

Death of the Vele

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

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Doulan was not surprised when the morning torments began earlier than usual on this day. After being left in isolation past the point of starvation these last two weeks, he assumed his jailers would eventually start making up for lost time.

Two weeks and one day since he was last covered in the jailers' filth. 405 hours, 28 minutes and 13, no 14 seconds to be precise, he reminded himself. Though Doulan tried to ignore the passage of time and his cell had no daylight, his mind kept the passing moments flawlessly. He had stopped praying for the peace of madness months ago.

I last prayed to Vah for madness 2,418 hours ago he told himself with morose certainty.

His keen hearing tracked the slapping footsteps of his Scrow jailers getting louder with their approach. He waited for the small slot feeding to open. Doulan knew the next step would be the splashing of the jailers' morning chamber pots being emptied into his cell.

Doulan had stopped avoiding the mess two months ago, and considered if perhaps he should close his eyes this time. He lay unmoving on the floor of his dark cell, resigned to his fate.

1674 hours. I stopped caring if I was laying in filth 1674 hours, 57 minutes and 31 seconds ago. 32 seconds ago.

He wished he knew how many more seconds until he died. Failing that, perhaps how many seconds until his mind finally retreated into the void of madness.

Garnak shoved the bottle on his mouth, "Drink it!". Doulan kept his lips shut tight and the bitter liquid splashed on the floor, bright yellowish-green. It had been a year of starvation, beatings, and malnourishment and death beckoned him. A circle of darkness closed in from the edges of Doulan's vision as he blacked out...

"Drink it! You'll break my purse with your stubborn foolery!" Doulan looked at Garnak, puzzled -- this new guard admitted weakness in his presence.

"Why do you give me that which you have paid for yourself?"

"Because, as I said before, I am trying to get you out of here. Apparently your fever prevents you from remembering. Now, drink this. It's medicine. Vele medicine."

Doulan drank. Then he stumbled. His head hit the thinly covered, straw strewn floor with a wet thunk. Blinding pain and then, darkness again...

He jostled awake, cautiously opening his eyes slightly. Hot summer afternoon sunlight lit the inside of the cart in different places as it jangled and bounced along the stone road, like a bucket on a string, pulled along the ground by the children of giants, jarring into holes and jerking over stones pried loose from too much traffic and too little repair. The first daylight he had seen since his capture.

His people built and tended those roads. In a nearby field, he could see the skeleton of a great paving machine, picked over by scavengers. Wrists still manacled, he noticed a dark ointment smeared on them. Looking up, slowly at the other people in the cart, he saw Garnak squinting at him. Garnak tightened his lips and moved his head towards the Scrowman at the back of the cart, nearest the driver. Doulan glanced at the brute and saw fresh blood glistening on the back of his hand. Slowly, he lowered his head and shortly fell asleep, exhausted...

A rough slap on his face from Garnak woke him with a start. "Gahhh! Wake up, you failed, extinct throwback of a dog! Wake up and eat this food or you'll feel my cat's paw on your back!" He forced himself to sit up and reached out a shaking hand to take the bowl of slop, "Vah, help me..." he muttered. His hand failed to close properly on the bowl and it fell, dumping the contents on the floor. "Do that again and I'll cut your hand off!

You'll still sell with only one. All they want you for is the novelty anyway, heh, heh. I can only imagine the performances you'll be doing!" Garnak snarled. As he turned away, he said under his breath, "be careful, Doulan..."

The slave market bashed its noise into his ears as Garnak jerked him up onto the auction block by the chain manacled to his torn wrists. Hawkers shouted and customers, heads darting, birdlike, looked eagerly at the merchandise, gobbling bits of food like chicks receiving their mother's vomit. "Here's a fine specimen of Vele!" Garnak boomed, asking in a mocking sing-song "Who wants the last Vele in the world, hmm? He looks worn out, but that's just from our expert care. He used to be a great warrior -- we had to starve him to make him docile." Garnak took a surly glance around the crowd, "Who is wants this one? Don't you worry now, Vele are easy to dupe. They'll believe almost anything if you look sincere. You should all know that by now..."

Among the thronging, greedy crowd, there was a gentle, richly dressed woman; dark and statuesque, unlike the other barbarians he had seen. She bought him. She wasn't a Scrowman and she spoke Scrow with an accent he had never heard. Since his capture, he had heard many accents, although Doulan hadn't kept up with the tongues of the lower races before that. He winced as she reached towards his head and brushed the point of his ear with the tips of her fingers, "Feels like a normal ear, though it is shaped differently... I am Narna," she said in her crisp, clipped speech. "I live in the east, across the sea. The land of Srela; once the capital of your people, I believe."

"I need a guard and they tell me that you are better than anyone in the world, although you do not look it," she said, eying him. "Tell me: do they lie?"

Doulan looked at her as they walked slowly toward her caravan, because of his weakness. "Perhaps, long ago, but I am that man no longer. Now I am a dog who licks the feet of his captors. What will you do if I am too weak to protect you?"

"Why, we will strengthen you, of course," she laughed, as they entered the bounds of her camp. Narna guided him towards a richly armored Scrowman facing away, near a cart, loudly eating a leg of fowl. Doulan tensed as they approached, powerless to resist her even if he wanted to, let alone the Scrow soldier. A tall Nadar man with red hair hopped down from the cart, thin metallic lines tracing along the skin of his face and arms -- if not for his blunt ears, Doulan might have mistaken him for a Vele. Doulan gaped at the man, "Are there now machine smiths who are not Vele?" "Yes," Narna looked him in the eye, smiling, "this is Loomin, our most exceptional machine smith."

The armored Scrowman turned around and winked at him as he offered him a long item, wrapped in oiled calfskin, metal gleaming in the folds. "I'm glad you didn't make trouble," Garnak said, flashing a grin. "Your sword, my lord Doulan."

"Perhaps you have heard of The Book of the Vele? We mean to deliver it to the Vault of Vah, if you would help us..." asked Garnak.

"The Book of the Vele! Who are you that you would give me such hope?" asked Doulan, as his knees weakened and he began to collapse...

The World of the Vele

The 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. The Vele refer to the other peoples as the “lower races” because Vele live 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, 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.

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 many other wonders. The devices are made of gleaming, layered metals of various hues, with clockwork internals of incredible complexity, decorated with ornate filigree. They are extremely durable and, unless weight is integral to their function, incredibly lightweight for their size. The source of their power is clear only to Machine Smiths, who claim that the devices are in some sense, alive; not 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 use special devices called shamanes which are grafted to their bodies to manipulate the universal life force energy, called “ruche”. 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. 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 can be fatal.

Machine smiths have to learn how to make their devices -- they don't generally improvise beyond personalizing

the devices. The body of machine smith knowledge is dwindling since the Vele's destruction.

