



Djambi

Rules of Play

[For those who care about such things]

Djambi

The chessboard of Machiavelli

Rules of the game (based on the original in French)

Designer's Note

Djambi was invented by Jean Anesto in 1975 to illustrate, using amazing looking pieces (these designed by Jean-Claude Adelman) and carefully crafted rules of play, all wrongdoings in politics. If you find that we have missed some shadowy areas in our attempt, you probably have the makings of an excellent Djambi player.

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Overview

1.1. The Players

The public is aware, or at least suspects, that politics is not the most pristine of pastimes. The former United States President, Ronald Reagan, observed “It has been said that politics is the second oldest profession. I have learned that it bears a striking resemblance to the first.” As an additional example, it is also most instructive to visualize political parties as akin to rowdy schoolboys scuffling on the playground, who when confronted by a higher authority simply offer, “If you think I look bad, you should see the other guy.”

Each player leads one of the parties in the running. All have the same goal: to conquer and obtain absolute power by all means (conflict, coalitions, negotiations, intoxication), that is, to eliminate all the leaders of the other parties. But, if the exercise of absolute power is a solitary pleasure, its conquest is a team sport: the key to success relies on knowing how to unite to gain power. But to reign without sharing, one must also know how to betray at the proper time...

If our allies prove treacherous, we can always start again with other partners: That's why four players best fill the closed field of the game. With three players, the clash is somewhat cruder but remains fertile in twists. With two, it is better to play Shogi.

1.2. The Pieces

To achieve his goals, each player has the conventional weapons of the political fight: the manipulation, the provocation, recovery, scandal, activism, and political crime. As many archetypes represented by the different pieces constitute his party.

The race for power has nothing to do with the traditional props of visible extravagance: gala dinners and famous entertainers. Physical liquidation threatens each of these coins. Everybody knows that in politics the dead are often as cumbersome as the living; therefore, any killed piece remains on the ground: the corpse is, simply, returned after the deed. This is indicated by turning the piece upside down. Everyone can then appropriate it. Killed pieces all share the same color: that of impotence.

1.3. The Labyrinth

The central square, also called the Labyrinth, is a springboard, not a shelter.

All pieces can cross the Labyrinth without stopping there when it is empty.

Only a party leader can occupy it permanently: it is the seat of the legal power, the traditional springboard towards the absolute power. Indeed, the party that has managed to place its leader therein enjoys a real control over the political checkerboard as will be seen later.

Even though a leader established on the central square enjoys a preponderance of influence, he does not inherit immunity from all harm, because most of the members of the opposing parties can kill or dislodge him.

The Labyrinth is off limits for returning the corpse of a killed piece, with the lone exception detailed in section 3.2.1, *Killing a Leader in Power* when the Leader is killed by a Reporter.

At the beginning of the game, the race for power is not always as lucrative as one might think. Opposition unites opponents like hungry wolves to the hunt.

1.4. The Balance

In the course of the game with each new development, alliances may be formed or dissolved publicly or in secret at the whim of the players and at any moment. The players make wonderful offers, solemn oaths, vile threats, cryptic pronouncements, and veiled intimidations in the presence of their opponents or whispered to particular players.

No rule limits these public or occult maneuvers. Bullying, intoxication, and betrayal are not here more than elsewhere, proscribed ...

It is recommended to avoid attacks ad hominem during the assessments which tend to hold to account companies driven off the paths of virtue, "*per qualche via scellerata*" (for some wicked way). In the end, however, it is better to ascend on the corpses of others, for if they are yet alive they may still grasp at your ankles.

