



Our sun is dying. Mankind faces extinction. Sixteen months ago, I, Robert Capa, and a crew of seven, left earth frozen in a solar winter. Our mission: reignite the sun, before it's too late. Welcome to Icarus II. - Dr. Robert Capa, Sunshine

Introduction

Hello!

My name is Mark, and this is my roleplaying game, *Our Last Best Hope*. In it, you and your friends play a team of people trying to stop the end of the world. Much like the movies *Sunshine* or *Armageddon*, your team has been selected for one, last shot at saving Humanity from a terrible Crisis. You, and your team, are our last best hope...

What is the Crisis?

To play *Our Last Best Hope*, your group needs to decide what threat you are facing. Some groups already know exactly what zombie/meteor/disease-fueled apocalypse they want to play out, but if you are having trouble thinking of a doomed Earth, this might help:

“When the Earth is threatened by (Crisis), only one team can save Humanity. But (Complication) isn't going to make it easy for them. With time running out, can they do it?”

Potential Crises:

- a dying sun
- an alien invasion
- a zombie apocalypse
- a giant meteor
- an electromagnetic solar storm
- an endless drought
- a nuclear holocaust
- an infertile population

Potential Complications:

- the loss of a previous crew
- a traitor in their midst
- the collapse of world governments
- a fascist uprising

What do I need to play?

- 15 black dice and 15 white dice (or any contrasting color)
- a set of tokens for story points
- a few pencils and pieces of paper

What are story points?

Story points are an out-of-character mechanism for rewarding good play. You can get story points from the Gamemaster (GM) for good roleplay, or as the result of specific mechanical actions. You spend story points to activate abilities or otherwise influence the game.

Good luck!

Character Creation

Names

First, pick a name for your character. Try to stay in character as much as possible by using other player's character's names.

Roles

In addition to a name, players should also select a Role for their character to play during the mission. Roles describe what kind of training and experience your character brings to the effort to save Humanity, and also what mechanical strengths and weaknesses you bring to the team. There are no levels or ranks to these Roles; it is assumed that you are the best that Earth has to offer. Multiples of each Role are allowed, and may even be needed.

Doctor - Needing medical science assistance, many teams have doctors to ensure the psychological health of the team or research medical cures to epidemics.

Role Abilities:

- Spend a story point to add two (2) white dice to a roll during a medical emergency.
- Add a Black die to all rolls when you are trying to harm someone.

Engineer - A common team member on technically complex missions, an Engineer is crucial for keeping the technology working.

Role Abilities:

- Spend a story point to add two (2) white dice to a roll when you are repairing equipment.
- Add a Black die to all rolls when you attempt to convince someone to change their mind.

Scientist - Many of the Crises that Humanity faces require bold and risky plans that have been dreamed up by our best and brightest minds. Sometimes they come along for the trip.

Role Abilities:

- Spend a story point to add two (2) white dice to a roll when utilizing your scientific training.
- Add a Black die to all rolls when you have to act quickly.

Soldier - Not all threats can be countered with science alone. Guns help too.

Role Abilities:

- Spend a story point to add two (2) white dice to a roll when you are harming others.
- Add a Black die to all rolls when you are disobeying orders.

Myers-Briggs Attributes

After choosing a name, decide on your "Myers-Briggs" Attributes (MBA). The MBA determines your character's strengths and adds white dice to your rolls during the game. Select one between each of the following:

- Extraversion vs Introversion (E or I)
- Sensing vs iNtuition (S or N)
- Thinking vs Feeling (T or F)
- Judging vs Perceiving (J or P)

Extraversion: Outwardly directed, acting first and thinking later.

Introversion: Thoughtful, slow to act, private in nature

Sensing: Focused on the present, easily recalls details

Intuitive: Future oriented, best suited to theoretical understanding

Thinking: Logically driven, accepts and enjoys conflict

Feeling: Prioritizes the needs of others, disturbed by conflict

Judging: Enjoys task related action, builds complex timelines

Perceiving: Comfortable “on-the-fly,” likes to multitask

Alonso decides that he wants his Scientist character, Robert, to be an action oriented physicist, the kind of man who jumps out of planes to better understand gravity. He selects ENTP (Extraversion, iNtution, Thinking, Perceiving) as his MBA.

Relationship Dice

After selecting Attributes and Roles, you should assign one Black die to the player on your left and one White die to the player on your right.