Sensitives (choose a better name here)

People who grow up in villages near rich sources of ruche can focus it (power-based effects; not building devices)

The World

The rest of the world is fairly primitive, compared to the world of the Vele. There are simple machines, powered by windmills, water wheels, and the like. There are ships and balloons, swords and muzzle-loaded guns, clocks and mechanical musical instruments. Buildings are made of wood, stone, brick, stucco, thatch, and the like. Clothing is tanned hides, rough cotton, wool, and flax, with silk from Srela, worn by nobles. People ride horses, oxen, water creatures, or other beasts and these beasts also pull coaches, carts, plows, barges, and other simple machines and vehicles. 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 several world-wide systems: gladiatorial combat, performances, trade, and fairly efficient mail delivery. Brutal rulers the Scrow may be, but they are also good at keeping the populace pacified with entertainment.

Scrow

Masters of intrigue and betrayal, the Scrow control the world with a grip of iron. Anyone who is not Scrow must pay extra taxes, 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 the Scrow install 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.

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.

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. That night, the Scrow turned the Vele's own devastating weapon machines against them. They killed most 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 grip. The remaining Vele, they dispersed among the nations of the world, but even most of those have perished in despair.

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.

The races of the world:

- Vele: long lived, kind, and proud; builders of magical machinery with a vast culture that once covered the continents; the only people with pointed ears
- Scrow: 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
- Goolan: dark and tall, they live in the east in Srela and the surrounding areas
 - Protected and trained by the Vele (while the Vele were still around)

- Aristocratic, educated
- Tend to follow Vah
- Nadar: pale, and much like the Vele in appearance
 - Clever with mundane devices, but Vele devices mystify them (they can build windmills, water wheels, etc.)
 - A disguised Vele could appear to be a Nadar
 - As a whole, they didn't adopt the philosophy of Vah
 - Circumspect about the Vele -- expected to be treated specially because of the similarity of their appearance, but the Vele didn't favor them

Fauna

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 metals in their blood, organs, and structure. Life around large deposits of these minerals and crystals can be changed by the energy, creating fantastic and fearsome creatures. Repshoon's power corrupts some of these with disgusting, terrifying, and sometimes maddening results.

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.

To Be Done

- life under Scrow rule: Vele, Scrow, Goolan, Nadar -- customs, modes of dress, food, unequal laws
- organizations: guilds, underworld, religions, philosophies
- geography, flora, fauna
- vehicles, beasts of burden, pets
- weapons, machines, musical instruments
- medicine, arts, sciences, engineering, education, entertainment, trade, crafts, military, crime, sanitation, service, aristocracy, sports, performing arts, politics, law

Notes

- You may be the last of the Vele and you carry the sum of all Vele knowledge, The Book of the Vele, a crystalline teaching device
- If you can get the device to the land of Srela, you can preserve it in The Vault of Vah, where it will be preserved until Vah sees fit to open the vault again

- 3 acts
 1. background of capture, outside help
 2. retrieving device, escaping to Srela
 3. secreting the device

Death of the Vele

Death of the Vele is an RPG (role playing game) set in the world of the dying Vele and uses the Philosopher's Stone collaborative role playing system, which is based on Blood Red Sands and includes significant concepts found in FATE, Lady Blackbird, and The Shadow of Yesterday. Death of the Vele is much like a "regular" RPG in that you have a PC (player character) that you keep and grow from session to session and there is a narrator (the GM). There are, however, some significant differences from more "traditional" RPGs. Although there is a narrator, the player who is narrator will most likely change several times in a session. Another difference from "traditional" RPGs is The Right of Challenge: a player can challenge many things if they disagree and if they get a majority of players to agree with them in a challenge, the thing which they are challenging must be changed until there is no longer a majority opposed. The Philosopher's Stone was created to try to keep the fun experience of "normal" RPGs while giving all of the players full narrative power over the story (although there is still only one narrator at a time).

When you play Death of the Vele, you will have NPCs (non player characters) in addition to your PC (some of the NPCs might even be geographic features, rather than people). You will work together with the other players to create a story framework and then play out the story. This doesn't mean there are no surprises; there is a lot of creative freedom within the framework you will make and there are explicit hooks meant to help you to create surprises for the other players.

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 than 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 for a creative form of communication 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 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 action 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!

Time

As you might expect, time flows forward. The story line, however, can contain many “meanwhiles,” flashbacks, and even “flashforwards.” Using the story as a communication medium will naturally cause these changes in sequence.

Example Characters

Here are descriptions of the characters in the story above. You don’t have to use these (you can make any characters you want to), but you are free to use them if you like. Even if you don’t use them, they can serve as examples, because they all have different goals and capabilities. First, we’ll look at Doulan so you can see what the different parts of a character mean:

Doulan, Vele warrior (Starting Dice: 2d4 1d6 1d8 2d10), Fate Points: 5, XP: 0

Traits		Aspects	
Focus: Vele Warrior* 10	Machine operation 8	- Guardian of the Book of the Vele - Defeated by the Scrow - The last champion	
History 8	Court Etiquette 6		
Survival 6	Poetry 6		
Component: Machine Sword		Component: Vele Armor	
Vele edge 10	Predictive strike 8	Vele construction 4	Active evasion 4
_____	_____	_____	_____

This game is played out in acts, and **starting dice** is how many dice you start with at the beginning of each act. 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, tetrahedron), d6 (6-sided, cube), d8 (8-sided, octahedron), and d10 (10-sided, pentagonal trapezohedron -- I had to look that name up); you can see them here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dice>. During the act, you can spend these dice (and others that you may win) to create components and traits, to heal or repair traits, and sometimes to add extra power to your actions. You can get more dice by successfully performing actions with your character.

Traits control what a character can do. Each character has one focus, which is a broad category of activity, and several other traits which are more specific. 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, and 10 is expert. Warrior lets Doulan do things that warriors can do, like assessing an opponent’s weaknesses or making a feint to trick them in a fight. Doulan’s Machine Operator trait lets him operate Vele machinery, he could use his knowledge of history for political insight in a royal court, etc. In the game, you use traits whenever your character attempts an action 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 action succeeds, based on the trait’s ratings (subject to challenge). A “*” after a trait indicates that it is extraordinary; you can spend fate points to do extraordinary things and spend dice to power it. A “+” indicates that it is extraordinary and also consumed when you use it. You can power these traits for free. See the **Action** rules for more about power.

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 meeting a related goal or by “growing out of” the aspect. To use an aspect, you spend one of your **fate points**. If your traits allow you to do extraordinary things, beyond what a normal person could do, you have to spend a **fate point** when you do these things. You can request a “**refreshment scene**” from the narrator to replenish your **fate points**.

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 damaged, some of its traits or traits of its components will be disabled. 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 healed disabled traits. You start with 4 sets of dice to use to buy traits for your character. Your character starts with a limit of 6 traits and 4 for each component. To buy an extra component, you buy at least 2 of its 4 traits. If all of your character's traits are disabled, your character is "taken out," which means that it is either totally at the mercy of an opponent or captor or dead. If all of a component's traits are disabled, that component is destroyed or lost.

Each component can 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 actions which fall under this broad category. Other traits should be more specific and less like a profession, such as fencing, persuasion, first aid, etc.

