Death of the Vele

The greatest culture in history, compassionate and scholarly...
Masters of art, science, engineering, academics, the martial arts...T
Destroyed in a single night by a barbarian culture they sought to aid

By Bill Burdick
https://sites.google.com/site/deathofthevele/rules
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Death of the Vele is a collaborative role playing game which owes much to Blood Red Sands, as well as Spirit of the Century and Lady Blackbird. Please check these games out as well as games they recommend. Here's an overview of the features of Death of the Vele:

- Collaborative, but feels like a traditional RPG
- Your characters are yours
- Supports campaign-length stories
- Game play stays at the table
- Characters don't *always* do their best -- sometimes they have an off-day, even if their stats say they're fine, but this is your decision
- The Right of Challenge -- if the other players don't buy it, you can't do it
- Show, don't tell -- a lot of communication happens through scenes and events
- Answer questions with scenes -- if players want to know, scenes reveal the answer
- Characters are naturally "woven together"
- Your characters will get the spotlight
- Supports visiting gamers

Usually, when you play Vele, you sit at a table with a bunch of dice, tokens, index cards, paper, and pencils or pens. Death of the Vele is about making cool stories, having a good time. It's not about competing, it's about working together to build something.

At various points in the game, each of the players will take the position of "narrator", but players are usually playing a character; their own "player character" or one of their "story characters." The player who is narrating is "the boss," for the moment, but the other players may challenge their decisions, and the majority will get their way.

Vele is structured into stories, acts, and scenes. When you start a new story, you create a very rough story framework with acts, first, and then play out each act, scene by scene, fleshing it out as you play. You won't know ahead of time what all of the scenes are going to be, but you'll have a rough idea and you will have objectives and maps for the acts and for the overall story before you start playing out the scenes.

[Please note the additional rules at end of mechanics section]

Culture and History in a Nutshell

Vah, god of knowledge, mercy, and life, created the Vele, hundreds of thousands of years ago. A few thousand years ago, he made the "lower" races, as the Vele call them, the Nadar, the Goolan, and the Scrow. The Scrow, clever and brutal worshipers of Repshoon, dark god of scheming, war, and corruption, insinuated their way into the Vele cities on the premise of learning from their great wisdom.

The Betrayal happened more than 1600 years later. Scrow verminites, rare and deadly priests of Repshoon with ugly, devastating powers, executed a long-range plan culminating in the destruction of the Vele in a single night, followed by world domination. Now, what scant Vele are left are hunted by the Scrow using the Vele's own powerful weapons. Most of them are either mad or slaves.

The Scrow Empire rules the world, now. Non-scrow "dogs" are subjects of the empire and allowed to own property, hold jobs, etc., but they are not citizens, they pay heavier taxes than Scrow do, and they may not wear certain types of clothing. Non-scrow nobles may still live in their estates, but Scrow overseers build rich estates nearby and the overseers own all of the keys to the dogs' estates.

There are certain Scrow who follow Vah and have become elite priestly spies to oppose the Scrow empire from within. A Scrahv is not nearly as powerful as a verminite, but there are far more Scrahv then verminites and verminites know nothing about them (Vah protects them from verminite perception).

It's Your World, Not Mine

Here are the key points: the Vele are dead and the left behind powerful devices all over the world. Vermintes lurk menacingly behind the scenes. The Scrow are tyrants, but they live and let live and heroes oppose them.

How soon after The Betrayal will your story occur? Was it several years ago? Did it just happen? Did it occur long ago, in time out of memory?

How organized are the Scrow and how tolerant are they of dissention?

Will it take place near the center of the Scrow Empire, where they are at their strongest or at the fringes, where they have the least control?

What is the role of Vah and Repshoon and how do the PCs view them?

Does "world" mean the planet, the galaxy, the island, the culture, or something else?

When you create the story, you will decide what the setting is. Vele has some mystical elements to it, but Kung Fu has shown that can work in the Old West and Warhammer 40K and Star Wars have shown it can work in the far future (or long, long, ago). Your setting can be Steampunk, Old West, Ancient Japan, Space Opera, Postapocalyptic, Egyptech, Renaissance, Dark Ages, Aztec, Pulp, Dystopian Future, Multiplanar, prehistoric, or whatever works for you.

Regardless of the setting you choose, it should be a Death of the Vele setting -- the Betrayal, Vele, Scrow, Scrahv, ruche, etc. should all be a part of it. You all need to agree on how to represent these things in your setting.

The World

The rest of the world is fairly primitive, compared to the world of the Vele. This depends a lot on your setting, but the idea is that Vele machines are magical, compared to things made by other people. The Scrow are very cunning and also good with math, engineering, and bureaucracy. They have put the Vele infrastructures to good use and under them there are world-wide systems: gladiatorial combat, performances, trade, and mail delivery. Brutal rulers the Scrow may be, but they are also good at keeping the populace pacified with entertainment.

Ruche

Ruche is the energy of life and the source of power for Vele machines, science, art, medicine, and esoteric disciplines. Those who are able to learn from Vele or their students can take advantage of it. Ruche is integrally bound together with life and the elements and it has an affinity to certain combinations of metals.

This affinity can be produced directly with the metals, by layering or alloying them, but it is also found in certain crystals and minerals that contain the metals.

All living things contain these minerals in their blood, organs, and structure. Life around large deposits of these minerals and crystals can be altered by the energy, creating fantastic and fearsome creatures.

Every living thing resonates with ruche and lives because of it, but creatures born near mineral or crystal deposits rich with ruche may acquire concentrations of these substances in their bodies and certain genetic aberrations produce mineral balances in the body structure, organs, or blood that naturally resonate more powerfully with ruche.

Machine Smiths

The Vele developed a craft based on synthetic ruche resonance, called machine smithing. Machine smiths can build ruche resonant devices with amazing capabilities. Vele devices are capable of operating by themselves, talking, rapidly healing people, rising into the air, enabling communication over long distances, manipulating the elements, and may other wonders. The devices are made of gleaming, layered metals of various hues, with clockwork internals of incredible complexity, decorated with ornate filigree and when they operate, they glow with muted color. They are extremely durable and, unless weight is integral to their function, incredibly lightweight for their size. Machine smiths claim that the devices are alive; not necessarily sentient (at least not normally), but alive, like a plant. In fact, a doctor skilled in Vele medicine can work with a Machine smith to replace a lost body part with a Vele device. Operating a Vele device untrained can produce unexpected and dangerous results, but some few people of the lower races have shown a greater facility with them than most.

Vele devices are like no other goods in the world; rare, but more available than they were before the downfall of the Vele – and death and injury due to improper operation is also accordingly less rare. Only Machine smiths understand how to fashion the fantastic Vele devices and there are very few Machine smiths among the lower races, except for rare ones adopted and raised by a smith as their own; the Vele have attempted to teach outsiders, but only apprenticeship has succeeded and learning the craft of a Machine smith can be perilous, particularly for one of a lower race.

Machine smiths have special devices, called shamanes, grafted to their bodies, to manipulate ruche with great precision. A shamane appears to be a set of deep, ornate, metallic, tattoo-like grooves, coming from the solar plexus, penetrating under the ribcage and into some of the organs. On the surface of the body, the shamane traces the rib cage, up along the sides of the neck, the bones of the face, the bones of the arms, the palms, and the fingers, with a very thin groove going to the center of each finger tip. Each smith's shamane is unique; for example, some machine smiths have thin shamane tracings, giving them a skeletal appearance and some have very broad shamane tracings that appear to be metal armor. Machine smiths use their shamanes when they build a device, to pool and shape ruche in a device, in order to confer power to it, and to impart any nonmechanical functions that the device has (interacting with the elements, communication, healing, etc.) Shamane grafting is a rite of passage, extremely painful for a long period of time. If the candidate is not properly qualified, prepared, and focused at every point during the grafting period, the process is fatal.

Machine smiths have to learn how to make different types of devices -- they can't generally improvise beyond personalizing the devices. The body of machine smith knowledge has been dwindling since the Vele's destruction, but there are most certainly hidden caches of knowledge waiting to be discovered by an ambitious smith.

Ruche Manipulation

Ruche manipulation is the direct manipulation of ruche by a living being and anyone can learn to do it, if they have access to teaching and study for at least a decade, but ruche manipulators each find that a certain type of manipulation comes easier than all of the rest. Machine smiths are ruche manipulators too but they are all "synthetically enhanced", gaining their facility through the painful shamane grafting process, which

forces their manipulation facility to align with machine smithing. Natural machine smiths occur only once in a thousand years, but this is undoubtedly how the first machine smith came to be. Natural machine smiths are, as far as game mechanics are concerned, the same as "normal" machine smiths, except that they don't have shamane grafts.

There are two main "grades" of ruche manipulation: domains, and techniques. Domains are large classes of effect, like healing, fire, athletics, movement, etc. Techniques are specific effects, like "flying leap" or "heal wounds". Ruche manipulators are limited to a single domain, but can have techniques outside of their domain. Machine smiths may also learn ruche manipulation techniques. When someone manipulates ruche, there are visible glowing effects, just like when people use Vele devices. Known ruche manipulators are sometimes revered and sometimes feared and hunted by their own kind. The Scrow officials take a dim view of non-scrow ruche manipulators.

Ruche mutants

Sometimes a creature is abnormally resonant in a singular way. Ruche mutants are uncommon, but not unheard of. A ruche mutant is like a ruche manipulator that only has techniques and no general ruche manipulation ability. If you want a character that can do a few extraordinary things that are limited in scope, a ruche mutant is probably more appropriate than a ruche manipulator. People view known ruche mutants in the same way they view known ruche manipulators.

Fantastic creatures

Fantastic and fearsome **types** of creature can be found around large deposits of ruche-resonant minerals and crystals. These are whole subspecies, forever changed by ruche. Repshoon's power corrupts some of these with disgusting, terrifying, and sometimes maddening results.

Vele

Vah, god of mercy and knowledge created first the Vele, waiting hundreds of thousands of years before creating the other peoples of the world. Long lived, kind, and proud; builders of magical machinery with a vast culture that once covered the continents; they were the only people with pointed ears. The Vele refered to the other peoples as the "lower races" because Vele lived for thousands of years and the other peoples live for only perhaps 100 or 200 years. Over the millennia, the Vele had fewer and fewer children, their population gradually decreasing. The Scrow are the shortest lived people, seldom living more than 70 years, with the exception of their "God Emperor," who has lived for 1735 years, now, because of a Vele machine given by Kershanh, Lord of the Vele.

Vele knowledge was unparalleled in the world; their proximity to Vah, along with their vast history and long lives enabled achievements which seemed magical to the other peoples of the world. The Vele were the best warriors, doctors, artists, athletes, and engineers and they excelled as well in many other areas. With their downfall, that knowledge is simply unavailable to most of the world. Many of their highly durable artifacts remain, though the Scrow have caused many Vele devices to deteriorate prematurely as they eradicate the traces of the Vele from the world. Vele devices are not illegal; indeed, many Scrow use them, but they have destroyed many of those which they found too dangerous to use themselves or which they considered to be useless or despicable.

The Betrayal

Several years after giving the gift to the Scrow God-Emperor, Kershanh died from a mysterious wasting disease. The Vele were completely unprepared for this and their society never recovered, with no one ever ruling in his place. After his death, the society gradually drifted into isolated units, communicating less and less frequently until their cities virtually became outposts. As their civilization dwindled and fractured, they took to keeping up isolated outposts in their former territories, practicing the old arts and acting as itinerant caretakers

of their vast roads and enormous, vacant structures; only a few forges remaining to produce their devices. Few Vele are ever seen, even in their ancient capital of Srela, today.

Using cunning strategies of betrayal, covering generations, the Scrow slowly advanced a plan of domination from within the Vele's civilization. Working within the Vele laws and culture, using lies and plausible deniability, they were able to deceive Vele in key positions, building temples to Repshoon in Vele cities and using them as strong points to slowly maneuver powerful Scrow Verminites into the Vele's strongholds. Then, they executed a sudden coordinated assassination of Vele leaders and seized control of the entire Vele empire in a single night, turning the Vele's own devastating weapon machines against the Vele themselves. The Scrow killed almost all of the Vele, that night, destroying most of their cities and structures and demonstrating their ultimate superiority over the Vele to the shocked and paralyzed world, universally cementing the Scrow empire's hold. The remaining Vele, they dispersed among the nations of the world, but even most of those have perished in despair.

