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BUNDLE OF TROUBLE

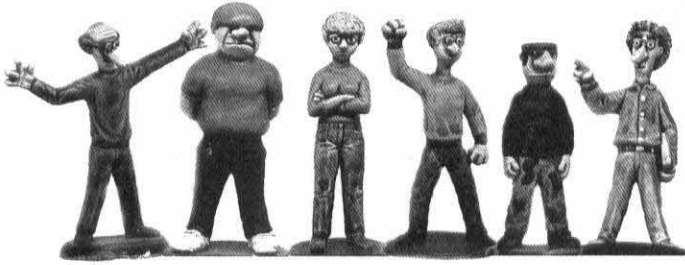
VOLUME THREE



A COMPILATION OF KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE: ISSUES 7 THRU 9

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Bundle of Trouble
Volume Three
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Knights of the Dinner Table™

BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOLUME THREE

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS
JOLLY R. BLACKBURN • BRIAN JELKE • STEVE JOHANSSON • DAVID S. KENZER
Cover Art by GEORGE AND JACKIE VRBANIC

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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). Ten years later, he continues to draw and write strips for the monthly Knights of the Dinner Table™ magazine as well as The Travelers and HackMasters of EverKnight. 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 7 thru 9
The Dice Man Cometh • An Orc By Any Other Name • Two Dice For Sister Sara

Editorial of a Madman

"Bob, Use Knobby Foot as a Shield to buy some time. He's JUST an NPC!!!"

Brian VanHoose showing his true colors in
KODT#7: Coward of the County

At a recent live-reading of KODT, I was asked by someone in the audience which strip was my personal favorite. I think I may have answered, *Agent of Evil* (The strip by Christopher Heath which ran in KODT#6/BOT II) which never fails to make me chuckle. The truth, however, is that I'm constantly revising my list of favorite strips. This is especially true when we begin compiling a new volume of **Bundle of Trouble** and working with strips that were written over two years ago.

Here are some of my favorites of the strips appearing in this volume and why.

Coward of the County

I'm fond of this strip for a couple of reasons. First off, it's one of the first times we had an NPC (*the torch bearer, Knobby Foot*) become an ongoing character. Knobby first appeared as a throw-away character in a strip I did for *Dragon*™ # 229 (see *Tales From the Vault vol II, page 39*). Besides becoming a tool for B.A. to influence the player's actions, he also went on to rival some of the Knights in popularity with our readers.

The feud between Bob and Knobby Foot, in my opinion, really helped to fully shift the comic book away from the strips which were basically stand-alone gags (i.e. like those in *Tales From the Vault*) to the continuing-story format which we began to implement in issue #4 where each strip began building, more and more, off the previous strips and carrying over to the next. Knobby Foot, along with Red Gurdy Pickens and Jonid Coin Krawler helped gain readership approval for the change in format.

In fact, when Knobby rode out of the comic (along with Bob's mule....er...Dwarven Warhorse) there was something of a minor letter writing campaign demand-

ing that we bring him back.

Another reason I like Coward of the County is that Sara verbally lashes out at Bob and Dave for their cowardly abuse of Knobby. Except for stretching out the neck on Dave's shirt a few times, this is one of the first times Sara gets pushed over the edge.

Game Master for a Day

This strip, one of many based on events that really happened at my gaming table, is one near and dear to my heart.

While in the Army (and stationed at Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas at the time) I was running a campaign on the weekends. For most of the players it was their first taste of role-playing and just couldn't get enough.

After several marathon gaming sessions, I was becoming a bit frazzled GMing and in need of a break. So, when gamer neophyte, Mike Osmond announced he wanted to take a stab at running a game himself, I readily agreed.

His first adventure was (and if you're reading this, I'm sorry Mike) a disaster and pretty much follows what transpires in the strip. (Incidentally, for all those Chelsie the Cow fans out there - this is the very same Mike who inspired the 'magic cow' story.)

One thing I can say for Mike's gamemastering style is that as a player, you ALWAYS knew if you were in deep trouble if his description of an NPC or Monster was followed with the phrase, "This bastard is a baaaaaaddd assssss!" Eventually, 'bad ass' came to mean 'hand me another character sheet' in our group.

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn

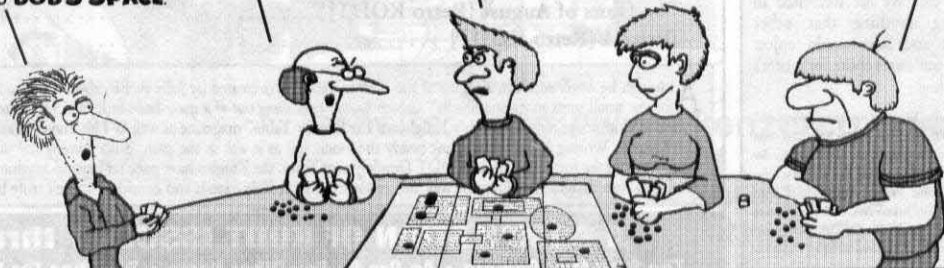
Games That Should Never Be: Crime Lord Expansion Set for Monopoly

OKAY, I'M SENDING A COUPLE OF MY **GIRLS** OVER TO WORK THE HOTEL ON **BOARD WALK**. NEXT TIME YOU COLLECT **INCOME** I GET 8% OF THE TAKE.

HEY, I'VE GOT A **CARD** HERE THAT LET'S ME CALL IN AN **ANONYMOUS TIP**. SOMEBODY MOVE THE **VICE SQUAD TOKEN** TO **BOB'S SPACE**.

MAN, DON'T BE SENDING YOUR **TRASH** OVER TO MY **ESTABLISHMENT**. I'M TRYING TO GET THE **STATE LEGISLATURE** TO LEGALIZE **GAMBLING**. I ONLY NEED **FOUR MORE AIR-OF-LEGITIMACY POINTS** TO PUSH IT THROUGH.

GOOD JOB, B.A. AND I'LL PLAY A **PAROLE VIOLATION MARKER** ON HIM. THAT SHOULD **NEGATE ANY GET OUT OF JAIL FREE CARDS** HE HAS IN HIS HAND.





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Knights of the Dinner Table #7
"The Dice Man Cometh"
May 1997

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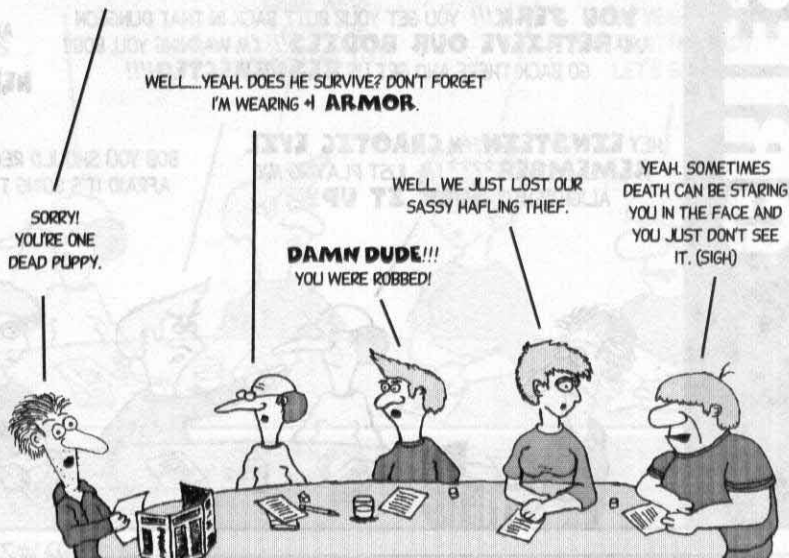
Knights of the Dinner Table™

"The Dice Man Cometh"

The KODT Development Team is:

Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,
Steve Johansson & David S. Kenzer

OKAY, SO WHAT YOU ARE ASKING IS IF YOUR CHARACTER SURVIVES A POINT BLANK **BLAST OF FIRE BREATH** IN THE FACE WHICH CAUSES HIM TO STUMBLE BACKWARDS OFF A **300 FOOT CLIFF** LANDING IN A **POOL OF MOLTEN LAVA**?



Editorial of a Madman

Dice! Gamers love 'em. Most of us show up at the gaming table with bulging dice bags. Bags stuffed with more dice than we could possibly use in a single session. Take AD&D for example. Depending on your character class, a player needs a pair of twenty siders, a few six siders, and possibly a four, eight and twelve sider just in case. We're talking seven to ten dice in our arsenal. At last count, I had 78 dice in my dice bag. Most gamers I know average around fifty.

Face it! Gamers love dice. While attending the GAMA trade show recently, I was talking to a dice manufacturer and he commented how dice consistently sell very well regardless of how the rest of the industry is doing.

Well, that got me thinking about dice in general and our love-affair with them. I thought I'd share some of my observations.

The Process of Rolling Dice.

Every gamer has his or her own approach when it comes to rolling the dice. Some gamers take it in stride, content with tossing the dice and accepting the results. Most gamers, however, myself included, take our dice rolling very seriously. For us, the act of rolling the dice is crucial - the one aspect of the game where 'we' can directly influence the outcome of the game. The more energy and focus we put into the process of rolling the dice, we convince ourselves, the better our chances of success. It's the uncertainty of how the dice will land after they tumble across the table that gets our adrenaline flowing. It's why we come back week after week.

Over the years I've watched hundreds of gamers at the table. It seems every individual has his or her own technique for tossing the dice.

1. Selection. Selecting the proper dice is almost a science in itself for many gamers. I know of one player who assigns a specific die for specific tasks. A metal flaked ten-sider for backstabbing attacks. A gold-plated metal twenty sider for saving throws, etc. A player I met in Germany used to pull out every die of the type he needed to roll from his bag. He would roll all

the dice several times, eliminating those which rolled low numbers. He would continue the process until all the dice had been eliminated but one. Then he would make his 'official' roll using that die.

2. Preparation. After selecting the proper dice for the required roll, many gamers feel the need to 'prep' their dice. Using various techniques to prep the dice, the gamer hopes to boost the luck of the dice for a more favorable outcome. Prepping techniques include, but are not limited to, any combination of the following; blowing on the dice, talking to the dice (*come on baby, high numbers, high numbers*), rubbing the dice vigorously between the palms, prolonged rattling of the dice in a closed fist, etc.

3. The Roll. The *roll* is defined as the period of time from when the dice leaves the player's hands to when they come to a complete rest. This is where many gamers differ on what constitutes a legitimate roll and what voids a roll (in which case the dice must be rerolled).

Most groups have house rules which all players have agreed to comply with. Some groups consider a roll to be void if it leaves the table or playing surface. Other groups consider all rolls valid including those on the floor, in the pizza, in a cup of soda, etc.

I once played with a group in South Carolina that had a special 'cat clause'. If the family cat intercepted the dice during a roll the cat was allowed to play with the dice until he was bored and broke his attack. The results of the abandoned dice were considered official.

Well, there are my thoughts on dice. Just one more example of what happens when a writer sits down to finish a column before deadline and his mind goes blank. Thank goodness I saw fit to subtitle this column Editorial of a Madman. A license to ramble and rave if ever I saw one.

Good Gaming!

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn
April 28, 1997

YOU JERK!!! YOU GET YOUR BUTT BACK IN THAT DUNGEON AND RETRIEVE OUR BODIES!!! I'M WARNING YOU, BOB!! GO BACK THERE AND GET US RESURRECTED!!!!

AND I WANT ALL MY MAGIC ITEMS BACK!!! OR THERE'LL BE HELL TO PAY. I GUARANTEE IT!!

HEY **EINSTEIN**, I'M **CHAOTIC EVIL** REMEMBER???? I'M JUST PLAYING MY ALIGNMENT!!! **SUCK IT UP!!!**

BOB YOU SHOULD RECONSIDER. I'M AFRAID IT'S GOING TO GET UGLY!



OKAY, YOU'VE JUST REACHED THE FIFTH LEVEL OF THE **DEATH-WEAVER'S INFERNAL HALLS OF DREAD**. THERE'S GOING TO BE A LOT OF STUFF ON THIS LEVEL - YOU MAY WANT TO START A LIST!!

WHY BOTHER? YOU KNOW DAMN WELL WE'RE GONNA TAKE ALL THE **GOOD STUFF** WE FIND.

YEAH, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE FOUND THAT **BAG OF HEFTY-CAPACITY!!** WE'VE GOT A LOT OF CRAP IN THERE.

INCLUDING DAVE'S HENCHMEN!! WHICH I STILL THINK IS CRUEL AND CONSTITUTES AN ALIGNMENT INFRACTION!!

BUT WE NEEDED A FULL TIME INVENTORY AND SUPPLY CREW IN THERE SARA TO KEEP THE BOOKS STRAIGHT. WE ROTATE THEM EVERY SIX WEEKS SO WHERE'S THE CRUELTY??



WELL, I'M JUST SUGGESTING KEEPING A LIST SO WE DON'T HAVE A REPEAT OF THAT RIOT WE HAD LAST SUMMER OVER THAT MISPLACED +1 SWORD!!

MISPLACED!!! MISPLACED!!! ARE YOU FORGETTING WHERE WE FOUND THAT SWORD?? **HUH??**

OH DON'T EVEN GO THERE, DUDE. I THOUGHT WE ALL AGREED THAT SOMEONE **PLANTED** THAT SWORD IN MY BACKPACK!!

NO...WE ALL AGREED THAT WE SHOULD **PLANT** THAT SWORD IN YOUR **BACK!!**

B.A. DOES HAVE A GOOD POINT. WE MIGHT AS WELL TAKE EVERYTHING ON THIS LEVEL!! WE HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM IN THE BAG. I'LL DO THE LIST.



THERE! ARE YOU HAPPY NOW!! JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LEAVE A SINGLE THING OUT B.A.!! WE'RE GOING TO TAKE ANYTHING THAT'S NOT NAILED DOWN!!

GROOOOAAANNNN!!! YOU'RE SERIOUS AREN'T YOU??? YOU'RE ACTUALLY GOING TO STRIP DOWN THE DUNGEON JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE THAT STUPID MAGIC BAG??

YOU BETTER SHARPEN A FEW EXTRA PENCILS, BRIAN. WE'RE TAKING THE FURNITURE TOO!!

SORRY, B.A. YOU ASKED FOR IT.

YEAH, YEAH, DON'T SWEAT IT. I'M READY. LET'S GAME.



"I was at a convention with Brian Jelke once when he complained I had changed a story idea for a strip he had submitted. I forget the specifics but I had basically rewritten a portion of his story and a few of the jokes had were lost. A few weeks later, I was fleshing out another story Brian had submitted — **Three Green Towels**. Deciding to push his buttons, at the last minute I changed the title to **Five Green Towels**. Several months later at another convention the subject came up as to why I changed the title. 'Five is a much funnier number than Three'. I replied, I'm not entirely certain, but I don't think Brian found it amusing." Jolly

LATER....

OKAY, IN THIS ROOM IS A PILE OF BROKEN GLASS, A CHAIR WITH A LEG MISSING, THE SKELETON OF A DEAD CAT, A DIRTY HANDKERCHIEF, TWO SILVER COINS, SOME TOE-NAIL CLIPPINGS IN A SILVER TRAY....

KEEP IT COMING B.A. DON'T LEAVE A **SINGLE** THING OUT. **WE'RE TAKING IT ALL!!**

BRIAN YOU GETTING ALL THIS?? DON'T FORGET THOSE TOE-NAIL CLIPPINGS. THEY MAY BE RELICS OR SOMETHING. YOU NEVER KNOW.

(YAWN) DON'T YOU THINK WE'RE OVER-REACTING GUYS? A DIRTY HANDKERCHIEF?? COME ON - THIS IS JUST STANDARD DUNGEON DRESSING.

....ONE CAT SKELETON (SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE), ONE HANDKERCHIEF-SOILED (SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE), TWO SILVER COINS (SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE)....



LATER STILL

OKAY, IN THIS ROOM THERE'S A WARDROBE, A NIGHT TABLE, A DRESSER WITH FIVE GREEN TOWELS IN IT. THERE'S A QUILT, A BROKEN HAIRBRUSH, A BROOCH, A PAIR OF SLIPPERS, A MATTED RUG, A BED, TWO PILLOWS, A PAIR OF DIRTY SOCKS....

(YAWN) WELL, IT MAY BE TEDIOUS BUT IT WILL ALL BE WORTH IT IN THE END. WE CAN SIT BACK IN TOWN AND RELAX LATER WHILE WE SORT IT ALL OUT.

(YAWN) MAN, I HAD NO IDEA THERE WOULD BE SO MUCH STUFF.

BRIAN, YOU OKAY?? WANT ME TO TAKE OVER??

HUH??? UH NO SARA. I MIGHT AS WELL PUSH ON THROUGH!!

FIVE GREEN TOWELS (SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE)...



MUCH LATER...

YOU FINALLY REACH THE DEATH-WEAVER'S TREASURE ROOM. AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF COINS ARE DOZENS OF WEAPONS, VIALS AND....

HEY, HEY, HOLD ON THERE TONTO. TAKE IT FROM THE TOP. EXACTLY HOW MANY COINS??? BREAK THEM DOWN THE TYPE AND VALUE.

(SIGH) 16,123 GOLD, 25,228 SILVER, 50,006 COPPER. FOUR LONG SWORDS, TWO JEWELLED CROWNS, A RING OF GIANT MIGHT, 65 RUBIES...

HOODY HOOO!! WE'VE HIT THE MOTHER LODE BOYS!!!

ARE YOU GETTING ALL THIS BRIAN??? 16,123 GOLD, 25,228 SILVER, 50,006 COPPER....

TWO JEWELLED CROWNS (SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE)...



TWO HOURS LATER..

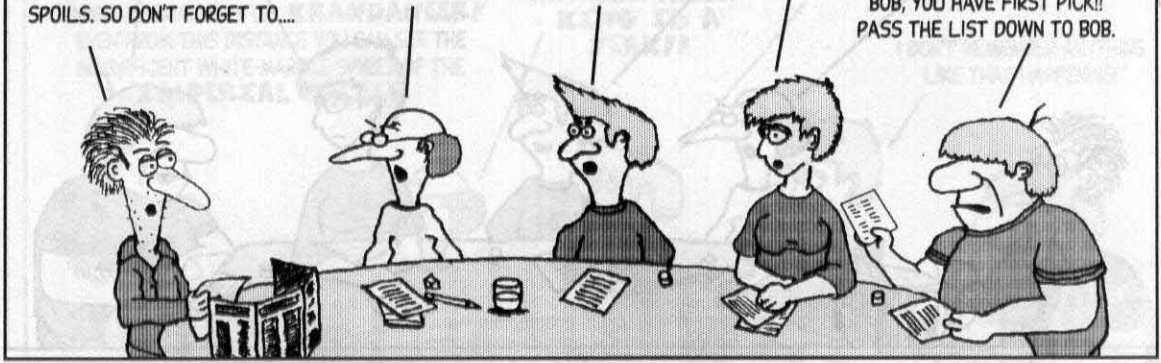
WHEW!! YOU'RE FINALLY BACK IN TOWN. I GUESS WE CAN JUST WAIT 'TIL NEXT WEEK FOR YOU GUYS TO SPLIT UP THE SPOILS. SO DON'T FORGET TO...

WAIT!! I DON'T THINK SO. I WANT MY TAKE **NOW!!**

COME ON B.A!! IT'S GROUP POLICY!! WE ALWAYS SPLIT UP TREASURE AND EPS BEFORE GOING HOME.

WELL, I WAS HOPING TO WAIT. BUT IF YOU GUYS WANT TO DO IT TONIGHT, I SUPPOSE I'M GAME.

OKAY LET'S GO DOWN THE LIST. BOB, YOU HAVE FIRST PICK!! PASS THE LIST DOWN TO BOB.

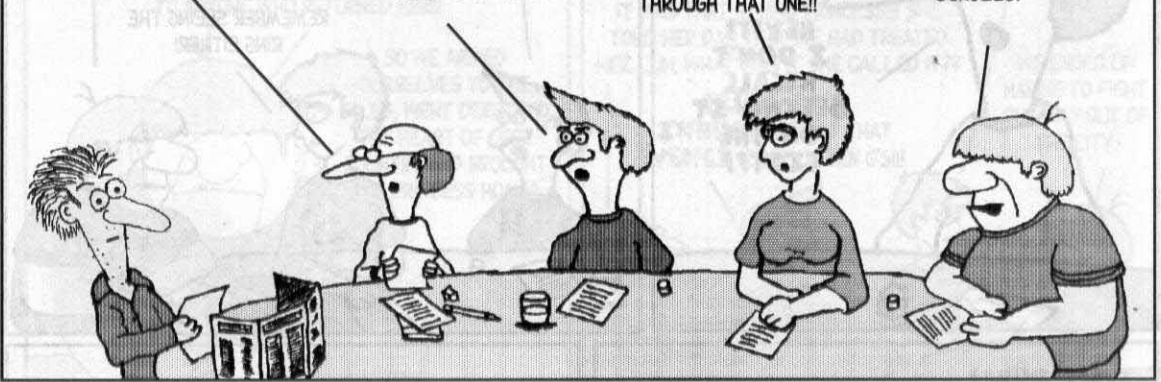


HMMMM...OH YEAH!!! COME TO PAPA!!! I'LL BE TAKING THE MAGIC SHIELD!!!! (SCRATCH)

WELL, I'LL TAKE THE MATCHED JEWELLED DAGGERS. SCRATCH THOSE OFF THE LIST.

I WAS AFRAID SOMEONE ELSE WOULD PICK THE GREAT HELM. I'LL BE TAKING THAT. MARK THROUGH THAT ONE!!

AND I'LL BE TAKING THE BAG OF SCROLLS.



ONE HOUR LATER..

GEE, THE LIST IS PRETTY MUCH PICKED THROUGH. NOT MUCH LEFT. I'LL TAKE THE TOE-NAIL CLIPPINGS!

HMMMM...WHAT'S LEFT??? I GUESS I'LL TAKE THE FIVE GREEN TOWELS.

FINALLY!!! I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE FINALLY DONE.

FIVE GREEN TOWELS??? DOES THAT COUNT AS FIVE PICKS OR JUST ONE???



WHO THE HELL CARES BRIAN??
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT ON THE LIST.

OKAY, I'LL TAKE THE **RING OF GIANT MIGHT**. GUESS WE'RE ALL DONE.

YEP!!! TIME TO HIT THE PUB DUDE!!!

???



RING!!!
WHAT..... MAN, I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THAT.

HEY!!! I DON'T RECALL SEEING IT ON THE LIST!!



I'M DRAWING MY HACKMASTER +12!!!
I SMELL A THEVIN-RAT!

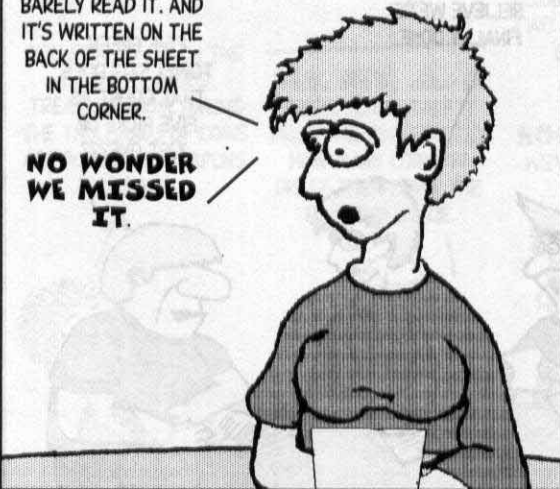
HEY, I PICKED IT FAIR AND SQUARE. IT'S NOT MY FAULT YOU GUYS CAN'T READ PLAIN ENGLISH!!!

LET ME SEE THAT LIST, BRIAN. I DON'T REMEMBER SEEING THE RING EITHER!



WELL DUH!!
LOOK AT HOW SMALL IT'S WRITTEN - I CAN BARELY READ IT. AND IT'S WRITTEN ON THE BACK OF THE SHEET IN THE BOTTOM CORNER.

NO WONDER WE MISSED IT.



YOU WANT SOME OF THIS?? HUH??
HUMMMMMRRPFFTT!!!

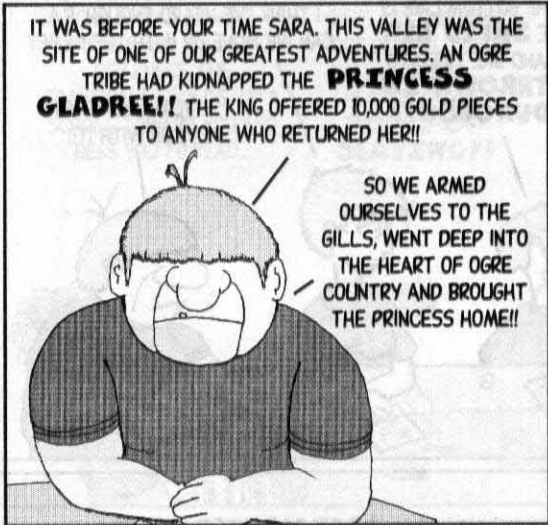
NO FOUR SIDERS!!
NO FOUR SIDERS!!

UMMMMMMMMMFFFF!!!

WELL...HERE WE GO AGAIN. (SIGH)



KRUNCH!
PUCKA DA PUCKA DA!!



"This strip was originally a much shorter in-house strip which I wrote for Dave and Jennifer Kenzer when they announced the birth of their daughter, Samantha. I think the last panel had the group bellowing out a big "Hoody Hoo!" Later on, a swiftly approaching deadline prompted me to scavenge it and merge the storyline with another strip I was working on." — Jolly

HEY, THE CHICK HAD A 12 STRENGTH!!! ALL WE ASKED HER TO DO WAS TO CARRY HER **MAXIMUM ENCUMBRANCE*** ABILITY JUST LIKE THE REST OF US!!! THERE WAS NO WAY WE WERE LEAVING THE **JEWELLED OGRE THRONE** BEHIND!!

YEAH, AND WE GAVE HER **FORTY SLAPS** FOR FALLING ASLEEP WHILE SHE WAS ON **GUARD DUTY!!!** THAT'S THE **STANDARD PUNISHMENT!**

ONLY FORTY SLAPS?? GEE YOU DIDN'T SHAVE HER HEAD AND BRAND "SLACKER" ON HER FOREHEAD LIKE YOU DID TO KNOBBY FOOT THAT ONE TIME??

WE WERE GOING TO BLIT THE SASSY WENCH GROIN KICKED ME AND CLIMBED A TREE.



OH AND LET'S NOT FORGET THE **LEATHER THONG AND CHAINMAIL BRA** YOU MADE HER WEAR. SHE WAS **HUMILIATED!!**

BUT WE EXPLAINED THAT!!! IT WAS FOR HER OWN PROTECTION SO NO ONE WOULD KNOW SHE WAS THE PRINCESS!!!

WELL THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT WE **SAVED HER LIFE** AND SHE TRIED TO GET US **THROWN IN THE DUNGEON!!**

I THINK I'VE HEARD ENOUGH. B.A., CAN WE MOVE ON WITH THE GAME?

YEAH, LET'S GET ON WITH IT!!



OKAY, AS YOU MOVE TOWARD THE CITY YOU SUDDENLY HEAR THE TOLLING OF HUNDREDS OF CITY BELLS!!!

UH-OH!!! LOOKS LIKE THERE'S TROUBLE AFOOT! I BET THE OGRES ARE CAUSING PROBLEMS AGAIN!!

PULLING OUT MY **HACKMASTER +12** HERE!!

GUYS, THE TOLLING OF BELLS CAN MEAN GOOD NEWS AS WELL AS BAD. MAYBE WE SHOULD INVESTIGATE BEFORE REACTING!!!

I DUNNO!! I GOT A **BAD FEELING** ABOUT THIS!! THE CITY IS IN SOME KIND OF DANGER - I KNOW IT!



* "This is actually based on a real incident in a game I ran years ago. Back in my early days as a GM I went through a period where I strictly enforced the encumbrance rules. My players hated me for it because I came up with the dirty tactic of placing treasure in small denomination coins such as copper or silver pieces. This often forced the players to make some difficult decisions such as leaving things behind. It also caused them to make some 'stupid' decisions such as forcing a rescued princess to carry several large bags of coins." — Jolly

AS YOU NEAR THE CITY YOU ARE APPROACHED BY TWO WOMEN WHO ARE WEeping WITH APPARENT **JOY!!** THEY PLACE WREATHS OF FRESH-CUT FLOWERS AROUND YOUR NECKS AND **KISS YOU ON THE CHEEKS.**

EVIL TEMPTRESSES!!! I WASTE THEM WITH MY CROSS-BOW!! THEY MUST BE SOME HORRID FORM OF SUCCUBUS !!

I'M AVERTING MY EYES AS I TRY TO DECAPITATE THEM. **COVER ME BOB!!**

WAIT!! IDIOTS!! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT THESE ARE TWO INNOCENT WOMEN??

HAHAHA!!!! YOU WON'T SAY THAT WHEN THEY TURN YOU INTO A PILLAR OF SALT OR TRANSMUTE YOU IN STONE. I'M COVERING MY EYES AS WELL B.A.



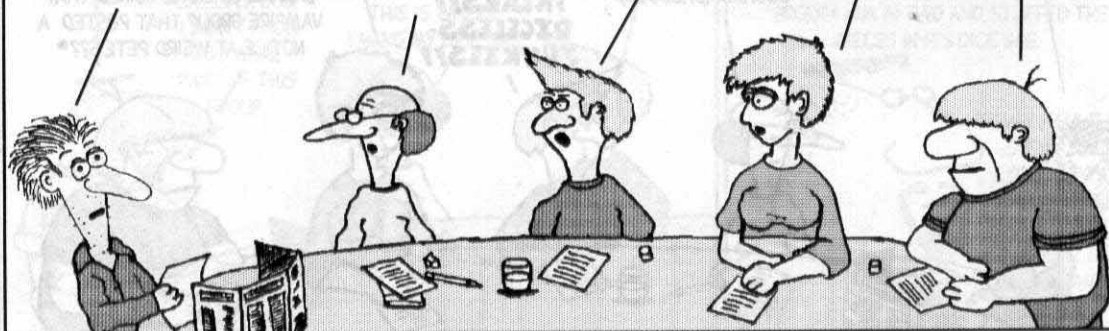
AS YOU BEGIN TO ATTACK ONE OF THE WOMEN SCREAMS AND FALLS TO HER KNEES. SHE FRANTICALLY HOLDS UP A SCROLL TOWARD YOU AND BEGS YOU TO READ...

AAAAAAHHH!! SHE'S CASTING SOME SORT OF SPELL FROM THAT SCROLL. I PEPPER HER WITH **BOLTS-OF-SLAYING!!**

HA! AND I ROLLED A NATURAL TWENTY!! THE OTHER SUCCUBUS' HEAD DROPS TO THE GROUND!!!

I'M GUARDING OUR BACKS!! THERE MAY BE MORE OF THEM IN THE AREA.

BUT... BUT ... (MOAN)



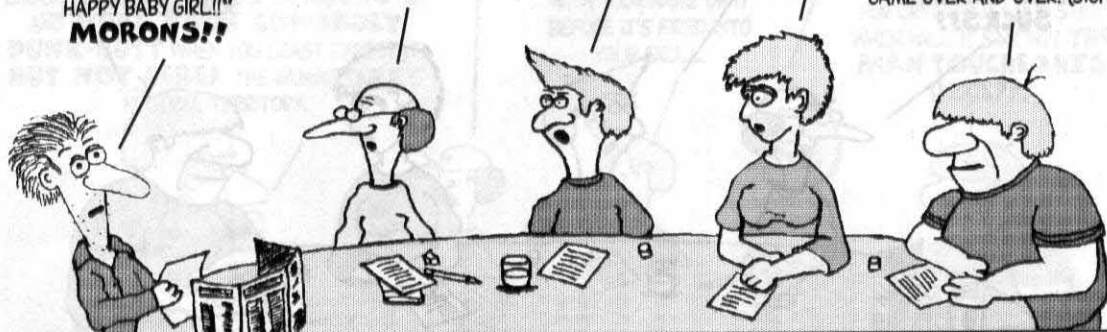
AS THE WOMEN LIE BLEEDING AT YOUR FEET YOU NOTICE THE SCROLL IS ACTUALLY A **HANDBILL!!** IT READS, **"JOYOUS NEWS!!** THE KING AND QUEEN OF KANDANEER GIVE BIRTH TO A **HAPPY BABY GIRL!!"** **MORONS!!**

SO THAT'S IT!!! THE EVIL SUCCUBI WERE PLOTTING TO KIDNAP THE NEW PRINCESS. THANK GAUDD WE WERE HERE TO THWART THEIR EVIL PLAN!!!!

WE'D BETTER HEAD FOR THE PALACE. I BET WE GET REWARDED FOR THIS. **GOOD WORK BOB!!**

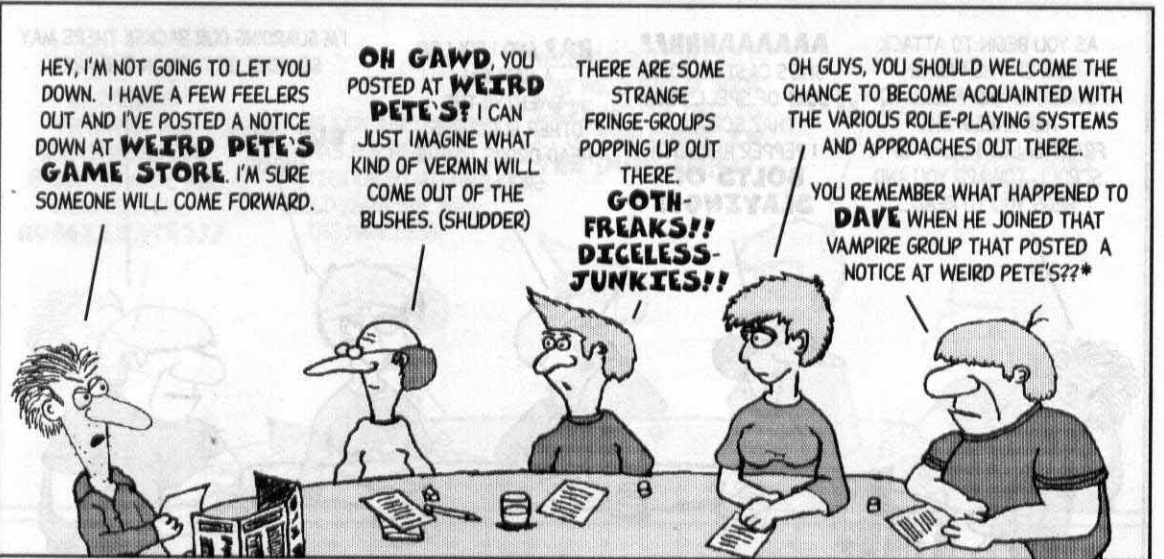
REWARD???? I HOPE YOU TWO GET JUST WHAT YOU DESERVE. HMMRRRRFFF!!

YOU KNOW, IT'S THIS KIND OF **HEROIC STUFF** THAT KEEPS ME COMING BACK TO THE GAME OVER AND OVER. (SIGH)

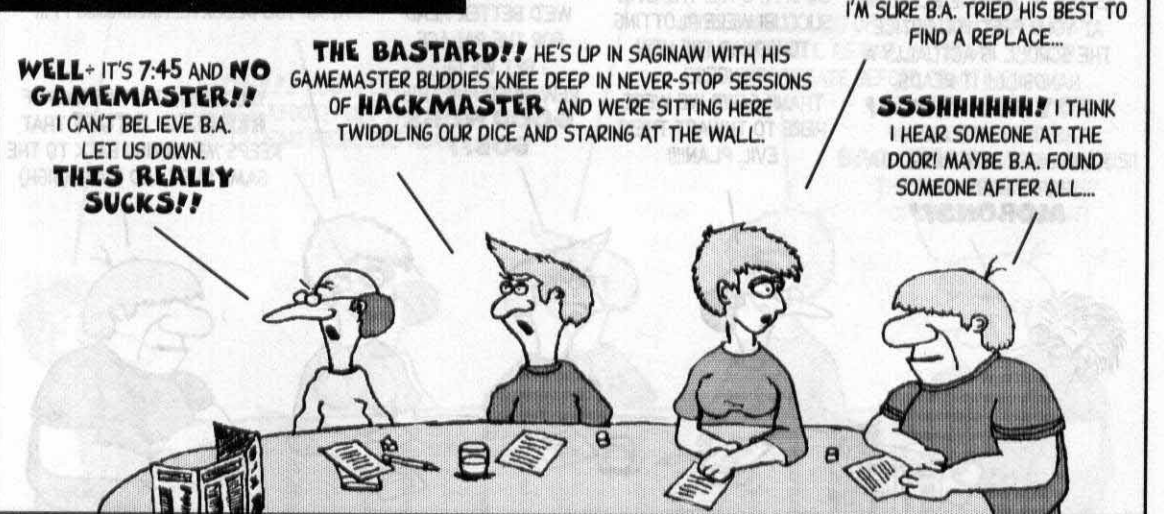


The Lord of Steam

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN WITH
DAVID S. KENZER



THE FOLLOWING WEEK...



*See KODT Issue 2: Lords of Darkness

OKAY MY LITTLE DICE-FREAKS!!
YOU CAN CALM DOWN NOW, THE
LORD OF STEAM ARRIVETH!!

NITRO!!!

NO...NO!! THAT
VOICE!! THIS
CAN'T BE. IT'S...IT'S....



**NITRO THE MAESTRO OF
ROLE-PLAYING** AT YOUR SERVICE.

NORMALLY I'M ALL
BOOKED UP AS FAR AS
RUNNING GAMES, BUT
MOST OF THE FOLKS IN
MY REGULAR GROUP ARE
STILL IN QUARANTINE.



QUAR..QUAR.. QUARANTINE? WHAT FOR??

WHO KNOWS? **TYPHOID, MALARIA,** ONE OF
THOSE FESTERING JUNGLE BUGS, YA KNOW?? MY LAST
STEAM-TUNNEL FORAY WAS A DISASTER.

I HOPE THERE
AREN'T ANY
HARD FEELINGS
NITRO. HUH??

UH...SAY, BOB!
I DIDN'T KNOW
YOU WERE
PART OF THIS
GROUP.

(GULP) UH..YEAH,
THIS IS WHERE
I HANG MY DICE-BAG.



**HARD FEELINGS!!!
TOWARD BOB!** HELL NO!! I ADMIRE A
MAN WHO DOESN'T TOLERATE OTHERS
SCREWING AROUND WITH HIS DICE.

BLINDING ME WITH **SALT** BEFORE HE
SUCKER PUNCHED ME* SAVED HIS
ASS. ANYTHING LESS AND I WOULD'VE
BROKEN HIM IN TWO AND STUFFED THE
PIECES IN HIS DICE BAG.

"NEVER FAULT AN
ENEMY FOR
EXPLOITING A
WEAKNESS", AS
ROMMEL
ONCE SAID, "LEARN
FROM IT AND
MOVE ON."



YEAH, EXACTLY!!! MOVE ON. THAT'S WHAT I LIKE TO
PRACTICE. WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE. ANCIENT HISTORY.

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE??

YEAH, RIGHT!!! LIKE A **COVERT
SEAL-COMMANDO** TEAM WADING
UNDER THE BRIDGE YOU MEAN. I'M GONNA POP UP
AND **NUKE YOUR COWARDLY
PUNK-BUTT** WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT.
BUT NOT HERE! THE GAMING TABLE IS
NEUTRAL TERRITORY.

AWESOME!! BOB
THIS IS LIKE LOOKING YOUR
EXECUTIONER IN THE FACE
HUH?? OR MAYBE IT'S MORE
LIKE SEEING THE BULLET
WITH YOUR NAME ON IT
BEFORE IT'S FIRED INTO
YOUR SKULL.

BOB, IN CASES LIKE THIS, A REALLY
SINCERE APOLOGY GOES A LONG WAY.
NITRO'S EGO IS BRUISED. YOU DID
ASSAULT HIM IN FRONT OF HIS PEERS.

APOLOGIZE??

