

SANTIAGO JOE



AND THE TREASURES OF OBLIVION

A 24-HOUR ROLE PLAYING GAME
BY JAAP DE GOEDE

Santiago Joe

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Santiago was running for his life. Again.
Usual pastime. Nothing new. Nazis, what else.
He sped through the corridor on his way out of the
University building. Just fifty more yards.

And then the man in black appeared. His eyes hidden in
the shadow of his hat. His hand into the fold of his
coat. A gun. One of them!

Santiago darted to the first door on the left.
Locked.

Damn! Try the other left!

Open. A big room full of old statues and artwork.

Scary African masks. Roman busts. Chock full.

Santiago winced. He zigzagged for the window.

Made it. But the window was barred. Heavy footsteps
sounded down the hall.

"Looks like I might have to shoot them..." Santiago
whispered, and reached for his own gun.

And then he figured that he left his gun in the car.
Oh yeah. That's right. Now what?

Errr... Time was short. Five seconds... four...
three... two...

The dark man entered the room, his gun cautiously at
his side. He watched left, then right. Artwork. Roman
busts. A broken window. Carefully he stepped forward
to the windowsill.

It was too late when he noticed the darting eyes
behind the African mask. A heavy head of a Roman
emperor hit him right in his face.

"That's one" Santiago thought. And then the other man
came in. The gun pointing at him.

SANTIAGO JOE

SANTIAGO JOE is a fast paced, diceless role playing game. In it, you recreate the type of adventure of old B-movie heroes. You delve for priceless treasures, shoot it out with nazis, run away from angry natives, steal the stuff from your competitors, nearly die in grinding car chases, jump from army trains and dangerous glaciers, unmask beautiful spies and seduce them, get poisoned while the antidote is in enemy hands, open cursed tombs and find nests of snakes and crawling spiders, uncover ancient relics, nearly get burned alive in bomb blasts, and save the day as you bring the artifact to the museum.

In SANTIAGO JOE you are the writer-director and stars in your own B-movies. You decide what happens to the heroes, and keep the story going - until... your time is up, the heroes win, or you find that you are in a film noir after all.

SANTIAGO JOE is especially designed to be played in lunch breaks, while walking home, waiting for the subway or when otherwise killing time. You'll need at least one friend to play with, a little spare time, and good spirits. That's it. Maybe you also want to keep this booklet handy, have something to munch and to write but that's it.

So how does it play? If you read the last page, you read a short example already.

WRITER AND STARS

To play SANTIAGO JOE, you have to be with at least two people. One of the players will have to be the WRITER. He or she has to start telling the story, give the setting, keep the game paced, judge the actions of the heroes, and play all roles of opponents, hapless victims and other non-major heroes. The WRITER should be the player who is most awake, best at telling stories, feeling most nasty and devious, and most up to the challenge.



All others players are the STARS. They play just a single role in the story. The role of a brave adventurer, treasure hunter, thrill seeker, kind of lucky bastard, crazy guy or gal, or one of their sidekicks. The player who feels most up to it and is most quick witted after the WRITER should play the STAR who plays the hero of the title. He or she should play a SANTIAGO JOE... or SANTIAGO JANE.

Santiago Joe

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PREPARING FOR PLAY

Before you can start you have to decide on a few specifics of the story-movie-adventure you are going to play. You do this taking turns. First the WRITER names one aspect of the movie, then one STAR names another aspect, the next STAR yet another aspect, and so on. If you run out of players, you start with the WRITER again, going 'round until you decided all specifics.

Important is that you can never, never deny what someone else has stated. You can only amend it, and add to it. It's like a brainstorming exercise. No negativism here!

You have to work on three things together.

- A. You have to name the movie
- B. You have to decide on the HEROES the STARS play - and what they can do, and
- C. you have to decide on some specifics like subgenre, time period, opponents and basic setting.

You decide which you want to do first, as long as you do them all before you roll into your first scene.

A. NAMING THE MOVIE

First thing you'll probably want to do is name the movie. In fact all in all, you'll build up what you see on the film poster together. From the poster you'll get an idea of the time period and subgenre. There is a title with the name of the MAIN HERO and the object it's about. And from the pictures you get an idea who the MAJOR HEROES are, who they fight, and where they'll go.

So let's make that title then.

The STAR who feels most like it names the MAIN HERO. That's the HERO he or she is going to play. And it's also the first part of the title (say: SANTIAGO JOE, or MARIAH CARVER). The next STAR names the second part of the title (say: ...and the treasure of the Sierra Nevada, or ...and the Crystal Rose). If there is just one STAR, the WRITER will do so. If the players like, they may also build up the title in more pieces - like: MATT JOHNSON... and the secret of... the hidden kingdom... of Vishnu.

