

Arachne



an abstract strategy game for 2 denizens of the underworld

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Introduction

In the dark tunnels and caves far below the surface of our world, evil creatures lurk in the shadows. Some of them, such as the cunning dark elves, have developed a civilization – and in every successful civilization games are played, so the masterminds can sharpen their wits, while the lower townsmen have their share of distraction.

~~Arachne~~ is such a game: While you can find some elements of the chess game played by the surface dwellers, there are quite a lot of differences, too:

First of all, as a devotion to the Spider Goddess, ~~Arachne~~ is played on the strands of a spider web. Also, the cruel and traitorous nature of the dark elves is reflected in ~~Arachne~~, too: Aside from being able to capture his own playing pieces, each turn, a player gets the option to move and to capture with an opposing playing piece.

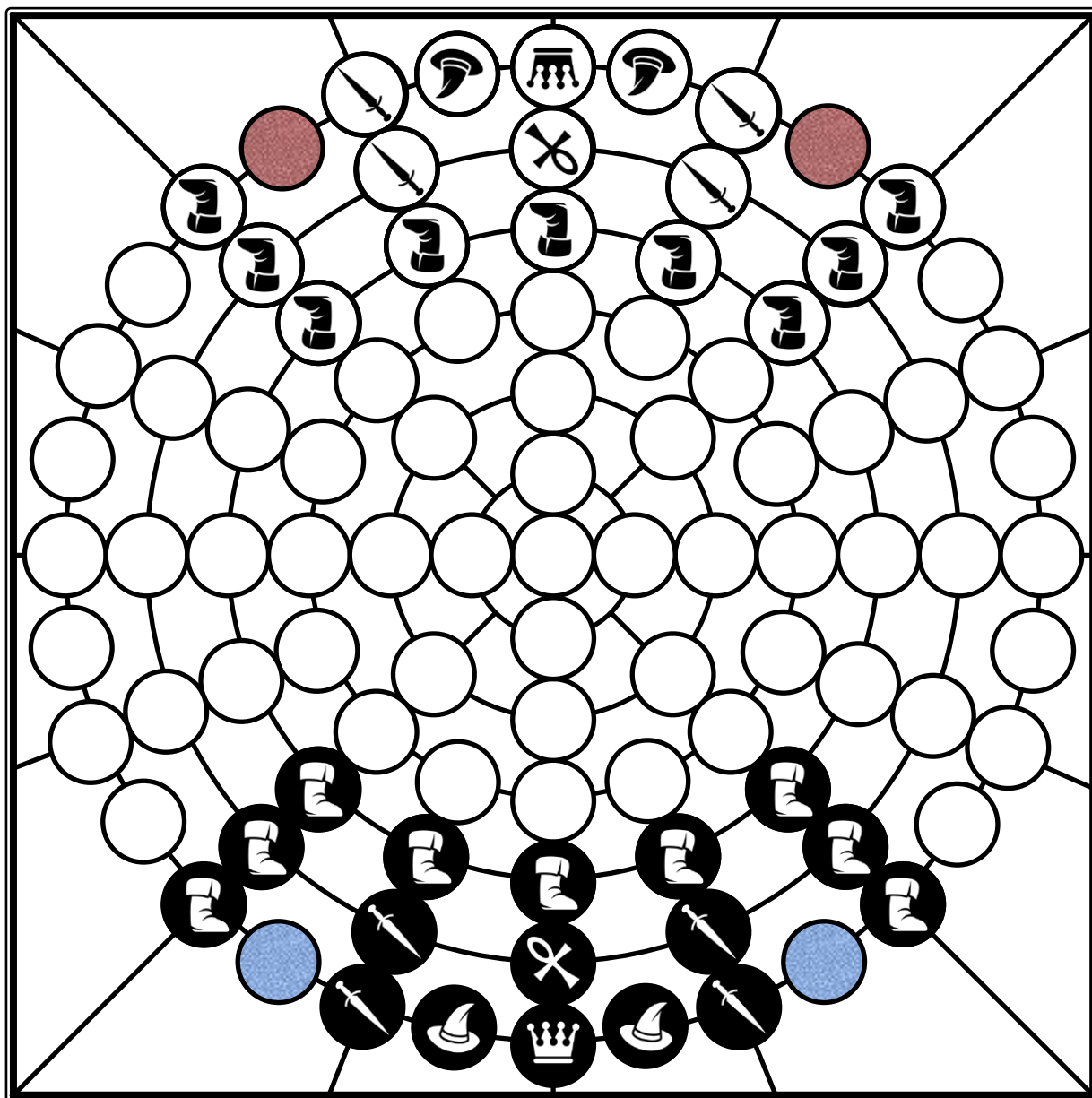
So, whatever you plan; always be aware, that the true enemy strikes from within!

