



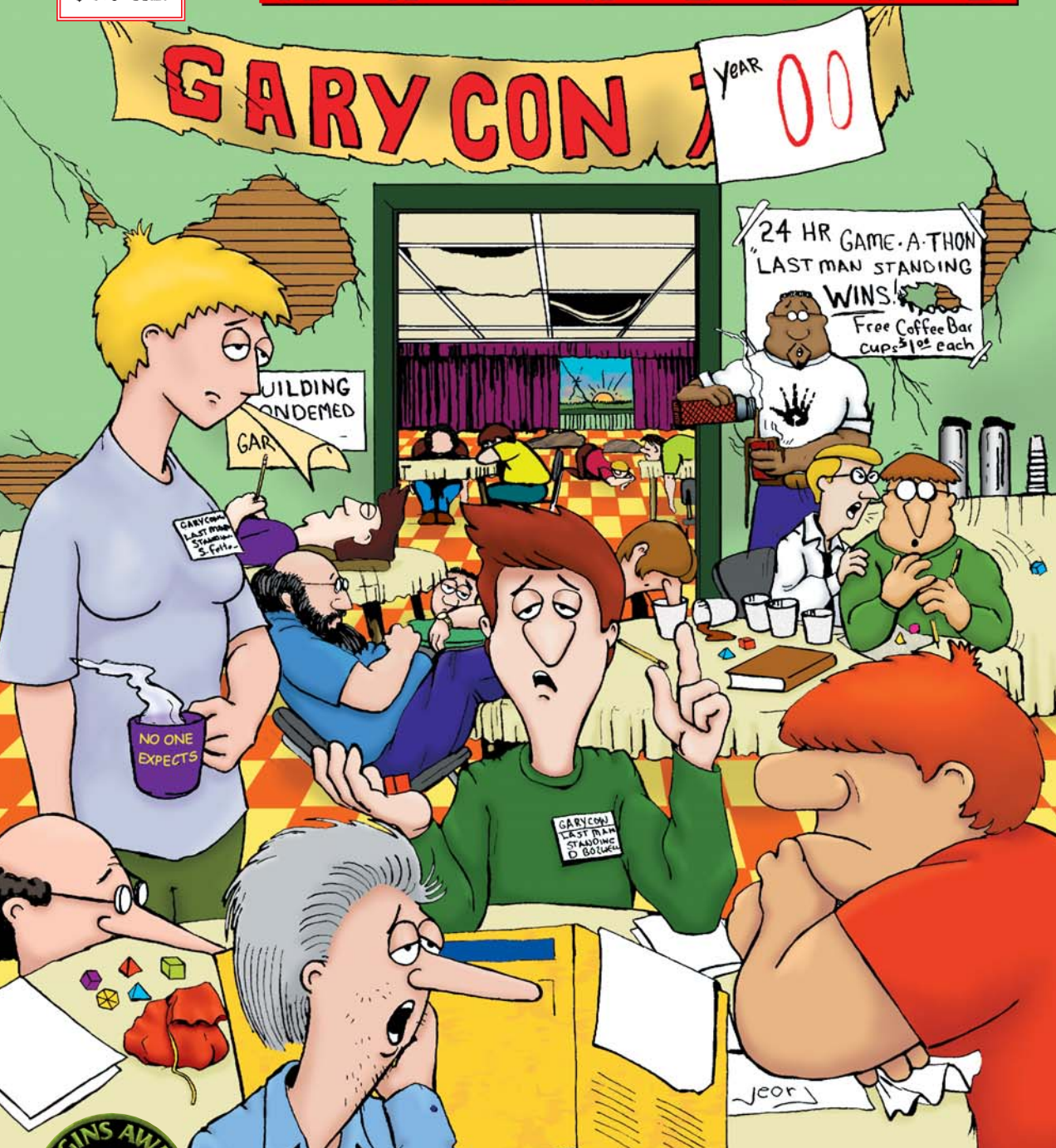
KENZER & COMPANY

No. 46

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Knights of the **D**inner **T**able™

M A G A Z I N E



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Knights of the Dinner Table #46
HACK AND ROLL ALL NITE
August, 2000

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

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

M A G A Z I N E

"HACK AND ROLL ALL NITE"

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS

JOLLY R. BLACKBURN • BRIAN JELKE • STEVE JOHANSSON • DAVID S. KENZER

Cover Art: George and Jackie Vrbanic • Editorial Assistance: Barbara Blackburn and Noah Kolman

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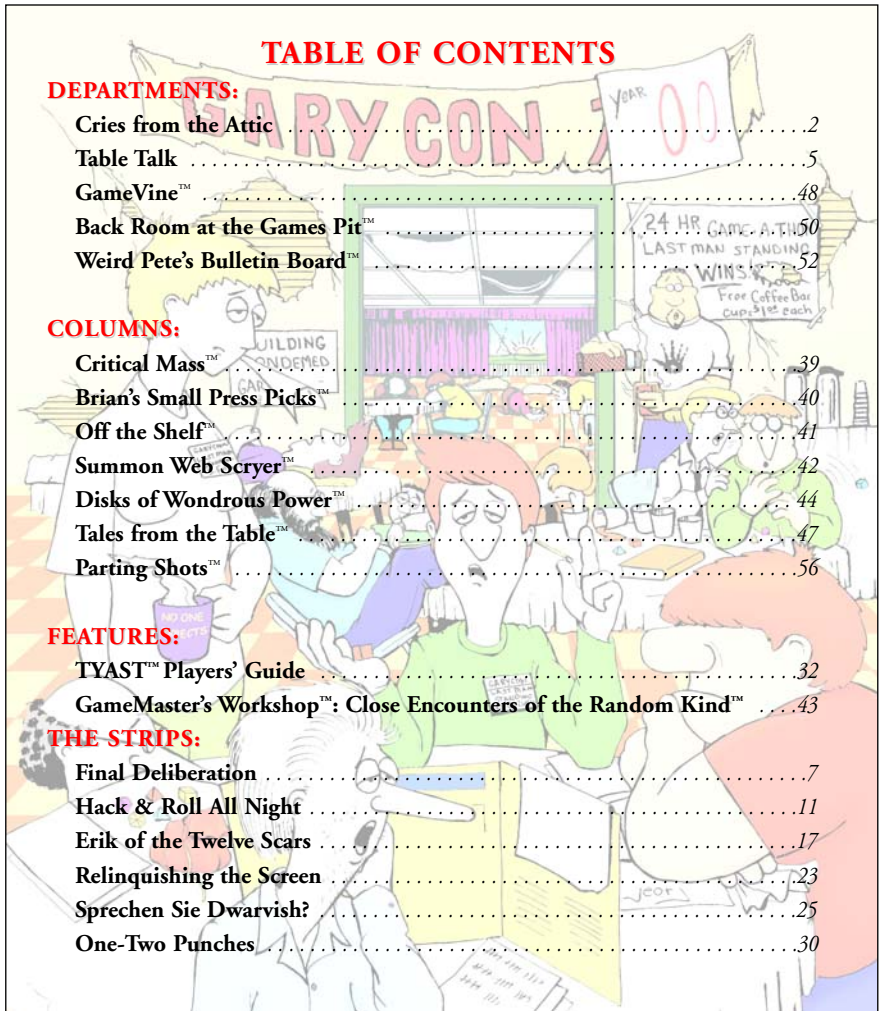
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KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™ was accidentally created by Jolly R. Blackburn way back in 1990 as 'filler' for his small press magazine, SHADIS™. Writing and drawing KODT strips, however, isn't nearly the lonely job it was in the past. Since joining 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. We look forward to seeing where the gang takes us next.

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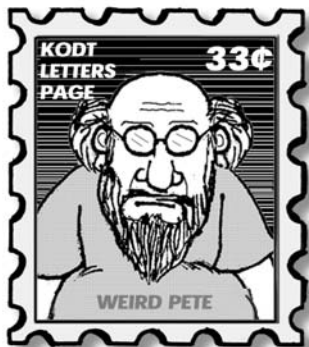
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Dear KODT,

Hi, just wanted to drop a line saying I saw the article in issue #43 regarding **Star Frontiers™**. Thanks for the coverage! Just wanted to let you know that SF has quite an active Web presence. We've had three SF conventions (*just recently over the Memorial Day weekend*), we have over 150 members on our listserv, we have over 20 websites on our webbing, and we've even published some (*nonofficial*) products for SF (*three Conbooks stuffed with articles from a lot of different authors, two modules, and a referee supplement*).

Again, thanks for the coverage. Many of us orphan RPGers really enjoy your comic. Keep up the good work!

Brad McMillan
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I was reading through **Penthouse Forum**, uh, I mean **Wizard**, and saw that **Knights of the Dinner Table #1** was in the **Top 10 Hot Back Issues**. Congrats. You've probably already seen it, but they list a *David Day* as the artist/writer. I don't own a copy of **KODT #1**, but I assume you wrote (*or wrote the majority*) of those scripts, and of course **KODT** is your creation. They even describe the book as "*Day's Knights of the Dinner Table . . .*"

What a rip, sorry. Man, your book is finally given a nod by the big boys, and they miscredit. I assume *David Day* is maybe the cover artist. Just thought I'd let you know so you can write **Wizard** or something so they don't do it again, on the off chance that you haven't seen it.

Christopher Heath
via E-mail

Thanks for the letter, Chris. A few dozen fans saw the list and emailed us in protest saying, "wazzup with that?"

David Day, of course is the marvelous talent behind Shields of Bandran (The fantasy strip which just concluded its 12 issue run in KODT #44.) I was happy to see KODT make the list and the miscredit didn't really upset me (or the other developers) as much as many people would have thought. What I

Our Readers Talk Back!

really mean to say is that we've made enough mistakes ourselves. (Read some of the other letters this month and you'll see what I mean.)

Being in the zine-biz ourselves we know how painfully easy it is to make mistakes. So there are certainly no hard-feelings or plans to execute a "takin' out the trash" operation against the editors of Wizard. (Though we may challenge them to a Grudge-Match at GaryCon 2000).

Many thanks, however, to all the readers such as yourself who are watching out for us. It's greatly appreciated.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I have never read a better (*and funnier*) comic until I had the chance to see the **Knights** in action. As with many other letters you have received shouting praise about the **Knights**, just put this at the top of the pile.

Since starting with issue 23, I have laughed my butt off over every issue. I had to back track to get some of the older issues, and am still working on getting them all.

Too all of the people that criticize the magazine in any way, if you don't like it, don't read it. There is a method to all the madness, and good things are best left alone. That sounds kinda cliché but tough noogies.

The magazine, in general, is fantastic. I enjoy all the strips, and the occasional strip of the **Black Hand** group is welcomed. But, in my humble opinion, there are a few parts that I think should not be in there. The **Shields of Bandran** and all the other sections of what I call "*filler*" are a waste of good space that could be devoted to more strips of the **Knights** or the **Black Hands**. Although, the additions of the **Tales of the Tables** and the like is welcomed, for it brings back many a memory of the adventures (*and misadventures*) that I have had the chance to participate in. **Parting Shots** is great and should always stay - very funny and usually humorous (*even funnier when you actually try some of this stuff out in person*). Of course, this is just my opinion, and will be overlooked if it disagrees with others.

You have created one of the best magazines on the market, and it portrays many of the situations that we gamers have encountered. Although I usually do not whip out my +12 **Hackmaster** and lay waste to a giant band of orcs or waste all the cripples on the street with my crossbow or bring multiple fireballs online to kill all the townspeople for the E.P.'s, I look forward every month to your magazine.

Keep up the good work, and in the immortal words, **HOODY FREAKIN' HOO!!!!**

Nathan McLeod-Hughes
via E-mail

Good feedback, Nathan. We're certainly aware of the old maxim, "You can't please everyone." so we expect the occasional letter from a reader who doesn't like a particular column(s). As I stated a few months ago we tend to run a negative letter over another 'atta boy' letter everytime. The result, I fear, is that we sometimes create the illusion that 'everyone' is complaining or criticizing the magazine. This is far from the truth.

The overwhelming majority of our letters are from readers who simply want to say, "Good job!" so I apologize if Table Talk sometimes suggests otherwise.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I just finished reading **KODT 43** after randomly finding it in a game store that I was checking out. I found **KODT** in **SHADIS™** years ago when I got a couple of free copies at **Norman Conquest** (*which sadly no longer exists*).

I rejoiced loudly with **Hoody Hoo's** (*much to the discomfort of my neighbors*) as I saw that the **PAC** that I had submitted, [**#42**] had been used and by **Stevil** at that, **beb beb...**

I knew it was only time until one of the writers wouldn't be able to resist such an allusion to the **Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy...**

I was a little put down when the list was published without any of the club member's names included, but now I have been fulfilled! I love you, man! (*In a friendly way*)

Doruk Ozaydin
via E-mail

Oops. Speaking of editorial-mistakes... Thanks for the letter Doruk. Yes, regretfully we did neglect to run the names along with the list of Player Advantage Codes we ran in BOT 4. I apologize. I'm also sad to hear that Norman Quest is no more.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I received my comp copy and check yesterday for my article. (**Icebreakers**) Thanks!

We have a small problem.

Not wanting to flood you with minutiae that would be forgotten anyway by the time you went to press, I didn't mention

that **Icebreakers** was a collaboration. I figured I'd just mention it when you told me you were going to print it -- IF you even intended to use it.

It's my fault; I should have made it clear when I sent in the submission. You can even blame me when you mention it prominently next month in a correction: "Lloyd, trying to steal all the credit for himself, forgot (cough, cough) to mention MARK BRIDGEMAN, who inspired and helped develop the article."

I'll take care of his payment out of my check.

The strip at the end was pretty hysterical, by the way. You make even me look good!

Lloyd Brown III
via E-mail

No, that's not good enough, Lloyd. I insist you get up before the KODT Live Reading at GenCon '00 and publicly apologize. Then we flog you and make you drink curdled milk.

After that may we can force you to wear a frilly dress and dance with....

Or maybe I should just share some of the blame. As you stated I neglected to let you know we were running your (and Mark's) article. See what I mean about editors making mistakes?

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I'm reading through my back issues of KODT today and I come across the spoof ad in #22 for "Build Your Own Dwarf Kits: The Legend of Sturm Pyre" (pg. 11). All fine and dandy until I notice that of the three pictures of "Sturm Pyre", two of them have his left leg missing!

Now as any true KODT fan knows, it was Knuckles who had his left leg missing. Sturm Pyre was missing his right leg. Good God, talk about your continuity flubs! (Although the fact that the true Sturm Pyre is eviscerating his foe with his wooden leg helps take up a good deal of this unfortunate slack.)

I swear to the gawds, I will never look at a KODT comic again. In fact, I'm burning my collection as soon as I send this little missive off. How could I possibly enjoy it knowing that this type of lackadaisical attitude is being taken towards its production?

It just makes me so angry I could cry, dammit.

(HmMMM? What? Am I serious? Of course not! Sheesh!)

Justin Bacon
via E-mail

Justin, Justin, you're slipping. If you recall, Gary Jackson had the molds for the Sturm Pyre

figures retooled because, to his shock and dismay, he discovered that the wrong leg was missing.

Isn't it obvious? The artist he commissioned to do the Sturm Pyre figures goofed. The first batch of Sturm-minis were based on the flawed drawings. Gary didn't see the need to commission new artwork so there ya go.

Oliver Tandy
Director of Continuity
HardEight Enterprises.

Dear KODT,

I just finished reading Issue 42. "A Very Delegate Situation" was the best strip. I loved how B.A. used the "Kryton principle" to basically slap the Knights in the face. But the coup-de-grace was how Brian used it and tore B.A.'s hope to shreds like a wet paper towel. Brian is one of the best characters.

Dave is the best because of his lust for Hack. Just make Sara's b**bs bigger by about one cup size, and she'll be up there too. You probably won't post this cause I used the word b**bs.

Your faithful reader,

Capt.Amazing
via E-mail

*Captain, I'm confused. What the hell is a b**b? Is that a type of fire-arm? I wasn't aware Sara was packing. (That might explain B.A.'s 'NRA' reference in Bundles of Trouble #7)*

Okay, I'm dodging the subject. But for good reason. Sara packs a mean right-punch and if you said that to her face she'd deck the BOTH of us.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

If you haven't watched, the last couple of episodes of WB's *Angel* it included a (rich) geeky techie who plays D&D quite often.

They make it out to be some kind of geek and freak game. I for one don't really see any problem with it. If gamers can't laugh at themselves then we don't deserve the right to laugh at others. I have said to people that "I am a geek and proud of it!"

Gaming is one of the oldest industries in the world, and I don't just mean the "modern" style of historical gaming and RPGs and CCGs! I include all the ancient games like Chess and Go.

Gamers have existed in every culture and in every time. So I say, laugh it off, just as we should have done after the first issue of flames about that sitcom flaming D&D.

Justin Stange
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I have just finished reading issue 43 and I haven't laughed so hard in many years. Your stories parallel my own gaming experiences so closely that I sometimes wonder if you and I didn't do some gaming together.

Do all of your ideas come from gaming that you are currently involved with or from recent pasts? I would love to contribute some of my own experiences if you would be willing to view them. Keep up the good work gentleman.

Steve R.
via E-mail

Many of the stories are based on real experiences of the developers. But a lot of strips are woven around ideas/seeds suggested by our readers -- which is why we encourage readers to send in their ideas.

We can't pay for story suggestions but you will get a free signed copy of the issue your idea is used in.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Greetings! I'm a semi-fledgling gamer who's run upon some bad luck with the dice recently. I and my co-workers/gaming group are huge fans of your comic and we remembered mention of a dice cleansing in one of the strips. What I'd like to know is whether you could tell me the procedure for said dice cleansing. I'm pretty desperate to get my mojo back.

BTW- I'm an aspiring artist, sketch work mostly, and part of the anthropomorphic fandom. I've got a couple projects in the works in my free time and my local GM and I have a few KODT storylines that might prove interesting. If you're interested, or know someone I could contact, please let me know.

Bill 'Star-Gazer' Kuelbs
BattleFleet Arlington Gaming Society

I consulted with Bob Herzog and Brian van Hoose. Not knowing the type of dieldice involved and the particulars of your unlucky streak they were reluctant to provide the details you asked for. (Something about a nasty lawsuit the H.M.P.A. lodged against a player who gave bad advice and 'cursed' an entire gaming community in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Which may explain why there hasn't been a Hack Journey champion out of Tulsa in 16 years!)

If I can track down Earl, I'll try to shake him down for the info. I'm told he's a little lax with guarding secrets.

Jolly

□



Dear,
KODT

SOMETHING ON
YOUR MIND?

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WANT TO TELL US
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Final Deliberation

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

LAST ISSUE, **CRUTCH** WAS INVITED TO 'TRY OUT' FOR AN **EMPTY CHAIR** IN **PATTY GAUZEWEILER'S** GROUP.

ACCORDING TO THE **BY-LAWS** OF THE GROUP, IT IS NOW LEFT TO A **VOTE** TO DETERMINE IF **CRUTCH** IS 'IN' OR 'OUT'.

THE **VOTE** IS DETERMINED BY EACH **MEMBER** DROPPING A **TEN-SIDER** INTO A **BOX**.

IF EVEN A SINGLE '**BLACK DIE**' IS PLACED IN THE **BOX** **CRUTCH** IS **OUT!!**

OKAY FOLKS. NOW THAT **CRUTCH** IS GONE, I GUESS IT'S TIME TO TAKE A **VOTE**. BEFORE WE DO, HOWEVER, I'D LIKE TO GO AROUND THE **TABLE** SO **EVERYONE** CAN HAVE A CHANCE TO **SWAY** THE **VOTE** ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

WHY WASTE TIME? LET'S GET THIS **OVER** WITH. I ALREADY **KNOW** HOW I'M GONNA **VOTE**.

AND I **DEFINITELY** KNOW WHAT **MY** **VOTE** IS GONNA **BE**.

C'MON GUYS. I'M WITH **PATTY**. WE SHOULD **DISCUSS** THIS BEFORE WE **VOTE**.



HELLO??!! LIKE THERE'S **ANYTHING** TO **DISCUSS**? C'MON **MO!!** THE **MAN** IS A **WALKING** **DISASTER**. BECAUSE OF HIM, **MURGAIN** CAN **NEVER** SHOW HIS **FACE** IN **CHANCE** **LANDING** AGAIN. I'VE HEARD OF **HACK** **MONGERS** BUT THAT **GUY** TAKES THE **PRIZE**. HE **ATTACKED** EVERYTHING THAT **MOVED** -- INCLUDING HIS **OWN** **PARTY** **MEMBERS**.

LOOK, I'M THE **FIRST** TO **ADMIT** **CRUTCH** HAS A FEW THINGS TO **LEARN** ABOUT **PLAYING** **HACKMASTER**. BUT I GOTTA SAY **THIS** FOR HIM -- THE **MAN** IS **PASSIONATE** ABOUT HIS **ROLE-PLAYING**.

B-B-BUT HE **BASHED** MY **HEAD** IN WITH A **MACE!**

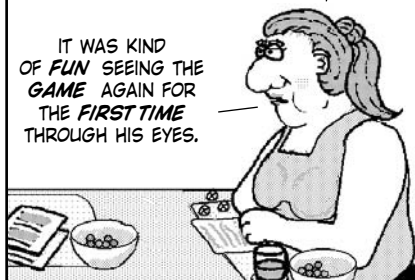
SURE HE DID, **EDDIE**.



LOOK WHO THE **POOR** **GUY** HAS BEEN **PLAYING** **UNDER**. **JOHNNY** **KIZINSKI??** **WEIRD** **PETE???** MY **GAWD** -- **NITRO???** A **PLAYER** IS ONLY AS **GOOD** AS HIS **GM**. YOU **KNOW** THAT.

I GOTTA **TELL** YA --MAYBE IT WAS JUST **ME** BUT I FOUND **CRUTCH** TO BE **REFRESHING**.

IT WAS KIND OF **FUN** SEEING THE **GAME** AGAIN FOR THE **FIRST** **TIME** THROUGH HIS **EYES**.



YOU CAN'T BE **SERIOUS**. DO YOU **REALLY** WANNA SEE THIS **JERK** SHOW UP AT **OUR** **TABLE** **WEEK** IN AND **WEEK** **OUT?** **DO** YOU?

ALL I'M SAYING IS THE **MAN** WANTS TO BE PART OF A **GROUP** SO **BAD** IT **PAINS** ME. **MAYBE** YOU'VE **FORGOTTEN** BUT **NO** **ONE** WOULD TAKE **ME** IN UNTIL **PATTY** CAME ALONG. AND WHAT ABOUT YOU **EDDIE** -- HOW MANY **GROUPS** DROPPED THE '**BLACK** **DIE**' ON YOU BEFORE '**THE** **PERPS**' TOOK YOU IN WITH **OPEN** **ARMS?**

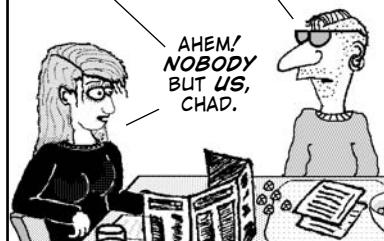
ME? UH....F-F-F-FOUR. MAYBE F-F-F-FIVE.



WHAT ABOUT YOU, **CHAD?** SEEMS LIKE I RECALL YOU GETTING **BOUNCED** AROUND **BETWEEN** **GROUPS** BEFORE **JOINING** US.

OH NOW **THAT'S** **LOW**. I WAS ONLY **13!** **NOBODY** WANTED A **MUNCHKIN** HANGING OUT WITH 'EM.

AHEM! **NOBODY** BUT **US**, **CHAD**.



NOW SEE HERE, I THOUGHT THE WHOLE IDEA OF THIS 'SECRET VOTE' THING WITH THE BLACK DIE WAS SO EVERYONE COULD FREELY VOTE THEIR CONSCIENCE WITHOUT CATCHING FLAK FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP. YOU'RE MAKING EDDIE AND ME OUT TO BE THE BAD GUYS HERE -- JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T THINK THIS CRUTCH-GUY IS 'PERP' MATERIAL.

NO ONE IS MAKING YOU OUT TO BE BAD GUYS. THIS IS JUST AN OPEN DISCUSSION BEFORE THE VOTE.

A-A-ACTUALLY I THINK YOU MAY BE ALONE ON THIS CHAD.

WHAT???! YOU'RE JUMPING FENCE? C'MON DUDE. I THOUGHT WE AGREED ON THIS.

MO' IS RIGHT. THE GUY NEEDS US. LOOK, HE'LL BE MY RESPONSIBILITY.

I'LL LEARN 'IM. TEACH HIM ALL ABOUT THE RULES. I PROMISE!

WELL YOU CAN SAVE YOUR PROMISES. YOU SEEM TO FORGET THAT IT ONLY TAKES ONE VOTE TO BASH THIS GUY'S HOPES OF JOINING THIS GROUP.

SAR'RIGHT BY ME. LEAST MY CONSCIENCE WILL BE CLEAR.

CLEAR CONSCIENCE? GIMME A BREAK.

WELL, I GUESS THAT'S IT THEN.

WE MIGHT AS WELL GET IT OVER WITH AND TAKE A VOTE.

SORRY, CRUTCH. I TRIED.

THE NEXT DAY....

