



KENZER & COMPANY

No. 41

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

M A G A Z I N E



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Starting in May, Kenzer and Company, the team that put "able" in Dinner Table, has set their wacky sights on the world of fantasy comics with the release of **HackMasters of Everknight**. Travel through Garweeze Wurd, made famous in the pages of *Knights of the Dinner Table*, and see the truth behind the rising popularity of the fantasy genre. Like all good fantasy, it begins with a thief stealing something he shouldn't have, characters being forced to flee from an unknown danger, everyone getting wrapped up into something bigger than expected, and the gathering of a team of unlikely heroes... but with a twist... and a pinch.

HackMasters takes a skewed look at the fantasy genre in ways that have never been seen before...except for maybe in *KODT*, *Groo*, *Nodwick* and possibly a few others. Kenzer and Company aims to draw in fans from comics with spoofs of popular comic titles, characters, concepts and even creators. Long time *KODT* fans will enjoy seeing the world of *KODT* spring to glorious life as illustrated by Manny Vega and can continue to revel in the writing they love from the *KODT* development team. You'll be splitting your sides as you read the subtle and obvious parodies of popular Gaming Systems and related novels. You'll also enjoy special *KODT* strips written specifically for *HackMasters*. "Our goal is to make a fun comic book that everyone can appreciate, even those we're poking fun at. I look forward to dealing with more creators that WANT to be mocked by us," commented Vega, the afore mentioned art monkey. Expect to see appearances from characters from cartoons, TV, movies and even music, new and old school... it's about time they get the (dis)respect they deserve!



KENZER AND COMPANY

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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

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

Editorial of a Madman

"Naaaaaa....he's nobody."

KODT Fan at GenCon

Definitely one of the highlights of this job is meeting our readers at various conventions. Discovering we speak a common language through gaming, I can't help but feel I'm meeting 'old friends' for the first time. There's always that feeling when meeting a reader that under a different set of circumstances we might have ended up playing in same gaming group. Having just read Paul Hornsby's hilarious letter (*which appears in this issue's Letters Page*) I was once again reminded of this fact.

Some encounters stand out more than others - like the time the guy came up to our booth at a show in Calgary. He picked up a copy of the comic and after flipping through it for a moment he asked, *"Is the guy who draws this here?"*

"Yeah, that would be me!" I answered.

"Oh. Did you go to art school or something?" he asked.

"Who me?" I laughed, "Are you kidding? No... I kind of fell into this."

"Yeah, that's what I thought." He replied, *"Your drawing pretty much sucks!"*

Of course I immediately agreed with him. "Yeah, I know."

He looked a bit disappointed with my answer and I had the strange feeling he had wanted to push my buttons. He walked away without any further comment.

If I'd had the chance I would have told him my artistic skills (or the lack thereof) have been, (as Bob Herzog would probably describe it), *"slapped around like a red-headed stepchild"* over the years. In fact I used to be my biggest critic until one fan wrote in to tell me to "cut it out".

Still, we get a lot of letters from readers wanting to know the answer to such questions as, "Why is one of Sara's sleeves shorter than the other?" (*To which I usually respond, "Oh, Sara rolls up her right sleeve in European-fashion so that she's better able to roll the dice." I don't think anyone really accepts that answer so I'm still searching for a better explanation.*)

One of the most awkward moments I've ever had concerning the topic of meeting a reader/fan was when it turned out the person involved wasn't really a reader at all. This happened a few years ago during a trip to Fort Wayne, Indiana (*the 'big city' about fifty miles from where I live*) to go holiday shopping at one of the malls. When I spotted an **Electronic Boutique**, I decided to go in and see if there were any new computer games for my Mac (*Only a fellow Mac owner can appreciate the futility of such a quest*). I was just about to leave the store when from behind a soft voice greeted my ears.

"Excuse me... Jolly?"

I turned to see a young woman shyly smiling at me.

"You're Jolly Blackburn aren't you?"

I was astonished. Wow! How kewl was this? Somebody recognized me? I knew KODT's distribution was really climbing but... I could feel my head suddenly beginning to swell.

"I sure am!" I said proudly, "You read KODT?"

The strangest look swept over the woman's face. "Uh... excuse me? Kayodee?"

"Knights of the Dinner Table...er...the... comic book?"

Her blank expression said it all. She had no idea what I was talking about.

"I just wanted to say, 'Hi'" she explained, *"I thought I recognized you — I'm your neighbor!"*

Needless to say my face turned five shades of red and my ego was quickly deflated back to its appropriate size.

Now I recognized her for who she was. My next door neighbor back in Marion fifty miles away.

Mercifully, she didn't inquire any further about what the hell, "kayodee" was and excused herself to continue her shopping. (*A few days later I told Dave Kenzer this story over the phone and he almost busted a gut laughing into the phone. "Dude!" he cried, "You've got to tell that story in the comic book!"*)

Another awkward moment occurred when a fan at GenCon '98 came up to the booth to ask some of the KODT developers to sign his copy of KODT. I think I signed first, then Dave Kenzer. The guy thanked us and was about to walk away when Brian 'the sixth knight' Jelke returned to the booth from his break.

"Hey, you're just in time." Dave said, *"You can sign this guy's copy of KODT."*

The guy looked at Brian for a moment as if sizing him up and then shook his head. *"That's okay!"*

Dave laughed and said, "No... no, this is Brian Jelke. He's one of the writers."

"Naaaaa..." he said softly, *"He's nobody! I got the signatures I wanted."* With that the guy turned and disappeared into the crowd.

Dave turned to Brian and laughed. "Dude - you just got slammed big time. That was brutal!" (*We took to calling Brian, "Captain Nemo" for the rest of the con until he got so mad he wuss slapped Dave and popped one of his fillings.*)

For the record, I should point out that Brian Jelke has written some of the classic KODT strips. In fact, if you check out the **Top Ten Favorite KODT Strips** at the KODT fan site <http://pages.infinit.net/kodt/kodt.htm> (*you'll also find the current rankings as of this writing in this issue's GameVine*), you'll see at least one of the strips he wrote made the list (*The Deck of Far Too Many Things*).

Well, here's hoping you enjoy the issue in hand. As always we encourage you to give us feedback (good or bad - we can take it).

May all your hits be crits!

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn

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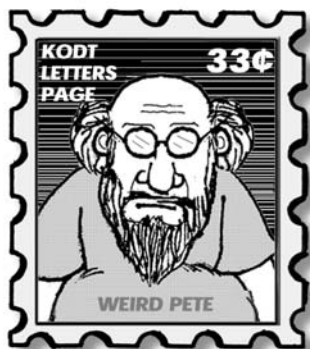
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Dear KODT,

This one is for Jolly. Remember when you were in Germany (*at Spiel '99*) and some guy gave you that really well-done "Homebrewed KODT" you ran in issue 38 where Sara rewards Bob with a kiss?

Well, I E-mailed him and complimented him on what a great artist he was. We've been regularly corresponding ever since.

Anyway, he really, really admires you and the Knights and refers to you as "*The Great One*."

One day he asks me if I'd heard anything about you ever coming to Germany so he could meet you. I didn't get it at first; it says at the bottom of the strip, "*Agin Suer handed us this home-brewed version of KODT at Spiel '99 in Essen, Germany recently.*"

So I ask him, "*When you handed in that strip to the guy at the KODT booth was it a big dude with roundish glasses and a goatee?*"

Apparently, it really hit home with him in a big way, because his only response was "Aaaaaagghhhhh!!!!!!!"

I felt bad for the poor guy but I couldn't stop laughing. I mean, you guys are really humble with your cult celebrity status and all. But we enjoy your comic so much that meeting you is just as cool as meeting a movie star to us gamers. And then to realize you'd met this person you so admire and not know it...

You should really drop the guy a note. You can get his site address off of Sara's breasts (*smicker*) in the strip.

Paul Hornsby
via E-mail

Since my write up of Spiel'99 appeared in issue 38, several German readers have E-mailed me to complain, "Why didn't you tell me that was you?"

One of the many differences I noticed between GenCon here in the states and Spiel '99 is the fact that exhibitors weren't given name tags at the latter.

This, coupled with the fact that we had no banner for the booth, (our KODT banner was stolen at GenCon a few months prior), apparently confused people. I'm sure I came off looking like some guy selling used comics on the side.

Our Readers Talk Back!

Although your story gave me a good laugh I apologize that Agin and other folks visiting our booth weren't aware of who I was.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I've read KODT since the old days when it first appeared in SHADIS. Your latest issue really struck home especially "Has Anybody Seen My Old Friend, Johnny?"

The other strips also had more laughs per page than your recent record. (*I think only the old strip about playing Call of Cthulhu was funnier.*)

Despite this, I have to take you all to task a little bit before I sing praises. "Talkin' Trash" fleshed out all the characters well except B.A. I have mixed feelings about this story line because it doesn't focus on the gaming table. For me, that kind of humor defines stories of the Knights. Please keep focused on that element.

"In the Black", set at Weird Pete's Game Pit, works well not because it sets up Kizinski's return but because it satirizes inane conversations game shop patrons hold with game shop staff.

"Trading Places" also draws strength from its setting. The Black Hands gaming table sets up your readers for jokes about role-playing sessions. This ground is better known than the gags of "Talkin' Trash" which are almost in-jokes. "Trading Places" was also particularly funny for three surprises: Weird Pete behind the GM screen, Stevil's pep talk, and the genius of PC switching.

All three of the strips were funnier than usual, but "Has Anybody Seen My Old Friend, Johnny?" didn't make me laugh. Like the Knights, I've had friends drop out of gaming. I have gamed most of my life; some of my dice can legally drink.

People move away and friends drift apart. This is part of our hobby, but the strip didn't amuse me. It was sad and maybe poignant, since it prompted me to think of dead friends. Seeing this in KODT is easier than maudlin drinking sessions - don't get me wrong. I liked the strip but it didn't fit KODT's usual tone.

Now that Johnny's shown again, please introduce Patty Gauzweiler.

From my GM experience, there is no greater conflict between two players than between two female gamers. Two attractive women in the same game can break down into the horrors of the two competing to demonstrate who is prettier. Just as Eris's Golden Apple marked "Kallisti" ultimately sparked the Trojan War, a female player who has long enjoyed a monopoly of male attention will react poorly to a new female face in the group. Pity the poor GM who must try

to hold player attention in the face of two females playing with their hair, heaving deep sighs, and asking for help from other players.

Keep up the good work.

Jay Dugger

Dear KODT,

I must say, speaking as a married father of three I actually liked the new version of Johnny Kizinski who showed up in issue #39. I think he could be very interesting character to keep in the story. There are a considerable number of gamers out there who are married and/or parents and the nature of their problems and viewpoints is often very different from other gamers. I myself love to game yet often have difficulty arranging the time (*perhaps you could have Johnny pop into the strip at semi-random intervals when he can find time*).

The possibilities with a gaming parent and children are numerous to say the least. Here are a couple from my own experience in hopes that you keep the new Johnny in the strip:

When I game it usually occurs at my home - and my children are typically home as well (*saves having to find a babysitter*). As a result the kids often wander in and "watch" the games.

Just last evening I was playing a miniature game (*Mordheim actually*) and in the midst of a lengthy battle.

After a few rounds of combat I noticed that a number of the buildings near where my kids were sitting, "watching", had a tendency to move around as if of their own volition, causing the tactical situation to shift radically a few times (*those skaven were under cover! Where did the building go?*)

In this same game another of my daughters (two years old) discovered the aerodynamic uses for the various dice which were sitting in assorted places around the table.

A hail of dice kept landing at various points on the table, often wiping out entire groups of forces.

Finally, there is the semi-edible (*at least in small children's views*) nature of gaming pieces. My youngest daughter did actually eat a mana stone from my oldest daughter's Pokemon game.

I didn't know about it until I was changing a diaper... (*I have visions of Bob's lucky twenty sider disappearing at the start of the game only for Johnny to hand it back to him late in the evening after checking on his kids and have Bob question where he found it.*)

Anyway, if you do keep Johnny in the strip I recommend having one his kids be very young (*say 2*) and the other be just starting to be interested in gaming.

Greg Pratt
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I'd been looking forward to a return of Johnny Kizinski for sometime now. I mean, I know we see him in **Retro KODT** all of the time but I'm referring to *Post-Sara Knights*. It was a major crack up to see his new doo (*or rather, lack thereof*) but the more he talked, the more straight-faced I became.

To quote B.A.: "It was all I could do not to burst into tears." Okay, maybe I wasn't that moved; but at the end, it did evoke a certain sense of melancholy in me. I've had gamer friends go "born again" and decide gaming is evil. Some have gotten a new career that takes them away. And the truly scary reason: they meet a woman (*or man, as the case may be*), fall in love, and forget about their gaming buddies.

Now I can see this coming a mile away (*feel free to remove this part if you want*), but I see Johnny coming back for his "One Last Time" and getting hooked on gaming all over again.

Now my second subject remained nebulous in my mind until I came to a part in issue #39 that refers to Nitro's status as gamemaster being revoked. Not just this one; but in any given issue there are references to the solidarity of gaming groups. In the world that the Knights live, GMs are apparently licensed. Gaming groups are recognized entities (*clubs with by-laws, oaths; dues, etc.*) and indeed the whole Hackmaster game seems to be unionized (*as implied by Nitro's accreditation being revoked by "HPA Local 254"*).

Okay, maybe I'm reading too much into this. But, really, is this poking fun at the growing industrialization of certain role playing games (*like those published by T&R, perhaps?*) or are there really places where people get together and game this way? And by the way, do you think gamers should pull together and organize like this? My gaming group has been together for a long time now; but we've never formalized it by giving it a name like **Knights of The Dinner Table**, collecting dues, forming by-laws, etc. (*my only rules as host and GM is: Don't smoke in the house and bring a six-pack of cola once in a while if you're going to raid my fridge*). I'd be very interested in hearing your guys' views, and those of the readers' on this subject.

Miniaturist
via E-mail

I was going to reply to your letter but upon reviewing the HMPA Local 249 (Marion, IND) bylaws I see that I am forbidden from doing so. (I could risk losing my GM credentials.) Sorry.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Our DM turned us on to you back in October when we got together to game. Since then I've done my best to track down all the back issues I can.

I've been gaming with the same group since my college days nine years ago and we do our best to get together a few times a year. We even stuck it out when our DM moved to California for six years. Now that he's back on the East Coast we keep in closer contact and try to get together more often. My wife has recently joined the group and become a welcome addition.

Reading KODT we all see ourselves in the characters and laugh out loud remembering some of our past tales of 'glory'.

One of our favorite stories that still keeps us in stitches goes like this: Our group came across a pit trap that had a pivoting top on it, so after we fell in, it closed on us again. The party's Psionist did not fall into the trap because he usually stayed in the back of the party and stayed out of trouble. So we were all trapped in the pit with the Psionist outside.

We determined the easiest way to get out was for the Psionist to trigger the trap from above, activate his Dimension Door and have us run through. The only problem is that the Dimension Door will only stay open as long as the top of the pit remained open (about 5 seconds). It all worked pretty smoothly until it was the party's thief, the last one mind you, to go.

Because of the way we were doing this, the character in the pit had to run at the wall where the Door would be before the Door was actually opened. Needless to say the Psionist failed his Dimension Door and the thief crashed into the wall. After dusting himself off, he went again and of course the Psionist failed again.

Three tries and a few hit points later he finally made it out of the pit. To this day we still think that the Psionist failed the second on on purpose just to be funny :)

Anyway, keep up the good work and maybe someday I'll tell you about the time we played 'Call of Cthulhu' and decided to make a trail of bread crumbs out of some asylum inmates in order to lure the monster to its death. :)

Chris Bulger
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I was quite impressed with **The World Turned Upside Down** from #38. Though a short article, its new take on some of the basic RPG monsters was fascinating, and is something I intend to use in my campaigns. The **Evil Elves** and the **Deadly Dwarves** are drawn from some of the darker tales of folklore and fantasy and prove an interesting alternative to the stereotypical "goody-two-shoes" elves and dwarves of D&D™, **Rolemaster**™, et al. The **Horrid Halflings** and **Nasty Gnomes** are interesting as well, and call back memories of Unselie bogarts and bogies of Celtic lore.

The benevolent humanoids are interesting as well, though they lack the same grounding in folklore as the malevolent demihumans.

I found it rather a shame that "kourageous kobolds" were not included among their number, but then who needs kobolds as allies when you have trolls?

Another great article was from #34, **The Magic Items from Garweeze Würl** written by the man himself, Gary Jackson. It's great to have diagrams of Knuckle's crossbow of slaying (*though a shame that El Ravager's Hackmaster +12 was left out of the list*).

I hope to see such great articles complementing the kick-ass comics in KoDT.

Keep up the good work.

Bevan "B. A." Thomas
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I ran "Los Caballeros del Comedor" (the KODT written in Spanish which appeared in issue #38) through Altavista's translator program (<http://babelfish.altavista.com>) just to see what would come out.

I have to tell you, I was pretty surprised by some of the translations...here it is, in full, with my annotations:

Strip title: The Horsemen of the Dining room (*Obviously "The Knights of the Dinner Table," right?*)

B.A.: Good, aqui comes the crazy dwarves. Apparently see encabronaron when Dave him shot a stone. (*The computer got confused here; the i in "aqui" has a dash above it instead of a dot and is supposed to mean "here". I can't figure out what "encabronaron" is supposed to mean.*)

Bob: I put with automatica my tiraflecha to him of the death! (*Ha! "I waste him with my cross-bow!" More computer errors, I should think.*)

Dave: Huh?

Sara: No! You are estupido Bob? We must chat and explain the situation. (*Computer didn't know what "estupido" was, though it seemed clear to me.*)

Brian: Alabao Sara, speaking him sumba the handle! It is the hour to hack-iar. "Alabao Sara, speaking him sumba the handle?" Obviously Brian is disagreeing with Sara but I can't figure out what he's saying. "It is the hour to hack,"" though - that's clear enough.

Bob: Vente! That B.A., knuckle swallows you is but the male one. (I'm laughing too hard at this to figure it out. Whatever could it mean!)

Sara: That tragedia, the poor man dwarfed. B.A. I am going to resar to my santo patron by them. (Again, computer errors turn this into so much gibberish.)

Dave: Uh?

Brian: Or! Good shot Bob. Oye B.A., aqui comes my balls from fire. (*"Balls from fire" would be fireballs, of course. Here we see the "aqui" error again.*)

Dave: Where comico Juana the library? (*He's asking about a library, but I don't know why.*)

B.A.: Dave, I know you feel left out but Teflon Billy's Tongues spell only affects three people.

Dave: Man, but why do I always get shafted? I'm The Freakin' Ravager! I don't see any of you guys with to bilingual name! (*Well, the computer went so far as to translate "El Ravager" for me. Interesting thing about that "I" - looks like if you put an apostrophe after a letter that's supposed to have a dash over it, that's how the computer translates it. Good to know.*)

Brian: That sera, sera... (*I remember hearing this in an old song, but I can't remember what it means, exactly. I know the English part of the chorus was "Whatever will be, will be," but did they say that in Spanish too?*)

Hope you got a good chuckle out of this. I know I did. Feel free to share it with the readers.

