

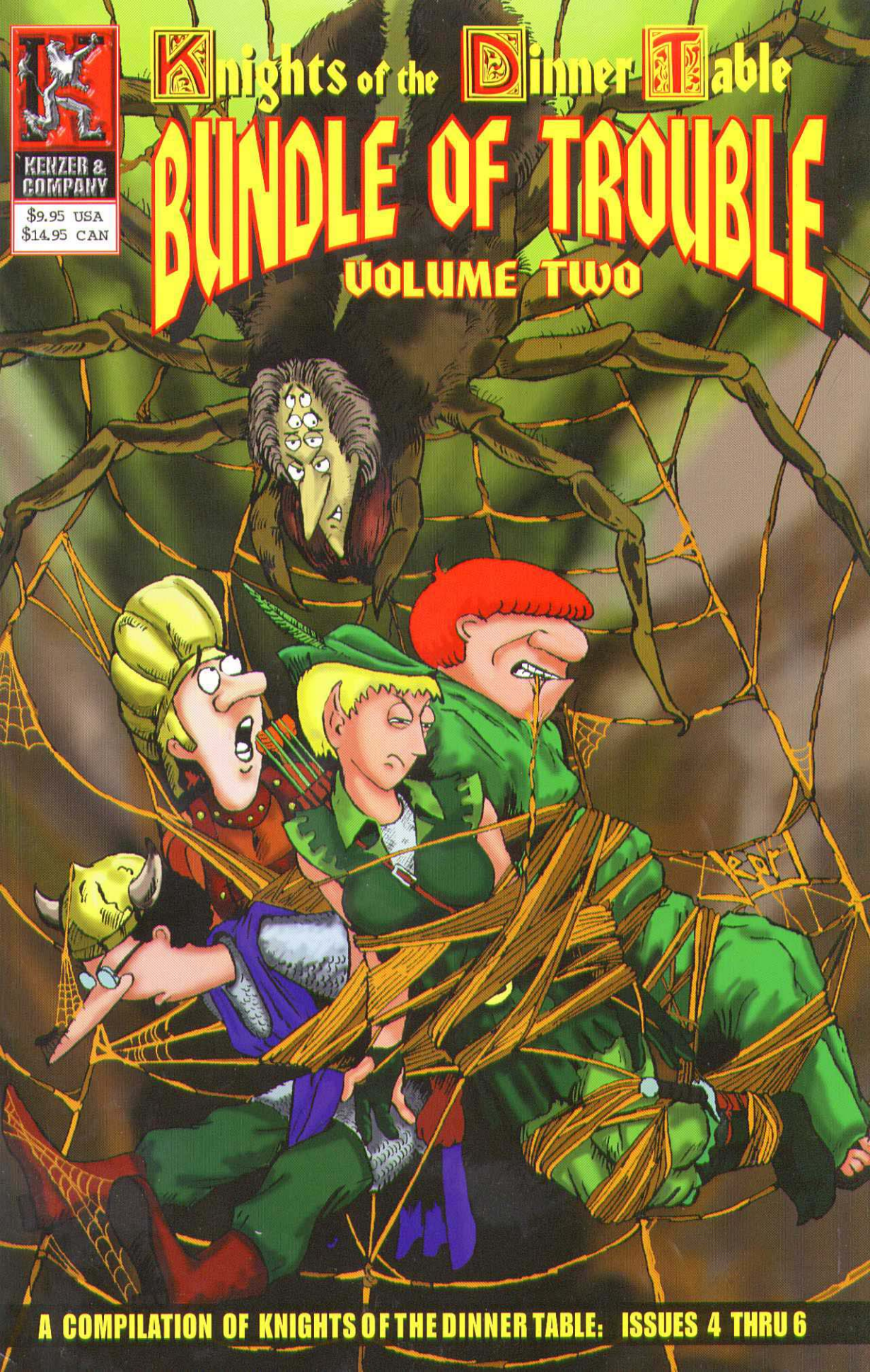


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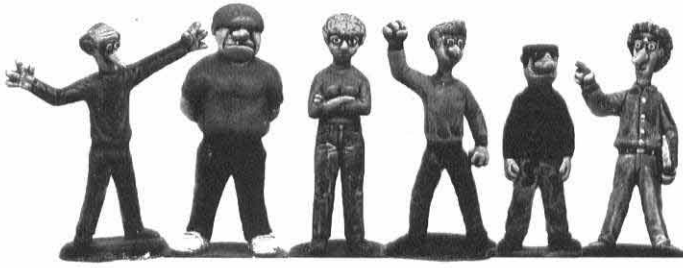
BUNDLE OF TROUBLE

VOLUME TWO



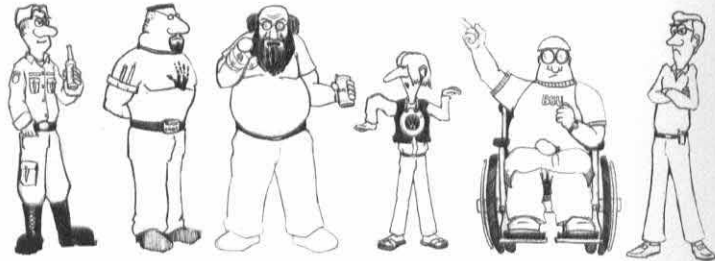
A COMPILATION OF KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE: ISSUES 4 THRU 6

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KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table
Bundle of Trouble: Volume II
Third Printing July, 2000

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

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOLUME TWO

The KODT Development Team is
Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,
Steve Johansson and David S. Kenzer
Cover Art by George Vrbanc

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Although he won't admit it, Knights of the Dinner Table™ was created by Jolly R. Blackburn way back in 1990 as 'filler' for the small press magazine Shadis™ (which he was publishing out of a spare bedroom). Nine years later, he continues to draw and write strips for the monthly Knights of the Dinner Table™ magazine as well as for Dragon™ magazine and The Rifter™ Sourcebook Series. Writing KODT strips isn't nearly the lonely job as it was in the past. Since joining the ranks of Kenzer and Company and the formation of the KODT Development Team, the Knights have gone far beyond anything Jolly or the other developers ever imagined. Along the way, he's made some incredible friends and considers himself truly blessed.

A COMPILATION OF KODT ISSUES 4 thru 6
Have Dice Will Travel • Master of the Game • Plays Well with Others

Editorial of a Madman



*"I am too a team-player, dammit!
Now get off my back and leave me alone."*

Bob Herzog

When we were preparing to release *Bundle of Trouble™*: Volume I, I remember there was some concern among the staff that it might not sell — at least not in the short term. It would 'really blow' we all decided, to have thousands of copies of BOT1 sitting in the warehouse for the next five years. We debated on how many copies we should print and eventually settled on a low-end figure. I believe the book was still on the presses when the pre-orders came in and we realized we were going to have to immediately do a reprint. Once again we had underestimated the demand for *Knights*. Now, to be honest, having a product that continually exceeds your expectations is not a bad thing. We tend to knock-on-wood, scratch our heads, and pretend like we had it planned all along.

In contrast, we've been excited about the release of *Bundle of Trouble™*: Volume II the start. In fact, I think we here at *Kenzer and Company* have been looking forward this particular volume coming out more than our fans. Why?

Because the issues reprinted in Volume II span the period of transition when *Knights of the Dinner Table™* evolved from being one man's endeavor to becoming a team effort. I thought it would be a good idea to recount a bit of the history of that transition here, for our readers.

The 'team effort' all started with a phone call in November, 1996. Dave Kenzer had called to tell me he was going to be attending a convention in my area (*PentaCon '96*) and that he wanted to drop by and visit. I invited him and the rest of the *Kenzer & Co.* staff to stay with me during the con. Dave accepted my offer and by the end of the weekend we were convinced we should be working together. Before Dave left to head back to Chicago, we shook hands. A few weeks later, the contracts were signed and I became a shareholder of *Kenzer & Company*.

Incidentally, I had just finished printing *KODT#4* on my own, prior to this meeting and it was actually on the press when we shook hands. A few days later when the comic book arrived from the printers my jaw hit the floor. The printer had mistakenly swapped out the fonts in the comic book which made it almost impossible to read. (*This printing of #4 came to be known as the 'crappy fours' in house.*) Since I had failed to order blue lines for the issue, the printer refused to take the blame. I called Dave with the bad news.

After a few calls to the printer to see if he would change his stance, we ended up reprinting #4 with the *Kenzer & Company* Logo and the inclusion of a new strip. (Since my old editorial no longer applied it was pulled and the strip was inserted to fill the hole). So, this explains why there are two versions of *KODT#4* out there. (For the record we refer to them as 4 alphas (the original printing) and 4 betas (The *Kenzer and Company* printing).

I thought the marriage with *Kenzer and Company* was a smart move. The burdens of running a business had suddenly been lifted off my shoulders, I reasoned, and I could now concentrate on being creative. Hoody Hoo! I envisioned a new world where I wouldn't have to be concerned with the headaches of shipping product, chasing down unpaid invoices, keeping track of such things as inventory, taxes and finances.

As it turned out, most of this was true. But there something else I hadn't really factored into the equation when I came on board with *Kenzer and Company*. It never dawned on me that Dave Kenzer, Brian Jelke and Steve Johansson would end up having such an impact on the comic book and characters. In fact, it took me several issues to realize that a development-team of sorts had formed.

Beginning with Issue #5 as I began forwarding strips for proofing there was a steady stream of comments and suggestions coming back down the pipe. "Hey, this is funny but it would be funnier if Bob was silent in this panel!" "I think Sara needs to have more to say!"

It's for that reason that this volume of *Bundle of Trouble* will always be near and dear to me. When I read back over these issues I have lots of fond memories of working on *KODT*, for the first time, as part of a team.

And speaking of teamwork, I want to make special mention of the contributors who took the time to send in their story ideas and suggestions. Upon going monthly, we began to depend more heavily on our fans to keep the creative juices flowing by sending in their ideas. Perhaps, ultimately, it's the input from our fans which keeps *KODT* fresh and why readers keep coming back for more.

Good Gaming,

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn
February 1, 1999



Knights of the Dinner Table™

“Have Dice Will Travel”

By Jolly R. Blackburn

Cover by Jason Holmgren

THE GAMEMASTER'S SCREEN IS A WALL. IT SYMBOLIZES THE LINE OF DIVISION BETWEEN PLAYER AND REFEREE. AND IT SHALL NOT BE BREACHED NOR DIMINISHED. THE GOOD GAMEMASTER HOLDS THE LINE AND IS UNWAVERING ON HIS CALLS AND DECISIONS. THE PLAYERS ARE AT CONSTANT ODDS WITH THE GAMEMASTER. IT IS THEIR UNSPOKEN MISSION TO CHISEL AWAY AT THE WALL - TO BRING IT DOWN BRICK BY BRICK. IT IS THE GAMEMASTER'S JOB TO THWART THEM.*

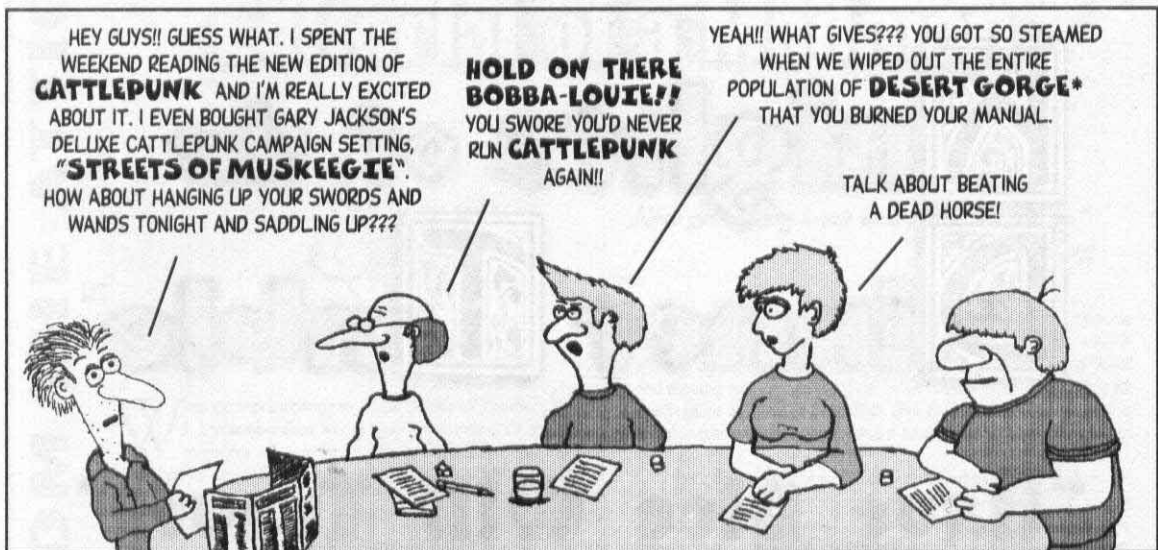
I'M SORRY BRIAN. I STILL THINK THE INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW EDITION OF THE **HACKMASTER: GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE** IS SIMPLY **BRILLIANT**. WHAT PART OF IT DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH??



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The Streets of Muskeegie

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



HEY GUYS!! GUESS WHAT. I SPENT THE WEEKEND READING THE NEW EDITION OF **CATTLEPUNK** AND I'M REALLY EXCITED ABOUT IT. I EVEN BOUGHT GARY JACKSON'S DELUXE CATTLEPUNK CAMPAIGN SETTING, "**STREETS OF MUSKEEGIE**". HOW ABOUT HANGING UP YOUR SWORDS AND WANDS TONIGHT AND SADDLING UP???

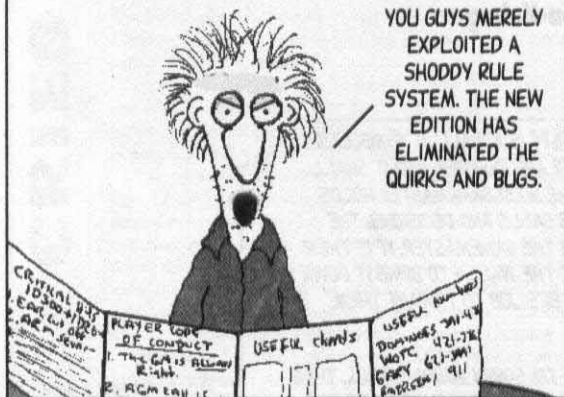
HOLD ON THERE BOBBA-LOUIE!! YOU SWORE YOU'D NEVER RUN **CATTLEPUNK** AGAIN!!

YEAH!! WHAT GIVES??? YOU GOT SO STEAMED WHEN WE WIPED OUT THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF **DESERT GORGE*** THAT YOU BURNED YOUR MANUAL.

TALK ABOUT BEATING A DEAD HORSE!

YEAH I GOT ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE THE LAST TIME I RAN **CATTLEPUNK**. THAT'S TRUE. BUT NOW I KNOW IT WASN'T MY FAULT. THE 1ST EDITION WAS FULL OF HOLES.

YOU GUYS MERELY EXPLOITED A SHODDY RULE SYSTEM. THE NEW EDITION HAS ELIMINATED THE QUIRKS AND BUGS.



HELL, I HAVE TO ADMIT, IT WOULD BE FUN TO FORM UP THE OLD GANG AGAIN AND HIT THE **OUTLAW TRAIL**. YA WANNA??

BRIAN, RESIST!! WHY NOT TRY PLAYING A LAWFUL CHARACTER THIS TIME??

WHADDA YA SAY, **SHOTGUN BILLY?** YOU IN?

SORRY MA'AM! THE HEART OF A LAWFUL MAN DOES NOT RESIDE IN THESE DUSTY BRITCHES.



AWWWH COME ON GUYS. THIS IS A **NEW** EDITION OF CATTLEPUNK. DON'T YOU THINK IT CALLS FOR **NEW** CHARACTERS?? SARA HAS A GOOD POINT. GARY SAYS THAT **CATTLEPUNK** HAS MUCH MORE ADVENTURE OPPS FOR LAWFUL CHARACTERS THAN THE OUTLAW VARIETY.

SIGH. I YIELD. **BUFFALO JANE** RETURNS FROM CHEYENNE COUNTRY.

NICE TRY B.A. **THE BAD BOYS OF SAGE** ARE RIDING AGAIN.

GNARLED BAT KNICKERSON ON A ONE-EYED MARE!!! AND I'VE GOT AN ITCHY TRIGGER FINGER.

THIS RULES!!! I WISH I HAD MY **TOMBSTONE CD** HERE!!



*see Tales from the Vault p. 40

OKAY, OKAY YOU GO AHEAD AND PLAY YOUR OLD CHARACTERS. BUT I GIVE YOU **FAIR WARNING!!!**

THE **\$5,000 BOUNTY** ON YOUR HEADS FROM THE OLD CAMPAIGN IS STILL IN PLACE. AND YOUR **NOTORIETY FACTORS** ARE STILL AT LEVEL SIX FOR THE **DESERT GORGE MASSACRE.**



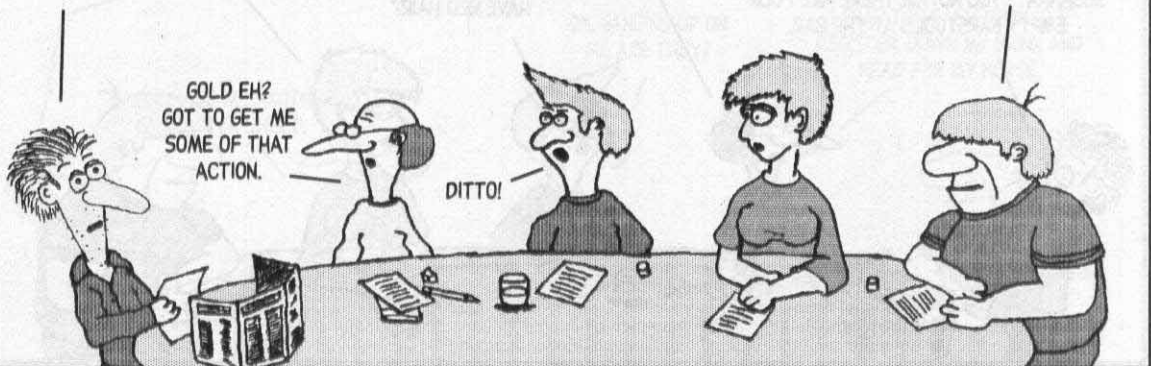
HOLSTER THAT THANG PARDNER!!! WE ALL KNEW THE OUTLAW TRAIL LEADS TO RUIN AND DAMNATION WHEN WE FIRST SET FOOT ON IT. BUT AS **TRAIL DUST NELSON** ALWAYS SAYS, "THEY'LL HANG ME FOR SURE. BUT FIRST THEY HAVE TO CATCH ME."



LATER THAT NIGHT...

AS YOU WALK DOWN THE BUSY MAIN STREET OF MUSKEEGIE YOU ARE BEARING WITNESS TO THE BIRTH OF A BOOM-TOWN IN FULL SWING. THE HILLS WHICH BORDER THE TOWN ON THREE SIDES ARE TEAMING WITH ACTIVITY AS HUNDREDS OF MEN INFLICTED WITH GOLD FEVER ATTACK THE EARTH WITH PICK AND SHOVEL.

WELL, ONE THING'S OBVIOUS. **JO JO ZEKE** IS STILL WRITING THE FLAVOR TEXT FOR GARY JACKSON.



GOLD EH? GOT TO GET ME SOME OF THAT ACTION.

DITTO!

GUYS I KNOW YOU'RE ALL ANXIOUS TO KILL, MAIM AND BREAK IN YOUR BINKS AT THE OLD JAIL HOUSE, BUT HERE'S AN IDEA TO CONSIDER.

WHY DON'T WE **LAY LOW** AND GET A FEEL FOR THE TOWN FIRST? I'M SURE THE LAW HERE IS GOING TO BE FAIRLY TOUGH WITH GOLD FEVER RUNNING SO HIGH.



OH THERE YOU GO **THINKING** AGAIN! YOU KNOW WHAT THEY CALL THINKERS IN THE WILD WEST? **DEAD!!** BOOTHILL IS FILLED WITH IDIOTS WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN DRAWING THEIR GUNS BUT WERE CAUGHT 'GETTING A FEEL FOR THE TOWN.'

BRIAN?? PLEASE BACK ME UP.

HOLD ON **GNARLED BAT**. I THINK BUFFALO JANE MAY BE RIGHT.



LET'S NOT FORGET HOW LETHAL THIS GAME IS. BETWEEN THE FOUR OF US, WE ROLLED UP 69 CHARACTERS DURING THE **DESERT GORGE CAMPAIGN**.

LET'S GET OUR BEARINGS FIRST. THEN WE KICK BUTT AND TAKE NAMES.*

WELL, THAT'S REFRESHING. YOU GUYS ARE OFF TO A GOOD START. NOW THEN, THE MOST PROMINENT BUILDINGS ON MAINSTREET ARE THE **IRON MULE SALOON**, THE **SIERRA MADRE BANK** AND **GABBY'S GENERAL STORE**. SO...WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO??

HEAR THAT GUYS? THEY HAVE A BANK!!

KA-CHING!!

UH, LET'S GO TO THE SALOON FOR A DRINK!

THE IRON MULE SALOON IS PACKED WITH DUSTY PROSPECTORS, CARDSHARKS AND DRIFTERS. THERE MUST BE A DOZEN GAMES OF POKER BEING PLAYED AT VARIOUS TABLES. A PIANO PLAYER IS PLAYING 'OL SUSANNA'. YOU NOTICE THERE ARE FOUR EMPTY BARSTOOLS AT THE BAR.

WE'LL GRAB THE STOOLS. I'M ORDERING A DOUBLE SHOT OF WHISKEY WITH A HAIR IN IT.

I'M TAKING A GOOD LOOK AT THE PIANO PLAYER. DOES HE HAVE RED HAIR?

WHY WOULD YOU ASK SUCH A QUESTION?

WHY YES, HE DOES HAVE RED HAIR. AND HE'S WEARING A GREEN DERBY AND A SILK NECKERCHIEF.

HA! I HAD A GUT FEELING WE'D MEET UP WITH **RED GURDY PICKENS****! I GOT A SCORE TO SETTLE WITH HIM.

OH HOW COULD I HAVE FORGOTTEN? THE PIANO PLAYER DAVE AND BOB HECKLED ONCE.

GAAAAHHH!!!! IT'S HIM!! THE DUDE THAT MADE ME DRINK FROM THE SPITTOON.

YEAH. HE'S ONE TOUGH HOMBRE.

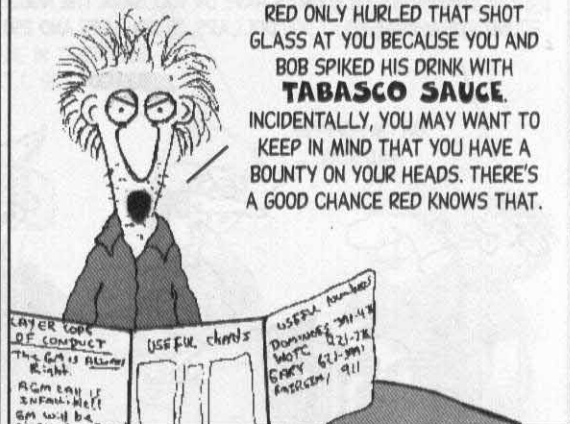
* When Jolly first joined Kenzer and Company we went through a period of time, internally, when we adopted Brian's phrase, "kick butts and take names" as a rallying cry whenever we talked about our growth plans for KODT. Eventually it sparked some debate among the KODT Development Team as to what exactly we meant when we said it. We finally decided it meant that we had 'so much butt' to kick that we would only kick the butts we had time for and take the names of the others so we would remember to kick their butts later. — Brian Jelke

OH IT'S GONNA BE **SWEET** GETTING **REVENGE**. LET'S ALL SHOOT HIM IN THE BACK AND RUN FOR IT.

NO I WANT HIM TO SEE WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER. HE KILLED MY CHARACTER WITH A HURLED SHOTGLASS. AND ALL I DID WAS ASK HIM IF HE COULD PLAY **"SMOKE ON THE WATER."***

UH ACTUALLY DAVE, YOU ATTEMPTED TO STEAL HIS TIP JAR. UNFORTUNATELY A DANCEHALL GIRL NOTICED YOU AND PISTOL WHIPPED YOU WITH A DERRINGER.

RED ONLY HURLED THAT SHOTGLASS AT YOU BECAUSE YOU AND BOB SPIKED HIS DRINK WITH **TABASCO SAUCE**. INCIDENTALLY, YOU MAY WANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU HAVE A BOUNTY ON YOUR HEADS. THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE RED KNOWS THAT.



LATER....

OKAY BOB, YOU HIT LUKE THE BARKEEP IN THE SHOULDER WITH YOUR BOWIE KNIFE BUT HE MANAGES TO TAKE OFF YOUR HEAD WITH HIS SAWED-OFF SHOT GUN BEFORE DIVING FOR COVER. DAVE, RED HITS YOUR CHARACTER WITH ANOTHER SHOTGLASS FOR 18 POINTS OF DAMAGE. THE DANCEHALL GIRL YOU PUNCHED IN THE FACE AND DECKED GRABS YOU BY THE SPURS AND CAUSES YOU TO STUMBLE. YOU CRASH INTO A TABLE WHERE A POKER GAME WAS IN PROGRESS. BRIAN AS YOU ATTEMPT TO RIDE YOUR HORSE INTO THE SALOON WITH BOTH GUNS BLAZING - YOU HIT YOUR HEAD ON THE DOOR JAM AND KNOCK YOURSELF OUT.

DAMN! HAND ME ANOTHER CHARACTER SHEET.

OH, GANGING UP ON ME ARE THEY?

I GRAB THE CASH FROM THE REGISTER, DOWN MY DRINK AND HEAD FOR MY HORSE.

DARN!



LATER STILL...

DAVE AS YOU ARE SNEAKING UP ON RED ATTEMPTING TO STAB HIM IN THE BACK, HE NOTICES YOUR REFLECTION ON THE BRIGHT SHINY KEYS OF HIS PIANO. WITH LIGHTENING REFLEXES HE SPINS ON HIS PIANO STOOL AND EMPTIES A COLT DRAGOON INTO YOUR CHEST. YOU ONLY HAVE FOUR HIT POINTS LEFT AFTER THE PUMMELING YOU TOOK FROM THOSE DISGRUNTLED POKER PLAYERS SO I EXPECT YOU'RE DEAD.

AFTER THE DOC FINISHES SEWING MY WOUNDS I'M HEADING FOR THE GENERAL STORE.

BUY A SHOVEL AND COME PROSPECTING WITH ME.

I'M LOW-CRAWLING UP BEHIND THE PIANO. DID HE NOTICE?

DAMN YOU TO HELL RED!



* This was an inside joke directed toward one of my friends who used to heckle local bar bands by screaming out, "Play Smoke on the Water, dudes!" during the middle of a song. One night, a rather burly bass guitarist, calmly handed his guitar to the drummer, jumped off the stage, and pummeled my poor friend senseless. Climbing back on the stage the guitarist turned and said, "Smoke that!"— Jolly

EVEN LATER STILL...

OKAY BOB, RED FORCES YOUR CHARACTER TO DRINK FROM THE SPITTOON A THIRD TIME. ROLL VS. NAUSEA. AND NO, YOU FAIL TO BREAK THE GRIP THE TWO DANCEHALL GIRLS HAVE ON YOU. SARA THE NUGGETS YOU FOUND ARE APPRAISED AT 300 DOLLARS, 75 DOLLARS AND 250 DOLLARS.

OKAY MY NEW CHARACTER IS READY. HIS NAME IS KNUICKLES NICKERSON. HE'S BAT'S BROTHER AND HE WANTS TO AVENGE HIS DEATH.

POOR MOTHER KNICKERSON. SHE'S LOST SO MANY SONS.

OH I'M HOPPING MAD NOW.

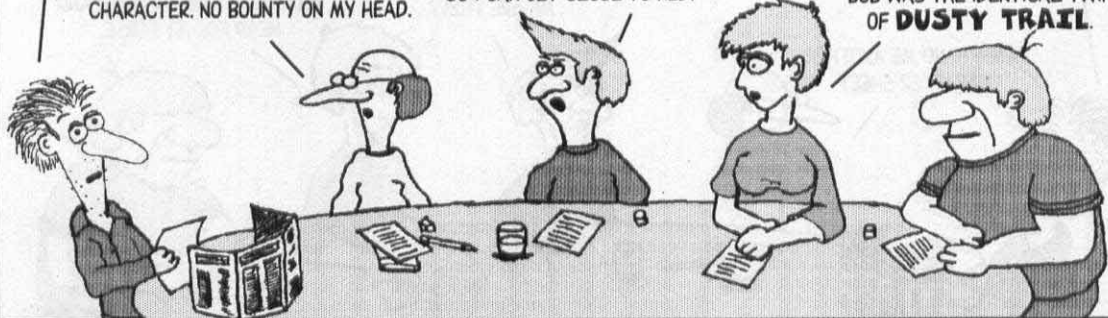


OKAY BRIAN THE STOREKEEPER FINALLY RETURNS AND SAYS HE MANAGED TO GATHER TOGETHER ALL THE AVAILABLE NITRO GLYCERINE IN TOWN. HE PACKED IT IN WET HAY AND IT'S SITTING IN THE STABLES ACROSS THE STREET. BOB AS YOU WERE BLOWING CHUNKS IN FRONT OF THE SALOON THE MARSHALL WAS RIDING BY. HE HALTS HIS HORSE AND STARES HARD AT YOU. HE RECOGNIZES YOUR FACE FROM THE WANTED POSTER.

NO WAY DUDE! THIS IS A NEW CHARACTER. NO BOLINTY ON MY HEAD.

I'M POSING AS A PIANO TUNER SO I CAN GET CLOSE TO RED.

LH BOB, YOU INSISTED CALICO BOB WAS THE IDENTICAL TWIN OF **DUSTY TRAIL**.



DAMN!! I'M NOOSE-BOUND!!! RED TOOK MY PISTOL AWAY AND I ACCIDENTALLY BOUGHT 10 GAUGE SHELLS FOR MY 12 GAUGE SHOTGUN.

BRIAN WHAT'S WITH THE NITRO? QUIT FOOLIN' AROUND. WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO BUST BOB OUT OF JAIL.

I'D LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT I'VE MADE FIVE GRAND PANNING FOR GOLD WHILE YOU'VE ONLY MANAGED TO RACK UP A BODYCOUNT FOR PLAYER CHARACTERS.



A WEE BIT LATER...

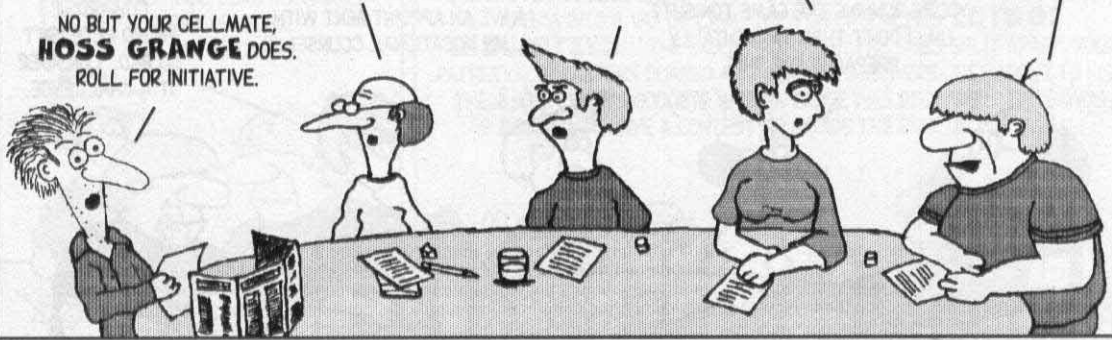
THEY HAVEN'T BUILT A JAIL THAT CAN HOLD **TRAIL DUST NELSON**...ER, I MEAN CALICO BOB.
I RATTLE MY TIN-CLIP ON THE BARS REAL HARD.
DOES THE MARSHALL GET A HEADACHE??

BRIAN YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING
ABOUT NITROGLYCERINE.
YOU BETTER RETHINK THIS.

IT'S THE MOST **LETHAL**
WEAPON IN THE BOOK SARA. WHAT
ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW? I'M
TAKING **RED** OUT FIRST. THEN
WE BUST OUT BOB.

NO BUT YOUR CELLMATE,
HOSS GRANGE DOES.
ROLL FOR INITIATIVE.

HANG IN THERE BOB.
WE'LL GET YOU OUT.



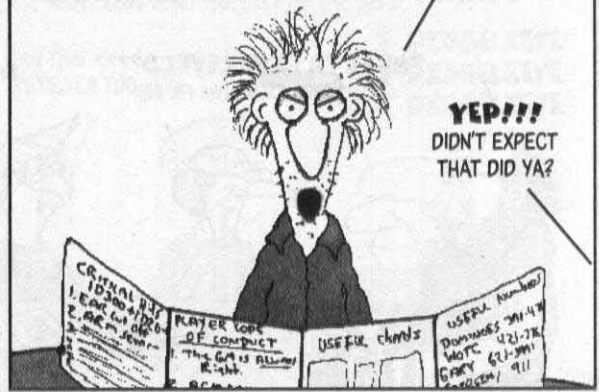
OKAY I STAND UP AND ACT LIKE I'M STRETCHING MY ARMS.
I'LL EVEN YAWN TO MAKE IT LOOK GOOD. THEN I SUDDENLY
GRAB THE SATCHEL UNDER THE TABLE AND WHILE
YELLING, "**FOR GNARLED BAT AND TRAIL DUST NELSON!!!!**" I THROW IT AT THE PIANO!!!!

UH.....YOU'RE THROWING THE SATCHEL??? THE SATCHEL
THAT CONTAINS FORTY-SEVEN 12 OUNCE BOTTLES OF NITRO?
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE DOING?



OH AND I'LL DIVE
BEHIND THE BAR
TAKING COVER.

YEP!!!
DIDN'T EXPECT
THAT DID YA?



MOMENTS LATER...

THE SHOCK WAVES ARE FELT UP TO 75 MILES AWAY IN RAPID SPRINGS. AT FIRST IT IS REPORTED THAT
MUSKEEGIE WAS STRUCK BY A **COMET** - SO GREAT WAS THE DEVASTATION. THE SALOON, JAIL AND HUNG MAC'S
LAUNDRY ARE VAPORIZED ALONG WITH EVERYONE IN THOSE BUILDINGS. MOST OF THE TOWN IS LEVELED BY THE
INITIAL BLAST. THE OTHER STRUCTURES BURN DOWN IN THE **CONFLAGRATION** THAT FOLLOWS.

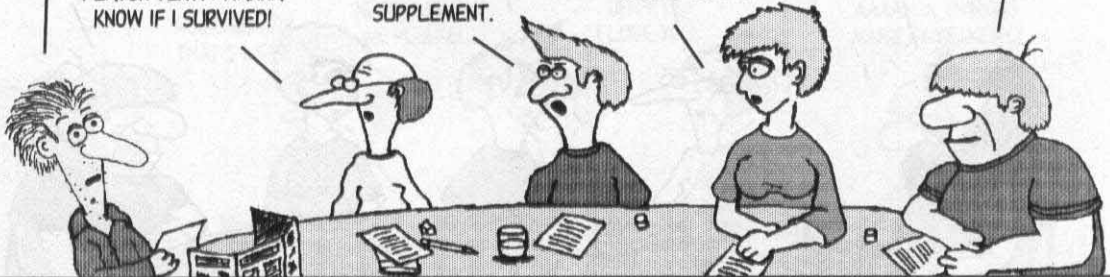
NOW **THAT'S** HOW
YOU **LIGHT UP**
A TOWN.

ADIOS RED!!

YEAH, YEAH, ENOUGH
FLAVOR TEXT. I WANNA
KNOW IF I SURVIVED!

WHOA!! SO MUCH
FOR THAT TOWN
SUPPLEMENT.

GUESS YOU GUYS WON'T
NEED CASKETS.



The Old Guard Strikes Back

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

EVENING BOYS AND GIRLS!! B.A. ASKED ME TO STAND IN FOR HIM TONIGHT. HE'S OVER IN KOKOMO SITTING IN ON A PLAY-TESTING SESSION OF NITRO FERGUESON'S NEW ROLE-PLAYING GAME, **ESCALATED DEVASTATION!!** MAY GAWD SAVE HIS SOUL!! I ADVISED HIM TO ABORT AND BAIL BUT YOU KNOW B.A.

YOU'RE RUNNING THE GAME TONIGHT?
UH...I DON'T THINK I'M MENTALLY
PREPARED FOR THIS.

OH...UH...ER...I FORGOT.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH
UH...MY VOCATIONAL COUNSELOR.

COWARDS!!!
WEIRD PETE ISN'T
SO BAD. CONSIDER
IT A CHALLENGE.



OH THAT'S RIGHT. I FORGOT. THIS IS A GROUP FOR SISSIFIED GAMERS WHO CAN'T CUT **REAL ADVENTURE!!!**
GO AHEAD AND RUN AWAY. WHAT DO YOU CARE IF YOU MISS OUT ON AN ADVENTURE PACKED WITH
ENOUGH EP POTENTIAL TO CATAPULT YOUR CHARACTERS THREE TO FIVE LEVELS IN A SINGLE SESSION.

THREE TO FIVE LEVELS????
KRIMMENY-JIMMENY!!! I'M IN!!!

ME TOO!!!

OH GREAT! THE TESTOSTERONE
LEVEL JUST WENT OFF THE
METER IN HERE.



TO REFRESH YOUR MEMORY I USE THE
DEMERIT SYSTEM TO KEEP
ORDER. AND THAT MEANS **ZERO-
TOLERANCE** FOR ANY CHALLENGE
OR QUESTION OF MY AUTHORITY AS
GAMEMASTER!

HELL, I GUESS I CAN KNUCKLE UNDER FOR ONE NIGHT.
AFTER ALL THREE TO FIVE LEVELS OF ADVANCEMENT!!!!

NO SWEAT!! OKAY WEIRD
PETE!! LET'S GAME!!

THIS SHOULD BE
INTERESTING.

-PSSST-
SARA



HUH? WHAT DID YOU SAY BRIAN?

HERE, IT'S MY CHARACTER'S
**LAST WILL AND
TESTAMENT.** IF ANYTHING
HAPPENS MAKE SURE MY WISHES
ARE EXECUTED.
JUST IN CASE.



OKAY HERE'S THE DEAL. THE GAWDS OF **GARWEEZE WURLD** ARE MIGHTY PEED OFF. THEY'RE FED UP AND THEY'VE DECIDED TO WIPE OUT HUMANITY AND START OVER. WELL, THEY WOULD HAVE DONE JUST THAT STRAIGHT OFF BUT **OL' LUVIA THE WUSS GAWD*** INTERVENED ON THE BEHALF OF MORTALS. THE GAWDS WERE FURIOUS. THERE WAS A BIG FIGHT OVER IT. ZEUS AND THOR STRANGLED EACH OTHER. MARKOVIA THREW ATENIA INTO A VAT OF LAVA. LOT'S OF CASUALTIES. **LOTS OF CASUALTIES!!!** THE GROUND RUMBLED! THE SKIES SPLIT APART. YOUR PATHETIC CHARACTERS QUAKED AT THE KNEES AND WERE JUST ABOUT TO KISS THEIR SORRY BUTTS GOODBYE WHEN A TRUCE WAS DECLARED. THE GAWDS DECIDED TO HAVE A CONTEST TO DECIDE THE FATE OF MORTALS.



THAT'S WHERE YOU GUYS COME IN. YOUR CHARACTERS WERE CHOSEN BY LOT TO REPRESENT ALL MORTALS IN THE CONTEST. THE GAWDS HAVE CONSTRUCTED AN ENORMOUS DUNGEON IN THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH. AND IT'S POPULATED BY SOME VERY SPECIAL CRITTERS. IT'S FILLED WITH EVERY MONSTER, MAN, WOMAN AND DEMI-HUMAN YOUR CHARACTERS EVER KILLED. B.A. AND I SAT DOWN FOR THREE HOURS LAST NIGHT COMPILING THE LIST OF THE DEAD.

OH IS THAT ALL? HELL WE
KILLED THEM ONCE. I SUPPOSE
WE CAN DO IT AGAIN.

OH MAN THIS IS A GIVE-AWAY!
PETE YER TOO KEWL.

**I DISBELIEVE!!
I DISBELIEVE!!
I DISBELIEVE!!**



SORRY BRIAN! IT'S NOT AN ILLUSION. GOOD REACTION THOUGH. 25 EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR QUICK THINKING. **NOW LET ME BURST THE BIG BALLOON.** THERE ARE RULES TO THIS CONTEST. YOU'RE NOT HERE TO FIGHT YOUR OLD FOES AGAIN. **HOW REDUNDANT.** IN FACT IF YOU INITIATE COMBAT, EVEN ONCE, **YOU INSTANTLY LOSE** THE CONTEST AND MANKIND IS WIPED OUT. TO SAVE YOURSELVES AND YOUR FELLOW MORTALS YOU MUST EACH WIN THE **ALLEGIANCE** OF FIVE - COUNT 'EM - FIVE OF YOUR FORMER FOES. THAT'S TWENTY TOTAL FOR THE GROUP BUT EACH OF YOU MUST PERSONALLY WIN OVER YOUR QUOTA OF FIVE. **HAR HAR HAR - NOW THIS IS ROLE-PLAYING. HAR HAR.**

NO COMBAT??
THAT'S LAME

NO KILLS? CAN
WE PUMMEL?

OH PÉTE,
I LOVE YOU.