Setup

After cutting out the board and the playing pieces, you might want to glue the board to sturdy cardboard and the playing pieces to wooden discs of two different colours.

To start a game, place the board between the two players.

The white playing pieces start in the red setup zone, the black playing pieces start in the blue setup zone as depicted here:



Also, you will need two dice. If you can, you might want to use two 8 sided dice. If you don't have any of these, two regular 6 sided dice will do as well.

Movement and Capturing

There are two directions, a piece may move: either along the ring it is on or along one of the spokes. A piece may move into spaces that are connected to its current space only. A space is connected, if it either touches a space or if there is a strand leading from one space to the other. A piece may not end its move in the space it started the turn and must end its move in an empty space. The different pieces follow different movement patterns - let's take a closer look at each of them:

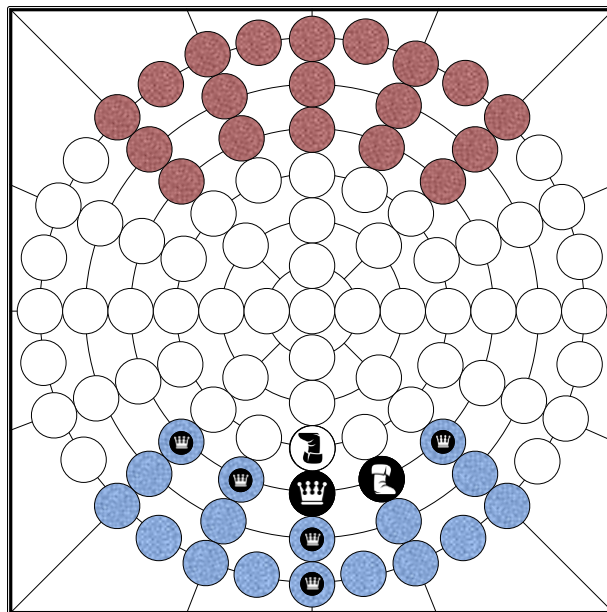
Matron



The Matron is your most important piece since you lose the game as soon as you lose your Matron!

She moves up to 2 spaces into any one direction. She may move across pieces of her colour, but may not move across pieces of the opponent's colour this way.

The Matron is a *rank 5* playing piece.



The black Matron could move over her own Grunt, but not over the white Grunt. She could try to capture the white Grunt, though.

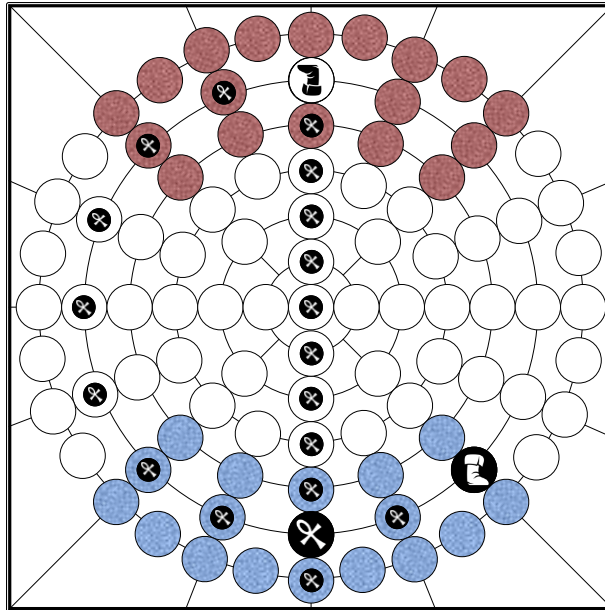
Priestess



The Priestess is your most powerful piece.

