

MCU: Gotham

A series kit for Primetime Adventures

ORIGINS

They didn't seem too interested in the dungeon crawl game I had brought to the monthly game day. "...Or I have another game where you're playing cops in Batman's Gotham City," I continued. I instantly had a full table. We ran a session of the series that day, complete with a large audience. Next

month, some of the players wanted to continue the game, so we did. A few players came and went, but we had a core crew that stuck with the game. By the time we were done, we had completed two seasons of *MCU: Gotham*.

PREMISE

Inside the Gotham City Police Department, there is a task force that deals with some of the city's worst cases. These are the stories of the Major Crimes Unit.

MCU: Gotham is a police procedural. While the pursuit of justice for a crime can span episodes, there is an overarching theme to each season, and the character's interactions drive most of the stories.

THE THREE RULES OF MCU: GOTHAM

One: The Batman does not exist. Batman is an urban legend, a story that criminals tell their children to scare them to sleep. If a civilian claims that Batman saved him, the proper response would be "Sure, and then he and Bigfoot jumped into their UFO and flew off to meet up with the Jersey Devil, right?" Batman does not exist.

Two: It's early in Batman's career. There is no Robin. There is no Bat-Signal on the roof of GCPD. No Ace the Bat-Hound. Very few people have even heard of him yet. Maybe there's a rumor in the criminal underworld of someone hunting them down. Maybe some street people tell stories of a monster that flies between rooftops. If we see Batman in the show at all, it's a shadow in the background that moves. While we're in Gotham and focusing on the cops, we probably won't hear anything about Superman, Wonder Woman, or the Flash.

Three: There are criminals and then there are Criminals. Freaks get names like The Zodiac Killer. The Unabomber. The Mad Hatter. The Riddler. Mister Freeze. But they're just criminals with fancy gadgets and dementia, nothing more.

THE MCU

Here's how the MCU was structured in the original series with DC regulars in interesting positions. Your MCU could be completely different.

The MCU is headed by Lieutenant Jim Gordon, new to the unit. Gordon refused to testify against his former partner, Harvey Bullock, a dirty cop through and through. Harvey Dent, current Head of Internal Affairs, thinks that Gordon is dirty as Bullock. Dent is pressured by the city's mayor, Oswald Cobblepot, to bring down Gordon.

In the pilot episode, we had Maggie Sawyer in charge of the MCU, but we all wanted Jim Gordon there. Maggie was transferred to Metropolis between episodes.

In addition to the regular line of Batman comics DC has put out over the years, MCU: Gotham is heavily based off of Gotham Central (DC), Powers (Oni), and the movies No Way Out and L.A. Confidential.

THE CAST

This isn't the actual cast that played in the original series, but something close. Six different cast members you can choose from to get your series started, plus four more concepts for you to flesh out.

SARAH ESSEN, DETECTIVE

Detective Sarah Essen transferred from Homicide well over a month before Jim Gordon was picked to head up MCU, which means that now she's working directly for the man she's sleeping with on the down low. As far as she knows, nobody in the MCU knows about the affair. She's a capable detective, possibly the smartest officer in the room. Her issue deals with her status in the unit. Sarah is the first female detective in the boys-only detective club. Her gender, intelligence, and drive are seen as an attack on the established order.

Questions for you to answer: Is Jim Gordon still married? Which co-worker really has it out for you?

Concept: The only female detective in the MCU.

Issue: Self-Worth.

Edge: "All that and brains, too."

Edge: Former Homicide Detective.

Connection: Jim Gordon.

Personal Set: Her small walk-up apartment.

Spotlight Episode: in mid-season after a screen presence 2 episode.

ELLORY "HURRICANE" HAMILL, DETECTIVE

This new guy, Gordon, doesn't appreciate how things are supposed to be done. Sometimes perps "resist arrest" or "slip and fall" or "he came at me with a knife". He's used to working the streets with his fists. Sometimes he thinks that's all he's good at. His wife of five years and three-year old child are the two calm spots in his life. Ellory's issue manifests in his temper: small things tend to set him off, but he would never hurt his family.

