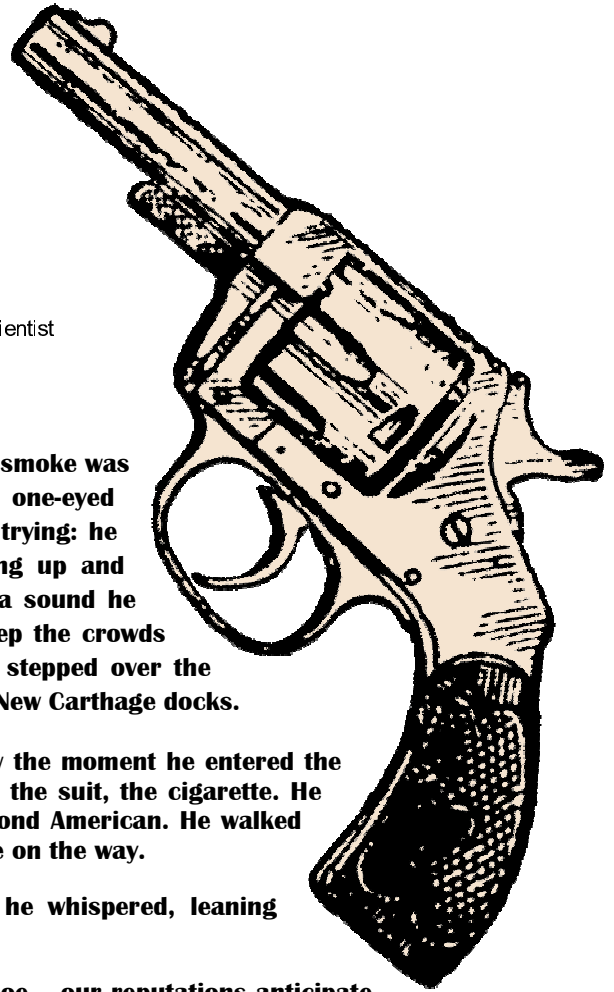# Spade
vs. Indy

Created by Tamás Kisbali aka Evil Scientist

The bar was packed. The smoke... the smoke was so thick, that it muffled sound. The one-eyed Negro at the honky-tonk wasn't even trying: he was just bashing away, hands moving up and down the keys. No one cared about a sound he made. The rhythm was enough to keep the crowds moving. A man collapsed, the crowd stepped over the motionless body. A usual night at the New Carthage docks.

A new face appeared. Everybody knew the moment he entered the room that he was American. The hat, the suit, the cigarette. He studied the crowd then noticed a second American. He walked up to him, throwing away the cigarette on the way.

„Dr. Humber, if I'm not mistaken," he whispered, leaning close to the other man's ear.

„And you must be the infamous Mr. Doe... our reputations anticipate us," the man called Dr. Humbert answered, „let's get to business. Square and fair."

„Your good friend," Doe said, stressing the word 'friend' with an ironic smile, „Dr. Keeton has the diamond. Well-hidden. His headquarters are somewhere in the tunnel system of New Carthage. It's a damn labyrinth down there. I know the way, but getting through won't be easy."

Now it was Dr. Humbert's turn to smile. „That's what you think. A real friend of mine provided me the map of those tunnels... I have it in my room."

„Oh... I'm sorry to disappoint you," at this point, their dialogue turned into an exchange of sarcasms and sly smiles, „but that girl, what's her name, Juliette... well, Juliette is no daughter of a kidnapped scientist. She works for Keeton. I'm sure she took advantage of your abscence and destroyed the map. The only person who can help you is ME."

„DAMN YOU!" Dr. Humbert shouted. It was hard to understand, what made him angrier: his nemesis' trick or Juliette's betrayal.

OVERVIEW.

Stories in „Spade vs. Indy" concetrate on a conflict, where two opposing characters who share the same goal are forced to co-operate, only to turn against each other when said goal is reached. One of the characters is considered to be a spade (a hard-knuckled heart-breaking private eye), the second is an indy (an equally hard-knuckled „professor" of archaeology). The goal: of course, an ancient artifact. The framework for the story announced in the intro novel would be:

It's 1938. John Doe (spade) is hired by a beautiful and dangerous stranger to retrive the Eye of Hua, a valuable diamond that was once in the sceptre of an African tribe leader. At the same time, Dr. Humbert (indy) stumbles upon an ancent manuscript stating that the Eye of Hua holds a magic power. They both arrive to New Carthage, a city in Northern Africa, learn about each other. It turns out that the Nazis also crave the diamond. Doe and Dr. Humbert have to co-operate, otherwise they don't stand a chance against those pesky, trigger-happy & probably necromancy-loving Nazis. After many adventures, our heroes end up grasping the diamond... who gets to keep it?

