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## Don't Fear the Reaper



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**KENZER AND COMPANY**

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Don't Fear the Reaper!  
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**Mailing Address:** Kenzer and Company, 2094 Camino a los Cerros, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Phone/fax: (650) 233-8270.

**Internet:** JollyRB@aol.com (editorial inquiries only) or KenzerCo@aol.com (all other inquiries). World Wide Web: <http://members.aol.com/reikin/kenzerco.html>

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# Knights of the Dinner Table™

MAGAZINE

## “Don't Fear the Reaper!”

The KODT Development Team is  
Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,  
Steve Johansson and David S. Kenzer  
Cover Art by George & Jackie Vrbanic

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Although he won't admit it, Knights of the Dinner Table™ was created by Jolly R. Blackburn way back in 1990 as 'filler' for the small press magazine Shadis™ (which he was publishing out of a spare bedroom). Eight years later, as head writer and creative director for the KODT development team, he continues to draw and write strips for the monthly Knights of the Dinner Table™ magazine as well as for Dragon® magazine and The Rifter™ Sourcebook Series. This month, Jolly slipped even further into his 'special place'. He began wearing a great helm around the office and has asked others to call him the "Man in the Iron Mask-thing." He claims to be writing the unauthorized autobiography of an immigrant alfalfa sprout farmer but won't offer any details.

# Editorial of a Madman

*"Excuse me, sir, do you happen to know Gamer-Speak?"*

One of the biggest thrills we get from publishing KODT is when we attend a convention and overhear someone quoting KODT during a game. It's nice to know that should the comic book fold some day and we all move on to do other things that we've somehow left our mark on gaming culture. (*I'm sure that years from there will still be someone out there who boldly yells, "I waste 'em with my cross-bow" whenever he's confronted with a surly Orc at the gaming table.*)

The truth is, *gamer-speak* is a very important part of gaming. Most of the action of any good RPG is verbal, after all. What better way to emphasize a point or to embrace your character than with a few good phrases or quotes?

The topic of *gamer-speak* came up recently in our forum on AOL when several fans began to debate the proper usage of certain *gamer* terms. Not only do a lot of us speak *Gamer-speak*, but apparently there are different dialects out there. Intrigued, I asked our fans to post their own favorite *gamer* terms which they used around their tables. Here is a small sampling of the results.

**1dHandful damage:** Used when players try to do something stupid like attacking a drawbridge or small building. The GM simply picks up a handful of dice and rolls them to determine how many hitpoints the object has. Variations include 1dBagful and 1dCoffee Can full.

**ADO:** (*pronounced "Ah-Doe"*). Automatic Door Opener. Used to describe a character or NPC who is large and stupid. Useful for kicking in doors. Variations include Brick, Mr. Potato head, Arnold, Lurch, etc.

**Casually Depart:** To run like hell when you are obviously out-matched but too proud to announce you are retreating. (*Also*

*called a tactical withdraw or retrograde advance*)

**Clanger:** anything wearing enough armor to make several dozen good pots out of (*especially if the armor was made out of those several dozen pots in the first place*).

**Clanking:** Wearing heavy armor and lots of weapons. As in: "Since this is a formal dinner party, I guess my character can't clank." (Also called a Random Monster Lure)

**Crunchies:** GM Term for how monsters view player characters. Variations: Munchies, Num-nums, Canned-Meat, Snack Packs.

**Cue the soundtrack:** A term that announces that a player is about to perform or say something dramatic (or melodramatic). It sounds better than "hey look at me!"

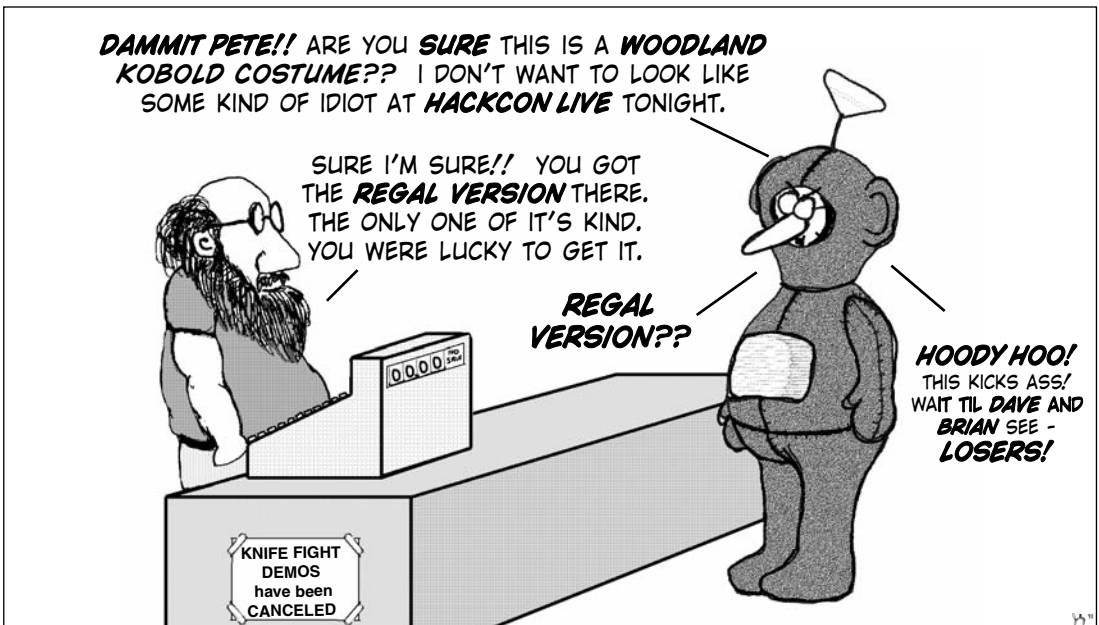
**Dan Roll:** 3 or more straight 1s on a fumble check...named after the worst dice roller ever born. Think of attack rolls that should come from a d6. Variations include, Putz Roll, Kazinski Effect

**Dicequake:** What happens when someone bumps the table really hard.

**DM Break:** Restroom break. A good time to peek behind the screen and strategize with the other players.

**Flavor Text:** Anything that comes out of the GM's mouth which isn't immediately useful to the players. Includes descriptions of the weather, random dungeon debris, descriptions of empty rooms, etc.

**Continued on Page 4**



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**UNIVERSAL MINIATURES SYSTEM**

**FM:** acronym for "freakin' magic." Stock explanation for any event or effect for which the players can see no obvious explanation. To really qualify for being an FM effect, it should be something that one could never reproduce using any of the existing game rules.

**Get on with it:** A sign that players are tired of listening to flavor text and that the GM should pick up the pace.

**Give a cold steel enema:** Another way of telling the GM you're back stabbing somebody. (*Usually followed by a Casual Departure*)

**GM Coolant:** Cold beer on a hot day. Providing the GM with a coolant could earn a player bonuses and favored treatment. (*Also known as an 12 oz. Insurance Policy*)

**Goon:** A character that is designed strictly for combat.

**Implement of Inscription:** mystical writing device used to update character sheets (*a.k.a. a pencil*).

**Kidney Check:** backstab executed on a giant, when the thief can only reach as high as the target's kidneys.

**Map Monkey:** A player (usually the newbie) who is forced into mapping for the party. The Map Monkey typically get's blame for everything that goes wrong.

**Monty Haul:** Probably the oldest gamer term out there. Any treasure/magic not adequately protected where players virtually 'walk away' with the goods.

**Mud Die:** The old, hard to read dice that came with the original D&D™ boxed sets.

**Ogre Eyes:** Rolling all 1's on 3d6

**PAF:** acronym for "prejudiced, arbitrary, and final." Somewhere along the line, our primary DM read that a good DM should not be afraid to display those qualities. So, whenever he'd make an unpopular or boneheaded decision (particularly after imbibing six or eight Guinnesses), he would defend himself by declaring that he had the right to be PAF.

**Pencil Death:** Character that has died so many times there are holes in his character sheet from all the erasures and updates.

**Pencil-Whipped:** A player character who has tons of crap listed on his character sheet that was NOT earned/developed during game play.(background notes, list of sworn enemies, detailed equipment lists, etc.)

**Petroleum-Based Food Products:** description of anything consumed at a gaming table that you would not want your mom to know was your only nutritional intake of the day. Includes potato chips, Doritos, Slim Jims, Ho-Hos, etc.

**PizzaMan-Speak:** Only one player in a group can possess the PizzaMan Speak skill at a time. He can only 'rid' himself of the skill by passing it on to a newbie. The player who has pizzaman-speak is the poor guy who has to call in any pizza orders and has to collect the money to pay to pizza dude.

**Plot Hammering:** When a GameMaster forces the players along a specific plot line in an adventure. Players who stray off the main

objective are likely to find themselves in deep kimshee when a GM is doing this. Variations include, Plot Wagon (as in getting run over by the plot wagon).

**Plotdevicium:** Something the GM won't let the players destroy no matter what.

**Rediger Option:** If one die of a roll falls off the table, all of the dice are re-rolled.

**Shield of Ignorance and Fear:** the DM screen.

**Spell Jockey:** A spell caster. Variations: Spell Artilleryman, Spell Lober.

**Spinectomy:** backstab, particularly when executed by a high-enough-level thief that it is essentially a sure kill.

**Tank:** A knight in armor.

**The Box:** The area of the table where dice should be rolled for optimum luck. For example, if the dice are going badly the chorus is "In the box, in the box!". If this doesn't seem to change the dice, the chant becomes "Outside the box!".

**The Sacrifice:** The practice of pouring soda on a blank character sheet at the beginning of a game to appease whatever deities & powers that control spills on the gaming table.

**Tink:** A term used to indicate when someone is being attacked and is hit but takes no damage. Variations include, Klang, Clang, Go-Fish, and Tap.

**Tossing the Stiff:** Throwing a corpse (usually of an orc or dead NPC) into a room to see if there are any booby traps.

**Totally Dead:** When there is no doubt that your character has died. Also known as Dead Meat, Grease Spot and Demised.

**Trap Monkey:** A player character (usually a newbie) or an NPC who is talked into or forced into taking the 'point' and detecting traps. (usually by unknowingly setting them off). Also commonly known as the Human Mine Detector.

I invite the rest of our readers who can't join us online to send in their own gamer-speak terms and phrases. I'll try to run another compilation in the future.

Speaking of online - a lot of readers have been complaining that they don't have access to AOL and can't participate in the our forum. Well, good news! There is now a **Knights of the Dinner Table Club** online which can be reached by ANYBODY with internet access. To join go to:

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/knightsofthedinnertable>

After joining (it's FREE!) you'll be able to access the KODT Chat Rooms, message boards, photo gallery, event calendar, etc. So be sure to check it out and come hang out with other KODT fans.

That's about it for this issue. Be sure to look us up at the upcoming summer cons. As usual we will be sponsoring some KODT Live readings, game demos and other fun stuff.

Til' next issue — Good Gaming!



Jolly R. Blackburn

# Our Readers Talk Back!

Dear KODT,

I just wanted to write in to say you guys ROCK! I've always been a great fan of the comic but I'm beginning to like the other features as well. Keep **Parting Shots**, **Gaming Dick's BackRoom**, **Homebrewed KODT**. Keep it ALL! You guys seem to have the touch. Most everything I find in KODT is a good read. It's like an adventure every issue. Though I can always count on the laughs, I never know what kind of extras you might throw in. (Like the kewl military piece in 28)

One other thing I think is kewl about your book is that you always seem to be talking to the reader, one on one. Does that make sense? I'm sure other readers will agree that we all feel like we know Jolly and the rest of the staff. I certainly have room for you at my table if you ever come to Detroit.

I noticed when a few readers complained recently you guys had the guts to run their letters. Way to go!! Forget the fact that those guys were waaaay off in their opinions. It's just nice to see that you guys can take the heat and are willing to listen to your readers. Take my advice. Don't listen to those guys. You are doing a great job and I like what you are doing. Don't pull your punches because some thin skinned no-life doesn't have anything better to do than complain about your cartoon characters being poor role models. You may not be able to call it what it is but I can. Feel free to print my name and E-mail address in case anyone wants to flame me. I can take the heat.

Brian Guthrie  
guthfal@hotmail.com

*Thanks for your letter, Brian. We are fairly certain that we have no thin skinned, no-lives among our readership. Our readers seem to be pretty kewl. The truth is we try to not take offense to letters from our readers who take the time to write in and share their opinions (even if those views happen to be negative). After all, we've been asking for honest feedback for almost three years now.*

*A huge part of being a gamer is being opinionated. Mention dice-less gaming, live action roleplaying or CCG's in a room full of gamers and you're going to get a broad spectrum of opinions.*

*Everyone has a right to an opinion and unfortunately most people who have opinions also adhere to the firm belief they are right. And, let's be honest, most of us love a good debate and arguing a point. (I once spent 4 hours after a game arguing why 1D6 damage per 10 feet of falling didn't make sense and ended up going home with a headache.)*

*That's why we opened up Gaming Dick's BackRoom as a forum where readers can share their opinions.*

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Hello! Just wanted to add my voice to the chorus of praise of **Knights of the Dinner Table!** I met them through reading my boyfriend's **Dragon™** magazines, and then found your magazine in the store and about died laughing! I hope to soon be able to stock up on the back issues and collections, and to subscribe, so keep 'em coming!

I have to admit, sometimes I get really tired of Bob and Dave. In the latest **Dragon** magazine, when they fired on the orc chieftain under flag of truce, I was much more angry than I should have been from reading a cartoon. Sometimes I think they should both have cursed rings of "extreme" slowness so Sara could always act first and counteract their more inane moves. Maybe Sara should seriously consider finding another gaming group, or

at least threaten the Knights with leaving, make them think.

Has she ever sat in with the *Black Hands*? As for Brian, I think B.A. should snooker him into a more GURPS™-type game, where the rules are much less explicit and more flexible. See how insecure he gets once he's relying solely on the G.M.'s judgement. Nothing like a rules-monger left without written support!

Wish I had an amusing gaming story to share, but the only thing I recall right now is the player who unexpectedly had to explain the origin of the immensely powerful amulet we were carrying (hot off our latest kill). His explanation: "Ummmm, we... FOUND it. It was... um, floating, in a river." {Pause, while his father considers the large, gold and jewel encrusted medalion.}

*"Floating in a river?"*

*"Yes, that's right." {Pause.}*

*"FLOATING IN A RIVER?!!!"*

For the rest of the campaign, "Floating in a river" became our watchword for an obvious lie :) Later in that campaign, we were pursued by a bitter mage who had turned himself bright blue, so we were ever on the lookout for someone with blue skin. The best line: {In a tavern} "You hear a man mention your names." "We do? Is he blue??" "You can't see him, you just hear his voice." "Well, does it SOUND blue?"

Anyway, thanks for the wonderful stories, and keep it up!

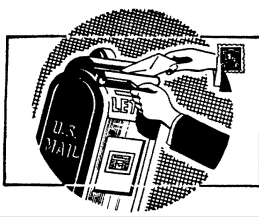
Betsy Moore  
ratnap@yahoo.com

*Thanks for the funny story, Betsy. When reading the line, "Floating in a river?" I couldn't help but think of John Cleese in the infamous **Dead Parrot** skit uttering in disbelief, "Pining for the Fjords?"*

*I really hate to defend Bob and Dave - I'm not sure I could if I wanted to. But they both represent player types that I've run into countless times during my years as a GM. I used to call them Reactionary Players. Stand something in front of them and they immediately react (usually violently and swiftly). Someone recently pointed out that in the movie, **Mars Attacks** that the Martians behave very much like Bob and Dave. (Even to the point of approaching under a flag of truce and then brutally attacking).*

*Strangely enough, both Bob and Dave seem to be popular and have their own fan bases. (Bob buttons sell fiercely at conventions. Second in sales only to the Brian Buttons).*

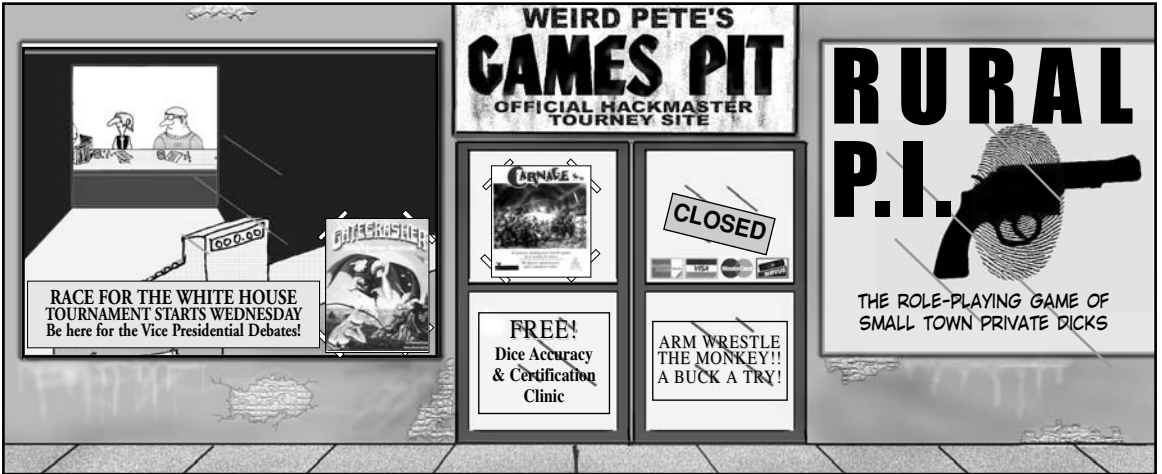
Jolly



YOU CAN WRITE TO US VIA  
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OR YOU CAN SEND  
YOUR SNAIL MAIL TO  
KODT LETTERBOX,  
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# Pleased to Meet You!

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN  
WITH DAVID S. KENZER AND STEVE JOHANSSON



OKAY, **LUCY THE BLIND PANDA BEAR\*** WADDLES UP TO **KRAGIN II** AND GIVES HIM A **SEALED SCROLL** BEARING THE **RUNE OF THE GAWD, ANDY WARHOL!** SHE LOOKS DEEPLY INTO **KRAGIN'S** EYES AND SAYS, "GO! TAKE THIS TO THE **PIXIE ELDERS**. YOU WILL FIND THEM IN **DIDDLE WOOD** WHERE THEY'LL BE RESIDING OVER **PIXIE MEET** IN A JUST A FEW DAYS."

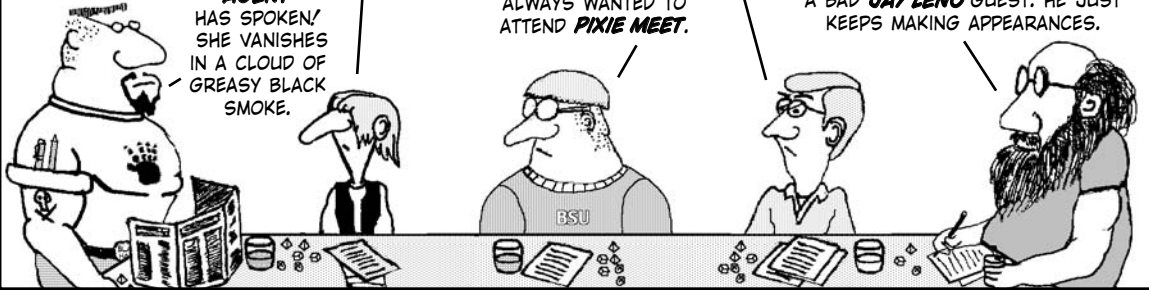
BUT SIR, WE **JUST** CAME FROM **DIDDLE WOOD**. THE **GRUNGE ELVES** ARE **STILL** BEATING THE **BUSHES** LOOKING FOR US.

THERE! YOU SEE? I **TOLD** YOU PICKING **WARHOL** AS YOUR **PATRON GAWD** WOULD LEAD TO TROUBLE. HIS LITTLE **DIVINE INTERVENTIONS** ARE REALLY STARTING TO GET ON MY NERVES.

**WARHOL'S AGENT** HAS SPOKEN! SHE VANISHES IN A CLOUD OF GREASY BLACK SMOKE.

HOW FORTUITOUS!! **FIRE BLOSSOM** HAS ALWAYS WANTED TO ATTEND **PIXIE MEET**.

HMMMMRFFFFF! MORE LIKE **DIVINE INTERFERENCE**. THAT GUY'S LIKE A BAD **JAY LENO** GUEST. HE JUST KEEPS MAKING APPEARANCES.



WELL PEOPLE, IT LOOKS LIKE WE PACK UP AND HEAD BACK FOR **DIDDLE WOOD!** IT'S NOT LIKE WE CAN TURN DOWN A **DIVINE CHARGE**. I SUGGEST WE **FORCE MARCH** THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE **COVER OF DARKNESS**.

WHOAH!!! LET ME REMIND YOU GUYS THAT TURNING DOWN A **DIVINE CHARGE** EFFECTIVELY GIVES YOU A **-5** TO ALL **SAVING THROWS** AND **TO-HITS** UNTIL YOU ACQUIESCE TO THE MISSION.

BY MY RECKONING TONIGHT IS A **NEW MOON** SO IT WILL BE **EXTRA DARK**.

FAT GOOD **THAT** DOES. **GRUNGE ELVES** HAVE INFRAVISION YOU **DORKS!**

WELL I VOTE WE IGNORE THE **PANDA BEAR** AND JUST CONTINUE ON OUR WAY.

AND REMEMBER THAT **WARHOL** HAS A HIGH **GRUDGE-RETENTION FACTOR**. YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF IN **DEEP KIMSHEE** IF YOU GET ON HIS BAD SIDE.



See KODT#7: The Dice Man Cometh

HE'S RIGHT, STEVIL. REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN **RASPUTIN** TOPPLED THAT STATUE IN THE **TEMPLE OF WARHOLP**? HE TURNED YOUR **EYELIDS INSIDE OUT** AND CAUSED A **SPHERE OF PERSONAL SANDSTORMS** TO FOLLOW YOU AROUND FOR **TWO WEEKS!**  
I DON'T THINK WE WANNA TO MESS WITH THIS GUY.

**BIG DEAL!** I CAME THROUGH IT IN ONE PIECE - UNLIKE A CERTAIN **FAT MAGE**, WHOM I WON'T MENTION.

OKAY, SO **MOONING** A **MAJOR DIETY** WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA. WE'VE **ALL** MADE MISTAKES BEFORE.

WELL I CERTAINLY WOULDN'T MIND CHECKING OUT **PIXIE MEET**.

LOOK, **BLOSSOM-BOY** I'M AFRAID I'M NOT UP TO SPEED ON MY **WOODLAND LORE**. WHAT THE HELL IS **PIXIE MEET?**

IT'S A **GATHERING** OF ALL **PIXIE-FAERIES** AND IT ONLY TAKES PLACE **ONCE EVERY SIX YEARS**.

WHAT? LIKE SOME KIND OF **BIKER WEEK** FOR **MUNCHKINS?**

YEAH, I GUESS.

THEY COME TOGETHER TO REDISTRIBUTE **FAERIE MAGIC** AND TO PAY OUT SHARES FROM THE **AMBER HORDE**. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A **BLAST!** LOTS OF DANCING, GOOD FOOD, HARD DRINK, RITUALIZED COMBAT.

HMMMM... SOUNDS LIKE THAT **FAERIE KIN SUPPLEMENT** WASN'T **ALL FLUFF** AFTER ALL. I MAY HAVE TO PICK UP A COPY.

SORRY, **NEWT**, IT'S OUT OF PRINT. HOWEVER, I HAVE A **COLLECTOR'S COPY** I'LL SELL YOU FOR **FIFTY BUCKS**.

REDISTRIBUTE MAGIC? SHARES? TELL ME MORE DIMINUTIVE ONE.

WELL, **PIXIE-FAERIES** SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME **GATHERING** ERRANT MAGICAL ENERGIES FROM THE DEEP FORESTS.

OKAY, OKAY, SO WE'RE TALKING BASIC **RESIDUAL MAGIC** HERE. IT'S **USELESS** AND **WEAK!** SO WHAT DO THESE CLOWNS DO WITH IT?

**USELESS??** THAT'S WHAT **YOU** THINK. YOU GOTTA THINK OF IT LIKE SAVING **PENNIES**.

YEAH, USELESS AS PIPS ON A ONE-SIDED DIE.

MOST PEOPLE WON'T BOTHER STOOPING TO PICK UP A **PENNY**. BUT SAVE UP A **MILLION PENNIES** AND YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A SMALL FORTUNE.

**ALRIGHTY!** YOU GOT MY ATTENTION NOW. SO THESE LITTLE GUYS GATHER ALL THIS **RESIDUAL MAGIC**, EH? WHAT THEN?

WELL, THEN THEY POOL ALL THE GATHERED MAGIC TOGETHER IN A **MAGICAL ORB** CALLED THE **AMBER HORDE!** EACH **PIXIE FAERIE** GETS A NUMBER OF **SHARES** DEPENDING ON HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE **ORB**. THE **ORB** IS THEN SOLD TO THE **CIRCLE OF SEQUESTERED MAGICKS** FOR A NEGOTIATED FEE AND THEIR CONTINUED PROTECTION.

GEE, THEY HAVE THEIR **OWN** LITTLE WORLD, DON'T THEY?

CALL ME ODD BUT I SUDDENLY HAVE A YEARNING TO GO TO **PIXIE-MEET**. WHAT DO **YOU** THINK?

