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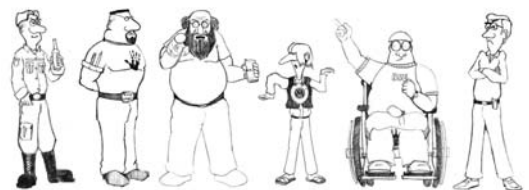
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KENZER AND COMPANY

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HOOKED ON PSIONICS
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Knights of the Dinner Table™

M A G A Z I N E

“HOOKED ON PSIONICS”

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS

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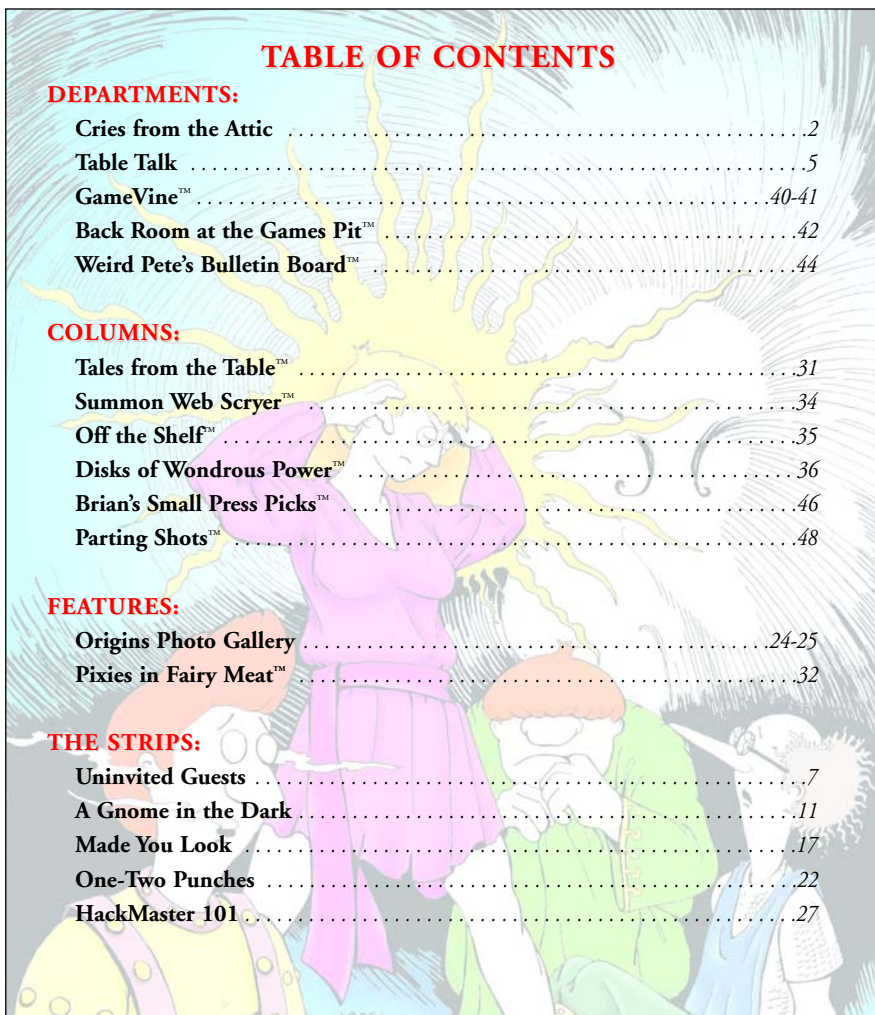
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KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™ was accidentally created by Jolly R. Blackburn way back in 1990 as 'filler' for his small press magazine, SHADIS™. Writing and drawing KODT strips, however, isn't nearly the lonely job it was in the past. Since joining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

Editorial of a Madman

"The only thing that can kick a man's vocal cords up to the 'shrill' level....is pants-wetting fear!"

Brian van Hoose to Stevil (KODT #40)

I made the mistake way back in the editorial of issue #42 of mentioning in passing that I was once almost 'snake bit' during one of my exploratory forays into the *Diablo Plateau* which lies east of El Paso, Texas. Based on the letters I've received, my comment that it was a "story for another day" was taken by many readers as a promise that I would come back and tell the full story in a future editorial.

Okay, let me be perfectly honest here. I never really had any intention of telling my 'rattlesnake encounter story'. The reason being, it's a bit embarrassing (as you will soon learn). But since so many of you wrote in to press me for details I now feel a bit obligated (i.e. guilty) in telling it — even if it marks me as the geeky coward I truly am. Oh well, anything to fill up a blank page when there's a press deadline on my back.

To set up the story, I first need to tell you about Lewis Linscott — one of the first friends I made when I reported to my first duty station in the Army (Fort Bliss, Texas). That's him in the photo above on the right.

Lewis and I hit it off right from the start when we learned we had a few common interests. We were both from the midwest (he from Ohio — myself from Indiana) and we both loved exploring our surroundings. This pretty much meant getting as far as possible from civilization and finding ways of getting adrenaline rushes. This mutual interest led to us exploring miles and miles of tank trails and missile ranges on Fort Bliss and nearby White Sands, New Mexico. These areas comprised some really remote (and wild) desert regions — unfortunately much of it was also restricted for security reasons. This forced us to eventually move our weekend excursions further east into the aptly named *Diablo Plateau*.

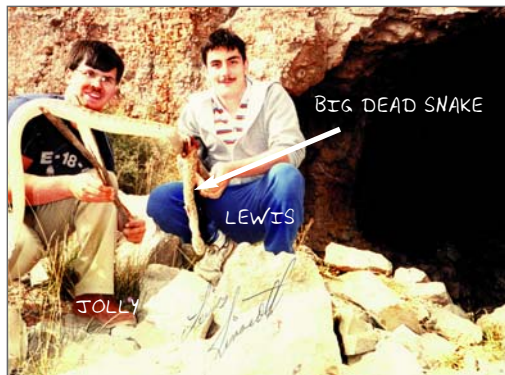
This rocky area, filled with mine shafts and caves, just screamed out for exploring. Never mind that such dark foreboding places are havens for poisonous snakes, scorpions and spiders. We always knew there was a 'chance' of encountering such nasties but that just added to the rush. Besides, after months of weekend forays into the desert we had seen neither hide nor hair of anything worse than a few fire ant hills and an occasional vulture. So our motto, "No fear!" had never really been put to the test.

So we were feeling rather confident on that December afternoon in 1983 as we drove down what amounted to two ruts in the sand winding between several mesas. Suddenly, Lewis told me to halt the car. Pointing toward a rising wall of red stone a few hundred yards away he cried out, "Over there! A mine shaft!"

Soon with flashlights in hand we were making our way up the slope toward the base of the rock wall. As we drew closer our excitement grew. It was obvious from the amount of excavated rock debris piled up outside the mine's entrance that this was a deep one. (Many of the mines we had discovered turned out to be exploratory in nature. Perhaps being mined ten or twenty feet deep before being abandoned.)

I entered the mine first (Taking the 'point' as we called it. Borrowing the phrase from our D&D campaign) and was delighted to see the beam of my flashlight disappear into the darkness well beyond. After crying out, "Hoody Hoo!" to let Lewis know we had struck paydirt I took several steps and was just about to turn to high five him when it happened. The most blood curdling sound I've ever heard resounded off the walls of the mine-shaft — a terribly LOUD "Hissssssssss". The hiss was immediately followed by a flash of white about the size of a fist arching out from a small rocky ledge to my left at about shoulder height. It cut through the beam of light from my flashlight only to stop short of my startled face by a few terrifyingly few inches. I had just been surprised and lost initiative.

Lewis managed to yell the obvious, "Snake!" just before turning in his tracks, exiting the mine and running down the rocky slope we had just climbed. What happened next is a blur. All I know is that I managed to pass Lewis and cover a distance of 50 meters over cactus and broken rock in the space of a few seconds. I was also aware of the fact that I was scream-



Jolly and Lewis Linscott — the Snake Slayers (December, 1983)

ing like a schoolgirl. You know the kind — a long sustained shrill scream.

Finally, my throat hoarse with screaming, I stopped gasping for breath and turned to size up the situation, almost expecting to see the snake chasing me in hot pursuit. Instead I saw Lewis who ran past me almost bowling me over (screaming like a schoolgirl of course) and continuing down the slope of the mesa toward the car. For a moment I thought he was going to jump in, lock the doors and speed off without me. (Now I know what those 'broken unit' rules in *Squad Leader* are all about.)

It took about five minutes to regain our composure. Slowly the panting and gasping from fear and hysteria was replaced with laughter.

"Oh man!" laughed Lewis, "That snake almost bit you in the face! I swear to god, he came 'that' close to getting you."

I looked at the span of distance Lewis was indicating with his narrowly spaced palms and felt a bit ill. What the hell were we thinking?

To make a long story short, we eventually rallied our nerve and decided that the snake had to die. Our plan? To stand in the entrance of the mine shaft and chuck large rocks at it from a safe distance. To this day Lewis and I disagree as to who actually struck the killing blow that 'took down' the rattle snake. By the time we were finished, the snake was literally buried in a small mound of rocks. If you look real close at the photo above you'll see how smashed the snake is — nearly in two. Looking at the photo we snapped that day I really have to laugh. What a couple of certified dorks. You'd think we had taken down a grizzly bear with our bare hands. I can almost hear Beavis and Buttthead in the background muttering, "Heh Heh — k-k-kew! We killed it."

Looking back, I now understand the snake was just minding its own business and we killed it because it scared the snot out of us. And before anyone writes in to flame me for gratuitously killing an 'innocent' animal let me just say I was much younger then. If I had it to do over again..... Aaaaaah, who am I fooling? If I had it to do over again I'd waste that ugly brute with a sharpened bungee stick and roast him over an open fire. I just wouldn't be foolish enough to take a picture of it.

I usually manage to tie these stories into gaming and this time is no different. A few days later when I finally climbed behind the DM screen and was running my players through my latest dungeon-crawl, I couldn't help thinking of that snake and the pants-wetting fear I had experienced during my real life 'random monster' surprise encounter. Was I really that much of a coward? To a character in D&D such an encounter would hardly cause a blip on the radar. Such horrible monstrosities as stirges, ear-seekers, giant scorpions, et cetera are dealt with fearless impunity. Your 5th level fighter certainly doesn't run away from them screaming.

Then it dawned on me. I wasn't the problem — the rules were somehow screwed up. I can not say that as a GM, I can role-play a snake encounter better than anyone I know. I've also changed the stats for snakes in my books so they ALL exude an aura of *Extreme Fear*. Characters who fail their saving throw must drop their weapons and flee in fear (screaming like schoolgirls of course.)

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn

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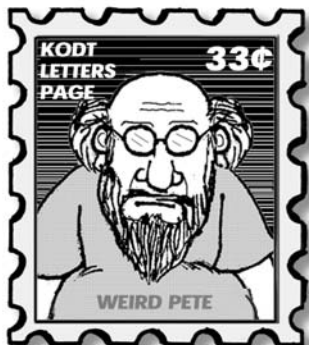
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Our Readers Talk Back!



Dear KODT,

It has been said many times before — the Knights Rock!!

I started reading them late last year but I still enjoy all the great stuff you guys do, Keep it up. Congrats on #44, it's getting better all the time.

I live in Juneau, Alaska which is a place that lacks anything interesting to do for someone in their late teens, such as myself. KODT and the various RPGs have given me a great way to cope with such boredom. Thanks a bunch.

Darren Williams
via E-mail

Your letter touched us deeply Darren. We are sending our intern, Noab, up to Juneau with an arm load of games and a ruck sack filled with snacks to keep you company for a while. Just be sure to let him win at Risk every now and then. He has a bit of a temper.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

If you put out that Fairy Meat ad as a poster I would buy it. Preferably with a little less text.

And as long as I'm writing I suppose I must heap on the mandatory praise. You guys put me in stitches again and again!! Whenever I meet some poor fool who hasn't learned of the wonder that is KODT I rush to lend them some Bundles of Trouble to catch them up. I'm so generous.

Joyceleen
via E-mail

Dear Jolly,

I read your "Games Day" idea in your editorial for KODT #44.

Have to tell ya, I'm inspired!! I've got some friends I've been meaning to get together with for a while now to play games. Great idea this Games Day thing.

And just cause you asked, "THANKS JOLLY!!!!"

Sincerely,

Yamil Gonzalez,
Reading, PA

Dear KODT,

As a long-time reader and fan of KODT, I was somewhat surprised when I picked up one of the most recent issues ("Because I'm the GM") and noticed the use of our company name (*Ground Zero Games*) in one of the strips.

GZG was used in relation to an "unlicensed third party add-on" to the game of *Formula Day* being played by the Knights, which, though completely fictional and bearing no relation to our real products, doesn't really portray our name in a good light.

Now, I know from past issues that you normally tend to use made-up company names for the strips, for obvious reasons, so I am left wondering what has happened in this case - did you simply not realize that we exist?

GZG is a small UK-based company, but we have been in business for nearly sixteen years now and we do have a reasonable penetration into the US market through our US licensee/distributor, **GeoHex**.

In case you don't know of us, we publish the very popular **Full Thrust** space combat rules, as well as other SF miniatures systems such as **Dirtside** and **Stargrunt**, and we have what is probably one of the most extensive SF miniatures lines in the industry.

Regards,

Jon Tuffley
Ground Zero Games)



Wow, with products with names like Dirtside and Stargrunt we're surprised we hadn't heard of your company, Jon. We apologize for stepping on your toes and want all our readers to know that strip had nothing to do with your company. Readers interested in checking out GZG's product line can check out www.gzg.com. U.S. retailers can contact GeoHex, Portland, Oregon. (Web: www.geo-hex.com).

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Just had to write in and tell you that the Games Day piece really struck a chord with me. For several years my friends and I have talked about getting together and doing a little gaming but nothing ever came of it. That is until I read issue 44.

We just had our very first Games Day

last week. Nothing earth shattering. Just a few games of *Axis and Allies* and a little MTG. But it was enough to get the juices flowing again.

My friend Frank has pulled out his GURPS books and by the time you read this we should be knee deep in dice again.

Thanks!! You guys rule.

Jeff Berry
St. Louis, MO

Dear KODT,

I am a long time lover of comic books, twenty years and counting, and this is the first time I've ever felt compelled to write a letter to the publisher. A little while back I stumbled upon **Hack Rogers** (issue 38) at a small comic book store and figured KODT might be worth a couple of chuckles. It turned out it was worth a whole lot more.

It's the first comic that I've reread in nearly ten years! You've locked onto a great slice-of-(fantasy)-life with your strips and I've spent the last few weeks passing the word along to friends that it's a must read for anyone who has role-played.

My experience as a role-player doesn't go back all that far, but I love it just the same. It's been nearly impossible to get together with friends in recent years to thump a few orcs, but I've found a very acceptable substitute that I'd like to share.

I teach at a sixth grade school, and each year the staff is asked to provide some after-school activities for the students. I traditionally offer a computer and basketball club for the students, which are two things I really enjoy, but I also wanted to try something new. So, for the past three years, I've conducted **Hams & Heroes** - a role-playing club using the D&D system.

It's really been a blast introducing so many young and excitable individuals to the gaming world. They learn the rules quickly and show a lot of ingenuity when playing. What's even more rewarding is seeing how some of the students make arrangements to continue gaming after the school year is complete. Looking toward this coming year, I've decided to mix in a little from the "Parting Shots" portion of KODT.

I'm going to insist that each of the player-students review, know, and use the "interesting interjections" from KODT #41 and the "Forty Things to do With a Dead Follower" from KODT #39. It should be fun. Hoody-hoo!

Finally, I do have a suggestion for you and your company to consider. How about knighting some of your loyal readers? Each year I present a short unit on

heraldry and ask the students to apply what they learn in making a family shield. Those that make the most clever shield representing the best about themselves and their family are knighted.

They are given the title of "Sir" or "Madame" before their name for the remainder of the year. It's really kewl to see how those who are knighted often try to live up to the ideals of knighthood. Anyway, I think it would add yet another layer of flavor and kewlness to your great publication if you picked one or two readers for knighthood each year and maybe listed them in a KODT hall of fame or worked their comic likeness into a short stint at the gaming table. Just an idea.

Sir Galahad
lagana23snet.net

Great idea. We have granted Honorary Knights of the Dinner Table status on certain individuals over the years. (Kevin and Mary Ann Seimbeida of Palladium Books being the first inductees back in 1995). With so many devoted fans helping the cause we've been hoping to revive the idea and, as you suggested, publish the names each year in KODT.

I was glad to hear from an educator who has managed to use role-playing as a teaching aid. You may be interested in knowing that GAMA (Game Manufacturers Association) has a division devoted to educators. You can check out <http://www.gama.org/GAMA/programs.html> for more information.



Dear KODT,

I saw KODT #44! Thank you for the announcement of the sequel! (*to the movie GameMaster GameMaster What Have You Done!*) I was surprised how eye catching the bit in Game Vine was with Boglin's gaping helmeted face yellin at ya. Awesome!

The struggle continues with the sequel. Being from all parts of New England makes it hard to pull the cast together, but today is one of those rare days we've seemed to do it. We were up last night until 4 working on props for what we will hopefully shoot all today. It's gonna be freakin hilarious!

By the way, I have to compliment you on

your "*Tomb of Horrors*" spoof/parody! I've been following it for the past few issues. I kept thinking "I want to be playing this adventure". It was just such a great story from start to finish. The spirit thing is something I may borrow for games in the future. It's too good to let lie.

Again, thanks for everything! Andrew and Jen are also here and they are shouting their thanks as well. On... to *Dungeon Rubber!*

Brian
Breakfast of Demons

Good luck on the shoot, Brian. I look forward to seeing the results. In the meantime I'm stockin' up on popcorn and Junior Mints.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Wow, I didn't think about OTHER gamers having game days...our group gets together every 2 or 3 months or so, usually for a weekend. Many games are played, much snacks and soda (and beer, depending on the person) is consumed, and little sleep is gotten.

We tend to call it "*Scott-Con*" because it's usually at his place. We have another one in a couple of weeks, Scott isn't able to go to *GenCon* this year (poor guy, but that's what he gets for running for office!)

I have run some of them thru *Orcs at the Gates*, I am 2-0 as GM against them (just like the gang in *KODT*, they go after each other instead of the orcs...)

Another great issue!

Dave Stern
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

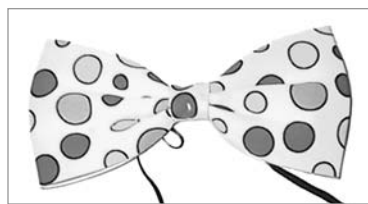
I was in attendance at the *Origins Award* ceremony in Columbus a few days ago. My friend, Keith and I were commenting on how 'serious' folks were taking the awards this year when they suddenly announced that *Knights of the Dinner Table* had won as *Best Games Magazine*. (*Congrats by the way*)

When Dave Kenzer began to 'thank' everyone who made the award possible and began reading each and every subscriber from his list I nearly fell off my chair. That was hilarious.

But the topper was having your intern accept the award for *Kenzer and Company*. That was a class act. Folks were talking about that all weekend. And the big flowery bowties? You guys rock. My only wish is that Jolly, Steve and Brian had said a few words as well. Oh well....maybe next year.

Anyway, I wanted to thank you for the laughs and for reminding folks to "*Keep it Fun!*"

Rich Saunders
via E-mail



Squirring Bow-Ties! Heb Heb — Funny

Thanks Rich. Glad you appreciated our attempt at "Keeping it fun" When word went out the event was to be 'black tie' this year we attempted to find powder blue tuxes but failed in that mission.

As a last ditched effort we secured the large clown squirring-bowties. As one fan told us at the ceremony, "Well, we really wouldn't have expected anything less from the guys who put out KODT."

