

[A Delicate Operation]

A social game for 3 or more players, that plays in less than 1 hour

This game requires 1 standard (52) deck of cards, a timer that can be paused,

and the included cards and characters

Best play has around 5 players

The King of Pangaea has been shot! The legendary Peacemaker was on verge of getting a treaty signed between the Union's feuding nations: Lorem, Ipsum, Dolor and Sit, Amet and Tempor when the assassin struck. The hope of peace is all but shattered by this assassination attempt, as the King himself lies on the operating table, surrounded by the best and brightest surgeons the global alliance of Pangaea has to offer.

The players are all expert surgeons from these feuding nations, who are cooperating to complete a puzzle and save the life of the only man who can bring the world back from the brink of Nuclear Apocalypse. But the wound is not serious, and the surgery should be simple, as long as everyone cooperates.

This may not be as simple as it seems, as a dangerous Spy has infiltrated the peace summit, and may very well try to interfere with this life-saving operation.

In addition, faith in peace is low, and everyone has been given orders to negotiate secret alliances at the Peace Summit, if war is to break out.

"A Delicate Operation" plays out this tense operation as a timed card game, where players cooperate to accomplish a number of milestones. Meanwhile they trade secrets and build clandestine alliances for the war that is to come. Only the players' alliances and knowledge will determine which Nations are ready for the war to come.

Game Chef 2012 Judging Notes

Theme: Last Chance

Supported narratively, as this game represents the turning point of a world, before war is declared. Additionally, the game's second scenario demonstrates an unusual social dynamic, which breaks the established rules. This will only work once per play group.

The Following Ingredients appear:

Doctor: One of the literal roles to appear in the game. These players are crucial for order and law in the game.

Coyote: Thematic inspiration. The Spy role is a trickster. Originally named Coyote Agent, I found "Spy" to be easier for players to understand.

Mimic: A literal inclusion, The Spy can only be successful if this character mimics the behaviors of the Doctor.

[Forge Post 24528](#): **A game about small group dynamics.** The principal game is sharing of information between members of a small group. This is an exciting topic for me, since it makes game play and strategy as deep as social nuance allows. Players always bring with them the experiences and relationships that will help them to understand each other's *intentions*.

An Inside Perspective

This is a replayable parlor game, but it was designed with the intention of putting the players into a single, particularly unusual situation: creating a room full of liars. This is [Scenario B](#), and it will only work once.

In "A Delicate Operation" the play is social and creative. Structure is kept to a minimum, so players are rewarded for developing their own ideas. The spy is literally allowed to cheat. Any way they can. It's a very creative, liberating charge. In my opinion, the spy is the most fun character. So why can't everyone be the spy? Because there needs to be order and structure? *What about just the assumption that there is order and structure?*

A delicate Operation trains the players to think the Spy is out classed, and operating alone. Scenario B secretly changes that.

"[Scenario B](#)" is what this game was written for.

The normal game teaches the spy caution, careful mimicry, and fear of the Doctor's watchful eye. When Scenario B is played, the dangerous Doctors are almost all removed. Different groups pick up on the change in different ways, and watching players discover the change during play is wonderful.

As you read "A Delicate Operation", think about how your friends would deal with the challenge of transmitting a secret code across a table in plain English. How would you do it?

Roles

There are two roles players can have in “A Delicate Operation”: Doctors, or The Spy.

Doctors are skilled medical experts who are working to save the King in order to prevent war and save Pangaea. Doctors can play any card during the Operation, and they have the ability to undo a mistake during play (the full details appear on their character cards). If that weren’t enough, the Doctor has been tasked with making secret alliances with other nations. This is done by exchanging a *secret word* with contacts during play. The full details of the Doctors’ abilities are written on their character cards.

The Spy is not a medical expert, and he has a disadvantage while participating in the surgery (this is explained on the character card). The Spy is present to hinder the life-saving operation, to tamper with alliances, and to make alliances of their own. Like the Doctors, the Spy is trying to build alliances by exchanging their secret code word with other nations, except any nation that allies with a spy is penalized instead of rewarded.

