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**KENZER AND COMPANY**

Knights of the Dinner Table #35

September, 1999

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# Knights of the Dinner Table™ MAGAZINE

## “Death Awaits”

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

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

#### DEPARTMENTS:

<b>Cries from the Attic</b> .....	2
<b>Table Talk</b> .....	3
<b>Heard it on the GameVine™</b> .....	35
<b>Weird Pete's Bulletin Board™</b> .....	37
<b>Back Room at the Games Pit™</b> .....	38

#### COLUMNS:

<b>Disks of Wondrous Power™</b> .....	32
<b>Brian's Small Press Picks™</b> .....	36
<b>Parting Shots™</b> .....	40

#### THE STRIPS:

<b>Wager Me This</b> .....	4
<b>Coal-Lateral</b> .....	9
<b>A Horse is a Horse</b> .....	14
<b>A Mute Point</b> .....	21
<b>Shardar™</b> .....	26
<b>The Shields of Bandran™</b> .....	29



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). Nine years later, 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. Writing KODT strips isn't nearly the lonely job as it was in the past. Since joining the ranks of Kenzer and Company and the formation of the KODT Development Team, the Knights have gone far beyond anything Jolly or the other developers ever imagined. Along the way, he's made some incredible friends and considers himself truly blessed.

# Editorial of a Madman

*"You know what I see when I look across the dealers' room floor? Survivors!"*

*Exhibitor at Origin's 1999 (Columbus, Ohio)*

Many people described my editorial in the September, 1998 issue of KODT (#24) as 'depressing'. It was written immediately after returning from GenCon '98 and I reported that, although Kenzer and Company had had record breaking sales, the 1998 summer con season had been a 'season of change'. With several companies giving up the ghost, being bought out, and/or laying off employees, the future of many companies seemed a bit grim, if not uncertain.

If the 1998 con season was one of 'change', then the 1999 season can only be described as one of 'great comebacks'. GenCon '99 has to rank as one of the single best gaming events I've ever personally attended. Here's my personal short list of the reasons why;

- **Judges Guild.** Those of us who first picked up the dice back in the late 70's or early 80's couldn't help but get the warm fuzzies upon learning the old adventures we first cut our teeth on were being refurbished and re-released. Passing by the JG booth was like running into an old friend.

- **Dungeons and Dragons 3rd Edition.** The big buzz at the con, of course, was the "Future of Dungeons and Dragons" seminar where gamers were hand-fed juicy tidbits of information on one of the most anticipated releases in years. Too bad we have to wait a full year for the real thing but most D&D fans were thrilled just to hear that the game has great things in store for it in the coming months.

- **Gary Gygax.** Speaking of old friends, on Saturday the news shot around the exhibit hall floor like a bullet. "Did you hear? Gary is running a game in the castle!" Hundreds of gamers wandered through the castle to just see the GrandMaster weaving an adventure.

- **Avalon Hill.** Many of you will recall that Avalon Hill was bought up by Hasbro last year. Most gamers mourned the deal as the end of an era and held out little hope that the classic AH board games would ever be produced again.

Boy, were we wrong. The old girl is back and she's looking pretty classy. Do yourself a favor and go to [www.avalonhill.com](http://www.avalonhill.com) and drool.

- **Dave Arneson.** Speaking of D&D, Dave Arneson showed

up at GENCON having just returned from the set of the upcoming *Dungeons and Dragons* movie (to be released next fall). He even promised to do a write-up about the movie for a future issue of KODT. Hoody Hoo! [Incidentally the rumors that the movie would be based on the *Gord the Rogue* novel series is not true.]

- **Beer and Pretzel Games.** One of the things I noticed missing at GENCON this year were the pretentious RPG debuts we saw at past cons. Maybe the message has finally gotten through — gamers want content and quality — not hype! More bang for the buck! Companies like *Cheapass Games*, *Placebo Press*, *Gold Rush Games* and many other relatively small companies seemed to be stealing the thunder this year.

Also absent were the *doom-and-gloomers* forecasting the death of gaming as we know it. Maybe they got the message as well — gaming is alive and well.

All in all it was a great con season and we're looking forward to the next one. (Except for Dave Kenzer who lost all his body hair when someone walked up behind him and screamed, "Pokemon, Pokemon!" and James Mishler who came down with Cowpoke's side-saddle rash at the con and had to be carried out on a gurney.)

Before closing, this issue, all of us at Kenzer and Company want to thank our readers for making 1999 a fantastic year. Not only did you snag the **Origins Awards** for us (*Best Professional Games Magazine of 1998 - our second win*) but you helped push sales of KODT far beyond anything we could have imagined. According to the Retailer's TOP 30 best-selling titles list in the September issue of *Comic Retailers* we recently outsold *Spider-Man: Chapter 1 (Marvel)* and *JSA Secret Files (DC)*. (If our current growth rate continues we expect to break the 20,000 distribution milestone by year's end.)

Hope you enjoy the issue in hand. Once again, the entire KODT Development Team would like to thank everyone who took the time to vote on the Origins Awards. You guys are pretty kewl.

*Jolly R. Blackburn*

Jolly R. Blackburn

OKAY SO THE **UMBER HULK** PULLS OUT A FREAKIN' **SHOTGUN** AND EMPTIES **BOTH BARRELS** INTO YOUR FACE! MEANWHILE THE **ORC-SLAVERS** IN **KEVLAR ARMOR** MAKE OFF WITH YOUR HORSES. THE WOUNDED **KOBOLD-SCOUT** ON THE RIDGE FIRES A **RESCUE FLARE**. YOU CAN HEAR THE DULL-DRONE OF THE **COMBAT-COPTERS** MOVING IN TO EVACUATE HIM.

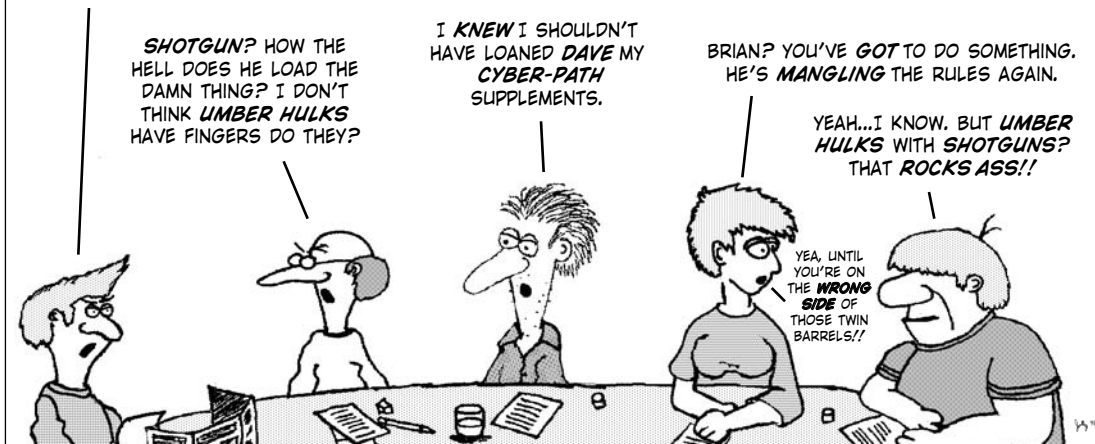
SHOTGUN? HOW THE HELL DOES HE LOAD THE DAMN THING? I DON'T THINK **UMBER HULKS** HAVE FINGERS DO THEY?

I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE LOANED **DAVE** MY **CYBER-PATH** SUPPLEMENTS.

BRIAN? YOU'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING. HE'S **MANGLING** THE RULES AGAIN.

YEAH...I KNOW. BUT **UMBER HULKS** WITH **SHOTGUNS**? THAT **ROCKS ASS!!**

YEA, UNTIL YOU'RE ON THE **WRONG** SIDE OF THOSE TWIN BARRELS!!

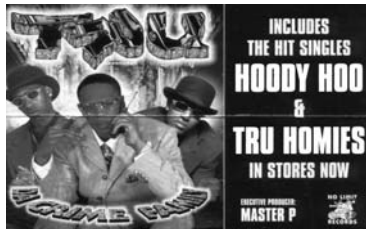


# Our Readers Talk Back!

Dear KODT,

I had just finished reading KODT on the subway and was walking to work when the enclosed piece of advertising literature caught my eye.

No other signs of KODT fandom from this group — though



I think that "I wazte 'em with my Crozzbow" would be a great gangsta rap tune.

Kevin Maroney  
New York, New York

Thanks for taking the time to send in your find, Kevin. We love hearing about all the 'hoody hoo' references out there. In recent months we've learned at least one professional wrestler, two DJ's and a beet-farmer in Des Moines, Iowa also use the catch-phrase. I guess that episode of Gomer Pyle was more popular than we thought. Either that, or there are a few closet KODT fans out there.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

A member of a group I game in on Sundays recently was kind enough to bring his comics to our game. I found them hilarious. I hadn't realized that many of the catch phrases he had incorporated into our sessions were from you.

Also, a lot of the arguments and tribulation that are accounted in your comic are reminiscent of games since past. But, the best part for me (*being a gamer of many years... I was raised on it*) is finding my alter-ego in the comic.

I AM SARA! Not only am I often the only girl gamer in certain quests and often push for less hack-and-slash, but my cousin is the GM! Being familiar with D&D since I was 4, and still loving it, I give you props and thank you on behalf of me and my group!

Kirsten/Age 20  
coffeejunkie@juno.com

Dear KODT,

I just purchased *Tales From the Vault Two* at GenCon.

On page 51 is a comic about IGOR (*Israeli Gathering of Role-Players*.) I will be spending next year in Israel, and had pretty much given up on getting any role-playing done while there. But this IGOR indicates that there are role-players in Israel. I tried to search for it online, with no success. So, if you have any information about it I would greatly appreciate it if you could send it to me. Oh, a few weeks ago, I didn't have an adventure prepared and I used the 'belligerent Dwarf trick' and it worked! (*That it worked was rather frightening*).

Eph Unell  
via E-mail

Thanks for the letter, Eph. Our IGOR contact is:

Asaf Bartov [asaf@forum2.org]  
77 Rambam St.  
Ra'anana 43601  
ISRAEL

*Belligerent Dwarf trick, eh? Works every time. Nothing touches off the anger of a player-character like a good slam-dunk to his or her ego.*

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Reading your episode "Night of Gaming Dangerously" reminds me of how I first ran into role-players. I was working as a

student doing psychological testing at the Feliciana Forensic Facility, an institution for the criminally insane in Louisiana. I struck up an acquaintance with a couple of the sociopaths there (*always the most charming people*), and they told me about some of their D&D games there:

They commented on how thugs generally played beefy hack-and-slashers, while con-men and sneak-thieves more usually played thief and rogue types. I've gone on to play and enjoy role-play games myself, but at the time it seemed to be a fairly exotic bit of prison lore. So anyway, you shouldn't necessarily expect *Switch* and *Crutch* to be clueless about Hackmaster.

Name Withheld

*Sociopaths? Is that the new GURPS supplement we've been hearing so much about? Do you happen to know the day and time they game? We get to Louisiana from time to time and we're always looking for game-sessions to crash. Do they serve snacks? Is their GM up on HackMaster 3rd edition?*

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I just finished reading issue #33 *Wild Wild Hack*, and I got the thought that there are people who are seriously trying the things that you publish in *Parting Shots* even after you mention in your *Field Report* from MarCon 34 not to try the *Things to do in an Elevator to Annoy People*.

This ties in with the people who are insulted by some of your comic strips. Those of you who are taking this stuff seriously are missing what the word 'comic' means. This is not a soap opera. I don't think Sara is going to be having anyone's love child.

In the words of *William Shatner*: "Get a Life." If you don't like having fun with this material, go back to reading gothic novels, leaving the rest of us to laugh our fool heads off.

A personal note: I would prefer the format to remain oriented towards the strips, but I don't role-play these days. If you do add game materials or non-KODT stuff, I tend to ignore it — except for the back five or six pages starting with *Heard it on the Grapevine*, which I like.

Again, that's my choice. Everyone else who wants the additional articles: more power to you. Thanks for the laughs. Keep up the good work.

Craig D. Cummings  
via E-mail

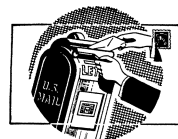
Dear KODT,

I want to thank you for writing KODT. The last eight years of my life have been spent in the company of gamers - my husband and his friends. No other magazine or comic book speaks to me the way yours does. When do you find time to spy on my dining room? I swear I've heard some of the conversations in KODT in my own house. Keep 'em coming. I rely on your comic book to keep my sanity. I want to be Sara when I grow up.

Suzi Dunn  
Fairview Park, Ohio

PS. If this E-mail should make it into an upcoming KODT could you please warn THE BOYS (John, Matt, Mike, Dave, Brian and Jason) that I will take MY HackMaster+12 to the next one of them who forgets to put the toilet seat down?

YOU CAN WRITE TO US VIA E-MAIL AT  
JOLLYRB@AOL.COM!!  
OR YOU CAN SEND YOUR  
SNAIL MAIL TO  
KODT LETTERBOX,  
1003 MONROE PIKE,  
MARION, IN 46953



# WAGER ME THIS

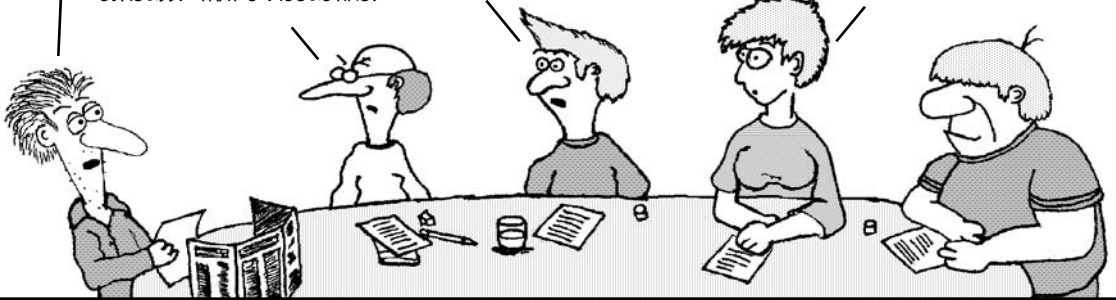
BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN  
BASED ON A SUGGESTION BY OBERON BARIMEN

OKAY AS YOU RIDE ALONG THE ROCKY SHORE OF **LAKE HAZARD** YOU NOTICE THERE ARE **HUNDREDS** OF GNAWED BONES AND BLOODY **SEAGULL** FEATHERS STREWN ALONG THE TRAIL SIDE. IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS THAT SOMEONE OR **SOMETHING** HAS BEEN COMING TO THE **LAKE** TO SCROUNGE FOR FOOD.

