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KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #39
The Game Must Go On!
January, 2000

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Submissions: We accept submissions for strip ideas, jokes, cartoons, etc. We are interested in running anything that other gamers and fans would enjoy. Send a S.A.S.E. for writer's guidelines to the address listed above or E-mail jollyrb@aol.com.

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

M A G A Z I N E

"THE GAME MUST GO ON!"

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). 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.



Left: The very first panel of the very first KODT strip.

Editorial of a Madman

*“Happy Frickin’ Anniversary!!
Now get over it and pass the frickin’ dice!!”*

Bob Herzog

As mentioned in the introduction of *Tales From the Vault™* Volume II, the tenth anniversary of *Knights of the Dinner Table™* nearly snuck up on us. Ten years ago this month, almost as an afterthought, a hastily-drawn strip was pasted into the back inside cover of *Shadis* #2 before taking the masters to the printers. (*When I think how close that strip came to being pulled I can't but wonder, "what if?"*)

So here we are with issue 39 going to press and a new millennium before us. Where do we go from here? Is there room for the *Knights* in this bold new age? Will one of the developers (or perhaps even some, as of yet unnamed, replacement filling our shoes?)

in ten years be writing about KODT's twentieth anniversary? Oh.....man....perhaps it's best not to look TOO far ahead. The thought of the guys not having girlfriends and living with their parents for another decade is a bit depressing.

Ultimately the answer is up to you, the fans. I suppose as long as you keep buying (and enjoying) what we're doing someone, somewhere, is going to keep this beast going.

I just hope the journey from here on out is even half as much fun as the first leg. Many thanks to everyone who helped the dream come true.

Jolly R. Blackburn
Jolly R. Blackburn

Still gaming after all these years



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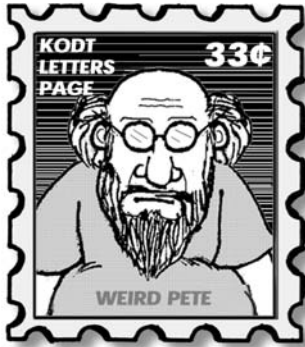
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Dear KODT,

In reading issue 36, there is only one thing I can say: That man is a genius! There's nothing I enjoy more than seeing B.A.'s best efforts ruthlessly crushed by Brian. Why you may ask? Because my DM is just the sort of person to try and pull a fast one on wishes like that (*he knows who he is, and hopefully won't kill off Lord Athalar as a result of my saying that...*). I do suggest that Teflon Billy become a gawd, though, (for purely sadistic reasons:) Anyway, keep up the good work.

Lord Lawrence
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I just want to say that I enjoy your comic very much. While I haven't played fantasy RPGs in a very long time, and my interests have changed to tabletop/RPGs like Heavy Gear™, it really brings back memories.

Now, to the heart of the matter. B.A. could have avoided all the grief, though depriving us of a 'hilarious' story. Brian, on page 9, quotes the Hacklopedia of Beasts to define a *Rogue Ogre*. B.A. could argue that the ogre Brian killed was not a *Rogue Ogre*.

The term "rogue" is in relation to a tribe. If there is no tribe to define one's relationship with, then the "rogue" label could not apply. The term is defined by existence of the tribe; that is, a comparative, not an absolute. But then again, Brian would probably find something unique about the birch limb.

Tony Kim
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

First off, I would like to say how much I admire you guys for being non-conformist and trying something risky and dangerous (*such as a gaming product*) even at great financial risk to yourself. I do think you guys have been selling out a little lately. The list of KODT stuff, the miniatures, the cross-overs. All I'm saying is don't push it.

Since I am aware all gamers have a horrible taste in music (*I do too*) so I don't think any of you picked this one up. My

Our Readers Talk Back!

younger sister was listening to a Big Bad Voodoo Daddy CD song called *'Mollie the Moocher'* (*they're a swing band*). In the song, it's got a line something like this *'Haady haady haady haady ha,ooooo, hoody hoody boo, haady haady ha'*

Now I haven't gotten a chance to see the official lyrics so I don't know if I'm right but I'd bet my lucky eight-sider they say Hoody Hoody Hoo. You guys kick ass.

AMP3003
via E-mail

Haady haady ha???? I like it. Hmnmnm, since this is a new millennium, maybe the Knights should live up their war cry by dropping 'hoody hoo' in favor of this one.

Of course, that would mean retooling the die for the KODT Lunchbox, the Franklin Mint commemorative KODT coin and the KODT Pez Dispensers about to ship. (grin)

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I just got KODT #37 tonight (*I've been reading since the old Shadis days*) and have a couple things to say about the **Disks of Wondrous Power** computer game column. You can't imagine how it feels to finally read a computer game reviewer who understands the gaming experience without having to look at a CRT. Man, how refreshing! So few computer game reviewers seem to understand that the gore, glitz, mindless destruction, and frenetic activity are really external window dressings compared to the playability, AI challenge, and, for adaptations of board games, the faithfulness of the play compared to the original. Gawd I love this comic.

Bill Dunn
bdunn@msn.fullfeed.com

Dear KODT,

We just started gaming again after a year or so, partly in thanks to inspiration from KODT! Our last, long term, group fell apart and we hadn't played in a while. But we got hooked on your comic, and it made us start missing all the fun, so we put together a new group.

We had our first meeting last night, and I think I heard the GM called "B.A." half a dozen times. One person there hadn't read KODT, but that'll change soon! (She missed half the jokes!) By the way, we were playing **Fantasy Hero™** when one person pointed out that there was no reason NOT to buy a stat down from ten, (*starting*) to nine for the extra points, because everything was divided by three anyways, and he could cover the disadvantage with whatever he got with the extra points. Everyone pointed and yelled "Brian!" at the same time.

Oh, and thanks for Sara. I'm so much like her, and now I understand a little bit why people get so annoyed when I actually want to role-play. I won't stop, but at least I can take the point.

SylvanBonin
Olympia, Washington

Dear KODT,

I picked up a copy of KODT purely at random (*almost*) and it's just plain fun. I'm a "part time" gamer (*work permitting*) and recognize a lot of my group in KODT. Non-gaming uses for dice. I've had a d30 rolling around in my lunchbox for almost a decade (*long story*) and have used it (*or loaned it out*) for a variety of uses- picking lottery ticket numbers, pick-a-number-to-decide-who-does-what, and a number of other important decisions where a dependable random number generator is needed. I use whiteout to touch up the numbers on dice. It seems to work just fine.

What games actually use a d30 anyway? Looking forward to the next issue.

Scott
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I DM for a group of seasoned gamers known as **The Lounge Wizards**. They've been hounding me to write to you since about issue 3, maybe 4. Ok, so maybe I procrastinated a little. Anyway, I have two things to relay to you.

The first occurred right after a friend showed me (*I believe it was issue three*) my first KODT. It contained the strip with the "swinging blade in the hole in the wall" trap, where Bob and Dave promptly lose their arms trying to get a gem. I laughed at this so hard I cried for an hour. Then I thought, "*These guys are SO stupid! No one would EVER fall for that! Especially not MY guys.....*"

Needless to say, the night went down EXACTLY like the strip, complete with the elven warrior whining, "But I can't wield my halberd with only one arm!" After this one trap nearly decimated the party, I let them read the strip. For some reason, they didn't find it to be very amusing.....heh heh heh. To this day "*Squeak Squeak, Gnaw Gnaw*" makes them cringe!

Well, as amusing as I found that, I never believed my players would give me an anecdote to send to you (*unaided, as it were*). Sigh. Oh, how naïve I was. The second tale I must relay is one of their own design.

The group was travelling through the woods (*which they knew to be infested with undead*) and they decided to camp. In the middle of the night, they were attacked by some Zombies. The Mage pulls out a magical item which, in effect, paralyzed the

zombies. The RANGER then decides to set them on fire (*in the middle of the woods*), and then the **WHOLE PARTY GOES TO SLEEP**.

Scenario: Two BURNING zombies frozen in the middle of the forest surrounded by sleeping adventurers. The RANGER cuddling into her cloak as the fire slowly starts to spread to the surrounding forest. Luckily(?) for them, I was rolling some pretty crudly damage from the fire, which allowed the paralysis to wear off of their Undead Nightlights and the mindless automatons resumed their attack on the now sleeping party.

After quickly dispatching the Undead, they decided it was "Maybe not such a good idea" to camp there, so they climbed into their wagon and drove off at top speed, leaving a massive forest fire in their wake. As I said before, Sigh.

Joshua Humphress
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

First off, like all other fans, GREAT WORK!!!! I do have a problem however. Remember a few issues back when you ran the Russian gaming girl ads? All those poor "gaming geeks" were so excited. They even wrote in regarding that even after you told them it was just a joke.

Shame on you Jolly to play on the emotions of the gaming society. Well I just want to tell you and all those guys out there that we EXIST!! Yes, beautiful women do game. I am 24 and have been an avid gammer for 10 years now. The group that I am currently in actually has 2 female players!! (*including myself, we are uncommon*). We are not easy to spot though. Don't get me wrong, I proudly wear my dice bag. As a matter of fact, I bought mini dice to carry in my purse at all times, and will no matter what, bust them out at anytime. But I don't

look like the stereo-typical gamer.

Just as an example, I was an exotic dancer for a while. A) because it was good pay and B) I can pull it off.

So see guys, we're out there. You just have to look harder and don't be intimidated by us. No offense, but a lot of guys get intimidated by the fact that I can go toe to toe with them on a number of game systems.

Anyway, that's about it. We're here!! You don't have to go to Russia :-) !! Take care and I hope you find your gaming dream girl!! My husband did.

I love the comic, I love the Knights, and most importantly: I LOVE TO GAME!!!!

Elix
via E-mail

No, shame on you, Elix! You write in to announce to gamers everywhere that you are a beautiful gamer (and a former exotic dancer to boot) and then — You pull the rug out from under them by informing them you're married? Does your cruelty know no bounds?

Seriously, we can't take credit for the "Beautiful Russian Women Seeking American Gamers" ad which ran in KODT #24. Although we later laid the 'blame' at the feet of Paul Lidberg (Crunchy Frog Enterprises) In turn, Paul has denied responsibility for the hoax and has informed us that it was actually Gilbert Milner (War Games West) who concocted the idea.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Wow! Shows how long it's been since I've been back to the US and to a gaming store.

I didn't even know KODT was a full-fledged comic book. Last time I saw it was in a Dragon™ Magazine. I loved it then and the

comic book is fantastic! One of my friends brought over issue #34 and I couldn't put it down.

I'd like to say I've always empathized with Sara. I'm one of those rare, female gamers. I am usually the DM of most (99%) of my gaming groups. I've been gaming for fifteen years now and I can honestly say I've only met a few (*as in I could count them on one hand*) other women who have shared my enthusiasm. Will Sara ever have another female friend with which to game? How about another group starting with a female GM? Being in the military also gives me a unique outlook on gaming. It's hard to maintain a steady group/campaign due to deployments and transfers. I saw one letter to the editor in which a person was looking for people to game with. One solution I found to that problem is MUDing. I didn't even know MUDs existed until a year ago.

I'm now an Immortal of one and can happily say that I'm having a great time playing there and running the game. There are some great ones and some real losers out there. However, with the vast amount of MUDs available, I'm sure everyone can find their favorite flavor. I was lucky enough to find mine the first time I tried one.

Mystra@Faerun.com

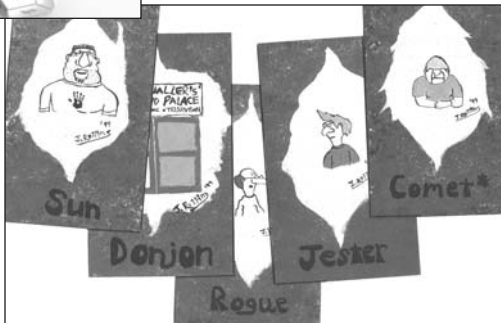
I can definitely relate to the hardships of maintaining a campaign while serving on active duty. During my eight-year stint I'm willing to guess over fifty people wandered into (and out of) my campaign due to transfers and discharges. (Some of my fondest memories are from those games in the military. There's nothing quite like having your Master Sergeant playing a bootlegger in your GangBusters™ campaign at night and having to report to him for duty the next morning.)

Jolly

CRUTCH'S "PEN" PAL CORNER



Above: A set of home-made dice (and dice bag) fashioned from paper and glue. Weird Pete tested them and claims they are remarkably accurate.
Right: A sampling from the home-made Deck of Many Things II featuring characters from KODT. A deadly combination to be sure.



Dear KODT,

In issue #34 Weird Pete created dice out of soap while in jail. I, myself, am incarcerated and soap breaks too easily when rolled, so here at USP (*Utah State Prison*) we make dice from glue and paper (*and paint if we have it*).

I have enclosed a set of dice that work, and we use here in USP. They really work. The prison won't let us have 'real' dice because they say that those type of dice can be used for gambling. (*Yet they let us have poker and pinochle cards! Hmmm...*)

I love KODT. Great articles and funny jokes. Just a fun mag all together. Thanks for helping me keep my sanity. As a gift for the fun you've given to me while I've been in prison I've enclosed a home (prison) made set of cards for the Deck of Many Things II out of the Encyclopedia Magica Vol. I (*also in 2nd revised edition of the AD&D DMG*). The stars next to some of the card names are the cards I

put back in the deck before the next victim...I mean player, takes a card.

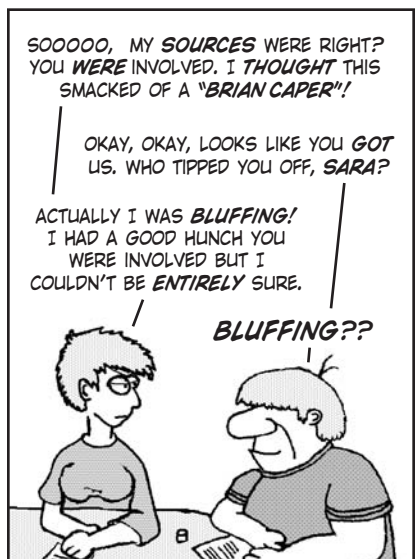
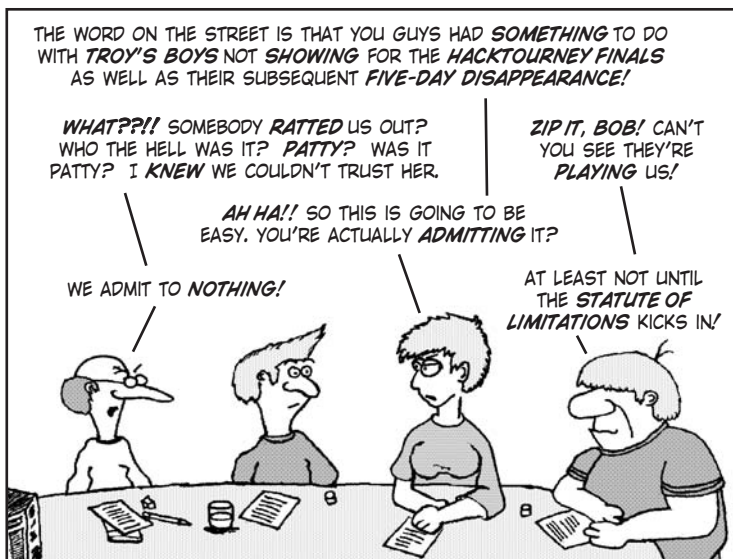
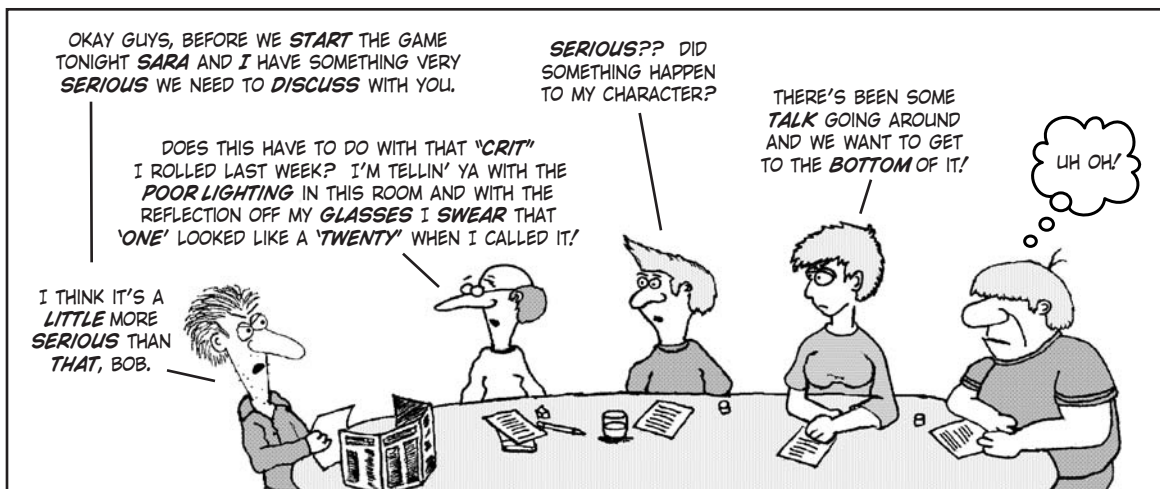
John Rollins
Utah State Prison

Thanks for the gifts, John. I happen to collect dice (the stranger and more unusual - the better) so these will certainly go in my collection. I couldn't resist trying them out and they seem to roll true. (A few of them rattle so I was a bit concerned they may be loaded)

As for the cards.....I can't wait to spring them on some unsuspecting party. So....? How's the grub at USP?