Now, here is the cast of characters...

Doulan, Vele warrior (Starting Dice: 2d4 0d6 2d8 2d10), Fate Points: 5, XP: 0

Traits	Aspects
Focus: Vele Warrior* 10 Machine operation 6 Swordsman* 10 Court Etiquette 6 Survival 6 Poetry 6	- Guardian of the Book of the Vele - Defeated by the Scrow - The last champion _____ _____
Component: Machine Sword	Component: Vele Armor
Vele edge* 10 Predictive strike* 8 _____ _____	Vele construction* 4 Active evasion* 4 _____ _____

traits marked with “*” can be powered, traits marked with “+” are powered and consumed on use

Garnak, Scrahv priest of Vah (Starting Dice:), FP: 5, XP: 0

Traits	Aspects
Focus: Scrahv Spy 10 10 Fighting 8 8 Survival 8 Machine Operation 10	- Chosen priest of Vah _____ _____ _____ _____
Component: Vele Maintenance Rod	Component: Belt
Repair* 6 Recharge* 6 _____ _____	Vele medicine+ 8 Vele medicine+ 8 Vele explosive+ 6 Vele explosive+ 6

traits marked with “*” can be powered, traits marked with “+” are powered and consumed on use

Narna, Goolan Lady of Srela (Starting Dice:), FP: 5, XP: 0

Traits	Aspects
Focus: Noble 10 Archery 6	- Ferver of the new convert - Known in the courts of the world _____ _____ _____
Component: Medic	Component: Tracker
Field Medicine 8 Herbalist 8 _____ _____	Tracking 8 Fighting 6 _____ _____

traits marked with “*” can be powered, traits marked with “+” are powered and consumed on use

Loomin, Machine Smith (Starting Dice:), FP: 5, XP: 0

Traits	Aspects
Focus: Machine Smith* 10 10 8 8 8 10	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Component: Vele Maintenance Rod 66		Component: Belt 88 66	
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traits marked with “*” can be powered, traits marked with “+” are powered and consumed on use

Aspects

- Guardian of the Book of the Vele hit: protect the book from harm buy off: lose the book - Defeated by the Scrow hit: fail to act, through self doubt buy off: face down a Scrow leader - Chosen priest of Vah hit: reveal yourself to an enemy of Vah buy off: forsake the ways of Vah	- Ferver of the newly converted hit: buy off: forsake Vah - Known in the courts of the world hit: buy off: become unwelcome in every court
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Game Mechanics Summary

Here's an overview of the flow of the game. After that, we'll take a more detailed look at each step. Before you start using the mechanics, you make the framework for a story. Playing that story out is when you create fiction and roll dice, so the first thing you do when you play *Death of the Vele*, is create a story framework.

You do this in steps:

1. [Determine turn order for the story framework](#)
2. [Create guidelines](#) (rules about the world, story, characters, and mechanics)
3. [Create player characters](#) (if you need to)
4. [Create the "story objective."](#) an aspect that describes the overall goal that the PCs should achieve
5. [Come up with names, objectives, and opening events for the acts in the story](#) -- one for each player
6. [Link each act name with an objective and an event](#)
7. [Draw a map of where the story takes place](#); could be a map of the world, a country, a space station, ...
8. [Choose the order of the acts](#)
9. [Each player chooses one act for which they will be the starting narrator](#)
10. [Indicate where each act starts on the map](#)

Once you are done creating the story framework, you are ready to start your first act. Every time you start an act, you also go through a series of steps, to populate the act with story components and create a map just for the act. Here are the steps:

1. [Determine initiative order](#) -- the order you will act in a free-for-all
2. [Create act guidelines](#) -- any new guidelines that this act requires
3. [Repurchase PC traits and components](#) -- take your character dice and use them for this
4. [Create the story components](#) -- the main actors in the story besides the PCs
5. [Draw a map of where the act takes place](#)
6. [Show where the story components are on the map](#)
7. [Show where the PCs start on the map](#)
8. [Create spotlight scenes for the PCs and groups](#)

Once you have done this, you play out the act until it is finished, which usually means that the PCs have either achieved their goal or it has become impossible for them to achieve it within a reasonable time. It might take several sessions to play through an act. During the act, the current narrator frames a scene that:

- spotlights a character (using up a spotlight card)
- refreshes a group (maybe requested by a player; see [Refreshment Scenes](#))
- advances the act or overall story

During a scene, the players create fiction (which is really the "meat" of the story), the PCs and story components may be injured or die, the players may gain or lose dice, and they may gain experience.

Actions

1. **Actor:** state your goal; extraordinary effects may cost a fate point or a die
2. **Both:** call for allies; each ally can contribute traits to the action
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 **action dice**. Bowl dice will reduce your winnings (no cost if you lose).
4. **All:** determine any difficulties involved in the action, 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 action; they are *spent*

6. **All:** roll your **action die** (not your power die); the *highest action die* for your side is the **result**
7. The action succeeds 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. If the action succeeds...
 - 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**
8. **All:** if you have **power dice**, discard them into the bowl; they are *spent*
9. **Winner:** take the other side's **action die**. If allies contributed traits, take turns taking the highest die left; the actor taking their turn *last* in the sequence.
10. **All winners:** after the dice are split up, put each **bowl die** you used back into the bowl, **plus** the highest of the remaining dice you won -- this is the cost of using **bowl dice** (each costs a die)
11. **Opponent:** if an attack succeeded against you, the final **result** is your **damage**, **disable** your side's healthy traits until there is no **damage** left by subtracting the trait values from the remaining **damage**. If allies helped you, take turns, each eliminating one trait until the **damage** is gone, the opponent going *first*.

Fate Points

- Spend 1 Fate Point to reroll one die for an action that has to do with one of your aspects
- Spend 1 Fate Point to add 2 to a result of an action that has to do with one of your aspects
- Spend 1 Fate Point to make something happen in the story based on one of your aspects
- Spend 1 Fate Point to produce an extraordinary effect using a Vele machine or special training
- At the start of an act, you get 1 Fate Point for each aspect your character has
- During an act, you may ask the Narrator for a refreshment scene to regain Fate Points

Creating New Traits and Components (*not allowed during an action*)

- Components come in 4 sizes: minions, normal, main, and PC. Minions have one trait, normal components have 2-4 traits, and main components have 3-6 traits (PCs can eventually have more than 6 traits, depending on the player's level) damaged traits still take up space and count toward these maximums
- Create a new trait if you have space by spending a die and telling the Narrator how the trait got there
- Create a new component by creating at least 1/2 of its maximum traits

Healing

- At the start of an act, you can spend a die of any size for each **disabled** trait to heal it
- During an act, a character must succeed at an action using a healing trait vs the **disabled** trait to heal it
 - Success: you or the healer (if it's another player) spend one die of any size to heal the trait
 - Failure: that trait cannot be healed until the start of the next act

Experience:

- Earn 1 XP: Hit an aspect by role playing to fulfil it as a goal
- Earn 2 XP: Hit an aspect in a way that endangers your friends or causes them extreme difficulty
- Earn 10 XP: Buy off an aspect by role playing its removal, going against your principles, attaining your ultimate goal, etc. and removing the aspect; you can replace this aspect at the next level
- At 20 XP, you get an extra d4 starting die, at 40: a d6, at 60: a d8, and at 80: a d10
- At 100 XP, you are now 2nd level: you get a new aspect and can start to replace aspects you bought-off

Now, a more detailed look at playing the game...