WHO THE HELL WOULD EAT A SEAGULL? THAT'S DISGUSTING.

SEA GULLS? THAT MUST MEAN THERE'S **WATER** NEARBY.

WE'D BETTER BE ON OUR TOES, EVERYONE!



## A FEW MINUTES LATER

AS YOU ROUND THE **POINT** ON THE SHORELINE YOU FIND YOURSELF STANDING ABOUT **FIFTY YARDS** FROM A VERY LARGE **FLAT-FOOTED OGRE!** HE'S HOLDING A **LARGE MATTOCK** ROUGHLY THE SIZE OF A **THIRD-WORLD NATION**. WITH THE **FULL MOON** RISING JUST OVER HIS LEFT SHOULDER AND THE DISTANT HOWL OF A **TIMBER WOLF** BREAKING THE EERIE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT, HE STRIKES AN INTIMIDATING POSE. THE HAIR ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECKS STANDS ON END.

A FLAT-FOOTED OGRE? ARE YOU SURE? I THOUGHT WE WIPED THOSE **BRUTES** OUT LONG AGO.

UH OH, EVERYBODY! LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE GOING TO GET BLOODY. **REAL BLOODY!**

WIPED THEM OUT? HUH?

GOOD GAWD! APPARENTLY ONE OF THEM SURVIVED.

OH YEAH. I'M SURE.



IT WAS BEFORE YOUR TIME, SARA. WAY BACK IN '88 WHEN **B.A.** WAS RUNNING US THROUGH HIS **EIGHT OGRES TO SUNDOWN** ADVENTURE.

OH, I SAW THAT ONE **ON FILE** DOWN AT **WEIRD PETE'S**.

AS IT SHOULD BE. THAT WAS SOME OF **B.A.'S** BEST WORK.



IT WAS AWESOME! THE WHOLE ADVENTURE CENTERED AROUND THREE TRIBES OF **HIGH OGRES** EMBROILED IN A FEUD THAT HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR THREE CENTURIES. THE **FLAT-FOOTS**, THE **WEBBED-TOES** AND THE **CHUB-FOOTS**. THEIR **ACTS OF AGGRESSION** WERE SPILLING OVER INTO THE SURROUNDING SETTLEMENTS AND WE WERE HIRED TO BRING A **HALT** TO THE FEUDING.

**HIGH OGRES??!!** I'M SORRY I MISSED THAT ONE. I WAS THE INSTRUCTOR'S ASSISTANT FOR THE **HIGH OGRE SEMINARS** AT **HACKMASTER CAMP** LAST SUMMER. I WISH I COULD HAVE TAKEN A CRACK AT SETTING UP NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TRIBES AND ENDING THE FEUD. WHAT A UNIQUE ADVENTURE HOOK!

NEGOTIATE? I GUESS THAT'S **ONE** WAY IT COULD HAVE BEEN HANDLED. WE TOOK A **DIFFERENT** APPROACH.

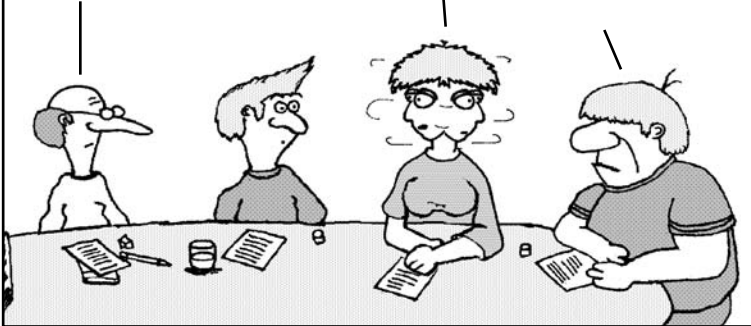
YEAH, WE CHOSE TO **ELIMINATE** TWO OF THE THREE TRIBES. IT WAS THE **ONLY** WAY TO ENSURE A **LASTING PEACE!**



**YOU WIPED OUT TWO ENTIRE TRIBES OF OGRES??!!**

OR SO WE THOUGHT. APPARENTLY **ONE** GOT AWAY. I GUESS WE WEREN'T AS **THOROUGH** BACK IN THOSE DAYS AS WE ARE NOW.

PRETTY AMAZING HUH? **THREE P.C.'S** TAKING ON **THOUSANDS** AND LIVING TO TELL THE TALE. -SIGH- BUT IT WAS **NO CAKE WALK**.



I LOST A **DAMN GOOD** CHARACTER IN THAT ADVENTURE.



OH, SURE! I WAS WONDERING HOW LONG IT WOULD BE BEFORE YOU THREW **FRANZ DEVEE** IN MY FACE AGAIN. **I SAID I WAS SORRY!**

IT AIN'T RIGHT, BRIAN. YOU KNOW IT WASN'T **BOB'S** FAULT THAT HE ROLLED A **ONE** AND FELL ASLEEP ON HIS **WATCH** THAT NIGHT.

HEY, I WAS **JUST** TELLING **SARA** IT WAS NO CAKE WALK - **ALRIGHT?** THAT'S ALL. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THE **DEAD** CAN STAY BURIED. I GOT **NO BEEF** WITH BOB.

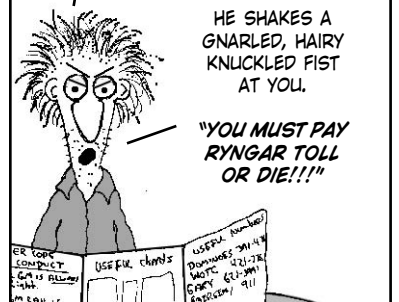


I HATE TO INTERRUPT, GUYS, BUT THE **OGRE** IS STANDING MOTIONLESS AS IF HE'S SIZING YOU UP. THEN HE SCOWLS AT YOU AND STAMPS HIS FEET AS IF GREATLY ANNOYED.

**"DIS IS RYNGAR'S LAKE!  
DIS IS RYNGAR'S ROAD!"**

HE SHAKES A GNARLED, HAIRY KNUCKLED FIST AT YOU.

**"YOU MUST PAY RYNGAR TOLL OR DIE!!!"**



MIGHTY **COCKY** FOR A **FLAT-FOOTER** ISN'T HE? I GOT NEWS FOR HIM - I AIN'T PAYIN' **SQUAT!**

WAIT GUYS, PERHAPS WE CAN NEGOTIATE WITH HIM. MY CHARACTER KNOWS A FEW OF THE **HIGH-OGRE DIALECTS**. IT'S A VERY DIFFICULT TOUNGE TO LEARN - MAYBE HE'LL BE IMPRESSED WITH MY...

HE SAYS YOU CAN PAY IN **GOLD** OR PAY IN **FLESH!** WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?

IS THAT A THREAT? THAT SOUNDED LIKE A THREAT. IS HE THREATENING ME?

GIVE IT UP, SARA. DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID? THE DUDE'S A **FLAT-FOOTER!** THE ONLY THING THAT IMPRESSES THEM IS THE BUSINESS END OF A SWORD!





GUYS, PLEASE! THESE CREATURES AVERAGE SOMETHING LIKE 150 HITPOINTS - RIGHT? WHAT COULD IT HURT TRYING TO NEGOTIATE? AT THE VERY LEAST, IT MAY BUY US SOME TIME OR DISTRACT HIM LONG ENOUGH TO GAIN THE ADVANTAGE. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

LOOK SARA, YOU WEREN'T GAMING WITH US WHEN WE MIXED IT UP WITH THESE GUYS A FEW YEARS BACK. THEY WERE BRUTAL!

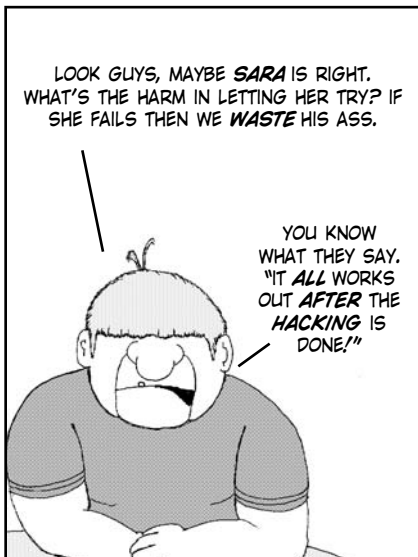
YEAH! THEY DECAPITATED FRANZ DEVEE AND PUT HIS HEAD ON A SPIT!

THAT WAS A CRYING SHAME. I WAS ONLY FOUR E.P.'S FROM MAKING 7TH LEVEL!



KNUCKLES WAS ON WATCH THE NIGHT IT HAPPENED. HE NEVER FORGAVE HIMSELF FOR FRANZ DEVEE'S DEATH. I HAD TO ROLL ON THE CHRONIC NIGHTMARE TABLES FOR SIX WEEKS! WE'RE TALKING MAJOR PSYCHOSIS HERE! IT TOOK AN 8TH LEVEL CURE-ALL SPELL TO FINALLY GET ALL MY MARBLES BACK IN THE BAG - IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

LOOK, I DON'T WANT TO INVITE THE GUY TO HAVE DINNER WITH US - I JUST WANT TO SEE IF WE CAN AVOID SOME UNNECESSARY COMBAT.



LOOK GUYS, MAYBE SARA IS RIGHT. WHAT'S THE HARM IN LETTING HER TRY? IF SHE FAILS THEN WE WASTE HIS ASS.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY. "IT ALL WORKS OUT AFTER THE HACKING IS DONE!"



WELL....OKAY, I GUESS WE CAN SEE WHAT HAPPENS. GO AHEAD, SARA. KNOCK YOURSELF OUT!

BUT I'M WARNING YOU. IF HE GETS ALL MOUTHY OR ANYTHING - I'M COMING IN SWINGING. YOU GOT THAT?

THANKS, GUYS! I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS.

HMMRRRRFFF! TALKIN' WITH A FLAT-FOOTER. IF THAT DON'T BEAT ALL.

### A WEE BIT LATER...



SORRY SARA, THE OGRE STUBBORNLY REFUSES TO YIELD. HE INSISTS THAT YOU PAY THE TOLL FOR USING HIS ROAD. HE WANTS ONE OF YOUR HORSES AS PAYMENT. UPON PAYMENT YOU WILL BE FREE TO CONTINUE ON YOUR WAY UNMOLESTED AND AFFORDED HIS PROTECTION.

A HORSE? HE WANTS ONE OF OUR HORSES? WHAT THE HELL DOES HE WANT A HORSE FOR?

FIGURE IT OUT, SHERLOCK! HE WANTS TO MAKE TASTY MEAT SNACK OUT OF IT. NO WAY IN HELL I'M GIVEN UP CLOVER FAX TO THIS CREEP.

WELL, YOU GAVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT SARA. NO ONE CAN FAULT YOU FOR TRYING. NOW HOW 'BOUT WE LAY WASTE TO THIS JOKER?

WAIT GUYS, I'M NOT FINISHED YET. B.A., I OFFER A **WAGER** TO THE **OGRE**. IF HE CAN ANSWER MY **RIDDLE** THEN WE WILL GIVE HIM **ALL FOUR** OF OUR HORSES AND LEAVE THE AREA PRONTO. HOWEVER, IF HE **CAN'T** ANSWER THE RIDDLE - WE GET TO PASS BY WITHOUT PAYING HIS **TOLL** OR ENGAGING IN **COMBAT**.

THE **OGRE** SEEMS REALLY INTERESTED IN YOUR PROPOSAL. "A **WIDDLE?** YOU WONS TO **PLAY WIDDLES?**"

GUYS, DON'T LOOK SO ALARMED. **FLAT FOOTERS** REALLY AREN'T THAT BRIGHT.

THE **OGRE** ACCEPTS THE **WAGER** BUT WITH ONE **SMALL TWIST**. YOU MUST ANSWER **HIS RIDDLE**. IF YOU FAIL TO GIVE HIM THE **PROPER ANSWER** THEN HE GETS **ALL** YOUR HORSES. IF YOU **CORRECTLY** ANSWER HIM THEN YOU GIVE HIM ONLY **ONE** HORSE.

WHAT THE HELL DOES HE THINK THIS IS? **LET'S MAKE A DEAL?**

THIS **BLOWS!** I SAY WE **CARVE** HIM UP LIKE A **THANKSGIVING TURKEY!**

WHOAH, HOLD ON GUYS. THIS COULD WORK IN **OUR FAVOR**. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS **SWEETEN** THE POT AND WE CAN HAVE THIS GUY EATING OUT OF OUR HANDS. HE SEEMS TO HAVE A **THING** FOR HORSE MEAT. HMMMMM.....

WHAT ARE YOU DRIVING AT **BIG GUY?**

UH OH, HE'S ON TO SOMETHING. I CAN HEAR THE **GEARS** SPINNING FROM HERE.

OKAY, B.A., HERE'S THE **DEAL**. I'M GUESSING THAT'S A **MATTOCK** OF **OGRE KIND** HE'S HOLDING THERE, WHICH MEANS IT'S A **+5**, POSSIBLY A **+6** WEAPON TO YOU AND ME.

I BELIEVE THE **BOOK PRICE** FOR THAT **LITTLE BEAUTY** IS SOMETHING LIKE **5,000 GOLD** PIECES NOT TO MENTION THE **E.P.S.** SO **WAGER** ME THIS - WE ANSWER THIS **DUDE'S RIDDLE** WE WALK WITH THE **MATTOCK** AND OUR HORSES. IF WE FAIL HE GETS THE **FOUR HORSES** AND IN ADDITION TO THAT - WE BRING HIM BACK **TEN** MORE HORSES WITHIN A **WEEK'S** TIME.

BRIAN, YER A **FRICKIN' GENIUS!!** AND **AFTER** WE TAKE HIS **MATTOCK** HE'LL BE **DEFENSELESS** SO WE **WASTE** HIM ANYWAY. **HOO-HOO!** THIS IS **TOO SWEET**.

