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### **Friends of the venom spider**

A short role playing game where you try to figure out who your friends really are, or how to best end them

### **Notes from first designer to Co-Designers**

This game is based off of this track -

<https://dukeofukeandhisnoveltyorchestra.bandcamp.com/track/spider-suite>

## Notes from second designer to Co-Designers

My music library is not so fancy, i use Spotify, and i loosely based my continuation on System of a Down`s - [Spiders](#)

### What is the game about?

As the title suggest this is a game about a Spider, his friends and his enemies. The common goal, except for surviving, is to create a collaborative story. The story does not have to be particularly well formed or super exciting, but imagine your actions and dialogues as if they were part of a novel. The game ends when Spider dies, and this could take half an hour or an entire evening, optimally you try to keep the game running as long as it is interesting by helping or obstructing the Spider. To be able to affect how the story goes each player gathers rewards in the form of dice, more on this is explained in the section called Twists.

### Very Important Note:

This game can be interpreted so that everything related to insects is a metaphor, personally I view it as little people in a schoolyard where some are strong bullies, and some are smart but weak and has to act accordingly. The other alternative is to interpret it as actual insects, but ultimately the choice is up to you and your friends.

## Getting started

Material: You need at least 3 six-sided dice for each player and two for each player extra for the bank. Each player also needs a blank piece of paper and a pen.

Character Creation & Quiz

Defining the setting

Setting up relations

Role playing and staying alive

## Character Creation

The character creation is a small game in in itself, each participant answers a small quiz to find their Ego. The player(s?) with the highest Ego plays as the Spider class. The other classes are based on their egos. Should two players tie with the highest Ego, let both would-be Spiders explain how they will exert their powers over the other characters. The other players then vote which player told the most boasting story will be claimed the ultimate Spider and adds 2 to their Ego.

## The Character Sheet

On your blank piece of paper find a space for the following characteristics.

**Ego:** This is how self-absorbed you are, a high ego makes you want attention, and dislike anyone else trying to compete for that attention.

**Faithfulness:** How loyal you are towards others, a faithful character will follow his friends through fire, where a faithless character will turn his back on you for a quick win. While the stat Faithfulness is describing your general loyalty, from the moment the game starts, you will have separate Loyalty stats for each other character in play.

**Secret:** Everybody has a secret, this is a piece of information you must not let anybody get a hold of in case they use it against you.

**Flaw:** A flaw is a characteristic which may place you in a bad light or hinders you from pursuing your wishes. More specifically, a flaw is a characteristic the Spider may take advantage of in scenes he is involved.

**Gift:** Your gift is something you are exceptionally good at.

**Name:** Make up a name

**Class:** Your class is a result of the mini-quiz below

Next, every Insect (this excludes the Spider) draw two different circles. Mark one "Action dice" and one "Twist dice". Place the three dice in your Action dice pool.

## Character Quiz

Read up the alternatives for the other players so that they don't know the outcome of the result

A friend needs help tending her garden, but your favorite tv-series is about to begin. Do you:

- Help her anyway (+1 Faithfulness)
- Make up some excuse to not help (+1 Ego)

You have three chocolate bars that you are going to share with your friend, how do you share them?

- Evenly (+1 Starting dice)
- Two for him, one for me (+1 Faithfulness)
- Two for me, one for him (+1 Ego)
- All for me, let him buy his own chocolate. (+2 Ego)

A friend of you is going fishing, he asks you to join him but you can't be bothered. Later he is inviting some other common friends over for cooked fish and you really want to go, what do you do when he doesn't ask you?

- Show up anyway, pretending the invitation from earlier still counts (+1 Ego)
- Ignore it (+1 Faithfulness)
- Remember the situation, swear to never invite him again (+2 Ego)

A boy you really like asks you to help him with his homework, you know he uses you to do most of the work, what do you do?

