

KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the **D**inner **T**able™

BUNDLE OF TROUBLE™

VOLUME FOUR

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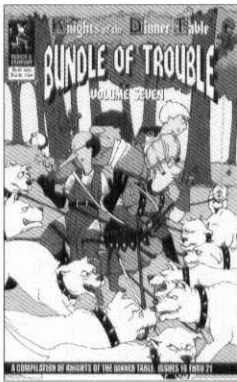
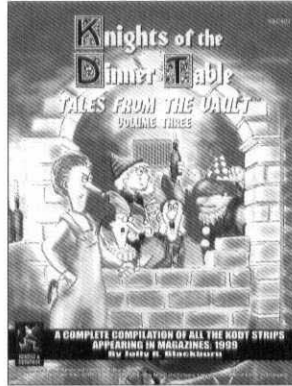
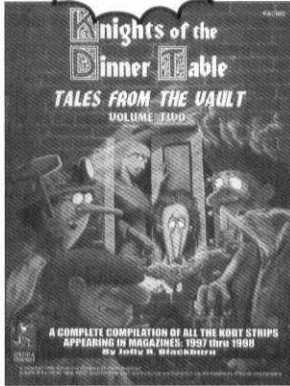
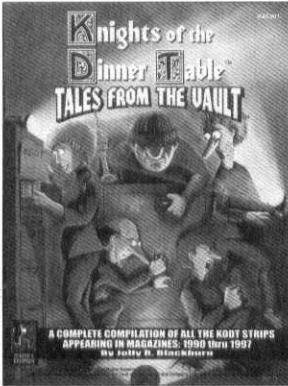


A COMPILATION OF KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE: ISSUES 10 THRU 12



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Bundle of Trouble
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Knights of the Dinner Table™

BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOLUME FOUR

The KODT Development Team is
Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,
Steve Johansson and 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). Nine years later, he continues to draw and write strips for the monthly Knights of the Dinner Table™ magazine. 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 10 thru 12

Let the Dice Fall Where They May • When in Doubt...Hack!!! • The Good, The Bad, and the Unlucky!

Editorial of a Madman

"That's the trouble with this business...when you make a mistake 50,000 people see it!"

Bill Peterson
Printing "Guru"

Several years ago, after separating from the Army, I walked into a print shop in Columbia, South Carolina in response to a help wanted sign hanging in the window. When the manager, Bill, learned I had no experience in the printing business he abruptly turned me away. A week later I noticed the classified was still running in the paper and a plan formulated in my mind. With a little work I managed to get Bill's home phone number. Determined to change his mind I interrupted him while he was eating dinner.

"Look," I said, "I want this job very badly. I want to LEARN the printing business. Let me come in and hang around your shop until you find somebody for the job. I'll work for free in exchange for the learning experience."

The was a moment of silence. Then I could hear Bill's muffled voice as he relayed the offer to his wife.

"I like your attitude!" he finally replied, "Be at my shop at 8 a.m. I'll teach ya."

I hung up the phone, climbed up on the dinner table and did a modified hoody-hoo jig. I ended up getting the job but as it turned out Bill wasn't exactly the best mentor I could have chosen from whom to learn the ropes. I later learned he had been a truck driver most of his life and had himself only recently jumped into the printing business.

Even so, I learned a lot working under Bill's tutelage. How to do layout, shoot film, make plates, run a press, bind books, silk screen t-shirts, curse the copy machine, etc. (I even learned how to rock the vending machines in front of the shop in order to obtain free soda and snacks - but, uh, that's another story.)

Some lessons, however, came a little harder than others. One day Bill came back to my office to inform me that a \$12,000 dollar print job for a major hotel chain had been refused. The reason? A single typo.

He wasn't a happy camper and I honestly thought it had cost me my job.

Seeing the panic on my face, Bill softened and said, "Oh hell,

it's not THAT bad. Don't sweat it. It's just paper. That's the trouble with this business. Write a letter to your girlfriend and make a mistake - one person knows about it. Make a mistake on the press and 50,000 people see it."

I was reminded of Bill recently at a convention when a reader cornered me to ask if the strips in the Bundle of Troubles were exactly the same as the strips in the original issues of KoDT.

Rather sheepishly, I replied, "Why? What have you heard? Who's been talking?"

I was surprised when he opened his Bundle of Trouble Volume Two and pointed to a page saying, "Bob's head is turned in a different direction in this panel. And his facial expressions are different from the original strip. Also on this page the original version said 'horde' but now it says, 'board'"

Okay, so it's true. We do take the opportunity, when compiling issues into a Bundle of Trouble to tidy things up a bit. One of the reasons we're grateful for the Bundle of Trouble volumes is that it gives us a chance to clean up some of those old mistakes (and, being an imperfect world, I'm sure some new mistakes are introduced in the process).

In the rush to meet deadlines we do make mistakes. Sure we know the difference between 'horde' and 'board'. And yes, we know the difference between 'here' and 'hear'. The struggle for perfection will continue, even if victory continues to be elusive. (sigh). We haven't thrown in the [green] towel — yet.

Typo-demons be damned! There may not be any second chances in life but there ARE new volumes of Bundle of Trouble down the road. (By the way, as far as future Bundle of Troubles are concerned, if you want to help the cause you can E-mail any typos/errors you find in an issue of KODT to BarbWryter@aol.com.)

Well, here's hopping you enjoy Volume IV. Somebody hand me the whiteout....

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn

HEY BRIAN, YOU THINK **YOUR CHARACTER** COULD TEACH **MY CHARACTER** HOW TO **DANCE** LIKE THAT? THAT WAS **FRICKIN' AWESOME!**

SURE. STEP OUTSIDE WITH ME AND I'LL TEACH YOU THE BASICS. OH, AND BRING A TWENTY SIDER!

WOW. **ALL THESE YEARS** AND I **NEVER** NOTICED THOSE **BALL ROOM DANCING** MODIFIERS TO ON THE **SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT TABLES**.

YOU SURE HAVE **PRINCESS VANATINE** EATING OUT OF THE PALM OF YOUR HAND.

AND MAY I HAVE THE NEXT DANCE, **SIR TEFLON??**

SORRY SARA, YOUR **SOCIAL STATUS** IS ONLY **MIDDLE MIDDLE CLASS**. MY **STATUS** WOULD **PLUMMET** IF WE DANCED TOGETHER.



Knights of the Dinner Table™

“Let the Dice Fall Where They May”

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



**KENZER AND
COMPANY**

Knights of the Dinner Table #10
“Let the Dice Fall Where They May”
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Submissions: We accept submis-
sions for strip ideas, jokes, car-
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S.A.S.E. for writer's guidelines to
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Editorial of a Madman

"Bernie throw me a sword!!! Bernie?? Bernie???"

Bernie Willowleaf! Of all the characters I've run over the years, he has to rank as my favorite. Before Bernie came along all my characters were of the Conan variety - characters who didn't know the meaning of fear and relished the fight almost as much as the spoils that came with victory.

Bernie was cut from a different kind of fabric, however. The GM I was playing under at the time was a particularly vicious power monger.

He demanded that we "play 'em as we roll 'em." Meaning, you rolled once for each stat and that was the character you ran until he died in game play.

Needless to say, from time to time, players saddled with characters who had deplorable stats would 'kamikaze' their characters so they could roll up a new one. (*One of my fondest role-playing memories was the night Toby the Gnome assassin leapt into the jowls of a red dragon with a flaming oil flask in each hand while screaming, "Top of the world, Ma!"*)

One night, after a nasty run in with a band of trolls I found myself without a character. That was the night I created Bernie. The little guy had the most miserable stats you've ever seen. With his raw stats, the only thing he was qualified to be was a common fighter.

Changing his race to Halfling, however, raised his Dexterity so he could just barely make the minimum requirement to be a thief. Next I rolled for his hit-points and came up with a four!

There I was with a first-level thief with the life expectancy of a gnat. As I sat there filling out my character sheet, one of the other players pointed out that a single blow from a fist attack would very likely kill little Bernie. My face turned red with shame as the table exploded in mocking laughter.

When I came to the area on my character sheet entitled, "Weaknesses" I paused for a moment and put down, "*Bernie is a coward. Deathly afraid of being killed.*" That was the point of departure - the trail less traveled that made all the difference.

That's what made Bernie different from any other character I had ever run. He was mortal and he damn well knew it. And that's the way I played him. Bernie's goal in life, I decided, was to survive.

Bernie quickly came to be known by the nickname, "Klang Clop Clop Clop" or "Klang" for short. He earned that title because invariably, whenever the party was faced with imminent danger, Bernie would drop his sword (Klang!) and run away (Clop, Clop, Clop). Though the allure of gold and treasure was great, survival was the foremost thing on his mind.

Now, you would think the other party members would quickly turn Bernie into dragon bait. After all, he was the first to run away, but always managed to show up later when the spoils were being divided.

For some reason, Little Bernie's cowardice endeared him to the other players. They liked having him around. Even though you couldn't count on him in the heat of battle he was always a good source of laughs and amusement.

Once an NPC hireling, a lowly zero level torchbearer insulted Bernie for running away from a battle and leaving the party's backs exposed.

Bernie was a coward, it was true, but he wasn't about to take any lip from a lowly zero-level type. He shoved the torchbearer and demanded an apology. The torchbearer responded by whacking him on the head with a torch, instantly killing poor Bernie.

I was reminded of Bernie and that torchbearer the other day when a reader asked me where the idea for the feud between Little KnobbyFoot and Bob had come from.

I don't think there are many players out there who can actually say they've had a character killed by a torchbearer. And if there are, I'm fairly certain no one else would admit to it, in public at least.