BUT WHAT IF WE **CAN'T** ANSWER HIS RIDDLE? WHAT THEN? I'M TELLIN' YA, THERE'S **NO WAY** I'M GIVIN' UP **CLOVER FAX**.

BRIAN, I THOUGHT I WAS SPEAKING FOR THE GROUP WITH THE **OGRE**.

YOU SET 'EM UP AND I CLOSE THE DEALS, **SARA**.

**TEAM WORK!!**

THE **OGRE** THINKS FOR A MOMENT AND THEN NODS HIS HEAD AND AGREES TO **BRIAN'S** WAGER. HOWEVER, ONLY **ONE** OF YOU CAN ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THE RIDDLE, AND YOU MUST DO IT **WITHOUT** ANYONE ELSE'S HELP. SO SEND FORTH YOUR **BEST** RIDDLER.

I DUNNO ABOUT THIS. WE STAND TO **LOSE** A LOT IF WE CAN'T PULL THIS OFF. IT'S **FIFTY MILES** TO THE NEAREST TOWN.

YEAH, TOO BAD WE BURNED DOWN **HAGLEY TOWN\*** AND FORCED B.A. TO ERASE IT FROM THE MAP. IT'S ONLY A HALF DAY'S MARCH FROM HERE.

GUYS, PLEASE. HE ASKED FOR OUR **BEST RIDDLER** DIDN'T HE? I GUESS THAT WOULD BE **ME!** DON'T SWEAT IT - I GOT IT UNDER CONTROL

OKAY, LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE A **WAGER** THEN. **OUTSTANDING!** I WANT TO COMMEND YOU GUYS FOR **NOT** RESORTING TO **HACKING** YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS.

OH...UH...I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. I LEFT SOME OF MY CAMPAIGN NOTES IN MY BEDROOM.



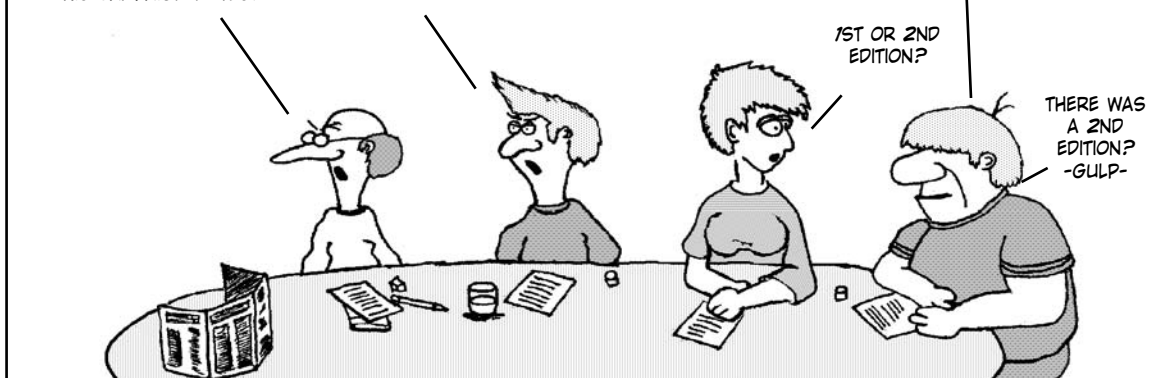
THIS ISN'T GOOD. HE'S UP TO SOMETHING. SINCE WHEN DOES **B.A.** FORGET HIS CAMPAIGN NOTES?

YOU GOT **THAT** RIGHT. HE COULDN'T GET OUT THE ROOM FAST ENOUGH. WHAT THE HELL'S HIS ANGLE?

MY GUESS IS THAT HE'S FRANTICALLY GOING THROUGH HIS **HACKMASTER TOME OF RIDDLES** HOPING TO FIND ONE WHICH WILL **STUMPE** ME. NOT LIKELY - I MEMORIZED ALL **379** RIDDLES AND THE CORRESPONDING ANSWERS.

1ST OR 2ND EDITION?

THERE WAS A 2ND EDITION? -GULP-



### MEANWHILE....

C'MON, PICK UP ALREADY. **PICK UP!**

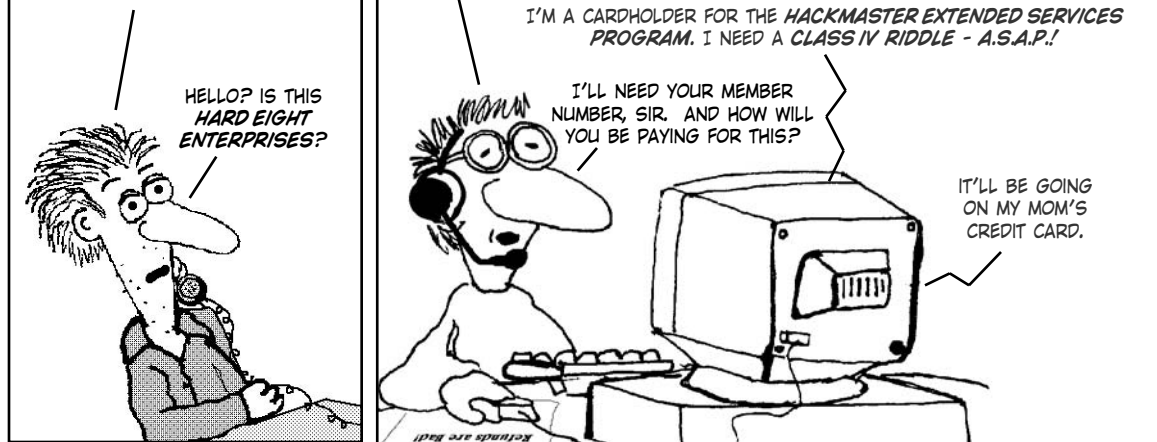
HELLO? IS THIS **HARD EIGHT ENTERPRISES?**

THANK YOU FOR UTILIZING THE **HACKMASTER SUPPORT LINE**, SIR. MY NAME IS **TULEY**. HOW CAN I HELP YOU?

I'M A CARDHOLDER FOR THE **HACKMASTER EXTENDED SERVICES PROGRAM**. I NEED A **CLASS IV RIDDLE** - **A.S.A.P.!**

I'LL NEED YOUR MEMBER NUMBER, SIR. AND HOW WILL YOU BE PAYING FOR THIS?

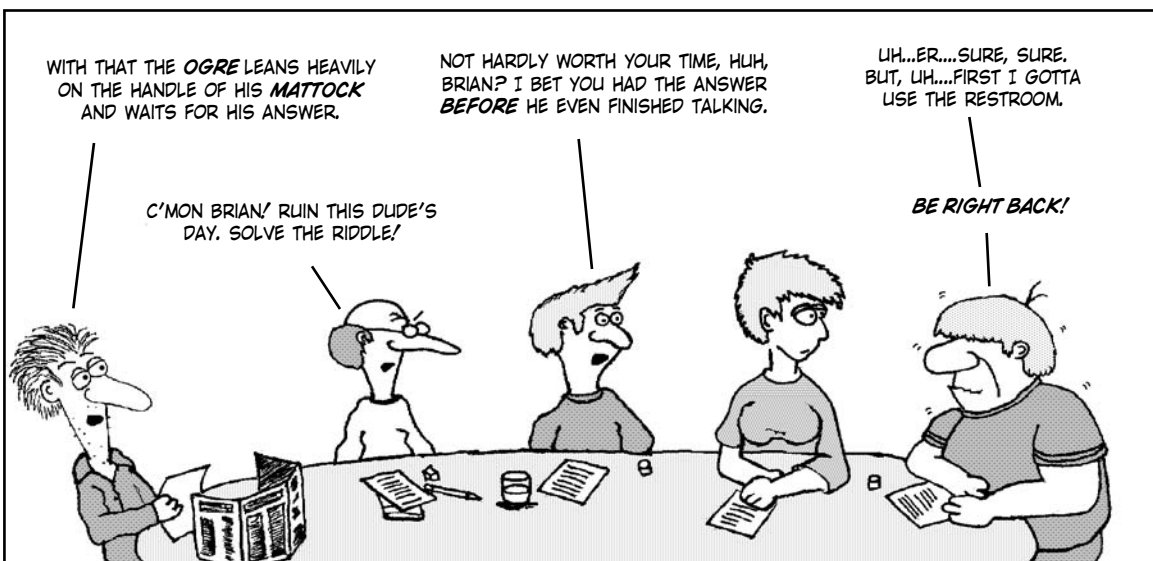
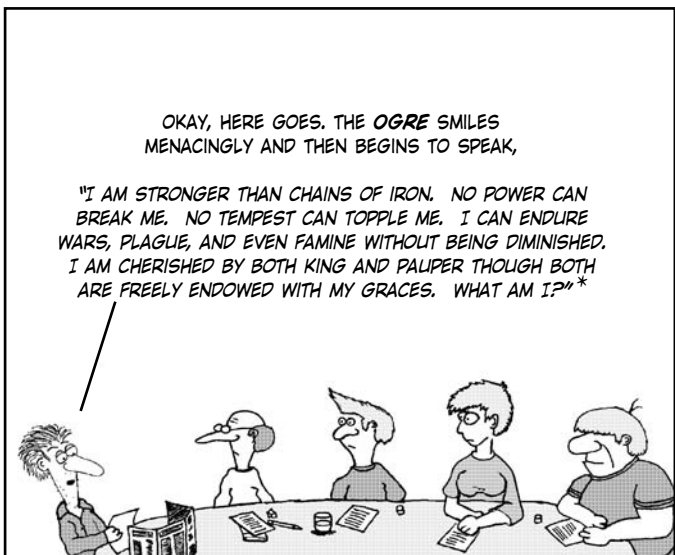
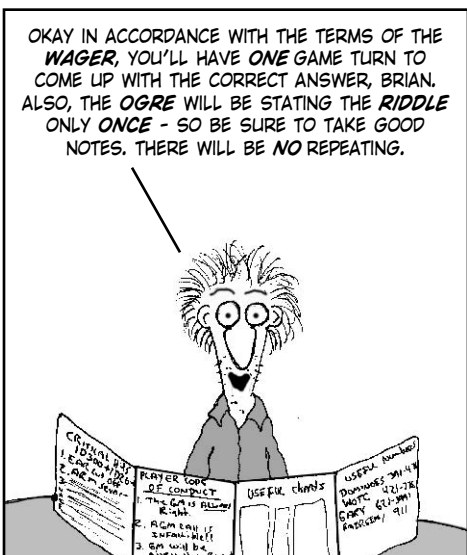
IT'LL BE GOING ON MY MOM'S CREDIT CARD.



\*See KODT#31: Missing Out Big Time

# COAL-LATERAL

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



\* Answer: A mother's love for her child.

**SECONDS LATER....**

UH OH! LOOKS LIKE THE **FAT MAGE** CHOKED. I DON'T THINK HE HAS THE **ANSWER**. NOW WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. I THINK I ACTUALLY **STUMPED** HIM. **FINALLY!!**

SHEESH! HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN THE GUY. LIKE HE SAID, HE HAD TO USE THE RESTROOM. HE'S JUST BUILDING UP THE SUSPENSE - THAT'S ALL.

I DUNNO, DAVE. HE **DID** HAVE THAT **QUEASY** LOOK ON HIS FACE.



**MEANWHILE....**

THAT'S RIGHT. I WANT THE ANSWER TO A **CLASS IV RIDDLE**. TRY SEARCHING THE KEYWORDS; CHAINS OF IRON, TEMPEST AND FREELY ENDOWED. AND **HURRY!**

I'M BRINGING IT UP NOW, SIR. LET'S SEE....

OH DEAR! I'M SORRY, SIR. A **FLAG** HAS BEEN PLACED ON THAT RIDDLE. "**PLAYER NON-DISCLOSURE**". LOOKS LIKE YOUR **GM** PAID THE EXTRA TEN DOLLARS TO HAVE THE SOLUTION SAFEGUARDED.

**FIRK DING BLAST!**  
**CLICK!!!**



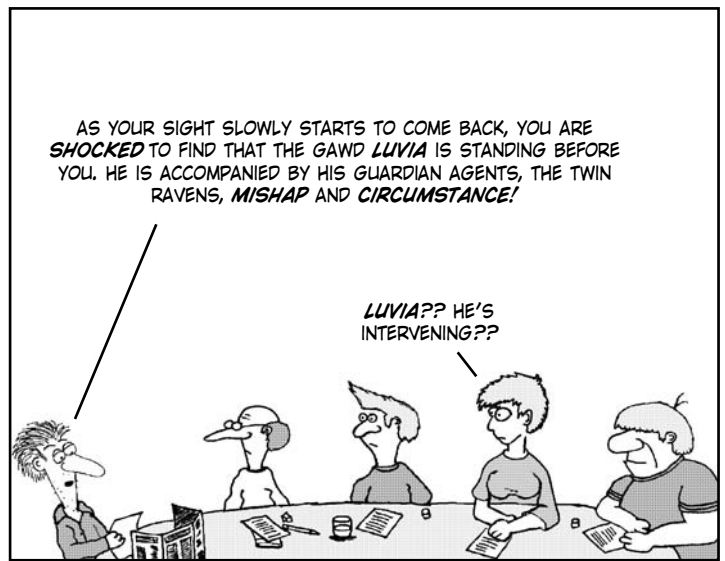
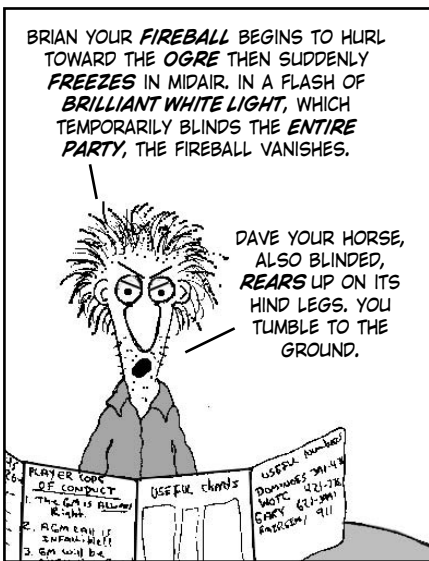
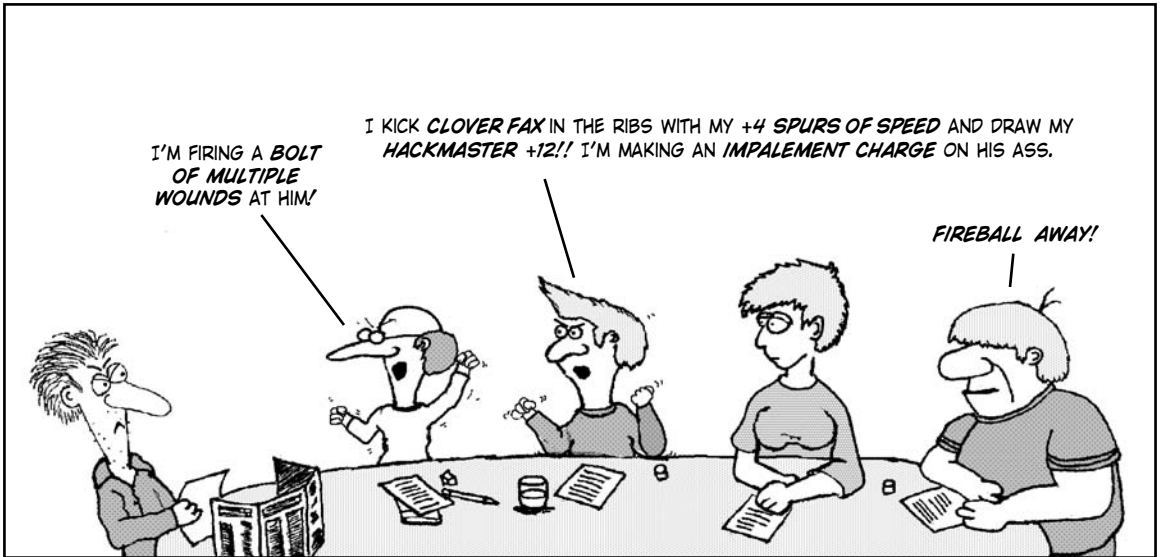
**TEN MINUTES LATER....**