- Do his homework while he plays playstation (+1 Faithfulness)
- Attempt to force him to give you special attention, and make him solve the assignments himself (+1 Ego)
- Do his homework but leave some really nasty mistakes intentionally (+1 Ego, +1 Faithfulness)
- Tell him to find another girl to do his homework for him. (+2 action dice)

Someone is flailing about in the water, quite possibly drowning, what do you do?

- Instantly jump into the water to help. (Bonus Gift: Excellent Swimmer)
- Call for help (Bonus Gift: Beautiful Voice)
- Attempt to find something buoyant to throw out to the person (Bonus Gift: Smarter than most)
- Ignore the situation completely, it's not your problem (Bonus Gift: Extremely Focused)

## Character secret, flaw and gift

Write down your character's secret.

In turn, invent a Flaw and let another player write it down on her character sheet until everybody has a flaw.

Then do the same for the Gift.

## Classes

Except for the spider class, each player is assigned a class based on their Ego. In the cases where the Ego value of a class overlaps, the player can choose.

## **Spider**

Spider is a narcissistic dictator, he will interfere with the daily lives of the Insects, not because he wants to destroy them, but because he needs their attention and love. He hides this need behind a mask of hatred.

The Spider has a powerful position among the insects of the forest because of his lethal bite. But Spider is lonely, and he wants and needs to have others around him. The other insects know this and attempt to exploit this weakness for their own advantage. Needless to say this is a dangerous game to play, doubt and fear runs deep in the spider, do not ever let him feel your mistrust or he will not hesitate to end you.

The Spider needs to dominate his friends, and to stay alive.

The Insects need to stay alive, preferably without the Spider

## **Butterfly**

Ego 0 to 1

The Butterfly character has a beautiful visage, but does not attempt to take advantage of this, he is always careful. He's delicate, both physically and emotionally. He is an artwork that will break if you cough next to it or look at it wrong. Spider will rarely hurt Butterfly, at least not intentionally and never physically.

## **Centipede**

Ego 2-3

Centipede is a workhorse, mostly too occupied to be fazed by the nasty comments he gets, he is however planning his revenge.

## **Beetle**

Ego 3-4

is a tough creature. She's seen some terrible things in her life, the kind of things that will reduce us to tears just by listening to her story. But nothing broke her before, because Beetle's heart is built like a brickhouse. Because she is so strong and used to a hard life she stays close to Spider.

## **Ant**

Ego 4-7

Ant is kind and nurturing, for his own at least, but you do not want to be an enemy of the ant. Ant has known Spider the longest. He has seen Spider change over time. Or at least he thinks so. Ant thinks he will eventually make Spider a good person.

## **Firefly**

Ego

7+

Firefly is a genius. He has this special creative talent that amazes everyone. But not Spider. Spider thinks the stuff he does is just for show, probably he is just jealous. Firefly doesn't understand why. So he tries hard to outdo himself. He pushes himself every day and every moment. If he tries hard enough, maybe Spider will admit Firefly is special, just like everyone else.

## Establishing Relations

Each Insect starts with 3 points of Loyalty towards each character. If a player has a Faithfulness score, he or she adds these points to a character of their choice, but he or she gives at least one point to Spider. If a player has no Faithfulness from the quiz, choose one character (except Spider) from which to remove a point of Loyalty.

Write down the current values and write next to them the value of the other characters Loyalty towards you. Then, for each character with a Loyalty score higher or lower than 3, discuss with those characters why your character trusts the other character more or less and write that down. For Spider, for each point of Loyalty, describe why you (falsely) believe you need Spider and what he delivers you.

The player playing Spider writes down Loyalty 0 with each character and one sentence on how he or she tries to gain the edge over the other character.