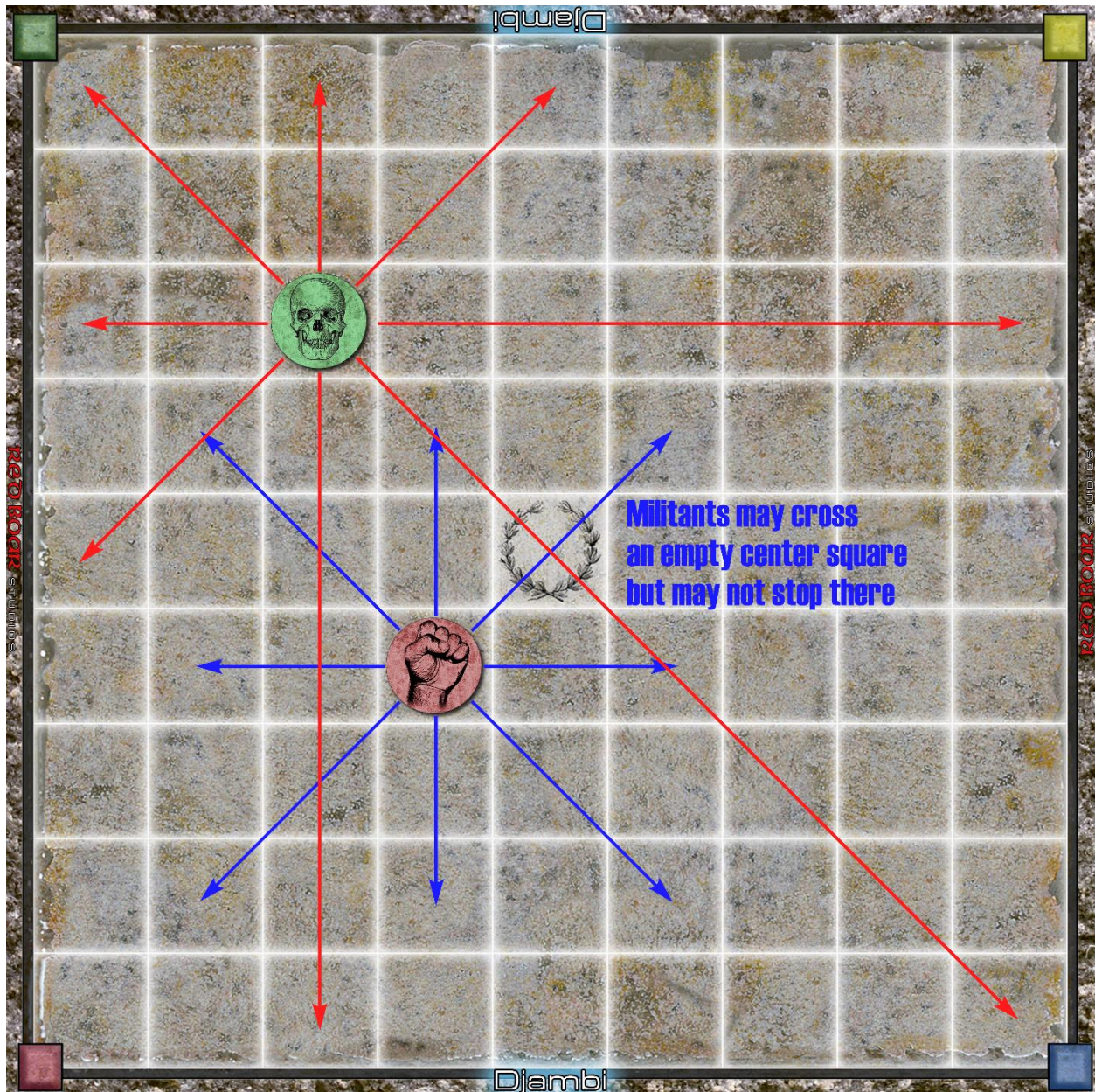
1.5. Turns

Red starts, then blue, then yellow, then green, and so on counterclockwise.

As long as the central square, or the seat of power is vacant, the players each intervene in turn by moving a piece left alive in their party. As soon as a Leader moves to power (by entering the Labyrinth), his party plays again after each other player. As soon as he gives it up (which can be a very profitable maneuver in some cases), he resumes his turn in the normal order of play: red, blue, yellow, and green.

1.6. Moving Pieces

The pieces are alive and may move in their turn. All the pieces move like the Queen of chess, except the militant whose course is limited to two squares.



The race to power is not a game of checkers: no piece can jump another. They move only in diagonals or in open columns; however, any living or dead piece is an impassable obstacle.

When the pieces are taken (killed), they are returned to the field as corpses (turn them over to indicate they are now dead and may not vote except in certain districts). The backs of all the pieces are the same. Any piece taken is returned by its executioner and replaced on the field.

Thus the dead, once placed on the ground, belong to everyone and can be handled by all the players. All the dead without exception end up on the ground.

The general action of a piece being played is to move and then either kill, relocate, both kill and relocate, or move only. Each piece follows specific rules that determine what it can do, following the pattern suggested by its occupation.

There are special considerations when manipulating or killing within the Labyrinth. A dedicated section follows the detailed description of the pieces to address them, as these considerations rely on a solid understanding of how the pieces move normally before one can apprehend why we need the exceptions in this situation and how to properly execute them. No pun intended, but hopefully it provides a humorous interlude from these tedious rules.