BRIAN? THE **OGRE** IS WAITING. DO YOU HAVE THE ANSWER OR NOT?

QUIT STALLING, BRIAN. IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER YOU **DON'T** KNOW THE ANSWER. **BIG DEAL!** WE JUST **HACK** OUR WAY OUT OF THIS LIKE WE ALWAYS DO.

BRIAN? ARE YOU OKAY?





WHAT KIND OF **SCAM** ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL? HUH? EVERYONE KNOWS **LUVIA** DOESN'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO **INTERVENE** INTO THE AFFAIRS OF **MORTALS**.

**LUVIA** EXPLAINS THAT THE **FLAT-FOOTED OGRE** IS THE **LAST** OF HIS **KIND!** AS SUCH HE HAS BEEN GRANTED THE **GAWD'S** **PERSONAL** **PROTECTION**.

**BIG DEAL!** HE STILL ISN'T ALLOWED TO **INTERFERE**. I **ORDER** HIM TO **STAND ASIDE** OR **SUFFER** THE **CONSEQUENCES**.

UH....**GUYS**. **ACTUALLY**....

"**PATRON GAWD OF ENDANGERED SPECIES**" IS BUT ONE OF MANY TITLES THAT **LUVIA** CARRIES. I'M AFRAID IN THIS SITUATION, **LUVIA** INDEED HAS **INTERVENTION RIGHTS**. AND IT LOOKS LIKE HE BROUGHT **BACK-UP**. **WE'RE SCREWED!!**

NO WAY IN HELL! THAT LAME-ASS TITLE WAS INTRODUCED WHEN **GARY JACKSON** WAS ON THAT **GREEN PEACE** KICK.

YEAH, HE WAS TRYING TO IMPRESS THAT **LINGERIE MODEL** HE WAS DATING AFTER HIS **DIVORCE**.

**BRIAN'S** RIGHT. AND IT'S **OFFICIAL**. **LUVIA** IS HERE TO MAKE SURE YOU **HONOR** YOUR **WAGER** WITH THE **OGRE**. HE **ORDERS** YOU TO **IMMEDIATELY** **HAND OVER** YOUR **HORSES**. AND LET'S NOT FORGET YOU PROMISED TO **DELIVER TEN** MORE **HORSES** WITHIN A **WEEK'S TIME**. **LUVIA** INFORMS YOU THAT **ONE** OF YOU WILL BE HELD AS **COLLATERAL** UNTIL THE REST OF YOU RETURN WITH THE **HORSES**. HE MAKES IT CLEAR THERE WILL BE **NO DISCUSSION** ON THIS. IT **SHALL** BE AS HE HAS **SPOKEN**.

NOW JUST A **DAG GONE** MINUTE. IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT **KNUCKLES' PATRON GAWD** IS **LUVIA**. DOESN'T THAT COUNT FOR **SOMETHING?**

YEAH, WOULDN'T ALL THAT **DEVOTION** AND **WORSHIP** TRANSLATE INTO **PERKS** OF SOME KIND?

GOOD THINKING, **BOB**. **KNUCKLES** HAS CHAMPIONED THE MESSAGE OF **LUVIA** FOR YEARS.

**LUVIA** SCRATCHES HIS HEAD AND LOOKS A BIT CONFUSED. "I'M SORRY. WHAT DID YOU SAY YOUR NAME WAS? **KNUCKLES?** NOPE. SORRY. NEVER HEARD OF YOU. YOU **HAVE** BEEN OBSERVING ALL MY **HOLY DAYS**, **PAYING TITHE** AND **ADHERING** TO THE **CODE OF CONDUCT** PRESCRIBED FOR ALL FOLLOWERS OF MY FAITH **HAVEN'T** YOU?"

**WHATEVER!**

AW DUDE, HE **SLAM DUNKED** YOU! THAT WAS **BRUTAL**.

OKAY SO **LUVIA** WANTS TO KNOW WHO....UH...ER.. **BOB?** IS THERE A **PROBLEM?**

DUDE?? WHAT'CHA DOIN'?

WHATTA YA **THINK** I'M DOING? I SCRATCHING THAT **BASTARD** OFF MY **CHARACTER SHEET**. IF YOUR **PATRON GAWD** WON'T **STAND** IN YOUR **CORNER** - WHAT **GOOD** IS HE?

ERASE!! ERASE!!

SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE!

*FINE!* THAT'S JUST GREAT. *LUVIA* WAS JUST ABOUT TO ASK *WHICH* ONE OF YOU WOULD BE STAYING BEHIND AS A *MARKER* BUT IT LOOKS LIKE *BOB* HAS *JUST* VOLUNTEERED. WITH A WAVE OF HIS HAND AND A CRACK OF THUNDER, A STREAK OF SWIRLING CRIMSON BALL ENERGY SURROUNDS *BOB*... ER, *KNICKLES*. THERE'S A BIT OF STATIC HISS AND A DISTURBING CRACKLING SOUND AND THEN THE ENERGY DISSIPATES REVEALING THAT *BOB* HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A SMALL LUMP OF COAL.

HUH? WHAT THE HELL IS HE PICKING ON *ME* FOR?

HMMMMMM...WHAT TYPE OF COAL WOULD THAT BE, B.A.? BITUMINOUS OR ANTHRACITE?

OH MAN, HE DID YOU *WRONG*, *BOB*.

BITUMINOUS OR ANTHRACITE? *BRIAN*, WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

WELL, DEPENDING IF THERE ARE ANY INDUSTRIAL CENTERS IN THE REGION - ABOUT 2 TO 5 COPPER PIECES A TON.

AN *HOURLASS* APPEARS OVER THE LUMP OF COAL AS IF HANGING ON AN INVISIBLE THREAD. *LUVIA* TURNS IT OVER AND YOU CAN SEE THE SAND BEGINS TO POUR. "THE SAND WILL STOP POURING EXACTLY *SEVEN DAYS* FROM *THIS HOUR*," PROCLAIMS THE *GAWD*. "IF YOU HAVE *NOT DELIVERED TEN HORSES* BY *THAT TIME* - *DEATH AWAITS* YOUR FRIEND." *LUVIA* SWEEPS HIS HAND AND A SMALL *BRICK FORGE* FILLED WITH *FLAMES* APPEARS TO HIS LEFT. "IF YOU *FAIL TO HONOR* YOUR WAGER, YOUR FRIEND SHALL BE CAST INTO THE FORGE AND HIS *SOUL* WILL BE *CONSUMED!*"

YOU *GOT* TO BE KIDDING!! JUST BECAUSE WE CHOSE TO *TALK* WITH THIS GUY INSTEAD OF FIGHTING IT OUT I'M FACING *ETERNAL DEATH*?

MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DIS'ED HIM *BOB*.

DON'T WORRY *BOB*. IT SHOULD BE A *CINCH* TO FIND *TEN HORSES* AND BRING THEM BACK.

### A WEE BIT LATER....

I'M SORRY *BOB*. AS A *LUMP OF COAL* YOU HAVE A MOVEMENT FACTOR OF *ZERO*. I'M AFRAID YOU CAN'T USE YOUR "*SLIP AWAY INTO SHADOWS*" SKILL.

AND *ALL* THIS TIME WE THOUGHT *LUVIA* WAS A *WUSS GAWD!* HE'S PRETTY KEWL FOR SOME *BLIND DUDE*, HUH?

WE'D BETTER HIT THE ROAD. THE QUICKER WE ROUND UP THOSE HORSES, THE QUICKER WE GET BACK.

*THIS BLOWS!* -SOB- I TOLD YOU GUYS WE SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THAT *OGRE* -SNIFF- OUT. IT'S CALLED *HACKMASTER* NOT *YACKMASTER*. -SOB-

OKAY BY ME, MAN, THAT WAS *COAL-HEARTED* WHAT HE DID TO *BOB*. *HAR HAR!*

# A HORSE IS A HORSE

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

AS YOU APPROACH **BADGER FALLS** YOU ARE **VERY** SURPRISED TO SEE THAT **DOZENS** OF **CENTAURS** ARE ROAMING ABOUT THE STREETS. THE TOWN SEEMS REALLY DIFFERENT. IN FACT...UH..ER... BOB? WILL YOU PLEASE TURN YOUR CHAIR AROUND AND SIT IN IT THE WAY YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO. I'VE TOLD YOU **TWICE** ABOUT IT. MY MOM PUT ME ON NOTICE - IF YOU GUYS BREAK **ONE** MORE CHAIR - **NO MORE** GAMING IN THE HOUSE.

I CAN'T HELP IT. I'M **BORED** TO TEARS OVER HERE. I CAME FOR A LITTLE **HACK-N-SLASH** TONIGHT. NOT TO PLAY SOME FRICKIN' **LUMP OF COAL!**

DON'T WORRY DUDE. I **KNOW** BADGER FALLS HAS HORSES.

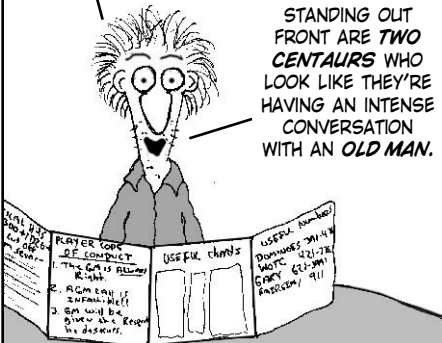
STRANGE HOW **NONE** OF THE DOZEN OR SO TOWNS WE'VE VISITED THIS FAR HAVE HAD ANY HORSES. AND WHAT'S WITH THE **CENTAURS?**

WHO CARES? WE NEED TO HURRY. WE'VE ALREADY WASTED **THREE DAYS**. BOB'S TIME IS **RUNNING** SHORT. I DON'T THINK THAT **LUVIA-DUDE** WAS BLUFFING.



YOU NOTICE A SIGN HANGING OVER A SET OF **STABLE DOORS** THAT READS "**HORSES BOUGHT, SOLD AND TRADED!**"

STANDING OUT FRONT ARE **TWO CENTAURS** WHO LOOK LIKE THEY'RE HAVING AN INTENSE CONVERSATION WITH AN **OLD MAN**.



AGAIN WITH THE **CENTAURS**. I WONDER WHAT THE HELL THEY'RE DOING IN TOWN?

I'M GOING TO TRY AND LISTEN IN ON THEIR CONVERSATION. DO I PICK UP ANY USEFUL INFO?

CENTAURS INTERACTING WITH HUMANS? THIS IS **TOO** STRANGE. SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED. BUT WHAT?

ONCE AGAIN, I'LL REMIND YOU BOB THAT **YOU** AREN'T WITH THE GROUP. YOU CAN'T PERFORM ANY ACTIONS.

I HATE TO INTERRUPT THEM BUT I'LL ASK THE **OLD MAN** IF HE HAS ANY HORSES.



"DO I HAVE ANY HORSES?" THE OLD MAN **LAUGHS** AT YOUR QUESTION AS DO THE TWO CENTAURS. HE WIPES THE TEARS OF LAUGHTER FROM HIS EYES AND PATS YOU ON THE SHOULDER. "THANKS MISTER! THANK YOU FOR REMINDING ME NOT TO LOSE MY **SENSE OF HUMOR**. I HAVEN'T LAUGHED IN MONTHS."

I PUSH PAST HIM AND ENTER THE STABLES. I'M GOING TO CALL **DIBS** ON THE **BIGGEST DAMN HORSE** HE HAS. MAYBE THAT **OGRE** WILL SWAP ME BACK **CLOVER FAX** FOR HIM.

SINCE THE OLD MAN SEEMS SO FRIENDLY, I ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE HIM AND THE CENTAURS IN CONVERSATION. MAYBE I CAN LEARN SOMETHING.