Next year we plan on doing the 'fish dance'. (If you're a Monty Python Fan you might have an idea of what I'm talking about.)

Seriously, many, many thanks to all the readers who took the time to vote. As always, the competition was very stiff this year and it's always a thrill to learn the hard work is appreciated.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Okay so *Fairy Meat* wasn't a joke. All I can say is, "You guys RULE!" Just about the funniest (and funnest) damn game I've picked up in a long while. I certainly hope there is more to come. (*Rules for the other wee folk would be nice for example.*)

Kenzer and Company really seems to be hitting on all cylinders and I look forward to what you guys come up with next.

Phil Eaton
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

I was wondering if you guys are planning to do a review in *Brian's Picks of the Tenchi Muyo!* *Roleplaying*, which is by *Guardians of Order* and uses the *TriStat* system. If this counts for anything, I give it my personal recommendation!

Lancelot Takeda
via E-mail

Sure we'd love to run it in Brian's Picks but we haven't seen a review copy yet. BTW, with the upcoming debut of Critical Mass (See KODT#44) readers can now rate and review their favorite games. Just go to www.kenzerco.com to download the review form.

As a reminder, Manufacturers who would like to see their product reviewed in KODT can send review copies to the Lake Zurich, IL address listed below.

Jolly



Dear
KODT

SOMETHING
ON YOUR MIND?

SOMETHING YOU WANT
TELL US OR SHARE WITH
YOUR FELLOW READERS?

DROP US A LETTER!!

e-mail jollyrb@aol.com

or write to KODT,
830 W. Main Street, PMB 114
Lake Zurich, IL 60047

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

File Edit View Insert Format Font Tools Table Window Work Help 11:45 p.m.

ADVENTURE MAKER

NPC GALLERY

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 184** **GAMEMASTER: B.A. Felton**

Game Session Summary: Garweeze Wurd has been cast into a world war. First the Knights learned that Gilead's recent hasty withdrawal was not the strategic victory it first appeared to be. Teflon Billy's **Gnome Titan** scouts soon reported that the **Southern Orc League** (under the rule of **Ahk Tang**) had entered the war as Fangaerie's ally. The **Fangaerian Army**, it turns out, had merely pulled back to redeploy further to the south where Gilead quickly seized control of the Mountain passes thus cutting off any chance of the Gnome army escaping back to their homelands or receiving reinforcements.

While Chancellor Teflon frantically poured over his maps to come up with a plan to meet this new challenge, more bad news arrived — Ahk Tang and his Orkin Hordes had executed a bold all out charge across the **Fargruss River** in the dark of night. The ill-prepared **Seventh Gnome Contingent** was caught off guard by the warrior-priest's attack and quickly disintegrated. With the road to **Flataroy Manor** now opened, the Orcs pressed home the attack.

As the other **Gnome Titan** units redeployed forward to fill the hole and to halt the enemy, yet another uninvited guest arrived on the field of battle - The **Dwarven Clans of Praxte**. Hated enemies of the Southern Orc League, *the dwarves* abandoned their century-long position of neutrality and entered the war on the side of their distant cousins, the Gnomes. The result was four days of carnage as sword and shield clashed. Then, on the fifth day, the battle cries fell silent. More uninvited guests had arrived. This time, emissaries from the **Council of Dragons** and the **Circle of Sequestered Magick** announced they were intervening and demanded an audience with Lord Flataroy.

Sensing the "*Jig is up!*", Teflon Billy and his comrades have retreated to back to their **Manor House** hoping to buy time by sending an endless array of couriers to the emissaries with hopes of stalling them.

How could they know that even MORE unpleasant surprises awaited them?



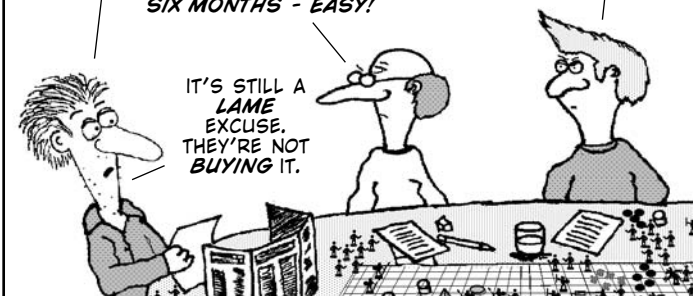
* See **KODT #18** "When Peace Comes to Shove" [When Lord Gilead attempts to hold a Peace Conference with Orcs, the Knights (who were invited to participate) turn it into a royal Hack Fest!]

I BELIEVE SHE'S TALKING ABOUT YOUR **ENDLESS** STREAM OF **EXCUSES** AS TO WHY **LORD FLATAROY** WON'T RECEIVE THE **EMISSARIES**. LIKE HAVING A **URINARY TRACT INFECTION** FOR EXAMPLE. THAT ONE **REALLY** TOOK THE **CAKE**.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THAT'S A **GREAT** EXCUSE. IT GOT ME OUT OF TAKING **PHYS-ED** IN HIGH SCHOOL FOR **SIX MONTHS - EASY!**

IT'S PERFECTLY **PLAUSIBLE**. BESIDES, WHO WOULD **LIE** ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

IT'S STILL A **LAME** EXCUSE. THEY'RE NOT **BUYING** IT.



YOU REALLY SHOULD **LISTEN** TO SARA. THESE GUYS AREN'T GOING TO BE **PUT OFF** MUCH LONGER. IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED YOUR **"LITTLE WAR"** IS THREATENING THE **STABILITY** OF THE **ENTIRE** WORLD.

YOU EVEN HAVE THE **DRAGON COMMITTEE** INVOLVED. THEY STAND TO **LOSE** A LOT OF **PROFITS** IF THEY DON'T PROTECT THEIR **INVESTMENTS**.

OH **BOO HOO!** I STILL DON'T SEE WHY THEY HAD TO STICK THEIR **SNOUTS** INTO OUR BUSINESS ANYWAY.

GEESH! WE GOT THE WHOLE **FRICKIN' WORLD** ON OUR BACKS.



IT'S **OBVIOUS** THESE GUYS AREN'T GOING TO GO AWAY. SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST SIT DOWN AND **TALK** WITH THEM, **BRIAN?** YOU WERE ABLE TO **FOOL** THE **GNOME TITANS** INTO THINKING YOU'RE THE **LEGITIMATE** HEIR TO **LORD FLATAROY**. IT MIGHT WORK AGAIN. LET THEM TALK **PEACE TERMS** AND **PRETEND** YOU'RE **COOPERATING**. IT COULD BUY US ENOUGH TIME TO COME UP WITH A BETTER PLAN.

YEAH. YOU TALK A GOOD TALK, DUDE.

TALK WITH THEM? **ME?** ARE YOU **NUTS?** I DON'T WANT THE **COSM** KNOWING I'M INVOLVED.



THIS ISN'T SOME **NEIGHBORHOOD WELCOMING COMMITTEE** WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE. THESE GUYS PACK SOME **HELLACIOUS MO-JO!** YOU THINK SOME **TWO-BIT** POLYMORPH POTION* IS GOING TO **FOOL** THESE GUYS? THEY'D SEE **RIGHT** THROUGH ME AND I'D BE **EXPOSED** AS THE **FRAUD** I AM.

UNDERSTOOD, BUT WE'RE RUNNING SHORT OF **OPTIONS**.

I DON'T CARE. THEY CAN'T LEARN MY **TRUE IDENTITY**. I'D BE **RUINED!**



HEADS UP, GUYS! AS YOU ARE **DEBATING** WHAT TO DO A **SENTRY** BURSTS IN THROUGH THE **MAIN DOORS** TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE **ORCS** ARE ON THE **MARCH** AGAIN WITH THE **FULL SUPPORT** OF **ROT GUT** AND THE **DRAGON COMMITTEE!**

THEY'RE STARTING TO **ENCIRCLE** THE **MANOR GROUNDS!**

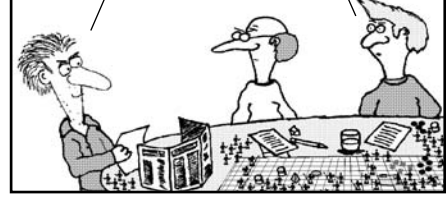
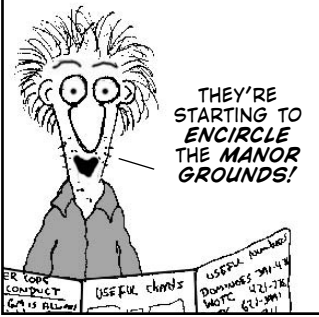
GAAA!! WHAT THE..... THEY'RE **SURROUNDING** US? AND THE **D.C.** HAS **SIDED** AGAINST US?

APPARENTLY AFTER **INTERROGATING** ONE OF THE **GNOME TITAN OFFICERS** CAPTURED BY THE **ORCS** IT WAS LEARNED THAT **LORD FLATAROY** IS **DEAD**. THEY WERE A LITTLE **SURPRISED** TO LEARN THAT A **'LONG LOST NEPHEW'** HAD CLAIMED HIS **TITLE**.

WHY SHOULD THEY BE SURPRISED? LOT'S OF PEOPLE HAVE **NEPHEWS** LURKING IN THE SHADOWS NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT.

YEAH BUT **FLATAROY'S** ONLY **SIBLING** DIED **CHILDLESS** AND HIS WIFE WAS AN **ONLY CHILD**. THAT BLOWS YOUR **NEPHEW STORY** OUT OF THE WATER.

OH C'MON, B.A. -- LIKE THESE GUYS WOULD KNOW SUCH **TRIVIAL** FACTS ABOUT **FLATAROY**.



* See **KODT #42** "A Very Delegate Situation" [After the group murders Lord Flataroy, Teflon Billy polymorphs himself into a Gnome and assumes the identity of Flataroy's 'long lost nephew'.]

AS A MATTER OF FACT THEY WOULD. THE D.C. FINANCED *MANY* OF *FLATAROY'S* BUILDING PROJECTS¹ AND WERE *INTIMATELY* FAMILIAR WITH HIS *AFFAIRS*.



IN FACT, *OL' ROT GUT* HIMSELF HAD BEEN APPOINTED *EXECUTOR* OF *FLATAROY'S* ESTATE SHOULD ANYTHING EVER HAPPEN TO HIM. *FLATAROY* TOOK SUCH STEPS BECAUSE HE HAD NO *LIVING* RELATIVES.

PLAYER CODE OF CONDUCT
USEFUL CHARMS
DOMINOES 2M-4M
DUFFLES 471-718
MTC

OH MY STARS! HE'S RIGHT. THAT'S WHY *FLATAROY* WAS SO *ANGUIISHED* OVER THE DEATH OF HIS SON IN *LIBATIONS TO THE DEAD*. REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID OVER HIS GRAVE? "THE *FLATAROY* LEGACY ENDS HERE!"



LET'S JUST TELL THEM *TEFLON* IS THE *BASTARD KID* HE WAS ALWAYS *ASHAMED* OF.

DAMN! WE'RE BACKED INTO A *CORNER* HERE. IF THE *GNOME TITANS* GET HOLD OF THIS INFO WE'RE *SUNK!* THEY'LL *TURN* ON US.



MY *DWARVEN* ELDERS TAUGHT ME *ONE* THING. "THERE'S NO *LOSING* THE BATTLE IF YOU GRAB *DEATH* BY THE *BALLS* AND GO DOWN *SWINGING!*" IF THERE'S GOING TO BE A *FIGHT* LET'S GO OUT AND *STARING* IT IN THE *FACE!*

I'M WITH *KNUCKLES!* IF *THIS* IS THE END LET'S GIVE A *GOOD* ACCOUNTING OF OURSELVES.

IT'LL BE AN *HONOR* TO *FIGHT* THIS DAY WITH SUCH *BRAVE* COMRADES ON EITHER SIDE OF ME. *HACK* ON, BOYS!

WHOA, HOLD ON, GUYS....



I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE SO *GUNG HO* ON DYING AND ALL BUT WE *DO* HAVE OTHER *OPTIONS* HERE.

DYING? WHOSE TALKING ABOUT DYING?



I STILL HAVE ONE MORE CHARGE IN MY *RING OF TELEPORTATION*. I FIGURE WHEN THINGS START TO LOOK *REALLY* GRIM, I CAN JUST *TELEPORT* OVER TO THE *OTHER SIDE* AND *POLYMORPH* MYSELF BACK TO MY NORMAL *DWARVEN-SELF*. IT'LL LOOK LIKE I ENTERED THE *FIELD OF BATTLE* LATE AND CAME TO THE AID OF MY *COSM BROTHERS*. MAYBE EVEN EARN MYSELF A FEW *POINTS* WITH THEM.

WHAT??!! WHY YOU NO GOOD, TWO-TIMING SON OF A....

YOU'D *ABANDON* YOUR FRIENDS? JUST LIKE THAT?

OH DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. I'D JUST BE *BIDDING* MY TIME UNTIL I COULD RETRIEVE YOUR *BODIES* AND HAVE YOU *RAISED*.

YOU *SCUM!*



SARA? YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT *OTHER OPTIONS*. IF YOU GOT ANY IDEAS NOW IS THE TIME TO VOICE 'EM. OTHERWISE I'M *THIS* CLOSE TO PEPPERING *MISTER SPELL-HAPPY* OVER THERE WITH A FEW *BOLTS OF SLAYING*.

WELL, THERE *IS* AN *ESCAPE ROUTE* WE HAVEN'T CONSIDERED. WHAT ABOUT THE *DUNGEON COMPLEX*² WE DISCOVERED BENEATH THE *MANOR*?

HEY, I'D FORGOTTEN ABOUT THAT.



¹ See *KODT #34* [The Dragon Committee]
² See *KODT #46* "Hack and Roll All Night" [While searching the 'hidden chamber' in the cellar of Flataroy's Manor, the Knights discover that it is linked to a sprawling dungeon network.]

OF COURSE! SARA, THAT'S ABSOLUTELY **BRILLIANT!!** WE SHOULD **BLOW THIS DUMP** AND LEAVE ALL OUR **WORRIES** BEHIND US.

OH I **LIKE** THAT IDEA. I LIKE IT **A LOT!** THIS **SETTLING DOWN** BUSINESS IS FOR THE **BIRDS!**

UNFORTUNATELY WE NEVER MANAGED TO FINISH **MAPPING** OUT THE COMPLEX BUT IT **HAS** TO LEAD SOMEWHERE. **RIGHT?**

I THINK YOU'RE ON TO SOMETHING **SARA!**



OF COURSE IT'S A **DAMN SHAME** TO LEAVE THIS **ALL** BEHIND. WE SUNK A **FORTUNE** INTO THIS JOINT.

NOT TO MENTION ALL THE WORK I PUT INTO MY **SPELL RESEARCH LAB** AND **HERBAL GARDEN**.



I AGREE. WE CAN'T LET THOSE FRICKIN' **ORCS** LOOT AND PLUNDER **OUR PLUSH DIGS**. I SAY WE MOVE WHAT WE CAN INTO THE **ACCESS TUNNEL** WE DUG AND THEN **TORCH** THE JOINT BEFORE **SEALING** IT OFF.

OH, THAT'S **GOOD!** WITH A LITTLE **LUCK** THEY'LL **ASSUME** WE BURNED UP IN THE **CONFLAGRATION** AND NOT EVEN BOTHER **LOOKING** FOR US. IT WOULD BE THE **PERFECT** WAY TO COVER OUR **ESCAPE**.

THEN IT'S **AGREED**. BUT LET'S **HURRY**. WE DON'T HAVE **MUCH** TIME.

SOUNDS LIKE A **PLAN**. LET'S **DO** IT.



HEY, I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING. MAYBE WE'LL FINALLY **TRACK DOWN** THAT **JOKER** WHO STOLE MY **HACKMASTER SWORD** AND **TEF'S BAG** OF **HEFTY CAPACITY!**

OH, I **CERTAINLY** **HOPE** SO.



AN HOUR OR SO LATER...

OKAY **B.A.** WITH THE LAST OF THE **FOOD** FROM THE **STORE HOUSE** MOVED INTO THE **TUNNEL** I CAST **STONE SPHERE** ON THE **ENTRANCE** AND **SEAL** IT OFF. MY **DELAYED-ACTION DAISY-CHAINED FIREBALLS** SHOULD GO OFF IN THE **MANOR HOUSE** IN ABOUT **FOUR** ROUNDS. SHOULD BE **QUITE** A SHOW.

GREAT! SO.....YOU'RE NOW **EFFECTIVELY TRAPPED** IN THE **DUNGEON** - **RIGHT?** THIS SHOULD BE **INTERESTING!**

TRAPPED? YOU MEAN **CUT OFF** FROM DANGER DON'T YOU?

-GULP- WELL, THERE'S NO **TURNING** BACK NOW.

UH OH! I **CERTAINLY** DON'T LIKE THAT **SMIRK**.

UH OH!




LIKE **RATS** IN A **MAZE** -- IT'S ABOUT TO **HIT THE FAN!**



A Gnome in the Dark

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN

OKAY, WITH A LOUD "SHOONK!" BRIAN'S **STONE SPHERE SPELL SEALS** OFF THE **ENTRANCE** TO THE **DUNGEON** AND YOU FIND YOURSELVES STANDING IN **TOTAL DARKNESS!** THE SUDDEN DIFFERENCE IN **AIR PRESSURE** CAUSES YOUR EARS TO **POP.**



ABOVE CAN BE HEARD THE **THUNDEROUS REPORT** OF EXPLOSIONS FROM **BRIAN'S DELAYED FIREBALLS.** EVEN WITH **THIRTY FEET OF SOLID STONE** BETWEEN YOU AND THE **UPPER LEVEL** OF THE **MANOR,** YOU CAN FEEL THE **TREMORS** SHAKE THE TUNNEL WALLS AROUND YOU.

PLAYER CODE: SF CONDUCT
1. THE GA IS BLENDING RIGHT

USEFUL CHARMS
DORMOS? 201-414
MOTC 421-78
671-3911
911

OH DEAR! I **KNEW** WE WERE FORGETTING SOMETHING. WE FORGOT TO **ROUND UP** OUR **HENCHMEN** BEFORE ENTERING THE **DUNGEON!** WE DON'T EVEN HAVE **TIPPY** OUR **TORCH BEARER.**

HEY, YOU'RE **RIGHT!** AND I FORGOT TO GET **RUDY** OUT OF THE **STABLE.**

WHO CARES?



THIS IS **PERFECT!** WHEN **GILEAD** DISCOVERS OUR **BEREAVED HIRELINGS** AND **HENCHMEN** STILL WANDERING AROUND THE **ESTATE** HE'LL BE **CONVINCED** WE **PERISHED** IN THE **FIRE!** WE'RE **GOLDEN!**

EVEN SO, I FEEL KINDA **BAD** ABOUT LEAVING **RUDY** TO **FEND** FOR HIMSELF. THE **DUDE** WAS LIKE A **BROTHER** TO **EL RAVAGER.**

HMMRRRRFFF! WELL **GOOD RIDDANCE!** WHO EVER HEARD OF A **CENTAUR MOUNT** ANYWAY? IT WAS **EMBARRASSING.** BESIDES HE COULDN'T HAVE **NEGOTIATED** THESE **DUNGEON CORRIDORS.**

HE'LL BE OKAY, **DAVE.** I'M SURE OF IT.



BOB'S **ABSOLUTELY** RIGHT. THIS HAS ACTUALLY WORKED OUT FOR THE **BEST.**




I'LL SAY IT HAS. I DIDN'T FULLY **REALIZE** HOW MUCH **KNUCKLES** HAS MISSED **DUNGEON CRAWLING.** JUST THE THOUGHT OF USING MY **THIEVING SKILLS** AGAIN HAS ME **BUZZING** WITH EXCITEMENT. I THINK LIFE IN THE **BIG HOUSE** WAS BEGINNING TO **SMOTHER** ME!

