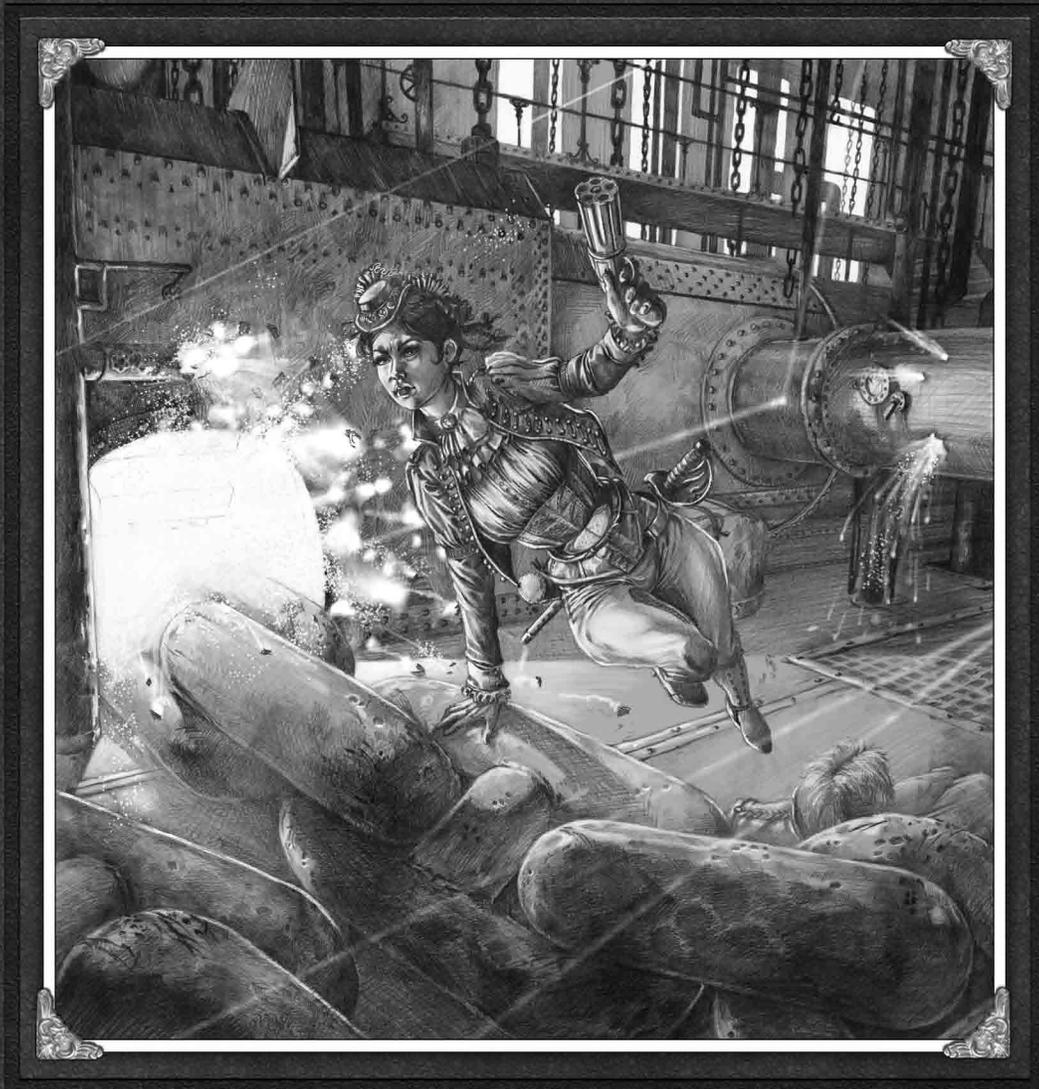


COGS & WHEELS

THE PRIME MOVER



BOOK III



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THE PRIME MOVER

All games need a system in order to play them, and *Victoriana* is no different. The system's engine determines whether your adventurer succeeds or fails when she leaps from her damaged ornithopter onto an aerostat, or whether she manages to learn enough gossip to put pressure on the Baron attending her party. As a nod to the original edition of *Victoriana*, we call this prime mover 'the Heresy Engine.'