OH, WE SHOULD. WE **MUST!** MOST DEFINITELY.

THESE GUYS HAVE SOME KIND OF **SCAM** GOING AND I'M GOING TO GET A PIECE OF THE PIE.

YOU SAID IT!!

**LATER THAT NIGHT...**

OKAY, THE **PIXIE ELDER** FINALLY EMERGES FROM THE **FERN-HOUSE** AND ASKS YOU ALL TO GATHER ROUND. HIS Demeanor is EXTREMELY **SERIOUS** AND **GRIM**. "IT IS AS WE FEARED!" HE SAYS IN A QUIET VOICE, "**THE RUNNING** HAS STARTED EARLY. **THE CARNAGE** SHALL BE **GREAT!**"

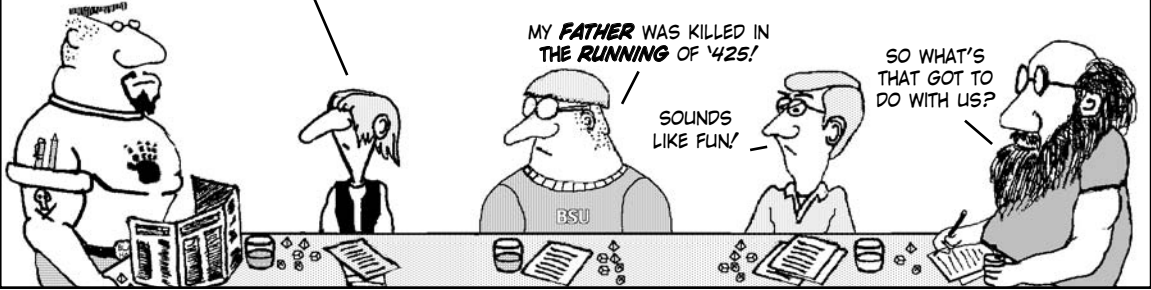
"THE RUNNING", HE EXPLAINS, "IS WHAT THE **GRUNGE ELVES** CALL THE **MASS HUNTING** AND **SLAUGHTERING** OF OUR KIND BY THEIR HANDS. IT COINCIDES WITH **EVERY PIXIE-MEET** AS THEY LAY IN WAIT AND **AMBUSH** THOSE ON THE JOURNEY HERE."

**THE RUNNING?**  
WHA..WHA..WHAT'S THAT?

MY **FATHER** WAS KILLED IN  
THE **RUNNING** OF '425!

SOUNDS  
LIKE FUN!

SO WHAT'S  
THAT GOT TO  
DO WITH US?



SOOOOOO..., LIKE IS THERE SOME PLACE I CAN **SIGN UP** FOR THIS THING? DO I NEED A **HUNTING LICENSE** OR SOMETHING? MAYBE FILL OUT SOME FORMS?

THAT'S NOT FUNNY, **STEVIL!** WE'RE TALKING ABOUT **MY PEOPLE**, HERE. I DON'T THINK MY **CHARACTER** WILL BE TOO TOLERANT OF SUCH REMARKS.

AND I DON'T LIKE YOUR ATTITUDE! IT'S NOT SOMETHING I LIKE TO SEE IN ONE OF **MY** HENCHMEN.

I THINK MY CHARACTER HAS SOME **GRUNGE ELF** IN HIS BLOOD OR SOMETHING 'CUZ I'M FEELIN' THE **CALL OF THE WILD!**

YEAH,  
ME  
TOO!

OKAY, SO THE **PIXIE ELDER** ASKS YOU FOR YOUR HELP. HE WANTS YOU TO GO TO **TRETCHER PASS** ON THE EDGE OF THE WOOD. IN A FEW DAYS **THOUSANDS** OF **PIXIE** AND **FAERIE KIN** WILL BE POURING THROUGH THE PASS FROM DISTANT REGIONS. IN THE PAST, THIS IS WHERE THE **GRELS\*** HAVE FOCUSED THEIR ATTACKS.

YOU MUST **ROUT** THE **GRELS** IF POSSIBLE, OR AT LEAST KEEP THEM **ENGAGED** SO OTHERS CAN SLIP BY SAFELY.



I, **FIRE BLOSSOM**, ACCEPT THIS MISSION! AND **HEAR THIS!!** ON MY **PRIMARY WINGS** I **SWEAR THIS OATH!!** I SHALL **AVENGE** MY FATHER, **STYRM BLOSSOM!**

EWWWWWWW, THAT WAS **GOOD GORDO**. EXCELLENT PLAY OFF YOUR **BACKGROUND**.

I AGREE. DAMN, **GOOD** ROLE-PLAYING THERE, **GORDO**. KUDOS!/?

HEY DID YOU NOTICE THE **HAND GESTURES?** I CAME UP WITH THIS MYSELF - IT'S HOW **PIXIE FAERIES** SWEAR AN **OATH!**

**PIXIE VENGEANCE?** COULD **ANYTHING** BE MORE FRIGHTENING?



**GAWD DAMN**, I'M IMPRESSED **GORDO**. THAT'S **JUST** THE KIND OF **INNOVATION** AND **IMPROVISATORIAL SKILLS** I'VE BEEN TRYING TO BEAT INTO YOUR HEADS. TELL YA WHAT, GO AHEAD AND TAKE A **500 E.P. BONUS**. JUST PLAY LIKE THAT FOR ME IN THE **HACKMASTER TOURNEY** NEXT MONTH AND YOU'LL MAKE ME PROUD!

SIR, THAT REMINDS ME, I CAME UP WITH A **HARVEST DANCE** FOR **KRAGIN**. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IT? IF YOU COULD JUST **CLAP** A BEAT I'D BE GLAD TO....

**NO!!**

UH..ER..NO, NEWT,  
THAT'S OKAY.

**SOO??!!! WOW!!**



\*GRELS - Slang for Grunge Elves

**A FEW HOURS LATER...**

AS YOU GUYS SIT IN YOUR **TREE STAND**, THE **MOUNTAIN PASS** IS **HAUNTINGLY QUIET!** TOO QUIET!! THERE'S NARY A SOUND, NO BIRD SONGS, NO CRICKETS, NOT EVEN THE **MELANCHOLY DRONE** OF THE **KATYDID!**

C'MON NITRO! ENOUGH WITH THE **FLAVOR TEXT!** THIS PLACE SOUNDS **EXACTLY** LIKE THE **JUNGLE LABYRINTHS** OF **LAOS** IN '68! I'M HAVING **CHARLIE FLASHBACKS** DOWN HERE.

**LOOK SHARP PEOPLE!!** WHENEVER IT'S **THIS QUIET**, THERE'S **GREL** IN THE BUSH! I WANT RANGED SPELLS PREPPED AND READY TO FIRE AT **MY** COMMAND

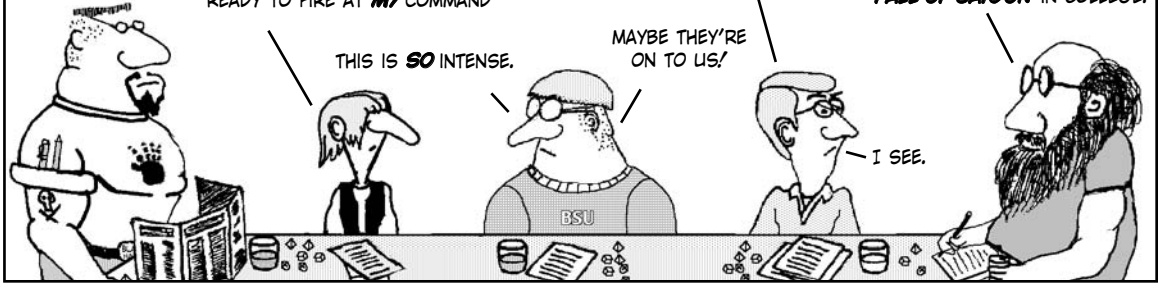
**PETE?** I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE A 'WAM VET?

HUH? OH I'M NOT. I USED TO PLAY A **LOT** OF **RISE AND FALL OF SAIGON** IN COLLEGE.

THIS IS **SO INTENSE**.

MAYBE THEY'RE ON TO US!

I SEE.



SUDDENLY THE FOREST **EXPLODES** WITH THE **HIGH SHRILL** WAR-CRIES OF THE **GREL!** THE CRIES ARE SO **HORRENDOUS** AND **FRIGHTENING** THAT ALL YOU CAN DO IS SIT AND STARE IN **STUNNED SILENCE**.

FROM BENEATH THE **THICK FOLIAGE** BELOW COME **THOUSANDS** OF **PIXIE-FAERIES**, FLYING, DARTING ABOUT, SOME CRAWLING, SOME FRANTICALLY LIMPING ALONG DRAGGING THE WOUNDED.

DRATS! WE FORGOT ABOUT THE **WAR-CRIES!** **MINUS 5** TO **SAVE VS. FEAR**.

I SEARCH **DEEP** WITHIN MYSELF FOR THE **INNER STRENGTH** TO REGAIN MY SENSES!

I'M TELLIN' YA, THESE GUYS **KICK ASS!** I **MUST** HAVE SOME **GREL** IN ME SOMEWHERE.

LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE **FRONT ROW SEATS**.

DISPERSED AMONG THE FLEEING **PIXIE-FAERIES** YOU SEE **GREL WARRIORS** WIELDING POWERFUL CLUBS AND MACES! IT'S A **BLOOD BATH** AS THEY **MERCILESSLY** CLUB THEIR PREY TO DEATH.



WHAT ARE THE **TACTICALS** ON THIS, SIR? HOW MANY **GRELS** DO WE COUNT?

OH, I'D SAY **FIVE HUNDRED** EASY. IT LOOKS LIKE THEY ARE **WEAVING** A **MIST-OF-CORRALLING** TO FUNNEL THEIR PREY INTO ONE LARGE GROUP.

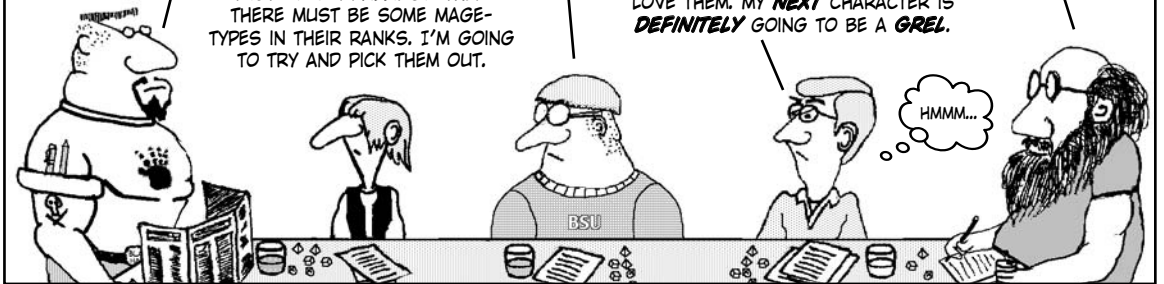
**FIRE BLOSSOM** IS GETTING REALLY **PISSED!** SHE PULLS OUT HER MATCHED PAIR OF **BLACK THORNS OF THROWING \*S** AND PACES BACK AND FORTH IN THE **TREE STAND**.

OH, OH, STAND BACK EVERYBODY! THE **PIXIE-FAERIE** IS **PISSED!** **HAR HAR!!!** GIMME A BREAK!

MIST-OF-CORRALLING? THEN THERE MUST BE SOME **MAGE-TYPES** IN THEIR RANKS. I'M GOING TO TRY AND PICK THEM OUT.

I'M TELLIN' YA, THE **MORE** I LEARN ABOUT THESE GUYS, THE **MORE** I LOVE THEM. MY **NEXT** CHARACTER IS **DEFINITELY** GOING TO BE A **GREL**.

HMMM...



PSSSTT! HEY, LET'S ME AND YOU FORM A **SUICIDE PACT**. WHAT DO YOU SAY? THROW OFF THESE **HENCHMAN SHACKLES** AND COME BACK AS COUPLE OF ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE **GRELS**?

THAT WOULD BE SWEET BUT **NITRO** ALWAYS RULED WE CAN'T DELIBERATELY KILL OURSELVES OFF.

DON'T WORRY. I HAVE A PLAN. JUST FOLLOW MY LEAD.

OKAY. BEATS SITTING IN THIS TREE.

OKAY, **LISTEN UP!** **RAZ** AND **JUNIOR** DOWN HERE ARE **BLINDED WITH RAGE!!** WE CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT THESE GOONS ARE DOING TO THOSE POOR LITTLE GUYS. AND BESIDES, WE **SERVE A PIXIE-FAERIE** SO IT REALLY HITS HOME...UH...IN THE HEART. WE'RE SO FRICKIN' MAD THAT WE JUMP UP AND LEAP INTO THE **FRAY!**

WAIT GUYS, YOU'LL BE KILLED! I **ORDER** YOU TO SIT DOWN AND STAY PUT UNTIL I ASSESS THE SITUATION.

OH, BUT IF WE **COULD!** WE'RE OUT OF OUR HEADS WITH **RAGE**.

HUH? ARE YOU GUYS FOR REAL?

OH YEAH **FB**, WE'RE FOR REAL.

**SIR??!!** THEY'RE TRYING TO DO IT **AGAIN!** THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL OFF THEIR CHARACTERS. YOU CAN'T ALLOW IT! I SPENT OVER **15,000 G.P.S** ON THOSE GUYS BUYING EQUIPMENT AND CURING THEM OF THEIR **CHARACTER FLAWS**. I'VE GOT AN INVESTMENT HERE.

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, NEWT, BUT THEIR REASONING SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE. I'M GOING TO ALLOW IT.

BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR. WE COME OFF LOOKING LIKE A COUPLE OF **COWARDS** NOW.

TO MAKE IT MORE INTERSTING, I'M GOING TO DO A TRIPLE SOMERSAULT AND A FORWARD TUCK ON MY WAY DOWN.

GIVE MY REGARDS TO **WARHOL**, BOYS! AND TELL THEM BACK AT TOWN THAT **MEPHISTO JUNIOR** DIED WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE AND HIS HANDS ROUND THE THROAT OF A **GREL!** HAR HAR!! THIS IS GREAT.

OKAY, YOU CLOWNS LAND WITH A SOFT THUD IN THE THICK BLANKET OF FERNS AND MOSS COVERING THE FOREST FLOOR. AS YOU REGAIN YOUR SENSES YOU REALIZE YOU ARE STARING AT SEVERAL PAIRS OF **SIZE TWELVE BOOTS** WHICH HAVE GATHERED AROUND YOU. YOU LOOK UP TO FIND YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY A HALF DOZEN **GREL WARRIORS!**

OKAY, LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH. I **SPIT** INTO THE FACE OF WHOMEVER IS THE **LARGEST** AND BARE MY TEETH AT HIM.

??!! UH...ER... OKAY, OKAY, THE **LARGEST GREL** WIPES THE SPIT FROM HIS FACE AND SMILES AT YOU.

SMILES? IT WAS A **LOOGIE** YOU KNOW.

I BITE ONE ON THE ANKLE!!

YOU GUYS DID THE **RIGHT THING!** AS YOU MAY RECALL, **GRELS** ADMIRE **BRAVERY** IN THIER ENEMIES. THEY ESPECIALLY LOVE **DEFIANCE** IN THE FACE OF **OVERWHELMING ODDS!** YOU'VE JUST IMPRESSED THE HELL OUT OF THESE GUYS AND IT PROBABLY SAVED YOUR LIVES.

ONE OF THE **GRELS** GRABS A **MOSS-STONE NECKLACE** HE HAS AROUND HIS NECK AND BEGINS TO CHANT. **ROLL VS. CHARM!!**

## A FEW FAILED ROLLS LATER...

OKAY, YOU GUYS HAVE JUST BECOME **GREL-SLAVES**. YOU'LL GET A CHANCE TO BREAK THE SPELL EVERY **SIX MONTHS** OF GAME TIME. WHENEVER A **GREL WARRIOR** APPROACHES, YOU MUST **KNEEL** AND **KISS THE TOE** OF HIS **BOOT!** THIS IS AN INDICATION THAT YOU ARE STILL **SUBSERVIENT**.

WHAT THE HELL? THESE GUYS AREN'T GOING TO KILL US? C'MON **NITRO** - YOU'RE SCREWING WITH US!!

YOU BETTER GET SOME **LIP-BALM!** YOU'LL NEED IT AFTER KISSING **ALL** THOSE **BOOTS**.

**SHUT UP, NEWT!!**



**CHARMED** ARE WE? OKAY, OKAY, JUST TO SHOW YOU I CAN PLAY A **CHARMED CHARACTER**, I POINT UP TO THE TREE AND TELL MY **GREL-MASTERS** THAT THERE'S A **BIG FAT PIXIE-FAERIE** SITTING UP THERE WITH HIS **BARBARIAN SIDEKICK!**

**HUH?** C'MON GUYS, THAT WAS UNCALLED FOR. YOU SHOULDN'T BE **VOLUNTEERING** INFORMATION TO THESE GUYS.

PAYBACK'S A BITCH, EH? I JUST HOPE THEY LET ME **PLUCK** YOUR WINGS TO DEMONSTRATE MY **LOYALTY**.



## A WEE BIT LATER...

OKAY, THREE **GRELS** COME OVER TO THE CAGE AND LEER THROUGH THE BARS AT **KRAGIN II** AND **FIRE BLOSSOM**. "YOU SHOULD BE **HONORED!**", ONE OF THEM SNARLS, "YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED AS THE **MAIN COURSE** FOR TONIGHT'S **FEAST!**" HE PUSHES A LARGE **WINESKIN** THROUGH THE BARS. "HERE! DRINK AS MUCH AS YOU WANT! IT MAKES THE **MEAT** MUCH SWEETER TO THE TASTE."

**MAIN COURSE?** THESE GUYS ARE CANNIBALS?

OH MAN, YOU GUYS ARE **DEAD MEAT** - LITERALLY!

OKAY, I'LL TRY **STEVI'L'S** LITTLE TRICK AND **HOCK** A **LOOGIE** IN ONE OF THEIR FACES. DO I WIN THEIR RESPECT?

WHOAH! THIS IS **BRUTAL!!**

AND I'LL **BARE** MY TEETH AT THEM.



OKAY YOU SPIT IN THE FACE OF THE **GREL** AND HE IS ABSOLUTELY **FURIOUS!** HE REACHES THROUGH THE BARS, GRABS YOUR ARM AND LITERALLY **RIPS** IT FROM IT'S SOCKET. HE THEN PROCEEDS TO **BEAT** YOU ABOUT THE HEAD AND FACE WITH IT. TAKE OFF ANOTHER **FIVE HIT POINTS** OF **BRUISE DAMAGE!**

??! HE RIPS OFF MY **ARM??** WAS IT THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT??

UH.... I ATTEMPT TO BLEND IN WITH THE STRAW BEDDING IN THE CAGE.



GEE, I FEEL REALLY BAD ABOUT THIS GUYS. LOOK, SINCE THEY PUT ME AND PETE TO WORK IN THE KITCHEN MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO.

REALLY? YOU'LL HELP US **ESCAPE?**

ESCAPE? SHYAA RIGHT! I WAS GOING TO GIVE YOU GUYS A CHOICE. YOU WANNA BE **SHAKED-AND-BAKED**, **STIR-FRIED** OR **FLAME BROILED?**



## A WEE BIT LATER STILL...

OKAY THE **GREL-CHEIFTAIN** PROUDLY ANNOUNCES THAT **THE RUNNING** WAS AN **OVERWHELMING SUCCESS!** OVER 2,300 **PIXIE-FAERIES** WERE **BAGGED AND TAGGED**. THOSE FIGURES ARE **UP EIGHTEEN PERCENT** FROM THE **LAST RUNNING**, SIX YEARS AGO. HE MOTIONS FOR THE **WAR-DRUMMERS** TO COMMENCE PLAYING AS HE ANNOUNCES, "**LET THE FEAST BEGIN!**"



DUDE THIS WHOLE '**RUNNING**' THING SEEMS TO REVOLVE AROUND **FEASTING ON PIXIE-FAERIES**. I THINK WE **OWE** IT TO OURSELVES TO DO A LITTLE **TASTE TESTING** BEFORE WE SEND THIS STUFF OUT.

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT. DISH ME OUT A **BIG BOWL OF BLOSSOM STEW**.

**SOB! SNORT!** I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY MADE A **MEAT PIE** OUT OF **KRAGIN!** WHIMPER - IT'S NOT FAIR!

OKAY, LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS **STUMBLED** UPON THE SECRET BEHIND **THE RUNNING**. AS SOON AS YOU BEGIN EATING THE **PIXIE-FAERIE STEW** YOU FEEL A **SURGE OF STRENGTH AND POWER!** BOTH YOUR CHARACTERS GO UP **108 EXPERIENCE LEVELS**. I'M GOING TO RULE THE SUDDEN **JOLT OF FAERIE MAGIC** BREAKS THE **CHARM SPELL**. YOU GUYS ARE FREE TO MAKE A MAD DASH FOR THE **DEEP FOREST**.



SIR, I'M GOING TO, SOB, TRY TO **DISBELIEVE** THE SITUATION JUST **ONE MORE TIME**. SNIFF

**JUMPIN' JERRY GARCIA!!** 108 EXPERIENCE LEVELS??

SORRY KID!

HEY, THEY'RE **MAGICALLY DELICIOUS!!**

HEY, HOW 'BOUT WE **PRETEND** WE'RE STILL CHARMED FOR A FEW DAYS AND **HANG OUT AND PARTY** WITH THESE GUYS? WE MIGHT LEARN A FEW THINGS.



I LIKE THE WAY **YOU** THINK. GIMME A **SECOND HELPING** OF THAT **STEW** AND WHILE WE DISCUSS IT.

WOULD YOU LIKE A SIDE ORDER OF **WINGS** WITH THAT?

<http://members.aol.com/relkin/kenzerco.html>

visit us on  
the World  
Wide Web



Brian is a very nice name. So, Brian, what do you do for a living?

HEH, HEH, SHE **DIGS** ME.

**TAPPA**  
**TAPPA**

# Angels of Mercy with Dirty Faces

STORY BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

WELL, I TRIED CALLING **GAMER TEMP** AGAIN BUT THEY **STILL** DON'T HAVE ANYONE AVAILABLE FOR TONIGHT. I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE CALLED EARLIER IN THE WEEK BUT, UH...I WAS HOLDING OUT HOPE THAT **SARA** WOULD CHANGE HER MIND AND REJOIN THE GROUP.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD CALL HER AGAIN AND **MAKE** HER COME BACK. YOU COULD USE YOUR **GM VOICE** TO INTIMIDATE HER.

**BAAAAA!** SHE'LL COME **CRAWLIN'** BACK. THE **HACKMASTER REGIONALS** ARE NEXT MONTH.

THAT'S RIGHT. SHE'LL WANT TO **HITCH** HER WAGON TO A **WINNING TEAM**.

INTIMIDATE SARA?



BRIAN'S RIGHT. ONCE SHE LEARNS WHAT A BUNCH OF **LOSERS** THAT OTHER GROUP IS, SHE'LL BE BACK. BUT IT **BURNS** MY ASS. WE SHOULD BE **HONING** OUR SKILLS AS A TEAM RIGHT NOW. SHE'S HURTING THE **WHOLE GROUP**.

I JUST HOPE **SARA** STAYS TIGHT-LIPPED. YOU JUST **KNOW** THEY'LL BE TRYING TO PRY INFORMATION OUT OF HER ABOUT OUR GAMING TACTICS AND PROTOCOLS.

HEY DAVE, WHY DON'T YOU **SCOOT** YOUR CHAIR OVER THIS WAY?



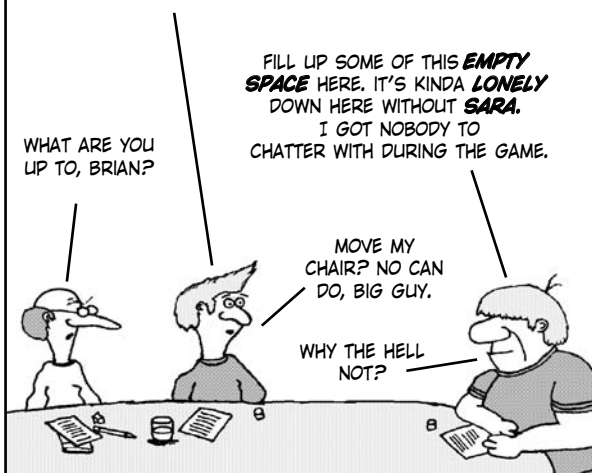
HUH? SCOOT MY CHAIR? WHY?

FILL UP SOME OF THIS **EMPTY SPACE** HERE. IT'S KINDA **LONELY** DOWN HERE WITHOUT **SARA**. I GOT NOBODY TO CHATTER WITH DURING THE GAME.

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, BRIAN?

MOVE MY CHAIR? NO CAN DO, BIG GUY.

WHY THE HELL NOT?



'CUZ I GOT **THIS SPOT TRAINED** TO ROLL **HIGH NUMBERS!** IT TOOK ME **MONTHS** TO GET IT THIS WAY.

I TOLD YOU ALREADY - **TABLE TRAINING** IS A MYTH. **NORMAN BOWZER** FUDGED HIS FIGURES IN THAT ARTICLE. I CHECKED THEM.

UH UH, NO WAY. THIS SPOT HAS SAVED MY ASS **MANY** TIMES.

