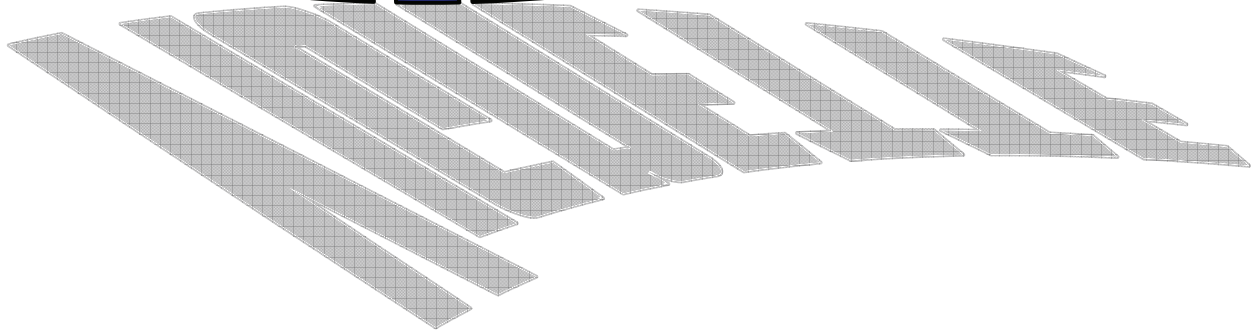

VIGNETTE



**The fast and fluid
role playing system.**



Nathan Russell
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Introduction

Welcome to *Vignette*, a game of action, adventure and fun! *Vignette* is a role playing game (or RPG, as we say) of immense proportions and stupefying simplicity, designed to allow you to create exciting stories in any setting imaginable, with a minimum of fuss, or even preparation.

Vignette is first and foremost an easy game. The guidelines and suggestions within this book have been designed to allow players to move from the thought '*lets role play in this setting...*' to actually playing within a matter of minutes. The character design system is quick and intuitive, allowing you to play any kind of character you desire, and the dice mechanics are easy to learn, and very simple to use.

Vignette is also universal. Or generic. Or whatever you want to call it. These core rules are not wrapped around a specific background or setting, and make an effort to assume nothing. It is a basic system around which you may create your own settings and stories. You will find *Vignette* offers a wide range of choices for you to customise the game to your preferred style of play, and more than enough room for you to add your own ideas.

With all that said, however, *Vignette* favours certain kinds of play. Players that prefer their game mechanics to provoke ideas and suggest options, rather than dictate specific results, will get the most out of *Vignette*. Actions in *Vignette* are never simply 'pass' or 'fail', and every dice roll will suggest new incidents and options to the players and Narrator.

Vignette lends itself to a 'seat of your pants' style of play, where little or no preparation is needed, and may in fact hinder the story being told. Narrators that enjoy running adventures 'on the fly' will certainly enjoy *Vignette*, as will players that are tired of being told what they can't do, instead of what they might achieve.

Vignette is intended to allow you and your friends to tell exciting collaborative stories, to enrich the game with your own imagination, and to allow players to actively participate in the creation of the tale being spun. This might sound a little wishy-washy, but it isn't as touchy-feely as you might think. Basically, players have more opportunities to define their character's actions, and interpret the results of those actions. This means players become more involved in the story, and Narrators can concentrate on mood, atmosphere, and action.

How is all this possible? Read on and find out!

What is role playing?

Role-playing is something that everyone is familiar with (even if you don't know it), yet a completely unique experience. Everyone no-doubt remembers playing 'lets pretend' games as kids, where you and your friends made up stories or locations and imagined what you would do there. Or perhaps you ran around the backyard, recreating the exploits of your favourite movie hero or wrestling champion. This acting out is at the very heart of role-playing, where you leave the real world behind for a few short hours and imagine with your friends the kinds of things you might do if presented with a certain set of events or opportunities. Rather than running about the house swinging imaginary swords or exclaiming 'Bang! Bang! You're dead!' however, you and your friends sit about a table, on the lounge, or in some other comfortable location, and let your imaginations do most of the work. Players describe what their characters are attempting to do, and the Narrator responds by informing them of the results of these actions.

To help with the development of the story, each player creates a character that will become their alter-ego during the game. This character might be any one or any thing, depending upon the kind of story being created. During the game they will attempt actions, they will be injured, they will be frightened, and they will be overjoyed when they have finally triumphed against all odds. Throughout this journey, the player describes how the character interacts with others, and how they respond to situations. If your thinking that this all sounds like improvisational theatre, then you would be right. But instead of actually acting the scenes out, you are describing the action.

