

Six Bullets for Vengeance

playtest document version 0.7

“A woman rides into town, a shooter at her hip. In it are six bullets, one for each of her enemies. Six bullets for vengeance.”

A game of bloodshed and revenge in six acts, backwards. By Andrew Kenrick

Zero: A note on the playtest

This is the current (as of September 2009) playtest document for *Six Bullets for Vengeance*. If you get the opportunity, I'd really love some feedback, either on the document itself or (better still!) a playtest of the game. The game has been playtested close to 15 times so far, including a couple of groups without me! So I'd really like it if you could have a look and see if you can understand how the game works purely from the document.

Some specific things I'd like feedback on:

1. revelation dice - are you encouraged to take them as a reward?
2. spare dice - do you use them, or load them into attributes?
3. the revelation map - do you use it as written, or do you just add revelations as they strike your fancy?
4. disputing revelations - do you ever dispute a revelation, or do you just let it ride? Do you think it's fair, or not?

Thanks for your help! Any feedback or actual play would be appreciated, either via this website, the Collective Endeavour (www.collective-endeavour.com) or by email (andrewkenrick AT gmail DOT com)

Andrew

One: Preludes, or an introduction to the game

Six Bullets for Vengeance is a game about revenge and bloodshed, played out in six acts, backwards. Over the course of a game, the players collaboratively tell the story of one person's quest for revenge, beginning with the final act of vengeance and tracing their quest back chapter by chapter, villain by villain, to the beginning.

It can help to think of it as a movie. The first thing we see on screen after the lights go down and the titles roll is the final scene of the story (but the first of the movie). We then jump back in time and watch events play out, one by one, almost like a series of flashbacks. Finally, just before we see the credits roll and go home, we get to see how it all began, the scene that started it all.

The Setting

Six Bullets for Vengeance is set in the Wild West. But instead of the historical West, it is set in the Wild West of your imagination, of popular culture and of Hollywood movies such as *Unforgiven*, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *the Quick and the Dead* and *Django*.

Although there is no reason why you can't play in the historical West, *Six Bullets* does not try to be a historical game and you shouldn't get too caught up in historical details.

[sidebar] Likely Locations

The saloon bar late at night, filled with the sounds of piano and the lazy smoke of its patrons.

A vacant lot at the edge of town, once used to corral cattle but now standing empty and alone.

An old mine entrance, long since abandoned and partly blocked with tumble down rock.

A mine shaft, supposedly abandoned but with signs of recent use.

A graveyard at the edge of town, the gravestones carved with the names of long dead settlers - and not so long dead townsfolk.

An isolated ranch at night, the clapperboard

*walls glowing softly silver in the moonlight.
An isolated ranch in the heat of the midday sun,
the cattle lowing agitatedly.*

A wagon train, still burning.

A steam train forging ever onwards across the salt flats, the sun beating down on the iron.

What is this game about?

Six Bullets for Vengeance is about revenge. It is about a single-minded quest for vengeance, and what such an all-consuming quest can do to a person. The game tells the story of the quest, starting with the final act of revenge, when the vengeance is all spent and the streets are slick with blood; and working back to the start, when the seeds of the vengeance are first planted.

What do the characters do?

There are two types of character in the game - six antagonists and one protagonist.

The protagonist is out for vengeance, and throughout the game she hunts down each of the antagonists in turn and gets her revenge on them.

The antagonists are responsible for the protagonist's quest for vengeance. Although they can only delay the inevitable showdown with the protagonist and not stop it, they can make life harder for her by forcing her to make difficult choices.

[sidebar] Throughout the game the protagonist is referred to as she/her, whilst the antagonists are all referred to as he/him. This is for no other reason than to follow the precedent set by the characters in the artwork and to keep it clear when we're talking about the protagonist or antagonist in the text.

What do the players do?

One player takes the role of the protagonist, the character seeking their revenge. The protagonist's player only plays the protagonist. The protagonist gets to set up the epilogue and the prologue, as well as narrating details within a chapter and describing their own actions. The protagonist's role is to exact their revenge against each of the

antagonists one by one, and to tell a gripping story in the process.

The remaining players play the antagonists, the characters against whom the protagonist seeks their revenge. In most games each player will play a couple of antagonists each. Each antagonist has their own chapter, and during this chapter their player gets to set up the opening of the chapter, deciding who is present and where the chapter is set. When the antagonist is not in the story, the player takes the role of the other characters in the story. The antagonists' role is to

create obstacles, challenges and moral dilemmas for the protagonist, making her quest for vengeance more difficult. In doing so they help tell an exciting story.

Collaboratively the players tell the story of the protagonist's quest for vengeance. They begin with the epilogue, the very last scene of the game, before jumping back to the beginning of the sixth chapter, then the fifth chapter and so on, all the way back to the first chapter, before finishing up with the prologue. Each chapter focuses on the protagonist's conflict with a different antagonist.

Glossary

Aftermath - the final stage of a conflict when both participants get to choose a reward.

Attribute - a mechanical characteristic associated with a number of dice. Used in conflicts.

Antagonist - the characters opposing the protagonist.

Bullets - six-sided dice, d6s

Chambering the Dice - the act of bring an attribute or dice into a conflict.

Chapter - the game is divided into six chapters, each telling the tale of one of the antagonists.

Character Attribute - descriptions or details tied to a character with a number of dice loaded into them.

Dice Posse - a collection of dice

Hit - a roll of 4-6, a success

Loaded Dice - dice that have been loaded into an attribute. Not discarded after being rolled.

Miss - a roll of 1-3, a failure

Picking up the pieces - the stage of a conflict where the winner gets to narrate what happens.

Protagonist - the main character seeking her revenge. Referred to as female throughout the text for clarity.

Revelation - the big questions and answers of the game, the unfolding pieces of the puzzle, the big reveals of the story upon which the game revolves.

Revelation Dice - dice rewarded for taking part in conflicts. Used to author revelations. Turn into spare dice after being used.

Revelation Map - the sheet used to keep track of all the revelations so far and how they connect together to form the story.

Scene - each chapter is divided into one or more discrete scenes.

Scene Attribute - descriptions or details tied to the scene with a number of dice loaded into them.

Spare Dice - dice in a dice posse, but that have not been loaded into an attribute. Discarded after being rolled.

Before you start

In order to play *Six Bullets for Vengeance* you will need a few things.

First and foremostly, you'll be needing some folks to play the game with too. Anywhere

between two and four people, including you, is the ideal number to play with. Any more and you'll either have your hands full keeping track of everyone, or folks'll have to wait an awfully long time to get involved. Any less and you'll be playing on your own, and that won't be much fun

either.

Six Bullets for Vengeance uses six-sided dice. Between them the antagonists will want about ten plain, ordinary dice. The protagonist will need six ordinary dice, as well as six red dice. You might also want a few spare, different coloured dice or some counters.

You'll need three sheets of paper between you all. If you want to be all fancy, there are some purty versions at the back of the book or on our website: www.steampowerpublishing.co.uk

Place one in the middle of the table where everybody can see it - this is the revelation map, and is used to scrawl facts and notes about the story as it plays out.

Place the second sheet next to the revelation map. Divide it into eight sections, write "epilogue" in a section at the top, "prologue" in a section at the bottom, and number the sections in between 6 to 1. This is the antagonist sheet, used to keep track of antagonists, scenes and the like.

The third sheet goes nearest the protagonist. This is the protagonist sheet and keeps track of all her details.

Pens or pencils would be useful too.

Setting up the game

There are two ways to start a game of *Six Bullets for Vengeance*: quick draw vengeance or the slow-burning revenge.

Quick-draw Vengeance

After you've got all your dice and paper out, you can go ahead and leap straight into the game. Pick two players to be the last men standing, set the scene and off you go. Everything else, from setting to characters to plot can be made up as you go along. Seriously, it's not as daunting as it sounds.

If you're playing it this way, both players start

with a posse of six dice, and share a posse of six vengeance dice.

Here's how this might work:

So we've just sat down to play and want to leap straight in. Me and you decide that we're going to be the last men standing, so we grab our six dice and one of us starts narrating. At this point neither of us know who is the protagonist and who is the last of the antagonists, so we keep the narration fairly neutral. I start by saying:

"It's a dust-choked street in a decaying, forsaken mining town. The sun is high over head, casting long shadows from the clapperboard houses. One shadow sways in the wind, the shadow of a man hanging from a pole. We're poised, guns in hand, smoke still rising from the barrels. 'You missed'.

