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Knights of the Dinner Table™

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THE SPY THAT HACKED ME

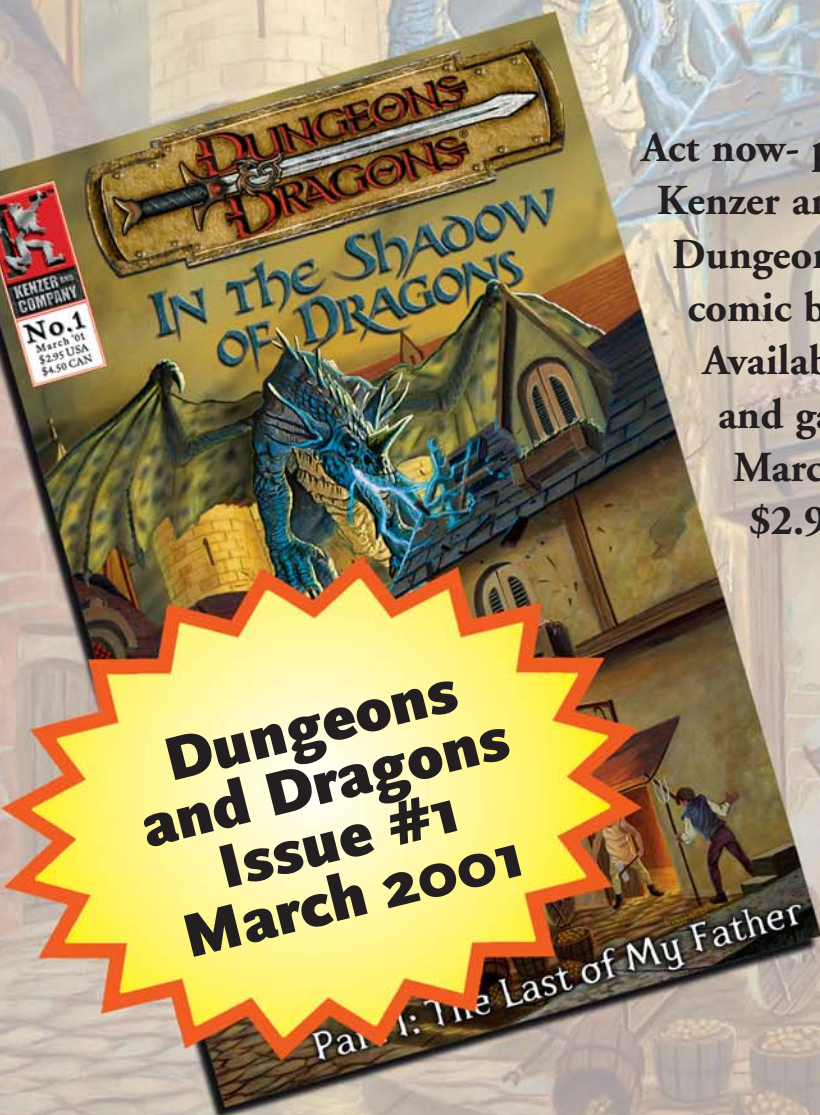
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KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #53

THE SPY THAT HACKED ME

March, 2001

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

M A G A Z I N E

“THE SPY THAT HACKED ME”

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS

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

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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™. It was something of a 'creative burp' and Jolly really didn't give it much thought. Perhaps that's why he was just as surprised as anyone that soon KODT was overshadowing everything else he'd ever done and that the *creator* was now controlling the *creator*. Fortunately, writing and drawing KODT strips isn't the lonely job it was in the past. Hundreds of fans have contributed to the beast over the years and 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. It's been a wild ride and the D-Team looks forward to seeing where the gang takes them next.



•1997• •1998•
•1999•

Editorial-of-a-Madman™

"It [HackMaster] is the game for the rest of us!! For those of us who, if not for the sad fact we were born in a world constrained by reality, would be KINGS!! HackMaster™ is for those who yearn to wield a sword and to weave magic. We come from different walks of life. We earn our living in different ways. But we have one thing in common — We love a good fight and we make no excuses for it.

JOSEPH JONIA "JO JO" ZEKE
Forward to HackMaster Player's Handbook



Above: Some serious deja-vu going on here. A partial view of the cover for the long awaited HackMaster Player's Handbook.

Welcome back!! As I sit down to write this editorial, I can't help but think what an exciting issue this particular KODT has turned out to be. Not only have we dropped a BOMB in the on-going strip storyline (*evil grin*) but the first tantalizing glimpses of the long awaited HackMaster Player's Handbook™ and Hacklopedia of Beasts™ appear in this issue. That's right, we're only a few months away from HackMaster™ becoming a reality.

Even so, we've still been sworn to secrecy about the project(s) but hopefully the few tidbits we were allowed to reveal in this issue will dispel those nagging rumors that HackMaster is nothing more than a joke. A parody, yes. But a joke? Never! By the time summer rolls around most of you should have your hands full fighting off swack iron dragons, purple impalers and merga-trolls.

Speaking of new things, you'll notice a few cosmetic changes have been made to the mad-man's editorial page. I got so fed up with people patting me on the back and giving me ALL the credit for what unfolds in this magazine month to month, I decided something MUST be done.

So we've pulled back the curtain a bit to actually reveal the inner gears and workings of the beast known as, KODT. As you can see to the right, a lot of folks contribute to this monster — Poor thankless souls who put in countless hours making sure you get your copy of KODT every month. Get to know the names - they're your friends.

And since we're on the subject of of thanking people I want to take this opportunity to correct an oversight on my part. Back in Issue#50 I thanked a lot of people for helping make 'the dream' come true for me personally. I'm afraid I left two people off the list — my mom and dad.

Many of you probably don't know this but back before I teamed up with KenzerCo I toyed with the idea of publishing KODT on my own. Mind you, there weren't a lot of people who believed in such a crazy notion back in those days. That is, except for mom and dad.

Without even being asked they offered to pony up the cash to get KODT #4 off the press. I don't know if they ever knew how much that meant to me. (*If not, they do now — both of them are loyal readers*). Anyway, they did a lot more than help me get an issue of KODT out. They helped me realize that doing a magazine on my own wasn't really what I wanted to do. I've always enjoyed being part of a team and somewhere during the process of doing KODT #4 I was reminded of that fact. By the time Dave Kenzer came around with his offer a few weeks later.... Well, you know the rest of the story.

Anyway, it dawned on me the other day that I'd never publicly told the story of my parents' contribution to 'the dream'. There's a very good chance that had they not believed in me, I wouldn't be sitting here writing this editorial. And what a sobering thought that is.

Thanks mom and dad!

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn
 February 1, 2001

Knights of the Dinner Table™

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OOPS! We Goofed!!

In Brian's Picks #50 we reviewed EMPIRE, but listed the game company as Reality Games. The correct name is Alternate Reality Games.



Little things can make a big difference

*Like knowing who
gets the face
full of acid*



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Our Readers Talk Back!

TABLE TALK: READER MAIL

Dear KODT,

I'm the "Richard" whose surname you were looking for in KODT#50. ("An Appetite for Adventure" and "The Prize Inside.") Sorry my CompuServe email bounced — I shut down my that account in 1999.

Richard A. Bartle
via E-mail

Good to hear from you, Richard. You were a hard man to track down. If only we had known it was YOU -- readers may recognize Richard Bartle's name. Several of his ideas for strips have been published in KODT over the years.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I was wondering why the KODT strips no longer appear in *Dragon*™ magazine or the *Rifter*™. I used to pick up both publications specifically to read your strips. (Not that the rest of the magazine was shabby but I'm a fanatic.) What's the deal? Those strips were the only thing getting me through the dark, lean times between issues of your magazine.

Aaron Lang
unhappy camper

We understand your withdrawal, Aaron. Several fans have written in to ask the same question in recent months.

*In the case of *Dragon*™, we were forced to pull the strips when the publisher wanted to renegotiate terms. We rejected the new proposal and that's pretty much where things have stood for almost a year. Nothing sinister, mind you. We just couldn't come to an agreement on terms and given the busy schedules of both parties things were left in limbo.*

*In the interim, a lot of new product lines were heaped on to our creative plates, (such as *HackMaster*™, *Fairy Meat*, the *D&D comic book* and *Kalamazoo*™ 3E) and we found we just didn't have the time to do the extra strips. This led us to make the tough decision to discontinue doing strips for *Rifter*™ as well.*

As much as we enjoyed doing the strips for both magazines there are currently no plans for KODT to appear in either publication in the near future. If the situation changes down the road, we'll be more than willing to reevaluate our decision. We'll certainly keep you posted.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Jolly, besides a great story of defeating the snake nemeses in a recent editorial, I saw that you were wearing a t-shirt from your basic training unit? My unit was A-1-3 and to this day I still remember the motto our Drill Sergeants made us shout.

It goes... "We're Alpha one-three, the best you ever seen, we're head and shoulders above the rest, we're Alpha one-three!"

Yeah... real poetry, but not bad remembering from the summer of 1981. I think that when I am in a nursing home they will hear late at night, "We're Alpha one-three...!"

1981, by the way, was also when I first started role-playing (*AD&D*) in the barracks at Ft. Huachuca (pronounced "We-gotchu!"). I enjoyed 8 years with the US Army in such flower spots as ROK (Korea) where between bar hopping we were slaughtering orcs by the bucket full (*hoody hoo!*).

After leaving the service in 1989 I dropped from role-playing (at least I was smart enough to keep my books) but something I found at my local hobby store about two years ago got my fever back for role-playing.

Yes, you guessed it, **Knights of the Dinner Table**. Keep up the great work and as I continue to keep my eyes open for your next issue, I will sing my battle anthem, "We're Alpha one-three....".

David Luff
Former E-5, US Army
via E-mail

Nice to have you back in the fold, David. As most of our readers already know, we love to hear that someone was lured back to the gaming table because something about KODT rekindled the desire to toss the dice.

Like a lot of gamers-in-uniform it looks like you discovered role-playing is a great way to pass the time. Especially when assigned to such garden-spots as Fort We-Gotchu or Fort "Hell's Furnace" Bliss.

By the way, it's probably best that we don't mention that "snake" thing again.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I'm 14 years old and have been gaming with a particular group for about a year now. I have to say that your comic brings gaming so much to life. When I first started reading I was far behind in the issues so I bought many along with **Bundles of Trouble** and **Tales From the Vault**.

Well now it seems I've become so accustomed to reading KODT, it actually troubles me to sleep without my daily dose of Hack. Your comic rules and you can't ever stop! I'm sorry too bad you can't quit. It's not your choice.

Hoody Hoo,

Sam Owens
via E-mail

Thanks for the feedback, Sam. You know you're the third reader in recent weeks to write me, urging (demanding) that we not stop publishing KODT.

I was a bit confused. How did such a rumor get started? Had I said something in my editorial which readers had misconstrued?

It was a mystery until one reader clued me in. Apparently way back in KODT#39 (which marked the tenth anniversary of the first KODT strip) I had been speculating what the 'next' ten years would bring and where it would take us or our 'replacements'.

Apparently some readers took that as an indication that myself or the other developers were thinking of moving on.

AAACK!!! Are you insane? We're having the time of our lives. I guess I was just acknowledging that the fates are fickle and there's no guarantee any of us will still be here in ten years. I was suggesting KODT would continue on, even if 'we' didn't. Sorry, if my remarks alarmed anyone.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I have been an avid reader of your magazine since issue #19 **Heroes of the Hackleague**. First of all let me say that you guys are great. Thank you for all the wonderful humor and fetchers in each issue. I thought I would take this time to make some comments as well as praises and criticisms of the three most recent issues (49-51).

The "My 'Grubby' Little Friend" story in #49 was great. Having Dave become a rot-grub was so funny and so true to life. In my 20 years of gaming I have never seen anyone do a reincarnation roll and get a good result.

Most players I know would rather have their characters fight their way out of the Abyss with a silver spoon than try reincarnation.

In general, my favorite sections of the magazine (besides the strips themselves) include **Game Vine**, **Tales From the Table**, and **Parting Shots**.

Issue #50 was wonderful, I especially liked the cover gallery section. As you said most of us started reading after issue #15 (*I started at #19*). It was great to see those early covers. I always like the cool title phrases you have on the covers. I would like to see you include a gallery of all issue covers in the future. Also, the **Who's Who** in KODT was great, please continue to up date that regularly.

The "Hawk the Slayer" plug in 'After Hours' (#50) was nice. That is my favorite fantasy movie.

I loved the story lines for #50-51. I am saddened by the loss of the **Trio+1** but I was glad to see the idea of having them play different races and classes (*Duvarves were rare in my group*). I do think Dave should somehow get his +12 sword back, it is just too valuable. I was shocked to think that any one would pay money for characters, that is just ridicu-

lous! (however, I would send in my high level characters to you guys for free if you would publish them in KODT).

The **Goth to Get Some!** & **Bring 'Em Back Undead or Alive** were interesting, again I think that the strips hit on some cord of reality. LARP gamers give me the creeps, I enjoy a good game, but hey this is not real life.

I hope Sara is not "sucked" in to the Vamp life style.

Throughout several issues I have seen the BSU on some of the peoples shirts. I have read that this stands for Ball State University. Is that a real school? I know for me those letters in college stand for Baptist Student Union, which most of the members don't game because they bought the lie that RPG's are evil. I have to sometimes combat those false rumors in my professional circles (*I am a member of the Clergy*).

Those LARP's and Vamp-Raves don't make my task of defending RPG's easier.

In the **Game Vine** some of those press releases read like press releases. Couldn't you jazz them up a little bit or something. Also, I see that Kenzer & Co. will be doing the **D&D** comic and that **Kingdoms of Kalamar** will become an official D&D world.

I have always loved KOK and I am concerned that Kenzer is maybe getting too friendly with the "establishment". I have always felt that KODT was an independent voice, I just would not want to see entangling alliances that may threaten the quality of KODT and other Kenzer products.

Finally, I am glad to see that you are actually coming out with **HackMaster**. Since I am one of the apparent minority who can't stand the 3rd Edition of D&D (and will continue to play AD&D, thank you!) I might just switch over to **HackMaster** altogether.

Sincerely,

Rev. Vance Shearin
via E-mail

Thanks for the letter, Vance. Yes indeed, Ball State is a 'real' university. (I should know — I spent five years there doing hard-time) As proof of its existence I offer up the movie, Close Encounters of the Third Kind. If you watch very carefully you'll see Richard Dreyfuss wearing a BSU t-shirt early in the movie.

Glad you enjoy the comic. If I might make a sug-

**YOU GOT
SOMETHING
TO SAY?**

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Illinois
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or E-mail:
mailbag@
kenzerco.com



gestion, I'd don any flame-retardant clothing you may have lying around. I'm fairly certain your comments about LARPERs are going to draw some fire.

As a friend of mine used to be fond of saying, "That's a GOOD thing." It might be just the thing to shift the focus of Back Room at the Games Pit to a new topic of discussion.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I just finished reading Jolly's editorial from KODT Issue #51, "16 Things the DUKE has Taught Me." After reading this, I am reminded of an old movie, from 1985, starring Tom Berenger called **Rustler's Rhapsody**.

Hardly anyone I know has ever heard of it, but everyone I have shown it to (*I have it on tape*) has loved it. It is a very funny sendup of the old westerns, i.e. White Hat vs. Black Hat. You should be able to find it at your local video store.

Keep up the great work!

Tony Law
via E-mail

Aaaaaa, a man after my own heart! Rustler's Rhapsody has been a long-time favorite of mine. In fact, you'll probably recognize a few lines from the movie in some of the CattlePunk strips that appeared in KODT. I know the movie was panned by critics at the time but it never fails to make me belly-laugh.

Speaking of the 'Duke' this movie stars John Wayne's son, Patrick as the 'hired gun'. Like you I've been turning friends on to the movie for years and have been amazed no one has ever heard of it.

Jolly

Dear KODT,

Love the comic, it's great work and can always bring a laugh although I think the heartiest laugh my wife and I ever had was over the "summoning of the Ape-Shaman Warriors." That was absolutely hysterical. I loved it.

However, when I re-read the preceding chapter "Behind the Green Door", I looked at the events and noted something. In my experience gaming if anyone spent over 30 minutes examining a single room for traps, I would have just grabbed the thing long since and gotten it over with. I mean, there's careful, and there's insanely, anally paranoid, ya know?

Of course if that had happened, then we might not have been treated to that classic plunge from the bridge. LOL, I loved that. Keep up the great strips.

Greg Simoes
via E-mail

Dear KODT,

Hey I'm a avid reader of the adventures of the Knights since I chanced upon them in my monthly issue of **Dragon** magazine a few years ago and I must say that I have been hooked on the guys misadventures and attempts to RPG properly for some time.

However I do have a few comments on some things that I've noticed in the double sized 50th issue and the previous 49th that I didn't write a letter about earlier (*my shame indeed since I dearly love reading your mailbag and nothing would be better -*

hint hint- than seeing my letter inside.)

1. Bob commented about how there was a shortage of clerics with spells to end their "unfortunate time of death" due to a deal a certain ex-henchman of Sarah's made with his armies. Bob hinted that even dead he was haunting them, I must have missed an issue but WHO KILLED LORD GILEAD?

2. Merga Troll indeed...in the "Bronze Conch of Aaaaaahhhh" page 19 last panel the Troll uses a blatant trap to slaughter the KODT party and some 2003 unfortunate Ape-Gawd shaman. In the words of Brian Van Hoose, "Something ain't right".

Why would a "friendly troll" have such a trap? Me thinks B.A. cheated to allow the troll revenge.

3. Jolly, how could you reveal our secret DM meetings to the players!? Spies will be everywhere next meeting!

I'd appreciate some answers if you could spare the space Mr. Blackburn. Finally while I love the profiles detailing the various new cast members to the already colorful population of the Muncie area but I'm hoping you might keep the book focused on the Knights, there are plenty of untold stories about B.A. and his crew and while I love Patty and Pete and all the rest I'm worried they might eventually take a backseat to everyone else. So please reassure me we will always see the Knights in their numero uno spot in your magazine.

Charles Phipps
via E-mail

Okay, let's see if we can get you those answers.

1. Apparently a lot of readers were confused by Bob's comment. My bad — it didn't occur to me the remark could be interpreted two different ways. Bob was actually saying Gilead was still a pain in their asses (Knuckles, El Ravager and Teflon Billy) even though THEY were dead. Meaning, they couldn't get their characters raised because Gilead had all the high level priests in the area tied up.

2. Now, I'm just guessing on this one. (B.A. wouldn't let me look at his campaign notes.) As you recall, the Knights took the very narrow gnome-engineered mountain trail to the **Dungeons of Kreatin Faarpang**. Apparently, the Merga-Troll knew they would have to return via the same route. After arming his trap, all he had to do was wait for them. (Are you buying this?) A more likely explanation lies in the reason the Gnome Titans built the mountain trails in the first place. (To supply their army during the Gnome Uprisings). The bridges were probably rigged with traps to prevent enemy soldiers from using them. (Cast 'Dodge Issue' on Self)

3. Secret GM meetings? What secret GM meetings?

As for your plea for a reassurance that the Knights will ALWAYS hold center stage in the magazine, don't worry — their status is safe. After all, the magazine IS called **Knights of the Dinner Table**.