Crutch





HOLY MOLY! SHE PULLED A **FAST** ONE ON US. SHE HAD **NOTHING!**

WELL DONE, **GRASSHOPPER!!** I'M PROUD OF YOU. THAT WAS **FIRST CLASS** DECEPTION. NOW... IF WE CAN JUST **TEACH** YOU TO BRING THAT **SKILL SET** INTO YOUR GAME, I THINK, AS A PLAYER, YOU WOULD **KICK ASS!!**

YEAH, I BET YOU COULD EVEN **HANDLE** PLAYING AN **ASSASSIN** NOW, SARA!

THIS ISN'T A **JOKING** MATTER, BRIAN!

JOKING? WHO'S JOKING? I **REALLY** THINK YOU'VE MADE A **BREAK THROUGH** HERE!



CUT THE CRAP, BRIAN! I WANNA KNOW WHY **JOHN LEE** AND HIS **CRONIES** DIDN'T SHOW UP FOR THE **FINALS** AND MYSTERIOUSLY **VANISHED** FOR FIVE DAYS! HE CAME IN TO **BIG BIG VIDEO** FRIDAY TO PICK UP HIS CHECK AND TO INFORM THE MANAGER HE WAS **QUITTING!** I TRIED TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED BUT HE COULDN'T SEEM TO GET AWAY FROM ME **FAST** ENOUGH.

HE QUIT??!! OH MAN IT WORKED LIKE A **CHARM!**

YOU MEAN HE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO **SAY** TO YOU?

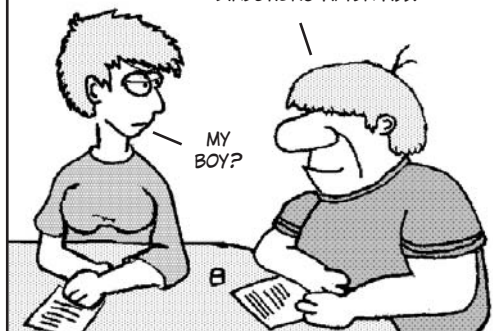
SWEET!



AS A MATTER OF FACT WHEN I WAS LEAVING WORK I FOUND AN **APOLOGY CARD** SIGNED BY **HIM** AND THE **REST** OF THE GROUP WITH THE **CRYPTIC** POSTSCRIPT, "**NOW CALL OFF YOUR GOONS!**"

EXCELLENT!! LOOKS LIKE **YOUR BOY** CAN FOLLOW DIRECTIONS AFTER ALL.

MY BOY?



OKAY GUYS, PUT IT **ALL** ON THE TABLE. WE WANT TO KNOW **WHY** YOU DID THIS! AND TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WE'D LIKE TO KNOW **EXACTLY** WHAT YOU **DID** DO TO THOSE POOR GUYS!

WHY? YOU ASK WHY? AFTER WHAT THEY DID TO **SARA*** - ONE OF OUR **OWN**??!!

Y...Y...YOU WERE SEEKING **REVENGE** FOR SARA?

SEEKING MY ASS! THAT ELUSIVE QUARRY WAS **SNAGGED, BAGGED** AND **TAGGED,** MY LITTLE **SCREEN-WIELDING FRIEND!**

AMEN, BOB!

FRICKIN' A!



KLICK! KLICK!

WELL, WE **WERE** GOING TO GIVE THESE TO YOU ON YOUR **BIRTHDAY** BUT SINCE YOU **BRILLIANTLY** FERRETTED US OUT, I SUPPOSE IT'S OKAY IF WE GIVE THEM TO YOU **NOW!**

YOU GOT ME A **BIRTHDAY PRESENT?** THAT'S SWEET, BUT WHAT'S THAT HAVE TO DO WITH....

EVERYTHING!!



YOU WANT **ALL** THE DETAILS AND PARTICULARS OF "**OPERATION TAKE OUT THE TRASH**"? THEY SAY A **PICTURE** IS WORTH A **THOUSAND WORDS,** SARA. IF THAT'S TRUE HERE'S A **NOVEL'S** WORTH OF **DETAILS.**

JUST OUR WAY OF SAYING WE TAKE CARE OF OUR **OWN** SARA. I KNOW WE GIVE YOU A HARD TIME AND ALL BUT...BUT...ER...UH... WELL, YOU'RE LIKE **FAMILY!**

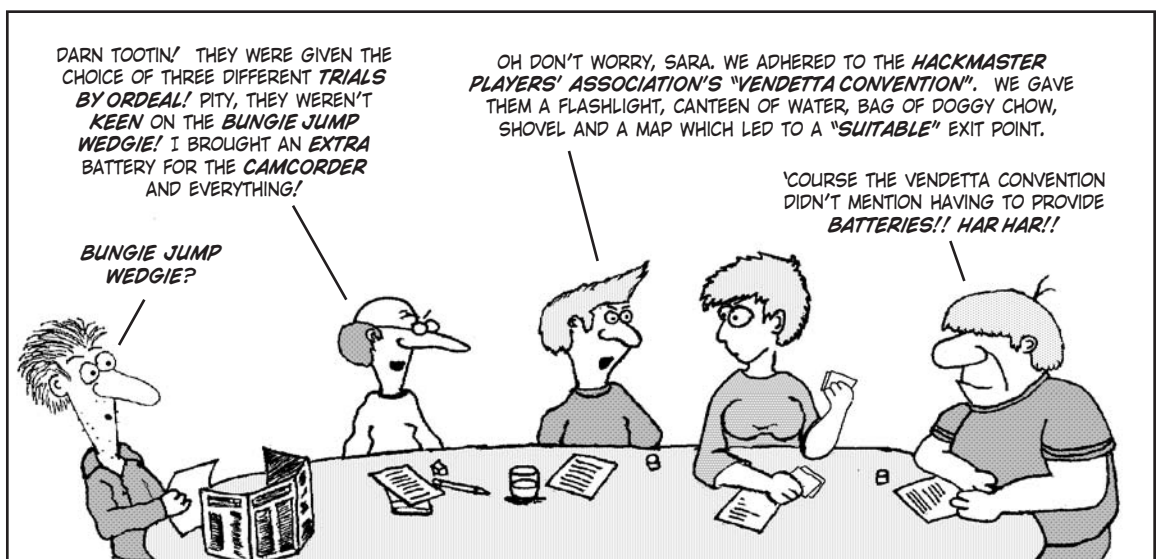
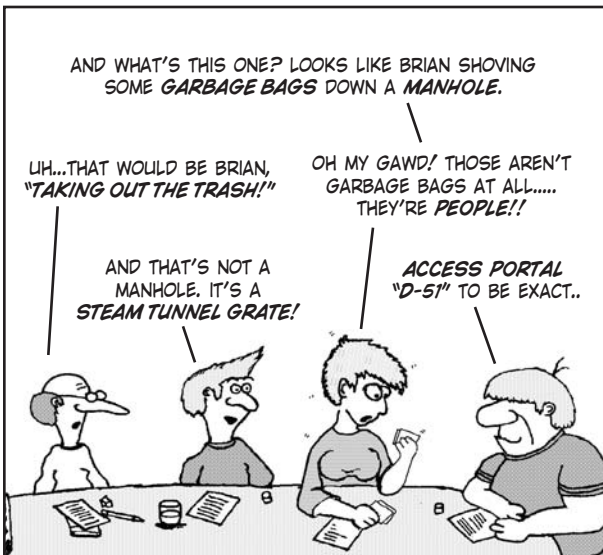
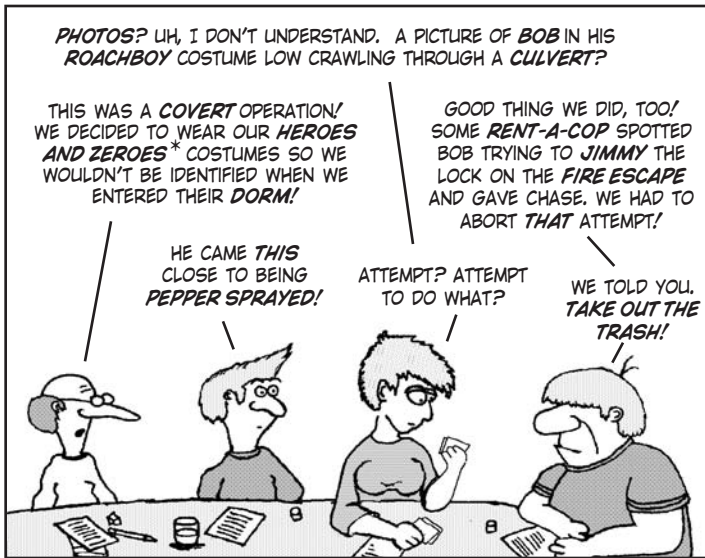
WE WERE GOING TO SCAN THEM AND LAY THEM OUT IN **STORY BOARD** FORMAT BUT WHAT THE HECK.

??!!

HERE YA GO. FROM ONE **KNIGHT** TO ANOTHER!



* See KODT #34 (Of Dice and Men): Sara discovers John Lee has been dating her so she'll play with Troy's Boys in the HackTourney, thus gaining the bonus points for have a 'mixed-gender' group.



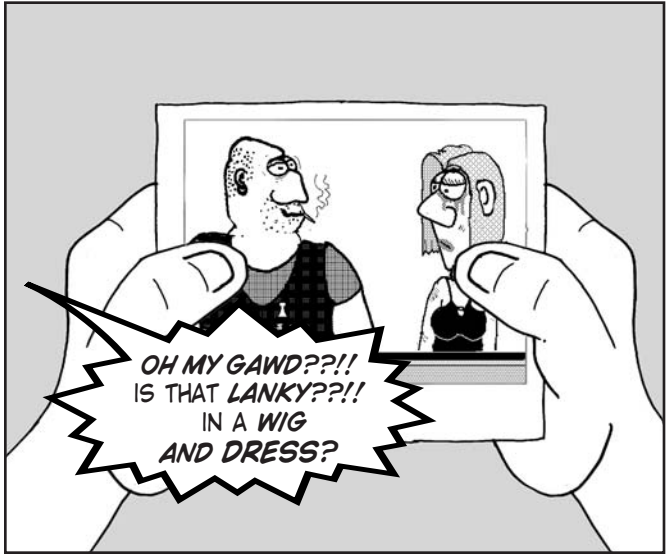
* See KODT #19 (A Time For Heroes) and Tales From the Vault Volume II (page 10): The guys decide that wearing costumes in their Heroes and Zeroes superhero campaign will add to the atmosphere. They each (with the exception of Sara) design a costume based on their character. Bob is Roach Boy, Dave is The Whisper and Brian is Cyber Scamp.

OH MY GOODNESS! JOHN?? VINCENT??
WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM? WHERE ARE THEY?

THAT'S JUST AFTER THEY DUG
THEIR WAY OUT OF RAT HAVEN INTO
HAWG WALLER'S BACKROOM!

WHO'S
THE GIRL?

UH... YOU BETTER TAKE
A CLOSER LOOK.



OH MY GAWD???!
IS THAT LANKY???!
IN A WIG
AND DRESS?

HEY WE DON'T KNOW WHY HE
WAS WEARING A DRESS. THAT'S
THE WAY WE FOUND HIM.*

I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR HIM.
I HEARD THOSE BIKERS FORCED
HER...ER..HIM TO DANCE WITH
THEM TIL THE COWS CAME HOME.

I'M AFRAID HIS
ORDEAL WAS A
LITTLE MORE
SEVERE THAN
THE OTHERS.

I JUST CAN'T
BELIEVE YOU
GUYS WOULD...



OH MY GAWD!!
JOHN?? OH MY GOODNESS!
WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS HAIR?

LET'S JUST SAY THAT SET OF
CORDLESS SHEEP SHEERS
THEY HAVE DOWN AT THE HOE
AND HARNESS CAME IN
HANDY!! I WAS GOING FOR
THE REVERSE-MOHAWK LOOK
BUT DAVE COULDN'T KEEP HIS
HEAD FROM WIGGLING.

SHEEP SHEERS? SO THAT'S WHY HE WAS WEARING THAT GOOFY SOCK
CAP PULLED DOWN OVER HIS EARS WHEN HE CAME IN TO GET HIS CHECK.

HE MUST HAVE BEEN PRETTY FOND
OF THE "DOO" 'COS HE PUT UP ONE HELL
OF A FIGHT ONCE HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF
THOSE CLIPPERS COMING AT HIM.

WE LEFT A POLAROID CAMERA
AT THE BAR AND PAID THE BAR-
KEEP TWENTY BUCKS TO SNAP
SOME PHOTOS WHEN THE GLUYS
EVENTUALLY POPPED UP.



OH MY!

* See KODT #34 (Of Dice and Men): When Sara bails from Troy's Boys the rest of the group decide Lanky should dress like a girl in order to secure the bonus points in the tournament.

SLAAAAMM!!!

I... I... I'M FLOORED! I JUST -CHOKE- DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. YOU GUYS ACTUALLY FORMULATED THIS ENTIRE PLAN AND EXECUTED IT JUST TO... TO...

HEY YOU'RE A KNIGHT! WE WERE HONOR BOUND TO DO SOMETHING.

SOB!! DO YOU GUYS KNOW HOW WRONG THIS WAS? YOU COULD HAVE BEEN...

SARA? YOU OKAY?

SARA, WE'RE SORRY IF WE...

WHAT THE?? NOW WHERE THE HELL IS SHE GOING? DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG?

I DON'T GET IT! I THOUGHT SHE'D BE HAPPY! WHAT GIVES?

SARA??!!

SHE WAS CRYING! WHY WAS SHE CRYING? MAYBE WE SHOULD GO AFTER HER.

NO! DON'T ANYONE GO AFTER HER - I THINK SHE REALLY NEEDS TO BE ALONE NOW. SHE'S OBVIOUSLY HURT.

-SIGH- DON'T YOU IDIOTS SEE? SHE STILL HAS FEELINGS FOR THIS JOHN-GUY. SHE'S PROBABLY RUNNING TO HIM TO COMFORT HIM OR SOMETHING. WE JUST CHASED HER RIGHT BACK INTO HIS ARMS! WHAT WERE WE THINKING?

DOES THIS MEAN SHE ISN'T COMING BACK?

GOOD THING WE DIDN'T TELL HER ABOUT THE HENNA TATTOOS OF SHAME WE ETCHED ON JOHN'S BUTT!

'COURSE, WHEN SHE GETS TO THE BOTTOM OF THAT STACK OF PHOTOS SHE'LL FIND OUT.

AN HOUR LATER AT THE MALL...

EVENIN' MA'AM! SOMETHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH?

WHY YES! I THINK YOU CAN, SIR.

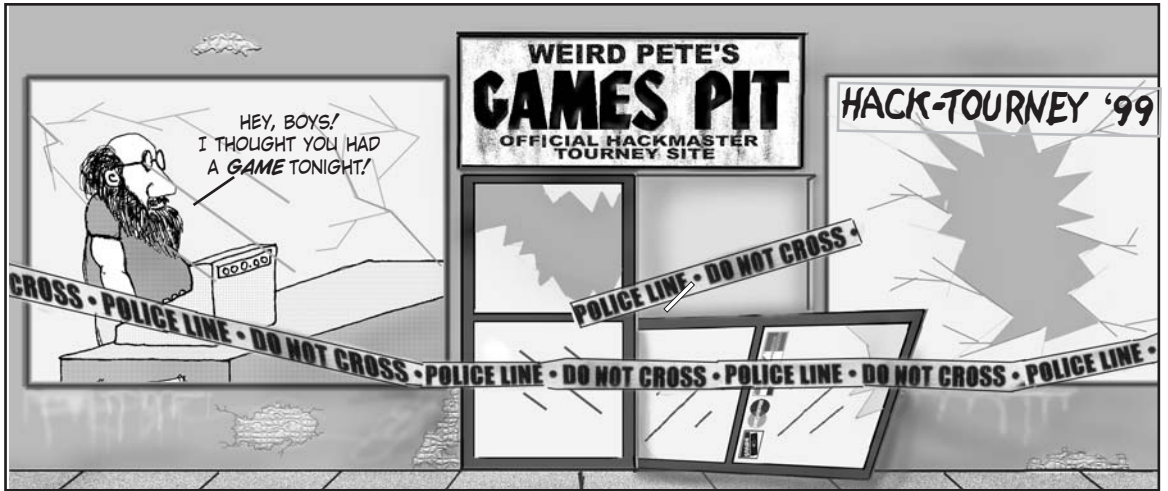
I'D LIKE TWO DOZEN 8X10 GLOSSIES MADE FROM THESE PHOTOGRAPHS!

OH, AND GIVE ME A BOOK OF STAMPS AND A BOX OF LARGE ENVELOPES!!!

THANKS, GUYS!

ONE HOUR PHOTO

SHIPPING • STAMPS • PACKING



YEAH BUT **SARA** BAILED ON US SO **B.A.** CANCELED THE **GAME** TIL NEXT WEEK. HEY, WE NOTICED THEY WERE TAKING DOWN THE **POLICE-TAPE*** OUTSIDE. DOES THAT MEAN YOU'RE IN THE CLEAR? EVERYTHING'S KEWL?

YEAH - EVERYTHING WORK OUT ALRIGHT? YOU, UH, DIDN'T **MENTION ANY NAMES** DID YOU?

MENTION NAMES? **ME?** NAAAAA, I TOLD 'EM SOME **OUT-OF-TOWNERS** BUSSED IN FOR THE TOURNAMENT AND CAUSED ALL THE TROUBLE.

IT WAS LIKE SPOON-FEEDING A BABY. THEY ATE IT UP.