AAAAH, A THINKING
MAN'S GAME. KEWL!



* See *Tales from the Vault* p. 14

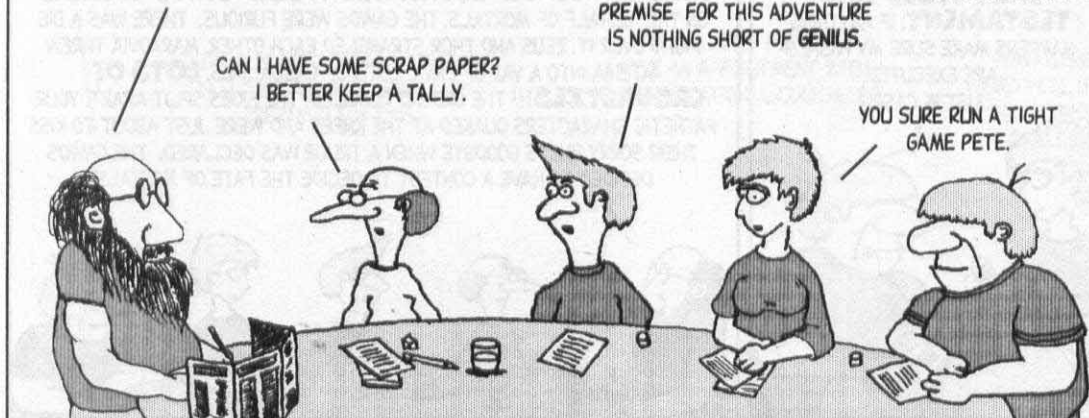
BOB, 10 **DEMERITS** FOR CRITICIZING THE PROPOSED ADVENTURE. SARA, 25 EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. AND THE SAME FOR YOU BRIAN.

OH...ER...UH...AS I WAS JUST ABOUT TO SAY, I THINK THE PREMISE FOR THIS ADVENTURE IS NOTHING SHORT OF **GENIUS**.

HRRRMMMMFFF!!
5 DEMERITS FOR TRYING TO **KISS-UP** TO THE GM DAVE. I HATE THAT.

CAN I HAVE SOME SCRAP PAPER?
I BETTER KEEP A TALLY.

YOU SURE RUN A TIGHT GAME PETE.



LATER AS THE ADVENTURE UNFOLDS...

OKAY AS YOU KICK THE DOOR IN YOU FIND IT'S A WINE CELLAR. THERE'S A DWARF LEANING ON THE WALL AND HE AIN'T LOOKING TOO HEALTHY IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. HE'S KINDA GURGLING AND FROTHING AT THE MOUTH. UPON CLOSER INSPECTION YOU SEE HE HAS A 'SLUCKING CHEST WOUND'. HE LOOKS AT YOU WITH EXTREME HATRED AND MOANS, 'I REMEMBER YOU. I BEGGED FOR MERCY BUT YOU ONLY OFFERED TORMENT AND PAIN.'*

DOES HE HAVE ANY GOLD TEETH?

I'M GOING THROUGH HIS POCKETS.

GUYS!!!! ARE YOU STUPID OR WHAT???



THIS IS OBVIOUSLY ONE OF YOUR POOR VICTIMS. WE'RE BEING JUDGED HERE REMEMBER? YOU TORTURED THIS PATHETIC CREATURE EVEN AS HE LAY DYING FROM A HORRIBLE WOUND. YOU SHOULD BE TRYING TO MAKE AMENDS. WE EACH HAVE TO WIN OVER **FIVE OF OUR FORMER FOES** AFTER ALL.



SHE MAY BE RIGHT. IT WILL BE A SNAP WINNING THIS GUY OVER. ALL WE GOTTA DO IS GIVE HIM A SIP OF HEALING POTION. HE'LL BE EATING OUT OF OUR HANDS.

HEY THIS CONTEST MAY NOT BE SO DIFFICULT AFTER ALL.

NOW YOU'RE USING YOUR HEADS.



* See Tales from the Vault p.14

MINUTES LATER...

BOB, AS YOU EASE YOUR HAND BEHIND THE DWARF'S HEAD AND LIFT HIM UP TO SIP FROM THE POTION BOTTLE YOU FEEL A SHARP STINGING PAIN IN YOUR SIDE. THE DWARF HAS STABBED YOU IN THE KIDNEYS WITH A POISONED BLADE. YOU'LL TAKE THIRTY POINTS OF DAMAGE PER ROUND UNTIL YOU EITHER SAVE VS. POISON OR DIE.

GAAAAAAA!!!!
I TAKE OUT MY AXE OF DOOM AND BEHEAD THE BASTARD!!

OH THAT LITTLE LOW-LIFE. AND WE WERE TRYING TO HELP HIM.

DON'T BE DISCOURAGED GUYS. AS LONG AS WE DON'T INITIATE COMBAT WE'LL BE OKAY.



A FEW ROOMS LATER...

OKAY DAVE, AS YOU OPEN THE DOOR YOU'RE SMACKED RIGHT DAB IN THE FACE WITH A SHOTGLASS!!! YOU TAKE 26 POINTS OF DAMAGE. YOU ALL HEAR A MANIACAL LAUGH AS A VERY LIVELY RENDITION OF 'BUFFALO GIRLS' BEGINS PLAYING ON A PIANO.

SPUTRRRR!!
IT'S RED!! HE'S FOLLOWED US INTO HACKMASTER!

WHAAAA?? WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?? THIS ISN'T CATTLEPUNK??

HOW BIZARRE! IT APPEARS ALL THE RULES HAVE BEEN THROWN OUT THE WINDOW. WE'D BETTER BE CAREFUL.

ACTUALLY SARA, THE **FIRST EDITION OF HACKMASTER** HAD SOME OBSCURE REFERENCES TO **INTRA-GENRE CROSS-OVER ADVENTURING**. THEY WERE NEVER WIDELY EMBRACED BUT THEY WERE NEVER RESCINDED.



THE NIGHT DRAGS ON...

OKAY, IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THERE ARE ABOUT 5,000 **ORCS** IN THE GROUP. THEY SPLIT INTO TWO LONG COLUMNS AND THEY FORM A 'GAUNTLET'. THE **BANSHEE-LORD** FORCES YOU TO REMOVE YOUR CLOTHES DOWN TO YOUR SKIVVIES. YOU ARE INSTRUCTED TO '**RUN THE GAUNTLET**'. IF YOU SURVIVE THE **BANSHEE LORD** SAYS HE WILL OFFER HIS FRIENDSHIP.

SHOOT, I WISH I'D KNOWN ALL THOSE **GRATUITOUS ORC KILLS** WOULD COME BACK TO HAUNT ME.

HEY MY CHARACTER ISN'T WEARING ANY SKIVVIES.

SO DAVE IS NAKED?? GREAT, NOW IT'S A **HORROR GAME**.



MANY PAIN-FILLED HOURS LATER....

THE OLD MAN IS USING BOB'S DEAD BODY AS A SHIELD TO PROTECT HIMSELF FROM THE BLAST OF YOUR FIREBALL VOLLEY BRIAN. HE TAKES THE FLAG OF TRUCE BOB WAS CARRYING AND USES IT TO MAKE A WICK WHICH HE SHOVS INTO AN OIL FLASK. LIGHTING THE WICK OFF OF BOB'S FLAMING BODY HE HURLS THE FLASK AT THE GROUP. EVERYONE TAKES 50 POINTS OF DAMAGE. OH, I ALMOST FORGOT -- DAVE PUT DOWN TEN MORE DEMERITS ON YOUR TALLY FOR ATTEMPTING TO WARN BOB'S CHARACTER THE OLD MAN WAS PACKING A SWITCHBLADE. I SAW YOU PEEKING AT MY NOTES WHEN I WAS IN THE RESTROOM.

LAST TIME I USE THE **FLAG-OF-TRUCE PLOY**. SHEESH!!!

I'M EARNING MORE DEMERITS THAN EXPERIENCES POINTS.

THAT OLD MAN HAS SOME PITCHING-ARM THERE. WHAT WAS THAT, 300 YARDS?

CAREFUL SARA. YOU'RE 3 DEMERITS AWAY FROM LOSING A LEVEL.



FINALLY...

WELL BRIAN, IT'S UP TO YOU TO SAVE HUMANITY NOW. THE GORGE-GIANT PICKS UP DAVE'S DEAD BODY JUST LONG ENOUGH TO PULL HIS +12 HACKMASTER FROM HIS BELT, TOSING DAVE ASIDE. HE BEGINS TO CHUCKLE LOUDLY AS HE APPROACHES YOU. SINCE YOU'RE TRAPPED IN A CUL-DE-SAC AND YOU ONLY HAVE TWO HIT-POINTS LEFT, I'LL LET YOU HAVE INITIATIVE.

WOW!! THANKS FOR LETTING ME PLAY THE PART OF THE GORGE-GIANT PETE. I WAS GETTING BORED JUST SITTING HERE WITH MY DEAD CHARACTER.

YOU LITTLE TRAITOR!!! WE HAD IT MADE. ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS ACCEPT OUR OFFER OF FRIENDSHIP.

AWH CRUD!! I'M OUTTA SPELLS. GOOD-BYE CRUEL WORLD.



TWO WEEKS LATER...

HEY PETE. I THINK IT WORKED. I RAN A GAME LAST NIGHT AND THE **HACK-N-SLASH RATIO IS DOWN 65%**. THEY EVEN VOTE NOW AFTER EVERY CONFLICT TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS A "GOOD KILL." I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

I JUST TAUGHT THEM TO HAVE A LITTLE RESPECT FOR NPCs AND MONSTERS, THAT'S ALL. IT'LL WEAR OFF SOON. **ENJOY, ENJOY.**



The Gaud Complex

BASED ON A STORY BY CHRISTOPHER HEATH

AS YOU FLEE FROM THE LARGE BAND OF GOBLINS PURSUING YOU, YOU FIND YOUR ESCAPE PATH HAS SUDDENLY BEEN CUT OFF. YOU'RE STANDING AT THE END OF A DEEP GORGE. FACING A STEEP CLIFF FACE.

THAT DEATH WAND IS A MIGHTY HANDY THING TO HAVE. IF YOU EVER WANT TO SELL IT - I GOT FIRST DIBS.

I'LL USE THE **DEATH WAND OF KANDEER** TO SLAY THEM ALL INSTANTLY. I CAN DO THAT TWICE MORE TODAY.

KEWL! I'LL START SEARCHING THE BODIES. GOOD WORK BOB.



NOW JUST A DAMN MINUTE!!! HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, BOB! WE JUST STARTED THIS CAMPAIGN LAST WEEK AND WE'RE ONLY ON THE SECOND SESSION. WHERE'D YOUR FIRST LEVEL RANGER GET A **MAJOR ARTIFACT**?

REMEMBER THAT **ELVEN KNIGHT** I PLAYED THREE YEARS AGO? WELL, THIS RANGER IS HIS COUSIN. SINCE THE KNIGHT IS RETIRED, HE'S GIVING ALL HIS ITEMS TO MY RANGER, INCLUDING THE +6 **GINSU BLADE OF SHARPNESS**.

ALL RIGHT! THIS CAMPAIGN'LL BE A BREEZE EARLY ON.

I'M POSITIONING MY PALADIN BEHIND BOB'S RANGER FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES.



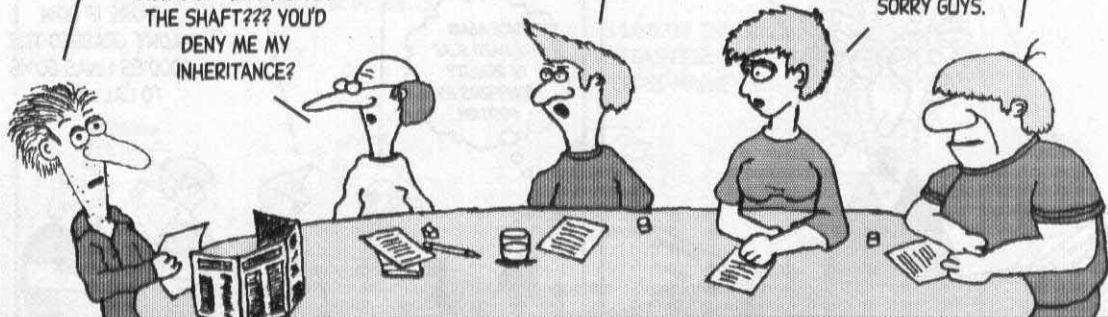
I DON'T CARE IF YOUR RANGER IS RELATED TO **HOOKNOSED WALLACE!** THERE'S NO WAY I'M ALLOWING YOU TO START OUT THAT POWERFUL!

LAST WEEK MY COUSIN GOT A NEW CAR STEREO AND GAVE ME HIS OLD ONE. IF IT CAN HAPPEN IN REAL LIFE, IT CAN HAPPEN IN A GAME, DUDE.

HALF THE CLOTHES I OWN ARE HAND-ME-DOWNS FROM A RICH UNCLE.

WHY DO I ALWAYS GET THE SHAFT??? YOU'D DENY ME MY INHERITANCE?

I'M SIDING WITH B.A. ON THIS ONE. SORRY GUYS.



YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT, GUYS. I'M NOT SAYING IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. I'M NOT ALLOWING IT SO I CAN PRESERVE **GAME BALANCE**. BEGINNING CHARACTERS SHOULDN'T BE TOTING AROUND A CART OF THEIR RELATIVE'S MAGICAL ARTIFACTS!

BUT I HAVE THE FAMILY TREE ALL DRAWN OUT **B.A.**, IN BLACK AND WHITE! THE TWO CHARACTERS ARE CLEARLY RELATED.

I'M JUST FORTUNATE MY UNCLE HAS SUCH EXCELLENT TASTE IN FASHION.

IF BOB'S GOT AN ACCURATE FAMILY TREE, IT'D BE WRONG NOT TO LET THE RANGER HAVE THOSE MAGIC ITEMS.



BOB, I'M SORRY YOU TOOK THE TIME TO DOCUMENT A FAMILY TREE. NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, I'M NOT GOING TO RULE FOR YOU. SCRATCH OUT THAT DEATH WAND AND ANYTHING ELSE YOU MIGHT HAVE 'INHERITED'. AGAIN, I'M SORRY.

BOB, YOU'RE WAY OUT OF LINE. **B.A.** IS OUR GM.

WHO ARE YOU TO PLAY GOD?
YOU MAY BE THE GM, BUT I CONTROL MY CHARACTER! MY RANGER IS NOW THE OFFICIAL OWNER OF THOSE ITEMS, SO DEAL WITH IT.

WHOA! SOUNDS LIKE BOB FOUND HIS MISSING SELF!

YOU'VE LOST THIS ONE, **B.A.**



THUNDER CRACKS AS A **HUGE LIGHTNING BOLT** FALLS FROM THE SKY, SIZZLING BOB'S RANGER IN THE PROCESS. THE MAGIC ITEMS THEN DISAPPEAR INTO ODIN'S HANDS. NOW ODIN OWNS THEM, **SO DEAL WITH IT.**

WHEN I ASKED, "WHO ARE YOU TO PLAY GOD?," I WASN'T REALLY LOOKING FOR AN ANSWER.

MAN, YOU WERE ROBBED, DUDE. **THAT SUCKED.**

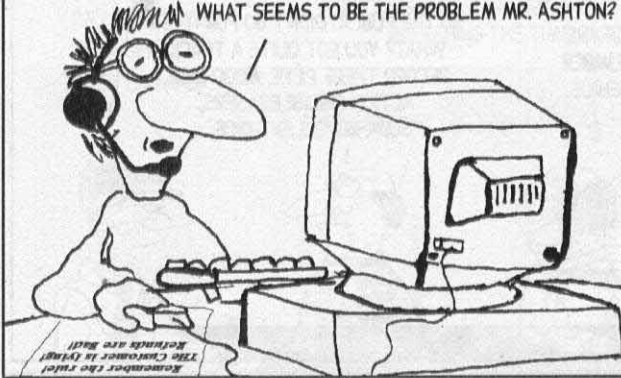
ONCE AGAIN THE HARD SLAP OF REALITY REAFFIRMS MY POSITION.

DAMN! IF ODIN HADN'T GRABBED THE GOODIES I WAS GOING TO CALL DIBS.



ONE MORNING AT THE COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT AT HARDEIGHT ENTERPRISES

YOU SAY YOU WANT TO RETURN A CASE OF **CATTLEPUNK 2ND EDITION**???
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM MR. ASHTON?



OH GEE I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE I'M A BIT UPSET BECAUSE I PEELED OFF THE LITTLE "2ND EDITION" STICKER ON THE TITLE PAGE AND IT READS "1ST EDITION" UNDERNEATH. PUT ME THROUGH TO GARY JACKSON.



YEAH, YEAH!! WELL LA-DE-DA YOU MANAGED TO PEEL OFF A STICKER. I'M HAPPY FOR YOU. MAYBE YOU WANT TO RECONSIDER RETURNING THE PRODUCT, HUH?



OR DO WE NEED TO DISCUSS YOUR 8,000 DOLLAR TAB ON THOSE **SPELLJACKED** STARTER DECKS YOU OVER-ORDERED. HUH PAL??? HELLO? HELLO?
I DIDN'T THINK SO!!

LATER IN THE BOARD ROOM...

WE GOT BIG PROBLEMS WITH THE CATTLEPUNK LINE. WE NEED TO GET SOMETHING INTO PRODUCTION QUICK OR SOME OF YOU MAY BE EATING YOUR CHRISTMAS DINNERS IN A REFRIGERATOR BOX ON MAIN STREET.

BAAAHHH!!! THIS DAMN X-GENERATION. WHO IN THE HELL CAN ANTICIPATE WHAT THEY WANT??

CATTLEPUNK IS A SOLID GAME SIR. THE INDEX NEEDS WORK BUT IT'S SOLID.



IT TOOK ME YEARS TO PULL THIS CREATIVE THINK-TANK TOGETHER. YOU'RE THE BEST IN THE INDUSTRY AND IT'S TIME TO EARN YOUR PAY CHECKS. SO LET'S HEAR SOME IDEAS.

I KNOW YOU SHOT THIS ONE DOWN ALREADY, GEE-JAY BUT I THINK MY DICE-ROLLING CORRAL IS A HOT IDEA. WE JUST TAKE SOME ATHLETIC PROTECTION-CUPS, LINE THEM WITH GREEN FELT AND SHRINKWRAP IT WITH SOME POLYHEDRONS. THE GAMERS HAVE BEEN SCREAMING FOR SOMETHING TO ROLL THEIR DICE IN FOR YEARS.

I LIKE IT!! THE GREEN FELT GIVES IT A VEGAS-FEEL. THERE'S SOME POSSIBLE CROSS-MARKETING POTENTIAL THERE.



PETER, YOU DUE FOR ANOTHER **PSYCH-EVAL??** YOU USED TO BE MY BEST IDEA MAN. GAWD, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU? WHERE'S THAT **INNOVATIVE SPIRIT** YOU USED TO **WOW** ME WITH?

WELL GEE-JAY, IT TOOK A VERY SEVERE BEATING FROM THE COLLECTIBLE CARD GAME CRAZE. I PUT MY HEART AND SOUL INTO **SPELLJACKED: SERIES FOUR THROUGH NINE**. THIS INDUSTRY CAN BE SO CRUEL.

AAAAHH! YOU WERE JUST TOO FAR AHEAD OF THE TIMES, PETER. I THOUGHT YOUR **PAINT-BY-NUMBER COLLECTIBLE CARD CONCEPT** WAS PURE GENIUS. I HAD A BLAST PAINTING MINE.

SO THE PUBLIC DIDN'T GO FOR IT. SO WHAT? YOU GOT QUITE A TRACK RECORD THERE PETE. **MOOD DICE, ACTION-FIGURE ERASERS, SODA-REPELLENT DICE...**



I WAS AFRAID OF THIS. SO THE WELL IS DRY HUH? OKAY, WE FALL BACK TO **PLAN B**. EDMUND I'M PULLING YOUR GAME FROM PLAY-TESTING AND PUSHING IT TO THE FRONT OF THE PRODUCTION LINE. YOU HAVE **24 HOURS** TO GET ME A FINAL MANUSCRIPT WITH ARTWORK. GOT THAT?

24 HOURS??? UH...BUT...GAAAA...SIR, WE'VE ONLY COMPLETED TWO PLAY-TESTING SESSIONS. NO ARTWORK HAS BEEN ASSIGNED. THERE ARE STILL SOME DESIGN CONCERNS AND, AND, I REALLY DON'T THINK IT'S READY TO GO TO PRESS. NOT BY A LONG SHOT.

I KNOW IT'S NOT READY. YOU THINK I'M AN IDIOT?? THAT'S WHY I'M GIVING YOU 24 HOURS.

WELL WE BETTER GET **FLASH COLBY** ON THE PHONE. HE'S THE ONLY ARTIST IN THE BUSINESS WHO CAN CRANK OUT LINE-ART ON SUCH NOTICE. AND HE'S WELL WITHIN THE 200 DOLLAR ART BUDGET ON THIS PROJECT.



SIR, DON'T GET ME WRONG. I REALLY BELIEVE IN **ABE, BABES AND ROLLERBLADES**. I THINK IT'S A WINNER. BUT...BUT...I JUST CAN'T PULL IT TOGETHER IN 24 HOURS.

I'M AFRAID THE KID MAY BE RIGHT GEE-JAY. THE INITIAL FEEDBACK FROM THE PLAYTESTERS INDICATES THAT BY-AND-LARGE THEY ARE CONFUSED AND BEWILDERED ABOUT THE PREMISE OF THE GAME.

CONFUSED? WHAT'S SO DAMN CONFUSING ABOUT PLAYING A CHARACTER WHO LACES UP A PAIR OF HIGH-TECH ROLLERBLADES AND TIME-TRIPS?

THIS NEW GENERATION OF GAMERS ARE A BLUNCH OF TECH FREAKS SIR. THEY WANT TO KNOW HOW EVERYTHING WORKS. THEY HAVE TROUBLE ACCEPTING THAT ROLLER-BLADES ENABLE TIME-TRAVEL.



LET'S JUST PUT SOME TECHNO-BABBLE EXPLANATION IN THE DESIGNER NOTES. I KNOW!! I SAW A SHOW ON THE SCIENCE CHANNEL ON **BUCKY-BALLS**!! I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DO BUT WE COULD JUST SAY THE ROLLER-BLADES HAVE BUCKY-BALL REACTORS IN THEM. HUH?? WHAT DO YOU THINK? HUH?

OH I SEE THOSE REFRIGERATOR BOXES LINING UP!

YOU'RE IN WAY OVER YOUR HEAD JO-JO. YOU'RE MIXING YOUR ALCHEMY WITH YOUR PHYSICS. BUCKY-BALLS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH BREACHING THE TIME BARRIER.

I'M CONFUSED. AIN'T BUCKY-BALLS THOSE CHEWY CARAMEL CANDIES THAT JOLLY-POACHER PUTS OUT?

BUCKY-BALLS?



WHY ROLLER-BLADES??? WHY NOT BUNGIE-JUMPING?? NOW THERE'S A HOOK FOR YA. THAT SUDDEN SNAP AT THE END OF THE JUMP COULD RIP THE FABRIC OF TIME!! IT'S A SURE WINNER!!!

THESE GENERATION-X'ERS HAVE BUNGIE JUMPING ON THE BRAIN. THEY'LL FLIP OVER IT.



OKAY I'M GONNA BREAK MY OWN RULE AND OFFER A LITTLE INCENTIVE FOR YOU EDMUND. IF YOU MAKE MY 24 HOUR DEADLINE I'LL GIVE YOU A 12 **POINT BY-LINE!!**



HOW'S THAT GRAB YOU? PICTURE THAT ENORMOUS 12 POINT HELVETICA FOR ALL THE WORLD TO SEE!!

TWELVE POINT!! ARE YOU SERIOUS??? WOW!!! **TOP-BILLING?**

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LIVE TO SEE THE DAY. I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE ACTUALLY GIVING ME CREDIT FOR WRITING MY GAME. THANK YOU SIR. **THANK YOU**. I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL MY PARENTS. MAYBE NOW MY DAD WILL FORGIVE ME FOR DROPPING OUT OF **SPIVEY-TECH**.

NOT TO BURST YOUR BUBBLE BUT I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT TOP BILLING SON. I'M BUMPING MY OWN BY-LINE UP TO **18 POINT**.

AAAH, I REMEMBER MY FIRST 12 POINTER.

JUST A DAMN MINUTE!!! HOW IN THE HELL CAN YOU JUSTIFY GIVING THE 'KID' A 12 **POINT SCREAMER???**



I'M HAVING TROUBLE HEARING YOU DOWN HERE PETE. BY THE WAY, WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE?? **MAYTAG, KENMORE OR FRIDGIDAIRE???**



YOU HAD YOUR DAY WITH 12 POINT - REMEMBER? IF YOU DON'T WHY NOT TAKE A STROLL THROUGH THE WAREHOUSE. I'M SURE YOU'LL SEE YOUR NAME ON ONE OF THE 75,000 PAINT-BY-NUMBER STARTER DECKS GATHERING DUST IN THERE.

OKAY LET'S GET THE BALL ROLLING. WHILE EDMUND CARRIES THE BALL THE REST OF US WILL WRAP UP THE LEGALS AND START PUMPING UP ADVANCED SALES.

THAT REMINDS ME BOSS -THEY KICKED BACK OUR TRADEMARK APPLICATIONS FOR '**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**' AND '**GEORGE PATTON**'.



DAMN!! I WAS HOPING WE COULD SNEAK THOSE THROUGH. WAIT A FEW DAYS AND WE'LL BATCH THEM WITH THE **DICE BAG BUDDIES** TRADEMARK PAPERWORK.

SURE THING, GEE-JAY!!

BUT HEY, WE MANAGED TO SLIP '**ROLLERBLADES**' AND '**TIME-TRAVEL**' BY THEM.

OUTSTANDING!!! GOOD WORK GLIYS.



OKAY, MEETING ADJOURNED. GOOD LUCK EDMUND. I'LL BE AT MY WINTER CONDO IN WABASH IF YOU NEED ME.

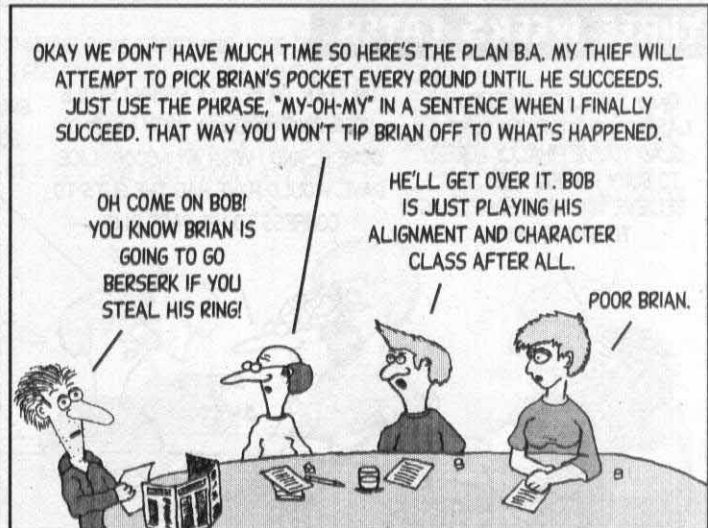
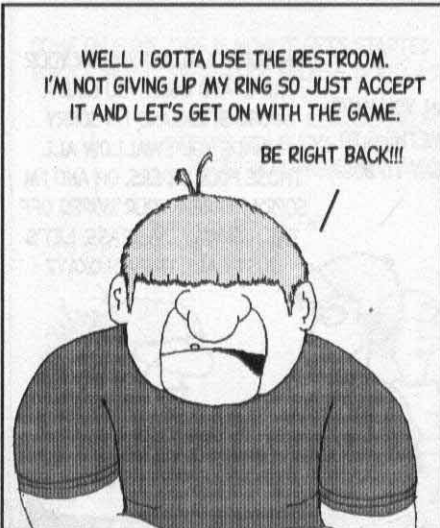
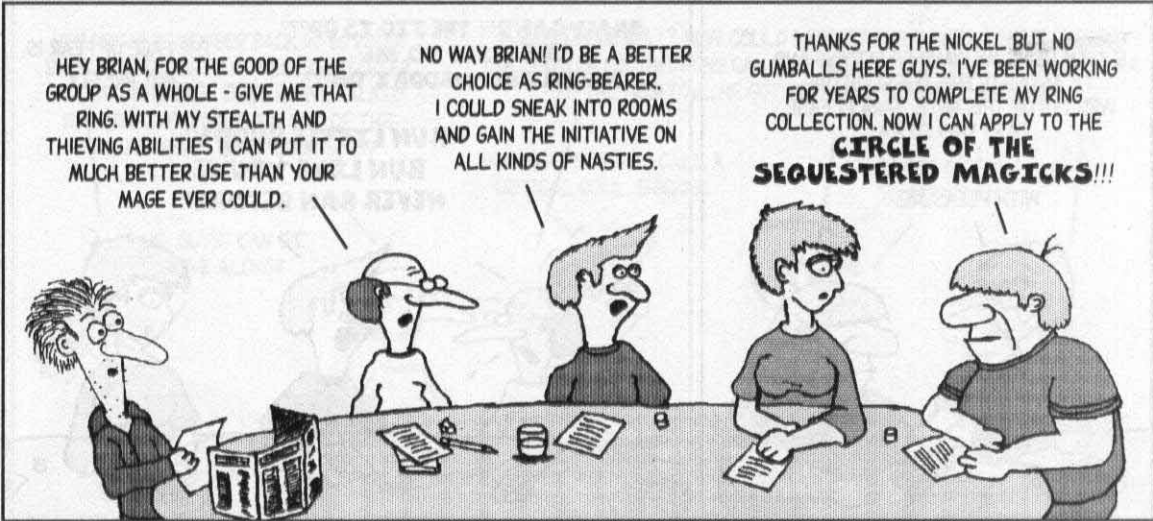
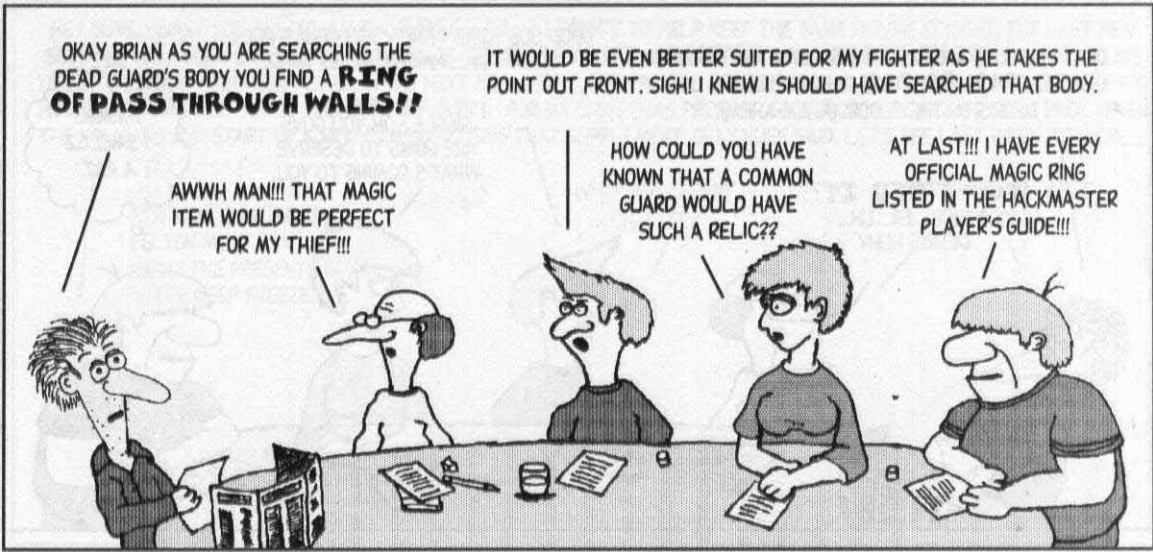
JUST KEEP THINKING OF THAT 12 POINT SCREAMER, SON.

24 HOURS HUH??
OKAY, I'LL GIVE IT MY BEST SHOT.

RUN EDMUND!!!
RUN LIKE THE WIND!!!

HMMRRRRFFF!!
OUR LITTLE 12 POINT WONDER-BOY!!





LATER THAT NIGHT...

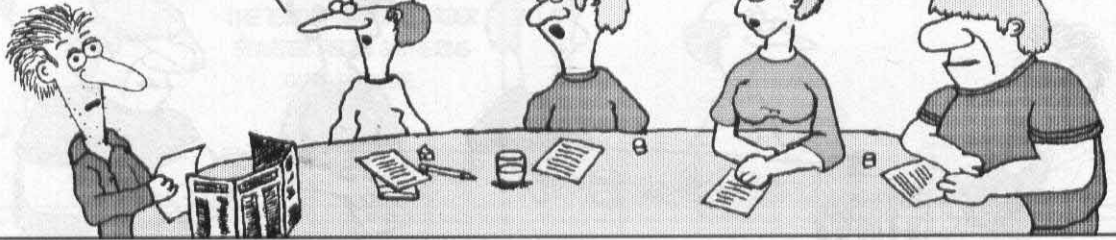
OKAY YOU GUYS ARE CONTINUING DOWN THE CORRIDOR AND UH.....**MY-OH-MY** THERE SURE IS A LOT OF DEBRIS ON THE FLOOR. (AHEM-AHEM).

GOOD JOB BOB!!!! I KNEW YOU COULD PULL IT OFF. UH.....I MEAN...NEVER MIND.

YEAH?? **I DID IT??**
I MEAN...ER...UH...
DEBRIS HUH?

GIGGLE - OH YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO DESERVE WHAT'S COMING TO YOU.

HMMM...
I SMELLZ
A RAT.



B.A. I'M USING MY WAND-OF-SCRYING AND I'M ASKING IT THIS QUESTION I'VE WRITTEN ON THIS NOTE. SARA PLEASE PASS THIS TO B.A.

WITH PLEASURE.

OH MY GAWD!!! THE JIG IS UP???
HE'S WISE TO ME!
WADDA I DO? WADDA I DO???

THE FACE OF FEAR IS
NOT PRETTY.

RUN LITTLE BUDDY!!!
RUN LIKE YOU'VE
NEVER RAN BEFORE!!!



THREE WEEKS LATER...

OKAY THIS LITTLE FELUD HAS LASTED LONG ENOUGH GUYS. I'M GLAD YOU'VE FINALLY AGREED TO BURY THE HATCHET. BOB, I BELIEVE YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO BRIAN?

UH YEAH. I'M REALLY SORRY I STOLE YOUR RING. I REALLY WISH I HADN'T DONE IT. AND I WISH MY ACCOMPLICE, DAVE, WOULD HAVE HAD THE GUTS TO CONFESS TO HIS PART IN IT.

BRIAN, YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO BOB?

I'M SORRY I STOOD YOU ON YOUR HEAD AND USED YOU LIKE A POGO-STICK. AND I'M SORRY I MADE YOU SWALLOW ALL THOSE **FOUR SIDERS**. OH AND I'M SORRY I THREW YOUR MOPED OFF THE HIGHWAY OVERPASS. LET'S JUST CALL IT EVEN OKAY?

DIRTY SWITCH!!



HEY GUYS, I WANT YOU ALL TO MAKE A **SPECIAL EFFORT** TO HELP KEEP THE GAME MOVING TONIGHT. THE LAST FEW SESSIONS HAVE BEEN EATEN UP WITH A LOT OF **IRRELEVANT CHATTER** AND **SMALL TALK**. I'D REALLY LIKE TO GET THIS CAMPAIGN WRAPPED UP IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. I GOT A REAL GOOD HUNCH MY MOM KICKED IN THE 47 BUCKS FOR **HACKMASTER: BAR ROOM BRAWL** FOR MY CHRISTMAS PRESENT. SO IT WOULD BE NICE TO COME BACK AFTER THE HOLIDAYS AND START UP A NEW CAMPAIGN USING THAT SUPPLEMENT. OKAY NUFF SAID. LET'S SEE LAST WEEK WE WERE.....

A 'HUNCH' HUH? MOMMA FELTON MUST STILL BE HIDING THE PRESENTS IN THE DEEP FREEZE.

WHAT IRRELEVANT CHATTER?

WE'RE HERE TO GAME!! NO PROBLEM.



HEY BRIAN! REMEMBER BACK IN '86 WHEN B.A.'S MOM BOUGHT THE DELUXE STARTER SET OF **MOOD DICE**? WE TALKED B.A. INTO SNEAKING THEM OUT OF THE FREEZER FOR A QUICK-LOOK-SEE??

REMEMBER?? HOW COULD I FORGET? WHO WOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT FROZEN POLYHEDRONS CAN SHATTER LIKE GLASS?? I HAD TO RACE B.A. TO THE HOSPITAL. HE GOT PEPPERED WITH DICE-SHRAPNEL.

UH...GUYS? CAN WE MOVE ALONG?

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A CRITICAL ROLL. SNICKER.

MOOD DICE?? YOU'RE KIDDING.



COME ON GUYS. THIS IS HOW IT GETS STARTED. SOMEONE SAYS SOMETHING LIKE, "SO-AND-SO OWES ME SUCH-AND-SUCH" AND A WHOLE SIDE CONVERSATION ERUPTS THAT LASTS FOR FIVE OR TEN MINUTES. SAVE THE CHATTER FOR AFTER THE GAME. OKAY??

HEY BOB, THAT REMINDS ME. YOU OWE ME TEN BUCKS. I NEED IT. MY PACER IS RUNNING ON FLAMES.

GEE I HATE MENTIONING IT BUT YOU ALL OWE ME TWO BUCKS FOR THAT PIZZA LAST WEEK.

TALK ABOUT JOGGING THE OLD BEAN. DAVE YOU OWE ME SEVEN BUCKS FOR THOSE BLACK-BORDERED SPELL-JACKED CARDS.

HUH? OH...UH...ER...I'M BROKE DUDE.



WELL AS LONG AS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT DEBTS, YOU'RE ALL BEHIND IN DUES. BOB YOU OWE **FOUR BUCKS**. DAVE YOU OWE **A BUCK**. BRIAN OWES **FIFTY CENTS** AND UH SARA, YOU OWE **FIVE BUCKS**.



NOW...**WHERE** WAS I?



YOU'RE GONNA **RUN** ME DOWN FOR OWING A **DAMN FIFTY-CENTS?** **SOME NERVE!!!**



ESPECIALLY AFTER I ALMOST **TREW** A **ROD** IN MY VAN RACING YOU TO THE HOSPITAL.

YEAH, I GOTTA SAY IT'S PRETTY **PETTY** OF YOU TO RUB A PUNY DEBT IN OUR FACES. I THOUGHT I WAS GAMING WITH FRIENDS HERE.

DAVE, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT UP DEBTS.

GRUMBLE...ERRR... I DIDN'T EVEN GET A PROPER THANK-YOU, A CARD, A COLD SODA - ZIP!!! **FIFTY FREAKING CENTS!!!** HMMRRFFF!

CAN WE JUST DROP IT? NOW WHERE WERE WE?

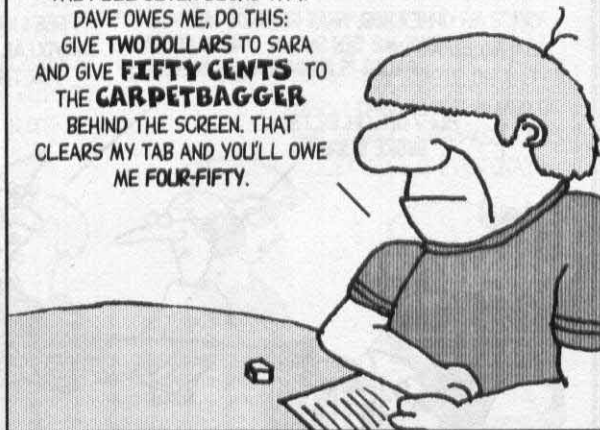
YEAH, I CAME TO GAME.



I'LL CLEAR **MY DEBT** RIGHT NOW. BOB JUST PAY BRIAN **SEVEN BUCKS** OF WHAT YOU OWE ME. GIVE **TWO BUCKS** TO SARA AND THROW THE REMAINING **DOLLAR** AT B.A. FOR MY DUES. THEN I'LL BE FREE AND CLEAR.



BOB, INSTEAD OF PAYING ME THE FULL **SEVEN BUCKS** THAT DAVE OWES ME, DO THIS: GIVE **TWO DOLLARS** TO SARA AND GIVE **FIFTY CENTS** TO THE **CARPETBAGGER** BEHIND THE SCREEN. THAT CLEARS MY TAB AND YOU'LL OWE ME **FOUR-FIFTY**.



WELL, I'LL FOLLOW SUIT. **BOB**, JUST GIVE **DAVE'S TWO BUCKS** AND **BRIAN'S TWO BUCKS** TO **B.A.** THEN GIVE ME **ONE DOLLAR** OF THE TWO YOU OWE ME TO **B.A.** THEN YOU'LL ONLY OWE ME **A BUCK** AND I'LL HAVE MY DUES ALL PAID UP.

DAMMIT!!! THIS AIN'T FAIR. I'M PAYING OFF **EVERYONE'S DEBTS**. EVERYONE COMES OUT IN THE CLEAR BUT **ME!!!**

CHILL OUT DUDE!

HEY, I THOUGHT WE CAME HERE TO **GAME?** LET **BOB** SETTLE HIS DEBTS AFTER THE **GAME**.

UH...WHERE WAS I?