The Heresy Engine is designed to be easy to learn, quick to play, and very flexible. We've streamlined it even further with the lessons learned from the Second Edition. It is our hope that these streamlined mechanics allow you to spend more time playing exciting adventures and less time flipping through the rules.

This first section contains a brief overview of the Heresy Engine; throughout the rest of Book III, you'll find expansions of the system that deal with special circumstances. While those additional rules increase the game's complexity, in the end they still follow the basic rules provided here.

As always, your Gamesmaster is the final arbiter of the rules, and she may feel the need to adjust some of them based on the needs of the adventure and everyone's enjoyment of it.

Heresy Engine Basics

When you use the Heresy Engine, much of the action will simply be narrated according to the wishes of the players and the judgement of the Gamesmaster, just as in any other role-playing game. The purpose of the game rules is twofold: to give everyone an indication of the adventurers'

capabilities, so that those judgements are fair, and to determine what happens when the outcome of a situation is uncertain.

The majority of the game system is generally only necessary when an adventurer is attempting to accomplish an action which might succeed or fail depending on random chance. Such an action could be almost anything: shooting a revolver at an enemy, persuading a wealthy mill owner to invest in a risky venture, or climbing a sheer cliff face, for example.

Each such action, known as a 'task,' is resolved using the same system. The basic task resolution process is as follows:

- All tasks in the game are resolved using a 'dice pool,' whereby the adventurer performing the task rolls a number of dice equal to their dice in the relevant Skill, plus their dice in the relevant Attribute.

Example: *The heroic and renowned explorer, Edward Applethwaite, is attempting to leap over an icy mountain stream. He has 5 dice in Athletics (the relevant skill) and 2 dice in Dexterity (the relevant Attribute), for a total dice pool of 7. He rolls 7 dice to see whether he successfully leaps the stream.*

- Each roll of '1' or '6' counts as a success. Add up the total number of successes you roll.

Example: *Mr Applethwaite rolls the following on his 7 dice: 1,1,2,3,4,4,6. Thus he has a total of 3 successes, from the two '1's and the single '6' he rolled.*

What is 2D?

While the game system in *Victoriana* usually requires the counting of successes on a die, there are a few occasions when you may need to roll dice and add the pips together. This is usually noted by the number of dice, so '2D' means roll two dice and add their pips together. We've chosen 'D' rather than the more traditional 'd'(as in 2d6) in order to distinguish it from the symbol for pennies.

- Any roll of a '6' can also be rerolled, for a chance at an additional success.

Example: Mr Applethwaite only rolled one '6', and so rerolls that die, getting a '3'. He gets no additional successes, but retains his originally rolled 3 successes.

- Generally, you need **two** successes in order to complete the task, although in some cases the Gamesmaster may grant you a partial victory if you score only one success.

Of course, some tasks are inherently more difficult than others, and sometimes other factors are at work, either for or against you. Two additional game mechanics – black dice and opposed rolls – accommodate these conditions.

Black Dice and Pool Modifiers

The inherent difficulty of a task is represented by a number of black dice. Black dice are rolled at the same time as the regular dice pool roll. They are usually rolled by the Gamesmaster, as she needs to account for all difficulties (both known and unknown) to the player. For each '1' or '6' that comes up on the black dice, one of the adventurer's successes is negated. Black dice do not roll again on a '6'.

While black dice don't necessarily have to be black-coloured, they should be distinct from the regular dice pool if the Gamesmaster allows the player to roll them together.

Example: Applethwaite rolled 2 successes, but the Gamesmaster informed him beforehand that the stream was rather wide. As this is a Difficult roll, 3 black dice are rolled, coming up: 3, 5, 6. For each die that came up a '1' or a '6' (in this case, one of them), Applethwaite's total successes are reduced by 1, leaving 1 success. Luckily this is still just enough to succeed.

There are also times when a task is considered easier than average. In these cases, rather than black dice, the adventurer receives extra dice to add to their dice pool. These are treated like any other modifier to the dice pool.

While Difficulties are rated in groups of '3's, there are times when an adventurer may receive numbers of black dice in-between. Furthermore, the Gamesmaster may assign a number of black dice between difficulties if she feels a task is more challenging than one rating but less challenging than another. Most Difficulties fall between Average and Incredibly Difficult. Higher difficulties should be reserved for very seasoned adventurers, as beginning adventurers would not be expected to make them.