One player will become the Narrator, and it is their job to describe the setting and locations of the story, and all the 'bit players'. These 'extras' are called non-player characters, or NPC's, and will include the villain of the story, innocent bystanders, and your allies. The Narrator will guide the story, interpreting the actions of characters and the roll of the dice. It is an important job to be the Narrator, but an exciting one too, as the Narrator forms the thread of the tale and subtly guides the story to its conclusion, ensuring that everyone enjoys themselves along the way.

The Basics

Before we get into the real meat of the *Vignette* game (the creation of characters and telling of stories), it is a good idea to go over some of the basics.

What you need

To play *Vignette* you will need to gather a few things. Here is your shopping list;

Friends: if you can't find any, stop reading immediately and pay a visit to your local hobby shop, game club, or pizza joint, and make some contacts. Role playing is a social hobby, which kind of makes friends necessary. Three to six players (including the Narrator) are ideal for games of *Vignette*.

Dice: standard six-sided dice are used to resolve actions in *Vignette*. You will need at least one, but it would be better if players had about three each. Six sided dice are referred to throughout the rules as d6. If a number appears in front (such as 2d6 or 4d6) this indicates you should roll that many dice.

Pencil and Paper: players will need to record the details of their character, and what better place than on a piece of paper! Or even better, the official *Vignette* character sheet (there is one at the back of the book, which you may photocopy). This handy resource has been designed to fold into a free-standing triangle, so that you can easily read all the important stuff about the character, and everyone else can see the character's name. Brilliant!

Scrap Paper: Narrators will find it useful to keep a supply of paper handy, in order to draw rough diagrams, or keep track of the events of a story. A small whiteboard is also handy for such purposes.

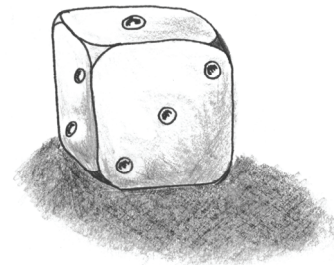
Beating the Odds

Before moving on to explaining how you create interesting characters and exciting stories, we will go over the most important game mechanic—the rolling of dice. Almost every action that a character attempts, where the outcome is not immediately and / or completely obvious, is covered by this simple system.

To resolve any action where the outcome is uncertain or dangerous, roll a d6. Your objective is to 'beat the odds' by rolling an even number. The higher the even number, the better the result. If you roll an odd number, the action either failed, or wasn't quite as good as needed or expected. The lower the odd number, the worse the result.

Die Roll	Degree of Success
6	Fantastic success. A brilliant result was achieved, in the most thorough and / or spectacular way.
4	Typical success. A solid result was achieved, resulting in the desired effect or outcome.
2	Minimal success. A simple or marginal success was achieved, probably in the most basic of fashions.
5	Minimal failure. The action only just failed, or was successful in an unexpected or undesired manner.
3	Failure. The action failed in the most obvious way, or resulted in a very undesirable outcome.
1	Critical failure. Things have gone horribly wrong, caused complications, or some other unsatisfactory result.

This is the heart of the *Vignette* system. While most of the time even numbers are good and odd numbers are bad, the precise situation will dictate the actual results. It may be that the roll of a 1 does not indicate a critical failure, so much as a success in the most minimal or fragile of ways.



Some examples

Sir Camden is riding after the evil Lord Kane. He sees Lord Kane leap a tall hedgerow, and disappear into the forest beyond. Sir Camden now attempts to leap the hedge, and his player rolls a d6, scoring 4. Lord Camden's horse manages to clear the dense hedge, its hind legs just brushing the top most leaves as it passes over.

Captain Vance ducks as another hail of bullets peppers the wall he is hiding behind. Grabbing a damaged radio, he flicks some switches and attempts to call HQ for back-up. Vance's player rolls a d6 and scores a 1. As he attempts to find the right frequency, the radio bursts into flames and burns his hand.

Sometimes circumstances, equipment and plain talent will contribute to making actions easier or harder to succeed at. Such modifiers influence the number of dice a player may roll when attempting an action.

Making Things Easier: If a character has some advantageous skill, ability or piece of equipment, they may roll an additional die. The result is the single *best* (not necessarily highest) die roll, as the player chooses.

Every factor that improves a character's chance of success adds a die.