I'VE BEEN **SABOTAGED!!!** NOW IF I DON'T PAY BACK THAT **TEN BUCKS** I GOT **EVERYONE** HOUNDING ME INSTEAD OF JUST **DAVE**. IT'S NOT FAIR.

NOT FAIR??? YOU WANNA TALK UNFAIR?? LET'S TALK ABOUT THAT LITTLE STUNT YOU GUYS PULLED LAST WEEK WHEN YOU VOTED TO GIVE ME **HALF SHARES** ON **EXPERIENCE POINTS!!!** JUST BECAUSE ONE OF MY **FIREBALLS** BACK-BLASTED. YOU'RE GONNA SEE SOME **PAY-BACK** TONIGHT.

OKAY, BACK TO THE **GAME** FOLKS.

SO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING IS...YOU WEREN'T PLANNING ON PAYING ME BACK??

GUYS...THE **GAME**.



OOOOHHHH, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WENT THERE **BRIAN**. ANY **IDIOT** KNOWS YOU DON'T **LOB FIREBALLS**

DOWN A TWENTY FOOT STRETCH OF PASSAGE WAY WHEN YOU'RE

STANDING IN IT!!

YEAH LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME **PAY BACK** IN THE **GAME**. HOW ABOUT FORKING OVER THE **10,000 GOLD PIECES** TO REPLACE MY **CLOAK OF STALKING** YOU TOASTED?



YEAH AND I THINK YOU SHOULD PLACE SOME **FRESH-CUT FLOWERS** ON THE GRAVE OF MY **FIGHTER, ROUGTUNDA!!** IF I WOULD'VE MADE MY **POLTERGEIST-ROLL** I WOULD HAVE HAUNTED YOUR **STUPID MAGE** TIL THE END OF TIME.

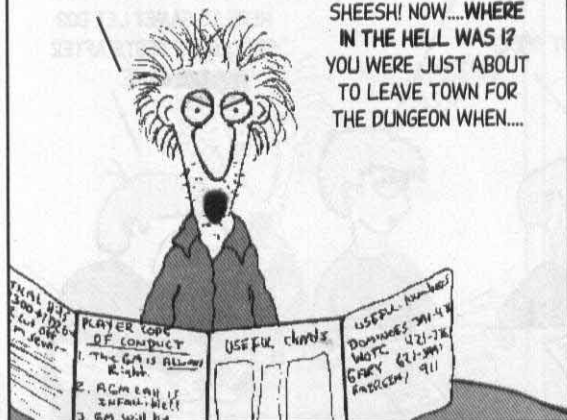
IT WAS A MAJOR BLUNDER, **BRIAN**. I WOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT IT UP.

BUT YOU WERE ALL IN THE **LINE OF FIRE!!**



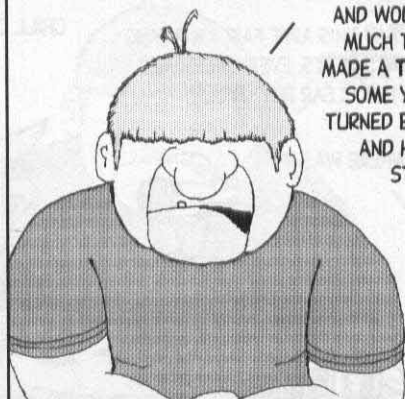
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!!! THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT!!! CAN WE **PLEASE, PLEASE** GET ON WITH THE GAME??? HUH???

SHEESH! NOW...WHERE IN THE HELL WAS I? YOU WERE JUST ABOUT TO LEAVE TOWN FOR THE DUNGEON WHEN...



WHOOOOOAAAAAAAAHHHHH!!! HOLD ON THERE, HACKMIESTER I NEED TO BUY SOME SUPPLIES. AND I WANT TO TAKE ANOTHER CRACK AT IDENTIFYING THOSE **STRANGE DAGGERS** I FOUND LAST WEEK.

AND WOULD IT BE TOO MUCH TO ASK IF WE MADE A **TACO RUN**? I ATE SOME YOGURT THAT TURNED BAD FOR LUNCH AND HURLED. I'M STARVED.



HEY BEAN-HEAD, DON'T FORGET THAT I WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND THOSE DAGGERS. IF THEY'RE MAGICAL I WANT THEM BACK. AND THAT LAME HEALING POTION YOU SOLD ME DIDN'T DO ANYTHING BUT MAKE ME SPEAK **GNOME-GIBBERISH** FOR TWENTY MINUTES.

HEY IF YOU'RE MAKING A **TACO RUN** COULD WE RUN BY **FREDDIE'S CHARRED BURGERS AND WINGS???** I GOT A CRAVING FOR A DOUBLE-THICK PEANUT BUTTER-CRANBERRY SHAKE.

UH, COULD WE JUST MOVE ALONG GUYS? SIGH.

BRIAN? YOU WERE HOLDING THAT **GNOME-GIBBERISH** POTION FOR ME. I GAVE IT TO YOU WHILE I CLIMBED UP THAT SHAFT.

HEY, I HAVE CON-ARTIST AS A SECONDARY SKILL

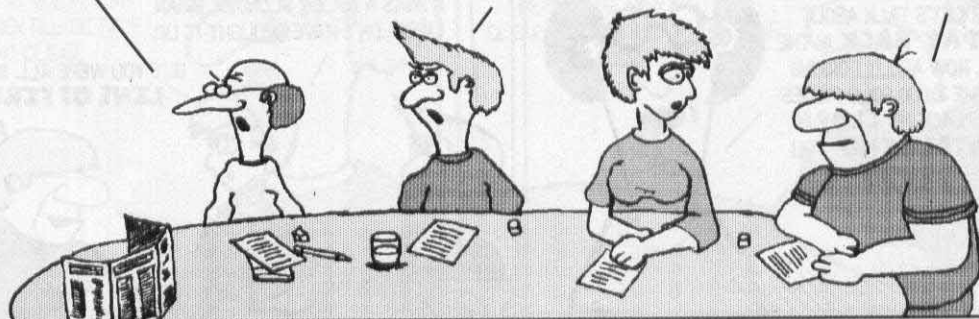


HEY B.A. MY CHARACTER WANTS TO....????
NOW WHERE THE HELL DID HE GO???

OH MY! I HAVEN'T SEEN B.A. LOOK SO MAD SINCE THE TIME YOU AND DAVE SHAVED HIS CAT.

WHAT A JERK! I DROVE ALL THE WAY OVER HERE ON EMPTY TO GAME AND WHAT DOES HE DO? BAIL ON US. **THIS BLOWS.**

NOT LIKE HIM TO LEAVE IN THE MIDDLE OF A GAME. WONDER WHAT'S BUGGING HIM?



OKAY, THE BLACK DRAGON CRASHES IN A BLOODY HEAP. HIS GREAT LEATHERY WINGS TWITCH FOR SEVERAL SECONDS AS HE DIES IN AGONY.

WOW, I'M KINDA SORRY TO SEE THE OL' BOY GO. HE WAS THE MOST WORTHY ADVERSARY I'VE EVER RAN ACROSS. DID YOU SEE HOW HE TOOK BLOW AFTER BLOW FROM MY HACKMASTER +12??

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!! **ROTGUT THE WYRM** IS FINALLY DEAD. I MUST'VE SUNK THIRTY BOLTS OF SLAYING INTO THE BASTARD.

I THOUGHT MY PARLEY WITH HIM WAS GOING WELL UNTIL YOU LOBBED THOSE **FLAMING FLASKS OF OIL** AT HIM.

COME ON B.A. START READING THAT DRAGON'S HORDE LIST.



WELL **OL' ROTGUT** HAD BEEN HOUNDED SO MUCH OVER THE YEARS SINCE HE BURNED AQUATANIA TO THE GROUND THAT HE WAS CONSTANTLY RELOCATING HIS LAIR. SO HIS HORDE ISN'T EXACTLY AS HUGE OR VARIED AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT. STILL, IT'S QUITE A PRIZE. **ONE MILLION GOLD PIECES!!!!** HE KEPT HIS HORDE IN A **PORTABLE HOLE**

A **PORTABLE HOLE**???. HOW CONVENIENT. WE'LL JUST GRAB IT AND HEAD BACK TO TOWN.

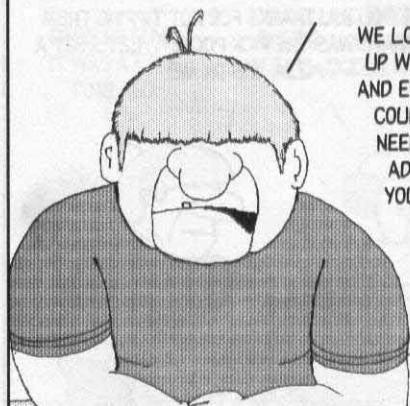
A MILL...A MILLION...WOW!!! I WANT TO SWIM IN IT.

GUYS. THIS IS A LOT OF MONEY. LET'S SPEND IT WISELY.



LISTEN UP GANG!!! I'VE BEEN WAITING A LONG TIME TO GET MY HANDS ON A PORTABLE HOLE. WITH A LITTLE PLANNING AND FORETHOUGHT WE COULD BE SET FOR LIFE.

WE LOAD THIS HOLE UP WITH ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING WE COULD POSSIBLY NEED IN FUTURE ADVENTURES. YOU WITH ME?



GREAT IDEA BIG GUY. LET'S MAKE A LIST.

OKAY WE HAVE ONE MILLION GOLD PIECES TO SPEND AND THE HOLE HAS 282 CUBIC FEET OF SPACE TO FILL.

WOW. IT'S LIKE HAVING A WAREHOUSE IN YOUR POCKET.



LATER THE GROUP ARRIVES BACK IN TOWN.

OKAY I'M BUYING A 3 MONTHS SUPPLY OF IRON RATIONS FOR EACH OF US. 50 SKINS OF THE FINEST WINE. 7 MILES OF STRONG ROPE.....

I'M PICKING UP 100 TORCHES, 200 FLASKS OF OIL, 10 HOODED LANTERNS, 10 BULLSEYE LANTERNS, 1,500 CANDLES...

TWO ROW BOATS, 8 OARS, 4 TENTS, 20 WINTER BLANKETS, A 60 FOOT EXTENSION LADDER....

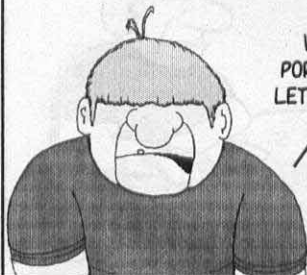
1,000 CROSSBOW BOLTS, 2,000 ARROWS, 6 OF EVERY WEAPON IN THE PLAYER'S HANDBOOK. NO, MAKE THAT 60 DAGGERS. I CAN THROW FOUR PER ROUND WHEN I'M HASTED.



AN HOUR LATER...

WE'LL WRAP ALL THE SHARP STUFF IN BLANKETS SO THEY DON'T CUT THE HOLE. WE'LL THROW IN 100 10 FOOT WOODEN PLANKS, A SACK OF NAILS, SAW, HAMMER AND A MANUAL ON CONSTRUCTING SMALL FORTRESSES AND DEFENSE WORKS. HELL, I'M PUTTING MY ENTIRE LIBRARY OF SPELL MANUALS IN THE HOLE AS WELL.

WHEW!!! THERE. THE PORTABLE HOLE IS FULL. LET'S GO TO THE DUNGEON.



LATER IN THE DUNGEON...

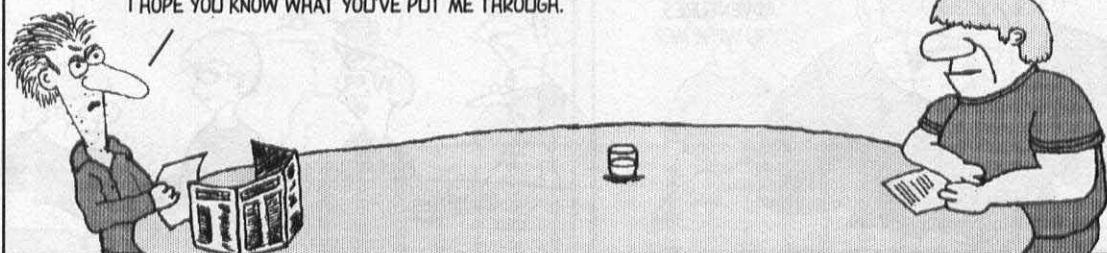
UH GEE GUYS, AS YOU GO TO RETRIEVE THE PORTABLE HOLE FROM DAVE'S BACKPACK YOU CAN'T SEEM TO FIND IT. REMEMBER THAT BEGGAR WHO BUMPED INTO YOU AT THE CITY GATE??? IT WOULD APPEAR YOU'VE BEEN THE VICTIM OF A **PICK-POCKET**. (SNICKER)



MOMENTS LATER...

BOY AM I STEAMED. BOB COULD HAVE PUT MY EYE OUT WHEN HE HURLED THAT TWENTY-SIDER AT ME. DID YOU SEE THE DENT IT PUT IN THE WALL?? AND SARA...MY OWN COUSIN. SHE ACTUALLY HELD ME DOWN WHILE DAVE GAVE ME AN ATOMIC WEDGIE. I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE PUT ME THROUGH.

I OWE YOU B.A. THANKS FOR NOT TIPPING THEM OFF THAT I WAS THE PICK-POCKET. LET'S GET A PIZZA. IT'S ON ME.



* NOTE: Four weeks later the group 'got wise' to Brian's treachery. Brian's character, Teflon Billy, was placed in the portable hole with fifty trolls, a dragon, four rabid bears and a near-sighted Frost Giant. The hole was then buried in a fifty foot shaft.

Detour Down Memory Lane

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

WOW, I WAS SORTING THROUGH MY OLD ADVENTURE NOTES LAST NIGHT AND I CAME ACROSS ALL MY PAPERS ON THE **HALLS OF THE MOUNTAIN MAGE!**

(SIGH) I REMEMBER THAT ADVENTURE WELL. THAT'S THE ADVENTURE MY CHARACTER, **SHADOW-PETE**, FOUND HIS **CROSSBOW OF DOOM**.

WRONGO! BOB, YOU SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS MY CHARACTER, **WARJICK THE STRONG** WHO TOOK THAT CROSSBOW AWAY FROM A STONE GOLEM AFTER A HORRENDOUS **DEATH-DUEL**. I GAVE YOU THAT CROSSBOW AS A GIFT.

WHAA??? HEY, IT WAS MY **FREEZE SPELL** THAT IMMOBILIZED THAT GOLEM WHILE YOU HACKED AT HIM DAVE.



NO WAY! **SHADOW-PETE** USED HIS STEALTH AND CUNNING TO STEAL THAT CROSS-BOW BEFORE YOU EVEN ENGAGED HIM. THAT'S THE ONLY REASON HE WAS DEFENSELESS. SHEESH! I SAVE YOUR BUTT AND YOU DON'T EVEN REMEMBER.

FREEZE SPELL! SNEEZE SPELL! YOU'RE WHACKED. YOUR CHARACTER, **TEFLON-BILLY** WAS HIDING BEHIND THE TORCH-BEARER SIPPING ON A VIAL OF HEALING POTION. **WARJICK THE STRONG** WAS FORCED TO SAVE THE PARTY SINGLE-HANDED.

HIDING??? YOU JERK! I HAD TO BE UNDER THE TORCH-LIGHT IN ORDER TO READ THE SPELL FROM A SCROLL!



YOU BALD-HEADED FART! **SHADOW-PETE** WAS FAMOUS FOR **HIDING-IN-SHADOWS** UNTIL THE FIGHTING WAS OVER. ONCE THE DANGER WAS OVER THE LITTLE COWARD WOULD MOVE IN TO POCKET ANY GOODIES TO BE FOUND. LIKE A HYENA FEEDING ON THE SCRAPS LEFT BEHIND BY THE LION. HAAA!

COME ON GUYS! IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO!

YOU CALLING **SHADOW-PETE** A COWARD?? HUH **NUMB-DICE**??? ARE YA??

B.A. IS RIGHT. IT'S ALL ANCIENT HISTORY.

SHADOW-PETE WAS FAR WORSE THAN A COWARD. HE WAS A TRAITOR. HE STOLE MY WAND OF BOLTS THAT ONE TIME.



TRAITOR??? YOU'RE CALLING **SHADOW-PETE** A **TRAITOR??** HE ONLY STOLE THAT WAND SO THAT HE COULD USE IT FOR THE GOOD OF THE PARTY.

TEFLON BILLY WAS GONNA SELL IT AND KEEP THE GOLD FOR HIMSELF!! NOW THERE'S A **TRAITOR!!**



YOU'RE ABOUT THREE SECONDS ON THIS SIDE OF A **BUTT-WHUPPIN' CUEBALL!!** NOBODY CALLS **TEFLON BILLY** A TRAITOR AND GETS AWAY WITH IT. YOU'D BETTER COMMENCE SOME SERIOUS **BEGGING!**

OH YEAH? WELL YOU'LL GROW A BEARD BEFORE YOU HEAR **SHADOW-PETE** BEG!

BRIAN, CALM DOWN. YOUR FACE IS TURNING THAT CERTAIN SHADE OF RED AGAIN.

YOU'D NEVER TALK TO WARJICK THE STRONG THAT WAY!



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD GUYS! WE RAN THIS ADVENTURE SIX YEARS AGO. IT BREAKS MY HEART TO THINK THAT THE ONLY MEMORIES YOU'VE TAKEN AWAY FROM THAT SESSION ARE **PETTY ARGUMENTS AND BRUISED EGOS.** WHY IN THE HELL DO YOU BOTHER GAMING AT ALL? I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A PATHETIC, BITTER GROUP OF GAMERS. **DAMN!**

IT'S KINDA SCARY HOW YOU GUYS CAN FALL BACK INTO PROTECTIVE MODE OVER CHARACTERS YOU HAVEN'T PLAYED FOR YEARS.

I'M NOT BITTER. THESE CLOWNS JUST HAVE SELECTIVE MEMORY, THAT'S ALL.

SLAYING THAT GOLEM WAS A PROUD MOMENT. NO ONE IS TAKING THAT AWAY FROM ME.

HEY I STILL PLAY **TEFLON BILLY!** THAT DUDE IS A SURVIVOR!!



THE REALLY SAD THING ABOUT THIS ARGUMENT IS THAT IT WASN'T A **STONE GOLEM** AT ALL. THEY SPENT THREE HOURS PLOTTING THEIR ATTACK ON AN ORDINARY **LAWN JOCKEY** AND THEN BASHING IT TO BITS. JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH. (SIGH)

YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW HARD IT IS TO SNEAK UP ON A GOLEM?? IT'S REALLY TOUGH!!! THOSE GUYS HAVE EARS LIKE MARMOSETS!

YOU CALL **TEFLON BILLY** A SURVIVOR?? HA!! TRY TAKING A VOLLEY OF BONE-SHATTERING BLOWS FROM A **STONE GOLEM** BUDDY! I DID, AND I'M STILL HERE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

VOLLEY OF BLOWS??? YOU JUST DON'T GET IT DO YOU? HE WAS IMMOBILIZED I TELL YOU! MY FREEZE SPELL SAVED THE DAY.





KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #5
"Master of the Game"
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"Master of the Game"

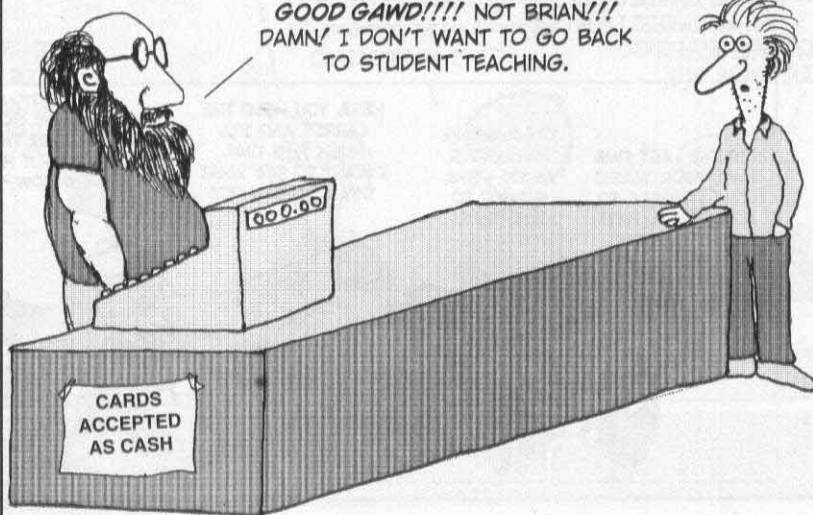
By Jolly R. Blackburn

Cover by Chris Adams

*ROLE-PLAYING DEAD?? HAR HAR!! WHY B.A. I'M SURPRISED AT YOU.
WHAT IN THE HELL WOULD PUSH YOU OVER THE PROVERBIAL EDGE.
THE DOOM-SAYERS HAVE BEEN PREDICTING THE DEATH OF RPG'S
FOR YEARS. PERSONALLY, I THINK THOSE JERKS AT
WAR-ROOM GAMES ARE BEHIND IT.*

*WELL... BRIAN HAS MISSED TWO
CONSECUTIVE GAMING SESSIONS.*

*GOOD GAWD!!!! NOT BRIAN!!!
DAMN! I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK
TO STUDENT TEACHING.*



Editorial of a Madman

Greetings! This issue of *Knights of the Dinner Table* comic (KODT) marks a turning point in our usual format. We've decided to expand the offering over the next few months and attempt to bring more 'fun stuff' to our readers.

Don't worry - we'll be going slow and easy from month to month so we can gauge feedback from our fans and ensure we're on the right track. We want the KODT comic to be a publication that reminds us all why we play games: because they're fun, entertaining and bring friends closer together. So, in addition to the KODT strips, we will be bringing gamer-related humor where ever it can be found. We'll also be pointing readers toward any fun and exciting beer-and-pretzel games or products we have stumbled across.

I invite you to help us in our quest for such material. If you're surf'in' the net, hanging out at your favorite game shop or simply playing your favorite RPG and you come across something you think other gamers would find amusing or funny - send it our way!!

Some of you may have noticed a strange new logo gracing the cover of issue #4 as well as the issue you hold in your hand. Recently, I sold my mind, body and soul to a strange group of gaming-fanatics in Illinois known collectively as **Kenzer and Company**.

I'm simply going to run the press-release that announced the union since it has all the details:

Jolly R. Blackburn Joins the Ranks of Kenzer & Company

(and There Was Much Rejoicing)

Palatine, IL - December 9, 1996

Kenzer & Company is proud to announce that Jolly R. Blackburn has survived the brutal initiation rituals imposed on him by the Chicago-based company. The initiation was the last step in **KenzerCo's** stringent screening process. By surviving, Jolly has been officially indoctrinated and may now sit with the other shareholders at the table.

Dehydrated and fatigued, Jolly wept with joy when the news arrived that he was now an official member of the **KenzerCo** team. There was some speculation that Jolly would be disqualified when it was discovered he had accepted medical treatment during his trial by ordeal. "A Yak-Hunter stumbled across me," explained Jolly. "He offered to sew up my wolf bite wounds and I accepted his help. I didn't realize such aid was prohibited during the ordeal."

"A majority of the shareholders overlooked the transgression because Jolly later ripped his stitches open after tumbling down a wall of glacier ice while fleeing a Kodiak Grizzly Bear," said David S. Kenzer, Chairman of the Board of **Kenzer & Company**.

Jolly R. Blackburn is perhaps best known as the creator of **Knights of the Dinner Table** comics, the comic books that spoofs role-players. His comic strip of the same name currently runs regularly in **Dragon**. Jolly is also the founder of **AEG (Aldeneac Entertainment Group)** and **Shadis Magazine**. He was the editor of **Shadis** for six years and nurtured the magazine from its lowly first print run of 50 issues to an award-winning publication.

"I'm very excited about this union!" said Jolly as generous amounts of Peruvian Llama Cheese were applied to the rope burns on his wrists and ankles. "The **KenzerCo** team has always impressed me with their 'go get 'em' attitude and with the quality of their products. They also make a real mean Lemon-Spritzer."

Jolly comes into **Kenzer & Company** as Vice President in charge of the **Kingdoms of Kalamar** role-playing products. Jolly replaces the last V.P., James Martin, who mysteriously disappeared while shopping for a gazebo with his wife. "Partnering with a well-respected industry leader and experienced editor like Jolly demonstrates **Kenzer & Company's** commitment to support and expand the **Kingdoms of Kalamar** line of role-playing supplements in 1997," explains Brian Jelke, Vice President.

Kenzer & Company also plans to release a new **Knights of the Dinner Table** comic book every month in 1997. Issue number 4 is set for release in January. Additionally, KODT collateral products, as well as new **Monty Python** products are expected throughout 1997.

Well, that should update you on what's been happening around here and where we are heading. Before I close, I'd like to encourage you to send us a letter, or e-mail, and let us know what you think of each issue. We'd also like to know what you'd like to see in future issues.

Enjoy the issue and until next time, Happy Gaming!!

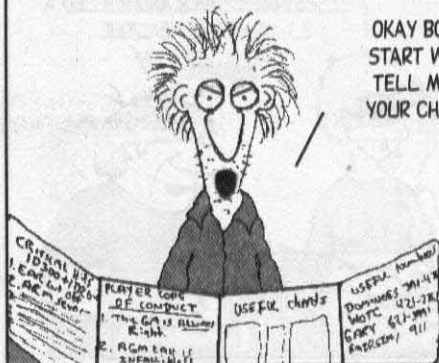
Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn
February 15, 1997



HEY GUYS! AS WE AGREED LAST WEEK, WE'RE GOING TO PLAY **SPACEHACK** FOR AWHILE. AFTER YOU BADGERED AND BULLIED ME, I FINALLY AGREED THAT YOU COULD ROLL UP YOUR OWN CHARACTERS AT HOME. BUT IF YOU GOT CARRIED AWAY I'M NOT GOING TO ALLOW YOUR CHARACTERS AND YOU'LL HAVE TO CREATE NEW ONES.

OKAY BOB, LET'S START WITH YOU. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER.



OH, WELL, HE'S WAY KEWL. HE HAS EXCEPTIONAL STRENGTH, UNGAWDLY WISDOM, AND **CYBERNETICALLY ENHANCED STEALTH CAPABILITIES**. HE'S 24 YEARS OLD, HE'S A **GRADUATE OF SPACE LEAGUE ACADEMY**. HE WAS AWARDED THE **IMPERIAL STAR-LEGION MEDAL OF BRAVERY**. HE OWNS TWO SMALL MOONS IN THE SYSTEM OF KALABRA. HIS DAD IS SOME RICH DUDE WHO LEFT ALL HIS MONEY TO MY CHARACTER. OH...AND I HAVE A DOG NAMED **KILL JOY**.

HE'S FULLY **CYBERNETICALLY-ENHANCED INCLUDING LASER-GUIDED NEVER-STOP PERSONAL COMBAT MISSILES**. OH, I ALMOST FORGOT, HIS NAME IS **MAJOR MAT MURDY**.

KEWL HUH?

WOW!



BOY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY BOB. YOU MUST HAVE ROLLED PRETTY GOOD NUMBERS ON THE **PRE-EXPERIENCE TABLES**. ONE SMALL PROBLEM. YOU SAY YOU'RE ONLY 24. **STAR LEAGUE ACADEMY IS A 12 YEAR SCHOOL**.

I WAS LUCKY. I ROLLED A NATURAL 100 ON MY **GENE POOL ROLL**. I WAS A **CHILD PRODIGY**. ENTERED THE ACADEMY AT THE AGE OF 12. GOT A MEDAL FOR THAT SOMEWHERE ON MY CHARACTER SHEET.

WAY TO GO BOB!! THAT CHARACTER RULES!!

GEESH! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW SOME OF THOSE THINGS WERE IN THE TABLES.



WELL, YOU'RE NEXT DAVE.

I'M PLAYING **STERLING LURGE**. HE WAS A **STAR-RANGER**, TWICE DECORATED UNTIL HE WAS ZAPPED BY A **MORDELIAN BLASTER**. HIS BRAIN WAS SALVAGED AND A TEAM OF **IMPERIAL SURGEONS** PLACED IT IN A FULL **CYBORG-MILITARY COMMANDO ARMORED BODY**. CHECK IT OUT DUDE - I'M **STAINLESS STEEL**.

OH WOW!! YOU GOT THE CYBORG BODY?? GAWD I WANTED THAT SO BAD.

IMPRESSIVE CHARACTER DAVE.

HA! JUST WAIT TIL YOU HAVE TO REPLACE ONE OF THOSE SERIES 920X POWER CELLS IN THAT ARMOR DUDE!



THREE INTELLIGENCE????

BRIAN ARE YOU INSANE?
WITH SUCH A LOW INTELLIGENCE
HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO FUNCTION IN
A STAR-FARING SOCIETY? IN FACT,
YOU HAVE TO HAVE AT LEAST A 9
INTELLIGENCE TO EVEN POSSESS
MOST OF THOSE SKILLS
YOU MENTIONED.

HEY, I'LL MAKE HIM MY
CABIN BOY.
MAYBE I CAN TEACH
HIM TO POLISH MY
GRAVITY-BOOTS.

**HA HA!! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?
MR. RULES-LAWYER
GOOFED UP. HE'S SCREWED.**

BRIAN? IT'S NOT LIKE YOU
TO MAKE SUCH A MAJOR BLUNDER.



**AND WHAT ABOUT
YOUR STRENGTH
AND DEXTERITY??**

YOU SACRIFICED A LOT OF
POINTS ON THOSE
ATTRIBUTES AS WELL!!
YOU GOT **GREEDY!!!**
I EXPECT THAT FROM BOB AND
DAVE BUT **YOU!!**



BRIAN!! DUDE!!
YOU'RE THE **MASTER OF
THE GAME!!!** YOU'RE
LOSING IT MAN!

I FEEL EMPTY INSIDE. THE
BIG GUY HAS LOST HIS EDGE.
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE
THE DAY!!

BRIAN WAS ALWAYS THE GUY
WHO COULD FIND A LOOP-HOLE
IN THE RULES. EXPLOIT A
MISTAKE TO THE FULLEST.

WELL GUYS, THIS IS
SPACE HACK!! IT'S NOT
OUR NORMAL GAME.
BRIAN JUST DIDN'T
HAVE TIME TO MASTER
THE RULES YET.



GEE GUYS, HAVE A **LITTLE FAITH** IN ME HUH??
IT'S ME, BRIAN, HERE!! SHEESH!!!!

**I'M THE KING OF
RULE-LOOPHOLES.**

**THE PRINCE OF
SHODDY-RULE
EXPLOITATION.**



I DID MENTION I TOOK A **CHARACTER FLAW!!** WELL
I JUST HAPPENED TO HAVE CHOSEN FLAW NUMBER 17 ON
PAGE 23 - **DRUG ADDICTION!** NOW THEN, APPENDIX C STATES
THAT A PLAYER MAY 'CHOOSE' THE CHEMICAL SUBSTANCE
HIS CHARACTER IS ADDICTED TO OFF OF TABLE 4A ON PAGE
23. I CHOSE ITEM NUMBER FIVE ON THAT LIST: **RYTHIAN-BLUE.**
IF YOU CHECK ISSUE 23 OF HACKMASTER MAGAZINE YOU'LL
FIND AN ARTICLE BY NORMAN BOWZER WHICH DETAILS THE
AFFECTS AND PROPERTIES OF RYTHIAN BLUE. OH, I MIGHT
ADD THAT GARY JACKSON HIMSELF APPROVED THIS ARTICLE
AS 'OFFICIAL' SPACEHACK MATERIAL. WELL, ACCORDING TO
MR. BOWZER'S ARTICLE, RYTHIAN BLUE RAISES INTELLIGENCE
PERMANENTLY BY 108 POINTS. I ROLLED A 7.

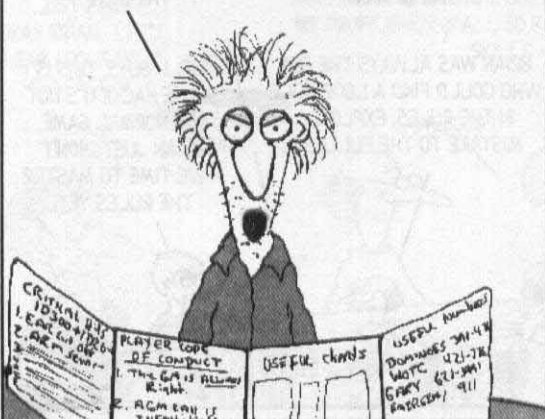


THAT GIVES ME A MODIFIED **INTELLIGENCE OF 10**. SO THAT SOLVES THE INTELLIGENCE ISSUE. NOW, AS FOR MY **STRENGTH AND DEXTERITY**... STAR LEAGUE ACADEMY GAVE ME A **MEDICAL DISCHARGE** BECAUSE OF MY LOW ATTRIBUTES. ACCORDING TO PAGE 29, 'ALL MEDICAL DISCHARGES FROM THE ACADEMY RECEIVE 50,000 CREDITS FOR SEPARATION PAY.' AWFULLY GENEROUS OF THEM. I USED MY SEP-PAY TO PURCHASE A TOP OF THE LINE **POWERED SUIT**. +5 TO **STRENGTH**, +5 TO **DEXTERITY**.

IN SHORT GENTLEMEN I SACRIFICED 27 TOTAL ATTRIBUTE POINTS, TOOK A MAJOR CHARACTER FLAW AND ENDED UP WITH A CHARACTER WITH ABOVE AVERAGE STATS, 64 MAJOR SKILLS MAXED OUT, A **POWERED ARMOR SUIT** AND SOME POCKET CHANGE. **IS THAT KEWL OR WHAT???**



WELL **LA-DE-DA!!** AND THANK YOU MR. BOWZER FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO SPACEHACK!! FINE! LET'S JUST GET ON WITH THE GAME. **SHALL WE???**



A LITTLE LATER...

OKAY, THE FUEL GAUGE ON YOUR SHIP HAS BEEN MALFUNCTIONING. APPARENTLY DAVE'S LASER-BLAST TO THE CONSOLE DID SOME DAMAGE AFTER-ALL! YOU BETTER LAND YOUR SHIP IMMEDIATELY OR YOU'RE IN DANGER OF BECOMING A DRIFTING HULK!!

SORRY GUYS! IF I COULD HAVE KILLED THAT BILGE-RAT WITH ONE SHOT INSTEAD OF THREE I WOULDN'T HAVE HIT THE CONSOLE.

DAMN!! I'LL LOOK FOR A PLACE TO SET DOWN!!

HEY WHAT ABOUT THAT PLANET WE JUST PASSED?

GOOD IDEA! I'LL SCAN IT!



OKAY, IT'S A WATER PLANET. THERE'S NO SPACEPORT LISTED ON THE CHARTS. THERE ARE ONLY STAGE 2 DEVELOPMENTS ON THE SURFACE. YOU'D BETTER LAND SOON THOUGH, YOU'RE **RUNNING ON FUMES**.

I'LL TAKE US INTO A LOW ORBIT - LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO LAND THIS BABY!!

EASY THERE BOB!! DON'T FORGET TO PUT THE LANDING GEAR DOWN THIS TIME.

STAGE 2!! CRUD!! THAT'S PRETTY LOW. WE MAY BE STUCK HERE FOR A WHILE GUYS.

HEY WAIT A MINUTE!! WHAT KIND OF DRIVE IS ON THIS SHIP??



LET'S SEE...UH IT'S A STANDARD STAR LEAGUE HYDROGEN DRIVE. WHY?

WELL DUH!!! NO PROBLEM GUYS. THAT DRIVE IS EQUIPPED WITH A **STANDARD R75 COLLECTION SKIMMER**. ALL WE GOTTA DO IS SKIM THE OCEAN SURFACE AND WE HAVE ALL THE HYDROGEN WE NEED. WE'RE BACK IN BUSINESS. **CRIPES!!** I WAS WORRIED THERE FOR A MOMENT.

YEAH!!! GO BRIAN GO!!! I LOVE YOU MAN.

DEFINITELY GONNA TELL MY KIDS ABOUT YOU SOMEDAY.

I'M GLAD YOU'RE ON OUR SIDE.

JUST DOING MY JOB AS SCIENCE OFFICER. THAT'S ALL.



HEY WAIT A MINUTE!!! YOU CAN'T DO THAT!!!

HYDROGEN IS A VERY RARE ELEMENT!! YOU CAN'T JUST SKIM IT OFF THE WATER LIKE CREAM OFF A CUP OF HOT CHOCOLATE!!

ARE YOU KIDDING?? DOES H_2O SOUND FAMILIAR?? THE 'H' STANDS FOR HYDROGEN, B.A. SLEEPING IN CHEMISTRY 101 WERE WE??

WHY THE HELL NOT??

HELLO!! SCIENCE TO B.A.!! COME IN!!

BE NICE.



THIRTY MINUTES LATER

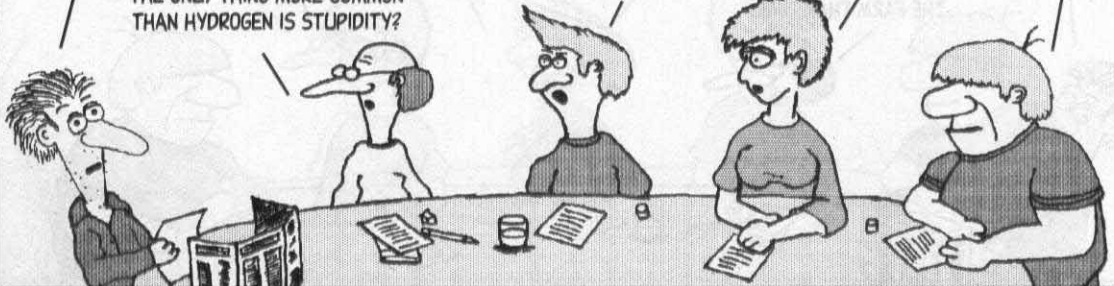
LOOK! JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE GANGING UP ON ME DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE RIGHT. HYDROGEN IS RARE, I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU TRICK ME JUST SO YOU CAN HAVE YOUR WAY.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE **PERIODIC TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS??** HUH? HYDROGEN IS AT THE TOP. IT'S THE MOST COMMON THING IN THE UNIVERSE. REALLY!! I'M NOT LYING TO YA.

EVER HEAR THE EXPRESSION THE ONLY THING MORE COMMON THAN HYDROGEN IS STUPIDITY?

COME ON B.A. WE'RE WASTING GAME TIME.

B.A. THEY'RE RIGHT. LET'S MOVE ON.



A WEBBIT LATER...

OKAY, THE PIRATE CAPTAIN AGREES TO BEAM OVER TO YOUR BRIDGE. HE SAYS THAT IN THE INTEREST OF PEACE HE WILL TRUST YOU TO KEEP YOUR WORD AND ALLOW HIM TO FREELY LEAVE IF THE TALKS DON'T GO WELL.



OKAY, YOU HEAR A STATIC-HUM AND THE PIRATE CAPTAIN BEGINS TO MATERIALIZE ON THE BRIDGE. YOU NOTICE THAT...

I BLAST HIM WITH MY PULSE-RIFLE!!!

WHILE BOB'S DOING THAT I'M LOCKING THE SHIP'S RAIL-GUNS ON THE PIRATE SHIP AND LETTIN' EM RIP!!!

I GUESS I SET UP THE CONFERENCE ROOM FOR NOTHING, HUH?



FOOLS!!! AS I WAS ABOUT TO SAY, AS THE **PIRATE CAPTAIN** BEGINS TO MATERIALIZE ON THE BRIDGE YOU SUDDENLY REALIZE THAT THE FORM TAKING SHAPE IS NOT A HUMAN AT ALL BUT A **TIRILLLEAN-NUCLEAR DEVICE**. YOU HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO SEE THE **COUNT-DOWN METER** CLICK FROM 3 TO 2 TO 1 BEFORE THE BOMB'S BLAST TURNS YOU AND YOUR SHIP INTO A BRILLIANT FLASH OF **THERMAL ENERGY**.

THAT DIRTY ROTTEN CHEAT!! I KNEW WE COULDN'T TRUST HIM.

HOW MUCH DAMAGE DID I TAKE?

HEY WAIT A SEC! NO WAY THAT COULD HAPPEN ON MY WATCH!



OH? AND WHY NOT?

WAY TO GO BRIAN!! MAN I THOUGHT WE BOUGHT THE FARM THAT TIME.

THAT WAS CLOSE.

GAWD, YOU'RE GOOD!



DAD BLAST IT!!! I HATE THIS STUPID GAME. TOO MANY VARIABLES. **FINE, FINE!!** THE PIRATES' ATTEMPT TO BEAM THE BOMB ONTO YOUR SHIP FAILS. A FEW MOMENTS LATER THEY KICK IN THEIR JUMP DRIVES AND LEAP OUT OF

DON'T YOU MEAN A FEW MOMENTS LATER THEY **BLOW UP!!!** THOSE GUYS ARE DEAD!

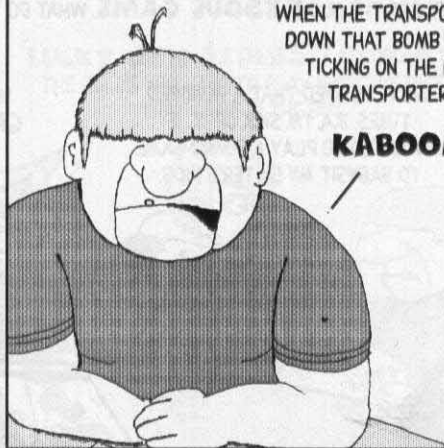
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT???



SORRY B.A.!! YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. THAT BOMB HAD THREE SECONDS LEFT ON THE COUNTER.