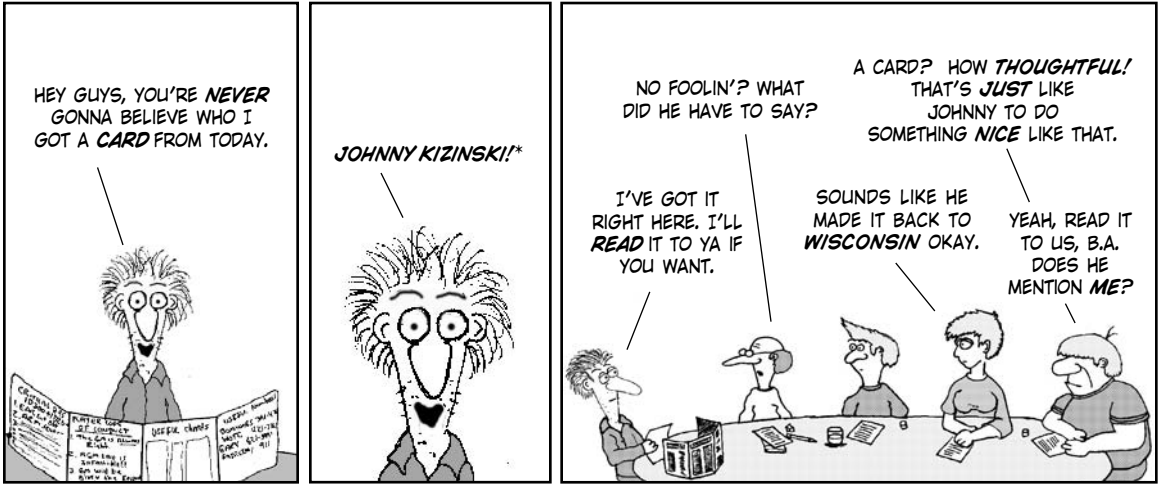
Spencer M. Lease
via E-mail



WRITE TO US!
E-mail Jollyrb@aol.com
or write to KODT,
830 W. Main Street, PMB 114
Lake Zurich, IL 60047

Back in the Fold

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



HEY GUYS, YOU'RE *NEVER* GONNA BELIEVE WHO I GOT A *CARD* FROM TODAY.

JOHNNY KIZINSKI!*

NO FOOLIN'? WHAT DID HE HAVE TO SAY?

A CARD? HOW *THOUGHTFUL!* THAT'S *JUST* LIKE JOHNNY TO DO SOMETHING *NICE* LIKE THAT.

I'VE GOT IT RIGHT HERE. I'LL READ IT TO YA IF YOU WANT.

SOUNDS LIKE HE MADE IT BACK TO *WISCONSIN* OKAY.

YEAH, READ IT TO US, B.A. DOES HE MENTION *ME?*

"DEAR GANG! THANKS FOR *USHERING* ME BACK INTO THE *FOLD!* I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GREAT IT FELT TO CRADLE A PAIR OF *TWENTY SIDERS* IN MY PALM AND FEEL THAT *OL' DICE FEVER* COURSEING THROUGH MY *VEINS* AGAIN. I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU ALL KNOW THAT I WAS *TRUE* TO MY WORD - AS SOON AS I HIT *MADISON* I LOOKED UP A LOCAL GAME SHOP AND MADE IT *KNOWN* THAT I WAS LOOKING TO *JOIN A GROUP*. I EVEN GOT MY *OL' LADY, SHELLY*, HOPPED UP ABOUT PLAYING. HOPEFULLY IN A FEW WEEKS I'LL BE *SLINGING DICE* AGAIN ON A *WEEKLY* BASIS. I'LL KEEP YA POSTED. STAY TRUE TO YER DICE. YER FRIEND, *JOHNNY.*"

P.S. ANY LUCK IN PLACING *CRUTCH* WITH A GROUP? I PROMISED HIM I'D FOLLOW UP.

A NEW GROUP? GOOD FOR HIM.

AWH WHAT A *WONDERFUL* CARD.



WHAT THE HELL DID I SAY? THE MAN IS DEFINITELY *BACK!* NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. YOU JUST *CAN'T* ROLL THE *DICE* LIKE HE DID *LAST WEEK* AND NOT EXPERIENCE A *TRANSFORMATION*.

I JUST WISH WE'D *FILMED* THAT GAME. *NINE CRITS IN A ROW??!* WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT SUCH A THING WAS POSSIBLE?

I HAVE TO ADMIT I WAS *TRULY* IMPRESSED. HE MADE THOSE DICE *SING* DIDN'T HE?

DAMN STRAIGHT!



AND DID YOU SEE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE WHEN I PRESENTED HIM WITH HIS *OLD* CHARACTER SHEET FOR *SPIKE 'FOUR EYES' MCCLELLAN!!* I'M NOT *CERTAIN* BUT I *THINK* I SAW A *TEAR* WELL UP IN HIS EYE.

OH MAN, I *WEPT* OPENLY WHEN YOU DID THAT DUDE. IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST *TOUCHING* MOMENTS I'VE *EVER* WITNESSED.

YOU DID *GOOD*, BRIAN.



* Recap: In the last issue, *Hack in the Saddle Again*, Johnny Kizinski agreed to play with the Knights for "one last game". After bailing he made a new friend (Crutch) at HawgWaller's and the two crashed B.A.'s game.

OH THAT WAS *BEAUTIFUL* WASN'T IT? TO SEE A MAN *REUNITED* WITH HIS CHARACTER AFTER *SO MANY YEARS*? AND IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH THE GUY PICKS UP THE *DICE* AND PROCEEDS TO PLAY ONE OF THE *MOST AWESOME* SESSIONS OF HIS *LIFE!* WHAT A WAY TO MAKE A *COME BACK!*

IT WAS LIKE HE *COULDN'T* BE TOUCHED! *DAMN!* WHEN THOSE *AZTEC HIGHLANDERS* HAD US PINNED DOWN IN THAT *GORGE* AND *JOHNNY* STOOD UP WITH A *WINCHESTER RIFLE* IN EACH HAND AND CHARGED THEM? I THOUGHT HE WAS *DONE FOR!*

WASN'T THAT EXCITING? IT WAS *SUICIDE* - YET SOMEHOW HE PULLED IT OFF.

IT WAS *CLASSIC JOHNNY!*

OR HOW ABOUT WHEN HE PUT A *CHOKE HOLD* ON THAT *WILD ARABIAN STALLION* AND WRESTLED IT TO THE GROUND?

STUPID HORSE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT *HIT HIM.*
-SNICKER-



I'LL TELL YA WHAT BLEW *ME* AWAY. IT WAS WHEN *SKALLAWAG JACK* BUSHWACKED US AND MADE US *THROW DOWN* OUR GUNS. I REALLY THOUGHT WE'D BOUGHT THE FARM WHEN *SUDDENLY* OL' *JOHNNY* TAKES HIS *MARSHAL'S BADGE* AND FLINGS IT LIKE A *THROWING STAR!!* *B.A.* RULED HE NEEDED TO ROLL A *NATURAL TWENTY* TO HIT AND *ANOTHER NATURAL TWENTY* TO DO ANY *DAMAGE.* AND *DAMN* IF THE *BASTARD* DOESN'T PULL IT OFF! *TWO NAT-TWENTIES* IN A *ROW!* HE HITS THE DUDE RIGHT IN THE *FOREHEAD* AND *KILLS* HIM ON THE SPOT.

GAWD ALL MIGHTY THAT WAS FRICKIN' AWESOME! I FELL OFF MY CHAIR!

I THINK I BRUISED MY HIM ON THAT FALL...

AND HE KNEW, I TELL YA. BEFORE HE EVEN ROLLED THE DICE *JOHNNY* KNEW HE HAD IT.

YEAH, I KNOW. YOU COULD SEE IT IN HIS EYE. THE *BASTARD* KNEW.



AND DID YOU NOTICE YOU *COULDN'T* SPEND A *DIME* WHEN *JOHNNY* WAS AROUND? EVERY TIME MY CHARACTER TRIED TO BUY A SHOT OF *WHISKEY* HE WAS THROWING THE BARKEEP *SILVER DOLLARS.*

OH I KNOW. HE EVEN LET ME TAKE A *CHAW* OFF HIS *CHEWING TOBACCO* WHILE HE DUG THAT *BUCKSHOT* OUT OF MY *KEYSTER.*

I THINK *JOHNNY* WAS ON *CLOUD NINE* AND HAPPY TO BE GAMING WITH HIS *OLD FRIENDS* AGAIN. THAT'S WHAT I THINK.

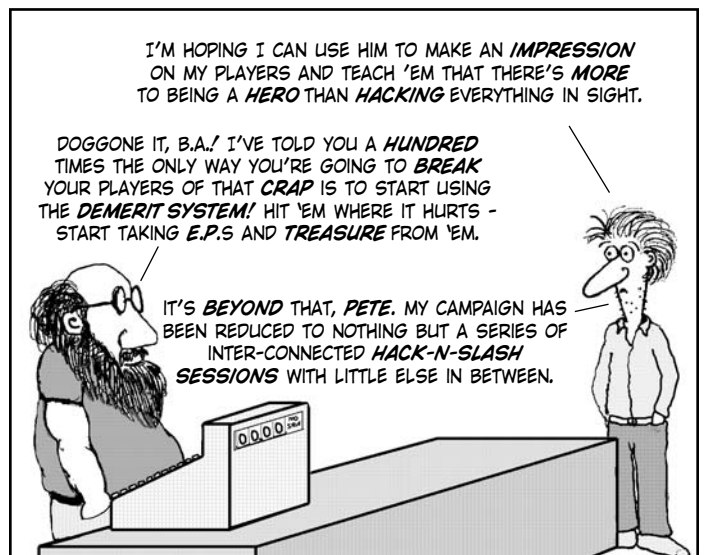
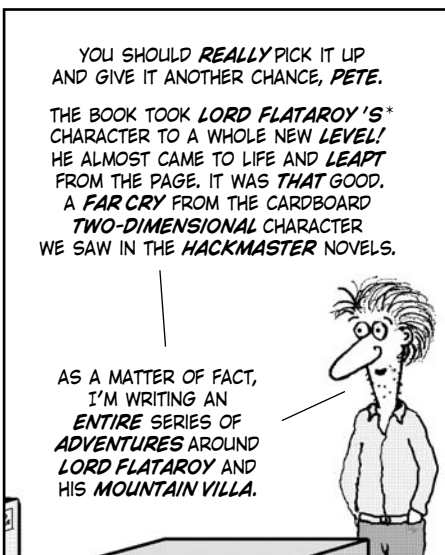
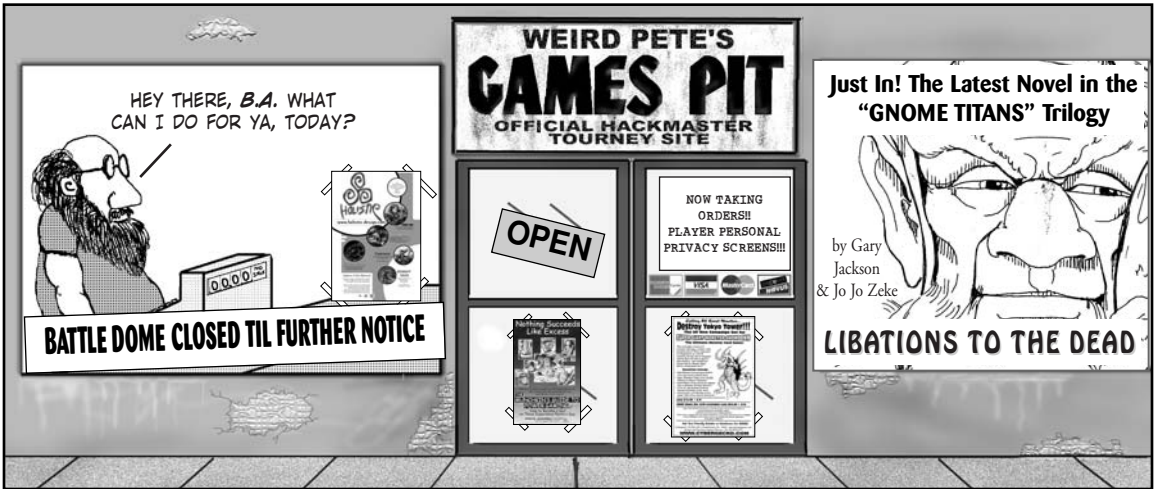
YEAH, I WAS FEELING THE SAME WAY.

IT'S LIKE *JOHNNY* SAID IN HIS CARD. IT'S *NICE* HAVING HIM *BACK IN THE FOLD.*

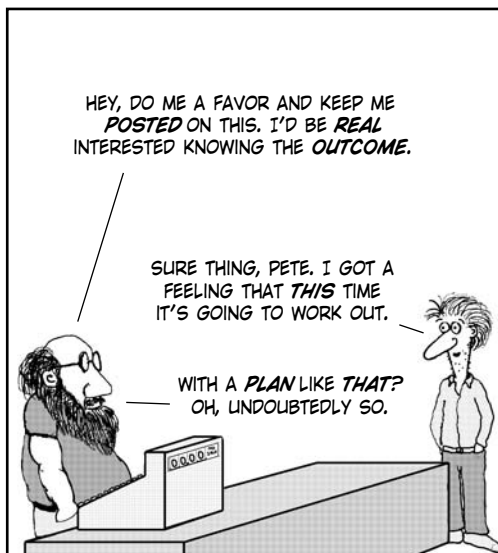
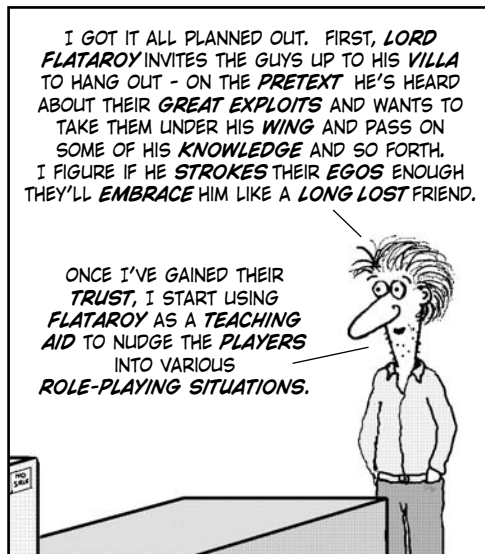
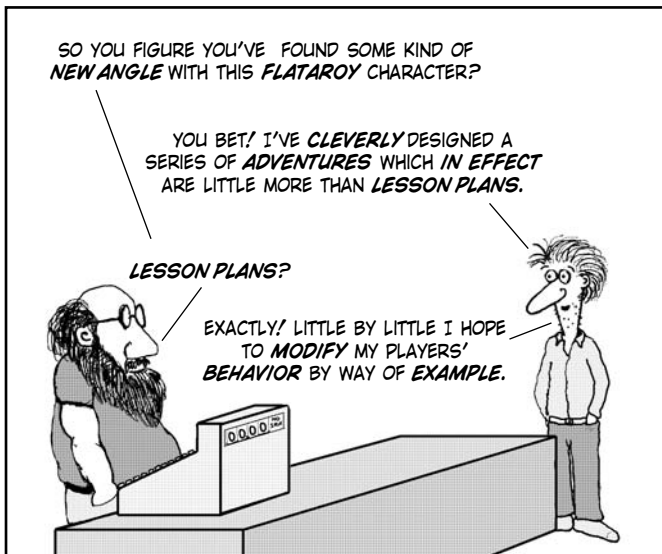


The Lesson Plan

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

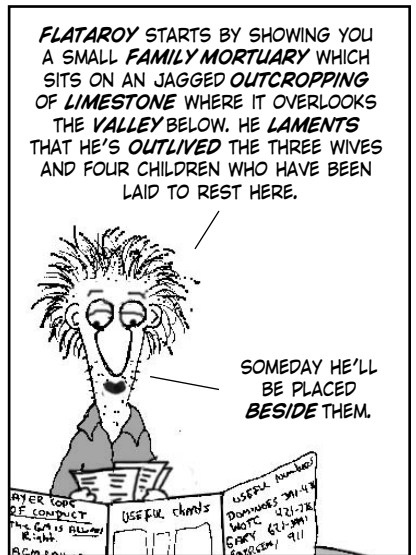
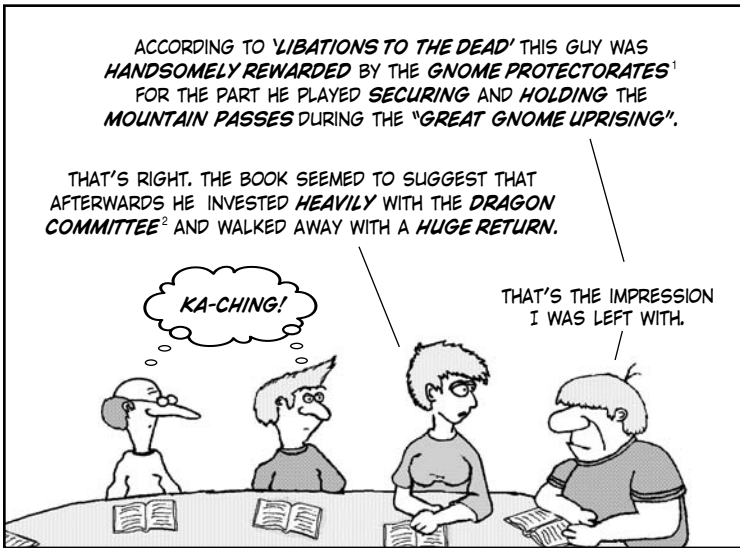
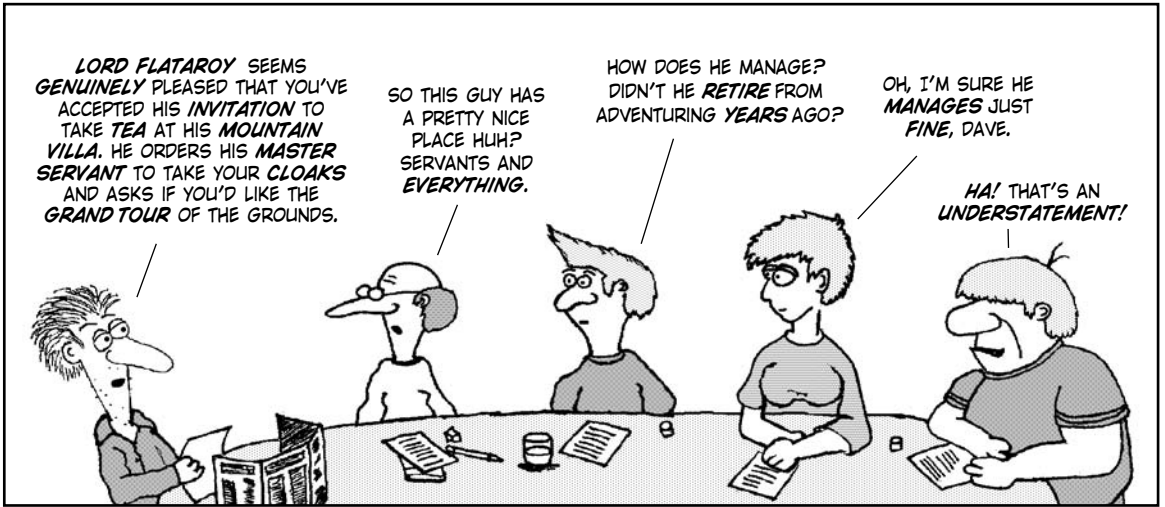


* See KoDT #24: "When Worlds Collide"



A Place of Their Own

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



¹ See KoDT #24: "When Worlds Collide"

² See KoDT #31: "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly" [The Dragon Committee is a secret society of dragons who meddle in the affairs of humans in order to increase their own power and wealth.]

TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

...AND **FINALLY** YOU ARE LED THROUGH A **LUSH GARDEN** NESTLED IN A **HIDDEN COURTYARD** TO A **SIDE ENTRANCE**. LORD FLATAROY OPENS A SET OF DOUBLE-PANED GLASS DOORS AND STEPS ASIDE MOTIONING FOR YOU TO ENTER. YOU ARE GREETED BY A **PRETTY MAID** WHO HANDS YOU EACH A CUP OF PIPING HOT **PEPPERMINT TEA** FROM THE **SILVER TRAY** SHE IS HOLDING.

