

Observance: The Board Game

“In any type of game, the most important element is trust. When you cannot trust your opponent, there is no reason to play.”

-Recommendation by the author inspired by *The Grasshopper* (Suits, 1978)

For 2 players.

Objectives:

For Mexican (MEX) side: To find where the green card has been hidden and get as many immigrants to it as possible.

For United States (US) side: To arrest as many illegal immigrants as possible.

NOTE: 1 game consists of 2 sets with players alternating roles. In the first set, one player gets to be the border patrol; the other player plays the immigrants. In the second, set players alternate positions. The player who gets more immigrants to the green cards wins the game.

Equipment:

MEX side: 6 immigrants*, 8 walls labeled, “blocked,” 16 “nothing here” tokens, 2 churches, and 1 green card.

*Immigrant Characters:

#1 – Lupe: Age 46. Her husband used to be one of the most popular coyotes in the western borders (Tijuana, Mexicali, and Nogales), crossing people from all nationalities to places as far as Vancouver, Canada. He was killed by gunshots in a confrontation with US governmental forces. She took over his rounds and she now leads the group you are in charge of.

#2 – Adrian: Age 33. Married to a US citizen, he returned to México after being tempted by the exquisite cuisine and was detained when trying to get back. He was charged of leaving the country before getting his official documents. He can receive a pardon in 5 years and request his residency once more, but he does not want to wait any more.

#3 – Lucia and son: Ages 25 and 1, respectively. She tried to cross legally when she was three months pregnant to stay with her sister in Missouri, but the officer that took her case declined the permit. She decided to stay near the border and work instead of going back to her hometown. Now that she has enough money to pay a coyote, she will try to go to her sister’s.

#4 – Biridiana: Age 38. She comes to the US in seasons; this is her 7th year. She already has a very stable clientele in San Francisco where she works as a babysitter. Usually, she spends her summers taking care of upper-middle class kids while their parents go on vacations. Her clients pay her coyote fee and airfare from the nearest airport to the border, depending on where she is crossing. Before winter, she returns

home because she hates cold weather. She is the mother of 4, and the oldest of her children works in the roofing industry in Lubbock, Texas.

#5 – Enrique: Age 52. He used to work on a milk farm near Milwaukee for 7 years. During a recession period, his patrons decided to call the border patrol to avoid paying half of their workforce. He has been going back and forth, but this is his first trip in 10 years, and he says he already has a good connection in Connecticut for landscaping.

#6 – Paco: Age 12. His father left for the US when he was 8; after struggling for many months, Paco's father finally found a steady job as an electrician in Las Vegas. He went back to Veracruz on Paco's tenth Christmas. After that, both of his parents left, leaving him in the care of his uncles. They send him money to go to school and to be well dressed, but Paco has decided to go to Nevada to find them.

US side: 3 border patrol agents, 1 border patrol "K-9" unit, 1 minutemen couple (dressed in red and blue with firearms), 10 walls, 2 churches, and 1 green card.

*US Characters:

#1 – Mark: Age 30. He is an African American man who wanted to enroll in the US Air Force, but was not accepted. He suspects the reasons why he did not get in were purely based on racism. But instead of wasting more time with the Air Force, he decided to serve his country in the Border Patrol Agency since they promised him pilot training after serving for a few years.

#2 – Roger: Age 24. He is convinced that all immigrants are a threat to the nation and should be stopped at all cost. He is using this job as a springboard to get a position in the Texas Rangers where his father used to work. Most of all, he enjoys fieldwork instead of standing on an international bridge, checking passports. He likes a girl in the office, but he does not know that she is Dominican.

#3 – Albert: Age 27. After graduating from high school, he had to find a job to help with the family expenses. Although his family is from Mexican and Shout American origins, he feels it is his duty to stop any more immigrants from taking American jobs. His dream is to buy a Texas Edition Truck and live in his own trailer.

#4 – K-9 unit: Age 4 (28 dog years). She was found in the pound; her rescue was part of an animal shelter program where the Border Patrol Agency trained dogs to spot drugs and/or explosive substances. She graduated with honors from her class and now she has a profitable career in the force. She enjoys beef tacos.

#5 – Mr. Minuteman: Age 48. He loves to spend his weekends rounding the arid areas of the border, trying to capture illegal immigrants. He spent a fortune on high tech goggles similar to the ones used by Navy Seals. He ends his trips drunk and moody and always shoots at his empty beer cans. He is genuinely convinced that he contributes a great service to his country, although, in the 1960s, he refused to go to Vietnam.

#6 – Ms. Minuteman: Age 43. She takes her role very seriously and, every weekend, prepares all the necessities so she and her husband can go mount guard. Her religious devotion makes her go back to their town to attend church every Sunday morning, but she returns to their post by midday. She has known how to use a rifle since

she was seven, when she would protect the chickens on her daddy's farm. Because she always had to work, she never had a formal education, but she is able to read the good book while they wait to catch those nasty immigrants.

Additional Information: the game also includes a set of colored dice: one red, one green. Both players make use of these dice during their turn.

Set up:

Open the game board. The two middle sections should be in a vertical position, allowing a visual separation between players. The US side has the view of a night-light camera, which represents the interior of a very sophisticated, high-tech guard post. The MEX side looks like the interior of a truck, facing the restrained border. The horizontal sections (the ones flat over the table) are the same on both sides. All pieces must be outside of the board when beginning the game and should be placed on the name cards. Keep these cards and the characters in a place where both players can see them. Notice that each character piece has a number on its back. These numbers should be facing the board so both players can view them.

