

KENZER AND COMPANY

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 May '01  
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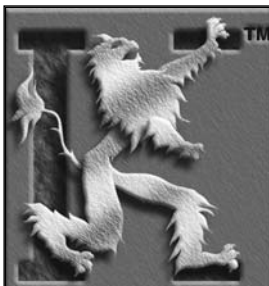
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# KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #55  
PUTTIN' ON THE CRITS  
May, 2001

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**Submissions:** We accept submissions for strip ideas, jokes, cartoons, etc. We are interested in running anything that other gamers and fans would enjoy. Check out our website for writer's guidelines.

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# Knights of the Dinner Table™ M A G A Z I N E

## “PUTTIN’ ON THE CRITS”

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS

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

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**K**NIGHTS 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 *created* 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™



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Don Morgan

I know what you're thinking. You think I ran out of ideas and that I'm once again resurrecting the "Russian Gaming Women Seeking American Gamers" prank from KODT #24 and 41. Actually the picture to the right is a screen shot from a REAL dating service (<http://www.dungeonsanddating.com>) that was pointed out to us by a reader. It seemed pretty clear to me that someone was attempting to turn the table and pull my leg. I mean c'mon. The photo of Alexa (a reference to Brian's dear Lexxy?) looks a lot like the sultry Tasha from our own ad.



After checking out the site, however, I was amazed to find that the site is actually affiliated with a REAL online dating service. As one member of the *kodt yahoo club* pointed out, "Someone has obviously figured out that a good many dateless gaming geeks carry credit cards."

I'll be honest, it puts my own ad copy in the *Russian Gaming Women* ad (which was suggested by Gilbert Milner of *War Games West* by the way) to shame — "...between all the dragon slaying and ogre battling do you find yourself pressed to find time for love?" It's enough to make any red blooded male gamer cry out, "She understands me!" and start fumbling through the ol' wallet for the credit card. But hold on there dice jockeys — before you go racing off to your computers and start firing up those modems let me issue a word of caution. I'm in no way endorsing this site nor am I questioning the integrity of the folks who run it. I really don't know anything about the company behind this site. So make sure you read the 'fine print' on the online agreement before you give out any of your personal information. Besides, not only is it informative — it's a very funny read (unintentionally so, I'm sure).

For example, one tell-tale clause in the agreement reads, "PLEASE TAKE NOTICE: The Company may monitor your profile, and from time to time an employee of the Company, using a fictional character, may send you one or more items of correspondence. The sole purpose of the communication(s), which may include communication(s) you have previously received, is to induce you to become a paid member of the Service or to continue your membership in the Service. Please be advised that the fictional correspondence is indistinguishable from genuine correspondence and we do not warrant the genuineness, truth or veracity of any correspondence you have received or may receive."

I'd applaud them for being so honest and forthright but the part that reads "we do not warrant the genuineness, truth or veracity of any correspondence" leaves me scratching my head. As Bob Herzog would say, "There's more red flags waving in that flavor text than at the Kremlin on May Day!"

Before closing, I'd like to point out that it's that time of year again — time to vote for your favorite gaming products for the 2000 Origin Awards. (See the ad on page 3) This year several Kenzerco products were nominated; KODT as *Best Professional Games Magazine*, Fairy Meat as *Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Miniatures Rules*, B.A. Felton as *Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Miniature* (Sadly Gordo didn't make the list for *Best Vehicular Miniature* but you can always write him in -- wink wink). I should also mention that Flying Buffalo's KODT Lost World books were even nominated for *Best Role-Playing Supplement*.

We need your votes!! The use of paper ballots are being discouraged this year — Voting is being conducted on line at [www.originsawards.com](http://www.originsawards.com)! Anyway, I'd like to urge our all our readers to jump online and vote — even if you choose not to vote for our products. It's a great way to reward those folks who make your favorite game products.

Until next issue — Game on!!

Jolly R. Blackburn  
Jolly R. Blackburn  
April 3, 2001

I'M CORRESPONDING WITH SOME CHICK NAMED BAMBI! SHE'S REALLY INTO CATTLEPUNK. SHE PLAYS A SALOON GIRL SHARPSHOOTER NAMED SILK ARROW! YOU SHOULD SEE THE PHOTO OF HERSELF SHE SENT ME. SHE LOOKS JUST LIKE A YOUNG BARBARA STANWYCK ONLY PRETTIER!

MAKES HER OWN DICE? KEWL? DOES SHE USE A POLYMER RESIN? WHAT KIND OF HARDENING AGENT DOES SHE USE?

HA! THAT'S NOTHING! MY GIRL PLAYS HACKMASTER AND MAKES HER OWN DICE.



Hey, ~~Brendon~~...er...  
~~Brendon~~...uh...  
Brendon, sorry about  
butchering yer name!



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THE 27TH ANNUAL

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**KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE**

[Best Professional Games Publication]

**FAIRY MEAT**

[Best Sci-Fi/Fantasy Miniatures Rules]

**B.A. FELTON**

[Best Sci-Fi/Fantasy Miniature]

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THE GAVELLED CALLIOPE STATUETTE

**Nominees for the 2000 Origins Awards:**

- Best Abstract Board Game**  
Bluff! Lords; Affirmation Bottommen  
Chief Harmond's Holiday Fun Pack  
Icehouse; The Martian Chase Set  
Reiner: Space Through The Desert  
Shipwrecked
- Best Historical Board Game**  
Aix & Alex: Europe  
For the People II  
Fractal Victory  
Panzer Grenadier  
Silverton: The Game of Colorado Railroad  
The Chicago Way
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Board Game**  
Star Wars: Queen's Gambit  
The Great Brain Robbery  
Twilight Imperium 2nd Edition  
Wizard King
- Best Graphic Presentation of a Board Game**  
For the People I  
Rome of War  
Shipwrecked  
Star Wars: Queen's Gambit  
The Great Brain Robbery  
The Hills Are Wild!  
Twilight Imperium 2nd Edition
- Best Trading Card Game**  
Age of Empires Expandable Card Game  
Magic: The Gathering  
MIB Showdown  
Sailor Moon Collectible Card Game  
Wheel of Time CCG
- Best Traditional Card Game**  
Apples to Apples Junior  
Chrononauts  
Letterhead  
The Big Lebowski
- Best Card Game Expansion or Supplement**  
7th Sea: Block sets (for 7th Sea)  
Apples to Apples Expansion Set-2 (for Apples to Apples)  
BRAWL: Club Foglio (for BRAWL)  
Doomtown: Eye for an Eye (for Doomtown)  
Shadowfist: Treachery War (for Shadowfist)
- Best Graphic Design of a Card Game**  
7th Sea: Block sets (for 7th Sea)  
Age of Empires Expandable Card Game  
BRAWL: Club Foglio (for BRAWL)  
Chrononauts  
Sailor Moon Collectible Card Game
- Best Game-Related Novel**  
Clan Novel: Giovanni (for Vampire: the Masquerade)  
Diagon the Dark (for Dragonage)  
Diagon: a Fallen Sun  
Neopolis  
The Scorpion
- Best Game-Related Short Work**  
Avilion (for King Arthur Pendragon)  
New Bathmen: Last His Issue (for Oneworld)  
Matt and Gilly's Big Date  
Mormac's Lament (for Warhammer Fantasy Battle)
- Best Historical Miniatures Rules**  
Battle Front  
Civil War: Rise  
Fields of Honor  
Rage on the Reich
- Best Science-Fiction or Fantasy Miniatures Rules**  
City Hall, U.C. Miniature Game Rules 1.0  
Fairy Meat  
Mage Knight: Rebellion  
Star Trek: Red Alert Customizable Disk Game  
Warhammer  
When Good Villagers Go Bad
- Best Historical Figure Miniatures Series**  
15mm American Civil War (34)  
Adler 6mm WWII line  
Hammer's Hellhounds (US Paratrooper)
- Best Science Fiction or Fantasy Figure Miniature**  
B.A. Felton: Knights of the Dinner Table Miniature  
Beholder (for Dungeons & Dragons)  
The Great Dragon Trazulul (for Dark Heaven Apocalypse)  
The Orb of Power & Benny the Bouncer (for Carrion)  
Warlord Greatguil Traxus (for Warhammer 40,000)
- Best Vehicular Miniature**  
CAV Dictator (for CAV: Combat Assault Vehicle)  
Hazard Ships: The Red Taron Fleet (for Noble Armada)  
Farm Miniatures: WWII (10mm Tiger I (50kt 18)) German Tank  
Shadowfist: Than Hunter (for Warhammer 40,000)  
Volksare German Walker (for Gear Krieg)
- Best Amateur Game Periodical**  
Advents & Excursions  
DEMONSOUND: Reflections of a Darker Future  
Dungeons Gwener Magazine  
Serendipity's Circle  
The Shadowrun Supplemental (for Shadowrun)
- Best Professional Game Periodical**  
Dusk Tower  
Dragon  
Games Unplugged Magazine  
Knights of the Dinner Table Magazine  
Pyramid
- Best Play-by-Mail Game**  
Adventurers Guild  
Middle-earth Play-by-Mail Fourth Age circa 1000  
Starweb
- Best Roleplaying Adventure**  
Another Fine Mess (for RUDGE)  
Death in Resport (for the d20 system)  
Sire: An Epic Adventure Anthology (for Sangoku)  
So, We Have... an Opalesk? (for Big Eyes, Small Mouth)  
Three Days to Kill (for the d20 system)
- Best Roleplaying Game**  
All Reason Must Be Eaten First  
Big Eyes, Small Mouth: Second Edition  
DUNE: Chronicles of the Imperium RPG  
Dungeons & Dragons  
Fudge Expanded Edition  
Star Wars Roleplaying Game
- Best Roleplaying Supplement**  
GURPS Steampunk (for GURPS)  
Hot Rods and Gun Bunnies (for Big Eyes, Small Mouth)  
Lost Worlds: Knights of the Dinner Table  
SAVONS! Wolves in the Fold of Arthur's Britain  
The Keeper's Companion (for Call of Cthulhu)  
Tromore (for Ars Magica)
- Best Graphic Design of a Roleplaying Game, Adventure, or Supplement**  
Big Eyes, Small Mouth: Second Edition  
DUNE: Chronicles of the Imperium RPG  
Legend of the Five Rings RPG: 2nd Edition Player's Guide  
Monster Manual (for Dungeons & Dragons)  
Tenchu: Miyaji Role-Playing Game and Resource Book
- Best Game Aid or Accessory**  
Army Builder II  
Cardboard Heroes Dungeon Floors  
Crystal Dice  
Fractal Terrain  
Master Maze: Cavern Set  
The Munchkin's Guide to Powergaming

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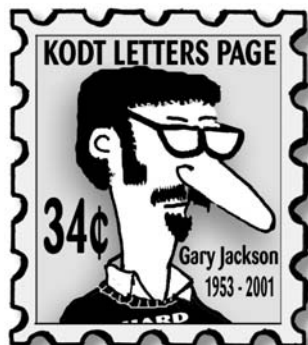
# GAMA 2001 PHOTO GALLERY

On March 19 to 22 the game industry held its annual trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada at The Orleans hotel.

Manufacturers and retailers donned their Sunday best and rubbed elbows with retailers from all over the country. Lots of exciting new products were announced at the show. It's safe to say that the 'game' will definitely go on.



# Our Readers Talk Back!



Dear KODT,

First of all, I want to thank you for being the inspiration to get me to start gaming again. I'm currently running a wonderful *Feng Shui* campaign with a bunch of friends from the SCA, and I really do have you folks to thank for getting the gaming bug back into me.

Secondly, I read your posted editorial (KODT#54) on the decision to send Gary Jackson to the *Land of the Perpetual Craps Game*. You made an interesting and surprising decision to do this, and I want to congratulate you on the twist in the story line. It was a great idea, and I look forward to the fallout in the comic.

Finally, there will be instituted a new house rule for my campaign in the memory of Gary (*why not? It'll be fun.*) - all *Hard Eight*s rolled using d6s for the next several sessions (*Feng Shui uses 2d6 as the central mechanic*) will be tossed out and rerolled using two d6ers. If another *Hard Eight* shows, that will be rerolled.

Again, thank you for the inspiration of the Knights. It's been a blast, and I look forward to many more issues.

Regards,

Drew Johnson  
via E-mail

*What an excellent idea! I approve. We've been overwhelmed by all the response to Gee-Jay's death. A lot of fans are having fun with the idea and running with it. There are already rumors of Gary Jackson autopsy photos circulating on the net. There's also talk about Gary Jackson memorial services being organized for GenCon and Origins. Many readers have informed us they plan on wearing black armbands and turning out to the live-readings to remember the Master of Hack emasse.*

Jolly

Dear KODT,

I just finished reading the editorial for #54. I'm sad, but happy at the same time. It's really difficult to explain. I think I speak for a lot of readers when I say that I consider these charac-

ters to be friends. Some of them really close friends. And of course when a friend leaves, we feel sad. However, I'm still amazed that this person who is only a fictional character in a comic book, who never even really existed, can affect me so. I suppose it's very like when a character in a game dies; that character never really lived, but we still feel some sorrow at their passing.

I am still happy, though. You guys "get it". I can't tell you how good this makes me feel. You guys aren't going to find some cheesy way to resurrect Gary (he had an identical twin, it was a mistake, it was a dream, there's someone who looks exactly like him, he was cloned, etc.), because of two reasons. First, real life doesn't work like that. When we lose someone we care about, there is no magic that can make the hurt go away.

Only time will soften the pain and leave us with the good memories. And second, you guys trust us, the same way we trust you. Thank you for trusting us and believing in us.

Mark Dykstra  
via E-mail

## ON KODT'S DOUBLE STANDARD WHEN IT COMES TO GAME REVIEWS.

Dear KODT,

I've been a loyal reader from the beginning, saw KODT in *Shadis*, *Dragon*. I even had Issue #1 and it's still as poignant to our lot in life and hilarious as ever (*please reincarnate me as a gazebob or rot grub!*) Ok, now that my token fanboy slobbering is complete I can strap on my flame-thrower.

You've made a claim in KODT that you only accept honest game reviews from people that play the game, thus indicating you want to set a higher standard of game reviews than "they pay the ads, we review their backsides nicely, with dollops of hot oil". But Rick Moscatello (*Disks of Wondrous Power*) goes too far, sure he plays the games (a lot of them, all of them, hell, too many "puter games by all appearances!"). His flighty opening of the games, installing them, playing them intensely (*maybe, maybe not, I can't tell all the time*), pondering of the games, and finally moving on to the next box before the CD ROM drives stops spinning just doesn't serve us gamers who are looking for a game that is worth diving into. Come on, all games have bugs, all games have weaknesses, but a lot of them are enough fun to lump it and keep playing (*read buy the sequel*).

Now, one thing that has become painfully clear is in addition to his short game attention span he doesn't appear to try to truly master the games he plays. His *Asheron's Call* character was the poorest designed character I have EVER seen (*Issue 51*). Specialized healing, no weapons, trained identify items...I am sorry, his e-Baying of the account was a felony. *Asheron's Call* was given a very unfair bad-mouthing. His character was less than pitiful, and the author admits to not being able to handle and adapt to a game

that changes (*Tip: better not play a game that is updated monthly!*). D00d, j00 +0+4lly g4V3 4sh3R0n's c4ll 4 |34d, unf4ir r4p!!

He reviews countless strategy games (*Panzer General*, *Age of Empires*, etc.), yet in any foray into head-on-head internet play he gets thrashed (*Issue 50*) and resorts to insulting his superiors (*i.e. anyone that has played the game long enough to grasp the mechanics and not just the tips n' tricks from the inundating cheat guides*). Ok, his reviews make me feel dirty when he suggests save/reloads as the best way to beat a computer combat AI.

Please, Rick — Slow down the pace of your reviews. Tell us the best games out there and dive into the game, don't just beat me to the install and dump it for the next game advertised in PC Gamer. You guys are better than that!

Tell us about the awesome games you've mastered, not the ones you uninstalled (those guys totally s0xx0rz).

As an aside, I know you guys only review the little chump games, but even the big guys deserve a comment when they crank out masterpieces with all their auto-purchase dregs. So, if the only AD&D reviews you put out are for Kalamar I'm pulling out Bigby's again :loads spell comps:

Bill o Deep  
via E-mail

*Good shootin' Tex! Nothing we love more than a letter from a fan who pulls no punches and isn't afraid to say what's on his mind. (Add five points to your Honor)*

*Obviously, this is one for Rick Moscatello to answer since it largely involves HIS column but before I turn it over to him, let me address a few points you raised.*

*As for the 'claim' that KODT will only accept 'honest reviews' well, yes, that's true. We publicly stated that policy a while back so our readers would hold us accountable. Buying an ad in KODT doesn't necessarily mean the advertiser is going to get a glowing review of his product splashed across the page opposite his ad. I'm sorry, but we're not in the business of writing reviews-on-demand. (I'd like to point out that MOST game manufacturers I know aren't really interested in swapping out ad dollars for white-washed reviews anyway. Like most of us, they believe in their work.)*

*It's our stance that it would be a great disservice to our readers if we were to plug or endorse a product(s) simply because we're courting advertisers. For example, if I mention I love playing *Formula De'* in my editorial (which I have several times) you can bet it's because I truly LOVE playing that game — not because I'm fishing for advertising dollars from the company who publishes it.*

*We realize that if you put a group of gamers in a locked room and toss them a box full of games it's not very likely any of them will agree as to which of the games were best and why. As a group, we gamers are very opinionated and we're not too shy about voicing those opinions.*

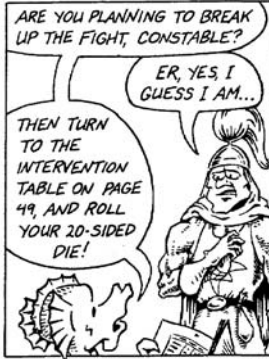
*This is something we acknowledged when we*

## GOT SOMETHING TO SAY??!

Write to Table Talk  
c/o KenzerCo  
25667 Hillview Ct.  
Mundelein, Illinois 60060  
or E-mail: mailbag@kenzerco.com

# BRUNO THE BANDIT

By IAN McDONALD



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Read Bruno the Bandit daily at [www.brunothebandit.com](http://www.brunothebandit.com)

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launched *Critical Mass* a few issues ago. We invited readers to send in their own reviews/comments on the games they're playing. If someone else feels that a game reviewed in CM has been treated unfairly (or, on the flipside, that it was left off too easily) we encourage that person to send in their own CM review.

As for not reviewing the 'big guys' products that's been remedied with the introduction of *Critical Mass* as well. (Brian's *Small Press Picks* are just that -- thumb-nail recommendations from the staff of KODT to our readers. Oh, and you mentioned D&D product reviews (or the lack thereof) specifically. If memory serves we've reviewed at least four d20 products (including D&D 3E itself) in KODT over the last six issues.

Finally, I'd like to point out that the various columns such as *Off the Shelf*, *WebScrier* and *Disks of Wondrous Power* are treated a bit differently -- they are written by hired guns (freelancers) and we generally have a handoff approach when dealing with our columnists. That means we don't tell them what to review or how to review it.

With that said, I turn you over to Rick who wasted no time coming up for air after receiving your letter.

Jolly

## RIK'S RESPONSE TO BILL O DEEP'S LETTER.

Well, there certainly is much to respond to in your letter. Let's see if I can hit all the points, major and minor:

1) Yes, I play A LOT of games. I get a lot of games. I love games. I play 16 hours a day when I can, and it's an unhappy day when I play less than 4. I've always been like this, and hopefully always will be. Strangely, the only time I don't play games is when I go to conventions and such. I treat games like most people treat novels, and usually spend a good deal of time with about 3 games a month, and "flip through" several others. For *Disks*, I tend not to focus on just one game. If I did just talk about one game, then I've left out all the players that just don't like games of that type. I'd rather put a bit more effort into having something for everyone in my column.

I could just talk about great games, but, c'mon, those games get TONS of coverage. I feel I'm doing more of a service to gaming by being about the only one to tell you the problems in a game, rather than being yet another guy enthusing ridiculously about the greatness of *Diablo 2*. Moreover, if I warn you away from such games, that's money you'll have to invest in better games.

2) Gee whiz, you say maybe I don't master games and don't know much about the games I play, then you say such stuff about *Asheron's Call* and my char-

acter. Um, I did not train "Identify Items", I got it for free...odd that you don't know that's a free skill. Also, it's not possible to not have a weapon, all characters get some weapon skill...odd that you don't know this either. In my case, I got staff for free. Staff, incidentally, is the second best melee skill, next to Unarmed (which is also free; I should mention that Unarmed is bugged and more powerful than it should be...when people found out about this and the developers promised to never fix the bug, they rerolled characters, but I just stick with my guy).

Yes, Specialized Healing was goofy, I took the skill to give my character some character. For the first 8 months of the game, specialization was worthless, and most players created characters with no specialized skills. When they changed the rules for specialization to make it powerful, most people rerolled, but I just stuck with it. Specialized healing, by the way, is considered by many to be the most useful skill; there were several occasions where I practically reattached my own severed head in the middle of combat (i.e., I healed over 100 points in one shot). Such healing also allows you to get mana quickly. Due to a bug, there are better ways to get mana, but when they fixed the bug, the exploiters complained so much that they "unfixed" the bug. I just stuck it out, doing things my own way.

My character also started with fairly low endurance, at a time in the game when it was nearly impossible to survive with low endurance. I struggled through and made it anyway. When they changed the combat rules to make "extreme" characters with minimal endurance (and thus maximum strength and such) possible, many people rerolled, but I just stuck with what I had.

Calling my 65th level character less than pitiful was harsh, man...I could beat nearly everything in the game singlehandedly, and cast any spell except War Magic. Those 65 levels were earned, I should mention. Due to poor design, a certain 1st level spell allows characters to gain a great deal of experience at no risk...while everyone else was exploiting, I was earning my experience "the hard way." I had over 200 followers, and people were always asking for aid from my "less than pitiful" self. I admit \$600 was a darn good price for him (got another \$530 for his armor--sold separately, in the "action figure" tradition), but I wouldn't call it a felony.

You accuse me of not being able to adapt to a game that changes? Yes, I could constantly reroll to a "flavor of the month" character in proper munchkin style. I chose not to, but it wasn't because I couldn't adapt, I just didn't want to reroll my character and start over just so I could eventually increase my hand to hand damage another 3%.

AC is absolutely the best MMORPG out there, in my opinion. But it still has problems, and not mentioning such little issues is doing a disservice.

3) Um, no, I'm not thrashed in any foray into head on head internet play. It happened in *Age of Kings*, and this was the first time I'd ever been crushed so. I had just started playing the game, and tried to play against people that had been playing every day for three months. A lesser person might have just hidden the fact, but I wrote about it...any KODT reader who went online now has less reason to be discouraged, since now he (or she) will know that the opponents may be much more experienced, and far too willing to take advantage of newcomers. I'm MUCH better now, and I seek out those jerks (also called "smurfs") and slap them around more often than not. Usually they curse at me and quit...seek me out as *Uber Rookie* on Microsoft Gaming Zone and I'll demonstrate.