We’re All Players

A Delicate Operation is a Parlor game for 3 or more players, though it does hit a sweet spot at about 5.

The included sheets have room for 6 players, though more can be included by adding on score boxes, and making up [Nation names](#).

The game requires a balanced distribution of Doctors to Spies, it is recommended there be 1 Spy for every 4 Doctors.

Because players pick their own Secret Words and the Public Keys are selected at random from the deck, there does not need to be any difference between players. There is no Narrator or Game Master. All participants are equal players.



The Operation

The Operation is the cooperative card game used to represent the work that must be done to save the King's life. Players place cards on the table to build a vascular system that delivers medicine to the King's wounds.

Setup

The King♥ is placed in the center of the play area. This represents the King's heart, and it must get connected to his wounds for them to heal.

The King is then flanked on 2 opposite sides by the Queen♥ and Ace♥, to start.

The top 4 cards are then drawn off of the *main deck*. All 4 are placed face up at LEAST 1 foot away from the *King♥*. Each card must also be at LEAST 1 foot away from each other. *These represent the King's wounds.*

Players each draw a hand of 3 cards from the *main deck*.

The next 10 cards are drawn off the deck, and are placed in a face up pile on the play area. This is the *draw deck*, where players will pull cards during play. Once it is empty, play is paused (and the timer as well) for discussion.

The timer is set for 20 minutes.

Players tear and distribute their [Public Keys](#)

Players receive their character cards, and fold them in half

Players receive their Nation Name, and write it on the back of

their character card, where other players can see it.

Players select and record their [Secret Word](#)



Wound



Wound

=>12"

The King's Heart



main deck



draw deck



Wound

Wound



Goal

Players are competing versus the clock to build their structure such that it *touches* the injury cards, and the *first* card that overlaps the injury is one of matching VALUE or SUIT. If all 4 wound cards are matched up with an appropriate treatment, the players save the King's life; the Doctors each earn a point, and the game is scored.

If the timer runs out before the King's wounds are treated or the players cause two untreated aggravated wounds, the King dies. Without the Great Peacemaker, Nuclear Armageddon is unavoidable. The Spy receives two points, and the game is scored.

How to Play

There is no turn order; players may play their cards any time they are able. Players may play a card out of their hand whose value is *adjacent* (either 1 value above or 1 value below) a card already in play. *In the example 1 below, the Ace ♣ is being played off of the King ♦. Notice how it does not overlap any invalid cards.*

The cards at the top and bottom of the spectrum (ace and 2) can be played off of each other.

Cards must be placed on the board such that two corners of the card *overlap* with the existing structure.

Cards cannot be played that *touch* non-adjacent cards. *In example 3 below, the 2 ♦ is played in such a way that it touches the King ♦, and touches the 2 ♠. This is illegal.*