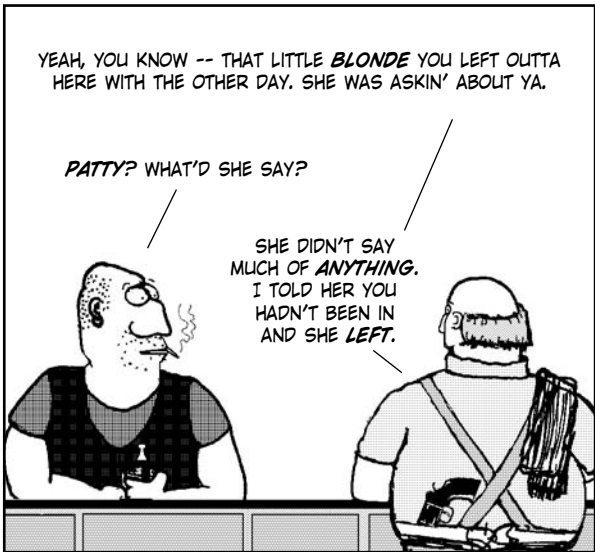
DAMN, CRUTCH! WHY THE LONG FACE?

AHHHHH, I DUNNO. I'M JUST FEELIN' DOWN IN THE DUMPS TODAY.

WELL SNAP OUT OF IT, HOSS! YOU'RE STARTIN' TO BRING ME DOWN.

HEY, I ALMOST FORGOT TO TELL YA. THAT LITTLE GAL FRIEND OF YOURS WAS IN HERE LOOKIN' FOR YA THIS MORNING.

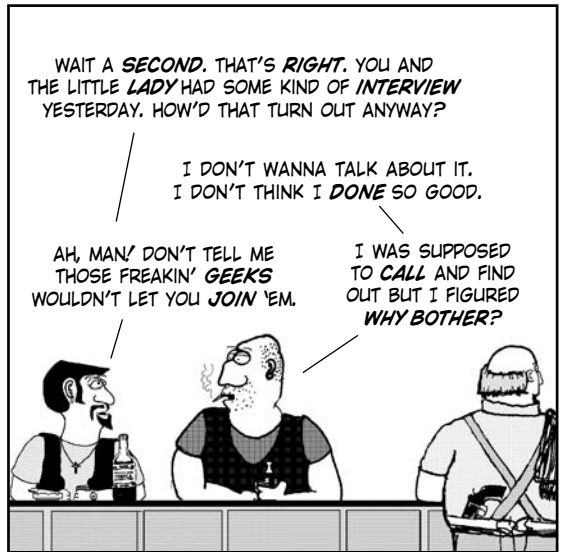
GAL FRIEND? YOU MEAN A GIRL? LOOKING FOR ME?



YEAH, YOU KNOW -- THAT LITTLE **BLONDE** YOU LEFT OUTTA HERE WITH THE OTHER DAY. SHE WAS ASKIN' ABOUT YA.

PATTY? WHAT'D SHE SAY?

SHE DIDN'T SAY MUCH OF ANYTHING. I TOLD HER YOU HADN'T BEEN IN AND SHE LEFT.



WAIT A **SECOND**. THAT'S RIGHT. YOU AND THE LITTLE **LADY** HAD SOME KIND OF **INTERVIEW** YESTERDAY. HOW'D THAT TURN OUT ANYWAY?

I DON'T WANNA TALK ABOUT IT. I DON'T THINK I **DONE** SO GOOD.

AH, MAN! DON'T TELL ME THOSE FREAKIN' **GEEKS** WOULDN'T LET YOU **JOIN** 'EM.

I WAS SUPPOSED TO **CALL** AND FIND OUT BUT I FIGURED **WHY BOTHER?**



I COULD SEE IT **WRITTEN** ALL OVER THEIR FACES WHEN I WALKED AWAY FROM THAT TABLE.

I BET IF YOU **KICKED** SOME **ASSES** THEY'D HAVE SOME **RESPECT** FOR YOU.

YEAH... MAYBE.

HEY THERE **STRANGER!**

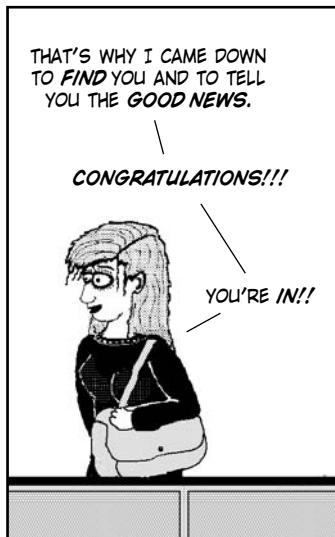


PATTY-GEE!!! H-H-HEY! I HEARD YOU WERE LOOKIN' FOR ME.

YOU WERE **SUPPOSED** TO CALL ME TO FIND OUT WHAT THE **VERDICT** WAS -- REMEMBER? WHAT HAPPENED? YOU **LOSE** MY NUMBER?

NOT EXACTLY. I GUESS I **KNEW** THE OUTCOME SO WHY WASTE A **QUARTER**.

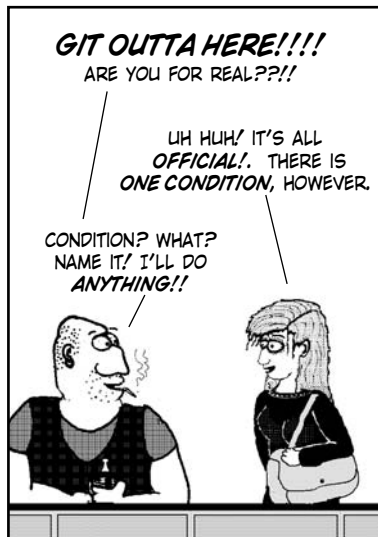
UH HUH. I FIGURED AS MUCH.



THAT'S WHY I CAME DOWN TO **FIND** YOU AND TO TELL YOU THE **GOOD NEWS**.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

YOU'RE **IN!!!**



GIT OUTTA HERE!!!!
ARE YOU FOR REAL??!!

UH HUH! IT'S ALL **OFFICIAL!**. THERE IS **ONE CONDITION**, HOWEVER.

CONDITION? WHAT? NAME IT! I'LL DO **ANYTHING!!**



YOU HAVE TO TAKE A **CRASH COURSE** IN **HACKMASTER** AND **BASIC ROLE-PLAYING SKILLS**. **EDDIE'S** VOLUNTEERED TO **TEACH** YOU. SOUND OKAY TO YOU?

DOES IT EVER!! WHEN DO WE START?

NOW **THAT'S** THE ATTITUDE THAT GOT YOU **IN**, CRUTCH. JUST SHOW UP NEXT **SATURDAY**. WE'LL GO FROM THERE.

YOU **BET!!**

WANTED

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HackMaster GM Toolkit THIS TRIAL VERSION OF HMGMTKV2.1 EXPIRES IN *KRACKED* DAYS

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NPC GALLERY [Icons]

MONSTER GALLERY

PLAYER STATS

HACK STATS

DICE ANALYZER

PLOT CHECKER

RULES CHECK

Campaign Journal

DICE BAG

MAP BUILDER

WEATHER

RANDOM MONSTERS

GARWEEZE WURLD

IDEA GENERATOR

CLUB TREASURY

HARD EIGHT HOTLINE

ARCHIVES

BATTLE MASTER

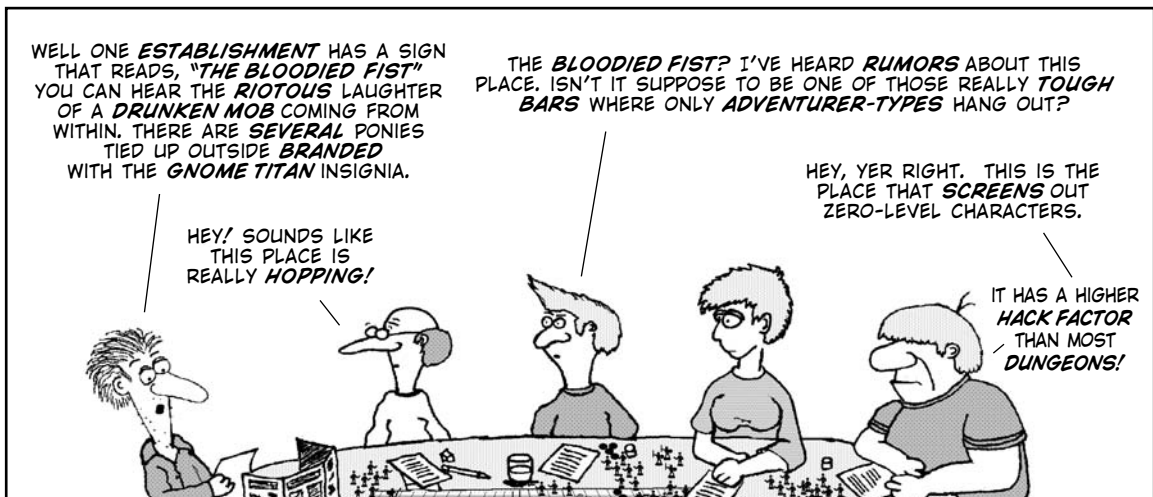
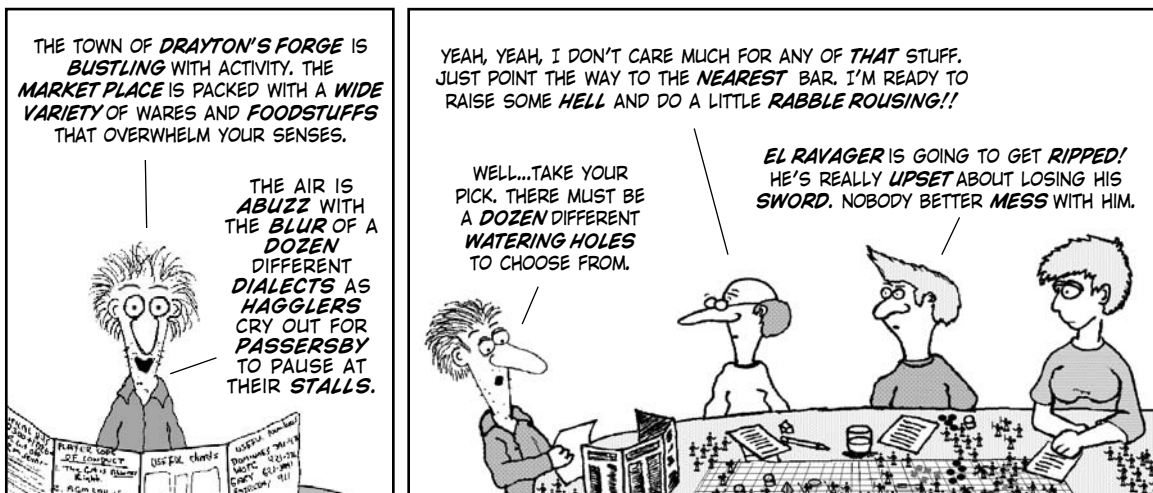
★ **GAMEMASTER'S CAMPAIGN LOG:** Day 172 **GAMEMASTER:** B.A. Felton

Game Session Summary: After being stripped of his rank and position as **Commander of the Gnome Titans**, (then sewn in a sack with wild animals and tossed in a well). Knuckles VI made his way back to the Manor House where he confronted Teflon Billy and threatened to "even the score." Teflon, after sizing up the situation, wisely chose to negotiate a settlement. For a sum of 85,000 gold pieces, to be paid in four quarterly installments, Teflon managed to save his neck and tensions have since eased.

The Party then devoted itself to rescuing **El Ravager**. After finally digging a tunnel to El Ravager and freeing him, the party set about exploring the **hidden chamber** [Map# 845a]. To their surprise, the chamber was connected to a sprawling dungeon complex - the existence of which had been unknown to them and was not present on any of the Manor House blueprints/plans which had been found among Flatatroy's papers.

The party assumes the dungeon was cleared out years before by Lord Flatatroy and sealed prior to the construction of his Manor House on the surface above. Yet they cannot be entirely certain. Convinced that the 'mysterious intruder' [NPC# 2145] has been using the dungeon labyrinth to come and go from the Manor, the party has decided the passageways should be mapped and explored to learn their secrets. They still hold out hope that **Flatatroy's Treasure** as well as El Ravager's stolen **HackMaster sword** will be recovered.

Meanwhile, word has arrived that **Lord Gilead's** armies have mysteriously **WITHDRAWN** from the banks of the **Fargruss River** and are heading back to their home provinces. The party has interpreted this action to be a victory. To celebrate this unexpected turn of events as well as El Ravager's rescue the party has decided to ride into the nearby town of Drayton's Forge and "tie one on!"



THEY **SCREEN** OUT ZERO LEVEL CHARACTERS? NOW HOW ON **EARTH** DO THEY GO ABOUT DOING THAT?

EASY! FIRST-TIMERS **HAVE** TO DRINK A ROUND OF THE "**HOUSE DRINK**" -- SOMETHING CALLED A "**GUT-BRUISER**". IF YOU'RE **STILL** STANDING AFTER **QUAFFING** A ROUND YOU CAN **STAY**.

STILL STANDING?

YEAH, IT'S A FAIRLY **POTENT** CONCOCTION. A SINGLE **8 OZ.** SERVING RENDERS **1010** POINTS OF **DAMAGE** TO THE **IMBIBER**. THERE AREN'T MANY **ZERO-LEVEL** NPCs WHO CAN **SURVIVE** THAT KIND OF DAMAGE. ALL IN ALL, IT'S REALLY NOT A BAD WAY TO **SORT OUT** THE **MEN** FROM THE **BOYS**.

YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING.

PRETTY KEWL, HUH?

WELL **HALLELUJAH** AND **AMEN!** FINALLY A **TAVERN** WORTHY OF MY TIME. I WOULDN'T MIND KICKIN' A LITTLE **BUTT** AND SHAKIN' UP THE **LOCALS** IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. MAYBE EVEN TAKE IN SOME **HIGH STAKES** POKER.

YEAH, THIS PLACE HAS OUR **NAMES** WRITTEN **ALL** OVER IT.

WELL THEN, WHAT ARE WE **WAITING** FOR? LET'S GO IN AND SEE IF WE CAN FIND A **TABLE**.

KEWL! FIRST ROUND OF DRINKS ARE ON ME.

SWEET! I'M TELLIN' YA THE **FIRST JOKER** WHO EVEN **LOOKS** AT ME **CROSS-EYED** IS GOING TO CATCH THE **WRATH** OF THE **DWARVEN FURIES!!!** I **SWEAR** TO **GAWD**.

I'M IN ONE OF THOSE **MOODS!**

OKAY, AS YOU ENTER THE **TAVERN** YOU NOTICE THERE ARE **NO** TABLES AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SEVERAL **EMPTY** **STOOLS** AT THE **BAR**.

WE'LL GRAB THE **STOOLS** AND **BELLY** UP TO THE **BAR**. SOON AS A **TABLE** OPENS UP WE'LL CALL **DIBS** ON IT.

AS YOU MOVE TOWARD THE **BAR** YOUR **NOSTRILS** ARE FILLED WITH **PUNGENT** SMELLS OF **VOMIT**, **URINE** AND **STALE** **MEAD**.

GEEZE LOUEEZE! IS THIS A **TAVERN** OR A **MEN'S RESTROOM**?

WELL....

BY THE LOOKS OF SOME OF THE **OTHER** PATRONS A **FEW** OF THEM MAY NOT KNOW THE **DIFFERENCE**.

I'M *SCOPING* OUT THE *CLIENTELE* IN THE BAR. ANYBODY *EYE BALLIN'* ME OR *LOOKIN'* FOR A *FIGHT*?

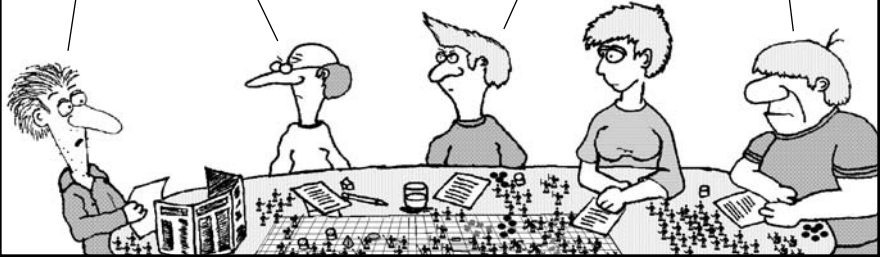


WELL, AS YOU PUSH THROUGH THE *CROWD* MAKING YOUR WAY TOWARD THE *STOOLS* YOU NOTICE A *TALL ROBED FIGURE* SITTING AT THE *END* OF THE BAR. HE KINDA *SHOOTS* YOU A *QUICK GLANCE* AND THEN LOOKS THE OTHER WAY.

HUH? HE'S *STARING* AT ME? I *COCK* MY *CROSSBOW* AND LOAD IT WITH A *BOLT OF SLAYING*!!

I GOT YER *BACK COVERED*, BOB. I PULL OUT MY *HACKMASTER PLUS*.... --CRAP-- I MEAN MY *DAGGER OF GRIEF-REAPING* AND HAVE IT AT THE *READY*!

FIREBALL COMING ONLINE HERE!



GUYS?? PA-LEEZE!!! IT WAS JUST A '*CURIOUS*' *GLANCE*! DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE *OVERREACTING* A *WEE BIT*? THIS IS A *TAVERN* - NOT THE *BROOD CHAMBER* OF A *SWACK IRON DRAGON*!

ARE YOU *BLIND*? DID YOU *SEE* THE *HATEFUL LOOK* THAT GUY GAVE ME?

HE STARTED IT, SARA. HE'S *PROVOKING* US.



C'MON BRIAN. YOU *KNOW* I'M RIGHT. THIS GUY IS *PROBABLY* JUST ONE OF THE *REGULARS*. YOU KNOW -- *SIZING UP* THE *NEW GUYS*.

I DUNNO. MY *INSTINCTS* SAY WE SHOULD *DEAL* WITH THIS GUY BUT.... MAYBE YOU HAVE A *POINT*.



OKAY GUYS, *STAND DOWN*! LET'S WAIT AND SEE WHAT THIS *GUY* DOES NEXT. LET *HIM* MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.

FIRP DING BLAST! *WAY TO GO* - SARA! WE JUST *LOST* THE *INITIATIVE*!

THANKS, FOR *LISTENING*, BRIAN. YOU MADE THE *RIGHT CALL*.

YEAH, WHATEVER. I'M *STILL* KEEPING A *FIREBALL* PREPPED, THOUGH. *JUST* IN CASE.

THIS BLOWS!



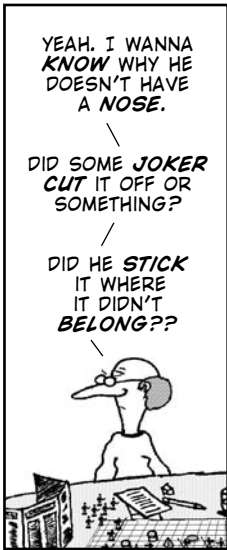
AS YOU TAKE YOUR SEATS AT THE BAR A *HUGE SWEATY* BARKEEP WITH A *GAPING HOLE* WHERE A *NOSE* SHOULD BE BELLOWES OUT,

"*WELCOME TO THE FIST!* LOOKS LIKE WE GOT A COUPLE OF *FIRST TIMERS* HERE."

YEAH. SURE. WE'RE *FIRST TIMERS*. SAY, WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS *NOSE*?

ARE YOU *ASKING* HIM ABOUT HIS *NOSE*?

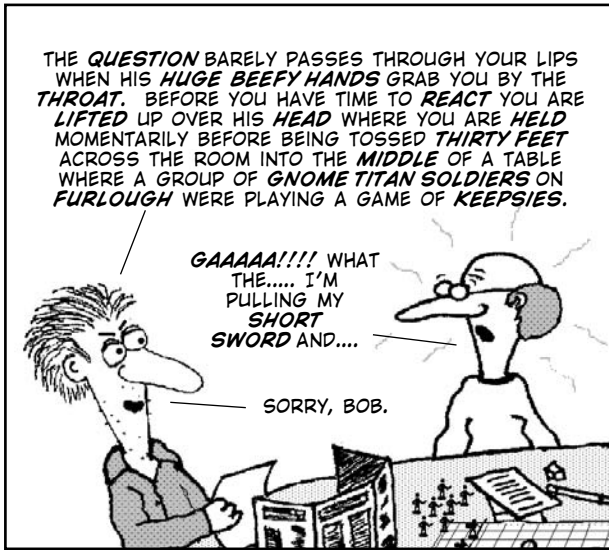




YEAH, I WANNA KNOW WHY HE DOESN'T HAVE A NOSE.

DID SOME JOKER CUT IT OFF OR SOMETHING?

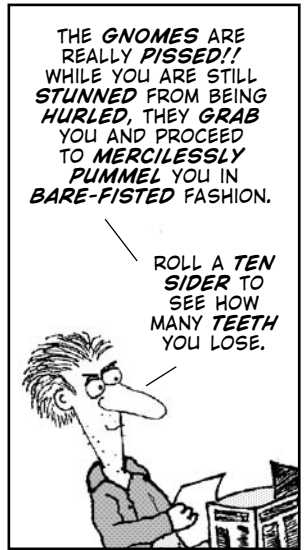
DID HE STICK IT WHERE IT DIDN'T BELONG??



THE QUESTION BARELY PASSES THROUGH YOUR LIPS WHEN HIS **HUGE BEEFY HANDS** GRAB YOU BY THE **THROAT**. BEFORE YOU HAVE TIME TO **REACT** YOU ARE **LIFTED** UP OVER HIS **HEAD** WHERE YOU ARE **HELD** MOMENTARILY BEFORE BEING **TOSSED THIRTY FEET** ACROSS THE ROOM INTO THE **MIDDLE** OF A TABLE WHERE A GROUP OF **GNOME TITAN SOLDIERS** ON **FURLOUGH** WERE PLAYING A GAME OF **KEEPSIES**.

GAAAAA!!!! WHAT THE..... I'M PULLING MY **SHORT SWORD** AND....

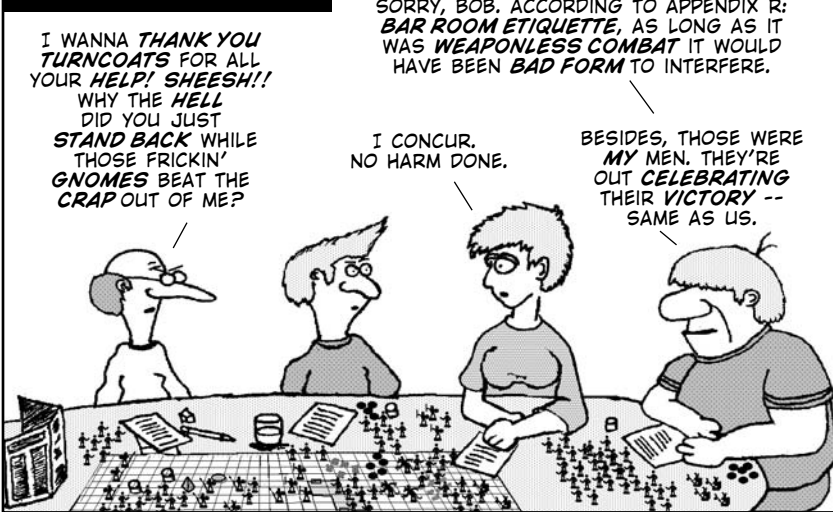
SORRY, BOB.



THE **GNOMES** ARE REALLY **PISSED!!** WHILE YOU ARE STILL **STUNNED** FROM BEING **HURLED**, THEY **GRAB** YOU AND PROCEED TO **MERCILESSLY PUMMEL** YOU IN **BARE-FISTED** FASHION.

ROLL A **TEN SIDER** TO SEE HOW MANY **TEETH** YOU LOSE.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

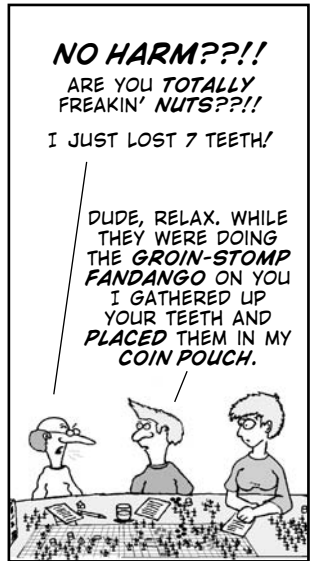


I WANNA **THANK YOU TURNCOATS** FOR ALL YOUR **HELP! SHEESH!!** WHY THE **HELL** DID YOU JUST **STAND BACK** WHILE THOSE **FRICKIN' GNOMES** BEAT THE **CRAP** OUT OF ME?

SORRY, BOB. ACCORDING TO **APPENDIX R: BAR ROOM ETIQUETTE**, AS LONG AS IT WAS **WEAPONLESS COMBAT** IT WOULD HAVE BEEN **BAD FORM** TO INTERFERE.

I CONCUR. **NO HARM** DONE.

BESIDES, THOSE WERE **MY MEN**. THEY'RE OUT **CELEBRATING** THEIR **VICTORY** -- SAME AS US.



NO HARM??!!

ARE YOU **TOTALLY** **FRICKIN' NUTS??!!**

I JUST LOST **7 TEETH!**

DUDE, RELAX. WHILE THEY WERE DOING THE **GNOMIN-STOMP FANDANGO** ON YOU I GATHERED UP YOUR **TEETH** AND **PLACED** THEM IN MY **COIN POUCH**.