4) So you don't use save and reload when playing games? I would love to see you beat some of these games without such tactics. Are you anywhere near Louisiana? Let me pick the game and skill level, and I'll bet money you can't do it. Some of these games are just ridiculous in the manner in which they play, and claiming otherwise is a disservice once again. Some computer games cheat horribly, and telling KODT gamers that information can relieve quite a bit of frustration, and make them feel less guilty about fighting back in kind.

5) Sorry, I'm unlikely to slow down. There are too many games on the shelves, and I really want to see them all. If you want massively in depth strategic discussions for a particular game, buy the \$30 "secrets" manual (as horrible as they are, maybe it's what you are looking for). In my opinion, most games just don't merit such thorough analysis, any more than your average Harlequin novel merits a *Cliff's Notes*, TV series, A&E Biography on the author, collectible card game, and a feature film. Life is short, the most playable games really do get coverage (how many times have I mentioned *Asheron's Call*, *Age of Kings*, and *Diablo II* in my columns?), but I'm also going to keep looking for hidden treasures.

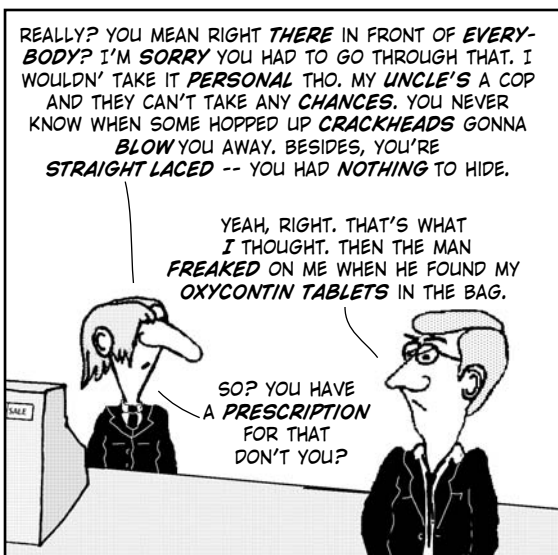
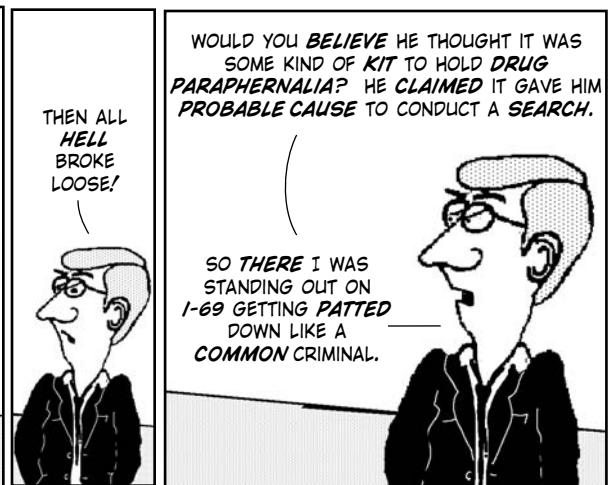
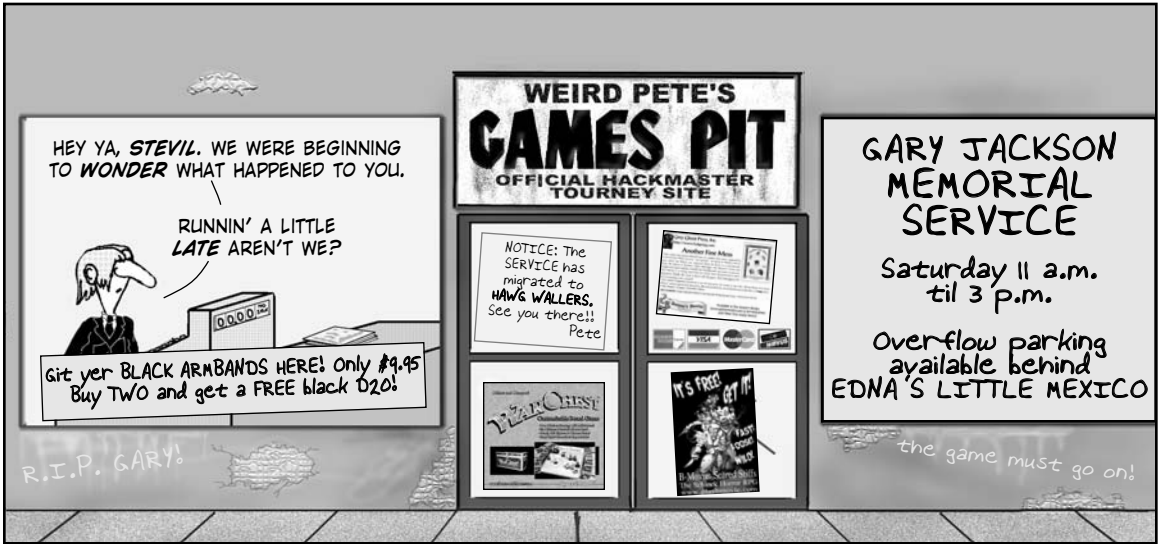
Why shouldn't I cover the next game advertised in PC Gamer? Don't you want to know if it's a dog, or would you rather just base your buying decision strictly on the hype? I do appreciate your comments; I hope I've explained better where I'm coming from in my writings.

Rick Moscatello

Disks of Wondrous Power. ☐

# "Bad Boys, Bad Boys..."

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN  
WITH BRIAN JELKE AND STEVE JOHANSSON



I *TRIED* EXPLAINING *THAT* TO THE MAN. NEXT THING I KNEW HE HAD ME *FACE DOWN* ON THE ASPHALT AND WAS SLAPPIN' A PAIR OF *HAND CUFFS* ON ME.

OH WOW!! HE ACTUALLY *CUFFED* YOU? THAT IS *SO KEWL*. DID HE DRAW HIS *GUN*?

AS A MATTER OF FACT...

...*HE DID!* ONCE HE POPPED THE *TRUNK* AND GOT A *GANDER* AT *GORDO'S MUSEUM-REPLICA TWO-HANDED SWORD* WHICH I'VE BEEN *HAULING AROUND* SINCE *GARYCON '99*.

MIND YOU THIS WAS JUST *AFTER* THE PART WHERE THEY USUALLY ASK, "ARE YOU CARRYING ANY *WEAPONS* IN YOUR CAR?"

TO WHICH I HAD *ERRONEOUSLY* ANSWERED, "*NO!*"

WOW! SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAD A *REAL LIFE* RANDOM ENCOUNTER OF THE *WORST* KIND.

HOLD ON TO YOUR *SEAT* THERE *SHEMP*. YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE *WORST* OF IT.

YOU MEAN THERE'S *MORE*?

BY *THIS* POINT, '*BARNEY FIFE*' THINKS HE HAS SOME *CRAZED DOPED UP PSYCHO* ON HIS HANDS -- SO HE RUNS MY *LICENSE* THROUGH THE *COMPUTER*.

NEXT THING YOU KNOW EVERY *BELL, WHISTLE* AND *SIREN* WITHIN A *FIVE MILE RADIUS* IS GOING OFF AND HE'S SCREAMIN' FOR "*BACK UP*" AND "*ASSIST*" ON THE RADIO. ACCORDING TO THE *COMPUTER* I HAD AN *OUTSTANDING BENCH WARRANT* FOR MY ARREST.

*GAAA!!!* YOU MEAN YOU'RE A *WANTED MAN*???! -SPUTTER- W-W-W-WHAT FOR?

NO YOU *MORON*, I'M *NOT* WANTED. IT WAS A *GLITCH* IN THE SYSTEM.

APPARENTLY SOMEONE '*FORGOT*' TO TELL THE *COMPUTER* THAT LITTLE "*BANK ROBBERY FIASCO*" FROM *NITRO'S CATTLEPUNK CAMPAIGN* HAD BEEN A *BIG FRICKIN' MISUNDERSTANDING*.\*

OH GAWD THAT IS *SO KEWL*. I ONLY *WISH* I'D BEEN THERE.

WEREN'T YOU LISTENING? THE MAN *DREW* HIS *GUN* ON ME!!

\*See KODT#33 Night of Living Dangerously Part II: While the Black Hands were playing CattlePunk in a bar (Hawg Wallers) a patron overhears them planning an in-game bank robbery. Thinking it was the 'real thing' he called the police. The Black Hands (along with their 'new' friend, Crutch spent several days in jail while it was sorted out.

IT WAS STARTING TO LOOK LIKE A BAD EPISODE OF "911 EMERGENCY" OUT THERE. THE JOKERS **IMPOUNDED** MY CAR AND **THREW** ME IN THE **BACK** OF A **SQUAD CAR**. THE **ICING** ON THE **CAKE** WAS THAT SOME **MR. MAGOO-ASS** TOW TRUCK DRIVER TOOK MY **CAR** IN WITH THE **EMERGENCY BRAKES** ENGAGED. WE **FOLLOWED** HIM FOR A FEW MILES -- MY CAR WAS TRAILING **SMOKE** LIKE AN **AEROSMITH ROADIE VAN!**

I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO MAKE **LIGHT** OF IT. I ONLY WISH I COULD HAVE **BEEN** THERE FOR YOU, MAN. **NO ONE** SHOULD GO THROUGH SOMETHING LIKE THAT **ALONE**.

**ALONE?! YEAH, RIGHT -- IF ONLY.**

I HAD TO **SHARE** THE BACKSEAT WITH SOME **HOOKER** NAMED **TRIXIE** AND HER '**BUSINESS MANAGER**', **CAGEY-CLEO** ON THE WAY BACK TO THE STATION.

THEY WERE **THIS CLOSE** TO PICKIN' THE **LOCKS** ON THEIR HANDCUFFS WITH A BENT **SYRINGE NEEDLE** BEFORE **BARNEY** NIPPED IT IN THE **BUD**.

WHAT A **NIGHTMARE**. I SPENT THE LAST **FIVE HOURS** IN **COUNTY LOCKUP** WHILE THEY **SORTED** IT ALL OUT.

FORTUNATELY THEY STILL HAD MY **FINGER-PRINTS** AND **PAPERWORK** ON FILE OR I MIGHT **STILL** BE THERE.

WHAT **REALLY** CHAPS MY **HIDE** IS THAT I HAD TO SIT THROUGH **ANOTHER ONE** OF **OFFICER TANDY'S** LAME ASS **B.A.H.M-INDUCED SEMINARS** ON THE **EVILS** OF **ROLE-PLAYING**. \*

OH GAWD! THEY SHOULD GIVE YOU THE OPTION OF **CYANIDE** OR A **PISTOL** TO THE HEAD. IT'D BE A **LOT** LESS PAINFUL.

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT. MY **MIGRAINES** ARE KILLING ME.

SO WHERE THE HELL **IS** EVERYBODY ANYWAY? NO **PUN** INTENDED BUT THIS PLACE IS LIKE A **MORGUE**.

I'M AFRAID YOU **MISSED** THE **MEMORIAL SERVICE**, **STEVE**. THINGS BROKE UP **HOURS** AGO.

BUT I THINK YOU CAN **STILL** CATCH **PETE** AND SOME OF THE OTHERS DOWN AT **HAWG WALLERS**.

**HAWG WALLERS?**

WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY DOING DOWN **THERE?**

IT ALL STARTED WHEN **WHITEY MORAN** OFFERED TO BUY EVERYONE A ROUND OF **DRINKS** -- YOU KNOW, IN **MEMORY** OF **GARY?** DIDN'T TAKE **LONG** FOR EVERYONE TO **MIGRATE** IN THAT DIRECTION.

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

I'M TOO **YOUNG** TO GET IN. BESIDES, I HAD A FEW **DEMERITS** TO WORK OFF.

I SEE. **DAMN!** I DROVE **FORTY MILES** FOR **NOTHING** THEN. -SIGH- GUESS I'LL SEE YA **LATER** THEN.

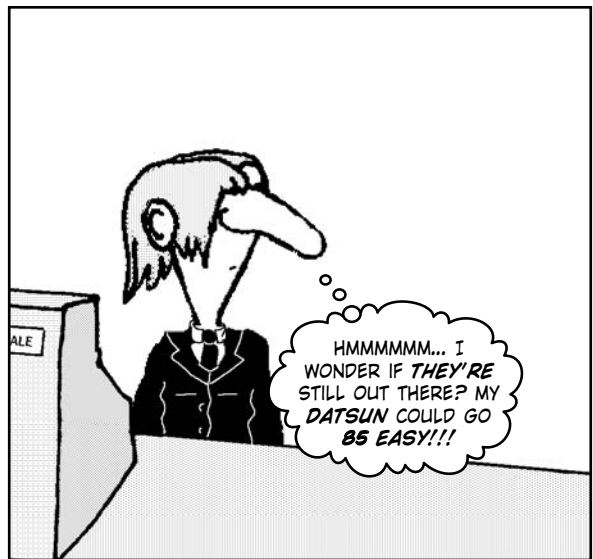
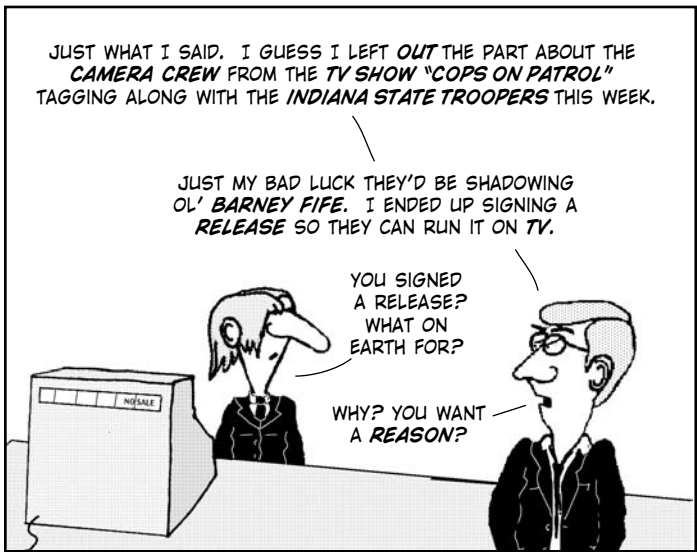
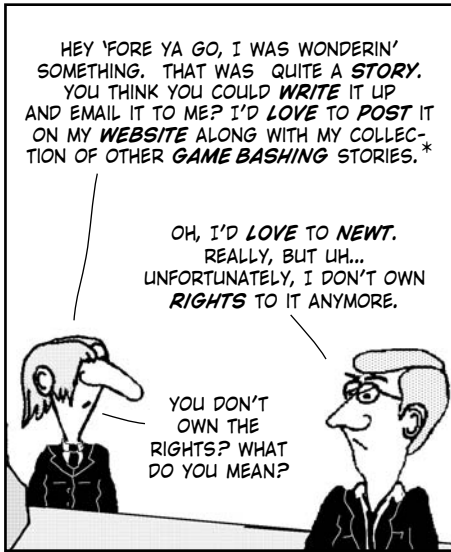
OH? YA THININ' OF GOING THAT WAY?

TO **HAWGS?** SHYA'RIGHT -- NOT **LIKELY!**

AS SOON AS THEY FINISH PUTTING **NEW BRAKES** ON MY CAR I'M DRIVIN' BACK TO **INDY** AND JUST **FORGET** THIS **DAY** EVER HAPPENED.

SURE, I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT.

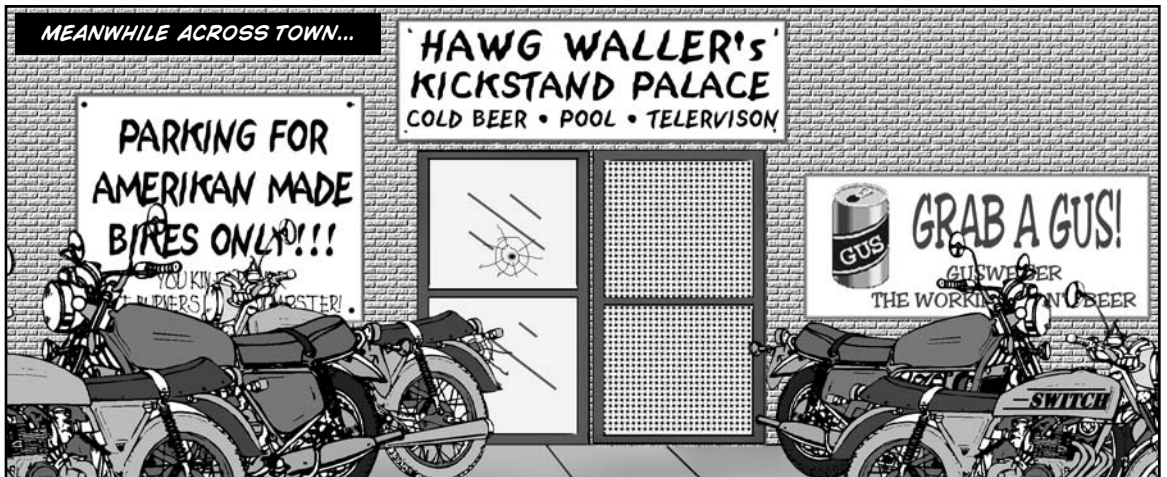
\* See KODT#50:Page 56: B.A.H.M stands for "Bothered about Hack Master" an organization whose members are convinced that HackMaster and other fantasy role-playing games like it are inherently evil and constitute a threat to young, impressionable minds. Officer Tandy was sent by the Muncie Police Department to attend a B.A.H.M. Seminar. He has since taken an active interest in gaming groups and its contribution to the 'downfall' of Muncie's youth.



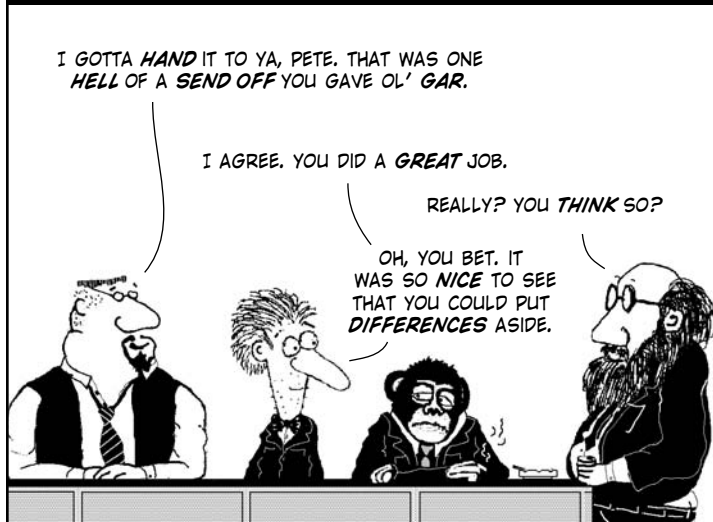
\*See KODT#42: **The Temple of Horrendous Doom** [Newt has a website where he likes to post stories about his characters as well as accounts of 'game bashing'. Apparently he thinks Stevil's run in with the law would make good content.]

# Last Call

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



MOST OF THE MOURNERS HAVE MOVED ON BUT A FEW DIE-HARDS LINGER...



I GOTTA **HAND** IT TO YA, PETE. THAT WAS ONE HELL OF A **SEND OFF** YOU GAVE OL' GAR.

I AGREE. YOU DID A **GREAT JOB**.

REALLY? YOU **THINK** SO?

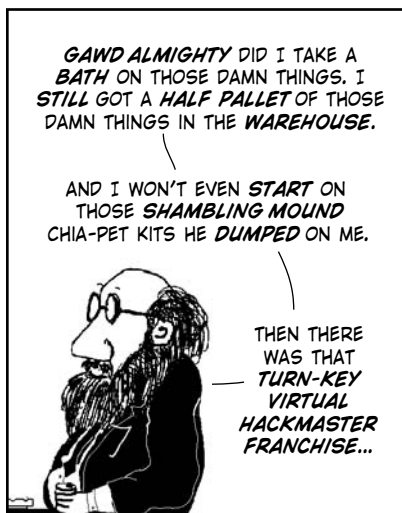
OH, YOU BET. IT WAS SO **NICE** TO SEE THAT YOU COULD PUT **DIFFERENCES** ASIDE.



DIFFERENCES? AWH HELL, I NEVER HAD ANY REAL **BEEF** WITH **GARY** -- CEPT MAYBE FOR THOSE FIRK DING BLASTIN' **ONE-LEGGED DWARF KITS** MAYBE.

AND I GUESS I WAS PRETTY **HOT** OVER HIM **DOUBLE SHIPPING** ME THOSE **SPELL JACKED BOOSTER PACKS**.

OH....AND THE TIME HE REPACKAGED THOSE OLD **CATTLEPUNK ADVENTURES**....



**GAWD ALMIGHTY** DID I TAKE A **BATH** ON THOSE DAMN THINGS. I **STILL** GOT A **HALF PALLET** OF THOSE DAMN THINGS IN THE **WAREHOUSE**.

AND I WON'T EVEN **START** ON THOSE **SHAMBLING MOUND CHIA-PET KITS** HE **DUMPED** ON ME.

THEN THERE WAS THAT **TURN-KEY VIRTUAL HACKMASTER FRANCHISE**...



NO, NO, PETE. I THINK WHAT **B.A.** IS REFERRING TO IS THE FACT THAT YOU SOLD ALL YOUR **SHARES** IN **HARDEIGHT** BACK TO **GARY** BEFORE IT WAS **APPARENT** THAT **HACKMASTER** WOULD BE SUCH A **HUGE HIT**.

YEAH, PETE. YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN PRETTY **BITTER** OVER THAT. **GARY** TALKED YOU INTO LETTING HIM **BUY** YOU OUT JUST **DAYS** BEFORE THE GAME HIT THE **STREETS**.\*

**BITTER?** HMMRRFFFF! I MAY HAVE **GRUMBLED** A BIT EVER' NOW AND THEN BUT I WAS NEVER **BITTER**.

HOW COULD I BE **BITTER?** SELLIN' THAT **STOCK** ALLOWED ME TO **BUY** MY FIRST **GAMESHOP**.

\*See Bundles of Trouble Volume 3: **Weird Pete the Man behind the Counter** [After Pete sued Gary for using material from his own game, Lynch Mob, to build HackMasters of Everknight (a set of fantasy miniatures war rules) on. Gary's lawyers settled by giving Pete 25% of the shares in HardEight. Later on the eve of HackMaster the RPG's release Gary pressured Pete to sell out. When HackMaster the RPG came out 5 days later, Pete felt he had been tricked.

Pete used his money to buy a gamestore (along with some rental property). When he hit hard times in the mid 80's Pete was forced to take out a mortgage on his building. When he defaulted, the bank sold the building to "Old Man Pavey" from whom Pete now leases his store front.]

HELL, IT ALLOWED ME TO DO WHAT I'VE LOVED MOST FOR ALL THESE YEARS --PLAY GAMES AND HANG OUT WITH ALL MY FRIENDS!! I'VE BEEN BLESSED I TELL YOU. GARY SHOULD BE SO LUCKY TO HAVE LIVED A LIFE LIKE I HAVE.

ALL THOSE NIGHTS HE WAS UP THERE BURNIN' THE MIDNIGHT OIL WITH A DEADLINE MONKEY RIDIN' HIS ASS I WAS SITTIN' HERE SIPPIN' WILD TURKEY AND TOSSIN' THE DICE!

ME AND YOU BOTH, OL' TIMER!

