

## Glass and Steel (RPG/Campaign)

### Premise Document: Initial Draft

*Tonight...is a night of shock and grief for residents of Calder City, the country, and the world, as the search continues into the night for those still trapped under the wreckage of the Grand Federal Building after today's tragic explosion. The death toll tonight stands at 21 confirmed dead, and injuries into the hundreds. The explosion happened at exactly 11:21 AM, with many of the workers were in the office building. Officials right now are saying that the explosive was similar to that used in the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995, although casualty counts are expected to be much higher, given the time of day, and the layout and construction of the building...*

### **Initial Scene**

The game starts with all the characters in a normal office building, working out their day. Everything is normal, until the explosion rips through the building. Some of the players will get out alive. Some will die. *[Usually, this is n-1 of the players getting out alive, and one not, but this can be tweaked to taste. The literature assumes that there is only one person "fated".]*

### **Backstory**

[The following information should be withheld from players, if possible, although repeat players will naturally know the outcome of the game.]

The true backstory is that the "living" players were attending the dedication to the memorial of the event on the site, and were somehow thrown back into the situation again. The PCs should not start knowing this, or even that the explosion is about to happen. For all they know, they are at the place where they work, although there is an unsettling out-of-place feeling and deja-vu surrounding it, not to mention that they can't recall how they got there.

*And at exactly 11:21 AM, they will ring the bell... 134 times ...once for every person killed in the tragic event three years ago...*

Throughout the game, cues should be given that something is amiss. Radios turned on are playing deadpan memorial speeches or just reading off names. Newspapers either have vague descriptions or unintelligible gibberish. Computers and electronics fail to work. Soot and charred remnants turn up in strange places throughout the workplace (*With a nod to Andrew Plotkin's Shade*). At 11:21 (or thereabouts, depending on the accuracy of the clocks), the explosion hits, and in the short time that follows, the PCs hear the monotonous tolling of bells, or some sort of representation thereof (a phone ringing, something striking and clanging.) When the bells stop, the scene resets and the players are back in the office again.

The major conflict of the story is that one particular PC *must* die during for the cycle (and the game) to end. The events, however, are fully undetermined, and the fated PC will not be “led to the slaughter” by the GM or by overwhelming metagamed fate. It may even come down to the other players to cold-bloodedly murder their compatriot once they find themselves back at the office again, even before the explosion hits (they retain memories of past go-rounds.)

[Finer points of this are still in the works.] The “fated” PC is determined by decks of “déjà vu” cards prepared beforehand by the GM. The GM should prepare full decks of cards, and the players pick blindly from the among the decks. Each card details a memory of what actually happened to that PC, and the cards are numbered on the outward-facing side, although not uniquely (so they cannot be guessed). At the end of each “cycle”, the players roll a d??. If the number matches one of their cards, they can put that card into their “known” deck, and look at. The memories of the fated and unfated characters should be reflective of that, although red herrings are not out of the question. One card, the [critical-success number] card, contains the player’s “fate” memory, either telling of them sitting at the memorial service, or dying.

Once the player knows or suspects their fate, they are under no obligation to tell the other players. Death for anyone is real and final, so no player should readily desire to give up their role as the key player.

Players should be introduced to the game as simply and as obscurely as possible (although good RPer's can RP not knowing the plot, I find it adds to the suspense if the

players are left in the dark): “You are in an office building, the place where you work. One of you will not survive.”