The Black die is tied to some conflict in the relationship, a love that went sour or a bitter rivalry. If two characters with a black die between them are ever in a conflict together, the GM can pay each of them a story point to add a black die to their rolls, as the bad blood gets in the way of solving problems.

The white die is tied to a positive tie between the two characters. If two characters with a white die are in a conflict together, one of them can use the die for the roll. There is no cost for using the die, but only one of the characters can use it at a time.

Capa, Farayi's character, has a bad history with Mace, Ryan's character. She puts a black die between them to represent the times they have gotten into fights onboard the Icarus II.

M.I.M.I.C

You do have one additional resource in the fight against the end of humanity: the Massively Integrated Multipurpose Informational Computer (MIMIC). MIMIC contains all of the information Humanity has generated to date about the Crisis and can be accessed by any team member in any location through the use of mobile devices and voice commands. If you have a question, MIMIC has an answer, although there may be elements of the Crisis that are still a mystery. Your GM plays MIMIC, along with any other characters you may meet during the mission.

Death Cards

Finally, you should draw a card from the death deck (see Death Cards). Look at the card, but place it facedown in front of you without letting any of the other players see it.

Game Mechanics

Resolving Conflict

The core mechanic of *Our Last Best Hope* relies upon rolling black and white dice. When you want to deal with Threats and accomplish your objectives, your GM will ask you to roll a dice pool consisting of some black and some white dice. Together, these dice will determine the outcome of your efforts with white dice adding positive effects and black dice adding negative effects.

Gathering Dice

You can gather dice for a roll from the following places:

Roles - You may pay a story point to add two (2) dice to your pool based on your Role Ability

MBA - You may take one white die based on an appropriate element of your MBA

Relationships - If you are working with the player with whom you share a white die, you may choose to utilize that white die

Assets - You may pay a story point to add Asset dice to your pool

Your GM will tell you how many black dice to roll, but black dice typically come from Threats.

Outcomes of Rolls

To determine the outcome of a roll, add up the total of each color of dice and subtract the lower amount from the higher total. For example, a roll of 4W, 3W, 2B, 3B has a white total of seven (7) and a black total of five (5). The total for the roll is two white (2W), a positive outcome for the characters. A roll of 4W, 3W, 6B, 6B has a total of 5B, a negative outcome for the characters.

For every five above or below zero, additional effects occur. For every five white, you receive a success, an additional bonus that will move you closer to resolving the Crisis. For every five black, a botch occurs, leaving your character weaker and the mission in danger.

Players can spend the success in the following ways:

- Intensifying an effect (i.e. increasing the healing effects of a Doctor's roll)
- Resolving a threat
- Creating or increasing an asset
- Adding a narrative element without mechanical effect ("After dressing a wound, I lift the injured team member into the truck.")

The GM may spend botches to:

- Deliver Harm to a character
- Increase a Threat
- Reduce an Asset

- Add narrative complications without mechanical effect (“As you finish repairing the computer, you notice that your trajectory is off course.”)

If you roll exactly zero (0) on a roll during Act 1, all black and white totals exactly cancelling out, the GM will roll the Event Pool (see The Event Pool below). Successes (totals of 5W+) will create new assets for the players, and Botches (totals of 5B+) will create new threats. The GM is free to spread Success and Botches across existing Assets and Threats as it fits the story.

If you roll a zero in Act 2, reroll.

Multiple Characters

If multiple characters wish to tackle a problem simultaneously, they may do so. However, their rolls are separate and take place sequentially. The effects are not combined, but both characters can target the same Threat.

If two characters are opposed in their desires, they both roll simultaneously, with the stronger white roll winning. All rolls that result in black totals are resolved by the GM as if the characters had rolled normally. It is possible, after all, for a fight between two characters to result in a greater threat from the outside.

Assets

Assets are valuable tools that your team has that can be used to counter Threats and counter the Crisis. These are usable by any character, as long as the Asset is within reach and appropriate to the Threat at hand. Assets are rated in White dice, and any item can have any rank. Some examples:

Assault Rifle (1W)
Set of Tools (3W)
Map of Area (2W)

Any player may pay a story point to the GM to add Asset dice to an appropriate roll. For example:

Chris’s character, Daryl, is running from a Zombie Mob (3B). Since he has a Map of the Area (2W), he can pay a story point to add two (2) White dice to his roll.