And then we play through the epilogue as normal (see page 26)

Slow-burning Revenge

Or if you'd prefer not to jump in completely blind, you can take ten minutes to set things up a bit more:

Decide amongst yourselves who wants to be the protagonist. Everyone else gets to be the antagonists. You can decide amongst yourselves which antagonist is the first to die or let the protagonist decide when he narrates the epilogue. If you like you can name your characters and come up with some very brief concepts.

You can also discuss where you want the game to be set. Will it be set in one place or in several places? What sort of locations might scenes take place in?

Don't discuss any more than the bare necessities, and certainly don't discuss things like character details or story. These things will emerge naturally during the game, and will be all the better for it.

This might work like this:

We've sat down to play but we want to set things up a little more, so we decide amongst ourselves who is going to be the protagonist and the antagonists. We decide that you'll be the protagonist, I'll be the last antagonist standing and the other players divide the remaining antagonists up between them. The characters are left undefined for now - we'll fill in those details as we play. We also discuss the setting for the game and decide to set the action in a single location - a lonely old mining town in the middle of nowhere. We also discuss some of the possible locations within the town: the saloon, the jail, the

church, the mine, the corral and so on, and everyone jots down a few ideas. With that set, we turn to the protagonist - you - to narrate the opening for the epilogue (see page 26).

[sidebar]Lines and Veils

Although gritty, somewhat extreme violence is inherent in the game, other mature subjects such as sex and drugs need not be. It can be worth discussing the sorts of topics people are uncomfortable including in the game before you begin, deciding whether any particular subject should be glossed over or excluded altogether during play.

Two: The Players, or the main cast

Each player controls one or more characters during the game.

You may also take control of other characters that feature in the story but are not controlled by another player. These are called secondary characters.

One player takes the role of the hero, or **the protagonist**.

The remaining players all play her opponents, **the antagonists**.

If you are playing a 4 player game then 1 player will play the protagonist and the remaining 3 players each play 2 antagonists.

If you are playing a 3 player game then 1 player will play the protagonist and the remaining 2 players each play 3 antagonists.

If you are playing a 2 player game then 1 player will play the protagonist and the other player will play all 6 antagonists.

[sidebar] Going in blind

If you've decided to leap straight into the game with no setup whatsoever, then you won't yet know who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist! That's fine, it'll become clear soon enough. Let both players have six dice and let them share the vengeance dice for the epilogue only. Whichever character is left standing at the end of the scene gets to be the protagonist throughout rest of the story.

[sidebar] Heroes and Villains

We use the terms protagonist and antagonist so as not to label them as black and white, good and

evil, and allowing room for shades of grey – a bit of moral ambiguity in the story is always a good thing. You can call them what you want, of course – heroes and villains, goodies and baddies, cowboys and banditos, cops and robbers...

[sidebar] Winning the Game

There are no winners or losers in Six Bullets for Vengeance. To a certain extent, the outcome of the story is already predetermined - the protagonist will have his revenge upon the antagonists, one way or another.

So, what's the point? Well, for a start, although we might know how the story ends, we don't know how it begins, or the path that has led the protagonist to this place. Secondly, it's all about the morality of the tale. Is vengeance justified? Do the actions of the protagonist make her as bad as the antagonists... or worse? Throughout the game, the protagonist will (probably) be trying to paint herself as a hero, whilst the antagonists will be trying to make her out to be a villain. Entering into - and winning or losing - conflicts will allow the players to shape the story one way or another, to push their own side of the story and take the morality of the story in the direction of their choosing.

There are no winners or losers, only the vengeful and the dead.

Defining a character

You can pick a name for your character at the start of the game, or decide on one when it becomes relevant to the story. If you like you can also decide on a rough concept or personality, or let that evolve during the game too.

Your character possesses a number of **attributes**, representing things you can do, things you know, things you possess or anything else that might define who you are. An attribute does not necessarily have to be positive – it can quite

easily be negative or ambiguous.

You do not define any of your attributes at the start of the game. Instead you define them as you play.

Each of your attributes has a number of dice associated with it. You decide on the exact number of dice when you create the attribute. Whenever you are in a conflict and you decide that that attribute is useful in some way, you can roll those dice to help you.

For more on attributes, see page 11.

The Protagonist

The protagonist is the heroine of the story... in theory, at least. Their objective in the game is to exact revenge on each of the antagonists, typically violently. If you are the protagonist your role in the game is to drive the story towards its conclusion in as entertaining a manner as possible.

The role of the protagonist is not to kill the antagonists as quickly as possible - that does not make for an entertaining story.

The protagonist gets to set the scene in the epilogue and the prologue, but may narrate details and characters in any of the chapters. For much of the game the protagonist will be reacting to the scene as set by the antagonists, who in turn will be waiting for the protagonist to act.

The protagonist starts the game with 6 spare dice and 6 red vengeance dice. She can load the spare dice into attributes whenever she wants. Spare dice are only replenished by aftermaths or the reward posse, whilst loaded dice stick around for the whole of the game.

Vengeance dice are partly replenished between chapters - each chapter the protagonist gets one less vengeance dice back. So at the start of the fifth chapter she gets 5 vengeance dice, in the

fourth chapter she starts with 4 and so on. The exception to this is in the epilogue and the prologue. For the purposes of vengeance dice, the epilogue counts as part of chapter six, and the protagonist does not replenish vengeance dice between the end of the epilogue and the start of chapter six. Conversely, the protagonist receives no vengeance dice in the prologue.

The protagonist sheet is used by the protagonist's player to write down any attributes, to jot down notes and ideas, as well as to keep all of their spare dice and vengeance dice in one place.

[sidebar] The Role of the Protagonist

Although it may be blunt to say so, but not every player is suited to playing the protagonist. The protagonist is the pivotal character in the story, and the whole of the game hinges on their involvement and actions. The protagonist's player must be aggressive and forceful, readily engaging with the story and antagonists and actively driving the plot onwards. As hard as the antagonists push the protagonist, the protagonist must push back even harder. That is not to say a passive or reactive player can't play Six Bullets for Vengeance, but they may not be well suited to playing the protagonist.

The Antagonists

The antagonists are the villains of the story, the characters hunted by the protagonist. The role of the antagonists is to provide opposition to the protagonist, to put obstacles and challenges in their way and to help create an entertaining story.

The role of the antagonists is not to frustrate the protagonist's goals or stand in the way of the story.

Each antagonist takes control of a chapter of the story. This is their chapter, the part of the story that revolves around their conflict with the protagonist. During this chapter they can create scenes and involve the other players however

they choose. The climax of this chapter is typically their death, although it can be another fate entirely so long as the antagonist is permanently removed from the story.

Antagonists can also appear in chapters prior to their death, although they do not have to.

Antagonists start the game with no dice. When it is an antagonist's chapter, he gets a scene posse of 7 dice that he can distribute between the dice posses of the various antagonists, including his own. Each antagonist can load these spare dice into character attributes or scene attributes whenever they want. Additional dice can be gained from aftermaths or the reward posse.

Any spare dice leftover at the end of the chapter are lost, along with most of the dice loaded into scene attributes. Dice loaded into character attributes stick around.

Rather than having their own, individual sheets, the antagonists all share one antagonist sheet. The antagonist sheet is divided into eight sections, one for each chapter plus the epilogue and the prologue. As each chapter begins, write down in the appropriate section which antagonist is the chapter antagonist for that chapter. Players can write down attributes in the section for their antagonist, alongside other scene attributes for that chapter.

Secondary Characters

Secondary characters are the supporting cast of the game, the minions and mooks ordered about by the antagonists and the townsfolk that have a tendency to get in the way. They are controlled by any of the players, but usually whichever player created them.

At the start of a chapter, the chapter antagonist dishes out roles and scene dice that can and should be used to play these secondary characters. You do not – and should not – have to wait for the chapter antagonist to dole out a character for you to play. If you have an idea for a character that fits in with the rest of the scene, grab some dice from the scene posse and bring them into play.

Most of the time a secondary character will just appear as part of the narrative, but sometimes they need a few dice of their own. Secondary characters do not have dice posses or attributes of their own, although they might *be* an attribute for the scene or another character. Instead when a secondary character gets involved in a conflict, a player can either use some of his spare dice to represent them, or they can be created as an attribute.