THERE! YOU SEE? I TOLD YOU PETE WASN'T GOING TO **SNITCH** US OUT AND PRESS CHARGES. THAT WHOLE "**BROTHERHOOD OF GAMERS CREED**" STILL MEANS SOMETHING TO OLD TIMERS LIKE HIM.

OKAY, OKAY, YOU WERE RIGHT. I WAS WRONG.

I DUNNO PETE. **OUT OF TOWNERS?** SOUNDS KINDA WEAK TO ME. YOU REALLY THINK THEY FELL FOR **THAT?**

OF COURSE THEY FELL FOR IT. I SLIPPED INTO MY **CHANCE PARKER** PERSONA. YOU REMEMBER HIM DON'T YA?

YOU DON'T THINK THEY'LL BE **BACK** WITH MORE QUESTIONS DO YOU? SUPPOSE YOU **CRACK** UNDER THE PRESSURE?

CHANCE? YOUR 6TH LEVEL **GUMSHOE** FROM **RURAL P.I. THE RPG?**

I'M TELLIN' YA I GOT IT **ALL** UNDER CONTROL. THEY TRIED TO **LEAN** ON ME PRETTY **HEAVY** BUT THEY DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE PLAYING **MY** GAME. THEY INSISTED ON NAMES SO I ENDED UP GIVING THEM A LIST OF **NPCS** FROM ONE OF MY OLD **HACKNOIA** CAMPAIGNS.

BY THE TIME THEY SORT IT ALL OUT THE TRAIL SHOULD BE FAIRLY COLD.

* See KODT #37 (The Prize Fighters): When the winners of the HackMaster Tournament get stiffed on \$1,500 dollar 1st prize, a riot breaks out and the Games Pit is trashed.

WELL, AT ANY RATE, THE REASON WE CAME DOWN WAS TO TELL YOU WE **MEANT** WHAT WE SAID. AS SOON AS WE'RE ABLE TO LOCATE THE **HARD8 OFFICES** AND **FORCE** THEM TO FORK OVER THE **1,500 BUCKS** IN **PRIZE MONEY** THEY OWE US - WE'RE GONNA KICK IN AND HELP PAY FOR **OUR SHARE** OF THE **DAMAGES**.

HEY THAT'S RIGHT. YOU GUYS WENT UP THERE TO **'SORT THINGS OUT'**. NO LUCK HUH?

NAAAAAA. IT TURNS OUT THE ADDRESS LISTED IN THE **HACKMASTER MANUAL** IS JUST A BOX AT SOME **MAILBOX ETC.**

A COMPLETE WASTE OF TIME!

"SUITE 300" MY ASS!!
WE MUST HAVE ASKED A **HUNDRED PEOPLE** WHERE THE **H8 OFFICES** WERE, BUT **NOBODY** WOULD TALK.

'CEPT FOR THAT **TRANSIENT** AT THAT **REST AREA** WHO KEPT HITTING ON YOU FOR CHANGE.

I STILL SAY I'M **98.9 PERCENT SURE** HE'S THE ONE WHO **STOLE MY SHOES!**

TELL ME ABOUT IT. I WENT UP THERE WITH A **U-HAUL TRAILER** ONCE TO RETURN SOME PRODUCT THEY **REFUSED** TO TAKE BACK. I SPENT THE BETTER PART OF THREE DAYS LOOKING FOR 'EM - **NOTHING!** DAMN TRAILER COST ME **\$39.95** A DAY **PLUS** MILEAGE. AND WITH THAT **LOAD** I WAS HAULIN' MY **VW BUS** WAS ONLY GETTIN' 4 MILES TO THE GALLON! EVEN THOUGH I HAD THE **BIGGEST DAMN TRAILER** THEY HAD, THE FREAKIN' AXLE **SNAPPED** LIKE A **MATCH STICK** JUST OFF **I-94** ON THE TRIP BACK HOME. I THINK IT WAS THE WEIGHT FROM ALL THE **LEAD** IN THOSE DAMN **ONE-LEGGED DWARF KITS** *. LOAD MUST'VE SHIFTED OR SOMETHING AND CAUSED THAT **FAULTY LATCH** TO GIVE.

LORD GAWD ALMIGHTY! IT WAS A **FEARSOME** THING TO BEHOLD. THOSE MINIATURES SPEWED ACROSS ALL FOUR LANES LIKE **FIVE THOUSAND LITTLE DWARVEN CALTROPS**.

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT! HUNDREDS OF CARS **CAREENING** IN EVERY DIRECTION IN A **DESPERATELY FUTILE** ATTEMPT TO AVOID THEM. TIRES BEING **PUNCTURED** AND **RIPPED** TO SHREDS! EIGHTEEN WHEELERS **JACK-KNIFING!** THE **SCREECH** OF **RUBBER** SLIDING ALONG THE **ASPHALT**. LIGHT POSTS **TOPPLING** OVER...

DIDN'T HE TELL THIS STORY AT **HACKCON** LAST YEAR?

I THINK THAT WAS A **DIFFERENT** STORY WASN'T IT?

NEVER DID GET MY DAMN DEPOSIT BACK!

WELL, UMMMMM, THAT'S NICE PETE, BUT ANYHOO... WE GOT **BRIAN** WORKING ON FINDING THE **REAL HARD EIGHT OFFICES**. WHEN WE GET THAT **PRIZE MONEY** WE'RE GOING TO PAY YOU. THAT'S A **KNIGHT'S SOLEMN PROMISE!**

A KNIGHT'S SOL.... SAY, YOU **ARE** SERIOUS ABOUT PAYING ME BACK - AREN'T YOU?

SURE WE ARE. BESIDES, **B.A.** SAID WE **HAD TO!**

YOU BET. I FEEL PRETTY **BAD** ABOUT THROWING THAT **DICE-BIN** THROUGH YOUR **FRONT WINDOW**. IF **NEWT** WOULD'VE TAKEN IT **LIKE A MAN** AND HADN'T **DUCKED** IT NEVER WOULD HAVE....

LOOK FELLAS, I **REALLY** APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT. **DAMN GOOD** OF YA TO BE **UP FRONT** ABOUT IT AND ALL. BUT I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT IF I WERE YOU. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH YOU GUYS DID ME A **BIG FAVOR!**



* See KODT #15 (A Sure Thing): Hard Eight Enterprises puts out a Sturm Pyre™ One-Legged Dwarf figure in response to what they perceive as 'high demand'. Weird Pete buys into the hype and over orders. When Hard8 refuses to accept returns, the unsold product joins the many pallets of SpellJacked™ cards in his warehouse. Later Hard8 repackages their remaining Sturm Pyre inventory and Weird Pete buys into the scam again.

A FAVOR???! I GUESS I **SMACKED** YOU ACROSS THE BACK WITH THAT **FOLDING CHAIR** A LOT HARDER THAN I THOUGHT. WE'RE OFFERING YOU **MONEY** AND YOU'RE **REFUSING** IT? THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE **WEIRD PETE** I KNOW.

YEAH, PETE. **EVERYONE** KNOWS YOU'D RUN OVER YOUR OWN MOTHER IF IT MEANT SAVING A **NICKEL!** YOU'RE JUST ABOUT THE **CHINTZIEST** GUY I'VE EVER....

I'VE SEEN YOU **SQUEEZE** A PENNY SO TIGHT THAT ABE'S EARS **bled!!**
-SNICKER-

MAYBE YOU TWO **BOZOS** SHOULD JUST **SHUT UP** AND **QUIT** WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD

THE **TRUTH** IS I'M MAKING OUT LIKE A **BANDIT** BECAUSE OF THAT SO-CALLED, "**RIOT**" THAT WENT DOWN HERE.

YOU REMEMBER WHEN **BRIAN** TRIED TO DO AN "**ERROL FLYNN**" ON THE **WATER MAIN** IN THE **BASEMENT**?

DO I REMEMBER? YOU MEAN THAT **TRAPEZE-THINGY** HE DID? MAN-O-MAN, I DIDN'T THINK THE **BIG GUY** COULD **MOVE** LIKE THAT!

THAT WAS **AWESOME!** IF THAT PIPE HADN'T **BROKEN** HE WOULD HAVE **FLUNG** HIMSELF RIGHT INTO THE **MIDDLE** OF THAT **FREE-FOR-ALL** AT TABLE FOUR. COURSE, HE **STILL** MANAGED TO **ENTIRELY** TAKE OUT **EARL'S** GROUP AT TABLE THREE.

YEAH, -SIGH- IF THEY'D BEEN HANDING OUT **EXPERIENCE POINTS** THAT DAY, **BRIAN** WOULD HAVE BEEN **RAKIN' EM** IN!

WELL IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT **BROKEN PIPE** DID SOME **MAJOR** WATER DAMAGE TO MORE THAN **SEVEN PALLETS** OF **SPELL-JACKED** CARDS BACK IN THE **SUPPLY ROOM**.

A **TOTAL LOSS!**

???!

WATER DAMAGE???! BUT HOW? **SARA** MANAGED TO FIND THE **SHUT OFF VALVE** WAAAAAYYY BEFORE ANY **FLOODING** COULD HAVE REACHED THE **BACK RO....**

OH...UH...ER, NO, BOB. I'M AFRAID YOU'RE **GRAVELY** MISTAKEN. -AHEM- IN FACT MY **INSURANCE ADJUSTER** HAS ALREADY BEEN OUT TO SETTLE MY CLAIM. THOSE **STARTER DECKS** AND **BOOSTERS** WERE A **TOTAL LOSS**.

BUT THAT'S **WHACKED**. I DIDN'T SEE THE **WATER**...

HEY...KEEP IT DOWN, **HERO!** THOSE **COPS** MAY STILL BE **NOSING AROUND**.

SO YOU'RE NOT **SORE** AT US OR ANYTHING? EVERYTHING'S **KEWL** BETWEEN US?

SORE??! HELL NO! WELL.... **MAYBE** FOR THAT **PILE-DRIVER** **BRIAN** LAID ON ME, BUT THE **CRUX** OF THE MATTER IS THAT FOR THE **FIRST TIME** IN **TEN YEARS** MY SHOP IS IN THE **BLACK**. JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME, I'M SITTIN' **PRETTY!**

SOUNDS LIKE YOU HIT **PAY DIRT!**

REAL PRETTY!

WOW THAT'S GREAT, PETE.

SO WHATTA YA GONNA DO WITH *ALL THAT MONEY*?
OPEN UP A SECOND SHOP? RENOVATE THE STORE?

OH I'VE BEEN THINKING ON THAT. YOU KNOW I ONLY HAVE
MYSELF TO BLAME FOR MY FINANCIAL WOES! I'VE ALWAYS
BEEN A PRETTY *KEEN BUSINESSMAN* - HAD MY FINGER ON
THE *PULSE* OF THE GAMING INDUSTRY. I WAS ALWAYS THE
GUY WHO *KNEW* WHAT WAS *HOT* AND WHAT WAS *NOT*!

BUT I GOT *GREEDY*
AND OVER-ORDERED
THOSE *GAWD DAMN*
SPELLJACKED CARDS.

IT DAMN NEAR RUINED ME! BUT
NOW? WELL... IT'S LIKE I HAVE A
NEW LEASE ON LIFE. FROM NOW
ON I LISTEN TO MY *GUT*
INSTINCTS. I'M GOING TO INVEST
THIS MONEY *WISELY*!

C'MON PETE, I DON'T THINK *ALL* YOUR PROBLEMS WERE DUE TO *SPELLJACKED*. DIDN'T YOU
GET *SOAKED* WHEN YOU ORDERED ALL THOSE *TANK GAL THE RPG* BOOKS? WHAT ABOUT THE
TIME YOU WENT *POG-HAPPY*? YOU REALLY *LOST YOUR ASS* ON *THAT FAD*. AND THEN THERE
WERE THOSE *COUNTERFEIT BEANIE BABIES* YOU TRIED TO IMPORT FROM *BURMA*.

OR HOW ABOUT THOSE
CAPTAIN PLANET CORE
RULE BOOKS HE SUNK
A FORTUNE INTO?

HEY THOSE *BEANIE BABIES* WERE
A *SOUND* INVESTMENT. IT'S NOT
MY FAULT THEY DIDN'T MAKE IT
THROUGH *CUSTOMS*. AND ALL
THOSE *MICRONAUT POGS* I
BOUGHT MAKE *EXCELLENT* PACKING
MATERIAL FOR MY *MAIL ORDERS*.

AND WHO COULD
FORGET THAT
TIME YOU
BOUGHT UP ALL
THOSE *FACTORY*
SECONDS ON
LINGERIE AND
TRIED TO SELL
THEM AS "*ELVEN*
APPAREL"?

HEY JUST THINK, *PETE'S* PROBABLY THE
ONLY GUY IN THE WORLD, OTHER THAN
GARY HIMSELF, TO *MAKE MONEY* ON
SPELLJACKED -SNICKER- AND HE *DIDN'T*
EVEN SELL THEM. AIN'T THAT A *HOOT*?

HA HA!! YEAH!
PRETTY FUNNY
WHEN YOU
THINK ABOUT IT.
-SNORT-

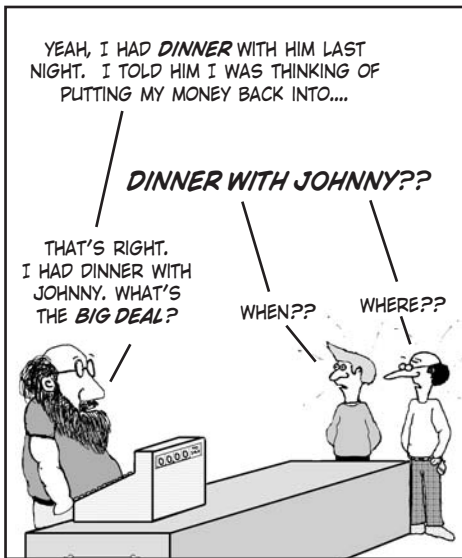
OH YEAH...
FRICKIN'
HILARIOUS!

SERIOUS, PETE, WHAT *ARE* YOU
GONNA DO WITH ALL THAT MONEY?

WELL, SINCE YOU ASKED, I WAS
TALKING WITH *JOHNNY*
KIZINSKI ABOUT HOW I MIGHT
INVEST IT. YOU KNOW HE TOOK
THAT *BIG JUICES* HIS *GRAND-*
UNCLE LEFT HIM A FEW YEARS
AGO AND ROLLED IT OVER INTO...

YOU
TALKED
WITH
JOHNNY?

JO... *JOHNNY*
KIZINSKI?



YEAH, I HAD *DINNER* WITH HIM LAST NIGHT. I TOLD HIM I WAS THINKING OF PUTTING MY MONEY BACK INTO....

DINNER WITH JOHNNY???

THAT'S RIGHT. I HAD DINNER WITH JOHNNY. WHAT'S THE *BIG DEAL*?

WHEN???

WHERE???



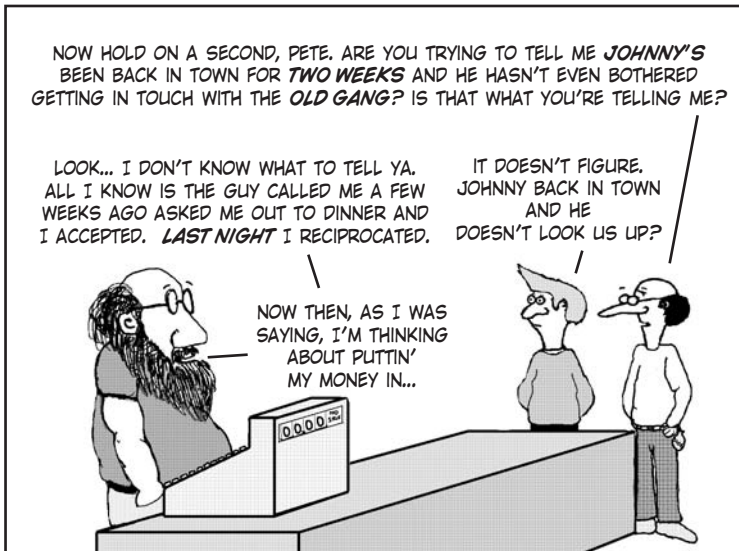
I TOLD YOU, *LAST NIGHT!!* SAY... DIDN'T YOU GUYS *KNOW* HE WAS BACK IN TOWN?

BACK IN TOWN? SINCE WHEN?

I DUNNO. I GUESS IT'S BEEN ABOUT 2 WEEKS NOW. HE'S MOVING HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW UP TO *WISCONSIN* TO LIVE WITH HIM.

MOTHER-IN-LAW? HE... HE... HE'S *MARRIED*?

LOOK, DO YOU GUYS WANNA HEAR WHAT I'M DOING WITH MY MONEY OR NOT?

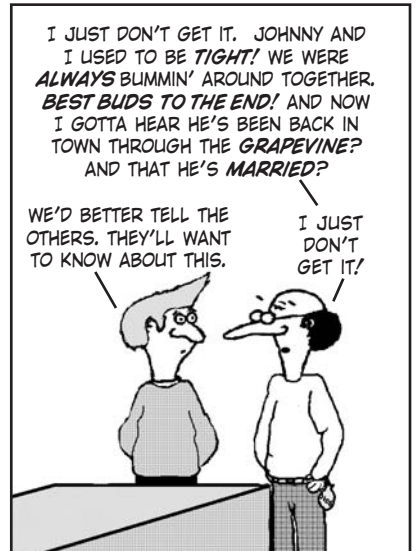


NOW HOLD ON A SECOND, PETE. ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME *JOHNNY'S* BEEN BACK IN TOWN FOR *TWO WEEKS* AND HE HASN'T EVEN BOTHERED GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE *OLD GANG*? IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME?