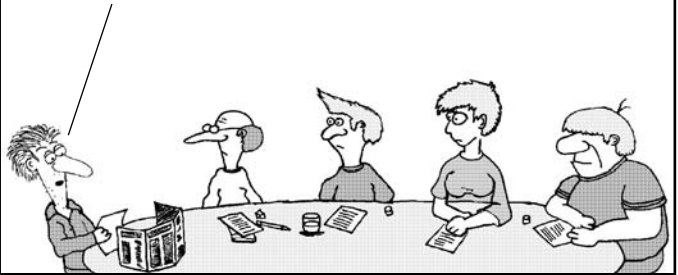
I ACCEPT THE TASTY BEVERAGE AND THANK MY HOST.

MMMMM, PEPPERMINT!



YOU ARE **USHERED** INTO A **LONG HALL** WITH A **VAULTED CEILING**. A **LARGE ROARING FIRE** BLAZES IN A **FIREPLACE** MADE OF **GREAT SLABS OF KOBIAN RED MARBLE** AND ADORNED WITH **INLAID SCRIMSHAW PANELS** DEPICTING SCENES FROM **BATTLES OF YORE**.

EVERY SQUARE INCH OF **WALL SPACE** IS ADORNED WITH THE STUFFED HEADS OF HUNDREDS OF **FANTASTIC CREATURES** INCLUDING A **BLUE RIDGED SPINY BACKED DRAGON**, A **HEDGE OGRE**, A PAIR OF **CLOVEN HOOF ORCS** AND EVEN A **RARE FLAT FOOTED OGRE**.



LORD FLATAROY SEEMS TO **BLUSH** AS HE EXPLAINS THAT THE ROOM YOU ARE STANDING IN IS HIS **TROPHY ROOM**.

"IT'S A **SHRINE**," HE ADDS, ALMOST **APOLOGETICALLY**, "TO MY OWN FOOLISH **VANITY** AND THE **FOLLY** OF MY YOUTH WHEN I **LIVED** BY THE **SWORD**."

HE THEN LEADS YOU TO A SMALL TABLE IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM WHICH SITS ON A **SWACK IRON DRAGON SKIN RUG** AND ASKS YOU TO SIT AND ENJOY YOUR TEA.



DAMN, THIS IS A **PRETTY SWANKY PAD**. **PERSONAL TRAINING HALL** COMPLETE WITH A **MOCK COMBAT PIT**. A **SPA** HEATED BY **NATURAL HOT SPRINGS**. A **BREEDING STABLE**. HE HAS IT ALL!

AND A **TROPHY ROOM!** DON'T FORGET THE **TROPHY ROOM!**

WITH A **DRAGON SKIN RUG?** KEWL!

I'M DULY IMPRESSED. AND HE'S A **WIDOWER?**



IT'S A **DAMN SHAME** WE NEVER THOUGHT OF TAKING **TROPHIES**. WE WOULD'VE HAD A COLLECTION THAT WOULD PUT **HIS TO SHAME**.

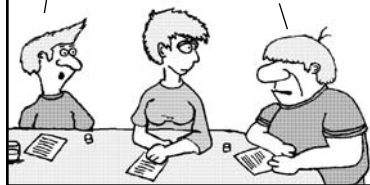
YOU'RE RIGHT. THINK OF ALL THE **GREAT STUFF** WE'VE LEFT LAYING BEHIND OVER THE YEARS.



YA KNOW, TAKING **TROPHIES** HAS ALWAYS BEEN A **COMMON RITUAL** AMONG **WARRIORS** AND **HUNTERS**, THROUGHOUT THE AGES. WHAT **BETTER WAY** OF **CHRONICLING** ONE'S **GREAT EXPLOITS** AS WELL AS DEMONSTRATING ONE'S **SKILLS** IN THE ART OF **HACK?**

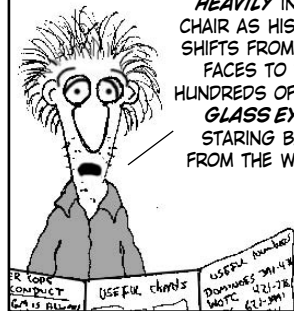
WELL I SURE WISH YOU HAD MENTIONED THAT A FEW YEARS AGO.

HEY, I'M A **MAGE!** WE DON'T DO **TROPHIES**. WE KEEP **JOURNALS**.



LORD FLATATROY IS ABOUT TO OFFER YOU SOME **BUTTERSCOTCH SCONES** WHEN HE OVER HEARS YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT HIS **TROPHIES**.

HE SIGHS DEEPLY AND SITS BACK **HEAVILY** IN HIS CHAIR AS HIS GAZE SHIFTS FROM YOUR FACES TO THE HUNDREDS OF **DEAD GLASS EYES** STARING BACK FROM THE WALLS.



"MY '**GREAT EXPLOITS**' YOU SAY? **HARDLY** THAT, MY FRIENDS. YOU SEE THESE **TROPHIES** WERE ALL TAKEN DURING MY **MISSPENT YOUTH** WHEN I **HACKED** SIMPLY FOR THE SAKE OF **HACKING**. IT WAS ONLY **LATER** IN LIFE THAT I REALIZED I COULD USE MY **SKILLS** NOT **ONLY** FOR MY OWN **PERSONAL GAIN** AND **VANITY** BUT TO HELP **OTHERS** BY **BATTLING** THE **POWER MONGERS** AND **OPPRESSORS** OF THE WORLD. MY **GREATEST TROPHY** BEATS **HERE** WITHIN MY **CHEST** - A **HEART** WITH A **CLEAR CONSCIENCE** AND THE **KNOWLEDGE** THAT I'LL SOMEDAY **LEAVE** THE WORLD A **BETTER PLACE** THAN I FOUND IT."

AMEN, BROTHER!
YOU'RE PREACHING TO
THE **CONVERTED**.

OUR SENTIMENTS
EXACTLY!

CAN YOU IMAGINE HAVING A **TROPHY ROOM** LIKE THIS? IN THE **QUIET** OF THE EVENING YOU COULD HAVE A **SHAPELY MAID** POUR YOU A **GOBLET OF WINE** WHILE YOU **KICKED BACK** AT THE FIRE PLACE AND OFFERED A **TOAST TO FALLEN FOES** FROM "**DAYS OF BATTLES YORE?**"

BEAUTIFULLY,
PLT, DAVE.
WE **DEFINITELY**
GOT TO GET
ONE OF **THESE**.

WHY, DAVE? YOU
THINKING OF
SETTLING DOWN?

I'M NOT SAYING **THAT**. BUT **EL RAVAGER** IS **TIRED** OF LIVING OUT OF A **BACKPACK** AND **BOUNCING** FROM **INN** TO **INN**. IT WOULD BE **NICE** TO HAVE A **PLACE** OF OUR OWN.

WE? ARE YOU SUGGESTING WE **ALL MOVE** IN TOGETHER?

BINGO!
STEP ONE
ACHIEVED.

WHY NOT? WE'RE **AMIGOS** AREN'T WE? WE **NEED** A PLACE WHERE WE CAN **HANG** OUR HATS BETWEEN **ADVENTURES** AND DISPLAY OUR **TROPHIES** AND **STUFF**.

HEY, I'VE **ALWAYS**
WANTED TO HAVE MY
OWN LIBRARY AND **STUDY**.

WHAT A **KICK**
ASS IDEA!



HEY I COULD PULL OUT MY **HACKMASTER** "**DESIGN YOUR OWN CASTLE**" CD AND WORK UP SOME **BLUEPRINTS**. MAYBE **NEXT WEEK** WE COULD SCOUT AROUND FOR SOME **PRIME REAL ESTATE** WHERE WE CAN START **CONSTRUCTION**.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE **FUN**, BRIAN.
MAYBE I COULD COME OVER AND **HELP**.
I TOOK A COURSE ON **INTERIOR DESIGN** MY FRESHMAN YEAR.

YOU MEAN
BUILD FROM
SCRATCH?

KICK ASS!

OKAY. WE CAN
ORDER **PIZZA** AND
MAKE A **DAY** OF IT.

WHOAH! GUYS! AM I THE **ONLY** ONE WHO SEES IT?
WE'RE MISSING A **WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY** HERE.

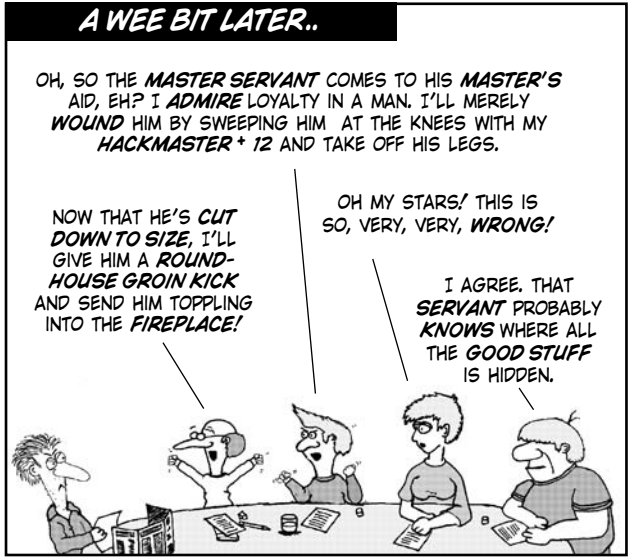
OPPORTUNITY? I'M
NOT FOLLOWING, BOB.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WHAT DO I MEAN?
I'LL **SHOW** YOU
WHAT I MEAN!





I WASTE LORD FLATAROY WITH MY CROSSBOW!!



A WEE BIT LATER..

OH, SO THE **MASTER SERVANT** COMES TO HIS **MASTER'S** AID, EH? I **ADMIRE** LOYALTY IN A MAN. I'LL MERELY **WOUND** HIM BY **SWEEPING** HIM AT THE **KNEES** WITH MY **HACKMASTER + 12** AND TAKE OFF HIS LEGS.

NOW THAT HE'S **CUT DOWN TO SIZE**, I'LL GIVE HIM A **ROUND-HOUSE GROIN KICK** AND SEND HIM **TOPPLING** INTO THE **FIREPLACE!**

OH MY STARS! THIS IS SO, VERY, VERY, **WRONG!**

I AGREE. THAT **SERVANT** PROBABLY **KNOWS** WHERE ALL THE **GOOD STUFF** IS HIDDEN.



A WEE BIT LATER STILL....

HEY B.A. WE'RE GOING TO TAKE DOWN ALL THE **TROPHIES** IN THE **TROPHY ROOM** AND TOSS THEM IN THE **MORTUARY** ALONG WITH **FLATAROY'S DEAD CARCASS**. THEN I'LL **DOUSE** THEM WITH **OIL** AND SET THEM ON **FIRE!** LATER WE CAN CLEAR OUT THE **ASHES** AND CONVERT THE **MORTUARY** INTO AN **ARMORY** OR SOMETHING.

YEAH, OUT WITH THE **OLD** IN WITH THE **NEW!** WE WANT TO START WORKING ON OUR **OWN** TROPHY COLLECTION.

WHOAH! EASY GUYS! I MAY BE ABLE TO **SALVAGE** SOME **SPELL COMPONENTS** FROM SOME OF THOSE **HEADS**.

WHIMPER.



THE NEXT DAY....

B.A.? WHAT'S WRONG?

P...P...PETE, TH...TH...THEY...THE GUYS, THEY...

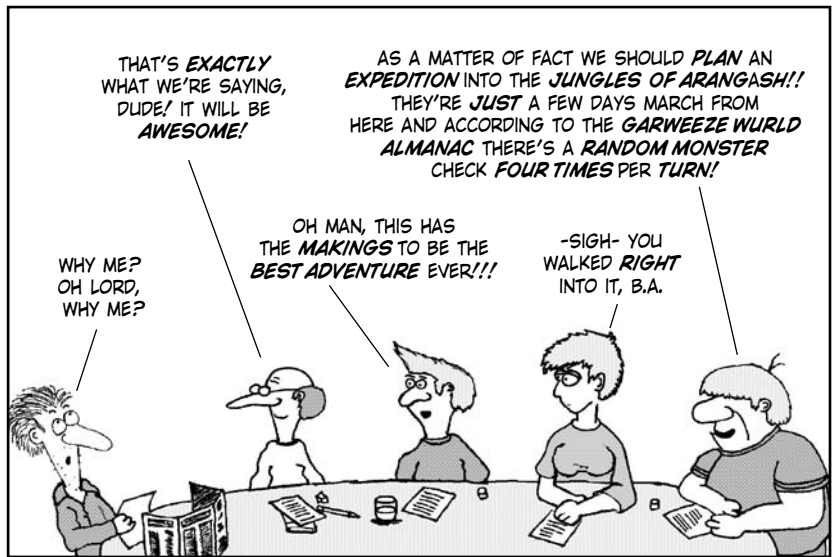
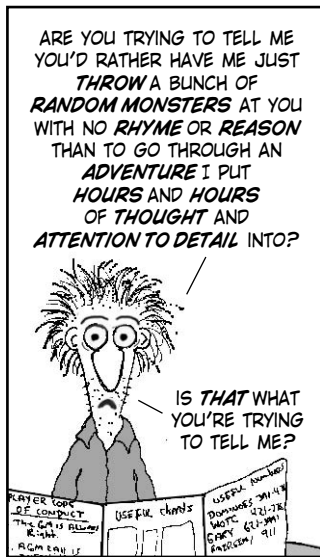
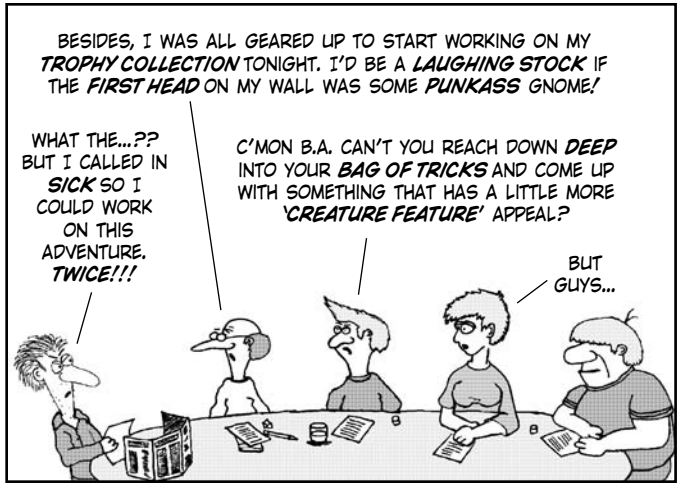
OH LORD! YOU DON'T HAVE TO **SAY** A WORD, B.A. IT'S **WRITTEN** ALL OVER YOUR **FACE!**

IT...IT WAS **AWFUL**, PETE!

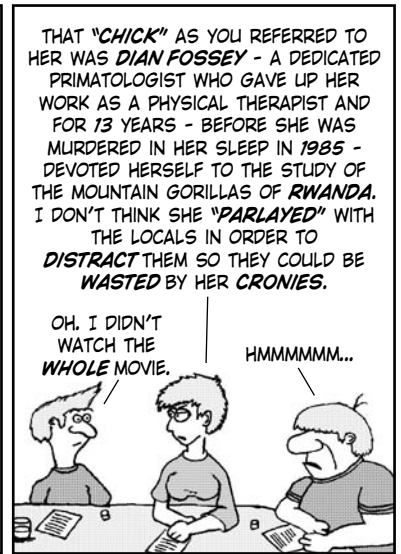
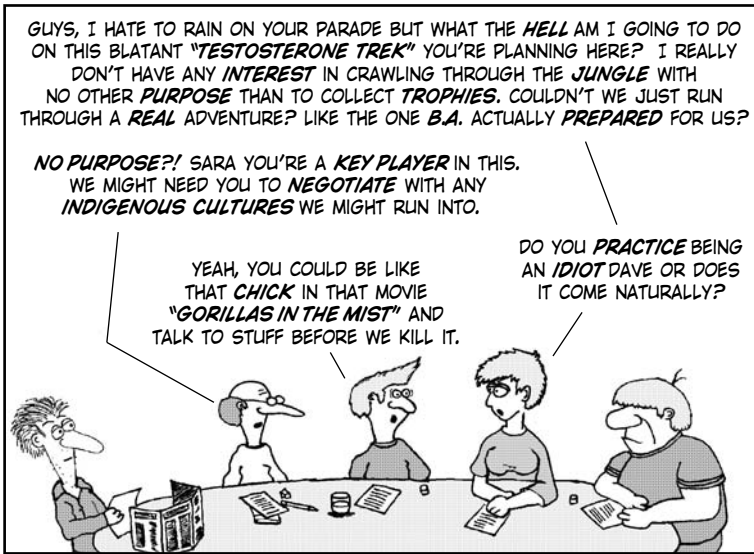
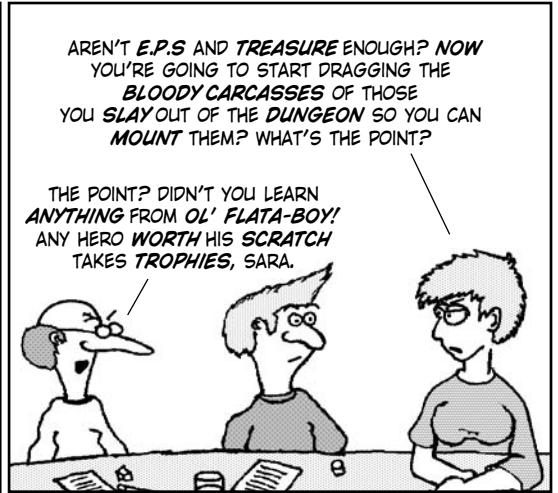
I KNOW, I KNOW. **HOP** ON OVER THE **COUNTER** HERE. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD USE A **HUG** YOU POOR SLOB.

The Trophy Hunters*

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



* based on a story submission by Steve Niehaus



* based on a story submission by Steve Niehaus

WITH THE **OBJECTIVES** OF OUR **EXPEDITION** BEING **REDEFINED** WITH A **BROADER SCOPE** WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO BE **ORGANIZED**. THIS MEANS WE NEED SOMEONE TO BE IN **CHARGE** OF THINGS AND MAKE ALL THE **TOUGH DECISIONS**. I OFFER **MY SERVICES** AS **EXPEDITION LEADER**.

I'M GOING TO NEED A **BUDGET** TO WORK WITH. WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO HIRE A **LOT** OF HELP. WE'LL NEED **PORTERS, TRACKERS, A FEW TAXIDERMISTS** AND A **HOST** OF OTHER SKILLED HIRELINGS. WE'LL ALSO BE NEEDING **PROVISIONS** AND SO FORTH. I'LL START MAKING A LIST.

YEAH, YEAH, WHATEVER. IF YOU WANNA PLAY **MARLIN PERKINS** - EAT YOUR HEART OUT. MEANWHILE **DAVE** AND I WILL BE BAGGING THE **NASTIES** AND TAKIN' **HEADS**.

FINE BY ME, **BIG GUY!**

SURE. WHY NOT?

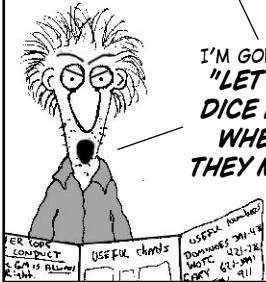
THANKS FOR YOUR VOTE OF **CONFIDENCE**.



OKAY GUYS, BEFORE YOU GO ANY **FURTHER** WITH THIS **EXERCISE** IN **STUPIDITY** I WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING **CRYSTAL CLEAR**.

SINCE YOU'RE **FORCING** ME TO DO THIS AGAINST MY WILL BE YE **FOREWARNED!!**

I'M GOING TO **"LET THE DICE FALL WHERE THEY MAY!"**



WHATEVER COMES UP ON THE **RANDOM ENCOUNTERS** IS **EXACTLY** WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO GET. AND DON'T EXPECT THEM TO **ROLL OVER** AND PLAY DEAD. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO **FIGHT** FOR **EVERY** SINGLE HEAD. ARE WE **CLEAR** ON THAT?