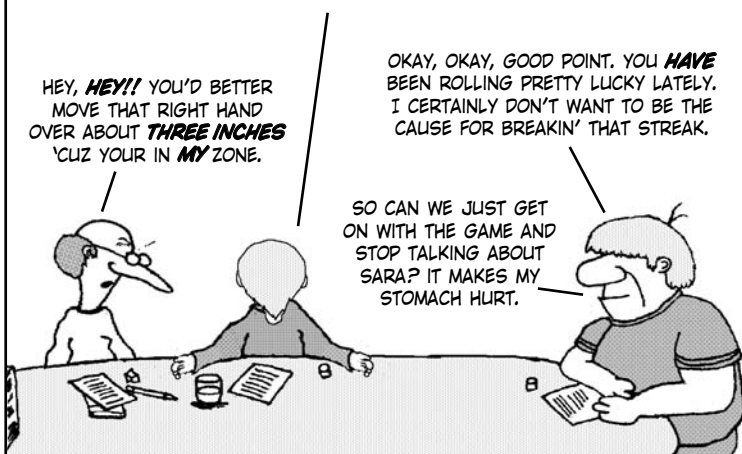


I'M TELLIN' YA, IF I ROLL MY DICE WITHIN **THIS ZONE** I GET HIGH ROLLS **EVERY TIME!** I LOVE THIS SPOT.

HEY, **HEY!** YOU'D BETTER MOVE THAT RIGHT HAND OVER ABOUT **THREE INCHES** 'CUZ YOUR IN **MY ZONE**.

OKAY, OKAY, GOOD POINT. YOU **HAVE** BEEN ROLLING PRETTY LUCKY LATELY. I CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TO BE THE CAUSE FOR BREAKIN' THAT STREAK.

SO CAN WE JUST GET ON WITH THE GAME AND STOP TALKING ABOUT SARA? IT MAKES MY STOMACH HURT.



OKAY, B.A., SO WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE TONIGHT? A **DUNGEON CRAWL**? **MAJOR QUEST**? MAYBE A **BAR ROOM BRAWL**? I JUST HOPE YOUR **HACK FACTOR** IS **WAY** UP TONIGHT. I'M READY TO KICK SOME ASS.

WELL ACTUALLY I WAS HOPING TO SWING YOU GUYS BACK THROUGH **HAGLEY TOWN** TO CHECK UP ON THE TOWNSFOLK. YOU **DID** PROMISE THEM YOU'D DO SO AND IT'S BEEN **TWO YEARS** OF GAME TIME.

**HAGLEY TOWN?** AH, DAMMIT, B.A.! WHY DO WE HAVE TO GO BACK THERE? YOU **KNOW** THAT BARKEEP HAS IT IN FOR ME.

HEY WE JUST **TOLD** THEM WE'D BE BACK SO WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO SETTLE OUR **BAR TAB**. WE WERE DOWN ON OUR LUCK AT THE TIME.

BESIDES, THERE'S NO **TREASURE** OR **E.P.'S** TO BE HAD THERE. COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME.



I **KNEW** YOU GUYS HAD NO INTENTION OF MAKING GOOD ON YOUR PROMISE. DOESN'T IT BOTHER YOU THAT YOU DISAPPOINTED **ALL** THOSE PEOPLE? WHAT ABOUT **NEBIL HENSHAW**? HUH? YOU PROBABLY BROKE THE KID'S HEART. HE **BELIEVED** IN YOU GUYS!

NEBIL? THE TOWN ORPHAN? YOU TRYING TO **GUILT** ME OR SOMETHING? I TAUGHT THE KID HOW TO RIDE A HORSE AND SWING A BLADE. WHAT **MORE** DO YOU WANT FROM ME? HUH?

YOU PROMISED TO SEND HIM TO **THIEVES SCHOOL**.



I **NEVER** SAID THAT. I PROMISED HIM I'D LOOK INTO IT. **TWO THOUSAND G.P.S** IT COSTS TO SEND AN **NPC** THROUGH SCHOOL!! DID YOU KNOW THAT? AND EVEN **THEN** THERE'S A 30 PERCENT CHANCE HE WON'T COMPLETE HIS TRAINING. AND I GOTTA BE HONEST - THE KID JUST NEVER SEEMED THAT **BRIGHT** TO ME. I'D BE WASTING MY MONEY.

YOU KNOW BOB, IT'S CALLED **ROLE-PLAYING!** JUST BECAUSE **YOU'RE** SHALLOW DOESN'T MEAN YOUR CHARACTER **HAS** TO BE.

DUDE, HE CALLED YOU **SHALLOW!**



**JEEZE LOUEEZE!** ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, WE'LL CHECK IN ON **HAGLEY TOWN**. FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! CAN WE AT **LEAST** HIT A **SMALL DUNGEON** OR SOMETHING ON THE TRIP THERE? I GOTTA SCRATCH THAT ITCH!

WELL... OKAY, I SUPPOSE. BUT I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU LOOK POOR **NEBIL** IN THE EYE AND TELL HIM YOU'RE RENEGING ON YOUR PROMISE.

OH STOP IT! YOU'RE BREAKIN' MY HEART HERE. TELL YA WHAT. I'LL DONATE **5 PERCENT** OF ANY TREASURE I GET THIS ADVENTURE TO THE KID'S COLLEGE FUND. HOW'S THAT?

**COLLEGE FUND?** COUNT ME IN. I'LL GIVE UP **5 PERCENTILES** FOR THE LITTLE TYKE. THIS IS **JUST** THE SORT OF CRAZY THING **SARA** WOULD HAVE BEEN ALL GUNG HO FOR.

OKAY, I'M IN TOO! I GUESS I DON'T MIND HELPING THE LESS FORTUNATE.



## TWENTY MINUTES LATER.....

OKAY AS YOU KICK IN THE DOOR YOU KNOCK IT OFF THE HINGES. A SMALL ROOM, APPROXIMATELY **FIVE BY FIVE FEET** IS REVEALED. CHAINED TO THE FAR WALL IS A **SICKLY** LOOKING **GNOME**. IN THE FLICKERING LIGHT FROM YOUR TORCH YOU CAN SEE **DEEP FURROWED WOUNDS** FROM HUNDREDS OF WHIP LASHES ACROSS HIS CHEST AND SHOULDERS. HE **BEGS** YOU TO END HIS MISERY AND TO KILL HIM.

SICKLY LOOKING GNOME? NOTHIN ELSE IN THE ROOM?? OKAY, I GUESS WE'LL MOVE ON TO THE NEXT ROOM AND....

GOOD CALL, BOB. THAT DUDE HAS **TRAP** STAMPED ON HIS FOREHEAD. BEST TO JUST LET HIM BE.

WHOAH! HOLD ON BOB! AREN'T YOU GOING TO TRY AND TALK TO HIM OR SOMETHING?

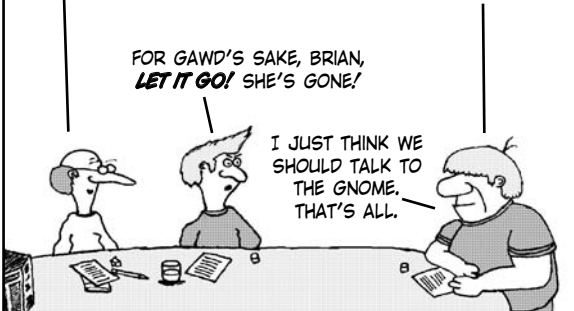


TALK TO HIM? WHAT FOR? WE ALREADY KNOW THIS IS AN **IN-AND-OUT** DUNGEON. IT'S NOT LIKE HE CAN TELL US ANYTHING USEFUL. **RANDOM DUNGEON DRESSING!** THAT'S ALL.

WELL **SARA** WOULD'VE WANTED TO TALK TO HIM. AND I BET SHE WOULD HAVE OFFERED TO **FREE** HIM OR SOMETHING OR EVEN TEND TO HIS WOUNDS.

FOR GAWD'S SAKE, BRIAN, **LET IT GO!** SHE'S GONE!

I JUST THINK WE SHOULD TALK TO THE GNOME. THAT'S ALL.



**BIG GUY, PRETENDING** LIKE SARA IS HERE AND DOING THINGS THE WAY SHE'D WANT US TO ISN'T GOING TO BRING HER BACK. SO DROP THE **CHICAGO HOPE** ROUTINE ALREADY. IT'S JUST SOME **STUPID NPC**.

HEY SARA'S APPROACH TO THE GAME WAS ALWAYS WORTH A FEW POINTS IN THE TOURNAMENTS. WE SHOULD PRACTICE HER STYLE JUST IN CASE SHE DOESN'T COME BACK.

I THINK HE'S GONE **SQUISHY** ON US.

GO AHEAD, **KNOCK YOURSELF OUT!** WE'LL WAIT IN THE CORRIDOR.



## SEVERAL MINUTES LATER.....

AS YOU OFFER THE **DYING GNOME** ANOTHER SIP OF WATER HE PUTS UP HIS HAND TO STOP YOU. HE LOOKS AT EACH OF YOU CLOSELY, MOVING FROM FACE TO FACE, HIS **DEEP BLUE EYES** WELLING UP WITH TEARS AS THE **PAIN** WRENCHES AT HIS BODY. PLACING A BLOODY PALM ON THE SHOULDER OF **TEFLON BILLY**, THE **GNOME** SAYS WEAKLY, "**THANK YOU!** THANK YOU, YOU KIND AND GENTLE SOULS! MY ENTIRE LIFE I **NEVER** KNEW **COMPASSION** NOR FELT THE KIND HAND OF **MERCY!** I HEARD SUCH QUALITIES EXISTED IN MEN - BUT, UNTIL NOW, I HAD **NEVER** EXPERIENCED THEM FIRSTHAND."

THINK NOTHING OF IT, LITTLE GUY! SOON AS YOU GET ON YOUR FEET YOU CAN THROW IN WITH US!

I OFFER HIM SOME MORE HEALING POTION! THEN I'LL GO SCROUNGE UP WOOD OR SOMETHING TO MAKE HIM A LITTER.

POOR LITTLE GUY! I ROLL UP MY SPARE ROBE TO MAKE A PILLOW FOR HIM.



THE **GNOME** DECLINES YOUR OFFER OF **HEALING POTION**, DAVE. HE SHAKES HIS HEAD SLOWLY AND SAYS, "I'M DYING, SIR! SAVE YOUR ELIXIR FOR ANOTHER DAY. FOR SOMEONE WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM IT."

**STOP SAYING THAT!** YOU'RE GONNA LIVE - YOU HEAR ME? WE'RE NOT GIVING UP ON YOU. SO **FIGHT** DAMMIT! HANG IN THERE!

HE BEGINS TO TREMBLE

POOR LITTLE GUY HAS NO MORE FIGHT IN HIM.

MAYBE IF WE HAD GOTTEN HERE SOONER. I WONDER WHAT SARA WOULD HAVE DONE?

I'M SORRY GUYS. THE **GNOME** WAS JUST **TOO FAR GONE** WHEN YOU FOUND HIM. HIS HAND GOES LIMP ON BRIAN'S SHOULDER AND HIS EYES ROLL BACK. A DEEP SIGH AND HE PASSES ON.



SNIFF - YOU DID YOUR BEST, BRIAN. THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE YOU COULD DO. SNIFF! HE JUST **LOST** THE WILL TO LIVE. THAT'S ALL.

HE CALLED ME **DANNY-DO!** TWICE! SNIFF! I THINK HE THOUGHT I WAS HIS BROTHER OR SOMETHING. SNIVEL. BRAVE LITTLE GUY.

SAIL ON MY WEARY FRIEND! WE'RE RICHER MEN FOR HAVING KNOWN YOU - ALBEIT, BRIEFLY! SNIFF.

OH MAN, **SARA** IS MISSIN' OUT **BIG TIME!** SHE WOULD HAVE **LOVED** THIS. AND YOU KNOW, EVEN THOUGH HE DIED, I FEEL LIKE WE MADE HIS LAST MOMENTS MORE PEACEFUL. SNIFF. HEY....DAVE? ARE YOU CRYING?

HUH? SNIFF. NO, NOT REALLY. JUST **IN CHARACTER**. **EL RAVAGER** IS A PRETTY SENSITIVE GUY.

YEAH, **KNUCKLES** TOO. SNIFF. I SUPPOSE THAT'S WHY THE CHICKS DIG HIM.

I SUPPOSE.

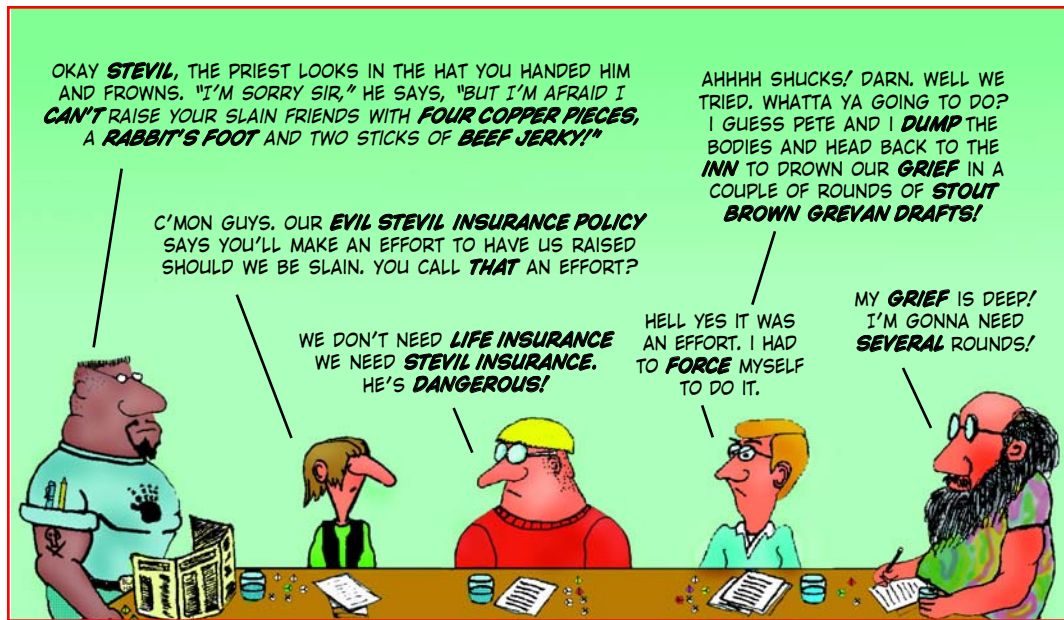
OKAY, I CALL **DIBS** ON HIS BOOTS! AND WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT NECKLACE HE KEPT KISSING? I CALL **DIBS** ON THAT TOO!

WHAT THE....  
**??!!!**

I'M GONNA ROLL HIM OVER AND SEE IF HE WAS HIDING ANYTHING. I'LL GO THROUGH HIS POCKETS TOO.

**HAI LOSERS!** I ALREADY PALMED HIS **NECKLACE** WHEN I WAS EASING HIM UP TO PUT THE **PILLOW** UNDER HIS HEAD! I'M GONNA CAST A **DETECT MAGIC** ON IT, B.A. DID I MAKE OUT?

I'LL TAKE HIS **EARS**. GNOME EARS CAN EASILY BE PASSED OFF AS BEING THOSE OF **TROLLS**. THERE'S A **FIFTY G.P.** BOUNTY ON TROLLS IN **HAGLEY TOWN**.



OKAY **STEVI**, THE PRIEST LOOKS IN THE HAT YOU HANDED HIM AND FROWNS. "I'M SORRY SIR," HE SAYS, "BUT I'M AFRAID I **CAN'T RAISE YOUR SLAIN FRIENDS WITH FOUR COPPER PIECES, A RABBIT'S FOOT AND TWO STICKS OF BEEF JERKY!**"

AHHHH SHUCKS! DARN. WELL WE TRIED. WHATTA YA GOING TO DO? I GUESS PETE AND I **DUMP** THE BODIES AND HEAD BACK TO THE **INN** TO DROWN OUR **GRIEF** IN A COUPLE OF ROUNDS OF **STOUT BROWN GREYAN DRAFTS!**

C'MON GUYS. OUR **EVIL STEVI INSURANCE POLICY** SAYS YOU'LL MAKE AN EFFORT TO HAVE US RAISED SHOULD WE BE SLAIN. YOU CALL **THAT** AN EFFORT?

WE DON'T NEED **LIFE INSURANCE**. WE NEED **STEVI INSURANCE**. HE'S **DANGEROUS!**

HELL YES IT WAS AN EFFORT. I HAD TO **FORCE** MYSELF TO DO IT.

MY **GRIEF** IS DEEP! I'M GONNA NEED **SEVERAL** ROUNDS!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IF YOU'VE HAD A **BANG STICK OF ANNIHILATION** ALL THIS TIME, WHY THE **HELL** HAVEN'T YOU USED IT?

ARE YOU NUTS? I'M A **PIXIE-FAERIE** DAMMIT! I TAKE **106** POINTS OF **RECOIL DAMAGE** EVERYTIME I FIRE IT.

SORRY BOB, AS YOU ATTEMPT TO **DISARM** THE **NUCLEAR DEVICE** YOU HEAR THE **MAIN SERVO** ACTIVATE AND BEGIN TO CLOSE. BEFORE YOU REACT, THE **BOMB** GOES OFF. IT VAPORIZES **YOU** AND THE ENTIRE AREA WITHIN A 2 MILE RADIUS.

WHOOAH! HOLD ON **TEX!** I DON'T THINK YOU TOOK INTO ACCOUNT THE FACT THAT I WAS **CROUCHING** REAL LOW BEHIND SOME ROCKS.

SORRY BOB, THERE ARE **NO** CROUCHING MODIFIERS AGAINST **NUCLEAR WARHEADS!!**

....OF COURSE BY THIS POINT I WAS **HOPPING MAD** AND I **TOLD** HIM SO. SO THE DUDE PULLS OUT HIS **TWENTY SIDER** AND I KNEW HE WANTED TO THROW DOWN. IT WAS TOUGH GOING. HE HAD **PLUS FIVE PLATE** AND A **WAR DAWG**.

I REALLY WISH YOU'D STOP CHALLENGING **MIDDLE SCHOOLERS** DOWN AT THE **"Y"** TO **CHARACTER DUELS**.

YEAH, BUT YOU HAD **YEARS** OF EXPERIENCE AGAINST HIM.

THERE, SEE? I TOLD YOU BOB, YOU SHOULD **ALWAYS** HAVE SOME **DETECT MAGIC** ON HAND BEFORE PROVOKING A CHALLENGE. YOU'RE GONNA GET **KILLED** SOMEDAY!



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**NOBLE  
ARMADA**



YOUR FULL BROADSIDES TEMPORARILY CRIPPLE THE **SYMBIOT** CRAFT BUT SINCE THE LAUNCH BAY IS UNDAMAGED THEY MANAGE TO SEND OUT A BOARDING PARTY.

**JUMPIN' BAJEEMERS!**  
I HEAD UP TO DECK THE GUN DECKS WITH MY SECURITY DETACHMENT.

BE CAREFUL THERE **BOB!!** THE **SYMBIOT BREEDERS** CAN TURN YOUR MARINES INTO ONE OF THEM WHEN THEY ATTACK.

GOOD CALL SARA BUT A LITTLE TOO LATE. **BOB**, HALF OF YOUR MARINES THAT YOU THOUGHT DIED IN THAT LAST ATTACK RISE AS **SYMBIOTS** AND TURN ON THE REST OF YOUR FORCES.

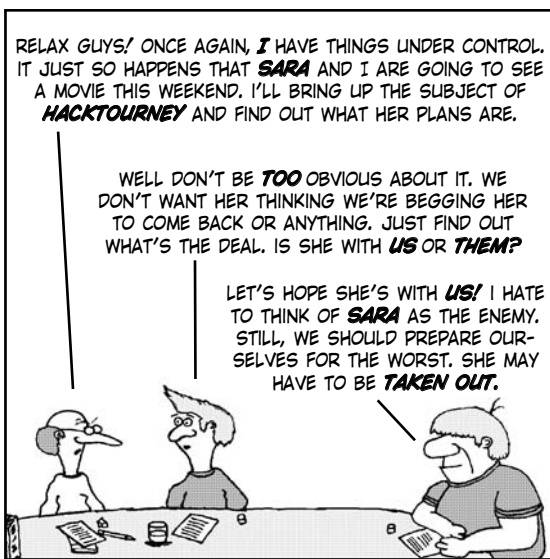
**GAA... WHAT??**

**DAMN!!** I SEAL OFF ENGINEERING AND FLOOD IT WITH FUNGICIDE GAS.

LET'S CUT OUR LOSSES BEFORE THAT POD SHIP REGENERATES ITS HULL. SORRY **BOBBY BOY**. BETTER LUCK NEXT LIFE. **HAR HAR!!**

# Missin' Out Big Time

STORY BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN  
AND DAVID S. KENZER



GUYS I HATE TO INTERRUPT BUT CAN WE GET **BACK** TO THE GAME? AS THE **TOWN HALL** CONTINUES TO BURN THE **HIGH PRIEST** FROM THE **TEMPLE OF LUVIA** APPROACHES YOU, HE IS CARRYING A SMALL WOODEN CHEST WHICH HE HOLDS OUT TO YOU. "HERE!" HE SAYS, "TAKE IT!" IT IS THE **TEMPLE TREASURY**. YOU CAN HAVE IT WITH MY **BLESSINGS** IF YOU LEAVE THIS TOWN AND PROMISE **NEVER** TO RETURN.

HA! I KNEW HOLDING HIS HEAD "**UNDERWATER**" IN THAT **OUTHOUSE** WOULD PAY BACK **DIVIDENDS**!

THE **NERVE** OF THIS GUY. I PATTED HIM DOWN TWICE! YOU MEAN HE WAS **HOLDING** OUT ON US?

LET'S NOT BE TOO HASTY TO ACCEPT HIS OFFER GUYS. WE MAY BE ABLE TO FINAGLE A FEW **HEALING SPELLS** ON THE DEAL.



### LATER THAT NIGHT...

**FORGET IT!** NO WAY IN HELL I'M GOING TO DO IT SO JUST **FORGET IT!** END OF STORY.

C'MON B.A.! WE WANNA SEE YOU ACTUALLY **ERASE** HAGLEY TOWN OFF THE MAP! IT'S NOT **EVERY DAY** WE GET TO **WIPE OUT** AN ENTIRE TOWN.

I'M SURE IT WILL BE **QUICKLY** RESETTLED!

QUICKLY RESETTLED? **NO WAY!** WE PUT ALL THOSE HEADS ON SHARP STICKS AND PLACED THEM BY THE ROADSIDE.

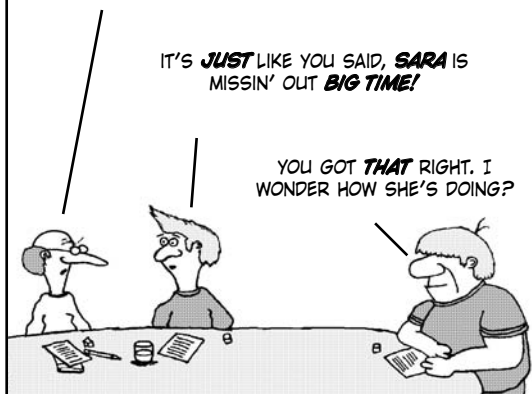
WHAT A GREAT ADVENTURE. KUDOS, B.A.!



I AGREE. **BA.**'S ADVENTURE WRITING HAS REALLY IMPROVED IN RECENT WEEKS. THE **HACKFACTOR** ON THIS ADVENTURE WAS RIGHT UP THERE WITH SUCH CLASSICS AS **ORCS AT THE GATES**, **BLOOD BATH AT KURZY** AND **SLAUGHTERHOUSE SIX**.

IT'S **JUST** LIKE YOU SAID, **SARA** IS MISSIN' OUT **BIG TIME!**

YOU GOT **THAT** RIGHT. I WONDER HOW SHE'S DOING?



### MEANWHILE ON THE CAMPUS OF BSU...

THE **LIZARDMAN** SIGNS THE **PEACE TREATY** JUST UNDER YOUR MARK, **LANKY** AND GRUNTS HIS APPROVAL. YOUR PARTY NOW HAS THE RIGHT OF **FREE PASSAGE** BETWEEN THE **GRAND MARSH** AND THE **GIBAR STRAIGHT** FOR AS LONG AS THE SKY IS BLUE AND THE GRASS IS GREEN. GOOD JOB. THAT WAS A **TOUGH** NEGOTIATION BUT YOU PULLED IT OFF - AND **WITHOUT** THE SHEDDING OF ANY BLOOD. QUITE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT CONSIDERING YOU WERE DEALING WITH **LIZARDMEN**.

