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M A G A Z I N E



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KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #44
BECAUSE I'M THE GM!
June, 2000

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

M A G A Z I N E

"BECAUSE I'M THE GM"

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS

JOLLY R. BLACKBURN • BRIAN JELKE • STEVE JOHANSSON • DAVID S. KENZER
Cover Art by George and Jackie Vrbanic • Editorial Assistance: Barbara Blackburn

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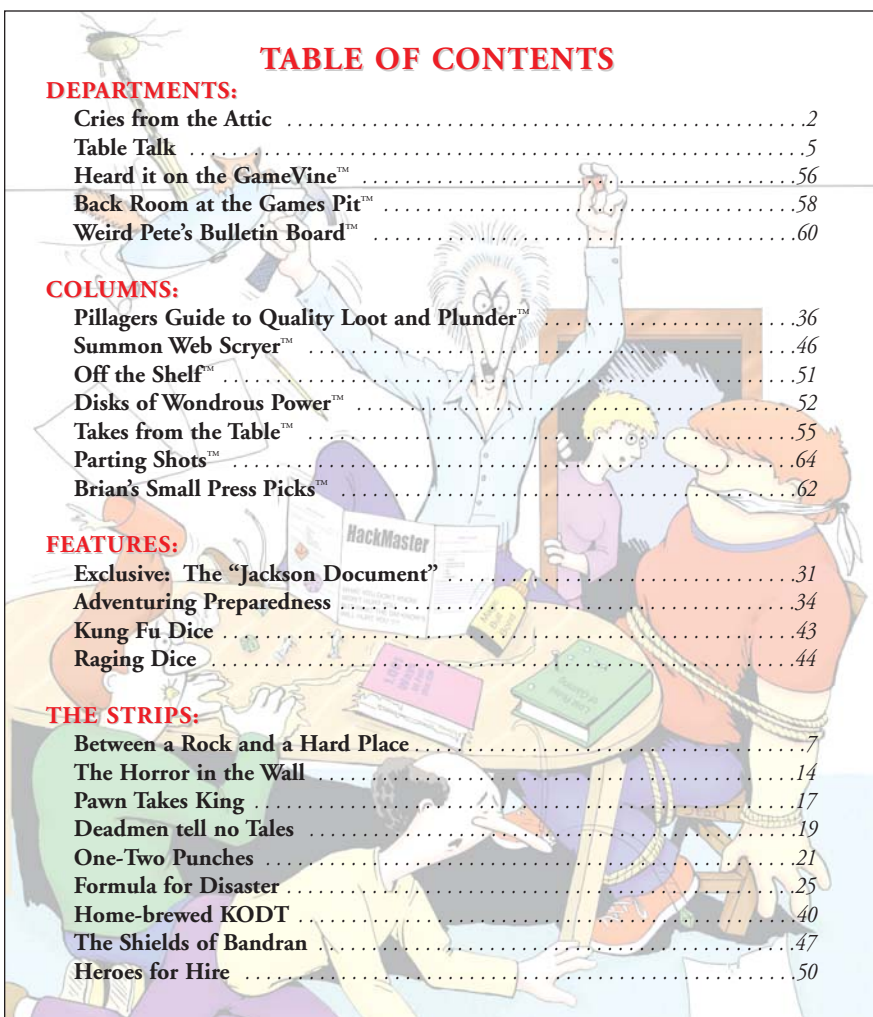
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KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™ was accidentally created by Jolly R. Blackburn way back in 1990 as 'filler' for his small press magazine, SHADIS™. Writing and drawing KODT strips, however, isn't nearly the lonely job it was in the past. Since joining the ranks of KENZER AND COMPANY and the formation of the KODT D-TEAM, the Knights have gone far beyond anything Jolly or fellow D-team members, Steve, Dave or Brian ever imagined. With two KODT spin-offs, and a crapload of merchandising such as T-shirts, buttons, games and metal figures (as well as quite a few raised eyebrows) all we can say is "Hoody Hoo!"

Editorial of a Madman

“See ya on Games Day”

One humid night back in 1977, I decided to drive by one of my high school classmate's place of summer employment. Joel Bozell, (*the inspiration for Brian van Hoose*) had taken a night security job at a Mall construction site and the air-conditioned guard shack where he manned a desk between security rounds became a popular after-hours spot for friends to hang out and keep him 'company'.

I'm not sure his employer would have approved but we spent a lot of nights sitting in that shack cooling off and talking about everything from girls to movies. (*Including writing a song called "Russ was Here" which proved that none of us could carry a tune nor write songs.*)

On this particular night when I entered the guard shack Joel was sitting alone at this desk hunched over one of the strangest looking board games I'd ever seen. As it turned out he was playing a solitaire game of Avalon Hill's *Luftwaffe*. It was the first time I'd seen a 'war game' and it literally changed my life. Joel offered to teach me how to play and proceeded to decimate my American bombers and P-51s as I looked on in amazement. An entire new world of simulation board games had just been shown to me and I was hooked. (*Thanks, Joel.*)

The next day I went out and purchased AH's behemoth monster *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. Not a wise choice for a newbie but in the following weeks I taught myself and several friends how to play. With my appetite whetted I bought another game, and another and so on. By the time I arrived at Ball State a few months later I had over a dozen board games to proudly display on my bookshelf. This turned out to be a good thing. The games tended to draw attention and inevitably someone would ask, "*Can you teach me how to play?*"

Later, during the great "Blizzard of '78" the students of BSU were snowed in their dorms for five days. To pass the time I played a lot of games (*and made a lot of lasting friendships*). It was during the 'blizzard' that I met a guy named John Lahr who saw my game collection and asked, "*You ever play D&D?*"

When I replied I had never heard of the game, another guy in the room (*Barry*) perked up. Without invitation he began to describe a game of D&D he had once played in (*which basically boiled down to a "Let me tell you about my character" saga*). The entire room was mesmerized. Barry wasn't talking about hex-grid boards and cardboard counters. Apparently this guy had 'lived' the events he was relating. I vividly remember him telling us how his character's horse had thrown him and he had been knocked unconscious. When he came to, to explained, his ring finger had been cut off. (*He had been wearing a magical ring which could not be removed otherwise.*)

There was something else about Barry's story. As he talked a strange smile swept over his face. I swear his eyes glazed over and every now and then he would pause and shake his head like a fisherman remembering the day he caught the 'Big One'.

It would be another two years before I'd finally get a chance to play D&D but I'll always remember that first chance encounter with Barry and the first time I had heard of role-playing games. (*Thanks Barry.*)

In the summer of 1980, Joel Bozell, Lew Herring and myself started our first campaign in my Dad's Barbershop after hours. I don't

think it occurred to us that it would be the 'game' which would keep us together for the next twenty years. (*Thanks Gary G. and Dave A.*)

We're all pushing forty now. We have families — careers. We each have our own set of problems and demands on our time to contend with. And, with the exception of each other, most of us have lost contact with our old high school and college buddies. But once a month, come hell or high water we make time to get together for Games Day. We started Games Day a few years ago when we realized we always talked about getting together to game but never followed through. As it's turned out - it's not an easy task. Getting the six of us (*including John Lahr*) at the table on the same day takes a lot of coordinating. Even so, it's been a great success and well worth the effort. We don't have an agenda - simply bring some snacks and be ready to play a LOT of games. As soon as we sit down and pick up the dice it seems the years have been peeled away. Amidst the taunting and ribbing it's obvious that everyone is having a great time just being among friends and tossing the dice. (*Thanks, Guys!*)

As I write this editorial my house is trashed. There are bowls of chips and empty soda cans everywhere set amidst stacks of board games which were pulled down from the shelf on our most recent game fest yesterday. (*Which lasted a record 17 hours - pretty good for a group of old men I think.*) I love it. I always get a warm feeling after our game marathons - something I never quite understood - until yesterday that is. When the last die-hard gamer left with the rising sun and waved good-bye it suddenly dawned on me.

If it weren't for our shared love of gaming we might never have managed to keep in touch over the years. Sure there would be the occasional phone call but I doubt all of us would ever find an excuse to get together at the same time.

I just did a search on the 'net to see if there was a National Games Day. (*A while back Hasbro ran some commercials advocating Family Game Night which I thought was a great ad campaign*). The search came up with nothing. That's a shame. I thought sure somebody would have seen the need to provide an excuse for folks to get together and play a few games with old friends.

A good portion of the letters we receive are from readers who claim they 'used' to game but don't have the time anymore. I certainly hope they read this, pick up the phone, and organize their own monthly Games Day. If they do, I'm sure they'll soon be saying, "*Thanks Jolly!*" And that would make me feel ten feet tall.

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn



Zombie-Master Lew Herring deploys his zombies in Maul of America on Game Day - April 22, 2000

SORRY GUYS. I CAN'T PLAY NEXT WEEK. I GOTTA WORK A DOUBLE SHIFT AT PIZZA-A-GO GO!

GAA??!! WHAT THE...??!! GET YOUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT - WILL YA??!!

YOU SHOULD QUIT, B.A. THEY OBVIOUSLY DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU IF THEY EXPECT YOU TO WORK ON GAMES NIGHT.

POOR WORKING CLASS FOOL!



Star Crusade 2: Lost Worlds

July
2000

Following up on the previous sourcebook, 'Star Crusade', which dealt with the Kurgan & Vuldrok worlds, this book details the independent worlds of barbarian space – worlds of mystery and wonder



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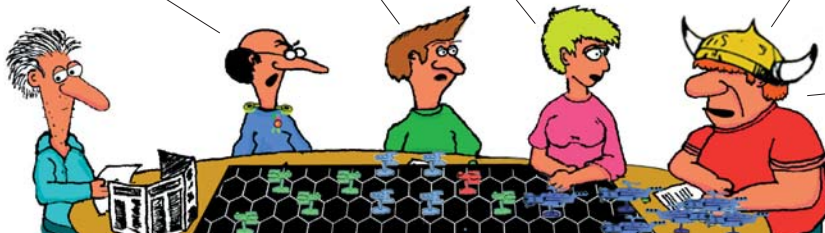
RAT BASTARD!! WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU **SOLD** ME INTO **SLAVERY**? YOU MEAN THAT SO-CALLED **SNACK RUN** TO THE **VULDROK RAIDER BASE** WAS JUST A **TRICK** TO GET ME OFF THE SHIP?

SORRY BOB, YOU KNOW THE OLD **VULDROK** SAYING, "TRUST NO ONE IN **BARBARIAN SPACE**?"

WE ARE GOING TO SPLIT THE **PROCEEDS** FROM THAT LITTLE TRANSACTION - **RIGHT?**

SPLIT THE **PROCEEDS**? SORRY DAVE, I DIDN'T WANT TO **BREAK UP** THE SET. YOU WERE **PART** OF THE DEAL. I PACKED YOU AN **OVERNIGHT BAG**. I HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOU - YOU **SHOULD** BE ABLE TO **ESCAPE**. EVENTUALLY...

I SUPPOSE YOU SOLD **ME** AS WELL.



NO WAY! YOU'LL FETCH 3 **TIMES AS MUCH** AT OUR NEXT STOP!

CHALLENGE YOUR PERCEPTIONS



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&
DRAGONS

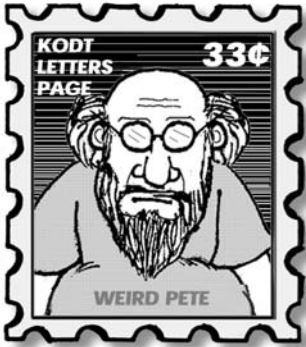
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Our Readers Talk Back!



Dear KODT,

You have probably heard this over-and-over, but I love KODT. Some of my friends in Ottawa and I have toyed with sending you anecdotes of our own as well as pictures (*some of them are in TV/movie animation*) and we may still.

I also know you like to hear stories of gamers and the like, and I have a lot; but this story is a little different.

This is my first pass at summing it all up, so I am sorry if it drags, rambles or is unpolished. In short, I had a fire three weeks ago today that gutted my home. Obviously, the RPG stuff went up in flames in a big way.

Having just moved, I sort of need to share the experience with other gamers; and being an enormous fan of KODT (*I had a subscription through a comic shop until the move and will (a) look at replacing my collection and (b) get another ASAP*), writing to you came to mind.

Thanks for your time,

Sam Curry
via E-mail

Thank you for the touching story, Sam. It arrived just as I was writing my editorial for KODT#42 which dealt with how rpgs have made my own life more enjoyable and how they've helped me get through some rough periods in my life.

Your story appears on the following page — I'm sure other readers will enjoy reading it as much as I did. Sorry about the fire.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I am sure that most gamers have had to deal with parents that put a cramp in their gaming style. Well I sympathize with you. You see, sometimes they dangle gaming over my head like some kind of carrot. They just don't get how important my hobby is to me. Well when I can't game with my friends, you know what I do to pass the time? Read KODT! When I pick up any issue it feels like I'm in the game. I can almost feel the multifaceted 20-sider rolling in my palm. It helps me get

through my gaming withdrawal. Thanks to you guys I always have a spare game in my room.

So if I'm not slaying Deepspawn or blowing away undead with my buffalo gun, I'm wasting Gazebo's with my freakin' crossbow!

Luke Alencikas
via E-mail

Dear KODT Gawds,

Hoody Hoo!! Issue 41 kicked ass!! After I read #40 I thought it would be hard to top but as soon as I read *Fumble in the Jungle*, I named it one of my all time favorites (*when I stopped laughing that is*).

In fact, the whole issue rocked, from Johnny getting back into the game, to Weird Pete offering B.A. a hug at the end of *A Place Their Own*, to "*From the Journal of Teflon Billy*."

The Journal was so kewl! Seeing how Brian phrased the adventure from his characters point of view had me rolling on the floor. And Johnny Kizinski GMing? Well, you get the idea. Aside from being funny, the preview for *Hackmasters of Everknight* made me want to grab a subscription right away, though the Travelers was a little confusing. Also, I've been wondering if there are any plans for compilations bigger than *BOTS*? And will there be any more *Tales from the Vault*?

All of the pervious volumes have kicked ass because I was introduced to the comic too late to get back issues beyond #23. And I'm the sort of guy who buys the compilation even if I have the issues.

Good Gaming,

Matt Michaelson

Thanks for the great feedback Matt. I'm especially thrilled that you found HackMasters to your liking. Although we plan on future Tales from the Vaults installments, we've had our hands full lately preparing several new comic book titles: HackMasters [on sale now], KODT Illustrated [available in June] & Travellers [Issue #4 - the first published by KenzerCo & featuring an exclusive KODT story - will also be available in June]. Rest assured that Tales #3 will be released as soon as we get the time!

Steve

Dear KODT

It's about fraggin' time that I got off my keyster and sent you a big fat "hoody-hoo" in praise of KODT - it's been a bastion of sanity these days.....

I sent a "mini-epic" for the Knights in probably two years ago and was disappointed by the story elements not having even cropped up [grumbles about lame plot developments]. Oh well, at least I hope that yer crew there enjoyed them before placing them in the circular filing system. While I'm still holding out hope for the *Knights*, most of my gaming buds simply pounce on the *Black Hand* strips for their laughs -- kinda sad isn't it? The "*Faerie Meat*" thing of Weird Pete's was an absolute riot, and here's hoping for more cross-overs between the groups.

"dingo" aka Gorath
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I was just reading *Bundle of Trouble #2*, when I came across an item that needs to be updated. I love your comic BTW. Anyway, when the group allows Dave to map for them, in the *Wherever You Go - There You Are* comic, there is a panel that reveals Dave's hard mapping work. On it is a number for the *Pizza Shack*, scratched out, but still legible. I called it today (*all the way from sunny California*), and was surprised to learn that the area code is no longer 317 but 765.

I was wondering if you felt that a correction had to be posted on a later issue? What do you think? I called again, using the new area code, but the man on the other end let me know I hadn't called a pizza place or a shack. Well, on with the reading. I can't tell you how much I enjoy your comic. I especially like all the new stuff you have begun including with each issue - Hoody Hoo!!!!

Sincerely,

split180@msn.com

You're not going to believe this Split but the 'man on the other end' was no other than myself — no joke. I was a little naive way back when we put that strip/issue together and when I drew Dave's map I put my own phone number on it under Pizza Shack.

You're actually the only person who bothered calling (to my knowledge anyway). I actually remember your phone call because I was confused as hell.

The Caller ID said, "California Call" and here was some guy asking, "Is this the Pizza Shack?" I hadn't made the connection until I received your e-mail.

I know what you're all thinking out there - "Let's call Jolly and order a pizza as prank. Wouldn't that be frickin' hilarious?" Fortunately I'll have moved by the time you

read this (I'm moving to the Chicago area to be closer to our home office).

Anyway, Split's letter gave me a good chuckle and I had to share it.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I have been reading KODT for over two years now, and I wanted to tell you how pleased I am with your comic. I've been playing AD&D™ for over 15 years now, and even though I don't play as much as I used to I still find time to read a magazine or two about my hobby. When I first picked up a KODT comic (I think it was #17) I was laughing from page one on. It so reminded me of some of my old friends (and a few new ones too). I have been reading other game magazines (the big "D" for starters) and I have to admit, KODT magazine has more for an old Dungeon Master like me than they do.

Your magazine always gives me a new idea (funny or not) and in the very least, I feel I've gotten my monies worth. I want to thank you for all the years of hard work and effort that you put into KODT. You've made the best attempt yet at making "us old timers" feel just a little less old.

Michael A. Fiorentino
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

You know I have just been introduced to this series of comics, although I have known of

their existence for some time through other friends. (Sf for one). I like the attention to the gamers attitudes and cliches but was put off by a glaring error I first noticed in KODT #33.

Outside of Hawg Waller's there is a sign that says "Parking for Amerikan made bikes only" Discounting the spelling of "American" (or if you want to you can use it as a really cheap ass loop-hole) there are NO American bikes in front of Hawg Waller's — Ever! Least wise, not in any of the issues I have seen.

I make part of my living building and customizing american made V-Twin motorcycle's (Harleys, Indians, and some other more obscure brands including Sears and Roebucks) so I am really familiar with the silhouette of most if not all American made bikes. What gives with this lame ass graphic you use for the front of Hawg Waller's?

Saintmatthew@Gothpunk.com
via E-mail

Okay, okay, there's a good explanation for this - really. You see...uh...er, well, you see most of the guys riding hawks park their bikes in back of the bar. And, uh, business has been slow lately ya see so Hawg Waller's has been turning a blind eye. And the reason the Yahmahas are parked out front is so their owners can keep a close eye on them while they down a few rounds of Gusweiser — a few such bikes HAVE managed to find themselves tossed in that dumpster the sign warns about.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

After stopping by my local game shop and picking up KODT #41, imagine my surprise when I see the hilarious "From Russia With Dice" After reading it and laughing heartily, I see that it was from Kevin Hendryx!

For those out there who don't know, Mr. Hendryx was a game designer, editor, and author for both TSR and Metagaming. He designed such games as The Fury of the Norsemen and Remember the Alamo. Also, he wrote articles for Dragon and Interplay magazines. You'll find his name in the credits of countless games, including the "Purple Cover" Basic Dungeons & Dragons rules and some Gamma World products. On top of all that, he's an awfully nice guy.

Just thought everyone might want to know some history about a fellow KODT reader.

Tony A. Rowe
via E-mail

Thanks for pointing it out to us, Tony. You know I thought I recognized the name but didn't make the connection. I actually own a copy of Fury of the Norsemen. Darn!! If I had known I would have held Kevin's check hostage and coerced him into autographing it for me.

Jolly
□



FIRE IN THE LIBRARY

I had a fire two weeks ago and lost a collection of role-playing material that I treasured enormously. My company (in Ottawa, Canada) was recently acquired, and I was due to move to Santa Clara, CA as part of the deal. The packers arrived and packed everything under my careful supervision on Tuesday. One of the packers turned out to be a longtime gamer and had a hard time not reading too much while working. The truck was due to come at 8:30 AM on Wednesday, so I locked up my ground floor apartment at 8:30 and went to the hotel where my company was lodging me and my cats.

At 5 AM, my landlord woke me with a call: my apartment had burned down. My initial reaction was disbelief, then a little anger and rejection (cliché as it is, I wished that I could just rewind time a little) and finally acceptance and gratitude for the miracle that saved us. Later in the day, I was allowed to visit the apartment.

It was difficult to walk through the sooty and watery wreckage where I had lived for 2 years. I lost a lot, but all of it replaceable except for my book and RPG collection. It was difficult to see the remains of my first edition Monster Manual or first printing Deities and Demigods, but they were there. The binders with careful campaign notes collected

over nearly two decades and in so many places were strewn everywhere, charred and blackened.

All-in-all two stuffed, full-length, ceiling-high bookshelves were destroyed. Having regularly DM'd well over 200 hundred people, I was staring at the blackened remains of thousands of dreams and moments. I had always thought to one day leave the collection as a whole to children or to a library: a complete set of 1st edition AD&D rule books, 2nd edition rule books, KODT comics, Shadowrun, Metamorphosis Alpha, Star Frontiers, L5R, Alternity, Call of Cthulhu and so much more. It was very difficult; and everyone, even my parents who had not understood my gaming hobby when I was young, called to make sure firstly that I was OK and secondly to see if any RPG material had survived.

My initial reaction had been to cancel my trip to California, but my insurance man convinced me to continue and get on with my life. I called the company and asked them to turn everything back on and, amazingly, they did. I would leave the next day as planned after all. I had one final challenge: the farewell party that night.

I met my dearest friends at my hotel, and what might have been a somber occasion I was

determined would be pleasant; so we reminisced in a local diner and had a nice evening. I refused to be down-hearted: I loved these people and regretted nothing. We had had more adventures in two years with our dice and with our smiles than most people have in a lifetime. It was especially touching when I was handed new dice and a brand new DMG that they had signed as if it were a yearbook, with personal comments and favorite moments. I boarded the plane the next morning with a new DMG and a brand new set of dice (as well as two cats and a suitcase).

For the past 16 years, role-playing has been my hobby, my passion and my joy. From junior high through high school, Colleges, Universities and a professional life in security and in IT, role-playing has sustained me, entertained me and consoled me. I have moved many times and lived in many cities; and role-playing has always been like a familiar old glove. In Montreal, Boston, Ottawa, New Brunswick and now hopefully in Silicon Valley, role-playing has helped me make deep friendships, share creative exploration, just relax quietly or just have a good time with friends. With good and bad experiences alike, I can honestly say that I am a gamer for life.

Sam Curry
via E-mail

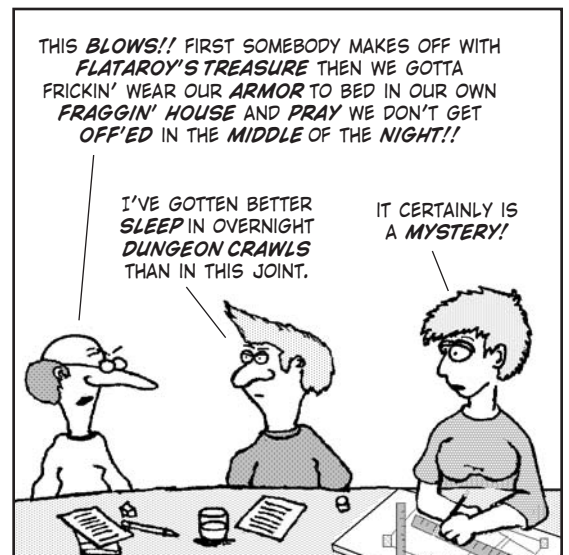
Between a Rock and a Hard Place

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

TEFLON BILLY'S JOURNAL --Day 156

The war with the CITY-STATE OF FANGAERIE is at a **STANDSTILL**. Two great armies, those of the **GNOME PROTECTORATES** and those of **LORD GILEAD** sit face to face with each other -- only the raging waters of the **GREAT FARGRUSS RIVER** (swollen from the spring thaws) stands between them. We are battle-weary. Over three months of fierce battle and nothing to show for it. Our couriers have beaten a path between the **FIELD OF BATTLE** and ~~Flat~~'s **OUR** manor with proposals for peace. **GILEAD**, however, has rejected every offer -- stating he will accept **NO LESS** than the **HEADS** of myself and my battlelords on a silver platter. **LAWFUL GOOD MY ASS!**

And so we prepare for the waters to recede and the battle to resume. The Manor has become our prison as reports abound of roaming bands of **BOUNTY HUNTERS** seeking to claim the reward on our heads. For the moment we've busied ourselves with trying to find the mysterious **INTRUDER** inside the manor who continues to attack in the middle of the night.*



*See KoDT #42 "A Very Delegate Situation" [B.A. has a 'man inside' Flatatroy's Manor who has moved Lord Flatatroy's treasure horde and is making opportunistic attacks on the Knights.]

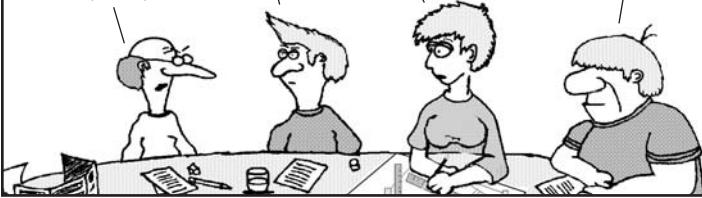
MAYBE WE SHOULD CHECK THE *WINE CELLAR* ONE *LAST* TIME. WE *DID* HEAR A *NOISE* DOWN THERE THE OTHER NIGHT AFTER *KNUCKLES* WAS SHOVED INTO THAT *CAULDRON* OF *BOILING FAT*.

SARA'S RIGHT. B.A. SAID I WAS 76 PERCENT SURE I HEARD SOMEBODY *SNICKER* AND *RUN* DOWN THOSE *STEPS*.

HELLO???! WE SEARCHED THAT FRICKIN' CELLAR. *FIVE TIMES!!*

WE MUST HAVE MISSED *SOMETHING!* I'M SURE OF IT.

HEY, YOU GUYS JUST *REMINDED* ME OF SOMETHING.



LAST NIGHT I WAS *THUMBING* THROUGH "*LIBATIONS TO THE DEAD*" AND SOMETHING *LEAPT* OUT AT ME FROM THE *PAGE*. *FLATAROY* DID SOMETHING WHICH MADE ME THINK OF OUR MYSTERIOUS *INTRUDER*. I MEANT TO WRITE IT DOWN SO I WOULDN'T FORGET BUT I *DOZED* OFF.

IT CAME BACK TO ME JUST NOW.



WELL IF YOU GOT AN *IDEA* SPEAK UP *BIG* GUY. LET'S HEAR IT.

REMEMBER IN CHAPTER FOUR WHEN *LORD FLATAROY* WENT INTO THE *CAVES* OF THE *ILL-WINDS* TO RETRIEVE THE BODY OF THE PRIEST *MALDA'KAR*?