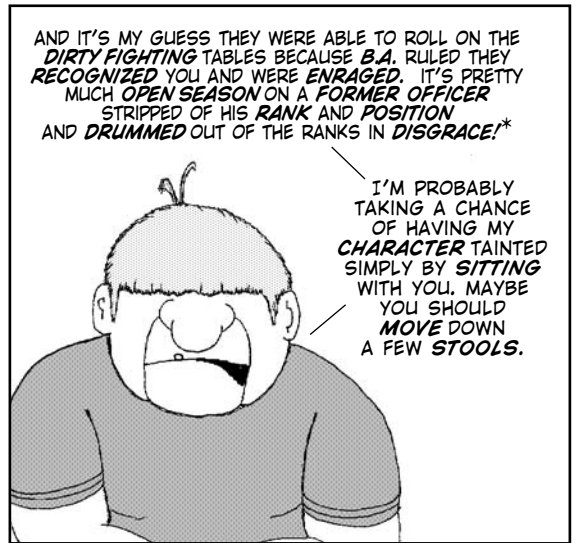


I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LIVE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN **KNUCKLES: KING OF THE WALL CLIMBERS** WOULD GET HIS **ASS KICKED** BY A BUNCH OF **ONE HIT-DICE GNOMES!**

GEEZE LOUEEZE! THEY WERE ROLLING ON THE **DIRTY FIGHTING COMBAT TABLES!** WHAT THE **HELL** DID I DO TO THEM?

CORRECTION, DAVE. THOSE WERE **GNOME TITANS!!** THEY MAY ONLY BE ONE **HIT-DICE** BUT THEY PACK A **MEAN PUNCH!**

THEY SURE DO. THEIR **GNOMIN STOMP 'SPECIAL ATTACK'** IS **WICKED!!**



AND IT'S MY GUESS THEY WERE ABLE TO ROLL ON THE **DIRTY FIGHTING TABLES** BECAUSE **B.A.** RULED THEY **RECOGNIZED** YOU AND WERE **ENRAGED**. IT'S PRETTY MUCH **OPEN SEASON** ON A **FORMER OFFICER** STRIPPED OF HIS **RANK** AND **POSITION** AND **DRUMMED** OUT OF THE RANKS IN **DISGRACE!***

I'M PROBABLY TAKING A CHANCE OF HAVING MY **CHARACTER** TAINTED SIMPLY BY **SITTING** WITH YOU. MAYBE YOU SHOULD **MOVE** DOWN A FEW **STOOLS**.

* See KODT#45 "The Command Inspection" [Knuckles is administered a little "Gnome Justice" and stripped of his rank.]

OH YEAH??!!! WELL MAYBE YOU WANNA *KISS MY DWARVEN ASS!*

GUYS!!! PLEASE!!! WE CAME HERE TO *CELEBRATE* AND GET OUT OF THE *MANOR HOUSE* FOR A FEW HOURS. THIS IS A *VERY ROUGH BAR*. WE SHOULD BE PRESENTING A *UNITED FRONT*.

WE SHOULD BE TALKING ABOUT HOW TO GET MY *HACKMASTER* BACK. THAT'S WHAT WE NEED TO BE DOING.

SARA'S RIGHT. WE SHOULD BE HAVING A *GOOD TIME!*



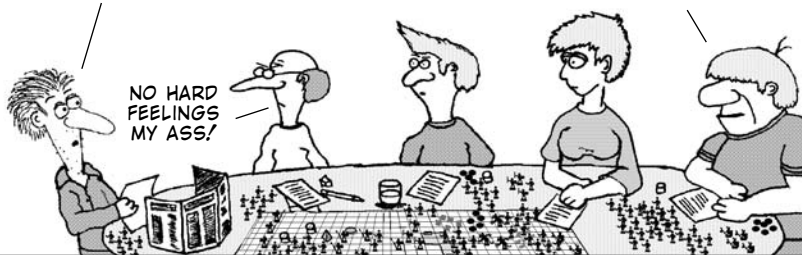
THE *BARKEEP* INFORMS YOU THAT SINCE YOU ARE *FIRST TIMERS* YOU MUST ORDER A ROUND OF *GUT-BRUISERS* OR YOU'LL BE *ASKED TO LEAVE*.



NO PROBLEM! I ORDER A *ROUND* FOR THE *PARTY*. *MY TREAT!!* I'LL ALSO ORDER A *ROUND* FOR THOSE *FURLOUGHED SOLDIERS* IN THE *CORNER*. OH, AND I *APOLOGIZE* TO THE *BARKEEP* FOR MY FRIEND'S *RUDE* REMARKS ABOUT HIS *DISFIGUREMENT*. -- PLUS FIVE TO ANY *SOCIAL ETIQUETTE* ROLL I MAY BE REQUIRED TO ROLL WHILE IN THIS *TAVERN*.

HE *ACCEPTS* YOUR *APOLOGY*. IN FACT TO SHOW THERE ARE NO *HARD FEELINGS*. HE OFFERS *KNUCKLES A DOUBLE* -- ON THE *HOUSE!*

OH, I'LL JUST BE HAVING A *WATER* BY THE WAY.



NO *HARD FEELINGS* MY *ASS!*

WATER? I DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE NOT HAVING A *GUT-BRUISER* WITH THE *REST* OF US?

NAAA! I'M THE *DESIGNATED SURVIVOR!* HAR HAR! I CRACK MYSELF UP. HAR!



VERY *FUNNY!*

MINUTES LATER....

OKAY, NOW THAT *EVERYONE* HAS DRUNK THEIR *GUT-BRUISERS* ROLL *IDIO* TO SEE WHAT KIND OF *DAMAGE* YOU TAKE. OH...EXCEPT FOR YOU *BOB*. YOU ROLL *2D10*.

HUH? *2D10?* HOW COME?

YOU HAD A *DOUBLE* - REMEMBER?



A ROLL OF 2D10 LATER...

HOW *EMBARRASSING!* THIS MAKES THE ENTIRE *PARTY* LOOK BAD. FIRST *BOB* GETS HIS *ASS* KICKED BY SOME *GNOMES* AND THEN HE *DIES* DRINKING A *GUT-BRUISER*. WE SHOULD JUST *DRAW* HIS BODY OUT TO THE *STABLES* AND THEN COME BACK AND TRY TO *SAVE FACE* BY HAVING A FEW MORE ROUNDS.

MAYBE NEXT TIME I SHOULD *TONE* DOWN THAT *SCREENING PROCESS*.

HEY DUDE, I'LL PUT YOUR *TEETH* IN YOUR *VEST POCKET*. OKAY? MAYBE WHEN WE HAVE YOU *RAISED* THEY CAN DO SOME *BRIDGE WORK* FOR YOU.

LET'S JUST GET HIM *RAISED*, OKAY?

LEMME ALONE!





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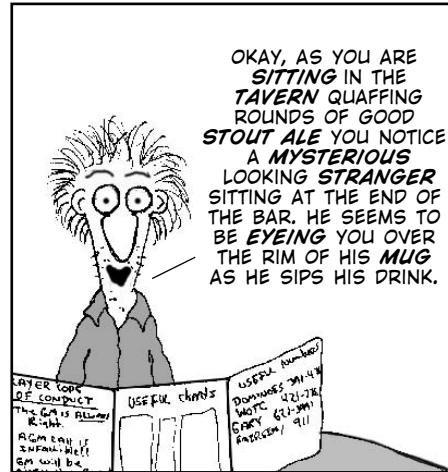
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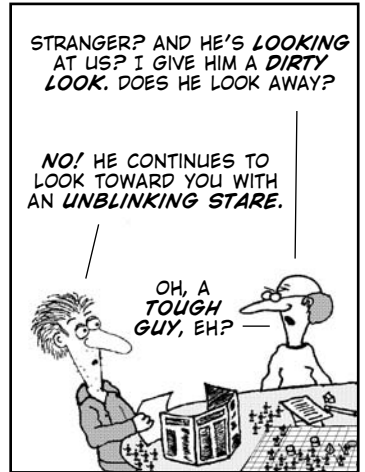
Erik of the Twelve Scars

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN & BRIAN JELKE

AFTER A QUICK TRIP TO THE **TEMPLE OF LUVIA** TO HAVE THEIR **COMRADE, KNUCKLES: KING OF THE WALL CLIMBERS** RAISED FROM THE DEAD OUR BAND OF **HEROES** HAS ONCE AGAIN RETURNED TO THE **BLOODIED FIST TAVERN** TO 'HANG OUT' AND **ROOT OUT ANY ADVENTURE OPPTS** WHICH MAY PRESENT THEMSELVES.



OKAY, AS YOU ARE **SITTING** IN THE **TAVERN** QUAFFING **ROUNDS** OF GOOD **STOUT ALE** YOU NOTICE A **MYSTERIOUS** **LOOKING STRANGER** **SITTING** AT THE END OF THE **BAR**. HE SEEMS TO BE **EYEING** YOU OVER THE **RIM** OF HIS **MUG** AS HE **SIPS** HIS **DRINK**.



STRANGER? AND HE'S **LOOKING** AT US? I GIVE HIM A **DIRTY** **LOOK**. DOES HE **LOOK AWAY**?

NO! HE CONTINUES TO **LOOK TOWARD** YOU WITH AN **UNBLINKING** **STARE**.

OH, A **TOUGH** **GUY**, EH?



OKAY, SO WHAT THE HELL DOES THIS GUY **LOOK** LIKE, ANYWAY? HAVE WE EVER LAID EYES ON HIM BEFORE?

ACTUALLY, HE'S THE **SAME** TALL **ROBED** **FIGURE** WHO **GLANCED** AT YOU THE **LAST** TIME YOU WERE IN THE **TAVERN**.

UH HUH -- WHAT DID I **TELL** YOU? LOOKS LIKE THIS GUY IS ONE OF THE **REGULARS**. HE'S JUST TRYING TO **RATTLE** OUR **CAGES**. THAT'S ALL.

WELL, WELL, WELL! LOOKS LIKE THIS GUY **WANTS** SOME. WHAT KIND OF **WEAPONS** WOULD HE BE CARRYING?

WHOA! THIS GUY **AIN'T** PACKIN' NO **WEAPONS**?

WEAPONS? **NONE** THAT YOU CAN **SEE**.



THIS IS A PRETTY **ROUGH** **TAVERN!** HE MUST FEEL **DAMN** **SURE** OF HIMSELF IF HE'S NOT CARRYING ANY **WEAPONS**.



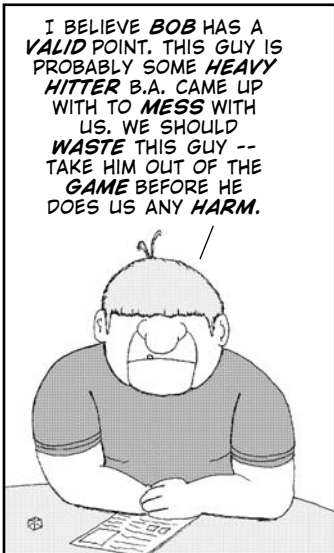
I **COCK** MY **CROSSBOW** UNDER THE **TABLE**. THIS GUY GIVES **ME** ONE MORE **DIRTY** **LOOK** AND I'M MAKING A **CALLED** **SHOT** TO HIS **THROAT** WITH A **+B** **BOLT** OF **REND FLESH!**

GREAT! THIS GUY WAS THE **HOOK** FOR THE **ENTIRE** **ADVENTURE**. **NOW** **WHAT?**

DON'T WORRY, **BOB**. I GOT YER **BACK** **COVERED**.

FIREBALL COMING ON **LINE**, **GUYS** -- JUST IN **CASE**.

OH MY!



HEY, I READ ABOUT THIS IN "THE CRAVEN MONK". YOU HAVE TO **DEFEAT** THE CURRENT HOLDER OF THE **STOOL-PRIME** IN ORDER TO EARN THE **RIGHT** TO SIT IN IT. IF I **RECALL** CORRECTLY THE "**HOLDER**" OF THE **STOOL-PRIME** GETS **FREE DRINKS** AND **25 PERCENT** OF ALL **TIP MONEY** EARNED BY THE **BAR WENCHES** AND **WAIT STAFF**.

FREE DRINKS AND TIP MONEY? WHAT A **SCAM!** I WOULDN'T **MIND** GETTING SOME OF THAT **ACTION**.

GET IN **LINE**, PAL. I CALLED **DIBS** ON THIS **PIGEON**.

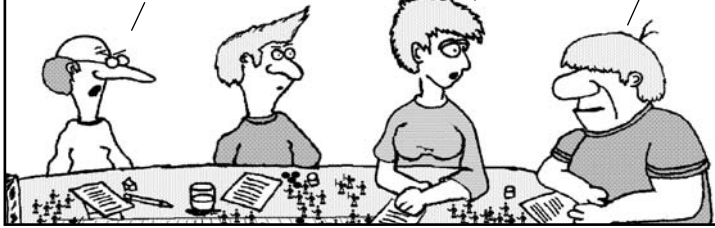
SO THIS GUY IS **ALPHA DOG** OF THE **BAR**?

FOR **SIX YEARS** IT SEEMS.

SIX YEARS? AND NOBODY HAS BEEN ABLE TO **KNOCK** THIS GUY OFF THAT **STOOL?** **HO HO!!** THIS IS SO **SWEET!!** I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE **LOOK** ON HIS FACE WHEN I TAKE HIM **DOWN**.

I DUNNO BOB. HE SOUNDS LIKE A **TOUGH HOMBRE!**

WHO CARES. A FEW **BOLTS OF SLAYING** IN HIS **BACK** WILL TAKE THE **STARCH** OUT OF 'IM.



THAT'S PRETTY **LOW**, BOB. EVEN FOR YOU. IF YOU CAN'T **BEAT** THIS GUY IN A **FAIR FIGHT** WHY EVEN **BOther?**

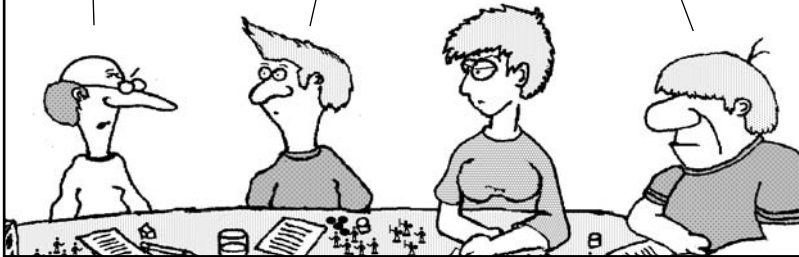
YOU GOT **WAX** IN YER EARS? **FREE DRINKS** AND **TIP MONEY!!** THAT AIN'T **REASON** ENOUGH FOR YA?

HOLD ON, BOB. SHE'S RIGHT. **NORMALLY** PEPPERING THIS GUY WITH A FEW **BOLTS** WOULD BE THE WAY TO GO. BUT **NOT** IN THIS CASE.

OKAY, YOU GET **FIRST CRACK** AT HIM BUT IF YOU **FAIL** I GET A **SHOT**.

THERE ARE **WAYS** OF GOING ABOUT CHALLENGING THE HOLDER OF A **STOOL-PRIME**. CERTAIN **RULES OF TRADITION** APPLY. TO **IGNORE** THOSE RULES COULD BRING DOWN THE **WRATH** OF THIS **ENTIRE** TAVERN DISTRICT.

THEY TAKE THIS STUFF **VERY SERIOUSLY!**

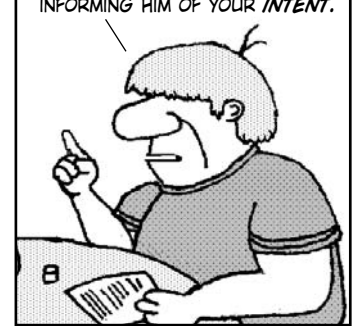
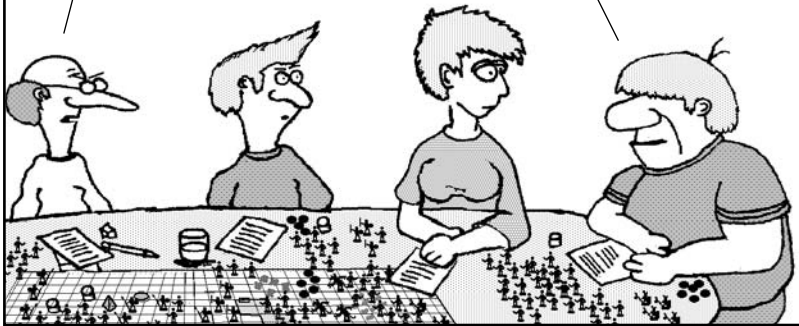


RULES? WHAT KIND OF **RULES?**

WELL, IN ORDER TO **LAY CLAIM** TO THE **STOOL-PRIME** AND THE **PRESTIGE** AND **PERKS** THAT GO WITH IT YOU HAVE TO PERFORM THE **FOLLOWING** STEPS IN **SEQUENCE**.

FIRST AND MOST **IMPORTANTLY** YOU MUST **PUBLICLY** MAKE THE **CHALLENGE!**

THIS INVOLVES WALKING UP TO THE GUY AND **FORMALLY** INTRODUCING YOURSELF AND INFORMING HIM OF YOUR **INTENT**.



WELL THAT CERTAINLY SEEMS **WHACKED**. I GOTTA **FLASH** A BIG **NEON SIGN** THAT I'M GOING TO **WIND** THIS GUY'S **CLOCK**? **HMMRRFFFF!! WHAT ELSE?**

WELL THEN THE BALL IS IN **HIS COURT**. HE HAS THE **OPTION** OF **STEPPING DOWN** AND **YIELDING THE STOOL-PRIME** OR **ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE** -- IN WHICH CASE YOU **EACH** GET TO CHOOSE YOUR OWN **WEAPON**.



THE FIGHT ITSELF TAKES PLACE WHILE **BOTH** PARTIES ARE **BLINDFOLDED** AND THE **CHALLENGEE** GETS TO CHOOSE THE **TIME** AND **PLACE**. ALSO, TRADITIONALLY, HE AUTOMATICALLY GETS **INITIATIVE**.

OH, AND **NO** **MAGICAL WEAPONS** OR **DEVICES** OF **ANY** KIND ARE ALLOWED.

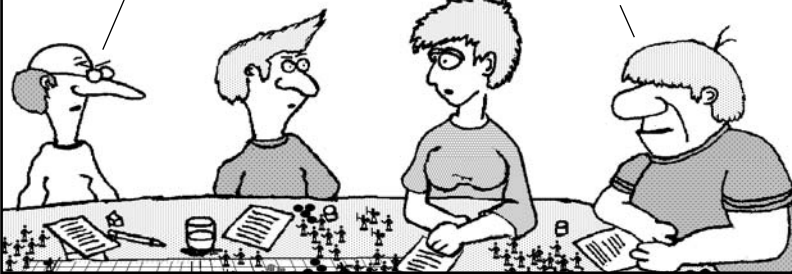


DAMN! WHATEVER HAPPENED TO WALKING UP TO A GUY AND JUST **PUNCHING** HIS LIGHTS OUT? THIS IS **DAMN COMPLICATED** IF YOU ASK ME.

I FIND IT **VERY INTERESTING**. **RITUALIZED COMBAT** WAS A **VERY BIG PART** OF THE **HACKMASTER NOVELS**.

FINE! I'M GAME. THAT **STOOL** IS AS GOOD AS **MINE**.

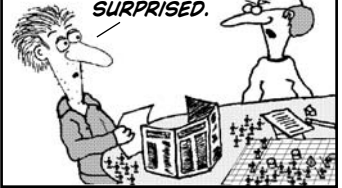
YEAH, THIS IS LIKE THAT **MOVIE, FIGHT CLUB**. IT'S **ALL** ABOUT THE **FIGHT**.



OKAY, I TELL THE **BARKEEP** TO GET READY TO SERVE MY **NEXT DRINK** DOWN AT THE **END** OF THE **BAR**.

THEN I WALK UP TO THIS **ERIK-DUDE** AND INTRODUCE MYSELF AS **KNUCKLES THE VI** -- **KING OF THE WALL CLIMBERS**. THEN I INFORM HIM HE'S SITTING IN **MY SEAT**.

HE LOOKS **VERY SURPRISED**.



SURPRISED, EH? THAT'S GOOD. I **FIGURED** I'D **SHAKE** HIM UP A BIT. DOES HE LOOK **NERVOUS**?

NO! AFTER **WITNESSING** YOU GETTING YOUR **BUTT** KICKED BY A **BUNCH** OF **GNOMES** AND THEN **CROAKING** AFTER DRINKING A **GUT BRUISER** HE DIDN'T THINK YOU'D HAVE THE **SAND** TO CHALLENGE HIM TO A **FIGHT**.

VERY FUNNY. I'LL **REMEMBER** THAT WHEN I'M **WHUPPIN'** ON HIM.



I USE MY **FLEX MUSCLE** SKILL TO TRY TO **INTIMIDATE** HIM. IT **EXAGGERATES** MY APPEARANCE, **STRENGTH-WISE** BY **704** ATTRIBUTE POINTS. MAYBE HE'LL JUST DECIDE TO **YIELD** IF HE FEELS **OUT MATCHED**.

IT'S MORE **LIKELY** HE THINKS YOU'RE **COMING ON** TO HIM. HE'S **DEFINITELY** NOT **INTIMIDATED**.

HE SAYS AS SOON AS HE'S FINISHED WITH HIS **DRINK** HE'LL MEET YOU **OUT BACK**.

"BE READY TO RUMBLE!!"

KEWL!! I'M GOING TO GO AROUND THE **BAR** TRYING TO GET A LITTLE **BETTING ACTION** GOING.

GOOD IDEA, DAVE. I'LL **ASSIST** YOU.



LATER BEHIND THE "BLOODED FIST"...

OKAY, LOOKS LIKE A PRETTY GOOD CROWD HAS GATHERED TO WATCH THE FIGHT. THEY'VE GATHERED IN A HUGE CIRCLE AROUND YOU AND ERIK. THE BARKEEP, ACTING AS REFEREE, ASKS THE CROWD TO QUIET DOWN. HE THEN ANNOUNCES THAT THE BLINDFOLDS WILL BE PUT ON FIRST. THEN YOU WILL ANNOUNCE YOUR WEAPONS OF CHOICE.

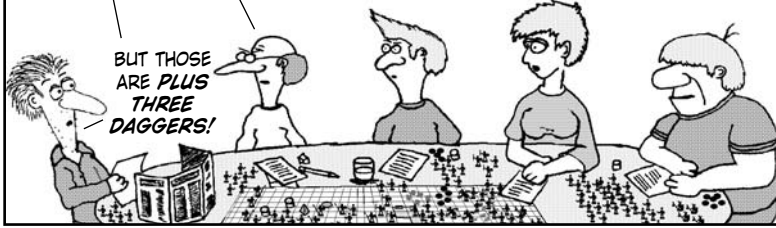
INDEED THEY ARE! BUT THEY'RE NOT MAGIC! THEY GAIN THEIR BONUSES DUE TO SUPERIOR CRAFTSMANSHIP AND THE FACT THEY ARE MADE OF BLUE-SILVER.

DAMN SHAME NO MAGIC WEAPONS ARE ALLOWED. I GUESS I'LL GO WITH MY MATCHED DAGGERS OF DWARVEN KIND.

I GUESS I'LL ALLOW THEM BUT THEY SEEM TO BE AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE CONTEST.

BUT THOSE ARE PLUS THREE DAGGERS!

TOUGH NOOGIES!



ERIK OF THE TWELVE SCARS ANNOUNCES HIS WEAPON WILL BE BARE FISTS!

BARE FISTS??!!

WHAT THE HELL? BUT I BET HEAVY ON THAT IDIOT! I'LL BE RUINED!!

THAT'S RIGHT.

YOU BET AGAINST BOB?



KNUCKLES IS BLINDFOLDED OF COURSE SO HE CAN'T REACT BUT THE REST OF YOU SEE ELEVEN HUGE BRITISH LOOKING MEN PUSH THROUGH THE CROWD TO TAKE THEIR PLACES BEHIND ERIK. YOU HEAR A CRESCENDO OF THUMP THUMP THUMP AS THEY POUND THEIR BARE FISTS INTO THE PALM OF THEIR HANDS IN A MENACING MANNER!!

TOGETHER WITH ERIK THEY COMPRISE THE LOCAL FIGHTING GROUP OF GREAT RENOWN KNOWN SIMPLY AS THE "TWELVE SCARS".

SOME KIND OF GANG, HUH? I GUESS THEY'VE TURNED OUT TO CHEER ON ONE OF THEIR OWN.

SURELY THEY WOULDN'T INTERFERE WITH A LEGITIMATE CHALLENGE. YOU KNOW - TRADITION AND ALL.

GAAA!!!! W-W-WHO THE H-H-HELL ARE THOSE GUIYS?

ACTUALLY, BOB, THEY'RE HERE TO 'POUND YOU' INTO THE DIRT!

HE'S JUST TALKIN' TRASH, BOB.

UH OH.



BRIAN? WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT? HELP ME OUT HERE.

I PLUM **FORGOT** THAT MANY **TAVERNS** HAVE THEIR OWN **TAKE** ON THE **'RULES'**. APPARENTLY THE **"TAG TEAM"** RULES ARE **OBSERVED** HERE. IT'S AN **OPTION** OPENED TO THOSE WHO CHOOSE **BARE HANDS** AS A WEAPON.

SO WHAT. I'LL USE THEM TOO! YOU GUYS CAN **JOIN** IN.

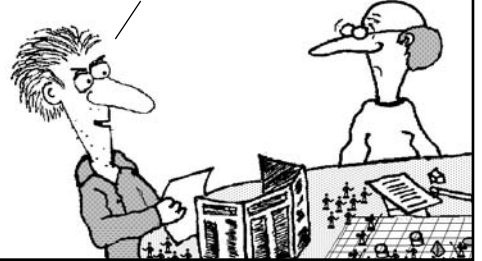
SORRY BOB! YOU'VE ALREADY **DECLARED** YOUR WEAPON.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

YOU TRY TO **RUN AWAY** FROM THE **BRUTAL BEATING** BEING DEALT TO YOU BUT THE **CROWD** CONTINUES TO **TOSS** YOU BACK INTO THE **FIGHTING AREA**. THE **SCARS** POUND THE **FLESH** OF YOUR **FACE** UNTIL IT LOOKS LIKE **RAW MEAT**.