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD SARA,
WHEN WILL IT SINK IN?? **THE
MAN TOUCHED HIS
DICE!!!**



* See KODT#6: The Safety Lecture

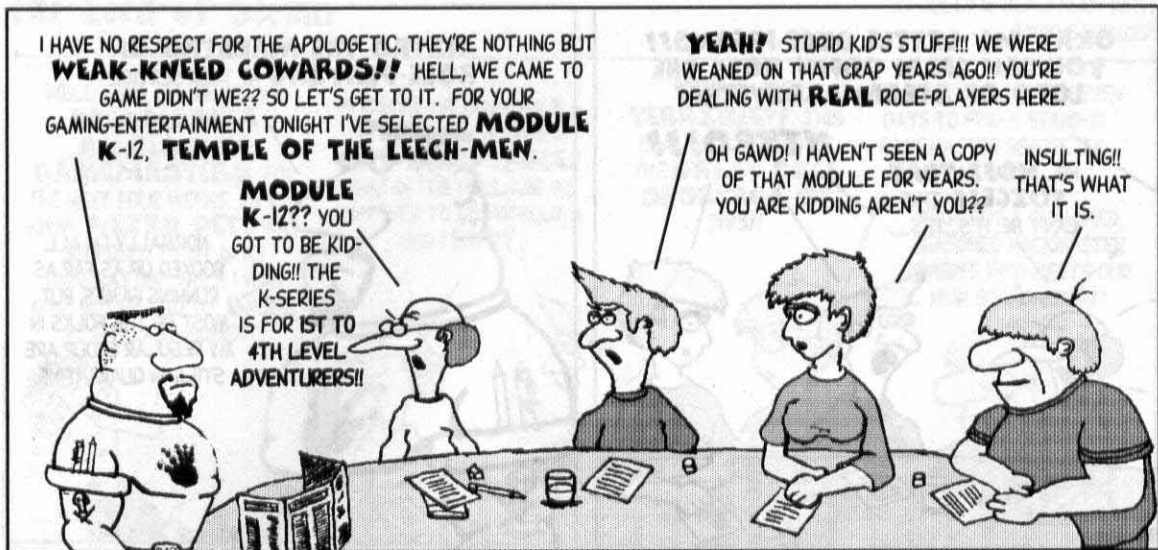
I HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THE APOLOGETIC. THEY'RE NOTHING BUT **WEAK-KNEED COWARDS!!** HELL, WE CAME TO GAME DIDN'T WE?? SO LET'S GET TO IT. FOR YOUR GAMING-ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT I'VE SELECTED **MODULE K-12, TEMPLE OF THE LEECH-MEN.**

YEAH! STUPID KID'S STUFF!!! WE WERE WEANED ON THAT CRAP YEARS AGO!! YOU'RE DEALING WITH **REAL** ROLE-PLAYERS HERE.

MODULE K-12?? YOU GOT TO BE KIDDING!! THE K-SERIES IS FOR 1ST TO 4TH LEVEL ADVENTURERS!!

OH GAWD! I HAVEN'T SEEN A COPY OF THAT MODULE FOR YEARS. YOU ARE KIDDING AREN'T YOU??

INSULTING!! THAT'S WHAT IT IS.



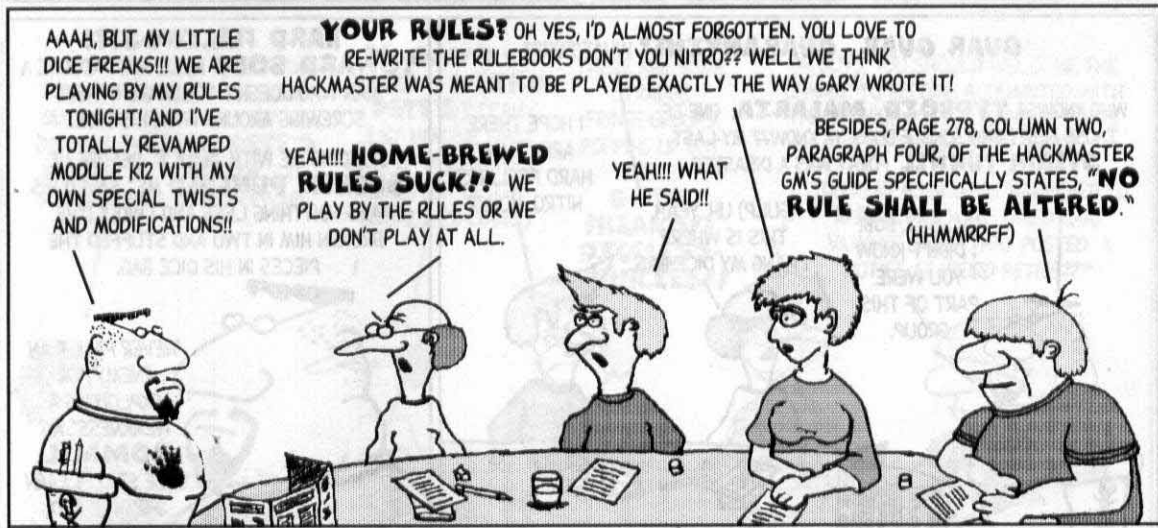
AAAH, BUT MY LITTLE DICE FREAKS!!! WE ARE PLAYING BY MY RULES TONIGHT! AND I'VE TOTALLY REVAMPED MODULE K12 WITH MY OWN SPECIAL TWISTS AND MODIFICATIONS!!

YOUR RULES? OH YES, I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN. YOU LOVE TO RE-WRITE THE RULEBOOKS DON'T YOU NITRO?? WELL WE THINK HACKMASTER WAS MEANT TO BE PLAYED EXACTLY THE WAY GARY WROTE IT!

YEAH!!! HOME-BREWED RULES SUCK!! WE PLAY BY THE RULES OR WE DON'T PLAY AT ALL.

YEAH!!! WHAT HE SAID!!

BESIDES, PAGE 278, COLUMN TWO, PARAGRAPH FOUR, OF THE HACKMASTER GM'S GUIDE SPECIFICALLY STATES, "**NO RULE SHALL BE ALTERED.**" (HHMMRRFF)



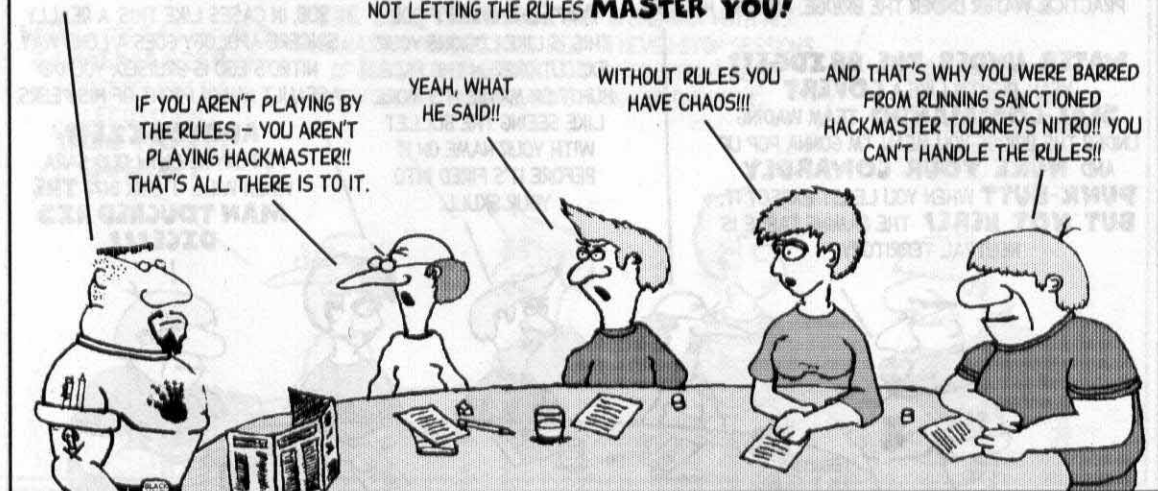
HOW FOOLISH OF ME. I'D FORGOTTEN THAT THIS **SOCIALLY-RETARDED** LITTLE GROUP OF **INTROVERTS** HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO THE **FOLLOW-THE-LEADER HOGSLOP** THAT **B.A. FELTON** ADHERES TO. YOU **POOR SAPS**. YOU SIMPLY CAN'T UNDERSTAND CAN YOU? **REAL POWER** COMES FROM **MASTERING THE RULES - NOT LETTING THE RULES MASTER YOU!**

IF YOU AREN'T PLAYING BY THE RULES - YOU AREN'T PLAYING HACKMASTER!! THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.

YEAH, WHAT HE SAID!!

WITHOUT RULES YOU HAVE CHAOS!!!

AND THAT'S WHY YOU WERE BARRED FROM RUNNING SANCTIONED HACKMASTER TOURNEYS NITRO!! YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE RULES!!



FOOLS!! YOU'RE REASONING FROM A POSITION OF **FEAR!** YOU CLING TO AN **OBSOLETE, ANTIQUATED RULE SYSTEM** WHICH HAMPERS, EVEN DIMINISHES THE QUALITY OF ROLE-PLAY THAT YOU CRAVE SO MUCH. YOU CLING TO YOUR CLUMBERSOME RULES BECAUSE YOU'RE **AFRAID!** AND YOU HAVE THE AUDACITY TO CONDEMN THOSE WHO BOLDLY PUSH THE ROLE-PLAYING ENVELOPE TO THE EDGE. I OFFER YOU THE **ULTIMATE ADVENTURE** BUT YOUR **LACK OF COURAGE** BETRAYS YOU. (SIGH).

WHO'S AFRAID?
WE CAN HANDLE ANYTHING YOU THROW AT US - AND THEN SOME!!

YEAH! BRING IT ON HOT-SHOT!! WE'LL CRAWL THROUGH YOUR **LITTLE DUNGEON!!**

THAT'S THE SPIRIT, BOYS!!

OBSOLETE! ANTIQUATED! THE MAN IS A BLASPHEMER!!



LATER....

OKAY, AFTER SEVERAL HOURS OF CHOPPING AND HACKING THROUGH THE THICK OVERGROWTH OF VINES AND VEGETATION, YOU COME UPON A LARGE STONE TEMPLE. A LARGE GATE STANDS BEFORE YOU ADORNED WITH THE SKULLS AND BONES OF THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE YOU!!

YEP!! SO FAR IT'S THE SAME **HUM-DRUM ADVENTURE.** IF WE ATTEMPT TO OPEN THE GATE THE BONES WILL RATTLE AND ALERT THE **LEECH-GUARD** IN ROOM 7-A.

LEECH-GUARD SMEECH-GUARD.
I TOOK HIM OUT WITH ONE HIT LAST TIME I PLAYED THIS ADVENTURE!! HE'S A WUSS!!

HA! EXACTLY AS I REMEMBERED IT!

WELL, ONWARD THEN.



I KICK THE GATE IN AND READY MY **CROSSBOW OF SLAYING!!**

I READY MY HACKMASTER
+12 AND TAKE POINT!!!

I'M TAKING UP THE REAR. I'LL SPIKE THE GATES OPEN AND THEN FOLLOW THE GROUP.

I SEE. I LOVE **RECKLESS BEHAVIOR.** THE GATE SWINGS OPEN REVEALING A LARGE HALLWAY LINED WITH PILLARS.

I HAVE A COUPLE OF FIRE-BALLS PREPPED!!



OKAY, AS YOU ENTER THE HALLWAY SOMETHING VERY STRANGE HAPPENS. VERY STRANGE INDEED. BOB, YOUR CROSSBOW BEGINS TO GLOW AND SUDDENLY CHANGES INTO A **RED RYDER BB-GUN!!**



DAVE, YOUR SWORD BEGINS TO HUM AND VANISHES. MOMENTS LATER A **POST-HOLE DIGGER** APPEARS IN YOUR HANDS!!!

BRIAN, AS YOU ARE CONCENTRATING ON YOUR FIREBALL SPELL YOUR THOUGHTS ARE SUDDENLY MUDDLED!!! YOU BEGIN TO THINK OF BROADWAY SHOW-TUNES AND FEEL COMPELLED TO START SINGING, "**WHERE IS LOVE**" FROM **OLIVER**.

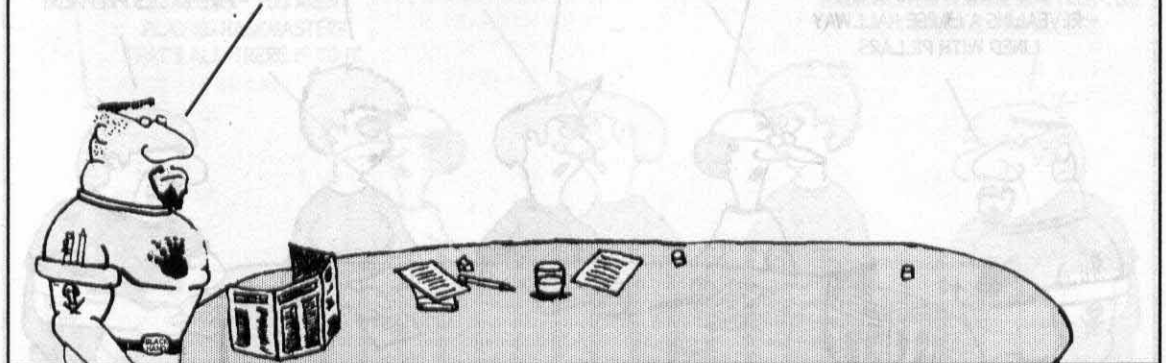


AS YOU STAND THERE STUPEFIED WITH AMAZEMENT, A SMALL HOLE OPENS UP ON THE FLOOR. MOMENTS LATER A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE RISES UP OUT OF THE HOLE!!! YOU ARE SHOCKED TO SEE THE STRANGER IS ACTUALLY **ANDY WARHOL!!** HE IS ACCOMPANIED BY **BLIND PANDA BEAR** WHO IS WEARING A PAIR OF **BERMUDA SHORTS** FASHIONED OUT OF AN OLD **NAZI FLAG**. ANDY HANDS YOU A **CD-ROM** AND A **FEATHER DUSTER**. HE THEN WARNS YOU STERNLY, "**I AM THE WALRUS!! I AM THE DICE-MAN!! KOO-KOO-KA-CHOO!!**" HE TELLS YOU THE PANDA'S NAME IS **LUCY** AND THAT HE WILL ASSIST YOU ON YOUR ADVENTURE. WITH THAT **ANDY** VANISHES IN A CLOUD OF BILLOWING SMOKE.



FIVE SECONDS LATER.

HA!! I KNEW THEY COULDN'T HANDLE A **REAL ROLE-PLAYING ADVENTURE**.



The Boy Could Play

HEY!! GUESS WHO THE HELL I SAW TODAY!
GO AHEAD, GUESS!

NO, I SAW **JOHNNY KIZINSKI!*** THE DUDE'S
BACK IN TOWN FOR HIS SISTER'S WEDDING OR SOMETHING.

GEE, I HAVE NO IDEA.
THE NEW CASHIER AT
**KARL'S
SCARFIN'
BURGERS!?**

JOHNNY KIZINSKI!!
MAN, THAT BOY COULD PLAY!!!

**GOOD OL'
JOHNNY!!**
YEP, THE BOY COULD
PLAY!!



THE MAN HAD A WAY WITH DICE DIDN'T HE??
REMEMBER AT **GARYCON '87** WHEN HE
ROLLED **SEVEN CRITICAL HITS**
IN THE HACKMASTER FINALS???

YOU COULDN'T ASK FOR A BETTER POINT-MAN
IN A PARTY EITHER!! ONCE HE **SAVED
MY CHARACTER'S LIFE** BY
THROWING HIMSELF INTO THE JAWS OF A
SPECKLED-DRAGON SO HE
COULDN'T BREATHE FIRE ON ME.

WELL THIS JOHNNY-GUY
WAS BEFORE MY TIME.
SOUNDS LIKE A GREAT
PLAYER!!!

(SIGH) REMEMBER HOW
HE USED TO KISS THE
DICE BEFORE HE
TOSSED THEM?

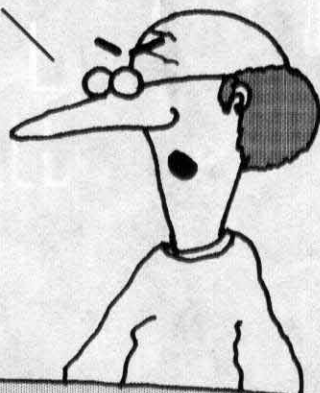
WAS HE EVER!!! MAN!!
THE BOY COULD PLAY!!



HEY, REMEMBER WHEN JOHNNY'S THIEF FOUND THAT
PAIR OF MATCHED +3 DAGGERS?? HE LOVED THOSE
DAGGERS!!! THEN ONE DAY AFTER I SAVED HIS LIFE
DURING AN ADVENTURE HE GAVE ME THOSE DAGGERS
AS A GIFT! +3 DAGGERS!!!! WHAT A GUY!!

THAT'S PRETTY FUNNY BOB
BECAUSE ACTUALLY THOSE
DAGGERS WERE CURSED, HA
HA, AND...

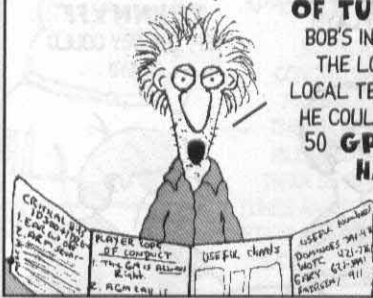
**CURSED!!
WHADDA YA MEAN THEY
WERE CURSED??**



* See Dragon # 233 and KODT Issue #5: Can't Buy Me Luck

DON'T GET UPSET BOB!! IT WAS JUST A PRACTICAL JOKE. JOHNNY WAS THE BEST WHEN IT CAME TO A GOOD PRANK! LIKE THE TIME HE DRAINED EVERYONE'S BOTTLES OF **HEALING POTION** WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING AND REFILLED THEM WITH **ORG-WIZ!!**

OR THE TIME HE INFORMED THE **MAGISTRATE OF TULMAR** ABOUT BOB'S INVOLVEMENT OF THE LOOTING OF THE LOCAL TEMPLE - JUST SO HE COULD COLLECT THE 50 **GP REWARD**.
HA HA!!



BUT THE BEST STUNT HE EVER PULLED...**HA HA**..THE BEST STUNT HE EVER PULLED...(**CACKLE**) WAS WHEN...(HAR HAR)..THE ENTIRE CAMPAIGN HE KEPT VOLUNTEERING TO PULL NIGHT WATCH!!! **HA! HA!!** AND WHILE YOU WERE ALL SLEEPING HE WOULD **LOOT YOUR SADDLE BAGS!!** BUT THE BEST PART.....**HA! HA!!** WAS THAT IN ORDER TO THROW OFF SUSPICION HE WOULD **PLANT** STOLEN GOODS ON SOMEONE ELSE IN THE PARTY!!!! **HA!! HA!!!**

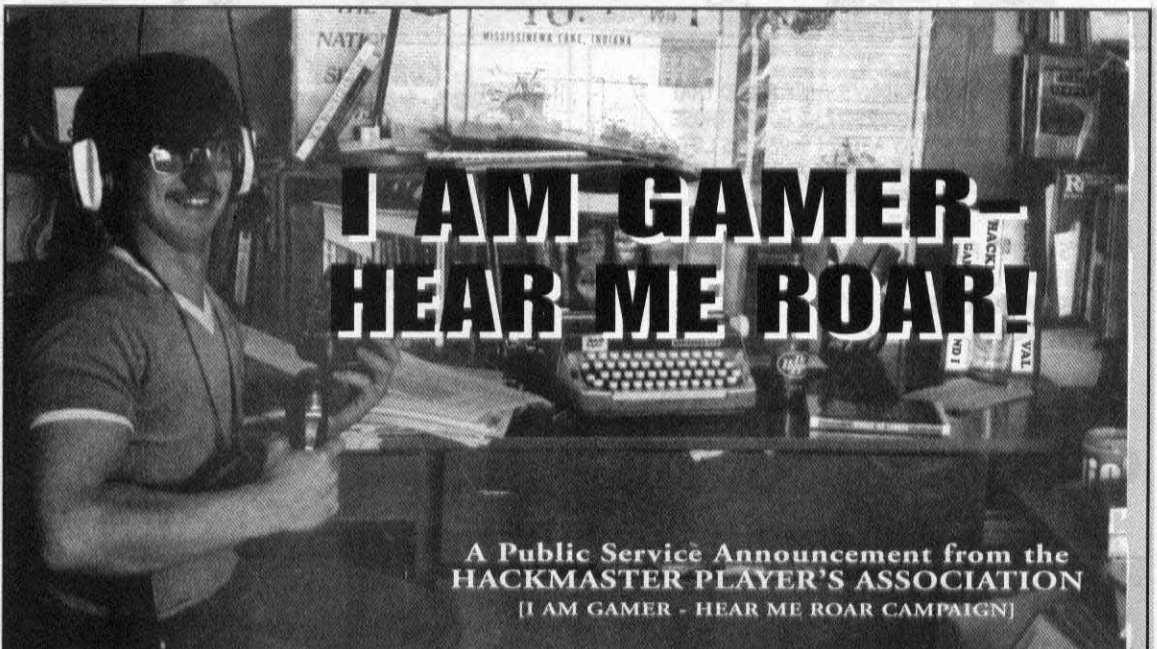


I NEVER LIKED THAT BASTARD!! I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING SNEAKY AND UNDERHANDED ABOUT HIM!!!

YEAH!!! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN. WHENEVER WE ORDERED PIZZA HE ALWAYS TOOK THE LAST PIECE!!

I SAY WE CRASH THAT WEDDING AND MOP THE FLOOR WITH HIM!!!

BUT THE BOY COULD PLAY - OR SO I'VE HEARD!!



I AM GAMER - HEAR ME ROAR!

A Public Service Announcement from the **HACKMASTER PLAYER'S ASSOCIATION**
[I AM GAMER - HEAR ME ROAR CAMPAIGN]

AS YOU KICK DOWN THE DOOR YOU ARE GREETED WITH AN **ENORMOUS BLISTERING WALL OF FIRE** AND **BILLOWING SMOKE**. DAVE YOUR CHARACTER IS THROWN AGAINST THE OPPOSITE WALL OF THE HALL WAY BY THE FORCE OF THE BLAST.

HA! I TOLD YOU THE **MIME** IN THE FOUNTAIN WAS SAYING, "THERE'S A **DRAGON** DOWN THIS CORRIDOR."

THIS ISN'T GOOD!! THIS ISN'T GOOD AT ALL!

DRAGON'S BREATH!!!

I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE YOU HAVE '**MIME**' AS A **SECONDARY LANGUAGE**, SARA.



THE REST OF YOU MUST SAVE VS. FEAR AS YOU SEE THE AN ENORMOUS **SWACK-IRON DRAGON** EMERGE FROM THE SHADOWS. AT FIRST IT APPEARS HIS FACE AND HEAD ARE BRISTLING WITH THORNS OR BONEY-SPIKES. THEN YOU REALIZE THEY ARE ACTUALLY THE BROKEN SHAFTS OF HUNDREDS OF ARROWS. THE DRAGON IS HORRIBLY SCARRED AND NICKED, SILENT TESTIMONY OF THE HUNDREDS OF SLAIN HEROES WHO HAVE SOUGHT TO SLAY THE ANCIENT WYRM.

AT LAST WE MEET **OL' ROT GUT FACE TO FACE!** I WASTE HIM WITH MY CROSSBOW!

FINALLY WE TRACK THE **BASTARD DOWN!!! HE'S MINE!!**

WAIT!!! BRIAN AND I HAVE A PLAN. WE WANT TO **PARLEY**.



PARLEY??? YOU DON'T PARLEY WITH A DRAGON. ESPECIALLY NOT AN ANCIENT SWACK IRON DRAGON WHO GOES BY THE NAME OF **OL ROT GUT!!**

BRIAN?? HAVE YOU GONE OFF THE DEEP END, BIG GUY??

BRIAN THINKS HE CAN **OUTWIT** THIS GUY. I SAY WE GIVE HIM A CHANCE.

PARLEY?? OH SARA, THAT'S AN EXCELLENT IDEA.

I CAN UNDERSTAND SARA WANTING TO PARLEY BUT DID SHE SAY **BRIAN** WANTED TO AS WELL??

IT'S A LONG SHOT, I'LL ADMIT. BUT I THINK IT COULD WORK.



A shorter, slightly different version of this story appeared in Dragon #239 [reprinted in Tales from the Vault vol. II, page six].

REMEMBER THAT CRUMBLING BOOK WE FOUND IN **SHINY PEBBLE CASTLE?** WELL, THERE WAS A PASSAGE IN IT ON **OL' ROT GUT** THE DRAGON. AND IT CLAIMS HE'S VERY FOND OF **FINE WINES**. THE BOOK GOES ON TO SAY HE'S A SUCKER FOR **CONTESTS AND CHALLENGES**.

HEY I'M IMPRESSED. I DIDN'T THINK YOU GUYS HAD EVEN CONSIDERED THAT VALUABLE CLUE I PLANTED MONTHS AGO. **GOOD WORK!!**

BRIAN, I KNOW YOU THINK YOU'RE A PRETTY CLEVER GUY BUT THIS IS A **STUPID IDEA**. ARE YOU FORGETTING THAT STUPID **WIND RIDDLE** THAT GARGOYLE THREW AT US??

YEAH! WE COULDN'T ANSWER IT AND WE ALL ENDED UP AS **EUNUCHS** SERVING THE **WEB-QUEEN!**

DON'T LISTEN TO THEM BRIAN. PROVE TO THEM THAT **BRAIN MATTER** IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD.



STAND ASIDE BOYS!! OKAY B.A. HERE'S THE SITUATION. REMEMBER ALL THOSE **BOTTLES OF WINE** WE FOUND ON LEVEL TWO OF **SHINY PEBBLE CASTLE?** WELL, I'VE PLACED ALL FIFTY BOTTLES IN MY **BAG OF HEFTY CAPACITY**. I'M GONNA PULL THEM OUT AND SET THEM BEFORE **OL' ROT GUT**. I'LL EXPLAIN THAT I AM CHALLENGING HIM TO A **WINE TASTING CONTEST**.

ROT GUT STARTS TO ATTACK BUT WHEN YOU MENTION A **CONTEST** HE PAUSES. "**SILLY MAN-THING**" HE ROARS, "YOU AMUSE ME!! TELL ME THE RULES OF THIS CONTEST!!"

YOU CAN DO IT BRIAN!!!

HEY, I THINK IT MAY BE WORKING!

GO BRIAN, GO!



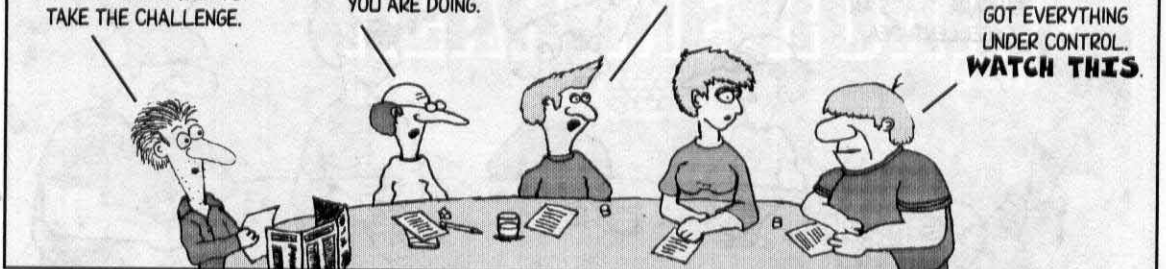
OKAY **MR. ROT GUT**, HERE ARE THE TERMS. FOR EVERY BOTTLE OF WINE YOU **CAN'T IDENTIFY** BY TASTE, WE GET TAKE **ONE LARGE SACK** OF GOLD COINS FROM YOUR HORDE. FOR EVERY BOTTLE OF WINE YOU **CORRECTLY IDENTIFY**, ONE MEMBER OF OUR PARTY WILL BECOME YOUR **WILLING SLAVE**. **DO YOU ACCEPT MY CHALLENGE??**

YES HE ACCEPTS. **OL' ROT GUT** LOVES THE IDEA AND SEEMS VERY EAGER TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE.

WILLING SLAVE?? BRIAN YOU BETTER KNOW WHAT THE HELL YOU ARE DOING.

THIS IS NO TIME TO PLAY GAMES BRIAN. I SAY WE FORGET YOUR PLAN AND LAUNCH AN ATTACK.

RELAX GUYS. I'VE GOT EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL. **WATCH THIS.**



OKAY, I GIVE HIM THE BOTTLE LABELED NUMBER ONE FROM THE LIST YOU GAVE ME.

HE DRAINS THE BOTTLE. SMACKS HIS LIPS. THINKS FOR A FEW SECONDS AND SUDDENLY GRINS. "AAAAHH!!" HE SAYS, "THIS IS A **DWARVEN WINE**, MADE FROM **ERAN VALLEY GRAPES** WHICH WAS STOMPED BY THE FEET OF **ORC SLAVES** IN THE YEAR 334. AN **EXCELLENT VINTAGE!!**"

I COMPLIMENT **ROT GUT** ON HIS INCREDIBLE KNOWLEDGE OF WINE.

HE POINTS TO BOB!! I'LL TAKE YOU AS MY FIRST PICK AS SLAVE!!

HUH?

I KNEW IT!! WE'RE GONERS!!

BRIAN?? HE'S GOOD AT THIS!!



TWO BOTTLES LATER...

ROT GUT ROARS WITH LAUGHTER!!! "WHAT A PATHETIC VINTAGE!! AN **ELDERBERRY WINE** DILUTED WITH SPRING WATER IN THE YEAR 578. A CHEAP WINE GIVEN TO THE MERCENARY TROOPS WHO HELPED KING VINDLAR TAKE THE STEPPES IN THAT SAME YEAR.

SORRY B.A., BUT ROT GUT IS **WRONG!!**

I TAKE THE WOMAN AS MY SLAVE!! THREE DOWN - ONE TO GO!

I'M FINISHED CLIPPING HIS TOE-NAILS. WHAT'S NEXT?

CAN I STOP DANCING NOW?

(GULP) ONE SLAVE GIRL COMING UP.



WRONG!!!

WHAT IN THE HELL DO YOU MEAN? YOU GAVE HIM BOTTLE NUMBER THREE **RIGHT??**

UH...ACTUALLY B.A. I **LIED**. IT WASN'T **WINE** IN THAT BOTTLE BUT A MAGICAL POTION: **POLYMORPH TO INSECT**. OL ROT GUT TURNS INTO A **LARGE DUNG BEETLE** WHICH I QUICKLY STOMP UNDER THE HEEL OF MY BOOT. **SCRATCH ONE DRAGON!!** SNICKER.

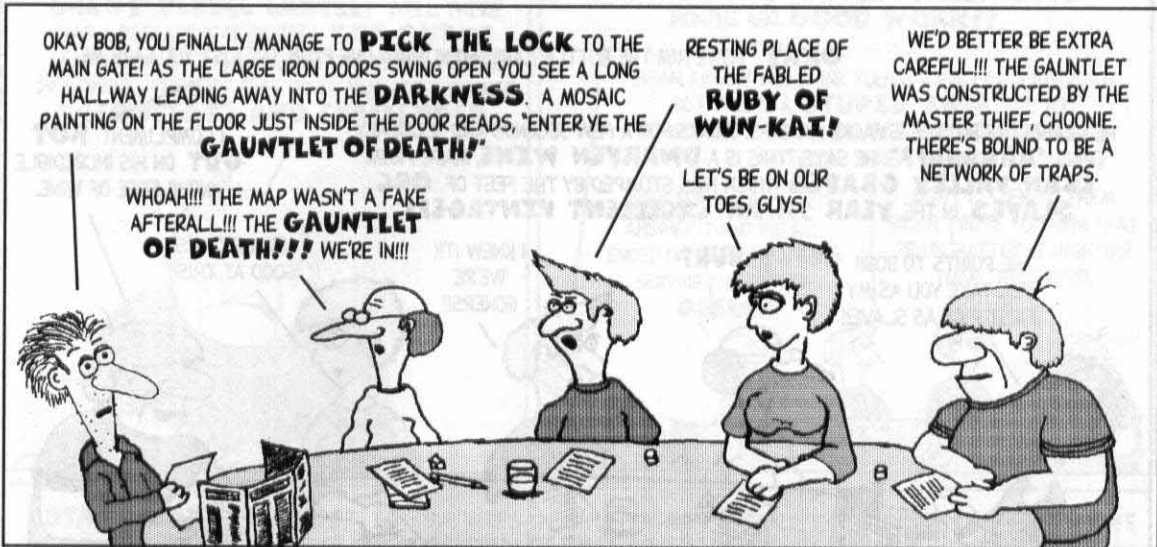
AWESOME!!! I COULD KISS YOU BIG GUY!! **YOU RULE!**

BRIAN THE DRAGON-STOMPER!!

(WHEW) YOU HAD ME WORRIED THERE FOR A SECOND BRIAN.

LET'S LOAD UP THAT HORDE BOYS!!!





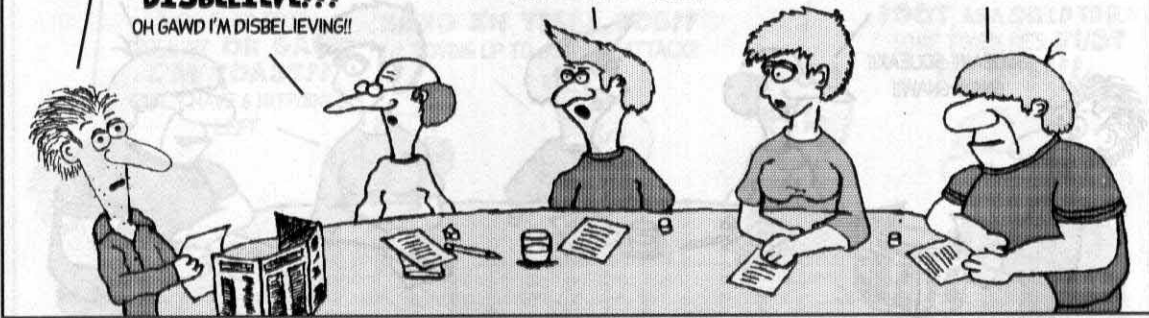
WELL BOB, AS YOUR THIEF REACHES THROUGH THE HOLE TO RETRIEVE THE **LARGE RUBY** YOU HEAR THE **GUT-WRENCHING** SOUND OF METAL GRINDING AGAINST STONE. BEFORE YOU CAN REACT A **RAZOR-SHARP BLADE DETACHES YOUR ARM** AT THE SHOULDER. SADLY YOUR ARM FALLS THROUGH THE HOLE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

WHAT?? OH NO DAVE, WAIT!!
YOU'RE GONNA.....SORRY, I'M NOT THERE. I SHOULDN'T SAY ANYTHING.

DISBELIEVE!! DISBELIEVE!!!
OH GAWD I'M DISBELIEVING!!

DON'T WORRY BOB!!! I'LL GET IT. I'LL RETRIEVE BOB'S ARM AND.....

I SAW IT COMING!!

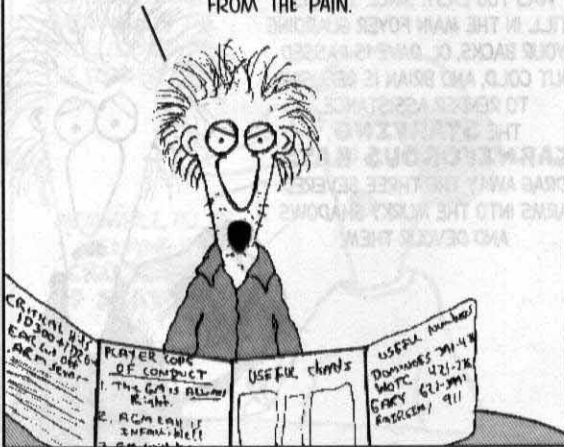


HA! HA! NO TAP BACKS DAVE AS YOU REACH INTO THE HOLE TO GET BOB'S ARM...**SWOOSH!!!**
YOU LOSE AN ARM. OH, AND YOU PASS OUT FROM THE PAIN.

BRIAN!! BUDDY OL PAL?? HELP ME GET MY ARM BACK. COME ON!!

MINE FIRST! MINE FIRST!!
THAT'S MY SWORD ARM LYING IN THERE.

YOU'D BETTER THINK IT THROUGH FIRST BRIAN.



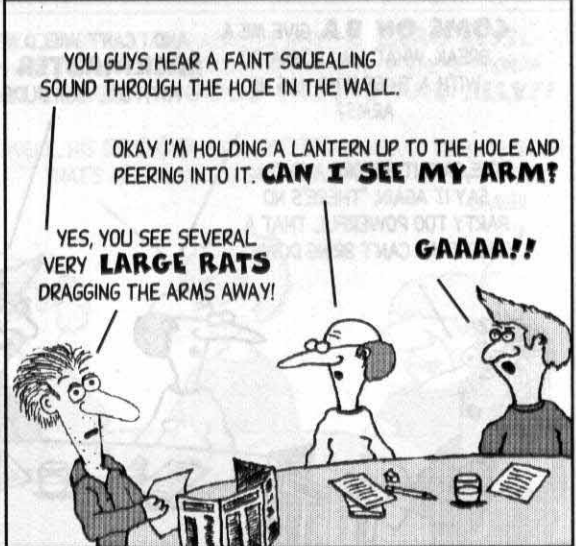
I DON'T THINK SO GUYS. 75% OF THE SPELLS IN MY ARSENAL REQUIRE THE EXECUTION OF **HAND-GESTURES** TO SUCCESSFULLY CAST. I AIN'T RISKIN' MY HANDS FOR **ANYONE**. NOTHING PERSONAL.

YOU GUYS HEAR A FAINT SQUEALING SOUND THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE WALL.

OKAY I'M HOLDING A LANTERN UP TO THE HOLE AND PEERING INTO IT. **CAN I SEE MY ARM?**

YES, YOU SEE SEVERAL VERY **LARGE RATS** DRAGGING THE ARMS AWAY!

GAAAAA!!





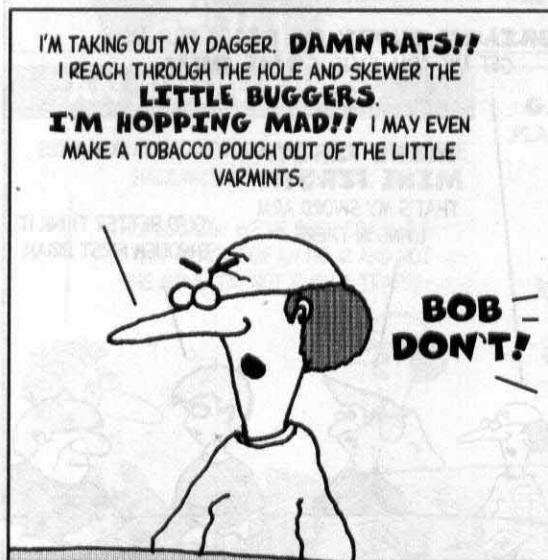
DUDE, OUR ARMS HAVE JUST
BECOME **TASTY MEAT
SNACKS** FOR VERMIN!!

**WADDA WE DO?
WADDA WE DO?!**

SQUEAK!! SQUEAK!!
GNAW-GNAW!!

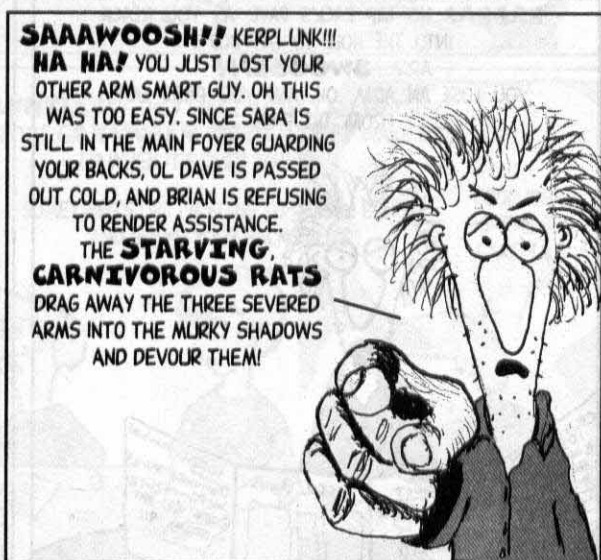
MAYBE WE SHOULD
HELP THEM OUT BRIAN.

UH-UH, NOT **ME!!** MY
HANDS ARE MY TRADE.
SADLY, THE
**SEQUESTERED
SCHOOL OF
MAGIC** DOESN'T OFFER
MEDICAL OR DENTAL.



I'M TAKING OUT MY DAGGER. **DAMN RATS!!**
I REACH THROUGH THE HOLE AND SKEWER THE
LITTLE BUGGERS.
I'M HOPPING MAD!! I MAY EVEN
MAKE A TOBACCO POLICH OUT OF THE LITTLE
VARMINTS.

**BOB
DON'T!**



SAAWOOSH!! KERPLINK!!!
HA HA! YOU JUST LOST YOUR
OTHER ARM SMART GUY. OH THIS
WAS TOO EASY. SINCE SARA IS
STILL IN THE MAIN FOYER GUARDING
YOUR BACKS, OL DAVE IS PASSED
OUT COLD, AND BRIAN IS REFUSING
TO RENDER ASSISTANCE.
THE **STARVING,
CARNIVOROUS RATS**
DRAG AWAY THE THREE SEVERED
ARMS INTO THE MURKY SHADOWS
AND DEVOUR THEM!