Number of players: a Storyteller and at least two players are required – a spade and an indy. Additional players represent friends, allies & damsels in distress. Keep in mind, that playing a side-kick is none the less interesting, than playing a lead role...

The game system uses two decks of playing cards (without the Jokers), one for character generation and keeping track of statistics, and a second one for tests & conflict resolution.

CHARACTER GENERATION

Character concepts are chosen. Two of the players take the lead roles: a spade and an indy. The leads have a suit: spades ♠ for spade (obviously), clubs ♣ for indy. The rest are supporting characters. As mentioned before, they are just as important, as the leads. They don't have suits but may draw an extra card when character generation is over. Then everybody makes up a basic concept, with special attention to the characters' connections to each other (lover, assistant, etc.). When done, each player is dealt eight cards from the character deck. These cards are distributed between the four main statistics. The remaining cards are the player's tricks and should be kept in secret.

The main statistics are:

➢ *Constitution.* Represents the character's physical strength and possibilities. Used to calculate the amount of damage the character can take.
➢ *Deftness.* How quick and agile the character is; dexterity included.
➢ *Quirk.* Brains. Intelligence. Wisdom. It also covers perception, noticing things in general.
➢ *Charisma.* Speaks for itself. It's not beauty – it's stance and behavior. Used when testing for seduction, leadership, smooth-talking, lying etc.

The higher the statistic – the better. Players are allowed (and encouraged) to trade cards. You may, for example, exchange two of your cards to get one of your own suit, and so on. The only rule is that in the end, every player must have a card on each statistic and one trick card. At the end there is a character sheet: the statistic cards are to be placed on it (fixing them with a paper clip is a good idea). You should also fill in the Wounds section, with the respective pain threshold (see System section, page 5).

SYSTEM.

The mechanics are pretty simple. Each statistic is represented by a playing card from the first deck. When testing, you draw a card from the second deck („random card") and compare the ranks. Higher beats lower, with the ace being the highest.

Card ranks, from lowest to highest →												
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	J	Q	K	A

If the random card fits the character's suit (explained later), you may add +1 to the tested statistic's rank. The storyteller may add or subtract ranks from the player's statistc, according to the difficulty of the task. Finding your revolver quickly in the bushes might be difficult to do, so that's a -2. Seducing a naive girl is no big thing for a charming man – here, a +1 bonus rank. You may ignore the penalty if the statistic you are using is of your character's suit!

Each player is allowed to have up to five cards in her hand („trick cards"). During *any* test or any action, requiring a random card, but *before* the random card is drawn, you may place one of these cards face-down on the table then reveal it after the random card is drawn. You may now decide whether to

replace the random card with the trick card or not, thus modifying the test's result. Either way the trick card gets discarded after the resulotion. Keep the two decks (character and random) and their discard piles separated.

Any number of players may use trick cards to rig the test. Cards are revealed at the same time. At this point, the players may try to intimidate each other to retreat from the test or support one another. Bribery, blackmail and diplomacy. At this point a player may retreat from the contest and replace her trick card with another card from her hand. Alternatively, players may even offer each other a replacement card or trade valuable ones! If no agreement is reached, the contest begins. You may decide to enter the contest with your original trick card or use a new one from your hand. The contestant with the higher rank contest card may replace the random card with her trick card. Using your own suit as the contest card grants you a +1 rank bonus. A draw means that the test has to be resolved as if there were no trick cards. After resolution, all cards (trick, contest, random) go into the respective discard pile. An example:

The quicksand was sucking Doe deeper and deeper. He needed all his dexterity to avoid death. Heather was just standing there, absorbed by thoughts. „Give me your hand," Doe said, still fighting for his life.

John Doe needs to pass a Deftness test to get out. His rank is ♥**9** (not of his own suit). The storyteller decides to give him a -1 penalty, so his rank counts as ♥**8**. If he had ♠ in the statistic, he could have ignored the penalty. Let's examine some of the possible outcomes!

