

23 Knives



RULEBOOK



It's 44 BCE, the pinnacle of the Roman Republic. At the end of Julius Caesar's civil war, he is left holding enormous power. He has the love of many but, for others, there is only fear. This fear leads Caesar's friends and allies to question his intentions. They're stoking a fire of conspiracy. A conspiracy that will end on the Ides of March, with 23 wounds, a republic in ruin, and the birth of an Empire.

OVERVIEW

In *23 Knives*, you take on the role of a Roman citizen with one of three allegiances: a **Loyalist** to Caesar, a **Liberator** of Rome, or an **Opportunist** biding their time. At the end of the game, if there are 23 or more knives in the Curia, Caesar is dead and the Liberator **most** committed to killing Caesar wins. If there are fewer than 23 knives, the Loyalist **most** dedicated to saving Caesar wins. Opportunists are those who linger, waiting to shift the fate of Caesar at the last moment, and if they do, they win as a team.

23 Knives is a game of social manipulation. Your Citizen's initial identity is hidden, as is their allegiance, but this will surely change. Your task is to plan ahead while staying flexible—deciding which side to manipulate and strategize against, all the while maneuvering among the tides of Rome and fate itself.

COMPONENTS



1 GAME BOARD



1 VOTING BOARD



1 CURIA
AND KALENDS



1 DAGGER



31 CITIZEN CARDS



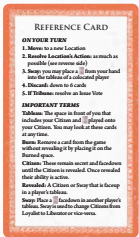
86 FATE CARDS



68 SWAY CARDS



33 ISSUE CARDS



8 REFERENCE CARDS



8 PLAYER PAWNS

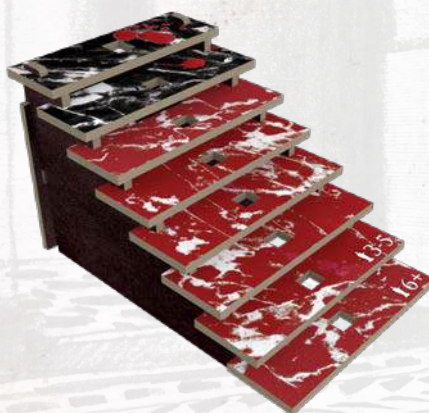
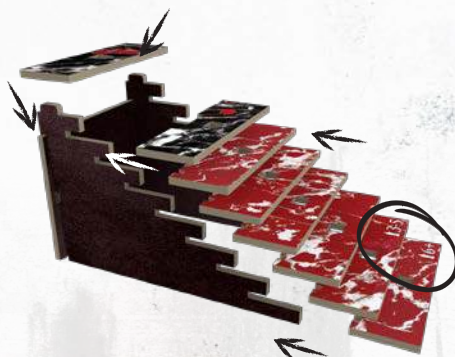
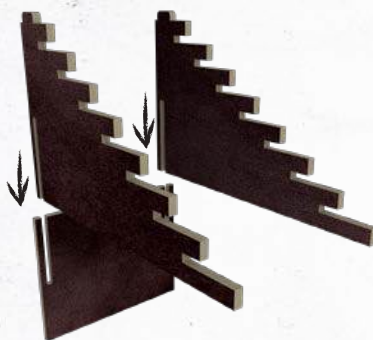
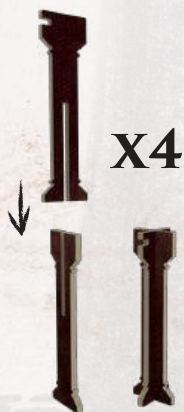
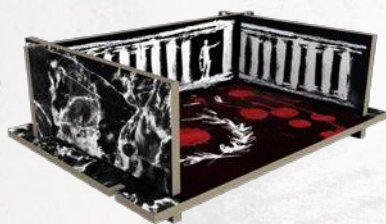