Scrow

Masters of intrigue and betrayal, the Scrow control the world with an iron grip. They are the shortest lived people, short, fat, and strong, with wild, dark hair, they are also cunning masters of combat, strategy, poisons, and betrayal; they ruthlessly oppress all the peoples of the world. Anyone who is not Scrow must pay extra taxes (optional: cannot, by law, learn to read or write) and must pay public homage to the Scrow God Emperor. Royals and nobles who are not Scrow still live in their castles and rule their lands, because administration of "dogs" is beneath a Scrow, but there are new locks in the castles and only the Scrow overseers have the keys. It is unlawful for a Scrow overseer to steal from a "dog", though this is seldom enforced.

Scrahv

Among the Scrow, there is an underground movement, priests of Vah who refer to themselves as the Scrahv. The Scrahv seek to preserve what Vele are left, along with their artifacts, culture, and teachings. Many of these brave Scrowmen risk their lives daily as master spies within the ranks of the Scrow military. Scrahv who work as overseers seek to gain followers of Vah among the nobles of the other races. It is very risky but the Scrahv are ready to take their own lives at any time, rather than reveal the movement. The Scrahv know of the Verminites and their devotion to Vah allows them a measure of protection from them; Verminites have a spiritual blind spot for Scrahv and forget details about them soon after they enter their mind, their own minds filling in the blanks with plausible, false memories. Until now, the Scrahv are still undiscovered by the Scrow empire. One of the ultimate goals of the Scrahv is to find the Book of the Vele, a mystical crystalline and metal device capable of teaching all of the Vele knowledge. Once they find it, they seek to place it in the Vault of Vah, thought to be somewhere near Srela, preserving it until Vah opens the vault to a future civilization.

Nadar

Pale and much like the Vele in appearance but without pointed ears; a disguised Vele could appear to be a Nadar. They are clever with mundane devices, but Vele devices mystify them (they can build windmills, water wheels, etc.). As a whole, they did not adopt the philosophy of Vah and they are circumspect about the Vele -- they expected to be treated specially because of the similarity of their appearance, but the Vele favored the Goolan over them.

Goolan

Dark, tall, and favored by the Vele, because of their love of Vah. They live in the east in Srela and the surrounding areas. They were protected and trained by the Vele (while the Vele were still around). They are aristocratic and educated.

The Craven

One example of Repshoon's influence on life is a phenomenon called "The Craven". People sometimes become permanently "craven", continuing to live in their societies, but preying on their own people in secret, as cannibals, torturers, hunters, and the like. They seem to have some way of recognizing one another and tend to gather into small groups of 2-5, with one or more taking a parental role in the group and the rest taking the roles of children -- many times there is an age-role reversal, with children acting as parents and older people behaving in an infantile manner. This behavior only occurs in private or in pressure situations; craven are very hard to detect in public and usually pass themselves off as normal people, remaining undetected. Craven usually have a secret lair where they bring their victims to practice their abnormal behavior.

Verminites

The Scrow worship Repshoon, god of war and scheming and their God-Emperor is also the High Priest of Repshoon. Scrowmen refer to the other peoples of the world as "dogs," the animals they most detest, because they are loyal and easy to predict and control. Scrowmen scare their children with stories of bogeymen who feast on garbage and the dead. Unknown to the world and almost all Scrow, these bogeymen are real; these figures of legend are the Scrow Verminites. These Scrowmen are a sect of priests of Repshoon who have learned the secret art of communing with vermin and it is unlawful for anyone besides them and certain other priests of Repshoon even to know of the existence of this art; those found to know of the Verminites are immediately captured, tortured, and executed.

Vermin are a constant extension of a Verminite. Verminites continually commune spiritually and physically with nearby vermin, perceiving what they perceive and commanding them, subject to the vermin's limited ability to think. Larger vermin are harder to read and control, but they understand more complex commands. Vermin can obey simpler orders for longer periods without direct communication from a Verminite. Two Verminites can also commune with each other through their vermin.

Because of the extreme secrecy and the fact that beholding a Verminite would be horrifying and disgusting to most people, they usually operate under the cover of darkness and use priests of Repshoon as intermediaries. The Scrow God Emperor is, of course, the most powerful of the Verminites and commands them. Some among the Verminites say that the God Emperor was the first and that it was the unnatural prolonging of his life by the machine of the Vele that made it possible.

Verminite camaraderie tends to focus on scheming, bitter complaints, and rivalry. A Verminite must maintain a fixation on Repshoon, hatred, and corruption directly opposed to Vah and everything he stands for (including his followers). Verminites must constantly be on their guard, lest they unthinkingly lose their focus, by feeling too much compassion, for instance, but as we judge the world by ourselves, so do they and they tend to view others as being like them, seldom falling into the trap of altruism. Verminites who slip too much in their mindset are bitten by their vermin. It happens to all Verminites at least once. This makes most of them more bitter and hateful. Others become fearful. These know that one day they will suddenly be consumed by their own vermin and that preys on their mind like a cancer until their inevitable death and rapid consumption.

Playing the Game

Basic Mechanics

In Vele, you use two mechanisms to tell stories, creating fiction, and resolving struggles. Both are important. Creating fiction is fairly free-form, except that it must not contradict previous fiction and it is subject to challenge by the other players. Many things must be "justified with fiction" (see Justifying with Fiction), meaning you have to rationalize what you want to happen in a way that makes sense to the other players and that is consistent with the story. Fiction can happen in the past (flashbacks -- see Elsewhere and Elsewhen), in the future (flashforwards), at the same time as the current struggle, but at another place (meanwhiles), or in the current story line.

The other mechanism is struggles. struggles happen when a player does something with their character to another players' character that they don't agree with. To resolve struggles, players roll dice and, in addition to the struggle succeeding, the winners gets the dice the losers rolled. In Vele, you use dice to create characters, creatures, and things, to heal and make repairs, and to allow your characters to do extraordinary things, so this gives extra story telling power to the winner, but don't worry, you can borrow dice from "the bowl" when you need them for struggles and this can help replenish dice you've lost, if you win big. Also, every act begins with a fresh start and everyone's dice, characters, items, etc. reset based on their experience level, so the "playing field" periodically evens out.

Vele is played out in acts, and at the beginning of each act, you get two sets of dice . Like a lot of role playing games (e.g. Blood Red Sands), Death of the Vele uses dice with different numbers of sides: d4 (4-sided), d6 (6-sided), d8 (8-sided), d10 (10-sided), and d12 (12-sided). During an act, you can spend these dice (and others that you may win) to create components and traits and to use abilities to produce extraordinary effects, like walking on walls, healing or extra powerful or effective attacks. You can get more dice by successfully wagering in struggles with your characters.

Traits specify a character's training and natural abilities. Each character has one focus trait, which is a broad category representing its background, such as warrior, politician, doctor, pirate, etc., and several other specific traits which are less general, such as fencing, persuasion, first aid, etc.. Each trait has a rating which is the size of a die (from d4 to d10). 4 is below-average, 6 is average, 8 is professional, 10 is expert, and 12 is master. Warrior would let Doulan (below) do things that warriors can do, like assessing an opponent's weaknesses or making a feint to trick them in a fight (note that Doulan is much less powerful than a "normal" Vele; his despair makes him operate at a "mortal" level). Doulan's could use his knowledge of history for political insight in a royal court, etc. In the game, you use traits whenever your character attempts a struggle that requires a roll, which means that both success and failure would be an "interesting" advancement in the story. If failure would be boring, the narrator can just declare whether the struggle succeeds, based on the trait's ratings (subject to challenge).

Aspects describe motivations and special features of characters that help describe the character, connect them to other things or people, or characterize their story or situation. You can use aspects to help with your rolls, to alter the story, or to gain experience by doing something that "plays up" to the aspect or you can get a lot more experience if you "buy off" the aspect by doing something that makes it no longer usable (like if Doulan were to destroy the Book of the Vele). To use an aspect, you spend one of your experience points (see Aspects and Fate). If you run out of experience points, there are ways to earn more of them.

Your PC's components are things that your character controls but that are not physically part of the character. Some examples are weapons, animals, devices, servants, or associates. They only have traits (no aspects). If your character is affected, some of its traits or traits of its components will be disabled and may require healing or repair. Only traits on your character and on components that are present with the character can be disabled. Traits which could be used for healing or repair (such as First Aid or Machine Repair) can be heal

disabled traits. If all of your character's traits are disabled, your character is "taken out," which means that it is either completely helpless or dead. If all of a component's traits are disabled, that component is destroyed or lost.

The Right of Challenge and Approval

The Right of Challenge is fundamental mechanic of adjudication in Vele. When players disagree with something another player is doing, in most cases, they can challenge. If the majority of players support the challenge, the player must do something else. If a player creates fiction that contradicts fiction that already exists, you should challenge it.

Sometimes the rules call for approval, which really just means mandatory challenge; the player may continue if a majority is not opposed. If there is a tie, make a roll to determine the outcome. This can help prevent "cheesing" (using the rules for undue advantage) – for instance, if you make an aspect that is trivial to buy off, that's probably cheesy and you probably did it just for an easy XP gain; other players may not approve of things that seem too cheesy. Quick thumbs up or down or nods is good enough for approval; don't make a big occasion out of it. Traits, difficulties, and goals during struggles, fate, and hitting and buying off aspects all require approval.
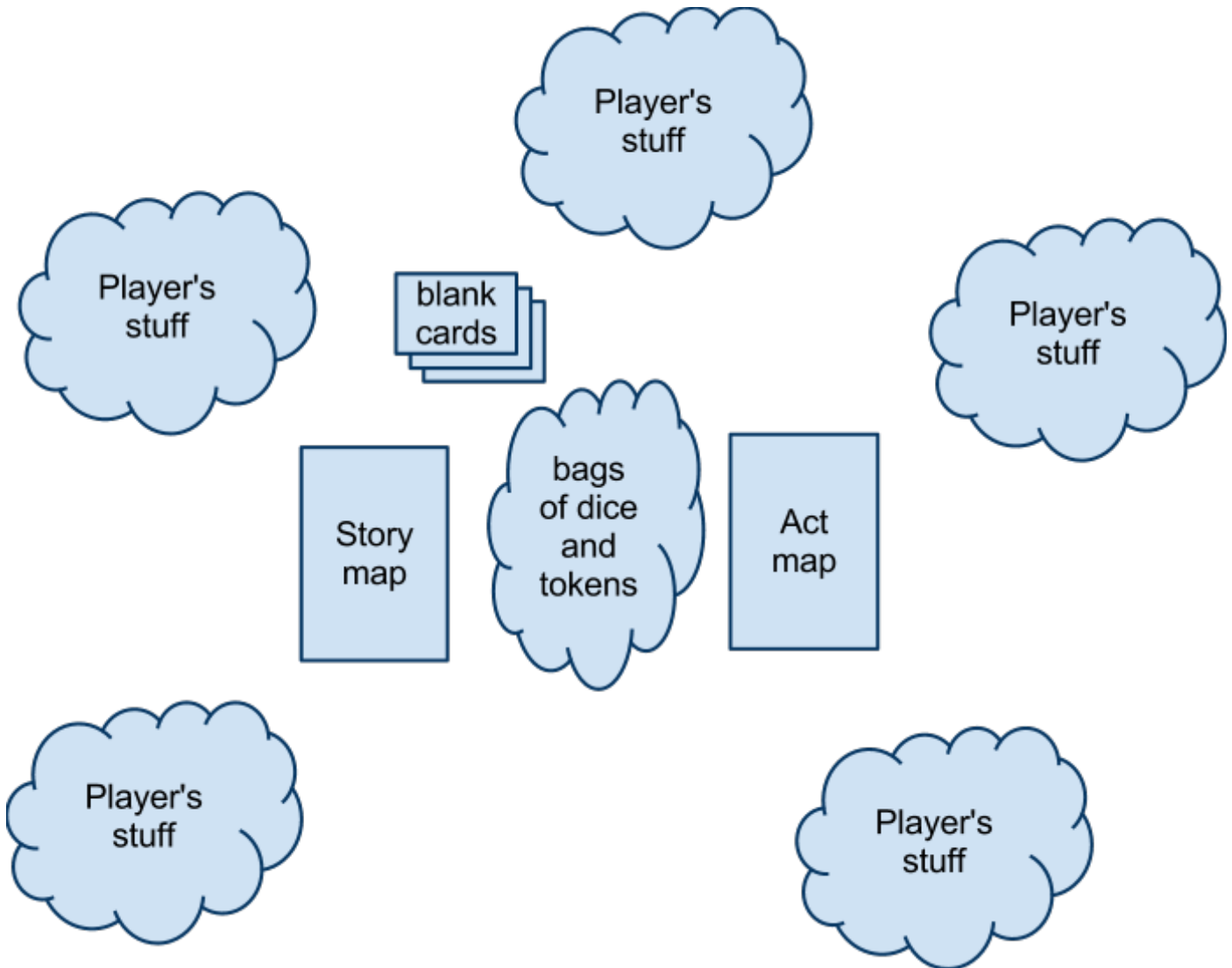
The Narrator Can Say, "No"

The narrator can choose to participate in a challenge normally or just say, "no," which is a challenge that automatically succeeds. This is one of the privileges the current narrator has over the other players. This makes play feel a little more like a single-GM game, which is what Death of the Vele aims to do.