WHEN THE TRANSPORTER SHUT DOWN THAT BOMB WAS LEFT TICKING ON THE PIRATE'S TRANSPORTER PAD.

KABOOM!!



GOOD TRY!! FORGET THE STUPID BOMB. I MADE A MISTAKE. THE PIRATES WOULD HAVE KNOWN IT WOULDN'T HAVE WORKED SO IT NEVER HAPPENED. OKAY, SO THE PIRATE SHIP JUMPS OUT OF SYSTEM AND.....

NOWAY!!! YOU GOTTA LIVE BY YOUR CALLS THE SAME AS WE DO!

IF BRIAN HADN'T CAUGHT YOUR MISTAKE WE'D ALL BE DEAD RIGHT NOW. I SAY THOSE PIRATES ARE DEAD OR I GO HOME!

YOU'RE BEING UNFAIR B.A.

DON'T DISGRACE THE SCREEN, B.A.!! ADMIT TO YOUR MISTAKE.

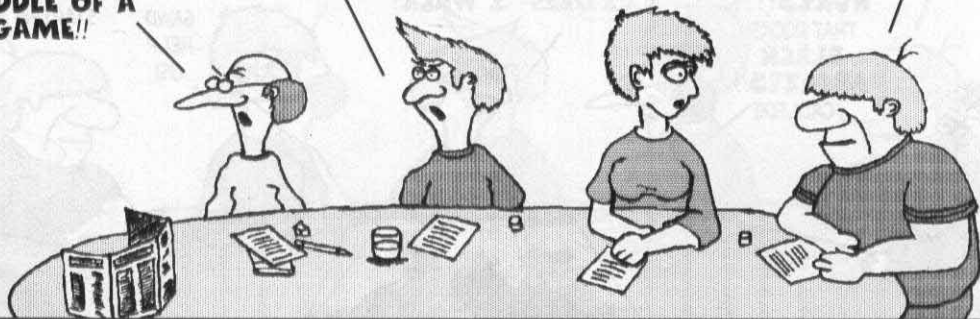


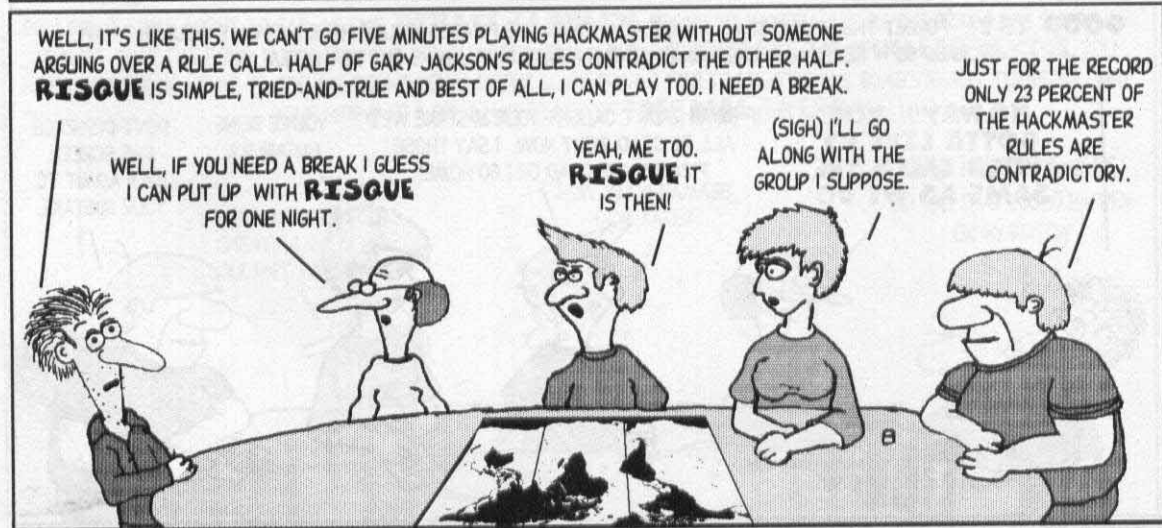
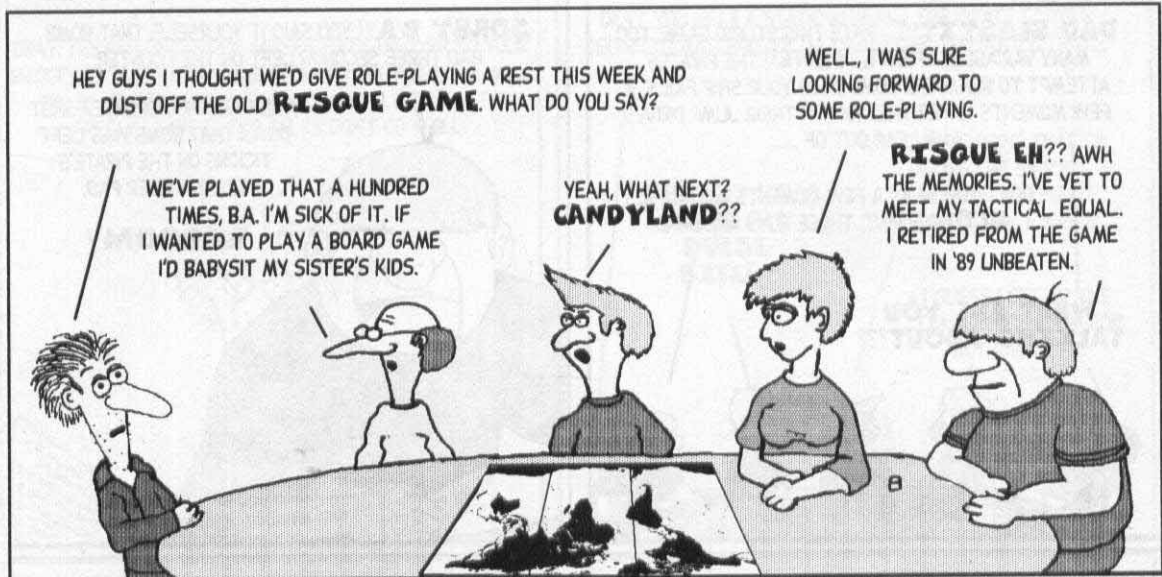
OH COME ON!! FLIP THE TABLE, THROW SOME DICE, BUT DON'T QUIT IN THE MIDDLE OF A GAME!!

NOW WE'VE DONE IT!! LAST TIME WE GOT TO HIM LIKE THIS HE DESIGNED A DUNGEON WITH SPIKED PITS IN EVERY 10 FOOT SQUARE.

BRIAN, MAYBE YOU SHOULD CHOKE IT DOWN AND LET B.A. WIN EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.

YEAH, AND MAYBE I COULD SUCK A 10-SIDER THROUGH A SODA STRAW. **NOT!!**





A FEW MOMENTS LATER

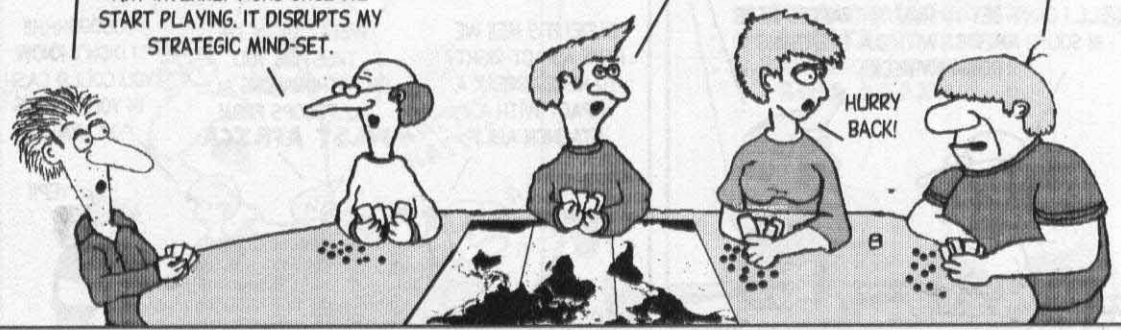
OKAY, LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ALL READY TO PLAY. LET'S ROLL TO SEE WHO GOES FIRST. UH...ACTUALLY, UH...BEFORE WE GET STARTED, LET ME CHECK ON THE CAT. I...UH...THINK HE'S OUT OF WATER.

OH...UH...WHILE YOU'RE DOING THAT B.A. I'M GOING TO RUN OUT TO MY VAN AND GET MY...UH...MY **LUCKY SIX-SIDERS**. CAN'T PLAY RISQUE WITHOUT THE OL' LUCKY SIX-SIDERS. BE RIGHT BACK.

HURRY UP THEN. I DON'T LIKE ANY INTERRUPTIONS ONCE WE START PLAYING. IT DISRUPTS MY STRATEGIC MIND-SET.

LUCKY SIX-SIDERS?? ACCORDING TO THE RULES YOU HAVE TO PLAY WITH THE DICE THAT CAME IN THE BOX.

HURRY BACK!



UH HUH!!! YOU SEE THAT? THEY MUST THINK WE'RE STUPID OR SOMETHING. LOOKS LIKE A LITTLE **UNDER-THE-TABLE DIPLOMACY** TO ME.

I KNEW THEY WERE UP TO SOMETHING. LOOK WHERE THEY PLACED THEIR ARMIES!! THEY'RE GOING TO TRY AND CATCH US IN A CLASSICAL PINCH MANEUVER!! DUDE, WE'VE GOT TO FORM A **NON-AGGRESSION PACT!** THE TWO OF US WON'T ATTACK EACH OTHER UNTIL EITHER BRIAN OR B.A. HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED. AT THAT POINT THE PACT IS NULLIFIED. AGREED??

YA VOL MINE COMRADE ILL DUCHY!! **AGREED!**

OF COURSE THIS MEANS I'M CANNON-FODDER!



A LITTLE LATER...

OKAY, I'LL BUILD UP IN **ALASKA** AND REINFORCE IN **MEXICO**. THAT WILL END MY TURN.

THAT'S THE FIFTH TURN YOU'VE JUST BUILT UP DEFENSES! THE NAME OF THE GAME IS **RISQUE** NOT **CAUTION!!!**

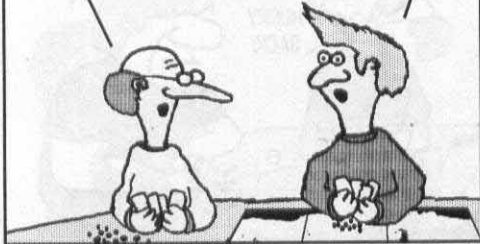
WELL THAT MAKES IT MY TURN. I'LL CONTINUE MY AMBITIOUS SWEEP OF ASIA. LET'S SEE I'M ATTACKING THE UKRAINE FROM KAMCHATKA!!! JUST ONE MORE VICTORY AND I'LL CONTROL ALL OF EUROPE AND ASIA!! THAT'S TWELVE ADDITIONAL ARMIES PER TURN!! **HAR HAR!! TASTE MY WRATH!!**



DUDE YOU GOTTA BREAK OUT OF AFRICA AND TAKE SOME TERRITORY FROM BRIAN!! HE'S GETTING TOO POWERFUL.

ARE YOU KIDDING?? LOOK WHAT HAPPENED IN EUROPE!!! HE PULVERIZED ME. I LOST 150 MEN TRYING TO HOLD ICELAND.

WELL I CAN'T GET TO HIM. I'M TRAPPED HERE IN SOUTH AMERICA WITH B.A. BREATHING DOWN MY NECK!!



TELL YA WHAT!! I'M CASHING IN MY CARDS FOR 50 ARMIES NEXT TURN. WITHDRAW YOUR TROOPS FROM **WEST AFRICA**. THAT WAY I CAN PUNCH THROUGH **AFRICA** AND HURT BRIAN.

WHAT? ALLOW FOREIGN TROOPS ON MY SOIL?? I DON'T THINK SO. WHAT'S TO KEEP YOU FROM SWEEPING AFRICA IF I DID THAT?

DUDE! IT'S ME!! WE HAVE A PACT RIGHT? I'D NEVER BREAK A PACT WITH A STALUNCH ALLY!

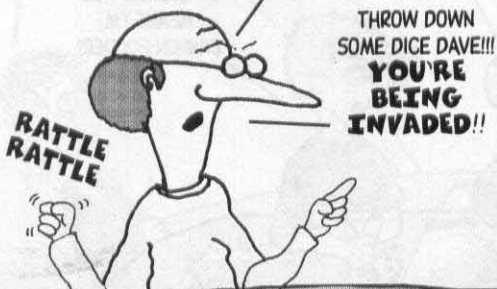
WELL...OKAY. I'M TRUSTING YOU. I'M WITHDRAWING ALL MY TROOPS FROM **WEST AFRICA**.

OOOOOOHHH!! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD CASH IN YOUR CARDS FOR ARMIES.



NEXT TURN...

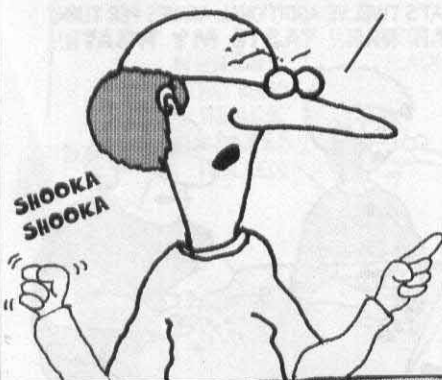
OKAY I HAVE 75 ARMIES IN WEST AFRICA. A QUIET HUSH SETS IN AROUND THE WORLD AS IT WAITS FOR THE RED SCOURGE TO ATTACK THE EVIL GREEN EMPIRE OF BRIAN!! BUT WAIT!!!! WHAT'S THIS??? THE RED SCOURGE TURNS SOUTH INTO THE **SOFT UNDERBELLY OF AFRICA!!!!**



YOU DIRTY ROTTEN TRAITOR!!! I KNEW I COULDN'T TRUST A COMMIE BASTARD!!!
YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE AFRICA ALIVE!!!



BOOM BABY BOOM!!! THREE SIXES!!! TAKE 'EM OFF!!! AGAIN! AGAIN!!! BOOM BABY BOOM!!! TAKE 'EM OFF!!!



AS THE SMOKE CLEARS

HA!! AFRICA IS NEARLY BROKEN! UMMFF CHUKA-LUKA, UMMFF CHUKA-LUKA!!

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT??

WHY IT'S THE RED SCOURGE VICTORY SONG!!! GET USED TO IT!! CAUSE I'M GONNA BE SINGING IT OVER YOUR GRAVE IN A FEW MOMENTS.

GRRRRR!!!
BACKSTABBING LITTLE....

HERE IT COMES!



THIRTY BLOODY MINUTES LATER...

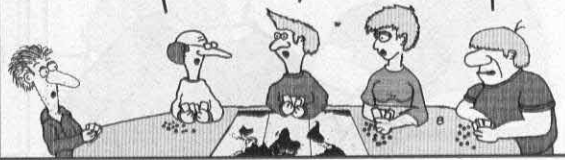
I'M CASHING IN MY CARDS FOR 125 ARMIES!! AND THEN MY **BLACK ARMIES OF DEATH** ARE LAUNCHING THEIR **BLITZKRIEG**!! I'M ATTACKING **SOUTH AFRICA FROM MADAGASCAR**!!



HA! SORRY DUDE!! I ROLLED **FIVES AND SIXES**!! YOUR LITTLE BLITZKRIEG JUST FIZZLED!! TAKE OFF SIX ARMIES.

TOO BAD YOU GUYS ARE FIGHTING IN VAIN!! MY GREEN EMPIRE IS STEADILY MOVING TOWARD AFRICA.

NO PROBLEM!!! MY **LEGIONS OF WRATH** ATTACK AGAIN!!! DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR!!!! **ROLL AGAIN!!!**

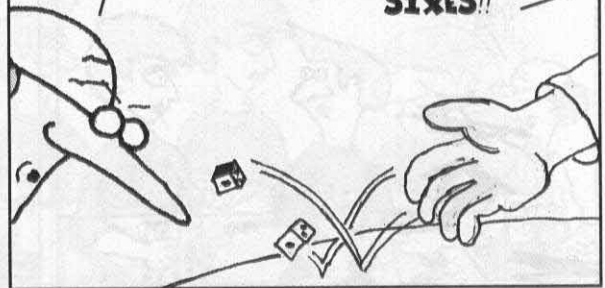


YES!!! MY WELL TRAINED, CRACK TROOPS ARE HOLDING. I PUT THE PERUVIAN DICE-JINX ON YOUR ATTACK!!! **JINX! JINX!!**



JINX! ONE'S!! JINX!! ROLL ONE'S!!

BIG SIXES!!! COME ON BOYS!! GIVE ME BIG SIXES!!



HA!!! TAKE EM' OFF!! THAT WILL TEACH YOU TO ... **GAAAA!!**

HEY I TOLD YOU TO CUT THAT OUT!!! THAT WASN'T FAIR!! YOU CAN'T JINX ANOTHER MAN'S DICE!! I DEMAND A RE-ROLL!!

WELL THERE'S NOTHING IN THE RULES ABOUT JINXING DICE. IF YOU CAN'T HANDLE IT DAVE, I HEAR THERE'S A GAME OF **CHUTES AND LADDERS** GOING ON DOWN AT MOTHER CROCK'S PRE-SCHOOL!!

HEY COME ON GUYS, BREAK IT UP!!

TAKE IT LIKE A MAN DAVE.



OKAY, IT'S PAYBACK TIME. I'M PLAYING THIS BLUE CARD ON YOU!! **DIRTY-NUKE!!!** YOUR EXPEDITIONARY FORCES SUSTAIN 50 PERCENT CASUALTIES!!!!

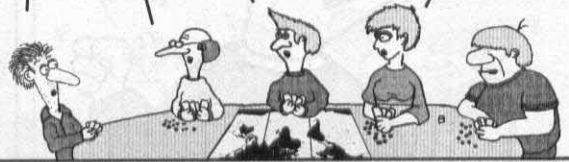


DIRTY NUKE?? WOW!! SO NOW SOUTHERN AFRICA AND EACH BORDERING TERRITORY IS UNINHABITABLE FOR THE REST OF THE GAME!!!

HA! UNLESS YOU JUST HAPPEN TO HAVE THE BLUE CARD, **NUKE-RETARDANT!!!** MY ARMIES ARE IMMUNE TO RADIATION!!

WELL IT AIN'T OVER YET **CUE BALL!**

IF IT'S GOING TO CAUSE HURT FEELINGS MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST QUIT??



QUIT??? DID ROMMEL QUIT BEFORE SACKING THE KREMLIN??

YEAH!! AND DID ALEXANDER PACK IT UP AND GO HOME BEFORE TOPPLING THE MING DYNASTY?? I DON'T THINK SO!!

OH...WELL. FAR BE IT FROM ME TO ARGUE WITH HISTORY.



A LITTLE LATER.

WELL, I'VE SECURED ASIA, EUROPE AND AFRICA. WHERE TO FROM HERE?? SARA'S SITTING ALL NICE AND SNUG IN AUSTRALIA - NOT REALLY MUCH OF A THREAT AT THIS POINT.

AND BOB AND DAVE ARE SLUGGING IT OUT FOR SOUTH AMERICA. WOULD HATE TO DISTURB THEM. SORRY B.A!! THE TIME HAS COME FOR OUR TREATY TO BE SHATTERED!!



TWO TURNS LATER

CRUD!! I ROLLED TWOS AND THREES!! YOU TAKE MEXICO AND I'M OUT OF THE GAME. (SIGH)

THAT WAS BRUTAL!! HE'S LIKE A GREEN SLIME OOZING ACROSS THE GLOBE!!

THERE'S NO STOPPING THE BIG GUY NOW! ALL WE CAN DO IS FIGHT TO THE LAST MAN AND DIE WITH HONOR!!

WELL, LOOKS LIKE IT'S FINALLY TIME TO LEAVE **AUSTRALIA.**

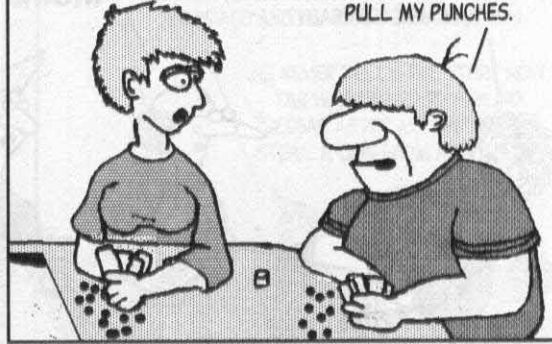


AS SUN TZU TEACHES, "WHEN THE STRIKE OF A HAWK BREAKS THE BODY OF ITS PREY, IT IS BECAUSE OF TIMING." I'M CASHING IN TWO SETS OF CARDS!! THAT SHOULD GIVE ME 175 ARMIES. OH, AND I HAVE THIS BLUE CARD, "NOBLE CAUSE" WHICH DOUBLES THE VALUE OF MY CARDS SO THAT'S 350 ARMIES IN ALL!!!



SORRY BRIAN!! LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO GET THE **FULL BRUNT** OF MY BREAK-OUT FROM AUSTRALIA!! NOTHING PERSONAL.

HUH?? OH..UH...RIGHT SARA. NOTHING PERSONAL.. BUT I WARN YOU I AIN'T GONNA PULL MY PUNCHES.

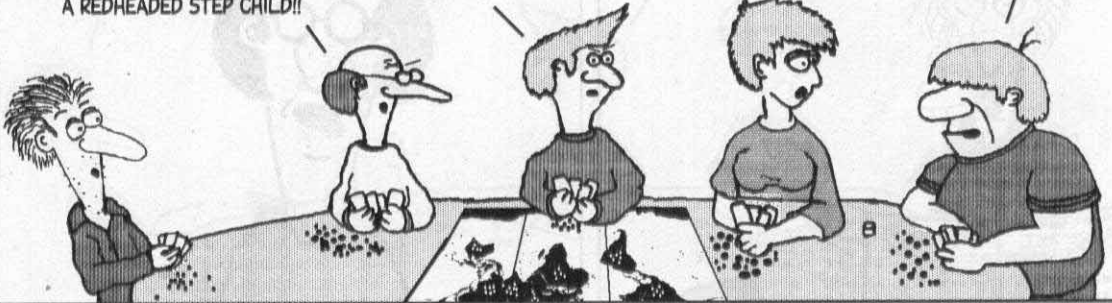


TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

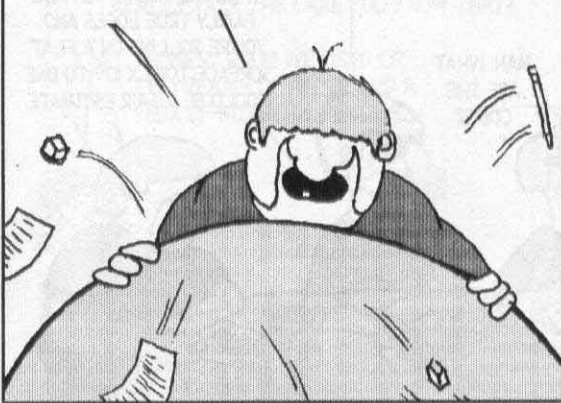
YOU LOSE **FIVE ARMIES**... GREAT!! I OWN ALL OF ASIA AND EUROPE NOW. GUESS I'LL KEEP YOU ON THE RUN AND MOVE INTO NORTH AMERICA. YOU KNOW, THIS GAME IS ACTUALLY FUN! I THINK I SEE THE ATTRACTION NOW.

MERCY!! LOOK AT THAT! SHE'S SLAPPIN' HIM AROUND LIKE A REDHEADED STEP CHILD!!

THE GREEN EMPIRE WAS NOTHING BUT A STRAW GIANT!

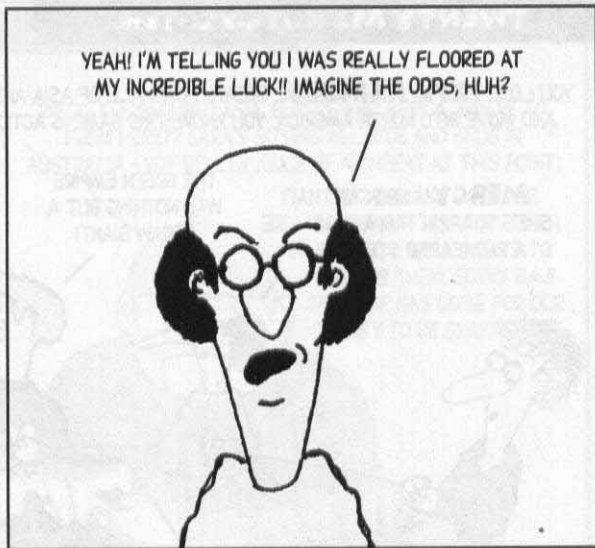
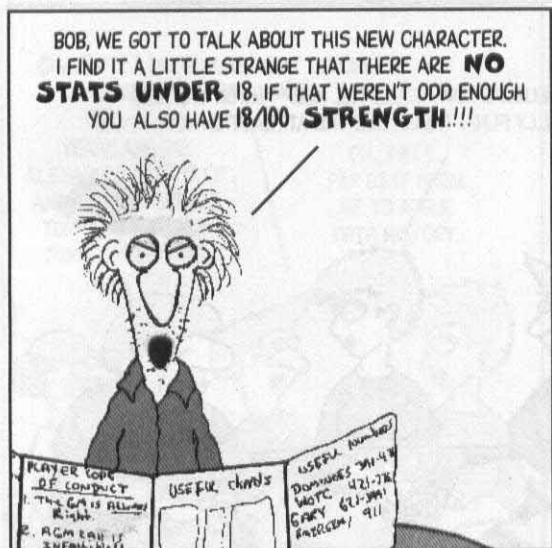
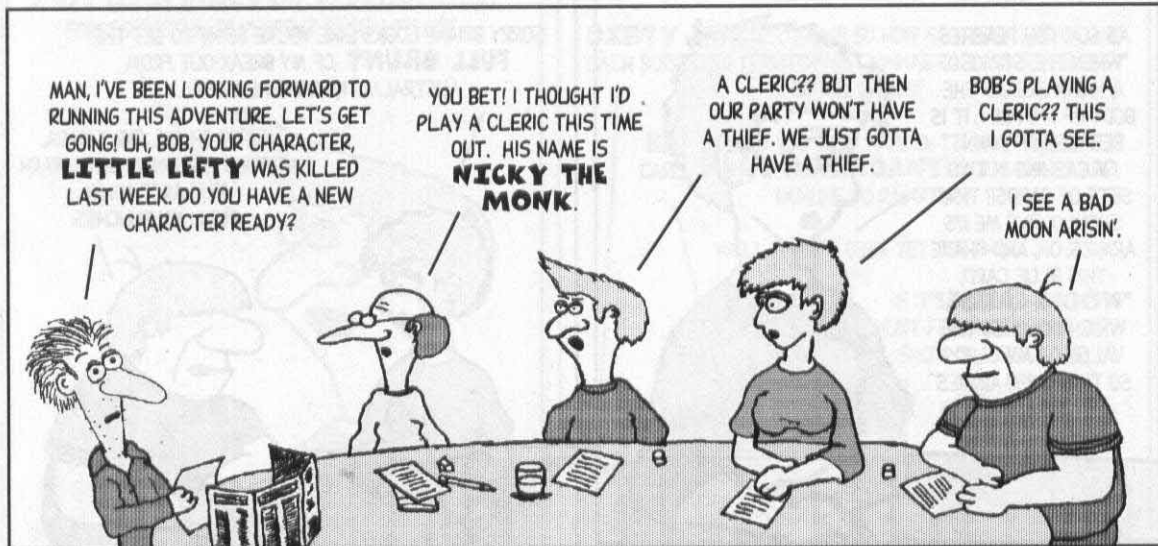


I HATE THIS STUPID GAME!!!! AARRRRGGGHHH!!

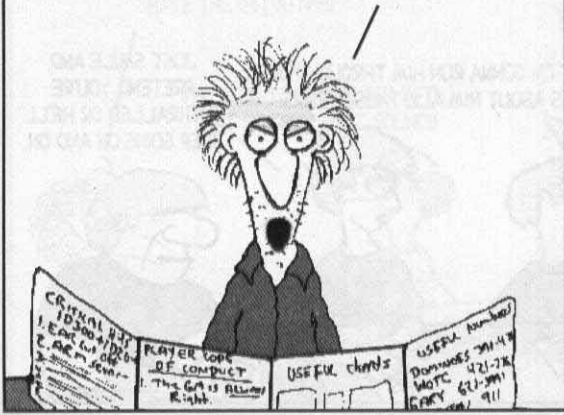


YOU KNOW, IN THE **FOG OF WAR** YOU NEVER SEE IT COMING!





WELL THERE'S BEEN A RASH OF 'LUCKY STREAKS' LATELY AND I'M FED UP WITH IT. I THOUGHT THE HONOR SYSTEM ON CHARACTER GENERATION WOULD SPEED UP THINGS AND GIVE US MORE TIME TO GAME. FROM NOW ON ALL CHARACTER GENERATIONS HAVE TO BE WITNESSED!!



DID I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT MY FIRST CHARACTER, **TAR MARKVAR**?? HE STARTED OUT A LOWLY THIEF WITH THE MOST PATHETIC STATS YOU EVER SAW. BUT LITTLE TAR WENT ON TO BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, BLAH...

I HATE HIS STORIES ABOUT **TAR MARKVAR**!!

HE ROLE-PLAYS A WIMP CHARACTER ELEVEN YEARS AGO AND HE ACTS LIKE A MARTYR!!

HE NEVER TELLS THE STORY HOW TAR WAS KILLED BY A BLIND BEGGAR AFTER ATTEMPTING TO STEAL A COIN FROM HIS TIN-CUP.



THE FOLLOWING WEEK!

BOB??? ALL 18'S???
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, GIVE ME A BREAK **HUH??**

HEY, I'M TELLING YOU THE DICE WERE HOT!!! AND I HAD MY WITNESS SO IT'S ALL OFFICIAL. DAVE WAS THERE AND HE EVEN SIGNED OFF ON MY CHARACTER SHEET.

IT'S TRUE B.A. BOB ROLLED TEN NATURAL 18'S IN MY PRESENCE. I WAS TRULY ASTONISHED! I MEAN...WHAT CAN YOU SAY?? WOW!

OH BROTHER.

SOUNDS A LITTLE FISHY TO ME. BUT THEN AGAIN, IF DAVE SAW IT WITH HIS OWN EYES...



AND WHAT'S THIS? DAVE'S NEW CHARACTER? WHY LOOK AT THIS, ALL 18'S!! WHAT A SURPRISE!! OH, BUT I SEE IT'S SIGNED OFF BY BOB. SO IT MUST BE KOSHER. YOU GUYS REALLY TAKE THE CAKE YOU KNOW THAT?

HONEST B.A.!!! WE USED UP TWO REAMS OF PAPER AND A BOX OF NUMBER 2 PENCILS.

I ROLLED SO MANY TIMES THAT I HAVE BLISTERS ON MY HANDS.

I GUESS YOU WANTED THOSE 18'S PRETTY BAD THEN.

BLISTERS?? YOU SHOULD USE MY CHARACTER GENERATION PROGRAM.



YOU GUYS DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT ROLE-PLAYING!!! IT'S NOT ABOUT HAVING THE MOST POWERFUL RELIC OR MAXIMUM STATS!!! WHAT POSSIBLE SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT CAN YOU GARNER FROM THAT?? TRUE ROLE-PLAYING IS TAKING THE RAW MATERIAL THAT'S GIVEN TO YOU - THAT STREAM OF NUMBERS AND STATS ON THAT PIECE OF PAPER YOU HOLD AND TURNING IT INTO SOMETHING NOBLE AND HEROIC!! I WISH I COULD MAKE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT. TAKE MY LOWLY THIEF **TAR MARKVAR**!! HIS STATS SUCKED. EVERYBODY TOLD ME TO SCRAP HIM AND ROLL UP A NEW CHARACTER. YOU WERE THERE BRIAN - REMEMBER THAT? BUT I TOOK THAT LITTLE GUY AND WENT ON TO BLAH, BLA...

GREAT! ANOTHER LESSON ON MARKVAR THE WUSS!

IF I EVER RUN INTO THAT RUNT I'M GONNA RUN HIM THROUGH FOR HAVING TO LISTEN TO STORIES ABOUT HIM ALL THESE YEARS.

JUST SMILE AND PRETEND YOU'RE ENTHRALLED OR HE'LL KEEP GOING ON AND ON.



I JUST DON'T GET IT! WE ROLE-PLAY SO WE CAN BE HEROES AND KICK THE BUTTS OF DRAGONS, ORCS AND BEASTIES. B.A. ROLE-PLAYS GEEKS AND LOSERS!

WELL, SOME GUYS JUST AREN'T CUT OUT TO BE PLAYERS. POOR SAPS ARE RELEGATED TO BEING SPECTATORS OR WORSE YET, **GAMEMASTERS.**

AND THEN TAR SAID TO THE KING, "WHY? DID YOU LOSE ONE?" HA HA. AND THE STUPID KING DIDN'T GET IT. SO HE THREW TAR IN THE DUNGEON AND BLAH, BLAH...

THAT'S IT!! I'M DOING MY TERM PAPER FOR PSYCH 101 ON YOU GUYS!!

TRUE, THE GAMEMASTER CAN BE A SAD AND MELANCHOLY FIGURE. THE GAMER WHO NEVER PLAYS.



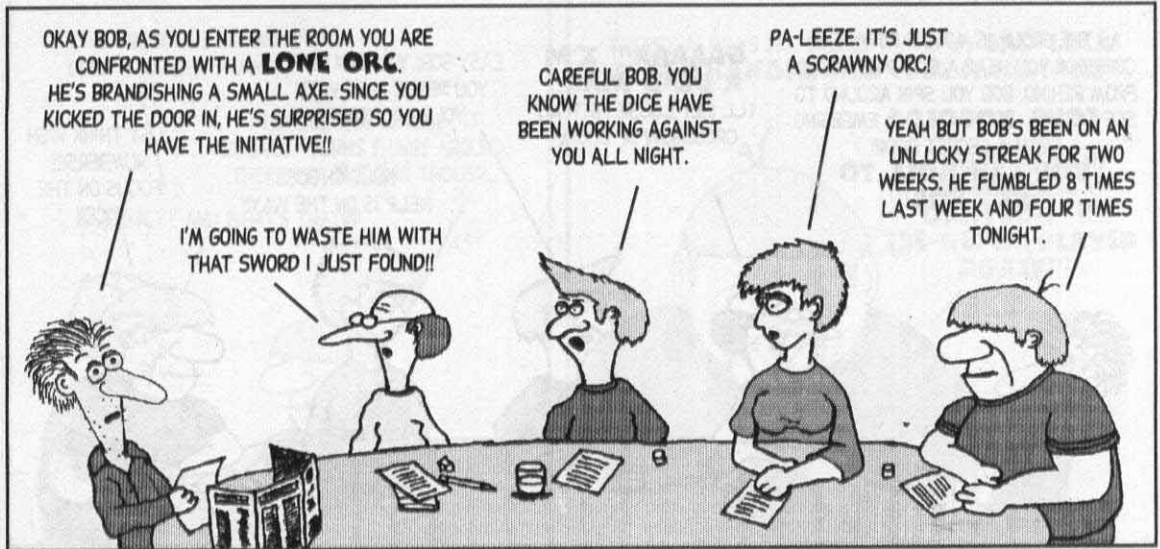
BOB'S TIPS: HOW TO BE ANNOYING AT THE GAMING TABLE



1. Shake your dice for thirty seconds for 'good luck' before each to-hit roll.
2. Bring a cellular phone to the game and call friends for advice whenever your character faces danger.
3. Wear the name tags to EVERY convention you've ever attended to the game.
4. Do sound effects for all the monsters and encounters the Gamemaster announces.
5. Stubbornly insist on buying other gamers' dice when they roll good numbers.
6. Say "Too Bad, So Sad" using a PeeWee Herman voice whenever someone's character dies.
7. Give all your characters unpronounceable names and then insist that others call them by name.
8. Give nonsensical hand-signs to the GM causing the other gamers to think you're up to something.
9. Constantly write sticky notes that say, "Hi how are ya!" and pass them to the GM during play.
10. Look at other players' character sheets and then frantically write yourself a note.
11. Ask other players, "So...when your character sleeps where does he keep his stuff?"
12. In the middle of an exciting encounter look at the GM and say, "Your heart's not in this is it?"
13. Jabber on and on about old adventures while the GM is talking, then ask everyone else to fill you in.
14. Yawn, stretch and wander around the room during everything but your own to-hit rolls.
15. Demand that the party spend hours planning even the simplest actions.

Can't Buy Me Luck

STORY SUGGESTED BY RICHARD BARTLE



SECONDS LATER...



NEXT WEEK



A LITTLE LATER.

AS THE GROUP IS MOVING DOWN THE CORRIDOR YOU HEAR A SCRAPING SOUND FROM BEHIND. BOB YOU SPIN AROUND TO SEE **FOUR KOBOLDS** EMERGING FROM A SECRET DOOR!
YOU CAN ROLL TO HIT BOB!!!

GAAAAA!!! I'M A DEAD MAN!!
I'LL LET LOOSE WITH MY CROSSBOW OF DOOM!!

EASY BOB! YOU CAN DO IT!
YOU NEVER MISS WITH YOUR CROSSBOW!

HOLD ON BOB!
HELP IS ON THE WAY!!

JUST THINK HIGH NUMBERS!!!
FOCUS ON THE DICE!!



I CAN'T DO IT! DAVE, YOU ROLL FOR ME.

NO WAY!!! THAT'S BAD KARMA.
I MIGHT INHERIT YOUR BAD LUCK.
THANKS BUT NO THANKS. YOU ROLL
YOUR OWN DICE!

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD I ROLLED A **ONE!**

AS YOU TRIED TO RAISE YOUR CROSSBOW YOU FUMBLER. ONE BOLT HITS BRIAN'S CHARACTER IN THE BACK. THE OTHER ONE KILLS THE **TORCH-BEARER.**

DAMN!! THE TORCH-BEARER WAS MORE EFFECTIVE AS A FIGHTER THAN BOB!! NOW WE'RE REALLY HURTING.

DUDE!! YOU KILLED LITTLE **KNOBBY FOOT!**

BOB IS INFLECTING MORE DAMAGE ON US THAN THE DUNGEON.



THAT'S IT!!! I'M INTERVENING. BOB, WE'VE GOT TO **PURGE** YOU OF YOUR BAD LUCK. LET'S GO DOWN THE CHECKLIST.

FIRST WE EMPTY YOUR DICE BAG OUT ON THE TABLE. EACH ONE OF US ROLLS EACH DIE UNTIL WE EACH GET A **MAXIMUM** RESULT ON EACH DIE!! SECOND, WE RUB EACH DIE ACROSS **GARY JACKSON'S** SIGNATURE IN MY AUTOGRAPHED COPY OF **HACKMASTER: PLAYER TIPS AND TACTICS.** AND FINALLY, WE PUT ALL THE DICE BACK IN THE BAG AND SHAKE IT 100 TIMES TO REDISTRIBUTE THE LUCK.

WELL LET'S HURRY!!
I CAN FEEL **MOTHER MISFORTUNE** PRESSING DOWN ON ME AS WE SPEAK.

YEAH, THAT'S WHAT HE NEEDS. A GOOD OLD FASHIONED, **DICE-CLEANSING.**



WE'LL TAKE IT FROM THE TOP,
STEP BY STEP.



YOU'VE TRIED THIS BEFORE??
DOES IT REALLY WORK??

IN CASES THIS SEVERE - IT
USUALLY TURNS THINGS AROUND.
THERE IS A **RISK** THOUGH...

RISK?? AND WHAT'S THAT??



THERE'S ALWAYS THE DANGER THAT BOB'S **BAD LUCK**
WILL BE **TRANSFERRED** TO ONE OR MORE OF **US!!**

I SAW IT HAPPEN TO
JOHNNY KAZINSKI AT
GARYCON '91!!!
HE NEVER PLAYED
AGAIN!!!



YEAH, POOR JOHNNY. HE WAS BANNED FROM TOURNAMENT PLAY
- **BLACKBALLED!!!** I HEAR HE'S A **YOUNG DEMOCRAT**
NOW. RUNS A **BIG JUICES** IN WISCONSIN.

LOOK GUYS, THIS IS MY MONKEY!!! YOU
DON'T HAVE TO RISK YOUR OWN LUCK
TRYING TO HELP ME.

WASN'T JOHNNY THE GUY WHO PUT SUPERGLUE ON
ALL THE TOILET SEATS AT THAT CONVENTION??
I DON'T THINK BAD-LUCK HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH...

NO BOB, WE'RE A TEAM. WE PLAY
TOGETHER AND WE TAKE RISKS
TOGETHER. **LET'S DO IT!!**



LATER THAT NIGHT!

OKAY THE DRAGON IS GOING TO DO **TWO CLAW ATTACKS** ON BOB, A **TAIL SWIPE** ON BRIAN AND A **BITE ATTACK** ON DAVE. LET'S SEE...HUH?? FOUR FUMBLES??? THAT'S THE FIFTH TIME SINCE BOB'S PURGING THAT I'VE FUMBLLED!!

HEY, I THINK B.A.
CHANNELED MY
BAD-LUCK!!!

ALRIGHT!! WE'LL CLEAN
UP ON EXPERIENCE AND
TREASURE!! LET'S PLAY
OVER-TIME TONIGHT.