YEAH, SO? HE SOLVED THE *RIDDLE* OF THE *GAWD* WITH *FOUR NAVELS* AND PLAYED A *PAN FLUTE* OF *RIVER DANCING* TO WALK ACROSS THE *RIVER* OF *ETERNAL FLAMES*. HOW DOES *THAT* HELP US?

NO, NO, NOT *THAT* PART. GO *BACK* A BIT. HOW DID HE GET INTO THE *CHAMBER* OF *DREAMS* TO EVEN *CONFRONT* THE *GAWD* IN THE *FIRST* PLACE?

CHAMBER OF *DREAMS*? THAT WAS THE *SEALED CAVERN* WHICH HAD *NO* *PASSAGES* LEADING IN OR OUT OF IT.

UH HUH! THAT'S RIGHT. BUT *FLATAROY* GOT IN. HOW DID HE DO IT?

WHY HE USED A *RING* -- A *MAGIC* *RING*.

BINGO!



HEY, THAT'S RIGHT! HE USED A *RING* TO WALK RIGHT THROUGH *SOLID ROCK* AND INTO THE *HIDDEN CHAMBER*.

A *RING* OF *STONE-PASSAGE* TO BE PRECISE.

BRIAN THAT'S *BRILLIANT!!* THAT *RING* WAS PROBABLY IN *FLATAROY'S* *TREASURE TROVE!!* WHOEVER *MOVED* THE *TREASURE* FROM THE *VAULT* MUST HAVE THE *RING* ALSO.

I SAY THAT *CELLAR* DESERVES *ANOTHER* LOOK.

OH *INDEED* IT DOES. IT ALL FITS. THAT *CELLAR* WAS *HEWN* OUT OF *SOLID ROCK* - B.A. *SPECIFICALLY* STATED THAT. AND REMEMBER THOSE *FOOT PRINTS* IN THE *DUST* WHICH *SEEMINGLY* JUST *DISAPPEARED* INTO THE *SOUTH WALL*?? IT *ALL* MAKES SENSE NOW.

SO WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WE GOTTA *TUNNEL* THROUGH THE *WALL* LOOKING FOR A *HIDDEN ROOM* WHICH *MAY* OR *MAY NOT* BE THERE?

OH IT'S THERE. IT *HAS* TO BE.



OH WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK ALL RIGHT. JUST LOOK AT *B.A.*'S FACE. HE'S *BUSTED* AND HE *KNOWS* IT.



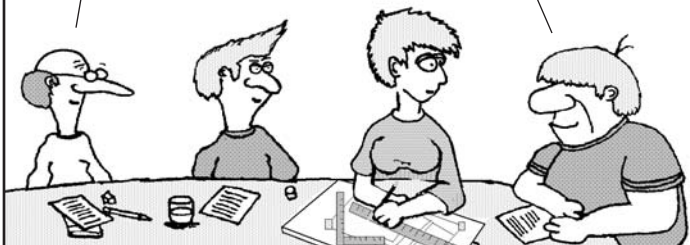
BRIAN'S RIGHT. HE'S AS *NERVOUS* AS A *ONE-LEGGED* MAN IN A *BUTT-KICKING* CONTEST.

FIRP!!!!
POKER FACE!!
FIND YER
POKER FACE!!
LOOK CONFIDENT.



ALL RIGHT, I'M CONVINCED. WHAT'S THE *PLAN*? SHOULD WE HIRE SOME *WORKER-BEES* AND START A *SYSTEMATIC TUNNELING-CAMPAIGN* LIKE *DAVE* SUGGESTED?

NOT A GOOD IDEA. *HIRELINGS* ALWAYS *TALK* AND SPREAD *GOSSIP*. IF WORD GETS OUT WHAT WE'RE UP TO SOMEBODY WILL FIGURE OUT I'M NOT *FLATAROY'S "LONG LOST NEPHEW"* AND THE *JIG* WILL BE UP. WE GOT TO HANDLE THIS *IN HOUSE!*



FORTUNATELY, I HAVE A LITTLE SOMETHING *STASHED* AWAY I'VE BEEN SAVING FOR A *MOMENT* LIKE THIS.

YOU DO? PRAY TELL - WHAT WOULD *THAT* BE?

I HAPPEN TO HAVE A *RING OF STONE* *PASSAGE* MYSELF.



WHAT???! YOU DO???!
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD *BIG GUY*, WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?

WELL, IT ONLY HAS *ONE CHARGE* LEFT ON IT. SO I'VE BEEN *SAVING* IT FOR AN *EMERGENCY*. BUT I SUPPOSE *THIS* IS A SPECIAL SITUATION. IF I *USE* THE RING AND WE FIND THE *TREASURE*, HOWEVER, I CAN SIMPLY *SWAP* IT OUT FOR *FLATAROY'S RING* AND REPLACE IT.

HUH? WHAT THE HELL IS HE *TALKING* ABOUT. OH.....*FLUDGE!!*

YOU GOT A *DEAL!*
LET'S *DO IT!!*

GOOD JOB, BRIAN. BUT ONLY *ONE CHARGE*?



THAT'S RIGHT. **ONE CHARGE!** SO WE'LL HAVE TO USE IT **WISELY!** I SUGGEST WE GIVE IT TO **KNUCKLES THE THIEF** TO USE. HE CAN MOVE IN UNDER THE COVER OF **STEALTH** AND TAKE OUT THE **PERP** BEFORE HE KNOWS WHAT HIT HIM.



ME??!! WHY DO I HAVE TO GO IN? BESIDES WITH JUST **ONE CHARGE** EVEN IF I **FIND** A HIDDEN ROOM WOULDN'T I BE **STUCK** IN THERE?

NOT IF YOU FIND THE **PERP** AND TAKE HIM OUT. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO USE **HIS RING** TO COME BACK OUT.

BRIAN, THAT'S A **BIG 'IF'**. WE'RE NOT **ENTIRELY** SURE THIS ROOM EVEN **EXISTS**. AND WHAT IF WE'RE **WRONG** ABOUT THIS GUY HAVING A **RING**?

OH PLEASE!



YOU SAW THE **TELL-TALE** LOOK ON **B.A.'S** FACE. BESIDES, I HAVE A **BACK-UP PLAN**. ONCE **BOB** FINDS THE **HIDDEN ROOM** HE CAN **TAP** ON THE WALL WITH A **DAGGER**. THEN I CAN USE MY **PICK AXE OF TUNNEL-EASE** AND **DIG** TOWARD THE **SOUND** OF HIS TAPPING. SO YOU SEE? THERE'S REALLY **NOTHING** TO WORRY ABOUT.

PICK AXE OF TUNNEL-EASE? WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GET ONE OF THOSE?

GEE, IT REALLY LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE COVERED **ALL** THE BASES.

SOUNDS LIKE A **GOOD PLAN**.

I'M TELLIN' YA. IT'S **FOOL PROOF**.



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

OKAY, **B.A.**, I SLIP THE **RING** ON AND ACTIVATE IT. I'LL WALK THROUGH THAT **SOUTH WALL** WHERE THOSE **FOOT PRINTS** SEEMED TO LEAD.

UH, **BOB**, ARE YOU **SURE** YOU WANT TO DO THIS? MAYBE YOU SHOULD....

QUIT **STALLING**, **B.A.** HE **KNOWS** WHAT HE'S DOING.



OKAY, **FINE!** I WAS JUST GOING TO POINT SOMETHING OUT TO YOU ABOUT **RINGS OF STONE PASSAGE** BUT SINCE YOU'RE SO **SURE** OF YOURSELF AND DON'T WANT ANY **FRIENDLY ADVICE** YOUR **FATE** IS IN YOUR OWN HANDS. YOU STEP INTO THE **SOLID ROCK**. IT'S LIKE MOVING THROUGH **JELLO**. THERE'S A LITTLE **RESISTANCE** BUT YOU FIND IT QUITE EASY TO **FORGE AHEAD**. YOU WALK APPROXIMATELY **TEN FEET**. NOTHING BUT **SOLID ROCK**. DO YOU CONTINUE?

FATE? HUH? IS THAT SOME KIND OF **THREAT**?

PAY HIM NO MIND, **BOB**. HE'S JUST TRYING TO **RATTLE** YOU. YOU'RE DOING **FINE!**

KEEP GOING **BOB!** I HAVE A **HUNCH** YOU'RE ALMOST THERE.

DON'T **SECOND GUESS** YOURSELF **NOW**, **BOB**. IT'S **TOO LATE!**



SEVERAL ROUNDS LATER....

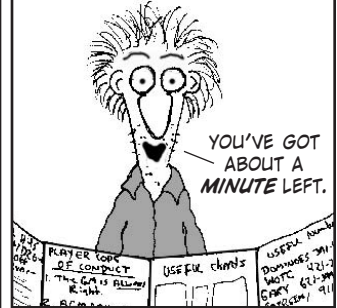
OKAY YOU MOVE ANOTHER **TEN FEET** -- THAT'S APPROXIMATELY **120 FEET** SO FAR. THOUGH YOU CAN'T BE SURE - THE **ROCK** OBSCURES YOUR **VISION** AND IS **DISORIENTING**. YOU CAN'T EVEN BE SURE WHICH **DIRECTION** YOU'VE BEEN WALKING.

ACTUALLY, BOB, I'D **FORGET** ABOUT TURNING BACK. AS I WAS **GOING** TO EXPLAIN **BEFORE**, EACH **CHARGE** ON A **RING OF STONE PASSAGE** LASTS ONLY **ONE TURN!!**

WHADDA YA MEAN I'M **DISORIENTED**? OBSCURED VISION? YOU NEVER **MENTIONED** THAT **BEFORE!**

DON'T **PANIC**, BOB. YOU'RE DOING FINE. WHY DON'T YOU **TURN AROUND** AND COME BACK - JUST IN CASE.

TURN BACK? AND **WASTE** A CHARGE? NO WAY!!



YOU'VE GOT ABOUT A **MINUTE LEFT.**

B-B-B-BRIAN??!! WHAT THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT? HUH? WHAT DOES THIS **MEAN??!!**

UH....ER...UH...

I GOT A VERY **BAD FEELING** ABOUT THIS.

BRIAN??!!

CHARGE DURATION! I FORGOT THE...



OH **MOTHER OF GAWD!!**

WHAT HAVE I **DONE?**



BOB, RUN!!

GET THE **HELL** OUTTA THERE!!!



MOVE!

W-W-WHAT??!! WHAT'S GOING ON? WHAT'S THE **PROBLEM!!**

B.A.'S RIGHT. THAT **CHARGE** ON THE RING HAS A **DURATION** OF ONLY **TEN MINUTES!** IF YOU DON'T GET YER **ASS** IN **MOTION** AND GET **OUT** OF THERE YOU'LL END UP **MOLECULARLY FUSED** IN **SOLID ROCK!**

FUSED??!! DON'T YOU THINK THIS IS SOMETHING I SHOULD HAVE BEEN **BRIEFED** ON?

ON NO! HE'S **TOAST!!**

OH MY! THIS IS **TERRIBLE!!**

I'M SORRY BOB. I **-CHOKE-** REALLY AM.



WELL DON'T GO **CRYING** OVER MY GRAVE JUST YET. THIS ISN'T THE **FIRST** TIME MY **ROSY RED DWARVEN BUTT'S** BEEN IN THE **SLING!** HE SAID I HAVE A **MINUTE LEFT**, DIDN'T HE?

THAT'S RIGHT BUT HE ALSO SAID YOU'RE **DISORIENTED** AND CAN'T **SEE!**

MERE NUISANCES!



I DO A **ONE-EIGHTY** AND **RUN** AS FAST AS I CAN BACK IN THE DIRECTION I CAME.

AND DON'T **FORGET!** I'M WEARING MY **THIGH-HIGH BOOT OF QUICK-CADENCE!**

SORRY, BOB!

AS **SARA** POINTED OUT YOU ARE **DISORIENTED!** AND YOU'RE WEARING **ONE MAGIC BOOT** WHICH MAKES **THAT LEG** WALK MUCH FASTER THAN YOUR **PEG LEG** I'M GOING TO **RULE** THAT THIS CAUSES YOU TO **DRIFT** TO THE LEFT QUITE A BIT. IN SHORT - YOU ARE **LOST**.

TIME RUNS OUT AND YOU ARE **INSTANTLY MELDED** INTO THE **STONE!**

OKAY, BUT I'M STILL **ALIVE!** RIGHT?

SECONDS LATER....

EL RAVAGER DIPS HIS **HACKMASTER PLUS TWELVE** AT THE **STONE WALL**. AS A **TEAR** STAINS HIS CHEEK HE MUTTERS THE FIFTH STANZA OF "**A BERSERKER MOURNS THE FALLEN**" IN HOMAGE TO HIS DEAR, FALLEN COMRADE. -SNIFF-

BRIAN? CAN'T YOU THINK OF **ANYTHING?** CAN'T WE **DIG** HIM OUT AND HAVE HIM RAISED?

THIS BLOWS!! -CHOKE- MY **PROTEGEE*** ISN'T UP TO **SPECS** YET. **KNUCKLES THE SIXTH** CAN'T GO **DOWN** LIKE THIS. I'LL LOSE **EVERYTHING!!** -SOB-

IMPOSSIBLE. HOW WOULD WE EVEN **FIND** HIM OR KNOW WHERE TO START? BESIDES HE'S ACTUALLY MELDED WITH THE **STONE**.

IF **ONLY** I HADN'T SENT HIM IN THERE WITH THAT **DAMN RING!**

IF **ONLY** I COULD TURN BACK.... UH...??!!!

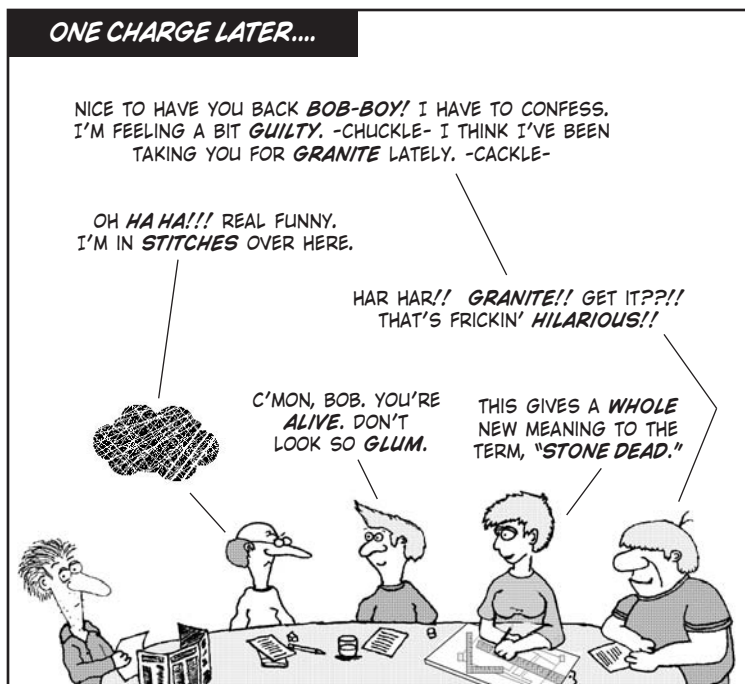
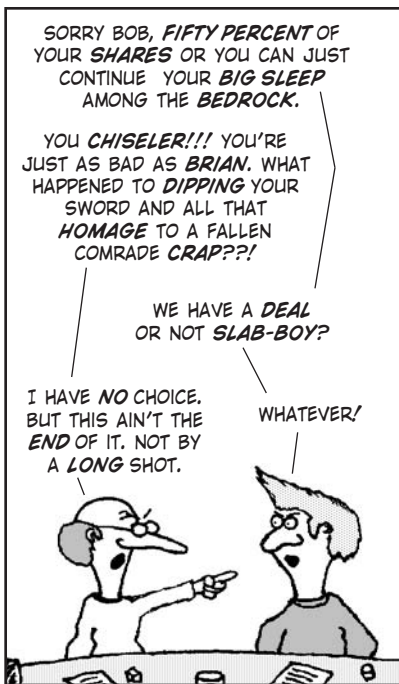
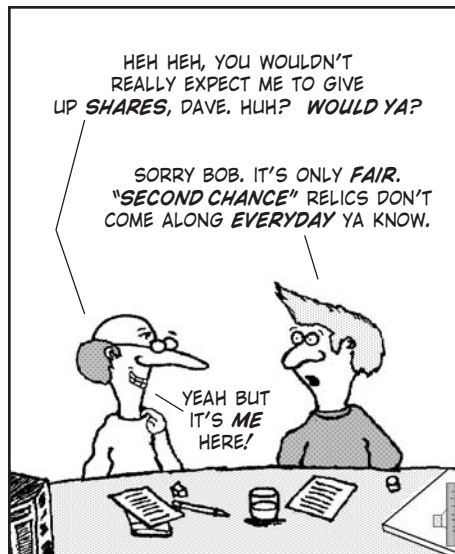
HEY, THAT'S IT. **TURN BACK TIME!** DAVE - YOU STILL HAVE A **CHARGE** LEFT ON YOUR **DAGGER OF HINDSIGHT** - RIGHT?

WELL....YEAH, BUT, UH....I WAS KINDA SAVING THAT. YOU KNOW - FOR **MYSELF**.

C'MON. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LET **KNUCKLES** TAKE THE **BIG DIVE** ARE YOU? THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO BE THE **HERO!!** TO SAVE A **FELLOW COMRADE!**

HUH? **DAGGER OF HINDSIGHT?**

*See *Bundles of Trouble* Volume Six "Bloodlines"



Dagger of Hindsight™ G.P. Value: varies X.P. Value: varies *

The Dagger of Hindsight is a unique relic in that it is prized more for its special property, rather than as a weapon. It's also unique in that it is one of the few weapons which allow the bearer to influence the fates (which is just another way of saying it allows the player a chance to alter a calling made by the GameMaster). This marvelous weapon gives the bearer the ability to erase certain actions or events and turn back time so he can do things differently - a second chance. For instance, if the character falls into a pit, he can use the dagger and suddenly rewind the action so that he may choose to turn a different way to avoid the pit. I'm fond of this weapon because it prevents those senseless character deaths which occur from hasty, or unwise actions. (Character deaths can often spell the end of a campaign which both GM and players have invested hundreds of hours in.) The drawback? Some DoH, when first acquired, will have 1d6 charges. Most Daggers of Hindsight, however, (75% chance) work a bit differently. A dagger of this type has no charges of its own. It has to 'tap' (expend a charge) from some other magical items the bearer happens to possess in order to perform its 'second chance' ability. And the bearer doesn't get to choose which magic item gets tapped - the GM does. If it turns out the bearer doesn't have any charge-based magic items the penalty is severe - the dagger will attempt to draw from the bearer's life-force. The player takes 2d20 points of damage and must make an immediate Constitution check. (Failure means death). Typically the blade is a +4 but there are rumors of a few +6 versions and even a +8. □

* Reprinted from Gary Jackson's article "HackMagic: Items and Artifacts from Garweeze Wurd". (KoDT#34 page 48)

The Horror in the Wall

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

OKAY, I'VE FINISHED MY *CALCULATIONS* AND I THINK I'VE *NARROWED* THINGS DOWN A BIT AS FAR AS THE *SEARCH AREA* FOR THE *HIDDEN CHAMBER*. I THINK OUR *INTRUDER* INTENDED FOR US TO DETECT THOSE *FOOT PRINTS* IN FRONT OF THE *SOUTH WALL* -- TO *THROW US OFF*. IT'S BASIC *CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY* - A *STAGED CRIME SCENE*. THE *EVIDENCE* WAS MEANT TO LEAD US IN *EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION* - AWAY FROM OUR *GOAL!*

SO WE SHOULD'VE GONE THROUGH THE *NORTH WALL* THEN. IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY?

BRIAN, YOUR *NOT* SUGGESTING WE USE THE *RING* AGAIN. DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S TOO *DANGEROUS?*

NOT AT ALL. I JUST *SCREWED UP* LAST TIME AND FORGOT ABOUT THE *CHARGE DURATION*. BUT NOW I'VE FIGURED THAT INTO THE *EQUATION*.

THIS PLAN CAN'T FAIL.

UH OH!



AND *THIS TIME* WE SEND *EL RAVAGER* IN.

ME???! NO FRICKIN' WAY, DUDE! *NADA!*

DAVE, YOUR CHARACTER IS *AMBIDEXTROUS!* THAT MEANS *BOTH LEGS* SHOULD PULL *EQUALLY!* BESIDES, WE'LL TIE A *ROPE* TO YOU. FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE AND WE *PULL YOU OUT*.



DAVE, DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT LISTENING TO THAT *BIG GOOF!* ARE YOU *NUTS?* DIDN'T YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO *MEP*? OF COURSE HE'S PERFECTLY *HAPPY* TO LET *US* TAKE *ALL THE RISKS*. HE'S *PLAYING US* LIKE A USED *HURDY GURDY!*

YEAH, YER RIGHT.



WHOA! HOLD UP, DAVE. LET ME *REMINDE* YOU OF SOMETHING. YOU'RE DUE *HALF* OF *BOB'S SHARES* ON ANY TREASURE WE FIND *THIS SESSION*. IT'S GETTING LATE. IF WE DON'T FIND THAT TREASURE TROVE *TONIGHT* YOU GET *HALF OF SQUAT*.

GEE, I DIDN'T THINK OF THAT.

BOB'S TRYIN' TO *SCREW YA*.



SOME NERVE!! YOU *PUKE!* AND AFTER I *DIPPED MY SWORD* TO YOU AND EVERYTHING. I EVEN *SAVED YER ASS* WITH MY "*SECOND CHANCE*" *DAGGER*.

B-B-BUT I WAS ONLY TRYING TO...

SHOVE IT!



ALL RIGHT, *TOSS ME* THAT *RING* AND *PULL OUT THE ROPE!* I'M GOIN' *IN!* LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH. BUT SINCE I'M TAKIN' ALL THE *RISKS* HERE I GET AN *EXTRA SHARE* OF THE *TAKE* FROM EACH OF YOU. ANYBODY GOT A *PROBLEM* WITH THAT?

AN *EXTRA SHARE?* BUT I'M ALREADY GIVIN' UP *HALF*.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S FAIR. I'LL *KICK IN*.

I'D *GLADLY KICK IN* BUT NOW LET'S NOT FORGET WE'RE USING *MY RING*. I FIGURE IT ALL *EVENS OUT* SO WE'RE *SQUARE*.



ONE CHARGE LATER....

YOU STEP INTO THE **SOLID ROCK**. IT'S LIKE MOVING THROUGH **JELLO**. THERE'S A LITTLE **RESISTANCE** BUT YOU FIND IT QUITE EASY TO **FORGE** AHEAD. YOU WALK APPROXIMATELY **TEN FEET**. NOTHING BUT **SOLID ROCK**. DO YOU CONTINUE?

UH OH! SAME AS THE OTHER WALL.

I DUNNO. THIS AIN'T LOOKIN' GOOD. MAYBE I SHOULD HEAD BACK OUT.

NO, NO, DAVE. YER **STERLING!** KEEP GOING. WE GOT YOU ON A **ROPE!**

OKAY THE **ROPE** INHIBITS YOU. THE **RING** ONLY PROJECTS A **SPHERE** AROUND YOU **FIVE FEET** IN DIAMETER. THE **ROPE** BEHIND YOU IS **SEIZED** IN **SOLID ROCK**. YOU'LL HAVE TO **CUT** IT TO GO FURTHER.

GREAT! IF I'M **TOSSIN' THE DICE**, I MIGHT AS WELL GO **ALL THE WAY!** I CUT THE **ROPE** AND GO ANOTHER **TEN FEET**. BUT I'M **COUNTING** THE SECONDS IN MY HEAD. AT **FIVE MINUTES** I'M TURNING AROUND.

OKAY....

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY FEET LATER...

OKAY WITH BARELY **TWENTY SECONDS** LEFT, AS YOU ARE **RUNNING** THROUGH THE **SOLID ROCK** THE **RESISTANCE** IS **SUDDENLY GONE** AND YOU FIND YOURSELF IN AN **INKY BLACK SPACE**.

LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE FOUND THE **HIDDEN CHAMBER**.

HOODY HOO!!

CONGRATULATIONS, BRIAN. I WAS A **SKEPTIC** BUT YOU **PROVED** ME WRONG. **GOOD JOB!**

WE DID IT!! WE FOUND IT!! **WHOO-HOO!!**

WE **RULE!!** KICK ASS!!

YOU CAN THANK ME **LATER**. FIRST WE GOT TO GET THAT **TREASURE** OUT OF THERE.

OKAY, B.A., START LISTING THE **LOOT** AND I'LL **WRITE** IT DOWN. BEGIN WITH ANY **HARD COIN**, THEN **PRECIOUS STONES** AND FINALLY ANY **MAGIC ITEMS** - IN THAT ORDER.

WHOOAH! BACK UP, GUYS. YOU GOT A LITTLE **PROBLEM**.

PROBLEM? WHAT PROBLEM? JUST **LIST** THE CRAP DAVE FOUND.

WELL....I **THOUGHT** IT WAS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE. HERE IT COMES, FOLKS.

HE'S JUST **BLOWIN' SMOKE!**

YOU GOT **THREE** PROBLEMS, DAVE. OKAY, **FIRST** OF ALL, YOU HAVE NO **LIGHT SOURCE** NOR **INFRA-VISION**. IT'S **PITCH BLACK** SO YOU CAN'T SEE A **FRICKIN' THING**.

SECONDLY, YOUR **STONE PASSAGE** CHARGE JUST **FIZZLED**. YOU'RE **TRAPPED** IN THE **CHAMBER**.

OKAY, OKAY, SO WE GO BACK TO **PLAN A!** I **TAP** ON THE WALL WITH MY **DAGGER** AND **BRIAN** USES HIS **PICK AXE** OF **TUNNEL-EASE** TO DIG ME OUT.

YOU MENTIONED **THREE** PROBLEMS - WHAT'S THE **OTHER** ONE?

DAVE'S NOT ALONE.

??!!!

I'M NOT ALONE??!

I START **TAPPING!!!**
I'M **TAPPING** LIKE A **MAD MAN!**

AS SOON AS YOU START **TAPPING** ON THE WALL A PAIR OF **UNSEEN HANDS** REACH OUT FROM THE **DARK** AND **SLAP** YOU ABOUT THE **NECK** AND **FACE** AND **THROW** YOU TO THE GROUND.

"SO! COME TO **PLAY** WIZ ME, EH?"
A VOICE WHISPERS IN YOUR EAR.

GAAAAA!