She may move into any one direction across any number of spaces not occupied by another piece.

The Priestess is a *rank 4* playing piece.



With the black Grunt blocking her path, the black Priestess can capture the white Grunt from two sides "only".

Wizard



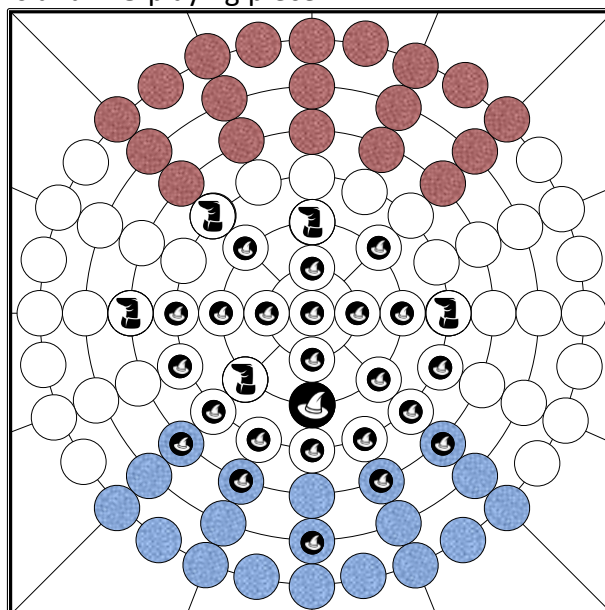
The Wizard can pose a high threat to his enemies.

For a Wizard there are two possible movement patterns:

Either the Wizard moves 1 space into any one direction. If he takes this option, he may *capture* any one playing piece on the spaces surrounding the space he just entered.

Or the Wizard moves exactly 3 spaces. During that movement he may change direction and cross as many occupied spaces as he wants to, as long as he ends his movement in an empty space and does not move across the same space twice. If he takes this option, he may capture any one playing piece on the spaces surrounding the space he just entered but he does not *follow up* upon capturing a playing piece.

The Wizard is a *rank 3* playing piece.



With high mobility comes a high threat: The black Wizard may capture any one of the white Grunts.

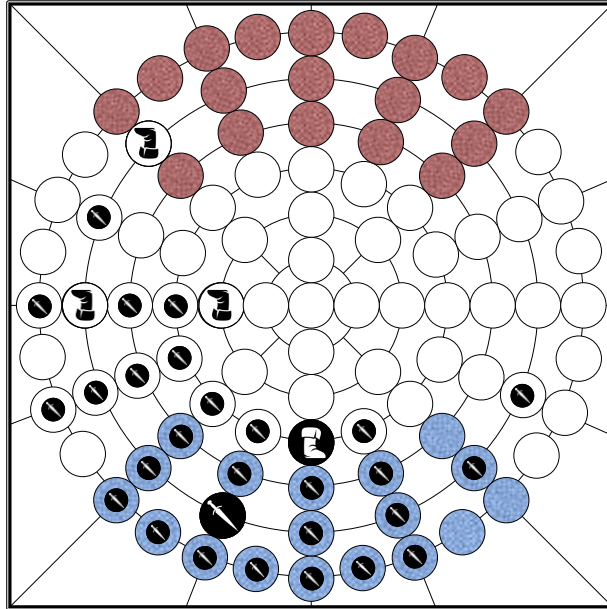
Blademaster



The Blademaster is a highly aggressive piece.

He gets to move twice during the player's turn and may move up to 2 spaces each time into any one direction. He may change direction between both moves, but he may not move across occupied spaces. Also, after each move he may *capture* another playing piece according to the rules.

The Blademaster is a *rank 2* playing piece.



With the path partially blocked by a black Grunt, the black Blademaster can capture up to two of the white Grunts on his turn.

