

Soldiers of Fortune

A game of introspective traveling and skilled melee confrontations



From inside walled city states, bloated and corrupt bureaucracies plot the downfall of their neighbors and bask in their avaricious hoards. In the forgotten countryside, trifling villages cling to bleak existence in an incongruously idyllic landscape. You and three teammates are a small mercenary company, traveling and taking on bounties in a constant struggle to stay afloat. Your targets are amoral, ruthless, and masters of their chosen weapon, requiring a demonstration of your full martial prowess in order to survive.

What are you fighting for?

Honor	Glory
Justice	Fortune
Love	Vengeance

What are you trying to forget?

A humiliating defeat	A youthful error
A lost loved one	A foolish pursuit
A scene of horror	A place you can't return

Where are your scars?

My face	I struggle to socialize
My legs	I struggle to run
My spirit	I struggle to sleep
My lungs	I struggle to breathe
My hands	I struggle to work
My body	I struggle to rest

Each character selects and uses a unique weapon:

Sword	Slice / Jab
Mace	Slam / Swing
Axe	Grab / Strike
Staff	Dive / Sweep

Guidelines for running an adventure

Four players play the company, and one runs the game. Through the travel phase, prompt the players to discuss things in character. Lead them to talk about themselves, their environment, and their target.

When they reach their destination, bring the bleak corruption of the civilized world to bear as they look for information about their target. Officials demand bribes, prices are high, and people are scared.

Combat is an expression of skill and ego. Opponents are arrogant, toying with the company, landing small hits until ultimately opening themselves to a strike.

Hitting the Road

In order to reach your target, you will need to travel a long distance. Each player should fold ten paper coin purses, representing the passage of time. Set the resulting pile aside - this is the advance on your bounty. You will need it later to purchase things in town and to keep track of your wounds.

While everyone is folding, take the time to converse in character. This is your opportunity to work with the GM to build the world and to interact with the other players at the table. The world is grim, and these comrades are some of the only people you can trust.

- What do you know about your teammates that warrants discussion?
- Where are you traveling, and what are you passing through to get there?
- Who are you hunting, and what information do you have that might be useful?

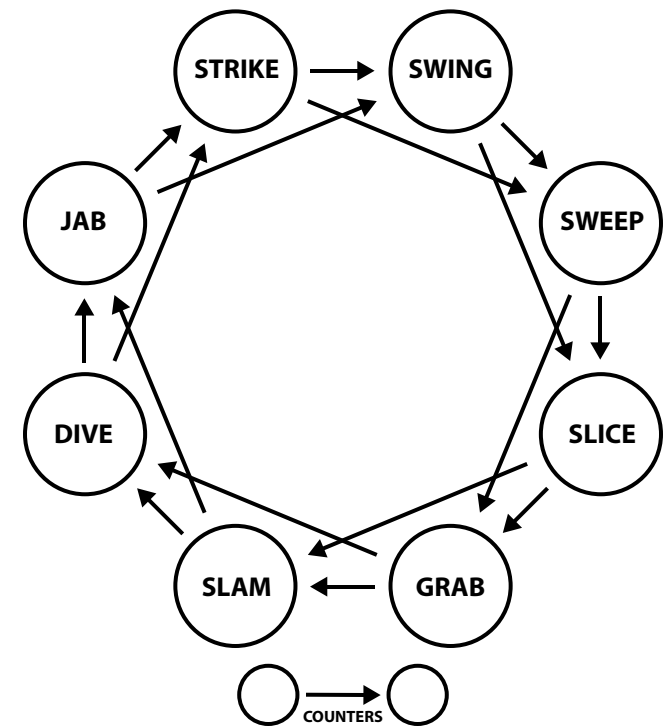
When you arrive at your destination (with each player having folded the ten coin purses), you will need to prepare for the final strike. You might need to spend some of your advance to acquire lodging or specialized equipment. You might need to bribe an official or buy a round of drinks at the tavern to find information.

Your target will be an individual or squad of incredible martial prowess and blackened morals. When the time comes for combat, you will need to use your teamwork and your foes' own ego to defeat them.

Designing combats

Each technique allows you to counter two others. Opponents should have an overlap of techniques that ensure there is at least one they can never counter. For example, [Slice/Slam/Jab/Strike] cannot counter a Slice. So, players will have to figure out how to force a chain of techniques that guarantee the opponent will be open to a Slice and ensure a hit. Multiple opponents work the same way - have them overlap with one gap, and take turns the same way as players.

A team of three: [Strike/Slam, Jab/Grab, Dive/Slice]
A deadly pair: [Slice/Grab/Dive, Slam/Jab/Strike]
A single grandmaster: [Dive/Jab/Grab/Sweep]



Turning to Violence

Each player has two techniques they can choose to use based on their chosen weapon. A technique can counter two other techniques.

Combat alternates in turns between the opponent and the company of player characters. Each player must use a technique before anyone in the company can go twice. Once all four players have acted, any player may be the first to respond in the new round.

- 1) Combat opens with the enemy using a technique.
- 2) One of the players with a technique that can counter responds
- 3) The enemy responds with a countering technique of their own.
- 4) A player that has not acted in this cycle chooses a countering technique.
- 5) And so on... This pattern repeats until a move is made that cannot be countered.

When a player character is hit, they lose a coin purse. Running out of coin purses mean you are defeated, and your teammates will struggle. The opponent being hit immediately results in their defeat. Once your opponent is defeated, the rest of your advance is yours to keep, and it's on the road to the next job.

Inspirational Tables

Interesting Environments

An orderly vineyard	A cluttered alleyway
An abandoned battlefield	A dark and dense forest
A noble's wheatfields	A towering seaside cliff
A sprawling poppy field	Rolling hills of grasses
A vine choked fort	A snowy rock-filled pass

Potential Bounties

Sofia and Donato Albano, the White Knives
Catalina Contarini, Butcher of the North
Bernardo Visconti, the Hungry Flame
The Filarini Five, last of Montebatte
The Unnatural Tartarugan Brothers
Velasco "Riposte" Alvarez Triolo

Destination Cities

Estaro, mountainside silver mining village
Coledo, greedy mercantile city divided by a river
Portinda, lively birthplace of the legendary Serafina
Foncona, bleak site of the mariner's academy
Materra, downtrodden town surrounded by flowers
Areto, once the seat of the empire, now a living ruin

Urban Happenings

A person crashes down from a second story window
Someone demands a 'toll' to pass through a gate
A mercenary strikes a merchant down in the street
A crowd of children surround you, asking for coins
A galloping horse tears down the street into an alley
A gathering of poor wait for water in a stagnant well

Final Showdown Locations

Atop tables in a crowded tavern
In a public square surrounded by a crowd
Leaping from rooftop to rooftop
Back and forth over the district canal network
In the foyer of a noble's manor house
Between the stalls of a bustling market

designed by Cathartidae (cathartidae.itch.io)

part of the One-Page RPG Jam 2020

paper coin purse adapted from a design by
Karen Thomas (2004)