The Rules in Detail

Approval and the Right of Challenge

A lot of play is creating fiction. When a player doesn't like another player's fiction, they can challenge it. If they can get enough support from other players to form a majority, the player creating the fiction must change it until there is no longer a majority opposed to it. Some mechanics require fictional backing to operate, like healing or the use of traits in an action; these are also subject to challenge. If a player creates fiction that contradicts fiction that already exists, you should challenge it.

Some things require **approval**. Approval is really just a challenge, but since it's mandatory, no one has to feel like they're nagging all the time :). Some of the rules require approval instead of merely being subject to challenge. This is frequently to help prevent "cheezing" – for instance, if you make an aspect that is trivial to buy off, that's probably cheezy and you probably did it just for an easy XP gain; other players may not approve of things that are too cheezy. 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 actions, spending fate points, and hitting and buying off aspects all require approval.

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.

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.

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 damage, if you have a character or item that can do that. The rest of the dice that are not owned by any player are placed in the middle of the players (perhaps in a bowl) 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 chips for dice, if you need to. Using tokens for story dice and regular dice for character dice can be helpful.

Investment in the Spotlight

When you invest dice in traits or components, you're "buying time in the spotlight". That says you are committing to a certain chunk of story in advance. If you buy a zeppelin, for instance, that means you are

changing the story -- the PCs (or at least some of them, probably) can now fly from place to place. When you spent dice for the zeppelin, you eliminated the possibility of spending those dice for some other purpose in the story.

Dice Flow

As you play, you will be using dice in your actions and gaining dice through successful actions. In order to gain dice, you 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 action. Bowl dice return back to the bowl if you win the action and they also each take 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 action -- this is covered again in the [Actions](#) section.

If you want to upgrade a die, you can trade it, plus any other of your dice from the same set (character or story) to the bowl for a die of the next larger size. You can downgrade a die by trading it to the bowl for a die of a lower size plus a d4. You can also say that dice are worth points, d4 = 1, d6 = 2, d8 = 3, and d10 = 4, allowing you to trade a combination of dice for a different combination of dice worth the same points. This doesn't change any traits, just the dice you have in your set.

Characters and Story Components

A "component" is anything which can mechanically affect the game (by participating in actions), a component has a name, a group name, and a slot for each of its "traits". Traits allow a component to function in an "action" (see [Actions](#)), like skills, natural talent, equipment, quirks, magic, technology, genetics, psychic powers, etc. You can buy a trait for an empty slot or to replace another trait at almost any time in the game, [justifying it with fiction](#) if it's done after the story outline (subject to challenge -- it should at least be possible) and paying one of the dice you have for that type of component (from your character dice or your story dice). The trait gets a name and a die size (ex: War Hammer d8). This means there are 4 levels of effectiveness for traits, with d4 representing below average, d6 average, d8 very good, and d10 extraordinary. If a component does not have an explicit trait for what it is doing, the component may perform at average, using a d6 bowl die for the action, provided the player can [justify it with fiction](#).

Components come in four sizes, "minions" with 1 trait slot, "normal" components with 4 trait slots and 2 aspects, and "main" components with 6 trait slots and 3 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 with 6 trait slots 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 maneuvers.*

When a player buys a component, they have to buy at least 1/2 of its traits. You can't buy traits during action resolution; buying traits in order to soak up the damage 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 actions. Any character dice a player doesn't spend go into the player's **character dice**. Players also have **story dice**.

Each component (both normal and main) can 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 actions which fall

under this broad category. Other traits should be more specific and less like a profession, such as fencing, persuasion, first aid, etc.

Here is a main story component:

Name: Giant Walking Mushroom		Group: evil plants	
Traits		Aspects	
• Focus: Psychic Fungus d10		All flesh must be replaced	
• Billowing spore cloud d6		Hit when it creates a fungoid copy of a person	
• Amazing speed d8		Spores are everywhere!	
• Thick flesh d4			
• Prodigious weight d6			
• Stout stalk d4			

This component is pretty powerful (and expensive); it costs almost 2 dice sets: 2d4, 2d6, 1d8, and 1d10. The first aspect (see [Aspects and Fate Points](#)) looks good for every component in the “evil plants” group to have; it gives players an idea of what evil plants do. “Creating a fungoid copy” is just colorful language for making a component that represents a person component. Presumably it kills the original, too. Otherwise, where’s the fun? Main story components don’t HAVE to have 6 traits but they have to have at least 3 and they can’t have more than 6.

At the start of each act, your character dice are reduced to the dice for your experience level and you must repurchase all of your character traits; anything you don’t buy can’t come into the story until you pay for it. Don’t forget that you can buy new traits later during the game, so don’t go overboard, you’ll get more dice as you play and you’ll want to hold back some dice (maybe half) so you can generate more “dice income” through actions, anyway.

Capability and Knowledge Traits

Sometimes it makes sense to require two traits for an action, capability and knowledge. This rule about capability and knowledge traits is really just a [guideline](#), but sometimes it makes for better play and it’s particularly applicable to Machine Smiths. A capability represents the raw competence a character has in a field and a knowledge trait represents the ability to do certain things within that field. Since these types of knowledge only represent techniques, they aren’t used in dice rolls; they represent what a character is able to attempt, not how well they can do it. When it comes to rolling dice for actions, the character uses their capability trait for that field; knowledge traits never contribute dice to an action. There is also no limit to the number of knowledge traits a character may have and knowledge traits cannot be targeted or absorb damage -- it’s a good idea to record knowledge traits in a separate place on the character’s sheet, so that the player doesn’t mistakenly use them in actions or absorb damage with them.

For machine smiths, for example, Machine Smith is a capability trait and other knowledge traits represent the ability to build certain types of machines, like Weapons, Vehicles, etc. Each major type of knowledge follows a novice/journeyman/expert/master pattern, based on the level of the trait (4, 6, 8, or 10). If there are extraordinary capabilities that go beyond master, sometimes it makes sense to require power for those uses. Examples: Weapons (contact, ranged, area, siege), Shelter (single person, small group, building, city), Medical Devices (first aid, disease, prosthetics). Some knowledge traits require other traits with at least the same level, like Vehicle (single person, small group, passenger -- requires Shelter) and some devices may require more than one knowledge trait, such as a prosthetic weapon. Knowledge traits can be used to create permanent of

one-shot items, using the standard trait purchase rules -- they just provide a good fictional justification for creating traits of the Machine Smith level or lower (i.e. Machine Smith determines the “quality”, which is the trait level, and the knowledge trait determines the types of machine you can build).