"LET'S **PLAY** **KEEP AWAY!**"

KEEP TAPPING DAVE! I'LL CAST A **HASTE SPELL** ON MYSELF AND START **DIGGING**. DON'T WORRY. WE'LL **SAVE** YOU.

OKAY BRIAN, THERE'S A **120 FEET** OF **SOLID ROCK** TO TUNNEL THROUGH. EVEN WITH THE **MAGIC PICK AXE** AND YOUR **HASTE SPELL** IT'LL TAKE **TWELVE TURNS** TO REACH HIM.

MEANWHILE, DAVE IS TOSSED ABOUT LIKE A **RAG DOLL** BY **POWERFUL** HANDS AND ARMS. THEN THE **UNSEEN HANDS** SNATCH YOUR **HACKMASTER PLUS TWELVE** FROM ITS **SHEATH**. YOU HEAR A **MANIACAL CACKLE** AND THEN **FOOT STEPS** RUNNING AWAY IN THE **BLACKNESS**.

HOLY **CRIT!** NOT HIS **SWORD???**

DON'T WORRY DAVE! WE'LL TRACK THE **BASTARD** DOWN AND.....

OH MY STARS! HE **FAINTED!**

DAVE??!!

KA-THUMP!!

THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

HOLD ON, DAVE! WE'RE ALMOST THERE. WE'LL GET YER **SWORD** BACK. YOU JUST SEE IF WE DON'T. C'MON BUDDY - **HANG IN THERE!**

GAWD HELP ME, I **LOVE** IT WHEN THEY **HIT** THE FLOOR. I **LIVE** FOR DAYS LIKE THIS.

WE DURSNT GO IN, PRECIOUS, NO WE DURSNT.

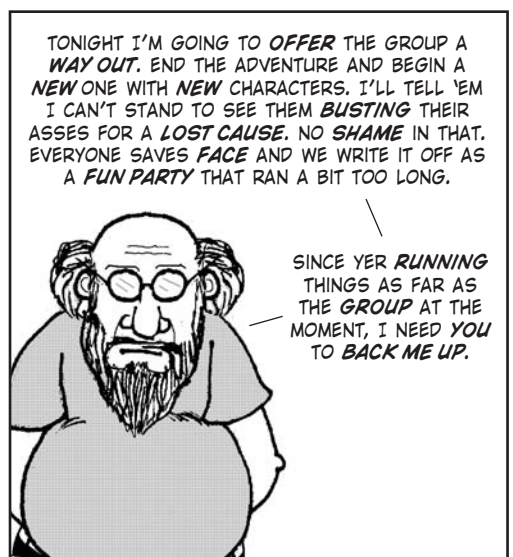
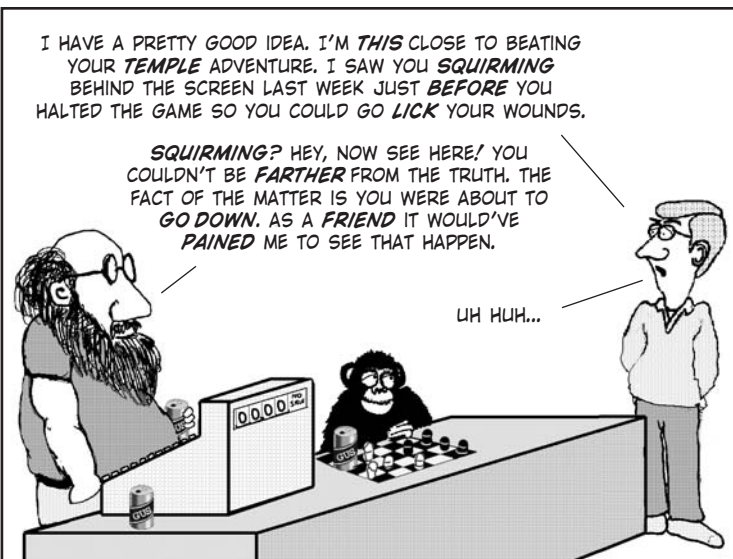
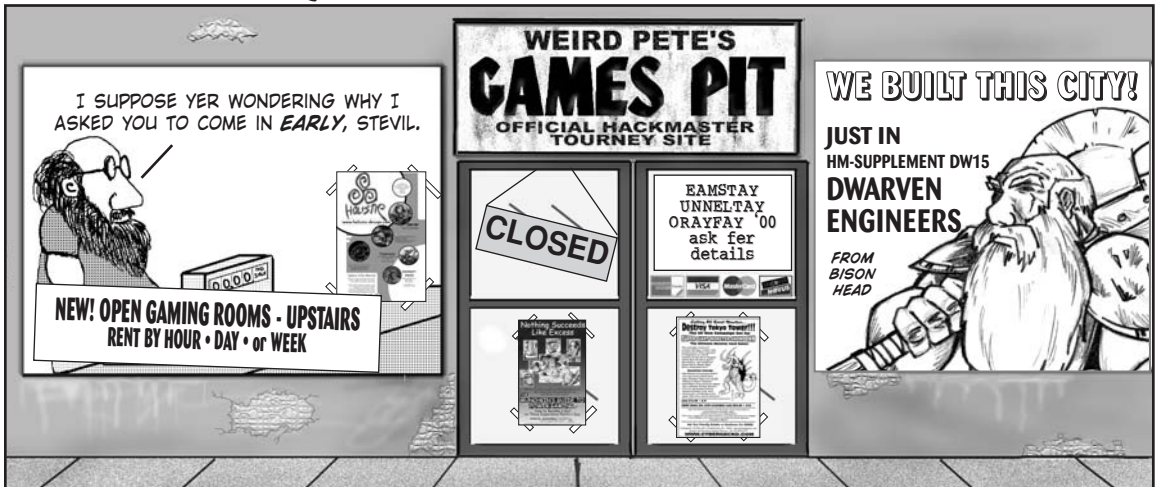
MAYBE WE SHOULD TURN HIM ON HIS SIDE.

KUDOS, B.A.!! YOU'RE **GAME** HAS REALLY **PICKED UP** IN RECENT WEEKS. I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS **LEVEL** OF ONE-UPMANSHIP FROM YOU.

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE.....

Pawn takes King

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



QUIT!! YOU MEAN JUST QUIT THE TEMPLE?? ARE YOU NUTS? NOW? AFTER ALL WE'VE GONE THROUGH?

LOOK, I'M WILLING TO **STRIKE** YOU A **DEAL** IF YOU BACK ME UP. YOU KNOW HOW BADLY YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO RUN A **HUNTER-GREL**? WELL, I'LL LET YOU. I'LL EVEN **PRIME-THE-PUMP**. SAY.....**5,000 EXPERIENCE POINTS** AND ANY MAGIC ITEM FROM **SUB-TABLE 1A?**

ARE YOU FOR REAL? YOU'D **DO** THAT?

YOU BET. UNDER THE TABLE OF COURSE.

GOOD GAWD, PETE. I **HAVE** BEATEN YOU, HAVEN'T I? I WASN'T SURE, I FIGURED YOU STILL HAD A FEW **TRICKS** UP YOUR SLEEVES BUT... YOU'RE ACTUALLY **DESPERATE** AREN'T YOU?

I MEAN TO OFFER A DEAL LIKE **THAT** - YOU **MUST** BE.

DESPERATE??!! ME? WHY YOU NO GOOD.... I COMPROMISE MY GM VOWS ON ACCOUNT OF OUR FRIENDSHIP AND YOU INSULT ME? THAT'S IT. THE OFFER IS RESCINDED!!

YOU'RE **SLIPPING**, PETE. YOU **BLINKED**.

YOU WANNA **DANCE WITH THE DEVIL**, SMART GUY? IS THAT IT? **FINE!** WE RUN THE ADVENTURE TO ITS **FOREGONE** AND **TRAGIC** CONCLUSION.

TRAGIC FOR YOU!

SEE YOU AT THE **GAME**, PETE. I HOPE YOUR **MIND** IS ON THE **GAME** TONIGHT **MORE** THAN THAT **GAME OF CHESS** YOU'RE PLAYING. TWO MORE **MOVES** AND **SQUIRRELLY** WILL HAVE YOU IN **CHECKMATE**. -SNICKER-

FIRP!! SHOW'S HOW MUCH **YOU** KNOW. **CHECKMATE** MY ASS!

LATER, PETE.

TWO TURNS LATER....

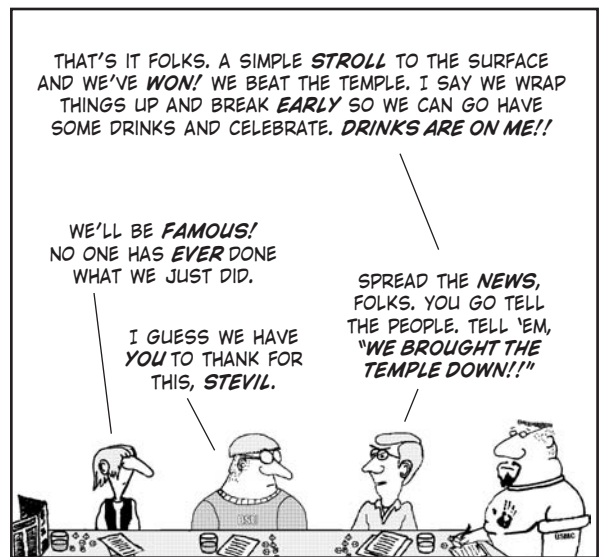
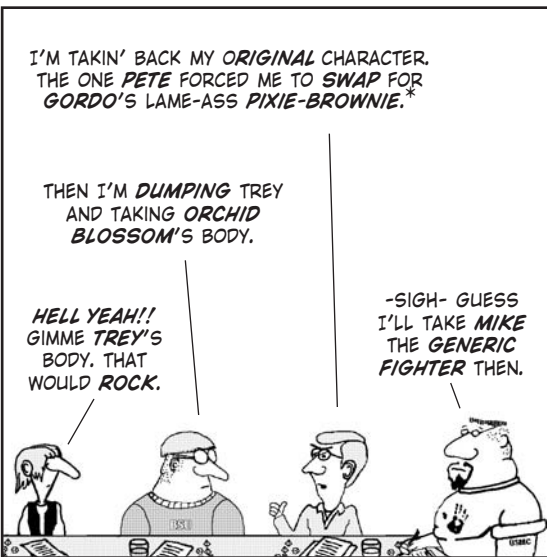
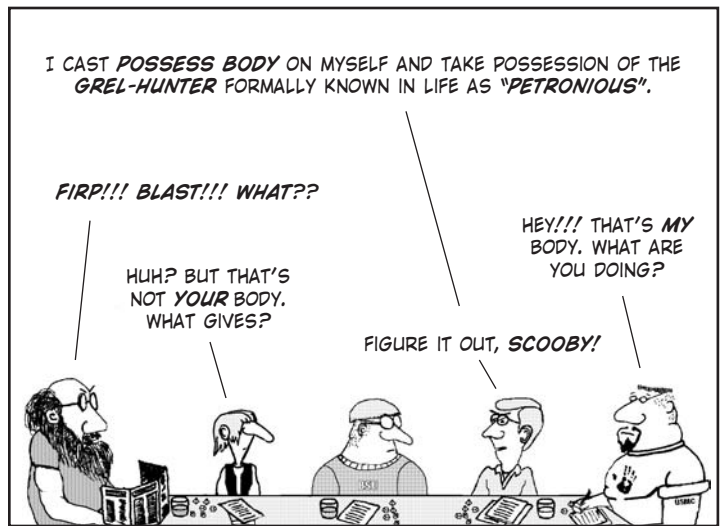
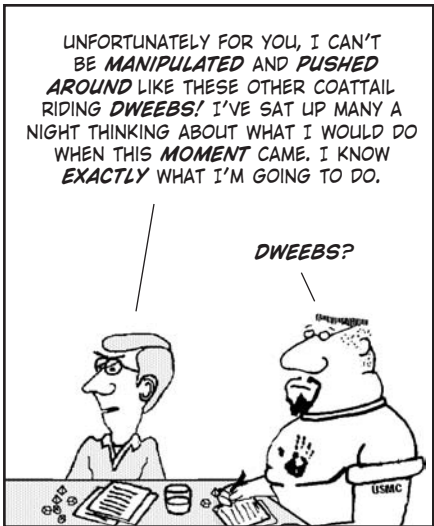
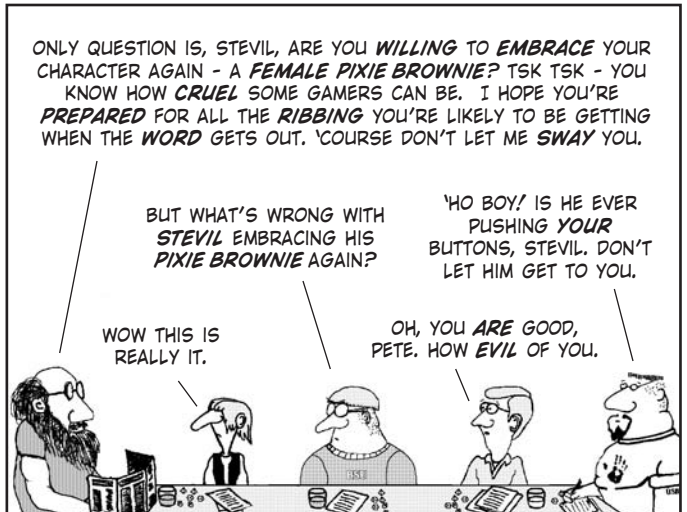
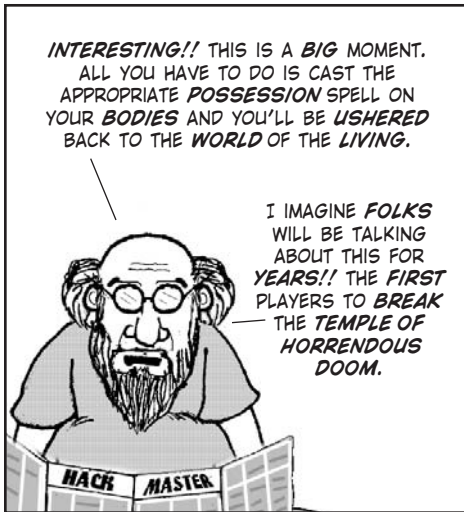
OH **SHUT UP!!**

WHOOH! WOOH! WHOOH!

NO ONE LIKES A **SMART ASS!!**

Dead Men Tell No Tales

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN, BARB BLACKBURN,
DAVID KENZER AND STEVE JOHANSSON



* See **KoDT#39** "Trading Places"

HEH HEH!! I **HATE** TO BURST YOUR **BUBBLE**, FOLKS BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO **REMINDE** YOU ABOUT THOSE **NON-DISCLOSURES** YOU ALL SIGNED. I'M AFRAID YOU CAN'T TELL A **SOUL** ABOUT WHAT TRANSPURED HERE.

NON-DISCLOSURE? BUT SURELY THAT ONLY COVERS THE **DETAILS** OF THE ADVENTURE. I CAN TELL FOLKS WE **BEAT** THE **TEMPLE OF HORRENDOUS DOOM** - RIGHT?

ACTUALLY IF YOU HAD READ THE **FINE PRINT** YOU'D HAVE NOTICED THE **N.D.A.** INCLUDED THE "**OUTCOME**" OF THE ADVENTURE AS WELL. SO THE ANSWER IS **NO!**

WELL, I'LL BE. AND THE **N.D.A.** STAYS IN EFFECT FOR **THIRTY YEARS??**

YOU MEAN WE BEAT THE TEMPLE AND WE DON'T EVEN GET **BRAGGING RIGHTS?** WHAT ABOUT ALL THAT TALK OF "PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT THIS FOR YEARS?"

THIS IS **WRONG**, PETE. AND YOU **KNOW** IT.



IF YOU FEEL YOU HAVE A **GRIEVANCE** TAKE IT UP WITH THE **H.M.P.A.** BUT I WOULDN'T BOTHER. FOUR SIMILAR COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN LODGED AGAINST ME AND THEY **BACKED ME UP** EVERY TIME.

WELL CAN YOU AT LEAST PUT THIS ALL IN **WRITING** OR SOMETHING. I'D FEEL BETTER IF THERE WERE A **RECORD** OF ALL THIS SO THAT **SOME DAY** THE **TRUTH** CAN COME OUT. MAYBE IN MY **OLD AGE** I CAN AT LEAST TALK ABOUT THIS **GREAT ACHIEVEMENT** AND HAVE **PROOF** OF IT.

SURE AFTER THE GAME BEFORE I LOCK UP YOU CAN COME OUT FRONT AND **SIGN** THE "**TOME OF HEROES**" THAT WAY YOUR NAME WILL BE LISTED ALONG WITH THE **OTHERS** FOR PROSPERITY.

TOME OF HEROES? HEY THAT WOULD BE GREAT. WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO GET A COPY OF...ER...??!! DID YOU SAY **OTHERS**?

OLD AGE?? HE'S ALREADY 36!!



WELL SURE, YOU DIDN'T REALLY BELIEVE YOU WERE THE **FIRST** HACK-JOCKEYS TO SUCCESSFULLY RUN THE **TEMPLE** DID YOU? THERE'S ABOUT **THIRTY** NAMES ON THE LIST SO FAR.

THIRTY NAMES? B-B-B-BUT THAT CAN'T BE. THE **WORD** ON THE STREET IS THAT **NOBODY** EVER BEAT THE TEMPLE.

DUH! WHY DO YOU THINK I INSIST ON THE **NON-DISCLOSURES?** HELPS KEEP THE **MYSTIQUE** GOING AND SETS THE **AMBIENCE** FOR THE GAME. JUST LOOK AT HOW **RATTLED** YOU GUYS WERE THE **ENTIRE** ADVENTURE BECAUSE OF ITS **REP.**

I'M **TORQUED!!!** WHEN IN THE **HELL** ARE YOU GOING TO GET YOUR **CREDENTIALS** BACK? I WANNA **HURT** PETE BUT I CAN'T DO IT AS LONG AS HE'S **BEHIND** THAT FRICKIN' **SCREEN.**

ACTUALLY, I'VE HAD THEM FOR THE LAST **TWO WEEKS.** I JUST WANTED TO SEE THIS **ADVENTURE** RUN THROUGH TO ITS **CONCLUSION.**

YOU DISAPPOINT ME, SO.



SORRY, BOB. I REALLY, REALLY AM BUT I GAVE YOU A CHANCE TO *SAVE* AND YOU *BLEW* IT. I'M AFRAID YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO *DEAL* WITH IT AND *LIVE* WITH THE RESULTS. AGAIN, I'M *SORRY!*

W-W-WELL, *SAR-REEE* ISN'T GOING TO CUT IT. I-I-I CAN'T RUN *KNUCKLES* WITH A *MONKEY* LIKE THIS ON HIS BACK. C'MON - *MAKE IT RIGHT!!*

SO *THAT'S* WHAT AN *ANKLE BRACELET OF GENDER BENDER* DOES.

AND *BOB* THOUGHT IT WOULD MAKE *WOMEN* BEND TO HIS WILL. -*SNICKER-*

SORRY. I *MADE* MY CALL. END OF SUBJECT...



BRIAN, *DAVE* HAS ASKED ME TO ASK YOU IF YOU'D CONSIDER GIVING HIM HIS *SPLEEN* BACK IF HIS CHARACTER *SINCERELY* APOLOGIZED FOR THE REMARK HE MADE ABOUT *TEFLON BILLY*. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

LET ME ROLL VS. *APOLOGY*. I'LL LET YA KNOW WHAT HAPPENS.

WHADDA YA MEAN I'M DEAD???!?

YOU SAY, "*BITE ME!*" TO AN *ANCIENT ALBINO SWACK IRON DRAGON* AND YOU GOT THE *NERVE* TO ASK ME *THAT?*

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?



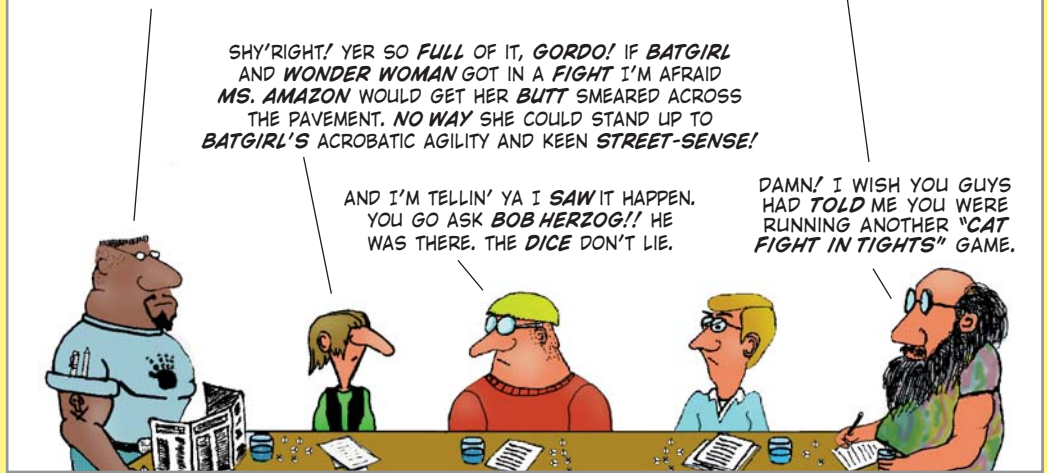
UH, *GUYS?* CAN WE JUST GET ON WITH THE *GAME?* I REALLY DON'T THINK WE'RE GOING TO SETTLE THIS ARGUMENT *TONIGHT*.

LET'M *FIGHT* IT OUT, *NITRO*. I WOULDN'T MIND KNOWING THE *ANSWER* MYSELF.

SHY'RIGHT! YER SO *FULL* OF IT, *GORDO!* IF *BATGIRL* AND *WONDER WOMAN* GOT IN A *FIGHT* I'M AFRAID *MS. AMAZON* WOULD GET HER *BUTT* SMEARED ACROSS THE PAVEMENT. *NO WAY* SHE COULD STAND UP TO *BATGIRL'S* ACROBATIC AGILITY AND KEEN *STREET-SENSE!*

AND I'M TELLIN' YA I *SAW* IT HAPPEN. YOU GO ASK *BOB HERZOG!!* HE WAS THERE. THE *DICE* DON'T LIE.

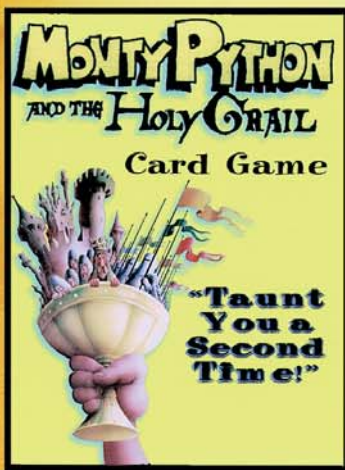
DAMN! I WISH YOU GUYS HAD *TOLD* ME YOU WERE RUNNING ANOTHER "*CAT FIGHT IN TIGHTS*" GAME.



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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.

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Formula for Disaster

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

THREE A.M. ON A THURSDAY MORNING...

HELLO? MRS. FELTON?? IT'S ME - BRIAN. HUH? WHAT'S THAT? ACTUALLY, I'M DOING FINE, MA'AM. THANK YOU FOR ASKING.

YES, IT IS LATE, I KNOW. BUT WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO TALK WITH B.A.?

OH, I SEE. WELL, COULD YOU WAKE HIM? IT'S VITAL THAT I TALK WITH HIM.



A FEW MOMENTS LATER.....

BRIAN? WHAT'S WRONG? DID YOU HAVE AN ACCIDENT OR SOMETHING? ARE YOU OKAY? MY MOM SAID SOMETHING ABOUT AN EMERGENCY??

OH....THAT. I JUST SAID THAT SO SHE WOULDN'T BE PISSED OFF. EVERYTHING'S KEWL.

LOOK, I NEED TO CLEAR SOMETHING WITH YOU.



CLEAR SOMETHING WITH ME? WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ALL ABOUT? DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS?

I BOUGHT A NEW BOARD GAME YESTERDAY AT WEIRD PETE'S!! IT'S CALLED FORMULA DAY. I'M TELLIN' YA THIS GAME RO.....

WHOAH!! WAIT A SECOND. YOU CALLED AT THREE-O-FIVE IN THE MORNING TO TELL ME YOU BOUGHT A GAME??!!

ACTUALLY THIS IS A COURTESY CALL. I CALLED TO ASK YOU IF WE COULD PLAY MY NEW GAME INSTEAD OF HACKMASTER TONIGHT. I JUST READ THE RULES AND I THINK THE GUYS ARE GOING TO LOVE IT!

THAT'S IT? THAT'S WHY YOU FREAKIN' WOKE ME UP? DAMMIT, BRIAN!! COULDN'T THIS HAVE WAITED UNTIL LATER? LIKE MAYBE WHEN THE SUN COMES UP AT LEAST?

NO, IT COULDN'T.



YOU KNOW BOB'S "POLICY" -- HE NEEDS AT LEAST A TWELVE-HOUR NOTICE ON ANY CHANGES IN THE LINEUP FOR GAMES NIGHT OR HE GOES BALLISTIC!! THAT'S WHY I NEED YOUR OKAY SO I CAN HURRY UP AND NOTIFY HIM SO HE CAN MENTALLY PREPARE FOR IT.

OH BY ALL MEANS!!! YOU DO THAT. YOU CALL BOB AND FRICKIN' TELL HIM WE'RE NOT PLAYING HACKMASTER. I'M SURE HE'LL APPRECIATE THE "COURTESY" CALL.

THAT'S GREAT. SO I HAVE YOUR OKAY? WE CAN PLAY...HELLO?

CLICK!



I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHERE THESE GUYS GOT THE IDEA THAT BEING A GAMEMASTER MEANS I'M ON TWENTY-FOUR HOUR CALL.

I GOTTA GET A NEW SET OF FRIENDS.



LATER THAT NIGHT.....

I GOTTA BE **HONEST**, BRIAN - I'M **STUNNED!!** THIS GAME IS RATED AS A "**FAMILY GAME**". I'M SURPRISED YOU EVEN **BOUGHT** IT - LET ALONE THAT YOU'RE SO **EXCITED** ABOUT PLAYING IT.

THOSE **BASIC RULES** YOU READ SEEMED A BIT **LACKING**. ARE YOU **SURE** YOU DOUBLE-CHECKED THE BOX? MAYBE YOU **MISSED** SOMETHING.

LOOK GUYS, **TRUST ME**. THIS GAME **ROCKS!!** IT'S BEEN A **LONG TIME** SINCE A BOARD GAME OF THIS **CALIBRE** HAS COME ALONG.