A Note About Verminites and Vele

There are only handfuls of Vele and Verminites in the world and they are so powerful that characters should probably never encounter one -- only what evidence it may leave behind (i.e. mechanics should not directly affect a Vele or Verminite). Vele are immortal and tend to be thousands of years old; extremely competent beyond what "normal people" are capable of. If a player wants to play a Vele, they need to justify with fiction why this Vele operates at the level of one of "the lower races," sing power only on occasion, rather than all the time. At some point, the character may be overwhelmed and die because of this stunted competence, so the reason needs to be very solid -- no Vele would be defeated by ordinary beasts, for instance.

The Game Table

Player's stuff

Player's stuff

blank cards

Player's stuff

Story map

bags of dice and tokens

Act map

Player's stuff

Player's stuff

Player's stuff

Components

Components in Death of the Vele represent anything that can interact with the story using the struggle mechanic -- anything that can act or be acted against can be a component. This includes characters, equipment, animals, machines, traps, hazards and anything else you can think of. PCs are collections of components: a "main component" for the PC and potentially several other components for equipment, servants, vehicles, etc. A component has a name, a group name, a set of "traits" and "abilities" and a set of aspects. Traits and abilities allow a component to function in an "struggle" (see Struggles), like skills, natural talent, equipment, quirks, magic, technology, genetics, psychic powers, etc.

You can buy or replace a trait at almost any time in the game by paying a die of the same size as the trait from your appropriate group of dice (character or story). You must justify it with fiction, and this is usually much harder during an act, than it is at story or act creation. The trait gets a name and a die size (ex: War Hammer 8, Investigation 10). This means there are 5 levels of effectiveness for traits, with 4 representing "incompetent", 6 "average", 8 "professional", 10 "expert", and 12 "master". Incompetent traits are disadvantageous, because if they apply in a struggle, a component may not use higher valued traits.

Abilities allow characters to do rarer, more extraordinary things than traits do during struggles. Characters use abilities in conjunction with traits by spending dice to use them. To add abilities to a character, you must "allocate" dice for it. This means that you can't use those dice to buy other abilities or traits.

Components come in four sizes, "minions" with 1 trait slot (many of which you can write on a single card), "normal" components with 4 trait slots and 4 aspects, and "main" components with 6 trait slots and 5 aspects, and PCs, which can be much larger, depending on their level. Your character consists of a PC component (with 6 trait slots at level 1 and more at higher levels), plus several normal components that will probably represent equipment, friends, servants, vehicles, pets, etc. You will also have "story components" for each act that represent things the characters will (or should) encounter in the story; one main story component and at least 3 normal story components. *Note: since minions only have only one trait and no aspects, they are generally easy to take out, but they can still provide a challenge if they ally with each other and/or use manuevers (see maneuvers).*

When a player buys a component, they have to buy at least 1/2 of its traits. You can't buy traits during struggle resolution; buying traits in order to soak up the effect you just got from an attack is not kosher -- but you can pay for traits before the rolls, if you can justify it with fiction. You don't get dice back when you replace a trait. Narrators can create *temporary components* from bowl dice, but may only use bowl dice with them in struggles. Any character dice a player doesn't spend go into the player's **character dice**. Players also have **story dice**.
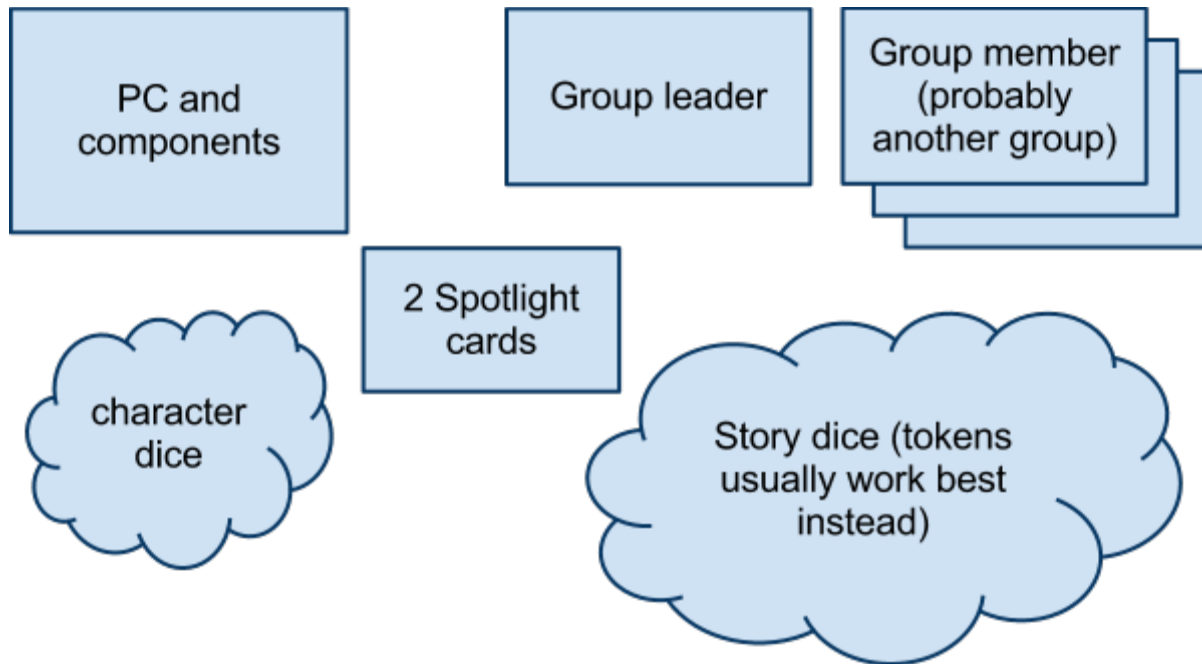
Minions have bargain prices -- when you buy a minion, you get another one with a trait one size smaller, so if you buy a d10 minion, you get another d8 minion as well. This is because integrated minions are far more vulnerable than regular components because there is no cost to target a particular minion (see Autonomous and Integrated Components), and they are also VERY vulnerable to mass attacks (see Mass Struggles).

Each component (both normal and main) **may** have one "focus" trait which is interpreted broadly to represent its background, such as warrior, politician, doctor, pirate, etc. This trait contributes its die to struggles which fall under this broad category. Other traits should be more specific and less like a profession, such as fencing, persuasion, first aid, etc. Only **one** component in a group of integrated components can have a focus trait, so make sure you consider this when you make your components.

Groups

Components belong to groups. The PCs are one group and each story character belongs to a group. At the start of each act, the players create groups that are part of the act. During play, players can create new groups as they see fit. Group members usually each have at least one aspect that pertains to the group (see Aspects and Fate).

A Player's Stuff

PC and components

Group leader

Group member (probably another group)

character dice

2 Spotlight cards

Story dice (tokens usually work best instead)

Using Traits and Focus Traits

When a player uses a trait, it is subject to challenge. If the use isn't obviously covered by the trait, players will be more likely to challenge it. Focus traits cover a lot larger areas, though, and are usually named for professions or areas of experience, rather than direct abilities. For example, "Warrior" would make a good focus trait, but a lousy normal trait. A better normal trait might be a weapon skill, like "Spear", or "Archery". Warrior can cover a lot of things, including fighting with a variety of weapons, first aid, and endurance training. Archery could be a hobby for a noble fop who happens to be good with a bow.

One-Shot Components

One-shot components model expendable, extraordinary things that only function once, like drugs, explosives, potions, scrolls, etc. They cost the same as normal components, but the component is only usable once and the dice you spend for the component also power the component's abilities. One-shot components can't be part of another component and can't absorb damage for it.

Creating PC Components During an Act

Modding your PC at the before an act is a fine thing to do and there shouldn't really be any limits on this. During an act, however, there are 3 major circumstances for creating PC components:

The Thing You Need

This is when it would be really nice to have just the right thing. But you don't. Any player should be able to create just what they need, once per act, without worrying (too much) about being challenged. Really need to pull a priceless antique watch out of your coat pocket? Go right ahead and spend the dice, just don't make a habit of it.

The Thing You Find Along the Way

If you're in an environment where you might reasonably find a particular item, you should be able to create it without worrying about challenge, assuming the other players agree that it's reasonable. If you're in a gizmo warehouse, you might find a spare gizmo. Create away.

Thing After Thing After Thing

Do people wonder where your character gets all of their wonderful toys? You really should justify the ability to come up with item's all the time by having a capability/technique combination (see below) that works for that. Like Machine Smith 10, Explosives 8, and Vehicles 6 would reasonably justify pulling a miniature roving bomber out of your pack. If a player tries this sort of thing more than once in an act and they don't have a capability/technique combination for it, the other players should really challenge it.

Absent Players and Conflicts Between Your Own Components

If your components need to act against each other, give one of them to another player. They use their own story dice and get XPs if they win struggles or affect your component. The same technique holds for absent players.
If someone doesn't show up, there are a few ways you can handle it:
1. Players take turns in initiative order choosing that player's components to play for the session; you can pass, but then you can't choose any more of their components
2. Keep that player's stuff together and let another player manage it, intact -- when they play the absent player's components, they use the absent player's dice (probably not spending their dice except for power and healing/repair)
3. Keep that player's stuff together, but have players volunteer to play their components as-needed, using the absent player's dice, as above

Fiction

A lot of the interesting things that happen in the game are "pure" fiction -- no dice rolling or spending points or anything like that. Some people might say that *most* of the interesting things take place in fiction. Struggles and dice can create suspense and excitement, but fiction can, too, and fiction forms the structure that supports the struggles.

Collaboration and Revision

This is a very collaborative game. You can play it competitively, but that could limit the type of story you end up producing. You should probably play collaboratively to start with, before you think about playing competitively. During the story outline phase, feel free to kibitz on other players' guidelines, objectives, etc. Also, revise when you want to (subject to challenge); if someone comes up with a cool idea that requires a change to a guideline and most of the players like it, go ahead and change it (see Guidelines: Creating a Framework for a Good Story).

If an act name no longer makes sense when the act starts, the starting narrator can simply rename it and if there is an act objective or starting event that doesn't make sense, they can replace them -- all subject to challenge, of course. The narrator position can change after a struggle or the narrator may voluntarily pass. Instead of voluntarily passing, the narrator can "lend" control to another player who wants it, reclaiming it when they like (except in the middle of a struggle roll).

Interviewing

When the creative juices aren't quite flowing, one of the players (maybe the current narrator, if there is one) should interview another player about their views on some aspect of the story. Then, interview the other players about whether they agree or disagree. Keep asking questions about the answers and the story will usually start flowing again.

Creating Fiction

A narrator can create fiction about anything at any time in the world, except fiction that changes or controls other players' characters or story components; that requires struggles. He can, however, create fiction about the environment around the other players' characters and story components. He can create fiction in the past (flashbacks) or the future (flashforwards) but these scenes have no struggles and players have veto power over any fiction of this type which directly changes their components. A narrator can use fiction to effectively create **virtual components** without mechanical effects, like, "A pizza delivery guy knocks on the door" -- a narrator doesn't explicitly *have to* make a component for a character with no mechanical effects. A virtual component can't mechanically affect the PCs but the narrator could later make a temporary component to represent it if needed (like if someone shoots him). Players can create fiction about their components (what they do and what they are) and they can pay experience points to create fiction about their characters' aspects.

Statement Trumps Intent

In this game, you write a lot of fiction down. Traits, aspects, guidelines, and other things are all written down. When you agree that something is true or that something happened and in particular, when you have written it down, all of the players will have a chance to interpret these things later in the story. Many times, ***different players have different interpretations***. This isn't an invitation to be literal and obstinate, but it is very important because it injects the unexpected into the story. You may have a clear idea of what you mean when you say something, but someone else may have another idea which also works. If you challenge what they do, based on your *intent* rather than your *statement*, you'll probably have a hard time getting support from the other players in your challenge. Also, it's probably better to go with what the other player says and support them, anyway.

Elsewhere and Elsewhen: Flashbacks, Flashforwards, and Meanwhiles

One of the challenges in this game is that it has a traditional GM/players structure, but the GM (narrator) position changes hands during a session and a narrator can't directly control most of the NPCs. One important technique for creating a coherent story is to use flashbacks. Narrators can build on each others' flashbacks to create a foundation of motivations for both the player characters and story characters. Beyond just events in a character's past, connections with other characters can be very powerful parts of a back story. Other ways to create back story are for a narrator to use their story components (if that's possible) or virtual components to support and elaborate on the back story through references and physical evidence.