Well, as I close for this month, it occurs to me that I'm about to put the tenth issue of KODT to bed. Ten issues?? Who would have thought the silly little strip I threw together to fill up space seven years ago would provide enough material to fill more than 320 pages of comic book?

An impossible task had it not been for so many wonderful ideas and suggestions from our readers. Remember, if you have ideas or a funny recollections you think would make a good strip, let me know. I'd love to hear them. I'm also interested in hearing your comments from issue to issue. How are we doing?

If you can't find KODT at your local shop please let your retailer know that the comic is available through most game distributors as well as Diamond Comics. Back issues are available as well. If your local shop is having trouble finding KODT, have them call (847) 540-1970 so we can send them a list of distributors that carry us.

Until next month, good gaming!

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn

July 6, 1997

Let the GM Be a Lady Tonight!

STORY SUGGESTED BY HAL MCKINNEY

OKAY, THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE OF PLANS FOR TONIGHT. AS YOU KNOW, **SARA** IS GOING TO BE RUNNING A **HACK-MASTER ADVENTURE** AT **GARYCON** NEXT MONTH. SHE'D LIKE AN OPPORTUNITY TO **PLAYTEST** HER ADVENTURE SO SHE CAN FINE TUNE IT.

MAN, NO OFFENSE BUT I'VE HAD NOTHING BUT **BAD EXPERIENCES** WITH FEMALE GAMEMASTERS!!! REMEMBER **PATTI GAUZWELER**?? SHE USED TO HAND OUT **M&M'S** FOR EXPERIENCE POINTS.

CRIPES!! I CAME TO GAME TONIGHT. NOT PLAY GUINEA PIG TO SOME **BARBIE-AND-KEN** ROMANCE NOVEL!!

NO WAY B.A.!!! TEFLON BILLY ONLY NEEDS 350 E.P. TO ADVANCE. I NEED TO EARN SOME **REAL** EXPERIENCE POINTS TONIGHT!



LOOK YOU GUYS!!! WEEK AFTER WEEK I COME HERE TO PLAY. I MAY COMPLAIN FROM TIME TO TIME BECAUSE OUR STYLES OF PLAY DIFFER, BUT FOR THE MOST PART **YOU GUYS ALWAYS GET YOUR WAY**. WELL THIS TIME I'M PUTTING **MY FOOT DOWN**. WE'RE GOING TO GAME TONIGHT AND I'M AT THE HELM. **UNDERSTAND????**

GIVE 'EM BOTH BARRELS SARA!!

NOTHING PERSONAL MISSY, I DON'T THINK YOUR SHOULDERS ARE BROAD ENOUGH TO BEAR THE RANK OF GAMEMASTER!!

IT'S ONE THING TO LET A GIRL PLAY A MAN'S GAME. BUT A GIRL **RUNNING** A MAN'S GAME?? NO WAY!!

EXACTLY!!!! THE TITLE IS GAMEMASTER!!! NOT GAMEMISTRESS!!! THE GM SCREEN IS THE LINE IN THIS GROUP!!! NO FEMALE GAMEMASTERS!!



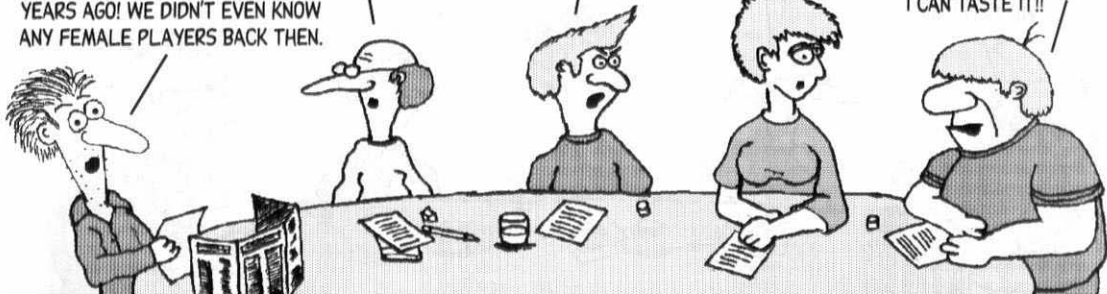
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?? YOU SHOULD HAVE NIPPED THIS IN THE BUD BEFORE WE GOT HERE. YOU KNOW THE CLUB BYLAWS SPECIFICALLY PROHIBIT FEMALES FROM RUNNING A GAME.

BUT WE WROTE THOSE RULES 15 YEARS AGO! WE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ANY FEMALE PLAYERS BACK THEN.

THERE ARE JUST SOME PLACES A WOMAN SHOULDN'T GO!!! THE MEN'S RESTROOM, FOOSBALL TOURNAMENTS AND BEHIND THE GM SCREEN. OH...AND THE BACK ROOM AT GILLY'S USED BOOKSTORE.

BRIAN? YOU? YOU'RE NOT SLIPPORTING ME ON THIS?? I... I'M CRUSHED.

SORRY SARA!! YOU KNOW TEFLON BILLY CRAVES POWER! I'M SO CLOSE TO 19TH LEVEL I CAN TASTE IT!!



WHO'S GONNA **KEEP** ME OUT OF THAT BACK ROOM DAVE??? HUH??? **YOU!!!**
YOU GONNA KEEP ME FROM CLIMBING BEHIND THAT GM SCREEN TOO?? **HUH, BUDDY**
BOY!!! I EVER TELL YOU WHAT I DID TO THE FORMER BOY'S BASKETBALL COACH AT
WAUWATOSA HIGH SCHOOL??

GAAAA!! WHAT THE
HELL?? SHE HAS
REFLEXES LIKE A COBRA!!!

(SPUTT... SPUTTER...)

I'M SORRY!! YOU CAN GM!!

COME ON, I SAID,

YOU CAN GM!!
PALEEZE LEGGO SARA!!

(GASP)

OH MY GAWD!!! **SHE'S**
ON THE EDGE!!
DAVE, APOLOGIZE.
QUICK!!

BACK ROOM AT
GILLY'S?? WHAT'S IN
THE BACK ROOM AT
GILLY'S??



TWENTY MINUTES LATER

OKAY, WE WILL BE USING THE OPTIONAL
RULES FROM **HACKMASTER:**
BRINGING DOWN THE
HOUSE. FOR THOSE OF YOU NOT
FAMILIAR WITH THOSE RULES, THEY
PROVIDE A **DICELESS ENGINE**
FOR **HACKMASTER!!**

I SWEAR TO GAWD!!
I DIDN'T KNOW
ANYTHING ABOUT
THIS GUYS!

DICELESS???
DICELESS!!
YOU MEAN LIKE IN **NO**
DICE?? HUH??

DICELESS!! MOTHER
OF BLESSED DICE-ROLLS
PRESERVE US.
I HEAR THE BARBARIANS
POUNING AT THE GATES!!!
WITHOUT DICE WE ARE MERE
PAWNS OF THE GAMEMASTER.



DICELESS!!



OPEN YOUR
MINDS GUYS!!
IT'S DICELESS TONIGHT SO
GET USED TO IT. AND JUST
SO THERE ARE NO
DISTRACTIONS, LET ME SEE
YOU PASS THOSE DICE BAGS
DOWN THIS WAY.

NOBODY TOUCHES
MY DICE!!!!
NOBODY!!

WELL IT SOUNDS
LIKE FUN. YOU CAN
HAVE MY DICE!

YOU CAN'T TAKE A MAN'S DICE!! IF WE
CAN'T ROLL THEM CAN'T WE JUST HOLD
THEM IN OUR HANDS FOR COMFORT?

SARA YOU CAN HAVE MY DICE
WHEN YOU PRY THEM FROM MY
COLD DEAD FINGERS!!!!



Another manifestation of Bob's dice fetish. See Bundle of Trouble Volume Two [KoDT #6] "The Safety Lecture" for a more vivid example. - Steve

COME ON GUYS. PASS 'EM DOWN. I KNOW YOU! IT'S TOO MUCH TEMPTATION. YOU'LL START ROLLING YOUR DICE FOR EVERY STUPID LITTLE DECISION LIKE WHAT ITEMS TO GET ON YOUR PIZZA OR HOW MANY TIMES YOU CHEW YOUR FOOD.

YOU'RE NOT A MAN SARA!! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW IT IS. NOT ROLLING DICE IS LIKE SITTING IN THE BACK SEAT OF YOUR OWN CAR WHILE SOMEONE ELSE DRIVES.

WELL, I CAN'T AFFORD ANY NEW SHIRTS. I YIELD, BUT LET THE CLUB MINUTES SHOW THAT I DID SO UNDER PROTEST!!

COME ON GUYS!!! THE SOONER YOU PLAY ALONG THE SOONER IT WILL BE OVER.

I'M NOT HANDING OVER MY DICE BUT I'LL LOCK THEM IN MY BRIEF CASE WHERE I CAN'T GET AT 'EM. IF WORD OF THIS GETS OUT, I SWEAR I'LL COME LOOKING FOR YOU GUYS!



LATER...