THEY SHOW **NO MERCY**, SLAPPING YOU AROUND LIKE A **RUBBER DOLL** AT A **SADISTS CONVENTION**.



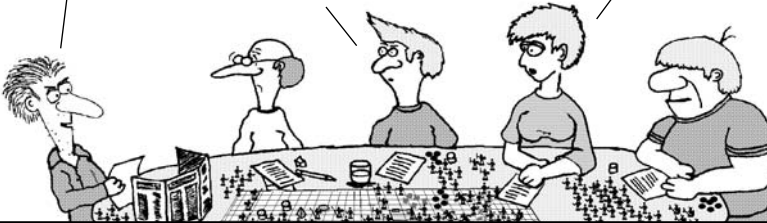
A WEE BIT LATER...

AS YOU FALL **LIMP** INTO A POOL OF YOUR OWN **BLOOD** THE **BARKEEP** HALTS THE FIGHT AND DECLARES **ERIK** THE **VICTOR**. HE MOTIONS FOR YOUR COMPANIONS TO **REMOVE** THE BODY.

BUT **FIRST** ERIK AND HIS MEN **STRIP KNUCKLES'** BODY OF ANYTHING OF **VALUE** INCLUDING WEAPONS, **MONEY**, **MAGIC** AND ANYTHING ELSE OF INTEREST. HAND ME YOUR **CHARACTER SHEET** BOB AND I'LL MARK OFF THE **SPOILS** TAKEN.

DAMN, DUDE. GUESS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE CALLING **DIBS** ON AN **ASS KICKIN'**.

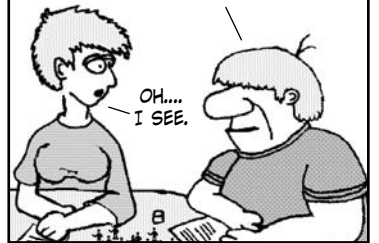
I'M **SO SORRY**, BOB.



MAYBE I CAN **REASON** WITH **ERIK** AND TRY TO GET SOME OF BOB'S STUFF BACK.

I WOULDN'T BOTHER. WHILE THEY WERE FIGHTING I SLIPPED A LITTLE **WITHERING BLUE** IN **ERIK'S** DRINK. GIVE HIM **FIVE MINUTES** AND HE'LL **KEEL** OVER LIKE A **TWO-LEGGED COW**.

OH... I SEE.



LATER THAT NIGHT...

NOT **EXACTLY** THE ADVENTURE I HAD IN MIND BUT IT **WORKS** FOR ME.

DAMN! I MADE OUT LIKE A **BANDIT!** I'M **RICH!** I RAKED IN **MORE GOLD** ON MY **BET** THAN I TOOK IN ON THE **ENTIRE DUNGEON OF CHAOS** MODULE.

ME TOO! I WAS GOING TO GO WITH **PARTY LOYALTIES** AND BET ON **BOB** BUT **HELL** -- THE GUY'S HELD THAT **STOOL** FOR **SIX YEARS**.

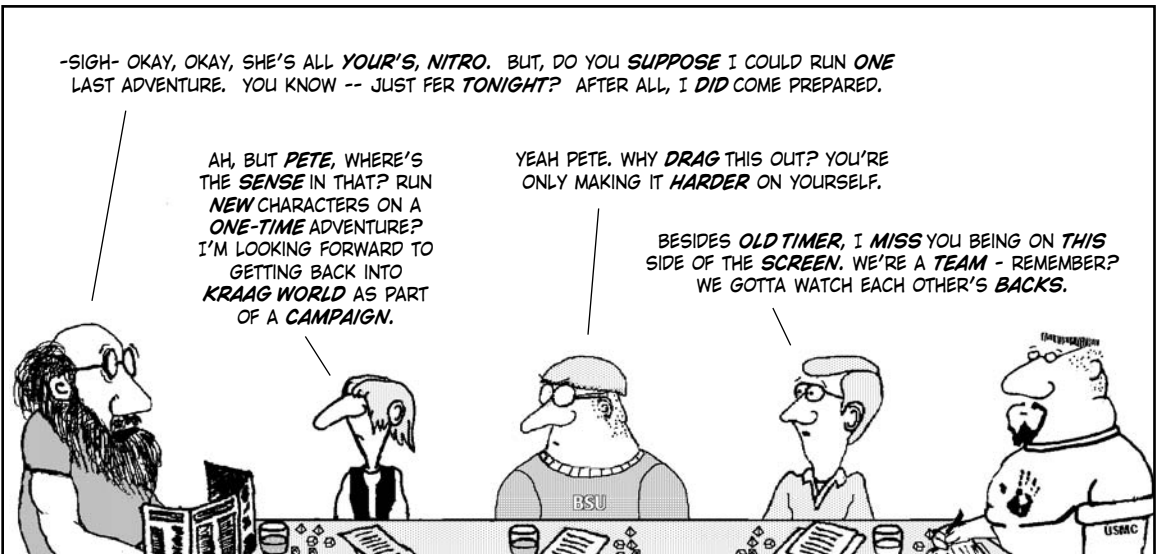
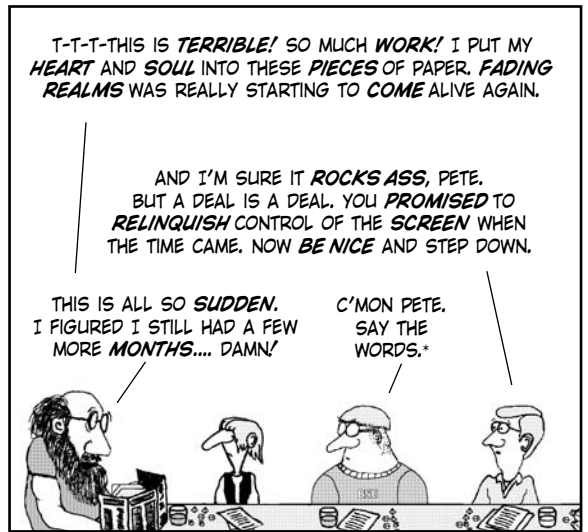
UH, MAYBE **NOW'S** NOT A GOOD TIME TO TALK ABOUT YOUR **WINNINGS**.



-FINIS-

Relinquishing the Screen

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN,



* According to the bylines of the Black Hand Gaming Society, "he who has the screen - wields the power!" The acting GameMaster must verbally state he is 'relinquishing' control of the screen before another GM can take the helm. If control is contested, or if a GM refuses to relinquish the screen a lengthy process must take place before that GM can be purged. Apparently the players, here, are sensing Pete's reluctance to step down and getting nervous.

A FEW MINUTES LATER..

WELCOME BACK, SIR! I *MUST* SAY -- YOU LOOK *GOOD* BEHIND THAT SCREEN. YOU WEAR IT LIKE A *FINE SUIT*.

UH...THANKS, *NEWT*. BUT I DON'T GIVE *POINTS* FOR *KISSING UP*.

JUST WALK A *THIN LINE*, NITRO. YOU *LOSE* YER *CREDENTIALS* AGAIN AND IT COULD BE FOR *GOOD!!*

OH *CHEER UP* YOU BIG *LUMMOX!* BEING A *PLAYER* ISN'T *FATAL* - USUALLY. BESIDES, I THINK YOU *SHINE* ON THIS END OF THE TABLE.

I KNOW. IT *JESS* TOOK THE *WIND* OUTTA MY *SAILS*. I'LL BE *FINE*.

PETE?
YOU OKAY?



SECONDS LATER.....

ACTUALLY, I'M NOT *FEELING* TOO HOT. IF YOU GUYS WILL *EXCUSE* ME I THINK I'LL GO GET SOME *FRESH AIR*.

AH, GEEZE!! THAT DIDN'T GO WELL. THE POOR GUY. HE LOOKED LIKE SOMEONE JUST KICKED HIM IN THE CHEST.

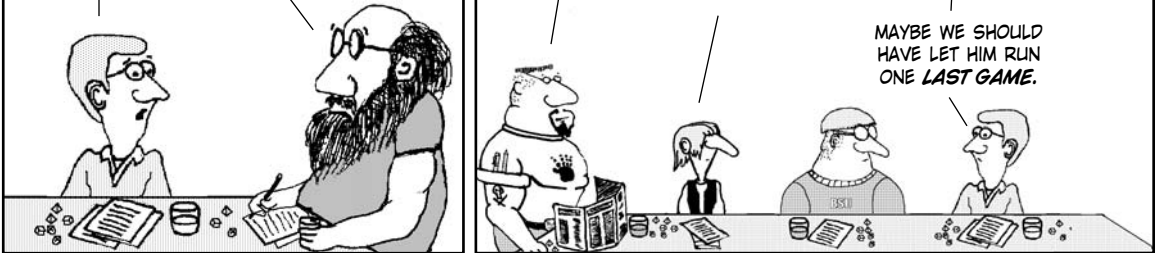
ANYTHING I CAN DO?

YEAH. IF I'M NOT *BACK* BY THE TIME YOU *FINISH UP* - LOCK UP FOR ME.

HE'LL BE BACK, LIKE HE SAID - HE JUST NEEDED SOME *FRESH AIR*.

I FEEL SO *GUILTY*. I THINK HE WAS LOOKING TO ME TO *BACK* HIM UP OR SOMETHING.

MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE LET HIM RUN ONE *LAST GAME*.



LATER THAT SAME NIGHT...

HEY PETE. LONG TIME NO SEE. HOW'S IT HANGIN'?

OH...SO SO. HOW 'BOUT YERSELF?

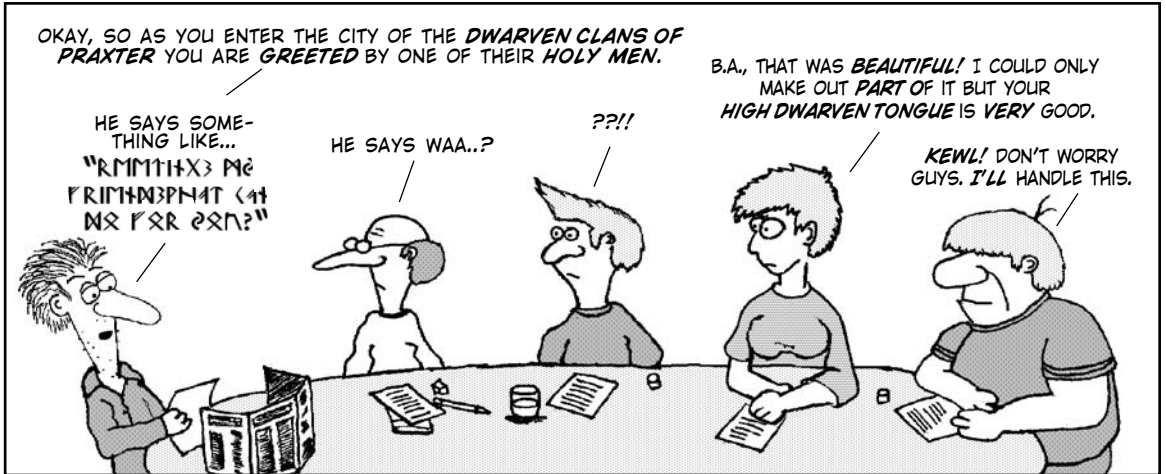
FAIR TO MIDDLIN'. HEY, WHAT'S WITH THE *MONKEY*?

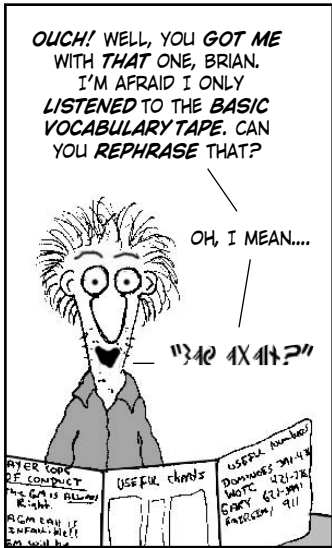
HE'S WITH ME.



Sprechen Sie Dwarvish?

BY DANIEL SCOTT
WITH JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

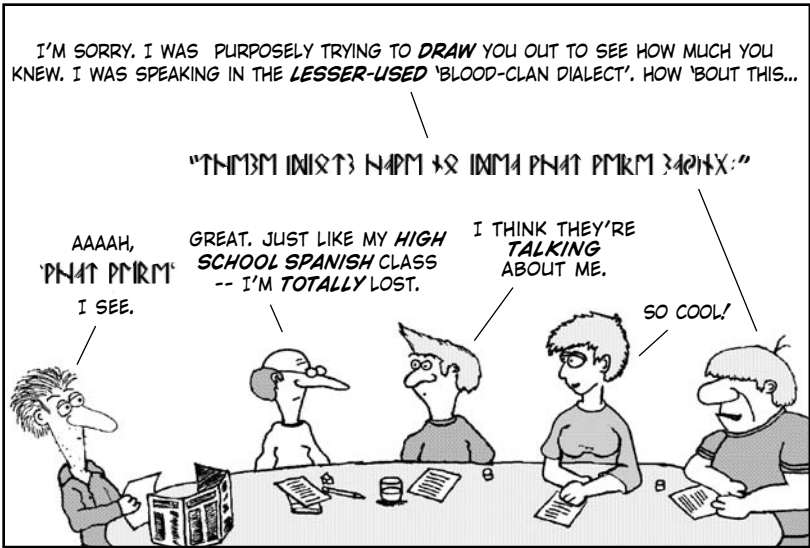




OUCH! WELL, YOU GOT ME WITH THAT ONE, BRIAN. I'M AFRAID I ONLY LISTENED TO THE BASIC VOCABULARY TAPE. CAN YOU REPHRASE THAT?

OH, I MEAN....

"340 4X 4H?"



I'M SORRY. I WAS PURPOSELY TRYING TO DRAW YOU OUT TO SEE HOW MUCH YOU KNEW. I WAS SPEAKING IN THE LESSER-USED 'BLOOD-CLAN DIALECT'. HOW 'BOUT THIS...

"THIMM INIXT3 N4PM X8 INMA PH4T PMKM 34PHX:"

AAAAH, 'PH4T PMRM' I SEE.

GREAT. JUST LIKE MY HIGH SCHOOL SPANISH CLASS -- I'M TOTALLY LOST.

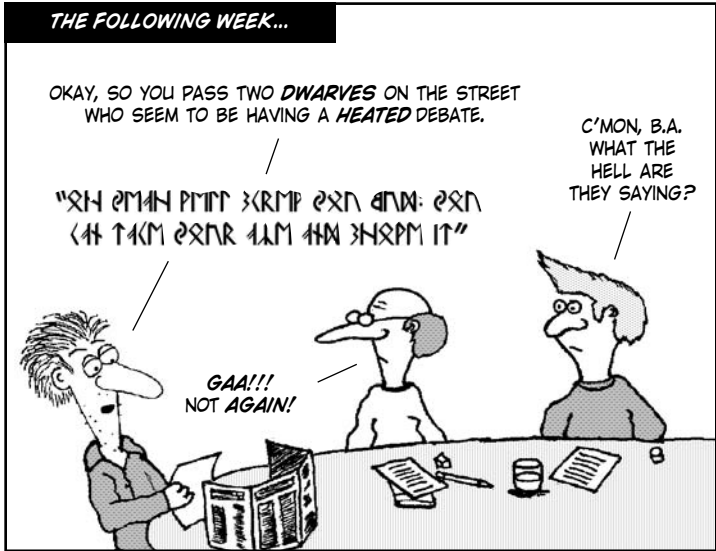
I THINK THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT ME.

SO COOL!



I THINK I'LL GO DOWN TO THE GAMES PIT TOMORROW AND CHECK OUT SOME OF THOSE TAPES MYSELF.

OH YOU SHOULD. IT REALLY ADDS TO THE ENJOYMENT OF THE GAME.



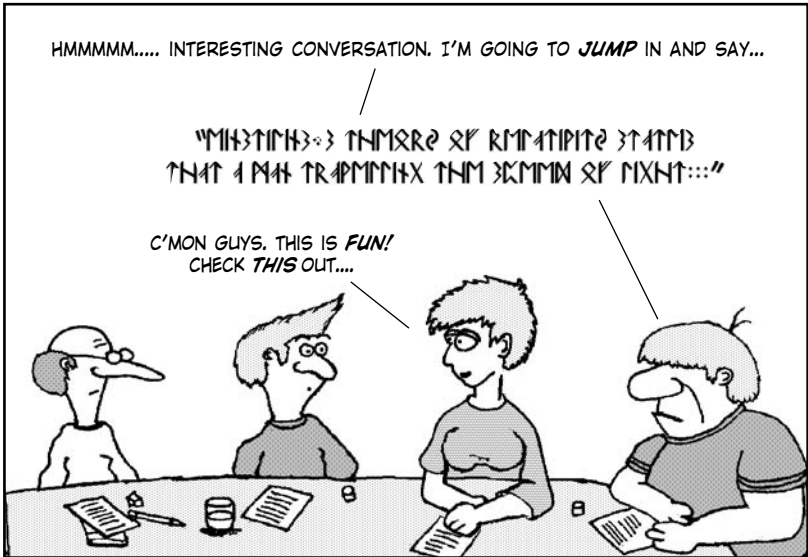
THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY, SO YOU PASS TWO DWARVES ON THE STREET WHO SEEM TO BE HAVING A HEATED DEBATE.

"X4 PM4N PM4T 3XRM 2XN 4N4: 2XN 4H T4KM 2XNR 4LM 4H 3X4PM IT"

C'MON, B.A. WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY SAYING?

GAA!!! NOT AGAIN!



HMMMMM..... INTERESTING CONVERSATION. I'M GOING TO JUMP IN AND SAY...

"M4XTHIX3:3 THMOR2 2F R4M4T4P4T2 3T4M2 THAT 4 M4T TR4PM4M4X TH4M 34MM4 2F N4X4T:~:"

C'MON GUYS. THIS IS FUN! CHECK THIS OUT....



"hch4 4002 4c4y i6 64 h04m4 744y4m4: 400 744y 744 400 44 4c74m4y 4m: c 44m4p 6r4y4m:"

HUH?

VERY NICE, SARA. I DETECT A **DEEP GINGE** DIALECT BUT I COULDN'T SEEM TO **FOLLOW** YOU. I'M AFRAID I'M NOT COMPLETELY **FLUENT**.

ACTUALLY IT WAS **OLD GINGE** -- BUT THE **TWO** ARE VERY SIMILAR. THERE WERE SOME **VOWEL SHIFTS** DURING THE **OLD REPUBLIC ERA**.

AH, THAT EXPLAINS IT.



"απολα λαλε ενα τικα ρνα γερμι-
εμπ ραατς αη ρετολ ριμα
εταεριματ ιμ ε βλε αη ετερεβραγ"

OH MY STARS!! NOT **COMPLETELY FLUENT**, EH? COULD'A FOOLED ME.

AAHH, I JUST MEMORIZED **GRINDFAR'S THIRD SYLLABI**. THAT'S ABOUT THE **EXTENT** OF MY KNOWLEDGE ON **GINGE**. I FOUND IT TOO **'FLOWERY'** FOR MY TASTES.

THIS IS **TOO MUCH**. **SARA TOO??!!**



SEVERAL MINUTES LATER....

"ΚΜΚΜ Β ΨΡΡ ΤΗΜ ΡΜΚ"

THAT'S PRETTY GOOD, SARA. BUT TO **ACCURATELY** SPEAK THE **DWARVEN VOWELS** YOU HAVE TO REACH DOWN **DEEP**. IT COMES FROM THE **STOMACH**.

I SEE. I'LL HAVE TO WORK ON THAT. THANKS.



THIS **BLOWS!!** WITH THESE GUYS LEARNING ALL THESE **FREAKIN' LANGUAGES** THEY'LL BE ABLE TO **PLOT** AGAINST US IN **SECRET!**

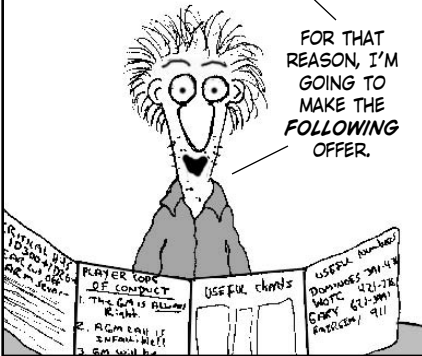
YEAH, WITH ALL THEIR **JIBBER-JABBER** THEY COULD BE PLANNING OUR **DOOM** WITH US SITTING **RIGHT HERE!**



DUDE, WE NEED TO **TALK** AFTER THE **GAME!**

OKAY LISTEN UP FOLKS. I CAN'T REMEMBER THE **LAST TIME** I'VE ENJOYED A **GAMING SESSION** SO MUCH. LEARNING THESE **FANTASY LANGUAGES** HAS REALLY BROUGHT THE **GAME** ALIVE.

FOR THAT REASON, I'M GOING TO MAKE THE **FOLLOWING** OFFER.



BEGINNING **NEXT WEEK** ANYONE WHO **LEARNS** AN **OFFICIAL** NATIVE LANGUAGE OF **GARWEEZE WORLD** WILL BE AWARDED A **1,000 EXPERIENCE POINT INCENTIVE AWARD** -- THAT AWARD GOES FOR **EACH** LANGUAGE YOU **LEARN**. I'M GOING TO GO AHEAD AND GIVE **SARA** AND **BRIAN** **500 EXPERIENCE POINTS** FOR THE **EFFORT** THEY'VE ALREADY MADE.

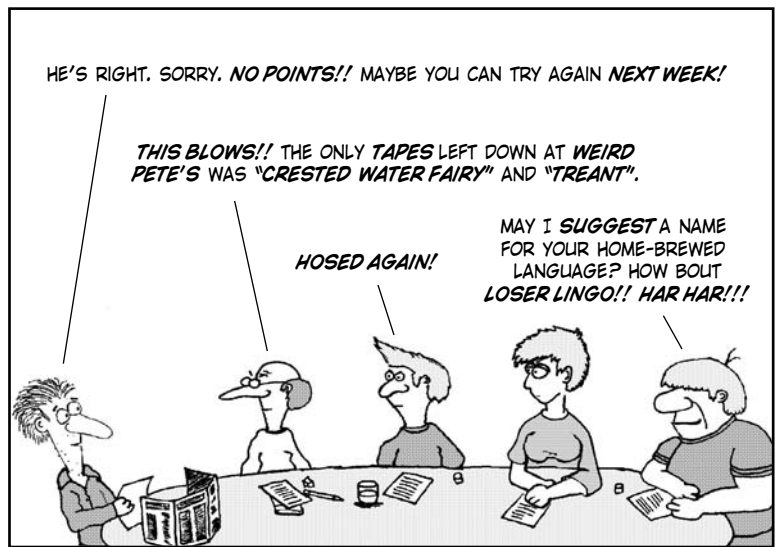
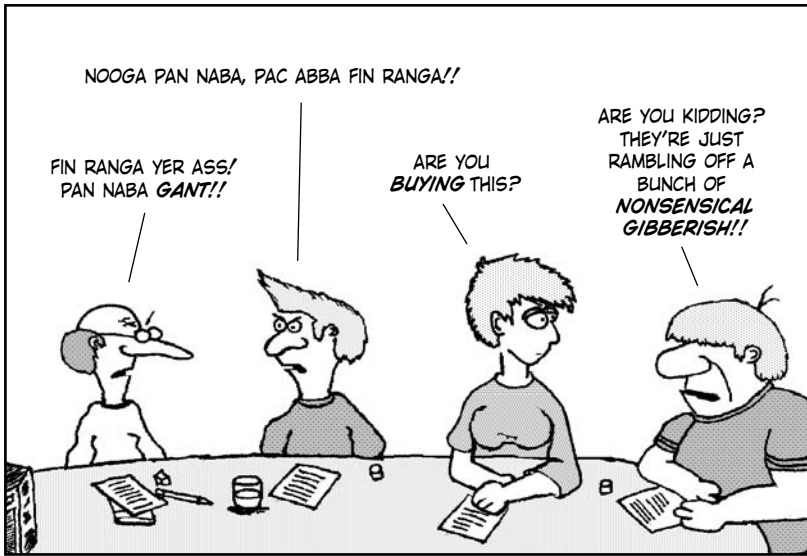
NO FAIR! I DON'T HAVE THE **TIME** TO SIT AROUND AND **LISTEN** TO A BUNCH OF **STINKIN'** TAPES LIKE **SOME** PEOPLE DO. I'M BEING UNFAIRLY **PENALIZED!**

YOU DON'T HAVE TO **MASTER** THE LANGUAGE. JUST **DEMONSTRATE** A FEW **BASICS**.

OH MAN! I'M GETTING **BONED** HERE. I **SUCK** AT LEARNING LANGUAGES.

HMMMMM, I BETTER GET DOWN TO **PETE'S** AND RENT SOME **MORE** TAPES.





WOW! A **MILLION DOLLARS!!!** IF I EVER HAD THAT MUCH MONEY IN **REAL LIFE** I'D SPEND HALF OF IT ON **BOOZE** AND **WOMEN** AND THEN JUST **WASTE** THE OTHER HALF.

YOU AND ME BOTH!



NO, NEWT. **NO!!** WANT ME TO **SPELL** IT OUT FOR YOU? **N-O -- NO!!** BINDING TWO **PLUS FOUR** SWORDS TOGETHER DOES NOT MAKE THEM A **PLUS 8** WEAPON. **FORGET IT!**

WHAT IF I APPLIED A REALLY GOOD **BONDING AGENT?**



NOW DON'T GO **SHRUGGING** THIS OFF, B.A. YOU **DEAL** WITH IT - **DAMMIT!!!** SINCE WHEN DID WE ALLOW **IN-PARTY LYNCHINGS** IN **CATTLEPUNK!**

LOOK, GUYS, THE MAN IS A **GUEST**. LET'S GIVE HIM SOME **LEEWAY**. OKAY? BESIDES.... HAVE YOU **LOOKED** AT HIM? HE'S **HUGE!!!** LIKE A **FRICKIN' TANK**. LET'S **HUMOR** HIM.

