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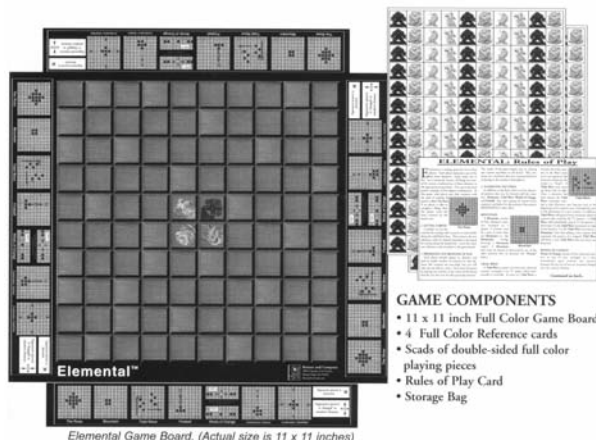
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Knights of the Dinner Table #33
Wild Wild Hack
July, 1999

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

MAGAZINE

"Wild Wild Hack"

The KODT Development Team is
Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,
Steve Johansson and David S. Kenzer
Cover Art by George and 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. Recently, Jolly returned from MarCon claiming he had 'taken out' the competition in ritualized Klingon combat in a subterranean parking garage. We were unable to confirm his claims. However, on three consecutive nights, baskets of Klingon "meat offerings" appeared on our doorstep.

Editorial of a Madman

"Curse my ass! Let's open the damn chest!"

American Explorer in 'The Mummy'

Last night I pushed myself away from the desk to take in a movie. The previews for "The Mummy" looked like it had *gamer-movie* written all over it. (By the time you read this the movie will be out for several months and most of you will have probably already seen it.)

If you haven't seen the movie don't worry - I'm not about to give away too much of the storyline.

While I wasn't expecting another **Indiana Jones**, I was expecting to be entertained. I wasn't disappointed. The movie wasn't perfect but as far as fantasy-flicks go, it was the best I've seen in a very long time. What wasn't there to love about this movie? Speaking as a gamer, this movie had a lot going for it. Dungeon crawls, zombie armies, spell books, curses, a decent villain and yes, a heavy helping of hack-n-slash.

What really made this movie click with me, however were the characters. Rather, I should say the character-behavior. As I watched the movie, I had the uncanny feeling it must have been written by someone who had bellied up to the gaming table more than a few times. I could almost hear the dice roll. Unlike most movies of this genre, the principle characters weren't stupid as dirt. They seemed intent on survival.

They behaved like your typical players in any good role-playing adventure - for the most part, they made all the right decisions and didn't bump about the script like mummy-fodder waiting their turn to be done-in by the evil Mummy.

For example, when the Mummy turns the citizens of Cairo into a zombie-army and has them block the heroes car from leaving the city, I sat in my seat thinking, "Floor it, you idiot! Plow through them!"

After all, it's what any self-respecting gamer would do in the same situation. When the camera zoomed in on the gas pedal of the sedan and showed a foot shoving it to the floor, I almost screamed out, "Hoody Hoo!" The car, in a brilliant moment of political incorrectness, mowed through the crowd of zombies as

bodies flung over the hood in rapid succession. Gamer that I am, I enjoyed every second of it.

In another scene the explorers are just about to open a sarcophagus using an ancient key found earlier in the movie. When they are compelled to run to a comrade's aid, the audience groans, for we see the key is still laying on top of the coffin just begging for the bad guys to steal it. Suddenly one of our heroes turns and comes back to grab the key and secure it. I was impressed. In any other movie, they would have forgotten the key only to discover it gone so we could eat up thirty minutes of plot time retrieving it.

Early in the film, when one of the heroes is asked why he is bringing so many guns on a simple archeological dig he replies, "There's something there! Something not right!"

How refreshing! A character with an intelligence above 8 who is able to look at the same clues as the audience and realize there are bad guys in the storyline.

I left the theatre wondering if Hollywood was starting to get it right. After suffering through such dogs as **Sphere**, **Mimic**, **Lost in Space**, **Relic** and a half dozen other forgettable movies in recent months going to the movies has become something of a lottery. You're definitely gambling with your seven+ bucks.

I've found over the years that gamers are just about the best critics you could hope for. If someone from my gaming group says, "Hey, **Star Ship Troopers** rocked!", I know there's a very good chance I'll enjoy the movie. If he says a movie 'blows' then you can be sure I'll wait for it to go to video.

With that being said - go see **The Mummy** if you haven't already. You'll be adequately entertained and will probably come away with a few ideas for your campaign.

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn

"No! You must NOT read from the Book!"

I'M SORRY BRIAN BUT YOU FAILED YOUR **SAVE VS. CHARM**. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO RULE THAT **TEFLON BILLY** OBEYS **JUSTINA'S** REQUEST AND THAT YOU KISS HER ON THE CHEEK.

SORRY BRIAN, BUT **JUSTINA** HAS ALWAYS BEEN TAKEN WITH **BILLY** PLAY ALONG AND ROLE-PLAY IT.

DON'T WORRY BRIAN. I'LL WHOP YOU A FEW TIMES ON THE HEAD WITH THE BUTT OF MY CROSSBOW. THAT SHOULD BREAK LIL' KOOCHIE-MAMA'S EVIL SPELL.

OH THIS IS TOO GOOD! THE **BIG GUY** LOOKS LIKE HE'S GONNA PASS OUT.

UH...ER...**TEFLON BILLY** IS GOING TO HIS "**SPECIAL PLACE**" I STEP INTO MY **RING OF STASIS** UNTIL THIS HUMILIATION HAS ENDED.



Our Readers Talk Back!

Dear KODT,

Me and some of my gamer friends have been reading KODT lately (I just found the monthly magazine though I read it in *Dragon*[™]) and we think *Hackmaster* sounds really Kewll! We were wondering if *Hackmaster* and *Hard8* exist in real life? And where can we get them if they do? Also I really like *Brian's Small Press Picks*. Rock on! And *Bones of Ruin* and *Borne in Blood* ruled!! Are you going to continue them? Generally I just think the Knights kick ass and take names! I see no problems with the magazine. It rules!

Well that's about it. Thanks

Colin Diem
via E-mail

Thanks for the letter, Colin. Sorry, neither Hard8 nor HackMaster exists in the 'real' world - yet. We have been approached by several companies on picking up the HackMaster license. Demand for the game has been so strong that I'm certain it will only be a matter of time before you'll see it on the shelf.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Hi, let me start by saying that my friends and I enjoy KODT immensely, or some properly spelled word to that effect. One of our favorite bits was the letter about "The Head of Vectra." However, some new people have joined our group and I cannot find the issue with it anywhere. could you please, please, please send it to me by e-mail. In return I give you the following true story:

One night while my friends and I were playing the *AD&D*[™] 1st edition *Ravenloft* module (a long time ago it was.) we came across the gypsy and had our fortunes told. When she (the DM) said that that was all the cards had to say tonight, I, in character decided that it was an insufficient amount of information. So, in character, I loudly proclaimed, "YOU WILL TELL US OUR FORTUNES NOW, WENCH!!!"

As the player, I of course expected no response. But rather than failing to intimidate the gypsy as I was expecting, I accidentally intimidated the DM, and before I could stop laughing (and thereby stop him from reading), the DM had already read too much of the flavor text available on fortunes. I quickly said I was sorry, and that I was trying to intimidate the gypsy, not him. We then had to take a break 'cause no one could stop laughing, including the DM.

Afterwards, we had our fortunes retold because otherwise, we would've had to look in every possible location for the stuff to defeat Strad. In the end, the only survivor of the battle was my Half-Drow Fighter/Cleric of Loviatar by the name of Grace Dagmar-Spelltwister (she had married a wild mage). So it goes.

Paul A. Schreiber
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

In issue #27, 'Editorial of a Madman' stated that you were beginning production of several Knights spin-offs, including action figures (!) of the characters.

Immediately after reading this, I began typing up an angry letter in my mind, but stopped for two reasons:

1. I remembered the joke about *Russian Women* looking for gaming partners, and figured that this was another joke; and

2. I took it for granted that loads of people would send angry letters about this, and I didn't want to be one of the people who fell for the joke. I'm petty-minded, I know, but that's the facts.

However, when I later accessed the KODT homepage, I saw a mini of Bob, and I realized that it was not a joke. However, I still reckoned you'd get loads of angry letters about it, so I didn't do anything.

Then, in the latest KoDT, you said that you wanted feedback,

especially complaints. So, now I'm typing up this.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU GUYS THINKING?

The problem with the gaming industry is that everyone who started out as an idealist who decided to do something for the gaming community, or who started something because it was fun, are turning into capitalists. The best examples of this is the oh-so-popular game *AD&D*. (*Notice the \$, so I won't get my butt sued off by WotC's lawyers*) Also, other companies, like *GW*, is also churning out as much as they can, for as much cash as they can, just for the money.

What has this got to do with you? I really can't understand what other motives you could have for making action-figures than the cash. It's not for the benefit of the game, that's for sure! Now, if they came with add-ons for the cast's characters, that would sound better, but still, I honestly can't get it. Why did you guys turn tables and join with the capitalist swine? (*Okay, that's going a bit far. One shouldn't insult swine.*) I can understand that you want to make cash. Everyone does, and its as good a reason as any. But really — spin-offs? Come on! Its the kind of thing that money-grabbing good-for-nothing orcs would do!

The worst thing is, people will actually buy it. I foresee you making a lot of money on this, and it will make you think what else you can do to get even more money, and sooner or later, we're looking at "*Knights of the Dinner Table: The movie*" starring Dan Ackroyd as Brian!

This is the reason I really like *Brian's Pick*. It shows me gaming-companies who are still idealistic and not just doing it for the money. (*All right. They're doing it for the money too, but not only because of the money*) And it's also one of the reasons I like KODT in general. I've always known that there were still some people out there who were not money-grabbers, and are doing something for the game. I've been with you since #10, and I've picked you up every month, looking forward to my laughs, and I'll continue picking you up, and showing the comic to other's who play for as long as I'm a player, for as long as I'm alive or for as long as you guys continue, and I'm placing my bets on B.

But even so, I've got to say I'm disappointed in you. I know you haven't lost touch yet, but its the start. I can feel it in my bones. I say, go with your guts, release the "*Orcs at the Gates*" game, the mini's, even the action figures. You'll earn money on it, and I'm sure quite a bit too. But the more stuff you make just for the money, the more you'll lose touch with the gamers. Who knows? One day, you might even quit gaming, yet still churn out KODT, because it gets you a lot of money.

That will be the day I quit buying KODT, because I will notice that you've stoped being gamers and started being businessmen. I'll notice it by the prices going up, the quality going down, and someone else actually doing the comic, with you guys just hanging around, discussing deals with *WotC*. Oh, maybe you'll still game, but I'll know. And so will every gamer with a few years under his or her belt out there. You'll still be making a lot of money, just like *GW's White Dwarf* makes a lot of money, but you'll have lost the golden touch, because you've become too rich to actually care about the Game anymore, and when that happens, you'll have lost me as a customer, and I'll be off, looking for yet another gaming magazine who is made by gamers, for the benefits of the game, not for the benefits of their wallets, i.e. just like you guys.

Emanuel Nordrum
via E-mail

Wow! You certainly gave us both barrels, Emanuel. Thanks for taking the time to vent on us and share what appears to be your very sincere concerns. Now, let's see if we can ease your fears a bit. First off, you've wrongly assumed that Kenzer and Company is producing all these KODT spin-offs that have been announced recently. The truth is ALL of the spin-offs you mentioned are being produced by third par-

ties. It's largely how the comic industry works.

When a publisher manages to put out a title that attracts a large and growing following other companies who specialize in making licensed-products take notice. It's their job to keep an eye on what seems to be selling or making waves. Companies who specialize in making action figures for example, are quick to approach publishers of hot-selling comics and inquire about the action-figure rights. Likewise, Screen Printers want to know about T-shirt (or even dice bag rights). Depending on the how hot the comic seems to be, dozens of potential licensees may come calling. Each license seems to spawn a dozen other inquiries. Look at South Park! You can find Cartman on everything from cereal bowls to parkas.

Of course everyone involved - licensor and licensees hope to make money on such arrangements. In the case of KODT, I do know that most of our licensees were big fans of the strip who wanted to apply their talents to the strip. Sure they hope to profit, but I also believe they want to make a quality product.

For example, ThunderBolt Mountain, who did the KODT miniatures you mentioned, picked up the rights because, Hal McKinney, a long time fan badgered award winning sculptor, Tom Mier to work them into his tight schedule. I'm sure the company lost money on the deal because Tom's talents were diverted from other projects. If you've seen the figures there will be no doubt that a lot of love and attention went into them. It's obvious that the foremost thing on Tom's mind was doing a good job - not making a quick buck.

I don't want to make excuses however. There's nothing wrong with making money on something you've put endless hours into. Being idealistic is a noble thing but it doesn't pay the printers. It takes a lot of money to be able to publish a product month to month. Licensing fees help a company get through the lean months and put out better product. Does making money on a product you've put years of your life into automatically mean you've sold out? Couldn't we be a bit more positive and say that paying your dues and putting in years of hard work sometimes pay off?

To be honest, Emanuel, I see where you are coming from. You enjoy KODT and think it's something special. You simply don't want to see it ruined or crushed under foot because the KODT Development Team is too busy doing the money-grab-lambada.

We'd hate to see that happen as well. All I can say is that Dave, Brian, Steve and I are probably the biggest fans of the Knights. The success of KODT surprised us more than anyone. We count ourselves lucky that things fell into place the way they did.

The Knights have taken us places we never expected to go and they've introduced us to countless friends and opportunities. As a result, we're very protective of them. One of the reasons we constantly ask for feedback is because we never want to lose touch with our fans.

If you see us slipping in the coming months, please feel free to write in again and let us know. We plan on publishing KODT as long as the fans still pick it up.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Sorry for the long letter. Just e-mailing to say:

(1) loved your latest comic (issue #29) but I was a little annoyed because I missed out on issue #28 (even though I asked my game store to reserve a copy for me...grrr...!) I suppose I could subscribe but I'm wondering if it's cheaper/worth the hassle since I live in Australia?)

(2) I'd also like to warn you of the dangers of your comic; ever since I started reading KODT I've had the urge to roleplay again. Well since watching *The Matrix* and getting my hands of a copy of *Feng Shui* (a movie-action RPG) I decided to give into the urge and set up a Friday night game. Well shame, KODT, shame! Playing RPGs is NOT like riding a bike (or if it is then I never rode one well to begin with!) I don't know what was worse; me GMing the night or me introducing 4 new people (out of 6 that attended) to the game.

Of the 2 that were "experienced" roleplayers; one was really tired (he almost fell asleep during the character generation stage) and then second was a true hack n' slasher type (he wouldn't get his character to do more during the game than eat and shoot his guns) so neither were of much help, assisting on the night.

Anyway, when the game unfolded I thought it would be a simple matter of getting them all into the designated restaurant and sending in a bunch of bad guys to start a good old fashion gun fight/brawl. Little did I know that the 4 new players (three girls and one art-loving ham actor) did not understand any of my subtle hints to be directed towards

the main scene and decided, as roleplayers do, that it was vitally more important for each of them to find dates.

As the game was quickly spiralling towards the world's first trashy "Mills n Boons" RPG - I, somehow, steered them back on course, all in the one place, and had them ready to confront the army of bad guys bursting through the door of the restaurant. At this point all hell broke loose as the Hack n' slasher decided to draw his guns and fire without waiting for the plot-line dialog to occur, the "sleeping pro" decided to sit back in amusement and the 4 newbies sat there stunned into inactivity.

Well I must give the new players credit as they quickly caught on to the idea that they needed to "really kill some people" - unfortunately they decided to turn on each other! Suddenly I was barraged with a constant stream of actions, counter actions and "I wanna change my action now because of what they did..." (all except the ham-up newbie who would at least 5 minutes, each turn, to describe - in intricate detail - every step and character motivation of his actions).

With the rules virtually being thrown out the window, as I tried desperately to keep up, all I kept thinking - over and over - was "Aw man! I can't believe this! I'm losing control and I can't hold on much longer!" and then it hit me: I'M JUST LIKE B.A! Aargh!

Well I did manage to run a reasonable fight (not to the rules mind you but it was a semblance of a structured combat anyway...) and when I thought enough damage had been done, I decided that it was time to pull the bad guys out of the scene to allow the good guys to rest and try and assess the situation.

Taking the main chef (a major NPC) hostage, the main bad guy shouted out "don't try to follow us or we'll kill him!" but again this seemed to have little effect on the "heroes" as they seemingly failed to understand the concept of a "hostage" and kept taking pot-shots at the bad guys.

Amid constant threats of "Stop chasing us! We'll kill him! I swear! We really will kill him if you keep on chasing us!" it reached the point where I had the good guys clinging to the outside of the getaway van (bouncing on the bumper bar and being swatted by the window wipers) and a group of generic badguy NPCs sitting around wondering if there was a serious language barrier between the two groups.

Trying one more time to get my point across, the main badguy shouted "Stop jumping on our van or he dies NOW!"

"Well I guess that means I'll jump into the window and take out the driver!" shouted one of the new players, enthusiastically.

Okay...I'll admit...maybe there was a better way to get these guys to understand there might have been alternatives to saving the chef other than direct conflict, but at the time it seemed hopeless.

Finally fed up by it all, I butted my head against the table several times and then shouted out "Okay fine! The main badguy shoots the chef in the head and he dies! There! Are you happy now?"

Describing the tragic horror of the chef's death ("thrashing and moaning, his blood sprays onto your hands and clothes...") I stopped to see what the players would do next.

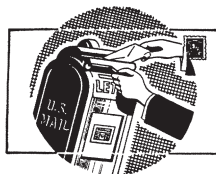
Instead I was faced by a wall of stunned faces. And after a moments silence, one of the newbies spoke up:

"Geez! Why did you kill the chef for?"

Sure - I guess you could say I was "too subtle" with my threats. But looking at the clock I saw it was 5 past midnight and I was tired. At this point I ended the session, thanked them all for coming and vowed to stick to reading comics about RPGs rather than actually playing them...at least for now...)

Thanks for reading and sharing.

Chris Yee
via E-mail account



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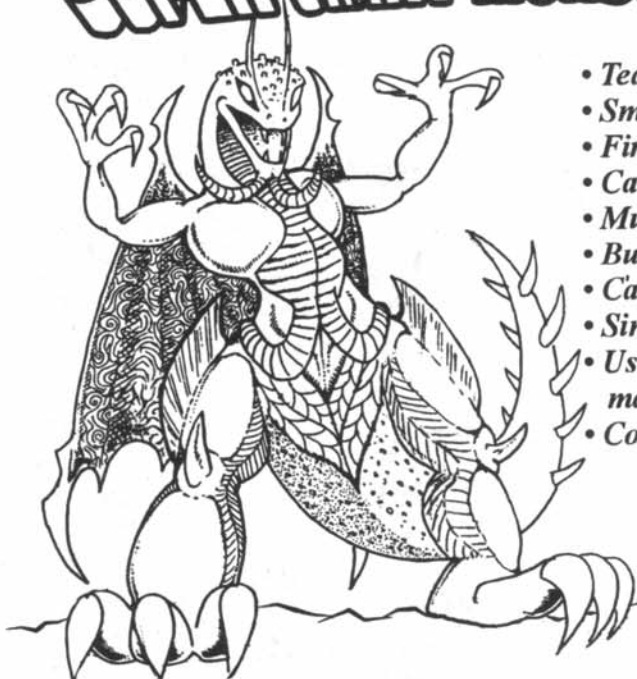
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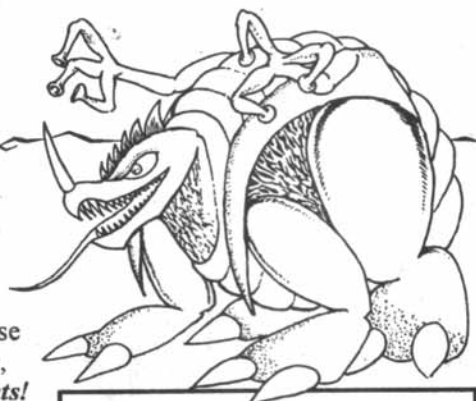
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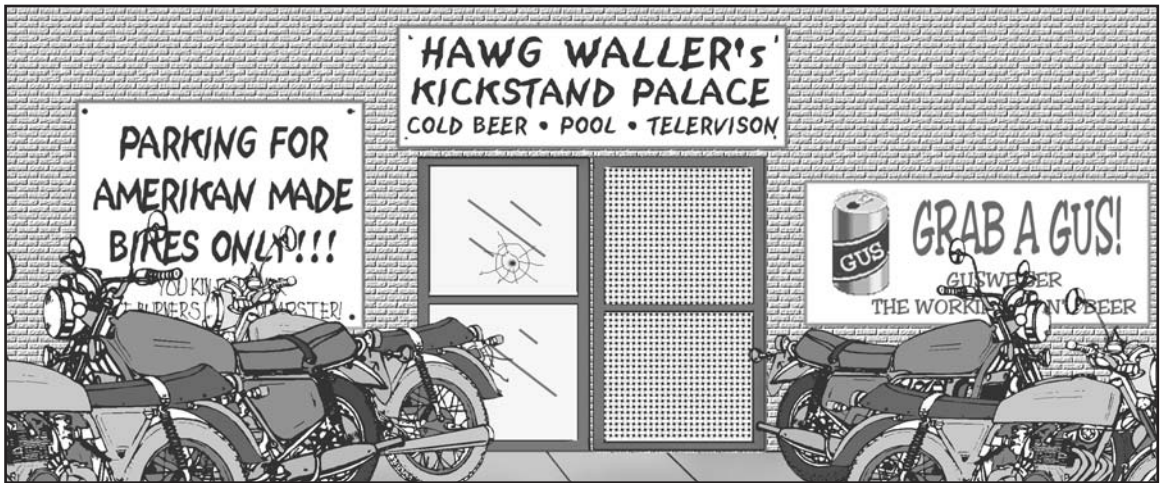
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The Night of Gaming Dangerously [Part II]

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
& STEVE JOHANSSON



GOOD NEWS, GUYS!! NO ONE OBJECTED SO IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE IN. JUST GIVE ME A FEW MINUTES TO MOVE THINGS ALONG TO A GOOD POINT FOR ME TO BRING YOU IN.

WE'RE IN? THANKS, MISTER
UH....ER....SAY, WE NEVER INTRODUCED
OURSELVES. MY NAME IS **CRUTCH**.

GOOD TO KNOW YA! MY
NAME IS **VICTOR** BUT MY
FRIENDS CALL ME **NITRO!**

MINE'S **SWITCH!**

WE REALLY
APPRECIATE
THIS
CHANCE.

TO SAVE TIME I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO PLAY **PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS** I'LL LEAVE IT TO YOU TWO TO DECIDE WHO GETS WHICH. **STARTING MONEY** FOR EACH CHARACTER HAS BEEN ANNOTATED AND I'VE INCLUDED A COPY OF THE **EQUIPMENT LIST** SO YOU CAN GO AHEAD AND EQUIP YOURSELVES.

STARTING MONEY?
EQUIPMENT LISTS? **DAMN!**
THIS IS A PROFESSIONAL OUTFIT.

OH, DON'T BOTHER WITH THE
GATLING GUN! I WON'T ALLOW
THEM AS STARTING EQUIPMENT.



A FEW SECONDS LATER....

WHAT THE HELL ARE THOSE? THEY LOOK
LIKE **POLICE MUG FILES** OR SOMETHING.