8 VOTING TOKENS



1 RULEBOOK

KALENDS AND CURIA ASSEMBLY



SETUP



- I. Place the board in the center of the play area and the Kalends stairs on the Kalends track coming out from the Forum in the center of the board. Then place the the Curia off the edge of the board at the end of the Kalends. Place the Dagger—according to the player count—into the corresponding space of the Kalends track (if playing with 3 players, see page 12 for two small rules changes).
- II. Separate and shuffle the Fate and Sway decks individually and place them on the deck spaces of the Gardens and Baths.
- III. Place the top card from both the Fate and Sway decks faceup into the discard space of the Tiber River.
- IV. Each player chooses a color, receives the corresponding Reference card, and places their Player pawn on the Temple (when placing your pawn during Setup and throughout the game, be sure to place them in the open area of the Locations and not over the icons). Each player also receives a Voting token.
- V. Shuffle the Citizen cards and deal 2 facedown to each player. Players choose 1 to keep facedown in front of them in their tableau and place the others back into the deck, which is then reshuffled and placed nearby.
- VI. Randomly choose a starting player. Shuffle the Issue cards and give the deck, along with the Voting board, to the player sitting to the right of the starting player. If playing with fewer than 5 players, remove any Issues with a 5+ player icon (15+) in the bottom left corner.
- VII. Each player draws 2 Fate and 2 Sway cards (**Note:** cards in players' hands may not be revealed, but you may freely discuss or lie about what you have. Players have a hand limit of a total of 6 Sway/Fate cards at the end of their turn—this does NOT include cards in their tableaux).
- VIII. Play begins with the starting player.

ADVANCED CITIZENS

Citizens with a 🗡 icon in the bottom left corner are Advanced Citizens. If you are new to the game, you may consider removing these from the game before dealing Citizens to players.


UNDERSTANDING THE CARDS


Citizen Cards


Citizen cards provide a starting Allegiance indicated by Laurels, Blood, or an icon of both. They are facedown in front of you in your tableau at the beginning of the game. They are considered to be in your tableau, and not in hand.

Note: You may freely look at cards in your own tableau at any time.

If your Citizen has:

 **Laurels:** they are a **Loyalist** who wants to save Caesar.

 **Blood:** they are a **Liberator** who wants to liberate Rome from tyranny by killing Caesar.





 **Blood + Laurels:** they are an **Opportunist** looking to change Caesar's fate at the last moment.






Each Citizen also has an ability that is tied to their historical persona and changes the game in various ways. These abilities are **only** active when the Citizen is revealed. Your Citizen card indicates when it may be revealed. Some effects happen immediately upon revealing a Citizen, while others trigger in various ways or may be passive abilities. Citizen abilities take precedence over the basic rules in this rulebook.



Once a Citizen is revealed, it cannot be turned facedown again.

Sway Cards

Sway cards are how you influence the Allegiances of other players.

There are 2 types of Sway cards: Laurels  and Blood . These range from 1 to 2  or  value on each card.

 and  counteract each other equally. If you have a majority of  you are a Liberator. If you have a majority of , you are a Loyalist. If you have an equal amount of each, you are an Opportunist .

When calculating your Allegiance, you must add the  value (the number of Laurels) or  value (the number of Blood) on your Citizen together with the Sway cards in your tableau.

When a Sway card is placed into your or another player's tableau, place them from left to right.







Reminder: You may freely look at any cards in your own tableau at any time.




- 1 Name
- 2 Historical Representation
- 3 Starting Allegiance
- 4 Reveal Timing
- 5 Special Ability
- 6 Historical Context

HISTORICAL NOTE



You'll find many busts, statues, and coins on the Citizen cards that represent the people who took part in the conspiracy to assassinate Julius Caesar. Some of these Citizens though, unfortunately, are lost to time and have no known representations of their physical appearances. We have used various Roman items and symbols to represent elements of their lives as best as we could.

EXAMPLE: Marcus Junius Brutus begins the game with 1  on his Citizen card, which means he begins as a Loyalist (1  value). During the game he is given two Sway cards with  on them. This means he is currently Swayed to be a Liberator since he has a total of 1  value: (the  and other  cancel each other out equally).







MAY REVEAL AT ANY TIME
When a colocated player Sways you during the Sway step of their turn, after you view it, you may choose to Burn any card from your hand to discard the Sway instead.




If in Brute! Thanks to Shakespeare, Brutus is the most famous conspirator that took part in the assassination. He was a close friend of Caesar and his mother was a member of Caesar's diaphanous circle of his true personality. In on. Despite this, he was regarded by his friends as a traitor. Marcus Junius Brutus overthrew the tyrannical Roman King, Tarquinius, and founded the Roman Republic. Brutus—regarded as the Republic—was an integral part of its death.




Liberator

WHY SWAY?




If you are a Liberator, for example, you may want to Sway other players toward being Liberators to help you get more Knives into the Curia to kill Caesar. However, since only the player who is most dedicated to killing Caesar wins if he dies, you don't want anyone to have a higher  value than you. So if you see a player with more , or think they may have more  than you, Swaying them with  is how you can reduce their dedication while maintaining their Liberator status. Be careful, though, Swaying players too far may make them Loyalists and they may begin to work against your cause.

