Arc Driver

Created by *Tayruh*. Copyright July 31, 2022.

Inspired by *Motif Story Engine* by Peter Casey, *Calypso* by Tam H. Dramatic Moves table borrowed from *Calypso*.

Oracle

Answering an oracle question requires rolling one or more d6's. Each die may add a modifier from -3 to +3 to adjust its probability to fit the story context.

The first die is the answer. **1-2: No • 3: Maybe not • 4: Maybe so • 5-6: Yes.** If the question requires a definitive Yes or No, count 3 and 4 as a straight No and Yes.
You may also use qualified answers. **1: No, and • 2: No • 3: No, but • 4: Yes, but • 5: Yes • 6: Yes, and.**

Each additional die adds context by gauging the strength of an element on a scale of 1 to 6, usually framed as "how ___ is it?" Some examples would be: dangerous, favorable, expensive, costly, dramatic, etc.

The second die usually determines how strong of a Yes or No the answer is on a scale of 1 to 6, but you may opt to use a different context instead. In fact, you may choose to use context questions for all dice, which will allow you to ask complex questions that are not reliant upon a Yes or No answer, such as how a character feels about a topic.

Example: If you ask "Is the antagonist strong? And how dangerous are they?" and roll a 3, 4, and 5, I would interpret that as the antagonist not being very strong but dangerously crafty. This is because a 3 on the first die (answer) and 4 on the second die (answer strength) would result in an answer like "most likely not," but a 5 on the third die (danger strength) means that they are still really dangerous.

Random Events

When using two or more dice for an Oracle question, a random event will trigger when the first two dice match and are odd. When that happens, either roll on the Motifs Table or the Dramatic Moves table to determine the event.

Open Questions

Motifs Table

The purpose of this table is to reinforce the theme by giving oracle results themed to your game. As such, this table should be your first stop when answering questions that require inspiration.

As you are playing, any ideas, characters, scenes, environments, etc that are well representative of your theme should be added to your Motifs Table. How you lay out your table is up to you; just try to make it something easy to roll on.

When listing a Motif, try to describe it using a phrase with a bit of ambiguity rather than a specific name. This allows you to draw out multiple forms of contextual information, since the answer can be taken literally, metaphorically, or by breaking it down into individual verbs and nouns.

As an example:

1. a curious girl, chasing trouble, and trapped in a dream from which she can't escape
2. the anxious rabbit, wishing to help but bound by servitude
3. a toothy grin floats in the air; it speaks in riddles and knows your secrets
4. a garden of white roses; its true nature hidden behind a crimson mask

Word Tables

If the Motif Table results fail to answer your questions, you can always fall back on the Word Tables for added context.

- Verb
    1. Abuse • Assist • Atone • Attack • Attract • Control
    2. Create • Deceive • Decrease • Entertain • Fail • Find
    3. Harm • Heal • Increase • Inform • Obscure • Obstruct
    4. Oppose • Preserve • Punish • Pursue • Return • Recruit
    5. Refuse • Resolve • Restore • Reward • Risk • Seize
    6. Summon • Threaten • Transform • Travel • Triumph • Worship

- Noun
    1. Aid • Ally • Arrival • Art • Authority • Balance
    2. Community • Conflict • Crime • Death • Deceit • Devotion
    3. Enemy • Emotion • Failure • Goal • Happiness • Honesty
    4. Idea • Innocence • Knowledge • Life • Mystery • Pact
    5. Past • Power • Presence • Pride • Progress • Relationship
    6. Resources • Rumors • Secret • Strategy • Territory • Travel

- Adverb
    1. Anxiously • Awkwardly • Bravely • Cautiously • Carelessly • Cheerfully
    2. Coolly • Curiously • Dangerously • Defiantly • Delightfully • Efficiently
    3. Excitedly • Fearfully • Foolishly • Generously • Gracefully • Gratefully
    4. Hastily • Helpfully • Innocently • Intensely • Irritatingly • Lazily
    5. Lovingly • Mechanically • Miserably • Mockingly • Mysteriously • Playfully
    6. Powerfully • Quietly • Rudely • Slowly • Threateningly • Wildly

- Adjective
    1. Amusing • Ancient • Altered • Cold • Confusing • Condemning
    2. Complex • Dangerous • Disappointing • Dependable • Disgusting • Failed
    3. Familiar • Harsh • Impressive • Juvenile • Lethal • Lonely
    4. Mature • Odd • Painful • Pleasing • Restored • Ruined
    5. Serious • Strong • Surprising • Suspicious • Tempting • Temporary
    6. Transforming • Thriving • Unique • Unreliable • Weak • Warm

Question Recipes

The following are simple recipes for answering common questions using the Word Tables.

- Standard 5W+H questions:
    - *Who, Where:* 1-3: Adverb Adjective, 4-6: Adjective Noun
    - *What, When, Why:* 1-3: Adjective Noun, 4-6: Noun of Noun
    - *How:* 1-3: Verb Noun, 4-6: Noun of Noun

- *Action/Event:* Verb Noun

- *Topic/Theme:* Noun of Noun

- NPCs:
    - *Identity:* 1-3: one Noun, 4-6: two Nouns
        - Their archetype in the story. (Witch, Soldier, Shopkeeper, etc). Feel free to reinterpret the Nouns to describe an archetype that makes sense (ie. "Authority" could be "Police Officer" or "Secret" as "Hacker").
    - *Descriptor:* 1-3: one Adjective, 4-6: two Adjectives
        - Who they are at a glance. This is their defining character trait.
    - *Traits:* three Adjectives.
        - These are more traits, but they're subtle and used to add depth to the character.
    - *Goal:* three Verb Noun combinations
        - These are the goals which the character would like to accomplish. They're not necessarily written in stone, but they're what the character is generally aiming for, even if it's not something that they may expect to see to the end. Their decisions will be directly affected by these.