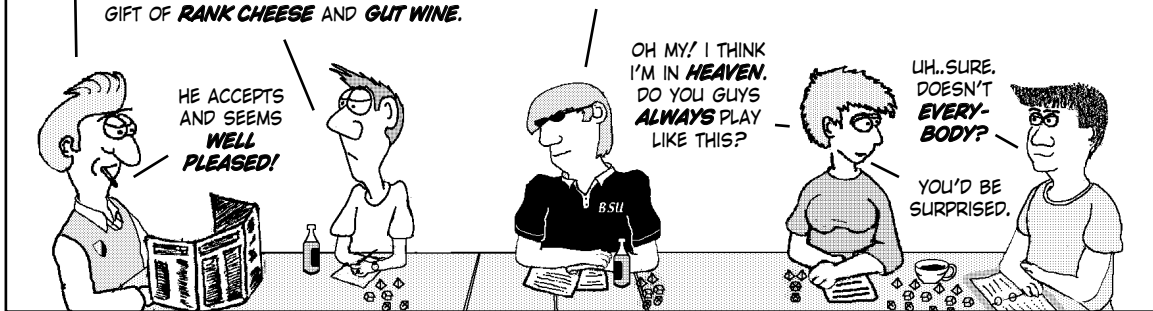
THE WAY OF **PEACE** IS **ALWAYS** A DIFFICULT ROAD. I BOW RESPECTFULLY BEFORE THE **LIZARDMAN** AND GIVE HIM A PARTING GIFT OF **RANK CHEESE** AND **GUT WINE**.

GOOD JOB, **LANK!** MY BARD COMPOSES A **SONG** BASED ON THIS **GREAT DEED**. I'LL SING IT AT **MEETING HALL** THIS EVENING WHEN WE RETURN THE **LOST SEPTRE** TO THE TEMPLE.

OH MY! I THINK I'M IN **HEAVEN**. DO YOU GUYS **ALWAYS** PLAY LIKE THIS?

UH...SURE. DOESN'T **EVERY-BODY?**

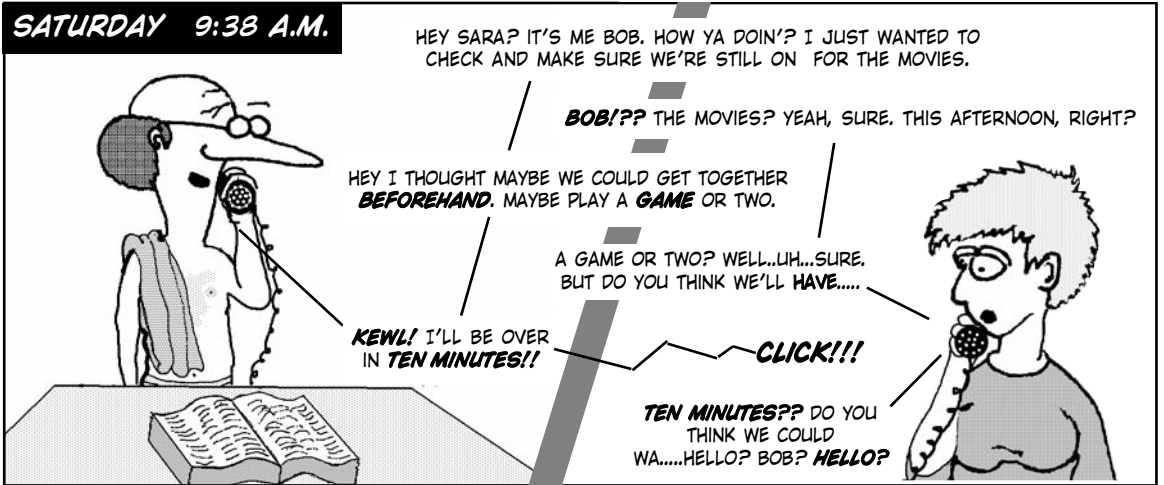
YOU'D BE SURPRISED.



# A Gamer's Brunch

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN AND DAVID S. KENZER

**SATURDAY 9:38 A.M.**



HEY SARA? IT'S ME BOB. HOW YA DOIN'? I JUST WANTED TO CHECK AND MAKE SURE WE'RE STILL ON FOR THE MOVIES.

**BOB!??** THE MOVIES? YEAH, SURE. THIS AFTERNOON, RIGHT?

HEY I THOUGHT MAYBE WE COULD GET TOGETHER **BEFOREHAND**. MAYBE PLAY A **GAME** OR TWO.

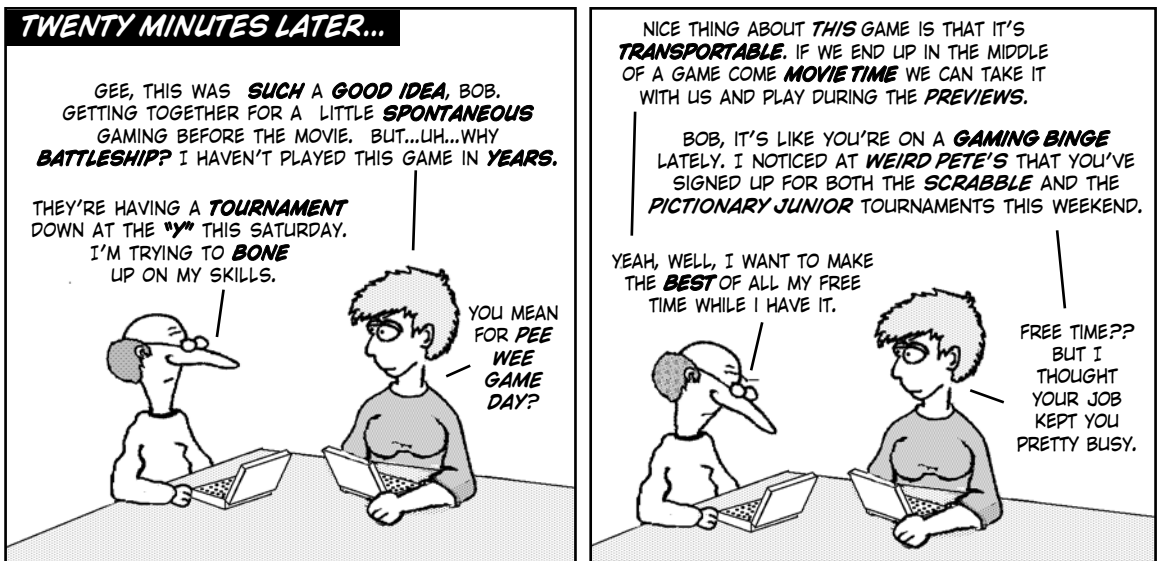
A GAME OR TWO? WELL...UH...SURE. BUT DO YOU THINK WE'LL **HAVE**.....

**KEWL!** I'LL BE OVER IN **TEN MINUTES!!**

**CLICK!!!**

**TEN MINUTES??** DO YOU THINK WE COULD WA.....HELLO? BOB? **HELLO?**

**TWENTY MINUTES LATER...**



GEE, THIS WAS **SUCH A GOOD IDEA**, BOB. GETTING TOGETHER FOR A LITTLE **SPONTANEOUS GAMING** BEFORE THE MOVIE. BUT...UH...WHY **BATTLESHIP?** I HAVEN'T PLAYED THIS GAME IN **YEARS**.

THEY'RE HAVING A **TOURNAMENT** DOWN AT THE **"Y"** THIS SATURDAY. I'M TRYING TO **BONE** UP ON MY SKILLS.

YOU MEAN FOR **PEE** **WEE** **GAME** **DAY?**

NICE THING ABOUT **THIS** GAME IS THAT IT'S **TRANSPORTABLE**. IF WE END UP IN THE MIDDLE OF A GAME COME **MOVIE TIME** WE CAN TAKE IT WITH US AND PLAY DURING THE **PREVIEWS**.

BOB, IT'S LIKE YOU'RE ON A **GAMING BINGE** LATELY. I NOTICED AT **WEIRD PETE'S** THAT YOU'VE SIGNED UP FOR BOTH THE **SCRABBLE** AND THE **PICTIONARY JUNIOR** TOURNAMENTS THIS WEEKEND.

YEAH, WELL, I WANT TO MAKE THE **BEST** OF ALL MY FREE TIME WHILE I HAVE IT.

FREE TIME?? BUT I THOUGHT YOUR JOB KEPT YOU PRETTY BUSY.

DAMN STRAIGHT IT DOES!! THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO TAKE A LITTLE **TIME OFF**. I'VE BEEN STRESSED OUT TO THE MAX. I'M TAKIN' A LITTLE **R&R** FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. YOU KNOW - KICK BACK WITH MY FRIENDS AND GET A LITTLE EXTRA **GAME TIME** IN.

A FEW WEEKS? I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU'D BEEN WORKING AT THE **HOE & HARNESS** LONG ENOUGH TO ACCRUE **THAT** MUCH **VACATION TIME**.

WELL, I HAVEN'T REALLY.

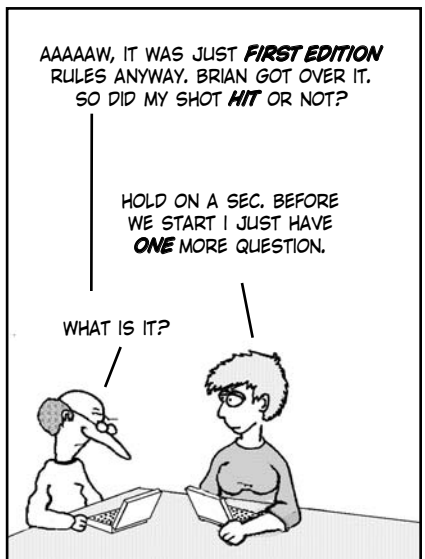
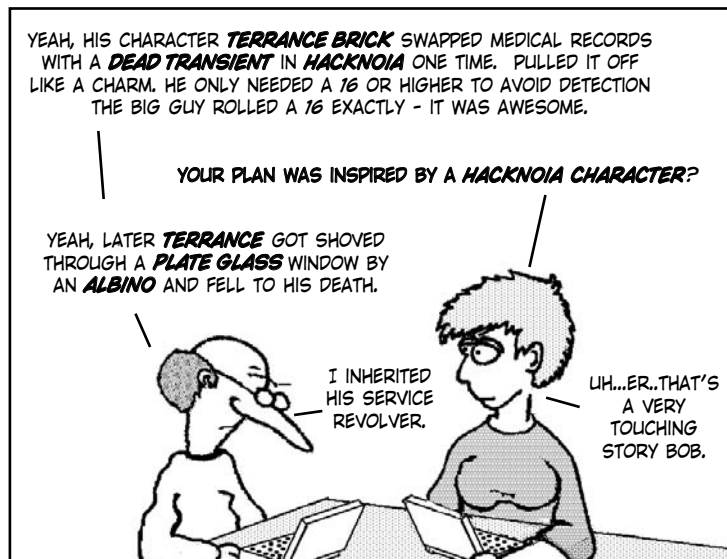
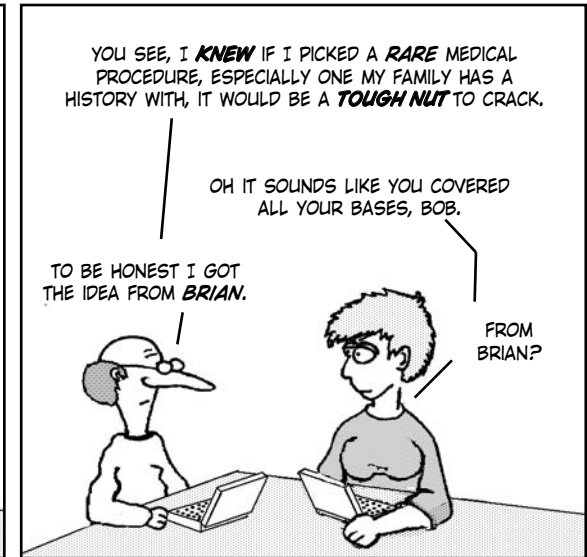
UH.. THEN I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HOW ARE YOU MANAGING TO....

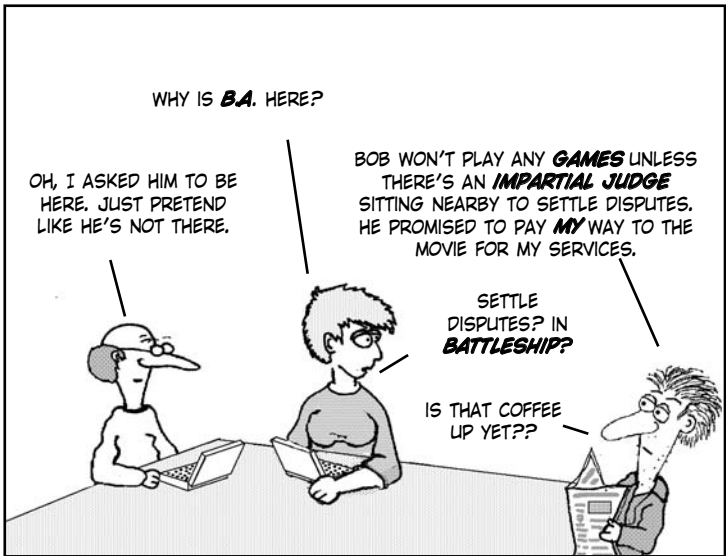
WELL I BURNED UP ALL MY **SICK DAYS** LAST FALL ON **"OPERATION GAMER IN THE HOLE"**, SO I FILED FOR **TWENTY DAYS** OF **EMERGENCY SICK LEAVE**.

**EMERGENCY SICK LEAVE?** ARE YOU OKAY? I HAD **NO** IDEA. YOU NEVER SAID ANYTHING.

RELAX. I'M FINE.

\*See [KODT#22: The Lost Ones](#) [Bob and Dave go into the steam tunnels to rescue Newt and become lost themselves.





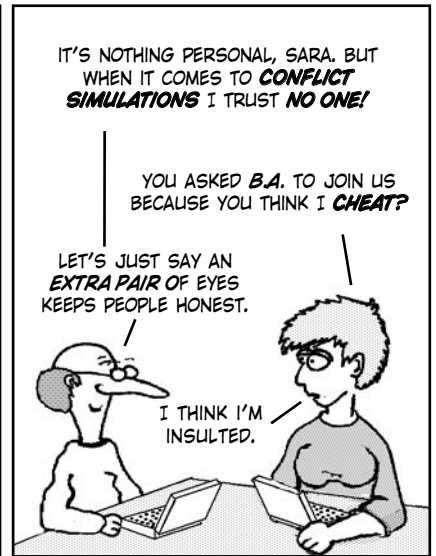
WHY IS **B.A.** HERE?

OH, I ASKED HIM TO BE HERE. JUST PRETEND LIKE HE'S NOT THERE.

BOB WON'T PLAY ANY **GAMES** UNLESS THERE'S AN **IMPARTIAL JUDGE** SITTING NEARBY TO SETTLE DISPUTES. HE PROMISED TO PAY **MY** WAY TO THE MOVIE FOR MY SERVICES.

SETTLE DISPUTES? IN **BATTLESHIP**?

IS THAT COFFEE UP YET??

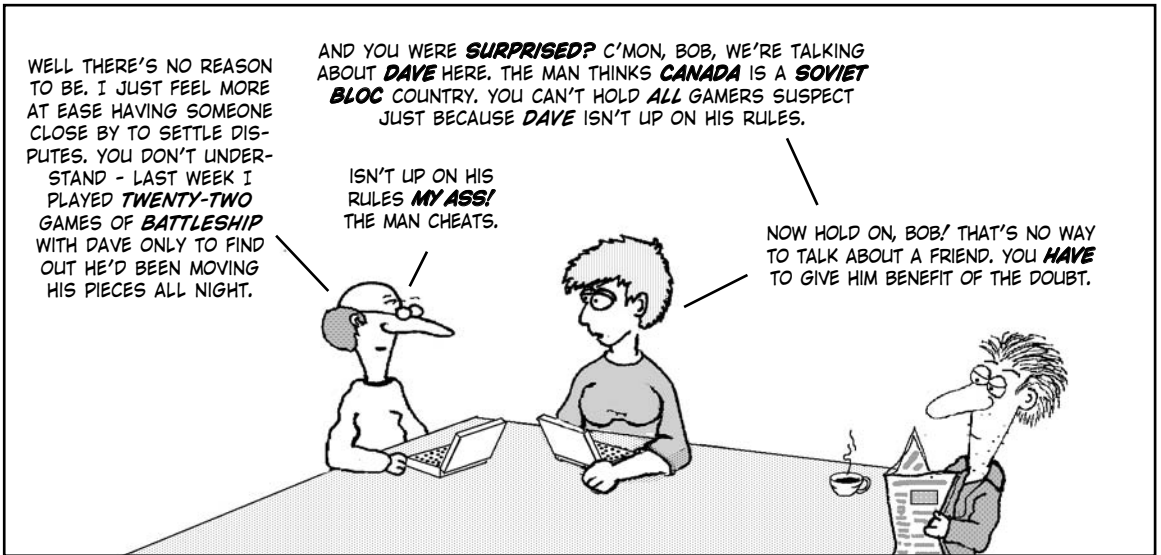


IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL, SARA. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO **CONFLICT SIMULATIONS** I TRUST **NO ONE!**

YOU ASKED **B.A.** TO JOIN US BECAUSE YOU THINK I **CHEAT**?

LET'S JUST SAY AN **EXTRA PAIR OF EYES** KEEPS PEOPLE HONEST.

I THINK I'M INSULTED.

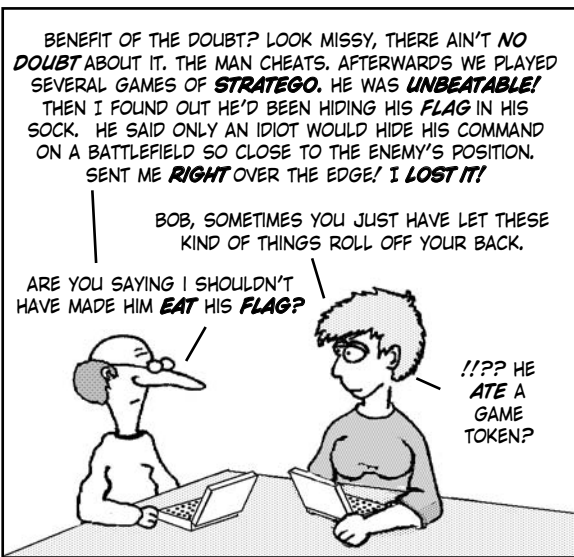


WELL THERE'S NO REASON TO BE. I JUST FEEL MORE AT EASE HAVING SOMEONE CLOSE BY TO SETTLE DISPUTES. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND - LAST WEEK I PLAYED **TWENTY-TWO GAMES OF BATTLESHIP** WITH DAVE ONLY TO FIND OUT HE'D BEEN MOVING HIS PIECES ALL NIGHT.

AND YOU WERE **SURPRISED**? C'MON, BOB, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT **DAVE** HERE. THE MAN THINKS **CANADA** IS A **SOVIET BLOC** COUNTRY. YOU CAN'T HOLD **ALL** GAMERS SUSPECT JUST BECAUSE **DAVE** ISN'T UP ON HIS RULES.

ISN'T UP ON HIS RULES **MY ASS!** THE MAN CHEATS.

NOW HOLD ON, BOB! THAT'S NO WAY TO TALK ABOUT A FRIEND. YOU **HAVE** TO GIVE HIM BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT.

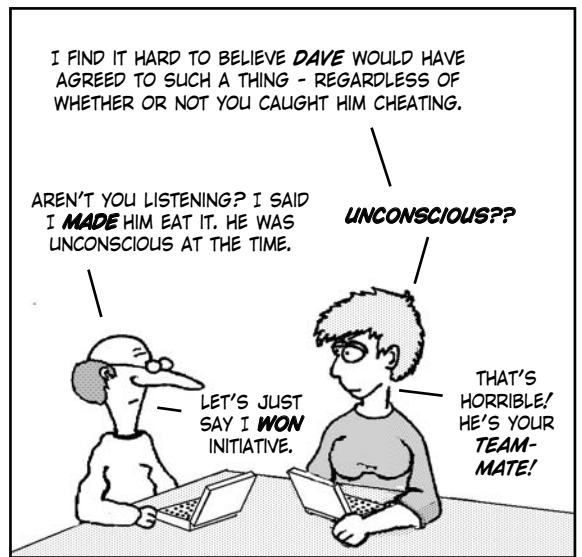


BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT? LOOK MISSY, THERE AIN'T **NO DOUBT** ABOUT IT. THE MAN CHEATS. AFTERWARDS WE PLAYED SEVERAL GAMES OF **STRATEGO**. HE WAS **UNBEATABLE!** THEN I FOUND OUT HE'D BEEN HIDING HIS **FLAG** IN HIS SOCK. HE SAID ONLY AN IDIOT WOULD HIDE HIS COMMAND ON A BATTLEFIELD SO CLOSE TO THE ENEMY'S POSITION. SENT ME **RIGHT** OVER THE EDGE! I **LOST IT!**

BOB, SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE LET THESE KIND OF THINGS ROLL OFF YOUR BACK.

ARE YOU SAYING I SHOULDN'T HAVE MADE HIM **EAT** HIS **FLAG**?

!?!? HE ATE A GAME TOKEN?



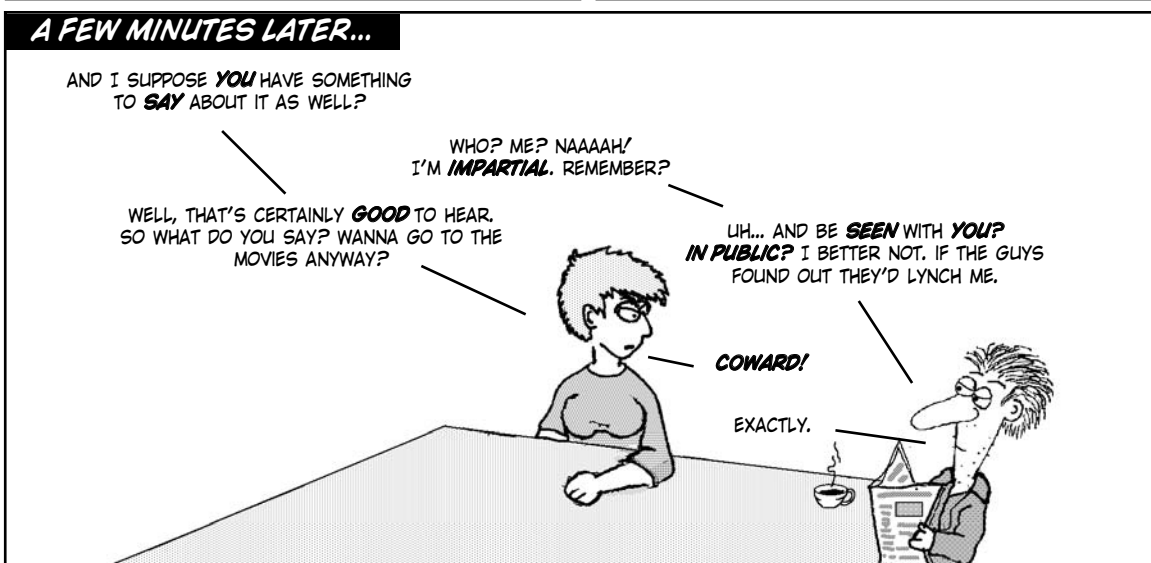
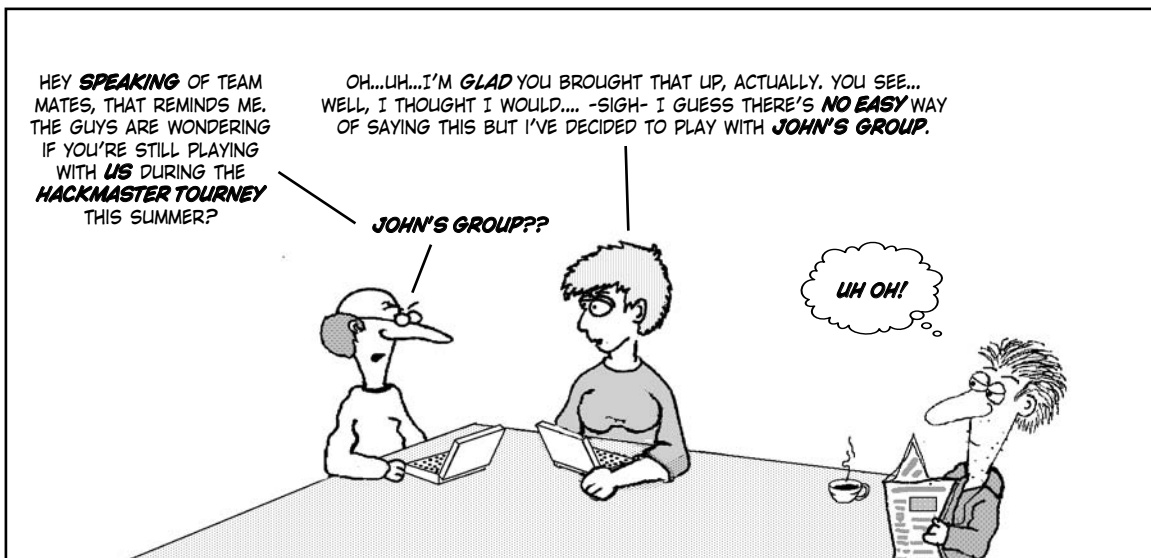
I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE **DAVE** WOULD HAVE AGREED TO SUCH A THING - REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAUGHT HIM CHEATING.

AREN'T YOU LISTENING? I SAID I **MADE** HIM EAT IT. HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS AT THE TIME.

**UNCONSCIOUS???**

LET'S JUST SAY I **WON** INITIATIVE.