YOU KNOW, I WAS JUST THINKING THE **SAME THING!**

AMEN, BOB! THIS IS THE **LIFE** FOR US. **DELVING** INTO THE GREAT **UNDERDARK!**

I COULDN'T AGREE MORE!



SO WHAT SAY YE WE SET A **COURSE** FOR **ADVENTURE** AND PUT SOME **DISTANCE** BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE **TROUBLE** BREWING OVER OUR HEADS? WHICH WAY **SARA?**

WELL, THE CORRIDOR ONLY RUNS **ONE WAY** FROM HERE SO IT'S REALLY A **NO BRAINER.**



WELL, **SOMEBODY** IS GOING TO HAVE TO ACT AS **TORCH BEARER**. I'D **VOLUNTEER** BUT I'M **DESIGNATED MAPPER**.

WELL DON'T LOOK AT **ME**. I'M THE **THIEF** OF THE PARTY. I HAFTA TAKE **POINT**. BESIDES, MY **INFRAVISION** SERVES ME JUST **FINE!**

OH NO, NOT ME!

WELL I **SURE** AS HELL AIN'T FILLIN' IN FOR SOME **LAME ASS** HIRELING. I NEED TO KEEP MY HANDS **FREE** SO I CAN **CAST SPELLS!**

SORRY DAVE, LOOKS LIKE YOU GET THE HONORS. BE SURE TO KEEP **CLOSE** TO ME SO I HAVE ENOUGH **LIGHT** TO WORK ON MY **MAPS**.

AWW MAN, THIS **SUCKS!** THE **RAY** DOING AN **NPC'S** JOB?

I **FEEL** YOUR SHAME, DAVE.

OKAY B.A., WE DO THE **BEST** WE CAN TO **HIDE** WHAT **PROVISIONS** WE CAN'T TAKE WITH US IN ANY **NOOK** AND **CRANNY** WE CAN FIND. THEY'LL SERVE AS **EMERGENCY RATIONS** JUST IN CASE THIS "**ESCAPE ROUTE**" DOESN'T **PAN** OUT. WE'LL THEN MOVE **SOUTH** DOWN THE **DUNGEON PASSAGEWAY**. I HAVE MY **CROSSBOW OF SLAYING** COCKED AND **LOADED** FOR **BEAR!**

GOOD ENOUGH. YOUR **DWARVEN INSTINCTS** TELL YOU THERE IS A **SLIGHT** INCLINE TO THE **PASSAGEWAY** AND YOUR **ROUTE** IS **SLOWLY** TAKING YOU **DEEPER!**

MAKE A NOTE, B.A.! I'LL BE USING MY **BACK-UP BLADE**. I PULL OUT **PAIN GIVER** AND HAVE **HER** AT THE READY.

I'LL BE EXERCISING MY **HASTY MAP DRAWING** SKILL, B.A. IT ALLOWS US TO MOVE AT A **NORMAL** RATE WITH ONLY A **10%** MARGIN OF **ERROR**.

GOOD THINKING, SARA.

A WEE BIT LATER....

AS YOU CONTINUE TO MOVE DOWN THE **PASSAGEWAY** YOU COME TO AN **INTERSECTION**. ON THE FLOOR IS A BIT OF **CRUMPLED** UP PIECE OF **SCROLL**. IT LOOKS **JUST** LIKE THE OTHER ONES YOU'VE FOUND.

WELL WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF **THAT?** ANOTHER **SCROLL FRAGMENT** SOMEBODY'S USED AS A **WIPE**. YOU THINK THIS COULD BE SOME KIND OF IMPORTANT **CLUE?**

YEAH, IT'S A CLUE ALL RIGHT. A **CLUE** SOMEBODY HAS THE **HERSHEY SQUIRTS!** THIS IS THE **UMPTIEN**TH PIECE OF DISCARDED **WIPE-PAPER** WE'VE COME ACROSS.

OKAY, MY **CURIOSITY** HAS GOTTEN THE **BEST** OF ME, B.A., I TAKE A **STICK** AND TRY TO SPREAD OUT THE PIECE OF **SCROLL**. IS THERE ANY **WRITING** ON IT?

THIS IS **DISGUSTING**. WHY CAN'T PEOPLE PICK UP AFTER THEMSELVES?

OH **GAWD!** SARA, DON'T **MESS** WITH IT.



ACTUALLY SARA, THERE IS **CLEARLY** SOMETHING WRITTEN ON THE **SCROLL FRAGMENT**. YOU CAN'T READ IT BUT YOU **RECOGNIZE** IT TO BE **MAGICAL RUNES!**



MAGICAL RUNES? ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME SOMEBODY TORE UP A PERFECTLY GOOD **MAGIC SCROLL** TO USE AS **TOILET PAPER?**

SOUNDS LIKE WE'RE NOT **ALONE** AFTER ALL. YOU THINK IT COULD BE OUR **MYSTERIOUS INTRUDER?**

FIRP! THIS BETTER NOT BE ONE OF THE **SCROLLS** FROM MY **SCROLL CASE** THE **BASTARD** STOLE FROM ME.



A WEE BIT LATER STILL....

THE **COUGHING-SOUND** SEEMS TO BE COMING FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF A **WOODEN DOOR** ON THE **EAST SIDE** OF THE PASSAGEWAY.

FREAKIN' FANTASTIC!!! IF THAT DOOR LEADS TO A **ROOM** WE MIGHT VERY WELL HAVE OUR **LITTLE FRIEND** TRAPPED. I'M GOING TO TAKE A **POUND OF FLESH** FOR EACH **SCROLL** HE **DESTROYED**. IT'S NOT GOING TO BE **Pretty**.

I **EXAMINE** THE DOOR. DOES IT APPEAR TO BE **LOCKED?**

YES IT DOES.



STAND BACK, GUYS. THIS IS WHERE THE **THIEF** EARNS HIS **SHARES**. DAVE, HOLD THAT **TORCH** UP HIGH WHILE I **PICK** THE **LOCK**. WITH A LITTLE **LUCK** WE JUST MIGHT GET THE **JUMP** ON THIS **JOKER**.



NO SWEAT, BOB. YOU **EASILY** PICK THE RATHER **SIMPLE LOCK**. YOU CAN STILL HEAR A **HACKING COUGH** COMING FROM WITHIN THE ROOM. WHOEVER IS MAKING THE NOISE SEEMS TO BE **VERY SICK**.

HE DOESN'T KNOW IT BUT HE'S ABOUT TO **MEET HIS MAKER**. I **KICK** THE **DOOR IN** AND **READY** MY **CROSSBOW!**

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, BOB! I'LL BE **SWINGING** OVER YOUR **HEAD**.



AS YOU **KICK** THE DOOR, IT **SHATTERS** INTO A **DOZEN** PIECES. THE **ROTTEN WOOD** DROPS AWAY TO REVEAL A **SMALL ROOM** ABOUT **EIGHT FEET BY EIGHT FEET**.



THE ROOM IS **EMPTY** EXCEPT FOR THE SOUTHEAST CORNER IN WHICH LIES A SMALL PILE OF **STRAW** AND BITS OF **TATTERED RAGS**. AT FIRST THE **IMPROVISED BED** APPEARS TO BE **EMPTY** EXCEPT FOR A SMALL CLUMP OF **GREASY CLOTH**, BUT THEN YOU NOTICE THE CLOTH IS **TREMBLING** EVER SO SLIGHTLY. SUDDENLY YOU HEAR A **PATHETIC COUGH** AND NOTICE MORE MOVEMENT. YOU ARE **AMAZED** AT WHAT YOU SEE NEXT. THE VERY, **SMALL** FACE OF A VERY **SMALL** PERSON PEERS OUT FROM UNDER THE **GREASY CLOTH** AND STAMMERS, "W-W-WHO'S T-T-THERE?"

SMALL PERSON?
WHAT ARE WE
DEALING WITH?
A **DWARF**? A
GNOME? WHAT?

THE POOR THING. HE SEEMS
DEATHLY ILL OR SOMETHING.

A **HALF-GNOME**? UH OH,
CAREFUL GUYS! LOOKS
LIKE ANOTHER ONE OF **B.A.'S**
SYMPATHY TRAPS.

IT APPEARS TO
BE A MALE
GNOMELING!*



B.A., IN A **CALM**,
REASSURING VOICE
I TELL THE POOR
CREATURE WE MEAN
IT NO **HARM**. I TAKE
OUT MY **HEALING**
POTION AND.....

OH NO, YOU DON'T! DON'T EVEN **THINK**
ABOUT
IT, **SARA!** YOU'RE **NOT** GETTING
INVOLVED.
PUT THE **HEALING** JUICE DOWN AND
STEP AWAY.

AND JUST **WHY** NOT?

GUYS, I'M **JUST** PLAYING MY
CHARACTER. **JUSTINIA** HAS SWORN
AN **OATH** TO AID ALL THOSE SHE IS
CAPABLE OF HELPING.

THIS LITTLE
SHRIMP COULD
BE THE **INTRUDER!**
THE **JERK** WHO'S
BEEN CUTTING MY
THROAT NIGHT
AFTER NIGHT!

WELL YOU CAN'T
HELP **THIS** ONE.

OH PA-LEEZE!



DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT **B.A.**, SAID? THE POOR THING IS A
GNOMELING! A **SICKLY** **GNOMELING**. DO YOU **REALLY** BELIEVE
THIS **PATHETIC** LITTLE **HALF-HIT DIE** CREATURE COULD **POSSIBLY** BE
THE **INTRUDER** WHO'S BEEN **OUTSMARTING** US FOR **MONTHS**?

OKAY, SO MAYBE
YOU HAVE A **POINT**
BUT I'D BET MY
GOLD TOOTH HE'S
IN **CAHOOTS**
WITH WITH HIM.

YEAH, MAYBE IF
WE **TORTURED**
HIM HE'D LEAD
US TO THE
INTRUDER.

BET! AND HE PROBABLY
KNOWS THE
WHEREABOUTS OF
FLATAROY'S
TREASURE TROVE!

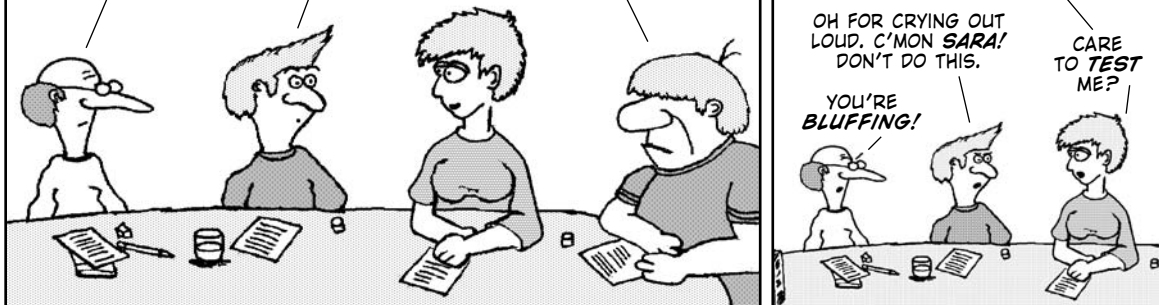
I HATE TO DO THIS GUYS BUT
JUSTINIA DRAWS HER **SWORD**
AND
STEPS BETWEEN **YOU** AND THE
GNOMELING. I CLUTCH THE
SYMBOL OF MY **PATRON GAWD**
AND SWEAR AN **OATH** BEFORE YOU.

"I WILL **DEFEND** THIS **HELPLESS**
CREATURE WITH MY VERY **LIFE**
AGAINST **ANY** HARM."

OH FOR CRYING OUT
LOUD. C'MON **SARA!**
DON'T DO THIS.

CARE
TO **TEST**
ME?

YOU'RE
BLUFFING!



* See **HackMasters of EverKnight #1**: Gnomeling (Half-Gnome). Not a true race in itself, Gnomelings are the result of gnome-halfling cross breeding. There are more of these shy creatures than most people would prefer to admit.

MIGHT AS WELL **FORGET** IT GUYS. YOU KNOW HOW **SARA** IS ONCE SHE'S TAKEN AN **NPC** UNDER HER WING AND SWORN AN **OATH OF PROTECTION** OVER HIM --THERE'S **NO** SWAYING HER.

ARE YOU SERIOUS? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GIVE ME ANY **TROUBLE** OVER THIS?

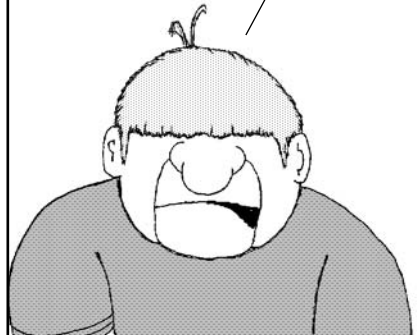
YOU GONE **SOFT**, ON US BIG GUY?

WE CAN'T LET HER **WIN** ON THIS.

WHAT IF WE JUST CUT A DEAL? WE LET **SARA** NURSE THIS GUY BACK TO **HEALTH**....



...AND IN **EXCHANGE** SHE AGREES TO **PROD** HIM FOR **INFORMATION** ABOUT THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE **INTRUDER**, AND **FLATAROY'S TREASURE**.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

THE **HEALING POTION** SEEMS TO BE HAVING AN **INCREDIBLE** EFFECT ON THE **GNOMELING**, **SARA**. HIS **CHEEKS** ARE ACTUALLY **ROSY** NOW AND **FLUSH** WITH COLOR. HE'S SITTING UP NOW AND ACTUALLY TAKES THE BOWL OF **STEW** FROM YOUR HANDS AND SEEMS STRONG ENOUGH TO FEED HIMSELF.

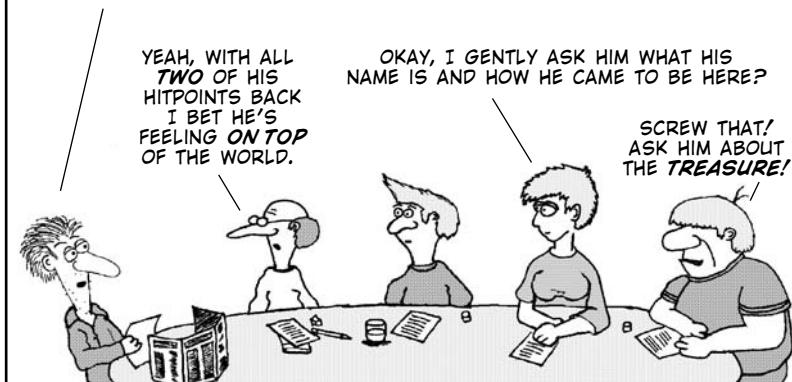
YEAH, WITH ALL **TWO** OF HIS **HITPOINTS** BACK I BET HE'S FEELING **ON TOP** OF THE WORLD.

OKAY, I GENTLY ASK HIM WHAT HIS NAME IS AND HOW HE CAME TO BE HERE?

SCREW THAT! ASK HIM ABOUT THE **TREASURE!**

HE SMILES WARMLY AT YOU AND TELLS YOU HIS NAME IS **PEWTER!** HE WAS **LORD FLATAROY'S** STABLE BOY. HE TELLS YOU SOMETHING **TERRIBLE** HAPPENED IN THE **MANOR HOUSE** * AND THE **STABLE MASTER** BROUGHT HIM TO THE **DUNGEON** FOR SAFETY AND **LEFT** HIM.

HE'S BEEN **ALONE** EVER SINCE TRYING TO **SURVIVE** ON HIS OWN.



AH HA! NOW WE'RE GETTIN' SOMEWHERE. I BET THIS **STABLE MASTER** IS THE **INTRUDER**. WHAT ABOUT THE **TREASURE**? DOES HE KNOW WHERE IT'S **HIDDEN**?

WELL, WHILE HE WAS **WANDERING** AROUND HE **DID** FIND ANOTHER **LEVEL** WHICH HAD **LOTS** OF **BEAUTIFUL THINGS** STORED ON IT.

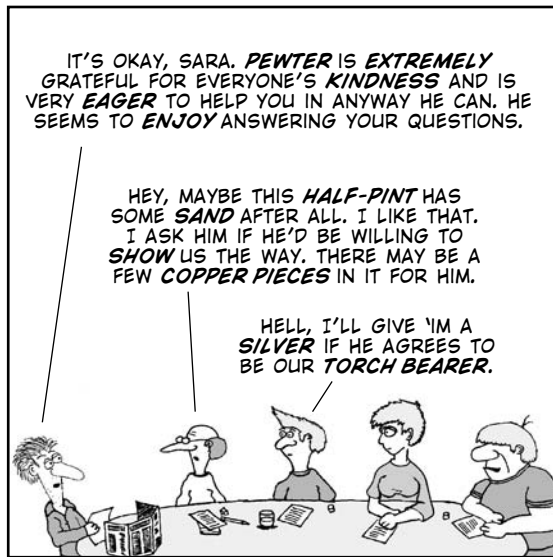
HEY? I THOUGHT I WAS ASKING THE QUESTIONS HERE?

HE DIDN'T HAPPEN TO SEE A **HACKMASTER +12** LYING AROUND DID HE?

IT'S OKAY, **SARA**. **PEWTER** IS **EXTREMELY** GRATEFUL FOR EVERYONE'S **KINDNESS** AND IS VERY **EAGER** TO HELP YOU IN ANYWAY HE CAN. HE SEEMS TO **ENJOY** ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS.

HEY, MAYBE THIS **HALF-PINT** HAS SOME **SAND** AFTER ALL. I LIKE THAT. I ASK HIM IF HE'D BE WILLING TO **SHOW** US THE WAY. THERE MAY BE A FEW **COPPER PIECES** IN IT FOR HIM.

HELL, I'LL GIVE 'IM A **SILVER** IF HE AGREES TO BE OUR **TORCH BEARER**.



* See **KODT #41** "A Place of Their Own" [Pewter is undoubtedly referring to the night Lord Flataroy and his household were murdered by the Knights.]

PEWTER ACCEPTS YOUR OFFER. "NO NEED TO PAY ME, GOOD SIRs." HE SAYS, "YOUR ACT OF *KINDNESS* IS MORE THAN ENOUGH PAYMENT FOR MY SERVICES."

LOOKS LIKE WE MADE A NEW FRIEND. NOW AREN'T YOU *GLAD* WE DIDN'T "*WASTE*" HIM?

WHOAH! SO *POLITE* AND *CORDIAL* TO BOOT. THAT'S REALLY *RARE* FOR AN NPC.

AND AFTER *ALL* HE'S BEEN THROUGH, TOO.

YEAH....*POOR* LITTLE GUY. I WONDER IF HE'D BE INTERESTED IN TRAINING AS MY NEW *SCROLL CADDY*?



HEY, B.A. WHAT'S THE LITTLE FELLA WEARING AS FAR AS *CLOTHING* AND *ARMOR*? MAYBE I HAVE SOMETHING IN MY *BACKPACK* I COULD FIT HIM WITH.

OH...UH...ACTUALLY THAT *GREASY CLOTH* HE WAS LYING UNDER IS A SET OF *HUMAN-SIZED* ROBES. THEY'RE WAAAAAAAY TOO BIG AND BAGGY ON HIM. STILL, HE CLUTCHES THE *ROBES** AROUND HIM TIGHTLY WHEN YOU SUGGEST GIVING HIM *NEW DUDS*. "NO SIR! PLEASE SIR! THESE ROBES BELONGED TO MY *MASTER*. THEY BRING MUCH *COMFORT* TO ME." HE BEGINS TO TREMBLE AND LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOING TO CRY.

WHOAH! EASY THERE *HALF-PINT!* NO ONE'S GOING TO TAKE AWAY YOUR *SECURITY BLANKET*.