LOOK... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YA. ALL I KNOW IS THE GUY CALLED ME A FEW WEEKS AGO ASKED ME OUT TO DINNER AND I ACCEPTED. *LAST NIGHT* I RECIPROCATED.

IT DOESN'T FIGURE. *JOHNNY* BACK IN TOWN AND HE DOESN'T LOOK US UP?

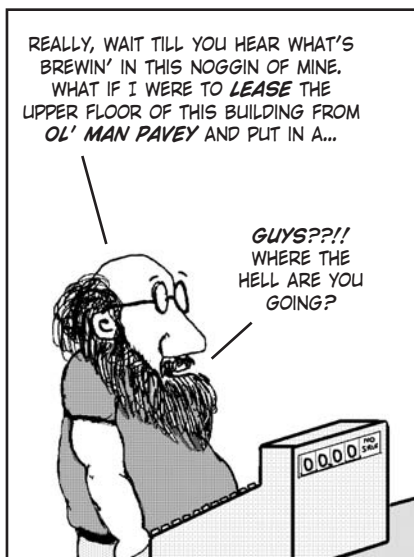
NOW THEN, AS I WAS SAYING, I'M THINKING ABOUT PUTTIN' MY MONEY IN...



I JUST DON'T GET IT. *JOHNNY* AND I USED TO BE *TIGHT!* WE WERE *ALWAYS* BUMMIN' AROUND TOGETHER. *BEST BUDS TO THE END!* AND NOW I GOTTA HEAR HE'S BEEN BACK IN TOWN THROUGH THE *GRAPEVINE?* AND THAT HE'S *MARRIED*?

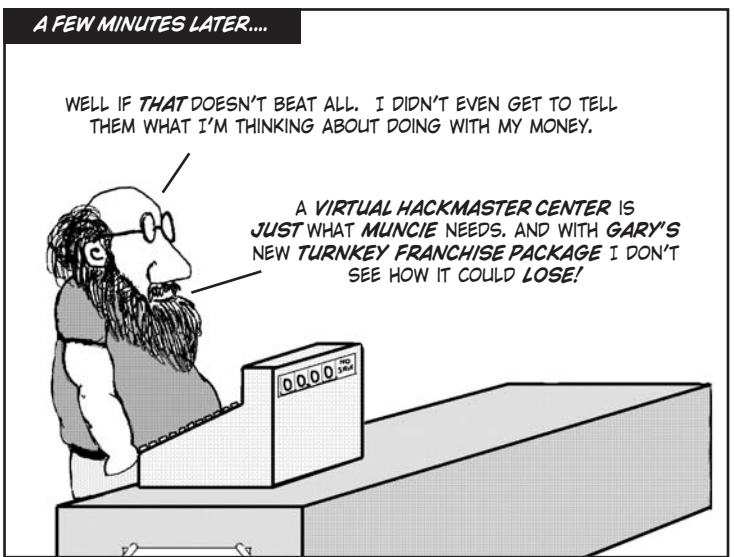
WE'D BETTER TELL THE OTHERS. THEY'LL WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS.

I JUST DON'T GET IT!



REALLY, WAIT TILL YOU HEAR WHAT'S BREWIN' IN THIS NOGGIN OF MINE. WHAT IF I WERE TO *LEASE* THE UPPER FLOOR OF THIS BUILDING FROM *OL' MAN PAVEY* AND PUT IN A...

GUYS??!! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU GOING?



A FEW MINUTES LATER....

WELL IF *THAT* DOESN'T BEAT ALL. I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO TELL THEM WHAT I'M THINKING ABOUT DOING WITH MY MONEY.

A *VIRTUAL HACKMASTER CENTER* IS JUST WHAT *MUNCIE* NEEDS. AND WITH *GARY'S* NEW *TURNKEY FRANCHISE PACKAGE* I DON'T SEE HOW IT COULD *LOSE!*

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- Hazat explorer *stalker*
- Hazat frigate *scorpion*

Here are four new starship deckplans for use with *Noble Armada*, *Fading Suns*, *TRAVELLER*®, or just about any other sci-fi game. Featured are two massive troop hauling galliots, one sleek frigate, and one small explorer, each presented as a 25mm-scale map (ranging from one to three 17" X 22" poster pages each). *Letters of Marque II* is perfect for detailed boarding actions or roleplaying game firefights from corridor to corridor, stateroom to engine room. Add these great deckplans to your growing fleet in March 2000.



Darius



Lucretzia



Stalker



Scorpion



FAULTY LATCH MY ASS! YOU DELIBERATELY EVACUATED ME FROM THAT AIRLOCK! MAY I ASK WHY?

SORRY DUDE, BRIAN GOT TO ME. I DECIDED TO THROW IN WITH HIS MUTINY.

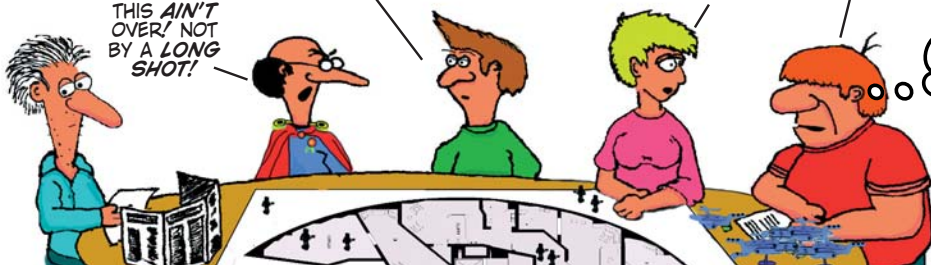
THIS AIN'T OVER! NOT BY A LONG SHOT!

YOU WERE RIGHT, SARA! THESE DECKPLANS ROCK! THEY WERE INVALUABLE IN HELPING ME PLAN MY TACTICALS IN SIEZING CONTROL OF THE BRIDGE FROM "CAPTAIN BLIGH" OVER THERE.

DON'T FORGET - YOU PROMISED ME A COMMISSION IN EXCHANGE FOR MY COOPERATION.

OF COURSE! YOU AND DAVE BOTH.

POST-HUMOUSLY, THAT IS!



Trading Places

BY STEVE JOHANSSON AND JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

IT IS A **SAD DAY** FOR THE **BLACK HANDS GAMING SOCIETY**. THE **FINAL WORD** HAS JUST COME IN FROM THE **HACKMASTER PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION (LOCAL 254)** THAT **NITRO'S GM ACCREDITATION (FOR THE THIRD TIME IN FIVE YEARS)** HAS BEEN **REVOKED!**

AAAAHHHHH!!! DON'T YOU WORRY, **NITRO!** I'M SURE IT'S JUST **TEMPORARY**. WHEN THE **HMPA REVIEW BOARD** CONVENES **AFTER** THE HOLIDAYS, THEY'LL THROW YOUR **CASE** RIGHT OUT ON ITS **EAR** AND RESTORE YOUR **GM STATUS**. BESIDES, I REALLY DON'T MIND SITTING IN AS **ACTIVE GAMEMASTER** FOR A FEW WEEKS. IT'LL BE **GOOD** FOR ME TO STRETCH MY **GM-LEGS** AGAIN AND WORK THE RUST OUT.

TOUGH BREAK, **NITRO**. IN THE **GOOD OLD DAYS** A **GM** COULD GET AWAY WITH THAT SORT OF **BEHAVIOR** - EVEN IN A **SANCTIONED TOURNAMENT!**

PETE'S RIGHT, SIR. YOU'VE GOT **FRIENDS** IN THE **HMPA**. THEY'LL PROBABLY WAIT FOR THE **STINK** TO DIE DOWN AND QUIETLY GIVE YOU YOUR **CREDENTIALS** BACK.

FRIENDS? IN THE **HMPA?** HA! THAT'S A **LAUGH**.



NO USE IN **SUGAR COATING** IT GUYS. I REALLY **SCREWED** THE POOCH ON THIS ONE. I DIDN'T JUST **WUSS-SLAP** SOME **LOWLY PLAYER** YA KNOW - I **MOPPED** THE FLOOR WITH ANOTHER **GAMEMASTER'S BUTT!** THE **BOARD** WILL **NEVER** FORGIVE SUCH A **TRANSGRESSION!**

BECAUSE OLD GHOSTS DIE HARD!

THEY STILL HOLD THAT **LITTLE INCIDENT** BACK AT **GARYCON '78** AGAINST ME!

BUT IT WAS A **FREE-FOR-ALL!** I STILL DON'T SEE WHY YOU WERE **SINGLED OUT**. I SAW **PLENTY** OF **GAMEMASTERS** **DUKING** IT OUT! DID YOU HAPPEN TO CATCH **EARL SLACKMOZER** **SCISSOR-KICK** **B.A. FELTON** IN THE **G'NADS** WHILE COMING UP THE **BASEMENT STEPS?**

GORDO'S GOT A **GOOD POINT** FOR **ONCE!** WHY **ARE** YOU THE **ONLY PERSON** GETTING **BURNED** BY THE **HMPA??**

WHY? I'LL TELL YOU WHY.

ALWAYS HAVE. ALWAYS WILL.



LITTLE?? YOU CAN SIT THERE WITH A **STRAIGHT FACE** AND REFER TO THE "**SLAP HEARD AROUND THE CON**"* AS "**LITTLE?**" FOR **CRYING OUT LOUD**, **NITRO**, I WASN'T EVEN **THERE** AND I HEARD IT. YOU **SLAPPED "THE MAN" HIMSELF - GARY JACKSON!** BETTER YET, YOU **LIVED** TO TALK ABOUT IT. THAT WAS NO **INCIDENT** - IT WAS **HISTORY!**

YEAH, WELL, BETWEEN **THAT** AND "**FERGUESON'S FOLLY**"† I'D SAY QUITE A FEW PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU **HANG UP** THE **GM SCREEN** FOR **GOOD!**

SIR??!! YOU **SLAPPED GARY??!!** OUR **GARY??**

YOU KNOW I DON'T THINK I **EVER** DID HEAR HOW THAT WAS **RESOLVED**. DIDN'T HE SEND THE **ANTIGNANO BROTHERS** DOWN TO PAY YOU A "**VISIT**"?

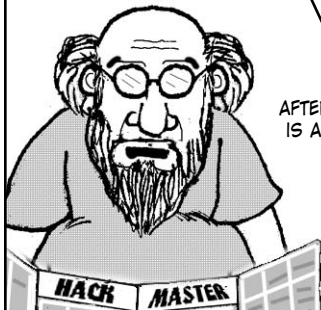
ACTUALLY GUYS, UNDER THE TERMS OF THE **NON-DISCLOSURE** I SIGNED AS A RESULT OF MY **SETTLEMENT**, I'M NOT **ALLOWED** TO **DISCUSS** THE MATTER. CAN WE JUST GET ON WITH THE **GAME?**



* See Tales From the Vault Volume I (page 44): Nitro Ferguson slaps Gary Jackson during a tournament over a 'disputed rule call'. As a result Nitro was banned from running sanctioned HackMaster for five years.

† See Bundles of Trouble Volume 1 (Dueling GameMasters): Nitro got his group lost in the steam tunnels beneath Ball State University.

GOOD IDEA, NITRO. WE CAME TO GAME DIDN'T WE? ALL RIGHT MY VENOMOUS LITTLE DICE FREAKS. I'VE DECIDED TO START A NEW HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN FROM SCRATCH. BIG NEWS FLASH FOR YA. WE'RE PLAYING BY MY RULES NOW. NO OFFENSE TO NITRO, BUT THINGS HAVE GOTTEN A BIT LAX AROUND HERE. AS A PLAYER IT WASN'T MY PLACE TO COMPLAIN.



AFTER ALL THE GM IS ALWAYS RIGHT.

BUT THAT'S ALL GOING TO CHANGE STARTING TONIGHT. SO BE FOREWARNED! I'M GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH YOU GUYS HOW TO PLAY REAL HACKMASTER. THOSE OF YOU 'WEAK OF SPIRIT' AND 'WUSS OF HEART' MAY WANT TO SHOVE AWAY FROM THE TABLE NOW AND GO YOUR MERRY....

EXCELLENT! I WELCOME CHANGE. IF YOU'RE OPEN TO A FEW SUGGESTIONS, MAYBE YOU COULD START BY MAKING IT A HOUSE RULE THAT A CHARACTER HAS TO BE THE SAME SEX AS THE OWNING PLAYER.

SUGGESTIONS MAY BE FIELDED AT THE END OF THE GAMING SESSION. IN THE MEANTIME BE ADVISED THAT THE "DEMERIT SYSTEM" IS IN PLACE.

YOU JUST EARNED YOURSELF 10 DEMERITS FOR INTERRUPTING THE GM, STEVIL.

DEMERITS?? YOU COULD HAVE WARNED US YOU KNOW.



I TRUST YOU ALL BROUGHT YOUR NEW CHARACTERS LIKE I INSTRUCTED YOU TO DO. I CERTAINLY HOPE, FOR YOUR SAKE, YOU HEDED MY ADVICE AND ROLLED UP "UNIQUE" CHARACTERS. I'M SO SICK OF THESE SAME-OL, SAME-OL CHARACTER CLONES YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN BRINGING TO THE TABLE. WELL....I'M GOING TO FORCE YOU GUYS TO EXPLORE NEW CHARACTER TYPES IF IT KILLS ME.

OH WAIT TIL YOU SEE MY NEW CHARACTER SIR. IT'S A REAL STRETCH FOR ME. I THINK YOU'LL BE QUITE PROUD OF KRAGIN THE THIRD.

WELL, I GUESS YOU'RE AS GOOD A PLACE TO START AS ANY NEWT. LET'S HEAR WHAT YOU GOT.

"TREY" IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER CHARACTER I'VE EVER RUN.

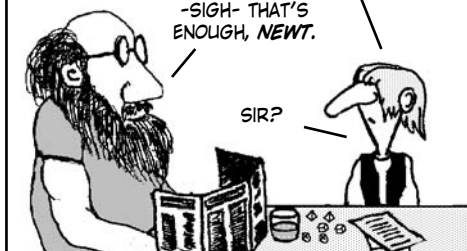


HE'S A TEMPERATE WOODLAND BARBARIAN. THAT GIVES ME BOTH THE WINTER SURVIVAL AND NATURE FORAGING SKILL SUBSETS.

I BANKED ALL MY FREE DEVELOPMENT POINTS TO GET THE HIGH ALERTNESS ABILITY SO THAT I CAN'T BE SUBJECT TO SURPRISE ATTACKS. AND GET THIS, I'M TRUE NEUTRAL! OH YEAH, AND JUST TO REALLY MIX THINGS UP, I TOOK GREAT SPEAR AS MY WEAPON. ALSO I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE KEWL IF HIS FATHER WAS A LUMBERJACK SLAIN BY ENEMIES OF THE..

-SIGH- THAT'S ENOUGH, NEWT.

SIR?



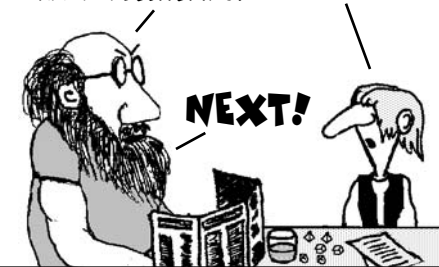
GO AHEAD PUT YOURSELF DOWN FOR 25 DEMERITS SON!

TWENTY FIVE DEMERITS?? HUH? BUT WHY?

FOR BUILDING UP FALSE EXPECTATIONS AND NOT DELIVERING!

B...BUT...

NEXT!



OKAY GORDO LET'S SEE IF YOU FOLLOWED INSTRUCTIONS AND TOOK A ROAD LESS TRAVELED. WHAT YA GOT FOR ME?

WELL I DID TAKE YOUR ADVICE AND WENT FOR SOMETHING TOTALLY OUT OF CHARACTER FOR ME AND OFF THE BEATEN PATH. ORCHID BLOSSOM IS A PIXIE-BROWNIE!! SHE'S AN ILLUSIONIST-PRIESTESS-FIGHTER. I ALREADY ROLLED FOR A FAMILIAR AND WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO GET A BUTTERFLY STEED!! IS THAT KEWL OR WHAT? I CHOSE PETITE RAPIER AS MY WEAPON PROFICIENCY AND I'M....

PIXIE-BROWNIE?? I SWEAR - I WORRY ABOUT YOU SOMETIMES, SON.

OH MAN ARE YOU IN TROUBLE. -SNICKER-





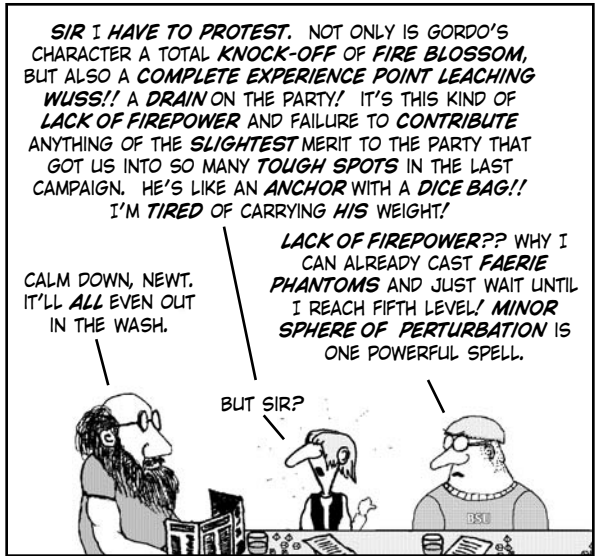
WELL, *GORDO*, THAT'S ABOUT AS *MUCH* AS I FIGURED I COULD GET OUT OF YOU. I GUESS I'LL LET YOU *SLIDE*.

