.CRYPTOCRACY.

v.1.1

24-Hour
RPG 2011

. by Simon Crowe .

Open your eyes

. . .

You've seen something haven't you kid? Was it the flash of light in the sky? Was it the black helicopters circling the creek last night? Whatever it is you know too much now.

What do you mean, you don't know anything? You know *something,* and that's all that matters to them. They've got to make sure you keep quiet, and they aren't going to take your word on that.

Who are they? Well I have some theories I'm still trying to tie together. The Trilateral Commission, members of Club 33, Majestic 12 maybe. Your basic New World Order. I've been studying them for years, keeping my head down, just waiting for an opportunity and someone to help me.

Where are they taking them?

Don't look at me like that. It's too late to go back to your real life now. Hell, there isn't a real life to go back to. It's come with me or be eliminated. Simple as that.

Where are we going? Oh kid, you're not going to believe this...

. . .

. . .

Dad, I hope this gets to you. I'm sorry I haven't been in touch, but I'm in trouble. Real trouble. So much trouble you need to burn this after you read it. Ha, I know what that sounds like. Like I've gone crazy? I'd say the guys I'm with are making me paranoid except... I'm not am I? The government are after me, except not that government. Dad, they're something none of us ever knew about. The reporter, Frederich, he calls them the Illuminati but Karl calls him crazy. Karl worked for them or something. I don't even know if that's his real name, but they're the only ones I can trust. I have to go. I love you .

xxx   Sammy

. . .

cryptocracy (*plural* **cryptocracies**)

Noun

1. A form of government where the real leaders are hidden, or merely unknown.
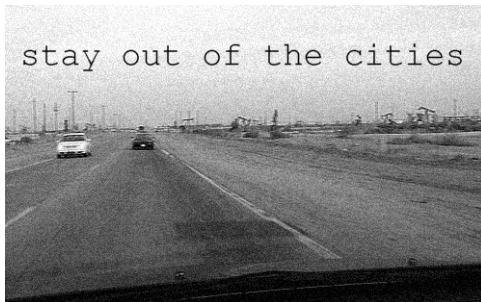
Welcome

Cryptocracy is a role-playing game for a GM and one or more players. It is a game where the characters glimpse the truth of shadowy forces that really run the country. This knowledge puts their lives in danger, and it's a race to see if they can uncover the whole truth before the conspiracy overwhelms them.

Cryptocracy differs from usual roleplaying games in a number of ways;

- **The game is designed as a one-shot.** The players have a goal to reach, but will they die trying?
- **There is no predetermined plot.** The players and GM come up with the details of the conspiracy as they play.
- **The GM is the enemy.** He is out the stop the players achieving their goal.
- **The GM does not have ultimate power.** How he opposes the players is determined by cards he draws.

The default setting is a slightly off kilter version of the modern day. Think of films such as *The Fugitive*, *Enemy of the State* or *Mercury Rising*. The players can put more of a historical angle on it, uncovering a religious conspiracy such as *The Da Vinci Code*. The use of supernatural or alien conspiracies of course brings to mind *The X-Files*. Alternatively you could play a near future version, to get the *Minority Report* feel. Players should discuss what sort of game they are looking for beforehand. Whatever the choice there is a conspiracy out there and a secret government is really running the country, and maybe even the world.

Goals of the game

The players trying to uncover the conspiracy win if:

- **One of the characters gains a knowledge rating of 10**. The characters uncover the final truth behind the shadow government cryptocracy, and how to bring it down.

The players lose if either:

- **All original characters are killed**. Once all the heroes are dead, it's game over.

or

- **The pursuit track reaches 10**. The characters can only run for so long, the conspiracy is everywhere now and they have nowhere to turn.

Cryptocracy Set Up

To play Cryptocracy you need to designate one person to be the GM, the others are the players. You will also need:

- **Character sheets** – About 2 per player should be ok. Characters can die during the game but the players can get new ones.
- **Dice** – The game uses D6s, a handful will do.
- **A deck of playing cards** – These are drawn by the GM, and represent the problems the players will face. Do not include jokers.
- **Pencils, beads** – Ways of marking changing statistics and conditions.

Once you have gathered everything you need, each player creates a character. To do this each player takes a character sheet and picks one of the three character types.

