LUNAR INVADERS

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EQUIPMENT
- Three Trios of a color for each player
- Two lunar gameboards
- 9 dice (or tokens of some sort)

OVERVIEW
Lunar Invaders is a teleportation combat game. The problem with teleportation is that it's a one-way trip. After you transport your space marines to the enemy's moon, the only way for them to get home is to take control of the enemy's teleporter!

GOAL
Transport one of your pieces back from the other moon.

TERMINOLOGY
- Moon: One of the round gameboards
- Factory: Square spaces
- Control Point: Triangular spaces
- Teleport Pad: Circular space in center
- Malfunction Tokens: The dice
- Bank: The reserve of unplayed pieces

SETUP
Begin by choosing a color and a moon. Each player populates their moon with all of their Smalls and Mediums, leaving their Larges on the side forming the Bank. Place two Smalls on the Control Points on one side of the moon, with a Medium on the Factory in between, and a reverse of that setup on the other side, leaving the Teleport Pad and two of the Factories empty. Lastly, each player gets four Tokens.

WHO GOES FIRST
One player takes the ninth Token and conceals it in one fist. The other player chooses a fist. If the empty fist is chosen, the chooser goes first. The player who goes second gains the extra Token.

HOW TO PLAY
On your turn, choose one of these options:

- Teleport: If you occupy two or more Control Points anywhere around a Teleport Pad, you may transport the piece on the Teleport Pad to any spot on the other gameboard, with the exception of the other Teleport Pad. Any piece occupying the space your piece arrives in is destroyed, regardless of either piece's size. (Destroyed pieces are returned to the Bank.) You can't use the Teleporter if the other two Control Points are occupied by enemy pieces.

- Build: If you occupy the two Control Points flanking an empty Factory (on either player's moon), you may place a new piece of your color on that Factory. You must build the smallest of the pieces you have in the Bank. You can't build if you have no pieces available.

- Move: You can move a piece of your color into any empty space to which it is connected.

- Attack: To move a piece into a space occupied by an enemy's piece, your piece must be of equal or larger total size. Their piece is then either pushed out, or destroyed. If there's a choice of empty spaces to retreat into, they decide where to go. If there's no connected space for them to retreat to, their piece is removed from the board. The defender cannot retreat into the space from which the attacker is advancing. Also, you cannot Attack a space you've just been forced to retreat from. (See No Undos).

- Combine: You can combine your pieces into a single unit by moving one piece into the same space as another, and stacking them up with the smaller piece

on top. The tower is now treated as if it were a single piece, with a size value equal to the total number of pips in the tower. Once combined, multiple pieces are considered a single unit which could be combined later with yet another unit.

- Divide: If you have combined two or more of your pieces into one, you can dismantle them again by removing any one piece and placing it onto an adjacent space. Furthermore, if you have the pieces in the Bank, you can split a Medium into two Smalls, or a Large into a Medium and a Small. You can only Divide if there's an empty space adjacent to the original for you to move into.
- Transfer: If you have more than two pieces in a pair of adjacent spaces, you can move a piece from one tower to the other, as if dividing and combining in one maneuver. However, this is the only case when such actions can be taken together. You cannot Divide and also Attack, neither can you Combine while retreating from an Attack.

BEAMING THE ENEMY

If you control a Teleporter and the enemy's piece is on the pad, you can choose to beam it into oblivion, and return it to the Bank. If said Teleporter is the one on their moon, you also have the option of beaming their piece to a location on your moon occupied by one of their pieces, causing that piece to be destroyed. However, if their piece is on your own Teleporter, you wouldn't want to beam it to their moon, since that would simply cause them to win!

MALFUNCTION TOKENS

During the other player's turn, you can spend your Malfunction Tokens to sabotage whatever they're trying to do. (Their technology breaks down just when they need it: engine failures prevent movement, factory mishaps interfere with build actions, and so on.) Most malfunctions cost one token; it costs double to cause a full-stop on the Teleporter.

- Simple Stop: If you spend one token when the other player is taking any action not involving the Teleporter, that action is simply canceled.
- Targeting Error: If you spend one token when the other player is seeking to Teleport a piece, that piece lands in the wrong location on the destination moon, i.e. you get to decide where the piece lands (although you cannot choose the Teleport Pad).

- Total Shut Down: At the cost of two tokens, this prevents the other player from beaming any piece from one moon to the other, leaving that piece right where it was on the Teleport Pad.
- Blocking Oblivion: At the cost of one token, you can prevent the other player from using the Teleporter to destroy a piece you've got on a Teleport Pad they control.

NO UNDOS

- You can't spend a Token to cancel a Malfunction.
- A piece cannot immediately move back into a space it has just been pushed out of.

REMINDERS & CLARIFICATIONS

- Making change is free. If you need to exchange a stack of pieces for a larger one of the same value from the Bank (or vice versa) in order to carry out your desired play, you may freely do so.
- You are allowed to wait until the other player has announced where their piece will land before deciding if you will use a Malfunction Token.
- If all of your pieces are destroyed, or you have so few left you can't make any more, you lose... but the other player still needs to be able to beam a piece home, or they lose as well and the game ends in a draw.
- Any time a piece is destroyed, it goes back into the Bank.

HOW TO WIN

If any of your pieces are Teleported back from the enemy's moon, you win!

OTHER NOTES

HISTORICAL NOTES

Lunar Invaders is adapted from Cosmic Coasters, which I designed as a game to be played in a bar, with coins for game pieces, boards printed on beverage coasters, and Rock-Paper-Scissors for combat resolution. In 2001, Cosmic Coasters received the Origins award for Best Abstract Board Game of the Year. Ten years later, I adapted the rules to work with pyramids, but five years after that (i.e. now) I did a major overhaul. Thanks to my arch-colleague James Ernest for helping inspire me to "sand it down" and rebuild it.