Flashbacks can be small, like a single, short memory, or they could be larger, containing several story hooks (information you can build on later). A narrator might pass to allow other players to add to it or other players

might add onto the flashback later. Want a player character to fight someone she meets? Flashback to when that guy stabbed her mom. A flashback can impact more of the story than just the current scene -- that guy could have been part of an organization with a grudge. You could make another flashback to before the event about why that guy stabbed her.

Flashbacks don't use struggles or dice mechanics, because changes to the components during flashbacks don't affect their current state. During flashbacks, players can create virtual components, unless the narrator overrules them (which, in turn, would be subject to challenge :)).

Justifying with Fiction

Justifying with fiction means rationalizing what you want to happen in a way that makes sense to the other players and that is consistent with the story. If they don't like it, they can challenge you and if the majority of players challenge, you have to change your story until enough of them buy it that there is no longer a majority opposed to your fiction. For example, if you create a "gun" component for your PC, using some character dice you have, you must justify how the PC got the gun with fiction. If you are in an armory, the fiction can be pretty straightforward: the character just takes a gun from a nearby rack -- but other players might not approve that if they think the rack is locked. They might not be satisfied until you succeed at a struggle to gain access to the gun.

Guidelines

Guidelines are Vele's way of documenting notions about the story that the players all share. When you add guidelines, you flesh out the world -- players can create guidelines at any time when they are narrating or during story or act creation. Guidelines are rules about the story. Because of this, you should **write them down**, this is important because you may need to see the wording later (see [Statement trumps Intent](#)). They can simply be fiction, like "the sky is purple during the day," or they can be rules, like "players must raise their hand and be called upon by the narrator before they may speak." Like fiction, guidelines are subject to challenge.

Scale: How "Big" is a Trait?

One concept found in the game Trollbabe, that might be appropriate for your guidelines, is "scale." Scale, in Vele refers to the "size" of the traits on the story components (see [Components](#)). "Normal" scale means the PCs are like "normal people", so the story components can each represent single people. Larger scales mean that the PCs are more effective, so one trait of a story component might represent a person, a group of people, or even an army, depending on how powerful the PCs should be in this story. You can set the scale for an individual story component by carefully choosing the language of its traits.

Show, Don't Tell

This is a collaborative role playing game, so there are some things you do in Death of the Vele that you don't do in traditional RPGs, like D&D. In Death of the Vele, players can use the story itself as a communication medium, to ask questions or make suggestions by using fiction to **show** the other players what you want to ask or suggest, rather then just **telling** them directly. By doing this, you put the question or the suggestion into the context of the story itself. The answer or the response will be in the context of the story as well. This isn't supposed to be a way for players to impose their will on each other or a way to grab territory; it's a creative form of communication that helps to build better stories.

For example, suppose a player asserts that their character is familiar with a secret trap door in the basement of the building they work in. The current narrator wants to know how the character got that knowledge. Rather

than asking the player that question, the narrator can frame a flashback to when the character discovered the trap door, because there might be important details about the discovery -- maybe the character developed a deeply rooted fear about the trap door, for instance. The narrator can also give temporary narrative control to the player and have them do the scene. This allows all of the players to participate and contribute creatively to the scene, because they can all create characters and objects in the flashback, even if they're not narrating.

Here's another example: suppose Clark, the lawman, heads off by himself towards dangerous territory, but one of the other players thinks that Clark will probably die if he goes alone. Rather than challenging or talking to the player about what they're doing, you can frame a scene instead -- maybe have a character tell Clark about the danger up ahead. This is a lot more *dignified* than just asking the player to explain his character's struggle and having them respond with, "uh, I didn't think about that" (note that this can preserve the dignity of Clark's player; the point is not to try to control Clark!) Also, by highlighting that decision with a scene, it can also help to flesh out the character. Maybe the character will ignore the warning and charge ahead -- maybe the player will frame a flashback that demonstrates some past hotheaded rashness. This scene could influence how the encounter with the dangerous territory plays out. The player might change one of Clark's aspects because of this extra character development.

Using the story as a communication medium changes the story. It develops the characters. It heightens realism and draws the players in. Show, don't tell; you'll be glad you did!

Narrating Scenes

During an act, players play out the story in **scenes**. To run a scene
1. The narrator announces the time and place for the scene
2. The narrator states who is there

If the narrator wants to exclude something that could be there and the owning player is not agreeable, the narrator may offer one of their dice to the owning player. The player can accept it and stay out of the scene, but if they want their component to be in the scene, they can roll one of their PC dice against one of the narrator's story dice. The winner gets their way and the loser gets the dice. If the player doesn't have a die to use, it counts as a roll of 0.

Then, the narrator starts narrating, just like they would in D&D. A simple way to start out is just to describe what the characters can see and then ask the players what they do.

During a scene, the players and the narrator create fiction, act, use aspects, and build traits and components. At the start of each scene the narrator states the time and place and who's there.

Between scenes, players should allow the narrator time to set up and consider the next scene, possibly brainstorming with them. Don't rush.

Twists

As a rule, once per story (or so), the players can award twist XP to the current narrator, if they add something really meaty and cool to the story. As a rule, there shouldn't be more than one twist per act. This is just a rough guideline; your group may award more twists than this.

Ending the Act

An act is over when the narrator says it's over, subject to challenge. If the act objective has been bought off, it may be good time to end the act.

Protected Mac Guffins

Sometimes you want a gizmo that's needed for several objectives in the story but immune to destruction or only destroyable under certain circumstances, like the One Ring or the Box from Hellraiser. In this case, the gizmo itself should not be an objective component; each objective should have its own, separate objective component. The gizmo can be pure fiction, backed up by guidelines, such as: "The One Ring can only be destroyed in the cracks of Mount Doom from whence it came" and "the One Ring can be given voluntarily or taken as a goal in a test."

Mechanics

The Dice

The Dice Economy

You have two sets of dice, your character dice and your story dice. You use these to build characters, items, and other things that can act in the story, to spend for extra power, when appropriate, and to heal or repair traits. The rest of the dice are placed in a the middle of the players (perhaps in bowls) and are called bowl dice. This game uses a lot of dice. When you're not actually rolling dice, you can substitute tally marks, fake money, or some other tokens for dice, if you need to. One way that seems to work well with tokens is to use a different color token for each die size and keep the tokens with the dice, in a separate container for each die size, so it's easy to tell what color stands for what die size. If you can use a different shade of color for character and story dice, you can keep all your tokens in the same container.

Dice Flow
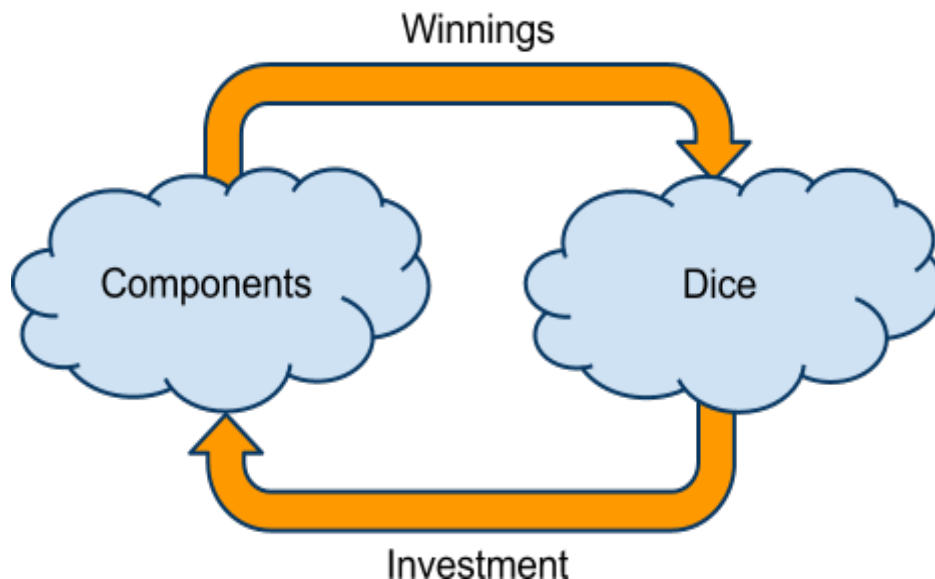
As you play, you will be using dice in your struggles and gaining dice when you succeed, but in order to gain dice, you usually have to risk some of your own. If you don't want to risk any (or can't), you can use bowl dice for your struggle. Bowl dice return back to the bowl if you win the struggle and **each bowl die takes the largest die of your winnings**, if there are still winnings left, so there is potentially a "fee" for borrowing a bowl die, but only if you win the struggle -- this is covered again in the Struggles section.

~~When you gain new dice, you can "break them down" to upgrade some of your current dice. A d6 is worth 2 d4s, a d8 is worth 3 d4s and a d10 is worth 4 d4s, so if you have a d6 and you win a d8, you could, instead, take a d4 and upgrade the d6 to a d10. You can downgrade dice at any time. Specifically, downgrading means converting a group of dice to d4s and recombining them to make another group which contains dice that are lower than all of the the ones in the original group. When you spend dice for power (see Power), you can break down your other dice in the same pool to upgrade them. Upgrading and downgrading dice only changes the dice you have in your pool; it doesn't change any trait values.~~

Sometimes players get low on dice. One strategy to get more dice is to perform struggle using only a single trait, with its die drawn from the bowl against components with several opposing traits. If you lose, you just don't succeed in the struggle, but if you win, you will gain dice. This works especially well when the opposing component has a strong incentive to oppose with several traits, like when you are attacking it and it stands to be affected by your struggle. By attacking someone else's component, you give them incentive to protect their investment in the component (which they can use to gain more dice) and also to defend their dice pool, because if they want to repair or heal the component, they will have to spend more dice on it.

Struggles

The core mechanic is the *struggle*, which represents an attempt to achieve a goal involving one our more components' traits (jumping, debating, carving a sculpture, fighting, picking a pocket...) Struggles are significant and they occur when the story demands a mechanical resolution. When a character starts a struggle, it means that it is trying to *achieve a goal* and both failure and success are "interesting," so you should pause before a struggle to consider the goal and results of both success and failure, although an attack does have obvious significant success/failure implications. Struggles are either offensive/defensive or head-to-head. In an offensive/defensive struggle, the offensive side is trying to achieve a goal and the defensive side is trying to prevent it. In a head-to-head struggle, each side is trying to accomplish the goal (with more style, more quickly, more effectively, etc.) There are two types of struggle, simple struggles which involve a roll and extended struggles which involve a series of simple struggles. **Completing an extended struggle causes a change of narrator** (see Changing Narrators).

State Your Goal

A player can initiate a struggle if initiative is not in effect or if initiative is in effect, it is their turn to act, and they have not yet acted this round. First, the player names their goal, subject to approval, which can be one of:
- continue an extended struggle
- attack a component (continues a "fight" extended struggle or create one)
- attack a trait -- more difficult to do (continues a "fight" extended struggle or create one)
- maneuver: attach a temporary aspect to a component
- asses or declare an aspect -- discover or create a permanent aspect that was "there all along"
- create fiction or guideline (scaling a wall, achieving an objective, tying someone up, etc.)
- block another component

After stating a struggle's goal, the players involved in the struggle may be able to invite allies, depending on initiative and subject to approval.

Maneuvers, Assessment, and Declaration

New or discovered aspects come with a free tag (see Creating and Discovering Aspects) and they can be on components, scenes, the world, or whatever makes sense. An aspect placed by a maneuver is usually *fragile*, disappearing when it is tagged or at the end of your next turn (whichever comes first). If your score for the struggle is at least 3, the aspect is *sticky* and lasts until the **end of the scene** -- it still only has one free tag, but you can spend an experience point to use it after that, like any other aspect. If you can justify it with fiction, you can use a maneuver to "recharge" a sticky aspect whose free tag has already been spent (the new free tag will stay around until the end of the scene or until it's used).

If you can spend a long time, uninterrupted (like aiming from a hidden position or meditating), you can automatically place one sticky aspect on something.

It is possible for a character to use a maneuver on itself. For example, an athlete might psyche himself up before a competition and a healer could prep his own wound.

Assessment allows a character (whose player must justify it with fiction) to discover an aspect that was "there all along," like a con artist discovering that a character is an easy mark because they are "too trusting of strangers" - it's OK if these aspects are "bland," but at least make an attempt to make them interesting. When first discovered, they start with one free tag.