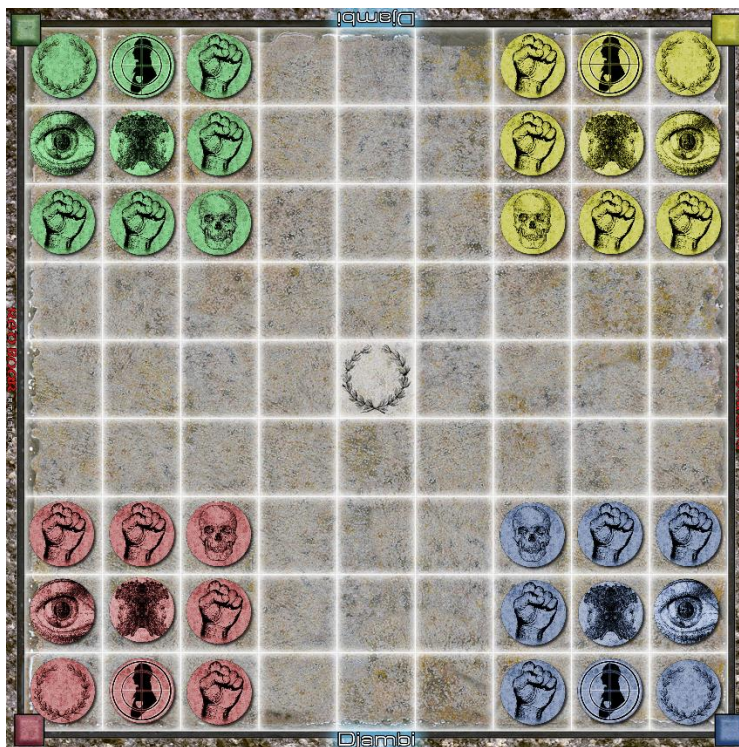
2. Details

2.1. The Board

The board has 81 squares.

The central square is the Labyrinth, the seat of power. When a living Leader occupies and controls it he receives a bonus, which consists of earning an extra turn after each player except himself. If only two players remain, he gains two consecutive moves on his turn.

The other squares are the field, or may also be referred to as the ground.



Initial piece setup.
Note the Labyrinth
in the central square.

2.2. Two Types of Pieces

The game consists of 36 pieces (9 pieces x 4 players), namely:

- 1 Leader,
- 1 Assassin,
- 1 Reporter,
- 1 Necromobile,
- 1 Provocateur and
- 4 Militants, per player.

The pieces within each party comprise two general types: *movers* and *killers*.

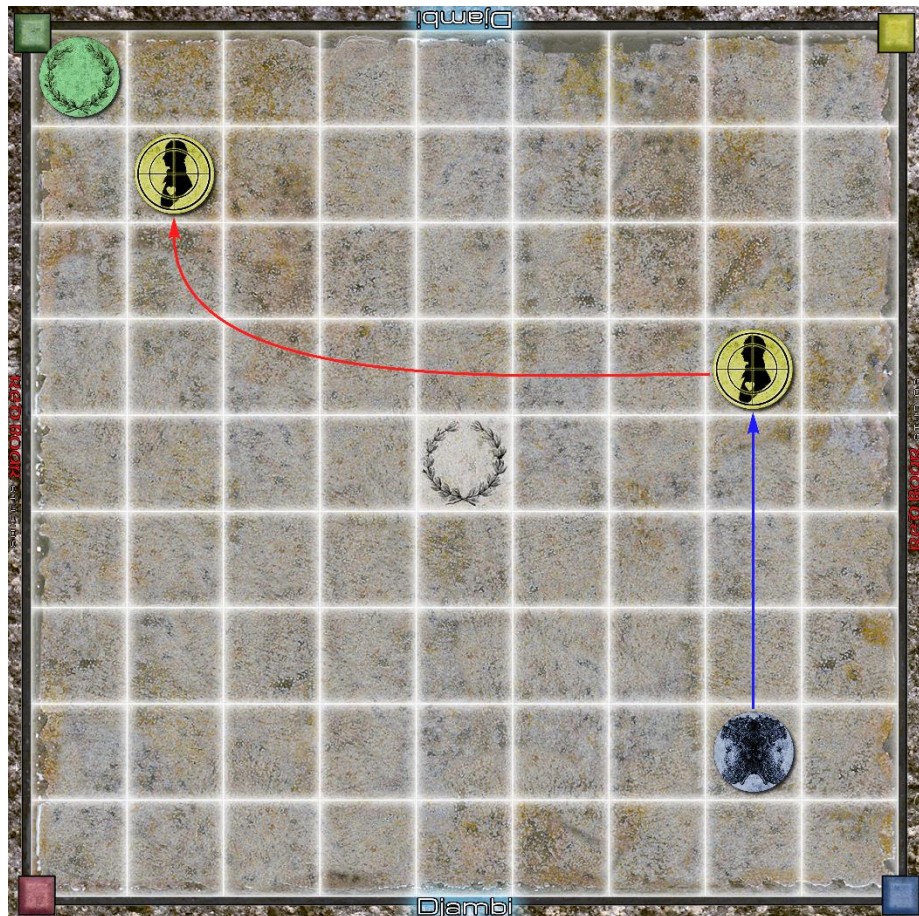
2.3. The Movers

The Movers: Those who do not kill.