*Now in the woods, Sir Camden looks for the trail of Lord Kane. Sir Camden's player points out that the noble knight is a **good hunter**, so the Narrator allows him to roll an extra d6. The player rolls 2d6, scoring a 5 and a 4. The player chooses to use the 4 result, and the Narrator informs him that after a brief search Sir Camden finds Lord Kane's tracks leading deeper into the woods...*

Making Things Harder: If a character possess any skills or traits that hinder their chance of success, or if circumstances will negatively affect the action, roll one additional die. The result is the single *worst* die roll.

Every negative or hindering factor adds a die.

*With no way of contacting HQ, Captain Vance decides to run to a near-by jeep. The Narrator points out that there is **no cover** between his hiding spot and the vehicle. Vance's player rolls 2d6, scoring a 3 and a 5. The player must accept the worst result, the 3, and the Narrator decides that Captain Vance takes a hit as he reaches the jeep...*

Cancelling: One beneficial die cancels out one hindering die, so you will never be rolling 'negative' and 'positive' dice at the same time.

*Later in his quest, Sir Camden finds that he must scale a **sheer cliff** in order to get to Lord Kane. Sir Camden's player points out that the knight is **strong** and has a **grappling hook**. The steepness of the cliff makes the action harder, but Sir Camden has two bonuses (his strength and grappling hook) to improve his chances of climbing the cliff. Overall, this equates to a single bonus to the action (the sheer cliff and the knight's strength cancel each other out, just leaving the grappling hook). Sir Camden's player rolls 2d6, scoring a 3 and 6, and chooses to use the 6!*

Doubles: The only result better than a '6' is a double or triple '6' (or quadruple, etc.) Multiple sixes will beat a single roll of six.

The only result worse than a '1' is double or triple (etc.) '1'. Multiple ones are worse than the roll of a single one.

Of course, the precise effects of these multiple results is up to the Narrator to decide. It might mean that an action is incredibly successful (or unbelievably catastrophic), additional damage may be caused, or some other bonus or penalty is applied. Of course, the additional sixes or ones may not have any further effect at all. After all, a fantastic success or catastrophic failure are already quite extreme!

Other types of rolls

Veteran role players might now be expecting to see guidelines on making such things as 'opposed rolls' or 'contested actions', 'damage rolls' and 'rolling to hit'. Sorry to disappoint, but that's it. The 'beat the odds' roll is the only kind of roll used in *Vignette*, whether you are trying to drive a car through a crowded mall, arm wrestle a giant, or shrug off the damage caused by a stray bullet.

So how does one adjudicate something like an arm wrestling contest, where both participant's abilities will affect the result? For a start, only players ever roll dice (this way the Narrator can concentrate on describing the result, rather than looking for the die that rolled under the chair), so you begin by factoring in all the bonuses and penalties that apply to the player's character. Then you take stock of all the factors that would apply to the opponent, and apply those into the players die roll too. Is the opponent weak? The player gets a bonus die. Is the opponent a world champion arm wrestler? The player factors in a penalty die. And so on, until all factors are figured in. When the player knows how many bonus or penalty dice they have, roll the dice. If the result is an even number, the contest goes in favour of the player; if the final result is an odd number, the opponent has the advantage.

Combat works in exactly the same way.

*Captain Vance hurtles along in the stolen jeep, when a guard lunges at him through the window, attempting to drag him out of the vehicle. It is **hard** (+1 die) to drag Vance through the window, but he is **wounded** (-1 die) and **surprised** (-1 die), and the attacker is very **strong** (-1 die). The guard, however, also has to avoid **falling off** (+1 die) the jeep. In total Vance's player must roll 1 penalty die. He rolls 2d6 scoring a 2 and 3, and must take the worst result, the 3. The guard manages to grab Vance by the collar and wrestle him out of the jeep. Both Vance and the guard tumble across the road as the jeep careens into a pile of fuel drums and explodes.*

Characters

In *Vignette* a character is your alter-ego. During a story you describe what the character does, how they respond to situations, and react to others. Before you get that far, however, you need to know something about the character.

Following are the *Vignette* character creation guidelines. By following these simple steps you will be able to quickly create any kind of character you desire, whether they are a tommy-gun toting gangster, savage barbarian, bold explorer, rock star, starship captain, or anything else you can imagine.

To Begin

Before anyone starts making characters, the Narrator should inform the players of what kind of game they will be playing, outlining the general setting, ideas, themes, or images. Is the game to be fast-paced with over-the-top action, or more serious, sombre, or angst-ridden? Is the adventure to be set in ancient Greece, the near future, medieval Japan, or some other time and place? You need to consider these questions, so that players have some starting point for creating their characters.