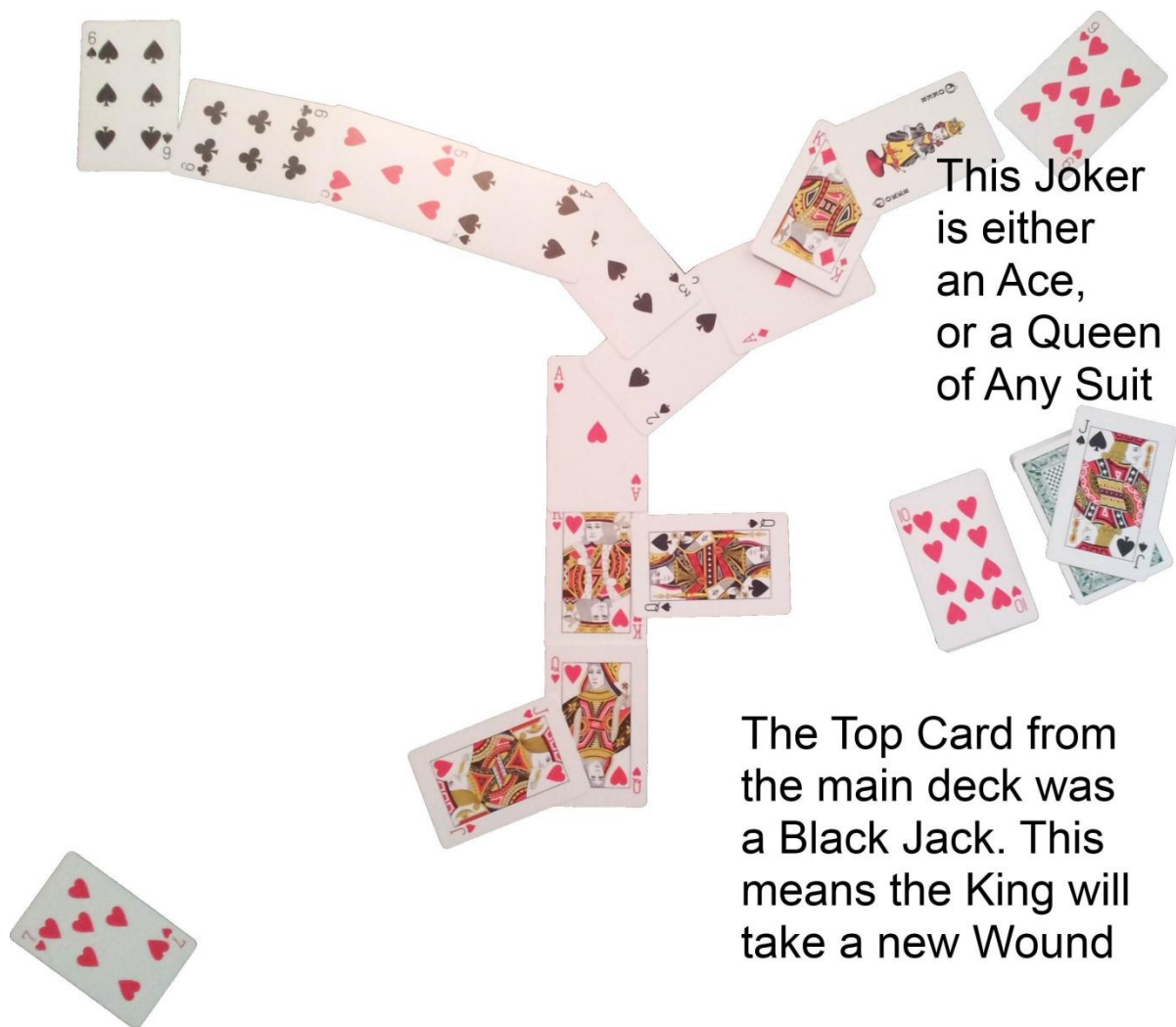
Once a card is played, the player draws a new card from the draw deck.

When the draw deck is empty, play is paused for Discussion.

If at any time no players are able or willing to play a card, all players discard their hands face down and draw a new hand of 3 cards from the *main deck*. The *draw deck* stays as it is. Discarded cards cannot be viewed.

If the end of the main deck is reached and all four wounds haven't been reached, the king gets worse, and an additional wound is placed between 6" and 12" of the *King ♥*. Two cards at random are permanently removed from the discard pile. These are not looked at. The deck is then shuffled, and play continues.

The *Joker* is a wild card. It counts as any card that could reasonably be played in that position. It maintains its wild status until a connecting card is played. At that point, there is only one card that the Joker can logically be. Jokers are powerful, and dangerous. When a Joker is played, look at and discard the top card off of the *main deck*. If the card is black, the King receives an additional wound, placed between 6" and 12" of the *King♥*. The Doctor cannot undo the play of a Joker.



This Joker is either an Ace, or a Queen of Any Suit

The Top Card from the main deck was a Black Jack. This means the King will take a new Wound

Treating Wounds

As players reach the King's wounds by playing cards across the play area, the card they play that overlaps the wound will either *stabilize*, *heal*, or *aggravate* the wound.