COME ON B.A. GIVE ME A
BREAK. WHAT AM I GONNA DO
WITH A THIEF WHO HAS NO
ARMS?

AND I CAN'T WIELD MY
HACKMASTER +12
WITH ONE ARM DUDE.

I'VE SAID IT BEFORE AND I'LL
SAY IT AGAIN, "THERE'S NO
PARTY TOO POWERFUL THAT A
GOOD TRAP CAN'T BRING DOWN."

WE JUST LOST
HALF OUR FIGHTING
POWER BIG GUY!

NO SARA, WE JUST MOVED UP
SEVERAL TAX BRACKETS.
WE'RE GONNA PICK THEIR
POCKETS WHILE THEY STAND
THERE AND WATCH.

Coward of the County

AS THE PARTY IS MOVING DOWN THE CORRIDOR A **SECRET DOOR** ON THE SOUTH WALL SUDDENLY **POPS OPEN!!** AN **ANCIENT GNARLED-TOOTH TROLL** BRANDISHING AN ENORMOUS CLEAVER EMERGES AND BEGINS **ATTACKING!!** **BOB**, YOU AND THE **TORCH-BEARER** ARE UP FRONT SO THE TROLL WILL BE ATTACKING YOU TWO.

I KNEW WE SHOULD'VE GONE BACK TO TOWN AND HEALED UP INSTEAD OF TACKLING THIS NEW LEVEL!!

A GNARLED-TOOTH TROLL??? **OH GAWD I'M TOAST!!**
I ONLY HAVE 6 HITPOINTS LEFT.

HANG IN THERE BOB!!
I'M MOVING UP TO JOIN THE ATTACK!!

BOB!! USE **KNOBBY-FOOT** AS A SHIELD TO BUY SOME TIME!!! HE'S **JUST AN NPC!!!**



BRIAN HAS A DAMN GOOD IDEA!!! I'LL STEP BACK AND LET THE TROLL DEAL WITH THE TORCH-BEARER!!

MEANWHILE, I'LL BE READING MY **CROSSBOW OF SLAYING!!**



AND YOU GUYS CALL YOURSELVES HEROES?? THIS HAS TO BE ONE OF THE **LOWEST, MOST COWARDLY ACTS** YOU'VE EVER PULLED!!!! THROWING A **HELPLESS NPC** - WHO JUST HAPPENS TO BE IN OUR EMPLOYMENT - INTO THE **JAWS OF DEATH**. JUST TO SAVE YOUR OWN SORRY BUTT!!! **YOU MAKE ME SICK!!**

WHO PULLED YOUR STRING??



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!! WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A NON-PLAYER CHARACTER HERE!! A **ZERO-LEVEL NOBODY!!!** SO WHAT IF HE DIES??? ONE OF US WILL HAVE TO CARRY THE TORCH FOR THE REST OF THE SESSION. IF I DIE, THE PARTY LOSES **AN INCREDIBLE THIEF** NOT TO MENTION **A GOOD FRIEND AND ALLY!!**

IT DOES SEEM LIKE A VERY CALLOUS ACT, BOB.

HEY, NO ARGUMENT HERE!! SCRATCH ONE TORCH-BEARER. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

WELL, HIS **BLOOD** IS ON **YOUR** HANDS. THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY ABOUT IT.

YEAH, YEAH, ON WITH THE GAME!!



OKAY, I'M SHOVING **KNOBBY-FOOT** TOWARD THE TROLL. I'M GOING TO PUT MY **DAGGER** TO HIS BACK JUST IN CASE HE LOSES HIS FIGHTING SPIRIT AND TRIES TO RUN AWAY.

KNOBBY-FOOT LOOKS UP AT YOU WITH A DISGUSTED LOOK. "PUT THE DAGGER AWAY, **COWARD!!!**" HE SNAPS. "I'M NOT AFRAID TO FIGHT" JUST BEFORE LEAPING INTO COMBAT WITH THE TROLL, **KNOBBY** LOOKS BACK AT YOU AND SAYS, "YOU WERE MY HERO, BUT NOW **I DESPISE YOU!**"

OH DUDE, HE **SLAM DUNKED** YOUR HONOR!!

HOORAY FOR THE HAFLING!! NOW THERE'S A HERO!!

MIGHTY BIG WORDS FOR SUCH A LITTLE GUY!!! GOOD LUCK, **KNOBBY**. (SNIFF)



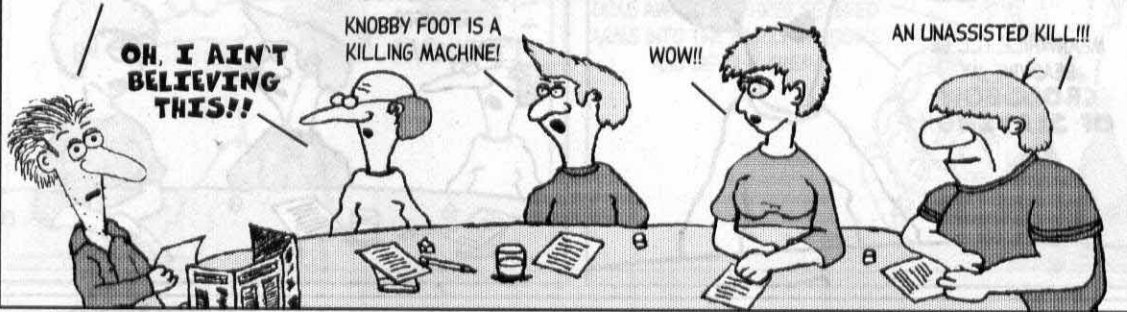
LET'S SEE. WHOAH!!!! LIL' **KNOBBY FOOT** ROLLS AN 18 TO HIT!!! HE LANDS A BEAUTIFULLY EXECUTED BLOW WITH HIS SHORT-SWORD ACROSS THE TROLL'S ABDOMEN. THE TROLL **HOWLS IN PAIN!** HE SWINGS AT **KNOBBY FOOT**. LET'S SEE!!!! **OH WOW!!!** LIL' **KNOBBY FOOT** ROLLS A **NATURAL TWENTY** ON HIS DODGE ROLL, HE DOES A SOMERSAULT RIGHT BETWEEN THE TROLL'S LEGS. THIS AUTOMATICALLY GIVES HIM INITIATIVE ON THE NEXT ROLIND. SWIFTLY SPINNING AROUND, THE **BRAVE TORCH BEARER IS ABLE TO DELIVER A BACK-STAB. UNBELIEVABLE!!** HE ROLLS A 17 - JUST BARELY A HIT!!! THE TROLL COLLAPSES IN A **BLOODY HEAP!!** LIL' **KNOBBY FOOT** CLIMBS UPON HIS VICTIM AND **SEVERS THE TROLL'S HEAD!!**

OH, I AIN'T BELIEVING THIS!!

KNOBBY FOOT IS A KILLING MACHINE!

WOW!!

AN UNASSISTED KILL!!!



LATER THAT NIGHT...

OKAY, YOU'VE RE-EQUIPPED YOURSELVES AND HEALED YOUR WOUNDS AND ARE READY TO SET OUT FOR THE DUNGEON AGAIN. **KNOBBY-FOOT** TELLS YOU HE WILL NOT BE GOING WITH YOU ON THIS TRIP.

HUH?? **WHY THE HELL NOT??**

HE SAYS HIS CONSCIENCE WON'T ALLOW HIM TO ADVENTURE WITH A **COWARD!!**

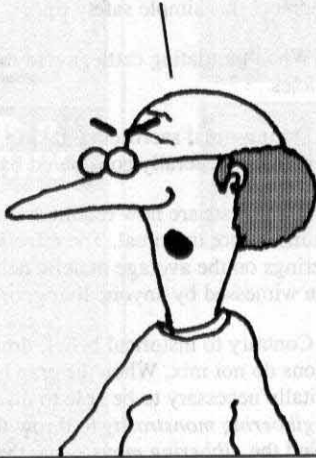
DUDE! AN NPC JUST CALLED YOU A **COWARD!!**

I THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH THE LITTLE GUY!!!

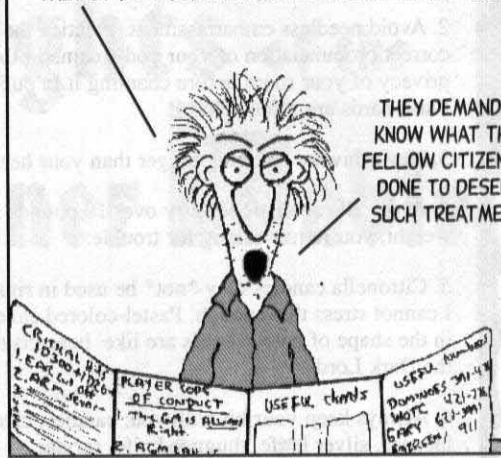
THIS COULD HAVE NEGATIVE MODIFIERS FOR THE WHOLE PARTY'S HONOR FACTOR.



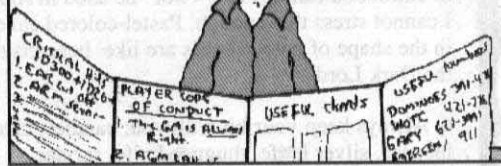
WELL, WELL, LOOKS LIKE OUR LITTLE FRIEND NEEDS A LESSON IN **RESPECT!** I'M GOING TO GRAB HIM BY THE COLLAR AND GIVE HIM A LITTLE **ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT!** I'LL SLAP HIM SILLY WITH THE BACK OF MY GAUNTLET!!!



WHILE YOU ARE STANDING IN THE TOWN SQUARE **SLAPPING THE CRAP** OUT OF THE **POOR, DEFENSELESS, HAFLING,** THE TOWNS PEOPLE HEAR HIS **CRIES OF PAIN AND TORMENT!!** THEY START GATHERING AROUND YOU IN A LARGE CROWD!!!



THEY DEMAND TO KNOW WHAT THEIR FELLOW CITIZEN HAS DONE TO DESERVE SUCH TREATMENT!!!



I WAVE MY GAUNTLET AT THE CROWD AND TELL THEM IF THEY DON'T WANT **SOME OF THE SAME,** THEY WILL DISPERSE AND GO HOME!!! **NOW!!**

DRAWING MY HACKMASTER +12 HERE!!!! I LEAP INTO THE CROWD AND START THRASHING!!!

OH GREAT! ANOTHER EVENING OF **HIGH ADVENTURE AND HEROIC FANTASY!**

I GOT A PAIR OF TORRENTIAL-FIREBALLS COMING ON LINE GUYS!!!

THE CROWD GOES BERSERK!!! THEY START TO RUSH YOU!!!



END OF THE EVENING

WELL, THE TOWN OF **FERN GROVE** IS ENGLTFED IN FLAMES. HER 475 **INHABITANTS** LIE STREWN ABOUT THE STREETS IN **POOLS OF THEIR OWN BLOOD.** AND SO ENDS ANOTHER ADVENTURE. (GROAN)

HOODY-HOO!! THAT RULED!!!! IT TOOK SOME OF THE FUN OUT OF IT WHEN THEY TRIED TO SURRENDER EN-MASSÉ BUT THAT WAS DEFINITELY AS MUCH FUN AS A DUNGEON CRAWL!!!

HEY, WHO SAID TOWN ADVENTURES AREN'T AS FUN AS DUNGEONS??

YOU KNOW, SOLO ADVENTURES ARE LOOKING REAL GOOD TO ME RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

DO WE GET EXPERIENCE FOR THE NON-COMBATANTS??



HOW TO BE A CULTIST

Courtesy of the Discordians

1. Pick one faith and stay with it. Dilettantism is the mark of the amateur.
2. Avoid needless embarrassment. Practice the correct pronunciation of your god's name in the privacy of your room before chanting it in public. Flash cards are often helpful.
3. Never invoke anything bigger than your head.
4. Avoid all cabalistic jewelry over 10 pounds in weight, you're just asking for trouble.
5. Citronella candles may **not** be used in rituals. I cannot stress this enough. Pastel-colored candles in the shape of cute animals are like beacons to the Dark Lords.
6. Always keep your kit with you: candles, chalk, incense, silver knife, thuggee knife, service revolver, garlic, Yellow Sign, cabfare, condoms, and change.
7. **Never** be the cultist that goes to rough up the investigator. Ransacking hotel rooms is probably safe, but going 'round to beat up the good guys' is a sure route to the bottom of the Thames.
8. When the Black Mass goes awry, stay away from the cult leader. Enraged demons always go for the pompous.
9. Don't gloat.
10. If you do gloat, never reveal your plans.
11. If you gloat and reveal your plans, never leave the investigators to die slowly. They don't.
12. If you gloat, reveal your plans, and leave the investigators to die slowly, don't have the audacity to look surprised when they show up to foil you.
13. Investigators always show up at the last moment to foil you. Start a half-hour early--they hate that.
14. Select ceremonial robes that are easy to run in while still affording ample concealment.
15. Never have sex with anything whose genetic structure you do not feel absolutely comfortable about.
16. Never admit to having sex with anything whose genetic structure you didn't feel absolutely comfortable about.
17. When a religious artifact begins emitting light, **CLOSE YOUR EYES**. Thousands of cultists could be saved every year if they'd just remember this simple safety tip.
18. When mutilating cattle, avoid the ones with testicles.
19. During ritual sacrificing, taking bits home for later is now generally considered bad form.
20. Blood tests are now required of all sacrificial victims before the ritual. The effects of HIV+ offerings on the average malefic deity have never been witnessed by anyone living, or even intact.
21. Contrary to historical belief, drugs and invocations do not mix. When the crap hits the fan, it is vitally necessary to be able to discern between the *gibbering monstrosity* to throw the holy water on and the *gibbering monstrosity* that will go away after a few hours, some B-complex, and a good hot bath.
22. Never play strip Tarot.
23. Piety and belief are powerful things, and few forces in nature can stand against one who is true to his faith, his god, and his soul. However, it is also true that God is on the side of the heaviest artillery, so be prepared to change sides at the drop of a hat.
24. For those situations where a fresh, living sacrifice is just not feasible or even possible, the lower ranks of demons can be fooled by microwaving a previously frozen chunk of ex-victim and cleverly jiggling it. However, a mock-victim sculpted from Spam™ will be all right too.

"OH, SO **THAT'S** WHAT THAT SPELL DOES!"



JOLLY BLACKBURN © 1987
JollyRB@aol.com



KENZER & COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #8
"An Orc By Any Other Name"
June, 1997

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

Knights of the Dinner Table™

"An Orc By Any Other Name"

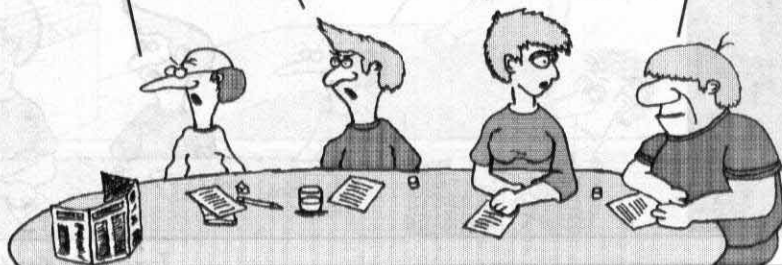
The KODT Development Team is:
**Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,
Steve Johansson & David S. Kenzer**

**COME BACK BA!!! SUCK
IT UP LIKE A MAN!!**

JUST BECAUSE WE KILLED HIS
SWACK-IRON DRAGON WITH A
CHEF'S SALAD - THE GUY GETS
ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE.

BRIAN, HOW IN THE
WORLD DID YOU KNOW
THE DRAGON WAS
DEATHLY-ALLERGIC TO
CELERY??

LET'S JUST SAY THAT
BA. WASNT THE ONLY
ONE WATCHING
**FARMER
DRAKE AND
THE DRAGON
OF ELF ISLE** ON
PBS NEW YEAR'S EVE.



Editorial of a Madman

Welcome back! We've been expecting you. Spirits are high in the KenzerCo camp! The summer convention season is upon us and we're looking forward to traveling around the country and meeting our fans face to face.

I don't think we'll ever tire of fans coming up to the booth and yelling out, "I waste 'em with my crossbow!" or "The man touched my dice!"

A few issues ago I hinted that we were planning to slowly evolve **Knights of the Dinner Table** into a full-fledged magazine. With distribution rapidly climbing coupled with the fact that the comic book has been so well received, you can expect to see new offerings within these pages in the coming months.

With that in mind, I'd like to use this opportunity to put out an open call for material. We will be in talent scouting mode for the next few months. What are we looking for? Anything that would be of interest or amusing to your fellow gamers. The watch words here are 'funny' and 'entertaining'. Of particular interest is anything unique or innovative that hasn't been done before.

Here's an editor's wish list:

Single Panel Cartoons

These should be half-page or quarter-page panels dealing with themes of interesting to role-players.

Humorous articles about gaming/gamers

This includes material for *Tales from the Table*, *Parting Shots* and feature articles. There's no fast rule - if it's funny we are probably interested in looking at it.

Humorous fiction

Again, we're looking for funny here. Short stories ranging from one to three thousand words in length would be appropriate.

One or two regular humor columnists

We are interested in finding a few good writers to head up two or more regular columns. We'll probably leave it up to any interested candidates to suggest the theme or focus for such columns. While established writers who have proven they are able to meet a deadline are obviously preferable, we are also interested in discovering new talent. If you're interested, submit one or more samples or your writing.

New comic strips

It is our hope that eventually KODT will serve as a platform from which new comics and talent will be introduced to our audience. If a new strip strikes the right chords, it may become part of the regular line-up or..... Who knows? Maybe it will even be spun off as a comic or publication of its own. The idea here is to keep things fresh by showcasing new talent and seeing what turns up.

Jokes

Okay, you know the deal. We are always looking for jokes in any form as filler to help bolster each issue. This also includes the various lists and compilations which we regularly run in *Parting Shots*.

While we prefer material that deals with gaming, we are also interested in material that deals with fandom of any kind since most gamers share such interests.

Story seeds or ideas for KODT strips.

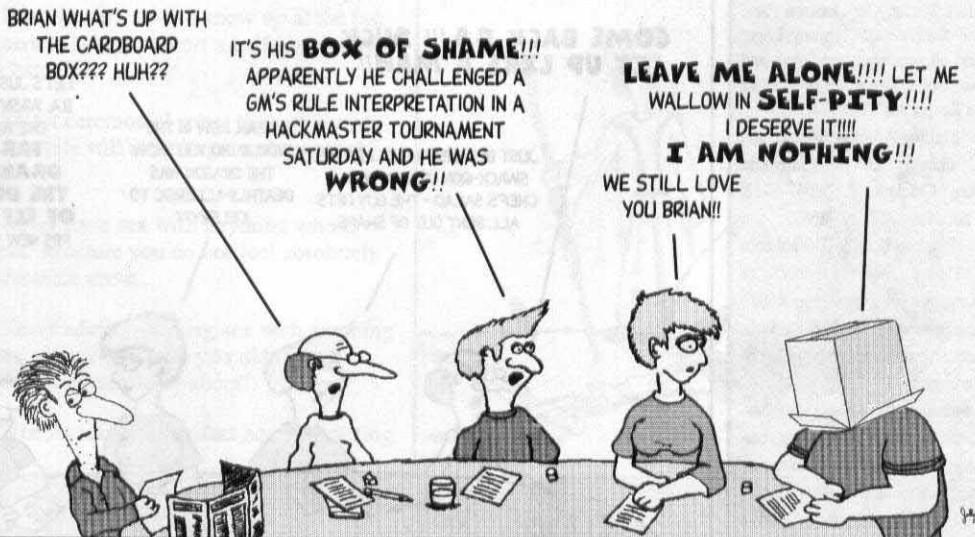
We always are interested in hearing your ideas or suggestions for KODT strips.

Feedback

Last, but not least, we need your feedback - good or bad. We are very interested in what you think of our progress from month to month.

That's it for this issue. Enjoy! As always, good gaming!

Jolly R. Blackburn
 Jolly R. Blackburn
 May 15, 1997





SECONDS LATER..

GAMIN' DICK?? HA HA, GUESS WHAT!!! I JUST UNLOADED THAT PIECE OF CRAP, '**ORCS AT THE GATES**.' **FINALLY!!** I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK I WAS GOING TO GET SOAKED ON THAT ONE.



ONE MONTH LATER...

OKAY GUYS!!! I KNOW YOU'RE ALL ANXIOUS TO RESUME THE CAMPAIGN!!! I'M SORRY I HAD TO PUT OUR GAMING SESSIONS ON HOLD FOR THE PAST MONTH, BUT THIS NEW HACKMASTER SUPPLEMENT WAS A BEHEMOTH!!!! I MEAN IT'S REALLY HUGE!!! I FELT I NEEDED THE EXTRA TIME TO PROPERLY PREPARE FOR THE NEW CAMPAIGN TO REALLY DO IT JUSTICE. SO NOW...WE OFFICIALLY BEGIN THE **ORCS AT THE GATES** CAMPAIGN!!! **BE FOREWARNED!!!** THIS CAMPAIGN WILL BE BOTH **DANGEROUS AND CHALLENGING!!!**

ORCS??? ORCS ARE LAME!!! SMACK 'EM ON THE BACK OF THE HEAD AND THEY DROP LIKE FLIES.

YEAH!! AND SOMETIMES THEY RUN AWAY WHEN YOU TRY TO HACK THEM!

YEAH!! AND THEY HAVE THE WORST EXPERIENCE-POINT RATIO IN THE ENTIRE **HACKMASTER CREATURE FOLIO!!**



WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT A SIMPLE DUNGEON CRAWL WITH A FEW ORCS THROWN IN AS **TOKEN OBSTACLES YOU IDIOTS!!!** THIS CAMPAIGN REALLY PUSHES THE ENVELOPE!!! IT TOTALLY FLESHES OUT ORCISH CULTURE, LANGUAGES, AND POLITICS. 15 CULTS AND RELIGIONS. 12 ORCISH LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS! **IT'S EPIC!!** IT'S GOING TO BE THE MOST CHALLENGING ADVENTURE YOU'VE EVER FACED. SO CAN YOU PLEASE TRY TO **OPEN YOUR MINDS A BIT?** HUH?

POLITICS? LANGUAGES? THERE'S A COUPLE OF **BIG RED FLAGS!!!!**

YEP! THAT CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING. HE EXPECTS US TO **PARLEY** AND TALK INSTEAD OF **HACKING!!!**

GUYS, FOR PETE'S SAKE, LET'S GIVE THE ADVENTURE A CHANCE.

IT'S LOOKING WEAK SO FAR.



AS THE ADVENTURE BEGINS..

THE DOORS TO THE KING'S THRONE ROOM SLOWLY OPEN AS FORTY-SEVEN BRASS HORNS SOUND OUT YOUR ARRIVAL. YOU ARE ESCORTED BY TWO ROYAL GUARDS UP TO THE KING FELDINAR'S THRONE. THE GUARDS MOTION FOR YOU TO BOW AND PAY YOUR RESPECTS.

KNUCKLES THE THIEF BOWS BEFORE NO MORTAL!!!! I GIVE THE KING A KNOWING NOD. HE'S AN OLD SEASONED ADVENTURER HIMSELF SO I'M SURE HE'LL UNDERSTAND.

OH...YEAH...WELL, IF KNUCKLES AIN'T GONNA BOW, I'M NOT EITHER. I GIVE THE KING A 'KNOWING' NOD AS WELL. I ALSO PAT THE HILT OF MY HACKMASTER +12 JUST TO SHOW HIM I'M WILLING TO BACK UP MY DECISION.

(SIGH) I HUMBLY BOW BEFORE THE KING AND APOLOGIZE FOR MY COMRADES' LACK OF RESPECT.

HELL WITH IT! I BOW REALLY QUICK.

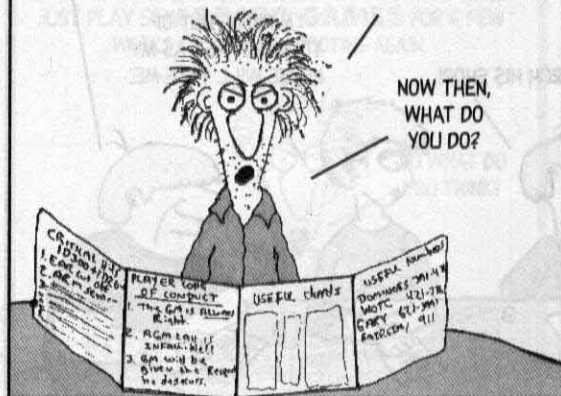


OH NO!! **HELL NO!!** WE'RE NOT GOING TO START OFF LIKE THIS. **LOOK YOU MORONS!!!** THE WHOLE ADVENTURE HINGES ON YOU WINNING OVER THE KING'S CONFIDENCE SO THAT HE **CHARGES** YOU WITH THWARTING THE **ORC INVASION!!!** SO WHAT DO YOU DO?? YOU **INSULT HIM** IN HIS OWN COURT IN FRONT OF HIS SUBJECTS. YOU'D BETTER DO SOME RE-THINKING AND BOW TO THE MAN SO WE CAN MOVE ALONG.

MAYBE YOU COULDN'T HEAR ME BEHIND THAT SCREEN OVER THERE. I SAID, **KNUCKLES BOWS BEFORE NO MAN!!!!**

AND NEITHER DOES **EL RAVAGER!!!**

GUYS, THE MAN IS A KING. PAY YOUR RESPECTS AND LET'S GET ON WITH THE GAME.



NOW THEN, WHAT DO YOU DO?



FIRKIN-DING-BLAST!!! ALRIGHT, **ERIC THE BRAVE**, THE KING'S FIRST KNIGHT, STEPS UP TO YOU AND GIVES YOU A VERY STERN LOOK. HE WHISPERS UNDER HIS BREATH, "FRIENDS, PERHAPS YOU ARE STRANGERS TO OUR LAND, SO I WILL FORGIVE YOU IF YOU HAVE **UNKNOWINGLY OFFENDED** MY LORD. IT IS THE **LAW OF THE REALM** THAT ALL THOSE WHO COME BEFORE THE KING MUST **BOW AND PAY HOMAGE** TO THE THRONE. THE PENALTY FOR NOT DOING SO IS **DEATH.**"

WELL **LA-DE-DA!!!** WHO THE HELL IS THIS LITTLE **CHEESE-WIPE!!!** HE BETTER GET OUT OF MY FACE!!!

DEATH?? IS HE THREATENING US?? I'M GONNA SAY, "**OH YEAH?? YOU AND WHOSE ARMY??**"

I'M STANDING AWAY FROM THOSE TWO. I'M DEFINITELY NOT WITH THEM.

WELL, I CAN'T STAND BY AND LET THIS ERIC-DUDE THREATEN MY BUDDIES.



THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY BOB AS YOU TRY TO MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE MAIN GATE, THE **KING** MANAGES TO BREAK THE **CHOKE-HOLD** YOU HAD ON HIM. HE DIVES BEHIND ONE OF THE **FLAMING BANQUET TABLES** THAT WAS TOPPLED BY BRIAN'S FIREBALL.

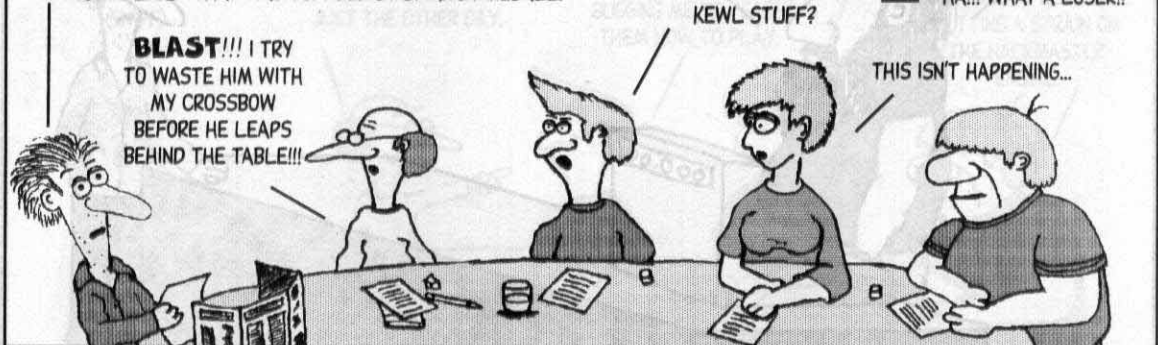
OKAY, I'M SEARCHING ERIC'S BODY. DOES HE HAVE ANY KEWL STUFF?

JUST HIS **ROYAL ENAMELED ARMOR** AND HIS **ROYAL CHAIN OF OFFICE!!!**

HA!!! WHAT A LOSER!!!

BLAST!!! I TRY TO WASTE HIM WITH MY CROSSBOW BEFORE HE LEAPS BEHIND THE TABLE!!!

THIS ISN'T HAPPENING...



AN HOUR LATER...

OKAY AS YOU PULL THE **KING'S CROWN** AND **SCEPTER** FROM THE BAG TO SHOW THE **PAWNBROKER**, HE SUDDENLY TURNS **ASH WHITE!!!** HE POINTS AT YOU AND SAYS, **"YOU!!! YOU MURDERING TRASH!!!! YOU'RE THE SCUM WHO KILLED THE KING!!! GUARDS!! GUARDS!!!"** SEVERAL CUSTOMERS WHO WERE ALSO IN THE PAWN SHOP RUN INTO THE STREETS ALERTING THE CITIZENS OF THE TOWN.

I'M CHASING THOSE CUSTOMERS OUT INTO THE STREET. I'LL LOB SOME FIREBALLS AT THEM!



ROTTEN SQUEALER!!!
I SILENCE HIM WITH MY POISONED DAGGER.

I TORCH HIS SHOP!

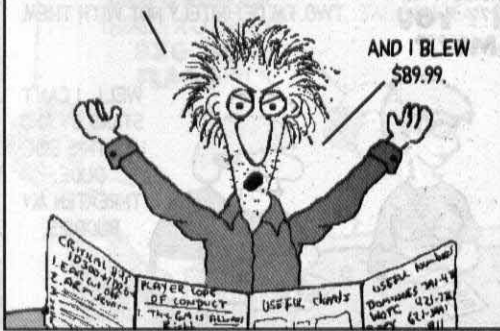
I'M RIDING OUT OF TOWN AS FAST AS MY HORSE WILL TAKE ME.

AS THE SESSION ENDS

CONGRATULATIONS!!!! GAME OVER!!! AND WHAT DID YOU ACCOMPLISH? YOU SLAUGHTERED THE KING AND HIS COURT, TORCHED HIS CASTLE, MASCARDED THE GOOD CITIZENS OF FERN FORKS, GRAND FALLS, AND HEAVINGTON HEIGHTS!!!

NINETY BUCKS!!!
HE GOT SCREWED!!!

IN A MAJOR WAY!!! I THOUGHT THIS ADVENTURE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ALL ABOUT **ORCS!!!** WE DIDN'T RUN INTO A SINGLE DAMN ORC. **WHAT GIVES?**



I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVE A PRICE ON MY HEAD.

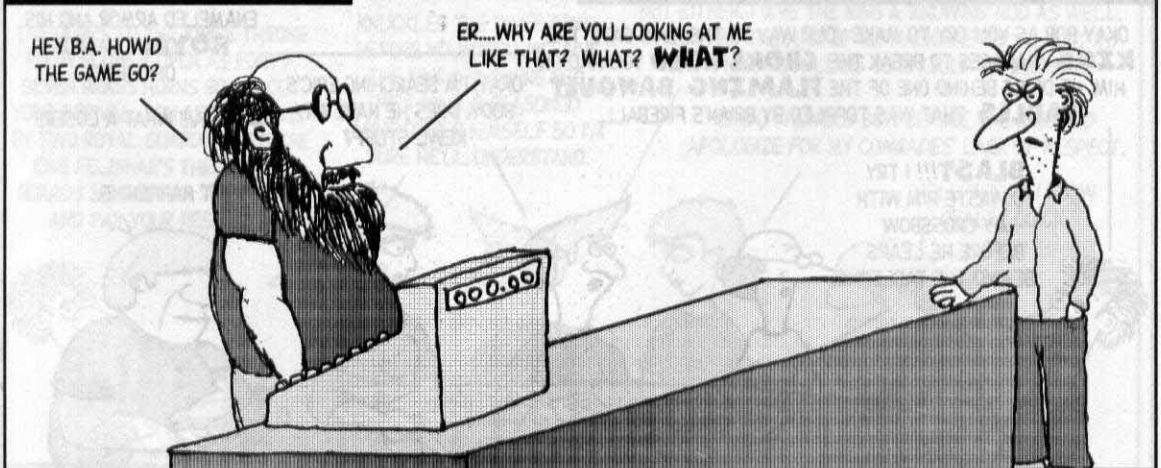
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE WE ONLY GOT 75 QUID FOR THAT LOUSY CROWN!!!



THE NEXT DAY...

HEY B.A. HOW'D THE GAME GO?

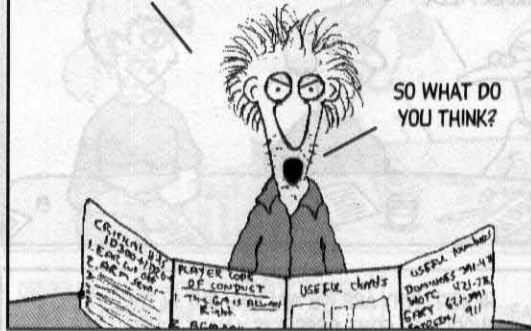
ER...WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT? WHAT? **WHAT?**



Game Master For a Day

GUYS, I REALLY SHOULD HAVE CALLED ALL OF YOU AND **CANCELLED** TONIGHT'S GAME. I'M **BURNED OUT ON GMING**. SORRY! I WRACKED MY BRAIN THIS WEEK AND JUST COULDN'T COME UP WITH AN ADVENTURE FOR TONIGHT'S SESSION. MAYBE WE COULD JUST PLAY SOME **BOARD GAMES** FOR A FEW WEEKS TIL I GET MY FOOTING AGAIN.

HUH?? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? **NO ADVENTURE TONIGHT??** ARE YOU NUTS?? I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN!! I TOLD YOU WHEN YOU GOT THAT JOB AT **PIZZA-A-GO-GO** YOU WERE SPREADING YOURSELF TOO THIN.



SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?

OH COME ON GUYS!! I JUST NEED A BREAK FROM THE GRIND.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU B.A.? **YOU'RE REALLY SLIPPING!** LAST MONTH YOU BAILED ON US AND WE HAD TO GAME WITH **NITRO**. NOW YOU SHOW UP UNPREPARED.

WELL, HE SAID HE JUST NEEDS A BREAK.

YEAH, HE NEEDS A BROKEN ARM.



LOOK I SAID I WAS SORRY! JUST GIVE ME TWO WEEKS TO **REKINDLE THE FLAMES**. I'LL COME BACK AS GOOD AS NEW, **I PROMISE!!**

COME CLEAN DUDE!!! WHAT'S THE **REAL PROBLEM???** **HUH???** THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU! ARE YOU ON **DRUGS** OR SOMETHING?? YOU'RE BREAKING THE FIRST RULE OF THE **GAME MASTER'S CODE OF CONDUCT: NEVER HOLD UP THE GAME!!**

WE'RE NOT ASKING FOR A LOT HERE. JUST THROW SOME ORCS IN A DUNGEON OR SOMETHING AND LET US WADE THROUGH THEM.

GIVE B.A. A BREAK!! WE'LL PLAY SOME SPELLJACKED AND CALL IT A NIGHT!

SPELLJACKED IS OUT! I SOLD ALL MY CARDS LAST MONTH. THE CARD-MARKET HAS BEEN UNSTABLE LATELY. I'M PREDICTING A CRASH IN CARD-VALUES.



(SOB) I'M JUST TIRED. SO VERY TIRED. I DON'T WANT TO GM TONIGHT. (SNIFF)

WAIT A MINUTE!!!! DUDE, HAVEN'T YOU BEEN WORKING ON AN ADVENTURE OF **YOUR OWN???** **HUH???** YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT IT JUST THE OTHER DAY.

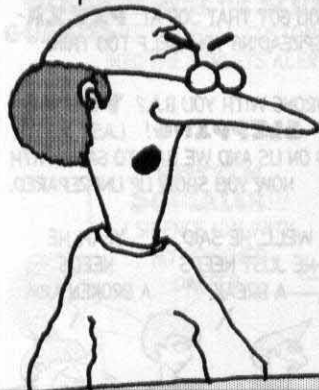
HUH? OH...NO...UH, THAT WAS JUST SOME STUPID LITTLE THING I WAS WORKING UP FOR MY NEPHEWS. THEY'VE BEEN BUGGING ME TO TEACH THEM HOW TO PLAY.

SAY, THIS WOULD BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO DO A TEST RUN, DAVE.

DAVE A GM?? (SHUDDER) THAT WOULD REALLY BE PUTTING A STRAIN ON THE HACKMASTER ENGINE.



COME ON DAVE!!! WE'RE NOT EXPECTING ANYTHING **EPIC!** TAKE US ON A SIMPLE DUNGEON CRAWL. I HAD A **STRESSFUL WEEK** AND I NEED TO **HACK** A LITTLE. **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**



WELL, I'LL HAVE TO RUN HOME AND GET MY NOTES BUT....HMMMM. ACTUALLY, I DO THINK IT'S A **ROCKIN' PIECE OF WORK.** I'VE PUT QUITE A BIT OF WORK INTO IT ALREADY. HMM...MMM...ALRIGHT DAMN IT!!! **I'LL DO IT!!!!**

THAT'S MY BOY!!! I KNEW YOU WOULD-N'T LET US DOWN!!! GO GRAB YOUR NOTES. WE'LL ORDER PIZZA.

THIS SHOULD BE INTERESTING. DAVE AS A DM HUH? YEP, SHOULD BE VERY INTERESTING.



THIRTY MINUTES LATER....

HEY??? WHY ARE WE WALKING OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF SOME DESERT?? I HAVE A NEW CHARACTER. I WANTED TO BUY PROVISIONS AND EQUIP MYSELF BEFORE WE STARTED TRAVELING.

UH...OKAY, HERE'S THE SET-UP. YOU GUYS WERE LIKE...WALKING ALONG A ROAD. YEAH, A REAL DESERTED ROAD WAY OUT IN SOME DESERT. AND UH...YOU MEET THIS OLD GUY. REALLY OLD GUY. I THINK HE HAS A BEARD AND STUFF. AND UH...HE LIKE TALKS TO YA AND STUFF.

ARE WE HEADING SOMEWHERE SPECIFIC?

WHAT THIS DUDE LOOK LIKE? IS HE ARMED??

OLD GUY HUH? WHAT DOES HE SAY?



UH, WELL HE'S JUST SMALL-TALKING THAT'S ALL. YOU KNOW LIKE, 'HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS WEATHER?', 'I GOT A BLISTER ON MY FOOT'. STUFF LIKE THAT. SORRY B.A. ACCORDING TO THE ADVENTURE THE PARTY STARTS OUT ON THIS ROAD. WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO PLAY IT LIKE I WROTE IT.

WHAT WEATHER?? WE'RE IN A DESERT. AND I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT HIS BLISTERS.

MY CHARACTER HAS A **17 INTELLIGENCE!!** I DON'T THINK HE WOULD HAVE JOURNEYED OFF INTO THE DESERT WITH NO ARMOR, WEAPONS, FOOD OR WATER!!!! (GRRRRR)

I HAVE AN EXTRA DAGGER I CAN LOAN YOU B.A. AND WE CAN SHARE FOOD AND WATER.

WHAT'S A MATTER, B.A.?? CAN'T STAND THE HEAT??? **HAR HAR.**



OKAY, SO YOU NOTICE THIS OLD DUDE HAS A HALF-DOZEN POUCHES TIED TO HIS BELT. YOU CAN TELL BY THE WAY THEY BULGE THAT THEY ARE STUFFED WITH COINS.

ALIGNMENTS BE DAMNED!!! I PULL OUT MY CROSSBOW AND WASTE THE OLD MAN!!! SHOULD BE EASY PICKIN'S!!!

SORRY DUDE!! AS SOON AS YOU RAISE YOUR CROSSBOW TO SHOOT, THE OLD MAN'S **HENCHMEN** ATTACK!!! ROLL FOR INITIATIVE

HENCHMEN?? WHERE IN THE HELL DID THEY COME FROM?

I DUNNO BUT I GOT A COUPLE OF FIRE BALLS COMING ONLINE TO DEAL WITH THEM.

HE'S JUST A HARMLESS OLD.....



OBVIOUSLY YOU WEREN'T **PAYING ATTENTION!** I SAID THERE WERE **FOUR HENCHMEN** ACCOMPANYING THE OLD MAN!!!

YOU GUYS SHOULD HAVE HAD YOUR GUARD UP!!!

I DIDN'T HEAR HIM SAY ANYTHING ABOUT ANY DAMN HENCHMEN!!! DID YOU GUYS???

