

Sugarfighter Black

A game about unsustainable experimentation.

By Joe McDonald

“100mg x 90 pills”

“Notice of Suspension”

You are a government secret: a drug-enhanced super-soldier, trained and prescribed to be a deadly weapon. They gave you a lot of little nicknames: juicer, lab rat, pillbox, drug monkey, sugarfighter. They treated you badly, but you always tolerated them. After all, they were giving you pills.

But that all stopped. The project has been indefinitely suspended, and the sugarfighters have all been released. You aren't going to be sent any more pills. And now you want revenge. The bastards must pay.

You've only got 90 pills left. You counted. It's going to take a lot of cunning to beat them with only 90 pills left.

The Goal of the Game

The basis of the game is that you are a sugarfighter, and you need to get ultimate revenge on the people who put you in this mess. You decide who those people are: the project supervisors, their funders, the project protesters, people from your messy personal life, etc.

Revenge consists of three Goals, which are usually layered on top of each other. The idea is that you have a plan, and it's beautiful and complex and has a lot of contingencies and back-up alternates. Of course, as players, creating that in advance would be lame. Instead, it's created on the fly as you go. At the same time, other players will be introducing Obstacles, which get in the way of your goals. You need to have your sugarfighter overcome these Obstacles in order to reach your Goals.

So, you go around and everyone takes turns at facing Obstacles and Goals. To succeed at your Obstacles and Goals, you'll have to mix pills that will boost your mind and body. You have exactly ninety pills to spend.

Now, here's the goal of the game: To succeed at all three Goals while spending less pills than all the other sugarfighters. If you finish the game with more pills than the other players finish with, you win. So, it's got a bit of gambling and risk taking built into the system, in the form of resource competition.

Goals and Obstacles

Each turn, you have your sugarfighter take a shot at reaching his next Goal. To start your turn, declare your next goal. There's a character sheet for goals and obstacles. Write your Goal in the square box.

Next, pick someone to be your first opposition. Describe your Goal and the master plan you created for achieving it. The opposition then creates your first Obstacle, which is basically a wrench in the gears.

Here's an example:

Joe: Alright, it's my turn. My sugarfighter, Charlie, has developed a cunning plan. A plan that will take all of his nerve and steel. He's going to infiltrate the CIA building, and get to its central records disk.

Kirk: Okay. Nice.

Joe: It's going to involve crawling through the vents.

Kirk: Great. Here's your first Obstacle: There are mutated, giant rats in the vents.

Joe: What? Shit! Why are they mutated?

Kirk: I dunno. They ate some weird virus juice stuff that was lying around in a CIA store room.

It doesn't need to be detailed, and it can be as crazy as the group wants. Feel free to involve mutants, psychics, jedi presidents and time travel if you feel it's in keeping with group expectations and wants.

So, once an Obstacle has been created, it's time for the first test.

Tests

For each test, the opposition and sugarfighter each deal themselves 3 cards, face down. If the sugarfighter wants to use some pills, they can do so to gain extra cards.

Now, the opposition has a total of five bonus cards to use throughout a whole scene (which includes one or more Obstacles and a Goal). As the sugarfighter writes down (in secret) which pills they are going to be using, the opponent writes down how many bonus cards they'd like to add to their flip (also in secret).

When both players have decided their bonuses, they reveal and add that many extra cards to their face down set. Then they flip them all at the same time.

Red cards score 1 point. Face cards score 1 point. (The effects are cumulative, so red face cards score 2 points in total.)

If this was an Obstacle and the opposition won, the sugarfighter overcomes the Obstacle, but not without introducing another Obstacle to be overcome. If this was an Obstacle and the sugarfighter won, the sugarfighter overcomes the Obstacle and moves on to the Goal now (which is tested in the same way as an Obstacle is).

If this was a Goal and the opposition won, the sugarfighter loses the game. The player can choose to

start a new sugarfighter at this point, and on his next turn, he'll start with the new sugarfighter's first Goal. If this was a Goal and the sugarfighter won, the turn is over and the Goal is crossed off.

Additional Obstacles

As stated above, if the sugarfighter loses an Obstacle test, in the fiction the sugarfighter still actually overcomes the obstacle. After all, we are talking about a kitted-out secret agent with drug-enhanced powers. What happens, though, is that a further complication is added into the scene. Another Obstacle test is now taken.

Here's an example:

Joe: Alright, so I've gotta somehow fight off these mutant rats within the air vents. Well, I'm going to draw my serrated hunting knife and try to cut them to ribbons as they attack.

