Advice for GMs

In addition to all the general advice, here are several points that are special to *Over the Edge*.

Create Custom GMCs: Invent a custom GMC for each player-character, such as a nemesis, a fan, or any other character that somehow reflects the character's traits. It's nice to have them in mind at the start of the story arc, but it's fun to improvise them, too.

Reveal Secrets: Give information to characters when they look for it, although gaining the information may come with a price or a drawback. Players can make choices that are more interesting if they know what's going on, so err on the side of letting them know. Sometimes share secrets with the players as out-of-character information.

Characters Need to Act: Create goals that the characters can pursue by being active, curious, or talkative — even extravagant or showy.

Set Up Casts: Before calling for lots to be cast, frame the possibilities. Name the levels of the character and the opposition. Discuss what sorts of outcomes are likely. Give away some out-of-character information if it helps the players understand what's at stake.

It's OK to Fail: Lots of conflicts can be styled as "how well do you succeed?" or "how much of a beating do you avoid as you lose?" It's better for failure to lead to trouble than to a dead end.

Reward Good Action: When characters act boldly in pursuit of goals, and you want them to succeed despite the risks, they still suffer when they fail. Characters can do more by acting and failing than by avoiding conflict.

Enforce Consequences: Let the characters' actions have consequences — good, bad, and ambiguous.

Identify "Just for Fun" Casts: Sometimes the player casts lots for something relatively inconsequential. If you can't think of a noteworthy consequence for a three or a four, have the player cast the lots "just for fun." You can improvise action based on the cast, with the presumption that the results are not substantive to the plot.

Pace the Action: The longer your arc, the more moderately the action should progress. Short arcs should have immoderate action.

Managing Casts from Setup to Resolution

A good deal of thinking or framing goes into each cast.

Characters versus the World: Typically, a player needs to cast lots when their character is trying to do something that someone else doesn't want them to do. Sometimes it's the character acting on the world, such as trying to find the most authentic artist in the city, and sometimes it's a gamemaster-character taking hostile action toward the character, such as a rival trying to defame them in their professional circle.

Resolve a Question: The default question for a cast of the lots is, "What happens when I try to do XYZ?" It's a question with a meaningful answer, where a successful cast has a materially different outcome from a failure. Agree with the player what's at stake, at least for success or failure. You can leave twists to improvise if they come up, or you can talk about what those might mean, too.

Default Difficulty is One Level Ahead: If the players mostly cast their lots with a one-level advantage, that's best. That's where success is common enough to move the plot forward and failure is common enough to be a real part of the action. Sometimes you can adjust the difficulty by reframing the conflict. If fighting an enforcer toe-to-toe means an even-on fight, maybe the character just wants to get out of there in one piece. That's an easier task and can be attempted with a one-level advantage. If overpowering a security guard would be a two-level advantage, maybe there's a good chance that a scuffle will draw attention. In that case, taking down the guard quickly and quietly might be attempted at a one-level advantage.

Who is the Initiator? If the character is initiating the action, they succeed on a 7. If someone else is initiating action against them, they succeed on an 8. Sometimes other circumstances grant this advantage to the player or take it away.

The Player Casts Lots and Possibly Rerolls Dice: The player casts their lots. If the character has a 1-level advantage, they can reroll one of those two dice. They use the second roll even if it's worse. With a 2-level advantage, the player can make a second reroll after the first, and so on. If the character has a 1-level disadvantage, the GM can make them reroll either die. If the character has a 2-level disadvantage, what are they even thinking? Yes, the GM can make them reroll a second time. If the difference is 3 levels, success or failure is automatic.

Success and Failure: Succeeding usually means getting the outcome you were looking for, and failure means not getting it. The GM determines what the outcome is, although the player can make suggestions and often narrates the details of the outcome. In general, the more success the character experiences, the more narrative leeway the player has.

Twists — 3s and 4s: Good twists and bad twists bring something unexpected to the mix. It might be something as simple as an unexpectedly good or bad outcome, or it could be the start of a whole new plot thread. A 3 is a bad twist and a 4 is a good twist. Two 3s means a doubly bad twist or two bad twists, while two 4s means a doubly good twist or two good ones.