

Die Glücksritter (The Fortune Seekers, or Soldiers of Fortune)

A game by Klaus Kreowski. Variant by Steffan O'Sullivan, 11/24/02.

A malicious castle construction game for 3 to 6 players age 8 years and up.

Knights in Germany have fallen on hard times: the crusades are over, big tournaments no longer draw the interest they once did, and peace prevails. In these uncertain times, a knight must make his own luck and find new challenges. And nothing seems more suitable in times like this as the construction one's estate.

However such a defensible castle, with four towers and walls between, isn't cheap. Collecting purses filled will Ducats is suspiciously easily – but for a knight of world there are always problems.

Thus the knight sends his people into the country, raises a few customs here, collects some taxes there... all while trying to outplan other knights with bluff, deceit, or – even better – theft. All because a knight's honor demands that one not only builds the most beautiful castle but also completes it first.

Unfortunately - a castle doesn't build itself. Therefore, each knight has six action cards with which to help construct their castle. All players always play two action cards simultaneously. How successful the play of an action card will be depends upon how many knights have chosen that action.

Whoever manages to build a complete castle with four walls and four towers first is the winner. Should several players succeed with that simultaneously, whoever has the most money (Ducats) wins. Knights are allowed to do everything possible to obscure their plans...

Game Components

- The gameboard,
- 6 action cards in each of 6 colors,
- 25 document cards,
- 18 Ducat cards,
- 100 Ducat coins - 60 worth one (silver) and 40 worth two (gold),
- 1 Ducat sack,
- 24 towers,
- 24 walls,
- 1 die,

- 1 special die and
- game instructions.

Game Setup

- Lay out the game board.
- Sort the action cards. Everyone gets a set of one color and sits in front of that position on the board. Set extra cards (if any) to the side - they aren't used. If one has the red cards for example, one builds his castle on the building site with the red frame.
- Shuffle the documents and place the stack on the field with the monk (field 1).
- The Ducat cards are also shuffled and placed beside the board.
- The castle walls are placed on the field with the farmer (field 2), the towers by the craftsman on field 3.
- **Everyone starts with two silver and two gold Ducats.** Put the remaining coins in the Ducat sack, which is placed next to the board.

Game Procedure

The game proceeds over several rounds. Each round starts with the Ducat distribution: any player uncovers the top Ducat card. The number of the coins that are to be placed on the field with the tax collector (field 5) are shown on the top; on the bottom are the number for the customs agent (field 6). The appropriate number of coins are taken from the Ducat sack (regardless of whether they are silver [value one] or gold [value two]) and put onto the fields on the game board.

Next, each player selects his two actions for the turn and sets them face down in front of him. Until they are uncovered, everyone that wants and can may play one or more red document cards. (No hurry – all documents are revealed simultaneously.) The chosen documents are revealed simultaneously and then acted upon. Additionally, yellow documents can be played at anytime.

After the documents have been resolved, all players uncover their action cards simultaneously. (After document cards are

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revealed, but before action cards are revealed, players may ransom their Black Knights from the Dungeon – see Card No. 4.) It becomes clear what each player has decided: the numbers on the action cards refer to the numbers on the board, with each field associated with an action. The lowest numbered action is taken first.

Card No. 1, Brother Jacob: With his relationships to the upper clergy, he is a resourceful adviser who knows information about everything and everyone and can organize the information well. Well, at least if someone is at his side to listen.

If only one player plays this card only, he takes the top card from the document stack for free. If several players play this card, however, brother Jacob holds out his hand: each of these players now gives a small offering of **four Ducats** into the Ducat sack and receives a document card then. Whoever doesn't want to or can't pay gets nothing.

Card No. 2, Farmer Johann: As our bondsperson, he masons the walls of our castle. He does the work for free – however the stones cost a pile of Ducats.