IT'S NOT FAIR!! OF COURSE WE DIDN'T HAVE OUR GUARD UP. WE THOUGHT WE WERE DEALING WITH JUST A HARMLESS OLD MAN.

THAT'S BECAUSE HE DIDN'T!!!!

I HAVE TO HAVE RELIABLE INFORMATION IN ORDER TO PLAN AND EXECUTE MY TACTICALS!!



I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HEAR MYSELF SAY THIS, BUT AS B.A. IS FOND OF REMINDING US, ACCORDING TO THE **HACKMASTER'S GM GUIDE**, "THE GAMEMASTER IS ALWAYS RIGHT!" SO LEARN TO PAY BETTER ATTENTION AND LET'S MOVE ON.

TURN-COAT!!!! HOW QUICKLY YOU SHED YOUR BOND WITH THE BROTHERHOOD OF PLAYERS!!

WELL, I SUPPOSE I'M OBLIGED TO AGREE WITH DAVE. THE GM IS ALWAYS RIGHT!

WELL WE DID FORCE DAVE INTO THE ROLE OF GM AT THE LAST MINUTE. I SUPPOSE WE CAN OVERLOOK A FEW QUIRKS IN THE ADVENTURE.

THERE'S NOTHING WORSE THAN A GM-FOR-A-DAY!!!



AN HOUR LATER...

OKAY YOU COME TO A SIGN THAT SAYS, "**DUNGEON TURN LEFT**" THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF VENDORS WITH BOOTHS AND TENTS LINED UP ALONG THE TRAIL LEADING TO THE DUNGEON. YOU SEE **CRAZY AKMAHD'S HEALING POTIONS AND MEDICINALS**, **HAGGLING-BARNEY'S MAGIC WEAPON EMPORIUM**, AND **GIVE-IT-AWAY-KARL'S PRE-GENERATED DUNGEON MAPS**.

WHAT A KEWL AND NOVEL CONCEPT!!! NOW THIS SMACKS OF REALISM!!! B.A. COULD TAKE A FEW POINTERS.

THIS IS NO DUNGEON! IT'S A TOURIST TRAP!

GEE, EVERYTHING IS SO CONVENIENT!

I'M HITTIN' THE MAGIC WEAPON EMPORIUM!!! I WONDER IF I CAN START A TAB!!



SHORTLY AFTER ENTERING THE DUNGEON...

OKAY BOB, YOU KICK IN THE DOOR TO THE 10' X 10' ROOM AND FIND A REALLY KEWL +5 SWORD!!! THERE'S 2,000 GP'S, A RING OF INVISIBILITY HIDDEN IN A ROTTING SACK AND A PAIR OF DAGGERS WITH JADE HANDLES.

HOODY-HOO!!!
I PULL OUT A LARGE SACK AND START FILLING IT UP. WHAT A GREAT START!!!

WHOOOOAH!!! NOT SO FAST CLUE-BALL!!!
FIRST YOU HAVE TO VANQUISH THE **GUARDIAN-SUN WYRM** WHO IS GUARDING THE TREASURE. SINCE YOU WERE BUSY FILLING THE SACK HE GETS FIRST ATTACK. (ROLL)
OKAY YOU TAKE 27 POINTS OF DAMAGE!!!



A GUARDIAN SUN-WYRM??? DAMN DUDE!!! DON'T YOU THINK THAT WAS SOMETHING YOU SHOULD HAVE MENTIONED IN THE ROOM DESCRIPTION???

YOU WERE DISTRACTED BY THE TREASURE AND DIDN'T NOTICE HIM!

WAIT A MINUTE!!! YOU SAID THIS ROOM WAS **TEN FEET BY TEN FEET!!!** HOW THE HELL CAN AN 80 TO 120 FOOT DRAGON FIT IN THE ROOM???

AND THE ONLY DOOR LEADING TO THE ROOM IS FIVE FEET WIDE AND 8 FEET HIGH!!! HOW DOES HE COME AND GO??

A COMMON MISTAKE AMONG NOVICE GAME MASTER NEOPHITES, DAVE. A GOOD RULE OF THUMB IS TO GIVE A MONSTER TWO AND HALF TIMES HIS VOLUME AS LAIR SPACE.



A FEW HOURS LATER...

OKAY THIS ROOM IS EMPTY EXCEPT FOR THREE **WARRIORS OF KRANE!!!** THE FIRST DUDE HAS A +5 **SHIELD**, +8 **PLATEMAIL**, A **RING OF FIRE PROTECTION**, **BRACERS OF +3 TO HIT/DAMAGE**. HE HAS A +4 **LONGSWORD** IN HIS LEFT HAND AND A +3 **MORNINGSTAR** IN HIS RIGHT HAND. HE ALSO HAS **KNEEPADS OF LEVITATION**, A **GREAT HELM OF FEAR** AND **BOOTS OF HIGH-KICKING**. THE SECOND DUDE HAS A **SPEAR OF IMPALING**, A **SHIELD OF...**

ARE YOU HEARING THIS??? WHAT WERE THESE GUYS DOING IN AN EMPTY ROOM?? WAITING FOR A BUS??

DAVE, DOES THE TERM, "GAME BALANCE" MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

LOOKS LIKE I'LL BE MAKING ANOTHER TRIP BACK OUTSIDE TO **CRAZY AKMAHD'S**. YOU WANT ME TO PICK YOU UP ANYTHING?

YEAH, A SUICIDE PILL!!! I CAN'T TAKE THIS MUCH LONGER.



AS THE NIGHT DRAGS ON...

OKAY, YOU'VE REACHED THE VERY LAST ROOM OF THE DUNGEON. AS YOU KICK THE DOOR IN YOU SUDDENLY FIND YOURSELF **BACK ON THE LONELY ROAD IN THE DESERT!!** THE OLD MAN WITH THE BEARD IS STANDING BEFORE YOU.

HUH? WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?

THE OLD MAN LAUGHS AND EXPLAINS HE CAST AN ILLUSIONARY SPELL ON THE PARTY. THE ENTIRE DUNGEON, THE ENTIRE ADVENTURE WAS ALL IN YOUR HEAD. A TOTAL ILLUSION!!!! THE OLD MAN SILENTLY SALUTES YOU AND TURNS AND WALKS AWAY INTO THE TWILIGHT.

AN ILLUSION??

WE SAT THROUGH **FIVE HOURS** OF THIS **CRAP** FOR **NOTHING**???? NO E.P.?? NO TREASURE???



TWO MINUTES LATER...

I DUNNO, HE'S RUNNING PRETTY FAST!!! HE MIGHT GET AWAY!

WELL IT WASN'T MY IDEA TO GIVE HIM A FIVE MINUTE HEAD START!!!

WHILE I DON'T CONDONE VIOLENCE, I SEE IT AS MY RESPONSIBILITY THAT DAVE NEVER SITS BEHIND THE SCREEN AGAIN!!!

HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE!! MY LITTLE TRIP TO THE CAN PROVIDED THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO LET THE AIR OUT OF HIS TIRES.



Weird Pete: The Man Behind the Counter

By Jolly R. Blackburn

You'd never know it to look at the man, but Weird Pete is not your typical, local games retailer. He's a living piece of gaming history — one of the last staunch survivors of the Old Guard! He's seen it all and played it all. Perhaps that's why he's so quick to let his customers know. For as long as I've been tossing dice across the gaming table, Weird Pete has been my source of games, dice and gaming paraphernalia. He's as timeless as the shrink-wrapped packages of expansion die cut counters for **Rise and Fall of the Third Reich** which hang above his cash register.

The other day while I was waiting in line to purchase my copy of **Newsies: The role-playing game of Newspaper route wars in Suburban America**, a fellow customer looked at my selection and scowled.

"Why the hell are you buying that piece of crap?? It only got a two finger rating in Watch Dawg Games Report last month!"

A little annoyed I shot back, "Cause Weird Pete recommended it! That's why!"

Mr. military glasses rolled his eyes and shook his head. *"Weird Pete? What the hell does that old coot know about gaming? Huh?"*

I let the remark slide. The offender looked all of sixteen years old. How could he possibly know? He was too young to remember. I paid for my game, thanked Weird Pete for the tip and raced home to lose myself in the rough-and-tumble world of newsboy territorial wars! The obnoxious gamer at Weird Pete's and his blasphemous remarks began to haunt me however. Weird Pete's tale was being eroded by time. In the dog-eat-dog world of collectible card games, POGs and holographic dice, Pete's contribution to gaming was fading into the backwashes. Someone had to tell his tale!! Someone had to make sure Weird Pete's legacy was etched in stone so that future generations would know.

Yesterday I found myself digging into corners of my game closet retrieving old yellowed copies of **Game Designer Quarterly**, **Journal of the Delaware County Gaming Society**, **Flaming Dice and Battle Hardened Lead**, and many other now defunct gaming publications from the late 1970s. All these magazines had two things in common; a burning passion for anything having to do with games and the people who played them, and the fact that they were all founded, edited and published by one Pete Ashton.

Weird Pete attended Ball State University from 1972 to 1978. He was a double-major in History and Political Science. Although I haven't confirmed it, I'm told Pete took a year's leave of absence in 1976 so that he could chase the band **Grateful Dead** and the infamous **Wall of Sound** around the country in his 1965 Volkswagen van. For years I dismissed this incident as an insane rumor but last year when Jerry Garcia passed away, Weird Pete's shop was inexplicably closed for three days straight. In the window a hastily scrawled sign read, "Closed: Due to the Death of an Era."

While attending BSU, Pete became heavily involved in the local gaming club, **DCGS** (Delaware County Gaming Society). The club was originally founded as a miniatures wargame forum. A corner in the basement of the Student Union was provided for the group and for years a half dozen sand tables occupied the sight. On Thursday nights and most weekends all the great battles and conflicts of man were recreated in 15mm's. Like most gamers, Pete felt he could do a better job designing rule systems than the mimeographed books in Ziploc bags he was shelling out ten bucks for. This led him to launch his first small press publication, **Flaming Dice and Battle Hardened Lead** in 1973. The newsletter averaged 16 pages and came out "whenever." Circulation never surpassed fifty copies and most of those were given away at local cons and club meetings. Nevertheless it introduced Pete to self-publishing.

In the fall of 1974 he play-tested his first original work, **Ant Colony X4763Z!** The miniatures battle pitted an army of red ants against a rival army of black ants as they wrestled for control of a child's sandbox in the backyard of a rural residence. The game attracted a loyal cult following. Weird Pete sold the game to **Get-On-With-It Games** who published the game under the name

Mandible Wars. The first printing of 500 sold out within a few months and Pete was contracted to write the expansion set **Aphids and Katydid**s which by all accounts was a bomb.

Dismayed at the meager royalties he earned on his first game design, Pete decided to self-publish his next game. He talked fellow club members, Johnny Kazinski, and the brothers Niles and Gary Jackson into forming a new company, **Three Dawg Knights** and they immediately set about publishing Pete's latest game design, **Lynch Mob: Miniature Rules for Social Reprisals and Uprisings!**

On January 5th, 1975 the first of 250 copies of Mob Justice was shipped out the door. The game itself was a bomb. However, the four crudely written pages entitled **Appendix C: Alternate rules for Intensive Play** which were thrown in almost as an afterthought would change the face of gaming forever. Without realizing it, Pete had written the first description of what is now commonly known as a 'role-playing game'. The appendix would be xeroxed and passed around college campuses and game clubs around the country, and indeed around the world for years afterward.

It's a sad fact that thousands of gamers read 10th and 15th generation copies of the appendix without ever seeing (or purchasing) the original book. Soon dozens of home-brewed role-playing games were popping up around the country. None of this, of course, was immediately apparent to poor Pete who sold the company and publishing rights of **Lynch Mob** to Gary Jackson for the sum of \$125.00. (The sales contract was handwritten on the facing page of a Mob Justice rules book at a barbecue party and signed on March 1, 1975).

Gary Jackson immediately dropped **Lynch Mob** and devoted his full time and attention to a new game design. A year later he released **The HackMasters of EverKnight** and the rest is history. HackMaster cannibalized **Lynch Mob**'s rules and shared many of the same concepts and rule systems — a fact which caused Weird Pete to sue for compensation in 1976.

Gary Jackson's lawyers were a bit nervous about the hastily scrawled contract with barbecue sauce stains on it and whether or not it would hold up in court. They settled with Pete by offering him 25% of the shares in Gary's new company, **Hard Eight Enterprises**. Claiming **Hackmaster** was a fad with the 'life expectancy of yogurt on a dashboard', Pete sold his shares back to Gary in the spring of 1977 just five days before **HackMaster: The RPG (1st edition)** was released. **Hackmaster** was an incredible success and blew off the shelf carrying Gary Jackson to wealth and fame and leaving poor Pete to lick his wounds in exile.

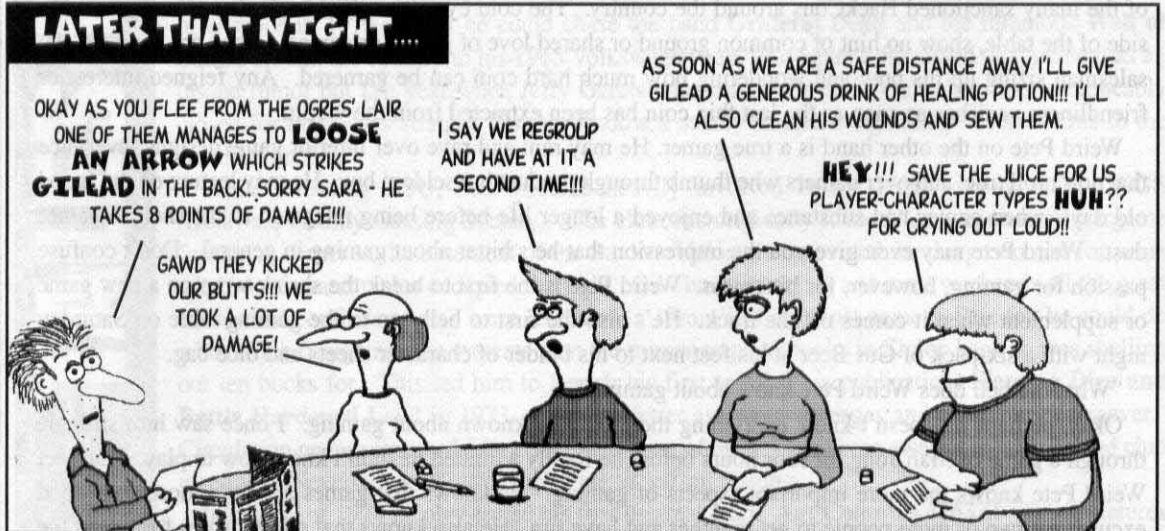
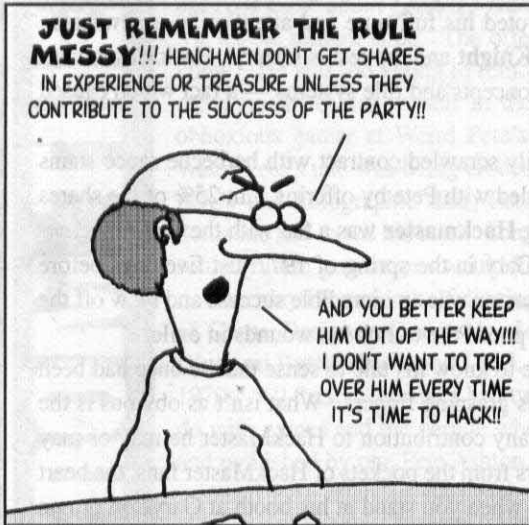
Weird Pete's bitterness is readily apparent. You don't have to know his tale to sense that he once had been 'that close' to grabbing the golden ring only have it elude his grasping fingers. What isn't as obvious is the fact that Weird Pete's merits and worth are far greater than any contribution to HackMaster he may or may not have had. Whereas Gary Jackson is adept at prying dollars from the pockets of HackMaster fans, the heart of a gamer does not reside within. It's something you sense when you stand at his booth at GaryCon or one of the many sanctioned HackCons around the country. The cold eyes, the glare back at you from the other side of the table, show no hint of common ground or shared love of games or gamers. They are the eyes of a salesman sizing up his prey and wondering how much hard coin can be garnered. Any feigned interest or friendliness vanishes as soon as the last thin coin has been extracted from the victim.

Weird Pete on the other hand is a true gamer. He may rant and rave over inferior game designs, over dice that don't roll true, and over gamers who thumb through product but seldom buy. He may lecture on the 'good old days' when games had substance and enjoyed a longer life before being relegated to the shelf to gather dust. Weird Pete may even give you the impression that he's bitter about gaming in general. Don't confuse passion for gaming, however, for bitterness. Weird Pete is the first to break the shrink-wrap on a new game or supplement when it comes off the truck. He's also the first to belly up to the gaming table on Saturday night with a six-pack of Gus Beer at his feet next to his binder of character sheets and dice bag.

"What the hell does Weird Pete know about gaming?"

Okay, perhaps he doesn't know everything there is to be known about gaming. I once saw him struggle through a game of Mah Jong for four hours before he finally admitted he didn't know how to play. I suspect Weird Pete knows the more important aspects of gaming. He knows that games are little more than good excuses for two or more people to get together and have fun. He also knows that relationships formed at the gaming table have value and that investing in friends has dividends.

As Weird Pete was once overheard to say, "I'd rather be playing with my friends than against them!" □



* See KODT Issue 7: A Call for Heroes

YEAH, DAMMIT!!! I'M DOWN A FEW HIT POINTS MYSELF!!! DON'T BE WASTING THE JUICE ON SOME **STUPID NPC!!!**

SEE? I KNEW THIS HENCHMAN-DUDE WAS GOING TO CAUSE PROBLEMS!!!

GET OVER IT!!! IT'S MY HEALING POTION AND I'LL USE IT AS I SEE FIT!! GILEAD AND MY CHARACTER HAVE SWORN A BLOOD-OATH TO PROTECT EACH OTHER. IF HE'S HURT I'M GOING TO HELP HIM.

HMMRRFFF!!! YOU AND THIS GILEAD-FELLOW SURE HAVE GOTTEN **CHUMMY!!!**

UH...GUYS?



AN HOUR LATER...

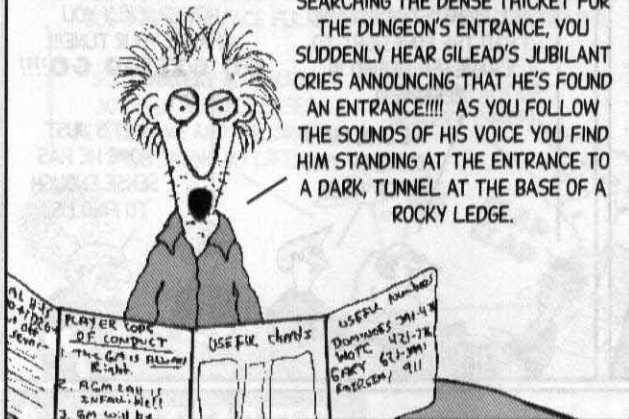
OKAY, AFTER FOUR HOURS SEARCHING THE DENSE THICKET FOR THE DUNGEON'S ENTRANCE, YOU SUDDENLY HEAR GILEAD'S JUBILANT CRIES ANNOUNCING THAT HE'S FOUND AN ENTRANCE!!!! AS YOU FOLLOW THE SOUNDS OF HIS VOICE YOU FIND HIM STANDING AT THE ENTRANCE TO A DARK, TUNNEL AT THE BASE OF A ROCKY LEDGE.

HA!! LOOKS LIKE GILEAD JUST **CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PARTY!!!!** HE NOW QUALIFIES FOR **EQUAL SHARES OF EXPERIENCE AND TREASURE!!** JUST THOUGHT I'D POINT THAT OUT.

SAY WHAT??? NOBODY TOLD THE LITTLE BROWN-NOSER TO HELP LOOK FOR THE DUNGEON

BLAST IT!! I'M AFRAID THE RULES BACK HER UP GUYS!!

I'M LODGING A FORMAL PROTEST!!!



OKAY, YOU'RE GETTING READY TO ENTER THE DUNGEON. WHAT'S THE MARCHING ORDER???

DAVE AND I WILL TAKE THE POINT. I HAVE MY CROSSBOW LOADED FOR BEAR!! SARA AND BRIAN WILL BRING UP THE REAR. AND...UH...OUR LITTLE FRIEND GILEAD WILL REMAIN OUTSIDE. HE CAN GUARD THE MULES. (SNICKER)

YEAH!! I'LL BE DAMNED IF HE GETS ANY MORE TREASURE OR EXPERIENCE BY RIDING OUR COAT-TAILS!!

THAT'S NOT FAIR!!! HE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO JOIN US IF I SAY SO. I CAN'T BELIEVE...I'M GOING TO...(SIGH) FORGET IT!! GILEAD WILL GUARD THE MULES.

YEAH...WELL, REMIND HIM TO STAY THE HELL OUT OF MY SADDLE BAGS.



TEN MINUTES LATER...

OKAY BOB AS YOU ARE ATTEMPTING TO PICK THE LOCK YOU SUDDENLY HEAR A **METALLIC SNAP** FOLLOWED BY A **WHOOSHING SOUND!!!!** SECONDS LATER AN ENORMOUS **EXPLOSION** FILLS THE CORRIDOR OF THE DUNGEON. YOU'RE ALL **KNOCKED OUT COLD** BY THE FORCE OF THE BLAST!!!

GOOD GOING BOB!! YOUR BONE-HEADED THIEF JUST DID US IN!!

THIS IS BAD!!! THIS IS VERY BAD!!!

I FEEL SO UTTERLY HELPLESS!!

KNOCKED OUT??? WE'RE TOAST!! THIS PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH NASTIES!!



HEY WE'RE FORGETTING SOMETHING!! **GILEAD!!** HE'S GUARDING THE MULES!! MAYBE HE'LL INVESTIGATE THE EXPLOSION!!



UH....GOOD POINT SARA. ACTUALLY, **GILEAD** DOES HEAR THE EXPLOSION!! HE IMMEDIATELY COMES RUNNING DOWN THE DUNGEON CORRIDOR LOOKING FOR YOU!!!

ALL RIGHT!!! THANK GAWD I HAD THE FORESIGHT TO LEAVE HIM BEHIND IN RESERVE!!!

HOW QUICKLY YOU CHANGE YOUR TUNE!!! **GO GILEAD GO!!!!**

WE OWE HIM A DRINK OR TWO FOR THIS!!

LET'S JUST HOPE HE HAS SENSE ENOUGH TO FIND US!!



GILEAD HAS NO TROUBLE FINDING YOUR LIMP BODIES!!! HE QUICKLY STEPS OVER THE BODIES OF BOB AND DAVE AND CAREFULLY PICKS UP SARA AND THROWS HER OVER HIS SHOULDER!!! RUSHING BACK TO THE MULES HE ADMINISTERS FIRST-AID TO HER WOUNDS. HE THEN BUILDS A LITTER AND TAKES HER BACK TO TOWN FOR FURTHER MEDICAL TREATMENT!!!

HUH???

THE REST OF YOU WAKE UP THIRTY MINUTES LATER. YOU'RE ALL TOTALLY NUDE AND ALL YOUR STUFF IS GONE!!!! **PIXIE BODY RUNES OF SHAME AND DISHONOR** HAVE BEEN PAINTED ALL OVER YOUR BODIES!!!

WAIT TIL I CATCH UP WITH THAT LITTLE BASTARD!!

YES!!! JUSTICE REIGNS SUPREME IN GARWEEZE WURLD!!!



THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY GUYS!!! YOU'VE RE-EQUIPPED YOURSELVES AND ARE READY TO HEAD BACK TO THE DUNGEON. YOU ARRIVE AT THE DUNGEON AROUND NOON AND....

HOLD ON THERE FLICK!!!
I WANT TO RECRUIT A FEW PERSONAL HIRELINGS. ONE SQUIRE, AND TWO PERSONAL BODYGUARDS!!!

YEAH!!! AND I'M HIRING FOUR BODYGUARDS, A FIELD MEDIC, AND A BARD TO WRITE MY PERSONAL MEMOIRS AND TO RECORD MY HEROIC EXPLOITS!!!

HMMMM...SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES!!!

I'M HIRING A SCROLL CADDY TO CARRY MY SCROLL CASES!!! AND, UH...I LIKE DAVE'S IDEA OF A PERSONAL MEDIC!!! I'M HIRING ONE OF THOSE TOO!!



LATER IN THE DUNGEON...

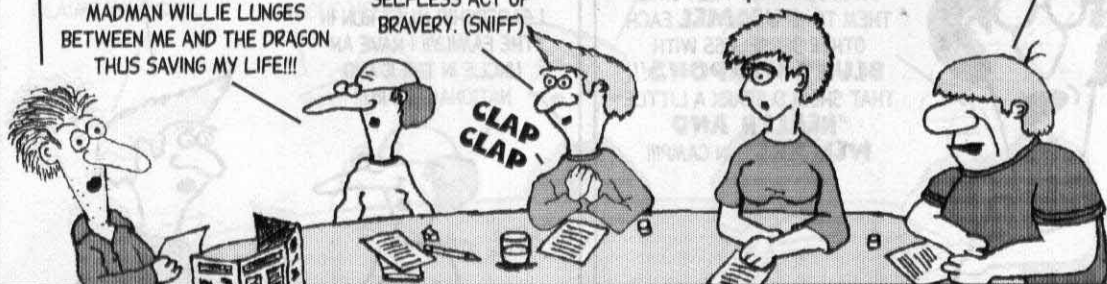
AS YOU KICK IN THE OAKEN DOOR YOU ARE SUDDENLY CONFRONTED BY A **SLAG-COPPER DRAGON!!!!** APPARENTLY HE HEARD YOU AND YOUR NOISY ARMY OF HIRELINGS COMING BECAUSE HE'S NOT SURPRISED!!! BOB YOU GET A FACE FULL OF BLISTERING DRAGON BREATH!!!

FORTUNATELY MY SQUIRE, MADMAN WILLIE LUNGES BETWEEN ME AND THE DRAGON THUS SAVING MY LIFE!!!

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL, SELFLESS ACT OF BRAVERY. (SNIFF)

NO WAY!!! YOU JUST HIRED THIS GUY AN HOUR AGO AND HE'S SO ENTHRALLED WITH YOU THAT HE GIVES UP HIS LIFE FOR YOU?? EXPLAIN THAT???

IT'S CALLED A **CHARM SPELL OF UNDYING DEVOTION** BABY!!!! AND I'M ONLY CHARGING 500 GP A POP TO CHARM A HIRELING!!!



CLAP CLAP

A WEE BIT LATER...

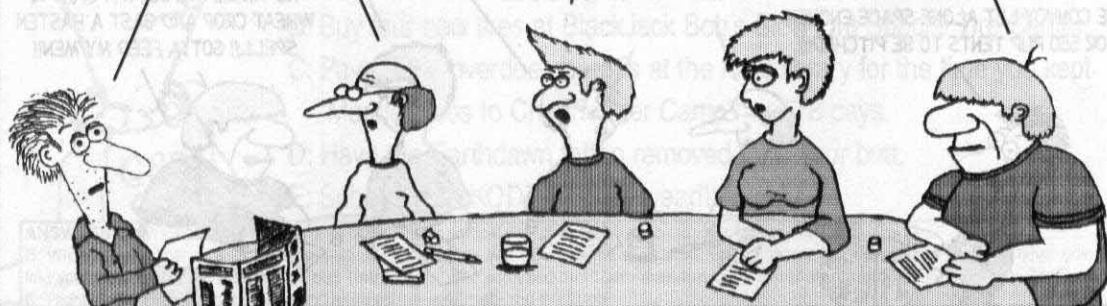
OKAY YOU COME TO A LARGE DOOR. IN HUMAN BLOOD SOMEONE HAS SCRAWLED THE WORDS, **"DANGER. MANY TRAPS LIE WITHIN!"**

OKAY MADMAN WILLIE, DURTY JAKE AND FERRET-FACE EDDIE WILL ENTER THE ROOM AND CHECK THINGS OUT. I'M GOING TO READY MY HEALING POTION I.V. DRIP WHILE I WAIT!!

WELL, HELL BOB!!! NO SENSE IN YOU TAKING ALL THE RISK HERE!!! I'LL SEND IN BOOT-STRAP HARRY AND MY BOYS TO BACK THEM UP!!!

GUYS, PLEASE!!! THINK OF WHAT YOU'RE DOING?? YOU'RE TREATING THESE HIRELINGS LIKE CLAY PIGEONS!

THEY WERE JUST NPC'S LIVING BORING NPC LIVES, SARA!!! WE'RE GIVING THEM SOMETHING TO TELL THEIR CHILDREN ABOUT!!!



ONE WEEK LATER.....

YOUR **SENIOR SQUAD LEADER** REPORTS THAT 75 MEN ARE **PRESENT**, 5 ARE IN THE **BOX**, 4 ON **SICKCALL** AND 2 ARE **AWOL!!**

ARE YOU GUYS
READY TO HEAD
FOR THE
DUNGEON YET??

NOT YET! I WANT TO CALL A
FORMATION OF MY MEN FOR
ACCOUNTABILITY!!
I THINK I HAVE A FEW LEECHES ON
THE PAYROLL!!

SEE? SEE WHAT I WAS
TRYING TO TELL YA?? YOU
GOTTA HAVE A LOCK DOWN AT
NIGHT DUDE OR THEY'LL KEEP
WANDERING AWAY LIKE THAT!!

LEG IRONS WOULD BE JUST
AS EFFECTIVE WOULDN'T
THEY, DAVE? (SIGH)

I FIND THAT FIVE GALLONS OF
SLEEP POTION AND A
BAG OF HOLDING
WORKS JUST FINE!!



0000OH, SO I GOT A FEW
SLACKERS RIDING THE
SICKCALL LIST EH??
I'M HAVING THEM THROWN IN THE
BOX!!! BUT FIRST I'LL FORCE
THEM TO **PUMMEL** EACH
OTHER SENSELESS WITH
BLUNT WEAPONS!!
THAT SHOULD SPARK A LITTLE
"HEALTH AND
WELFARE" IN CAMP!!!

DUDE!!! THAT WAS SO KEWL!!! REMEMBER IN
THE MOVIE **PATTON** WHEN HE **WUSS SLAPS** THE
SOLDIER WITH 'BATTLE FATIGUE' IN THE FIELD
HOSPITAL??? WELL YOU JUST PUT THE OLD MAN TO SHAME!!!

LEADERSHIP MUST RUN IN
THE FAMILY!! I HAVE AN
UNCLE IN THE IDAHO
NATIONAL GUARD!!



A FEW WEEKS LATER...

OKAY YOU'VE FORCED MARCHED THE
PARTY TO THE DUNGEON ENTRANCE!!!
HOWEVER, THE AREA IS SO HEAVILY
FORESTED YOU DON'T HAVE ROOM TO
CIRCLE THE 30-ODD SUPPLY WAGONS IN
THE CONVOY LET ALONE SPACE ENOUGH
FOR 550 PUP TENTS TO BE PITCHED!!!

NO PROBLEM!! I HAD BOOT STRAP HARRY PICK UP TWO HUNDRED AXES!!! I'LL
BREAK THEM OUT AND ORDER THE MEN TO START CLEARING A BIVOUAC AREA!!!

HEY MAKE SURE THEY PITCH THE
CANTINA-TENT SO WE HAVE A
GOOD VIEW OF THE LAKE!!!

WANNA SCOUT OUT THE DUNGEON WITH ME
WHILE THEY SET UP THEIR CAMP?

NO TIME!!! I'VE GOTTA PLANT A
WHEAT CROP AND CAST A HASTEN
SPELL!! GOTTA FEED MY MEN!!



TWO WEEKS LATER...

HE REPORTS THAT THE MEN ARE REBELLING!!! THEY DON'T FEEL 5 GOLD PIECES PER MAN IS SUFFICIENT PAY!!! THEY'VE SEIZED THE TREASURY AND ARE CURRENTLY MARCHING TOWARD THE CAMP!!!

SERGEANT BARRINGER KNOCKS ON THE DOOR AND REQUESTS PERMISSION TO ENTER THE SALINA!!!

BARRINGER? EXCELLENT, THEY MUST HAVE FINISHED CLEARING OUT THE SIXTH LEVEL. I TELL HIM TO COME IN!!

UNGRATEFUL SCUM!!!!
IF IT'S WAR THEY WANT - I'LL GLADLY SERVE IT UP FOR THEM!!!

LOOKS LIKE PAYBACK TIME!! I'M FINDING A GOOD SEAT TO WATCH!!

HMMMM... DISSENSION IS SOMEWHAT CONTAGIOUS ACCORDING TO THE RULES. I WASTE MY SPELL CADDIE!!



THE DAWGS OF WAR ARE LOOSED...

AS THE NOOSE IS PUT AROUND YOUR NECKS, GILEAD ASKS YOU IF THERE IS ANYTHING TO SAY BEFORE JUSTICE CLAIMS YOUR SOUL!

YEAH! HOW COME SARA WAS GRANTED IMMUNITY HUH? SHE STARTED THE WHOLE MESS!!

WHAT HAPPENED TO MY **PLEA-BARGAIN??**
I GAVE THEM ALL THE DIRT ON BOB AND BRIAN?? WHAT GIVES???

DON'T WORRY GUYS!! I'LL PUT FRESH CUT FLOWERS ON YOUR GRAVES. AND WHENEVER I USE YOUR STUFF I'LL THINK OF YOU. (SNICKER).

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THESE HIRELINGS HAVE SUCH A BURR UP THEIR BUTTS!!!



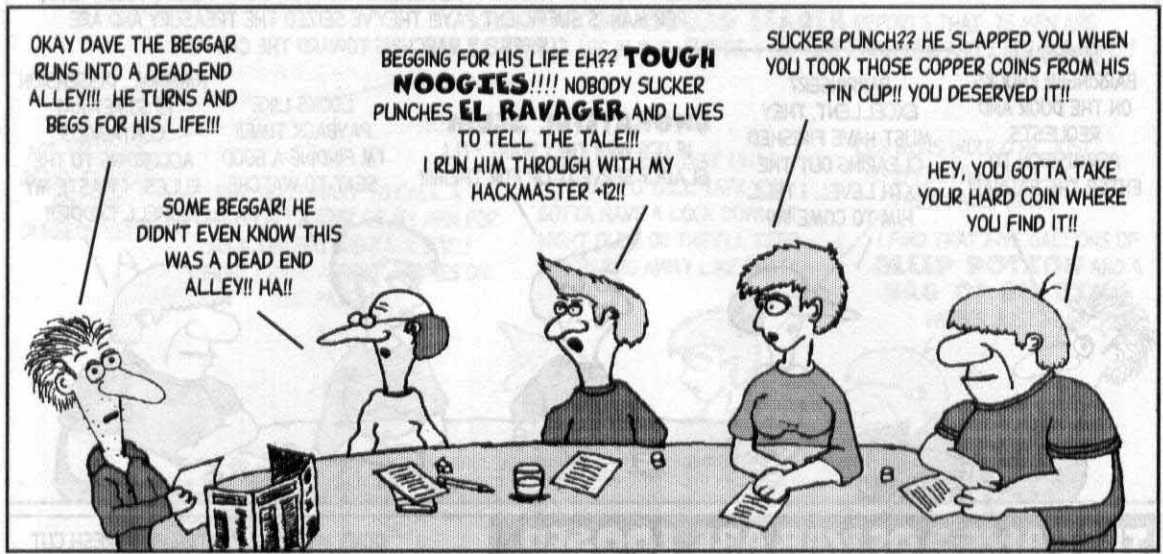
KODT READERSHIP TEST NO. 21



Q: You have \$32 bucks in your pocket. Which of the following would best illustrate the 'wisest' use of that money??

- A: Rent a room at Motel Chester and order the 'hot oil' special.
- B: Buy four new tires at BlackJack Bob's Blow Out Special Tire Center.
- C: Pay off the overdue charges at the local library for the time you kept "Marcia Goes to Cheerleader Camp" for 178 days.
- D: Have the Earthdown tattoo removed from your butt.
- E: Subscribe to KODT for a full year!!!

ANSWERS: A: Wrong! Motel Chester was closed down when it was discovered the sanitary wrappers were being reused. B: Wrong Again! There's a six week waiting list for BlackJack Bob's thirty dollar special. C: Wrong! Why pay? The Library Police are never going to find you dude. D: Wrong! Keep the tattoo!! There's nothing to be ashamed of!!! There were lots of people at the 1984 White Wolf party at GenCon! E: Right!!!! Subscription rates are bound to go up in the future!!! You the Man!!!



OKAY DAVE THE BEGGAR RUNS INTO A DEAD-END ALLEY!!! HE TURNS AND BEGS FOR HIS LIFE!!!

BEGGING FOR HIS LIFE EH?? **TOUGH NOOGIES!!!!** NOBODY SUCKER PUNCHES **EL RAVAGER** AND LIVES TO TELL THE TALE!!! I RUN HIM THROUGH WITH MY HACKMASTER +12!!

SUCKER PUNCH?? HE SLAPPED YOU WHEN YOU TOOK THOSE COPPER COINS FROM HIS TIN CLIP!! YOU DESERVED IT!!

SOME BEGGAR! HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THIS WAS A DEAD END ALLEY!! HA!!

HEY, YOU GOTTA TAKE YOUR HARD COIN WHERE YOU FIND IT!!

AS THE OLD BEGGAR DIES IN A POOL OF BLOOD HE POINTS AT YOU AND **CURSES YOU!!!**

SUDDENLY YOUR **HACKMASTER +12** SHATTERS LIKE GLASS INTO FINE PARTICLES THAT FALL TO YOUR FEET IN A SMALL PILE THEN QUICKLY BLOW AWAY!!!



BLAH, BLAH, BLAH!! I TELL THE OLD MAN TO CAN IT AS I SEARCH HIS BODY FOR.....

GAAAAA!!!
MY HACKMASTER +12??
SHATTERS???
BLOWS AWAY???

NO!!



HA! HA!! JUST A LITTLE APRIL FOOL'S JOKE THERE DAVE. HA HA.....UH.....ER....

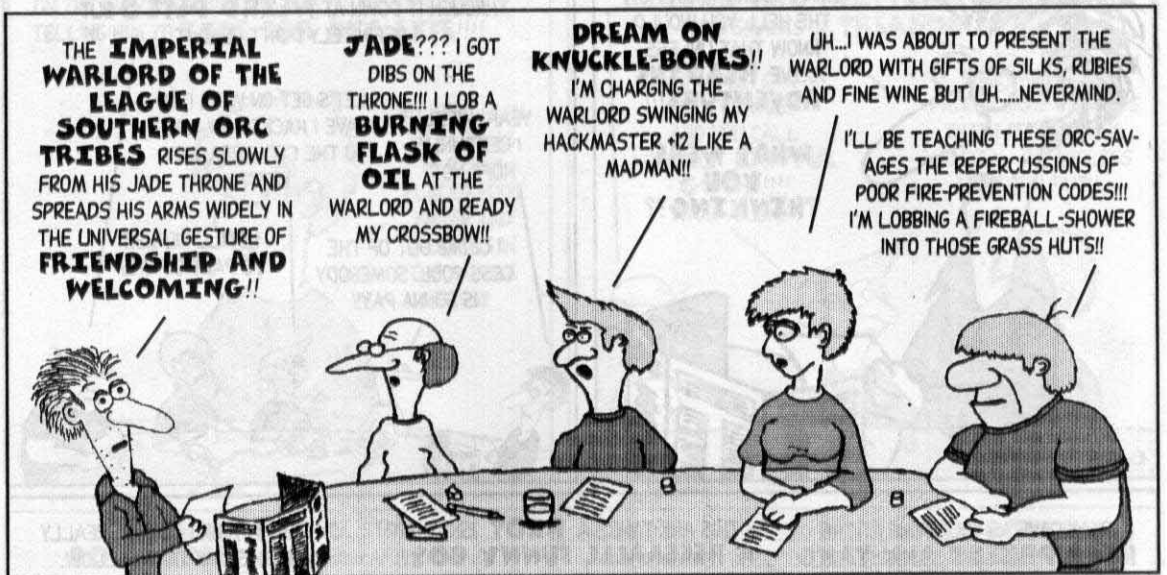
HE FAINTED???
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM DO THAT SINCE THEY CANCELLED **KNIGHT RIDER!!**

HE HIT HARD TOO! HE'S SURE GONNA FEEL IT WHEN HE WAKES UP!!

NOT HALF AS MUCH AS HE'S GONNA FEEL THAT FOUR-SIDER HE LANDED ON. **OUCH!!**

KERPLUNK!!