When you make traits, discuss them with the other players if there might be a logical split between capability and knowledge and whether there are logical prerequisites for any knowledge traits you make.

Vele Devices, Vele Training

Traits and components can represent Vele devices and traits can also represent Vele training. Vele devices and training make characters capable of extraordinary things and are a good fictional justification for using [power dice](#) and fate points for [extraordinary actions](#).

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 actions or damage your component. They can only use that component's fate points with your permission, but both of you should be reasonable. The same technique holds for absent players. If someone doesn't show up, 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.

The Story

1. Determine turn order for the story framework

You do this by using an auction. You each get 6 XP. Then, you hide a d6 (usually under your hand) and turn it to the number of experience points you are going to spend; each player immediately loses the experience points they just spent on their die. Next, the players all reveal their dice and the numbers determine the turn order (highest goes first). Finally, if any players are tied, they roll their die to determine the order among themselves. This turn order is just for story creation. Each act will have its own turn order determined by another auction.

2. Create 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 a fate point 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.

3. Create player characters

If any players don't have characters yet, brainstorm together about their player characters, what they are like, what their story is, what their goals are, what they can do, and how they are related to the rest of the PCs. Players start with dice to pay for their character's traits and components. At first level, you get 4 sets of dice (4d4, 4d6, 4d8, and 4d10) and as you get more experience, you start with more dice. You pay for your PC's traits with these dice. You also create aspects for your character. At first level, your PC gets 5 aspects, with more at higher levels.

A useful technique for character creation is to frame a background story for each PC that's being created. See [fiction](#) for information on flashbacks. Players will probably want to incorporate information from the background

stories into their PCs and revise their aspects and traits.

In the game, things that can participate in actions are called “components.” Player characters are “main components” and can have up to 6 traits and up to 5 aspects (if the player has experience points, their PC might have even more traits or aspects). A PC can also have other components, each with up to 4 traits. These components can represent objects, vehicles, animals, other people, or even places, like houses.

A player buys a new component by buying at least 1/2 of its traits. You can't buy traits during action resolution, i.e. buying traits in order to soak up the damage you just got from an attack is not kosher -- but you can pay for traits before the action starts, if you can [justify it with fiction](#). You can replace a trait with another, but you don't get dice back for the original trait when you replace it. Narrators can create *temporary components* from bowl dice, but may only use bowl dice with them in actions.

Keep any dice you don't spend for your PC's traits and components as your **character dice**; you can use them later during the story. It's a good idea to keep several so that you can risk them or use them for power during actions and also to give you more creative options.

4. Create 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 [Fiction](#)). An objective aspect only lasts for the act if it's an act objective or for a story if it's a story objective. 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)

5. Come up with names, objectives, and opening events for the acts in the story

First, you take turns coming up with a name for an act, using the established turn order. Next, take turns coming up with an objective. They may have an act in mind for the objective or maybe not. The next step will link the objective with an act 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.

6. Link up the act names, objectives, and events

The easiest way to do this seems to be to use a table with columns for act names, opening events, and objectives. Here's an example:

Act Names: 1) Release from prison, 2) The Journey to Srela, 3) The Vault of Vah

Objectives: 1) Avenge the town of Duvan, 2) Lock the Book in the Vault, 3) Unite the group

Opening Events: 1) Raiders bear down on the caravan, 2) Garnak forces Doulan to drink an awful tasting potion, 3) A Scrow Legion bars the way

To link up the act names, events, and objectives, players take turns using the table to link two items together

Act Name	Opening Event	Objective
1) Release from prison	1) Garnak forces Doulan to drink	3) Unite the group
2) Journey to Srela		2) Avenge town of Duvan
	4) A Scrow Legion bars the way	4) Lock the Book in the Vault

Once you've done this much, there remaining act name and event ("The Vault of Vah" and "Raiders bear down on the caravan") are constrained to be in the two empty slots. Note that the opening events involving the raiders and the legion could have easily been switched. Also, the objective "Avenge the town of Duvan" is "tangential" to the story. Tangential act objectives like these can be useful for character development and they also make the story less linear.

7. Draw a map of where the story takes place

The players brainstorm about the map and choose one of them to draw it out (probably the best artist).

8. Choose the order of the acts

Players can choose the order just by discussion. If there's a disagreement, the player with the earliest turn order has the final say.

9. Assign each player as the starting narrator for one act

Players take turns choosing the act that they will start off narrating.

10. Indicate where each act starts on the map

Players take turns saying where "their" act will start on the map (the act that they start off narrating).

The Acts

1. Determine initiative order

Besides setting the turn order for this phase, this is also the order you will act in a free-for-all. If you are in a brawl, for instance, you can act with your PC and all of your story components during your turn.

2. Create act guidelines

Players take turns adding any new guidelines that this act requires.

3. Repurchase PC traits and components

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). 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. It's just that those things can't enter the story until you pay for them. Sorry :).

4. Create the story components

This is when you create the other characters in the story, besides the PCs. You do this in stages which help you to tailor the characters with aspects and traits that spotlight the PCs. To aid this process, the players choose characters to flesh out and they tailor them to spotlight their own PCs twice, once for their aspects and once for their traits. You'll be making 1 main component and 3 normal components. One way to tell them apart is to use index cards for main components and half index cards for normal components. Here are the stages:

1. Make Groups

Players each make a group, with one main component (large card) and 3 normal components (small cards; one or more of the components can be minions). Call out your group's name first, changing it if there's too much overlap. Each component in the group should have the following (alternatively, it could be taken from a previous act) on its card:

- a. A name
- b. The group's name
- c. One group aspect: probably the same or similar for each group member (minions get one shared group aspect)
- d. One personal aspect; descriptive, connection to the group or a member, or other (minions don't get personal aspects)
- e. Numbers for its traits taken only from 5 dice sets; these are numbers only, no traits, yet. The point is to give the player who will fill these out an idea of the relative competence of the components:
 - i. The main component normally gets 4, 6, 8, and 10
 - ii. Normal components get 2 trait numbers; suggestions:
 1. Mixed: (10, 8); (8, 6); (6, 4)
 2. Challenging: (10, 10); (8, 6); (8, 4)
 3. Reasonable: (8, 6); (8, 6); (8, 4)
 - iii. Some components may be minions:
 1. Dangerous minion horde: (10m, 10m, 8m, 8m)
 2. Minor minion horde: (6m, 6m, 4m, 4m)

Review (see [Review](#)).

2. Assign Aspects

Players put their components in the middle and take turns choosing one story component at a time for which they will make aspects: 1 main component and 3 normal components, adding 1 aspect to each normal component (except minions) and 2 aspects to their main component. Each player should try to make aspects that are consistent with the components and also that highlight their PC's aspects -- highlighting them in an advantageous or disadvantageous ways. Any of the PC's aspects might be relevant: description, connection, story, or situation. For example, if your character is a smooth talker, you might make a group that could be an "easy mark" for your character or you might make a group that's hard to fool.

Review (see [Review](#)).