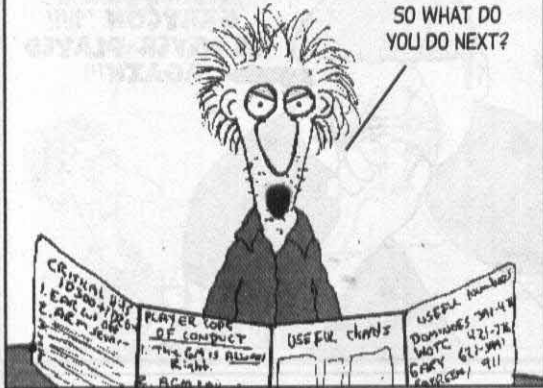
YOU GUYS REALLY
DON'T BELIEVE IN
FLOATING BAD-LUCK
DO YOU?

THERE. YOU SEE B.A!! I TOLD YOU TO RUB
YOUR DICE ON GARY'S NAME RIGHT TO LEFT
BUT YOU INSISTED ON LEFT TO RIGHT!

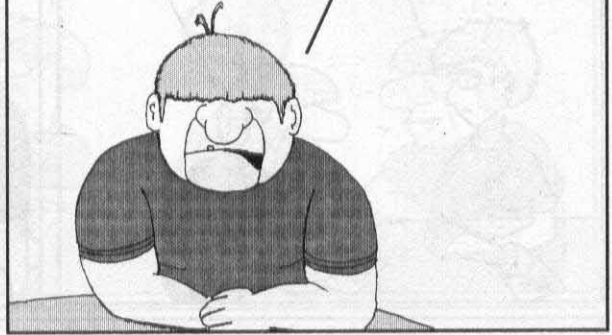


OKAY, YOU'VE MADE IT TO THE FINAL CHAMBER OF THE **LABYRINTH OF VECTRA!!!** YOU'RE STANDING IN FRONT OF TWO LARGE BRONZE DOORS EMBOSSED WITH VECTRA'S SEAL. A STERN WARNING READS, "ONLY THOSE WHO SERVE THE DUKE OF EVIL SHALL ENTER THESE DOORS!"

SO WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?



AT LAST!!! THE **INFAMOUS INNER CHAMBER OF VECTRA!!!** AND YOU SAY THE SEAL IS STILL INTACT??? **OH MAN**, I'VE BEEN WAITING A LONG, LONG TIME FOR THIS. **I CAST A BASH-DOOR SPELL.**



A LARGE CIRCULAR ROOM IS REVEALED WITH A DOMED-CEILING. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM IS AN ALTAR. MAGICAL FLAMES DANCE FROM EACH CORNER OF THE LARGE MARBLE BLOCK. LYING IN THE CENTER OF THE ALTAR ON A VELVET PILLOW IS A **SEVERED HAND!!!** IT IS ADORNED WITH DOZENS OF RINGS AND BRACELETS.

BRIAN WAS RIGHT!! IT'S THE **LEGENDARY HAND OF VECTRA!!**

IT'S EVIL!! I SAY WE DESTROY IT!! BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

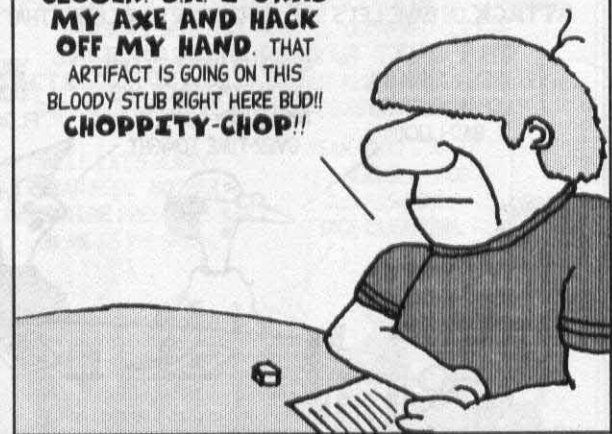
WHAT??? YOU DON'T DESTROY THE SINGLE MOST POWERFUL RELIC IN THE **HACKMASTER'S GM GUIDE!!**



I SLICE OFF MY OWN HAND AND ATTACH VECTRA'S HAND TO THE NUB. THE HAND IS MINE!!!!



NOWAY!!! I'M CLOSER. B.A. I GRAB MY AXE AND HACK MY HAND. THAT ARTIFACT IS GOING ON THIS BLOODY STUB RIGHT HERE BUD!! CHOPPITY-CHOP!!



WELL, IF THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GONNA BE, DAVE AND BRIAN WILL HAVE TO ROLL FOR INITIATIVE TO SEE WHO CAN **HACK OFF THEIR OWN HAND** THE QUICKEST. BRIAN GETS A +2 BONUS FOR USING AN AXE.

HEY DON'T FORGET I'M USING MY HACKMASTER +12!!

I WON THE ROLL!! I WON THE ROLL!!
DAVE IS STILL SAWIN' AWAY BUT MY HAND IS ALREADY LYING ON THE GROUND!!
HAR HAR - LOSER!!

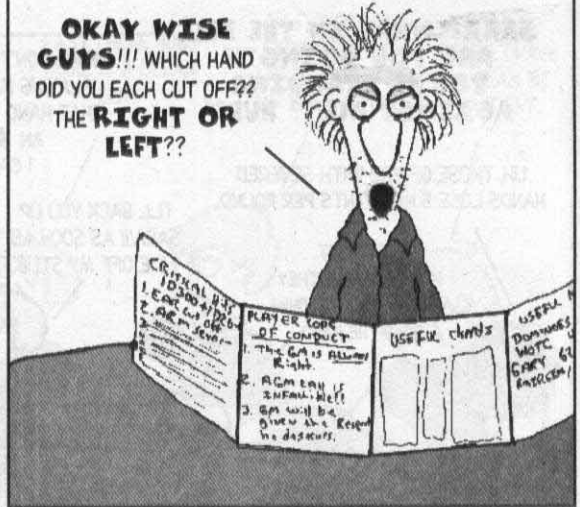
DAMN!!! ALL I HAVE IS THIS STUPID CROSSBOW! SOMEBODY LOAN ME A DAGGER.

YOU'RE ACTUALLY DUELING TO SEE WHO CAN MAIM THEMSELVES FIRST?



MY HAND IS CUT OFF TOO!!!
I'M GOING TO WRESTLE WITH THE BIG OAF FOR IT!
THAT HAND IS MINE!!!

OKAY WISE GUYS!!! WHICH HAND DID YOU EACH CUT OFF?? THE **RIGHT OR LEFT??**

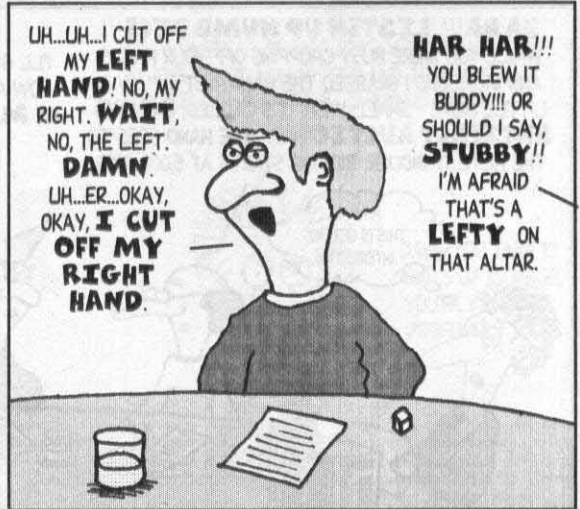


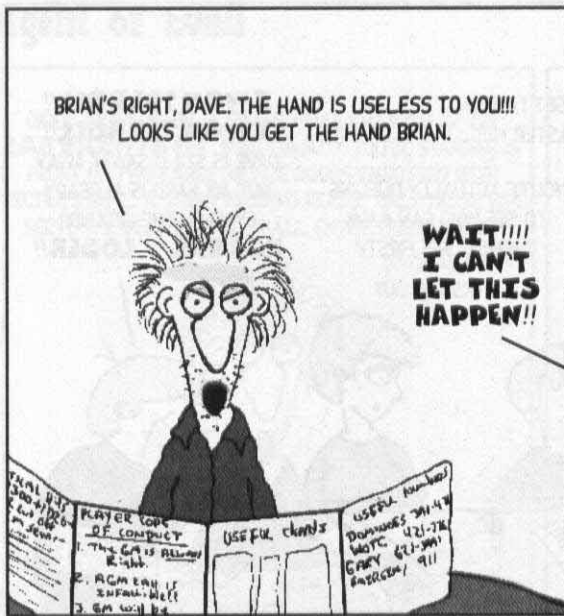
UH...UH...BRIAN, WHICH HAND IS THE **HAND OF VECTRA??** IS IT A LEFT HAND OR A RIGHT HAND.

WHAT'S WRONG DAVE?? A LITTLE RUSTY ON OUR KNOWLEDGE OF MAJOR ARTIFACTS AND RELICS??
TSSK, TSSK.

UH...UH...I CUT OFF MY **LEFT HAND!** NO, MY RIGHT. **WAIT,** NO, THE LEFT. **DAMN.** UH...ER...OKAY, OKAY, I CUT OFF MY **RIGHT HAND.**

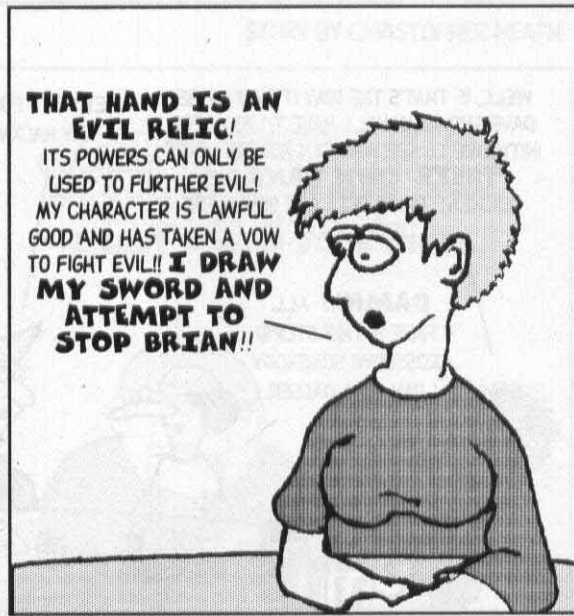
HAR HAR!!!
YOU BLEW IT BUDDY!!! OR SHOULD I SAY, **STUBBY!!**
I'M AFRAID THAT'S A **LEFTY** ON THAT ALTAR.



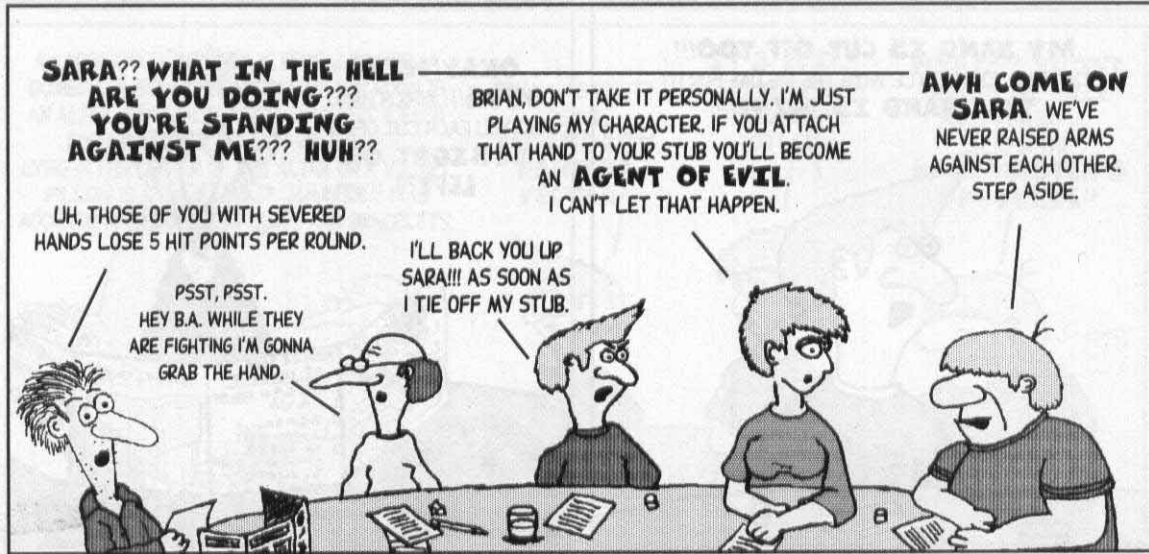


BRIAN'S RIGHT, DAVE. THE HAND IS USELESS TO YOU!!!
LOOKS LIKE YOU GET THE HAND BRIAN.

**WAIT!!!
I CAN'T
LET THIS
HAPPEN!!!**



**THAT HAND IS AN
EVIL RELIC!**
ITS POWERS CAN ONLY BE
USED TO FURTHER EVIL!
MY CHARACTER IS LAWFUL
GOOD AND HAS TAKEN A VOW
TO FIGHT EVIL!! **I DRAW
MY SWORD AND
ATTEMPT TO
STOP BRIAN!!**



**SARA?? WHAT IN THE HELL
ARE YOU DOING???**
**YOU'RE STANDING
AGAINST ME???** HUH??

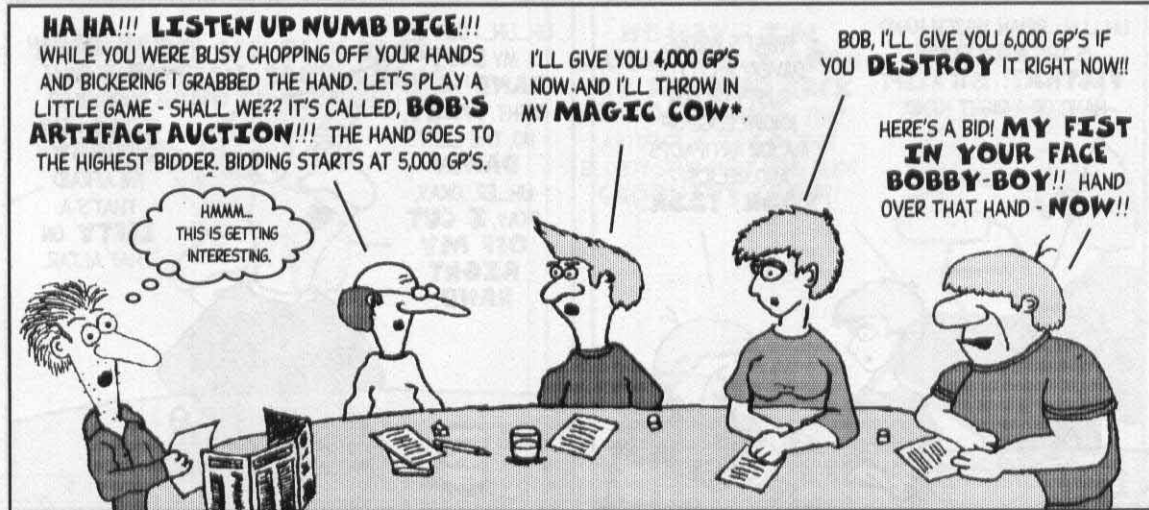
BRIAN, DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. I'M JUST
PLAYING MY CHARACTER. IF YOU ATTACH
THAT HAND TO YOUR STUB YOU'LL BECOME
AN **AGENT OF EVIL.**
I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN.

**AWH COME ON
SARA.** WE'VE
NEVER RAISED ARMS
AGAINST EACH OTHER.
STEP ASIDE.

UH, THOSE OF YOU WITH SEVERED
HANDS LOSE 5 HIT POINTS PER ROUND.

PSST, PSST.
HEY B.A. WHILE THEY
ARE FIGHTING I'M GONNA
GRAB THE HAND.

I'LL BACK YOU UP
SARA!!! AS SOON AS
I TIE OFF MY STUB.



HA HA!!! LISTEN UP NUMB DICE!!!
WHILE YOU WERE BUSY CHOPPING OFF YOUR HANDS
AND BICKERING I GRABBED THE HAND. LET'S PLAY A
LITTLE GAME - SHALL WE?? IT'S CALLED, **BOB'S
ARTIFACT AUCTION!!!** THE HAND GOES TO
THE HIGHEST BIDDER. BIDDING STARTS AT 5,000 GP'S.

I'LL GIVE YOU 4,000 GP'S
NOW AND I'LL THROW IN
MY **MAGIC COW***.

BOB, I'LL GIVE YOU 6,000 GP'S IF
YOU **DESTROY** IT RIGHT NOW!!

HMMM...
THIS IS GETTING
INTERESTING.

HERE'S A BID! **MY FIST
IN YOUR FACE
BOBBY-BOY!!** HAND
OVER THAT HAND - **NOW!!**

* See Bundle of Trouble Volume One [KODT #2] "Cows of War"

HMMM....I GOTTA GO WITH DAVE'S BID. SORRY SARA, BUT I'VE ALWAYS HAD MY EYE ON THAT COW. THROW IN THE DIAMOND-ENCRUSTED MAHOGANY YOKE AND THE SOLID-GOLD BELL AND IT'S A DEAL DAVE.

YOU GOT A DEAL DUDE. WILL YOU HELP ME CUT MY OTHER HAND OFF? HERE, USE MY HACKMASTER +12.

DAVE, THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING!! I'M TELLING YOU THAT HAND IS EVIL. IT WILL DESTROY YOU!

I'M WARNING YOU BOB! I WANT THAT HAND. GIVE IT UP!

DAVE, BRIAN, BOTH OF YOU GUYS ARE STILL BLEEDING PRETTY BAD.



I'M TAKIN' DAVE'S SWORD AND HACKING HIS HAND OFF.

WELL, YOUR CHARACTER ISN'T PROFICIENT WITH A 2-HANDED SWORD BOB SO I'M GIVING YOU A -4 MODIFIER.

NO PROBLEM!! IF I MISS THE FIRST TIME, I'LL JUST TRY AGAIN.

EASY THERE BOB!! MAKE IT A CLEAN CUT!!

OH, I'VE GOT TO STOP THIS. BUT I HATE ATTACKING MY TEAM-MATES!

HOLD UP SARA. I HAVE A PLAN. BE PATIENT.

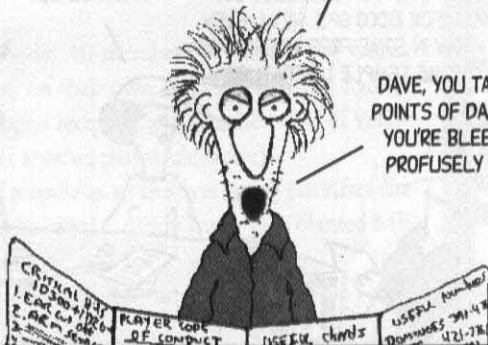


DAMN!!
I ROLLED A ONE!
A FUMBLE.

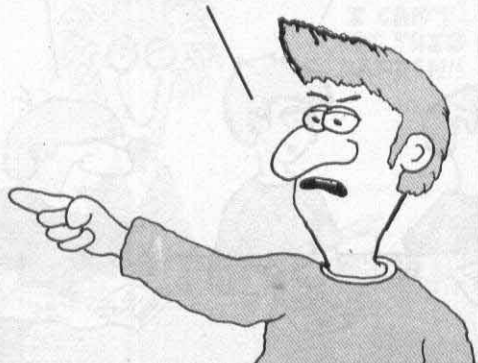


OKAY, INSTEAD OF SEVERING DAVE'S HAND AT THE WRIST, YOU MISSED AND TOOK OFF HIS **ARM AT THE SHOULDER.**

DAVE, YOU TAKE 10 POINTS OF DAMAGE. YOU'RE BLEEDING PROFUSELY TOO.



**YOU STUPID JERK!!!
YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE.
NOW WHAT THE HELL
AM I GONNA DO???**
I GOT NO HANDS!!



DUDE, RELAX!! I'M PICKING UP
VECTRA'S HAND AND
ATTACHING IT TO YOUR SHOULDER. IT'S
MAGICAL, AIN'T IT?? MAYBE IT WILL
GROW A NEW ARM FOR YA!

(SIGH) ANOTHER
POLAROID MOMENT
COMING UP.

WELL DO SOMETHING!!
I FEEL EXPOSED HERE.
I CAN'T EVEN WIELD MY
HACKMASTER +12.



YOU PLACE THE HAND ON DAVE'S
SHOULDER AND IT INSTANTLY
MESHERS WITH HIS FLESH. UH,
SORRY DAVE. IT DIDN'T GROW A
NEW ARM FOR YA. YOU NOW HAVE
A HAND PROTRUDING FROM YOUR
SHOULDER JOINT.

SORRY DUDE!!
I MEANT WELL.
GUESS YOU WON'T NEED
YOUR SWORD BACK.
(SNICKER!)

**THIS AIN'T
FUNNY!!**
COME ON, MAN!!
FIX ME!! MAKE IT
RIGHT!!

NICE TRY GUYS!! B.A., I'M TAKING
MY AXE AND **HACKING**
THAT HAND OFF OF DAVE'S
BODY. NOT LIKE HE CAN DO
ANYTHING TO STOP ME.



A FEW HOURS LATER...

OKAY, THE **HEALER** SAYS HE'LL
GIVE YOU A GROUP DISCOUNT.
HE'LL REATTACH THREE HANDS,
ONE ARM, AND RESURRECT BOB
ALL FOR 10,000 GP'S. HE'LL EVEN
THROW IN SOME FREE INCENSE AND
SOME TEMPLE LITERATURE.

WELL? SOMEBODY PAY THE MAN! I CAN'T
GET TO MY COIN POUCH AT THE MOMENT.

I GOT DIBS ON
THE INCENSE!!

AT LEAST I WAS ABLE TO
DESTROY THE EVIL RELIC
BEFORE IT DID ANY HARM.

DARN!! I REALLY
WANTED THAT HAND!!
MAYBE WE CAN
PURSUE THAT RUMOR
ABOUT THE **HEAD**
OF VECTRA!!



The Head of Vecna

by Mark Steuer ©1998

Many years ago, (back when we all were still playing D&D™), I ran a game where I pitted two groups against each other. Several members of Group One came up with the idea of luring Group Two into a trap.

You remember the **Hand of Vecna** and the **Eye of Vecna** that were artifacts in the old D&D world where if you cut off your hand (or your eye) and replaced it with the **Hand of Vecna** (or the **Eye**) you'd get new awesome powers?

Well, Group One thought up **The Head of Vecna**. Group One spread rumors all over the countryside (even paying Bards to spread the word about this artifact rumored to exist nearby). They even went so far as to get a real head and place it under some weak traps to help with the illusion.

Unfortunately, they forgot to let ALL the members of their group in on the secret plan. A Druid in Group One heard about this new artifact and went off in search of it himself (I believe to help prove himself to the party members).

Well, after much trial and tribulation, he found it; deactivated (or set off) all the traps; and took his "prize" off into the woods for examination. He discovered that it did not radiate magic (a well known trait of artifacts) and smiled gleefully.

I wasn't really worried since he was alone and I knew that there was no way he could *CUT HIS OWN HEAD OFF*. Alas I was mistaken as the Druid promptly summoned some carnivorous apes and instructed them to use his own scimitar and cut his head off (and of course quickly replace it with the **Head of Vecna**).

Some time later, Group one decided to find the Druid and to check on the trap. They found the headless body (and the two heads) and realized that they had erred in their plan (besides laughing at the character who had played the Druid). The **Head of Vecna** still had BOTH eyes!

They corrected this mistake and reset their traps and the Head for it's real intended victims. Group Two, by this time, had heard of the powerful artifact and decided that it bore investigating since, if true, they could use it to destroy Group One.

After much trial and tribulation, they found the resting place of **The Head of Vecna!** They were particularly impressed with the cunning traps surrounding the site (one almost missed his save against the weakest poison known to man). They recovered the Head and made off to a safe area. Group Two actually *CAME TO BLOWS* (several rounds of fighting) against each other arguing over *WHO WOULD GET THEIR HEAD CUT OFF!*

Several greedy players had to be hurt and restrained before it was decided who would be the recipient of the great powers bestowed by the Head. The magician was selected and one of them promptly cut his head off. As the player was lifting **The Head of Vecna** to place it on it's new body, another argument broke out and they spent several minutes shouting and yelling. Then, finally, they put the Head onto the character.

Well, of course, the Head simply fell off the lifeless body. All members of Group Two began yelling and screaming at each other (and at me) and then, on their own, decided that they had let too much time pass between cutting off the head of a hopeful recipient and put the **Head of Vecna** onto the body. *SO THEY DID IT AGAIN!...* (killing yet another player-character).

In closing, it should be said that I never even cracked a smile as all this was going on. After the second PC was slaughtered, I had to give in (my side was hurting)... And Group Two blamed ME for all of that...

So let that be a warning to you - don't let your head get cut off unless you really know what you're doing.

Mark Steuer
steuer@nichols.com

TALES FROM THE TABLE

CHALK ONE UP FOR BART

For those of you who watch the SIMPSONS you may have noticed in the opening credits, Bart is being punished and writing something 100 times on the blackboard. The following is a compilation of the various phrases poor Bart has had to scrawl out in chalk over the past few seasons.

I will not carve gods.
 I will not spank others.
 I will not aim for the head.
 I will not barf unless I'm sick.
 I will not expose the ignorance of the faculty.
 I saw nothing unusual in the teacher's lounge.
 I will not conduct my own fire drills.
 Funny noises are not funny.
 I will not snap bras.
 I will not fake seizures.
 This punishment is not boring and pointless.
 My name is not Dr. Death.
 I will not defame New Orleans.
 I will not prescribe medication.
 I will not bury the new kid.
 I will not teach others to fly.
 I will not bring sheep to class.
 A burp is not an answer.
 Teacher is not a leper.
 Coffee is not for kids.
 I will not eat things for money.
 I will not yell "She's Dead" at roll call.
 The principal's toupee is not a Frisbee.
 I will not call the principal "spud head."
 Goldfish don't bounce.
 Mud is not one of the 4 food groups.
 No one is interested in my underpants.
 I will not sell miracle cures.
 I will return the seeing-eye dog.
 I do not have diplomatic immunity.
 I will not charge admission to the bathroom.
 I will never win an emmy.
 The cafeteria deep fryer is not a toy.
 All work and no play makes Bart a dull boy.
 I will not say "Springfield" just to get applause.
 I am not authorized to fire substitute teachers.
 My homework was not stolen by a one-armed man.
 I will not go near the kindergarten turtle.
 I am not deliciously saucy.
 Organ transplants are best left to professionals.
 The Pledge of Allegiance does not end with "Hail Satan".
 I will not celebrate meaningless milestones.
 There are plenty of businesses like show business.
 Five days is not too long to wait for a gun.
 I will not waste chalk.
 I will not skateboard in the halls.
 I will not instigate revolution.
 I will not draw naked ladies in class.
 I did not see Elvis.
 I will not call my teacher "Hot Cakes".



Garlic gum is not funny.
 They are laughing at me, not with me.
 I will not yell "Fire" in a crowded classroom.
 I will not encourage others to fly.
 I will not fake my way through life.
 Tar is not a plaything.
 I will not Xerox my butt.
 It's potato, not potatoe.
 I will not trade pants with others.
 I am not a 32 year old woman.
 I will not do that thing with my tongue.
 I will not drive the principal's car.
 I will not pledge allegiance to Bart.
 I will not sell school property.
 I will not burp in class.
 I will not cut corners.
 I will not get very far with this attitude.
 I will not belch the National Anthem.
 I will not sell land in Florida unless I actually own it.
 I will not grease the monkey bars.
 I will not hide behind the Fifth Amendment.
 I will not do anything bad ever again.
 I will not show off.
 I will not sleep through my education.
 I am not a dentist.
 Spitwads are not free speech.
 Nobody likes sunburn slappers.
 High explosives and school don't mix.
 I will not bribe Principal Skinner.
 I will not squeak chalk.
 I will finish what I sta
 "Bart Bucks" are not legal tender.
 Underwear should be worn on the inside.
 The Christmas Pageant does not stink.
 I will not torment the emotionally frail.

Have a joke or cartoon you'd like to share?

Send it to:

Knights of the Dinner Table
Parting Shots Submissions
 830 W. Main Street, PMB 114
 Lake Zurich, IL 60047



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"Plays Well With Others"

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sions for strip ideas, jokes, car-
toons, etc. We are interested in
running anything that other
gamers and fans would enjoy.
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Knights of the Dinner Table™

"Plays Well With Others"

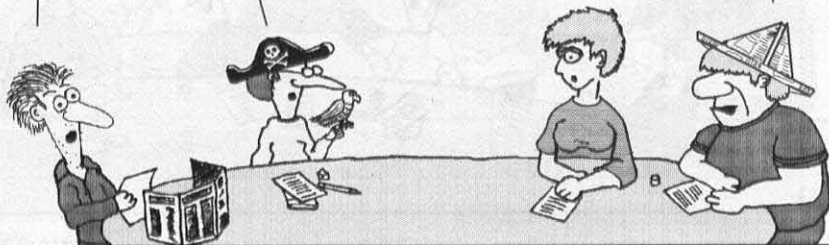
By Jolly R. Blackburn
With Brian Jelke, Steve Johansson
and David S. Kenzer

HEY? THE GAME IS ALMOST OVER AND DAVE
STILL HASN'T SHOWN UP YET. *WHAT GIVES?*

HE HAD A HOT DATE TONIGHT. HE TOOK SOME
GIRL OUT TO A BIG DINNER AND A SHOW!!

HAAAA!!! WHAT A LOSER!
HE MISSED OUT ON 10,000
EXPERIENCE POINTS.

DAVE ON A DATE?
MAYBE THERE'S
HOPE FOR HIM
AFTER ALL.



Editorial of a Madman

Greetings and welcome to another issue of KODT! I've just returned from GAMA (the Games Industry trade show, held in Reno, Nevada) and from GAME-FEST (held in Calgary, Alberta Canada). It was a great opportunity to talk with manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and most importantly, fellow gamers about the comic book as well as KenzerCo's other products.

I also came home with a small pile of KODT story-ideas and submissions for future issues. It seemed everyone who came by the booth had a story to share or a comment to make about one of the characters.

I think the big news from GAMA is that role-playing games are alive and well. There were lots of new companies presenting RPGs as their flagship products. And many old familiar companies who had been lured away chasing card-games the past two-years were back with new RPG products and supplements as well.

Even though I've been predicting for the past 18 months that RPGs would make a major comeback at GENCON '97, I was very relieved to see so much interest in role-playing products at GAMA. One of the Andon Unlimited reps summed it up best when he said, "You know, I've really missed role-playing games. It feels so damn good to see all these new products on the tables."

Whether or not these new offerings will find a following remains to be seen. Here's my own personal list of games to watch for:

- **ALTERNITIES.** TSR's new science fiction RPG. This game has been generating a lot of interest.

- **FILM NOIR.** Archon's flagship product. Beautiful product with a stable of good writers and artists working on supplements and expansions.

- **DEADLANDS.** This RPG debuted at GENCON 96 and was somewhat lost in the blur of new collectible card games released at the show. Now it seems to be getting the attention it deserves and attracting a good base of players.

- **BLUE PLANET.** Another sci-fi RPG with a twist. It takes place on a distant water planet where a stranded earth-colony fights for survival.

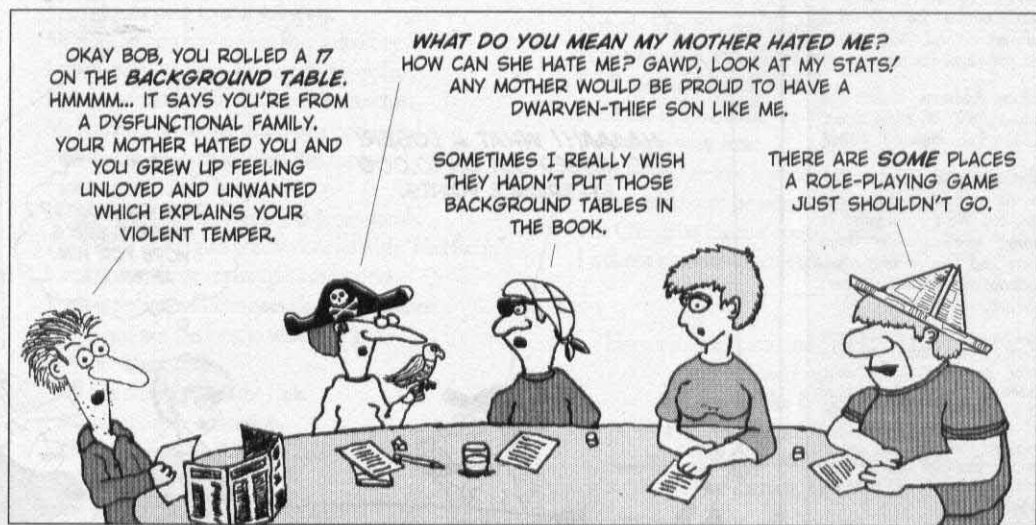
Also at the show were new products from Myrmidon Press, Steve Jackson Games, Five Rings Publishing, West End Games and many other companies. So the next time someone says, "Role-playing is dead!" you can just smile, pat the doomsayer on the back and say, "Sure....sure."

Enjoy the issue! And remember to send in those letters and ideas.

Good Gaming!

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn
April 7, 1997



THAT ENDS THE CAMPAIGN FOLKS!!! REMEMBER, NEXT WEEK WE'RE GOING TO REVIVE OUR **HACKBEARD, THE RPG OF PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS** CAMPAIGN. SO DON'T FORGET TO DIG OUT YOUR OLD CHARACTER SHEETS AND PROPS.



I CAN'T WAIT TO UNFURL THE **JOLLY ROGER** AGAIN! KICKIN' THE BUTT OF A PORTUGUESE MAN-O-WAR IS ALMOST AS FUN AS STOMPIN' ORCS!

I WAS GOING OVER MY CHARACTER LAST NIGHT. I ALMOST FORGOT HOW AWESOME **SCURVY-JACK** WAS. THE MEANEST, TOUGHEST, SEA-DOG TO EVER TILL A RIGGER IN THE SPANISH MAIN!!

SOON WE'LL BE A-HOISTING THE SAILS ON THE OL' **HACK-BETH**!! WE'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT WITH THE OL' GIRL. NO FINER SHIP - NO SIREE!

JUST GIVE ME A TALL SHIP AND A STAR TO GUIDE HER BY.



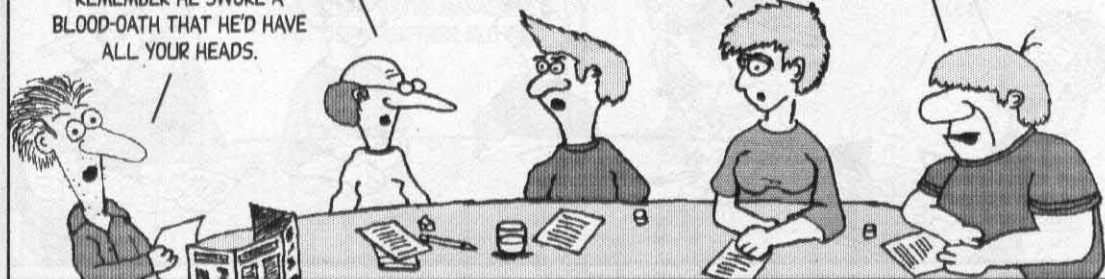
HEY LET'S NOT FORGET THAT DIRTY SCALLYWAG, **BLACKDAWG BARTHOLEMW** IS STILL OUT THERE SOMEWHERE!! AS CAPTAIN, I WANT EVERYONE TO BONE UP ON THEIR NAUTICAL SKILLS BEFORE NEXT WEEK.

JUST THE MENTION OF HIS NAME MAKES MY BLOOD BOIL!! I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CHANCE TO LOCK SABRES HIM AND HIS MANGY CREW AGAIN!!

THAT'S RIGHT! AND IF YOU REMEMBER HE SWORE A BLOOD-OATH THAT HE'D HAVE ALL YOUR HEADS.

ME TOO! HE HUMILIATED US IN OUR LAST MEETING!

I LOST MY HAND TO HIS CABIN BOY, **BARNACLE-TIMMY**!! I PLAN ON SETTling THAT LITTLE SCORE.



THE FOLLOWING WEEK

OKAY, YOU GUYS ABOUT READY TO GET GOING?

NOT UNTIL THIS SORRY-EXCUSE FOR A CREW IS SEA-WORTHY!! OKAY, NOW WHO CAN TELL ME HOW TO TIE A SHEEP-SHANK KNOT? HEY BRIAN, WHAT'S WITH THE GOOFY HAT??

AWH, MY MOM THREW OUT MY PIRATE HAT!! I TRIED TO GET A NEW ONE AT **LONGJOHN FISH AND CHIPS** ON THE WAY TO THE GAME BUT YOU HAVE TO BUY THE **DELUXE FUN MEAL** TO GET ONE AND I ONLY HAD A BUCK FIFTY. SO I JUST MADE ONE OUT OF THE SPORTS SECTION.

WELL IT RUINS THE AMBIENCE OF THE GAME. YOU LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT!

FORGET THE HAT! BOB WHO'S YOUR LITTLE FRIEND?

OH YEAH?? WELL YOU LOOK LIKE A FRY-COOK.

BOB, BEFORE YOU LEAVE, I WANT YOU TO APOLOGIZE TO MY MOM FOR CALLING HER A SERVING-WENCH!

AWWK! GOOFY HAT! GOOFY HAT!



WHAT'S UP WITH THE PARAKEET?? SHE DOESN'T BITE DOES SHE?

IT'S NOT A PARAKEET YOU MAROON!! IT'S MY AUNT GELGA'S PARROT, **HALF-PINT!** I BORROWED HIM FOR THE NIGHT.

THOSE ARE VERY EXPENSIVE BIRDS. JUST BE CAREFUL WITH IT.

ACTUALLY, BOB, I THINK WHAT YOU HAVE THERE IS A **BRAZILIAN-RED MACAW**. THEY'RE FAIRLY COMMON AND ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR GENTILITY!

HEY IT TALKS!!! THAT'S PRETTY KEWL DUDE.

ARR MATEYS!! IT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD THAT WE HAVE A NEW MASCOT FOR THE HACKBETH!!! BUT THE TIDE BE GOING OUT ME THINKS!! ARRR!! LET'S SHOVE OFF SHALL WE?

MAROON!! MAROON!! AWK AWK!



OKAY, LAST TIME WE PLAYED YOU WERE BOOZING IT UP AT **PIRATE'S HAVEN!** A DRUNKEN OLD SAILOR SOLD YOU A MAP TO SOME BURIED TREASURE IF YOU RECALL. IT'S ON AN ISLAND CALLED **FEAR**. IT'S A FIVE DAY TRIP FROM YOUR CURRENT...

THE TREASURE CAN WAIT. IT'S PROBABLY A FAKE MAP ANYWAY. I THINK WE'LL JUST SET SAIL FOR **DIABLO ATOLL!** WE'LL BE LOOKING FOR FAT, LOW-RIDING MERCHANT SHIPS ALONG THE WAY THAT WE CAN AMBUSH!

AHOY MATEYS!!! IT'S HUNTING TIME! REMEMBER THAT **SPANISH MAN-O-WAR** WE BEAT INTO SUBMISSION THE LAST TIME WE PLAYED?? WE RULE!!

MAN-O-WAR?? I THINK THEY WERE SIMPLE PILGRIMS DAVE. NOTHING TO BRAG ABOUT.

AWK! FRY COOK, FRY COOK! AWK!



PILGRIMS?? GIVE ME A BREAK. SARA WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT THEY WERE LYING? IF THEY WERE INNOCENT PILGRIMS WHY WOULD THEY BE SO HEAVILY ARMED TO THE GILLS?? HUH?

THEY MUST HAVE THOUGHT WE WERE STUPID!! JUST BECAUSE THEY THREW ON A COUPLE OF CHEAP ROBES, AND DANGLED A FEW HOLY SYMBOLS AROUND THEIR NECKS THEY THOUGHT WE'D BUY INTO THEIR COVER STORY. HA! DO YOU REMEMBER HOW THEY FRANTICALLY WAVED THOSE WHITE FLAGS WHEN WE WERE BROADSIDING THEM??

I DON'T THINK TWO HUNTING MUSKETS AND A FILET KNIFE CONSTITUTES 'HEAVILY ARMED,' DAVE.

AARR! WHO CARES? IT MATTERS NOT. WE KICKED THEIR BUTTS FROM NOON TO SUNRISE MATEYS AND WE DIDN'T TAKE A POINT OF DAMAGE!!! AARRRR.

REMEMBER? HOW CAN I FORGET?

AWK!! WHITE FLAGS. AWK!



TWO HOURS LATER...

YAWN. GUYS, FOR THE LAST TIME YOU DON'T FIND ANY MERCHANT SHIPS. YOU'RE RUNNING LOW ON FOOD AND WATER. IF YOU DON'T MAKE ANOTHER SUPPLY RUN SOON YOU'LL HAVE TO ROLL ON THE SCURVY-TABLES AGAIN. THIS TIME WITH A -5 MODIFIER.

MAN, THERE REALLY SEEMS TO BE A LULL IN THESE SHIPPING LANES.

AWK, THIS SUCKS, AWK!

THIS SUCKS!! SIX WEEKS WE'VE BEEN LAYING IN AMBUSH ALONG THESE REEFS EVERY TIME A SHIP COMES INTO SIGHT IT TURNS-ABOUT AND HIGH TAILS IT.