DUH! WE WOULDN'T WANT IT **ANY** OTHER WAY, DUDE. WHAT GOOD IS A **TROPHY** IF THERE ISN'T A **GOOD STORY** ABOUT A **VALIANT FIGHT** BEHIND IT?

THANKS FOR THE WARNING, B.A. BUT I'M AFRAID IT'S FALLING ON **DEAF EARS**.

BRING IT ON **SCRUFF-BOY!!**



FROM THE JOURNAL OF TEFLON BILLY...

DAY One

Dear Journal,

It began as a metaphorical invitation. A "Call of the Wild" if you will. The Jungles of Arangash issued a challenge and we accepted. I wonder....will we live to regret our decision?

There have already been bad omens. ~~DAVE~~ El Ravager's centaur mount, Rudy, went into an unexplained rage when ~~DAVE~~ RAV attempted to place a saddle and bridle on him this morning. Rav caught a spur in a stirrup and was dragged for many miles before we were able to rescue him. I'm afraid more than his EGO was bruised by the experience.

Tonight as we were setting up camp the DRUMS began to beat. They are far and distant yet one cannot escape the rump-rump-rump of their incessant beating. I feel I'll go MAD!

Tomorrow we cross the Arangash River. What lies beyond?

A FEW ROLLS LATER...

OKAY AS YOU ARE **CROSSING THE RIVER ARANGASH**,
A **HUGE SCHOOL OF GIANT PIRANHA** ATTACK YOUR
EXPEDITION AS YOU **WADE** ACROSS THE **MURKY WATERS**.

C'MON B.A.! FIRST **MOSQUITO SWARMS** NOW **PIRANHA**? THERE'S
NO **TROPHY-POTENTIAL** IN THAT!!

DAMN! I KNEW I SHOULD
HAVE **DONNED MY +5 HIP-
WADERS OF PROTECTION!**

I'M JUST
GOING BY
THE **DICE**.

SHOOK!
SHOOK!

LET'S SEE A **THIRTY-
NINE**. THAT'S A....
BEAST SHAMAN??
WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

WHOAH!!
INTERESTING.
THIS HAS
POTENTIAL!

I DIDN'T LIKE THAT **SMIRK** ON B.A.'S FACE. **BEAST SHAMAN?** I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THAT BEFORE. BRIAN, ARE THEY **TROPHY WORTHY?** ARE THEY A **THREAT?**

THEY'RE KIND'A LIKE **HOLY MEN** OF THE
JUNGLE. NOT REALLY WORTH MESSIN' WITH.

HOLY MEN?
ARE THEY
DANGEROUS?

ONLY IF YOU **HARM** ONE. THEY
SAY THEY ARE **PROTECTED** BY
THE **SPIRITS OF THE JUNGLE**.

THE **BEAST SHAMAN** WARNS YOU THAT
"THE **SPIRITS OF THE JUNGLE**- THE **WATCHERS AMONG
THE CANOPY ABOVE** - ARE **ANGRY** BECAUSE YOU ARE
WASTING YOUR KILLS. YOU TAKE THE **HEADS OFF** BUT
LEAVE THE **BODIES** FOR THE **CARRION**. ONLY **EVIL** WILL
COME OF THIS! I'VE BEEN SENT TO TALK TO YOU."

EASY GUYS! MAYBE WE SHOULD **HEED** HIS
WORDS. THESE **WATCHERS** ARE **MINOR
DEITIES** AND THEIR **INTERVENTION**
RESTRICTIONS ARE **MUCH LESS RESTRICTIVE**
THAN THE **MAJOR GAUNDS**.

OKAY, WE'RE GOING TO **POW-WOW**
WITH THIS GUY AND SEE IF WE CAN
SMOOTH THINGS OVER.

DAY TEN

Dear Journal,

Another great day. ~~Bat~~ Knuckles and El Ravager collected over 150 more trophies. Some real prizes too, including a Jungle-Drac, four Gougers and a Horned Simian Bush-Grappler.

We have over four carts filled with GAME so far. Knuckles, foolishly promised the **BEAST SHAMAN** that we would not waste any more kills. This has caused a great burden for us since we are forced to cart the **ENTIRE KILL** - head and all.

I am feeling a bit uneasy about our journey. I sense strange things are in the works behind the scenes. As if someone is plotting our **downfall** and even **NOW** is leading us into an **elaborate trap**. The **WATCHERS** perhaps? Justinia sure seems to fear their powers. I suspect however something less sinister - some devilish **IMP** perhaps. He plays with our heads. Uses our fears against us. The drums go on beating. They are maddening. I long for great open spaces where the cool winds blow.

AS YOU ARE PREPARING TO LEAVE THE **JUNGLE** AND RETURN TO YOUR **MOUNTAIN VILLA** THE **BEAST SHAMAN** STEPS OUT FROM THE **UNDERGROWTH** AND MOTIONS FOR YOU TO STOP. HE WANTS TO **BLESS** THE ANIMALS SO THAT THEIR **SPIRITS** MAY FIND THEIR WAY BACK TO THE **ARANGASH!**

HE RAISES HIS STAFF AND BEGINS TO CHANT!

CRUCIAL SPELLS:
1. ESCAPE FROM GRASP
2. ARM YOURSELF
3. ...

PLAYER CODE OF CONDUCT
1. THE GM IS ALWAYS RIGHT
2. ARGUMENT IS SUPPORTIVE!

USEFUL CHANTS
DOMMONES: 2M-4M
WOTC: 621-782
GARY: 621-399
BARBARA: 911

WHOAH! WHOAH! WHOAH! THE MAN IS CHANTING!! WHY THE HELL IS HE CHANTING??

C'MON BRIAN - TALK TO ME! WE NEED TO MAKE A CALL ON THIS - QUICKLY!!!

RELAX GUYS. THESE DUDES HAVE NEXT TO NOTHING AS FAR AS OFFENSIVE SPELLS. MOST OF THEIR **SPELL ARSENAL** IS OF A PEACEFUL VARIETY. TALK TO ANIMALS. CHARM ANIMALS, SUMMON ANIMALS, RAISE ANIM.....

--GULP-- OH FOR THE LOVE OF.....

I THROW MY DAGGER AT THE BEAST SHAMAN AND DISRUPT HIS CHANT!!

KUDOS, BRIAN! YOU'RE QUICK ON YOUR FEET. I'M GOING TO RULE THAT BECAUSE OF THE LOW HANGING BRANCHES AND LEAVES YOU GET A -4 MODIFIER TO HIT. IF YOU **HIT** HIS SPELL IS BROKEN AND YOU CAN CLOSE ON HIM TO DO **COMBAT**. IF YOU **MISS**....

WELL, AS I'M SURE YOU FIGURED OUT ALREADY - YOU'LL BE **SCREWED!** IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THE ROLL OF A **DIE!**

SCREWED? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO **B.A.?**

UH OH!

HA!! DON'T SWEAT IT GUYS. I JUST THREW MY +6 **DAGGER OF FAR-REACHING VENGEANCE!!** THE ONLY WAY I COULD POSSIBLY MISS WOULD BE IF I **FUMBLED!** HAR HAR!!

OKAY, LET'S SEE. IT LOOKS LIKE A.....

SHOOKA! SHOOKA!

ARRRGH!

I **FUMBLED!!!**

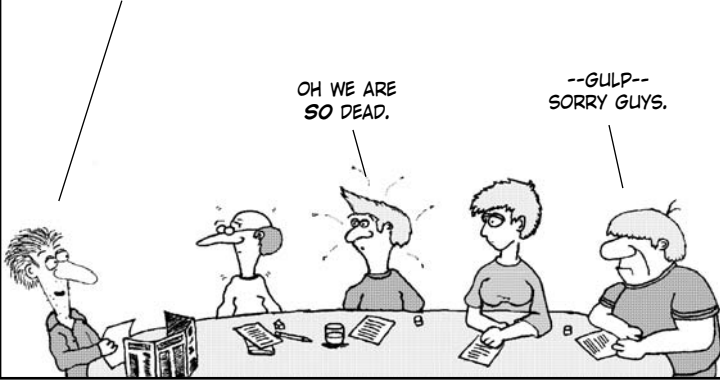
FUMBLED???! HOW COULD YOU FUMBLE? HE WAS STANDING **RIGHT** THERE FOR **GAWD'S SAKE!!**

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? YOU SAID ALL HE COULD DO WAS CAST **SPEAK WITH ANIMALS** AND LAME STUFF LIKE THAT.

SORRY GUYS! IT'S **EACH** MAN FOR HIMSELF. I TWIST MY **RING OF QUICK ESCAPES** AND **TELEPORT TO SAFETY!**

TSK TSK, TOO BAD GUYS. THE **BEAST SHAMAN** CONTINUES TO SHAKE HIS STAFF OVER HIS HEAD AND CHANT HIS SPELL. WITHIN SECONDS THE **AIR** IS FILLED WITH THE **SQUAWKS, SHRIEKS, HOWLS** AND **BARKS** OF EVERY CREATURE YOU SLEW AND THREW INTO YOUR **GAME CARTS**.

YOUR **HIRELINGS**, SENSING THE **IMMINENT CARNAGE** ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE, DROP THEIR **PACKS** AND **FLEE** INTO THE **JUNGLE**. THOUGHTS OF DOING THE **SAME** THING CROSSED YOUR MIND BUT IT IS **USELESS**. THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY TWO '**TROPHY WORTHY**' MONSTERS BEGIN TO **ENCIRCLE** YOU. THEY AWAIT THE **BEAST SHAMAN'S** COMMAND TO **UNLEASH** THEIR **FURY** AGAINST YOU!



OH WE ARE SO DEAD.

--GULP--
SORRY GUYS.



MINUTES LATER...

YOUR **DEAD BODIES** ARE TAKEN TO THE **GREAT SPIRIT TREE** IN THE **MIDDLE** OF THE **JUNGLE** AND SUSPENDED BY THE **HEELS** AND LEFT FOR THE **JAGUARS** TO TOY WITH.

HA HA HA!!! --SNORT-- LOOK AT YER **FACES!!! -CHOKE-HAR HAR!!** I WISH I HAD A **CAMERA** **RIGHT NOW** BECAUSE.....
-SNORT- YOU SHOULD SEE THE **STUPID** LOOKS ON YOUR **FACES**.



OH THIS IS RICH! A CLASSIC! WAIT TIL I TELL THE **GUYS** DOWN AT THE **GAMES PIT** ABOUT **THIS!!**

UH...B.A.? BE NICE!

DON'T WORRY GUYS! I WILL **AVENGE** YOU.

A WEE BIT LATER...

DEFINITELY GOT TO LEARN NOT TO **POINT** AND **HECKLE** THEM NEXT TIME I **WASTE** THEM LIKE THAT.



IN THE MEANTIME, MUSN'T WIGGLE. REMAIN **MOTIONLESS**. DON'T MOVE A...
UH OH!!!

MEEEEOOOWWWRRR!!
HISSSSSSSS!!!!!!*

* The preparatory "attack call" of Prowler - B.A.'s 24 pound tom cat.

DAY TWENTY

Dear Journal,

The **Devil IMP** - the harbinger of doom and despair which took the lives of my dear comrades has been **VANQUISHED**. Though he tried to hide, I reached across the **FABRIC** of **TIME** and **SPACE** and **FOUND** him. I seized ~~DA~~ the **Devil Imp** and bound him magically. Then he was suspended from the **Great Spirit Tree** in the **Jungle** and left for the **JAGUAR** to deal with. May God have mercy on his soul. I am taking my dead friends to be raised. Drinks are on me.

AFTER MONTHS OF PRODDING **JOHNNY KIZINSKI** HAS FINALLY CONVINCED HIS FELLOW *KNIGHTS* TO GIVE HIM A CRACK AT BEING *GAMEMASTER* AND TO ALLOW HIM TO RUN A GAME OF *HACKMASTER*.

JOHNNY'S DEBUT SESSION IS NOW OVER AND IT'S TIME FOR THE CUSTOMARY "AFTER GAME EVALUATION" THAT ALL *NEOPHYTE* *GMs* MUST ENDURE.



OKAY GUYS, I GUESS THAT *WRAPS* THINGS UP. LET ME HAVE IT. I WANT YOUR *HONEST* OPINION. WHAT'D YA ALL THINK?

THAT WAS ONE *KICK-ASS* ADVENTURE, **JOHNNY!** I CAN'T REMEMBER THE *LAST TIME* I HAD SO MUCH FUN IN A SIMPLE *DUNGEON CRAWL*.

I AGREE. NOT A BAD *SHOWING* FOR YOUR *FIRST TIME*. WITH A LITTLE *PRACTICE* I THINK YOU'D MAKE A *FINE GM*. REALLY!

PRACTICE? C'MON GUYS YOU'RE *HOLDING* BACK ON ME. I *REALLY* WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THOUGHT. FEEL FREE TO GIVE ME *BOTH BARRELS*.

WELL THERE ARE A FEW AREAS WHERE YOU COULD IMPROVE. YOU JUST NEED TO HONE YOUR SKILLS AS A *GAMEMASTER*. AND TO BE *HONEST*, I COULD SAY THE *SAME* THING ABOUT MYSELF. A GOOD *GM* IS *ALWAYS* LEARNING.

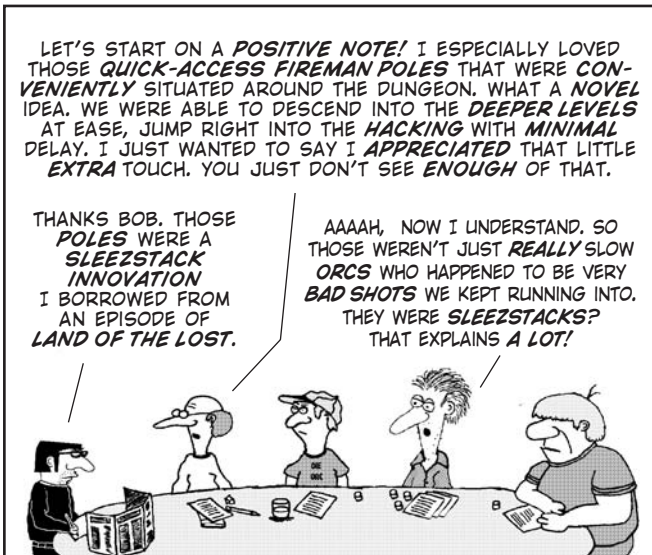
HONE MY SKILLS HUH? CAN YOU BE *MORE SPECIFIC*?

WELL, ER, UH...

LET'S START ON A *POSITIVE NOTE!* I ESPECIALLY LOVED THOSE *QUICK-ACCESS FIREMAN POLES* THAT WERE *CONVENIENTLY* SITUATED AROUND THE *DUNGEON*. WHAT A *NOVEL* IDEA. WE WERE ABLE TO DESCEND INTO THE *DEEPER LEVELS* AT EASE, JUMP RIGHT INTO THE *HACKING* WITH *MINIMAL* DELAY. I JUST WANTED TO SAY I *APPRECIATED* THAT LITTLE *EXTRA TOUCH*. YOU JUST DON'T SEE *ENOUGH* OF THAT.

THANKS BOB. THOSE *POLES* WERE A *SLEEZSTACK INNOVATION* I BORROWED FROM AN EPISODE OF *LAND OF THE LOST*.

AAAAH, NOW I UNDERSTAND. SO THOSE WEREN'T JUST *REALLY SLOW* *ORCS* WHO HAPPENED TO BE VERY *BAD SHOTS* WE KEPT RUNNING INTO. THEY WERE *SLEEZSTACKS*? THAT EXPLAINS A LOT!



BRIAN! YOU'VE BEEN AWFULLY QUIET. SO TELL ME - WHAT DID *YOU* THINK OF THE ADVENTURE?

HUH? WHO ME? UH... I'D RATHER NOT SAY, **JOHNNY**. WE'RE *FRIENDS*. I'D PREFER TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

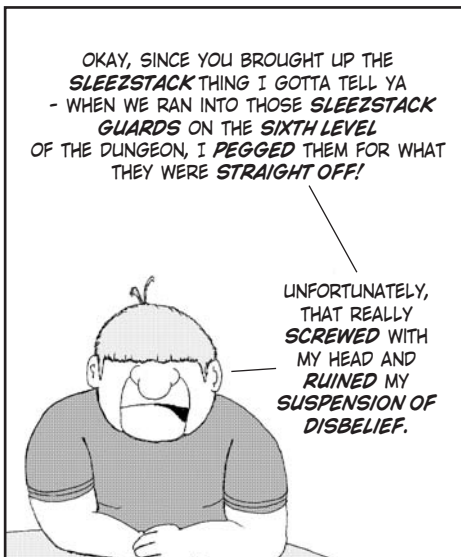
OUCH! THAT BAD HUH? GO AHEAD *BIG GUY!* SPILL IT! I CAN TAKE A LITTLE CRITICISM.

C'MON **BRIAN!** YOU'VE NEVER REFRAINED FROM *BLASTING MY SESSIONS*.

WELL.... I....ER....

OKAY, SINCE YOU BROUGHT UP THE *SLEEZSTACK* THING I GOTTA TELL YA - WHEN WE RAN INTO THOSE *SLEEZSTACK GUARDS* ON THE *SIXTH LEVEL* OF THE *DUNGEON*, I *PEGGED* THEM FOR WHAT THEY WERE *STRAIGHT OFF!*

UNFORTUNATELY, THAT REALLY *SCREWED* WITH MY HEAD AND *RUINED* MY *SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF*.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY **SLEEZSTACKS**? THEY'RE **TOTALLY** FAITHFUL TO THE SHOW.

WELL, THERE WAS AN ARTICLE IN **HACKJOURNAL** NO. 12 BY **NORMAN BOWZER** IN WHICH HE PROVIDED **STATS** FOR CREATURES FROM THE **LAND OF THE LOST**. HIS OPINION ON THE **SLEEZSTACK**, AND I HAPPEN TO AGREE WITH HIM, WAS THAT BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THEY ARE **CLEARLY** SHOWN TO BE **ONE-HIT DIE MONSTERS**. IN THE TELEVISION SERIES THEY ARE SLOW AS **MOLASSES**, CAN'T HIT THE **BROADSIDE** OF A BARN WITH THOSE **HOKEY CROSSBOWS** THEY CARRY, AND THEY USUALLY **DROP** FROM A **SINGLE BLOW**. IN FACT, IN ONE EPISODE, **HOLLY** DECKED A **SLEEZSTACK** WITH A **CANTALOUPE!**

I REMEMBER THAT EPISODE. THE **SLEEZSTACKS** KIDNAPPED **WILL!**

THEY KIDNAPPED **WILL** IN **EVERY** EPISODE, B.A!



OH GEE! **STUPID ME!** I FORGOT THAT **LORD BOWZER** WAS **GAWD ON EARTH** WHEN IT COMES TO MAKIN' UP STATS FOR FRICKIN' **SLEEZSTACKS!** I'M SORRY BUT THE **LAST** TIME I WATCHED THE SHOW I DON'T THINK I SAW HIS **NAME** LISTED ON THE **FRICKIN' CREDITS!**

-SIGH- THERE! YOU SEE? THIS IS WHY I WAS SO RELUCTANT TO SAY ANYTHING. BUT YOU ASKED FOR MY **OPINION** AND **NOW** I'M GOING TO GIVE TO YOU.



LOOK I'M **JUST** POINTING OUT THAT YOU MADE A **COMMON** MISTAKE THAT **MOST** NEOPHYTE GAMEMASTERS FALL VICTIM TO.

YOU SAW SOMETHING **KEWL** ON TV OR IN A **MOVIE** AND YOU TRIED TO **DRAG** IT INTO THE GAME. UNFORTUNATELY YOU **BOTCHED** THE JOB.