OH MY. HE REALLY *HAS* BEEN THROUGH A TERRIBLE ORDEAL, HASN'T HE? CAN YOU IMAGINE BEING *TRAPPED* ALONE IN THE DARK FOR ALL THOSE *MONTHS*?

THERE, THERE, PEWTER.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE ANYMORE LITTLE GUY!



HEY, I JUST REMEMBERED. I HAVE SOME *SALT WATER TAFFY* IN MY *RUCK SACK*. I'LL PULL OFF A PIECE FOR HIM. MAYBE IT'LL *BOOST* HIS SPIRITS.

OH MAN! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. THEY *FELL* FOR IT. HE'S *RIGHT* UNDER THEIR *NOSES* AND THEY *FELL* FOR IT.

AAAAAAAH, BOB. THAT'S REALLY SWEET. I'M SURE HE'D LIKE THAT.

IF HE'S STILL *SICK* HE COULD RIDE UP ON MY *SHOULDERS*. I DON'T MIND.

WHEN I THINK OF THAT *STABLE MASTER* LEAVING THE *POOR KID* ALL ALONE TO FEND FOR HIMSELF... I HOPE I GET MY *HANDS* ON HIM.

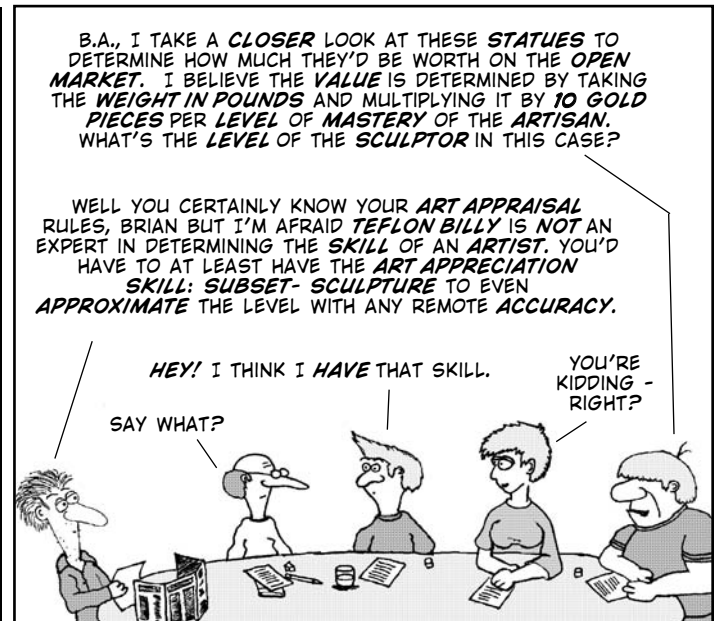
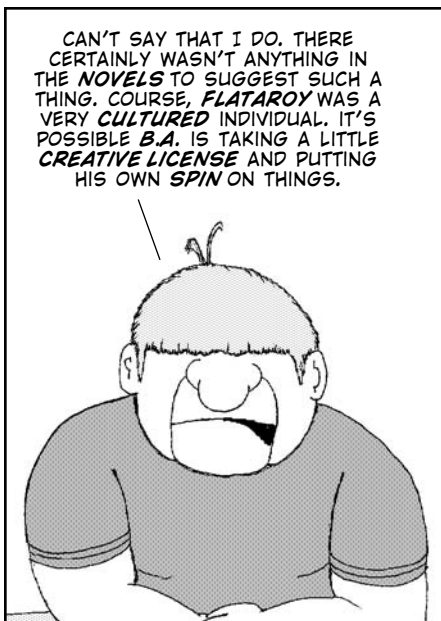


* See *KODT #42 "The Kryton Principle"* (page 8)

Spoiler -- if you want a glimpse into B.A.'s deviousness you can turn to this reference for some insight.

Made You Look

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN & JOHN W. NOWAK



A FEW MOMENTS OF SEARCHING LATER....



I'M NOT SURE I **WANNA** KNOW HOW MUCH THESE THINGS ARE **WORTH**. WITH OUR LUCK THEY'RE WORTH A **FORTUNE**. IT'S NOT LIKE WE CAN **CARRY** THEM OUT OF HERE. WE GOT NO **STINKIN'** HIRELINGS TO DO THE **GRUNT** WORK.

YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'D BE JUST LIKE **B.A.** TO PLACE A **FORTUNE** WITHIN OUR **GRASP** THAT WE'D HAVE TO LEAVE BEHIND.

UH, NOT NECESSARILY, GUYS.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BRIAN?

WE CAN ALWAYS **CHOP** A FEW STATUES UP AND **DIVIDE** THE WEIGHT **EVENLY** AMONG US.

OH RIGHT. WE CAN JUST **SMASH** THEM TO PIECES THEREBY **RUINING** ANY **VALUE** AS A WORK OF ART THEY MAY HAVE. IS **THAT** YOUR PLAN?

IT IS A PRETTY **LAME** PLAN, BRIAN.

ACTUALLY THE **RULES** DON'T SAY **ANYTHING** ABOUT A **STATUE** HAVING TO REMAIN **INTACT** TO RETAIN ITS **VALUE**.

AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT **SMASHING** THEM. I COULD USE MY '**SPLIT STONE**' RING TO BREAK A FEW OF THE STATUES INTO **SEGMENTS** WHICH COULD BE REASSEMBLED LATER. I COULD THEN USE A **MEND SPELL** TO FUSE THE SEGMENTS BACK TOGETHER.

A LITTLE **SPACKLING COMPOUND** AND NOBODY'S THE **WISER**.

TALK ABOUT YOUR **RULE HACKS**. HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH THIS STUFF?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

OKAY, **B.A.**, I PICK OUT A **STATUE** AT **RANDOM** AND LOOK IT OVER **REAL GOOD**. I USE MY **ART APPRECIATION SKILL** TO APPROXIMATE ITS **VALUE**. WHAT DO I COME UP WITH?

YOU PICK OUT A STATUE OF A **DWARVEN CLERIC**. THE **CRAFTSMANSHIP** IS **OFF THE CHART**. YOU'VE **NEVER** SEEN SUCH **BEAUTIFUL WORK**. THE **SCULPTOR** WAS **20TH LEVEL** AT LEAST. YOU GUESS THE STATUE MUST WEIGH ABOUT **800 POUNDS** OR SO....

AACKKK!!!

HOLY MOLY!

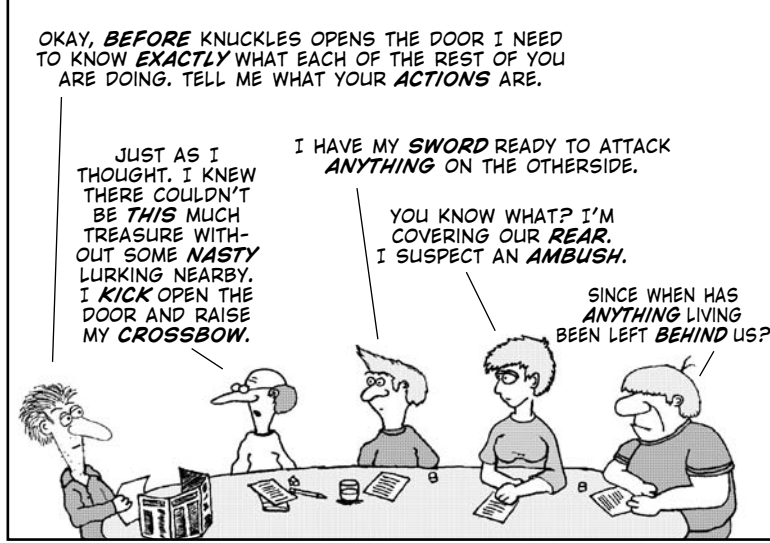
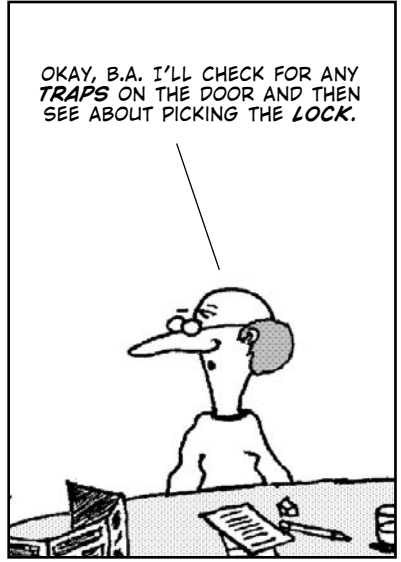
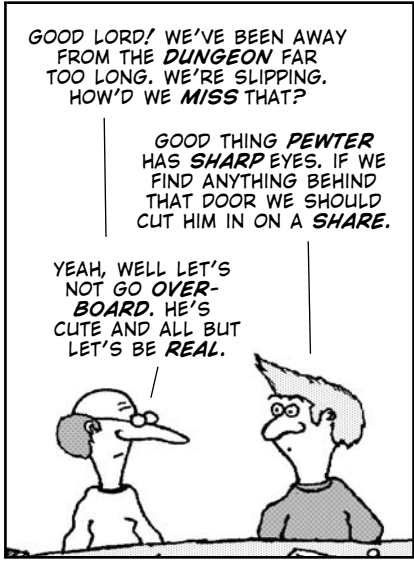
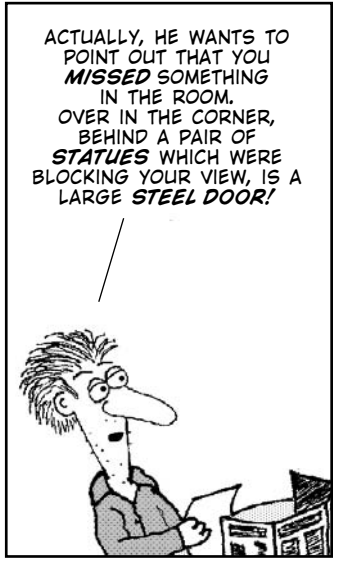
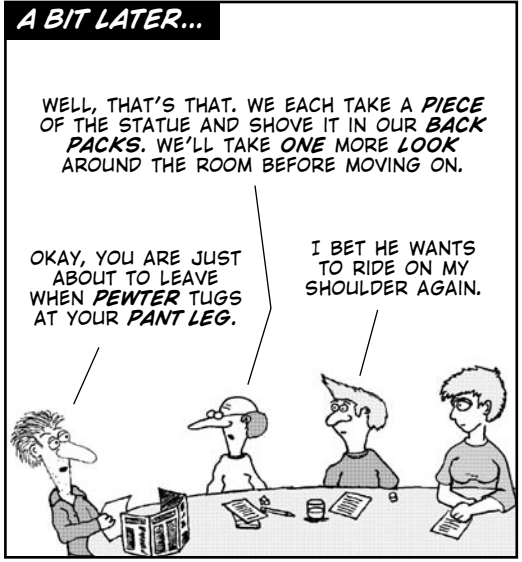
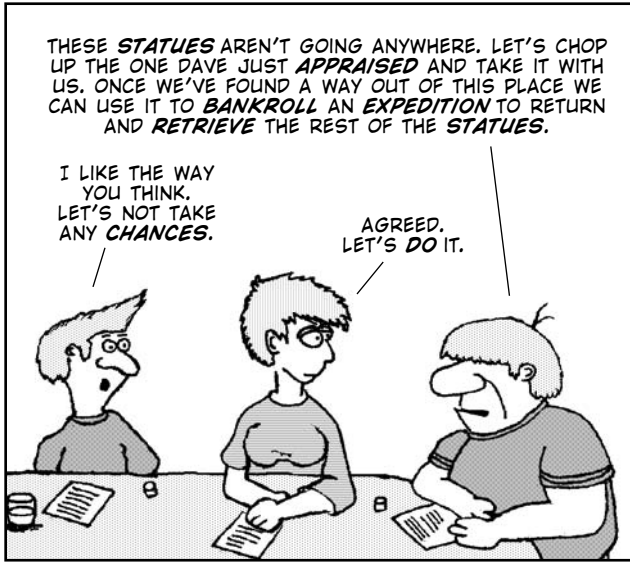
MY GAWD! W-W-WHY T-T-T-THAT'S OVER **160,000 GOLD PIECES**. AND THAT'S JUST **ONE STATUE!** THIS PLACE IS A **VIRTUAL FORT KNOX!**

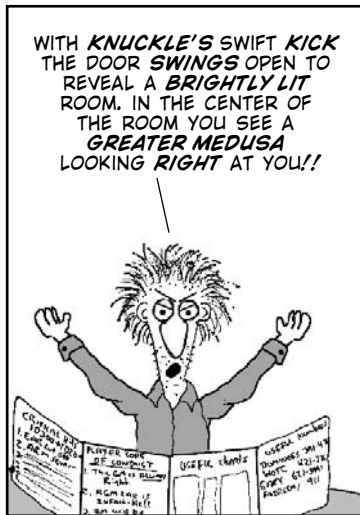
WE'RE STINKIN' FILTHY RICH! THINK OF THE **EXPERIENCE POINTS!**

IT CAN'T BE THAT EASY. CAN IT? NO TRAPS? NO **GUARDIAN MONSTERS?**

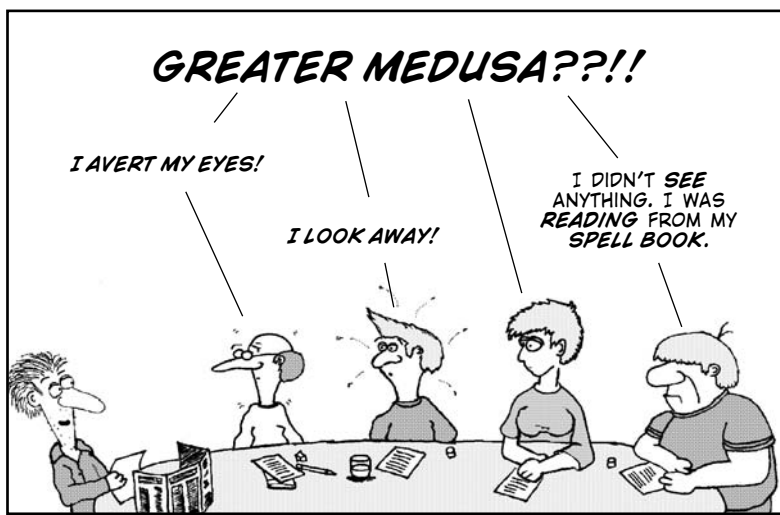
WE MUST HAVE PASSED **HUNDREDS** OF THESE STATUES. WHO KNEW?

OKAY, LET'S NOT **SCREW** THIS UP.





WITH **KNUCKLE'S** SWIFT **KICK** THE DOOR **SWINGS** OPEN TO REVEAL A **BRIGHTLY LIT** ROOM. IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM YOU SEE A **GREATER MEDUSA** LOOKING **RIGHT AT YOU!!**

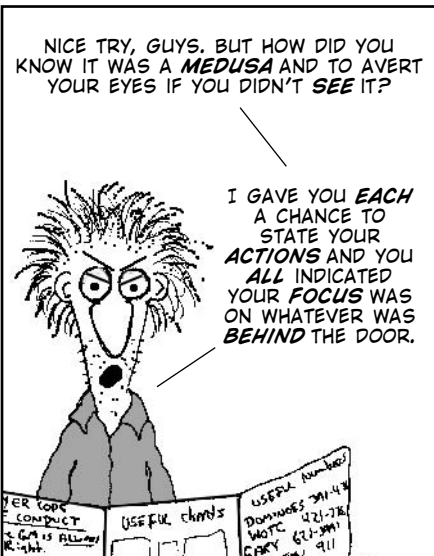


GREATER MEDUSA???!

I AVERT MY EYES!

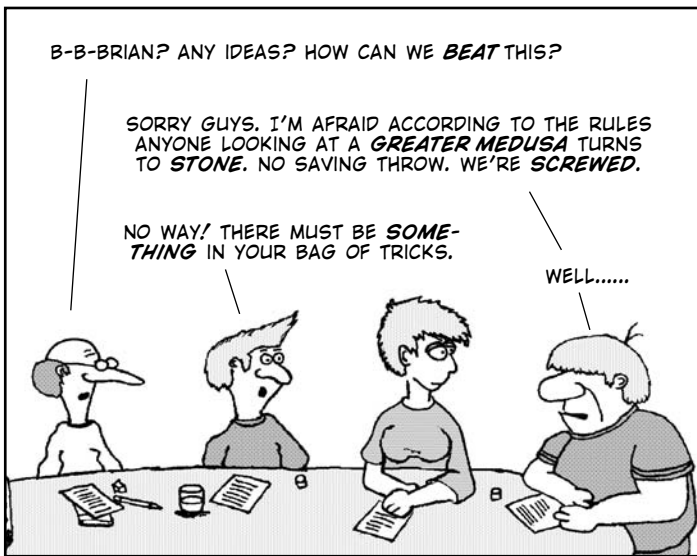
I LOOK AWAY!

I DIDN'T **SEE** ANYTHING. I WAS **READING** FROM MY **SPELL BOOK.**



NICE TRY, GUYS. BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW IT WAS A **MEDUSA** AND TO AVERT YOUR EYES IF YOU DIDN'T **SEE** IT?

I GAVE YOU **EACH** A CHANCE TO STATE YOUR **ACTIONS** AND YOU **ALL** INDICATED YOUR **FOCUS** WAS ON WHATEVER WAS **BEHIND** THE DOOR.

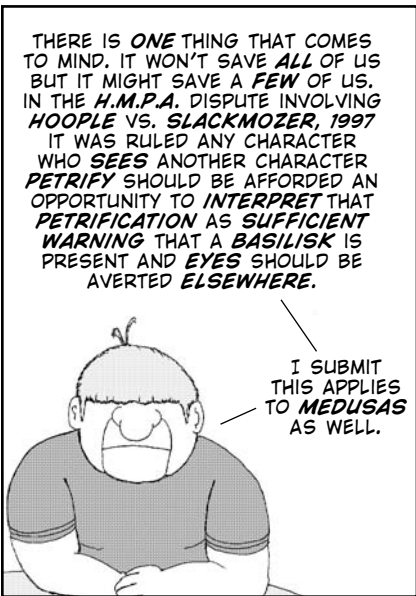


B-B-BRIAN? ANY IDEAS? HOW CAN WE **BEAT** THIS?

SORRY GUYS. I'M AFRAID ACCORDING TO THE RULES ANYONE LOOKING AT A **GREATER MEDUSA** TURNS TO **STONE**. NO SAVING THROW. WE'RE **SCREWED**.

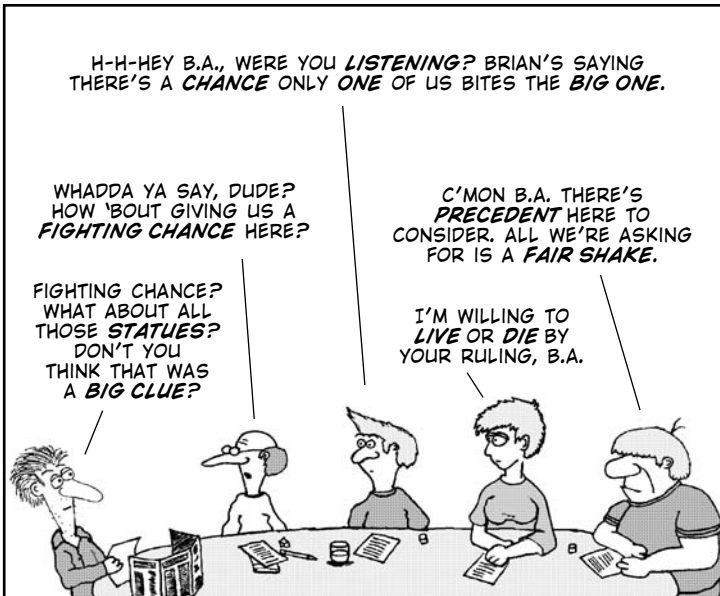
NO WAY! THERE MUST BE **SOME-THING** IN YOUR BAG OF TRICKS.

