**SUMMARY:**

The narrative is about the player, a gang member among countless thousands in the city streets, who gets pulled from a simple but tough life into a deeper web of intrigue as the gang begins to be influenced by outside forces.

**VIGNETTES:**

1. Introduction – Self-explanatory. Sets up the player character and introduces the player to the world around them.
2. Starting mission – A normal, ordinary task to fulfil for the gang to get the player acquainted with the setting and how things are going to work. The calm before the storm.
3. Second mission – A more difficult task for the gang, this one likely linked to the overall plot and not merely just a way to get situated.
4. Crisis – Something goes wrong. We’ve got the player comfortable with himself and the world through the first two missions, now we’re going to turn things upside down. Introduce the main (visible) antagonist in this arc.
5. The plot thickens – the situation gets worse somehow, ending in a major twist- but also a breakthrough in the story.
6. Increasing pressure – The breakthrough is followed, successfully, giving the player a clear idea of what they’re trying to achieve and what they need to, potentially at a cost. But pressure mounts from outside sources, either their enemy or a third party, keeping tensions rising.
7. Getting the upper hand – In this vignette, the player scores a major victory, giving their struggle against their opponent a clear winner for now, bringing them up to the final confrontation.
8. Final confrontation – One last confrontation, in which the antagonist is defeated- potentially at a cost. The story is effectively, over.
9. Epilogue – A vignette dedicated to the epilogue. Pretty straightforward.

This list of vignettes is very vague and doesn’t mention anything specific because it merely establishes the pacing of the narrative. We’ll go into more detail later.

Now is a good time to bring up cause and effect. Here’s how the structure of the story works: The first three missions up to and including the crisis exist primarily to establish the statistics of the player. The biggest timeskips are here, and this is also where the player has the most resources. There aren’t many alternate routes to go through at this point. The actions they take with the people they are affiliated with will determine the characters attitude later on in the story, and that’s important to note. The final four “missions” are where the big choices get made. That’s where there’ll be a lot of deviation and room for alternate endings. Let’s figure that out after characters.

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE:**

1. Partner in crime
2. Main antagonist (hidden)
3. Main antagonist (public)
4. Support character (Church)
5. Support character (Laity)

**GLOBAL VARIABLES:**

THEORY ON VARIABLES:

Variables and statistics are a bitch and a half to deal with and possibly the most difficult aspect of a text adventure. To avoid the plague of endless branching, they are to some extent necessary. But it is important to note that too many creates a sense of meaninglessness and inability to control the story.

To properly implement statistics, we will need to implement no more than truly necessary, with clear differences between them. I believe that to make them feel truly relevant, they will need to be checked quite frequently- different statistics should open up entirely different options in the story. Yet I also believe that that difficulty should be avoided. There should always be an alternative route, and the game should not introduce scaling difficulty. Rather, I believe that theory should follow like this:

A choice comes up. Multiple ways to deal with it are proposed. It should not be guaranteed that one of the choices will use a stat that the player has high levels in, but there should still be multiple options to pick from. The options should not require a high level in that skill to succeed, but higher levels should result in better outcomes. For example: on a scale of skills being 0-100, less than 30 makes it impossible to succeed, 30-49 is a success with a catch, 50-69 is a normal success, 70-89 is a success with a boon, and 90-100 is an overwhelming success. Focusing on degrees of success rather than a simple binary failure or success means that when the player is forced to choose between skill tests for skills they have few points in, they are rarely doomed to complete failure. Choices should not exist to determine if the player succeeds as much as how well they do.

Skill tests exist for two reasons:

1. To determine the degree of success when using a skill: The difference between throwing a party and becoming the talk of the town.
2. Allowing the player to explore different options to roleplay. If a character has the swordfighting skill to fight their way out of prison but believes that it would be more fitting to their characters concept and personality to sneak out, but has a low sneaking skill, they should not be forced to fight simply because the number is better.

In order to ensure “roleplayability,” that is, the idea that a player should be able to choose less beneficial options because it is truer to their persona’s character, we cannot have skill checks be harsh and binary. They should always have options to choose from, and not require very high skill levels to succeed in.

When it comes to variables, we’re gonna split them into three sorts: Relationship variables, character variables, and history variables.

RELATIONSHIP VARIABLES: Define relationship with the main characters.

This is perhaps the simplest: They simply keep track of how the main characters view the PC. Yet it should be noted that these are only important if their views towards the player are important. I’m yet unsure how much of a focus I want to put on character relationships- strong, well-written characters are the essence of a game, but gamified relationships are not necessary to make it good. But I think it could add some nice dynamism to the story. I’ll need to wait to flesh out the plot a bit more before revisiting this.

CHARACTER VARIABLES: Define the stats and personality of the PC.

Arguably one of the most challenging parts of writing the story is making good character variables/statistics. I need to pick stats that adequately define the PC while having clear boundaries.

Too many is an issue. There’s two types of character variables/stats.

Skills, and personality.

Skills are very clear. They define the players competence with certain types of actions- we’ll keep it broad.

Personality stats are different, they’re opposed stats. I’m not yet sure how to implement them or if I even should.

HISTORY VARIABLES: Define the past and identity of the PC.

Also very simple. These variables define the past and identity of the PC are are purely used to define their relationship in the present world. Race? Culture? Sex? History? Interests?

This will be mostly established in the introduction chapter, and give the player a good idea of who they are, as well as setting the initial values of their stats. They won’t have any bearing on ability, save for the history setting the base skill levels, but will be regularly referenced during gameplay, possibly opening up new rp options through them.