

BLACKSTONE CASTLE



Design: Harvey N. Cornell, IV

Development: Harvey and Carlie Cornell, Bryn Smith

Art and graphics: Carlie Cornell

Publisher: Dragon Phoenix Games

The realm of Westarland is in turmoil. Since the Permon empire collapsed the power vacuum has left nations scrambling to exert local control. Previously minor rulers now aspire to the dragon-skull throne of Permon.

The kingdom of Avondell is embroiled in this political confusion. The King and his council of advisors, based in Blackstone Castle, struggle to establish secure borders with the neighboring kingdoms of Hanshore, Magdar, and Wildom. To that end, the king employs emissaries, scouts, captains, and even spies to carry out his political machinations.

You can help. Use your influence with knights and wizards, and the king himself, to carry out missions for the king.



Westarland. Blackstone Castle is in Avondell, in the capital city of Deltimar.

Components

- These instructions
- 1 game board
- 32 Machination cards
- 32 Power cards
- 32 Guild cards
- 72 Vassal cards
- 20 Household cards
- 4 Assassin/Saboteur cards
- 4 Wild Vassal cards
- 4 Family cards
- 8 Intrigue tokens (match Family crests)
- 20 Knight tokens
- 20 Wizard tokens
- 10 Castle (completion) tokens
- 4 Dog cards for *Rats in the Walls*
- 25 *Rats in the Walls* cards
- 1 First-Player marker



Dog cards from Rats in the Walls



Rat and Plague cards



Blackstone Castle game board



Machination cards



Power cards



Guild cards



Vassal cards



Household cards



Assassin/Saboteur cards



Wild Vassal cards



Family cards



Intrigue tokens



Knight and Wizard tokens



Castle (completion) token



First-player marker

King's Quest

2 to 4 players

Overview and Objectives

You play as a courtier in the Avondell court, manipulating vassals to carry out the king's political goals. Take actions to increase your influence with knights and wizards in the court who can help you carry out the king's political tasks.

Ultimately, you must complete political machination ploys and gain influence with the wizards' and knights' guilds to gain 21 points or more of favor with the king and win the game.

Setup

1. Place the game board on the center of the table, in easy reach of the players.
2. Shuffle vassal cards and place random vassal cards in the spaces outlined in white. The finished grid will contain 13 vassal cards.
3. Divide the remaining vassal cards into four roughly equal piles and place them at the corners of the board.
4. Choose one of the corner decks as your replenishment deck for the game.
5. Give players starter cards (marked "Household" on the back): 1 Order of Events, 2 Kings, 1 Wizard and 1 Knight and place them in your tableau.
6. Give each player one knight token and one wizard token.
7. Set extra knight, wizard, and castle tokens within easy reach.
8. Shuffle Guild cards, Power cards, and Machination cards as separate decks and place them in easy reach of the players.
9. Each player draws two random Guild cards to form their starting hand.
10. Select a first player by any means you choose. Give the first player the first-player marker.

Setup Notes

- If you wish to use special cards such as Saboteur/Assassins or wild cards, shuffle them into the vassal card deck in step 2.
- The board must always contain 13 vassals. If the count drops below 13, you may have forgotten to replace a vassal who was retained. If you discover a shortage, replace the missing card in a location you choose.

3.



10.



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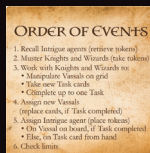
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Game Play

ORDER OF EVENTS

1. Recall Intrigue agents (retrieve tokens)
2. Muster Knights and Wizards (take tokens)
3. Work with Knights and Wizards to:
 - Manipulate Vassals on grid
 - Take new Task cards
 - Complete up to one Task
4. Assign new Vassals
(replace cards, if Task completed)
5. Assign Intrigue agent (place tokens)
 - On Vassal on board, if Task completed
 - Else, on Task card from hand
6. Check limits

Order of Events

On your turn, you:

1. *Recall Intrigue agents.* Remove Intrigue tokens you have on the board or a face-down card. You may allow an Intrigue token to remain on a face-down card until it triggers a reward. This step will not apply to your first turn of the game.
2. *Muster Knights and Wizards.* Collect Knight and Wizard tokens, one token per Knight or Wizard Household card and completed Knight or Wizard card on your tableau. Do not collect tokens for any Knight or Wizard cards that exceed the number of Kings in play in your tableau.
3. *Work with Knights and Wizards to:*
 - a. *Manipulate Vassals on grid.* Use Knight and Wizard tokens for actions listed on their Household cards.
 - b. *Take new Task card(s).* You may select one Guild, Power or Machination card per Wizard token that you return to the supply.
 - c. *Complete up to one Guild, Power or Machination Task card.* Use castle completion tokens to mark the two Vassal cards you use to meet the two requirements on the Task card. You must use two different Vassal cards on the board to meet the two component requirements.
 - d. *Continue to use Knight and Wizard tokens* until you run out or wish to pass.
5. *Assign new Vassals.* Replace any used Vassal cards you marked with completion tokens (castles) from your replenishment deck. Start with the card on the highest row, then replace the other card. If both cards are on the same row, start with the one farthest left.

6. *Assign Intrigue agents.* If you completed a Task card, you may place one Intrigue marker on any of your completed Knight, Wizard, or King Task cards. Place the matching Intrigue marker on one Vassal card on the board whose face-up symbols match either the faction or the role symbol (or both). If you did not complete any cards this turn, you may place any one Task card from your hand face down on the table and put your Influence marker on it.
7. *Check limits.* If you have more of any of the following than you have completed King cards, discard any that exceed that number:
 - Knight tokens
 - Wizard tokens
 - Task cards in your hand
 - Retained Vassals in your tableau
8. Turn passes to the left.

Note 1: The cards from the replenishment deck must be placed on the board with the same face up as they had when sitting in the replenishment deck (do not flip cards when replenishing).

Note 2: You may keep completed Knight, Wizard and Ploy cards that exceed the number of completed Kings. However, you may not receive an income of tokens or count any Victory Points for those excess cards until you complete the King cards needed to support them.

Victory Conditions and End Game

The first player to collect 21 or more victory points triggers the end of the game. When this happens, finish the round so that everyone has the same number of turns.

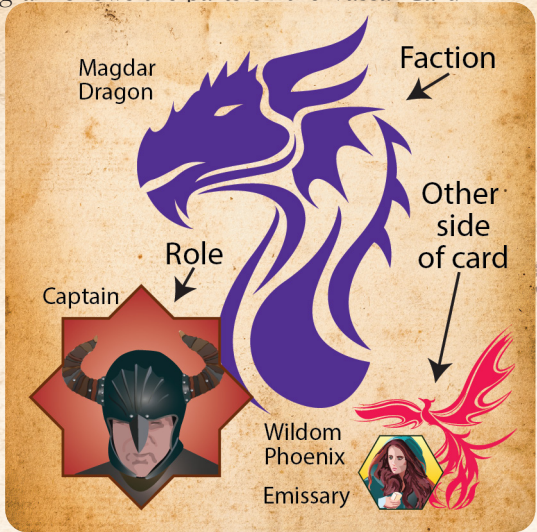
Whoever has the most points wins. If there is a tie, use the following tiebreakers (not including cards in hand):

1. Most completed Ploy Task cards
2. Most completed King Task cards
3. Most completed Wizard and Knight Task cards (added together)
4. Most remaining Wizard and Knight tokens (added together)
5. Most retained Vassal cards
6. Most remaining cards in hand
7. Result is a tie

Additional Instructions

Vassal Cards

This diagram shows the parts of the Vassal Card.



Vassal cards explained.

Vassal Tasks

The Task cards (Guild, Power, and Machination) all have Vassal Task requirements on them. Each Vassal Task requirement has two components. Each component specifies a board location (described with one or two letters) and a Vassal description, which includes a faction association and a role affiliation.