HOW THE HELL DO YOU EXPECT US TO **BELIEVE** THAT THESE **LAMEASS** GUYS COULD SURVIVE IN THE **CUTTHROAT ECOSYSTEM** OF A **SIXTH LEVEL DUNGEON?**

IT'S **JUST** SO **UNREALISTIC!**



YOU KNOW BRIAN I THINK IT'S CALLED **CREATIVE LICENSE!** SURE I TOOK A BIT OF **INSPIRATION** FROM THE SHOW BUT I **SOUPED** IT UP AND MADE IT MY **OWN!** I **RAN** IT THE WAY I **WROTE** IT.

SO DEAL WITH IT!



WHOA! CALM DOWN **CHURCHILL!** DON'T LET HIM GET TO YOU LIKE THAT. LIKE I SAID, I HAD **FUN!** THAT'S **ALL** THAT **REALLY** COUNTS. OF COURSE, IT **DID** BLOW -LOSING MY **SOUL** TO THAT **DOOM HARVESTER** ON THE **EIGHTH LEVEL.**

YEAH, WHAT WAS WITH THAT GUY? HE POPPED OUT OF **NOWHERE** AND HAD **CHIP** ON HIS SHOULDER A **MILE WIDE!** I NEVER DID FIGURE OUT WHY HE WAS SO **PISSED** AT US. WAS THAT A **PROGRAMMED ENCOUNTER** OR JUST A **FLUKE ROLL** ON THE **WANDERING MONSTER TABLES?**

IT KINDA **WEIRDED** ME OUT THE WAY HE KNEW MY CHARACTER'S **NAME** AND EVERYTHING.

HE WASN'T SO **TOUGH!** ALL HE DID WAS SHAKE US DOWN FOR A FEW **MINOR ITEMS** AND THEN WENT ON HIS **MERRY WAY.**



JUST A FEW MINOR ITEMS???! THAT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SAY. THAT FRAGGIN' BASTARD TOOK MY SOUL!! AND YOU MORONS JUST STOOD THERE AND LET HIM DO IT.

WELL, MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE RESPONDED WITH "BITE ME!" WHEN HE ASKED US ALL TO BOW DOWN AND DISAVOW OURSELVES FROM OUR PATRON GAWDS!!

YOU SHOULD'VE JUST DONE IT AND GOT IT OVER WITH LIKE WE DID. THEN HE WOULD'VE LEFT YOU ALONE.



YEAH, RIGHT! LIKE I'M GOING TO RISK P.O.ING DRAPER THE THIEF GAWD! YOU GUYS HAVE ANY INKLING JUST HOW HIGH HIS "DIVINE WRATH AND RETRIBUTION" FACTOR IS? ESPECIALLY TOWARD FOLLOWERS WHO TURN AGAINST HIM. THERE'S NO TAKE-BACKS WITH THAT GUY.

-AHEM- SOMETHING WE POINTED OUT, I'LL REMIND YOU, WHEN YOU INSISTED ON TAKING DRAPER AS YOUR PATRON GAWD.



SO WHAT? IT WAS TOTALLY WORTH THE RISK. HE'S THE MOST LOW-MAINTENANCE GAWD IN THE BOOKS. NO TITHES. NO GOOFY FASHION STATEMENTS. NO SYMBOLS. NO MANDATORY SERVICES OR RITUALS. PRAY AND PLAY! WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE ABOUT HIM?

WELL, I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR SOUL DUDE BUT AFTER WHAT HE DID TO OUR TORCH BEARER I DECIDED TO "LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY." KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

YEAH, I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. YOU'RE A COWARD!

POOR LITTLE CONROY! HE NEVER EVEN SAW IT COMING.



POOR LITTLE CONROY???! GIMME A FREAKIN' BREAK! WHAT ABOUT ME???! HUH? THAT BASTARD SLAPS ME AROUND LIKE A PINATA AND RIPS MY SOUL OUT OF MY LIMP BODY AND ALL YOU GUYS CAN SAY IS "POOR CONROY?"

UH, DIDN'T HE MAKE YOU KISS THE HEEL OF HIS BOOT AND SAY "THANK YOU SIR MAY I HAVE ANOTHER?" BEFORE ACTUALLY TAKING YOUR SOUL?

ACTUALLY THE DOOM HARVESTER WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE WHEN BOB YELLED, "PAYBACK WILL BE A BITCH!" THAT'S WHEN HE CAME BACK AND MADE BOB KISS HIS BOOT.



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD THE WAY THAT GUY KEPT SCREWIN' WITH ME YOU'D THINK HE HAD IT IN FOR ME. AND I'M FAIRLY CERTAIN THE TWO OF US NEVER MET BEFORE.

I DUNNO. JOHNNY'S EXPLANATION WAS KINDA VAGUE AS TO WHY THIS GUY WAS SO ANTAGONISTIC.



HEY, B.A. JUST REMINDED ME OF SOMETHING. I FOUND YOUR FLAVOR TEXT TO BE VERY WEAK, DUDE. NOW I KNOW THAT MAY SOUND STRANGE COMING FROM ME BUT I FOUND IT HARD TO GET INTO MY CHARACTER WITH THE WAY YOU DESCRIBED THINGS TO US. ABOUT AS DRY AND UNINTERESTING AS A BOX OF CHALK.

BUT IT WAS INTENTIONAL! MY FOCUS IN PREPARING THIS ADVENTURE WAS TO STICK TO ESSENTIALS AND KEEP THE ACTION GOING AT A GOOD PACE!

THAT'S ADMIRABLE BUT YOU CAME OFF SOUNDING LIKE MR. KRENshaw BACK AT DEWEY HIGH. YOU KNOW - THE PHYS ED TEACHER WHO USED TO ANNOUNCE THE GIRLS VOLLEYBALL SCORES ON THE P.A. SYSTEM?



LET ME **READ** YOU AN EXAMPLE I JOTTED DOWN HERE. AT ONE POINT WHEN WE **ENTERED** A ROOM **THIS** IS HOW YOU **DESCRIBED** TO US WHAT WE SAW;

"THIS ROOM IS FIVE SQUARES BY FIVE SQUARES. TREASURE INCLUDES SO GOLD IN A SACK. GUARDIAN MONSTERS - NONE. SECRET DOORS - ONE. TRAPS - POISON NEEDLE IN SACK."



OKAY, OKAY, I **CONFESS**. I HAD SOME TROUBLE WORKING UP THIS **ADVENTURE** AND **SKIPPED** A BIT ON THE DETAILS. POINT WELL TAKEN! BUT THAT'S SOMETHING I CAN EASILY FIX. ANYTHING ELSE?

WELL I DO HAVE ONE OTHER **SMALL** OBSERVATION. OUR STATED **OBJECTIVE** WAS TO TAKE OUT **PAUNCH THE 'GOLEM MASTER'**. I JUST FOUND IT A BIT **STRANGE** THAT HE MANAGED A SERIES OF **MIRACULOUS ESCAPES** AND SLIPPED THROUGH OUR FINGERS **EVERY** SINGLE TIME WE HAD HIM CORNERED.

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?



WHO WAS THIS GUY **FRICKIN' MCGYVER?** I MEAN SOME OF THE **STUNTS** HE MANAGED TO PULL OFF WERE DOWNRIGHT **BAFFLING!**

SO HE'S **RESOURCEFUL!** SOUNDS LIKE A **WORTHY ADVERSARY** TO ME.



HOLD ON, **JOHNNY**. **BOB** HAS A **VALID** POINT. I MEAN **DAMN!** WE LOCKED THIS GUY IN A **SUPPLY CLOSET** AND WHAT HAPPENS? HE SOMEHOW MANAGES TO TAKE A LITTLE **SAW-DUST**, SOME **GLUE** AND **FIVE QUARTS OF GOATS' BLOOD** AND CONSTRUCT A **BLOOD GOLEM** WHICH THEN PROCEEDS TO MOP THE FLOOR WITH OUR **BUTTS** WHILE HE **ESCAPES**.

HEY, **ALL** THOSE INGREDIENTS WERE IN **THAT** CLOSET. I HAVE IT **ALL** WRITTEN DOWN HERE IN MY NOTES. YOU SAYING I **CHEATED** OR SOMETHING?

NO, BUT I **AM** SAYING YOU STACKED THE DECK AGAINST US. **NO WAY** WE COULD HAVE SEEN THAT ONE COMING.

YEAH THAT **BLOOD GOLEM** NEARLY DID ME IN.



YOU KNOW I DIDN'T **WASTE** AN **HOURLY** WORTH OF **MY TIME** WORKING ON THIS ADVENTURE JUST SO I'D BE **FORCED** TO SIT HERE AND LISTEN TO YOU GUYS **BITCH AND WHINE**.

I'M **SORRY** IF THINGS PROVED **TOO TOUGH** FOR YOU TO HANDLE. I **THOUGHT** YOU MIGHT WANT A **CHALLENGE** AS OPPOSED TO THE USUAL **CAKE WALK CRAWLS** YOU'VE BEEN SUBJECTED TO IN THE PAST.



WHADDA YA THINK? WERE WE **TOO HARD** ON HIM?

NAAAAAA! HE'LL BE BACK. JUST PART OF THE **LEARNING CURVE**. AFTER ALL, YOU LEFT THE TABLE IN **TEARS** ABOUT A **DOZEN** TIMES OR SO WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED.



SLAM!

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

UH... JOHNNY??!! WHAT'S THE DEAL? I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO GM THIS WEEK.

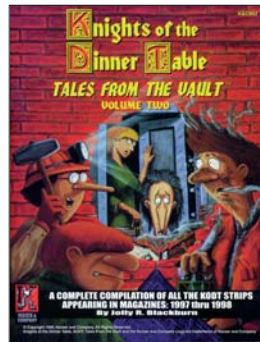
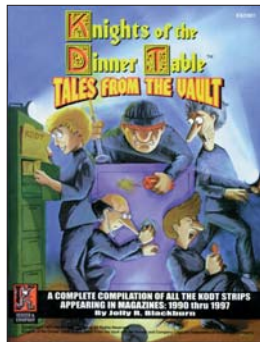


NAAAAAA, YOU GO AHEAD, B.A. I THOUGHT IT OVER AND I DECIDED SITTING BEHIND THAT SCREEN AIN'T WORTH ALL THE AGGRAVATION AND GRIEF THAT COMES WITH THE JOB. MY ULCERS WERE STARTING TO FLARE UP FOR FOR GAWD'S SAKE!

IT'S LIKE GARY SAYS. "MANY ARE CALLED - FEW ARE CHOSEN."

DOES THIS MEAN I GET MY SOUL BACK?

YOU MADE THE RIGHT DECISION THERE, JOHNNY! YOU WERE BORN TO BE A PLAYER. WE NEED YOU ON THIS SIDE OF THE SCREEN.



DID YA KNOW *KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE* HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE 1990?? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO GET:

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DON'T *SWEAT* IT, BOB. IT'S JUST *PIN WORMS*. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE EATEN THAT *RAW MEAT!* ACCORDING TO THE RULES, THERE'S AN 85 PERCENT CHANCE THAT UNCOOKED *TROLL MEAT* WILL BE INFECTED WITH ONE OR MORE *PARASITES*. NOTHING A *CURE ALL SPELL* WON'T FIX THOUGH.

PIN WORMS MY ASS! THOSE LITTLE *BASTARDS* ATE A *HOLE* THROUGH MY *SMALL INTESTINE* AND *KILLED FOUR HENCHMEN* BEFORE DAVE WAS ABLE TO *DOUSE* THEM WITH *FLAMING OIL* AND *TORCH* THEM.

WHO EVER HEARD OF *THREE HIT-DICE PIN WORMS??!!*

AWH, YOU WERE *LUCKY!!* GOOD THING IT WASN'T A *TAPE WORM!* WE WOULDN'T EVEN BE *HAVING* THIS CONVERSATION.



GAAAAA!!!! ZERO-ONE??!! THE '*HEDRON TWINS*' HAVE FAILED ME!!

THERE ARE *DARK FORCES* AT WORK HERE! MAYBE WE SHOULD PAUSE FOR A GOOD OLD FASHIONED "*DICE CLEANSING*"!



HEY *GORDO!* PARDON MY *WANDERING EYES* BUT I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE THAT YOU HAVE '*BADLY SCARRED*' WRITTEN DOWN UNDER *APPEARANCE* FOR *FIRE BLOSSOM*. ALL THIS TIME AND I HAD NO IDEA. I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?

OH....THAT. WELL, WHEN *FIRE BLOSSOM* FIRST JOINED THE GROUP *STEVI* WASN'T TOO FOND OF HER. HE DIPPED HER IN *HONEY* WHILE SHE WAS SLEEPING AND TOSSED HER ON A *FIRE ANT HILL!* I BARELY ESCAPED WITH MY LIFE!

I GUESS THAT EXPLAINS YOUR *MORBID* FEAR OF MOUND BUILDING INSECTS.

MY PLAN FOILED SIMPLY BECAUSE *DUCT TAPE* ISN'T LISTED ON THE *PRICE LISTS*.



BOB, ANYONE WHO HAS EVER READ *THE HOBBIT* KNOWS THE ANSWER TO THAT *RIDDLE*.

"A CONTAINER WITHOUT KEY OR LID IN WHICH GOLDEN TREASURE IS HID?" THE *SWACK IRON DRAGON* QUICKLY ANSWERS, "*AN EGG!*"

WRONG MUNCH-HEAD!! YOU LOSE!! I DIDN'T SAY '*GOLDEN TREASURE*' I SAID '*GOOEY TREASURE*'. THE ANSWER IS '*HOSTESS FRUIT PIE*'. THE *DRAGON'S HOARD* IS *MINE!!* THANK YOU FOR PLAYING!

WHAT A *LAME* RIDDLE!

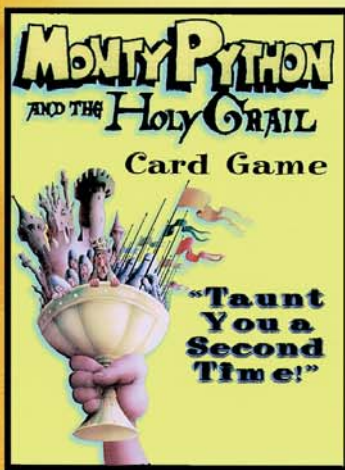
YEAH, VOLUME SIXTEEN OF THE *BISON HEAD GAMES* "*RIDDLES AND PUZZLES*" WAS PRETTY WEAK.



MONTY PYTHON AND THE Holy GRAIL



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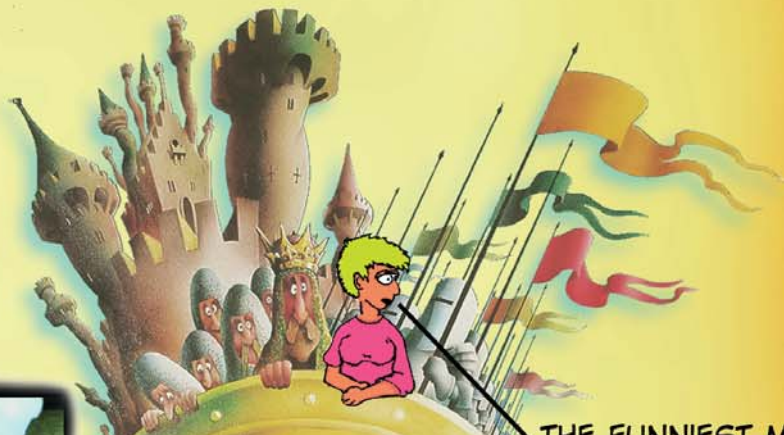


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I don't want to talk to you no more, you empty-headed animal
food troughwiper! I fart in your general direction! Your
mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries.

Now go and get your own deck or I shall...

Taunt You a Second Time.

FROM RUSSIA WITH DICE



My Mail-Order Russian Gamer Bride

A Testimonial by Kevin Hendryx
(with special thanks to 'Marina')



I took this picture right after the package arrived and I let my very own Beautiful Russian Woman Gamer out. You can see that she is a little jer-legged and I don't think she'd ever been in a place with indoor plumbing before. She didn't really dress for Texas, either, but was comfortable enough with her vodka and potato sack lunch.



This is Marina Borisova (at least, I think — her English isn't too good). She presented me with papers supplied by New Horizons and seemed happy to be in America at last. I am still a little upset that she wasn't the blonde I had requested, but I suppose she'll do. I guess the computers in Minsk weren't as Y2K compliant as ours.

Dear New Horizons, Inc.:

Hello! My name is Kevin Hendryx and I'm a wargamer and RPGer living in Austin, Texas. I just had to let you know how pleased I am with your service. You see, I first spotted your ad in a back issue of *Knights of the Dinner Table* comic. I was instantly smitten with the lovely Tasha. She's nearly as hot as that *Star Trek* Borg-babe! AND she plays games, too? "What have I got to lose?", I thought. With the Russian economy rolling on the Fumble Table every month, I'll bet there's just thousands of fantastic-looking women hot to play *HackMaster* with men who don't have to stand in soup lines all day long. And I was right! Since I called for information about *Beautiful Russian Women Gamers*, my life has changed one hundred percent!

Now, don't get me wrong — there's no reason why I couldn't just roll up, er, ask out an American chick. But let's face it: girls in the US of A ain't what they used to be. Have you seen those pie wagons at the mall? I haven't run into a supermodel sipping a name-brand beer in a sports bar in God knows how long, contrary to what TV would have you believe. And when it comes to games, forget it! Most dames don't know a d20 from a bowling ball and can't tell a red-legged, three-toed, demi-hobgoblin from a red-toed, three-legged, miniature cave imp. They're not fit to tie the shoelaces of the lowliest torch-bearer. And as us guys all know, they'd rather watch *Ally McBeal* and eat bonbons than wade into a good ol' two-fisted bloodbath. So to heck with them! At least a Russian babe doesn't badger you about losing weight or taking showers or eating pizza for breakfast or living with your parents (*like I'm supposed to afford an apartment on what they pay me at Comics-a-Go-Go!?!?*) [Editor's note: All of the KODT staff, especially the men, want to make it perfectly clear that these opinions are solely those of this author and are not shared by any member of the staff.]

Anyway, I was very impressed with your catalogue and sales presentation, and it was worth maxing out all my Mom's credit cards for that glorious day when the big crate from Minsk arrived via air freight. I am enclosing some photographs I took; feel free to use them for promotional purposes. I am just so happy now that I'd like EVERY true-blue die-roller to experience the joy of having your very own Beautiful Russian Woman Gamer.

Sincerely,

Kevin Hendryx
(age 41)

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SHAVAS THE PALADIN

by Rick Moscatello



In my long career of DMing, I've had many a player pick the Paladin class, for the fun opportunities of role-playing it offered. From *Lee The Lawful And Good* But Generic Paladin, to *Baldar The Unbearably Righteous Paladin*, they were all a joy to have in the campaign.

My last campaign had a Paladin of a most unusual sort, and I figure KODT readers might enjoy the tale.

My most recent group of gamers was a fascinating collection. All of them were "older" (as in, mid-20's or later) and familiar with the classic AD&D™ modules; they had a nasty habit of reading the new modules before we played them, which made things a bit challenging for me as DM. Some of them were also classic *Power Gamers*. While usually such gamers tend to go for the *Wizard* or *Elven Warrior/Wizard* class, one chose *Paladin*, for all the neat extra abilities. While I had some concerns that "ultimate power" might not be the best reason for playing a Paladin, I gave it a shot, just to see what would happen. Possibly a mistake, as we shall see.

A definite mistake was letting the players use the Core Compendium software to roll up characters. Since "we're all adults here", I thought the honor system would be enough, and it would save me the trouble of staring at each one as he rolled up all the myriad aspects of a D&D™ character (anybody remember when rolling up a character took less than 15 minutes?).

This was incredible naivete on my part. I couldn't help but notice that the minimum dexterity in the party (which had no thieves) was 16, with 17 being the mode. The other stats were pretty buff as well; the Paladin was lucky enough to roll five stats at 15 or higher.

