

One Mask



The
Roleplaying Game of
Myth, Subterfuge and
Revolution!

This game is dedicated to my favorite role player
my son Derek

Resources: 24Hr RPG, 1km1kt (<http://www.1km1kt.net/>).

Fonts: RagingRedLotus BB, Times New Roman. (<http://www.blambot.com/>)

Images: Public domain images that I altered in photoshop. (<http://www.karenswhimsy.com/public-domain-images/>)(<http://www.oldbookillustrations.com/pages/ornaments5.php?lng=en>)

Other Games I borrowed ideas from: FUDGE (<http://www.fudgefactor.org/>), FATE (<http://www.hill-kleerup.org/pmwiki/FATE/GoldenRuleOfFATE>), TAGS, Vs. Monsters, Blur, Tri-Stat DX

This was my first 24 Hr RPG project. Check out the rules and find a link to the official page at 1km1kt
(<http://www.1km1kt.net/>).

Introduction

The interrogators closed in on the masked man. They had been tipped off and the source turned out to be a good one. There were peasants on the scanner interfering with the signal. That could be dealt with easily. Then, as if to make it even easier, the masked man began to separate himself from the others and run straight for the force's position. The team leveled their cannons and moved to tighten the circle. Just as he came into view and the first shots sounded, there was a powerful blast from an exploding car in a nearby empty lot. Interrogators fell to the ground, struggling to their feet, to regain their tactical advantage. But the masked man was gone. They had only gotten a brief glimpse. The long black coat, the black mask and the police captain's helmet matched every description to date. They searched the area but found no trace of him. The scanners were no longer picking up his signal. The bastard had done it again and the peasants could be heard cheering. There would be hell to pay when they got back to the station.

Glorianna Dering fell heavily against the wall of the bank vault. This business was getting too intense. She tore the helmet and mask from her head and ran her fingers through her sweat soaked hair. This costume would kill her if the Gators didn't. She hoped her turn to wear it wouldn't come around again for a while. With Kendall's little plot, it would be much sooner than she was comfortable with. She was the best runner and the chase was an important element of his plan. Josephine, the team's undercover expert, had the Gators in the palm of her hand. They really thought she was going to help them catch the masked man but if everything turned out according to Kendall's design, they would be led right into the heart of their own operation and see for themselves the corruption and greed that spawned them. They would see the true nature of the men who gave them orders and they would have to make a choice about what they really believed in. Until then, Glorianna and her small crew would trade that stupid mask and build a legend that would move the "peasants" and chill the masters of the city.

What is this?

One Mask is a role playing game about standing up for what is right. It's a story about a small group of concerned citizens that understand that people want a hero to look up to and nothing frightens the powers-that-be more than a voice they just can't silence. This a game where you, and your friends, can take on the role of a team of people who take turns donning the attire of a masked avenger and through their various talents, create a mythic entity that can change the course of life in a miserable world. One player will narrate the story and take the role of all the cruel forces that make life so terrible as well as the hapless victims and courageous friends that will help as best they can. The other players will play one of the main characters. These characters will be very limited in their abilities but what they do well, they do better than anyone. One Mask is a game about working together to become more than one person can be.

How To Read These Rules

This is a game intended for several players. The rules are simple and open to interpretation. If one player doesn't mind doing most of the work, they should take the role of the narrator, read the rules and guide the other players through the process. Throughout these rules you will find Icons that indicate additional material that is not completely necessary to understand the rules but are intended to be helpful and add flavor to the game. This is what they mean:



Example: This icon indicates an example of play that might make the rules more clear.



Alternate Rule: This icon indicates a variation on the rules that might be more interesting.



Notes: This icon indicates a note from me. It may not be useful at all.

How To Start a Game of One Mask

The game begins with a series of sessions to establish an environment and characters. Depending on the amount of time and how quickly the players work together, these sessions can be held in one sitting or over the course of several get-togethers.



Session 1: Setting

One Mask is best played by people who feel strongly about the events in the story. For that reason, all the players have a hand in creating the world their characters will inhabit.