Multiple Choice

Begin by rating each option on a scale of 1 to 3 in relation to its likelihood or your preference. Next you add up the totals in succession. For example, if option A is 3, option B is 1, and option C is 2, then that would result in 1-3: option A, 4: option B, 5-6: option C. Finally, roll against them to determine the winning option. If option list doesn't map exactly to a die size, just pick the next one up and reroll when it's beyond the highest number.

Dramatic Moves

- 1-3
  1. Declare a new danger or inflict harm as promised.
  2. Use someone's character aspects against them.
  3. Put someone in a compromising or high-stakes position.
  4. Bring in someone interesting with an agenda.
  5. Reveal an unwelcome truth.
  6. Offer a hard bargain or an ugly choice.
- 4-6
  1. Turn someone's action back on them.
  2. Show a drawback to or new facet of your gear or abilities.
  3. Expose a weakness or a past mistake's consequences.
  4. Take something or someone away, or threaten to.
  5. Show signs of something bad happening off-screen.
  6. Tempt or provoke a reaction.

Story Framework

This is the basic framework for a standard three-act story condensed into Story Steps. Because stories are fractal, these Story Steps can help shape a scene, an event, an arc, or an entire campaign using the same structure and methods.

It is not required to strictly adhere to the structure step by step as you play, nor is it recommended to trigger each Story Step back to back. Instead, let your story proceed naturally until it hits a lull, then take a look back over your story so far and determine which Story Step objectives have already been completed, then create a random event using a Dramatic Move, a Motif, or the Word Tables as indicated in the Story Step instructions.

- **Conflict:**
  - *Action, Event, or Trait:* 1-2: Motif, 3-4: Verb Noun, 5: Adjective Noun, 6: Adverb Adjective
  - *Objective:*
    - Establish how the Hero or their environment deviates from the norm to create a looming threat that promises to disrupt the Hero's life if left neglected.

- **Catalyst:**
  - *Event:* 1-2: Dramatic Move, 3-4: Motif, 5: Adjective Noun, 6: Noun of Noun
  - *Objective:*
    - Define a surprising event related to the Conflict—whether by cause or effect—that prevents the Hero from returning to life as usual and forces them to respond.
    - If the Hero does not yet have a concrete Goal, you must give them one now.

- **Antagonist:**
  - *Person or Thing:* 1-2: Motif, 3-4: Adjective Noun, 5: Adverb Adjective, 6: Noun of Noun
  - *Objective:*
    - Define a person or thing that prevents the Hero from obtaining their Goal.
    - An ideal Antagonist is after the same Goal for a different reason and/or is uniquely qualified to strike hardest at the Hero's weaknesses.

- **Revelation:**
  - *Event or Information:* 1-2: Dramatic Move, 3-4: Motif, 5: Adjective Noun, 6: Noun of Noun
  - *Objective:*
    - After the Hero has spent a generous amount of time making progress toward their Goal, define an event or information that reveals to the character just how out of their depth that they really are and how they are not yet ready to face the Antagonist on even footing.
    - The Revelation should be so disruptive to the Hero's Goal that the only way forward is to modify or replace the existing Goal.
    - The impact of the Revelation is so effective that Oracle rolls have a +2 or -2 modifier in favor of the Antagonist added to the answer die until the next Story Step.

- **Resolve:**
  - *Event:* 1-2: Dramatic Move, 3-4: Motif, 5: Verb Noun, 6: Noun of Noun
  - *Objective:*
    - After the Hero has taken a series of beatings, define an event which causes the Hero to hit rock bottom and nearly die or become broken, or perhaps someone important to them does die or becomes broken.
    - This event hardens a resolve in the Hero so great that Oracle rolls now have a +1 or -1 modifier added to the answer die in favor of the Hero lasting until the next Story Step!

- **Confrontation:**
  - *Event, Action, or Topic:* 1: Dramatic Move, 2: Motif, 3: Verb Noun, 4: Adverb Adjective, 5: Adjective Noun, 6: Noun of Noun
  - *Objective:*
    - Once the Hero has placed themselves in position to face off against the Antagonist to clear the path to their Goal, define an event, action, or stake that describes how the Hero's is taking the battle to them.
    - In this situation, Dramatic Moves and events are to the detriment of the Antagonist, not the Hero. The topic is what is at stake for either the Antagonist, or both the Hero and the Antagonist, and is what forces them to take you seriously.

- **Resolution:**
  - *Event, Information, or Thing:* 1-2: Motif, 3: Verb Noun, 4: 5: Adjective Noun, 6: Noun of Noun
  - *Objective:*
    - Having overcome the Antagonist, the path to your Goal is clear and you obtain it easily. What the Hero gets is never exactly as expected, so define how an event, information, or thing alters the results of the Goal in a positive or negative way, depending on the context of the story.
    - To reflect how relieving obtaining your goal is, Oracle rolls will have a +1 or -1 modifier added to the answer die in favor of the Hero throughout the resolution of this story.
    - However, story resolutions work on a karmic basis. If the Hero was the direct cause of physical or emotional harm to allies through the actions taken to overcome the Antagonist, Oracle rolls will instead have a -2 or +2 modifier added to the answer die against the favor of the Hero.