- **Innocent** – Someone who has stumbled on the conspiracy accidentally.
- **Investigator** – Someone who is digging into something he shouldn't.
- **Insider** – Someone who worked for them once, and has now gone rogue.

See the character types later. The character's four statistics depend on the type chosen, with some customisation possible. Choose the statistics now.

- **Physical** – Speed, strength, fighting skills etc.
- **Mental** – Ability to piece together what's going on.
- **Luck** – Destiny, fate, fortune, measuring how long you might survive.
- **Knowledge** – How much you know about what's really going on.

Players choose a name for their character and a brief background (one or two sentences will do). Each character sheet also has a box to tick if this is an original character. Tick this when creating characters at the start of the game, but don't tick it if you are creating a replacement character.

Once players have their characters they discuss how the characters met, and come up with a brief idea of the conspiracy so far. What does each know?

Each player may come up with one fact about the conspiracy for each point of knowledge their character begins with. Was the cryptocracy involved in the assassination of a political leader? Did it help fake the moon landings? Is it putting drugs into the water supply?

Finally choose one of the players to be the first active player. Use some sort of marker that can be passed around. The role of active player gets changed around during game.

Cards
The GM shuffles the deck of playing cards and draws cards equal to the number of players. Each card represents a hazard for the characters to overcome or a complication in their investigations.

You're now ready to play Cryptocracy. Good luck.

Character Types

Innocent
The bearded man barrelled into you in the street, pressing the data stick into your hands before running off, pursued by men in dark suits. Your boyfriend is missing and you've found the mysterious envelope of satellite photos in your flat. You were just walking the dog through the park when you saw one senator pull a gun on the other.

Innocents don't know much – they've just glimpsed the surface – but it's enough to make them dangerous to the cryptocracy. Despite their inexperience they tend to be the heroes of the story and luckier than others.

Innocents start with Physical 2, Mental 2, Luck 3, Knowledge 1. They then choose two of Physical, Mental or Luck and increase the chosen stats by 1.

Investigator
This will be the story of the century if you can survive long enough to see it printed. You always knew the coded Lincoln Diaries pointed to the formation of MKUltra. You just thought it'd be fun to try and hack into the CIA archives, but nothing prepared you for what you found.

The investigator is outside, looking in. He's glimpsed some of what's going on, but it doesn't all add up – yet. They tend to be fairly average characters not skewed in one way or another.

Investigators start with Physical 2, Mental 3, Luck 2, Knowledge 2. They may add an additional point to either Physical or Mental.

Insider
What you've done for them, the blood on your hands, it's just too much and you've got to get the word out. Once you found out what your micro-biology research was being used for you handed in your notice. They tried to kill everyone involved with Project Liberty, but you escaped somehow.

Coming from inside the conspiracy itself but now gone rogue, insiders know a lot about the cryptocracy already, and are generally very tough or smart depending on their role. But they're often first on the conspiracy hit list.

Insiders start with Physical 1, Mental 1, Luck 1, Knowledge 3. They then gain 4 points which can be split anyway between Physical and Mental.


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Playing Cryptocracy

During the game players take it in turn to frame a scene. They see what leads are available for them to investigate and choose which to go for. The GM uses cards from his hands to play hazards and obstacles the players must overcome. As the game goes on new facts are uncovered until either the conspiracy is revealed and comes crashing down, or the player characters are silenced forever.

Though some parts of Cryptocracy are not seen in traditional role-playing games, this is still an RPG through and through. Players and the GM are trying to tell a cool story of hidden truths and dark dealings. Don't use the dice and the cards as an excuse not to do some great roleplaying. When a lead is chosen or a hazard played, the players and GM must come up with what the characters are up to and what dangers they are facing.

The Active Player

The game is divided into scenes. Each scene one player is designated the active player. The active player has the final say on the player decisions during that scene with regards to what leads to follow and who deals with obstacles. They certainly do not have a say with regards to other players roleplaying.
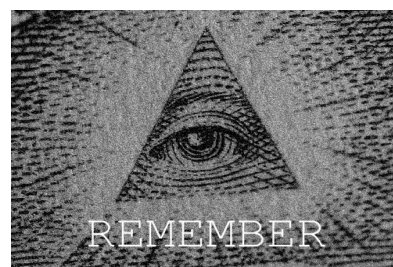
The use of an active player is mostly for the purposes of ensuring the game does not bog down with players arguing over what to do next.