Of course, all of these decisions do not have to be made by the Narrator, and everyone may find it more fulfilling to provide input to the setting and coming adventure. Perhaps a player will suggest a situation or setting, and someone else will expand upon the idea, or the Narrator will indicate a preference, but leave the details open until everyone has created their characters.

Be creative. Why not explore realms and times that you might not normally consider. Perhaps you could play a game set during the Napoleonic wars, where the characters are spies, or even humble peasants. What would it be like to be primitive cavemen, hunting woolly mammoths, and fending off other tribes? Or maybe you might play more 'off the wall' games, such as a game based on the Viking sagas, where the characters are the trolls and giants of legend. Or a science fiction game where mankind has advanced so far that all knowledge of weaponry or even conflict has been forgotten. Maybe everyone is an animal, trapped in an evil cosmetics corporation laboratory, trying to escape.

If you're really stuck, take a look at some of the suggestions in the chapter on Adventures, or pick up a *Vignette Module*, which describes a specific setting, appropriate characters, and suggests adventure seeds.

Concept

When you know the kind of setting or basic premise of the adventures you will be playing, you can begin thinking about a character concept. This is the kernel of who or what the character is, and can usually be summed up in just a few words or a phrase.

The concept usually defines some part of the characters background or occupation, such as 'paranormal detective' or 'child prodigy', but does not have to. They might also give insight into the personality or traits of a character, such as 'noble savage' or 'nutty professor'. You will notice that all the examples we have given are very short, and a little clichéd. That's fine. Clichés contain a host of ideas and concepts that we are already familiar with. When somebody describes their character as a barbarian, we automatically picture them as heavily muscled, and somewhat uncivilised. Using clichés is kind of a shorthand way to describe a character.

Of course, the character's concept should be appropriate to the setting, background or types of adventures that you will be playing. There is no point dreaming up a 'streetwise cop' in a game set in medieval England, though a 'worldly sheriff' is certainly a possibility. Use the setting to inspire your character. Are you going to play a game of political intrigue set around the White House? Politicians and spies are obvious character choices, but what about playing a genitor that has access to the Oval Office, or the barber that cuts all the high-profile politician's hair? Be imaginative when creating your character; dare to be different, and don't be afraid of a challenge—that's all part of the fun of roleplaying!

An example

Throughout this chapter we will follow Dave and Nina as they create their own characters. Tim, the Narrator, has told them that he is going to run a game based on the pulp serials of the 1930's, and that it will be fairly whimsical and action-packed.

Considering this information, Dave thinks of a couple of his favourite movies and decides that the concept for his character will be 'Daredevil Explorer'.

Nina wants to play something a little unusual, and after discussing her ideas with the Narrator and Dave, decides that her character concept will be 'Alien Emissary'.

Descriptors

Descriptors indicate the kinds of things that a character is good at, their physical and mental traits, and any abilities or drawbacks they might have.

Descriptors are adjectives or very short phrases that identify a character's skills and flaws, the things that make their life easier and harder, and ultimately make them who they are. Descriptors can be anything you desire, pointing out any part of a character's physique, personality, or background that you wish to highlight. Anything from *Strong*, to *Explosive Temper*, to *Only One Leg* can be descriptors.

When you get right down to it, descriptors are modifiers to 'beat the odds' rolls. If you have a descriptor that makes an action easier, you get a bonus die. If a descriptor makes an action more difficult, you get a penalty die. Some descriptors will be useful all the time, others will be a hindrance all the time, and some will be a little of both, depending upon the descriptor and the situation at hand.

Most characters have four descriptors, though it is possible to begin with more. While players are free to choose the precise nature of these descriptors, one should define a physical trait, another the character's primary mental trait, a special skill or ability of the character, and a drawback or flaw.

The character sheet at the back of this book has a space for the following types of descriptors:

Body: Is the character strong, quick, agile, thin, huge, or ambidextrous? Or perhaps they are weak, overweight, or slow. The Body descriptor should record a character's most obvious physical trait.

Mind: Is the character smart, wise, witty, observant, or book-smart? Or are they dim-witted, absent-minded, or uneducated? The Mind descriptor is a character's primary mental attribute.

Edge: Is the character good at driving, hunting, espionage, horse riding, performing, gymnastics, or research? Or do they have keen eyesight, courage, hearty constitution, or good looks. An Edge is a talent or trait that is almost never a hindrance.

Flaw: Is the character ugly, greedy, or blind? Or perhaps they are wanted by the police, wheelchair bound, socially inept, or very clumsy. A Flaw is a trait that is more of a hindrance than it is useful.