A secondary character is never a very challenging obstacle for an antagonist or protagonist. A secondary character can never be involved in more than one conflict in a scene - during the conflict they must either be narrated out of the scene or forced into the background somehow.

Three: The Bullets, or the basic principles of the game

Dice

Each player uses a pool of six-sided dice, both as a sort of currency and to resolve conflicts that crop up in the game. because you load them into an attribute like you load a bullet into a gun.

The protagonist begins the game with 6 ordinary six-sided dice and 6 red vengeance dice but this number will ebb and flow during play. The antagonists don't begin the game with any dice at all, but as they take part in scenes they can accrue dice. The total number of dice a player has at any one time is called their **dice posse**.

There are two main types of dice – **loaded dice** and **spare dice**.

The protagonist has a third type of dice to play with – **vengeance dice**.

Revelation dice are a fourth type of dice, gained as rewards in conflict.

[sidebar]Dice as Tokens

For the sake of simplicity, dice are often used as tokens or markers during the game. If you are short of dice, you can use counters instead or write down how many of each dice you have.

Spare Dice

All dice start out as spare dice. After you roll a spare die it is discarded out of your posse and placed in the reward posse, in the middle of the table.

Loaded Dice

You can turn spare dice into loaded dice. Loaded dice are attached to an attribute, either a character attribute or a scene attribute. You do not discard loaded dice after you have rolled them - you put them right back where you found them, ready to use again next time. Loaded dice are so called

Vengeance Dice

As well as your normal posse of dice, if you are playing the protagonist you will also need a posse of 6 red dice. Vengeance dice are like spare dice in that after you roll them in a conflict they get discarded. You cannot load them into an attribute.

These are your vengeance dice and you can use them to even the odds when things get tough – but do so sparingly, for when the vengeance dice come out, things are bound to get out of control. For more on using vengeance dice in a conflict, see page 19.

The protagonist gets all but 1 of her vengeance dice back at the start of each chapter. So in the epilogue and chapter six she has 6 vengeance dice, in chapter five she has 5 dice, in chapter 4 she has 4 dice and so on. She gets no vengeance dice in the prologue.

Revelation Dice

You will also need a few different coloured dice to use as **revelation dice**. Revelation dice can only be gained as rewards for participation in a conflict. They can be used as a spare dice, in which case they are discarded as normal. But, instead of being rolled, a revelation die can be spent to introduce a new revelation, to counter another revelation or to steal an attribute from another player.

If spent to add a revelation to the revelation map, they become a regular spare dice in the player's scene posse.

Dice Posses

Six Bullets for Vengeance uses quite a lot of dice, divided up into various types of dice that change as the game goes on. Although it may seem confusing at first, all dice can be divided up into 3 distinct pools of dice, called posses, and any dice on the table will fall into one of these posses.

First up you have the player dice posse – these are all the dice a player currently possesses and has control over. We tend to call them just dice posses, as they're where most of the dice hang out. Each player has their own separate dice posse, including all their spare dice, loaded dice, revelation and vengeance dice. The protagonist gets to keep her dice posse from chapter to chapter (although her vengeance dice partially refreshes between chapters). The antagonists must get rid of any spare dice at the end of a chapter, but may keep loaded and revelation dice.

Secondly you have the scene posse, which is given to the chapter antagonist at the start of a chapter and is used to create opposition and scene attributes. It is controlled by the chapter antagonist.

Finally you have the reward posse, which sits in the centre of the table and is made up of any dice that are lost during the game. It is used to give out reward dice or to create new scene attributes.

Losing, Loading and Adding Dice

In addition to rolling dice, the rules sometimes call for you to lose a die, load a die or add a die. There's nothing complicated in any of these actions, and they really just mean shuffling and discarding dice.

When you roll a spare die, you move it from your dice posse to the reward posse.

When you load a die, you move one of your spare dice to an attribute. Once loaded it stops being a spare die. If you do not have any spare dice, you cannot load a die.

Sometimes you might be called upon to add a die. When you add a die, just grab a new die from the reward posse and add it to your spare dice. Sometimes you will be directed to add a die to an attribute, in which case place it there instead of into your posse.

Rolling Dice

You only ever roll your dice when you need to resolve a conflict. If a situation is not a conflict, then you do not roll any dice. Dice are a valuable commodity and you don't need to waste them needlessly.

Whenever you roll a die, a roll of a 1-3 is called a **miss** or a failure, a roll of a 4-6 is called a **hit** or a success. The number of hits you rolled determines how successful the dice roll.

Four: The Shooters, or the mechanics of the game

Attributes

An attribute doesn't have to be positive – it can quite easily be negative or ambiguous.

I'm going to load 3 dice into it, as I want to be a really good shot. So I take 3 of my spare dice and move them across my sheet to where I've written my new attribute. Then I also write a 3 next to it.

You do not define any of your attributes at the start of the game. Instead you define them as you play.

*I end up with: **good shot with a rifle, 3 dice.***

Each of your attributes has a number of dice associated with it. You decide on the exact number of dice when you create the attribute. Whenever you are in a conflict and you decide that that attribute is useful in some way, you can roll those dice to help you.

Negative Attributes

Remember how I said that an attribute didn't have to be good? Well it doesn't, and although it might seem like a negative attribute, it can still work in your favour if you're cunning.

Creating a New Attribute

At any time during the game – except when someone else is talking (that's just bad manners!) – you can declare that you are creating a new attribute.

Here's an example of how that might work:

So I might say: "I'm in a bar, seducing your sister. You don't realise it yet, and neither does she, but I'm trying to lure you into a trap. My reputation as someone who talks too much means your sister thinks I'm being indiscreet instead of cunning, which works in my favour ... this time."

To declare a new attribute, describe what it is, how you have come to acquire it and what relevance it has to the story. Write it down on the protagonist sheet if you're the protagonist, or in the relevant chapter of the antagonist sheet if you're the antagonist. Then load a number of spare dice into it. Take the dice out of your spare dice and either place them with the attribute on the sheet, or write the number of dice next to the attribute. Or better still, do both.

Then I'd write on my sheet: talks too much.

I'm going to load 2 dice into it, so I take 2 of my spare dice and move them across to my new attribute, as well as writing a 2 next to it for good measure.

Here's what it might look like in play:

*I end up with: **talks too much, 2 dice.***

So I might say: "Ok, so you're escaping across the fields out back. Shame you didn't know that my pa taught me how to hunt with a rifle back when I was a kid. Good shot I was too, even at this range."

A negative attribute can also work against you too, if you're not careful or your opponent is wily – but if it does you get paid for the privilege, so it's not all bad.

Then I'd write on my sheet: good shot with a rifle.

In a conflict you can use one of your opponent's own attributes against them! To do so lean across and announce which of your opponent's

attributes is helping you, just like you would one of your own! Then give your opponent one of your spare dice for the privilege, and take the dice loaded into the attribute and roll them alongside your own!

Here's an example of how it could go:

You say: "Later on that night I'm about to get ambushed by you, lured into the trap you set earlier via my sister. But you talk too much and I've gotten wind of your plans, so I get the jump on you instead!"

Then we would set stakes and roll to see who ambushed who as with any other conflict, but as well as using your own attributes as part of the stakes, you also announce you're going to use one of mine!

You push one of your spare dice over to me and flash me a grin, before snatching the 2 dice I've loaded into 'talks too much' and roll them right there with your own!

Here's a little secret to finish up with – there aren't really positive or negative attributes! If you're clever you can always find a way to use an opponent's attribute against them, just as you can find a way to turn an attribute to your advantage.

Scene Attributes

A scene or location can have an attribute, just like a character can. Scene attributes are usually created at the start of a scene and have dice loaded into them as normal. Creating a scene attribute in this way is detailed on page 27.

When you create a scene attribute, write it into the relevant section of the antagonist sheet. Then, at the end of the chapter, check to see whether it makes sense for any of the scene attributes from that chapter to continue on into the preceding

chapter. If it does, leave them where they were. If not, cross them out.

A scene attribute might also be created as part of the aftermath of a conflict.

You can use a scene attribute in a conflict just like any other attribute. If more than one participant wants to use the attribute, then split up the dice as evenly as possible.