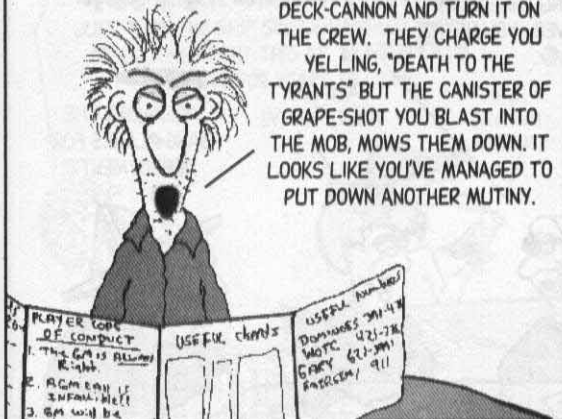
WELL MAYBE PAINTING THE SHIP BLOOD RED AND RIGGING IT WITH BLACK SAILS WASN'T SO SMART GUYS. OUR SHIP KINDA SCREAMS OUT AT YA.

THAT'S THE POINT SARA. WE WANT TO STRIKE FEAR IN THOSE WE MEET.



AN HOUR LATER

OKAY, BRIAN, YOU MANAGE TO CUT THE TIE-DOWNS ON THE DECK-CANNON AND TURN IT ON THE CREW. THEY CHARGE YOU YELLING, "DEATH TO THE TYRANTS" BUT THE CANISTER OF GRAPE-SHOT YOU BLAST INTO THE MOB, MOWS THEM DOWN. IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE MANAGED TO PUT DOWN ANOTHER MUTINY.



WELL, I GUESS I'LL CLIMB UP THE MIZZENMAST AND CUT BOB DOWN. I'LL MIX UP ANOTHER BATCH OF WHALE-OIL AND LYE AND TRY TO GET THE TAR AND FEATHERS OFF OF HIM BEFORE TREATING THOSE LASH MARKS.

THANKS SARA! I THOUGHT I WAS A GONER THAT TIME. LET'S ROUND UP THE SURVIVING CREW MEMBERS AND ADMINISTER A LITTLE HIGH-SEAS JUSTICE!

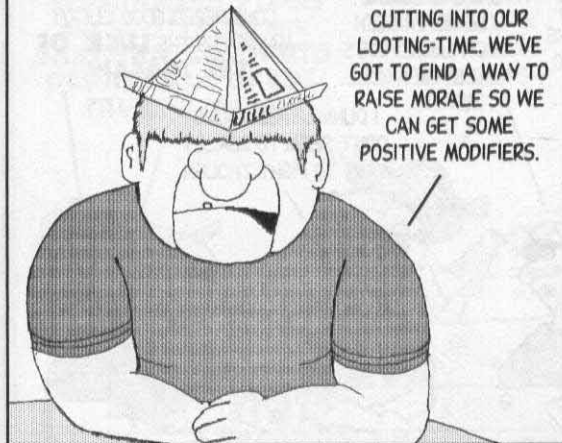
CAN SOMEBODY LET ME OUT OF THE CARGO HOLD?



AWK, AWK, TAR AND FEATHERS.

WELL, WE'D BETTER GO GET THAT FOOD AND WATER AND RECRUIT A NEW CREW. THESE MUTINIES ARE REALLY

CUTTING INTO OUR LOOTING-TIME. WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO RAISE MORALE SO WE CAN GET SOME POSITIVE MODIFIERS.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? MORALE IS GREAT. THE CREW IS JUST FRUSTRATED BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANY SHIPS TO ATTACK!

YOU'RE TOO LAX ON THEM **SCURVY JACK!** YOU SPOIL THEM. LOOK WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU CUT THEIR WATER RATIONS - THEY WENT BESERK!! NO DISCIPLINE.

WE'VE BEEN FEEDING THEM OATS AND WATER FOR SIX WEEKS!

HEY, THEY GET A STRIP OF SALTED-PORK ON SUNDAY!! UNGRATEFUL WRETCHES.



MANY HOURS LATER...

ALRIGHT **FINE!** A CREWMEMBER IN THE CROW'S NEST REPORTS HE HAS SPOTTED A SHIP ON THE HORIZON HEADING YOUR WAY. IT SEEMS TO BE A MERCHANT TYPE VESSEL AND RIDES LOW IN THE WATER.

YES! WE'RE RICH! HOIST THE JOLLY ROGER AND RAISE THE MIZZENMAST!! POWDER AND LOAD THE MAIN BATTERY!!

AYE, AYE SIR!! BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES!
PREPARE TO JIBE!!

BOSUN, TACK 15 DEGREES TO THE AFT LEEWARD PORT! LET'S HOPE THIS WIND STAYS AT OUR BACKS!!



YOU'RE MAKING INCREDIBLY GOOD SPEED!! THERE'S A GOOD STRONG WIND PUSHING YOU ALONG. YOU QUICKLY CLOSE THE DISTANCE ON THE OTHER SHIP. YOUR **VOLLEYS OF GRAPESHOT** ARE REALLY HAMMERING THE ENEMY SHIP'S SAILS AND RIGGINGS. THEY'VE YET TO RETURN FIRE, HOWEVER. YOU NOTICE **THEY ARE WAVING A WHITE FLAG.**

FIRST MATE JUANITA!!! ORDER THE CREW TO THROW GRAPPLING HOOKS!!
PREPARE TO BOARD!!!

HO HO!!! SO THEY FIND THE TASTE OF SCURVY JACK'S PASSION FOR BATTLE A BITTER BREW EH???

JUST WAIT TIL WE CLOSE FOR **BOARDING.**

AYE SIR!!
HOOKS AWAY!!

PREPARING THE GANG-PLANKS FOR DEPLOYMENT!!!



SECONDS LATER...

INCREDIBLE ROLLS BOB!!! YOU SUCCEEDED IN DOING A DOUBLE SUMMERSAULT FROM THE HACKBETH'S RIGGING. GRABBING A ROPE YOU SWING WITH INCREDIBLE SKILL AND GRACE OVER ONTO THE OTHER SHIP WHERE YOU LAND DEFTLY ON THE DECK.

GEEZE-LOUTEEZE!!
I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH LUCK!!! BOB'S REALLY ON A ROLL.

YOU KNOW THE RULEBOOK MENTIONS THAT PARROTS WERE CONSIDERED GOOD LUCK!!! MAYBE IT'S THE **LUCK OF THE MACAW!**

I'M FIRING A MUSKET WITH MY LEFT HAND AND SWINGING MY SABRE WITH MY RIGHT HAND. **YES!!!**
I ROLLED TWO MORE **NATURAL TWENTIES!!!!**

I DUNNO. THESE GUYS DON'T SEEM TO REALLY WANT TO FIGHT THOUGH.



BOB YOU KILL THREE SAILORS WITH A **SINGLE SHOT** FROM YOUR MUSKET. THEY GO DOWN LIKE DOMINOES. YOU ALSO MANAGE TO KILL TWO MORE WITH **SABRE-BLOWS**.

HEY YOU DIRTY SCALLYWAG!! LEAVE SOME KILLING FOR THE CREW. WE DON'T WANT ANOTHER MUTINY ON OUR HANDS.

YES!!! YES!! IT'S THE LUCK OF THE MACAW!!!
I'M UNSTOPPABLE!!

FIVE CRITICAL HITS IN A ROW??? WOW, BOB!! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD IT IN YOU. GREAT JOB!!!

HEY BOB, I'M HANDING DOWN MY TEN-SIDER. RUB IT ON THE BIRD'S TAIL FEATHERS. MAYBE SOME LUCK WILL RUB OFF.

AWK. AWK DIRTY SCALLYWAG! AWK.



THE REST OF THE ENEMY CREW ARE SO HORRIFIED BY BOB'S **TERRIFYING DEMONSTRATION OF BLOOD-LETTING** THAT THEY CHOOSE TO **JUMP OVERBOARD**. THEY'D RATHER TAKE THEIR CHANCES IN THE **CHOPPY, SHARK-INFESTED WATERS**, RATHER THAN FACE **BOB'S WRATH!!!**

YOU HEAR THAT??? SCURVY JACK JUST TOOK THE SHIP SINGLE-HANDED!! THEY'LL BE TALKING ABOUT THIS AT **PIRATE'S HAVEN** FOR YEARS TO COME.

DAMN!! I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO ROLL FOR A TO-HIT.

WELL NOTHING FOR THE REST OF US TO DO BUT SEARCH THE CARGO-HOLDS. WHAT DO WE FIND B.A.??

AWK. GOOFY HAT! GOOFY HAT!



OKAY YOU LOOK IN THE HOLDS AND FIND THE HOLDS ARE **COMPLETELY FULL!!!** YOU FIND HUNDREDS OF CRATES AND BASKETS FILLED WITH **BANANAS, COCONUTS, PAPAYAS AND GRAPE-FRUIT!!!** (SNICKER)

SORRY GUYS! NOTHING BUT TROPICAL FRUITS!!! YOU SIMPLY STUMBLED ACROSS A COLONIAL SUPPLY SHIP TAKING GOODS TO PORT.

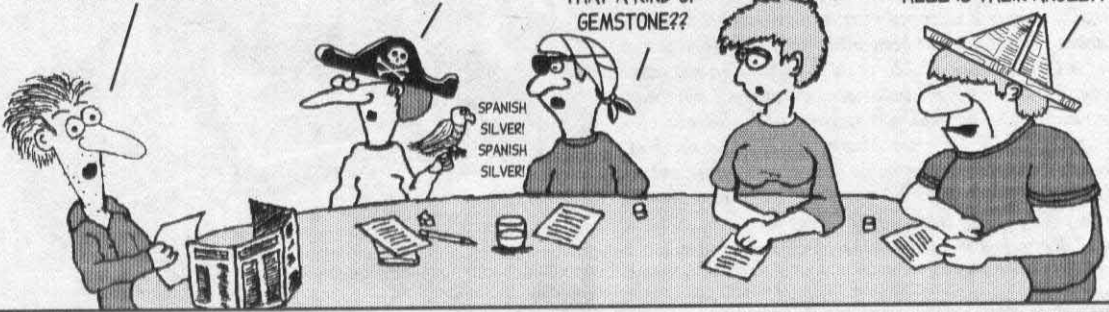
YEAH, REAL FUNNY!! WHAT'S REALLY IN THE HOLD?? GOLD? JEWELS?? SPANISH SILVER??

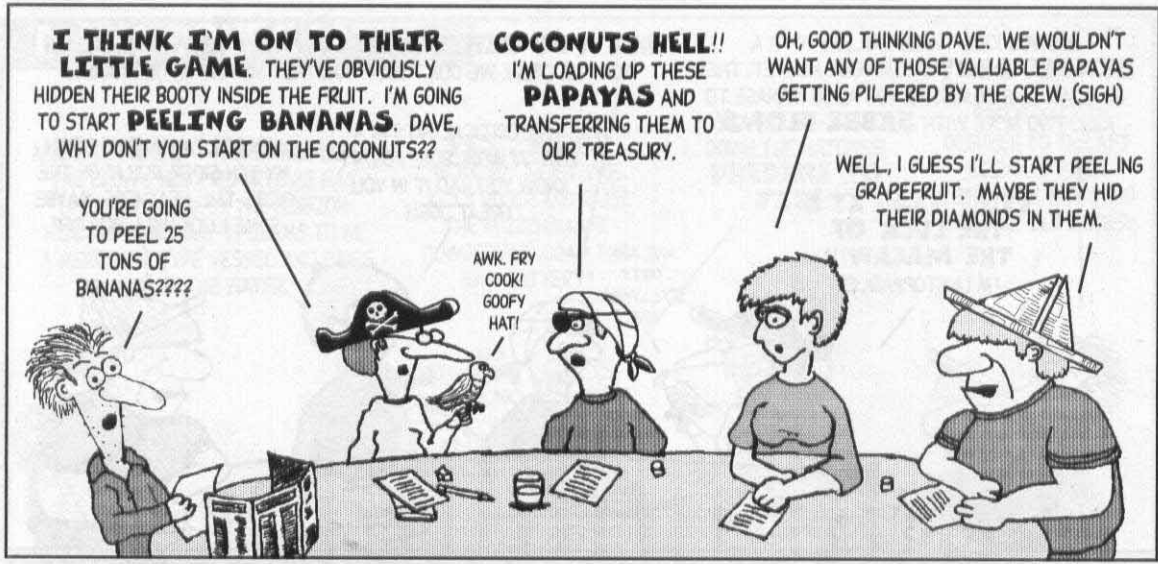
THAT EXPLAINS THE LACK OF FIGHTING SPIRIT IN THE CREW. NOBODY WANTS TO DIE FOR A BUNCH OF BANANAS.

PAPAYAS?? IS THAT A KIND OF GEMSTONE??

FRUIT??? WHAT THE HELL IS THEIR ANGLE??

SPANISH SILVER! SPANISH SILVER!





I THINK I'M ON TO THEIR LITTLE GAME. THEY'VE OBVIOUSLY HIDDEN THEIR BOOTY INSIDE THE FRUIT. I'M GOING TO START **PEELING BANANAS.** DAVE, WHY DON'T YOU START ON THE COCONUTS??

COCONUTS HELL!! I'M LOADING UP THESE **PAPAYAS** AND TRANSFERRING THEM TO OUR TREASURY.

OH, GOOD THINKING DAVE. WE WOULDN'T WANT ANY OF THOSE VALUABLE PAPAYAS GETTING PILFERED BY THE CREW. (SIGH)

YOU'RE GOING TO PEEL 25 TONS OF BANANAS?????

AWK. FRY COOK! GOOFY HAT!

WELL, I GUESS I'LL START PEELING GRAPEFRUIT. MAYBE THEY HID THEIR DIAMONDS IN THEM.

TWO HOURS LATER...



OKAY THAT FINISHES OFF THE LAST CRATE OF BANANAS BOB - **YOU FOUND ZIP!!!** DAVE, YOU MANAGED TO TRANSFER THE LAST **BASKET OF PAPAYA'S** TO THE HACKBETH.

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!! **NOTHING?????** WHAT A **PATHETIC EXCUSE** THESE GUYS WERE FOR **MERCHANTS.**

THIS SUCKS!!! I DON'T THINK B.A. PUT **MUCH EFFORT** INTO THIS ADVENTURE. LIKE THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING BETTER TO DO THAN **HAUL SOME STUPID FRUIT AROUND.**

GUYS, MAYBE WE SHOULD PULL OUT THAT TREASURE MAP WE FOUND AND CHECK IT OUT.

ARE YOU CRAZY??? WITH ALL THIS FOOD WE CAN SIT OUT HERE FOR MONTHS LOOKING FOR SHIPS TO AMBUSH.

A Moment from Kenzer and Company's History

A lot of people have been curious as to how Knights of the Dinner Table is brought together month to month. As, Dave Kenzer explains, "When we approached Jolly about coming on board with Kenzer and Company, we offered him what we thought were some pretty lucrative stock options and perk packages.

We were shocked when he kept declining our offers. Finally, during a weekend visit to his house, Brian Jelke learned, that Jolly had been using an old Etch-A-Sketch and a Commodore Vic-20 to do his layout on the comic book. I think the light bulb went on over all our heads simultaneously. We had just recently upgraded our own computers while doing the Monty Python and the Holy Grail Card Game so we took a gamble. We pulled out the old Radio Shack TRS 80 Computer and cassette data drive from our storage room and dangled it as a carrot to lure Jolly on board. It worked! He was tickled to death to get it. When we told him over the phone it had a whopping 16K of memory, I think I actually heard him cry."

A week later the contracts were signed and Jolly received the computer of his dreams in the mail. ☐



Jolly learning how to tap into the wondrous powers of his new computer.

OKAY GUYS, YOU ARE MOVING THROUGH THE **CAVERNS OF ETERNAL PERIL!** YOU NEED TO FIND OUT WHERE THE **EVIL DEATH-WEAVER'S** HIDDEN LAIR IS, SNEAK IN, FIND THE **CRYSTAL HEART OF EVERDREAD** AND RETRIEVE IT. IT IS RUMORED THAT ONLY THE FEEBLE-MINDED GOBLIN, **ROOFUS** KNOWS THE SECRET ENTRANCE INTO THE LAIR.

YEAH THAT WAS EDMUND FINLEY'S FIRST FREELANCE ADVENTURE FOR GARY JACKSON. IT WAS A VERY WEAK OFFERING FOR THE MODULE-B SERIES.

WELL LOOKS LIKE A STANDARD **IN-OUT DUNGEON CRAWL** WITH THE USUAL **PUZZLES** AND **QUEST-ITEM TRAPPINGS.**

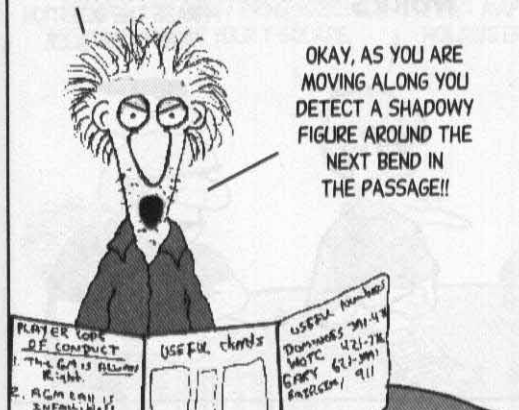
YEAH SOUNDS SIMILAR TO **MODULE B6, CAVES OF TREACHERY.**

EDMUND GOOFED ON THAT ONE. THE MAJOR VILLAIN WAS SORELY UNDER-POWERED. HARDLY A CHALLENGE. (YAWN).



FOR **CRYING OUT LOUD!!!** WILL YOU GUYS PLEASE GIVE THIS MODULE A CHANCE? **HUH???** THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MODULE B6.

OKAY, AS YOU ARE MOVING ALONG YOU DETECT A SHADOWY FIGURE AROUND THE NEXT BEND IN THE PASSAGE!!



PLAYER LOGS OF CONDUCT
1. THE GM IS ALWAYS RIGHT.
2. AGM EAT IT UP! HEH!!

USEFUL THINGS

USEFUL NUMBERS
DORMERS 311-4
MOTC 421-7K
GARY 671-3M1
PATERSON 911

I READY MY CROSSBOW OF SLAYING!!!

UNSHEATHING MY **HACK-MASTER +12!!!** READY TO RUMBLE HERE!!

OKAY, AS IT MOVES CLOSER YOU SEE IT IS A GOBLIN. HE IS SEVERELY WOUNDED AND WEARING A BLOODY T-SHIRT THAT SAYS **ROOFUS!!**

I GOT A COUPLE OF **MAXIMUS-FIRE-BALLS** COMING ON LINE GUYS. JUST IN CASE.

UH...GUYS...



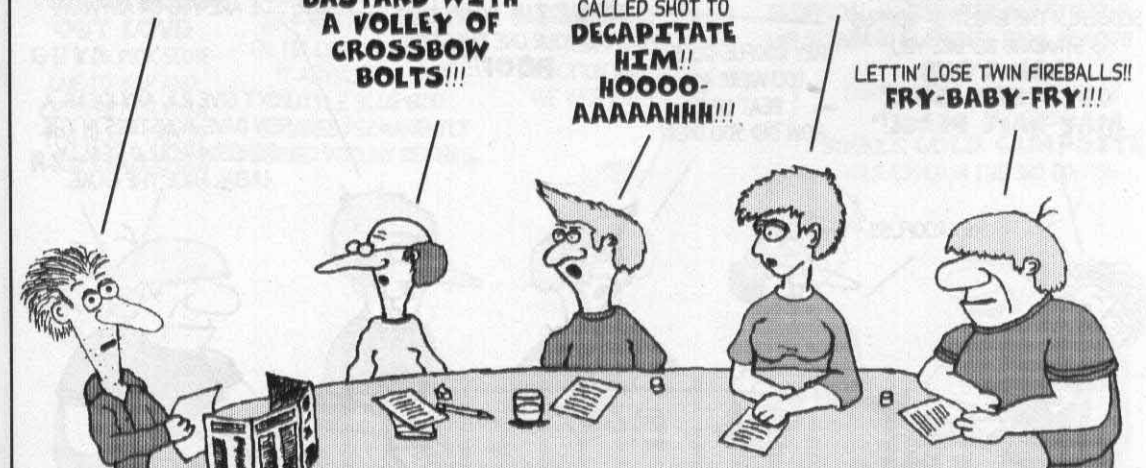
ROOFUS WAVES AND...

I PEPPER THE BASTARD WITH A VOLLEY OF CROSSBOW BOLTS!!!

I'M MAKING A CALLED SHOT TO **DECAPITATE HIM!!**
HOOOO-AAAAHHH!!!!

WA...WA...WHAT????

LETTIN' LOSE TWIN FIREBALLS!! **FRY-BABY-FRY!!!**



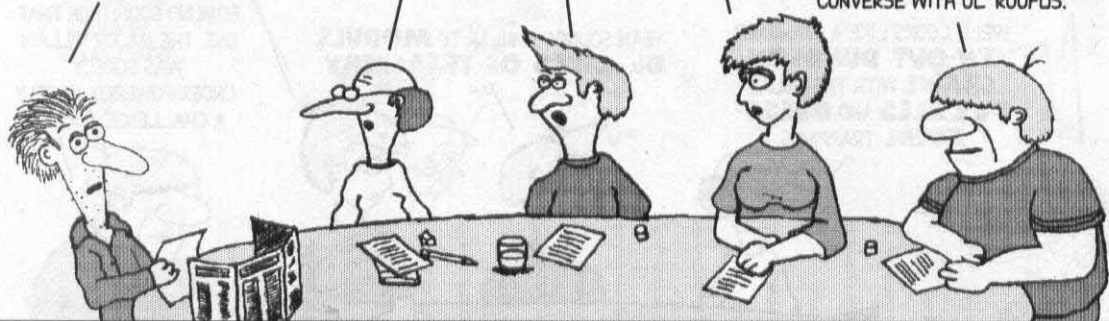
TOO BAD MY LITTLE **TRIGGER-HAPPY WISE-GUYS!!** **ROOFUS IS DEAD** AND WITH HIM YOUR CHANCES OF EVER FINDING THE **DEATH-WEAVER'S SECRET LAIR!**

NO FAIR!!! THAT WAS A DIRTY TRICK!!

GOOD JOB GUYS!!!

WAIT A MINUTE. ACCORDING TO PAGE 253, PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE HACKMASTER RULES THERE IS A NEW CLERICAL ABILITY FOR SPEAKING WITH THE DEAD. I THINK THAT MEANS SARA COULD CONVERSE WITH OL' ROOFUS.

YEAH!!! I FELT THREATENED!!!



OH, ALL RIGHT. SARA CAN ATTEMPT TO CAST THE SPELL BUT THE RULES SAY THERE IS ONLY A ONE PERCENT CHANCE OF SUCCESS. SO GO FOR IT!!

COME ON SARA!!! **YOU CAN DO IT!!**

I WONDER WHO OL' ROOFUS WAS RUNNING AWAY FROM?

YES!!! GAWD YES!!! I ROLLED DOUBLE-ZEROES!!! THE SPELL WORKS!!!!

OKAY, NOW REMEMBER YOU ONLY GET **ONE QUESTION.**

GOOD POINT! LET'S PHRASE THE QUESTION VERY CAREFULLY.



A CLOUD OF BLUE SMOKE APPEARS BEFORE THE PARTY. SUDDENLY THE GHOST OF ROOFUS IS STANDING BEFORE YOU. **"ASK YOUR QUESTION SO I MAY HAVE PEACE!"**

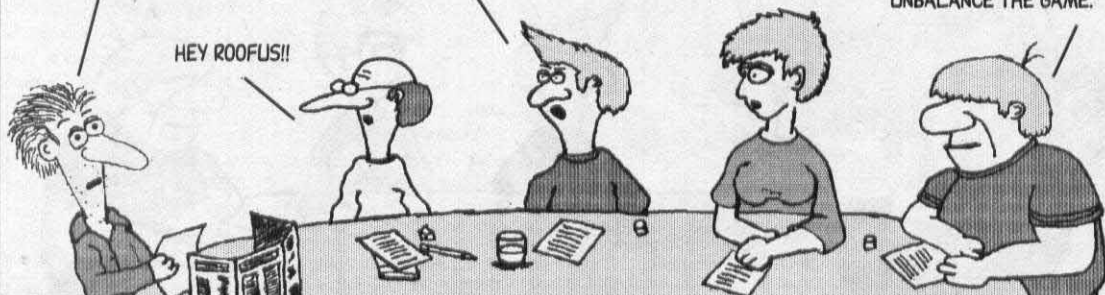
HEY ROOFUS-DUDE!!! YOU WERE ALL BEAT UP!! HOW DID YOU DIE??

YOU GUYS KILLED ME YOU IDIOT!!! SORRY THAT WAS YOUR ONE QUESTION. **POOF!!**

NOOOOOOO!!!! DAVE WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON ANYWAY!!

DON'T GIVE B.A. ANY IDEAS. A FEW DAVE-MONSTERS IN THE DUNGEON WOULD REALLY UNBALANCE THE GAME.

HEY ROOFUS!!



Wherever You Go - There You Are

OK, YOU'VE JUST ENTERED THE **NON-EUCLIDIAN LABYRINTH** OF WRAITH-LORD, MONFYR! BETTER GET OUT SOME EXTRA GRAPH PAPER BOB, THIS IS A REALLY **COMPLEX LAYOUT!**

I'M SICK OF MAPPING! I MAP EVERY WEEK AND I'M BURNT. I WANNA KEEP TRACK OF TREASURE AND EXPERIENCE FOR A CHANGE. LET SOMEONE ELSE MAP TONIGHT.

HEY, YOU HAFTA MAP, DUDE! YOU'RE THE PARTY THIEF. **THIEVES MAKE THE BEST MAPPERS.** EVERYONE KNOWS THAT.

I'M SURE NOT GOING TO BE THE **MAP-MONKEY!** AND I'M NOT GIVING UP TRACKING TREASURE EITHER.

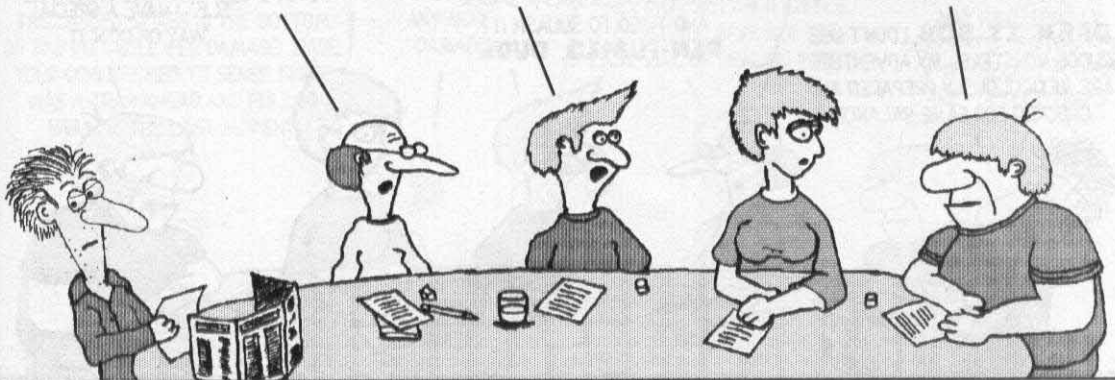
I ENJOY MAPPING! I DON'T MIND DOING IT BOB!



NO OFFENSE SARA BUT YOU TAKE WAY TOO MUCH TIME MAPPING. BESIDES YOU DIDN'T BRING YOUR FRENCH CURVE OR YOUR T-SQUARE.

COME ON BRIAN, GIVE UP THE TREASURE LIST SO YOU CAN START MAPPING! YOU'RE HOLDING UP THE GAME.

NO WAY! LAST TIME SOMEONE ELSE KEPT TRACK OF THE TREASURE WE GOT SCREWED BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T ACCURATELY LIST EVERYTHING WE FOUND.



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD GUYS, PICK SOMEONE TO MAP AND LET'S GET ON WITH THE GAME. THIS IS **RIDICULOUS!**

COME ON DAVE. BE THE MAP-MASTER TONIGHT!! I'M TELLING YA I CAN'T DO IT ANYMORE. I HAVE LITTLE BLUE GRID SQUARES PERMANENTLY BURNED INTO MY RETINAS.

THE HELL WITH MAPPING! I HAVE A KEEN SENSE OF DIRECTION AND RECALL. WE WON'T GET LOST.

I'M AN EXCELLENT MAPPER! I KNOW ALL 64 OFFICIAL HACKMASTER MAP SYMBOLS AND STANDARD ELEMENTS FROM MEMORY!

THAT'S GREAT SARA. ACTUALLY THERE ARE 65 OFFICIAL SYMBOLS. **COLD CAMP SITE** WAS ADDED IN THE 3RD EDITION.



OH NO! DON'T EVEN SUGGEST GOING IN WITH-OUT MAPPING. I TOLD YOU THIS WAS A PARTICULARLY **COMPLEX AREA**. YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED THE LAST TIME YOU FAILED TO MAP PROPERLY?

WE WERE DOING JUST FINE MAPPING BY MEMORY UNTIL WE ASKED DIRECTIONS FROM THAT BLIND ORC AT THAT ROADSIDE STAND. IT WAS HIS WHACKED-DIRECTIONS TO THE FOREST CITADEL THAT GOT US LOST.

AND BRIAN WAS PAYING THE PIZZA DUDE WHEN WE TOOK THAT LEFT TURN AT THE FORK IN THE ROAD. SO WE ENDED UP WITH TWO MENTAL MAPS.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, I HAD TIME TO LEARN THREE NEW LANGUAGES WHILE I WAITED FOR YOU TO EMERGE FROM THE FOREST.

I STILL SUSPECT THERE WERE SOME TELEPORT TRAPS ON THAT ROAD. REMEMBER HOW TIME SEEMED TO FLY BETWEEN MILE MARKER 64 AND 65?



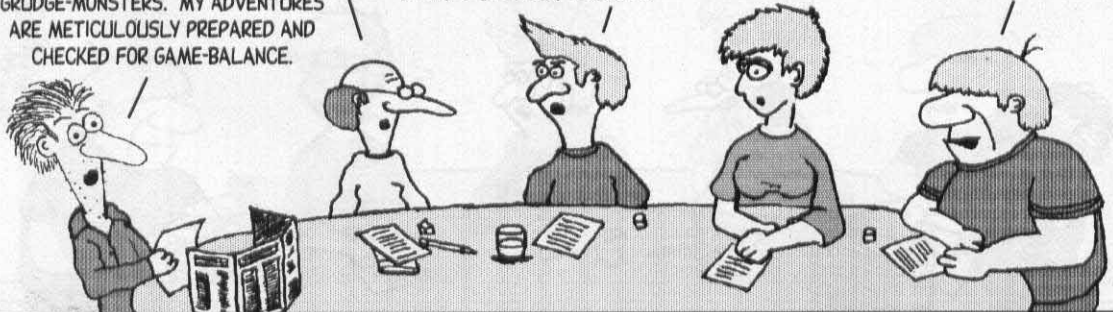
DAVE, YOU BETTER MAP. IF WE DON'T AT LEAST GO THROUGH A TOKEN EFFORT AT MAPPING B.A. IS GOING TO START THROWING **GRUDGE-MONSTERS** AT US TO PROVE HIS POINT.

DARN IT BOB, I DON'T USE GRUDGE-MONSTERS. MY ADVENTURES ARE METICULOUSLY PREPARED AND CHECKED FOR GAME-BALANCE.

MAN, I'M TELLIN YA I DON'T LIKE BEING THE MAP-MONKEY. THE TOXIC-FUMES FROM THE BLACK MARKER MAKES ME GOOFY! REMEMBER WHEN I THOUGHT YOUR TEN-SIDER WAS A SPIDER AND TRIED TO SQUASH IT? **PEN-FUMES, DUDE!!**

CONSIDER IT A RECREATIONAL-HAZARD DAVE. GOES WITH THE GAME.

WELL YOU CAN USE MY NO.2 GAMES PIT PENCIL. BUT I WANT IT BACK! AND IF THE LEAD BREAKS DON'T TRY TO SHARPEN IT YOURSELF. I HAVE A SPECIAL WAY OF DOIN' IT.



LATER THAT NIGHT...

OKAY, AS YOU ARE MOVING DOWN THE CORRIDOR YOU HEAR A LOUD CLICK. THE FLOOR BENEATH YOU SUDDENLY GIVES WAY AND THE ENTIRE PARTY PLUNGES INTO A TEN-FOOT PIT. EVERYONE TAKES 10 POINTS OF DAMAGE FROM THE FALL AND AN ADDITIONAL 30 POINTS FROM SPIKE DAMAGE.

WOOAAHHHH!! THAT'S THE THIRD PIT WE'VE FALLEN INTO. THIS PLACE IS A DEATH-TRAP. WE'RE GOING TO BE CONSTANTLY CHECKING FOR TRAPS.

DAVE, MAKE SURE YOU MARK THAT PIT ON THE MAP. WE MIGHT HAVE TO COME OUT THE WAY WE WENT IN.

HMMMM...DID WE MAKE A RIGHT OR A LEFT AT THAT LAST INTERSECTION?

ANOTHER PIT??? GREAT!! WE JUST LOST THREE MORE VIALS OF HEALING POTION FROM THE FALL.



SARA, YOU TAKE AN ADDITIONAL 12 POINTS OF DAMAGE WHEN DAVE'S COW LANDS ON YOU. SORRY.

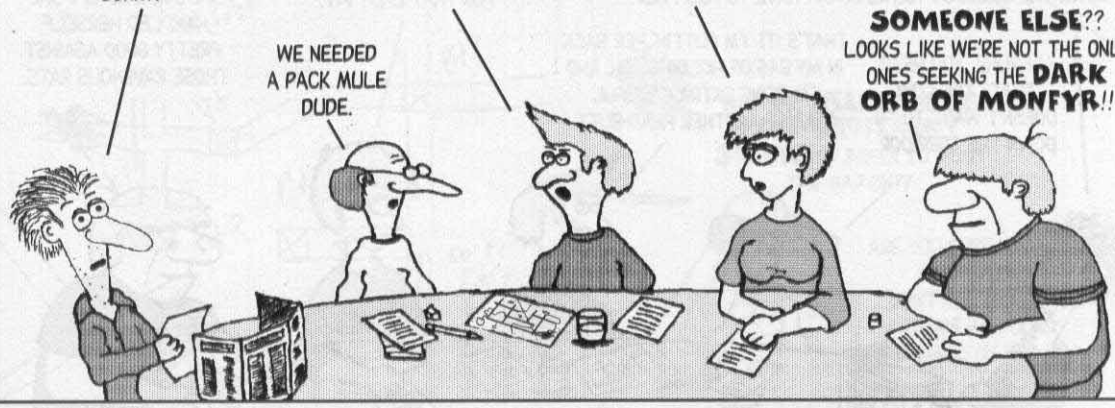
DAMN IT!! I KNEW I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU GUYS TALK ME INTO BRINGING **CHELSEIE** INTO THE DUNGEON.

B.A., BEFORE WE CLIMB OUT OF THIS PIT I'M EXAMINING IT. WHAT DO I SEE?

YOU SEE A LOT OF **BROKEN GLASS**, SOME **FRESH BLOOD** AND BITS OF **DEBRIS**. LOOKS LIKE **SOMEONE ELSE** HAS RECENTLY FALLEN INTO THE PIT.

SOMEONE ELSE?? LOOKS LIKE WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES SEEKING THE **DARK ORB OF MONFYR!!**

WE NEEDED A PACK MULE DUDE.



A LITTLE LATER...

OKAY, AS YOU PROCEED NORTH THE FLOOR SUDDENLY DROPS OUT FROM BENEATH YOU. YOU'VE FALLEN INTO **ANOTHER** 10 FOOT PIT. YOU LAND ON THE **JAGGED SPIKES** IN THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT. ROLL FOR DAMAGE! DAVE, YOUR COW SEEMED TO SENSE THERE WAS A TRAP AHEAD AND PULLED AWAY AT THE LAST MOMENT.

CRIPES THERE SURE ARE A LOT OF STUPID PITS IN THIS LABYRINTH. I CAN'T AFFORD ANY MORE DAMAGE!

THANK HEAVENS CHELSIE DIDN'T FALL IN A PIT AGAIN. IT'S ALMOST AS IF SHE **KNEW** THERE WAS A TRAP HERE.

I KNOW YOU'RE ATTACHED TO HER DAVE BUT I'M A LITTLE UPSET YOU GAVE HER THE LAST VIAL OF HEALING POTION.

DAVE, I THINK YOUR COW MAY HAVE FINALLY DEMONSTRATED WHAT ONE OF IT'S SECRET POWERS ARE - **DETECT-TRAPS**.



LATER STILL...

ONCE AGAIN YOU LAND IN A **BLOODY HEAP** AT THE BOTTOM OF A TEN FOOT PIT WITH SPIKES. THE FLOOR OF THE PIT IS COVERED WITH **FRESH BLOOD** AND **BROKEN GLASS**.

THIS SUCKS!!! WE'RE SPENDING ALL OUR TIME FALLING IN THESE STUPID PITS.

DAVE ARE YOU GETTING THIS ALL MARKED DOWN ON THE MAP? **DAVE??**

UH...UH...HMMMM. WHERE THE HELL ARE WE??

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!! MONFYR WENT **FREAKIN-BANANAS** WITH THE PITS IN THIS LABYRINTH!!



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

I'M TELLING YOU, PRODDING THE COW TO MOVE OUT AHEAD OF THE GROUP ISN'T WORKING. SHE'S REALLY GETTING UPSET. IF YOU WANT CHELSIE TO PROCEED DOWN THE CORRIDOR YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO PUSH HER.

DAVE DID YOU INDICATE THAT LAST TURN ON THE MAP? AND I DON'T THINK I SEE THE SPIKED-PIT SYMBOL FOR THAT LAST PIT.

HMMMM...I WONDER WHAT IN THE WORLD SHE'S AFRAID OF? SHE HANDLED HERSELF PRETTY GOOD AGAINST THOSE RAVENOUS RATS.

UH HUH!! YOU HEAR THAT? THE COW DOESN'T WANT TO GO DOWN THE CORRIDOR.

THAT'S IT! I'M PUTTIN' HER BACK IN MY BAG OF HOLDING. OH, AND I'M BEING EXTRA CAREFUL AGAINST ANOTHER HEAD-BUTT.



OKAY, AS YOU PROCEED NORTH THE FLOOR SUDDENLY DROPS AWAY. DOWN YOU FALL INTO A 10 FOOT PIT WITH JAGGED SPIKES SET IN THE BOTTOM. ROLL FOR DAMAGE. YOU NOTICE THAT THE FLOOR OF THIS PIT IS SPATTERED WITH FRESH BLOOD, BITS OF BROKEN ARMOR AND EQUIPMENT, ETC. BLOODY HAND AND FOOT PRINTS COVER THE SIDE OF THE PIT WHERE APPARENTLY SEVERAL PEOPLE CRAWLED THEIR WAY OUT.

DAVE YOU DIDN'T MAP THAT LAST HALLWAY. (SIGH). UH...B.A., I'M SCRATCHING MY INITIALS ON THE WALL OF THE PIT.

NORTH?? WEREN'T WE MOVING EAST??

MAYBE THE COW WAS TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING.

THOSE MYSTERIOUS TRACKS AGAIN! AND FRESH BLOOD TOO?



MOMENTS LATER...

OKAY, AS YOU PROCEED NORTH THE FLOOR SUDDENLY DROPS OUT FROM BENEATH YOU. YOU'VE FALLEN INTO YET **ANOTHER** 10 FOOT PIT...

YES SARA. YOU FIND YOUR **INITIALS** EXACTLY WHERE YOU SCRATCHED THEM INTO THE STONE.

I'M LOOKING FOR MY INITIALS ON THE WALL OF THE PIT, B.A. DO I FIND THEM?

I KNEW IT!!! DAVE LET ME SEE THAT MAP.

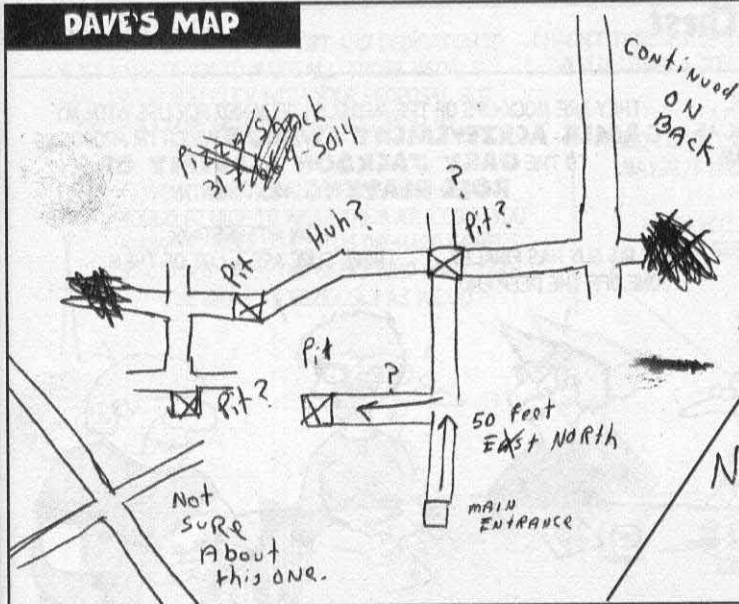
FERKIN DING BLAST!!! THE SAME DAMN PIT??? WE'VE BEEN FALLING INTO THE SAME DAMN PIT???

WELL THAT SHOULD JUST ABOUT FINISH OFF MY CHARACTER. **SHEESH!!**

IS THAT A WINDOW OR A DOOR?