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*Rick, Jerome, Remko and Natasja are playing "Friends of the Venom Spider". Jerome has the highest Ego, so he becomes Spider. Remko has 1 point of Faithfulness, so he has to put an extra point of Loyalty in Spider, bringing it to 4. Natasja has no points in Faithfulness and lowers Rick's score with one. Rick, on the other hand, has 2 points of Faithfulness and gives everyone but Remko an extra point of Loyalty.*

*Rick: "So, I trust almost everyone. Natasja, I trust you because you rescued me from that bully in the fourth grade. Is that Ok?"*

*Natasja: "Sure, but I still distrust you because... eh... you slept with my girlfriend?"*

*Rick: "No, my character would never do that. Could you change that in 'thinks he slept with her girlfriend'? Perhaps Spider mentioned it to you?"*

*Natasja: "Cool!"*

After writing her Loyalty stats down, it looks something like this:

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Character	I trust him / her	He / she trusts me
Jerome (Spider)	4: Knows everything happening, has a strong voice, dares to say what he thinks, can protect me from bullies	0
Natasja (Ant)	4: Rescued me from a bully	2: Thinks I slept with her girlfriend
Remko (Centipede)	3	3

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# Creating and resolving scenes

## How the game starts

Spider calls his “friends” together and tells them to search for an elusive prey. She is beautiful, strong, and elegant - he must have her as his trophy. To get this new trophy, players are tasked with stalking her, harrowing her and wearing her down. When they manage to accomplish this task, Spider will enthrall her. Her name is Mantis.

## Types of scenes

There are four different type of scenes in *Friends of the Venom Spider*: a domination scene, a relation scene, a confrontation scene and a Twist Scene. With the exception of Twists, only the Spider may create domination scenes, while the Insects are only allowed to create relation scenes.

If a player has at least 5 Twist dice in his pool, he must start a twist scene.

### Domination scene

A domination scene is a scene in which a character (normally the Spider) exerts his power over another Insect. Examples of such a scene could be about Spider giving a cruel task to an Insect. However, dependent on the type of Spider, the exertion might be less direct, e.g. manipulation or coercion. This scene does require Spider to be present at the scene.

### Resolution

If Spider's Ego + Loyalty of Insect is higher than the Ego of the Insect + loyalty of Spider and the Loyalty of the Insect isn't 0, the Insect describes how it is affected by Spiders exertion and Spider receives two Action dice from the bank (roll directly). Alternatively, Spider may try to use the weak Loyalty between Insects. He then evaluates instead against Loyalty of the Insect towards another Insect + Loyalty of Spider instead of against Ego of the Insect + loyalty of the Spider, receiving two Action dice from the bank. If the bank is empty, Spider receives one Action die from the Insect Action Pool. If the insect has only one action die left, Spider gains one point of Ego.

The Spider may try to influence these scores in a number of ways. Spider may narrate how the Insect's Flaw(s) is/are used in the exertion. If done so, Insect's score is lowered by 1 for each Flaw described in the process.

The Insect may narrate how he or she uses his or her Gift to prevent the act of the Spider. The score of the Insect is increased by 1 for effectively applying his Gift and the player receives one Action die. Also, the Insect may bid Action Dice (max 3), each die giving an extra plus one on the score of the Insect. These dice return to the dice pool afterwards.

If the Spider loses the Insect may:

1. Describe how Spider is seen in a bad light: Spider loses one point of Ego.



2. Describe how Spider loses grip on this particular insect. Erase one line in the relation of Spider and decrease Loyalty towards Spider with one.

This leads to the following scene order:

1. Spider announces whether he directly exerts his power against the Insect or against the Loyalty between Insects.
2. Spider narrates the start of the scene and the players involved roleplay their part in the scene.
3. Spider narrates how he or she uses the Flaw(s) of the Insect to his or her advantage, if applicable.
4. Insect narrates how his or her gift gives an advantage (+1 action die), if applicable.
5. Insect narrates and pays Action dice to gain an advantage using a superhuman feat or prowess, if applicable.
6. Calculate results and narrate outcome.