If Brutus were Swayed with another , he would be neither Loyalist nor Liberator but instead an Opportunist because he has an equal amount of  and .



MAY REVEAL AT ANY TIME
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If in Brute! Thanks to Shakespeare, Brutus is the most famous conspirator that took part in the assassination. He was a close friend of Caesar and his mother was a member of Caesar's diaphanous circle of his true personality. In on. Despite this, he was regarded by his friends as a traitor. Marcus Junius Brutus overthrew the tyrannical Roman King, Tarquinius, and founded the Roman Republic. Brutus—regarded as the Republic—was an integral part of its death.



Opportunist

Fate Cards

Fate cards are how you either kill or save Julius Caesar, and are generally played while in the Forum.

There are 2 types of Fate cards: **Knives** and **Doves**. The Knives range from 1 to 5 Knives on each card (no 4s). The Doves range from 1 to 3 Doves on each card.

Each Knife depicted on a card counts toward the 23 needed to kill Caesar, and each depicted Dove counts against that number. One way to think about a Knife is as a +1 and each Dove as a -1, which is also indicated on the cards (e.g. if there are 31 Knives and 10 Doves, the total number of Knives is actually 21 toward the 23 needed to kill Caesar).



GAMEPLAY

The game plays out continuously as players take turns traveling to different Locations, performing actions, and Swaying Allegiances. Issues are also revealed to change the state of Rome and expose or muddle Allegiances as the game leads toward the resolution of Caesar's fate.




When the Dagger on the Kalends track moves **into** the Curia, the Knives and Doves are tallied, Citizens and their Sway are revealed, and a winner is declared.

Turn Structure

- I. **MOVE:** You **MUST** move to a new Location. When placing your pawn in a new Location, be sure to place it in the open area of the Locations so that you do not cover the icons.
- II. **ACTIONS:** You must resolve the Location's action (to the best of your ability).

REVEALED VS TRUE ALLEGIANCES?

Sometimes you may see a card refer to a true or **revealed** Allegiance. A revealed Allegiance is what is visible to all players based solely on the cards faceup in a player's tableau (**Citizen** or **Sway** cards). A **true** Allegiance counts all the cards in a player's tableau—revealed or unrevealed. Any time a card simply says an Allegiance without the keyword **revealed** or **true**, it is referring to a **true** Allegiance.

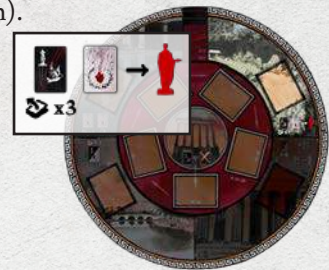
For example, if you have a 1  Sway card in your tableau and it is revealed, but your Citizen has 2  and is unrevealed, you are considered a **revealed** Liberator, but a **true** **Loyalist**. Even if you had any number of unrevealed  Sway in your tableau, your **revealed** Allegiance would still be Liberator.

Gardens

Draw 3 Fate cards **AND** Sway ANY OTHER Citizen (in any Location).

Note: When resolving this Location, you may still resolve the normal Sway step of your turn, which may result in you Swaying twice on your turn.

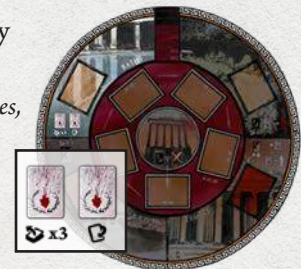
The conspirators were cautious and met often in their private gardens to discuss the fate of Julius Caesar.



Baths

Draw 3 Sway cards **AND** reveal 1 Sway in ANY player's tableau (this may be your own).

The ancient Roman baths were a prime location for discussing business, playing games, and friendly leisure.



Tiber River

Take up to 2 cards from any of the cards in the discard (the cards you take must be revealed to all players publicly).

Many things were abandoned in the Tiber River: Romulus and Remus were sent to drown here and bodies of criminals (even future Emperors) were often disposed of in the rushing waters.



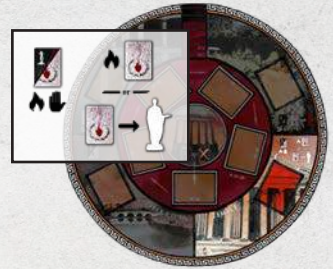
LOCATIONS

Temple

Burn a Sway or Fate card from your hand. **THEN**, choose to either Burn a Sway card from your tableau **OR** add a Sway card from your hand facedown to your tableau.

Note: Whenever you are instructed to Burn a card, you always place it facedown in the Temple's Burned space.