3. Assign Traits

Players put their components in the middle again and take turns choosing one story component at a time for which they will add traits: 1 main component and 3 normal components, filling in their traits, potentially adding more traits, up to the maximum allowed. Each player should try to make traits that highlight their PC's traits. If your PC is an art critic, you might want to make one of the story

components an artist (particularly if their aspects support this).

Review (see [Review](#)).

4. Choose Components

Players put their components in the middle again and take turns choosing one story component at a time that they will play for the act: 1 main component and 3 normal components, again, and then pay dice for them out of their pool of 7 sets for the act. If you can't buy all of them, modify the components so you can. Try to make a few changes as you can. Keep any left over dice -- these are your **story dice** you'll use those during the act.

5. Draw a map of where the act takes place

Pick a player to draw a map for the act. This can be as detailed or abstract as you like. The point is to provide some context for the story and show where the story components and PCs are at the start of the act.

6. Show where the story components are on the map

Indicate on the map where the story components are (or just their groups, if they're all in the same place). This may change during the act, but it gives you some important information when you start the act.

7. Show where the PCs start on the map

Show where the PCs start. If everyone is in a different place, show that, otherwise you can just put a star or some other symbol where the PCs start.

8. Create spotlight scenes for the PCs and groups

Play goes around the table in initiative order and each player chooses traits to spotlight for their PC and the players collaborate to create a spotlight card for the PC. Play proceeds around once more, with each player spotlighting a member of the group whose leader they own. A spotlight card contains the following information:

Spotlight: <i>character name</i> Aspect/Traits: <i>character's aspect and/or traits</i> Objective/Event: <i>spotlight event</i> Motivation: <i>character's aspect</i>

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. This is a good opportunity to plan for [extended actions](#) and agree on them ahead of time.

Review

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.

Revision

If an act name no longer makes sense before it 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 an action 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 an action roll).

Scenes

Each act starts with the narrator who was chosen during story creation and the act plays out in scenes. If there is a starting event for the act, the narrator starts the first scene with that event. 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 determines the time and place and who's there. If the narrator wants to exclude something that could be there, they can 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 dice against the narrator's die. The winner gets their way, the loser gets the dice. Between scenes, players should allow the narrator time to set up and consider the next scene, possibly brainstorming with them. Don't rush.

Ending the Act

An act is over when the narrator says it's over. This is subject to challenge. If the act objective has been achieved or made impossible to achieve within a reasonable amount of game time, it's probably a good time to end the act.

Once you are finished with the 7 steps above, you are ready to start the act.

Playing Out an Act

The meat of this game is playing out acts. This is where the *role playing* is; you create the story and the acts so that you have a chance to role play in them. No components begin the act with any fate points, so a lot of times, people start out an act with a refreshment scene for each group (see [Aspects and Fate Points](#)).

Fiction and Guidelines

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. Actions and dice can create suspense and excitement, but fiction can too and fiction forms the structure that supports the actions.

Justifying with Fiction

Many things in the game must be “*justified with fiction*.” This means you have to make up some fiction that explains or shows why that thing is reasonable and the other players must [approve](#) it. 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 an action to gain access to the gun.

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 actions. 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 actions 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 fate points to create fiction about their characters’ aspects.

Flashbacks

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 actions 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 :)).

Using Fiction to Ask Questions

This is a pretty important use of fiction and it's very much related to flashbacks, but it's a different perspective. You can use fiction to answer questions that come up during play. In a collaborative game like this, sometimes players will have questions about why something happened, why something is the way it is, why someone would ever do something like that, etc. Maybe someone suggests something that seems far-fetched, obscure, or off-the-wall. A player may wonder whether something is true or about something in the world. In a "regular" RPG, a GM might answer a lot of these questions. Some of these questions, a GM would never answer for a player, because their character would have no way of knowing the answer; like questions about motivations of other characters.

Sometimes it's helpful to use fiction to answer questions collaboratively. Especially if the current narrator doesn't have an opinion or a strong idea about the answer. A lot of times, a simple way to do this is to make a flashback that illustrates the point. For example, suppose a player asks, "how does the boss feel about the new immigrants?" and the narrator says, "she hates them." The player might not immediately buy that and challenge it. In response, the narrator can frame a flashback to a past incident involving some immigrants. For another 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 narrator can optionally require that the player spend a fate point (see [Aspects and Fate Points](#)). In any case, they should probably frame a flashback to when the character discovered the trap door, because there might be important details about the discovery. This also allows all of the players to participate and contribute creatively.

Using Fiction to Make Suggestions

This is like "Using Fiction to Answer Questions," but instead of asking a question, it's more like you're making a suggestion. Sometimes a player will make their character do something you think is inconsistent with the character's personality or body of experience. In a traditional RPG, a GM or player might take the opportunity to say, "are you sure you want to do that?" but there is another means of communication available in Vele: you can directly challenge, or you can (more subtly) create fiction to communicate. You can make a flashback or scene that shows the players what you mean, rather than saying it directly. Playing that out may even show **you** why the player is making their character do what it's doing.

For example, suppose Clark is heading off by himself through dangerous territory, but it seems like an experienced lawman like that ought to bring some companions with him. Instead of 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. Doing this can not only give the player a chance at a more dignified response, but by highlighting that decision with a scene, it can help to define the character better. Maybe the character will ignore the warning and charge ahead. In that case, that could influence how the encounter with the dangerous territory plays out. Maybe the player will change one of Clark's aspects because of it.

Actions

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

State Your Goal

A player can initiate an action 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 action (completing the extended action causes a change of narrators)
- attack a component (normally continues a "fight" extended action or creates it, requiring a stated **goal** and it causes a change of narrators at the end of the fight)
- attack a trait -- more difficult to do (normally continues a "fight" extended action or creates one, requiring a stated **goal** and it causes a change of narrators at the end of the fight)
- maneuver: attach a temporary [aspect](#) to another component
- assess or declare an [aspect](#) -- discover or create a permanent aspect that was "there all along"
- fiction or guideline (like taking scaling a wall, achieving an objective, or tying someone up, for instance)

After stating an action's goal, the players involved in the action may be able to invite allies, depending on initiative and subject to [approval](#) -- see [Initiative, Actions, and Allies](#).

Manuevers, 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. A maneuvered aspect is usually **fragile**, disappearing when it is tagged or at the **end of your next turn**. If you beat the other score in the action by 3 or more, the aspect is **sticky** and lasts until the **end of the scene** -- it still only has one free tag, but you can spend fate points to use it after that, like any other aspect.

Assessment allows a character (whose player can [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.

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.

Difficulties

Difficulties are situational issues that make an action harder to do. The players must state the difficulties for an action before the traits are chosen and difficulties are subject to [approval](#). Some example difficulties are: long

range, blurred vision, slurred speech, etc. Failing a previous action might create a handicap, like a bad impression. -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.