WELL.....



THERE IS **ONE** THING THAT COMES TO MIND. IT WON'T SAVE **ALL** OF US BUT IT MIGHT SAVE A **FEW** OF US. IN THE **H.M.P.A.** DISPUTE INVOLVING **HOOPLE** VS. **SLACKMOZER, 1997** IT WAS RULED ANY CHARACTER WHO **SEES** ANOTHER CHARACTER **PETRIFY** SHOULD BE AFFORDED AN OPPORTUNITY TO **INTERPRET** THAT **PETRIFICATION** AS **SUFFICIENT WARNING** THAT A **BASILISK** IS PRESENT AND **EYES** SHOULD BE AVERTED **ELSEWHERE**.

I SUBMIT THIS APPLIES TO **MEDUSAS** AS WELL.



H-H-HEY B.A., WERE YOU **LISTENING**? BRIAN'S SAYING THERE'S A **CHANCE** ONLY **ONE** OF US BITES THE **BIG ONE**.

WHADDA YA SAY, DUDE? HOW 'BOUT GIVING US A **FIGHTING CHANCE** HERE?

C'MON B.A. THERE'S **PRECEDENT** HERE TO CONSIDER. ALL WE'RE ASKING FOR IS A **FAIR SHAKE**.

FIGHTING CHANCE? WHAT ABOUT ALL THOSE **STATUES**? DON'T YOU THINK THAT WAS A **BIG CLUE**?

I'M WILLING TO **LIVE OR DIE** BY YOUR RULING, B.A.

OKAY, I'M GOING TO **ACCEPT** YOUR ARGUMENT. ONLY **ONE** OF YOU IS **PETRIFIED** BY THE **MEDUSA**. JUST TO **REVIEW**, WHY DON'T **EACH** OF YOU TELL ME WHERE YOU WERE **LOOKING** WHEN **BOB** KICKED IN THE DOOR? IT WILL HELP ME MAKE MY **DECISION** AS TO **WHO** THE **UNLUCKY** VICTIM IS.

THAT'S EASY. I WAS **FOCUSING** ON MY **BOOT** TO MAKE SURE I DIDN'T **SCUFF** IT ON THE DOOR.

OH, OH, AND I WAS **LOOKING BACK** AT **TEFLON BILLY** SO I COULD **DUCK** WHEN HE RELEASED THOSE **FIREBALLS**.

AND I WAS **READING**. I WAS **DEFINITELY** READING.

IF YOU RECALL, B.A. I **SPECIFICALLY** SAID I WAS **LOOKING TOWARD** OUR **REAR**.



GIVE ME A BREAK! EXCEPT FOR **SARA** EACH OF YOU **CHANGED** YOUR STORY. I CAN'T **BELIEVE** THIS.

IF THAT WAS A **CHEST** BEYOND THAT DOOR INSTEAD OF A **MEDUSA** YOU GUYS WOULD HAVE **TRIPPED** OVER YOURSELVES TRYING TO SEE **WHO** COULD GRAB IT FIRST.

SARA WAS MOST **DEFINITELY** NOT **LOOKING TOWARD** THE **MEDUSA**. SO SHE **OBVIOUSLY** CAN'T BE THE ONE TO **PETRIFY**.

OH, I SEE WE'RE **RIDING** THAT **COUSIN-EXPRESS** TO **IMMUNITY-VILLE** AGAIN -- EH, SARA?

PUT A **SOCK** IN IT, BOB.

HOLD ON, B.A. IT'S NOT THAT **HARD** TO FIGURE OUT. THE **FIRST** GUY IN THE ROOM GOT **ZAPPED!** THAT WOULD **CLEARLY** BE **KNUCKLES**.



YOU **FAT BASTARD!** I WAS **PICKING** THE LOCK. YOU'RE THE **MORON** WHO WAS **LOOKING** FOR A **TARGET** FOR YOUR FRICKIN' **FIREBALLS!**

NOW **SHUT UP** AND QUIT TRYING TO **CONFUSE** B.A.

GUYS??!! WILL YOU **PLEASE** SIMMER DOWN? I'M GOING TO DETERMINE THIS AS **FAIRLY** AS I KNOW HOW. **TORPEDOING** EACH OTHER ISN'T HELPING MATTERS.

I JUST WANT TO **EMPHASIZE** THAT **EL RAVAGER'S** MENTOR THE GREAT **CHUNG HU CHEK** TAUGHT HIM TO **ALWAYS** FOCUS ON THE **END** OF HIS **SWORD** WHEN **ATTACKING** AND NOT TO **LOOK** AT HIS **OPPONENT**.

ARE YOU EVEN **LISTENING** TO WHAT YER SAYING? YOU WERE TAUGHT TO **FIGHT** BY **NOT** LOOKING AT WHAT YOU'RE **ATTACKING?**

IT'S A **MARTIAL ARTS** THING.

WELL I DIDN'T COME HERE TO BE **INSULTED**. IT'S NOT **NICE** TO MAKE FUN OF SOMEONE WITH A **GLANDULAR** PROBLEM.

OH, MY!



CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE: STONED AGAIN

SO THEN THE **BIG KID** PUSHES ME, YA SEE, AND I FALL BACK OVER **PETE'S** COUNTER AND **CRASH** INTO THE **DICE BIN**. YOU SHOULD'A SEEN IT. **'HEDRONS** SCATTERED **EVERYWHERE!** SO I **LEAP** UP AND GRAB A **MOP** WHICH HAPPENED TO BE LEANING AGAINST THE WALL AND I **THROAT-POKE** THE KID -- RIGHT IN THE **ADAM'S APPLE**. HE DIDN'T EVEN **FLINCH!**

THEN HIS **BUDDIES** JUMPED ME. THAT'S THE **LAST** I REMEMBER.

DAAAAMMMNN!!! WISH I'D BEEN THERE. I WOULD'VE **BACKED** YOU UP, DUDE.

BOB, I **REALLY** WISH YOU WOULD **STOP** PICKING FIGHTS WITH THE **POKE'MUNCHKINS**.



HEY **STEEVO**, I'LL GIVE YA FOUR **SWIGS** FROM MY **WATERSKIN** OF **DAZE** AND **CONFUSION** IF YOU LET ME FIRE OFF A **CHARGE** FROM YOUR **RING** OF **WICKED KICKS** AT **NEWT** OVER THERE.

UH....NO THANKS. LAST TIME I DRANK FROM YOUR **WATERSKIN** I WOKE UP IN THE BACK OF A **SLAVE CART** WITH MY **EYELIDS** SEWN SHUT AND A **YAK HUNTER** SITTING IN MY LAP.

HEY, WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THAT **YAK HUNTER**? YOU GUYS USED TO BE **TIGHT**.

SHUT UP!



DAVE, I KNOW THAT **REDUCING** YOUR **INTELLIGENCE** BY **6** POINTS CAN **RAISE** YOUR **STRENGTH** FROM **15** TO **18**. BUT YOU **DO** REALIZE THAT BY **DROPPING** YOUR **INTELLIGENCE** TO **THREE**, YOU CAN ONLY **COMMUNICATE** WITH **GRUNTS** AND **NOISES**? **RIGHT?**

WHO CARES? **+6** TO **DAMAGE** AT FIRST LEVEL **ROCKS ASS!**



GOOD LORD, **B.A.**! THAT WAS JUST ABOUT THE **KEWLEST** ADVENTURE YOU'VE EVER RUN. WHEN THAT **HILL GIANT 'CAMEL DRIVER'** ASKED **'WHO THREW THAT ROCK?'** I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO **PEE** MY PANTS. GOOD THING MY **HIDE IN SHADOWS** SKILL CAME THROUGH FOR ME. I THOUGHT I WAS A **GONER!**

YEAH, **LUCKY** FOR YOU. TOO BAD HE **ASSUMED** THE **OTHERS** WERE **GUILTY** AND TOOK OUT HIS **WRATH** ON THEM. BY THE WAY, YOU MIGHT WANT TO THINK OF **HIDING IN SHADOWS** AGAIN --BUT THIS TIME FOR **REAL**.

HIDE IN SHADOWS? FOR REAL? WHAT THE HELL YOU TALKING ABOUT?

FIRST I'LL **DE-PANTS** HIM AND TIE HIM TO THE ROOF OF MY VAN. NEXT I'LL DRIVE DOWN MAIN STREET **REALLY SLOWLY**. THEN OFF TO THE CAR WASH FOR A **HOT WAX!**



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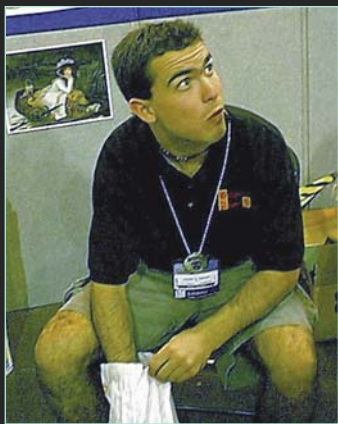
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ORIGINS 2000 PHOTO GALLERY

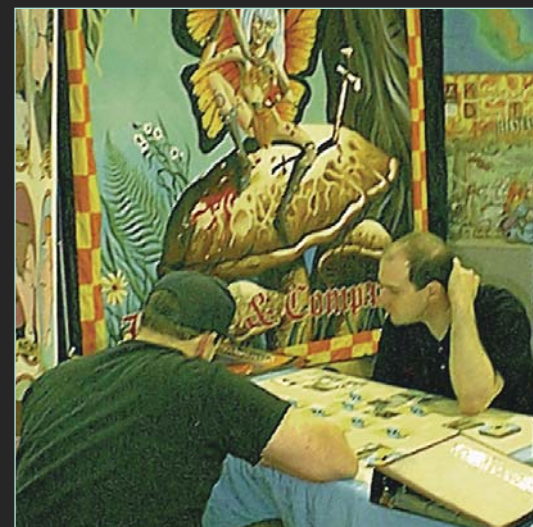
On July 12th through 15th the KODT D-Team travelled to Columbus, Ohio to attend Origins 2000. Here's a glimpse at just some of the mayhem they got into.



Above: Bitter Steve Johansson shortly after arriving at the KenzerCo booth. Needless to say, he was NOT impressed with the Ohio highway system



Above: Super-Summer Intern Noah eagerly consumes his daily rations at the KenzerCo booth.



Right: Dave Kenzer demos a game of 'Taunt You a Second Time'.



Above: Phil of Agents of Gaming shows off his latest 'product'.



Proving that the 'fan-boy' in them is still alive, Steve, Jolly, Dave and Brian force J.D. Webster (Second from the left) of Finieous Fingers fame to pose for a photo.

KENZERCO DEMO'S THEIR NEW 1:1 SCALE Miniatures WARGAME: HEAVY ARMOR

One of the highlights of Origins 2000 for the staff of KenzerCo was having a chance to demo their much touted 1:1 scale modern-era wargame, Heavy Armor.



1. Dave Kenzer gets a line-of-sight on his opponent's Main Battle Tank.



2. Here Dave argues with Game Official Steve Johansson over a disputed movement allowance.



3. With the movement dispute resolved, Dave prepares to move his Stinger-equipped APC.



4. Another argument.

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HackMaster 101

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

LAST ISSUE, *PATTY'S PERPS* VOTED TO ALLOW *CRUTCH* TO JOIN THEIR GROUP.

THERE WAS *ONE* CONDITION.

HE HAD TO AGREE TO TAKE A *CRASH COURSE* IN *HACKMASTER* AND *BASIC ROLE-PLAYING SKILLS* FROM *EDDIE*.

AFTER MEETING AT *HAWGWALLERS* AND FINDING A *QUIET TABLE* IN THE CORNER THE *LESSON* HAS BEGUN...

NOW THEN, THE *NEXT* IMPORTANT ABILITY YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PLAYING A *CLERIC* IS '*LAYING OF HANDS*'.

PLAYING HANDS? WELL *NOW* YOU'RE TALKIN'! SO MY CHARACTER IS GOOD AT *PLAYING POKER* EH?

UH...NO, I DON'T THINK YOU HEARD WHAT I SAID.

MY *CATTLEPUNK* CHARACTER, *COYOTE RED* HAD *CARDSHARK* AS A SKILL. HE USED TO CLEAN UP.

I SAID *LAYING OF HANDS* - NOT *PLAYING*. YOU SEE AS A *CLERIC* YOUR CHARACTER CAN *LAY HANDS* ON OTHER CHARACTERS AND....

WHOAH THERE HOSS. *LAY HANDS* ON OTHER CHARACTERS? WHAT'S *THAT* ALL ABOUT?

IT'S ONE OF YOUR *SPECIAL ABILITIES*.

SPECIAL ABILITY?

YEAH. LET'S SAY I TOOK AN *ARROW* IN *COMBAT*. YOU COULD ACTUALLY *LAY HANDS* ON ME AND, DEPENDING ON YOUR *LEVEL* RESTORE *PART* OR *ALL* OF MY.....

H-H-HUH? *MY* CHARACTER *LAYIN'* HIS *HANDS* ON *YOURS*?
I-I-I DON'T T-T-*THINK* SO. NO OFFENSE, BUB BUT *MY* CHARACTER ISN'T *LIKE* THAT. *FRIAR SWAYZEE* TOOK AN *OATH* OF *CELIBACY*. WE *ROLLED* THAT ON MY *BACKGROUND* - REMEMBER?

AGAIN YOU'VE *MISUNDERSTOOD* ME. YOU SEE YOU'RE A *CLERIC*. *LAYING OF HANDS* IS SOMETHING THEY DO TO....

I DON'T WANNA *HEAR* ABOUT IT. *MY* CHARACTER ISN'T *TOUCHY-FEELY* IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

-SIGH- OKAY, LET'S MOVE ON THEN. I WANNA TURN OUR ATTENTION BACK TO *ALIGNMENT AND ALIGNMENT ADHERENCE*.

YOU *STILL* SEEM TO BE HAVING PROBLEMS GRASPING THE CONCEPT.

I DUNNO ABOUT THAT BUT IT SURE DOES *CONFUSE* THE HELL OUTTA ME.

IT'S REALLY *SIMPLE*. YOUR *CHOSEN* ALIGNMENT DEFINES THE *PARAMETERS* OF YOUR CHARACTER'S ACTIONS. IT REPRESENTS HOW HE *VEWS* LIFE AND THOSE AROUND HIM. YOU'RE *CHAOTIC GOOD*. WHILE YOU DON'T NECESSARILY *CONFORM* TO A *RIGID* SET OF RULES YOU *DO* PLACE GREAT VALUE ON *LIFE* AND ON THE *WELFARE* OF THE *INDIVIDUAL*.

I SEE YA MOVIN' YER LIPS, HOSS BUT I'M NOT *RECEIVING*. CAN YOU JUST SPEAK IN *PLAIN ENGLISH*?



OKAY LET ME GIVE YOU AN *EXAMPLE*. A FEW WEEKS AGO WHEN YOU *BASHED* ME IN THE FACE WITH YOUR *MACE* WITHOUT *PROVOCATION* -- THAT WAS *WRONG* FOR YOUR CHARACTER. THAT'S WHY *PATTY* PENALIZED YOU WITH THE *BROWN M&M*.

YOU'RE STARTIN' TO SOUND LIKE MY *PAROLE OFFICER*.

LET'S LOOK AT IT *ANOTHER* WAY.



HERE WE ARE *TWO GUYS* SITTING IN A BAR HAVING A FEW *BEERS* AND SOME *GOOD* CONVERSATION. YOU SEEM LIKE A *NICE ENOUGH* GUY IN *REAL LIFE*. I FIGURE YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH A *CHAOTIC GOOD* - MAYBE A *CHAOTIC NEUTRAL*.

NOBODY EVER SAID *THAT* ABOUT ME. THE *D.A.* SAID I WAS A *HABITUAL OFFENDER*.

UH...ER...



MY POINT IS YOU WOULDN'T JUST *HAUL OFF* AND *SMASH* ME IN THE FACE OUT OF THE *BLUE* LIKE *FRIAR SWAYZEE* DID TO *KRAVEN STURMHALGER* WOULD YOU?

WELL.... IF'IN I THOUGHT YOU HAD A *MAGIC RING* AND YOU WERE WORTH A *THOUSAND* EXPERIENCE POINTS I MIGHT.



UH....YOU KNOW WHAT? I THINK IT JUST *HIT* ME WHAT THE PROBLEM HERE IS. YOUR *ENJOYMENT* OF THE *GAME* COMES FROM GARNERING POINTS AND ITEMS. FAIRLY *COMMON* AMONG NEW PLAYERS.



BUT YOU'RE ONLY EXPERIENCING A **SMALL FRACTION** OF WHAT TRUE **ROLE-PLAYING** HAS TO OFFER, **CRUTCH**. YOU NEED TO **EMBRACE** YOUR CHARACTER. STEP INTO HIS SHOES.

WADDA YA MEAN?

YOU HAVE TO **LET GO** OF YOURSELF AND TRY TO **BECOME** YOUR CHARACTER. WHEN FACED WITH A **DECISION** YOU SHOULDN'T BE ASKING, "WHAT SHOULD I DO." RATHER YOU SHOULD BE THINKING, "WHAT WOULD MY **CHARACTER** DO?"

YOUR CHARACTER IS A MAN OF **GOD**. HE'S **DEVOTED** TO DOING **GOOD WORKS** AND FURTHERING THE **CAUSE** OF HIS **PATRON GAWD**.

I HEAR WHAT YER SAYIN'

BEFORE **ACTING** SIMPLY ASK YOURSELF IF IT IS SOMETHING YOUR **CHARACTER** WOULD REALLY DO.

OKAY YOU'RE STARTIN' TO MAKE SOME **SENSE** TO ME BUT I'M STILL CONFUSED ABOUT **ONE** THING.

WHAT'S THAT?

WHEN I ATTACKED YOU, **PATTY** SLAPPED A **BROWN M&M** ON ME FOR VIOLATING MY **ALIGNMENT**. BUT WHEN I **RIPPED** THAT **TRASH OGRE** A **NEW ONE** SHE **AWARDED** ME FOR **FOLLOWING** MY **ALIGNMENT**. WHAT GIVES?

OH, THAT'S **EASY** TO EXPLAIN. YOU SEE I **POSED** NO **THREAT** TO YOURSELF OR TO THE **WELFARE** OF **OTHERS** AS FAR AS YOU KNEW. YOU COULDN'T **JUSTIFY** ATTACKING ME. ON THE OTHER HAND THAT **TRASH OGRE** TRIED TO SHAKE US DOWN FOR A **TOLL** AND **THREATENED** US WITH **BODILY HARM**. YOUR CHARACTER WOULD HAVE SEEN IT AS HIS **DUTY** TO **VANQUISH** SUCH A **FOE** SINCE HE **POSED** A **THREAT** TO YOURSELF AS WELL AS TO OTHERS.

HEY, I THINK IT JUST **CLICKED**. NOW I **UNDERSTAND** WHAT YOU'VE BEEN SAYING.

THANK **GAWD!** NOW THEN, HOW 'BOUT WE GO OVER **CALLIN' DIBS** PROTOCOL AGAIN?

I WAS HOPING YOU COULD EXPLAIN ONCE AGAIN **WHY** I CAN'T USE AN **EDGED WEAPON**.

MAYBE WE SHOULD **SAVE** THAT ONE FOR OUR **NEXT** LESSON.

LATER THAT NIGHT AT THE GAME...