Jolly

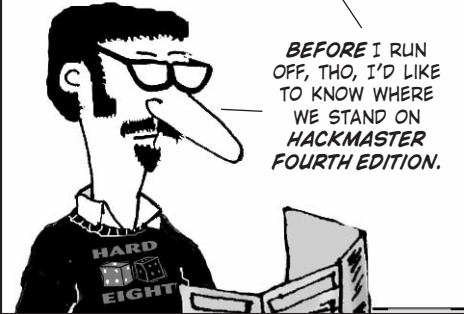
□

Managing the Beast(s)

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN
WITH TONY DIGEROLAMO

HARD EIGHT ENTERPRISES... CONCLUSION OF THE WEEKLY GAME

OKAY, FOLKS. THAT'S A WRAP FOR THIS WEEK. I'VE GOTTA GET OUT TO THE PLANE IF I WANT TO MAKE THAT "MEETING" IN RENO TONIGHT. I'LL TALLY UP YOUR EXPERIENCE POINTS ON THE PLANE AND E-MAIL THEM TO YA FROM THE HOTEL.



BEFORE I RUN OFF, THO, I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHERE WE STAND ON HACKMASTER FOURTH EDITION.

SO LET'S QUICKLY GO AROUND THE TABLE. I WANT AN UPDATE FROM EACH OF YOUR DEPARTMENTS. EDMUND? HOW 'BOUT YOU? WHERE YOU AT?

UH, I'M SITTING GOOD, SIR. I JUST RECEIVED THE ARTWORK FOR THE GM SCREEN LATE LAST NIGHT. I GOT THE ART DEPARTMENT HUMMING ON IT NOW. I'LL HAVE BLUELINES ON YOUR DESK FOR APPROVAL FIRST THING MONDAY MORNING.

EXCELLENT! GOOD MAN! I'M GOING TO SHIFT YOU BACK TO THE PLAYER'S HANDBOOK WITH JO JO. HE HAS HIS HANDS FULL UPDATING THOSE NEW APPENDICES.

OH THANK GAWD! I CAN USE THE HELP. TULEY MADE A MESS OF THOSE OFFICIAL MAP SYMBOL LISTS.

SURE THING, SIR.



HOW 'BOUT PLAYTESTING, WACO? WHAT'S THE FEEDBACK BEEN LIKE FROM THE PLAYTESTER CAMPS ON THOSE LATEST REVISIONS?

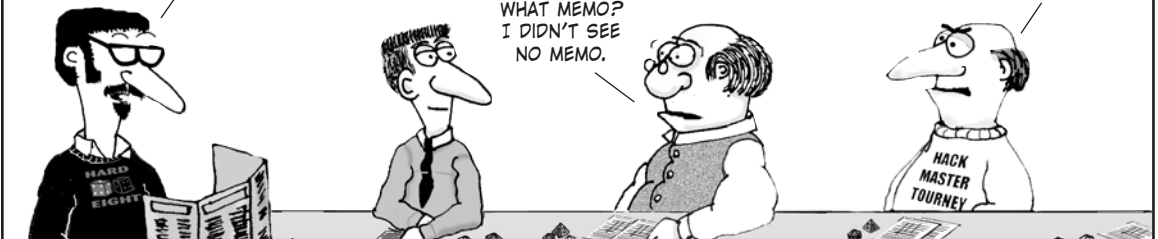
FAIR TO MIDDLIN', GEE-JAY, BUT WE'RE GETTING REAMED ON THE PLAYER AFTER-GAME EVALUATIONS. THE PLAYTESTERS ARE ANNOYED OVER SOME OF THE CHANGES WE MADE TO THE MONK. BUT THEY'RE DOWN RIGHT PISSY THAT WE YANKED THE FREELANCE ASSASSIN CHARACTER CLASS. MATTER OF FACT, ONE OF MY EVALUATORS WAS PUMMELED WITH DICE BAGS DOWN AT GULAG 17.* IT TOOK TWELVE STITCHES TO...

WHOAH! HOLD ON. I THOUGHT I MADE THE CALL TO PUT THE FREELANCE ASSASSIN BACK IN? DIDN'T YOU GET JO JO'S MEMO?

UH...MEMO?

-SIGH- WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO START CHECKIN' YER E-MAIL, WACO. I SENT UP THOSE REVISIONS A WEEK AGO.

WHAT MEMO? I DIDN'T SEE NO MEMO.



B-B-BUT, SIR, THE EGG HEADS DOWN IN THE A.C.T. LAB CLEARLY INDICATED IN THEIR RED-LINE REPORT THAT THE FREELANCER ASSASSIN IS A CAMPAIGN BUSTER!

YEAH, YEAH, I READ THAT REPORT. AND THEY'RE WRONG!!! IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED AFTER TWENTY-SIX YEARS IN THE BUSINESS IT'S THAT YOU ALWAYS GIVE JOE GAMER WHAT JOE GAMER WANTS!!



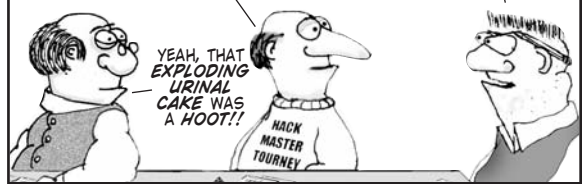
AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO, CAPEESH??!!

ER, YES, GEE-JAY. SORRY, GEE-JAY.

HMMRRRFFF!!! I'VE NEVER REALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT THOSE LABCOATS DO ANYWAY -- EXCEPT PULL OFF INTERESTING PRANKS AT THE CHRISTMAS PARTY EVERY YEAR. WHAT THE HELL DOES A.C.T. STAND FOR ANYWAY?

ACCELERATED CAMPAIGN TESTING. THEY ATTEMPT TO RED-LINE THE GAME ENGINE BY SIMULATING A LONG TERM CAMPAIGN IN THE SPACE OF JUST A FEW WEEKS.

SOUNDS LIKE VOODOO SCIENCE TO ME.

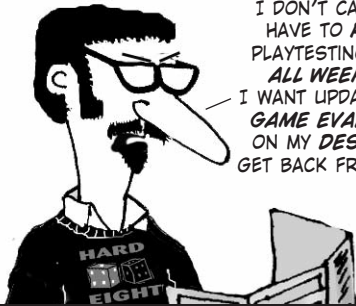


YEAH, THAT EXPLODING URINAL CAKE WAS A HOOT!!

* See *Bundle of Trouble Volume Eight [KODT #24]* "Gulag 17" - Hard Eight Enterprises operates a series of Playtester Camps where 'volunteers' are provided room and board in exchange for intense play-testing of Hard Eight Product. An ingenious series of blind-test groups coupled with detailed after-game evaluations/debriefings have led to the camps sometimes actually writing/generating new product (without their knowledge of course).

YEAH, WELL, JUST SO WE'RE ALL **CLEAR** ABOUT THIS, I WANT THE **ASSASSIN** BACK IN THE **FRICKIN RULES!!** YOU **HEAR ME?**

THEN I WANT THE **4-E ENGINE** **SHOVED** BACK THROUGH **PLAYTESTING**. **CRANK UP THE CAMPAIGN ACCELERATION!!**



I DON'T CARE IF YOU HAVE TO **RIDE** THE **PLAYTESTING DIVISION ALL WEEKEND --** I WANT **UPDATED AFTER GAME EVALUATIONS** ON MY **DESK** WHEN I GET BACK FROM **RENO!!**

I SWEAR TO GAWD I DON'T KNOW WHAT GETS INTO YOU GUYS SOMETIMES. EVERY TIME WE DO ONE OF THESE **NEW EDITIONS** OF **HACKMASTER** YOU GET ALL **WEAK-KNEED** ON ME AND START **SECOND GUESSING** MY DECISIONS. REMEMBER WHEN I **INSISTED** ON **BEEFING UP** THE **DEMONS** IN **2ND EDITION??**

BUT SIR, I ONLY **SUGGESTED** CHANGING THE NAME OF "**DEMONS**" TO "**NE'ER-DO-WELLS**" TO HELP **BOLSTER** SALES IN THE **BIBLE BELT**.

PLAYER'S WANNA SLAY **DEMONS**, EDMLIND. **NE'ER-DO-WELLS** SOUNDS LIKE A **PETTY THIEF** WHO REGRETS HAVING MADE A **BAD CAREER CHOICE**.

HEH! WE **RULE!** OUR **DEMONS** GO TO **TYPE ELEVEN** NOW.



YOU'RE **RIGHT** OF COURSE, SIR.

SO HOW THE HELL IS THE **PLAYER'S HANDBOOK** COMING ALONG, **JO JO**. AT LAST WEEK'S MEETING YOU SEEMED **CONFIDENT** WE COULD GO TO **PRESS** BY THE END OF THE MONTH.

OH, WE'RE **ACES** ON THE **PLAYER'S BOOK**, **GARY!** I JUST NEED TO FINISH UP THOSE **APPENDICES** AND WORK SOME **KINKS** OUT OF THE **UPDATED SPELL LISTS**.

JES WHAT I WANTED TO HEAR! HEY, THAT REMINDS ME, DID YOU GET THOSE LAST MINUTE ADDITIONS TO THE **SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT CANTRIPS** I WORKED UP?

I SURE DID. AND **THANK YOU!** REAL **SOLID STUFF**, **GARY**. I'VE ALREADY PUT THEM IN THE **BOOK**.



GOOD JOB!

AND YOU'LL BE **HAPPY** TO KNOW THAT MY **TEAM** WORKED OUT THOSE **BUGS** IN THE **CHAIN-CASTING RULES** TOO.

OH, AND WE **TRICKED-OUT** THE **BOUNCING BETTY FIREBALL** LIKE YOU ASKED.

YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE WHAT WE DID WITH THAT **SPELL**. IT REALLY **ROUNDS OUT** THE **BATTLAMAGE**.

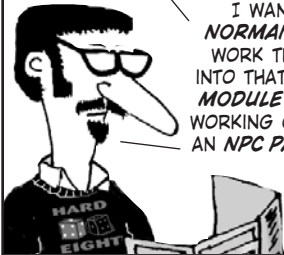


WE MIGHT WANT TO PUT A **WARNING LABEL** ON THAT **SPELL**. -SNICKER-

EXCELLENT!! JUST WHAT I WANTED TO HEAR.

BY THE WAY, I WANT YOU TO GIVE THOSE **CHARACTERS** I BOUGHT ON **HACK-BAY** A FEW WEEKS AGO TO **NORMAN***. YOU'LL FIND THEM ON MY **COMPUTER** IN MY OFFICE.

I WANT **NORMAN** TO WORK THEM INTO THAT **NEW MODULE** HE'S WORKING ON AS AN **NPC PARTY**.



NOW HOW 'BOUT THE **HACKLOPEDIA OF BEASTS**? I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY **NEW H.O.B. MATERIAL** IN MY BOX IN **NEARLY A MONTH**. WE'RE STILL ON **SCHEDULE --** RIGHT?

UH....ER...WELL, S-SIR, TO TELL YA THE **TRUTH** I'VE BEEN WANTING TO **TALK** TO YOU ABOUT THE **HACKLOPEDIA**. -GULP-

OH GAWD. I **KNOW** THAT LOOK. HOW **BAD** IS IT, **JO JO**? AM I GOING TO HAVE TO **HAND THE BALL** TO SOMEONE ELSE?

ACTUALLY, SIR, COULD WE DISCUSS THIS IN **PRIVATE**?



* See **KODT #51** "A Bid Too Far" — The Knights put their characters (The Untouchable Trio) up for auction on Hack-Bay. The characters go for an ungodly price to an 'anonymous' bidder.

IN PRIVATE? THAT'S *NONSENSE*. WE'RE ONE *BIG FAMILY* HERE. YOU CAN SAY YOUR *PIECE* IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS. YA GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? SPIT IT OUT?

WELL....S-SIR, IT'S ABOUT *TIMMY*. YOU SEE HE....ER, -SIGH- GOSH, *GARY*, YOU *KNOW* I LOVE THE LITTLE *TYKE* BUT...

TIMMY? WHAT'S MY *SON* HAVE TO DO WITH IT? ISN'T HE KEEPING UP ON HIS *QUOTA*?

ACTUALLY, SIR, THAT'S THE *PROBLEM*. HE *IS* KEEPING UP ON HIS *QUOTA*. THE LITTLE GUY IS *CRANKING* OUT *MONSTERS* OUT AS FAST AS HE CAN.



THEN I *FAIL* TO SEE THE *PROBLEM*. WE PROMISED *TIMMY* HE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE *HACKLOPEDIA* SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE -- SO LONG AS HE *MET* YOUR *DEADLINES*.



BUT SIR, WHEN I *AGREED* TO THAT PROPOSAL I THOUGHT HE'D WRITE *ONE* OR *TWO*, LOSE INTEREST, AND THAT WOULD BE THE *END* OF IT.

BUT IT'S GETTING OUT OF HAND. AS OF *FRIDAY* HE'S TURNED IN *ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY SEVEN* *MONSTERS*.

EGAADSS!! I'VE ONLY MANAGED TO DO *FIVE* OR *SIX*. HOW DOES HE DO IT?



ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY SEVEN??!! IN THE SPACE OF A WEEK? *MY BOY DID THAT?* HEH, HEH, LOOKS LIKE *JUNIOR* IS GOING TO BE A *PROLIFIC WRITER* -- JUST LIKE HIS *OLD MAN*.

I *STILL* DON'T SEE THE *PROBLEM* HERE, JO JO. SOUNDS LIKE THE KID IS UPHOLDING *HIS* END OF THE DEAL.

BUT, *GARY*, YA *KINDA* PROMISED THE KID WE WOULD PUBLISH *ANYTHING* HE *TURNED IN*. YOU GOT MY BACK AGAINST THE *WALL* ON THIS ONE.

W-W-WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? HIS *STUFF* ISN'T UP TO *SNUFF*?

TO BE HONEST, SIR...



HIS *MATERIAL* IS A LITTLE... WELL, IT'S NOT *EXACTLY* WHAT I HAD IN... -SIGH-

WHAT I'M *TRYING* TO SAY IS....

GO AHEAD, *JO JO!* TELL 'IM! THE *KID'S STUFF BLOWS!!*



MAYBE IT WOULD BE EASIER TO JUST *SHOW* YOU WHAT I MEAN.

FOR EXAMPLE HERE'S ONE *TIMMY* DID THE FOR THE *GIANT BADGER*.

I THINK IT PRETTY MUCH SAYS IT *ALL*.



HACKLOPEDIA WORKSHEET

Creature Name: BADGER, GYANT

Contributor: Timmy Jackson

STATS: [Use Form Alpha-32 and attach]

DESCRIPTION: This isn't like all the other badgers. This is a gyant badger. It is really big. Bigger than you. Gyant badgers look all scary, because they're big, but they can be nice if you feed them fish. Gyant badgers need to eat a lot of fish because they're big.

COMBAT/TACTICS: The gyant Badgers don't like people, so they run away. But, if you go to Badgerland*, then the Giant Badger gets really mad and bites you. It's big, so the bite hurts a lot. If you take the badger's fish, he bites whoever took it. If you feed the badger fish, then he purrs.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: Badgers like to dig holes, so gyant Badgers dig gyant holes. Some holes are 1000' wide and 1,000,000' deep. Badgers never fall into the holes because they dug it and they are big. People who fall down the badger hole get hurt and then the badger buries them. Badgers like to play at night and go fishing.

ECOLOGY: Gyant badgers have gyant babies. The Daddy Badger and the Mommy Badger have the Baby Badgers. Sometimes the Daddy Badger leaves and only sees the Baby Badger on the week-ends, but the Daddy Badger isn't mean and the Mommy Badger still loves him.

YIELD:

Medicinal: The blood makes you brave. (cures cowardice)

Spell Components: The heart is good. (can be used to make potion of Heroism)

Hide/Trophy Items: The fur is worth 10-30gp

Treasure: Fish

Other: Stinky gland. (scent can be used to drive away other animals)



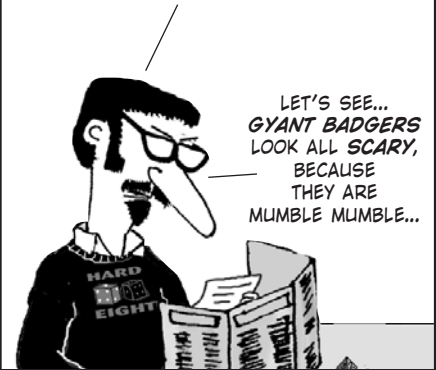
SKETCH CREATURE IN SPACE ABOVE FOR ARTIST GUIDANCE

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, JO JO. I DIDN'T SAY THE KID'S STUFF WOULDN'T NEED A LITTLE EDITING. CRIPES!! HE'S ONLY EIGHT YEARS OLD. BUT EVEN SO -- IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD.



WORK WITH ME ON THIS -- WILL YAP?

OKAY, OKAY, SO HE MISPELLED GIANT!! BIG DEAL!!! YOU NEVER HEARD OF A SPELL CHECKER?? NO NEED TO GET YOUR DICEBAG ALL IN A WAD OVER IT.



LET'S SEE... GYANT BADGERS LOOK ALL SCARY, BECAUSE THEY ARE MUMBLE MUMBLE...

A FEW MOMENTS LATER....

...SOMETIMES THE DADDY BADGER AND THE MOMMY BADGER...

-CHOKE- -SPUTTER-



-SIGH- OKAY, JO JO. I SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK. SOON AS I GET BACK FROM RENO, I'LL HAVE A LONG TALK WITH THE KID.

THANK YOU, GARY. SORRY TO HAVE TO BRING THIS TO YOUR ATTENTION AND ALL.

NO PROBLEM. YER JUST DOING' YER JOB. GO AHEAD AND SET HIS STUFF ASIDE. WE'LL DEAL WITH IT LATER. AND...UH, DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO TIMMY ABOUT THIS.

OF COURSE NOT, SIR.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

SIR?? IT'S A QUARTER TIL. YOU'RE GOING TO MISS YOUR PLANE.

YEAH, YEAH. PULL THE CAR AROUND. I'LL BE RIGHT OUT.

-SIGH- I REALLY HAVE TO START SPENDING MORE TIME WITH THAT BOY.



Cantrip Me Up

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN

RECAP: THE KNIGHTS HAVE ROLLED UP NEW CHARACTERS AND ARE IN THE PROCESS OF INTRODUCING THEIR IN-GAME PERSONAE TO B.A. AND EACH OTHER.