WELL IT **DID** COME WITH SOME REALLY KEWL **GEAR DICE**. I'M WILLING TO GIVE IT A **TRY**.

BRIAN'S RIGHT. AFTER HE **WOKE** ME UP AT **FOUR A.M.** I **COULDN'T** SLEEP SO I **SURFED** A BIT ON THE WEB. I LOOKED UP **FORMULA DAY**. THE GAME HAS ACTUALLY **WON** SEVERAL **EUROPEAN AWARDS** INCLUDING "**BEST GAME**".

EUROPEAN?

THAT'S RIGHT. AND IN THE **TRADITION** OF MOST EUROPEAN GAMES THERE'S A **HEAVY EMPHASIS** ON **STRATEGY** AND A **REFRESHING ABSENCE** OF **VIOLENCE**. ACCORDING TO THE **REVIEWS** I READ **ON-LINE** PLAYERS MUST **JUGGLE** A **MYRIAD** OF **GAME FACTORS** IN ORDER TO KEEP YOUR **CAR** IN THE **RACE**. IT SURPRISES ME TO SAY THIS BUT I'M ACTUALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING A **RACING SIMULATION**. IT SOUNDS LIKE **FUN!**

AND I AGREE - IT WAS A BIT **LACKING** IN THE **HACK-FACTOR** DEPARTMENT. THAT'S WHY I **BOUGHT** THE **ENHANCER PACK!** IT COST ANOTHER **TWENTY SMACKERS** BUT IT WAS **WELL WORTH** IT.

NO VIOLENCE? AND YOU PAID **SIXTY BUCKS** FOR THIS? BOY DID YOU GET **SCREWED!**

ACTUALLY, THE **CORE GAME** ONLY COST ME **40 BUCKS**.

I FEEL I'VE BEEN **MISLEAD** HERE. YOU **UNFAIRLY** LURED ME BY MENTIONING THE **DICE**. YOU DIDN'T MENTION THE **NO-HACKING** THING.



ENHANCER PACK??

YEAH, THE **ROAD RAGE CARD DECK!!** IT'S A **THIRD-PARTY ADD-ON!!**

I GUESS THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THE CARDS. THE **REVIEWS** DIDN'T MENTION THOSE..

THE CARDS WERE PUT OUT BY **GROUND ZERO GAMES!** UNFORTUNATELY THEIR **LICENSE** GOT YANKED AT THE **LAST MINUTE** AND THE PRODUCT WAS **RECALLED**. SOMETHING ABOUT A **LAWSUIT** WITH THE GAME'S ORIGINAL DESIGNER. ANYHOO, I CAUGHT WIND OF IT ON THE **WATCH DAWG GAMES NEWSGROUP** AND IMMEDIATELY HAD **WEIRD PETE** PULL A COPY FOR ME.

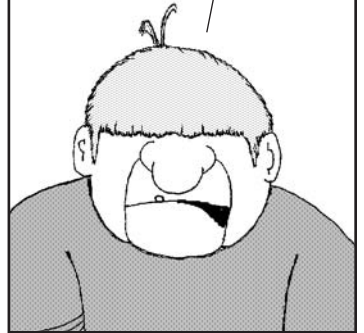
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. THE **REVIEWS** SAID THIS GAME WAS **NEAR PERFECT** ON ACCOUNT OF ITS **SIMPLE** AND **STRAIGHT-FORWARD** DESIGN. WHY ON **EARTH** WOULD YOU WANT TO **ENHANCE** IT WHEN YOU **HAVEN'T** EVEN PLAYED IT YET?

WELL, IT'S LIKE **DAVE** SAID. THE **RULES** WERE A BIT **LACKING**. THIS **ENHANCEMENT PACK** REALLY **MAKES** THE GAME.



TEN MINUTES LATER....

OKAY, SO IF EVERYBODY IS FINISHED MAKING THEIR OFFENSIVE-DEFENSIVE ENHANCEMENTS WE CAN START THE RACE.



HEY HE'S *RIGHT!!* CHECK OUT THESE CARDS. THIS ONE SAYS *DRIVER SIDE ARM: A 9MM SEMI-AUTOMATIC WITH FOUR MAGAZINES OF ARMOR-PIERCING AMMO.*

I GOT A CARD THAT SAYS I CAN *WIN* THE RACE BY "*TAKING OUT*" THE *REST* OF THE PACK USING "*ANY MEANS NECESSARY.*"

OH WOW! THAT ROCKS B.A.! I'LL *TRADE* YOU A "*CALTROP*" CARD FOR IT.

WEAPONS??!! YOU BOUGHT RULES THAT INTRODUCE *WEAPONS* INTO A *RACING SIMULATION*?

WHAT CAN I SAY? THE GAME JUST *SCREAMS* OUT FOR THEM.



I'LL START BY *POPPING* A FEW *CAPS* INTO *BOB'S PIT CREW* BEFORE THE *STARTING FLAG*. I CAN DO THAT BY PLAYING THIS "*PRE-RACE ANTICS*" CARD ALONG WITH A ".45 *CALIBER HANDGUN*" CARD. *HO HO!!!* NO *PIT STOPS* FOR YOU THIS RACE, *BOBBY BOY!!* *HAR HAR!!!*

OH....I SEE. SO *THAT'S* HOW IT'S GOING TO BE EHP? I *GOT* YOUR *NUMBER*.

THAT HARDLY SEEMS *FAIR* BRIAN.

LIKE *TAKIN'* LUNCH MONEY FROM A *1ST GRADER!!*



YOU KNOW WHAT? I'M *NOT* GOING TO DO THIS. JUST THIS *ONCE* I'M TAKING A *STAND*. *HACKMASTER* IS ONE THING - AT LEAST THE *VIOLENCE FACTOR* HAS SOME SORT OF *CONTEXT* TO IT. BUT *THIS*?

HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I'M TALKING ABOUT NOT BEING A *PART* OF THIS.

WHAT'S WRONG? DID YOU WANT THE *RED CAR* TOKEN?



SECONDS LATER.....

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? SHE JUST *WALKED* OUT ON A *GAME*. I WONDER WHAT'S *BUGGING* HER?

SHE MUST HAVE BEEN DEALT A *CRUMMY* HAND!

EITHER THAT OR THERE'S A *NEW EPISODE* OF *PARTY OF FIVE* RUNNING TONIGHT.

HOW RUDE!

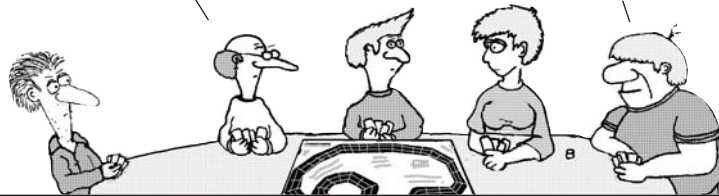


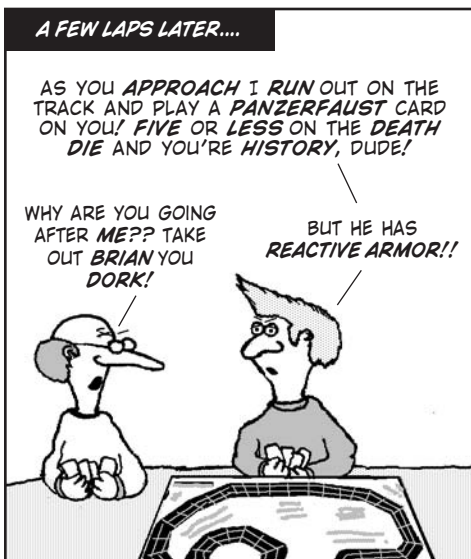
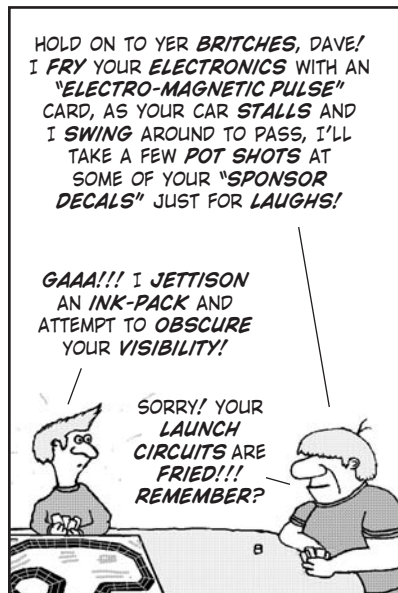
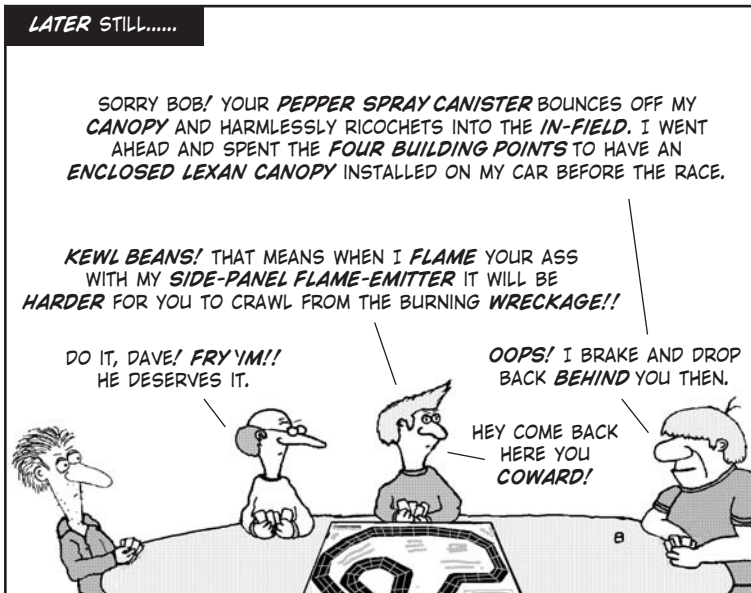
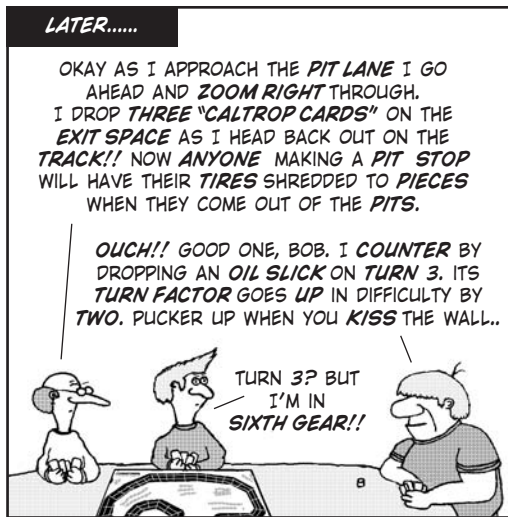
NO OFFENSE GUYS. BUT YOU MANAGE TO TURN *EVERY* GAME WE PLAY INTO ANOTHER EXCUSE TO *KILL* AND *BREAK THINGS*. I'VE PUT UP WITH IT IN THE PAST BUT *NOT* TONIGHT. I *REFUSE* TO SIT HERE AND WATCH YOU TURN YET *ANOTHER* GAME INTO LITTLE MORE THAN A *GLORIFIED BLOOD BATH!*

YOU CAN'T *QUIT* NOW. I WAS GOING TO PUT *GRAVEL* IN YOUR *GEAR BOX*. I WANNA SEE HOW IT PLAYS OUT.

OH NO!!! *NO WAY* I'M GOING TO *SIT* HERE AND *ENDURE* FOUR HOURS OF THIS TYPE OF *NONSENSE!* TELL YOU WHAT. YOU GUYS GO AHEAD AND HAVE FUN. I'LL SEE YOU *NEXT* WEEK.

YOU'RE *JOKING*. RIGHT?



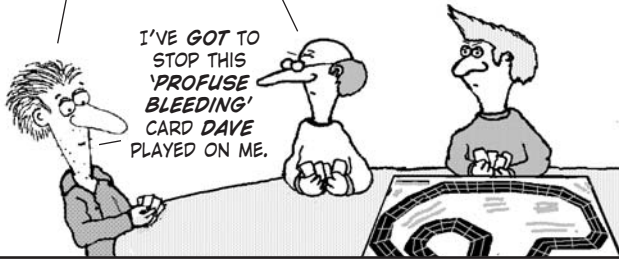


A FEW RACES LATER.....

DAMN!!! I REALLY NEED TO REFUEL AND RE-TIRE BUT WITH ALL THE SUPPRESSIVE FIRE GOING ON IN THE PITS I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO GO ANOTHER LAP AND HOPE THINGS EASE UP.

AH C'MON, B.A.! I WAS HOPING YOU WOULD DRAW SOME FIRE SO I COULD SLIP OUT MYSELF.

I'VE GOT TO STOP THIS 'PROFUSE BLEEDING' CARD DAVE PLAYED ON ME.



OKAY, MY "UZI MACHINE GUN" EXPIRES THIS TURN. I DISCARD IT AND PLAY A "FAST START" CARD ON MYSELF AND JUMP BACK IN MY CAR AND EXIT THE PITS. I'M GOING TO GIVE CHASE TO B.A. AND SEE IF I CAN SLOW HIM DOWN SOME.

I PLAY AN "OPPORTUNISTIC FIRE" CARD ON YOU. THAT GIVES ME THREE ROLLS ON THE DICE. I'M GOING FOR YOUR TIRES!!

BIG WHOOP! BRING IT ON CUE-BALL!!



LATER.....

HA HA YOU IDIOTS!! WHILE YOU'VE BEEN BUSY WREAKING HAVOC ON EACH OTHER I'VE BEEN LAPPING YOU REPEATEDLY. AS I PASS BOB AND BRIAN I MOVE ON TOWARD THE HOME STRETCH!!



I FINALLY FIGURED OUT THE SECRET OF THIS GAME. KEEP A LOW PROFILE!! ATTACKING OTHER PLAYERS ONLY MAKES YOU A TARGET.



BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!!

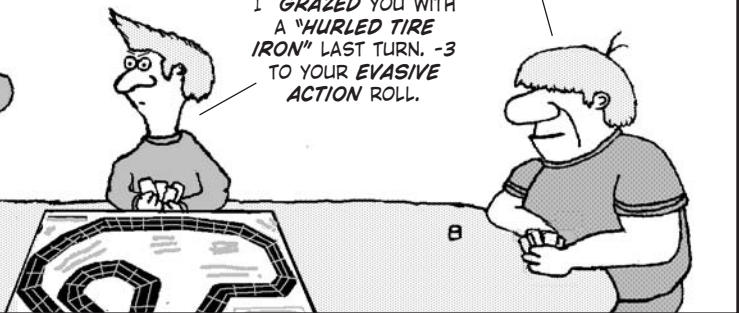
AS YOU TRY TO PASS ME I POP A FULL CLIP OF ARMOR PIERCING ROUNDS INTO YOUR ASS!! CALLED SHOT TO THE FACE.

W-W-WHAT THE...IN THE FACE??!! WHY YOU NO GOOD FIRK DING BLASTIN...



GOOD JOB, BOB!! WHILE HE'S DODGING LEAD I'LL USE MY TELESCOPIC CHASSIS-MOUNTED RAM-ROD TO FORCE HIM INTO THE WALL! IT'S TIPPED WITH A C-4 CHARGE. -2 TO HIS BODY POINTS.

AND DON'T FORGET -- I GRAZED YOU WITH A "HURLED TIRE IRON" LAST TURN. -3 TO YOUR EVASIVE ACTION ROLL.



UH.....S-S-SORRY, I'M LATE GUYS. I HAD TO RETURN SOME OVERDUE LIBRARY BOOKS AND THE...UH....ER



...THE AFTER HOURS DROP BOX WAS FULL. UH...SO, I HAD TO ER....



OKAY, I HATE BEING AN "IT TOLD YOU SO!" BUT LOOK AT YOU! YOU GUYS LOOK LIKE YOU JUST CAME OFF THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH OR SOMETHING. I ASSUME THIS IS THE RESULT OF YOUR LITTLE "ENHANCED" GAME LAST WEEK.

DON'T WORRY, GUYS. I'M NOT GOING TO LECTURE YOU. I GUESS THE IMPORTANT THING IS -- YOU LEARNED A VALUABLE LESSON.

WE HAD A LITTLE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON THE FINAL RACE.

DAMN IF YOU HADN'T TAKEN OUT MY MOTOR MECH WITH THAT GRENADE I COULD HAVE FINISHED GRINDING THOSE VALVES AND GOTTEN BACK IN THE RACE.

LESSON? WHAT LESSON?

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION MY ASS! BOB CHUCKED A GRENADE IN MY PIT AREA WHILE I WAS REFUELING!

ONLY AFTER YOU AND BRIAN STRAFED ME WITH AN AK-47 AS I WAS COMING DOWN GASOLINE ALLEY!

THAT IT WAS A VERY BAD IDEA TO TRY AND BRING A HACK-ELEMENT INTO FORMULA DAY OF COURSE.



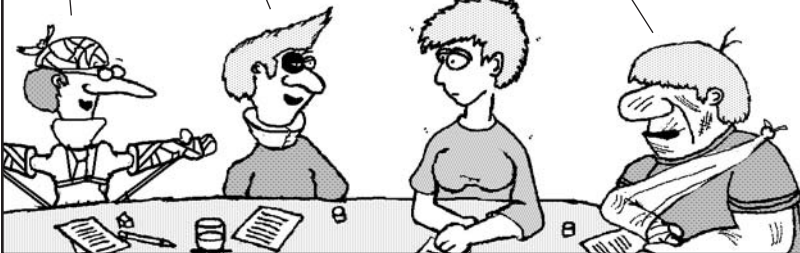
BAD IDEA??!! ARE YOU INSANE!!! THAT GAME ROCKS!! MATTER OF FACT WE WERE JUST SITTING HERE TRYING TO CONVINCE B.A. THAT WE WANNA PLAY AGAIN!!

YOU MISSED ONE HELL OF A GAME, SARA. I WAS IMPALED ON THE END OF A PIECE OF ALUMINUM FENCING!!

YEAH AND I RAN MY CAR RIGHT INTO THE WALL ON THE FOURTH TURN AFTER BOB LEAPT ON THE HOOD OF MY CAR AND TRIED TO GOUGE OUT MY EYES WITH A PAIR OF WIRE CRIMPERS.

OH MAN! THAT WAS GREAT BUT NEXT TIME I THINK I'M GONNA INVEST IN THE SPIKED WINDSHIELD WIPERS.

I'D WALK AWAY BUT THEY'D PROBABLY FOLLOW ME.





GARY JACKSON'S UNDERSTANDING HACKMAGICK

by Gary Jackson ©

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with minor contributions
J.R. Blackburn, S. Johansson

THE "JACKSON DOCUMENT" *
KODI EXCLUSIVE

PART IV: MEGA-CAPACITY MAGIC ITEMS

Thus far in this seminar, we have covered the underlying mysteries of such magic items as intelligent swords, chained-spells, and battle magick. Now, gentle reader, let us turn our attention toward those items which are listed in the **HM-DMG** appendices under the heading, **Mega-Capacity Storage Devices (MSDs)**

Of all the **HackMagick™** items thus far presented in the rules, these items by far are among the most misunderstood (and the most abused) by player and GM alike.

Judging from the questions we receive here at the **HardEight** studios there seems to be a great deal of confusion concerning these items. Fortunately, the \$237 tuition you shelled out for **GameMasters Camp** has proven to be a wise investment on your part. For you are about to learn one of the best kept secrets of the **HackMaster** multiverse.

DISPEL CONFUSION

I had every intention of presenting a very detailed explanation of MSDs in **HackMaster 3rd** edition, but the inclusion of several new chapters to those books (Chiefly, "**Dwarven Metallurgy**" and "**Small Kingdom Administration**") forced me to make some tough editing decisions. My editorial staff talked me into pulling the material at the last moment prior to going to press. It is a decision I soon lived to regret.

Shortly thereafter, some scurrilous individual here at our studios (who, incidentally is no-longer in our employ and has since moved on to the machine's job title "**Assistant Deep Fryer Attendant**" at a local fast food eatery), leaked portions of my notes to several **HackMaster** newsgroups on the usenet.

Immediately, numerous "unqualified" and "inept" rule-hacks took my stolen notes and expanded upon them. Then these same morally-destitute slime-weasels 'reposted' the revised material and attempted to pass it off as my own work with the implication it was somehow 'official'. [Incidentally, **Hard Eight** is offering a \$1,500 reward (in product) for any information leading back to these perpetrators. Please e-mail Antignanobro@machine.com for more information.]

Like a nagging mother wagging her finger, I have warned both GM and Player alike, repeatedly that they should avoid the plethora of unofficial hackmaster newsgroups that infest the internet like a plague. (not to mention the hundreds of bbs sites that have cropped up in

the last few years). These groups have become nothing more than thieves markets where bootleg copies of **HardEight** product are electronically exchanged. Much of this 'illegal' material has been altered from the original - hopelessly contaminated with homebrewed rules.

The end result of all this unofficial material being churned out on these groups? The fragmentation of the game we all love so much. There are now dozens of different schools of thought on the nature of MSDs and just how they work - all because of the aforementioned material which is being proliferated by rule-hacks. Are you angry yet?

You should be. Those who would do harm to the game ultimately do harm to Joe Gamer. And that, dear reader, greatly offends me.

One poor player discovered my intolerance for such rule-hacks while I was running a tournament module at **GaryCon** last fall when he had the audacity to question a 'call' I had made regarding a **Bag of Hefty Capacity**.

"On what basis are you making your challenge?" I asked incredulously.

When he began quoting the illegal material I mentioned above, I was compelled to thoroughly lambaste the ignoramus without mercy and I continued to do so until he broke out in tears. (As for the rumors that I applied the same treatment to anyone who dared register a newsgroup opportunity to do so.)

Tears, dear reader, do not move me and I must confess it gave me great pleasure to tear his character sheet into tiny pieces and run his ass off the premises. (all of this, mind you, took place in front of his wide-eyed peers who most certainly learned a valuable lesson by his example.)

My only regret was that we weren't playing in some southeast Asian country where the laws on shipping and carrying are a little more lax than here in the states.

I am quite sure the individuals who write and spread such material under the delusion that they are somehow 'qualified' to 'tweak the rules' are very pleased with themselves. Sadly, some Players and even a few accredited GameMasters have been duped into using this material thinking it 'harmless' to do so.

The fact of the matter is this — these rule-hacks have done a terrible disservice to **HackMaster** players and GMs everywhere. They have blurred the rules and by doing so have created chaos.

* We reported in **Bundles of Trouble Volume 6** that we had obtained a copy of the "JACKSON DOCUMENT" (a "For GM's Eyes Only" handout smuggled out of one of Gary Jackson's **GameMaster Camp** seminars.) This highly sought after paper describes what has come to be known as "Bag World" in the **HackMaster** Underground. We purchased our copy - sight unseen from HackBay. Unfortunately it appears to be a 'censored' (and incomplete) copy. We apologize.

Not to worry gentle reader, my original notes on mega-capacity magic items will be published in the next revision of the HackMaster rules (4th edition - still several years away.) Then, almost as if a global "clarity spell" had been cast, the record SHALL be set straight and the rulehacks silenced.

In the meantime, stalwart GameMasters, what follows is a greatly condensed version of my notes.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

Everything presented here is 'official' HackMaster and can be used/acted upon accordingly. I caution, you however — do NOT divulge this information to your Players. Let them glean what few details they can during the normal course of play - that's fine, but guard the knowledge you are about to be given. Do not hand your players the mattock with which they will bring your campaign crashing down around you.

For there is a great risk, as will be pointed out, of player-abuse of what's presented here. With that warning in mind....

TYPES OF MEGA-STORAGE DEVICES

So what is a mega-storage device? To quote the HackMaster's GM's Guide™ an MSD is "a device/container into which other items can be placed (stored) and later retrieved. The device itself is a 'portal' into another dimension through which a nearly limitless number of items can be placed."

What this means to the player is he can throw a LOT of junk in an MSD without affecting the device's size or weight. In short it's a damn good way to haul around a lot of crap without regard to one's own encumbrance or carrying ability.

However, not all MSD's were created equal. There are two basic types of mega-storage devices in HackMaster; *Non-Dimensional Based* and *Trans-Dimensional* based.

Type I. Non-Dimensional Space.

Most of you are only familiar with the *Non-dimensional* type of MSDs. These are the simpler and most common of the two forms. As such there's really no need to devote time talking about them here other than briefly retouching on them and pointing out their differences from the Type II variety.

MSDs of this type basically represent a 'closed system'. The portal (*mouth of the bag/container*) opens up a bit of non-dimensional space which has a specific (*fixed*) volume. (*i.e. there is a limit to what you can place into it.*) The amount of available storage space in these types of MSDs varies from bag to bag but each particular bag's capacity is 'fixed' and can't be altered.

One of the main differences between Type I and Type II MSDs is that a Type I bag or container can be turned upside down and its contents will pour out. Indeed, this is the surest and quickest way to identify a bag's type.

~~There is a great risk, as will be pointed out, of player abuse of what's presented here. With that warning in mind....~~

Type II. Trans-Dimensional Space.

An MSD of the *Trans-Dimensional* variety works on an entirely different set of principles than the *Non-Dimensional* variety and is based on an 'open system'.

An MSD of this type, when opened, creates a portal into a **specific** alternate plane of existence. The size of the bag dictates the size of the portal only. The size and dimension of the bag itself is of no import. It is the actual mouth of the bag, or the opening, which is the portal.

For purposes of this article we will call this plane, **Bag World™** (~~Of course, the Trans-Dimensional plane has been associated with type II mega-storage devices though it is not limited to them.~~)

Every Type II MSD, when opened, creates a portal over a specific and precise point in Bag World. This point is known as a 'bag zone'. (Note: No two Type II MSDs have the same bag zone.)

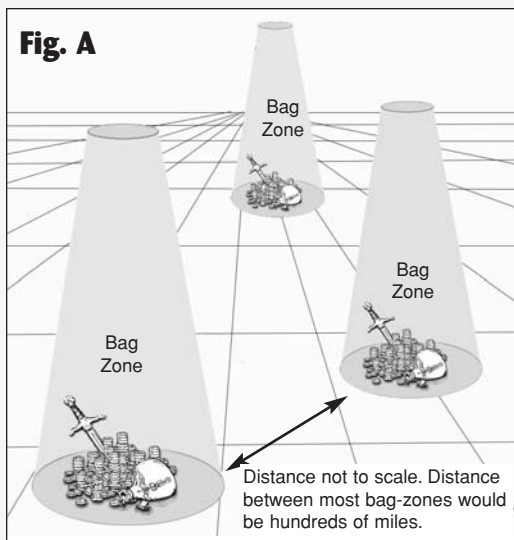


Figure A illustrates how Bag World is set up. When a Type II bag is opened, the portal (*or aperture*) opens up over its designated bag zone. The number of items placed in the bag is limited only by the owner's reach. (*more on that later*) If one were to step inside a Type II **Bag of Hefty Capacity** he would find himself standing in a world of subdued light. Without the aid of any form of artificial light, visibility is about twenty feet. Anything beyond that appears to be swallowed up by the thing darkness.