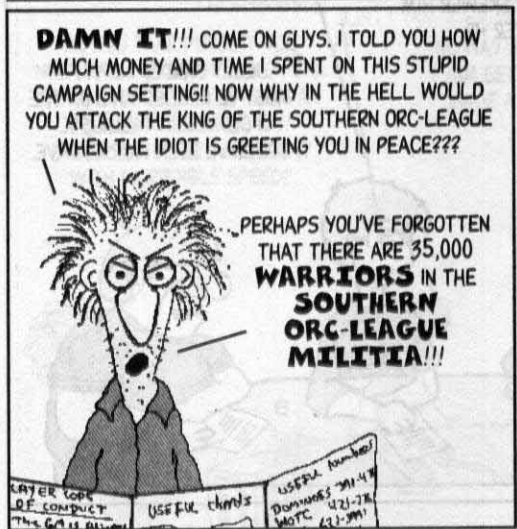
THE **IMPERIAL WARLORD OF THE LEAGUE OF SOUTHERN ORC TRIBES** RISES SLOWLY FROM HIS **JADE THRONE** AND SPREADS HIS ARMS WIDELY IN THE UNIVERSAL GESTURE OF **FRIENDSHIP AND WELCOMING!!**

JADE??? I GOT DIBS ON THE THRONE!!! I LOB A **BURNING FLASK OF OIL** AT THE WARLORD AND READY MY **CROSSBOW!!**

DREAM ON KNUCKLE-BONES!! I'M CHARGING THE WARLORD SWINGING MY **HACKMASTER +12** LIKE A **MADMAN!!**

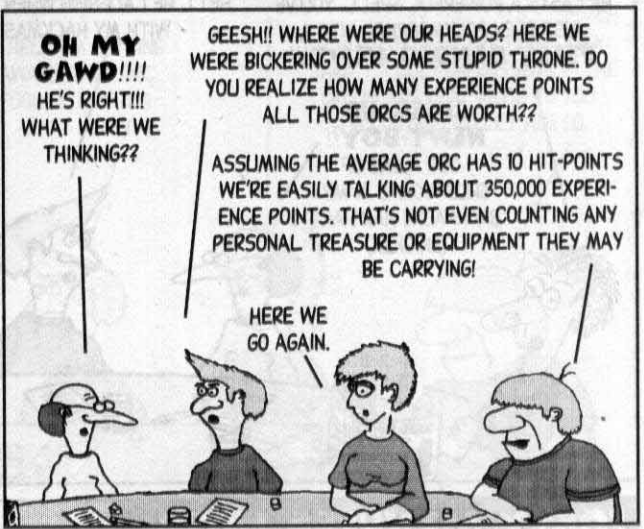
UH...I WAS ABOUT TO PRESENT THE WARLORD WITH GIFTS OF **SILKS, RUBIES** AND **FINE WINE** BUT UH....NEVERMIND.

I'LL BE TEACHING THESE ORC-SAVAGES THE REPERCUSSIONS OF **POOR FIRE-PREVENTION CODES!!!** I'M LOBBING A **FIREBALL-SHOWER** INTO THOSE **GRASS HUTS!!!**



DAMN IT!!! COME ON GUYS. I TOLD YOU HOW MUCH MONEY AND TIME I SPENT ON THIS STUPID CAMPAIGN SETTING!! NOW WHY IN THE HELL WOULD YOU ATTACK THE KING OF THE SOUTHERN ORC-LEAGUE WHEN THE IDIOT IS GREETING YOU IN PEACE???

PERHAPS YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THAT THERE ARE **35,000 WARRIORS** IN THE **SOUTHERN ORC-LEAGUE MILITIA!!!**



OH MY GAWD!!!! HE'S RIGHT!!! WHAT WERE WE THINKING??

GEESH!! WHERE WERE OUR HEADS? HERE WE WERE BICKERING OVER SOME STUPID THRONE. DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY EXPERIENCE POINTS ALL THOSE ORCS ARE WORTH??

ASSUMING THE AVERAGE ORC HAS 10 HIT-POINTS WE'RE EASILY TALKING ABOUT **350,000 EXPERIENCE POINTS**. THAT'S NOT EVEN COUNTING ANY **PERSONAL TREASURE** OR **EQUIPMENT** THEY MAY BE CARRYING!

HERE WE GO AGAIN.



AN HOUR LATER...

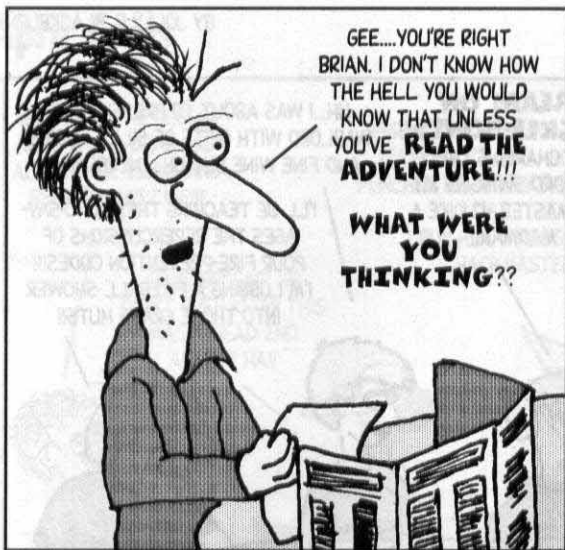
OKAY BOB AS YOU RUN UP THE TEMPLE STEPS FLEEING FROM THE **ORC GUARDS**, THE DOORS SWING OPEN. THE **HIGH-PRIEST AHK-TANG** EMERGES SURPRISING YOU. HE COLD-COCKS YOU KNOCKING YOU OFF THE EDGE OF THE STEPS INTO A LARGE FESTEING **CESS-POOL!!! ROLL VS. DISEASE!!!**

WAAAA?? WHAT?? YOU JUST MADE THAT UP! WHY YOU ALWAYS PICKING ON ME? HUH?

(SNICKER) YOU FELL IN A CESS POOL DUDE? NOT ONLY THAT BUT AN **ORC CESS POOL!!!**

I DON'T KNOW WHO THIS **AHK-TANG** IS BUT I LIKE HIM.

AHK-TANG IS A 15TH LEVEL **HALF-ORC MAGE/CLERIC**. HIS **RADICAL TEACHINGS** BROUGHT ABOUT THE **FORMATION** OF THE **SOUTHERN ORC LEAGUE**.



GEE...YOU'RE RIGHT BRIAN. I DON'T KNOW HOW THE HELL YOU WOULD KNOW THAT UNLESS YOU'VE **READ THE ADVENTURE!!!**

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING??



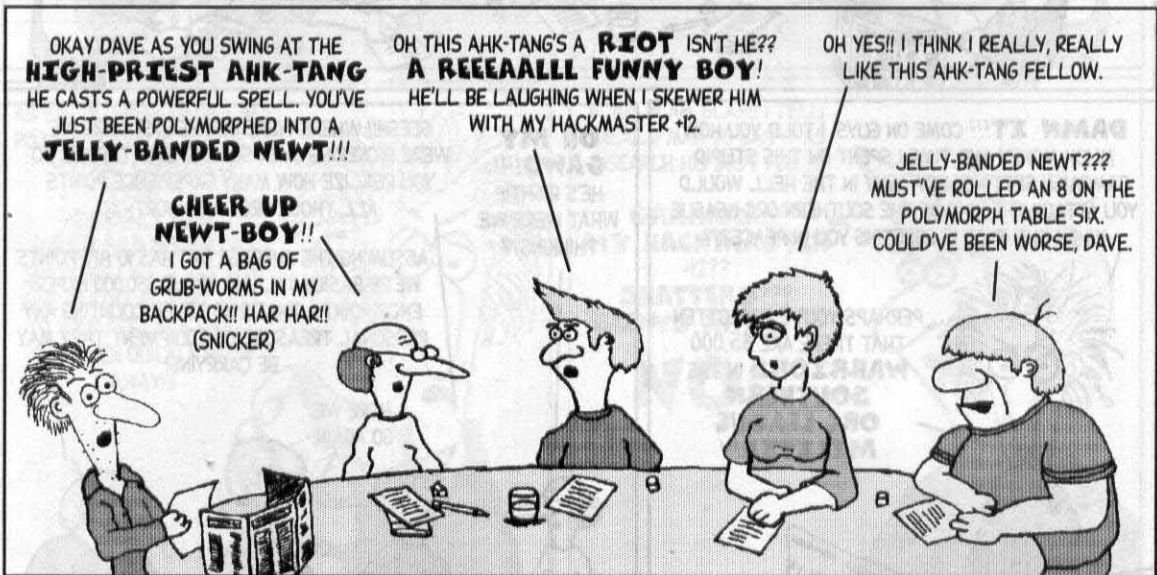
CHILL OUT DUDE!!! I MAY HAVE FLIPPED THROUGH IT DOWN AT **WEIRD PETE'S** BUT I DEFINITELY DIDN'T READ IT.

YEAH...WELL... I CERTAINLY HOPE NOT.

LET'S GET ON WITH IT!!! HAVE I HACKED MY WAY TO THE CITY-TREASURY YET??

I CLIMB OUT OF THE CESS POOL. SOMEBODY IS GONNA PAY!!

I STILL REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE!



OKAY DAVE AS YOU SWING AT THE **HIGH-PRIEST AHK-TANG** HE CASTS A POWERFUL SPELL. YOU'VE JUST BEEN POLYMORPHED INTO A **JELLY-BANDED NEWT!!!**

OH THIS AHK-TANG'S A **RIOT** ISN'T HE?? **A REEEAALL FUNNY BOY!** HE'LL BE LAUGHING WHEN I SKEWER HIM WITH MY HACKMASTER +12.

OH YES!! I THINK I REALLY, REALLY LIKE THIS AHK-TANG FELLOW.

CHEER UP NEWT-BOY!! I GOT A BAG OF GRUB-WORMS IN MY BACKPACK!! HAR HAR!! (SNICKER)

JELLY-BANDED NEWT??? MUST'VE ROLLED AN 8 ON THE POLYMORPH TABLE SIX. COULD'VE BEEN WORSE, DAVE.

FORTY MINUTES LATER...



THE ORC METROPOLIS IS CONSUMED WITH FLAMES AS SPIRES OF SMOKE REACH TOWARD THE HEAVENS. BRIAN'S FIREBALL OBLITERATES THE ORC TEMPLE WHERE LAST SURVIVORS HAD FLED FOR SAFETY WHEN YOU REFUSED TO HONOR THEIR FLAG OF TRUCE.

WHEW!!! THAT TOOK A LITTLE LONGER THAN I THOUGHT!!! WE'LL WAIT FOR THE FLAMES TO DIE DOWN IN THE TEMPLE AND THEN I'LL RETRIEVE THE TEMPLE RELICS.

I'LL BE SEARCHING AROUND FOR ANY MORE WAGONS SO WE CAN LOAD UP THE LOOT!!

WAIT A SEC GUYS. ACCORDING TO MY TALLY WE'VE ONLY AMASSED 349,999 KILLS!!!! THERE'S STILL ONE MORE ORC OUT THERE SOMEWHERE!

UH-OH

B.A. I'M PULLING AHK-TANG FROM HIS HIDING PLACE ON THE WAGON AND PUTTING HIM ON MY HORSE AND TELLING HIM TO **RIDE FOR HIS LIFE!!!!**



MY HENCHMAN, GILEAD, HAS ALREADY PLACED FOOD WATER AND WEAPONS IN THE SADDLE BAGS!!

SARA?? WHAT IN THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?? **AIDING AND ABETTING AN ORC??**
THIS SMACKS OF **TREASON** MISSY!!!

AWH MAN, I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS!!! AND YOU CALL YOURSELF **LAWFUL GOOD!!!!**
WHAT A JOKE!!

SORRY GUYS!!! MY PATRON GAWD DEMANDS THAT I PROTECT ALL CLERGY - REGARDLESS OF THEIR FAITH.



I'M MOUNTING MY FAITHFUL STEED, **DOOR-STOP** AND CHASING AFTER THE HIGH-PRIEST!!!

LOOKS LIKE THE OATS LACED WITH **HASTEN-POTION** HAVE KICKED IN. GOOD LUCK, BROTHER AHK-TANG!!!

AS YOU TAKE PURSUIT YOU NOTICE THE **HOOVES** ON THE ORC'S HORSE BEGIN TO GLOW AN **ELECTRIC-BLUE!!!!**
HORSE AND RIDER PULL AWAY WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED!!

NO WAY IN HELL I'M LETTING HIM GET AWAY!!! THAT ORC MADE A FOOL OUT OF US!!

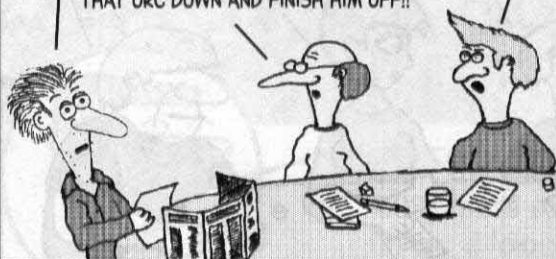
LACED-OATS??? BRILLIANT IDEA SARA. I'M DULY IMPRESSED!!! IF THE ORC MEANS THAT MUCH TO YOU - I'M CONTENT TO LET HIM GO.



WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT MAKES AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY TO END TONIGHT'S SESSION. NEXT WEEK WE'LL...

HOLD ON THERE, JACK!!! JUST BECAUSE BRIAN AND SARA HAVE GONE TACO-SOFT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE FINISHED HERE!!! THIS IS PERSONAL!!! DAVE AND I ARE GOING TO HOUND THAT ORC DOWN AND FINISH HIM OFF!!

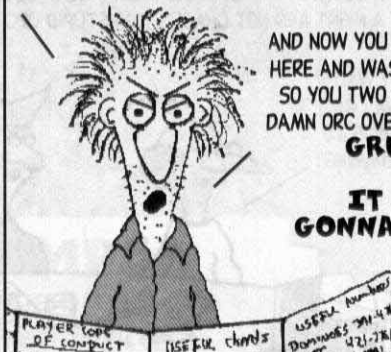
TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH IF NEED BE!



LOOK IDIOTS! YOU JUST TOOK AN **EIGHTY-NINE DOLLAR INVESTMENT** - A CAMPAIGN SETTING DESIGNED TO PROVIDE MONTHS OF PLAY AND EXCITEMENT- AND REDUCED IT TO TRASH IN LESS THAN THREE HOURS!!

AND NOW YOU EXPECT ME TO SIT HERE AND WASTE MY TIME JUST SO YOU TWO CAN CHASE SOME DAMN ORC OVER SOME **PETTY GRUDGE??**

IT AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN!!



FORTY MINUTES LATER...

OH FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!! YOU MANAGE TO TRAP THE ORC HIGH PRIEST IN A BOX CANYON!!!

AH-HAAA!! LOOKS LIKE OUR LITTLE FRIEND HAS MADE A FATAL MISTAKE!!!

LET'S BE CAREFUL!! IT COULD BE ANOTHER TRAP!! ONLY A CUNNING AND EVIL MIND COULD HAVE COME UP WITH THAT DECAPITATION-TRAP IN THAT ROAD-SIDE LATRINE.

WELL HE'S CERTAINLY EARNED MY RESPECT. YOU GUYS HAVE CAUGHT UP WITH HIM FOUR TIMES AND HE KEEPS OUT-SMARTING YOU!!

HE'S PROVEN HIMSELF A WORTHY ADVERSARY!!! NOW I WISH I'D JOINED IN ON THE CHASE.



OKAY, DAVE AND I WILL DISMOUNT AND SLOWLY TRACK AHK-TANG BY FOOT INTO THE CANYON!!! I'VE GOT MY CROSSBOW OF SLAYING LOADED WITH +6 BOLTS OF DESPAIR!

OKAY AS YOU REACH THE CENTER OF THE CANYON YOU HEAR A MOCKING VOICE COMING HIGH UP FROM THE RIM OF THE CANYON. LOOKING UP YOU SEE AHK-TANG MOONING YOU!!!!

OH HE'S A LITTLE COMEDIAN HE IS. I CAN'T WAIT TO GET MY HANDS ON HIM!!

WHAT'S HE DOING WAY UP THERE ANYWAY?? WHY WON'T HE FIGHT?



YOU SEE AHK-TANG SUDDENLY STAND ERECT AND OUTSTRETCH HIS ARMS. YOU CAN HEAR HIS INCANTATIONS ECHO ACROSS THE CANYON AS HE CASTS A **TRANSMUTE ROCK TO LAVA SPELL!!!** YOU SUDDENLY FIND YOURSELF SWIMMING IN HOT, MOLTEN GOO!!! YOUR LAST PATHETIC THOUGHTS ARE, "B.A. WAS RIGHT!! WE SHOULD HAVE CALLED IT A NIGHT AND NOT CHASED THIS STUPID ORC!!!"

DID YOU TAKE INTO ACCOUNT I WAS WEARING LEATHER ARMOR??

I DON'T REMEMBER READING ABOUT A BOX CANYON IN THIS ADVENTURE!

WELL, THAT WAS WORTH HANGING AROUND TO WATCH!

HEY WAIT!!! I THINK I HAVE A BONUS TO SWIMMING!!



**MORE ORCS THAN
YOU CAN SHAKE
A STICK AT!!**

ORCS

THE RECKONING

They are a MILLION FOLD.

They're Hungry, Pissed and Looking for a Fight.

Worst of all, they're heading YOUR WAY.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?



NOT FOR WIMPS!

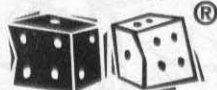
50% more mayhem than
Orcs: Blood Vengeance

some minor contributions by Edmund Finley

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Now with
enhanced
gunpowder
rules.



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Etch-A-Sketch Technical Support

As a public service we thought we should print the following FAQ provided by the Etch-A-Sketch Technical Support Staff.

Q: My Etch-A-Sketch has a distorted display.

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: My Etch-A-Sketch has all of these funny little lines all over the screen.

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: How do I turn my Etch-A-Sketch off?

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: What's the shortcut for Undo?

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: How do I create an empty New Document Window?

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: How do I Exit without Saving?

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: How do I set the background and foreground to the same color?

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: What is the proper procedure for rebooting my Etch-A-Sketch?

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: My Etch-A-Sketch has lines that prevent me from doing my art project.

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: How do I delete a document on my Etch-A-Sketch?

A: *Pick it up and shake it.*

Q: How do I keep from losing my Etch-A-Sketch documents in the middle of my work?

A: *Stop shaking the damn thing!!*

True Lawyer Stories

Recently reported in the **Massachusetts Bar Association Lawyers Journal**, the following are questions actually asked of witnesses by attorneys during trials.

- "Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?"
- "The youngest son, the 22 year old, how old is he?"
- "Were you present when your picture was taken?"
- "Were you alone or by yourself?"
- "Was it you or your younger brother who was killed in the war?"
- "Did he kill you?"
- "How far apart where the vehicles at the time of the collision?"

- "You were there until the time you left, is that true?"
- "How many times have you committed suicide?"
- "She had three children, right?" A: "Yes."
- "How many were boys?" A: "None."
- "Were there any girls?"
- "You say the stairs went down to the basement?"
- A: "Yes." "And these stairs, did they go up also?"
- "Mr. Slatery, you went on a rather elaborate honeymoon, Didn't you?" A: "I went to Europe, Sir."
- "And you took your new wife?"
- "How was your first marriage terminated?"
- A: "By death." "And by who's death was it terminated?"
- "Can you describe the individual?"
- A: "He was about medium height and had a beard."
- "Was this a male, or female?"





**KENZER AND
COMPANY**

**Knights of the Dinner Table #9
"Two Dice For Sister Sara"
July, 1997**

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

Knights of the **D**inner **T**able™

"Two Dice for Sister Sara"

**The KODT Development Team is:
Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,
Steve Johansson & David S. Kenzer
Cover by George Urbanic**



OKAY! LAST WEEK YOU ALL VOTED TO START UP A NEW **CATTLEPUNK** CAMPAIGN. SINCE ALL OF YOUR OLD CHARACTERS WERE KILLED IN THE **STREETS OF MUSKEGIE*** CAMPAIGN, I ASKED YOU TO GO AHEAD AND CREATE NEW CHARACTERS!



SO WHY DON'T WE GO AROUND THE TABLE SO EVERYONE CAN INTRODUCE THEIR NEW CHARACTERS



WELL DAVE AND I GOT TOGETHER AND DECIDED OUR CHARACTERS WOULD BE BROTHERS. MY NAME IS **WILLIE DERRINGER**, BUT I GO BY THE NAME **YELLOWFEVER WILLIE**. I WAS A CONFEDERATE SCOUT IN **QUANTRELLE'S RAIDERS**. WHEN WE DISBANDED, I HEADED WEST TO HOOK UP WITH MY BROTHER. ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER AND WE BEGAN PULLING BANK JOBS THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORIES. I'M A QUICK-DRAW ARTIST - A LEFTY AT THAT. I RIDE A PALOMINO MARE NAMED, **RANGE FIRE** AND I HAVE TWO APACHE SIDE-KICKS, **THORN-IN-THE-KNEE** AND **LITTLE-MAN-WHO-SLEEPS-IN-SHADOWS**, WHO I CALL **LITTLE MAN** FOR SHORT. OH, AND I HAVE A WOLF-DAWG NAMED **GRIM REAPER**.



YELLOWFEVER WILLIE? WHAT A STRANGE NAME. WHY DO THEY CALL YOU THAT?

ONCE WHEN I WAS A CONFEDERATE SOLDIER I PURPOSELY EXPOSED MYSELF TO YELLOW FEVER AND THEN MOVED BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES INFECTING AS MANY YANKEES AS POSSIBLE. I GOT A MEDAL FOR UNCOMMON VALOR FOR THAT.

I'M SORRY I ASKED.



OKAY, MY CHARACTER IS NAMED, **CLIFF DERRINGER**, BETTER KNOWN IN THE TERRITORIES AS, **CROSS-EYED CLIFF**. I TOOK BRIAN'S ADVICE AND TOOK A **PHYSICAL-FLAW** DURING THE CREATION PROCESS SO I COULD EARN AN EXTRA FIFTY BUILDING POINTS. THANKS BRIAN!!! THOSE EXTRA POINTS ALLOWED ME TO BUY **DEAD-EYE SHOT** AS MY SHOOT-TO-HIT FACTOR. **I RULE!!!** I RIDE A COMANCHE-BRED APPALOOSA PONY NAMED **BRANDED** WHO COMES TO ME WHEN I WHISTLE, LINTIES KNOTS AND HAS FIND-WATER ABILITY.

WHAT A KEWL CHARACTER!!! WAY TO GO CROSS-EYED!!

NICE CHARACTER!

CROSS-EYED?? UH-OH...



YOU SHOULD HAVE READ THE FINE PRINT ON THAT FLAW, MORON! BEING **CROSS-EYED** AUTOMATICALLY GIVES YOU A **MINUS TEN** TO HIT MODIFIER. YOUR **DEAD-EYE SHOT RATING** GIVES YOU A **PLUS FIVE** SO YOU STILL HAVE A **MINUS FIVE TO HIT** RATING. SORRY DUDE.

AWW MAN, THOSE **PHYSICAL FLAW CHARTS** SUCK!!! **WHAT GOOD ARE THEY??** THEY ALWAYS TAKE SOMETHING AWAY FROM YOUR CHARACTER!

MINUS FIVE TO HIT??? HE WONT LAST FIVE MINUTES IN THE WILD WEST!

THAT'S WHY THEY'RE CALLED **FLAWS** DAVE. FIGURE IT OUT.

BETTER BUY A SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN DUDE. +5 TO HIT AT CLOSE RANGE.



* See KODT#4: Streets of Muskegie

I'M PLAYING A ROMANIAN IMMIGRANT KNOWN AS **STOGIE-KATE!!!** SHE CAME TO THE STATES TO FIND HER YOUNGER BROTHER WHO CAME HERE FIVE YEARS EARLIER AND WAS NEVER HEARD FROM AGAIN. KATE FOLLOWED HER BROTHER'S TRAIL TO LARAME, KANSAS WHERE SHE LEARNED HE HAD BEEN GUNNED DOWN IN A POKER FIGHT. SHE SMOKES CIGARS, HAS A VIOLENT TEMPER AND WEARS A DOUBLE-HOLSTER, PACKING A PAIR OF **COLT DRAGOON FORTY-FOURS!** I HAVE A FINELY-HONED BOWIE KNIFE TUCKED IN MY SNAKESKIN BOOTS AND A DERRINGER CONCEALED ON THE INSIDE OF MY HAT.

WELL, YOU MADE HIM, YOU PLAY HIM DUDE! SORRY. OKAY, SARA, LET'S HEAR ALL ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER.

WHOA SARA!!! WE WERE AFRAID YOU WERE GOING TO BE A PROSPECTOR OR HOMESTEADER AGAIN. YOU'RE LOADED FOR BEAR!!!

IF I WEAR AN EYE-PATCH WILL IT OFFSET MY CROSSED EYES?

DRAGOONS??? LORD ALMIGHTY, MISS KATE, THOSE ARE CANNONS!! NOT EXACTLY WHAT YOU WOULD CALL A LADY'S WEAPON OF CHOICE.



WELL, IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE I'M GOING TO GET MY WISH AND END UP RUNNING A CAMPAIGN FOR LAW-ABIDING CHARACTERS. (SIGH) OKAY BRIAN, LET'S HEAR ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER.

I'M PLAYING A CHARACTER CALLED, **BIG JIM MURDOCK**. MY ONLY WEAPON IS A **COLT CLOVERLEAF DERRINGER** WHICH I CARRY FOR PERSONAL PROTECTION. I DECIDED TO TAKE **GAME-LEG** AND **MALE-PATTERN BALDNESS** AS MY **PERSONAL FLAWS**. THIS GAVE ME 575 ADDITIONAL BUILDING POINTS WHICH I APPLIED TO THE FOLLOWING SKILLS; **LAND SPECULATION, STOCK MARKET PLAYER, LEGAL CONTRACTS & AGREEMENTS, ACCOUNTING & BOOK KEEPING** AND TO ROUND THINGS OUT I MAXED OUT MY SKILL IN **HIGH EXPLOSIVES AND DETONATIONS**. OH, AND I TYPICALLY WEAR A THREE-PIECE SUIT, SMOKE FINE CIGARS AND WEAR A BROWN DERBY.

HUH? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO???

WHAT A WUSS!!



BRIAN?? I'M IMPRESSED!!! IT APPEARS YOU ARE ACTUALLY ATTEMPTING TO PLAY A LAW-ABIDING CHARACTER. MAYBE THE OTHERS WILL LEARN A FEW THINGS FROM YOUR FINE EXAMPLE. AFTER ALL, THIS IS THE WILD WEST, LAND OF OPPORTUNITY. WITH YOUR SKILLS AND BACKGROUND YOU COULD REALLY BENEFIT SOCIETY AS THE WEST IS TAMED.

WELL AS I STATED LAST WEEK, THIS CAMPAIGN WILL BEGIN FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO OUR LAST CAMPAIGN. THAT WAY I CAN STILL USE THE STREETS OF MUSKEEGIE CAMPAIGN SET YOU GUYS TRASHED.

WELL **CROSS-EYE**, LOOKS LIKE THE **DERRINGER BROTHERS** ARE ABOUT TO RIDE AGAIN!!!

WHO CARES??? APPARENTLY I CAN'T HIT THE BROAD SIDE OF A BARN!!! I HATE MY CHARACTER! **I HATE HIM!**

AWH, DON'T CUT YOURSELF SHORT, DAVE! I'M SURE YOU COULD HIT A BARN.



PLAYER LOOKS LIKE A WUSS
USEFUL CHARMS
USEFUL CHARMS
DOMMONS? 21-44
421-78

AS THE ADVENTURE UNFOLDS...

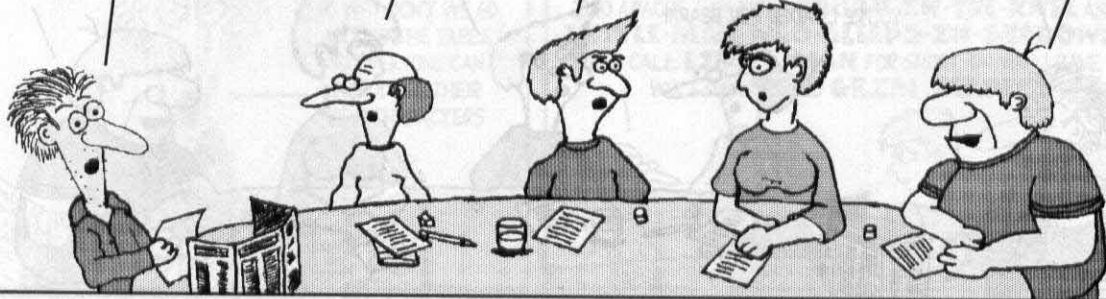
OKAY AS YOU ARE WALKING DOWN THE MAIN STREET OF MUSKEEGE, YOU PASS THE SIERRA MADRE BANK, GABBY'S GENERAL STORE AND THE....

KA-CHING!!!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE PODNER!!! THE DERRINGER GANG IS GOING TO **ROB THE BANK!!**

WELL **STOGIE-KATE??** YOU WITH US?? HOW ABOUT YOU **BIG JIM??**

I'M IN!!! THIS TIME I'M WILLINGLY GOING DOWN THE OUTLAW TRAIL INSTEAD OF LETTING YOU GUYS DRAG ME DOWN IT.

SORRY GUYS, NOT THIS TIME!!! I'VE BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO. THANKS FOR ASKING THOUGH.



OH COME ON GUYS!! AT LEAST TAKE A STROLL ABOUT THE TOWN SO I CAN READ THE FLAVOR TEXT!!! LAST TIME YOU GUYS NEVER MADE IT PAST THE SALOON!!

WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO KNOW ABOUT THE PLACE??
WE SEE A BANK -WE ROB IT!!!
THAT'S THE MOTTO OF THE DERRINGER GANG!!!

OKAY, STANDARD PROCEDURE!! WE KICK THE DOORS IN! I COVER THE TELLERS AND SARA WATCHES THE STREET WHILE BOB LOADS UP THE LOOT!!

THORN-IN-THE-KNEE AND LITTLE MAN WILL BE WATCHING OUR HORSES

B.A., WHILE THEY'RE DOING THEIR THING, I'M GOING TO MOSEY OWN DOWN TOWARD THE MARSHALL'S OFFICE.



AS THE CRIME PROGRESSES

AS **YELLOWFEVER** AND **CROSS-EYE** RUN INTO THE BANK YOU DISCOVER THERE IS ONLY ONE TELLER AND ONE CUSTOMER.

ALL RIGHT!! THIS WILL BE A SNAP!! I PULL OUT MY PEACEMAKER AND HOLLER OUT FOR EVERYONE TO RAISE THEIR HANDS.
THIS IS A BANK ROBBERY!!!!

I PUT MY HENRY REPEATER TO THE CUSTOMER'S BACK AND TELL HIM TO HIT THE FLOOR!!!

I'M SCANNING THE STREETS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS!! IF ANYONE APPROACHES THE BANK I'LL KNOW ABOUT IT!!

HERE SARA, PASS THIS NOTE TO B.A. AND...UH...DON'T READ IT.



DAVE, AS YOU ORDER THE CUSTOMER TO LAY ON THE FLOOR, HE SPINS AROUND AND POPS YOU WITH AN IRISH LEFT-HOOK!!! "HOOT MON!!!" HE CRIES OUT, "DAT'S MUH TIP-MONEY I WERE ABOUT TO DEPOSIT THERE! I CANNA LET YA HAVE IT!"

WAIT A MINUTE!!! THAT LAME ACCENT!!! IRISH LEFT-HOOK??? IT CAN'T BE!!!

OH GAWD!!! IT'S RED GURDY PICKENS!!!! BUT HE'S DEAD!! WE BLEW HIM UP WITH THE REST OF MUSKEEGIE!!! FOUL! FOUL!

YOU'RE FORGETTING ONE THING!! THIS CAMPAIGN TAKES PLACE FIVE YEARS PRIOR!! RED IS BACK!!

WHO KNEW NITROGLYCERIN WAS SO POTENT??



SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

OKAY BOB, YOU FAILED YOUR REACTION ROLL!! THE TELLER MANAGES TO GRAB YOUR PEACEMAKER AWAY FROM YOU!!! HE FRANTICALLY PISTOL WHIPS YOU FOR 25 POINTS OF DAMAGE.

GAAAAA!!!! I'M GOING TO GO AHEAD AND TAKE THE FIFTEEN BUCKS OFF THE COUNTER AND RUN FOR THE DOOR!!

OKAY, DAVE, YOU PALM-FIRE YOUR PISTOL AT RED, FIRING FOUR SHOTS!! THE FIRST SHOT HITS BOB IN THE BACK AS HE'S RUNNING FOR THE DOOR! THE SECOND SHOT HITS A DAWG ON IN THE ALLEY BEHIND THE BANK, THE THIRD SHOT HITS THE TOE OF YOUR BOOT (TAKE OFF 3 POINTS OF DAMAGE) AND THE LAST SHOT KILLS THE TELLER!!

DAMN FLAW CHARTS!!! THIS GAME SUCKS!!

SEE DAVE? YOU CAN HIT REALLY WELL! JUST NOT WHAT YOU'RE SHOOTING AT. (SNICKER).



OKAY SUDDENLY THE BANK IS SURROUNDED BY A MOB OF FIFTY WELL-ARMED AND DEPUTIZED MEN LED BY MARSHALL ELY HIMSELF!!! THEY BURST ONTO THE SCENE, THEY ORDER YOU TO LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS AND COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS UP!!!

DAAAMNNNN!!! WHAT IS THIS?? THE SWAT TEAM OF MUSKEEGIE??? HOW THE HELL DID THEY REACT SO FAST??

YOU WOULD THINK THEY'D BEEN TIPPED OFF OR SOMETHING. BUT THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE!!

UH...DIDN'T BRIAN SAY SOMETHING ABOUT VISITING THE MARSHALL?? AND THERE WAS THAT MYSTERIOUS NOTE TO B.A.



SORRY GUYS!!! IT WAS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF MY CHARACTER TO REPORT YOUR NEFARIOUS PLOT TO THE MARSHALL!! ACCORDING TO THE RULES THERE'S A STANDING **2,500 DOLLAR REWARD** FOR ANYONE WHO THWARTS A BANK ROBBERY!!! AND IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, I WILL BE ENTITLED TO AN ADDITIONAL 500 GP BOUNTY FOR EACH PERSON APPREHENDED AS A RESULT OF MY ACTION!!



YOU DIRTY SIDEWINDER!!! YOU'RE A DEAD MAN!!! YOU HEAR??? A DEAD MAN!!!

YOU BETTER FIND A HOLE AND CLIMB IN IT YOU **FRED-FLINTSTONE-LOOKING-BASTARD!!** CAUSE I'M COMING AFTER YOU AND HELL'S COMING WITH ME!!! **YOU HEAR???**

YOU DONE MESSED UP WHEN YOU MARKED ON THE **DERRINGER BROTHERS!!!**

BE AFRAID, BRIAN!! BE VERY AFRAID!!

THIS IS GREAT!!! BEING THREATENED IN PUBLIC BY VILLAINS GIVES ME +25 TO MY PRESTIGE!!



OKAY, WE'RE GONNA GO AHEAD AND SURRENDER. SINCE LITTLE MAN AND THORN-IN-THE-KNEE WERE WATCHING THE HORSES THEY CAN BREAK US OUT LATER WHEN THE ODDS ARE A LITTLE BETTER!!

GOOD THINKING BOB!! RED GURDY PICKENS ESCORTS THE THREE OF YOU OUT TO THE MARSHALL WHERE YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY LED OFF TO THE JAIL

RED GURDY!! THE LITTLE SUCK-UP!!! HE'S ON MY LIST TOO!! HE'S GONNA PAY FOR THAT SUCKER-PUNCH!!

THIS HAS GOT TO BE A RECORD!!! ROB A BANK, ARRESTED AND JAILED IN THE FIRST TEN MINUTES OF THE CAMPAIGN!!

AHHHH, THIS WILL WORK OUT NICELY. WHILE YOU GUYS ARE TRYING TO BUST OUT OF JAIL I CAN CONCENTRATE ON PUTTING MY GAME PLAN INTO ACTION!!



OKAY B.A., THERE'S A REASON MY CHARACTER IS CALLED **BIG JIM MURDOCK!!!** HE'S DESTINED TO BE THE BIG MAN IN TOWN!!! I HAVE A LIST OF AGENDAS HERE SO LET'S GET STARTED. FIRST OFF, I WANT TO COLLECT MY REWARD MONEY!!! IT SHOULD SERVE NICELY AS MY LITTLE GRUB STAKE FOR MY CLIMB TO THE TOP. THEN I'M GOING TO PAY A VISIT TO THE COUNTY RECORDER'S OFFICE!!



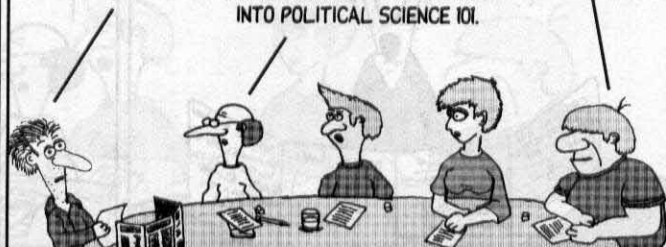
RECORDER'S OFFICE
EH? UH...UH...
WHAT'S THAT?

IT'S A STANDARD DEPARTMENT IN ALL AMERICAN MUNICIPALITIES - DUH!! AMONG OTHER THINGS THEY KEEP RECORDS OF LAND OWNERSHIP AND DEEDS.

LAND? DEEDS?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO?

JUST A LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN WITH AN ITCH FOR LAND SPECULATION!! THAT'S ALL!

GREAT!! THE GAME HAS TURNED INTO POLITICAL SCIENCE 101.



THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY THE CLERK IS TALLYING UP YOUR LAND PURCHASES. THAT'S 1,500 ACRES ALONG WALLOWING BUFFALO CREEK, 75 ACRES OF LAND ON THE WESTERN SLOPE OF BUZZARD RIDGE, AND 300 ACRES OF FRONTAGE PROPERTY ALONG THE SANTA FE TRAIL. IT ALL ADDS UP TO \$3,000 DOLLARS!!! YOU STILL HAVE \$1,000 LEFT FROM YOUR REWARD MONEY!! THE CLERK LAUGHS HYSTERICALLY AS YOU PAY THE MONEY AND SIGN THE DEEDS!!!

COME ON BRIAN! I KNOW YOU!!!
WHAT'S YOUR PLAN???

NOT THAT I CARE, BUT HAVE YOU GONE LOCO BRIAN?? THERE'S A REASON THAT LAND WAS A BUCK AN ACRE!!! IT'S **WORTHLESS!!**

YOU'RE NOT THE BIG MAN IN TOWN, YOU'RE THE **BIG IDIOT!!!**

OKAY B.A., I'M GOING TO HIRE **LITTLE MAN AND THORN-IN-THE-KNEE** TO DO A LITTLE WORK FOR ME!!



I'M GOING TO BUY THEM A WAGON, A TEAM OF MULES, A COUPLE OF PICKS AND SHOVELS, A CASE OF NITRO, TWO CASES OF DYNAMITE, SIX KEROSENE LANTERNS, A MAP OF THE AREA AND A COMPASS. HMMMM...I'M ENTRUSTING THEM WITH A LOT HERE. LET'S SEE, I'LL GIVE THEM EACH

FIFTY DOLLARS POCKET MONEY AND A BOTTLE OF SCOTCH AS WELL. THAT SHOULD GIVE ME A +5 ON THE HIRELING LOYALTY TABLE ON PAGE 7.



HEY!!! YOU **SIDE-KICK THIEVIN' BASTARD!!!!** YOU CAN'T BOND WITH LITTLE MAN AND THORN-IN-THE-KNEE!!!

I SURE WISH YOU'D TOLD ME YOU WERE PLAYING A LAWFUL CHARACTER THIS TIME BRIAN. I WOULD HAVE JUMPED AT THE CHANCE TO RIDE WITH YOU!

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!! YOU'RE GONNA LET US ROT IN JAIL WHILE YOU PLAY CITIZEN KANE??

DREAM ON JEZEBEL! THIS COWBOY DON'T RIDE WITH NO JAILHOUSE TRASH!!!!

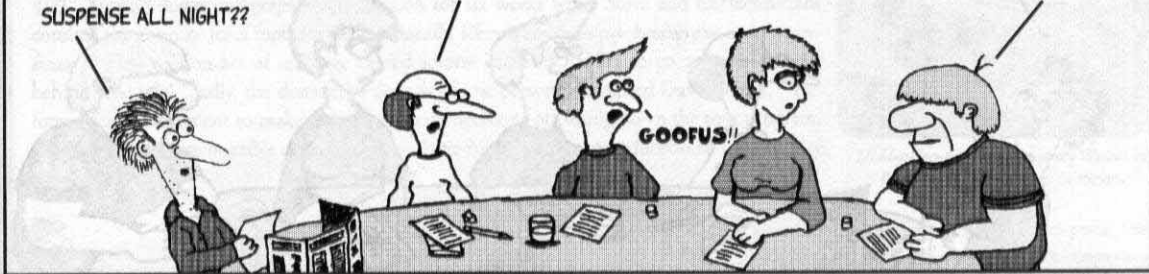


OKAY BRIAN, YOU'VE EQUIPPED **LITTLE MAN AND THORN-IN-THE-KNEE**. YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT THE HELL YOU ARE PLANNING ON DOING? OR ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP ME IN SUSPENSE ALL NIGHT??