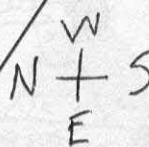


DAVE'S MAP



LOOK AT THIS CRAP!!! HE'S GOT HIS **COMPASS POINTS** ALL SCREWED UP.

WHY THE **HELL** DID HE USE **FIVE DIFFERENT SHEETS** OF PAPER TO DRAW THE MAP ON??



ARE YOU SURE WE'RE NOT MISSING ONE?? I DON'T SEE ANY OF THE ROOMS WE FOUND INDICATED ON THE MAP.

DUDE, DON'T TAKE THIS PERSONAL, BUT YOUR **MAPPING SKILLS SUCK!!!**

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY MAP. YOU JUST CAN'T READ IT BECAUSE I'VE WRITTEN IT IN **SHORTHAND**.

WE MIGHT BUY THAT EXCUSE IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE FACT WE'VE BEEN TRAVELING IN CIRCLES FOR THE LAST FOUR HOURS.

SHORTHAND??? THERE ARE NO REFERENCES TO **SHORTHAND MAPPING TECHNIQUES** IN THE HACKMASTER BOOKS MISTER. PULL A STUNT LIKE THIS AGAIN AND I'LL BE TEACHING YOU HOW TO **READ KNUCKLES**.



NEXT WEEK

OKAY SARA, THIS CORRIDOR IS EXACTLY 9.75 FEET WIDE AND 11 FEET THREE INCHES IN HEIGHT. DOES THAT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION? OH, AND THE FLOOR RISES 3/4 OF AN INCH EVERY 15 FEET.

THAT WAS THE LAST OF THE SURVEY MARKERS SARA. YOU WANT I SHOULD BREAK OPEN A NEW BUNDLE??

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! THIS IS TAKING 500000 LONG TO MAP. CAN'T WE JUST GET GOING?

JUST KEEP TAKING POINT, **PIT BOY!!!** WE'RE RIGHT BEHIND YOU.

HAS ANYONE SEEN MY COMPASS?



I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO TONIGHT'S GAME. THINGS ARE REALLY HEATING UP. LAST WEEK, AS YOU REMEMBER, WE WERE...UH...HMMMMMM. BRIAN? WHAT ARE THOSE **SHINY THINGS** ON YOUR SHIRT??

THEY ARE MOCK-UPS OF THE MEDALS I DESIGNED FOR USE WITH MY **GAMER ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS** WHICH I'M PROPOSING TO THE **GARY JACKSON ACADEMY OF ROLE-PLAYING** NEXT MONTH.

HE LOOKS LIKE **ADMIRAL DEWEY** SITTING DOWN THERE.

THE BIG GUY HAS FINALLY GONE OFF THE DEEP END.

HOW INTERESTING. THERE SURE ARE A LOT OF THEM.



THEY ARE DESIGNED TO BE WORN BENEATH CONVENTION NAME TAGS AND AT OTHER FORMAL GAMING EVENTS. EACH MEDAL HAS A UNIQUE COLOR AND PATTERN WHICH INDICATES WHAT TYPE OF MEDAL IT IS.

SO WHAT'S THE LITTLE YELLOW RIBBON WITH THE SILVER BRAID FOR?

OH, THAT'S A **HEROIC SPELL-CAST MEDAL**. IT'S AWARDED FOR SAVING ONE OR MORE MEMBERS OF THE PARTY BY CASTING A SPELL WHILE UNDER FIRE.

AND THE BLUE ONE WITH THE STAR?

THAT'S A **FAITHFUL-ADHERENCE TO ALIGNMENT BADGE**.



HEY WHAT'S THE GREEN ONE WITH RED STRIPES FOR? THAT ONE'S KINDA PRETTY.

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER AWARD IN A SINGLE SESSION.

IT'S NOT THE LURE OF ACCLAIM AND RECOGNITION THAT BRINGS ME TO THE TABLE. I JUST WANT TO KILL THINGS!! UH...WHAT'S THE PURPLE ONE FOR?

EXPERT MARKSMANSHIP BADGE WITH A FIREBALL OR MAGIC MISSILE SPELL.

HOW ABOUT THE METALLIC GOLD RIBBON??

I DON'T KNOW YET. BUT IT WILL HAVE TO BE A PRETTY SPECIAL ONE. THEY COST TWO BUCKS TO MAKE.



UH...WELL... I ADMIRE THE EFFORT AND DEDICATION IT MUST HAVE TAKEN TO MAKE ALL THOSE MEDALS BRIAN. I WISH YOU LUCK WITH YOUR PROPOSAL BUT WE SHOULD BE GETTING BACK TO THE GAME.

I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT. MAN, I BET THE CHICKS WOULD REALLY GO NUTS OVER A GUY WITH A SHIRT FULL OF MEDALS TOO, HUH?

WOW! LOOK AT ALL THOSE MEDALS. IT WOULD BE NICE TO WEAR THEM AT A CON. YOU KNOW - IT WOULD HELP US DIE-HARD GAMERS STAND OUT FROM THE GEEKS WHO DON'T TAKE THE GAME AS SERIOUSLY AS WE DO.

WELL, LOOKS LIKE YOU WON OVER BOB AND DAVE ON YOUR IDEA. MAYBE IT WILL CATCH ON AFTER ALL. GOOD LUCK BRIAN.

WHEN YOU HAVE A CAUSE AND THE STRENGTH OF RESOLVE TO SEE IT THROUGH, YOU DON'T NEED LUCK, SARA.



NEXT WEEK...

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!

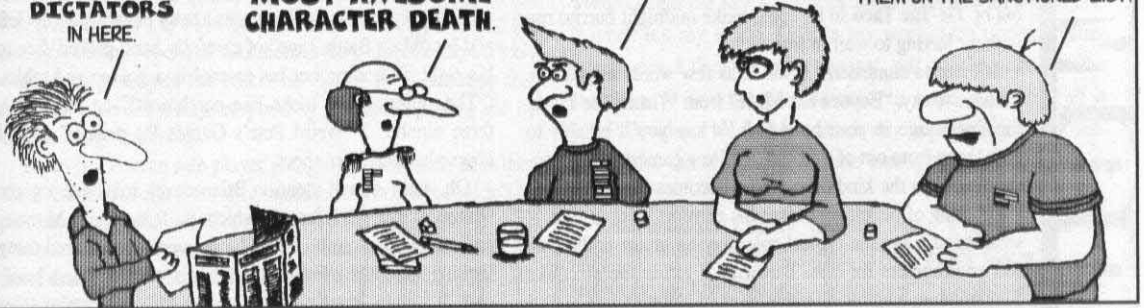
IT LOOKS LIKE A CONVENTION FOR THIRD-WORLD DICTATORS IN HERE.

...WELL THE SHOULDER BOARDS INDICATE THAT I'M A **TWELVE-YEAR ROLE-PLAYING VETERAN**. THE CHROMIUM-BLUE RIBBON WITH THE OAK-LEAF CLUSTER IS FOR **MOST AWESOME CHARACTER DEATH**.

KEWL!! THOSE SHOULDER-BOARDS RULE DUDE. MY ORANGE RIBBON WITH THE GOLD-BRAID BORDER IS FOR **MOST DAMAGE DEALT OUT IN A SINGLE-BLOW**

OH NO. YOU GUYS ARE GIVING YOURSELVES MEDALS FOR **HACK-N-SLASH ANTICS??** (MOOOAANN)

HEY GUYS GIVE ME A LIST OF YOUR MEDALS SO I CAN GET THEM ON THE SANCTIONED LIST.



MOST DAMAGE DEALT OUT IN A SINGLE BLOW?? OH YES, THE INFAMOUS **PEBBLE-CASTLE AFFAIR**. WE WERE ALL LUCKY TO LIVE THROUGH THAT ADVENTURE.

DO YOU REALIZE THE EVIL YOU'VE UNLEASHED UPON US ALL??? OUR FUTURE CONS WILL CONSIST OF LITTLE MORE THAN GROUPS OF GAMERS STANDING AROUND EXPLAINING WHAT ALL THEIR MEDALS ARE FOR.

UH...VERY NICE GUYS. VERY NICE. UH...CAN WE GET ON WITH THE GAME??

AAHH, YOU REMEMBER. THERE I WAS TOE-TO-TOE WITH **LORD VEGNAR**. NOTHING BUT MY HACKMASTER +12 AND...

YEAH! ISN'T IT GREAT???



Brian's Visit

by Jolly R. Blackburn

A few nights ago Brian stopped by my house, unannounced. I could see, straight off, that he had a distant look in his eye. It was obvious there was something on the Big Guy's mind so I invited him to have a seat. I offered him a cold drink. At first he accepted but then quickly declined when he learned I was out of Grape Faygo. We ended up talking about role-playing and the state of the game industry (*with the latest Hackmaster supplement, JabberHockey being the main topic of conversation*). I pitched Brian on my **Designer Dice** idea and suggested it would be a great accessory for his **Dice Bag Buddies** concept. He seemed leery of my offer to collaborate so I backed off. Soon the conversation drifted to the current campaign I was running; how somebody lifted Bob's lucky ten-sider last week; that it seemed cold for this time of the year, etc.

Rather, I should say I was talking about such things. For the most part Brian stared at the **Pulp Fiction** movie poster on the wall and muttered, "uh huh" and "yeah" whenever I paused or whenever there was a moment of silence. The Big Guy was turning something over in his head - no doubt about it. Still, he didn't seem to want to talk about it. It seemed as though the weight of the world was on his shoulders and that he was about to make a very difficult decision. Now mind you - I'm just guessing. For the truth of the matter is that Brian is a very hard person to read. It's just as likely that he was waiting for the post-movie crowd to clear out of **Tic-Tac Taco** so he could make midnight burrito run without having to wait in line.

If I had to summarize Brian in as few words as possible I'd have to say, "**Eeyore the Mule**" from **Winnie the Pooh**. Put that image in your head and I'd say you'd be able to pick Brian from out of a crowd of fellow gamers at any convention. He's the kind of guy who becomes invisible when a gathering of people surpasses his comfort level of five. A small group, say the typical role-playing group is the perfect environment for him. Throwing a girl in the mix, like Sara involves a whole different layer of complexities to deal with. We'll ignore that for the time being but ask me about it someday.

Brian's famous for some peculiar quirks. He has a temper that has to be seen to be believed. He's slow to rile. Things that would cause most people to start flailing their fists roll off his huge shoulders like twenty-siders. Things that most of us would take in stride, however, cause him to go berserk.

Dice-pilfering, for example, is the biggest button you can push on the big guy. His eagle eye and that Spock-like computer in his brain-pan keep constant vigil over his pile of dice throughout the evening. Once while he was distracted paying the pizza-dude, Bob hid one of Brian's four-siders and a bet was placed with those of us at the table as to how long it would take for him to notice. I think we were all floored with disbelief when Brian walked back in the room carrying the pizza saying, "Okay, Dave you still owe me 3.50 for the pizza. Jolly, the cat got out while I was paying the guy. And.....alright, where's my 4-sider?"

The other thing Brian is famous for is table-flipping. For a long time he was making weekly payments to my mom on

a new kitchen table to replace the one Brian trashed. That little fit-of-rage was erupted when Brian's character, Teflon Billy bought a pair of cursed boots from Bob's character. After he laced them up his began singing, "I'm a little teacup, short and stout" and then inexplicably ran off a cliff to his death. Brian was motionless as he attempted to stare me down behind my GM's screen.

"Well?" he finally murmured, "Do I get a saving throw?"

I unwisely replied, "Yeah you can roll to see if your head detaches from your body on impact and bounces" Scratch one dining room table and a pair of glasses - Brian went berserk.

In the years I've known him, I've never seen the slightest hint of a smile on Brian's face. He does laugh occasionally, but it's a deep guttural "har, har" that suggests evil intent or reminds one of the gloating of a pirate who has just prodded you off the plank into the maw of a Great White. He only laughs when he's fired off a joke, lobbed a fireball into an approaching group of surrendering orcs or when he's pointed out a Game Master's failure to grasp the rules. (In my campaign Brian frequently challenged my calls with, "You're wrong GameMeister and let me TELL you why!").

Other than that, Brian is content to show up every Thursday, rulebooks in one hand, dice bag hanging from his belt proudly as if it were a pouch of spanish doubloons. He takes his seat, strategically places a tasty beverage to his left and his 'Main Battle Line' of carefully hand-picked dice to his right. Rounding out his arsenal is a golden rod tablet. ("The yellow paper looks like parchment!" he explains.), three number 2 'Weird Pete's Games Pit pencils' and of course his character sheet.

Oh, and I should mention Brian never arrives at a game without "**The Briefcase**" which is famous in Muncie, Indiana gaming circles. It's a large, worn and tattered thing looking more like a Fuller Brushman's sales kit than a briefcase. It's huge. Brian picked it up at a Military surplus store though nothing about it suggests it ever wore the uniform. On one end there is a Pakistani Customs Clearance label showing that some guy named, Donald Clarke of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, apparently was carrying the case when he passed through that country on June 3, 1956.

In this case Brian has managed to store everything a gamer would ever need at the table. Spare dice, change for the vending machine, pencil sharpener, Character sheet archive, the last six issues of his favorite gaming magazines. (Including copies of Blue Blood with book marks referencing the 'Vampire chicks in Latex' photos he likes to pull out to make Bob blush.)

Most importantly, Brian carries the entire set of Hackmaster rulebooks, supplements and tables with which he can lend support to his challenges on game calls. He keeps the combination for the lock secret and to my knowledge no living gamer has ever seen the inside of that case. When Brian has to retrieve something, he places it on his lap and opens it just wide enough to shield his face as he retrieves the desired item.

Over the years the rest of us have taken the opportunity

to try our best guesses at the combination while Brian is paying the pizza dude.

We never succeeded. We all groaned in utter disbelief when, as a group, we went to see *Pulp Fiction*. Remember the scene where John Travolta pulls that mystery briefcase from the kitchen cabinet. Spotting the combination lock he thinks for a second, half smiles and flips the dials to 666 and click. As he opened the case we heard Brian mutter under his breath, "Damn, I guess I'll have to change my combination now." (It would be interesting to do a survey as to how many people actually use 666 on their combo locks.)

As I was saying, in general, I find Brian hard to read unless he's at an emotional extreme - i.e. flipping a table or belly-laughing so hard the dishes rattle in the pantry.

I can never tell when he's angry, happy, sad, bored etc. When I first started having him over to game I was constantly asking, "Brian? You ok? Need a drink? Something wrong?" and a host of other questions attempting to find out why he was silently sitting at the other end of the table, not having said so much as a single word all night. One night, apparently annoyed at my constant questions, Brian muttered, "Look Jolly, when I need something I'll let you know. If I'm not making noise I'm happy. And when I make noise listen to what I'm saying and you'll know what's wrong. Comprehend?"

That's about as much as Brian's ever said to me in a single response. I've found if he's really upset he leaves a detailed note turned face down behind my screen on his way out. They usually are concerns with judgement calls, favoritism, group-politics and the like. The next week Brian will always ask, "You read my note?" with a peculiar quality in his voice that's normally absent. I'm not sure but I always have the impression he's asking the question for the benefit of the others in the group. Perhaps it's his way of suggesting to the others he's privy to information that they don't have. I always respond by nodding my head and he flashes a big thumbs up.

Brian is a veteran role-player going way back to the days they used "cardboard chits" for dice because Polyhedrons couldn't be purchased in Delaware County. He's the kind of player most GM's dread - the ones who know just 'that' much more about the game than you do. Just enough to find the loopholes in your calls and are able to challenge the GM and make it stick.

In the beginning, not knowing Brian that well, I would look across the table and see this enormous pokerface muttering one and two word responses for five or six hours. Knowing that this gentle giant could erupt at any moment turning the room into a low-budge reenactment of the Poseidon Adventure.

His silence always gave me the impression he was bored to tears with my campaign and that the only reason he was coming week after week was to make a fool out of me by challenging me to rule-duels.

Night after night he would roll the dice when prompted. Scribble a few notes, sip his soda and as soon as the game wound down he was the first to give a "see ya Thursday" and dart out the door. (I found out later that Brian runs a BBS and that late night Thursday he liked to archive the previous week's uploads.)

Anyway, it really began to eat at me. Finally, I had to know the truth. Did Brian think my GMing sucked wind or was it me personally?

One night Brian arrived early before the others and I decided to find the truth. "Brian? How do you like the campaign? I'm curious. I love feedback."

He looked up from the ten-sider he was polishing. "It's okay."

There was a pause as he picked up a wax crayon and touched up the numbers on his die. Then he added, "The way you handle Orcs is bogus though. Keeps me from fully getting into my character."

"Whaa.....what?" I answered. I had been running a campaign in which a few orc tribes began causing problems for the Emperor by continually raiding the borderlands. Fed up, the Emperor hires the players to talk sense into the orc chieftains. He doesn't want orc-blood on his hands but he can't tolerate the raids.

The orcs resent being told what to do and after several bloody exchanges, the whole thing explodes with hundreds of far flung orc clans rallying together to form an Orc nation bent on bringing down the Empire. I thought the campaign was brilliantly laid out and was proud of my orc-handling.

"You have them banning together in large numbers," explained Brian. "The rules don't support it. Orcs aren't good leaders. Give 'em more than 15 to 20 warriors to command and you have chaos. Male rivalry is too instinctual to be overcome by discipline for Orcs. Throw a group of males in a situation and the leader-types begin wrestling for control. The Orc tribes are doomed to continually grow in population until rivalries and inner-strife forces the tribe to split. Then the process is doomed to repeat itself. It's basic Orc nature. So your Orc nation is lame."

I hadn't really expected any criticism of my game. Brian's words caught me like a left hook and I reacted with a kneejerk. "Lame? It's my world. Orcs in my world aren't cookie-cutter stereotypes. I decided to be original, put a little work into the campaign so you guys would enjoy it more. And you call it lame? Besides, I think this male-rivalry impulse would be overridden if a threat from an outside enemy threatened the entire Orc race."

Brian nodded. "Exactly. And that's how I handled it in the adventure I wrote in 1978 called, "**Orcs at the Gates**". In my adventure the Overlord was systematically slaughtering the orc tribes with the very clear intent of bringing on their extinction. That's sufficient cause for the Orc tribes to unite in force. But you just had a few soldiers raid a local Orc village and we're to believe this trivial incident would cause a mass convergence of all the Orc tribes in Alderac with the singular mindset of bringing down an enemy which has historically kicked their butts for three thousand years in every single contest?"

Brian must have noticed the vein on my forehead rising to enormous heights because he shifted in his seat, took a long sip of soda and added, "But it's your game. I'm having fun or I wouldn't come back each week."

I decided to let the comments slide and put them out of mind. So what if Brian was a self-professed expert of Orc culture and behavior? The following week when I slid behind the DM's screen and began assembling my notes I was a little miffed to find a signed copy of "**ORCS AT THE GATES**" sitting before me. I shot a look that could kill toward Brian. He was oblivious. He sat there flashing me a big thumbs up and a 'knowing' nod.

□

BEFORE WE WRAP THINGS UP, I WANT TO REMIND EVERYONE TO TRY AND BE MORE SAFETY CONSCIOUS. I WAS JUST LOOKING AT THIS YEAR'S MINUTES AND **GAME SESSION ABSENTEEISM** IS UP 24 PERCENT DUE TO INJURIES. REMEMBER, WHEN YOU MISS A GAME YOU'RE NOT ONLY HURTING YOURSELVES, YOU'RE HURTING THE GROUP.

B.A. IS JUST POINTING OUT THAT WE'VE HAD OUR SHARE OF GAMING MISHAPS THAT HAVE RESULTED IN INJURY.

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! WE'RE NOT LITTLE KIDS. I FEEL LIKE I'M IN A BAD EPISODE OF **SKIPPY THE SAFETY SLUG**.

WE DON'T HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER WHETHER OR NOT WE GET HURT! ACCIDENTS ARE JUST REAL LIFE RANDOM ENCOUNTERS!

HEY IT WASN'T MY FAULT I **BROKE MY ANKLE** WHILE PLAYING **NERF-BASKETBALL** IN MY BEDROOM. I TRIPPED OVER SOME **RS232 PRINTER CABLE**.



DON'T GET ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE OVER IT. I'M JUST SAYING YOU GUYS SHOULD **THINK** BEFORE YOU ACT. A LOT OF THESE ACCIDENTS COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED. FOR EXAMPLE, **BOB'S PAPER CUT!**

HEY LAY OFF JACK!! THAT PAPER CUT ON MY EYE WAS A FREAK ACCIDENT. TEARING PAPER OUT OF A **HACKMASTER CHARACTER BINDER** IS SUPPOSED TO BE A MUNDANE TASK. WAS I SUPPOSE TO BE WEARING **OSHA APPROVED** EYE GOGGLES OR SOMETHING??

HEY THERE WERE SIX OF US IN THAT LIVE-ACTION HACKMASTER OUTING!! IS IT MY FAULT THAT **DERANGED OPOSSUM** TARGETED ME FOR ATTACK?? I WAS MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS!!

ACTUALLY YOU KEPT POKING IT WITH A STICK AND SAYING "YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?" IT WAS ONLY DEFENDING ITSELF.



OR THE TIME DAVE WAS **MAULED** IN THAT STORM CULVERT.



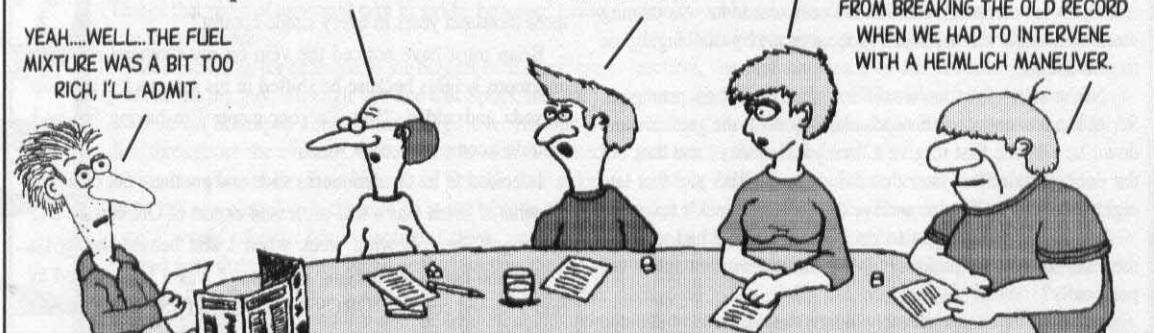
YOU HAVE SOME GALL SITTING THERE AND PREACHING TO US ABOUT SAFETY. I STILL REMEMBER STARING DOWN THE BARREL OF THAT DAMN **FIREBALL GENERATOR*** YOU BROUGHT TO THE TABLE THAT ONE TIME. **YOU NEARLY KILLED US ALL!!**

A BIT TOO RICH?? I HAD TO WEAR A HAIR PIECE FOR EIGHT WEEKS! AND MY EYEBROWS STILL HAVEN'T GROWN BACK IN COMPLETELY.

AND THERE WAS THE TIME YOU NEARLY CHOKED TO DEATH OVER A BET ON HOW MANY TWENTY-SIDERS YOU COULD CRAM IN YOUR MOUTH. OH, THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE.

YOU WERE ONLY TWO DICE AWAY FROM BREAKING THE OLD RECORD WHEN WE HAD TO INTERVENE WITH A HEIMLICH MANEUVER.

YEAH...WELL...THE FUEL MIXTURE WAS A BIT TOO RICH, I'LL ADMIT.



* See Bundle of Trouble Volume One [KODT #1] "Diminishing Returns"

YEAH, YEAH. WELL. BESIDES ACCIDENTS, YOU GUYS TEND TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE GAME SO MUCH THAT I NEVER KNOW WHEN A TABLE IS GOING TO BE FLIPPED OR A TWENTY-SIDER IS GOING TO BE HURLED AT ME. I'M TALKING ABOUT **NAKED AGGRESSION** AND **PHYSICAL HOSTILITY**.

B.A.'S RIGHT. THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR FLIPPING A TABLE IN ANGER OR THROWING A DIE AT SOMEONE OVER A DISPUTED RULE CALL.

I THINK YOU ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATING. WE DON'T FIGHT ANY MORE OR ANY LESS THAN ANY OTHER GROUP.

JIMMINY! FLIP A TABLE AROUND HERE AND THEY BRAND YOU WITH THE **MARK OF GAIN**.

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS GOTTA BRING UP THAT TWENTY-SIDER THING, HUH? **I SAID I WAS SORRY** FOR CHIPPING YOUR TOOTH.



I WAS AT WEIRD PETE'S SHOP TODAY AND RAN INTO **NITRO FERGUSON**. HE HAD A **BLACK EYE** AND A **DISLOCATED SHOULDER**. SAID SOME **DERANGED GAMER** ATTACKED HIM AT HACKCON LAST SATURDAY. SAID HE WAS LUCKY TO **ESCAPE** WITH HIS LIFE. HE EVADED ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS AND LEFT QUICKLY. WEIRD PETE SEEMED TO THINK THAT ONE OF YOU GUYS WERE RESPONSIBLE. IS THIS TRUE?

THAT WAS NO DERANGED GAMER DUDE. **THAT WAS BOB!!!** YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT. OL' BOB WAS LIKE A **RABID PIT BULL!** IT WAS AWESOME!!

NITRO IS ONE TOUGH HOMBRE. I CAN'T THINK OF ANYONE WHO WOULD WANT TO TANGLE WITH HIM.

BOB ATTACKED NITRO??



UH OH.

BOB THE GUY IS A **GORILLA!!** HE'S **HUGE!!** **WHAT WERE YOU THINKING??** HE'S THREE TIMES YOUR SIZE.. ARE YOU STILL HURT?

BOB WAS GREAT!! FIRST HE **BLINDED** NITRO WITH AN OPEN SALT SHAKER. THEN HE **FLEW** ACROSS THE TABLE, TACKLING NITRO AND GETTING HIM IN A **MORGENSTERN THROATLOCK**. THEY **PLOWED** A PATH FROM THE RPG ROOM RIGHT THROUGH THE SPELLJACKED TOURNAMENT. KNOCKING OVER CHAIRS, FLIPPING TABLES, TOPPLING OVER SPECTATORS. IT WAS **AWESOME**.

THE MAN TOUCHED MY DICE!! TWICE!! HE GOT A WARNING THE FIRST TIME.

BOB DID THIS?

OUR BOB?



WELL, NITRO HAD IT COMING I SUPPOSE. HE KNEW BETTER.

FRANKLY, I'M **APPALLED!** HOW CAN YOU JUSTIFY **ATTACKING** AN INNOCENT PERSON? AND **PHYSICALLY INJURING** THE POOR MAN!!

HUH? YOU GOT WAX IN YER EARS? **I SAID THE MAN TOUCHED MY DICE!!!**

YOU RULE BOB!! WHEN YOU PULLED HIS **SHIRT OVER HIS HEAD** AND **SMACKED HIM** WITH THAT SNACK TRAY **THE CROWD ROARED!!**

WELL, I GUESS THAT'S ONE **DICE-SQUIRREL** WHO WILL THINK TWICE BEFORE PUTTIN' HIS PAWS ON **ANOTHER MAN'S DICE.**



I STILL DON'T SEE WHY BOB HAD TO **ATTACK** THE POOR MAN OVER SOME **MINOR INCIDENT.**



SARA, YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY NOT LISTENING TO WHAT BOB IS SAYING. **THE MAN TOUCHED HIS DICE!!!**

NITRO **CROSSED** **THE LINE!!**

THAT'S STILL **NO EXCUSE** FOR PUMMELING THE POOR BASTARD HALF-SILLY!!



LOOK, MISSY, MAYBE THEY LET SUCH THINGS SLIDE IN WISCONSIN BUT NOT HERE IN MUNCIE!!

MAN I WISHED YOU COULD HAVE SEEN BOB IN ACTION. THE DUDE WAS **BLINDED WITH RAGE.** IT TOOK THREE HOTEL **RENT-A-COPS** AND HALF A CAN OF **PEPPER-SPRAY** TO PULL BOB OFF **NITRO'S LIMP BODY.**

HAR HAR!! I GUESS BOB HAS A SNACK TRAY WEAPON PROFICIENCY!! **HAR HAR!!**

WE'RE GETTING OFF THE SUBJECT GUYS. THE POINT IS....



The Great Intervention

STORY BY CHRISTOPHER HEATH
WITH JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



ALEXIS MARIE NOT REAL?
ARE YOU KIDDING? THIS IS ALMOST LAUGHABLE.

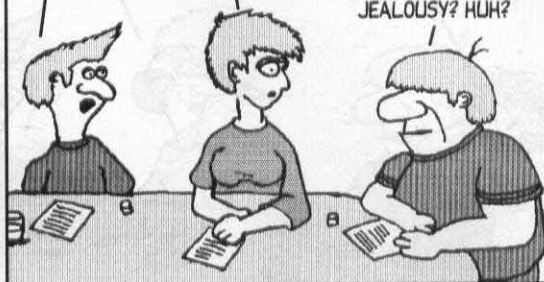
HA HA, I CAN'T
WAIT TO TELL
HER ABOUT THIS
TONIGHT. SHE'S
GOING TO GET A
KICK OUT OF IT.



THE JIG'S UP, BRIAN!! WE'VE COME WITH AN OFFER
TO MAKE THIS AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE FOR YOU.

SIMPLY CONFESS **ALEXIS MARIE** ISN'T REAL
AND WE AGREE TO DROP THE MATTER RIGHT HERE. NO
ONE WILL EVER GIVE YOU ANY FLACK ABOUT IT.

WHY ARE YOU AGAINST
LEXXY?? IS IT
JEALOUSY? HUH?



THIS IS CRAZY! IS IT THAT HARD FOR YOU GUYS TO
BELIEVE SOMEONE AS **BEAUTIFUL** AND **WONDERFUL** AS
ALEXIS COULD BE IN LOVE WITH A GUY LIKE ME??

IF SHE'S NOT REAL HOW DID
I JUST GET OFF THE **PHONE**
WITH HER? WE MUST HAVE
TALKED FOR AN HOUR.

WE'RE NOT SAYING THAT, BRIAN.
WE'RE JUST SAYING THAT YOUR
LITTLE **LEXXY** ISN'T REAL.

SAY IT!! SAY SHE
DOESN'T EXIST. YOU
KNOW YOU WANT TO
EMBRACE THE TRUTH.

SHE'S A FAKE!!
JUST LIKE THE SO-CALLED
HICKEY ON YOUR NECK YOU
SHOWED UP WITH AT THE
CHRISTMAS PARTY!

OH, BRIAN.
(SIGH)



OKAY IF YOU JUST
GOT OFF THE PHONE
WITH HER WHAT DID
SHE HAVE TO SAY?

UH...WELL...THAT WOULD BE
**NONE OF YOUR
BUSINESS!** IT WAS A
PERSONAL PHONE CALL.

YEAH WHICH 900 NUMBER
WAS IT DUDE?
**1-900-BIG BAD
BIKER CHICKS??**
HA HA HAR HAR!

PERSONAL?
YEAH MOST 1-900
NUMBERS ARE.

I'M TELLING YOU SHE'S REAL.
IF YOU CAN'T ACCEPT THAT THAT'S YOUR
PROBLEM. NO LOSS TO ME.

BRIAN, THEY'RE NEVER GOING TO
EASE UP ON YOU. TELL THEM
WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR AND
IT WILL NEVER COME UP AGAIN.



HOW COULD I MAKE UP
SOMEONE LIKE LEXXY??
SHE'S SO WONDERFUL!

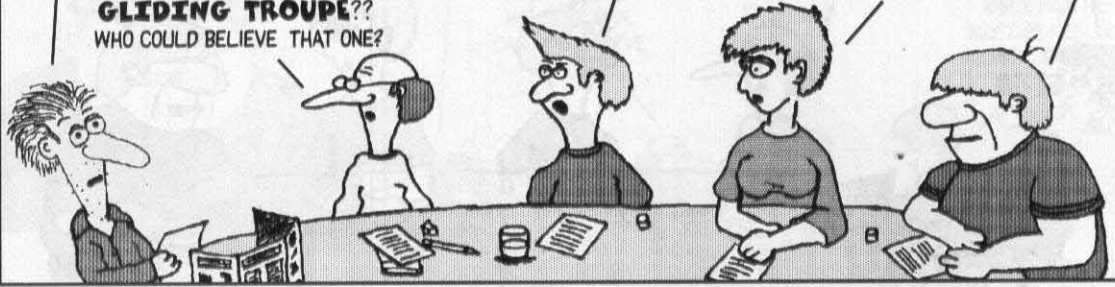
MAYBE FROM WATCHING
TELEVISION? SOME OF
THOSE LEXXY-STORIES HAVE BEEN
PRETTY UNBELIEVABLE!!

SHE'S A MEMBER OF AN
**OPERATIC HANG
GLIDING TROUPE??**
WHO COULD BELIEVE THAT ONE?

I LOVE HEARING ALL THOSE STORIES
ABOUT HER CRAZY ADVENTURES. YOU
KNOW, THE ONES, WHERE SHE GETS
HERSELF OUT OF VARIOUS
LIFE THREATENING
JAMS BY USING COMMONLY FOUND
ITEMS TO PRODUCE
SPECTACULAR RESULTS?

SHE'S REAL DAMMIT!!
YES SHE GETS IN A LOT OF ADVENTURES.
SHE'S A RISK-TAKER. I'VE BEGGED
HER TO BE MORE CAREFUL. PERHAPS
THAT'S WHY I WAS ATTRACTED TO HER.

AND SHE MAKES HER LIVING AS
A **PRIVATE EYE** WHO
DOUBLES AS A
FASHION MODEL?



WE'RE SHIFTING THE BURDEN
OF PROOF TO YOU BRIAN.
INVITE HER TO THE GAME
NEXT WEEK. WE'LL HAVE
PIZZA, TELL JOKES, PLAY
SOME C.D.S, ANYTHING SHE
WANTS TO DO.

WELL...UH...THAT'S NOT
SO EASY. SHE LIVES OUT
OF STATE YOU SEE.

**OUT OF
STATE??**

SO WHERE DOES
MISS WONDERFUL
LIVE THEN?

SHE LIVES IN...UH...ER...
THE PHILIPPINES!

THE PHILIPPINES?

SHE'S STUDYING
POLYNESIAN DANCE.



OKAY. **GOOD BLOCK.** NOW I COUNTER WITH ANOTHER
SHOT. LET'S JUST CALL **MARIE** ON THE PHONE AND
SETTLE THIS. I HAVE A CORDLESS PHONE AND I'M WILLING
TO COVER THE COST FOR AN OVER-SEAS CALL.

YOU DIDN'T EXPECT
THAT DID YOU BIG GUY?
NOW WHAT ARE YOU
GOING TO DO?

I DON'T REMEMBER HER
PHONE NUMBER.
I LEFT IT AT HOME. THOSE
INTERNATIONAL CALLING
CODES ARE MURDER.

THAT'S IT B.A.
KEEP THE
PRESSURE ON.



COME ON BRIAN!! WE'VE ALL PULLED LITTLE STUNTS LIKE THIS. I ONCE MADE UP A GIRLFRIEND MYSELF. I TOLD EVERYONE I WAS TAKING HER TO THE PROM. LATER, WHEN WE DIDN'T SHOW, I TOLD EVERYONE OUR LIMO GOT HIT BY A TRAIN ON THE WAY TO THE DANCE.

RUBBER-BAND WILLIE WASN'T REAL???

JUST...JUST BECAUSE YOU GUYS LOST TOUCH WITH REALITY DOESN'T...DOESN'T MEAN...I...HAVE...**ALEXIS IS REAL!!!**

YEAH AND WHEN I WAS A LITTLE TYKE, I USED TO HAVE A MAKE BELIEVE FRIEND CALLED **RUBBER-BAND WILLIE!!**

YOU SEE BRIAN, WE'VE ALL DONE IT. YOU JUST TOOK IT TOO FAR.

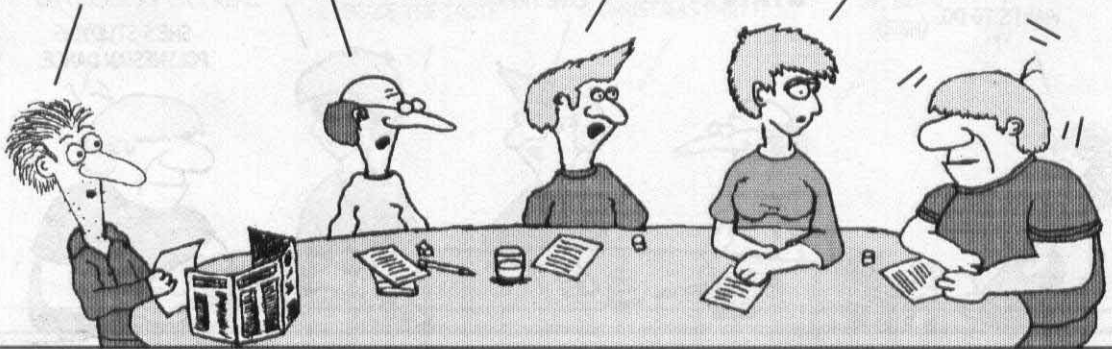


LOOK!!! HE'S CRACKING!!! I THINK HE'S ABOUT TO BREAK!!!

COME ON, BRIAN!!! PLANT THOSE SIZE-TWELVES BACK ON FIRM REALITY!!! EMBRACE THE TRUTH!!!

THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE, BIG GUY!!!

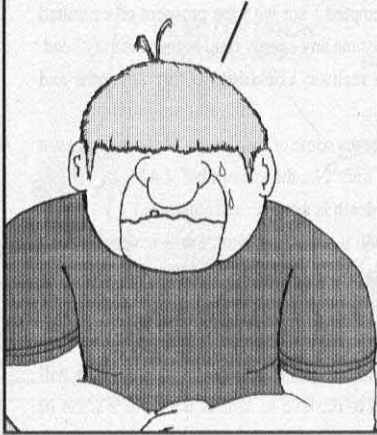
COME ON BRIAN!!! SAY IT!!!



ALRIGHT!!! (SOB) ALRIGHT DAMN IT!!! SHE ISN'T REAL!!!! (SNIFF) IS THAT WHAT YOU WANTED TO HEAR?? DO ANY OF YOU KNOW THE DEPTHS OF PAIN A MAN CAN SINK TO?? WAS IT A CRIME FOR ME TO ENGINEER MY OWN ESCAPE FROM A CRUEL WORLD OF LONELINESS??? (SOB) **I'M A ROLE-PLAYER, DAMN-IT!!** THAT'S WHAT I DO!! SO I CREATED MY OWN LITTLE PATHETIC WORLD. IT'S CALLED **BRIAN'S LIFE!!!** IT'S NOT MUCH BUT IT'S **MY WORLD!!!** THE HARSH EDGES OF LIFE ARE LITTLE DULLER HERE. HERE I COULD IMAGINE THAT SOMEBODY COULD LOVE AND CARE FOR A GUY LIKE ME. **BUT YOU KILLED IT!!!(SNIFF)**



(SNIFFLE) I'M....I'M SORRY GUYS. **IT JUST HURTS**. I'LL EXCUSE MYSELF NOW. I THINK I'D LIKE TO BE ALONE AND SORT THINGS OUT.



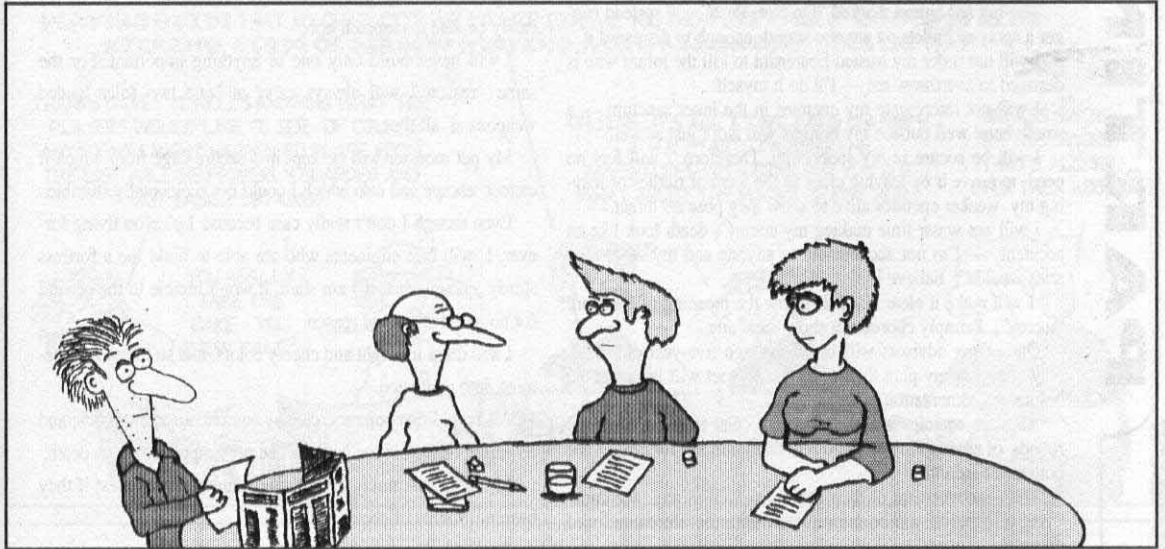
I FEEL SO **GUILTY!** DO YOU THINK WE DID THE RIGHT THING? I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT THE BIG GUY.

IT HAD TO BE DONE B.A. HE TOLD ME LAST WEEK THAT HE AND LEXXY WERE **ENGAGED**. AND YESTERDAY I ACTUALLY GOT THE INVITATION IN THE MAIL..