Resolving an Action

Here is how you resolve an action:

1. **Actor:** state the goal, subject to [approval](#); magical or extraordinary effects may cost a fate point. If this is a head-to-head action, the Actor and Opponent are really peers.
2. **Both:** call for allies; each ally can contribute traits to the action
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 **action dice**. Bowl dice reduce your winnings (no cost if you lose). If this 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](#). If a component has no trait which could be used in the action in **any** way, you may roll one d6 from the bowl as an "average" value (but if you have an applicable d4 trait, you have to use that instead).
4. **All:** determine any difficulties involved in the action, 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 action; they are *spent*
6. **All:** roll your **action dice** (not your power dice); the *highest action die* for your side is the **result**
7. The action succeeds 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. If the action succeeds...
 - 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 action, the one with the highest result is the "winner" of the action, 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 **action dice**. If allies contributed traits, take turns taking the highest die left; the actor taking their turn *last* in the sequence.
10. All winners: after the dice are split up, put each **bowl die** you used back into the bowl, **plus** the highest of the remaining **action dice** you won -- this is the cost of using **bowl dice** (each costs a die)
11. **Opponent:** if an attack succeeded against you, the final **result** is your **damage**, **disable** your side's healthy traits until there is no **damage** left by subtracting the trait values from the remaining **damage**. If allies helped you, take turns, each eliminating one trait until the **damage** is gone, the opponent going *first*.

Actions Against Things

Failing an action against a thing that isn't a person may still result in a consequence -- a "counter-action" 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 damage. Some things, like traps, can initiate actions even though they can't "think."

Extended Actions

Extended actions are made of several simple actions 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 actions, they have a goal. Either the initiator determines the type of action or the players agree on what type makes sense, based on the goal. Extended actions are either one- or two-sided; it could be some components against some other components or some components against “the world.” An extended action is composed of several simple actions and continues until one side wins or one side gives up. To make a simple action part of an extended action, just make continuing the extended action the goal of the simple action. There are four types of extended action:

- first to score N wins
- first to beat the other score by N wins
- best score in N actions wins
- open ended (until a condition, surrender, forfeit, escape, death, etc.)

For the first three types of action, you first determine what the limit is (i.e. the value of “N”) and then you keep a running score for each side, adding to it when a side wins a roll. For offensive/defensive rolls, only the offensive side can increase its score, and only if it wins. In a head-to-head action, the winner always increases its score. For rolls that are “against the world,” the components’ score increases if they succeed and the world’s score increases if they lose. An example might be a tug-of-war over a pit using a head-to-head competition with the first to beat the other’s score by 20 winning. The goal might be “the loser is trapped in the pit”, which could constrain the loser for a scene (i.e. until the next narrator takes over). A fight is generally an open ended extended action.

Initiative, Actions, and Allies

If an action 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 and that must be during its initiative. Both parties in the action may call for allies. A component may preempt its action in order to participate as an ally, but it may do nothing but ally with that component for its action (both offensively and defensively, at the owner’s discretion) and the other component may not also ally with it in its defensive actions (the other component is already occupied).

Power

Power can represent magic, technology, psychic activity, or anything else that would make a component more effective than usual (fire, cold, sonic, gun, laser, etc.) and it affects the winner’s result, either adding or subtracting an extra die. When you use power with a trait, you must:

1. [Justify it with fiction](#)
2. Pay a die from your dice area to the bowl that is no larger than the trait, **before you roll**

After you determine the winner, roll the extra die (if you are using several powered traits, roll all of the extra dice and use the highest number). If you were the winner *or you tied*, add it to your initial result. If you were the loser, subtract it from the winner’s result but you can’t reduce it below 0.

Attacking Components and Traits

You can only attack on your initiative (see [Initiative, Actions, and Allies](#)). An attack joins the “fight” that is now happening, which means it will create a new extended action if there isn’t one, causing a narrator change after the fight (see [Changing Narrators](#)).

Attacking a trait will either disable the trait or do no damage at all. You must declare whether you are attacking to damage it or to take the component (see [Taking Components](#)), because this will determine whether it needs to be healed with a healing trait. Attacking a trait adds 1/2 the size of the trait to the difficulty of the roll. If the attacker wins, the trait is disabled. If the attacker is a story component, the controlling player gets 2 XP.

Attacking a component does damage to the component and the allies equal to the final score. Damage disables traits, according to their size; 4 points disables a d4 trait, 6 points disables a d6 trait, etc. To apply damage, you remove traits from the components which were involved in the attack until all of the damage is all accounted for. Trait removal is not subject to challenge (you are perfectly fine removing a “royalty” trait because of a gun shot). Dice are atomic; if you have only one point of damage left, it still disables 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 [Characters and Story Components](#)).

If more than one component is defending, damage is divvied in rounds, one round of damage for each contributed trait, with the main target taking damage last (the main target has a protective advantage here, but a disadvantage when gaining dice). So, if you used a component and your ally contributed two traits, you disable one of your component’s traits first, reducing the total damage by the value of the disabled trait, then your ally disables one of their component’s traits, next you disable one of your component’s traits, then it goes back to the ally, and finally you take all of the remaining damage. The ally’s component lost two traits because it contributed two traits (provided there is enough damage to disable two of their traits).

Healing

When a trait is disabled, it becomes unusable until it’s “healed”. A damaged trait can be healed with an action pitting the healing trait against the disabled trait. Using your healing trait to heal someone else’s trait is subject to challenge, since it’s an action -- you shouldn’t be using medical training to repair a gun. If the healing trait wins, either the healer or the wounded may spend any die to heal the trait. If the healing trait loses, the disabled trait cannot be healed in this act (it will start out healed at the beginning of the next act). If all of a component’s traits are disabled, the component is disabled and can be taken with fiction (see [Taking Components](#)).

Dice Flow After an Action

If the action 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 an action, 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).

Taking Components from Other Players

To take a component from another character by force (usually in a conflict involving at least one story component), you must first “disable” the component, then [justify taking it with fiction](#) (subject to challenge) and, finally, purchase it from your story or character dice (depending on who will “own” the component). You can just make a different one, if you can [justify that with fiction](#), but if you want that exact one, you must disable it first. Disabling it is required because a component with more traits is more “important” to the story (of course,

the owner could give just you the component, [justifying that with fiction](#)). Disabling represents the struggle for control. Traits disabled in this way can be healed automatically for a die, after the struggle is over -- they don't require an action with a healing trait.

Changing Narrators

When a player wins a simple action that is not part of an extended action against a narrator, the player may take over by paying their dice to the narrator instead of taking the narrator's dice. After an extended action, narrating passes to the left by default. If the player to the left doesn't want to be narrator, the option continues to pass until it returns to the current narrator. If a player wants to be narrator and the narrator wants to retain control, the narrator may offer one of their dice to that player. That player may accept and allow the narrator to continue or they may roll one of their dice against the narrator's die. The winner gets to be narrator and the loser gets the dice.

Aspects and Fate Points

An aspect is a quick, simple way to model something that can provide narrative power or an advantage in an action -- 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 called the "[FATE Fractal](#)."

Creating and Discovering Aspects

You can make a temporary aspect the goal of an action (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 an action. You can declare an aspect using declaration, which means that you use an action 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).