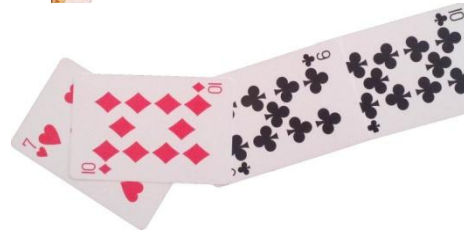
If a wound is matched with a card of the same **VALUE**, the wound is **healed**. A Healed wound will negate an aggravated wound.



If a wound is matched with a card of the same **SUIT**, it is **stabilized**. If all of the King's wounds are stabilized or healed, the Operation is a success.



If a wound is matched with a card of a **different value or suit**, the wound is **aggravated**. If the King has 2 aggravated wounds (and no healed wounds), he immediately dies.



Example: The game cycles through the main deck and the players earn an additional wound on the King. As cards are dealt out, the king has 5 total wounds.

2 are stabilized, one is healed. Two are untreated. In order to win, the players need to build their structure out to reach both wounds. One must be stabilized, but because they have a Heal already, the players can still win if the final wound is aggravated.

Discussion

Whenever the *Draw Deck* is emptied (every 10 plays), the timer is paused, and the players have a discussion. This is a good opportunity for players to try to share their secret words with certain people. Draw and discard the top card off of the *main deck*. Depending on the suit, read the following:

If the card was a ♥ card, the bleeding is severe, and the players will need to wait for bleeding to stop. Players have a short discussion about the plant life from their home countries. This discussion is not complete until each player has contributed to the conversation.

If the card was a ♠ card, the King's anesthesia needs to be adjusted, and this will take a few minutes. Players have a short discussion about weather in their home countries. This discussion is not complete until each player has contributed to the conversation.

If the card was a ♦ card, the king's blood pressure is too high. The players will have to wait as his blood to drain a little. During this time, Players have a discussion about popular foods from their home countries. This discussion is not complete until each player has contributed to the conversation.

If the card was a ♣ card, the King is suffering from a seizure. Players will have to put a sock in his mouth and wait for him to ride through it. During this time they have a discussion about the animals in their home countries. This discussion is not complete until each player has contributed to the conversation.



Secret Words

Building alliances and intercepting secret communication is crucial to scoring in the game of “A Delicate Operation”. Each player has their own secret word that they are trying to share with some players, and keep from the others.

Each player has a Secret Word that they choose at the start of the game.

Players receive one point for Each Secret Word that they write down during the game.

If you think you’ve intercepted a Nation’s Secret Word, record it on your Score Sheet. For each secret word you’ve found, you will receive a point at the end of the game. This is in addition to the Allies bonus if you both exchange words.

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| Nation | Lorem | Ipsum | Dolor | Sit | Amet | Tempor |
| Secret Word | | | | | | |

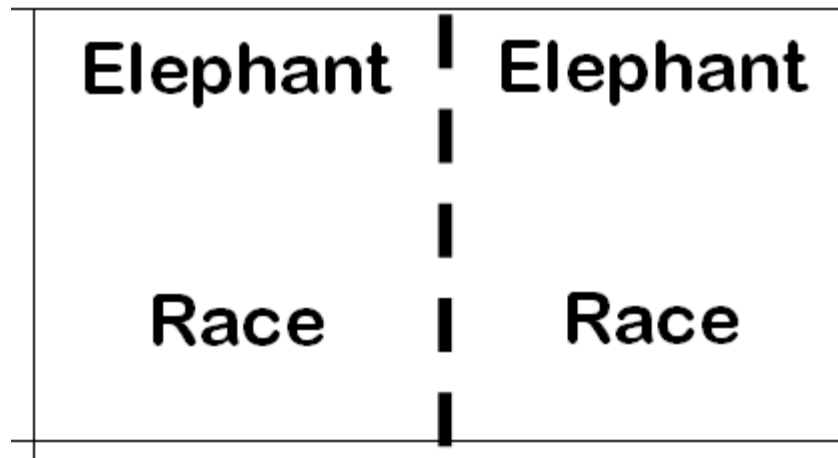
When you and another player *exchange* secret words, you become Allies, and will receive 2 extra points during scoring.