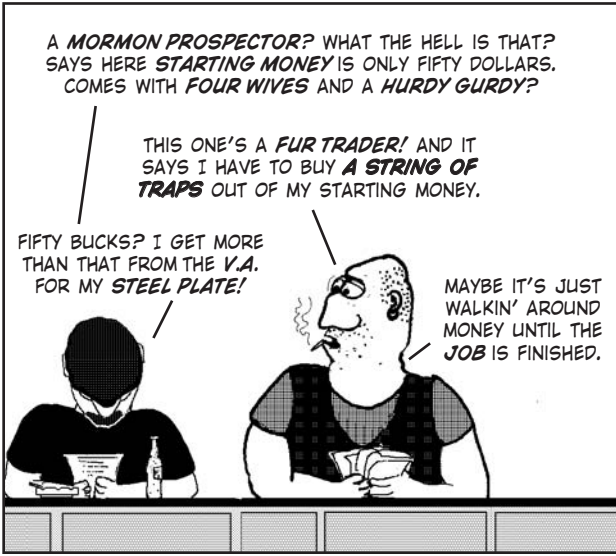
LOOK LIKE THEY'RE **ALIASES** OR
SOMETHING. I THINK WE'RE
SUPPOSED TO PICK A **COVER**.

YA KNOW - **MAYBE** WE'RE GETTING IN **OVER** OUR HEADS
HERE. THESE GUYS SEEM CONNECTED - **MOB CONNECTED!**
I'M NOT SURE I'M READY TO GET IN SO DEEP.

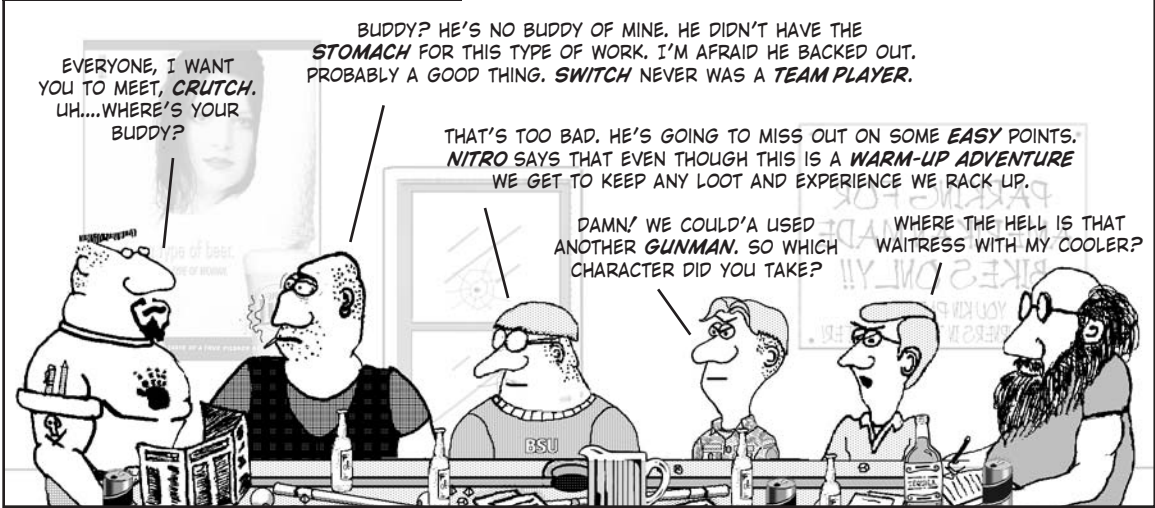
YOU BACKIN' OUT **SWITCH?** C'MON,
DON'T LEAVE ME HANGIN' LIKE THIS.

LET ME
SEE ONE
OF THOSE.





A FEW MINUTES LATER....



MEANWHILE, IN THE MEN'S RESTROOM...

HELLO? **CRIME BUSTERS?** IS IT TRUE YOU PAY A **500 DOLLAR** REWARD FOR THWARTING A CRIME? UH HUH....**YEAH....YEAH??**
FRICKIN' A!!

OKAY, SWEETHEART, LISTEN UP. THERE ARE THESE GUYS, AND THEY'RE PLANNING....



HOOTY PATOOTY!! WHERE THE HELL DID YOU FIND THIS JOINT? THIS IS ONE **SWEET BANK**. ARE THESE PLANS ACCURATE? **CRIMINEY!** NO ALARM SYSTEM? NO **TIME-LOCK?** ONLY **TWO** TELLER STATIONS? THIS PLACE IS JUST **SCREAMIN'** TO BE HIT. WHAT'S THE PLAN?

THE PLAN IS SIMPLE. WE GET IN - GET OUT IN THE SHORTEST AMOUNT OF TIME POSSIBLE. I FIGURE TWO TELLERS, MAYBE TWO GUARDS AND ONE OR TWO MANAGER TYPES STAND BETWEEN **US** AND THE MONEY.

WE'RE GONNA HIT THIS PLACE DURING BUSINESS HOURS? WHAT THE HELL FOR?

I WAS WONDERING THE SAME THING.

MONTY THINKS IT'S WORTH THE RISK.



WHY? COZ' DURING THE DAY **85%** OF THE **MALE POPULATION** OF **DESERT GORGE** ARE DEEP IN THE **SILVER EAGLE MINE** EARNING THEIR WAGES. THAT MEANS **NITRO** HAS TO ROLL ON **POSSE FORMATION TABLE C!!** THE **BEST** THEY CAN DO ON FORMING A POSSE IS **FIVE MEN**. EVEN THEN IT'S GONNA TAKE **1 D30** MINUTES FOR THEM TO DO SO. THERE'S ALSO THE **SLIGHT CHANCE** WE'LL MANAGE TO GET THE **UPPER HAND** IN THE BANK **BEFORE** THEY CLOSE THAT **SAFE**.

I NEVER HEARD ANYONE USING **ALGEBRA** TO PLAN A BANK JOB. WHAT ABOUT CROWD CONTROL? YOU GOT **THAT** FIGURED IN? CUSTOMERS ARE UNPREDICTABLE. I KNOW A GUY DOING TWENTY-FIVE TO LIFE 'COS SOME **OLD LADY** FREAKED OUT ON HIM DURING A JOB. SHE DISTRACTED HIM **JUST** LONG ENOUGH FOR THE COPS TO SHOW.

ACCORDING TO THE RULES WE CAN EXPECT **1D10** CUSTOMERS.

THIS GUY REALLY SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING.

YEAH, HE'S AN **EXCELLENT** PLAYER.

WAS THAT A TOURNAMENT LEVEL GAME?



DID SOMEONE SAY SOMETHING ABOUT A **POSSE** **DESERT GORGE?** WHERE THE HELL IS THAT?

IT'S A **TYPE TWO TOWN** ABOUT FOUR HEXES SOUTH WEST OF **EL PASO**.

EL PASO, EHP? I SEE, SO WE'RE GONNA LAY LOW IN **MEXICO** AFTERWARDS TIL THINGS COOL OFF?

MEXICO? ARE YOU **NUTS?** WITH **PANCHO VILLA** AND THE **SUNSHINE BOYS** RAISING HELL IN THEIR **WAR WAGONS?** BESIDES **AZTEC-HIGHWAY MEN** ARE SWARMING ALONG THE **RIO GRANDE** JUST LOOKING FOR VICTIMS.

FOUR HEXES? HOW FAR IS THAT? I NEVER DID GET A HANDLE ON THE **METRIC SYSTEM**.

A LITTLE **RUSTY** ON OUR **CATTLEPUNK** ARE WE?

METRIC SYSTEM? THAT'S PRETTY FUNNY. I'LL HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT ONE.

ON AN **OVERLAND MAP** EACH HEX IS **25 MILES**.



A FEW MINUTES LATER....

PANCHO WHO? AZTECS? I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH THOSE GANGS. WHAT ARE THEY? **TAGGERS?**

YOU'RE NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE **WILD WILD HACK** SUPPLEMENT TO **CATTLEPUNK?** IT'S **ALTERNATIVE HISTORY!**

HISTORY? SORRY, I DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL IN THE 8TH GRADE.

NEWBIE ALERT!

OKAY, AS YOU ARE SITTING IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM PLANNING THE BANK ROBBERY, YOU **SUDDENLY** HEAR THE DISTINCT SOUND OF ABOUT A **DOZEN** PAIR OF **SPURS** JINGLING OUTSIDE IN THE HALLWAY. THEY GET LOUDER AND LOUDER UNTIL THEY SUDDENLY **SILENCE** JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

I **READY** MY **TOMAHAWK** AND MOVE JUST BEHIND THE DOOR. IF SOMEONE ENTERS THE ROOM, THEY'LL GET A **NASTY** SURPRISE.

I **DRAW** MY **SABER** AND LIGHT A **CIGAR** WHILE I TURN IN MY SEAT SO I'M FACING THE DOOR.

I TAKE A DRINK FROM MY **HIP FLASK** AND DRAW MY **DERRINGER!**

READYING MY **MATCHED** SHOTGUNS HERE.

????!!

OKAY, CAN WE **STOP** RIGHT THERE? I'M A BIT CONFUSED. IS THIS SOME KIND'A **DRILL** OR **EXERCISE?**

DRILL? THIS IS THE **REAL THING** MAN! YOU BETTER **FILL** YOUR HAND AND TAKE COVER. I GOT A FEELING WE'RE ABOUT TO HAVE COMPANY.

THE **DEPUTY** GAVE US A FUNNY LOOK WHEN WE CAME INTO TOWN.

YOU HEAR A CREAKING FLOOR BOARD IN THE HALLWAY JUST OUTSIDE YOUR ROOM. THEN YOU HEAR SOMEONE ATTEMPTING TO TURN THE LOCKED DOOR KNOB. **GORDO**, YOUR CHARACTER THINKS HE HEARS **HUSHED WHISPERS**.

JUST SO YA KNOW, **JERRY GARCIA** HAS **BOTH** SPLATTER GUNS AIMED DEAD CENTER ON THE DOOR. I PITY THE FIRST MAN WHO TRIES TO COME THROUGH THAT DOOR.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO **JERIMIAH?**

WHOA, SIMMER DOWN, **HOMBRE!** LET'S NOT BE **TRIGGER HAPPY!**

ME DO?

OH MAN, IT'S 'BOUT TO HIT THE **FAN!** GET READY, EVERYONE!

JUST WATCH MY BACK, **ENGLISH** AND WE **MAY** GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE!

YOUR ACTION?

CRUTCH? IS SOMETHING WRONG? YOU SUDDENLY SEEM LOST.

I WAS WITH YA UP TO A FEW MOMENTS AGO. I MEAN, SURE, YOU GUYS WERE TALKING FUNNY BUT I THINK I WAS GETTIN' THE GIST OF IT. BUT NOW..... IT SEEMS LIKE EVERYONE HAS **LINES** TO A **PLAY** OR SOMETHING - 'CEPT FOR ME.

GOOD LORD! ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY YOU'VE **NEVER** ROLE-PLAYED BEFORE?

LINES TO A PLAY? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

HA! I WAS RIGHT. **NEWBIE ALERT!!**

IT'S YOUR **FIRST** TIME?

????!!

ROLE-PLAY? WHEN I WAS IN THE **JOINT** THE **SHRINK** USED TO MAKE US DO SOMETHING CALLED **ROLE-REVERSAL!** YOU MEAN LIKE THAT?

NO! IT'S **NOTHING** LIKE THAT. WE'RE PLAYING A **ROLE-PLAYING GAME** HERE. WHAT THE HELL DID YOU **THINK** WE WERE DOING?

A **ROLE-PLAYING GAME?** HELL, I'VE HEARD ABOUT THOSE THINGS. AREN'T THEY SUPPOSED TO BE **EVIL** OR SOMETHING?

TALK NICE TO THE MAN, **STEVIL.** -GULP-

UH OH!

CRUTCH, I THINK THERE'S BEEN SOME KIND OF MISTAKE. WE'VE BEEN PLAYING A GAME. JUST WHAT DID YOU THINK WE WERE DOING?

THIS IS ALL SOME KIND OF KID'S GAME? I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE PLANNING A BANK HEIST!

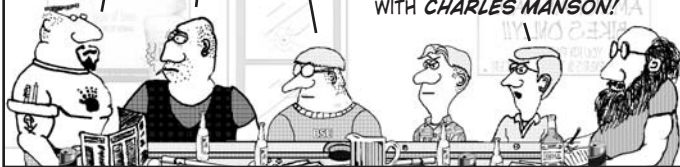
KID'S GAME? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! HAVE YOU SEEN THE BASIC RULE BOOK?? WE'RE TALKING AT LEAST A HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL WRITING.

GREAT! WE'VE BEEN PLAYIN' WITH CHARLES MANSON!

Y..Y..YOU THOUGHT THIS WAS REAL!!

GEE, THIS IS CERTAINLY AWKWARD! I APOLOGIZE MISTER CRUTCH, SIR, FOR WASTING YOUR TIME. I HAD NO IDEA. HOW 'BOUT WE BUY YOU A DRINK AND CHALK IT UP AS A MISUNDERSTANDING?

COURSE, YOU'RE WELCOME TO PLAY WITH US BUT I KNOW YOU PROBABLY GOT THINGS TO DO.



AN HOUR LATER....

WHO ME? NAAAAAA, I GOT NOTHING TO DO. I GUESS I CAN HANG A FEW AND SEE WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.

OKAY AS JERIMIAH AND SLY FOX COME OUT OF THE BACK OF THE BANK, SHOTS RING OUT. LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT A HERO TRYING TO SAVE THE DAY. THE BLACKSMITH HAS TAKEN UP A FIRING POSITION BEHIND HIS FORGE WITH A SPRINGFIELD FIFTY-EIGHT. FORTUNATELY HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A GOOD SHOT. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO.

YOU WANT TO PLAY? WITH US?

I'D KINDA LIKE TO SEE HOW THINGS TURN OUT.

CRIPES!! I SAY WE SHOOT OUR WAY OUT OF THIS. WHAT ABOUT YOU, AMIGO?

BEATS THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE! LET'S GO FOR IT!



A FEW MINUTES LATER....

THAT ALL YOU GOT MISTER TNT?? HUH? I SHOVE MY HOSTAGE IN THE BACK OF THE STAGE COACH AND THEN DUMP ENGLISH DAN'S BODY - BEING CAREFUL TO RETRIEVE THE KEY TO THE STRONG BOX. THEN I'LL PUT SOME FIRE ON THOSE REIGNS AND GET OUT OF DODGE!!

HE...HE SHOT ME IN THE FACE!! DID YOU SEE THAT?

YOU SURE ARE HOT ON THOSE DICE, CRUTCH!

UH, EXCUSE ME, CRUTCH. BUT DID YOU FORGET ABOUT ME? I'M LYING WOUNDED NEAR THE WELL!

'FRAID NOT. HE LOCKED ME IN THE VAULT, REMEMBER?

ME AND THE DICE ALWAYS DID GET ALONG.

WELL, IT'S NOT AS BAD AS WHAT HE DID TO COLONEL MONTY.

SHOOKA SHOOKA



HUH? OH YEAH. SORRY, *SLY FOX*, ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT YOU. I SINK A FEW *SLUGS* IN YOUR *NOGGIN* TO PUT YOU OUT OF YOUR MISERY BEFORE I *RIDE OFF!*

??!!! BUT...BUT, I SEWED YOUR WOUNDS. WE WERE *TIGHT*.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I DROVE *FORTY-FIVE FREAKIN' MILES* FOR THIS!

SORRY *SLY*, BUT WE WEREN'T *THAT TIGHT*.

SERVES YOU RIGHT FOR OFFERING TO HELP HIM CURE MY *SCALP!*

YOU GUYS HEAR *SIRENS?*

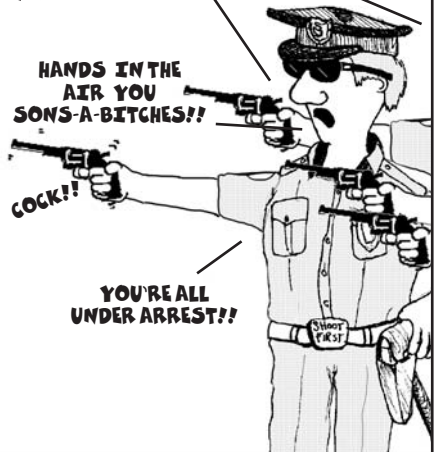


FREEZE!!

HANDS IN THE AIR YOU *SONS-A-BITCHES!!*

COCK!!

YOU'RE ALL UNDER ARREST!!



A SHORT WHILE LATER ACROSS TOWN....

"WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM TO BRING YOU THIS *SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN!!* MUNCIE POLICE HAVE JUST ANNOUNCED THEY HAVE ARRESTED *SIX INDIVIDUALS* WHO WERE APPARENTLY PLANNING A *DARING BANK ROBBERY*. *NILES NASH* IS ON THE SCENE WITH THIS LATE BREAKING STORY."

"THANKS, CINDY! THIS IS INDEED A BIZARRE STORY! OUR OLD FRIEND, *PETE ASHTON*, A LOCAL BUSINESSMAN, SEEMS TO BE IN THE *MIDDLE* OF THIS AMAZING..."

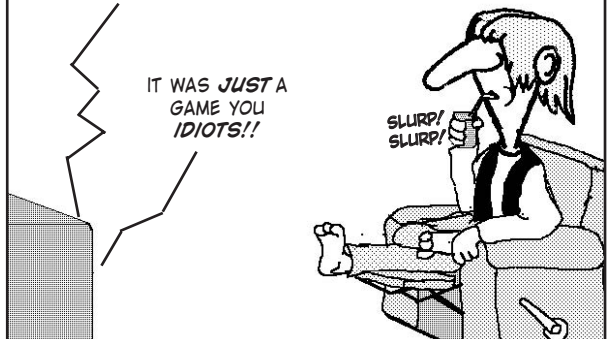
GIT THAT DAMN THING OUTTA MY FACE!



"WHOAH-HOO! MR. ASHTON, BEING LED AWAY IN HANDCUFFS. APPARENTLY NOT A *HAPPY CAMPER* AT THIS MOMENT. I'M TOLD BY *OFFICER DOUG TANDY* THAT NOTES WERE FOUND ON *MR. ASHTON* INDICATING THE GANG WAS PLANNING ON "*WASTING*" ALL WITNESSES. IT CERTAINLY SENDS CHILLS DOWN THE SPINE TO THINK OF WHAT *MAY* HAVE BEEN IF NOT FOR AN ANONYMOUS TIP FROM A CONCERNED CITIZEN."

IT WAS *JUST* A GAME YOU *IDIOTS!!*

SLURP!
SLURP!



OFFICER TANDY, WE JUST HEARD ONE OF THE SUSPECTS YELL OUT, "IT WAS *JUST* A GAME!" TO THE CAMERAS. THEY ALMOST SEEM ANNOYED THAT THEIR PLANS WERE INTERRUPTED.

MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT THEY DIDN'T GIVE ME CAUSE TO SHOOT THEM WHERE THEY STOOD.



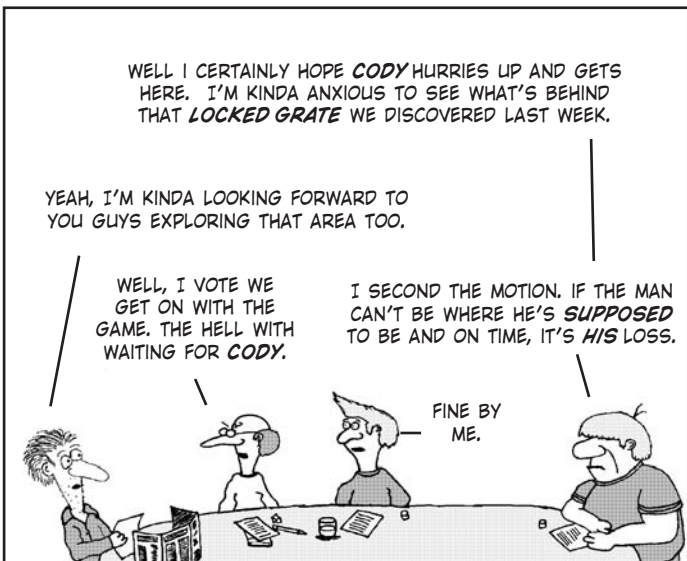
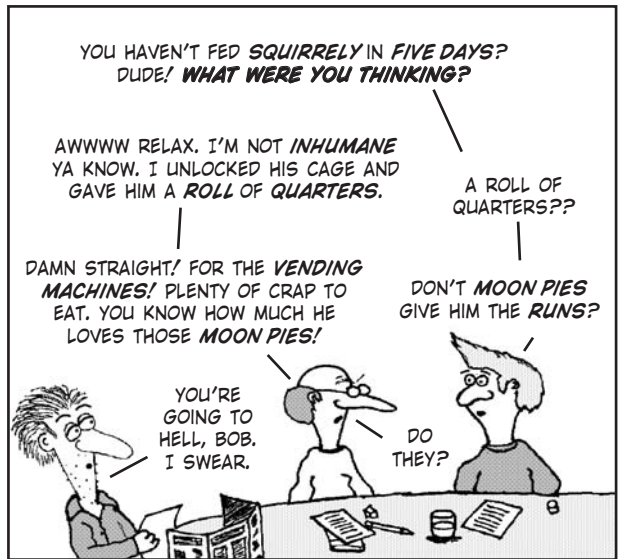
"THE SUSPECTS WILL BE ARRAIGNED *MONDAY MORNING* WHEN MOST LIKELY *BAIL* WILL BE SET. BUT, FROM WHAT WE'VE SEEN AND HEARD HERE TODAY, I'D SAY IT'S VERY UNLIKELY ANY *JUDGE* WOULD LET SUCH *WANTON-CRIMINALS* OUT TO ROAM OUR STREETS."

AHHH GEEZE! LOOKS LIKE I MISSED ONE *HELL* OF AN ADVENTURE.



Murder Most Foul

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



AN HOUR LATER...

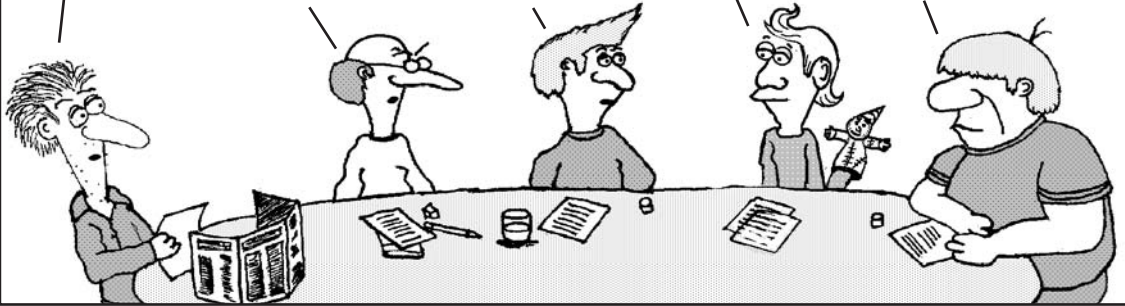
HEY CODY, GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT. WE WENT AHEAD AND **STARTED** WITHOUT YOU. WE'LL CATCH YOU UP ON WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOUR CHARACTER **THUS FAR** AND THEN WE CAN CONTINUE.

BY THE WAY YOU OWE ME 500 GOLD! I KICKED IN TO HAVE YOUR ASS **RAISED!**

AND I KICKED IN 350 G.P.S.

RAISED???!

YEAH, YOU **ANNOYED** THE HELL OUT OF SOME **GATE GUARD**. IT GOT **UGLY!**



AM I TO UNDERSTAND **RAPHAEL HOOLISAR** WAS SLAIN BY A COMMON **CIVIL SERVANT**?

ACTUALLY THE GUARD **SUCKER PUNCHED** YOU AND FOLLOWED UP WITH A SWIFT **GROIN KICK**.

THEN HE SHOVED YOU IN THE **MOAT**. IT WAS THE **GATORS** THAT DID YOU IN.



I'M SORRY, **CODY!** I WAS ACTUALLY RUNNING **RAPHAEL** FOR YOU. I TRIED KEEPING YOU OUT OF **HARM'S WAY** UNTIL YOU GOT HERE BUT THINGS GOT OUT OF HAND.