One of the letters is light blue on a white field. This letter is a requirement of the advanced game. In the basic game, ignore this letter.

The described Vassal must appear in the specified location to meet the requirement. You must satisfy both requirements to complete the Task card and put it into play. You must use different cards to satisfy the two requirements.

Vassal Task Notes

1. A rainbow-colored flag or standard indicates that any faction affinity on a Vassal will meet the requirement, if the Vassal has the specified role.
2. A rainbow-colored silhouette of a man and woman's head indicates that any role association on a Vassal will meet the requirement, if the Vassal has an affinity for the specified faction.



Anatomy of a Task card.

3. A single letter means the Vassal must be in the row or column identified by the letter.
4. Two letters mean that the Vassal must be in the space at the intersection of the row and column identified by the two letters.
5. You may not use a single Vassal for both requirements on any task card. You must use two separate Vassals.

When you can show there are Vassals on the board matching the requirements for a Task card in your hand, you can put it in play. Use the castle completion markers to mark the Vassal cards that will be used. After the other players are satisfied that the requirements have been met, put the Task card into your tableau in the appropriate space. If it is a Knight, Wizard or King Task card, tuck it under the top of the appropriate stack of cards. If it is a ploy, tuck it under the Order of Events card (or the topmost ploy in this stack).

Each completed Task card adds a retained Vassal requirement to subsequent Task cards of the same type.



In this example, one retained Vassal (a Lion-Spy) is required to add another Knight.

For example, if you have already completed one Knight Task card (not counting the starting knight card) and it has a Lion-Spy shown in the upper right corner (as shown in the picture at left), then you must also have a retained Vassal card with a Lion faction and a Spy role on it to discard.

This card must be a **retained** Vassal card (see *Knight cards* on p. 11). It cannot come from the board, unless you retain it first. The required Vassal card must be face up when the card is retained.

Tuck the new Knight behind the top Knight as shown in the picture below. Now that you have two completed Knight Task cards (for a total of three Knights), if you complete another Knight Task card, you will need to provide **two** retained Vassals, including a Lion-Spy and a Dragon-Captain.



Here, two retained Vassals (a Lion-Spy and a Dragon-Captain) are required to add another Knight.



Knights and Wizards

These court members are represented by Knight or Wizard tokens, respectively. When you use a Knight or Wizard for an action, return one Knight or Wizard token to the supply. You collect Knight and Wizard tokens equal to the number of those types of cards you have in play in your tableau at the beginning of each turn.



Knight cards

Knight cards give you an income of Knight tokens every turn. A Knight token can be used to:

1. *Slide a Vassal orthogonally one space.* Move a Vassal one space either horizontally or vertically (not diagonally). Two Vassal cards may never occupy the same space. If another Vassal is in the location you wish to move a Vassal into, you must move it out of the way first.
2. *Retain one Vassal.* You may retain a single Vassal card from the board using one Knight. To complete this action, mark the location of the Vassal you are retaining with the knight token. Remove the Vassal from the board and place it in your tableau. Refill the location with a new Vassal card from any of the corner Vassal decks.

Note 1: The orientation of a Vassal cannot change once it has been retained. The face that is up when you retain the Vassal is the face that must be presented for any retained Vassal requirements. Also, you may not flip the card that is refilling the space vacated by the Vassal card you are retaining.

Note 2: A retained Vassal cannot be returned to the board.

3. *Draw one Task card.* You may draw one card from the Guild, Power, or Machination card decks by paying two Knight tokens.



Wizard cards

Wizard cards give you an income of wizard tokens every turn. A Wizards, represented by a Wizard token, can be used to:

1. *Swap a Vassal with another.* Trade places for two orthogonally adjacent (not diagonal) Vassal cards.
2. *Transform a Vassal.* Any Vassal card on the *Blackstone Castle* board may be flipped over by using one Wizard token.
3. *Draw one Task card.* You may draw one card from the Guild, Power, or Machination card decks by paying one Wizard token.