THAT'S HORRIBLE! HE'S YOUR **TEAM-MATE!**



# Only the Lonely

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

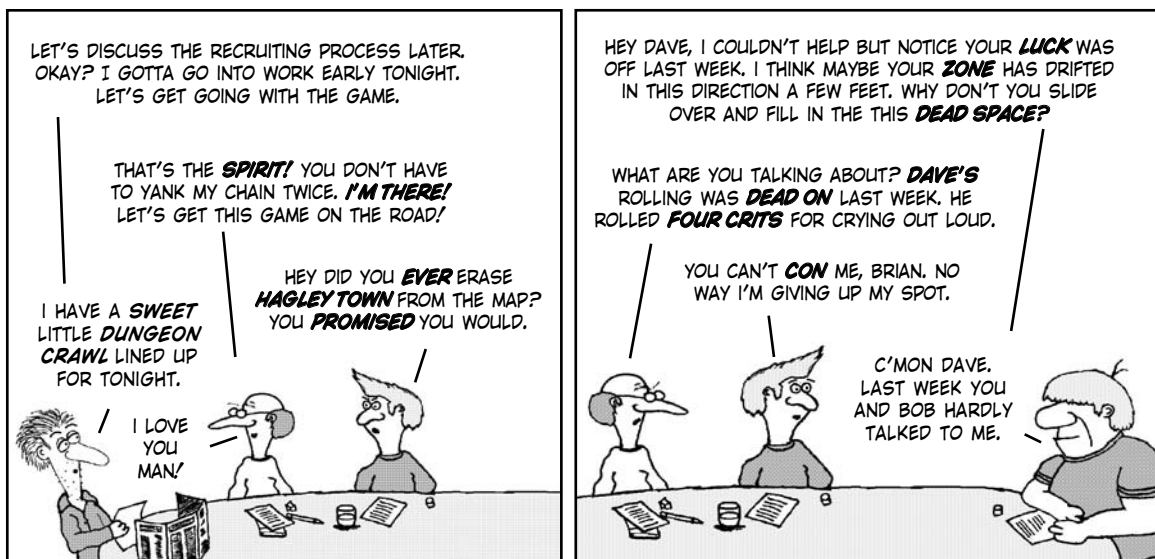


OKAY, I POSTED A NOTICE DOWN AT **WEIRD PETE'S** THAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR A **NEW MEMBER**. I'M COMPILING A LIST OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE RESPONDED. WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO START INTERVIEWS NEXT WEEK.

DARN, I **REALLY** WISH YOU WOULD HAVE LET ME APPROVE THAT NOTICE **BEFORE** YOU PUT IT UP. I HOPE YOU **EMPHASIZED** RULE MASTERY AND INDICATED **NON-SMOKERS** ONLY.

WON'T SARA BE SURPRISED WHEN SHE COMES CRAWLING BACK AND FINDS HER CHAIR IS TAKEN. **HA!**

THIS GROUP COULD USE SOME **NEW BLOOD**. I SAY WE **RAISE** THE STANDARDS. WE DON'T WANT JUST **ANY** DICE-JOCKEY TO COME STROLLING IN HERE.



LET'S DISCUSS THE RECRUITING PROCESS LATER. OKAY? I GOTTA GO INTO WORK EARLY TONIGHT. LET'S GET GOING WITH THE GAME.

HEY DAVE, I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE YOUR **LUCK** WAS OFF LAST WEEK. I THINK MAYBE YOUR **ZONE** HAS DRIFTED IN THIS DIRECTION A FEW FEET. WHY DON'T YOU SLIDE OVER AND FILL IN THE THIS **DEAD SPACE?**

THAT'S THE **SPIRIT!** YOU DON'T HAVE TO YANK MY CHAIN TWICE. **I'M THERE!** LET'S GET THIS GAME ON THE ROAD!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? **DAVE'S** ROLLING WAS **DEAD ON** LAST WEEK. HE ROLLED **FOUR CRITS** FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.

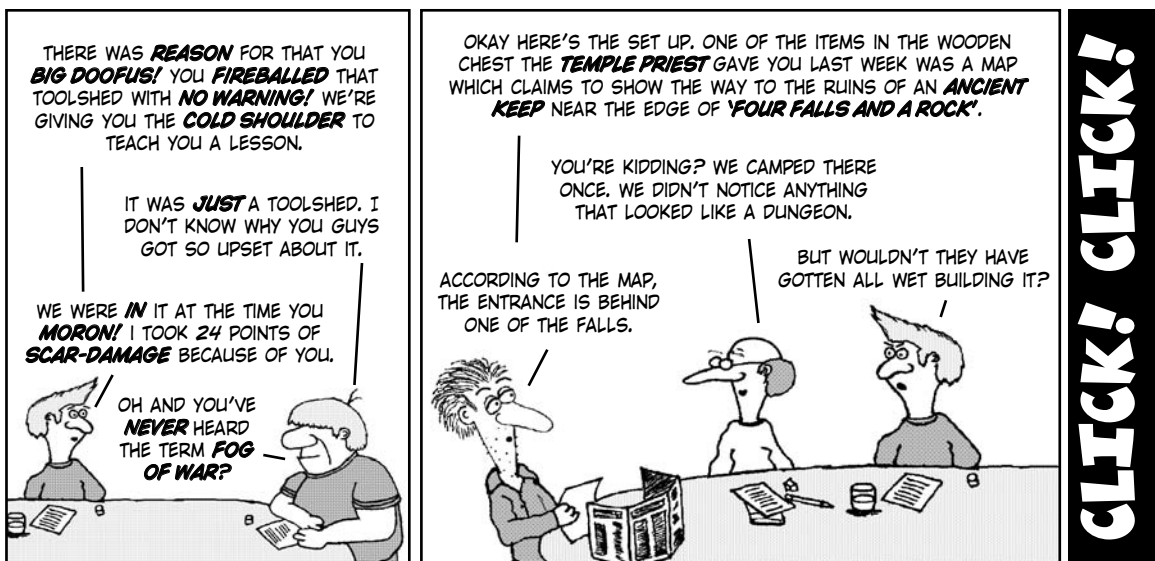
I HAVE A **SWEET** LITTLE **DUNGEON CRAWL** LINED UP FOR TONIGHT.

HEY DID YOU **EVER** ERASE **HAGLEY TOWN** FROM THE MAP? YOU **PROMISED** YOU WOULD.

YOU CAN'T **CON** ME, BRIAN. NO WAY I'M GIVING UP MY SPOT.

I LOVE YOU MAN!

C'MON DAVE. LAST WEEK YOU AND BOB HARDLY TALKED TO ME.



THERE WAS **REASON** FOR THAT YOU **BIG DOOFUS!** YOU **FIREBALLED** THAT TOOLSHED WITH **NO WARNING!** WE'RE GIVING YOU THE **COLD SHOULDER** TO TEACH YOU A LESSON.

OKAY HERE'S THE SET UP. ONE OF THE ITEMS IN THE WOODEN CHEST THE **TEMPLE PRIEST** GAVE YOU LAST WEEK WAS A MAP WHICH CLAIMS TO SHOW THE WAY TO THE RUINS OF AN **ANCIENT KEEP** NEAR THE EDGE OF **'FOUR FALLS AND A ROCK'**.

IT WAS **JUST** A TOOLSHED. I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU GUYS GOT SO UPSET ABOUT IT.

YOU'RE KIDDING? WE CAMPED THERE ONCE. WE DIDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING THAT LOOKED LIKE A DUNGEON.

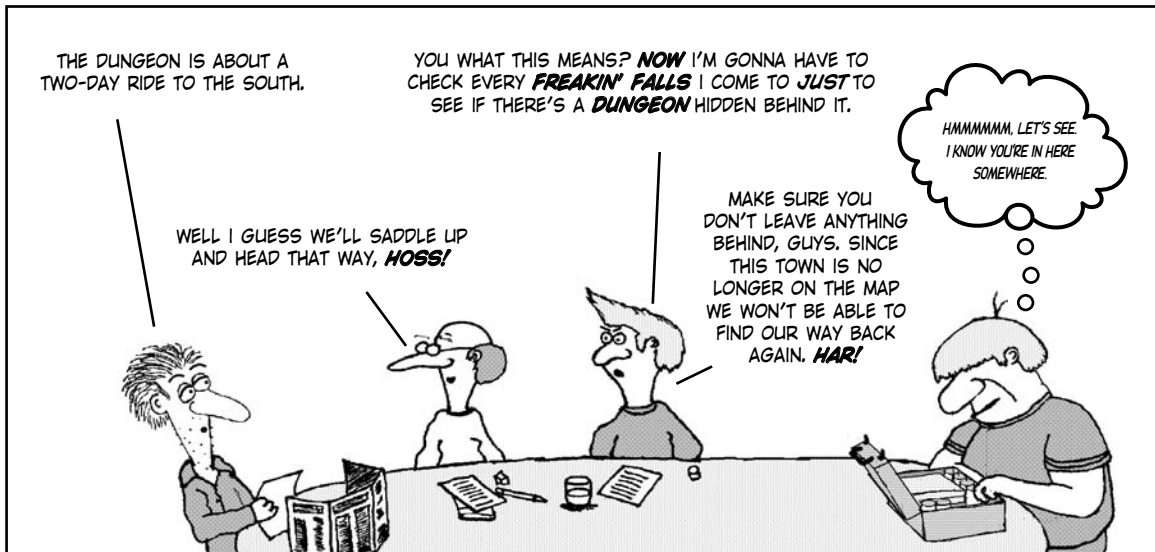
WE WERE **IN** IT AT THE TIME YOU **MORON!** I TOOK 24 POINTS OF **SCAR-DAMAGE** BECAUSE OF YOU.

ACCORDING TO THE MAP, THE ENTRANCE IS BEHIND ONE OF THE FALLS.

BUT WOULDN'T THEY HAVE GOTTEN ALL THAT WET BUILDING IT?

OH AND YOU'VE **NEVER** HEARD THE TERM **FOG OF WAR?**

**CLICK! CLICK!**



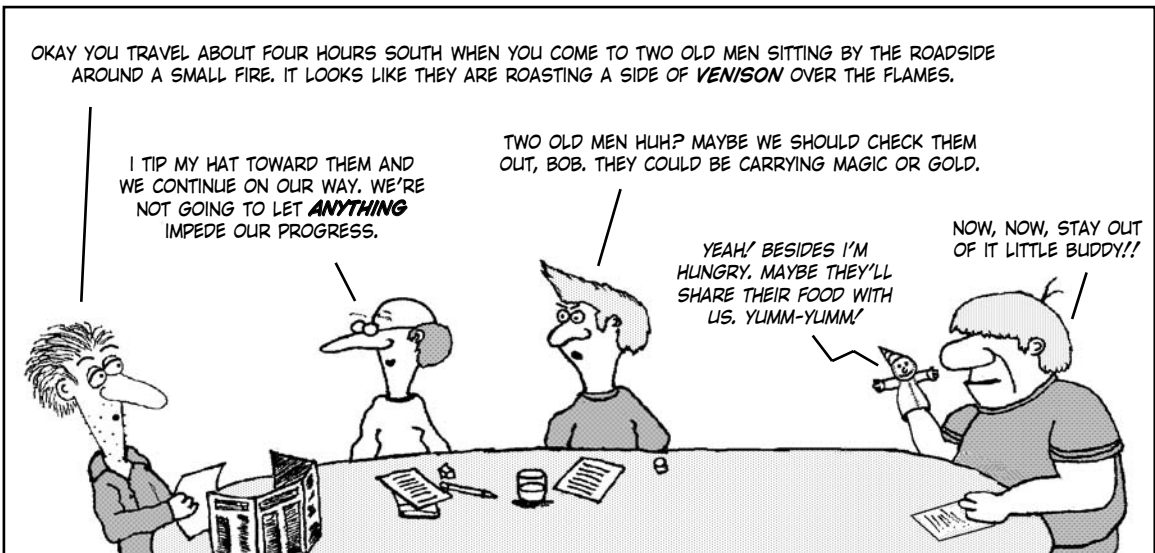
THE DUNGEON IS ABOUT A TWO-DAY RIDE TO THE SOUTH.

YOU WHAT THIS MEANS? **NOW** I'M GONNA HAVE TO CHECK EVERY **FREAKIN' FALLS** I COME TO **JUST** TO SEE IF THERE'S A **DUNGEON** HIDDEN BEHIND IT.

WELL I GUESS WE'LL SADDLE UP AND HEAD THAT WAY, **HOSS!**

MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LEAVE ANYTHING BEHIND, GUYS. SINCE THIS TOWN IS NO LONGER ON THE MAP WE WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND OUR WAY BACK AGAIN. **HAR!**

HMMMMMM. LET'S SEE I KNOW YOU'RE IN HERE SOMEWHERE.



OKAY YOU TRAVEL ABOUT FOUR HOURS SOUTH WHEN YOU COME TO TWO OLD MEN SITTING BY THE ROADSIDE AROUND A SMALL FIRE. IT LOOKS LIKE THEY ARE ROASTING A SIDE OF **VENISON** OVER THE FLAMES.

I TIP MY HAT TOWARD THEM AND WE CONTINUE ON OUR WAY. WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET **ANYTHING** IMPEDE OUR PROGRESS.

TWO OLD MEN HUH? MAYBE WE SHOULD CHECK THEM OUT, BOB. THEY COULD BE CARRYING MAGIC OR GOLD.

YEAH! BESIDES I'M HUNGRY. MAYBE THEY'LL SHARE THEIR FOOD WITH US. YUMM-YUMM!

NOW, NOW, STAY OUT OF IT LITTLE BUDDY!!



WHAT THE....?? LOOK, HE'S GOT A **SALSA BOY HAND PUPPET\***. YOU DON'T THINK IT'S.....

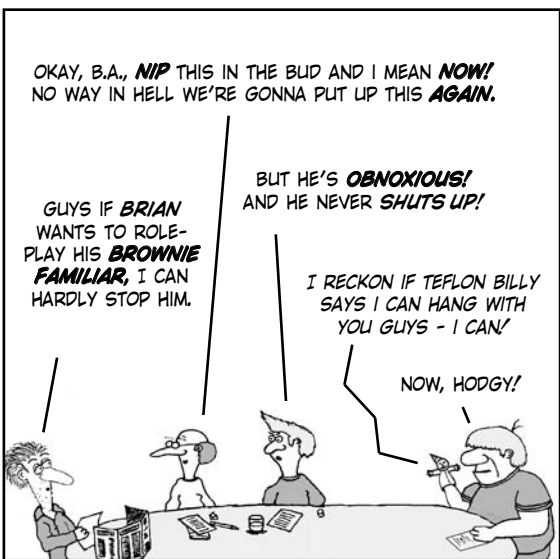
**HODGY?** IT SURE LOOKS LIKE HIM.

DON'T MOVE. MAYBE HE'LL GO AWAY.

DO YOU THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA?

I'M BRINGING **HODGY** OUT OF MY **RING OF STASIS**. HE CAN KEEP ME COMPANY SINCE YOU GUYS WON'T.

HI GUYS!



OKAY, B.A., **NIP** THIS IN THE BUD AND I MEAN **NOW!** NO WAY IN HELL WE'RE GONNA PUT UP THIS **AGAIN**.

BUT HE'S **OBNOXIOUS!** AND HE NEVER **SHUTS UP!**

GUYS IF **BRIAN** WANTS TO ROLE-PLAY HIS **BROWNIE FAMILIAR**, I CAN HARDLY STOP HIM.

I RECKON IF **TEFLON BILLY** SAYS I CAN HANG WITH YOU GUYS - I CAN!

NOW, **HODGY!**

\*See Tales from the Vault: Page 41

**A FEW MINUTES LATER...**

WHAT ARE YOU GUYS LOOKING AT? YOU THINK I TOOK DAVE'S **PLUS FOUR DAGGER OF INTERROGATION?** HMMRRRRFFF! I'M INSULTED!

C'MON BRIAN. WE SAW YOU SLIP B.A. A NOTE ON THE WAY TO THE BATHROOM.

YOU STANDING UP FOR HIM BRIAN? TAKING HIS SIDE AGAINST ME?

MAKE HIM APOLOGIZE, **TEFLON!**

SORRY, DAVE. WE'RE TIGHT.

I DON'T THINK HE DID IT, GUYS.

I'M AFRAID HE'S RIGHT GUYS. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK YOU TO APOLOGIZE TO **HODGY**. HE **IS** MY FAMILIAR.

**APOLOGIZE?** YOU GOTTA BE JOKING. NO WAY IN HELL I'M SAYING, "SORRY" TO THAT LITTLE **JERK!**

WHO YOU CALLIN' A JERK? YOU **BALD HEADED GAMER GEEK!**

YOU BETTER WATCH YOUR TONGUE SALSA-BOY!

STAY OUT OF THIS **HODGY**. I'LL HANDLE IT.

**BITE ME!**

**GRAB! RIP! REND!**

THERE'S YOUR, "**BITE ME**" RIGHT THERE! HUH? HUH? NOT SO **MOUTHY** WITH HIS HEAD DETACHED IS HE?

**FRICKIN'-A, DUDE!** IF YOU HADN'T DONE IT - I WAS GOING TO.

NOW BRIAN, REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU. AT TIMES LIKE THIS JUST TAKE A **DEEP BREATH** AND...AND...

**NO BRIAN!!**

**PUCKA-DA!**

**PUNCH!!**

**OWW-YOWL!**

**WRENCH!**

**GRIND!**

I REALLY **MUST** LEARN TO TRUST MY INSTINCTS WHEN THEY SAY, "**RUN!**"

dwarf:  
to make seem small by comparison.



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# AVELON

A FANTASY COMICBOOK

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# SHARDAR

story & art

Manny Vega

SIR, IT APPEARS SOMEONE CAUSED A HUGE EXPLOSION. BROUGHT MOST OF THE MOUNTAIN DOWN ON HIMSELF, AND EVERYONE ELSE.

FROM WHAT I CAN TELL, WE HAVE THREE SURVIVORS, POSSIBLY FOUR, IT'S DIFFICULT TO TELL. IN ANY CASE WE KNOW THEY WERE FIT ENOUGH TO KILL THE SLEN SEARCH PARTY, NOT THAT IT'S ANY REAL INDICATION OF THEIR PROWESS.

YES...OUR SCRYING CONFIRMS YOUR CRUDE ASSUMPTIONS.

THE TRAITOR, SOREN DARKENWULF, HAS SURVIVED... ONCE AGAIN.

WHAT?

SENKAN HIMSELF ASSURED US THAT THE PROBLEM WAS DEALT WITH!




THE GRAND THEOCRAT... PROMISED NOTHING. THE TRAITOR WAS TORTURED ACCORDINGLY, AND WAS TO BE SACRIFICED ON THE NIGHT OF THIS TREACHERY.

WE BELIEVE THAT BEFORE HIS CAPTURE, DARKENWULF INFORMED SHYNABYTH OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RITUAL.



BY SHEER LUCK HE MANAGED TO SURVIVE, AS DID OUR...SPECIAL SACRIFICE.




DO YOU REALIZE  
WHAT THIS MEANS?  
THE INFORMATION THAT  
*DARKENWULF* HAS  
COULD BE DISASTROUS  
TO BOTH *SLEN* AND  
*PARU'BOR*.

I WAS ENTRUSTED  
WITH THE CAPTURE OF  
THIS TRAITOR, AND IN  
ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR  
LAWS, I RETURNED HIM TO  
YOUR *THEOCRAT*. THIS  
IS UNACCEPTABLE.

I WILL HUNT DOWN  
THE CRIMINAL AND  
EXECUTE HIM MYSELF,  
HIS JUDGEMENT HAS  
ALREADY BEEN PASSED.  
ANY THAT STAND IN  
OUR WAY WILL BE  
DEALT WITH  
ACCORDINGLY.



THE *GRAND THEOCRAT*,  
HAS FAR MORE AT STAKE THAN  
YOU WILL EVER KNOW.



BE WARNED...  
*JUSTIFIER*, WE  
WILL RECOVER OUR  
SACRIFICES AT  
ALL COSTS.



SHOULD YOU, OR  
ANY OF YOUR KNIGHTS  
INTERFERE...*YOU*...

...SHALL BE DEALT WITH...

...ACCORDINGLY.



# Borne in Blood



By David S. Kenzer

## Part III: Of Dreams Made Real

*It is evident that the Unconscious Reality is more powerful than the other Aspects of Tellene. We know this because it is ruled not by one god alone, as are the other Aspects of Tellene. Rather, Unconscious Reality is so powerful that three gods are needed to master it. Dreams, Nightmares and Visions, each have their own patron.*

The Kabataroth, Book I

Talos the Wool Merchant woke with a start. His fine linen sheets felt damp. His overworked heart thumping, Talos violently tossed the covers aside sending his obese belly jiggling. His half-asleep concubine shrieked and fumbled for more covers.

Talos gasped a sigh of relief. There was only sweat, no blood. He looked down his pale, rotund form, then to his arms. Everything seemed to be intact. He laid back on his fluffy pillow and exhaled deeply and audibly. It had all been a dream. Or more precisely, it had been a nightmare.

Talos believed strongly in the gods. His patron, like most merchants, was Golidirin the Profitmaker. But he also had more than a passing interest in the others, including Pagari the Fate Scribe and Old Shivers. Perhaps it was his overactive imagination, or maybe his strong belief in the latter two deities that made this particular dream so vivid.

Talos' nightmare hadn't begun as such. It started as a simple dream of his weekly wagon of supplies arriving from Segeleta. It must have been Arigo's wagon, since he has supplied Talos for years. The wagon was admitted at the gate and worked its way to the kitchens. Strangely, his scullery slaves began running from the kitchen and climbing into the wagon. Then suddenly the wagon driver reached under the boards of his seat and produced a cranked and loaded crossbow. One of Talos' guards (was his name Lani?) shouted an alarm. The sun reflected momentarily off of the crossbow bolt's razor-sharp point. The driver fired. The quarrel hit the guard's upper arm and passed through, splattering blood and leaving bone and sinew dangling in its wake. The wagon lurched toward the gates. Talos' gatekeepers tried to interfere, but warriors of all shapes and sizes jumped from the

wagon and engaged them. The nightmare skipped from one grisly injury to the next. Talos could not discern who was being harmed, the raiders, his guards, his slaves or himself. That is when he awoke.

As he recalled the final scenes a chill crept up Talos' neck. *It is certainly an ill omen*, he thought. *Today is in fact Katarday, the day of my supply delivery.* Talos sat up and reached for his robe.

"Talos, it's early. Come back to bed," said the concubine in a sleepy voice.

"Not now, my sweet. I'm thinking," he responded. *Damn bandits, I'd wager. I should go down now and stop the shipment.* But his body refused to stand as his memory again conjured up the gore from his dream. The nightmare was so vivid, so lifelike. It was almost as if he had witnessed it rather than dreamed it.

"Any of those wounds could have been my body," the audible sound of his own voice surprised him.

"What's that, Talos?"

"Nothing that concerns you, I was only thinking," he replied, not looking at his slave consort of the week. Then an idea occurred to him. "On second thought, my pretty, go down and wait for the supplies to arrive."

"What? Me?"

"Yes. Get your arse up! NOW!" Talos could not decide if he should double the guards. They cost good money. He would have to pay compensation to their families if any were killed. He would also have to replace or repair damaged armor, weapons and uniforms.

The concubine began to dress.

But the loss of all those slaves would set him back years. And if the bandits were defeated, he could keep their weapons, maybe there would be enough to offset the costs of the funerals. Talos decided to double his guards.

"Never mind, girl. Just summon Sergeant Malaki. I need to give him special instructions today." Talos decided he wouldn't leave his quarters until after the delivery. "And have him bring along another guard, but not Lani."

"You mean Linu?" she asked, genuinely confused.

Talos turned to face her for the first time. He blinked.

"Nali?" she asked, helpfully.

"Neither. Just make sure both are on duty outside."

Talos turned and looked out his window at the rainy morning.

"Hold it thar, Arigo," said the guard, his outstretched hand raised in the universal hand gesture for stop. The guard's helm was cocked back and a tuft of rain-soaked hair curled out from underneath. "Let's just see what's in that wagon."

"Ho, horse Ho!" Arigo reined-in his old mare and the wagon lurched to a halt. *This is my chance*, thought Kaleb, *I can't see anything from inside this covered wagon*. He climbed down from the back of the wagon and walked casually to the front.

Arigo shot Kaleb an angry look as Kaleb climbed beside him.

"Had to give them room to search. Can't argue with the customer's guard," Kaleb explained.

*This Talos is a real paranoid*, Kaleb thought. *It's strange that there are more guards on duty in the daytime than at night*. A fearful chill shot up Kaleb's spine, momentarily hunching his shoulders and tensing his neck. He reached into his pocket, seeking reassurance. Kaleb relaxed as he felt the two small scraps of parchment. With his free hand, Kaleb pulled his hood closer about him.

Like Kaleb himself, his plan was simple and practical. Of course, if the opportunity presented itself, he would grab Beranise and run. But Kaleb was no fool, he understood that the possibility of that happening was slim to none. *Although perhaps the rain might present some opportunity along those lines*, he thought.

The real plan was to find out if Beranise was safe and being treated well. She seemed to be okay from what he saw from his perch in the old maple tree near the wall, but he had to see her face to face to be certain. Kaleb was gambling that Beranise would be in the kitchen and near the delivery. If she was not there, he would continue to work for Arigo and spy for information in the evenings until an alternate plan came to him. If she was there and all seemed well he would return at a specified time to either buy her back or free her, with force if necessary. The trick was coordinating the time with Beranise, so she could arrange to be prepared. He planned to hand her a note, but that form of communication posed a great difficulty since Beranise could neither read nor write.