Example: Dirty Saward fires his pistol at Sir Michael Cord as the gentleman enters the room from a distance of 5 yards. While this is just beyond point blank range (Average rating), the Gamesmaster doesn't believe it would be a difficult shot (as close range is a Difficult rating). She rules that Dirty Saward takes a single black die penalty when shooting at Sir Michael.

DIFFICULTY RATING	BLACK DICE/POOL DICE	DEFINITION
Very Easy	Automatic success	Even a completely unskilled person has little chance of failure
Easy	+6 pool dice	Not difficult with even a little training
Routine	+3 pool dice	A skilled person does this all the time
Average	No modifiers	A skilled person would normally achieve this task
Difficult	3 black dice	There is significant opposition to the task
Very Difficult	6 black dice	Only a trained professional has a real chance
Incredibly Difficult	9 black dice	Very tough opposition or circumstances
Extremely Difficult	12 black dice	Only an expert has a real chance
Fantastically Difficult	15 black dice	An expert would consider this folly
Ridiculously Difficult	18 black dice	A very lucky expert might succeed
Legendary	24 black dice	Only someone at the top of her field has a chance
(Impossible)	(36 black dice)	Hoping against hope for the slightest of chances

Automatic Successes

Regardless of difficulty, some adventurers are so skilled in certain areas that Average or even Difficult tasks are very easy for them. When performing a task, the player always has the option of trading 3 dice in her dice pool for a single success. She can do this as many times as she has multiples of 3 dice. Thus, an adventurer with a dice pool of 6 can automatically succeed at Average tasks.

While automatic successes don't eliminate black dice, they can negate them, although this often requires very large dice pools.

Eyeballing Difficulty Ratings

Once you've gotten the knack of it, it's fairly easy to create modifiers on the fly. Most increased Difficulties fall into the 1-9 black dice range; if you think in terms of minor, challenging, or major hindrance/obstacle then you can just assign 3, 6, or 9 black dice accordingly.

Degrees of Success

Sometimes, you'll want to know the degree of your success. As stated above, a partial success usually means that you've succeeded but not entirely: your lock picking tools may be broken, you may be hanging off the edge of the catwalk you tried to jump onto, or you may have fixed that engine but now there's a fuel leak. Degrees of success are hardwired into combat and magic rolls. There are times, however, when your degree of success can have a greater, perhaps lasting, impact.

For example, you wouldn't want to settle for a regular success if performing in a concert or opera; the critics won't be kind in tomorrow's newspaper if your performance was

merely 'adequate.' And while a regular success is enough on a Medicine roll to patch someone up, your number of successes would be inversely proportional to the size and appearance of the healed scar.

The number of successes remaining, after black dice have been applied, indicates how well the task was performed.

Opposed Rolls

When another person or creature is working directly contrary to the adventurer's actions then that other agency makes her own skill roll in opposition. In this case, the adventurer who scores more successes than her opponent achieves her desired end. Black dice are rolled against both adventurers as normal, to represent situational difficulties and any inherent difficulty of the task.

Example: *Mr Applethwaite is facing off against Montague, a renowned cad and thug, who has had the temerity to insult Mr Applethwaite's parentage. Mr Applethwaite attempts to teach Montague some manners by means of a manly punch to the jaw. Mr Applethwaite rolls his Brawl skill (7 dice) + his Dexterity (2 dice) for a total of 9 dice, getting 1, 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, for 2 successes and 1 reroll - another 1 (!) - giving him 3 successes overall. Montague rolls his Dodge skill (3 dice) + his Dexterity (1 die), for a total of 4 dice, getting 2, 3, 5, 6, for a success and a reroll himself - 4 - so still just 1 success. Mr Applethwaite thumps Montague right on the 'button' or point of his chin, with 2 'clear' successes.*

Foul Failure

Sometimes you will roll so badly that you will get more black dice successes than dice pool successes, cancelling them all out and with some left spare! In this case, you have suffered a Foul Failure. Not only have you failed, but you have failed spectacularly badly; your skill alone was nowhere near good enough to overcome the opposition. If you are climbing, you not only fall but break some vital piece

SUCCESSSES GAINED

1
2
3
6
10
15
20+

DEGREE OF SUCCESS

Partial Success - Just about managed it
Success - Task completed methodically
Good Success - Completed with some flair
Impressive Success - A demonstration of mastery
Virtuoso Success - An amazing performance
Awe-inspiring Success - People will talk about this for years
God-like Success - You must have beaten the world record

of equipment. In combat, your weapon might break or jam. When inventing something, your creation might turn against you, or manifest powers you didn't expect or plan for.