Lets say our working title is:

SANTIAGO JOE AND THE TREASURES OF OBLIVION

Now we have a title. Let's hope it's catchy and sounds like something you want to watch. If not, then you'd better give it another go. Satisfied? Then we establish the cast.

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B. MAKING THE HEROES

The WRITER sets off by saying the title of the movie, and then "featuring ..." name of the STAR who then names his or her HERO.

Like: "Today we play... JACK COOPER and the Tribe of the Golden Scalp, featuring Jim who plays..."

And then the player tells how his or her character will be named. So Jim says: "... who plays JACK COOPER". The WRITER then goes on to the announce the next STAR, who also names their HERO. This goes on until all HEROES are named.

Then all HEROES must be given their attributes. These are:

- A. What their day job is
- B. What they do especially well
- C. What they know the other HEROES from
- D. What their major weakness is
- E. What they look like

Again WRITER and STARS take turns in assigning these attributes, one at a time. Note that everyone may assign attributes to every other HERO. You're not confined to your own. If you want to annoy or help a partner player, go ahead!

However, there are a few ground rules again.

- 1. If you assign an attribute to a HERO that's not yours, it may not have been given yet. You must be the first to make one up.
- 2. If you are the STAR that has just been assigned an attribute by someone else, you may amend it, or add to it once, in your immediate turn following. You may not contradict what has been said before.
- 3. If you are the WRITER, you can amend and add to an attribute too, but only if it has not been amended or added to before. And even as a WRITER you may not contradict what has been said before (except when it's absolutely ridiculous, maybe).

For example: Mikel plays JACK COOPER, and states that JACK is a superior shot with the pistol. John says that his own hero BOB THE RIPPER knows JACK from the army, and they were in the same unit. Tineke is next, and she says: "JACK COOPER shoots well, because he's very precise, you can see that because in daily life he's a dentist".

Mikel now may not contradict what is said, but he may amend and add another attribute to his day job. So he says "JACK COOPER indeed works as a dentist, but his friends know that at night he works as an amateur private detective."

Let's say that our example adventure-movie-story,
which is called:

SANTIAGO JOE AND THE TREASURES OF OBLIVION

IS STARRING:

***JAKE GOODMAN AS.....SANTIAGO JOE
MIKEL REESEDYKE AS.....JACK COOPER
JOHN COMPTONIUS AS.....BOB THE RIPPER
TINY KEY SMALL AS.....MARIAH NEVADA***

AND ALSO FEATURING

***WRITER-DIRECTOR RINZL SCHAUERMAN
AS
MILLIUS KEETON, LORD OF A THOUSAND MONKEYS***

And in addition we know, partly from the photo's
and the blurb we now have not available, that:

SANTIAGO JOE is very good at driving cars, runs a
boxing school as a teacher, is tall with blue
eyes and always grinning below his fedora, and he
is particularly scared of dogs.

JACK COOPER is an excellent shot, a dentist who
is an amateur detective in the evening, looks as
a dandy always in white, and is very scared to
have his face hurt in any way, he is Santiago's
good friend from childhood

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BOB THE RIPPER is very good at taking blows, is a daytime car mechanic, who knows Santiago from being his favorite mechanic, is huge with a fat belly and a beard, and he has the tiny problem that he can go into a killing frenzy if he's hurt

MARIAH NEVADA used to be Santiago's girlfriend, she is an excellent pilot and owns a biplane which she doesn't want damaged, her day job is kindergarten teacher (so dealing out commands and leading groups is easy for her), she looks smashing as long as her face isn't full of soot, and her weakness is her brother, who is now working for the MASTER ENEMY (see later) named...
MILIUS KEETON

MILLIUS KEETON is the villain of this story, and he is especially good at enchanting a thousand apes into following his commands, his day job is being leader of a Zulu Kingdom, in this incarnation he looks like a tall, laughing, immensely strong black man, and his known weakness is his interest in technological toys. Give him a typewriter, and he will be amazed.

For this adventure-movie-story the WRITER already decided, MILLIUS has kidnapped MARIAH's brother NICK the reporter exactly because he was carrying a... broken typewriter. Bloody apes bust it.

So now we know which HEROES the STARS play and what they can do. Now, what sort of movie is it exactly? What would (p)reviewers tell you?