Players should strive to be imaginative and honest when choosing descriptors. They should think about their character concept and the setting that the story will take place in. Giving a character the Flaw 'can't swim' when you know all the stories will take place

in the desert is hardly sporting. Narrators are encouraged to exploit, and humiliate, players that attempt such things (*What do you mean my character is too afraid to go to the oasis?*).

Virtually any ability or skill can be an Edge, though the best Flaws tend to be personality traits or physical shortcomings. Things like 'always smells bad', or 'deaf' are better flaws than 'can't drive' or 'can't speak French'. Of course, there are always exceptions. Imagine the game mentioned earlier, where players are British spies during the Napoleonic wars—not being able to speak French would be a genuine drawback. Likewise, the flaw 'can't swim' becomes a great feature in a game of pirates and sea battles. Essentially, players should be looking for ways to not so much hinder their character, as add spice to games, and present themselves with challenges that need to be overcome.

Extra Edges: It is hoped that players are noble enough to give their characters, at least where appropriate, hindering Body and Mind descriptors. Experience has shown, however, that players will rarely disadvantage themselves just because the option is there. They require some kind of kickback, so here it is.

If a player chooses to give their character a Body or Mind descriptor that the Narrator deems to be more hindering than useful, the character may have an additional Edge. This means that the character can have up to three Edges, but will essentially be operating with three Flaws too!

Dave and Nina are now ready to choose descriptors for their characters.

Thinking about his Daredevil Explorer and the kinds of things he might have gotten up to during his life, Dave decides on the following choices;

Body: Nimble
Mind: Good Memory
Edge: Use bull whip
Flaw: Afraid of heights

Nina, inspired by classic pulp science fiction stories, has decided on the following descriptors for her character, the Alien Emissary;

Body: Fragile
Mind: Observant
Edge: Read Minds
Edge: Persuasive
Flaw: Alien

Tim, the Narrator, decides that the Alien Emissary's fragile body is enough of a hindrance to allow a second Edge.

Example Descriptors

Here are some example descriptors that you might like to use when creating your character. The list is by no means exhaustive, but it's a good place to start. Each entry lists the descriptor title and the kinds of things it might influence when attempting to 'beat the odds', which makes it a handy reference for both players and Narrators.

Body Descriptors

Agile: helpful when doing gymnastics, crawling through tight spaces, leaping, balancing and even dancing.

Ambidextrous: great when shooting two guns at the same time, or doing slight-of-hand magic tricks.

Handsome: useful for flirting, selling stuff, getting roles on T.V., modelling, and being popular.

Huge: good for looking menacing, reaching high places, acting like a body builder, or getting stuck in small spaces.

Overweight: a problem when exercising, borrowing clothes, and attracting the opposite sex.

Poor Constitution: a hindrance when long distance running, resisting damage, performing feats of endurance, and healing.

Quick: handy for ducking to and from places, slight-of-hand, dodging and other actions that require speed of action.

Short: a pain for reaching the top shelf, but useful for crawling under low objects and getting lost in a crowd.

Slow: a problem when running, dodging, and reacting to things around you.

Strong: useful for lifting, carrying, smashing and throwing things. Wrestling, and avoiding being crushed might also be aided.

Tall: good for reaching the top shelf, climbing, and seeing over other people's heads.

Thin: handy for squeezing into places and clothes, hiding behind poles, and performing on the catwalk.

Ugly: a problem when trying to seduce someone, or get a role on television.

Vigour: great for resisting the effects of poison, long distance running, and other feats of endurance.

Weak: a pain when lifting, carrying, smashing and throwing stuff.

Mind Descriptors

Absent-Minded: good for being distracted, but a problem when remembering where you left the keys, or that you just pulled the pin from a hand grenade.

Book-Smart: great when doing exams, knowing maths formulas, remembering history dates, and generally getting into Law at Harvard.

Dim-Witted: a problem when trying to understand jokes, recognising a trick, or generally keeping up appearances in social settings.

Empathetic: good for reading peoples emotions, doing psychological evaluations, and knowing how to comfort distressed people.

Focused: good for staying on task, not getting distracted, and looking serious.

Lateral Thinker: handy for problem solving, and approaching issues in new or unusual ways.

Observant: great for spotting hidden clues, noticing details, doing find-a-words, and reading body language.

Slow: a pain when trying to understand plans, or learn new things.

Uneducated: a pain when reading, doing math, remembering important dates in history and doing any school-type tests.

Wise: handy for sprouting proverbs, giving advice, putting unrelated clues together, interpreting people's reactions, and saying 'I told you so'.