PETITE RAPIER? BUT THEY ONLY DO *ONE POINT* OF DAMAGE!

I SWEAR, I'LL ALWAYS *RUE* THE DAY I SOLD YOUR MOM THAT *COMPENDIUM OF HYBRID-PIXIES* SOURCE-BOOK FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY.

SURE, BUT I CAN ATTACK WHILE *MOUNTED* AT *NO PENALTY*.

BIG WHOOP! YOU *STILL* ONLY DO *ONE POINT* OF DAMAGE.

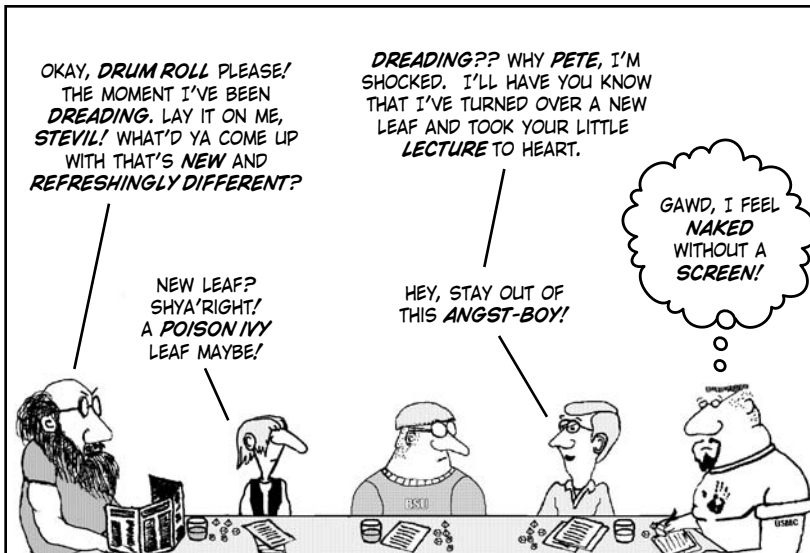


SIR I HAVE TO PROTEST. NOT ONLY IS *GORDO'S* CHARACTER A TOTAL *KNOCK-OFF* OF *FIRE BLOSSOM*, BUT ALSO A *COMPLETE EXPERIENCE POINT LEACHING WUSS!!* A *DRAIN* ON THE PARTY! IT'S THIS KIND OF *LACK OF FIREPOWER* AND FAILURE TO *CONTRIBUTE* ANYTHING OF THE *SLIGHTEST* MERIT TO THE PARTY THAT GOT US INTO SO MANY *TOUGH SPOTS* IN THE LAST CAMPAIGN. HE'S LIKE AN *ANCHOR* WITH A *DICE BAG!!* I'M *TIRED* OF CARRYING *HIS WEIGHT!*

CALM DOWN, NEWT. IT'LL *ALL* EVEN OUT IN THE WASH.

LACK OF FIREPOWER?? WHY I CAN ALREADY CAST *FAERIE PHANTOMS* AND JUST WAIT UNTIL I REACH FIFTH LEVEL! *MINOR SPHERE OF PERTURBATION* IS ONE POWERFUL SPELL.

BUT SIR?



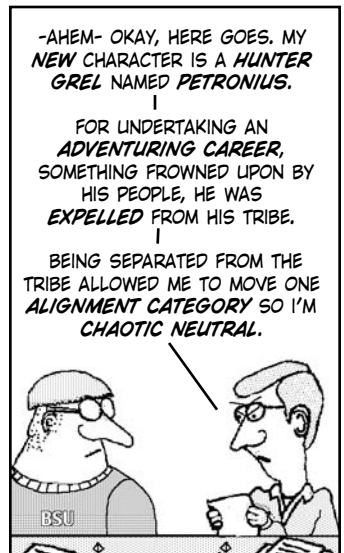
OKAY, *DRUM ROLL* PLEASE! THE MOMENT I'VE BEEN *DREADING*. LAY IT ON ME, *STEVI!* WHAT'D YA COME UP WITH THAT'S *NEW* AND *REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT?*

DREADING?? WHY *PETE*, I'M SHOCKED. I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW THAT I'VE TURNED OVER A NEW LEAF AND TOOK YOUR LITTLE *LECTURE* TO HEART.

NEW LEAF? SHYA'RIGHT! A *POISON IVY* LEAF MAYBE!

HEY, STAY OUT OF THIS *ANGST-BOY!*

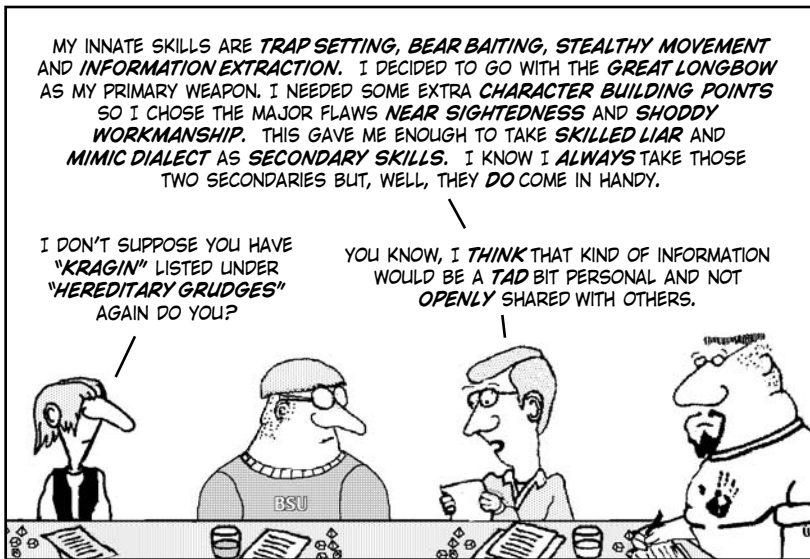
GAWD, I FEEL *NAKED* WITHOUT A *SCREEN!*



-AHEM- OKAY, HERE GOES. MY *NEW CHARACTER* IS A *HUNTER GREL* NAMED *PETRONIUS*.

FOR UNDERTAKING AN *ADVENTURING CAREER*, SOMETHING FROWNED UPON BY HIS PEOPLE, HE WAS *EXPULSED* FROM HIS TRIBE.

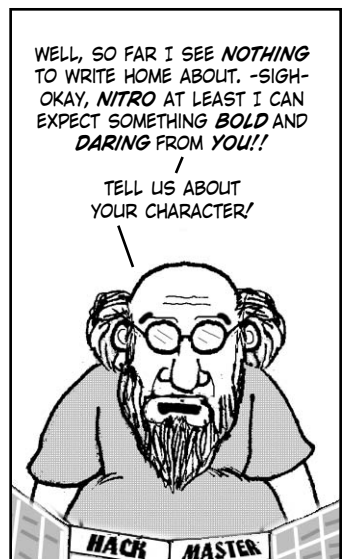
BEING SEPARATED FROM THE TRIBE ALLOWED ME TO MOVE ONE *ALIGNMENT CATEGORY* SO I'M *CHAOTIC NEUTRAL*.



MY INNATE SKILLS ARE *TRAP SETTING*, *BEAR BAITING*, *STEALTHY MOVEMENT* AND *INFORMATION EXTRACTION*. I DECIDED TO GO WITH THE *GREAT LONGBOW* AS MY PRIMARY WEAPON. I NEEDED SOME EXTRA *CHARACTER BUILDING POINTS* SO I CHOSE THE MAJOR FLAWS *NEAR SIGHTEDNESS* AND *SHODDY WORKMANSHIP*. THIS GAVE ME ENOUGH TO TAKE *SKILLED LIAR* AND *MIMIC DIALECT* AS *SECONDARY SKILLS*. I KNOW I *ALWAYS* TAKE THOSE TWO SECONDARIES BUT, WELL, THEY *DO* COME IN HANDY.

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAVE "*KRAGIN*" LISTED UNDER "*HEREDITARY GRUDGES*" AGAIN DO YOU?

YOU KNOW, I *THINK* THAT KIND OF INFORMATION WOULD BE A *TAD BIT* PERSONAL AND NOT *OPENLY* SHARED WITH OTHERS.



WELL, SO FAR I SEE *NOTHING* TO WRITE HOME ABOUT. -SIGH- OKAY, *NITRO* AT LEAST I CAN EXPECT SOMETHING *BOLD* AND *DARING* FROM YOU!!

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER!

HACK MASTER

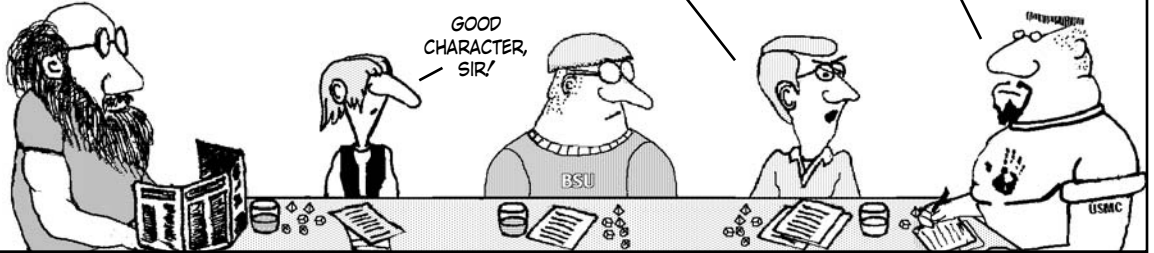
WELL, UH... I ROLLED UP A **FIGHTER** NAMED **MIKE!** I JUST TOOK THE STANDARD **SKILL-PACKS** AND **EQUIPMENT BUNDLES** FROM THE **QUICK-START** RULES. NOTHING SPECIAL REALLY, EXCEPT I REPLACED THE **LONG SWORD** WITH A **SHORT SWORD** SINCE I ONLY ROLLED **FIVE FOOT TWO INCHES** ON THE HEIGHT TABLE. OH... I'M ALSO **LAWFUL GOOD!**

???

LET ME GUESS. THIS IS YOUR **SECRET PERSONA** - RIGHT? THE BLAND FACE YOU'RE REVEALING TO THE REST OF THE WORLD? YOU'RE THE **CLARK KENT** TYPE AREN'T YA? C'MON - WE'RE FRIENDS HERE. YOU CAN TELL US ABOUT YOUR **REAL CHARACTER**.

NAH, THAT'S PRETTY MUCH IT. LIKE I SAID - I USED THE **QUICKSTART** RULES. I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO **FLESH** HIM OUT DURING PLAY.

GOOD CHARACTER, SIR!



WELL WITH **THAT** KIND OF ATTITUDE WHY DID YOU EVEN BOTHER TO ROLL HIM UP? IF YOUR **HEART'S** NOT IN IT ALL YOU'VE GOT THERE IS A SHEET OF PAPER WITH A BUNCH OF **NUMBERS** SCRAWLED ON IT. THAT'S ABOUT AS INTERESTING AS MY **401(K)** STATEMENT. ACTUALLY, QUITE A BIT **LESS** INTERESTING - MY FUNDS DID PRETTY WELL LAST YEAR...

YEAH, THAT'S THE PROBLEM. MY HEART **ISN'T** IN IT. IT'S BEEN **YEARS** SINCE I'VE BELLIED UP TO THE TABLE AS A **PLAYER**.

FOR GAWD'S SAKE, IT'S LIKE RIDIN' A BIKE! PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER AND **EMBRACE** YOUR CHARACTER.

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN.

DON'T GIVE ME THAT CRAP! I DROVE **45** FRICKIN' MILES TO THIS DUMP TO **PLAY!** YOU THINK **JUST** BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT SITTING BEHIND THAT SCREEN YOU'RE NO LONGER A **GAMEMASTER?** HUH? YOU'VE GOT A BUNCH OF GUYS HERE WHO ARE **COUNTING** ON YOU! SET THE EXAMPLE FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.

YOU SHOW 'EM DAMMIT!



SHOW 'EM THAT THE GAME IS **BIGGER** THAN YOU OR I. SHOW 'EM THE **GAME MUST GO ON!!**

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU KNOW I AM!



PETE, IF IT'S NOT **TOO** LATE, I'D LIKE TO ASK THAT WE TAKE A **RECESS** SO I CAN RE-WORK MY CHARACTER.

WHY? I THINK YOUR CHARACTER IS **PERFECT!** I WAS JUST ABOUT TO **AWARD** YOU **50 INCENTIVE POINTS** FOR A JOB WELL DONE.

NO, SERIOUSLY, PETE, I **REALLY** DIDN'T PUT MUCH THOUGHT INTO THIS CHARACTER. IF I COULD **JUST** HAVE THIRTY MINUTES TO...

NOPE! SORRY. YOUR CHARACTER RUNS AS IS.

OH MAN, DID YOU GET BONED! NOW YOU **HAVE** TO PLAY HIM.

CRIPES!

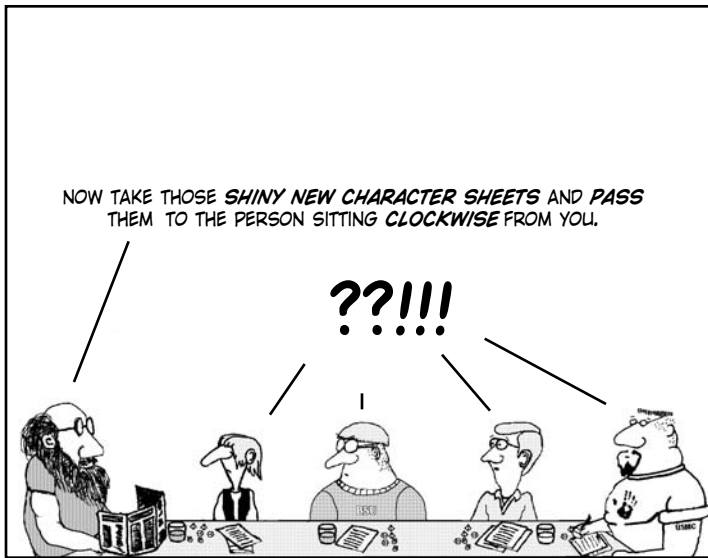


OKAY, FOLKS, I **TOLD** YOU I WAS GOING TO **SHAKE UP** THE HEN HOUSE TONIGHT AND I MEANT IT. **BEFORE** WE BEGIN TONIGHT'S ADVENTURE I'VE GOT A LITTLE **TWIST** TO THROW INTO THE WORKS.

NOW I DON'T WANNA HEAR NO **WHINING** AND **CRYING** ABOUT IT.

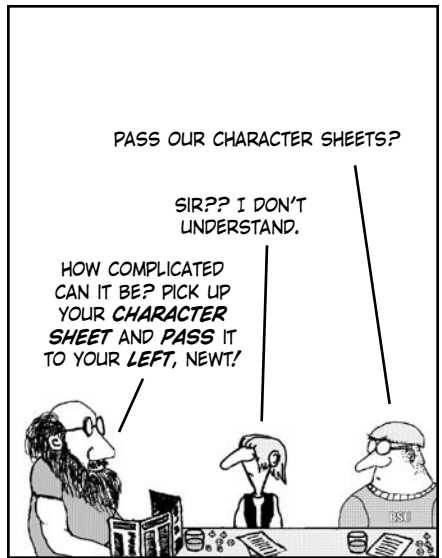
IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT YOU CAN JUST GATHER UP YOUR DICE AND **HIT THE ROAD.**





NOW TAKE THOSE *SHINY NEW CHARACTER SHEETS* AND PASS THEM TO THE PERSON SITTING *CLOCKWISE* FROM YOU.

??!!



PASS OUR CHARACTER SHEETS?

SIR?? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

HOW COMPLICATED CAN IT BE? PICK UP YOUR *CHARACTER SHEET* AND *PASS* IT TO YOUR *LEFT*, NEWT!

A FEW SECONDS LATER...



TADA!!! WELCOME TO YOUR *NEW CHARACTERS* BOYS AND GIRLS! *HAR HAR!!* TAKE 'EM HOME WITH YOU - GET TO KNOW THEM! GET TO KNOW THEM *WELL!* BECAUSE NEXT WEEK I EXPECT YOU TO PLAY THEM *TO THE LETTER!* AND THAT INCLUDES *ALIGNMENT* AND WITHIN THE CONFINES OF YOUR *CHARACTER RESTRICTIONS.*

A FREAKIN' PIXIE-BROWNIE? I GOTTA PLAY A FREAKIN' *FEMALE* PIXIE-BROWNIE? THIS AIN'T RIGHT!

MIKE THE FIGHTER?

HER *BUTTERFLY STEED'S* STATS ARE WRITTEN ON THE BACK.