YOU BROUGHT IT ON YOURSELF, **BOB**. YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST **GIVEN** HIM YOUR **HORSE** WHEN HE ASKED FOR IT.

LOOK...**CRUTCH...**SIR. PERHAPS WE CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT. HOW 'BOUT I **GIVE** YOU THE **WINCHESTER RIFLE -- TO KEEP!** THEN YOU COULD JUST **CUT** ME DOWN AND I'LL GO ON MY **MERRY** WAY.

C'MON B.A. YOU COULD **TAKE** HIM IF YOU WANTED TO.

BUT YER WORTH **250** EXPERIENCE POINTS - **EASY!**

YOU'RE **TOAST**, SARA. MIGHT AS WELL ACCEPT IT.



UH....PERHAPS THIS WAS A MERE **OVERSIGHT** BUT THE **LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT** OF **KRAGIN II** CLEARLY STATES THAT HIS **MATERIAL WEALTH** SHOULD GO TO HIS **SURVIVING SON, KRAGIN III**. IT DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT **"DIVVYING UP"** THE GOODS AND SPLITTING IT UP AMONGST YOURSELVES.

SORRY NEWT. WE'RE SO **STRICKEN** WITH **GRIEF** WE NEGLECTED TO EVEN **READ** YOUR **WILL**.

YEAH. I'M SUFFERING FROM **POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER** OVER YOUR **TRAGIC DEMISE**.



OKAY, OKAY, SO **COLONEL MUSTARD** OFF'ED **MISTER BODY** IN THE **BILLIARDS ROOM** WITH THE **FRICKIN' CANDLE STICK**. I UNDERSTAND THAT. BUT **MOTIVE!!!** WHERE'S THE **MOTIVE??!!!**

I THINK HE WAS **DOIN'** **MISS PLUM** OR SOMETHING. YOU WANNA PLAY ANOTHER GAME OR WHAT?



Why, Yes.
I am God.



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Taunt You A Second Time

MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL CARD GAME



ALL IN THE CARDS: A PLAYER'S GUIDE

ADVERSARIES

Name C/W Grail #
Description (*alternate effect*)

AFRICAN SWALLOW -/ 2
Special Combat: every time African Swallow is in the same space as opponent's Round Table, a coconut drops on a knight's head of opponent's choice causing a permanent -1 to combat. You may move African Swallow one space during opponents turn. (-1 to a combat draw)

BLACK KNIGHT 8/- 0
The Black Knight must be defeated 4 times, but his combat ability permanently drops by two each time he loses a combat. (Players may not play positive modifier cards this turn)

CONFUSED GUARD 3/6 2
Knights must have wits with the Confused Guard prior to attempting combat. (-2 to a wits draw)

CRAPPER -/2 5
A knight defeated by Crapper in a village or castle may not leave that space until Crapper is defeated by another knight. May be played with other Anthrax adversaries or personae. (+2 to a castle table draw)

CREEK FIEND 3/0 6
(-2 to a wits draw)

DENNIS' MOTHER -/2 6
(-1 to a combat draw)

DUCK 2/- 4
Duck automatically attacks the knight with the lowest combat value. (-3 to a combat draw)

EVIL CAT BEATER 3/3 5
(+1 to a village event draw)

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE WEEK -/5 3
A knight outwitted by the Executive Officer of the Week throws an item. (-2 to a wits draw)



FIRST SOLDIER WITH BIRD INTEREST 3/3 5
Soldier will accept Extra Coconuts in lieu of a dispute. (Players may not play positive modifier cards this turn)

SIR GRINGAMORE 8/3 4
When Sir Gringamore is encountered and the Famous Historian is in play, place the Historian(s) in the dead cart. (-1 to a combat draw)



GUY DE LOIMBARD 9/11 1
(-1 to a combat draw)

KNIGHTS WHO TIL RECENTLY SAID NI 8/7 2
(+1 to a combat draw)

MIDGET -/2 5
A knight defeated by Midget in a village or castle may not leave that space until Midget is defeated by another knight. May be played with other Anthrax adversaries or personae. (-2 to a castle table draw)

MOISTENED BINT -/4 5
A knight outwitted by the Moistened Bint is reshuffled into deck. (-1 to a wits draw)

MOOSE 4/- 4
(-1 to a combat draw)

PASSING RUFFIANS 4/- 4
(+1 to a castle table draw)

VICIOUS PENGUIN OF BRISTOL 2/- 6
(+1 to a wits draw)

RALPH THE WONDER LLAMA 4/- 2
Llama immediately bites a knight giving him a permanent -1 to combat. (+3 to a combat draw)

THE ROBINSONS 2/5 2
After a knight combats The Robinsons, draw a grail number. On a 4 or higher, the knight catches the plague and dies. (-2 to a village event draw)

SECOND SOLDIER WITH BIRD INTEREST 3/3 5
Soldier will accept Extra Coconuts in lieu of a dispute. (Players may not play negative modifier cards this turn)

SOOTHSAYER -/4 5
Only a knight whose wits value is greater than, or equal to, his combat value may have wits with the soothsayer. (Look at any face down card)

WATERY TART 2/5 3
A knight who outwits Watery Tart receives a sword - permanent +1 to combat - or you may search your deck for Excalibur. (-1 to a combat draw)

WEDDING GROOMSMEN 3/- 5
Wedding Groomsmen have wits 0 for castle table draws only. (Players may not play negative modifier cards this turn).

WICKED CAT BEATER 3/3 5
(Player may avoid answering a Questions 3 card)

142 MEXICAN WHOOPING LLAMAS 3/- 3
Each knight in your Round Table must combat a llama individually. Do not credit the combat assist bonus. (Negate combat assist bonus for 1 turn)

Events

Name Grail #
Description (*alternate effect*)

BLOODY HELL 2
Multiple knights may combat this turn. Add their combat values together and draw one grail number. If combat is lost, place all participating knights in the Dead Cart. (Bypass and wedding personae or adversary)

BUGGERING OFF 2
Target knight must run away from his next combat. (Negate the results of combat against a peril)

DELIRIOUS 3
Force your opponent to redraw a draw made to find the Holy Grail. (+2 to a combat draw)

DISBELIEF 3
Demote King Arthur to a page for a grail number draw of turns. (Search the deck for a page)

DON'T BE AFRAID OF HIM 2
Draw a grail number. 0-2) opponent loses a Knight. 3-4) opponent loses a page. 5 or higher) opponent loses a persona. (Search the deck for Prince Herbert)

DRESS HER UP 5
Search your deck for Witch or Old Crone and play immediately. (A knight who has been turned into a newt returns to normal next turn)

DRESSED AS A WITCH 2
Eliminate the Witch card and stop the Witch from turning your knight into a newt. (+1 to a wits draw)

EARTHQUAKE 1
Place Earthquake on any land. As long as Earthquake remains, that land may not be entered. (+1 to a combat draw)

- ENOUGH MUSIC** 4
Look at opponent's hand. Remove any song cards you find and place them in the Dead Cart. (Remove any minstrel card from play)
- FALSE COUNT** 5
If any knight is using the Holy Hand Grenade, it explodes in his or her own Round Table killing the entire Round Table except for one knight and one page of his choice. (-1 to a grail number draw)
- FANFARE** 2
Search through your deck and play any or all song cards immediately. Reshuffle your deck when finished. (May discard two cards to avoid singing)
- FOOLING ANYONE** 5
Switch any two face down cards in your opponent's England but do not peek while you switch them. (+1 to a wits draw)
- FOOLING YOURSELF** 3
Switch any two face down cards in your England but do not peek while you switch them (-1 to a wits draw)
- GOT ONE?** 3
You may search for the Holy Grail in the next new castle you enter. Draw a 6 or higher to find the Holy Grail. Opponent may cancel this event by playing any taunt card. (Search your deck for any one armour item)
- GREAT FIND** 2
Take any Monty Python and the Holy Grail card out of your personal collection and put it into your hand. (Opponent must double ante with a card(s) of his choice from his own collection)
- A HAPPY OCCASION** 4
Opponent's knights may not have combat this turn. (-1 to a wits draw)
- HEAD OFF** 1
Force opponent to cut his own head off. Well, one of his knight's heads anyway. Place knight in Dead Cart. (Search your deck for the Three-Headed Knight)
- HICCUPS** 3
Search your deck for Castle Guards or Confused Guards and play them immediately. (Bypass Castle Guards)
- HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE** 1
If Tim the Enchanter is in your Round Table, you may look at one face-down card per turn. (May search your deck for Tim the Enchanter)
- HOLIDAY IN SWEDEN** 4
Opponent must remove one sock or place his entire hand in the Dead Cart. (+2 to a combat draw)
- I GOT BETTER** 6
May be played on any character so that he or she is no longer a newt. (Remove a Scratch or Flesh Wound from a knight)
- JOIN MY COURT** 6
+3 to a Round Table draw. (+1 to a combat draw)
- KNIGHTING** 4
Grant knighthood to any persona. If persona previously had no combat ability, the new knight will have a combat of 1. This new knight may not invite others to join the Round Table. (-2 to a Round Table draw)
- MALLET TO THE HEAD** 2
+7 to a combat draw. (-1 to a wits draw)
- MARRIAGE** 6
Lower Sir Lancelot's combat value to 3. (Search your deck for 1 Swamp Castle persona)
- MAYHEM** 2
Take the top 3 cards from your opponent's deck and play them against her immediately. Place any unused cards in the Dead Cart. (+2 to a combat draw)
- MEN OF VALOR** 2
Play Men of Valor face up in your Round Table area. If your Round Table slays 2 adversaries in the next 2 turns, each knight gains a permanent +1 to his combat total. Otherwise, discard Men of Valor and each knight gets a permanent -1 to his combat. (+1 to a combat draw)
- MIGRATION** 1
Draw a grail number and place in the Dead Cart all members of opponent's Round Table who have the same grail number on their card as the one you drew. (+2 to a castle table draw)
- MOOSE BITE** 5
Take two cards from opponent's hand and place them in yours. Return them at the end of the game. (Prevent opponent from playing a card that forces you to discard)
- MORE THAN REASONABLE** 0
If your opponent fails in his next search to find the Holy Grail, send his Round Table back to his Round Table Area. (+1 on a draw to find the Holy Grail)
- NO CLASS** 2
Demote a knight to a page for a grail number draw of turns. (Place an opponent's page in the Dead Cart)
- NO PROBLEMS** 0
Move any adversary encountered in England to your hand. (-2 to a grail number draw against an adversary)
- NOBILITY** 5
During a grail number draw, draw two grail numbers and take the best one. (Negate the effects of Get Slop Poured on You)
- NON-MIGRATORY** 5
Place any African Swallows currently in play in the Dead Cart. (Prevent opponent from playing a face down card. Place the card in the Dead Cart)
- NOT QUITE SO BRAVE** 3
May be played on any knight. Knight may not fight alone or as an adversary. If a combat draw indicates the knight is slain, negate the result and the knight runs away instead. (players may not play positive combat modifiers this turn)
- OH DEAR** 1
Place any persona in the Dead Cart. (+1 to a wits draw)
- OUTRAGEOUS ACCENT** 6
If quote is read in an outrageous French accent, draw a grail number. If the grail number is 4 or higher, bypass a French adversary without dispute, even if he is in a castle. (+2 to a wits draw)
- PYROTECHNICS** 4
Remove any land card from England or Avalon. Place the land in the Dead Cart. (+2 to a combat draw)
- RATIFICATION** 2
Automatically win a battle of wits. (Search your deck for Dennis)
- SEPARATE WAYS** 1
Separate your Round Table into 2 or more groups. You may still only move one Round Table per turn. (+1 to a wits draw)
- SILENCE** 6
If your Round Table contains more than one knight, knights may bypass any anthrax adversaries or personae in any one space in England. (Avoid a song card)
- SINGLE HANDED** 5
Prevent opponent from using the combat assist bonus. (Search the deck for any one armour item)
- SLINK** 2
Bypass one adversary, but leave behind - discard - all personae and any pages not currently assigned to knights. (-3 to a castle table draw)
- SOILED MY ARMOUR** 6
Knight must sit out one turn while he goes to change his armour. (-2 to a castle table draw for a knight)
- SPECIAL GUEST** 5
Search the deck for Sir Lancelot and reshuffle. (Search the deck for a page)
- SPLASH** 4
Automatically defeats Moistened Bint or Watery Tart. Place the defeated adversary in the Dead Cart. (+2 to a grail number draw against a female adversary or persona)
- TOO PERILOUS** 5
Release all knights trapped by an Anthrax persona(e). (-2 to a combat draw against a peril)
- A TREAT** 4
Search your deck for the Killer Rabbit and reshuffle. (+2 to a combat draw)
- UN CADEAU** 1
Look at your opponent's hand. Take and permanently keep any one card. (Your opponent must place an item in the Dead Cart)
- SEVERED HEAD** 2
+9 to a combat draw against a knight. (-1 to a wits draw)
- WAZZED STIFF** 3
Send your own Arthur to the Dead Cart to send opponent's Round Table back to the Round Table area. (Avoid forced movement)
- WEIGHT RATIOS** 6
All players must discard down to the number of cards held by the player who holds the least amount of cards. (+1 to a combat draw)
- WELL I'M AWFULLY SORRY** 6
Return anyone killed by Lancelot, from your Dead Cart to your deck and reshuffle. (+3 to a wits draw if Lancelot is in play)
- WHERE ARE YOUR MANNERS** 4
Your opponent must offer you a drink or lose a turn. If the game is at your house, offer your opponent a drink and move twice this turn. (Search your deck for a page)
- WHOA THERE!** 0
Prevent opponent from playing any card from his or her hand. Place the card in the Dead Cart. (opponent may not move this turn)
- WITCHCRAFT** 6
Play on a page. During opponent's draw phase any Angry Mob in play moves one space per turn toward target page. When the Angry Mob reaches the page, send both the page and the Angry Mob to the Dead Cart. (+1 to a combat draw)
- WITH A HERRING!** 4
Draw a grail number. For this number of turns, all players must draw their draw phase cards from the player to their left's deck. (Target player must skip his draw phase)
- YOU MAKE ME SAD** 6
-3 to a Round Table draw. (-1 to a wits draw)



ITEMS

Name	Grail #	Description (<i>alternate effect</i>)
THE BOOK OF THE FILM	1	Once per turn, player may look at any face-down cards at any one location in England or Avalon for 10 seconds. Discard one card from your hand for each face-down card viewed. (negate a land combat modifier for 1 turn)
BOW AND ARROW	2	An arrow may be shot, once per turn, at an adversary or peril up to 2 spaces away. Draw a grail number. If it is 4 or higher, target receives a permanent -1 to combat for each hit. (shoot down an African Swallow. Place African Swallow and Bow and Arrow in Dead Cart)
CAP OF IDIOCY	2	Cap of Idiocy lowers the wits value of a knight by 2. This item cannot voluntarily be discarded. (+2 to a castle table draw)
DAGGER	3	Dagger may be thrown prior to actual combat. Place Dagger in the Dead Cart, then draw a grail number. If it is a 2 or higher target receives a permanent -2 to combat (Prevent opponent from using Strand of Creeper or Rope. Place items in the Dead Cart)
FAULTY COCONUTS	2	A knight whose page carries these coconuts may only move every other turn. Faulty Coconuts may not be voluntarily discarded. (-1 to a Round Table draw)
FLOWER VASE	6	Place Flower Vase in the Dead Cart to cause an attack by Lancelot to go astray. Treat combat result as a draw. (+3 to a grail number draw against Lancelot)
GALAHAD'S SHIELD	1	Permanent +1 to combat for bearer. Must be used by Sir Galahad if he is in your Round Table. (Prevent opponent from moving this turn)
GLASS OF WATER	6	Place Glass of Water in the Dead Cart to prevent Hiccups from being played. (+2 to grail number draws against Castle Guards)
A HERRING	4	Place in the Dead Cart to bypass the Knights-Who-'Til-Recently-Said-Ni or to remove the Mightiest Tree in the Forest from play. (Player must double ante)
INTERSPACE TOOTHBRUSH	6	Place Interspace Toothbrush in the Dead Cart to defeat a Moose. (+3 combat draw against a Peril)
LANCELOT'S SHIELD	1	Permanent +1 to combat for bearer. Must be used by Sir Lancelot if he is in your Round Table. (Prevent opponent from moving this turn)
MACE	2	Permanent +1 to combat for bearer. (+1 to a village event draw)
MUD	5	Place Mud in the Dead Cart to bypass Dennis or Dennis' Mother. (+1 to a combat draw)
A NOTE	3	Place A Note in the Dead Cart to retract any one movement after the face down card has been revealed. Instead of making the original movement, the player's round table may move elsewhere. (Prevent opponent from moving this turn)

RAKE 5
Bypass Angry Mob, Passing Ruffians, or the Witch Burning Villagers. (+2 to a village event draw)

SIR ROBIN'S SHIELD 1
Permanent +1 to combat for bearer. Must be used by Sir Robin if he is in your Round Table. (Prevent opponent from moving this turn)

SCALE 3
Raise the lesser of combat or wit of a knight until it is equal to the other attribute. (Target knight requires two pages to serve him)

SEQUINED VEST 1
Player using Sequined Vest must impersonate Clark Gable. Bedazzle your opponent. +1 to combat for wearer. (Prevent opponent from moving this turn)

SHEEP'S BLADDER 5
Place Sheep's Bladder in the Dead Cart to remove any Earthquake from play. (Prevent opponent from playing a card that causes lands to be placed in the Dead Cart)

STAFF OF FIRE 1
Send knight from your own Round Table to the Dead Cart to gain +7 to a combat draw. (Negate a land combat modifier for 1 turn)

STRAND OF CREEPER 6
Page bearing Strand of Creeper may carry two additional items. (+2 to a castle table draw)

SWORD OF PARRYING 4
Regardless of actual results, the first grail numbers drawn for combat involving a knight whose page carries this item always result in a combat draw. Further draws are unaffected. The knight is compelled to deflect an otherwise sure miss from his adversary. The Sword of Parrying may not be voluntarily discarded. (+3 to combat if your grail number draw turns out to be less than your opponent's)

TORTURE RACK 3
Permanent -2 to a knight's combat ability. That knight may not assist others in combat. Torture Rack may not be voluntarily discarded. (+2 to a combat draw)

TROJAN RABBIT 4
Ignore castle table. A knight may have wits with a castle opponent. If victorious, his Round Table may enter the castle. If defeated, his round table loses a page and remains outside the castle. Discard after use. (+10 to combat for the occupant of a castle that is being assaulted)



KNIGHTS

Name	C/W	Grail #	Description
ARTHUR, KING OF THE BRITONS	5/5	1	+3 to Round Table draws. When Arthur is the lead knight and Galahad is not in his Round Table, all grail numbers of 5 that you draw become 3 if your opponent says "3 sir."
SIR BALIN THE HOARDER	7/3	1	Sir Balin requires 2 pages to serve him.
SIR BEDEVERE	2/8	1	Automatically eliminates Witch
SIR BRUCE	4/1	5	If Sir Bruce is in your Round Table your knights may not have wits with any adversary.
SIR CLARKE	2/4	4	If Sir Clarke encounters an adversary with a wits value, he may not attempt to combat that adversary.
DANCING KNIGHT	4/1	4	-2 to Round Table draws when inviting others to join the Round Table
SIR GALAHAD THE CHASTE	4/5	1	May not be adversely affected by taunts or events.
SIR GARETH OF ORKNEY	6/3	4	Place Sir Gareth in the Dead Cart if your Round Table is ever taunted.
GENERIC KNIGHT	X/X	4	X is determined by draw of a single grail number. +1 to Generic Knight's Round Table draw when he is invited to join. May not invite others to join the Round Table.
SIR LANCELOT THE BRAVE	8/2	1	3 or less on a combat grail draw involving Lancelot indicates he killed one non-knight persona in his own Round Table.
SIR NOT-APPEARING-IN-THIS-FILM	2/0	7	May not invite others to join the Round Table. May not be adversely affected by Anthrax adversaries.
SIR PRAM-A-LOT	5/3	2	If Sir Not-Appearing-in-this-Film is in your Round Table, Sir Pram-a-Lot gains +2 combat.
SIR PELLINORE	4/6	1	May not use Wits to bypass adversaries.
SIR PERIMONES (THE RED KNIGHT)	2/4	4	
SIR ROBIN	2/5	4	Can not be killed in combat, he runs away if a combat draw is lost. Cannot fight alone or as an adversary. Discard if encountered in England and will not join the Round Table.
SIR WISSHARD	1/6	3	

LANDS

Name	Grail #	Description (<i>alternate effect</i>)
ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST COMMUNE	6	+1 combat for adversaries. Knights here may grant a persona knighthood if a page is available to carry his coconuts. (+2 to a wits draw)
AVALON	2	+3 wits for occupant. May send 1 knight to Dead Cart to search this land for the Holy Grail. Draw a grail number of 6 or higher to find the Holy Grail.



CARTOON FOREST 6

+2 to grail number draw for an animated occupant. Draw 1 extra card during draw phase. (+1 to a combat draw)

GENERIC LAND 4

Draw a grail number and add that to the combat value of any adversaries inhabiting this land. Draw half that number, rounded down, of extra cards during draw phase. (-1 to a combat draw against a knight(s))

HIGHLANDS 5

+2 combat for adversaries. Draw 1 extra card during draw phase. Opponent of player encountering this land may search his deck for Tim the Enchanter and play him immediately in the Highlands.

MIGHTIEST TREE IN THE FOREST 1

This land may not be passed, but it may be entered. (+2 to a combat draw)

NURSERY 6

+2 wits for occupant. Draw 1 extra card during draw phase. (Search your deck for Roger the Shrubber)

POINTLESS LAND 7

(Remove a land card from play)

SWEDEN 5

No adversaries with a sword icon may be played here. Draw 2 extra cards during draw phase. May not be placed under an existing adversary. (+1 to a grail number draw against and adversary)

PAGES

Name	C/W	Grail #
Description (<i>Adversary</i>)		

APPY 4

May carry 2 items. (Lion, Combat 6) Lightning, the Lost Page of Sir Lancelot⁵ May carry 1 item. May not be placed in play if Concorde is in play. (Evil Spirit, Combat 6)

LUCKY JOHN 5

May carry 1 item. Lucky John may dramatically escape death once. (Giant Serpent, Combat 7)

PACKEY 2

May carry 3 items. (Rabid Hedgehog, Combat 5)

WRITE YER OWN PAGE -

PERSONAE

Name	C/W	Grail #
Description (<i>alternate effect</i>)		

CART MASTER -/4 4

May randomly take 1 card per turn from your Dead Cart and reshuffle it back into your deck. (+2 to a combat draw)

DEAD PERSON -/5 2

Place Dead Person in the Dead Cart to avoid catching the plague. (Remove one card from your Dead Cart and reshuffle it into your deck)

FRIENDLY GUARD 1/0 5

While the Friendly Guard is in your Round Table, receive +4 to all castle table draws. (+1 to a combat draw)

KING OF SWAMP CASTLE -/2 6

You may discard 3 cards to avoid singing. (Opponent may not use Sir Lancelot for 1 turn)

MR. NEWT THE BLACKSMITH 2/1 3

If Mr. Newt joins your Round Table, your opponent must immediately remove any Witch cards in his hand and/or deck from play. (-2 to a combat draw)

OLD MAN FROM SCENE 24 -/3 4

May discard a card from your deck and peek at a face down card every other turn. (Switch 2 face down cards in any England)

PRINCESS LUCKY -/1 5

Each turn that Princess Lucky is in your Round Table and the King of Swamp Castle is anywhere in play, you may choose a knight and draw a grail number. If it is greater than the chosen knight's wits, discard both the knight and Princess Lucky. (-1 to a combat draw)

TIM THE ENCHANTER 10/8 2

Will not fight for a player; cannot be knighted. If Tim joins your Round Table, you may discard a card to look at any face down card. (+1 to a combat draw)

QUESTIONS THREE

Third Question	Grail #
Effect (Alternate Effect)	

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE COLOR? 3

Red: questioner may draw 2 cards,
Blue: answering player may not run away from next dispute,
Yellow: answering player loses a knight,
Other: questioner may look at a face down card in England. (+1 to a castle table draw)

WHICH FEMALE CHARACTER WAS A MAN? 3

Questioner may take any item in play and place it in the Dead Cart. (+1 to a wits draw)

WHAT IS THE TRANSLATION OF MONK'S CHANT? 3

Questioner may search an area in Avalon for the Holy Grail one additional time and at the same odds, but not in the same turn as the last search. (+1 to a combat draw)

IN WHAT YEAR DOES THE MOVIE TAKE PLACE? 3

Questioner may create an additional space in Avalon by playing an additional face-down card from the top of his or her deck. (+1 to a wits draw)

TAUNTS

Name	C/W	Grail #
Description (<i>Adversary</i>)		

ACNE 3

Knights may not enter or pass castle for one turn. (-2 to a Round Table or wits draw)

BE QUIET 2

Except for reading cards and announcing actions, target player must remain silent for a grail number draw of turns or send his entire Round Table to the Dead Cart. (Avoid a song card)

BEGORRAH! 6

Opponent must display a silly walk or send his entire Round Table to the Dead Cart. (draw 2 cards and play them immediately or discard them)

BUT FATHER 5

Opponent must discard all weapon and armour items currently in her possession. (+2 to a wits draw)

ENGLISH KNNNNIGGETS 3

Opponent may not invite knights to join his Round Table for a grail number draw of turns. (-2 to a wits draw)

FART 4

Opponent must place any page not presently serving a knight and all personae in his Round Table into the Dead Cart. (Opponent may not use a persona in her Round Table for one turn)

FEROCIOUS TAUNT 3

Double the effect of another Taunt card. (-1 on a draw made to find the Holy Grail)

FOOD TROUGH WIPER 4

Eliminate all Chicken, Duck, Llama, Penguin, or Farm Animals cards that are currently in play from the game. (-3 to a wits draw)

FOUL AND CRUEL 2

For a grail number draw of turns, opponent must remove his Arthur from the game and sit on him. During this time, Arthur may not take part in the game. (Cancel a taunt card as it is being played)

GIT 1

A taunt being played against you takes effect against your opponent instead. (+2 to a grail draw against a persona)

A LOONEY 2

Permanently lower the wits value of target knight to 1. (+2 to a wits draw)

MAJOR TAUNT 1 (NO CHANCE) 0

Opponent may no longer draw cards in the Balance Hand Phase. (+2 to a combat draw)

MAJOR TAUNT 2 (I DON'T) 2

For the duration of the game, during his Balance Hand Phase, opponent must discard such that he has no more than 5 cards rather than 7. (Draw 2 cards and play them immediately or discard them)

NO CHANCE 1

Target automatically loses a combat or wits draw. May be played before or after the draw. (Move an adversary knight in England 1 space)

NO MORE 4

Target knight may not have wits with adversary, knight or persona. (+1 to a combat draw)

PISSING OFF HOME 3

The next time the taunted player's knights run away, he must place a knight and a page in the Dead Cart. (+1 on a draw to find the Holy Grail)

RUDE GESTURE 2

Play directly after a grail number draw to change your grail number into that of your opponent. (+1 to a combat draw)

SILLY REQUEST 2

Remove any one of opponent's knights, except Arthur, from his Round Table and shuffle the Knight into your deck. (Add a grail number to a Round Table draw)

TINY BRAIN 4

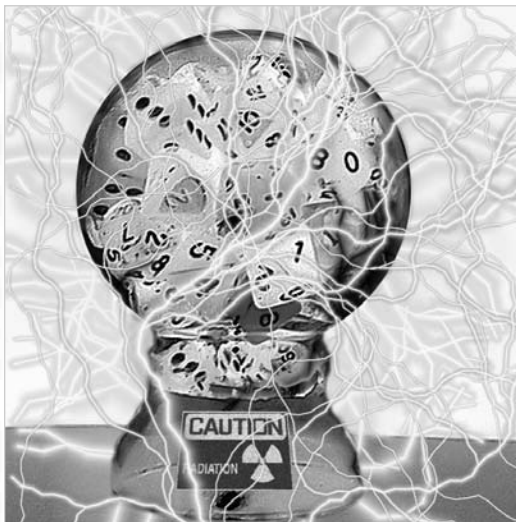
Permanently reverse the combat and wits of one knight, persona, or adversary. May only be used on a character who has both combat and wits. (-3 to a wits draw)

WINDOW DRESSER 3

Opponent's Round Table must move 1 space in a direction chosen by taunter. (Draw 2 cards from your opponent's deck and play them immediately or discard them)

YOUR MOTHER 5

Opponent must immediately finish his or her drink or his knights are forced into combat and may not run away. (May not invite others to join your Round Table for 1 turn)☐



Review *n:* a critical evaluation.