Declaration allows a character (again, justifying it with fiction) to create an aspect, based on their knowledge. For instance, a dwarf might declare that based on the surrounding environment, there should be a safe water source nearby, creating the "moist" aspect for the local environment. Like maneuvered and assessed aspects, declared aspects start out with a free tag.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If a character has a fairly large amount of time to repeatedly attempt a maneuver, an assessment, or a declaration, the narrator may rule that the attempt automatically succeeds and creates one sticky aspect. This can dispense with a lot of dice rolling (outside of combat, for example) -- this is a lot like D&D's "take 20" rule, by the way.

Difficulties

Difficulties are situational issues that make a struggle harder to do. The players must state the difficulties for a struggle before the traits are chosen and difficulties are subject to approval. -1 is difficult, -3 is really hard, and -5 is probably the most you'd want to deal with. This gives you a small/medium/large rating for difficulties. Some example difficulties:
- Driving while slightly tipsy: -1
- Trying to hit while your vision is blurred from smoke: -3
- Walking a balance beam in the dark: -5
- Attacking a trait: the dice points of the targeted trait (d4: -1, d6: -2, d8: -3, d10: -4, d12: -5)

Resolving an Struggle

Here is how you resolve a struggle:

1. **Actor: *state the goal***, subject to approval; magical or extraordinary effects may cost dice points. If this is a head-to-head struggle, the Actor and Opponent are really peers.
2. **Both:** call for allies; each ally can contribute traits to the struggle (see [Initiative, Struggles, and Allies](#))
3. **Actors First, Then Opponents:** for each trait you are using (trait must not be disabled), move forward one of your dice or a bowl die (no larger than the trait); these are the **struggle dice**. Bowl dice only reduce your winnings, there is no cost if you lose. If the struggle is offensive/defensive, the actor's side pushes their dice forward first so the defender's side can see them before pushing their dice forward. If it's head-to-head, both sides cover the dice they are using and reveal them when they are both ready. If you're using bowl dice, you may want to keep them near the bowl so you remember to put them back if you win. Trait choices are subject to approval. You may always borrow one d6 from the bowl as an "average" value (i.e. you may not wager it) and add it to your roll.

   If this is a head-to-head struggle, the two sides take turns pushing forward traits, starting with the lowest initiative.
4. **All:** determine any difficulties involved in the struggle, subject to approval.
5. **All:** If you are powering any traits (like for a Vele device), say so now and set aside a die for each trait, no larger than the trait; these have to be your dice unless the trait is a consumed trait -- consumed traits disappear after they are used, but they use bowl dice; the dice you set aside are your **power dice** and you will lose them after this struggle; they are *spent*
6. **All:** roll your struggle dice (not your power dice); the *highest* struggle die for your side is the **result**
7. **All:** determine the winner. If this is a head-to-head struggle (two actors), the one with the highest result is the winner (if the results are the same, there is no winner), otherwise If a) the actor's result is higher than the opponent's result or b) the results are tied, the actor's side has power dice, and the opponent has none, then the actor wins, otherwise the opponent wins. If the actor wins...
   a. Actor: subtract your opponent's result from your result
   b. Actor: if your side has power dice, the owners roll them and *add the highest one* to your result
   c. Opponent: If your side has power dice, the owners roll them and *subtract the highest one* from the actor's result
   ○ If this is a head-to-head struggle, the one with the highest result is the "winner" of the struggle, so they function as the "Actor" above.
8. **All:** if you have power dice, discard them into the bowl; they are *spent*
9. **Winner:** take the other side's struggle dice. If there are allies on the winning side, those players take turns choosing one die each of the winnings until they have one for each trait that they contributed, with the actor player taking their turn *last* in the sequence (so the winnings should be split among as many of the components that took part in the struggle as possible).
10. **All winners**: after the winnings are split up,
    a. for each die you wagered, put it back into your set, along with the **lowest** left of the winnings
    b. put each bowl die you used back into the bowl, along with the **highest** left of the winnings
    c. if there are any winnings left, put them into your set
11. **Opponent:** if an attack succeeded against you, the actor's final result is your **effect**, disable your side's healthy traits until there is no effect left by subtracting the trait values from the remaining effect. If allies helped you **and it's not a [control attack](#)**, take turns, each eliminating one trait until the effect is gone, with the opponent going *last* in the sequence.

Dice Rolls and Spin

If you have 3 or more points left over that weren't used for an effect (like for damage or making a temporary aspect sticky), this is called "spin," and you can use it like this, but you have to justify it with fiction:

1. Apply a +1 or -1 to the *next* die roll someone makes (friend or foe), or
2. Immediately attempt a maneuver
3. Take a struggle that does not require rolling (like simple movement, drawing a sword, etc.)

Some examples of spin: defending against an attack by 3 or more points, taking out an opponent with 3 or more points left after all damage is accounted for, attempting a maneuver and getting 6 or more higher than the defender.

Movement

You can handle movement and locations purely in fiction or you can use a map with zones, like Spirit of the Century does it, or you can use some other method to keep track of what's where. If you use movement, you can move one zone before or after a struggle. You can also move an additional zone as a struggle.

Autonomous and Integrated Components

[Please see additional rules at the end of the mechanics section for revised "attached components" rules]

Components operate in one of two "modes," autonomous and integrated. Components which are integrated together operate as a unit. Integration has to be justified with fiction (i.e. plausible enough). A close bodyguard could be integrated with its subject. Items can be integrated with their owner, etc. During initiative-based struggles, the mode defaults to the last announced mode and when a component acts, you must announce which mode it is in. The mode can't contradict what has already happened for that round. So, if the unit gets attacked before it acts and you don't change any modes, all of the components remain integrated for that round.

Autonomous components can act independently, but integrated components must act as a unit. If a bodyguard and its subject want to act separately, they must both operate autonomously. That means that during that round, if someone attacks the subject and the bodyguard hasn't yet acted, the bodyguard must defend the subject as its struggle and if the subject then attacks someone, the bodyguard can't contribute traits to the attack, like it could if they were integrated.

If an integrated component can be autonomous, you can usually target it separately with no extra difficulty. If the components are attached, however (like a snake coiled around its owner, or a warrior with an intelligent sword), they act as a single component and the normal targeting difficulties apply (see Attacking Components and Traits). Attaching or detaching may take time -- usually one struggle, when initiative applies (when attaching, only one of the components usually has to spend the time). Time spent attaching or detaching should be justified with fiction. If the characters have no traits to justify a rapid attachment or detachment, but you really need it, you can always spend an experience point (see Doing Extraordinary Things).

If integrated (detached) components **that are not minions** are specifically aiding one component (like a PC or a leader, for instance), then you cannot target that component without difficulty -- attacking it specifically requires targeting one of its traits. You may, however, target one of the aiding components without difficulty. If you succeed, the first trait disabled must come from the targeted component, but for the rest of the effect, the owner can freely choose to use traits from other components integrated with it.

Mass Struggles

[Please see additional rules at the end of the mechanics section for revised Area and Selective Area knowledge trait rules]

An struggle against several components at once is called a "mass struggle." Mass struggles are only possible with the "area" ability. If you are using zones, a mass struggle affects everything in a zone. Normally, if you are using other abilities, you have to pay power for **each** victim of the attack -- if you can't afford it, you can't use any other abilities at all in that attack. You resolve a mass struggle like a normal struggle, except each opponent resolves their roll separately. The actor still only wagers their dice once and rolls once. Mass struggles affect integrated components separately, if they are not attached. This makes them very effective against minions.

If the actor loses to any of the opponents, they lose their wager. Winning opponents get their own set of the actor's dice (taken from the bowl if another opponent has already won the actor's dice). If the actor wins, any bowl dice they used subtract from the winnings for *each* opponent against which they win.

If a component is a stationary part of the geography, like a bridge or a patch of ground, it can attack nearby components on their turn, justified by fiction, of course. So if a person walks over a rickety bridge, the bridge can attack them as soon as they walk over it. If you are using zones, some of these components might span more than one zone.

Failing Struggles Against Things

Failing a struggle against a thing that isn't a person may still result in a consequence -- a "counter-struggle" with the goal of attack, aspect, constraint, or fiction, subject to approval. If you fail to climb a wall, you may get hurt. Suppose Dexter the Thief, with d8 Acrobatics tries to scale a building with a d6 Wall. If he fails, the building will "attack" him, using its d6 Wall versus his acrobatics and whatever he can use to help cushion his fall (armor, maybe), potentially causing an effect. Some things, like traps or disasters, can initiate struggles even though they can't "think."

Initiative, Struggles, and Allies

If a struggle is a free-for-all, like a combat, heckling a performance, or a meeting of the British House of Commons, players take turns based on the turn order determined at the beginning of an act -- this is their "initiative" order. During a player's turn they may use **each** of their components that is in the scene once. If initiative has not started yet and you attempt to attack, initiative starts right then. When initiative is in effect, each component can only act once per turn and that must be during its initiative. Both parties in the struggle may call for allies. Any component may participate as an ally, provided it is not already allying with a different component, even if it has already acted that turn, but it may do nothing during its next struggle. The other component may not ally with it in its defensive struggles (the other component is already occupied).

Abilities

[Please see additional rules at the end of the mechanics section for "additional uses of power" rules]

Attacking Components and Traits

You can only attack on your initiative. An attack normally continues a "fight" extended struggle, or may create a new one if there isn't one, yet, causing a narrator change after the fight finishes (see Changing Narrators).

Attacks can be either for damage or control; you must declare which one when you make an attack and you must justify it with fiction. If you successfully defeat a component with control, you can control that component for the rest of the scene (but if you want to control it after that, you must buy the component; see Taking Components from Other Players). Traits disabled for control recover when the scene ends and traits disabled for damage must be healed with a healing trait. If you gain control over a component that doesn't necessarily mean that it will willingly cooperate with the character that defeated it -- it may need to be restrained, etc. The other players should pay attention and be ready in case they need to challenge.

You can attack a component or you can specifically attack one of its traits. Attacking a trait adds the trait's dice points to the difficulty of the roll (1 for a 4d, up to 5 for a d12). If the attacker succeeds, the attacked trait is affected first (unless there are allies defending it). Use normal effect rules to resolve any excess effects, if the effect exceeds the value of the trait. Attacking a trait during a conflict can be very powerful but also very difficult. You can use temporary aspects to mitigate some or all of the difficulty, which can also make for more interesting conflicts.

Successfully attacking a component affects that component and any allies defending it. Effects disable traits and you buy off the effect as you disable the traits, according to the points for the trait. A d4 trait buys off 1 point, a d6 trait buys off 2 points, etc. So, to apply the effect, you remove traits from the components which

were involved in the attack until all of the effect is accounted for. Trait removal is not subject to challenge (you are perfectly fine removing a "royalty" trait because of a gun shot). Dice are indivisible; if you have only one point of effect left, it *will* disable a trait. When a story component disables traits while attacking a component, the owner of the attacking story component gains 1 XP for each trait they disabled. Disabled traits can't be used until they are healed (see Healing and Repair).

If more than one component is defending **and it's not a [control attack](#)**, the effect is divvied in rounds, with each ally getting affected first and the main target being affected last in the round (the main target has a protective advantage here, but a disadvantage when gaining dice). Each ally participates in one round for each trait it contributed to the defense. So, if you used a component and your ally contributed two traits, your ally disables one of their component's traits first, reducing the total effect by the value of the disabled trait, then you disable one of your component's traits and reduced the effect by the disabled trait's value, next your ally disables another of their component's traits and reduces the effect by its value, and if there is any remaining effect, your component gets it all. The ally's component lost two traits because it contributed two traits (provided there is enough effect to disable two of their traits).

Taking Components from Other Players (Control Attacks)

To take control of a component, you must disable all of the component's nondamaged traits, then justify taking it with fiction (subject to challenge). This called an attack to control and it represents a nonlethal conflict, like an argument, a bake-off, a singing contest, a seduction, etc. Disabling all of the nondamaged traits is required because a component with more traits is more "important" to the story (of course, the component can also just submit, justifying that with fiction). Disabling represents the struggle for control. Traits disabled in this way are automatically re-enabled after the struggle is over -- they don't require a struggle with a healing trait. You must personally disable all of the traits, yourself (but people can aid in your attacks). If two or more are competing for control, they must each disable all of the traits (i.e. a trait can be disabled for control more than once by separate parties).

If you succeed, you control the component until the end of the scene. Control isn't necessarily absolute in all respects. If you win a debate, that doesn't make the loser your slave, but it does mean that you have defeated them and they suffer the consequences. If the component belongs to anther player, you take it from them until the end of the scene.

Important: *A defending component must take control damage itself. Allies and integrated components may assist in defense, but cannot take control damage for the defender.*

Integrated components and allies can participate in defensive rolls, but control "damage" is restricted to the component itself; integrated components and allies cannot absorb it. To control the component, the attacker must disable even traits which have already been disabled by control attacks from other characters, so you need to indicate, somehow, which attacker disabled which traits (you man want to write the attacker's initial next to the disabled traits, for instance). If more than one character is attempting to control a component, the first one to disable all of its traits wins.

