

BEYOND SUPER

LIFE BEHIND THE MASK



Version 1.0.1

This is the first public version of this game. It is fully playable, but should be considered a first draft. If you have recommendations or find anything wrong or unclear let me know at [@maxkaemmerer](https://twitter.com/maxkaemmerer) on twitter or on <https://maxkaemmerer.itch.io/beyond-super-life-behind-the-mask>.

“Beyond Super: Life Behind the Mask” is a game by Max Kämmerer. This is his first game, this and future games can be found at maxkaemmerer.itch.io. This game was created as a submission to the “[Beyond The Super](#)” jam held by Riley Rethal and is based on “The Quiet Year” by Avery Alder.

Credit

- Cover Image by Paul Fiedler on Unsplash
- Title Font “Clocksmith” by AlienValley
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- Body Font “Ageo” by Eko Bimantara
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- Made with Affinity Designer by Serif
- Made with Google Docs by Google

Thanks to

- Jason, for feedback and suggestions [@StrayBasilisk](https://twitter.com/StrayBasilisk)
- Mei, for constant patience and support

Inspiration

- The Quiet Year by Avery Alder
- Belonging Outside Belonging by Avery Alder & Benjamin Rosenbaum
- Watchmen by Alan Moore & Dave Gibbons
- Watchmen Mini-Series by Damon Lindelof et al.
- The Boys by Eric Kripke et al.

Introduction

What the game is about

“Beyond Super: Life Behind the Mask” is a one-player journaling game that takes a peek behind the mask of a superhero.

The job of superheroes is just like many other jobs, at some point it becomes routine. But other challenges arise around it. Missed your moms birthday because you were saving the city from Doc Trine? Handed in work late because you were busy running from an intelligent turtle turned supervillain?

How do you deal with the challenges of a regular life once you have a handle on your after-hours job? Can you keep a regular job? A relationship? Raise kids? Who do you have to lie to and who can you be honest with?

The stakes are not if you can save the city. They are unfulfilled dreams, burnout, loss of identity and loneliness. Who you have to lie to, who you don't spend enough time with, who you lose, and who you have to pretend to be, to protect those you love most.

What the characters do

The characters in this game try to navigate regular life while dealing with all the issues that come with it, in addition to those that come with their after-hours job of being a superhero. They will have to prioritize, sacrifice, lie and pretend, while attempting to lead two lives at once.

What the player does

The player creates a world and character, interprets prompts and tells the story of their character. They are both writer and director and decide how their character navigates life by creating a journal entry for each week during a year of their characters life.

Inclusiveness

Even in a solo game, inclusiveness is important. Create characters from all walks of life. Distance yourself from stereotypes and cliches, unless you plan on challenging them during play. Be as respectful of your characters as you would be with your loved ones. And finally, love, hate, fear, support and include them equally.

Gameplay

What you need to play

- Writing implement, preferably something you can't erase
- Paper, preferably a journal of some kind
- A standard deck of cards (jokers optional)
- A six-sided die (for optional Goodwill rule)
- A printout of this document (most importantly the card and rule reference)

Terms

- Your **after-hours** job refers to your work as a superhero
- Your **day job** refers to the job you do when not in costume

How to play

To play, first create a world and character by following the instructions in the World Creation and Character Creation sections. Then shuffle the deck of playing cards and keep drawing event cards and choosing actions until you are satisfied with where your character is or when the deck is empty. Each time you draw an event card and pick an action, write a journal entry, from your character's point of view, using the prompt on the card and your chosen action. This is called a turn. Your character's journal exists in the world, it is an item cherished by the character that they share everything with.

Actions

- Make a promise you won't keep
- Ask for / offer help
- Reach out to find comfort
- Make a discovery
- Counteract something that happened before

Generally, each event card represents a week, resulting in one year worth of weekly journal entries in your character's life. Feel free to adjust the scale of your story by changing the amount of time that passes with each card or by writing multiple entries, maybe one per day of the week. Get as detailed or vague as you like, but keep in mind that there is no time pressure and you can write your story at your own pace. Maybe draw one card a day and spend extra time going into detail if you like.