2.3.1. Provocateur



The Provocateur does not kill: he is a manipulator, a mover of the living. The Provocateur takes the place of a living piece not belonging to his own camp. The piece taken is placed without being killed, so remaining alive and able to subsequently act, on any free square of the field, where the placement benefits the party's interest. The Provocateur cannot, in this game, manipulate his own parties' pieces. This is the most useful piece at the beginning of the game.

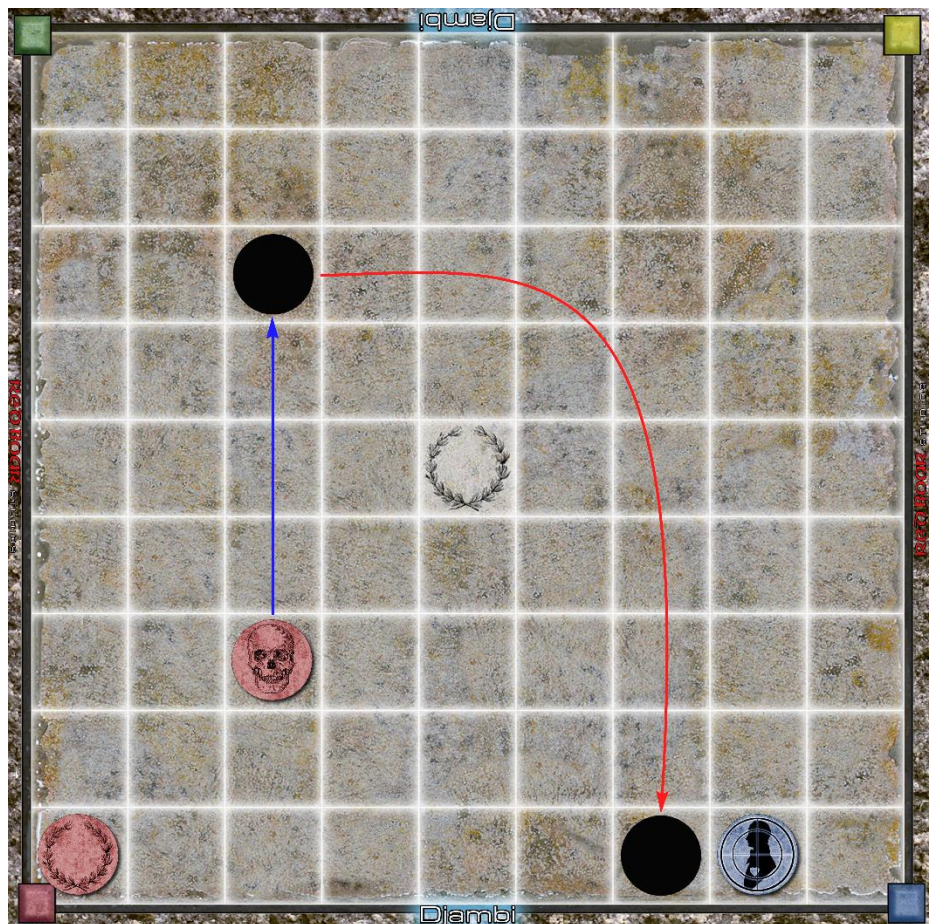


2.3.2. Necromobile



The Necromobile does not kill: he is a salvager, a mover of the dead. He uses, for the benefit of his party, any corpse lying on the ground, taking its place. The corpse is then placed, remaining dead without the possibility of zombie animation or network syndication, on any free square of the field, where the placement benefits the party's interest. A corpse can be either an obstacle or a guarantee.

The Necromobile may thus clear a path for a friendly piece or block an opponent. Being an essential piece particularly at the end of the game when the dead outnumber the living, it is advisable to avoid unnecessary risk with him.



