

Two Men Enter, One Man Leaves.

A fight breaks out in the prisonyard because Fat Tommy ratted out the contraband Jimmy was keeping under his mattress. The prisoners form a ring around the two, and Fat Tommy slips the shiv he'd been saving from his sleeve as Jimmy comes at him with a chair!

The Viper is getting too old for professional wrestling, but he has one last shot at making a comeback (and enough money to retire) if he can just beat The Iron Kid!

Fresh from the Wastelands, Ana Goanna is thirsty, but the Settlement won't let her in unless she has something to barter or a trade to ply. She can weave, but the Settlement already has a weaver. There's only one option Ana can take: provoke the weaver into a duel in the Deathdome!

When Flavius was a free citizen of Rome, he used to come to see the gladiators and cheer their battles. Now he will fight for his own life against Terminus, a gladiator known for his massive strength. Flavius knows the only way he can beat the juggernaut is to fight dirtier than the famed gladiator himself. Only then can he have a shot at proving his innocence.

John Bartlett, Esq. has never lost a case, and he's not about to start. But when he realizes the prosecutor is Felicia Jones, the most vicious Assistant DA in the state, he begins to think this won't be just another celebrity murder trial.

Introduction:

Two Men Enter, One Man Leaves is a game about the conflict between two **Competitors** in a defined and limited setting such as a pit, ring, or courtroom. There is also a **Judge** who will reward the winner and punish the loser, and a **Crowd** whose reactions to the conflict you hope to influence. Whether its two lawyers in a courtroom or knights on a jousting field, you must use who you are, what you can do, and the features of the battleground to your advantage to overcome your opponent.

Here's what you need to play:

At least two imaginative players.

A 52-card deck of playing cards (no jokers).

At least two Competitor sheets for each player in the game, and more on hand for making more Competitors later.

Character Creation:

First, all players agree on a setting. The examples included in the Appendix are the obvious ones I came up with on the fly; maybe you can think of one that's more interesting for you. Once that's done, every player is going to make at least two Competitors (in case one dies, you have one on hand for the next conflict). For each Competitor:

Give your Competitor a name and a brief description. Description can be physical, emotional, psychological, or whatever.

Write down how you got into the "career path" leading up to the fight in the Background section. That means a quick sentence or five about what led you into a life of crime and how you became a prisoner, or why you became a professional wrestler, or who inspired you to become a lawyer, or how you became a knight in this jousting tournament, or whatever.

Then write down what you want in the long run in the Final Goal section. Is it mere survival in a post-apocalypse world?

Do you want to be so well known as a prosecutor that you become the District Attorney? Are you hoping that your bravery as a gladiator will lead the emperor to give you your freedom?

Now that you know those two key things about your character, its time to assign some points to your abilities. Keep in mind the things you've already written as you do so. At creation time, you have 17 points to spend on your abilities; you can have as few as 0 in an ability and as many as 9 for now. You have four abilities you will use in the Ring:

♣ represents your physical Strength in most settings¹

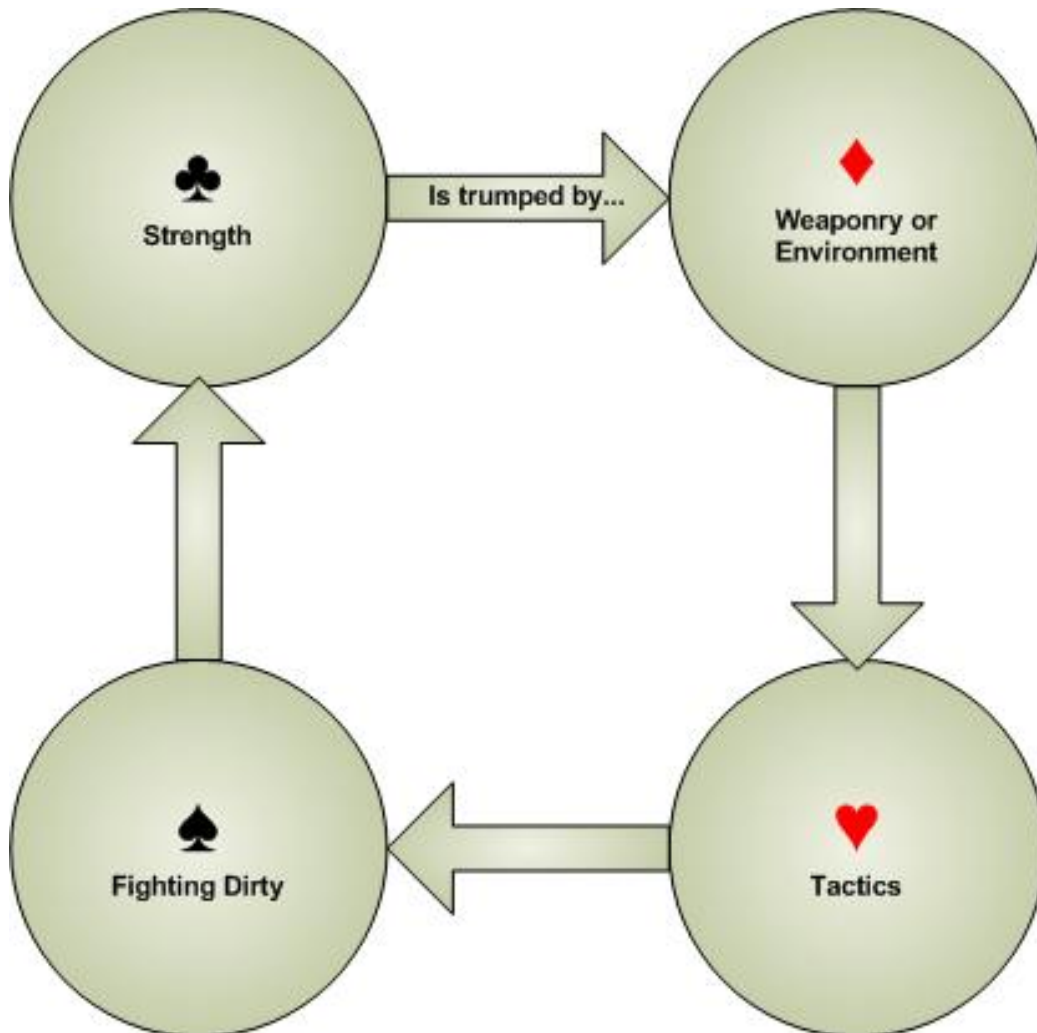
♦ represents your ability to use external resources in the environment, whether that's evidence in a courtroom or weaponry hanging from a Deathdome or throwing your opponent out of the wrestling ring onto the floor.

♥ represents your cleverness, ability to use tactics, and ability to outmaneuver your opponent within the Ring.

♠ represents your ability at "Dirty Fighting," whether that's calling a surprise witness, throwing sand in your opponent's face, or biting the other prisoner's ear.

¹ If the setting is not about physical conflict, its what's classically important in that setting – for lawyers, this is probably Persuasiveness or Knowledge of the Law

Trumping:



If your opponent is using his Strength (♣), you must also be Strong, or you can use a Weapon (♦) at least half as well.

If your opponent is using a weapon (♦), you must also use a Weapon, or you can use your Tactics (♥) at least half as well.

If your opponent is using superior Tactics (♥), you must also use Tactics, or you can Fight Dirty (♠) at least half as well.

If your opponent is Fighting Dirty (♠), you must also Fight Dirty, or you can fight him with your Strength (♣) at least half as well.

The Conflict:

Now we need a conflict. Every conflict in the game (and the game is essentially just a sequence of them) is between exactly two Competitors, which means if you have more players than that, someone will be sitting out. If you aren't involved in a conflict directly, you are encouraged to take the role of the Crowd by cheering or heckling or booing or whatever's going to be fun for you (but not too disruptive to the conflict itself) while you wait for your turn in a conflict. If the other players want you to, you can help them come up with coolness to narrate as they play their cards.

In a conflict, Aces are always high, and are worth 12 numerically. Any time you play an ace in conflict, you may draw another card into your hand. If you play an ace on your winning play, you have the option to remove the other Competitor from further play altogether (usually by narrating that Competitor's death).

Face cards are all worth 11, but King beats Queen beats Jack in a tie.

Kings played in a conflict mean you have impressed the Judge, and your narration should include this.

Queens played in a conflict mean you have impressed your opponent or yourself, and your narration should include this.

Jacks played in a conflict mean you have impressed the Crowd, and your narration should include this.

Both players in a conflict choose one of their Competitors and the deck is shuffled. Both players then draw a hand of nine cards from the deck and choose one card that represents their reason for being in this particular fight (for the winner, this will also be the opening play). Both players play their reason card face down and turn them over when both cards are on the table. Each player narrates the reason he or she is in the conflict according to the suit of the card chosen, using the following guidelines for suit significance, and filling in whatever other color you want to add:

♣ means you are settling an old score or dealing with your past somehow, or it relates directly to your Background as expressed on your character sheet.

♦ means you are trying to get some material gain from the fight, whether that's a pack of cigarettes or a portion of the money the Crowd is betting on you.

