

Alternative Wagering Rules

for the Baron Munchausen Game

Baron Munchausen is a crackingly mad game of tall tale telling based on the Terry Gilliam film (and its predecessor). Best played after a few bottles of fine wine, stoops of ale, or tipples of your choice, it stretches the players imaginations to the limit. In brief, each player takes it in turn to tell a story of some preposterous act of daring-do that will explain a question they have been put by another player.

The game, published by Hogshead Publishing, goes into much greater length to explain the type of questions and explanations that should be attempted, and is well worth the paltry sum of several guineas if only for being a highly amusing read.

The general gist of what I propose here is, I think, a more structured form for the wagering. Hopefully one where it can still be fun, yet tactical as well, allowing both listeners and storytellers to try and gain coins or cause others to lose them in order to try and win.

Choosing Your Questioner

At the start of a round of Baron Munchausen, the player that won the last game (or otherwise randomly determine) may decide which listener to ask for an opening question to start them off on a tale about their exploits. Play proceeds around the table with each player in turn asking a listener of their choice for a question which they use to start their tale. The only restriction is that no player may be asked more than once for a question in any round of play, so each player must ask one opening question and tell one tale each round of play. This means that when each player is the storyteller they do not always necessarily get the same player to start them off with a question on their tales of daring-do.

Wagers

Listeners Initiating a Wager

When a listener wishes to initiate a wager against a storyteller, they indicate their desire to do so by holding up a coin (or marker) and proffering it to the storyteller in a clear way.

Ignoring the Wager

The storyteller can decide to completely ignore the wager if they like, and must simply pass a coin to the listener from their own pile whilst continuing their narrative.

Refusing the Wager

If the storyteller wishes to consider the wager then they pause their story in order to hear the nature of the listener's wager and in doing so accept the listener's coin from them.

If the storyteller does not like the listener's idea for a wager then they can refuse it and dismiss it out of hand as a silly thing, but they must then return the listener's coin along with one of their own.

Accepting the Wager

If the storyteller decides to accept the wager then they must work the listener's idea into their story, explaining it out to the satisfaction of the majority of the listeners. If they fail to do this then they must return the coin wagered and two of their own (if possible) to the listener that initiated the wager.



Unignorable Wagers

When initiating a wager, a listener may proffer 2 coins instead of 1 and the storyteller is then obliged to pause their story and listen to whatever the idea is that the listener could believe is of such great import; the listener and the wager can not simply be ignored. In this case, if the storyteller then accepts the wager after hearing the listener's idea, they keep both the coins proffered if they successfully incorporate it into their story. If they fail to do this satisfactorily for the majority of listeners, or wish to refute the wager without endeavouring to try and explain it, then they return both the proffered coins and one of their own to the listener.

Upping the Ante

Whenever a listener has a wager refused (not ignored), then instead of accepting the storytellers coin back along with their own they may instead decide to up the ante. They put forward another coin of their own indicating their wish to raise the stake. The storyteller again has the option to refuse the wager or accept it as normal. The listener must put forward another idea, unlike the first but pertaining to the same area of the storyteller's tale. If the storyteller decides to refuse the wager then they return all of the listener's coins wagered so far, as well as an equal number of their own. If they decide to accept the wager then they must satisfactorily incorporate this new, second idea into their yarn. If they succeed in this then they keep all the coins put forward by the listener, but if they fail they must return them all plus an equal number of their own and an additional one (if possible).

Raising the ante can go on indefinitely as long as a storyteller keeps refusing a listeners wager and the listener wishes to raise the ante.

If during the course of raising the ante a listener puts forward an idea deemed to be too similar to one that they already proposed earlier as part of the same wager, or is deemed too far removed from the part of the story where the initial wager was made, then the wager is null and void and the teller gets to keep all the coins thus far wagered in recompense for the foolish interruption.

Storytellers Initiating a Wager

During the course of a tale a storyteller may also offer a wager to the listeners along the lines of 'I bet you cannot guess what happened next'. The storyteller pushes a coin forward and any of the listeners may take up the wager. Where two or more listeners cannot agree which of them is to take up the wager then the one that offers the most coins is allowed to take it up. However, in this case the initial stake of the wager is still considered as just one coin, with the extra coins being considered as something of a bonus purse. The listener that has accepted the wager must now think of an (un)likely explanation for the part of the story the teller has reached and offer it forward much like the usual idea wager when initiated by the listener. The teller must then either incorporate this idea satisfactorily into their tale, taking the listener's coin(s), or refuse the idea saying 'no, you are quite wrong,' and go on with the story however they want, but in this case giving the coin they wagered to the listener.

Choosing the Listener

If the storyteller initiates a wager against the listeners by putting forward 2 coins as an initial wager, then they may ask one specific listener if they can 'guess what happened next.' If the listener does not wish to accept the wager then they must give one of their coins to the storyteller who proceeds however they like. If the listener accepts the wager and puts forward an idea that the teller successfully incorporates (along the lines of 'you are quite right, that is just what happened' and then explains) then the listener must give the teller 1 coin. However, if after the challenged listener accepts the wager the storyteller doesn't successfully incorporate the idea, or decides to refuse the idea after all (saying 'no you are quite wrong'), then they must give the 2 coins offered to that listener. This is a good way of targeting a listener that is not listening as the storyteller is under no obligation to repeat any part of their story to help out the challenged listener; they should have been paying attention. The ante cannot be raised on storyteller initiated wagers however.

Explaining the Wager and Interruptions

New wagers can be initiated during the course of an explanation/incorporation by the storyteller of a previous wager idea, but in this case the initial wager should still be returned to and satisfactorily explained/incorporated if the new wager is accepted (and the other listeners remember). However, any such new wager initiated must be a new idea/objection pertaining to a new part of the story and cannot be another wager about part of the story already part of the previous wager being explained/incorporated.

Duelling

If the amount of a wager is ever above what a player can afford to pay should they wish to refute or refuse the wager, then they must either accept the wager and attempt to incorporate/explain, giving up all their coins only if they fail, or call out the player initiating the wager to a duel for pushing the interruptions to their story just too far or otherwise insulting their honour. The loser of the duel must give all their remaining coins to the winner. They may be allowed to continue to play (assuming only a flesh wound was received) or be put out of the game whilst bleeding is staunch and medical attention arranged.

Winning and Losing

The winner of this game is the player with the most coins at the end of an agreed number of rounds of storytelling, where each player has told an equal number of stories. Players will have to have told the best stories, either fending off the most wagers by incorporating/explaining others challenges, or else having challenged and successfully wagered the best during the course of their story or other peoples in order to win. The player with least coins is obviously a frightful bore, if not a liar and a charlatan to boot, and should remove themselves to the bar post-haste to purchase another round of drinks and try and curry some favour with those evidently well above their station. Any players sharing this dishonour are obviously in cahoots and get to share the tab whilst they no doubt plot some form of revenge.