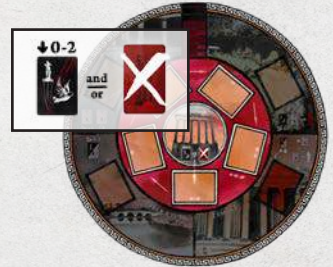
Temples to the gods in ancient Rome were often used to make sacrifices in return for the god's favor.



Forum

Play up to 2 Fate cards into the Forum **AND/OR** Call a Vote to Exile another Citizen (see FORUM IN DETAIL, page 10).

The Forum was the heart of ancient Rome. News and speeches rang out from the rostra; elections, trials, and funerals were held here every day.



CAN'T RESOLVE AN ACTION?

Each Location's action must be resolved as much as possible. If you are unable to resolve an action or instruction, you may simply ignore it.

For example: if you are at the Gardens, and have no Sway cards to Sway another player, or if an Issue instructs you to discard a Knife card and you have none, you may ignore it.

OUT OF CARDS?

In the rare case that the Gardens or Baths run out of Fate/Sway cards, reshuffle ALL cards from the Tiber River into their decks.

III. SWAY: After the Location's action is resolved, you may Sway any one colocated player by placing a Sway card from your hand facedown into their tableau. This is optional; you may choose not to Sway another colocated player during this step.

Note: a colocated player refers to any player in the same Location as you.

IV. DISCARD: Discard down to 6 cards (in your hand). Discarded cards are placed into the Tiber River discard faceup.

Note: You only discard at the end of your turn. If Citizen abilities or Issues cause you to draw cards, you may end up with more than 6 cards in your hand between turns. **Only discard during this step.**

V. RESOLVE AN ISSUE: If you have the Issue deck, you are the Tribune and must resolve an Issue Vote.

- i. Draw 2 Issues, read them aloud, and place them on the spaces of the Voting board (one on red and one on grey).
- ii. Using their Voting token, each player must secretly Vote for which Issue to resolve. Once all players are ready, call for all players to reveal their votes simultaneously. If there is a tie, you—the Tribune—make the final decision (you may choose either red or grey, regardless of your original Vote).
- iii. Resolve the instructions on the chosen Issue. Issue effects take precedence over the basic rules in this rulebook. After resolving the Issue, discard it, and then **place the unresolved Issue on the bottom of the Issue deck.**
- iv. If there is a Kalends icon (🗡️) on the resolved Issue, advance the Dagger on the Kalends track one space toward the Curia.
- v. Pass the Issue deck and Voting board to the next player **counterclockwise.**

VESTAL VIRGINS ①

The Vestal Virgins are the keepers of the sacred flame. They are fundamental to the security of Rome because of their rituals and once interceded to stop proscriptions against Caesar.

Starting with the Tribune and proceeding clockwise, each player may view the Burned cards and choose one to place in their hand.

15+

④



⑤

Issue Cards

- ① Name
- ② Historical Context
- ③ Effect
- ④ 5+ Player Icon
- ⑤ Kalends Icon

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Issue deck represents a number of moments from the life of Julius Caesar that influenced his reputation among the citizens of the ancient world.

EXAMPLE: Lucius has completed his action and has the Issue deck, so he must resolve an Issue. He draws 2 Issues from the top of the deck. ① He reads aloud the first Issue, **Liberatores**, and places it on the red space of the Voting board. ② Then he reads aloud the second Issue, **Populus Romanus**, and places it on the grey space of the Voting board.



Each player uses their Voting tokens to vote. The result is ③ 3 Grey and 3 Red. Lucius voted Grey, but since he is the Tribune, he may choose to break the tie however he wishes. ④ He chooses the Grey Issue, **Populus Romanus**, which is resolved as indicated by the instructions on the card then discarded. He then places the unresolved Issue, **Liberatores**, on the bottom of the Issue deck, and passes the deck and Voting board counterclockwise to Francesca, the player to his right. Francesca is the new Tribune and will break all ties—not just Issue ties—going forward until she resolves the Issues on her turn and passes the Issue deck and Voting board to the player to her right.




Issues: Issues that have this icon call for players to close their eyes and reveal information or their Allegiances to other players in various ways. First, make sure to double check your Allegiance by looking at the Citizen and Sway cards in your tableau. The Tribune then calls for all players to close their eyes. After a few seconds, they call for the players indicated on the Issue to open their eyes and look around to discover their allies, enemies, etc. Once enough time has passed, the Tribune calls for all players to close their eyes and then, finally, for everyone to reopen their eyes.