YOU WOULD'VE BEEN OKAY. IT WAS **HODGY** WHO REALLY GOT YOU IN TROUBLE. HE WOULDN'T KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT.

BY THE WAY, YOU CAN PUT AWAY THE HAND PUPPET. **HODGY** DIDN'T PULL THROUGH.



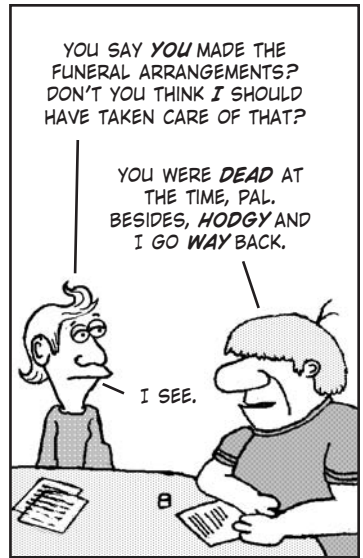
MY **DEAR FRIEND**, **HODGY BIGGINS** IS NO MORE? PRAY TELL MY COMRADES. WHAT **MISFORTUNE** BEFELL HIM?

HE ROLLED A **FUMBLE** WHILE ATTEMPTING A **HAMSTRING ATTACK** ON THE GUARD.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY, 'LET THE DICE FALL WHERE THEY MAY'?

IT'S MY FAULT, I SUPPOSE. I WAS **TOO EASY** ON THE LITTLE FELLOW. I TRIED MAKING HIM PICK A **WEAPON PROFICIENCY**. BUT HE ALWAYS ASSUMED I'D BE THERE IN A **PINCH**.





TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY, THE **BARKEEP** REMEMBERS SEEING **HODGY** AND A **LARGE MAN** IN ROBES HEADING DOWN THE ALLEY BEHIND HIS BAR. HE THOUGHT IT **ODD** AT THE TIME BECAUSE **EVERYONE** ELSE IN THE CITY WAS HEADING FOR THE **MOAT** TO SEE YOUR BODY BEING TORN APART BY THE **GATORS**.

SO....IN **STARK CONTRADICTION** TO YOUR STORY, GENTLEMEN, IT **APPEARS** **HODGY** SURVIVED THE **GUARD** ENCOUNTER. NOW I WONDER.....**WHO** COULD THE **LARGE MAN** IN ROBES BE?

THAT BARKEEP IS WHACKED! BESIDES, **NPC'S** ALL LOOK ALIKE.

YEAH, SURELY HE'S MISTAKEN.

LOOKS LIKE A **DEAD END!**



GENTLEMEN, IF YOU'LL INDULGE ME, I'D LIKE TO **EXHUME** THE BODY OF **HODGY BIGGINS!**

OH FOR THE LOVE OF PETE! NOW HE THINKS HE'S **QUINCY!**

WHY CAN'T YOU JUST LET THE **DEAD** REST IN PEACE? THIS IS AN **OUTRAGE!**

YOU WANNA DIG UP **HODGY?**



A WEE BIT LATER...

THE **NECROMANCER** WAVES HIS HANDS OVER **HODGY'S** BODY AND WHISPERS YOUR **QUESTION** IN HIS EAR REPEATEDLY, "WHO HAS SENT THOU TO THE GRAVE? WHO HAS SENT THOU TO THE GRAVE?" THERE IS AN EERIE SILENCE AND THEN A VOICE MUTTERS, "T'WAS **TEFLON BILLY** WHO HASTENED MY DEPARTURE FROM THE WORLD OF THE LIVING!"

TEFLON BILLY? WHEN? HOW?

THIS WOULD EXPLAIN THE **FLURRY** OF STICKY NOTES GOING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN BRIAN AND B.A. WHILE WE WERE GETTING **RAPHAEL** RAISED.

HODGY'S OBVIOUSLY LYING.



SIR, I **ACCUSE** YOU OF **MURDER MOST FOUL!!**

I'VE BEEN **SET UP** I TELL YA!

I'M GOING TO SEE TO IT THAT **JUSTICE** IS DONE. I'M OFF TO SEE THE **MAGISTRATE!**

BUT....BUT....BUT....



AFTER THE GAME...

WELL, THAT'S THAT. I GUESS I'LL GO DOWN THE **WEIRD PETE'S** ON MONDAY AND PUT THE "**PLAYER WANTED**" NOTICE BACK UP ON THE **BULLETIN BOARD**.

IT HAD TO BE DONE, B.A.! THE MAN WAS ABOUT TO **FINK** ON A **COMRADE-IN-ARMS!**

I DON'T KNOW WHY HE TOOK IT SO **HARD!**

AS SOON AS I'M DONE **FEEDING** THE **GATORS** I GET RID OF HIS CLOTHES AND ANY OTHER EVIDENCE.

THEN I'M GOING AFTER THAT **NECROMANCER!**



A Pressing Engagement

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

OKAY **WISE GUYS**, BANGING ON THE **GONG** FOR SEVERAL ROUNDS FINALLY ATTRACTS SOME **WANDERING MONSTERS**. A **SEEPING GELATINOUS SEEKER** FLOWS UNDER THE **SOUTHERN DOOR** AND COMES AT YOU.



PRESSING ENGAGEMENT? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT? WE GOT A GAME GOING HERE.



IF YOU **MUST** KNOW, I HAPPEN TO HAVE A **HOT DATE** TONIGHT.



A DATE? OH FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, DON'T TELL ME WE GOTTA GO THROUGH **THAT** AGAIN. YOU DIDN'T SLIP BACK INTO **LA-LA LAND*** AGAIN DID YOU?



* See KODT#6: **The Great Intervention**: The group confronts Brian about his imaginary girlfriend, Alexis.

URSULA? WHAT KIND OF NAME IS THAT? SOUNDS MADE UP. DID YOU MAKE UP ANOTHER **DAY DREAM BELIEVER** TO KEEP YOU COMPANY?

YOU'LL HAVE TO TRY BETTER THAN THAT, BOBBY-BOY. I'M TELLIN YA, IT'S FOR **REAL** THIS TIME. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO RUFFLE MY FEATHERS. I'M TOO HAPPY.

LET ME GUESS, SHE'S A **RUSSIAN TEST PILOT** RIGHT? OR IS SHE **EX-KGB**?

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. SHE WORKS AT A **BOWLING ALLEY!**

BOWLING ALLEY? THAT SOUNDS HALFWAY LEGIT! YOU DON'T THINK HE'S ON THE **UP-AND-UP** DO YOU?

HELL IF I KNOW! WE ALL BUT MENTIONED **ALEXIS** AND **NOTHING!!** NO REACTION!

OKAY, I'LL BITE! WHAT'S THE CATCH? YOU GONNA TELL US SHE'S IN THE **WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM** OR SOMETHING? THE **MOB** HAS A CONTRACT ON HER ASS? SHE KNOWS WHO KILLED **JFK**? C'MON, WHICH IS IT?

BOB, WILL YOU **PLEASE** LAY OFF OF HIM. IF HE WANTS YOU TO KNOW HE'LL TELL YOU.

YEAH AND DOES SHE KNOW ABOUT **ALEXIS**? YOU EXPECTING A **CAT FIGHT**?

TALK ABOUT LIVING IN **LA-LA LAND!** SHEESH! I ALREADY TOLD YOU, SHE'S JUST A WONDERFUL PERSON WHO HAPPENED TO CATCH MY EYE. WHY DON'T YOU GUYS **GET A LIFE** AND STOP OBSESSING ON MINE - HUH?

ALEXIS? TEH HEH, C'MON DAVE, YOU KNOW SHE WAS **NEVER REAL**.

THIS ISN'T SOME KIND OF **DEFENSE MECHANISM** KICKIN' IN 'CUZ **SARA** GOT HERSELF A **BOYFRIEND** IS IT? YOU DID TAKE IT KINDA HARD.

WHAT ARE YOU BABBLING ABOUT? **SARA**? WHAT IN THE WORLD WOULD SHE HAVE TO DO WITH ME HAVING A DATE?

YOU KNOW BRIAN, IF YOU EVER NEED A FRIEND TO TALK TO....**B.A.** HAS MONDAYS AND TUESDAYS OFF.

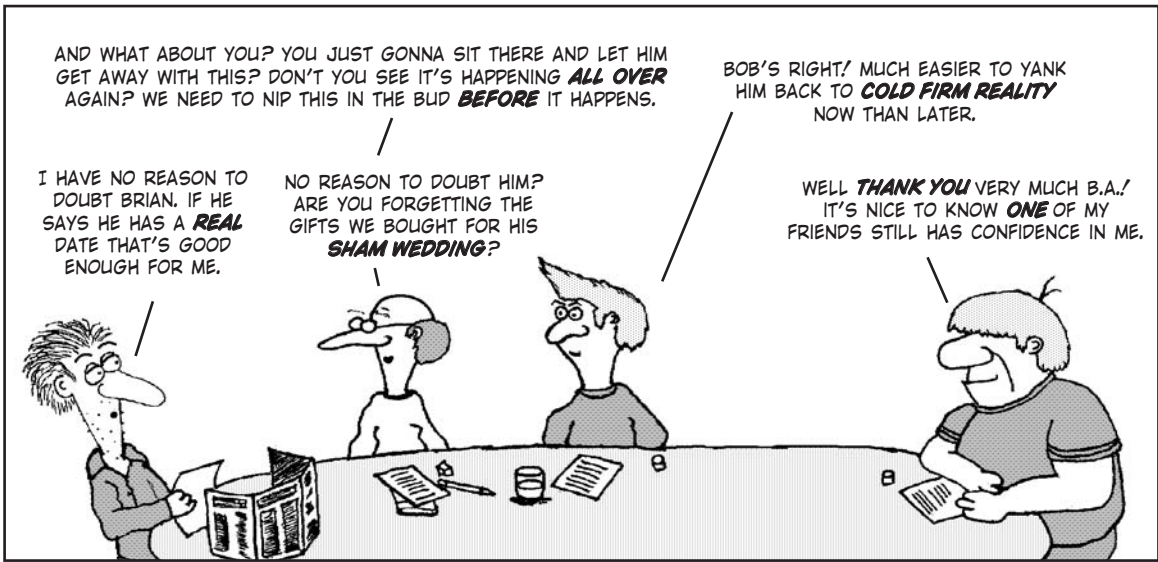
GUYS IT'S JUST A **DATE!** IT'S NOT A **BIG DEAL!**

NO OFFENSE BRIAN, BUT IF YOU RECALL THE WHOLE **ALEXIS-THING** STARTED WITH JUST A **'DATE'**, REMEMBER? YOU TOLD US YOU PACKED A PICNIC LUNCH AND CRUISED AROUND IN HER RESTORED **GRUMMAN HU-16 ALBATROSS!**

YEAH, YOU CLAIMED YOU STRAYED INTO **CUBAN AIRSPACE** ALMOST CAUSING AN INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT!

SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND OUR CONCERN.

I THOUGHT WE WEREN'T GOING TO BRING THAT UP EVER AGAIN...



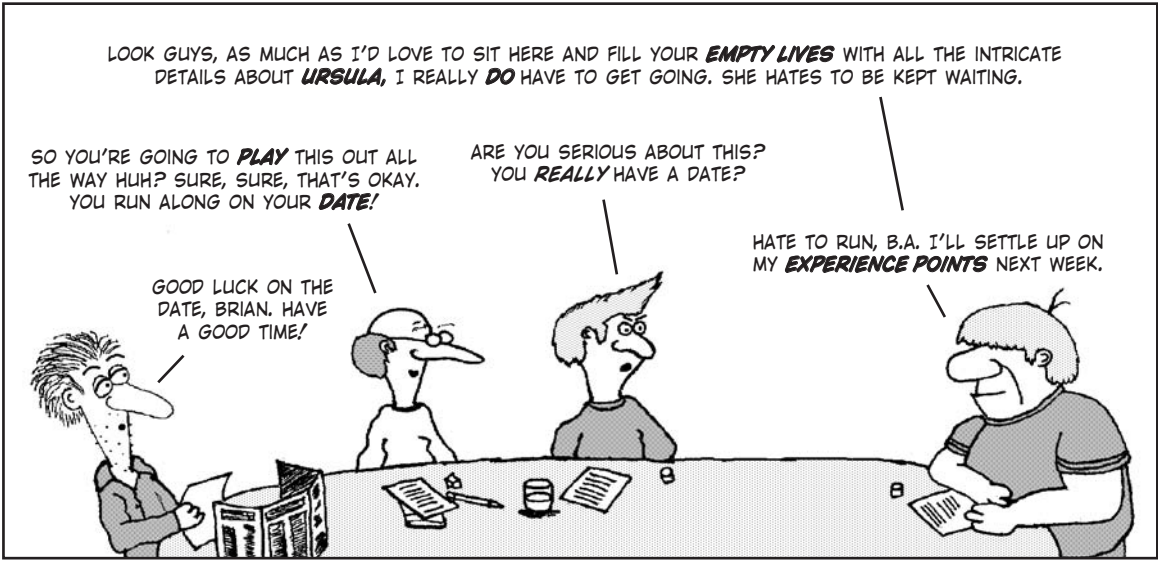
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU JUST GONNA SIT THERE AND LET HIM GET AWAY WITH THIS? DON'T YOU SEE IT'S HAPPENING **ALL OVER** AGAIN? WE NEED TO NIP THIS IN THE BUD **BEFORE** IT HAPPENS.

BOB'S RIGHT! MUCH EASIER TO YANK HIM BACK TO **COLD FIRM REALITY** NOW THAN LATER.

I HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT BRIAN. IF HE SAYS HE HAS A **REAL** DATE THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.

NO REASON TO DOUBT HIM? ARE YOU FORGETTING THE GIFTS WE BOUGHT FOR HIS **SHAM WEDDING?**

WELL **THANK YOU** VERY MUCH B.A.! IT'S NICE TO KNOW **ONE** OF MY FRIENDS STILL HAS CONFIDENCE IN ME.



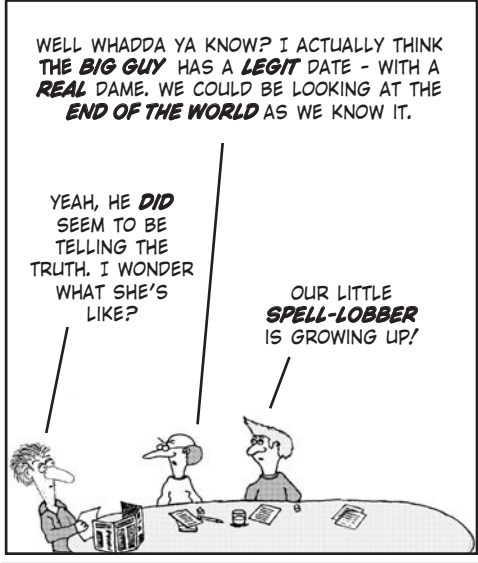
LOOK GUYS, AS MUCH AS I'D LOVE TO SIT HERE AND FILL YOUR **EMPTY LIVES** WITH ALL THE INTRICATE DETAILS ABOUT **URSULA**, I REALLY **DO** HAVE TO GET GOING. SHE HATES TO BE KEPT WAITING.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO **PLAY** THIS OUT ALL THE WAY HUH? SURE, SURE, THAT'S OKAY. YOU RUN ALONG ON YOUR **DATE!**

ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT THIS? YOU **REALLY** HAVE A DATE?

HATE TO RUN, B.A. I'LL SETTLE UP ON MY **EXPERIENCE POINTS** NEXT WEEK.

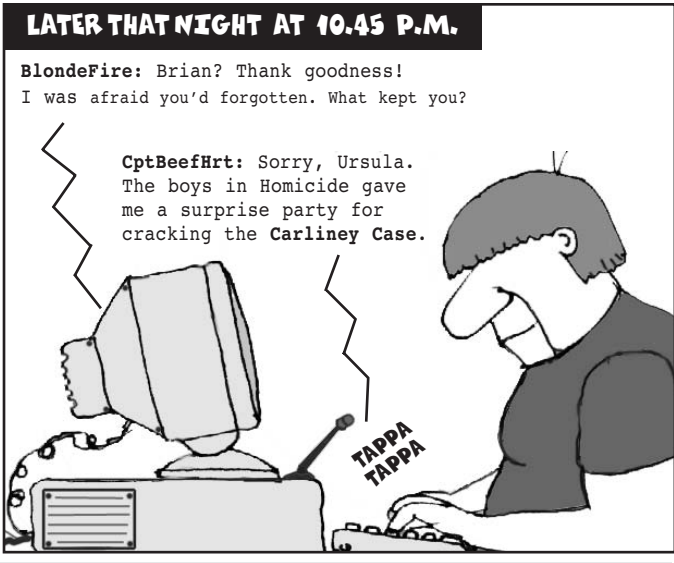
GOOD LUCK ON THE DATE, BRIAN. HAVE A GOOD TIME!



WELL WHADDA YA KNOW? I ACTUALLY THINK **THE BIG GUY** HAS A **LEGIT** DATE - WITH A **REAL DAME**. WE COULD BE LOOKING AT THE **END OF THE WORLD** AS WE KNOW IT.

YEAH, HE **DID** SEEM TO BE TELLING THE TRUTH. I WONDER WHAT SHE'S LIKE?

OUR LITTLE **SPELL-LOBBER** IS GROWING UP!



LATER THAT NIGHT AT 10.45 P.M.

BlondeFire: Brian? Thank goodness! I was afraid you'd forgotten. What kept you?

CptBeefHrt: Sorry, Ursula. The boys in Homicide gave me a surprise party for cracking the Carliney Case.

TAPPA TAPPA

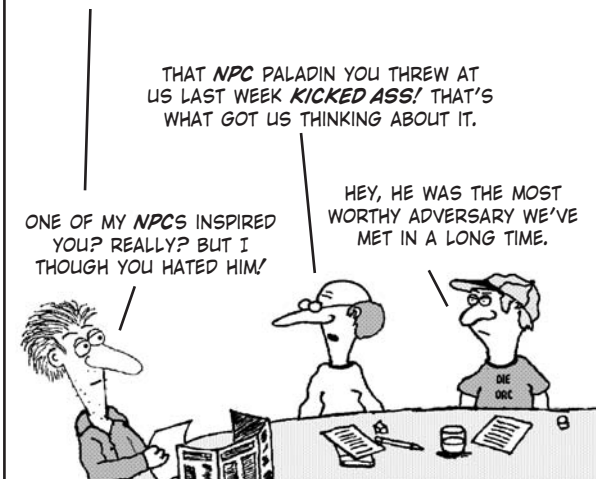
NOW LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, YOU AND DAVE WANT TO PLAY *PALADINS*? IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE?



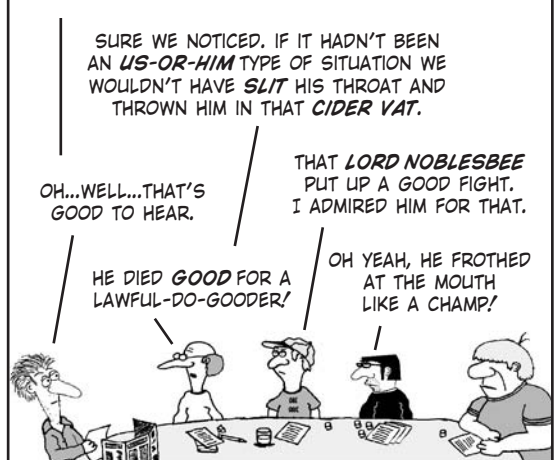
YOU WANT TO PLAY A PAIR OF BROTHERS WHO JUST HAPPEN TO BE *PALADINS*? SHYA'RIGHT! I DON'T THINK SO.



WADDA YA MEAN I GAVE YOU THE IDEA??



GEE, THANKS! YOU KNOW, I DID PUT A LOT OF WORK INTO THAT GUY. I DIDN'T EVEN THINK YOU NOTICED.



FOR A **LAWFUL DO-GOODER**? THERE, YA SEEP? THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. DO YOU HAVE **ANY** IDEA HOW RESTRICTIVE PLAYING A **PALADIN** IS? HUH? YOU'VE GOT TO PLAY **LAWFUL GOOD** RIGHT DOWN THE LINE. YOU CAN'T WAIVER EITHER. YOU CROSS THAT LINE YOU SUFFER SOME PRETTY **STIFF** PENALTIES. I DON'T THINK YOU GUYS ARE UP TO IT.

WHAT A LOUSY ATTITUDE! I THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT **ROLE PLAYING** WAS ALL ABOUT - TAKING ON NEW CHALLENGES AND STRETCHING.

YEAH, AT LEAST GIVE US A CHANCE TO TRY.

YOU'RE SERIOUS AREN'T YOU? YOU REALLY WANT TO TAKE A CRACK AT IT?

DO ORCS STINK? YOU BET WE'RE SERIOUS.

I SUPPOSE IT **WOULD** ENCOURAGE YOU GUYS TO **ROLE-PLAY** MORE.

YEA, YEA, WHAT-EVER. SO DO WE HAVE A GAME?

WELL....OKAY, I'LL LET YOU GUYS RUN **PALADINS**. BUT I'M WARNING YOU - I'M GOING TO BE **TOUGH!** YOU GUYS FAIL TO ADHERE TO YOUR ALIGNMENTS OR THE **CLASS RESTRICTIONS** FOR BEING A **PALADIN** AND YOU GET **SLAM DUNKED!** UNDERSTAND?

NO SWEAT! PLAYING A **DO-GOODER** IS A **NO-BRAINER**. NOTHING LIKE PLAYING A **DWARVEN THIEF**, NOW **THAT'S** TOUGH TO PULL OFF.

WE'RE GONNA BE THE BEST **DAMN PALADINS** YOU'VE EVER SEEN!

THIS SHOULD BE INTERESTING. I WONDER HOW YOUR **WERE-BADGER ASSASSIN** IS GOING TO REACT TO THESE GUYS?

NO-BRAINER? I GUESS WE'LL SEE.

I GUESS WE'LL SEE.

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY, LET'S SEE WHAT YOU GUYS CAME UP.....**GAAAAA!!! FERP! DING!! GURP!!**

HUH? WHAT DID WE TELL YOU? DO THEY **KICK ASS** OR WHAT?

WHAT THE HELL?

ROLLING UP THESE CHARACTERS WAS LIKE **CHURNING BUTTER!!** REAL SMOOTH!

WELL IT CERTAINLY LOOKS LIKE **B.A.** IS DULY IMPRESSED. LAST TIME I SAW HIM LOOK LIKE THAT IS WHEN HE **CHOKED ON A RITZ CRACKER** IN THE **THIRD GRADE**.

WHAT'S WRONG **B.A.**?

I'M SORRY BOB. I HATE TO LET YOU DOWN. IT'S OBVIOUS YOU'VE PUT A **TON** OF WORK INTO THIS CHARACTER AND HIS BACKGROUND. BUT...UH...I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK YOU TO ROLL UP ANOTHER ONE.

I FIGURED YOU'D HAVE A COW OVER MY STATS. THAT'S WHY WE **VIDEO TAPED** OUR DICE ROLLS. IT'S ALL ON TAPE - I ROLLED **FIVE CONSECUTIVE 18s!!** THE CAMERA DOESN'T LIE!

UH, JUST SO YOU KNOW, I FILMED THE WHOLE THING WITH A **SHAKEY-CAM** TECHNIQUE. THAT WILL EXPLAIN THE STRANGE **DEAD STATIC** INTERVALS BETWEEN EACH ROLL.

HAVE A LITTLE TROUBLE LOOPING YOUR FOOTAGE DAVE?



NO, THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU ROLLING FIVE **18s**. THE PROBLEM IS YOU'RE TRYING TO RUN A...A....

YOU ROLLED FIVE 18s??!!!