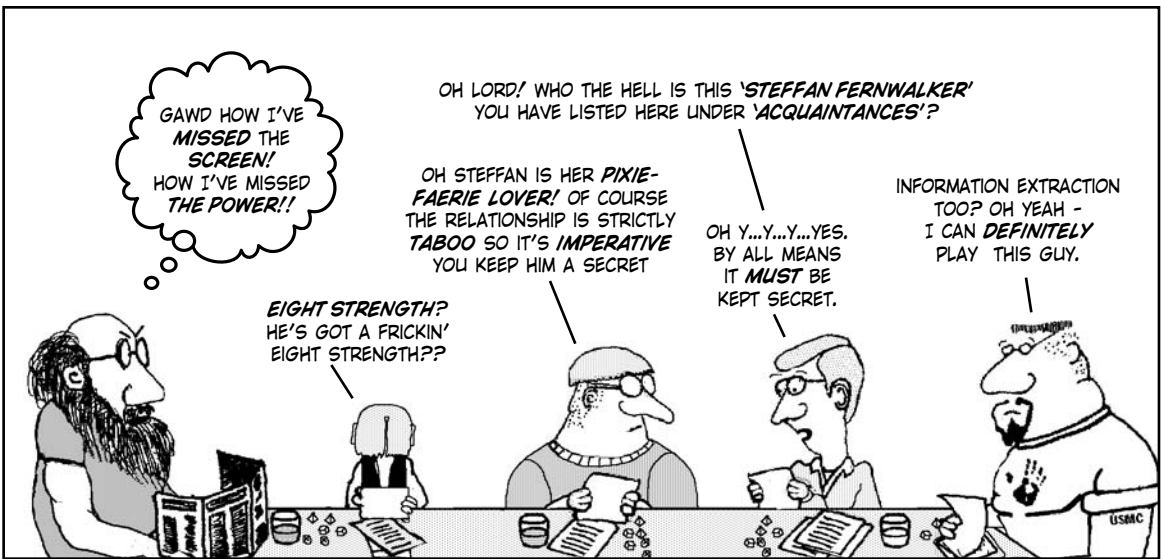
HMMMMM... PLAY A *GREL HUNTER?* I CAN DO THAT.



BUT MIKE HAS *NO BACKGROUND.* *NO SECOND LANGUAGE.* *NO PATRON GAUWDS.* I'VE *NOTHING* TO WORK WITH HERE.

CONSIDER IT A *CHALLENGE,* NEWT. YOU'RE *STUCK* WITH HIM.

AWWWW MAN, HE'S GOT NO ARMOR!



GAWD HOW I'VE MISSED THE *SCREEN!* HOW I'VE MISSED THE *POWER!!*

OH LORD! WHO THE HELL IS THIS '*STEFFAN FERNWALKER*' YOU HAVE LISTED HERE UNDER '*ACQUAINTANCES*'?

OH STEFFAN IS HER *PIXIE-FAERIE LOVER!* OF COURSE THE RELATIONSHIP IS STRICTLY *TABOO* SO IT'S *IMPERATIVE* YOU KEEP HIM A SECRET

OH Y...Y...Y...YES. BY ALL MEANS IT *MUST* BE KEPT SECRET.

INFORMATION EXTRACTION TOO? OH YEAH - I CAN *DEFINITELY* PLAY THIS GUY.

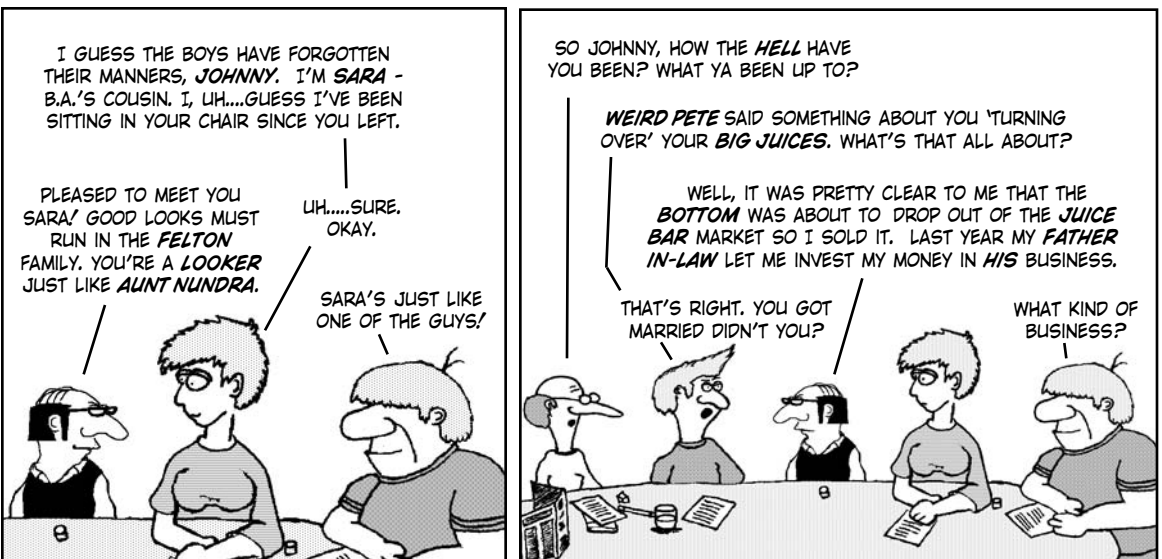
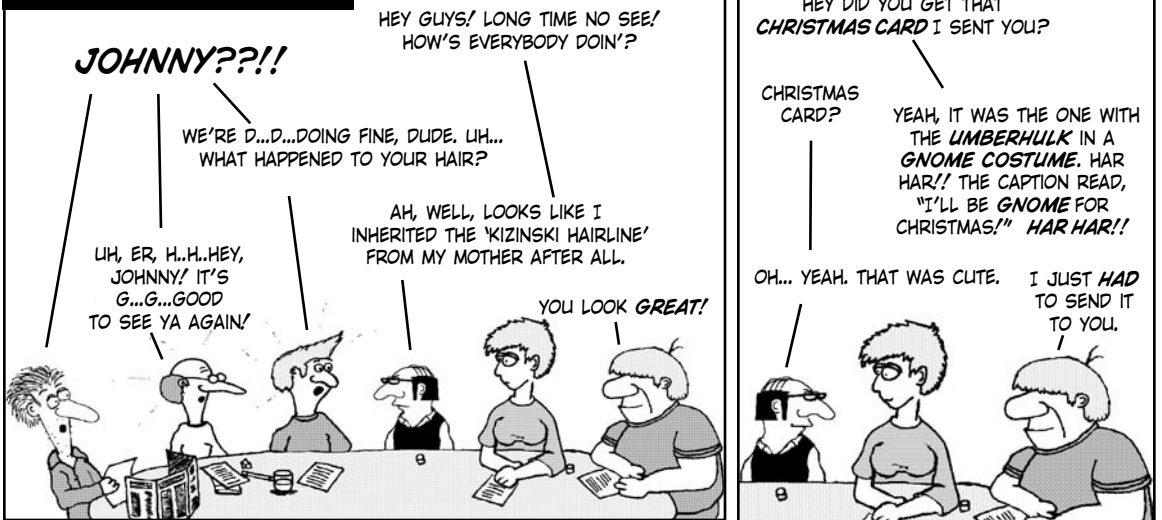
EIGHT STRENGTH? HE'S GOT A FRICKIN' *EIGHT STRENGTH??*

Has Anybody Seen My Old Friend, Johnny?

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



MOMENTS LATER...



WE **REGLAZE** PORCELAIN BATHTUBS AND SINKS. IT'S REALLY **LUCRATIVE!** YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE PROFIT MARGINS. IT'S BEEN SLOW THE LAST YEAR OR SO BUT THINGS SHOULD **DEFINITELY** START PICKING UP SOON.

WELL THE IMPORTANT THING IS YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING YOU **LOVE** DOING - RIGHT?

UH..YEAH, I GUESS.

SO...TELL US ABOUT THE WIFE.

OH, **SHELLY?** I MET HER THROUGH WORK AT MY OLD BUSINESS. SHE WAS ONE OF MY FRONTLINE **JUICE SQUEEZERS**. ONE DAY I ASKED HER TO WORK OVER-TIME TO HELP ME OFFLOAD A SHIPMENT OF TANGERINES AND.. WELL, THE REST IS HISTORY. WE GOT MARRIED IN '94 AT THE **MIDWEST FRUIT-DERIVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONVENTION**.

OH THAT'S SO SWEET. ANY CHILDREN?

TWO! FREDRICK AND ASHLEY. THEY'RE FIVE AND SIX. AND THERE'S ANOTHER ONE ON THE WAY.

I BET YOU'RE A **PROUD** FATHER.

HAR HAR!! SOUNDS LIKE **JUICE** ISN'T THE ONLY THING SHE WAS **SQUEEZING**.

CHILDREN??

WELL...UH....

ACTUALLY FREDRICK AND ASHLEY ARE FROM **SHELLY'S** PREVIOUS MARRIAGE. BUT THEY CALL ME DAD AND EVERYTHING SO IT'S KEWL.

DAMN, JOHNNY! SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE BEEN BUSY.

OH...ER...UH....

YEAH WHERE DO YOU FIND THE TIME TO GAME?

I TEASE THEM AND CALL THEM MY **PRE-FAB KIDS!**

CUTE!

GAME? AWWW HELL, GUYS. I HAVEN'T GAMED IN **YEARS!** TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH I SOMETIMES **REGRET** ALL THOSE YEARS I DID **WASTE** ROLE-PLAYING. I MEAN, CRIPES, I FLUNKED OUT OF COLLEGE MY SOPHOMORE YEAR BECAUSE I DITCHED **FINALS** SO I COULD MAKE **HACKON INDY**.

GAAA! WHAT? YOU DON'T GAME ANYMORE? I DON'T UNDERSTAND. B.A SAID YOU WERE BRINGING A WHOLE BUNCH OF GAMES TONIGHT.

NO, NO, YOU MISUNDERSTOOD. I WAS BRINGING **ALL** MY OLD GAMES TO GIVE TO **BRIAN**. MY MOM WANTS THEM OUT OF HER ATTIC.

YEAH, WHAT GIVES?

REALLY? YOU'RE GIVING MY ALL YOUR OLD STUFF? **WOW!!** THANKS, JOHNNY.

I GOTTEM OUT IN MY TRUNK. BEFORE I LEAVE WE CAN TRANSFER THEM OVER TO YOUR VAN. BY THE WAY, NICE **MURAL!**

THANKS! I'M A **BIG** BABYLON FIVE FAN YA KNOW. EVER CATCH IT?

NO, 'FRAID NOT. IT COMES ON AGAINST **ALLY McBEAL**. SHELLY AIN'T ABOUT TO MISS HER "ALLY".

I GOT 'EM ON TAPE. I'LL LOAN THEM TO YOU.

WELL HELL, JOHNNY, THIS WILL BE A **CAUSE** TO CELEBRATE THEN. YOUR **FIRST** GAME OF **HACKMASTER** IN WHO KNOWS HOW MANY YEARS.

HUH? GAME? TONIGHT? WHOAH, HOLD ON GUYS. I'M SORRY, I JUST STOPPED BY TO SAY HELLO AND DROP THIS STUFF OFF WITH BRIAN. I REALLY CAN'T STAY LONG. IN FACT I SHOULD BE GOING. MY WIFE IS...

AW C'MON JOHNNY! IT'LL BE A **BLAST!** B.A. IS **MUCH** BETTER THAN HE USED TO BE.

CAN'T YOU STAY A LITTLE WHILE LONGER?

YOU JUST **GOTTA** PLAY WITH US, JOHNNY!



LOOK GUYS, I REALLY **DO** HAVE TO BE GOING BUT I'LL TELL YA WHAT. I'M GOING TO BE IN TOWN FOR ANOTHER WEEK OR SO. MAYBE WE CAN GET TOGETHER **NEXT WEEK** AND I'LL PLAY **ONE LAST GAME** FOR OLD TIME'S SAKE. HOW'S THAT GRAB YA?

NOW YOU'RE TALKIN'. WE CAN ORDER PIZZA AND MAKE IT A **PARTY!**

SOUNDS LIKE A DATE!

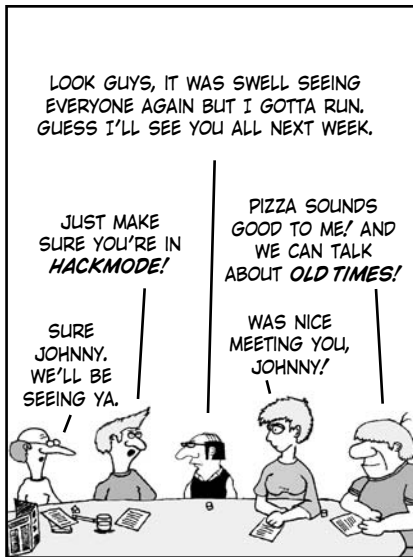
OKAY. HOW 'BOUT NEXT THURSDAY? SAME TIME - SAME PLACE.

**BEEP!
BEEP!
BEEP!**

I CAN HARDLY WAIT! MAYBE WE CAN DIG OUT MODULE **FS: INTO THE FRAY** AND RELIVE OLD TIMES.



WHOOOPS! IT'S THE **OLD LADY** PAGING ME. SHE AND HER MOM ARE GOING DOWN TO THE **FIRST BAPTIST** TO PLAY **BINGO** TONIGHT. I PROMISED HER I'D WATCH THE KIDS.



LOOK GUYS, IT WAS SWELL SEEING EVERYONE AGAIN BUT I GOTTA RUN. GUESS I'LL SEE YOU ALL NEXT WEEK.

JUST MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN **HACKMODE!**

PIZZA SOUNDS GOOD TO ME! AND WE CAN TALK ABOUT **OLD TIMES!**

SURE JOHNNY. WE'LL BE SEEING YA.

WAS NICE MEETING YOU, JOHNNY!

OH... UH... ER, THANKS. -BLUSH-

HEY BRIAN, FOLLOW ME OUT AND I'LL TRANSFER THOSE GAMES OVER TO YOUR VAN.

SURE THING!



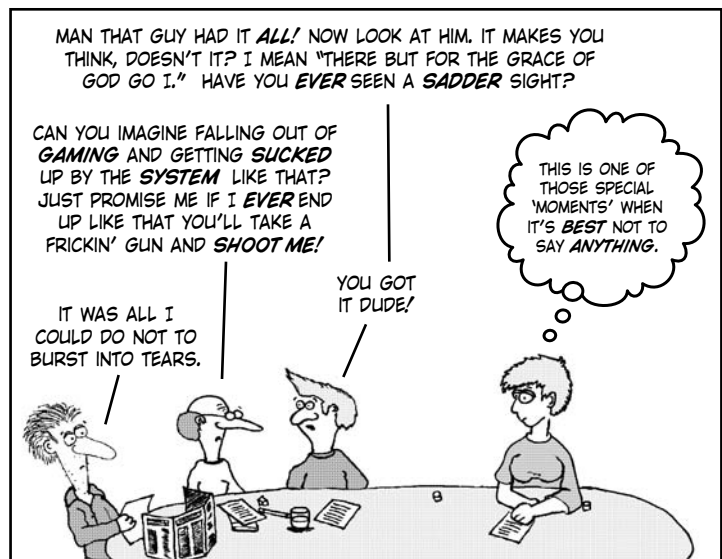
MOMENTS LATER...

SO THAT WAS JOHNNY KIZINSKI HUH? I HAVE TO CONFESS I'M SURPRISED. FROM ALL THE STORIES YOU TOLD ME ABOUT HIM I WAS EXPECTING SOMETHING... WELL... **DIFFERENT**. HE SEEMS LIKE A **NICE GUY!**

SORRY SARA. I DON'T KNOW WHO THE **HELL** THAT WAS BUT HE WASN'T **JOHNNY!** AT LEAST NOT THE JOHNNY I KNEW.

YEAH, HE WAS JUST A **SHADOW** OF THE MAN WE USED TO GAME WITH. -SIGH-

HE'S QUITE A CARD.



MAN THAT GUY HAD IT **ALL!** NOW LOOK AT HIM. IT MAKES YOU THINK, DOESN'T IT? I MEAN "THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD GO I." HAVE YOU **EVER** SEEN A **SADDER** SIGHT?

CAN YOU IMAGINE FALLING OUT OF **GAMING** AND GETTING **SUCKED** UP BY THE **SYSTEM** LIKE THAT? JUST PROMISE ME IF I **EVER** END UP LIKE THAT YOU'LL TAKE A FRICKIN' GUN AND **SHOOT ME!**

IT WAS ALL I COULD DO NOT TO BURST INTO TEARS.

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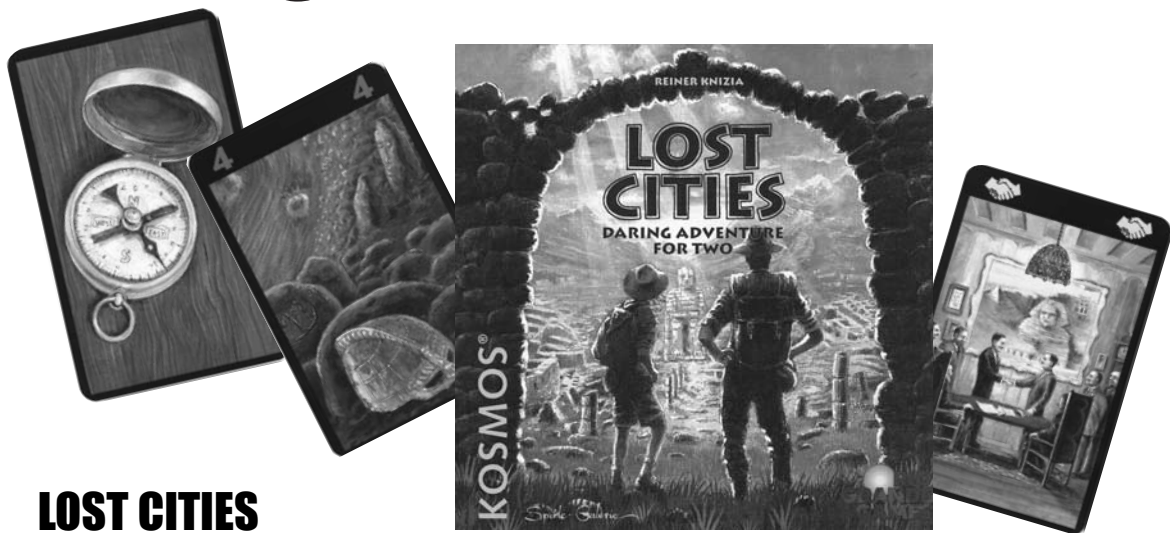
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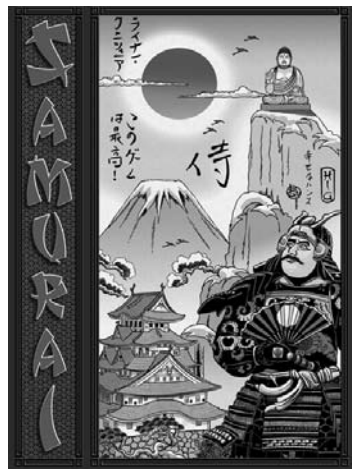


Tikal German Game of the Year 1999

This award-winning strategy game takes you to the jungle in search of the hidden temples and treasures of the ancient Mayans. The attractive board is new each time as players choose where to place the tiles as they explore Tikal. The game offers two ways to play for light and heavier strategy players. For 2 to 4 players ages 10 and up. \$44.95

Reiner Knizia's Samurai

Each player has an identical force of warriors, priests, and peasants to use to gain control of the important power figures of Old Japan. The players deploy their forces to the spaces around the power figures. When a figure is surrounded, it is captured by the player with the strongest sympathetic force. To win, a player must gain dominance with one of powers while getting better support from the other powers than the other players. For 2 to 4 players ages 10 up. \$39.95



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WHILE CROSSING THE RIVER BANADER, A BAND OF CUTTHROATS ATTACKED OUR THREE HEROES. A CLOAKED THUG KNOCKED GAREN UNCONSCIOUS AND TOOK ACTION TO RID HIMSELF OF BOTH HIS PARTNERS AND THE REMAINING VILNA GUARDS...