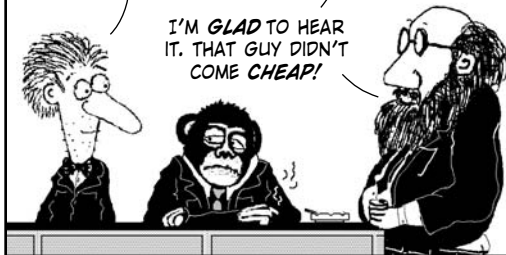


WELL, LIKE NITRO SAID YOU GAVE OL' GAR ONE HELL OF A SEND OFF. I'M PROUD OF YOU, PETE.

REALLY? YOU DON'T THINK HIRING THAT PAN-FLUTIST TO PLAY DANNY BOY WAS A BIT MUCH?

NAAAAA...NO WAY! THERE WASN'T A DRY EYE IN THE HOUSE. IT WAS BEAUTIFUL!

I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT. THAT GUY DIDN'T COME CHEAP!



YEAH, THAT DANNY BOY THING REALLY GOT TO ME. WE EVEN PAUSED OUR GAME OF SLACKER RAMPAGE TO STOP AND LISTEN. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW GARY WAS IRISH.

ACTUALLY, HE WASN'T -- BUT I'M SURE HE APPRECIATED THE SENTIMENT.

WHERE THE HELL DID YOU FIND THAT GUY, ANYWAY?

JUAN?? OH, HE PLAYED AT GORDO'S BAR MITZVAH YEARS AGO. WE WERE INTRODUCED AND GOT TO TALKING -- TURNED OUT WE WERE BOTH DEAD HEADS.

HAR HAR -- ENDED UP AT A TEXICAN BIKINI BAR OVER IN FAIRMOUNT KNOCKING BACK TEQUILA SHOTS!!

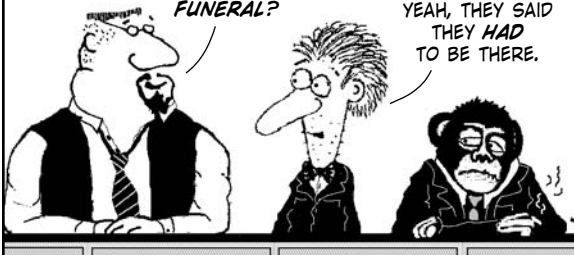


SAAAAY, I JUST REALIZED WHO'S MISSING. I DON'T THINK I SAW BOB OR BRIAN AT THE SERVICE.

OH, THEY DROVE UP TO SAGINAW TO TRY AND CRASH GARY'S FUNERAL.\*

CRASH THE FUNERAL?

YEAH, THEY SAID THEY HAD TO BE THERE.



BOTH OF THEM TOOK GARY'S DEATH PRETTY HARD. WE ALL DID, I SUPPOSE, BUT THEY MORE THAN MOST.

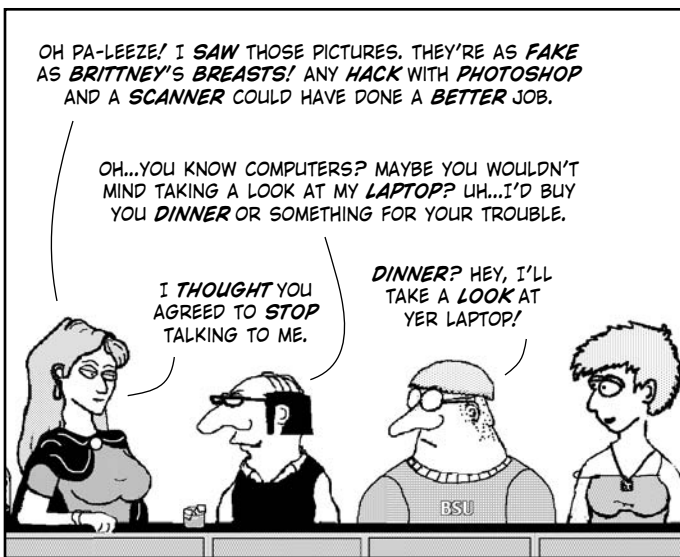
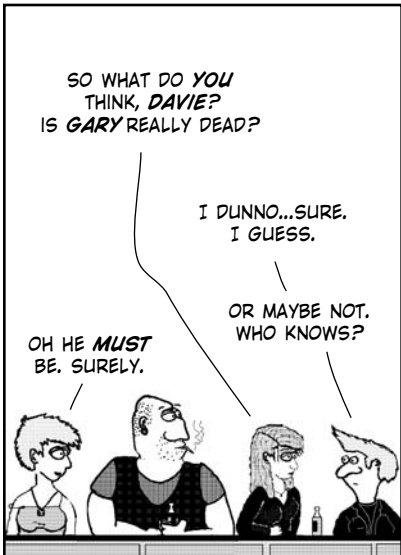
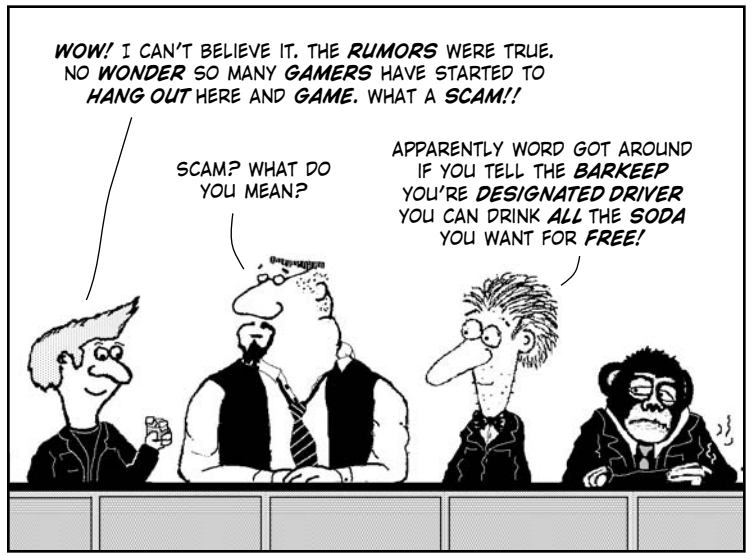
BRIAN'S CONVINCED IT'S SOME KIND OF HOAX THE HARD EIGHT BOYS COOKED UP TO HELP HYPE HACKMASTER 4TH EDITION.

THE BIG GUY SAYS HE WON'T BELIEVE IT UNTIL HE'S SEEN GARY IN HIS CASKET WITH HIS OWN EYES.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE BRIAN.

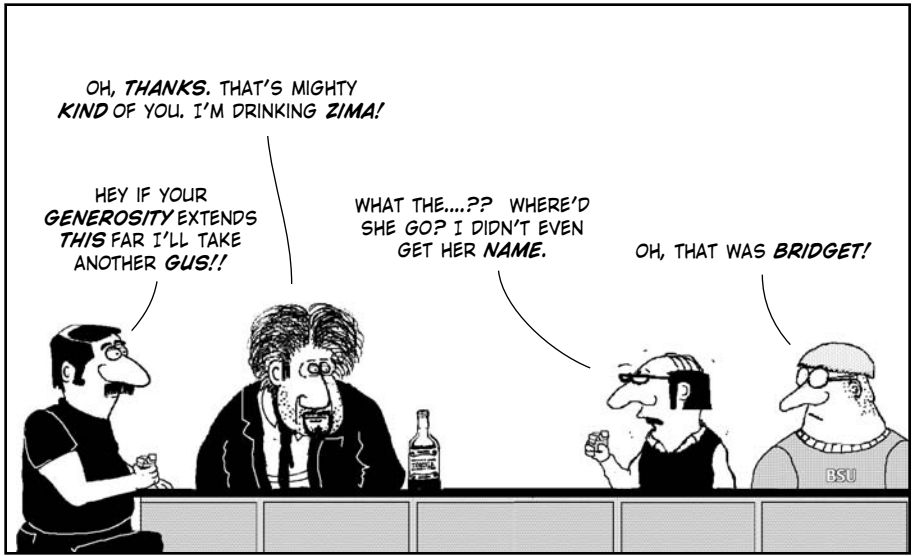


\* Although Gary's company was headquartered in Wisconsin he originally hailed from Saginaw, Michigan where Hard Eight was originally situated. After his divorce the company was split with the paperback book division going to his wife and the game division (and company name) going to Gary.





NOW THEN, MY **SWEETS**. WHY DON'T YOU LET ME BUY YOU **ANOTHER** DRINK AND...



OH, **THANKS**. THAT'S MIGHTY **KIND** OF YOU. I'M DRINKING **ZIMA!**

HEY IF YOUR **GENEROSITY** EXTENDS **THIS FAR** I'LL TAKE **ANOTHER GUS!!**

WHAT THE....?? WHERE'D SHE GO? I DIDN'T EVEN GET HER **NAME**.

OH, THAT WAS **BRIDGET!**



OH YEAH? WELL YOU **RUIINED** IT FOR ME. THAT **CHICK** WAS **DIGGIN'** ME.

NO, SHE DOES THAT TO **EVERYBODY!** I WOULDN'T LET IT GO TO YER **HEAD**.

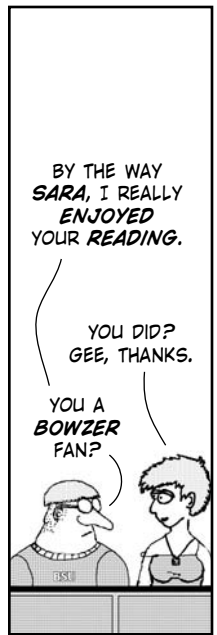
BESIDES, AREN'T YOU **MARRIED**, JOHNNY?



OH HOO!!!! SO **THAT'S** IT? I **THOUGHT** YOU WERE GIVING ME THE **COLD SHOULDER**.

IT'S JUST **BURNING** YOU UP THAT I'M **UNAVAILABLE** ISN'T IT? HEH HEH.

OH BROTHER!



BY THE WAY **SARA**, I REALLY **ENJOYED** YOUR **READING**.

YOU DID? GEE, **THANKS**.

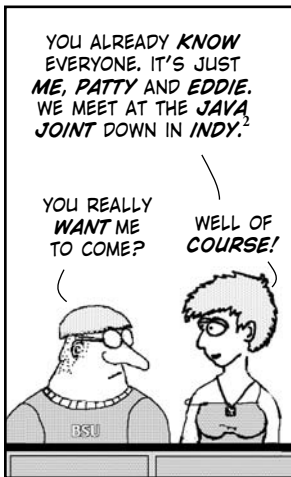
YOU A **BOWZER FAN?**



OH YES, I'M A **HUGE FAN**. IN FACT MY **BOOK CLUB** IS READING HIS NOVEL, **BLACK HAND: EVIL INSISTENT**<sup>1</sup> THIS MONTH.

HEY, THAT'S THE **BOOK** WE NAMED OUR **GAMING GROUP** AFTER. THAT NOVEL **ROCKS!**

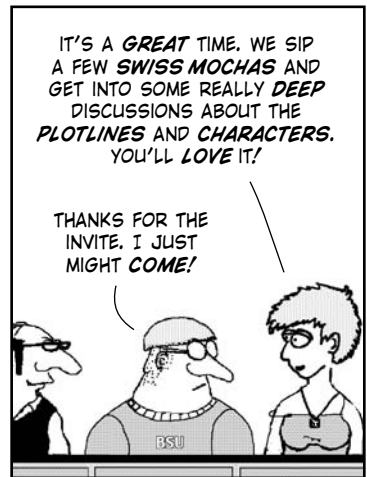
YOU SHOULD **COME** JOIN US. WE RECENTLY **LOST** A MEMBER SO WE'RE DOWN TO JUST **THREE** PEOPLE NOW.



YOU ALREADY **KNOW** EVERYONE. IT'S JUST **ME, PATTY** AND **EDDIE**. WE MEET AT THE **JAVA JOINT** DOWN IN **INDY**.<sup>2</sup>

YOU REALLY **WANT** ME TO **COME?**

WELL OF **COURSE!**

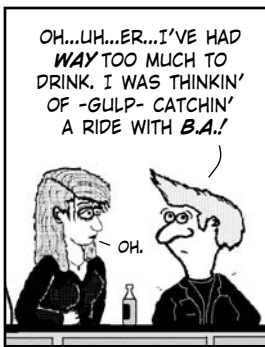


IT'S A **GREAT** TIME. WE SIP A FEW **SWISS MOCHAS** AND GET INTO SOME REALLY **DEEP** DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE **PLOT LINES** AND **CHARACTERS**. YOU'LL **LOVE** IT!

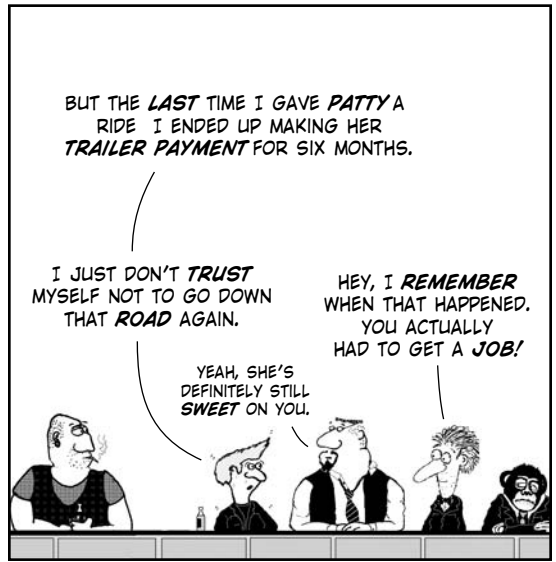
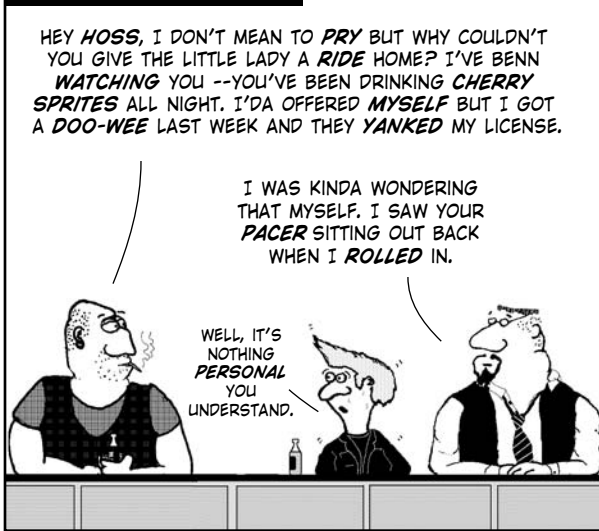
THANKS FOR THE **INVITE**. I JUST MIGHT **COME!**

1. The **Black Hand (Evil Insistent)** is a splinter group of the Dragon Committee comprised of three black dragons and two obsidian dragons.

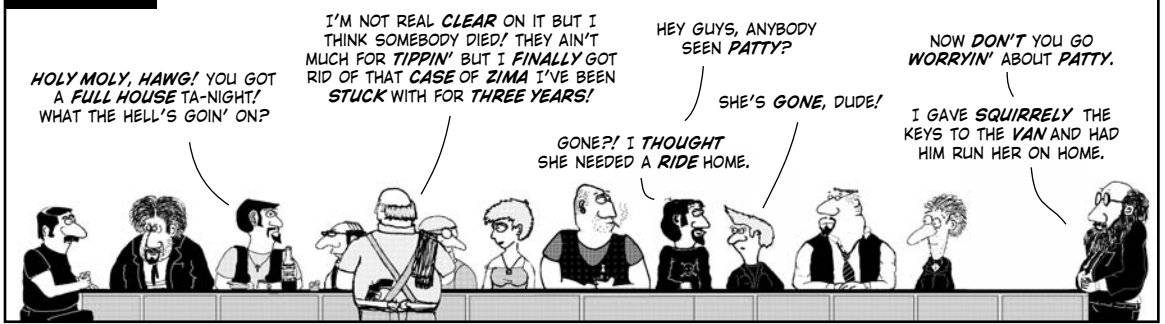
2. The adventures of Sara's book club can be seen in the KODT spinoff strip, **Java Joint** which appears in Black Gate Magazine. You can visit [www.blackgate.com](http://www.blackgate.com) for more information if you're interested.



**A FEW MINUTES LATER....**



**LATER....**



**LATER STILL....**





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Also coming this summer: The HackMaster  
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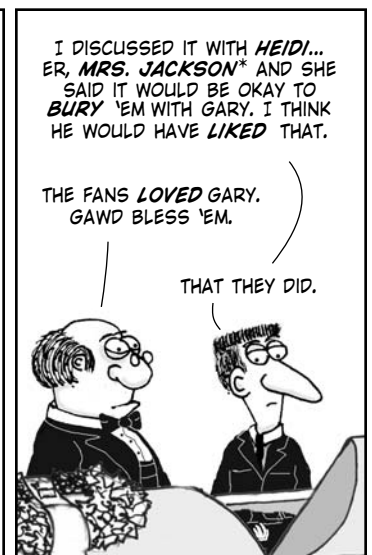
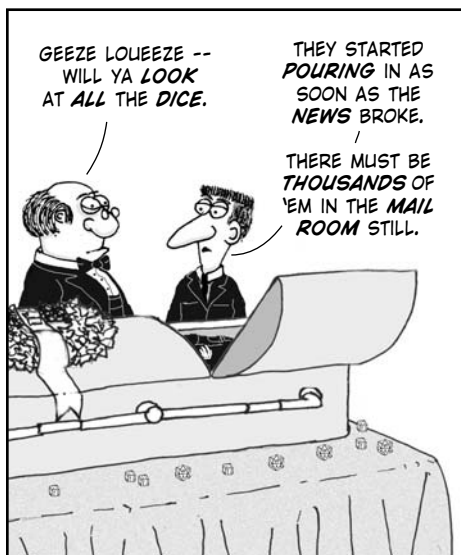
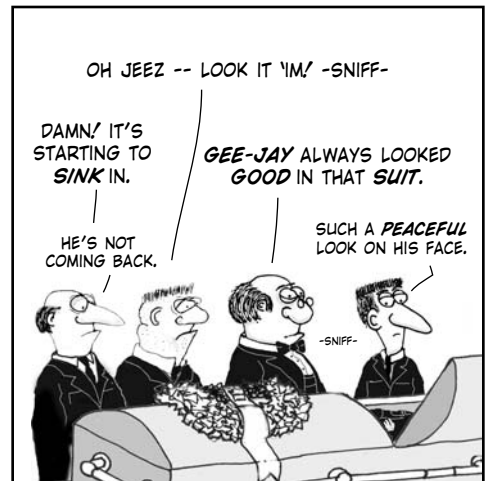
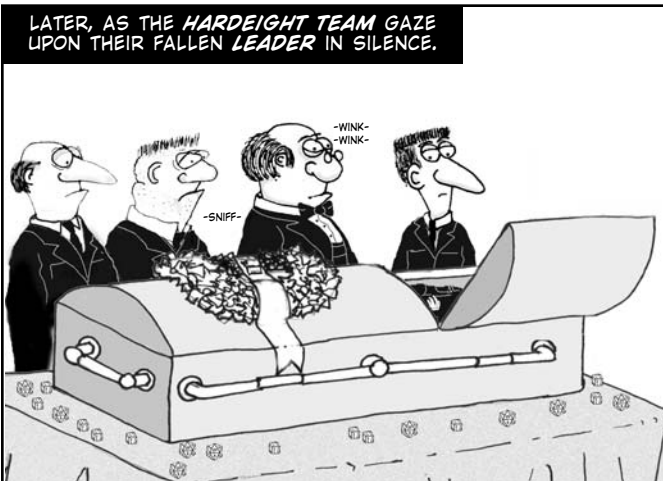
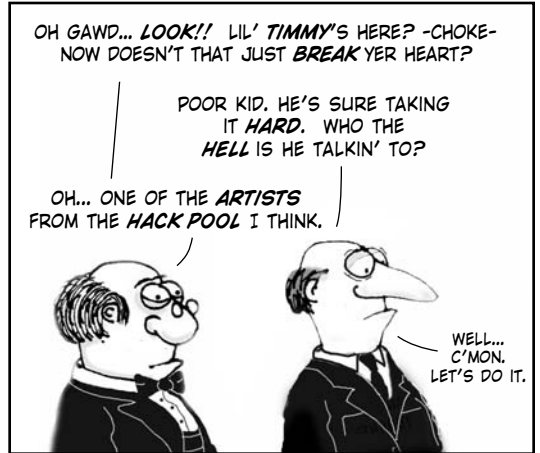
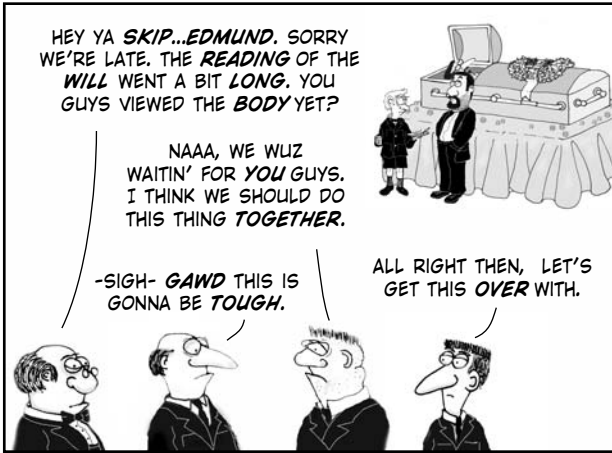
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# "We've become Orphans"

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

AT THE 'QUIET ACRES FUNERAL PARLOR' NOT FAR FROM THE DAIRY FARM HE GREW UP ON, GARY JACKSON'S FRIENDS, FAMILY AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATES GATHER TOGETHER TO SAY GOOD BYE!



\* Heidi Stephanie Jackson: Gary's ex-wife and mother of their only child, Timmy. [See the footnote on page 12 for more details about the divorce.]

FANS? HEY THAT REMINDS ME WE GOT A LITTLE PROBLEM. WHEN WE PULLED UP THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF 'EM TRYING TO GET IN. ONE FOOL KNUCKLEHEAD WAS EVEN TRYING TO CLIMB OVER THE PRIVACY FENCE OUT BACK. I DON'T THINK WE CAN REALLY TURN THEM AWAY -- DO YOU?

OH, WELL WE HAD A LITTLE HEART TO HEART WITH HEIDI ON THAT SUBJECT -- SHE'S CAVED IN.



WE'RE GONNA LET IN A DOZEN FANS AT A TIME SO THEY CAN PAY THEIR RESPECTS. I ALREADY GOT TULEY OUT THERE PUTTIN' THE PLAN IN MOTION.

A DOZEN AT A TIME? BUT IT'S A MOB OUT THERE. HOW'S TULEY GONNA DECIDE WHO GETS TO GO FIRST?

NO SWEAT! I TOLD HIM TO HAVE THEM DICE OFF FOR IT.

YEP! THAT'S THE SAME WAY GARY HANDLED THE SITUATION WHEN WE UNDER BOOKED HOTEL ROOMS AT HACKCON DETROIT THAT ONE TIME. REMEMBER?



SPEAKING OF DICING OFF -- HOW DID THE READING GO? I'M STILL KINDA SORE THEY WOULDN'T LET ME GO.