FORUM IN DETAIL

PLAYING FATE INTO THE FORUM

The Forum is made up of the space on which you place your Player pawn as well as 5 connected spaces for Fate cards. Playing Fate cards into the Forum is the primary way to get Knives and Doves into the Curia and determine Caesar's fate.



When playing Fate cards into the Forum, you must place them in the 5 card spaces in the order indicated by the direction of the arrows. Each space indicates how to place the cards. A space with  /  means you may play the Fate card faceup or facedown. Spaces with a  indicate a Fate card must be played faceup.

The space in which you place Fate cards must be empty, but if the 5 Forum spaces are filled and you are allowed, or must (because of a resolved Issue) play more Fate cards, any extra cards may be placed faceup or facedown, as indicated by the icon near the 5th space. Additional cards played this way may simply be placed on top of the card in the 5th space.


EXAMPLE: In previous rounds, players have placed 4 Fate cards into the Forum: only one space remains. The next player that goes to the Forum is allowed to place up to 2 Fate cards so chooses to place the first facedown since it has 3 Knives and they want it to remain a secret. The next card they place may be either faceup or facedown, so they decide to place a Fate card with 1 Dove on it faceup in order to deceive others of their true Allegiance.


Once there are 5 or more Fate cards in the Forum after the end of your turn (if you're the Tribune, after Issues are resolved), flip all Fate in the Forum facedown, shuffle them, and place them into the Curia. **Then, advance the Dagger on the Kalends track one space toward the Curia.**

CALLING A VOTE TO EXILE


When a Vote to Exile is called, the player resolving the action chooses a player's Citizen to be up for Exile. Each player must secretly Vote whether to Exile the Citizen (using the  side) or to allow them to Remain (using the  side), and once everyone is ready, they simultaneously reveal their Vote.

There are 2 possible outcomes:


- ▶ If a majority of players Vote to Exile , the Citizen is Exiled: their Citizen and any **faceup** Sway in their tableau are discarded. The faceup Sway from their tableau is placed in the Tiber River discard and the Citizen is placed faceup in a separate discard pile. The Exiled player may then draw up to their hand limit of 6 from either or both the Gardens or the Baths. Finally, the player then draws 2 new Citizens, chooses 1 to place facedown in their tableau and places the other into the deck, which is then shuffled. Play then continues as normal.

- ▶ If a majority of players Vote for the Citizen to Remain , the player who called the Vote to Exile is shamed: their Citizen, as well as all the Sway in their tableau is revealed for all to see. Play then continues as normal.

You may never Call a Vote to Exile yourself, but if your Citizen is Called for Exile, you may Vote against yourself. Ties are determined by the current Tribune.

- ! **Exiling on the black spaces of the Kalends track:** You may never Call a Vote to Exile while the Dagger is on either of the final 2 black  spaces of the Kalends track.

WHY EXILE?

Sometimes you may see players hoarding Fate cards and suspect them of being an Opportunist, and sometimes another player has revealed themselves as a powerful Liberator with an ability that works against your strategy, or they have a higher  value than you. These are examples of why you may want to Call a Vote to Exile another player.



END OF GAME

Once the Dagger on the Kalends track moves from the last space of the Kalends into the Curia, the game **immediately** ends and the following occurs:

- I. Any Fate cards remaining in the Forum are shuffled, then placed facedown into the Curia.
- II. If Citizens have special abilities that resolve at the *End of Game*, check their timing and resolve appropriately, starting with the Tribune and proceeding clockwise.
- III. One at a time, reveal the Fate cards from the Curia, calculating the total by adding Knives and subtracting Doves. If the total is 23 or greater, Caesar is dead. If the total is fewer than 23, Caesar lives.
Reveal the cards slowly—one at a time—while adding and subtracting the total of Knives and Doves to build tension as you reveal the fate of Caesar.
- IV. All players reveal their Citizens and the Sway in their tableaux.
- V. Now is the time for Opportunists to act: Opportunists may all play any number of Fate cards from their hands. If they can change the Fate of Caesar, they win as a team.