LIKE I SAID, IT'S ALL ON TAPE. IF YOU LISTEN YOU'LL HEAR MY OWN CRIES OF SURPRISE AND JOY EACH TIME THOSE DICE COME UP ALL SIXES.

THERE'S ONE CLOSE UP I'M PARTICULARLY PROUD OF. YOU CAN SEE THE DICE REFLECTING IN BOB'S GLASSES AS HE SHEDS A TEAR.



OH, I'D LOVE TO SEE **THAT** VIDEO TAPE, BUT IT WON'T BE NECESSARY. THE **MAIN** PROBLEM I HAVE WITH YOUR CHARACTER IS THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO RUN A **THIEF-PALADIN!** NO WAY IN HELL I'M ALLOWING SUCH NONSENSE IN **MY** CAMPAIGN.

WHY NOT? DIDN'T YOU READ MY BACKGROUND NOTES? HE **ONLY** STEALS FROM **EVIL CHARACTERS** AND **INSTITUTIONS**. THE **TEMPLE OF ODIN** STILL GETS IT'S **TEN PERCENT** SO WHAT THE HELL DO THEY CARE?

HE'S TORN BETWEEN HIS TWO PROFESSIONS.

WHAT AN **AWESOME** COMBINATION.



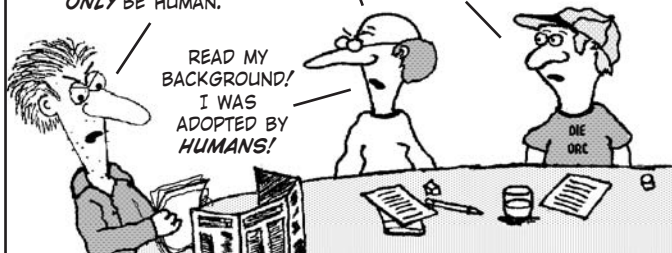
THIS IS THE **MOST** RIDICULOUS CHARACTER, I'VE EVER HEARD OF. AND WHAT THE HELL IS **THIS??!!!** SAYS HERE YOU'RE A **DWARF??**

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT? I **ALWAYS** PLAY DWARVES. YOU KNOW I HAVE A **KNACK** FOR IT.

WELL FOR **ONE** THING A **PALADIN** CAN **ONLY** BE HUMAN.

UH OH, I TOLD YOU HE'D CATCH THAT.

READ MY BACKGROUND! I WAS ADOPTED BY **HUMANS!**



I THOUGHT YOU AND DAVE WANTED TO PLAY **BROTHERS!**

WELL, DAVE'S PARENTS ARE THE ONES WHO ADOPTED ME. I WAS RAISED AS A HUMAN. TAUGHT THEIR WAYS. IN FACT THEY **NEVER** TOLD ME I WAS A **DWARF**.

I SEE, AND THIS IS SUPPOSED TO **ALLOW** YOU TO BECOME A **PALADIN**. IS THAT IT?

YEAH, HE'S A **DWARF** BUT HE **THINKS** HE'S HUMAN.

KEWL, HUH?



DAVE, I DON'T HAVE **TOO MUCH** PROBLEM WITH **SIR STOMP-EVIL**, UH, EXCEPT FOR HIS NAME, BUT I'M GOING TO INSIST BOB ROLL UP A NEW CHARACTER. I'M NOT GOING TO ALLOW A **DWARVEN THIEF-PALADIN**. AND THAT'S FINAL.

WELL THIS CERTAINLY BLOWS. IF I CAN'T BE A DWARF **AND** A PALADIN THEN FORGET IT. I'LL JUST KEEP RUNNING MY OLD CHARACTER, **TOMMY CUTPURSE**.

SO MUCH FOR THE **BROTHERS KARAMAZOV!** OH WELL, I GUESS I CAN STILL PLAY MY **PALADIN** BUT IT WON'T BE AS MUCH FUN.

THE PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS A LONELY ONE. OR SO I'VE HEARD.

NOW CAN WE START THE GAME?

WELL, I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT.



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

OKAY BRI, REACH IN YOUR **BAG OF HEFTY CAPACITY** AND PULL OUT THAT CRAP WE TOOK OFF **LORD NOBLEBEE'S** DEAD BODY.

YOU GOT IT, DUDE! TOO BAD MOST OF THE **MAGIC ITEMS** WE TOOK FROM HIM CAN ONLY BE USED BY **LAWFUL GOOD** CHARACTERS. I WOULD HAVE **LOVED** TO HAVE USED THOSE **BRACERS OF JUDGEMENT!**

DON'T FORGET - YOU'VE GOT TO **PAY** THE PARTY THE **FULL G.P.** VALUE FOR EACH ITEM YOU TAKE.

FORGET THE **BRACERS!** I GOT MY EYE ON THAT **+7 HOLY REAVER!!**

THAT **SWORD** IS **SWEET!** GLAD TO SEE **SOMEBODY** WILL GET SOME USE OUT OF IT.

????!!!



AM I TO UNDERSTAND YOU COOKED UP THIS **ENTIRE** PALADIN-NONSENSE JUST SO YOU'D BE ABLE TO USE THE **ALIGNMENT-RESTRICTED** MAGIC ITEMS YOU PLUCKED FROM A **DEAD MAN'S** BODY?

IT WAS THE LURE OF THAT **PLUS SEVEN** SWORD THAT GOT TO US.

I'M TAKING THE **HOLY SYMBOL OF PROTECTION** TOO. OH, OH, AND THE **BOOTS OF WATER WALKING**.

WHAT THE HELL WAS ALL THAT CRAP ABOUT ADMIRING MY **NPC?** HUH?

DON'T FORGET THE **SHIELD OF COMMAND-WEATHER**. MIGHT COME IN HANDY.

YOU SHOULD TAKE THE **HANDKERCHIEF OF HEALING** TOO!

A DIVERSION.



A FEW SECONDS LATER..

DON'T LET HIM RATTLE YOU, DUDE! HE'S JUST BLOWIN' STEAM. B.A.'S SORE 'CUZ HE LOADED DOWN LORD NOBLESBEE WITH **ALL** THAT MAGIC, THINKING HE WAS GOING TO DO US IN. HE HEDGED HIS BET BY MAKING SURE NONE OF US COULD USE THE STUFF SHOULD IT FALL IN OUR HANDS. HE'LL COOL OFF IN A FEW MOMENTS AND COME BACK TO THE TABLE.

BUT HE THREATENED TO "GET" ME. WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

JUST WATCH OUT FOR **GRUDGE-MONSTERS!** IT'S YOUR **CHARACTER** HE HAS A BEEF WITH.

I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT. B.A. IS ASTHMATIC. IF HE MAKES A MOVE FOR YOU JUST **RUN!** HE'LL GET WINDED AFTER A FEW BLOCKS AND GIVE UP.

SHHHH! HERE HE COMES.



A WEE BIT LATER.....

FOR THE **LAST** TIME, DAVE, JUST BECAUSE YOU YELL, "**BLASPHEMER**" BEFORE SLAYING SOMEBODY, IT DOESN'T **FREE** YOU FROM THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE **PALADIN CLASS**. KEEP IT UP AND YOU'LL **LOSE** YOUR **PALADIN STATUS** ALTOGETHER. DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

THE **VILE TEMPTRESS** DESERVED WHAT SHE GOT. SHE KNEW DAMN WELL **SIR STOMP-EVIL** HAS TAKEN A VOW OF CHASTITY.

BUT I'VE BEEN CHARGED WITH DESTROYING **EVIL!** THAT **SERVING WENCH** TRIED TO SEDUCE ME.

HERE, HERE, HE WAS **WELL** WITHIN HIS RIGHTS TO WASTE THE TROLLOP!

I'M GOING TO TRY AND PICK A FEW POCKETS WHILE WE'RE HERE.



I'M GOING TO RULE THAT YOU HAVE TO **SACRIFICE** YOUR MOST **CHERISHED POSSESSION** TO **ODIN**. UNTIL YOU DO, **ALL** THE POWERS AND ABILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH BEING A **PALADIN** ARE SUSPENDED.

QUIT STALLING, DAVE!! CHOOSE YOUR **MOST** CHERISHED **POSSESSION** AND THROW IT ON THE **ALTAR** IN **ODIN'S TEMPLE!**

WHY ARE YOU PUNISHING ME? I'M JUST PLAYING MY CHARACTER. READ MY BACKGROUND, IT **CLEARLY** STATES MY CHARACTER IS **MISGUIDED!** HE MEANS WELL.

MY **MOST** CHERISHED POSSESSION? WELL...UH...I SUPPOSE **THAT** WOULD BE **SILK SCARF** MY POOR DEAR MOTHER TIED AROUND MY NECK THE DAY I TOOK MY VOWS AND LEFT HOME.

YOU'RE BEING **COMPLETELY** UNFAIR ABOUT THIS.

YEAH, **RIGHT!** C'MON HERO, WE ALL KNOW YOU VALUE YOUR **WORD** ABOVE ALL ELSE.



MY SWORD? SORRY B.A., BUT *SIR STOMP-EVIL* ISN'T AS SUPERFICIAL AS ALL THAT. THE SENTIMENTAL VALUE HE HAS FOR THAT *SCARF* FAR OUTWEIGHS ANY HOLD SOME STUPID SWORD WOULD HAVE ON HIM.

THAT SOUNDS MIGHTY FUNNY COMING FROM *MR. BIG ASS SWORD MAN!* GO AHEAD AND SCRATCH OFF THAT SWORD AND LET'S GET ON WITH THE GAME.

YOU GOT *WAX* IN YOUR EARS? I'M TELLIN' YA MY *CHARACTER'S* MOST PRIZED POSSESSION IS THE *SCARF*. IT'S CALLED *ROLE PLAYING* YOU KNOW. YOU CAN'T TELL *ME* HOW MY CHARACTER FEELS.

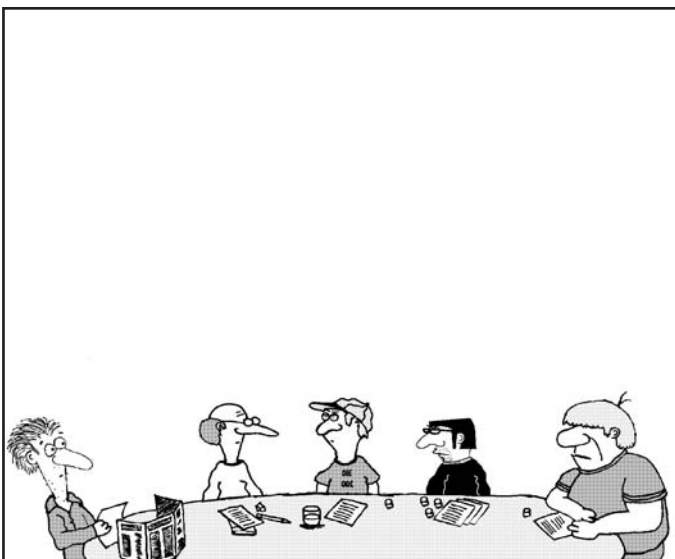
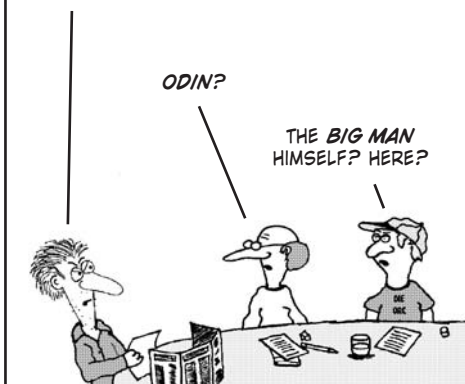
LET THE MAN PLAY HIS CHARACTER.
HERE, HERE.



OKAY, I'LL MAKE IT *EASY* FOR YOU. *ODIN* HIMSELF STEPS DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS AND *SNATCHES* THE SWORD FROM YOUR HANDS. HE *DISASSOCIATES* HIMSELF WITH YOU. YOU JUST LOST *PALADIN* STATUS BUDDY!

ODIN?

THE *BIG MAN* HIMSELF? HERE?



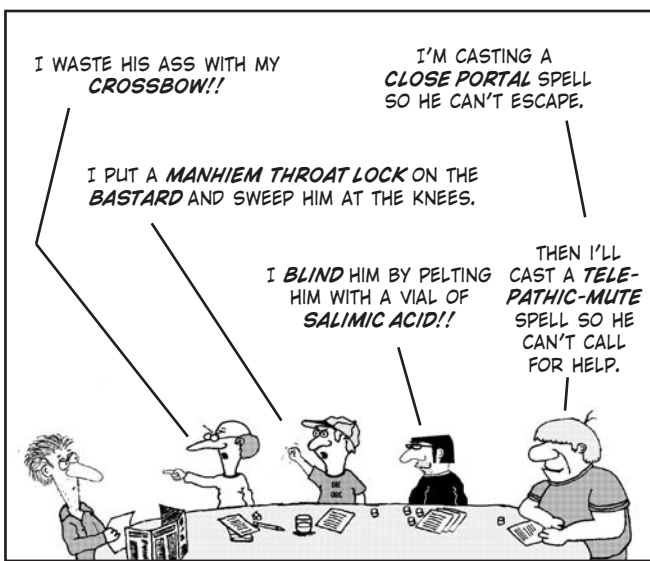
I WASTE HIS ASS WITH MY *CROSSBOW!!*

I'M CASTING A *CLOSE PORTAL SPELL* SO HE CAN'T ESCAPE.

I PUT A *MANHIEM THROAT LOCK* ON THE *BASTARD* AND SWEEP HIM AT THE KNEES.

I *BLIND* HIM BY PELTING HIM WITH A VIAL OF *SALIMIC ACID!!*

THEN I'LL CAST A *TELE-PATHIC-MUTE* SPELL SO HE CAN'T CALL FOR HELP.



I DON'T THINK HE'S COMING BACK!

DON'T FORGET, I CALLED *DIBS* ON *ODIN'S GOLDEN LAUREL!!*

I'M TELLIN' YA, THIS WAS THE *BEST ADVENTURE* EVER.



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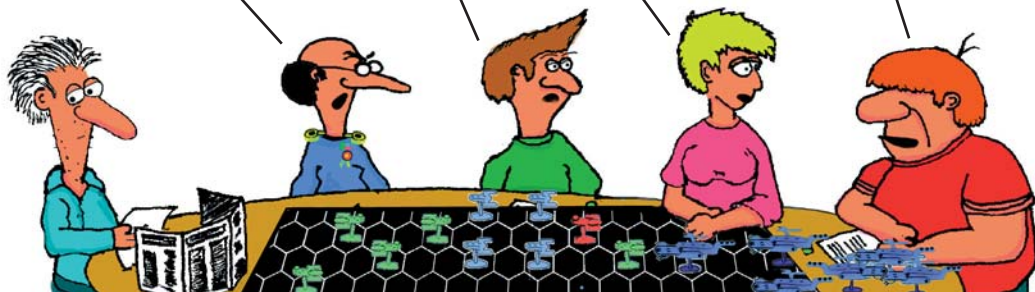
NOBLE ARMADA

DAMMIT BRIAN! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PICKING ON ME FOR? I THOUGHT WE AGREED UPON A **CEASE FIRE**?

YOU HAD A **PEACE INITIATIVE** WITH **BOB**? I THOUGHT **WE** HAD AN AGREEMENT?

SO DID I. DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE BEING A BIT UNDERHANDED, BRIAN?

SORRY GUYS, I JUST NEEDED TO GET IN CLOSER WITH MY **DREADNOUGHTS** SO MY **MESON SPINAL CANNONS** WOULD BE IN RANGE WITH YOUR FLEETS. THE ONLY **PEACE** I WAS TALKIN ABOUT WAS THE **REST-IN-PEACE** VARIETY.





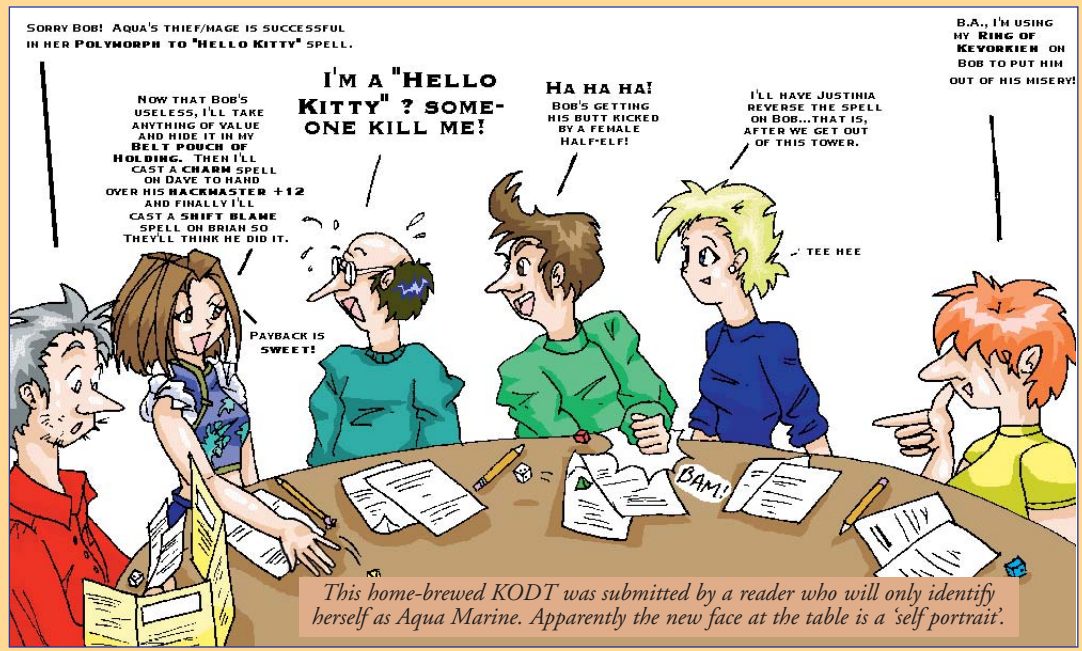
YOU'VE KILLED YOUR 27TH MESSENGER. THE BODIES ARE STARTING TO PILE UP. BY NOW IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT THEY HAVE IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR YOU!

DOES ANOTHER ONE SHOW UP? THIS IS ~~XP~~ HEAVEN!

GUYS, MAYBE WE REALLY SHOULD LET ONE LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO HEAR WHAT IT HAS TO SAY.

COME TO PAPA!

This panel is from a five page home-brewed strip, Ken Albery II recently submitted. We liked it so much, we've decided to run the full strip in Tales from the Vault II which will be released in August. Sara? Is that you?



SORRY BOB! AQUA'S THIEF/MAGE IS SUCCESSFUL IN HER POLYMORPH TO "HELLO KITTY" SPELL.

NOW THAT BOB'S USELESS, I'LL TAKE ANYTHING OF VALUE AND HIDE IT IN MY BELT POUCH OF HOLDING. THEN I'LL CAST A CHARM SPELL ON DAVE TO HAND OVER HIS BACKMASTER +12 AND FINALLY I'LL CAST A SHIFT BLAME SPELL ON BRIAN SO THEY'LL THINK HE DID IT.

I'M A "HELLO KITTY"? SOME-ONE KILL ME!

HA HA HA! BOB'S GETTING HIS BUTT KICKED BY A FEMALE HALP!EL!

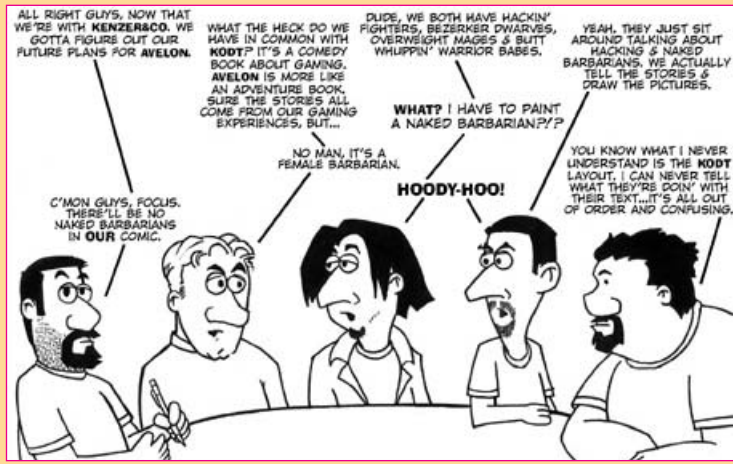
I'LL HAVE JUSTINIA REVERSE THE SPELL ON BOB... THAT IS, AFTER WE GET OUT OF THIS TOWER.

B.A., I'M USING MY RING OF KEYBIEK ON BOB TO PUT HIM OUT OF HIS MISERY!

PAYBACK IS SWEET!

TEE HEE

This home-brewed KODT was submitted by a reader who will only identify herself as Aqua Marine. Apparently the new face at the table is a 'self portrait'.



ALL RIGHT GUYS, NOW THAT WE'RE WITH KENZERCO, WE GOTTA FIGURE OUT OUR FUTURE PLANS FOR AVELON.

WHAT THE HECK DO WE HAVE IN COMMON WITH KODT? IT'S A COMEDY BOOK ABOUT GAMING. AVELON IS MORE LIKE AN ADVENTURE BOOK. SURE THE STORIES ALL COME FROM OUR GAMING EXPERIENCES, BUT...

DUDE, WE BOTH HAVE HACKIN' FIGHTERS, BEZERKER DWARVES, OVERWEIGHT MAGES & BUTT WHUPPIN' WARRIOR BABES.

YEAH, THEY JUST SIT AROUND TALKING ABOUT HACKING & NAKED BARBARIANS. WE ACTUALLY TELL THE STORIES & DRAW THE PICTURES.

WHAT? I HAVE TO PAINT A NAKED BARBARIAN???

NO MAN, IT'S A FEMALE BARBARIAN.

HOODY-HOO!

YOU KNOW WHAT I NEVER UNDERSTAND IS THE KODT LAYOUT, I CAN NEVER TELL WHAT THEY'RE DOIN' WITH THEIR TEXT...IT'S ALL OUT OF ORDER AND CONFUSING.

C'MON GUYS, FOCUS. THERE'LL BE NO NAKED BARBARIANS IN OUR COMIC.

HEY HACK-JOCKIES! SEND YOUR HOME-BREWED'S TO: KODT-KNOCK OFFS 1003 MONROE PIKE, MARION IN 46953. OR E-MAIL THEM TO JOLLYRB@AOL.COM



The folks at Drawbridge Studios (The talent behind Avelon) turned in this panel. Hey, I think I know these guys!

MONTY PYTHON AND THE Holy GRAIL

The fun
time just

“Taunt You a



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- Contains marquee cards like **Tim the Knight and the Trojan Rabbit**
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“I don’t want to talk to you no more, you empty-headed animal fo
your general direction! Your mother was a hamster and your fat
Now go and get your own deck or I shall.