NOT SO GOOD. I ROLLED A FRICKIN' TWO. GOT THE GOLF CLUBS AND THAT SIGNED PORTRAIT OF PIA ZADORA GARY WAS SO FOND OF.

SHE'S LOVELY!



I DID A LITTLE BETTER. ROLLED AN ELEVEN. GOT THE HIS-N-HER SKEE-DOOS AND THE BALANCE OF GEE-JAY'S 'TIME SHARE' ON THAT BEACH RENTAL IN OCHO RIOS.

GOOD FOR YOU, WACO.

BAAAA - I'D GIVE IT ALL BACK JUST TO HEAR GARY SAY, "GAME ON!" ONE MORE TIME.



I HEAR YA. BUT I REALLY WASN'T INTERESTED IN THE ROLLS ON THE INCIDENTALS TABLE. I WAS WONDERING HOW IT WORKED OUT WITH THE LAWYERS AND WHY IT WAS ALL SO HUSH HUSH.

I'M NOT SURE WE CAN GO INTO THAT, SKIP

IT WASN'T PRETTY. I CAN TELL YOU THAT MUCH.

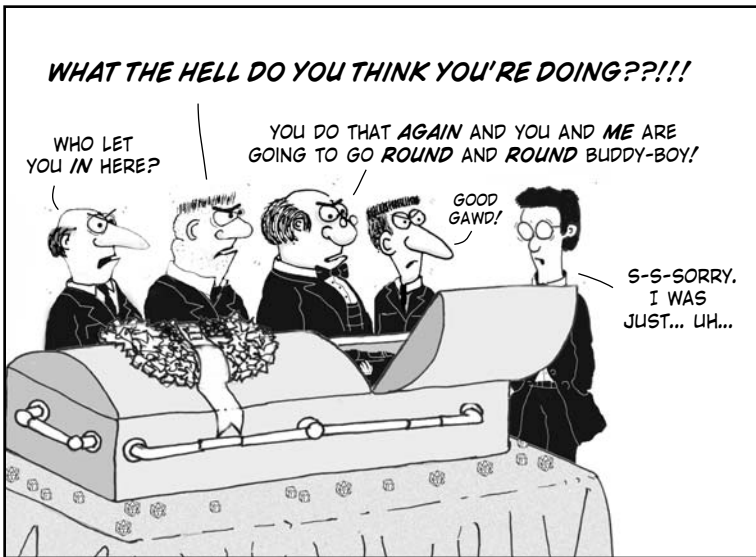
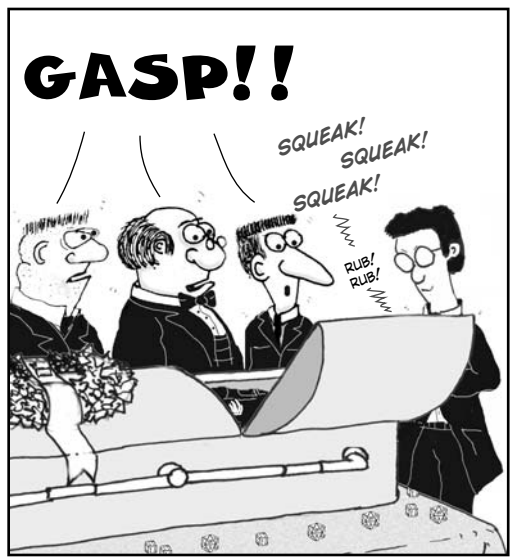
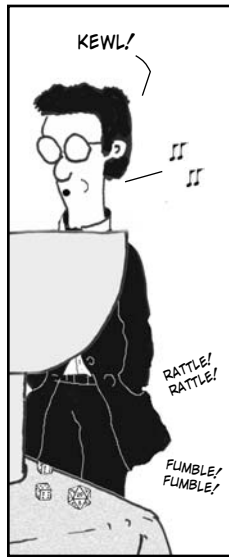
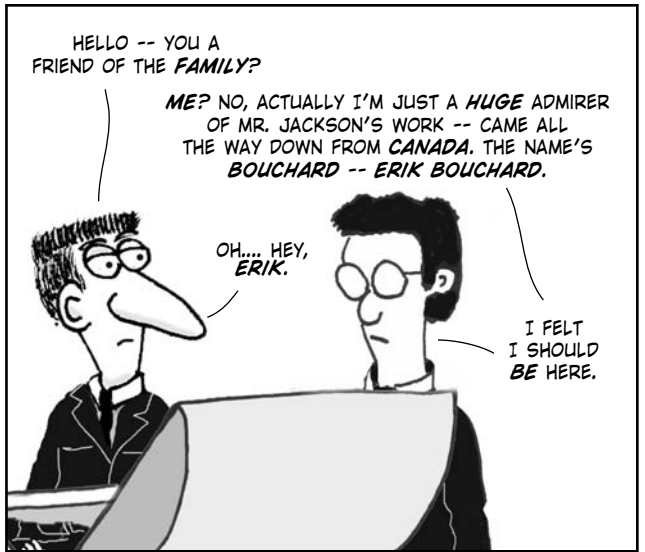


AWH NOW C'MON, YOU GUYS! WE'VE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER A LOT OF YEARS. I WANNA KNOW WHY GARY'S EX IS SUDDENLY POKING HER NOSE INTO OUR AFFAIRS AND WHY THE REST OF US COULDN'T BE AT THE READING. I GOT A RIGHT TO KNOW. DO I STILL HAVE A JOB?

OKAY, OKAY, MAYBE YER RIGHT. BUT...UH.... WE NEVER HAD THIS CONVERSATION. RIGHT?

YOU CAN TRUST ME. SO WHAT'S THE SCOOP??





THE GUY JUST RUBBED A *TWENTY-SIDER* ON GARY'S *FOREHEAD*!!

YEAH, I CAUGHT *GRAVEYARD GREG* DOIN' THE *SAME* THING A LIL' WHILE AGO. I RAN HIS *ASS* OUT OF HERE SO FAST HIS *HEAD* SPUN.

I GUESS WE SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU -- APPARENTLY PLAYERS ARE TAKING THOSE *DICE-PRIMING PROCEDURES* FROM THE *PLAYER'S ADVANTAGE* BOOKS TO THE NEXT *LOGICAL* STEP.

WHADDA YA MEAN? I DON'T *FOLLOW*.

YOU KNOW -- THEY CLAIM YOU CAN *CHARGE* YOUR DICE WITH *LUCK* BY RUBBING THEM ON A *FAMOUS GAME DESIGNER'S* AUTOGRAPH.<sup>1</sup>

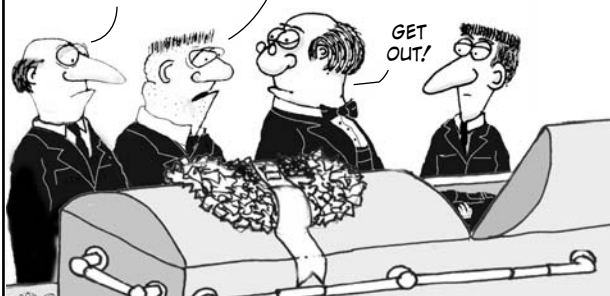


AND THEN THERE'S THAT *OLD GAMER'S TALE* THAT IF YOU *RUB* YOUR *DICE* ON A DEAD *GAME DESIGNER'S* TOMBSTONE THE *BAD LUCK* WILL *DISCHARGE*.

NO, NO, YOU DON'T *RUB* IT -- YOU HAVE TO *LEAVE* IT ON THE TOMBSTONE FOR *TWO NIGHTS*.

ANYWAY, THE WORD ON THE *NET* FOR *YEARS* IS THAT RUBBIN' A *DIE* ON SOMEONE OF *GARY'S* STATUS WILL INCREASE THE TRANSFERENCE OF *LUCK* BY AN ORDER OF *MAGNITUDE*.

GET OUT!



WHY DO YOU THINK GARY STOPPED GIVING OUT *AUTOGRAPHS* YEARS AGO?<sup>2</sup>

IT GOT TO THE POINT HE COULDN'T *TURN AROUND* IN A CROWD WITHOUT SOME *PLAYER* RUBBING A *POLYHEDRON* ON HIS *SLEEVE*.

THAT'S SO *CRAZY!*



OKAY, SO LET'S GET *BACK* TO WHAT YOU WERE *STARTING* TO TELL US BEFORE -- SOMETHING ABOUT *GARY* LEAVING ALL HIS *SHARES* TO....?

RIGHT -- WELL YA SEE AS IT TURNS OUT *GARY* LEFT ALL HIS *REMAINING* SHARES TO LITTLE *TIMMY*.

WELL *THAT'S* NO SURPRISE. WE ALL *FIGURED* *TIMMY* WOULD INHERIT THE *KINGDOM*.



WELL IT'S A LITTLE *MORE* COMPLICATED THAN THAT. I SAID *'REMAINING'* SHARES. YA SEE A FEW YEARS BACK *HARDEIGHT* WAS *DROWNING*. I MEAN IT WAS REALLY *FLOUNDERING* BADLY. *GARY* DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO *KNOW* THIS OUTSIDE OF THE *SHAREHOLDERS* BUT HE *LOST* A GOOD BIT OF HIS SH... UH...ER...

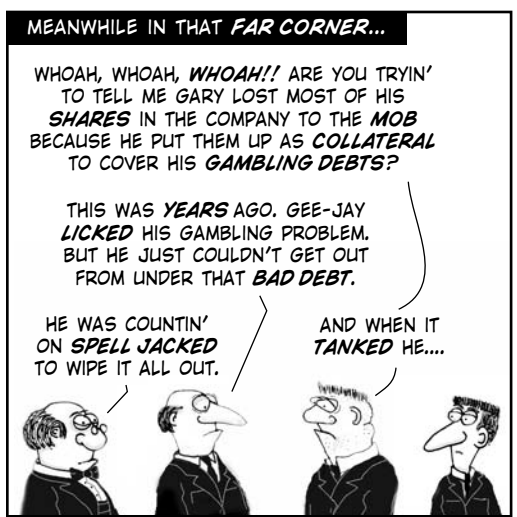
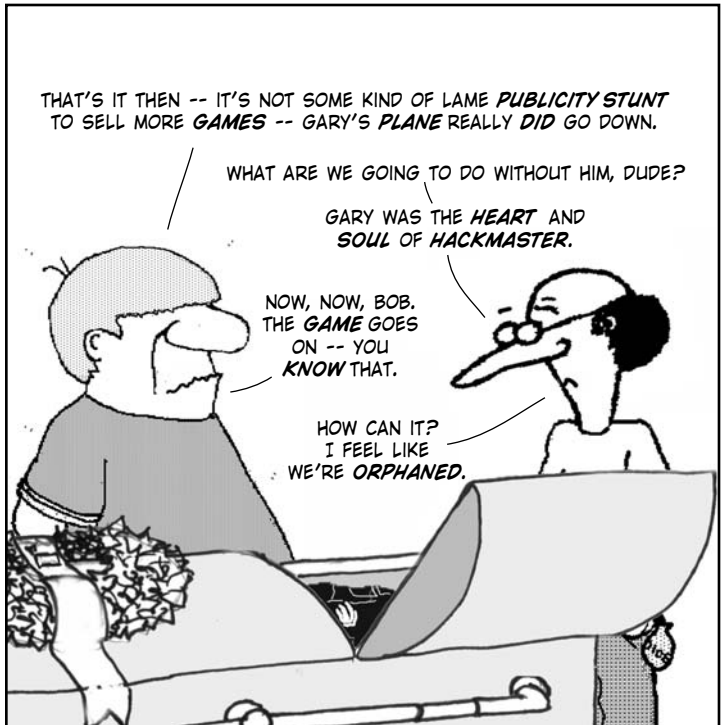
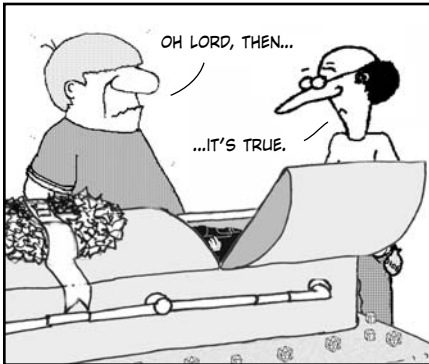
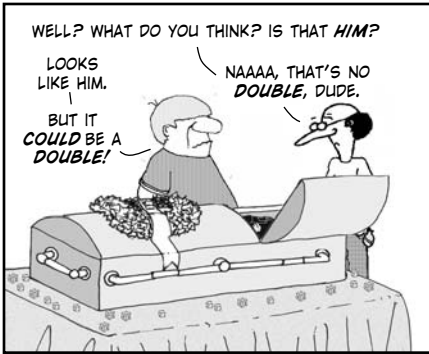
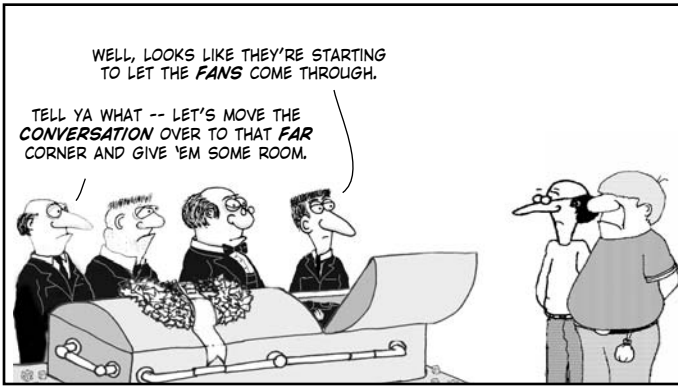
NOW WHO'S *THIS* COMING THIS WAY?

LOST? LOST WHAT? *SHARES*?



1. See KODT#5 *Can't Buy Me Luck*: When Bob suffers an unlucky streak Brian does a dice-cleansing on his unlucky dice. Part of the process involved rubbing a die on Gary Jackson's signature. (right to left -- NOT left to right).

2. See KODT#19 *Got Yer Number*: Gary Jackson refused to give out autographs in 1986.



THAT'S RIGHT. HIS SHARES WENT TO THE **ESPOSITO** FAMILY. THEY'VE HAD A **CONTROLLING INTEREST** IN THE COMPANY EVER SINCE.

CONTROLLING INTEREST?

YEP. COURSE THEY WEREN'T TOO HAPPY TO LEARN THAT GARY'S '**GAMING BUSINESS**' HAD **NOTHING** TO DO WITH '**GAMBLING**'.

IT WAS AN **HONEST MISUNDERSTANDING**...

...AT LEAST AT **FIRST**. THEY KIND OF **ASSUMED** AND **GEE-JAY** WASN'T TOO **QUICK** TO **CORRECT** THEM.

WHEN THEY FOUND OUT **HARDEIGHT** PUBLISHED **ROLE-PLAYING GAMES** THERE WAS **HELL** TO PAY.

**HOLD UP, CHIEF!** IT JUST **CLICKED!** IS THIS WHERE THE **ANTIGNANO BROTHERS** CAME INTO THE **PICTURE**?

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT. THEY WERE **SENT** BY **ESPOSITO** TO KEEP AN **EYE** ON THE '**FAMILY'S**' INTERESTS.

I **KNEW** IT!! I **KNEW** THERE WAS SOMETHING **FUNNY** ABOUT THOSE GUYS. I **NEVER** BOUGHT INTO THAT **STORY** ABOUT THEM BEING **BRAND MANAGERS**.

**VINCE** AND **TONY** WERE **SUPPOSED** TO KEEP **TABS** ON **GARY** AND GET THE **MOB'S** MONEY BACK OUT OF THE **COMPANY**.

BUT YOU KNOW GARY. HE COULD **CHARM** THE SKIN OFF A **SNAKE**.

HE **BEFRIENDED** THE **BROTHERS**. HAD THEM **CONVINCED** EACH **NEW** PRODUCT WAS GOING TO CLEAR HIS **DEBT** -- RIGHT UP TO THE **END** HE WAS **CONVINCED** HE'D BE ABLE TO PAY OFF THE **MOB** AND BUY HIS **SHARES** BACK.

SON OF A **BITCH!** AND HE **NEVER** SAW FIT TO TELL ANY OF THIS TO **ME** OR **EDMUND**?

OH...I **KNEW!**

YOU DID? HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?

TULEY TOLD ME.

SO ALL THOSE '**MEETINGS**' IN **RENO**...?

**GARY** WAS TRYING TO BORROW **MORE** MONEY TO GET **HACKMASTER 4TH EDITION** OFF THE PRESSES.

MORE MONEY?

THE **COFFERS** WERE ABOUT **DRY** MY FRIEND.

AS A MATTER OF FACT IF **GARY** HADN'T **DIED** IN THAT PLANE CRASH THE **COMPANY** WOULD HAVE SURELY **FOLDED** IN SIX MONTHS' TIME.

WE WERE **DEFINITELY** ON OUR LAST LEG.

**FOLD? S-S-SIX M-M-MONTHS?** YOU MEAN IT'S **OVER?** W-W-WE'RE OUT ON THE **S-S-STREETS**??!!

WELL...

THAT'S WHERE *HEIDI* COMES INTO THE PICTURE. AS YOU KNOW WHEN SHE GOT THE *PAPERBACK BOOK DIVISION* AS PART OF THE *DIVORCE SETTLEMENT* SHE WENT ON TO *GROW* IT AND MAKE *MILLIONS*.

SHE MADE A *KILLING* PUBLISHING THOSE *SOAP OPERA DIGESTS* AND *ROMANCE NOVELS!*

FOR *TIMMY'S* SAKE SHE PUT UP THE *MONEY* TO PAY OFF *GARY'S DEBTS* AND BUY BACK HIS *SHARES*.

SHE DID?

UH HUH.

SHE ALSO PUT UP THE *MONEY* TO GET *HACKMASTER* OFF THE PRESS.

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

WE NOW HAVE A *NEW BOSS*.

OH NO... DON'T TELL ME.

YEP. AS *TIMMY'S* LEGAL GUARDIAN AND WITH THE *SHARES* SHE BOUGHT BACK FROM *ESPOSITO* SHE HAS *CONTROLLING INTEREST* IN *HARDEIGHT*.

B-B-BUT SHE'S A *WOMAN!* I CAN'T WORK FOR A *WOMAN!*

UH OH...

YOU MAY NOT *HAVE TO*.

AFTER THE *READING*, *HEIDI* TOLD US SHE'S GOING TO BE BRINGING IN SOME OF HER *OWN* PEOPLE FROM THE "*PAPERBACK WERKS*".

SHE DIDN'T COME OUT AND *SAY* IT BUT I HAVE A FEELING SHE'S GOING TO LET SOME OF THE *OLD STAFF* GO.

*GARY* NEVER WOULD HAVE STOOD FOR THIS *NONSENSE!*

OH GAWD, I'M *TOAST!* THE *DRAGON LADY* HAS ALWAYS HATED ME.

MEANWHILE...

OKAY, YOU *READY?*

YEAH... I *GUESS* SO.

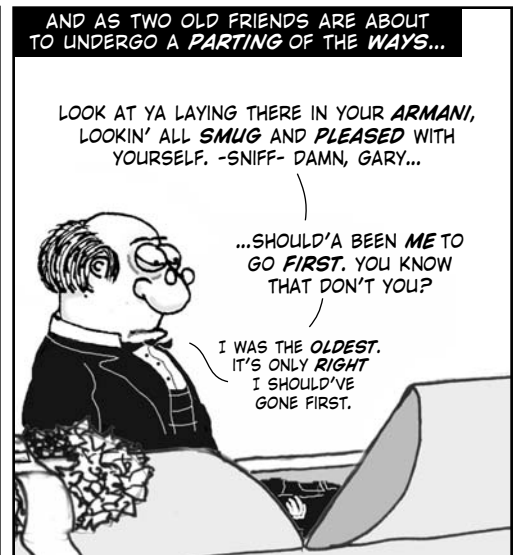
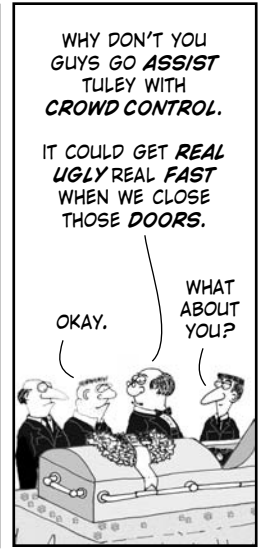
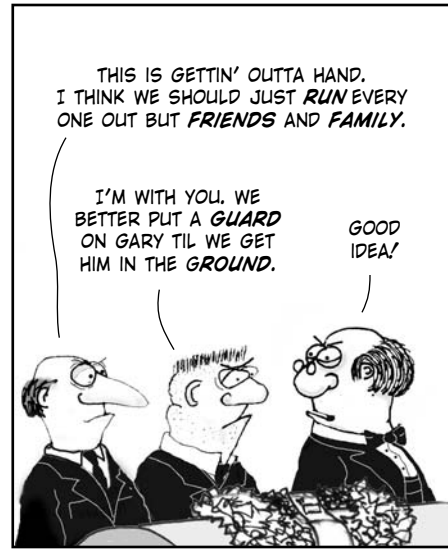
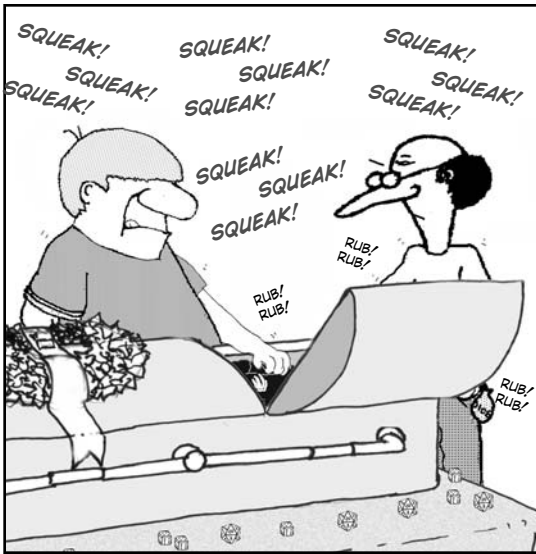
ANYBODY *LOOKING?*

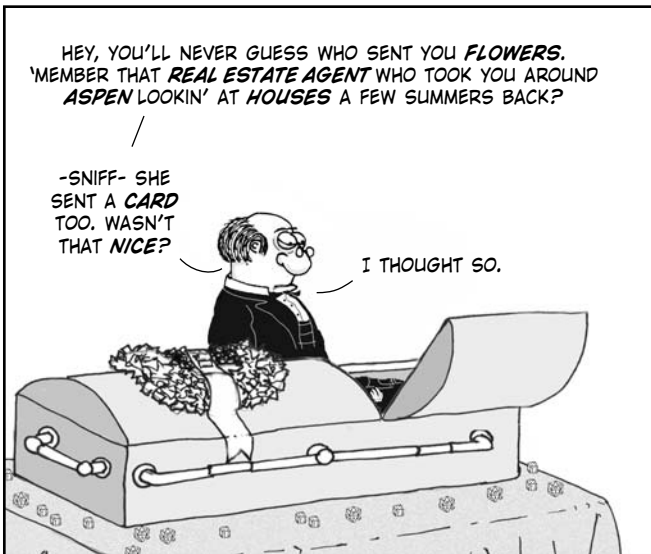
NO -- *COAST* IS CLEAR.