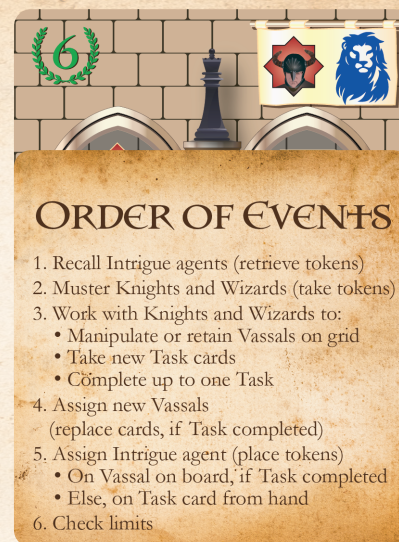
King cards

The number of King cards in your tableau determines how many items you may have at the end of your turn. The following is a list of the items limited by your King cards.

1. Cards in your hand (sum of Guild, Power, and Machination cards)
2. Knights in your service (tokens)
3. Wizards in your service (tokens)
4. Retained Vassal cards in your tableau

If, at the end of any turn, you have too many of an item based on the above limitations, you must immediately drop down to the limit.

If you have more completed Task cards (Knights, Wizards, Ploys) than Kings, you may retain the cards. However, you may not take income or victory points from any that exceed the number of King cards in play.



Ploy cards

Ploy cards are generally worth the most points, but otherwise do nothing.

See the section on “Victory Conditions and End Game.”



Intrigue Tokens

If, on another player's turn, the card you have marked with your Intrigue token is manipulated or used by another player, you get a reward. The Knight, Wizard and King Household cards list your reward choices.

If your token was on:

- *A Knight or Wizard card:* you gain one like token or one Guild card if you matched one symbol. If you matched both symbols, you gain **both** a like token and a Guild card, **or** you gain a Power card.
- *A King influence card:* you gain one Power card if you matched one symbol, **or** one Machination card if you matched both symbols.
- *If your token was placed on one of your face-down cards and someone else used that matching card to complete a Task,* you may put the card you marked in play in your tableau.

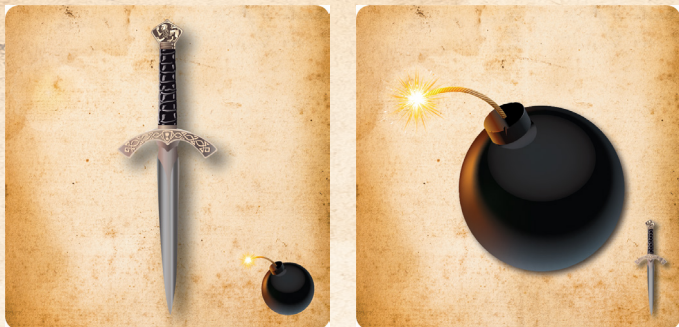
Note: When adding an Intrigue reward to your tableau, you must pay any upcharge that is due.

If you complete a card in this way, your Intrigue agents are exhausted and you cannot use Intrigue for the rest of the game.

Special Cards

Assassin/Saboteur cards

You have four cards with an Assassin on one side and a Saboteur on the other that you may optionally include in the game.



An Assassin (dagger side up) can be moved with a Knight or Wizard token, but cannot be removed from the board or retained. Once placed, a Saboteur (bomb side up) cannot be moved on the board. It can be flipped using a Wizard token. Or, for one Knight token it can be removed from the board. This action will “blow up” and reset the entire Vassal board.

An Assassin/Saboteur card may not be placed on the board during game setup. If one appears in the random distribution of initial setup, replace it and reshuffle it into the Vassal deck.

When an Assassin/Saboteur card appears on the Vassal card deck, set it aside if you are not finished replacing used cards. After you finish replacing used cards place the Assassin/Saboteur (without turning it over) onto an empty space on the board.