Questions for you to answer: What caused you to be filled with such rage? What calms you down?

Concept: Leftover brute from the previous administration; husband.

Issue: Wrath.

Edge: Family Man.

Edge: "Sometimes the blood just doesn't come out."

Connection: "Matches" Malone, criminal informant.

Personal Set: The men's room on the third floor of HQ with the chipped tiles on the wall and the broken mirror over the filthy ceramic sink.

Spotlight Episode: in late season. If possible, just before Natasha Hamill's if she is a protagonist.

LIAM MCTAVISH, DETECTIVE

Everyone is dirty, it's just a matter of how much. Liam has been well compensated for doing all the things you're supposed to like letting some rules slide here, turning a blind eye there. That's just how Gotham is, you know? Family life—his actual family, mind you—hasn't been so good. His wife moved out and, well, there hasn't been any paperwork filed. Yet. Maybe there is time to change things. His issue as a dirty cop is forefront. He's trying to get out, but it won't be easy.

Questions for you to answer: Which mafia family are you working for? Can you reconcile with your wife? Can you trust her?

Concept: Cop on the take trying to get out.

Issue: Divided Loyalties.

Edge: Did a stint in Afghanistan.

Connection: Harvey Bullock, all around good guy who's got your back no matter what, winds up getting kicked from the GCPD on some trumped up B.S. charge. Can you believe that?

Connection: Family connections.

Nemesis: Harvey Dent, the two-faced s.o.b. that heads up Internal Affairs.

Personal Set: A photo of his estranged wife.

Spotlight Episode: in early season.

NATASHA HAMILL, FORENSIC TECHNICIAN

The lead tech in GCPD's forensics department, Natasha has been with the GCPD for seven years and married for the last five. Nearly two years ago, she was kidnapped by someone the MCU was tracking down; after rescue, Natasha turned to using drugs to cope with the stress. Her issue deals with that dark temptation: She has been clean for exactly six months at the start of the series, but the anniversary of the kidnapping is coming up.

Questions for you to answer: Which capital-C Criminal kidnapped you? Is he or she locked up or still on the loose? How did your husband find out about the drug use?

Concept: Crime Scene Unit Forensic Technician; wife.

Issue: Temptation—drugs.

Edge: Six Months Sober.

Edge: Science!

Connection: Amelia Weston, childhood friend and sponsor.

Nemesis: That capital-C Criminal.

Personal Set: Sobriety Pin.

Spotlight Episode: in late season. If possible, just after Ellory Hamill's if he is a protagonist.

KAT O'DONNELL, ASSISTANT D.A.

From the well-to-do slice of society, Kat has her eye set on the Governorship. With a large social circle (including old college friend Bruce Wayne), Kat is confident in her chances with attaining her goal. Her issue manifests in what steps she will take to get there.

Questions for you to answer: Where is your ex-husband in all this? What is your next step in the grand plan: the DA's office or straight to the Mayor's?

Concept: Divorcee with political ambitions

Issue: Temptation—power.

Edge: Assistant District Attorney.

Edge: Knows the right people.

Connection: Bruce Wayne, philanthropist.

Personal Set: Her Blackberry phone.

Spotlight Episode: early or mid-season.

BRYCE ROSSLAND, EMBEDDED REPORTER

Bryce Rossland is possibly best known for his four books covering his journalism experiences around the world. As part of Mayor Cobblepot's recent reforms of the GCPD, Bryce reports from the front lines of law enforcement in a weekly column, which will surely be book number five and hopefully a mini-series. He begins the ride-along just before or just as the series begins. His issue deals with the public perception. He wants to be known as successful and competent. Not that everything has to be about him, but Bryce knows the real story isn't Gotham, it's Bryce's experience in Gotham.

Questions for you to answer: How well do you know Gotham, really? What would you do to get the real story?

Concept: Veteran Reporter here as a publicity stunt

Issue: Pride

Edge: "I've reported from Afghanistan and Iraq. Gotham's easy."