This could go like this:

*I'm setting a new scene, so I say: "The alley is in the shadow of the church, the moonlight that illuminates the streets beyond blocked by the tall bell tower." Then I load some of the scene dice into a scene attribute for the alley: **dark alley, 2 dice.***

Or maybe like this:

*At the end of the last conflict your character set the bar on fire. It now has the attribute: **blazing inferno, 1 die.***

And it could be used like this:

You say: "I'm trying to sneak up on you, using the shadows to hide my approach."

Then we get into a new conflict where you try to hide from me and I try to spot you, setting stakes and picking attributes and so on. But as well as your own attributes, you grab the 2 dice loaded into the scene's dark alley attribute and roll them as well!

Stealing an Attribute

Sometimes using a character's attribute against them simply isn't enough. Sometimes you'll want to seize possession of that attribute for yourself so that they can't use it.

To do this, spend a revelation die and narrate the twist in the story that has led you to steal the attribute. As with any revelation dice expenditure, this must be discussed first so that it makes sense to everyone else.

You must then load the same number of dice into the attribute as the original attribute had. The player whose attribute has been stolen gets to turn the attribute's dice from loaded dice back into spare dice.

Stealing an attribute is likely to be a fairly rare and unusual situation, so decide on the exact circumstances and consequences if it ever arises.

This might look like this:

*You've got the attribute **Six-Shooter, 2 dice** that you used to blow away one of my fellow villains in a previous scene. Now you're facing me down, and I can see your hands are inching towards those six-shooter dice.*

So I slide forward a revelation die and say: "You know that six-shooter you'll be cradling later in the story? Well, I know where you found it. It was mine."

*You get those 2 dice that you've loaded into the attribute back into your posse of spare dice, and you scrub out the attribute. Then I have to load the same number of dice into the exact same attribute, so I load 2 of my own dice and write down the attribute: **Six-Shooter, 2 dice**.*

Minions and Henchmen

Sometimes a character needs someone to boss about in the form of minions and henchmen. Minions and henchmen can be handled in a number of different ways, and it is up to you which one you choose at any given moment.

Henchmen may actually be one or more of the other antagonists, who act as henchmen to one of the other antagonists. Their subservient role is a narrative conceit, and has no more impact on the game play or story than their player wishes it to. They remain a potent force in the game, and get to have their own chapter with the protagonist just as any of the other antagonists do.

Alternatively minions may be represented by secondary characters, played during the scene by one of the other players or merely acting as set dressing. Minions as secondary characters may be less tractable and reluctant to follow your commands.

Finally, a character may choose to define his minions as he does anything else, as an attribute. Minions defined as an attribute act as any other attribute, and allow the character to keep more control over them during the narrative.

For example:

*I might have the attribute: **Loyal Soldiers, 2 dice** or, if I was less discerning in the people I keep in my employ, **Violent Thugs, 1 die**. These could represent all of my henchmen, which I could freely incorporate into the story and call on in a conflict, as with any other attribute.*

Trusty Steeds, Favourite Guns and Trademark Items

A character's trusty steed, favourite gun or trademark item can either be handled purely as part of the description or, if you want it to have a

mechanical effect then treat it as just another attribute.

Like so:

So as part of your narrative you might describe your character calling for her horse, pulling out her father's rifle or sucking on her cheroot, and them have no more impact on the game than that.

*Or you might load some dice into a new attribute of: **Faithful Steed, 2 dice; Father's Rifle; 3 dice, or Black Cheroot, 1 die.***

Secondary Characters

Secondary characters do not have dice posses or attributes of their own, although they might *be* an attribute for the scene or another character. For example, a protagonist might have her husband as an attribute: **Beloved Husband, 1 die.**

Five: Getting your hands dirty, or playing through conflicts

Conflict

There will be times in the game when you want something different to another player. If you cannot or will not compromise then a **conflict** is called to settle the dispute. Conflicts are also the main way of driving the story forwards, as they're the only way to gain revelation dice.

At the start of the conflict you and your opponent decide what the conflict is about, why your characters are in the conflict and the scope of the conflict. You get to state what is at stake in the conflict, if not the actual outcome. This is called **picking your targets**.

You then decide whether any of your attributes is useful in the conflict. If any are, you briefly describe how they help you. Then you push forwards any dice loaded into these attributes, alongside as many spare dice and vengeance dice as you want. This is known as **chambering the dice**.

You then roll your chambered dice and compare the number of hits you have scored with your opponent. A **hit** is a roll of a 4+. The player with the most hits is the winner.

If you both rolled the same number of hits then the conflict is tied. In a tie, the protagonist always wins.

The winner gets the outcome they set out in their stakes, and the loser does not. The winner gets the privilege of describing the outcome to their liking. This is called **picking up the pieces**.

After a conflict, the winner and loser get to choose their **aftermaths**: take a die from the reward posse or gain a revelation die.

A simple conflict might look like this:

*I'm escaping from the window of the room when you burst in, trying to catch me. The stakes are simple and so we pick our targets. My target is: **do I escape?** Your target is the opposite: **do you catch me?***

The stakes can be broken down into what will happen if each side wins. So I lay it out: "If I win, I'm outta here and away across the rooftops and into the night."

You say: "You're going down, boy. When I win, I'm gonna stop you escaping justice, with force if necessary."

So targets are picked and both sides have explicitly said what will happen if they win. Then we both look at our sheets to see which attributes we might have that we can use.

*I have the attributes **slippery character, 2 dice** and **keen sense of self preservation, 1 die**, both of which I think will be useful. I chamber the dice for these attributes, pushing 3 dice forwards. I also decide to even the odds a little and chamber one of my spare dice too, so push 4 dice in total forwards.*

*You have the attributes **six-shooter, 2 dice** and **law-woman, 3 dice**. You chamber the dice for these attributes, pushing 5 dice forwards. You could also add some of your spare dice too, but decide not to.*

We then roll our chambered dice and are on the lookout for a 4, 5 or 6.

I roll 1, 3, 4 and 4. That's 2 hits.

You roll 2, 2, 4, 5, 6. That's 3 hits.

Because you've scored more hits than me, you win the conflict and get your stakes. You get the privilege of picking up the pieces however you like. You say: "You're halfway out of the window when I kick open the door. You try to clamber out but I bound across the room, pull out my six-shooter and shove it between your legs. 'You gonna climb back in here and face me boy, or am I gonna pull this trigger and make you less of a man than I am?'"

Then we each get to pick our aftermath. I grab a spare die, you grab a revelation die.

Now that we've seen what a conflict looks like, let's take a look at it in more detail.

Picking your Targets

The first stage of starting a conflict is to pick your targets. This is a fancy way of saying "setting the stakes", which in turn is a fancy way of saying "what my character is trying to achieve." All you are doing when you pick your targets is laying out what your character is trying to achieve and how he is going about achieving this. You might also want to throw in why you are trying to achieve it and what will happen when you achieve it, but you do not have to. So let's break it down some more.

What goals are you trying to achieve?

This is the big question in any conflict and is at the heart of picking your targets. If you ask only one question, ask what are you trying to achieve in this conflict? Ask yourself what are your character's goals, what is he trying to do or accomplish? What are your goals as a player (which are not necessarily the same as those for your character)? What are you trying to make happen in the story, what story are you trying to tell?

Why are you trying to achieve your goals?

This question might be implicit in the conflict or the character, but it can still be worth considering. Ask yourself what your goals mean to your character and why he is trying to achieve them. What do they mean to you as a player, and why are you trying to achieve them? Why are they important to the story?

How are you going to achieve your goals?

This is the other big question in any conflict and helps define the sphere in which the conflict takes place, and to an extent shapes what the narration of the outcome will look like. Ask yourself what methods is your character using to achieve his goals? What is happening in the story whilst your character tries to achieve his goals? Is your character engaging in a mental, physical or social conflict?

What will happen if you achieve your goals?

Again, this question might be implicit in the conflict, the character or the targets you have already picked, but you might like to sketch it out anyway. Ask yourself what will happen if you are successful, if you achieve your goals? What will this mean to your character and what will they do? What will happen in the story, and how will this impact all the characters? What does this mean to you, the player, and how do you see the story unfolding as a result? Be careful not to go too deeply into this, if at all - after all, the narration might be shaped by other considerations too, such as the targets your opponent picked, which attributes you both end up using, the aftermath of the conflict and so forth.

Here's how you might put this all together in play:

Let's take a look at the simple conflict from the start of the section and talk it through in a little more detail. So, the conflict kicks off with you bursting into the room as I'm clambering out of the window. It's time to pick targets, so we run through the questions above.