At the end of each scene, the active player passes along clockwise. Note that although the GM is playing the game he does not count as a player and so is never the active player.

The Scene

Each scene is divided into the following steps:
1. The active player rolls for leads.
2. Players choose a lead.
3. The GM draws cards and introduces hazards.
4. Resolve hazards and the scene.
5. Pass the active player marker clockwise.

Roll for Leads

This is done by rolling a number of D6 equal to the current lead value. Certain in game choices can increase or decrease the lead value. However the lead value can never go below 1.

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The default lead value is **3**

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The active player rolls the D6s. If you roll duplicate of any numbers remove all but one of that number. The players will end up with one or more different values, each of these represents an option the players have. Generally the higher the number the more information can be gained but the greater the risk. Each number corresponds to the following option:

Value	Lead	Brief Description
1	*Flee!*	The characters are trying to get far from danger as possible. It's not going to gain them anything but time, and sometimes that's the only option.
2	*Hide*	The characters have a chance to rest, heal and reflect on what they've learned. But no new knowledge is gained and no hideout is truly safe.
3	*Travel*	The character are buying time, but it will open up their options later.
4	*Contact*	Finding someone who knows a piece of the puzzle will help, as long as they can be trusted.
5	*Break-in*	A risky move, trying to steal evidence from the cryptocracy itself, but key to uncovering the conspiracy.
6	*Confront*	Taking on someone directly involved with the conspiracy is the biggest risk of all, but there is no other way to get more information.

See the leads section for more information on each lead.

Choose Lead

The players now discuss among themselves which lead to take. The active player has the final say in this. When choosing a lead the players must come up with more detail on what the lead represents.

For instance, if they choose option 4 – Contact – they should decided among themselves who the contact is. A disgruntled scientist, a conspiracy theorist, a government whistle-blower? Give them a name, description and work out how the player know them.

The players carry on in this fashion when resolving the lead, role-playing how their characters act and so forth. The GM can act as any non-player characters needed for the scene – though remember the only obstacles the GM can actually use are those on his cards. The GM can't throw dangers in the way, or have a contact refuse to speak to the players, unless it's on the cards. Though the GM is the enemy it is still in his interests to make sure everyone has a good game.

See the leads section for how to resolve each lead. Some resolve before the GM plays hazards, sometimes afterwards.

Drawing & playing hazards

Certain leads allow the GM to draw cards in his hand. See the lead section. Each card drawn is a particular hazard or complication. There is no limit to the amount of cards the GM can hold.

There is a maximum number of cards that can be played each scene, equal to the value of the lead chosen. So for instance if players choose option 3 – Travel – then the GM can play 3 cards this scene. Hazards are played and resolved one at a time.

When a hazard is played it is resolved then (in most cases) placed in a discard pile. Should the main draw pile become empty, shuffle the discard pile to make a new draw pile.

Tests

Some leads and hazards will ask the characters to make tests based on a particular statistic (for example a Physical Test). To make a test roll a D6. To pass the test the roll must be equal to or under the value of the character's relevant statistic. Any roll above the statistic fails the test.

The results of success and failure will be outlined in the lead or hazard.

Using Luck

Each character has a Luck statistic. This is resource that the character can use throughout the game. If a character reaches 0 Luck there is no penalty, but the character will no longer be able to use Luck.

A point of Luck can be spent to do the following:

- Re-roll a single D6 roll made by that character (not including lead rolls) and then add +1 or -1 to the result rolled. Each dice may only be re-rolled once. The result of the re-roll stands.
- Re-roll all lead dice if that character is the active player.
- If the character dies spend a point of fate to survive. If the fatigued and/or injured conditions are not currently applied, tick those conditions on the character sheet.

Conditions

There are two conditions that can affect a character; Fatigued and Wounded. These can be gained and lost through various actions during the game. A character starts off as neither Fatigued nor Wounded. The character sheet contains boxes for both, tick these when the conditions are in play.

Fatigued – Tired of running, a character suffering the fatigued conditions is at -1 to their Mental statistic. In addition should a character who is fatigued gain the fatigued condition again they gain the wounded condition.