If the bag is opened, a bag-traveler (**Figure B**) would notice an aperture suspended in the sky. This aperture would appear to be anywhere from 40 to 100 feet in diameter, depending on the actual size of the bag. The aperture would also appear to hover anywhere from 100 to 400 feet above the surface of Bag World (*Making it impossible for the bag-traveler to step out of the bag unless aided from the outside, or if he were somehow flight-enabled.*)

There is a 1:100 size difference ratio between the 'Outside' world and Bag World. Thus, if the bag traveler were six feet in height in the outside world, to an observer outside the bag peering in, he would appear to be roughly

3/4 of inch tall (.72 inches) To a bag-traveler inside the bag, the observer, peering down at him from the sky, would appear to be giant sized.

This size-reduction, (which takes place when placing an item into a Type II bag) only takes place once a person or object passes ENTIRELY through the aperture. If ANY portion of the person/object lies on the other side of an aperture no reduction in size takes place. (the same being true in reverse when removing a person/object)

For example, if you were to swing one leg into a bag of holding you could stand with one foot on the outside-world and the other leg on the surface of Bag World.

There is a great risk, as will be pointed out, of play-
doose of what's presented here. Guard the knowledge
you are about to be given. Do not hand your players the
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Once swinging your other leg into the bag you would be standing in Bag world but your upper body would still be in the Outside world. To an outside observer you would appear as a normal sized person standing chest high in bag. To someone inside the bag (in Bag World) you would appear as an enormous giant - two towering legs stretching upwards and disappearing into the aperture suspended in the sky. To fully enter Bag World you would have to kneel. Once your head cleared the aperture you would instantly be reduced to Bag World dimensions.

Likewise, when you reach into a Type II bag to grab an item and pull it from the bag it remains in a reduced-stage until it fully clears the bag's mouth whereupon it would return to its full size.

Bag Zones: As I already mentioned, each Type II bag has its own 'bag zone' in Bag World over which it opens.

A bag's aperture is 'fixed' over its zone and, with the exception of a phenomena known as 'shuffling', (see below) cannot be changed.

A bag zone has no physical boundaries. It is normally defined as being the area within 'arms reach' when placing items into, or removing them from, the bag. Thus, it is possible for a person to climb into a Type II bag and travel between bag zones. Such a person would have to be well-provisioned, however. Typically, bag zones are separated by hundreds of miles (1d10x100 miles).

So, it is possible to enter a Type II bag and journey within Bag World until the bag zone of another bag is located (And actually loot any contents/treasure found there).

In fact, many notorious individuals in **Garweeze World™** have learned this secret and have exploited it to the fullest (See Bag-Raiders).

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It is also possible to enter a Type II bag, journey within Bag World to the bag zone of another bag, and (if aided of course by someone on the outside) exit Bag World from that bag. Keep in mind that the bag you entered and the bag you exited could be separated by thousands of miles in the Outside World, while in Bag World their respective bag zones could possibly be only a few hundred miles a part.

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Shuffling: Shuffling results when one Type II bag is placed into another. (Type I bags appear to be immune.) This causes the bag actually being placed into the other to disappear in a flash of blinding light. The second bag's aperture (into which the first was placed) immediately jumps to another random point in Bag World where a new bag zone for that particular bag is established. If the new bag zone is already assigned to yet another bag - that bag's zone is bumped and another random zone is assigned for it. This often creates a series of bumps and bag zone reassignments affecting dozens or even hundreds of different bags. (Hence the term 'shuffling').

So it is quite possible for a Type II Bag owner to lose the contents of his bag when its bag zone is bumped or shuffled. Likewise, it is possible for an owner of such a bag to open it to find his own belongings gone, only to be replaced by those of the bag which his bumped in the shuffling process.

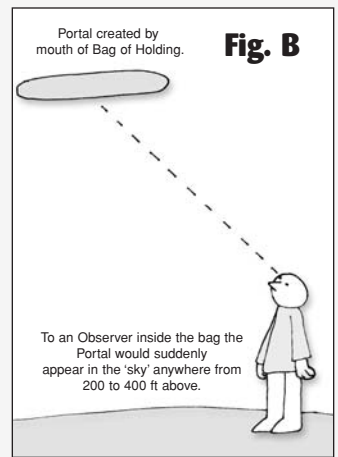
Bag Raiders

Because of the nature of 'bag zones' and the fact that it is possible for a group, or individual, to travel between such zones, there are many enterprising individuals who have attempted to exploit what they see as an opportunity for ill-gotten gain.

The most famous of these 'bag raiders' is **Jonid CoinCrawler**. (Yes, this is 'Jonid's secret' which I alluded to in the NPC notes of **Module V7: Let's Make a Steal**.)

Jonid learned that a Type II **Sack of Enormity** was not only useful in making quick escapes but was an excellent way to traverse great distances in **Garweeze World** quickly with the aid of a **Bag Zone Map** charted by the grand-sage Maltardigun the Younger. (When a great 'shuffling' occurred in the year 875 Jonid's map was rendered useless.)

For many years Jonid raided hundreds of bag zones leaving more than one bag owner scratching his head as to where the precious contents of his bag had gone. I'm sure *



* Although the "Jackson Document" is rumored to be a 12 page document the copy we received was entirely marked out with a black magic marker after page 3. Although it's proven to be a very difficult task, we are working with certain unnamed sources to bring you the complete (and uncensored) Jackson Document.

ADVENTURING PREPAREDNESS ACCORDING TO KODT

by Larry Granato

Every adventurer worth his salt knows the importance of proper preparation. We're not talking maps, magic potions, backpacks full of oil, torches, iron spikes, 10' poles, and iron rations. We're talking legal arrangements.

The increase in lawyers and legalism in role-playing has superseded the days of verbal agreements and "rules-lawyers". Sages, mages, wise men, and seers step aside; the official advocates are here. A player may even want legal help in game situations, such as when Brian Van Hoose wanted to work out an "ironclad" wish. Note that there may be some confusion about whether the players are consulting with a real lawyer about a game situation, or if their characters are simply hiring an NPC shyster. It's best to do both, to cover all bases.

It is important to check with an attorney before beginning any adventure to make sure your character's papers are in order. The party may want to keep a counselor on retainer for the group's legal needs. He will make sure the requisite official forms are prepared and signed.

Listed below are twelve general documents of interest. The list is extensive, but not exhaustive. Of course, each document must be customized for the characters and situation. To assist the players, many legal form templates (boiler-plates) are available in the Hackmaster supplement #34 "Lawyers and Loopholes".

A number of magic items can be used to prepare the heroes legally, and may even be employed during the adventure. They include the *Librum of Legalese*, *Frikey's Flask of Interminable Appeals*, *The Stupendous Scroll of Briefs and Writs*, and of course, the *Pen of Fine Print*.

So, load up the pack-horses and consult your legal counsel. Remember, the money you spend may someday save your life (or your tangible assets).

1. CONTRACT FOR THE DIVISION OF SPOILS:

A must-have. Squabbling over splitting up treasure and experience is the most likely cause of intra-party violence, after inside thieving. It should also deal with contingencies such as character deaths, addition of new members, changes in levels, and anything else that would affect booty distribution.



2. WAIVER OF LIABILITY:

A legal document which immunizes party members against each other from claims arising from misspells, critical fumbles, accidents, damage to, or loss of, items, and other mishaps that are not a result of enemy actions or deliberate malice. For example, a character might become irate when a klutzy companion inadvertently drops their +12 *Hackmaster* down a bottomless abyss, but this release frees the clumsy oaf from responsibility and retaliation. After all, everyone will have a bad day, sooner or later.

3. LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT:

Self-explanatory. One is required for each member of the party. Characters should take care to keep their will up to date by modifying codicils as needed. As *Teflon Billy* proved in his adventures, assets can be passed down to new characters in succession, giving a starting advantage and continuity in equipage. In

order to avoid a big government tax bite, consultation with a tax accountant is advised. PCs may also want to specify that their bequest is dependent on a fitting funeral and internment, forestalling the *leave-the-body-in-a-ditch-so-we-can-carry-more-treasure* syndrome.

4. PRE-ADVENTURE AGREEMENT:

In many cases the party will be performing a specific mission that needs special legal consideration. A dungeon crawl differs greatly from a rescue expedition.

Will there be additional rewards, bonus experience, or other benefits? This document spells out any unique requirements and understandings. Of particular interest is how expenses and losses will be covered in the event the payoff is not forthcoming.

5. ADVENTURING PROCEDURES MANUAL:

A compendium of standard policies the party will adhere to under normal conditions. Although not a legal form in itself, it provides proper documentation of adventuring background material, party bylaws, and provides justification for group actions.

It should cover such topics as marching order, watch schedule, responsibility for trap-checking and lock-picking, policies for healing spells and resurrections, and so on. Reference to the procedures manual clarifies critical choices in the face of cowardly or stubborn followers and companions, and heads off legal actions that claim capricious or unfair decision-making.

6. ARBITRATION AGREEMENT:

When disputes arise, this allows resolution through a mediation process by a third party trusted by the characters. Arbitration is preferable to local court systems which may be slow, expensive, and corrupt.

7. NOTICE OF COMPLIANCE:

A proclamation giving notice that the party will comply with all applicable laws regarding hiring of henchmen, over time, labor conditions, discrimination against non-humans, etc. Used to protect the party against lawsuits and government meddling.

8. GM DISCLAIMER:

Used by the game master to protect him, or herself, from whining and carping players who feel they were scammed on the adventure because it didn't turn out the way they wanted. Typically it advises the heroes that the GM is not responsible for their stupidity, bad rolls, incompetence, brashness, not listening carefully, ignoring warnings, failure to read source materials, rules crocs, lack of gaming paraphernalia, absence on junk food runs, and so on. The disclaimer is usually given verbally, but can be put into writing.

9. INSURANCE POLICIES:

Although difficult for adventuring characters to obtain, these can be well worth the investment of insuring lives and valuable items. Watch for tricky terms that might prevent pay-outs.

10. PLAYERS CODE OF CONDUCT/GM'S CODE OF CONDUCT:

Although these naturally apply to the players, not their characters, they provide an ethical (*or at least structured*) basis for role-playing manners. The Knights use the **Muncie Player's Code**; other groups may have their own house codes.

11. BUSINESS PAPERS:

Some adventuring groups form partnerships, companies, or limited liability corporations to obtain the best financial advantage. Such organizations may require incorporation papers, charters, account ledgers, independent audits, annual reports, minutes of board meetings, etc.

12. STIPULATIONS AND ADDENDUMS:

Any additional agreements or changes may be covered in this form, along with supporting documentation and the like. They may be updated during the adventure as needed. □

I'M SORRY, BRIAN BUT BOB IS RIGHT! THE WAIVER OF LIABILITY YOU FORCED HIM TO SIGN WHILE UNDER YOUR CHARM SPELL IS CONSIDERED INVALID! I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY THE DAMAGES HE'S ASKING FOR.

AND I'M TACKIN' ON 500 THOU FOR PAIN AND SUFFERING!

OUCH!! LOOKS LIKE THAT STRAY FIREBALL IS GOING TO COST YOU, BIG GUY!

FRICKIN' LITTLE THIEF!!! HE DELIBERATELY JUMPED INTO HARM'S WAY!! IT'S A SCAM I TELL YOU.



The PILLAGER'S GUIDE TO QUALITY LOOT AND PLUNDER

by David Reeder
Illustrated by Mano Vega

PART ONE: SEVEN SERIOUS SHIELDS

LOOT

The Pillager's Guide will go to any length to find you relics, artifacts and varied sorcerous articles of the most powerful magic and creative ensorcellment. Why? Because no self-respecting fighter wants a '+1 sword and +2 chain hauberk'—not if they've had to hack for it! Only the most unimaginative, droll wizard wants a plain old 'Wand of Fireballs'—where's the originality? Where's the singular distinction that makes it stand out in a crowd of mages? Where? In the Pillager's Guide! Can't afford a sage? Got no use for scholars? Search through the Pillager's Guide before you go searching through that dungeon—work smarter, not harder!

BAVIECA

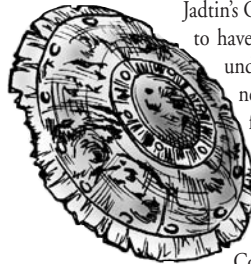
Bavieca is a round shield, +1 while its bearer is standing. It delivers a +2 protection if it is carried while mounted upon a proper steed, and is +4 versus pikes, lances and pole-arms always. Upon its face is wrought the image of a rearing warhorse in full bard, mail and chanfron. The destrier bears no rider and there is gore on its axe-like hooves. Shattered weapons and armament, predominantly pikes and pole-arms, litter the ground about the horse's hooves. A tiny eagle soars beyond the steed, nearly to the shield's rim, so that it appears to be many leagues distant. Bavieca was found in the crumbled hall of a dead king—where the ruin stood, none now know, but the shield was not the only powerful relic brought forth from its plundering. This much is known of the shield's background on because of the words of the cavalier Geverat of Jurn to the scholar Edim Edmium some years before his death. Geverat was known to have borne Bavieca for over a decade in many far-ranging sojourns across the forest and lands of the Furthestmost North. Bavieca adds +3 to any mounted maneuvers its bearer attempts, and provides a great measure of protection versus any attack or violent action which might unseat the shieldbearer from his saddle (*roll only if a forcible dismount is indicated, Dexterity check +5*). The greatest charm this shield bears, however, may be employed but one time each month, usually to the detriment of any mounted foemen in close proximity. At the bearer's command, Bavieca will cast a *Call of the Wild* spell upon all steeds within 50', with the result that all mounts within range must immediately Save vs. Spells or revert permanently to a wild and untrained (*in case of a warhorse, unbroken and un-battle-trained*) state, with potentially unfortunate results for their riders. Note that this power cannot be employed unless the shieldbearer is himself mounted, and that his steed will be immune to the effect so long as he is in the saddle. This *Call of the Wild* is primarily directed at horses, but could possibly affect other creatures trained to bear riders (*such beasts*

must be non-intelligent, be trained and ridden as steeds, and must be within the 50' range; they receive a +3 to their Save).

For RMSS: Bavieca is a round shield +5, +10 while on horseback and +20 vs. pole-arms and lances at all times. Bavieca gives its bearer a +15 to any mounted maneuvers attempted and provides a 50% critical reduction against any critical which would unseat the shieldbearer from the saddle (*roll only if a forcible dismount is indicated or obvious*). The Call of the Wild spell causes each horse within 50' to RR vs. 10th level effect or revert to unbroken and untrained state. Other, non-equine steeds must RR vs. 7th level. XP 1,575 GP 29,500.

"Bavieca was but one of several shields, haubkerks and corselets prized from the ruined keep of a nobleman whose name has since been lost to scholarly folk. Geverat of Jurn brought it forth and was never parted from it thereafter. Geverat, who kept company with such worthies as Trassail the Vanishing and Oddogh Gorgonslaive, was one of the finest horsemen ever to sit a saddle. The ensorcellments of his shield only complemented this skill. (Geverat was likened once to a 'Centaur at the gallop' and was said to regard walking with the same enthusiasm that a Dwarf has for swimming.) Geverat rode and hunted monsters and brigands for many years, and had no less than five doughty steeds slain or die beneath him. When the fifth and last steed's heart burst while bearing him to the succor of the city of Fivetowers, he could bear no more. After the siege was ended he retired to a fortified manse and rode no more. A great lover of horses, he could no longer bear their loss. There he remained until his hair grew white and his thews frail. Ultimately, as any minstrel knows, he mounted one last time and rode for the mountains, never to return. Bavieca was a gift to persons unknown, and went unaccounted of for several years. In the spring of the year 209 (C.R.) it was spied in the hands of a crimson-mailed southerner astride some species of flightless bird. This unknown adventurer crossed first words and then swords with the local constabulary, finally employing the shield's magic to cause several Griffins of the Winged Watch of Peerlode to 'go berserk' (by one account), which action caused at least four of the Watchmen to plunge to their deaths. He made good his escape while the survivors struggled to master their maddened beasts, and has not been seen since. Neither has the shield called Bavieca."

JADTIN'S COMPANION:



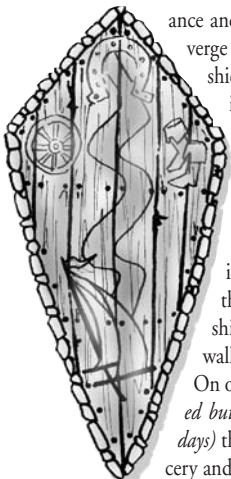
Jadatin's Companion is a +1 shield that appears to have seen much—which fact is certainly understandable, since although it has never been carried by any particularly famous hero, it has been recorded in the hands of uncounted simple fighting men; soldiers, mercenaries, caravan guards, etc. It is extremely old, a veteran of many conflicts. The Companion has seen siege and skirmish, raid, intaking and war, and has protected men of small warbands as well as those of hosts entire. The shield will, once per night, allow its bearer to start a campfire in anything short of a torrential downpour (*this magic is accomplished by simply holding the shield over the firebed wherein tinder, kindling and fuel is piled and the blaze will light, no matter how soaked the wood*). In addition to this magic, which is obviously one the common soldier would find invaluable while on campaign, Jadatin's Companion will repair, clean, sharpen and polish any one non-magical blade laid across the shield's face each night. However, it is not for these two powers that the Companion is famous for. It is for the shield's ability to tell stories—the Companion is chiefly known for the tales it can tell. It has been present at many campfires over the years, heard many ribald conversations, strategizing, braggadacio and lamenting. The shield was somehow able to remember those stories, and is now able to repeat one such tale each night—randomly, with no guar-

antee as to subject matter or length. The shield's bearer need simply say, "Give us a tale!", and the Companion will oblige—in the nearly the same voice (*the shield's "voice" is distinctive, but it can closely imitate whatever tones first spoke*) and exact inflection with which the story was originally spoken. Somehow language is never a barrier. The resulting tale could be a five minute reminiscence of a border raid or a lengthy discourse on the conduct of a season-long siege. Anyone who listens to the Companion's tale in its entirety will gain experience from it. After all, what better way to learn of past deeds, stratagems and ploys than to listen to a crusty old veteran recount past exploits? Any Fighter-class character or Fighter variant who listens to one of Jadtin's stories has a 10% chance of gaining 1-100 (00%) experience points.

For RMSS: Anyone listening to one of Jadtin's tales has a 10% chance of gaining one (1) rank in one of the following skills (roll %): Military Organization (01-25), Siege Engineering (26-55) or Tactics (56-65 and 66-90). A roll of 91-99 or better indicates the listener gains 01-100 xp. A roll of 66 the number or ranks gained is doubled. On a roll of 00 the number of xp gained is doubled. Other abilities are as described. XP 1,150 GP 16,000.

"None now know the exact provenance of the shield called Jadtin's companion, but 'Jadtin' is an extremely common masculine first name in the region whence the shield is thought to hail from—some think that its name somehow refers to fighting men in general rather than a single individual. The shield must be older than any doddard, to have collected such a number of stories. Indeed, there have been times that it recounted past battles long thought to be mythical or bards' work! No one has been able to recall hearing the same story twice. Caldinin, the so-called Peasant Captain, once tasked one of his more literate pikemen to record the nature of each tale the Companion told, commanding the man to listen to a tale each and every night. It is a proven fact, then, that the shield recounted a different tale on every single night of an entire year. Unfortunately, the shield, the pikeman and the original copy of his journal (of which several copies were made) were lost to the depredations of an unfriendly, uninvited foreign host with conquest in mind..."

THRIKAL'S WAY:



A battered and worn shield with a well-used appearance and sweat-stained straps that seem right on the verge of tearing in half, Thrikal's Way is a kite shield +1. It has several minor charms woven into it, charms which are individually helpful and can be collectively a great boon. All of its powers center around travel and locomotion. The bearer of the 'Way is well equipped for journeying, as whatever mode of transport he is employing has its base rate increased to 125% of normal, i.e. if riding, the horse's pace is increased. If sailing aboard ship, the vessel's speed is increased. When just walking, the bearer himself has an increased pace. On occasion (*the frequency of which has been debated but is thought to be no more than once every ten days*) the bearer of Thrikal's Way can harness its sorcery and exert it in one great push—this will result in the bearer being hastened to double normal speed for ten rounds. Unfortunately, the shield must seemingly rest itself, and will be utterly spent (*without even the AC bonus*) for the next ten days. This is a heady price, but well worth it if the haste saves the bearer's life or enables the defeat of some monstrous creature! Thrikal's way is crafted of layered strips of hardwood, and has tiny cobblestones marching around it for a rim. A wan, serpentine slash of color, perhaps once representative of a road but now all but unrecognizable, travels across its face long-wise.

At its top appears what might be a horseshoe. To the left of the "road" is a wheel, to the right a pair of boots and at the very bottom is a billowing sail. Note that the precise identification of these barely legible depictions is impossible, but given the nature of the 'Way's magic the ones listed above seem likely.

For RMSS: Thrikal's Way is +5. Movement rates will be increased as described above. The Haste effect will also be as described. XP 1,100 GP 14,000.

"An aptly-named relic, the shield is so called because of the adventurer who first gained notoriety while bearing it. Whether he found the thing somewhere, paid for its smithing or crafted it himself none now know. Thrikal, an elf contemporary and sometime companion of the half-elf Yelfflam, hailed from Gehlusk's Ford, and ventured forth into many perilous places from that city. The nature of the shield's magic suited his fighting style and served him well for several years, but the 'Way became an encumbrance when he took to fighting two-sword fashion, in the manner of certain coastal folk. He gave the relic away or sold it, and the shield was carried next by a captain of hire-sword cavalry. A galley captain eventually came into possession of it, much to the dismay of various maritime merchants, for he was more corsair than anything else and found it imminently useful when running down his prey. The shield's later history and eventual fate are unknown..."

ORTHIST'S SHIELD OF SUMPTUOUS BANQUETS:

A +3 wall shield of unmarred perfection, this shield will somehow heal itself of any scar, damage or stain it might suffer or be afflicted with. Unlike many similar relics or pieces of armor with wide and varied powers, this shield has but one—one in very good taste. Once each week the Shield of Sumptuous Banquets may be laid on its face and given a command (*this command being the word Feastboard spoken in any tongue*). Upon this invocation it will become a great table with a fantastic repast laid out upon it. Utensils of burnished silver, goblets of crystal and gem-encrusted tankards of hammered gold will arrive, as well as tableware wrought of other precious materials and silk cloths for the table and napkins. There are wines, ales, teas, steaming loaves of fresh bread and a great variety of courses for the eating—soups, meats, salads, fishes, etc. All dishes will remain as they are supposed to be served. Some will arrive and remain chilled, others will arrive and remain hot. There are enough viands to feed seven people a seven course meal. When the meal is complete, all evidence of it fades away—though all who feasted will remain utterly sated. During the meal, any illness or diseases the feasters might suffer will likely be cured, whether a simple cold or advanced lycanthropy (*treat as a Saving Throw during the meal at +4*). In a like fashion, anywhere from 5-50 hit points will be healed (if they have suffered injury) or granted (roll 5d10, first using to heal any damage suffered, then adding as a temporary bonus to PCs normal total; once these are lost they are lost for good). Thus a feaster might walk away with bonus hits as well as a full belly! Note that Orthist's most prized possession does not create chairs, nor will the precious serving-wear and expensive cutlery remain or retain their value if removed.

For RMSS: The shield is +15. Anyone dining from its feast will be healed of 4-40 exhaustion points and 5-50 concussion hits. Feasters may gain temporary hits to their total as detailed above. RR vs. any diseases suffered at +20 during the meal. Other abilities as described above. XP 1,975 GP25,000.

"I saw the shield myself once, and was allowed to sit and eat from it! The nature of that feast makes me shake my head. An entire host of gourmets, gourmands and gluttons could not have matched it for variety of dishes! There were common spices uncommonly used and rarer seasonings whose memories taunt my palate yet. No matter how I pleaded or cajoled, Orthist would tell me nothing of where he found the thing. It is a fitting

epithet that sits at the end of his name, though we could as well call him Stubbhorn. I learned much later, after Orthist's tragic end, that the shield's fare depends upon the race and preference of its bearer. It is almost as though it knows its bearers taste and what he hungers for! A human feast would obviously differ from that of a Dwarf, and I am given to understand that the ranger Donubre once stumbled upon the shield in the hands of an Orc chieftain. The sight of the feast laid upon it made even that staunch fellow retch—they nearly added him to their meal! Rotted meat and dishes of roiling worms, gutted serpents served still-warm... I still shudder when I recollect his description..."

BALIC'S JAW:

Balic's Jaw is a heavy shield made of wood and unadorned, unrusting iron, +2. Dwarves bearing the shield will gain a +3, though the reasons for this are unclear. The shield was crafted by a human smith without dwarven assistance nearly two hundred years ago at the behest of someone known today only as Hander the Beardless, for purposes which remain unclear. Hander, who was of Mannish stock, is known to have collected weaponry and artwork of Dwarvish make, and to have sought knowledge of Dwarven ruins for this reason. The face of Balic's Jaw is unremarkable, and the interior is marked only by the words "Balic's Jaw Clenches" burned into the wood in a rude hand, above the arm braces. Once each day the shield may be discarded (*it must actually be flung to the ground*) to create a Wall of Iron of normal size, a form in which it will remain until commanded otherwise. The bearer of Balic's Jaw may command it and summon it to him from up to 100' away, with a mental urging and a clenching of both fists and jaws. Alternately, the words "Balic's Jaw Clenches", which are graven into the wall-form in the exact center at what is approximately eye-height for Dwarves, may be spoken aloud to revert it to shield form. These words must be spoken in the Dwarvish tongue, and the speaker must have both fists clenched. Unfortunately, there is a 50% chance that the bearer will suffer a bludgeoning attack (2-7 damage, d6+1) when it arrives. For RMSS: Balic's Jaw is +10, +15 for Dwarves. Dwarves attune to the shield at a +20. Other aspects of the shield are as detailed above. If the shield is called by the bearer from a distance there is a 50% chance that he will suffer an A Krush critical when it arrives. XP 1,475 GP 16,000.