If you want permanent control, you must purchase the component with your story or character dice (depending on who will "own" the component). You could just make a different component, if you can justify that with fiction, but if you want that exact one, you must control it and pay for it.

Blocking Struggles of Other Components

If your struggle is to block another component, you must state what you are trying to prevent them from doing -- remember, all struggles are subject to approval. If the other component tries to do that thing before your next

turn, they must first overcome your block, using normal struggle resolution rules. In this struggle, you are the defender, so they must exceed your result. If they manage somehow to make several attempts before your turn, don't roll again; reuse your result. If the other component does not overcome your block, they may not perform their struggle.

Healing and Repair

[Please see additional rules at the end of the mechanics section for the Heal/Repair knowledge trait]
When a trait is disabled, it becomes unusable until it's "healed" or "repaired" (depending on what makes sense for that trait).

Dice Flow After an Struggle

If the struggle was a tie, all of the dice go back where they came from. If it was not a tie, the winners' dice go back where they came from (character, story, or bowl dice) and the losers' dice go to the winners. This doesn't have to be as bad as it sounds; remember that you don't have to use your own dice in a struggle, you can use dice from the bowl. If you win, you have to pay allies first and then the bowl with your choicest winnings first, one choice die for each contributed die (allies, in turn must pay the bowl in the same way for dice they borrowed).

Spending Dice to Create Things

Players can spend their dice to purchase new components or new traits for their existing components (provided there is space in the component) at any time, as long as they're not in the middle of a struggle -- i.e. you can't create a component to absorb effect for you. That's just cheesy. When a player purchases a trait or component, they have to justify it with fiction.

Extended Struggles

[Please see additional rules at the end of the mechanics section for revised extended struggle rules]
Extended struggles are made of several simple struggles and they can represent drawn-out bargaining, public debates, combat, or anything that fits the idea of several attempts to determine who wins but, like simple struggles, they have a goal. Either the initiator determines the type of struggle or the players agree on what type makes sense, based on the goal. Extended struggles are either one- or two-sided; it could some components against some other components or some components against "the world." An extended struggle is composed of several simple struggles and continues until one side wins or one side gives up.

Note: it's usually a good idea to determine the goal of each struggle ahead of time. For instance, suppose a character is trying to impersonate an official and you determine that the best of 3 attempts determines the winner and you choose these goals:
1. forgery
2. fast-talk
3. political knowledge

You can then play out the discussion by choosing a goal making the rolls and framing the dialogue according to the results of the rolls.

Changing Narrators

[Please see additional rules at the end of the mechanics section for the focus-relay]

When narration changes, go through the initiative list, starting after the current narrator to find a player that wants to become narrator. If no one wants to become narrator, the player on the list after the narrator becomes the new narrator.

A narrator may temporarily pass control to another player and take control back whenever they like, unless narration has been forced to change, which passes full narration control.

Aspects and Fate

An aspect is a quick, simple way to model something that can provide narrative power or an advantage in a struggle -- it's a story telling tool. Aspects are snippets of text associated with a component (like your character) or part of a scene that's not even a component. It can be a description like, "Poet Laureate," a connection to something or someone like, "Galuba, the Wonder Horse," a common situation like, "Always in the wrong place at the wrong time," or part of your character's story like, "The old man's shoes are hard to fill." It can also combine several of those elements like, "Head guard of the Topaz Temple." Bland is bad (like "Strong" or "Smart"). Pithy is good. More specific aspects usually play better. The story itself can have aspects (such as "oppressive regime") and groups can also have aspects (the player characters or a group of story components); objectives are group story aspects. Many other things can have aspects: scenes, organizations, areas, etc.; whatever makes sense. In a way, everything in the story is a "character" and can have aspects, even parts of those "characters" can be "characters" -- this is sometimes called the "FATE Fractal," and was in both Universalis and FATE.

Creating and Discovering Aspects

You can make a temporary aspect the goal of a struggle (such as, "cowering in fear"). For example, if your character lights some curtains on fire, you can make the "on fire" aspect the goal and roll against the curtains' "size" trait (representing how hard the curtains are to hit). If there is no "curtains" component, the narrator could just create a temporary "curtains" component that you can act against or they can use a d6 from the bowl as a default trait. The aspect can still hang around when the temporary component disappears.

You can "discover" aspects using assessment, which means that your character gains knowledge of an existing aspect through a struggle. You can declare an aspect using declaration, which means that you use a struggle to create an aspect, justified with fiction about your character's field of knowledge (such as the fact that the tribe that captured you worships snakes).

Fate

Your character starts with a number of aspects based on your experience level and your aspect choices are subject to challenge (in case they're too easy to hit or too lame). You use experience points with aspects just like you use fate points in FATE. Using fate requires *approval*. You can use fate to:
- Use an aspect (yours or otherwise) to add 2 to your result or reroll any one of the dice in your struggle *after* a roll (including one of your allies' dice)
- Add 1 to your result, if you have no applicable aspect
- Do something extraordinary with your trait
- Create fiction involving one of your aspects when you're not narrator, like creating virtual components which you or the current narrator control, etc.
- Change a fact which has not yet come to light, if you're narrator (kind of like Shrődinger's cat)
- Alter the established world, if you're narrator (cave-ins, political shifts, etc.)
- Cancel a fact change, if you're not narrator

When aspects are created or discovered as part of the goal of a struggle, they start with one "free tag". This is free fate that can only be used with that aspect, but anyone can use it, if they can justify it (first come, first serve). Aspects can still be used afterwards, for as long as they are around, but you have to spend one of your experience points to do it.

Hitting an Aspect

Aspects can function like personal objectives. When you hit an aspect (role play it in a nontrivial way), you **and** the narrator both get 1 XP; if hitting the aspect causes you or your allies danger or extreme difficulty, you and the narrator each get an extra XP. If your character hits an aspect while you are narrating, you just get 1 or 2 XP, not double. Hitting aspects requires approval. If you hit a group aspect, each player who controls at least one group member gets experience.

Buying Off an Aspect

You can buy off an aspect of your character (but not a story component) by making sure that the character will never hit that aspect again and removing the aspect. This usually means deliberately going against the aspect or "achieving it" if it's a goal. This is a form of character development and it will give you 10 experience points. When you reach a new experience level, you'll get new aspects to replace the ones you bought off. Buying off aspects requires approval. If you buy off a group aspect, remove it from each group member and each player who controls a member gets experience (if they control more than one member, they only get experience for one buy-off). If an aspect is removed by external circumstances, this is still character development and still generates experience.

Objectives

Objectives are group aspects for the player characters; achieving the objective buys off the aspect and all of the players get experience for it. Failing the objective may *also* buy off the aspect, so failing may give the players experience, too! The only way not to buy off the objective is to completely ignore it or to lose it through another's struggles that don't involve the PCs. Both achieving and failing an objective are good for the story and produce character development. Acts should not be contingent on objectives -- if you fail an objective, it should not make another act impossible.

A good way to add conflict to a story is to make it possible for a story character to prevent the PCs from achieving an objective -- this might make a good spotlight scene for that character. This can also provide another way to buy off the objective, depending on whether the PCs are involved. A simple way to make this possible is to make the objective involve a component, like "the dark emerald" and use the rules for taking components. An act objective disappears at the end of the act if it's not bought off and a story objective aspect disappears at the end of the story if its not bought off.

Experience

Your *level* determines how many dice, main component traits slots, and aspects you get for your PC at the beginning of an act (starting at 4 dice sets, 6 main component slots, and 5 aspects for level 1). You gain experience (XP) by acting with your character and your story components during the game and every 100 experience you get raises your level by 1, so 0 XP is level 1, 100 XP is level 2, and so on. When you gain a level, you can replace any aspects you bought off.

Gaining Experience

- Disable a trait **with a story component**: 1 XP for each trait disabled (+1 if trait was targeted)
- Succeed in a struggle that is not an attack **with a story component**: 1 XP
- Hit an aspect: 1 XP for the player, 1 for the narrator
- Hit an aspect causing danger or extreme difficulty: 2 XP for the player, 2 for the narrator
- Buy off an aspect: 10 XP for the player, 3 for the narrator
- Succeed in a spotlight: 5 XP for the spotlight player, 3 for the narrator

~~Experience Levels~~

~~You gain a new aspect at even levels and a new main character slot at odd levels. In between levels, you gain dice. Here is the progression:~~
~~Level 1: 0 XP: 4 dice sets, 5 aspects, 6 traits on your PC~~
~~20 XP: gain a d4~~
~~40 XP: gain a d6~~
~~60 XP: gain a d8~~
~~80 XP: gain a d10~~
~~Level 2: 100 XP, level 2: new aspect, replace bought off aspects (subject to challenge)~~
~~120 XP: gain a d4~~
~~...~~
~~Level 3: 200 XP, level 3: additional PC trait, replace bought off aspects (subject to challenge)~~
~~...~~
~~Dice, aspects, and traits apply **immediately**, as well as at the start of an act, so when you arrive at 140 XP, you immediately get a d6.~~

IMPORTANT: Additional Rules

PENDING CHANGES
- *switch to dice points (and new player mat and character sheet)*
- *Top off Allocated at the end of a scene with up to 10 points, but dice points count against it*
  - *Replenished points go into the allocated box*
  - *ex: allocated: 12, current level: 5, character dice: 3, you add 4 dice points to allocated*
- *use XP on your aspects instead of FP*
  - *you may only use XP on one of your aspects once per scene*
- *eliminate PMS*
- *change costs of effects to dice points*
- *Focus for narration*
  - *written on both sides of folded index card, standing up*
  - *Narrate in initiative order -- first narrator gets first focus (starting event)*
  - *During a narrator's focus, the next one in initiative order chooses their focus*
    - *may choose the act objective*
    - *writes it on a card so the current narrator can see it*
    - *when ready, the current narrator prepares for the hand-off*
- *XP changes*
  - *Narrator XP for Focus*
    - *Starting event and act objective: 4 XP*
    - *Internal focus: 3 XP*
  - *Story XP for extended PC challenge*
    - *first failure (minor failure): 1 XP for story character owner*
    - *ultimate failure: 3 XP for story character owner*
- *Concentrated control attack*
  - *like extended challenge, but ends when*
    - *1) Attacker has total control*
    - *2) Attacker fails twice*
  - *Story XP as extended challenge*
- *suggestions for marking trait damage*
  - *X for damage that must be healed*
  - *S for damage that disappears at the end of the scene (like certain social damage)*
  - *initial for control*

These additional rules are important, but they have yet to be integrated into the main text of the rules. Here they are, in rough form:

1. **d12s:** ~~You can use 12s, but you don't get any at the start of an act; you can, however, upgrade to d12s, just not to any other dice.~~
2. **Only One Personal Use of Fate Per Scene**
   You may only spend one of your experience points for fate in a given scene.
3. **No Advice During Play:** Players may not offer advice to the narrator or to the active player, i.e. "out of character communication" may only happen between players who are not currently narrating or acting. Story and act creation allow full communication.
4. **Average traits:** You may always add a borrowed d6 to your roll.
5. **Experience for Below-average performance:** if you have a d4 trait that applies to a struggle, you may take 1 XP if you use it by itself in the struggle (no borrowed d6, either).
6. **Extended struggles:** (revised [extended struggle](#) rules)
   ○ **Opposed:** one side tries to achieve its goal and the other tries to stop them
      ■ one floating failure (2 failures loses the extended struggle -- first failure is really a stumble)
      ■ one side does the struggles
      ■ the other side attempts to stop them
      ■ May be just 3 attempts, or if it's something like control, it goes until failure or the control is complete
   ○ **Contest:** both sides have the same goal; first to succeed wins
      ■ May be just 3 attempts, or if it's something like control, it goes until failure or the control is complete
   ○ **Tug-of-War:** both sides have the same goal and may interfere with the other; first to beat the other by 2 successes wins
   ○ **Overpower:** proceed until one side surrenders or cannot continue
7. **Using semi-applicable traits**
   A trait which only partly applies to a situation may "assist" another trait (or a d6 bowl die if there is no applicable trait) by contributing a die of its size if it is equal to or less than the main trait or one larger than the main trait's size if it is larger. Other than the size restriction, it is a normal trait in the struggle (you can spend dice points with it, etc.)
8. **PC trait requirements**
   Trait Values: A PC must have at least one trait for each of these values: d4, d6, and d8.
9. **Abilities:** [revised [knowledge trait](#)rules: there are no longer "capability traits" and "technique traits;" there are only traits and abilities, now]
   Abilities provide "permission" to spend dice points in conjunction with a **particular trait** to add to the normal function of the trait -- they are like "stunts" or "feats" in other systems, except that they always cost dice to use. An ability has a name, which indicates its function (like the name of a trait does) and a set of **ability effects** (each ability effect has a description of what it does and how much it costs to use).
   To create an ability, you "allocate" spare dice for the ability effects by *placing them on your character sheet*. This doesn't consume the dice, but **you can't allocate them for other abilities or use them to buy traits**; you can still use them to wager or spend them on ability effects, though.