Wounded – Injured during the chase, a character suffering from the wounded condition is at -1 to their Physical statistic. In addition should a character who is wounded gain the wounded condition again they succumb to their injuries and are killed.

Killed Characters

When a character is killed he is removed from the game, the player however is not. They create a new character who joins in at the start of the next scene. Players can decide how the new character comes to join the group. New characters are created in the same way as starting characters, however do not tick the original character box on the character sheet. Do not establish new facts when creating new characters.

If none of the characters in play have the original character box ticked then all the starting characters have been removed from the game. With all the original heroes dead the conspiracy has grown too strong, and the game is over. The cryptocracy wins.

The Pursuit Track

Certain actions during the game can increase or decrease the pursuit track. The track represents how tight the noose is around the characters as the conspiracy closes in. The pursuit track begins at 0.

The track should be visible to all players. Either write it down on a piece of paper in the centre of the table or use a number of beads to show its value.

If the pursuit track reaches 10, then the agents of the cryptocracy have closed in for the kill. There is no escaping and the game is over.
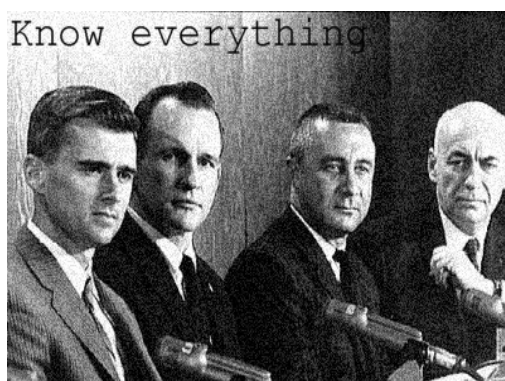
Gaining Knowledge

The goal of the game for the players is to gain knowledge, and survive till the end. The knowledge statistic of each character is likely to change a lot during the game. Whenever a lead or hazard states that knowledge is gained, simply add the points gained to the relevant characters statistics.

Establishing Facts

Each time characters gain knowledge, players can come up with another fact about the conspiracy to show what they have learnt. The conspiracy therefore evolves during play, rather than the players trying to uncover a plot set up by the GM beforehand.

Establishing facts is important in creating the overall story for the game. Each facts can be connected to a current one, or could be a puzzling new lead. A fact could be a red herring or a vital clue.

Uncovering the Truth

The only way the players can win the game is by uncovering the whole truth behind the cryptocracy. When one character gains a knowledge rating of **10** then they have learnt the whole truth, and they know how to bring the shadow government crashing down.

The player (or players) in question should describe what they have now learnt, how they show the world the truth and how the cryptocracy comes crashing down.

Leads

Each lead has an order in which its effects, and nay hazards are resolved. Follow the order listed in the lead in order to resolve it.

1 - Flee!

Choosing flee is not an ideal option. Sure it's relatively safe, but it gains you very little. There may be times though when it's a better option than doing something very risky, just to buy you some time.

1. The GM may play a single hazard.

2. Each character makes a Physical test. If they fail they gain the fatigued condition.

3. If at least one player passed the Physical test the GM must discard a card from his hand at random, as the players outrun for Conspiracy – for now.

2 – Hide

Choosing hide is a good option if characters are fatigued or injured, and its a relatively safe option. But the conspiracy isn't waiting around for you to rest up, and the net could be closing in.

1. The GM draws a hazard card.

2. All characters remove the fatigued condition. If a character has the injured condition they may make a Physical test. On a success, remove the condition.

3. The GM may play up to 2 hazard cards.

4. The players all make Mental tests. If all players pass add an additional lead dice to the next lead roll. If all players fail the GM draws a hazard card and remove a dice from the next lead roll. Otherwise there is no effect.

3 – Travel

Travel means you're going places, actively chasing down leads. Though you wont learn anything new, this gives you more options in future.

1. The GM draws a hazard card.

2. All characters with the fatigued condition may make a Physical test. On a success remove the condition.

3. The GM may play up to 3 hazards cards.

4. All players make a Mental test. For each successful test, add an additional lead dice to the next lead roll. If all players succeed the GM must discard a hazard card at random from his hand. If all players fail the GM may draw a hazard card.

4 – Contact

You know of someone who can help, assuming they can be trusted. Things are getting more risky now, but this is a chance to gain some important information.

