Another **Day,**

Another **Crisis**

A One-on-One Game of Superheroic Storytelling

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Game Chef 2012

Ingredients:
Coyote, Doctor, Lantern, "Funny Games (and the Temple of Ass)", Mimic

Introduction

Another Day, another Crisis is a game of superheroics for two players. One of those players will play the role of a superhero, and the other will direct the action and plot along typical comic-book narratives.

Materials

You will need:

The three decks of cards in this game. It is possible to play with paper printouts, but shuffling and handling the cards will be much easier if you paste the cards onto the faces of three decks of playing cards, ideally all with distinct backs.
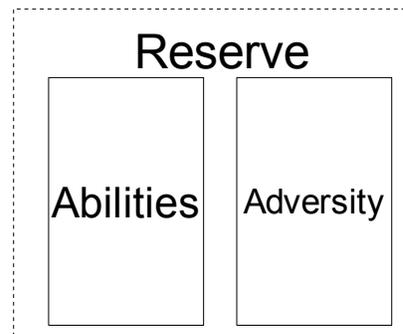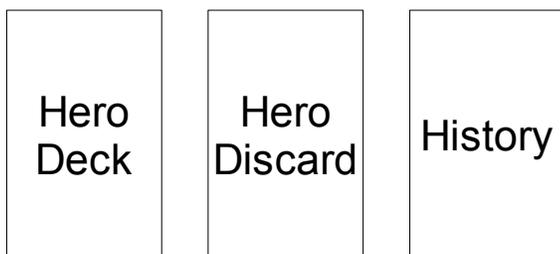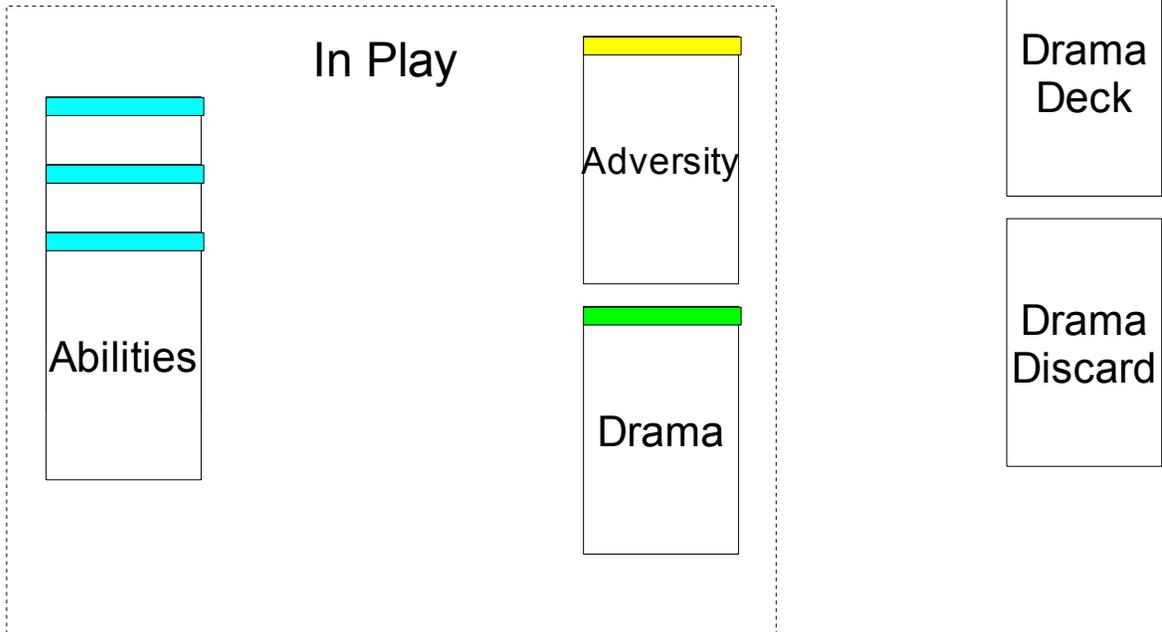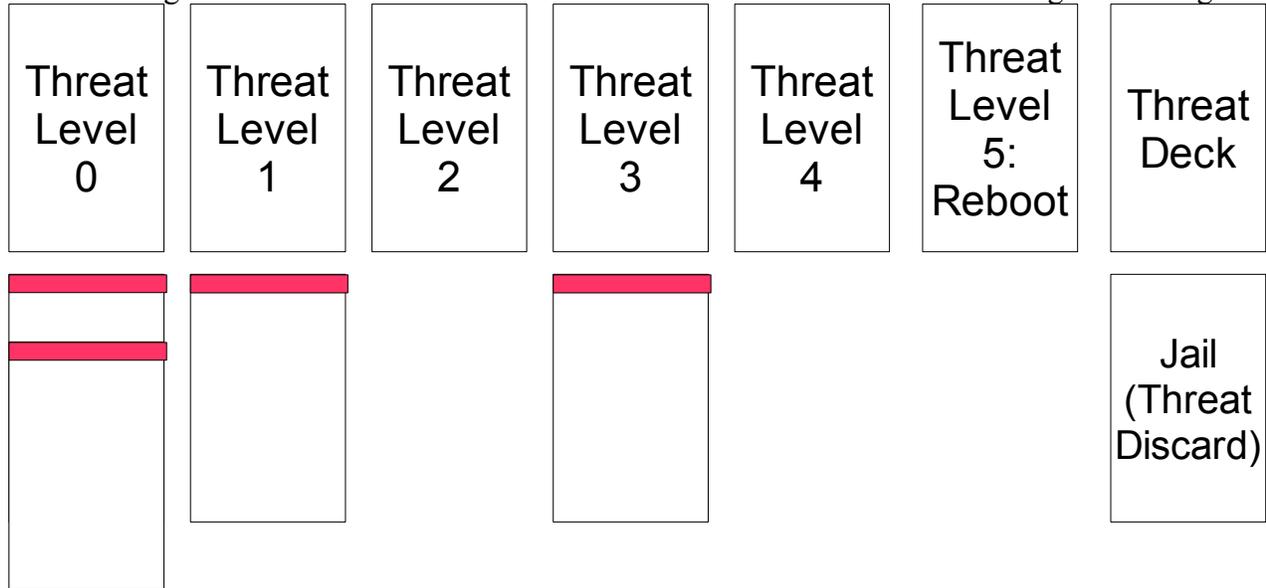
Dice; lots of dice. 6 each of four distinct colors of dice would be ideal.