2.4. The Killers

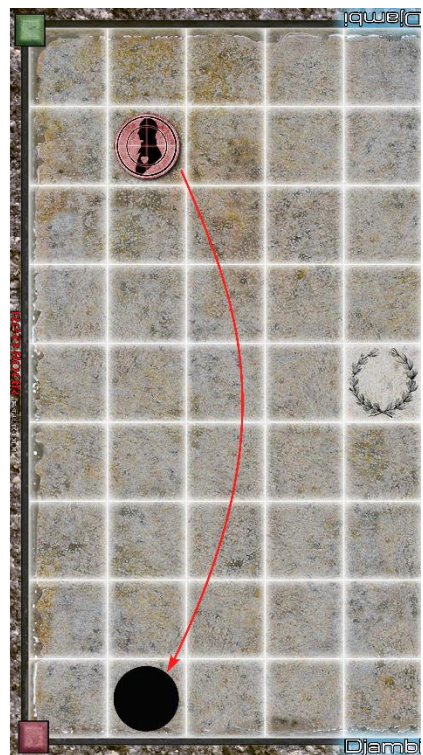
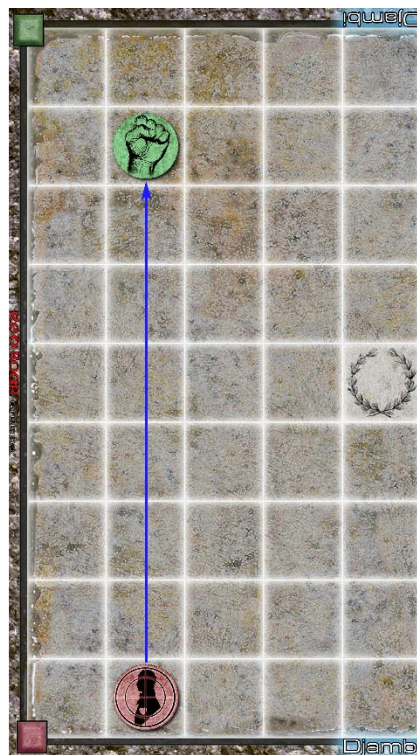
The Killers: Those who kill.

2.4.1. Assassin



As the name suggests, he may kill any enemy piece. But he cannot disguise his crime by placing the corpse wherever it seems beneficial to him on the ground. Instead, his victim takes his place from which he started his move. A powerful instrument, the Assassin leaves traces and creates embarrassment.

When the Assassin kills, he takes the place of a coin and the one killed is then placed in the starting square from where the Assassin moved from. For this is a political assassin, not a ninja, more skilled in making a mess than in secrecy.



2.4.2. Militants



These eternal sacrificers advance with counted steps. The Militant has a course limited to two squares (minimum one square). The Militant can cross the empty Labyrinth. Their limited march makes them tools that parties use happily, alive for mischief or dead as martyrs.

These unheralded but courageous and dedicated activists to the Cause can kill any piece on the field, including a Leader. To kill they take the place of a piece, which is then returned and its corpse placed on any open square of the board except the Labyrinth. However, he is forbidden to kill a Leader occupying the Labyrinth as Militants avoid the spotlight of power, preferring to ply their disruptions in places which grant a measure of obscurity. They love the cameras but want to retain their anonymity.