1. The GM draws 2 hazard cards.

2. The GM may play up to 4 hazard cards.

3. Each player makes a Mental test. On a success that character gains 1 knowledge.

5 – Break-in

Finally you're taking the fight to the enemy. This means even greater risk and reward.

1. The GM draws 2 hazard cards.

2. The GM may play up to 5 hazard cards.

3. Each player makes a Physical or Mental test (their choice). On a success the character gains 1 knowledge. If all characters passed then they gain an extra lead dice next lead roll, and the character(s) with the lowest current knowledge gain an additional knowledge.
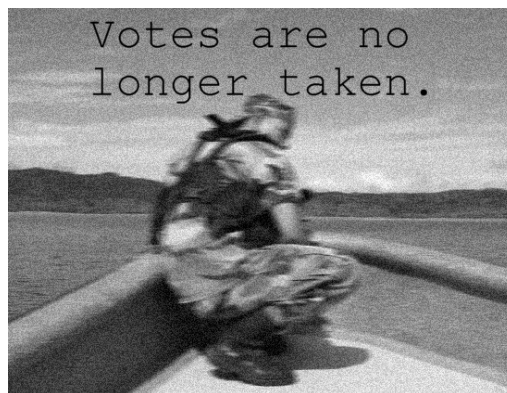
6 – Confront

The ultimate attempt to find out what's going on, but unsurprisingly the most dangerous thing to try.

1. The GM draws 3 hazard cards.

2. The GM may play up to 6 hazard cards.

3. Each character gains 1 knowledge and makes a Mental test. On a success they gain an additional knowledge. If all characters fail increase the pursuit track by one.

4. The pursuit track is increased by one.

Hazards

The GM uses a standard 52 card deck of playing cards as his hazard cards. Each card represents a hazard, so the GM will need this list around to see what each card represents. However there are not 52 different hazards, and the cards are grouped together for ease. Higher values tend to represent more difficult or dangerous hazards, and the four suits represent four different hazard types.

- **Spades** represent agents out to silence the characters.
- **Diamonds** represent puzzling mysteries the characters must figure out.
- **Hearts** represent complications to the characters efforts.
- **Clubs** represent other dangers that the characters must confront or flee.

As mentioned previously, a GM shouldn't just play a hazard and ask the players to resolve it. He should set the scene, describing the danger that the players are in. Likewise the players should describe how they are going to try and overcome it.

Types of hazard

♠ **Agent** – An agent is a direct threat to the players, someone who has tracked them down and is out to kill or capture them. Agents are therefore the best way to try and kill the characters. Agents have a danger rating based on their experience.

When an agent is played the players must choose one of their characters to fight the agent. The GM rolls a D6 and adds the agents Danger. The player rolls a D6 and adds the characters Physical statistic. Interpret the results as follows.

- If the character rolls higher the agent has been overcome and is discarded with no further effect.

- If both sides roll the same amount the character gains the fatigued condition, but the agent has been overcome and is discarded with no further effect.

- If the agent rolls higher the character gains the fatigued condition, if the agent rolled more than double the character the character gains the injured condition instead. Then the players must choose a different character to fight the agent and the process is repeated. A character may not fight twice against one agent. If there are no characters left to fight the agent is then discarded.

♦ **Mystery –** Whilst not a physical threat, mysteries slow down the characters, cutting off leads and giving time for the conspiracy to close in. Each mystery has a Difficulty rating and a fail condition. Players choose a character to solve the mystery. Roll a D6 and add the character's Mental statistic. If the result beats the Difficulty then the obstacle is overcome and discarded. If the result is equal to or less than the difficulty, resolve the effects of the fail condition before discarding the card.

♥ **Complication** – A complication is not a hazard on its own, but has an effect on the game none the less. Complications can be played when particular conditions are met, and can be played at any time during a lead that the conditions are met. See the cards for more details. Complications still count towards the maximum number of hazards that can be played at a lead. As soon as the effects of the complication are worked out the card is discarded.

♣ **Action** – Perhaps a deadly car chase, a flight across roof tops, disarming a bomb. Whatever it is, it's a danger to the lives of the characters. The action will specify the test to make and the failure condition. All characters must make the test and any who fail are affected by the condition, or the GM gains a bonus for each failure (see the particular action for details).