Kaleb gently released the two scraps and removed his hand from his pocket. Both notes were comprised of hand-drawn pictures. On the first, Kaleb had drawn three circles in a horizontal row with arrows pointing from left to right between each circle. The

center circle was colored in with black ink. Under the first circle Kaleb had drawn a simple figure of a man standing. The poorly drawn picture of man and a woman holding hands lay directly below the last circle. The second parchment was similar, but it had five circles, with the second and fourth colored-in. If the estate was heavily guarded, Kaleb planned to slip Beranise the second parchment, if not, he would hand her the first parchment.

"Okay, pass on through," the guard waved them through the gate, interrupting Kaleb's thoughts for the moment, "You know the way, Arigo."

Kaleb noted two other armed guards. Like the guard at the gate, they were wearing studded leather armor and sheathed short swords. *How very odd*, Kaleb thought. *Why were the guards so well-armed during the day?* It made little sense to him. Kaleb shot a quick glance around the grounds. He saw another guard, leading three dogs, their wet but relatively clean coats in stark contrast to their muddy feet. *Well, it seems unlikely I'll be using the first parchment*, thought Kaleb. He moved the first parchment from his right pocket to his left as Arigo's little supply wagon splashed near the rear of the kitchen, leaving rut marks in the mud.

Woof. Woof, woof, woof. WOOF!

Despite the cool rain, Kaleb's hands started to sweat. His thoughts were now consumed with Beranise's safety and no longer plans for removing her from her predicament.

Arigo's muddy old draft horse pulled the wagon alongside the back door. Ignoring the dogs, Kaleb climbed from the front of the wagon and headed around to the back. He grabbed the first box, a crate of hens, and walked it into the kitchen. Even though he entered the kitchen and came in from the rain, he left his hood up to help cover his face. He wanted to spot Beranise before she noticed him. His presence would surely startle her and he did not want her to cause a stir.

Kaleb looked around. His heart sank. There were two women there, but no Beranise.

He must have looked confused, because the first woman, an elderly, portly maid pointed to the floor on one side of the kitchen "the hens kin be put rit down thar."

Kaleb placed the chickens where the woman instructed then hazarded a quick glance at the other woman before leaving. She was much younger, in her late teens, maybe.

Kaleb continued to unload the wagon, while he tried to come up with a new plan. Thinking quick on his feet was not his forte. He needed time. He could give the note to one of the women and ask her to give it to Beranise. The older woman seemed to be an

authority figure, so it would have to be the younger girl. Perhaps her and Beranise were friends.

In and out, he went. Each time Kaleb looked for some clue that he could use to his advantage. But there was nothing of use, except the younger girl. *Maybe I should simply speak up and tell them I want to see Beranise,* thought he. *Bold, but very risky.*

Kaleb could hear Arigo settling-up with a servant, just under the awning. As tempting as it was to end the tension one way or another, he concluded that the best course of action was to wait until the next week and try again. Kaleb would have to make new parchments, but that would be the easy part. And what if she never worked at the time he delivered? How many weeks would he try, before a new approach was warranted?

Kaleb was carrying the second-to-last parcel, a sack of ground wheat flour, when a third woman backed into the kitchen carrying a breakfast tray full of dishes. Kaleb stopped sharply to avoid a collision, just as she turned around. The tray hit him in the navel, spilling two pewter saucers to the ground with a loud clang. Kaleb dropped his sack to the kitchen floor, tearing a seam in its side. Flour poured out onto the floor creating a tiny pyramid of powder. *Kaleb you idiot!* He thought. *Way to blend in and stay anonymous. A thief you are not.*

Kaleb immediately knelt to retrieve the girl's saucers while the older woman scolded her, "Bera! Ya clumsy fool!"

Kaleb's heart leaped into his throat. He kept his head down so his hood completely covered his face. He quickly gathered the saucers, then stuffed his hand into his right pocket and grabbed the parchment.

"I apologize, 'twas my fault, my lady," said Kaleb as he stood and grabbed her left hand with his right. "I give you my Word, 'twas my fault" and he squeezed her hand closed around the parchment.

The woman let out a barely audible gasp, as Kaleb handed her the saucers with his left hand. Still holding her hand, hood mostly drawn, he cocked his head in the direction of the older woman and said, "A thousand apologizes, ma'am, I am a clumsy oaf. My hood was covering my vision." For a moment the older woman was speechless.

Kaleb turned to Beranise and dropped his hood back. "Again, my lady, I ask your forgiveness." Then he whispered quickly, "Are they treating you fairly?" Beranise nodded. He released his grip on her hand, leaving the parchment.

Kaleb knelt again, "Oh, I must clean this mess."

"Let me help," and Beranise knelt whispering, "Kaleb, you shouldn't be..."

He cut her off, "Are you safe from harm?"

Beranise nodded as the older woman came over, harshly scolding Beranise. "How kin ya be so stupid, Bera? Why don' ya watch where ya goin'?" she demanded.

Just then, Arigo popped his head through the kitchen door and silenced the older woman with some noise of his own. "Hey, ya stupid cuss, get out 'ere! The mud's delayed us enough. We 'ave work ahead o' us now."

"But there's one more..."

"I brought it in whilst you was causin' a mess. Get on the back side o' the wagon, 'fore I leave you to walk 'ome with no pay."

Kaleb locked eyes with Beranise. While pulling back on his hood, Kaleb dropped his eyes to her hand that still gripped the parchment, nodded toward the same hand, and winked. Confused, Beranise slipped the parchment into her apron for later examination. Then Kaleb turned and left the kitchen. He did not look back.

Kaleb climbed onto the back of the wagon and immediately mumbled the Prayer of Thankfulness to Forinori, the Honorable One. Kaleb then sat down and began formulating his next move. *Beranise is safe and apparently free from harm, that gives me time,* he thought. *She should hopefully be expecting my return in two months time if she can understand my note.*

Suddenly exhausted, Kaleb lay on the stiff boards of the wagon's bottom. He began taking inventory of his assets. Kaleb had little, so he would have to earn or borrow a fortune in just two moons time. Buying her seemed a very remote possibility. All of those alert guards meant he would need a lot of assistance if he rescued her by force.

His only kin were his mother and two sisters, so help would have to be in the form of friends. Kaleb took inventory of his friends in Melidu. *I can count on the mages, but they would be of little use in this situation. Junior would be useful. Perhaps I could convince a few of the Ironhearts to help this time? They were all typically gruff and grouchy, but nonetheless reliable and stout warriors. Out of the seven brothers, surely two or three would see fit to help. After all, Dillan himself attends services more often than most in Melidu.*

Sleep overtook Kaleb, even as he was still counting his assets. Not even the shaking and jolting of the wagon could keep him conscious. Kaleb would not wake again until Arigo arrived at his next client.

Not yet a half league away, Talos the Wool Merchant laid down for an afternoon nap in his feather bed. Although he never left his bedchamber, he too was exhausted by the events of the day. If Talos dreamed, he did not remember it. □

# Excerpts from Kutagi's Journal

by Jolly R. Blackburn



## Bomar Island/Prison

### History

Originally, *Bomar Island* was little more than a long, jagged sandbar lying at the mouth of the *Badato River*. As the sprawling city of *Bet Kalamar* rose up on the banks of the *Badato*, the island was slowly transformed into a fortress.

The first structure raised on the island was a small, stone shrine to the god, *Rostak the Voyager*. It was built in honor the god in -143 IR and financed by merchants who plied their trade on the river and looked to the *Voyager* to protect their interests.

The first bridge across the *Badato* was not constructed, until the year 1 IR when *King Ali Inakas* founded the *Kingdom of Kalamar*. Using *Bomar Island* as the foundation for its middle pilings, his engineers built a beautiful bridge which for many years was the most distinctive feature of the city. Even today the reverse side of many Kalamaran coins bare the image of the *Inakas Bridge*.

The bridge made the island more accessible and soon local merchants began to use the broad flat island as a marketplace to push their wares. (*The older markets in Bet Kalamar proper were often over crowded and city ordinances eventually began to regulate the number of vendors who could set up there.*)

Because a toll was charged for both foot and wagon traffic across the bridge the marketplace on Bomar began to cater to the rich and well-to-do.

After the floods of 74 IR, much of the island was swept away (*including the Temple of the Watcher*). *King Kolokar* added Bomar Island to his list of public works program and had the entire island paved and encased in a protective granite wall. A rather ugly scandal arose when it was learn by the *Bin Par'ta* that *Kolokar* planned on renaming the bridge (and the island) after himself. In the end, both the bridge and the island kept their respective names and no king or emperor since has made the same mistake.

In the center of the island, a monument to *Kolokar's* historic victory over the savage *Obakasek* humanoids was constructed. Over the next hundred years, the island's paved surface became a magnet for monuments, shrines and statuary. By 135 IR the

tragic playwright *Falurikor* wrote, "*one dare not sneeze while strolling Bomar Island from fear of cracking his head on some infernal statue of a dead king.*"

Many citizens agreed and the island was widely regarded as "unpleasant to the eye". As if in answer, the mighty *Badato* would once again erase the slate. Another great flood in 203 IR destroyed a great part of the island, and swept most of monuments and temples into the bay. For the next fifty years Bomar Island was surrendered back to the forces of nature. A grove of willows grew up under the bridge and the island was used to graze sheep and to spread out fishing nets for repair.

In 259 IR, a year after the *College of Architecture* was established in *Bet Kalamar*, workers once again began clearing off the island. Enormous funds were set aside to build the *Imperial Treasury* on the island and to fortify it.

The project was placed in the hands of the *College*, whose founders were anxious to showcase their skills to the citizens. When construction ended four years later one *Rader Kem* remarked, "*Damn fine work! The Emperor should immediately order the entire city to be razed the ground so the College can rebuild it. I am quite certain if this happened, the gods would soon vacate us so they could move in.*"

A permanent garrison (*Bomar Garrison*) was placed on the island to defend the treasury and to oversee the slave laborers who operated the coin mint and smelting furnaces. With the many exploits of the *Imperial Legions* abroad, a virtual stream of precious metals and ore was funnelled back to the mother city.

*Bomar Island* became the processing center where the ore and metals were purified and melted down. Then the metals were poured in to bars and minted into coins which were stored in the *Imperial Treasury* until they could be dispensed.

Slave labor was used to do most of the work on the island and a small barracks was built to house the them. Gradually, the complex was expanded and doubled as a prison where enemies of Crown awaited their fate.

Today, citizens of *Bet Kalamar* enjoy walking across *Inakas Bridge* and pausing to gaze over the bridge's railing at the island and its numerous and

varied buildings. Here, the common citizen can observe the wide variety of daily activity that takes place on the island. Among other things, they can watch the Bomar Garrison practice drill and ceremony or catch a glimpse of fledgling gladiators as they are put through their deadly paces in the practice arena. If they are lucky they may catch a glimpse of a famous political prisoner being escorted under guard from one building to another. It is a fascinating part of the city of *Bet Kalamar* and has given birth to hundreds of legends and rumors.

#### Bomar Prison

Today, Bomar Island is essentially one large prison. It has evolved over the years to make the best possible use of prison-labor. No, this is not an experiment in rehabilitating wrong-doers and placing them back in society. The Empire has no concept of such noble causes. To put it bluntly, if a prisoner can serve a useful purpose, he is allowed to live. Once that usefulness is depleted, he is quietly put to death.

Prisoners with skills are forced into service - smelting precious metals and hammering out coins, training as gladiators so they can properly amuse the masses in the arenas, or simply helping to maintain the island and cater to the needs of others.

Prisoners with political or religious connections are often kept alive in the event they may prove useful at a later date. Some prisoners are kept alive because their social or political status protects them, by law, from capital punishment.

The prison area itself slowly evolved from a single building. Originally, it was constructed to house the laborers who helped reconstruct the island's walls and other buildings. Over the years, more prisoners were funnelled to the island and the complex grew.

Life is harsh on the island and there are little provisions to care for the prisoners other than food and shelter. If a prisoner falls ill, he is either killed (considered an act of mercy), or allowed to wither in his cell until he dies. The dead are wrapped in woven-reed mats and tossed in the river to be carried out into the Kalamaran Bay.

The prison compound is divided into Dereman (*akin to cell blocks*). Each Dereman takes its name from an animal or mythical beast. Prisoners are assigned to a Dereman depending on the nature of their crimes or their demonstrated skills.

There are also Dereman for political prisoners and prisoners of war. The main purpose of the Dereman is to segregate the prison population. Prisoners assigned work in the treasury or mint are kept in the same cell blocks. Prisoners being held for interrogation or torture are kept in another. This allows guards

to move prisoners to and from their work stations at different times.

Almost all prisoners on Bomar Island are maimed or marked so that they can be readily identified. (The exception being some political prisoners.) Each Dereman has its own distinct form of maiming - usually, a particular finger is cut off.

Each Dereman also has a Voraman or King Rat (a dominate prisoner who unofficially lords over other prisoners in his block). Voraman usually surround themselves with several henchmen. The Voraman can make life miserable for other prisoners.

Below I have included a few of my more mundane journal entries in keeping with my chosen task to comment on and define for my readers some of the more unusual terms and names that appear in this month's fiction.

**Golidirin the Profitmaker** - patron deity of money, business and greed.

**Pagari the Fate Scribe** - god of prophesy, fate and time.

**Old Shivers** - god of fear and nightmares

**Segeleta** - a small city of 9,200 population in central Kalamar near the Paliba woods.

**Katarday** - 3rd day of the week (Calendar of Tellene)

**Salireta** - a small city of 9,600 population in Kalamar on the Badato River.

**Svimohzia** - Island continent surrounded by the Sea of Svimohzia, the Kalamaran Sea and the Brandobian Ocean.

**Mezh-Vowmi Isle** - Small island just off the eastern shore of Svimohzia. The capital of Ahznomahn, Zha-nehzmish, is located here.

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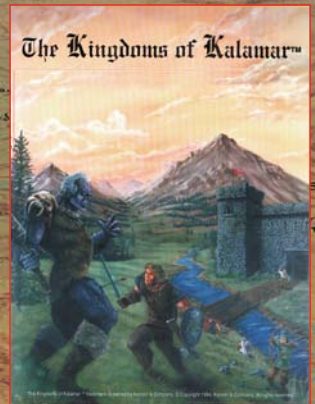
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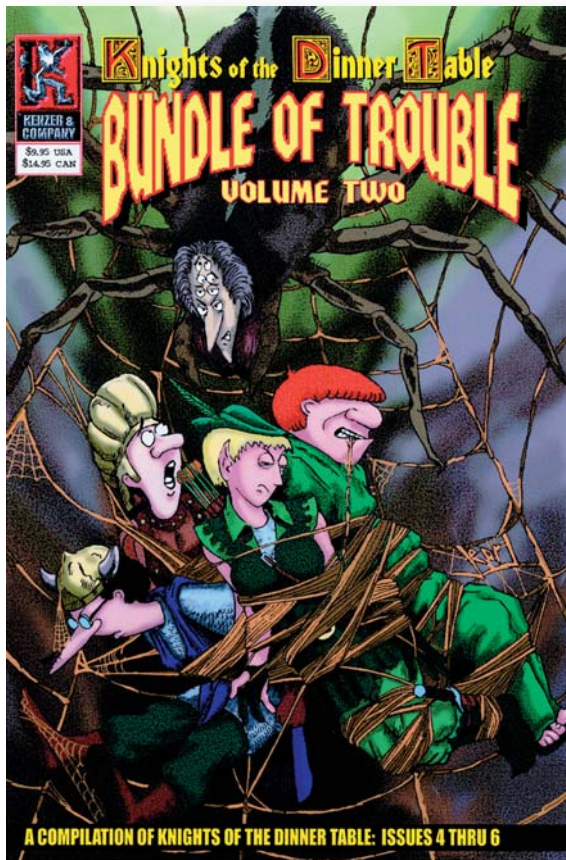
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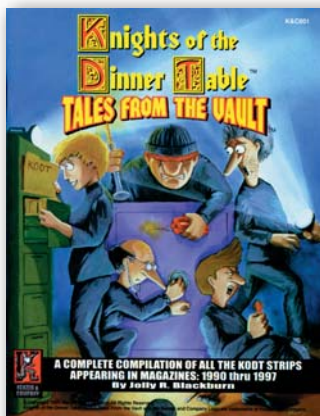
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# Bones of Ruin

By Jolly R. Blackburn

## Part II: Wolves and Old Men

*"In my dream I saw two travelers who had paused by a lonely grave along the roadside. And a terrible question was asked by one to the other, 'To whom does this stone testify?'"*

*And the answer haunts my dreams, for the other man replied, "I know not sir, I know not. "In this dream I then saw that the grave was my own!"*

*Esalin Sular,  
The Silent Stones*

Venar Kurasin approached the large iron doors of Bomar prison. It was late, well after the third watch and a steady rain drizzled down upon the city of Bet Kalamar. Raising his staff, he knocked on the heavy doors several times. From within, a rattling of chains and the scrape of an iron bolt being slid back told him that someone was responding. A moment later a small spy-hole slid open, a half-closed eye on the other side peered through at him.

*"What ya want?"*

Kurasin groaned and replied, "It's Venar Kurasin the Rader-Kem! Let me in!"

The eye on the other side of the door widened immediately, "Muh Lord? Whut brings ya here at such an hour?"

Kurasin struck the door again with his staff, "I've business to attend to! Open this door!"

The bolt slid back and the large door creaked open, straining on its hinges. A shaken guard confronted Kurasin. "My apologies my Lord! What can I do for you?"

Kurasin pushed the guard aside and entered the room. He removed his cloak and shook the rain from it. He was standing in the outer block of the guardhouse. To his left was the barracks for the

prison guards and to the right, through the double portcullis was the main prison with its labyrinth of dungeons and dank cells.

"Why are you on duty alone? Do not the orders call for two guards at this post?"

The guard began to stammer, "Uh...the captain has gone into the block to check the cells every hour as ordered!"

Kurasin blushed slightly at his abruptness. "Oh I see. Very well. I'm here on an urgent matter. I wish to speak with the prisoner Ravethope."

"Ravethope? My Lord the orders are to allow no one to speak with the prisoner."

Kurasin furrowed his brow in anger, "Do you realize who I am?"

"Why of course ma Lord" answered the guard without hesitation.

"Then you must realize that I issued those orders!"

The guard was visibly shaken, "My apologies ma Lord. I'll show you the way."

He followed the guard as he opened the double gate leading into the main prison.

The guard took a torch from its mount on the wall and turned to follow a narrow-winding corridor that descended ever so slightly. After several moments, Kurasin detected the shadows of torchlight coming from the other direction. Shortly, the captain approached with a somewhat alarmed look on his face.

"Daval? What is this?" he snapped.

The guard halted, "Captain, it's Rader-Kem Kurasin. He's come to see Ravethope"

The confused captain raised his torch and strained to see Kurasin's face. "Lord Kurasin? Is there a problem?"

Kurasin stepped in front of the guard, "No captain. I was told that Ravethope is close to death. I thought I'd have a few words with him."

The captain shook his head, "He's wearing the face of death all right. That's the truth my Lord. But he's not talking. I'm afraid you..."

"I'd like to determine that myself. If Ravethope dies before I have a chance to question him the Emperor will have us all!"

"Of course my Lord. If you'll follow me." He paused, "Daval! Return to your post. I'll see to this."

The guard nodded, turned and headed away. Kurasin motioned for the captain to lead the way and they proceeded on. After several moments they came to a set of rough-hewn steps descending at a steep angle. Watch your step my Lord, the walls seep down here."

They descended about thirty steps and came to a large irregularly-shaped room. A foul smell overcame Kurasin's senses and he quickly pulled the sleeve of his robe over his nostrils and mouth. He was familiar with these foul odors from his days on the fields of battle: disease and death.

In the corner, bound by chains and lying on a heap of soiled straw lay a dark figure. A frail chest rose and sank slowly, a multitude of deep red gashes were clearly discernible even in the torch light.

The captain walked over to the prisoner and kicked him in the ribs. The frail figure grunted and rolled to his side. A tormented face, framed in a beard of gray, looked upward.

"You've a visitor old man. Get up!"

Kurasin stepped up beside the captain and placed a hand on his shoulder. "Captain, I wish to talk to the prisoner alone. I can find my way back to the guardhouse."

"My Lord? I can't leave you down here alone!"

It's all right captain. Now go!"

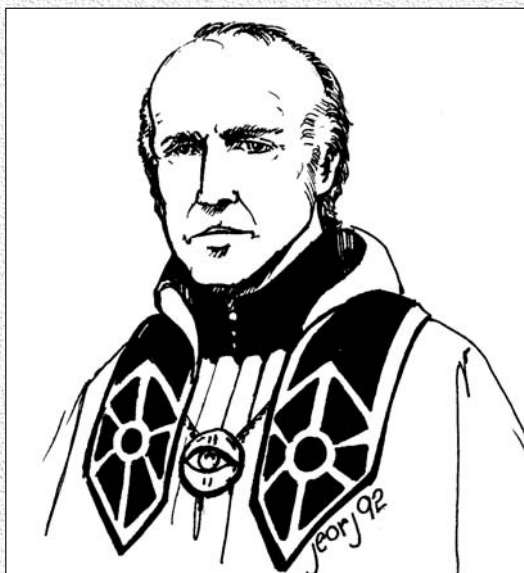
The captain nodded and departed. Kurasin waited for several moments until he was sure that they were alone and then kneeled beside Ravethope.

"Rave? It's me, Kurasin," he spoke in a hushed voice.

Ravethope raised his head and stared weakly at Kurasin for several seconds.

"I knew you would come. It was only a matter of time. I knew it wouldn't be..." He laid his head back down, his face contorted with pain.

Kurasin eased an arm around him and helped him to a sitting position. "I tried to come many times.



**Venar Kurasin**

*Shown here in his Rader-Kem Robes and wearing his chain-of-office. According to the scribe Bent Megar a "Nothing is quite so terrifying to the average citizen of Bet Kalamar as the sight of a Rader-Kem in full robes with the 'all seeing eye' of his chain-of-office gleaming on his chest. The eye seems to stare at the observer as if to say, 'I can take your life - or spare it, as I choose.'"*

*For a full bio on Kurasin see KODT#14: Good, Bad and the Ugly.*

I wanted you to know that I tried everything to aid in your escape. When I failed in that, I tried to render you an honorable death. I've failed you Rave. With all my powers, with all my chains of office, I couldn't help you. Can you forgive me?"

"You were afraid I would talk my friend. Afraid I would utter your name under the whip. Don't bother to make your case with me. I have no power to condemn or to forgive."

"You know better than that Rave! We were friends once. I've done nothing to make you believe such a thing. I never wanted to see it come to this. I haven't slept in weeks thinking of you chained away in the darkness here, in agony!"

"The pain will end," said Ravethope weakly, "not even the Emperor can detain death. And in the end, the boy will fulfill the oracle."

"You still cling to those prophecies even now?" asked Kurasin sadly, "Don't you see our folly? The world is not ruled by oracles. Where are your prophets now? He who has the sword has the power. Even your sacred Kabataroth tells you that."

Kurasin reached into the folds of his robes and produced a small amber vial. He held it toward Ravethope. "I've come to release you. This poison is swift, you have my word. You also have my word that your family will be cared for. I've made arrangements to move them to Svimohzia at the Mez-Vowmi Isle. Once you are dead the Emperor will move swiftly to do them harm."

Ravethope looked into Kurasin's eyes, "You've come to silence me."

Kurasin turned his eyes away from the old man. "I've come to free you from this daily torture. Can't you believe that?"

Ravethope smiled faintly, "I can believe many things. I believe that you and Garit were the only two who knew my hiding place in Salireta. And I also know you fought like a warrior to have me executed without an audience. You've embraced the Emperor once again. You fear that I will put the finger of death on you with my confession."

Kurasin stood to his feet, "If that were true I could have had you killed a fortnight ago." He turned and began to pace the small room.

"I have taken my oath to the Emperor again, I'll admit that. But not for myself! I have three sons of which to think. They are the innocents in this affair. Suval, my eldest, has just been admitted to the Bin Par'ta.

Is he to die for my crimes? Losing my head to the Tanedor's axe will not topple Kabori from the throne! But I would never betray you and I have not. It was Garit who sold us out. He betrayed you to the Var Rader Kem in exchange for a handful of gold and his life."

Ravethope shook his head, "Why did he not put the finger on you?"

Kurasin shrugged, "I don't pretend to understand the likes of Garit! Sav was the only one who seemed to trust that scoundrel. But a man of Garit's standing accusing a Rader Kem of treason? Even he's too smart for that."

"You have nothing to fear from me" said Ravethope, "I'll drink the libation you have brought me. Garit is your enemy now. Soon his gold will dwindle and he'll be looking for new ways to rekindle it."

Kurasin drew pale. "Don't you think I know that! He fled the city before I could get my clutches on him. Believe me I would have made him pay for his treachery and I swear he will get his just rewards. He'll spend his blood-money to pay for his own

funeral rites."

Ravethope turned the vial of poison in the palm of his hand. "It's strange how time and distance can change a man." He looked toward Kurasin, "A few weeks ago I would have thrown this vile elixir in your face. But now it seems like sweet nectar. They say that an excellent guest offers his host a gift of fine wine. You are a most excellent guest Lord Kurasin. A few sips and release. A brief..." His voice cracked, "...moment and all the bonds of man no longer have any power over me."