Witty: good for making funny comments, being charming and / or entertaining, and always knowing the right thing to say.

Edge Descriptors

Acrobatics: great for joining the circus, leaping through narrow gaps, and doing impressive flips.

Arcane Knowledge: good for identifying mystic artefacts, recognising the presence of evil magic, and reading ancient scrolls.

Courage: handy when seeing something scary, telling your wife you forgot your anniversary, and attempting other dangerous acts.

Driving: great for Formula 1 racing, car chases, and passing your driving exam.

Fencing: good for sword fighting and other civilised forms of melee combat.

Good Memory: handy for remembering names and faces, vital clues, and mathematical formulas.

Hunting: good when tracking and stalking, looking good in camouflage, and knowing what an angry rhinoceros sounds like.

Keen Sight: great for seeing a long way, or even doing stuff by moonlight.

Linguistics: good for speaking one (or more) foreign languages and generally communicating with others.

Magic: great for knowing the mystic arts, casting spells, or acting like a stage magician.

Medicine: good for performing operations, diagnosing illness, and administering first aid.

Nasty Bite: great for really hurting someone in combat, chewing your own arm off, or winning a pie eating contest.

Rich: handy for buying luxury sports cars, getting invited to exclusive parties, and bribing city officials.

Wrestling: good for fighting unarmed combat, and pinning opponents to the ground.

Flaw Descriptors

Blind: a pain when doing anything that requires sight, such as shooting, navigating an unfamiliar space, or painting.

Brave: good for charging into mortal danger, acting foolhardy, and getting into deep trouble.

Clumsy: a problem when carrying a valuable vase, visiting an antique store, or trying to cross a booby-trapped room.

Greedy: a pain when resisting the urge to steal, lie, or in some other way keep or obtain wealth.

In-Human Appearance: a hindrance when trying not to get noticed, avoiding attention, or finding a pair of pants that fit just right.

Missing Leg: a problem when running, climbing, or performing any other activity that involves movement, without prosthetics or a wheel chair.

Old: a pain when trying to look cool, climb stairs, use a computer, or be positive about your health.

Poor: a hindrance when wanting to buy food or clothes, or trying to get into an exclusive party.

Poor Sight: a pain when trying to recognise someone or thing, driving at night, or noticing visual clues.

Primitive: a problem when using mobile phones, cars, and door bells, as well as interacting at more civilised social occasions.

Smelly: a hindrance when trying to impress people, or hiding from wild animals or trackers.

Wanted: a pain when trying to keep out of trouble, or needing something from your apartment.

Young: a problem when trying to get into clubs, be taken seriously by adults, avoid school, or see over the dash in a car.

You may have noticed that some descriptors could easily fall into more than one category—Good Memory might, for example be a Mind Descriptor, or Ugly could be a Flaw. That's fine. There is also no reason why a character could not describe their body as Huge and their Edge as Strong, if they wanted a character that is a wrestler, body builder or an angry green super hero! This list is only meant to get you thinking, and hopefully inspire you to come up with your own unique and interesting descriptors. Be imaginative, keep your concept in mind, and discuss your ideas with the Narrator. The possibilities are literally endless.

Props

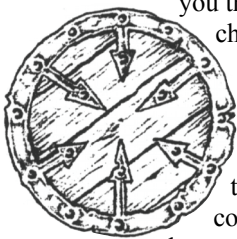
Clothes may not maketh the man, but they sure do help. At least in *Vignette* they do. Props are the equipment, gadgets, and weapons that a character will use on their adventures.

Props can be anything, from guns and knives to fancy clothes, credit cards, a horse, mobile phone, or even a star ship. Once again, the precise nature of a prop will depend upon the character concept, the setting being explored, and the kinds of stories that will be told. In a game set in the middle ages plate armour, a big sword and riding horse might all be logical props, but none will be particularly appropriate if your character is a Poor Monk, or Village Idiot. Think about you character, and come up with some options that are appropriate for them.

Like descriptors, a character's props will modify their chances of succeeding at certain actions. If a Noble Knight was to wear the plate armour mentioned above, they would get a bonus to resist damage, but a penalty to swimming. Keep this in mind when choosing props for your character.

Props do not have to be 'balanced' in the sense that they are equally as hindering as they are useful, but all the characters in a game should have a collection of props of approximately equal usefulness. If one character has a large rock, fur jacket and shiny baubles, while another character has power armour, laser blaster and a star ship, then things are probably a little unbalanced. Of course, if the character with the laser blaster has the Flaw 'can't shoot', or if the entire game revolves around impersonating Neanderthals, things might be a bit different. Use your common sense, and check with the Narrator if

you think you are going to give a character a prop that could be a little unbalancing.