Taunt You a Second

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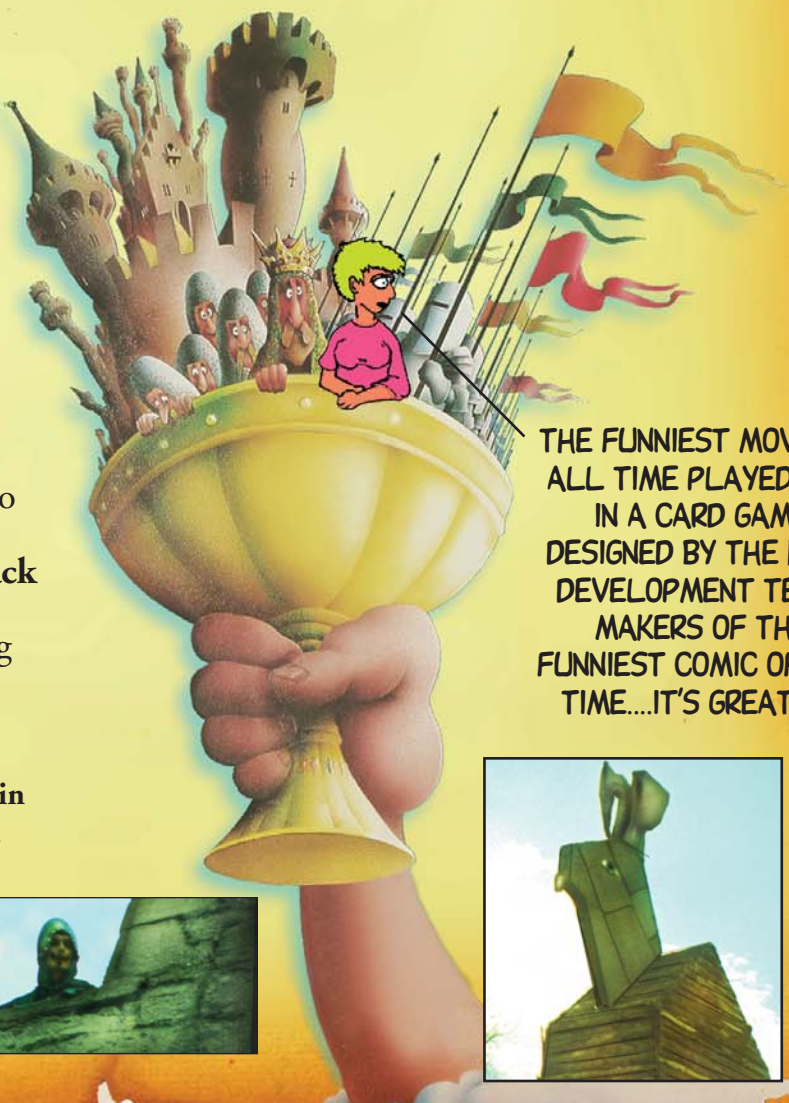
niest card game of all
t got more outrageous!



Second Time!"

ET ON
TH IT!!

arity for all cards!
e movie!
ible card game and also
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e Enchanter, the Black
e between Bob Herzog



THE FUNNIEST MOVIE OF
ALL TIME PLAYED OUT
IN A CARD GAME
DESIGNED BY THE KODT
DEVELOPMENT TEAM,
MAKERS OF THE
FUNNIEST COMIC OF ALL
TIME...IT'S GREAT!!!!

od trough wiper! I fart in
ner smelt of elderberries.
...

Time.



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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: NUCLEAR WAR

Company: Flying Buffalo
Rule Tweak: Mandatory Sound Effects
Mechanic: Dave Kenzer

Nuclear War is a classic card game that's been around for nearly thirty years now and has spawned several expansion sets. What could be more fun than nuking your enemy out of existence? The perfect game to invite your politically correct, 'peace-luvin' pansy-ass friends play. Here's a kewl house rule that will help spice up your games and make things more entertaining - Mandatory Sound Effects. Whenever players launch a missile they must make rumbling and whooshing noises (simulating the roar of the missile's engines) as they physically pick up the missile and 'fly' it toward it's target. Upon impact, players must also make an 'explosion' noise. If a player forgets to do a sound effects during an attack and another player calls him on it - the missile is an automatic dud. You can expand this rule to include the play of propoganda cards, requiring dramatic readings or the acting out of whatever is on the card. At GenCon '97 we forced Rick Loomis (Mr. Flying Buffalo, himself) to sit down and play a game using 'our' rules. He still beat us. ☐



Game: EMPIRE BUILDER

Company: MayFair Games
Rule Tweak: Exploding Cargo
Mechanics: Phil Harmon & Tom Briner

We came up with this rule because our games of Empire Builder typically ran 2+ hours. Okay, that's not entirely true. We just thought exploding cargo would be cool. Before beginning a game, take a dry erase marker and mark one of the cards with a big x. Shuffle it into the deck and begin play as normal. The player unfortunate enough to draw the 'X' has been contracted by the government to haul a shipment of nuclear warheads to Phoenix. The trick is they only have 1d6 turns to deliver the cargo before it detonates. If the player makes it to Phoenix before the warheads go off he automatically wins the game. If he doesn't make it, his train is vaporized along with any laid track with in 2 hexes in all direction from ground zero. We had a 'white slavery' rule (picking up tourists and selling them on the Mexican border) but we didn't think you'd run it. ☐

Game: KILL DOCTOR LUCKY

Company: Cheap Ass Games
Rule Tweak: Player Assassin
Mechanic: Jolly Blackburn

Here's a fun house-rule you may want to try when playing a full game of *Kill Doctor Lucky* (7+ players). Before beginning play, take 8 regular playing cards (making sure one of them is the Jack of Spades) and deal out one card to each player. Players keep their cards secret til the end of the game. The player who has the Jack of Spades is the Player Assassin. It seems Dr. Lucky was suspicious of his house guests and hired an Assassin to kill his would-be murderers before they kill him.

The Assassin wins the game by taking out (killing) three other players. Players are killed exactly the same way Dr. Lucky is killed (and foiled the same way - with failure cards). Note that Dr. Lucky does not count as a 'witness' and that an Assassin can kill another player if in view of Dr. Lucky. (But not any other player(s)). I've found this rule adds a lot of tension to the game because suddenly players have to watch their backs as they stalk Dr. Lucky. ☐

Game: AXIS & ALLIES

Company: Milton Bradley
Rule Tweak: Alternative Geopolitical World
Mechanics: Brent Pal

A&A is one of my favorite games but after years of playing the outcome of any given game has become somewhat predictable. Why not mix things up? One night we decided to handle start up in a fashion similar to *RISK*. Each player was given the same amount of starting money and then asked to randomly draw a starting country. Building Costs for each player is determined by the country he drew. After purchasing starting units, each player placed one unit on any unoccupied space on the board and then the next player, and so on, until every space on the board was occupied. Players then were given twenty minutes to fortify their positions, trade/swap positions with other players and make troop movements. When this was done each player placed a token on the map space in which their capital was located. The result was one of the best games of A&A I've played in a long time. Russian tanks on the East coast of America?

Game: NIGHTMARE MONOPOLY

Company: Parker Brothers
Rule Tweak: Might makes Right
Mechanics: Phil Harmon

We were bored one night and came up with this 'house' version of *Monopoly*. Each player rolls up a 1st level AD&D character. Put away the standard playing tokens that come with the game and pull out your favorite lead gaming figure. The new rule is simple. If you land on the same space as another player you can engage him in combat (per the AD&D rules). If you win you get to take his stuff. Being sent to Jail automatically heals all damage. If you are slain you go directly to Jail where you are resurrected. You may want to ask a non-partial to watch and make rule calls but basically this is a cut-throat version of the old family classic. ☐

Borne

By David S. Kenzer



Part IV: Axes and Anvils

in Blood

*"He's Worthless and Weak,
Chintzy and Cheap,
Alas! He is still my Brother."*

*Ode to a Brother
by Steelhead Ironheart*

CLANG, clang. Yet again, the hammer fell onto the glowing orange edge of the plow. CLANG, clang. Dillan bent over his anvil, plow gripped in one powerful hand, and hammer in the other. Soot and grime covered his face, arms and torso with a thin dark layer. Like tiny rivers of tan running through a darkened landscape, small droplets of sweat cleared the dirt from Dillan's face and arms. Still bent over, Dillan looked up, "Bromide!" Bromide's eyes leaped from the edge of the plow to his father's face.

Bromide for the first time noticed the beads of sweat streaking down Dillan's cheeks and into his beard. A particularly large drop ran along Dillan's upper lip. It dripped all the way down his left braid and collected at the tip.

"Look at me when I'm talking to you, dwarf!" Bromide's gaze snapped from the ends of his father's beard to his penetrating pupils. Bromide loved his father more than any other being on Tellene or in the heavens, but he hated looking into Dillan's eyes. It was like looking into the eyes of a god that could peel away your inner core and see the barest truths of your soul. And it frightened Bromide. "I'll finish from here, you get over to Stump's and buy another 80 pounds of iron. And get some copper ore, too."

Without hesitation Bromide turned to leave. Once he had turned fully, his angry scowl betrayed his seemingly instant obedience. *Damn! Stump lives all the way in stinkin' Zanazi, at least a two day trip*, he thought angrily, *I guess I won't be exploring with little Toes tomorrow*. In the doorway he saw Steelhead, who had been heading into the smithy, twirl on a heel and face back out the way he came. It looked to Bromide like Steelhead was biting his lower lip. *Probably repressing a grin, the cur*.

"And take your youngest brother with you." Dillan commanded. Bromide could only see Steelhead's backside, but he thought he noticed Steelhead's frame deflate slightly with an exhale of dejection. Almost imperceptibly there followed a sharp nod of Steelhead's head, probably accompanied by a silently mouthed cuss. Now it was Bromide's turn to crack a smile.

"That's what I get for going anywhere near the smithy," Steelhead emphasized the word smithy by kicking the dirt ahead of him.

"What in the nine HELLS are you complaining about?" asked Bromide rhetorically. "You're the only one that never works the smith at all. Me and the rest of your brothers do all the work around here." Steelhead was the youngest of the eight Ironhearts - Dillan and his seven boys. Of course, by human standards none of them were really boys, they were old men; Bromide, the fourth son, was 81 years old and Steelhead was 48. But by dwarven standards they were both

young adults.

"Yeah, great life I have here. Because I'm too smart to melt away in little Gehenna there like the rest of you saps, I have to do all the CRAPPY chores," Steelhead retorted. No one understood why Dillan had not forced Steelhead to learn the trade like his other six sons. The oldest brothers speculated that it had to do with the death of their mother during Steelhead's birth, but no one could be certain. In any case, they were generally happy to spend proportionately less time doing menial work like carpentry, repairing the roof, cooking, or fetching supplies than would otherwise be required of them if Steelhead also worked the anvil.

"Just go get the mare and bring her around to the wagon," said Bromide as he headed for the water barrel. He rinsed the smith dirt and dried sweat from his face and arms then went into the tool shed and grabbed a large axe. *Just in case there are bandits on the road*, he thought. He tossed the axe under his side of the bench, while Steelhead loaded the last of the tools they were going to trade to Stump for the ore. Then the two packed some food and set off, Steelhead at the reins.

Bromide loved traveling. He just hated doing errands for his father. He would prefer to set out on his own for an explore rather than play go-between for two old dwarves. As the wagon left the environs of Melidu, Bromide imagined that the brothers were going on a quest for gold rather than materials for their father.

Steelhead broke the silence, "Hey brother, what's with the axe?"

Bromide's cheeks rounded in a cocky grin, "Ya just never know when you'll need a sharp weapon on the road."

Steelhead snorted and shook his head. "Expecting a wild pack of trees to waylay us on the King's Road, brother?"

"Ha, jest if you must, but you know I can swing an axe. I think a highwayman might now think again when faced with a stout dwarf brandishing an axe."

Steelhead looked skyward, "Lokalas! Am I the only of us seven born with a brain? I'll have to remember to flee the cart before you bury your backswing in my chest."

"Well, I guess you'd better hope we don't meet any bandits," said Bromide with a smile.

"If you accidentally hit me, you had better make sure it's a mortal wound, brother."

The two traveled that way, bickering mostly. Neither was really the other's favorite sibling; Steelhead was much closer to Chro, the sixth of the clan, while Bromide felt closer to his father than any of his brethren. Bromide's tepidness toward his brothers arose from their general distrust of him. None of the others, including Dillan, approved of his sneaking around with Toes, the village thief, and they made that fact painfully clear at meals and other gatherings. While Bromide proved to be an excellent blacksmith, he even meddled in the noble arts of weaponsmithing and armor making, and he could in fact swing an axe, he never excelled to his best potential. His family

blamed his underachieving on his practicing of the less honorable arts of sneaking and playing with mechanical locks and tumblers.

Bromide had always felt little understood by his family, even his father. Bromide believed that diverse training would give him the necessary skills to survive on his own, when he left Melidu. Dillan, a skilled warrior, though none had ever seen him wield a blade in anger, felt that Bromide should concentrate more on martial arts and smithing and less on "distractions." To some extent, Dillan was clearly correct. It had taken Bromide far longer to master weaponry relative to his other, even younger, siblings because Bromide practiced less. He had his other interests to hone.

Most definitely, Bromide felt his path was the wiser. Now, not only could he wield an axe as well or better than most, he could also hide. He could hide, sneak and survive when fighting was not the answer. And in the Vast Empire, it seemed to Bromide that direct physical force seldom proved the most prudent answer.

"Coming to our favorite ambush spot," announced Steelhead, his face giving way to a bearded grin. The two had often joked about setting off on their own and leaving Melidu. These small, unnamed woods afforded a perfect ambush spot to waylay passersby. Here the two dwarves would set up shop as mercenary bandits and waylay rich merchants and nobles. They talked of returning the stolen wealth to the local peasantry, then high-tailing it before the local lord sent out a force to reckon-with the menace. Deep down, Bromide knew he'd keep his share of the spoils for himself. After all, he was a peasant, too.

As the little wagon rattled into the grove, the temperature dropped noticeably. The shade of the trees and the cool breeze were a welcome change from the beating summer sun for both the dwarves and the old mare, which snorted her approval.

The pair nearly traveled half the length of the woods when a man stepped out onto the path about 30 yards distant. The man, dressed in leather hunting garb and carrying a knife at his belt and a bow across his back, pushed his cap up by the point in a relaxed manner, then raised his left hand, palm forward. He stood confidently, legs shoulder length apart.

"Son-of-a-pig, the bastard stole our idea," Steelhead reined-in the mare slightly, but let her walk toward the man.

Bromide turned to look at Steelhead, "Just keep talking, see how close we can get. He's likely to have cohorts in the brush. Maybe even in the trees. Look conversation-like," Bromide raised his brows and shook his head in an exaggerated manner.

Steelhead took the cue, he tilted his head back and guffawed loudly, "Good one, brother."

The man was now but a dozen paces away, "Ho there, good sir dwarves."

Steelhead shouted, "Ho! Ho there I say, mare! Dammit girl, WHOA!" He made an exaggerated movement like he was pulling on the reins, but he never pulled.

"My name is Alen, I lead the Company of the Wood. In the forest, this road is ours," Alen grabbed the mare's bridle and she stopped. "Now stand and deliver, we have you surrounded."

If he has no partners, he sure has a set of stones, thought Bromide, impressed so far.

"We're not rich merchants, we're two poor dwarves going to trade for some iron," said Bromide truthfully. He imagined burying his axe in Alen's skull. *It'd split like firewood on a chopping block.*

"Yes, all we have are half a dozen farming tools that we're delivering to Zanazi for trade," explained Steelhead. His palms were beginning to sweat. "We have no money."

"Then I guess the goods will have to do," Alen raised his left hand. An arrow whizzed out of the trees and landed with a loud "thunk" in the wagon, near the back. The head of the arrow was buried so deep in the wood it was no longer visible.

"That was just a warning, we'd rather not waste any arrows on the

likes of you," Then Alen stepped around the wagon and tried to peer at the contents from a distance. All he could see was a leather tarp covering something big and bulky. "You, driver. Show me," cautious, Alen did not want to move too close.

Steelhead pulled the tarp back to reveal the pile of tools, except for the part closest to him, where the tarp still covered. "All the way," the man stepped closer to peer over the edge of the wagon's side for a full view. As the tools came in view he gave a thumbs-up signal in the air. "Farm tools!" he shouted, presumably to the Company of the Wood.

We can't get robbed, the others would never let us live this down, Bromide's mind raced for a solution. He thought momentarily about his axe, but visions of his body riddled with arrows from the trees stayed his hand.

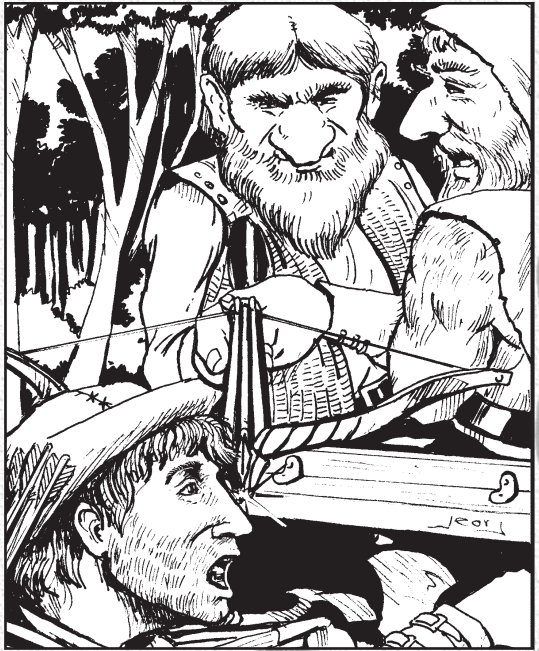
"There's also this, but it's heavy," said Steelhead, bending over the bench, with both hands in the back, just behind the driver seat.

Alen stepped forward, his mind conjuring images of coffers overflowing with gold. Steelhead stood up swiftly, pulling a loaded and fully cranked heavy crossbow with him and pointing it at Alen's head all in one motion. The point was a mere hand's length from Alen's temple. "Anybody even breathes and I scatter his brains on the road like pulp from a melon."

Bromide exhaled in absolute shock, his eyes wide and mouth agape. There was a murmur in the trees, and Bromide grabbed the reins. "Hang on! Ya, Ya!!" He slapped the mare into motion. The wagon lurched forward, but Steelhead held the crossbow steady, pointing it now squarely at Alen's chest. Bromide snapped the reins again with one hand, and reached for his axe with the other. The blood pumped in his temples and his heart beat so loudly in his breast that Bromide could hardly hear the sounds of the wagon creaking ahead.

A single arrow whizzed past Bromide. *They'll pay for that,* he thought, then said aloud, "Shoot the swine, brother!"

But Steelhead surprised Bromide again by tossing the crossbow in the back of the wagon. *Why the hell didn't he shoot him?* Bromide shot Steelhead an irritated glance as he handed him the reins and pulled up his axe. Red faced, he hopped over the bench into the wagon proper. *Rob the Ironhearts, will you? I'll cleave you in twain!* Bromide scrambled over the tools, hardly noticing them, and brought his axe back hoping to get one mighty chop at Alen before the wagon pulled away. But Alen was already running for the trees.



A volley of half a dozen arrows and bolts came *thunk, thunk, thwack* into the wagon proper. Bromide fell and rolled for cover along the wagon's left side. He scanned the trees for bandits, but he managed to spot only one. Perched on a wooden platform twenty feet overhead and off to the side, stood a scruffy man with a scar on his chin, clad in old leather. The man briefly made eye contact with Bromide. Grinning, he hurled a throwing axe directly at Bromide's head.

Bromide ducked under the wagon's edge. The axe hit the wagon's side with a loud whack, its blade buried so deep, it clove partially through the wood. Bromide grabbed the handle and yanked the hand axe free. It was of fairly decent quality, *I've gained a nice axe*, he thought with a smile.

Still sitting in the wagon, Bromide shouted, "Ha-HA!!!" and waved the axe at the scruffy man as the wagon rattled out of bow shot.

"Let's hope they don't have mounts," said Steelhead.

"Why didn't you shoot that cuss when you had him?" demanded Bromide.

"The crossbow's broken, you know that?"

"Broken! When I saw you pull it out of the back, I thought you must've fixed it," said Bromide. "Were you TRYING to get us killed?"

"Killed? I was trying to save yer miserable arse," retorted Steelhead. "You should be thanking me. Because of me we escaped a brigand ambush with just a broken heavy crossbow, a rickety wagon and an old mare."

"And this!" boasted Bromide, holding aloft his new hand axe. "You might say it was the brigands who were robbed!" They both had a hardy laugh at that, giggling away the effects of the adrenaline like a couple of schoolgirls.

Steelhead and Bromide had known Stump all of their lives. Like Dillan, Stump was an older dwarf. He worked the anvil as well, although unlike Dillan, Stump's expertise was in making armor not tools. Of course, "Stump" was only his Merchant's Tongue nickname. None of the brothers knew when or how Stump lost his left leg, but Dillan raised them to respect their elders and none dared ask and Stump never offered an explanation. So his missing leg, now replaced with a peg leg remained as deep a mystery as his origins and dwarven Truename.

Dillan and Stump went way back and seemed to share a bond of some sort, though the brothers and their siblings could only guess at its genesis. The prevailing theory was that the two apprenticed under the same smith in the Ka'Asas, then migrated together to settle in central Kalamar centuries ago. Stump was like an uncle to the Ironheart boys and was always happy to see them. And today was no exception.

Covered with sweat and grime, Stump emerged from his smithy to greet the young Ironhearts, "Welcome, boys. Bromide, Steelhead." He nodded at each and actually rapped Steelhead on the head with his knuckles as he spoke his name.

Stump invited the brothers into his house and they related their tale of the bandits. Steelhead tried to embellish his role, though Bromide managed to keep him honest whenever he strayed too far. Stump listened intently through the whole tale, never taking his eyes off of the speaker.

At the end they all had a good laugh and Stump finally commented on the tale, "I'd expect no less from an Ironheart, your father will be proud. You will of course take the northern route back, or skirt the woods."

"Yes sir," said Bromide. Both were so excited about their success that neither had really given much thought about the trip back.

"I'll instruct my servants to provide for your needs. Any requests for dinner?"

If he had not previously been thinking about the trip back, he was now. Bromide said, "Thank you sir, but we must respectfully decline and take your leave. We should set out again if we are to travel the

northern route and still return in time for father's needs to be met."

Stump stroked his beard thoughtfully, "I see. Well, the choice is yours, but I'll stable the mare and you may take my draft horse. He's fresh and in need of exercise."

Soon, the two were back on the road. "I could've used a soft bed. What in Tellene were you thinking?" Steelhead was quite irate.

"I was thinking that we aren't going down the northern route. It'd take another four days. It's way out of our way," Bromide explained.

"So, what do you care if we waste four days? At least we won't have to work. My arse is killing me. We need a break. Let's go back, it's not too late. We can spend some time in the pubs."

"While the pubs sounds sweet to my ears, thwarting the Company of the Wood sounds sweeter to my sense of fun and adventure," Bromide developed a sly grin. "We wait until darkness and slip past, right through their camp." Bromide actually planned to sneak into their camp and rob the scruffy grinning bastard that threw the axe at him. "No one travels the road at dusk, so they'll be preparing camp for the night. We can ride on through."

Steelhead's own sense of adventure overcame his sensibilities and he acquiesced. The two plotted for the next few hours until they were in sight of the woods. Then they pulled the wagon off the road and rested the horse. Bromide took the hammer and nails he borrowed from Stump and nailed some boards he took from a wood pile near the edge of Zanazi to the back of the wagon, creating a 30 inch high barricade of sorts.

When dusk came, Bromide climbed into the back of the wagon and Steelhead urged the horse into a walk. As they entered the woods it became considerably darker.

"Fools work," Steelhead complained, "what I wouldn't give for a nice hooded lantern. If this horse breaks an ankle, you can tell it to Stump."

"Shh!" Bromide put an index finger over his mouth.

The wagon creaked and groaned onward. As they reached the ambush spot, the sun fell completely and inky darkness rose up around them. Bromide could make out lights in the trees off to the right. Bromide wanted to tell Steelhead to stop the wagon so he could go pilfer a few purses and cut the scruffy man's throat, but truth be told, he was too scared. *What was I thinking! We escaped Galapiti once, why dice with Him a second time? And in the same day, to boot!*

Steelhead felt the same fear well up inside him and he urged the draft horse faster. A bird chirped somewhere above, and Steelhead suddenly stood and snapped the reins hard "Chya!!! Move boy, MOVE!"

Bromide also recognized the birdcall as a signal and he readied his new throwing axe. The two could hear some sort of commotion in the camp, followed by more torchlight. The lights were moving toward the road.

The wagon was now moving full speed. *Never catch us now*, thought Bromide. He scanned the trees for the sentry that tripped the alarm, but saw only darkness.