This is what to do:

1. Have the narrator lead a discussion and take notes. They will ultimately be the person responsible for breathing life into the shared world so they will have some authority during this portion of the game.
2. Go around the table and ask each player what they love the most about the country they live in. They don't have to come up with something new. If they agree with another player, they can just say so.
3. Take turns talking about possible ways that those loved elements could be stripped away and replaced by their opposites. What could happen that would destroy everything they love about their lives? Who would be responsible? How would the terror of this new world be maintained? What kind of people would live there and how would they try to resist or return to better ways?
4. Ask each person what the world would actually look like. It doesn't have to be a modern setting. They might want to describe a fantasy setting or a distant space station. If another player likes a description, they should speak up and join forces with that player. Try to look for consensus among the players during this part but let every player be heard.
5. The narrator looks over the notes and describes the world in terms of the most important lifestyle elements and the most popular descriptions of setting.
6. All the players get one more chance to add or argue against elements of the imaginary world.
7. The narrator ends the session and thanks all the players.



Session 2: Building the Masked Avenger

The shared identity will also be forged through a discussion session. All the players will have a hand in creating the legendary, mystery person, daring to face all odds and stand up to the powerful and champion the weak.

1. The narrator should remind the players about the setting that was created in the last session.
2. Each player takes a turn telling the group about a personal favorite heroic character from fiction, the movies or from real life. Give them a chance to tell all the other players what makes that person such an inspiration.
3. Have each player talk about the skills that would be needed to survive in the world they have created and what kind of skills would be useful to help one person stand out and make a difference.
4. Have the players describe the heroic character from the point of view of a common citizen. What does the costume look like? Is it obviously a particular gender or is it hard to tell? What kind of things can they do? Have them tell stories about the masked one. Ask them what impressed them the most.
5. Find out if the players can agree on a general description of the masked character. Is there a feeling for the direction the game will take? What do people call the unknown champion? What do the villains have to say?
6. The narrator reads a description of the character all the players have been talking about.
7. The players have one more chance to make suggestions.
8. The narrator thanks everyone and ends the session.



Session 3: The Revolutionaries

1. The narrator reminds everyone how their Heroic character turned out and reads the description again. The narrator should pass the description around or make copies for all the players for this session. The narrator hands out character sheets to each player and explains how to fill them out.
2. Each player looks over the description and concentrates on the skills or features of the character that appeal to them most. They try to imagine a character that might be particularly good at those things while not super impressive at others. They describe the person they are imagining and the other players ask questions about them. Do they actually don the costume or do they work behind the scenes? What are they like as a person? What made them want to take action? How did they find the others or become involved? What issues are most important to them? What are their personal goals?
3. The narrator lists the possible characters and suggests any of their own ideas for the whole group to consider. Are the player's characters the only people in on the secret or are there others?
4. Each player talks about a weakness that one of the characters might have and the others make suggestions or agree to apply that weakness to the character.
5. The players decide which character they will become in the story. If the players can't agree at this point, return to step one and try again.
6. The narrator chats with the players about all the characters and makes any final alterations with them keeping fun, fairness and consistency in mind.



Some skills and talents to consider: Lock Picking, Free Running (Parkour), Inventing (Gadgets), Martial Arts (Specialties might include striking, blocking, throwing etc...), Public Speaking, Tactics, Acting, Disguise, Street Smarts, Well Connected, Persuasion, Dodging, Hiding, Ditching, Shadowing, Climbing, Forgery, Mechanics, Singing (that would get attention!), Driving, Fencing, Horse Back Riding.....

Putting it all down on paper:

A character for One Mask will consist of a description, a list of skills, a goal, a weakness, and few personal belongings.

The hardest part is putting the skills in order. Remember that each character will start with only a few important skills. Unless they have a particular skill or a weakness that applies, each character will be assumed to operate like any average person might if put to any given challenge.

Think of one area where your character really excels and come up with a name or title for that field of talents. If they are really strong and good at taking hits, Tough Girl might be a good start. If they are clever and great at giving the baddies the slip, Pickpocket Boy could be the way to go. This is a very broad descriptive term that others should be able to identify easily. This will also be the basis for the majority of your skills. Next, come up with 3 or 4 specific skills relating to your description. A pickpocket might have slight of hand, hiding and running as skills. Place your skills directly under your description. Now choose 1 or 2 of these skills and think of an even more specific aspect that might come into play. Maybe the character is into parkour and can make use of obstacles as they run away. Place this directly under the skill it applies to. You will now have a branch like structure showing how your skills are connected. These will be your basic skills. If the narrator agrees, you can also choose 1 or 2 unrelated skills that you can put to the side.