What are you trying to achieve? Now faced with

this situation, there are a myriad of different things you might decide you want to achieve. You might decide you want to kill me, or perhaps ransack the room or interrogate the wench who is lying on the bed (didn't we mention her? What's to stop you picking a target no one knew was there?). But instead you decide to stop me from escaping. Note that's a goal, not necessarily a motivation or an action - we'll come to those in a moment.

Why are you trying to achieve your goals? Well, it's a bit early in the story to have discovered that yet, but we've seen enough to know that I'm a wrong 'un and you're trying to bring me to justice. My escape will foil that goal.

How are you going to achieve your goals? You could kill me - that'd stop me from escaping, for sure. You could reason with me too, but you've got something a little more violent in mind, so you've decided to threaten me with your six-shooter.

Finally, what will happen if you achieve your goals? You've pretty much set this one up already. If you succeed, I don't escape. What happens after that will emerge during play.

Now for many conflicts - the one given in the example above too, truth be told - you probably won't need to go through all those steps, but for more complicated or involved conflicts, it might help make things a little clearer, a little more explicit.

Looking at the Bigger Picture

Don't get carried away with the little stuff - save the nitty-gritty details and the blow-by-blow action for the narration. When picking your targets, go for the big, broad, over-arching targets that span an entire conflict, not just a small part of it. This is doubly true for conflicts involving secondary characters - the story should zoom past them as quickly as possible to get to where it's interesting, the conflict between protagonist and antagonist.

For example:

*Snake has escaped out the back of the saloon bar and left his mooks to take care of you. A conflict begins between you and the players controlling the mooks. Don't have your target as: **I want to shoot one of the mooks.** Instead have it as: **I want to take down all the mooks as quickly and cleanly as possible.***

Cutting to the Heart of the Conflict

Don't be afraid to cut to the heart of what the conflict is really about when picking your targets. Sometimes a conflict seems to be about something on the surface, but when you cut deeper you find it is really about something else. On the surface the conflict might be about killing the antagonist, but when you dig a little deeper it might turn out to be about how you kill the antagonist, or whether you have to kill the antagonist at all.

Or perhaps it could be about something a little more tangential to the conflict - are you seen killing the antagonist, does the antagonist die with dignity or does the antagonist tell you where he buried the treasure before he dies.

Continuing the example:

*Although it might seem that the conflict is between you and the mooks, it could really be about you and the antagonist. Instead, your target could be unrelated to the mooks: **can I get past Snake's men before he gets away?***

Inevitability and Conflict

When picking your targets and setting up a conflict, remember the inevitability at work in the story. The protagonist *will* survive to the end, the antagonists *will* die and so on. So with this in mind, don't let your conflicts be about those things. Let your conflicts be about *how* the protagonist survives, what choices he has to make, whether the antagonist goes without a fight or a struggle and so on.

Here's another example:

You're in a conflict with the Preacher, another

one of the antagonists. You've chased him into the church and are trying to kill him for what he has done. There's a conflict so we pick our targets. The most obvious targets to pick would be: **do I catch the Preacher? Or even do I kill him?**

*Yet these targets are redundant. It is already a certainty that you will both catch the Preacher and kill him, so to have these targets as part of a conflict is wasteful. Instead you could pick the target as: **does the Preacher die with dignity, or does he die begging for his life? Or does the Preacher reach the belltower and sound the alarm before he dies? Or, juicier still, does the Preacher repent his sins before he dies?***

Player vs Character Targets

When picking your targets, you do so from the point of view of you as the player, not you as the character. Sometimes these will be one and the same thing, but at other times they will be entirely at odds. You do not have to pick targets that are in your character's favour, or that are targets that he might want. Instead you pick targets that are in line with what you, the player, wants from the story, targets that will lead to an interesting and satisfying story.

For example:

*Your character is pleading with your husband not to go and confront the antagonist, Snake. He is determined to, so you start a conflict. You pick your targets as normal, but instead of picking a target in line with your character's wishes, which will be to keep your husband from confronting Snake, you think it will make for a more interesting story if he does go, so you pick the target: **my husband goes against my wishes and goes to confront Snake.***

Chambering the Dice

The second step of a conflict is to chamber the dice. After you have picked your targets, decided what the conflict is about and how it will take place, then you must decide which of your attributes are relevant to the conflict and how many dice you will be rolling.

Using Character Attributes

Take a look at your sheet and see if any of your attributes are relevant to the conflict. Do any of them represent things that could help your character out and make him more likely to achieve his goals? If so, take the dice loaded into them and push them out in front of you, describing as you do so how the attribute will be of use.

For example:

*I'm in a shootout and am chambering my dice. I look at my sheet and see the attribute: **quick-draw, 2 dice.** I decide that this attribute will help me win the conflict, so push 2 dice forwards, saying as I do so: "I've got the quickest draw in the whole place, so my gun is in my hand and spitting lead before anyone else can react."*

Make sure your attributes fit the situation, and if any of the other players think you are stretching it too far, abide by their opinion and don't use it. Or come up with a better reason why it applies.

That said, be sure to use your attributes creatively, and don't be afraid to call on the emotional power an attribute can bring, or the symbology behind it.

Using Scene Attributes

Next take a look at the antagonist sheet and see if any of the scene attributes are relevant to the conflict. that could help your character out and make him more likely to achieve his goals? If so, take the dice loaded into them and push them out in front of you, describing as you do so how the attribute will be of use.

If more than one player goes for the same scene attribute, then share the dice out as evenly as possible. If there aren't enough dice to go round, the chapter antagonist gets first pick, then the protagonist, then everybody else.

Continuing the previous example:

*I look at the antagonist sheet and see the attribute: **glaring sun, 2 dice**. I decide that this attribute is useful, so go to grab the dice. You think the same thing, so we take 1 die each. I push the die forwards and say: "The midday sun is beating down on us, and I position myself so its dazzling you."*

*There is also the attribute: **dusty, 1 die**. We both decide to make use of this attribute too, but because there is only 1 die there isn't enough to go around. Because I'm the chapter antagonist, I get to grab the die first, pushing it forwards and saying: "There's a lot of dust about today, whipped up by the wind and getting into everything, including your gun."*

Using your Opponent's Attributes

After you have done that, take a glance at your opponent's unused attributes. Is there anything there that you can use against him? Any attributes that you can turn to your advantage instead of his? If so, give him one of your spare dice, grab his loaded dice, and add them to your pile, describing how you use the attribute against him.

This might look like:

*I take a look at your sheet and see the attribute: **quick to anger, 2 dice**. I decide I can use your anger against you, so give you 1 of my spare dice before grabbing the 2 dice loaded into your attribute. I place them in front of me and say: "You're mad as hell already, so I taunt you some more, hoping to make you mad enough that you miss."*

Spare Dice & Vengeance Dice

Finally, throw in any spare dice or vengeance dice you want to use in the conflict. Remember that spare dice and vengeance dice are lost after use.

Rolling Dice

Once everybody has finished chambering the dice, you all get to roll them, all at once. Rolls of 1-3 count as a miss or failure, rolls of 4-6 count as a hit or success.

Count up the number of hits you've rolled and compare the total with your opponent. The player with the most hits is the winner.

If both players roll the same amount it is a tie. The protagonist wins in the case of a tie.

Creating an Attribute During a Conflict

It is perfectly acceptable to create a new attribute whilst you are chambering the dice, so long as no dice have been rolled. Just take some of your spare dice and load them into a new attribute as normal. You can even chamber the dice from this attribute then and there, if it's relevant to the conflict.

Which could work like this:

*I'm taking aim at you and you decide you need the advantage, so you say 'the midday sun is glinting off my father's old sherrif badge, dazzling you. You grab a couple of spare dice and load them into the attribute: **sherriff's badge, 2 dice**. You immediately push them forwards into the conflict.*

Rolling Vengeance Dice

Back at the beginning of the book, remember we said that the protagonist also needed a posse of red dice to use as vengeance dice? Well think of these as a separate posse of dice that he can use as he would any other spare dice during a conflict – they can be rolled alongside attributes and spare dice, and are discarded after the roll.

But rolling vengeance dice is messy business – conflicts in which you use them get nasty, bloody and violent, and if you don't win the conflict it might well be you who gets the hurt.