The torches accompanied by shouting bearers and others now reached the road ten feet behind where they had just passed. Bromide kept his eyes to the trees and soon he was rewarded. As the torchlight hit the foliage above the torchbearers, it revealed a guard platform as before, manned by a single sentinel.

Bromide stood, gained firm footing and heaved the hand axe at the sentry. He heard a sickening, crunching thud and a cry. The sentry fell from the platform. Bromide couldn't see him hit ground, but he heard it.

"Take your axe back ya dung heap! You need the practice more than I." Then both Ironhearts let out a round of raucous laughter that was heard throughout the wood. □

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Bones of Ruin

By Jolly R. Blackburn

Part II: Wolves and Old Men (continued)

Sav yawned and shook his head, shaking the morning dew from his hair. Shivering, he reached over to the small circle of rocks where a raging fire had burned brightly just hours before.

He felt for any signs of heat.

With shuddering teeth he threw back his blanket and struggled to put on his clothes. He stood to his feet and stretched, the gnawing pain in his gut reminding him of the hunger which had been demanding satisfaction for the last two days. Yawning, he gathered his blanket and walked toward the solitary thorn tree where he had expected to find his pony. He stopped dead in his tracks.

Dropping the blanket he quickly spun on his heels, scanning the horizon in all directions.

Gone! The sudden prospect of walking out of the desolate hill country caused him to panic. Racing to the thorn tree he searched for tracks. He was not a skilled tracker but in the moist loam of the P'Sapas, it didn't demand such skills. What had happened during the night was all too obvious and very unnerving.

Two sets of large human-like prints trailed off into the distance with the pony in tow. What was more alarming was that the large tracks were scattered all about the campsite. Glancing over to where he had lay sleeping he immediately detected the same tracks, the nearest of which was only scant inches from where he had been sleeping. A lump formed in the base of his throat.

He suddenly realized that along with his pony, his satchel and waterskin had also vanished.

Sinking to his knees in despair, he cradled his head in his hands.

The deep dread of walking out of the accursed country became too much to bear. He pondered the thought of pursuing the thieves, but quickly dismissed the notion. He wanted his pony and badly, but he did not want to meet up with the thieves. From the size of the tracks he was very certain they were not human. He looked down at a set of deep tracks before him and found himself studying them. One set was peculiar in that the left foot of its maker apparently had lost three toes.

He turned the dagger in the palm of his hand and resigned himself to reality. Retrieving the blanket, his only

remaining possession he set off toward the east, his stomach protesting in earnest.

After an hour or so, the sun had reached a sufficient height to begin to warm the barren hills.

The effort of climbing and maneuvering his way convinced him to drop the blanket and continue on without it. He hated himself for doing so, for he knew the bone-chilling damp would return that night and he would curse himself for not being stronger.

The strains of walking, however, and the greatness of his hunger demanded he handle the present. What he needed was food, and in any form it should present itself. The previous evening, he had expended a great amount of energy and effort digging for grub worms, but in vain.

Sav was beginning to wonder if his short, troubled life was destined to end right here, nothing left but a pile of bleached bones for the passer-by to wonder at. He had passed many such bone-piles over the past few days, unfortunates who had wandered too far and probably spent their last hours cursing their own stupidity. He was just breaking the crest of a large ridge when a chilling sound crescendoed throughout the hills.

Sav froze, the hairs on his neck standing on end. He stopped breathing and listened intently, but there was only a dead silence over which he could hear his own heart, pumping wildly in his chest. The sound which had startled him had been a shrill wailing, faintly woman-like. Yet he was quite sure that no human had made it.

After several moments, he cautiously continued. As he descended the other side of the ridge, he came to the edge of a deep ravine. He was just about to descend its bank when the sound again echoed across the hills. This time, it came from below him. Sinking to his knees he looked into the dark ravine below. As was common in the P'Sapas hill country, the higher hills were sparsely wooded, with only a few stubborn thorn trees clinging to the dead soil. In the deeper ravines and gullies, however, the soil was black and fertile. Small forests thrived here, thick and ominous. Peering into the web of foliage below, Sav could detect no sign of movement.

Again, the sound issued forth, but this time it was followed immediately by another from the far end of the

ravine. Sav began to sweat profusely as a chorus of wailing howls resounded from the ravine. He drew pale and felt his legs begin to tremble. The dagger quickly found its way to his hand, but was of little reassurance as he began to back away from the ravine's edge.

He had only crept back up the hill a few feet, when a dark form caught his eye. A large buck exploded from the wood's edge and landed on its forelegs, its mouth rimmed with froth and its eyes wide in terror. It struggled violently to regain its footing and frantically started up the steep bank of the ravine toward Sav. Sav noticed the buck's hind quarters were shattered, a mass of blood and severed flesh. The buck fought to climb the steep bank of the ravine, dragging itself with its front legs, its jaw agape in a silent-scream.

At that moment another larger form caught Sav's attention. A large gray and black creature had broken the edge of the foliage. With amazing speed for its bulk, it closed the distance with the buck and leaped heavily on the poor creature's back. Massive jaws closed around the deer's neck and in a savage instant, thrashed its neck about. In the span of a few seconds the buck collapsed in a dead heap.

Sav watched it all in terror. Frozen in his tracks he looked on with a stifled scream forming in his throat. He was suddenly snapped to his senses as the wolf arched its neck and emitted a long mournful howl. From the woods a dozen like responses rang out. It was too much, Sav screamed.

The startled wolf below snapped its attention toward him, its piercing blue eyes locking onto his. The wolf bared its fangs as it released the deer from its jaw.

It was the largest wolf Sav had ever seen or imagined. It was monstrously large, almost the size of a pony. He envisioned his dead corpse clenched in the large powerful jaws of the beast. Frozen in fear, he stared at the wolf as it raised its head and sniffed at the air. For several moments the two stared at each other, both motionless.

It was the wolf who broke the truce and began to move up the hillside, a low growl emitting from its gaping jaws. Sav watched in disbelief for several seconds, then jumped to his feet and ran.

Running like a crazed man, he dashed for the only semblance of cover in sight, a large jagged, sandstone boulder with a halo of thorn bushes growing about it. He could hear the heavy foot fall of the beast just yards behind him. He dared not look back, for he was afraid of what he'd see. The boulder, a good fifty yards away, became the focus for all of Sav's efforts.

Suddenly, he was thrown to the ground by a tremendous force from behind, his face thrust into the sandy-soil. At first, there was no pain, only the sense of being thrashed and pulled about violently. Then an agonizing searing pain overwhelmed him. The wolf had him by the lower legs and was shaking them in his jaws like a leg of mutton. Muscles tore and teeth grated against bone.

Tightening his grip on his dagger Sav rolled to his back and began to frantically stab at the wolf's neck and head.

The wolf howled in pain, paused and then continued his attack with greater fury. Every blow seemed to intensify

the wolf's attack. Sav now sensed something behind him and then felt a second set of sharp teeth clamp down on the base of his neck. Another wolf!

The intense pain caused him to drop his dagger and flail in agony as he found himself in a tug-of-war. He was just about to lose consciousness when the pressure on his neck suddenly slackened. The wolf which had been thrashing his legs had turned its attack toward the other wolf. Now the two were engaged in a furious contest and Sav was the prize. Vaguely aware of a chance to escape, Sav attempted to get to his feet but found his legs to be useless and unresponsive. Rolling to his stomach he began to crawl toward the boulder again.

He had crawled a few feet when again a wolf grabbed him by a leg and began to maul him. There was no more pain. Only the dull sensation of being tugged at.

Screaming in terror Sav rolled over and struck at his attacker with bare hands. Then all about him there was a flurry of movement, as several more wolves, attracted by the sounds of a kill, descended upon the scene.

One grabbed his left arm and proceeded to attempt to strip it of its flesh. As Sav began to drift into the shelter of unconsciousness, somewhere in the back of his numbed-brain he heard a high-pitched yelp. His arm was freed and fell limp. A moment later, he heard another yelp and his legs dropped to the ground, his attacker crashing down on him in a motionless heap.

Sav's last thoughts before blacking out was the awareness that he was choking on his own blood.



Sav found himself seated at a large oaken table set with fine dinner-ware and silver utensils.

Clustered in the center of the table were a variety of pastries, meat-dishes and other delicacies. Before him a large pewter flagon of wine sitting beside a plate of stewed venison greeted his eyes.

Eagerly he began devouring the steaming dish. At that moment an arm reached over his shoulder and a large helping of brander-berry sauce was applied to his venison. He looked up.

"Nayrod?" he asked in astonishment, "*Is that you?*" Nayrod had been his old tutor and bondservant, who had taught Sav in his childhood.

Where had he been all these years? It had been so long since he'd seen the servant's weathered face.

He couldn't help but stare at him.

"*Evenin' Sir*," Nayrod replied, "*Your mother will be down shortly.*"

"Mother?" Sav thought, "What's going on here?" His mother had died giving birth to Andos. Had Nayrod been filching the Brandobian brandy again? He was about to begin eating again when a familiar voice rang out.

"*Sav you little bastard! Can't you wait for the rest of us before you start stuffing your belly?*"

Sav looked up startled. "Nados?"

Sure enough it was his younger brother.

Sav suddenly went pale and dropped his fork. Nados had been missing for years, ever since his journey to the Kalinor on Sav's behalf. So sure was the family that Nados

was dead that his empty funeral clothes had been placed in the family tomb and sealed.

He turned to Narod. Now he remembered. Narod had suffered a heart attack one night when Sav was only twelve. Everyone had been afraid to inform the young Sav and it had been weeks before he learned the truth.

He looked about the table closely. He recognized things now. This was the family table and he was in the Bakar Villa outside of Bet Kalamar. He looked toward the head of the table where his father's huge black-elm chair sat empty. Before it a large alabaster soup bowl sat waiting.

Sav closed his eyes and looked again. The bowl was spattered with thick streams of blood and small rivulets of crimson were streaming down the sides onto the white-lace beneath it.

Suddenly, a large wolf leapt into his father's chair and began to lap up the blood.

Sav woke up screaming. He tried to get to his feet and run but fell back in agony. His neck felt as though a red-hot bracer had been placed about it. As he lie in agony he became aware of a host of other pains all about his body.

Wrestling with his thoughts he began to remember the wolves. He opened his eyes and looked around him. He was in a dark, warm room.

There was a terrible stench, one of dead flesh and urine. But there was also the smell of roast venison. His knotted stomach twitched at the prospect of a meal. Turning his head he noticed a low fire burning in a stone fireplace, over it a side of venison was being licked by the flames.

He wet his lips. He couldn't remember the last time he had eaten meat. Looking about him he found that he was laying on a bed made of furs and skins piled in a crude wooden frame. He gazed down at his legs and held up his injured arm.

The wounds were crudely dressed with large strips of stained cloth. Apparently someone had rescued him. But who?

Straining his neck to look about the room, Sav determined he was in a one room cabin. The walls were constructed of logs which were still covered with bark and packed with mud. Along one wall an assortment of shelves were littered with a wide variety of glass bottles and vials. One shelf was crammed with parchments, scrolls and books, arranged in a haphazard manner.

Assured that he was alone, Sav tried once again to get up. He grimaced in pain and quickly forgot the notion. He was just about to call out when the door swung open.

In the doorway, silhouetted against an over-cast sky, a tall robed figure paused for several moments. He was carrying a large leather satchel across one shoulder and an enormous twisted staff in his right hand. The man entered slowly and closed the door. Sav strained his eyes to get a better look. He was an elderly man, very tall and thin with a balding head and a full flowing beard of gray. The stranger hung the bag on an iron nail by the door and set down his staff. Turning, he noticed Sav's attentive eyes.

Sav was trying to build up the nerve to say something when the man approached him.

Moving over to the side of his pallet he reached out and



placed a large callused palm on Sav's forehead.

"You dressed my wounds?" asked Sav nervously, "I want to thank..."

"Your fever's broken. You just might live after all." the old man interrupted.

He turned and moved toward the fire.

Picking up a clay dish he pulled a piece of venison from the spit and brought it back to Sav.

"You'd better eat this. I've been nursing you on gorus nader stew for days now. You'll need to stoke up your strength."

Sav thanked him and grabbed the meat.

He began to devour the venison at a fevered pitch.

After several moments of gorging himself, he looked up toward the old man.

"You killed the wolves?"

The old man shook his head, "I wouldn't even know where to begin killing a sturm wolf."

"Then who?"

The old man pulled out a bone pipe from his robes and began to fill it with pipeweed.

"Has'Faur the Dralch brought you here about a week back. He's a mute. Couldn't tell me what had happened, but it was very obvious from your wounds."

Sav took another bite of venison. He'd seen Dralch before. They were large brutish looking creatures. They were somewhat human in appearance but larger and sheathed with incredible muscles. All the ones he'd encountered were slaves in the capital city of Bet Kalamar. He'd seen them working on the roads and mining stone in the quarries. Once he had seen a pair of Dralch fight to the death in the arena, Gor Monodera.

The Dralch called themselves the Di'ndryl and lived in the rocky hinterlands of the Svimohiza Islands. Sav knew little else about them except that the childrens stories of his youth were filled with evil Dralches who stalked young children and hid them away in their forest lairs.

"A dralch up here?" he finally asked, "I owe my life to a dralch?"

The old man smiled and took a deep draw from his pipe.

“Has’Faur has lived in the P’Sapas for years. Probably a runaway. He bears a slave’s mark. Takes skins every winter and brings them to me. I sell them in Taleridu every spring and we split the coin.”

Sav finished off the last of the venison and handed the old man the bowl. “By the way my name is Sav...” He caught himself and cursed his stupidity, “My name is Savanaton”

The old man chuckled over the stem of his pipe. “Put your mind to ease boy. I don’t care who you are. As for me, my name is Kandraas. And that is my real name.”

He stood and returned to the fire throwing another log on the flames. “Very few go by their real names in the P’Sapas. Everyone up here has reason to be running or hiding from someone. They say that only wolf hunters and outlaws live in the P’Sapas.”

He returned and seated himself, “I’ve little to offer but a roof to put off the rain and some fresh meat when Has’Faur decides to come around.” He paused and pointed at Sav with his pipe. “But before you start believing that I’m good of heart and charitable you’d best know the truth. Has’Faur is paying me handsomely to play nurse-maid to you. I suggested burying you the moment I saw you, but he wouldn’t have it.”

Sav stared at Kandraas in disbelief, “He’s paying? You mean to tell me that he’s paying you to make me well?”

Kandraas nodded. “I’ve never understood the Dralch, leaswise Has’Faur. But his gold is as yellow as any man’s”

“Well regardless of who’s paying whom...I am grateful.”

“Don’t start believing Has’Faur’s a bright copper either!” said Kandraas sternly, “He’s got a black spot or two. If he’s dipping his gold to help you, you can be sure there’s a wrinkle in it.”

Sav was becoming very concerned now.

“What are you trying to say?”

The old man shrugged. “I’m not saying anything. When someone offers you free wine, be prepared to get a taste of vinegar, that’s all.”

Sav wondered at what the old man said.

What would a runaway Dralch have to gain by keeping him alive?

“Well, I plan to be long gone by the time he shows up!” said Sav.

Kandraas smiled, “You think so? You might be able to hobble to the privy in a few days or so,” he shook his head in amusement, “but you can grow a beard that would scratch your chest before you could walk out of these hills.”

Sav shook his head. “No, I must be in Taleridu as soon as possible. I’m already dangerously late.”

Kandraas leaned back in his chair and puffed his pipe. “Come spring, I can take you with me when I go in to sell my skins.”

Sav shook his head again, “No, I must go as soon as possible. I’ll pay you! Twice what you would make in the spring!”

Kandraas smiled, “Son, it’s a two-week journey round trip to Taleridu. I would either catch the winter storms going or coming and I’m too old and wise to let that happen to myself. Besides I searched you very thoroughly and you haven’t a copper to offer.”

“I have friends in Taleridu. Rich friends! They’ll gladly pay whatever I ask!”

Kandraas stood to his feet and stretched, “I’m sorry lad. You’ll have to wait until spring unless you find it in yourself to walk out of here. Either way, Has’Faur might have something to say about it.”

Sav closed his eyes. He couldn’t wait for two months in this stinkhole. Falasan and the others would surely be gone by then.

Kandraas moved over to a small pallet in the corner of the room and sat on its edge. Before lying down he looked toward Sav and shook his head. “Was damned foolish to be traveling the P’Sapas alone son. Damned foolish”

Sav closed his eyes and moaned in despair. He never imagined that fulfilling an oracle would cause a man so much grief.

Next Issue: Thorns and Briars □

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HEY, YOU GOTTA TAKE YER EXPERIENCE POINTS WHERE YOU CAN AND TREAT.

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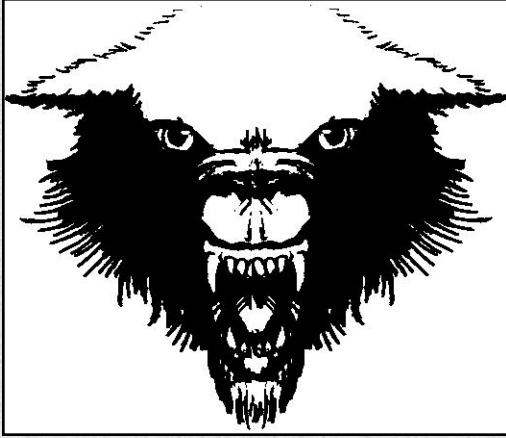
CHARGE ME ONE OF THOSE BAD BOYS ON MY MOM'S CREDIT CARD!!!!

KODT T-Shirts are now available!! Classic black with the above strip in white. Size XL only. Available exclusively from Kenzer and Company. Our mail order address is Kenzer&Co, 2094 Camino a los Cerros, Menlo Park, CA 94025

Sturm Wolf

STATS-AT-A-GLANCE

AR: 5 MV: 15 THACO: 15 HD: 6+6 #AT: 3 DMG: 1-4/1-4/1-12 XP: 700



Sturm-wolves are a species of carnivore that closely resemble the common wolf. However, there are some major differences. They are larger in size, standing from four to five feet at the shoulder. Sturm-wolves have fore-paws which resemble (and function like) those of a bear and are equipped with lethal claws. Sturm-wolves also have powerful frames which resemble those of a bear. In the dark, a Sturm-wolf can easily be mistaken for a large cave bear. The coat of a Sturm-wolf is usually coal black, though various shades and patterns of two or more colors have been reported.

COMBAT: Sturm-wolves are highly aggressive and will attack superior opponents without provocation. As a pack, Sturm-wolves normally single out a victim and savagely attack. If there are any other targets in the area, the pack will very likely take pursuit once it has downed its target. Sturm-wolves are notorious for over-kill; not always killing just to feed, but for the sake of a kill alone. Sturm-wolves have the habit of becoming enraged when wounded. Severe blows shouting, etc. will normally drive the wolves into a fever pitch and they will not withdraw until either their wounds prevent them from carrying on the attack, or they are killed.

If a Sturm-wolf scores a jaw hit of 18 or better, then he has locked onto the flesh of his victim and may make a thrashing attack. A thrashing attack scores additional damage of 2d8 points. The powerful jaws of the Sturm-wolf are used to snap the neck of large game animals. The wolf will lunge at its prey, locking its jaws about the animal's neck, and then it will use its massive weight to break the neck.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: Sturm-wolves have an excellent sense of smell. They can normally detect the scent of any large game in a given area, up to 3 miles away. Sturm-wolves are social creatures and are rarely found alone or far from a pack. Packs are relatively small, ranging from three to twelve adult wolves. One male Sturm-wolf will be the leader, being the strongest and most experienced hunter of the pack.

Packs are territorial. Territories are very large since it takes a relatively large number of game animals to support a pack. Territories will average from 25 square miles

to 50 square miles. Often, the chosen territory will be bordered by a large stream or river, where game animals tend to congregate. The pack will constantly roam within the bounds of its territory rarely spending more than a day at the same location. The exception is during mating season when the pack disperses for short periods of time. It is during this time, usually early spring, that Sturm-wolves, especially the male, will be encountered alone.

A pecking order is established within the pack. Normally the males of a pack will be required to vie for leadership numerous times because the leader's status in the pack will be constantly challenged. When the pack reforms after mating season, a series of ritual fights break out between the males. Those who were too young or inexperienced the previous season, and therefore unable to beat their competitors, will try again. If the current leader has grown too old or slow, he will be quickly dislodged from his role. Some males, after losing within their own pack, will venture into another pack's territory, seeking to challenge males of that pack. Sturm-wolves communicate very effectively with barks, howls, etc. If there are Sturm-wolves in the area, they normally reveal themselves with their high-pitched howls.

A few Sturm-wolves captured as cubs have been successfully domesticated and trained. Some Fhokki tribes have used them quite successfully as war-dogs. There is a danger, however, — no amount of training or bond between master and Sturm-wolf seems to be able to overcome the wolf's tendency to become outraged when attacked or provoked. When sufficiently enraged the Sturm-wolf often becomes oblivious to friend or foe. Many a trainer has found himself the victim of his own loyal pet.

The teeth and claws of a Sturm-wolf can demand as much as 200 gp in the larger cities. The hide of a Sturm-wolf can bring 500 gp.

ECOLOGY: Sturm-wolves prefer large grazing game such a deer, bison, and when the opportunity affords itself, sheep, cattle, etc. They will, however, attack any animal they happen to encounter within their territory.

Due to their tendency for overkill, Sturm-wolves will often deplete their territories of game to the point that the pack cannot support itself sufficiently. It may then attempt to expand its territories, or abandon them in favor of new ranges. Depending on the size and strength of a pack, they may be able to force another pack from its territory. If not, a pack may become uprooted and roam for months in search of a hunting range it can control. It is packs of this sort that humans most often encounter. An uprooted pack will often encroach upon human-settled lands and attack livestock as well as the human inhabitants. □



Excerpts from Kutagi's Journal

Compiled by Brian 'The Sixth Knight' Jelke & Jolly R. Blackburn

On the Sturm Wolf

Background

The following entries concerning the Sturm Wolf were taken from a portion of Kutagi's Journal dealing with notes the aged High Watcher made after one of many lectures he was asked to give at the Imperial Library of Bet Kalamar.

"When I arrived in Bet Kalamar yesterday, I was asked if I had seen any sign of Sturm Wolves on my journey up the Old Guard Highway. I'm glad to report that I did not. However, a merchant caravan I passed, heading south, reported that they had lost several horses to a Sturm pack which had attacked their camp at the mouth of the narrow pass known as 'prophet's rock'.

Indeed, I was a bit shaken at the news, for I had set camp near that very spot a few nights prior. I must confess, that for all my wide travels, I have only encountered a Sturm Wolf in the flesh, but once. Ironically, that encounter took place right here on the streets of Bet Kalamar and not but a stone's throw from where I stand.

A large Sturm Wolf bitch had been brought into the city to be fought in mortal combat at Grod Mondre (arena). It was just a few days before the fall equinox and the restless citizens of Bet Kalamar were looking forward to seeing a good fight. For this time of year is considered holy by both the Halls of the Valiant and the Temple of Armed Conflict. Both religions celebrate the day through displays of battle prowess in the the arena and significant rivalries have developed between the two sects. Often several weeks are spent in preparing for the sacraments of just the one day.

From the way I heard it, a drunken guard, accepting the challenge of a bet from his comrades, entered the wolf's cage in order to tie a red ribbon around her neck. (The guards in this city have never been known for their wisdom.) The wolf made a

quick mess of the guard and escaped from it's cage.

About this same time, and just a few blocks away, I was returning from the Var'Rader-Kem's estate where I had the honor of sharing a very tasty meal of roast-pig and fern surprise. The High Judge of the Empire requests my company whenever I return to Bet Kalamar so that I may bring him news of lands both near and far. I was just about to cross Lame Bear Street (near the new fountain) when I heard a commotion coming from the direction of that quarter's marketplace.