Kurasin stood motionless. He watched as Ravethope removed the stopper from the vial and raised it to his lips. He took several short sips, his face reflecting deep anguish.

Ravethope dropped the vial and lay back on the straw. He turned his head toward Kurasin and smiled weakly. "Will you stay till it's over?"

Kurasin nodded, "Of course Rave, of course."

"Only the accursed die in solitude." He coughed violently for several moments. "Promise me one thing Kurasin, if you are the friend you claim to be."

*"Anything"*

"See my family to safety."

*"I've already arranged it. It's being taken care of even as we speak."*

"...and one more thing...if the boy shows up, help him. Honor the oath you've made to him."

*"Sav? Show up here?"*

"He will. He has no choice. And when he does he'll need refuge."

Kurasin was silent. He knew he could never swear to such a thing. How could he?

"Swear by it Kurasin!" said Ravethope reaching up and clutching the official's robe. "If anything is left of the man who served Relus IV, swear by it."

Kurasin drew pale and pulled away. "I swear..."

He stopped. Ravethope began to cough uncontrollably, and clutching his chest he rolled to his side and pulled up into a fetal position. Finally he drew silent, his breathing became shallow. After several moments he emitted a low guttural groan.

Kurasin stepped away from him in fear.

He watched for several minutes until he was quite sure Ravethope was dead. He then retrieved the vial and placed it in his robe.

Taking a torch from its holder he headed up the steps. □



### Lord Gilead

**Occupation:** Ruler of Fangaerie  
**Skills:** Diplomacy, Leadership, Social Planning/Engineering.  
**Motivation:** Ease the plight of the common man.  
**Weaknesses:** His forgiving nature is often taken advantage of by others.

Gilead began his career as a man of little means. The son of peasant farmers, young Gilead grew up watching his parents working themselves into an early grave with little or nothing to show for it. It occurred to him that he was being groomed to take their place in the fields by the evil overseer who was more concerned with quotas and yields than the welfare of those who worked beneath him.

One day after spilling some grain he was unloading from a cart, one of the overseer's men began beating him with a whip. Angered, Gilead pulled the man from his horse and accidentally killed him. Facing execution, he grabbed what little belongings he had and fled. Over the next few years he took odd jobs. One day he was hired by a woman adventurer named Zayre. He fell madly in love with his employer but held out little hope that she could ever feel the same about him. In his eyes, he was unworthy.

He would have been content to remain in her service had it not been for a Great Helm of Lordship he found in a dungeon. As soon as he placed it on his head he was transformed into a charismatic leader. All who gazed upon him felt compelled to follow him. Soon he was wandering around the countryside with a large throng of devotees following after him.

Gilead decided to return to his home town (Fangaerie) where he toppled the Overlord and restructured the government. He then began an aggressive public works campaign building new roads, diverting rivers, raising temples, etc. He also introduced labor reforms and a welfare system to aid those who couldn't work.

Even though he is powerful and rich, Gilead seems to be sad and distracted. It is rumored he still pines for a woman named Zayre.

Jonid Coincrawler's biggest regret is that he can't collect any of the dozen or so bounties and rewards that have been placed on his head. The Gnome Illusionist has been working his various scams and con games on the unsuspecting for over thirty years and has yet to be caught or brought to justice.

Only a few have seen him in his true form. Some of his favorite disguises include either a harmless, innocent-looking unfortunate (who has a deal 'too good to be true' to offer) and a large swack iron dragon who extorts tolls from travellers for the right of safe passage.

Jonid's theory is that the hard coin in your pocket really belongs to him - you just don't know it. While there is no shortage of con men or thieves in Garweeze Wurld, Jonid seems to be more infamous and more hated than most. One reason for this is the fact that Jonid has a habit (or more accurately a fondness) for shaking down the same victim repeatedly months or years later. He takes special pleasure in unmasking himself once his scam has been completed and laughing maniacally at his victim as he makes good his escape.

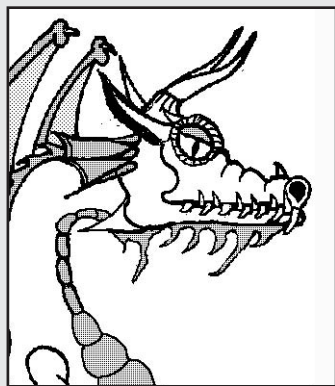
Another reason Jonid is so well hated is due to the outrage his victims feel after learning they have been duped. Most of Jonid's scams convince the victim(s) to willingly, almost enthusiastically, to hand over their money and material wealth. Gilead once commented about Jonid that, "He's the type of fellow who would steal your best suit of clothes and then turn up at your funeral wearing them. Then to top it off, he would present your widow with a cleaning bill for the suit and ask her to be reimbursed."

Go to any pub or watering hole in the vicinity of Fangaerie and you're likely to run into someone with an, "I was had by Jonid" story.



### Jonid Coincrawler

**Occupation:** Gnome Illusionist/Scam Artist  
**Skills:** Fast Talk, Disguise, Con Games  
**Motivation:** Putting hard coin in his pocket.  
**Weaknesses:** His insatiable greed keeps him on the run constantly. Has many, many, enemies.



### ROTGUT

**Occupation:** Swack Iron Dragon  
**Skills:** High Finance, Hostile Takeovers.  
**Motivation:** Making his horde work for him.  
**Weaknesses:** Junk Bonds.

'RotGut' is a more a title than a name, though most humans in Garweeze Wurld aren't aware of this fact. Rotgut is the ruling dragon of the Dragon Committee. The D.C., as it is known can best be described as the dragon mafia. The D.C. was originally formed by several dragons who were concerned that the actions of men and demihumans were affecting the prices of precious metals and stones. This meant that the value of their hordes had to be constantly reappraised. And since a dragon's status among his own kind is based on the market value of his horde, many dragons were intentionally creating havoc in human commerce in order to increase the value of their own wealth (or to devalue the hordes of his enemies). So the D.C. was set-up to restore order.

Over the years the D.C. has strayed enormously from its original charter. Now the D.C. meddles in the affairs of men with an eye for 'turning over' their gold. They've been known to invest in public works, finance the formation of new colonies and back wars and military campaigns. All of this is done through a small network of intermediaries (The Circle of Sequestered Magicks being one of them).

Because the average Joe knows nothing of the D.C. or its purpose, dragons appear to do some pretty bizarre things like threatening to burn a town unless they promise not to plant wheat in the coming season. (To increase the price of wheat elsewhere of course.)

The current RotGut is a master of investment. In fact, at any given time, 90% of his horde will be tied up. (Leaving any adventurers who stumble upon his lair scratching their heads as to why dragon kind's greatest is apparently so poor.)

Because he has so much invested (and so much to lose), RotGut is unusually inquisitive when meeting strangers. He's likely to ask about exchange rates and for opinions on the stability of certain rulers.

As gamers we all have one thing in common. We love climbing under the hood of a game and tinkering with the rules. The Game Mechanic is a place where rule-jockies can get together and share their home-brewed rules. Send your own favorite house-rules to KODT, 1003 Monroe Pike, Marion IN 469532



**Game: FORMULA DE'**

Company: Euro Games

Rule Tweak: Pedal-to-the-Metal

Mechanics: Jolly R. Blackburn & Joel Bozell

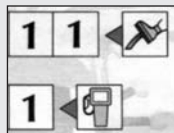
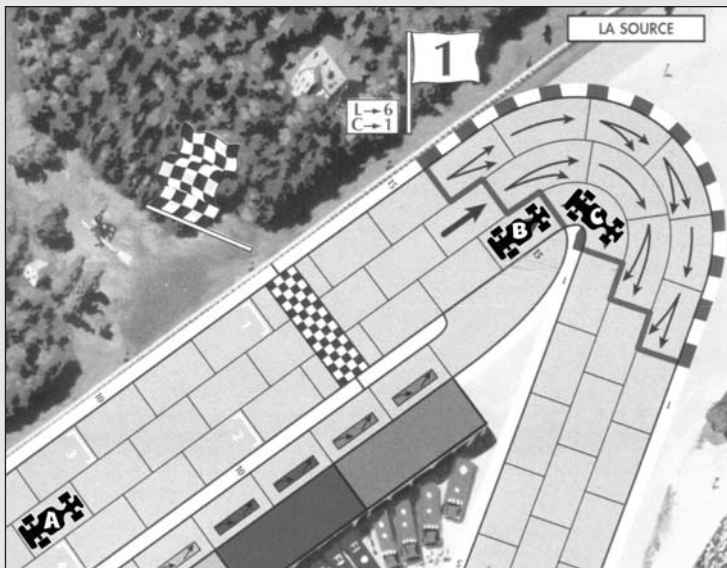
Formula De' is a classic game but sometimes it leaves us scratching our heads. While the game beautifully captures the feel and suspense of racing there are times when the luck of the dice seems to determine the winner more than the skill of the player.

Case in point: The situation shown at the left came up in a recent race. The formula racer (A) is just completing his first lap and approaching a sharp curve in third gear. The player notes that he must make at least one stop in the curve or suffer penalties. (He's already hit the curves pretty hard on lap one and is hurting on tire and brake points). If he shifts to fourth gear his next turn he would be forced to move anywhere from 7 to 12 spaces (dictated by the fourth gear die).

Too risky he decides. If he over shoots the curve without stopping at the end of his turn he's likely to spin out. He decides to stay in third gear. Rolling the third gear die he rolls an 8. Unfortunately competitor cars in his lane and the outside lane (not shown) force him to take the inside lane. He ends up in position B which really blows! This means he's screwed. There's no way he'll be able to drop his speed to make the one-stop requirement for the curve during his next turn. (He could downshift two gears by expending a fuel point but this would put him in first gear and it will take him two to three turns to get his speed back up.)

It was this situation that got us thinking about a fix. It seemed to us that a skilled driver would be able to get that little bit of 'ummmfff' out of his machine to get that little bit of distance to make it in the curve.

So we came up with the Pedal-to-the-Metal rule. Using this rule, in the example above the driver can declare he's "pushing the pedal" and move his car one additional space forward (C). Thus putting him officially in the curve. The drawback is that he has to expend a fuel point immediately. This keeps players from abusing the rule and gives the driver another option other than down-shifting and dropping behind the pack.



**Game: RISK!**

Company: Parker Brothers

Rules Tweak: Revolution Risk

Mechanics: Leon Atkinson

The idea here is that each player is of a certain continental background (European, Asian, North American) and has the ability to convince the people living there to revolt sometimes.

At the beginning of the game each player puts an army next to the list of continents on the board to denote his background. Two players may choose the same continent.

At the start of any turn, a player may choose to use a card to have a revolt instead of attacking that turn. He places his armies as usual then reveals a card. The card must have the name of a territory on his continent. All the armies there are changed into his color army and are his. So, if the blue player has ten armies in Central America, the red player may take them as his own with the proper card.

**Game: RISK!**

Company: Parker Brothers

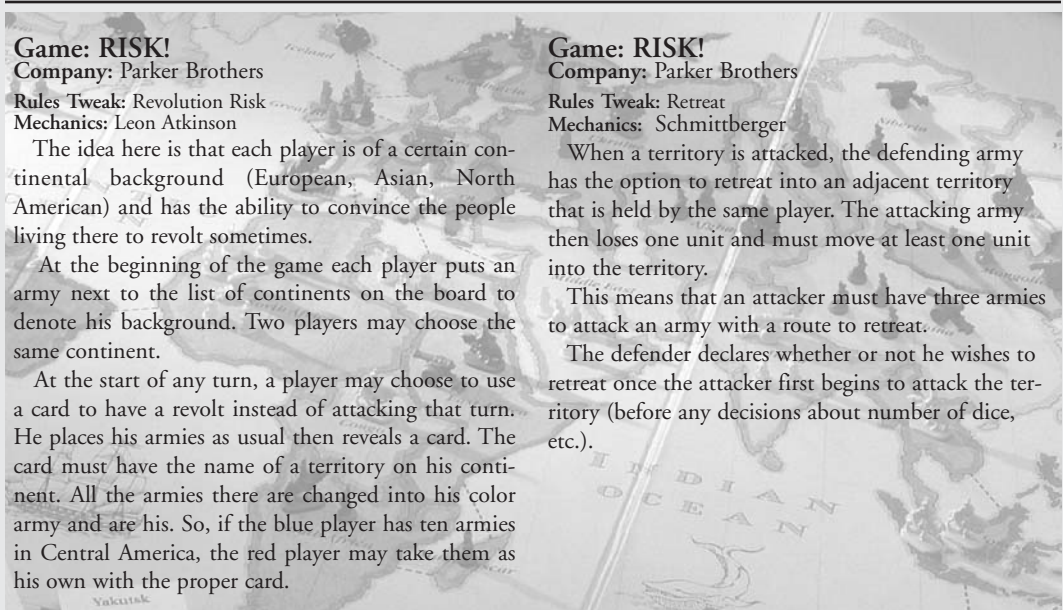
Rules Tweak: Retreat

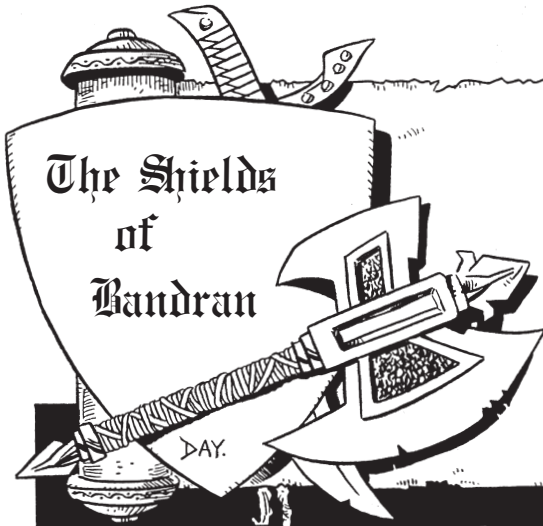
Mechanics: Schmittberger

When a territory is attacked, the defending army has the option to retreat into an adjacent territory that is held by the same player. The attacking army then loses one unit and must move at least one unit into the territory.

This means that an attacker must have three armies to attack an army with a route to retreat.

The defender declares whether or not he wishes to retreat once the attacker first begins to attack the territory (before any decisions about number of dice, etc.).





# The Shields of Bandran

DAY.

WITH THE ASSASSINATION OF ARCHDUKE WELDRIL, THE SMALL DUCHY OF BANDRAN IS THROWN INTO A BLOODY CIVIL WAR BETWEEN THE RIGHTFUL HEIR, PRINCE KIRASI, AND HIS HALF BROTHER, LORD TUBAR THE SORCEROR.

LED BY GENERAL NESTRA, A LARGE FORCE OF GOBLINOID MERCENARIES AND TUBAR'S UNDEAD ARMY MARCHES INTO THE HEART OF THE SANAKIR HILLS. NESTRA'S PRIZE: THE RED TOWER, THE FORTRESS THAT HOUSES SACRED SEALS OF LIDA.

THE VILNA GUARDS, STALWART DEFENDERS OF THE HOUSE OF BANDRAN, PROTECT THE SEALS. FOR WHOMEVER HOLDS THE SEALS MUST BE MADE ARCHDUKE OF BANDRAN.

OUR STORY BEGINS WITH GENERAL NESTRA AND LORD TUBAR COMMUNICATING VIA THE MISTS OF DALOW.

MY PRINCE, WE HAVE THE RED TOWER SURROUNDED. IT IS DOOMED TO FALL WITHIN THE HOUR.

EXCELLENT NEWS. INFORM ME THE INSTANT THAT YOU HAVE THE SACRED SEALS OF LIDA IN YOUR HANDS. GENERAL, YOU MAY RETURN TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FORTRESS.

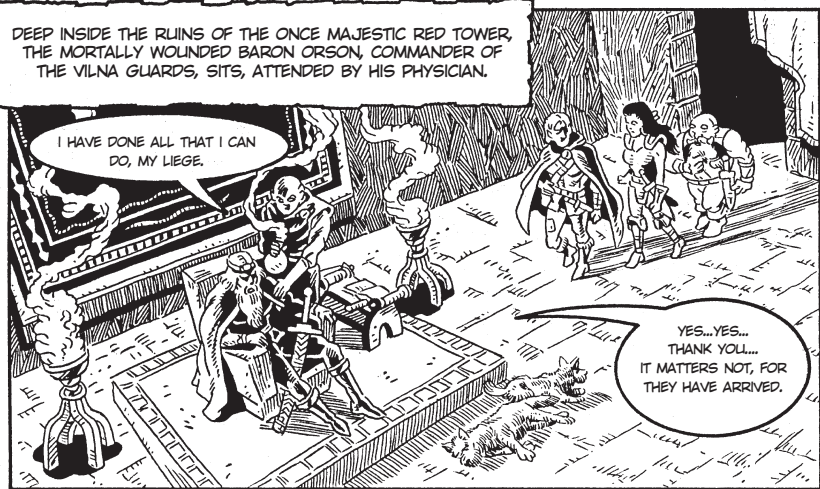


WE WILL ATTACK AT ONCE. KEEP A FEW OF THEIR OFFICERS ALIVE FOR QUESTIONING.

SHORTLY AFTER THE ASSAULT COMMENCES, THE CHILLING CRIES OF THE WOUNDED BEGIN TO ECHO THROUGHOUT THE TOWER'S HALLS.



DEEP INSIDE THE RUINS OF THE ONCE MAJESTIC RED TOWER, THE MORTALLY WOUNDED BARON ORSON, COMMANDER OF THE VILNA GUARDS, SITS, ATTENDED BY HIS PHYSICIAN.



EACH OF YOU...WILL FIND SEWN INTO YOUR CLOTHING OF DISGUISE... ONE OF THE SACRED SEALS OF LIDA...AS YOU WELL KNOW...THE SEALS MUST BE DELIVERED TO PRINCE KIRASI...FOR HE CANNOT BE CROWNED ARCHDUKE WITHOUT THEM.



GAREN, I HAVE ONE LAST REQUEST OF YOU...CONCERNING THE HONOR OF THE VILNA GUARDS...



NOT ONE COMMANDER... HAS LOST HIS SWORD TO THE ENEMY...SO TAKE MY BLADE WITH YOU...FOR BEFORE THIS NIGHT IS THROUGH, ALL WILL BE LOST...



AND WITH A TEARFUL GOODBYE...

THE THREE VILNA GUARDS LEAVE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT BY MORNING THEIR BELOVED REGIMENT WILL BE GONE. THEY DESCEND DEEP INTO THE BOWELS OF THE RED TOWER TO A REOPENED SECRET PASSAGE AND ESCAPE FROM THE FINAL CONFLICT.



QUICKLY, TIME IS RUNNING SHORT.



MAY THE GODS BE WITH YOU.

I SWEAR TO FORINORI I WILL SEND MANY A HOBGOBLIN TO MEET GALAPITI, THE HARVESTER OF SOULS FOR THIS NIGHT.

THEY DEPART THE RED TOWER...

THE THREE STOP TO TAKE ONE LAST LOOK.



LOOK! THE TOWER'S AFLAME...IT'S...

...DYING!!!

CONTINUED...

# KODT: IN YER FACE EVERY FREAKIN' MONTH!!



Issue 31: Don't Fear the Reaper  
Available May, 1999

I READ MINE WITH AN *R.C. COLA* AND A COUPLE OF *MOON PIES*. I REALLY **FEEL THE PAIN** OF THOSE READERS WHO MISSED THOSE EARLY ISSUES. I'M MISSING ISSUES 9 AND 11 MYSELF. AND I LOANED MY NUMBER 5 TO *TIPPER* AND SHE **NEVER** GAVE IT BACK. **THAT BLOWS!**



Issue 32: Tales from Hog Wallers  
Available June, 1999

## “WHAT DO YOU READ YOURS WITH??!!”

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planet overhead while cybernetic orcs inspect their power armor in preparation for storming a wizard's enclave....

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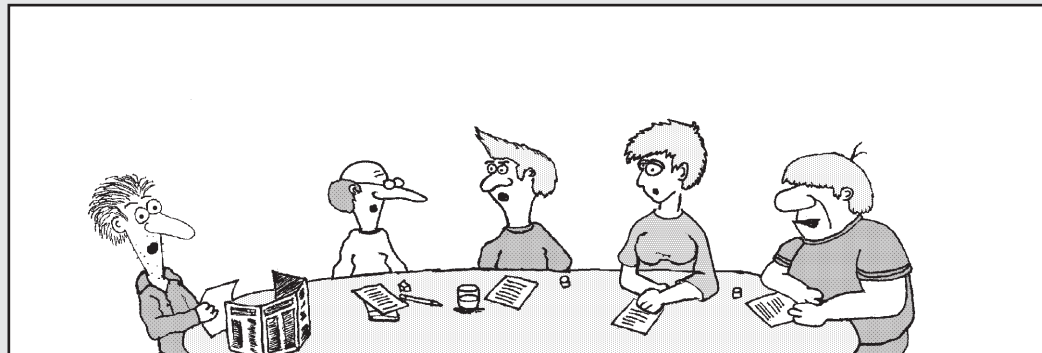
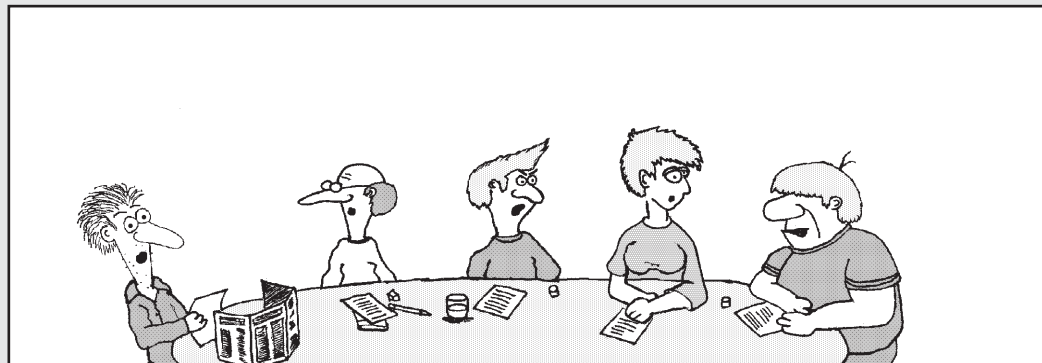
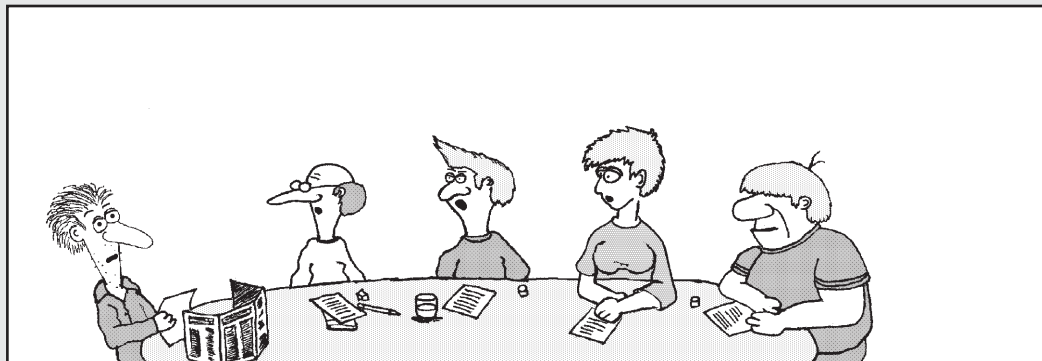


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# News, Rumors and Industry Buzz plucked

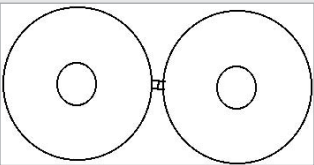


**HEY KIDS!!**  
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## WADIZITZ™

Wadizitzs are simple abstract drawings. The challenge is to guess what that drawing is. Some Wadizitz's may have more than one correct answer.



• ANSWER •

Aerial view of one man in a sombrero lighting a cigarette off another sombrero's cigarette.



## Errata, Clarifications, and Odd Questions

Ever since *Jolly Roger Games'* best selling game *Ors at the Gates* (based on *Knights of the Dinner Table™*) has hit the shelf we've been mistakenly getting letters from players with questions about game play and rules clarifications.

Questions pertaining to the game should be directed to the game's designer, Jim Dietz at [jolly.roger1@advant.net](mailto:jolly.roger1@advant.net) You can also find the latest Errata/Clarifications list on Jolly Roger's Web page at <http://jollyrogergames.hypermart.net>.

Since there were a few rule omissions from the first printing of the game, Jim provided us with a few rules errata/clarifications which we are running here as a service to our readers.

**Q:** Player's Advantage code card. This card allows a player to duplicate the special power of any other character. Since Dave gets to start the game with his Hackmaster+12. Would the use of the PAC card allow someone to immediately "steal" Dave's Hackmaster if they are duplicating his special ability?

**A:** No, because Dave's special power gives him the Hackmaster +12 at the beginning of the game. Since the card is used after that point, it is impossible to take the Hackmaster +12 away from Dave.