OKAY, I'M INSTRUCTING THEM TO START **MINING FOR GOLD** ON THE PLOT OF LAND I BOUGHT ON WALLOWING BUFFALO CREEK!! AS SOON AS THEY FIND COLOR THEY ARE TO HIGH TAIL IT BACK TO TOWN AND TELL ME SO I CAN FILE MY CLAIM AS A TECHNICALITY. ONCE THAT'S DONE, I'LL HIRE A FULL CREW TO MAN THE MINES THERE WHILE I SHIFT OVER TO MY LAND ON BUZZARD RIDGE TO START A SILVER MINE.

YOU IDIOT!!! THIS ENTIRE REGION IS SWARMING WITH GOLD AND SILVER MINES!!! IF THERE WAS GOLD ON YOUR LAND THEY WOULD HAVE FOUND IT YEARS AGO!!

YOU'RE WRONG EINSTEINS!! AND LET ME TELL YOU WHY!!



GOLD AND SILVER WAS DISCOVERED IN MUSKEEGIE IN THE YEAR 1872!!! (PAGE 12, SECOND COLUMN, FOURTH PARAGRAPH OF THE **MUSKEEGIE BACKGROUND BOOK** WHICH CAME WITH THE CAMPAIGN SET!!) B.A. SAID THIS ADVENTURE IS FIVE YEARS PRIOR TO OUR LAST SESSION IN MUSKEEGIE WHICH WAS SET IN THE YEAR 1876!! BY ANYONE'S MATH THAT MEANS THIS IS THE YEAR 1871!!! THE LAND I JUST BOUGHT FOR A DOLLAR AN ACRE ENCOMPASSES VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE GOLD AND SILVER VEINS IN THE AREA!!!



WHAAA...WHAAAT?

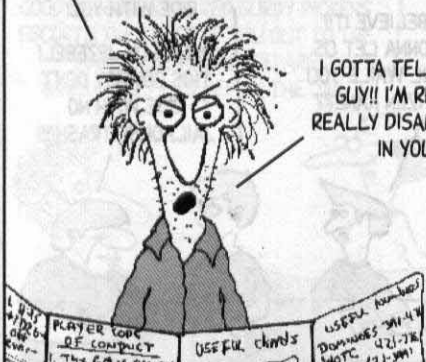
CLEVER, VERY CLEVER!!
BUT YOU COULDN'T LET YOUR FRIENDS
IN ON A GOOD THING COULD YA?

YEAH! WHY
CUT US OUT?

YEAH,
WHY?

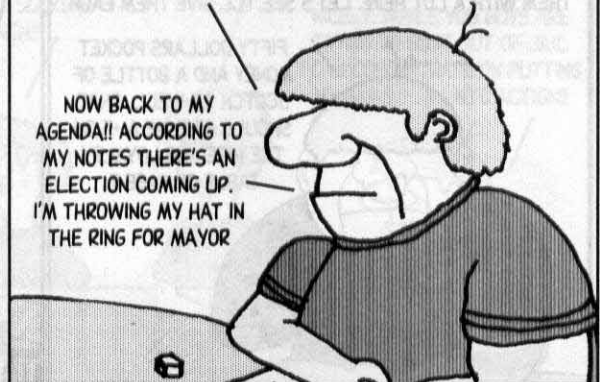
I HAD TO THROW B.A.
OFF THE SCENT ON
WHAT I WAS DOING. YOUR
BANK JOB DISTRACTED
HIM.

DAMN IT, BRIAN!!! AM I TO UNDERSTAND
YOU'VE READ THE **MUSKEEGIE**
CAMPAIGN BOOKS??? WHAT WERE YOU
THINKING???: OF ALL THE **LOW, UNETHICAL**
STUNTS YOU COULD PULL!!!!



I GOTTA TELL YA BIG
GLY!! I'M REALLY,
REALLY DISAPPOINTED
IN YOU!!

HEY AFTER WE BURNED DOWN THE TOWN IN THE LAST
CAMPAIGN I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D EVER RUN IT AGAIN!!! HELL, ALL
I DID WAS FLIP THROUGH IT DOWN AT WEIRD PETE'S. I CAN'T
HELP IT IF I HAVE A PHOTOGRAPHIC NOGGIN!!



NOW BACK TO MY
AGENDA!! ACCORDING TO
MY NOTES THERE'S AN
ELECTION COMING UP.
I'M THROWING MY HAT IN
THE RING FOR MAYOR

AN HOUR LATER...

OKAY, OKAY, YOU JUST BOUGHT THE
ELECTION!!! PROMISING 25 DOLLARS TO ANY-
ONE WHO VOTED FOR YOU PRETTY MUCH
SWEEPED YOU INTO OFFICE!! **LITTLE MAN**
WON THE ELECTION FOR TOWN MARSHALL
AND **THORN-IN-THE-KNEE** WON THE
POSITION OF TOWN TREASURER.

AWESOME!!! BRIAN HAS
COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE TOWN!!!!

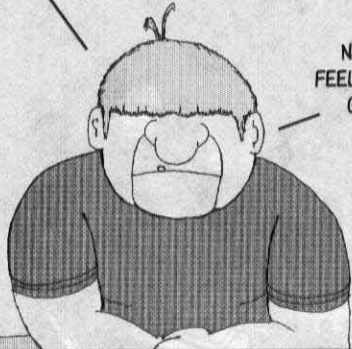
HE'S THE GRAND MASTER OF
PLAYERDOM!!! WATCHING HIM
PLAY IS LIKE WATCHING ALI BOX!!

ABSOLUTE POWER CORRUPTS
ABSOLUTELY!!! I DON'T LIKE THIS!!

OKAY, I TAKE THE OATH
OF OFFICE, THROW A
PARTY, MINGLE AND
STUFF LIKE THAT.



AS MY FIRST OFFICIAL ACT AS MAYOR, I WILL CALL A TOWN MEETING. LITTLE MAN AND I WILL ANNOUNCE THAT THE DERRINGER GANG IS INNOCENT!! THEY WERE ACTUALLY ATTEMPTING TO OPEN A SAVINGS ACCOUNT WHEN THE CONNING, RED GURDY PICKENS ATTEMPTED TO ROB THE BANK!!! LITTLE MAN ORDERS THE IMMEDIATE ARREST OF RED. AS COMPENSATION FOR UNLAWFUL IMPRISONMENT I AWARD EACH MEMBER OF THE DERRINGER GANG 5,000 DOLLARS AND A JOB ON THE TOWN PAYROLL!!!



NO HARD FEELINGS, HUH GUYS??

OH MAN!!! BEAUTIFUL!! I'M IN TEARS HERE!!! BRIAN, YA BIG LUG!!! I COULD KISS YOU!!! YOU THE MAN!!! YOU DEFINITELY THE BIG MAN IN TOWN!!!

YOU'RE THE GREATEST BRIAN!!! I'LL TELL MY CHILDREN ABOUT THIS!! SOMEBODY TAKE A PICTURE!!!

YOU GET THIS PECULIAR GLOW IN YOUR FACE AT MOMENTS LIKE THIS!!

YEAH, I LIVE FOR MOMENTS LIKE THIS!!!



LATER THAT NIGHT...

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! WHY DO YOU WANT TO TESTIFY?? **CROSS-EYED CLIFF** IS THE RESIDING JUDGE!!! YOU ALREADY KNOW HE'S GOING TO FIND **RED** GUILTY!!!

COME ON!!! IT WILL BE DRAMATIC!!! I WANT TO BATTLE WITS WITH THE THE DEFENSE TEAM!!!

FOR THE LAST TIME, BOB. **NO!!**

HEY, AS JUDGE, CAN I OVERRULE A GM'S CALL??

WE'RE GOING TO HANG AN INNOCENT MAN?? I COULDN'T LIVE WITH MYSELF.

STAY OUT OF IT SARA!!! OR THERE'S A SHOVEL WITH YOUR NAME ON IT DOWN AT THE **MOLLY HATCHET MINE!!!**



KENZERCO SELF-GUIDED TOURS SUSPENDED

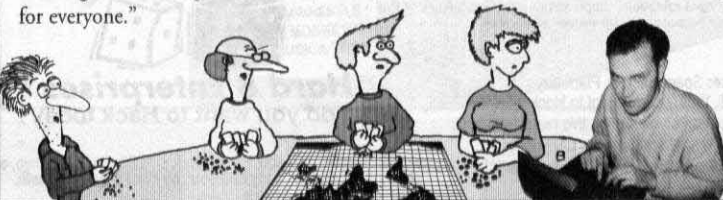
"Vandalism, Security Concerns Contributed to Difficult Decision"

Earlier this year, the ever-popular self-guided tours at the KenzerCo KODT Development Plant in Wawatosa were indefinitely suspended after vandals put sand in the ink vats and dumped a bucket of polyhedrons in the ice maker at the Iron Face Willy Memorial Cafeteria.

Even worse, the vandals stole the 16K RAM Memory Module™ from Steve Johansson's Atari 400 shutting down our graphic arts division for six weeks while Steve and his technicians combed the country for a replacement. [Ironically, Weird Pete ended up having one in his warehouse.] This wanton act of sabotage caused several issues of KODT to go to press months behind schedule. "Sadly, the destructive actions of one person," lamented Dave Kenzer, "has forced the management to make the very difficult decisions of closing down the tour program. Once again, the irresponsible actions of a few, have ruined a fun and educational opportunity for everyone."



Hidden Security Cameras at the Wawatosa Plant captures the thieves in the act.



Steve Johansson, (left) of the KODT Development Team took the recent theft of KenzerCo high-tech equipment as a stern lesson. He is currently upgrading the graphic arts department with a stash of Texas Instruments TI-99/4s he uncovered during a recent trip to Mexico City.

Gary™ Jackson™'s®

SpaceHack!® Pro Edition

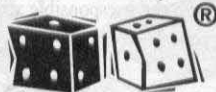


NOT FOR WIMPS!
 50% more carnage than
 Advanced SpaceHack!® 6th Edition.

* some additional rulebooks supplementing the SpaceHack™ Pro manual may be necessary for proper game play

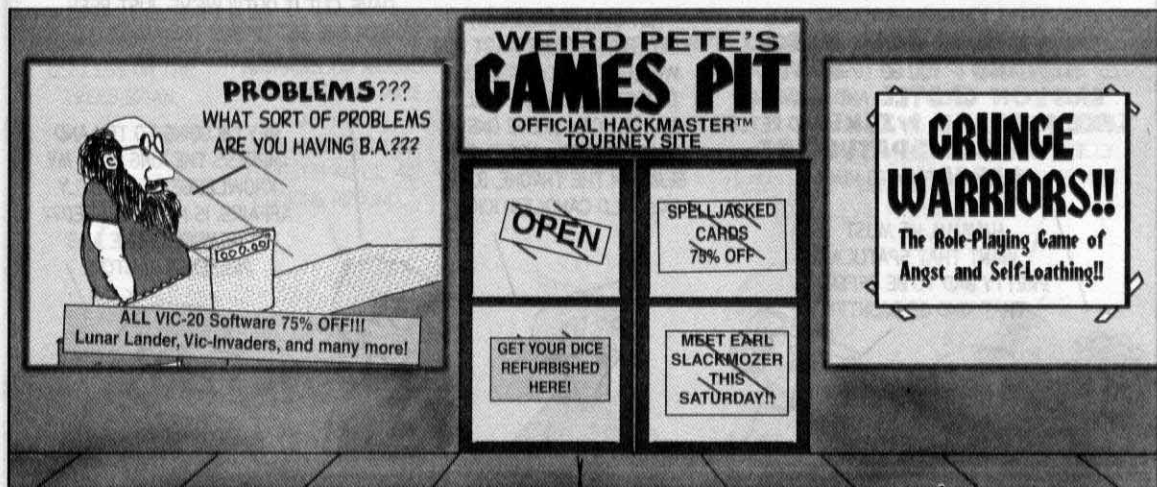
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122% more charts,
**NEW Planetary
 Conflagration™ and
 SuperNova Ignition™**
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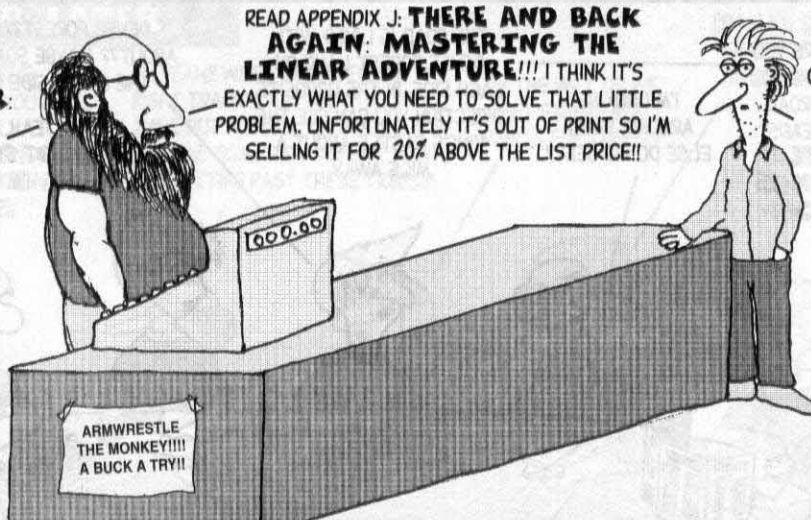
WHAT ELSE?? **IT'S MY PLAYERS!!!** TIME AND TIME AGAIN THEY WRESTLE CONTROL OF THE GAME AWAY FROM ME!!! I SPEND HOURS EACH WEEK PREPARING AWESOME ADVENTURES AND THEY CONSTANTLY STRAY OFF COURSE ON TANGENTS AND SCREW EVERYTHING UP!!!



HMMM...CLASSIC CASE OF **RUBBER BALL-CAMPAIGN SYNDROME!!** YOUR PLAYERS ARE BOUNCING OFF THE FLAVOR TEXT AND WALLPAPER AND LOSING SIGHT OF THEIR OBJECTIVES!!

THEY'VE GOT A NAME FOR IT??? THANK GAWD!!! IS THERE A REMEDY??

YOU BET!!! GRAB A COPY OF **GARY JACKSON'S HACKMASTER: MANUAL OF ADVENTURE WEAVING!!**



READ APPENDIX J: **THERE AND BACK AGAIN: MASTERING THE LINEAR ADVENTURE!!!** I THINK IT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU NEED TO SOLVE THAT LITTLE PROBLEM. UNFORTUNATELY IT'S OUT OF PRINT SO I'M SELLING IT FOR 20% ABOVE THE LIST PRICE!!

HELL, PUT IT ON MY MOM'S CREDIT CARD!!! I'VE GOT TO TRY SOMETHING!!

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY, THE KING TELLS YOU HE WILL PAY YOU A **5,000 GOLD PIECE REWARD** IF YOU GO TO **SLATE CANYON CASTLE** AND SLAY THE **EVIL WIZARD WICK** AND RETURN THE **SACRED SPATULA OF HARFANG** TO HIM.

HEY BOB, HAGGLE WITH KINGY-BOY AND DISTRACT HIM WHILE I CHECK OUT THOSE TAPESTRIES ON THE WALL. MAYBE I CAN SHOVE ONE IN MY BACKPACK. ARE THERE GEMS ON THE THRONE, B.A.?? ANY GOLD CANDLESTICKS??

DAVE, CUT IT OUT!!! WE'VE JUST BEEN GIVEN THE SET-UP FOR THE ADVENTURE. SO LET'S GET TO IT!!!

HEY I'M GOING TO TRY AND IMPRESS THE KING WITH MY KNOWLEDGE OF COURTLY AFFAIRS. IS HE IMPRESSED?? REMEMBER I HAVE A +5 PRESENCE FACTOR!!!

HMMMM, HE MUST WANT THAT SPATULA PRETTY BAD TO BE OFFERING THAT KIND OF BOUNTY!!!



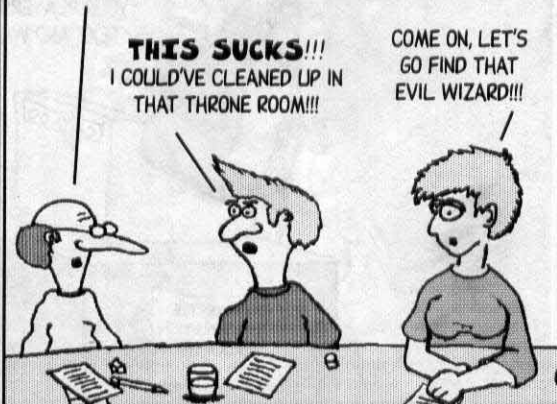
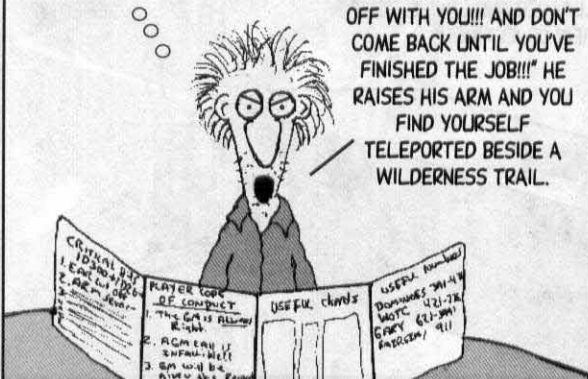
UH-HUH! THERE GOES THE RUBBER BALL!! LET'S SEE IF I WASTED THIRTY BUCKS.

THE KING'S PERSONAL MAGE STEPS FORWARD AND CRIES OUT, "YOU HAVE YOUR ORDERS!!! NOW BE OFF WITH YOU!!! AND DON'T COME BACK UNTIL YOU'VE FINISHED THE JOB!!!" HE RAISES HIS ARM AND YOU FIND YOURSELF TELEPORTED BESIDE A WILDERNESS TRAIL.

HEY WHAT GIVES???? I WAS PLANNING ON GOING BACK TO THE STABLE AND SLAYING THAT **BLACKSMITH WHO SHORT CHANGED US!**

THIS SUCKS!!! I COULD'VE CLEANED UP IN THAT THRONE ROOM!!!

COME ON, LET'S GO FIND THAT EVIL WIZARD!!!



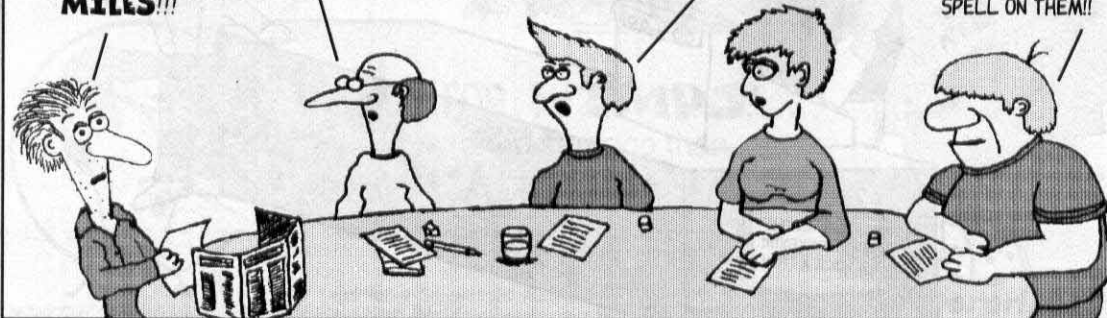
RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE STANDING YOU NOTICE A ROAD SIGN. IT READS **SLATE CANYON 25 MILES!!!**

I'M LOOKING AROUND. WHAT ELSE DO WE SEE??

THE ROAD IS LINED WITH DENSE FOREST LAND ON EACH SIDE. IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION YOU CAN SEE THE KING'S CASTLE ABOUT A MILE AWAY.

DENSE FOREST?? WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?? MAYBE SOMETHING IS HIDDEN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THOSE TREES??

YEAH, THOSE TREES SEEM A BIT STRANGE. DENSE HUH?? I'M CASTING A SCRYING SPELL ON THEM!!





(SIGH) YOUR SCRYING SPELL IS USELESS ON THE TREES BRIAN.

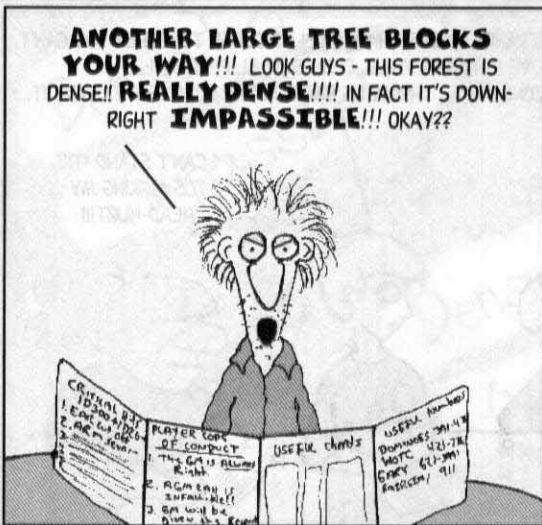
HMMMM...I'M ARMING MY CROSSBOW. DAVE AND I ARE WALKING INTO THE FOREST!!! WE'LL BE LOOKING AROUND...

SORRY GUYS!! A **LARGE TREE BLOCKS YOUR WAY!!!**

WELL LA-DE-DA!!! WE WALK AROUND THE LARGE TREE.

GUYS, IT'S JUST SOME TREES. LET'S FOLLOW THE ROAD TO THE EVIL WIZARD!!

SCRYING SPELL DIDN'T WORK HUH?? HMMMM... SOMETHING DEFINITELY STRANGE HERE.



ANOTHER LARGE TREE BLOCKS YOUR WAY!!! LOOK GUYS - THIS FOREST IS DENSE!! **REALLY DENSE!!!!** IN FACT IT'S DOWN-RIGHT **IMPASSIBLE!!!** OKAY??



HUH??? WHAT DID I TELL YOU GUYS??? THERE'S SOMETHING BEHIND THESE TREES. I'VE GOT A GUT FEELING ABOUT IT!!!

YOU KNOW IT, DUDE!!! I'M GOING TO USE MY HACKMASTER +12 LIKE AN AXE AND START BLAZING A TRAIL!!!

OH LORD!! LET IT GO GUYS!!!



AN HOUR LATER...

FERK-DING BLAST!!! OKAY YOU FELL THE LARGE TREE ONLY TO FIND **ANOTHER LARGE TREE BLOCKING YOUR WAY!!!!**

OH YEAH!! WE'RE DEFINITELY ON THE RIGHT TRACK!!! YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE PUT A LABEL ON IT B.A.!!! IT'S OBVIOUS SOMEBODY DOESN'T WANT US GETTING PAST THESE TREES!!!

BY THE WAY, DO WE GET EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR TREES??

(SIGH) I'M SITTING IN THE SHADE OF A TREE AND SIMPLY WATCHING B.A.

I'M ATTEMPTING TO DISBELIEVE THE DENSE FOREST!!!! YOU NEVER KNOW.

TWO HOURS LATER...

OKAY, YOU'VE JUST COMPLETED TEN MILES!! THERE'S A ROAD SIGN THAT READS, **SLATE CANYON 15 MILES.**

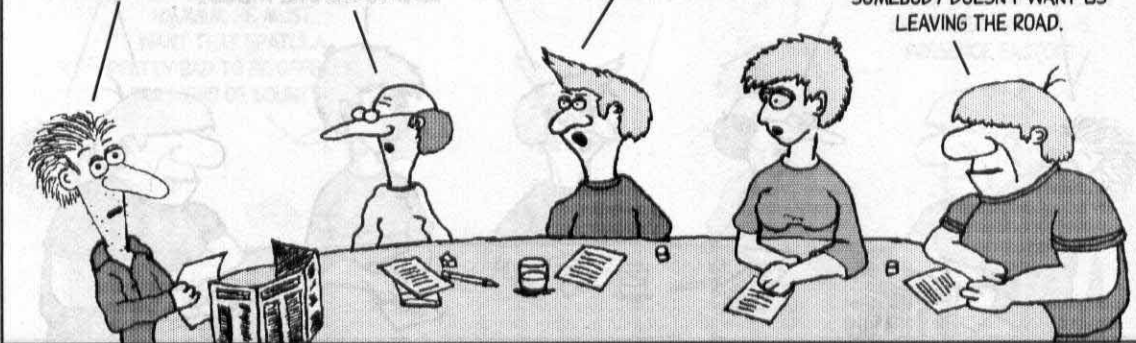
OKAY, WE'RE LOOKING AROUND AGAIN. ARE WE STILL IN THAT **STUPID FOREST??**

NO, THERE ARE TALL MOUNTAINS ON EACH SIDE OF THE ROAD NOW!!!

I'M GOING TO CHECK OUT THE MOUNTAINS. MAYBE THERE'S A CAVE OR SOMETHING UP THERE.

SORRY!!! A WALL OF FRIGHTENINGLY HIGH CLIFFS PREVENT YOU FROM GOING MORE THAN A FEW YARDS OFF THE ROAD.

HMMMM...IT'S ALMOST AS IF SOMEBODY DOESN'T WANT US LEAVING THE ROAD.



HELL I'M A THIEF!!! I'LL CLIMB UP THE CLIFFS LIKE A FLY ON WALLPAPER!!! WHAT DO I SEE!!

THIS IS VERY STRANGE. TREES THAT GROW SO CLOSE TOGETHER YOU CAN'T MOVE BETWEEN THEM. CLIFFS OF SLIPPERY OIL... TELEPORTING ZONES THAT THROW US BACK ON THE ROAD IF WE LEAVE IT...

SORRY BOB!!! THE CLIFFS ARE COMPOSED OF A RARE FORM OF COAL WHICH SEEPS A SLIPPERY OIL!! YOU FALL AND TAKE 20 POINTS OF DAMAGE!

OH I AIN'T BELIEVING THIS!!

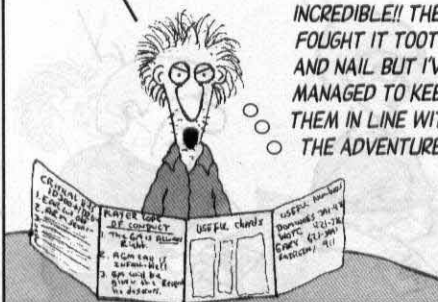
I CAN'T STAND IT!!! IT'S MAKING MY HEAD HURT!!!



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

GREAT!!! YOU'VE FINALLY REACHED SLATE CANYON CASTLE!!!! LET'S TAKE A BREAK WHILE I FEED THE CAT AND THEN WE CAN RESUME THE ADVENTURE!!

INCREDIBLE!! THEY FOUGHT IT TOOTH AND NAIL. BUT I'VE MANAGED TO KEEP THEM IN LINE WITH THE ADVENTURE.



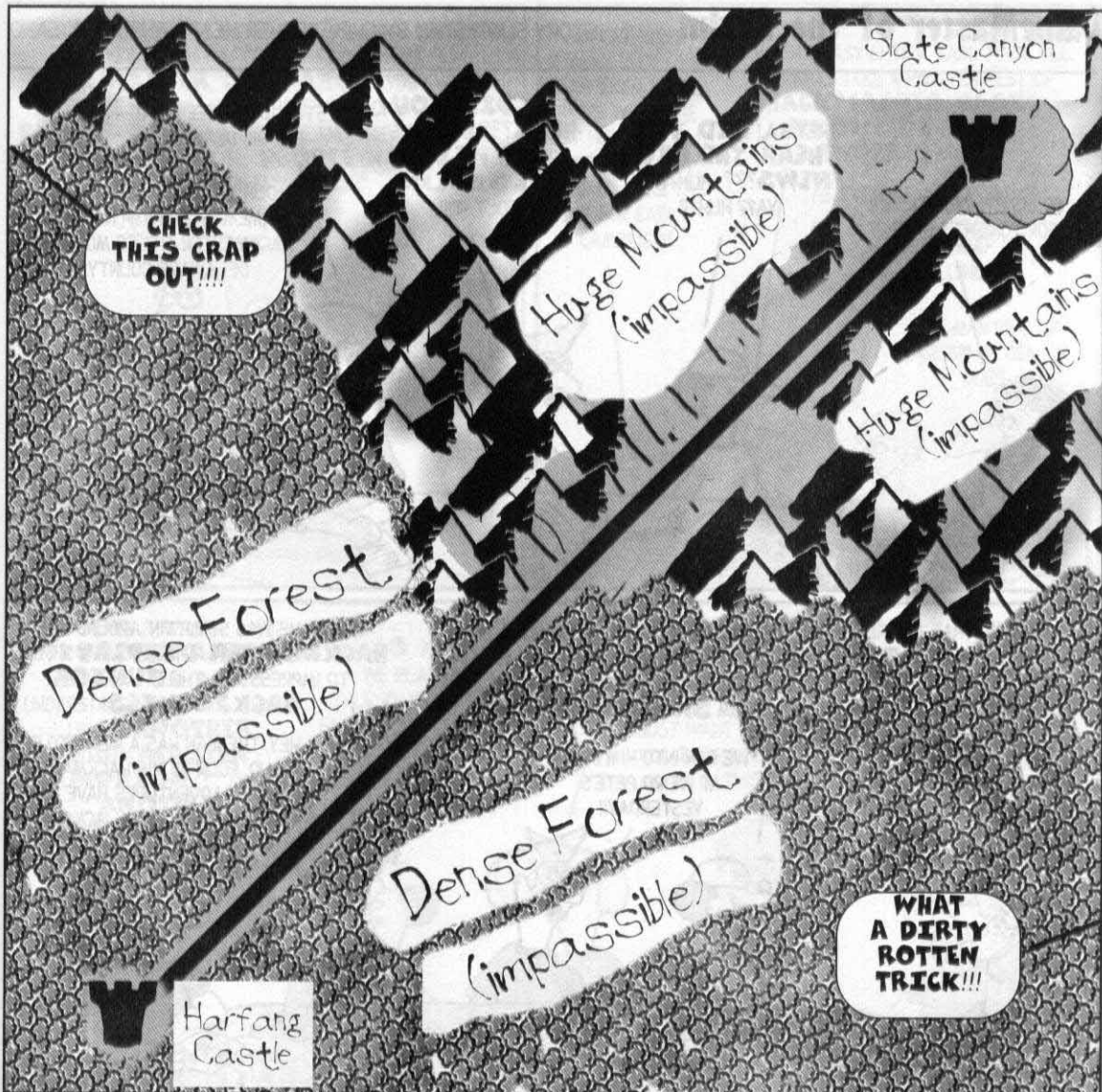
THERE'S SOMETHING ROTTEN GOING ON BEHIND THAT GM SCREEN!!!

MAY THE SAINTS OF FAIR-PLAY FORGIVE US!! LET'S BREAK THE PLAYER CODE OF CONDUCT AND HAVE A LOOK-SEE AT B.A.'S MAP.

THIS REALLY SUCKS!!! I FEEL ALL HEMMED IN!!! I CAN'T BREATHE!!

DO YOU THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA??





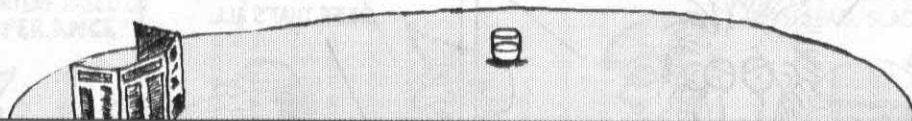
HOURS LATER...

NOTE TO SELF. AS SOON AS SOMEBODY CUTS ME DOWN GO HURT WEIRD PETE!!! **HURT WEIRD PETE REALLY BAD!!!**



MEEEEEERRRRROOOOOOWW!!!

MEANWHILE, PRAY THE CAT DOESN'T ATTACK AGAIN.



HISTORICAL NOTE: THIS INCIDENT, LED DIRECTLY TO THE WHAT HAS COME TO BE KNOWN IN LOCAL GAMING CIRCLES AS, **THE GREAT POLYHEDRON BATTLE**. B.A. FELTON WAS CREDITED WITH THROWING THE FIRST DIE IN THIS INFAMOUS DICE BATTLE. THE RESULTS WERE TWO SCRATCHED RETINAS, A CHIPPED TOOTH AND NUMEROUS PAPER CUTS. CLUB RECORDS INDICATE THAT 72 DOLLARS AND 64 CENTS WERE PAID OUT FROM THE TREASURY FOR A NEW KITCHEN TABLE.

WEIRD PETE IS LETTING EARL HAVE THE BACKROOM ON SATURDAY AFTERNOONS TO RUN HIS **HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN**. YOU SHOULD SEE THE SIGN-UP LIST!!!! THERE WERE ONLY **TEN PLAYER SLOTS** AVAILABLE AND THEY WENT FAST. THERE'S OVER 45 **PEOPLE** ON THE **STAND-BY LIST**.



MAN WE WERE REALLY LUCKY WE HAPPENED TO BE THERE WHEN THE LIST WENT UP. ALL FOUR OF US MANAGED TO MAKE THE CUT FOR EARL'S CAMPAIGN!!

IT WASN'T EASY EITHER. EARL MADE ALL ENTRANTS TAKE A WRITTEN TEST OF **HACKMASTER BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE**.

HE EVEN WEIGHED OUR DICE AND TESTED THEM FOR ACCURACY AND TRUE-ROLLING.

THE MAN REALLY CARES!!! HE REALLY DOES.



WHOAH, WHOAH, **WHOOOOAAAAHHH!!!** HOLD ON THERE! AM I TO UNDERSTAND YOU'VE ALL SIGNED UP FOR **ANOTHER HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN???** UNDER **ANOTHER GAMEMASTER???**

YEAH, **SO WHAT???** WE PLAY ON THURSDAYS, EARL'S GAME IS ON SATURDAY. THERE'S NO CONFLICT!!!

YOU'VE BEEN MOANING AND WHINING LATELY ABOUT BEING BURNT OUT GM'ING. THIS WAY WE STILL GET OUR WEEKLY DOSE OF HACKMASTER IF YOU WANT TO TAKE SOME TIME OFF.

I JUST WANT TO SEE WHAT ALL THE HYPE IS ABOUT WITH THIS GUY.

SORRY B.A.!!! THE MAN IS RUNNING HACKMASTER!! I GOTTA BE THERE.



COME ON GUYS!! WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS CRAP BEFORE!!!! DO I HAVE TO REMIND YOU WHAT HAPPENED WHEN BOB AND DAVE DECIDED TO PLAY **VAMPYRE*** WITH THOSE GUYS ON THE WEST SIDE?? AND HOW ABOUT THE TIME NITRO FERGUESON RAN THAT ADVENTURE BASED ON **DELIVERANCE???**

BACK OFF JACK!!! WE PROMISED NEVER TO DISCUSS THE **DELIVERANCE THING** AGAIN!!! I DON'T WANNA GO THERE.

WELL THE VAMPYRE THING WAS PRETTY KEWL!!! I COULD HAVE BEEN **DARKLORD OF INDIANA** BY NOW IF MY DAD HADN'T INTERFERED!!!

WE TOLD YOU THE BLACK LIPSTICK WAS GOING TO GET YOU IN TROUBLE, DAVE.

YOU HAVE A POINT THERE, B.A. BUT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT EARL SLACKMOZER!



* See Bundle of Trouble vol. 1/KODT Issue 2: Lords of Darkness

** See Bundle of Trouble vol. 1/KODT Issue 3: Dueling GameMasters

THE MAN HAS CREDENTIALS!! HE'S RUN SANCTIONED HACKMASTER TOURNAMENTS FOR 8 YEARS AT VARIOUS HACKCONS, NOT TO MENTION GARYCON ITSELF. BESIDES, WE'VE BEEN PLAYING IN A BUBBLE HERE. MAYBE THIS EARL HAS A FEW NEW TRICKS OR TECHNIQUES THAT WE CAN BRING BACK TO THE GROUP.



I MEAN IT GUYS!!! I DON'T WANT YOU PLAYING WITH THIS EARL-DUDE. IT'S NOT RIGHT!!! THERE'S AN UNSPOKEN BOND BETWEEN A GEMEMASTER AND HIS PLAYERS. IT'S SACRED!! YOU WOULDN'T ROLL SOMEONE ELSE'S DICE. AND YOU WOULDN'T LET SOMEONE ELSE PLAY YOUR CHARACTER WOULD YOU?? IT JUST ISN'T DONE. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT.

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!! DON'T CRY. WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU FELT SO STRONGLY ABOUT IT. IF IT'S THAT BIG A DEAL WE WON'T PLAY WITH EARL.

YEAH, DUDE. NO PROBLEEMO!!

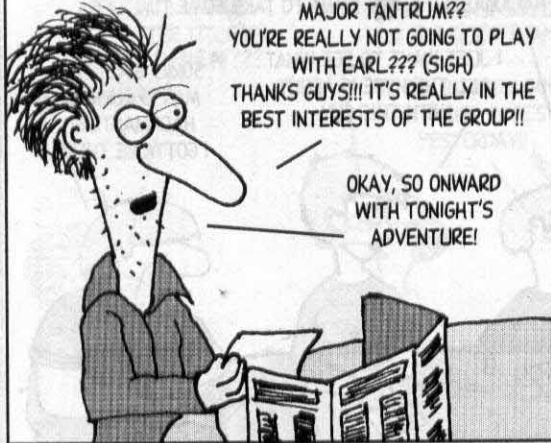
WE'LL JUST STAND EARL UP. WHO'S HE TO US ANYWAY?

OKAY, WE DROP EARL.



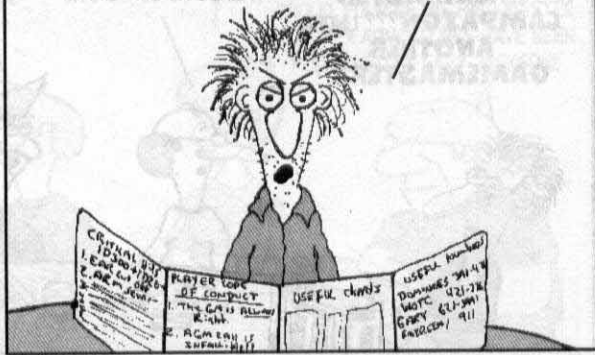
REALLY??? I DON'T HAVE TO BANG MY HEAD ON THE TABLE OR THROW A MAJOR TANTRUM?? YOU'RE REALLY NOT GOING TO PLAY WITH EARL??? (SIGH) THANKS GUYS!!! IT'S REALLY IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE GROUP!!

OKAY, SO ONWARD WITH TONIGHT'S ADVENTURE!



THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

UH...BEFORE WE START TONIGHT'S GAME THERE'S A LITTLE MATTER WE NEED TO DISCUSS. BUT FIRST I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR YOU GUYS!



THE WEATHER WAS SO NICE SATURDAY AFTERNOON I THOUGHT I'D BREAK OUT THE PAINT-BALL GUNS AND GET A GAME OF CAPTURE THE FLAG GOING OVER AT VIRGIL GULLY. STRANGELY ENOUGH, I COULDN'T GET HOLD OF ANY OF YOU GUYS. WHERE WERE YOU?

HUH? UH...ER...OH, UH...UH...I WAS HELPING MY DAD CHECK THE AIR IN HIS RADIATOR. AND UH, ROTATING THE BRAKES. WE DO THAT EVERY SUMMER.

I ATE SOME BAD MEAT AND SPENT THE WHOLE DAY AT THE EMERGENCY ROOM.

I WAS...I MEAN I WENT TO.... (SIGH) I CAN'T LIE TO YOU B.A. I WAS PLAYING IN EARL'S GAME DOWN AT WEIRD PETE'S.

I FRIED THE MOTHERBOARD ON MY GONDO X35. SPENT THE WHOLE WEEKEND GETTING MY BBS BACK ONLINE.



WELL, AT **LEAST** SARA WAS HONEST WITH ME!!! WHEN I COULDN'T FIND ANYONE TO PLAY PAINT BALL I DECIDED TO GO AHEAD AND PAINT SOME MINIATURES. UNFORTUNATELY, I RAN OUT OF SY-35 FLESHSTONE AND DECIDED TO RUN DOWN TO WEIRD PETE'S AND PICK UP ANOTHER BOTTLE. LOW AND BEHOLD!!!! WHO DO YOU THINK I SAW IN THE BACK ROOM TOSSIN' DICE WITH **EARL SLACKMOZER???**



SEE??? I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD HAVE PUT A CURTAIN UP!!!

OH MAN!! WE'RE BUSTED!!!