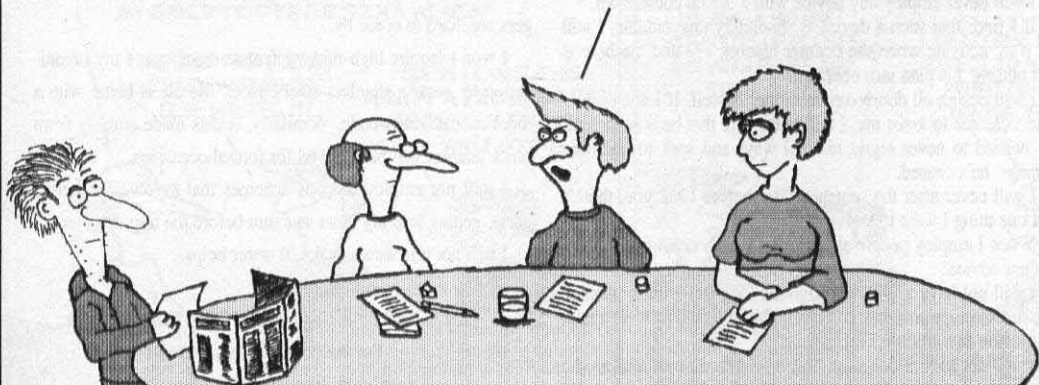
YEAH, AND HE ASKED ME TO BE HIS BEST MAN. CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT??

ENGAGED???
BRIAN?? HOW DID I MISS THAT ONE?

OH DEAR. CAN YOU IMAGINE THE TERRIBLE PAIN HE MUST BE FEELING NOW?? **POOR BRIAN.**



I CAN'T BELIEVE THE **BASTARD** DIDN'T INVITE ME TO HIS **DAMN WEDDING!!**



If I ever happen to become an Evil Overlord:

My legions of terror will have helmets with clear plexiglass visors, not face-concealing ones.

My ventilation ducts will be too small to crawl through.

My noble half-brother whose throne I usurped will be killed, not kept anonymously imprisoned in a forgotten cell of my dungeon.

Shooting is not too good for my enemies.

The artifact which is the source of my power will not be kept on the Mountain of Despair beyond the River of Fire guarded by the Dragons of Eternity. It will be in my safe-deposit box.

I will not gloat over my enemies' predicament before killing them. When the rebel leader challenges me to fight one-on-one and asks, "Or are you afraid without your armies to back you up?" My reply will be, "No, just sensible."

When I've captured my adversary and he says, "Look, before you kill me, will you at least tell me what this is all about?" I'll say, "No," and shoot him.

I will not include a self-destruct mechanism unless absolutely necessary. If it is necessary, it will not be a large red button labeled "Danger: Do Not Push".

The big red button marked "Do Not Push" will instead trigger a spray of bullets on anyone stupid enough to disregard it.

I will not order my trusted lieutenant to kill the infant who is destined to overthrow me — I'll do it myself.

I will not interrogate my enemies in the inner sanctum — a small hotel well outside my borders will work just as well.

I will be secure in my superiority. Therefore, I will feel no need to prove it by leaving clues in the form of riddles or leaving my weaker enemies alive to show they pose no threat.

I will not waste time making my enemy's death look like an accident — I'm not accountable to anyone and my other enemies wouldn't believe it.

I will make it clear that I do know the meaning of the word "mercy"; I simply choose not show them any.

One of my advisors will be an average five-year-old child. Any flaws in my plan that he is able to spot will be corrected before implementation.

All slain enemies will be cremated, or at least have several rounds of ammunition emptied into them, not left for dead at the bottom of the cliff.

The announcement of their deaths, as well as any accompanying celebration, will be deferred until after the aforementioned disposal.

My undercover agents will not have tattoos identifying them as members of my organization, nor will they be required to wear military boots or adhere to any other dress codes.

The hero is not entitled to a last kiss, a last cigarette, or any other form of last request.

I will never employ any device with a digital countdown.

If I find that such a device is absolutely unavoidable, I will set it to activate when the counter reaches 117 and the hero is just putting his plan into operation.

I will design all doomsday machines myself. If I must hire a mad scientist to assist me, I will make sure that he is sufficiently twisted to never regret his evil ways and seek to undo the damage he's caused.

I will never utter the sentence "But before I kill you, there's just one thing I want to know."

When I employ people as advisors, I will occasionally listen to their advice.

I will not have a son. Although his laughably under-planned attempt to usurp power would easily fail, it would provide a fatal distraction at a crucial point in time.

I will not have a daughter. She would be as beautiful as she was evil, but one look at the hero's rugged countenance and she'd betray her own father.

Despite its proven stress-relieving effect, I will not indulge in maniacal laughter. When so occupied, it's too easy to miss unexpected developments that a more attentive individual could adjust to accordingly.

No matter how tempted I am with the prospect of unlimited power, I will not consume any energy field bigger than my head.

I will maintain a realistic assessment of my strengths and weaknesses.

Even though this takes some of the fun out of the job, at least I will never utter the line "No, this cannot be! I AM INVINCIBLE!!!" (After that, death is usually instantaneous.)

No matter how well it would perform, I will never construct any sort of machinery which is completely indestructible except for one small and virtually inaccessible vulnerable spot.

If I am engaged in a duel to the death with the hero and I am fortunate enough to knock the weapon out of his hand, I will graciously allow him to retrieve it. This is not from a sense of fair play; rather, he will be so startled and confused that I will easily be able to dispatch him.

I will never build only one of anything important. For the same reason I will always carry at least two fully loaded weapons at all times.

My pet monster will be kept in a secure cage from which it cannot escape and into which I could not accidentally stumble.

Even though I don't really care because I plan on living forever, I will hire engineers who are able to build me a fortress sturdy enough that, if I am slain, it won't tumble to the ground for no good structural reason.

I will dress in bright and cheery colors, and so throw my enemies into confusion.

All bumbling conjurers, clumsy squires, no-talent bards, and cowardly thieves in the land will be pre-emptively put to death.

My foes will surely give up and abandon their quest if they have no source of comic relief.

Any and all magic and/or technology that can miraculously resurrect a secondary character who has given up his/her life through self sacrifice will be outlawed and destroyed.

I will not fly into a rage and kill a messenger who brings me bad news just to illustrate how evil I really am. Good messengers are hard to come by.

I won't require high-ranking female members of my organization to wear a stainless-steel bustier. Morale is better with a more casual dress-code. Similarly, outfits made entirely from black leather will be reserved for formal occasions.

I will not employ devious schemes that involve the hero's party getting into my inner sanctum before the trap is sprung.

I will not turn into a snake. It never helps.

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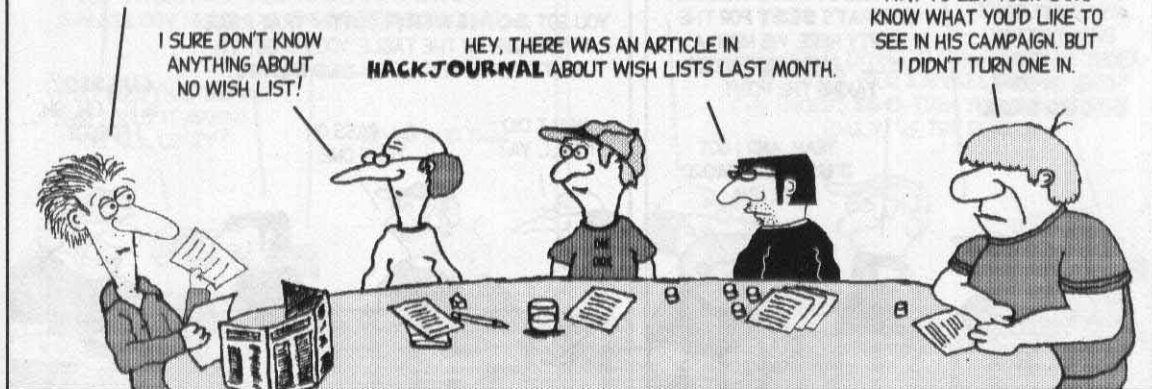
For the complete list, E-mail
anspach@aftermath.math.uoknor.edu

HEY!! WHO PUT THIS LIST BEHIND THE **GM SCREEN**? IT'S GOT **WISH LIST** WRITTEN ACROSS THE TOP AND HAS A **WHOLE BUNCH** OF STUFF LISTED ON IT.

I SURE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT NO WISH LIST!

HEY, THERE WAS AN ARTICLE IN **HACK JOURNAL** ABOUT WISH LISTS LAST MONTH.

YEAH, THEY SAY IT'S A GOOD WAY TO LET YOUR **GM** KNOW WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IN HIS CAMPAIGN. BUT I DIDN'T TURN ONE IN.



OKAY, I'LL CONFESS. IT WAS ME! IT'S JUST A LIST OF ITEMS I JOTTED DOWN FROM THE **HACKMASTER'S PLAYERS GUIDE** THAT MY CHARACTER WOULD LIKE TO HAVE. YOU KNOW LIKE A PAIR OF **BOOTS OF HIGH KICKING**, A **CAPE OF SHADOW WEAVING**, A **BIG ASS SWORD**. THINGS LIKE THAT!

THANKS DAVE! IT HELPS KNOWING WHAT THE PLAYERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE. OF COURSE ANY ITEMS I MIGHT HAPPEN TO PLACE FROM THE LIST WILL BE PROPERLY GUARDED AND NOT EASILY OBTAINED.

OH SURE, IT'S ALL **FINE AND DANDY** IF B.A. STARTS PADDING THE ADVENTURES WITH CRAP FOR YOU BUT WHAT ABOUT THE **REST** OF US? HUH?

BIG ASS SWORD!
BIG ASS SWORD!
THAT'S ALL YOU EVER TALK ABOUT!

YOU REALLY TAKE THE CAKE - YOU KNOW THAT?



DUDE, YOU'VE ONLY BEEN PLAYING FOR **SIX MONTHS!** YOU GOTTA PUT YOUR TIME IN AT THE TABLE! **PAY YOUR DUES!** NOBODY'S GONNA HAND YOU OVER THE **WORLD!** THAT'S WHAT **HACKMASTER** IS ALL ABOUT! YOU GOTTA **FIGHT** FOR IT. HELL, YOU GOT A **+2 REAVER (+5 VS. GNOME KIND!)** WHEN I WAS A **LOW LEVEL CHARACTER**. I WOULD HAVE GIVEN MY **GOLD TOOTH** FOR SUCH A WEAPON!

THE **REAVER** SUCKS!! THAT'S WHY NO ONE ELSE WANTED IT!

I GUESS I CAN SEE HIS POINT. IF A **FIGHTER** HAS NO RESPECT FOR HIS WEAPON WHAT GOOD IS HE?



OKAY, SO WHEN YOU SAY '**BIG ASS SWORD**' JUST EXACTLY WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? BRIAN AND I HAVE SQUIRRELED AWAY A FEW CHOICE BLADES OVER THE YEARS. MAYBE WE CAN FILL THE ORDER.

I DUNNO. A **BIG ONE!** WITH LOTS OF **PLUSES** AND WITH **RUNES** AND STUFF ON IT.

OF COURSE WE'D EXPECT TO MAKE A **PROFIT** ON THE TRANSACTION.



REALLY? YOU GUYS HAVE SOME OF THE **GOOD ONES** PUT BACK? **HOODY HOO!** LET'S TALK.

C'MON GUYS! DAVE'S MY FRIEND. DON'T EVEN **THINK** ABOUT SCREWIN' HIM OVER ON SOME **BOGUS DEAL!**

BOB, RELAX! WE'RE THINKING OF WHAT'S **BEST** FOR THE PARTY HERE. WE NEED A WELL-ARMED **FIGHTER** TAKING THE POINT.

YEAH, AND I GOT **JUST** THE SWORD FOR HIM.

MAY I RECOMMEND A **+6 BANESMITH?** A BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED PIECE OF WORK WITH AN ENGRAVED BLADE BEARING **NORDIC RUNES** AND A **GOLD INLAID SCABBARD** MADE FROM THE RIB BONE OF A **SWACK IRON DRAGON.**

YOU GOT **SOME NERVE** PUTTIN' THAT PIECE OF **TRASH** ON THE TABLE. YOU FORGET TO MENTION THAT IT'S A **CURSED BLADE?**

WHAT DID I TELL YA?

I'LL PASS ON THAT ONE.

CURSED? IS IT? UH...OH, I FORGOT.

NOW IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT **I** HAVE THE **PERFECT** SWORD FOR YOU. I WAS GOING TO USE IT MYSELF BUT UH...ER...WELL... **CERTAIN PROBLEMS** AROSE WHICH PREVENTED ME FROM DOING SO. **BUT YOU?** I'M TELLIN' YA THIS SWORD'S GOT YER NAME WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. I DON'T KNOW WHY I DIDN'T THINK OF THIS BEFORE.

OH YEAH? WELL GIVE ME SOME DETAILS. WHAT KIND OF SWORD IS IT?

CAREFUL, DAVE! HE'S AS BAD AS BRIAN.

??!! I HOPE YOU'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT **MARVIN!!** I THOUGHT WE ALL AGREED TO LET HIM REST IN PEACE!

WE AGREED TO **NOTHING!** YOU AND BOB DECIDED TO **BURY** HIM WITH **PIGLY THIN-WILLOW** WITHOUT **MY** CONSENT. REMEMBER?

HEY THAT SWORD WAS BAD NEWS! YOU CHANGED - REMEMBER? **MARVIN** HAD YOU ACTING ALL CRAZY.

MARVIN? WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

MARVIN WAS AN INTELLIGENT SWORD JOHNNY'S CHARACTER, **IRON SWALLOW** USED TO HAVE. THAT SWORD HAD THE **EGO** OF A **TITAN!** POOR **IRON SWALLOW** COULDN'T CONTROL IT.

INTELLIGENT SWORD? **AWESOME!!**

WILL YOU JUST **SHUT UP?** I'M TRYING TO MAKE A DEAL HERE. AND WHO KNOWS? HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO CONTROL IT BETTER THAN I DID.

I WOULDN'T WISH THAT SWORD ON MY **WORST ENEMY!**

BAAA!! TELL YA WHAT. I'LL CUT YOU IN FOR **TEN PERCENT** OF THE TAKE!

TEN PERCENT? SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.

LOOK KID, I'M GOING TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, **CARVIN MARVIN** IS NOTHING SHORT OF **GAWD FURY** TRAPPED IN A BLADE OF COLD **DWARVEN STEEL!** THINK OF HIM AS A **WILD UNTAMED STALLION!** HE NEEDS TO BE BROKEN IN BEFORE YOU CAN BE HIS MASTER. I'M JUST ASHAMED TO SAY THAT **IRON SWALLOW** NEVER HAD THE **METTLE** TO DO SO.

WHAT WAS THAT BRIAN SAID ABOUT IT MAKING YOU 'ALL CRAZY'?

I NEVER SAID THAT!



MARVIN IS ONE OF THE **HACKMASTER CLASS** SWORDS. HE STEALS THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO ARE SLAIN BY HIM. THERE ARE **THOUSANDS** OF SOULS TRAPPED IN THAT BLADE AND THEY HAVE ALL BECOME ONE **SENTIENT** CALLED **MARVIN!** HE'S INSANE! THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE HIM DO YOUR BIDDING IS TO **MENTALLY WHIP** HIM IN A PERPETUAL CONTEST OF THE **WILL!**

WHAT BOB IS TRYING TO SAY IS THAT YOU HAVE TO SUBTRACT YOUR **INTELLIGENCE** FROM THE SWORD'S **EGO**. THEN YOU HAVE TO SAVE (DAILY) VS. THE RESULT.



UNTAMED STALLION HUH? DAMN! SOUNDS LIKE THIS **MARVIN-DUDE** IS **JUST** WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR. BUT DIDN'T I HEAR YOU SAY SOMETHING ABOUT IT BEING BURIED WITH SOME **PIG?**

THAT WAS **PIGLY THIN-WILLOW!** HE USED TO BE OUR TORCH BEARER.

JOHNNY KILLED HIM DURING ONE OF HIS **MARVIN-MOMENTS!**



MARVIN-MOMENT?

THAT WHAT WE CALLED IT WHEN **IRON SWALLOW** FAILED HIS **EGO-CHECKS!**

NORMALLY WE WOULD CHAIN HIM TO A TREE TIL THE NEXT DAY BUT HE MANAGED TO WIGGLE LOOSE SOMEHOW.

POOR **PIGLY** DIDN'T EVEN SEE ME COMIN'.



THAT WAS THE **LAST STRAW!** AFTER PUMMELING **IRON SWALLOW** SENSELESS, WE TOOK HIS SWORD AND BURIED IT WITH **PIGLY**. I'M TELLIN' YA DAVE, YOU WANT **NOTHING** TO DO WITH THAT SWORD.

WOW! THAT'S SO KEWL! NOT ONLY DOES THE SWORD HAVE A NAME BUT I HAVE ALL THESE KEWL ANECDOTES I CAN TELL PEOPLE ABOUT.

YEAH, THAT'S A **REAL BONUS!**



OKAY, I'M SOLD. WHAT'S YOUR PRICE?

FIVE THOUSAND G.P.S UP FRONT AND **TEN PERCENT** OF YOUR TAKE OF **PARTY TREASURE** FOR THE NEXT **FIVE GAME SESSIONS!**

YEAH, WE CAN TAKE YOU BACK TO **PIGLY'S GRAVE** TO GET THE SWORD.



DONE DEAL! NEXT WEEK WE CAN HAVE B.A. RUN US ON AN ADVENTURE WHERE WE GO BACK TO GET IT.

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, DAVE! WHAT HAPPENED TO HAGGLING?

YOU KNOW, **MARVIN** HATED ME FROM THE **GIT GO** BUT I HAVE A FEELING YOU AND **MARVIN** ARE GOING TO GET ALONG JUST FINE!

GOOD GAWD! WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY DAVE YOU MANAGE TO PRY TO LID OFF OF **PIGLY'S COFFIN**. THE ODOR OF DECAYED FLESH IS ALMOST OVERWHELMING AS YOU PEER INSIDE. THERE, CLUTCHED IN THE SKELETAL HANDS OF THE DEAD **TORCH BEARER**, IS A SWORD.

UGH! IT KINDA FEELS FUNNY DIGGING UP SOMEBODY YOU REALLY KNEW! THIS IS SICK!

GET OVER IT! IT'S JUST SOME STUPID NPC!

OKAY I GRAB THE SWORD AND RAISE IT OVER MY HEAD IN TRIUMPH! **CARVIN MARVIN IS MINE!**

GO AHEAD AND ROLL VS. EGO, DAVE!

YOU GRABBED IT? YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO WAIT UNTIL I PUT THE **ANKLE CHAINS** ON YOU FIRST!

EASY THERE DAVE! GIVE US A CHANCE TO STEP BACK A BIT.

DAMN! I FAILED!

OH LORD! IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN **ALL OVER** AGAIN!

RELAX! WE STILL DON'T KNOW HOW **MARVIN** WILL REACT TO **DAVE**.

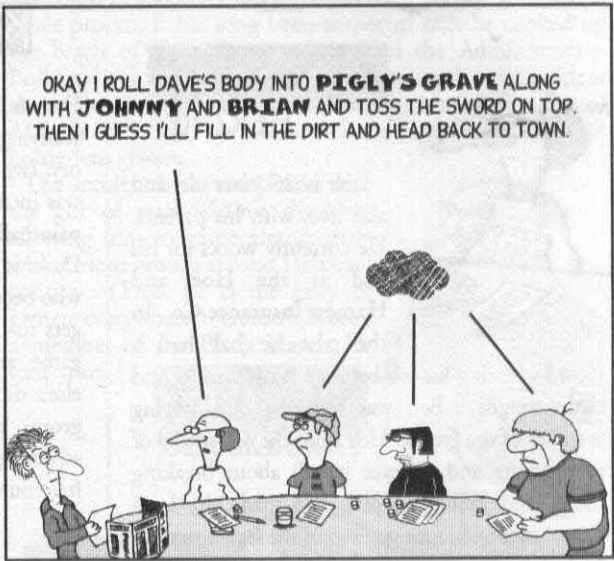
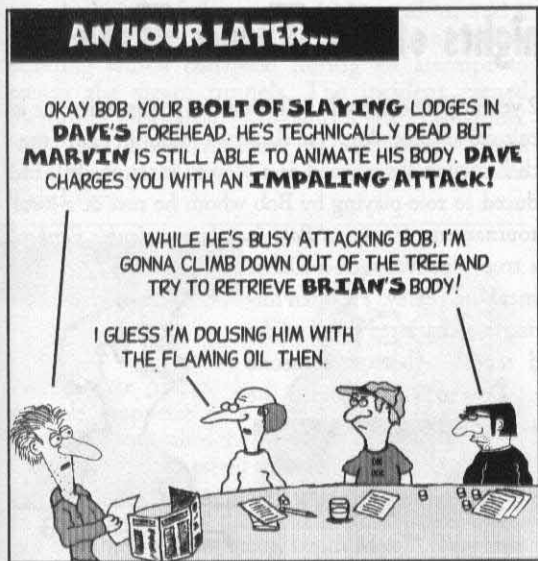
OKAY DAVE, THE SWORD BEGINS TO **VIBRATE** IN YOUR HAND. YOU CAN SENSE THE **AWESOME POWER** WHICH RESIDES IN THE WEAPON. SUDDENLY YOU ARE **SHOCKED** FOR **FIVE POINTS** OF DAMAGE. THEN A DEEP, HUSKY VOICE FROM WITHIN THE BLADE CALLS OUT, **"HOW DAAAAARRREEE YOU ATTEMPT TO WIELD ME! YOU ARE NOT WORTHY! YOU PILE OF ORG DUNG INFESTED WITH PIN WORMS AND SMELLING BADLY!"**

I SEE FOUR YEARS IN A GRAVE HASN'T TAKEN THE EDGE OFF HIS TONGUE!

WHO THE HELL IS THAT?

UH...THAT WOULD BE **MARVIN!** I GUESS I FORGOT TO MENTION HE CAN SPEAK.

BRACE YOURSELVES! HE'S LIKE **DON RICKLES** WITH A **MIGRAINE!**



b.a.

FELTON

B.A. is 30 years old and lives with his parents. When he isn't gaming he works part-time in his dad's dry cleaning shop. B.A.

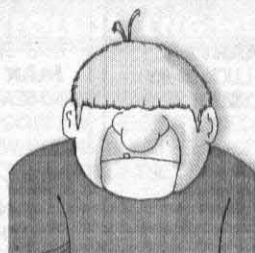
dropped out of college to follow his dream of being a game designer. He sunk \$6,000 into his first gaming product, **DAWG: the Role-Playing Game™**, which was a bomb. B.A. suffered a nervous breakdown and left gaming for a few years before picking up his dice bag again. He founded the Knights of the Dinner Table. He's currently employed at **Pizza-A-Go Go**.



brian

VAN HOOSE

Brian is 27 years old and lives alone. He manages to make a modest living operating a local ISP and selling painted miniatures. Brian is typically



quiet and utters only three-word sentences unless a rule has been broken or his character has been maligned. Even though Brian can't remember his own phone number, he can recite entire passages of various rule books from memory. He used to claim to have a girlfriend (Alexis) who no one had ever seen. After being confronted by the other Knights on the subject, he refuses to discuss his dating life. And gawd help the poor soul who brings it up.

Knights of the Dinner Table™

Dave is 22 years old and attends Ball State University where he is studying cultural anthropology. He also has a minor in dance theory. (which he originally pursued as a ploy to meet chicks). He was introduced to role-playing by Bob whom he met at a local paintball tournament. *(He saved Bob's butt from a double-flanker)*

Dave is a true blooded hack-n-slasher who becomes bored easily. He often forgets to bring his character sheet to the game and tends to borrow someone else's dice. Dave originally joined the group to take advantage of the free munchies.

dave

BOZWELL



bob

HERZOG

Bob is 26 years old and also lives with his parents. He currently works for his dad at the **Hoe and Harness Insurance Co.** In the past he has had a record of losing his job because of his temper and sharp tongue. Bob was the first dues paying member of the group. He's from the old school of role-playing and believes it's all about breaking things and killing people. He made the local papers twice when he got lost in the steam tunnels under the Ball State. *(The first time for seven days.)*



sara

FELTON

Sara is 25 years old and is B.A.'s cousin. She recently moved back to Muncie, Indiana from Wisconsin and is the newest member of the group. Unfortunately, Sara is also the only female in the group and fights a lonely battle to bring more role-play into the group's gaming sessions and less hack-n-slash. Sara has decided it is her sworn obligation to bring the other members of the group around to her style of play. She attempts to do this by example but occasionally has to resort to threats and physical bullying to make her point.



johnny

KIZINSKI

Johnny "Lucky" Kizinski was one of the original members of the **Knights of the Dinner Table Gaming Club**. He was highly respected by the other members for his gaming style and dedication to the game. He is mostly remembered, however, for his incredible luck with the dice and his uncanny habit of coming up with the right results at the right time. Mention his name around any gaming table in Muncie, Indiana and you're likely to hear the sad refrain, "the boy could play!" Johnny's story has an unhappy ending however. One night during a power session of **CattlePunk**, his luck ran out. He fumbled consecutively FIVE times, failed four saving throws, and missed twelve to-hits over the course of the evening. As a result four high level player characters met their demise. Johnny's unlucky streak haunted him in the weeks that followed and he eventually lost interest in the game and hung up his dice bag. He moved out of state and now manages a Big Juices in Wisconsin.



nitro FERGUESON

Victor Ferguson became known as the *Lord of Steam* when he adapted the HackMaster rules to live-action play and began taking hand picked groups of players on late night forays into the labyrinth of steam tunnels beneath Ball State University. After 'Ferguson's Folly' made national headlines (Victor and his group were lost for 7 days prompting a massive rescue search), the steam tunnels were secured and dozens of entrances were sealed with concrete. There are several contradicting accounts of what happened weeks later on the evening of January 5th, 1987 but it involved a satchel of C-4 high explosive, a miscalculation of the expected blast radius, and a medical evacuation of the Campus Administration Building which collapsed during an attempt to breach the steam tunnels. The incident earned Victor the nickname 'Nitro' and 5 years probation. Nitro has been president of the **Black Hand Gaming Society** for 8 years, taking over from Weird Pete.



weird PETE

"Weird" Pete Ashton is the sole proprietor of a local game store called the **Games Pit**. He is proud of the fact that he was one of the co-designers of the cult classic role-playing game, **Lynch Mob™**. Pete loves to relate the story of how he was burned by his partners and lost "millions". Pete is always available for advice but oddly seems to be very bitter about the hobby he loves so much. He was a major stockholder in **Hard 8 Enterprises** but sold his shares mere days before HackMaster was released. Pete co-founded the **Black Hand Gaming Society** along with Nitro and served as president for the first four years of the club's existence. The backroom of Pete's shop serves as home table for the Society.



flak jack MONTY



ing the public and a half dozen other charges as a result of his commando-style assault on a city bus armed with water balloons and several auto-fire equipped paintball guns. Jack was playing a live-action game of **Urban Assassin™** and was attempting to 'take out' several players who had sought refuge on a passing bus. The judge was not amused and sentenced Jack to six months confinement. The sentence was waived, however, on the condition that Jack enlist in the armed forces. Jack joined the Army for a two year hitch. DoD cutbacks allowed him to end his tour early and return to Muncie to attend BSU on the GI Bill while completing his military obligation in the Indiana National Guard. He joined the **Black Hands** soon afterwards and earned a reputation for being a formidable player.

Jack "Flak Jack" Monty is well known in Muncie, Indiana as a consequence of his highly publicized 1994 trial *People v. Monty*. Jack was convicted of aggravated assault, endangering

stevil VAN HOSTLE

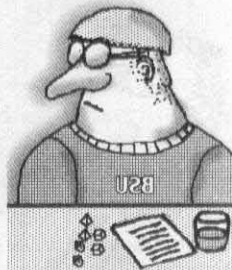


Stevil has a day job administering customer warranty claims. For years he satisfied his gaming itch through freelance work for various gaming industry publications. However, his divorce a couple of years back freed up time for him to get back into real gaming. He met Gordon Sheckberry at work [prior to his unfortunate(?) accident] and 'Gordo' subsequently introduced him to the **Black Hands**. He now commutes to Muncie every Friday night from his apartment in suburban Indianapolis.

Gordon 'Gordo' Sheckberry graduated from Ball State with a Chemical Engineering degree in his back pocket. (Although never proven, it has long been suspected that he cooked up the batch of C-4 Nitro used to level the Administration Building). Gordo was involved in a bizarre industrial accident that seriously impaired his vision and resulted in the loss of ALL his body hair. He is famous for his bad toupee and coke bottle-lens glasses.

The accident bestowed Gordo with the gift of total lifetime disability allowing him to game almost daily with various groups around Delaware county. (Thus he is the envy of gamers everywhere.) Gordo has been a member of the **Black Hands** for four years.

gordo SHECKBERRY



newt FORAGER



Newt was the only child of a career military couple. He spent his childhood either being dragged around the globe or tossed back and forth between various uncles and grandparents. Perhaps that's why Newt has trouble making friends and fitting in. He wet his feet in gaming by playing every play-by-mail game he could track down and earned a bit of notoriety by toppling the five year powergrip of the top player in the PBM game, **Tribes of Angst** and essentially shutting down the game. Later he was introduced to HackMaster through a MUDD on the internet and embraced the game. After running through every Solo-Adventure published he set out on a quest to find a group to play with. Unfortunately he's finding it difficult to find a group who will tolerate his personality quirks.



gary

JACKSON

Gary Jackson is fondly known as the “Gawdfather of Gaming” by millions of gaming enthusiasts around the world. His failing wargame company, Hard 8 Enterprises, was about to close its doors for good in 1977 when Gary tossed the dice on a hastily produced role-playing game, *The HackMasters of EverKnight™*. The first print run was quickly snapped off the shelves and soon frantic distributors were calling Gary’s three-man shop with pleas of

“More!” Gary has been riding Hackmaster spin-offs ever since. For those who want to know what ‘hard eight’ means, it refers to the game of craps where Gary has blown thousands of dollars of company money over the years on his frequent trips to Vegas.

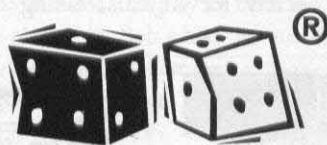


edmund

FINLEY

Edmund Finely was once Gary Jackson’s paperboy. One morning he was coerced into filling an empty chair

during a play-testing session of HackMaster and became ensnared in ‘Gary’s Game’. That was twenty years ago and Edmund has been on the Hard 8 team ever since (though he’s only been on the payroll for the past four months). Edmund wears the proud title of “Director of Research and Development” and recently oversaw the production of his first written work, *Abe, Babes and RollerBlades™*, described as a “sexy, zany, time-travelling romp through history and fashion”.



Hard 8 Enterprises®

What do you want to Hack today?™

Jo Jo is one of Gary Jackson’s favorite, “yes-men”. When he bought out *Battle Cry Games* in 1984, Jo Jo Zeke came as part of the deal. For years Jo Jo was considered the ‘King of Hex-and-Cardboard-Counter’ wargames and has over forty-two titles under his belt. His most famous game design was ‘The Pope’s Panzers’ a ‘what-if’ wargame simulation that rocked war gaming circles around the country. The sequel, ‘V-Rockets at the Vatican’ earned him his first Gamers’ Choice Award for best game design. Jo Jo is now responsible for writing much of the flavor text for HackMaster adventures (something he has a knack for), and crunching rules. It is rumored he lives in his office at Hard Eight Enterprises.



jo jo

ZEKE

the antignano BROTHERS

Very few people have ever seen the infamous Antignano Brothers. Those who have are usually reluctant to talk about it. It’s known that Gary Jackson has kept them on the payroll for years. Their checks are usually annotated with the cryptic words, “for various services rendered”. It is said that Vince and Tony Antignano wear grey, pinstripe suits with twenty-sider cuff links. A few years ago, Nitro Ferguson publicly insulted Gary Jackson at a convention. A few days later, he FedExed a letter of apology to Gary. It is rumored the Antignano Brothers paid him a ‘visit’.



pete
SKIPOWSKI

Pete has been with Gary Jackson since the beginning. In fact they met in college where they used to play epic sessions of MERC

ARMOR and BLAZING GUNS. When Gary started his company, Pete came onboard as his first full-time game designer (working for shares in the beginning). In recent years the friendship has been strained as Gary's projects have repeatedly over-shadowed Pete's pet projects. In fact Gary usually targets Pete for his much publicized verbal abuse and ego-bruising. Still, Pete is loyal to Gary and Hard 8 Enterprises and rarely complains.

Waco Bob is one of the original share holders of Hard 8. He really doesn't do much at the company other than agree with virtually every word that comes out of Gary's mouth. Waco has done well, financially, working with Gary and that seems to be enough to have earned his undying devotion. Waco does sit in on every playtesting session he can. But since he seems to love every game he plays, regardless of its flaws, his value as a playtester leaves a lot to be desired. He invariably fills out his playtester evaluation forms with, "This game is the next HackMaster!!"

'waco' bob
FORSEY



Tuley isn't an employee at Hard 8, nor is he considered an intern. He originally came to the company as part of a Summer Playtester program. He was tricked into running the company's customer service department by being led to believe it was a 'virtual corporation computer game' and that he was earning points based on how well he 'played' the game, which involved answering the phone and working out 'variable solutions' to each call. No one has mentioned the 'game' in quite some time and Tuley seems content to live in his office, occasionally order out for pizza and man his station.



tuley
PRISWINKLE



norman
BOWSER

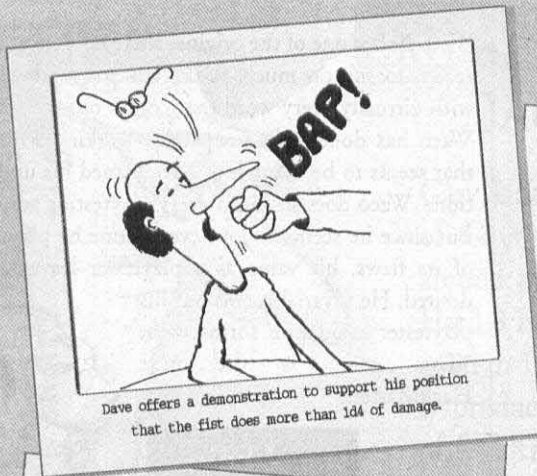
Norman Bowser is a role player who made good and realized his dream. He started out as a freelancer and began to pump so much HackMaster material into the Hard 8 offices that he was eventually asked to come on board. A few years ago he replaced Earl Slackmozer as the editor of HackJournal magazine and has been doing a bang up job of scratching the 'hack-n-slash' itch for thousands of fans. Gary has become so comfortable with Norman's writing ability that he has sanctioned all of Norman's material as 'official' Hackmaster material (even though Gary rarely reads Norman's work as of late). Norman has a long standing rivalry with Bitter Stevil. Norman cut Stevil's column from HackJournal soon after taking the helm.

timmy
JACKSON

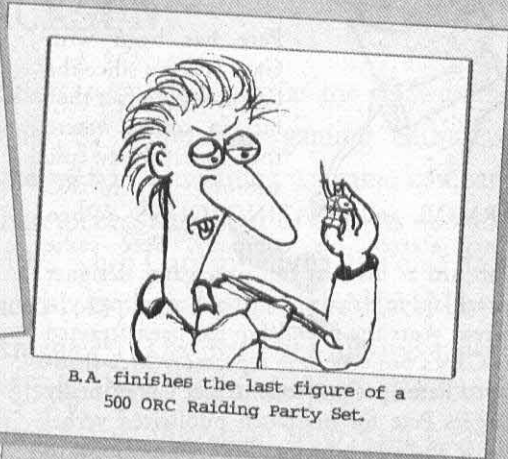


Eight year old Timmy Jackson is Gary's youngest son. He is also the newly installed chief developer for the SpaceHack sci-fi roleplaying game. He had been responsible for development on the superhero frp Heroes and Zeroes, but was reassigned due to a rash of complaints following the release of H&Z's Background Tool Chest supplement. Gary, uncharacteristically emotional, felt terrible about this and has promised to make it up to Timmy by bringing his favorite TV hero, Xena the Warrior Princess, to the next HackCon.

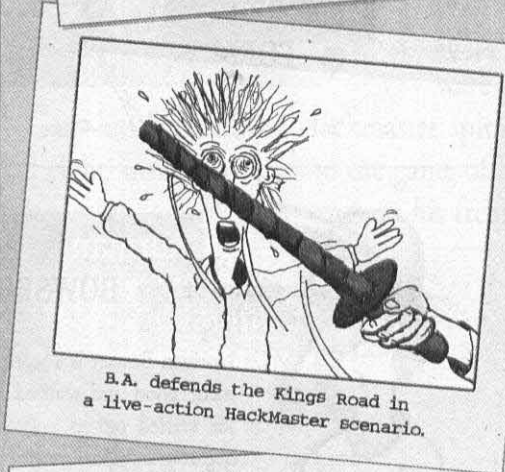
KODT POLAROID MOMENTS



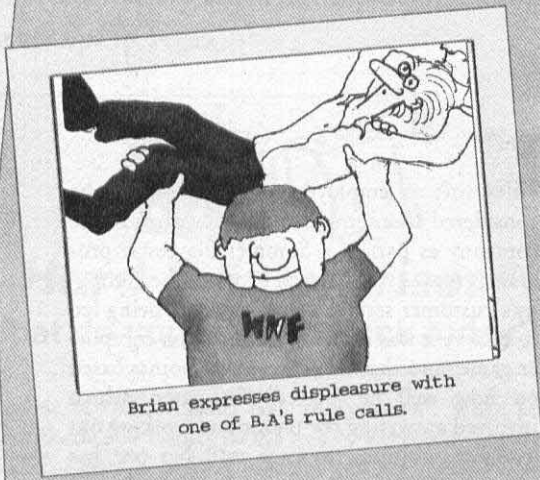
Dave offers a demonstration to support his position that the fist does more than 1d4 of damage.



B.A. finishes the last figure of a 500 ORC Raiding Party Set.



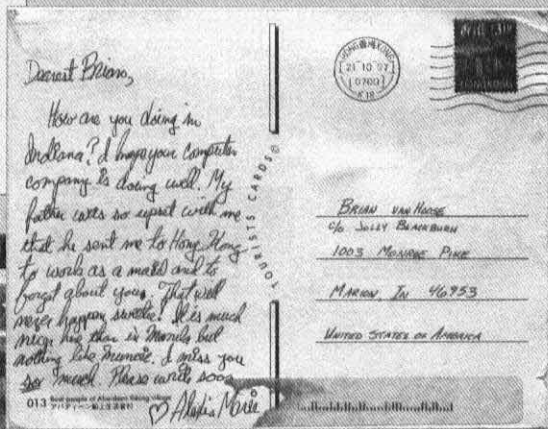
B.A. defends the Kings Road in a live-action HackMaster scenario.



Brian expresses displeasure with one of B.A.'s rule calls.



B.A. demonstrates his REMOTE Gamemaster System.

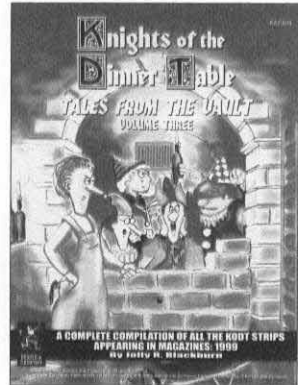
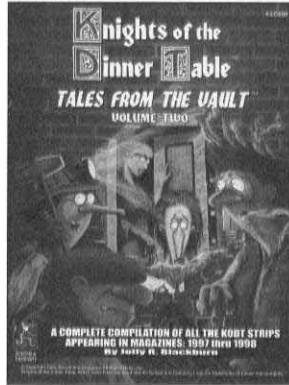
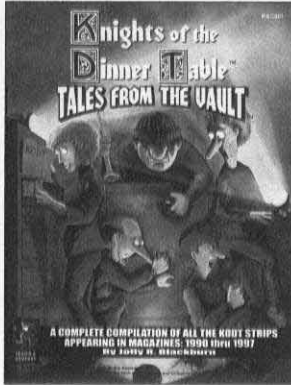


Is Brian's Girlfriend Real?

Shortly after we ran The Great Intervention story in KODT#6, this postcard (addressed to Brian van Hoose) arrived at Kenzer and Company's Indiana Office.



I've got yer BACK ISSUES right here bub!!



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STORY!!

The moment I leafed through the first few issues that Jolly produced prior to teaming up with us, I knew they were something special. When he became a partner in Kenzer and Company, we really believed in the power of the strips but were uncertain whether or not the rest of the gaming community would catch on. At this point I think we can safely say that our faith in those early Kenzer and Company produced issues [#4 - #6] has paid off.

We really put a lot of thought into those first few issues as we felt we had something to prove as a new team. While Jolly had the bulk of issue #4 done before joining us, many of the stories in issues #5 and #6 involved some synergistic collaboration by the newly formed development team. There are definitely some classic strips among issues four through six. Of course there's the famous "Agent of Evil" but looking back over them I can't help feeling like "Wherever you go - There you are" is the one nearest to my heart. I was often the mapper of the group.

As you read this, I'm sure you'll find your own favorite stories based on one of your personal experiences. That's what KODT is all about; bringing back the memories of good times past and making new ones. Here's to making new ones.

Brian Jelke

Knights of the Dinner Table Issue #4

Have Dice Will Travel

Originally Published: February, 1997



Knights of the Dinner Table Issue #5

Master of the Game

Originally Published: March, 1997



Knights of the Dinner Table Issue #6

Plays Well With Others

Originally Published: April, 1997