An Assassin card can be moved or flipped like a Vassal card but cannot be retained.

A Saboteur card can be flipped or retained but not moved. If a Saboteur card is retained, then place it and ALL vassal/assassin/saboteur cards on the board on the Vassal discard pile and reset the board as you would at setup. If you draw a new Assassin/Saboteur, set it aside and finish setting up the board. After you have finished, place the Assassin/Saboteur (without flipping it) onto any empty space on the board.

Family Cards

Each player represents a noble family in the kingdom of Avondell. Each player receives a random family card (optionally, deal each player two cards and they can choose one). Each family has a special major ability and a minor ability to help them in the game.



Corwin

Major ability: Use a knight token to slide a vassal up to 3 spaces in a straight line.

Minor ability: A Knight token may be used to swap adjacent vassals (like a Wizard).



Keygriff

Major ability: No limits apply to this player.

Minor ability: Start the game with one bonus Knight token and one bonus Wizard token, in addition to the standard startup bonus tokens.



Thistledown

Major ability: A Knight token may be used to slide a Vassal diagonally.

Minor ability: A knight token may be used to transform (flip) a Vassal (like a Wizard).



Wolfgram

Major ability: A Wizard token may be used to swap Vassals diagonally.

Minor ability: A Wizard token may be used to slide a Vassal one space orthogonally (like a Knight).

Variant 1: The King's Quest Co-op

(2 players, cooperative)

Objective

Two players must collect a combined total of 50 victory points in their tableaux to win. If you ever have 12 active rats, you lose the game.

Setup

Set the game up the same as the base game (pp. 4-5). In addition, shuffle the Rats in the Walls deck and set it face down where both players can reach it. Place the four dogs face up near the board.

How to play

Play as in the King's Quest game. In addition, follow these instructions for playing with the "Rats in the Walls."

Rats in the Walls

At the end of each player's turn, reveal one "Rats in the Walls" card. Play the cards as follows:

- **Rats** (one, two or three): Place face up near the board. These rats are now active and wandering.
- **Cat**: No new rat this turn. You get a quiet night.
- **Duchess**: No new rat this turn. Enjoy her affectionate company.
- **Plague**: All face up rats are now permanent residents of *Blackstone Castle* and cannot be killed by your dogs. Place the Plague card on top of trapped rats (see picture at right).

The Dogs

You may adopt a dog by completing and discarding a Task card. Follow base rules for completing the card then discard and take your new dog. Since you are not placing the Task card in your tableau as an active supporter, you will not have to pay an upcharge of Retained Vassal(s).

Each dog tells you which type of



In this example 4 rats have been "Plagued." You may not remove them from the game. Your dogs cannot kill them. Now they are not wandering, but they are still active.

Task you need to finish to adopt it. For a Jack Russell, complete a King card. For the Scottish Terrier, complete a Wizard. For the West Highland Terrier, complete a Knight.

Once you have adopted a dog, you may kill unplagued rats. The Westie will kill one rat. Pay one Knight token to the supply and discard a one-rat card. For one Wizard token, the Scottie may kill a single or double rat card. For one Knight token plus one Wizard token, a Jack Russell will kill any single rat card.

You may use each dog in your kennel once per turn. Each dog can only kill one rat card.

Variant 2: The Queen’s Quest

(2 to 4 players, competitive)

Objective

In this game variant you collect Vassal cards from the board and make sets that will be worth points at the end of the game.

Setup

- 1. Shuffle the Vassal cards (do not include wild or assassin/saboteur cards).
- 2. Set up the board as you would in the *King’s Quest* game (pp. 4-5).
- 3. Set Guild and Power decks aside. You will not need them.
- 4. Shuffle the Machination deck.
- 5. Make a draw deck and then turn over the top five, laying them out in a row. This is your offer area.
- 6. Give each player three Wizard tokens.