THINKING ALL ON BOARD WOULD PERISH BY GOING OVER THE FALLS...

HIS PLAN ALMOST SUCCEEDS!



NORTH SHORE OF THE RIVER BANADER



WHAT HAPPENED?!

A BAND OF THIEVES ATTACKED...FERRY'S GUIDELINES WERE CUT...LUCKILY I WAS ON BOARD...ESCAPED WITH ONE OF THE VILNA GUARDS ALIVE...



YOU TWO - GO AND SEARCH THE SHORE THOROUGHLY FOR BODIES. I'LL SIGNAL OUR MEN ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE TO DO THE SAME. REPORT DIRECTLY TO ME.

NORTH SHORE BELOW THE FALLS...



BY BELANAR, THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL



THE TWO GOBLINS SCOUT
ALONG THE RIVERBANK.



GENERAL NESTRA'S ENCAMPMENT



A SEAL OF UDA.



NOW SPY, BEFORE I GIVE YOU YOUR REWARD, YOU WERE GIVEN AN ORDER TO STAY IN THE VILLAGE OF LEW DOWN AND OBSERVE THE FERRY DEPARTING...

I WAS MY LADY... BUT... I NOTICED THOSE RUFFIANS ALSO GOING ON BOARD AND FEARING... RIGHTLY I MIGHT ADD... THAT THE VILNA GUARDS MIGHT BE SLAIN AND ROBBED... THEIR BODIES THROWN OVER BOARD... AND THEN WE WOULD HAVE NOTHING...

YOU SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN A PIECE OF THE TALE. YOU WERE SEEN LEADING THE ATTACK, THEN CUTTING THE FERRY ADRIFT.



BY YOUR FOLLY WE HAVE BUT ONE OF THE THREE SACRED SEALS OF UDA... FOR FAILING TO FOLLOW MY ORDERS...

YOUR REWARD IS DEATH!!

PLEASE... GENERAL... NOOOOOO!!!

HALF ELF GAREN, YOU HAVE LOST THE SEAL, ORSON'S SWORD OF COMMAND AND YOUR TWO FRIENDS AS WELL. YOUR FAILURE COULD NOT BE MORE COMPLETE. DOES THE SHAME BITE DEEPER THAN STEEL?

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE



Some Shockingly Hard Games

By Rick Moscatello

Perhaps I'm just a psychopathic barbarian at heart, but I love first person shooters (FPS), especially deathmatches. There's nothing I like better than to grab a weapon (*online of course!*), and go forth and slay and slay and slay in **Quake3** or the like. I'm not alone in this addiction, and game companies churn out FPS games, hoping to create the "Quake-killer" that will attract hordes of blood-thirsty gamers like myself.

Most suck, but it isn't their fault. I mean, you gotta have a shotgun-type weapon, a rocket-launcher type weapon, and a wussyboy pistol type weapon, and after that, it doesn't really matter what the weapons are, so there's almost no way to improve on the weapons.

You gotta have monsters, but, again, there are only a few types that seem to be worthwhile in games. You've got the useless zombies, the big tough ones that get in close and slaughter you, and the ones with the big weapons that hammer you from a distance. Yeah, graphics can help, and AI is always nice, but there really isn't that much room for improvement over any other FPS.

But there's one place where things can almost always be better: the story. Most FPS clones have the same story: "You're a soldier, alone in a hostile environment. Kill everything to win." Chances are, if that's the story, the game will suck.

After a few years of this, someone finally came up with a real story for a FPS game, and made **Half-Life**. It was a great horror story in the best sci-fi theme, with alternate dimensions, mad scientists, evil government types, and hostile soldiers with orders to "cleanse" the area, and they think you're quite dirty! There was only one problem with the game: it had no replay value. You knew what was going to happen, where everything was, and how to beat everything. You could play through the whole game the second time around in about 90 minutes, with no chance of getting killed.

Time for FPS games to move to the next level, and that next level is **System Shock 2**, published by *Electronic Arts*.

Much like **Half-Life**, the game has a strong horror/sci-fi theme to it, as you are a soldier (*crap, shame you gotta be a soldier again*) on a spaceship, escorting another ship on an interstellar voyage. As is typical for the genre, the ship's artificial intelligence goes on the fritz, just as an alien menace bent on controlling humanity starts to take over the personnel on the ship. Sure, this isn't the most original story--quick, how many AIs in sci-fi moves can you

name that have freaked out in some way? Still, the ship layout and atmosphere is just plain awesome, with computer consoles, beeping lights, and all sorts of stuff that constantly remind you that you're on a massively-screwed up starship.

The story is most kewl, but **SS2** has more going for it. The game has role-playing elements, as you get to choose the abilities of your character, starting 3 years before the game starts, when you enlist in the military. You can increase stats (*like strength and endurance*), weapon skills, technical skills, and psi skills; while you'll need them all to some extent to win the game, these choices of character development mean that the game has some replay value to it. Even after you've beaten it, it'll take a good 8 hours to win the second time through, so you'll definitely get your money's worth.

Alas, there are some problems with the game. First, it's insanely difficult, especially early on. Even though you're in the far-flung future, pistols are horrifyingly unreliable. You'll need to repair and/or maintain them every 30 shots or so. It's the same deal for laser guns and the like, but having your weapons disintegrate so rapidly is darned annoying. Adding to the frustration is the scarcity of ammo in the early parts of the game, until about a third of the way through, you'll mostly be braining zombies with a wrench until you get the skills to repair and maintain weapons.

Adding to this little difficulty is the infinite collection of monsters. Yep, much like **Aliens vs Predator**, monsters just appear out of nowhere, all the time. They're especially common if you trigger a security camera, but at least you can blast security cameras. It's funny that destroying a camera doesn't cause problems, but I guess the security here was installed by Starfleet ("*Captain, we just had a security camera blow in a restricted area. It didn't see anything, so we'll ignore it right?*"). Sometimes, though, it's a real nuisance to have to backtrack to pick up some equipment (*you can't carry much*), only to burn off precious ammo walking through long-cleared areas.

The story, by the way, is particularly grim. Most everyone on the ship is dead, and all you get is the chance to look at their old voice mails, from love letters to flame wars. There's this one lady with a somewhat corny French accent that you "follow" for several hours. She even talks to you "live" (*darn near the only human to do so*), telling you where she is. You get there moments after she is killed. Clearly, the story was written by a crack team of bitter and

disoriented vermin. I guess things wouldn't work out anyway, since you load up on so many cybernetic implants throughout the game that another crewman takes a look at you, and says "Oh, crap!" before running away in terror and jettisoning off in the only escape pod. At least someone makes it out alive.

Despite all those cybernetic implants, your character is a bit clumsy, and there are several places in the game where you need to make jumps that should be quite easy, yet are insanely difficult. Make that bitter, disoriented, and morbidly obese vermin, not to realize that a human should have no trouble jumping one foot in any direction.

Still, the main problem with the game is it's way too hard. Even on the easy level, I found myself accessing cheat codes every few minutes (*and remember, I'm a hardcore FPS player, not the poster boy for Parkinson's*). SS2 is a great game, but go online to get the cheat codes (there are at least a half-dozen you'll need) before trying to actually win.

Another difficult game is **Disciples: Sacred Lands**. The premise of the game is pretty good: there are these four factions, all fighting each other in classic "boardgame on computer" style. I really enjoyed **Heroes of Might and Magic** and **Warlords**, as well as most fantasy board wargames, and was beginning to think that any game like this is guaranteed to be fun. **Disciples** has shown me the error of my ways.

This game sucks. I know, as a critic, I'm supposed to put this in all flowery words like "it's derivative of neo-classical amusements that only a neanderthal could appreciate", but, the closest I can come to that is to say it's derivative of something else that sucks.

WAR DOGS

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While there are four sides, they are almost identical. Each side has the same four different hero types, and about the same few different soldier types. You're supposed to put together an army from these units. The armies are more like adventuring parties, as they'll generally consist of around five units, led by a hero. This is a cool idea, although you can't really protect any particular unit, so wizards die quickly, and warrior-type heroes in the front row die just about as fast. If they'd just put some thought into making combat interesting and less fatal, it would have helped immensely.

Units gain experience, and this is a really cool idea, too. Or it would be if going up levels really made much difference. A 7th level character (*after about 100 battles*) is only incrementally better than a 1st level character, and can be beaten if attacked by a pair of such units. If they had just put some thought into making the experience system for the heroes interesting and advantageous, that would have been very nice.

There are magic items of all sorts, but their effects are so trivially lame that it makes much more sense to just sell off everything and use the money to buy more troops. Again, a great game needs lots of magic items, but they need to be interesting. Another missed opportunity.

The best part of the game is the spell system, where you research spells to generate interesting effects. Again, it's a near miss, as you get a limited amount of power, and all the spells cost the same amount; you have no choice but to limit yourself to the "blastthecrapoutof" spell. There is some room for strategy here, if the rest of the game weren't so weak.

Then comes the real problem with the game: the AI cheats. As a computer player, I'm used to the AI fudging the rules a little, but this is freaking ridiculous. For every 100gp worth of units you buy, you'll kill about 5,000gp worth of enemy units (*that says something about how feeble the role-playing element is, that all too quickly units are defined by how much they cost*). You'll kill two or three major armies every turn. The computer gets an insane amount of magical power, too. Step outside your cities and get greeted by a blast of hostile spells. Again, you'll deal with roughly 10:1 firepower. I made it to the third or fourth campaign as the leader of the Undead forces. Despite controlling 75% of the map and never losing a battle, I still found myself cringing in my cities while swarms of dwarves rampaged through the countryside, hurtling reality-tearing magic at me on a regular basis. I won by setting up a thief and a hero next to a merchant, and stole/resold merchandise every turn. The only way to beat the abusively cheating computer is to cheat more abusively. This stuff just ain't right, and it's happening just a bit too often.

Game programmers need to get a grip: good AI means the computer plays a challenging game with a fair amount of resources. Stop with the bogus cheating, and start making the computer play the same game the human plays!

Anyway, **Disciples** has wonderful artwork, but you'll end up loathing this game no matter how deeply you want to like it. Don't even buy it in the discount rack, nothing will justify the hours of your life you'll waste on this abomination. □

News, Rumors and Industry Buzz plucked



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YOU'VE HEARD OF AD&D™ MINIATURES BUT MINIATURE AD&D™ BOOKS??!!

I first ran into these strange books at GENCON '99 when the word spread across the exhibitor hall like wildfire and they quickly sold out. As rumor has it Twenty First Century Games

(Monza, Italy) nabbed the license to do miniature versions of the 1st edition AD&D™ line shortly before TSR was bought out by Wizards of the Coast in 1996. Each manual has been reduced in its entirety, from 8.75"x11.25 to 3.25"x 4.16. I suspect a Spell of Nostalgia must have been cast on the ink prior to printing for, as silly as they sound, most gamers feel on overwhelming compulsion to buy them. I myself was seen slipping away into the crowds at GENCON muttering the words, "Must have little AD&D books. Must have...."

And now that I've managed to track down Gary Gygax himself and get them signed, they will go in a place of honor in my collection. Now....if I can just track down the mini-*Unearthed Arcana*. ☐



Above: Three examples of the mini-AD&D books available from Twenty First Century Games. (The quarter is to scale)

2 CDS – ONE GAMER GEEK MUSICIAN??!!

That's how Gayleen Froese describes her CD's *Obituary* and *Chimera*. Gayleen is apparently a role-playing fan and several of the songs on her albums were inspired at the gaming table. Thirteen songs about blood, guilt and dental anomalies? Music for fantasy-prone personalities?

Bob agreed to take the samples we received at the office home to play on his sister's stereo system and refuses to bring them back to the office. "They're hauntingly beautiful!" he later reported, "I think there must be some hidden messages in the lyrics. I need more time to investigate."

For those of you who don't want to wait until Bob's finished with his 'investigation' you can visit [members/tripod.com/~vgarry](http://members.tripod.com/~vgarry) for more information. ☐



WHAT PRICE GLORANTHA?

Rejoice my brother *RuneQuest™* fans! The epic fantasy world *Glorantha™* lives on "King of Dragon Pass™" from A Sharp. The fate of an entire people is in your hands as you lead your clan. Although you will have advisors given you wise counsel YOU must ultimately decide which battles to fight (and which to avoid through negotiations). The game comes with a 63-page manual, a quick reference sheet and a CD compatible with Macintosh and Windows 95/98. Will you have the resolve to lead your clan to victory — and take your rightful place as king? E-mail www.a-sharp.com for more info. ☐



HOMEBREWED KODT WEB SITES

<http://www.hoodyhoo.com> — Here, you'll find some kewl animated KODT cartoons.

<http://pages.infinit.net/kodt/kodt.htm> — A KODT web site with lot of stuff to see

http://members.tripod.com/~mythical_ventures/kodt — A Dedicated Weird Pete Fan Page

<http://www.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/knightsofthedinnertable> — KODT Fan Club

<http://www.kodt.fsnet.co.uk/> — Richard Bartle's KODT page



from the vine for your reading enjoyment



Joel Bozell expresses 'shock and dismay' over the GenCon Move commenting, simply, "Ob My!"

MILWAUKEE "FUMBLES" DIE ROLL. GENCON TO MOVE TO INDIANAPOLIS!!

Citing inadequate hotel space, Milwaukee convention officials say GenCon will move its annual summer gathering of gamers to Indianapolis in 2003. The announcement sent shock waves over the internet as gamers who have faithfully made the annual pilgrimage to Milwaukee for years expressed their disappointment. The August event is hailed as the biggest gaming convention in North America and has been held in Milwaukee since 1985.

GenCon grew out of a tiny show begun in nearby Lake Geneva in 1968 by Gary Gygax. (co-creator of *Dungeons and Dragons*™) It's been widely known for quite some time that GenCon organizers were 'shopping' for an alternative site for the convention which attracts 20,000+ attendees but many gamers held out hope that a delegation who recently flew to Seattle to present a "new offer" to Wizards of the Coast would save the day. Despite the announcement, one Milwaukee official is reported as saying, "We're not going to close the door on getting them [GenCon] back at some point."

As for Hoosier gamers, they are ecstatic over the decision and more than willing to play host. Indianapolis has undergone a radical make-over in recent years, and is considered by many to be the perfect location to hold a national convention. □



FIELD REPORT: PENTACON '99 November 12 -14 • Fort Wayne, Indiana



James Mishler (right) arguing his position that Gandalf the Wizard has an 18/20 strength. (Incidentally, he stands alone in that opinion.)

Unusually mild fall weather undoubtedly took its toll on Pentacon this year. Attendance was down a bit and some familiar faces were missing. On the other hand, there were so many events planned, we weren't able to find space to run the KODT Live Reading this year (*Sorry guys!*) Not to worry though. A good time was had by all. The guest of honor this year was Gary Gygax who ran sessions of *old time D&D* as well as signed copies of his latest RPG, *Lejendary Journeys*™. Chris Wies (*Holistic Design*) drove up from Georgia and shared booth space with us. [Which turned out to be pretty kewl since I finally got to play *Carnage*™ and *Noble Armada*™] This year's con was also pretty special because my long time friends, George and Jackie Vrbanic (and their son, Michael "the deer slayer") drove down to hang out at the booth (KODT fans will recognize them as the cover artists of *Knights of the Dinner Table*).

Besides getting my ass kicked in *Carnage*™ by a nine year old, and losing a game of *GIGANTEN*™ at the booth, I narrowly avoided being thrown in Klingon Jail. Speaking of Klingon Jail, I was called upon to make an 'official' ruling for *Orcs at the Gates*. It seems a group of players were within minutes of losing the game to the GameMaster when they struck upon the idea of having him thrown into Klingon Jail. The players immediately declared victory but the GM over-ruled them and claimed the honors for himself. Not satisfied, the players came by our booth asking me to make an official call as to who won. Of course, I had to side with the GM. As, B.A. says, "The GM is ALWAYS right!" □



FIELD REPORT: ARMAGEDCON '99 November 20-21 • Elyria, Ohio

This small con, (formerly called *NoahCon*) suffered from a lack of attendance. Again, the weather may have played a factor - especially in this small town which lies near the Great Lakes. Let's face it - it's tough to compete with beautiful weather.