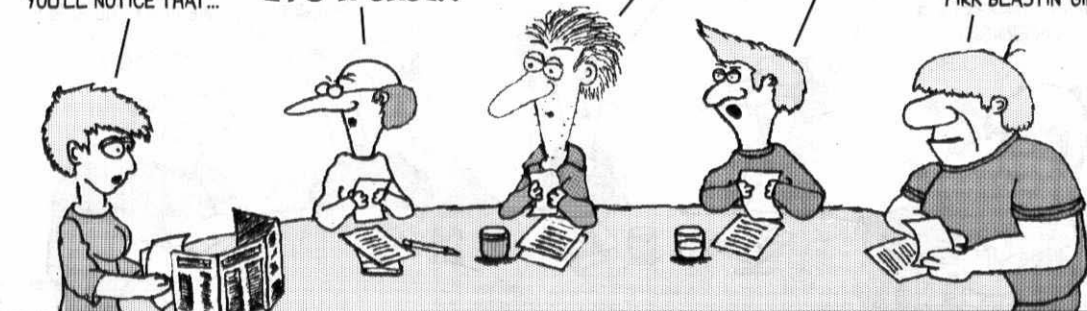
OKAY, YOU SHOULD EACH HAVE YOUR PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS BEFORE YOU. YOU'LL NOTICE THAT...

I THINK YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE BROOM HILDA!!! THIS AIN'T NO CHARACTER...IT'S... **IT'S A BABE!!**

WELL THE NAME OF THE GAME IS ROLEPLAYING. I HAVE NO PROBLEMS PLAYING THIS CHARACTER.

I WANNA PLAY TEFLON BILLY!! I AIN'T PLAYIN' NO FIRK BLASTIN' GIRL!!!

MINE TOO!! SORRY, I DON'T PLAY NO DAME CHARACTERS. TOO BAD, THIS BABE HAS REALLY GREAT STATS.



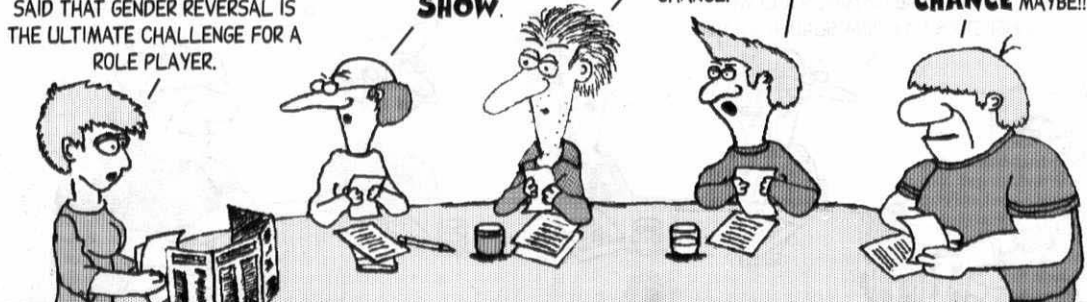
WELL WHEN THE TESTOSTERONE POISONING CLEARS UP, LET ME KNOW. I THOUGHT I WAS PLAYING WITH A GROUP OF SEASONED VETERANS HERE. EVEN **GARY JACKSON** RAN A FEMALE CHARACTER AT GARYCON 94. HE SAID THAT GENDER REVERSAL IS THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE FOR A ROLE PLAYER.

NOT ME!! ROLE-PLAY A BABE AND YOU END UP WEARING BLACK LEATHER AND FISHNET STOCKINGS. I SAW IT HAPPEN TO A GUY IN KOKOMO ONCE. HE WAS ON THE **RICKY LAKE SHOW**.

MY PARENTS ARE ALREADY THREATENING TO SEND ME TO THERAPY OVER THAT VAMPIRE THING*. THIS WOULD ONLY GIVE THEM EXTRA AMMUNITION.

COME ON!! LET'S GIVE SARA A CHANCE.

WE'LL GIVE HER A CHANCE. A **FAT CHANCE** MAYBE!!



* See Bundle of Trouble Volume One [KODT#2] "Lords of Darkness"

OKAY, I DIDN'T WANT TO PLAY HARBALL BUT YOU'VE LEFT ME NO CHOICE. YOU GUYS CUT THE FLAK AND PLAY YOUR CHARACTERS OR I PHONE **WEIRD PETE** AND TELL HIM IT WAS YOU GUYS WHO UNLOADED ALL THOSE **COUNTERFEIT BLACK-BORDER SPELLJACKED CARDS** ON HIM LAST MONTH!!!

HEY IT WASN'T ME!!
I ONLY PURCHASED THE BLACK MAGIC MARKER. **MISTER STEADY-HANDS** OVER THERE WAS THE ONE WHO ACTUALLY BLACKENED IN THE WHITE BORDERS.

WAIT A MINUTE!! YOU MEAN TO TELL ME IT WAS YOU GUYS WHO CAUSED **THE CRASH!!** SPELLJACKED CARD VALUES PLUMMETED AFTER THAT INCIDENT!!

YOU LOUSY SNITCH!! WELL IT WAS BRIAN WHO ACTUALLY PAWNED THEM OFF ON WEIRD PETE. I AIN'T TAKIN THE FALL FOR NONE OF YOU!!

HEY, WE HAD AN OATH OF SILENCE!!! SHEESH!!!!



WE JUST WANTED TO RAISE A LITTLE QUICK CASH SO WE COULD BUY THE NEW **PLAYER ADVANTAGE GEAR** GARY JACKSON IS PUTTING OUT. WE HAD NO IDEA ALL THOSE DOCTORED WHITE-BORDER CARDS WOULD CAUSE A PANIC!!

THERE'S STILL A LYNCH MOB ATMOSPHERE BREWING OUT THERE. YOU CAN'T PUT THE FINGER ON US SARA. YOU JUST CAN'T!!!

IT'S NOT LIKE I COULDN'T USE THAT FIFTY DOLLAR REWARD WEIRD PETE IS OFFERING.

MY GAWD!!! IT WAS ALL BECAUSE OF YOU GUYS?? THE UGLY MOB THAT TURNED OVER WEIRD PETE'S VW VAN? GAMING DICK BEING TARRD AND FEATHERED??

SO THE GAME IS BLACKMAIL NOW, IS THAT IT?? DING BLAST IT!! LOOKS LIKE WE PLAY THE BABES.



AS THE ADVENTURE UNFOLDS...

AS YOU ENTER THE MARKETPLACE AN OLD MAN APPROACHES BOB. "BEAUTIFUL LADY" HE WHISPERS, "I KNOW WHY YOU ARE HERE! I CAN HELP YOU GAIN ENTRY TO THE ROYAL PALACE, BUT IT WILL COST YOU SOME HARD COIN!!"

I DON'T TRUST THIS GUY. IS HE STARING AT MY CHEST? I SWEAR IF ANOTHER CREEP TOUCHES ME OR MAKES A LEWD SUGGESTION I'M GONNA SLAUGHTER HIM.

WHAT AM I? INVISIBLE?? HOW COME NOBODY HITS ON ME?

RELAX BOB, WITH AN 18 BEAUTY AND A 15 FLIRTATION FACTOR YOU'RE BOUND TO ATTRACT A FEW FLIES.



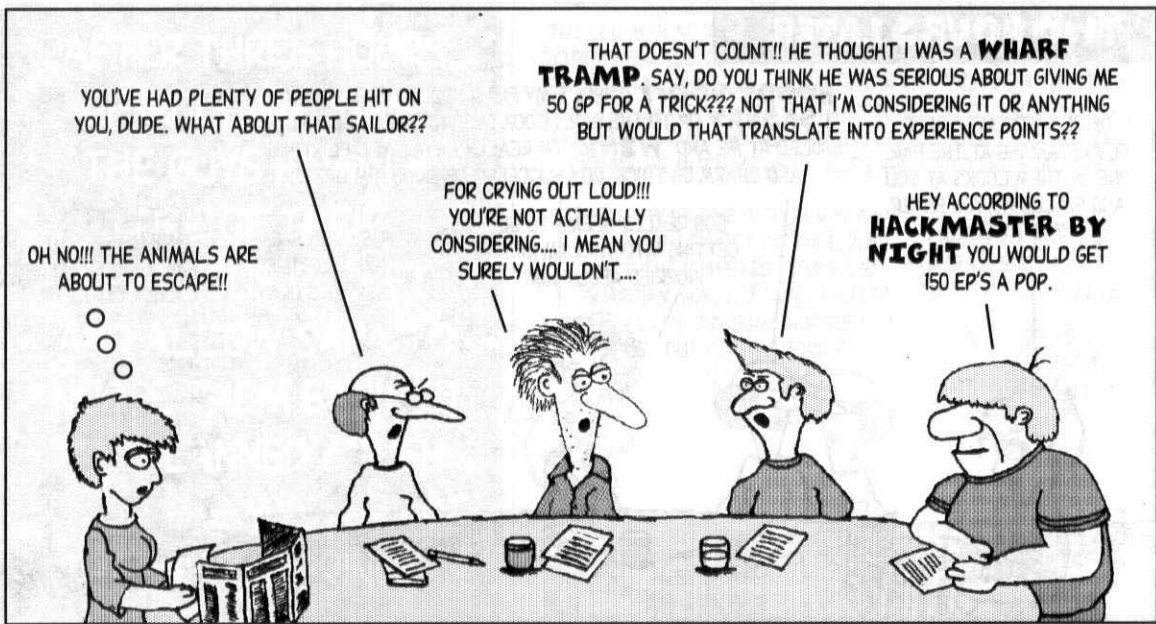
YOU'VE HAD PLENTY OF PEOPLE HIT ON YOU, DUDE. WHAT ABOUT THAT SAILOR??

THAT DOESN'T COUNT!! HE THOUGHT I WAS A **WHARF TRAMP**. SAY, DO YOU THINK HE WAS SERIOUS ABOUT GIVING ME 50 GP FOR A TRICK??? NOT THAT I'M CONSIDERING IT OR ANYTHING BUT WOULD THAT TRANSLATE INTO EXPERIENCE POINTS??

OH NO!!! THE ANIMALS ARE ABOUT TO ESCAPE!!

