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THE *d2* BASED NOIR THEMED RPG



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THE BACKSTORY

It was a cold, wet November and I was feeling a bit stressed. I needed a distraction, something to take my mind off my problems, if you know what I mean. So I made my way to this quaint little cyber gin-joint that I tend to frequent, maybe you've heard of it, **GOOGLE+**? Anyway, a bunch of palookas in the place were babbling on and on about some sort of **NAGA DEMON**. I know what you're thinking. I was there myself. Just what kind of hooch were these eggs downing? Turns out they were just talking about a self-governed contest to design an entire game in the month of November. It seemed to be just what the Doc ordered, so I sat myself down with a glass of rye to try and figure out just what I could do.

Now, I'm a simple man of simple pleasures with simple vices, so I figured the best thing would be a simple game, something that relied less on mechanics and more on the Narration of the story. The way I had it figured, most dice games try to squeeze out every option possible for success, but good stories also come from failures, so why not even the odds a bit? Why not fall back to that classic arbiter of chance, the coin flip? With that the basis for The Coin's Hard Edge was born.

From there it was only a quick hop, skip, and jump to a suitable genre for a game with this type of mechanic, something where failure was always an option, where combat was fast and dirty, and where -let's face it- flipping a coin would look cool.

It doesn't take a Shamus to figure that one out: Noir.



NOTES ABOUT GROUP SIZE:

The Coin's Hard Edge tends to work best, like most Noir Films, by following the exploits of a few individuals. As such, it favors player groups of 2-4. While you can play the game with larger groups, it becomes unwieldy and difficult to keep that Noir aesthetic.

BASIC MECHANICS

Unlike most Role Playing Games, there is no real stat or skill system in The Coin's Hard Edge. The game is largely story-driven, with the basic game mechanic coming back to the classic coin flip to determine the outcome of individual Events.


In the game, Events are divided into three basic types of flips.

Type 1: The Check

The Check is an uncontested 'roll' or flip of a coin to determine success or failure. Let's say your Gumshoe wants to pick a lock on a warehouse. A single coin flip determines success or failure. By default, a flip landing on 'heads' is considered a success and 'tails' a failure. To keep the quick and dirty feel of the Noir genre, characters are not allowed 'second chances' at individual Checks (unless you can Play it Again, which we'll cover in a bit). Returning to the example: If you fail the lock-pick and fuse the lock, you're not getting in that way. Try something else.

Type 2: The Grift

A Grift is made when a character wants to do something that directly affects another player or NPC that is not actual Combat. The target is called a 'mark'. A Grift is made by both the player and their mark flipping a coin. If the player succeeds



and the mark fails, the player wins. If both succeed, it is considered only a partial success at the Narrator's (GM's) discretion for extent. If the player fails and the mark wins, the mark is aware of the attempt. If both fail, there's no net effect and they both just stand there looking stupid.

For example, your Femme Fatale wants to seduce the Gumshoe. They both flip, and both flips come up heads. In this instance the Gumshoe would pick up that she's flirting, while also being fully aware that she's up to something.

Type 3: Combat

Combat in The Coin's Hard Edge is designed to mimic the 'one-two punches and someone's on the ground' combat of Noir. All combat flips are always made by the Narrator. The attacker 'calls' the flip in the air, and if it is called correctly the attack succeeds. If not, it fails. A successful attack requires a secondary flip called by the target of the attack to see if they were incapacitated.

A success on the secondary flip means that they are injured, but not incapacitated, and may continue to play. Once a character or NPC has become incapacitated they are 'out' until the Narrator determines that they are able to resume gameplay. This may require some form of medical attention, but does not really mean that the character has been killed. In fact, avoid killing any characters as a result of combat; since Noir likes to keep the heroes alive to prolong their suffering [insert maniacal laughter here].

Combat is not meant to be a prolonged Event and should resolve quickly. Should your entire party fall into combat with an individual, it would be best to let one party member take the lead, and rather than run separate Combat Events for each player, let other players assist the lead in Combat.