Reviewer *n:* a writer of critical reviews.

Critic: *n:* one who expresses a reasoned opinion on a matter involving a judgement of its value while exercising careful judgement or judicious evaluation.



Dungeons and Dragons: 3rd Edition — One Player's Perspective

by Todd Ruthman,
a 20 year veteran

Find the money; buy the books. That's all I have to say. Well, not quite. Reading the 3rd Edition *Player's Handbook* makes me feel like I did when I first opened a D&D™ manual. It all seems new and fresh and exciting. I'm already badgering my DM to convert as soon as humanly possible. I want to play every class, try every combination. It's almost enough to make me start my own campaign so I can play dozens of NPCs.

3e is all about choices and consequences. Imagine who you want to play, then make it happen. While the core concepts of class and level remain, each character can be truly unique. And as you gain experience, you continue to refine your character. While going up levels was always a high point in previous editions, now it contributes significantly to the type of character you play. Let's consider some specifics.

The first major change is to ability scores. In 3e, 10 and 11 are the only scores without modifiers. Anything else has a direct impact on your character as a bonus or penalty. It takes a bit of getting used. I've hated rolling characters since being stuck playing a cleric for 10 years with 14 STR, 12 INT, 16 WIS, 14 DESC, 14 CON and 12 CHR. In 3e, he would have phenomenal bonuses. Since your average using the best of three of 4d6 will be 12 or 13, most of your abilities will be good. And the odd 17 or 7 makes for a more interesting character. Of course, our group will probably stick with pre-generated characters to keep everyone on an even keel.

Regardless of which method you use to generate characters, your scores aren't frozen at first level in 3e. Another nice touch. Part of going up levels is getting the occasional point to add to your abilities. Now that's incentive.

Most of you have probably heard that 3e has only one experience table. It's great. First of all, the high-level dead zones are gone. While the gaps between levels still increase the higher you get, they increase gradually after the first few levels. You need 15 times less experience to get to 20th as a fighter compared to 2nd edition. While the DM always controls how much experience gets handed out, even more so in 3e, players should see their characters go up levels more regularly. They've designed the tables intentionally so that it takes roughly the same number of challenging encounters to move between any two levels.

To make this table work, 3e revamps all the core classes. They are now much more balanced -- and more interesting. *Clerics* are now much more on par with *mages*, and can switch off any memorized spell for a heal spell at any time. No more filling your repertoire with cure lights! The new *monk* had *d8* and is kick butt. The *barbarian* is back and goes berserk. The *rogue* is more formidable, with reams of skills and a sneak attack that comes into play much more frequently. The *sorcerer* gives a new twist to *spell casters*. I'd even consider a *bard*. Quasi spell casters, such as the *ranger*, get spells much earlier and have their own spell lists. Many of the classes gain special abilities as they go up levels, such as the *paladin's* *Smite Evil* and the *barbarian's* *Uncanny Dodge*. And everyone gets feats and skills.

Feats are new. Feats are cool. They expand weapon specialization into heroic abilities available to all classes. Some suit *fighters* and others favor *spell casters*, but there are few restrictions. If you want your mage to hit better with a staff, so be it. Feats help you differentiate characters. There are dozens to choose from but you only get a couple at first level. One feat gives you bonus to hit, while another improves your initiative. Do you build on your strength or your speed, or start on the path of a mounted warrior? As a *mage*, do you boost your hit points or focus your power? Some are prerequisites for others, and many are only available at higher levels. You get more as you go up levels, so pick carefully if you have a specific goal in mind.

While feats focus on heroic abilities, skills help you round out your character. Skills revamp the clumsy non-weapon proficiencies into a more streamlined and flexible system. In many ways, 3e is a skill-based system. It's just that your chance increases in 5% increments.

Each class has a core set of skills but can also take cross-class skills at a higher cost. Now your *illusionist* can *Move Silently* and *Open Locks* too. Some skills are downright irresistible. I'm sorely tempted to take *Innuendo* in every campaign, if you know what I mean...

Many checks in previous editions are now covered by skills. For example, surprise is now handled in part by opposed *Move Silently*, *Hide*, *Spot* and *Listen* checks. You get to choose how good your character will be in any given skill at first and continue

to add skills or improve existing ones each level. While you can use many of the skills untrained, training dramatically improves your chances. Watch out for high level *rogues*, who get a scary amount of skill points. Expect a lot of skill use in 3e campaigns, especially in non-combat encounters.

Changes to characters are only part of the story. 3e has improved almost every aspect of the game. Some purists may not like the streamlined combat system as it dumps weapon speeds and anything or anybody with multiple attacks get them simultaneously. I think the new strategies available and the speed of combat are worth it. Besides, this is supposed to be a role-playing game, not a gladiator simulation.

Once again, it's about choices and consequences. Charge headfirst into combat and you open yourself up to attacks of opportunity. Do you attack normally, or attempt to disarm or trip your opponent instead? While encounters were always about tactics and strategy, the new rules give you much more to work with. Every combatant will play it a little differently depending on what class and what feats they've selected. Feats really shine in combat.

Most of the rules in 3e are much clearer. Hopefully there will be less arguing about the rules and more playing. Spells are no exception. How spell casting works in combat, spell effects and saves, and magic resistance are all laid out precisely and consistently.

The spell tables are much better organized, and there are some really juicy spells to choose from. Check out Eric Noah's web site (www.rpg-planet.com/dnd3e) for some examples. There are numerous subtle but important changes as well. For example, the new **Speak with Dead** forces players to really think carefully again. Gone are the days of asking dozens of questions each day, every day. There are no guarantees it will even work! This should bring back more of the mystery and suspense when skulking through that evil Baron's keep.

There are two more changes I want to highlight quickly. In 3e, non-magical healing finally makes sense. The higher your level, the faster you heal. A 10th level fighter will be back on her feet as fast as a 1st level

All that talk about increased hit points being a mixture of body and skill now rings true. Secondly, 3e tracks lethal and non-lethal (subdual) damage separately but ties them together cleverly. Check out Tordek's bar brawl with a pair of half-orcs in the **Player's Handbook**.

There are many, many other changes such as revised multi-classing, playing monsters, reversed AC, and weapon proficiencies. I can only reiterate: find the money, buy the books! 3e is a major reworking, but still feels like D&D only better. Right now, I love the new rules. Ask me again in five years.

Dungeons and Dragons: 3rd Edition — One DM's Perspective

by Wayne MacLaurin,
a 25 year veteran

First a brief recap (*forgive me for any inconsistencies here, I'm working off the spines on my bookshelf*). In the beginning there was **Dungeons & Dragons** (0e ?). It was made of three very slim booklets that introduced the world to role-playing games. Actually, there are two versions of those books. The ones with hobbits, balrogs and ents and the version with halflings, treants and an illustration of a dungeoning party where the balrog once was (*Hey, that sword has eyes on it!!*). Then came the supplements... **Greyhawk**, **Blackmoor**, **Eldritch Wizardry**, and **Gods, Demigods and Heroes**. D&D was simple, if sparse, but it drove the imagination of thousands. Sadly, my copies of "Men and Magic", "Monsters and Treasure" and "The Underworld and Wilderness Adventures" don't have Balrogs or Hobbits (*missed that by a year or two*) but my copy of **Greyhawk** does.

Then came **Advanced Dungeons and Dragons** (1e). It was a tighter work with an amazing wealth of material and ideas packed into wonderful hardcover books (*a first in the industry*). There were supplements (**Unearthed Arcana** is probably the most notable), had a few changes between printings (hmm... my copy of **Deities and Demigods** has Cthulhu, why doesn't yours?) and it lasted a very long time. It is also the source for most of the "classic" material, from the **World of Greyhawk**, to the "G" module series to **The Tomb of Horrors**.

Enter "Advanced Dungeon and Dragons, 2nd Edition" (2e for short). I think it was supposed to "reorganize" all the 1e material into

something that was easier to reference without a dozen rulebooks at hand. Dragons were beefed up and devils a "Der Magguffin Elf Bard" it was pretty much interchangeable with 1e. Unfortunately, over the years, 2e became increasingly complicated. The introduction of the class "Books" and, after 2e had been introduced, the "Option" books added to the mix.

A great deal has happened in the interim. A new DMG was introduced (*anybody heard of the "Dungeon Master's Guide" (DMG) (Gathering?)*). With a new compendium of rules, the DMG decided to make some fundamental changes. The DMG (3rd Edition) was born.

So, here we are. 3e is a real change. In the months of playtesting by select groups of players, and in the months of eger players can finally get their hands on it, **The Players Handbook**. Personally, I think the best aspect of WotC approach to 3e is that Real players got a chance to vet the designer's ideas, comment on them, and actually see their comments improve the game.

Do I think that everybody will run out and buy the gleaming new hardcover, to get rid of their years of accumulated D&D stuff in the dumpster and "do 3e"? No, probably not. Does 3e represent a significant change for gamers? Definitely.

My good friend Todd Ruthman has given 3e the "once over" from the perspective of the player and I agree with him whole-heartedly. There is much in the 3e rules that makes me want to switch immediately. Certainly, as a player, I'll gladly try 3e (*and by the time this reaches the press, I'm sure I'll be well into a new campaign somewhere*).

Of course, I should point out that the "10 year old campaign" that Todd has been "stuck" with his "average" cleric is closer to 15 years (*yes, Todd.. it has been that long*). And, in a world without magic-users, that "average" cleric is a pretty awesome force.

But, enough of that. Todd has touched on some of the highlights of 3e from a player's perspective. I'll try and do the same for those people thinking about running a 3e campaign.

The **Player's Handbook** is only the start of the material a DM is going to need to run a campaign. Unfortunately, the **DMG** and **Monster Manual** are still a month and two (*respectfully*) away. Thankfully, the nice folks at WotC are going to be including some conversion guidelines, a sampling of magic and a few monsters in the first edition of the PHB. That should be enough to get most campaigns through a month or two. Luckily, the only thing that you absolutely need from the DMG to run a campaign are the "advancement" guidelines for awarding experience and most DMs should be able to hold off for a month for the DMG to arrive before they have to worry about character advancement.

While 3e isn't a complete rewrite, its very close and a great deal has been changed so its probably a good idea to read the PHB thoroughly a couple times to get familiar with the new spell descriptions and the various skills and feats. Many spells have changed substantially and, as Todd has mentioned, some fundamental abilities (*like clerical healing*) are also considerably altered. Getting use to the new AC and combat systems takes little time (*at least to master the basics*) but quickly becomes part of the background of the game rather than a noticeable feature.

What does change is the role of tactics within combat situations. This means both the players *and* the DM need to understand their respective tactics much better than before. The introduction of "attacks of opportunity" as well as concept of "full" and "partial" actions means all parties will spend more time "thinking" about their combat than before. Of course, that 7"-8" barbarian with the 2H sword can still run screaming into combat and slash away. He might just get poked a couple times by the goblins with spears first.

Yes folks, "reach" becomes important. Both physical size and weapon size can impact what is considered your "reach" and it impacts the ability to move uncontested in combat. It doesn't mean that the goblin with a spear can hold off a 10th level *fighter* indefinitely but that *fighter* is likely to get poked at least once before he wades in an lops that poor goblin's head off.



Similarly, the rules are much better defined for things like casting spells in combat (*generally a bad idea*) and even offer ways of improving the success of such an attempt (*there is a feat called Combat Casting*).

Where these changes make the most impact is with the DM. No more will your players simply charge across the bridge at the guards with those spears ready. Hell, those guards probably have "Combat Reflexes" and will almost definitely attack first. If you want a really good starting point, read the rules on *Attacks of Opportunity* and the rogue ability of "Sneak Attack" and think what might happen the next time you ambush your players with a bunch of bandits.

What else really changes? Character creation, development and advancement all change as does multi-classing changes but it doesn't really change the role or challenges of the DM. So, the mechanics change but the act of DMing doesn't.

However, one thing that does change (*insert evil DM chuckle here*) are monsters. Most monsters come with a typical "range" of improvement. Think of it as the 3HD gnoll or the 5HD ogre leader. In 3e, a monster might typically have 3 or 4 HD more than normal but that could also be 3 or 4 "levels" of character class. The rules are very clear on creating "monsters with class." Whether its the 3rd level gnoll ranger (*equivalent to a 5HD monster*) or a vampire sorcerer (*or a monk ogre mage*) its definitely something to use to vary the monsters in a campaign, trip up the players and very definitely explore for all sorts of nasty fun.

Some other mechanics also change for the better. Death and dying are better laid out with characters unconscious but "healable" from -1 to -10 and truly dead at -10. Of course, death is, hopefully, just an inconvenience in D&D but, *Raise Dead* and its related cousins have the nasty side-effect of costing the character a level rather than a point of Con. This is an equally nasty result for all players not just those with Con bonuses.

Energy draining is also being handled differently. While a wight still drains a "level" from the character. The character gets a saving throw in 24 hours to "shake off the effect" and avoid it being permanent. Similarly, spells have been altered to mirror this reality. Personally, I think this is one of the best changes in the books as it maintains a sufficient level of dread for those nasty negative-material-plane creatures

but it helps to eliminate the "tear up the character sheet" side-effects that often follow encounters with vampires and the like.

Magic item creation is well thought out and comes complete with a series of feats for *mages* that relate to item creation. Creating items will not cost a character experience points as well as money, time and spells. I think this is a good change, as it will help reinforce the true value of magic items.

Obviously, with changes of this magnitude, most old AD&D material is going to be difficult to use. Changes to character classes, monster and spell statistics as well as changes to the experience system will mean that some effort will be needed to migrate existing campaigns and old material to 3e. *WotC* will be providing conversion guidelines that will help ensure a balanced conversion.

Realistically there are two aspects to 3e conversions. One is the conversion of existing 2e (and 1e for those really long running campaigns) characters to 3e rules. While the conversion itself might be straight forward, players are likely to be split on whether it is a good idea. Multi-class characters are definitely going to take a hit on levels and those high-powered 2e *fighters* and *rangers* are going to find the transition somewhat painful. I know my current group of players is split on the idea with the multi-class *magic-user/cleric* being the one most opposed to the change.

The second aspect of a conversion is the updating and conversion of the source material. Monster stats and NPCs will have to be tweaked in some manner and a DM might find that some aspects of their existing game might simply not make sense any longer or need a significant amount of back-plot to justify the change. It will vary from game to game.

Of equal concern is the huge volume of existing AD&D material. It seems a shame to simply ignore some of the classic modules and collections of material (*the complete wizard and cleric spell books come to mind*). Luckily a DM isn't alone here, Eric Noah (*of Eric Noah's Unofficial D&D 3E News fame*) has already setup a website devoted to collecting converted D&D works.

Assuming *WotC* doesn't have any object to this effort, <http://www.rpgplanet.com/dnd3e/3econversions.htm> will certainly be a wonderful source of material. I have heard that the DMG will contain a significant amount of material for those intrepid souls that are considering running their first campaign. Material on structuring the campaign, the various types of campaigns and the typical character types, how to handle players and similar subjects should help make 3e fun for players both new and old.


Finally, I guess the real question is if *Dungeons and Dragons Third Edition* is worth all the fuss? I really think so. Everything seems to make more sense.

It has been a long time since I've seen so many players (*active and retired*) excited about a new D&D product and I'm seeing more and more people really looking at the game with a new-found sense of enjoyment. Personally, I'm eagerly waiting my first sessions as a 3e player and, when I find a couple more hours in the week, my first new campaign using the 3e rules. □



idda
Female, Halfing Rogue

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CRITICAL MASS: GAME REVIEW FORM

GAME TITLE: _____

PUBLISHER: _____

RETAIL PRICE: _____ CATEGORY: _____

REVIEWER: _____

Production Value	
Writing	
Art and Illustrations	
Overall Production	
Play Value	
Rules Presentation	
System/Playability	
Replay Value	
Entertainment Value	
Total:	
Overall Rating*:	

* Divide total by 7 to determine Overall Rating.

1. Would you recommend this game to a friend? Y N
2. Would you nominate this game for a BRIAN AWARD? Y N

EXPLANATION OF GRADING SCALE:

- 5: EXCELLENT 4: ABOVE AVERAGE 3: SO-SO 2: BELOW AVERAGE 1: POOR
- Use of fractions in .25 increments are allowed to show drift toward the next higher or lower grade. Overall Ratings rounded down to the nearest quarter.

GAME CATEGORIES: (Examples Only - If you feel any of the following categories are not suitable please suggest an alternative)

- Card Game (Stand Alone) • Card Game (Collectible) • Board Game (Family) • Board Game (Wargame)
- Board Game (Simulation) • RPG Core Rules (specify genre: Sci-Fi, Fantasy, etc.) • RPG Supplement • Miniature Rules

COMMENTS/REVIEW:

We encourage you to write out your comments and/or detailed reviews and attach them to this form. We will be running a selection of both full reviews and outtakes from attached comments in future installments of **Critical Mass**. Be sure to include your name if you want it published along with your comments. Return your ballot/comments to; KODT-IRC, 830 W. Main Street PMB 114 Lake Zurich, IL 60047. You may also email your form and review to JollyRB@aol.com. Be sure to include all the info requested in the above form. You may submit ballots on as many different games as you like. If you want to write a review please keep them between 100 to 1,000 words. Keep in mind that there is no guarantee your review will be published in its entirety. All ballots, however, WILL be tabulated into our **Game Rating List**. The overall results will be published periodically in this column and/or posted on our website.

EXPLANATION OF RATING CATEGORIES:

Basically, rating each category is a judgement call. Opinions among gamers vary greatly. Put two gamers in a room and toss them a new game - chances are they won't agree on its merits. For some gamers art isn't as important as the writing. For others it's equally important. For most gamers it's 'how it plays' that matters above all else.

The **Review Ballot** box isn't meant to replace the good old-fashioned game review. It's meant to supplement the review — to provide an impression-at-a-glance of how other gamers feel about a specific game.

The following are only suggested guidelines for rating each category.

WRITING:

Overall quality of the writing. This could include typos/grammatical errors as well as the author's basic writing skills and his ability to engage the reader and convey his message.

ART AND ILLUSTRATIONS:

Was the quality of the art sufficient for the product? Did it lend itself to the game and its presentation? Did it detract from the overall quality of the game?

OVERALL PRODUCTION:

This would cover the quality of such things as printing, packaging, binding, components etc. Keep in mind that this is relative. A five dollar *El Cheapo* game shouldn't be expected to have the same production qualities as a thirty dollar core-rules book.

RULES PRESENTATION:

Did the rules adequately explain how to play the game? Were there omissions? Were they confusing or incomplete? Keep in mind that while the game itself may rock - poorly written rules could impede learning how to

play and raise the frustration factor.

SYSTEM/PLAYABILITY:

Okay, so you've finally learned the rules and have sat down and actually played the game. This is what everyone wants to know - is it playable? Is the game unbalanced or otherwise flawed?

REPLAY VALUE:

Now that you've played it, is there enough to the game that you would play it again? Is this one of those games that will quickly be banished to the gamers' closet or is will it get played over and over again?

ENTERTAINMENT VALUE:

Was it worth the cost of admission? Forget poorly-written rules, bad production qualities, etc. Did the game entertain you and your friends?

OVERALL RATING:

This is an average of all your scores above. This is the rating which will be used to stack the game up against all others in its category.

PLAY FAIR

We ask that you do not evaluate games or game product which; 1. You haven't taken the time to actually play in the environment they were designed to be played in. (For example: *Don't review a set of Live Action Rules if all you did was read the book in the comfort of your favorite easy chair.*)

2. The game/product is of a genre and/or gaming-form you dislike by nature. (For example if you hate the AD&D™ system please don't evaluate an AD&D™ boxed adventure.

□



Artwork by George Vrbanic

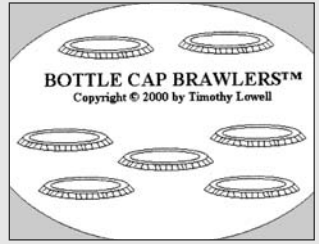
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BOTTLE CAP BRAWLERS

by Timothy Lowell

586 N. 850 E.
Columbus, IN 47203
tlowell@quest.net



Bottle Cap Brawlers is an abstract strategy micro-game for two players. The game comes packaged in a resealable plastic baggie along with a rules sheet, 8x8 square checkerboard sheet and 24 stickers. Each player uses twelve stickers representing warriors, wizards and dragons. The stickers are to be placed on your favorite bottle caps for use as game tokens. The game is simple to learn and introduces chess-like strategies but is unique and different enough to be a refreshing change. *Warriors* are your basic pieces to use for killing your opponent's caps. *Wizards* are similar but are used to capture opposing caps. Captured caps are used to determine the winner if a stalemate occurs. Your dragons also kill opposing caps but they have a much greater range of movement. Each player gets six warriors, four wizards and two dragons. If you are like most gamers, you'll be coming up with your own rules variants and be clamoring for more in no time.

The production value is very basic. Although the stickers come in two different colors, the icon art on each is black and white. But it is a cool enough game that hopefully with some luck we might eventually see a deluxe edition come out. I doubt this one is available in stores. I don't even know how much he is asking for it. But if you are interested, go ahead and send the designer a letter and tell him you saw it in KODT.

Brian's Rating: A neat game

SPACEMASTER

PRIVATEERS

Iron Crown Enterprises
P.O. Box 1605, Charlottesville, VA 22902
E-mail: www.ironcrown.com

In Spacemaster, Privateers, players are thrust into a universe at war. Just my kind of place.

The book, "Privateers", part of I.C.E.'s Spacemaster system, includes everything needed to jump right into the game — combat rules and character creation, as well as complete settings, starships and even psychic powers. Of course other supplements to Spacemaster are available.

In "Privateers", characters can become anything from a Valiesian (a dinosaur-like race) explorer to a Human psychic or an Oort (a small, egg-shaped, highly-intelligent race covered in fur) pilot. The psychic powers are really kewl. My favorite is the Pyrokinetic Bolt where you can focus a blast of intense heat at an opponent. Of course, characters who choose not to be psychic have plenty of firepower available to them in a wide variety of weapons. Kewl combat options are not the only plus to Privateers. Character generation allows for really unique characters, and the politics of the Privateers universe are complex enough to give a campaign an epic quality.



Brian's Rating: Save the universe. Grab Privateers.

