

## Pumpkin Bomb 0.2

By JJ Prince [www.princeofdarknessgames.com](http://www.princeofdarknessgames.com)

This game is inspired by *Stacy's monster*. To me Stacy's monster is the Green Goblin.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwen\\_Stacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwen_Stacy)

Gwen Stacy dies at the hands of the monster, despite Spider-man's desperate efforts to save her. The storyline was a pivotal one not just for Spider-man, but for the super-hero genre. The tale marks the end of the silver age of comics.

I have set about trying to write a game that will generate exquisite replicas of the Gwen Stacy plotline. A game with heroes and villains, the society they inhabit and the innocents they strive to protect or destroy. A game with room to see what if...

This game requires at least two players, three to five is ideal - more than seven will be pushing it.

Half the players take on the role of heroes, half take on the role of villains, one player becomes the facilitator if there is an odd number.

HEROES are aiming to protect innocents and serve the forces of justice. VILLAINS are out to encourage disorder, crush heroes and ravage innocents.

The facilitator facilitates the game, storylines and fun!

At the game's climax the villains will try to victimise the innocents that have a connection with the heroes.

*This is an all new playtest version, after getting some much appreciated feedback from Ron Edwards at The Forge ([www.indie-rpgs.com](http://www.indie-rpgs.com)). It's still pretty raw, but all feedback is gratefully received!*

*The original Pumpkin Bomb was an entry in the M@ke Game\$ F@\$t competition run by Joe Murphy.*

## **SETUP**

Each of the HERO and VILLAIN players gets to create their character.

### **Heroes**

HEROES have four stats: HEROICS, POOL, GIMMICKS and CONNECTION.

HEROICS is a measure of all round heroicness of the character. HEROICS is what is called a hand (or hole) stat; it determines starting hand during conflicts. HEROICS begins at 1 and cannot rise above 5.

POOL represents the endurance and tenacity of a character. POOL is a currency stat, it determines starting currency or 'stack during conflicts. POOL begins at 4 and cannot rise above 10.

GIMMICKS are the skills, powers and quirks that make the heroes super-human. Each GIMMICK should have a description of no more than one sentence.

*E.g. proportional strength and agility of a beetle.*

A HERO begins with a single GIMMICK and can have no more than 4.

HEROES begin with a HEROICS score of 1, a POOL of 4, and 1 GIMMICK. HEROES then get a further 2 points to split between HEROICS, POOL and GIMMICKS.

HEROICS + POOL + GIMMICKS = LEVEL.

HEROES also need to come up with the innocent their hero is connected to. Innocents begin with a CONNECTION of 1, which grants an additional +1 to a HERO'S stats. Thus HEROES begin play at LEVEL 9.

### **Villains**

VILLAIN creation is similar to HERO creation; each begins with a THREAT score of 1, a POOL of 4 and 1 GIMMICK. VILLAINS get a further 2 points to distribute.

THREAT + POOL + GIMMICKS = LEVEL. So VILLAINS begin play at LEVEL 8.

### **Society**

The backdrop for these HEROES and VILLAINS is the society that they have sprung from. In this game, society is defined in just three terms:

JUSTICE: how just, safe and predictable society is.

DISORDER: Chaos, unrest, crime, the dark underbelly of civilization.

SIZE: Justice + Disorder, society's critical mass.

JUSTICE and DISORDER begin at 2, so SIZE is 4 at the outset.

### **Virtues and Vices**

Each player writes down a virtue they think a hero should display. Each player writes down a vice they think a villain will indulge in.

Anytime a HERO role-plays a VIRTUE or a VILLAIN role-plays a VICE they may refresh a GIMMICK. After a player uses a VIRTUE/VICE in this manner he cannot use the same one again until his next scene.

*Playtest point – how well do virtues and vices work? Are they too susceptible to overuse?*

## **PLAY**

### Sequence of play

1. Villain scene
2. Hero scene
3. Facilitator scene (if there is a facilitator)

### Villain scenes

- Corrupt [- Justice]
- Villainy [+ Disorder]
- Scheme (develop)
- Stalk (track)
- Threaten innocent

### Hero scenes

- Inspire [+ Justice]
- Fight Crime [- Disorder]
- Connect with innocent (develop)
- Investigate (track) / Confront villain

Facilitators can call for any scene. No one can call for the same scene consecutively.

A HERO/VILLAIN cannot call for a second scene until all other HEROES and VILLAINS have called for a scene.

## **SCENES**

Most scenes involve a conflict of some type.

Conflicts are written using the formula: A & B (C) vs X & Y (Z).

A gives C's hole cards and B gives C's stack for the conflict.

X gives Z's hole cards and Y gives Z's stack for the conflict.