Events don't need to be resolved completely. Let's say one card suggests you are being followed. You do not need to find out who is following you during this turn. Maybe later you draw a card that suggests your door is open when you get back home. Someone could be inside. It could be the person that followed you. Maybe it's a concerned friend that is trying to figure out what you are doing. Or it could be something more malicious. Leave room to expand on things later. This leads to a richer and more intricate story.

Journals usually don't have an epilogue. People stop writing in them because they lose interest, are too busy or pass. Nevertheless, end your game by writing what your character hopes for the future. What they are proud of. What they are ashamed of.

And add whatever else you like, this is your story.

The general tone of this game is meant to be melancholic, but add points of light and joy along the way. Maybe things start getting better for your character, I certainly hope so.

Gameplay Summary

1. Create a world using the World Creation section or chose an existing one
2. Create your character using the Character Creation section
3. Take a turn
 - I. Draw an event card
 - II. Choose an action
 - III. Write a journal entry using the cards prompt and your chosen action
4. Repeat from step 3 until you are satisfied or the deck runs out
5. Write your characters epilogue

World Creation

You may use an existing world you created or one created by someone else that you want to play in. If you want some help creating a new world consider the following questions and prompts. You are not required to fill them all out, but they might help you imagine a world you would want to play in. Some event cards you draw later might work better with one setting than with another. Interpret them freely, they are meant as suggestions only.

You might also want to consider playing a game that is focused on world creation before playing this, there are some great options.

What you decide here should be considered as true in your world. Write it down and reference it during play. Don't worry about the amount of world-building you do. The world will get more interesting and intricate during play, just make sure you have a decent baseline.

Which time period are you playing in?

- Greek myth
- Fantasy
- 1920s
- 1980s
- Modern time
- Future

What is the general opinion of superheroes?

- Are they known or considered a myth?
- Are they welcome or despised?
- Do governments consider them criminals? Do they ask for help?

What do you want the tone of your world to be like?

- Are supervillains more cartoonish or despicable?
- Are superheroes generally pure of heart and saviours of the world or are there those that abuse their powers?
- What is the focus of your society? What are the current issues? What has improved recently? What has become worse lately?

Character Creation

When creating a character the following base assumptions are made.

- Your after-hours job has become routine
- You are barely scraping by financially
- The general mood is melancholic
- There are issues with your day job
- Your relationships with loved ones are strained

To create a character split the deck of cards into its four suits. Then draw one card from each suit and interpret them using the prompts associated with the cards. You will draw one each of the following.

- A complication (Spades)
- A day job (Clubs)
- A superpower (Diamonds)
- An origin (Hearts)

You may redraw your hand of character creation cards, if you are not satisfied with what you got, or make up your character without using this method whatsoever.

Additionally, you should note the following for both your superhero persona and your regular self.

- **Name:** Superhero name / Regular name
- **Rival:** Arch-nemesis / Co-worker you can't stand
- **Friend:** Co-conspirator / Best friend
- **Look:** In costume / regular (draw your character if you like)
- **Contacts:** 2 people or groups you work with (4 total)
- **Weakness:** How can others take advantage? / What are you bad at?

Finally, these are some questions that you might want to consider. You are not required to answer them, they are meant as inspiration only.

- When did you put your costume on for the first time?
- How long have you been a superhero?
- Have you ever misused your powers for personal gain?
- Who knows your secret?
- Who do you wish you could talk to freely?
- Is there someone that regularly helps you?

Optional Rules

This game is meant to be rules-light but adjustable. It is intended to plug in optional rules that you like to create the game you would enjoy most. Some people prefer a very rules-light system, others prefer detailed mechanics. The optional rules provided here serve to both inspire you with additional prompts and to offer more complex mechanics.