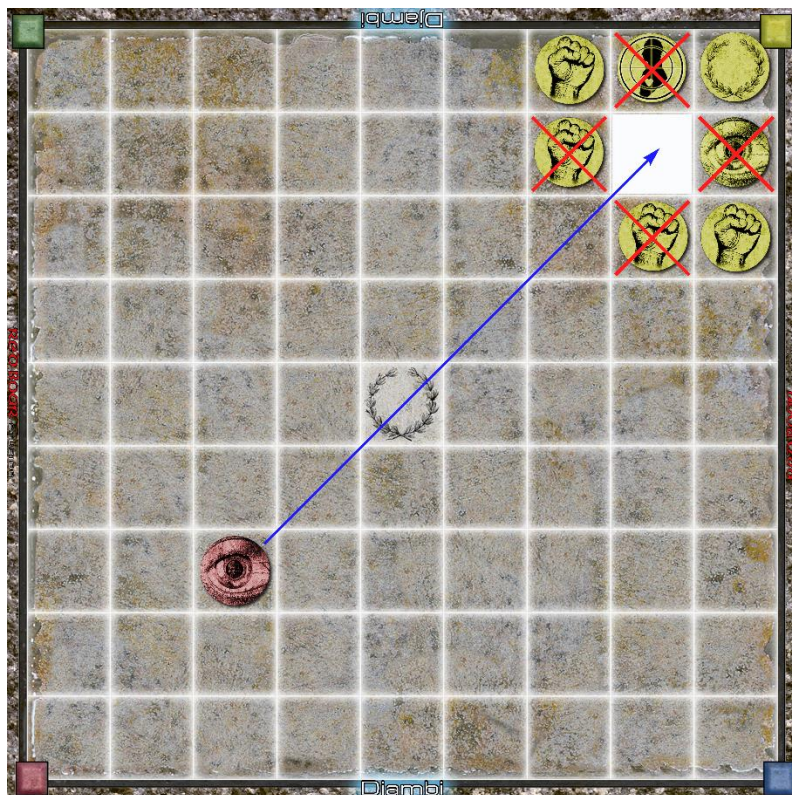
2.4.3. Reporter



A living embodiment of scandal, the Reporter does not kill directly, it splashes destruction round about. The Reporter can only act after a trip. When he has finished his course, he can at that point annihilate an opponent's piece that is on one of the four squares that have a common side with the one he occupies. The Reporter does not take the place of the killed piece, and the victim's corpse is not moved.

For a Reporter to move and to kill, it must be done during a single turn of play. These two actions cannot be spread over two turns. If in a turn, the Reporter moves without killing, he must, on his next turn, move again before he may fulfill his toxic role once more.

If the Reporter was to be manipulated by a Provocateur he cannot act on the piece contiguous to the square where he was parachuted, but will have to move again to regain his poisonous effect. The Reporter acts only at the end of long orchestrated movements conducted by his own hand.



2.4.4. Leader



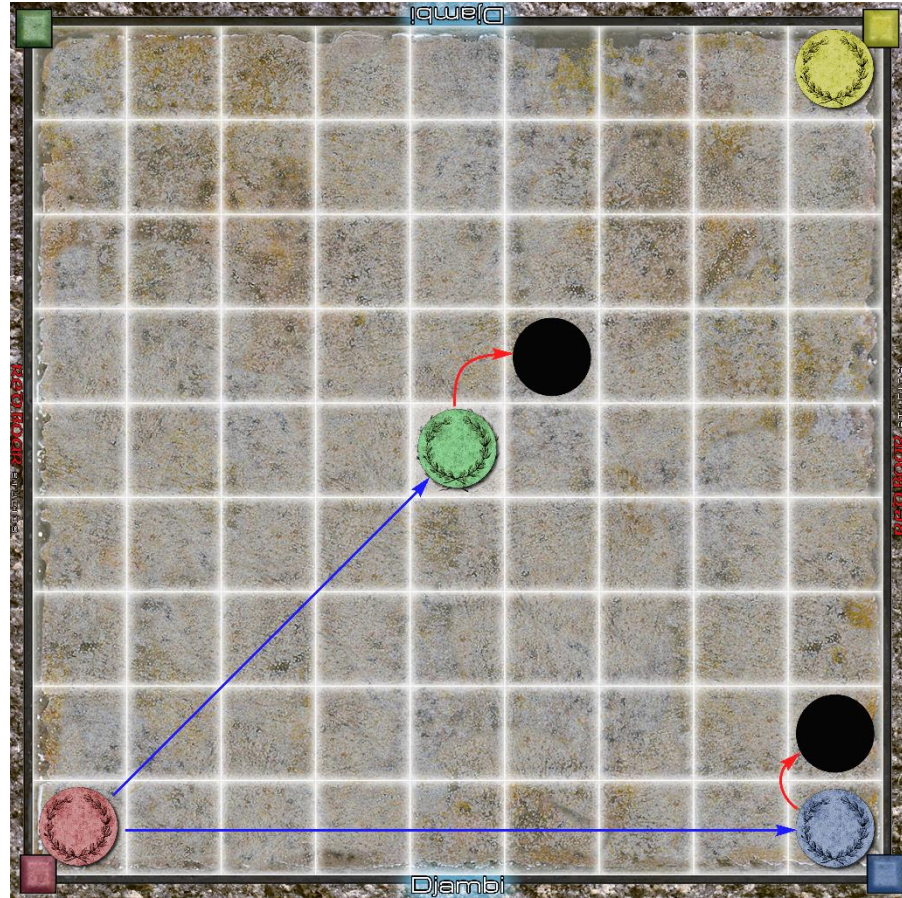
The Leader is the most important piece on the board for a player's party. Should he be lost, the game is lost. The first great irony is that he must risk exposure in order to gain superior power against the other parties.

The Leader can kill any piece occupying the field, then returns his victim's corpse to any free square on the board where the placement benefits the party's interest.