GOOD! LET'S BE *QUICK* ABOUT THIS.

SQUEAK!  
SQUEAK!  
SQUEAK!

RUB!  
RUB!





HEY, YOU'LL NEVER GUESS WHO SENT YOU **FLOWERS**. 'MEMBER THAT **REAL ESTATE AGENT** WHO TOOK YOU AROUND **ASPEN** LOOKIN' AT **HOUSES** A FEW SUMMERS BACK?

-SNIFF- SHE SENT A **CARD** TOO. WASN'T THAT **NICE**?

I THOUGHT SO.

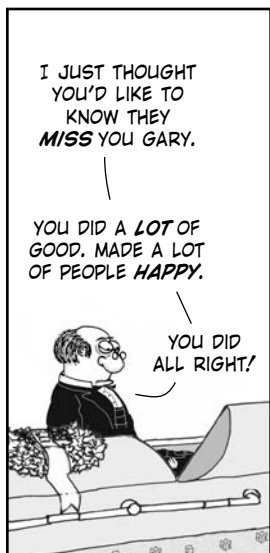


AND GET THIS, GARY. THE **IDAHO H.M.P.A.?** THEY ANNOUNCED THAT **ALL 'HARD EIGHTS'** ROLLED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE MONTH ON **TWO D6** HAVE TO BE **RE-ROLLED!!**

IN YOUR HONOR!

AND THE **PHOENIX CHAPTER?** ALL 1200 MEMBERS GOT TOGETHER AND ROLLED A **THOUSAND TWENTY SIDER** SALUTE TO YOU.

THEY SENT A **PICTURE!**



I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW THEY **MISS YOU GARY**.

YOU DID A **LOT** OF GOOD. MADE A **LOT** OF PEOPLE **HAPPY**.

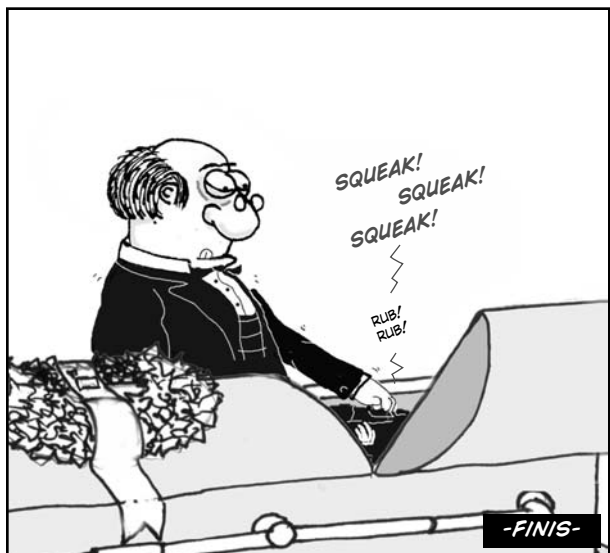
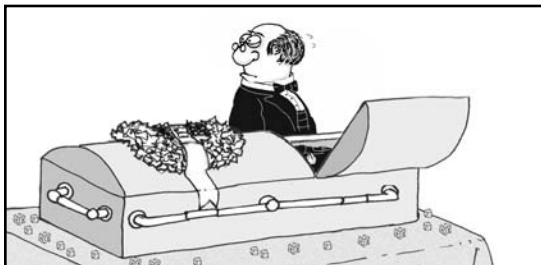
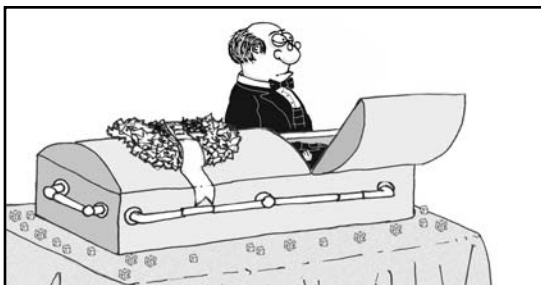
YOU DID ALL RIGHT!



OKAY, I'LL **SAY IT** -- I'M GONNA MISS YOU **TOO, GEE-JAY**.

YOU WERE THE **BEST** FRIEND I EVER HAD -- I'M **NEVER** GONNA FORGET YA.

-SNIFF- I DON'T EXPECT I'LL **EVER** PICK UP A **DIE** WITHOUT THINKING OF YOU!



SQUEAK!  
SQUEAK!  
SQUEAK!

RUB!  
RUB!

-FINIS-

# The Black Hole of Munz

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

IN THEIR *LAST* ADVENTURE THE *KNIGHTS* MADE THEIR WAY INTO THE 'SLEEPY' TOWN OF *FOWLSWAIN*.

THERE THEY *BEFRIENDED* THE HALF ORC "*WRENCH*" WHO WAS PERSUADED TO JOIN THE PARTY AS *SHADOWGLYH'S* ONE-MAN ARMY.

BUT *WRENCH'S* LOYAL SERVITUDE CAME WITH A *PRICE* IN THE FORM OF A *PROMISE* -- TO VENTURE FORTH INTO *ORKIN* TERRITORY TO THE *BLACKHOLE OF MUNZ* WHERE *WRENCH'S* ONLY *BROTHER* RECENTLY DISAPPEARED.

OKAY THE SELDOM TRODDEN FOOT PATH MEANDERS THROUGH THE DENSE *BRIARS* FOR SEVERAL MILES BEFORE *FINALLY* ENDING AT A POINT WHERE A SMALL *CIRCULAR CLEARING* OPENS UP. AT THE *MOUTH* OF THE CLEARING STANDS AN *ORKIN SCARECROW* FASHIONED FROM THE SKELETAL REMAINS OF WHAT LOOKS TO BE A *LESSER KOBOLD*.

A SCARECROW? IS THAT SUPPOSED TO *FRIGHTEN* US OR SOMETHING?

IT'S MEANT TO BE A *WARNING*, BOB.

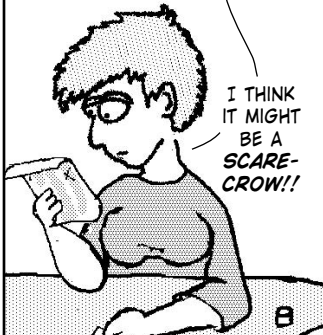
*ORCS!* I WISH THEY'D *SHOW* THEMSELVES!

SCARECROW?



OH MY GAWD! REMEMBER THAT SQUIGGLY LITTLE *STICK* FIGURE ON THE MAP THAT WE COULDN'T *FIGURE* OUT?

I THINK IT MIGHT BE A *SCARECROW!!*



GENTLEMEN, I THINK THIS IS *IT!* ACCORDING TO THE *MAP*, IF I'M *INTERPRETING* IT CORRECTLY, THE *DUNGEON ENTRANCE* IS IN THE *CLEARING* JUST AHEAD.

BUT HOW CAN WE BE SURE? THAT *MAP* IS *WHACKED!* WHO EVER *DREW* IT DIDN'T KNOW THE *FIRST* THING ABOUT ESTIMATING LINEAR DISTANCE!

LOOK I *CAUTIONED* YOU THIS *MAP* LOOKED TO BE WRITTEN IN AN *ORKIN* HAND. THEY PROBABLY HAVE THEIR OWN STANDARD FOR MEASURING DISTANCE.

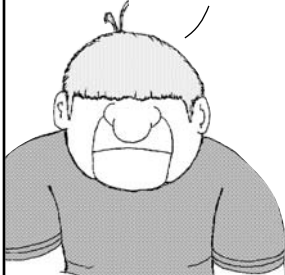
25 MILES PER HEX MY ASS!

IT'S A MOOT POINT, SARA!



THE STANDARD *ORKIN* MILE -- MORE ACCURATELY CALLED THE *HAGGUT* -- IS ROUGHLY *.78* IMPERIAL MILES.

I TOOK THAT IN ACCOUNT WHEN SETTING OUR *PACE* COUNT FOR MAPPING PURPOSES.



EVEN SO, THOSE *DISTANCES* INDICATED ON THE *MAP* WERE *GROSSLY* INACCURATE. FOR EXAMPLE IT INDICATED IT WOULD ONLY BE *FOUR MILES* FROM THE '*BURNED OUT RUINS*' TO THE '*BIG STUMP*'.

AS IT TURNED OUT IT WAS A *FRICKIN'* TWO AND A HALF DAY TREK. AND THERE WAS *NO MENTION* OF THAT *POISON SUMAC GROVE* WE *LOW CRAWLED* THROUGH TO BYPASS THAT *ORKIN BORDER PATROL*.

OKAY, OKAY, THE *MAP SCALE* WASN'T ACCURATE. BUT *MOST* OF THE *LAND MARKS* AND *TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURES* HAVE BEEN REMARKABLY *DEAD ON*.

GO AHEAD AND *MAKE* EXCUSES, SARA, BUT YOU'RE MISSING THE *POINT!*



I THINK IT'S THE *MARK* OF A *LAZY GM* TO PROVIDE A "*PLAYER AID*" TO HIS *PLAYERS* WHICH IS *CLEARLY* DESIGNED TO *MISLEAD* THEM AND ADD A CERTAIN DEGREE OF *FRUSTRATION* FACTOR SIMPLY TO BUILD *TENSION* IN THE *ADVENTURE*.

IT'S JUST A *CHEAPTRICK* TO MAKE UP FOR A *WEAK* PLOT LINE AND CAN *ONLY* BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE *LACK* OF PROPER PREPARATION ON THE *GM'S* PART.



FRANKLY, I'M HAVING SOME SERIOUS CONCERNS AS TO WHETHER OR NOT THIS ADVENTURE IS EVEN WORTHY OF OUR TIME.

EVEN THE OPENING FLAVOR TEXT WAS A BIT LACKING. DIDN'T YOU THINK? IT JUST DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE THE SAME OL' FLAIR I'VE COME TO EXPECT FROM B.A. DISAPPOINTING, REALLY.



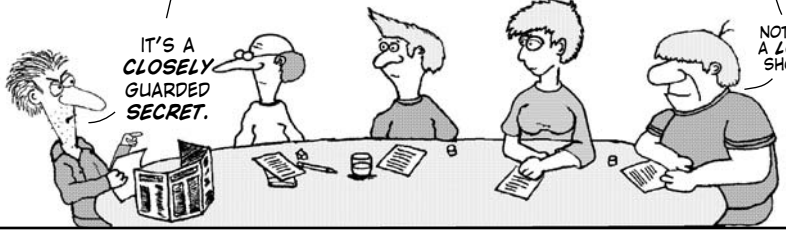
NOW HOLD ON THERE BRIAN. STOP RIGHT THERE. I RESENT THAT REMARK. I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW WE...ER... I PUT A LOT OF WORK INTO THIS ADVENTURE -- TONS OF WORK!! IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT IT'S AN OLD WAR TRICK TO WORK IN FALSE SCALES OF DISTANCE INTO MAPS OF TACTICAL IMPORT -- JUST IN CASE THEY FALL IN TO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY. I THINK IT'S REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT SUCH A PRECAUTION COULD HAVE BEEN USED BY THE ORC WHO DREW YOUR MAP.

THE 'BLACK HOLE OF MUNZ' IS SACRED GROUND TO THE ORKIN TRIBES OF STONY DOWN. OBVIOUSLY THEY WOULDN'T WANT OUTSIDERS TO LEARN OF ITS EXISTENCE.

SECRET!!! HAR!!! NICE ATTEMPT AT TRYING TO COVER YER ASS, B.A. UNFORTUNATELY, I AIN'T BUYING IT!

IT'S A CLOSELY GUARDED SECRET.

NOT BY A LONG SHOT!



DO YOU HONESTLY EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT SOME ORKIN MAP-MAKER WENT TO ALL THE TROUBLE OF FUDGING HIS MAP SCALE IN SOME FEEBLE ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE LOCATION OF THE 'BLACK HOLE' A SECRET? ONLY TO TURN AROUND AND WRITE, "MAP TO THE BLACK HOLE OF MUNZ" IN BIG BLOCK LETTERS ACROSS THE TOP?

I FIND THAT LAUGHABLE!



ORCS MAY NOT BE THE SHARPEST TACK IN THE BOX WHEN IT COMES TO HUMANOIDS BUT I DON'T THINK THEY'D BE THAT STUPID.

AND IF SECRECY WAS SUCH A CONCERN WHY DID THE MAP MAKER LABEL HIS MAP IN COMMON TONGUE? HUH? WHY NOT ONE OF THE LESSER KNOWN ORKIN LANGUAGES?

SURELY THAT WOULD BE MORE DESIRABLE THAN BROADCASTING THE FACT THAT IT'S A MAP TO THE 'BLACK HOLE' TO ANY TOM, DICK OR HARRY WHO HAPPENS ACROSS IT.

COME TO THINK OF IT, ORC SCRIBES ABHOR THE HUMAN LANGUAGES. THEY CALL IT THE 'SPLINTERED TONGUE' AND CLAIM IT PAINS THEM TO EVEN SPEAK IT. WHY ON EARTH WOULD THEY USE A HUMAN SCRIPT FOR A MAP TO A SITE THAT'S SACRED TO THEM? I FIND THAT A BIT ODD!



SOMETHING ELSE JUST OCCURRED TO ME. ORKIN CULTURE IS SECRETIVE BY IT'S VERY NATURE.

AS A RACE THEY TYPICALLY DON'T LIKE TO HAVE WRITTEN RECORDS LYING AROUND OF THEIR DOINGS. THEY'RE BIG ON COMMITTING THINGS TO MEMORY AND ORAL TRADITION.

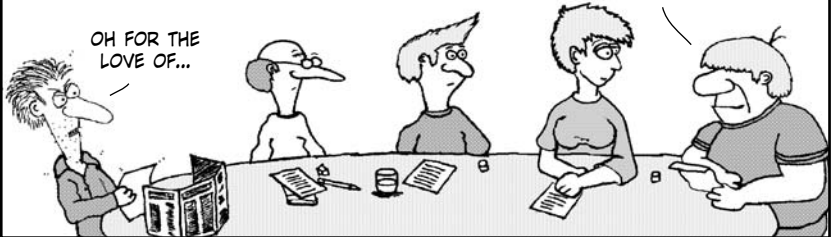
IN FACT, THEY DEVELOPED A WRITTEN LANGUAGE VERY LATE IN THE GAME AND ONLY AFTER OPENING UP TRADE WITH THE GRELS WHO INSISTED ON RECORDING SUCH TRANSACTIONS.



AGAIN, WE'RE DEALING WITH WHAT YOU, YOURSELF, HAVE INDICATED IS "SACRED GROUND". I THINK A CASE COULD BE MADE THAT NO PROUD ORC, REARED IN THE TRADITIONS OF HIS PEOPLE WOULD EVEN CONSIDER PENNING A MAP WHICH COULD POSSIBLY LEAD TO OUTSIDERS LEARNING OF IT'S VERY EXISTENCE -- LET ALONE POINTING THE WAY.

THAT'S THE REASON ORKIN RELIGION HAS NO ASSOCIATED WRITTEN TEXT OR TOMES. IN FACT, IT'S FORBIDDEN TO WRITE THE NAME OF THE ORKIN GAWDS ON PARCHMENT OR CLAY. THOUGH IT IS ACCEPTABLE FOR ORKIN WARRIORS TO HAVE THE NAMES RITUALY TATTOOED ON THEIR BODIES BY A SHAMAN -- BUT THAT'S A DIFFERENT MATTER ENTIRELY -- AT ANY RATE, BY MY WAY OF THINKING IT'S SORT OF PREPOSTEROUS FOR AN ORC TO ACTUALLY...

OH FOR THE LOVE OF...





LATER, AS THE GROUP STUDIES THE SITUATION...

OKAY AS YOU *PHYSICALLY* SHOVE ANOTHER *HORSE* ON TO THE *PAVED SURFACE* IT BEGINS TO *REAR UP* AND ATTEMPT TO *ESCAPE* THE SAME FATE IT SAW THE OTHER *TWO HORSES* SUFFER.

AS THE *BLACK HOLE* SLOWLY REVOLVES BACK AROUND THE *WEDGE* THE HORSE IS STANDING ON BEGINS TO *GLOW*.

IN THE *BLINK* OF AN EYE THE *HORSE* VANISHES.

OKAY, SOMEBODY OWES ME A HORSE.

HEY LET'S THROW *WRENCH* IN.

NO, LET'S *NOT* THROW *WRENCH* IN. WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH YOU?

I THINK IT'S *OBVIOUS* WE'RE DEALING WITH SOME KIND OF *PAN-DIMENSIONAL PORTAL* HERE.

YOU *JUST* FIGURING THAT OUT?

THAT MUCH WAS *IMMEDIATELY* OBVIOUS. I'M JUST TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE DEAL IS WITH IT *SPINNING* AND HAVING *EIGHT ZONES*.

A PORTAL? BUT WHERE DOES IT LEAD TO?

YOUR GUESS IS AS *GOOD* AS MINE BUT I THINK THE *POSITION* OF THE DISK RELATIVE TO THE *ZONES* DETERMINES THE *DESTINATION*.

THAT MEANS *EIGHT WEDGES* EQUALS *EIGHT POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS*.

UNLESS OF COURSE THERE'S A *RANDOM NUMBER MATRIX* PLUGGED INTO THE EQUATION WE'RE NOT *AWARE* OF.

WHAT YOU'RE *REALLY* SAYING IS THAT THIS IS SOME KIND OF *PUZZLE TRAP*. I *HATE* THOSE THINGS. YOU *NEVER* KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST AND YOU *USUALLY* GET *SCREWED* BY 'EM.

WHAT SHOULD WE GO IN?

WELL... A *WISE MAN* ONCE SAID...

WHEN IN *DOUBT* FOLLOW THE *HOOK!*

*B.A.* FUNNELED US WITH HIS *PLOT WAGON* TO BRING US HERE SO *THEREIN* LIES THE *ADVENTURE!*

HE'S PROBABLY TRYING TO *SPLIT* US UP SOMEHOW SO I *SUGGEST* WE ALL *JUMP* ON THE SAME *ZONE* AT THE *SAME* TIME.

WHICH ONE?

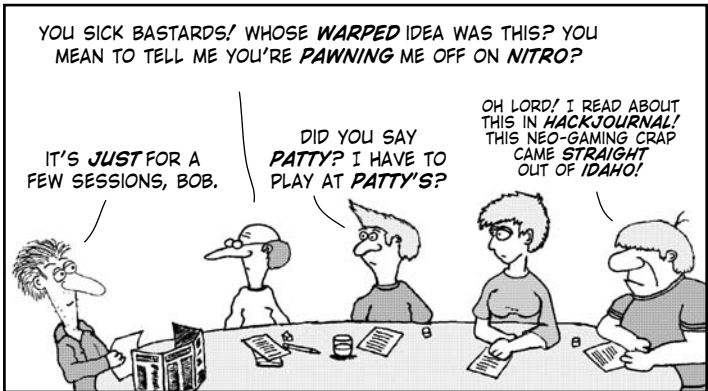
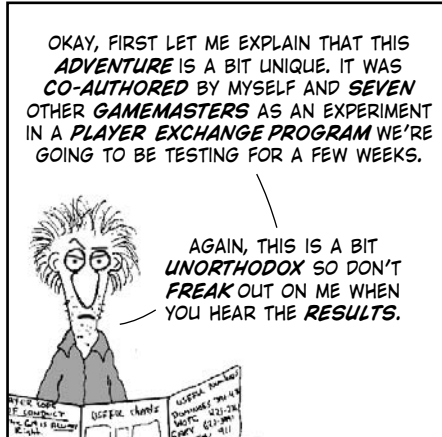
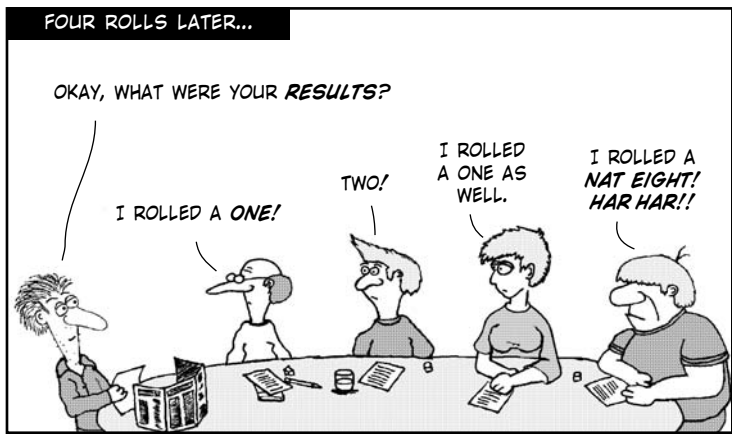
WHEN YOU'RE DEALING WITH *UNKNOWN'S* ONE IS JUST AS *GOOD* AS THE *OTHER*.

OKAY *B.A.*, WE'RE GOING TO PICK A *ZONE* AT *RANDOM*. THEN WE'LL *HOLD HANDS* AND JUMP ONTO IT AT THE *SAME* TIME.

OKAY, HERE'S THE DEAL. *EACH* OF YOU HAS TO ROLL AN *EIGHT SIDER*.

*HA!!! SWEET!!* EIGHT *SIDERS* ARE *USELESS* EH, *BOB?* TOO BAD YOU *BLEW* IT AT *GARY'S FUNERAL*.

A *EIGHT SIDER?*



CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

# D RIFTING BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE WITH GREYHAWK

by Kenneth Newquist

**G**reyhawk — For thousands of *Dungeons and Dragons* fans it's not just the original fantasy campaign setting — it's the only one that matters. Greyhawk was Gary Gygax's home campaign, and in the early days of *Dungeons and Dragons* it was the campaign setting for the game. It took its name from the Free City of Greyhawk, a gem set in the heart of a region known as the Flanaess. The setting prided itself on not dealing with the extremes of good and evil, instead choosing to delve into the gray areas in between. Another hallmark of the campaign was its reliance on player heroes, rather than all powerful non-player characters, to fight the good fight. In Greyhawk, *Elminster* will never pull your butt from the fire.

The setting expanded slowly over time, spawning boxed sets, source books and a loyal, almost fanatical following. It's been killed off and brought back a few times over the years, and nowadays it's back again as the default setting for all of D&D 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (well, at least a version of it is... most Greyhawk fans look at the 3E changes to the setting with disdain).

The Internet's played a vital role in the evolution and survival of Greyhawk, perhaps more so than any other system. Its fans have rallied numerous times to save the setting from termination, either by petitioning *Wizards of the Coast* for new products (and getting them) or by ignoring *WotC* and creating works of their own.

The premiere destination for Greyhawk fans on the Net isn't a web site — it's an e-mail list. Greytalk's been around for years, and it's home to the most passionate Greyhawk fans you'll find this side of the Hell Furnaces. Members of this list were pivotal to 1998's Greyhawk resurrection, and they've played a crucial role in keeping the setting alive whenever it went out of publication. List lurkers can expect highly intelligent — and passionate — arguments about canon material, the effectiveness of underwater assaults against passing ships, whether or not Greyhawk's home world — Oerth — revolves around its sun, or its sun revolves around it, and more. Its archives, which periodically drop offline, are a gold mine of information about the Flanaess. It's a busy list, but it's an essential one for newbie and diehard fans alike.