## **Relation scene**

A relation scene is a scene in which a character (normally an Insect) tries to find comfort, shelter or other forms of affection with an(other) Insect. Insects may try to appeal with food or other gifts to gain affection, but may also try to convince them rationally or emotionally appeal to them to become more closer. If successful, the current character may choose one of the following options:

1. Both him or her and the other character may convert an Action die in a Twist Die (see below) and both narrate how their (renewed) friendship leads to new insights about the nature of the Spider.
2. The other character adds one point to his Loyalty towards the current character and the current player receive one Action die from the Bank. The current player narrates how the new relationship invigorates his or her character.

Spider (or any other insect) may attempt to prevent this by narrating how he or she disturbs the attempts of the current player in appealing for affection. If the Ego of the opponent is higher than the combined Loyalty of the two characters involved in the relation scene, the current player must pay one Action die, unless he is able to narrate how the opponent's weakness is preventing the opponent from harassing the two characters. Other players may choose to pay one Action die to heighten or lower the number of Action dice required to ensure a success.

## **Confrontation scene**

A confrontation scene describes how the character tries to get something done. Whether it is trying to get away from the Spider, obstructing him or her, squabble with other Insects, bluntly attacking them or confronting them with a certain fact, a Confrontation gets the job done. A Confrontation may take place out in the open or at a secluded spot.

There are two different types of Confrontations: Confrontations between Insects and Confrontations between (an) Insect(s) and the Spider.

In a Confrontation between Insects, the Spider determines the outcome of the conflict, although Spider favours those who are able to use their gift, since they are of so much more use. If one of the Insects is a favourite with the Spider (has the single highest Loyalty rating with the Spider), he receives an Action die from the Spider. Regardless of the outcome, the player may convert one Action die into a Twist die or take two Action dice from the bank.

If an Insect confronts the Spider, the Insect narrates how it tries to mess with the Spider's plans. This may involve another character (at the other character's discretion). If the Insect confronts the Spider on his own, compare the Insect's Ego + Loyalty of the Spider towards it with the Ego of the Spider. If it is equal to or higher, the Insect wins the conflict. The Insect may narrate how the Spider's Flaw(s) is/are hindering him to lower the Spider's score with one. Also, it may use extraordinary feats or prowess, paying action points to narrate those in at a maximum of 2 (for a +2 bonus). Regardless of the outcome if the total value of the Insect is at least half the Ego of the Spider (rounded up), the Insect gains one point of Ego. It then narrates the outcome, including boasting about the conflict with the other Insects. If the Insect wins the conflict, it may remove one point of Loyalty towards the Spider, narrating how the confrontation strengthened the Insect's confidence to stand up against it. If the Insect loses the conflict, the Spider may choose one of the following:

1. Add a loyalty point of the Insect to the Spider, narrating how the Insect became more dependent on the Spider.
2. Delete a Loyalty point of the Spider to the Insect, indicating the Spider sees through the actions of the Insect.
3. Take either two action dice or one Twist die from the Insect, narrating how the Spider drained the Insect of hope for a better future.

The outcome of a Confrontation scene may not involve death or permanent disablement of a character. This type of scene is reserved for the Twists Scene.

## **Twist scene**

A twist scene is a powerful tool at the disposal of both Spider and Insects. Twists represent putting into action learned lessons and trying to make a difference. To initiate a Twist scene, a player must pay dice from his Twist die pool (Action die pool in the case of the Spider). By using a certain combination of values, they can narrate plot twists into the story, changing their character and the game at play: Some of the values state "Reactive". This means that it may only be used as a reaction on an action in another player's Twist scene.

All Twist scenes outcomes are determined by the active player. Since they are meant to give headway to the story, describe the scene vividly. At their discretion, you may include other player characters. After the Twist scene has passed, the acting player receives one action die.

[1] [1] [1] (*Insect only*) - You start to free yourself from Spider's web – remove one point of Loyalty towards Spider, remove one sentence of the Loyalty description and act out your defiance. Spider is angry, but you are becoming independent.