Although the Leader may kill if necessary, his ambition is different and his loss irretrievable. The Leader is the only piece that can install his team in power. For this, he must first place himself on a column or a diagonal leading to the central square (also called the Labyrinth). Upon entering the Labyrinth, he ascends to the seat of power. This provides a significant, though not absolute, superiority. The section "Powers of the Labyrinth" explains these advantages in detail.

To defend himself, the leader in power can then kill with his own hands or have this task carried out by his party associates. By abandoning the Labyrinth to enjoy a punitive expedition, the Leader also loses all privileges that are attached to that location. He risks direct attacks on his person, in addition to attracting the vengeful attention of the party that has just beheaded. The real trick is how to take power ... and keep it.

In such cases, the best solution is often to place (or if it is not suggested to an allied party to do so by proxy), a dead or living piece between the two Leaders.



Here are examples of the Leader killing, then placing the corpses to protect from Yellow. Note that an attack on Green leaves Red open to be attacked by Blue, and an attack on Blue leaves Red open to be attacked by Green. Be careful out there.

Death of a Leader

The player who directly kills a Leader adversary appropriates his pieces which become his satellites. The player whose Leader is killed is eliminated from the game at once.

The second great irony is that if a Leader becomes completely immobilized, fully encircled by corpses either friend or foe that prevent him from moving, and does not have a remaining Necromobile to rescue him by moving the surrounding dead to a more favorable place of rest, he likewise perishes and is eliminated from the game.

But the forces of a Leader who perishes by encirclement become satellites only when a Leader first occupies the Labyrinth or already occupies it following the encirclement. While waiting for devolution (transfer of control), the other players have no ownership over the pieces of the encircled Leader.

3. Powers of the Labyrinth

3.1. Benefits to the Leader

When a Leader occupies the Labyrinth, he gains several additional favorable abilities.

- He gains the ability to move after each of the other party's turns, not just once in the regular sequence of red, blue, yellow, and green.
- The Leader who first occupies the Labyrinth, becomes the owner of the living parts of the encircled Leader(s), if there are some, which become his satellites.
- The encirclement has no effect on a Leader occupying the Labyrinth (on the contrary, it is a guarantee...).

While in the Labyrinth, the Leader may not be attacked by Militants. However, there are other unsavory characters that can, which is dealt with in the next section.

3.2. Attacking within the Labyrinth

3.2.1. Killing a Leader in Power

The Leader tends to seize the Labyrinth and to stay there to take power and keep it. If another Leader kills the Leader in power in a direct engagement, his dead body must be placed on any free square of the field and the victor becomes the new Leader in power.

Special considerations are laid out here to prevent difficulties that would otherwise result from non-Leaders attacking a Leader in the Labyrinth.

The Assassin, the Provocateur, and the Necromobile must enter the Labyrinth in order to act on the Leader stationed there. This triggers a unique sequence to ensure that no non-Leader remains on the seat of power. Any of these pieces must make an immediate additional move within the turn to leave the Labyrinth.

The Assassin can kill a Leader occupying the Labyrinth. After displacing the Leader he must then make an immediate additional move within the turn to leave the Labyrinth before placing the Leader's corpse back on the field.