TITANIC THE BOARD GAME

Universal Games

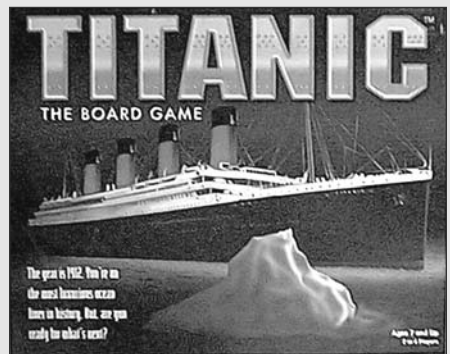
This game has been out for awhile - obviously an attempt to cash in on the Titanic-craze started by the movie (even though the box has a disclaimer stating the game is 'not' associated with any motion picture production). I guess you can't blame people for trying to cash in on a good thing when they see it.

Apparently a lot of toy store chains over-ordered the game and sales weren't as good as expected. I recently picked it up for a measly four bucks. What a bargain. I definitely got my money's worth. Considering the components included with the game alone, you could expect to pay thirty bucks for a game like this.

The game seemed strangely familiar once I'd read the rules. Finally it dawned on me -- it has a lot in common with one of my favorite games -- *Escape from Colditz*. The object of the game is to collect five pieces of personal property, (in *Colditz* you collect escape tools) make your way through First Class and be the first one to reach your lifeboat.

The game comes with a nice board which is a layout of the ship from steerage to first class, telegrams, gossip cards, personal property cards, passports, bellhop tokens, playing pieces, a die and play money. It's a first class operation all the way. The five items of personal property a player must obtain in order to be allowed to enter First Class are a room key, valuables, a life vest, a health inspection card and a passport. It's an easy game for two to six players, ages 7 and up. It has all the feel and flavor to make you feel as if it's really 1912 and you're really aboard this luxury liner with a date with destiny. It's the kind of game to play when you need a break from hacking and you're in the mood for a little genteel fun with the family. There's even a little history about the Titanic included in the game.

Brian's Rating: Don't go down with the ship. Find this game and have first class fun.



AMAZING STORIES

by John O'Neill

OFF THE SHELF



AMAZING STORIES

Edited by: Kim Mohan
Publisher: Wizards of the Coast
Published: Summer, 2000
Cover Art: Cliff Nielsen

96 pages, \$4.95

I don't often get special requests for this column (well, okay, I do. But they're usually from David Kenzer, and usually of the form, "Fer the love of God, O'Neill, can you keep it under 2000 words just this once?"). But during the whirlwind 2000 convention season, in a short meeting between Kenzer & Co staffers and Johnny Wilson -- one of my personal heroes ever since his days at the helm of the great **Computer Gaming World** magazine, the most influential and useful publication of my last three decades of grad-school -- the august Mr. Wilson, Group Publisher for **WotC's** fine line of magazines (including *Amazing Stories* and *Top Deck*), took the time to make a special request which, as I mentioned, I don't get that often, my column being in the back of the magazine next to the frozen food ads.

The special request was for a look at *Amazing Stories*, **WotC's** science fiction magazine. Now, **Wizards of the Coast** has had some tremendous success with its magazine line. They're a pretty prestigious bunch, truth be told.

But the problem child in the group has always been *Amazing*.

Quick history lesson for those of you born after, say, ten p.m. yesterday. *Amazing Stories* was the first true science fiction magazine. Founded in 1926 by none other than Hugo Gernsback (the father of modern SF and the guy for whom the "Hugo Awards" are named), *Amazing* has been published more or less continuously ever since -- including in its pages (for example) the first Buck Rogers story ("*Armageddon 2419 A.D.*" by Philip Francis Nowlan, in 1928), E.E. "Doc" Smith's classic *Skylark* series (which began with *The Skylark of Space*, also in 1928), Isaac Asimov's first story ("*Marooned Off Vesta*," 1939), Harlan Ellison's first SF novel (in

1959), and numerous other greats and near-greats down through the decades.

In 1982 *Amazing Stories* was acquired by TSR, and relaunched in May 1991 as a large-sized slick format under new editor Kim Mohan. It has since been re-designed into one of the most attractive genre publications on the stands, with beautiful interior art, handsome layout, slick paper, and gorgeous use of color throughout.

So why is it a problem child?

Unlike RPGs, which have been enjoying something of a renaissance with the explosion in online gaming, science fiction magazines have been struggling. Many, in fact, have simply been dying -- such as *SF Age* and *Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine*, to name the two most recent casualties. And despite the attention **WotC** has lavished on *Amazing*, it hasn't really enjoyed the success it deserves. More than a few critics, noting that *Amazing* simply doesn't fit into **WotC's** gaming portfolio, have been quietly readying a casket for the grand 'ole lady of science fiction.

But Wilson and Mohan have refused to give up. In fact, they've improved *Amazing* with every issue, attracting top-notch authors such as Ray Bradbury, Harlan Ellison, David Brin, Orson Scott Card, R.A. Salvatore, and many more.

They've also taken the step of introducing original licensed fiction -- short stories set in the universes of *Babylon 5*, *Star Wars*, *Starcraft*, *Star Trek*, and others.

It's a bold strategy, and it appears to be working. Even in the face of a declining genre fiction market, the buzz generated by *Amazing* has been terrific, and readers have been paying attention. Maybe all *Amazing Stories* really needed was a little old-fashioned marketing -- and just a handful more gamers to clue in to what they've been missing.

The latest issue is no exception. Packed with stories, articles, and gaming resources, it's a fine example of the recent trend.

The fiction begins with an original *Babylon 5* story by series creator J. Michael Straczynski, "*Space, Time, and the Incurable Romantic*," the latest in a series which has been appearing in these pages. Straczynski's been exploring the future of the characters he created for the TV show, and this installment begins with Ranger Marcus Cole being thawed from cryofreeze -- a state he was placed by Commander Susan Ivanova after saving her life.

Marcus expected to die after using the alien device to transfer his life force to hers, and the future he finds himself in is no comfort to him. In fact, only one thing could be a comfort, and Marcus sets out to find it -- or, if necessary, steal, lie and cheat to create it.

Michael Stackpole offers us "*The Lazarus Murders*," a genuine murder mystery in space, in which Father Patric Flynn -- Catholic priest on Purgatory Station, home to dozens of alien races from every corner of

the galaxy -- is called on to perform last rites on the murder victim. Flynn is as careful as possible, considering the deceased is an alien he's never encountered before... but when the victim stands up in the morgue a few hours later, walking and talking, Flynn finds himself in potentially very hot water. An original and often funny tale of alien theology -- and biology.

Ben Bova offers a surprising tale of a stunt man with a secret -- in fact, several secrets -- as he attempts to be the first man to execute a solo skydive onto the surface of Venus. Joshua Mertz presents an emotional story of a police helicopter pilot who must solve his own murder. And Angus MacDonald offers one of the strongest stories of the issue with "*Disassembly*," a compact tale of revenge and nanotechnology in a small banana republic.

But the real masterpiece this issue is Michael Kandel's "*Multum in Parvo*," a dazzling and thought-provoking novelette. Spence is a scholar, a man who spends every spare moment locked in his closet working on theorems of purest logic and mathematics. It's come in handy in his day job as a repairman in fact, since he finds he no longer needs tools to fix things. In fact, strictly speaking, he no longer needs much of anything, since he is capable of bifurcating reality into whatever shape or texture he needs. Not that he stoops to such things, of course -- much to the annoyance of his wife, who wouldn't at all mind if Spence could see his way clear to bifurcating them some decent meat chops from time to time. But Spence has other things on his mind -- such as discovering the identity of the evil genius who's drastically tampered with reality. And why that's caused holes in his memory... and how he can possibly fix what he doesn't even remember. An ingenious tales in more ways than one.

The issue is rounded out by a fun story in **WotC's** *Gamma World* setting by Nick Pollotta -- complete with power armor, mutant raccoons, and a lot of firepower -- and an enigmatic short by James Sallis, "*Upstream*." There are two companion pieces to accompany the fiction as well, both gaming supplements: a *Bab 5* scenario from *Agents of Gaming*, and a one-on-one *Gamma World* adventure by Mike Selinker.

As always, the departments make great reading as well -- from Paul Di Filippo's column on the future of art, to Neal Barrett, Jr.'s "*Ask Dr. Science*" (which addresses "questions set in by readers over the years, or sent to *Dr. Science* by bill collectors or other mean-spirited persons.")

In short, *Amazing Stories* offers top value for your reading dollar. E-mail amazing@pcspublink.com to subscribe. It's inexpensive, it's always original, and it's fun. What more could you want? □

• John O'Neill has vowed to read only magazines for the next 30 days. You can ridicule his opinions at john@blackgate.com.

HACKING THE WEB WITH CYBERPUNK

by Kenneth Newquist

The menacing towers, malevolent corporations and grimy streets of cyberpunk have long held an attraction for gamers. Firepower, cyber-sorcery and intrigue dominate that dark future, and no few game systems have dedicated themselves to it.

FASA's *Shadowrun*™ is one of the most popular, and its online universe reflects that. Don't expect to find much on FASA's *Shadowrun* home page. Even after three editions, the company's web presence offers little more than a description you could have picked up off of one of the hard covers. No chummer, for the good stuff you need to hit the fan sites.

Shadowrun Archive

The *Shadowrun* Archive is an immense site that may send game masters into the gaming equivalent of sugar shock. The site is simply huge, and contains all the goodies you'd hope to find, including *Shadowrun*-inspired columns, current gaming news, links, the mother of all *Shadowrun* archives, and write-ups on everything from archetypes (70 articles) to critters (32 articles.) Every gaming system should have a site that's this rich in content, this easy to navigate, and this up-to-date. In short, if you can't find what you're looking for here, then you just aren't looking hard enough.

Blackjack's Shadowrun

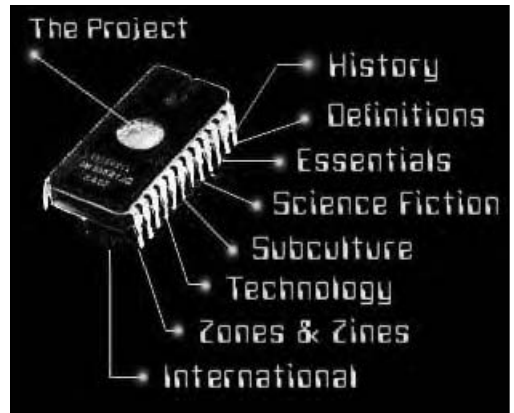
Although not as current as the Archive, *Blackjack's Shadowrun Page* makes up for its lack of timeliness with attitude and very cool graphics. Its weapons and equipment pages include write-ups on fun toys like the "Dragonbreath Minigat" and the "Firedart Flame-thrower." Each has a description of the item and its history, as well as some excellently-rendered illustrations. GMs of any cyberpunk-inspired RPG would do well to stop by this site for a few quick bursts of inspiration.

Cyberpunk 2020

Before *Shadowrun* dominated folks' RPG libraries there was *Cyberpunk 2020* by R. Talsorian Games Inc. *Cyberpunk.co.uk* is a British site dedicated to that RPG. Well, 'obsessed with' would be a better description. This good-looking site is chock full of good stuff for the discriminating cyberpunk. As with the more-extensive *Shadowrun* Archive, *Cyberpunk.co.uk* has write-ups on weapons, drugs, programs and more. But it also goes beyond the standard campaign-specific offerings -- the site includes an interactive cyberpunk novel called *Axel Shades*, a top 100 cyberpunk Web sites list, and a library section highlighting inspirational genre novels.

The Cyberpunk Project

Those looking to find out about the history of cyberpunk both as a genre and a real-world sub-culture should check out *The Cyberpunk Project*, a quiet little site that tries to chronicle our evolution into the dark future imagined by William Gibson in *Neuromancer*. It's taken the razor-sharp edge of the genre and dulled it into something about as exciting as



a graduate-level thesis, but it's a good resource for learning about cyberpunk's roots and future. It also has a fair selection of 'cyberpunk culture' links that can be useful for GMs hoping to sprinkle a little modern-day slang into their home-grown futures.

Fading Suns

The *Fading Suns* RPG and campaign setting isn't really cyberpunk, but the feel of that genre's dark future echoes through this galaxy-spanning, end-of-reality universe. It's a good setting for cyberpunks looking to knock old planet Earth's dust from their combat boots, and the fan site simply called 'Fading Suns' is a good place to learn more about it.

It's a solid resource for *Fading Suns* fans, and much of its content is specific to that RPG. But there's also a lot here that *Shadowrun* or straight cyberpunk GMs can use in their campaigns, including adventures hooks, monsters, and some very nice (and occasionally very nasty) technology.

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

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BLACKJACK'S SHADOWRUN PAGE

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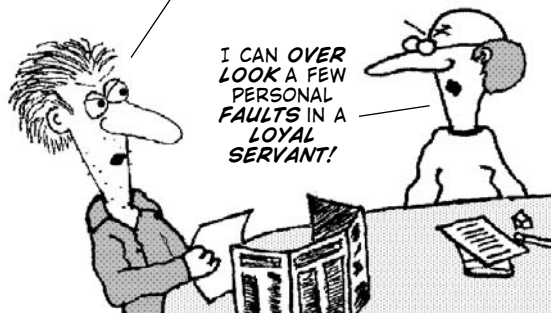


BOB THE *BLACKSMITH* YOU KILLED IN A *BARE-FISTED DUEL* LAST WEEK IS STANDING BY YOUR *BEDROLL* WHEN YOU WAKE UP. APPARENTLY HE'S A *ZOMBIE* NOW. YOU NOTICE HE HAS *POLISHED* YOUR BOOTS AND HAS GATHERED SOME EXTRA *FIRE WOOD* FOR THE FIRE.

NO FOOLIN'? YOU MEAN HE'S LIKE MY OWN PERSONAL *MAN SERVANT* OR SOMETHING? *KEWL!!* I'M GONNA CALL HIM *JEEVES*.

YOU DO REALIZE *JEEVES* IS A *340 POUND MOUND OF ROTTING FLESH* - RIGHT?

I CAN OVER LOOK A FEW PERSONAL FAULTS IN A *LOYAL SERVANT!*



THIS THAT AND THE OTHER THING: ODD FOLLOWERS

By Christian Walker

4. WIDOW AND ORPHAN

The wife and child of a recently deceased foe arrives, angry and demanding support from the players. The widow creates quite a scene. Just imagine an episode of a day time talk show to get a feel for the anger and desperation.

5. TRAVELERS

The roads can be pretty dangerous for merchants, farmers, pilgrims, and what not. The next time the players prepare to leave town a few traveling types find out and follow the group for protection. The players end up escorting a rag-tag band of wagons, goat herds, snot-nosed kids, and surly livestock. Think of the role-playing opportunities if you add the zombie and widow in!

6. STRAY ANIMALS

As the party travels the roads it is a magnet for all sorts of domestic strays, such as cats, dogs, livestock, and other agrarian critters. The animals are hopeful the party will treat them well and will follow them quite faithfully, which may cause quite a stir when the group goes to a town or city.

7. TAX COLLECTOR

Adventuring types are always coming into sudden wealth. An auditor for the local authorities has decided to accompany the party, ensuring that all booty they acquire is carefully accounted for and that a fair share is paid in taxes. The PCs might think twice before doing the bureaucrat in as the players would be held responsible.

8. SECRET ENEMY

The players appear to be haunted by a mysterious figure. Everywhere they go someone seems to inquire about them. They find their rooms broken into, but nothing stolen, footsteps following behind them at night, etc. Feel free to develop and torment the players.

Player characters are always meeting new and interesting NPCs and beasts. As their fame and fortune spreads, so should their sphere of influence. In an ideal setting, hordes of brave, strapping young warriors would flock to their banner. While the intrepid heroes might very well attract dependable and worthy henchman, it would be quite interesting to mix in a few odd followers to keep play interesting.

A 'DS' WORTH OF ODD FOLLOWERS :

1. GHOULS

It appears that the group has attracted a small band of ghouls. The carrion eaters are always just out of sight, but their smell does linger. They follow the players as remoras cling to a shark, hoping to feed on the remnants of the PCs' victories. The Ghouls will never attack the PCs and try to stay hidden from view.

2. CAMPFIRE RODENTS

Whenever the players make camp they find all sorts of furry critters stowed away in their gear the next morning. They find squirrels in back packs, rabbits in saddle bags, and maybe a badger beneath a saddle. Careful with that last one.

3. ZOMBIE

One character in particular has assumed an odd curse - the last entity he kills rises as a Zombie and follows him around, like an obedient lap dog. The zombie waits patiently outside inns and taverns, and shambles along behind the group as they travel. If the group slays it another will rise the next time the character kills. The locals might also take offense at the walking dead following the party around.



A Couple of Basic Games

By Rick Moscatello

I'm beginning to think computer game companies are getting as vicious as television networks. You know how six out of seven nights, there's nothing on all night, and, at 8 o'clock sharp, all the stations are running something worthwhile?

That's how it computer games this month. It's June, but no "hot titles" are out for a few more weeks, when I bet a bunch of good things will all come out at once. Somehow, I did find two worthy games.

First off is **Majesty**, from *Hasbro*. Just when I think I'm finally going to be totally sick of real time strategy games, somebody somewhere shows that there are still a few ideas left unexplored. **Majesty** is a real time strategy fantasy game, but it's nothing like the clunky **Total Annihilation: Kingdoms**. In fact, it's unlike any other RTS game.

As a critic, I'm always looking at what other critics say about a game that I'm reviewing. Most everyone is giving **Majesty** slightly better than average reviews, but I disagree, at least a little. I think it's way better than average, although certainly no "second coming".

The basic idea of the game is you are a king of a fantasy kingdom. Like everything else in the genre, you start with very little, but by building ever more advanced buildings, you can recruit ever more interesting units. Your units in this case are fantasy heroes. You've got your barbarians, wizards, thieves, paladins, all that stuff. There is research in the game, but it's more along the lines of getting better equipment for your stores. No matter how good the equipment is, your heroes will still have to earn enough money to buy it from you, and that's what separates this game from everything else in the genre.

You don't control your units. There's NONE of the "grab everything and shove it to the front" click-fest madness that is so typical of these kinds of games. The only way you have to guide your heroes are "reward flags", basically bounties on the heads of rampaging monsters or unexplored areas of the map. Reward flags don't seem to work very well, but luckily the heroes seem to like doing the things you'd want them to do. Rangers happily go off to darkened areas of the map, warriors seek out monsters to bash, and so on. It works quite well, and while the heroes' AI causes them to do some dippy things, the Knights all too easily demonstrate that, hey, heroes are QUITE capable of fool-

ish behavior.

The other major weakness of the game is the scenarios (*which are only laughably strung together in a campaign*). They're nice enough, but there's no continuity, and you can't take prize heroes from one mission and use them in the next. You're never really up against an enemy kingdom, just hordes of monsters rushing in to commit destruction before, hopefully, being snuffed by your heroes. There are a few other weaknesses, such as most spells cost far too much to be worthwhile (*except for the all-important "Resurrection" and "Heal" spells*), and wizards are far too eager to obliterate themselves by casting their blastomatic spells on creatures that have an obvious "reflect blastomatic spells" spell up. *There are limits to how much dippyness is tolerable, after all. The "random scenario generator" is also fairly limited, as there only seems to be a half dozen distinctly possible scenarios you can get this way.*

For being the first in a new kind of game, **Majesty** has much to offer. There's an expansion pack slated for **Majesty** to come out soon (*almost certainly out as you read this*), promising more monsters, more buildings, and, well, most stuff to play with, and a few more ways to influence your heroes. Even without the pack, it stands apart, as a nice solitaire fantasy game that you can finish in a spare hour or so.

Another somewhat special game is **Soldier of Fortune**. Admittedly, I have a soft spot in my heart for first person shooters, but I had some worries when I opened the box. First, they're using the "Soldier of Fortune" magazine license... license games tend to be bad (*with a few exceptions for Kenzer and Co, of course*), and games from weak licenses tend to be even worse than bad.

On top of that, they're using an old engine. I'm never one to say graphics can replace gameplay, but after the hours I've spent on **UnReal Tournament** and **Quake 3: Arena**, I worried that I'd have trouble going back to "old" graphics.

The designers clearly had the same concerns as I, so they came up with a solution that would get people to try their game, even if they couldn't promise a hot license or spiffadelic graphics. Their solution? Gore, and plenty of it. Gore attracts me to games about as well as "beautiful" graphics, but I have to concede it IS a great marketing ploy, although it only works if backed up with a good game.

It is a good game. In a storyline in the same

league as a **Rambo** movie, you play a veteran mercenary, out to make a buck and not afraid to use a gun. An ultimate bad guy has stolen 4 nukes, and you spend your time stopping him over a series of missions. Yes, the "terrorist with nukes" spiel is hardly new, but the story has enough going for it that one little cliché is acceptable.

To keep the "just another shooter" feeling from creeping up, the levels take you all over the place. You start in New York tenements and subways. Before the game ends in a nuclear missile silo, you'll fight in Kosovo (cool!), Iraq, Russia, and even Japan, shooting up a wide variety of interesting places. The "bad guys" lack AI (old gaming engine, after all), but they have plenty of character, and have enough scripted moves to keep things interesting. Besides, there are so many goons with guns that you don't want them to be particularly bright, anyway.

There's no way to talk about the gore without talking about the weapons. The usual assortment of weaponry is here, and for once the shotgun doesn't reign supreme, and the rocket launcher isn't unstoppable either (it's all too easy to stop YOURSELF with it!). The gore pretty much depends on the weapon. You can blow off pretty much any limb; probably the worst was when I shot off BOTH legs of an enemy with my heavy machine gun. He just sort of hovered there, bones protruding from the stumps and twitching a bit, before falling to the ground. Excessive? Yeah. You can turn it off, but you seem to get bonus bucks for blowing off heads, throat shots, "gibs" (where your opponent is reduced to chunks), and foe nether region blows that

mercifully do not have pieces of your target fly off to lie on the ground.

If there's any drawback to the game, it's the nod it gives to realism. On normal skill levels, you can't carry but a few weapons. In practice, this means you carry the knife (never used it myself, but it sure seems kewl), the sniper rifle (wonderful), the heavy machine gun (great for swarms), and a pistol (up close combat). That's all the room you have. When you consider that the game has rocket launchers, flame throwers, slug throwers, microwave guns, and a few others, this is a bit of a disappointment. Many of the special ways of killing someone (eg, the flame thrower) are only available if you're willing to dump the more functional weapons, mid game, in favor of something with a bit of flash. With such a small, albeit realistic, inventory, dumping a basic weapon will leave you vulnerable later...it's hard to approve of rules that make it hard to appreciate a game, but at least you can customize the difficulty to allow you to carry everything.

Soldier of Fortune is not a \$50 game (priced so because of the license, I'm sure), but it is a hopping good time. The main problem with storyline games is they lose replay value, and this game is no exception. With the old engine, it probably won't heat up the internet with multiplayer matches (although the balanced weapons are nice), so don't expect this game to sit on the hard drive much longer than it takes to play through all the missions two or three times. So, even though it's a worthwhile title, I'd wait until it hits the discount rack before investing that precious gaming dollar. □



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DICE I HAVE KNOWN

by Joey Trotter

I have several sets of dice. There is my bruise dice, a collection of black and blue dice which I use, especially when I run the game. They have been dubbed the DM's Dice of Doom and Gloom. And I am thinking of removing the 20s from my 20-siders and replacing them with skulls (*to symbolize just how doomed the characters are*), and replacing the 1s with crosses (*to symbolize Divine Intervention*).

Then there is my set of Jinx'd dice, which I call my Damian Dice (*after a swashbuckler character of mine, by the name of Damian deBrazier. While playing him, I rolled nineteen 1s in a row, for saving throws, attacks, etc. My 20th roll was a 2. My highest roll with that set of dice was a 20, but for a proficiency check, which is a critical failure in D&D*). The Jinx'd dice are of various colors and sizes, and I usually let players who don't have any dice of their own to use them (*insert evil laughter here*). I used to have a pair of twenty-siders which I called The Twins. I got them from an old player of mine who had sanded off all the numbers and repainted them so that the lowest number on one die was 10, and the highest on the other was 10. It took me forever to figure out why he never seemed to miss an attack or fail a proficiency check. (*I always figured that he was like Johnny Kizinski, and just really lucky*.) So when I found out I confiscated the dice and used them myself, which was only fair. □

SLUG WITH THE GOLDEN BRAIN

by Sean McGovern

I once ran this adventure published by "Role-Aids", a company that put out D&D compatible adventures in the early 80's. The adventures were sometimes good, but often had bizarre encounters and ideas. Case in point: Blechh the giant slug.

I ran my group through one of these adventures but they found it boring. I tried to spice it up, but one lame encounter preceded the next. "*Let's just go to the rooms with good stuff and get out!*", they whined. Then, they entered a room where two orcs were torturing a giant slug. Barry, the Brian of our group, rescued the Giant Slug and was shocked when the slug said "*thank you*".

They talked to him some more and discovered he was incredibly intelligent (*the module stated not only was he a genius, but he had a GOLDEN BRAIN!*). Barry, or Brian, decided this was the ideal mount! The slug never had a name, so Barry christened him "Blechh" and the adventure just took off.

I used Blechh to help steer the players away from the boring encounters. They'd get to a crossroads, and they'd ask Blechh which way had treasure or good monsters, and Blechh with his golden brain always directed them to the rooms with "the good stuff." Blechh was my first smash-hit NPC, and for a few adventures my group monty-hauled like few have monty-hauled before. But then came the tragic, tragic end.

Barry/Brian had a temper. A BAD temper. The PCs were passing through a canyon innocently chatting, when some bandits ambushed the party. They were on top of the canyon on both sides, plugging the party full of arrows. The PCs had few range attack items. Once the long distance spells ran out, the heroes, with all their mighty items, had to take cover and hope the bandits ran out of ammo.

