

Munchausen by Proxy

Or The strange and extraordinary letters of the Baron

Based on

The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron Munchausen

By Baron Munchausen published by James Wallis, Hogshead Publishing

Adapted by Peter Cobcroft

For the tabletop game, try :-

http://www.hogshead.demon.co.uk/NS_BaronMunchausenRPG.htm which sadly is very out of print. A shortened version was published as an appendix to the volume *Second Person* (ed. Pat Harrigan and Noah Waldrip-Fruin, MIT Press, 2007) and a new edition of the game will be published later in 2007 by my new imprint, Magnum Opus Press. I am James Wallis and I endorse this wiki.

For examples of stories told by the Baron, try :-

<http://www.ffutures.demon.co.uk/munch/munch.htm>

To have a look at the Terry Gilliam movie, try :-

<http://us.imdb.com/Title?0096764>

A person's bearing

Unlike the tabletop version, the PBeM version requires that every player in the game does something every turn. A turn usually consists of the storyteller telling a paragraph or two of their story and then each player in turn either describing their actions (usually drinking, listening, or acknowledging the story) or using a coin to make the story more interesting. Every player in this game must take on a noble persona of the 18th century.

The duties of the host

At the start of the game, the host - the man organizing the PBeM describes the room in which the participants are seated. He must describe the food available on the table (usually snacks and after-dinner treats - but it could be a full blown 3 course dinner) and the drinks available from the cabinet. Other drinks may be had - but require being brought from the cellar by a servant. It is best not to describe any of the players in the game, as they may wish to make 'an entrance'. The game may also be set in an Inn or Public House.

On a person's character

Each player then describes their character and his entrance into the room if they aren't there already. If the storytelling is set by the host as an after-dinner event, then naturally all players should be seated. If the host decides that it will be a meal from the beginning, then players may enter as they describe themselves. The important thing to remember here, is the seating arrangements. As the host will first ask a story of the person to his right, and so on from story teller to story teller. It's vitally important for players to seat themselves and remember what their order is.

For each turn of the game, all players must reply – but it need not be in seating order. The seating order is used only to determine who the next storyteller will be.

The coinage of the realm, and introducing a servant.

- There are two coins used in this version of the game. The reason for this is to reduce the amount of interruptions as a PBeM is not as free-flowing as a regular conversation. However, there are now more kinds of interruption instead.
 - Every player starts with one Gold coin (I recommend you use whatever coin is native to your character's country). A gold coin can be used during any storyteller's tale to make an interruption.
- At the beginning of a tale, each player other than the storyteller receives two silver coins from the butler. The storyteller may start their tale with a quick description of the butler handing out the coins.
 - Silver coins can only be used during that storyteller's tale. And are lost at the end.
- If a player earns silver coins, they can be exchanged at the end of the storyteller's story. They may be exchanged for a gold coin from the butler. The exchange rate is two silver coins for one gold. So earning merely 1 extra silver will gain you nothing as it is lost next round.
- It is possible for a player to earn more coins during a round either from the storyteller or from the butler.
- At the end of the game, only gold coins may be used to show a players appreciation of a story.

Beginning the first storytelling turn

The Host turns to the man on his right and asks him about one of his adventures. The player must then come up with a story pertaining to what the Host has inquired about. Alternatively the player may decline to tell the story, stating they know a much better story. If they do so, he must pay the host his gold coin, but he may then start a story to his own liking.

A turn of the game, a player's responsibilities

Each turn, the storyteller tells one to three paragraphs of his story at most. He should write in the third person, describing any actions necessary, but must not perform any extraordinary actions while they tell the story. Only the low born and the French dare to show off in mixed company.

E.g.

Baron Peter of Gloucester poured himself a shot of brandy as he prepared his story. His brow furrowing with recollection as he again seated himself. 'I wasn't dead at the time of the murder, I recall', he smiled and sipped from his brandy.

'It was the butler's ghost...'

The minimum posting is one paragraph. It must be at least one sentence of at least five words, it may have as many sentences as you like, but must have less than 300 words.