C is the main character in the scene, who will initiate the conflict.

Z indicates the opposing force. The facilitator (or spotlight player if there is no facilitator) decides who will control the opposing force if there is more than one eligible player.

## **Corrupt**

Summary: The VILLAIN tries to influence the corrupt elements in society and undermine the justice department.

Conflict: THREAT & POOL (VILLAIN) vs DISORDER & POOL (HERO).

Stake: If the VILLAIN wins then JUSTICE decreases by one. Otherwise the corruption attempt fails.

## **Villainy**

Summary: The VILLAIN tries to extend his evil influence, commit crime and promote disorder.

Conflict: THREAT & POOL (VILLAIN) vs DISORDER & SIZE (HERO).

Stake: If the VILLAIN wins then DISORDER increases by one. Otherwise the villainy fails to make any appreciable difference.

## **Scheme**

Summary: The VILLAIN tries to strengthen his powerbase.

Development: The VILLAIN is dealt cards equal to his level. If dealt a red queen, the VILLAIN fails, otherwise he succeeds.

Stake: If the VILLAIN wins, then his LEVEL improves by one. This increase grants the usual +1 stat (THREAT, POOL or GIMMICK). Also, a scheming VILLAIN may refresh his GIMMICKS.

## **Stalk**

Summary: The VILLAIN studies a HERO.

Track: The VILLAIN draws a card (face cards count as 12, aces as 11), if the card value is lower than the HERO'S LEVEL the VILLAIN succeeds in finding out some titbit of information – such as the identity of the HERO'S CONNECTION or alter ego.

Stake: If successful the VILLAIN can now call for THREATEN scenes against that CONNECTION.

## **Threaten Innocent**

Summary: After stalking a HERO, a VILLAIN may try to threaten his innocent. This could take the form of direct intimidation, dispatching minions or just events arising from the inherent disorder in society.

Conflict: DISORDER & THREAT (VILLAIN) vs JUSTICE & [6 – CONNECTION] (HERO).

Stake: If the VILLAIN wins then the innocent is damaged by the disorder in some way. The HERO'S LEVEL and CONNECTION drop by a point. Otherwise no values change.

### **Inspire**

Summary: The HERO tries to inspire, truth, justice and decency in society.

Conflict: HEROICS & POOL (HERO) vs JUSTICE & SIZE (VILLAIN).

Stake: If the hero wins then JUSTICE goes up by one. Otherwise the inspiration fails.

### **Crime-fight**

Summary: The HERO endeavours to battle crime and those cowardly elements who use disorder to prey upon the weaker members of society.

Conflict: HEROICS & POOL (HERO) vs JUSTICE & POOL (VILLAIN).

Stake: If the HERO wins then DISORDER drops by one. Otherwise there is no change.

### **Connect with innocent**

Summary: The HERO tries to strengthen his CONNECTION and improve as a HERO.

Development: The HERO is dealt cards equal to his LEVEL. If dealt a black jack, the HERO fails, otherwise he succeeds.

Stake: If the HERO wins, then his CONNECTION score improves by one. This increase in CONNECTION also grants an extra LEVEL to the HERO, accompanied by the usual +1 stat (HEROICS, POOL or GIMMICK). A connecting HERO also refreshes his GIMMICKS.

### **Investigate**

Summary: The HERO tries to learn more about a VILLAIN, which can act as a prelude to a confrontation.

Track: The HERO draws a card (face cards count as 12, aces as 11), if the card value is lower than the VILLAIN'S LEVEL the hero succeeds in finding out some titbit of information.

Stake: If successful the HERO can now call for a single CONFRONTATION scene with the VILLAIN in question.

### **Confront Villain**

Summary: After a successful investigation, a HERO can confront a VILLAIN and do battle directly.

Conflict: HEROICS & POOL (HERO) vs THREAT & POOL (VILLAIN). Facilitator may join using JUSTICE/DISORDER & SIZE.

Stake: The victor may lower one of the loser's attributes (HEROICS/THREAT, POOL, GIMMICKS) by a point. The victor may raise his own corresponding attribute by a point (facilitator cannot do this but may increase the lowest of JUSTICE or DISORDER if used in the conflict).

### **Super Team-Ups**

Allies can enter conflicts with 1/2 stack (round up) and HEROICS/THREAT capped at two. The facilitator decides whether or not it's appropriate to have allies join the scene. If there is a dispute and no facilitator, cut the deck to decide.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Conflicts are determined by a Texas Hold 'em like mechanic. First the story state and mechanical stake are declared.

Determine each player's stack, this will usually be their POOL stat, but sometimes might be SIZE or THREAT.

All involved parties bid from their stack. When a player's stack is exhausted he is out of the conflict. A conflict is resolved over a number of hands.