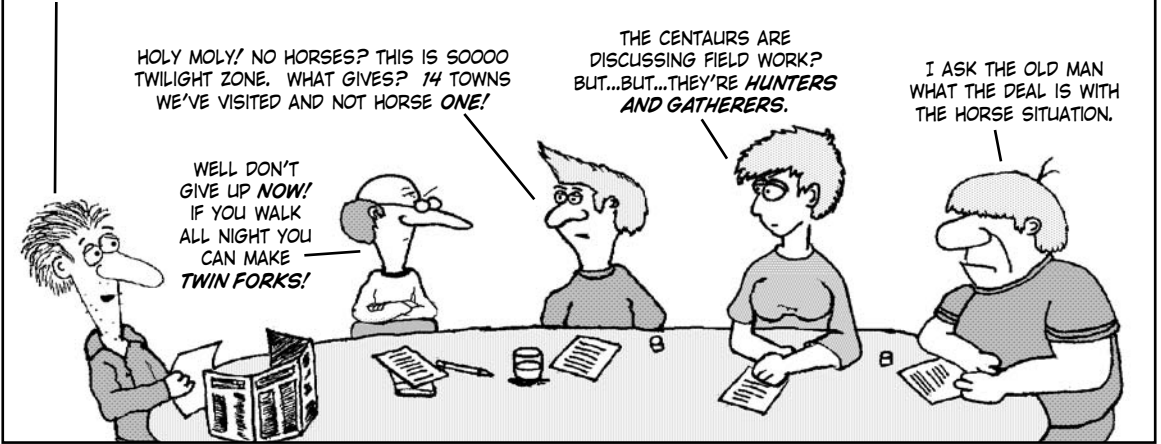
GREAT. **TALKIN'** IS WHAT GOT US IN THIS **FIX!**

I BET HE WOULDN'T BE SO QUICK TO LAUGH IF **KNUCKLES** WAS STANDING THERE.



\*See Tales From the Vault: Volume II: page 14 [After B.A. bases the town of Badger Falls on Mayberry from the television series, the group becomes so enamored with the town and its citizens that they refuse to leave.]

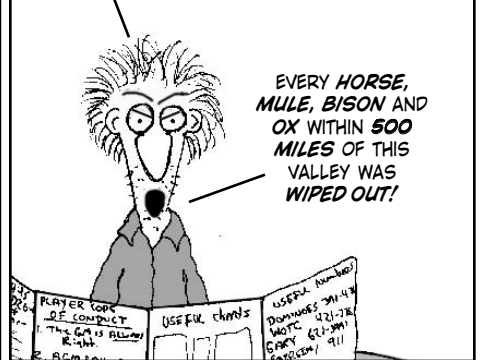
SORRY DAVE, AS YOU STROLL THROUGH THE STABLE YOU DISCOVER **ALL** OF THE **STALLS** ARE EMPTY. THERE'S NOT A **SINGLE HORSE** ON THE PREMISES. SARA, YOU LEARN FROM THE **OLD MAN** THAT HE AND THE **CENTAURS** WERE DISCUSSING HOW THE **FIELD WORK** SHOULD BE PRIORITIZED DURING THE UPCOMING **HARVEST**.



HE SEEMS VERY SURPRISED THAT YOU DON'T KNOW. HE ALMOST STARTS TO LAUGH AGAIN BUT THEN HE SENSES THE SINCERITY OF YOUR QUESTION. "YOU MEAN YOU HAVEN'T HEARD? WHY...WHY, THE **PLAGUE OF THE BOUND SPECTRE** WIPED THEM ALL OUT LAST SUMMER."



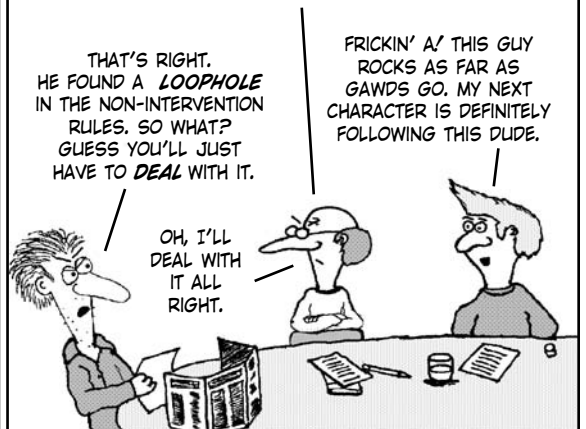
THAT'S RIGHT YOU **MORONS!** YOUR **PAST** HAS FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH YOU. BY **TORCHING** THE **TEMPLE** YOU **FREED** THE **SPECTRE** AND SET HIM **LOOSE** UPON THE LAND TO SPREAD HIS **VILE DISEASE**. WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, ONLY AFFECTS **BEASTS OF BURDEN**.



WITHIN 500 MILES???!  
**NO HORSES???!** BUT THAT MEANS...



OOOOHHH, **NOW**, I GET IT. THIS ISN'T ABOUT SOME **STUPID WAGER** AT ALL. THIS IS ABOUT ME PUTTING THE TORCH TO **LUVIA'S TEMPLE**. PRETTY SNEAKY FOR SOME **GAWD WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE LAWFUL-ASS-GOOD!**



\* See KODT#31: Missing Out Big Time [The guys burn down Hagley Town along with the Temple of Luvia.]

THE OLD MAN EXPLAINS THAT WHEN THE HORSES BEGAN DYING OUT THE **CENTAURS OF THE PELAR MOUNTAINS** GATHERED TOGETHER AND TOOK A VOTE. THEY DECIDED TO HELP THE FARMERS OF **BADGER FALLS** CULTIVATE THEIR FIELDS AND GATHER UP THE HARVEST.

KUDOS, **B.A.** ON COMING UP WITH SUCH A WONDERFUL PLOT DEVICE. BUT I DIDN'T THINK **CENTAURS** WERE THAT INTERESTED IN THE WELFARE OF HUMANS.

INITIALLY, THEY WEREN'T. BUT, THEY BECAME AFRAID WIDE-SPREAD FAMINE WOULD CAUSE HUMANS TO ENCROACH UPON THEIR HUNTING GROUNDS.



HMMRRRRFFF!! YOU CAN BE SURE THESE **CENTAURS** ARE MAKING A **HEFTY** PROFIT ON THE DEAL. I BET THEY'RE MAKING OUT LIKE BANDITS. **DAMN!** TOO BAD WE DIDN'T GET IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR. I'D **LOVE** A PIECE OF **THAT** ACTION.

WELL WITH **ALL** THE HORSES PUSHING UP **DAISIES** IN THESE PARTS, IT LOOKS LIKE **BOB** IS **TOAST!** LITERALLY!

YEAH, WELL, WE TRIED OUR... **PUSHING UP DAISIES??!!**



**JUMPIN' BAJEEMERS!!** WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH ME? I ALMOST THREW IN THE TOWEL AND THE **SOLUTION** WAS STARING US RIGHT IN THE FACE. **BOBBY-BOY**, THE FATES HAVE NOT FORSAKEN YOU.

DON'T LEAVE ME, HANGIN', DUDE. WHAT'S GOING ON?

**SOLUTION??!!** UH....DID I MISS SOMETHING?

I HAVE TO GIVE **DAVE** CREDIT FOR **JOGGIN'** THE OL' BEAN.



OUR **WAGER** NEVER SPECIFIED IF THE HORSES HAD TO BE **ALIVE AND KICKIN'!**

ALL WE GOTTA DO IS DIG UP **TEN** HORSE CARCASSES AND WE'RE **GOLDEN!**



**HOODY HOO!!**

BRIAN YOU DA MAN!  
I COULD KISS YOU.  
**IN YER FACE LUVIA!!**

I'VE SAID IT ONCE AND I'LL SAY IT AGAIN - YOU'RE A **GAWD**, DUDE. I CALL DIBS ON TELLIN' THIS STORY AT THE NEXT **BRAGGIN' RIGHTS NIGHT** AT **WEIRD PETE'S!**

AWH, HELL. I SHOULD'VE SEEN IT RIGHT OFF. I MUST BE SLIPPING.

OH NO, BRIAN. YOU **STILL** GOT THE TOUCH.



HA! HA! REAL CLEVER BUT YOU'RE FORGETTING SOMETHING. HOW THE HELL ARE YOU GOING TO HAUL **FIVE TONS OF DEAD HORSES OVER THREE OVERLAND HEXES** IN THE **FOUR DAYS** YOU HAVE REMAINING? AND WITHOUT ANY **BEASTS OF BURDEN** TO HELP YOU? HUH, WISE GUYS? LOOKS LIKE THE **LAUGH** IS ON YOU!

DAMN! I DIDN'T THINK OF THAT. THERE'S GOTTA BE A WAY.

EL RAVAGER CAN LIFT 500 LBS CLEAN OVER HIS HEAD!!

THERE **IS** A WAY! WE JUST HIRE A GAGGLE OF THESE **CENTAURS** AND HITCH THEM UP TO A FEW WAGONS. THEN WE **RIDE** BACK TO RETRIEVE **KNUCKLES** IN STYLE.

THANK GAWD YOU'RE ON **OUR** SIDE, BIG GUY. FOR A SECOND THERE I THOUGHT **B.A.** HAD OUTWITTED US.

SHY'A-RIGHT! IN HIS **DREAMS!**

MAYBE WE CAN TAKE SOME **EXTRA** DEAD HORSES WITH US. I'D **STILL** LIKE TO TRY AND SWAP 'EM FOR **CLOVER FAX**.

### THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

OH FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! THE **CENTAURS** AGREE TO **ONE HUNDRED GOLD** APIECE FOR THE JOB. BUT THEY DEMAND **HALF PAYMENT** UP FRONT. THEY'RE NOT TOO **KEEN** ON PULLING WAGONS, SO THEY DEMAND YOU HIRE **FOUR EXTRA CENTAURS** SO THEY CAN **ROTATE** THE WORK.

I KNEW THEY'D CAVE IN. LET'S GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD. I'D LIKE TO GET BACK IN ACTION AND DO A LITTLE **HACKIN'** BEFORE THE **ENTIRE EVENING** IS SHOT TO HELL.

HEY, B.A.! I'M GONNA PAY **RUDY** AN EXTRA **FIFTY** IN GOLD TO LET ME **SADDLE** HIM UP AND RIDE HIM. I ALREADY BOUGHT DRINKS FOR HIM AT THE **TAVERN** AND STUFF SO HE SHOULD BE DOWN WITH THAT.

YOU'RE RIDING A CENTAUR?

ALL RIGHT BOYS, LET'S GET TO THAT **GRAVEL PIT** AND LOAD UP THOSE DEAD HORSES.

### LATER THAT NIGHT...

**RUDY** FIRES ONE LAST ARROW AT THE FLEEING **HIGHWAYMEN**. HE STRIKES ONE OF THEM SQUARE IN THE BACK CAUSING HIM TO FALL, CRASHING TO THE GROUND ON HIS FACE. **RUDY** ORDERS TWO **CENTAURS** TO RIDE FORTH AND RETRIEVE ANY WEAPONS AND VALUABLES ON THE WOUNDED AND DEAD.

HEY, THAT **RUDY-DUDE** HAS A **GOOD AIM**. HE MADE SHORT WORK OF THOSE GOONS.

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT. I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO DRAW MY SWORD.

THAT LITTLE **AMBUSH** PUSHED US BEHIND SCHEDULE. WE'VE ONLY GOT **8 HOURS** TO GET THESE **HORSES** TO **LUVIA** BEFORE OUR TIME IS UP.

**LATER STILL...**

**LUVIA** YIELDS TO YOU. EVEN THOUGH IT WAS IN THE **SPIRIT** OF YOUR WAGER WITH THE **OGRE** THAT YOU WOULD DELIVER **LIVE** HORSES, HE CONVINCES THE **OGRE** TO ACCEPT THE **DEAD** ONES YOU'VE ARRIVED WITH. -SIGH- WITH A WAVE OF HIS HAND THE **LUMP OF COAL** IS TRANSFORMED INTO **KNUCKLES** - APPARENTLY UNSCATHED BY HIS ORDEAL. THEN IN A **FLASH** OF BRILLIANT LIGHT THE **GAWD** DISAPPEARS.

UNSCATHED MY ASS!  
I'M **TORQUED!!**  
SOMETHING'S  
GONNA DIE!

**HA!** GOOD THING HE FLED WHEN HE DID.  
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO DO SOME  
SERIOUS **WHOPPING** ON HIS BUTT!



HEY, B.A.! I WANT TO DOUBLE-CHECK.  
**LUVIA** HAS DEPARTED THE AREA - RIGHT?



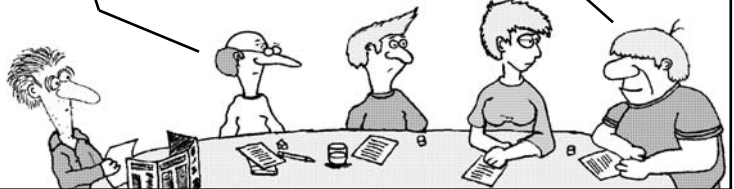
THAT'S RIGHT. **LUVIA** HAS  
VACATED THE AREA. UNLIKE YOU,  
HE HAS **HONOR!** HE MADE A  
DEAL AND HE'S STICKING TO IT.



KEWL! I'M CASTING A **GRASPING-DEATH SPELL** ON THE **OGRE**.  
I'M SACRIFICING **ONE EXPERIENCE LEVEL** TO KICK IN THE SPELL'S  
**AUTOMATIC KILL** FEATURE. THERE'S **NO SAVE**. SCRATCH ONE  
**FLAT-FOOTED OGRE!**

BRIAN! DUDE! HAVE YOU GONE  
NUTS? YOU'RE GOING TO BRING  
**LUVIA** BACK DOWN ON OUR BUTTS.

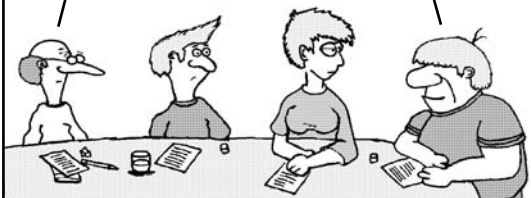
NOT LIKELY. ACCORDING TO THE **GAWDS  
AND DEITIES MANUAL**, **LUVIA** CAN ONLY  
INTERVENE **ONCE** ON THE BEHALF OF ANY  
**ONE** PLAYER, CREATURE OR NPC UNDER THAT  
LAME-ASS 'SPECIES ERRADICATION' CLAUSE.  
**HA!** **LUVIA** CAN'T TOUCH US! HE **BLEW IT!**



BUT...BUT....YOU SACRIFICED  
AN **EXPERIENCE LEVEL!!**

**WHY??!!**

YOU ASK WHY? 'COS ACCORDING TO THE  
**HACKLOPEDIA OF BEASTS** KILLING OFF  
ANY **MONSTER** WHICH IS THE **LAST** OF  
ITS KIND KICKS UP ITS EXPERIENCE POINT  
VALUE BY A MAGNITUDE OF 100.



