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a game by Jonathan A. Leistiko

## Origin

It all started with Sharon getting me hooked on Kevin and Kell. Then I found Sluggy Freelance through Plan 9 Publishing's website. Reading Sluggy led me to Keenspot and Keenspace, which eventually led me to Howard Tayler's online comic, Schlock Mercenary.

I'll admit that I first started reading Schlock Mercenary because of the "attorney drone" banner ad, but I've stayed with it for several reasons:

1. Good long-term plot and continuity.
2. The use of real science in a fantastic setting. Although there are aspects of the strip that I feel go far beyond the bounds of "hard" sci-fi, Howard Tayler frequently offers real-science explanations for what's going on. He gives a nice discussion of hyperfast projectiles when near-c-speed sabots are lobbed at the heroes, discusses the physics of falling in reduced gravity, and alternate propulsion systems.
3. Diverse characterization. The broad range of available characters makes Schlock Mercenary engaging and fun to read. It's also what made me want to make up yet another checkers variant. To my knowledge, the characters presented in this variant are fully compatible with all previous Sluggy checkers characters.

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## Schlock Attack

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## Object

To be the last player with checkers on the board or to meet your special victory conditions.

## You Need

- A complete checkers set.
- A six-sided die.
- Some pennies.

## Setting Up

Setup is identical to that of a standard game of checkers.

Next, one player choses a character to play. Then, the other player chooses a character and starts the game.

The character you pick will give you certain advantages (and disadvantages in some cases). Make sure you understand the special rules for the character you pick. . . .

## Play

Play is identical to a normal game of checkers with the following additional rules:

If you have a capture available to you, then you must take that capture. If there is more than one available, then you may choose the one you want to take. The rules that govern a character overrule all other rules.

### The Characters:

All Schlock characters designated as "mercenaries" have the following abilities:

If you perform a double jump, then you gain a penny. A triple jump gets you two pennies, a quadruple jump gets you three pennies, and so on... If you accumulate 5 or more pennies, then you win the game.

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## Play, continued

### **Sergeant Schlock** [mercenary]

Starts the game with a penny. When kinged, Schlock also gets a piece back which he may place in any unoccupied square in his home row. If no home row space is unoccupied, then nothing happens. (Regeneration) May spend a penny to capture a piece without moving, instead of jumping that piece. If he captures in this fashion, then he may not make any more captures this turn. (Plasma Cannon)

### **Captain Tagon** [mercenary]

If Tagon has three or more pennies, then he wins the game. (Very mercenary) May spend a penny to prevent one of his pieces from being captured after it is jumped. Pieces protected in this fashion may not be jumped again this turn. (Nerves of Steel)

### **Admiral Breya** [mercenary]

Starts the game with a penny. May spend a penny at the start of a turn to neutralize all of her opponent's special powers for that turn. (Superior tactician)

### **Commander Kevyn** [mercenary]

At the start of the turn, Kevyn may choose one of his pieces and a square on the board. Place a dime on the chosen checker and another on the chosen square. Roll a die. Reduce this die one pip at the start of each player's turn. When the die runs out of pips, then move the selected piece to the selected square. If the square is already occupied, then the terraporting piece is captured instead of entering the destination square. (Inventor of the Terraport drive)

### **Ennesby** (He is not a mercenary. He likes being a well-armed civilian, thank you very much)

Starts the game with a penny. Instead of jumping a piece, Ennesby may gain a dime and capture all pieces (his and opponent's) in the line of the jump instead of jumping. This must be used on the first jump of the turn. After he does this, he must spend a number of pennies equal to the number of dimes he has. If Ennesby does not have enough pennies to meet this demand, then his opponent wins the game. (High-powered laser)

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# Schlock Attack

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## Play, continued

### **Master Seargeant Thurl** [mercenary]:

Starts the game with two pennies. May spend a penny during his turn to have his opponent honestly tell him what they think his best move is. (Good problem-solver) May spend two pennies at the end of his turn to take an additional turn. (Able to work miracles in short periods of time)

### **Chef Ch'vorthq** [mercenary]:

May spend a penny to "detonate" one of his checkers at the beginning of his turn instead of moving a checker. All checkers in that square and the eight squares surrounding the detonated checker are captured. (Biological bomb)

### **Reverend Theo Fobius** [mercenary]:

If one or more of his pieces was captured last turn, then none of his pieces may be jumped on his opponent's next turn. (Protected to some small degree by clerical status.)

### **Lieutenant DerTrihs** [mercenary]:

If he has more than eight checkers, then his checkers behave as normal checkers. (Pre-explosion) If he has more than four checkers and less than nine, then his checkers may not double-jump. (Head-in-a-jar) If less than two of his remaining checkers are kinged when he loses his eighth checker, then he may choose checkers to be kinged until he has two kings. (Transplanted onto big robot body.) If he has four checkers or less, then he gains a penny for every checker he captures. (Much more useful with a big robot body.)

### **Dr. E. Bunnigus** [mercenary]

Starts the game with a penny. The doctor may spend two pennies at any time to "heal" one of her captured checkers, placing it in the first available vacant space closest to her home row. If there are multiple options, then she chooses where to place the checker. (Medic!)

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## Winning

When your opponent loses the last of his or her checkers, you win.

The game also ends if one player has met any special conditions that he or she has for winning.

## Variants

Try pitting characters from Schlock Mercenary against characters from Sluggy Freelance and see which strip does better.

Sluggy Freelance checkers variant rules are available at <http://www.invisible-city.com/games/k&bb.htm>

## Credits

Credits:

Concept, development : Jonathan A. Leistikio

Editing : Sharon J. Leistikio

Banner design: Howard Tayler

Typesetting : Jeremy P. Bushnell

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