**Q:** How many points do I get for killing an Orc?

**A:** 10, 20, or 30 depending on the skill level of your group or how tough you want the game to be.

**Q:** How many wounds does an Orc take?

**A:** One. You hit it, it dies.

**Q:** Can I just go back and forth between two Treasure squares?

**A:** Sure, you just can't keep searching the same Treasure square over and over.

**Q:** How does the Dungeon map connect with the others since it doesn't have a road?

**A:** It doesn't. Place it to the side. The only way to move to/from the Dungeon is by taking the Spiral Staircases.

**Q:** Do I keep the points for Treasures I've got if I die?

**A:** Nope. The only points that you keep are for Orcs killed. When a Treasure card is discarded for ANY reason, its points are lost.

**Q:** The rules suggest that rolling a 1 has bad effects but doesn't actually say. Are there effects?

**A:** Yup, and like the points for killing Orcs, the printing Gremlins took this out of the first edition rules (to be corrected in the next print run). If a player rolls a 1, it is a Critical Failure. Rather than hit the intended target, the nearest character suffers one wound instead (regardless of how far away the nearest character actually is!)

## PICK OF THE WEB

*Our favorite websites for the Month!*

### Gear up for Urban Adventure!

One of our fans turned us on to these underground web sites devoted to the exploration and mapping of steam tunnels, sewers, abandoned mines and other lost realms of the underdark.

<http://www.infiltration.org/>

<http://www.infiltration.org/underosu/tunnels.html>

<http://members.tripod.com/~tunnels/tunnels.html>



*A dark inviting steam tunnel beneath Ohio State*

# from the vine for your reading enjoyment

## A Moment in Gaming History #8

It seemed like a good idea at the time. A live action RPG event in the back woods of Wisconsin. At least that's what Sedrik Johansson thought in 1903. Sedrik's group had been playing the tabletop version of Herdsmen of Krane for several years when one of his players came up with a set of live-action rules for the game. At first the group confined their game to Sedrik's back yard. As the campaign grew so did the need for a larger playing field.

So in the summer of 1903, Sedrik and his players loaded up their props and gear and headed off to a local state forest. Unfortunately, they had chosen the opening day of deer season to run their event. In the blood bath that followed 13 players dressed as Horned-Herdsmen had been gunned down.

Thinking it was part of the game, several players attacked and killed four deer hunters. Years later, writer George Orwell would base his book, *Animal Farm* on the tragedy. □



Sedrik Johansson (center) poses with several other live-action role-players at a game outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1903.

## FIELD REPORT

WINTER FANTASY 1999

Once again Winter Fantasy turned out to be a tough con to miss. Some people complained that there were too many card players but I know there was some cool RPGing going on all night over the whole weekend. I was surprised to learn the news that Andon Unlimited (the con organizer) is moving back to Washington where it will be closer to parent company WOTC. I was also shocked to learn that they are planning on canceling some of their smaller regional shows. I'm not sure what this means for WF but hopefully the con will continue with RPGA support.

As always it was great to meet with all the fans both at the booth and in our events. Don Boden stopped by to kiss the fish but couldn't coax his girlfriend into it. For the first time (pre-release) we had game designer Greg Stolze run demos and a tournament of our new Elemental™

board game. Chet Shallenbarger and Tom Baumkach took first and second place in the Monty Python and the Holy Grail CCG tournament and Chet walked away with a box of booster packs for a prize. And at the KODT Live Reading veteran GENCON readers Bryan Sims, Ed Hennessy and Bedford Crenshaw showed up. Fans were also treated to a special rap session during the event where they got the inside story on KODT strips old, new and yet to be released.

Another interesting facet of the show was that the hotel was also hosting what appeared to be some kind of Mary Kay event. This meant that mixed in among the throngs of typical gamers were some cute women who wore LOTS of make-up. I'd be interested to hear any stories about how the two crowds mixed.

Please let Andon Unlimited know that you want them to continue this con in the Chicago area. It would be a shame to lose it.



Brian "the sixth knight" Jelke □



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AND  
COMPANY  
WANTS  
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That's right, we want you to join the on-going 'Celebration of Gaming' you are holding in your hands. KODT Magazine (and you thought it was just a comic) is expanding its page count so we can bring you even more fun and excitement each month. That means we'll need new material to fill those pages. Things like cartoons, articles on gaming, industry news, reviews — you name it!

For our writer guidelines E-mail  
KenzerCo@aol.com

## LOOK WHO'S TALKIN'

*"I'm going to hurt you so bad I'll have to grant you Federal Aid afterwards!"*

*Heard during a game of Axis and Allies at the editor's house recently.*

*"If I attack you there would you attack me back? You would? Okay, never mind."*

*Heard during the same game above.*

*"I had a linguistics professor who said that it's man's ability to use language that makes him the dominant species on the planet. That may be, but I think there's one other thing that separates us from animals. We aren't afraid of vacuum cleaners."*

*- Jeff Stilson*

*"Oh Gawd! They must have failed their saving throw vs. stupidity! What in the hell were they thinking?"*

*Game manufacturer commenting on a competitor's new product*

□



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## GAME MASTERING SECRETS

Wade Guthrie Press  
P.O. Box 4373  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652  
\$19.95 (136 pages)

Well, here's a supplement which will hold a place of honor in my game reference library. (sigh) I was really delighted to see this book come across my desk. It reminds me of some of the creative material that was being written back in the early 80's when role-playing was just beginning to take root.

GMS is a GameMaster's resource book. A collection of how-to's really. (I'm going to slip this book behind B.A.'s screen because he could really use it.) It's really amazing just how much, Wade Guthrie, managed to cram into 136 pages.

Here's a sampling: building three-dimensional NPC's, Handling players when they get too powerful, helping players work as a team, creating interesting treasure, writing good plots, handling classic player problems, placing traps, clues and puzzles, keeping the game entertaining, organization notes for the GM, world building (including geography, climate, populations, etc), GameMastering style, modifying rules, character knowledge vs. player knowledge, penalties.

Even the seasoned GM will find plenty of useful info here to justify the cover price. I really hope this book does well. Maybe Wade will follow it up with another installment (maybe a Player's Secrets edition?) This seems to be Wade Guthrie's first work so you may have to ask your retailer to order it for you. Tell 'em Brian says it will move.

**Brian's Rating:** Get it today! (Great gift for your GM)



## GATECRASHER

(2nd Edition)  
Grey Ghost Games  
P.O. Box 838  
Randolph, MA  
02368-0838



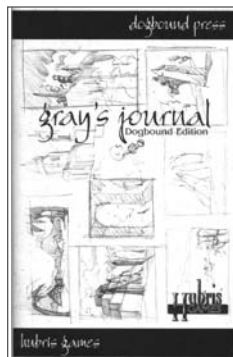
**Gatecrasher** is a sci-fi roleplaying game mounted on the FUDGE engine. The book provides all the rules and campaign background needed to play in the Gatecrasher universe.

Gatecrasher is a high tech (and high wizardry) struggle for supremacy. Armoured knights, space shuttles, dragons, angels, demons, lycanthropes, cybernetic orcs? Where do I sign up?

The premise of the game is that a 22nd prospector discovered an ancient transdimensional gate on one of Jupiter's moons. He accidentally lets magic back into the world and all hell breaks loose (literally).

I thing I like about his game is that it doesn't take itself too seriously. Several of the illustrations had me laughing out loud. If you're looking for a new RPG to explore this may be what you're looking for.

**Brian's Rating:** Roll 'em up!!



## Gray's Journal

Hubris Games  
PO Box 53341  
Washington, DC 20009  
www.hubris-games.com  
\$4.00 - 78 pages  
Digest sized

As I've pointed out before, because of space constraints I usually only preview product in this column which I think is kewl.

I immediately knew **Gray's Journal** had made the cut as soon as I opened it. This is one of the kewlest supplements to an RPG I've seen in quite a while. Digest sized, **Gray's Journal** is a supplement for *Hubris Game's Maelstrom Storytelling*.

Har's off to Hubris for actually remembering that an expansion supplement should be useful. How many times have you bought a supplement only to wonder, "why did they bother?" **Gray's Journal** has four pieces of fiction which help bring the Maelstrom World to life, three scenarios (any one of which could have stood alone as an adventure supplement in my opinion), six new realms to expand your campaign into, three pages of resource material on gadgets and equipment. And last but not least a scaled down version of the Maelstrom Storytelling engine (called Story Bones) so you can actually learn to play in 5 minutes. All this for 4 bucks! Kewl!

**Brian's Rating:** Ask for it now!

Arnold:  
Sometimes puzzle pieces are so close at hand that they hang like an albatross about your neck, but then fall from your grasp.  
Johan



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**WEIRD PETE'S BULLETIN BOARD**

is a meeting place where readers may pass along information, barter, trade and gossip. Readers are invited to place classified ads, announce group meetings, seek out other players, etc. Subscribers of KODT may place classified ads free of charge with a limit of one ad per issue and a maximum of twenty-five words. Non-Subscribers may place ads at the rate of 50¢ per word with a limit of 25 words. Companies may place ads at the following rates: [5.5" x 2" - \$50], [2.75" x 2" - \$25], [1.5" x 1" - \$10]. Non-profit organizations (serving the gaming community) and Conventions or Seminars may place ads for free. All ads are placed on a first-come first-served basis with subscribers having priority.

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YOU'VE GOT SLUMPIN  
ON YER MIND, BOY?  
BESS' SAY IT AND  
JES' GET ON WID IT!

## An Opinion Arena and Open Forum

Well, Gamin' Dick wanted his back room back for his Saturday night Poker game. So, the Opinion Arena has been moved to the back room of the Games Pit. There are no rules here, except for one! No personal attacks can be made. If you disagree with someone tell us why - but no name calling. Oh, and keep clear of Squirrely's cage. He seems to resent the sudden intrusion into what once was his private space.

As the subheading indicates, this is a sounding board where gamers can give their two-cents' worth on whatever seems to rile them. So pull back the curtain and come on in the Back Room. You can leave that thin-skin at the door but be sure to bring your opinions with you.

As a female gamer and a writer (yes, that's relevant), I hasten to assure you that *Ivy K. Ryan's* letter, featured first in the first back room feature, does not represent either a common or a wholly justified reaction for a female gamer. I have a lot in common with Sara besides gender (in fact I'm one, probably of many, who suggested to you that you let her have a date), and I laughed as hard at the Thorina debacle as at any other strip.

The *Revenge of Newt* was also greeted with enormous pleasure. My experience as a writer has been that, in any given work, only part of the reader's experience is due to what the writer puts into it - the rest is what the reader brings to it.

The reason both these stories was so enjoyable to me was that I already knew the characters. I knew Sara would not take *Thorina's* mishandling lying down, and part of each laugh was anticipation of how she would make the guys suffer for their behavior.

Also, *Newt's Revenge* was sweet for me because I was glad to see him learn how to handle *Stevil* and *Weird Pete*. In the off-kilter, slightly nasty world of the *Black Handers*, he has finally found his feet and earned respect. From now on, these two will have to handle him as an equal, not as a victim. The pleasure of the story involved remembrance of what had gone before and expectation of what was to come. This is good, in that it means you have established characters who behave in a real way and change over time; but awkward, in that it makes the stories less accessible to new readers.

Once you have an established readership and history, it's easy to forget that every episode of a series is somebody's first; but if you want to continue to expand the readership, you have to bear it in mind so that newcomers don't feel shut out.

It's probably time to update and resurrect the character descriptions/biographies, at least of the characters who appear in a given issue; and you might consider a brief synopsis at the beginnings of stories that continue directly from last issue.

As for appealing to female gamers - since *Sara* is far and away the most "normal" gamer in the regular cast (she has integrated gaming into her life, she functions in the real world, she has numerous interests, and she copes flexibly with interpersonal relationships, as epitomized by her change of heart on the "telling Jim Lee" issue) as well as the only female gamer we see, I sometimes suspect you of sucking up to us.

When are we going to see *Patty Gauzweiler*? Hasn't Sara ever met the only other female gamer in *Muncie*? Incidentally, I thought it might interest you to know how male gamers look to female gamers.

They can generally be divided into three attitudes (not actual types, since there is a lot of fluidity in the divisions, and almost every guy has it in him to behave in all three ways): the Jerk, the Knight, and the Oblivious. These categories apply pretty much every place that women enter a subculture where males predominate, from fanboys to the military, and they are responses to women entering perceived male turf.

The Jerk can't forget you're a gurrll. He either hits on you, or picks on you, or both. If he can't have sex with you he wants to make you run crying from the room. A quick, definitive slap-down at the first sign of jerkness will save all kinds of trouble later.

The Knight can't forget you're a lady. He wants to protect you and help you and make you feel welcome, which can really cramp your role-playing style. He'll handle the Jerk for you if you'll let him, but you shouldn't let him. Be nice to him, but make it clear you can take care of yourself. (Warning: many Knights can turn into Jerks at a moment's notice if they get the idea you're a "bad girl" instead of a "lady." This is the dark side of chivalry and shows up the falseness of the

kind of respect you get on a pedestal.)

The Oblivious guy completely forgets your physical differences and accepts you as another player. You want all of your gaming partners to become Oblivious during the game, even the one you're married to. It can be a little disconcerting when he forgets about it during the planning of the trip to the big convention: "Why can't you just bring a sleeping bag and bed down on the floor in the single we're going to rent like the other nine guys that're going?" But in all other situations, it's the way to go.

I've found men become Oblivious quicker if you behave in an ever-so-slightly butch manner. The worst thing you can do is behave in a stereotypically feminine way. But mutilating your own personality to fit in with the guys spoils the whole point of the endeavor. Every woman has to learn to cope in her own way.

That's my story, and I'm sticking to it.

Peni  
San Antonio, TX

We were glad to see your rebuttal, Peni. Several female readers wrote in to champion the Newt/Sara storylines and to tell us they were in no way offended. Here are a few responses to your questions.

Patty Gauzweiler? She should be making an appearance sometime this year in the comic. There's a minor debate in-house as to what she should look like. As for being the 'only' other female gamer in Muncie - that's not quite true. There has been mention of a Sheila Horowitz they guys used to play with. She should be making an appearance too a bit further down the road.

You commented that you sometimes wondered if we were 'sucking up' to female readers with our portrayal of Sara. I'd have to say no - at least not consciously. She's actually based largely on a 'real' female player who was in my first campaign. As the strip evolved, of course, Sara began to take on burdens of female gamers everywhere as she was forced to endure her male counterparts issue to issue. Incidentally, I like your classification of guys. Looking back at the Sara intro in Issue number 2 it appears Dave and Brian tried the 'Knight' approach at first while Bob went straight for the 'Jerk' approach and stuck with it.

As for new readers being lost we have taken steps to ease their pain. Our August issue each year features a compiled list of updated character bios and well as an Issue/Story index.

We should also be printing subsequent volumes of Bundles of Trouble in the coming months so those readers who discovered KODT late in the game can catch up on the action. (Bundle of Trouble #2 just recently shipped.)

Jolly

HEY SARA ACCORDING TO THIS ARTICLE I READ IN **HACKJOURNAL** IF TWO CHARACTERS HAVE A BABY TOGETHER YOU TAKE THE STATS OF THE **PARENTAL CHARACTERS** - ADD THEM TOGETHER AND DIVIDE BY TWO. THIS GIVES YOU THE KID'S STATS. THEN EVERY YEAR ON HIS BIRTHDAY HE GETS 104 ATTRIBUTE POINTS HE CAN ADD TO HIS STATS. UH...UNTIL HE'S SIXTEEN OF COURSE. SO...UH...I WAS WONDERING. DO YOU THINK...MAYBE...

TURN AROUND AND SHUT UP, DAVE!  
I'M ONLY GOING TO SAY IT **ONCE!**

IF IT'S A MATTER OF MONEY WE COULD HAGGLE A FAIR PRICE...

SHE DOESN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOUR **MUCK-FACED FIGHTER!** NOW **TEFLON BILLY** ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU COULD **COUNT** ON HIM TO BE A GOOD PROVIDER.



### HEY HACK JOCKIES!! CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

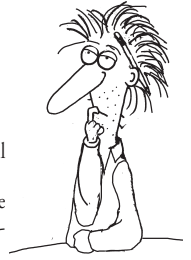
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# THINGS THE MOVIES HAVE TAUGHT ME



- During all police investigations it will be necessary to visit a strip club at least once.
- All telephone numbers in America begin with the digits 555.
- Most dogs are immortal.
- If being chased through town, you can usually take cover in a passing St. Patrick's Day parade - at any time of the year.
- All beds have special L-shaped cover sheets which reach up to the armpit level on a woman but only to waist level on the man lying beside her.
- All grocery shopping bags contain at least one stick of French Bread.
- It's easy for anyone to land a plane providing there is someone in the control tower to talk you down.
- Once applied, lipstick will never rub off - even while scuba diving.
- The ventilation system of any building is the perfect hiding place. No-one will ever think of looking for you in there and you can travel to any other part of the building you want without difficulty.
- If you need to reload your gun, you will always have more ammunition - even if you haven't been carrying any before now.
- You're very likely to survive any battle in any war unless you make the mistake of showing someone a picture of your sweetheart back home.
- Should you wish to pass yourself off as a German officer, it will not be necessary to speak the language. A German accent will do.
- If your town is threatened by an imminent natural disaster or killer beast, the mayor's first concern will be the tourist trade or his forthcoming art exhibition.
- The Eiffel Tower can be seen from any window in Paris.
- A man will show no pain while taking the most ferocious beating but will wince when a woman tries to clean his wounds.
- If a large pane of glass is visible, someone will be thrown through it before long.
- The Chief of Police is always black.
- When paying for a taxi, don't look at your wallet as you take out a bill - just grab one at random and hand it over. It will always be the exact fare.
- Interbreeding is genetically possible with any creature from elsewhere in the universe.
- Kitchens don't have light switches. When entering a kitchen at night, you should open the fridge door and use that light instead.
- If staying in a haunted house, women should investigate any strange noises in their most revealing underwear.
- Word processors never display a cursor on screen but will always say: Enter Password Now. (Passwords are always the name of dead children or lovers and are thus easily circumvented)
- Mothers routinely cook eggs, bacon and waffles for their family every morning even though their husband and children never have time to eat it.
- Cars that crash will almost always burst into flames. You can also make the tires sqawl and squeal when turning corners even if you are on a dirt road.
- The Chief of Police will always suspend his star detective - or give him 48 hours to finish the job.
- A single match will be sufficient to light up a room the size of RFK Stadium.
- Medieval peasants had perfect teeth. They also had nothing better to do than to stand by the roadside and answer questions put to them by passersby.
- Although in the 20th century it is possible to fire weapons at an object out of our visual range, people of the 23rd century will have lost this technology.
- Any person waking from a nightmare will sit bolt upright and pant.
- It is not necessary to say hello or goodbye when beginning or ending phone conversations.
- Even when driving down a perfectly straight road it is necessary to turn the steering wheel vigorously from left to right every few moments.
- All bombs are fitted with electronic timing devices with large red readouts so you know exactly when they're going to go off.
- It is always possible to park directly outside the building you are visiting.
- A detective can only solve a case once he has been suspended from duty.
- If you decide to start dancing in the street, everyone you bump into will know all the steps.
- Most laptop computers are powerful enough to override the communication systems of any invading alien civilization.
- It does not matter if you are heavily outnumbered in a fight involving martial arts - your enemies will wait patiently to attack you one by one by dancing around in a threatening manner until you have knocked out their predecessors.
- When a person is knocked unconscious by a blow to the head, they will never suffer a concussion or brain damage.
- No-one involved in a car chase, hijacking, explosion, volcanic eruption or alien invasion will ever go into shock.
- Police Departments give their officers personality tests to make sure they are deliberately assigned a partner who is their total opposite.
- When they are alone, all foreigners prefer to speak English to each other.
- You can always find a chainsaw when you need one.
- Any lock can be picked by a credit card or a paper clip in seconds - unless it's the door to a burning building with a child trapped inside.
- An electric fence, powerful enough to kill a dinosaur will cause no lasting damage to an eight year old child.
- Television news bulletins usually contain a story that affects you personally at that precise moment.
- If you are wearing a hat, it will NEVER fall off. Even if you get socked in the jaw, fall from a plane or tumble down a set of stairs. And, if your hat should fall off, it will miraculously reappear on your head moments later.
- If you loan your car keys or room key to a friend they will be blown up by a bomb that was meant for you.
- Never, ever go up to someone you have just shot to see if they are dead. They never are and will jump up and strangle you. You should always deliver a head shot to someone you've downed just to make sure.
- If you hear ominous music playing you are in some kind of danger and should leave the area.
- When driving your car at night your face will appear to be illuminated by some kind of strange lighting system on the floor board.
- If someone says, "I'll be back!" you should step away from any windows or doors.
- You can get away with being sarcastic and witty without someone punching you in the face.
- If someone peers over a newspaper at you in a bus station you should shoot them because they're probably going to cause you trouble later.
- It is possible to run away from an explosion.
- If you jump off a building chances are you'll land in a neatly stacked pile of cardboard boxes or a dump truck full of sawdust.



# Earth, Water, Air and Fire...

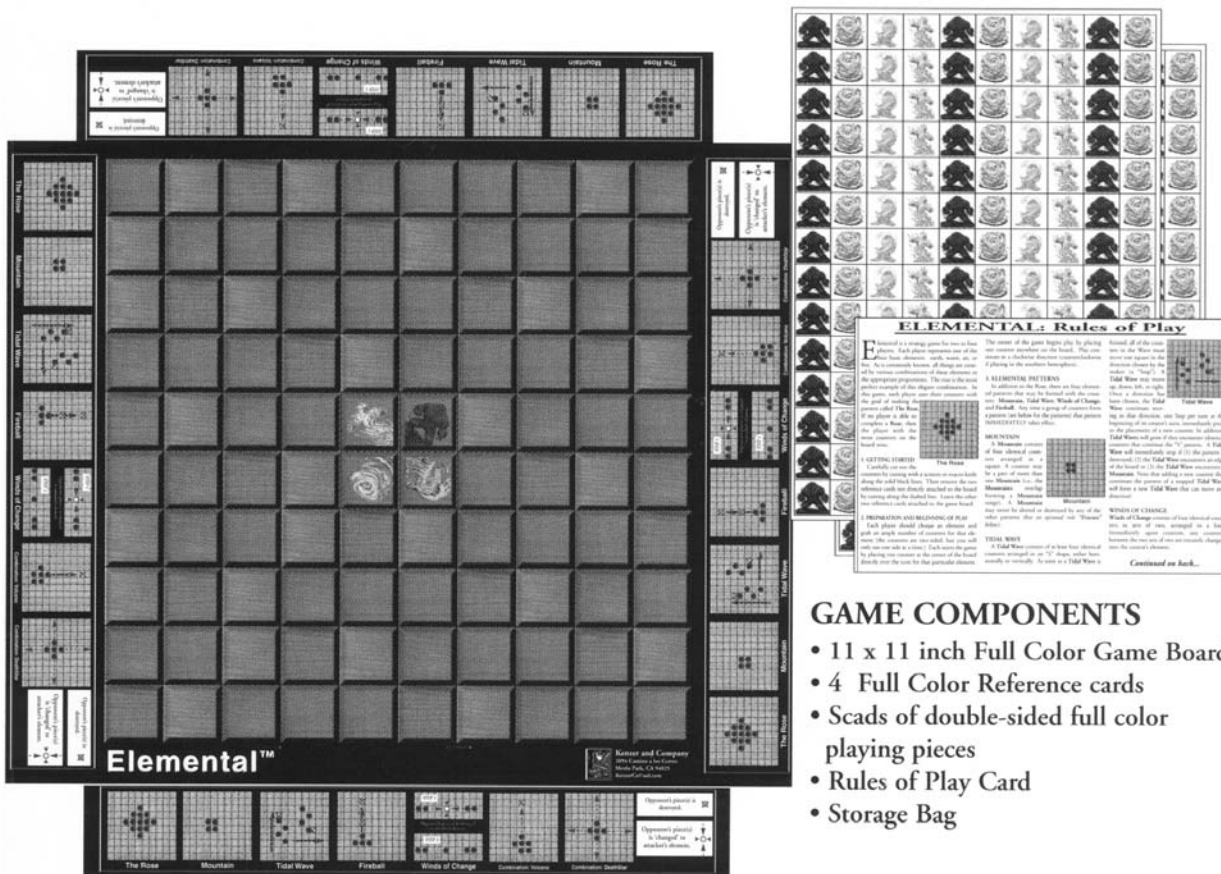
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*Elemental Game Board. (Actual size is 11 x 11 inches)*

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for  
Fading Suns



I'M SORRY BOB BUT THE **QUESTING KNIGHT** DOESN'T BUY YOUR STORY. HE'S FAIRLY CERTAIN **EMPEROR ALEXIUS** DOESN'T HAVE A **GANNOCK BROTHER BATTLE** NEPHEW NAMED **FIG NEWT**. HE **BLASTS** YOU IN YOUR TRACKS.

I TOLD YOU RANSACKING THE **EMPEROR'S** PRIVATE CHAMBER IN **BROAD DAYLIGHT** WASN'T A GOOD IDEA. WE'RE TOAST!!

**THIS BLOWS!** YOU DON'T KNOW **JACK** ABOUT ABOUT **LEGIONS OF THE EMPIRE**, B.A. I'M TELLIN' YA THE **KNIGHT** TAKES MY STORY AS GOSPEL.

WHILE BOB IS DISTRACTING THE DUDE, I'M GONNA CROUCH DOWN REAL LOW AND TRY TO SNEAK OUT OF THE ROOM.

**DAMN!** BOB TOOK MY COVER STORY. DON'T BOTHER ME, SARA, I GOTTA COME UP WITH A **NEW ONE - QUICK!**