Conflicts with Secondary Characters

The thrust of the game is the series of conflicts between the protagonist and the antagonists. Secondary characters are great obstacles for making things trickier for the protagonist, but should not dominate the game or become a drain on her resources. For this reason, a secondary

character can always be "dealt with" in a single conflict. Whether this means killing them, talking your way past them or just pushing them into the background of the story is entirely up to you.

A protagonist need never take any more than a single conflict to get past a secondary character in any one chapter - if the secondary character recurs in more than one chapter, then they can get into conflict with the protagonist on more than one occasion, but never more than once per chapter.

surrender.

Snake, Preacher and Azzassin all chamber our dice together, and you and your Deputy do the same. Then we roll our dice together and whichever side wins achieves their stakes.

A conflict with multiple participants who each want their own goal becomes a more complex affair. Each participant picks their targets as normal. Then we step back and consider the conflict as a whole. If you can, split this conflict up into smaller conflicts, each of which can be handled on their own in turn, one after the other.

Conflicts with Multiple Participants

Not all conflicts will be between two people, or even two evenly matched sides. Sometimes a conflict will have multiple participants, each with their own stakes.

This works like this:

The simplest way to handle a conflict with multiple participants is to divide the conflict into two sides, each with their own shared targets and opposed goals. All the characters on both sides get to chamber their dice collectively, and then each side rolls their chambered dice together. Whichever side scores the most hits wins.

So we're engaged in a gunfight in the street, but Azzassin is on the rooftop above us and is trying to shoot you with his rifle. Your Deputy is trying to sneak up on him and club him round the back of the head. The easiest way to handle this conflict is to pair up, so Azzassin and the Deputy have a conflict over who wins the tussle on the rooftop, and me and you have our gunfight as normal. If you wanted to go a stage further, the winner of the tussle on the rooftop could weigh in on one side of our gunfight, chambering dice towards the same goal, as described above.

This works like this:

I'm engaged in a gunfight on one side of the street alongside Preacher and Azzassin. You're on the opposite side of the street shooting back at me, with your deputy, played in this scene by Rob.

Or you can have all participants pick their targets, chamber their dice and roll at the same time, and the winner gets to pick up the pieces whilst his opponents do not.

This works like this:

We can easily divide into two sides, each of whom wants the same thing. Snake, Preacher and Azzassin all want to get you to keep your heads down long enough so that we can escape, whilst you and your Deputy want to force us to

Say we wanted to resolve the above conflict as one seamless affair; we could each pick our targets and roll our dice individually. The winner would then get to pick up the pieces for the whole

conflict. So, in the conflict above, say that Rob, playing the Deputy, wins. Not only could Rob narrate clubbing Azzassin unconscious, as per his target, but he could also describe how the conflict in the street ended too, in this case with you forcing my surrender with rifle cover from your Deputy.

Picking up the Pieces

Once a conflict has been won, the winner gets to say what happens, describing the outcome. This is called picking up the pieces. The winner can narrate the outcome however he likes, up to a point – the outcome must be within the scope of the conflict, and must be in line with the stakes set before the conflict.

Sometimes the outcome of a conflict will be wide ranging in scope, covering hours or days of time. Other times, especially in the midst of a gritty, hard-hitting combat, the outcome will be very tightly focused, revolving around little more than whether a blow hits or not.

You can tie whatever aftermaths were taken into the narration too.

This might work something like this:

*You've just won a conflict in which you were trying to shoot me in the leg to stop me escaping. As a conflict aftermath you've opted to give me the attribute: **crippled, 1 die**.*

So you might narrate it like this: "You scramble out of the window to get away from me, fleeing across the rooftops. I don't give chase. Instead I pull my six-shooter, cock it and take aim. BLAM! Your knee explodes as I hit it from behind with a single bullet. You go down, skidding towards the edge of the roof, crippled and helpless. I clamber out and walk over to where you're laid, and cock the gun again."

Narration and Vengeance Dice

Normally the specifics of picking up the pieces are left up to the winner, whose only constraints are the stakes and scope of the conflict itself. However, if a vengeance dice has been rolled as part of the conflict, then the narration of the outcome **must** include violence, pain, injury or death in some capacity, to someone in the scene (but not necessarily the conflict - innocent bystanders are fair game). This violence should relate to the choices made by the protagonist, good or ill. As usual, the winner of the conflict gets to narrate this as he sees fit.

[sidebar] Violence Motifs

Something that emerged organically through play during the playtesting of Six Bullets for Vengeance was the idea of a violence motif attached to the use of vengeance dice. That is, a common image or theme that occurs during the narrative whenever a vengeance die is used in a conflict. This could be anything from a dramatic splatter of blood to the chopping off of an arm.

The important thing to remember with a violence motif is not to force it – the best motifs emerged organically through play, they weren't forced on the game from the outset.

Aftermaths

In the aftermath of a conflict there are two rewards up for grabs. Both winner and loser get to pick one of the following:

- Take a die from the reward posse.
- Take a revelation die.

If there are no dice left in the reward posse then both the winner and loser must choose to take a revelation die.

If you chose to take a die from the reward posse you **must** do one of the following with it:

- Create a new attribute and load the die into it.
- Create a new attribute for the scene and load the die into it.
- Create a new attribute for the loser and load the die into it.

add a revelation to the map, but choose to save it for later.

In the case of a conflict with multiple participants, each side gets one aftermath between them.

If you chose to take a revelation die you **can** do the following with it:

- Spend a revelation die to create a new revelation.
- Or you can save it for later.

Here's an example of how this works:

You've just won the conflict so you get to choose which of the aftermaths you want for yourself. You choose to take a die from the reward posse, and whilst you could use it yourself, you decide it'd be more fitting to use it against me. So you create a new attribute for me and load in the die:
crippled, 1 die

But I get an aftermath too. I decide to take a revelation die this time, but I could have taken a die if I'd wanted to. I can spend it immediately to

Continuing Conflicts

Sometimes a conflict will conclude but the outcome will remain ambiguous, or the same stakes will still be up for grabs. This is often the case during a combat situation between a protagonist and an antagonist, where one or more of the participants remain standing. This is fine and, so long as you all agree, you can set up another conflict with the same stakes.

If one of you disagrees and thinks the conflict is resolved, then it is. Once a conflict is resolved, it's over. Don't dwell on the outcome or endlessly return to the same conflict over and over again.

Remember that this can never happen to a conflict involving secondary characters - a secondary character must be dealt with, one way or another, in the course of a single conflict.

Six: Claiming the Reward, or the revelation map

Revelations

Over the course of the game the story is slowly unfurled. At the start of the game, the reason for the protagonist seeking revenge is utterly unknown. By the end of the game, the answers have all been revealed.

The story is revealed through **revelations**. A revelation is a statement about the protagonist, an antagonist, or something they have done.

The most satisfying revelations are those that connect together existing elements of the story, tying up loose ends. But revelations do not have to connect to other revelations – sometimes the best revelations introduce entirely new elements or twists into the plot of the story.

[sidebar] Pieces of the Puzzle

Revelations are the big reveals of the story, the unfolding mystery and the pieces of the puzzle. Good revelations should catch everyone out, making everyone go "now I see!" There should be a big click as things suddenly fall into place, as the revelation turns out to be the missing piece of the puzzle that suddenly makes everything make sense. Of course, not every revelation can be the final piece - sometimes revelations have to be non sequiturs and unanswered questions, just so someone else can fill in the gaps later. They are both the big questions and the answers.

Without revelations, players are stuck introducing small details as the game unfolds. With revelations they can go for the big whammy.

[sidebar] Why Can't I Just Narrate a Revelation?

An interesting question that often comes up is:

why do I have to spend a revelation dice to narrate a revelation? The answer I normally give is to make the narration of a revelation a reward for players who get involved in conflicts. Therefore the ability to add a revelation to the story is directly tied to a player's involvement, as the only way to gain a revelation dice is to get stuck in to the action.

It also acts as a means to control the flow of the revelations, to stop one person dominating the narration of revelations and to prevent the protagonist's story from being totally derailed by the combined revelations of the antagonists.

The Revelation Map

Unlike a character attribute, you do not own any revelations. Instead they are written on a sheet of paper in the centre of the table called the **revelation map**.

Although you can write other things on the revelation map as well, such as character names, locations and so on, which can then be connected to revelations, you should try not to clutter it up too much with notes. Try to use the antagonist sheet for any extraneous scribbles.