The secret to winning “A Delicate Operation” is making Alliances. Be cautious though. If every player simply tells everyone what their secret key is, all players would get the same score from the alliances, and it would be a wash.

A viable strategy to start with is to look for a player who is paying attention. Transmit your secret key to them and use a subtle gesture, like a wink to indicate its significance. Meanwhile, pay attention for the other players who may have picked up on it. Since they already have YOUR secret key, try using your Public Key to proposition them for an exchange.

Public Keys

Each Player has a set of *Public Key Words* that they share with each other nation.



This card is torn down the middle.

One half is given to another player, the other is kept.

Every player will have a unique Public Key for each other player in the game. These are two words that can be used as a call and response to indicate something. This gives every pair of players a method for secretly signaling each other, as long as they can find a way to determine who each Key is connected to...

Public Keys are distributed during setup. The first player receives a number of cards equal to the number of players, minus 1 ($n-1$). They rip their cards in half, and give half to each other player.

The second player receives one less card, since they already have one with the first player ($n-2$). They rip the cards in half, and give half to the other player (except player 1).

The third player received one less than the last ($n-3$). They tear their cards, and share with everyone but players 1 and 2.

This process continues until all players have one public key paired with each other player in the game.

The War (Scoring the Game)

Regardless of the King's health at the end of the game, the winner of "A Delicate Operation" is the nation that is best prepared for war, by knowing the most secrets, and having the most allies.

Before the game is complete, all players should be reminded to record the secret keys, and their suspicions for spies.

For each other Nation's *secret word* you have recorded

+1 to your score

If you and another player both recorded each other's secret words, you are allies.

+2 points to your score

Scores can also be augmented by the following events:

Successfully identifying another player as a spy

-1 to their score

Incorrectly identifying another player as a spy

-1 to your score

Forming an Alliance with a Spy

-1 to your score (in addition to the allies bonus)

The King is saved

+1 to score for each Doctor

The King dies

+1 to score for the Spy

[Play Props]

**The following pages have the
printable cards and sheets
necessary for play.**

Doctor

You are a Doctor from one of the Nations of Pangaea, Your goal is to save the King's life.

You are an expertly trained surgeon, and may use all cards to their full advantage during the Surgery. You may also **undo the most recent play** by touching the offending card with one hand, and raising the other, and saying "Stop". This will effectively stop the other players, and the Doctor can explain his case about why the play should be undone, and immediately take the card into his hand. This may only be done with the last card played.

Notes

Cheat Sheet

Players have a hand size of 3

Play any time, off of an adjacent card

When you play a card, draw a card from the *draw deck*.

When the Draw deck is empty, play pauses for a short Discussion.

Touching a wound with a mismatched card **aggravates the Wound**

Matching SUIT **stabilizes the wound**

Matching VALUE **heals the wound** (negates an aggravated wound)

When all players choose not to play, all cards are discarded, and players draw new hands from the *main deck*.

Score Break Down

+1 per Secret Word recorded

+2 per Alliance

-1 if allied with Spy

-1 to Spy per player that identifies them

-1 for false accusation of spy

King is Saved= +1 to Doctors; King Dies= +1 to Spy

Your Nation:

Your Secret Word:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|------|--------|
| Nation | Lorem | Ipsum | Dolor | Sit | Amet | Tempur |
| Secret Code | | | | | | |

Spy

Your earlier assassination attempt on the King has failed, but you have one more chance. You were sent to the Peace Summit under cover as an influential doctor, and had the good fortune of being asked by the Peace Committee to tend to the King's wounds in the Operating room. This is your chance to finish the job. Carefully.