THE FICKLE LADY:

Lady Luck can be a ticklish dame. Sometimes when you really need things to come up right for

you, you keep seeing the tail end of the horse.

Never fear; there are two ways to charm the doll and try to get back on rails.

The first is hoping your pals have got your back and are going to give you an assist (more on that in a bit). The second comes along when you fail in something you're particularly good at; you can always ask to "Play it Again."

Play it Again, Sam

All characters have a number of 're flips' available, equal to their Archetype level (see Leveling and Advancement section). This allows them to reflip for any Events whose outcome they may not like, so long as those Events lie within their Archetype's particular specialization.


For instance, let's say a first level Tough Guy wants to break a door down. She fails her Check but announces to the Narrator that she would like to "Play it Again." This allows her to reflip. If she fails again, she fails. If not, she succeeds on that flip and the door comes down. Now if the Tough Guy wanted to investigate a murder scene and failed, she would get no Play it Again, as investigation is not part of her Archetype Specialization.

Regardless of level, you only get one reflip per Event. A level two Tough Guy in the same situation that failed her reflip would not get to try again on that flip, but would have to save her second available Play it Again for another flip.

Assisted Flips

If a player should encounter an Event where they really want, or need every chance for success, other players can make assisting flips to help out, with some stipulations.

The player making the Event flip makes it normally. Those who are attempting to assist must do two things: first, provide a good narrative on how they're going to try to help, and second, make a standard Check. On a success they 'help' by affording the player making the Event flip one free



Play it Again flip should they fail on that Event and that Event only. Multiple players can assist, but only one Play it Again can be granted. Assisted Play it Agains do not count towards your level cap; they are gratis.

As an example, let's say that our Gumshoe from before is in a close room with our Femme Fatale and two other people. The Femme Fatale needs to try and weasel some information out of one of the marks, so the Gumshoe says that he wants to assist by casually taking the other person aside and interrogating them about their whereabouts at a particular place and time. Since the Gumshoe doesn't have any real interest in the information, he's only attempting to give the Femme Fatale a little leg room to get the info she needs. He makes a Check and succeeds, so if the Femme Fatale fails, she can Play it Again without having to spend any the reflips granted by her Archetype.

CHARACTERS

Characters in The Coin's Hard Edge are based off of a series of Noir inspired Archetypes. These Archetypes can best be imagined as a character's motivation and outlook on life, and also provide some support in certain fields of expertise, or specialties.

The Core Archetypes

The Gumshoe - This is the classic private dick. The Gumshoe is exemplified by the giants in the field, Sam Spade, Phillip Marlowe, Mike Hammer, Dixon Hill, etc. The world is a mess and The Gumshoe wants to put everything in its place, and it doesn't hurt if they make a little dough along the way.

The Gumshoe specializes in Detective Work, Investigation, Interrogation, and generally being a bit of a snoop.

The Tough Guy - A street tough, possibly a small time boxer, or they may have ties to organized crime. The Tough Guy is just trying to make a

living in this crazy mixed up world.

The Tough Guy is a Melee Combat and Brawn specialist. If it has to do with Strength and Intimidation, they're your guy.

The Femme Fatale - Mysterious, dangerous, possibly villainous and very, very sexy, the Femme Fatale knows what they want and will take any means to achieve it.

The Femme Fatale's specialty lies in the fine art of Social manipulation. They know their way around pretty much any social situation and can generally learn or get what they want.

The Ingénue - The wide eyed innocent; kind, gentle, and (you'd think) fodder for grist mill. Generally you'd be wrong.

The Ingénue is the ultimate at lying low and assuaging others' concerns about them. They're masters of misdirection and social stealth.

It is important to note that while the Core Archetypes are divided into two 'genders', your character is not necessarily the same 'gender' as the archetype you pick. You can have a female Gumshoe or Tough Guy, and a male Ingénue or Femme Fatale.

Secondary Archetypes & Archetypal Expansion

Should the Narrator wish, they may generate a series of secondary Archetypes, with their own unique specializations, that can develop a more Setting-appropriate character for the players. They are also free to pick from any Secondary Archetypes available in the various supplemental works and Settings books for The Coin's Hard Edge.