Card values

Some optional rules reference card values. Whenever this is the case, the following values apply.

- **2-10:** 2-10
- **Jack:** 11
- **Queen:** 12
- **King:** 13
- **Ace:** 14
- **Joker:** 15

Jokers

Playing with jokers is an optional rule. To use it during character creation add one joker to the complication cards (Spades) and one to the origin cards (Hearts). If you draw the joker during character creation your character is a supervillain instead of a superhero. You also draw an additional card from either the complication or origin cards, depending on where you drew the joker from.

This can be fun but forces you to reinterpret some of the cards you draw during character creation and regular play. Your story might become one of redemption, it may be the downfall of your character or anything else you come up with. The story is yours.

When you draw a joker during your turn, immediately draw another card. The result of this card and your action will be the worst possible outcome for the given situation.

Choice

You may draw two event cards on each of your turns, choosing one of them and discarding the other. This results in a shorter game and gives you more control over your story.

Details


These prompts may serve as inspiration if you need it. Generate or choose as many you want.

To generate a prompt, roll two six-sided dice, the first decides the column, the other the row. Some of the prompts work better with a modern setting, find a fitting equivalent for your setting or roll for a different prompt.

Theme

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Anxiety	Lost	Dread	Secret	Politics	Past
2	Rumor	Anger	Betrayal	Disappointment	Pride	Fear
3	Love	Greed	Power	Grief	False	Pretend
4	Broken	Left	Justice	Desperation	Peace	Chaos
5	Sympathy	Forgive	Forbid	Confusion	Free	Jealousy
6	New	Old	Hidden	Frustration	Recovery	First


Crime

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 - 2	Robbery	Murder	Extortion	Money laundering	Fraud	Kidnapping
3 - 4	Perjury	Forgery	Identity theft	Drug trafficking	Arson	Conspiracy
5 - 6	Vandalism	Shoplifting	Intimidation	Reckless driving	Bribery	Trespassing

Places

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Alley	Apartment	Museum	Library	Construction site	Park
2	Roof	Newsstand	Sewer	Train station	City hall	Stadium
3	Ruin	Restaurant	Cinema	Hideout	Public bathroom	Lake
4	Train	University	Hospital	Unknown	Religious building	Forrest
5	Port	Phonebooth	Tunnel	Graveyard	Famous sight	Airport
6	Bar	Warehouse	Court	Police station	Parking garage	Street

Superhero/Supervillain Visual Descriptor

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Goggles	Tights	Hovering	Large collar	Colorful	Animal themed
2	Doctor's coat	Monochromatic	Muscular	Scrawny	Glasses	Tall
3	Chains	Spikes	Reflective	Many hats	Grotesque	Facepaint
4	Business suit	Cool hood	Strange haircut	Unusual prop	Unnatural shape	Strange voice
5	Something Glows	Additional limbs	Faceless Mask	Disproportionate	Constant smile	Belts, lots of them
6	Mask that hardly hides anything	Prominently placed emblem	Face always covered by shadows	Over the top facial expression	Long cloak that is hindering movement	Mechanical contraptions

Goodwill

Goodwill is an optional rule that adds more mechanics to the process of writing your character's story. When asking another character to do something roll a six-sided die and add your Goodwill to the result. Goodwill is a numeric value between +2 and -2 that represents how likely people are to help you out or listen to you. Every time you let a character down, reduce your Goodwill by 1, to a minimum of -2. Every time you help someone out or sacrifice something to be there for them, increase your Goodwill by 1, to a maximum of +2. After rolling, interpret your result as the other character's response.

- -1-0, no and
- 1-3, no
- 4-5, yes but
- 6, yes
- 6+, yes and

Goodwill may also be used as a currency, to push the result of an event card to be particularly good or bad. When improving the result reduce Goodwill otherwise increase it by a reasonable amount. This needs to make fictional sense, someone might help you out or forgive you for something you did, or you might help them.