"Hander the Beardless was regarded by most Dwarves he encountered as a bare-chinned fool, but his shield was a prize any of them would have gladly borne. The shield was actually wrought from the steaming metal of a fallen spell-slain Golem called Balic—hence the name. Bearers of Balic's Jaw have been well-chronicled over the years, and have numbered several famous adventurers. Gaught Ha'Crest of the Fastred's Folly companionship is known to have carried it, and likewise Amerlin Ree of the Kestrel Eight (before, sadly, they became the Kestrel Six). For that matter, any half-wit dim-quilled sage can tell you at length of the Company of the Strutting Crow, whose captain raised the shield's Iron Wall to hold no less than five dire specters at bay until priestly assistance could be found. Hander himself actually met his end while bearing the 'Jaw. It seems that he, never being truly facile of tongue nor overly familiar with the language of Dwarves, misspoke himself and unwittingly affronted several of them in some deep place beneath the ground. However unintentional the insult, its ending was the repeated meeting of beardless chin and hammer-head...a finish rather final in nature..."

YELFLAMM'S WARD:

Known to have been carried on many journeys by Yelflamm of Gelhulsk's Ford, a half-elf known to have borne a great hatred of harpies, this shield is +1, +5 versus the attacks of any flying creature. The 'Ward is of superior construction, with arm-straps of Peryton hide and buckles of Griffin beak. Thrice each day the bearer of Yelflamm's

Ward can pronounce a single dire command word (*this word is scribed on the reverse of the shield's face*) to instantly hurl any nearby flying creatures towards the ground. All airborne creatures within 80' (*including those flying with magical assistance*) will involuntarily drop 50' towards the ground, with the appropriate unpleasant consequences if they encounter a solid object (such as, saaaaaay, a roof or the ground) on the way. If a single flying creature is so attacked, it must save versus Spells at -6. Two creatures save at -2, three or four make saving throws normally and five or more gain a +3. Tales have it that while Yelflamm triumphed over many unnatural creatures of the skies, he was finally drowned by Kelpies and his shield lost while journeying up the river Torrenthing. For RMSS: Yelflamm's Ward is +5, +25 vs. flying creatures. The command to fall is a 12th level Power Word. One creature attacked with this word suffers a -30 to RR. Two suffer a -10, three or four RR normally and five or more gain +15. XP 2100 GP 19,500.

"Yelflamm and his spear spelled the doom of many a winged creature on the frontier. It was he who hunted down and slew every member of the Harpy flock that devoured Nocien Worlain during the misrule of the Theocrat Vatikyn I. Yelflamm met his fate in the deep currents of the river Torrenthing, while journeying with Nine Blazing Torches adventuring band. His companions were unable to save him from the hunger of kelpies swimming by night, despite even the sorcerous speed of Thrikal Talfir or the prodigious strength of Jedceor Far'Tor. It may be that the shield lies even yet on the river's bottom, for certainly no one has used any magics like it over the past several decades, at least not in the public eye. Thomien Bryne went looking for it, before searching for the nest of some legendary Roc, but it is not in my memory that he found it..."

LOREHL, THE THIRSTY BUCKLER:



Lorehl (*and this is the shield's proper name*) is a finally-made buckler +2 which will scarcely encumber its wielder. Such is the excellence of its craftsmanship and magic, in fact, that anyone bearing the buckler gains the full protection of a normal shield while moving and fighting as though not wearing one at all. Thus the Thirsty Buckler can be worn by someone wielding two-handed weapons without penalty. Lorehl resists all but the harshest attacks against it without scarring, and so is little marred despite long years of use. Little of its crafting or past is known, though it has changed hand (*sometimes bloodily*) among several different adventurers (odds, most of them elven) over the past several winters. The buckler takes its name from its unique ability to "drink" magical potions—if such an elixir is poured slowly over the buckler's face it will be quickly soaked up, and will absorb all of the potion's magical properties (whatever those are) as it does so. Lorehl's bearer is subsequently able to call upon those properties sometime thereafter, just exactly as if he'd imbibed the draught himself. The Thirsty Buckler may hold up to three such potions at a time, and each will keep its potency for up to two weeks before the enchantment must either be called upon or lost.

For RMSS: Lorehl is +10 and protects as a wall shield against melee (not missile) attacks. All other powers are as described above. XP 900 GP 14,500.

"A useful relic it is, if you have a goodly store of potions, elixirs and magical draughts lying about. Lorehl has a distressing tendency to change hands the hard way, and for some reason is much desired by adventurers of Elvish stock. Were I the kind who stomped around in an ettin's weight in armor and gear, I'd rather the damn thing soaked up a good tankard of ale or a flagon of brandy...But then if I were the type to wear all that hot metal, I might well need the occasional healing elixir or enchanted potion."

PLUNDER

The Pillager's Guide brings you the finest in plunder, jewels and gems and works of art that any self-respecting thief would steal for and any worthy fighter would sack a castle for. Why? Because after hacking through legions of foes and wading through rivers of gore, no one wants a '50 gp. Gem and a 200 g.p. jewel'. What kind of lame-assed description of treasure is that? Adventurers who hack want loot they can brag about. Here are a few jewelled articles any self-respecting pillager would be glad to plunder!

01-20: A round shield of blued steel, its boss of darkest, burnished black iron. Thin inlays of jet are worked into its face in the semblance of capering shadows, and marching studs of moonstone circle its face, just a fingerswidth from the rim. The rim itself is bound in polished black wood, as are the grips on its back. Value: 1,200 g.p.

21-40: A kite shield of steel polished to such a glittering sheen that it throws back both light and reflections more truly than glass. An overlaid skein of silver on the shield's face lends it the appearance of a shattered mirror. May be found wrapped in a scrap of muslin. Value: 850 g.p.

41-60: A leather shield cover, well-tanned and unstained. Made to

mask the face of more drab ornaments during times when such display is demanded. A tall conifer is depicted on its face, picked out and outlined by gold filigree and colored brilliant green by flecks of crushed emeralds for the leaves and by brown agate for the trunk and limbs. Behind the tree is a background of snow-capped mountains, wrought with parchment thin plates of electrum, silver and platinum.

61-80: A round shield of layered, precious hardwood. Its boss is the head and forequarters of a rampant polar bear, one paw upraised. Black bear claws radiate outward from the boss like marks on a sundial. The bear is worked entirely in ivory, and the wood is scored by a series of clean, parallel gouges as though claws were once drug across it. The shield is rimmed with pure, white polar-bear fur, as are the buckled straps on its back. Value: 2,725 g.p.

81-00: A wall-mount for the display of weapons, above a table, fire or in a great hall. It is in the form of a shield. Two spears can be fastened to and held behind the face provided by the shield. A helmed face is depicted on the shield's front, with gleaming silver for the helm and reddish copper for the crest. Two eyes of smoldering amethyst peer forth from the visor, above a beard of coiling black onyx. Value: 10,225 g.p. □

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



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

The Brood boyz



"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

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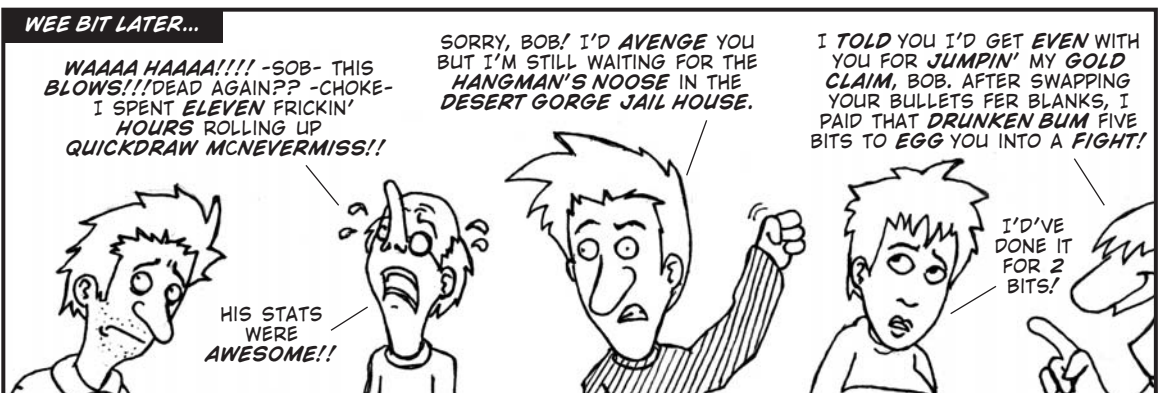
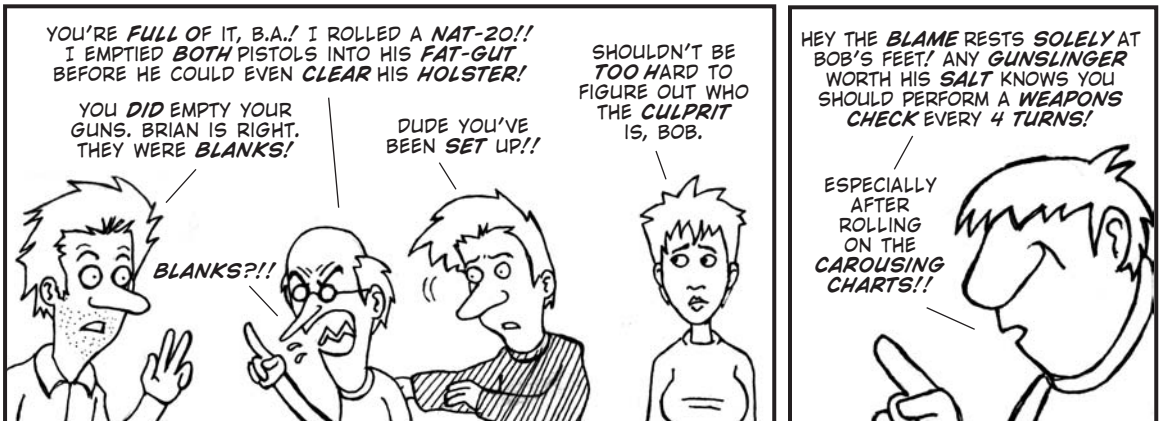
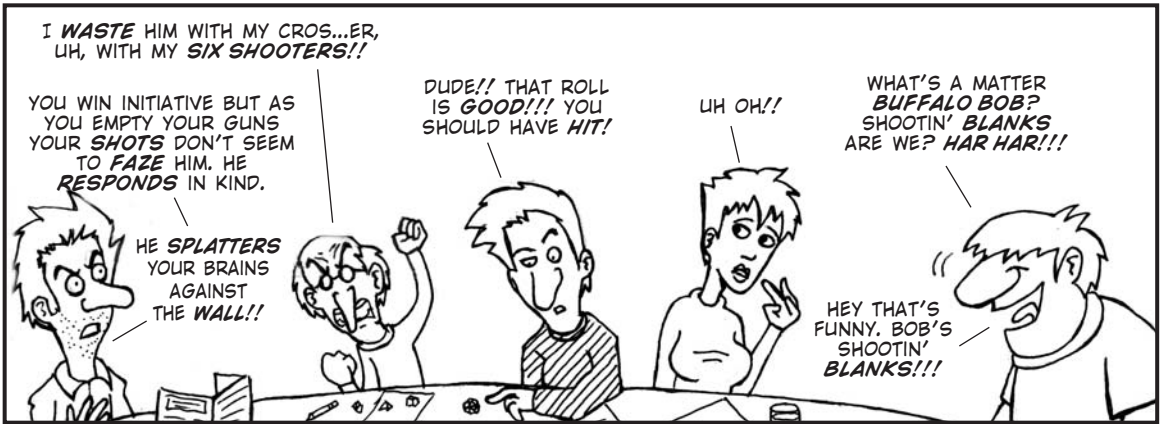
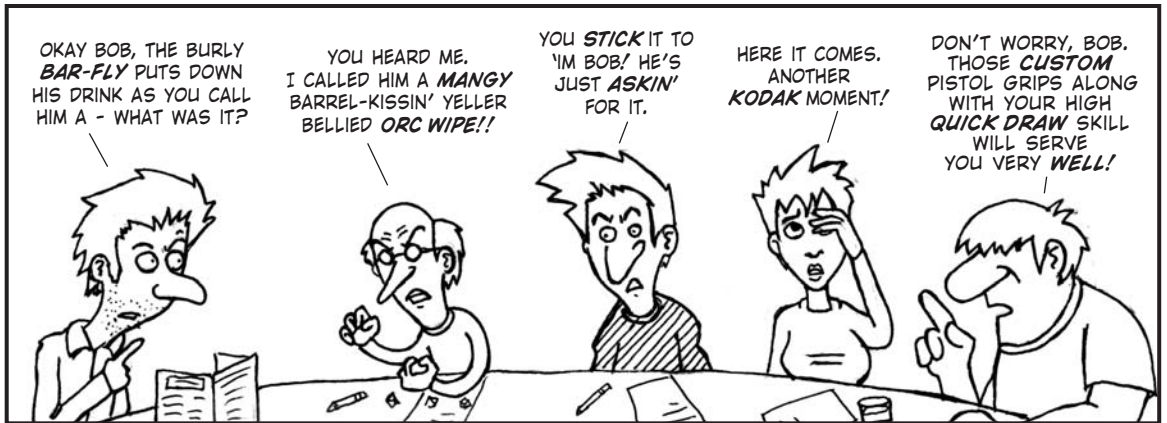
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BY PAUL MACNEVIN AND SCOTT DAVIES



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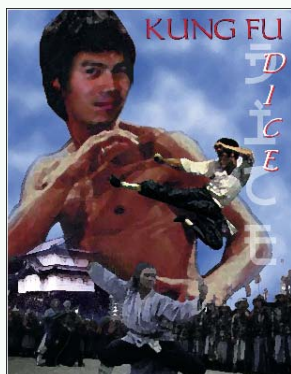
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KUNG FU DICE

A FAST & FURIOUS DICE GAME BY TODD DOWNING

THE SETTING: Imagine flying fists of fury — talented martial artists locked in mortal combat — a shrieking kiai that sounds like some-one's strangling a cat — in a land and time where the only law is that of foot and fist — and one's honor is his greatest possession.

YOU WILL NEED: Pencil, paper, several 6-sided dice and a couple 4-sided dice.

SETUP: Each player selects an equal number of 6-sided dice and 1 4-sided die. The number of 6-sided dice should reflect the character's skill. 3 or 4 dice are good for a quick game (4 can be the equivalent of the 4 limbs used for combat). Keep a score column for both players on the paper.

GOAL: The object of the game is to batter your opponent into submission. This is done by causing 30 points of damage to him or her.

PLAY: Both players "attack" simultaneously. This is done by rolling all of their 6-sided dice. Remove any dice whose results match the dice of the opponent (*i.e. one player 1 rolls 2, 2, 4, 5 and the other player 2 rolls 1, 2, 4, 6; player 1 removes one 2 and the 4, while player 2 removes the 2 and the 4*). The result of the remaining attack dice gets through in damage on either side. Each player then rolls his/her 4-sided die and subtracts that amount of the damage that he/she took (*this symbolizes the ability of the martial artist to shrug off damage*). The remaining damage is recorded in the appropriate player's column.

The first player to take 30 points or more is defeated. The victor gets a win to his/her credit and all associated bragging rights. The loser has the right to demand one rematch, which the victor must indulge if he/she is to save face. If the previous loser loses a second time, the victor need not indulge in any more rematches unless desired. He/she has satisfied honor and any further combat is undertaken purely for ego satisfaction.

Future losses against that opponent will of course count against him/her, which will eventually take a toll on his/her honor. If the previous loser wins the second match, the loser of the second match may demand a final rematch to settle the score (*a best of 3*).

MULTIPLE PLAYERS: You can play multiple combatants by using the following rules — teams should be equal, and each player should declare which of the opposing team members he/she is attacking before rolling his/her attack. It is generally bad form to double or triple team a single opponent, but if it happens the outnumbered player may distribute his/her damage as he/she sees fit. Another option for an outnumbered

player is to allocate his dice for defense, combining the remaining dice to counter incoming damage from the attacking players. The defender's combined dice must match an equal amount of incoming damage (*i.e. the defender can add a 2 and a 4 to counter an incoming 6*). This means that the defender won't be doing much damage, but will last longer against multiple opponents until his teammates can come to his aid.

OPTIONAL RULES: If you don't have any 4-sided dice, use an odd-colored 6-sided die to shrug off your damage. For more flavor, each player can use up to 2 single-handed weapons or 1 two-handed weapon (*symbolized by different-colored 6-sided dice — the effects are the same*).

Weapons can only be blocked by weapons (*so duplicating numbers are only removed if the weapon dice have the same result*). This can be especially brutal, and any unarmed player who loses a fight to an armed player loses no honor as a result. And the victorious player will begin to get a reputation for fighting dishonorably.

□

STYLES

If the players wish, they may use the optional schools and rules' variants listed below. They exist only for flavor, and none of them unbalance the game. We'll post new styles on the Deep7 website.

TIGER

Treat 1 hand as a weapon (*odd-colored die*) which can only be blocked by another weapon. The player must allow his/her opponent to use a weapon without honor.

MONGOOSE

If at least one of the player's remaining attack dice has a result of 6, the player may opt to vault completely out of the way of his opponent's attack, nullifying damage done to him in that round and doing a single point to his opponent.

DRAGON

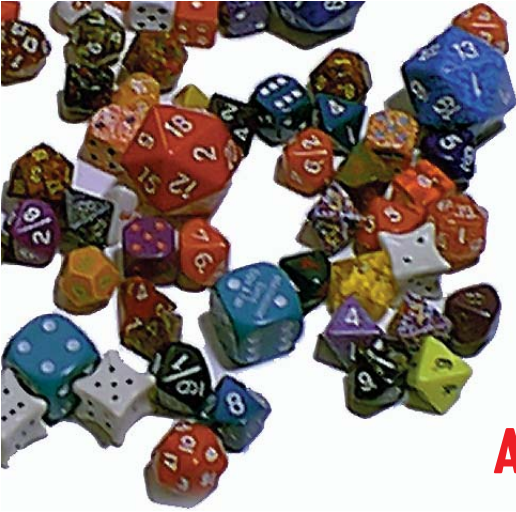
Each round, the player may call out a number from 1 to 6. If any remaining attack dice have that result, they cannot be blocked except by a weapon.

GHOST

If at least one of the player's remaining attack dice is a 6, the player may forfeit doing damage in exchange for taking half the opponent's damage and forcing the opponent to take the other half.

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For more kewl games like this check out their website at www.deep7.com.



RAGING DICE

A NEW DICE-THROWING GAME

BY WHITNEY WESTON

If you've been a gamer for a very long time you've undoubtedly managed to acquire a vast quantity of dice. You've purchased dice, received dice as gifts, maybe even been awarded them as prizes at gaming conventions. And as you've colored in the numbers with crayon or ink, used them in vicious and terrible combat against the most hideous of monsters, armies and players, run your fingers through them like they were pirate gold or a dragon's hoard of gems. Perhaps you've wondered what it would be like to throw all of your dice all at once.

Well wonder no more. **Raging Dice!!!** is the game where all of your dice come into play. They are your armies, and their clatter across the table is like the thunder of artillery from wars long past. They charge into battle with infinite courage and resolve, and their victory is your victory.

THE BASIC GAME

This version of **Raging Dice!!!** uses only the six-sided dice, or d6, and you're going to need every stinking one you can get your power-crazed claws on. Go ahead--rifle through your **Monopoly™**, **Risk™**, and **Yahtzee™** sets. Break open the bubble on your **Pop-O-Matic™**. Pilfer the souvenir casino dice your Aunt Bertie brought back from Atlantic City. You're going to need them, along with two to six players (*including yourself*), who, by the way, should have brought their own dice.

The player with the most dice begins the game by **Calling Out** (*challenging*) any one of the other players, and together they gather their dice and roll them, making sure each player's results are kept separate from the other's. (*In other words, don't get your dice mixed up with your opponent's.*)

Once the dice have stopped rolling, each player counts the number of dice that have come up with a result of one (1); these are called **Bullets** and are kept apart from the rest of the player's dice, which are called **Shot**.

The number of **Bullets** a player rolls is the number of his opponent's **Shot** dice which have been **Shot** and **Killed**; those dice are then removed from play, to be put back into the players dice-bag so they aren't accidentally re-introduced into the game. (*Accidentally--yeah, right.*)

No **Bullets** are ever removed from play; if a player has somehow managed to roll more **Bullets** than his opponent's total of **Shot** dice, then only the opponent's **Shot** and **Killed** dice are

removed. The rest of the player's **Bullets** have no effect.

During the course of his turn a player may **Call Out** the same opponent again and again, or **Call Out** another opponent, or **Withdraw**, at which point his turn ends and the player on his left takes his turn. Play continues until only one player has dice remaining on the table. That player has thrown himself headlong into the crucible of high-pitched battle and emerged bloodied but unbowed, tortured but triumphant, shaken, but not stirred, battered, but not fried, beaten but victorious. There's only one name for a player like that--**The Winner**.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Bad Billy Bullseye sits down at the table with Terrible Tommy Gunn and Insane Elaine Disdain. He's brought fifty-three d6s with him, while Terrible Tommy has forty-seven d6s on this day, while Insane Elaine brings forty-eight dice to this angry party. Bad Billy glares across the table at Terrible Tommy with eyes glaring like twin billion-watt lasers.

"I Call You Out, you filthy, dirty, mangy- sidewinder of a rap-scallion!"

"Y-y-you're not a very nice person!!!" replies Terrible Tommy.

"Raging Dice!!!" they each scream, and the dice begin to roll.

Bad Billy comes up with eleven Bullets, while Terrible Tommy ekes out a mere five Bullets. Each removes the dice that have been Shot and Killed, leaving Bad Billy with forty-eight dice and Terrible Tommy with thirty-six.

Bad Billy has drawn first blood, and you can almost see it trickling down the sides of his mouth.

"I'm Calling You Out again, you pathetic excuse for proto-plasm!!!" snarls Bad Billy, the words streaming out along with little flecks of saliva.

Terrible Tommy wipes off his glasses and snarls back, "I'd call you a disgrace to humanity but you might take it as a compliment!!!"

"Raging Dice!!!" rings out through the room, and the dice fly across the table. This time, Bad Billy can only manage three Bullets, while Terrible Tommy rolls up--Jumpin' Jehosophat!!-- eighteen freaking Bullets! Bad Billy stares at his thirty-three remaining dice, while Terrible Tommy breathes a sigh of relief at the sight of his thirty-three survivors.

Visibly shaken, Bad Billy slumps into his seat and croaks out, "I Withdraw." Terrible Tommy now takes his turn, and he turns to Insane Elaine. "I'm Calling You Out, he sneers, you wretched degenerate hussy of a floozy!"

"That's no way to talk to a lady, you-imbecilic imbecile!!" shrieks Insane Elaine. The dice fall where they may, and the game continues.

THE ADVANCED GAME

Now that you know how the game works, it's time to bring in the rest of your vast dice collection. In order to equalize the probabilities of rolling the *Bullet* with the various polyhedrons, (after all, it's harder to roll a "one" on a d20 than a d6), the following table is used:

THE DIE:	THE BULLET IS:
d4	.....1
d8	.....1, 8
*d10	.....1,0 (zero)
d12	.....1, 12
d20	.....1, 10, 11, 20

*includes twenty-sided dice that are only numbered zero(0) through nine(9)

Otherwise, the game plays the same as the Basic version. It just takes a little longer to count up the Bullets.

OPTIONAL RULE: DODGING THE BULLET

The players should decide in advance whether this rule is in effect. When a *Dodge* is rolled on a die, it avoids being *Shot* and *Killed*; the die is not removed from play if an opponent rolls a

Bullet. The *Dodge* number for each die is as follows:

THE DIE:	THE DODGE IS:
d4	.....4
d6	.....6
d8	.....4
*d10	.....5
d12	.....6
d20	.....5, 15

*see first table notation

EXAMPLE: *Jammin' Sam* is down to his last seven dice, while his opponent, *Sid Malicious*, as sixteen dice left to do damage. With a malign chuckle *Sid* rolls and comes up with--oh, no--nine Bullets! But wait! *Sam's* roll comes out to three Bullets--and four Dodges! Not only do three of *Sid's* dice go off to *Shot and Killed Heaven*, but *Sam* gets to keep all his remaining dice on the table-- for now.

Author's Notes

Two items that might be useful for this game are a cup with which to throw the dice (in case you have more than you can hold in your hands) and something to catch them in (*like a shallow box lid*) so they don't scatter across the table and onto the floor. And please, people, don't play for "keeps"--that only leads to broken hearts and broken friendships. That's not what we want--right?

Above All--Have Fun. □

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Grey Ghost Press, Inc.
<http://www.fudgerpg.com>

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...Any Character



EQUIPPING THE DUNGEON MASTER'S TOOL KIT

by Kenneth Newquist

In *Dungeons and Dragons*™, Dungeon Masters are gods. They create worlds, control the fate of millions, and rain down destruction on those foolish enough to annoy them. On some days though, even gods could use a little assistance.

Fortunately, the net can help.

DunGen alone could keep half the world's shield monkeys from losing their minds (*as well as their hair*). It's a random dungeon generator that creates excellently formatted dungeons in **Microsoft Word**. And not only that, you can set the climate associated with the labyrinth, and even what monsters you want to populate it with. Or you can just skip all that and let the creator do all the work.

In either case, the resulting dungeons include maps, encounters and room descriptions. It's great for creating a quick dungeoncrawl, but it's also excellent for those DMs who want to create a huge dungeon, but don't want to take hours detailing every closet. It runs on **Windows 95/98** machines, and requires you to download a few **Microsoft** extras, but it's well worth the set-up time.

Defrags Realms is packed with goodies that'll make DMs drool like a cavalier hungering for a +5 *bastard sword*. Its **Adventures** section has over three dozen modules ready for download, but it's the netbooks section that is the real find.

It includes 30-odd downloads including the **Net Monstrous Compendium**, the **Compete Guide to Herbs in RPGs**, and a few downloads designed to help DMs with adventure ideas and campaign mechanics.

It's a *Realms-centric* site, and some of its information is colored by that setting, but it's a good resource for DMs of all worlds.

One detail my players always trip me up on is names. They capture some third-rate, nearly-dead orc, and the second thing they ask (*right after "where's your treasure?"*) is "*What's your name?*" It's usually followed by an annoyed groan by me and the retort "*His name is Grak*" followed by, "*but the last five orcs we met were named Grak... maybe it means something..*"

Fortunately, brain-addled DMs can turn to the **Fantasy Name Generator**, a tool that creates names for a variety of races including human, elf, dwarf, halfling and orc. It also has options for *Tolkien* and *Warhammer*-inspired names.

Even more useful is the **Village Generator**, a sister site to the **Fantasy Name Generator**. This tool creates an entire village -- large or small -- com-

plete with a map, list of buildings, and inhabitants. It goes so far as to detail homes, inns, castles and wandering war bands. Both of these tools are Web-based, run without having to download any special programs, and are generic enough to use with any game system.