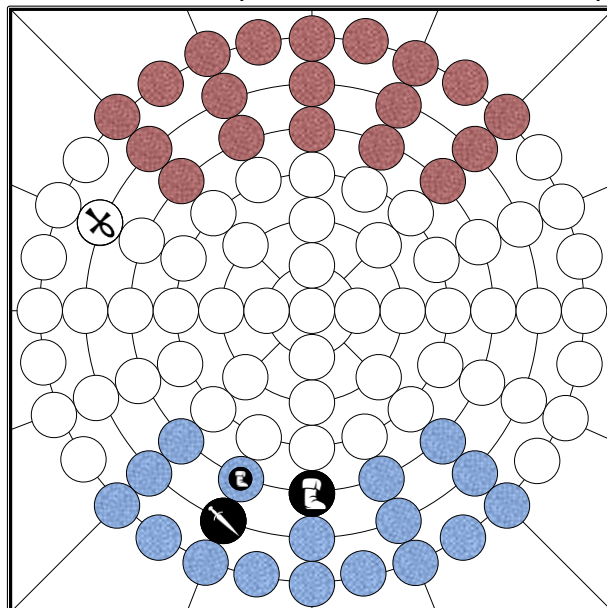
Grunt



A Grunt represents the lowly footman of the army.

He may either move 1 space or try to *capture* another playing piece. If he moves, he has to move on the shortest path towards the closest opposing playing piece. If there are more pieces equally far away, the player may choose where the Grunt moves to. If a Grunt reaches a space, where the opposing Matron, the Priestess or one of the Wizards started, he may be *promoted* and replaced by one of the pieces already captured by the opponent.

At the bottom of the hierarchy, a Grunt does not have any *ranks at all* (= rank 0).



The black Grunt must move towards the white Priestess. Doing so, he grants the black Blademaster a bonus, should the Priestess try to capture the Blademaster.

Before a player does anything else on his turn, he rolls two dice. If those dice show „spiders' eyes“ (a pair of „1“), the player may opt to move any one piece of the opposing player's pieces according to the movement rules of that piece. After moving, he may also *capture* an opposing piece with the piece he just moved, if possible.

This maneuver is called the *turncoat*: One of your soldiers suddenly turns against you and wrecks havoc in your own lines.

However, the Matron can not be a target of the *turncoat* for *capturing*: while she can turn against her own ranks, she is too aware of treachery among her followers and thus can not become *captured* by a *turncoat*!

If the result of the die roll is anything else, the player moves any one of his own pieces according to the rules.

If a playing piece ends its movement next to another piece lying in the same direction of its movement, it may attempt to *capture* that piece. (An exception is the Wizard, who can *capture* into any direction after moving.)

Capturing means, the *captured* piece is removed from the board, while the *capturing* piece *follows up* by moving into the space the *captured* piece just has been removed from.

There are varying rules for capturing a piece – see the section *Variants* for details.

Usually playing pieces only *capture* pieces of the opposing colour. There are two maneuvers, though, where a piece can *capture* a piece of the same colour:

One is the aforementioned *turncoat* maneuver, where you can use one of the opponent's pieces.

The other maneuver is called *punishment*. During a *punishment* a player may capture one of his own playing pieces with one of his playing pieces of a higher *rank*. The *capturing* succeeds automatically and the *capturing* piece *follows up* regularly. A playing piece *captured* this way counts as *captured* by the opponent.

Also note, a player does not necessarily have to move a playing piece. He may skip the movement part and may *capture* immediately, if an opposing playing piece is a valid target for *capturing*.

The game is won if one player manages to *capture* the opposing player's matron. In that case, the *capturing* player wins.

If for any reason the both players agree that they are unable to *capture* each other's matron OR if the same position on the board occurs for the 4th time (since dark elves only have got 4 fingers on a hand), the game is called a draw and there is no winner.

Variants

There are three known variants for capturing, that have been passed down:

1. ~~The strategist~~

In this variant, capturing succeeds automatically.