Keeping Track

During play keep track of the following

- Keep track of how often you had to lie to people to protect your secret
- Keep track of who knows your secret
- Keep track of how often you chose to put yourself first
- Keep track of how often you put others first
- Keep track of how often your personal life suffered for your secret one

When writing your epilogue take these notes into consideration. This might help you to keep track of how your character behaved, how open they were with others and what they had to do to keep going. It also might feel like you are keeping score, which is why this is an optional rule. Decide for yourself if you would like to use it.

Count(er)ing Cards

After each turn you may add the event card you drew during that turn to your hand. When taking a turn you may spend cards from your hand to counter the usual effect of the card you drew. To do this you need to spend cards from your hand that have a higher combined value than the difficulty of the drawn card. The difficulty equals two times the value of the card. When countering a card you may not add it to your hand at the end of the turn. When you spend a card it is discarded for the rest of the game. Countering takes up your action for this turn. You start the game with zero cards in your hand.

Example:

You drew the queen of diamonds, which has a value of 12, setting its difficulty at 24. You can counter it by combining cards from your hand to reach a minimum value of 25.

Countering a card can mean many things. You can turn a bad situation into a good one, or a good one to a bad one. You can change who the card affects or anything else you can come up with. It is both a game mechanic and a narrative point to describe. The basic idea and theme of the card should remain the same.

You can use the prompts associated with the spent cards as inspiration on how the new event card is countered in the narrative.

When playing with optional Joker rule:

You can counter a joker but must also counter the additional card you drew that turn. When countering a joker you add a flat 15 to the difficulty of the other card, meaning the previous example would be raised from a difficulty 24 to a 41.

If you countered a joker you may add it to your hand and spend it once to counter any other card, even jokers, regardless of card value.

If you do not counter the joker it will be added to your hand face down. While it is in your hand the difficulty of countering any card is three times its value, following the previous example, the difficulty would be 36. The joker remains in your hand until you counter a card at the increased difficulty. You may not spend the joker to counter other cards.

Narratively, having the joker in your hand face down means something is haunting you, someone is actively after you or making your life more difficult. When discarding it from your hand describe how in fiction.

Connections

This optional rule adds more variation and additional prompts to use for your journal entries. The prompts from this may either complement the one from your event card or result in a second situation for this turn.

The suit of the event card which you have drawn determines the category of the Complication - corresponding to a column in the table below.

Roll two dice. One dice determines which of your lives is affected - odd indicates your private life; even indicates your superhero life






The value shown on the other dice determines the detail of the Complication - corresponding to a row in the table. (You may choose which die indicates the detail, and which indicates the life which is affected.)

Example:

- You drew the 4 of Diamonds (“A Contact” Aspect)
- You roll a 2 (“superhero life” or “calls in a favor”)
- You roll a 5 (“private life” or “appears unexpectedly”)

Meaning someone you work with, in your superhero life, appears unexpectedly or someone you work with, in your private life, calls in a favor.

Complications

	 A Weakness	 A Friend	 A Rival	 A Contact
1	is temporarily overcome	asks for a favor	asks for your help	offers something
2	affects you worse than usual	wants to spend time with you	challenges you	calls in a favor
3	becomes known to someone	is angry with you	helps you	disappears
4	reveals something to you	is in trouble	exposes you	is strained
5	gets you in trouble	sends you a strange message	becomes closer with a friend of yours	appears unexpectedly
6	motivates you	embarrasses you	is in danger	warns you

Two Players

Even though this is generally a game for one player, these slight modifications allow you to play with two players as well.

Generally, you would first create or choose a world together and then create either one or two characters.

When playing two characters, instead of writing in a journal, you may write notes and letters to each other. The assumption being that the two characters exchange anonymous messages, sharing what happens to them, supporting each other while not knowing who the other person is. This approach could work especially well in a play-by-post scenario. Players can either draw from a shared deck or each use their own. They take turns resolving one turn for their personal character.