Other players may then respond to this post. There are several different ways to respond;

1. A **Continuance**. The player merely allows the storyteller to continue with his story. At most he describes himself doing minor actions.
 "Absolutely fascinating, Baron. Pray, continue."
 Or
 The Colonel nods his head sagely as he puffs on his pipe.
2. A **Digression**. The player pays the storyteller a coin, then the player may refer to one of his own stories - if the storyteller ask him about it, he may then make a digression before the storyteller resumes his story. If the storyteller is not interested in hearing the digression, the storyteller continues. A player can only Digress once per storyteller. A Digression can only be a single posting (after the storyteller says yes, that is) and can't be interrupted itself - but could be used as a basis for that player to build a story on when it's his turn (depending on the idea for a story he's given). After the Digression, the player receives a Gold coin from the butler.
 "Ah, yes, I do recall a similar thing happened to me in India, only without the great conjunction or the bonfire."
 And a 'single posting' for a digression would be - a minimum of one and a maximum of five paragraphs. And it should end with the character handing the attention back to the storyteller
 "Anyhow, that's what happened on the way here this evening. Sorry for interrupting: As you were saying, Baron..."
3. An **Expoundment**. The player may expound on a part of the story - he adds a paragraph to the story that doesn't put any of the characters in a different/worse situation but merely fleshes out the story - the player gets a silver coin from the butler. A player can only Expound once per storyteller
4. A **Wager**. The player wagers that something happens next by placing a coin on the table- he suggests an idea or plot element that either the storyteller adds or doesn't. If the storyteller adds it, then the storyteller receives the coin. If the storyteller doesn't, then the player receives their coin back and another from the storyteller.
 "I'd wager", said the Earl, "That she was not dead after all, but had somehow escaped unscathed from that cannon blast, eh what, Baron?"
 Conversion into a Digression can happen if a sufficiently appropriate wager is made and the storyteller asks it of the original player who made the wager. The player must then pay an extra silver, post their Digression, and receive their gold. If they do not, the wager is dropped.
5. A **Contradiction**. The player contradicts a point in the story by placing a coin on the table - profusely denying that something happened due to various reasons. If the storyteller disagrees, then they must pay a coin, the player can then be more emphatic and pay an extra coin - and so on until they run out of valid coins. The winner keeps the coins
 "My dear Baron, everybody knows that fish use their gills for entirely different purposes, such that you could not possibly have wooed the Empress of Atlantis by fluttering them."
6. A **Clarification**. The player asks a question of the storyteller about some point of their story. This is not a wager or contradiction, so no coins are used. If the storyteller thinks it's enough of a plot point to become a wager etc.. then the storyteller should respond accordingly (ie roleplay it) otherwise, they can just address the question in the next story post.
7. A **Banter**. The player chats to the storyteller or another player without making an interruption to the flow of the story.

The turns in a round

After each story post by the storyteller, he should wait about a day to allow the other players a chance to respond to his post, either with interruptions or just general banter, before continuing

Many interruptions

If several players interrupt at the same time then it is necessary to determine who's interruption succeeds and whose is ignored.

The player who pays a gold coin succeeds over the player who pays silver who succeeds over the player who does not pay. In the case of the same coinage, the player with the larger paragraph wins. It is vitally important that the storyteller does not answer any interruptions until every player in the game has had time to reply to his post. However, the storyteller may banter as normal until their next story post.

Companions

As with the live game, at any stage in his story, the storyteller may introduce a 'Companion'. A Companion is a traveling companion of almost equal uniqueness as the storyteller. This companion is never mentioned until the storyteller needs him. The companion has one impossible ability which he uses to solve the problem facing the storyteller at the time of his introduction. He then stays with the storyteller until the story ends, or is written out.

On ending a story

After the storyteller has posted at least 4 paragraphs, he may end his story. The story must not be too long and should end within 12 paragraphs or so. If posting daily, then at least a weeks worth of postings is recommended. The final story post may more than the normal amount of paragraphs in length. The storyteller then turns to the person on their right and asks them about one of their adventures.

On ending the game.

Once the final brandy has been served (or cognac for the continent) and the last story has been told, each player, starting with the host and then proceeding in seating order, decides who's story is best. They may make a single posting of any length with or without comments on every player's story. The must also give their entire amount of gold coins (after having exchanged the last round's silver if necessary) to the player they deem to have told the best story. After everyone has posted, the coins are counted and the winner is declared. If at an inn or public house, it is expected for the winner to buy everyone a last round of drinks. If at a gentleman's mansion, it is expected for the winner to host the next game, using the money won to pay for all food and drinks.

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