Your Nation also needs you forge alliances with a contacts at the Summit. This will be crucial to surviving the war you are working so hard to cause. If your contacts suspect that you are a Spy, they will have nothing to do with you.

You have only received basic medical training as you prepared for this mission. As such, you are forbidden from playing (_____) suited cards during the operation. As a spy, **you are allowed to cheat**. Mimic the Doctors as best you can, and do whatever is necessary to exchange your Secret Word with as many players as you can.

Notes

Cheat Sheet

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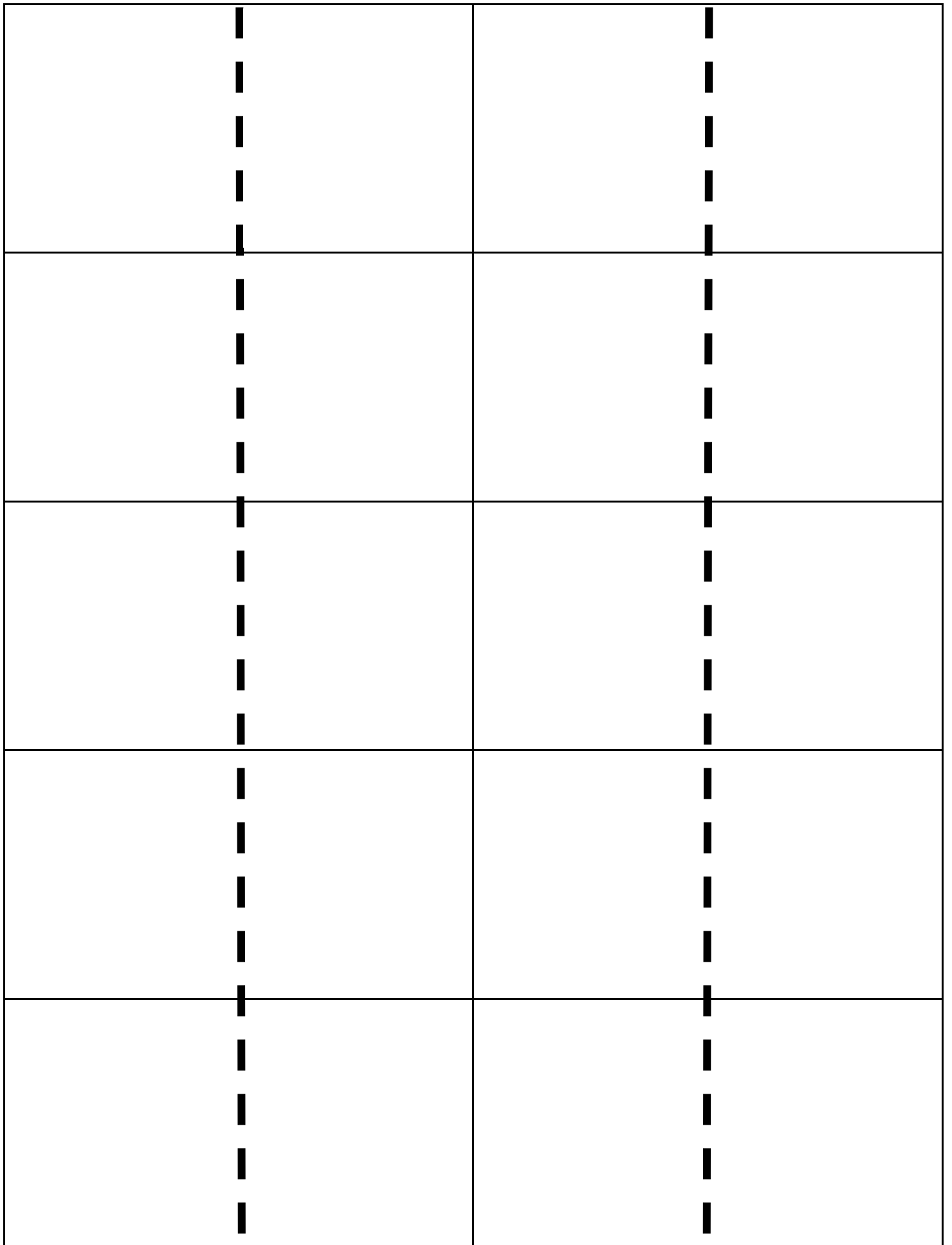
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| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|------|--------|
| Nation | Lorem | Ipsum | Dolor | Sit | Amet | Tempur |
| Secret Code | | | | | | |