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!! YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY CONSIDERING.... I MEAN YOU SURELY WOULDN'T....

HEY ACCORDING TO **HACKMASTER BY NIGHT** YOU WOULD GET 150 EP'S A POP.



HMMMMM... NOT MUCH REALLY. BUT HOW MANY TRICKS COULD A GUY...ER, I MEAN A BABE CRANK OUT EACH TURN?? IT COULD REALLY ADD UP YA KNOW??

DAVE, YOUR CHARACTER IS **LAWFUL GOOD** AND OF **HIGH SOCIAL STANDING!!** BE SERIOUS. I REALLY DON'T THINK SHE WOULD CONSIDER TURNING TRICKS ON THE WATERFRONT FOR LONELY SAILORS.

SARA IS RIGHT DUDE. YOU'RE A CLASS BABE!! YOU SHOULD BE WORKING THE TEMPLE DISTRICT WHERE THE POLITICIANS HANG OUT. YOU COULD CLEAN UP!

BUT GUYS...
YEAH! WHY SHOULD I SELL MYSELF SHORT?



YOU THINKING OF HEADING THAT WAY?? I UH... I THINK I MIGHT JOIN YOU.

COME ON GUYS THIS IS THE WORST PLAN YOU'VE EVER HAD. YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING...

ARE YOU DEAF?? THE EXPERIENCE POINTS MAN!!! THINK OF THE **EXPERIENCE POINTS!!** WE'RE JUST TRYING TO GET AHEAD IN LIFE.

GUYS??? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING PRINCE.

TOO BAD WE'RE DICELESS TONIGHT. LIPSTICK AND EYE SHADOW ADD +5 TO A SEDUCTION ROLL.



TWO HOURS LATER...

OKAY, THERE ARE THREE GUYS STANDING AT THE BAR. ONE OF THEM LOOKS AT YOU AND SMILES AS YOU ENTER THE TAVERN!!

HOODY-HOO!! THERE'S MY FISH!! NOW TO REEL HIM IN. I **SASHAY** UP TO THE BAR. I LOOK OVER AT THE DUDE WHO SMILED AT ME AND **WINK**. I'M REALLY LAYING THE FLIRTING AND CHARM ON THICK. DO I SUCCEED IN PICKING HIM UP?

BOB REALLY SEEMS TO BE GETTING INTO THIS. I'M KINDA WORRIED ABOUT HIM.

IT'S JUST THE THRILL OF THE HUNT!!! HE'S OKAY.

I DON'T KNOW! EVERY TIME HE BATS HIS EYELASHES I FEEL KINDA QUEASY.



(SIGH) OKAY, HE'S CHARMED. THE OLD GUY IS PUTTY IN YOUR HANDS.

KEWL BEANS!! I'LL TAKE HIM BY THE ARM AND LEAD HIM OUT THE BACK DOOR OF THE TAVERN. MAN, THIS IS TOO EASY!!!! **I RULE!!**

OKAY DAVE, IT'S YOUR TURN TO ROLL THE JOHN.

YEAH, YEAH, I'M ON IT. OKAY, AS SOON AS THEY STEP OUTSIDE I EMERGE FROM THE SHADOWS AND STAB THE OLD GEEZER IN THE BACK!!!

ME AND B.A. DRAG HIM INTO THE STABLE AND SEARCH THE BODY BEFORE HIDING IT WITH THE OTHERS IN THE HAYLOFT.



OKAY, HE WAS CARRYING A RUBY WORTH 1,500 GP AND 100 GOLD PIECES.

CHECK IT OUT DUDE!! THAT ONE MAKES FIFTY ON MY TALLY!!!! I'M FIVE JOHNS AHEAD OF YOU NOW!!!! **CAN'T TOUCH THIS!!**

NO WAY!!! THAT ONE DUDE DOESN'T COUNT!! HE WAS JUST COMING OUT TO TAKE A LEAK!!! BESIDES, YOU'VE BEEN PICKING UP ANYTHING THAT MOVES. I'M A LITTLE MORE SELECTIVE.

YOU SHOULD BE VERY PROUD BOB!

HEY, WE'RE CLEANING UP!!! THAT MAKES A TOTAL OF 7,000 EXPERIENCE POINTS!!! NOT TO MENTION ALL THE KEWL STUFF WE'VE ACCUMULATED.



AFTER THREE HOURS OF 'ROLLING JOHNS' THE GUYS FINALLY TIRE OF THEIR NEFARIOUS RACKET AND ALLOW SARA TO NUDGE THEM BACK TO THE PLANNED ADVENTURE: THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING PRINCE!!!

THE OLD MAN ACCEPTS THE COIN POUCH YOU'VE OFFERED HIM AND MOTIONS FOR YOU TO LEAN IN CLOSE. "THE PRINCE IS BEING HELD BY THE **DARK MAGE, SINAR** IN THE **TOWER AKULA** ALONG THE GALUNDEER ROAD SOUTH OF TOWN." HE CAUTIONS YOU THAT THE MAGE IS EVIL AND VERY POWERFUL. "HE WILL KNOW YOU ARE COMING" HE MUTTERS AS HE SLIPS AWAY INTO THE SHADOWS.

WELL LOOKS LIKE A SIMPLE IN-AND-OUT JOB. I EXPECT WE WILL RUN INTO THE STANDARD TRAPS AND GUARDIAN MONSTERS. WE'LL EQUIP OURSELVES, BUY SOME HORSES AND SET OUT FOR THE TOWER.

I WOULDN'T UNDERESTIMATE SARA. I'M SURE SHE HAS A FEW TRICKS UP HER SLEEVES.



LATER...

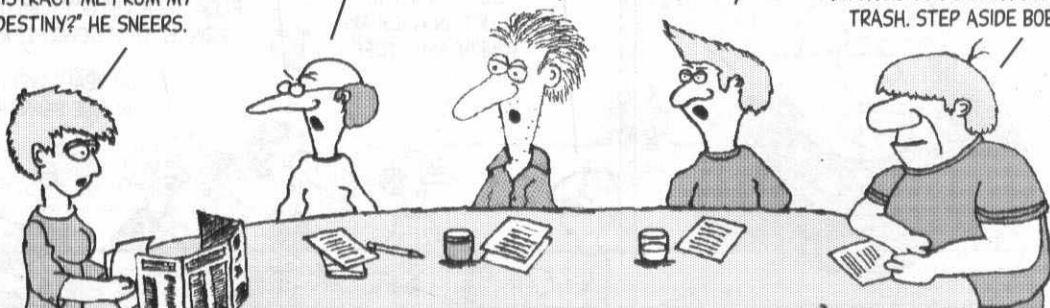
I'M SORRY BOB, **SINAR** SHUNS YOUR ADVANCES. "DO YOU THINK YOUR WARM EMBRACES CAN DISTRACT ME FROM MY DESTINY?" HE SNEERS.

WAAA...WHAT?? IS HE BLIND OR SOMETHING?? WHAT DO YOU MEAN HE SHUNS ME?? HE CAN'T SHUN ME?? I SHUN HIM!! WHAT'S HE THINK ABOUT THAT??

DAMN! TURN ON THE TEARS, BOB!! THE TEARS ALWAYS GET TO THEM.

THERE, YOU SEE? I KNEW YOU SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH THE LAVENDER EVENING GOWN. LEATHER IS TACKY TO THESE THINKING TYPES.

OBVIOUSLY THIS DUDE IS A MAN OF CLASS. HE DOESN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH STREET TRASH. STEP ASIDE BOB.



LATER STILL...

OKAY, HANGING FROM THE CEILING IS A SMALL CAGE WITH A VERY LARGE BULLFROG SITTING IN IT. AS YOU APPROACH, THE FROG YELLS OUT, "PLEASE! KIND MAIDENS, SAVE ME!! I AM **PRINCE KEVAR** AND I AM BEING HELD PRISONER!!

OBVIOUSLY, SINAR POLYMORPHED HIM WITH A POWERFUL SPELL. TOO BAD WE HACKED HIM TO BITS. HE MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO REVERSE THE SPELL.

A FROG?? A FREAKIN' FROG?? WE CAME ALL THIS WAY TO SAVE SOME FREAKIN' FROG??

HEY, LET'S KISS THE FROG!! IT ALWAYS WORKS IN THOSE STORIES.

I AIN'T KISSIN' NO FROG!!



MANY KISSES LATER...

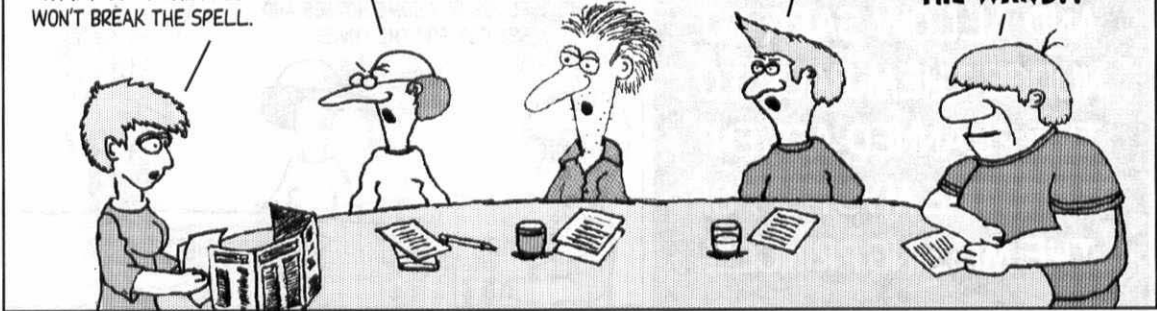
OKAY, I KISSED THE FROG REALLY HARD THAT TIME. ANYTHING HAPPEN?? HUH??