Being most curious, as the hour was quite late, I was drawn toward the direction of the noise. I had just rounded a corner when I saw to my great horror the enormous beast running at full speed in my direction. If there were any courage in my veins, it fled me at that moment, for I froze where I stood with jaw agape. Not that I could have made much of an effort at escape in my well-fed, bloated condition.

My mind raced as I mentally struggled to select an appropriate incantation that would save my plump belly from the lightning fast jaws of death. I had barely presented my holy staff to begin the spell when a mounted guard, answering the sounding alarms rode out from a side street and quite unintentionally, broadsided the wolf.

Horse, rider and wolf tumbled across the street before my very eyes. The horse regained it's footing, momentarily and was just about to bolt away when the she-wolf leapt upon it's back and broke the poor animal's neck with an audible snap. It then turned it's attention to the guard. With the guard drawing his weapon but still in a prone position, the beast easily bounded on top of him, knocking him to his back. The long sharp claws of the wolf screeched against his mail. I never saw what ultimately happened to the guard for I was running as far as my creaking-legs could carry me. Since I heard no reports of further bloodshed, I assumed the beast

made its kill and escaped the city to rejoin its pack in the wild.

I've made it a point to avoid the Sturm Wolf at all costs. What I've learned of them has been from others who are more stout of heart to investigate them more closely. One such lucky encounter was related to me by Merikot, a warrior friend of mine whose strength is of an exceptional nature. He came up with an intriguing technique to drive the beast off but I dare-say that he was incredibly lucky not to be attacked in greater numbers.

It was a lonely night out on the moors of the northern Alubelok (swamp). Merikot was travelling alone and nervously considering his prospects at safely getting any restful sleep when a lone Sturm Wolf lunged at him from out of the darkness. Thinking back he says he can remember barely hearing its stealthy approach but at the time could not discern it from the other music of the night. With great speed it was upon him by the light of the campfire before he could even grab a weapon.

Note that it is unusual for a Sturm Wolf to attack alone. This male was no doubt recently driven from a position of authority within its pack and in the process of searching for a new group to join.

The initial attack allowed the wolf to latch on to Merikot's left arm with its great canine fangs as it began to thrash him with its claws. Luckily he had not yet removed his armor. In a miraculous moment of clear thought coupled with his basic instinct as a wrestler, as soon as the beast released its jaw slightly to take another bite, Merikot boldly forced his bloody forearm further into its jaw, all the way to the joint. With his great strength he wrapped the creature in a headlock and wedged his arm solidly into the rear of its mouth such that the wolf could not possibly bite down again and was now struggling to prevent its long tongue from being forced down its own throat. Now face to face, he could smell its mangy wet dander and foul breath. As he peered into its frightful eyes and quickly pondered the apparent stalemate, he felt the claws of the beast continue to thrash his torso and legs, searching for a weakness in the protective metal skin. With the wolf's jaw still helpless in his tight grip, he struggled with all his might to roll the evil mass of bone, muscle and fur into his campfire. It quickly caught fire and released a muffled howl of pain. To avoid being burned himself, he released his mighty grip and the flaming dog writhed away into the darkness.

Now as I said, this was most certainly an unusual encounter as the Sturm Wolf was alone and Merikot



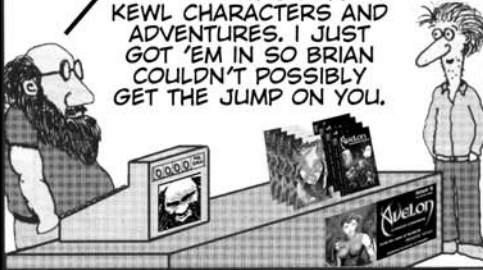
is a fine specimen of manliness. Had there been an entire pack, perhaps my friend might have set himself on fire to avoid being torn apart by these ferocious carnivores. As the case was, he did live to tell the tale.

Yet it still annoys me that there are so many fat-bellied Bin Par'tans in the capital city who proudly show their dinner guests the fur of some Sturm-Wolf which they claimed to have killed with a short dagger. Trust me, such men have paid a sizeable amount of hard coin for the privilege of telling such tall tales. □

KODT meets AVELON

HEY PETE, I NEED SOME FRESH IDEAS FOR MY **HACKMASTER** CAMPAIGN, EVERYTIME I TRY SOMETHING NEW, BRIAN'S ONE STEP AHEAD OF ME. I CAN'T LET HIM KEEP RUINING ALL MY PLANS.

HAVE YOU TRIED READING THIS FANTASY COMIC, "**AVELON**"? IT'S FULL OF KEWL CHARACTERS AND ADVENTURES. I JUST GOT 'EM IN SO BRIAN COULDN'T POSSIBLY GET THE JUMP ON YOU.



I HEAR THEY BASED THE COMIC ON THEIR GAMING EXPERIENCES. I LIKE THE WAY THEY MAKE THE CHARACTERS COME ALIVE, AND IT LOOKS SO KEWL...IF **GRIMSHAW** ISN'T A DEAD RINGER FOR **MEPHISTO**, I DON'T KNOW WHO IS.

SOUNDS KEWL, I'LL TAKE A FEW ISSUES. JUST DO ME A FAVOR AND DON'T LET BRIAN KNOW ABOUT "**AVELON**" JUST YET. SEE YA.



ONE DAY YOU'LL PUSH HIM TOO FAR AND HE'S GOING TO SNAP.

YEP, BUT UNTIL THEN I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE **TEFLON BILLY** WEARS THE **CROWN OF THRAIN** AND POSSESSES THE **SCROLLS OF DYOM**.



PUBLISHED BY
KENZER & COMPANY

SHARDAR



SO YER SAYIN' >mrph< THAT YA COULD HEAR, >gulp< BUT YA COULDN'T MOVE OR SPEAK?



GODS THIS IS FRUSTRATING! THE BOY CANNOT TALK, AND ALL YOUR VAIN ATTEMPTS TO SPEAK WITH HIM HAVE YIELDED NOTHING OF ANY IMPORTANCE. WE SHOULD BE MOVING.



I THINK THAT'S THE FIRST SMART THING I'VE HEARD YA SAY. SUGGESTIONS?


THE RIVER DESHADA IS NOT FAR FROM HERE, ONCE THERE WE CAN FOLLOW IT UNTIL WE REACH THE LANDS OF MY PEOP-

NO!

WE MUST RETURN THE BOY TO SHYNABYTH AT ALL COSTS.



NOW... OLD MAN... YOU WILL EXPLAIN YOUR WORDS, OR YOU SHALL FIND YOURSELF WALKING ALONE.



VERY WELL, NOW THAT THE BOY IS AWAKE. HE, AT LEAST, DESERVES TO KNOW THE TRUTH.

A CHILD WAS BORN INTO SLEN SLAVERY, TO DEJY AND FHOKKI PARENTS.

HE WOULD HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED IMMEDIATELY SAVE FOR THE UNEXPECTED INTERVENTION OF THE ORDER OF AGONY'S HIGHEST RANKING ICE PRIEST.

HE HAD RECEIVED A VISION IN WHICH A CROW SPOKE TO HIM, SHOWING HIM VISIONS OF THE FUTURE OF THE SLEN EMPIRE. IT URGED HIM TO PREPARE THE CHILD, FOR HE WOULD BE THE EMPIRE'S GREATEST STRENGTH... OR IT'S GREATEST WEAKNESS.

THEY TOOK THE BOY FROM HIS PARENTS, AND BEGAN PERFORMING SACRED RITUALS OF SUFFERING ON THE CHILD. THEY SCARRED AND BRANDED HIS BODY WITH SIGILS AND MARKS, EACH TORTURE FOCUSING THE POWER OF COLD DEATH INTO HIS BODY.

AS THE BOY GREW, THE POWER WITHIN HIM GREW, AND THE TIME FOR ITS RELEASE WAS FAST APPROACHING. THAT BOY IS YOU, YOUNG TOBIN...AND THE POWER STILL LIES WITHIN YOU---



AND HOW IS IT THAT YOU CAME TO KNOW THIS... INFORMATION?"



I...I WAS HIS MENTOR.

BAH!! I TOLD YOU HE WAS A DANGER TO US, A DIRTY SLENNISH SPY!

HOLD YER WEAPON ANGWAR! IF E'S A SPY WHY WOULD E' AVE BEEN TIED TO THE POSTS? WHY WOULD E' EVEN TELL US THIS? SIT DOWN YE DANG DURN FOOL.



IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE. I CRINGE AT THE THOUGHT OF THE TORTURE INFLICTED UPON ME AS PART OF OUR EVERYDAY RITUALS. WERE I IN ANGWARS POSITION I COULD NOT FORGIVE MYSELF...IN MANY WAYS I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO DO SO.

I WAS IN CHARGE OF KEEPING TOBIN IN PEAK PHYSICAL CONDITION, TO BE SURE THAT HE COULD WITHSTAND THE DAILY TORTURES. AS TIME PASSED I FOUND THAT THE LINTHINKABLE WAS OCCURRING...I WAS BEGINNING TO EMPATHIZE WITH HIM. HIS WILL AND DETERMINATION STRUCK ACCORD IN ME, AND I FELT ASHAMED OF THE THINGS I HAD DONE. THAT IS WHEN I BETRAYED MY FAITH, AND BEGAN FEEDING SLEN SECRETS TO KING JOTO OF SHYNYBYTH. I HOPED THERE WOULD BE AN OPENING FOR US TO ESCAPE DURING ONE OF THE RAIDS OR ATTACKS, BUT I WAS QUICKLY DISCOVERED.

SOON AFTER I FOUND MYSELF TIED TO THE POSTS NEXT TO ANGWAR. THE TIME OF TOBIN'S SACRIFICE WAS HASTENED FOR FEAR THAT I HAD DIVULGED INFORMATION ABOUT HIM...WHICH I COULD NEVER BRING MYSELF TO DO. I CAN ONLY ASSUME JOTO SENT STEELVEIN'S GROUP TO FREE ME, AS THE FATES WOULD HAVE IT, THE BOY SURVIVED AS WELL. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE SACRIFICIAL RITUAL NEVER OCCUR...FOR TOBIN'S SAKE AND FOR ALL TELLENE.



TWICE YOU HAVE SAVED MY LIFE. FORGIVE ME FOR PLACING MY PAIN ABOVE YOURS.

THE PAIN MAKES US BROTHERS, AND BINDS US. I WILL SEE THAT YOU ARRIVE IN SHYNYBYTH SAFELY, ON MY WORD.



The Shields of Bandran

by David Day

DAY

UPON LEARNING THAT THREE VILNA GUARDS ESCAPED WITH THE SACRED SEALS OF LIDA, GENERAL NESTRA SENT HER GOBLIN TROOPS TO SCOUR THE DUCHY OF BANDRAN FOR THEM. NOW NESTRA PREPARES TO MAKE HER REPORT TO TUBAR THE SORCERER.

ALL IS IN READINESS, GENERAL. REMEMBER, YOU MAY ONLY COMMUNICATE THROUGH THE MISTS OF PALOW AS LONG AS WE KEEP THE CENSER FULL.

AND WE'RE RUNNING LOW ON THE ELIXIRS REQUIRED FOR THIS TASK.



MY LORD, THREE VILNA GUARDS HAVE ESCAPED WITH THE SACRED SEALS OF LIDA.

UNFORTUNATE... BUT NOT UNEXPECTED, FOR ORSON WAS NO FOOL. HE WOULD HAVE PICKED THREE OF THE BEST MEN AVAILABLE TO HIM... YOU HAVE MADE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS?

THE TROOPS ARE ABOUT A DAY BEHIND...

THEN THE VILNA GUARDS MUST BE SLOWED DOWN.

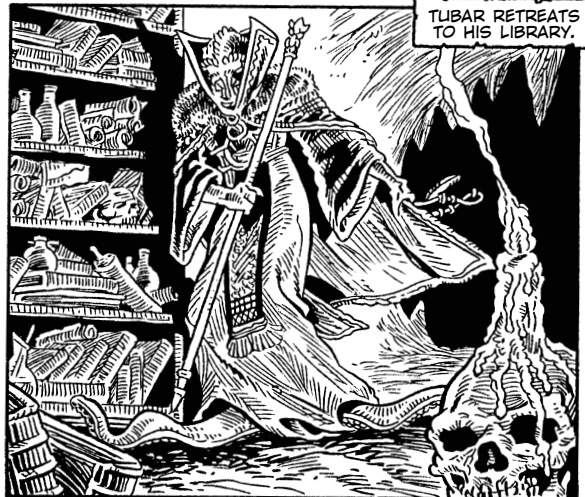


MILES AWAY INSIDE A MURKY CAVERN.



KEEP AFTER THEM
GENERAL NESTRA.

TUBAR RETREATS
TO HIS LIBRARY.



TUBAR RAVES AT THE INEPTNESS OF HIS ARMY, FOR NOW HE MUST PERFORM YET AGAIN THE BLACK ARTS...AND TUBAR KNOWS FULL WELL THAT HIS BRAND OF MAGIC COMES WITH A HEAVY TITHE. TUBAR'S HIDEOUS APPEARANCE PROVIDES HIM WITH A CONSTANT REMINDER OF THE PRICE OF HIS CONTINUAL OVER USE OF THE DARK FORCES.

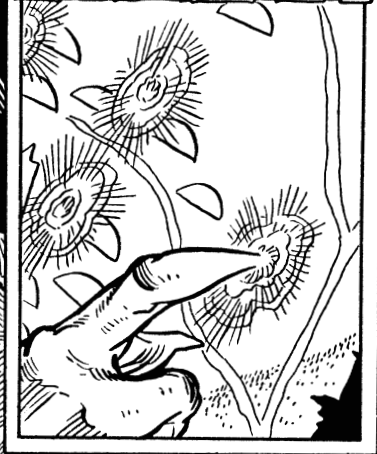
HOLDING A MAP OF BANDRAN HE ENTERS THE CIRCLE NEEDED TO PERFORM THE RITUAL.

HE BEGINS THE REQUIRED GESTURES, THEN CHANTS IN THE ANCIENT, FORBIDDEN TONGUE.

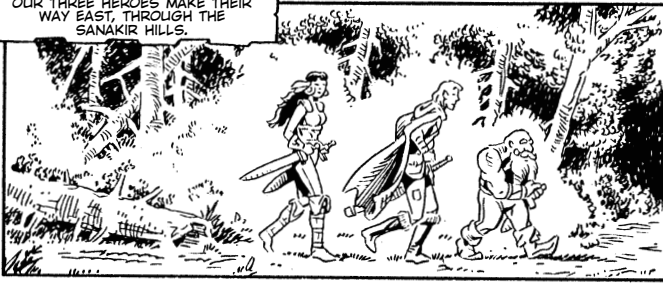
THE VERY CHAMBER SHAKES AND TREMBLES.



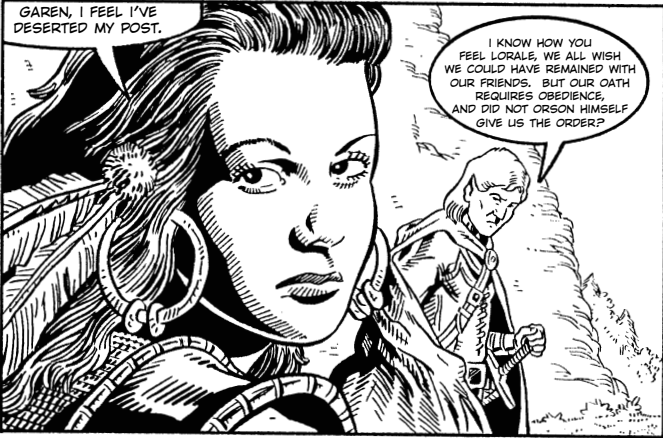
WITH WITHERED FINGER, TUBAR STRIKES THE MAP AT KEY POINTS, THE POINTS THROUGH WHICH ANYONE WISHING TO TRAVEL SAFELY MUST PASS.



OUR THREE HEROES MAKE THEIR WAY EAST, THROUGH THE SANAKIR HILLS.



GAREN, I FEEL I'VE DESERTED MY POST.



I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL LORALE, WE ALL WISH WE COULD HAVE REMAINED WITH OUR FRIENDS. BUT OUR OATH REQUIRES OBEDIENCE, AND DID NOT ORSON HIMSELF GIVE US THE ORDER?

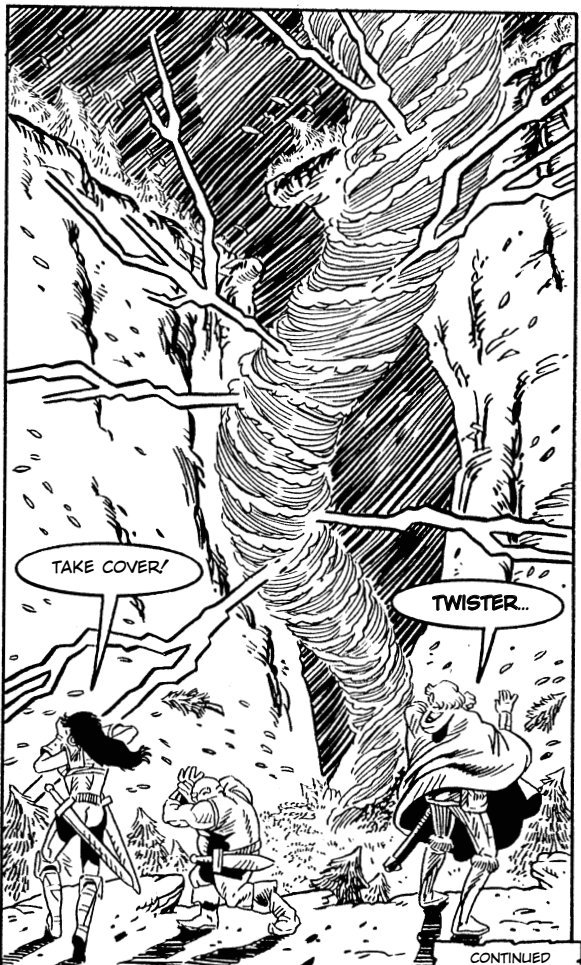
POSEN, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT... A STORM?

NOT THE LIKES MY OLD EYES HAVE EVER SEEN.



I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS. LET US MAKE HASTE AND SLIP THROUGH HALF MOON PASS BEFORE IT BREAKS.

WHY IT LOOKS LIKE A...



CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

KODT MINIATURES??



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* OK, it's almost too good to be true because your set of miniatures will be *unpainted*. We were working on a deal with some female Russian gamers to hand-paint every set but unfortunately the deal fell through.

News, Rumors and Industry Buzz plucked



HEY KIDS!!
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Send your news items to
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MAKE A FASHION STATEMENT!

Every gamer dreams of having one in their wardrobe. A full suit of functional gothic armor. That dream could be a reality thanks to the folks at Museum Replicas Limited. This Italian Gothic reproduction is fully articulated and hand forged from 18 gauge steel and comes with a wooden stand to display it on. All for \$3,500! (For an extra 150 bucks you get a mail shirt to go with it.)

The perfect stocking stuffer for the gamer in your life. And if ol' Goth-Boy isn't your style you can order the Duke of Burgundy suit of armor (only \$2,495)



PICK OF THE WEB

Our favorite websites for the Month!

<http://users.erols.com/vansickl/scifi.htm>

You've enjoyed Parting Shots each month in KODT, you'll love this site. One of it's many features is a page called the, "The Science Fiction Lists" where you'll find humorous lists with such titles as;

- The Grand List of Overused Science Fiction Clichés
- The Things I Will Do if I Am Ever the Hero
- The Things I Will Do if I Am Ever the Sidekick
- The Evil Henchman's Guide
- and many others.

If you want a few good laughs, this site is a must-visit!!

KENZER & COMPANY EVENTS SCHEDULED FOR GENCON™ '99

If you plan on attending GENCON this year (*August 5 to 8 at the Midwest Express Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin*) you might want to attend one of the events we are sponsoring. Be sure to sign up for them. Free prizes will be awarded to the winners and a mass mocking-jig will be danced on the graves of the losers.

- Friday Night, 7 p.m.: *KODT LIVE READING* [Event 906]
- Saturday, 2 p.m.: *MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL CCG* Tournament. [Event 905]
- Friday, 9 a.m.: *ELEMENTAL BOARD GAME TOURNAMENT* [Event 442]

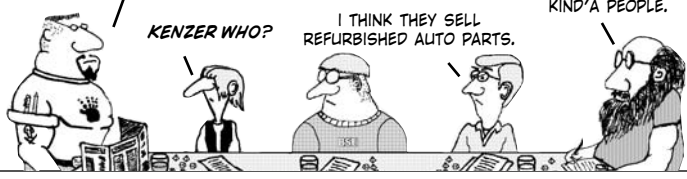
Be sure to stop by our booth for free demos of the *Elemental™* strategy board game and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail™* (and the new, *Taunt You A Second Time™*) card game. (Not to mention scoping out all the new KODT™ product!)

Other cons you can catch at this year include, DragonCon (Atlanta), Origins (Columbus), Shore Con (NJ), Chicago Comic Con (duh!), San Diego Comic Con, and PentaCon (Ft. Wayne, IN).

We love meeting our fans so be sure to visit our booth and yell, "Hoody Hoo!" at us. (Please do not feed us or tap on our cages)

I WANT YOU GUYS TO STAY AWAY FROM THOSE **KENZER FOLKS!** THEY'RE NOTHIN' BUT TROUBLE.

TROUBLE? SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE MY KIND'A PEOPLE.



"And Now, For Something Completely Different.."

Starting this month, the A&E will begin showing the original *Monty Python's Flying Circus* every Saturday night at 11 pm (10 PM central), i.e., 30 minutes before SNL.

October 5th is the 30th Anniversary of MPFC's first television appearance (it first aired 10/5/69 on the BBC).

Yielding to demands from the fans of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail CCG*, *Kenzer and Company* will be releasing the long-awaited "*Taunt You a Second Time*" card game.

TYAST uses the same rule-system as the *Holy Grail* game but is a stand along card game. (Each player needs his own deck to play). The cards, however, are compatible with *MPHG CCG* and introduce over 150 brand new cards.

from the vine for your reading enjoyment



“LOOK WHO’S TALKIN”

“Mick Jagger and I just really liked each other a lot. We talked all night. Turns out we had the same views on nuclear disarmament.”

Jerry Hall.

GM: “The bushes are rustling—a ten-foot-tall, glowing spider steps out in front of you.”

Player: “Is there anything unusual about it?”

Footer from a Reader’s E-mail to KODT.

“Sara is the only Knight I wouldn’t pimpslap if I was GM”

Comment made in KODT chatroom recently.

“I only played AD&D once. Someone gave me a potion to drink and I turned in to a tree. I don’t think they, (the group) really wanted an 8 year old girl playing with them.”

Karla Bean at MarCon ‘99



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FIELD REPORT: MarCon 34 - Columbus, Ohio

When the folks at MarCon invited me to attend their show as *guest-of-honor*, I jumped at the chance. I’ve heard lot’s of good things about his Ohio-based con over the years but never had the chance to check it out. Besides, I was afraid if I didn’t accept quickly they would realize their mistake and rescind the offer.

Frankly, I was amazed at how large this con was. (*nearly 3,000 attendees*). While not a games-dedicated con, there was certainly enough gamer-related panels and events to make any gamer happy. (*There was even a 24-hour open gaming room*).

Highlights of the show were the costume ball, a Klingon Wedding, filking and too many other events to even begin listing. In fact, most folks I talked to were having a hard time deciding which events to attend since there were so many interesting things competing in the same time slots.

Besides sitting on several panels, we were able to run a Live KODT Reading followed by a short Q&A regarding the comic book and other Kenzer and Company products.

The ‘big question’ seemed to be whether or not my real middle name was ‘Roger’ (*which it isn’t - it’s actually, Randall*), and if my great great grandparents were pirates. (*A rumor Dave Kenzer started with his forward to Tales*)



Live-Readings aren’t just for the Knights anymore. Several fans volunteered to read a BlackHand strip. Guess which one is Nitro?