THAT MEANS I LOSE **ONE LEVEL** BUT EARN ENOUGH **E.P.S** TO  
GAIN **TWO LEVELS!** NOT TO MENTION I LAY CLAIM TO THAT  
**MATTOCK OF OGRE KIND!!** IS THAT KEWL OR WHAT?

ALL BOW BEFORE  
THE GLORIOUS  
BRIAN! HIS  
**POWER** IS GREAT!

THIS IS **MOVIE**  
MATERIAL. AND IT  
HAPPENED **RIGHT**  
**HERE**. I'M SO  
PROUD TO HAVE  
BEEN A PART OF IT.

IT'S LIKE I SAID.  
IT **ALL** WORKS  
OUT AFTER THE  
**HACKING** IS  
DONE!



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AH HA!! I KNEW YOUR *SNEAKY-ASSES* WERE UP TO *SOMETHING!* WHAT *BUSINESS* DO YOU HAVE WITH THE *MERCHANT LEAGUE* THAT CAN'T BE CONDUCTED AT THE TABLE? HUH?

BRIAN, SARA - I'LL GRAB A SODA AND MEET YOU ON THE BACK PORCH AND WE CAN GO OVER YOUR PROPOSALS.

I *DEMAND* TO KNOW WHAT YOU TWO ARE UP TO!

Y'KNOW, YOU TWO ARE THE MOST *IGNOBLE* ROYALTY I'VE EVER COME ACROSS!

I TIRE OF YOUR INCES-SANT BARKING. YOU'RE LIKE A DOG WITHOUT TEETH. YOU MAKE A LOT OF NOISE BUT YOU NEVER GET THE BONE!



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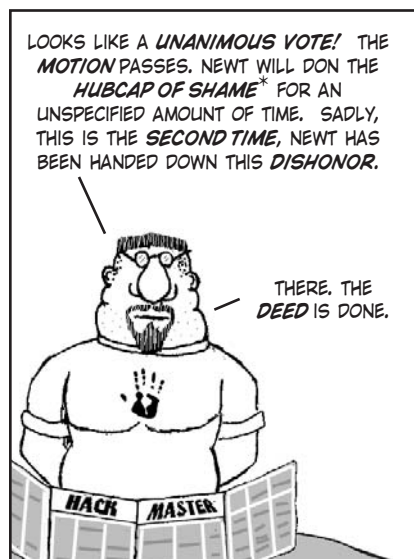
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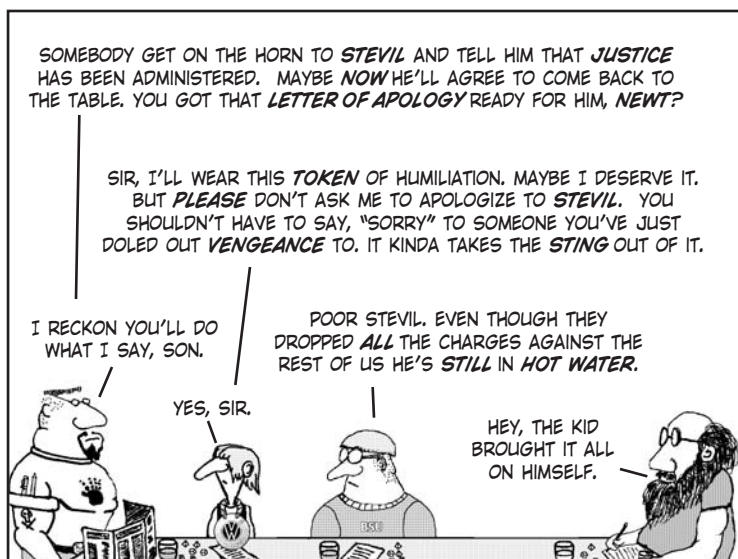
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# A MUTE POINT

STORY BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN AND STEVE JOHANSSON



THERE. THE DEED IS DONE.



I RECKON YOU'LL DO WHAT I SAY, SON.

YES, SIR.

POOR STEVIL. EVEN THOUGH THEY DROPPED ALL THE CHARGES AGAINST THE REST OF US HE'S STILL IN HOT WATER.

HEY, THE KID BROUGHT IT ALL ON HIMSELF.



AREN'T YOU GOING TO CALL HIM, PETE?

NO NEED TO CALL HIM. HE'S SITTING OUTSIDE IN HIS CAR WAITING FOR THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE. I'LL GO GET HIM.



HOW'S THAT HUBCAP FEEL ON YOUR NECK, BOY?

HEY, YOU'RE AN ABBA FAN TOO? I HAVE ALL THEIR ALBUMS.

\* See KODT#23: A Man Outstanding in His Field [The Black Hands make Newt wear the Hubcap of Shame for all the bad press generated by his 'lost in the steam tunnel' hoax.]

**OUT BACK OF PETE'S SHOP...**

HEY, MISTER HAPPY DISPOSITION-BOY! YOU'RE WANTED INSIDE.

IS HE WEARING IT?

AND NO JOKES ABOUT THE DANCING THING - RIGHT?

YOU BET! SEEP? I TOLD YOU **BLACK HAND JUSTICE** WOULD STAND BEHIND YOU ON THIS THING.

YOU'RE SAFE. C'MON ON INSIDE SON.

CAN YOU UNDO MY SEAT BELT? THESE **BANDAGES** KEEP GETTING IN THE WAY.

OH SURE. AND MAYBE YOU WANT ME TO **WIPE** YOUR NOSE AND PACK YOU A **SACK LUNCH** WHILE I'M AT IT.

JUST HELP ME WITH MY GAWD DAMN **SEAT BELT!!** ALL RIGHT, **LARD HEAD?**

TSK, TSK. WELL NOW YOU'VE GONE AND OFFENDED ME.

**A FEW MINUTES LATER...**

SO???! WHERE'S **STEVIL?**

HE'S COMING. **SQUIRRELY** FOUND OUT **STEVIL'S** DEFENSELESS WITH HIS HANDS ALL BANDAGED UP LIKE THAT. HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION.

**SQUIRRELY** WON'T HURT HIM WILL HE?

NAAAAAAAA! HE GOT WHAT HE WANTED. HE TOOK **STEVIL'S** **WALLET** AND **INHALER** AND CRAWLED DOWN THE **HEATING DUCT**.

**STEVIL** DIDN'T CRAWL IN AFTER HIM DID HE? I TRIED THAT ONCE AND HE GRABBED MY GLASSES AND GAVE ME **REVERSE-WEDGIE**

NO, **STEVIL'S** TRYING TO FLUSH HIM OUT WITH THE **FIRE EXTINGUISHER**.

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, **PETE**. CAN YOU GO BREAK THOSE TWO UP? THEY'RE HOLDING UP THE....ER...NEVER MIND.

**HERE HE COMES, NOW!**

DON'T WORRY **STEEVO!** I'LL LURE HIM OUT WITH SOME **MOON PIES** TOMORROW AND GET YOUR STUFF BACK.

YEAH? WELL THAT **APE** JUST MADE MY **LIST!** AND YOU TOO. YOU PICKED THE **WRONG** FRICKIN' NIGHT TO **MESS** WITH ME.

HEY **STEVIL**. YOU WANT I SHOULD ROLL YER DICE FOR YOU TONIGHT?

AWWWW, C'MON, **MITTEN PAWS!** YOU SHOULDN'T OUTTA TALK TO YOUR **FRIEND** LIKE THAT.

NO, **GORDO**, I DON'T. I WANT YOU **SHOULD** KEEP YOUR **MOUTH SHUT** AND NOT TALK TO ME. THINK YOU CAN DO THAT?

HEEEYYYY! WHY YOU **SORE** AT ME? I'M THE **ONLY** ONE WHO VISITED YOU IN THE HOSPITAL AND ALL. SHEESH!

YEAH, BUT YOU ATE ALL MY FRICKIN' **TAPIOCA PUDDING** WHILE I WAS ASLEEP!

WELL IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE YOU HAD TOUCHED IT...

OKAY, FOLKS. THE GAME IS *HACKMASTER* TONIGHT. A **BRAND NEW BEGINNING!** NEW CHARACTERS. A **FRESH CLEAN SLATE.** THAT MEANS **NO GRUDGES OR HARD FEELINGS BETWEEN CHARACTERS.** DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?

AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED THE SCORE IS **EVEN** NOW. I GOT NO PROBLEMS WITH STARTING FRESH.

**DITTO** ON THAT. I'M WITH YA, **NITRO.**

OH YEAH! A **NEW HOPE.** A **NEW BEGINNING!**

CAN WE JUST DISPENSE WITH THE **LECTURE** AND GET ON WITH THE GAME?



I ASKED EVERYONE TO GO AHEAD AND ROLL UP **NEW CHARACTERS** THIS WEEK TO SAVE TIME. SO, LET'S GO AHEAD AND QUICKLY REVIEW THEM. **NEW?** WHY DON'T YOU GO AHEAD AND INTRODUCE YOURS.

MY CHARACTER'S NAME IS **WIND DRIFTER.** HE'S **HALF-ELF.** HE USED TO BE A HIGHLY REVERED **SAILOR** WHO PLIED THE TRADE WATERS OF THE **SCOWNZDORN.** BUT HE LEFT ALL THAT BEHIND WHEN HIS SHIP STRUCK A REEF AND WENT TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA WITH **ALL HANDS.** HE WAS THE **SOLE SURVIVOR** AND SET OUT TO...

FINE, FINE, I'VE HEARD ENOUGH. GOOD CHARACTER. **NEXT??!!**

BUT I DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO GO INTO HIS **LINEAGE** AND **SOCIAL STANDING...**



UH...MY CHARACTER'S NAME IS **BLUESHINE GOSSAMER** - **BLUE** FOR SHORT. SHE'S ORIGINALLY FROM **DIDDLEWOOD** AND SHE'S A...

OH **GOOD LORD!** NOT AGAIN! ANOTHER **PIXIE-FAERIE?** A FREAKIN' **FEMALE PIXIE-FAERIE??** **GORDO!** SON! DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE OF PACE?

I **AM** TRYING SOMETHING NEW. THIS TIME **INSTEAD** OF A **PIXIE-FAERIE FIGHTER** I'M RUNNING A **PIXIE-FAERIE MAGE.**



-SIGH- I WAS **HOPING** WITH A **NEW CAMPAIGN** AND ALL YOU GUYS WOULD HAVE SEEN FIT TO HAVE COME UP WITH SOME **ORIGINAL CHARACTERS.** SO FAR IT'S THE **SAME OLD CRAP** IN NEW PACKAGING. OKAY, **STEVIL,** LET'S HEAR ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER.

BUT SIR, **WIND DRIFTER** IS **VERY ORIGINAL.** YOU SEE, HE TURNED HIS BACK ON THE SEA AND NOW HE WANDERS AROUND THE LAND LOOKING FOR A **NEW CALLING.** OF COURSE THIS LEADS HIM TO....

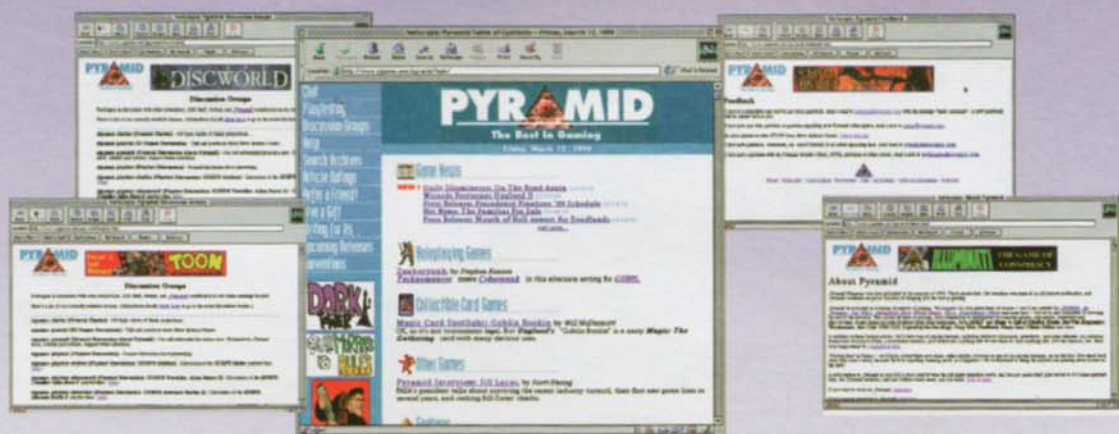
**BLUESHINE** IS ALSO A MASTER OF **FAERIE KIND MARTIAL ARTS!** AND SHE HAS A **GINGER MOTH** AS A MOUNT. DON'T YOU THINK **THAT'S ORIGINAL?**

HMMRRFFF! SOUNDS MORE LIKE A **BREAKFAST CEREAL MASCOT** THAN A **HIGH FANTASY RPG CHARACTER.**

I THINK YOU'LL LIKE **MY CHARACTER, NITRO.** CHECK IT OUT....



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# PYRAMID

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MY CHARACTER IS A **MUTE**. HE **NEVER** SPEAKS. HE'S JUST ABOUT THE MOST **MYSTERIOUS** FIGURE YOU'RE EVER LIKELY TO MEET. HE WEARS A **BLACK VELVET** ROBE WITH A **DEEP HOOD** WHICH HE KEEPS PULLED LOW OVER HIS FACE. ON HIS LEFT WRIST THE WORD "**PAYBACK**" IS TATTOOED IN THE MANNER OF THE **GREL SHADOW WARRIOR**. LIKEWISE, ON HIS RIGHT WRIST APPEARS THE PHRASE, "**UNBRIDLED WRATH**"

WELL THAT'S CERTAINLY A **STRANGE** CHARACTER. WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW ABOUT HIM?

TRUST ME. I'VE TOLD YOU **EVERYTHING** YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HIM.

UH, ER, WHAT'S HIS NAME?