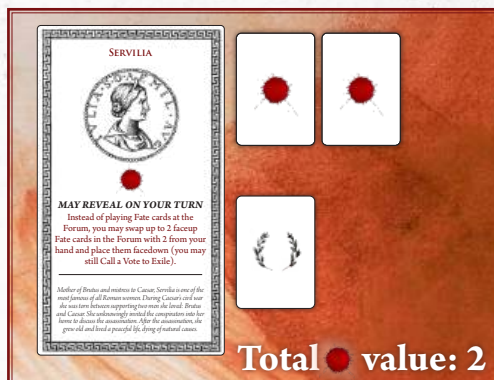
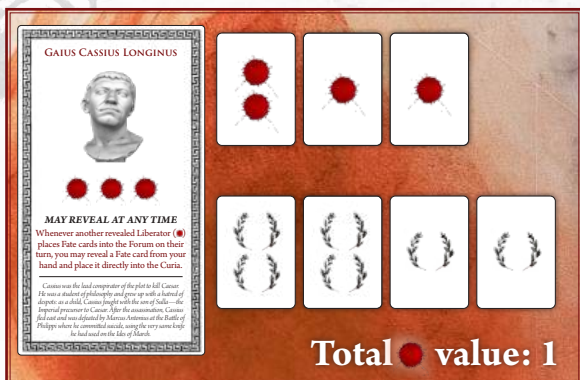
The diagram shows the following sequence of cards and calculations:

- Four cards with +5 (Knives) and two cards with +3 (Knives) and one card with +2 (Knives).
- Two cards with -2 and -1 (Doves).
- Calculation: $28 - 3 = 25$
- Calculation: $25 - 3 = 22$
- Result: **Caesar Lives!**

EXAMPLE: 25 was the final count, so Caesar is dead. If the Opportunists play 3 Doves from their hands, the total is now 22, and they have changed the fate of Caesar and win together. OR if 19 is the final count, Caesar lives, and the Opportunists play 4 or more Knives from their hands, they have changed the fate of Caesar and win together.

- VI. If the Opportunists didn't win and Caesar lived, the player with the most total value wins OR if Opportunists didn't win and Caesar was killed, the player with the most total value wins (remember that and cancel each other out, so a player with 3 and 1 has a total value of 2).

If tied, the player with the fewest / , in relation to the outcome, on their Citizen card wins. If still tied, the tied players share the victory (or at least until one eventually stabs the other in the back).



EXAMPLE: A total of 28 Knives were counted at the end of the game. The Opportunists only had 4 Doves total in their hands, so they were unable to change the fate of Caesar and he is dead. 2 players are Liberators and only 1 will win: Lucius has 3 ● on his Citizen, and 4 ● and 6 🗡 on Sway cards in his tableau, so his total ● value is 1. Francesca has 1 ● on her Citizen, and 2 ● and 1 🗡 on Sway cards in her tableau, so her total ● value is 2 and she is the winner. If they had an equal amount of ● value, then Francesca would have won because she had fewer ● on her Citizen card.

VARIANTS

Sometimes slight changes in gameplay are needed to help those who are new, or in order to create a new experience. Below are a few variants to help you facilitate different experiences.

Tria Ludio (3 players)

When playing with 3 players, use the following small changes:

- Begin the game with a facedown unrevealed Fate card on the last space of the Forum. Each time the Forum is full, after it resolves and the cards are placed into the Curia, and the Dagger advances on the Kalends track, place the top card from the Fate deck facedown into the last space of the Forum; there will only ever be 4 spaces for Fate in the Forum.
- Players are the Tribune for 2 rounds. When you become the Tribune, at the end of your turn when you would normally resolve an Issue Vote, read and place 2 Issues on the Voting board, and then continue the round as normal without a Vote. The next time it is your turn as the Tribune, you hold the Vote on the previously revealed Issues. Once the Issue is resolved, pass the Issue deck counterclockwise as normal.

Simplicitas (beginner)

If it's your first time playing or you are playing with non-gamers, choosing to ignore the abilities of the Citizens will help with the amount of information players need to process.

Quid Pro Quo (this for that)

When another Citizen Calls a Vote to Exile your Citizen, you may take a moment to attempt to bribe the other Citizens at the table by offering cards, promises, future Votes, etc. These deals are non-binding.

Aut Omnia Aut Nihil (all or nothing)

This variant leans into winning as a team, but removes some of the backstabbing and manipulation elements. At End of Game, it is all or nothing. If Caesar dies, all Liberators win; if Caesar lives, all Loyalists win. Opportunists win as normal.

CREDITS

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Special Thanks: Francesca King (for being the loveliest and best wife), Danny Brown (for being a patient brother), and everyone else for being amazing in various ways, including: Alan Gerding, Delton Brack, Hayley Twyman Brack, Ben Kanelos, Luke Otfinowski, Eric Link, Adam Huck, Alex Finch, Juan Valdez, Ben Anderson, Joshua Adams, Jeremiah Adsit, Connor Johnson, Long Tran, Brandon Hays, Kyle Gonzalez, Chris Bybee, Jordan Lee, Dina Ramse, my family, and all the other playtesters over the years at various conventions and game nights I know I am forgetting.