[1] [1] [4+] (*Insect only*) - Your heart hesitates and returns to Spider. Add one point of Loyalty to Spider and pick a description. You are now Spider's Favourite, Spider will not hurt you until he has a new favourite or you betray him greatly.

[1] [1] [1] (*Spider only*) - You crave for attention. Choose an insect to receive one point of Loyalty and one Action die.

[1] [2] [3] [4] - You strike at your target, killing it instantly.

[\*] [\*] (*Reactive*) - Two of a kind, defend. Nullify a strike. If the strike was made by another Insect, lower your Loyalty towards the Insect with 1.

[3] [3] - You gained knowledge of one of your fellow insects or Spider. Choose one of the following:

1. Force another character to reveal their secret and choose you as the target.
2. Get knowledge of another weakness of an Insect or Spider. Devise a Flaw for this Insect or Spider.
3. Get two Action Dice from the Die Pool, which you may only spend during a conflict.

[3] [4] [5] [6] (*Spider only*) – Even your most dirty secrets are a deceit. Write down a new secret and remove the old one (even if it has been revealed).

[5+] [5+] (*Insect only*) - The next problem you deal with, choose the outcome. You don't need to accept a resolution.

[6] [6] (*Insect only*) – You show your unabiding loyalty. Spider will step in and protect you when you face a problem you cannot deal with.

[6] [6] [6] - You murder the hypotenuse. You kill a Player emotionally, socially and/or physically. Spider is no longer interested in them, in which case he might do the killing himself.

[Three different dice] (*insect only*) - Your indecision leads to Spider's capricious attention. The group decides what kind of attention he gives you. Spider receives a +1 on his next Domination scene with you.

[Three different dice] (*spider only*) – You are indecisive in your actions. The next character who confronts you receives a +1 in a confrontation scene with you.

## Convert an Action die into a Twist die

Several outcomes described in the scenes above talk about converting an Action die into a Twist die. When the Spider receives an Action die, he must roll it directly and add or subtract 1 point at his or her discretion. Players only receives action dice and must convert them into Twist dice in order to use them in a Twist scene. To convert an action die into a Twist die, roll the die. If the Spider approves the action leading to the conversion, he may add 1 or 2 points to the die, while when he disproves the action leading to the conversion, he may subtract 1 or 2 points to the die. The die is then transferred to the Twist die pool with the modified result.

## Using secrets

On any moment, you may choose to reveal your secret. If you choose to do so and are not the Spider, describe how revealing your secret creates sympathy with one of the other characters. You gain two action die from him or her and one action die from the separate pool as though you rolled the result from your choice, unless the chosen character is Spider. If you choose Spider, Spider immediately gains one point of Loyalty with you and describes how he is touched by the openness of the confession. However, from that moment on, treat the Secret as though it is a Flaw (as described above).

If you are playing the Spider, describe how your secret has been found out by one of the other characters. The other character's player may choose one of the following:

1. They choose to keep the secret for themselves, not willing to hurt the Spider. He or she receives one action die and +2 on Faithful, while you receive +3 on Faithful and two action dice.
2. They choose to tell the secret around. He or she receives +2 Ego, but all the other characters feel sympathy for the Spider. Act as though all other characters have used the twist [6] [6], but may not betray the Spider in their next scene. All characters narrate how this secret gave them a change of heart.

Regardless of their choice, the Spider regards their Secret as a Flaw (as described above).

## Death

In case of death, other than the Spiders, you restart play with the same class but lose any collected dice and your gift, flaw and secret changes. Killing a character drains Spider of resources, but also removes the other player's dice that they could have used against him.

## Miscellaneous

The game should emphasize the Thralls' addiction to Spider. He is a drug and a gamble. He will destroy the Thralls, but they are craving that *one* moment of pleasure.

If the Spider is killed, the game ends and the other players have successfully defeated the bully.