All characters are assumed to have the basic clothes or items that are appropriate to their concept. These 'assumed' items,

however, never adjust a characters chance of success at actions. The knight mentioned above might be described as wearing plate armour (which is fine) but if it is not listed as one of their props, they receive no bonuses or penalties for it.

All characters should begin with three props. Of course, a Narrator is welcome to change this number, depending upon circumstances and the adventures they have planned. If a player wants a prop that is particularly powerful, the Narrator might allow it, but reduce the total number of props the character has. It is not recommended to allow characters to have extra props because the items they have chosen seem

'weak'. You will be surprised how ingenious players will be with even the simplest, dullest or weakest piece of gear.

With their descriptors decided, Dave and Nina move on to choosing the props for their characters.

*Dave knows, strait away, that he wants a **bull whip**, since he is quite skilled with it, and a **leather jacket** to keep out the cold and offer a little protection from scrapes and falls. For his third prop, Dave decides the Daredevil Explorer will have a **mysterious treasure map**, that was given to him by his father.*

*Nina thinks for a little while about who her character is, and what kinds of equipment they might carry. Finally, she decides that the Alien Emissary will have a **universal phrasebook**, to help her speak with the people of Earth, some **official papers** indicating her political importance, and hopefully gain her access to all kinds of interesting places, and some very **fancy clothes**, designed to impress and inspire awe.*

With their props chosen, there are only two steps left for Dave and Nina to complete...

Description

By now, you should have a pretty good idea of who your character is. You have chosen their basic concept, defined their general skills, abilities and drawbacks, and equipped them. Now it is time to fill in all the other details.

This is the bit where you get to describe the character's appearance or personality, their past, goals, friends, enemies, or any other detail you deem important or interesting. All of these details will work toward making the character more 'real'. You can be as thorough as you like, though there is no need to go into detailed family history. Concentrate on things like general appearance, motivations, or life-altering events. Of course, you should take into account the character's concept, the setting, and the kinds of stories that you will be telling.

When writing your character description, consider adding a secret or two, or some other detail that might spark off an adventure. Perhaps the character has a secret identity, or is a spy. Maybe they know who shot JFK, or they are looking for their long lost brother. Use your imagination, and have some fun.

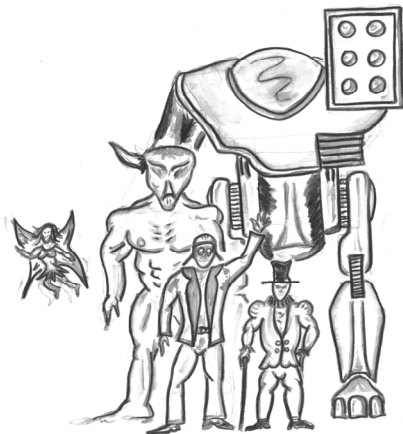
If you haven't already done so, now is the time to think of a name for your character.

Dave takes a moment to note a few things about the Daredevil Explorer, and when he is done, the description looks like this;

Tennessee Smith is a mild-mannered professor of history most of the year, but in his spare time he makes expeditions into the wilderness in search of lost artifacts and treasure. Ruggedly handsome, he always seems to keep his cool, no matter how much danger he is in—and he tends to get into a lot of it.

Nina’s description of the Alien Emissary is;

Lumina is an important diplomat from the planet Jupiter, which is ruled by the Dread Lord Kang. Like all her kind, she has purple skin, a bald head, and her features are very delicate. Lumina works for the Jupiter Underground, attempting to overthrow Dread Lord Kang, and uses her position to gain allies on Earth.



The following step is an optional component of the character creation process. It is best suited for campaign games, where players will keep the same character for a number of adventures. In ‘one off’ games, where players are unlikely to play more than one or two adventures with their characters, they are better off relying on the skills and resources of the character, than on contacts.

Contacts

Characters don’t exist in a void. Everyone knows somebody with a set of tools they can borrow, or that has a great knowledge of an obscure topic, or lets you in on a piece of gossip from whatever profession they happen to be in. In *Vignette* these acquaintances are called contacts, and every character has one.

Contacts can be anyone, but are generally in a position to supply a small amount of help, on a limited basis. A good contact for a medieval

knight might be a wandering Monk, or a rich but greedy merchant. A Roman legionnaire might have a friend in the Senate, or an aging mentor. As always, a contact should be appropriate (no Demon Worshipers in realistic games of counter-terrorism, please), and not too powerful (no school teachers with the President’s private phone number).