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Publius Servilius Casca Longus

P. Servilius Casca Longus, denarius, 43 BC, RRC 507/2, Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com> CC BY-SA 2.5

Marcus Aemilius Lepidus

Lepidus and Octavian. 42 BC. AR Denarius, Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com> CC BY-SA 2.5

Gaius Calvisius Sabinus

RIC II Nerva 24 (denarius), Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com> CC BY-SA 2.5

Fulvia

PHRYGIA, Eumeneia (as Fulvia) 41-40 BC, Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com> CC BY-SA 3.0

Quintus Pedius

Lollius Palicanus. 45 BC. AR Denarius, Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <http://www.cngcoins.com> CC BY-SA 3.0

Gaius Servilius Casca

Brutus & L. Plaetorius Cestianus, denarius, 42 BC, RRC 508-3, Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. CC BY-SA 2.5

RECOMMENDED READING

There are 5 major historical sources from which we understand the fate of Julius Caesar, and a number of wonderful modern books with historical insights.

Ancient sources:

- ▶ Life of Augustus, by Nicolaus of Damascus (recommended trans. Mark Toher, 2017)
- ▶ The Fall of the Roman Republic, by Plutarch (recommended trans. Rex Warner, 1958)
- ▶ The Twelve Caesars, by Suetonius (recommended trans. Robert Graves, 1957)
- ▶ The Civil Wars, by Appian (recommended trans. John Carter, 1996)
- ▶ Roman History: Vol. IV, by Cassius Dio (recommended trans. Earnest Cary, 1916)

Recommended modern sources:

- ▶ Rome in the Late Republic 2nd ed., by Mary Beard and Michael Crawford (1999)
- ▶ Caesar: Life of a Colossus, by Adrian Godsworthy (2006)
- ▶ Rubicon: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Roman Republic, by Tom Holland (2003)
- ▶ The Last Assassin, by Peter Stothard (2021)
- ▶ The Death of Caesar, by Barry Strauss (2015)

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Again, during a sacrifice, the augur Spurinna warned Caesar that the danger threatening him would not pass until the Ides of March; and on the day before the Ides a little bird, called a King Wren, flew into the Pompeian Assembly Room with a sprig of laurel in its beak—pursued by a swarm of different birds from a nearby copse, which tore it to pieces there and then. And on his last night Caesar dreamed that he was soaring above the clouds, and then shaking hands with Juppiter; while his wife Calpurnia dreamed that the gable ornament, resembling that of a temple, which had been one of the honours voted him by the Senate, collapsed, and there he lay stabbed in her arms! She awoke suddenly and the bedroom door burst open of its own accord.

These warnings, and a touch of ill-health, made him hesitate for some time whether to go ahead with his plans, or whether to postpone the meeting. Finally, Decimus Brutus persuaded him not to disappoint the Senate, who had been in full session for an hour or more, waiting for him to arrive... As he went, someone handed him a note containing details of the plot against his life but he merely added it to the bundle of petitions in his left hand, which he intended to read later. Several victims were then sacrificed, and despite consistently unfavorable omens, he entered the House, deriding Spurinna as a false prophet. 'The Ides of March have come,' he said. 'Ay, they have come,' replied Spurinna, 'but they have not yet gone.'

As soon as Caesar took his seat the conspirators crowded around him as if to pay their respects. Tillius Cimber, who had taken the lead, came up close, pretending to ask a question. Caesar made a gesture of postponement, but Cimber caught hold of his shoulders. 'This is violence!' Caesar cried, and at that moment one of the Casca brothers slipped behind and with a sweep of his dagger stabbed him just below the throat. Caesar grasped Casca's arm and ran it through with his stylus; he was leaping away when another dagger caught him in the breast. Confronted by a ring of daggers, he drew the top of his gown over his face, and at the same time ungirded the lower part, letting it fall to his feet so that he would die with both legs decently covered. Twenty-three dagger thrusts went home as he stood there. Caesar did not utter a sound after Casca's blow had drawn a groan from him; though some say that when he saw Marcus Brutus about to deliver the second blow, he reproached him in Greek with: 'You, too, my son?'

-Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, (trans. Robert Graves).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Plot to Kill Caesar began when Gaius Cassius Longinus walked across town to visit his brother-in-law. He had not spoken to Marcus Junius Brutus in months, even though Cassius was married to Brutus's sister... Now, however, Cassius needed Brutus. The conversation began with a friendly exchange and an agreement to reconcile. Then came a long and serious discussion. Finally, Cassius threw his arms around Brutus in embrace. And with that, the life of Julius Caesar lay in the balance. It was February 44 B.C.