### Ante

All involved ante in a bid of 1.

### Pre Flop

Players are dealt a starting hand equal to their Hole attribute (HEROICS, THREAT, JUSTICE or DISORDER) or 5, whichever is lower. The active player is first dealer and the player to his left "under the button" decides whether to fold (throw hand in), raise (increase bid) or check (match bid). Anyone who folds subtracts their bid from their current stack. Play progresses to the left. After all players have been the flop is dealt.

### Flop

Three cards are dealt face up in the middle of the table, these are community cards as with standard Texas hold 'em. Another round of betting follows.

### Turn & river

The fourth and fifth community cards are dealt. A final round of betting follows. Assuming at least two players are still in, cards are revealed. Each player constructs the best five card stud hand they can, using their hole cards and the community cards. The loser subtracts his bid from his stack.

If only one player is left in then he wins the conflict, otherwise the deal passes left and a new hand begins.

### **Gimmicks**

Gimmicks are what put the super in super-hero and super-villain! During conflicts a player bringing in a GIMMICK, through role-play or narration, gains an advantage.

What the advantage grants depends upon when it is used.

Pre-flop the advantage is to discard his hand and be dealt another one. After the flop an advantage can be used to re-flop and deal a different three cards. After the turn and river card have been dealt, an advantage discards and re-deals the turn and river cards.

After a GIMMICK has been used, mark the circle next to it. The same GIMMICK cannot be used again until it is refreshed, either in a development scene or by roleplaying a VIRTUE/VICE.

## **ENDGAME**

Is triggered by SIZE = 10, or when a HERO or VILLAIN'S POOL reaches 10, or after an agreed upon time limit has expired.

After endgame is triggered, each of the VILLAINS takes a special victimisation scene. In this each VILLAIN targets an innocent that they are going to make a victim of. Villains take scenes in descending Level order. The same innocent cannot be victimised more than once – if two or more villains of the same level want to victimise the same innocent, then cut the deck to decide which of them does.

These special victimisation scenes move into the final confrontation. The confrontation is comprised of two conflicts. The first conflict involves all VILLAINS and HEROES facing off, with the innocents' lives being at stake.

The final battles are individual, with each HERO going after his villainous nemesis. If a HERO'S CONNECTION was destroyed then he gains an additional GIMMICK "Vengeful" and +1 POOL for this final conflict. If the VILLAINS failed to victimise the innocents then each VILLAIN gains an additional GIMMICK "Enraged" and +1 POOL for the final conflict. The first to be eliminated loses the conflict and is defeated by his nemesis. Each VILLAIN winning adds a point to DISORDER. Each HERO winning adds a point to JUSTICE.

The facilitator does not take a hand in the final conflicts.

## **Outcomes**

The ultimate outcome and epilogues depend upon three factors:

The innocents' fates.

Whoever wins the first round of conflict gets to narrate the fate of the innocents. It's a victory for good if they survive unmolested. The victory is for evil if the innocents are slain or defiled.

## **The victor Heroes/Villains**

Whoever wins the final conflict gets to narrate the epilogue for the HERO/VILLAIN pair. The characters' survival is at the narrator's discretion. Obviously, dead HEROES mean victory for evil and defeated VILLAINS mean victory for good. Slain VILLAINS are somewhat ambivalent as it can represent the HERO'S slide into villainy.

## **Society's final values**

The final values of JUSTICE and DISORDER determine the state of society and it's likely future.

If JUSTICE is higher than DISORDER then society is, for the most part, ordered and fair. Criminality is limited to the shadowy underworld. The ordinary citizens are only occasionally affected by crime. The bigger the gap, the less prevalent crime is.

If DISORDER is higher than JUSTICE, then society is ill at ease, criminality is rife, chaos and unrest are waiting in the wings. The bigger the gap, the more prevalent crime is.

If DISORDER and JUSTICE are equal than society is a mixed place. In some areas justice is strong and crime is driven underground, in others crime flourishes. Things could go either way depending upon the heroes and villains...

# HERO

**HEROES**

**POOL**

**GIMMICKS**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**LEVEL**

**HERO SCENES**

**Inspire** [+ Justice]

**Fight Crime** [- Disorder]

**Connect** (develop)

**Investigate** (track)

**Confront villain**

**INNOCENT**

**CONNECTION**

# VILLAIN

**THREAT**

**POOL**

**GIMMICKS**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**LEVEL**

**VILLAIN SCENES**

**Corrupt** [- Justice]

**Villainy** [+ Disorder]

**Scheme** (develop)

**Stalk** (track)

**Threaten innocent**

**SOCIETY**

**JUSTICE**

*VIRTUES:*

**DISORDER**

*VICES:*

**SIZE**