1. No trick cards are announced. Doe's player draws a random card: ♥**5**. Test passed.
2. No trick cards are announced. The random card is ♠**8**. Usually it would be a draw, but the card has the character's suit, so the +1 suit bonus awards John Doe with a success (and probably his life).
3. Doe really wants to live, so his player choses a trick card from her hand, ♣**2**, and places it face-down. No other tricks announced. The random card is drawn: ♥**J**. Doe's player reveals the trick card and wins.
4. Doe might want to live... but Heather, his ex-lover has a different opinion, so her player picks a trick card from her hand, ♦**K**, Doe has the good ol' ♣**2** ready. The random card is drawn: ♥**10**. Contest time. Heather decides to use her original trick card. If Doe has no cards of a higher rank, Heather replaces the random card with her tricky King and poor Doe gets sucked into the quicksand. But if Doe has... well, for

example, an ♠A just in case in his hand, he may overcome Heather in the contest and keep his life.

5. Or there's the real RPG way. The situation is the same is in example №4 – with Heather's player about to win with her higher ranking contest card. Let's imagine that Doe has a letter Heather really wants. So they agree, that in exchange for the item, Heather replaces her high contest card with a lower rank and lets Doe use his trick card to get out of the sand.

Important! All tests, contests and tricks should be motivated, role-played and described! The players have the cards, not the in-game characters. Heather successfully using a trick card during Doe's escape would mean her pushing the poor private investigator into the quicksand or simply not helping at all and just laughing at the edge of peril. Be dramatic!

Also, sometimes you might want to define the effect of an action (including damage dealt by weapons or lethal traps in a cursed tomb). In such cases, draw a random card and consult the chart below. The trick card system applies as before – announced before drawing, contested, replaced at will.

Damage/effect chart		
Card rank	**Damage**	**Effect**
2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Light wound	Minor / less than expected
9, 10, J, Q, K	Deep wound	Major effect / as expected
A	Deadly	„Jinkies!" / more than expected

Light, deep and deadly wounds should be recorded on the character sheet. The wounds stack, and after a certain amount, they get more severe, in accordance to the pain threshold:

Constitution rank	Light wounds	Deep wounds	Deadly
2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	3	2	1
9, 10, J, Q, K	4	3	1
A	5	4	2

E.g. if a character with Constitution 7 amasses three Light wounds, they are transformed into a Deep wound, two Deep wounds become one Deadly... And that one Deadly renders the character unconscious and if no one saves her in time, he's gone for good. A character with an ace in Constitution needs two Deadlies to black out.

ACTION.

Now onto the more specified use of the system. The key here is *intuition*. Each time you want to do something, you announce the action and describe it in a few words. The description should include the objects, targets and methods, but most importantly, your goal.

Dr. Humbert reaches for his trusted six-shooter. The Nazi thug doesn't seem too scared – action must be taken. The brave archaeologist aims for the kneecap (he has a few questions to ask) and pulls the trigger.

After this, a statistic is agreed upon. Basically any statistic can be used for any action if you are able to convince the Storyteller and the other players. The Storyteller is free to give the player penalties for using a not-too-convincing statistic. Dr. Humbert's action calls for Deftness. If the test is passed, another random card is drawn to determine the damage. The Storyteller describes the effect and moves on. Not all actions require additional effect resolution: sometimes it's obvious what happens. Dynamic gameplay over system! Actions include but are not limited to:

➢ First Aid. Can be used to remove a single Light Wound or to wake up a blacked-out character. There are many different methods to this – a creative description can save lifes. It may include „real" first aid with bandages (Quirk) or just shaking the poor guy 'til he wakes up (Constitution)...

➢ Hand-to-hand combat. Again, many ways to do this. One may rely on brutish force (Constitution), swift movements and martial arts (Deftness) or even „looking good with my fists in boxing position" (Charisma).

➢ Gunfight. The usual choice is Deftness, but a sniper relies on Quirk.

➢ Lockpicking. Having tiny hobbit-fingers (Deftness), having tiny ork-fingers (Constitution) or just deducting the movements required from the shape of the keyhole (Quirk).