When aspects are created or discovered as part of the goal of an action, they start with one "free tag". This is a fate point that can only be used to power that aspect, but anyone can use it (first come, first serve). Sticky aspects can still be used after that, but you have to spend one of your fate points to do it.

Fate Points

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 fate points with aspects just like in FATE. Your character starts with one fate point for each aspect. Your story components start with none; this

means you have to have a refreshment scene for them to have fate points. This can help with character development for story components (see [Refreshment Scenes](#)). Spending a fate point requires [approval](#). You can spend a fate point to:

- Use an aspect (yours or otherwise) to add 2 to your result or reroll any one of the dice in your action **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 Schrödinger's cat)
- Cancel a fact change, if you're not narrator

Doing Extraordinary Things

Sometimes characters can do extraordinary and dramatic things with their traits, like sway a crowd with a speech, memorize things you see in a room, go first, even if you don't have initiative, etc. This is generally limited to once per scene and should be in line with what your trait can do. See Spirit of the Century's [stunts](#) for inspiration. This is also good for movie-like stunts, like quietly running up a wall to get to the top of the building if your character has Vele warrior training, for instance. If the action is extremely powerful, it may be more appropriate to spend a die instead of a fate point.

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.

Refreshment Scenes

Refreshment scenes replenish fate points. Everything starts an act with no fate points, so it's a good idea to start off with some refreshment scenes. A refreshment scene is like a flashback, in that it has no actions, just story, but it usually takes place in the normal time stream so it's up to the narrator if/when it's possible. Anyone can request a refreshment scene from the narrator. If you create a component during an act that has aspects and its group has already had a refreshment scene, the new component, starts off refreshed and has a fate point for each aspect.

If actions enter the scene, refreshment's over and it's back to normal play, but don't be too quick to end the refreshment; this is a chance for characters to elaborate on their own stories, others' stories, or on the story

itself. After refreshment, the characters in the group which are missing fate points get more fate points to bring their fate point total up to the number of aspects they each have. For example, if you have an orc story component with 5 aspects, but only 2 fate points, you can frame a refreshment scene in the dungeon break room, to get him back to 5 fate points, along with refreshing the other members of his group – just describe what happens with the orc and the rest of his group.

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 *also* gives the players experience! 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 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 [Fiction](#)). 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.

Some broad categories for objectives are (mostly involving things which could be virtual or real components):

- deliver something
- retrieve something
- defend something
- perform a task (maybe with a certain thing at a particular place)

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

- Use a story component to attack a trait: 2 XP if successful
- Use a story component to attack a component: 1 XP for each trait disabled
- Use a story component to win an action that is not an attack: 1 XP
- Hit an aspect: 1 XP (plus 1 for the narrator)
- Hit an aspect causing danger or extreme difficulty: 2 XP (plus 2 for the narrator)
- Buy off an aspect: 10 XP

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 slots in your main character component

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 (choices subject to challenge)

120 XP: gain a d4

...

Level 3: 200 XP, level 3: new main character trait slot, replace bought off aspects (choices subject to challenge)

...

Playing Death of the Vele

Important Links

As a reminder, here are some important sections of the main text that talk about key concepts of play: [Show](#), [Don't Tell](#), [Interviewing](#), [Investment in the Spotlight](#), [Flashbacks](#), [Using Fiction to Ask Questions](#), [Creating and Discovering Aspects](#)

Verminites and Vele

There is only a handful 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 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," perhaps using power on occasion. 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.

Fauna

(example stats for beasts, etc. stats can give you an understanding of how creatures compare with each other; details are good so that everyone can be on the same page and have a more integrated understanding)

Objectives

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.

Creating a Framework for a Good Story

Guidelines are The Philosopher's Stone'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. During act creation, there are three explicit review periods to give extra time for the act's first narrator to come up with story and guidelines.

Since TPS doesn't have a permanent narrator who's responsible for creating a story, there's a risk that a TPS game can devolve into flashes of brilliance floating in a murky, puerile darkness. TPS **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.

Mysteries

[This is in play-test right now] The object is to create competing "theories of the crime" and find out which one is the best at the end of the story. During each act, each player can use one of their components either to discover a clue (which the player makes up). A clue can be new information and/or it can connect existing clues. A bunch of connected clues form a "theory of the crime." At the end of the final act, the theory of the crime with the most clues is the one that has the most convincing evidence.

Story Component Refreshment

Before you introduce a group of story components, it's a really really good idea to do at least a refreshment scene, if not a full scene with them. This allows you not only to get fate points for them but to set the scene as well.

Setting Up For a Fall

Attacking 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.

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."

Tweaks

This is some advice on how you can customize the rules to your taste. These may not be appropriate for your story -- make sure you know what you are doing before using any of these. To use a tweak, you can just make a guideline for it (subject to challenge, like all guidelines).

“Traditional” RPG play (permanent narrator)

TPS is also suited to “traditional” RPG play. Just remove the collaboration. The story/act structure is still good for pacing since it “resets” the dice totals for the PCs.

“Always On” Power

Here is an alternate system for power that allows unlimited use of “power,” by buying “powered traits”:

Pay extra when you buy a “powered trait” (perhaps triple?) and use the power in a test without having to pay a die (you still have to justify it with fiction).

One-Shot Powered Traits

To model expendable, extraordinary things, you can allow one-shot traits. The trait functions once for a specific purpose (like explosives or a consumable spider-climbing token) and provides its own powered die of its size or smaller. The trait is specific, which makes it potentially less powerful than a regular trait, and it only works once, but the power die is paid for already -- you don’t have to pay for it again. These aren’t tied to a component and can’t absorb damage. They can represent drugs, explosives, potions, scrolls, etc. Pay the normal cost for one of these traits and justify it with fiction when you create it (in your lab, workshop, cave of secrets, or whatever). These one-shot traits don’t count against the slot total for a component, but you also can’t use them to absorb damage (although an opponent can target them if they can justify it with fiction).

Making Power Less Powerful

For lower power power, only use half of the extra result from the power dice.

Grittier Damage

Damage is twice as effective: 2 damage removes a d4, 3 removes a d6, etc.

Elemental Magic

For elemental magic, a superior element eliminates an inferior element’s extra die.

Bookmarks

[Approval and the Right of Challenge](#)

[Characters and Story Components](#)

[Fiction and Guidelines](#)

[Justifying with Fiction](#)

[Actions](#)

[Actions Against Things](#)

[Initiative, Actions, and Allies](#)

[Taking Components from Other Players](#)

[Changing Narrators](#)

[Aspects and Fate Points](#)

[Creating and Discovering Aspects](#)

[Refreshment Scenes](#)

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

Universalis: Ralph Maaza, Mike Holmes

Feedback

Leonard Balsera

Guy Bowring

Eoin Keith Boyle

Shirley Burdick

Ralph Maaza

Roy Riggs

Ron Edwards

Vincent Baker

Play Testing

Abraham Grief

Eitan Berko

Jeremiah Bjorgaard

Tim Collier

Dan Hauskins

Versions

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