There is a risk that actions may reveal more about the conspiracy than intended. If all characters pass the test then all characters gain 1 knowledge. After the effects are resolved discard the card.

Card List

♠ Spades ♠ - Agent
- *2* – Danger 2.
- *3* – Danger 2.
- *4* – Danger 2.
- *5* – Danger 2.
- *6* – Danger 2.
- *7* – Danger 3.
- *8* – Danger 3.
- *9* – Danger 3.
- *10* – Danger 3.
- *Jack* – Danger 4.
- *Queen* – Danger 4.
- *King* – Danger 4.
- *Ace* – Assassin – The assassin counts as an agent with Danger 3. After it is resolved shuffle the assassin back into the deck rather than discarding it. Make a note of how many times the assassin has been played. For each time after the first, add 1 to its Danger.

♦ Diamonds ♦ - Mystery
- *2* – Difficulty 6. Failure: Roll one less lead dice next time lead dice are rolled.
- *3* – Difficulty 6. Failure: Roll one less lead dice next time lead dice are rolled.
- *4* – Difficulty 6. Failure: The GM draws 2 hazard cards.
- *5* – Difficulty 6. Failure: The GM draws 3 hazard cards.
- *6* – Difficulty 6. Failure: Increase the pursuit track by one.
- *7* – Difficulty 7. Failure: Roll one lead dice next time lead dice are rolled.
- *8* – Difficulty 7. Failure: The GM draws 2 hazard cards.
- *9* – Difficulty 7. Failure: The GM draws 3 hazard cards.
- *10* – Difficulty 7. Failure: Increase the pursuit track by one.
- *Jack* – Difficulty 8. Failure: Roll two less lead dice next time lead dice are rolled.
- *Queen* – Difficulty 8. Failure: The GM draws 3 hazard cards.
- *King* – Difficulty 8. Failure: Increase the pursuit track by one.
- *Ace* – Difficulty 9. Failure: The character(s) with the highest knowledge each lose a point of knowledge. Then increase the pursuit Track by one.

♥ Hearts ♥ - Complication

- *2* – Dangerous – Play after playing an action. All players add 1 to their dice roll.
- *3* – Dangerous – Play after playing an action. All players add 1 to their dice roll.
- *4* – Convoluted – Play after playing a mystery. Add 1 to its Difficulty.
- *5* – Convoluted – Play after playing a mystery. Add 1 to its Difficulty.
- *6* – Elite – Play after playing an agent. Add 1 to its Danger.
- *7* – Elite – Play after playing an agent. Add 1 to its Danger.
- *8* – Treacherous – Play when a character has failed a test during an action. That character gains the fatigued condition if it did not already have it.
- *9* – Exhaustion – Play when a character fails a mystery. That character gains the fatigued condition if it did not already have it.
- *10* – Stolen evidence – Play when an agent rolls higher than a character. That character loses 1 point of knowledge.
- *Jack* – Fallout - Play when a character has failed a test during an action. All other characters are counted as having failed the test and suffer the failure condition.
- *Queen* – Traced – Play when a character overcomes a mystery. Add 1 to the pursuit roll.
- *King* – Killing blow - Play when an agent rolls higher than a character. Kill the character.
- *Ace* – Turncoat – May only be played if Contact is the chosen lead. The players choose one character to gain the injured condition. Add one to the pursuit track. Then end the scene, characters do not gain any knowledge.

♣ Clubs ♣ - Action

- *2* – Physical. During the next lead roll, roll one less dice for each failure.
- *3* – Mental. During the next lead roll, roll one less dice for each failure.
- *4* – Physical. Failure: The character gains the fatigued condition if it did not already have it.
- *5* – Mental. Failure: The character gains the fatigued condition if it did not already have it.
- *6* – Physical. Failure: The character gains the fatigued condition.
- *7* – Mental. Failure: The character gains the fatigued condition
- *8* – Physical. Draw a hazard card for each failure.
- *9* – Mental. Draw a hazard card for each failure.
- *10* – Physical. The character loses one knowledge.
- *Jack* – Mental. The character loses one knowledge.
- *Queen* – Physical. The character gains the injured condition.
- *King* – Mental. The character gains the injured condition.
- *Ace* – Knowledge. Failure: The character gains the fatigued condition. Add one to the pursuit track for each failure.