The dice are only used at the beginning of each player's turn, to determine whether he moves one of his playing pieces or plays a *turncoat*.

2. ~~The convenient~~

In this variant, six sided dice are used during *capturing*.

Capturing does not necessarily succeed automatically. Instead, before *capturing*, a player announces that he is starting an attempt to *capture* a playing piece. The announcing player becomes the *attacking* player, the other player becomes the *defending* player.

Each player takes one of the dice, rolls it, and adds the rank of the according playing piece to the result. (The *defending* player adds the rank of the piece the *attacking* player wants to *capture*, the *attacking* player adds the rank of the *capturing* piece.)

The *defending* player also adds a bonus of 1 for each of his Grunts standing in a space directly connected to the space the targeted playing piece is in.

If the *attacking* player's result is equal to or higher than the *defending* player's result, the *capturing* succeeds and the *attacking* playing piece may follow up as usual.

If the *defending* player's result is higher than the *attacking* player's result, the *capturing* fails and the *attacking* playing piece has to remain in the space it ended its movement.

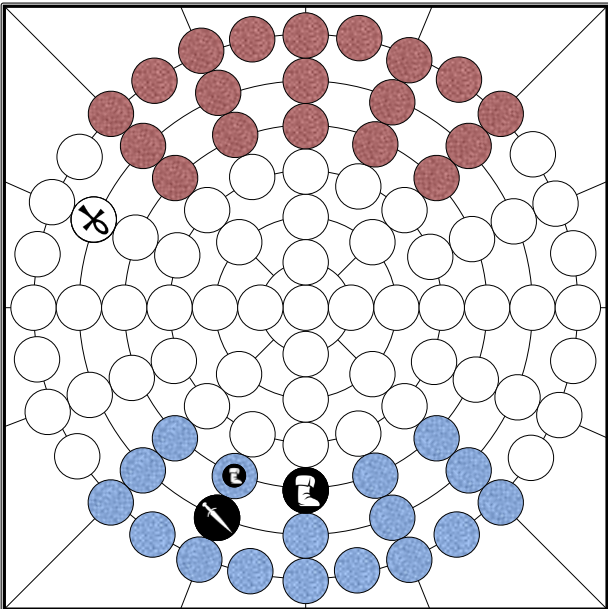
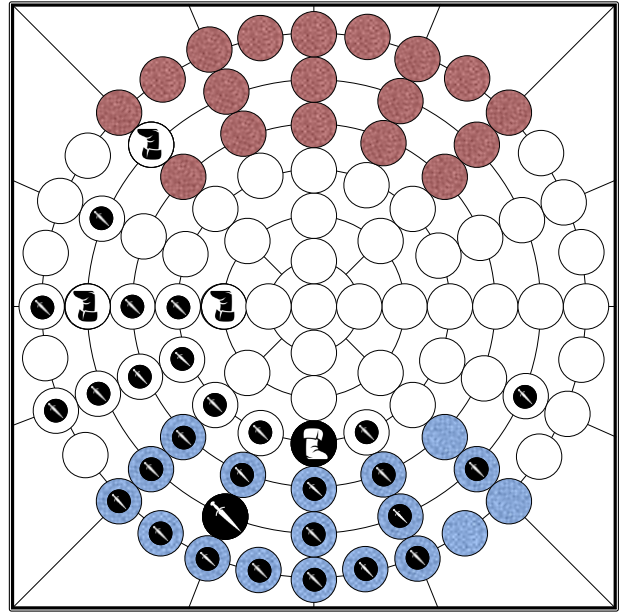
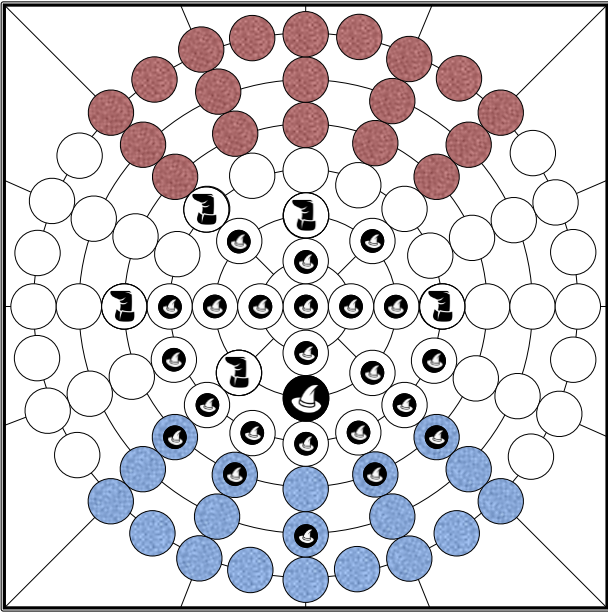
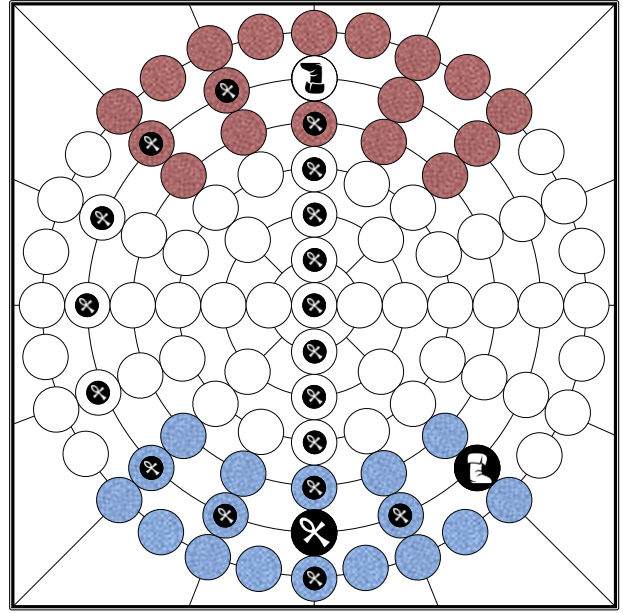
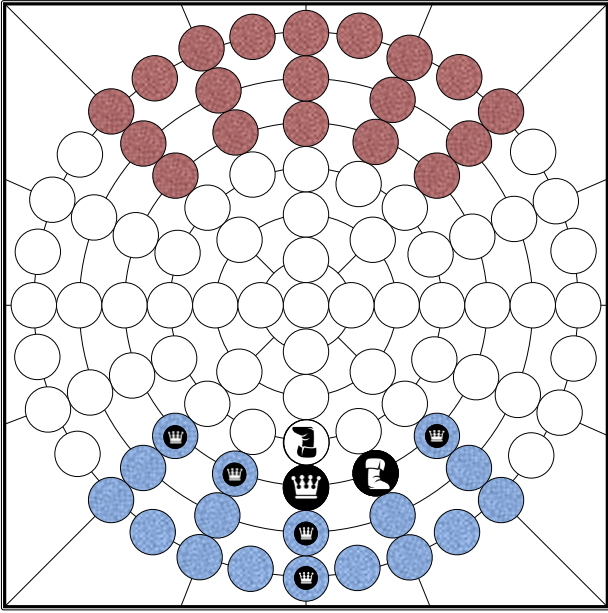
As mentioned before, the *punishment* maneuver succeeds automatically. No rolling of dice is necessary here.

3. ~~The original~~

This variant follows the same rules as ~~The convenient~~, however eight sided dice are used instead.

Also, in this variant the eight sided dice are used to check for *Spiders' Eyes* at the beginning of a player's turn.

Reference Sheet



Matron (Rank 5)



Priestess (Rank 4)



Wizard (Rank 3)



Blademaster (Rank 2)



Grunt (Rank 0)

Credits

Cover Art:
Dark Duel by *Niklas Hook*

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Credits go out as well to all those gals and guys creating games for the love of it and releasing them for free. You folks are an incredible source of inspiration!

And a big THANK YOU to all those gamers playing and (hopefully) enjoying *Arachne* for sending me their feedback, suggestions and ideas. Without you, *Arachne* just would not be the same!

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