Your team creates assets during character creation, but you can also use success to create new assets during the game. A player can pay a story point to turn a success into a newly discovered Asset.

Threats

Threats are obstacles to your team’s objective, a danger that could harm team members or derail the entire mission. Since each Crisis is different, each threat is different. Any team member, regardless of Role, can tackle any threat, but some team members will be better at handling specific threats based on Role Abilities.

Threats are rated in black dice. Some examples:

Psychotic Crew Member (4B)
Malfunctioning Airlock (3B)

Pack of Zombies (2B)

When confronted by a threat, you must roll to avoid Harm, adding the black dice from the Threat to your roll (see Harm). If the total comes up White, the Threat does no damage, but the danger may pursue you or continue to threaten Harm in the future.

Janice's character Maggie is exploring an abandoned military base for supplies when she is confronted by a Zombie (1B). Janice gathers her dice, and finds that she has only one White die (+1 Perceptive). She rolls her one White die and her one Black die, getting 3W and 2B. She successfully escapes the Zombie, but it may pursue her further.

Resolving threats is difficult. You must spend a success (see Rolls) in order to reduce a threat by one level.

A Malfunctioning Computer (2B) is endangering the crew of the Icarus II. Ryan's character Mace, the ship's engineer, attempts to repair the computer. Gathering his dice, Ryan has three White dice (+2 Engineer, +1 Judging). He rolls his three White and the two Black dice from the Threat, getting 4W, 3W, 2W, 3B, 1B for a total of 5W. Mace makes significant progress repairing the computer, and the threat is reduced by one die to 1B.

Interacting with threats can sometimes make the threat worse. If your roll comes up as a botch (i.e. 5B+), the GM can add a die to the threat, as the situation has worsened and the threat has become more dangerous.

Mike's character Wilson is doing everything he can to close a Damaged Hull Section (3B) that was blown open by a meteorite. Unfortunately, he's only got one white die (+1 Thinking). His roll comes up 3W, 4B, 5B, 3B for a total of 9B. Since the roll came up black, Wilson takes a level of Harm, as the rushing air knocks him into the one of the bulkheads. In addition, one of Wilson's tools catches on the Hull Section, ripping it open further and escalating the Threat to 4B.

The Event Pool

The GM begins the game with one black die and one white die in the Event pool. Additional dice are added to the pool during Act 1 until the Event Pool contains ten dice. At that point, the game advances to Act 2 (see Gameplay: Act 2).

Dice are added to the Event Pool when a player rolls a black or white six during a regular roll. If a black die comes up as a six, the GM can pay three (3) story points to have that die removed from the roll and added to the Event Pool. If a white die comes up as a six, the player can pay three (3) story points for the same effect. Only one white and one black die can be pulled from a single pool.

Note that this affects the end total of the roll; the removed die is not counted in the total.

Mace makes another attempt to repair the Malfunctioning Computer (1B) with his three (3) dice (+2 Engineer, +1 Judging). This time he rolls 1W, 6W, 6B. The GM pays him three (3) story

points to add the black die to the Event Pool, and Mace does the same, adding a white die as well. The end roll of 1W is not enough to resolve the Threat, and Mace will have to roll again.

Harm

Your character can suffer up to five levels of Harm before dying. Harm typically arises from interactions with Threats, but can also happen when two characters fight with each other. Regardless, the effect is cumulative. The fifth level of Harm knocks you out, and any additional Harm kills you.

Harm can be healed by any character, but Doctors receive mechanical bonuses to do so.

If you are facing a Threat and takes a fifth level of Harm, you can chose to die, resolving the Threat as a result of your death. Like Spock in Star Trek II, you can sacrifice yourself for the greater good, saving your team at the cost of your life. Threats resolved through suicide are not replaced with new threats by the GM.

Death Cards

If you have taken five levels of Harm, but aren't ready to die, you can play your death card. The death card resolves the threat as if you died, but your Harm is reduced to zero and you escape danger. In the future, however, you must die in a way that matches the card, fulfilling your destiny...

Gameplay: Act 1

Five Threats, Three Assets

To start Act 1, the GM lays out five Threats (one 3B, two 2Bs, and three 1Bs) on index cards, face down in front of the players. These Threats should come into play as the characters work against the Crisis.

Simultaneously, the players should collectively decide on three Assets they want to have at the start of the game and place those on index cards, face up, as well.