WELL? HOW'D THE FIRST LESSON GO? WAS EDDIE ABLE TO SHOW YOU WHERE YOU'VE BEEN GOING WRONG, CRUTCH?

BOY, DID HE. HE REALLY OPENED MY EYES. I LEARNED A LOT!

I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SEE IT.

HE WAS AN EAGER AND WILLING PUPIL.

GOOD! GLAD TO HEAR IT. I HAD FAITH IN YOU CRUTCH.



GEE, THANKS, MO. I'M KINDA LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING INTO MY CHARACTER NOW.

WELL WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? LET'S GET THIS GAME GOING.



YO, PATTY, BEFORE WE GET STARTED THERE'S A LITTLE BUSINESS I WANT TO TAKE CARE OF.

UH..SURE. OKAY. WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?

MY CHARACTER'S CONSCIENCE HAS BEEN BOTHERING HIM. HE WANTS TO DO THE RIGHT THING!

OH, THAT'S GOOD, CRUTCH! THAT'S THE WAY TO THINK.



ALL RIGHT MO, BETTER ROLL FOR INITIATIVE COZ I'M COMING AT YA!

GAAA!!! W-WHAT THE.... ME? WHAT ON EARTH FOR?

YOU'RE A FUGITIVE FROM JUSTICE - REMEMBER? YOU'RE A THREAT TO THE WELFARE OF OTHERS. IT'S MY DUTY TO TAKE YOU DOWN AND COLLECT THAT BOUNTY ON YOUR HEAD.*

B-B-BUT...



LATER, AFTER THE GAME...

NOTHING PERSONAL BUT THAT BOUNTY WILL HELP ME DO MY GOOD WORK.

JUST EXACTLY WHAT DID YOU TEACH HIM, EDDIE?

HE'S WORSE THAN BEFORE. NOW HE CAN BACK UP HIS ACTIONS WITH SOME LAME- ASS RATIONALE.

SORRY, GUYS. I GUESS I SHOULD HAVE MOVED 'PLAYING WELL WITH OTHERS' UP SOONER IN MY LESSON PLAN.



-FINIS-

* See KODT #45 "The Perp Walk" [Mo's halfling-fighter Zarwanda is wanted in Finklesworth by a 'one-horse King' who is offering a 5,000 gold piece bounty.

SOUND HACK

by Brandon K.

I run a Big Eyes, Small Mouth campaign (*thank you for showing me that game, Brian's Picks!*) set about 50 years into the future. My group makes use of a variety of downloaded music files from video games or TV shows to play in the background during fights and such. You all know how whenever the hero comes onscreen and is about to waste the bad guy, a certain tune plays? After my players used a given ditty as their "hero song" several times, I decided the bad guys would catch on. The next time the party crashed into the megacorp's headquarters to confront the evil boss dude and his (*rather weak*) mecha, they insisted I put on their song since they knew they could whip him. As soon as it began playing, the villain cried, "Holy *@!%, that's ass-kicking music! Get the hell out of here boys!" The players found that very amusing...it works in reverse too. Whenever I put on my favorite piece, they get a pale look on their faces because they know I'm in a PC killing mood. "Cue the soundtrack" has an entirely different meaning now. □

HOT LEAD

by Sam Joseph

I've had a nice *Ral Partha* collection worth about \$100 for several years. I never painted of them until recently when I got the itch to do so. I spent about \$40 on acrylic paints and I got a can of enamel primer, since the store was out of any other primer. I don't like enamel, it takes too long to dry. So I primed 90% of my collection and put them in the oven at 200 degrees to dry. Apparently "Raldium" melts at a lower temp than lead, or my oven's dial is incorrect. I now have the new edition of *Ral Partha* that adventured through the apocalypse stone module. I am left with two wererats, a ghost, a viking, and the set that came with my *Star Wars Monopoly* set. □

FOR WHOM THE BAIL TOLLS

by Briatan

This one isn't about RPGs, but I thought you might want to hear it. Jack and Tom were playing *Monopoly* in the dorm lounge. They each owned a fair portion of the board, but Jack was in dire straits. He was down to his last hundred bucks while Tom had a crapload of money.

Anyway, Jack landed on GO TO JAIL. He quickly realized the advantage of his situation—as long as he was in jail, he couldn't land on Tom's hotels and go bankrupt. Meanwhile, he could just sit back for a few, watch Tom land on his motels, and rake in some much-needed cash. So Jack decided not to pay to get out, and declined the option of trying to roll doubles to get out.

There was one problem, however. Since we were in New York, house rules went according to New York state law. According to New York state law, anyone can post your bail for you. Tom remembered this and generously paid the \$50 to get Jack out of jail, immediately after which he landed on one of Tom's motels and went bankrupt. □

YOU HAVE A PAIR OF WHAT?

by Tom Weaver

This happened back when I was gaming in the military. A new player had just joined our D&D group and was pressing the GM to allow him to run a high-level character he'd been running in a campaign at his last duty assignment. The GM took his character sheet and was looking it over when he casually asked, "Is everything this guy owns standard D&D items?"

The newbie quickly sounded off with, "Definitely!"

To make a long story short, later that night we entered a dungeon chamber where we were greeted by a Red Dragon. I had just ordered the party to withdraw from the room when our newbie-friend said, "Don't worry! I have *Chuck Norris Num-Chucks of Dragon Slaying!*" □

QUEEN OF THE LIZARD PEOPLE

by Glazier John

Probably one of the funniest things that ever happened to our adventuring group involved a *Ring of Delusion*. It was treasure division time at the end of a particular part of a dungeon. My roommate Brad (*who was just "slightly" on the greedy side when it came to getting treasure for his characters*) was running a dwarven fighter named Galthum Gildewar. Anyway, Galthum almost came to blows with the rest of the party to get a magical ring from the treasure we'd recovered. Our DM Bill was a little at a loss on how to handle the ID of this item since he's never dealt with a *Ring of Delusion* before and it can present some real problems to DM a bunch of suspicious players. So when Brad's dwarf starts through the standard ring ID techniques, Bill asks "Well what type of ring would you like it to be?"

"A *Ring of THREE WISHES!*!" cried out Brad.

"Well congratulations, that's exactly what it is!"

Well then the fun begins. The first "wish" is for dwarven plate +5.

"Well, you remember seeing some dwarven plate a few rooms back." Hot dog! The character was deluded into thinking this by the ring and the player was so caught up in his find that he never even bothered to imagine that this wasn't magical dwarven plate mail. Couldn't have worked better if the DM wanted it to.

The next wish was for a dwarven throwing hammer, several pluses and able to return to the caster when a command word was uttered.

Now this one presented a problem, what to do about the command word and the fact that it didn't work? On the side, one of the other players in the group came up with the idea that the command word should be fairly unpronounceable to help cover the non-magical nature of the hammer. So the DM informs the deluded PC that the command word is "Krxspitckctky" or something like that with no vowels at all except for the "y" at the end.

Gawd, it was memorable watching this dwarf go into battle. First, launch his hammer and say the "command word".

DM: "Well, you hit the enemy for 4 points of damage."

PC: "Only 4 points!?! Does the hammer come back to me?"

DM: "Well...it bounces back about 2 feet or so. I guess you didn't say the command word quite right."

And then he'd charge into melee to recover his hammer and start getting pummeled, even with his "magical" armor. This went on for several adventures, I'll tell ya, it was tough keeping a straight face through these battles. Bill let all the other players in the group in on it so we could enjoy the show.

It all came to an end in an unexpected and altruistic way. We always figured Brad was saving up the last wish to resurrect his character or to wish for the *Axe of the Dwarven Lords* or something outrageous like that.

Well, things hadn't gone well for the party in one of the later battles and he actually spent his last wish to try to bring back one of his fallen comrades. Didn't work of course but the thought was there. Galthum finally figured out why his stuff never worked very well and he got a few thousand extra experience points for his trials and for doing the right thing at the end.

Ah, the good old days...□

SPECTATOR DORK

by Jim Hall

In a campaign I was running a few years ago, Bob one of the players (who was running a fighter) was challenged to a 'blood match' by the village bully. Bob was genuinely afraid of this bully and for good reason. They estimated his level of experience to be about twice that of the party and he was known to be a 'dirty fighter' whose matches usually ended in the death of his opponent.

The rest of the party was quite thrilled at the prospect of Bob taking on this guy. Someone struck upon the idea of buying snacks and a keg of ale and setting up a table and watching the fight to cheer on their comrade. I had a group of town merchants approach the party about placing side bets and soon some heavy betting was going on. One of the players even asked Bob if he'd be willing to 'take a dive' so they could clean up.

Anyway, as the fight was about to start Bob learned that one of the other party members (Eric) was betting against him. Just as the whistle was blown and the fight began Bob turned and proclaimed he was "lunging" at Eric's character with a dagger. Bob quickly killed Eric's character. When Eric asked why he had attacked his character, Bob looked at him sternly and said, "Sorry. My character temporarily went berserk."

Bob went on to lose the match (and his head) but now everyone knows that 'blood matches' are NOT a spectator sport. □

PIXIES in FAIRYMEAT

by Scott Leaton

The Wee Folk, it seems, have always been wont to go sour after a while. Fairies, for instance, grew a bit vicious after an unpleasant change in diet. The usually peaceful brownies, on the other hand, have simply embraced a more belligerent lifestyle as a means of survival. And gnomes... well, we can say for now that gnomes just need girlfriends — Badly.

The first pixie, however, was born with a dagger in his hand and a belly full of mean beans.

Pixies are slight, wiry creatures, with big child-like heads, enormous grins, and little beady black eyes. They usually sport dirty, raggy pants, striped caps or gnomish bucket-helmets, and little combat boots. Typical pixie interests include punk rock and eating bugs, and they never brush their teeth.

Don't let the big, goofy smile distract you from those black, murderous eyes: today's pixie is the product of countless generations of sharp-toothed, back-stabbing, cuss-tossing bastards. Newborn pixies are blessed with an instinctual knowledge of over two hundred ancient and blood-boiling insults. Only one or two infants survive each eight-baby litter, the rest being mocked to death during the birthing cries.

Pixie history does not include any "good ol' days", and they never fell from some wide-eyed innocence; in fact, their family histories read like rough drafts of **Titus Andronicus**. And today, after all these years of aimless delinquency and wanton throat-cutting, pixies have recently found something approaching legitimate employment: they operate as roaming freelance assassins!

PIXIES IN FAIRY MEAT

We don't know what pixies accept as payment, and a survey of what they don't care about should tell you that we probably don't want to. Suffice to say that a single pixie (*they usually work alone*) will work for any side in any conflict. Any player may employ a pixie, as long as the points cost is paid. The cost of a pixie is simply to hire him, and includes all of his weapons. It does not, however, include any therapy which might be needed after spending a day listening to one. A pixie assassin costs 17 points.

Pixie "gangs" are not unheard of, and so a force consisting of only pixies may be chosen. Such a gang cannot employ any non-pixies, including thralls.

HOW PIXIES WORK

Pixies, in spite of their vicious demeanor, are really rather frail. A pixie has one live point and one kill point. Further, pixies are not related to fairies, and get nothing from eating meat, except for some very luminous farts a few hours later. Likewise, they aren't at all magical, and eating a pixie's foul-tasting flesh doesn't help a fairy at all.

Movement

Pixies can't fly, instead skipping up to six inches along the ground per turn. A pixie may bound over any obstacle which measures less than two inches tall. They can pounce, but only six inches high instead of the usual twelve.

Weapons

A pixie is armed with a **Stabber** (*the traditional toothed metal dagger of the pixies*), but may be armed with any non-ranged fairy weapon for the additional cost. Pixies are fine fighters but terrible shots.

They are, however, masters of the put-down! A simple cupping of the hands around the mouth, and they can spew a verbal jet of concentrated nastiness that could curdle cheese. Ear plugs don't even work; even living cells can recognize these pure vulgarities, and many simply give up and die upon hearing them. Such **Sharp Words** act as weapons in their own right, but have a rather short range of effectiveness.

STABBER

<i>Kill Mod</i>	<i>Live Mod</i>	<i>Attacks</i>	<i>Special</i>
+2	-2	1	poisoned

SHARP WORDS

<i>Strength</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Live mod.</i>	<i>Special</i>
1	12	-1	---

SPECIAL RULES

Sneaky: Pixies have an uncanny ability to evade detection, which helps them do things like steal baby mice (*for soccer games*) or clip the wings of mommy sparrows (*for the hell of it*). It also comes in handy for murder, an honored pixie pastime!

A pixie may begin the game *Sneaking*. To Sneak, replace the pixie figure with a "Sneak" counter. This counter moves just like a pixie does, but may not attack or be attacked, nor may a spell be cast upon it, until it has been *Spotted*.

The Sneak counter doesn't really reflect where the pixie is; it's the general location of the prowling pixie, which enemies inaccurately guess at with hearing or instinct.

If an enemy figure can see the Sneak counter (*remember, a figure's field of vision is its front 90-degree arc*), she can Spot the pixie instead of attacking. When the pixie is Spotted, place the pixie figure anywhere within 6" of the Sneak counter, and then remove the counter. Now everyone knows where the pixie is, and it's open season!

A pixie may reveal himself at any time during his turn. To spot another pixie, a pixie must emerge from Sneaking as described above. A pixie may also go back into Sneak mode instead of attacking, but only if he's not in an enemy's field of vision at the time.

Poison: Pixies anoint their precious *Stab Knives* with a nasty poison, extracted and distilled from rare spider-guts. Any figure stabbed with this poison (*after a successful hit*) is at a -1 penalty to Live and Kill draws for the rest of the game! (*No, this effect is not cumulative after subsequent stabbings. Psycho.*)

Backstabbing: If a pixie manages to get close enough, he may emerge from Sneaking and make a special surprise attack from behind!

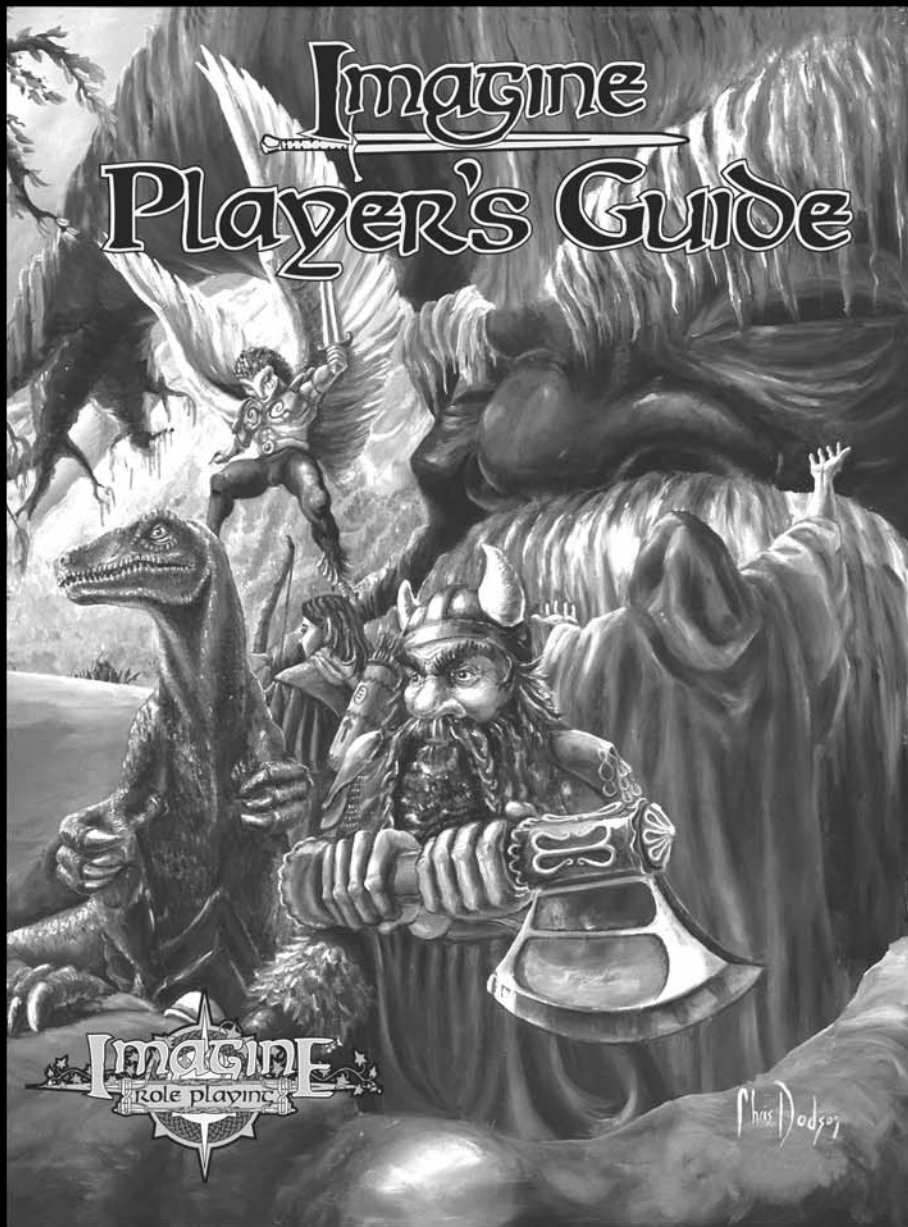
The enemy figure must first be within 6" of the Sneak counter. Place the pixie figure directly behind the enemy, and remove the counter. The pixie may then make a back-stabbing attack!

Against this attack the defending figure only gets one card (this includes figures subject to the One Card Rule). This attack does not work with swords, nor with Sharp Words. Besides, any pixie worth his snot would use his trusty Stabber for the job! ☐



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REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN REALMS ONLINE

by Kenneth Newquist

Wizards of the Coasts' **Forgotten Realms** is the biggest campaign setting in **Dungeons and Dragons**, and probably one of the most detailed of any in the RPG genre. The Realms are a high-powered land where gods walk the earth, enigmatic wizards change the fate of nations, and even common beggars seem to be bristling with magic items.

It's one of the most detailed settings I've ever seen, with everything from nations to plant life having been documented by creator Ed Greenwood and his fellow Realms enthusiasts. That level of detail, combined with its high fantasy, late Renaissance feel, has attracted legions of loyal followers. But even those who run low-powered games in other worlds can find information of value in the Realms books, and this holds true on the Net as well.

OFFICIAL FORGOTTEN REALMS SITE

The Wizards of the Coast's official **Forgotten Realms** site may not be as flashy as some of its fanpeers, but it's got one thing that those other sites don't: official free stuff. The site offers out-of-print campaign supplements for download (like *The North*, which I snagged to supplement my *Greyhawk D&D* campaign), an extensive timeline covering the Realms' 7,000-year, 240-book history, a Realms column called "**Elminster Speaks**", and an art gallery. There's also a smattering of news about upcoming product releases.

Best of the Forgotten Realms Mailing List

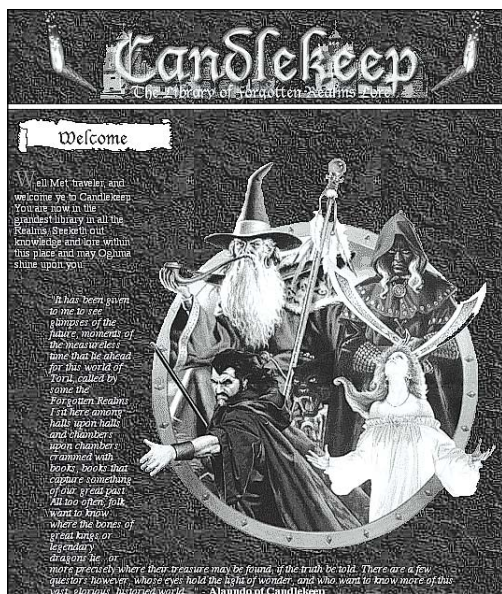
This site skimmed the crème that rose to the surface of the FR-L (*Forgotten Realms List*), and repackaged it in an easy-to-use, searchable site. Its content--which draws upon canon and non-canon material compiled by fans--is divided into five major sections: faiths, lands, magic, people, lore and general. There's also an area detailing the rules of the list, and how to join. Unfortunately, while the content here is good, the site has languished without an update since February 1999.