Barry was furious! He yelled to Blechh, "Why didn't you tell us this was coming?? I thought you knew EVERYTHING!?!?". Blechh said he couldn't predict the future, and that he was insulted by the remarks. Without hesitation, Barry's character Khalerius struck Blechh in the head with his +3 Mace of Disruption. The party tried to stop him, but it all happened so fast they were helpless to do anything to save the slug. As the arrows rained down, Barry stood over Blechh's corpse (Blechh only had 8 hit points) and yelled things like, "*Didn't see THAT coming, either, eh??*".

Then he saw the exposed golden brain. Again, without hesitation, the party scooped up the brain. Eventually they were able to slaughter the bandits, and went to town and sold that brain for 300 gold. The players were upset with Barry for quite awhile.

So then my brother used some cleric spells and attempted to use a purple worm as a mount. He named him "Stupid". But it just wasn't the same - There could be only one Blechh! □

A SAVANNAH LEGEND

by Christian Rekowski

The fantastic "Risue" strips you've run in KODT inspired a game of MB's Risk among myself and two gaming buddies a few months ago that will always be quite memorable to us. The game was fairly uneventful for maybe an hour or so; Jamey had control of Europe and was running me out of Africa; Ziggy had a stranglehold on the Americas and I had just taken Asia and Australia.

Asia proved to be too much for those two numb-skulls, there was no way they were going to let me keep adding seven armies per turn to my fiendish Brown war machine. They both invaded Asia and I was reduced to slag pretty quickly, but managed to eat up parts of Europe and North America in the process.

At this point, Ziggy was on the run. He went to the bathroom - a huge mistake. If gaming has taught me anything, it's bladder control. Jamey and I agreed to eliminate Ziggy and fight for the rest of the map between ourselves. Ziggy returned and was quickly smashed down to one or two countries in South America. Then, my "friend" Jamey pulled off the greatest treachery I have ever witnessed. He attacked my soft underbelly, and in one turn reduced ME to one country - Kamchatka. I was extremely upset. If nothing else, he should have finished off Ziggy before commencing his attack on me, it's common-sense tactics.

At least I had Ziggy's support now. Two countries versus the whole map. A turn later, I was stuck with about seven armies holed up in Kamchatka and two cards. Jamey threw roughly fifty armies into Kamchatka to wipe me out. Well, the *Deity of Dice* chose just that moment to enter my apartment and blessed my dice, because the rag-tag group of Browns held against the massive Green forces. Dice were thrown. Mockery was doled out in spades. Voices were raised.

Jamey eventually won the game, but my victory in Kamchatka was easily one of the best gaming experiences I have ever had. The story of the game was circulated by the incredulous Ziggy who witnessed the battle while laughing in the fetal position on the floor. Kamchatka. MY KAMCHATKA—a Savannah gaming legend. □

WIELD HUMAN

by Gina Cross

We were playing in a world my husband had created. It was our first session in this world, and we were doing the general getting-to-know-you party building exercise also known as "*nighttime at the local tavern*." As usual, there were games of chance and skill going on in various areas: knife throwing, cards, dice, and oh-yes, wrestling.

One of our characters, a hunted noble, was strapped for cash, so he got his semi-human servant/bodyguard (*another PC w/ a 19 strength by AD&D rules*) to challenge the village wrestling champ. Being intimidated by his size, the champ insisted on two companions to help him. Here are the highlights of the match:

One NPC jumps on the bodyguard's back. Bodyguard just decides to fall backward and land all of his weight on the NPC. One down, two to go. The second NPC, one way or another, gets knocked unconscious, and in a brilliant move, the bodyguard grabs NPC #2 by the feet and swings him into NPC #3 (*the champ*). The DM ruled that the human body falls under club (*assuming that your character is large enough*), but with an additional -2 to hit beyond any non-proficiency penalties. The bodyguard critted and nearly killed NPC #3.

Our gaming group still refers to the incident occasionally (*especially when generating characters*).

"Can I get wield human?" I asked one day.

"No, you're playing a dwarf."

"Oh yeah. That might be a problem, huh?" □



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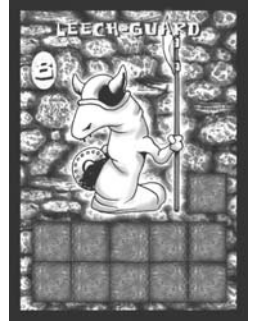
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News, Rumors and Industry Buzz

"It's Time to start HACKING!"

Eden Studios and Kenzer & Company are proud to announce that Eden will be producing another new non-collectible card game. This time it's in full color and based on Kenzer and Company's *Knights of the Dinner Table* characters. That's right. Eden Studios is producing an officially licensed, *Knights of the Dinner Table* card game entitled *Hack!*



Hack! is the fast-paced, hilarious card game taken from KenzerCo's award-winning magazine, *Knights of the Dinner Table* (KODT). Based on Eden Studios' critically-acclaimed *Abduction* card game, players in *Hack!* take on the fantasy personas of characters from KODT, including the GameMaster. Players explore a dungeon, encountering monsters, traps, NPCs, and even new and twisted rules. Players build the dungeon as they go, using cards from their hand. Since the dungeon is different each time they play, each game is unique! "We know *Abduction* is a great game," said Brian Jelke, Vice President of Kenzer & Company, "but the alpha version of *Hack!* had Bob Herzog getting taken aboard an alien space ship. Eventually Eden warmed to the idea of a dungeon setting, but there's still a raging debate over whether to leave the *Grav Disk* and *Pulse Rifle* in the game." George Vasilakos of Eden studios added, "We know these guys are great comedy writers, but we really had to reel in some of their crazy stories about David Kenzer's and Jolly Blackburn's 'real-life' alien abduction experiences. And despite Steve Johansson's input, I'm still very please with the end result."

Conflict is solved with a simple die roll. Every card bears a quote from KODT, adding to the fun. Each deck has its own specialty and unique victory condition, allowing each player to capitalize on his/her strengths.

Each deck? What do you mean each deck? We did say the game is non-collectible but we need to tell you that the game will be presented in 5 different decks, each featuring one of the beloved KoDT characters in their HackMaster personas. Each player needs one deck to play and can choose his or her favorite KODT character.

B.A.'S DECK. What the GM says, goes! He throws out new rule cards, changing the way the game is played.

BOB'S DECK. Knuckles, King of the Wall Climbers, carries a crossbow and wastes anything that gets in his way. His specialty: diffusing traps.

Dave's Deck. El Ravager has a reputation for excessive brutality in the face of usually harmless foes. His specialty: annihilation!

SARA'S DECK. Thorina is a barbarian with a heart of gold. Always ready to parley with an enemy before attacking, Thorina's specialty is negotiating with NPCs.

BRIAN'S DECK. While Teflon Billy readies a fireball, Brian flawlessly quotes the rules to B.A. Brian's specialty: removing new rule cards, returning the game to its true intent.

The first edition of *Hack!* throws the players into the Labyrinth of Vectra! Who'll be the first to chop off his own hand and replace it with the deadly Hand of Vectra??? Find out this fall.

For more information, please check out www.edenstudios.net/HACK or please call George Vasilakos at Eden Studios at 310-497-0418 or Dustin Wright at Wizards Attic at 512-346-7552 (for distribution questions).

Knights of the Dinner Table magazine has won the *Origins Award* for the gaming industry's Best Professional Games Magazine since its first year of eligibility (1997). For more information on ordering the monthly KODT magazine, advertising rates, or licensing information, please contact Kenzer and Company at (847) 540-0029. Check us out on the web! www.KenzerCo.com.

KODT, HackMaster, *Knights of the Dinner Table* and all prominent characters and likenesses related thereto are trademarks of Kenzer and Company and are used here under license. All Rights Reserved.

plucked from the vine for your reading enjoyment

Call of Cthulhu Keeper's Screen!

Keepers of Forbidden Lore rejoice!!! Now you can keep your secrets in style. This new three-panel *Keeper's Screen* is jam-packed with vital GM information presented in any easy to use at a glance format. The player's side of the screen



features awesome *Philippe Caza* artwork worthy of its own sanity check.

This product includes a new introductory scenario perfect for beginning investigators and keepers alike, a three 4-page game aids (*weapons table with an alien weapons section, a new 4-page summary of rule book spells, and some character sheet masters to jump-start your new Call of Cthulhu game*). □

ORK! the Role-playing Game?!

Five years in the making, *Green Ronin Publishing* recently announced that their new role-playing game, *Ork!* will be unveiled at the *Origins International Game Expo & Fair* in July.

Ork! is a satirical look at the guys on the other end of the sword. "Other games have let you play a monster," comments Chris Pramas, *Green Ronin* honcho and *Ork!* co-author, "but they completely miss the fun by humanizing the bad guys. *Ork!* doesn't do that. You're an *Ork* alright, and that means that you are a murderous, back-stabbing psychotic interested in naked, merciless power."

Ork! the Roleplaying Game is 64 pages of blood-soaked merriment. This stand-alone RPG gives you everything you need to descend into the *World of Orkness*. Being a monster has never been such fun!

Contact: Chris Pramas, GreenRonin@aol.com

Racing on the CHEAP!!

With parade season just around the corner, the elite members of the *SHRYNERS GO-CART SQUAD* gathered at a local taco eatery. Tales were told, old parade glories were relived, and many burritos were consumed. With their bellies full of greasy meats, the field of battle awaited. No words needed to be spoken between these warriors of the speedway. Only one place would quench their need for speed: the go-cart track at the local *Golf 'n' Games*.

Gentlemen, start your engines!
Placebo Press is proud to present *Formula C Minus (PPS0008)*, a low-performance racing board game for 2-6 players!

The game includes 76 option cards and a 22 x 34 inch board. Six-sided dice and car tokens are necessary for play. The board is compatible for use with *Micro-Machines™*. May not be suitable for younger players.

For more info contact:

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• **GAMES WORKSHOP**, the world's largest hobby wargames company, and **EXILE FILMS**, a Seattle-based production has announced the signing of an agreement for the production of a feature-length computer-animated film set in the **Warhammer 40,000** universe. The first story is based upon the popular characters and settings of "**BloodQuest**", a tale of **Blood Angel Space Marines** striving to redeem their honor. □



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. □

The "BAD BOYS" of HACK in RAGING METAL!!!

A few issues ago we hinted we would be following up our highly successful *Knights of the Dinner Table* pewter figure set with a *Black Hands* version. The six-figure *Black Hand* set features Nitro, Weird Pete, Newt, Gordo, Stevil and Flack Jack Monty. Sculpted by one of the industry's best, Tom Mier, the sets will be available at game and comic shops everywhere. Note: the design sketches at the right are early drafts - the final product may differ slight from what is shown. Contact: Kenzerco.com for more information. □





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.

I have been a GM for about 18 years and one thing that really annoys me is players like Brian who memorize the monster stats and then broadcast this to the other players thus removing any sense of mystery or surprise. Well KODT has sure changed that as I have started using the monsters mentioned in the strip, after throwing a few **Festering Reavers** at them or pitting them against a **Purple Impaler** my players have no idea what to expect and they are all loving the mix of a name they have read in KODT and wondering what I will cook up next. Then I had an idea that the guys at Kenzer and company might like, How about you have a competition to design the **Hacklopedia of Beasts** sort of like the old AD&D **Fiend Folio™** with new monster designs and filling out the stats that have been mentioned. Sure it would be a huge task but at the end of project you would have an instant hot selling collectors item and you guys would be hailed as Gawds of gaming.

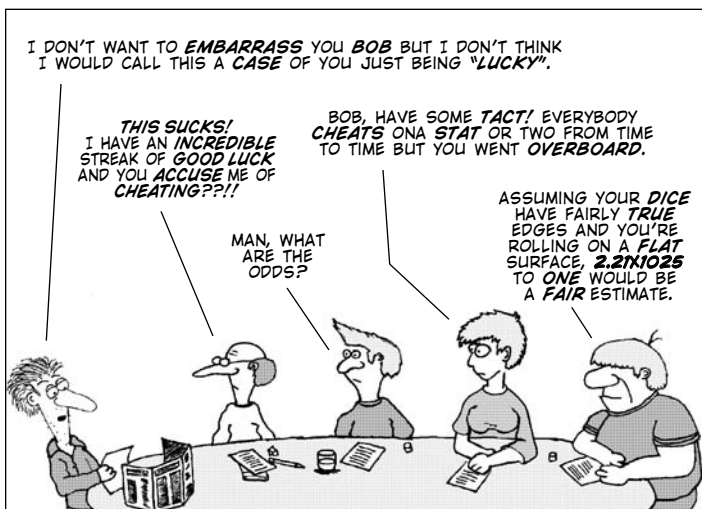
So tell us what you think.
Regards Geoff Hancock and players

Hmmmm...interesting idea. We'll throw that idea in the stew pot and see what happens.

Jolly

I only started reading KODT a few months ago, and since then I have managed to get most of the back issues (either as stand alones or in the Bundles of Trouble). I noticed a problem in one of the past issues, and since it hasn't been corrected in the earlier printings of **Bundle of Trouble II**, I thought I might point it out.

In "Beating the Odds", originally published in KODT #5, Brian gives the prob-



Brian spouting 'bad math' in "Beating the Odds" (Issue 5)

ability of Bob successfully rolling six 18's and a 00 for exceptional strength at 2.21×10^{25} to 1.

Judging by Brian's comments, I take it that he assumed that these were "fair" die-rolls. If that were the case, however, the real probability of rolling 6 18's and a 00 for strength is [with a brief explanation]:

Since each die roll is an independent event, the probability of getting a 6 on each six-sider is 1/6. Thus, rolling an eighteen is 1/216. The probability then of rolling six 18's is then 1 out of 1.016×10^{14} (216 to the sixth power). To then get a 00 for exceptional strength would make the final probability of Bob rolling those scores 1.016×10^{16} to 1.

I know Jolly has admitted to be math-deficient, but really, the engineers-by-training that apparently work at KenzerCo should have spotted this some time ago.

Other than that, I have high praise for the magazine. Now, if only you can get Sara to play a **Grunge Elf** (or game with the **Black Hands**)....

Sincerely (and Math-Geek in training),
Richard S. Horvath, Jr.
Teaching Assistant
Mathematics Department
Lehigh University

I've noticed that Brian seems to have many of the symptoms of *Asperger's Syndrome*. Is this intentional? If so, I think it would be really interesting. He'd be the first comic character I know of who shows

symptoms of the condition.

What I mean by 'symptoms' is that he's highly obsessive, has a near-photographic memory, is very quick to anger, takes almost everything literally, makes sure that everyone plays by the rules, and can't seem to cope when someone breaks the rules. And his social skills are very limited.

AS, by the way, is a high-functioning form of Autism. It's been estimated that about 1 in 300 people has it. A lot of professors have it, because they hyperfocus on their own narrow interests.

Anonymous
via E-mail

Thanks for a very interesting inquiry. While there has been no conscious attempt to link AS with Brian's behavior, your letter did pique my curiosity.

Since Brian is based on several people I've gamed with over the years I wondered if, in fact, I may have picked up on some of the traits you described (without being aware of the condition.) I've come to the conclusion that this wasn't the case. Still, I'm grateful you educated me on AS and furthered my understanding of it.

Readers interested in learning more about Asperger's Syndrome and other forms of autism may want to pay a visit to <http://aspie.freesevers.com/main.html>.

Jolly

I just read through the latest KODT, and I thought it was pretty good. It's nice to see B.A. taking a brief break from

HackMaster so he can figure out what to do next. (*And he needed it: First Bob kills Lord Flatatoy for his place, then Brian figures out how to make the Knights leaders of a truly massive army.*)

I was a little disappointed at how Brian managed to win the game of **Risque** -- does this mean he can just threaten Bob and Dave from now on to get what he wants?

Then again, it's been a while since we've any strips ending with a table flip...

The duel between Weird Pete and Stevil is getting quite interesting. I don't know who to root for: Weird Pete, the GM who is ignoring the **HackMaster** rules and player wishes for his own ideas, or Stevil, the person who has, as Nitro said, "*taken an adventure designed to build teamwork and turned into a one-man show!*" (*Not to mention Stevil's using his fellow players as targets and energy -- ironic, as he reminded Brian of the H.M.P.A. rule about always helping fellow members and I'm sure at least some of the Black Hands are fellow members.*)

Poor Gordo -- one of his pixie characters finally has a chance to become powerful, and it's being run by Stevil!

I was very pleased to see Greg Downing's comments on the role-playing element of RPGs, reminding us that the (*theoretical*) point of RPGs is to take on a role, usually a heroic one, and act out that role. He's also

right that there are plenty of players who turn RPGs into scavenger hunts, doing whatever they can to gather treasure and experience points.

Offhand, it would seem that the Knights (*not including Sara and B.A.*) are incredibly poor role-players. They often bring their personal grudges to the table, their claims of "playing the character" are always selfish (*Bob says his most treasured possession is his mother's handkerchief and not his magic sword; Brian screws over the other players with the excuse "I'm just playing my character"*), and their "characters" remain as static as ever, maybe picking up some new items and experience but still the same (*Knuckles is abusive and quick to kill, El Ravager's answer to everything is using his Hackmaster +12, and Teflon Billy exploits loopholes for his advantage.*)

Actually, the Knights (*again, not including Sara and B.A.*) do have a role: They're the bad guys. Sure, they've killed a lot of monsters.

They've also murdered innocent NPCs, killed kings and rulers, been willing to use hirelings for food or potion experiment beakers (*yes, I picked up Bundle of Trouble #6 today*), steal from innocents and beggars, wiped entire towns off the map...

Their notoriety factor, as Brian once said, must be through the roof. Why aren't other adventurers hunting them down? Who in their right mind would hire them for an

adventure?

I also thought Sara's comment "I still remember when death actually meant something" reinforces my belief that the Knights' characters are virtual immortals -- when they get killed, they come back with no appreciable loss of ability or equipment -- which leaves them free to do whatever they want.

Another example of why the Knights are bad guys: their planned attack on Lord Gilead's kingdom! What's the rationalization for this?

That he runs a just, enlightened, and respected kingdom? That he's a former NPC who unfairly (*to them*) got to keep an item (*the Helm of Lordship*) they sent him in for because they suspected it was trapped?

That he punished them for such acts as killing innocent citizens and slaying the orc representatives at the peace summit? Just another example that the Knights' actions represent evil (*or at least greed*) far more than heroism.

Jim Lynch
E-mail

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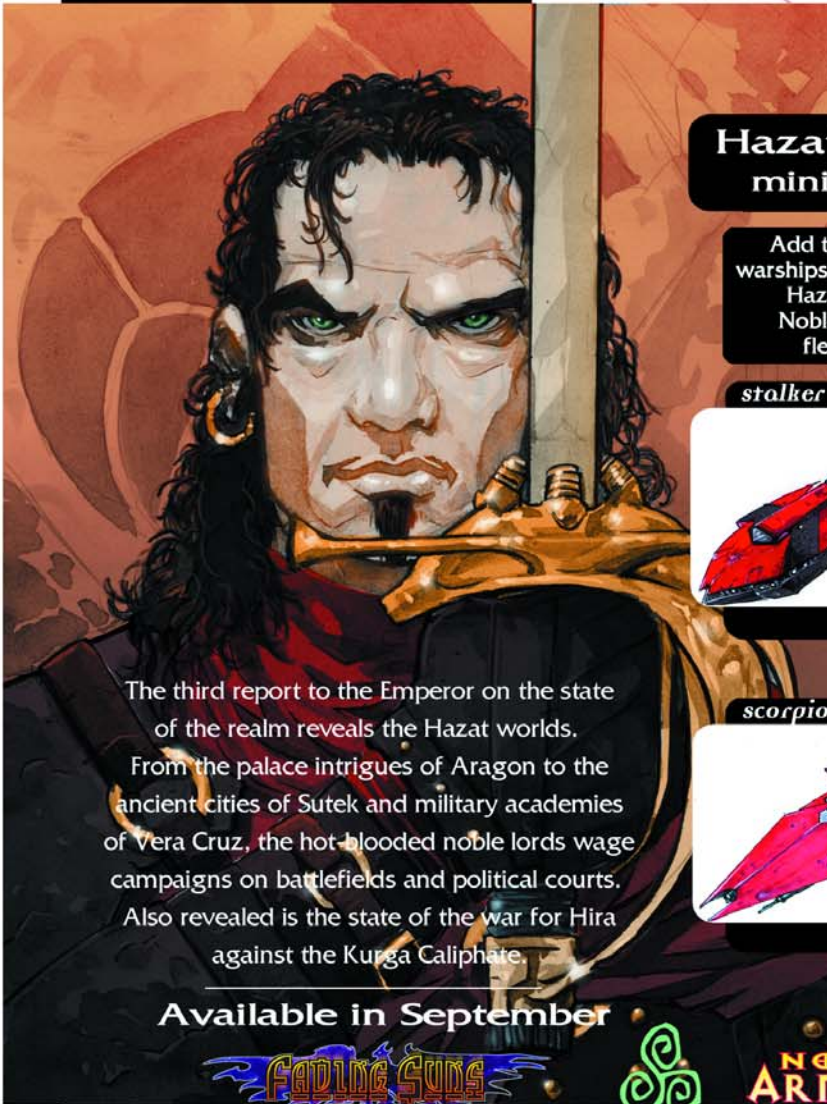
**Happy Anniversary, Paul,
husband and GameMaster!
Love, Cari, your GameSlave wife**

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.

Imperial Survey vol.3:
Hazat Fiefs

Hazat



The third report to the Emperor on the state of the realm reveals the Hazat worlds. From the palace intrigues of Aragon to the ancient cities of Sutek and military academies of Vera Cruz, the hot-blooded noble lords wage campaigns on battlefields and political courts. Also revealed is the state of the war for Hira against the Kurga Caliphate.

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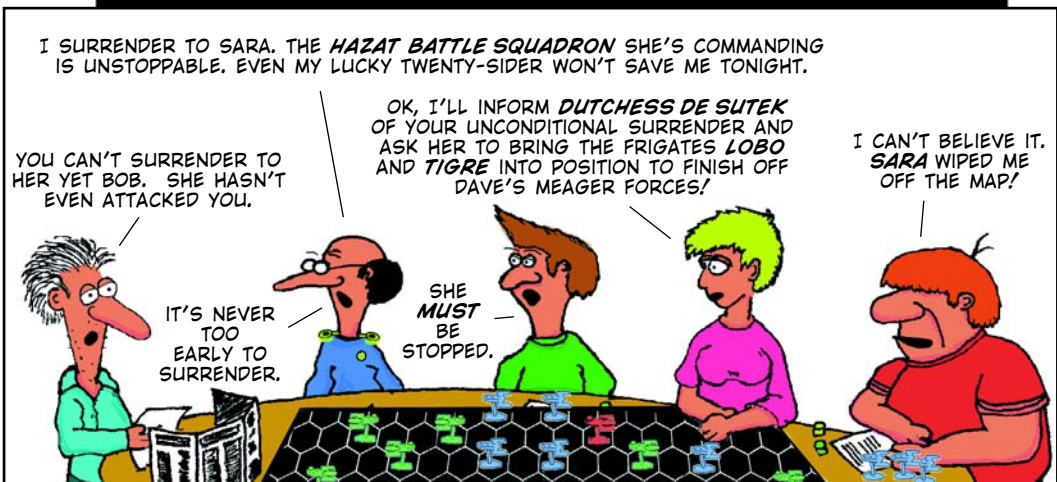
stalker explorer



scorpion frigate



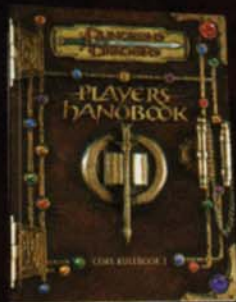
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TOP 10 THINGS BRIAN WOULD NEVER SAY:

1. What's a roleplaying game?
2. Magic Missile coming online BA!
3. Guys relax, it's not like the GM is our enemy or anything.
4. Page 1 of *HackMaster 3rd edition* declares the GM is always right.
5. I cast Protection from Cantrips!
6. Why are you asking me, what do I know about *HackMaster*?
7. Hey guys, guess what? I took up smoking to increase my masculine image.
8. I have vowed never to take advantage of a rules system again.
9. I'm playing a 20th level fighter named Bill, he has *High Weapons Mastery* in *Whip*.
10. NPCs are our equals.

submitted by Wendy McBride

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

1. "Let's go in."
2. "Let's not go in."
3. "I follow them."
4. "I stab the dragon and tell it to get off me."
5. "I drink the bottle marked POISON on the off-chance that it's the extra-healing potion."
6. "I kill it."
7. "Let me handle this."
8. "Whaddya mean, a pentagram only has FIVE sides?"
9. "What a useless scroll. It just says, HASTUR HASTUR HASTUR over and over again..."
10. "Click?? ...This doesn't come with ammo?"
11. "Why is your torch flame turning blue?"
12. "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!"
13. "Trust me."
14. "I never get lost."
15. "Oh yeah? Same to you, buddy!"
16. "Dammit, this thing won't die!"
17. "I bet without Mjolnir you're a real wuss."
18. "He looks like a wuss to me."
19. "He hit me for HOW MUCH?????"
20. "They're only kobolds!"
21. "Hey, this chest just bit me!"
22. "I try to move silently in plate armor..."
23. "I didn't find any traps!!"
24. "Wonder what this button does?"
25. "Don't worry, he's just first level."

DOG PROPERTY LAWS:

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my mouth, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in anyway.
6. If I'm chewing something up, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it just looks like mine, it's mine.
8. If I saw it first, it's mine.
9. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.
10. If it's broken, it's yours.
11. A growl beats 'I call dibs' everytime.



Okay boys and girls. Time to dig out those 3D glasses from the back of your closets. One of our talented readers recently sent in this "Ko3Dt" image of the Knights taking on the classic horror flicks.



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