When playing one character together, the approach of one player being the sole writer and director changes to more of a writer's room situation. Players tell a story together, building on what the other player comes up with, asking questions and making suggestions. The general game loop remains the same. Players take turns drawing event cards and choosing actions for their shared character, resolving them together.

Examples

Example World

Time Period: 1578 during the Brahi Wytch Trials of Nassette

The superheroes of this setting are considered to be wytches. They are hunted and put on trial, their strange powers said to be granted by the goat-headed devil himself. The general populace is reliant on their help, defending them from brigands and landowners alike. Landowners and the church use them as scapegoats for the current drought. Unrest is brewing and a few wytches are starting to organize a revolt. Wytches attempt to stay anonymous, hiding their faces with masks made from animal bones. They wield strange powers and are often excellent in hand to hand combat. The term wytch is not gendered in this setting.

Example Character

Cards drawn

- **10 of Clubs:** Delivery driver / Messenger (Day job)
- **Queen of Spades:** You do not age and people are starting to notice (Complication)
- **10 of Hearts:** You were raised by superheroes (Origin)
- **8 of Diamonds:** Invisibility (Power)

Details

- **Name:** Sombra / Esra Hakkham
- **Rival:** Arch-child Sifrit / Hifette Kha
- **Friend:** Lóstrego / Malique Sha
- **Look:** A mask shaped like a fox made from bones and bark / small in stature, red hair, anxious eyes
- **Contacts:** Inventor Leos, Laiakh who is head of the revolt / Sifrit who is head of the local church, aunt Sikh
- **Weakness:** Easily overwhelmed when caught / Keeping a cool head

Esra was raised as a wytch by their aunt Sikh. They were trained in the rites from the moment they could walk. Their work in the revolt was mostly that of a spy, attempting to gain information from the head of the

local church, Sifrit. They are able to shift into a plane between life and death where they remain unseen from prying eyes. To preserve their secret they work as a messenger between the church and local landowners. Recently people started to mention that they look young for their age, which is making Esra consider moving on to a different town, as their siblings once did. They have spent too much time shifting into the plane between, where their body does not age.

Leos and Sikh are the only ones that know of Esra's secret, attempting to help them in their work.

Example Turn

Event Card: 5 of Spades, A parental figure passes

Action: Reach out to find comfort

“They found out that aunt Sikh is one of us. Sifrit strung her up in the town centre before I could get to her. They will burn for this. It is only a matter of time before they come looking for me. I reached out to Leos and they will let me stay with them for a couple of days. They say I should contact Laiakh to talk about a plan to take down Sifrit... last night I burned down their home, discussing plans has never been a strength of mine.”

Reference

Preparing Character Creation

1. Split the deck into its four suits
2. (if using the optional Joker rule) Add one joker each to the complication and origin cards
3. Shuffle each suit separately

Character creation

1. Draw 1 Complication, 1 Origin, 1 Power and 1 Day Job card
2. Interpret the cards to your liking and re-draw those you don't like
3. Write down character details for both of your lives
 - Names (1 each)
 - Rivals (1 each)
 - Friends (1 each)
 - Looks (1 each)
 - Contacts (2 each)
 - Weaknesses (1 each)
4. Think about and take note of who your character is

Preparing Gameplay

1. Gather all 4 suits of your deck into one deck
2. (if using the optional Joker rule) Add both jokers to the deck
3. Shuffle the deck


Taking a turn


1. Draw an event card
2. Choose an action
3. Write a journal entry using the prompt, provided by the card, and your chosen action


Actions

- Make a promise you won't keep
- Ask for / offer help
- Reach out to find comfort
- Make a discovery
- Counteract something that happened before


The following pages include card reference tables for both character creation and gameplay.