The *Oerth Journal's* a fanzine dedicated to the setting that's been published since the early 1990s. Originally started to insure that new Greyhawk material did not disappear from the face of the Earth (or the Net), the journal's editors have successfully published a dozen editions. The Journal's run by the Council of Greyhawk and it features professional quality articles that would have looked great in *Dragon* magazine. Unfortunately, the Council's Web site is down, but you can get copies of the journal at one of the best Greyhawk sites around: **The Codex of Greyhawk**.

As its name implies, the Codex is an immense repository of information about the Flanaess. Its myriad pages cover topics like geography, history, religion, metaphysics, and magic. Visitors will find copies of numerous fanzines in a variety of formats, as well as ideas for kits, creatures, adventures and much more. It's a nice looking, easy to navigate site that's also very stable — I've never known it to be down for any extended period of time.

Greyhawk Matters is home to Scott Rennie's near-legendary Black Hart campaign, which is set in the ancient Kingdom of Keoland. The site features more than two dozen chapters worth of sagas detailing the campaign's adventures, and Scott's DM notes at the end of each one are priceless. Anyone who wants to see how a long-running, well-orchestrated campaign can be done, and be done well, should check out them out. The site's also home to the Sheldomar Valley sourcebook, which includes much of Scott's home-grown source material on Keoland.

Those with a taste for darker fantasy can try **The Assassins**, the home for a long-running campaign of the same name. It follows a group of assassin-adventurers as they slink their way across the Flanaess. The sagas make for excellent reading and there's a tremendous number of write-ups dealing with the campaign's history, characters and antagonists.

For a D&D 3E spin on Greyhawk, stop by my own campaign web site, **The Pirates of the Vohoun**. The campaign is dedicated to high hero-

ics on the high seas, and pits a small group of adventurers against the pirates and slavers who prowl the southern edges of civilization. The site includes overviews of the kingdoms of the region, write-ups about its various PCs and NPCs, and one feature I'm particularly proud of: the 3E journal. The journal chronicles our attempts to convert to the new edition, including thoughts on what works, what doesn't work, and what can be done to keep 3E from bastardizing Greyhawk.

**Living Greyhawk** is a massive multi-player real-world campaign organized by the RPGA Network and played at conventions around the world. The campaign's the last remaining quasi-source for Greyhawk content that's close to canon, and has already seen one print source book published: *the Living Greyhawk Gazetteer*. The Living Greyhawk site serves as the campaign's nexus, providing character generation rules, policies and lists of current adventures for the campaign.

Folks who are jealous of the *Forgotten Realms* domination of D&D computer games should check out **NWN Greyhawk Adventures**. The site's committed to fully re-creating the Flanaess online using Bioware's upcoming *Neverwinter Nights* game. NWN takes a *Baldur's Gate*-like approach to game-play, but it also allows people to create their own adventures, cities and even nations online. The volunteers at this site are doing exactly this, and are looking for volunteers to host portions of the Flanaess and to create content — aka modules — for the project. If you know of a cool RPG web site, or have a subject you'd like to see covered in this column, please e-mail it to me at [knewquist@nuketown.com](mailto:knewquist@nuketown.com). □

### GREYTALK

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[www.oerthjournal.net/](http://www.oerthjournal.net/)  
(currently inactive)

### CODEX OF GREYHAWK

[www.greyhawk-codex.com/](http://www.greyhawk-codex.com/)

### GREYHAWK MATTERS

[freespace.virgin.net/scott.rennie/greyhawk.m](http://freespace.virgin.net/scott.rennie/greyhawk.m)

### THE ASSASSINS

[hwww.elf.aust.com/~goran/Archive.htm](http://hwww.elf.aust.com/~goran/Archive.htm)

### THE PIRATES OF THE VOHOUN

[hwww.nuketown.com/pirates](http://hwww.nuketown.com/pirates)

### LIVING GREYHAWK

[www.wizards.com/rpga/lg/](http://www.wizards.com/rpga/lg/)

### NWN GREYHAWK ADVENTURES

[www.rpgghost.com/MysticQuests/main.html](http://www.rpgghost.com/MysticQuests/main.html)

# AARNZ HOUND

|   |
|---|
| <b>HACKFACTOR:</b> 2                            |
| <b>CLIMATE/TERRAIN:</b> Forests/Plains/Tropical |
| <b>FREQUENCY:</b> Uncommon                      |
| <b>ORGANIZATION:</b> Family                     |
| <b>ACTIVITY CYCLE:</b> Day                      |
| <b>DIET:</b> Omnivore                           |
| <b>INTELLIGENCE:</b> Average (8-10)             |
| <b>ALIGNMENT:</b> Neutral Evil                  |
| <b>NO. APPEARING:</b> 4-12                      |
| <b>SIZE:</b> M (4' long)                        |
| <b>MOVEMENT:</b> 18", 12" brachiation           |
| <b>PSIONIC ABILITY:</b> Nil                     |
| <b>Attack/Defense Modes:</b> Nil/Nil            |
| <b>MORALE:</b> Unsteady (7)                     |
| <b>ARMOR CLASS:</b> 7                           |
| <b>NO. OF ATTACKS:</b> 3                        |
| <b>DAMAGE/ATTACK:</b> 2-5/2-5/1-8               |
| <b>SPECIAL ATTACKS:</b> Nil                     |
| <b>SPECIAL DEFENSES:</b> Nil                    |
| <b>MAGIC RESISTANCE:</b> Standard               |
| <b>HIT DICE:</b> 2+2                            |

**DESCRIPTION:** Part ape, part bloodhound, Aarnz Hounds were created by the ApeGawd to serve Carnivorous Apes and provide them with suitable war dogs. These vicious mutations are enough trouble, in and of themselves, but considering that they often serve as trained war dogs for Ape Shaman Warriors and occasionally Carnivorous Apes, they spell quite a bit of trouble for player characters.

Their fur coloration is similar to that of apes, ranging from brown to black. Their paws end in vicious, rending claws and their fangs ooze with saliva.

The eyes of an Aarnz Hound exude an aura of mental instability and viciousness. This demeanor is so terrifying that any PC facing one for the first time must make an immediate morale check, or be forced to break and run. This, of course, is the worst thing anyone can do when confronting one of these simian-canines because they delight in running down prey.

**COMBAT/TACTICS:** These creatures can move through dense jungle undergrowth as though they are moving across open ground (no movement penalty) so it is virtually impossible to out run them in their own environs.

Aarnz Hounds fight in packs, usually picking on the stragglers of a herd and mercilessly murdering the young or the sick. With adventuring parties of 4 or less, Aarnz Hounds tend to get "kill greedy" and will attempt to wipe out the entire party 50% of the time.

These beasts have tremendous speed and endurance, which they use to their best advantage when fighting. They will attack, then run out of reach constantly, especially against larger, heavily-armored opponents.

In a pack of six or more, one or two of these beasts will attack from the front, diverting attention from the rest of the pack, which will attack from the rear if possible, or wherever they sense a vulnerability.



Additionally, the Aarnz Hound is adept at brachiation (swinging from tree to tree like a monkey), at a rate of 12" and can use this movement to escape harm or rally for a new attack.

**HABITAT/SOCIETY:** While a great majority of these creatures serve Ape Shamans, or Carnivorous Apes, there are packs of feral Aarnz Hounds who roam wild areas, hunting for food.

Attempts to domesticate one of these creatures by anyone other than an Ape Shaman or Carnivorous Ape will always end in failure.

**ECOLOGY:** Aarnz Hounds were created by the ApeGawd and are not a natural species, thus, they cannot mate with other dogs or apes. If captured by a non-ape and confined, they will refuse to eat and eventually starve to death.

Aarnz Hounds eat meat exclusively. The mother protects pups until they reach full maturity (2 months), after which time they must fend for themselves. Although Aarnz Hounds cooperate as a pack, they do so only to the extent of taking down prey, and the previously mentioned maternal instincts of mothers.

In every other instance, these beasts will not only fail to cooperate with each other; they will compete for food and mates by engaging in vicious fights. The young and weak are usually reduced to fighting for scraps.

As previously stated an Aarnz Hound's only reason for existence is to serve intelligent Ape Shamans and Carnivorous Apes. Other than that, they simply live to hunt and eat.

## **YIELD:**

**Experience Point Value:** 85

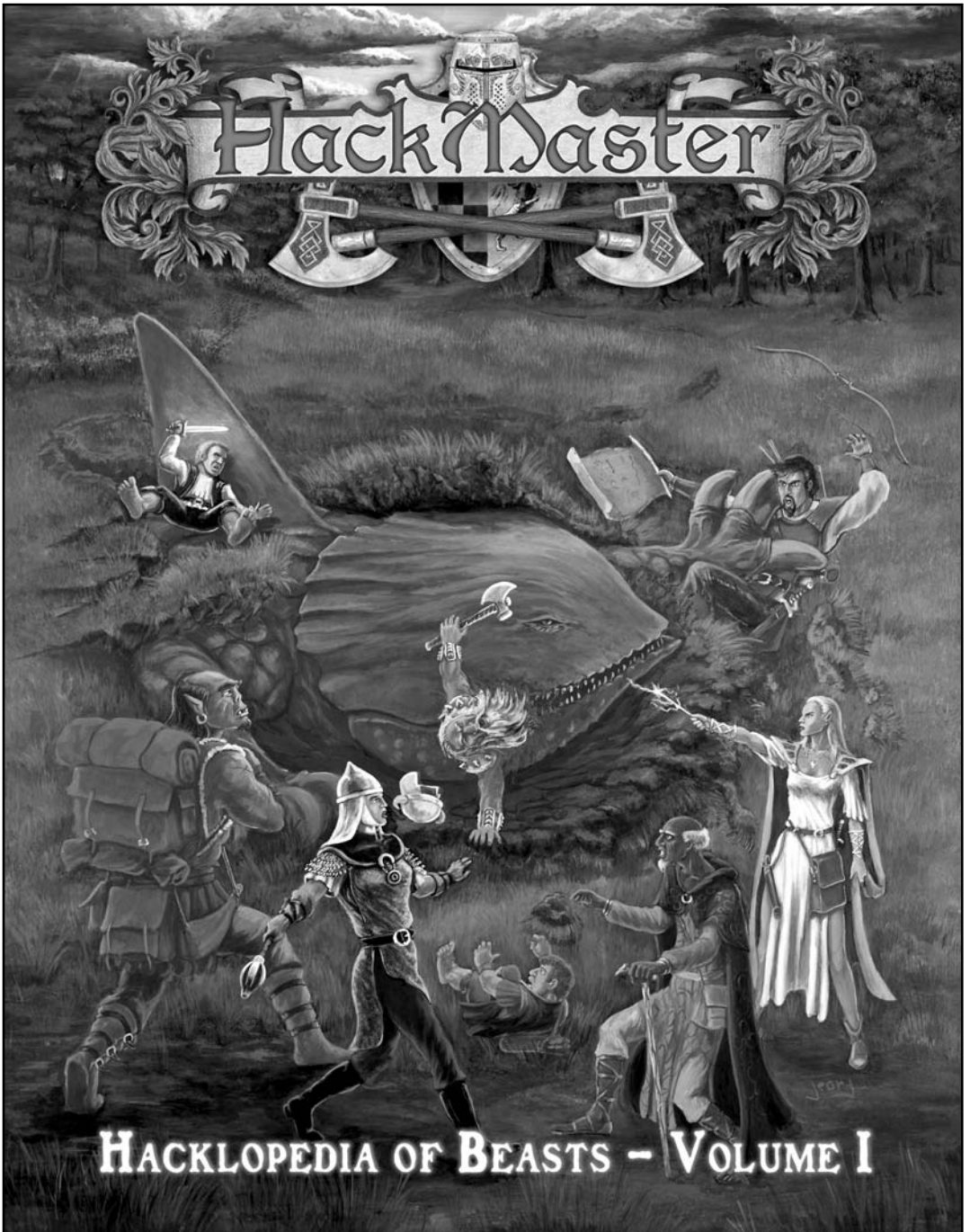
**Medicinal:** saliva cures mild poisons, +1 saves vs. others

**Spell Components:** brain can be used for Control Ape, Dog or Aarnz Hound

**Hide/Trophy Items:** pelts are 25gp

**Treasure:** Nil

**Other:** Forearm bones can be turned into +1 clubs



It wouldn't be HackMaster without the Hacklopedia of Beasts. Look for volumes of HOB to begin appearing in game-stores 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.



# Some Historical Type Games

By Rick Moscatello

**W**hen it comes to computer gaming, there definitely seems to be two main themes: science fiction and fantasy. Other than the perhaps over-visited World War II era, historical games are few and far between.

Our first history-based game does go to WWII, but at least it hits an aspect beyond the usual "tanks everywhere" or "beach invasions" or "miserable Russian winters." Some of you older, and I mean MUCH older (*like, over 30*) gamers might remember this nifty Intellivision game called **B-17 Bomber**. I can still close my eyes and hear a redneck voice saying (at startup): "Beee seventain bommmber!" It was great stuff, and when I met the designers of the modern **B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth** they were only too happy to tell me that their game owed many of its ideas from the Intellivision masterpiece.

The best way to play is the campaign game, where, just like in real life, you need to survive 25 missions against ever more hostile German anti-aircraft guns and fighters in order to "win" the game. The B-17 has 10 different crew positions, and the computer can operate them all (*if you're in the mood to sit back and watch*), or you can take over any position yourself. Naturally, you'll do much better if you take an active part in your own survival. In other versions of the game, you can take over a German or Allied fighter plane, or you control an entire bomber squadron, but neither of these versions are so great...play them once, then go back to the "real" game. Admiring the kind of damage your individual bomber can sustain, from individual bullet holes, to oil leaks, to--god forbid--fires, and keeping such a damaged aircraft in the sky, is the real fun of the game.

In a great nod to the console game (*of course, in*



*Intellivision's heyday, they weren't called console games*), you can change the difficulty level dramatically enough to make it more of an arcade game than a simulation. You can also alter many other little details, such as the art on the nose of your plane. It's the little things that count, and in a game with this many details, being able to factor out the ones that annoy you the most really helps.

The only real drawback is all the highly detailed graphics do tend to slow things down. A lot. If you have a high end computer, and we're talking gigahertz speed, then this game will fit nicely on your hard drive. If you've got something much slower, then you can at least look forward to buying this in the discount rack a few years from now when you upgrade.

Moving just a little further back in time is **America**, which, finally, covers some aspect of American history besides the Civil or Revolutionary War. If only it did a good job of it.

**America** might be better named as "*The American West*." In this real time strategy game, you take control of one of four factions: Native Americans, Outlaws, Mexicans, or Settlers. They're really kind of reaching here, Outlaws, Mexicans and Settlers really don't have the distinctiveness that you find in other RTS games, and it really seems like Settlers have all the big advantages, since eventually they'll be able to build units that outclass the other factions in every conceivable way. The Native Americans' ability to heal bullet wounds with herbs also ranks a bit, but that just might be pickiness on my part.

The best RTS game out there right now is **Age of**



**Continued on page 35...**

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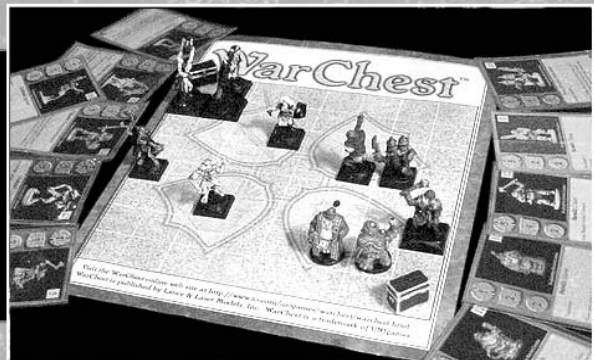
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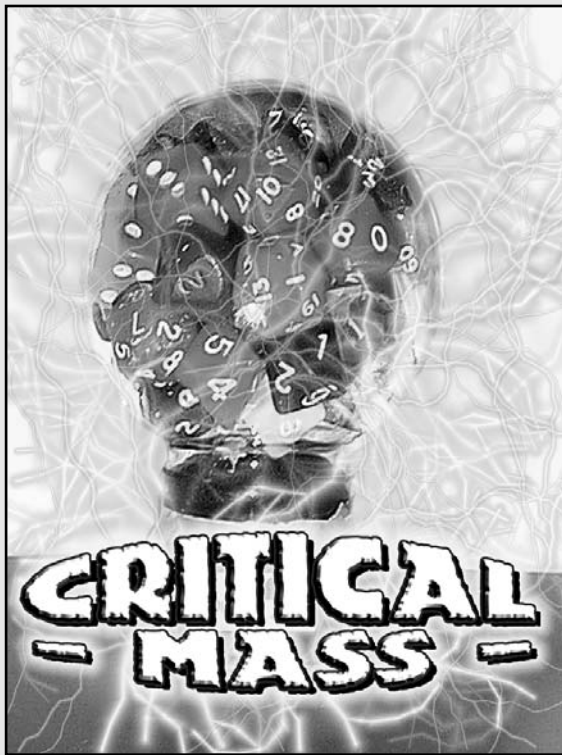
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Once again, we'd like to remind our readers that the views & opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of the editor or KenzerCo. Reviews & Ratings are presented exactly as submitted. *Critical Mass* is meant to be an open forum where many opinions can be presented. If you feel a game has gotten a bad rap or was unfairly critiqued by another reader we encourage you to share your own views. [Critical Mass worksheets can be downloaded at [Kenzerco.com](http://Kenzerco.com)].

Jolly



**TITLE: BATTLECATTLÉ 2ND ED**

**PUBLISHER:** Wingnut Games

**RETAIL PRICE:** approx. \$9.95

**CATEGORY:** Miniatures Mayhem

**Recommend to a friend?:** Yes

**Recommend for a Brian Award?:** Yes

**PRODUCTION VALUE**

**Writing:** 4

**Art & Illustration:** 2

**Overall Production:** 4

**PLAY VALUE**

**Rules Presentation:** 5

**System/Playability:** 4

**Replay Value:** 3

**Entertainment Value:** 5

**TOTAL:** 27

**OVERALL RATING :** 3.8



**3.8**

**REVIEWED BY:** Jeff Davies

**COMMENTS:** This is one of those rare games that's as much fun to read as it is to play. *BattleCattle 2nd Edition* is a re-release of an old classic from Wingnut Games. In case you missed the original, BC2E is a game of militant bovines. Although the designer doesn't say so, this beer-n-pretzel game is an obvious spoof of *Battletech*.

The introduction is hilarious and includes a history of the use of

cows in warfare through out the ages. (Such as the French discovering that bovines make highly effective missiles during a battle with King Arthur.) KODT readers will appreciate the humor. In fact, I know a lot of people who bought the game who have no intention of playing it — after seeing my copy they wanted a copy just to read.

The art is on the cheesy side but it fits the subject matter of the game. Anything more sophisticated would have diminished the light hearted feel of the game.

A lot of beer-n-pretzel games start out with a witty or clever premise but the game itself falls flat. (A joke can only be taken so far.) Fortunately, *BattleCattle* avoided such pitfalls. There's meat (beef) here.

*Wingnut* actually managed to cram a solid game in between two covers. Players begin by deciding how much money they have to spend (10,000 makes for a good game -- enough to build a *BattleCattle* with a good variety of weaponry and features).

You are given the option of picking your Cow Type (*Watusi*, *Texas Longhorn*, *Angus*, etc.) Each type of cow has its own size rating, weight, moo-vement, *Horns/Ram* rating, *HP* and *Tipping Defense Number*.

After buying a cow you can equip it with a harness (light, medium, heavy, extra heavy). Each harness type provides a number of slots into which you can plug in weapons. You can also buy *Udders* (four types as above) which additional weapon systems can be plugged into.

Don't be fooled — we're talkin' some serious weaponry here. *Bazookas*, *autocannons*, *cattleprods*, etc. My favorite part of the game are modifications. (*Hoover hooves*, *doomsday udder*, *cud-gel*...)

Combat is fast and furious. You can play on a hex grid or a square grid or with no grid at all. Besides gunplay you'll have to worry about being tipped, trampled, and rammed. I use a set of cow salt/pepper shakers as minis for the game. A friend of mine found some really kewl plastic cows at a Teacher Supply store. (Fat good it did him - I made beef paddies out of him in no time.) However such improvisation is no longer necessary. I just read a press release that announced a new line of *BattleCattle* miniatures. *Hoody Hoo!*

**TITLE: FENG SHUI**

**PUBLISHER:** Atlas Games

**RETAIL PRICE:** aprox. \$30.00

**CATEGORY:** Action RPG (core rules)

**Recommend to a friend?:** Yes

**Recommend for a Brian Award?:** Yes

**PRODUCTION VALUE**

**Writing:** 4

**Art & Illustration:** 3

**Overall Production:** 4

**PLAY VALUE**

**Rules Presentation:** 5

**System/Playability:** 5

**Replay Value:** 5

**Entertainment Value:** 5

**TOTAL:** 31

**OVERALL RATING :** 4.4



**4.4**

**REVIEWED BY:** Ethan S. Parker

**COMMENTS:** My game group and I greatly enjoy *Feng Shui: The Action Movie RPG*. For five years since its conception, we have been faithful followers. No other game I've played has had the re-playability of this fine product.

A universe base on action movie physics? It gives you everything you need: fun roleplaying, interesting characters and death scenes. One interesting aspect I've embraced are the two classes of characters: named and unnamed. Named characters are important to the story and thus harder to kill while unnamed characters (mooks, if you will) are your basic meat for the grinder. The game can be played for laughs, drama, or pure action.

I give it a very high Hack-Rating.

**TITLE: GOD OF HARDCORE**

PUBLISHER: Atomic Hyrax Games

RETAIL PRICE: aprox. \$4.95

CATEGORY: finger puppet war game

*Recommend to a friend?:* Yes*Recommend for a Brian Award?:* Yes

## PRODUCTION VALUE

Writing: 4

Art &amp; Illustration: 1.5

Overall Production: 2.5

## PLAY VALUE

Rules Presentation: 4.5

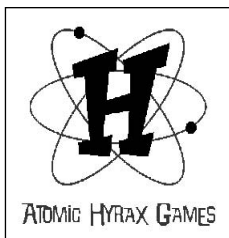
System/Playability: 4

Replay Value: 3.5

Entertainment Value: 5

TOTAL: 25

OVERALL RATING : 3.5

**3.5**

REVIEWED BY: Matt Fischer

COMMENTS: Playing God of Hardcore is, without a doubt, the most fun I had at GenCon last summer. When I saw two guys sitting in inflatable chairs waving finger puppets of a roach and a critter called "Nurble, god of pork sausage", I HAD to know what was up.

It turns out they were playing a fast paced tongue-surgically-implanted-in-cheek finger-puppet combat game called, "God of Hardcore" by Atomic Hyrax Games.

GOH is billed as a 'game of gods fighting to the death at the end of time.' The game's collectible, of course. Each set comes in a black box with one six-sided die, a randomly selected finger-puppet "God", rules and the vital statistics for the god in question.