Candlekeep

An even more extensive archive of Realmslore can be found in the online version of that venerable library, **Candlekeep**. Fans can happily lose themselves in its stacks while paging through the **Forgotten Realm Notebooks**, treasures such as *The Book of Weeping Eyes* (a tome that details beholders), official- and fan-generated artwork, and more than a dozen campaign journals. Of course most of the material on this site is Realms-related, but wandering GMs like myself can find quite a lot to transport into their own campaigns. Aside from the impressive array of materials, there's also a nice, downloadable selection of fonts and computer helper programs.

Forgotten Realms Web Ring

There are more **Forgotten Realms** fan sites than can be listed in one column (or even twenty), but those looking for a comprehensive list should check out the **Forgotten Realms Web Ring**. The 103 sites comprising



the ring aren't rated or reviewed, but they do have a brief entry describing them, and if you're feeling lucky you can always try the 'random' link.

One site that has to be seen to be believed is **Grimspear, City of Wonder**.

The first thought that crossed my mind when the site loaded was "wuw". The second was "Hey, do these people have day jobs?" The sepia-toned artwork is done in the style of old faerie tales, and will make visitors drool.

The city of *Grimspear*, located air-born island floating off of the *Sword Coast*, is documented with well-written chapters covering its history, laws, and present operation. The site's not as content rich as **Candlekeep**, but it is a wonder to explore, and should inspire DMs to tidy up their own web sites.

If you know of a cool Realms site, or have a subject you'd like to see covered in this column, please e-mail it to me at knewquist@nuketown.com

OFFICIAL FORGOTTEN REALMS WEB SITE
<http://www.wizards.com/forgottenrealms/Welcomex.asp>

THE BEST OF THE FORGOTTEN REALMS MAILING LIST
<http://sefton.tradepage.co.za/Realms/>

CANDLEKEEP
<http://www.candlekeep.com/>

FORGOTTEN REALMS WEBRING
<http://www.dragonlance.com/forgottenrealms/>

GRIMSPEAR, CITY OF WONDER
<http://grimspear.com/>

POWERS: FROM IMAGE COMICS

by John O'Neill



POWERS

Written by: Brian Michael Bendis
Illustrated by: Michael Avon Oeming
Published: Image Comics
Published Monthly
Issues 1-3

I love a skillfully written detective story. I'm also a sucker for a good superhero comic (*though they seem to be a little thin on the ground these days*). I've read a lot in both genres... and just a bit too much of one pretending to be the other.

But I've never read anything like *Image Comic's* new series *Powers*, and I suspect you haven't either.

Powers begins with Detective Christian Walker, called to the scene of a hostage situation in an unnamed metropolis. Walker is a decent cop, good under fire and with plenty of experience, but he's sometimes hampered by poor information. He has no idea, for example, why the nut holding a gun and a scared little girl is asking for him by name.

Powers reads like a polished crime drama, with sure-fire dialog, beautifully noir artwork, and all the police procedural details right where they're supposed to be. In the opening pages Walker is thrown into a tense, realistic hostage drama that calls for a cool head and a calm voice, not retractable metal claws and spandex shorts.

All of that changes when the perp blows a hole in the ceiling and escapes, jet-packing into the upper atmosphere (*"He couldn't do that three hours ago?" complains one of the offers. "I missed the game."*) When he even-

tually crashes back to earth and is hauled into custody, Walker demands to know why Jetpack man asked for him personally. *"I heard you were soft... soft on guys with powers,"* the gunman confesses.

Christian Walker is an honest cop in a town ruled by superheroes. Like *Marvel Comic's* groundbreaking series *Marvels*, this is a tale of men and women who only rarely interact with the god-like creatures flying overhead, and who witness their cosmic clashes in clips on the six o'clock news. But who, perhaps, if we believe the clues dropped by the creators, occasionally can peek behind the mysterious veil to reveal the dark secrets of the super-elite.

Immediately after being assigned a new partner – the no-nonsense Detective Deena Pilgrim, a young pro unimpressed both by superpowers and "the cosmic nonsense" that usually accompanies them – Walker gets a call about a homicide. A young woman's broken body lies on the grounds of an elementary school. A woman who turns out to be one of the most popular, and powerful, superheroes in the city. This time Walker finds his suspect list includes some of the most dangerous people in the city – and realizes that following the clues may just bring his own dark secret into the public light.

While admittedly it takes a moment to adjust to the collision of these two disparate genres -- the grim noir of the hardboiled detective and the spandex-laden world of the sculpted superhero -- the result is surprisingly effective, the ultimate your-peanut-butter-in-my-chocolate mix. The setting, an urban jungle whose inhabitants are used to both repeated cosmic threats and last-minute heroics from inscrutable saviors, is absolutely ideal for this kind of off-kilter mystery.

It wouldn't work, of course, without believable characters, and this is where *Powers* – and in particular writer Brian Michael Bendis -- really shines. Bendis is also extremely skilled at the use of irony, especially when he plays the expectations of one genre off against the other, usually to marvelous effect. One such scene is in the bowels of police headquarters, as a crew of police and forensic experts

talk shop over the body of Retro Girl – while trying (*without success*) to cut the body open with a blowtorch.

Bendis made a name for himself with his noir comic collections *Jinx*, *Goldfish*, and *Fire*, all of which he wrote and illustrated (*he's also recently been contracted by Todd McFarlane to write two Spawn-related series, HELLSPAWN and Sam And Twitch, and by Marvel for their Ultimate Spiderman comic*). But with artist Oeming (*Ship Of Fools, Foot Soldiers*) he's really found the perfect collaborator. The layout is both dynamic and tight, and the character rendition is spot-on. Best of all, Oeming really knows how to create and enhance mood, and he's done that to wonderful effect here.

Powers compares well to Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's *DC Comics* novel *The Watchmen* – which also featured the murder of a superhero, and the relentless efforts of a detective to crack the case -- and in some ways reads even better than the 80's classic. For one thing, it takes less time to build and, so far, the characters have been both more believable and more sympathetic.

Still, all we're running on at the moment is the prelude, and it remains to be seen if the creators can wrap up the story as brilliantly as they've begun it. So far *Image Comics* has published only the first three issues. Although the comic has already begun to grab a significant amount of attention in the fan press, at print time all three issues were still in stock at both comic shops I frequent.

That won't last long. Do yourself a favor and check out *Powers*. Before you have to have some superpowers of your own just to find a copy.

+++++

John O'Neill is the founder of the SF Site (www.sfite.com) and *Black Gate* magazine. He has several thousand comics in plastic bags in his basement, betting on an inevitable mylar shortage and making a killing in re-cycled plastic. He can be reached at john@blackgate.com.

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OF THE SHELF



DIABLO II

AND THE SECOND COMING SYNDROME

By Rick Moscatello

Welp, after years of waiting, **Diablo II** is out. Yeah, I know you can read about **D2** in every other magazine, but I've a few things to say that just don't seem to be getting said anywhere else. Sit back and listen to the thoughts of a future Weird Pete.

Before I could even get the cellophane wrapping off my box, the 'Net was flooded with comments from enraged gamers. "*The graphics SUCK*", "*I waited three years for THIS?*", and "*I've only had the game two days and I'm already 20th level!*", are just a few of the rants I've seen on the boards.

D2 is hardly the first game to get this sort of treatment, it seems like whenever a game comes out after a long delay, there is a large minority of gamers just waiting to pounce down and shred it, for not being the *Second Coming* of gaming. While **D2** does have some problems, there's nothing here that should be greeted with rage.

First off, the graphics. What is it with people that are perpetually expecting more and more and better and better graphics? There really is a limit to just how pretty a picture can be. Your character fairly accurately represents the weapons and armor he's wearing (*especially the unique equipment*), the monsters are all distinct with a good level of detail, the spells all have nice pyrotechnics, and everything looks just like it should. Yes, the graphics aren't fifty times as good as in "*old*" **Diablo**, but before you get upset over it, go and load up **Diablo** and compare to **D2**. Side by side, anyone can see they're better, much better, and that should be enough for anyone.

As for the people that are upset over a three year wait, there's not much to say but "*Get a Life*". **StarCraft** (*also by Blizzard*) was delayed many times, so it really shouldn't be a surprise the **D2** was much delayed. **D2** has a deeper character advancement system involving skills, and unlike a tabletop RPG, fixing a massively broken set of rules once the game has shipped is pretty much impossible. Yeah, after three years of refining, there are still many skills that nobody uses, but even **D&D** has a few hundred character proficiencies that nobody uses; as long as the useful skills don't utterly dominate the game, then the wait was worth it.

Finally we come to the people who complain that they're going up levels too quickly. Again, the main response to this is, "*GET A LIFE!!!*" I don't understand this whole "*What's your level?*" fascination. I started telling people I was playing **D2**, and

immediately they ask me what my level is. Nobody seemed to ask about the game, just my level. And I honestly couldn't answer exactly, although I at least knew the current class of my character. Heck, it's probably killing some of you readers right now that I'm not saying. In **D&D**, advancing to *20th level* could easily take years of game play. In **EverQuest**, hitting *20th level* takes about a month. In **Asheron's Call**, *20th level* can be reached in a week of casual play. In **D2**, *20th level* takes 2 days. Ok, I guess it does seem like the more recent the game, the easier to level, but it really is ridiculous to compare levels from one game to the next. If you've hit *20th level* in **D&D**, you can cast pretty much every spell in the game (*if you're a wizard*), or hit darn near anything if you roll a "2" or better on a twenty sider. In **Asheron's Call**, *20th level* is practically nothing; a well designed wizard at that level can cast maybe 60% of the spells in the game, and most monsters are far too tough for such characters to casually defeat. **D2** is about the same way, your character has plenty of room for development at level 20, although it is remotely possible to slay **Diablo** himself at that level. Besides, **D2** has 5 different character classes, with many different ways to develop each character. It's a good thing that you can "*level up*" quickly, so you can see what the other classes have to offer. Computer games really have changed the "*level*" attitude. At the risk of sounding like a geezer, it seems like gamers used to brag about their characters' exploits and special traits, but no more. With the advent of computers, everybody is doing pretty much the same thing with the same characters and same equipment, so I guess there is nothing else to talk about except the level of your character. **Diablo 2** is especially vulnerable to this, as you play the same quests in every game, and, naturally, everyone kills poor **Diablo** at the end, repeatedly. While the original **Diablo** was essentially a massive monster bashfest, and **D2** is no different, I do seem to note a disturbing rise of "*munchkin*" gaming. I posted a question on a board asking about how to better keep the NPCs alive in **D2**. I received more than a few responses in the form "*Who cares if the NPCs die? They don't deal out much damage!*" Somehow I'm not so sure that **D2** can be called an RPG, when you've got Paladins running around saying stuff like that.

While those initial criticisms are unfair, there

Continued on 39....

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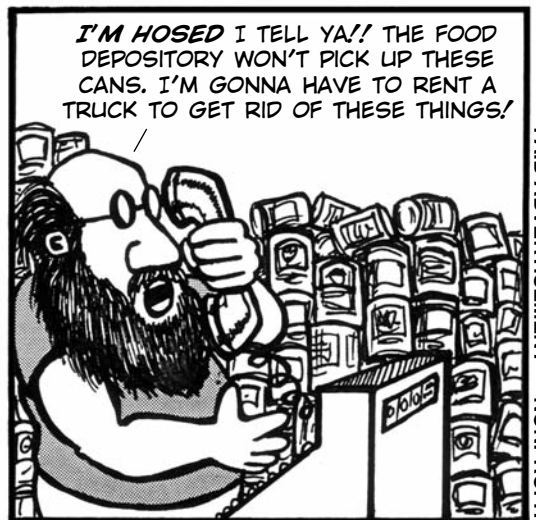
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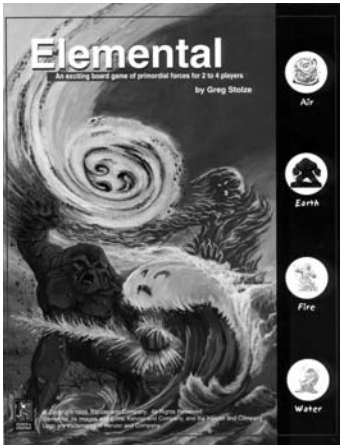
are nevertheless some legitimate problems. First off, and this is a biggie, you can't save when you wish. When you save, you exit the game. When you come back, no matter where you saved, you're back in town, and all the monsters you've killed have respawned. While this is great for those who like bashing the same monsters repeatedly, if you're the kind of player who usually doesn't have more than an hour to play, you'll find D2 is tough to finish. Even worse, D2 suffers from numerous crashes (*even after the second patch*). There is some sort of "automatic" save so you can keep much of your experience when it crashes, but slogging through a mess of monsters just to get back to where you were before the crash can be a chore.

Another big problem concerns equipment. A big part of the fun of *Diablo* was finding kewl stuff. There wasn't any place to keep it, of course, so most players just dropped it on the ground. Alas, when you leave the game (*or when it crashes*), stuff on the ground vanishes. There is a "stash" where you can store a tiny amount of extra equipment beyond what you're carrying, but it is SMALL. Adding to the space problems are the new rules for gems and magic equipment. You can make your own magic items by inserting gems in socketed

items. Better gems get you better items, of course, and you can fuse small gems into better gems. Alas, due to a quirk in the inventory system, 6 chipped rubies, for example, take up as much space as a suit of plate mail. Since you'll save every little gem you find, you darn near won't have room to save equipment. But, you'll want to do that, too, since there is a new kind of super rare equipment that is "named" and comes in several pieces. If you find all the pieces, and wear them all, you'll get bonus abilities. So, you'll need to save gems and the special named equipment, and there's a few other things that you'll need to save, too. But there's no room. The only option you have is to create several "mule" characters for storing extra stuff, and it's an incredible pain to use them, since you need a friend to run a game while you're using your mules (*or a separate computer system...it's embarrassing how many people I know that have a "home LAN" for this sort of thing*). Ok, maybe this is a bit greedy, but you'd think the folks at Blizzard would realize that people want to save more than three pieces of equipment.

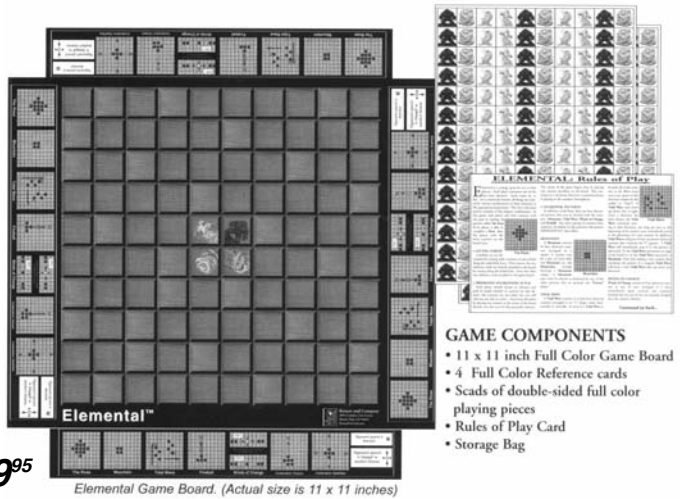
So, *Diablo II* isn't the *Second Coming* of computer games. It's still plenty of fun, so just overlook the small problems, and realize that a game doesn't have to be utterly without flaw to be enjoyable. □

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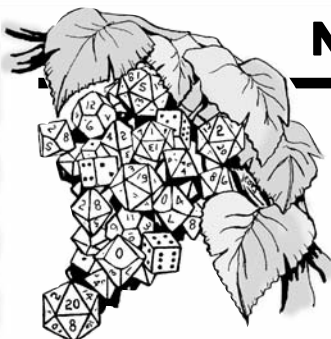
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Congratulations to *Jolly Roger Games* for winning an Origins Award for *Orcs at the Gates* board game. Hoody Hoo!

We've also like to congratulate the winners of this year's OAG tournament held at Origins.

Bob: Sean McAfee
Dave: Dale Nielson
Sara: Trisha Tomsa
Brian: Robert Reed
B.A.: Kyle Mathis

Overall Winner: Trisha Tomsa

ORIGIN AWARDS 1999 WINNERS!!

The annual Origin Award winners were announced at Origins 2000 on July 15 in Columbus, Ohio. The event was bigger and better than ever this year. And the winners are...

Outstanding Achievement in Abstract Board Game Design:
BUTTON MEN (*Cheaps Games*)

Outstanding Achievement in Historical Board Game Design:
GREAT WAR AT SEA, VOL. IV (*Avalanche Press, Ltd.*)

Outstanding Achievement in Science Fiction or Fantasy Board Game Design:
ORCS AT THE GATES (*Jolly Roger Games*)

Outstanding Achievement in Graphic Presentation of a Card Game or Expansion:
7TH SEA: NO QUARTER! (*Alderac Entertainment Group*)

Outstanding Achievement in Trading Card Game Design:
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Outstanding Achievement in Traditional Card Game Design:
CHEZ GEEK (*Steve Jackson Games*)

Outstanding Achievement in Card Game Expansion or Supplement Design:
7TH SEA: STRANGE VISTAS (*Alderac Entertainment Group*)

Outstanding Achievement in Action Computer Game Design:
MECHWARRIOR III (*Microprose, Inc.*)

Outstanding Achievement in Strategy Computer Game Design:
SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI

Outstanding Game Related Novel:
DELTA GREEN: THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT (*Pagan Publishing*)

Outstanding Game Related Short Work:
JUST A TAD BEYOND INNSMOUTH (*from Tales Out of Innsmouth; Chaosium, Inc.*)

Outstanding Achievement in Historical Miniatures Rules Design:
ARMIES OF ANTIQUITY (*Warhammer Historical Wargames*)

Outstanding Achievement in Science Fiction or Fantasy Miniatures Rules Design:
DISKWARS (*Fantasy Flight Games*)

Outstanding Achievement in Historical Miniature Figure Series Design:
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TOGASHI YOKUNI: DRAGON CLAN CHAMPION (*Alderac Entertainment Group*)

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BABYLON 5 STATION (*Agents of Gaming*)

Outstanding Amateur Game Magazine:
ALARUMS & EXCURSIONS (*Lee Gold, publisher*)

Outstanding Professional Game Magazine:
KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE (*Kenzer & Company*)

Outstanding Achievement in Ongoing Play-By-Mail Design:
MIDDLE EARTH PLAY-BY-MAIL: FOURTH AGE, CIRCA 1000 (*Game Systems, Inc.*)

Outstanding Achievement in Graphic Presentation of a Role-Playing Game, Adventure or Supplement Design:
DARK MATTER (*Wizards of the Coast*)

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DELTA GREEN: COUNTDOWN (*Pagan Publishing*)

Outstanding Achievement in Role-Playing Game Design:
7th Sea (*Alderac Entertainment Group*)

plucked from the vine for your reading enjoyment

"Survivor" to become a Board Game?!

DAMN! WE SHOULD HAVE HELD OUT FOR TOY AND GAME RIGHTS

I'D SETTLE FOR TOILET PAPER.



Mattel has licensed the gaming rights to Survivor, and plans to release a board game based on the CBS series this November. The game has players drawing "Out Wit,"

"Out Play," and "Out Last," cards, while completing challenges and trying not to get voted out of the game. Let's just hope they don't pick up the option for Big Brother.