Once you have your description, your skills, your weakness, your goodies and your goal in place, you are done.

Basic Mechanics of the Game

One Mask is a game designed to have a narrative focus and rely heavily on the imaginations of the players and narrator. At some point, to add excitement and suspense to the story, there will be a random element brought into the game to resolve particularly challenging tasks or to depict the uncertainty of combat.

One Mask uses a standard deck of playing cards (see the alternate rules for other options) to resolve conflicts and challenges. The system is extremely simple and meant only as a guideline. Here is how it works:

Shuffle and place a deck of cards (face down) in the middle of the play area where all players can reach it. Decide whether you will be playing out a challenge or a combat. The main considerations are the possibility of damage and what skills will be used to draw cards. See Challenges and Combat below:



Challenges

Challenges take place when a character is faced with a task that might give them trouble. The narrator should explain the situation in as much detail as possible and begin the challenge process.

1. The narrator explains the situation and draws a card for each element of the situation that would make it difficult for the player. If the environment poses a problem, the narrator should draw a card. If the task is, in some way, connected to the character's weakness, the narrator draws a card. If the character is wounded, the narrator should draw a card. If there is another character working against the player's character, the narrator draws cards for that character's skills and applicable talents (at least one for the irritating presence of an opponent). If the character is in a hurry, you guessed it, the narrator draws another card.
2. The player draws a card for free just for having the will to take on the task.
3. The player explains how they will attempt the task and draws a card for each skill or advantage that might apply to the task. If the task is one that might be met on occasion by a person with their description, they get to draw a card. If it's a task they are particularly skilled at they get to draw another card (in other words, if they have a skill under their description that applies). They can keep drawing cards as long as the branch of skills continues to apply. They also get to draw a card if the task is directly connected to their personal goal.
4. Once both sides have drawn all their cards and there are no objections by either side or other players, the hands are compared. The best poker hand wins. Aces can be high or low. Jokers are wild.



You might want to try making up some special rules for particular cards. A Joker might always cause the player to fail but in a way that is lucky for them. A Suicide King (King of Hearts) could always spell terrible doom.

You could also try playing with a tarot deck and assigning special events to all the major arcana cards. Death, The Lovers, The Tower and the Hermit could really spice up a game. Perhaps when certain cards are drawn the player keeps them and draws again to replace them. Then they could use them at a later time for some "special effect".





Combat

Combat works exactly the same way. The narrator draws cards on behalf of the villain and the player draws their own cards. Multiple combatants, working together, get to add to the same hand so there will be greater possibilities. Ranged weapons can allow characters or villains to attack their enemies without retaliation. If only one side can attack, have the defender draw what they can to avoid getting hurt. Combat is dangerous and the results can be quick and deadly so choose your fights carefully. To find out what happened, have the losing side draw a card and consult the chart below:

Characters can heal by resting or receiving medical attention. When the narrator feels they have healed from their wounds, they can discard the card representing damage taken. If they still have the damage card and they receive more damage the cards are totalled together. If the character is heavily armored or has some way to resist damage, they may draw two cards and immediately discard the higher one when taking damage.

2-10 = the character is hurt but not seriously wounded

J-Q = the character is seriously wounded and in need of medical attention

K = the character is potentially crippled.

A = K.O. the character is out cold and possibly killed.



Grey Cloak (a medieval masked avenger) has met a castle guard while attempting to break into the stronghold. Unfortunately for Grey Cloak, it is only little, sly Darren in the costume and he's not very skilled with a sword. He draws one card for attempting to fight his way through and one card for being nimble. The guard draws one card for basic training and one for sword. The Narrator informs Darren that he surprised the guard and was able to draw his weapon first. Darren draws one more Card. After comparing hands, the guard manages to win the contest with a Jack because Darren has nothing that can beat it. Darren draws a card for his damage and fortunately, it's a 4 of diamonds. His next move will be to dive out of the window into the moat (a challenge) and try again another day.