LAST ISSUE, BOB REVEALED HIS HUMAN-CLERIC, **CUDGEL BANE-FORGER** WHO FOLLOWS A "RELIGION OF HIS OWN DESIGN" -- THE NEWLY INDUCTED GAWD, **KNU-KYLE-RA: GAWD OF THE WALL CLIMBERS** (FORMERLY KNOWN AS **KNUCKLES: KING OF THE WALL CLIMBERS.**)

NOW IT'S **DAVE**'S TURN TO INTRODUCE HIS **GNOME MAGIC-USER.**

OKAY, DAVE, LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE UP. I'VE GOT YOU DOWN HERE FOR A **GNOME MAGIC-USER.** GO AHEAD AND TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT HIM.

WELL, THE LITTLE GUY'S NAME IS **GARSTANG NARVAR'STAFF.** SINCE YOU DIDN'T SPECIFY WHAT TYPE OF GNOME I HAD TO PLAY I WENT WITH ONE OF THE **GNOME-HYBRIDS** RATHER THAN A **TRUE GNOME.** I HOPE THAT'S OKAY.

WELL...YEAH, I SUPPOSE. **WISH** YOU'D CLEARED IT WITH ME, THOUGH.

NARVAR'STAFF? KEWL! THAT WAS THE NAME OF **POADRUS THE DARK MAGE'S** SCROLL CADDY IN **HACKMASTERS OF EVERKNIGHT.**

WHICH **GNOME-VARIANT** ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?



GNOME TITAN!! THOSE GUYS **ROCK ASS!** NOT ONLY DO THEY GET +2 TO THEIR **STRENGTH** RIGHT OFF THE BAT BUT THEY **ATTACK** AT ONE LEVEL **HIGHER** THAN THEIR ACTUAL **EXPERIENCE LEVEL.**

DUDE, ARE YOU FOR **REAL?** YOU'RE RUNNING A FRICKIN' **GNOME TITAN?** THEY ONLY GO UP IN HITPOINTS AT **HALF** THE RATE OF REGULAR **GNOMES.**

HE'S RIGHT, DAVE. **GNOME TITANS** AREN'T REALLY **BUILT** TO TAKE MUCH DAMAGE.

YEAH, BUT THEY CAN REALLY **DISH** IT OUT.



SURE, THEY CAN DISH IT OUT. BUT **GNOME TITANS** ARE A **MILITANT RACE!** THE MORALE OF A **GNOME TITAN UNIT** IS VIRTUALLY **UNBREAKABLE.** THEIR **STRENGTH** LIES IN **ATTACKING** IN **GREAT NUMBERS.**

SOMETHING YOU'LL BE **DEPRIVED** OF AS AN **ADVENTURER.**

I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST.



YEAH, YEAH, I **KNOW** ALL THAT. BUT CHECK **THIS** OUT. ACCORDING TO THE **PLAYER'S HANDBOOK,** GNOME TITANS **RETAIN** THEIR **GROIN-STOMP** SPECIAL ATTACK EVEN AS **MAGIC-USERS** IF THEY SPECIALIZE AS A **BATTLEMAGE.**

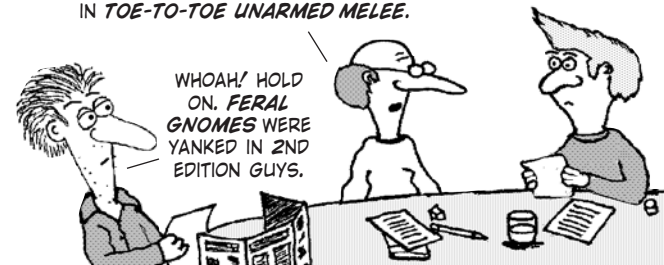


DUDE, I DON'T MEAN TO **SLAM** YER CHARACTER AND ALL WITHOUT KNOWING **ALL** THE FACTS BUT **SO FAR** HE'S SOUNDING PRETTY **LAME.**

A **GNOME FRICKIN' TITAN?** THAT'S THE **BEST** YOU COULD DO? AS LONG AS **B.A.** IS ALLOWING YOU TO RUN WITH A **GNOME-VARIANT** WHY NOT THE **FERAL GNOME?**

THEY'RE NOT MUCH TO **LOOK** AT BUT THEY'RE SOME **MEAN SONUVABITCHES** IN **TOE-TO-TOE UNARMED MELEE.**

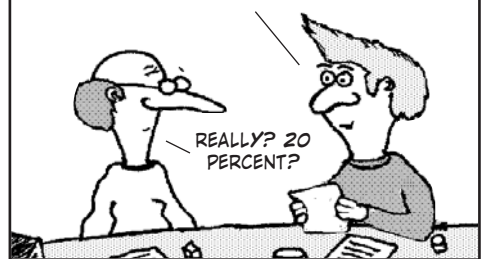
WHOA! HOLD ON. **FERAL GNOMES** WERE YANKED IN 2ND EDITION GUYS.

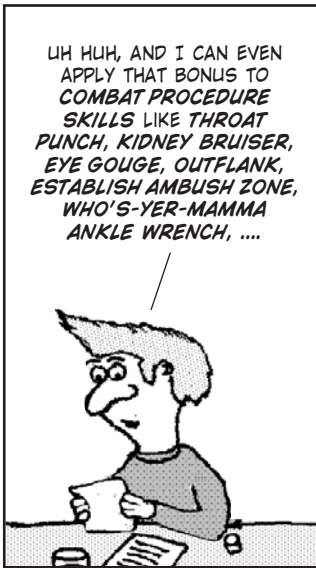


LOOK, I **HEAR** YER CONCERN AND ALL, BUT I'M **TELLIN'** YA -- THIS GUY HAS **GREAT** POTENTIAL. BECAUSE OF HIS **INBRED** MILITANT NATURE, HE GETS A 20 PERCENT BONUS WHEN ADVANCING IN ANY **SKILL** DEALING WITH A **MILITARY DISCIPLINE.**

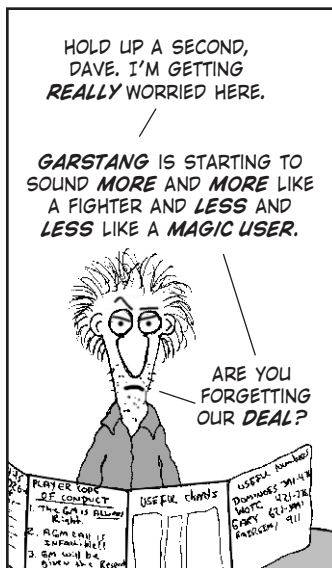
OF COURSE, I'M NOT SAYIN' I DON'T NEED TO **TRICK** HIM OUT A BIT. THAT'S WHY I **BURNED** A FEW **ATTRIBUTE POINTS.** I **ALSO** TOOK ON A FEW **FLAWS** TO EARN SOME **BUILDING POINTS** SO I COULD BUY **MORE** SKILLS.

REALLY? 20 PERCENT?





UH HUH, AND I CAN EVEN APPLY THAT BONUS TO COMBAT PROCEDURE SKILLS LIKE THROAT PUNCH, KIDNEY BRUISER, EYE GOUGE, OUTFLANK, ESTABLISH AMBUSH ZONE, WHO'S-YER-MAMMA ANKLE WRENCH,



HOLD UP A SECOND, DAVE. I'M GETTING REALLY WORRIED HERE.

GARSTANG IS STARTING TO SOUND MORE AND MORE LIKE A FIGHTER AND LESS AND LESS LIKE A MAGIC USER.

ARE YOU FORGETTING OUR DEAL?



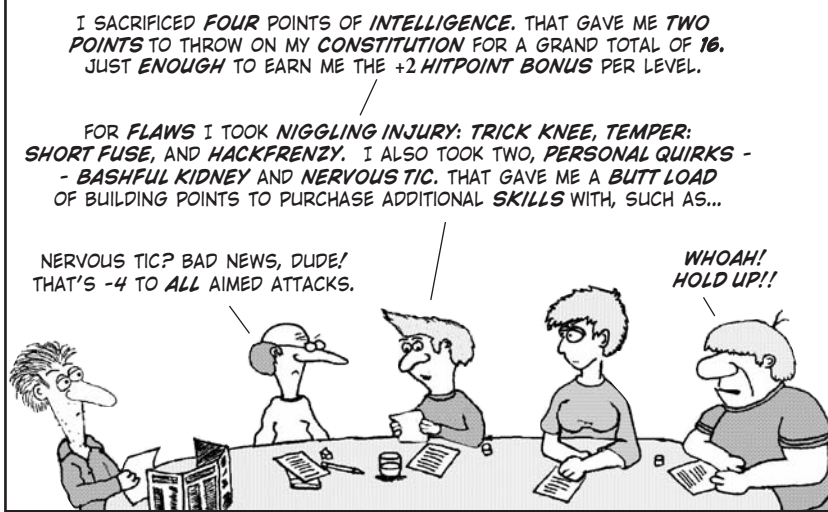
DEAL? OH....NO, NOT AT ALL. HE'S TOTALLY A MAGIC-USER DUDE. A BATTLEMAGE!

IT'S NOT MY FAULT HE COMES FROM A PROUD WARRIOR RACE.

UH HUH, SURE, DAVE. CONTINUE. I'M VERY INTERESTED IN HEARING MORE ABOUT LITTLE GARSTANG.

SURE.

FIVE MINUTES LATER....

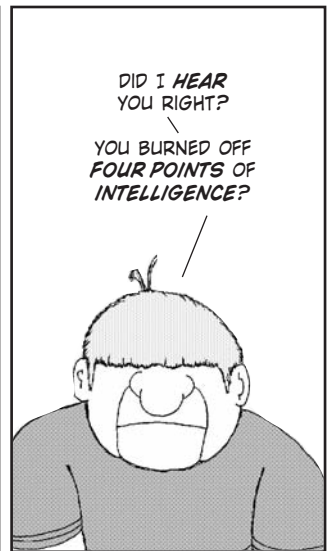


I SACRIFICED FOUR POINTS OF INTELLIGENCE. THAT GAVE ME TWO POINTS TO THROW ON MY CONSTITUTION FOR A GRAND TOTAL OF 16. JUST ENOUGH TO EARN ME THE +2 HITPOINT BONUS PER LEVEL.

FOR FLAWS I TOOK NIGGLING INJURY: TRICK KNEE, TEMPER: SHORT FUSE, AND HACKFRENZY. I ALSO TOOK TWO, PERSONAL QUIRKS - BASHFUL KIDNEY AND NERVOUS TIC. THAT GAVE ME A BUTT LOAD OF BUILDING POINTS TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL SKILLS WITH, SUCH AS...

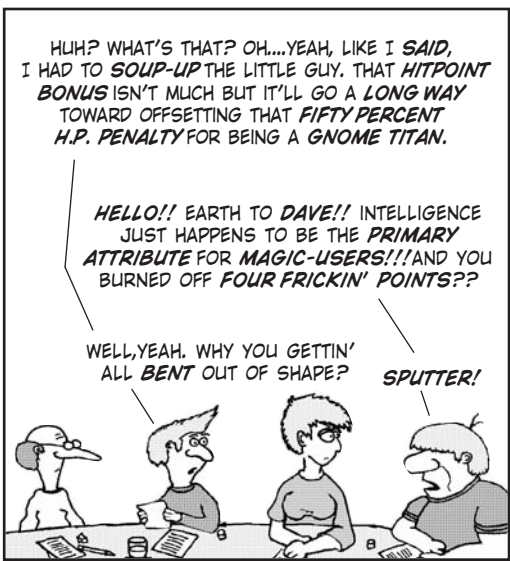
NERVOUS TIC? BAD NEWS, DUDE! THAT'S -4 TO ALL AIMED ATTACKS.

WHOA! HOLD UP!!



DID I HEAR YOU RIGHT?

YOU BURNED OFF FOUR POINTS OF INTELLIGENCE?

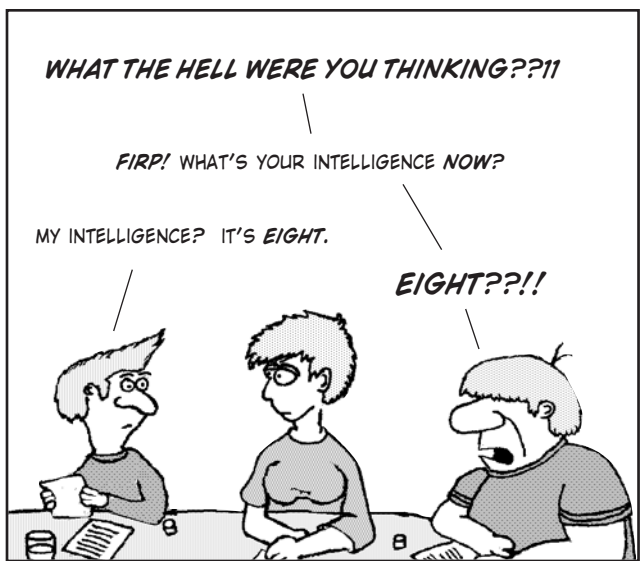


HUH? WHAT'S THAT? OH....YEAH, LIKE I SAID, I HAD TO SOUP-UP THE LITTLE GUY. THAT HITPOINT BONUS ISN'T MUCH BUT IT'LL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD OFFSETTING THAT FIFTY PERCENT H.P. PENALTY FOR BEING A GNOME TITAN.

HELLO!! EARTH TO DAVE!! INTELLIGENCE JUST HAPPENS TO BE THE PRIMARY ATTRIBUTE FOR MAGIC-USERS!!! AND YOU BURNED OFF FOUR FRICKIN' POINTS??

WELL, YEAH. WHY YOU GETTIN' ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE?

SPUTTER!



WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING???!

FIRP! WHAT'S YOUR INTELLIGENCE NOW?

MY INTELLIGENCE? IT'S EIGHT.

EIGHT???!

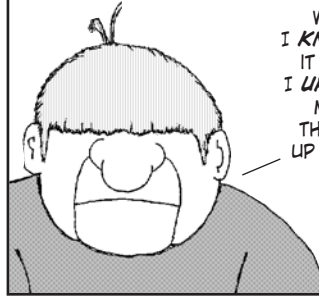
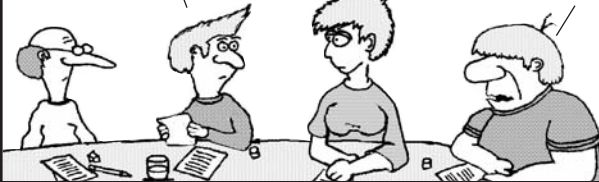
DAVE, I THINK YOU **GOOFED!** IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN YOU NEED AT LEAST A **NINE INTELLIGENCE** TO BE A MAGE.

YEAH, **NORMALLY**. BUT **GNOME TITANS** ONLY NEED AN **EIGHT** TO LAY CLAIM TO **MAGIC-USER** STATUS. SAYS SO IN THE **HANDBOOK**.

YOU SHOULD'VE READ THE **WHOLE** PARAGRAPH, DAVE. **EIGHT INTELLIGENCE** MEANS YOU CAN **ONLY** CAST **CANTRIPS** - **EVER!!**

NO MATTER HOW MANY **LEVELS** YOU GO UP IN **EXPERIENCE** YOU'LL **NEVER** HAVE ACCESS TO **FIRST LEVEL SPELLS!!!**

I **KNEW** THIS WOULD HAPPEN. I **KNEW** YOU'D SCREW IT UP. THAT'S WHY I **URGED** YOU TO LET ME **COACH** YOU THROUGH ROLLING UP A **MAGIC-USER**.



NOW BRIAN, TO BE **FAIR** THE REASON **B.A.** FORCED US TO PLAY CHARACTERS THAT WERE **NEW** AND **DIFFERENT** WAS SO WE'D ALL HAVE A CHANCE TO **LEARN** AND **EXPERIENCE** NEW THINGS. DAVE WILL HAVE TO **LIVE** AND **LEARN** FROM HIS OWN MISTAKES. IT'LL BE **GOOD** FOR HIM.

NO, YOU DON'T **GET** IT, SARA. DAVE **SCREWED** US **ALL** OVER.

WE **ALL** HAVE TO **LIVE** WITH HIS **BOTCHED** CHARACTER. HE **JUST** DEPRIVED THE **PARTY** OF ALL THE **BENEFIT** OF ALL THE **MAGICAL SPELLS** HE **SHOULD** HAVE HAD.

DAVE, HE HAS A **DARN GOOD** POINT. IF WE WANT OUR **PARTY** TO **COMPETE** IN **HACK-TOURNEY** WE NEED A **WELL-ROUNDED** GROUP. MAYBE YOU SHOULD ASK **B.A.** IF YOU CAN **ROLL** UP A **NEW** **GNOME MAGIC USER** FROM **SCRATCH**.

ROLL UP A **NEW** CHARACTER ? ARE YOU **NUTS?** WITH AN **1875** **STRENGTH???**

NO WAY!!! JUST BECAUSE I'M A **MAGIC USER** DOESN'T MEAN I HAVE TO HAVE **SPELLS**.

I'M **FINE** WITH **CANTRIPS**.

YA CAN'T MAKE ME **RE-ROLL!**



YOU'RE **RIGHT** DAVE. I CAN'T **MAKE** YOU **RE-ROLL** YOUR CHARACTER. YOU'VE MET WITH THE **LETTER** OF MY CONDITIONS IF NOT THE **SPIRIT**. -SIGH- BUT, SOMETHING **ELSE** JUST OCCURRED TO ME. IF I'M NOT **MISTAKEN** ALL **GNOME TITANS** MUST **WORSHIP** THE **GNOMISH GAWD OF WAR, PANGRUS**. **GNOME TITANS** DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER **OPTIONS** WHEN IT COMES TO A **PATRON GAWD**.

OH...YEAH. I THINK I REMEMBER **READING** THAT SOMEWHERE.

THAT MEANS WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO **BACK TRACK** A BIT, SINCE, AS IT TURNS OUT **GARSTANG** CAN'T **CONVERT** TO **BOB'S GAWD, KNU-KYLE RA!**

WHICH **UNFORTUNATELY**, FOR YOU, **BOB**, **ALSO** MEANS THAT...

?

UH OH...



...YOU **DON'T** GET THE **2,000** **EXPERIENCE** POINTS* FOR CONVERTING **GARSTANG**.*

WHAT?

SO YOU **DON'T** GAIN A **LEVEL** OF **EXPERIENCE** AFTER ALL. **SORRY**.

HUH?

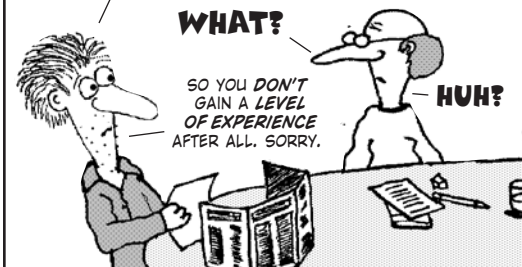
A WEE BIT LATER....