WELL, I'M PERPLEXED. WE CAN'T TAKE THE PRINCE BACK TO HIS FATHER AS A FROG.

THE HELL WITH IT. LET'S KILL THE FROG AND TELL THE KING THE MAGE DID IT!! ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING PRINCE. NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT RETURNING HIM. BESIDES, WE MADE OUT LIKE BANDITS WITH ALL THE KEWL STUFF WE TOOK FROM **SINAR'S LAB!!**

SINAR'S LAB!! WAIT!!! THAT'S IT!!! WE FORGOT ABOUT **THE WAND!!**

YEAH, THE FROG BEGS YOU NOT TO DO IT AGAIN. COME ON GUYS, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT KISSING THE FROG WON'T BREAK THE SPELL.



I WAVE THE WAND OVER THE FROG!!

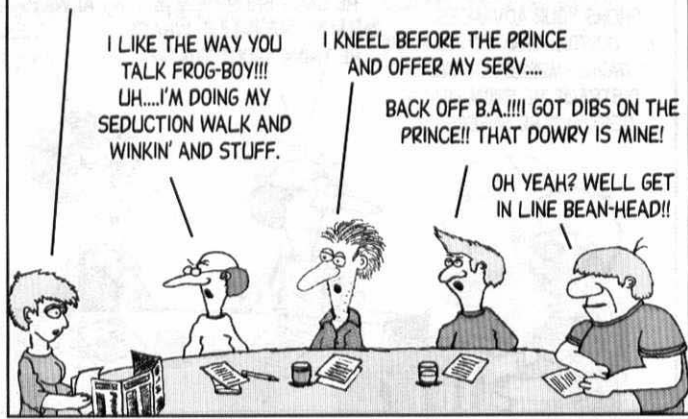
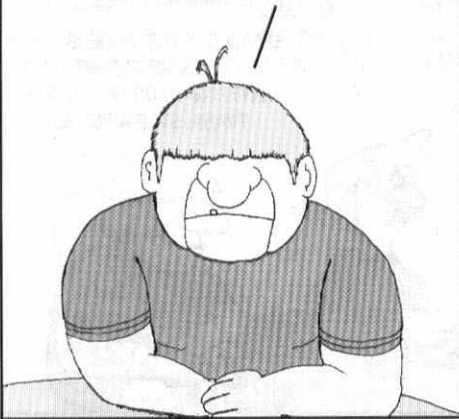
GOOD JOB BRIAN!! THE FROG BEGINS TO SHIMMER AND SUDDENLY TURNS INTO A HANDSOME YOUNG MAN. THE PRINCE BOWS BEFORE YOU. "THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE!" HE SAYS, "YOUR REWARD SHALL BE GREAT!"

I LIKE THE WAY YOU TALK FROG-BOY!!! UH...I'M DOING MY SEDUCTION WALK AND WINKIN' AND STUFF.

I KNEEL BEFORE THE PRINCE AND OFFER MY SERV...

BACK OFF B.A.!!!! GOT DIBS ON THE PRINCE!! THAT DOWRY IS MINE!

OH YEAH? WELL GET IN LINE BEAN-HEAD!!



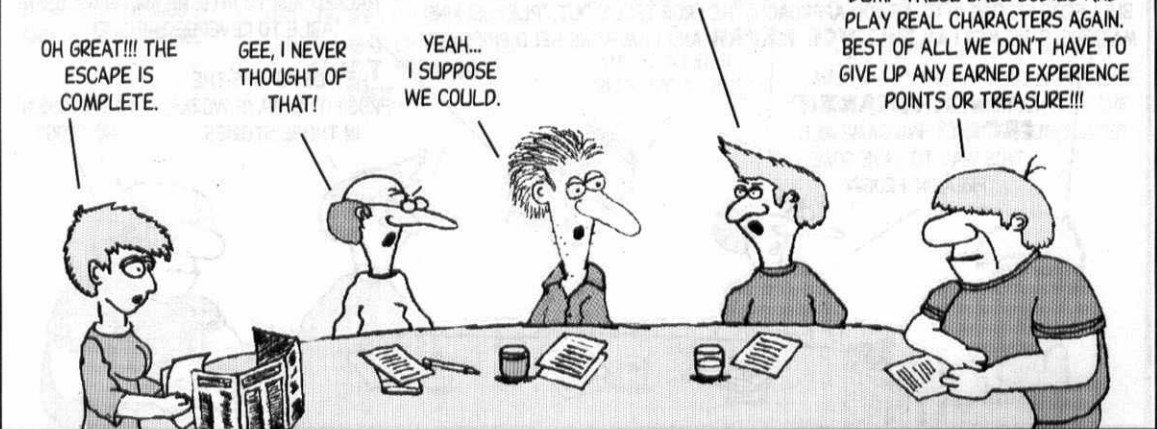
HEY!! WAIT A SEC!! I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING. IF THAT THING IS A WAND OF POLYMORPHING WE COULD POLYMORPH OUR CHARACTERS INTO **MEN!!**

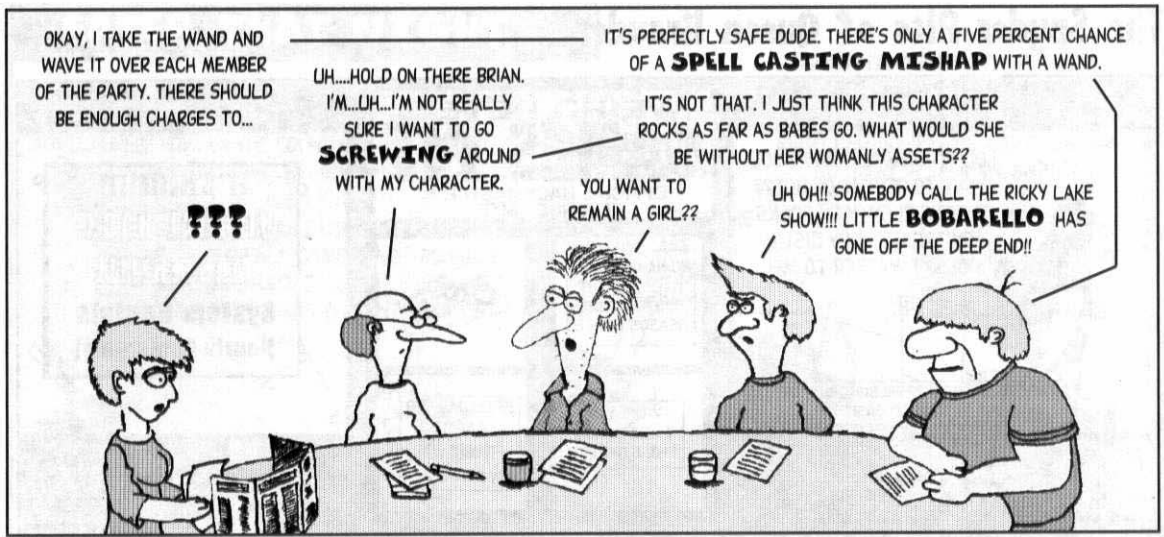
OH GREAT!!! THE ESCAPE IS COMPLETE.

GEE, I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT!

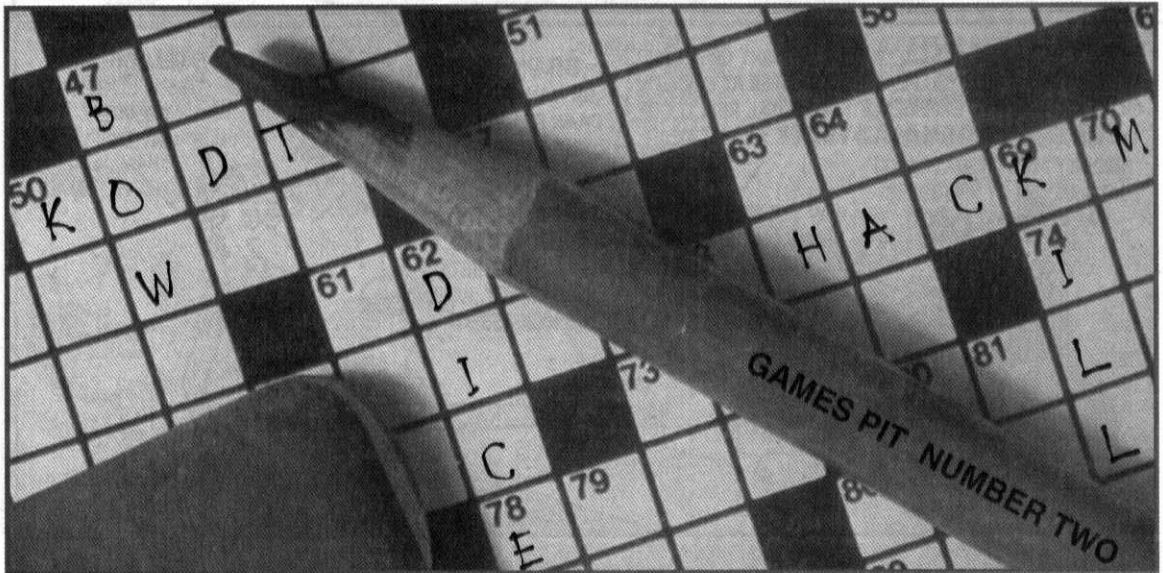
YEAH... I SUPPOSE WE COULD.

GOOD THINKING DAVE!! WE CAN DUMP THESE BABE BODIES AND PLAY REAL CHARACTERS AGAIN. BEST OF ALL WE DON'T HAVE TO GIVE UP ANY EARNED EXPERIENCE POINTS OR TREASURE!!!