Or so the best-known source tells the story. It is plausible, but, in truth, we don't know just how the conspiracy began or with whom. Shakespeare tells us that Brutus and Cassius were at the heart of it, but the Bard was only following one ancient tradition. Other sources state that three men, not two, headed the conspiracy—and that Decimus, in fact, stood beside Brutus and Cassius as its leaders. Our earliest in-depth source for the conspiracy even names Decimus first among the conspirators.

Decimus is no mere detail; he is the key. Brutus and Cassius fought for Pompey and the Republic but Decimus had been loyal to Caesar for more than ten years. Why change now? Although Decimus said later that he acted to save the Republic, he was a hard-nosed man, the sort to be moved by fear, honor, and self-interest. And Decimus wasn't alone—other friends of Caesar also joined the conspiracy. That took more than a public relations misstep on Caesar's part—it took a crisis of trust. Caesar abused their friendship by breaking the unwritten rule of Roman life, that loyalty would be rewarded. Indeed, he convinced important friends that they were better off without him.

-Barry Strauss, The Death of Caesar

DESIGNER'S NOTE

Rome is a living history. Modern buildings intermingle with ancient ruins and medieval churches spring up around every corner. There are countless reasons why the story of Julius Caesar has been retold over and over for the past 2000 years.

23 *Knives* recreates the environment of paranoia, deceit, and manipulation that surrounded the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar. It provides historical context to each citizen involved with their special abilities complementing their historical personas. The flavor text on the cards comes from many sources, ranging from Suetonius to Nicolaus of Damascus and modern historians such as Barry Strauss and Adrian Goldsworthy (and, of course, a few nods to Shakespeare). When designing 23 *Knives* I was inspired by the words of the French philosopher, Jean Juarès, who said "Take from the altars of the past the fire, not the ashes." I've simply tried to include the story that excites me—the fire that I think makes this event memorable.

CLARIFICATIONS

Burn: Remove the card from the game without revealing it by placing it facedown on the Burned space in the Temple.

Colocated: This text indicates or refers to when 2 or more Citizens share a Location.

Cicero: This Citizen's ability allows the player to split their Sway cards however they want into 2 sets as equally as possible and choose one set to claim as their Allegiance (each set may contain 1 and 1). This means that they have a single tableau in which to place Sway, but when Allegiances are called for or checked, they have 2 different tableaux of Sway; each of which may contain any type of Sway card. Because of Cicero's ability to have separate sets of Sway, the player will have up to two potential Allegiances when they must reveal or claim an Allegiance. Cicero cannot be an Opportunist; if one set of Sway indicates the player as an Opportunist, it is simply ignored.

Citizen Abilities and Issue Effects: If a Citizen ability and the Issue effects ever conflict, the Citizen ability takes precedence.

Forum Spaces: Some effects on Issues and Citizens may cause cards to be discarded from the Forum, leaving empty spaces. When Fate is played into the Forum, the cards must still be played in the indicated order, filling in any possible empty spaces first.

Immediate Issues: Some Issue use the term "immediately." These Issues ONLY resolve if they win the Vote.

Revealed: The keyword "revealed" refers to any public information. A revealed Loyalist is a player whose revealed Citizen or Sway indicates them a Loyalist (e.g. *If you have 1 revealed 1 Sway, 5 facedown 1 Sway, and your Citizen is unrevealed, you are a revealed Loyalist because of the 1 revealed 1 Sway*).

Sabinus: Sabinus allows you to play Doves onto Knife cards in the Forum. When the Forum is full, all cards—including the Doves—are placed into the Curia as normal.

Sempronia: Sempronia's Sway ability is non-negotiable and must be resolved if a player gives a Fate card. When a player uses Sempronia's ability to Sway, they may Sway them however they choose.

Swaying: When playing Sway cards on other players, they are placed facedown into the player's tableau from left to right. They are hidden from other players, but you may freely look at those in your own tableau. Once in a player's tableau, the Sway is immediately counted toward and affects the Allegiance of that player.

Tableau: When text refers to a tableau, it refers to the space in front of a player. This is the space that contains their Citizen card and any Sway given to that player. The keyword "tableau" also helps differentiate between the cards in a player's hand, which they may play, and cards in their tableau, which they may not play.

Timing: If 2 effects would happen at the same time, resolve them in turn order beginning with the Tribune. Some effects say "immediately," which always resolve before any other conflicting effects would resolve.