How to Play

You get three actions per turn.
Wizard tokens represent your standard three actions. Use your Wizard tokens to keep track of actions as they are used.

Action choices

- **Take a Machination card.** Choose a Machination card from the offer area and place it in your hand.
- **Slide a Vassal orthogonally one space.** Move one Vassal either horizontally or vertically (not diagonally). Two Vassal cards may never occupy the same space. If another Vassal is in the location you wish to move a Vassal into, you must move it out of the way as a separate action.
- **Swap a Vassal with another.** Trade places for two orthogonally adjacent (not diagonal) Vassal cards.
- **Transform a Vassal.** Any Vassal card on the board may be flipped over.

- **Use Machination card to take Vassal(s).** When a Vassal matches a location and faction-role requirement described on a Machination card, you may take that Vassal from the board and place it in your play area. If you match both requirements, you may take two Vassals. Replace Vassals removed from the board from the draw deck nearest to you. Discard the Machination card. You must choose which set(s) you will place Vassal(s) into when you take them from the board. They may not be moved into another set later. You may start a new set.
- **Take a Knight token.** You may use Knight tokens saved from previous rounds as extra actions.

End of turn

If a Machination card (or cards) was taken, slide to the right and refill from the left. If no card was taken, discard the card on the right and refill from the left (if possible).
Reset your three Wizard tokens to “available”.

End of Game

When the Machination deck is exhausted and all Machination cards have been taken and a player has completed and discarded all of the Machination cards in their hand, complete the current round and one more full round. Then the game will end. Add the values of your sets. Highest points wins.

Scoring

Set of Vassal cards that do not duplicate either the Faction or the Role:

Cards in set	1	2	3	4	
Score	0	1	2	4	

Set of Vassal cards that contain the same Faction **or** the same Role:

Cards in set	1	2	3	4	...
Score	0	1	2	3	+1

Set of Vassal cards that contain the same Faction **and** the same Role:

Cards in set	1	2	3	4	...
Score	0	1	4	8	+8

Variant 3: The Wizard's Quest

(2 to 4 players, competitive)

Objective

In this game you get rid of as many cards from your hand as you can.

Setup

1. Place the game board in the center of the table between players.
2. Shuffle the Vassal cards (without the wild cards or the Assassin/Saboteur cards).
3. For a two-player game, deal 25 Vassal cards to each player. For a 3-player game, deal 20 Vassal cards to each player, and for a 4-player game deal 15 Vassal cards to each player.
4. Shuffle the remaining Vassal cards. Make a draw deck and turn over the top five, laying them out in a row.
5. Shuffle the Machination cards. Make a draw deck and then turn over the top five, laying them out in a row.
6. Give each player three Wizard tokens.

How to Play

You get three actions per turn.

Wizard tokens represent your standard three actions. Use your Wizard tokens to keep track of actions as they are used.

Action choices

- **Take a Machination card.** Choose a Machination card from the offer area and place it in your hand. Pay one action token for the first one taken this round, two for the second taken this round. **Note:** you may wish to manage two separate hands, one for Vassal cards and one for Machination cards.
- **Slide a Vassal orthogonally one space.** Move one Vassal, or stack of matching Vassals, either horizontally or vertically (not diagonally) into an empty space. You may use a slide to add a single Vassal onto a Vassal or stack of Vassals in which the top card matches the Faction and role of the Vassal that you are sliding.
- **Swap a Vassal with another.** Trade places for orthogonally adjacent (not diagonal) Vassal cards. You may swap a single Vassal or a stack of Vassals.
- **Transform a Vassal.** Any single Vassal card on the board may be flipped over. A stack of Vassals may not be flipped.
- **Use a Machination card to place Vassal(s).** Place a Vassal that matches the faction-role requirements described on a Machination card into the location for that requirement, if that space is empty or if the Vassal (or stack of Vassals) in

that location matches the faction and role of the Vassal you are placing. If you can match both requirements, you may place two Vassals. Discard the Machination card.