Edge: Ride-along

Connection: Victoria Vale, reporter for the Gotham Tribune.

Personal Set: 30, a newshound's bar near the Tribune.

Spotlight Episode: early to mid-season.

JULIANA CHRISTINOPOLI, FBI LIAISON

With Gotham City on one side of the state line, the MCU has to coordinate with the FBI whenever dealing with crime that crosses the river. Agent Christinopoli has held this position for almost two years.

DAVID MOORE, DETECTIVE

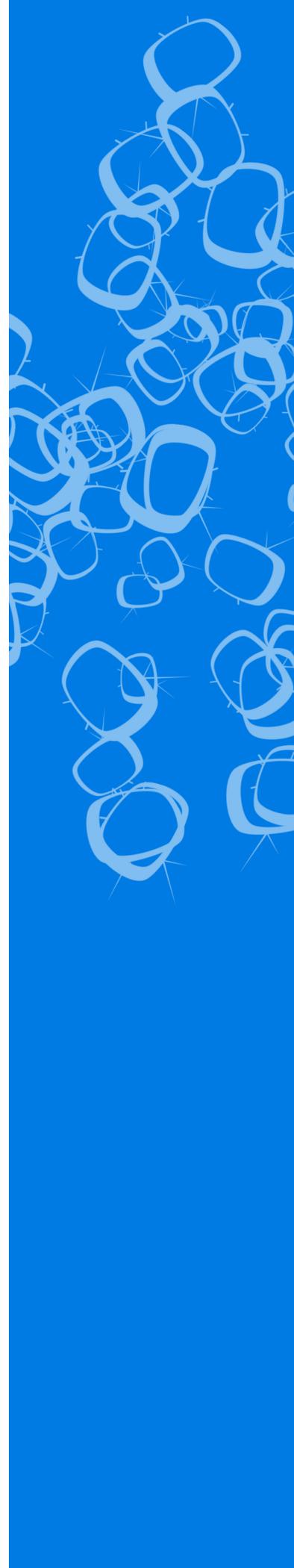
Freshly transferred from Metropolis. Gosh, does it ever stop raining here?

THOMAS DIDYMUS, INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Thomas works directly under Harvey Dent, helping to clean house in the "newer, more gentler" GCPD.

STACY BLACK, LIAISON TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

She works for, not with, Hizzoner Mister Mayor Cobblepot. The money is good, the working conditions aren't, and she knows she was hired more for her looks than anything else.



CRIMINALS

Adapting Criminals from the Batman lore to *MCU: Gotham* is surprisingly easy for the majority of Batman's Rogues Gallery is full of normal people with twists. The Riddler is just a person. The Joker is just a person. Killer Moth is just a person in a stupid suit. Here are a ten villains for your *MCU: Gotham* game.

THE PENGUIN

Oswald Cobblepot is a short, obese, toad of a man from a family of old money. His connections with the criminal underworld didn't stop him from becoming Gotham's mayor. Now, he uses his position to avenge slights against him and settle old grudges, but he's clever, always keeping his hands clean. He doesn't see himself as Mayor of Gotham. He sees himself as King.

CLAYFACE

That cosmetics company that horribly scarred Mark Hagan was run by one of Gotham's many mafia families and now Clayface is out for revenge. In order to alleviate the constant pain from the "accident", he coats his body with a special type of cosmetic mud, which just turns out to be toxic.

CALENDAR MAN

A serial killer that tied deaths to holidays (but not always on holidays), forcing the victims to ingest a lethal dose of poison. Victims included a woman with the last name of Nieujahr, found with confetti in her stomach for New Years Day; three members of the King family, for Three Kings Day; and so on.

KILLER CROC

Jordan "Killer" Croc is a wrestler in an underground fight club. He's a huge guy with a skin condition that makes him shed dead layers of skin off, as if he's constantly sunburned. His teeth are filed to points (although that's really a prosthesis). "The win-nar and still champ-y-ohn... *KILLLLLLLLLLLLLLLER CROC!*" He has anger management issues. (Killer Croc is played by Brock Lesnar.)