HE DOESN'T HAVE ONE. I DON'T EXPECT HIM TO **LIVE** LONG ENOUGH FOR HIM TO GET ANY **USE** OUT OF HAVING A NAME.

THEN I'LL JUST CALL HIM **JOHNNY PAYBACK**.

STEVEIL, I SURE HOPE YOU'RE NOT PLANNING ON DOING WHAT I **THINK** YOU'RE PLANNING ON DOING. EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED AT THIS TABLE IN THE PAST IS **WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE!** I WON'T TOLERATE ANY MORE **GRUDGE-KILLINGS**

HEY, I'LL JUST BE PLAYING MY CHARACTER THE WAY I ROLLED HIM. A **MUTE PSYCHOPATH** WHO DOESN'T KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **FRIEND** AND **VICTIM**. JUST DON'T TURN YOUR BACK ON HIM AND EVERYTHING WILL BE **HUNKY DORY**.

I DON'T THINK **WIND DRIFTER** LIKES THE **MUTE**.

WE **ARE** TALKING ABOUT YOUR **CHARACTER**- RIGHT?

LOOKS LIKE WE GOT A **GAME!**

OH SURE.

### AFTER THE GAME...

YOU COULD HAVE AT LEAST LET ME FINISH READING THE INTRO TO THE ADVENTURE **BEFORE** INTERRUPTING AND YELLING, "**LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MY LITTLE FRIEND!**" AND RUNNING **NEWT** THROUGH WITH A **POISONED DAGGER!**

I **WAS** PLANNING TO WAIT UNTIL LATER IN THE ADVENTURE BUT THAT DAMNED **ABBA** SONG PUSHED ME OVER THE EDGE.

YOU **DID** WARN HIM **NITRO**. ONLY SEEMS FAIR.

HEEEEEY, YOU SAID YOU WERE **MUTE!**

♪♪ AND WHEN YOU GET THE CHANCE  
YOU ARE THE DANCING QUEEN  
YOUNG AND SWEET, ONLY SEVENTEEN  
DANCING QUEEN FEEL THE BEAT FROM THE TAMBOURINE  
OH YEAH ♪♪

# SHARDAR

story and art Manny Vega

GO BOY!  
TAKE THE OLD MAN  
AND GO! I WILL  
HOLD THEM HERE...  
GO NOW!







PERHAPS I HAVE MISJUDGED YOU.

COLD DEATH CANNOT BE DEFEATED, ONLY DELAYED...



COME, LET US REJOIN OUR ALLIES. THIS WAS INDEED A GREAT BATTLE, SONGS WILL BE SLUNG ABOUT OUR VICTORY!

I RENDER MY SOUL TO COLD DEATH...



THE PLAY MASTER...

KENNAD...



THE PRINCE OF SUFFERING...



THE SCOURGE OF TELLENE...




LIFE



IS



PAIN.



The Shields  
of  
Bandran

IN ORDER TO RETURN THE SACRED SEALS OF LUDA TO THEIR RIGHTFUL HEIR, PRINCE KIRASI IN THE DUCHY OF BANDRAN, OUR THREE HEROES HAVE ENTERED THE RUINS OF A LOST CIVILIZATION WHICH HAS BECOME THE DEN OF A PACK OF FEROCIOUS WO-LAR-GRAS.

HISSESSS...

JUST WHAT I FEARED WOULD HAPPEN! THE WO-LAR-GRAS ARE FORCING US TO SEPARATE.

PUT YOUR TAIL BETWEEN YOUR LEGS AND SLINK OFF TO HELL YOU FLEA RIDDEN CUR!



WAIT...I'VE JUST RECALLED THE ONE THING THESE CREATURES FEAR.

KA-KANG!



FIRE!! LORALE, POSEN, THEY HATE FIRE.



GAREN'S INFORMATION ARRIVES TOO LATE FOR LORALE.

AAHHHH!!

HISS...CHOMP!!



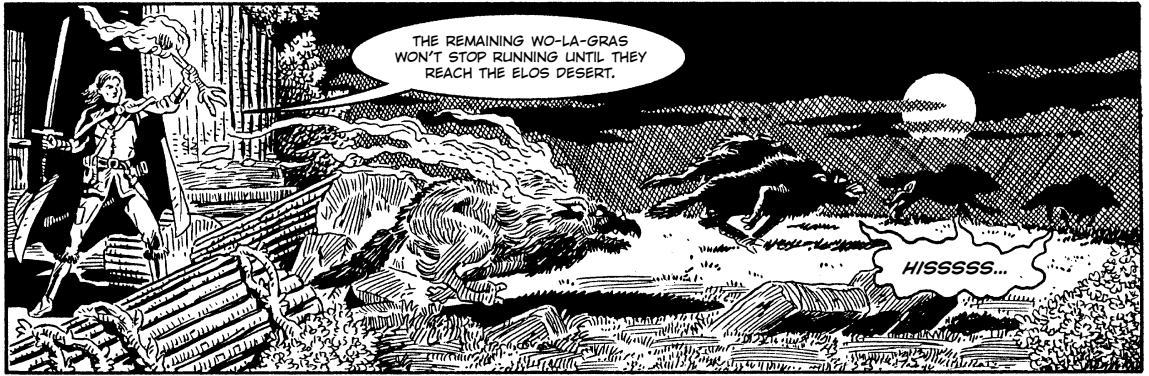
GAREFUL WITH THAT GAREN OR YOU'LL SET ALL THESE RUINS ABLAZE!

AND I SUPPOSE YOU WOULD PREFER TO BE EATEN?



POINT MADE. TAKE THIS FOUL BEAST!

HISSSSS...





# Rick's Rants

By Rick Moscatello

Last time around, I told you about a few games that were much better than you might think from looking at the box or reading the ads. This time around, let's discuss some games that just didn't measure up to the hype and promise that "the good stuff" is supposed to have.

First, let's mention an older game that should hit the discount racks any day now, Sid Meier's **Alpha Centauri** (*optimistically abbreviated SMAC*). Sid Meier is the genius behind **Civilization**, an awesome game that led to **Civilization II**, with most of the improvements of the latter coming from Brian Reynolds. **Civ II** spent a long time on my hard drive, and with every crash, it was one of the few games that I always reinstalled. **SMAC** was billed as "the new *Civ*," and while it is a worthy game, it is no **Civ II**, going wrong in so many ways.

Where **Civ II** had a strong "discover the world" feel to it with every game, **SMAC**, which takes place on an alien world, somehow manages to get the "I've done this all before" feeling after only a few games. It's hard to explain why, but the fact that there are only two terrain types (fungus and non-fungus) might have something to do with it. **SMAC** has a new technology tree, but the technology is so arbitrary that it's hard to relate to. Building a *Wonder Of The World* is also obscure—which of "Cure for Cancer" (from **Civ II**) and "Human Genome Project" (from **SMAC**) sounds like more of an achievement, and would really make people happy? Amazingly enough, they have the exact same effect, giving you an extra happy person (or "Talent") in every city. This brings up another problem—the game is all too similar to **Civ II**. Veterans of the classic will spend their first game realizing that "oh, *Energy is Money*, and *Probe Teams are Diplomats*," then they'll realize that there's less new about the game than first meets the eye. A bit more time changing the game and less time just changing the names would have been appreciated. The final disappointment? Even though Sid's name is slathered across the front, a look at the credits reveals this game is Brian Reynolds' baby. Sid actually whored out his name for increased sales, and I can't help but be slightly offended.

**SMAC** is a good game, worthy of a half dozen plays, but when my hard drive crashed, I saw no reason to put it back on. Despite all the hype, it was just another game.

**Might and Magic VI** was the most fun I've had with a computer RPG in years — the best game since **Bard's Tale**. Despite its huge size, I played it

through twice, not something one usually does with an RPG. Thus, I was plenty hyped to play **Might and Magic VII**. They blew it.

There are only minor improvements to the engine and game rules, and this game would be better off labeled as **Might and Magic 6.1** than giving it a whole new number. Yes, I would have bought it as an expansion (*which is what it really is*), and then I wouldn't have been disappointed when I found out it wasn't a new game at all. I guess **Sword of Xeen** (*an expansion for M&MV*) didn't sell well, so they didn't want to hurt sales by calling **M&M VII** an "expansion pack." But, they should call a spade a spade. Now I know that **3DO** will deceive me just to increase sales, and I'm not happy about this knowledge.

What few changes they made to the game add more complexity than fun, which is something that **3DO** has never done (*before now*) with their games. In **M&MVI**, to cast a really cool spell (*like one that teleports you from the dungeon to a town*), you need to get a mage with a high relevant skill, get him trained in that skill, get the gold to buy the spell, and then find the shop that sells the spell. Does this sound like it needs to be made more difficult? Admittedly, once you've played the game through, you can get this all done in two months or so of game time, but **M&MVII** (*which has identical spells*) additionally requires you to go on a pretty major quest before you can get the training. By the time you've scoured the entire continent to finish the quest, the game is mostly over, since the game is MUCH smaller than its predecessor. They took something challenging, and made it annoying, and that's just not kewl. If they didn't want you to use the big spells, they could have just taken them out, and actually ADDED some new spells to the game.

The main, heck, only, innovation in the game is that there are several more character classes, and you can do a bit more specialization. Unfortunately, every class has a specialty, and the party maximum size is still 4. It's all too easy to put together a party that lacks either the ability to disarm a trap, or wear plate mail, or wield a sword, or cast some very useful spells, or repair armor, or identify items, or whatever. Oh well, it's still worth playing once, barely, but not twice.

Another game that didn't fulfill its potential was Microprose's **Birth of the Federation**. The basic idea was to take the wonderful engine of **Master of Orion**, and fill it with all the lawful goodness of the **Star Trek** universe. How could something like this

go wrong? Let's count the ways:

First, you put in a great, three dimensional, tactical combat system—then make ships so fragile that they explode like firecrackers at the slightest provocation. Most combats are over in two turns, giving you almost no chance to run away.

Next, you put in the unique **Master of Orion** research system—then take away all the cool neat stuff, and make most of the research like “Level 2 Farm, Level 3 Farm, Level 2 Factory, Level 3 Factory,” and so on. Then make the act of upgrading to a higher level of facility something that takes a dozen or so turns (sometimes MUCH more). Then program it so that colonies all start out at level 1, making colonization a tedious and frustrating business.

Let players play on really big maps, but have almost all ships go only 1 or 2 spaces a turn (and no faster, since research is so unimaginative), making movement across the map a painfully slow process. Then make shipbuilding extremely expensive (especially considering how fragile they are), so that building a spacefleet and army for conquest is just as slow as movement.

Institute a fascinating system of morale, so that the various races get bonus points for doing things they're supposed to do (e.g., Klingons get really happy when you conquer), and are penalized for acting out of character (brutally conquer a world as the Federation, and watch in horror as Earth goes into revolt)—then make the penalties and bonuses to morale so outrageous that accidentally losing a scout ship in a minor skirmish can only be rectified by slaughtering millions of civilians and conquering

a world. Make sure the program makes it easy for a scout ship to be ambushed by a space station, and don't forget to make the ship so fragile that it is certain to be destroyed before it can run away from the sneaky starbase.

Add the possibility of a wide range of random events, including stuff that happened on the television show, then make the events so horrific that players will learn to expect asteroids to annihilate worlds every three turns or so. Don't forget to add a high possibility of an unstoppable Borg invasion of 3 or more cubes, since players might like to have game after game ended because of a “random” event, even on the “easy” level.

Finally, make the game fairly complex, with lots of little rules and nuances. Then, put nothing in the rulebook that comes in the box, and charge another \$20 for the “strategy guide,” which has all the charts and tables a player will need to make informed decisions about what to do. Be sure the strategy guide includes all the built-in cheats that the designers used, (the only way they could actually finish this abomination.)

Add to the mix a slew of bugs, and program requirements that could take hours of effort before the program will even run. I really wanted to like this game, but, in the end, it was a “play once, then blow off the hard drive” game for me. Some people might well love this game, but, I have a life.

Hey just because I don't like it doesn't mean it's a bad game. Disagree with my rants? Write me sometime at [IQRickMo@aol.com](mailto:IQRickMo@aol.com), and convince me of the error of my ways. □



**WAR DOGS**  
Sgt. Sniff

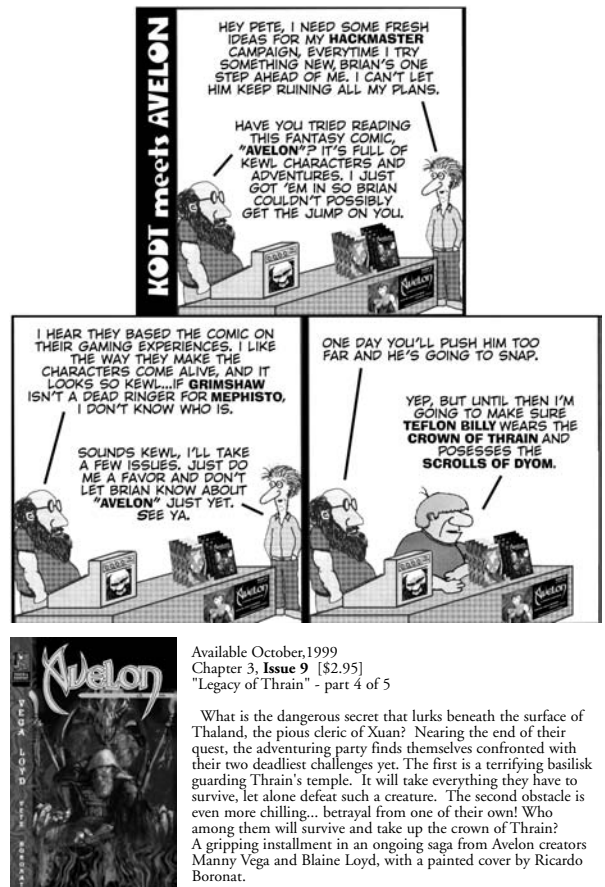
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**KODI meets AVELON**

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.

Available October, 1999  
Chapter 3, Issue 9 [\$2.95]  
"Legacy of Thrain" - part 4 of 5

What is the dangerous secret that lurks beneath the surface of Thaland, the pious cleric of Xuan? Nearing the end of their quest, the adventuring party finds themselves confronted with their two deadliest challenges yet. The first is a terrifying basilisk guarding Thrain's temple. It will take everything they have to survive, let alone defeat such a creature. The second obstacle is even more chilling... betrayal from one of their own! Who among them will survive and take up the crown of Thrain? A gripping installment in an ongoing saga from Avelon creators Manny Vega and Blaine Loyd, with a painted cover by Ricardo Boronat.