Foul Failures are to be feared because the Gamesmaster can impose any horror they like on your poor adventurer. However, it must relate to the task they were trying to achieve. A Foul Failure in combat might destroy a weapon or put the adventurer in a bad position, but it doesn't mean the villain has automatically managed to wound them. Foul Failure is about the adventurer and the environment; others may prosper from their troubles, but not directly.

The Gamesmaster might also decide to adjust Foul Failure by the number of black dice successes that are outstanding. So, the results of 1 outstanding black dice success won't be as bad as that of 5 (in essence, reversing the **Degrees of Success** table). However, any Foul Failure is bad, even catastrophic; the question is, just how catastrophic?

Complementary Rolls

Sometimes an adventurer has more than one skill that is applicable to the task at hand. When this happens, she may use her second skill as a complementary skill to increase her chances of success. She can add her complementary skill dice (but not the Attribute) to her primary roll. There is normally a limit of one complementary skill per skill roll.

Example: *The Gnomish scholar Tristan McIntyre is trying to find a cure for a new disease. Tristan has a Wits of 3, Medicine of 4 and Science (biology) of 3. The Gamesmaster rules that his Science (biology) skill can help him out as it is complimentary, so he rolls Wits + Medicine + Science, or 10 dice.*

Group Rolls

A group of adventurers may pool their resources on a specific task. The team chooses one person to make the actual Attribute + Skill roll while the others roll their skill only, adding any successes to the leader's roll as automatic successes. If there is a complementary skill involved, then the helpers can choose whether to roll the primary skill or a complementary skill (but not both). A helper need not use the same complementary skill as the leader.

The Gamesmaster should feel free to limit the number of helping adventurers or extend the time needed to complete the task, as too many helpers start to get in each other's way. In addition, the Gamesmaster may also add black dice to the helper's roll if too many people are working on a task or if their skills are not as effective (keep in mind that helpers are only rolling skills, not attributes; take that into

consideration when assigning black dice). Any outstanding black dice on a helper's roll is added to the black dice successes of the leader's roll.

Example: *Lady Noir wants to find out what rumours Lord Morton is spreading at a party. Sir Nigel Pierce and Miss Abigail Smith wish to aid her. The Gamesmaster calls for a Difficult Presence + Conversation roll. Lady Noir adds Charm as a complementary skill. Miss Smith also has Conversation so the Gamesmaster allows her to roll her skill dice and add the successes to Lady Noir's success total. Sir Nigel lacks Charm and Conversation but does have the Etiquette skill. While the application seems almost spurious, the Gamesmaster allows it but assigns 4 black dice to the roll. As Sir Nigel only has a 2 in Etiquette, he fears his efforts will do more harm than good...*

Trying Again

Unless you get a Foul Failure, you may normally retake a failed task roll, unless the situation prevents it. Each additional try garners a cumulative 1 black die penalty as frustration sets in. The Gamesmaster should feel free to add additional black dice if new obstacles or environmental changes make the task harder. If the adventurer walks away and comes back to the task after some time has passed then she may try again with no penalties.

Typical Dice Pools

An average, untrained adult usually has no Attribute modifiers. A typical competent craftsman or professional has 4-6 in her trade skills, allowing her to succeed on a regular basis and have a fair chance of some moments of 'flair' and rare demonstrations of mastery.

Typical dice pools for adventurers of a given level of attainment are as follows:

SKILL LEVEL	DICE POOL
Amateur/beginner	3
Professional	6
Artisan	9
Master tradesman	12
Legendary tradesman	15
The stuff of epics	20

When creating an adventurer, remember that on average you will get 1 success for every 3 dice you roll. As you need 2 successes to properly complete a task, you should make sure that your adventurer can field a dice pool of at least 6 for the tasks they will be attempting most often.