The Choice

At the start of every game of *Our Last Best Hope*, the team is called together by MIMIC to discuss a new development in the mission. Ideally, this Choice presents a potential for a new asset in the fight against the Crisis, but also the potential for the loss of all hope.

Encountering Threats

As the characters move to act (or not act) on The Choice, the GM should expose appropriate Threats. Characters will work to counter those threats, and any that are resolved should be replaced with new facedown 1B Threats.

End of the Act

As stated above, the Event Pool grows during Act 1. When it reaches ten dice, Act 1 ends.

Gameplay: Act 2

The Consequences

To start Act 2, the GM rolls the Event Pool to determine the effects of the Choice. This can result in new Assets, new Threats, Harm, and narrative effects (see Consequence Table).

The Crisis/Hero Pool

After establishing the Consequences, the Event Pool should be split into black dice (Crisis Pool) and white dice (Hero Pool). The GM can add dice from the Crisis Pool to Threats at any point during Act 2, and the characters can add dice from the Hero Pool to their rolls as well. Dice added to Threats persist until resolved, but Hero dice are discarded after a single roll.

Encountering Threats

As the characters deal with the consequences of the Choice, the GM should expose appropriate Threats. Characters will work to counter those threats, and any that are resolved should not be replaced. Characters who played Death Cards should begin to fulfill their obligations.

Confronting the Crisis

When the characters finally confront the primary crisis, the players gather all appropriate white dice from the remaining characters, and add them to the remaining Hero Pool. (Dead characters can add one die if they died using their Death Card.) The GM gathers all appropriate black dice from immediate threats and add them to the remaining Crisis Pool. The players and GM roll their respective pools to resolve the story (see Crisis List).

Consequence Table

If the total is...

...1W - 5W: It worked, but barely. And at a cost. You lose your lowest rank Asset.

...6W - 10W: You made the right Choice, and at a minimum cost. You lose your lowest rank Asset, but improve your highest rank Asset one level.

...11W - 15W: Your plan worked! You may add a Level 1 asset to the game. All characters heal one level of Harm.

...16W - 20W: Almost perfect. You made the right choice. You may add a Level 2 Asset to the game, and you may select one threat for resolution. All characters heal two levels of Harm.

...21W+: The best of all worlds. Your plan worked perfectly. All assets gain a level, you may add a Level 3 Asset to the game, and you may select two threats for resolution. All characters heal three levels of Harm.

If the total is...

...0 - 5B: Mistakes. Screwups. Errors. You almost made it. Lose your highest rank asset.

...6B -10B: It was the wrong choice. You made the best of it, but it isn't enough. Lose your top two rank Assets, and increase the highest level Threat by one level.

...11B - 15B: Disaster strikes. And it's almost certainly your fault. All assets are reduced one rank. Add one of each of the following Threats: Level 3, Level 2, Level 1.

...16B - 20B: Perfect chaos. Your decisions has ruined everything. Lose all your assets. Add one of each of the following Threats: Level 3, Level 2, Level 1. All characters take one level of Harm.

...21B+: Absolute, utter, terrible failure. This was the wrong choice, and it will cost you everything. Lose all your assets. Add one of each of the following Threats: Level 4, Level 3, Level 2. All characters take two levels of Harm.

Crisis Table

If the total is...

...1W - 3W: You saved the world! But at great cost: the team is lost. You will be remembered as heroes.

...4W - 6W: Despite the challenges, your team succeeded in saving Humanity. And one of you even lived to tell the tale.

...7W - 9W: Your teamwork and planning paid off, saving the world from destruction. Two of you manage to make it home to a hero's welcome.

...10W+: You did it. Not only did you save Earth, all of you who faced the final Crisis survived. Your names will become legend, and your faces will be on monuments. Well done!

If the total is...

...0 - 3B: Your mission fails. Yet, there is a small beacon of hope. You managed to forestall the Crisis long enough for another team to mount a challenge. Hopefully they won't make your mistakes. Oh, and you all died.

...4B - 6B: The threats were too many, and your assets too weak. You fail to stop the Crisis, and the world ends. Sadly, there is no one left to remember your sacrifice.

...7B - 9B: Your plans fail. The Crisis comes in force. Hope was an illusion.

...10B+: You were never even close. The world ends while you watch, and your failure is painfully obvious. Worse yet, you all miraculously survive. Enjoy the apocalypse.