NO! NO!! I **WON'T** DROP IT! YOU **HEAR** ME?? YOU **JUST** **COST** ME A **FUCKIN' LEVEL**. **CUDGEL BANE-FORGER** WILL **NOT** FORGET THIS.

A **MAGIC-USER** WHO **CAN'T** CAST **SPELLS?**

YOU **BETTER** **WATCH** YER **BACK!**

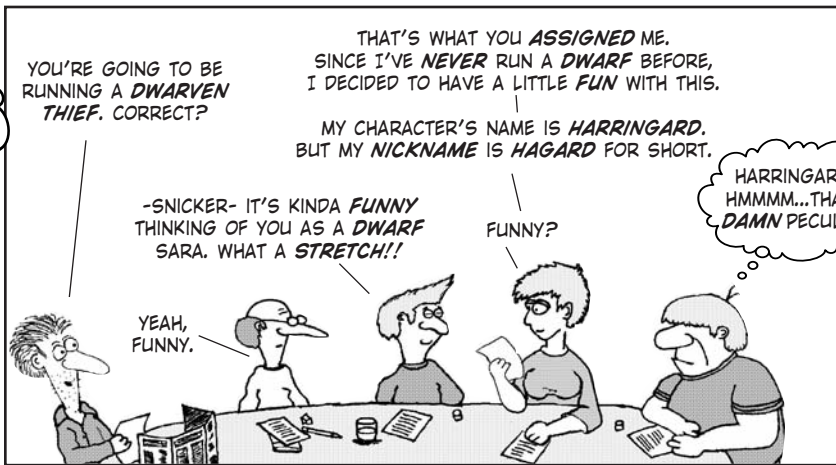
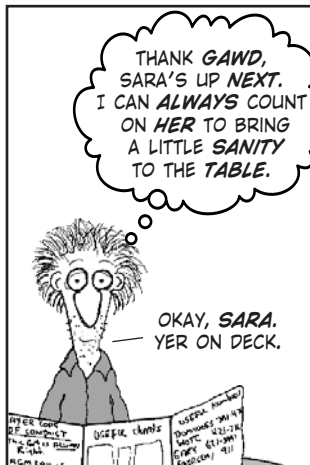
TELL **SOMEBODY** WHO **CARES**.



*. See **KODT #52** "Temple of the Unknown Gawd" - Bob convinces the other players to 'convert' to his gawd thereby earning enough E.P.s to go up from fourth level to fifth. (500 e.p.s x the level the character converted)

One of the Boys

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN



MALE CHARACTER??!!

OH SARA, THAT'S GREAT! WHAT AN INCREDIBLE CHALLENGE FOR YOU AS A PLAYER.

I'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE WITH ALL THOSE **SEXIST RULES** WHICH PENALIZE **FEMALE PLAYERS**.

IF I HAVE TO HAVE A **BEARD** AND TAKE A HIT ON **STRENGTH** JUST FOR BEING **FEMALE** I FIGURED I MIGHT AS WELL PLAY A **MALE DWARF**.

THAT'S **OUTRAGEOUS!** **EEEEWWWWW!!!**

B-B-BUT YOU CAN'T DO THAT?

OH? AND WHY NOT? I SEEM TO RECALL YOU GUYS PLAYED **FEMALE CHARACTERS**.*

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU **MADE** US. THAT WAS DIFFERENT. YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO **CIRCUMVENT** THE RULES AND AVOID THOSE **GENDER MODIFIERS**.

MAYBE I AM.

DEAL WITH IT!

C'MON SARA, YOU'RE **CREEPING** ME OUT. YOU'RE JUST PULLING OUR **LEG** -- RIGHT?

OH LORD, **PATTY** USED TO RUN A **MALE FIGHTER BERZERKER** NAMED **BLUDGEON DE'LEON**. SHE ALWAYS **INSISTED** ON **BUNKING** WITH MY **HALF-DWARF THIEF**.

I HAD TO QUIT THAT CAMPAIGN.

OH. DON'T **FRET**. I'M **SURE** YOU'LL WARM UP TO **HARRINGARD** IN **DUE** TIME. HE WAS **HEIR-APPARENT** TO THE **THRONE OF THE DWARVEN FORGE** BUT HIS **BROTHERS** BETRAYED HIM AND SET HIM UP. HE WAS **FALSELY** ACCUSED OF **HIGH TREASON** AND **BANISHED** FROM...

YEAH, YEAH, THAT'S **GREAT**. HOW MANY **HIT POINTS** DOES **SHE** HAVE?

NINE. AND IT'S NOT '**SHE**' IT'S '**HE**'.

WHAT **WEAPONS** IS **SHE** PROFICIENT IN?

SHE PREFERS **A...ER.. -GRRR--**

FIVE MINUTES LATER....

FOR THE **LAST TIME** HAGARD IS A "**HE**" NOT A "**SHE**". THE NEXT PERSON TO REFER TO **HER** AS A... ER, UH, I MEAN '**HIM**' AS A "**HE**" ER... I MEAN "**SHE**" IS GOING TO BE PICKING **KNUCKLE-BITS** OUT OF THEIR **TEETH!!**

WAIT TIL THEY FIND OUT SHE WENT WITH AN **ASSASSIN SUB-CLASS**.

BUT IT'S ALL SO **CONFUSING**. YER MAKIN' MY **HEAD HURT**.

MAYBE IF YOU DIDN'T SOUND SO MUCH LIKE **GOLDIE HAWN**. TRY PUTTIN' SOME **BASS** IN YER VOICE.

I STILL SAY WE'RE GONNA BE THE **LAUGHING STOCK** OF **HACKTOURNEY** IF WE SHOW UP WITH SOME **DAME-ASS DWARF** WHO'S A **GUY**.

* See *Bundle of Trouble Volume Four* [KODT #10] "Let the GM be a Lady Tonight" - When Sara sits in as GM she forces the group to play pre-generated female characters.

Long-Distance Warrior

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN
WITH BRIAN JELKE

WELL, LAST BUT NOT LEAST, IT LOOKS LIKE WE COME TO YOU, BRIAN.

I'M PARTICULARLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER.



LAST TIME YOU RAN A NON-MAGIC-USING CHARACTER DURING THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION.

OKAY, YOU STUCK ME WITH AN ELVEN RANGER SO I TOOK THE HAND DEALT TO ME AND DID WITH IT THE BEST I COULD. LIKE DAVE, I WENT WITH ONE OF THE RACIAL VARIANTS -- GREY ELF. THEY'RE MIGHTY HANDY WITH THE ELVEN LONG BOW AND THERE ARE SEVERAL MAJOR RELICS IN THE GM'S GUIDE WHICH ONLY A MEMBER OF THEIR KIND CAN USE.

GREY ELF YA SAY? KEWL! I BOUGHT SOME RIVER BOTTOM LAND OFF A GREY ELF ONCE. GAVE ME A VERY FAIR PRICE.

ONLY 4TH LEVEL AND YOU'RE ALREADY SETTING YOUR SITES ON MAJOR RELICS, EH?

HEY, RUDYAR'S BOW OF FURY IS ONE SWEET ELVEN RELIC!



ANY HOO, HIS NAME IS SHADOWGLYPH. HE WAS BORN IN THE LOWER RIFT VALLEY NEAR BROKEN HENGE. WHEN HE WAS ONLY FOUR HIS VILLAGE WAS BURNED OUT BY TAR GUT THE MOTTLED DRAGON UNDER ORDERS OF THE DRAGON COMMITTEE -- I'M NOT SURE WHY THO. ANYWAY I HAVE TAR GUT LISTED AS ONE OF MY HEREDITARY GRUDGES. LIL' SHADOWGLYPH WAS ORPHANED AS A RESULT OF THE DRAGON'S ATTACK AND HE WAS TAKEN IN BY A KINDLY UNCLE IN THE NEARBY VILLAGE OF GRIM FALLOW. HIS UNCLE WAS VILLAGE PROVIDER -- CHARGED WITH PROVIDING THE VILLAGERS WITH FRESH MEAT. IT WAS HIS JOB TO TRAIN AND LEAD THE ELVEN HUNTING PARTIES. THIS IS HOW I EMBARKED ON DOWN THE PATH OF BEING A RANGER. MY UNCLE TAUGHT ME TO TRACK GAME, SET TRAPS, THE ART OF MAPLESS TRAVEL AND ORIENTATION, IDENTIFY PLANTS, IDENTIFY ANIMALS BY TRACKS...

AWW MAN THAT BLOWS! ORPHANS GET SCREWED OVER AS FAR AS STARTING MONEY. -10 ON THEIR STARTING MONEY ROLL.

THEY TAKE A BIG HIT ON FAMILY HONOR AND SOCIAL CLASS TOO.

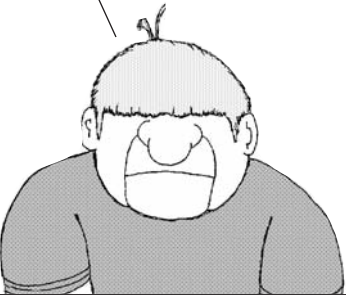
NICE BACKGROUND, BRIAN. I'M IMPRESSED.

HUH? OH, YEAH. THANKS.



FIVE MINUTES LATER....

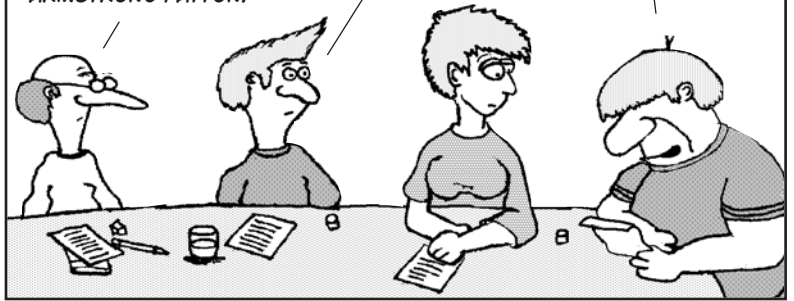
...SO BY TAKING SIX MAJOR FLAWS AND FOUR PERSONAL QUIRKS I WAS ABLE TO SCRAPE TOGETHER ENOUGH BUILDING POINTS TO BUY BOTH THE LEADERSHIP SKILL SUITE AND THE MILITARY OPERATIONS SKILL SUITE.



THAT NICELY ROUNDS OUT MY CHARACTER WITH SUCH SKILLS AS SIEGE CRAFT ENGINEERING, SIEGE CRAFT CONSTRUCTION, MAKESHIFT DEFENSE WORKS, HASTY DEFENSE WORKS, FORTIFICATION: ENGINEERING, FORTIFICATION: CONSTRUCTION, CAMPAIGN: LOGISTICS, DIPLOMACY, ORATION: ROUSE TROOPS, RECRUIT ARMY...

THAT'S NO ELF IT'S FRICKIN GEORGE ARMSTRONG PATTON!

DAMN! THE BIG GUY CAN SQUEEZE BUILDING POINTS OUT OF A ONE-SIDED DIE.



A WEE BIT LATER....

...LIKE I'VE ALWAYS SAID, IT ALWAYS PAYS TO THINK AHEAD WHEN CREATING A PLAYER CHARACTER AND WORKING THE NUMBERS AND RUNNING THROUGH YOUR OPTIONS. THE BIGGEST MISTAKE MOST PLAYERS MAKE IS THAT THEY'RE TOO SHORT SIGHTED. THEY'RE MUCH TOO CONCERNED ABOUT SURVIVING THE LOWER LEVELS. SADLY, WHEN THEY FINALLY REACH THOSE HIGHER LEVELS THEY FIND THAT THEY ARE LACKING THE SKILLS AND ABILITIES THEY NEED TO BE WORLD-SHAKERS. SHADOWGLYPH IS A DAMN GOOD EXAMPLE OF PLANNING TO SUCCEED!

YEAH, YEAH, WHATEVER. ALL I'M CONCERNED ABOUT IS HOW MUCH FIREPOWER YOU'RE GOING TO BE PACKIN'. OUR BREAD AND BUTTER AT THIS STAGE IN THE GAME IS GOING TO BE DUNGEON CRAWLING.

YEAH, IT'S ALL NICE AND GOOD THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LEAD ARMIES WHEN YOU'RE AT UMPTEENTH LEVEL BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?



I THINK THEY WANT TO KNOW IF YOU CAN HOLD YOUR OWN IN A FIGHT, BRIAN.

AS OUR ONLY FIGHTER-JOCK WE'RE GOING TO BE COUNTING ON YOU TO DEAL OUT DAMAGE TO THE ENEMY AS WELL AS TAKING IT.

SAY NO MORE! I'VE GOT IT COVERED.



I DIDN'T BURN ALL MY BUILDING POINTS ON TASK-RELATED SKILLS AND ACADEMIA. I APPLIED MOST OF THEM TO WEAPON PROFICIENCIES. I'M EXPERT AT THE SLING, THE LONGBOW, AND THE CROSSBOW NOT TO MENTION THE THROWING DART AND MOST WEAPONS IN THE PITCHED AND THROWING CLASS. I'M ALSO PROFICIENT IN THE USE OF SEVERAL CREWED WEAPONS SUCH AS TREBUCHET, CATAPULT, BALLISTA, SCORPIO, CHEIROBALISTRA, THE ONAGER, THE ORGAN GRINDER...

GEEZE LOUEEZE! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT HALF THAT STUFF IS.

ORGAN GRINDER?

-SIGH- I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE.

YEAH, IT'S LIKE A WOOD CHIPPER BUT...

UH... NEVER-MIND.

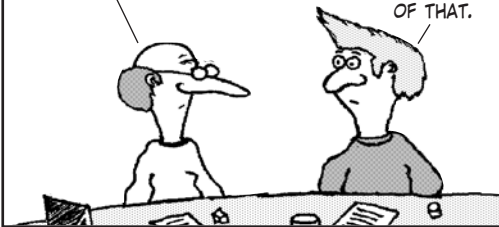


YOU'VE SEEN WHAT BEFORE?

CLASSIC MAGIC-ENVY. USUALLY HITS PLAYERS WHO'VE RUN A LOT OF MAGIC-USERS AND THEN SUDDENLY FIND THEMSELVES RUNNING A CHARACTER WITHOUT SUCH ABILITIES.

THEY TEND TO OVER COMPENSATE BY SPECIALIZING IN RANGED AND MISSILE BASED WEAPONRY.

OH YEAH. I'VE HEARD OF THAT.



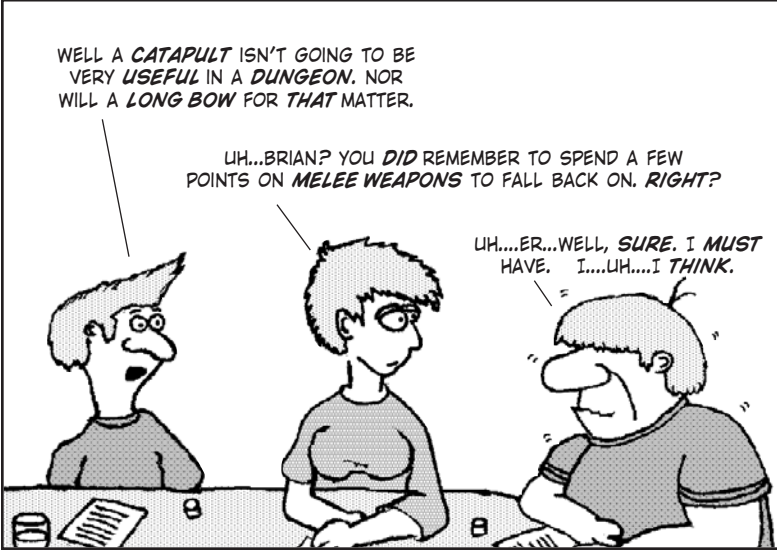
THAT'S INCREDIBLE, BRIAN. I'M SURE YOUR MASTERY OVER SUCH WEAPONS WILL BE OF IMMENSE VALUE TO THE PARTY IN THE MONTHS TO COME. BUT HOW DO YOU STAND AS FAR AS THE MORE TRADITIONAL MELEE WEAPONS?

UH...MELEE WEAPONS?

YEAH, WHAT KIND OF SWORD ARE YOU PACKIN'?

SWORD?





WELL A **CATAPULT** ISN'T GOING TO BE VERY **USEFUL** IN A **DUNGEON**. NOR WILL A **LONG BOW** FOR THAT MATTER.

UH...BRIAN? YOU **DID** REMEMBER TO SPEND A FEW POINTS ON **MELEE WEAPONS** TO FALL BACK ON. **RIGHT?**

UH....ER...WELL, **SURE**. I **MUST** HAVE. I....UH....I **THINK**.

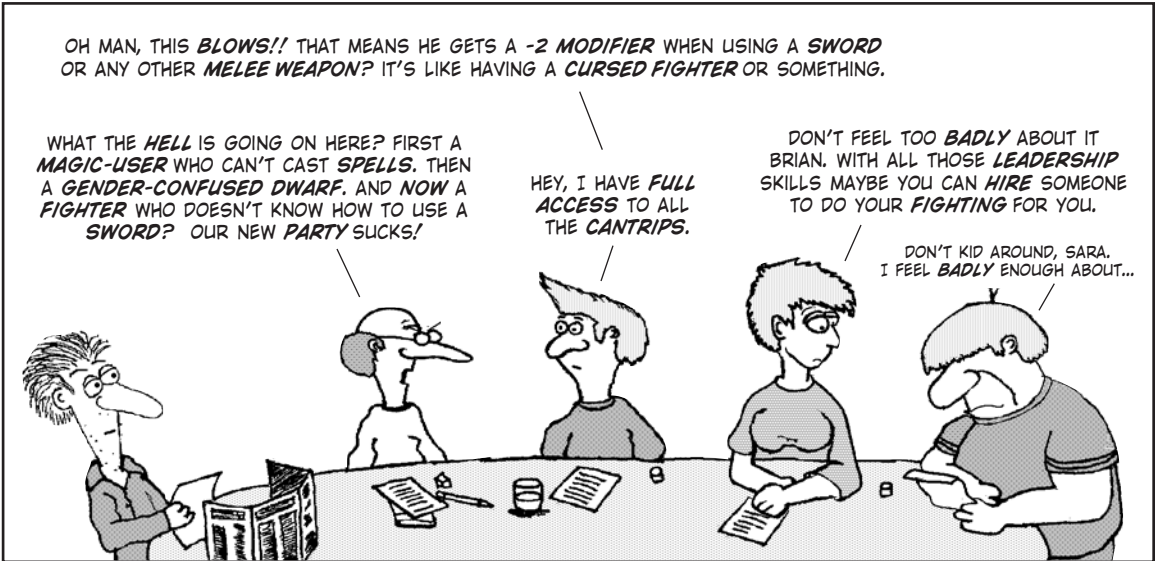


LET'S SEE HERE, **PROFICIENCIES**... MUMBLE MUMBLE....**LONGBOW**... MUMBLE MUMBLE....**CROSSBOW**... MUMBLE MUMBLE... **TOOL PROFICIENCIES**...MUMBLE MUMBLE...**TROWEL**...**TACK HAMMER**... **AUGER**... MUMBLE MUMBLE.. -GULP

OH BRIAN. NO **MELEE WEAPONS??**

NO, MAAM.