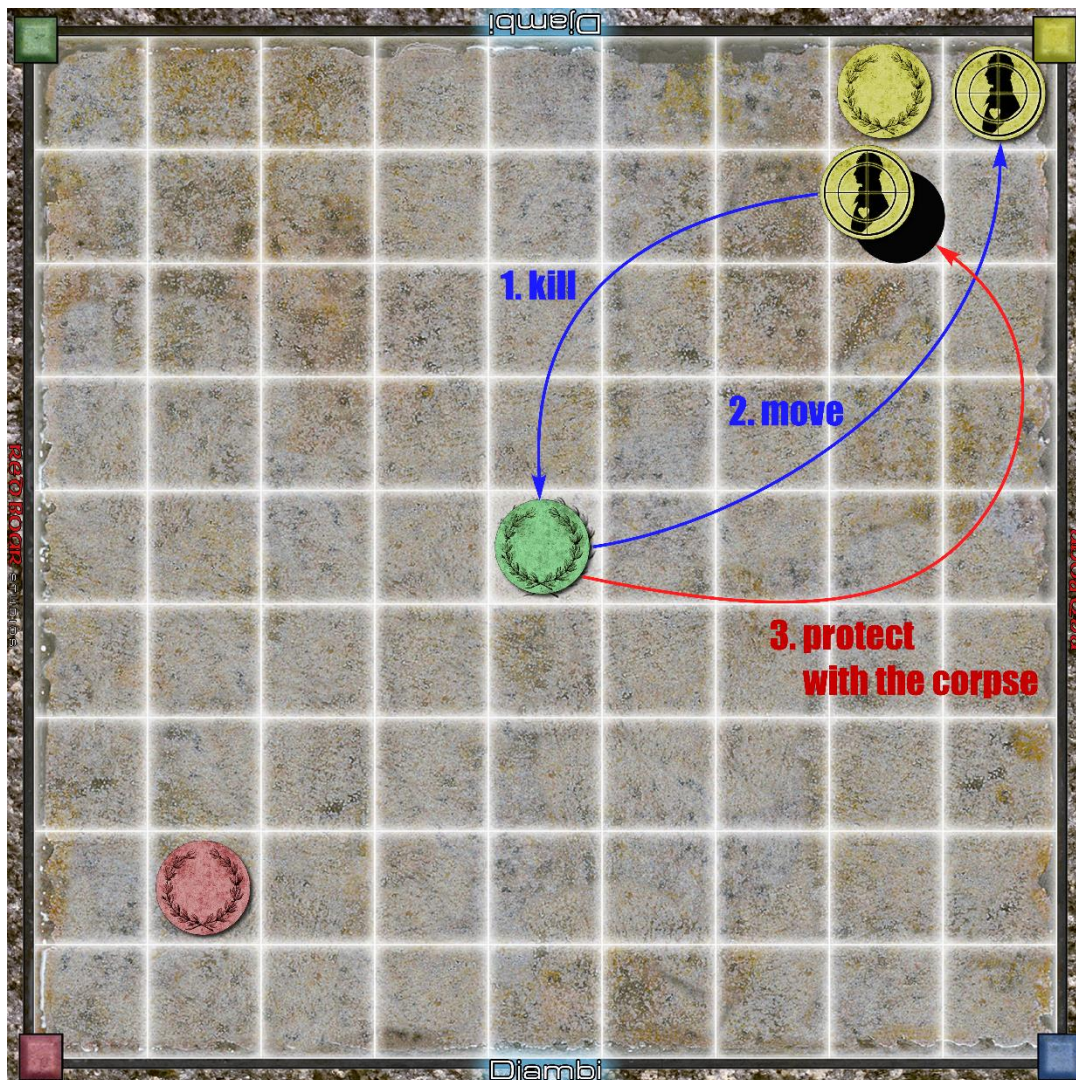
The Provocateur can move a Leader occupying the Labyrinth. After displacing the Leader he must then make an immediate additional move within the turn to leave the Labyrinth before placing the Leader (still living) back on the field.

The Necromobile can move a Leader's corpse occupying the Labyrinth. After displacing the Leader's corpse he must then make an immediate additional move within the turn to leave the Labyrinth before placing the Leader's corpse back on the field.

The Reporter can kill a Leader occupying the Labyrinth. If the report is conducted adjacent to the Labyrinth, this results in a corpse of Leader, immobilized in the central square. Only a Necromobile will then be able to unlock the Labyrinth. The Necromobile must then make an immediate additional move within the turn as described above to leave the Labyrinth.

At the near-certain risk of appearing repetitive, here is the sequence on how to evacuate the Labyrinth after aggression on a Leader by a non-Leader. The respect of this sequence avoids scabrous situations, such as an Assassin in power...

1. Action (kill or move the Leader or a Leader corpse)
2. Exit the Labyrinth using an additional move with the provision that the piece may not kill or relocate any piece at this time, as it has already done so when it entered the Labyrinth. This is a necessary step to evacuate any non-Leader from the seat of power.
3. The player places the Leader, dead or alive, on the field. The corpse of a dead Leader clutters the Labyrinth following a Reporter action: only a Necromobile can unlock this situation of a puppet power moldering in his mausoleum.



4. Three-player games: The Hostage

4.1. Hostage situation

Three-player games: The Hostage

A camp is held hostage: the pieces cannot act on their own and have no power of death.

On the other hand, hostages can be manipulated, killed, and placed by the three players according to their strategy and in accordance with the general rule.

If the Hostage Leader were to be manipulated and placed in the Labyrinth, he only gets the appearance of power because the puppet only serves to obstruct and neutralize the seat of power.

5. Showtime

That's it, the room is up, the curtain may rise, the four parties are encamped in their positions within the closed arena. Whether by election, natural selection, or dereliction, the adversaries will compete for either the love or blind acceptance of the people. For power is an end in itself.

This game is, as far as I can determine, in the Public Domain, and links are freely available to download board and piece images. Red Boar Studios has simply made these graphics and a few updates available in physical boards (high-quality vinyl) and pieces (flat-back buttons).