Glorianna is running to the secret hiding place the team established at the bank. She is an athletic woman and skilled runner. Her past experience, smuggling people out of the city, has taught her how to avoid capture. When she encounters a large group of interrogators waiting for her, she is not entirely surprised. She is on the scene for only a second before the car, rigged with explosives, tears up the parking lot causing confusion and turmoil among their ranks. She is trying to dive behind a mailbox and then climb through a ground floor window and into the bank without getting shot.

Because Glorianna is not going to stay and fight, the narrator runs the scene as a challenge.

The narrator draws 2 cards because the interrogators have a number of different angles from which to attack and some of them are quick enough to fire off a shot. The narrator draws another card because the two part action is difficult to do in a coordinated way. The narrator draws one more card because Glorianna was being tracked thanks to her friend Kendall's desire to have the interrogators get a good look at her to establish Josephine's credibility as a snitch.

Glorianna draws a card because she is dedicated to the action. She draws another because she knows the interrogators will be there. She draws another card because she is expecting the car explosion while they are not. She also looks at her character sheet and draws cards for her smuggler title, her running skill and her quick hiding specialty.

The narrator looks at his 4 cards

- 3 of spades
- 5 of hearts
- Jack of hearts
- Queen of Spades

Glorianna's Player looks at her 6 cards

- 2 of Diamonds
- 2 of Hearts
- 7 of diamonds
- 8 of spades
- 9 of spades
- Jack of clubs

He plays the Queen as his highest card.

Glorianna wins playing the 2s for a two of a kind.

Several interrogators get shots off but don't have time to take aim before the car explodes. In the midst of the mayhem, she rolls behind the mailbox and dives through the open window which is quickly closed behind her by Josephine. She seems to have vanished before their very eyes.

Being the Narrator

Chances are, a bunch of your friends put you in charge of this game because they trust you to make it fun for them. This game has an unusual structure and may lead to some hurt feelings unless you are careful. Some of the potential pitfalls of One Mask are:

- Everyone wants to be important. Make sure all the players have something to do. In a game that seems to be designed to make players take turns doing something fun, there are actually a lot of opportunities for coordinated actions and special plans involving more than one costume. Don't let certain players dominate the mask.
- The players are your friends. Don't kill them just because you can. The story should be dramatic but it shouldn't be a drag.
- Remember the beginning. All you have to do when looking for a great plot hook is look back to the original sessions. Your players told you what was important to them and what they wanted to do about it.
- Fun always wins. If the rules get in the way of play, lose the rules.
- Plan ahead but don't worry about drifting off course. Sometimes a story will evolve on its own no matter what you wrote down in your little secret booklet.
- You are a player too. Don't forget to have fun. If being the narrator becomes tiresome, ask the other players to take a turn. It can be a blast to see what they do.
- Reward your players for great role-playing. During the game, if a player is doing an excellent job, you can give them a card from the top of the deck that they can add to any challenge. When the game ends, allow your players to add a new skill or specialty to their characters. Talk it through with them. Did they use a particular skill a lot? What did they learn? Help them develop in a way that makes sense in the game.

Narrator's Worksheet

Title:

Main Themes:

Setting:

Specific Locations:

Cast:

Supporting Cast:

Act 1:

Act 2:

Act 3:

Act 4:

Act 5:

One Mask

Player:

Character:

Goal:

Weakness:

Belongings:

Concept:

Skills:

Specialties:

Notes:



My 24 Hrs:

Star time: 6/30/09 8:30 A.M.

Sleep: about 4 hours. Music: I listened to a couple stations I made on Pandora. One station was created from the theme music from Henry V which was very dramatic and helped me keep the right attitude.

Breaks: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, Dog Walks, Big Train (television show).

End Time: 7/1/09 8:30 A.M.



You could have the players create “recipes”. If they use the same skills a lot, just have them write down the skill order and total number of cards. That way, they can just draw that many cards next time they are in a similar situation and the game will move more quickly.

Throw in some “Narrator’s Twists”. For a game session, you could make all 8’s wild or maybe a One-eyed Jack can be held to the side by the player who drew it and used later negate a damage card. Feel free to play around with these rules. This is your game now.