OH, DEAR.



OH MAN, THIS **BLOWS!!** THAT MEANS HE GETS A **-2 MODIFIER** WHEN USING A **SWORD** OR ANY OTHER **MELEE WEAPON**? IT'S LIKE HAVING A **CURSED FIGHTER** OR SOMETHING.

WHAT THE **HELL** IS GOING ON HERE? FIRST A **MAGIC-USER** WHO CAN'T CAST **SPELLS**. THEN A **GENDER-CONFUSED DWARF**. AND NOW A **FIGHTER** WHO DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO USE A **SWORD**? OUR NEW **PARTY SUCKS!**

HEY, I HAVE **FULL ACCESS** TO ALL THE **CANTRIPS**.

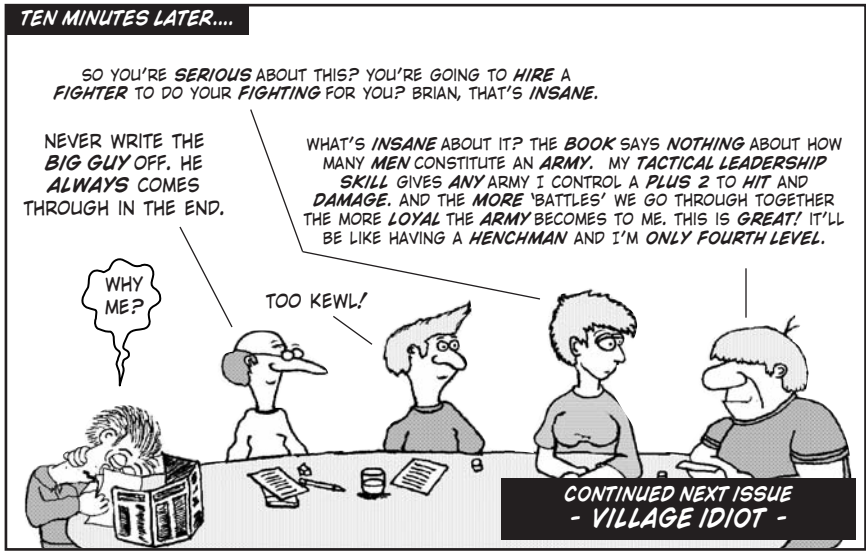
DON'T FEEL TOO **BADLY** ABOUT IT BRIAN. WITH ALL THOSE **LEADERSHIP SKILLS** MAYBE YOU CAN **HIRE** SOMEONE TO DO YOUR **FIGHTING** FOR YOU.

DON'T KID AROUND, SARA. I FEEL **BADLY** ENOUGH ABOUT...



HEY.....WAIT A MINUTE. YOU JUST MIGHT BE ON TO **SOMETHING** THERE.

HMMMMMM.....



TEN MINUTES LATER....

SO YOU'RE **SERIOUS** ABOUT THIS? YOU'RE GOING TO **HIRE** A **FIGHTER** TO DO YOUR **FIGHTING** FOR YOU? BRIAN, THAT'S **INSANE**.

NEVER WRITE THE **BIG GUY** OFF. HE **ALWAYS** COMES THROUGH IN THE END.

WHAT'S **INSANE** ABOUT IT? THE **BOOK** SAYS **NOTHING** ABOUT HOW MANY **MEN** CONSTITUTE AN **ARMY**. MY **TACTICAL LEADERSHIP SKILL** GIVES **ANY** **ARMY** I CONTROL A **PLUS 2** TO **HIT** AND **DAMAGE**. AND THE **MORE** 'BATTLES' WE GO THROUGH TOGETHER THE **MORE** **LOYAL** THE **ARMY** BECOMES TO ME. THIS IS **GREAT!** IT'LL BE LIKE HAVING A **HENCHMAN** AND I'M **ONLY** **FOURTH** LEVEL.

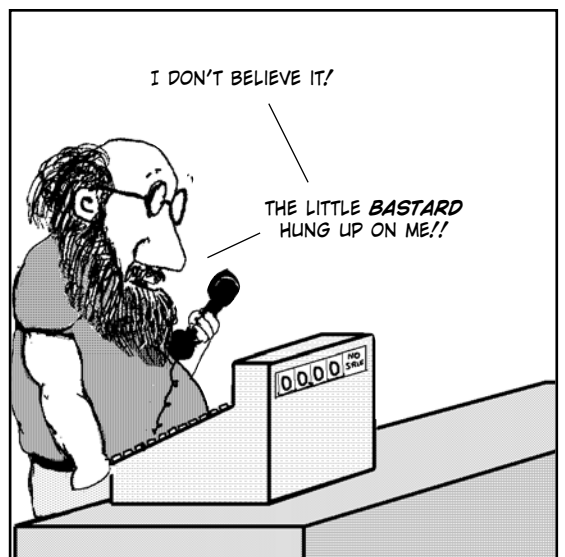
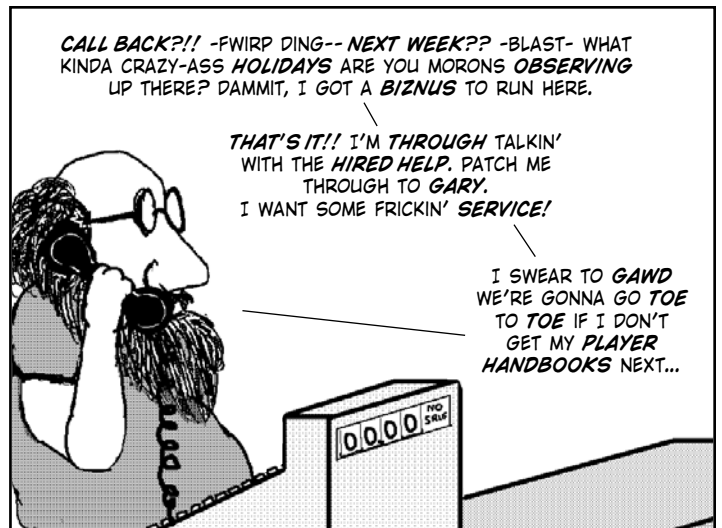
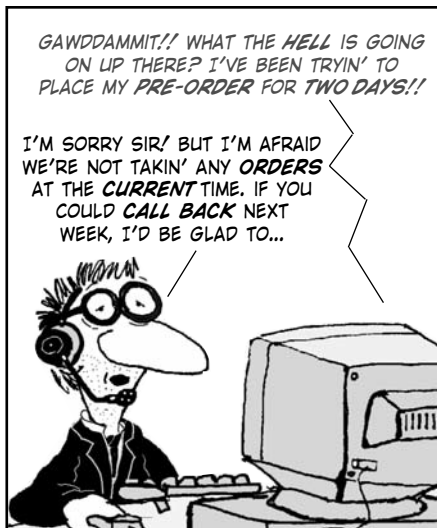
WHY ME?

TOO KEWL!

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE - VILLAGE IDIOT -

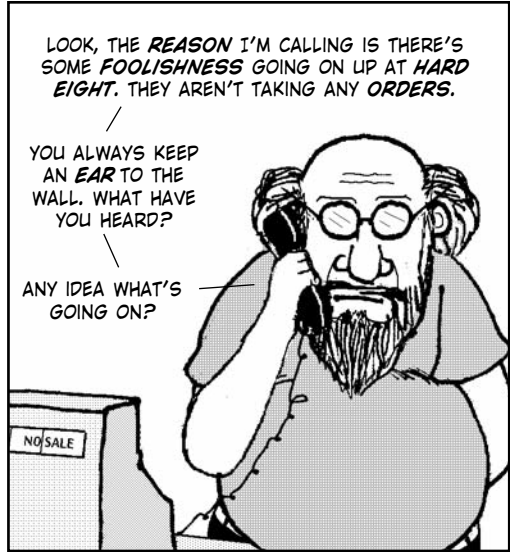
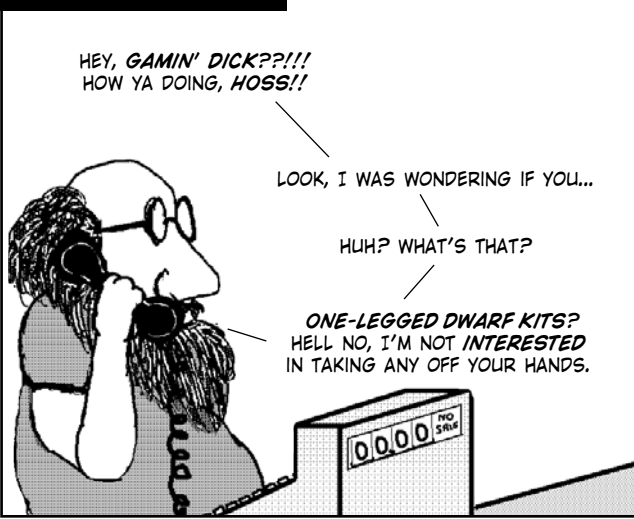
"Lay Down the Dice and Cry..." *

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
WITH BRIAN JELKE,
STEVE JOHANSSON & DAVID KENZER

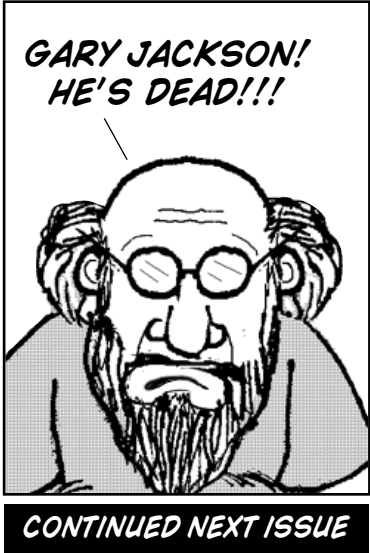
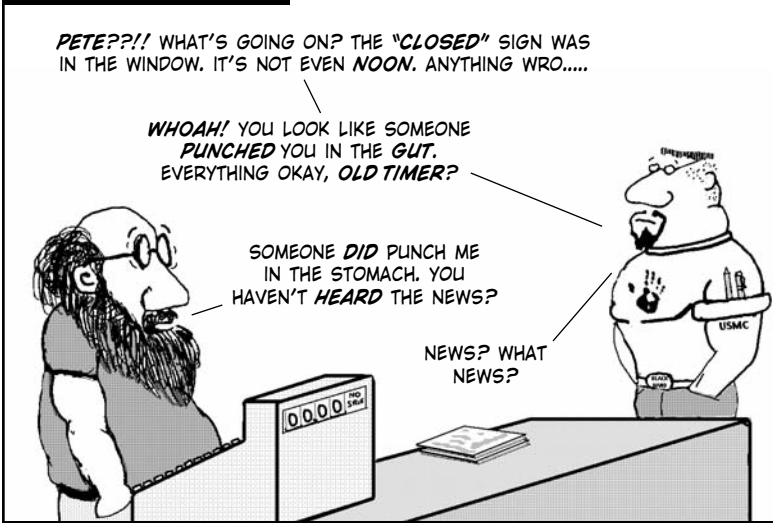


* "Lay down your dice and cry...": From the third stanza of "Requiem to a Fallen Gamer" by Eliza Reese (Chairperson, HMPA Local 175 Dallas, Tx)

A FEW MOMENTS LATER....



A FEW HOURS LATER....





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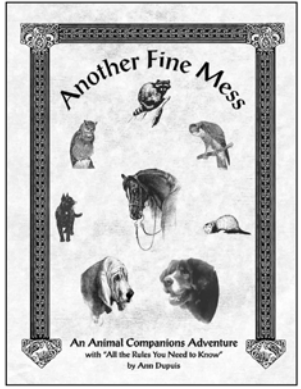
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BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
WITH STEVE JOHANSSON

UH...GUYS? WHAT'S UP WITH THE GOOFY HACKNOIA SUNGLASSES*? YOU CAME HERE TO **GAME**? I THOUGHT THE **PURPOSE** OF THIS MEETING WAS TO **BRAINSTORM** WAYS OF GETTING **SARA** OUT OF **LORDS OF DARKNESS**.

I'M AFRAID YOU MISUNDERSTOOD ME ON THE **PHONE**, B.A. WE'RE NOT HERE TO **BRAINSTORM**. WE'RE HERE TO **BRIEF** YOU.

MAYBE IT **SLIPPED** YOUR MIND BUT BRIAN ALREADY **HAS** A PLAN ON THE TABLE TO REMEDY THE "**SARA SITUATION**"

THAT'S RIGHT. THIS MEETING IS TO **UPDATE** YOU ON SOME OF THE **LAST MINUTE CHANGES** BEFORE WE PUT THAT PLAN INTO **OPERATION**.

FIRST RULE OF ANY **COVERT OPERATION** -- ALWAYS LEAVE THE **MISSION PARTICULARS** WITH A FELLOW **AGENT** PRIOR TO **EXECUTING** SAID **MISSION**.

THAT WAY SHOULD SOMETHING GO **WRONG** YOU'LL HAVE SOME **BACKUP**!!

BRIEF ME?

-CHOMP-
-CHOMP-

-CHOMP-
-CHOMP-
-CHOMP-

BACKUP!!! IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE CALLING IT, **NOW**?

WELL, I CALL IT HAVING TO COME **BAIL** YER BUTTS OUT OF YET ANOTHER **MESS** JUST BECAUSE ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR **IDIOTIC PLANS** GOES **AWRY**.

YER COPE
E. CONDUCT

USEFUL CHOPS

USEFUL NUMBERS
DOMINOS 391-4444
421-7811
etc.

AND WHAT ARE YOU **CHOMPING** ON DOWN THERE BRIAN? YOU LOOK LIKE A **COW** CHEWING ITS **CUD**.

SEE? I **TOLD** YA HE'D COP AN **ATTITUDE** ABOUT THIS.

AWWWW, HE'S JUST SORE BECAUSE HE'S **WEAK-MAN-OUT** ON THIS **OP**. HIS **PRIDE** IS WOUNDED.

DAMN STRAIGHT I HAVE AN **ATTITUDE!**

I'M JUST CHEWIN' A **CHAW** OF **TOBACCO!** IT HELPS ME STAY IN **CHARACTER**.

-CHOMP-
-CHOMP-

MY **HACKNOIA** CHARACTER, **NIGEL MOLENSKI** HAS A **HACKING COUGH** FLAW - REMEMBER? WELL I SPLIT THAT **MAJOR FLAW** INTO TWO **MINOR FLAWS**. **TOBACCO HABIT: CHEWING** AND **SHORT WINDED**.

-CHOMP-
-CHOMP-

I CAUGHT '**BIG JAKE**' ON TV THE OTHER NIGHT. I **TELL** YA, WATCHING **THE DUKE** SPIT **TOBACCO JUICE** INTO THE EYES OF HIS **OPPONENTS** IN ORDER TO WIN **INITIATIVE** MADE ME REALIZE JUST HOW **USEFUL** THOSE "**TOBACCO HABITS**" IN **APPENDIX C** CAN BE.

HEY, I **SAW** THAT MOVIE. IT **ROCKED!** THE **DUKE** WAS **KICKIN' ASS** AND TAKING **NAMES** IN THAT MOVIE.

IT **HELPS** YOU STAY IN **CHARACTER**? WHAT ARE YOU **BABBLING** ABOUT?

AND DON'T FORGET -- **CHEWING TOBACCO** RAISES YOUR **INTIMIDATION** FACTOR.

YEAH, I KNOW.

-CHOMP-

*See **Bundle of Trouble Volume Five [KODT #13]** "Men that Hack" Note: Those who religiously pay attention to the **KODT** time-line may notice an apparent continuity error here. The original **Lords of Darkness** strip appeared in **KODT#3** but the **Knights** didn't play **HackNoia** until issue 13. Since Issue #13 basically stood on it's own, storywise, and didn't reference any other strips/storylines I'm officially ruling that the events in that issue took place just prior to the **Lord of Darkness** story. There - the authors just successfully cast **Immune to Continuity Constraints** on themselves and found some wiggle room. — Jolly

ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME YOU'RE **ACTUALLY CHEWING TOBACCO?**

RELAX, IT'S **REALLY** JUST SOME **CHARLESTON CHEW**, MY **FAVORITE CANDY**. BUT I'M **PRETENDING** IT'S **RED POLUCH PREMIUM CHEW**. THAT'S THE KIND **NIGEL** PREFERS.

I SEE. AND UH.... **PLAYING YOUR HACKNOIA CHARACTERS** IS SOMEHOW GOING TO **HELP SARA**?

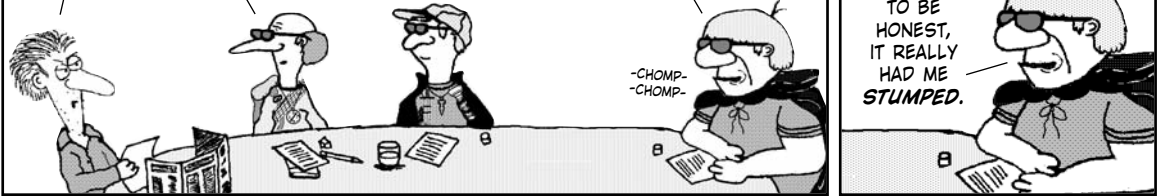
NOW YOU'VE **GOT IT!** IT WAS **BRIAN'S** IDEA OF FALLING BACK ON OUR **CHARACTER PERSONAS**.

YEAH. IT WAS A REAL **BREAK THROUGH**.

-CHOMP-
-CHOMP-

I SPENT THE WEEKEND **WRACKING** MY BRAIN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GO **IN** AND GET **SARA** WITHOUT **ANY MORE** OF US GETTING **SUCKED** INTO **"THEIR"** GAME.

TO BE HONEST, IT REALLY HAD ME **STUMPED**.



BUT THEN THE **ANSWER** CAME TO ME LIKE THE PROVERBIAL **FREIGHT TRAIN** BARRELING DOWN THE **NARROW-GAUGE TRACKS** TO **SHILOH!!** WE'VE BEEN APPROACHING THIS FROM THE **WRONG DIRECTION!** WE'VE BEEN PLAYING BY **THEIR** RULES AND GIVING THE **ENEMY** THE **HOME-COURT** ADVANTAGE. I DON'T KNOW **WHY** I DIDN'T SEE IT BEFORE. WE **SHOULD** HAVE BEEN PLAYING BY **OUR** RULES FROM THE **GIT GO!!**

WHAT A SURPRISE! YOU'VE MANAGED TO BREAK THE PROBLEM DOWN INTO TERMS OF **GAMING**. WHAT'S YOUR PLAN? HAVE **SARA** MAKE A **SAVING THROW**?