A handful of small tokens.

A pen or other writing implement, and a suitable playing surface.

Setting Up

Arrange the three various decks and threat level cards on the table according to this diagram:

Threat Level 0	Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3	Threat Level 4	Threat Level 5: Reboot	Threat Deck

Jail (Threat Discard)

In Play

Abilities

Adversity

Drama

Drama Deck

Drama Discard

Hero Deck

Hero Discard

History

Reserve

Abilities

Adversity

The next step is to create the hero character. The hero player should pick a name and basic concept for his character, and then build his hero deck selecting the following cards:

1 **Origin**, 1 **Adversity**, and 10 **Abilities**, with at least one of each of the four types of abilities (**Violence**, **Gimmicks**, **Motion**, and **Wits**). There are advantages to both specialization and diversification, so no single build should be 'right'. On page 7 are some suggested starting decks for various hero archetypes. The Hero player should then shuffle those cards and draw his staring hand of four cards.

The Director, meanwhile, should deal the top four cards in the **Threat deck** and put them face-up underneath the **"Threat Level 1"** Marker. These cards represent the various supervillains and other disasters that the hero must beat in order to protect Edge City. Finally, the Director should draw a single **Drama** cards to form her own 'hand'.

The Golden Rule

As in most games of this sort, whenever a card and the rules here conflict, follow the card.

The Other Golden Rule

The Director's main job is to ensure that exciting superhero stories arise from play. It is her responsibility to ensure that scenes are actually role-played and keep the game from being simply a card game.

Order of Play

Each turn, the following things should happen:

(1) The Hero player plays any **Adversity** cards from his hand, and follows any directions on them. If the **Adversity** is '**Lingering**', it goes in play and will remain there until the condition on it is met. Otherwise, put it in the Hero Discard pile. Both players should be sure to incorporate the story elements from that card this turn and as long as the card is in play.

(2) If the Director's **Drama** card is of type '**initial**', he plays it, and both players should role-play the effects and responses to these cards.