➢ Seduction. Smooth-talking (Charisma) or muscle-flexing (Constitution).
Or basically anything you can come up with.
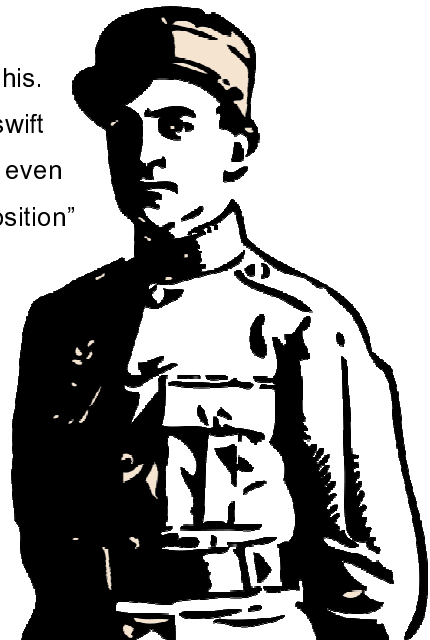
STORIES.

Pulp – noir – drama – backstabbing – deceit. These are the key elements you should concentrate on both as a player and a Storyteller. To be honest, „Spade vs. Indy" is supposed to be a pretty traditional RPG, story-wise. Characters embark on a quest for a lost artifact. Enemies are introduced – we get a glimpse of the main villain but he gets away. Henchmen are slaughtered. Dungeons penetrated. Nemesi defeated. You can say that „Spade vs. Indy" owes the storytelling to the Indiana Jones movies. But the atmosphere should be Maltese Falcon. The time-limit of the 24-hour RPG design contest doesn't leave space for a complex pre-generated world – but come on... everybody knows pulp. You've seen the movies. Use the arche- and stereotypes every gamer has in her head. Come up with an absurd artifact, throw in some pseudo-scientific garb, exploit the „arcane Nazis" theme. Make sure you use catchy dialogues.

There are a few system-related notes. Of course you don't have to have four cards for every single NPC appearing in the game. Just jot down their ranks on a piece of paper. Pain thresholds for no-name enemies should be kept low to allow for one-whiplash kills... Henchmen don't use trick cards, but when the players encounter a more serious enemy (SS-Obersturmbannführer Karl von Schiffburg) or the evil Dr. Keeton himself, the Storyteller should draw up to five random cards and use them as trick cards.

The Storyteller should reward the players for nice moves, gained information and so on by giving out bonus trick cards. If there are no more trick cards left in the deck, shuffle the discard pile. The Storyteller may adjust the drama factor of the game by controlling the flow of trick cards. Imagine the tension of facing your nemesis with only a ♠6 in your hand or trying to achieve your goal with the other players grinning and tossing in trick cards against you in every test.
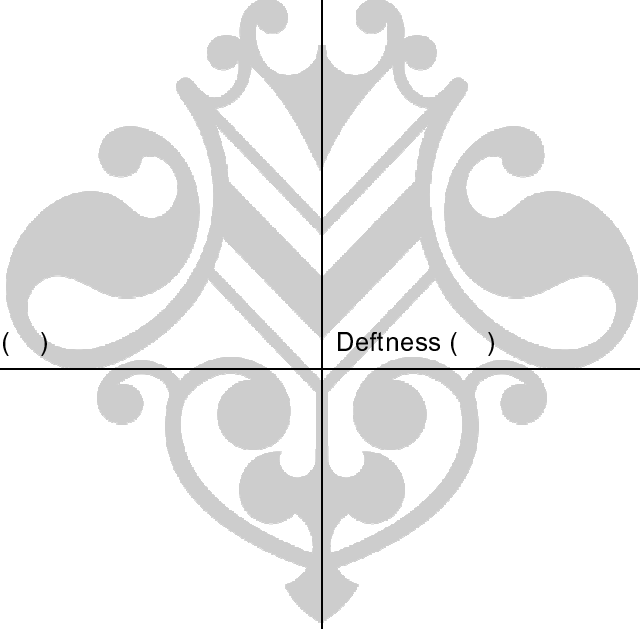
That's all for now, folks. **Have fun!**

Created for the 2011 „Move Mashup" contest by 24hourrpg.com & 1km1kt.net.

Character Sheet.

Name:		
Role:		Suit:
Light wounds ( ):	Deep wounds ( ):	Deadly ( ):

Constitution (   )

Deftness (   )

Quirk (   )

Charisma (   )