true to what your character would do, and if you are having fun playing, then you are playing correctly, because that's what *Bulletproof Blues* is all about.

If you would like to read more about who plays roleplaying games, and why and where they play them, check out <http://www.theescapist.info/>.

## Why Bulletproof Blues?

Why does *Bulletproof Blues* exist? That is an excellent question. The simple answer is that we wanted to write the superhero game we wanted to play.

There are, at last count, at least a dozen superhero roleplaying games, and at least three or four more generic games that you can use to run a superhero game. A handful of these — *Mutants And Masterminds* and *Wild Talents*, for example — are outstanding games. So why write yet another?



We wanted a superhero game that was quick to learn, quick to play, and yet reasonably complete. We also wanted a game that lent itself to more serious superhero fiction, like *Planetary* and the first two years of *The Authority*. In addition to *Mutants And Masterminds* and *Wild Talents*, we tried *BASH*, *Capes*, *Cowls, And Villains Foul*, and *Icons*. These are all fine games, but not quite what we wanted. We found some games too light, some games too heavy, and some games, well, just weren't what we were looking for. So what's a gamer to do?

If you can't find the game you want to play, as the saying goes, you have to write it yourself. We are pretty happy with the result. It's not perfect, of course. If you have suggestions for improvements, we are happy to listen to them. But we hope you have fun playing, despite any flaws you may find.

*Bulletproof Blues* is not a carefully balanced simulation of a reality where people can fly, dress up like bats, and shoot energy beams from their jewelry. The rules are here to help you play a fun game and keep things fair, but there's really nothing special about the rules. They are there to serve you, not the other way around. Your first thought when someone tries something new in a *Bulletproof Blues* game should not be, "Do the rules allow it?", but "Would that be fun?". Of course, what's "fun" varies from group to group. If a tightly plotted political thriller is your bag, that's great. If you prefer nonstop action with giant robots and exploding ninjas, that's great, too. You could use *Bulletproof Blues* to run either type of game, or anywhere in between. However you want to play, though — whatever you consider "cool" — takes precedence over the written rules. If the rules don't make sense in a given context, or if they seem to be getting in the way of the kind of game you want to play, then either change the rules or ignore them.

If it turns out that *Bulletproof Blues* is not suited to the kind of game you want to play, you might try one of the many other fine superhero games out there, starting with the ones we've mentioned above. Or, as a final resort, you can do what we did, and write your own game.

## Ground Rules

A roleplaying game is fundamentally a cooperative activity. The players (one of whom is the game moderator) are not in competition. The goal is not to be the most powerful hero, or to win every fight. The goal of a role-playing game is to create interesting stories and to entertain everyone at the table. We hope that you are the kind of player that creates interesting characters and enjoys creating stories with your friends.

## Don't Abuse The System

It's not the job of *Bulletproof Blues* to keep you from abusing the system, or to prevent you from creating an unstoppable juggernaut. If that's what you want to do, you certainly can. No game system can stop you, and *Bulletproof Blues* doesn't really try. However, we hope that you aren't that kind of player.

## Use Common Sense

The single most important piece of advice we can give you is that you should use your common sense. If something in the rules violates the way you think your game should work, then override it. If the rules permit something ridiculous, or would prevent something completely ordinary, then override them. Do not be one of those players who adheres to the letter of the rules in defiance of common sense.

## Avoid Rule Arguments

It is in the nature of any human activity that differences of opinion will arise. We've tried to make the rules for *Bulletproof Blues* as simple and clear as possible, but there's only so much we can do. Sooner or later, there will be a difference of opinion among the players regarding what a rule means, or how a rule should be implemented. There is nothing wrong with this: discussion and consensus are healthy. However, the time for rule discussions is between games, not during games. If a rule discussion takes longer than 60 seconds, the game moderator should make an executive decision and table additional discussion for later. If players balk, the GM should be civil but firm, and move on.

## Respect Genre Conventions

*Bulletproof Blues* is a superhero game, and being a superhero game, it has certain genre conventions. Robert McKee defines genre conventions as the “specific settings, roles, events, and values that define individual genres and their subgenres.” Superhero games, relying as they do on a relatively commonplace modern-day setting, but one which incorporates extremely non-commonplace characters, have even more genre conventions than most other games.

For example, there are no rules for running out of bullets, or for recharging the cosmic widget from the cosmic widget recharging device. It's not that guns do not run out of bullets, or that cosmic widgets never need recharging. Of course they do, and if a character intentionally empties their gun, then the gun runs out of bullets just as you'd expect. It's just assumed that they don't normally run out of bullets unless there is a dramatic reason for it. The rest of the time, the character is reloading the gun or recharging the widget when it's convenient to do so.

Another genre convention of *Bulletproof Blues* is that the extraordinary technological advances made possible by the superhuman intelligence of super-scientists (not to mention alien technology) rarely make it into the marketplace. Some technology eventually does — cell phones and 3D televisions, for example — but these advances are delayed until they can be successfully commercialized. Any advanced technology with potential military applications remains out of the reach of ordinary people, or even of ordinary soldiers. Shadowy government agencies, amoral corporations, and subversive organizations bent on world domination all conspire to keep these advances to themselves, or at least to as small a group as possible.