DEADSHOT

All members of the GCPD's SWAT unit have nicknames. Floyd Lawton's is Deadshot. He pulls in side jobs that aren't exactly legal, like murder-for-hire. With his knowledge of police procedures and close quarters combat, he is a deadly foe.

THE JOKER

You really don't need to change the Joker at all. He would completely fit within a Batman-less Gotham.

CATWOMAN

You don't need to change Selina Kyle, either. She's a world-class cat burglar that works for herself.

TWO-FACE

During the first season, we keep Harvey Dent as Harvey Dent, head of Internal Affairs. A duplicitous and smug s.o.b., he is convinced that Jim Gordon is a dirty cop and is egged on by the mayor's office to pursue removing the one good cop from the GCPD. After the accident that creates Two-Face, he wouldn't need many changes from traditional Batman lore.

POISON IVY

Similar to Calendar Man, Pamela Isley is a poisoner. Take away the magical man-eating plants and focus on the plant-based poisons and ecowarrior ethos. She is an Earth-first fanatic and willing to destroy anyone that harms the living earth. The city is a blight, an affront to nature. Eventually she will work her way up to ridding the world of the cesspit that is Gotham. She is secretly backed by Ra's Al Ghul.

THE RIDDLER

Edward Nigma is the smartest man alive and he's going to prove it. Having already stolen a fortune via wire fraud, he's still in town because they haven't recognized his genius. While any incarnation of The Riddler would work well in an *MCU: Gotham* game, I am particularly fond of the mastermind of deadly traps from the Arkham series of video games.

GETTING STARTED

There are detectives in your cast or the reporter is in your cast: Put one or two in an unmarked police car with the embedded reporter in the back seat (even if Bryce Rossland isn't a protagonist). It's Bryce's first day as a ride-along and everything is being recorded. Allow for a line or two of banter as the players find their characters. Suddenly, an explosion from the storefronts ahead! Dark greenish clouds of gas pour out of the building as a van pulls up and masked gunmen rush out, heading into the smoke!

There are no detectives in your cast: Well, that's odd, but okay. Two members of the cast most likely to be going to coffee together or coming back from an off-site

meeting together are walking by One Police Plaza, back to the HQ. Allow for a line or two of banter as the player find their characters. Up on the steps, the police commissioner is giving an impromptu news conference to a gaggle of reporters. Suddenly, gunshots are heard! A van pulls up and masked gunmen rush out, firing at the commissioner and uniformed police officers!

For either scenario, possible conflicts could include looking competent (yourself or the GCPD) in front of the reporters, the overall impression of the GCPD in the public (i.e., "If I fail, it looks I used excessive force to take these guys down."), your protagonist's relationship with the GCPD.

KEEP GOING

Stuck for a scene? With Primetime Adventures' emphasis on creating interesting characters, just putting those protagonists next to each other should provide fodder for the next scene.

Failing that, *MCU: Gotham* at heart is a police procedural. There should be some sort of investigation going on: Move detectives to a crime scene. Have the Forensic Technician discover something important in the evidence. Have the people that report to the DA, Internal Affairs, FBI Chief, or the Mayor be called in and get yelled at because progress hasn't been made on their boss' agendas.

But life isn't all about the criminal investigation! There is some real world going on: It's the end of shift and some of the cast are heading out to drink the day away. There is a secret rendezvous in the evidence room. Someone shows up and needs help. Someone shows up to collect a debt. Someone shows up to send a message. Someone has broken into the evidence room. Things are missing. Someone stole our undercover car. Sexist remarks in the locker room. Showing off at the target range. Called in to go over your testimony.

If all else fails, ask yourself which two characters would most hate to be stuck in an elevator with each other. You know what to do.

words and stuff
Thomas Deeny

special thanks to

primetime adventures
Matt Wilson

mcu: gotham players
Kevin Hayward
Matt Hydeman
Kate Minturn
Joel Minturn

and all who joined
for a session or two

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