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C. PREVIEW: DECIDING ON SPECIFICS

Finally (assuming you have not already done so) you have to make a few decisions on the type of movie-story-adventure. So that you know what you're going to play, what the ground feel is, what you may expect. Again WRITER and STARS take turns to decide. These are the things you'll at least want to know:

- A. The subgenre. It's an adventure, but is it straight Indiana and the Jewel of the Nile, or is it also horror, or film noir, or war movie, even science fiction, or a detective or a mystery play?
- B. The year the adventure takes place.
- C. The country or countries we eventually end up in.

- D. The legendary object, thing or person it's all about. This is probably in the title already, but it may be fun to make up one or two extra things about it. Is a lost people involved, a kingdom of gold, a relic of the first Saints, an undead creature?
- E. The opponents, or type of opponent. Are they Nazis, Communists, Capitalists, Thugees, Zulus or a secret Runic Sect. Or all of them?
- F. The WRITER will also have to make up at least one MASTER ENEMY. This is the leader of one group of opponents, and he or she may pose as the patron for the adventure at first. You can also make up the MASTER ENEMY together (WRITER and STARS together) during the creation of the HEROES.
- G. The patron for the main adventure. Who asks that the object be recovered or the lost culture be found? Is it the U.S. Government, a collector, who? The WRITER may secretly decide that the MASTER ENEMY will pose as the patron, or have an accomplice working with the HEROES.

To finish our Example, the preview of:

THE UNWEEKLY MOVIE PREVIEW, June 1931

SANTIAGO JOE AND THE TREASURES OF OBLIVION

SANTIAGO JOE is a tongue in cheek, humorous adventure movie, set in the late nineteen-twenties. The bold heroes set out in the desert of Gobi, China, where they try to get away from Long Bob, from whom they have stolen the secret bookroll of the Dalai Lama. Whether they succeed in keeping it out of his clutches, you'll see, but eventually the trail will lead to...

The heartlands of Africa, somewhere near the source of the river Nile, in a Zulu Kingdom, where master enemy MILLIUS KEETON, LORD OF A THOUSAND MONKEYS takes them prisoner as the seek out the treasures of Oblivion. And these treasures consist of an old golden artefact, on which is written about the beginning of the world, written while it happened. Or so the legend says. In their search the heroes are chased around by renegade proto-Nazis (SS-men working for some bloke named Adolf), and a British SIS man named Pinkerton. Their patron Kuma Kai Kara, a Chinese crime lord they met on earlier set them on the trail of all this mayhem.

Intrigued? Go and play the adventure yourself!

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Now that you have the movie poster, the cast list and a preview, it's finally time to take your seats and play. Note that all of the above need not take much time for accomplished players. And once you have HEROES you like playing with, you're off to an even faster start. Because then you already know a lot about your sequels and prequels, and don't have to make them up anew.

Let's get to how we play the game.



RULES: SO HOW DO WE PLAY?

SANTIAGO JOE is diceless storytelling and role playing. So unlike most paper and pen role playing games you don't roll hands full of dice. You don't draw cards either. And you also don't do paper-stone-scissors, usually.

Instead you have a few simple ground rules to resolve all conflicts and actions that arise during the game. You can see these as the ELEVEN COMMANDMENTS of SANTIAGO JOE. Basically though, the art is to keep the game going!

- 1. The games must go on. Whenever you are hesitating when it's your turn to think of an action, the other party starts counting with one hand. Five, four, three... If he reaches zero before you say something useful ("errrr" does not count), you fail.
- 2. This also goes if you are interrupted in any way, by a phone call, your teacher, a car driving over you, your girl friend, your guiding spirit or whatever. You fail. Also if you are the WRITER and it was your turn to think of a new cinematic action.
- 3. You must always be creative. If you think of something new, cinematic and unexpected, it should always work (if remotely possible and in character), and you succeed at least partly.

- 4. You cannot use the same method to do something twice, unless that's the one attribute you're extremely good at. Then you can. In all other cases that you use the same method twice in a row (or scene), you fail, at least partly.
- 5. If it's your profession you're at, and you at least vary in your description, you succeed. You don't have to be too creative there.
- 6. If you encounter your great weakness, you should play it out and panic. Freeze, make a show of it. If you do it well, the WRITER should reward it even if you fail. Which you will.
- 7. Basically, the WRITER gives the setting, and the STAR reacts. As long as the reaction is adequate, cinematic, good, unexpected, creative, new, or the thing the HERO is particularly good at, he or she succeeds. But then the WRITER should think of something new that goes wrong. Just keep throwing up new problems as a WRITER. Until...
- 8. You don't know what to throw at your STARS anymore, ran out of active opponents, you are interrupted, you have captured, killed or knocked out your HEROES, the OPPONENT should lay off, or if you think think the STARS have delivered a nice scene. In all these cases you may wrap up the scene.