Ability Effect	Description
Power Attack 4-12	On a success, roll dN and add to the result -- attack succeeds even on a tie
Power Defense 4-12	On a failure, roll dN and subtract from attacker's result
Lethal 10	+1 damage, guaranteed (after defense and even if attack fails)
Lethal 12	Remove a trait, guaranteed (after defense and even if attack fails)

Finesse 6	On success, place a temporary aspect on target; the score determines stickiness.
Auto-Finesse 8	Automatically place a temporary aspect on target, and the aspect may be used for this roll. The score determines stickiness.
Move 8-12	Costs 2 + zones moved. Struggle score must exceed dice points spent. Move may take effect before or after the struggle. **You may move yourself or anothe**r **character**. If you move another character, it may be resisted with a suitable physical trait.
Range 4-12	Cost = distance
Block 6	On success, do a block struggle in addition to the struggle using the struggle result as the block value (power works with this)
Auto-Block 8	Automatically do a block struggle in addition to the struggle; as block 6, but if the struggle fails, reroll for the block value
Chain 6	On success, optionally choose another target to affect in the same zone (reuse roll, wager, and dice expenditure)
Reflective 12	On defending a successful attack, remove 1 trait from attacker (does nothing if the attack fails)
Area 8	Affect everything in zone, except yourself (if you are using other ability effects, you must pay dice for each thing in zone)
Selective Area 10	Selectively affect things in zone (you may also selectively use other ability effects on the affected characters)
Heal/Repair 4-12	Heal traits. Cost is the number of traits being healed (up to the Heal cost, so Heal 6 can heal up to 2 traits) and is paid by the healer(s) and/or the patient. Works similar to damage but heals smaller traits, first. Healing is opposed by all of the wounded traits, together (even if you can't heal them all). A healing attempt is only possible one time after each conflict or sleep period. If more than one character is a healer they can ally together. If further healing is attempted by someone else on the same damage, treat the additional healer as an ally in the original attempt.
Fiction 6	On success, create fiction (reveal information, communicate, change moods or appearances, ...). If the fiction is opposable, record the result for future blocks.
	Example: Glamor (M) (Fiction 6): Change your appearance to that of another -- record the result as a block against others detecting your disguise.
Create 4-12	If successful, creates a component which takes part in the struggle with trait sizes up to Create size for which you pay normal trait costs, in addition to the up-front dice point cost. You can't add traits to a component, with this, but you can attach the created component to it. Creation lasts until the end of the scene.
	Example uses: ● Continual damage: a component that continually attacks (napalm, face-hugger) ● Summoned/created allies, calling for backup ● Armor, force fields ● Traits (flight, spiderclimb, eagle sight) ● Fire, wall, forcefield

10. **Components, dice points, and aspects:** the total dice point value of a character is the cost of its traits and the allocated points for its abilities; a component gets 2 aspects, plus one for each complete set of 10 dice points in its value.
11. **Replenishing dice after a scene**

    When you make your character, write down the dice points you have allocated for your abilities (or just add up the ability costs). After each scene for each character, add its allocated points and your main dice points; if you are below original allocated dice points, you may take up to 10 dice points to get back to your allocated total, but not over it.
12. **Attached Components** (revised rules for [Integrated Components](#))
    ○ Attached components function as a single component during struggles
    ○ Attached components may be targeted separately
    ○ Attaching or detaching a component must be justified with fiction and takes at least one struggle, unless you justify and spend an experience point for fate
    ○ Unattached components can still be allies (i.e. only attack or defense)
13. **Hidden rolls**

    When failure yields uncertainty, the other side hides their roll and tells you the effect so that you don't know whether you failed. No wagering is possible.
14. **Dramatic Tone:**
    ○ **Using Fate in struggles**

       During a struggle roll, one party may use fate to affect their roll, and then the other may spend their points. That's it. There is no counter-spending. This means that all of the rolls need to be on the table before anyone uses fate (so if you're using power to add a die to your roll, you need to roll that before using fate). *This gives a sizeable advantage to the second party*. The **dramatic tone** determines the order in which players use fate, because it determines who gets to use fate second:
         ■ **Pulpy:** The actor spends first, then the opponent
         ■ **Gritty:** The opponent spends first, then the actor
         ■ **Heroic:** Story characters spend first, then PCs (choose pulpy or gritty for PC v PC and story v story)
         ■ **Doomed:** PCs spend first, then story characters (choose pulpy or gritty for PC v PC and story v story)
    ○ **Taken Out**

       Taken out means the loser is at the mercy of the victor, but doesn't necessarily mean the character is dead. You must decide the default meaning of "**taken out**" for a lethal conflict in your story:
         ■ **Dead**
         ■ **Unconscious** -- the character is unconscious at least until the end of the scene and it requires an extra struggle to kill them (which, of course, doesn't need a roll)
         ■ **Too weak to act** -- the character can see and hear, vaguely, but not act, until the end of the scene

       In any case, victor's player may take control of the character that was taken out if they justify it with fiction (like having one of their characters load the fallen character into a truck, etc.)
15. **Narrator cards:** make a card with a line for each PC: name, negative aspects, spotlights
16. **Purchasing PCs at the start of an act:** You start each with 30 character dice points and 30 story points to use, along with your XP, to purchase your PC story characters for the act.
17. **Group Creation:** (revised rules for [creating groups](#))
    ○ Players start each act with 3 sets of story dice
    ○ Each player names a group at the start of the act and writes the name on a leader card

- Position the group on the act map
- Each group gets allocated 5 dice sets; mark them on the leader card as you use them
- group dice stay with the group and can only be used for group member traits (not for power or healing)
  - All of the players flesh out and create all of the group characters, adding traits using group dice and aspects, up to the limit for the component type
    - players can freely add group members
    - players may freely use group dice to create traits
    - players may freely add aspects, up to the limit for the component type (4 for a main component and 3 for a normal component)
    - once for each other player, you can add a trait and an aspect that are connected to your PC and get a d4 story die for each
  - The owner should make a spotlight for the group and tie it to a PC by a connected trait or aspect
18. **Using Groups in scenes without PCs**
  - The player who owns the group should keep the leader and hand the rest of the members out to other players
  - After the scene, the group goes back to the owner
19. **Spotlights** (revised rules for [spotlights](#))
  - In a given story, a player may create two spotlights for their PC
  - Spotlights are worth 5 XP for the player and a 3 XP for the narrator
  - After a player creates a spotlight, they put it in the middle of the table (and may remind the narrator that it's there)

Sample Scenario: Gothic Fantasy

Guidelines

- Vampires command undead
- Easter European feel (mountainous, pine trees, etc.)
- Vampire posing as a count hires PCs on a mission to retrieve a large ruby pendant on a thick gold chain from a temple

Name	First Focus	Objective
Your lives for coin	A dark-clad count approaches your table	Avoid a bar fight
The darkness within	The villagers suspect a vampire of killing their townsmen	Escape the Labyrinth
The betrayal	Find priest ravaged on the bridge to the castle	Destroy the count at his castle

Each player gets a PC and the story character listed under it.

PC: Cat's Paw, Halfling Monk, DP: 30, Allocated: 18

Drunken Monk 10   - Meteor Hammer (Move 8),
Brewer 6   Drunken Fist (fiction 6, Power Attack 6, Selective Area 10),
Trading m 6
Meditation s 8   - Cure Wounds (Heal 6, Auto-finesse 8)
Light Weight 4   Terror Leech (create 4)
                                   [Terrify 4 - Awe (Lethal 12)]

It's so rude to refuse a drink
Elder of the Broken Temple
Brought Duke Frang back from the brink
Secret ingredients require secret means
My parents must be avenged

Allocated

18

Story Character: Ectoplasmic Goo   **Labyrinth Beasts**

Life Force 10   - Shocker s (Area 8)   I want your soul!
Membrane p 6   Regenerative
Smarts m 4   Toxic astral substance

Dice
d4

```
d6
d8        \
d10
```

PC: Rorngar Steelbeard, Dwarf Trollslayer, DP:

Trollslayer 12	- Demonslayer rune s (Lethal 12),	"By my oath, I will meet a worthy opponent!"
Swift p 8	Master crafted p (Power Attack 6),	"Ha! I do have a deathwish, but not today..."
Gambling s 8	Rune of Finesse (Finesse 6),	"Don't be in a hurry to die, I have ale to finish."
Runic Tattoos p 10	- Rune of Dodging (Power Defense 8)	Quicker than I look
Dedicated m 6		"Never seen a Trollslayer? These be my
Drunk 4		runes!"

Allocated Dice   **Story Dice**

```
d4      \       d4      \
d6      \ \     d6      \
d8      \       d8      \
d10     \       d10     \
```

Story Character: Phrya'al, Lord of the Dusk   Labyrinth Beasts

Spectre 12	-Chill Blood (Lethal 10)	Eternal Servant of Von Keiffer
Ethereal p 8	- Life Leech (Reflective 12)	I feed on the living
	Out of Phase (Powered Defense 8)	Unending Hunger

Dice
```
d4      \
d6      \ \
d8      \
d10     \
```

PC: Tekbert Scryboomer, Gnome Illusionist, DP:

Illusionist 12	- Magic Ether (Range 6),	Often overdressed
Short p 6	Flashy (Area 8),	Attracted to shiny objects
Appraisal m 8	Tricky (Fiction 6)	Can't resist a good trick
Fast Talk s 8		Acts erratically in tense situations
Composure s 4		I was twenty when I found out my toys
		weren't really possessed. Dad was such
		a delightful prankster!

Cloak of Displacement
Evasion p 10
Magic Resistance s 10

Allocated Dice   **Story Dice**
```
d4      \ \     d4      \
```

d6	\	d6	\
d8	\ \	d8	\
d10	\ \	d10	\

Story Character: Minotaur Ghost   Labyrinth Beasts

Labyrinth Guardian 6   Defends against intruders, even in death
Axe p 8   - Deadly Edge (Lethal 10)   Memorized the labyrinth
Wits m 4   Tough as nails

Dice
d4   \
d6   \ \
d8   \
d10   \

PC: Vaurin Stronghammer, Dwarf Machine Smith, DP: 13

Machine Smith 12   I know your weapon and it knows me
Blade Weapons p 10 - Seeker Blade p (Chain 6),   Vah, guide my blade!
Trade m 6   Darth Axe (Power Attack 8)   I don't do dogs. I had a bad experience.
Enchanting s 8   - Parasitic Weapon m (Create 8) Hard to hit
Awkward s 4   [Shard 8 - Lethal 12]   Smith Vwerml's apprentice and heir
Armor p 6   - Iron Skin (Reflective 12)

Allocated Dice		**Story Dice**	
d4	\	d4	\
d6	\	d6	\
d8	\ \	d8	\
d10	\	d10	\

Story Character: Undead Hound   Labyrinth Beasts

Hound 8   - Pounce Bite (Lethal 10)   Where's my kibbles?
Teeth 6   I'll eat your bits!
Claws 4   Brains!