There are six gods in all (that is, until the 'Fists of Fury' expansion comes out) with varying levels of rarity including: the god of pork sausage, the god of abject stupidity, the god of intellect, the god of roaches, and, rarest of all, Garuda the Hindu sun god.

It takes about 5 minutes to learn the game IF you even resort to reading the rules. It's fairly self-explanatory just by looking at the stat cards.

There are four phases to a turn, each of which consists of rolling two six sided dice and checking the result against the stat card. The phases are: move, combat (ranged or smashing), heal, and death. All it takes to get started are two starter sets (each having one die -- these guys are fair competition for "Cheapass" games when it comes to production value). But you don't want just two. You MUST collect them all.

I sincerely hope Atomic Hyrax Games is deluged with requests for this riotously funny game. They deserve it. If you support small game companies, please ask your retailer to stock this little gem. (Then buy a few copies.) If you can't find it then check out their website at [atomichyrax.com](http://atomichyrax.com)

One final note, when you by/order your game, make sure to request a copy of Atomic Hyrax's business card. The reverse of the card contains the rules for a game called, "Sugar Wars" which you can play using the implements found on any given table of your favorite diner or coffee shop. (as long as you don't mind a few weird looks when you start making explosion noises and throwing your opponent's sugar packets up in the air). Enjoy, and may all your games be Hardcore!

*Review n: a critical evaluation.**Reviewer n: a writer of critical reviews.*

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

**TITLE: THE HILLS RISE WILD!**

PUBLISHER: Pagan Publishing

RETAIL PRICE: aprox. \$34.95

CATEGORY: Miniature/Board Game

*Recommend to a friend?:* Yes*Recommend for a Brian Award?:* Yes

## PRODUCTION VALUE

Writing: 5

Art &amp; Illustration: 4

Overall Production: 4.5

## PLAY VALUE

Rules Presentation: 5

System/Playability: 4

Replay Value: 5

Entertainment Value: 5

TOTAL: 32.5

OVERALL RATING : 4.6

**4.6**

REVIEWED BY: James Lynch

COMMENTS: Yee-ha! Here's a Lovecraft-inspired game for 2-4 players where the players are the bad guys, searchin' and fightin' to get their hands on a cursed book and use it.

In the back woods of *Dunwich*, the old Wizard *Whateley* died, sealing his copy of the *Necronomicon* in the *Whateley Mansion*.

Four factions (the *Whateleys*, the *Marshes*, the *Cult of Ezekiel* and the *DeGhoule* clan) want that book. You control the six members of each faction. First, search the surrounding shacks for *Thub Great Whateley Seal* that will open the Mansion; shacks also contain cards that are helpful or deadly, such as weapons, booby traps and clan-specific artifacts. Get the Seal to the Mansion, find the *Necronomicon* inside again, (other cards there can benefit or hurt you) bring the *Necronomicon* to your summoning circle, summon your god and win the game (*presumably at a horrible cost to the losers*).

To complicate matters further, the clans can all fight each other, through ranged or melee attacks and special abilities. After all, you are horrible monsters and cultists!

*The Hills Rise Wild!* is a silly, fun game. Miniature purists may find fault with its simplicity because the figures are cardboard cut-outs that you fasten to a base, the board is totally flat (but it's a lot of fun for beginners. Every character has their own abilities) some can be used every turn, a special one can only be used once per game and no one group has an inherent advantage over the others. And while *Pagan Publishing* correctly estimates game time at an hour per player, things really pick up as the characters start bitin' the dust.

The artwork for the game is pretty good. The board itself is a simple layout, composed of shacks (*with doors and windows for entry*), the *Whateley Mansion*, each player's summoning circle, and fields and trees. Each character is shown front and back; when they die, they're replaced by a quite gruesome flat piece showing the disfigured corpse! *The Hills Rise Wild!* also comes with a 20-sided die (*the only die you'll need*) and a small, very effective tape measure.

My one complaint is the strategy (or lack thereof). While the ostensible goal is to get the *Necronomicon* back to your summoning circle, the games I've played have all quickly degenerated into slugfests, with the last faction standing winning the game. Once factions get into combat, it's tough to break off without exposing yourself to attack. So rather than racing to grab the book, players quickly become locked in struggles to the death, with the quest for the *Necronomicon* left almost as an afterthought.

That said, *The Hills Rise Wild!* is an enjoyable, goofy game that will keep players' interest and make them ready for a rematch. Go git it! □

Well? Do you agree with the reviews presented by your fellow readers this issue? Do you disagree? We want to hear what you think. E-mail your comments to [jolly@kenzerc.com](mailto:jolly@kenzerc.com)

GRADING SCALE: 5= EXCELLENT 4= ABOVE AVERAGE 3=SO-SO 2=BELOW AVERAGE 1: POOR



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Mundelein, IL 60060

## PANTHEON

Hogshead Publishing • [www.hogshead.demon.co.uk](http://www.hogshead.demon.co.uk)

Every now and again something new and different comes across my desk which delights me. **Pantheon** fits into that category. You see **Pantheon** is an RPG, well kinda anyway. The game uses a base system that is called the *Narrative Cage Match*. At the beginning of the game, each player chooses a character for the story. The Player then reads a brief one paragraph outline for each character in the opening round. Now this is where it gets interesting. The game progresses by each player adding a sentence to the story in turn. There are only two simple rules that have to be followed with your turn's sentence. First you have to mention your own PC, and second you can not mention more than one other PC in the story.

As the story builds other players may not like the twist that you put on the story, so they can then start a challenge. During a challenge all players roll 6d6, then an auction starts to determine who gets to choose the lucky number. The winner of the auction then gets to choose the lucky number. Who ever has the most of the lucky number on their 6d6 wins the challenge. The winner can then substitute a new sentence in place of the old one. Each player also gets 3 special beads at the start of the game. The special beads are green, white, and black. During the auction the green bead can be played to automatically make you the winner of the auction. The white bead can be used to make any other player win an auction. And the black bead can be used to cancel any sentence that another player says on their turn. If that is not weird enough for you, after the story winds down to a conclusion, each player is awarded points based on what their character achieved during the story. Each adventure has a victory point list for several actions that the PC might have done during the story. You award points based on the charts for effects, and then name a winner. Hmmm kinda cool, an RPG with a true cut winner.

**Brian's Rating:** Rocks Ass!



## WHEN GOOD VILLAGERS GO BAD! • Inner City Games Designs

Any one who has ever played a "classic" style RPG has been through your basic prototypical small village. You know the ones; adventures stroll into the small village and do pretty much as they wish. Well in the miniatures game *When Good Villagers Go Bad*, the happy go lucky villagers are not gonna take it any longer!

At the beginning of the game players choose sides as the villagers, or the adventures. The goal of the game for the villagers is to persuade the adventures that their attitudes and actions are not appreciated in this village. The villagers also get to use the ever-popular tar and feathers to help them run the adventures out of town. On the flip side the goal of the adventures is to teach this village a much-needed lesson about virtues of hospitality by murdering them, looting them, and burning their peaceful little village to the ground. The adventures are much stronger in the game, but the villagers have numbers on them at a 6 to 1 ratio. Now here is were the rather cool and unique part of the game comes in. As the adventures start to do their looting, burning and killing, the player must be aware of line of site for all the villagers. You see every time a villager witnesses a crime against anyone or anything in the village there is a chance the villager might get angry about it. And the worse the crime the greater the chance of villagers becoming more and more angry. All the villagers start off as happy villagers, but they can increase in rage for 4 more levels. As the villagers get madder and madder their stats become much better. The game is played using victory points to determine the winner. Villagers earn the points by removing courage points from the adventures, and of course using the aforementioned tar and feathers. Furthermore villagers can score big points by running the adventurers out of town. Killing villagers, looting, and burning buildings award the adventures their victory points. The game ends when all the adventurers are run out of town, or the entire village has been burned to the ground. The player with the most victory points is the winner.

**Brian's Rating:** Wicked fun!



## HEAVY GEAR TACTICAL MINIATURE RULES

Dream Pod 9 • <http://www.dp9.com> • [www.dp9.com](http://www.dp9.com)

The Folks at *Dream Pod 9* have retooled the *Heavy Gear* line. In the old days *Heavy Gear* was a miniatures game, and an RPG all rolled up into one. Now the two aspects of the game have been separated into two different books.

The new miniatures book features the original *Heavy Gear* tactical rules, but they have been streamlined so that it can be played as a stand alone tabletop game. There is a quick start section that helps to get new players up to speed without spending hours reading over and trying to take in all the rules.

There is a listing for 3 different pre-generated armies in the book; there is also a section for assembling your own personalized combat regiment. After you get your armies the new book comes with six scenarios for your enjoyment. To make sure that the game always stays fresh there is a scenario building section. It is a series of charts that you can use dice to get random results from the cards to build the scenario.

A nice added touch is two full color sections in the book. One section shows some typical battlefields that you can use as a model for building your own battlefields. The other color section shows techniques on how to paint minis, and how to build some terrain.

Overall the new book is a very nice streamlined version of the *Heavy Gear* tactical rules. If you just want to get to the fighting, and skip the role-playing then this is for you.

**Brian's Rating:** Power up!!

Kings, and so comparisons are in order. **America** uses the same resource structure, which is fine, but, for some reason, it doesn't steal any of the other good ideas. Unit AI is abysmal, and a single cactus can confuse a war party of Native Americans more often than not. Drug use is, apparently, modeled quite well, as in heated combats, some of your troops will just stand there in a daze until you specifically tell them to defend themselves.

In short, **America** is a RTS clone that used bad DNA or something. The single player scenarios are sometimes ok, but the multiplayer (*when I finally got it to work, for a little while*) is a bit limited in strategy even if you can overlook the bugs. It's a crying shame, as they had a rather original premise, but no follow-through to make it worthwhile.

Our final history-based game will take up many hours of your time. **Europa Universalis** covers world history between 1492 and 1792, in a real-time turn-based hybrid mode that is pleasing enough. **Imperialism II** (*from SSI*) did a fine job covering this era as well, although it handled the New World a bit crudely--one diamond mine could magnify a country's income 400% overnight, and only let you be a pseudo-European power. EU makes the New World worth exploring, but you'll still need to focus on the old world and Asia for most of your activity, and you can be one of many different countries, from England to Japan.

Much like the bomber game, above, this game has a wealth of details for your consideration. Random events, a plethora of resources to exploit, multiple ways to win, inflation, and country-specific bonuses will have you quickly forget that there are only six distinct military units (*modifiable by research, of course*). One really nice new aspect of the game is religion...betray an ally, and you could have the Pope ticked off at you, getting you in deeper trouble. No matter what religion you choose, and you will have to choose, you'll annoy someone, making diplomacy a constant concern. Likewise, all the little stuff to watch for makes the "meager" choice of only 6 scenarios (*and one of those is "wasted" on the American Revolution*) to play more than you could ever need.

So, I sit down and play, utterly mesmerized, for an afternoon. And I get creamed. Ok, that always happens the first time, at least in a complicated game. I fiddle with the skill levels (*getting*

*a bit cocky in my old age, I guess*), and play another round. While the industrial revolution is beginning in other countries, my Frenchman are still living in tepees. Not good.

I finally get decent, but I can't help but notice that the computer players are doing much better than I am, for no conceivable reason. The designers insist the AI doesn't cheat, but that's rubbish. Anybody remember old **Civilization**, where a nomadic spear-chucker controlled by the computer could sink a human's modern battleship about 10% of the time? At least the designers admitted the computer cheats, although what the precise combat modifiers were, were never clear.

Things are just a bit overboard here. You'll take amazing casualties in combat, while the computer's troops will hardly catch a cold. Even if you win a battle, the time it takes you to recover from victory is more than enough for the enemy country to entirely rebuild an army. An enemy mine seems to produce only 1/5 as much in your hands, and everyone will hate you for doing most everything, all the time. Bah, there IS a fun game here, and I don't mind the computer cheating a bit (*heck, I save and reload all the time*), but I would like to have a better idea what kind of game the computer is playing, so that I can play a bit more optimally.

So, after many hours of play, I guess I don't like EU much, but I feel like the customer who eats the entirety of his meal, then complains to the manager that his food was terrible. I got my money's worth, and considering the shortage of good new games of this type out there right now, I guess EU gets a recommendation from me. □



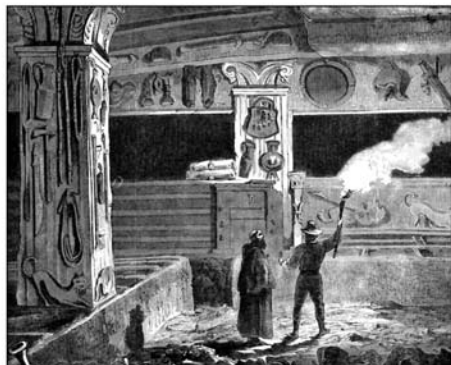
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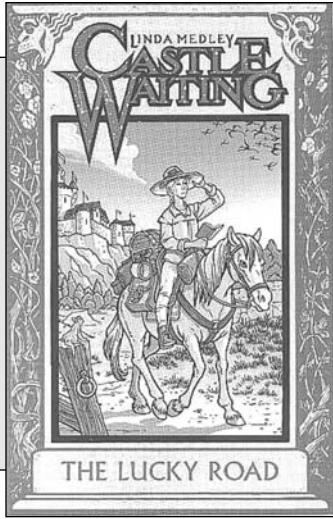
# CASTLE WAITING: BOOK ONE

A Book Review by John O'Neill

## CASTLE WAITING

### Book One: The Lucky Road

Written and drawn by Linda Medley  
Cartoon Books  
192 pages, \$16.95



I first stumbled across *Castle Waiting* with its second issue, self-published by Linda Medley's *OLIO Comics* in 1998. Which meant, as you probably know, that it was with the rest of the self-published comics -- in the back of the comics shop next to the vending machines, buried under a bunch of wrestling magazines from 1950.

I hunted around for a few months afterwards and did manage to locate a copy of issue #3 (*by moving the mummified corpse of a fanboy, slumped over a row of long boxes at the 2000 Chicago Comicon*), but that was the extent of my luck with the first run of *Castle Waiting*. Which was a shame, since those two issues had genuinely piqued my curiosity. They weren't really enough to figure out the plot, if in fact there actually was a plot, but they were packed with strange settings -- including an inn run by three little pigs, a gypsy camp, and a mysterious, sprawling castle -- and a truly charming and memorable cast, including a mischievous water sprite, the nun Sister Peace and her tiny leashed demon, and most especially the heroine herself, the Lady Jain, pregnant and on the run from a vengeful husband and desperately searching for sanctuary.

Linda Medley's *OLIO* line put out seven issues of *Castle Waiting* before packing it in, but that's all it took for the critical establishment to take note. Medley was nominated for a number of awards and eventually took home an Eisner, one of the top awards in comics. In July of last year *Cartoon Books*, publisher of Jeff Smith's marvelous *Bone*, picked up the series and collected the impossible-to-find first run into a graphic novel titled *Castle Waiting: The Lucky Road*.

*The Lucky Road* is my first exposure to the complete storyline, and I'm happy to say that all the promise of those first two issues is nicely fulfilled. There is in fact a plot of sorts, something about a beautiful princess (*Lady Jain*) forced to flee her "happily ever after" husband to seek refuge in an isolated part of the kingdom, but it's only painstakingly revealed and by no means resolved.

But in a way, that's part of the point. *Lady Jain* comes to *Castle Waiting* seeking escape from her troubles, and she finds exactly that... in the form of people and stories with as much drama and danger as anything she's encountered. *Jain* escapes into these stories and by doing so finds precisely the refuge she needs. Pretty deep for something called "*Cartoon Books*."

On top of the interwoven stories and genuinely funny asides, *Castle Waiting* has a running thematic gag: many of the characters are inspired by the fairy tales and rhymes of Mother Goose and the Brothers Grimm, from the source of the castle's thriving economy (*a goose who lays golden eggs*) to the Countess of Carabas (from *Puss in Boots*). It's something of a game Medley plays with her audience as each new character, and new fairy-tale influence, arrives on the scene.

This is probably subtler than it was meant to be... for example, the term *Castle Waiting* appears to come from a Mother Goose rhyme itself, something to do with a place of sanctuary. Beats me, I never heard that one. All my classical education came from comics. I had to look up the *Puss in Boots* reference too.

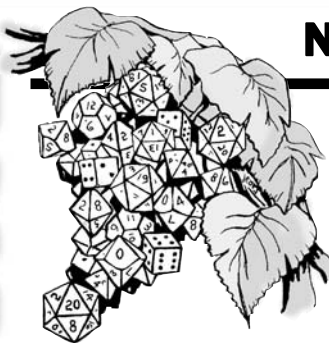
Taken as a whole, *Castle Waiting: The Lucky Road* is a surprisingly rich and rewarding experience. Wonderfully drawn, whimsical without being self-indulgent, and at times extremely funny, *The Lucky Road* has all the hallmarks of classic fantasy. *Cartoon Books* has published four issues in a brand new storyline since the middle of last year, a storyline that looks to be the strongest yet.

*Castle Waiting* is a title worthy of your attention. Now that it has solid distribution, there's no excuse for not making it part of your monthly reserve list. Check it out.

+++++

*John O'Neill is the editor and publisher of Black Gate magazine (www.blackgate.com). His most memorable run-in with Mother Goose was in an animated special broadcast in 1971 that still gives him nightmares. He can be reached at john@blackgate.com.*

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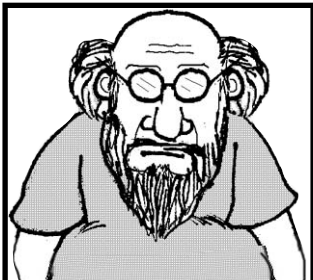
Hey, bunky just in case you've been frantically worrying and losing sleep over who the next **Vampirella** model will be, here's your chance to take an active role and bring closure to the entire ordeal.

That's right, voting is currently underway in the **Vampirella 2001 Model Search Contest** at HARRIS Comics' official site for the character.

Visitors to the site are invited to view photos, stats, and a short video from each of the 12 finalists before casting their vote. Sweet justice — now it's YOUR turn to break a beautiful woman's heart by telling her she's NOT up to YOUR standards.

Do they think just ANYONE can don the Vamp-Princess's scarlet-duds? Just pop over to <http://www.vampirella.com> and vote! □

*submitted by cub report Lang*



**SUPPORT YOUR  
LOCAL GAME SHOP!!**

## **KODT FANS proclaim June 2nd: “INTERNATIONAL GAMER DAY”**

**T**hat's right — Kenzer and Company and the members of the Yahoo Knights of the Dinner Table Club (<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/knightsofthedinnertable>) have taken it upon themselves to proclaim that the FIRST Saturday of JUNE each year is to be known from this date forth as INTERNATIONAL GAMER DAY (IGD). This new Gamer Holiday will first be celebrated on June 2, 2001.

What is IGD? It's a day for gamers everywhere to sally forth from their gaming tables and come together with others of their kind to celebrate their gamerdom. And what better place to gather than your local gameshop? You guessed it, this is a thinly discussed ruse to trick gamers into paying a visit to their local version of Weird Pete and show their support.

It's a chance to browse the isles and check out the new product, rub elbows with old friends (and make new ones). More importantly it's a chance to show the guy behind the counter that he or she is still appreciated.

Not a week goes by that we don't hear the sad news of yet another gameshop closing its doors for good. We're asking all our readers to make an attempt to observe IGD. We're also asking gamers everywhere to consider buying at least ONE new gaming product during their visit. (Even if it's just a new ten-sider -- you can ALWAYS use another ten-sider can't you?) Ordering your gaming product online from the comfort of your own home may be convenient but consider this — can online shopping replace gaming in the backroom or talking about how 'badly' the latest SpellJacked supplement blew chunks at the front counter with a half dozen fellow gamers?

If you can't afford to buy something you can always give the guy behind the counter a big hug simply for still being there. Word has been spreading fast. We've already received reports of stores planning cookouts and special events for June 2nd. If you happen to take pictures of the festivities please send them this way. We'll try to run a few in them in a future issue of KODT.

Okay, so you now have your marching orders -- It's up to you. Help spread the word on IGD and remember — make sure to SUPPORT your LOCAL GAMESHOP!! Nothing is quite so missed as when you turn around and it's GONE.□

## **RUN WITH THE PACK!**

**YOUR HMPA NEEDS YOU!!** Are you going to Origins or GenCon? Would you be interested in being one of the world's FIRST sanctioned HackMaster GMs? We're looking for GMs to run events at Origins and GenCon this summer. If you're interested please contact [Todd@kenzerco.com](mailto:Todd@kenzerco.com) immediately!



What is the HACKPACK? It's Kenzerco's newly formed demo team. We're currently accepting applications from those interested in running with the pack and running demos of KenzerCo's products at stores and cons.

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For an application packet contact Todd Weaver at [Todd@kenzerco.com](mailto:Todd@kenzerco.com).

# plucked from the vine for your reading enjoyment

## • CHEEZY WHEEZY??

Maybe you missed it but in a brilliant flash of marketing genius the Frito-Lay folks released a new product last month called, **Cheeto Mystery Colorz Snacks**.

The spring promotion snack looks just like the normal neon orange colored Cheetos but there's a catch.

They turn your tongue either blue or green when you eat them. Doesn't that put you in mind of spring? huh?

## • MAGICAL SLEEVE TO APPEAR ON FOX NETWORK

FOX has acquired a comedy pitch for a film entitled **Nothing up my Sleeve**. It's said to be the story of a down-and-out magician who gains real powers.

## • THE 'I INSIDE'

Stephen Dorff, Jennifer Love Hewitt, and Christian Slater are in talks to star in the low-budget time-travel thriller **The I Inside**. The film is based on Michael Cooney's upcoming stage play **Point of Death**, about a man who discovers he has the ability to travel back in time after waking up as an amnesiac in a hospital. He goes back in time to prevent his brother's death.

## • ULTIMATE FILM FESTIVAL SURVIVAL GUIDE

Film Threat founder Chris Gore recently released the Second Edition of his indispensable Film Festival Survival guide. The book is a must for any wanna-be filmmaker and features everything you need to know about getting a film into a festival. There are also tips on hyping your movie and getting people to notice it. The guide includes listings for over 600 events, several new interviews, and a comprehensive look at the making and marketing of the **Blair Witch Project**. <http://www.filmthreat.com>

## • DIGITAL WRITING WORKSHOP

And for all you wanna-be sci-fi and fantasy writers out there, you'll be happy to know that you now have a new tool to help get you started — Del Ray's Digital Writing Workshop! This free online workshop has been enhanced allowing new writers more options in posting chapters and stories to be critiqued by other members, as well as upcoming guest editors such as authors Terry Brooks, Anne McCaffrey, and Toni Anzetti, and screenwriter Michael Reeves. Is that kewl or what? Just zip over to <http://www.delreydigital.com> and check it out. ☐

HEY I ATE A GREEN CHEETO ONCE. I YAKED IN MY DICEBAG!

DUDE THOSE THINGS WERE FIVE YEARS OLD.

EXPIRY DATES ARE FOR WUSSES!



NO, NO, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THE PRINCESS DIDN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH ME BECAUSE I HAVE AN 18-75 CHARISMA!

I ACTUALLY WOODED HER HEART 'COS SHE FAILED HER SAVE VS. COURTING ROLL.