Contacts will rarely join a character on an adventure, but instead offer advice or assistance where they can. This should not be every adventure, or even every second one, but when the character’s resources and wits are truly stretched. A helpful police officer contact might look the other way while the character searches a crime scene, or an old family friend might let the character hide in their remote cabin while the evil sheriff and his posse are out looking for them.

Characters are free to consult their contacts whenever it is plausible and appropriate, and players might also suggest times where it would be logical and / or beneficial for the contact to appear.

While involved in a car chase, the characters are pulled over by the police. As the cop approaches, Alex asks, “Is this Dan, my character’s contact from the 6th precinct?” The Narrator considers the idea for a moment and informs Alex that, as the officer gets closer, he recognises him as Dan.

Narrators should also use a character’s contacts to inspire stories. The Roman legionnaire’s Senator friend might ask for help in proving some corruption, or the old family friend may mysteriously disappear. Perhaps the contact is only willing to help in return for some service, or reward. Maybe the contact just isn’t reachable when the character needs them. Let logic be your guide, when deciding how much, if any, help a contact is.

Nina decides that her contact will be a spaceship pilot that regularly travels between Earth and her home world. This allows him to get plenty of gossip, and pass it on to the Alien Emissary.

Dave’s Daredevil Explorer is always getting into trouble, but luckily his contact, a museum curator, is there to bail him out when needed.

We’ve now reached the end of the character creation process. If you’ve followed the above steps, you will have a fully fledged, 100% certified *Vignette* character, ready to be used in whatever stories or adventures you dream up. So go on, get out there and role play!

Here is one more example of the character creation process, just so that everything is nice and clear.

Ellen decides to run some games for her friends Nick and Mark. She has a great idea for a campaign set in a fantasy world ruled by Orcs. After discussing the concept with the players, it is decided that the characters will be members of special resistance force working to overthrow the tyrannical Orc rule.

Concept

With the basic campaign in mind, Nick and Mark set about coming up with concepts for their characters.

Nick decides he will play a Elf Wizard who has recently escaped from slavery and is looking for revenge.

Mark wants to play a Grizzled Veteran of the wars against the Orcs, an expert soldier that has seen all his friends die in battle.

Descriptors

Now the players must fill out their Descriptors.

Nick knows that his Elf Wizard will be intelligent and agile, but will also have some serious problems after spending years in slavery. He decides on the following Descriptors;

Body: Agile
Mind: Book Smart
Edge: Magic*
Flaw: Poor Constitution

Mark wants his Grizzled Veteran to be tough and a good fighter, so chooses the following Descriptors;

Body: Strong
Mind: Wise
Edge: Sword fighting
Flaw: Brave

Props

The players use what they know about their characters to choose some suitable props.

Deciding that easily concealed objects would be preferred by someone who has spent a long time in captivity, Nick equips his Elf Wizard with a **dagger** and a **cloak with hidden pockets**. For his final prop, Nick decides that the Elf Wizard will have a **slave mark** that will identify him to Orcs as being a slave, but might also help in infiltrating enemy camps.

Picturing his Grizzled Veteran, Mark gives him **armour** and a **two-handed sword**. He also decides that the old soldier never goes too far without a **flask of ale**.

Contacts

Knowing that they will be playing several games in this campaign setting, Ellen, Nick and Mark decide that contacts are a good idea.

Hit with a little inspiration, Nick decides his contact will take the form of a wolf totem who occasionally appears to aid him in combat or guide him from danger.

Mark chooses to make the Grizzled Veteran's contact a kindly old woman who runs an orphanage.

Description

Now all that is left for the players to do is describe their characters.

Nick's description of the Elf Wizard is;

Once the promising apprentice of a great mage, Gilden Oakheart had his studies cut short when the Orc overlords forced all of his tribe into slavery. After more than a decade of hard labor, Gilden managed to escape his captors and has vowed to find a way to free the rest of his people.

Mark's description of the Grizzled Veteran is;

For more than twenty years Marlon Grey has fought in the wars against the Orcs. While he won many victories, it always seemed to be at great costs, and now he works to overthrow the enemies of freedom in more subtle ways.

* Magic: Nick discusses his concept and ideas with the group, and it is decided that a character with the Magic edge can describe an effect they would like to occur, and attempt to 'beat the odds'. This roll can be modified by the situation, the target, and any other factors that the narrator deems appropriate. The effect will depend upon the result of the 'beat the odd' roll, as adjudicated by the narrator