I also let them use the program for generating hit points — another mistake. At 8th level, most of the party were within 1 point of having the maximum possible hit points for their class and constitution (this led to the *Ranger*, the only "normal" character, having less hit points than the *Bard*, despite the bigger dice). But perhaps I'm getting ahead of the story.

While they claimed to want a "straight" campaign, I found out pretty quickly that I was dealing with power gaming megalomaniacs. At first level, **Shavas The Paladin** started asking for a *Holy Sword*, of the +5 variety. By a fluke, he managed to find a +2 long sword, just as he reached third level. I thought I was being pretty generous, but that weekend, they all got together (without me), and GM'ed each others characters. Between one week and the next, the party had acquired a respectable collection of magical trinkets, such as a *Wand of Magic Missiles*, a *Ring of Wizardry*, a *Dagger +2/+3*, and another +2 longsword. Not bad for a party of second and third level characters.

After much whining, I convinced them that maybe we should just stick to equipment found in "my" campaign. Most players agreed, but the *Bard* player (whose character was never called anything but "The Bard"), put up such a remarkable hissy fit for a professional with a touch of gray in his hair, that I let him keep the sword (renaming it "*The Bitter Blade*", a name that stuck as I refused to let the character part with it

under any circumstances. Later in the campaign, another player got "*The Whiny Blade*" for winning an ancient barbarian whining contest, but I digress).

Back to Shavas, who is unhappy that his character isn't really that much more powerful than everybody else. He whines bitterly about not getting weapon specialization (an optional rule I loathe, and makes warrior types far too strong, especially if they have maximal stats and hit points), every week. He whines bitterly about not having a *Holy Sword* yet, every week. He buys the **Paladin's Compendium**, and min/maxes his way through each of the kits (swapping his godlike stats around several times); each time he thinks he's found the one kit that will let him dominate all other players, but each time a careful look at the rules, mid-game because he never reads them right before the game, shows the kit is balanced. He uses the *Player's Option* charts to change his character; even managing to roll up the ability to instantly teleport at will (needless to say, the group decides that those charts are a bit unbalancing, and decide it's best nobody use them). Finally, just to get him to stop it all, I concede to let him have spells starting at 5th level (nobody liked handling the NPC cleric much, anyway).

Meanwhile, the rest of the campaign is chugging along. We go through a few modules where they are supposed to rescue some slaves. The party rather consistently leaves slaves behind, but Shavas is having such a hard time keeping track of his everchanging abilities that I don't give him much grief for not remembering some basic Paladin concepts, like rescuing the innocent (a rough estimate puts the number at around 35 zero-level types left behind for eventual slaughter).

In a later module, they find some magic plate mail. Shavas puts it on. For the next few weeks, he gets pummeled mercilessly by monsters. He's bashed to the left, he's bashed to the right. He's beaten like the red-headed stepchild with the words "*I am not your child*" stamped on his forehead in day-glo colored fluorescent pink ink. I make a point of showing him how a monster hits him on a "2". He complains about how he's getting picked on. Finally, I tell another, unreliable, player that Shavas has some cursed armor, and swear the player not to tell (*I have a vicious streak, I admit*). Miraculously, after weeks of clueless complaining, Shavas realizes the very next time we play that his armor was cursed.

On one of our last modules, Shavas is closing in on 9th level, and the group is hired by a sage to retrieve a precious sword. Eventually they find it, a gorgeous 2-hander that Shavas generously offers to carry on his back (complaining all the while about dragging this monstrous sword around in a dungeon). He never draws the blade, just carries it around in the jewel-encrusted sheathe. Eventually they escape the dungeon, and turn the weapon over to the sage...who informs them that 1) the thing is a **Holy Avenger** and 2) the sage is an **Evil Wizard™** who intends to use the blade to craft a powerful evil weapon. The sage then teleports away, laughing in typical **Evil Wizard™** style.

I think this incident finally broke Shavas; now the guy plays **EverQuest™** addictively. Even when he plays **AD&D™**, I GM to the back of his head while he stays online, occasionally getting grunts from him when he's asked about his characters' actions. □

Listen to what the monsters are saying about

the **TONY DIGEROLAMO'S**
TRAVELERS



"THEY SLAYED MY HUSBAND AND MY BROOD, BUT THEY'RE SO ENTERTAINING, I GAVE THEM BACK THE VIRGINS AND MY TREASURE! TWO HORNS UP!"

-Mother Sepias, Dragon Brood Queen



"WHAT DELIGHTFUL FELLOWS! LOCUST IS SO AMUSING, I ALMOST FORGOT HE BANISHED ME TO THE LAND OF SHADOWS TO SUFFER FOR ETERNITY!"

-The Oni King



"BARBARA STAB GRAH. STOMP ON GRAH'S HEAD! TAKE GRAH'S GOLD! GRAH IN LOVE! BARBARA PRETTY!"

-Grah, a Minotaur



"WE LOVE THE TRAVELERS! PURELY IN A PLATONIC WAY, LIKE A MAN LOVES HIS HORSE OR HIS BOAT."

-The Brood boyz


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and Sgt. Tariff Staff.**

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The Travelers #2: (April)
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 IN
The Count Came
 Up Short
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Pencils by
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DUNGEONS OF THE VISCOUNT ANGSTUS AND LOCUST THE WIZARD HAS LOST THE MAP...



Moo-
 moo-moo
 moooo!!

Moo!

WAY TO FORGET "MAP BOY!"

I DIDN'T FORGET THE MAP! I JUST BROUGHT THE WRONG BLOODY ONE!

GOOD LORD! I NEVER EXPECTED SUCH RESISTANCE FROM LOWLY CREATURES OF EVIL!

WE ARE TRYING TO KILL THEM, SIR.



BARB, I THINK IT'S TIME FOR PLAN "B"

YOU WANT BARBARA TO DRESS UP LIKE BANANA AND DISTRACT GIANT MONKEY?

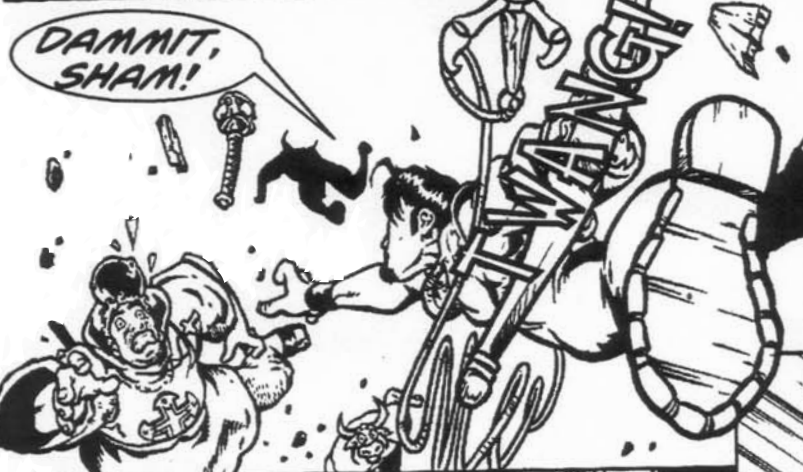
NO, THE OTHER PLAN "B"



SARGE! "B" IS FOR BRIDGE!


RIGHTO!

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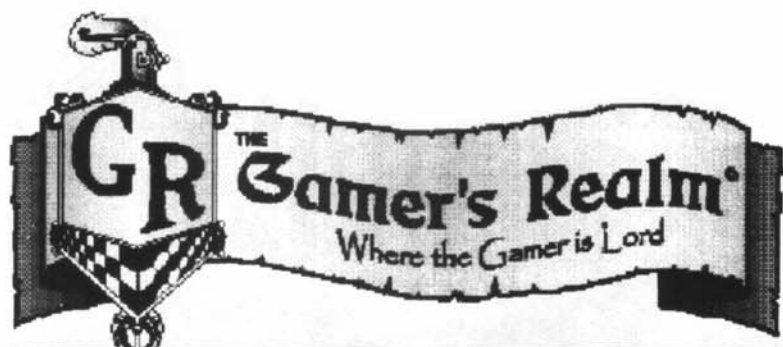
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 "Never Turn your back on a 500 lb Cello"
 The Travelers #2: (April)
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HACKMASTERS



MUCH LATER.







The Shields of Bandran

IN AN EFFORT TO RESCUE GAREN AND RECOVER HIS SACRED SEAL OF UDA, LORALE AND POSEN HAVE DISGUISED THEMSELVES AS HOBGOBLIN SCOUTS. UNDER THE COVER OF RAIN AND DARKNESS, THEY PICK THEIR WAY THROUGH THE SENTRIES TO THE CENTER OF GENERAL NESTRA'S ENCAMPMENT.



THAT'S THE HORSE WE'VE BEEN TRACKING. MY GUESS IS GAREN'S BEING HELD IN THIS TENT.

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT FOR SURE AND THAT'S TO TAKE A QUICK PEEK.



I HAVE ONE THIRD OF THE SACRED SEAL OF UDA AND BARON ORSON'S SECOND IN COMMAND.

SO I HAVE NO FURTHER NEED FOR A HALF ELF...

...DO ENJOY THE LITTLE TIME YOU HAVE REMAINING.



URK!





POSEN, RELEASE GAREN.



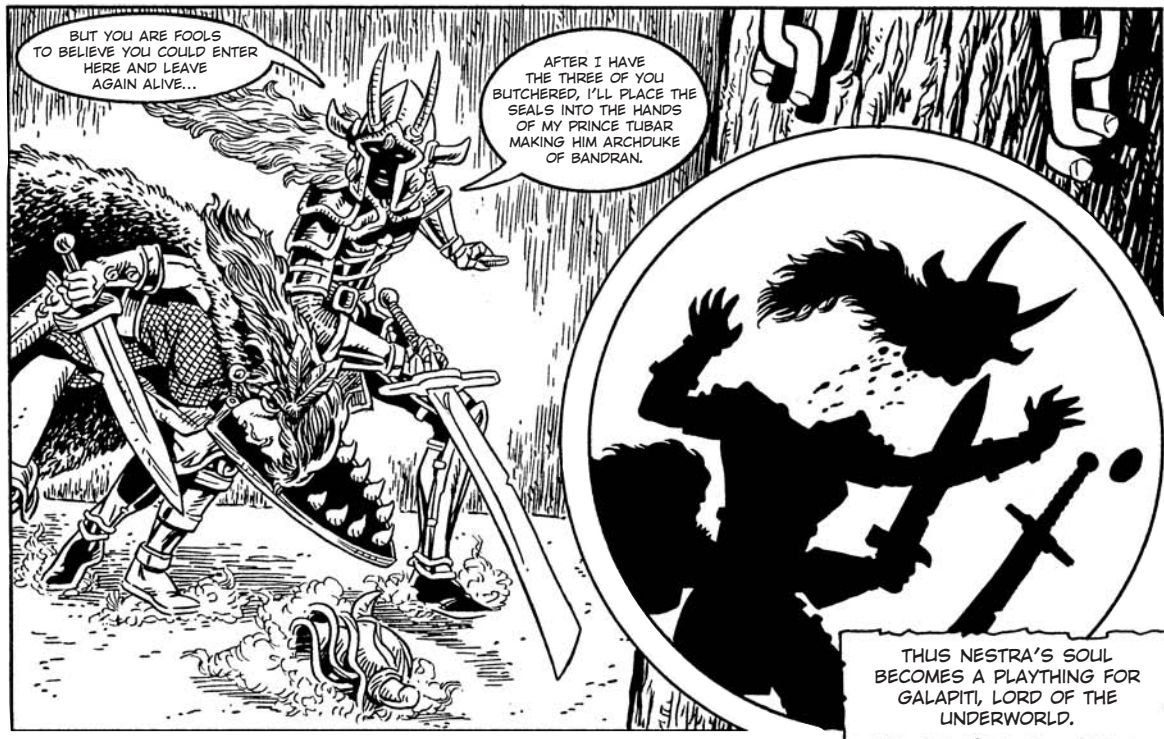
PRAISE SELANDI AND RELVIK THE LIBERATOR! YOU TWO ARE ALIVE, BUT HOW?

A TALE I BELIEVE... BETTER LEFT 'TIL A LATER DATE.



AND NOW FOR THE HONOR OF THE VILNA GUARDS YOU MURDERED AT THE RED TOWER.

SO, YOU DIDN'T DIE GOING OVER THE FALLS. YOU HAVE LUCK.



BUT YOU ARE FOOLS TO BELIEVE YOU COULD ENTER HERE AND LEAVE AGAIN ALIVE...

AFTER I HAVE THE THREE OF YOU BUTCHERED, I'LL PLACE THE SEALS INTO THE HANDS OF MY PRINCE TUBAR MAKING HIM ARCHDUKE OF BANDRAN.

THUS NESTRA'S SOUL BECOMES A PLAYTHING FOR GALAPITI, LORD OF THE UNDERWORLD.

WITH NESTRA DEAD, CONFUSION GRIPS THE GOBLINOID FORCES ALLOWING OUR HEROES TO RETRIEVE THEIR SEAL AND MAKE A HASTY RETREAT.



HURRY POSEN, FOR WE MUST RIDE.

ALL THAT WET NIGHT...



AND THROUGHOUT THE NEXT TWO DAYS THEY PUSH THEMSELVES AND THEIR MOUNTS TO NEAR EXHAUSTION.



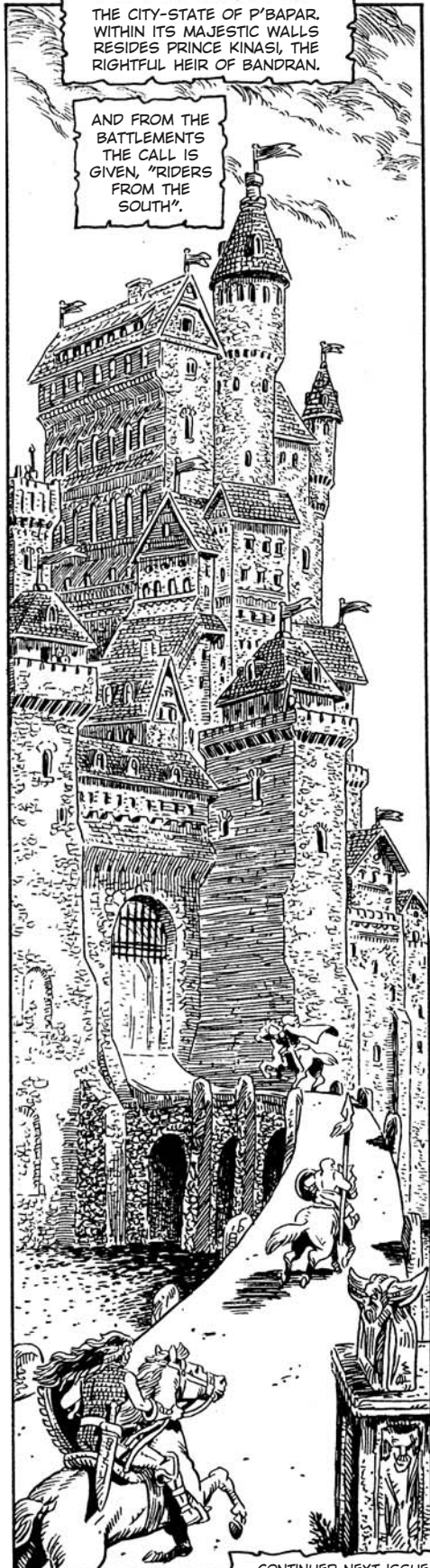
FINALLY ARRIVING IN VIEW OF THEIR DESTINATION.



THERE IT IS!

THE CITY-STATE OF P'BAPAR. WITHIN ITS MAJESTIC WALLS RESIDES PRINCE KINASI, THE RIGHTFUL HEIR OF BANDRAN.

AND FROM THE BATTLEMENTS THE CALL IS GIVEN, "RIDERS FROM THE SOUTH".



CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE



Book: *Against the Giants*

Author: Ru Emerson

Publisher: Wizards of the Coast (TSR) August, 1999 paperback, 310 pages

Cover: Doug Beekman

Okay, admit it. More than once in your role-playing career you've set down

your dice among the scattered miniatures and battle remnants before you, looked around the table at your triumphant comrades and said "Man, that would make a great novel!"

Except, it usually wouldn't. True, epic role playing — done right — is packed with action, humor, surprises, and character development. It's just that it usually skimps on the last in favor of the first. No matter how funny it seemed at the time when you locked *Sven the Strong* in the bar with that *Medusa*, on paper it just comes across as adolescent.

Still, most of us have yearned to see an adventure we've played — a really great adventure, the kind that still gets talked about a decade later and occasionally re-enacted at the kitchen table with a salt shaker — put down on paper.

There are only a few published adventures like that, and quite likely the granddaddy of them all is the *G (Giants) Series* by Gary Gygax.

Giants Galore

The *Giants* series, for those of you who learned role playing under a rock, was originally published as three *Greyhawk* modules in 1978. They were the first official adventures TSR released for AD&D, and they were a big hit.

GAME-WORTHY READS

By John O'Neill

Beginning with *Steading of the Hill Giant Chief* and continuing in *The Glacial Rift of the Frost Giant Jarl* and *Hall of the Fire Giant King*, they pitted adventurers against an organized force of evil giants controlled by a mysterious mastermind.

Among many other innovations, these modules first introduced the *Drow*, who've since forgotten their humble roots and gone on to fame and fortune in numerous novels and supplements.

The original modules are of course expensive collectors' items, as is the reprint volume which collected all three in the 1980's. So is the second reprint which bundled them with Gygax's famous sequel *Descent into the Depths* — which meant owning the adventure in any edition these days was an expensive proposition.

Luckily, last year TSR saw fit to release an updated and greatly expanded edition of the first trilogy as *Against the Giants (1999)*, with substantial new material by Sean Reynolds.

Simultaneous with its release was a novelization of Gygax's adventure by fantasy author Ru Emerson.

Emerson begins her tale in the small town of *Upper Haven*, where a young warrior named Lhors is training as a hunter like his father. When a force of giants attacks, pausing only long enough to toss a few children into a boiling pot, Lhors sees his father die in defense of the village.

Escaping with a bare handful of survivors, Lhors journeys to the city of *Cryllor* to raise the alarm. There he is recruited by Vlander, a skilled warrior and friend of Lord McBree, who decides to take the battle directly to the giants' lair.

But first Vlander must recruit a suitable team of mercenaries and adventurers — including twin elven rangers, a much put-upon paladin and his unlikely thief ward, a skeptical barbarian, and the spoiled and over-confident son of a city elder.

Anyone who's played Gygax's original adventures may expect to endure the preliminaries somewhat impatiently while waiting for the main

event. Surprisingly though, Emerson manages to make the first few chapters extremely engaging as we observe Lhors, and soon Vlander and his companions, plot and execute a daring raid into giant territory.

The characters are likable, the stakes are high, and before you know it the company has arrived at the *Steading of the hill giant Nosnra*.

From the Steading to the Fire Giant Hall

Once the real action starts a few things become apparent. First, it's not easy to follow the narrative flow of a typical D&D adventure, especially one where the action moves quickly from twisty corridors to winding towers and back again.

I gave up after the first 20 pages and pulled out the worn maps from G1 and ended up referring to them constantly. If you haven't got G1 or one of its many reprints, God help you.

The maps should have been printed in the back of the book.

Second, it's pretty obvious that Ru Emerson has never played D&D — or if she has, her play was unhindered by any of the rules I'm used to.

This isn't really a flaw but it does introduce a certain quirkiness to the text, especially in the magic system, which appears to be mostly original.

There are sleep spells which affect giants, paladins who detect pain, and even a dwarf who handily wields not one, but two pikes in combat. But the real giveaway is the way characters treat magic items, i.e. leaving them behind when they have no immediate use. Sure, it might have been in character for Malowan the paladin to not covet possessions but, I mean, c'mon.