From the Vault a few years ago.

I plan on attending this show again in the future. Where else can you step into an elevator and find yourself standing face to face with Richard Hatch (*Apollo of BattleStar Galactica fame*) or Dr. Demento?

Incidentally, remember that list of things to do in an elevator to annoy people we ran several issues ago in Parting Shots? Don’t try them. They tend to cause people to step off on the fifth floor and walk ten flights to get to their room. I’d like to thank the entire MarCon staff for one of the best-run cons I’ve ever attended (seriously). Special thanks to Jack Needles, Jackie Stevens, Kyle Klinger and Dan Youngfor making me feel like royalty.

— Jolly Blackburn



One of several groups attempting to bring the Knights to life in the Live-Readings.



John Labr, Lew Herring and Joel Bozell get a late night game of Formula De’ in down in Open Gaming.

HEY YA DOOFUS! KENZER AND COMPANY WANTS YOU!!



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 email, KenzerCo@aol.com



**PUBLISHERS!!
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LIGHTED HERE!
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COPIES TO:
KODT: BRIAN'S PICKS
1003 MONROE PIKE
MARION, IN 46953**

BUTTON MEN

Cheapass Games
2530 E. Miller Street
Seattle, WA 98112
www.cheapass.com



Every once in a while a game comes along and you say, "I wish I thought of that.". Button Men is one such game. It is elegantly simple yet focuses on one thing gamers love to do, roll dice. Each game bag comes with rules and 2 well-drawn characters depicted on buttons. The dueling characters each have dice size ratings that represent their speed and strength and allow customization by including a variable die type to be determined by the player. Each player rolls his or her dice and the person with the lowest number gets to go first. You can then use your die rolls to try to capture your opponents dice by meeting or exceeding their result. The capturing dice are rerolled and your opponent then gets a shot at you with his remaining dice. Scoring and play is simple and quick. This is a great little pick up game for killing time between other game sessions or to run as a tournament. By the way, you probably won't need to buy dice for this game because you can likely use the lucky ones you already have from other games.

Brian's Rating: *A great little game*



THE DEVIL'S ADDITION

Knuckleduster Publications
PO Box 1024
Normal, IL 61761

This role-playing adventure book is set in the wild west circa 1871. It is a stand alone solo western adventure in which the reader takes on the role of a law-man pursuing a murderer. Possibilities abound in this 135 page book with over 400 passages of story. This book is particularly good for someone who is interested in the western genre yet can't round up a posse for a regular RPG session. However, the setting (Abilene, Kansas) and story can easily be adapted for use with an ongoing Cattlepunk or other western RPG campaign. You can pursue your reward money but just don't get on the wrong side of Abilene's reigning Marshal, Wild Bill Hickok.

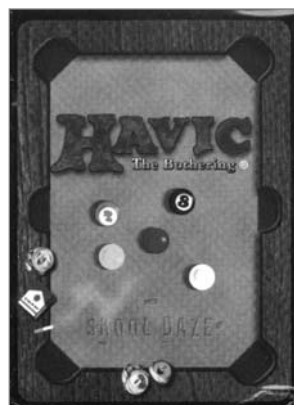
Brian's Rating: *A great read*

HAVIC THE BOTHERING

PGI Limited
30 Shorehaven Road
Norwalk, CT 06855
havic6@aol.com

Havic is a humorous CCG that parodies other popular CCGs (*one in particular that shall remain nameless*). Each player is a student who battles others in an effort to reduce their sanity points to zero while maintaining his or her own. In order to win, a player needs to recruit peons, create effects and use articles against his or her opponent before losing all one's sanity. The cards are good quality with color artwork that's a bit rough around the edges but funny. With peons and effects such as a bartender, bitch secretary, beer goggles and hypnotic pimple, the tone of the game should become quite clear. It's not for the kiddies. The mechanics are simple and anyone who has played the popular CCGs should give this one a try just for kicks.

Brian's Rating: *Check it out.*



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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.

ATTENTION CONTRIBUTORS!

IF YOU SUBMITTED AN IDEA FOR A KODT STRIP THAT WAS PUBLISHED, BUT DID NOT RECEIVE YOUR FREE COPY OF KODT - CONTACT THE EDITOR. (HE LOST HIS LIST). BE SURE TO INCLUDE THE NAME OF THE STRIP, YOUR FULL NAME, AND SNAIL MAIL. THANK.
 JOLLY

Mohammed:

After you left, sparkling southerners/VerHoeten came here in search of their competition. They act to ensure their championship despite hardship or sorrow.

Preston

Watch the hilarity ensue as Wounds Unlimited and FATGOP get ready for Gen Con!
 Join in the fun at

<http://www.cpinternet.com/~snelson/wounds/gc1999.htm>

Sergeant D'AMATO!!

The old Swaebisch Gmund group would like to hear from you. Write and let us know where you are.

Contact Jolly.

BRETT "RAMBO" FILZER

HEY DUDE, DROP ME A NOTE AND TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU. THE STATUTE OF LIMITATION HAS LONG PASSED. YOU'RE IN THE CLEAR.

HUECO TANKS MAN



WANTED!!

The board games, "Escape from Colditz" and "The Great Escape". Contact jollyrb@aol.com

ICEMAN,

YOU'RE GOING DOWN, BOY!
 GET YOUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER.

SPROCKET BUTT



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

An Opinion Arena and Open Forum

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.

Hey, I can take a joke. And I know that everyone on a sitcom is a caricature. But the D&D episode of "Jesse" struck me as being contrived and unfair, taking a cheap shot at gamers. In the episode, Jesse, (who's working on her g.e.d), accepts a date from her math teacher. He's a smart guy with a great sense of humor. That is, until we find out that he's a gamer. Then, of course, his character turns 360 degrees and he's an idiot. His gaming group? They're idiots too. They have no life except the game, no other friends, no other interests.

Look, all gamers are not obsessed with "the game" to the exclusion of the outside world. In our own group, for example WE ALL HAVE JOBS, ranging from teachers to programmers to members of the Human Genome Project. NO ONE LIVES IN THEIR PARENT'S BASEMENT.

We all are married, with (in our minds) wonderful children. WE ALL HAVE OTHER INTERESTS. Hunting, fishing, camping, being with our families. Normal stuff. Some of us even found time to earn their master's degrees while working full-time. And lastly--NO, WE DON'T WEAR FUNNY HATS.

There's more of us out there than you'd think. Last summer I worked with a teen camp, and almost all the guys played *Magic: the Gathering*. "Jesse" would have been much more true-to-life if her own son was a gamer--spending half his free time completing his "blue and white" deck and the other half playing *Zelda* or some other console/pc rpgs.

I guess it isn't as funny if Jesse doesn't run into the "superfans" of gaming, but I took the portrayal as a somewhat mean-spirited jab at gamers. Perhaps someone on the writing staff is upset that the nerd they sat next to in high school made it big (did you sit next to Bill Gates, Jim Cameron, George Lucas...?)

Steve Bruns
via E-mail

I would like to respond to the letter in KODT #29, written by Ivy K. Ryan. She said the story line in "A Surprising Situation" was not funny to her or to any other female gamer, she would imagine.

I guess she didn't imagine me. I did find it funny, and here's why. I have played in many a group where someone no-showed and seen that happen to their characters more than once. The humor is not that it happens, but that the writer knows it happens and presented it in such an over the top, outrageous way.

Now the way they dressed Sara's character up might

have been sexist, but also a reflection of the movies, comic books, figurines, and so on the "guys" have seen, where women in fantasy are dressed exactly like that. Personally, I find that funny as well, since it is a constant source of one liners for Sara to bounce off them, and they never seem to realize her dry wit is aimed at them.

Overall I would like to say, (speaking purely for myself here) The guys aren't bad, they're an exaggeration of the games the writers have played, and the people they have played them with. I don't think of myself when I read KODT, I think of all the bad gamers, clueless gamers, hack-and-slash gamers, and laugh once again at the bad ideas, the very bad ideas these people come up with, and the worse execution of those ideas.

Of Newt and his group, I have to say it also reflects part of the gaming community, where the gamers are not always friends, and seeing it presented in such a way makes people like that easier to deal with. When you find yourself stuck in a game with one of the power mad, vindictive, one-upmanship players try imagining him as anyone in that group and you might be surprised at how less irritating he becomes.

One last point I'd like to make is that not all bad gamers are men. I am the only female in my gaming group, and have been ever since I begged the DM to get rid of the clueless, vindictive, irritating females we used to have in our group. They either flirted shamelessly to get their own way, pouted when they didn't get it and made Brian's "get you back later" attitude look tiny in comparison. You could even see KODT as Feminist in viewpoint, since Sara is the only one in the group who isn't totally lost. But I hope we can avoid turning it into a political forum.

Sherry Drake
via E-mail

After reading the numerous commentaries about BA's handling of the *Lyrion Academy* situation, I find myself nearly forced to repudiate some of the commentary, especially Mr. Tolstrup's assertion (printed in issue 30) that "He owed them that two million." Indeed, that is essentially untrue.

The monetary reward was a rules-mongering by Brian, who should have been told off years ago. As a GM, I have often found simple, and creative, ways to limit major hauls (including not allowing them in the first place as a general rule); over the past 20 years, I have found the three simplest are to have them switch time-space-dimension coordinates by accident using some artifact, while strictly enforcing encumbrance rules - What you don't have on you no longer exists. I recently de-valued a high level D&D group's treasures and wealth this way (See also the *Gazeteer covering Glantri*), having the major advantage that, upon returning from a time hop, I was able to selectively prune their lands, titles, retainers, etc.

By the same token, of the people in BA's group (or for

that same matter, the **Black Hands**), I'd have tossed Brian, and Bob long ago... The only players amongst those groups I'd tolerate are Sara, Newt, and perhaps Stevil and Dave. Both the knights and the **Black Hands** are perfect examples of the worst two kinds of gaming: *Power Gamers* and *Hack-n-slashers*.

While I enjoy the comic, I use it to train new players exactly what NOT to do. The abuse of Newt was, IMHO, nearly criminal in nature; any players who even suggest such things I show the door, with my size 13 boot applied if needed.

William F. Hostman
via E-mail

A female gamer and reader named Ivy Ryan took offense to your recent story line in which the guys destroy Sara's character in her absence. You requested that your female readers would "opine on this issue."

First, congrats on the erudite use of opine. Secondly, I took no offense at the story, despite Ivy's claim that it was not funny to her, "*nor to any other female gamer I would imagine.*"

In fact, I laughed out loud! Her imagination needs to be less defensive. . .perhaps she should rent "Aliens" or "Terminator 2" [starring kick-butt dames] and loosen up.

Dave Kenzer was right to point out that their actions had nothing to do with gender. As the only female in my gaming group, I have witnessed my comrades use and abuse each other's characters regularly. When I first joined them, I was informed that I should not expect any "*special treatment*" because I'm a gal. Had they not tormented me, I'd have felt discriminated against. I'm sure Ms. Ryan would not want to be treated with kid gloves. Neither, then, should she complain about the occasional "rough-housing."

This is not to say that the world does not contain its share of sexist gamers. I've met a few choice examples myself. Most of the lot, however, are naturally open-minded, fair, and eager to avoid alienating the girls. If Ms. Ryan has been the sole victim in her group, if the behavior is repeated and exceptionally sexist and harsh, then her problem lies not with gamers, but with the pathetic excuse for gamers with whom she associates. I hope she trounces them as a GM.

Finally, I know that, as usual, Brian, Dave, and Bob will get theirs eventually. KODT has proven in story after story that karma always catches up with the character. . . .

Keep up the good work!

Amy Lynch-Binieck
via E-mail

As you no doubt are aware, a film very closely related to our glorious geeky domain of gaming was recently released after much internet hype and endorsement. On opening night, gamers by the thousands flocked to theatres to catch a glimpse of the new **Star Wars** trailer and fuel their gaming nostalgia by seeing **Wing Commander**. The result: A gripping space drama, well acted and enhanced by great special effects?

A competent enhancement of the cool cut scenes in **Wing Commander III**? You wish.

If a hundred monkeys, banging randomly away at a hundred typewriters are given an infinite amount of time, they will eventually produce the script for Hamlet. Given five minutes, they could come up with the script for **Wing Commander**. That is, in fact, quite likely the method used in creating this fetid pile of cinematic rubbish. And as if the hundred monkeys were not already overworked, they apparently were given the task of cast selection.

The role of *Christopher Blair* (played by the competent Mark Hammil in the video games) was given to the snotty Freddie Prinze Junior who indicates that his character is being contemplative by staring into space (or Colonel Devereaux's chest) with

the slack jawed expression of a large trout, only not quite as cunning. Other mystifying cast decisions include:

1. Replacing Tom Wilson (Maniac), who actually added an element of humor into the games, with Matthew Lillard, another bleach-haired arrogant member of generation X who's most notable artistic achievement was in "**Scream**".

2. Gone is another good actor, Malcom McDowell, and in his place is the O.K. David Warner for Admiral Tolwyn.

3. Lastly, John-Rhys Davies, whom you may remember from **Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade** is no longer Paladin. In his stead is some greasy, unshaven Russian guy.

What the hell?

Even the costumes were laughable. "Ha ha" one might say upon seeing the Kilrathi, dressed in typical B-movie rubber, and wearing barely articulated masks which bear no resemblance to the well done cgi enhanced Kilrathi of WCIII and IV. The damn things look ready to start destroying Tokyo and befriending small children with high pitched voices and frighteningly short pants. Even the Confed pilots are poorly dressed, donning caps which make the pimply young actors look like heroic spacefaring employees of a heroic spacefaring fast food restaurant. Predicting the plot is like predicting the trajectory of a sack of lard thrown from the top of an office building. You know where it's going: downhill, fast. And the end isn't going to be pretty.

To be fair, the film had several redeeming qualities: There is a damn cool trailer for **Star Wars, Episode 1** at the beginning.

The special effects were decent, as one would expect from a movie about space battles, and the woman playing Devereaux (Saffron Burrows) was decent and had a nice English accent.

The somewhat cool space battles, however, are not without their problems. Anyone who played the video games remembers the cool ship designs: The looming presence of the carriers, the sleek, dartlike Arrow fighters, and the angular and menacing Dralithi. Of course, since these were good things, they had to be purged from this movie. It's almost as if Chris Roberts realized that it was going to suck, and spared the games better elements from association with it.

In short, if you want to enjoy a good space opera, play **Wing Commander III**. The acting is better and you get to control the battles. Or, if you can't afford the price tag of the game from the bargain bin, you can always sit by your friend's PC and watch him play.

The only reason I can see for possibly wanting to stick around after the **Star Wars** trailer is to punish yourself for some crime you committed in the past, although I personally wouldn't sentence anyone to see this unless they had murdered at least two people, one of whom being a close relative.

Diccon Hyatt
via E-mail

The only things that need to be changed in KODT is:

1. More pages. The more the better. 2. Let Brian GM! The greatest knight needs his chance behind the screen! and 3. As for the letters and feelings about Newt's behavior and the TV show Jesse, I have to say that the people who are writing in, complaining about it, are giving gamers a worse name than the strip & TV show did. They are portraying gamers as people who can't take a joke!

KODT is a comic book, a work of FICTION, and not the moral guideline for the gaming community. To Allan Miller and those who agree with him, as well as those who are offended by Jesse's portrayal of gamers, I say this: Get over it!

Brett Abercrombie
Ukiah, California ☐

ANNOYING NON-GAMERS AT THE OFFICE



You should be proud of being a gamer. So what not put your gaming-skills to use at the office? Let your polyhedrons shine for all to see. Try some of the following 'gameresque' activities at the office to show your co-workers you march to the beat of a different drummer.

- When your boss announces his solution to a problem, mutter under your breath, "*Lord Vader wouldn't have done things this way.*"
- Put your garbage can on your desk and label it 'IN'.
- Find out where your boss shops and buy exactly the same outfits. Always wear them one day after your boss does. (*Especially effective if your boss is the opposite gender.*)
- In the memo field of all your paychecks, write "*To Chan Lee for Chinese Military Secrets*".
- Drink your coffee from a tall German Beer stein with a flexible straw. Hang around the water cooler and insist on telling your 'Bismarck' stories.
- Hide behind some xerox paper boxes in the supply room. When someone enters jump out and surprise them. Brag that you 'successfully hid in shadows'.
- Send e-mail to the rest of the company informing them "*Your thief takes four points of damage. Roll for initiative.*" If they don't respond send another email stating you are, "docking" them experience points for not taking action..
- While sitting at your desk, work on your, 'Spiders from Mars', adventure. If someone asks what you are doing, ask them if your map of a martian brothel looks accurate.
- Put mosquito netting around your cubicle. Tell your co-workers to keep their distance because you think you contracted malaria at the company picnic.
- Insist that your e-mail address be *zena_goddess_of_fire@companyname.com*.
- Every time someone asks you to do something, ask if they want fries with that.
- Suggest that the Coke machine be filled with beer.
- Encourage your colleagues to join you in a little synchronized chair dancing.
- Bring roadkill to the office and display it on your desk. Proudly call people over to see your collection.
- Circle an obituary and ask your boss if you can go to your 'uncle's funeral'. Do this twice a week.
- Develop an unnatural fear of staplers.
- Come to work early and fill everyone's staplers with PEZ candy.
- Next time your supervisor asks you to do something ask, "Who the hell died and made YOU boss?"
- Yell, "Officer on Deck!" every time you exit an elevator. Then change your voice and yell, "Carry on!"
- When riding in an elevator with a co-worker. Angriily comment that you are 'manager material' and

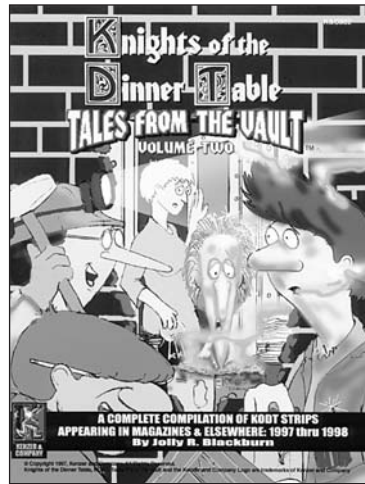
that you aren't appreciated. Then fart and accuse the other person of doing it.

- During company meetings, when someone asks if there are any questions, raise your hand and ask if "Do you think the Hulk could take Superman in a fair fight?" If the reply is, "I don't know." Stand up and say, "I don't think I can work for this company any longer." and walk out.
- A few days before taking a vacation, ask a co-worker if he/she will FEDEX you to Nepal.
- If asked if you can handle an important project, roll some twenty siders, consider the results and say, "Damn! I failed my saving throw. You better let O'Riley handle this one."
- Make some really strong strawberry Koolaid. Then walk around the office with bright Koolaid stained lips and tell everyone you got 'lucky' during morning break.
- Have an engraved name tag made with your name then install it on a stall door in the restroom. Then put a shelf in the stall and place family pictures, sticky pads, pens and a stapler on it. For a final touch buy a throw rug and put on the stall floor. If someone tries to use your stall or comments about your improvements insist that you called, "Dibs!" and they should stay the hell out of your stall.
- Adjust the tint on your monitor so that the brightness level lights up the entire working area. Insist to others that you like it that way.
- Don't use any punctuation
- If someone finds a typo in something you wrote insist that the 'french' spell it that way.
- Ask people what level their characters are.
- While making presentations occasionally say, "If I was the man I was five years ago, I'd like take a flamethrower to this place!"
- While making a presentation pick someone at the conference table and glare at him/her for several seconds. Then say, "You wanna take this outside. Tubby?"
- Get rid of your desk and buy a bean bag chair and a couple of milk crates. Explain that you're trying to "think outside the box".
- Complain at all office meetings that the 'rogue squirrels in the ventilation shaft' are disturbing your work with their incessant political rallies.
- Whenever you enter a room, BURST in suddenly. Scan the room by swiftly looking to your left and right. Talking into wrist watch, say, "Sector Alpha - clear!" Then leave the room.
- Come to work early and take all the staplers in the office (including yours) into one victim's desk drawer. Do this about once a week but moving on to other items such as keyboards, mice and mouse pads. □



IT SEEMED LIKE THEY'D NEVER ARRIVE...

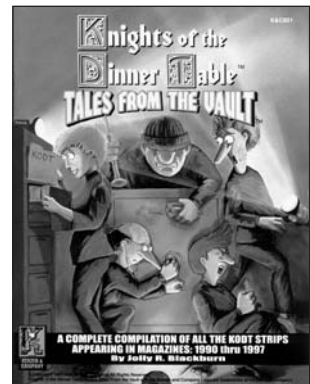
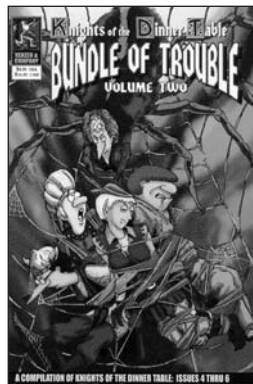
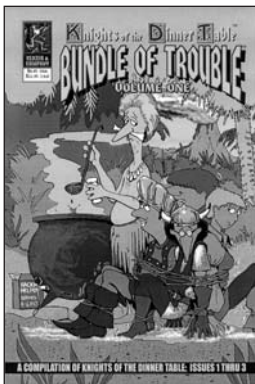
BUT THIS AUGUST YOU CAN GET YER GRIMY PAWS ALL OVER
BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOLUME #3 AND
TALES FROM THE VAULT VOLUME #2



FOR YOU **JOHNNY-COME-LATELYS** WHO CAUGHT ON TO KODT AFTER THE EARLY ISSUES **SOLD OUT**, THERE'S **GOOD NEWS!!** THE NEW **"BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOL. THREE"** BRINGS ISSUES 7 - 9 TOGETHER AND JUST TO BE NICE, WE THREW IN ANOTHER NEVER BEFORE SEEN STORY AND A FEW OTHER TASTY MORSELS. **"TALES FROM THE VAULT VOL. TWO"** IS A COMPLETE COLLECTION OF KODT STRIPS WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN OTHER MAGAZINES (DRAGON, RIFTERS & TROLL) DURING '97-'98 AS WELL AS SPECIAL STRIPS WE DUG UP THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN COMMERCIALY PUBLISHED. YA AIN'T GOT IT ALL WITHOUT THIS!!
IS THAT KEWL OR WHAT??

JUST \$9.95 EACH!!

**DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE OTHER COMPILATIONS. THEY ALSO NEED A
LOVING HOME THAT ONLY YOU CAN PROVIDE.**



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Gamemaster's Screen and
Complete Pandemonium adventure



DON'T WORRY, BOB, IF YOU WANT TO **OPEN** THE AIRLOCK AND LET DAVE IN, I'LL LET YOU. BUT...UH...YOU **DO** REALIZE YOU LOST YOUR HELMET WHILE FIGHTING THE GUARDS ON **DECK 3** AND UH...YOU **DO** REALIZE BY PUNCHING THE DOOR PANEL YOU ARE ABOUT TO **DEPRESSURIZE** THE AIRLOCK?

WELL **DUH!!** I CAN'T VERY WELL LET HIM IN **WITHOUT** DEPRESSURIZING CAN I? QUIT STALLIN' B.A.!!

HA! HE DIDN'T EXPECT US TO USE THE OLD "**BACK DOOR**" ROUTINE TO GAIN ENTRY TO THE SHIP.

BRIAN, I THINK YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLAIN HOW AN **AIRLOCK** WORKS TO BOB AGAIN HE'S ABOUT TO TURN **DAVE** INTO **SPAM!**

HUH? WHAT WAS THAT, SARA? SORRY, I DIDN'T HEAR YOU. I WAS BUSY CHECKING OUT THE NEW **2ND EDITION FADING SUNS!** IT **ROCKS!!**