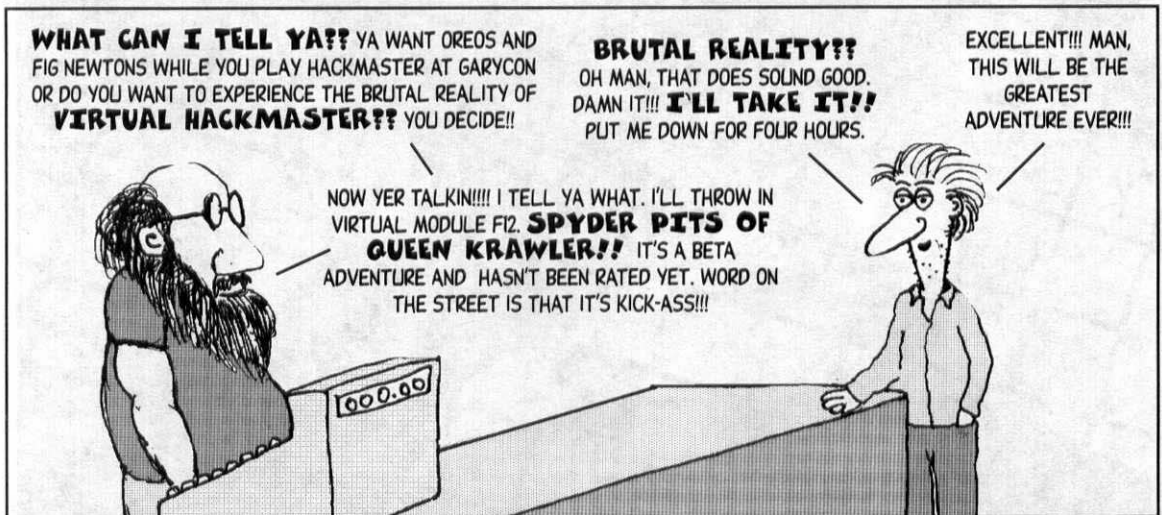
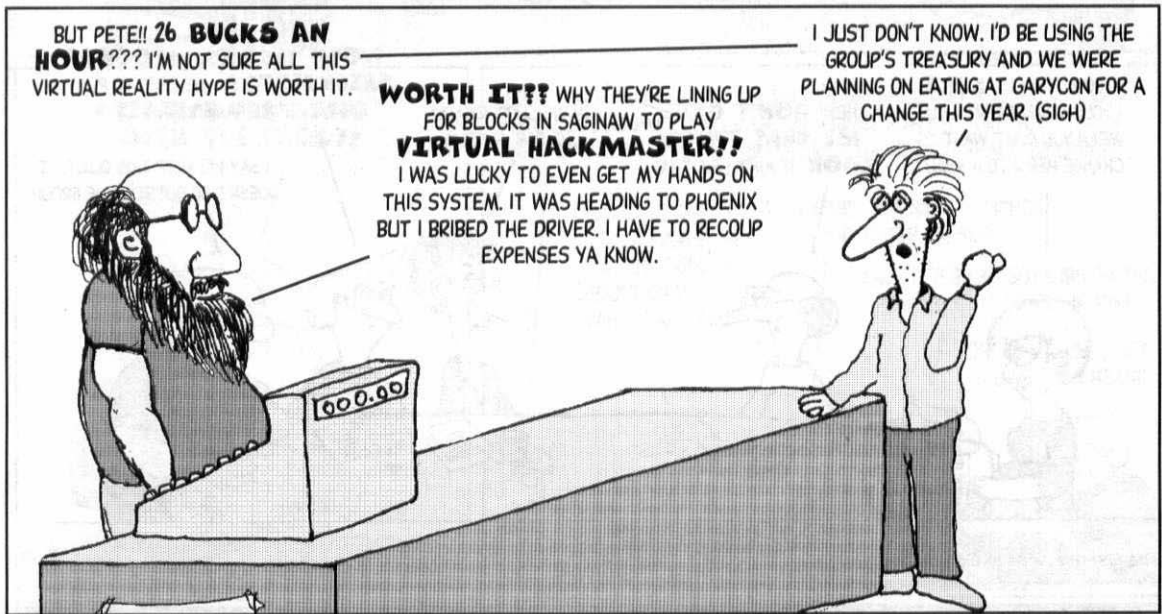
The first reference to Gordo Sheckberry. His Pixie-Faerie, Fireblossom, would debut in KoDT #17.



50 Across: A four letter acronym which commonly evokes the response, "Hoody Hoo!"

The Spyder Pits of Queen Krawler

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



This particular strip is one of my personal favorites. I think it also ranks as the strip with the most requests for a sequel. One reader suggested a strip showing the Black Hands using the same equipment. We're still considering that one. -Jolly

LATER THAT NIGHT....

OKAY, WE ONLY HAVE FOUR HOURS OF RENTAL TIME SO LET'S DISPENSE WITH ALL THE USUAL **CRAP** AND **HORSEPLAY** AND CONCENTRATE ON THE ADVENTURE!!!! NOW, ON THE COUNT OF THREE EVERYONE **GOGGLE-DOWN** AND WE'LL RUN THROUGH THE **PRE-OPERATION CHECKLIST**.

I KNOW I'M NOT CRAZY. I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER READING THAT THE SERIES 1000 VIRTUAL HACKMASTER SYSTEM WAS RECALLED. SOMETHING ABOUT A BIZARRE ACCIDENT IN SAGINAW, MICHIGAN.

THIS SUCKS!!!! I CAN'T WEAR MY GLASSES. 76 PERCENT OF ALL GAMERS ARE VISUALLY IMPAIRED!! YOU'D THINK THE DESIGNERS WOULD HAVE TAKEN THAT INTO ACCOUNT.

HEY!! MY GOGGLES ARE HUMMING. ARE THEY SUPPOSED TO BE HUMMING???

THAT WAS MONTHS AGO SARA. OBVIOUSLY GARY JACKSON WORKED OUT THE BUGS. LET'S GAME!!!!

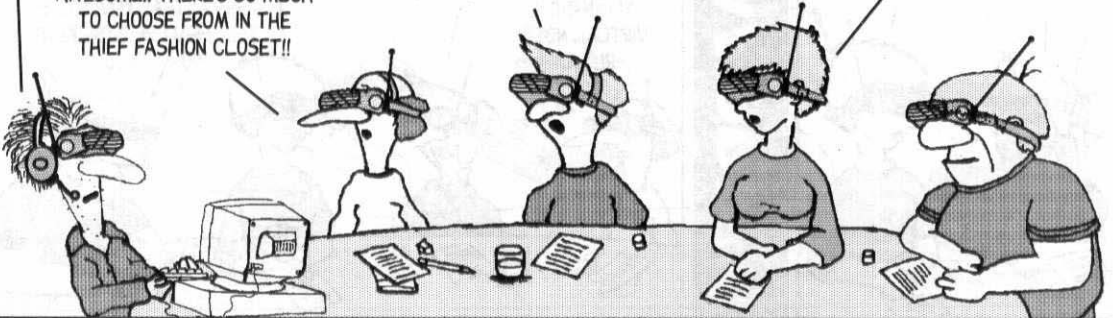


OKAY, NOW THAT YOU ARE **GOGGLED-DOWN** YOU SHOULD **BLINK HARD** THREE TIMES. THIS SHOULD ACTIVATE YOUR **HEADS-UP-DISPLAY** AND **RETINA-CURSOR**. MOVE THE CURSOR UNTIL IT'S OVER THE BUTTON **CHARACTER SET-UP**. TO SAVE TIME I'VE ALREADY ENTERED YOUR CHARACTER STATS AND PARTICULARS. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS DECIDE HOW YOUR CHARACTER WILL APPEAR TO OTHER PLAYERS IN THE GAME. SELECT CHARACTER APPEARANCE. HERE YOU CAN PICK YOUR EYE AND HAIR COLOR, CLOTHING STYLE, BODY-TYPE, ETC.

AWESOME!! THERE'S SO MUCH TO CHOOSE FROM IN THE THIEF FASHION CLOSET!!

AND THERE MUST BE 200 ITEMS IN THE HACK-WARRIOR CLOSET!!

GREAT... THE FEMALE WARRIOR CLOSET HAS TWO ITEMS. CHAINMAIL BIKINI OR LEATHER THONG.



NOW THAT YOU'VE DEFINED YOUR APPEARANCE YOU CAN ACTUALLY SEE EACH OTHER WITHIN THE GAME ENVIRONMENT.

WHOAH DUDE!! YOU LOOK AWESOME. CHECK OUT THE ENAMELED PLATEMAIL WITH GOLD-LEAF DETAILING. AND THAT RED-VELVET CAPE IS A NICE TOUCH. I APPROVE. HOW DO I LOOK?

OH MAN, YOU WENT WITH THE FOREST GREEN ENSEMBLE EH?? YOU ROCK, DUDE!!! RIGHT DOWN TO YOUR SNAKE-SKIN BOOTS!

I'M WRITING A LETTER OF COMPLAINT TO GARY JACKSON. THERE ARE NO DECENT SELECTIONS FOR FEMALE CHARACTERS.

WHOOOOOOOOOOAAAAHHH!! LOOKS LIKE A PRETTY DECENT SELECTION TO ME SARA. OH BABY - COME TO PAPA!!