Kirk: Okay. So, we each draw 3 cards, face down.

(In secret, Joe writes down the pill cocktail he's going to be swallowing for this Obstacle).

(In secret, Kirk writes down 2, because he plans to use 2 bonus cards).

Joe: Okay, reveal time. I'm using a new cocktail called Confinus. It's a new cocktail, and I'm spending 5 to create it. I get 2 cards from it whenever I need reflexes in confined spaces. So, plus two cards for me.

Kirk: And I wrote down that I'm using 2 bonus cards.

(Each of them has five cards, face down. They reveal together now.)

Joe: I got one red card and two face cards. 3 points in total.

Kirk: I got two red face cards. 4 points in total. So, you slice the rats up, but one of them bites you. Your next Obstacle is "rat infection".

Joe: Luckily Charlie prepared for this sort of thing.

Tracking Obstacles, Calculating Fatigue

When the opposition creates an Obstacle, they draw a circle on the Goals page. If the sugarfighter loses that Obstacle test, write the amount that the sugarfighter lost by in that circle. This number is part of what is called Fatigue.

Do this for each Obstacle that is created.

When a Goal is confronted, the sugarfighter suffers from Fatigue. Unless he buys off the Fatigue, the opposition will get an additional card for each point of Fatigue the sugarfighter has for this Goal.

To buy off Fatigue, the sugarfighter can spend 1 pill per point, right before the Goal test starts. He can buy off a partially amount of the Fatigue too.

Mixing Cocktails

A true sugarfighter always takes pills in little bundles and combinations known as cocktails.

Here's how a cocktail works: You create it when you need it during a test (Obstacle or Goal). It costs a certain amount. You can then use it in later tests, if its benefits still fit, for a reduced cost.

First of all, creating a cocktail costs 1 Body, 1 Mind and 1 Kill. This is just a set Creation fee.

Next, think about how many cards you want the cocktail to allow you to draw each time you use it: 1, 2 or 3. It'll cost that many more pills to create. Choose whether these are Body pills, Mind pills or Kill pills. They cannot be a combination – they must all be from a single column.

So, that's the cost to create a cocktail. It'll cost between 4 and 6 points, depending on how many cards you want to draw when you use it.

Here's an example of creating a cocktail:

Joe is creating a drug cocktail to help Charlie (his character) fight the mutated rats he encountered in an air vent he was crawling through. He decides he wants a drug that'll give him two additional cards.

It costs an automatic 1 Body, 1 Mind, and 1 Kill to create a cocktail.

It'll also cost him 2 more pills to have 2 cards drawn. He has to pick a pill type that makes sense for his drug, and he picks Body.

He decides its a drug cocktail that's designed to improve reflexes in tight, confined spaces. He names the cocktail Confinus.

It's always cheaper to re-use the same cocktails again, but is sometimes going to be less applicable.

Here's how to calculate the cost of swallowing a previously created cocktail:

If it's a really generally applicable cocktail, reduce the cost by 1 pill.

If it's a fairly narrowly applicable cocktail, reduce the cost by 2 pills.

If it's a very narrowly applicable, specifically focused cocktail, reduce the cost by 3 pills.

Always take away from the pill types which aren't the main pill type first.

This means that the less likely it is you'll be able to reuse a cocktail many times, the cheaper it is to reuse it.

Here's an example of figuring this out:

Joe has decided that Confinus (3 Body, 1 Mind, 1 Kill) is fairly narrowly applicable – it's only a useful cocktail if you need improved reflexes in confined spaces. That means he reduces the cost by 2 pills. He is supposed to take away from Mind and Kill first in this case.

The final, re-useable product is: Confinus (3 Body).

Fair Play

The key to the game is to have fun with it, but also play competitively. It's a tough balance to maintain, but a crucial one.

If someone is trying to re-use a cocktail from a previous scene, and it doesn't really apply, feel free to call bullshit on them. At the same time, don't be a stickler or a technicality freak. Play with a generous yet competitive vibe.

Specifically create Obstacles you know the sugarfighter doesn't have applicable cocktails for. Force him to either be creative in his use of existing cocktails, or more likely create new ones.

If someone's sugarfighter dies, or runs out of pills... mock them viciously. This game is dead easy to beat, and the only reason someone would lose is if they were hoarding pills when they should have been spending them. That's tough guy behavior that's fair to laugh at when it backfires.

THE END

For the record, I started this competition on the 23rd, and finished 1am of the 25th. I only spent about two hours on the game and character sheet. Apologies for its unfinished nature. I was rushed.