Dice
d4   \
d6   \ \
d8   \
d10   \

The Story Framework
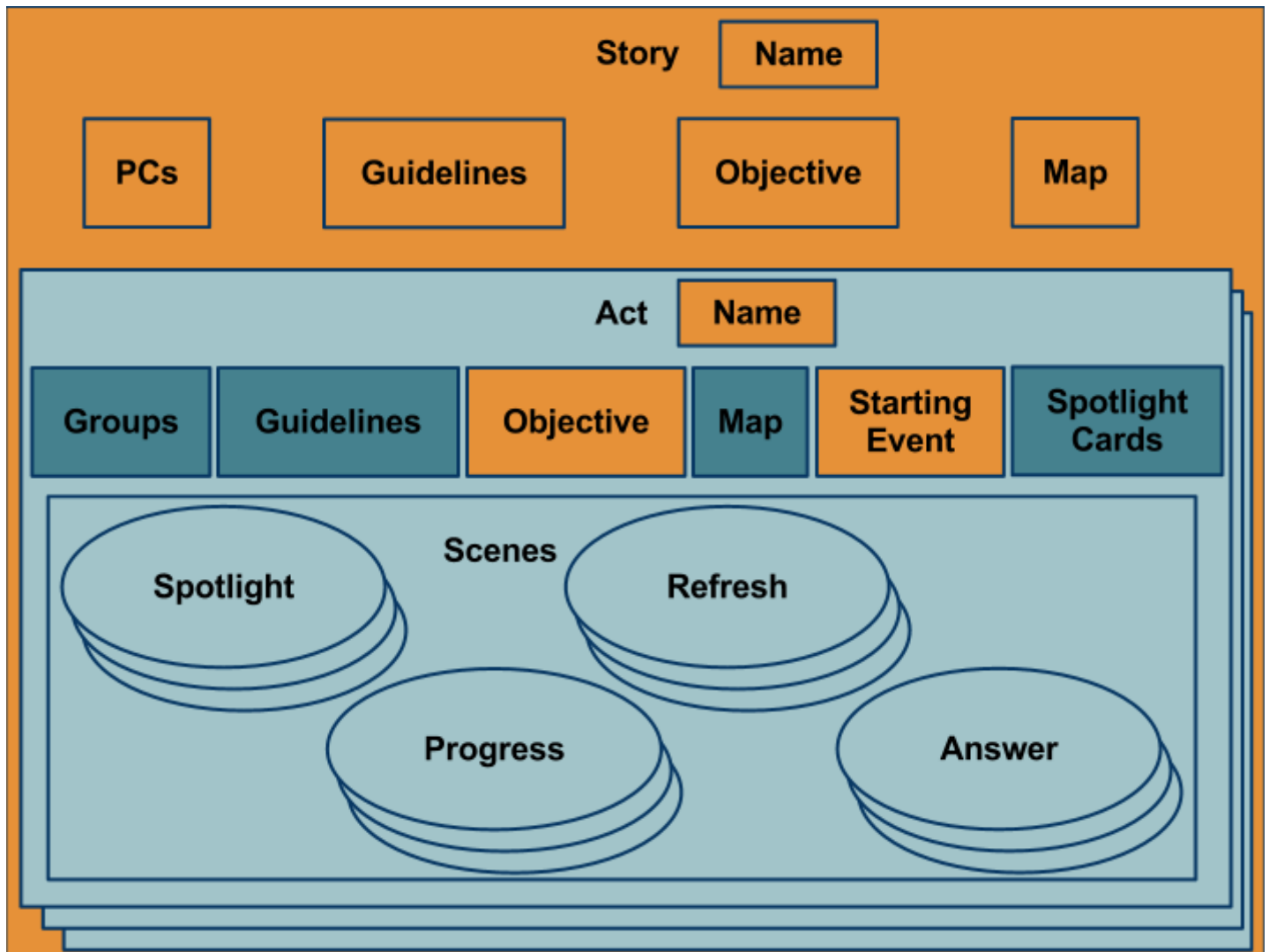
Stories

You start out a Vele story by creating the story framework. For the rest of the story, this will help guide you and provide consistency for all of play. The Story Framework Outline, below, shows what happens when you create the story framework.

1. Bid for player priority for decisions
2. Create the guidelines for the story, which are the facts that are true about the world or parts of it, anyway (see Guidelines: Creating a Framework for a Good Story)
3. Each player creates their PC or reuses one of their old PCs (see Components)
4. Come up with an objective for the story (see Creating the Story Objective)
5. Come up with names, objectives, and opening events for the acts (see The Act Matrix)
6. Use an act matrix to link each act name with an objective and an event (see The Act Matrix)
7. Draw a map of where the story will take place (see Finishing the Story Framework)
8. Choose the order of the acts (see Finishing the Story Framework)
9. Choose the starting narrator for each act (see Finishing the Story Framework)

10. Indicate where each act starts on the map (see Finishing the Story Framework)

Story Framework Outline

Bidding for Player Priority During Story Framework

To bid for player priority, each player gets 6 experience and then secretly turns a d6 to the number of experience they will pay for priority, covering it with their hand. After enough suspense has built up, the players suddenly reveal their dice. The highest to lowest values determine the priorities of the players, with ties resolved by roll-offs. Players subtract the amount they spent from their experience. This priority is just for story creation. Each act will have its own priority determined by its own auction.

Creating Guidelines

Take turns making up guidelines, one at a time, in story turn order. Guidelines are just sentences, words, or phrases about setting, characters, story, optional rules, or whatever. They are true in the game and they function as inviolate rules (except that in certain cases, the narrator may use fate to change something that is "true"). Any player may create guidelines at this point, but while playing an act, only the current narrator can create guidelines (which they can do at any time). Guideline creation is subject to challenge. This is an opportunity to weave some structure into the story by making guidelines about characters that will appear in the story and relationships between them and possibly the PCs. The sample story has an example of this.

Creating the Story Objective

First, you may all want to discuss what you would like to see in the story. Take time and talk about it -- if you hurry, you may just get a story that feels random, hastily thrown together, or forced. The first player creates a **story objective** for the group or passes down the list until someone does. Objectives are group aspects for the player characters; achieving the objective buys off the aspect and all of the players get experience for it. Acts should not be contingent on objectives -- if you fail an objective, it should not make another act impossible. A good way to add conflict to a story is to make it possible for a story character to prevent the PCs from achieving the objective. This provides another way to buy off the objective. A simple way to make this possible is to make the objective involve a virtual component (see Creating Fiction). A story objective aspect only lasts for the story; if it's not bought off by the end of the act or story, it just disappears.

Some broad categories for objectives are:
- deliver something
- retrieve something
- defend something
- perform a task (maybe with a certain thing at a particular place)

The Act Matrix

When you create the story framework, you will create the names of the acts in the story, objectives for the acts, and starting events. You just make these up and they may reference things that don't yet exist. By referring to them, you imply their future existence. This will help you to make the story map and also help you during the acts, when you make the act maps and the story groups (see Groups). Act objectives that involve new elements of the story, not indicated by the act names are sometimes useful, like giving an orphan safe transport, for example.

First, you take turns coming up with a name for each act, using priority order. Next, take turns coming up with an objective for each act. The players may have an act in mind for their objective or they may not -- the objectives will be assigned to acts in the next step and maybe it'll be linked to an act that you didn't originally have in mind. Finally, take turns coming up with a starting event for an act. Once you have these things, you are ready to fill in the Act Matrix.

The Act Matrix is a table with three columns, one for act names, one for objectives, and one for starting events and one row for each act (which should equal the number of players). You can fill out the matrix as a group or you can take turns filling in the Act Matrix by writing one name, objective, or starting event in the Act Matrix, until there are no empty spaces left, going in priority order. If you fill it out as a group, each player gets veto power over the next item, in initiative order.

Name	First Focus	Objective
The darkness echoes.	tunnel collapses	enter the cavern
Riches Unobtainable	the sounds of machinery begin to fill the air	extinguish the fire
Off into the Sunset	a brace of pistols fires far off towards the horizon	escape town with dissidents

Example Act Matrix

Finishing the Story Framework

To finish the framework, first, you make a **map**: brainstorm about the map and choose one player to draw it out (probably the best artist). The map is just for context -- it helps to have it out on the table during play. Next, choose the order of the acts by discussion. If there's a disagreement, the dissenting player with the earliest turn order has the final say. Next, take turns choosing which act each player will start off narrating. Finally, indicate where each act starts on the map: players can choose, but if there's a disagreement, discuss it; the dissenting player with the highest priority has the final say.

Acts

1. Determine initiative order, see Bidding for Player Priority During Story Framework
2. Create act guidelines, see Guidelines
3. Repurchase PC traits and components
4. Create groups
5. Draw the act map
6. Indicate where story components and PCs start on the map
7. Create spotlights for PCs and groups

Act Framework Outline

Determine initiative order

Bid for this, using dice and experience, just like you did at the start of story creation. Write down the player names in order and also the amount each player bid. If another player joins in, later, have them bid the same way, but don't show them the numbers until after they bid.

Repurchasing PC traits and components

[See additional rules at the end of the mechanics section for revised trait purchasing]

~~Take your character dice based on your level and repurchase PC traits and components. Level 1 gets 4 sets of dice (4d4, 4d6, 4d8, 4d10); higher levels get more dice. If you can't afford to repurchase some traits because you had a lot of dice in a previous act, that means that you need to somehow mark that those traits are inactive until you get character dice and purchase them. It's not that your character "can't" do those things or "doesn't have" those components anymore, but those things can't enter the story until you pay for them. Sorry :).~~

Creating Groups

Review

You'll probably be doing this along the way, anyway, but these formal "review" periods are here as reminders. During the review periods, discuss what has been created so far; remember anyone can make new guidelines at any point during story creation and act creation. This is a chance to think about where the story will go. When you're the starting narrator, you should think about or write a tentative story line for the act. This story line probably won't play out like you make it, but you can extract guidelines from it about relationships between story component groups, structures, organizations, etc. These guidelines can help provide an infrastructure for the rest of the story. As the game progresses, you can make more and more guidelines to flesh out the story.

Since Vele doesn't have a permanent narrator who's responsible for creating a story, there's a risk that a Vele game can devolve into flashes of brilliance floating in a murky, puerile darkness. Vele **can** provide a story that makes sense, feels solid, and can give players a *joy of discovery* that can happen in a good "traditional" role playing session.

When you are an act's first narrator, make notes during the review steps about a story line that you think would be entertaining and might provide some interesting surprises for the other players. Since you'll lose narrative control after the first extended test (e.g. a conflict), you can't "enforce" this story line, but there is a way that you can "stack the deck." This isn't about struggling against the other players for control of the story, it's about trying to ensure that the story that happens feels like it has a form and entertains the other players. It's why you're playing, after all -- for a good story. Keep in mind any surprises that didn't come to pass and see if you can introduce them later when you are narrating again.

After you're happy with the notes you've made, look them over. Chances are that you can distill some new guidelines from your notes about relationships between people, groups, and organizations. Maybe you discovered a Mac Guffin (see below). Maybe you have come up with new geographical features or forces. Make guidelines for all of these things. This shapes the framework of the story to make it a better environment for your story line. You will lose narrative control, but you'll have contributed a lot to the story with your guidelines. If the story diverges radically from your notes, that's OK. The guidelines are there for **all** of the players to use as they create the story.

The Act Map

The act map is like the story map, but it just applies to this act. As with the story map, have one of the players draw it. Then, they players take turns placing the group whose leader they own on the map, or the region in which that group hangs.

Creating spotlights for the PCs and groups

Spotlight cards are cues for the narrator to use to create a spotlight scene. This is a way to tell the other players what you would like to see in the story about your character and group. Now that you know all of the major players in the act, where they are, what they like and dislike, you're ready to make spotlight cards. This is a good chance for characters to buy off aspects; transcending the bonds of a character's own nature can generate good story (if it's not overdone). If you're using a key quest, this could have a lot of influence on how you make your spotlights.

Each players creates one spotlight for their PC and one for the group whose leader they own. A spotlight card contains the following information:

> **Spotlight:** *character name*
> **Highlight:** *character's aspect / trait / ability*
> **Motivation:** *character's aspect*

The objective or event should be a description of what should happen to spotlight the character. This could be something the character does or something that happens to the character. Try to plan an extended struggle and agree on it ahead of time. If the spotlighted character achieves the goal of the spotlight (which may or may not mean winning the struggle), the player and the narrator get experience (people don't usually narrate their own spotlights).

Keep in mind the connections between the story characters and the PCs when you make spotlights. Remember that each story character should have aspects and traits connected to one or more PCs? You might want to emphasize these connections in the story and spotlights give you a way to do that.

After you make spotlight cards, the players take turns taking spotlight cards from the other players to narrate during the act -- this means each player will end up with 2 spotlight cards from other people and have none of their own left. If you want to make it "more interesting," keep the cards hidden until the other players take them.

Advice and conclusion

Credits

Games

Blood Red Sands: Ralph Maaza
FATE: Rob Donoghue, Fred Hicks, Leonard Balsera, et al
Lady Blackbird: John Harper
The Shadow of Yesterday: Clinton R. Nixon
Trollbabe: Ron Edwards
Sorcerer: Ron Edwards
Universalis: Ralph Maaza, Mike Holmes
Eberron campaign setting for D&D 3.5
Dungeons and Dragons (without which none of this would happen)

Books

Eternal Champion series, Corum, Hawmook, and Elric in particular, by Michael Moorcock

Posts

Transneptune, "Interpretive Authority" http://games.transneptune.net/2011/08/29/interpretive-authority/

Feedback

Leonard Balsera
Guy Bowring
Eoin Keith Boyle
Shirley Burdick
Ralph Maaza
Roy Riggs
Ron Edwards
Vincent Baker
Ralph Maaza
Tyson Sawyer
Doug (sorry, didn't get your name at Gencon)

Play Testing

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Dylan Kennet
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