HUH, AND HERE I'VE BEEN DOING IT THE HARD WAY.



MARK YER FRICKIN' CALENDARS!

'COS I AIN'T REPEATIN' MYSELF!

## KODT CONVENTION CALENDAR

### ARKANSAS

5/18/01 – 5/20/01  
Roc\*Kon 2001  
Little Rock, AR  
RPGA, GURPS, In Nomie, D & D 3E,  
and Troll Lord Games  
Visit our website:  
<http://www.rockon.org/index.html>

### CALIFORNIA

5/25/01 – 5/28/01  
KublaCon  
Oakland, CA  
RPG, board games, ccg, and mini's  
Visit our website:  
<http://www.kublacon.com/>

### IOWA

5/04/01 – 5/06/01  
Jen-Con 11  
Mt. Vernon, IA  
The annual gaming convention of the  
Cornell College Chess and Games Club.  
Visit our website:  
[http://cornell-iowa.edu/chess\\_and\\_games/](http://cornell-iowa.edu/chess_and_games/)

### KENTUCKY

5/04/01 – 5/06/01  
Odyssey Con 2001  
Harlan, KY  
Featuring Sci-Fi and Fantasy in all their  
myriad forms including films, books,  
comics, role-playing and miniature  
wargames.  
Visit our website:  
<http://www.angelfire.com/scifi/odcon>

### MINNESOTA

7/6/01 – 7/8/01  
CONvergence 2001  
Minneapolis, MN  
Sci-Fi and Fantasy Panels, readings, gam-  
ing, art, masquerade, parties, live music, DJ  
dance.  
Visit our website:  
<http://www.convergence-con.org>

### NEVADA

5/25/01 – 5/28/01  
Con 2001  
Reno, NV  
Guest of Honor include: Larry Elmore  
Visit our website:  
<http://con2001.home.att.net>

### NEW JERSEY

4/20/01 – 4/22/01  
MonCon 2001  
Tinton Falls, NJ  
Visit our website:  
[www.gameconvention.com](http://www.gameconvention.com)

### 5/25/01 – 5/28/01

Dreamation  
East Rutherford, NJ  
Visit our website:  
<http://www.dexposure.com/dreamation.html>

### SOUTH CAROLINA

4/20/01 – 4/22/01  
RoundCon 2001  
Columbia, SC  
We are celebrating our 15th anniversary  
this year. We feature RPGA role-playing,  
Non-RPGA role-playing, LARPS, board  
games, anime room, dealers room, and  
more!  
Visit our website:  
[www.roundcon.org](http://www.roundcon.org)

### SOUTH DAKOTA

5/25/01 – 5/28/01  
Mage Con North – 7  
5/25/01 – 5/28/01  
Sioux Falls, SD  
Guest of Honor include: Jolly Blackburn  
Visit our website:  
[www.mage-page.com](http://www.mage-page.com)

### TEXAS

6/1/01 – 6/3/01  
Project A:Kon XII  
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[Info@a-kon.com](mailto:Info@a-kon.com)

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](mailto: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.



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

## An Opinion Arena and Open Forum

**A**s 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.

First, let me say I agree with your issue #52 editorial whole-heartedly. I haven't been playing D&D for long (I played AD&D 2nd Ed. once and then picked up 3E last August and have DMed it since then), and my gaming group and I did go out and see the D&D movie (not on opening day, that following Monday). Now, I won't get into what we all thought of the film, because that's beside the point. The point is this: I have been to GenCon, and I have seen the geek which we can be.

Allow me to explain. I believe we go through stages as a gamer. Myself, I have been gaming for a little over seven years and I am 21 years old, and I was once a complete goober (you know what I'm talking about). I believe you always begin as a goober, then progress into the realm of the true gamer. I admit, I was bad. Really bad. I played *Marvel Superheroes* for over a year and then discovered bigger and better games (and, eventually, GenCon).

I read a few of those reviews about the D&D movie, and I was perplexed at what they were saying. I do admit, it is a step in the right direction that people don't see those that play D&D as satanists anymore, but as geeks. No, I've seen geeks, and most gamers don't fall into that category. Many of the gamers I have met, especially at GenCon, have been very nice, easy-going people with great ideas and a passion I don't see in most people. Of course, there are those that frighten me (like not bathing for the entire weekend ... uh, I'm sorry, I like to feel clean), but most gamers you

meet are cool people. They have an interesting way of looking at things, movies, television, books, and life in general. I often find myself looking at situations presented on film or television and ask myself, "What would I have done?" I always examine events in life and film and look for something which I can use, not only in the game, but in my life. Many a time, I have used knowledge from a RPG book I read in an actual situation (*Blue Planet* really helped in Biology class).

As for the reviewers, who cares? Let them think what they may about us, but the gamer community at large knows the truth.

We have an unspoken bond which we see. We're everywhere. These reviewers don't realize this, and I find it very funny. I have met up with gamers in every job I have ever had, as have my friends. Think about GenCon, thirty-thousand people can't be wrong.

Anyway, I've tried to sound coherent here and I hope I have got my point across. Keep up the good work on the comics, guys, you're doing a great job (I still find it amazing the amount of gamers who DON'T know you exist -- but I educate them!).

Ethan Parker  
via E-mail

**H**ello Again. You printed my letter in Issue 53, and yes, it would appear that I was wrong when I said the *Gamer Gril's Manifesto* wouldn't alter a man's opinions, at least in the case of Troy and hopefully for a few others. This is the first time I can say I ever heard of an article on this subject having an effect. Sorry, I was wrong. I guess the sacrifice of the paper was not in vain if it's improved just one person's game, but you do get cynical after seeing the same type of thing many times.

Thanks, I stand corrected

Graham  
via E-mail

I must admit that I am a male gamer, I must also admit that I have not been gaming for nearly as long as some of the others out there

(only 4 years).

However, I do know some things about male-female gamer interaction (at least in my area). First, none of us act even close to the way that Ms. Doda describes, in fact, all of the gaming stores that I frequent employ women as well as men. Second, some of the coolest gamers I have ever met have been women. Perhaps it is only the region that you are gaming in that has a less than average female gamer count. Finally, none of the members of my group nor their characters have ever been the leering type.

Also, as to gamers being somewhat "in the dark" about women: Bull, absolute bull. I have had several healthy relationships with women, even though two out of three ended in her dating around behind my back.

Dan  
via E-mail

**I**n issue 53, Becky asked what other parents did with their children while gaming. Our group has been together since 1981, and of course some have had children during that time. When some of the players had children, they vanished for a short time as new parents often do, but they reappeared with dice in hand.

When my wife and I had our first child 4 years ago, games vanished for a short while but started up again once we were willing to let people see our new wreck of a house. My wife is also a gamer, but nursing was kept private and the game went on. We now have our second daughter, age 7 months, and the game continues around them. Our 4 year old understands that adults need to play games too, and as long as she can share in the snacks, and occasionally roll dice between her computer games and videos, she's happy. It was hilarious the first time she rolled a fumble, then slapped her forehead and said "I rolled a 1, DOH!", then followed it with a 20 and pumped her fist and said "YES!".

Children are a wonderful part of life, but so is getting together to play with friends. One does not

have to give up one to have the other.

A person must learn to balance the load. Just yesterday my wife showed off her mother/gamer skills when she proved she could get 3 attacks a round and spoon-feed the baby at the same time.

Let your kids see the game, keep the language clean, and don't ignore them completely. I've even occasionally paused a D&D game to see the latest 'cool thing' on my daughter's computer game. I don't ever want her to think that the D&D game is more important than her.

Bruce J. Medic  
via E-Mail

Well this is the first time I've probably ever written to a Comic book, but I think it's about time. I've been a fan of KODT since it first started coming out in comic book format (*Sadly I missed all of the strips in Dragon as I rarely read the mag, mostly out of general malaise over D&D and where it wasn't going.*). I have to say thanks. KODT gives me a look back into the gaming groups I used to play with and admittedly sometimes still do. Until the 1st of January I had worked as the manager of the best local games Store in Worcester, Mass. As of January 1st the doors were closed for business (Although due to the landlord being a %\$\*&% rent is still paid so we still game there.) and I'm currently out of a job. But the gaming hasn't stopped.

The benefit to this particular store was the wide base of players we could have access to, some better than others or at least more tolerable.

Due to the closing however I HAVE been forced to cut back on my gaming, but at least I have more time to write supplements for various games that I'd like to see published sometime in the future (*Fingers-crossed.*). I have to thank you for being the most on-target gaming publication in existence.

Your willingness to support some sensitive gaming issues, particularly the Female gamer issue, is more than commendable! I've always been a fan of having women playing games as it always brings a new spin on things and a fresh perspective (*Unless of course you've been gaming with the same women for awhile and they've gotten annoying...happens...*). I am still in Worcester and I'm trying to put together a group of Gamers that I've never gamed with before to start up a new Campaign, whether to play in or GM if anyone is in the area and wants to play something feel free to drop me a line (usagirenfield1@juno.com).

Meantime, keep up the good work, I look forward to more laughs in the future. Oh and I do have a comment about the last issue #52.

When the hell did Bob get that smart? Damn I always figured he was just another trigger-happy idiot. Okay now as a GM I have to say that BA needs to grow some balls big time. Screw this GM honor stuff. I think he should tell Bob "*Sorry Bob but you are ONLY 4th level. You have the Main building built and the rest of the area outlined, but that's it! Everything else is represented by tents or just stakes in the ground.*"

No more letting BA get over-run by the Players again. I shudder to see what Brian comes up with. Dammit I think Sarah should take over the game for awhile, and not that one-shot mind game stuff either. I think Female GM's definitely make for very twisted and deep games! Enough for now, later.

Ian W. Straughan  
via E-mail

Jolly, I suppose a dozen people must have brought this up, but I will be sadly disappointed in BA as a GM if he lets this go by.

Bob's character didn't convert anyone. Bob converted the other players, but since those players' characters hadn't even been introduced yet, they had no existence in the game world. And Bob converted the players to his metagame ideas, not the characters to worship of Knu'Kyle-Ra, or however it is spelled.

So he didn't get 6000 EP for converting three 4th level characters. No way.

Those characters didn't even exist when they were talked into joining the cult. He should have waited at least for everyone to introduce their characters. Typical Bob--lots of prep then jumps the gun when the crunch comes.

Cute story, though.

Steve Perrin  
via E-mail

Okay, here's the deal. I started reading KODT with issue #17. By the time I found a comics shop that would actually order the book for me (here's a big Hoody-Hoo! to Midtown Comics, 40th Street and 7th Ave, Manhattan, the best comics shop in the universe), instead of just buying two for the shelf, which would always sell out (you'd think some store owners don't want to make money, wouldn't you?), I'd missed two issues. So my solid run begins with #20.

Which means that, as of the latest

Bundle of Trouble, I'm all caught up, which means that I never need to buy another BOT. Great!

More money to spend on other Kenzer Co. stuff! But, this leads me to my dilemma. See, you guys keep sticking, like, twenty pages of NEW material in the BOTs, and I don't want to miss it. But ten bucks for twenty pages is a ton o' bucks, which is better spent on important stuff, like, y'know, miniatures of the Knights, and the new Dungeons & Dragons comic.

So what I want to know is this: Will the new material from the BOTs ever be reprinted elsewhere, like, for example, in *Tales from the Vault*, maybe? Because if not, then I've got no reason to support the ongoing comic series. I mean, don't get me wrong: the letters column, and the reviews, and all the rest are interesting, but the strips are 99.9% of why I buy the book. I'll happily give up the columns - and nor-so-happily wait the three months between issues of BOT - if it means that I don't miss any strips, and don't waste my money.

So, that's my dilemma, in a nutshell. Any information that you can give me to help steer my course here would be muchly appreciated.

By the way, in case you can't tell from the amount of time I'm spending on this topic: I LOVE your comic book. Not only is it laugh out loud, over the top, superlatively funny, but it's managed to reignite my long-dimmed interest in role playing games. Thanks for the great work, and all the laughs.

Mark James Schryver  
via E-mail

*Glad you love the strips, Mark. I can understand your desire to have ALL of the new material appearing in BOTs. The new material, along with the historical footnotes and anecdotes were originally added to the BOTs to give them increased value for fans. It was our way of saying, "Thanks!"*

*We really hadn't counted on a few readers, such as yourself, crying, "Foul!" Are there any plans to collect the 'new' BOT material in a separate publication? Not currently. However, if enough fans were to demand such compilation it would certainly give us reason to consider doing it. (Say, a special compilation of the BagWar series?)*

*As such, only a handful of readers have expressed interest in such collections. We have a habit of giving readers what they demand so let us know what's on your mind.*

Jolly

□

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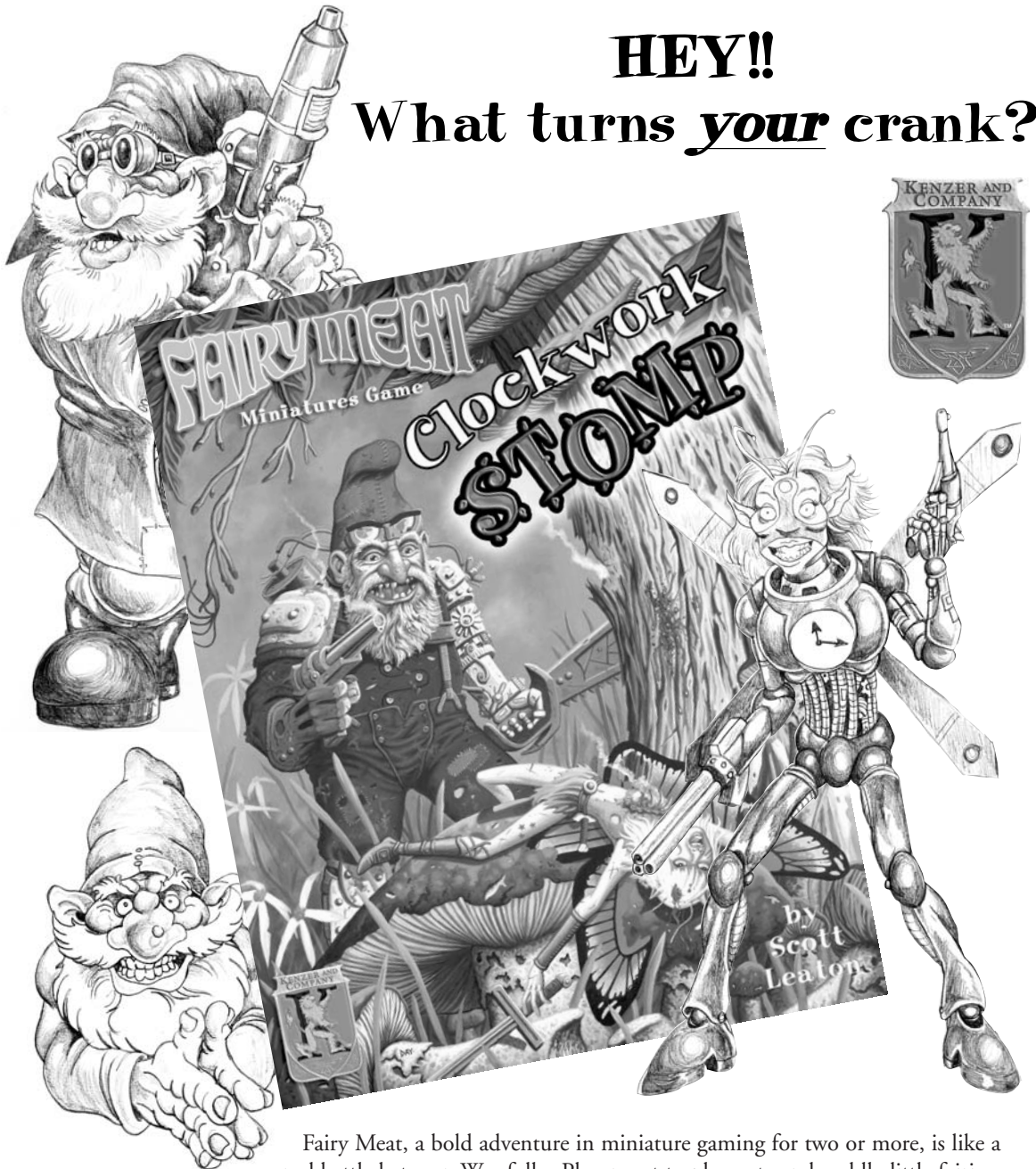
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is a meeting place where readers may pass along information, barter, trade and gossip. Readers are invited to place classified ads, announce group meetings, seek out other players, etc. Subscribers of KODT may place classified ads free of charge with 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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# SPRECHEN SIE GM-SPEAK?

As much fun as role-playing can be it can sometimes become an exercise in frustration. One minute you're prancing off to the local dungeon to fill your kitbag with gold, the next minute you're just one more pile of ashes among the countless others which lie strewn about the passageway just outside the entryway to the Dragon's Lair. Dragon's Lair? You didn't even see that one coming. Did you MISS something? Was the GM laying down clues that you were getting in over your head?

Well, cheer up, Bunk. It's probably not your fault. Recent studies by the H.M.P.A. have clearly demonstrated that almost 87% of all players fail to fully understand GM-Speak — especially when subjected to the rigors and great mental stresses caused by most Dungeon Crawls with a decent HackFactor (3 or higher).

To bring attention to this problem, we've decided to come up with a little test to gauge your understanding of GM-Speak. 5 situations are presented. You must interpret what the action/phrase means and record them. When you are finished check your answers with the key and score yourself. Each right answer is worth 10 points. 50 points indicates you are fully fluent and in good fighting-condition. 30 to 49 points -- Still pretty good but you might want to consider boning up on your Player Advantage skills and GM Counter-Measures. 20 to 29 — You're in the danger zone. One missed cue and your character could be toast. You definitely need some remedial training. Contact your local H.M.P.A. rep and sign up for some courses. 01 to 19 — You're dead meat and in dire need of help. Contact your local H.M.P.A. and report your score. You'll be placed on the priority list for help. They'll probably recommend Summer HackMaster Camp.

1. When you announce you are about to open a door the GM peers over the screen and calmly asks, "Oh...are you SURE that's what you want to do? Do you confirm with "Yes!"?"

## HACK FEATURE!



Hack Feature is a sneak peek at some of the nasties awaiting you in the upcoming Hacklopedia of Beasts. Above, a Death Harvester attempts to 'close the deal with a tempted, but leery, fighter bearing a grudge against a certain shield monkey. □

2. You are walking down a patrolled road when the GM announces you see an 'inviting' foot path leading off into the 'warm' shadows. Do you go down the path?
3. You're in a tavern. The GM informs you that a friendly, jovial dwarf comes up to your table and offers to buy you and your friends a round of drinks. Do you accept his offer?
4. You kick open a door and peer in. After being pressed for details the GM tells you that the room 'appears' to be empty. Do you enter the room?
5. You and your comrades have rented a room at an Inn and are busy dividing up the day's haul from the dungeon. Suddenly, there's a knock at the door. When you say "We'll check and see who it is." the GM comes back with, "Okay, tell me EXACTLY who opens the door." What do you do next?

Okay, that concludes the test. Go ahead and score your answers.

### ANSWERS

1. When the GM asks the question, "Are you sure..." that's a big frickin' clue that you're about to bite the big one due to negligence or stupidity. The GM is being a bit generous by pointing out you forgot to do something (like checking for traps). The standard answer should always be, "No! Actually I want to...."
2. This is GM Speak at it's most devious best. You're being baited. Words like "inviting" and "warm" should be construed as red flags. The GM obviously wants you to go down that path. Your best course of action is to stick to the main trail.
3. This one is easy. Hell no you don't accept a drink from a strange dwarf. When was the last time you ever heard of a dwarf who was free and generous with his money? This situation has set-up stamped all over it. If you declined the offer take your points.
4. Once again you're being baited. The word 'appears' is just the GM's way of saying "Don't hold me to this..." He's being non-committal which usually means there's more to the situation than he's saying.
5. Whenever the GM asks for specifics such as "exactly WHO is opening the door?" or "What's your marching order?" it's about to hit the fan. It may be too late to avoid the flak but you can hopefully minimize damage by immediately drawing weapons or taking cover.

Remember this was just a SCREENING meant to help identify those players who may have problems. Don't beat yourself up too much if you scored poorly. Just do the right thing and seek help. Only proper, supervised testing will yield full and accurate results.

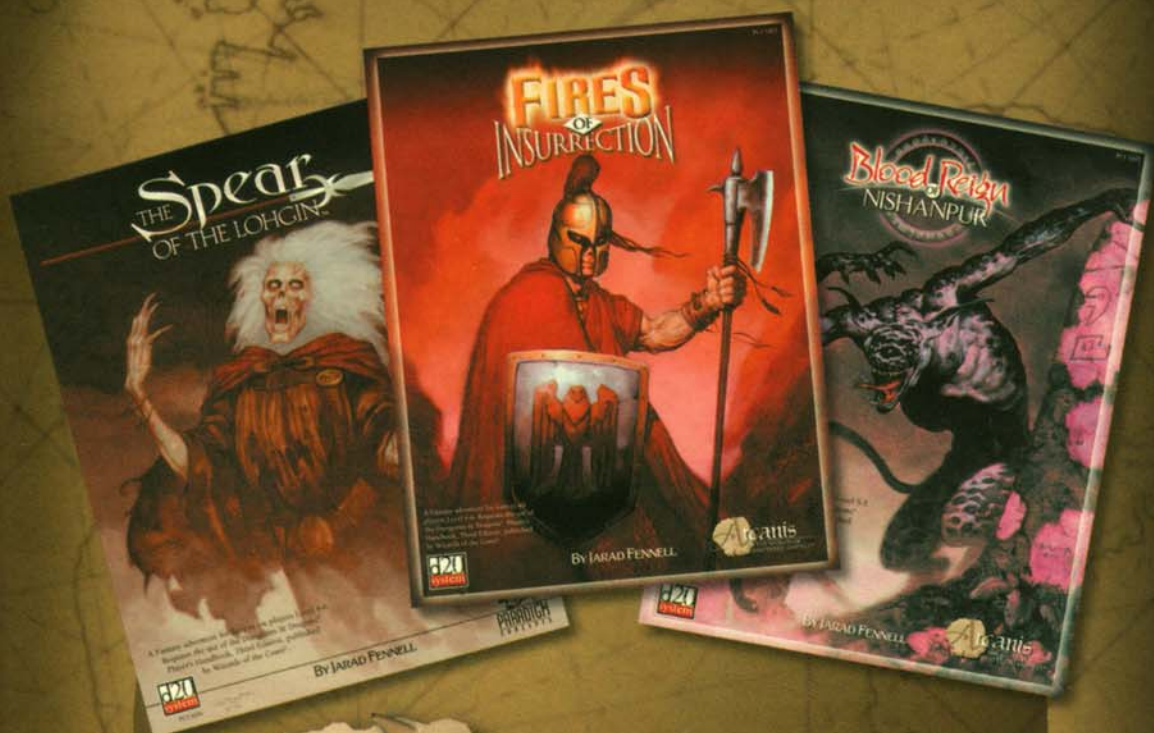
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GAAA!!! EATEN?

LITTLE LATE FOR THAT ISN'T IT? THOSE 'DUDES' ARE GOING TO FRY US!