# News, Rumors and Industry Buzz plucked



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 Send your news items to  
**gamevine@aol.com**



## 1998 ORIGINS AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Recently, at **Origins '99** (*July 4th Weekend in Columbus Ohio*) the Origins Award Winners were announced. Congratulations to all you winners and a BIG THANKS to everyone who took the time to fill out a ballot and vote.

**HOODY HOO!**

- Best New PBM Game: *Dungeon (Madhouse USA)*
- Best On-going PBM Game: *Middle Earth PBM Fourth Age*
- Best Game-Related Novel: *The Silent Blade (WotC)*
- Best Game-Related Short Work: *Leftovers (Pinnacle)*
- Best Action Computer RPG: *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron (LucasArts)*
- Best Roleplaying Computer Game: *Baldur's Gate (Interplay)*
- Best Strategy Computer Game: *Starcraft (Blizzard/Havas)*
- Best Historical Miniatures Rules: *Medieval Warfare (Terry Gore)*
- Best Sci-Fi or Fantasy Miniatures Rules: *Battletech Master Rules (FASA)*
- Best Amateur Game Magazine: *Mythic Perspectives (Gnawing Ideas)*
- Best Professional Game Magazine: *Knights of the Dinner Table (KenzerCo)*
- Best Graphic Presentation of a Card Game: *Deadlands CCG (WotC)*
- Best Graphic Presentation of a Board Game: *Crimson Skies (FASA)*
- Best Graphic Presentation of an RPG: *Dragonlance Bestiary (WotC)*
- Best Card Game Expansion or Supplement: *M:TG: Urza's Saga (WotC)*
- Best Trading Card Game: *Deadlands CCG (WotC)*
- Best Traditional Card Game: *Guillotine (WotC)*
- Best Historical Figure Miniatures Series: *25mmDarkest Africa (Guernsey Foundry)*
- Best Vehicle Miniature: *Velocipede (Pinnacle)*
- Best Sci-Fi or Fantasy Figure Miniature: *Hangin' Judge (Pinnacle)*
- Best Abstract Board Game: *What Were You Thinking? (WotC)*
- Best Historical Board Game: *Great War at Sea: Plan Orange (Avalanche)*
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Board Game: *Crimson Skies (FASA)*
- Best Roleplaying Adventure: *Return to the Tomb of Horrors (WotC)*
- Best Roleplaying Supplement: *Greyhawk: The Adventure Begins (WotC)*
- Best Roleplaying Game: *Star Trek: The Next Generation RPG (Last Unicorn)*

## "YEAH BABY!"

Decipher  
to publish  
**Austin Powers**  
Collectible  
Card Game



PHOTO © 1999 NEW LINE CINEMA

It's party time, baby!  
*Decipher (The same folks who brought you the Star Wars CCG)* are working on the **Austin Powers Collectible Card Game**. Can you say, "It's party time, baby!?" The game is due out this fall. So dig out those mood rings and bell bottom jeans and prepare to get randy. For more info go to:  
<http://www.decipher.com/austinpowers/index.html>



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## MAXIMUM DROOL FACTOR!

### AVALON HILL BACK? Boy, is it EVER!!

Last year when it was announced **HASBRO** was buying out **Avalon Hill** there was a collective cry of despair from gamers everywhere. It seemed, as one reader put it, "the end of an era."

Well, the **Masters of Strategy** are back. We spent considerable time at the **Avalon Hill** booth at **GENCON** drooling (literally) over their new games. These games have to be seen to be believed. Classics like **Acquire**, **Axis and Allies** and **Diplomacy** have been given make-overs and brought up to date. Go to [www.avalon-hill.com](http://www.avalon-hill.com) to see more. **HOODY HOO!**



## KODT LOST WORLDS BOOKS

Flying Buffalo will be releasing four **Lost Worlds** books based on the **KODT** characters in October. The books will be fully compatible with the other books in popular diceless combat series.

- Product #8610: **Knuckles** - thief with crossbow (Bob) \$8.95
- Product #8611: **Teflon Billy** - magic user with Fireball (Brian) \$8.95
- Product #8612: **El Ravager** - with Hackmaster +12 (Dave) \$8.95
- Product #8613: **Thorina** - female barbarian with axe (Sara) \$8.95

For more info contact: **Flying Buffalo Inc**  
 PO Box 1467/Scottsdale, AZ 85252 USA  
 Ph: 480-945-6917



# from the vine for your reading enjoyment



Lew Herring thought it would be kewl to sing, "I'm Too Sexy For This Shirt!" for twelve consecutive hours at the KenzerCo Booth. It wasn't kewl at all - it was downright annoying.



Task-Master Steve Jobansson, demanding to know where the final files for KODT#35 are.



Byron Schlidmatt of Awesome Games attempting to draw interest in his up-coming product line. Byron just launched his company recently but didn't have any product for the show. He decided to get a booth and ask attendees what kind of products he should make.



Bob basking in the presence of Laura Croft. Below - is that Keven Bacon in a Dave "Die Ore" shirt?



The Drawbridge Studio staff (creators of Avelon) discover that the phrase, "We don't need no stinkin' [con] badges!" will NOT get you past security.



Wayne Wallace, trying to decide if he should buy Orcs at the Gates or actually save some money for food.

## GENCON PHOTO GALLERY



The KODT Live Reading was standing-room only, this year. We were stunned at the turnout. A good time was had by all.



The big man, himself. Gary Gygax running a game of AD&D for a lucky group of players.



"It's HUGE!!" Bob attempts to walk off with the 'Big Damn Twenty Sider' at the 'Big Damn WOTC Castle'.

LIFE'S A GAME!  
**PLAY!!**



**DEVIL BUNNY NEEDS A HAM**

**Cheapass Games**

2530 E. Miller St.  
Seattle WA, 98122  
www.cheapass.com



I was drawn to this game by the wacky title and although the game has nothing to do with ham, it is an interesting little strategy board game. Of course it is produced in the *Cheapass* format on black and white card stock.

Players compete to be among the first to move their tokens safely to the top of a building (the board). Unfortunately, *Devil Bunny* feels the need to knock them down every so often. Falling players will live or die depending on the height of the fall or whether or not there is anyone below them to catch them.

As you would expect from Cheapass games, this is a great one to pull out during a party or when simply passing time with friends.

**Brian's Rating:** Another fine game from Cheapass



**STOP SECRET: The Spy Game**

**Plum Publishing INC.**

P.O. Box 511521, SLC, UT 84151-1521  
www.plumpublishing.com \$29.95

This game is cleverly disguised in a pizza box so it might be easy to miss in your typical game store. But if you can find it, it's definitely worth checking out.

The format of the game is a traditional abstract board game that comes with multicolored six sided dice, tokens and chips for use during play. The rules are a simple one page sheet and they're also summarized on the board itself. Each player plays a spy and begins play at his home "embassy."

The chips represent political "secrets" that are placed in predetermined locations on the board according to matching the color of the secret with the color of the board location. Each color represents a different country. The goal of the game is to travel around the board and be the first to collect at least one secret from each of the other 5 countries and return them to your embassy.

What makes this game really fun is your ability to mess with your opponents. Like the old game *Aggravation*, landing on your opponent's tokens allows you to send them back to his own embassy. Furthermore you can raid an opponent's embassy to take any secrets he has there.

Each player also has "satellite" embassies that may allow him to fax secrets back to the home embassy but this might be more difficult than delivering the secret in person.

There are also airport spaces which allow faster round-the-board movement. All in all this game is a fun twist on a classic board game concept.

**Brian's Rating:** That's classified mister! Just buy the game.

**PUBLISHERS!!**

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**KODT: BRIAN'S PICKS  
1003 MONROE PIKE  
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Looking for a lost Ethyk! It has reddish brown hair and responds to the name Kip. If you have any information please contact me at [www.jestersplayhouse.com/zardo.htm](http://www.jestersplayhouse.com/zardo.htm)

### WANTED!!

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Contact [relkin@aol.com](mailto:relkin@aol.com)

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YOU LOSE DUCK BOY

Preston

### WEIRD PÉTÉ'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.



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vs. Knights,  
Turtles vs.  
Aztecs,  
Suburban  
Demons  
vs.  
Napoleon,  
Robots vs.  
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vs.  
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# "HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM!"



A reader recently informed us that NASA has a contingency plan in the event of a Viking Attack and instructed us to go to [gazis@arwen.arc.nasa.gov](mailto:gazis@arwen.arc.nasa.gov). We were a bit surprised that to find he was telling the truth. Either the folks at NASA have a keen sense of humor or someone down in R&D has been sniffing the helium tanks again. At any rate, we thought our readers would find "Defense Against Viking Raids" an interesting read.

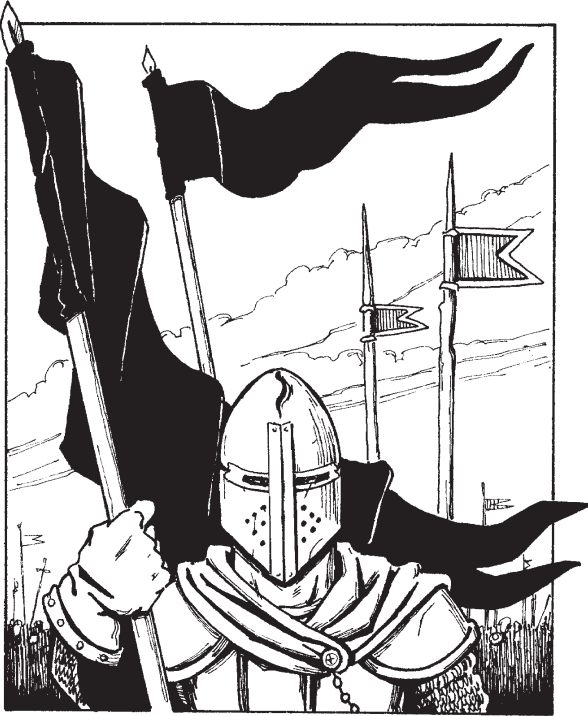
-----  
**SUBJECT:** Procedure to Follow in the Event That Vikings attack Building 245.

**BACKGROUND:** Since the decline of the **Carolingian Empire** in the 10th century, **Building 245** of the **NASA Ames Research Center** has been subject to periodic raids by Viking marauders. These marauders generally attack in search of gold, religious icons, and other forms of plunder. The **NASA Ames Barbarian Affairs Office** has established the following procedures for defense against Viking raids:

## DEFENSE AGAINST VIKING RAIDS

- 1.0 Complete a **DARC-820AD** (Identifying a Barbarian Attack) to determine if the visitors are Viking raiders.
  - 1.1 Are the strangers wearing weapons, helmets, and armor?
  - 1.2 Do the strangers lack trade goods or other evidence that they might only be peaceful merchants?
  - 1.3 Do the strangers have NASA Ames visitor ID badges?
    - 1.31 If so, do these badges identify the visitors as Viking raiders?
- 2.0 Fill out **Viking Raid Logbook** in Division Office.
- 3.0 Complete an **FF-1066AD** (Report of Viking Raid)
  - 3.1 Section I -- Identity of the attackers
    - 3.11 Nationality (if not Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, or Frisian check 'Other').
    - 3.12 Name of leader (include name of family and clan)
    - 3.13 Under 'Religion' check either 'Pagan' or 'Converted'.
  - 3.2 Section II -- Program Office Review
    - 3.21 Check 'Unclassified'.
    - 3.22 Originating NASA Organization (NASA Ames Research Center/SST).
    - 3.23 Type in Division Chief.
    - 3.24 Type in Mail Code under 'Office Code'.
    - 3.25 Type in Mail Code under 'Program Office and Code'.
  - 3.3 Write cover letter to NASA Headquarters.
- 4.0 Assemble the **FF-1066AD** package. Separate and assemble the FF-1066AD with four (4) copies of cover letter as follows:
  - 4.1 First Page (white) -- attach cover letter to the back. On the side write: DO/218-2.
  - 4.2 Second Page (green) -- attach cover letter to the back. On the side write: S/200-7.
  - 4.3 Third Page (pink) -- attach cover letter to the back. On the side write: SS/245-1.
  - 4.4 Fourth Page (yellow) -- attach cover letter to the back. On the side write: Branch Code and Mail Stop (SST/245-3).
- 5.0 Finish **DARC-820AD** -- staple copies of letter to Headquarters (Step 3.3) to the back.
- 6.0 Forward **DARC-820AD** and **FF-1066AD** package to Division Office for signatures.
  - 6.1 Division Chief will forward **DARC-820AD** and letters to secretary to file in author's file.
  - 6.2 Division Office will sign **FF-1066AD**, date all copies, and forward them as follows:
    - 6.21 Original: to Document Control Clerk.
    - 6.22 Others: to Branch Office and Directorate Office.
- 7.0 Take refuge in the hills until the raiders are gone. □

from the writers of *Knights of the Dinner Table*



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## FADING SUNS

SO CHECK *THIS* OUT. THEN THIS *QUESTING KNIGHT* DUDE GETS AN ATTITUDE. I MEAN THIS DUDE *REALLY* GETS ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE AND YELLS, "I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO *STAND FAST!*" COURSE, MY CHARACTER IS A *GANNOCK BROTHER BATTLE* - HE AIN'T ABOUT TO TAKE THAT KIND OF LIP FROM *ANYBODY*. SO HE YELLS BACK:

"YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?!"  
NOW THIS IS THE PART WHERE IT *REALLY* GETS INTERESTING....

NOW KEEP IN MIND THIS *ALL* TOOK PLACE IN THE VACCUUM OF SPACE. IT TOTALLY ROCKED!

AND *ME* WITH MY LEFT LEG TORN OUT OF IT'S SOCKET AND *STILL* TRYING TO MAINTAIN MY GRASP ON THE *DETONATOR*.

(GROAN) I WISH THEY WOULD LEAVE SO I COULD GET READY FOR OUR *FADING SUNS* GAME TONIGHT. I CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY A *REAL* MERCENARY!