If only one player has played the farmer, he buys **one or two castle walls for 4 Ducats each**. If several have brought the farmer into the game, however, every one of them may buy one or two castle walls; however each castle wall then costs **6 Ducats**. After the Ducats have been paid into the Ducat sack, everyone takes their wall(s) and builds them on their building site on the board. Again, whoever can not or does not want to pay receives nothing.

Card No. 3, Master craftsmen Ehrenfried: He comes from the city and is responsible for the construction of the towers. Unfortunately his experience comes at a price, which makes the towers more expensive than the walls.

If the card is played by just **one player**, that player may buy **one or two towers** at a cost of **5 Ducats each**. With several played, the master craftsmen receive **7 Ducats** per tower. As with the walls, once the Ducats are in the sack, the buyer(s) receive and build their tower(s).

Card No. 4, the Black Knight: Yes, yes – even lucky knights face difficulties occasionally. Stinginess and envy can drive a penniless (or even well off) knight to test his thieving talents. Once one decides that their castle must be completed at any cost, the time has come to take on the role of the Black Knight....

If just **one player** has played the black knight, he is allowed to **(a)** take all the **two-Ducat coins** from either the Tax Collector (field 5) or the Customs Agent (field 6) or **(with an evil grin) (b)** the player attacks. If one decides in favor of a raid, one first names the player whom one wants to attack. Then, one rolls the special die. If this shows the Ducat sack, the attacker gets all the victim's money; if the die shows the castle, the attacker steals any one castle piece and installs it into his own castle. At this point, the player puts his Black Knight card into the Dungeon – it's hard to be anonymous in this game, and so you're caught at your robbery. But you keep the loot.

So far, so good. However, if two players have had the same idea and have played the knight-card, they must haggle to see who becomes the Black Knight. Whoever has fewer castle pieces decides who must make the first offer (roll a die in case of ties). Players may offer each other Ducats that they already have in stock, or castle pieces. (For barter purposes, a wall = four Ducats; a Tower = five Ducats.) You may offer a share of the reward you intend to collect, but if this is rejected, you must make a substitute offer or accept the opponent's offer. When someone is unwilling or unable to offer higher than his opponent has offered, he must accept his opponent's offer. Zero Ducats is not a legal offer – if neither player is willing or able to make an offer of at least one Ducat, both go to the Dungeon immediately.

The winner of the barter pays the loser the agreed upon sum, then carries out his action. If he won the barter with a promise for a share of his loot, he does not have to honor that promise! He may indeed give as much as he promised, or a lesser amount, or nothing at all. Be warned...

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When the phase is over, both players put their Black Knight cards into the dungeon.

If more than two players should play their knight cards, **all** played knight cards go to the dungeon and no one gets to be the Black Knight!

A knight which has landed in the dungeon can be ransomed. Ransoming costs **four Ducats**, which are paid into the Ducat sack **only after action cards are selected near the start of any round**. The knight card is then immediately returned to the player, which cannot be played that round, of course.

Cards No. 5 and 6, the terrifying brothers:

No. 5 is the tax collector, No. 6 is the custom agent, and both work to ensure that your treasury is replenished again and again.

If a player has played the only card with the tax collector, he receives all Ducats that lie on the tax collector field (field 5).

If several players should choose to visit the tax collector, they divide the money: Everyone takes the same number of one-Ducat coins and the same number of two-Ducat coins. Coins are divided evenly; remaining coins are left in the field.

For example:

On the field lie 3 one-Ducat coins and 5 two-Ducat coins.

- 1 player: takes all 8 coins.
- 2 players: each receives 1 one-Ducat coin and 2 two-Ducat coins. (1 one-coin and 1 two-coin remain).
- 3 players: each takes 1 one- and 1 two-Ducat coins (2 two-Ducat coins remain).

The rules for the customs agent are the same.