I KNEW HE'D FIND OUT SOMEHOW. I JUST KNEW IT.



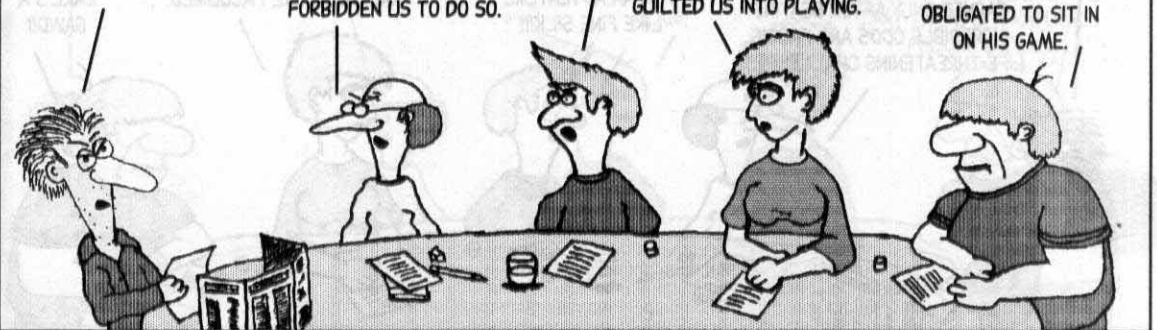
WELL?? YOU **BLATANTLY** LIED TO ME AND WENT AGAINST MY WISHES!!! DO YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELVES???

WELL, WE JUST WENT WITH THE INTENTION OF SPECTATING. WHEN EARL ASKED US WHY WE WEREN'T PLAYING WE TOLD HIM YOU HAD FORBIDDEN US TO DO SO.

HE ASKED US WHY AND WE TOLD HIM SOME OF THE THINGS YOU SAID ABOUT HIM. YOU KNOW, THAT HE WAS A GARY-WANNA-BE AND THAT HE WASN'T UP TO SNUFF. MAN, THE DUDE WENT BALLISTIC!!! THEN HE STARTED HYPER-VENTILATING AND WENT INTO A SEIZURE!

WHEN HE CAME TO, HE GUILTED US INTO PLAYING.

YEAH, WE FELT OBLIGATED TO SIT IN ON HIS GAME.



YOU TOLD HIM WHAT??? **BALLISTIC???** FOR CRYING OUT LOUD YOU MORONS!!! YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO RELAY PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS AND OPINIONS OUTSIDE THE GAMING TABLE. **GEEEEESH!!!**

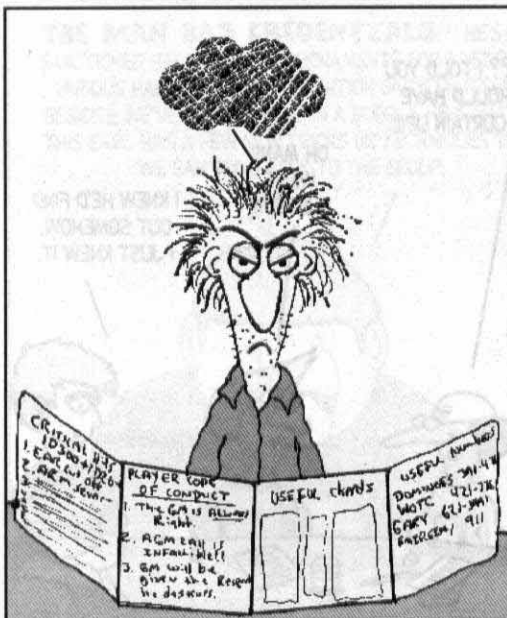
DON'T WORRY, B.A.!! HE CALMED DOWN LATER. HE ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU AND HOW YOU RAN YOUR SESSIONS. AFTER THAT HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD WHY YOU WOULD FEEL SO THREATENED AND INTIMIDATED BY HIM.

HE SAID THAT PRO-LEVEL GAMEMASTER'S LIKE HIMSELF ARE CONSTANTLY GETTING FLACK FROM THE AMATEURS.

YEAH HE WAS A LITTLE INSULTING ABOUT IT. WE TOLD HIM ABOUT OUR LAST CAMPAIGN WITH YOU AND HE SAID IT SOUNDED "CUTE".

HE SAID HE'D BE GLAD TO GIVE YOU SOME POINTERS THOUGH, B.A.





B.A. YOU SHOULD REALLY GET TOGETHER WITH EARL SOME TIME AND COMPARE NOTES!! HE'S AWESOME!!! HE EVEN TAKES **ACTING LESSONS** AND **DRAMA CLASSES** SO THAT HIS NON-PLAYER CHARACTER PORTRAYALS ARE MORE CONVINCING.

HE HAD US SOBBING LIKE BABIES WHEN HE DID A DWARF READING **"EULOGY TO A FALLEN HERO"** IN FULL COSTUME WHILE WAGNER'S 'SIEGFRIED'S FUNERAL MUSIC' PLAYED IN THE BACKGROUND. (SNIFF)

YEAH HE'S PRETTY KEWL EXCEPT THAT HE CHARGES SIXTY CENTS FOR A CAN OF SODA.

THE MAN'S EXPERIENCE POINT PER HOUR RATIO WAS AMONG THE HIGHEST I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED.



I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT **MR. WONDERFUL GRANDMASTER EARL!!** I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF LISTENING IN ON HIS LITTLE GAME AND **I WAS APPALLED!!!** THE MAN'S NOTHING MORE THAN A **MONTY HAUL GAMEMASTER!!!** HE WAS HANDING OUT MAGIC ITEMS AND EPS LIKE THEY WERE SALTED PEANUTS AT A BALL GAME!!!

HANDING THEM OUT??? EVERY EP AND TREASURE ITEM WAS EARNED ONLY AFTER BEATING INCREDIBLE ODDS AND FACING LIFE-THREATENING CHALLENGES!!

YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS BECAUSE EARL CAN SPIN AN ADVENTURE LIKE FINE SILK!!!

TO BE HONEST I HAD TO BUY AN EXTRA HORSE JUST TO CARRY ALL THE LOOT AND TREASURE I ACQUIRED.

EARL'S A GAWD!!



I'M PUTTING MY FOOT DOWN. I'M NOT ALLOWING YOU TO BRING ANY EXPERIENCE OR TREASURE FROM EARL'S GAME INTO OUR CAMPAIGN. JUST SCRATCH IT ALL OFF. IT NEVER HAPPENED!! AND I'M FORBIDDING YOU TO PLAY WITH OTHER GAMEMASTERS. IT'S ME OR EARL!!

TOUGH NOOGIES DUDE!!! EARL INVITED US TO HIS HOUSE TOMORROW FOR A LITTLE LIVE-ACTION ROMP. AND I'M GONNA BE THERE!!

YOU'RE NOT BEING FAIR B.A.!! YOU'RE ALWAYS STRIVING TO BE THE BEST GAMEMASTER THERE IS. WELL....WE WANT TO BE THE BEST PLAYERS WE CAN BE. PLAYING WITH BOTH EARL AND YOU IS EXPANDING OUR REALM OF EXPERIENCE AND GAME SAVVY.

AND I'M YOUR SHADOW DUDE!

NOTHING PERSONAL B.A.!!! I WANNA GET IN CLOSE AND PICK THIS GUY'S BRAIN.



AS THE WEEKS PASSED **EARL SLACKMOZER'S** FAME AND POPULARITY GREW LIKE A FESTERING WOUND. DOZENS OF LOCAL GEMMASTERS SOON LOST THEIR REGULAR PLAYERS TO THE **USURPING GM** AS EARL BEGAN RUNNING SIX DIFFERENT CAMPAIGNS ON SIX CONSECUTIVE NIGHTS EACH WEEK. AT WEIRD PETE'S GAME SHOP THE HOT TOPIC AT THE COUNTER EACH DAY WAS, "**WHO IS THE GREATEST GEMMASTER IN TOWN?**"

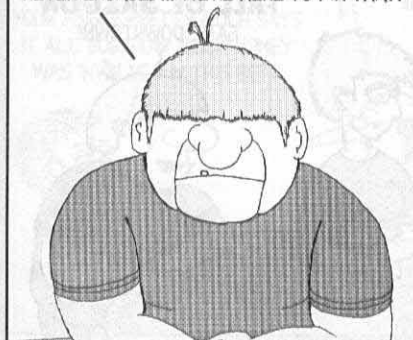
FINALLY, **B.A. FELTON** SHOCKED THE GROUP BY ANNOUNCING HE WAS **HANGING UP HIS GM SCREEN** AND DISBANDING THE **KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE CLUB!!**

(AND THERE WAS GREAT SORROW AND GNASHING OF TEETH). IT WAS INDEED, A SAD HOUR.

BUT IN EVERY CRISIS, A HERO IS CALLED FORTH. ONE DAY **BRIAN** CALLED AN **EMERGENCY MEETING** OF THE **KNIGHTS**, CLAIMING HE "**HAD A PLAN**" TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE!!!



IF WE WERE WOLVES YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN THE LEADER OF THE PACK AND THIS EARL-DUDE WOULD BE THE CHALLENGER VYING FOR YOUR POSITION. THE CHALLENGE RESULTS IN A CONTEST TO SEE WHO IS THE BEST!! THE PROBLEM IS, THE CONTEST WAS NEVER ENGAGED!!! WE'RE HERE TO FIX THAT.



CONTEST???

WHAT CONTEST??

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU GUYS UP TO??

THIS MONTH'S ISSUE CONTAINS THE 1997 **HACKMASTER GM EXAMINATION & QUESTIONNAIRE!!** IT'S DESIGNED TO MEASURE A GM'S MASTERY AND EXPERTISE OF HACKMASTER AND RANK HIM.



WE'VE ORGANIZED A CONTEST FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTY TO SEE WHO IS THE **BEST HACKMASTER GM!!!** EVERY GAMEMASTER WORTH BEARING THE TITLE IS GOING TO GO DOWN TO WEIRD PETE'S TO BE ADMINISTERED THE TEST. THE RESULTS WILL BE PUBLICLY POSTED AND EACH GAMEMASTER WILL BE RANKED ACCORDING TO HIS FINAL SCORE.

COME ON B.A.!!! EARL HAS ALREADY AGREED AND HE'S BOASTING THAT HE'S GOING TO SWEEP THE CONTEST!

I'M NOT TAKING SOME STUPID TEST!!! IT'S PROBABLY NOT ACCURATE ANYWAY.

IF YOU DON'T TAKE THE TEST WE WILL BE FORCED TO CHOOSE EARL AS OUR PERMANENT GM!

YOU MUST SNATCH THE TWENTY-SIDER FROM MY HAND, GRASSHOPPER!!!

YEAH!! HE WANTS A PIECE OF YOU. HE'S STILL SORE OVER THAT GARY-WANNA-BE REMARK!!!



THAT'S THE FIGHTING SPIRIT!!! NOW DON'T LET THIS MAKE YOU NERVOUS, BUT CURRENTLY THE ODDS FAVOR EARL THREE TO ONE WITH AN EIGHT POINT SPREAD. NOW THAT COULD CHANGE DUE TO THE FLUCTUATIONS IN EARL'S MEDICATION.

OH ALL RIGHT!!
I'LL TAKE THE STUPID EXAM.
I'LL BURY THIS EARL-DUDE
ONCE AND FOR ALL.

WE JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT EVEN THOUGH WE ALL BET AGAINST YOU, IT DOESN'T MEAN WE DON'T WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK!!

I DIDN'T BET, B.A.
I JUST COULDN'T GO
AGAINST MY OWN BLOOD.

THE BETTING IS
PRETTY HEAVY.
EVERYONE WANTS
SOME OF THIS
ACTION.



NOW DON'T WORRY B.A.!!! I'M CHAIRPERSON OF THE **EVALUATION COMMITTEE** AND I'LL BE ADMINISTERING THE EXAMINATIONS AND MAKING SURE EVERYTHING IS FAIR AND ON THE UP-AND-UP!!!

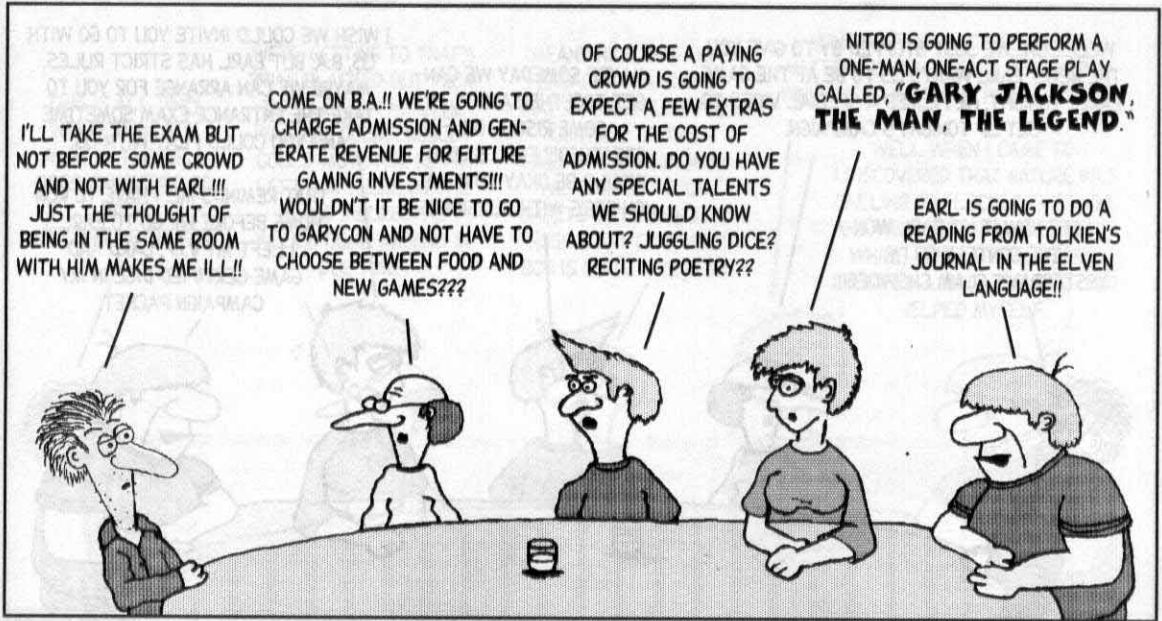
I'M HEADING UP CROWD CONTROL.. IT DOESN'T PAY BUT I GET FREE SODA AND HOT DOGS SO WHAT THE HELL?

CROWD CONTROL??
WHAT CROWD??

HELL! ANYONE WHO IS ANYONE IS TURNING OUT FOR THIS!!! THE PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW!!!

THERE HASN'T BEEN THIS MUCH EXCITEMENT IN THE LOCAL GAMING COMMUNITY SINCE NITRO FERGUSON RAN HIS LIVE-ACTION **FALL OF SAIGON** GAME DOWNTOWN!





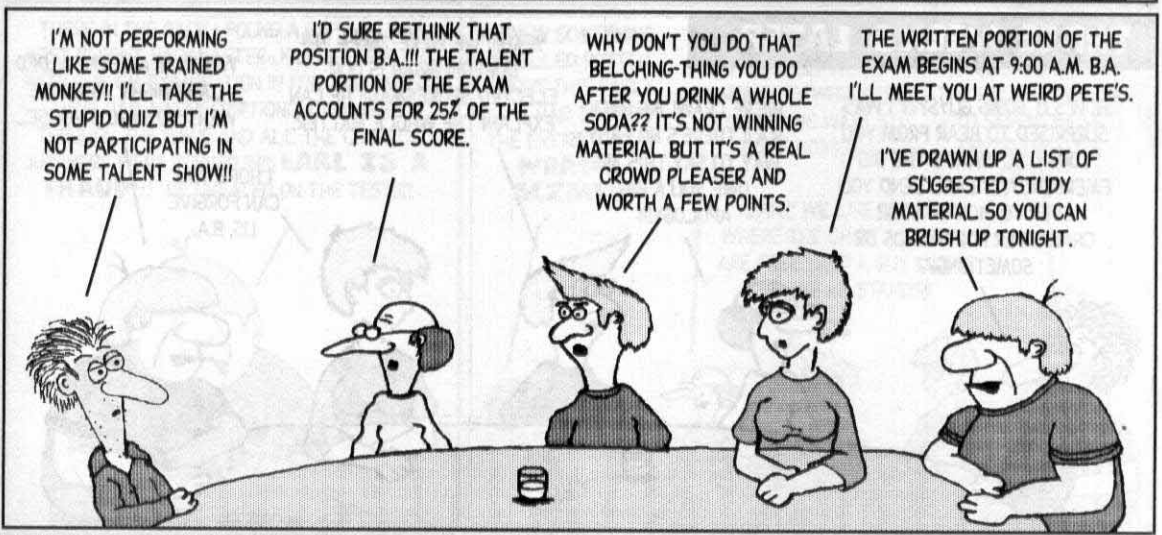
I'LL TAKE THE EXAM BUT NOT BEFORE SOME CROWD AND NOT WITH EARL!!! JUST THE THOUGHT OF BEING IN THE SAME ROOM WITH HIM MAKES ME ILL!!

COME ON B.A.!! WE'RE GOING TO CHARGE ADMISSION AND GENERATE REVENUE FOR FUTURE GAMING INVESTMENTS!!! WOULD'N'T IT BE NICE TO GO TO GARYCON AND NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FOOD AND NEW GAMES???

OF COURSE A PAYING CROWD IS GOING TO EXPECT A FEW EXTRAS FOR THE COST OF ADMISSION. DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL TALENTS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT? JUGGLING DICE? RECITING POETRY??

NITRO IS GOING TO PERFORM A ONE-MAN, ONE-ACT STAGE PLAY CALLED, "GARY JACKSON, THE MAN, THE LEGEND."

EARL IS GOING TO DO A READING FROM TOLKIEN'S JOURNAL IN THE ELVEN LANGUAGE!!



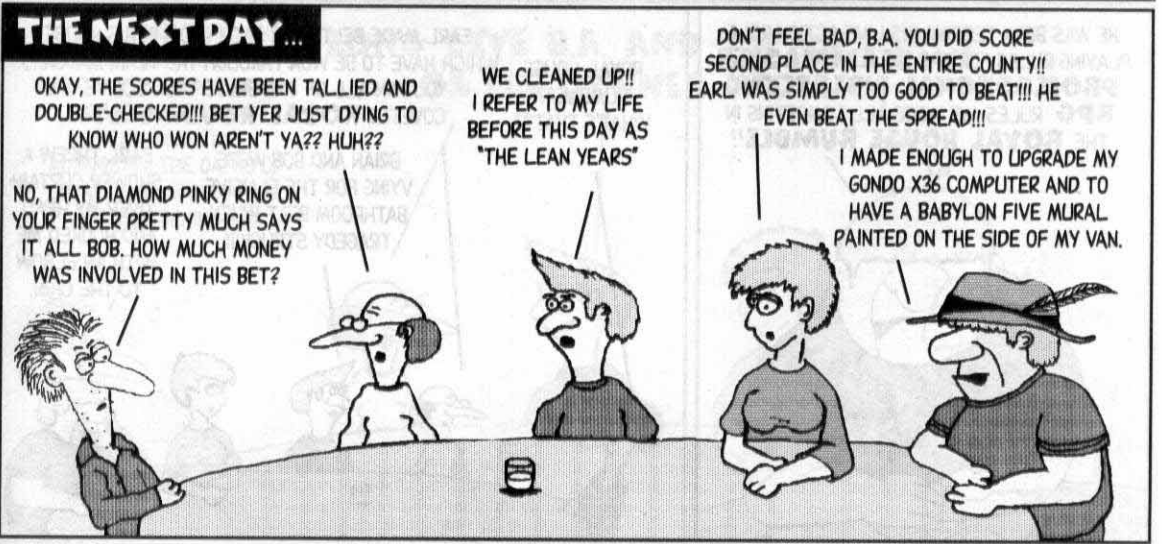
I'M NOT PERFORMING LIKE SOME TRAINED MONKEY!! I'LL TAKE THE STUPID QUIZ BUT I'M NOT PARTICIPATING IN SOME TALENT SHOW!!

I'D SURE RETHINK THAT POSITION B.A.!!! THE TALENT PORTION OF THE EXAM ACCOUNTS FOR 25% OF THE FINAL SCORE.

WHY DON'T YOU DO THAT BELCHING-THING YOU DO AFTER YOU DRINK A WHOLE SODA?? IT'S NOT WINNING MATERIAL BUT IT'S A REAL CROWD PLEASER AND WORTH A FEW POINTS.

THE WRITTEN PORTION OF THE EXAM BEGINS AT 9:00 A.M. B.A. I'LL MEET YOU AT WEIRD PETE'S.

I'VE DRAWN UP A LIST OF SUGGESTED STUDY MATERIAL SO YOU CAN BRUSH UP TONIGHT.



THE NEXT DAY ...

OKAY, THE SCORES HAVE BEEN TALLIED AND DOUBLE-CHECKED!!! BET YER JUST DYING TO KNOW WHO WON AREN'T YA?? HUH??

WE CLEANED UP!! I REFER TO MY LIFE BEFORE THIS DAY AS "THE LEAN YEARS"

DON'T FEEL BAD, B.A. YOU DID SCORE SECOND PLACE IN THE ENTIRE COUNTY!! EARL WAS SIMPLY TOO GOOD TO BEAT!!! HE EVEN BEAT THE SPREAD!!!

NO, THAT DIAMOND PINKY RING ON YOUR FINGER PRETTY MUCH SAYS IT ALL BOB. HOW MUCH MONEY WAS INVOLVED IN THIS BET?

I MADE ENOUGH TO UPGRADE MY GONDO X36 COMPUTER AND TO HAVE A BABYLON FIVE MURAL PAINTED ON THE SIDE OF MY VAN.

The original printing of this strip had some major problems which have now been corrected. Somehow the images were jumbled and Bob was looking in the wrong direction for three pages. (He was addressing B.A. but looking at Dave.). One reader wrote in to ask if Bob was mad at B.A. and was refusing to look at him. Also, Bob's text in the first panel on this page was mostly missing.

WELL...UH...WE JUST STOPPED BY TO GIVE YOU THE NEWS. EARL WANTS US TO BE AT THE GAME EARLY TONIGHT. HE FILMED A SPECIAL VIDEO TO SET UP TONIGHT'S CAMPAIGN.

MAYBE SOMEDAY WE CAN GET TOGETHER AND PLAY SOME RISQUE OR STRATEGO!!! EARL SAID IT WOULD BE OKAY TO PLAY NON-RPG'S WITH OUTSIDERS.

I WISH WE COULD INVITE YOU TO GO WITH US, B.A. BUT EARL HAS STRICT RULES. MAYBE WE CAN ARRANGE FOR YOU TO TAKE THE ENTRANCE-EXAM SOMETIME AND YOU COULD PLAY WITH US.

I SEE HOW IT IS!! EARL WON THE CONTEST SO I'M YESTERDAY'S CLAM CHOWDER!!

THAT REMINDS ME. I HAVE TO RUN HOME BEFORE WE GO TO EARL'S. I LEFT MY V.I.P. CARD AND GAME-CERTIFIED DICE IN MY CAMPAIGN PACKET.



THREE WEEKS LATER...

HOW'S IT GOING GUYS??? I WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR FROM YOU TODAY. SO WHAT'S THE BIG EMERGENCY??? EARL SEND YOU OVER TO PICK UP YOUR CHARACTER PORTFOLIOS OR SOMETHING??

WE'RE CRAWLING BACK B.A.!! THERE'S NO EASY WAY TO SAY THIS. WE OWE YOU A BIG APOLOGY!!!

YEAH!!! WE WERE TAKEN IN!!! DUPED!!! BRIAN IS OUR ELECTED SPOKESMAN!! HE CAN EXPLAIN THE WHOLE MATTER.

WELL...IT ALL UNFOLDED LAST NIGHT WHEN WE WENT TO EARL'S HOUSE...

I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE US, B.A.



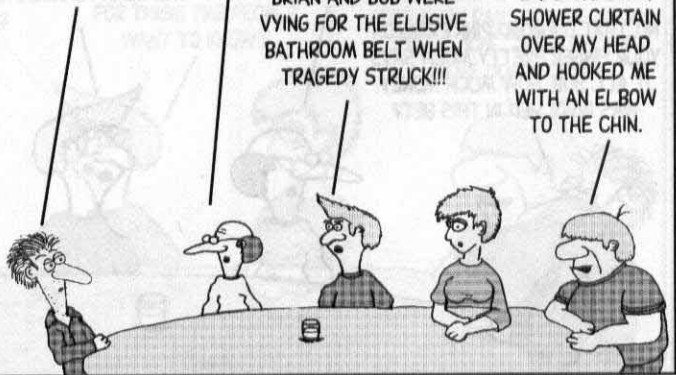
HE WAS BETA-TESTING HIS LIVE-ACTION ROLE-PLAYING RULES FOR THE **SLAMMASTER: PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING RPG** RULES. WE WERE ALL COMPETING IN THE **ROYAL HOUSE RUMBLE!!**

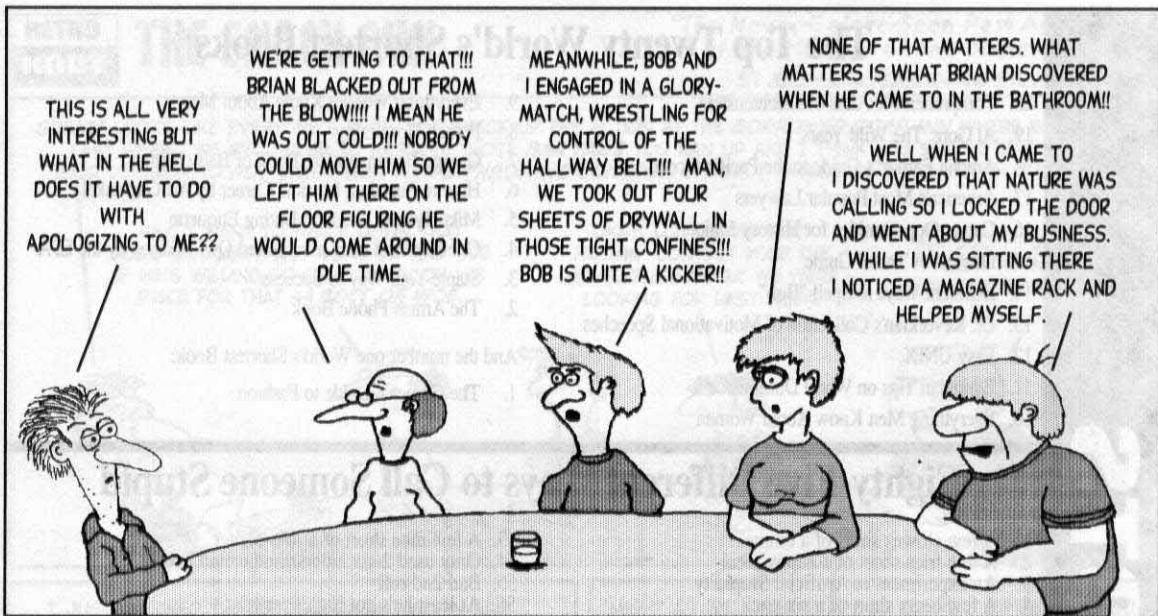
ROYAL HOUSE RUMBLE?? WHAT'S THAT??

EARL MADE BELTS FOR EACH ROOM IN HIS HOUSE WHICH HAVE TO BE WON THROUGH TAG-TEAM MATCHES. IF YOU WIN ALL OF THE BELTS YOU RECEIVE THE COVETED **ROYAL HOUSE BELT!!!**

BRIAN AND BOB WERE VYING FOR THE ELUSIVE BATHROOM BELT WHEN TRAGEDY STRUCK!!!

EARL THREW A SHOWER CURTAIN OVER MY HEAD AND HOOKED ME WITH AN ELBOW TO THE CHIN.





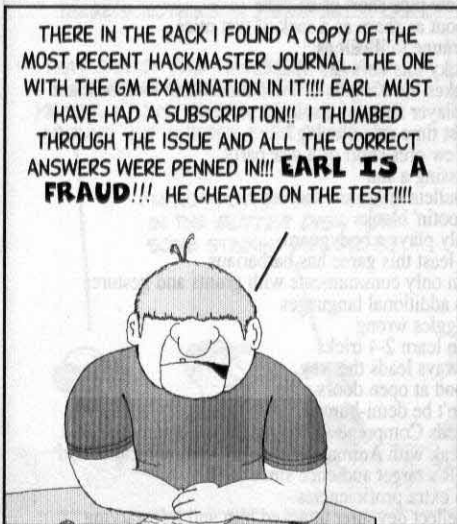
THIS IS ALL VERY INTERESTING BUT WHAT IN THE HELL DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH APOLOGIZING TO ME??

WE'RE GETTING TO THAT!!! BRIAN BLACKED OUT FROM THE BLOW!!!! I MEAN HE WAS OUT COLD!!! NOBODY COULD MOVE HIM SO WE LEFT HIM THERE ON THE FLOOR FIGURING HE WOULD COME AROUND IN DUE TIME.

MEANWHILE, BOB AND I ENGAGED IN A GLORY-MATCH, WRESTLING FOR CONTROL OF THE HALLWAY BELT!!! MAN, WE TOOK OUT FOUR SHEETS OF DRYWALL IN THOSE TIGHT CONFINES!!! BOB IS QUITE A KICKER!!!

NONE OF THAT MATTERS. WHAT MATTERS IS WHAT BRIAN DISCOVERED WHEN HE CAME TO IN THE BATHROOM!!

WELL WHEN I CAME TO I DISCOVERED THAT NATURE WAS CALLING SO I LOCKED THE DOOR AND WENT ABOUT MY BUSINESS. WHILE I WAS SITTING THERE I NOTICED A MAGAZINE RACK AND HELPED MYSELF.



THERE IN THE RACK I FOUND A COPY OF THE MOST RECENT HACKMASTER JOURNAL. THE ONE WITH THE GM EXAMINATION IN IT!!!! EARL MUST HAVE HAD A SUBSCRIPTION!! I THUMBED THROUGH THE ISSUE AND ALL THE CORRECT ANSWERS WERE PENNED IN!!! **EARL IS A FRAUD!!!** HE CHEATED ON THE TEST!!!!

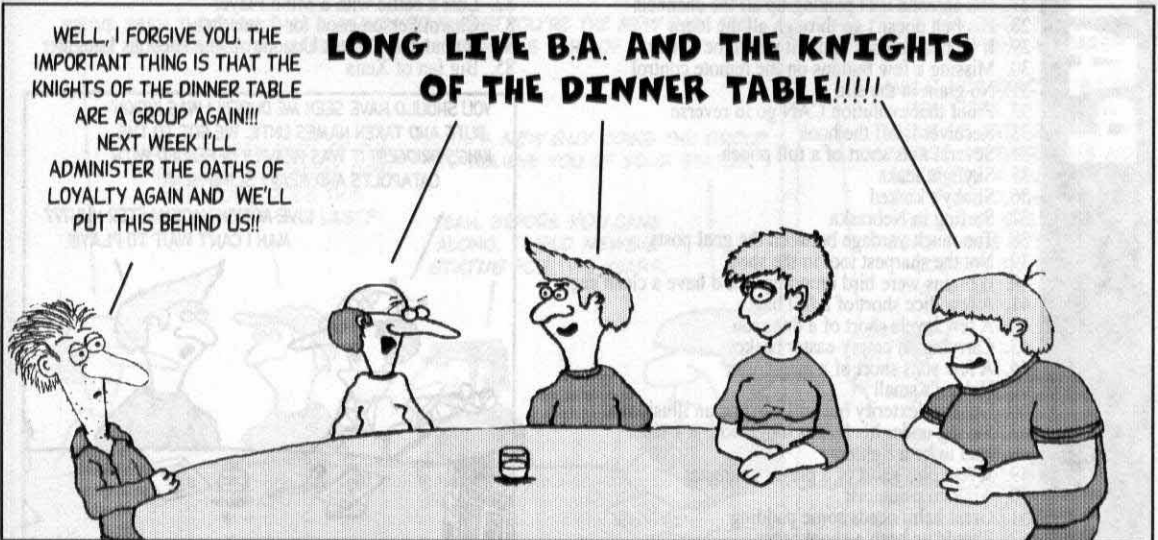


I KNEW SOMETHING SMELLED ROTTEN ABOUT THIS EARL!! SO HE HAD THE TEST THE ENTIRE TIME!!!! **WHAT A SLIME!!!**

WE'RE SORRY WE DOUBTED YOU!!! WE DON'T WANNA PLAY WITH EARL ANYMORE. WE WANT TO COME HOME!!!

THAT EARL IS A SNAKE!!! HE RAISED THE PRICE OF A SODA TO SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS!!! WHAT A CROOK!

YEAH!!! WE LIKE IT HERE!! WHERE THE CHIPS AND SODA ARE FREE!! AND A GUY KNOWS WHERE HE STANDS!!



WELL, I FORGIVE YOU. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THE KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE ARE A GROUP AGAIN!!! NEXT WEEK I'LL ADMINISTER THE OATHS OF LOYALTY AGAIN AND WE'LL PUT THIS BEHIND US!!

LONG LIVE B.A. AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE!!!!

The Top Twenty World's Shortest Books

20. Comprehensive Atlas of Liechtenstein
 19. Al Gore: The Wild Years
 18. Amelia Earhart's Guide to the Pacific Ocean
 17. America's Most Popular Lawyers
 16. Career Opportunities for History Majors
 15. Detroit - A Travel Guide
 14. Different Ways to Spell "Bob"
 13. Dr. Kevorkian's Collection of Motivational Speeches
 12. Easy UNIX
 11. Ethiopian Tips on World Dominance
 10. Everything Men Know About Women
 9. Everything Women Know About Men
 8. French Hospitality
 7. George Foreman's Big Book of Baby Names
 6. How to Sustain a Musical Career by Art Garfunkel
 5. Mike Tyson's Guide to Dating Etiquette
 4. One Hundred and One Spotted Owl Recipes by the EPA
 3. Staple Your Way to Success
 2. The Amish Phone Book
- And the number one World's Shortest Book:
1. The Gamer's Guide to Fashion

Eighty-Five Different Ways to Call Someone Stupid

1. A few clowns short of a circus
2. A few fries short of a happy meal
3. An experiment in Artificial Stupidity
4. A few beers short of a six-pack
5. Dumber than a box of hair
6. A few peas short of a casserole
7. Doesn't have all his cornflakes in one box
8. Wheel's spinning! Hamster's dead!
9. One fruit loop shy of a full bowl
10. One taco short of a combo plate
11. A few feathers short of a whole duck
12. All foam. No beer!
13. The cheese has slid of his cracker
14. Body by Fisher. Brains by Mattel!
15. Has an IQ of 2, but it takes 3 to grunt
16. Warning: Objects in mirror are dumber than they appear
17. Couldn't pour water out of a boot with instructions on the heel
18. He fell out of the stupid tree and hit every branch on the way down
19. An intellect rivaled only by garden tools
20. As smart as bait
21. Chimney's clogged
22. Doesn't have all his dogs on one leash
23. Doesn't know much, but leads the league in nostril hair
24. Elevator doesn't go all the way to the top floor
25. Forgot to pay his brain bill
26. Sewing machine is out of thread
27. His antenna isn't picking up all the channels
28. His belt doesn't go through all the loops
29. If he had another brain, it would be lonely
30. Missing a few buttons on the remote control
31. No grain in the silo
32. Proof that evolution CAN go in reverse
33. Receiver is off the hook
34. Several nuts short of a full pouch
35. Skylight leaks
36. Slinky's kinked
37. Surfing in Nebraska
38. Too much yardage between the goal posts
39. Not the sharpest tool in the shed
40. If brains were bird droppings, he'd have a clean cage.
41. A few dice short of a full bag.
42. A few levels short of a dungeon
43. Carrying an empty easter basket.
44. A few stats short of a magic user
45. Helmet's small
46. Got the dexterity but still can't be an illusionist
47. Saving under his INT is tough with a 4-sider
48. Had to be a fighter
49. A few pips short of a player character
50. Ain't no psionicist
51. Great helm needs some padding
52. Should've been a shopkeeper
53. A few dice short of a role-player
54. Only used 2-six siders...and rolled poorly
55. Bad 2nd roll
56. At least he's got high strength
57. A few pips short of an ogre
58. About as sharp as a sack of wet mice
59. Immune to illusions
60. Lucky this ain't Ars Magica
61. Makes the Knights of the Dinner table look brilliant
62. A player short of a solo game
63. First time role-playing?
64. A few ores short of a war party
65. Missing a stat
66. 5 bullets in his six-shooter
67. Shootin' blanks
68. Only plays a bodyguard
69. At least this game has barbarians
70. Can only communicate with grunts and gestures
71. No additional languages
72. Haggles wrong
73. Can learn 2-4 tricks
74. Always leads the way
75. Good at open doors rolls
76. Can't be demi-human
77. Needs Comprehend Languages for common
78. Speak with Animals useful as a communication aid
79. TSR's target audience since 1986
80. No extra proficiencies
81. Intellect devourer attacked him and left starving
82. Lost a battle with a Mind Flayer
83. Charm Person good for 3 months
84. Immune to Tasha's Uncontrollable Hideous Laughter
85. Big fan of Xena



THE SNACK RUN

"The Never-Before-Seen Past Adventures
of the Knights of the Dinner Table"

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN AND STEVE JOHANSSON

GREAT! LOOKS LIKE EVERYONE'S HERE. WE'LL PICK UP THE ACTION AT THE *BORROWED BOAR INN* WHERE WE LEFT OFF LAST WEEK. WE STILL NEED TO RESOLVE THOSE *BAR TABS* YOU RAN UP AND I THINK YOU SHOULD RECONSIDER YOUR DECISION TO *NOT ENTER THAT KNIFE-THROWING CONTEST*. I THINK IT WOULD BE *WELL WORTH YOUR WHILE*.

HEY, I WANT TO TRACK DOWN THAT ROAD-SIDE *ARTIFACT VENDOR* AND SEE IF HE'S WILLING TO COME DOWN ON HIS PRICE FOR THAT *+4 BOLT OF WOE*.

OKAY, LOOKS LIKE THAT FRICKIN' *CONTEST WAS THE ADVENTURE HOOK* WE WERE LOOKING FOR LAST WEEK.

HEY B.A., FIRST THINGS FIRST. WE NEED TO MAKE A *SNACK RUN*.



I JUST CHECKED THE *FRIDGE* ON MY WAY IN AND THERE'S NOTHING IN THERE BUT A CAN OF *TAB*.

MIGHT AS WELL GET READY TO *SADDLE UP DAVE*. IF YOU *HURRY*, YOU WON'T MISS TOO MUCH OF THE ACTION.

THAT CAN OF *TAB* HAS BEEN ROLLING AROUND IN THAT *FRIDGE* FOR *TWO YEARS*. IT JUST KEEPS GETTING MOVED AROUND BUT NOBODY EVER DRINKS IT.

OH NO, DON'T *RUSH* HIM. HE'S GONNA MAKE A *LIST* THIS TIME. I DON'T WANT ANY MORE EXCUSES AS TO WHY HE DIDN'T GET MY *HOSTESS FRUIT PIES*.

I'M NOT PUTTIN' FIFTY CENTS IN THE *BUTTER DISH* FOR SOME STINKIN' DIET DRINK.

ME? HOW COME I ALWAYS GET STUCK WITH MAKING THE *SNACK RUN*?



WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THAT A *HUNDRED TIMES*. YOU'RE THE *NEW GUY*. THE *NEWBIE ALWAYS* HAS TO MAKE THE *SNACK RUN*. IT'S PART OF OUR *INITIATION*.

REALLY? SO YOU MADE THE *SNACK RUNS* FOR *TWO WHOLE YEARS*?

BUT I'VE BEEN PART OF THE *GROUP* FOR *8 MONTHS* NOW. HOW LONG DOES THIS *INITIATION* THING LAST?

UNTIL A *NEW GUY* JOINS THE *GROUP* TO RELIEVE YOU OF YOUR STATUS.

YEAH, BEFORE *YOU* CAME ALONG, I HELD *NEWBIE STATUS* FOR *TWO YEARS*.

WELL, NOT EXACTLY. B.A.'S MOM USED TO BE KEWL ABOUT US EATING FROM THE *FRIDGE* SO THERE WAS *NO NEED* FOR A *SNACK RUN*. GOOD GAWD, THOSE WERE THE DAYS. SHE USED TO MAKE THESE LITTLE SUGAR COOKIES THAT...WELL, THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST.



The Guns of August

"The Never-Before-Seen Past Adventures of the Knights of the Dinner Table"

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN AND STEVE JOHANSSON

SORRY, GUYS, WE'VE GOT TO END THE GAME RIGHT THERE. I PROMISED MY DAD I'D HELP HIM FLUSH OUT THE MARTINIZER IN THE MORNING BEFORE HE OPENS UP SHOP.