Optional Rules

The following rules are not necessary to enjoy Cryptocracy, but you may find them fun. The GM and players should discuss whether or not they are using them before starting the game.

The Hero

Cryptocracy is already styled to play out a bit like a film and this option reinforces that, making one of the characters the hero of the story. The option is highly recommended if you have only a single player.

If you decided to use this rule then, after creating their original characters, the players must choose one of them to be the hero. Indicate the chosen character by writing hero on their character sheet. This has the following effect.

- The hero adds one to their starting Luck.

- Whenever the hero gains either the fatigued or wounded condition the player may roll a D6. On a 4-6 the character does not gain the condition. This roll may not be re-rolled using Luck.

- When they are the active player, the hero may re-roll the lead dice. They must accept the second dice.

- If the hero is killed then the Cryptocracy win.

Jokers

The standard Cryptocracy deck does not include jokers, but the following rule allows them to be used. They represent 'special characters', important people in the Crypotcracy. They make life harder for the players but also give a chance of learning more knowledge. It's therefore a risk for the GM to use them.

If the GM decides he can add 2 jokers to the pack of hazard cards. Joker cards are hazard cards in all respect, with the following rules.

- The important people do not dirty themselves with field work. Jokers may only be played at leads 5 (Break-in) and 6 (Confront).

- The GM doesn't know what a joker will represent until it is played. When a joker is played roll a D6 on the following chart and resolve the joker as the card type described. The GM should decide who the figure is and why they are important to the cryptocracy. He should be named, or given a cool nickname.

1. *The Army Guy* – Agent – Danger 4 and if any further Agents are played this lead, they are each at +1 Danger.

2. *The Enigma* – Mystery – Difficulty 8. Failure: The GM draws a hazard card, add one to the pursuit track, roll one less lead dice nest time lead dice are rolled.

3. *The Bureaucrat* – Complication – All characters subtract 1 from any Mental tests they make this lead.

4. *The Experiment* – Agent – Danger 4. Any character that gains the injured condition when resolving this agent is killed instead of gaining the condition.

5. *The Corrupt Official* – Mystery – Difficulty 8. Failure: The GM chooses the next lead the players must take.

6. *The Big Boss* – Action – Mental. Failure: Add one to the pursuit track for each failure. Then any character who failed must make a further Mental test. Add one to the pursuit track for each failure.

• The presence of an important member of the cryptocracy often reveals new information. After a joker is resolved each character makes a Mental test. On a success that character gains a knowledge.

Example of Play

Kate, Rich, Jake and Simon are sitting down for a game of Cryptocracy. Jake is the GM. Kate is playing Carol, a crusading journalist who uncovered secret weapons stockpiles in the Patagonian Desert. Rich is playing Agent Morgan, a former bodyguard to one of the members of the cryptocracy who knew too much and is now on the run. Agent Morgan is tough but not smart. Simon is playing Jimmy, an innocent office drone who received a strange package in the mail from his lost cousin.

Between them the characters have 6 knowledge. They have established the following facts; A shadow government is stockpiling weapons in the Patagonian desert. 10 years ago a military official went missing in the area. The weapons are supplied by a Russian arms dealer. A plan called Operation Morpheus is in place. The Operation centres round an observatory in Chile. Two scientists were kidnapped from Haltech Labs.

It's the first turn, and Rich is the active player. He makes the lead roll which at this point is 3D6. He rolls 4, 4, 6. Two of the dice have rolled the same, so one of the 4's is discarded. The players have the choice between two leads; 4 (Contact) and 6 (Confront). After discussing it with the players it is decided that it's a bit early to be confronting members of the cryptocracy with their information. He decides to follow lead 4 – Contact.

Rich decides the contact is Agent Morgan's old partner Agent Kane. Kane no longer works for the cryptocracy but she may still have some useful information. Rich describes where Kane lives and how the three characters sneak through the city to find her.

Looking at the Contact lead, Jake as GM sees the steps involved. First the GM draws 2 hazard cards. At the start of the game Jake had 3 cards in hand (equal to the number of players) so now he has 5. But during this lead he can only play a maximum of 4, and he might not want to play them all at this point.

He has two cards that are agents (Jack of Spades and Six of Spades), two complications (Seven of Hearts and Nine of Hearts) and one Action (Seven of Clubs). Looking at the rules for each card he sees that the Nine of Hearts is only useful with a mystery, so unplayable at the moment. The other four could all be handy though.