The US player hides the **green card** in lane "A" between boxes 2 and 8 on the US side (do not tell the MEX Side player where the green card is).

In addition, place the **churches** anywhere in lane "D." The churches are for political asylum. When an immigrant finds one, he or she cannot be captured while in that coordinate. When one of the churches has been found for the first time, the immigrant who found it can ask for any coordinate in line A to see if the green card is hidden there (one coordinate per one immigrant per church).

The Mexican side always begins (why would you want a border defense if you did not have immigrants, right?).

Throwing dice and actions:

For the US side: Throw both dice at the same time. The **green die** will determine which character will enter the board and the **red die** will determine how many steps the character must take. As the game advances, if a character is already in the board, then the green die will determine which character moves and the red die will determine how many steps are taken.

For the MEX side: Throw both dice at the same time. The player can decide which die will be assigned for the character, and which for the steps to be taken. **Example:** red die is 3 and green die is 5. You can choose to move character 3 five steps or to move Character 5 three steps.

US characters always enter through coordinates A-1 or A-9, which are labeled “Border Patrol Headquarters.” Getting into the board counts as step one.

MEX characters always enter through any coordinate in line G, which is still part of the Río Bravo (Grand River). Getting into the board counts as step one.

In the US turn:

1. If in the throw of the dice, the red die was an even number, **place a wall/block** on any coordinate in line “E.” Make sure you tell your opponent in which coordinate you are placing this wall so he or she can mark it, as well.
2. **Move your character.** Characters can move up-down, left-right, but NOT diagonally. You must always use the whole amount of the dice. This means that, in some cases, you will need to move your piece in circles until you reach the coordinate that you want.
3. **Search for immigrants.** Call out your coordinate first (where your character is standing) and any of the two formats shown in the game board (or see specifics below). **Example:** Character 3 is in coordinate C-4. You tell your opponent where are you standing (C-4) and you specify *search format 2*. This means that you are scanning four coordinates at the same time: B-3, B-5, D-3 and D-5. If your opponent has an immigrant in any of those coordinates, that immigrant will be captured and taken out of the game.

NOTE 1: Only the character that moved can search for immigrants.

NOTE 2: If you capture an immigrant, you can add a wall to line E

Search Format 1 will capture any immigrants in the immediate coordinate to the up-down-left-right of your piece, but not the coordinate that your piece is standing on.

Search Format 2 will capture any immigrant in the immediate coordinate to the diagonals of your piece, but not the coordinate that your piece is standing on.

Throwing doubles, US side: If you throw doubles (for example, green 3 and red 3), you can do all activities from 1 to 3, and throw again. Only two doubles in a row are accepted.

In MEX turn: (Remember, the Mexican side always starts first.)

1. Choose your options of movement or character. Try to move as fast as you can upwards. Remember that you cannot cross over any coordinate blocked by a wall. Characters can move up-down, left-right, but NOT diagonally. You must always use the whole amount of the dice. This means that, in some cases, you will need to move your piece in circles until you reach the coordinate that you want.
2. **If you want to search for a church,** you need to be standing on a coordinate in line D. Tell your opponent your position and ask if a church is hiding there.
Example: Character 2 is standing in coordinate D-8. You ask your opponent if D-8 has a church.

If the answer is yes, you are safe as long as you remain in that church. Make sure

to mark the coordinate with one of the “church tokens,” so you can remember where you found it. With the character that found that particular church (and only with that character), you can ask from a distance for any coordinate in line A (only once) to see if the green card is hidden there.

If the answer is no, make sure to mark the coordinate with a red “nothing here” token.

NOTE: Searching for a church is a dangerous activity because you give up your position in the game. Make sure that you work strategically.

3. **If you want to search for the green card**, you need to be standing on a coordinate between A-2 and A-8. Tell your opponent your position and ask if the green card is hiding there. **Example:** Character 4 is standing in coordinate A-6.

Ask your opponent if A-6 has the green card.

If the answer is yes, take out the character that found the card and place it on your side: this is a point in your favor. Do not forget to mark the coordinate with a “green card” token.

If the answer is no, mark the coordinate with a “nothing here” token.

NOTE: Searching for the green card is also a dangerous activity because you give up your position in the game, so make sure to work strategically.

Losing pieces: As the game evolves, your pieces will be captured or will find their way to the green card, so either way you will be limiting your capacity for movement. If the dice gives you numbers for pieces that are not in the board, you cannot move. You lose that turn and hope that you can throw something usable for the next one. This is why the MEX player can use the values of the dice interchangeably. **BUT** when you are down to your last piece, then throw only one dice, which will determine only the movement of that last piece.

Throwing doubles, MEX side: If you throw doubles, you can choose any piece and move it according to the sum of the dice, or choose two pieces and move them according to the number on each individual die. **Example:** both the red and the green die have a four. You can move Character 6 eight times or move Characters 2 and 3 four times each. After finishing this move, throw again. Only two doubles in a row are accepted.

Winning the game:

The winnings of the game depend on how many immigrants made it to the US, not on how many were captured. Remember that players need to switch positions at least once. Whoever introduced more immigrants into the US wins the game.

Enjoy the Game!

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