7. **Take a Knight token.** You may use Knight tokens saved from previous rounds as extra actions.
8. **Swap one Vassal card from your hand** with one Vassal card from the offer area.

End of turn

If a Machination card (or cards) was taken, slide those in the offer area to the right to fill gaps and refill from the left. If no card was taken, discard the card on the right and refill from the left.

Reset the player's three Wizard tokens to "available."

End of Game

If you cannot play any cards from your hand, you must pass. After this happens to one player, complete the round and then allow all players to take one more turn.

Scoring

Fewest Vassal cards in hand wins. If tied, most tokens wins.

Variant 4: The Puzzle Master's Quest

(2 players, cooperative)

Objective

The goal of this game is for two players to work together to obtain the following formation on the board:

1. There must be exactly sixteen Vassal cards on the board (no more or less).
2. There must be only one of each faction/role combination on the board (there are four factions and four roles so there are sixteen unique combinations).
3. All Vassal cards must be in spaces around the perimeter (nothing in the nine interior spaces)
4. The players must meet either one of the following criteria:
 - All four of each FACTION must each be on one column only (B or K) or one row only (S or E), and two Vassal cards adjacent to each other may not have the same roles. OR,
 - All four of each ROLE must each be on one column only (B or K) or one row only (S or E) and two Vassal cards adjacent to each other may not have the same factions.

An acceptable example of a winning board might be: all scout Vassals on column B, all emissary Vassals on column K, all spy Vassals on row S and all captain Vassals on row E, as shown here:



Setup

Setup is the same as for a two player King's Quest game, with these changes:

- A Vassal card should be placed in each of the 25 spaces of the board.
- Do not use the wild cards or Assassin/Saboteur cards.
- Place the unused Vassal cards in TWO draw stacks (instead of four as in the regular King's Quest game).
- Do not give each player any tokens at the start of the game.
- Machination cards will not be used in the Puzzle Master's Quest.
- Shuffle the *Rats in the Walls* deck and set it face down where both players can reach it.
- Place the four dogs face up near the board.

How to Play

- *Rats in the Walls*. See pp 12-13.
- *Loss conditions*. If you have 12 active rats, you lose the game.
- *Replacing cards*. When a Knight token is used to retain a Vassal card, you may replace the retained card with a new Vassal card or not, your choice. You may also choose not to replace Vassal cards on the board when they are used to fulfill formula requirements. You may replace one of the two Vassal cards used in the formula, or both, or neither.

- *Reducing Vassal card count*. Since the board is full with 25 Vassal cards at the start, you will need to choose not to replace some of the Vassal cards on some of your turns. You need to reduce the number of Vassals down to 16 to set up for the winning board condition.

Variant 5: Advanced King's Quest

(2 to 4 players, competitive)

Objective

Collect 30 or more victory points on cards that are active in your tableau.

How to Play

The advanced game requires that you respect the optional constraint on the second requirement of the Task cards (the location letter in blue, see p. 7).

End of Game

The first player to collect 30 or more victory points triggers the end of the game. When this happens, finish the round so that everyone has the same number of turns.

Whoever has the most points wins.

Variant 6: Solo King's Quest

(2 to 4 players, competitive)

Objective

When you collect 28 or more points you win. However, if you ever have 12 active rats, you lose the game.

How to Play

In addition, at the end of each turn you randomize the Vassal board by following these steps:

1. Choose a board-refresh replenishment deck that is different from your Task-completion replenishment deck (first turn only).
2. Draw a Machination card. If there is a Vassal card in the location on the grid identified by the two letters of the left-side requirement, replace it from your board-refresh replenishment deck.
3. Repeat for the location identified on the right-side requirement.
4. Repeat drawing Machination cards and replacing Vassals until you have replaced two Vassal cards. Otherwise, follow instructions for Variant 1 (pp. 12 - 13).