<http://www.mattel.com> or <http://www.cbs.com>

• MARY J. BLIGE - SUPERHERO

Mary J. Blige has signed a partnership agreement with Stan Lee Media to create and launch "an original Stan Lee Hip Hop Super Heroine." The franchise will launch this fall with a series of animated webisodes voiced by Mary, and is envisioned to grow into offline projects like TV, film, and print. Blige's super heroine alter ego is described by Stan Lee as "a cross between Cleopatra Jones and Barbarella ... an inspirational character and self-described 'Protector of the Hood'." <http://www.stanlee.net>

• NEW MALE LEAD FOR X-FILES

Chris Carter is believed to be eyeing Bruce Campbell (*Evil Dead*), Robert Patrick (*T2*), Lou Diamond Phillips (*La Bamba*), and Hart Bochner (*Anywhere But Here*) for the new male lead on X-Files next season. <http://www.fox.com>

• ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK TO BE SYNDICATED

Kurt Russell, John Carpenter, and Debra Hill will executive produce an *Escape from New York* syndicated series for Tribune Entertainment. Additionally, a third *Escape* film, (Let's hope it's better than the second one), *Escape from Earth*, may follow the planned 2001 launch of the series.

• RACE AROUND THE WORLD

Hoping to cash in on the a reality-based gameshow genre, Fox Television is to launch a new show in which two families will travel to 25 countries over 40 days, competing in challenges along the way. <http://www.foxfamilychannel.com>

• FREAKS AND GEEKS SAVED!

Fox Family Channel has announced it has picked up the cancelled NBC series *Freaks and Geeks*. (Incidentally the characters in the show frequently play D&D) <http://www.foxfamilychannel.com> or <http://www.freaksandgeeks.com>

THAT SHOW FREAKS AND GEEKS ROCKS ASS!

YEAH, I HEARD IT'S ABOUT GAMING IN THE OLDEN DAYS.



PLAY WITH YOUR PEZ!

U.S. Games has released its PEZ Card Game, the first game ever based on the collectible candy dispensers. (*We're not making this up.*)

The game, made for ages 8 and up, comes with 100 Flavor cards (*grape, strawberry, lemon, orange*), 20 Dispenser cards, and a Play Mat, and a total 200 different Dispenser cards can be collected by purchasing Booster packs.

In the PEZ Card Game, players try to accumulate points while matching Flavor cards in the order they appear on the Dispenser cards.

For more information you can go to <http://www.usgamesinc.com> or <http://www.pez.com>



Speaking of PEZ did you know the makers experimented with different flavors over the years? We're still trying to figure out what *Flower Flavor* must have tasted like.

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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've really enjoyed Weird Pete's Back Room and I'm really glad there is a forum for gamers to discuss issues and voice their opinions. Something has been really bugging me the past few weeks and I thought it was high time I got off the pot and said something about it.

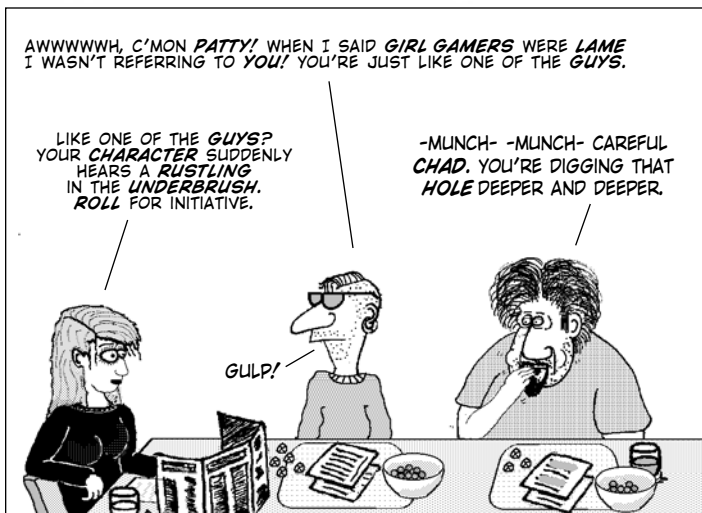
Last month my local Weird Pete (*game shop*) closed its doors. It happened rather suddenly and there was very little warning. Well, perhaps that's not quite true...

When Eric (*the proprietor*) quit his day job at Chrysler back in '92 and opened his very own gameshop, he was just about the happiest (*and luckiest*) guy I knew. He was living every gamer's dream. Running his own shop. Surrounded by gamers (*and games*) day to day. How great is that?

Recently, however, Eric wasn't his old self. It was obvious something was bugging him. He seemed depressed. Even sad. We all saw it but we never thought to ask him what was wrong. We figured it was his business and none of our own. Why pry? We were content to play games in his back room on Saturday night, hang out around his counter and talk about games and complain about the rising price of Swiss mochas at the Starbucks in the strip mall across the street.

It never dawned on us that Eric was struggling to keep food on the table and that the dream was about to end.

You see, I feel a bit guilty because for the past year or so I've been buying my games on eBay or other venues on the great 'Information Highway'. I even had the gall to bring my purchases to Eric's backroom on Saturdays and brag about what great prices I had obtained them for. (*Thereby encouraging other gamers to follow my example*). I tell ya, I felt really small



AWWWWWH, C'MON PATTY! WHEN I SAID GIRL GAMERS WERE LAME I WASN'T REFERRING TO YOU! YOU'RE JUST LIKE ONE OF THE GUYS.

LIKE ONE OF THE GUYS? YOUR CHARACTER SUDDENLY HEARS A RUSTLING IN THE UNDERBRUSH. ROLL FOR INITIATIVE.

-MUNCH- -MUNCH- CAREFUL CHAD. YOU'RE DIGGING THAT HOLE DEEPER AND DEEPER.

GULP!

when I saw that "Out of Business" sign on the door to Eric's shop.

Now I'm not baggin' on those of you who may be buying their games on the internet. If you don't have a gameshop in your neighborhood it's a great way to find those games you've only heard or read about in KODT and other mags. But if there's a gameshop in your neck of the hood, you may want to think of spending your dollars there.

Every issue, KODT runs that little picture of Pete with the blurb, "Support Your Local Game Shop!" You've seen it. I never really understood what Jolly and the others were trying to say. I even thought it was annoying. "Why don't they pull that thing and run something else? It's getting a bit old."

But now, I've seen the light. As of June 6th we no longer have a gameshop in my town. Saving a few bucks online on the latest HackMaster supplement is great but it's a far cry from having a place to hang out with my friends and game on Saturday afternoon.

I miss Eric and I miss the aisles filled with product and familiar faces. I really, really wish I had heeded the call and supported Eric instead of some invisible, anonymous person on eBay who probably didn't need my money as badly as Eric did.

Josh Dejong
E-mail

Unlike the dude who shared his experience with female gamers in a recent issue of KODT,

I've found gaming with women to be a lot of fun.

I'm a Grandmaster in the RPGA & have been playing and DMing since 1977, so I've a lot of gaming experience.

Some of my best times at a table have been due to the quality of roleplaying or GMing by a woman. If you ever get a chance to play with Patricia Jackson (*whether she's playing or DMing*) or to play under Claire Hoffman running a Living Death event, then do whatever it takes to make it happen. You will not be disappointed. My experience has been that the average female gamer is a better role player than the average male player — Although I've played with great & lousy role players of both genders.

As for having babies in character, I've 2 solutions. 1 - have the time line jump forward 20 years, since this can mess up plot lines... 2 - go to the Hotel.

The Hotel is located at a nexus of the planes (*as of 1984 when it was created by Tim Joslin*) they can put you in a wing of the Hotel where time runs very fast so that 1 week of game time later, you return to the game 18 to 25 years older (*youth spells cost extra.*) and a new title, "Mom".

David

Judging by the letters of Simonne Grant and Bonnie Bane, I didn't write clearly enough in the last paragraph of my letter to you (*See Table Talk, KODT# 41*). I meant that passage to relate a funny event that

befell me -- not to demonstrate misogyny or sexism.

I certainly do not dismiss gamers on the basis of their gender, nor do I kill off characters to drive off players. When I wrote "Two attractive women in the same game can break down" I meant "can" or "might," not "will" and not "must."

Contrary to S.G.'s assertion, I did not insist this will happen. When I wrote "a female player who has long enjoyed a monopoly of male attention" I meant enjoyed in the sense of taking pleasure in that focus.

The event I alluded to took place near the middle of a long-running *Delta Green* game. I was GM, and my open-chair policy had brought three new players to the game: Bob (*male*), Will (*male*), Chris (*Vegan's wife*). In addition, the following six regulars attended: Dawn (*female*), Quinn (*male*), Becky (*female*), Dean (*male*), and Stan (*male*).

Just as I wrote in my previous letter, Becky and Chris began to compete for the attention of the male players. Their behavior hurt the game, and I eventually took them to task for it. I did this with as much malice as I would for any player acting disruptively. I don't allow people to play *Magic* at the game table either.

I agree with S.G.. The game table is no place for a beauty pageant and real gamers know this. Chris had never role-played before, and Becky was also a new player. Both attend-

ed more for the game's social aspect than out of any real interest in the story. Dawn, the other female player and just as attractive as Chris or Becky, had played before and plays still. She also did not participate in that contest.

Instead, she paid attention to the story like a real gamer.

I do not hold the opinion that role-playing is a "man's game." On the contrary, I actively recruit females. They often bring depth to role-playing and tend to enjoy non-combat role-playing more than males do. I hope most gamers welcome one another, regardless of age or gender or race. I might not invite someone to play if she dislikes the genre or if he lacks maturity needed for its themes, but I will not turn anyone away.

S.G. called my letter "sexist," "in every way offensive," and "blatantly misogynistic." I find that opinion ill-considered. Did she read anything other than the final paragraph?

Still, her response, along with your [Jolly's] reply admitting hesitation about running my letter, (along with Jolly's wife's comment) all prove I did not express myself clearly.

Being misunderstood makes me feel angry and frustrated. Yet I can only blame myself for it. To make certain this letter is well and truly known, let me repeat the main points. The event I described really happened to me. I met it with dismay and disappointment. It seems

funny in retrospect. Only a potential player's interest in role-playing matters to me.

I hate to think you published my earlier note as flame-bait. I didn't write it as such. Nonetheless, I will defend my earlier missive. You have permission to distribute my address to anyone who asks for it. BTW, I still voted for you on my *Origins* ballot. No hard feelings.

Jay Dugger
via E-mail

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*Jolly, Dave, Steve and Brian,
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*Know ye
all that Raven
Crestwallow has
stopped running
with the pack.
Mourn ye klingers
of the night.*

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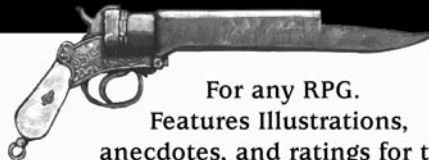
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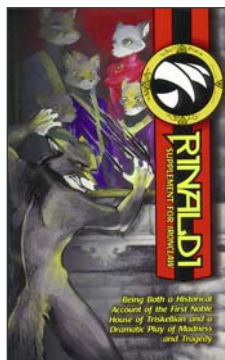
RINALDI: Supplement for IRON CLAW
Sanguine Productions Ltd. • jason@ironclaw.gs

Rinaldi is the first supplement for the 'furry animal' rpg, *Iron Claw*, created by Jason Holmgren. (Readers may recognize Jason as the cover artist for the first three issues of *KODT* as well as the *Joe Genero* strip from the now defunct *Shadis* magazine.)

Based on the activity at the Sanguine booth at Origins, Jason has filled an rpg niche long overlooked by game designers. Even though I've never had much interest in 'furry animal' comics, I have to confess this supplement could well make a convert of me. It largely centers around the political arena in the city of Calabria where Guild Masters wrestle for control and play the Noble Houses against each other. There are also new rules for mounted combat.

This is definitely one RPG line I'll be keeping my eye on.

Brian's Rating: Brian's Rating: Highly Recommended



FLEET ACTION: Fleet Level Combat in the B5 Universe

Agents of Gaming • 7672 McEwen Road • Dayton, OH 45459

I must admit that I am not a *Babylon 5* fan. To put things into perspective, the last time I saw the television show, there was still peace among the races. But despite my limited knowledge of the series, I found *Fleet Action* to be a very enjoyable miniatures game. Each player creates and commands a task group worth a certain number of points from one of four races in the *Babylon 5* universe. The fleets compete to fulfill various objectives as dictated by the scenario. The result is a fantastic battle in space.

The most impressive aspect of the game was its simple, yet complete, rules. Players of *Babylon 5 Wars* will see that a single fighter is no longer your concern; you have an entire fleet to command. As a result, the rules for movement and shooting have been simplified, yet they still cover all the complex aspects of starship combat. In addition, I thought the rules did a very good job of incorporating the uncertainty of combat into the rules. For example, all movement decisions must be made before the turn commences. Each player maps out the path of each of their squads before seeing what their opponent does. Each turn is then divided into three pulses, and weapons can be fired after each pulse of movement. This makes combat feel much more realistic, something that other miniatures games do not always achieve.

The book itself is quite colorful and very complete. The back of the rule book has four sections, each devoted to a different race from the *Babylon 5* universe. Each section details the race's ships, their military organization and background, and their special rules and technology. The last section of the book gives datacards for all the ships including points cost and vital statistics. These can be photocopied and used to track your fleet during the battle. The end result is a simple, yet complete rules system for large scale battles.

Brian's Rating: If you are a *Babylon 5* fan, get your fleet in action and buy this game.



FORMULA C-MINUS • Placebo Press • www.placebopress.com



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A game for 2-6 players
With parade season just around the corner, the elite members of the Shrynera 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 need 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.
May not be suitable for younger players.
Placebo Press
PF5008 www.placebopress.com

A few days after *KODT*#44 hit the streets (*The issue with the "Formula Day" strip*) we received a review copy of *Formula C-Minus* in the mail. Talk about great...er...warped minds thinking a like. The similarities, as it turns out are only superficial. There are no weapons or violence in this game (unless you consider the "Fez Dispenser" a weapon). Just a lot of beer-n-pretzels mayhem and a game guaranteed to be worth the price of admission.

FC-M isn't a game of high-performance formula racing. Rather this game is for 2 to 6 players about a *Shryner Go-Cart Squad* who have gathered at the local *Golf 'n' Games* to quench their need for speed. Wearing fezes, red velvet vests and reeking of liquor and refried beans these low-performance racers are sure to be crowd pleasers. Their credo? "On the track there are no friends, and he who wins drinks for free!"

What sets this game apart from most racing games is the inclusion of **Option Cards**. These include **Power Up** (add extra abilities to your go-cart), **One Shots** (one time advantages), **Whammy** (played on other players - usually with bad results), and **The Pits** (play on another player to force them to the pits). Other cards include **Beer Goggles**, **Offroad Suspension** (lets you take shortcuts across the infield), **Taco Fart** (you don't want to know).

Uh...did I say there was no violence in this game? Players can attack each other as they are racing. Visions of *Ben Hur* will flash through your mind as you *Fez-Bash* your opponent on the straight-away. If you win an attack you immediately get another turn.

Brian's Rating: Today is a good day to drive!!

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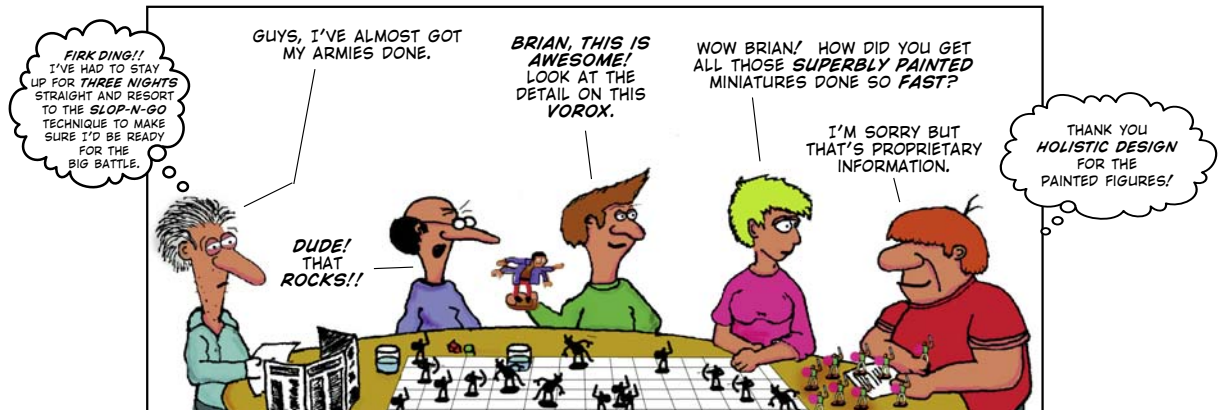


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VINCENT VAN GOGH'S LESSER KNOWN RELATIVES

After much careful research it has been discovered that the artist Vincent Van Gogh had many relatives. Among them were:

- His obnoxious brother. Please Gogh
- His dizzy aunt Verti Gogh
- The brother who ate prunes. Gotta Gogh
- The brother who worked at a Seven Eleven Stopn Gogh
- The grandfather from Yugoslavia U Gogh
- The brother who bleached his clothes white Hue Gogh
- The cousin from Illinois Chica Gogh
- His magician uncle Wherediddy Gogh
- His Hispanic cousin Ameer Gogh
- The Hispanic cousin's American half brother Grin Gogh
- The nephew who drove a stage coach Wellsfar Gogh
- The constipated uncle Cant Gogh
- The ballroom dancing aunt Tan Gogh
- The bird lover uncle Flamin Gogh
- His nephew psychoanalyst E Gogh
- The fruit loving cousin Man Gogh
- An aunt who taught positive thinking Wayto Gogh
- The little nephew. Poe Gogh
- A sister who loved disco Ahgo Gogh
- His niece who lives in a van Winnie B. Gogh
- His Monopoly loving uncle Donot Stop Gogh

THE GAMER'S LAMENT

(Sung to the tune of Janis Joplin's "Mercedes Benz")

A 20-sided dice is a good chance to win.
I hate when I try to bluff and I do it with a grin.
I need to get my character some ex-perience,
Cause I can run 50 miles but I can't jump the fence.

I hate when the guys hide their dice in a box,
They always say they "got it,"
they could be rolling rocks.
I need to tell the GM a secret or two,
But he twists it so his girlfriend
will always find the clue.

I hate when the guys play the same ol' game,
They say without D&D life is not the same.
I need to tell them off and cry out "you're lame,"
But then I won't come back,
and it'll be me that they frame.

Some advice if you don't want to botch and get killed,
Stay out of the puzzles if you don't have the skills.

Don't battle with your party and
don't trust the "new friend,"
And the girls play the best
if they're not dating the GM.

Yurimi Grigsby
Memphis, Tn

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"You should hire me away from [company X] because I do good work and we'd work well together. Also because my company is going down the crapper as we speak."

Anonymous Game Designer to Jolly at Origins 2000



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This 'home-brewed' Black Hands strip was submitted by Albert McCune

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Rich Spangle, [wizards.com](http://www.wizards.com)

full review at http://www.wizards.com/origins/ORG2K/Virtual_FM.asp



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I SURRENDER TO SARA. THE **HAZAT BATTLE SQUADRON** SHE'S COMMANDING IS UNSTOPPABLE. EVEN MY LUCKY TWENTY-SIDER WON'T SAVE ME TONIGHT.

YOU CAN'T SURRENDER TO HER YET BOB. SHE HASN'T EVEN ATTACKED YOU.

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO SURRENDER.

OK, I'LL INFORM **DUTCHESS DE SUTEK** OF YOUR UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER AND ASK HER TO BRING THE FRIGATES **LOBO** AND **TIGRE** INTO POSITION TO FINISH OFF DAVE'S MEAGER FORCES!

SHE MUST BE STOPPED.

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. **SARA** WIPED ME OFF THE MAP!