(3) The Player picks one of the **Threats** on the table to engage. Both players should role-play the **Threat's** danger and the Hero's initial approach to beat that threat.

(4) The Player should choose one of his **Ability** cards to attack the **Threat** with, narrating his efforts accordingly. He may also play any number of other **ability** cards to support his main attack card. He then takes as many dice as his **ability** cards have on them, *plus* one additional die for each supporting **ability** card of the same type as his attack card, and prepares to roll them. He may wish to hold some cards back, because...

(5) If the Director's **Drama** card is a **combat** card, she plays it, narrating its effect into the fight against the **Threat**. Many of these allow the Hero to counter their effects by playing a card.

(6) The Player then rolls his dice, modifying their effects if the **Threat** is **weak** or **resistant** to those abilities, and compares it to the **Threat Rating**. If the total is higher than or equal to the **Threat Rating**, put the **Threat** in the **Jail** pile and **Upgrade** the Attack card and role-play the hero's triumph over the **Threat**. Then turn over the top card of the **Threat** deck and put it under '**Threat Level 0**'.

If the total is not enough to beat the **Threat**, role-play a temporary defeat and place a **token** on the **Threat** card. Each token reduces a **Threat's Rating** by five, to a minimum of 10. If the total is at least half the base **Threat Rating** (before applying **tokens** or other card-based modifiers), add a second **token**

(7) If the Director's **Drama** card is an **ending** card, she plays it, narrating the effect.

(8) If the Director was unable to play his **Drama** card, she discards it. In any case, she draws a new **Drama** card at this time. The Hero discards any cards in his hand and draws four new cards. If there aren't enough cards to do this, the Hero shuffles his discard pile and makes it his new deck. Whenever this happens, move every **Threat** up one space on the **Threat Track**. If any **Threat** ever reaches **Threat Level 5**, a **Reboot** happens. Then start the next turn with step (1).

Upgrades

To upgrade an **Ability**, the Hero player must choose a **Power** or **Catchphrase**, as indicated, and write it into the blank space on the card. From then on, so long as the Hero player manages to work that **Power** or **catchphrase** into the action, the card is worth two dice rather than one, even as a support card. The Director should insist that powers be interesting expressions of the hero's unique identity.
Examples:
Violence: Boxing-glove arrow, Blast Vision, Sucker-punch
Gimmicks: Energy Net, Shield Reflection, Darkness Bombs
Motion: Teleportation, Superspeed, Flight, Uncanny Dodge

Reboots

Sometimes, a Hero falls. As in comic books, that's not always the end of the story. Possibly another person will take up the fallen hero's legacy, or the hero will eventually return from disgrace or even death. Sometimes the entire universe gets restarted from the beginning.

When the rules call for a **Reboot**, take every card in the **Hero Deck**, **Discard**, and **History**, and put them together. Then add one of each type of **Ability** card. Shuffle these cards together, and then deal out four cards. If one of those cards is the **Origin** card, put it back into the **hero deck**. Put the remaining three or four cards into the **History** pile. What is left is the new **Hero Deck**.

The directory should also reshuffle the **Threat** deck with the **Jail**, dealing four new threats into **Threat Level 1**, and reshuffle the **Drama** deck and discard piles. Then continue play, deciding which kind of **Reboot** this is and playing the new Hero accordingly.

Ending the Game

The struggle to save Edge City and the world is a never-ending one, so like successful comic book characters stories, this game can go on as long as the audience is interested. (Players who want a more finite game experience may choose to play for a specific time limit, or to end the game after a set number of reboots.)

Character Archtypes

The Martial Artist
This is a Superhero who is mostly a fighter, but relies on speed and skill rather than brute force.
4x Violence
2x Wits
1x Gimmick
3x Motion
1x Origin
1x Bad Press

The Brick
This kind of Hero is all about raw strength and toughness, more likely to ignore attacks than dodge them.
6x Violence
1x Wits
2x Gimmick
1x Motion
1x Origin
1x Berserk!