As it turned out, this was one of the most unusual cons I've ever attended. Most of the exhibitors in the dealers room spent the weekend playing board games, watching videos and conspiring to have each other arrested by the Klingons. (I tried to frame Michael Vrbanic and have him hauled before the Klingon High Judge but the rat-bastard bribed the court and I ended up in jail myself along with my witness, George).

In fact, we even ran the KODT Live-reading right in the dealers room. All in all, I had a great time. I heard rumors that this was a party-con and I'm proud to report that those rumors were true. (It turns out the Klingons throw a decent room party each year) Sunday morning at the show looked like a gathering of the Living Dead as the party-hardy types of the night before staggered into line at the concession stand clamoring for cups of coffee. Weird Pete mocked them, of course, calling them gurdy-men for not being able to hang with him. □



Above: *Weird Pete and 'a friend' pull vigil over the KenzerCo booth.*



Right: *An anonymous gamer asbamed of being a 'KODT Fan' begs the Jolly to take her picture.*

Special Guest Appearance:
Brian Jelke

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KenzerCo@aol.com.





Artwork by George Urbanic

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ABDUCTION

Eden Studios Inc.
 15 Ledgewood Drive, Albany, NY 12205
 E-mail: EdenProd@aol.com Cost: \$10.00

Here's a fun little card game which you might have overlooked at your local gameshop last summer. (*At least I did - until a friend turned me on to it.*)

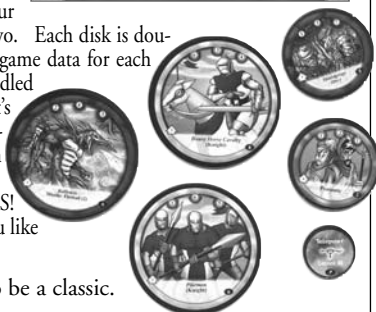
Each player (2 to 4) finds himself waking up aboard an alien spacecraft and coming to the horrible realization that he has been abducted. Your objective? Be the first player to escape captivity. The game is fast and furious. There are three basic card types; *Location, Item and Event*. The Location cards are placed on the table to form a map of the alien craft. Each location card is marked to show possible doorways, effects (which are automatically tripped) and powers (which must be activated.) Item cards (such as *Grav Disk, Pulse Rifle, etc.*) also have powers and/or effects. Event cards add a bit of uncertainty to the game with such things as alien patrols, ship malfunctions, etc. A good solid fun game - just the way I like 'em.

Brian's Rating: Worth the price of admission.

DISK WARS

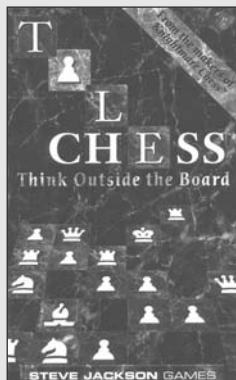
Fantasy Flight E-mail: www.rpg.net/ffg Cost: \$9.95 per set

This game is sweeping local game circles like wild fire. Those who play it are very enthusiastic about it and take it very, very serious. So...what's all the fuss about? What you actually have here is a cleverly disguised miniatures game without the miniatures. Uh....did I mention the game is customizable? WAIT!! Come back. It's not another CCG. This is a beast of a different (*and refreshing*) color. Don't worry, the disks aren't numbered and you won't find yourself in some back alley trading two *Drullus Worms* for a *Carpet Rider Acolyte*. Armies are bought in sets. Each *'Army Set'* comes with a set of the rules and enough 'disks' to build the army of your dreams. Later if you find you need more recruits you can pick up another set or two. Double sided with a beautiful rendition of the creature it represents. All the relevant game data for each creature is clearly indicated on its disk. This game is truly unique. Movement is handled by flip-flopping a disk across the playing surface a number of times based on it's movement value. Missiles are fired by holding them a foot above the target and dropping them (by letting them slide off an unused disk) onto the table. If they land on the target - they hit. If not - they are wasted.



I really wish I had an entire page to discuss this game because it really ROCKS! Look, scrape up ten bucks and buy a set and give it a try with a friend or two. If you like it, talk each of your friends into buying their own Army Set and going to War.

Brian's Rating: Don't be the last guy to discover this one! Destined to be a classic.



TILE CHESS — Think Outside the Board

Steve Jackson Games
 E-mail: www.sjgames.com Cost: \$14.95

This new Chess variant, (*from the same people who brought us Knightmare Chess™*) takes the game of chess to a strange new level. How? By dumping the board and allowing up to six players to play at the same time.

The set contains six sets of 16 tiles and a rule book. Everything you need to play one large game, two smaller ones or three 2-player games at once. If you have a basic understanding of chess you can be playing, out of the box, in less than ten minutes.

Play begins with each player choosing a color. Once it is decided who goes first, players take turns placing their tiles on the playing surface. Each tile must be placed either adjacent to, or on an existing tile, either on a side or on a corner. Players may place their pieces in any order with the exception of the King piece which is always placed last. (Incidentally, in *Tile Chess* the King can actually be captured) Since there are no borders or boundaries no two games are the same. Also, because the board is 'virtual' some of the pieces move and behave a bit differently. Pawns, for example can move in four different directions (*up, left, right, down*) instead of one. Also when a captured piece is removed from play, the capturing piece replaces it. This game brings a bit of chaos to chess which can make you quite paranoid. My favorite ploy to take on the role of a 'lurker' (*players who wait in relative safety in a corner surrounded by powerful defense zones while other players duke it out.*)

This game lends itself well to house-rules. (*Such as 'Blood Lust' in which each player must take a piece EVERY turn unless it's impossible to do so.*) With so many players you'll find the need to form (*and break*) alliances in order to survive. Remember - trust no one!

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 CANNON BLEW UP IN MY
 FACE AND ALL I GOT WAS
 THIS STINKIN' T-SHIRT!

ODD JOB,
 Many dangers lie on the
 road ahead. Be sure to read
 the sign posts and beware of
 the red-headed hitchhiker.
 Grody Jody



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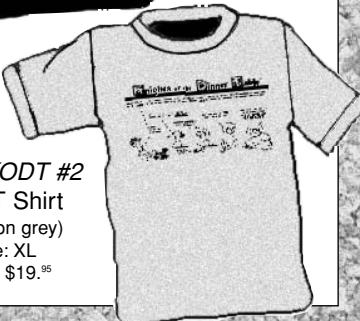
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MICHAEL V.
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 The Jol-Meister

MANNY,
 Welcome aboard! You know what the New Guy
 has to do - Right?

Kenzer Krew



Attention Convention Organizers

KenzerCo is currently pulling it's year 2000 Convention schedule together. If you

are interested in having one of the KODT Developers as a guest contact Brian Jelke (restin@aol.com) or call (847) 540-1970.
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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" - \$160], [2.75" x 2" - \$80], [1.5" x 1" - \$40]. Non-profit organizations (serving the gaming community) and Conventions or Seminars may place ads for free. All ads are placed on a first-come first-served basis with subscribers having priority.

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DRAGONS DON'T SHARE

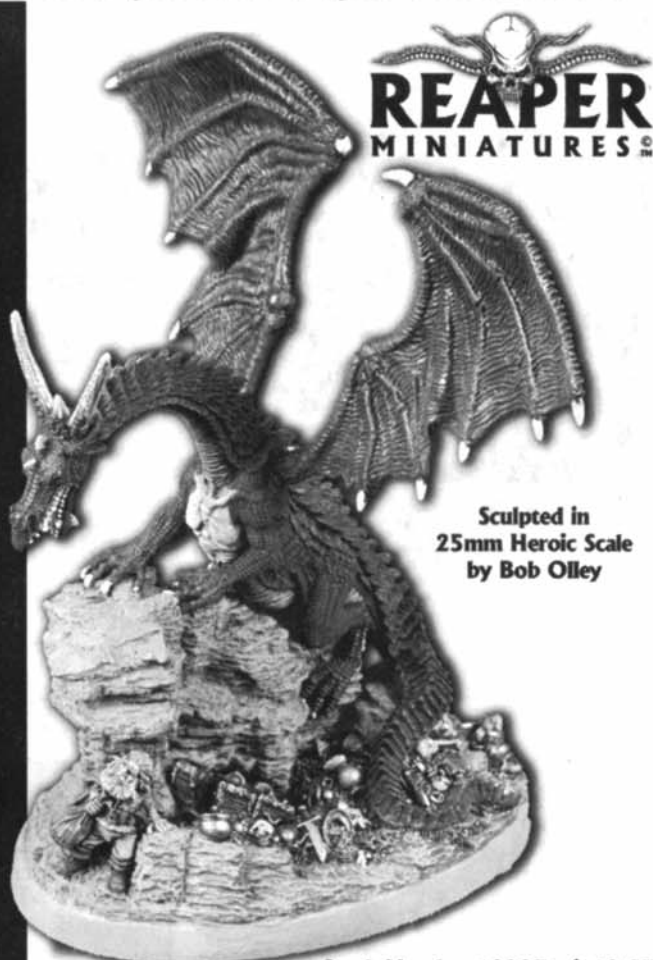
Listen well my weary traveling friend,
to a tale adventurous, sad and bold;
of Digger McGee's tragic End,
and the theft of Nathavarr's ancient gold.

He was a weaver of stories such as I,
a finder of treasure from dungeons deep.
Digger found the drake's lair on mountain high,
and chanced upon the dread wyrm in its sleep.



Digger was a dwarf stealthy, swift and strong,
dreaming himself rich from robbing the drake,
quick he ran from where he did not belong,
he laughed under breath and caused it to wake.

No twinkle of eye where mirth once did live,
ashes now, what was bone and hair,
no greater admonition did he give,
the final lesson is: Dragons Don't Share!



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

An Opinion Arena and Open Forum

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.

I have to agree with Chris Jantzen (*Forum issue 37*) in that the behavior of the **Black Hands** is not a current trend as Alan Miller suggests. I am a veteran gamer, having played for 18 years (*yes, I have dice old enough to vote*). There have always been back-stabbing goons like Bitter Stevil in the hobby and dysfunctional groups like the **Black Hands** with back-stabbing group dynamics. I knew players whose characters could always be described as "chaotic greedy" whether they were playing good rangers or evil wizards.

The **Black Hands** are a send-up of that type of gamer, just like the **Knights** are send-ups of hack-n-slashers and rules lawyers (*what else could Brian be?*).

Gaming has always attracted its share of quirky and even dysfunctional personalities. The situation hasn't changed appreciably, as far as I've noticed, in the time I've been a gamer. I think we should all just sit back and enjoy the **KODT** and **Black Hand** strips for what they are, satirical entertainment.

Bill Dunn
Madison, WI

Many thanks for Greg Downing (**BackRoom/KODT#37**) for coming to the aid of Stevil and his fellow **Black Hands**. Finally, a voice of reason from the darkness. Hell yes gamers like Stevil exist in real life. I AM Stevil and proud of it.

My day job (programmer) sucks. My life sucks! That's why I love to

role-play. You can be sure if it moves, I kill it. If it squawks, I torch it. If you don't watch your back in my game - you get whacked. Deal with it!

Long live Stevil!! Death to the peacemakers.

Steve Purvis
via E-mail

Whoah! Good shootin' Tex! Sounds like your game might be an interesting one. We might have to train our cameras in your direction for some Black Hand story ideas. I'm willing to bet you're sitting on a treasure trove of material.

"As Oliver Twist put it so perfectly, "Please, sir. More!?"

Jolly

I just wanted to say that I love what you are doing with the magazine. You've been up front all along about where you are heading with it and it's obvious a lot of love and attention goes into each issue.

So it burns my ass to read letters from readers who want to dismiss anything that isn't directly related to the comic strip.

Perhaps they haven't bothered looking around lately. Besides **Dragon**™ and (*gag*) **Inquest**™ there aren't a lot of gaming magazines out there any more.

From where I stand, **Knights of the Dinner Table** is carrying the torch. If it weren't for the bit's of information I glean from the ads, editorials, letters and articles in **KODT** I wouldn't have a clue as to what's going on out there in the gaming world. (*sadly my 'weird pete' closed his doors three years ago.*)

KODT is a rallying point. I can

walk into any gaming circle in the country with my **KODT** t-shirt and strike up a conversation and immediately feel like I'm among old friends.

All that 'extra' stuff in **KODT** some people feel compelled to complain about is what turned me on to such great games as **Formula De**™, **Lowenberg**™, **Way of War**™ and **The Devil's Addition**™.

These games alone have literally given me hours and hours of enjoyment. Games I never would have discovered if not for the 'extra stuff' in **KODT**.

Because I trusted the opinion of the publishers, I felt confident in picking them up. I'm gaming again for the first time in seven years and lovin' it. I'm sure I'm not alone.

So I beg you, PLEASE! Don't listen to a few self-centered whiners who would rather see you cut back to 32 pages and dump everything that doesn't say, "hoody hoo" every other sentence.

Obviously they're not playing with a full dice bag.

As Oliver Twist put it so perfectly, "Please, sir. More?!"

Shelby Lewis
via E-mail

Thanks for the letter, Shelby. Actually we've only received a handful of letters complaining about the extra material appearing in KODT. We get so many positive 'atta boy' type of letters that when we DO get a letter with a genuine complaint or criticism we tend to run it to see if other readers feel the same.

We really don't mind good honest feedback. (In fact, that was one reason for creating this forum) I'm certainly glad to hear you are back in the fold and gaming again. Look me up at the conventions next summer and I'll take you on in a game.

Jolly
□

FORTY THINGS TO DO WITH A DEAD FOLLOWER

Whether they are called hirelings, lackeys, henchmen, or just lowlifes, all flunky-type non-player characters have two things in common: they are low in ability and high in mortality. If they're not too helpful when they're alive, why not get some usefulness out of them after they've died?

Listed below are 40 suggested roles for expired minions. None require any special skills by the deceased, although cadaver size and state of decay may factor in. Not all proposed uses are applicable to your campaign, so consultation with your Game Master is advised. Also, for fastidious players, the question of good taste may be relevant.



1. Shield against missiles.
2. Battering Ram (*after rigor mortis sets in*).
3. Monster bait.
4. Hireling morale "booster" ("*Look what happened to Fred! He didn't follow orders...*").
5. Gag gift.
6. Castle or Hood ornament (*evil PCS only*).
7. Distraction for pursuing/attacking monsters.
8. Anchor (*best if wearing armor*).
9. Clumsy but effective missile weapon (*one, two, three, heave!*)
10. Set off traps with.
11. Melee weapon (*when swung by the heels*).
12. Fertilizer.
13. Treasure storage (*may need to gut and clean first*).
14. Source of magic spell material components.
15. Doorstop.
16. Sell to necromancers or other corpse-collectors.
17. Body parts can be used for practical jokes.
18. Counterweight.
19. Excessive mourning over body by PC may convince others of his sincerity and sensitivity.
20. Convenient person to blame (*Party points to corpse and says, "He did it!"*)
21. Pit depth-testing.
22. Put head on pole as warning to others.
23. Low-lying obstacle (*best if camouflaged*).
24. Zombie servant (*with animate dead spell*).
25. Scarecrow.
26. Puddle-crossing.
27. Booby-trap (*with appropriate spells or devices*).
28. Emergency rations (*only for very evil characters or extreme situations*).
29. Monster snack.
30. Get to drive in high-occupancy lane without the annoyance of a living passenger.
31. Chum.
32. Receptacle for lost soul.
33. Advertisement for mortician/taxidermist (*prepared corpses only*).
34. Extra weight for better vehicle traction.
35. Weapons/spell test target.
36. Catapult ammunition (*best if diseased*)
37. Glue (*some processing required*).
38. Opportunity for dramatic speech about revenge, etc.
39. Ventriloquist's practice dummy.
40. Raise up for monster fodder. Repeat as needed.

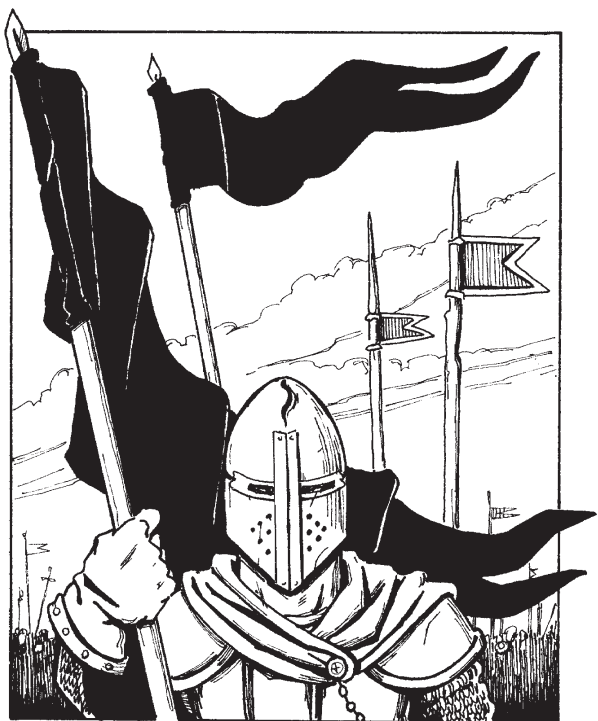
by Larry ABodybag@ Granato ☐



Hey HACK-JOCKEY!! Got yer own Parting-Shot?
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from the writers of *Knights of the Dinner Table*



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