Lastly, and the only thing that's genuinely irksome, is the fact that the book was obviously rushed.

There are numerous small editing mistakes scattered throughout, from typos to glaring irregularities, including an empty tower that suddenly contains a hill giant and a battle in the ice rift where characters switch places without explanation.

continued on page 47



A Look At “AGE OF WONDERS”

By Rick Moscatello

Gawd, I sure have played a lot of *Asheron's Crack*. I still think the game has way too many design flaws, but all the “hot games” that I was expecting to come out around Christmas/January just haven't materialized. Interplay's *Abomination* certainly is an abomination, unworthy of a great computer game company. LucasArts' *Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine* is mundanely mediocre, a bit of a surprise from a company that has such a great track record with adventure games (*check out their Grim Fandango if you haven't already, it's a wonderful adventure game*). *UnReal Tournament* is great, and superior to an also great *Quake 3: Arena*, but I played those games to death when the demos came out months ago—do check out the demos if you haven't already, I think they gave away a bit too much for free. It's hard for me to get excited about a “great new game” that I've already played for 60 hours at the really neat *Browser Game Center* in Houston (*shameless plug? Yes, it is. But I gotta support the good hobby shops, since Megacorp, Inc. sure doesn't...Browser already knows how kewl KODT is, although I told 'em anyway*).

Only one game has been strong enough to pull me away from *Asheron's Call*, and even that one fries my beans a bit. This month's victim is *Age of Wonders*, from *Gathering Of Developers* (*aka, GOD*).

AoW is a classic turn-based fantasy game, and begs for comparison with *Heroes of Might and Magic* (*HoMM*). *GOD* also released *Disciples: Sacred Lands*, one of the few turn-based fantasy strategy games that outright sucks, so it's a bit surprising that *AoW* is so good. Let's take a look at what's in the game:

First off, *AoW* has an interesting backstory. Normally, I couldn't give a flying dicebag about the background story of a game, but *AoW's* “*No, actually, we CAN'T all just get along*” tale is good stuff, on the same level as some fantasy novels. *HoMM* has a nearly as good story, but it just isn't as much fun to read.

The graphics of games are simply a matter of taste, although the spell effects of *AoW* are superior by far, especially on the game-altering spells which can permanently change the map. Ok, that's enough time on the stuff that doesn't really matter (*graphics and story*), time to talk about what makes a game good.

AoW's greatest strength is in the variety of combat units in the game. There are TWELVE distinct races, each with their own special unit mix, easily blowing away the other games in this genre. In addition to the cliché, but fun, elves, goblins, orcs, dwarves, and humans, the game also features halflings (*not often these guys get their own army mix*), lizard men, high men, azracs, frostlings, and others. Yes, there is some

overlap between the races, especially with siege engines, but there's still some variety here, such as the lizard men's catapult-mounted giant turtle, or the goblin's big beetle, capable of smashing walls. There are also a host of special units, such as the Builder, which can allow you to add roads and towers to a map, or to rebuild something previously razed. *HoMM* has significantly less than this, and the way you get units is set up so that you see pretty much everything after a handful of games. *AoW* does a better job of doling out the new stuff slowly.

AoW handles conquest a bit more realistically than *HoMM*. In *HoMM*, if you capture a castle, you automatically have complete control of the inhabitants, with no real penalty for being an invader. Units hired there are instantly, totally, loyal. *AoW* keeps track of race relations—if the inhabitants of the city hate you, you'll have to keep a garrison there, or else they'll revolt and you'll need to reconquer it. You can use the city to build units, but the morale of these new units is low, and they might well leave you (*just because an orc warlord captures a dwarven citadel, doesn't mean he'll have a legion of dwarven warriors working for him anytime soon, after all*). To get around this, you can migrate in a race that does like you. It's a time consuming affair, but skips the annoying situation where you lose a city, and it instantly churns out more units to oppose you.

As is now the standard for fantasy wargames, your leaders gain experience points and levels, and can acquire magic items to wield—with such items most commonly found when you investigate dungeons. Leaders also gain special abilities when they go up levels—and the range of abilities far exceeds that of other games. Unfortunately, things begin to break down here, as, around level 8, a well-designed leader can singlehandedly destroy medium-sized armies, which is just a bit much. *HoMM* wins out here, as god-heroes take much for time to create, and need to have an army under them to be effective.

Another welcome standard to fantasy wargaming is spellcasting. *AoW* has a very rich spellcasting system, with spells broken up into categories roughly along the lines of *Magic: The Gathering*. You can focus your skills along just a few types (*such as Life, or Water*), or spread yourself thin along several types of magic. Naturally, more focused wizards eventually get access to more powerful spells. The spells themselves run the gamut of simple “blast that unit” and “enchant weapon” to great spider- and dragon-summoning, to terrain shifting wonders such as Flood and Raise Terrain (*probably better described as “summon mountain range”*), to mastery spells with effects that mean “game over” for your enemies. And, again, problems with the game rear up, as *Raise Dead* and

Summon Hero spells are horribly bugged, and completely worthless, even with the SECOND patch. I don't understand; being able to raise a favorite hero from the dead is a kewl thing that I would expect a playtester to try. Not noticing a bug this size in this part of the game is akin to not noticing a 30lb cockroach in your underwear, and it's darned annoying that I had to waste several hours of my life figuring out that these absolutely necessary spells are useless. Maybe the third patch will fix things up. **HoMM** handles things a bit differently, so it's hard to compare, but the lack of bugs give it the clear advantage.

Next, we come to nearly the most important part of computer fantasy war games: combat. And, once again, **AoW** comes close to greatness, except for a few critical flaws. You have 2 choices in combat, tactical (*disturbingly like HoMM*), or quick. The tactical combat is fun, as you can exploit terrain and flanks to great effect. The quick combat is not as good, as archery plays far too a strong role in the game (*archers get many free shots in quick combat that they would not get in tactical*). Just like the other games, you can only have 8 units in a stack. But, in a major advancement of the genre, friendly stacks adjacent to you can take part in combat. This means that as many as 56 different units can be involved in a battle, which is really nice. Yet, again, the system has flaws, as units inside a fortified city can be forced into defense outside the walls (*if they have a friendly adjacent unit there*), and the computer AI always keeps friendly adjacent units outside the walls. Still, the combat here is superior to **HoMM**, especially since you get a choice.

This brings us to the most important part of any game like this: the AI. These types of games can often take 8 hours or more to play to finish, and are best played with 3 or more opponents. Finding this many humans, with this much available, concurrent, free time, is an unlikely proposition. The AI in **AoW** is among the weakest I've seen in such games. It is barely able to put together an army and attack a relatively undefended outpost, and you can march

precious, solitary, units right by its major armies with no fear of attack. Usually most companies make up for such deficiencies by granting the AI massive arbitrary advantages; while **GoD** didn't do this, a bit more effort in making the AI almost intelligent would have been appreciated. **HoMM** gives the computer a significant advantage, but it's still able to mount an intelligent campaign, even playing cat-and-mouse with your armies while jockeying for an assault on your castles. Vastly superior to the mainly decorative AI armies in **AoW**.

So, when all is said and done, **AoW** probably isn't as good as the current great game of fantasy strategy wargaming, but it's still pretty good. If you've played **HoMM** to death, **AoW** should be right up your alley.

But wait, **AoW** does one more thing to annoy me, even as I rather like the game. Here's the formula that determines the percent that a given attack will succeed: $50\% + (\text{attacker's skill} - \text{defender's skill}) * 10\%$. So, if the two units have equal ability, the attack will succeed 50% of the time. For each point advantage/disadvantage, the chance will increase/decrease by a flat 10%. This simple formula is not in the rulebook, it's in the strategy guide, sold for a mere \$20. What????!!

Why do I have to pay extra money to get this sort of information? It drives me nuts that this is not in the regular game manual. Even the movement point costs per space moved for terrain aren't in the manual! Is this really the sort of information a gamer should pay "extra" for? Could you imagine the **OUTRAGE** if you bought a \$60 boardgame, and you had to pay an extra \$20 just to get a book that tells you the rules for movement? To top it off, the "strategy" in the guide is dubious, recommending long, tedious, courses of action that are completely unnecessary in light of the anemic AI.

The computer game companies say that people who steal their software by copying it are bad. I agree completely. What do they think of themselves when they rip people off like this? Just wondering. ☐

Book Review: continued from page 45

Nothing serious, certainly, but it detracts from the whole experience — especially if you pause to wonder what else might have suffered under a tight deadline. Is there a reason that 200 pages are devoted to the Steading, only 65 to the Ice Rift and a bare 40 to the enormous hall of the fire giants?

Still, there's plenty to enjoy in Emerson's retelling of a classic adventure. For one thing, it's fun to watch young Lhors advance through the ranks just as we all did years ago, and in much the same way -- from a boy who's terrified of wolves, to one who slays fire giants (even if there are a few too many "lucky shots" to the eye in the interim — every second arrow or javelin seems to lodge unerringly in a giant head. The critical hit tables for giants appear to be about 95% eyeball). And the drow, when they finally appear, are suitably majestic and terrify-

ing -- particularly Eclavdra, the evil mas-
termind behind the entire affair.

Other Options

If you're really dying to read adventure novelizations and one book just isn't enough for you, there are a few more options out there. TSR has done novelizations of popular modules before — most notably of course the **Dragonlance** books, which kicked off the entire TSR publishing arm. But for all of the novels that TSR produces each year, surpassingly few are based on published adventures, classic or otherwise.

More recent examples are the **Pool of Radiance** series by James Ward, based on the computer game of the same name from SSI. Perhaps the best executed adaptation of a classic adventure is Elizabeth Moon's **Divided Allegiance** (*Baen Books, 1988*), second novel in her **Paksenarrion** trilogy and still in print as part of the omnibus edition, **The Deed of Paksenarrion** (*Baen, 1992, \$18*). Heavily inspired by **T1: The Village of Hommlet** (*TSR, 1979*), the opening

module in Gary Gygax's **Temple of Elemental Evil** series and one of the best adventure supplements ever produced, **Divided Allegiance** is the story of Paksenarrion and her early training as a Paladin. This isn't a licensed novel, so most of the names are changed, but you can still follow Paks as she digs through the dungeons of the moathouse and confronts Lareth, the priest behind it all.

Finally, TSR will be releasing **Descent into the Depths of the Earth** by Paul Kidd this June. It continues the adventure begun in **Against the Giants** as the company pursues the drow into their dark lair underground, and presumably will continue the chronicle begun by Ru Emerson with the same characters. Like the **Giants** series, **Descent into the Depths of the Earth** is one of the most fondly-remembered adventures series ever written. I'm looking forward to it.

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Interesting Interjections

by Larry Granato

Interjection: *An exclamation or ejaculation; a word or phrase, capable of standing alone, which typically signifies an emotion.*

Interjections can be used by both players and the gamemaster to quickly and simply express a character's reaction to a situation. Interesting and inventive interjections immediately make an invaluable impression.

In everyday conversation, profanity is the most commonly used interjection and needs no further elaboration here. More common exclamations (*Hub! What!*) can likewise be ignored as they are known to all. However, the English language has an abundance of archaic and amusing interjections which can easily spice up a fantasy role-playing encounter. The GM can give reoccurring NPC's a customary interjection, which can be utilized to further define their personality. A PC can use one as a tag line or "*fun phrase*".

In many cases, the most useful exclamations fall into three categories: declarations of surprise, approval, or dissent. A sample offering is listed below; players are encouraged to come up with new interjections for their characters.

INTERJECTIONS OF SURPRISE, CONFUSION, OR DISMAY

1. Alack! (also, Alas!, or Alack and Alas!)
2. By my halidome! (also, By my sooth! or By thunder!)
3. By ____! (insert name of deity)
4. By ____'s ____!, (insert name of deity and item, e.g. *By Odin's Beard!*)
5. By the ____ of ____ (insert item and name of deity, e.g. *By the Hammer of Thor!*)
6. Crikey! (also, Crikey, do beha-a-a-ve!)
7. Egad!
8. Eh? (also Eh What?)
9. Firkin' ding blast!
10. Forsooth!
11. Gramercy! (or Mercy!)
12. Great ____'s Ghost! (insert name of famous dead person)

13. Great balls o' fire!
14. Hark! (or I Say!)
15. Heavens! (or Good Heavens!)
16. Hoody Freaking Hoo!
17. How now?
18. Lo! (also Lo and Behold!)
19. Yikes! (Also Zoinks!, Jeepers! and Jinkies!)
20. Zounds!

INTERJECTIONS OF APPROVAL, AGREEMENT, OR JUBILATION

1. Aye!
2. Excelsior!
3. Hear! Hear!
4. Huzzah! (Or Hubba-Hubba!)
5. Indeed!
6. Oh Happy Day!
7. Precisely! (my dear Watson, or whomever)
8. Quite! (or Quite so!)
9. Tis Well!
10. Verily!
11. Yippee!
12. Yowzah!

INTERJECTIONS OF DISAPPROVAL, DISAGREEMENT, OR DENIGRATION

1. Away!
2. Bah!
3. Balderdash!
4. Fie!
5. Harrumph!
6. Humbug! (may be combined with bah)
7. Horse feathers!
8. Nay!
9. Nonsense! (or Stuff and nonsense!)
10. Poppycock!
11. Posh! (or Pish-posh!)
12. Rot! (or Rubbish!)

I SWEAR TO **GAWD** IF HE DOESN'T **SHUT UP** I'M GOING TO **SHOVE** THAT **FRICKIN' PUPPET** DOWN HIS **FRICKIN' THROAT!**

POPPYCOCK MY DEAR FELLOW! **BALDERDASH** I SAY. AWAY WITH YOU AND YOUR FOUL SMELLING BOTTOM!

MAYBE IT WASN'T SUCH A **GOOD IDEA** AWARDED ROLE-PLAY INCENTIVE POINTS FOR TALKING **IN CHARACTER.**

C'MON **BRIAN!** I'M TIRED OF **HODGY** INSULTING MY **HONOR!**

BRIAN, DEAR, IT'S **REALLY** STARTING TO WEAR **THIN!**

HEY, IT'S NOT **ME!** I CAN'T **CONTROL** HIM. AFTER ALL HE DOES HAVE A **WILL FACTOR** OF **7!**





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HOMEBREWED STARSHIPS??

Interactive has announced it is developing **Star Trek Starship Creator: Warp 2**.

The planned March release will interface with October's **Deep Space Nine: Dominion Wars** allowing players of that game to battle with their own custom built ships, but also comes loaded with 10 scenarios, the ability to create scenes for "mini-episodes" which can be downloaded to a Palm Pilot or Visor PDA, and photo editing abilities which allow you to dress pictures of yourself in Starfleet Officer uniforms.

<http://www.simonsays.com>

LET'S RIP OUT THE LAUNDRY ROOM AND ADD ANOTHER BANK OF PHASERS.

SURE, WHY NOT.



Kalamar Quests

We are proud to announce that four more books in the popular **Kalamar Quest** line are scheduled for release over the next few months.

These 16-page adventures are designed to provide both a challenging adventure for your players and to serve as a useful campaign supplement when the adventure is over. They are set in the Kingdoms of Kalamar campaign setting but are designed to be easily used with any fantasy role-playing system including but not limited to; **Advanced Dungeons and Dragons®**, **Rolemaster®**, **GURPS™** and even **HackMaster™**

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YK3	Sometimes They Come Back	Now
KA2	In Too Deep	MAR
KA3	Temple of the Bronze Flame	APR

Hey Freelancers! Kalamar Quests are the 'gateway' product line for anyone wanting to write for Kenzer and Company. These 16-page adventures are a great place to start for those seeking to break into the industry. (KQ authors will be given special consideration for larger writing projects slated in the near future). Write to Barbwryter@aol.com for a copy of our guidelines. □

"TRADE YA TWO SPIDEY-CARDS FOR THAT INCREDIBLE HULK CARD!"

Wizards of the Coast has acquired the exclusive licensing rights to create trading card games and card game accessories based on the **Marvel Comics Universe**. The first release will be an **X-MEN** trading card game this summer.

Fairy Meat is a miniatures wargame brought to you by KenzerCo. This simple to learn game is a bold adventure in miniatures gaming for two or more players. You get to play cute & cuddly little fairies. The twist is, they've been warped by evil and now the only thing they care about is who their next meal is going to be. Once happy-go-lucky fairies are now homicidal cannibals in the kill or be killed world of raw carnage and inch high mayhem. Whether it's a one-on-one scenario or an ongoing campaign, this twisted game of brutal action is for all mature gamers who want something different. A game of Fairy Meat, like real battles between the wee folk, can last anywhere from ten minutes to hours of ferocious fun. Combat is resolved using ordinary playing cards and the game also includes a complete magic system. Cardboard miniatures are included.

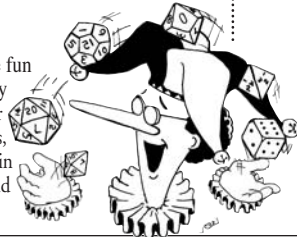
in stores April 2000

FAIRY MEAT



JOIN THE FUN AND MAYHEM!

That's right. Working on KODT is like a big freakin' party! The fun never stops around here. Really! It's like every day is a Saturday or something. And we want to share that FUN! Got ideas for things like cartoons, articles on gaming, adventures, industry news, reviews, etc.? And we just raised our rates - among the highest in the industry. Hoody Hoo! Well, quit playing with those dice and drop an E-mail for our guidelines to: KenzerCo@aol.com.



\$500 REWARD FOR RETURN OF ESCAPED INTERN



Kenzer and Company is offering a \$500 reward for any information leading to the apprehension of an intern who fled from a training seminar.

Fitz Mulligan, (pictured above) a 46 year old unemployed pipe fitter from Hammond, Indiana was participating in an Intern Confidence Seminar as part of the training/indoctrination all new interns are required to complete before being assigned duties at the home office.

Steve Johansson, who was conducting the seminar says, 'We were working on teamwork skills here at my house, which involved ripping out the floorboards in my bathroom and putting in some glazed terra cotta tiles. I sent Fitz out to the tool shed to get more grout but he never returned.'

Upon learning of the escape, Dave Kenzer was justifiably angry. "It hurts! Ya know? We bring these guys in and try to teach them something and look how we're repayed!"

Despite the recent rash of escapes, Kenzer and Company plans on continuing its Intern Program.

"We're gonna invest in some good chain link fence" commented Jolly Blackburn. □

from the vine for your reading enjoyment

- FOX has ordered a horror anthology entitled **Night Terrors**, and a contemporary Three Musketeers series called **MK3**.
- Pupi Avati's **The Knights of the Quest** will be set in 11th century France. The movie is about a young man sent to bring a French king news of a sacred relic.
- Ron Perlman (**Beauty and the Beast**, **The Magnificent Seven**) has joined Jude Law and Ed Harris in director Jean-Jacques Annaud's **Enemy at the Gate**.
- The much awaited Val Kilmer film **RED PLANET** has been pushed back, this time from June 16th to November 10th.
- Rob Kinkoff (*Stuart Little*) will direct the feature film adaptation of C.S. Lewis' **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** for Universal pictures.
- A fifth **BATMAN** film is said to be in the works. The **Bruce Wayne** TV series is on hold until plans for the movie are set.



"Massively Multiplayer" Star Trek

ACTIVISION has announced its plans to launch a 'massively multiplayer' **Star Trek** game in 2002. The game is being developed by VERANT (Everquest), a company also rumored to be working on a massively multiplayer **STAR WARS I** game. For



more information check out <http://www.activision.com> and <http://www.verant.com>. "Scotty, 2,257 to beam up!" □

INDUSTRY NEWS COLUMNIST NEEDED

We're looking for someone to head up our Industry News column. Think you know the ins and outs of the gaming industry? Are you handy with a webbrowser and have a nose for news? Well maybe you're the person we've been looking for. Hey, we're willing to pay. E-mail jollyrb@aol.com if you're interested.