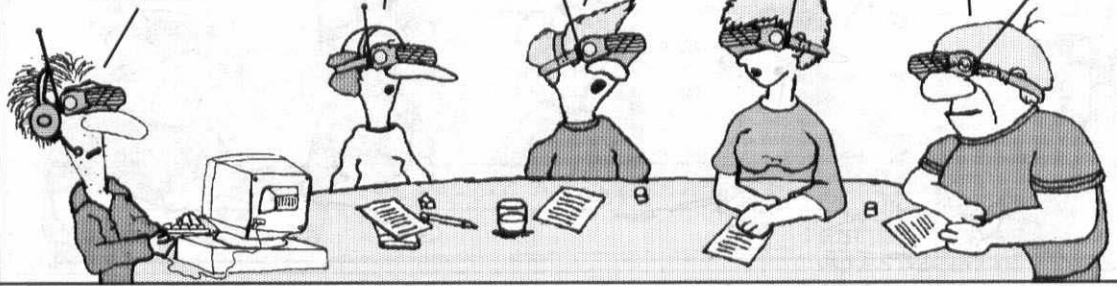
WHAT ARE YOU GAWKING AT?? HUH?? I FEEL LIKE A MONKEY IN A CAGE AT THE ZOO. QUIT STARING AT ME!!

HOLY MOLY!! CHECK OUT SARA!!

UH...UH...UH...UH...
UH...UH...UH...UH...NICE THONG SARA.

I'M LAST IN THE MARCHING ORDER. I CALLED DIBS. THIS GIVES A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO THE PHRASE, "BRINGING UP THE REAR".

(BLUSH) UH...THAT'S QUITE A COSTUME SARA. (GULP)



AWESOME!! YOU CAN ZOOM IN REALLY CLOSE!!! HOODY-HOO!!



SLAAPP!!!

DAMN!! THIS VIRTUAL REALITY STUFF IS INCREDIBLE!!! IT FELT LIKE YOU REALLY HIT ME!!

IDIOT!! I DID REALLY HIT YOU!! AND THE NEXT GUY I CATCH STARING AT ME IS GOING TO GET WORSE!!

THIS IS KEWL!!! YOU HAVE A VIRTUAL NOSE-BLEED!!

DAVE, HOW DOES THAT ZOOM FEATURE WORK??



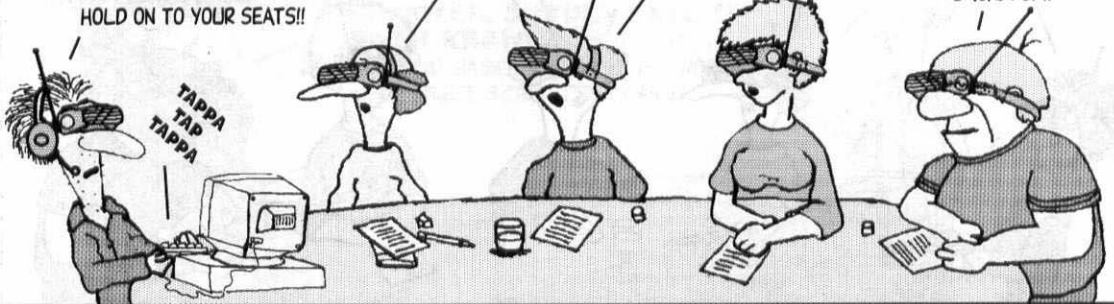
OKAY GUYS, WE'RE BURNING RENTAL TIME HERE SO LET'S GET TO THE ADVENTURE!!!! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS INPUT THE ACTIVATION CODE AND WE SHOULD FIND OURSELVES STANDING BEFORE THE ENTRANCE TO THE **SPYDER PITS OF QUEEN KRAWLER!!** HOLD ON TO YOUR SEATS!!

I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING???
WAIT.....OH MAN!!! CHECK OUT THE LATEX AND FOAM ROCKS!!!!

KEWL!! THIS REMINDS ME OF THAT GWAR CONCERT WE WENT TO LAST YEAR!!!

KINDA LOOKS LIKE THOSE OLD VIEWMASTER 3D PICS.

HEY LOOK, SOMEONE LEFT A PEPSI CAN ON THE SET WHEN THEY FILMED THE BACKDROP!!



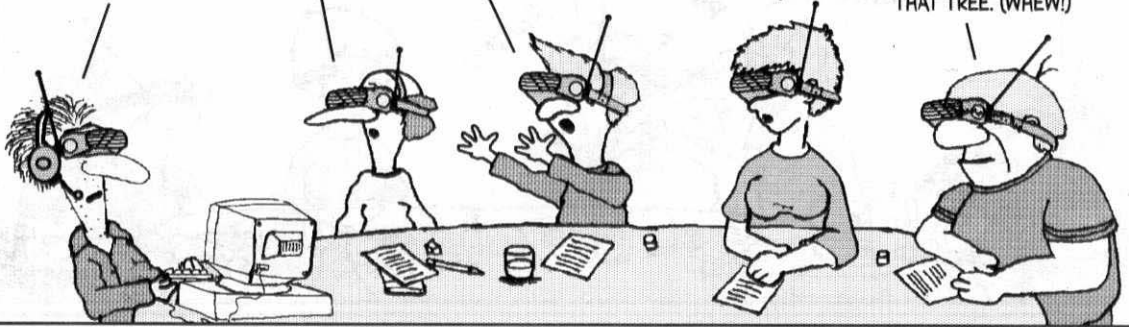
I'M NOT IMPRESSED. I FEEL LIKE I'M WALKING THROUGH A BAD EPISODE OF **H.R. PUFFINSTUFF**. WAIT...SOMETHING IS HAPPENING!

DON'T BE FOOLED GUYS!! THE MANUAL SAYS IT TAKES APPROXIMATELY 1 TO 3 MINUTES BEFORE YOUR VISUAL SENSES FULLY ADAPT TO THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT.

YEAH IT'S PRETTY CHEESY. AND THE.....**WHOAH!!** WAAAAA!!!! **HOOOOO MAN!!!** IT JUST KICKED IN?? **I'M VIRTUAL!!** IT'S SO REAL. LOOK AT THAT ROCK!! I FEEL LIKE I COULD REACH OUT AND TOUCH IT!!!

YOU'RE RIGHT!!! EVERYTHING IS BEGINNING TO POP WITH DETAIL!! IT DOES LOOK REAL. THIS HAS INCREDIBLE POTENTIAL!

THE DETAIL IS AMAZING!!! RIGHT DOWN TO THE BEAUTY MARK ON YOUR THIGH... UH... ER... I MEAN RIGHT DOWN TO THE BARK ON THAT TREE. (WHEW!)



OKAY, THE MONSTER ENCOUNTERS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE FAIRLY INTENSE SO A PROGRAMMED INTRODUCTORY ENCOUNTER WITH A GIANT CAVE SPYDER IS COMING UP TO DAMPEN THE SHOCK. AHHHHH, HERE IT COMES NOW!

THIS IS SO GREAT!!! LOOK AT IT!! IT LOOKS LIKE A REAL SPYDER AND IT'S SO HUGE!!!!
YAHH BOY!!
SHOOOO!!
SHOOOO!!

YEAH THIS IS PRETTY KEWL! YOU CAN ALMOST...**YOOOOWLL!!** MOTHER OF GAWD **IT'S HIDEOUS!!** GET BACK!!!
GO AWAY!! YAAAA BOY!!

GUYS RELAX. REMIND YOURSELF IT'S JUST AN ELECTRONIC IMAGE.

BOB LOOK OUT!!
THERE'S ANOTHER ONE BEHIND YOU!!



THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE PROGRAM!!! THERE IS ONLY SUPPOSED TO BE A SINGLE SPYDER!!!! THEY'RE COMING OUT OF THE WALLS!!! **THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF THEM!!**

AAAAEEEEIIIIIII!!! THEY'RE ALL OVER ME!!! MY GAWD I CAN FEEL THEM CLAWING AT MY FACE??? **HALP!!** OH GAWD SOMEBODY **HALP ME!!**

I CAN FEEL THEM CLAWING AT ME TOO!! **IT'S HORRIBLE!!** MAKE IT STOP!!!! **MAKE IT STOP!!**

GUYS, CALM DOWN!!! YOU'RE JUST GRAPPLING AT EACH OTHER!!

THIS IS SO KEWL!



THE PROGRAM ISN'T RESPONDING TO MY OVERRIDE COMMANDS.
IT'S LOCKED ME OUT!!

UGLY HAIRY BASTARDS!!!

YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME???
HUH???. LET'S SEE HOW YOU LIKE IT WHEN I WHOP YOU UPSIDE THE HEAD!!!! (**UMMMFFFF!**)

OWWW!!
UMMMPPRRRRFFFF!!
I DON'T THINK I CAN HOLD THEM OFF MUCH... **OMMMFF!!** ... LONGER...
DAMN THEY HIT HARD!!

WE'VE GOT TO STOP THIS!!!!
THEY'RE KILLING EACH OTHER!!!

APPARENTLY THE PROGRAM IS FLAWED!! I THINK THEY ARE ACTUALLY SEEING EACH OTHER AS CAVE SPYDERS!!!
THIS ROCKS!!!