| | | | | | |
|---------------|--|---------------|----------------|--|----------------|
| Laser | | Laser | Pickle | | Pickle |
| Beam | | Beam | Pots | | Pots |
| Pliers | | Pliers | Guitar | | Guitar |
| Hammer | | Hammer | Drums | | Drums |
| Nun | | Nun | Corpse | | Corpse |
| Priest | | Priest | Crypt | | Crypt |
| Barrel | | Barrel | Bubble | | Bubble |
| Fish | | Fish | Trouble | | Trouble |
| Test | | Test | Mutton | | Mutton |
| Pants | | Pants | Silo | | Silo |

| | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Value | Value | Elephant | Elephant |
| Insult | Insult | Race | Race |
| Creeper | Creeper | Clown | Clown |
| Hunt | Hunt | Hair | Hair |
| Train | Train | Saint | Saint |
| Tracks | Tracks | Death | Death |
| Bag | Bag | Shout | Shout |
| Paper | Paper | Silence | Silence |
| Nuts | Nuts | Pill | Pill |
| Birds | Birds | Medicine | Medicine |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|--|----------------|---------------|--|---------------|
| Cheese | | Cheese | Day | | Day |
| Dairy | | Dairy | Heat | | Heat |
| Bulb | | Bulb | Window | | Window |
| Break | | Break | Door | | Door |
| Binge | | Binge | Trophy | | Trophy |
| Vomit | | Vomit | Medal | | Medal |
| Grease | | Grease | Sled | | Sled |
| Fall | | Fall | Winter | | Winter |
| Peanuts | | Peanuts | Asylum | | Asylum |
| Allergy | | Allergy | Beds | | Beds |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| Eagle | | Eagle | Smoke | | Smoke |
| Trout | | Trout | Fire | | Fire |
| Forest | | Forest | Sheep | | Sheep |
| Wood | | Wood | Wool | | Wool |
| Mountain | | Mountain | Riverbed | | Riverbed |
| Stone | | Stone | Bricks | | Bricks |
| Belt | | Belt | Corset | | Corset |
| Buckle | | Buckle | Garter | | Garter |
| Electric | | Electric | Ice | | Ice |
| Motor | | Motor | Danger | | Danger |

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| King | King | School | School |
| Throne | Throne | Uniform | Uniform |
| Bullfight | Bullfight | Graffiti | Graffiti |
| Airhorn | Airhorn | Murder | Murder |
| Dolphin | Dolphin | Bath | Bath |
| Porpoise | Porpoise | Shower | Shower |
| Tiger | Tiger | Spy | Spy |
| Traps | Traps | Bomb | Bomb |
| Doctor | Doctor | Criminal | Criminal |
| Noble | Noble | Violent | Violent |

[TOP SECRET]

Scenario B

“A Delicate Operation” is a parlor game focused on communication and body language between players. Subtle cues can reveal a Spy without the player even saying a word. Scenario B plays with the idea that every player has something to hide.

After several rounds of play, try out this scenario.

Setup is identical to the normal game except:

There is one Doctor for every four Spies.

This must be kept a secret, players should believe the game balance is normal when they start the game.

The Doctor may be the player reading this, or it might be a third party who is not privy to the truth. If a Doctor knows that all other players are Spies, that Doctor cannot identify other players as spies during the score phase.

Even Spies earn the -1 score penalty for allying with Spies.

Credits

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