He starts off with the Seven of Clubs. This forces a mental test and anyone who fails it becomes fatigued. Jake narrates that the paranoid Agent Kane's home is under heavy security, and the characters will need to break in to talk to her. The players respond with descriptions of how they cut the power and crawl under the electric fence. Each character makes a Mental test, trying to roll under their Mental statistic on a D6. Agent Morgan and Jimmy both succeed but Carol, despite her high Mental ability fails. The emergency power trips back on just as she is clearing the fence and she receives a short shock. Carol is now fatigued and at -1 to her Mental statistic.

The troubles aren't over for the players. Jake now pulls out the Jack of Spades, a dangerous agent guarding Kane's property. On top of this he plays the Seven of Hearts which adds one to the agent's danger value. The agent is now danger 5. He describes the elite agent dressed in army fatigues leaping from the rooftop to confront the characters.

The players must choose someone to defeat the agent, with active player Rich having the final say. It's quickly established that Agent Morgan will step up, as the most effective at physical confrontations.

Rich rolls a D6 and adds Morgan's Physical of 5. Jake rolls a D6 for the agent, also adding 5 because of the agent's difficulty. Rich rolls a 4 for a total of 9 but Jake rolls a 5 for a total of 10. The agent bests Morgan, throwing him to the ground in a display of his awesome skills. Morgan is fatigued and the agent looks for the text target.

The other two are in trouble as the elite agent bears down on them. The players decide Jimmy, with his Physical of 3, is better off than Carol who only has Physical 2. Simon describes Jimmy grabbing a tree branch and whacking the agent with it.

The characters roll again. Simon rolls a paltry 1 for a total of 4, whilst Jake rolls a 3 for a total of 8. Not only has Jimmy been beaten but the agent has rolled twice as much, and Jimmy will end up Injured.

Simon decides its time to use his character's luck. He crosses off a point of his luck to re-roll the dice, and he is allowed to add + or − 1 to the new roll. He rolls much better... a 5, and chooses to add 1 to that to make it a 6. Jimmy now has a combat total of 9 compared to the agent's 8. The agent is overcome through Jimmy's dumb luck. Simon narrates Jimmy slipping on the wet grass and accidental clocking the agent over the head with his tree branch, knocking him out.

So far Jake has only played 3 hazard cards, and he is allowed to play 1 more. He has another agent but this one is only Danger 2 and Morgan is likely to easily best it. He decides to save it for another time. He passes on the chance to play any more hazards.

The hazards have been dealt with, though two of the characters are now fatigued. Still the characters can now speak to Agent Kane and see what she knows. Each player makes a Mental test. Carol and Jimmy both pass but the slow-witted Agent Morgan does not. Carol and Jimmy each gain a point of knowledge and the players can establish two more facts about the conspiracy that they have learnt from Agent Kane.

Simon chooses to establish that the missing military official was in charge of a new experimental weapon. Kate likes this idea and adds that the weapon could control the effects of gravity.

What could this super-weapon have to do with the observatory and the missing Haltech scientists? Perhaps the players will find out as they continue to play... assuming their characters live long enough to find out.

Appendix

Designer's Notes

This roleplaying game was originally written as part of the *2011 RPG Geek 24-Hour RPG contest,* you can find details at http://rpg.geekdo.com/. This means it was written in less than 24 hours and so far has had no playtesting done, so might be wildly unbalanced. If you do have any comments after reading or playing the game contact user Scrowe at RPG Geek. Any criticism is welcome!

Version 1.1

After Cryptocracy came second in the contest, I thought I'd give it an update. There were some spelling errors and incorrect image alignment now fixed. I also added the optional rules for Heroes and Jokers, ideas I came up with later.

Images

All photographs are modified versions of public domain images from a variety of websites;

http://www.publicdomainpictures.net
http://www.public-domain-photos.com
http://www.photos8.com
http://www.public-domain-image.com

"The most dangerous man, to any government, is the man who is able to think things out for himself."

H.L. Mencken

Name...

Player Name..

Character Type.......................................

Background...

Physical	Mental	Fate	Knowledge

Fatigued	
Wounded	

Original character? ☐

Notes: