

What will it cost

You

to fight for

the Truth

when corruption and lies

have so many followers?

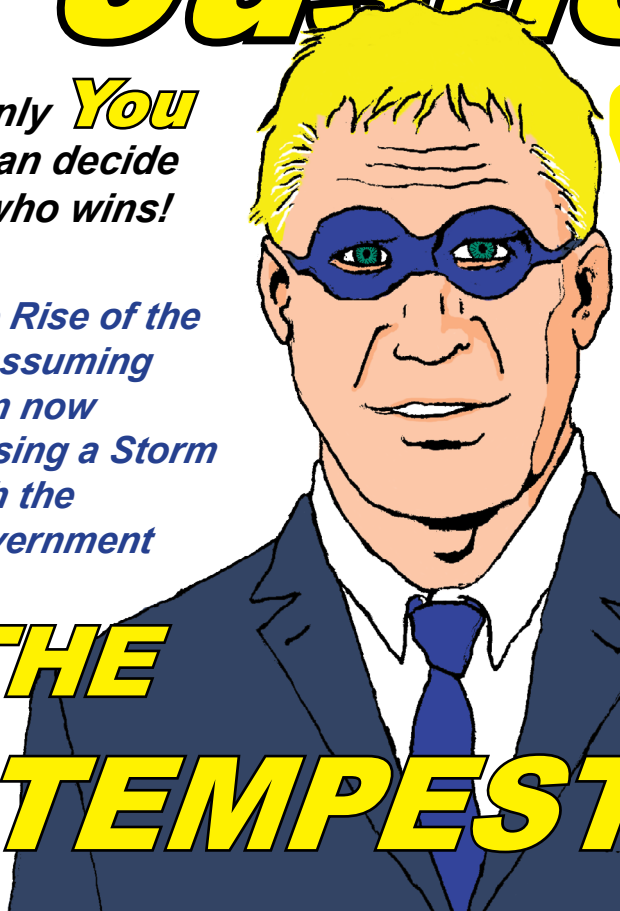
Pop Justice



Only **You**
can decide
who wins!

*The Rise of the
unassuming
man now
Raising a Storm
with the
Government*

THE TEMPEST



BOMBSHELL!



*Who's getting
in his way?*



*Are they
climate change
deniers?*

How far must a man go to battle Climate Change?

*The shocking phone call to Senator Williams
An electrifying look into life with the Storm Chasers*

Pop Justice

The logo for 'Pop Justice' features the words 'Pop' and 'Justice' in a bold, yellow, italicized font with a black outline. Above the word 'Justice' is a black and white illustration of a balance scale. Each of the two pans of the scale contains a raised fist icon, symbolizing justice and social equality.

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Introduction

The court of public opinion has merged with the court of law, making guilt or innocence a matter of popularity. The media have become the defacto arbiters of justice by swaying the masses one way or another. Celebrity influencers have become nearly immune to prosecution.

Meanwhile, normal people, with their mundane and messy lives, try to live by their convictions. But for you, following your convictions involves taking justice into your own hands. Someone has to take a stand for the truth. Turns out that someone is you. So, suit up, gather your friends and super-powered allies, and bring a little justice where you can, no matter what it costs.

Setup

This game is meant to be run over six or seven sessions for between three to six people. You will need between eight to ten six-sided dice, pencils, an eraser, and lots of scrap paper. The organizer will become the Gamemaster, or GM, and the rest of the participants are called players. Each player needs their own Character Sheet and the GM needs a Menace Sheet, found at the back of this book. There also needs to be something that can be used as an X-card.

Safety

People are more important than games. The people around the table are either your current or future friends. To protect their feelings, Pop Justice uses an X-card. Choose an innocuous object that people don't feel compelled to fiddle with, such as a playing card, to function as a the X-card.

Whenever anyone feels uncomfortable, all they need to do is reach out and touch the X-card. Play stops immediately. The person then tells the group what made them feel uncomfortable and the story is changed to avoid that topic. This can be as simple as renaming a character, but sometimes more needs to be retold. At no time should anyone feel the need to justify their use of the X-card.

If anyone hasn't played with the X-card before, you should probably read the last two paragraphs out loud.

The Game Flow

This game is about a group of heroes fighting for change in a city whose justice system has turned into a popularity contest. The game cycles between three phases: Action, Domestic and Media.

The Action Phase is where the heroes work towards taking down the baddies. This is the heroic fight for truth and change.

The Domestic Phase is where the heroes show what drives them and what is dear to them. This is the truth the heroes hold tight.

The Media Phase is where the heroes learn about the consequences of their behaviors, along with what's happening in the city.

Most of the game takes place in the action phase during which players and the GM pit their heroes against threats to the city by framing and playing contest scenes. Things will get messy. Things will have consequences.

When you want to show what brought the characters here. For example if a bad breakup in the past is making a stakeout complicated, that's an opportunity to go to the domestic phase to figure out what happened. These sorts of scenes show the details that make our heroes ordinary people. They can also be used to explain or add complications and advantages.

Dice

This game uses pools of six-sided dice to decide the outcomes of uncertain situations. When the dice are rolled, any die showing 4 or higher is considered a success. The result of most rolls is found by comparing the number of successes to the obstacle rating determined by the GM.

Player Characters

These rules cover the characters made by players.

Renown

Renown is the greater of your Fame and Infamy. Both start at zero. Fame and Infamy represent two tracks that a character can take through their story arc. The character either accomplishes their goals in a way the media's pop justice approves of, or in a way they disapprove of.

Renown, along with traits, affects how many dice your character rolls.

Fame and infamy always rise. When a character reaches 5 Renown their story is close to its end. At 5 Renown every media phase risks either corrupting them by fame or overwhelming them with infamy which lands them in jail, dead, or living in exile.

Character Retirement (GM Note)

If a character's renown gets to 3 or 4, it's probably time to start tempting them. Offer them suggestions of how it could all be easier if only they would let the media know certain things, or possibly not know other things. Yes, this is blatant. It's supposed to be. That way, when they reach renown 5, they can see how power corrupts.

Traits

These are specific details about your character. Leave interpreting them until they come up in play.

Traits can also gain advantages (marked by a +) or complications (marked by a -). When a trait has two complications (--), it becomes unavailable until you take time to resolve one of those complications.

You gain or modify traits through goals. If you want to change what a Trait says, write a goal about it.

Goals

Goals are what a character is working towards and how they gain traits about characters gain, modify or otherwise rewrite traits and refuges. When goals are achieved, the character is changed.

Refuges

These are where the character goes to recover from being a superhero. Usually home is listed as one of them, but the other may be work the local bar or coffee shop.

Creating Characters

Choose Names

Choose both a name and an alias for the character. Write them in the appropriate areas and add your name underneath player.

Write Your Traits

Write your characters traits either as parts of their history, simple facts, attitudes, or skills.

For example:

I've always loved to tinker with machines

I'm good at making machines

I build machines easily

Inventor

Each character starts with six traits, marked on the character sheet by an "s."

Start by writing three traits about your life that drove you to vig-

ilante heroism. Think about the injustice you experienced or witnessed and what you might have done about it. How did the broken justice system or mainstream culture make the life you were trying to build untenable? Consider writing one about how you were able to build the life you wanted.

For example:

*They burned down the church so we armed ourselves
I learned to lie to avoid harassment and abuse
I found a life partner, we both live to support the other*

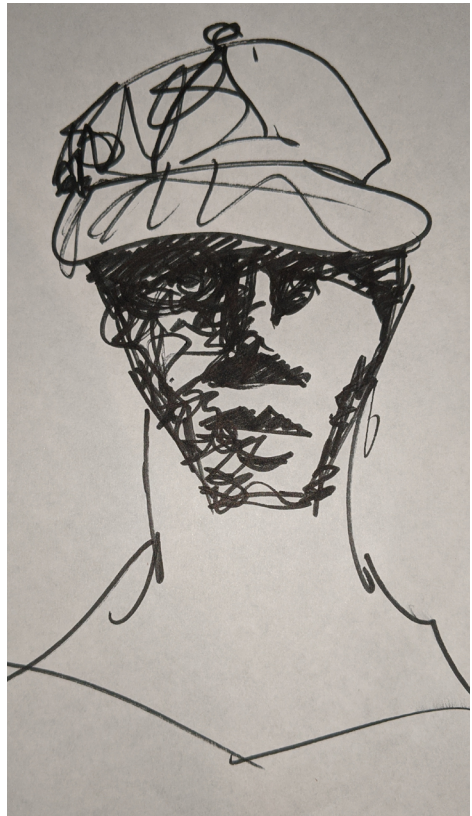
Write one about how you work with others. Do you prefer small teams? Large movements? Working alone?

For example:

*We're strongest in a well coordinated team
I know how to drive large crowds
I'm best without anyone else to worry about*

Write one about your superpower. It doesn't have to be supernatural but it can be as long as it's in line with what the group wants to play. This is something you are uniquely good at. Don't take anyone else's superpower. No villain can have it either.

For example:



*I'm the best investigator the world will ever see
I built myself power armor
I can freeze time*

Talk through the traits as a group and answer any questions anyone has, especially about the powers. Make sure everyone feels like they can contribute meaningfully to the game and that no one is overshadowed by another character or their traits.

Choose two of your traits and mark them as complicated. Choose one of your traits and mark it with advantage. Write the details in the Notes section.

Write Goals

Achieving goals are how characters gain new traits or change the traits they have. Goals have three parts:

1. An idea about the character that is not yet true
2. What it will take to achieve
3. Whether it will add a trait, remove a trait, or rewrite a trait or a similar modification to a refuge

Together with your group you will write the following three goals for your character.

Personal Goal

Write one goal for yourself that your character hopes to change about themselves, along with the trigger and an associated trait.

*For example:
I have to learn to take a punch
It'll take getting hit, and hurt bad, a few times
It'll add a new trait*

Peer Goal

Nominate another player to write a goal for your character. Have another player choose a trait that they are interested in seeing your character gain, along with a trigger and an associated trait.

For example:

I think Alice could organize a new political party

It'll take getting her ideas into the media, some fame would help too.

It'll add a new trait

Media Goal

Choose between the goals of get famous or infamous. Your GM will work with you and the group to say what it will take for the media and mainstream culture to see you that way. Work together to figure out when the group will know what the media thinks is true. The nature of the goal should scale in scope along with your current renown. Use the following guidelines when making media goals based on the fame or infamy you are aimingreaching for.

1. Local Rumors
2. Scattered Newspaper Articles
3. Acknowledged by Establishment Figures
4. Regional Influence
5. Global Renown

For Example:

Vicktor wants infamy and he is currently at 3, it'll take seriously harming a national celebrity to generate enough publicity to earn rank 4.

Character Advancement

After each session, evaluate goals as a group. If you made at least one roll trying to achieve a goal but have not met the trigger, you worked towards achieving that goal, growgoal grow a trait that was relevant to the work you did.. If you did what it takes to achieve it write a new trait with the group about it.have made a roll that matches the trigger of the judgement, you have resolved it.

For example:

If you uncovered important details that led to stopping a villain's progress, "I know just where to look"

If you repeatedly complicated things for your career, "I own my own construction company"

At any time you may replace your personal goal or switch your media goal. At the end of every session you may nominate someone to decide to either keep or replace your peer goal.

If you resolved a goal, gain the mechanical change. As an optional rule, if someone else can confirm that you worked towards a goal, but didn't complete it, a trait that was used gains an advantage.

Folding the Character Sheet

Print or photocopy the character sheet onto a piece of A4 paper. Those using letter paper will have to select Fit or some similar option before printing.

Once printed, mountain fold it in half where the pages would crease so that you're looking at the back of the character sheet. Then, mountain-fold it at 90° along the dotted line to turn your character's Alias into a nameplate.

How to Play

As mentioned previously, playing Pop Justice cycles through three phases.

Action Phase

When the group is involved in the action, fighting against a threat, use a Contest to resolve what happens. This involves players telling the group how their characters fight the threat and what that will accomplish. The GM then describes what will happen if they don't succeed. Test Renown with applicable traits, advantages and complications.

Contests can also occur between two opposing characters. Instead of choosing an obstacle, the characters roll off with whoever rolls more successes winning. Ties go against the challenger.

Flashback

Characters may use flashbacks to add temporary advantages to their rolls. Only one is allowed per character for each action phase. Describe how you want to gain the advantage you wish to give to one of your traits in order to make your change.

Reporting Live

Sometimes the news is on the scene, covering the story. Reporting Live allow quick aside that give characters new traits to also hint at how they're working towards their Media Goal. As with Vignettes, Reporting Lives are quick sub-scenes.

Domestic Phase

How do the characters get away from the pressure? More specifically, where do they go? Domestic Phases involve the characters going to one of their Refuges. Spending some time in such a place allows the character to recover all of their used traits.

Additionally, all characters may grow a new advantage or remove one complication. Tell the group how you resolved the complication or set up the advantage.

After the players recover, the GM resets the Pressure to 0 and play usually continues to the Media Phase

Media Phase

The tabloid and clickbait media also help frame responses. The media lacks any shred of objectivity and eschews any notions of integrity. It's a garish and ubiquitous caricature of real world media. When entering a media phase do any of these as appropriate.

Progress a Menace (always)

Move a menace closer to its dark future.

Foreshadow (sometimes)

Reveal a clue to the players. Show something to the players that is outside the notice of the characters. Use this to make the path forward clearer or to add dramatic irony to the game.

Ramp up the pressure (sometimes)

Increase pressure by 1. Describe how the heroes actions have brought this about and what is making everything harder to accomplish now.

Revelation (once per session)

This Media Phase usually happens at the end of every session. Check the character's Media Goal and advance their fame or infamy. If the character did something noteworthy, and didn't receive a new trait from Reporting Live, then the GM may give them a trait.

Tests

When you make a test, state what you hope to accomplish. The GM will tell you what will happen if you fail and give you an ob-staclerating. Then add your renown to the number of traits you're using to get how many die you roll. This is done by describing how they apply. If there's no chance of success, don't roll or mark traits as used.

If there is a chance, roll your dice and count the total number of successes (4+) if this number meets or exceeds the test obsta- cle, you accomplish what you set out to do. Otherwise, you suffer the consequence declared by the GM.

Spending Advantages

When you make a test and have some advantage. You may spend advantages after you roll to affect the outcome. Advantage may be spent in the following ways:

1. reroll a single non success die
2. reroll a single die as long as it shows a 6 counting addi- tional successes
3. negate one complication point the GM would gain this round

Help

Players may help another player on a test if they are in a situ- ation to do so. Describe how you help. The helped player adds one die and one complication to the test. The helping player is also caught in any fallout from the test.

Fallout

When you spend complication after a test, choose one of the

following options for each complication.

- Remove an advantage from a trait used in the test
- Add a complication for a trait used in the test
- Roll 1d6, on a 1 or a 2 to increase the Pressure level by 1

Pressure

Pressure builds as play proceeds through more and more contests without Recovery. Pressure Increases the obstacle of all tests by 1 per level and is reset to 0 whenever the players decide to return to their normal lives, via starting a Domestic Phase. It can also be increased by fallout or in a media phase.

How to Run

(GMs only)

Pop Justice is a character-focused game. That means the player characters usually set the pace of play. The menace needs to threaten what the characters care about. More than the characters overcoming the menace, Pop Justice is about the choices characters make.

The object of the game is to give the characters impossible choices between the normal life they want to build and upholding their convictions. Make the player characters choose to sacrifice their normal life in order to fulfill their convictions. Usually one of these will offer short-term gain, while the other offers long-term effects. It's up to you to decide which is which. These also produce the complications and advantages that are the first way that you may give feedback to the players.

Session 0

The first session will likely be taken up by creating characters alongside choosing and describing a city. It's up to the GM to think up a Menace, or at least the beginnings of one. But that doesn't mean that you can't start playing right away.

Session 0 can also incorporate a Domestic Phase, allowing the players to get to know their characters and decide how everyone knows each other. If the GM is particularly quick-thinking, then end the first session on a Media Phase.

Planning

When you're thinking on your feet, it's usually best to go with your first idea in order to keep the story moving.

This approach is bad for adventures because it leads to simplistic, predictable responses. Playing Pop Justice works better with more nuanced approaches. The best way to do that is through planning. There's two rules of threes I recommend using.

The first is to discard your first and second idea because they're usually just an idea and then a reversal of that idea. The third and subsequent ideas tease out the connection between those two inspirations.

The second rule of threes is that, for every detail, ask “why?” Come up with an answer, and then ask “why,” again. Answer that, then ask “why” yet again. Come up with a third answer. This sort of thinking allows for more than three answers, it also allows for greater understanding of how the answers connect.

These sorts of intellectual activities take time.

Tests and Obstacles

This is a world of superpowers so give the heroes the benefit of the doubt in terms of what they can accomplish but also make sure to challenge them. If you think they are asking the impossible, tell them so and make them justify themselves.

Each time a player makes a test you will need to provide them with an obstacle. Obstacles are based on the difficulty of what they want to happen and how much pressure the setting is under. Under most circumstances the base difficulty is 2. These are the things that most heroes should be able to do on a regular basis. What those things are will vary based on what your group thinks is a reasonable baseline. Tests/Obstacles should always have real consequences for failure and those should be stated up front/be consequential. Simple tasks like walking down an empty street should never involve a roll. The more difficult the task, the higher the obstacle, the more successes are needed to overcome it.

As the setting becomes more tumultuous, the pressure will build. Pressure represents activity in the world but also fatigue of the heroes. Pressure is added to the obstacle of all tests. Pressure builds until the players Recover.

Based on the circumstances you may also give additional difficulty modifiers. For example, if the threat is way beyond a player's experience or they are outnumbered ten to one, add one to the base obstacle for each factor.

Fallout

When you spend complication after a test, choose one of the following options for each complication.

- Remove an advantage from a trait used in the test
- Add a complication for a trait used in the test
- Roll 1d6 on a 1 or a 2 Increase pressure level by one

Pressure

Pressure builds as play proceeds through more and more contests without Recovery. Pressure increases the obstacle of all tests by 1 per level and is reset to 0 whenever the players decide to Recover. It can be increased by fallout or in a media phase.

Menace

The cities of this game are plagued by the actions of those who have escaped justice through their popularity. Unchecked these celebrities will reshape the city to serve only their best interests.

A Menace presents a celebrity's vision for an idealized and corrupt version of the city. Through the menace we gain glimpses into the future in the form of stepping stones the city will take on the path towards ruin.

As a celebrity's influence and power goes unchecked the glimpses of the future come to pass. If too many of the portents come into reality, the vision too becomes real. Our heroes fight against the progress of a menace by engaging and overcoming it's threats in contests.

Creating a menace has five parts:

1. The city to be menaced
2. Description of the Menace
3. Name it, come up with an alias, and their followers, too
4. Say what happens if nothing gets in the way, This is the dark future.
5. List portents of the dark future, The threats and signs of what's happening that add up a big change.

The City

Whether based in someplace real or a someone's imagination, it's handy to describe the city a little. Come up with a couple of neighbourhoods, along with a smattering of political and law enforcement figures.

Names

The Menace centres around a celebrity. Name them. Come up with their alias. Finally, think up a name for their followers to organize under. After all, everyone wants to belong to something.

Dark Future

This is what happens if no one interferes with the celebrity's plans. It should be a future full of corruption, lies and mass suffering.

Portents

These are things that will happen leading up to the Dark Future. They make good media fodder, but they should threaten the characters' domestic life, too. It's a good idea to think up a couple of more portents than the number of sessions you plan to run the game.

Star Struck

Eventually the characters will confront the celebrity behind the Menace. If they haven't progressed far enough in renown, they'll be star struck, or something similar.

All Menaces are celebrities themselves. Their renown effectively becomes a base obstacle for any tests a character attempts to undertake. Given that most Menacing celebrities have a renown of 5, or even higher, that's quite the hurdle to overcome, before the situation and pressure are taken into account.

If you're feeling generous, then consider running the celebrity like another character. Resolve things by rolling off against the characters.

Example Menace

A Meteorologist turned climate scientist, named Gavin Wayle, is disgruntled after funding is cut to his research. He adopts the persona of The Tempest and turns to extremism. He becomes obsessed and applies his previous work into creating a weather machine.

His followers are called the Storm Chasers. They are unable to crowdfund the exorbitant amount of money required so they turn to crime.

Portents

(Expand this list to threaten the characters' domestic lives.)

1. Protestors break into a power plant to steal parts
2. Rare minerals stolen from a mine
3. Scientist goes missing
4. Power grid redirected
5. Winds and rain pick up
6. Freak weather incidents

Dark Future

The city is surrounded by a megastorm, isolating it from the outside world. Within the city panic, accompanied by looting and rioting ensues. The government capitulates, but The Tempest doesn't let the storm subside, stating that if he does, everyone will just return to wrecking the environment.

Example Characters

These characters are for running a small game of *Pop Justice*. They haven't been given peer goals yet, so make something up

when you introduce them.

Bob Boyle/Knuckles

He was a guy from the wrong side of the tracks made good until everything was threatened by The Tempest.

Traits

Bar room brawler. Works well with a buddy. Friends with an out-of-work mechanic. Owns a beat-up pickup truck. Can punch through almost anything.

Goals

Self: Make friends with employers

Media: Intimidate someone into seeing reason (infamy)

Refuges

1. His trailer-home
2. His job as a social worker

Alice Jones/Anomaly

She was an up-and-coming climate scientist who didn't like how The Tempest played with the weather, let alone the climate.

Traits

Climate Science!. Used to working alone. Teleportation. A lightning-proof cage. Has a handful of scientist friends. Has university bureaucrat allies.

Goals

Self: Survive a lightning strike

Media: Save someone from a lightning strike (fame)

Refuges

1. B.L.U.E.S. Bar
2. Book club with fellow scientists

Alias:

Player:

----- *fold here* -----

Goals

Self: _____

Peer: _____

Media: _____

Refuges

1. _____

2. _____

Notes: _____

Pop Justice



Menace Sheet

Name: _____

Alias: _____

Followers: _____

Portents

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Dark Future: _____