MAKE ALL THE **JOKES** YOU WANT TO, B.A. BUT I'M **RIGHT** ABOUT THIS. BY EMBRACING OUR **HACKNOIA CHARACTERS** BEFORE GOING IN WE'LL HAVE A **FOUNDATION** TO CLING TO. WE'LL BE **IMMUNE** TO **THEIR** GAME IF WE LET OUR **RULE SYSTEM** OVERRIDE THEIRS!

OR MAYBE A **SKILL CHECK?** ATTEMPT TO **DISBELIEVE?**

JUST MY OWN LITTLE **SPIN** ON AN OLD **C.I.A. TRICK** WHICH WAS USED DURING THE **COLD WAR** TO KEEP OUR **AGENTS** FROM BEING **TURNED**.

-CHOMP-
-CHOMP-



BRILLIANT, HUH? **HACKNOIA** IS **PERFECT!!** THE GAME DEALS WITH **COVERT OPS** AND **COUNTER ESPIONAGE**. EASING INTO MY **'LUGER KRINGE'** PERSONA SHOULD BE A **SNAP!** AND HIS **SKILL SETS** ARE REALLY GOING TO COME IN **HANDY**.

YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS? Y-Y-YOUR **PLAN** IS TO GO IN AS YOUR **HACKNOIA CHARACTERS**?

IT'S SO **SIMPLE** IT **CAN'T FAIL!** ESPECIALLY SINCE WE'RE USING THE **OPTIONAL RULES** FROM **MODULE HN:J7**

MODULE **HN:J7?** YOU MEAN THE **DARK SIDE OF INDY??**

ISN'T THAT THE ONE WHICH INTRODUCES **VAMPYRES** AND THE **UNDEAD** TO **HACKNOIA?**



THAT'S RIGHT. IT INTRODUCES *PROVISIONS* FOR *PLAYERS* TO PROGRESS IN *EXPERIENCE* AS *VAMPYRE SLAYERS!* THAT MODULE WAS *CHOCK FULL* OF USEFUL STUFF ON FERRETING OUT *NEFARIOUS CREATURES* OF THE NIGHT AND DOING *BATTLE* WITH THEM.

VAMPYRE SLAYERS?
DOING BATTLE?

WHAT ARE WE SAYING?
ISN'T IT *OBVIOUS?*

WHAT THE HELL ARE
YOU SAYING?

WE'RE GONNA KICK
SOME *VAMPYRE ASS!!!!*

WE'RE GONNA *RUIN* THEIR *GAME* FOR THEM BY DISRUPTING THEIR PRECIOUS LITTLE *VAMP RAVES*. WE'RE GONNA PUT THEM ON THE *RUN* BY *CRASHING* THEIR *SUMMONINGS*, BIG FOOTING THEIR *THRALL RALLIES*. -SNORT- IT'S GOING TO BE *GREAT!*

WHO BETTER TO BRING THEIR *WAY OF LIFE* CRASHING DOWN? THERE'S AN *EVIL* LURKING IN THE SHADOWS OF *MUNCIE GAMING CIRCLES* AND IT'S *HIGH TIME* WE DEALT WITH IT.

B-B-BUT
THAT'S
CRAZY!!

CRAZY LIKE
A *FOX!*

THAT'S THE *PLAN*.
DESTROY THE *VAMPYRE CULTURE* AND *SARA* WILL BE *SAVED* ALONG WITH *ALL* THE OTHER *LOST GAMERS* OUT THERE.

NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY. *HERE'S* HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO GO DOWN. OUR *INFORMANTS* TELL US THERE'S TO BE A *VAMP RAVE* THIS *VERY* NIGHT DOWN AT THE *OLD CANNERY* NEAR THE RIVER. *FIRST*, I'LL *STRATEGICALLY* PLACE MY *VAN* ON SITE NEAR THE *WATER TOWER* ON THE EAST CORNER OF THE *MAIN BUILDING*.

I'VE INSTALLED SOME NEW *BASS SPEAKERS* AND AN *EQUALIZER* ON MY SOUND SYSTEM FOR THE OCCASION. I'LL *CRANK UP* THE MUSIC JUST *BEFORE* THE FESTIVITIES BEGIN --- A LITTLE *NINE INCH NAILS* TO START OFF WITH. THAT'LL BE YOUR *CUE* TO COME, *BOB*. THEN I'LL LAY ON SOME *MARILYN MANSON* LATER ON.

THIS SHOULD *LURE* SOME *GOTH-FREAKS* AWAY FROM THE *CROWDS* TOWARD THE *VAN*. THAT'S WHERE *YOU* COME IN *DAVE*. YOU'LL BE POSITIONED ON THE *WATER TOWER* WITH YOUR *NERF CROSSBOW* AND *PAINT BALL RIFLE*. AS SOON AS THE *TARGETS* COME WITHIN RANGE, I WANT YOU TO....*

LOCK,
ROCK, AND
LOAD!!

OH, I'M
SOOOOO
ON IT.

SUDDENLY I'M
THANKFUL I'M
WEAK MAN
OUT ON *THIS* ONE.

*NOTE: the authors do not encourage "HUNTING" live action Vampyre players for sport (or experience points). If you do decide to do so, we ask that you limit your choice of weapons to Nerf-brand Crossbows, foam stakes, and water balloons filled with "holy water". Always remember, "Play Nice!"

A WEEK LATER....

UH.....GUYS??!!!



I TAKE IT THINGS DIDN'T GO AS PLANNED.

DIDN'T GO AS *PLANNED*?
ARE YOU KIDDING?
I RACKED UP ENOUGH *E.P.S*
TO MAKE *THIRD LEVEL*!

YEAH, BOB *FARED* A BIT *BETTER*
THAN I DID. A COUPLE OF *DARK*
UNDERLINGS PINPOINTED MY
FIRING POSITION ON THE *WATER*
TOWER. I HAD A *HELL* OF A TIME
GETTING OUT OF *HARM'S* WAY.

ARE THOSE *BITE*
MARKS ON
YOUR NECK?

A *FEW* OF THEM
GOT *LUCKY*.

YOU'VE *NO ONE* TO BLAME
BUT YOURSELF, *DAVE*.



I *TOLD* YA YOU WERE PACKING *SHY*
ON *HOLY-WATER* *BALLOONS* WHEN
WE WERE DOING OUR *PRE-OP* CHECK.



I'LL GIVE 'EM CREDIT. THOSE *GOTH-FREAKS* PUT UP ONE *HELL* OF A
FIGHT. WE DIDN'T *COUNT* ON THEM COMING TO THE *AID* OF THEIR OWN.

YEAH, THERE WAS THIS ONE GUY -- *WALTER*,
I THINK HIS NAME WAS. HE *JUMPED* ME WHILE I WAS
CRAWLING UNDER A STRETCH OF *FENCING* ALONG
THE *RIVER* AND TRIED TO *WRESTLE* MY *CROSSBOW*
AWAY FROM ME. I WAS GETTING THE *BEST* OF HIM
AND ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE I WAS -- *FACE* TO
FACE WITH *FOUR* OF HIS *UNDEAD* BUDDIES!



MY *GAWD*, WHAT HAPPENED?

WHAT HAPPENED? THEY KICKED
THE *LIVING CRAP* OUT OF ME.

I TRIED *HIDING IN SHADOWS* BUT THOSE
GOONS MUST HAVE *INFRAVISION* OR
SOMETHING 'COS IT DIDN'T SEEM TO WORK.



NO USE *DWELLING* ON DEFEAT, BOB. THE *IMPORTANT*
THING IS WE WENT BACK A FEW NIGHTS LATER AND
GAVE A *BETTER ACCOUNTING* OF OURSELVES.

YEAH, WE *CLEANED* OUT A WHOLE
DEN OF 'EM DOWN AT *SEATTLE*
DAWN'S *CAFFEINE SHACK*.

YOU GOT *THAT*
RIGHT. THEY WON'T
SOON FORGET US.

A SHAME THOSE *THRALLS*
ESCAPED BEFORE THEY COULD
BE *INTERROGATED*.



THAT WAS *MY* BAD.
I SHOULD HAVE
RE-CHECKED
THOSE *BINDINGS*.

FALL THROUGH A JUMP GATE INTO FADING SUNS

by Kenneth Newquist



Before I picked up my copy of the **Fading Suns** core book, I didn't think I was going to like it. I'm a high heroics kind of guy and **Fading Suns'** dark future, neo-medieval setting seemed like something I'd want to pass on. But the production values looked good, and the game had a good buzz about it, so at the last **Gen Con**, I had to pick it up.

I was pleasantly surprised. It was the first campaign book in a good long time that I found I couldn't put down. The rules system was intriguing but it was the detail and depth of the game's universe that I really enjoyed. Reading about the setting's fallen republics, lost worlds, scheming houses, struggling guilds and all-powerful church reminded me *Isaac Asimov's Foundation* books, *Frank Herbert's Dune* novels, and even *Babylon 5*.

I immediately began plotting a **Fading Suns** mini-campaign to run my players through, and naturally turned to the net for a little inspiration.

OFFICIAL FADING SUNS HOME PAGE

My first stop was *Holistic Designs' Official Fading Suns Home Page*. The site's not an eye-popper in terms of its look, but wow, do they ever give you a lot of stuff to read. The "Universe" section gives a nice overview of the game's human-dominated empire, the "Known Worlds" while the "Game" area includes FAQs, a rules overview, some free downloads, and -- most importantly for beginning GMs - two adventures. I particularly liked the **Introduction to Fading Suns** download, which was available in Adobe Acrobat format. This was exactly the kind of summary I needed to familiarize my group with the game and entice them into playing. These sorts of downloads should be standard operating procedure on all game company sites.

FADING SUNS GAMES E-MAIL LIST

Those who'd like a little moral support running their game can check out the **Fading Suns Games E-mail List**, hosted by *eGroups*. It's got more than 325 members, sees a high amount of traffic (*over 500 posts in December 2000*) and even gets posts from *Holistic Design* employees. It's definitely a good place to go for advice and fan-level news about the game. It's also cool that the company asks fans for help organizing games at cons like **Origins**.

FADING SUNS HOME PAGE

One of the first fan sites I found called itself simply the **Fading Suns Home Page**. The site's hampered by an occasionally frustrating navigation system, but that's forgivable given the site's rich content. Newbie GMs like me will find the "Gaming Aids" section a life saver -- it includes a

bunch of indexes for topics like skills, psychic powers, blessings and curses, and cybernetics, as well as other goodies such as character sheets, income spreadsheets, and even character generators. Established GMs will appreciate the adventure hooks, "places" write ups, and technology section. I particularly like the *Arachnid Blunderbus*, a gun that fires spiders -- yes spiders -- at your enemies. The only draw back is the site hadn't been updated since August 2000.

EMPIRE OF THE PHOENIX THRONE

Even more impressive (*and timely*) is **Empire of the Phoenix Throne**. The site's content delves into the familiar areas of most campaign sites: worlds, places, people, characters, aliens -- you name it, this site has it. And the content in these sections is quite good -- I really liked the *Defense Golems* write-up and *Starships* section. What's best about the site though, are the numerous rants, editorials and essays that the author launches into. They (*and the entire site*) do a great job of demonstrating the author's passion for this game.

FADING SUNS MUSH

Folks who need their **Fading Suns** and need it now, can get their fix online with the **Fading Suns MUSH**. The site for this multi-player, telnet-based game includes instructions for connecting, brief overviews of major aspects of the universe, and rules for game play. It's a nice-looking site, but I was disappointed that the "rumors" page hadn't been updated since September 2000.

FADING SUNS JUMPWEB

And finally there's the **Fading Suns Jumpweb**, which offers links to 30 member sites. It's a bare-bones web ring hosted by Yahoo!, but most (*if not all*) of its links work, and it's a good starting point for those who just want to wander through **Fading Suns'** fan-created universes.

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

OFFICIAL FADING SUNS HOME PAGE

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

FADING SUNS E-MAIL LIST

http://www.egroups.com/group/Fading_Suns_Games

FADING SUNS HOME PAGE (FAN)

http://www.brunel.ac.uk/~eepgmas/fading_suns/fading_suns.html

EMPIRE OF THE PHOENIX THRONE

<http://www.fortunecity.com/rivendell/gallows/954/fsuns/frameset.htm>

FADING SUNS MUSH

<http://saturn.planetmud.com/~mwbay/>

FADING SUNS JUMPWEB

<http://nav.webring.yahoo.com/hub?ring=fsuns&list>



Dashes of Style Without Substance

By Rick Moscatello

For a good 20 years, the word “Civilization” meant a good game. There was Avalon Hill’s classic boardgame (*that, regrettably, took about as long to play as to develop an actual civilization*), then came Sid Meier’s amazing computer game. Somehow, magically, Sid’s game was improved in **Civilization II**. Even with graphics that were cruddy by the standards of the day (*and can make the eyeballs bleed of anyone who never used a 33mhz processor before*), it was a game worth devotion.

The corporate world being what it is, Activision decided to buy the name **Civilization** and make their own game. Suddenly, Avalon Hill decided that IT had the rights to the name, and thus a major lawsuit was born. Years (*and many checks*) later, Activision acquired the rights to make a game about civilization using the name **Civilization**, and eventually, **Civilization: Call To Power**, made it to store shelves.

It was horrid. Expecting the worst, I only reluctantly pulled it from the box and inflicted it upon my hard drive, and was not disappointed. Oh, it had some good points, but military units were nearly worthless next to the awesome power of special units (*especially Lawyers, which may have been some subtle commentary on the earlier licensing trouble*), and the game was buggy as well.

Some days ago, the sequel made its way to my desk, and I was looking forward to it. Guess I should explain that. In mathematics, there’s this concept called “*Regression to the Mean*”, that basically says things tend to even out over time. So, if a movie is really great, the sequel will probably stink (*you gotta admit, that sure seems to work*). Well, it goes both ways...if a computer game is horrible, then the sequel is very likely to be better.

So, expecting to have some fun, I installed **Call To Power II**, and this time around, the game is worth looking at closely. It must be a hard, hard, thing to design a game like this, trying to build something that is as good as Sid’s **Civilization**, without using any of his ideas, but using the same theme. Considering they were copying from perfection, the best they could hope for was a hit and miss affair when comes to new game concepts. Let’s look at a few of the hits:

The original **Civ** used Settlers to build terrain improvements like roads and farms. It worked great, although Settlers had a heavy upkeep cost. If you got a random “*nomad*” settler (*with no upkeep*), you had a huge advantage, as you could literally have the settlers build roads for 5,000 years with no cost--that’s the kind of wandering even Moses would refuse! **Call to Power (CTP)** uses the idea of “*public works*”. You can tax your cities’ production for points, and later spend those points to build what you need when you need it. This is a really cool idea, and you spend much less time micromanaging settlers, who instead--amazingly enough--can only settle new towns.



The original **Civ** whizzed through the early ages just a little too quickly (*at least, to my taste*). By the time you researched how to build a catapult, built a unit of catapults, and hauled it over to an enemy city, you had already discovered gunpowder, making catapults obsolete. **CTP** moves much more slowly, and you’ll get to build and enjoy a host of ancient units before finally the relatively dull machine gun infantry guys dominate the battlefield.

Unfortunately, past this point there are quite a few misses.

Civ had computer opponents, and they were styled on actual political figures. Abe Lincoln was reasonably trustworthy, Atila the Hun was rather aggressive, and so on. While the diplomacy was feeble, you could at least put a face on your opponent and have SOME idea of his or her thoughts. **CTP** computer opponents have names, but they all make decisions the same way. The game lacks character.

Civ had special resource squares, where you could get bonuses for being near a gold mine or something. The resources in **CTP** are almost worthless, even though there are more of them. If you build caravans, you can trade the resources for a pittance of money, but you get no advantage otherwise. It’s a shame, since once again it detracts from the character of the game, one city is no different from another.

They toned down the special units, so now they’re nearly worthless...geez guys, ever hear the word “*overkill*”? Slavers, Lawyers, Diplomats all used to have interesting abilities, but now they’re not even close to worth building.

But the final straw is the computer cheating...it’s just too much, and I haven’t even tried the two hardest skill levels. I understand that programming AI is hard, but the only way to compete with the enemy is to conquer like nuts, cheat via the ol’ *save/reload option*, and do the best you can against an opponent who can out-

Continued on page 31...

HORROR OF THE 20TH CENTURY

A Book Review by John O'Neill

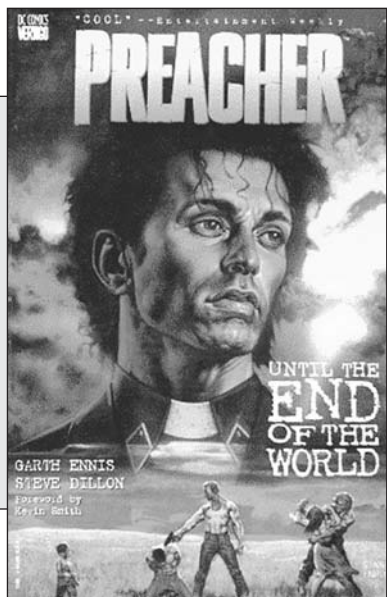
PREACHER

Written by Garth Ennis

Art by Steve Dillon

Published by Verigo/DC Comics

65 Issues.



There's something strangely compelling in the very nature of comic books, the way they bring you back faithfully to your local comic shop month after month, chasing the latest chapter of your favorite series.

Unless, like me, you hate that. In which case you can wait until a series is completed and collected in handy trade format before even troubling to try it. As I did with *Preacher*, the cornerstone of DC Comic's *Vertigo* line, written by comics celeb Garth Ennis (*Hellblazer*, *Hitman*) and drawn by Steve Dillon (*Hellblazer*, *The Punisher*).

The groundwork for *Preacher*, and in fact the entire *Vertigo* line, stretches back to the early work of Allan Moore, John Totleben, and Steve Bissette on DC's *Swamp Thing*. Moore and his collaborators took a third-string DC horror title – featuring a swamp monster who schlepped back and forth between castles and carnivals in the back woods of Louisiana – and turned it into one of the greatest comics of the 80s... and one of the decade's great works of horror.

DC used the cachet of *Swamp Thing* to attract readers and writers to their embryonic line of adult comics, most especially their first big hit: Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*. The success of *Sandman* led to the launch of the *Vertigo* imprint in 1993, arguably the most influential & successful line of adult comics on the market.

While *Vertigo* has published some terrific work – including the *Sandman* spin-off *Petrelax*, and the anthology series *Flinch* – for horror fans it didn't have anything to match the visceral thrills of *Swamp Thing* more than a

decade ago. At least, it didn't until *Preacher* arrived.