- 9. The death of a HERO should only be caused as the direct result of a suicidal action or non-action of the HERO. The WRITER should warn that this will be the result if the HERO follows through with the action. If a HERO is incapacitated earlier, and/or cannot be saved by his own actions or fellows, preferably wound or capture and imprison the HERO for a later scene.
- 10. A wounded HERO is no longer capable of automatically succeeding in what he does especially well anymore. Instead, the STAR now must make up something (mildly) new and creative each time to make it succeed.
- 11. Killing a HERO or MASTER ENEMY is not normally advisable until either the last act, or until the STAR playing the HERO is leaving the game anyway (then you can make it a dramatic exit for the player). The only way to do it, is making it extremely cinematic, dramatic or heroic.

THE ADVENTURE MOVIE BEGINS

Now we kind of know how to play, and we have our HEROES and story basics ready. Let's begin. Lights out, and there we go.

A full game plays in four acts, or ten scenes. The first two acts have three scenes, the last two acts each have four. You may not always have time for a full game, so just see how far you get each time you play. You can always go for a cliff hanger and continue the story-movie-adventure later on. Later, when you have time again, after work, bedtime or college.

BUILDING BLOCKS: SCENES

Like a movie, a game of SANTIAGO JOE is made up of scenes. And preferably you start a scene in the middle of the action. WRITERS should not spend too much time between scenes. If the last scene ended with thee heroes being captured by the Gestapo, just skip to the part where they they are bound to chairs ready to be interrogated. Or skip to the part where they are already interrogated, badly hurt, bound to a chair, and finally left alone to potentially escape. Or skip to the part where they are being rescued by their colleagues. Think cinematically!

Be sure to describe what the new situation in a scene is though. Everyone should know where they are, and whether they are in the scene or not.

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ACT ONE: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The first act of a game is actually the last act of an adventure we never actually saw or knew. We jump straight into the action and skip the acts before. Maybe the heroes are chased by Nazis, by Assassins or by Indians. Maybe they just enter the tomb of an entirely different sort, and uncover a golden relic protected by a vast number of traps. Maybe they are right into a bank heist or a great train robbery. Or maybe they are in a great showdown with some Chinese crime lord.

The first act is often the place where the HEROES meet each other, or at least are introduced to us, and where they can show off what they can do.

A first act may also be a special "flashback" act, in which we go back to the youth of at least one of the heroes. We could find out where the weaknesses of the HERO come from, or how he learned to be so good at something. Or we can go back to sketch an early encounter with the MASTER ENEMY of the story, years before.

ACT TWO: SETTING THE STAKES

Once the HEROES have escaped from the first act, they may or may not have the money, the relic or whatever they were fighting for. It doesn't matter. They are introduced. In act two we go for the setup of the actual story. The HEROES are back to their daily lives again, and now they receive the commission to recover the thing that is mentioned in the title of this game. Someone will contact them to search for it, one of the HEROES will find a lead to where it is, a secret sponsor will donate money to go for it fast, or... the competition is ready to knock out the HEROES before they even know what they are looking for (and thus the HEROES find out what's at stake here). The second act usually takes place on the home ground of the HEROES. In their home town, during their day job, at school, wherever. The second act usually ends with the leaving for an exotic location far away, preferably by commercial water plane.

ACT THREE: STAKING THE ODDS

The third act deals with the arrival at exotic locations in hostile and forgotten third world countries, secretly tracing the treasure, finding of the hidden city, meeting interesting and deadly native people, getting the treasure from under the nose of the enemy, chasing around with opponents, and often in the end losing the treasure to the enemy.

ACT FOUR: FINAL CONFRONTATIONS

The fourth and final act deals with the getting the treasure back, or getting it home. This will of course not be too easy, as the MASTER ENEMY will also reveal him or herself in this act (unless they also have done so before), and become particularly nasty. The HEROES may be captured, bound, and things may become quite hairy. But one thing for sure, as the MASTER ENEMY will try to make use of the gained artifact, lost treasure or whatever mystical power, the HEROES will find a way to escape and go for a final confrontation. Or alternately, they may be happy that they were bound when a Deus ex Machina devours the MASTER ENEMY in divine retribution. That's up to the WRITER. Finally, the HEROES will reminisce in the last scene about what they have done, and store the treasure in a museum or wave the starship goodbye.