Creating a New Revelation

A revelation can only be created by spending a revelation die. If you really like the revelation you can spend more than one revelation die, or your friends can chip in with some of their own too. Revelation dice are only gained by taking part in conflicts.

To declare a new revelation spend a revelation die, briefly describe the revelation, how it connects with the other revelations and what relevance it has to the story. Write it down on the revelation map.

discussed it in a bit more detail.

Before you finish, quickly check the revelation map and see if it connects to any other revelations. If it does, draw a line between them.

Here's what it might look like in play:

I have just won a conflict against you and you're lying beaten and bruised on the floor. I say: "I knew you took after your father. All he could do was lie there whilst I killed your mother."

Then I spend one of my revelation dice and write onto the revelation map: I killed your mother whilst your father watched.

Now before I finish, I quickly check the revelation map and see if it connects to any others. In this case, we also have your father was a coward as a previous revelation. This can be connected to the new revelation, so a line is drawn between the two.

So we end up with: your father was a coward & I killed your mother whilst your father watched

Once you have spent the revelation dice, it goes back into your posse as a spare dice.

Disputing a Revelation

Sometimes someone will create a revelation that you don't think fits or just plain don't like. If you have revelation dice of your own, you can dispute the revelation.

Before doing so, state that you are unhappy with the revelation and discuss it a little. It is far better to work alongside the other players and their revelations than to flat out oppose their creative input. Sometimes you might not see how a revelation can fit into the story until you have

But, if you remain unhappy with the revelation, you can dispute it.

To do so you spend a revelation die of your own (this does not go back into your scene posse. You can spend more than one if you want to, and the other players can help out with their own dice too. If you spend at least as many revelation dice as the other player did, the revelation is not added.

But, because creativity is far better than criticism, if you dispute a revelation you must suggest a related revelation of your own.

Of course that can be counter-disputed and so on, and the whole process continues until someone runs out of revelation dice or everyone is satisfied.

This would look a bit like this:

Following on from the previous example, I have just spent a revelation dice and added the revelation: I killed your mother whilst your father watched.

Say you disagree with the revelation – you might have a different idea about what happened. So you say: "Hold up a minute, I'm not keen on that revelation. It doesn't quite fit in to how I see the story going."

Then you spend at least as many revelation dice as I spent, which in this case is 1, to dispute the revelation. Then you have to propose a revelation of your own to replace it, so you suggest: "What if, instead of you having killed my mother whilst my father watched, you made my father do it? I don't like the idea of him being so passive."

And we all draw in our breath sharply and smile wickedly, because your idea is better than mine. But if I didn't like it, I could spend another revelation die to keep my original idea. But I do, so instead of my revelation I write yours down: I forced your father to kill your mother.

Rewards

As well as getting rewarded for taking part in conflicts with conflict aftermaths, players are also rewarded by coming up with great story twists and revelations, narrating cool actions and outcomes and generally contributing to the fun around the table.

These rewards take the form of bonus dice taken from the reward posse. The reward posse is the posse of dice made up of any spare dice spent or lost as the game goes on.

Whenever a player does something cool or worthy of reward, **another player** may give him a **reward die**, which he then adds to his own dice posse. You don't get to decide whether you're worthy of a reward die – other people decide for you.

The goal of the reward posse is to get dice flowing around the table, to reward people for being fun and creative. Don't be a tight ass with reward dice, and don't sweat it if you run out because you're handing dice out like candy – that means that the fun is happening and everyone is engaging with the game.

But you shouldn't run out too often, because that means people are hoarding their dice. Don't hoard your dice – spend them and keep the game flowing.

The reward posse looks a bit like this in action:

At the start of the scene there aren't any dice in the reward posse – all the dice are currently in dice posses and the scene posse. But as the scene goes on, a couple of players use a few of their spare dice in conflicts, and they go straight into the reward posse. So there are now 3 dice in the reward posse.

A bit later Geoff does something cool. Rob leans across the table and flicks one of the reward die towards him. Geoff adds the die into his posse of dice.

Seven: Bang, Bang, Bang

Epilogue

The game begins at the end, with the epilogue. If *Six Bullets for Vengeance* was a movie, the epilogue would be the very final scene, the closing frames before the credits roll. The final antagonist might very well die in the epilogue, or he might be dead before it begins. So too might the protagonist.

The purpose of the epilogue is to provide a starting point for the game, a common event that each of the following chapters eventually lead to. It is not there to be the climax of the game - it is a starting point, not an end.

Starting with a Bang

The epilogue is the very first scene of the game and the very final scene of the story. It needs to start in media res, right in the heart of the action. Don't worry about what is happening or why it's happening - just know that what is happening is cool, and worry about the rest later. Throw the protagonist and antagonist into conflict right from the start of the epilogue, begin the game with a bang and then fade to black.

Pose Questions, Not Answers

Although it might be tempting when playing through the epilogue to lay out the story for the whole game, a lot of the fun of *Six Bullets for Vengeance* comes from letting the story evolve naturally through play. So don't start out trying to explain things, or worrying what everything might mean - just leap in there with a juicy setup, some unexplained events and a mystery or two and rely on the rest to become clear as the game progresses. Don't have the antagonist monologue about what he has done and why, have him throw in some vague statements and let them be incorporated or dismissed as the story unfolds.

[sidebar] Spreading the Payoff

As written, the "payoff" for Six Bullets for Vengeance is split between the epilogue and the

prologue, the two major conflicts that bookend the game. Contrary to storytelling convention, the end of the story is not the climax, the start of it is. At the start of the game the end of the story is already written, it's the journey there that's yet to unfold. Whilst this works perfectly well, you might like to try spreading the payoff throughout the game. Instead of ending the story right at the start, end the epilogue on a cliffhanger and keep returning to it as the game progresses, only wrapping it up right at the end.

Dice, Conflicts and the Epilogue

The epilogue should be punchy and quick, whetting the appetite for the story to come and leaving plenty of questions unanswered. There shouldn't be much need for dice in the epilogue, but if there is consider it a part of chapter six - players use the same dice poses for the epilogue as they will do in chapter six. If there's any more than one or two quick conflicts, you're taking too long over the epilogue - bring it to a climax and skip back in time to the start of chapter six.

[sidebar] Epilogue starters - some ready-made epilogue situations.

[sidebar] Going in Blind, part 2

If you've decided to leap into the game completely blind, you won't know who is the protagonist until the end of the epilogue (see page 26). Pick two players, either randomly or some other way. One of them gets to describe the setting of the epilogue, the other gets to add a detail or two. Both players get to narrate their characters entry into the scene and frame the final conflict. Dice are then rolled, and whoever wins gets to narrate the outcome as normal. Last man standing gets to be the protagonist.

Starting a New Chapter

Starting Chapter Six

Chapter six is subtly different from the other chapters, because it is connected to the epilogue. The chapter antagonist for chapter six keeps the scene posse he had in the epilogue, and he may share these out as normal. Similarly the protagonist keeps the vengeance dice they had in the epilogue - vengeance dice do not refresh until the start of chapter five. Chapter six does not have a natural ending - it ends at the point where the epilogue begins.

The Scene Posse

At the start of a new chapter, the chapter antagonist takes 7 dice to create a **scene posse**. He can split his scene posse up between attributes for himself, attributes for the scene, giving them to the other players to use as they see fit. Any dice that aren't spent are left in the scene posse, and are fair game for any antagonist to use.

The Antagonist Sheet

The antagonist sheet is used to keep track of what's going on in each chapter; who's in it, where's it set and what's yet to happen in the story (but has already happened in the game). All of the information relating to a chapter should go on the same sheet, so it's all in one place for everyone to see, including attributes related to the antagonists and any secondary characters.

Scene Attributes

The chapter antagonist can use dice from the scene posse to create attributes for the scene. He can either do this at the start, as he describes the scene, or he (or the other players) can do so as the game progresses. It's often a good idea to leave a few dice in the scene posse for this purpose. As you create scene attributes, add them to the relevant section of the antagonist sheet.

Secondary Characters

During a chapter both the antagonist and protagonist players play a central role, but that's not to say that the other players can't get involved too. They get to play the supporting roles in the

chapter, the secondary characters. At the start of a new chapter the chapter antagonist can hand out dice from the scene posse to the other players so that they can get involved in conflicts themselves. The chapter antagonist can either give them a specific role to play, if he has one in mind, or leave it up to the player to get involved when they have a good idea or see an opening for a secondary character - they can just grab dice from the scene posse when they want.