Preacher is the tale of Jesse Custer (*an anagram for "Secret Jesus," for those of you who track that kind of thing*), a down-and-out preacher in Texas with a checkered past. It's also the tale of his ex-girlfriend, Tulip, on the run from a very bad situation, and an alcoholic Irishman named Cassidy, who happens to be a vampire.

The opening volume, *Gone to Texas*, collects the first seven issues and sets the tone for the entire series. While Jesse is preaching a lackluster sermon, a supernatural entity named Genesis escapes its prison in heaven. Roaming the earth searching for a host, it selects Jesse. The resulting fireworks destroy Jesse's church, some of his memory, and grant him the power of The Word – the ability to speak in a tone that must be obeyed.

Seems like a decent deal. Except Jesse has no idea he has the power of The Word, doesn't know what's happened to him, and has no clue that relentless agents of Heaven and Hell are converging on his location. How he comes to meet up with Tulip and Cassidy, defeat the unstoppable Saint of Killers, and uncover the terrible secret of Genesis is the heart of the first volume. By the end, Jesse and his companions embark on a very literal search for God, one which will lead them across the twisted landscape of America.

If you're a fan of the horror work of Moore and Gaiman, *Preacher* is its natural successor. Brilliantly realized, starkly illustrated, and peopled with the most colorful cast of heroes and villains I've encountered in years, *Preacher* carries on the tradition of modern gothic horror, pushing the genre in surprising ways. It's saturated with a lush back-story and a fascinating supporting cast, and still the storyline moves with ferocious momentum. Like *Sandman* before it, *Preacher* creates a thick pantheon of characters and storylines that could be mined for years (*and probably will be*).

The final issue in this critically acclaimed series appeared last year, and so far DC has published nine volumes, collecting issues 1 through 58 and two related mini-series. The tenth and final volume, *Preacher: Alamo*, is scheduled to appear in May of this year. Ironically enough, purchasing the handsome trades is actually cheaper than buying the individual issues at cover price. And they look awfully nice stacked together on your bookshelf.

+++++

John O'Neill is the publisher and editor of Black Gate magazine (www.blackgate.com). His favorite comics are Scott McCloud's Zot, Dave Sim's Cerebus, and Jeff Smith's Bone. Plus that 1968 issue of Fantastic Four where the Thing finally pounds the crap outta Dr. Doom. That rocked.

Thanks to Neil Walsh for the recommendation. I owe you one, Neil.

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produce you 10:1 with only 20% of the resources you have. If you let the computer have any strength at all, he just overwhelms you, leaving you no choice to conquer him early. In every game, if you don't have him well subjugated by the time you have Bombers (*which means he'll get Bombers in a turn or two*), you'll find yourself so swarmed with enemy bombers that you can't defend anything. It was the same way in *Civ*, but by the time your technology advanced that far, the game was nearly over. In *CTP*, there are 400 or so more years of technological advancement after Bombers, but I lose interest in the game long before then, and I don't see how anyone can stay interested that long.

To top it off, there's some sort of bug that will corrupt your save game files (*caused me to lose three centuries' worth of conquering, corrupting both autosaves and regular saves*), and that's the kind of bug that is just unforgivable. In the end, *CTP* is an interesting thing for game designers to study, but is only barely worth it for a gamer.

Now a word or more about shooters. Shooters are violent, there's just no away around that, even though they tend to be fun as well. No *Escape* seems to be a doomed effort: a bloodless shooter. Yes, you run around shooting people, there's just no blood (*not even the ridiculous green stuff like what comes out of Kabuto--there's already a patch to make it red, by the way...anyway, back to the topic*). This is sort of a kiddie shooter aimed at pacifists who like shooting people but don't like blood. Whatever.

The only real breakthrough, if you can call it that, is the world. It's very small, but spherical. You might not see someone a dozen steps away, since the curvature is so steep. It's an interesting effect, but fans of sniper rifles (*or rail guns*) won't like it much. Then again, those kinds of weapons require great skill, something kiddies (*and pacifists?*) generally don't have. There's also a nifty "game show" feel here, as you run around and try to pick up the most money, although I can't help but feel someone might complain at shooting someone and taking his money. And wouldn't the people that complain about this sort of violence for profit in game be the same ones that aren't so wild about blood?

Alas, this one is pretty much a writeoff, unless you've got an 8 year old sibling that you want to introduce to gaming, since the computer opponents aren't real tough, even on the hardest possible setting.

A shooter that does a better job of keeping the fun factor high is American McGee's *Alice*. This is no wimpy story about a sweet 12 year old girl (*not that the original book was so sweet, either*), but rather we see Alice some years after her visit to the lunatic world beyond the *Magic Mirror*, and she's plenty the worse for wear. She's now a teenager, with a major case of bad attitude. What better cure for teenage angst than going few a through levels of a fantasy world, spilling as



much blood as possible?

They've done a great job of capturing the wonder of Lewis Carroll's world (*although it could use some more lights*), and the characters are all animated very well. Any fan of his work will find this an enjoyable way to spend gaming dollars.

If you're in it strictly for the gaming, this one might not be worth your while. The combat is rather slow, and the fights generally aren't very interesting. A few good whacks or hacks will finish most creatures, and most of the weapons and powerups are more interesting than useful. I rather liked it, but only as a break from the more pulse-pounding action that I get in other games.

So, nothing really looks great on my computer this month. What do you guys think will be "the next big" online RPG? People tell me I should look into *Horizons*, *Shadowbane*, and a few others, but I've yet to hear from any *Knights* fans. What do you recommend as the next online game to sacrifice my personal life for? Let me know at IQRickMo@aol.com. □



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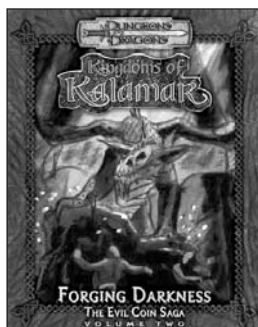
HACKMASTER PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

**ROLL A SAVE VS. DROOL!!
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HackMaster: The Role-Playing Game is about to leap from the pages of *Knights of the Dinner Table* and right onto your gaming table. That's right, the game KODT fans have been demanding for years is finally here. The first book to be released in the HackMaster product line will be the *Player's Handbook*. This book will arm players with everything they need to know to delve into the wonderful violent world of HackMaster. This game is all about killing and breaking things in this hilarious, yet fully playable RPG of insane sorcerers, armies of orcs bent on bringing about the fall of man, and swack iron dragons who can't wait to battle wits with the unsuspecting. Get back to your role-playing roots with the game that started it all; HackMaster. Ask for it by name!!

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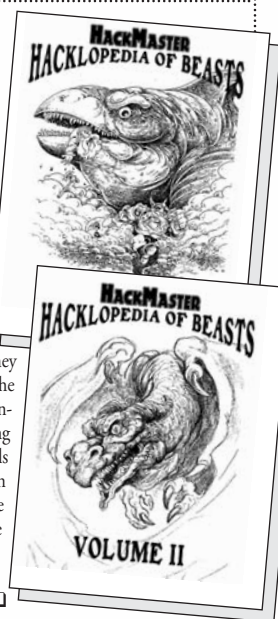
FORGING DARKNESS

A fantastic new role-playing adventure module in the new *Dungeons and Dragons* campaign setting, the *Kingdoms of Kalamar* third edition is coming. The epic story continues as the players go on a quest to collect three ingredients that they will use to forge a magic coin to defeat an evil wizard. Which will be more dangerous to collect, the mysterious diamond touched by death, the blood of an outsider spilled by a coward or a blue dragon's breath? *Forging Darkness* is an official *Dungeons and Dragons* adventure for 3rd to 4th level characters. Players need not have completed the first adventure in the story series to enjoy this one. □

HACKLOPEDIA OF BEASTS

It wouldn't be HackMaster with out the *Hacklopedia of Beasts*. Look for volumes of HOB to begin appearing in gamestores everywhere beginning in May. These comprehensive reference manuals are a must for HackMaster GMs (and players as well — just don't let your GM know you're peeking). In the first volume, terrifying monsters whose names begin with the letters A-D are described in full detail. Trust us — these aren't the monsters your daddy used to go up against. Every monster in the Fourth Edition *Hacklopedia* has been revised, edited, and updated and they have had their HackFactors beefed up to bring them in line with the rest of the game. Among other features, readers will learn about monster social structures, activity cycles, diets, attack modes (including combat tacticals), morale and even how to make the most of their kills by salvaging monster remains of potential value. Jo Jo Zeke has even included some of his notes on Hack-Worthy adversaries, Grudge Monsters and Sympathy Monsters designed to keep troublesome players in line. [Covers shown to the right are not the actual covers. Final product will have full color paintings.]

K&C2001 \$24.95 est. □



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TOP TEN MOST Popular KODT STRIPS

Erik Bouchard recently sent us an update of the most popular KODT strips based on votes tallied on his website;

<http://pages.infinit.net/kodt/kodt.htm>

1. LAIR OF THE GAZEBO
2. THE COWS OF WAR
3. THE BARRINGER REBELLION
4. AGENT OF EVIL
5. DECK/FAR TOO MANY THINGS
6. IT TAKES A THIEF
7. THE STREET OF MUSKEEGIE
8. DANCES WITH PITBULLS
9. DAVE FIRST GAME
10. THAT'S MY WISH

Be sure to visit Erik's site and VOTE!! And while you're there check out the really kewl HackFiles animated KODT strip. It rocks!!



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plucked from the vine for your reading enjoyment

• BONANZA PREQUEL??

PAX is developing a Bonanza prequel. Beth Sullivan (*Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman*) is working with Bonanza creator David Dortort in creating *The Ponderosa* for PAX-TV. The series, expected to launch as a two-hour movie, will be a prequel to the classic western. Does this mean we get to see the younger, hipper, Hoss Cartwright?

• ALEXANDER THE GREAT

No, not THAT Alexander -- a different one. ABC is apparently developing an hour-long drama about a mysterious man searching for redemption by helping bad guys in trouble. (*Sounds like my Uncle Norris*).

• SHANGHAI SEQUEL

Jackie Chan has announced his next film will be a sequel to *Shanghai Noon*. No announcements on casting yet.

www.studio.go.com/shanghainoon

• NEWS FROM THE EDGE

The SCI FI Channel has ordered 13 episodes of *News From the Edge*, an hour-long drama about a journalist who takes a job at a tabloid newspaper. Trouble is, he quickly learns all the crazy stories are true. It's interesting to note that the series was originally developed for NBC but studio execs passed when they saw it.

For more info visit <http://www.scifi.com>

• INCREDIBLE HULK FLICK MOVES CLOSER TO REALITY

Ang Lee (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) will direct Universal Studio's *Incredible Hulk* feature film. Whoo Hoo! Just don't make him angry. You wouldn't like it if he was angry...

• BRITNEY SPEARS TO ATTEMPT SAVE VS. ACTING

It was bound to happen. Britney Spears will make her feature film debut in an untitled coming-of-age music drama from director Tamra Davis (*Half Baked, Billy Madison*). The movie is about a teen who...uh. Does it really matter?

• THOR TO BECOME A SERIES

UPN's development slate for the 2001-2002 season includes a series about Marvel Comics character THOR. There's also a Todd McFarlane entitled *The Terror* on the list.

• CROW IV NEWS

Music video director Joseph Khan, is set to direct DMX in *The Crow: Lazarus*

This is the fourth CROW film, and will be written by Jim Gibson. Production to begin in the spring.

• MONTY PYTHON AND THE QUEST FOR LICENSED TOYS

Tony Vault has acquired the toy rights to both Monty Python's *Flying Circus* and Monty Python and the *Holy Grail*.

These clever guys also hold the toy rights to *EverQuest*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *FarScape*. ☐

FARSCAPE? THAT SHOW
ROCKED THE FIRST
SEASON BUT THEN IT
GOT DOWNRIGHT SILLY!

YEAH. WHEN THAT
SHIP HAD A BABY
IT RUINED IT FOR ME.

BRITNEY'S DOING A MOVIE?
OUTSTANDING! THAT
GIRL IS GOING PLACES.



KODT CONVENTION CALENDAR

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NORTH CAROLINA

3/16/01 - 3/18/01

StellarCon 25

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<http://www.uncg.edu/student.groups/sf3/s>

tellarcon.htm

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Conventions listed in bold are shows that Kenzer and Company will be attending.

To get your convention listed here for free, please email todd@kenzerco.com with the following information: Show dates, City and State, brief highlight of your show, and contact information and/or a web page for your show.



CLOCKWORK STOMP

Fairy Meat, the surprise hit of last summer, is about to receive reinforcements. The fantasy miniature game where two or more players pit their battle-hardened Fairies against each other, will be elevated to an even higher Hackfactor next month when *ClockWork Stomp* (the first supplement for *Fairy Meat*) hits the streets. This supplement (which also is a stand-alone game in its own right) is so intense it prompted the Pixie-Faerie Council of Diddlewood to publicly ban it and label it as, "Inflammatory and Disturbing!" "This is in extreme bad taste" High-Faerie Lundrus was quoted as saying. In this supplement, gnomes, clock fairies, gremlins and pixies enter the field of battle.

Share in gnomish technology and find out why fairies are on the top of their list of "things to kill". Gnomes crank up the Hackfactor with high-tech weapons ranging from sawed off shotguns to flame throwers and chainsaws. Find out why the gnomes of Krimtip are such a secretive, anti-social lot and meet Gunkdunder Albany's breakthrough invention, the Clock-Fairy. Build your own fairy? Yes, with propellers instead of wings, with weapons instead of hands. Go ahead, use gnomes, clock-fairies, gremlins and pixies with your Fairy Meat world!



K&C404 B&W, 32 pages. \$19.95 est. ISBN#1-889182-16-8



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

An Opinion Arena and Open Forum

As the subheading indicates, this is a sounding board where gamers can give their two-cents' worth on whatever seems to rile them. So pull back the curtain and come on in the Back Room. You can leave that thin-skin at the door but be sure to bring your opinions with you.

THE MUNCHKINS AMONG US!

No, dude, not *those* munchkins (*they* *suXXors*). I'm talking about the munchkins Chad of Patty's Perps referred to when talking about why he was given the "black ten-sider" so many times (*Issue 46: Final Deliberation*).

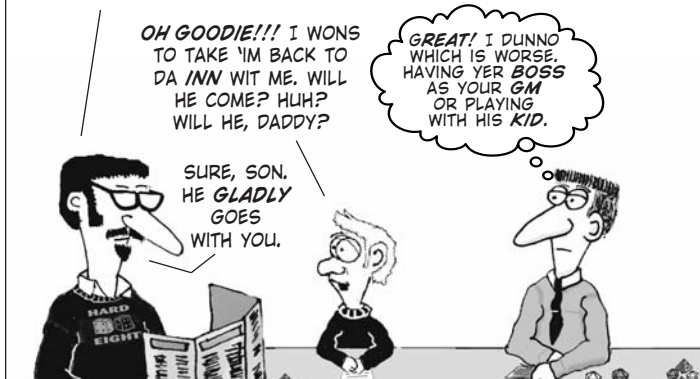
He was right really. Nobody wants to babysit a whiny little kid who has to be told every time he needs to toss the dice. I should know. Despite my 7 years of experience and 100+ collection of books, I can still see the "Oh god. We're gonna have to humor a child. I wanted to play a real game" look in the 20 and 30 something guys, when they see a 16-year-old kid swinging a dice bag walk into the room.

Not every time, but often enough. This was probably the main reason I decided to let my 10-year-old sister roll up a character and have a run through the dungeon I had just made. I'm sure I gave her the same look, thought the same thoughts, but I caught myself. Besides, my group is very distractable, so I don't get to scratch the gaming itch as much as I like to. So I sat her down, walked her through character generation for D&D 3E, and began to spin the tale.

That game in my 7 years of mostly GMing experience, was easily the best I have ever played. Christmas eve we played, and my family was constantly hearing the shouts of elation ("Natural twenty!!") and despair ("Oh no! A Fumble!") as we tossed dice trying to save a dwarven city from a deadly zombie disease brought on by magically intelligent kobolds. It was heroism at its best.

In two days we played five games. As soon as one was over, I would retreat to my room and scrawl another dungeon

UH...ER...SURE, TIMMY. THE BUGBEAR...UH...HE SMILES WHEN YOU HUG HIM AND OFFER HIM A BITE OF YOUR CHICKEN. IN FACT....HE...UH....HE HUGS YOU BACK AND GIVES YOU FIVE HUNDRED GOLD PIECES AND A MAGIC SWORD!!



on graph paper, with her jumping up and down, as if her frantic movements would speed my pencil. Little Michelle is probably one of the best roleplayers I have ever encountered, and she lives in my house! When she discovered the *Holy Dagger of Krondar* in the diseased city, she gave it back, despite the "you may have all treasure" agreement.

She healed a lizard man who had attacked her, despite the the King's orders to destroy these monsters, when she discovered he was fighting for his home. And when she had to kill her NPC friend Alagar, a wizard who had gone insane in his quest for immortality, she nearly cried. I was stunned, and pleasantly so.

And though we were having fun, laughing and shouting and acting out the really dramatic parts, I could see something in her. So often, her ignorance is mistaken for stupidity, and my other brother and sister have called her "idiot", "moron" and worse. But now, when she strapped on her shield, her hide armor and her short sword +2, she was doing the good thing, the smart thing, the right thing. And she (and I) loved it.

So what's my point? Only this: you never know where you might find the spirit of a good gamer. And more importantly, you never know where you might be able to build one. Next time your little baby brother or sister wants to play with you, give 'em a little dungeon crawl, where they can be great warriors, powerful wizards, strong superheroes and brilliant scientists. And watch their eyes light up as you

describe the treasure hoard, their smiles widen as the saved princess thanks them, and their chests puff out with pride when they hear you say "Wow! Great roll!". You won't ever regret it.

Oh yeah, and if you see a 16-year-old kid, waving his arms and making monster noises, to a young 10-year-old gamergrrl, Ryoko the 7th level Halfling Paladin, thrusting and parrying, and the two of them looking like they're having the time of their lives, Sorry buddy. Munchkins only.

HolyShmo
via E-mail

I am going to say something which is inevitably going to attract a lot of flak, but I am going to say it anyway

(Isn't the right of free speech brilliant!) That is: Almost everything in "A GamerGrrl's Manifesto" I have heard again and again in RPG mags. They are the same points that have been raised again and again on sexism (*religion and racism also have the same problems*).

Perhaps they should stop being RPG mags and go to somewhere where they could be productive, such as better parenting manuals. Because if a man is a sexist now he's not going to alter it by reading one or one million articles, it has to be done when he is young.

This is NOT about RPGs this is about MANNERS. Every point (almost) is about a lack of manners by male gamers.

Well parents, it's in your hands. Sort 'em out when they are young and we won't have to read complaints when we are older.

BRUNO THE BANDIT

By IAN McDONALD

BY ROYAL DECREE, EVERYONE IN ROTHLAND IS GIVEN A SET OF DICE, A PERSONAL STATISTICS SHEET, AND RULES ON HOW THE DICE ARE TO BE USED IN PLACE OF A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION...