FOWL, DUDE, YOU CAN'T LEAVE US HANGING FOR AN ENTIRE WEEK. LET'S KEEP GOING.

WE CAN'T QUIT NOW! WE GOT OVERLORD VANDERNURF'S MEN ON THE RUN! WE WANT TO CHASE AFTER THEM AND DO A STRAGGLER ROUND-UP AND PICK UP ANY DISCARDED ITEMS.

DIDN'T YOU HEAR THE MAN? HE HAS TO WORK. MAYBE WE COULD PLAY SUNDAY AND WRAP THINGS UP.

SUNDAY? NO CHANCE IN HELL OF THAT HAPPENING.



WHY NOT, DUDE? SUNDAY IS PERFECT. YOU GOT SOMETHING GOING ON?

I GOT A G.A.S. MEETING THIS WEEKEND. I CAN'T MISS THAT! I SWORE AN OATH I'D BE THERE EACH MONTH COME HELL OR HIGH WATER.

REALLY? YOU GUYS ARE STILL MEETING? CRIPES! HOW LONG'S IT BEEN NOW?

GAS MEETING? WHAT THE HELL?

FOUR YEARS, THREE MONTHS.



HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE GUNS OF AUGUST SOCIETY YA DORK! SEVERAL YEARS BACK WEIRD PETE FORMED A GAMING GROUP FOR WORLD WAR ONE BUFFS! THEY MEET IN THE BASEMENT OF THE GAMES PIT STOP.

IN THE BASEMENT? OH...SO THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT THE WAR ROOM.

CALLING IT A 'GROUP' IS A BIT OF A STRETCH DON'T YOU THINK? BRIAN AND PETE ARE THE ONLY TWO MORONS STILL ATTENDING MEETINGS ON A REGULAR BASIS.

MORONS??



REMEMBER THAT GAME THEY CAME OUT WITH SEVERAL YEARS BACK, THE GREAT WAR? IT WAS PUT OUT BY BATTLECRY GAMES - THE SON OF A BITCH WAS HUGE! IT ACTUALLY CAME IN A REAL VINTAGE FOOT LOCKER!

IN A FOOT LOCKER? DAMN! NO, I MUST'VE MISSED THAT ONE.

THE SUCKER COST 400 BUCKS! THEY ONLY ENDED UP SELLING FOUR COPIES.

WE DROOLED OVER THAT GAME FOR MONTHS BUT NOBODY HAD THE CASH TO BUY IT.



SO FINALLY WEIRD PETE COMES UP WITH THIS IDEA FOR FORMING A CLUB AROUND THE GAME. HE TALKED TWENTY GUYS INTO PAYING TWENTY BUCKS TO JOIN THE DAMN THING. THEN HE USED THE MONEY TO BUY THE GAME.

I THOUGHT IT WAS A NOVEL IDEA, MYSELF. THEY DECIDED THE WINNER OF THE GAME GOT TO KEEP IT.

HEY THAT SOUNDS PRETTY AWESOME. SO SOME LUCKY JERK WALKED AWAY WITH A 400 DOLLAR GAME?

YOU'RE NOT LISTENING, CHIEF, NOBODY'S WON YET. THE GAME IS STILL GOING ON.



STILL GOING ON? YOU MEAN TO TELL ME THEY'VE BEEN PLAYING THE **SAME GAME** FOR **FOUR YEARS??**

YEAH, I DROPPED OUT TWO YEARS AGO. I BLEW MY WAD WITH A **BOLD OVERLAND MARCH** BUT I GOT **BOGGED DOWN** IN THE FRICKIN' **ARGONNE FOREST**. LOST 15 DIVISIONS IN A TWO-DAY **BLOOD BATH**. IT WAS **BRUTAL HELL**.

HELL, SCHMELL YOU KNEW DAMN WELL I HAD THE **438TH PRUSSIAN REGIMENT** DUG INTO THAT **POTATO FIELD**.

BUT YOU JUST **HAD** TO HAVE IT!

BACK OFF! I HAD **STARVING MEN** AND **HORSES** DROPPING LIKE **FLIES!** THAT **POTATO FIELD** WAS OF THE **UTMOST STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE**.

LOOK **DOOFUS**, IF YOU HADN'T **OUTRUN** YOUR **SUPPLY LINES** YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN IN THAT MESS.

SUPPLY LINES? LIKE HELL! IT WAS **BOB'S FAULT** MY MEN GOT **BUTCHERED**.

MY FAULT??!! LOOK YOU **FREAKIN' GLORY HOUND**, IF YOU HAD STUCK TO THE **PLAN** AND HADN'T **MOVED OUT** THREE HOURS EARLY, YOUR **LAME ASS INFANTRY** WOULDN'T OF GOT **HUNG UP** ON THE **WIRE** AND BEEN **PULVERIZED** BY MY **FIELD GUNS**.

HOW THE HELL WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW MY **RUNNERS** DIDN'T GET THE **"HOLD FIRE"** ORDER THROUGH TO YOU? BESIDES, YOUR **FIRST ARTILLERY BARRAGE** TOOK OUT MY **SIGNAL BATTALION**.

HEH, HEH, THAT WAS SO KEWL. THOSE **RUNNERS** DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE. MY **SNIPER PLACEMENT** WAS **DEAD ON!**

DUDE? YOU'RE IN THE **SOCIETY** TOO? HOW COME YOU NEVER SAID ANYTHING?

I HAVEN'T PLAYED IN MORE THAN A YEAR. AFTER A SERIES OF **SETBACKS** ON THE **BATTLEFIELD** I LOST FACE WITH **PARLIAMENT**. I WAS GIVEN A **TOKEN COMMAND** SO I RESIGNED MY **COMMISSION**.

SETBACKS? YOU CALL A **HALF MILLION CASUALTIES** IN ONE SUMMER A **SETBACK?**

AT LEAST MY **BRITS** STOOD THEIR GROUND. I MADE **MORALE CHECK** **EVERY TURN** THE **SUMMER OF '15!** YOUR BOYS, HOWEVER, LOST **FRIESLAND, GRONINGEN** AND THE FRICKIN' **OVERIJSSSEL** IN **MAY** ALONE.

THAT WAS PART OF MY **PLAN** YOU **IDIOT**. I WAS DELIBERATELY **PULLING BACK** SO **BRIAN** WOULD CLOSE THE GAP. IF MY **DREADNOUGHTS** HADN'T **RUN AGROUND** BEFORE MANAGING TO **BLOW THOSE DIKES** IT WOULD'VE WIPED OUT THOSE NEW **TANK REGIMENTS** HE HAD JUST BROUGHT UP ON LINE.

HEY, I THOUGHT WE AGREED THIS WAS ALL **WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE**.

MAN, IT SOUNDS LIKE AN **EXCITING GAME**. CAN I **STILL** GET IN?

DAMN! SO **THAT'S** WHAT YOUR **ANGLE** WAS. I **KNEW** YOU WERE TRYING TO PULL A **FAST ONE**.

EXCUSE ME? WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE? HA! YOU'D LIKE TO THINK SO WOULDN'T YA? **STINKIN' ISOLATIONIST PIG!**

THERE! YOU SEE? THE NAME CALLING WAS **EXACTLY** WHY I DROPPED OUT OF THE GAME.

YOU DROPPED OUT OF THE GAME BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE **STOMACH** TO WAGE A **MAN'S WAR!**

13 MONTHS HE PLAYED! AND HE DIDN'T **DEPLOY** A **SINGLE UNIT** INTO COMBAT.



WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS A HUNDRED TIMES. I WASN'T ABOUT TO DRAG **AMERICA** INTO A **EUROPEAN WAR!** I HELD TO THE **MONROE DOCTRINE** FIRMLY THEN AND I **STAND** BY MY DECISION NOW.

TWO MILLION FREAKIN' CASUALTIES, I SUFFERED WAITING FOR THE **YANKS** TO SHOW UP!! HOW THE HELL DO YOU SLEEP AT NIGHT?

CAN WE JUST **DROP** IT?



THE TRUTH HURTS DOESN'T IT? HUH? YOU CAN'T EVEN **LOOK** ME IN THE EYE. **COWARD!!**

COWARD? YOU KNOW, CALLING ME NAMES WAS ONE OF THE REASONS I **VETOED** THE **MILITARY AID PACKAGE** CONGRESS HAD EAR MARKED FOR YOU.

HOW CHILDISH IS THAT? YOU SHOULDN'T LET YOUR **PERSONAL EMOTIONS** COME INTO THE GAME, B.A.

SHYA' RIGHT!



THAT'S IT, GUYS. I'M NOT GOING TO SIT HERE AND TAKE THIS ABUSE. I'LL SEE YOU NEXT THURSDAY.

YEAH, SURE. **RUN AWAY** FROM A FIGHT. YOU'RE GOOD AT IT.

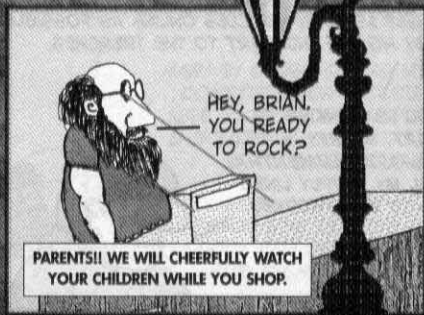
BEIN' **YELLOW** MUST COME NATURAL TO HIM.



MAN AM I **BLUMMED!** SOUNDS LIKE **THE GREAT WAR** IS A **KICK-ASS** GAME. I WISH I COULD HAVE GOTTEN IN ON IT.



SUNDAY MORNING...

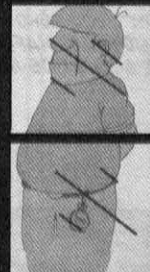


SLOT CAR TRACK • RV PLANES • HO TRAINS • HOBBY SUPPLIES

GAMES PIT STOP

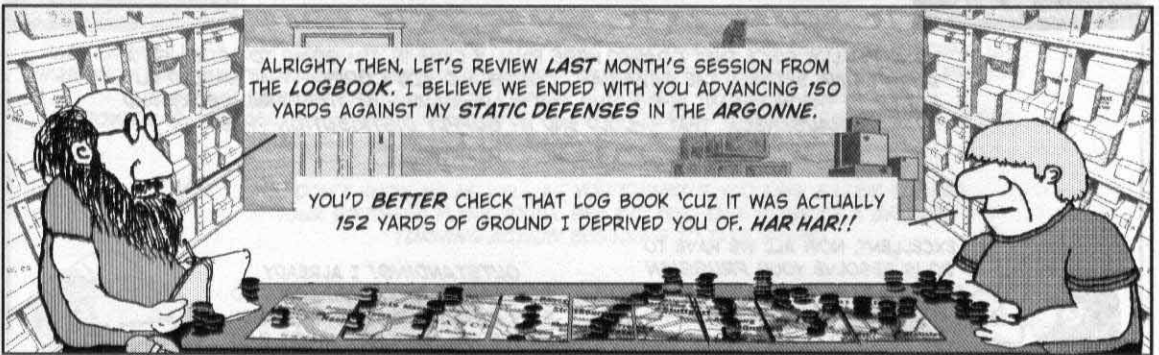
ROLE-PLAYING GAMES • DICE • CHESS • BACKGAMMON

SORRY, FOLKS
CLOSED
PLEASE COME BACK



TRIVIAL PURSUIT
TOURNAMENT
SATURDAY

Meet Jack Klugman
Star of Quincy™
QUINCY
THIS SATURDAY
11 to 5
THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME



ALRIGHTY THEN, LET'S REVIEW *LAST MONTH'S* SESSION FROM THE *LOGBOOK*. I BELIEVE WE ENDED WITH YOU ADVANCING 150 YARDS AGAINST MY *STATIC DEFENSES* IN THE *ARGONNE*.

YOU'D *BETTER* CHECK THAT LOG BOOK 'CUZ IT WAS ACTUALLY 152 YARDS OF GROUND I DEPRIVED YOU OF. *HAR HAR!!*

OKAY, ACCORDING TO THE RECORDS SHEET WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO FINISH *TURN 53*. MORE SPECIFICALLY WE WERE JUST ENTERING THE *PRUSSIAN RESUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION* PHASE. SO.....FIRST, YOU'LL NEED TO ROLL ON THE *INCOMING SUPPLY TABLE* FOR EACH OF YOUR *OPERATIONAL RAILROAD DEPOTS* AND *SUPPLY GATHERING POINTS* TO DETERMINE WHICH ITEMS FROM YOUR *SUPPLY REQUISITION FORM*, IF ANY, HAVE ARRIVED FROM THE REAR.

HOPEFULLY MY *QUARTERMASTER EFFICIENCY RATING* WILL BE *WAY UP* SINCE I REPLACED THAT INEPT *GENERAL VON WERDER* OF COMMAND.

I STILL THINK YOU WERE A LITTLE *HARSH* ON THE MAN. IT WASN'T HIS FAULT MY *SOPWITHS* LOCATED THOSE RAILWAY CARS LOADED DOWN WITH *ARTILLERY SHELLS* AND BLEW THEM TO *KINGDOM COME!*

THE MAN ONLY HAD A *5* RATING FOR ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP WHICH MEANS MY SUPPLY FULFILLMENT RATIO AT *BEST* WAS ONLY 30%. I'M SORRY IF THE MAN'S *EGO* WAS BRUISED BUT I HAVE A *WAR* TO RUN HERE.

OH, I'M NOT SAYING YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE REPLACED HIM. I JUST THOUGHT BY HUMILIATING HIM YOU DROVE DOWN *MORALE* IN HIS COMMAND. THAT'S ALL I'M SAYIN'.

WHATEVER.

FOUR HOURS LATER...

...AND I THINK I'LL OFF LOAD THOSE RAILROAD CARS FILLED WITH *WHEAT* AND *HORSE MEAT* SOMEWHERE NEAR MY *SECOND LINE* AT *VERDUN*. I'LL ALSO OFF LOAD 500 GALLONS OF *PETROL*. *MAJOR BLUMENTHAL* AND *COLONEL CLAUSEWITZ* HAVE A FEW DOZEN MEN WITH MECHANICAL SKILLS IN THEIR COMMAND. THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET THOSE *LORRIES* I CAPTURED FROM YOU AFTER THE *VERDUN OFFENSIVE* UP AND RUNNING. I ROLL ON THE *SCAVENGE PARTS* AND *CANABALIZE VEHICLE* TABLES IF NEED BE, TO GET AS MANY VEHICLES ONLINE AS POSSIBLE. ANYTHING THAT CAN'T BE LOADED INTO THE TRUCKS CAN BE TAKEN BY *HORSE* AND *CART* TO THE TRENCHES.



HOLD ON THERE, DIDN'T YOU SEND *MAJOR BLUMENTHAL* TO *LUDWIGSCHAFEN* LAST TURN TO ATTEND THAT *LOGISTICS MEETING*?

NO, YOU'RE THINKING OF *BRONSART*. NO WAY IN HELL I COULD SPARE *BLUMENTHAL* WITH ALL MY SUPPLY LINES HAVING TO BE REWORKED.



A N HOUR LATER...

...AND FINALLY, SINCE THAT *COMMO WIRE* FINALLY CAME IN, I'M GOING TO ESTABLISH A *DIRECT LINK* BETWEEN THE *BAVARIAN I CORPS* AND *VIII CORPS* - THAT SHOULD PUT A STOP TO THE INCESSANT IN-FIGHTING AND BLAME-GAMING BETWEEN *FRANSECKY* AND *KRAUSENECK*. THAT SHOULD END MY *SUPPLY DISTRIBUTION* PHASE.



EXCELLENT, NOW ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS RESOLVE YOUR *PRUSSIAN MEDICAL EVACUATION PHASE* AND WE CAN MOVE ON TO *TURN 54!*

OUTSTANDING! I ALREADY COMPILED MY *WOUNDED LISTS* TO SAVE TIME. I'M PLACING 2457 MEN ON THE RAILWAY CARS WHICH JUST OFF LOADED IN *OVILLERS*, ANOTHER 1632 IN THE CARS IN...



A WEE BIT LATER...

OKAY, A *NEW TURN* - A *NEW HOPE!* LOOKS LIKE WE'RE READY TO RESOLVE YOUR *BREAKOUT ATTEMPT* FROM THE *BALTIC SEA*. SHALL WE MOVE OVER TO THE *NAVAL ENGAGEMENT BOARD*?

ACTUALLY, THAT *BREAKOUT* ISN'T SCHEDULED 'TIL *NEXT TURN*. THOSE *NEW DREADNOUGHTS* I JUST CHRISTENED AREN'T FINISHED WITH THEIR *SHAKE-DOWN* EXERCISES YET.



OH.....WELL WE STILL HAVE THE *HMS CORNWALL* AND *HMS VICTORIA*'S PASS THROUGH THE *SKAGERRAK* TO RESOLVE.

AAAAAHH, I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN. LET ME GRAB A *FAYGO* AND I'LL MEET YOU OVER THERE.



FORTY FIVE MINUTES LATER..

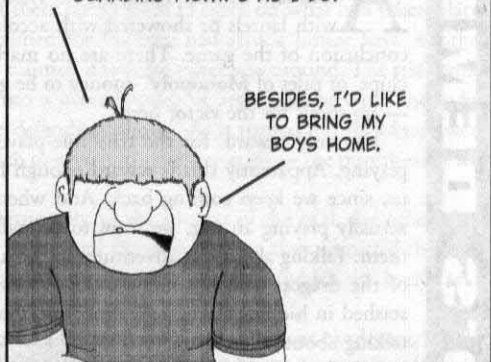
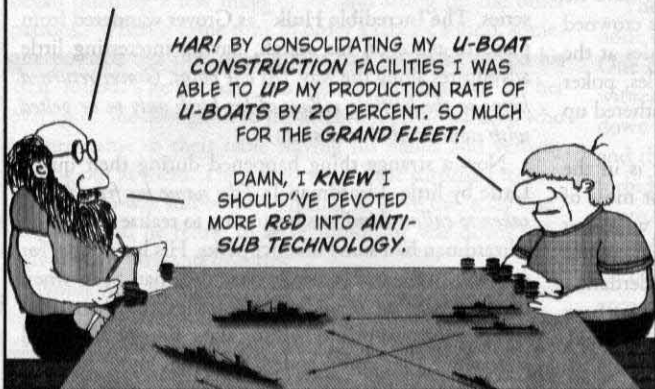
HOLY MOLY! THAT WAS **DAD BURN** CLOSE! THE **VICTORIA** IS **HAULING ASS** FOR THE OPEN WATERS OF THE **NORTH SEA**. I'LL **SCUTTLE** THE **CORNWALL** TO PREVENT IT FROM FALLING INTO ENEMY HANDS. I'LL CUT MY LOSSES. SO **THAT'S** WHERE YOU'VE BEEN FUNNELING ALL YOUR **PRODUCTION POINTS!**

HAR! BY CONSOLIDATING MY **U-BOAT CONSTRUCTION FACILITIES** I WAS ABLE TO **UP** MY PRODUCTION RATE OF **U-BOATS** BY 20 PERCENT. SO MUCH FOR THE **GRAND FLEET!**

DAMN, I **KNEW** I SHOULD'VE DEVOTED MORE **R&D** INTO **ANTI-SUB TECHNOLOGY**.

I'LL PICK UP ANY SURVIVORS AND TRANSFER THEM TO MY **P.O.W. POOL**. BY THE WAY, IT'S BEEN **18 MONTHS** SINCE WE'VE SCHEDULED A **PRISONER-EXCHANGE**. WE SHOULD DO THAT SOON - I KNOW YOU'VE GOT JUST AS MANY **RESOURCES** TIED UP WITH GUARDING P.O.W.'S AS I DO.

BESIDES, I'D LIKE TO BRING MY BOYS HOME.



FOUR HOURS LATER...

HA!! LOOKS LIKE I JUST GAINED **117 YARDS** ON YOUR ASS! **TAKE THAT!!** I'LL IMMEDIATELY STRING UP WIRE AND COMMENCE TO DIGGING IN. MY MEN WILL TURN ANY CAPTURED ORDNANCE AROUND AND PREPARE FOR YOUR COUNTER ATTACK - WHICH I **KNOW** IS COMING. FIGHTING ACROSS THIS **NARROW DEADLY SPACE** THESE PAST FEW YEARS, I'VE COME TO LEARN HOW YOU THINK MY OLD FRIEND.

YOU DON'T KNOW ME AS WELL AS YOU **THINK!** IF YOU TAKE A LOOK TOWARD YOUR SOUTHERN FLANK YOU'LL SEE THE TELL-TALE SIGNS OF A **BROAD TURNING ACTION** BEGINNING TO TAKE SHAPE.

SPPPPUTTTTEERRRR! WHAT THE HELL WAS WITH THAT **MAJOR PUSH** IN **AMIENS?**

I BELIEVE IT'S CALLED A **DIVERSION** - **OLD FRIEND!!**



THREE HOURS LATER...

WELL, IT'LL BE TIME FOR ME TO **OPEN THE SHOP** IN THREE HOURS. LET'S FILL OUT OUR **SUPPLY REQUISITION FORMS** FOR NEXT TURN AND RESOLVE THOSE **INCLEMENT WEATHER SET BACKS** ON THE **TURKEY BOARD** AND PICK UP THE **GAME** NEXT MONTH.

OH...OKAY, TOO BAD. I WAS BEGINNING TO FEEL THE **LINES** MIGHT SHIFT A FEW MORE YARDS THERE. WISH THOSE **TANK REPLACEMENTS** HAD COME IN A TURN EARLIER.

HEY, BY THE WAY, DO THOSE **INCLEMENT WEATHER TABLES** SEEM RIGHT TO YOU? I WAS THINKING WE COULD ADD SOME **WIND CHILL FACTOR TABLES** TO BEEF UP THE REALISM.

YOU READ MY MIND, DUDE. SOME **HUMIDITY MODIFIERS** TO COMBAT READINESS WOULD KICK ASS AS WELL.



FINIS

The Tale of Lizardman Junior

By Jolly. R. Blackburn

As everyone knows, role-playing games have no ultimate winner. There are no victors crowned with laurels or showered with accolades at the conclusion of the game. There are no marbles, poker chips, or piles of *Monopoly*™ money to be gathered up — no spoils for the victor here.

The only reward, for the true role-player is in the playing. Apparently this is reward enough for most of us, since we keep coming back. And when we're not actually playing an rpg, we seem to be talking about them. Talking about our adventures in the underdark, of the dragon who got away, sacks of coin you have stashed in hidden places, and most importantly of all, talking about fallen characters.

I don't think I've ever attended a convention when some reader hasn't tracked me down to tell me about his or her character. I enjoy hearing such tales because it's comforting to see in others the same love of the game I, myself, have.

To be honest, I've rarely sat at the table as a player. This wasn't always by choice really. It's just that usually I'm forcibly shoved toward the gm's screen when a game is about to take place. So most of my 'character stories' are about those of players who have sat in on my games. For some reason most of the stories I tell are about dead characters. Probably because I figure such unfortunates are fair game to be dusted off, tweaked, and turned into non-player characters for future campaigns. (*Face it, it's much easier to slip into the role of a character you spent hours upon hours watching develop at the table.*)

Every once in a while, however, a gamemaster runs across a player character who literally makes a campaign more enjoyable for all involved. For some reason, such characters stand out from the crowd. They're the ones you remember years after a campaign has ended. They are ones that are talked about when players who haven't seen each other in years bump into each other.

Such is the case with a strange character known fondly as Lizardman Jr.

Lizardman Junior's Tale

Junior started his career as a *Halfling Thief* named *Grover StoutLeggings*. He had a fairly promising career (18 dex!) but it ended abruptly when he was caught ransacking a high mage's study one rainy evening. As punishment for his crime he was polymorphed into a lowly, despised lizardman. It was enough to make David, his owning-player groan in despair. (*Incidentally, David was new to role-playing and Grover was his 'first' character*)

Grover was a few hundred points shy of reaching third level, so David felt he was worth salvaging. Perhaps a cure could be found for his humiliating affliction. The other players agreed. They would embark on a quest to find a cure for their comrade.

For weeks, Grover, roamed about the world, his sympathetic comrades in tow, as he searched for the solu-

tion to his dilemma. It reminded us of the television series, *The Incredible Hulk*™ as Grover wandered from place to place on his search, having interesting little adventures along the way. (*At one point, Grover returned home to the halfling village of his birth only to be pelted with stones and chased away.*)

Now a strange thing happened during their quest. Little by little, Lizardman Jr. (*the name his friends had taken to calling him*) was beginning to realize that being a lizardman had some distinct perks. His hit points, for example, were nearly triple what they had been when he was a halfling. And his lizzy-strength was herculean compared to his pitiful halfling stats. Best of all he had a presence that commanded fear from those he confronted.

As a halfling, Grover had always been the butt of everyone's jokes. It seemed to him that he had always been fleeing from opponents who had a size advantage. As a lizardman, however, he pretty much got what he wanted. The best seat. Why, at times, even his fellow adventurers seemed a bit intimidated by him. So it wasn't much of a surprise that one one night, as the party sat around the camp fire, sewing their wounds, that Junior announced the quest was ended. He would remain a lizardman.

His comrades were against the decision. They weren't keen on adventuring with a 'lizard'. He smelled funny and people gave the group queer looks when they strolled into town.

Besides, the group had chosen a life of crime as the path to fatter coin pouches. Junior stood out in a crowd, not a desirable trait for a group of thieves trying to pick pockets in the noon-day city crowds.

Junior insisted, and because his transformation came complete with a lizardman's temperament (short fuse), he prevailed.

Thus began the saga of Lizardman Jr. This loveable character bumped around Alderac (*my campaign world*) for months and was a countless source for hysterical outbreaks of laughter and amusement. One running gag that took place was Lizardman Jr. walking into a small village and being unable to find anyone to wait on him. (*The merchants usually fled out the back door of their establishments upon seeing an 8 foot lizardman stroll through the front door.*)

In these situations, Junior would pick out what he wanted to purchase, approximate their value and leave a like amount of coin on the counter before leaving. Of course his 'approximations' of value were always incredibly low. (*While David thought it important that Junior retain the honest nature of Grover, he conveniently maintained that the polymorphing process had lowered his ability to accurately approximate the value of goods.*)

The group became fond of Junior and soon the voices of dissention were silenced. Sure, he couldn't ride a horse well and his speech was pathetic, but Junior was

fun to be around. He was also a good person to have in your corner during a fight.

Junior's tale has a tragic ending I regret to say. One day the group wandered into a strange city and sought out a local bar. A round of drinks were ordered and the group began quaffing a few mugs of ale and sizing up the other patrons. When it came time to order a second round, someone pointed out that poor Junior had yet to be served his 'first' round. The barmaid was quickly reprimanded for her oversight. She brought it to the attention of the barkeep who in turn came to their table waving his hands and verbally lashing out at them. The group was a little surprised to hear the barkeep was stubbornly refusing to serve the 'scaly one'. Not only did he refuse to serve Junior, he was down right ugly toward him and insulting.

Words were further exchanged and soon a classic barroom brawl had broken out. When the dust settled the barkeep lay dead with Lizard Jr. standing over him. The city guard burst onto the scene at that very moment and after a brief scuffle, Junior was bound in chains and led away. *(The rest of the group, summing up the odds, wisely slipped away into the crowd.)*

As the rest of the party rode from the city, they vowed they would return and rescue their friend. The next day the city bells began to toll, summoning the citizenry to the market place to witness a trial. The crowds were buzzing with excitement because, as rumor had it, a lizardman was going to be put on trial for murder.

What followed was perhaps one the most enjoyable sessions I've ever run. A courtroom melodrama unfolded

(which was quite unplanned mind you) and the players were soon drawn into the action. When the high judge asked the crowd, "Who defends this creature?" one of his comrades stepped forward.

"I do!" he said proudly.

The trial was heated. Witnesses were called forth, but none of them could seem to agree on what had taken place. One claimed the barkeep had struck Junior first. Another witness claimed it was the other way around. The trial broke down into a heated volley of argument between the judge and the defending player. As it turned out lizardmen were forbidden to even enter the city at all — the punishment was death.

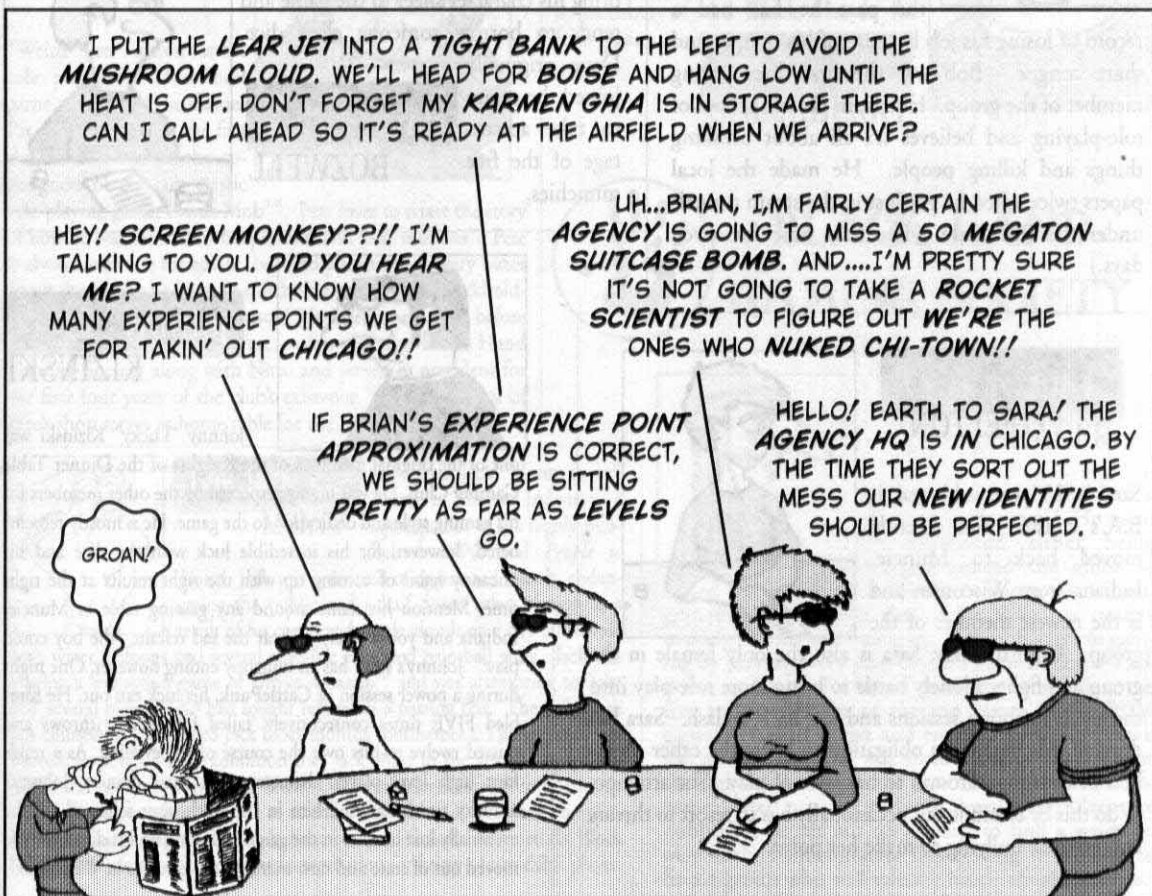
Unfortunately, in the process of the trial, the other players had implicated themselves when they admitted they had accompanied Junior into the city (which in itself, as it turned out, was a crime).

To make a long story short, Junior was condemned to die and his comrades were to be sold into slavery.

The group later managed to escape but before departing the area, one player bravely announced he was going back to retrieve Junior's remains. No, he didn't arrange to have Junior raised from the dead. *(As the player put it, "Who know what kind of mood he'd be in!")*

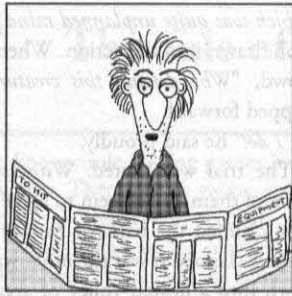
Instead he had a nice pair of lizardskin boots made from Junior's hide. "Don't worry, dude!" he said to Dave, "Where ever I go - Junior goes with me."

As far as I know, he proudly wears them to this very day. □



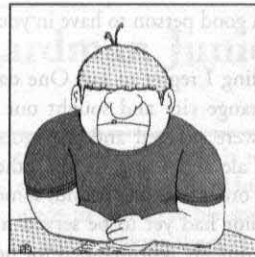
b.a.
FELTON

B.A. is 30 years old and lives with his mom. When he isn't gaming he works the late shift at Pizza A Go Go. 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. subsequently suffered a nervous breakdown and left gaming for a few years before once again picking up his dice bag. He founded the Knights of the Dinner Table.



brian
VAN HOOSE

Brian is 27 years old and lives alone. He manages to make a modest living operating a fee based gaming website 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™

bob
HERZOG

Bob is 26 years old and still lives with his parents. He currently works with 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.)



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



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 FIVE times consecutively, 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.



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



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.



BLACK HAND GAMING SOCIETY

flak jack MONTY

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 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.



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



“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.

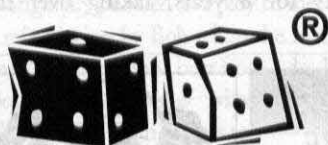


edmund

FINLEY

Edmund Finley was once Gary Jackson’s paperboy. One morning he was coerced into filling an empty chair

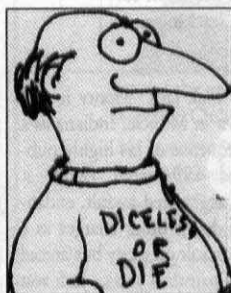
during a play-testing session of HackMaster and became ensnared in ‘Gary’s Game’. That was twenty years ago and Edmund has been on the Hard 8 team ever since (though he’s only been on the payroll for the past four months). Edmund wears the proud title of “Director of Research and Development” and recently oversaw the production of his first written work, **Abe, Babes and RollerBlades™**, described as a “sexy, zany, time-travelling romp through history and fashion”.



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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 fed-exed 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 heroes, Xena the Warrior Princess and her 'friend' Gabriel, to the next HackCon.

THE LAWS OF HACKQUITION

1. When in doubt, HACK!
2. Nothing beats a big ass sword.
3. Dragons are never to be trusted (see rule #1).
4. Hack first, don't bother with questions.
5. You aren't evil unless you think you are evil.
6. Bows are for wusses and elves (see rule #2).
7. Anything with multiple heads is BAD!
8. When given a choice between gold and items - take both. Hack makes right!
9. Never trust a GM, Smiling or otherwise. EVER!!!
10. Half of everything the GM says is made up and the other half can be overturned by Hack! (see rule #9).
11. If you don't understand something, then it must be destroyed.
12. Don't put off till tomorrow what you can hack today.
13. Liches suck no matter how you serve them.
14. If you disbelieve it, then it doesn't really exist.
15. It's never good to die on an empty stomach.
16. You are never outnumbered when you have the conga line of death on your side. *
17. Anyone who turns their back on you or exposes their weak side is inviting you to hack them.
18. Never turn your back on someone - one or expose your weak side. It's just an invitation for them to hack you.
19. He who hacks first - hacks best.
20. He who hacks last, loses out on experience points and treasure.
21. Never walk away from an opportunity to hack.

* *The conga line of death is when you are in a dungeon environment and face numerous opponents. Take two fighters and station them just inside a doorway. The monsters cannot utilize their greater numbers and are hacked to pieces one at a time by your fighters in the doorway. Sometimes it is nice to have a cleric just behind the fighters for emergency healing.*

Submitted by Matthew Fay



GRAVELY SPEAKING: Actual Epitaphs from Real Tombstones.

In a Ribbesford, England, cemetery:

"Anna Wallace

*The children of Israel wanted bread
And the Lord sent them manna,
Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife,
And the Devil sent him Anna."*

On the grave of Ezekial Aikle in East Dalhousie Cemetery, Nova Scotia:

*"Here lies Ezekial Aikle - Age 102
The Good Die Young."*

In a London, England cemetery:

*"Here lies Ann Mann,
Who lived an old maid
But died an old Mann."*

Memory of an accident in a Uniontown, Pennsylvania cemetery:

*"Here lies the body
of Jonathan Blake -
Stepped on the gas
Instead of the brake."*

In a Silver City, Nevada, cemetery:

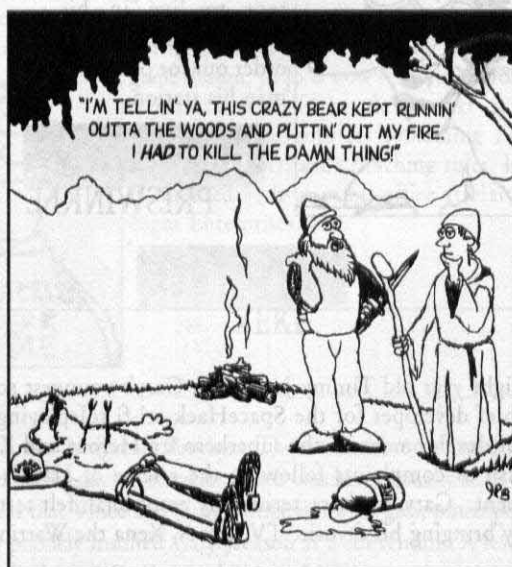
*"Here lays Butch,
We planted him raw.
He was quick on the trigger,
But slow on the draw."*

In a Ruidoso, New Mexico, cemetery:

*"Here lies Johnny Yeast
Pardon me for not rising."*

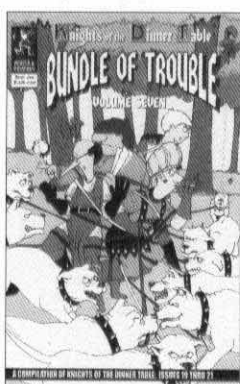
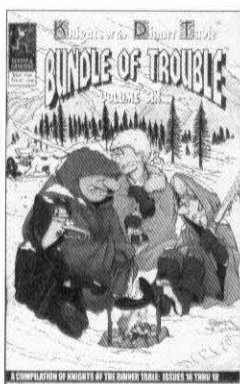
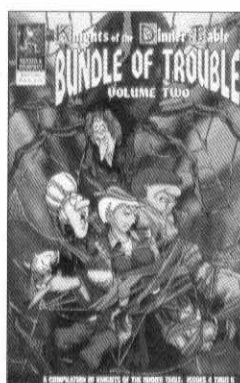
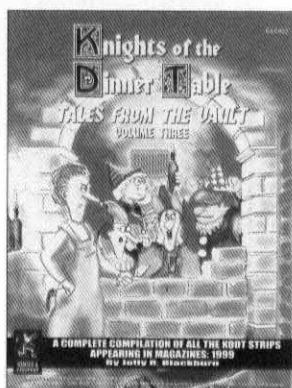
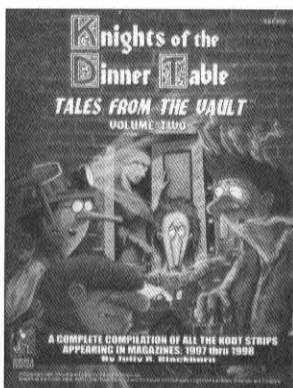
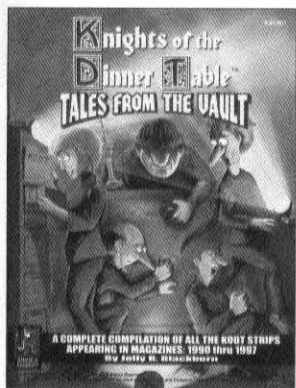


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Maggie Thompson
Editor, Comics Buyer's Guide

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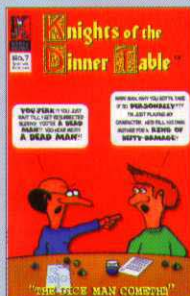
Joyce Greenbolt
Comic Buyer's Guide

"Since opening my own gaming shop, one of the hottest products to come through the doors has been Knights of the Dinner Table. Every issue sells off the shelves, and hardly any gaming session goes by where I do not hear, "I waste 'em with my crossbow!" or "Fireballs coming on-line!" It is a great magazine and reminds me why I opened this shop in the first place: because gaming is a really enjoyable hobby and I want to promote it as much as I can. KODT does the same thing."

Christopher Torres
Paradox Books

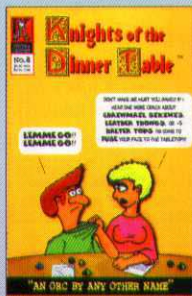
Knights of the Dinner Table
Issue #7

The Dice Man Cometh!!
Originally Published: May, 1997



Knights of the Dinner Table
Issue #8

An Orc By Any Other Name
Originally Published: June, 1997



Knights of the Dinner Table
Issue #9

Two Dice for Sister Sara
Originally Published: July, 1997