♥ means you are in this fight because of some emotional provocation, usually by the other Competitor, but possibly just having to do with your morals, ideals, love, etc.

♠ means what you are hoping to gain by winning the battle is a better reputation, more fame, or some other essentially social benefit.

Whichever player laid down the card with the higher number goes first in the conflict. If the numbers are the same, refer to the Trumping section. If that doesn't solve the problem (e.g. 3 ♣ vs. 3 ♥), flip a coin. The card the winner played is also his opening attack, so that player narrates an associated action for his Competitor in the conflict corresponding to the suit's meaning as an ability, and adds his score for that ability to the number of the card. This is the number that the other Competitor must beat in order to take the lead in the conflict.

The other Competitor's player plays a card from her hand – this means she lays down one or more cards from the same suit as the current card on the table or its trumping suit, and adds her Competitor's ability score corresponding to the suit played. If she is trumping, she only needs to beat half the value on the table with her play, but if she stays in the current suit, she must exceed (not tie) the value on the table. As she does so, she narrates the action her Competitor takes corresponding to the suit she plays. If she cannot come up with a combination of cards that will either beat her opponent's total within the current suit, or change

the nature of the conflict by trumping that suit (and beating half the opponent's total in the current suit), she must give and lose the conflict – the winning player narrates how his or her last narrated action leads to winning the conflict as a whole. If the winning player used any Aces in the winning play, this narration may include the permanent removal of the other Competitor from the game (usually, this is death); otherwise the Competitor can be reused later.

Play proceeds back to the first player, who now has to exceed within the current suit or change the nature of the conflict. This goes on until someone must give. If a player can tie the current suit total by playing a card and adding his Competitor's corresponding score, that is insufficient; the number must be exceeded. There are no ties.

Post-Conflict Narration and Character Advancement

A winning player gets to narrate how winning the conflict got him or her what she was in the conflict for (according to the card played at the start of the conflict to show the Competitor's reasons, remember?) and how the Judge and Crowd react to your badassness.

You also get to talk about how this brought you closer to your Final Goal as noted on your character sheet. You add whatever the suit-specific point total was that your opponent couldn't beat (including your ability score) to your Advancement Points on your character sheet, and you add 1 point (or 2 if an Ace was played to win) to that suit's score on your character sheet to reflect getting better at that ability through the conflict. If your Advancement Points now exceed 100, you have the option of narrating how your character's goals were finally accomplished and retiring that character. Or, maybe you're having a lot of fun and you want this Competitor to keep going. Your game.

If your Competitor was permanently removed because the winner used an Ace to win, you get to make a brand new Competitor. If not, you should begin to plan your revenge in a future conflict!

If no Competitor has reached their “final goal,” a new conflict gets started. The winning player may keep his or her Competitor in the new conflict if they so choose, but if the losing player is involved in the next conflict, he or she must rotate in a new Competitor. There are rematches, but there’s always at least one other conflict played in between. If you have more than two players, you should allow at least one player who was not involved in the last conflict to be in the new one.

That’s it! Hope you like it! This is my first RPG design ever and I’m anxious for feedback and suggestions.

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Acknowledgement:

The cards mechanic was largely inspired by Clinton Nixon’s mechanic in **Black Widows** (a Sept. 2005 Ronnie entry), although I’d been playing around with card mechanics in my head for a little while.

Appendix A – Suggested Settings:

Setting	Competitors	Judge	Crowd
Prison	Rival gang members	Powerful crime lord	Fellow prisoners
Rome	Gladiators	Emperor	Crowd
Post-Apocalypse	Survivors in the Deathdome	Settlement Owner	Settlers
Pro-Wrestling	Wrestlers	Federation Owner or Referee	Crowd
Courtroom	Rival lawyers	Judge	Jury
Jousting Tourney	Knights	Princess	Crowd

Appendix B – Suit Meanings

Suit	Ability/Conflict	Conflict Reason	Trumps
Clubs ♣	Physical Strength	Settle an old score	♠
Diamonds ♦	Weaponry or Environment use	Material gain	♣
Hearts ♥	Tactics, Maneuvers, or Cunning	Emotional Provocation or Moral Stance	♦
Spades ♠	Dirty Fighting	Fame or Reputation	♥

Two Men Enter, One Man Leaves

Name:

Description:



Strength
(Settle a Score)



Weaponry
(Wealth)



Tactics
(Emotion)



Dirty Fighting
(Fame or Reputation)

Background:

Final Goal:

Accomplishments:

Advancement
Points

(Add the amount you
won by when your op-
ponent had to give)