The Speedster
Getting around quickly and avoiding attacks are this Hero type's usual strategy.
1x Violence
2x Wits
2x Gimmick
5x Motion
1x Origin
1x Wanted: Dead or Alive

The Metahuman
This is the type of hero who has a list of different powers, usually focused on a single theme.
1x Violence
2x Wits
2x Motion
5x Gimmick
1x Origin
1x Hated and Feared

The Paragon
This is a balanced, all-around hero type.
2x Violence
2x Wits
3x Gimmick
3x Motion
1x Origin
1x Secret Identity

Glossary

Ability- A Card representing something that a hero can do

Adversity- A Card representing something that makes a hero's life more difficult

Beat- To eliminate a threat by exceeding its **rating** with your dice and **tokens**

Catchphrase- A statement or battle-cry that your hero will repeatedly use

Combat- **Drama** card type played during combat

Drama- A Card played by the Director, usually driving the story by interfering with the hero.

Edge City- The setting of this game

Ending- **Drama** card type played at the end of a turn.

Immune- Dice of this type cannot be used on this **threat**

Initial- **Drama** card type played at the beginning of a turn

Jail- The pile of defeated **threats**.

Lingering-This **adversity** lasts until a condition is met, and is discarded

Power- A superhuman ability of a hero

Rating- The large number on a **threat**, indicating how dangerous it is

Reboot- The end of the Hero's story, and a new beginning

Resistant- Dice of this type are divided in half (round up)

Temporary- **Adversity** card that lasts through the current turn, and is then put into your discard pile

Threat- A Card representing something a hero must **beat**.

Token-Experience gained fighting a threat, reduced it's **Rating** by 5 (to a minimum effective **rating** of 10)

Weak- Dice of this type are doubled

Designer's Notes

Following this page are an awful lot of cards. (156 of them, although with enough duplication that it's more like 100 or so unique card texts) I do not expect you (the Game Chef reviewer) to read every single one of them. Just skimming through them, reading one or two that strike your fancy on each page, should be enough to get the idea. This is the sort of game in which most of the cards should be initially discovered by the players during actual play, anyhow.

The four 'fixed' ingredients in this competition (Coyote, Doctor, Lantern, and Mimic) practically screamed 'superheroes' to me and I'm sure many other Chefs. (Each of them is, or is part, of a perfectly acceptable name for a superhero or villain.) So, my primary use of these ingredients is as that collective, superheroic gestalt. In addition, I've incorporated some of them more directly into the overall setting implied by the names and 'flavor text' of the cards, with two cosmically powered beings representing the forces of Chaos and Order, both to excess: Coyote and Dr. Diogenes (a two-fer, evoking 'Doctor' and 'Lantern' together).

I also through in a Villain named 'The Mad Mimic', but my more significant fourth ingredient is one of the four Forge Threads: http://indie-rpgs.com/archive/index.php?topic=1707.0, "Funny games (and the Temple of Ass)", which starts out as a complaint about parody games and turns into an interesting discussion how to make a game funny to play as opposed to merely being funny to read. I think that one possible solution to that involves a card-based game of this type, where the player's first encounter with most of the 'jokes' will be in play. Of course, in a 'finished' game of this sort, each card would feature an amusing cartoon of some sort and the humorous elements would not rest merely on a dozen or so of my words per card.

As for the theme, well, I think that it shows through in several places, from the idea of end-of-the-world superhero universal reboots to the fact that the default rules allow the game to go on forever.

I've been interested in attempting to use Dominion/Ascension/etc style 'Deck Building' as the central mechanic for a roleplaying game since my first encounters with those types of games, or actually, since considerably before then: since reading Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon*, which contains a brief scene of people playing just that sort of a game (inspired no doubt by Magic the Gathering). While I'd not want anything to do with the sort of Grognardly Hypersimulationist game that those characters preferred, the basic idea of a roleplaying game with an evolving deck as a character sheet has been lurking at the back of my head for years, and it's been a good experience to actually try and make one. I chose to make this a one-on-one RPG in part because making it multiplayer would probably lead to competitive mechanics, and move it closer to those board/card games and away from the deckbuild RPG area that I was aiming at. (And also in part because that it how the vast majority of comic books are already structured.)

Finally, I'll mention the other influences to which this game owes debts: firstly, of course, hundreds upon hundreds of comic book stories, particularly those of the Bronze and Chrome ages, Steve Jackson Games' Illuminati (both versions), and the games of Tom Wham, both of which are an education in how to build worlds with a handful of names and brief epigrams.

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