These Secondary Archetypes simply provide another aspect to the character and allow for extra specialties and character development, but are by no means required for the core game. In fact, if the Narrator deems it acceptable, one could choose multiple Core Archetypes.

CHARACTER GENERATION

Character generation in *The Coin's Hard Edge* can be done one of two ways; which one you use is up to the Narrator.

The first method is to let the coin decide. Flip once to determine if you will play either one of the 'male' or one of the 'female' Archetypes. Flip a second time to determine which of the two remaining Archetypes you play.

The second method, for exceedingly less anal Narrators, is to just let the player pick.

LEVELS & ADVANCEMENT

Each character begins play with all of their Archetypes at Level 1. This affords them one Play it Again per Archetype, per session.

At the end of a session, a character flips a coin a number of times equal to the level of their most frequently used Archetype for that session. Should they succeed on all their flips, they then advance to the next level for the next session. This keeps the number of Play it Agains to a reasonable level except for extraordinarily lucky players.

SOME NOTES ON SETTING

Noir is a particularly versatile genre that has been successfully translated to a wide range of other settings, from Classic Noir to Steampunk, Cyberpunk, and even Fantasy and Hard SciFi. Don't feel limited by the classic Film Noir settings; if you want elves or aliens running around, don't let anyone tell you no. The world is your oyster, baby. Crack it open.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

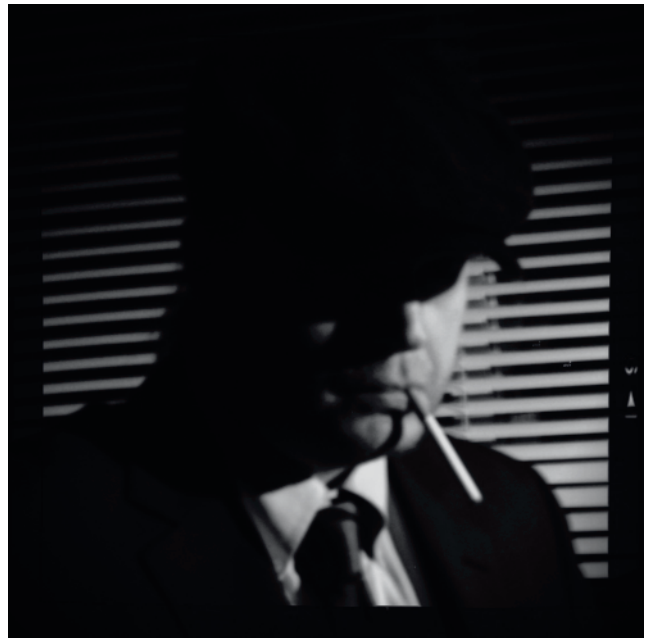
There are quite a few people I would like to thank in helping with the development of the game. **S. JOHN ROSS**, for his development of **RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG**, which showed me that yes, simple and fun systems can and should be made.

I would like to thank the following people for

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And last but nowhere near least, My Lovely Wife for putting with my insanity. Here's lookin' at you, kid.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



E. Bryan Rumph is a self-titled Geek of all Trades, and has performed in Renaissance Festivals, brewed mead, genetically engineered bacteria, and has had lengthy discussions on the pros and cons of Silver Age and Post Crisis Superman, among other things. He is currently a Mad Scientist in Training and lives in Northern Virginia with his wife and three furry demons of the feline persuasion.



The city is a dark and dangerous place; loads of folks would just as soon kill ya as give ya the time of day. It's hard for any right guy or dame to keep sucking air, let alone make any headway in this town. Most of the time, it's a toss-up, and it all comes down to **THE COIN'S HARD EDGE**.

THE COIN'S HARD EDGE is a Noir-themed Role Playing Game which relies on a d2 (a coin toss) to determine the outcome of events. Fate is a fickle lady, and failure is always an option. Desaturate your gaming experience and take a walk down the mean streets with **THE COIN'S HARD EDGE**.

