

FROM THE DESK OF THE STATMONEY: WHAT I DID AND WHY

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Well, well, well.

It's been a hell of a ride bringing Rotted Capes into its second edition. The first one was... ambitious. It was my love letter to every superhero TTRPGs from the 80s, and the comic books I grew up with. However, over the years, I observed what worked, what didn't, and where we could improve. The 2nd edition isn't just a polish; oh no, it's a total reinvention of the system with one mission: to make it faster, cleaner, more intuitive, and more cinematic, while maintaining the ability to run light-hearted sessions or sessions that lean hard into the grit and horror.

Let's break down what changed and why.

WELCOME TO THE UNCANNY SYSTEM

Yes, we made the leap. Gone is the old dice pool system, and in its place is a more streamlined d20 + modifier vs. DC roll system. We call it the *Uncanny System* because, while it feels familiar (hello, 5e fans), it takes the genre in a direction uniquely our own.

- Same d20 core – while using a narrative-first approach to fuel cinematic gameplay
- No AC – We kept the three defenses from 1st Edition: Avoidance, Fortitude, and Willpower. It adds more flavor and distinguishes mental and physical threats.
- Armor doesn't make you harder to hit; it reduces incoming damage instead.
- No hit points – Instead, we kept the Stamina and Wounds model. You can still be heroic, but getting stabbed in the chest feels appropriately dangerous.
- Math is easier to balance. No more hunting for a d12 because your STR mod is 3. Just roll the die and your modifiers, and keep the story moving.

CHARACTER CREATION: SIMPLER. FASTER. DEEPER

The old system required you to pull from the same point pool at every step. It was a cool idea. Terrible in practice. So, we got rid of it.

Character creation is now broken up into clear, individual steps. You pick your Origin (where your powers come from) and Archetype (how you use your powers), and these two choices determine your ability boosts, starting feats, and Origin features.

You still have deep customization? Want to go deep into the weeds? Great, we have a Point Buy system.

Want to work up a blaster quickly? We've got you!

We have predetermined ability and power score arrays, as well as modular Power Sets to build your Hero your way.

Take an optional Weakness? Like a flaw where your powers shut down when hit with electricity? Build a weakness and get bonus feats.

HERO ADVANCEMENT: NARRATIVE GROWTH. NOT JUST NUMBERS

Characters level up every Issue (what we call an adventure), but in small, meaningful incremental steps. It keeps your Hero improving steadily without breaking the game balance.

At each level, you get either:

- A Feat (your toolkit of tricks, ability score boosts, or power score boosts)
- A Feature (pick from a list of options for your Origin)
- A Power Boost (which increases all your power scores).

There's no class track. Your Hero grows in the direction you choose. And if you screw up? Use the provided Retcon Rule, where up to level 9, you can revisit earlier decisions and reshape your Hero. No punishment. No judgment.

Additionally, we also introduce Rank Caps. These are hard ceilings that reflect your Hero's narrative tier. Yes, you might be able to get an ability score to 30, but if you're a Rank 3 (Delta), your usable max is 28. Powers and abilities can still grow, but within the expectations of your rank. It keeps things heroic, not godlike.

SKILL SETS: STORY-DRIVEN FOR CINEMATIC PLAY

We ditched individual skills in favor of *Skill Sets*: broad domains of knowledge and training that encourage narrative solutions and creative thinking.

Instead of the previous "Persuasion +5," you're a "Former UN Ambassador" negotiating a trade route during a supply crisis.

It's faster, more flexible, and encourages out-of-the-box thinking, making roleplaying actually matter when rolling to meet a challenge.

This shift ties directly into.

POWER STUNTS: STILL HERE. STILL COOL

One of the best mechanics from the 1st edition returns: Power Stunts, those cinematic moments where you can use your powers in uniquely new and narrative ways.

Want to flash freeze water with your ice blast?

That's a stunt.

Want to use your fire generation to boil water out of an underground pipe and launch yourself into the air?

That's a stunt.

Once you successfully perform a power stunt a few times, you can master it, no longer requiring any power check to pull off; it just becomes part of your repertoire.

And yes, the Comic Book Stunt Rule is still in effect: if it's been done in a comic book, it's fair game, and you even get advantage on your power check.

PLOT POINTS: STILL NARRATIVE GOLD

Plot Dice are back, renamed Plot Points. You earn them for leaning into Flaws, nailing that tagline at the perfect moment, and generally being awesome.

Spend them to survive dangerous situations, twist scenes to your advantage, or create story beats mid-session. This game rewards cleverness and roleplaying, not just straight damage rolls.

STREAMLINED COMBAT: FASTER, DEADLIER, EASIER TO RUN

Let's talk about combat.

To be totally honest, Rotted Capes 1E had a bit of a love/hate relationship with combat. On one hand, it gave brutal showdowns, tactical team fights, and those classic comic book splash-page moments. On the other hand? That Combat Clock system could drag everything to a screeching halt. When you were running a super-zombie, 3 mobs of zombies, and an abomination mutant dog with a fire aura, tracking individual initiative, speed, burnout, and actions per round became a nightmare.

So, we nuked it from orbit. You're welcome.

Rotted Capes 2nd edition replaces the Combat Clock with a faster, simpler initiative and action structure that: keeps the order moving cleanly, supports team synergy without bogging down, and makes it way easier for Editors to run multiple threads at once.

Heroes roll initiative using a standard 1d20 + bonus and take one major action per round, with what we are calling narrative actions in between other major actions. Threats are grouped by type and act together, making mob and minion management a breeze. No more multi-layered tracking charts. No more analysis paralysis, just fast, easy, and fun combat!

THREAT DESIGN - STREAMLINED

In 1st edition, threats were built like Heroes. Cool in theory. Insane in practice.

Now? You build threats quickly using templates and narrative tags. You've got creative freedom, and it won't take three hours to stat out a raider warband or a super-zombie juggernaut. You're the Editor-In-Chief. Spend your time on stories, not filling out spreadsheets.

ENCLAVES: YOUR HOME HAS CHARACTER

This might be my favorite addition!

Your Enclave isn't just your base. Enclaves are a living, changing piece of the story, complete with their own attributes: *Cohesion, Resources, and Security*.

They also have buildable Facilities that Heroes can build, upgrade, or rebuild.

Want to train your crew? Build a Training Room.

Need to coordinate with other enclaves? Get that Shortwave Radio online.

Need gear? Time to scavenge and fix up that Maker's Workshop.

Every Facility has rules, and the choices you make will matter to your survival. Want to build a teleport pad? Go for it. But you'd better work for it.

THE TLDR

THE UNCANNY SYSTEM: FAMILIAR BUT DIFFERENT

Some folks say it feels like 5e, but also, doesn't.

Good.

We kept what worked:

d20 + modifier rolls

Familiar ability score system (18 = +4, up to 50 = +20)

Saving throws

Feats

Combat

Then we veered off.

No HP. You take Stamina and Wounds.

Defenses instead of AC.

Armor as damage reduction, not evasion.

Advancement without classes.

Powers and Power Stunts

Narrative skill system

Cinematic, reactive gameplay.

*It's **uncanny** on purpose.*

So, in closing,

Rotted Capes 2nd Edition is a game that somehow survived the end of the world and came back stronger.

It's smarter. Slicker. Meaner. But also, more fun. And you're going to love it.

Because now, more than ever, you get to tell your story.

Catch you next Issue.

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