OPTIONAL RULE: SEQUELS AND PREQUELS

If you like SANTIAGO JOE, find that you can play it well, and would like to go for a sequel. Or a prequel. You can then use (some of) the HEROES of another adventure, and find out what happened after, or before. You just make up an adventure title and details as usual. But you already know some of the HEROES.

In addition, you may add an attribute to your existing hero. The WRITER may then amend that attribute, or add another weakness too.

In prequels, the HEROES will be younger of course, and if you go back far, it is unlikely that they have they will have the same profession. You may then give a new profession (such as student, barman or paperboy), or the WRITER will. Note that such a new thing may also add depth in later adventures!

OPTIONAL RULE: PREWRITING TOGETHER OR ALONE

Depending on the players and the time, the WRITER may decide to make up the title of the adventure and/or specifics alone beforehand. Players may also make up their HEROES beforehand, and bring them along. If you have bright ideas, read inspiring novels, or seen crazy but great B-flicks that inspired you, this can be great fun. You can even steal some odd HEROES from real good movies and stories, if you dare. I won't mention names (such as Indiana Jones, Nick Carter or Alan Quatermain).

Or, conversely you may even make up more together taking turns. You could make up the start of the opening scene together, or the attributes of the MASTER ENEMY. Or you could make up the start of all scenes jointly like this. It's up to you if you like that challenge!

On a third note, you could even switch the WRITER role between acts. That would be a nice challenge too, for the really crazy method role players and theatre sports initiates.

OPTIONAL RULE: COUNTDOWN VARIATION

You may find that if the cast of STARS is bigger (i.e. You are with more players), that counting down from five in case of hesitation is too long. Or too short, depending on your players and amount of sleep they have had.

In this case you can give them more or less time. Counting down from ten is good too, or from three. See what works well to keep the pace.

As another variant, you may count down from five with the first hesitation. If you reach zero, the HERO fails miserably, but kind of survives miraculously, and loses a count. The next time this HERO hesitates, he has only a count of four. And so on, until zero counts remain. Then the HERO will just die with the next lethal hesitation. No more help then.

Counts won't be lost if the STAR picks up and thinks of something before a countdown finished. His or her HERO will have the same amount of counts next hesitation. Lost counts are replenished each new adventure, or each new act.

AFTERWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am now going into my last hour of writing this 24 hour game, and see that I still have to do examples, artwork, contents and a lot else I would have liked to do. I'll cut that short for the 24-hour version. I hope to do it a later day for a more full-fledged one. Shouldn't have tried to start on a free Sunday which turned out not to be free, with not nearly enough sleep before I started. I just changed from train to bus in the middle of the last sentence, on my way to work, which makes the effort seem even more crazy.

However, thanks to the guys from 1kmlkt who dreamt up this crazy challenge. It's goodd to see how much I can do despite all this distraction (like sleep, haha) in 24 hours. And thanks to my wife, daughters and friends too, for role playing with me and being there.

Oh yes, and thanks to George and Steven for bringing the adventure movie back in our lives. I figure you deserve all the money you made with them. And Harrison, thanks for portraying one of the inspirations for this game.

Finally I'd almost forget Rinze and Mikel, friends and fellow players who figured out the basic idea for the diceless mechanics this game uses. When they had no dice, they thought of the continuous action roleplaying - like:

I grab the bar!
You succeed, but it breaks and you fall.
Then I slide falling onto the elevator.
That's ok, but now the elevator starts moving. And you start to fall again.
I'll grab the cable and hold on.
Brilliant! You move down. Now he has seen you and opens the elevator hatch.
I slam it down.
He falls, and the hatch breaks. You nearly fall.
I hold on to the hatch opening!
Okay... but now...

And so on. That's much the way SANTIAGO JOE should now play. Now let's see if I can do the content listing and write one more example somewhere.

Jaap de Goede
Amsterdam, June 29 2009

Frack! Missed my bus stop!

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SANTIAGO JOE

is a fast paced Role Playing Game

Where you are the movie STARS
and the WRITER-DIRECTOR

Of the many B-Movies of Oblivion

Movies that never were, but that you would have
loved to see.

Enjoy them during college, your coffee break,
when you can't sleep on the phone, while
you're on the bus, or just when there's
nothing on TV.

**Santiago dodged the arrow and aimed for
the Native Apache King's eye. "It will be
the end of you now, even if I don't like
to kill people, you of all people
definitely deserved it."**

He pulled the trigger.

Klick.