LIZARD, I DON'T SEE WHY THEY MADE YOUR INTELLIGENCE STAT TWICE AS HIGH AS MINE!

HMPH! UNCLE LUCIUS HAS THE MOST LIFE POINTS OF ANY OF US!

LESSEE... IF I WANTED TO USE MY FIRE-BREATHING ABILITY ON YOU, BOSS, I'D ROLL MY 8-SIDED DIE, LIKE SO...

CURSE IT, TWIT! YOU COST ME 3 LIFE POINTS!

OOPS! ACCORDING TO THIS ROLL, I ALSO SET FIRE TO THE CURTAIN BEHIND YOU!

DON'T WORRY FIONA! MY REACTION ROLL SAYS I PUT OUT THE FIRE!



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Read Bruno the Bandit daily at www.brunothebandit.com

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Now if you'll excuse me, I'd better find a good trench because I bet most of you won't agree and I am sure I will be classified as a sexist English bigot to be shot on sight.

God Save The Queen.

Graham
via E-mail

Thanks for throwing your two-cents into the mix, Graham. In defense of Hilary's manifesto, I would direct you to Troy Hirschfeld's letter which ran in Issue 52. Troy wrote, "I had no idea how badly I was making the two female players in my group feel."

I think the issue goes beyond, 'bad manners.' Role-playing (and gaming in general) is supposed to be entertaining. If someone's not having a good time or comes away feeling as though they've been badly treated (whether it be intentional or merely from thoughtlessness) that can't be a good thing.

I think there are a lot of folks out there like Troy. They don't realize they're behaving badly until someone points it out to them in a very clear fashion. (One of his female players shoved Hillary's article in his hands and said, "Read!")

Jolly

I have a few comments to make about Hilary Doda's article "A Gamergrl's Manifesto" that was printed in issue #48 of KODT.

I have been in an RPG where a new player received extra starting bonuses and her Player Character was treated differently than the others because she was a woman. The GM got upset with me when I treated her character like I treated all new players in the game and proceeded to frame her PC for a crime that my PC committed. That was back when I played evil characters.

I worked as a clerk at a comic book store that never succeeded in selling RPG or war games, although we did OK with accessories and CCG's. The owner was a woman and she always made sure that the store was clean, organized and well lit. She commented that she had a hard time

buying back stock at comic book shows because the dealers would ignore her and talk to the men.

Later that week, I watched her husband ignore a young woman with a stack of comics to talk to the young man with her. I almost burst out laughing when the guy said, "I don't collect comics. I just drove my girlfriend to the store."

While working as a clerk, I noticed that it is a bad idea to go up immediately to a woman who has walked in the store because it seemed to scare them off. After noticing this was happening, the next time I let the woman look around and when she did not seem to find anything I asked if she needed help. I found that if I treated women customers the same as I did new men customers that some soon became regular customers.

I thought I should mention the problem that you were having with action figures. This is not the store owner's fault. For the most part, female action figures are short packed (I figure out of a box of 10). The manufacturers do not believe that the female figures will sell, so they do not make as many. Due to this fact, toy dealers buy up the female figures to sell or trade for much higher prices.

Tom Dunham
via E-mail

I became a fan of KODT at Origins 99 when I picked up my first Bundles of Trouble. Of course (as most do) I have since gotten my hands on every issue either through strips or BOT and am loving every minute of it. KODT rekindled my love for gaming and my husband and I currently host friends once a week for a traditional D&D campaign. I love the mag and hope to continue to do so for years to come.

I have been following the recent discussions about female gamers and most recently the "kids and gaming" thread that has popped up. I have a couple of things to say about this and would also like to hear the opinions of other gamers in this area.

In July, my husband and I had our first child. We missed one week of gaming (on the day he arrived!) and started right back up again the next week. It never occurred to me

to get a babysitter or stay out of the game to take care of him. When he's hungry, I originally just took him to the other side of the door and rolled from there so the other gamers wouldn't feel uncomfortable with my nursing him. That got to be kind of a hassle and now I just turn my back and continue to play as normal. They have never been disrespectful or uncomfortable towards me or my son for this. I've even joked, "Shield your eyes, lest ye be turned to stone..."

It really helps that those we game with are genuinely fun people who are understanding and respectful to our family and home.

On occasion he has gotten a little fussy, but rarely disrupts the game for more than a moment or two and as long as my husband or I attend to him, it's pretty much business as normal. We even keep the diaper bag in the room so we don't have to leave for diaper changes. I think back to what my mom said about their card playing days when we were children...you just sit the baby on your lap and go on.

I am hesitant to keep him out of gaming as the years go on, as Kettir so fervently believes. I think there is a lot he could learn from and enjoy about our weekly game nights. Besides, if he's going to grow up to game, I'd rather he learn it from us.

Having said all that, I would honestly like to know what other gamers and gamer parents do in this situation. Do you banish the kids and keep things for adults only? Do you encourage them to participate and if so, how disruptive is this? In fact, I'd like to know what other gamer parents do to "babyproof" your playing area since dice, minis and other game accessories are mega choking hazards.

Just some thoughts from an old gamer and new parent.

Becky
via E-mail

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



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MAGE KNIGHT REBELLION

Whizkids Games • www.wizkidsgames.com

Whizkids' new game system, *Mage Knight*, should have gamers drooling all over themselves and beating feet down to their local game stores, wallets at the ready. I only wish I would have thought of it.

The game combines the blood and guts of tabletop combat with the collectability of a card game, something that may sound odd, but the result is awesome.

Each warrior has a combat dial base. The base rotates as your warrior takes damage or receives healing. As the warrior takes damage with this dial system his game stats change to reflect his condition during the battle. For example, let's take a closer look at the *Bone Golem* warrior: His starting stats are move 8", attack value of 11, defense value of 16, and damage value of 3. His attack value on the disk is also in red, showing that he is a weapons master and can do extra damage. Now, let's say he takes two points of damage, you move the base two clicks and his game stats have changed to reflect his damage. The new stats are: move 7", attack 9 (red), defense 15, and damage of 2. You see how the damage has worn him down? This system greatly enhances some of the realism of combat.

The game is sold in starter boxes, and booster boxes. A starter has 10 miniatures, a rulebook, a pair of dice, a 28-page comic book, an 18-inch flexible ruler, and ID stickers to put on the bottom of your warriors. A booster adds 5 new warriors to your collection. The miniatures are all beautifully painted right out of the box (Blast! They might just put me outta the business.) The price is right too.

Brian's Rating: Catch the Fever!!



BRUNO THE BANDIT

Written by Ian McDonald • Plan Nine Publishing
Website: www.plan9.org

Plan Nine Publishing has published a compilation of the popular Internet comic strip, *Bruno the Bandit* (www.brunothebandit.com). The book is 152 pages long, and takes readers back to the beginning.

The first story introduces us to Bruno, and tells how he met his often much smarter familiar. His sidekick is a micro-dragon named Fiona. In the further adventures of Bruno, we meet Bruno's home shopping network addicted mother, his one-armed father, and Uncle Lucius. Seventeen different adventures are included in the first compilation book. There are also some bonus illustrations, and a few other surprises included in the package, as well as a 6-page bonus story entitled *SANU CITY* that is only available in this book. Writer Ian McDonald does a great job of bringing you a joke in every day's strip, and the strips are all tied together to form a continuing storyline. For those of you who enjoy fantasy humor (like most all KODT readers) this book is a great read.

Brian's Rating: Snort! Cackle!

SURVIVOR • Upper Deck Entertainment

Outwit, Outplay, and Outlast to make your castaway the last survivor! *Upper Deck Entertainment* brings us the *Survivor* card game, based on last year's very successful *Survivor* TV show. To win *Survivor* you must manage your food cards, maintain your alliances, compete in immunity challenges and vote off your opponent's castaways to win the game.

At the beginning of the game players choose their tribe of castaways by taking turns selecting from the castaways who will be playing the game. Each castaway has ratings in the following skills: *Accuracy, Balance, Endurance, Politics, Speed, Strength, Swimming, and Wits*. Each castaway's stats are true to their real-life abilities, for example Richard (*the overall winner of Survivor I*) has a *Politics* rating of 10, but an endurance of only 5.

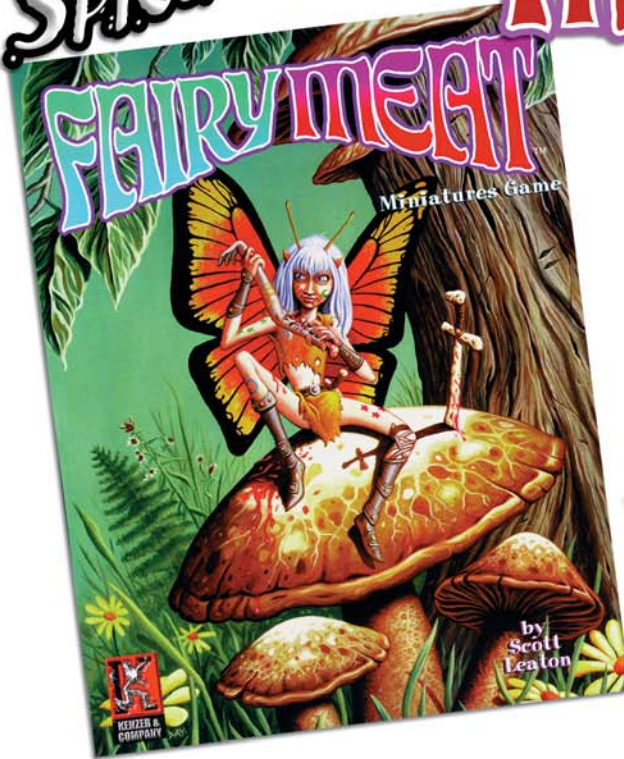
After your tribes are set, the game moves into rounds where you can feed your castaways and play alliance cards. This represents the castaway's daily lives on the island. Then you start an Immunity Challenge. To win the challenges, you try to pick castaways who have the appropriate skills. Fortune cards and item cards are then played to increase your chances of winning the much-coveted *Immunity Idol*. The tribe with the Immunity Idol cannot have a member of his/her tribe voted off the island. Then a new "day" starts and play continues until there is only one tribe remaining on the island.

This light and entertaining game is great for parties, or when you want a change from the usual mayhem of role playing. And it lets you consider the question of what you would have done in the place of the castaways. Would Richard have won if you had been in control? Play and find out.

Brian's Rating: Accept the Challenge!



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Hardcore Fairy



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I thought I had about seen it all. Then I discovered Fairy Meat by Kenzer & Company... If you get a chance to play or demo this game, do it. Trust me -- you'll be hooked.

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

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

FORTY-FIVE HACK-WORTHY RINGS

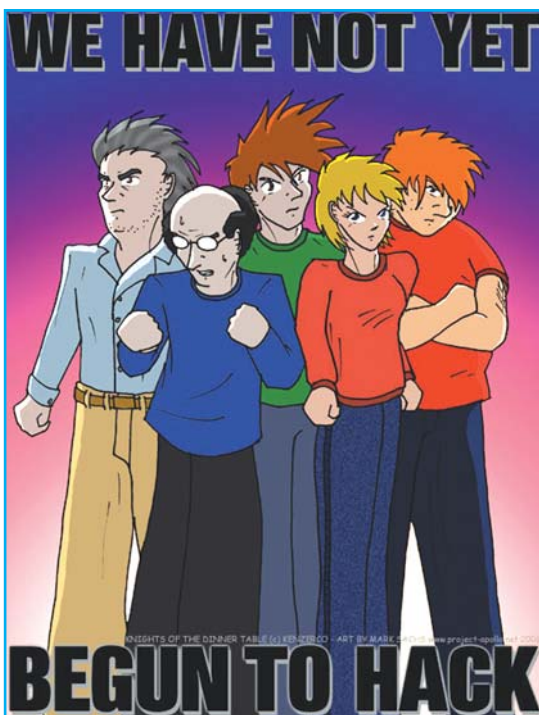
During the course of their various HackMaster™ campaigns, the characters in KODT have utilized a lot of Hack-Magic Items. With HackMaster the RPG about to be released in a few months we thought it would be interesting to take a look at the various magical rings mentioned in the strips. (Key: V=*Tales from the Vault*, BOT = *Bundle of Trouble*, K=KODT, HOE=HackMasters, TV= *Travellers*.)

Combination: Invisibility/Demon Spawn Slaying Ring V1/p15	Ring of Many Deaths, V1/p32,
Grawdyng's Ring of Servitude (Cursed), BOT#7/p50	Ring of Martyrdom, BOT#8/p67
Hypitor's Pronged Ring of Remote Eye Gouging, K345/p13	Ring of Mercy Killing (aka Ring of Kevorkian), K#28/p26, V1/39
Poison Ring, BOT4/p46	Ring of Pass Through Walls, BOT2/21
Ring of Acid Plumes, K26/p5	Ring of Perpetual Mo-Jo, K#45/p13
Ring of Breaking Curses, V1/36	Ring of Quick Escapes, K41/P19
Ring of Cloaking, K#26/p22, BOT8/p33	Ring of Regeneration, BOT#7/p56
Ring of Constant Thunder, HOE#2	Ring of Scabs, K#27/p33
Ring of Diminished Scars,	Ring of Scrying, BOT#5/p78
Ring of Dire Straits, TV#4/p35	Ring of Sincerity, V3/P7
Ring of Fall Softly (aka Gently Fall), HOE#1	Ring of Stasis, K#31/p26, K33/P2
Ring of Free Action, B6/p46	Ring of Stone Passage, K#44/p8
Ring of Friendship, K37/p20	Ring of Suggestion, BOT4/p31
Ring of Gentle Persuasion, V3/p36	Ring of Talk With Plants, K37/p20
Ring of Giant Might, BOT3/p8	Ring of Tele-Location, BOT#7/p78
Ring of Hefty Damage, V2/p44	Ring of Teleportation, K50/36, K47/p11
Ring of Hefty Healing, V1/58	Ring of Undead Aggravation, K50/42
Ring of Hefty Recovery, B1/P49	Ring of Undead Utilities, V3/P19
Ring of Hefty Spell Casting (aka Ring of Simul-Casting), V2/p4	Ring of Water Siphoning, BOT#5/p76
Ring of Hindsight, V3/P11	Ring of Wicked Kicks, K47/p22
Ring of Illumination, BOT#8/p73	Seal Ring, K34/p13
Ring of Invisibility, B1/68, B1/p80	Split Stone Ring, K47/p19
Ring of Longevity	

HACK FEATURE!



Hack Feature is a sneak peek at some of the nasties awaiting you in the upcoming Hacklopedia of Beasts. Above, a *Great Marauding Red Beaver* gets 'medieval' on a player character who made the mistake of crossing his path. (artist Doug Curtis) [Note the "cartoon balloons" are just an added embellishment for KODT and don't appear in Hacklopedia.] □



Mark Sachs sent us this home-brewed picture of the Knights with a bit of attitude. Hmmm...looks like they might be on their way to their weekly Hack-Club meeting.

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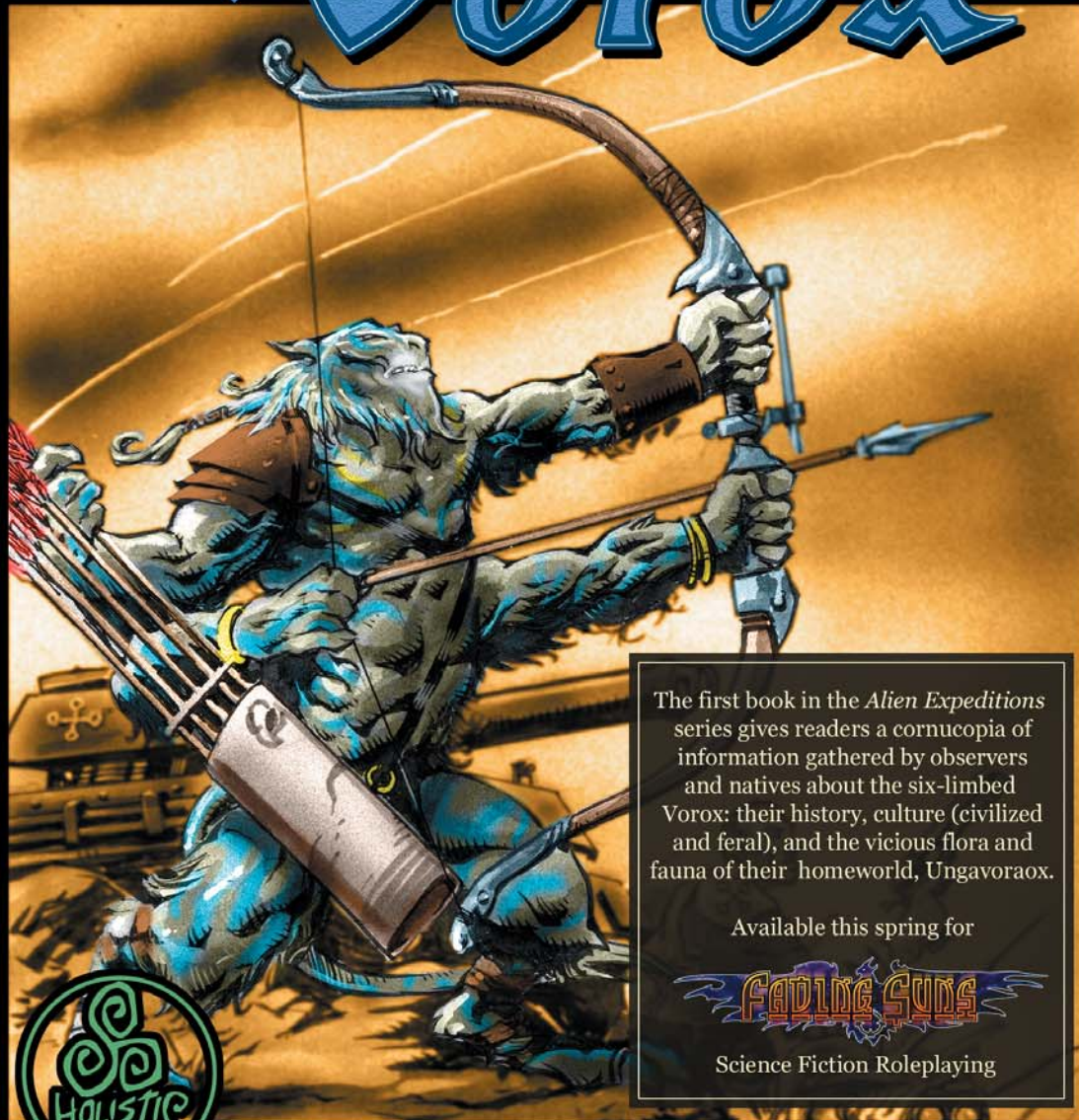


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