Of course, being a DM isn't just about creating dungeons, villages and lots of compelling flavor text. No, it's also about creating cruel and sadistic traps, which is where **The Trap Collection** comes in. It's a simple, plain text Web page, but it includes trap gems such as "**Treasure Ain't Always Treasure**" and "**The Deadly Pit of Doom.**" They're the kind of traps that'll make DMs cackle with maniacal glee.

The **Random Log-Line Generator** probably won't help DMs come up with their own plot lines, but it may keep them amused until they think of something on their own. The generator spews out random ideas for television sit-coms and dramas, and may explain why there are so many bad TV shows every fall. Still, the ideas here just might spark a creative rumbling or two for DMs - just think of where you could go with the idea "five meteorologists exchange brains."



Have a site that will make a game master's life easier? Have a game system or campaign setting you'd like to see featured? E-mail me it to me at knewquist@nuketown.com

DEFRAGS REALMS

<http://www.defragsrealms.com/>

DUNGEN

<http://rpghost.com/DunGen/>

FANTASY NAME GENERATOR

<http://spitfire.ausys.se/johan/names/default.htm>

VILLAGE GENERATOR

<http://spitfire.ausys.se/johan/village/>

THE TRAP COLLECTION

<http://www.aros.net/~jseeley/trapcol.html>

RANDOM LOG-LINE GENERATOR

<http://www.lifeformz.com/idea/idea.cgi>

The Shields of Baudran

THE STENCH OF BURNING FLESH AND AGONIZING SCREAMS FLOOD THE NOW SMOKE-FILLED CHAMBER AS TUBAR UNLEASHES HIS DARK POWERS ON THREE OF PRINCE KURASI'S ADVISORS.

QUICKLY, BRING FORTH THE SHIELD OF LIDA! WE MUST COMPLETE THE CEREMONY.

AT ONCE, MY LIEGE.



THE BATTLE'S DIN ALL BUT DROWNS OUT THE ADVISORS' CEREMONIAL CHANT.



QUICKLY, FOR THE SMOKE IS DISSIPATING.

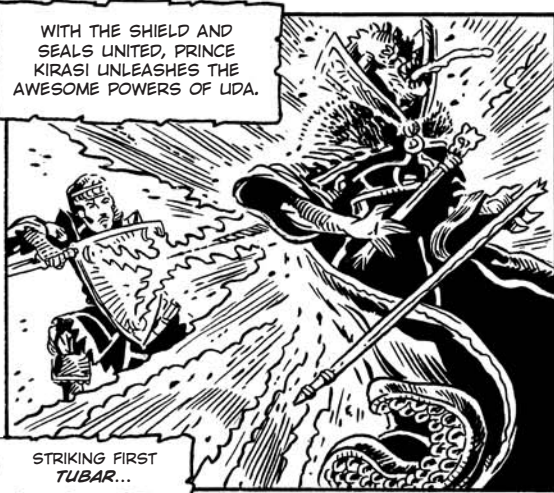


YOU ARE TOO LATE LITTLE BROTHER. I WILL ENJOY ROASTING YOU LIKE PIGS ON A SPIT.

NOT IF I HAVE ANY SAY.



NOT MY STAFF..... NOOOOOOOO!!!!



WITH THE SHIELD AND SEALS UNITED, PRINCE KIRASI UNLEASHES THE AWESOME POWERS OF LIDA.

STRIKING FIRST TUBAR...



...THEN TURNING THE BLAST TO THE REMINDER OF HIS MINIONS. THE POWER OF LIDA PROPELS THE INVADERS BACK THROUGH THE MYSTIC GATEWAY.

A FINAL BOLT AIMED AT THE GATEWAY
CAUSES THE PORTAL TO IMplode.



WHEN THE DUCHY
OF BANDRAN IS IN PERIL
THE POWER OF LIDA
IS GREAT.

THAT IS WHY THE SEALS
ARE STORED SAFELY IN THE RED
TOWER UNDER THE EVER-WATCHFUL
EYES OF THE VILNA GUARDS.

BUT SADLY,
THE RED TOWER AND
THE VILNA GUARDS
ARE NO MORE.

THAT IS WHERE
YOU ARE MISTAKEN.



FOR, I PRINCE KIRASI, HEREBY
APPOINT YOU, GAREN, AS THE
NEW COMMANDER OF THE VILNA
GUARDS...AND YOU, LORALE AND
POSEN, AS COMMANDER GAREN'S
LIEUTENANTS. I CHARGE YOU TO
REBUILD THE TOWER AND THE
VILNA GUARDS.



BUT NOW, FOR THE
TRUE PURPOSE OF THE
SEALS OF LIDA, THE
ANointING OF THE ONE
RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THE
DUCHY OF BANDRAN.

WHAT IS YOUR FIRST ORDER,
GARE-, ER,
COMMANDER GAREN?

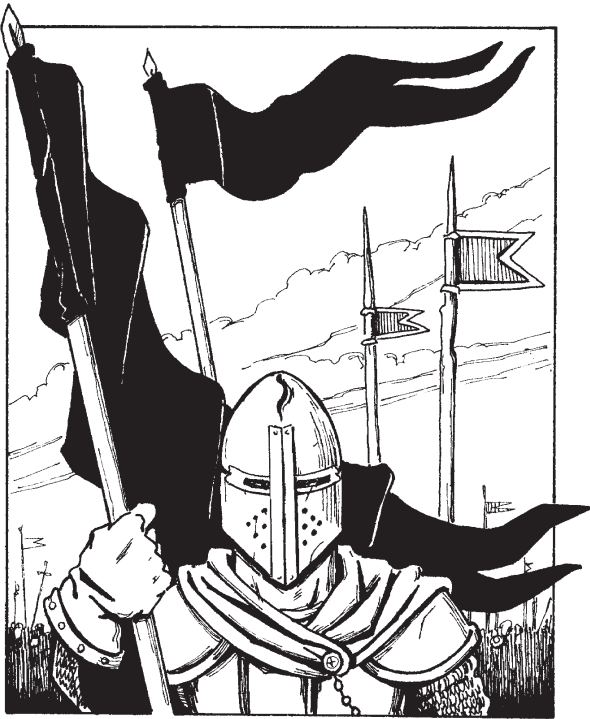
WE WILL RETURN
TO OUR SHATTERED RED
TOWER. THERE WE WILL
GIVE OUR FALLEN
BRETHREN THEIR PROPER
VILNA BURIAL RITES AND
BEGIN THE CLEANSING OF
THE TOWER'S
REMAINS.

BUT ON THE WAY, LET US
FIND OURSELVES A SIDE OF
BEEF AND A FEW JUGS OF
KASELIAN BRANDY!



THE END

authored by the KODT Development Team of Jolly, Brian, David & Steve



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A look at Far West

by John O'Neill



FAR WEST

Issues # 1 thru 3

Written and Illustrated by:

Richard Moore

Publisher:

Antartic Press

website: www.antartic-press.com

One interesting thing about a monthly column is that it forces a certain amount of editorial honesty. For example, I usually start off planning to review the latest glamorous and weighty fantasy bestseller. But looking back over the last 30 days -- in fact, looking back a lot longer than that -- I find that the most engrossing read I've stumbled across isn't something with a big name or a quarter million dollar advertising budget. It's an erratically published black

and white comic book from a small independent company: Richard Moore's dynamic **Far West** for Antarctic Press.

It's been a while since I paid close attention to fantasy in the comics market. True, there's a lot of wonderful material out there -- Jeff Smith's brilliant **Bone**, the mammoth **Cerebus** volumes from Dave Sim and Gerhard, and Kenzer & Co.'s own **Avelon**, just to name a few -- but I've also read more than my share of poorly written or just downright uninspired fantasy comics, thank you very much.

But I'm a sucker for both an attractive cover and a promising new title. And **Far West**, whose fourth issue arrived at my local comics shop in April, is graced with a set of colorful and action-filled covers executed by creator Richard Moore.

And so it was with a cynical eye that I found myself flipping through, and eventually buying, the first two issues. Within twenty-four hours I was back to buy the third issue, and two days later I was hounding the store owner to order the fourth, already sold out. Such are the rewards of the incautious cynic.

Far West is set on the American Frontier in the 1800's, in the rough and tumble town of... of... well, let's just say that it's waaaay west. The main characters are Meg, a

hard-bitten elf bounty hunter who dresses in leather and Indian garb, and her partner Phil, a talking Kodiak bear who's a dead shot with a rifle.

Meg makes a living bringing in small-time local outlaws -- mostly ornery badgers and the like -- and despite her tough-as-nails attitude, it's clear she hasn't tangled with much worse. But when a nationally sought bandit is spotted in the area, drawing the attention of high-powered detectives and bounty hunters from out east, her professional pride forces her to step up to what may be the greatest challenge of her career -- one that very quickly gets her in over her head. For Darien Voss, murderer and train robber, was last seen riding a great dragon, a creature that could destroy her entire town.

There's lots to like about **Far West**. First off, the artwork is wonderful. Moore has a real gift for character. Meg and Phil are drawn marvelously, of course, but so are the many folk they encounter, from the mundane to the fantastic. My favorite are the ogres -- huge, hulking brutes who are 80% shoulder, yet somehow are still rendered with exquisite care and gentleness.

Even the first issue's water demon, a hissing inter-dimensional creature mostly teeth, claws and tentacles which Meg finds in her bath, compliments of an unnamed assassin, is drawn two pages later clutching its hand with an expression of surprise and wounded pride. Anyone who so successfully mixes horror and humor, and cares enough to use a fascinating character in place of a card-stock monster, is well worth watching.



continued on page 53



Quake 3: Arena vs. Unreal Tournament

By Rick Moscatello

It seems my little crack last issue about **Quake 3** struck a nerve, a number of people wrote me to say that **Q3** was the best thing to happen to gaming since 20 sided dice.

So, let's set the record straight right up front: **Quake 3** is an awesome game. The only problem I have with it is that **Unreal Tournament** is better in so many different ways. Yes, the original **Unreal** was lamer than a planet full of one-legged dwarves, but the sequel made up for it in a big way. Let's look at some of the highlights of each game:

GRAPHICS

Sometimes it seems like I'm the only person on the planet that doesn't care about graphics. Did the lousy graphics of **PONG** keep it from becoming popular? Heck no! So, I'll happily concede that, maybe, the graphics of **Q3** are superior, especially when it comes to the player models. If you want to be a walking eyeball, there's no doubt about it, **Q3** is your game. Although, **UT** does have mutations, which allow your character to change mid-game, so it isn't completely outclassed even in the graphics department.

GAMES

Quake 3 has one game: *deathmatch*. That's it. Yes, you can go on the Net and get a mod, but for every good mod that gives you hours of fun, there are a half dozen that drain hours of your life away in unamusing play. **UT**, on the other hand, has everything from the get-go. Want *deathmatch*? Sure, there's plenty of levels for that. Prefer *Capture the Flag*? Yep, tons of levels for that. *Domination*? Yeah, **UT** has domination levels built right in. Did I mention assault? Well, **UT** wrote the book on assault levels. **Q3** isn't in the same league as **UT** when it comes to game variants. There is nothing like storming a beach, fighting your way through tunnels, up ramps, and into the weapon control chamber of an assault mission in **UT**. One night, the opposing team managed to get control of the Frigate in 54 seconds--and my team came back and did it in 52 seconds. The glory! Think we were tempted to go over to **Quake 3** and pointlessly kill each other for a while?

WEAPONS

These games are all about the weaponry, and, once again, the designers of **Q3** seem to have been napping. The primary weapon in **Q3** is the rocket launcher. In 95% of the locations in the game, the rocket launcher is vastly superior to any other weapon (except the uber-weapon, the *BFG*, which usually isn't available). If you have a rocket launcher, and your opponent doesn't, then the odds are almost certainly in your favor. In a few, rare, instances, the rail gun is a good choice, but if you've got the rail gun, and your opponent has the rocket launcher, then he still has a chance even in a worst-case scenario. There are another ten weapons, but you'll never use them if you have any choice at all. There's just no balance in the weaponry at all.

Unreal Tournament has 11 weapons, and each has an alternate fire--pretty much doubling the weapons in the game. This would be meaningless if **UT** turned into the "**Quest For The Rocket Launcher**" game that **Q3** is, but, the weapons are done

right. Yes, some weapons might not be as good as others in some situations (eg, the *biosludge* weapon has short range and isn't very accurate, so you'll get creamed if you fight at range against someone with a sniper rifle), but EVERY weapon you pick up can be used effectively, most of the time. Even if you have a favorite weapon, the alternate fire mode gives you tactical choices that you just don't have in **Quake 3**. Sometimes you'll want to use the shock rifle for pinpoint accuracy with a blue bolt of force, other times, a slower moving sphere of force that does less damage over a wider area, is a wiser choice. The other weapons likewise have options that are worth considering.

SOLITAIRE

Both games are lean on storyline, but even in an Internet world, there are times when you need to play alone. In **Quake 3**, the enemy "bots" have four skill levels: stupid, hard, ridiculously hard, and freakin' impossible.

The accuracy of the bots make little sense. If I'm standing still behind no cover, the bots, on "ridiculously hard" can hit me about 90% of the time. If I'm running, jumping, and behind cover, and the bots are under fire while running and jumping, they can STILL hit me 90% of the time. It's freakishly hard and at higher levels, your only hope is to exploit the holes in the AI. The bots on **Quake 3** don't pick up weapons/powerups, and, more importantly, don't look up much. Grab the good stuff, get some altitude, and you can beat them. Meet one at close range, and if it has the rocket launcher, you're dead meat in one shot, and it's two shots for anything else.

Unreal Tournament, once again, does it so much better. In deathmatch levels, the bots are pretty good, and will go for those powerups and weapons right away. Yes, you can take advantage of this by setting up ambushes, but humans are just as vulnerable to that tactic as well (I can't count the number of times I've nailed someone as he's running to pick up some extra health). There are also multiple skill levels, but the 'bots are customizable, so if you don't like some aspect of their skill, you can change it easily enough.

Since **UT** has more than deathmatch, the bots also have to be able to play the more complicated games like assault and capture the flag. They do it very well. As each objective is captured in assault, the defending bots automatically fall back to the next position, and the attacking bots automatically push forward. If you don't like the default commands, you can give them specific orders to attack or defend other areas. Yes, their intelligence is no match for a human, but the fact that they play the games with something even approaching cleverness is very cool.

Much like **PONG**, **Quake 3** is a great game for its time. Alas, that time was very brief. **Unreal Tournament** does everything so much better, and, even after a few months, I still find **UT** to be the superior game.

Next month, May, is when **E3** will happen in Los Angeles. **E3** stands for "Electronic Entertainment Expo", and it's the big mac daddy of computer gaming conventions. Every computer game maker in the world is there, hawking their wares. Even companies from China, Korea, and Scotland come for the show,

although, even after coming for three years, I don't have the slightest ideas what games they've made. Naturally, they only have small displays. Monster companies like Sony or Nintendo have "booths" so large that a person can get lost in them (*Nintendo even had a mock "computer game store" set up, sans the employee who says "can I help you?" as you walk in*).

This is the best place to go if you want game freebies. It's no problem at all to get T-shirts or stuffed animals or even free games, and if you know what you're doing, you can get "*Lara Croft*" paper doll kits. Last year they were allegedly giving away *Pokemon* dolls--they had a big room full of them. Even though I waited around for 30 minutes (*I'm a sucker, I admit it*), I never saw even one handed out to the huge throng of people hoping to get a stuffed *Pikachu* or something. The most amazing thing about E3 is the games that are "*coming out*" in the future. Every year, I'll preview maybe 40 games, and maybe 4 will actually see the stores shelves by the next year. Heck, I've got a half dozen T-shirts from games that will never exist.

My favorite example of this phenomenon is *Diablo II*. I remember, 2 years ago, the crowds around the computer consoles, waiting for a chance to play. You had to wait 20 minutes or more to get to play the sequel, which at least worked a bit, two years ago. Last year, the *Diablo II* displays were more controlled--it was private viewings only. I wonder if this year I'll only be able to see screen shots?

Anyway, I'm looking forward to going--can't wait to see what game will make *Unreal Tournament* a "*game from the past*". □

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEAN IT'S THREATENING YOU?

IT KEEPS FLASHING THE MESSAGE "YOU WILL FINISH THE CURRENT LEVEL MR. WUSS OR YOUR TAX FILES ARE HISTORY!!"

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

JUST KEEP CONFUSING THE A.I. WITH THOSE "PICK UP SELF" COMMANDS. I'LL GO FOR HELP!!



Book Review: continued from page 51

Unlike a lot of other people working in this medium, Moore also has a true sense of the possibilities of black and white. There's fine use of shadow, exquisite line detail, and genuine attention paid to the backgrounds -- details that are usually lost in a color book, but are showcased marvelously here.

Moore also demonstrates genuine affection and respect for Meg. Browse the shops looking for a book with a female lead and

you'll see exactly what I mean: rack after rack of semi-nude, impossibly proportioned comic heroines. While it's hard to say what "realistically proportioned" might mean to a female elf bounty hunter, you'd be hard pressed to say any part of her anatomy was exaggerated. And while there are certainly opportunities for Moore to pander to a male audience -- especially in the bath sequence and at the end of issue two, in which Meg is jumped in her bedroom by an animated toy soldier -- he shows a tasteful amount of restraint. True, there is an ele-

ment of elf immodesty in the way she dresses (*particularly with regards to, shall we say, her elfin tush*), but this is so much in character with Meg's brazen personality that it's easy to overlook.

Lastly, even with Moore's complete disregard for female comic conventions, I was still surprised to find him ignore the number one rule of the feminine hero: Meg isn't very attractive. By the fourth page in fact she's already suffered comments on her bulbous nose, and the reader's likely to have noticed long before that. Without any of the traditional shortcuts, Moore forces Meg to win our admiration the hard way.

And win it she does. Like a close friend whom you only discover is beautiful gradually, Meg wins us over with charm and compassion. *Far West* is one of the most original and compelling fantasy sagas I've read, in any genre, so far this year.

All four issues could be a tough find unless your local comic shop is very well stocked, but consider that part of the challenge. Trust me, the reward is well worth it. □



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THE STONE SQUIRREL

By Allen Gies

My group had just finished dealing with a medusa and we're looking for any valuables. As an off the cuff piece of backdrop parsley I mentioned that several woodland creatures had not only been turned to stone but arranged inside the medusa's cave in a mockery of a wildlife scene. The descriptions of deer, wolves, foxes and squirrels frozen forever in stone were apparently a little to much for one player who decided to take action.

He asked (*Being a ranger/druid sort of guy*) if the animals were still alive. I of course said yes, since this made him feel all the worse. I figured this might give him a reason to find the proper magic to restore the animals to life, but no. He asked if the stone was solid. I of course said yes, it's magic after all — This was the final mistake.

He proceeded to cast *Charm Animal* on a stone squirrel. Proclaiming that not only did he have a nearly invulnerable familiar (*bonded with telepathy*) but one who could, for example, be lowered on a rope down into wells, pushed into crypts, and thereby giving the group a near invulnerable scout.

I was not amused. □

"CAN I BE A CANNIBAL?"

By Jeff Dodd

The cannibalistic nature of Fairy Meat reminds me of an event that happened during the character creating process of a *Marvel Super Heroes™* game years ago.

My friend Anderson (*most groups have an Anderson at one point or another. He is the guy that really likes knives, is prone to outbursts but still is very funny in an unexpected kind of a way.*) is quietly sitting at the back of the room while the rest of us make up our assortment of heroic tight-wearers.

From this quiet corner comes the cry of, "*Ryder (GM), can I be a cannibal?*"

After a pause the answer of, "*No Anderson, think of a hero!*", can be heard from the front of the room.

A few more minutes go by and from the quiet corner comes the question of, "*Ryder, can I be a vampire?*"

To this the whole room erupts into, "*No Anderson, think of a hero!*"

The end result of this was the birth of **Axe Murderer the Hero** who carried an acid dripping fireman's axe. I guess that it just goes to show that sometimes the games that are the most fun have a demented little friend in them. □

WHAT'S WRONG, BUNK??!!

GOT YER 'OWN' TALE FROM THE TABLE BUT **NOBODY** WILL LET YOU **TELL IT?** COME ON IN FROM THE RAIN, DUDE. HERE IT'S **PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE TO TALK ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER OR YOUR CAMPAIGN.** E-MAIL YOUR **EPIC** - [ER, FUNNY]- TALE TO JOLLYBGOOD@AOL.COM

HISTORY ACCORDING TO HACKMASTER

by Laura Watkins

One day in government, my teacher was attempting to deliver a dramatic account of the framing of the Constitution. Surveying the class, he announced, "The year is 1789. You are an ordinary citizen of Philadelphia, enjoying a drink in your local tavern."

"From a nearby table, you hear the sound of men arguing. When you turn to look at them, one of them, a small man in a wig, beckons you over. He introduces himself as James Madison and points out the other men sitting with him: James Wilson, George Washington, and Roger Sherman."

"He says to you, '*We are trying to create a new law for this troubled young nation of ours, and we want to know what you, as a common citizen, consider most important for a new Constitution.*'"

Here the teacher paused, then asked solemnly, "*What do you do?*"

I never hesitated and screamed, "I waste him with my crossbow!" from my seat in the back.

The one or two other KODT readers in the class fell off their chairs laughing, but everyone else just stared, even after I explained.

It was the most fun I ever had in Government, and, as an added bonus, the teacher never calls on me anymore. I think, though, that I had better stop doing things like that. The teacher is starting to look like B.A. to me. □

ROASTING HARRY

By Lew Hodges

In a campaign I was in a few years ago we came up with a form of punishment for those party members who broke the faith or otherwise threatened the integrity of the group.

The first victim to be dealt this form of punishment was an annoying thief called Harry one of my friends used to run. Harry had a very bad habit of stealing from his fellow party members whenever the opportunity arose. One day he finally crossed the line - when the party ran into a gas-trap and was knocked out cold it was Harry who came to first. His first action was to 'rifle' through the pockets of his unconscious comrades and pocket any found valuables. (*Of course when we came to be claimed we must have been 'robbed' by strangers while we were passed out - that didn't fly with us.*)

After much thought we decided upon his punishment — we took a **Bag of Holding** and placed him in it. Then we cast fire balls into it and then beat the bag over a rock. Then we soaked the bag in bacon fat and coaxed an Owl Bear to eat it. Sweet justice! □

News, Rumors and Industry Buzz plucked

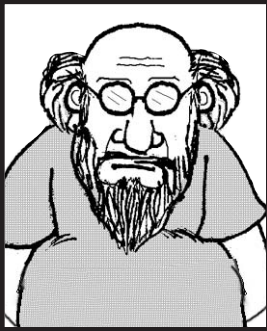


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1999 ORIGINS AWARDS ELECTRONIC VOTE

According to the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design, this year, public balloting for the ORIGINS awards will be available online through the GAMA website — www.gama.org. Please go there and vote for your favorite games and game related products. □



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

COINCIDENCE... OR CONSPIRACY?

Editor's Note: The following conspiracy-piece was recently discovered on <http://www.theescapist.com>. So convincing were the arguments presented we asked for permission to rerun it here. Coincidence or conspiracy? You decide.

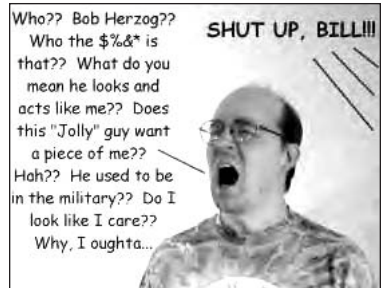
Few gamers are not familiar with the *Knights of the Dinner Table* comic book, which details the adventures of a small band of role-players, their fellow gamers, and several members of their gaming community. But hardly anyone knows about the remarkable *Kennedy-Lincolnesque* similarities between KODT regular Bob Herzog and keeper of *The Escapist*, Bill Walton. Similarities so remarkable, in fact, that it leads one to believe that there is something more to this than mere coincidence.

Has my identity been stolen? Is this an attempt to rob me of my very self? Or has the hand of fate rolled another critical miss on the "artistic creativity" table? I leave it to you, the reader, to decide...



BOB HERZOG

- First name begins with "B".
- Lives in Delaware County.
- Balding and wears dorky glasses.
- Looks like Bill with a carrot taped to his face.
 - Last name is Herzog.
- Plays in B.A. Felton's Hackmaster campaign.
 - Drives a Chevy Chevette.
 - Drinks lots of Faygo.



BILL WALTON

- First name begins with "B".
- Lives in Delaware State.
- Has a distinguished receding hairline and sports nifty Lennon specs.
- Looks like Bob with a nose job.
- Once played a Paladin named Herzog.
- Lives in the town of Felton.
- Drives a Chevy Nova (close enough!).
- Got sick from drinking too much Faygo at Origins '91

Not enough for you? Then I urge you to visit these web pages for more shocking evidence of the pillaging of my personality: www.kenzerc.com/comics/kodt/default.htm: The official KODT website, where you can purchase volumes and volumes of this plagiaristic rag. As if this flagrant theft of my identity were not enough, those scoundrels at **Kenzer and Company** have forced me to include the following statement: *KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE* and Bob Herzog and his likeness are trademarks of **Kenzer and Company**, and are used here with permission. All rights reserved. I, however, have no such legal fetters on my likeness. Once again, the little guy gets screwed. Hoody hoo, indeed. [Disclaimer for the terminally clueless: *Mr. Walton does not honestly hold any of the statements made above as the truth, and has no personal grudge against KoDT, the KoDT Development Team or Kenzer and Company. We all know that Bill is much more hip, handsome, and a bigger hit with the ladies than Bob Herzog could ever dream to be. Please consider the publication date of this particular column before taking it very seriously.*] □

BOGGLES THE MIND!

Breakfast of Demons (*makings of the low-budget gamer movie, GAMEMASTER, GAMEMASTER WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?*) have announced that a sequel is in the works.



The script for **DUNGEON RUBBER!** is finished and is said to including scenes of roleplaying actually happening in hell! New characters include Cageface (*Hell's Henchman*) and Blamey (*"The funniest thing you have ever seen we swear!" the writers claim.*) The star of the first film, *Sucs Face* will be reprising his role.

Sucs-Face the demon-turned Paladin from GameMaster, GameMaster What Have you Done.

New additions to the production cast include Nathan Meharg doing set design and Joe Trapasso creating an original soundtrack. Shooting will begin shooting soon. For more info go to www.breakfastofdemons.com □

• Frank Darabont (*THE GREEN MILE*) is expected to direct *New Line Cinema's* remake of *FORBIDDEN PLANET*. <http://www.ain't-it-cool-news.com> • <http://www.newline.com>

• **Constantin Film** has acquired worldwide rights and plans to co-produce an adaptation of *STONEHENGE 2000*. The historical epic, set in 2000 B.C., involves a rivalry between three brothers during the construction of Stonehenge.

