# **Visual Novel Foundation Framework**

## **Instructions**

* **Complete in order** - each section builds on the previous
* **No "both" answers** - make choices even if difficult
* **Use the exact scales provided** - no in-between values
* **Circle or bold your final answers**
* **One person fills this out while the group discusses, then everyone signs off**

## **SECTION 1: EMOTIONAL CORE**

### **1.1 Primary Emotional Journey**

*Pick ONE. This is what the player should feel by the end.*

* **Catharsis** (relief after tension/suffering)
* **Triumph** (earned victory/achievement)
* **Melancholy** (beautiful sadness, bittersweet)
* **Wonder** (awe, expanded perspective)
* **Connection** (belonging, intimacy achieved)
* **Dread** (lingering unease, questions)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **1.2 Emotional Intensity Scale**

*How hard should this story hit emotionally?*

1────2────3────4────5────6────7────8────9────10

Gentle Moderate Devastating

(Background warmth) (Significant feels) (Cry multiple times)

**Your number:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **1.3 Tonal Consistency**

*How much tonal variation?*

* **Laser-focused** (one consistent tone throughout)
* **Controlled shifts** (deliberate tonal changes between acts)
* **Dynamic range** (frequent movement between tones)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **1.4 Dominant Atmosphere**

*Pick the ONE that should permeate most scenes.*

* Cozy/Comfortable
* Tense/Suspenseful
* Mysterious/Enigmatic
* Energetic/Dynamic
* Intimate/Vulnerable
* Oppressive/Heavy
* Whimsical/Playful
* Melancholic/Wistful

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION 2: NARRATIVE PHILOSOPHY**

### **2.1 Story Complexity Commitment**

*What level of cognitive demand?*

1────2────3────4────5────6────7────8────9────10

Accessible Moderate Demanding

(Clear, direct) (Some puzzling) (Requires analysis)

**Your number:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **2.2 Ambiguity Tolerance**

*How much should remain unexplained?*

* **Complete closure** (all questions answered)
* **Guided interpretation** (clear answers, room for personal meaning)
* **Deliberate gaps** (some mysteries intentionally unsolved)
* **Radical ambiguity** (major elements left to interpretation)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **2.3 Pacing Philosophy**

*Force choice: Which is more important?*

* **Sustained momentum** (keep things moving, cut slower material)
* **Earned depth** (take time needed, even if momentum slows)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **2.4 Player Agency vs. Authorial Vision**

*Where on this spectrum?*

1────2────3────4────5────6────7────8────9────10

Player shapes story Equal Author's story,

(Multiple routes, outcomes) player experiences

(Kinetic novel-like)

**Your number:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION 3: THEMATIC FOCUS**

### **3.1 Core Thematic Question**

*Write ONE question your story explores. Must be specific, not generic.*

Example: "Can you truly know someone who refuses to be known?" NOT: "What is love?"

**Your question:**

### **3.2 Thematic Approach**

*How do you want to explore this question?*

* **Thesis-driven** (story argues for a specific answer)
* **Dialectic** (presents competing perspectives, player decides)
* **Exploratory** (examines question without answering it)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **3.3 Subtheme Limit**

*How many significant secondary themes?*

* **0** (laser focus on one theme)
* **1** (primary + one supporting theme)
* **2-3** (primary + few interconnected themes)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION 4: CONTENT BOUNDARIES**

### **4.1 Darkness Threshold**

*What's the darkest content type you'll include?*

Rate each from 0-3:

* **0** = Not present
* **1** = Implied/off-screen
* **2** = On-screen but not graphic
* **3** = Explicit/detailed
* Violence: \_\_\_
* Sexual content: \_\_\_
* Death: \_\_\_
* Psychological abuse: \_\_\_
* Substance abuse: \_\_\_
* Self-harm themes: \_\_\_
* Horror elements: \_\_\_

### **4.2 Comfort Level Intent**

*Overall, should this feel...*

* **Safe** (player can relax, no severe distress)
* **Challenging** (player should feel uncomfortable at times)
* **Harrowing** (player should be significantly disturbed)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION 5: STRUCTURAL COMMITMENTS**

### **5.1 Length Target**

*Pick ONE. Be realistic.*

* **Short** (2-4 hours, 50k-100k words)
* **Medium** (5-10 hours, 100k-250k words)
* **Long** (10-20 hours, 250k-500k words)
* **Epic** (20+ hours, 500k+ words)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **5.2 Route Structure**

*If you marked 1-5 in Section 2.4, specify:*

* **Branching paths** (choices lead to different routes)
* **Hub and spoke** (return to common points)
* **Parallel routes** (completely separate storylines)
* **Single path with variations** (same story, different flavors)
* **N/A** (kinetic novel)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### **5.3 Ending Philosophy**

*Pick ONE.*

* **Definitive canon ending** (one "true" conclusion)
* **All endings equally valid**
* **Tiered endings** (good/neutral/bad structure)
* **Perspective-based** (endings reflect player's values, not quality)

**Your choice:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## **SECTION 6: FINAL COMMITMENTS**

### **6.1 Non-Negotiable Elements**

*List THREE things that MUST be in this story, no matter what.*

### **6.2 Absolutely Forbidden**

*List THREE things that will NOT be in this story, no matter what.*

### **6.3 Inspiration Anchors**

*Name 2-3 existing works (any medium) that capture the feel you want.*

These aren't for plot—they're for VIBE reference.

### **6.4 One-Sentence Premise**

*Summarize in one sentence. Must include protagonist type + situation + tension.*

Example: "A ghost must solve her own murder before her memories fade completely."

## **CONSENSUS CHECKPOINT**

**All team members must sign below to indicate agreement with ALL choices made above:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## **POST-COMPLETION INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Keep this document visible** during all development meetings
2. **When debating a choice**, refer back to these commitments
3. **If you want to change an answer**, require unanimous agreement and document why
4. **Use Section 6.1 and 6.2** as immediate filters for new ideas

**This document is your creative constitution. Treat it as binding.**