HACKMASTERS OF EVERKNIGHT

Hey there Hack-Jockey! Why the long face? What's that? You say you'd like a chance to go up against ol' Rot Gut the Swack Iron Dragon, throw down with Sturm Pyre or drink a few Suds with Skraag Fallow from the HackMasters of Everknight novels?

Hmmrrrrfff! So you want a chance to rake in the BIG experience points in Gareweeze Wurd huh?

Well maybe you should check out

this exciting new comic book which brings the Gareweeze Wurd to life.

That's right, under exclusive arrangement with **Hard Eight Enterprises** and the **Sultan of Hack** himself, **Gary Jackson, Kenzer & Company** is proud to announce that they will be releasing the greatly-anticipated comic version of the **HackMasters of Everknight** in May. You want hack-n-slash? Shya' right — There's so much carnage packed into the first issue we're thinking of packaging it with safety glasses to avoid lawsuits. You still interested?

Travel through the realms of Garweeze Wurd, (made famous in the pages of **Knights of the Dinner Table** and see first hand what keeps Bob, Dave, Sara and Brian coming back for more - week after week to see what happens next. No, this book doesn't follow the exploits of Knuckles, Teflon Billy and El Rav (You can check out **KODT ILLUSTRATED** for that).

Hackmasters follows a team of unlikely heroes as they are forced to flee from one unknown danger only to get pulled into something even larger and more insidious. Written by the **KODT Development Team** and illustrated by **Manny Vega**, you won't want to miss this first Hack-pounding issue.

Be sure to reserve your copy at your local game or comic shop today!



TOP KODT STRIPS??!

For those of you keeping score here are "Top Ten KODT Strips" as determined by vote at the website: <http://pages.infinit.net/kodt/kodt.htm>.

1. Lair of the Gazebo [KODT #1]
2. The Cows of War [KODT #2]
3. Agent of Evil [KODT #5]
4. It Takes a Thief [KODT #23]
5. The Deck of Far too Many Things [KODT #29]
6. The Evil Among Us [KODT #21]
7. Dave's First Game [Bundle of Trouble V.1]
8. The Barringer Rebellion [KODT #14]
9. Operation Skim [KODT #25]
10. Dances with Pitbulls [KODT #19]

Wanna vote for your favorite strip? Well, it's as easy as going to the website listed above and clicking on your ten favorite strips. We'll try to publish the current standings every six months or so. According to the webmaster at this site there are plans to get a Top Ten Black Hands strips set up as well. □



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





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Floor Wars

Siege Engines Ltd.

73 Jacobsen Ave. Glendale Hts. IL 60139
 siege@skullworx.com

This game consists of super-cool miniature medieval artillery models in full working order. The basic game comes with two large wooden trebuchets (about a foot tall), 10 rounds of ammo, and 96 wooden blocks. The idea of the game is simple, each player uses the blocks and their best engineering skills to build a fortress. Then they load up and see who can destroy the other guy's castle first. Shots can be exchanged one at a time or in speed rounds. The basic set is \$60 and the large trebuchets are sold separately for \$40. Mini-trebuchets (about 6") are also available separately for \$20. You'll need some pennies to use as counter weights but these little powerhouses can launch a peanut M&M up to twenty feet. This game is so cool it makes me feel like a kid again. Plans are in the works for additional devices such as catapults. Currently, the game is only available from the manufacturer but hopefully once it catches on you'll see it on your local game shop.



Brian's Rating: A Must Have!

LEGENDARY ADVENTURE

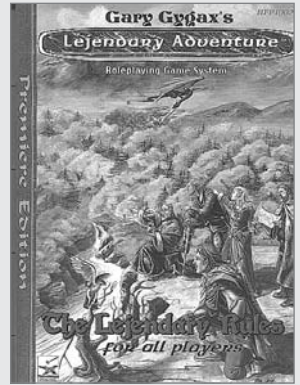
Roleplaying Game System

Hekaforge Productions
 36460 North Highway 45, Lake Villa, IL 60046
 E-mail: www.Hekaforge.com Cost: \$29.99

A new roleplaying system by Gary Gygax? For many gamers, that's all that needs to be said to have them beating down the door of their local game shop in order to get a copy. Well, the players' rule book, the *Legendary Rules*, has just come out, and the *Legend Master's Lore*, the *Legendary Earth* world setting and the *Beasts of Lejend* are on their way. Watch out game store owners.

The players' book is 220 pages thick, including simple rules for creating characters, called Avatars, races, abilities, and orders. In *Legendary Adventure*, orders create career paths for avatars who wish to follow them. Recognized Avatar Orders include: Desperado Order, Elemental Order, Jongleur Order, Mariner Order and Soldier Order. Avatars are also free to adventure without joining an order. Races include everything from dwarves and wylfs to kobolds and trollkin.

Although it isn't possible to see how the game will work until the rest of the books come out, the *Legendary Rules for All Players* whets the appetite for what promises to be a mystical, fantastic new way to adventure.



Brian's Rating: Roleplaying adventure from the master himself. 'Nuff said!

GOLFMANIA

The Game of Crazy Golf!

Fantasy Flight Games

1938 W, County Rd. C, Roseville, MN 55113
 Cost: \$18.95

This is one you may have missed. I know I did. But I'm glad I found out about it.

For golf fans and non-fans alike, this game is a fun, zany diversion for 2-6 players, ages 12 and up. More players can play by combining more than one game of *GolfMania*. A typical game takes about 15 to 25 minutes from tee off to finish.

The object is to collect 18 Hole Points to win. The only obstacle to a victory on the links is the other players. Each player has game cards they can play to either help themselves, or mess up the other players. Just when you think you might win a hole, such as "Devils Alley" or "The Sweet Spot" another player plays something like "Poodle Love" or "Deep Sand Trap" on you and you blow your 'drive' roll.

Each hole has a point value, and if you roll the designated number for that hole, or below it, on the dice provided, you can win it. But terrain and hazard cards played by others can force you to have to add to your dice. You can use equipment cards, such as the "Biiig Umbrella" and the "Lucky Luck" card to protect yourself, or help your dice rolls. There is even one card, the "Lucky Luck" card which allows you to demand that any dice rolled be rerolled, yours or another players.



Brian's Rating: For an afternoon on the fairway, without having to wear those goofy pants, you can't miss.



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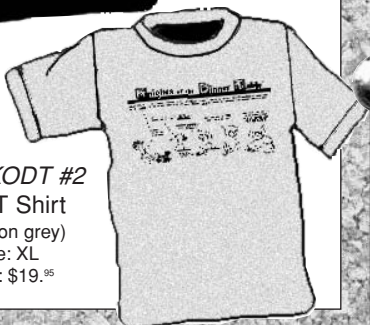
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KODT Shirt
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Price: \$19.⁹⁵



Style KODT #2
KODT Shirt
(black on grey)
Size: XL
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KenzerCo.,
Seriously though, can I have my soul
back? You said I could get it back
when I... yes Master...
Mano



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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.

WEIRD PETE'S BULLETIN BOARD



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.

Jolly, it's going to take a female (albeit a female geek) to explain this one too you, because there are *vast* differences in the terms geek, dork, dweeb, and doofus. That's because we have to make distinctions in dating them. No female would ever date a dork, and while we sometimes can find interest in dweeb and doofus, they're not first choices.

Geek is a subclass of nerd. (And yes, I'm using Java programming terms. Deal with it. I'm a female computer geek.) You know us nerds. We were the ones who belonged to the electronics club, and had every Star Trek episode memorized. Geek is the more social reject form. You know us. We were always chosen last for sports, and the males tended to be pale and hollow-chested in youth (though most fill out later, I notice). We are near-sighted and tended to be sick a lot as kids. But if you want someone who can build robots, fix your ham radio, or fabricate high explosives from common household items, we're the folks you look for.

A *dork* is a geek who's also an idiot, and probably offensive as well. Beavis and Butthead are dorks. Dorks like toilet humor, and pick their noses. They tend to call each other "dude" a lot, but not jokingly. Dorks are usually only tolerated by other dorks. If they weren't so smart, they'd be running around in aging pickups with gun racks and dynamite fishing. You get my drift.

A *doofus* is a geek who just doesn't get some stuff. This is the guy who gets so lost in plotting some brilliant piece of tech work that he walks into lamp posts. Sometimes, they are slow on the uptake of things that aren't related to geek pursuits. If someone tells a joke, and one person doesn't laugh, then laughs five minutes later when he finally figures it out, he's a doofus. Doofus need wives, keepers, and others who can run their everyday lives for them, as they haven't a clue about that aspect of life. I have a very good friend who's one of these--he taught me amazing amounts about how computers work, but he's always had to hire someone to manage his bank account, because he just doesn't relate. He told us, in all earnestness, one day, that cooked food doesn't spoil. He's the guy that everyone has funny stories about, that can't figure out why folks think the stories are funny.

And then there's the dweeb. A dweeb is a nerd who at least seems rather lame. In the Luanne comic strip, her sometime-date Gunther is a dweeb. They're nice guys, often painfully nice, but totally bland. (At least they seem that way. I've known a couple dweebs who harbored some interesting fantasy lives, that belied their outer appearance). Dweebs become accountants. They're completely reliable, and often (but not always) boring. Walter Mitty was a dweeb.

Hope this helps!

Jane Beckman
via E-mail

Indeed it does! Thanks for the letter Jane. I couldn't believe the response we got to my request for definitions of these terms. As I mentioned in the editorial of Issue 40, we received a lot of dictionary definitions which didn't

quite convey the way most of us use such slang.

I think your very insightful definitions (along with Beth Young's reply - which you can find in the editorial of issue 40) pretty much capture what I 'knew' but was unable to convey to my german friends.

Again, many, many thanks to everyone who took the time to reply. I apologize that space limitations prevented us from running more.

Jolly

Yes it is another dreaded email from the fascist fundamentalist conservative Alan Miller (or radical bleeding-heart atheist, depending on what your own standards happen to be).

I'm writing as of issue 37. After the wonderful KODT issue 34 I was very tempted to write in and tell you what a great job you guys had done in making human characters out of what I previously perceived as dangerous caricatures in **The Black Hands**.

However, since you had published my editorial in the same issue, that would have seemed like I was just brown-nosing. I think enough time has passed for you to take my thanks and congratulations in earnest.

Starting with issue 32 there was definitely a change in the portrayal of **The Black Hands**, and it continued in issue 33. Issue 34 put a nail in the coffin of the old **Black Hands**. Huzzah for the new! Much funnier (by my measurement anyway) and no longer a frighteningly real scenario.

Well anyway I wanted to follow up and let you know that you had restored my faith in KODT as a whole (though I never lost it with *The Knights*).

Take care and have fun with KODT,

Alan Miller
via E-mail

First, I have to say I enjoy the comic. At first when you went into *Dragon*, I didn't much care for it since you replaced 'Yamara.' However, after a couple months I became hooked. Thank you! Plus, I've created a Shinobi Magic user (*using AD&D's "Complete Ninja's Handbook"*) just so I can say "*Fireballs coming online*" and "*I waste him with my Cho-no-ku!*" The crew will love it.

Anyway, on to issue #38. In general, it was great. But there is one thing that you will catch hell for. Brian asks to see some of the untranslated adventures to see if he can '*decipher them based upon my vast collection of ANIME titles.*'

First off Anime is Japanese, which will be useless since many of these are Chinese. Secondly, Anime are cartoons, which don't have too much in the way of text except for the titles.

Now, if he had said MANGA, the comic books, it would be understandable. However, all of this ranting could be a moot point. Since Brian always has a trick up his sleeve, perhaps he is trying to trick B.A., and it wouldn't be the first time it happened.

Also, I can hardly wait to see how the revenge turns out. After all, this isn't the first time Gary Jackson has pulled the wool over people's eyes.

Plus, I wonder if Brian, Bob, and Dave will run into Edmund on their attack on Hard8 Enterprises. After all, he is the one who leveled the charges against the entire group in the KODT-FAANS crossover, and there has been no revelation of what happened, even though there was a footnote mentioning that there would be some resolution to their arrest.

Well, keep up the good work!

Scott Bobnick
via E-mail

Kudo's for getting the juices flowing in us old gamers! You were just the thing to get us all back into gaming when I happened to pick up issue #11 at the local games shop.

I've been collecting them ever since. Being a DM for almost twenty years, I've seen the whole gambit of the game in all its facets. There was the game explosion of the mid seventies to the mid eighties, where either most people played or were willing to learn. You had many, many PC's to pick from, so if you got a bitter Stevil, you booted his bitter self for greener pastures.

To me, the Knights seem like the

representation of that time period. There is the camaraderie between players from different walks of life, even if they aren't friends, and the internal conflicts are there, but quickly solved among the players. I've had my "Fools Rush In" players like Bob, and the laid back Dave's. I think for a while I was a Brian magnet, attracting all the Rules Lawyers. Towards the end of that period, I was dubbed the "Hose King" for demanding my players roleplay more and hack less, much like Sara wants but rarely gets.

Then, there was the 'Underground' of the mid eighties to the early nineties when the Church and the Media did the double drub on all us gamers, which is still going on now. That's when the player pool shrank to next to nothing. The Black Hands evoke memories of that period, sort of like a bad disco flashback in the dentists' chair.

You had to put up with your players, because that's all there was. And, there were many bitter Stevils. As reader and DM, I've always tried to pull for the underdog new guy, like Newt, who seems to be a good role player, but had to tolerate the 'Bitter Stevils' of the world.

The 'Wierd Petes' were the angle guys, who knew just the right angle to manipulate the others to his way, either bullying or by befriending. (We even had the 'different' gamer in the group, like Gordo).

During one of the many campaigns I DM'd, I'd play every Sunday and get calls from two of the gamers every Thursday asking if it was OK to kill the other guy, and would I mind?

The nineties is sort of the Bizarro World for us old gamers. There are lots of new games out, and strange groups like "Troy's Boys" abound in this 'Brave New World' of gaming, who are very tight and very bizarre.

There are times when I am reading your magazine, that I laugh so hard tears run down my face! It's not just the ludicrously outrageous antics of the Knights, but also the spin-off memories of my 'misspent youth'. At first, I used the magazines to do personal live readings on the thirty minute trip each week to the gaming site, to the guffaws and belly laughs of my old gamer buddies. I do a mean Bob, I might add, complete with gestures!

Now, I collect the magazines as well, and have the local stores delivery schedules posted so I know when to get them before they are out. I even have a

web site devoted to the game and especially all my players and their exploits (<http://members.tripod.com/~Onry/index.htm>) which is featuring a semi-quasi-original KODT panel this month in honor of the Knights and my love for them. The site even has a "Coffee Table Chronicles" of my past gamers and campaigns, and was ironically named just before I started picking up KODT.

I especially like the entrance of Crutch onto the scene, and he provides the means to control the group. Everyone is secretly afraid of him, but he's like a lovable teddy bear with an overkill complex. Hopefully, he can tone down Bitter Stevil and Wierd Pete, while at the same time becoming more of a team player himself. But then, they'd be just like the Knights and you'd either have to have a comic book spinoff or slowly decrease their panels in favor of the varsity team. Hmm...spinoff...not a bad idea at that! Keep up the great work, guys!

Robert Kelsey a.k.a. Arillion
via E-mail

I just finished reading issue thirty-nine, and I have to say it is one of the best I have read in a long time. I have been with the Knights since issue three, and I know that **The Game Must Go On** will be one of those classics I bring to every gaming session, on the off chance that someone there has not beheld KODT in all its glory. I read most of the issue aloud to myself between fits of laughter, but the final strip, **Has Anybody Seen My Old Friend, Johnny?** really hit home. Our group recently lost a local gaming legend to the "*ol' ball n' chain.*" He packed up, moved away, got "sucked up by the system" as Bob says. Though we recognize that all things come to end, and that at one point or another we all have to choose our own path, it is never easy seeing a great friend and gamer retire the old DM shield and set down the dice forever. Wherever you are Jeff, I hope that you snuck this one past the wife and are, in some little way, having one more laugh with the guys.

Jason Whitesitt
Boise, Idaho

□

GARY, PLEASE TELL ME WHY??!!

Sung to the tune of Don McLean's pop classic song, "American Pie" Lyrics by Jolly R. Blackburn

A long long time ago
I can still remember how
I could make those Players really smile
And I knew I had them in my trance
That I could make those twenty-siders dance
And my players would be happy for a while
But 3rd Edition made me shiver
With every supplement Hard8 delivered
Bad news on the counter top
at Weird Pete's old game shop
Now, I can't remember if I cried
When I cracked open the new GameMaster's guide
But something touched me deep inside
The day...HackMaster died
So...

(CHORUS)

Why, why, Gary please tell me why
You dropped the mage-assassin and the ten sided die
Changed all the to-hit tables - did away with the crit
All the wait for 3rd edition - is this really it?
Can you tell me, please is this really it?

Now, for ten years we'd been on our own
Most of our rules have been homegrown
(And that was fine by us)

But now we're told the rules have changed
and the Hacklopedia's been rearranged
Were psionics purposely cut from appendix F

And I noticed you dropped the Demonic Horde

No more HackMaster +12 Sword
Oh the index is hopelessly incomplete
(No listing for 'stone ground wheat')

And the Gawds seem to be missing stats
or do we have to pay extra for a peek at that
What happened to the Vampiric Snail?
More errata in the mail?
I just have to ask...

REPEAT CHORUS

Now did you have to change ALL the rules
And did you have to drop the Gnarled Ghoul?
(I really thought they were kewl)

My players are really throwing a fit
They're complaining it's harder for them to hit
And I think I'm losing them

Well, I know that you're a gamer just like me
you even published my letter in Hackjournal 3
If you recall we even met once it was at GaryCon Two
(Man, I really dug those green felt shoes)
I was the lonely teenage hack-jockey
Who's dice bag hung down to his knees
I pushed my way to you through the crowd
Boy your handlers sure went wild
When I asked you...

REPEAT CHORUS

HACKHELL TOMB OF HORRORS

Sung to the tune of the Eagles classic song, "Hotel California" Lyrics by Tom Michael

On a dark pleasant Friday, players were all there
The smell of Doritos rising up through the air
I sat down in my chair since, we were ready to fight
We had burritos and a lot of gin
I thought we'd have a good night

Our GM's name is BA;
He knew his mission well
He decided early on,
That he was going to put us through living Hell
Then he sat at the table and we started to play
Faces all turned white in horror, for,
we thought we heard him say ...

Welcome to the Hackhell Tomb of Horrors
Such an ugly place (such an ugly place)
Plenty of doom at the Hackhell Tomb of Horrors
Swallow your fear, you're gonna DIE in here.

This module's def-nitely twisted,
it's full of traps that can rend- uh!
It's gonna make a lot of gamemasters, lose their friends
How the GM is smiling, sweet sudden death,
Some games I remember, I'd prefer to forget

So I yelled at the GM,
He said 'Please don't whine'
He said, 'You've got to make a saving
throw at, let's see, minus nine'
And that sick bastard that wrote this is far away,

Like to get both my hands around his throat
Just to hear him say ...

Welcome to the Hackhell Tomb of Horrors
Such an ugly place (such an ugly place)
A little bit tough at the Hackhell Tomb of Horrors
What a nice surprise, half your party dies

My mind is still reeling,
Throwing up would be nice
And I said 'My head is just frazzled in fear

I can't hold the dice'
And in the final chamber,
Where we thought we'd be rich
We stabbed it with our magic swords,
But we just can't kill the Lich

My legs got dismembered, and I
Fell down towards the floor
I had to get some wishes fast
Make my mage like he was before
'Relax', said the nice man,
'You have made it and you're free.
But now you are ninety-six years old,
and you are level three!'

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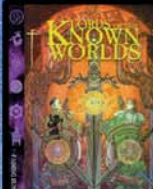
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