Other Rules

1. Royal Taxes:

Whoever has 8 or more of the same type of coins must immediately return half of them to the Ducat sack. **Exception:** if the player plays the document card "Gift". For example, if a player possesses 10 two-Ducat coins, he returns 5 to the Ducat sack. If a player has an odd number of

coins, they keep the spare coin. Note that a player may have a *total* of more than 8 coins; it is only the possession of 8 or more coins of one type which is taxed by the King.

2. Documents and seals:

For those that have them, document cards always bring an advantage. One should take the trouble therefore to collect and use them. They come in two types: red and yellow:

- Documents with a red seal may only be played at the start of the round, before action cards are revealed. Whoever is not careful and attempts to play a red seal document after the action cards are revealed must return the card to their hand.
- Documents with yellow seal may be played at any time.

A player may play several documents in a round. However, a player may not play the *same* document multiple times in the same round.

Played documents are set aside; they are only returned to the game if the pile on Brother Jacob's field (field 1) is depleted, in which case the used cards are shuffled and placed on the field.

3. The rest

If Ducats still lie on the field of the tax collector or the customs agent at the end of a round, they are simply left there. At the beginning of the next round the new coins for the fields are added to the leftovers.

Victory

As soon as the actions of all played cards are executed, the next round starts. This continues for a while, until a player has a complete castle with 4 walls and 4 towers on his building site at the end of the round. This player has won; that means an end to the construction for the others - the game is over. If several players end a round with complete castles, the one of these players who has the most Ducats, wins.

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Summary of Game Play, in Sequence

- A. Reveal the top Ducat card and draw the listed coins for Field 5 (top of card) and Field 6 (bottom).
- B. Players select two action cards, face down. Any “red” Document cards may also be played face down. You may play more than one Document card, but not two of the same type.
- C. Document cards are revealed and acted upon. Counter Document cards (“yellow”) may be played at this time.
- D. Any player may return his Black Knight card from the Dungeon to his hand by paying **4 Ducats**.
- E. Reveal action cards. Resolve in Field number order, 1-6.

Field 1: you may buy **one Document** card.

Field 2: you may buy **one or two wall** sections.

Field 3: you may buy **one or two tower** sections.

COSTS:	1 player	2+ players
Field 1	0	4
Field 2	4	6
Field 3	5	7

Field 4: you may become the Black Knight. If successful (there can only be one), you may either

- a. Rob all the two-Ducat (gold) pieces from Field 5, or
- b. Rob all the two-Ducat (gold) pieces from Field 6, or
- c. Rob another player: roll the special die and take either all his money or one castle piece, depending on the die roll.

One player present: automatically successful. Black Knight card goes to the Dungeon.

Two players present: haggle. Player with fewest castle pieces decides who offers first (dice ties).

Minimum bid: 1 Ducat, use “1 player” cost for value of castle pieces. Winner pays loser agreed-upon amount and then raids. Both Black Knight cards go to the Dungeon.

Three or more players present: no one is successful. All Black Knight cards go to the Dungeon.

Field 5: you collect local taxes. One player present: take all the Ducats. Multiple players present: split the one-Ducat coins as evenly as possible, and the two-Ducat coins as evenly as possible. Leave any odd coins.

Field 6: you collect custom tolls. One player present: take all the Ducats. Multiple players present: split the one-Ducat coins as evenly as possible, and the two-Ducat coins as evenly as possible. Leave any odd coins.

F. Other Rules

1. Royal taxes: if you have eight or more of one type of coin (one-Ducat coins or two-Ducat coins), put half of them back into the bag. (Keep the leftover if you have an odd number.) This happens at any point during the game, unless you play the *Gift* Document card to avoid the situation.
2. Red Document cards can only be played in phase B, above. Yellow Document cards can theoretically be played anytime, but the card itself will tell you details of when it's best to play it.
3. Any leftover Ducats on Field 5 or 6 stay there and accumulate with the next turn's coins.

G. Victory: The winner is the player who, at the end of a round, has a complete castle consisting of four wall pieces and four tower pieces. If more than one player have a complete castle at the end of round, most Ducats is the tiebreaker.