	Day Job
2	Photographer / Painter
3	Journalist / Bard / Town crier
4	Detective / Investigator / Spy
5	Doctor
6	Student
7	Scientist / Alchemist
8	Writer / Philosopher
9	Programmer / Hacker / Codebreaker
10	Delivery driver / Messenger
J	Cab driver / Coachperson
Q	Emergency medical technician (EMT) / Medieval Surgeon / Herbalist
K	Grief counsellor / Bartender
A	Teacher

	Origin
2	You lost someone you care about
3	You are the manifestation of nature's suffering
4	You used to be a supervillain but someone changed your mind
5	You wanted the attention
6	You discovered the lair, journal and costume of an old and half-forgotten superhero
7	You are good at something and someone recruited you for it
8	You were a government experiment
9	You felt like the things you were doing to help weren't enough
10	You were raised by superheroes
J	You witnessed a superhero in action and wanted to do the same
Q	You were bullied from childhood on and stood up for yourself for the first time
K	You were affected by a chemical accident
A	You are an alien sent from a distant planet


	Complication
2	You have a partner that is a superhero
3	Someone thinks you are up to something
4	You have children
5	Your best friend in regular life is your arch-nemesis and you don't know it yet
6	You are in love with someone you shouldn't be
7	You want to quit being a superhero but something always stops you
8	You are an informant for a task force aimed at arresting superheroes
9	Someone is blackmailing you
10	You are homeless or currently "couch surfing"
J	Your powers require an illegal substance/chemical
Q	You do not age and people are starting to notice
K	You directly or indirectly work for someone corrupt and connected to organized crime
A	You have a strange mark on your body, caused by your powers

	Superpower
2	Flight
3	Charm
4	Dream
5	Memory
6	Light
7	Dark
8	Invisibility
9	Speed
10	Time
J	Elements
Q	Gravity
K	Invincibility
A	Transformation

	Events
2	You miss an important life event of someone you care about
3	You meet someone new that you like a lot
4	Someone you care about moves away
5	You meet an old flame
6	Friends get married, have a child or get promoted
7	A reporter wants to interview your persona
8	Someone has the chance to uncover who you are but lets you keep your secret
9	You disappoint someone
10	Someone else's secret is revealed to you
J	You find yourself on a date
Q	Someone you care about gets hurt
K	You lose your day job
A	You coincidentally meet a villain out of disguise while out in plain clothes

	Events
2	Someone is very sick
3	Your powers act up and someone notices
4	Your powers fail you in an important moment
5	You become afraid of your own powers
6	Your powers change in a meaningful way
7	Your powers help you in regular life
8	You cannot take up an important opportunity at your day job
9	Police question you about where you were. You were in costume and have no alibi
10	You witness a robbery in progress while out of costume
J	You are at a party when the news report that supervillain causing havoc downtown
Q	Someone assumes your persona, doing horrible things in your name
K	You are injured or sick and unable to prevent something bad from happening
A	You discover something about a friend or family member that you wish you hadn't

	Events
2	Someone who knows your secret almost lets it slip to someone else
3	Someone is spreading false information and people start doubting your persona
4	You grow distant with a friend or partner
5	A parental figure passes
6	Someone discovers who you are behind the mask
7	Your persona loses relevance
8	A friend or family member goes missing.
9	Your base of operations is discovered
10	A colleague at your day job discovers your secret
J	Someone tries to rob you while you are out of costume
Q	Your forgot something important
K	Something costly breaks
A	Your Journal is stolen (Take notes somewhere else until you recover it)

	Events
2	Someone is following you
3	You get back home and your door is open
4	Someone has been asking about you
5	You receive a mysterious note
6	Someone unexpectedly helps you out
7	Someone asks you to use your powers to help them do something you don't want to do
8	You discover what seems like the abandoned lair of a long-forgotten superhero
9	Your bills are due but you are out of money
10	A holiday celebration passes uninterrupted, allowing you to reconnect with someone
J	A friend does something they shouldn't
Q	A friend makes new friends they spend more and more time with
K	Someone close to you condemns superheroes for being reckless or acting above the law
A	You are caught in a lie