Setting up a Scene

A chapter might comprise one scene, or it might comprise several. Both can work just as well, so just go with what feels right. The chapter antagonist usually starts off the scenes within a chapter, but don't let that restrict you - if one of the other players has an idea too, that's just as good! Regardless of who has the idea for the scene, scenes are started in much the same way.

First up, the chapter antagonist sets the scene. He states where the scene is set, describing the location and setting in some detail. He can also describe where the antagonists are and any secondary characters that are present. The chapter antagonist divides the scene posse up at this time, creating scene attributes or handing out dice to secondary characters as he describes them as part of the scene.

Then, go round the other antagonist players one by one. In turn, each gets to add a detail to the scene, which could be anything from a secondary character to a little detail of the location.

Once all the antagonists have had a chance to add detail to the scene, the protagonist gets to describe where she is in the scene - if she is in it at all.

After everyone had had their say, the scene is all set and ready to go, the scene can start. Either the protagonist begins the scene by narrating her entrance, at which point the antagonists react to his arrival; or the antagonists begin by narrating their actions prior to the protagonist entering, before turning to the protagonist to react to their actions and narrate her arrival.

Here is an example of setting up a scene:

*It's my chapter so I get to set the scene up. I start the narration by saying "It's the saloon bar, after closing time. It's dark and smoke still drifts across the bar from cigar butts. I'm sitting in the corner, feet up on the table, gun in my lap. There's a waitress here too, laughing at my jokes and flirting with me. I have a mook or two as well, probably with their own wenches." We decide that Rob will play my mooks, and Geoff will play my wench. I give them of the scene dice each to play with. I load a dice into the scene attribute: **dark, 1 dice**. We then go round the table, each player adding a detail.*

*Rob adds that the barman is cowering behind the bar, amidst shattered glass. Rob uses his dice to add the scene attribute: **shattered glass, 1 dice**. Geoff says that the moon is high in the sky, occasionally emerging from behind clouds to illuminate the scene. Geoff keeps his dice to use for his wench.*

With the scene set, we turn to you to introduce the protagonist, so you say: "Outside there is the whinnying of a horse followed by the slow crunching of boots on dirt. The moon goes behind a cloud and the footsteps crunch on glass. The moon reappears, and I'm standing in the doorway. 'It's time Snake.'

Narration within a Chapter

There are no real rights and wrongs as to who can narrate what during the course of play, which can take some getting used to. Any player can narrate the story in a direction of their choosing, describing the actions of the characters as they see fit. Players nominally have control of one or more characters at any given time, and most of the time their narration will revolve around these characters.

As a rough guideline, narration about the setting or antagonist defaults to the chapter antagonist, whilst narration about the protagonist defaults to the protagonist's player. If at any point a player doesn't like where the narration is heading, they can call for a conflict, with the winner getting to narrate the outcome as he wishes.

Narration within a chapter should play out as a back and forth between the protagonist and chapter antagonist, with each narrating their actions and the other reacting in turn. As you do this, conflicts will naturally emerge and opportunities for revelations will arise.

The players should not hold back - right from the off, the protagonist should be going for the antagonist's throat, either metaphorically or physically! And the antagonist shouldn't try to run away from conflict either, but should be trying to cause as much pain and misery and suffering for the protagonist as he possibly can.

Narrative Rights and Wrongs

Although we said a moment ago that there are no real rights and wrongs, there is a certain etiquette to narration within Six Bullets. You have a great deal more power over the story than you would in many games, getting to describe not only your character's actions but also the actions of the other characters, the outcome of conflicts and the mysteries that unfold over the course of the story. Equally, you have a great deal more responsibility to the story - and the other players.

Don't shoot down other players' ideas, even if they contradict your own vision of the story. Similarly, when bringing in ideas of your own, don't ride roughshod over what has gone before - bring in ideas that build on the story so far and that incorporate other players' ideas. You're telling a story together, not alone.

Just as much as their ideas, respect the other players' characters. Don't shy away from including them in your narration and hitting them with revelations, but respect how they have been portrayed already and don't try to spoil another player's fun by messing with their character.

Narrative Tricks

Because the story in *Six Bullets for Vengeance* unfolds from the end, players are in the position of knowing what will happen later on in the story already. This allows players to play tricks with the narration. They might foreshadow in their

actions things that will happen in a later chapter, they might introduce a mysterious object, confident that it will make sense earlier in the story, or explain the origin of something that crops up later on, and so on.

Ending a Chapter

The end of a chapter might be self-evident - the antagonist lies dead in the sand, the next step on the protagonist's path is clearly set up and the mystery surrounding the story is one piece closer to completion. You can draw the line neatly here, closing the curtains on the chapter and moving on to the next chapter.

Sometimes the end of a chapter won't be as clear cut as all that. You might want a bit more moral ambiguity in the actions of the protagonist, or decide to leave it deliberately unexplained until later. The scene might be heading towards one of the topics you decided were off-limits. Or you might just decide it's more dramatically appropriate to end the chapter prematurely, drawing the curtains closed on the act of vengeance and having it take place off screen. This can be a very effective way of handling the story indeed, when used sparingly.

If there's ever a dispute over when to end a chapter, defer to the chapter antagonist.

However you decide to end a chapter, make sure that the end of the chapter makes sense (eventually, if not right away) and remains consistent with what has happened so far. The end of a chapter doesn't have to lead straight into the next chapter, but it should be clear from the ending and the preceding events the direction the story will eventually take. The leap from chapter to chapter should make sense in hindsight.

Between Chapters

The time between ending a chapter and starting the next one is an ideal opportunity to take a break from the game. Grab some more refreshments, sit back, relax and chat about the

game so far. What has worked? What hasn't?

It's always worth recapping the game at this stage, so take a look at the revelation map and the antagonist sheet and remind yourself what has happened so far. Identify any loose threads and revelations that can be brought into the game in the next chapter, and see if you can foreshadow or setup the events from the final chapters.

Before you launch into the next chapter, remind yourselves which antagonists are currently alive, which secondary characters could feature in this chapter and what has to happen before the game reaches the prologue.

When you're ready, let the next chapter antagonist step up and begin the next chapter!

Bookkeeping between Chapters

There's just a little bit of bookkeeping that needs to happen between chapters - the antagonists all discard any spare dice they might have, only keeping dice currently loaded into attributes. The protagonist refreshes his vengeance dice, taking a number equal to which chapter it is. Take a look at the antagonist sheet too and note any scene attributes or secondary characters who might make an appearance in the next chapter - keep them in mind and leave the dice in place. Discard any others - you can always bring them in again later if you need to.

The Next Chapter

The next chapter starts in exactly the same way as the previous chapter, except it's set a little earlier in the story, and one more antagonist will be still alive (and possibly present) at the start. Play hands to the next chapter antagonist, who sets the first scene up and divvies up the scene posse as normal.

Play continues in this fashion, chapter by chapter, at each stage the story unfolding, the revelations mounting and the pieces of the puzzle slowly falling into place. Early in the game - in chapters five and six - there will be a lot that doesn't make sense. But as the game progresses, the direction the story is heading should start to become

clearer, until by the end there's no question (even if there are still a few surprises left to be had) of how it all began.

The Prologue

The final scene of the game is the very start of the story. Continuing the movie analogy we started with the epilogue, the prologue is the bit of the movie before the titles roll, the teaser, if you like. Unlike the epilogue, it needn't start in media res and should be fairly self-contained.

There can be a fair amount of disconnect between the prologue and the chapters that follow. By the point you reach the prologue, the rest of the story has already unfolded - all that needs to be shown is how it all began, what life was like for the protagonist and what actions set her on the path to vengeance. It's best to keep it shorter than a regular chapter, but it can be longer and more involved than the epilogue.

Unlike in the preceding chapters, the protagonist sets the scene for the prologue, acting as the chapter antagonist would. She gets to use any of her attributes that make sense at this point in the story, but doesn't get any vengeance dice. A prologue will rarely need recourse for dice or conflicts, however, and works best as a narration amongst the players, informed by what has already transpired in the game.

All the characters - both the antagonists and the protagonist - should feature in some respect, or at least be alluded to off screen. By the end of the prologue there should be no ambiguity about what the protagonist will do, or that any of the antagonists are involved. They might not be guilty in our eyes, but in the mind of the protagonist there should be no doubt at all what must happen and who must pay.