• **Stan Lee takes on DC Comics:** Stan Lee is set to write a 12-issue prestige-format *ELSEWORLDS* miniseries for the publisher, entitled *JUST IMAGINE STAN LEE CREATING*. Each issue will feature Lee's own take on DC characters, alongside top artists. The series will include Lee's take on Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern and others. "During all the years I've been with Marvel, it was always fun to imagine how I might have written the DC characters," says Mr. Lee. "Now, it's really great to have the chance to reapproach the DC Universe and tackle the storytelling and characterization in my own style." <http://www.dccomics.com> • <http://www.stanleemedia.com>. □



COME JOIN THE KODT LIVE-READINGS!!

Can you believe it?? It's time for the summer cons again. That can mean only ONE thing — **KODT LIVE READINGS!!**

Be sure to check out your convention program schedules to find times and dates - then come join the fun.

Last year it was "standing room only" so be sure to come early and call dibs on a seat. This year's *GenCon™* reading will be on Friday at 7 p.m. Room E-1 (Event# 153) □

You might get arrested. Or fried.

Ohio State warns—and prosecutes—tunnel trespassers

By John Rauch

OSU is not seeing much light at the end of the tunnel. The utility tunnels that run underground on campus, that is.

The tunnels house power, water and gas lines, which run to all the buildings everywhere on campus. OSU would prefer that those dangerous crawlspaces stay secret. Of course, a few students have always found their way into them anyway.

But awareness of the system seems to be growing in the past year.

A Web site called *UnderOSU!* went online in December 1998, offering photos and a partial map of the tunnels. OSU got the site killed, but it has resurfaced on a private server in Canada.

A search of Internet chat groups showed some interest in exploring the tunnel system. But OSU Police Chief



14,000-volt power lines and "an invisible sword" of 600-degree steam: Ohio State says its underground utility tunnels are so dangerous that workers don't enter them alone. Not much. **drop 8 feet down into another tunnel.**

student told *The Other Paper* that he'd heard about the tunnels from a friend of a friend, not from the Internet.

Sweet said OSU, which put up more "No trespassing" signs in the tunnels last year, relies on students being scared off by the law. "It's a criminal trespass," he said. "We will prosecute."

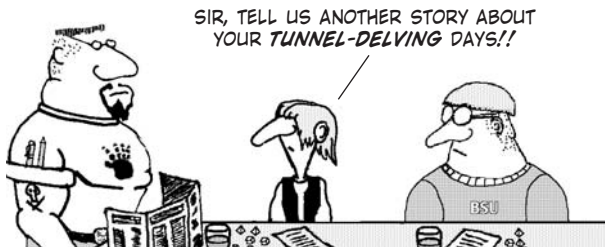
The main reason OSU wants to keep students out of the tunnels is physical danger.

Wallace Giffen, OSU's director of utilities, said the 100-year-old tunnels are so dangerous that Ohio State workers never enter them alone. He said they contain 14,000-volt power lines, venting natural gas pipes, and jets of 600-degree superheated steam that he likens to "running into an invisible sword."

"It's like a cave system," Giffen said. "There are pitfalls—tunnels upon tunnels. You can drop 8 feet down into another tunnel."

Larry Smith of Columbus, Ohio sent in this newspaper clipping from the March 16th edition of "*The Other Paper*". "I thought your readers might get a kick out of the troubles OSU (Ohio State University) is having with 'tunnel tourists'. It seems all that Nitro would need to do at OSU is jiggle a few doors to gain access."

We showed Nitro the article but he wants no part of it. Besides the fact that OSU seems intent on prosecuting tunnel-delvers, he claims he checked out the tunnel maps on **Urban Underground** and they only rank at a 7th to 8th level rating — far below the 12th Level ranking of his beloved BSU tunnels. [*ranking determined by the *HMPA Urban Underground Committee*.]



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. □

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YOU'VE GOT SUMPIN' 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.

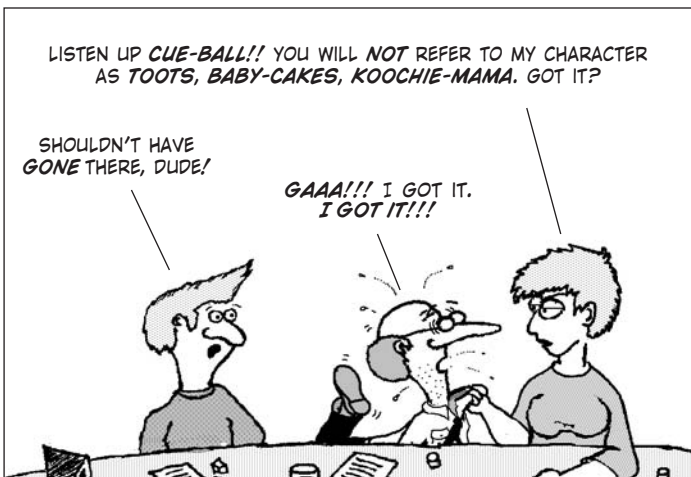
About two years ago now, my friend Harold placed an issue of KODT in my hands and said, "Here. Read this. You're Sara." I have devoured every issue I could get my hands on since, and enjoyed every one. One of the things I like the most about the magazine is that it isn't full of sexist comments. I have gamed avidly since age 15, and since I am both pretty and female, I have received more disparagement than encouragement. (*That is, until I began GMing, but that's another story.*) That is why I am outraged by the letter from Jay Dugger that you printed in Issue 41.

This is the guy who insisted that two women at a gaming table will immediately begin to try to prove who is prettier. Such a statement is ridiculous! The gaming table is no place for a beauty pageant, and real gamers know this. I can guarantee that in my 8 years of gaming and GMing, I have never once distracted from the game by playing with my hair or heaving deep sighs, and I only asked for help when I was a beginner.

I was introduced to gaming by a female friend, and while I am usually the only girl at the table, I welcome female additions. Unfortunately, too many women have had negative experiences with male GMs who figured "girl gamers" weren't serious.

Jay's letter was sexist and in every way offensive. Frankly, Jay sounds like the kind of GM who "kills off" his female player's female characters by getting them pregnant. (*Can I add here that that sort of thing really sucks? Thanks.*)

In conclusion, I am appalled and disappointed that you would print such a blatantly misogynistic letter. Women read your magazine too, and if I am the only one who writes in upset, I'll be very sur-



prised. I hope you will choose to print at least one of those letters.

Keep the Dice Rolling,

Simonne Grant
Girl Gamer/Gamemaster

Thanks for the letter, Simonne. I'll be honest - when I received Jay's letter I hesitated running it. After showing it to my wife (who had the same initial reaction you did) she said we should run it. "Don't worry, female gamers can handle themselves. We're used to standing up for ourselves."

As you pointed out yourself - "too many women have had negative experiences" like this. Hopefully your letter (and this forum) will enlighten a few of our readers.

And, as you suggested, you were not alone. Several of our readers (both male and female) wrote in about Jay's letter. Read on....

Jolly

I've been wanting to write in for awhile and now I finally feel like I have good reason too! First of all, I love your comic. I read very few comics, so you're up there all the way with **The Tick** and **Nodwick**.

Woo-hoo! Being a female gamer, I've always enjoyed Sara's character and how she has dealt with the Knights and, more recently, **Troy's Boys**.

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the way the Knights stuck up for her and, best of all, her reaction. I'd also like to say that I go to an all-women's college and have found many female gamers, much to my delight. My boyfriend and I have even started our own little gaming group with

first timers and they love it. I can't tell you how proud I was when, after their first gaming session, they read a strip I have posted outside of my door, **Armload of Trouble**, and they realized how funny it was. Each one explained that they just didn't get it until they had experienced a little role-playing.

I'm not sure if this would go in the Opinion area or table talk, but I just got issue #41 and I have to say that I'm a little dismayed at what Jay Dugger wrote. I've really worked on bringing in a lot of female gamers so that my girl friends as well as the guys would understand how much fun gaming is. Being with a majority of men, I still have yet to see one woman "playing with her hair, heaving deep sighs, and asking for help from other players" all in order to receive some attention.

This isn't to say that this might not happen, but I really hope that this isn't the majority of the opinion that men have for women who roleplay. I have seen players compete with each other (*who hasn't*) to prove strength, intelligence, or sometimes just pure stupidity, but never to get the attention of men/women. I think that KODT recognizes this. Sara has never gone out of her way to entice the guys. Think back to the mini-comics in the editorials with virtual hackmaster! Sara seems to have gone out of her way to make herself a good roleplayer and not a ditz. I would hope that an introduction of another female character (*which would be really cool*) wouldn't result in Sara suddenly becoming competitive for attention from

the Knights. She has their respect and their love, and it's just plain out of character! Thank you for letting me rant, sorry if this was too long. Oh, and by the way, I'm a Mac user, I feel your pain Jolly! We're eagerly awaiting **Baldur's Gate** out here.

Bonnie Bane
via E-mail

Thanks for writing KODT. It is simply the greatest comic strip of all time. 'Nuff said.

I've read many of your editorials on the subject of gaming as a source of friendship. A recent event has driven this point home for me and my friends. Our local game store recently closed its doors due to financial mismanagement - they were 3 months late on the rent!

Sunday was the big game day for most of us. Miniatures games, my **Star Wars**™ RPG, a **Dark Sun**™ game I play in, a **Vampire**™ LARP, and of course lots of different card games all ran on Sunday. In the core group of about 30-40 gamers (mostly 16-30 years old) we all knew each other and got along great. It was really a special place for all of us.

The news that the store would close was a shock. We found out on Friday and the store was closed by Tuesday. On that last Sunday we all stayed later than usual and reminisced about friends, characters, great adventures and the like.

About an hour before close, my friend Rob said it was like the last day of School. That sparked something in me and I went to get my **AD&D**™ **Players Handbook** out of the car. I had everyone in the store sign the last 2 blank pages of it. It is now the **Apocalypse Yearbook**, and the only one of its kind.

I read your editorial about the **MECCA "C"** a few weeks later and I was moved. This sort of thing is what gaming is really all about. I am still getting signatures in my **PHB** from people who missed that last night!

Name Withheld
via E-mail
Hoody hoo!

Once again Bob messes up everything BA planned. You would think that he'd learn by now, but I guess that this is what makes the Knights so fun. Still, it was great to see that Pete is more than a money grubber - hugging B.A. (admittedly off-panel) shows the solidarity of gamers. As for the safari itself, I'd say kudos for the **Beast Shaman** and his revenge against the Knights! It was fun to see Brian finally fumble, though he ran away.

In the end though, Brian's last journal entry as Teflon Billy disturbed me. Why you ask? Simple: the multiple resurrections these characters go through. Sara is the only one in these past 40 issues that has played more than one character (except in the **Retro-KODT**) - her deaths always seem final - yet for Bob and Dave, they keep coming back for more with the

same character. Plus, in the **Retro** strips, they are the exact same personality - true Munchkin gamers. Perhaps B.A. should try doing what Pete has done and have the players trade characters to run.

Finally, in issue 40, I'm surprised at Brian's move of stealing credit from Pete on "**Fairy Meat**" the game. While he has always been out for himself, this seems even more self-serving than usual. Also, what happened with his internet girlfriend?

Scott Bobnick
via E-mail

*As for Brian 'stealing' credit from Pete, We'd have to argue that's not the case. Brian is merely downplaying Pete's contribution and up-playing his own. He simply feels that his input to **Fairy Meat** has 'made' all the difference.*

*It's interesting that several readers wrote in to say they felt this was out of character for Brian. We would like to remind those readers of the time Brian stole Bob's idea for a pencil-sharpener miniature base in **Bundle of Trouble Volume Five**.*

Anyone who has ever collaborated on a creative endeavor can tell you that determining credit and by-lines can be a messy quagmire of contention. The surest way to offend someone is to not give them proper credit.

Even here at KODT when working on strips which have been suggested by readers we're never really sure what of the proper way to list credit. It's something we constantly review and talk about. For example, some readers have told us they prefer "story suggested by..." others prefer "based on a story by..."

It's a tough call. A strip suggestion may be as simple as, "You should do a strip about the Knights finding a Deck of Many Things!" or it can be much more elaborate - consisting of an very detailed script or even a story board.

Dave & Jolly

Please tell me the ad for the game **Fairy Meat** on the inside back cover of **KODT 41** is an April Fool's joke!

I love **KODT**, and I'm glad it's doing well; but I don't want to see every parody of gaming or half-baked **Hard8** product turned into a real product. It's bad enough that readers want actual rules to **HackMaster**, a game that, from reading **KODT**, glorified mindless killing and contains shoddily written, easily exploitable rules. Games like **Orcs at the Gates** are fun because they deliver the personal quirks and **KODT** references we fans love. Reading about something blatantly moronic, parodying gamers' love of mindless hack 'n slash, can be funny (like seeing them play **Fairy Meat**). But just because something's funny to read, doesn't mean it should be made available to play.

If this happens, what's next? Complete **HackMaster** adventures, complete with how the Knights screwed them up? **Hard8** aroma

dice? Guides to abusing henchmen and NPCs? Focus on keeping **Knights of the Dinner Table** funny and topical -- don't try to flood its fans with excessive merchandise.

As always, the latest **KODT** was well written. B.A.'s plan to get the Knights to role-play more was doomed to failure from the start. He thought he could bring their characters -- who regularly steal copper, pieces from beggars and, in **Cattlepunk**, rob every bank they pass by -- into a fabulously wealthy mansion and not expect them to kill the owner and rob it? (I liked Sara's reaction -- amazing how widowers are usually romantic leads.)

Weird Pete's reaction was nice, showing a non-materialistic side for a change. (Weird Pete's demerits system is all that would keep the Knights in check, but B.A.'s too much of a sofie to enforce it -- notice how often he winds up bound, gagged, upside-down and threatened by **Prowler**?)

It's nice to see Johnny's back at the dice (don't forget to update his bio!), and I would've enjoyed seeing **Crutch** playing with the Knights. Maybe a future strip?

The jungle crawl was an amusing trip that showed, once again, how single-minded the Knights can be. Their eventual demise was nice -- too bad B.A. didn't stay upright to enjoy it. I also loved the "real" mail-order Russian bride for Gamers. HAH!!!!

Anyway, that's all from me. Keep on gaming!

Jim Lynch
via E-mail

*We hear ya, Jim. In our defense, let me just say that fans have been screaming for **HackMaster** for several years now. If we wanted to make a quick buck it would have been all too easy to crank out a **HackMaster** rpg to meet demand and cash in.*

*Instead, we decided to wait (even turning down several lucrative licensing deals from interested third-party companies). This isn't to say we aren't going to come out with a **HackMaster** - just that when we do - we want to do it right.*

*As far as **Fairy Meat** we recently demoed the game at **GAMA 2000** and it was a huge hit. The game should be out about the time you read this. Do me a favor - write us again, AFTER you've had a chance to either play it yourself or to observe someone else playing it. I think you'll be surprised.*

Jolly ☐

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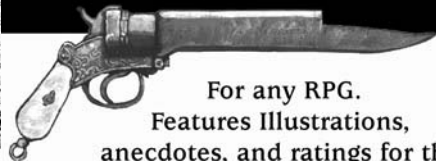
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Events include AD&D, Deadlands, Civilization,
Diplomacy, Star Fleet Battles, Battletech, Vampires,
Rifts, Warhammer 40K, Rolemaster, MTG and Axis
and Allies. Other activities include miniature
wargaming, trivia, and figure painting contests.
Registration: \$21 until 20; \$30 at door. Write to:
Gamefest XX, 3954 Harney St., San Diego, CA 92110

WEIRD PETE'S BULLETIN BOARD

is a meeting place where readers may pass along information, barter, trade and gossip. Readers are invited to place classified ads, announce group meetings, seek out other players, etc. Subscribers of KODT may place classified ads free of charge with a limit of one ad per issue and a maximum of twenty-five words. Non-Subscribers may place ads at the rate of 50¢ per word with a limit of 25 words. Companies may place ads at the following rates: [5.5" x 2" - \$160], [2.75" x 2" - \$80], [1.5" x 1" - \$40]. Non-profit organizations (serving the gaming community) and Conventions or Seminars may place ads for free. All ads are placed on a first-come first-served basis with subscribers having priority.

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SLEEP.

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EITHER.



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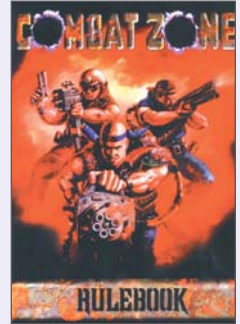


PUBLISHERS!!

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COMBAT ZONE

Paladin Publishing
www.cintranet.co.users/mugridge



According to the blurb on this boxed Aminiatures game, *Combat Zone* is a “fast and deadly, action packed game set in a future world of corrupt corporations and crazed street gangs.”

And that's pretty much what the game delivers. This game was originally published in England and picked up by Holistic Design who now supports it.

The box contains a 32 paged rule book (with a mini-campaign), 30 detailed plastic miniatures, 12 (count 'em) dice, a die cut sheet of counters and templates, quick reference sheet, a roster pad, beginners guide and several sheets of die-cut 'scenery' which can be used to set-up 3-D playing fields complete with broken walls and buildings.

The rules are surprisingly easy to learn and covers small-arms combat and squad-level skirmishes and close combat very well.

Brian's Rating: Hack Worthy!

AXIS AND ALLIES: EUROPE

Avalon Hill (Hasbro)
P.O. Box 200, Pawtucket, RI 02862
Email: www.avalonhill.com



Fans of the original *Axis and Allies* board game will rejoice with this spin-off version from Avalon Hill. I've been aching to get my hands on a copy ever since I saw a mock-up version at GENCON last summer.

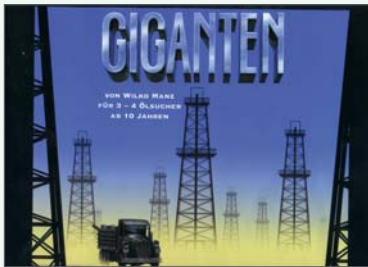
Upon opening the box, I felt as though I was greeting an old familiar friend. Many of the components looked very familiar — well, almost. The first thing I noticed is that Japan is missing. As the title suggests this game concerns itself with the European theatre only. The new board is beautiful. I drooled as I anticipated all the toe-to-toe battles which would be waged on it very soon. The second thing I noticed is that the playing pieces were frickin' awesome. Each nationality now has its own tailored set of pieces. The Americans have Sherman tanks, B-17 bombers, P-38 Lightnings etc. The Germans have Panthers, Stukas and Heinkels. The Russians have T-34s and so on. The pieces have to be seen to be believed. Even the soldiers are accurate with the appropriate uniforms, helmets and small arms. Amazing!

Such loving attention to detail. But how does the game hold up? If you're familiar with the original game you'll feel right at home. For the most part play is the same. There are a few differences. There are two new combat units; destroyers and artillery. There are also provisions for German wolf packs (which affect Allie IPCs). Bombers can now be escorted by friendly fighters. So....what's the verdict?

This game rocks! With the addition of naval engagements and the absence of Japan, the fighting seems fierce and the tension high. A game worthy to carry the A&A moniker. And you thought Avalon Hill was dead. tsk tsk.

Brian's Rating: Rocks Ass!

GIGANTEN: OIL IN TEXAS • Kosmos (Spiele Galerie) • Stuttgart, Germany



I toted this game back with me from the Essen Game Fair last fall and it quickly became a favorite at our monthly game-meet. In fact, my friends have been verbally reprimanding me for not reviewing it sooner.

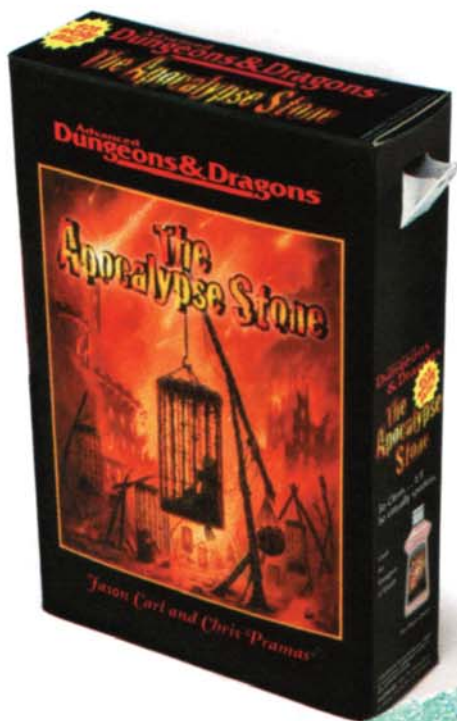
This is a German game but fortunately some a very good English translation of the rules can be found on the internet. So if you happen to run into this game at a convention don't be afraid to pick it up just because you don't speak (or read) the language.

The premise of this game is simple. You and three other players are wanna-be oil barons. You must take your starting money and explore the untapped Texas oil fields in a race to see who can make the most money in the world of oil exploration. Using your truck (which acts as your pawn on the game board) you roam about the oil fields looking for promising sites where you can raise your oil rigs. Each rig you set up will produce one barrel of oil per day (until it dries up). The problem is, you must transport that oil back to one of three refineries via your rail line at the end of your turn or it is lost.

Money is earned by selling your oil to the oil companies. However, the price for crude oil constantly fluctuates from turn to turn. Each oil company will only buy oil once per turn so you and the other players must bid in auctions (using license cards) to win the chance to sell your oil. Without money you won't be able to afford new rigs so the auction rounds tend to be fierce. This game is cutthroat. Nice guys are quickly buried and only the ruthless survive to claim the spoils. My kind of game.

Brian's Rating: Black Gold

REMOVE UNWANTED SPOTS



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YOU MIGHT BE A GAMER IF...

- A significant fraction (maybe all) of your investment portfolio is in games.
- You never miss local games conventions.
- You're on a first name basis with the owners of the local games stores.
- You had a falling out with your GM after your favorite character died.
- You carry dice in your pocket.
- You built a to-scale castle for your miniature figurines to attack.
- Your gaming paraphernalia takes up more space than your major appliances.
- You are conversant with tactics and weapons of pre-modern armies.
- You remember your most famous die rolls.
- You buy collectible games at auctions, but never play them.
- You spend more time organizing your card collection(s) than you do with your significant other/spouse/ family.
- You've saved all your character sheets.
- You have dreams about role-playing for real.
- The first thing you did with computers was to program a d6 random number generator.
- You have more gaming anecdotes than stories about your own family.
- Gaming buddies often refer to you and your characters by the same name.
- You have lucky dice.
- The first thing you do with a new game system is to rewrite the rules.
- You have a standing order for junk food at the local convenience store
- You remember when games cost \$8 and came with little dice.
- You have worn-out dice that have the numbers colored in with a wax pencil.

THAT'S IT! I PUT A POX ON YER DICE! MAY ALL YOUR TUMBLES BE FUMBLES FROM NOW UNTIL THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN!



- You will play games with people you can't stand otherwise.
- You've wondered what your personal stats and skill levels are.
- You've actually approximated what the stats of your friends would be in your favorite game system.
- You've yelled "critical hit" while watching a movie or TV.
- You see every crappy SF and fantasy movie that comes out.
- You have a d30, or a giant novelty die.
- You've played a monster-sized game that took a day or more to set up.
- You've rolled dice to make a decision such as which movie to go see or what channel to watch.
- You use the name of your favorite character as your screenname or ATM pin number.
- You complain about the inaccuracies in fantasy movies. (*"Good Lord, Dragons don't fly like that!"*)
- You've considered joining the Army because it would be 'fun' to play soldier.
- You've checked out books on Weather and Plate Tectonics from the library to better design your 'world'.
- You've gotten angry at someone for suggesting that Gabrielle is anything other than a just a 'good friend' to Xena.
- You feel you can NEVER have ENOUGH dice.
- At a con, given the choice of eating that day or buying a new game - you pick the game hands down.

by Larry Granato

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meat is meat
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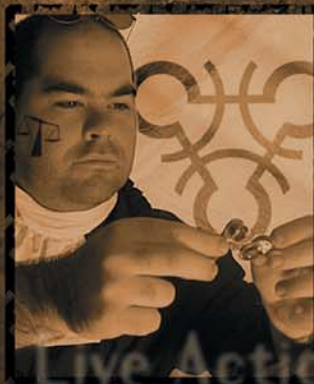


**KENZER &
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Passion Play

Fading Suns

Live Action Role-Playing



May 2000

Finally, the much-requested live action rulebook for Fading Suns! Noble masques, duels of honor, palace and cathedral intrigues, scavenger hunts amid alien ruins – now players can live out these stories at conventions or in their own homes.

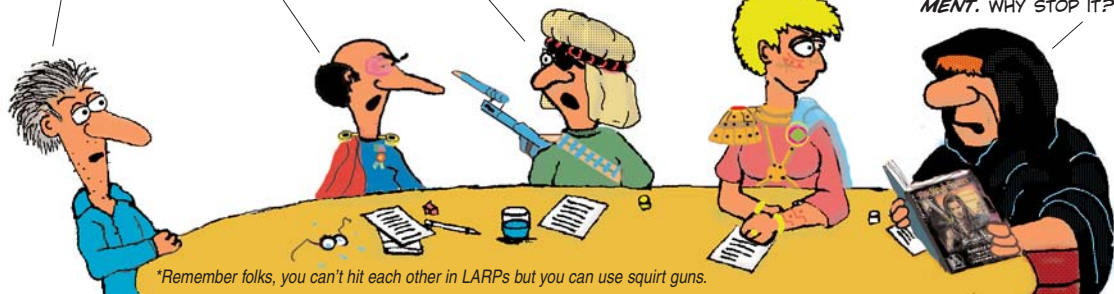
DAVE?! WILL YOU STOP PUNCHING BOB IN THE FACE?*

FIRP!! SPUTTER!!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
YOU BROKE MY GLASSES YOU BIG GOOF!

BRIAN? WILL YOU PLEASE HURRY UP AND FIND THOSE DAMAGE RATINGS FOR HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT BEFORE THEY KILL EACH OTHER.

SEE??? MY FIST DOES A LOT MORE DAMAGE THAN AN OPEN HAND SLAP. I THINK THEY MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE ON THOSE DAMAGE RATINGS OR SOMETHING.

ACTUALLY I FOUND IT TWENTY MINUTES AGO. THE INDEX IN THIS BOOK ROCKS! BUT THIS IS JUST TOO MUCH ENTERTAINMENT. WHY STOP IT?



*Remember folks, you can't hit each other in LARPs but you can use squirt guns.