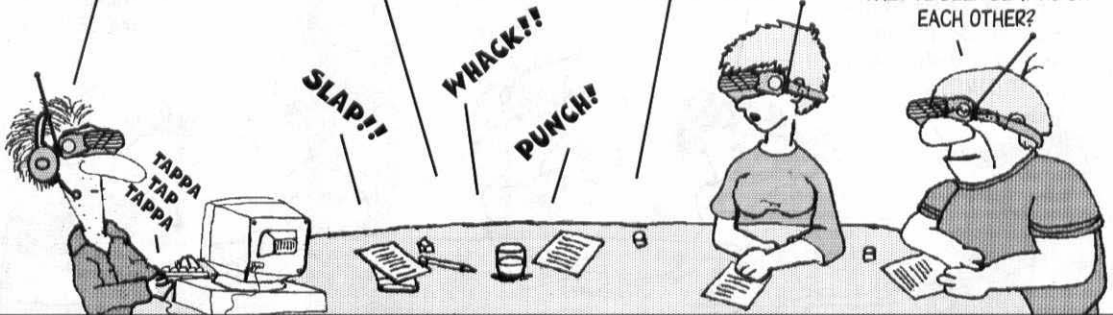
IT'S NO USE!!!! THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO!! WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO LET THE PROGRAM RUN ITS COURSE!!!! EVERYONE JUST STAY CALM!!

FOR THE LOVE OF GAWD!!
SOMEBODY GET THEM OFF OF ME!!!

HALP ME!!! PALEEZE!!!
UMMMMMPPRRRRFFFF!!!

HOW CAN YOU SIT HERE AND WATCH THIS? PULL THE PLUG!!

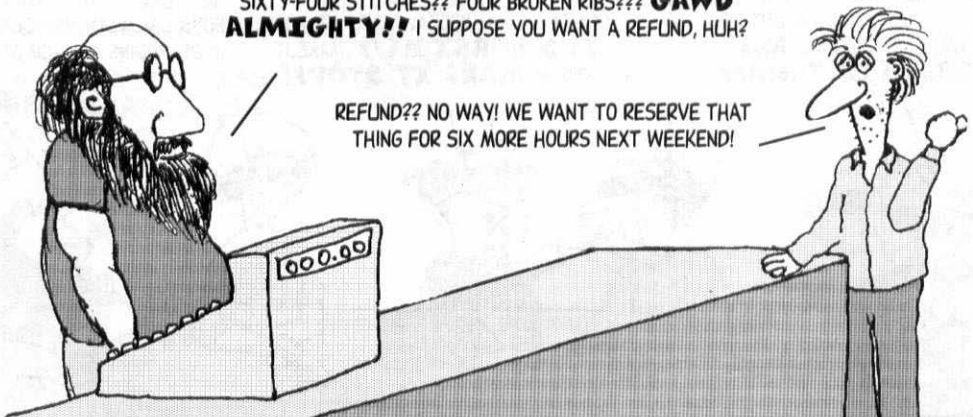
AREN'T YOU CURIOUS AS TO HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE BEFORE THEY REALIZE THEY'VE BEEN BEATING ON EACH OTHER?

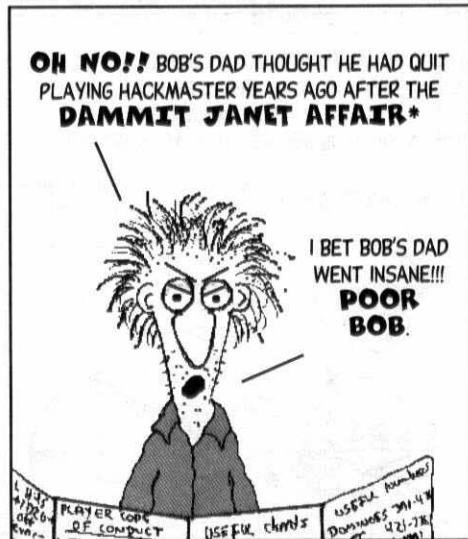
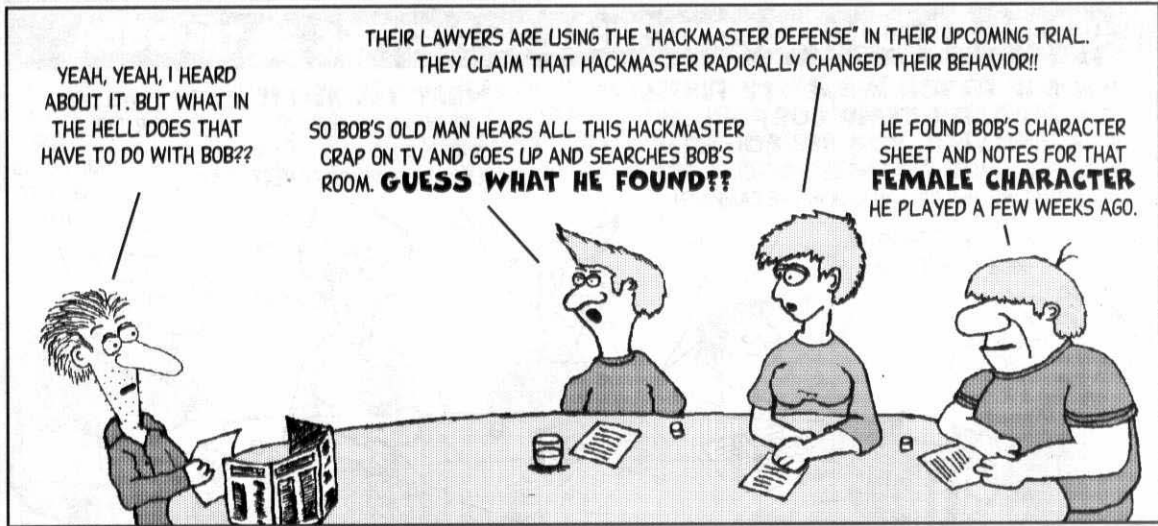


LATER THAT NIGHT...

OH MY GAWD!! BOB AND DAVE ARE IN THE HOSPITAL??
SIXTY-FOUR STITCHES?? FOUR BROKEN RIBS?? **GAWD**
ALMIGHTY!! I SUPPOSE YOU WANT A REFUND, HUH?

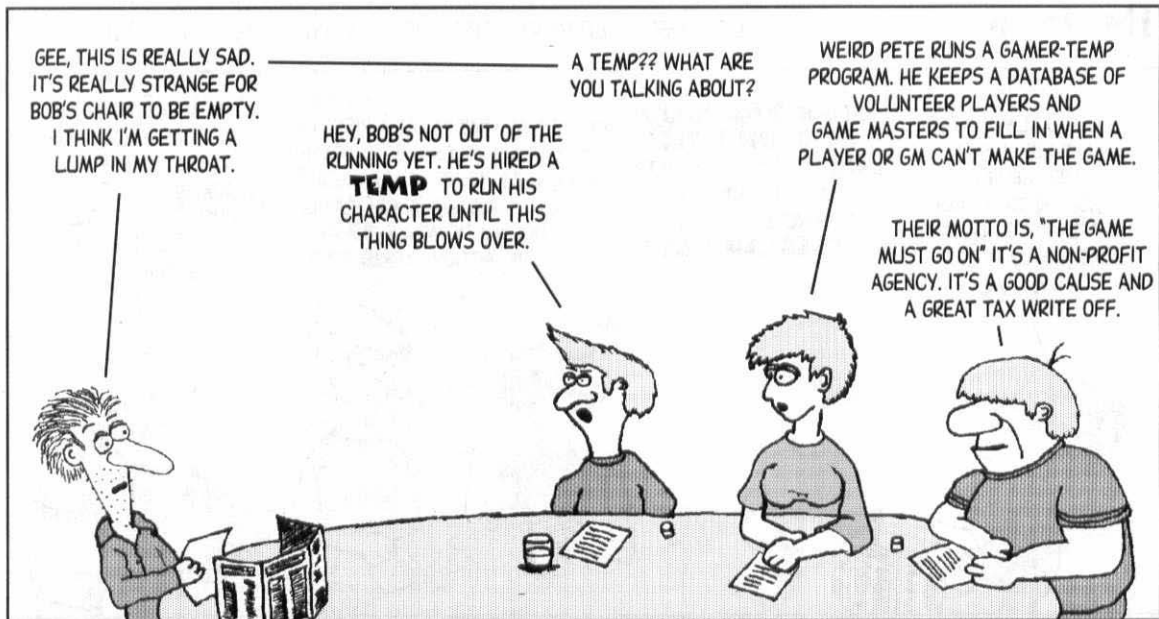
REFUND?? NO WAY! WE WANT TO RESERVE THAT THING FOR SIX MORE HOURS NEXT WEEKEND!





This strip resulted in several letters of concern over Bob. It also gave us some insight and a little bravery when we removed Sara from the table a year and a half later. -Dave

*see Tales from the Vault Volume One p. 32 †Quote from "Eulogy to a Gamer" which appears on p. 72



BEFORE B.A. CAN RESPOND THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR...



Ty Ferfel was based on a pizza delivery boy I met in California several years ago. I was finishing up an issue of Shadis Magazine late one night when the munchies hit and we ordered pizza. It turned out the delivery boy was a gamer and a huge fan of Shadis/KODT. He ended up staying for four hours and became a frequent visitor to our offices. -Joly

OKAY TY, NOT TO OFFEND YOU BUT LET'S JUST TEST YOUR SO-CALLED **MASTERY OF THE HACKMASTER RULES**, SHALL WE? ASSUMING THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT WIND CURRENTS AND A LEVEL TRAJECTORY, WHAT'S THE **MAXIMUM EFFECTIVE RANGE OF A LEVEL SIX SIDEWINDER FIREBALL SPELL??**



ONE HUNDRED FEET PER LEVEL OF THE SPELLCASTER. THAT'S ASSUMING THE AIR TEMPERATURE IS ABOVE 32 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT. OTHERWISE THE RANGE WOULD BE REDUCED BY 10 FEET PER DEGREE BELOW THE FREEZING POINT.

NOT BAD. BUT DON'T YOU MEAN 12 FEET PER DEGREE??

NO WAY!! THAT'S A COMMON MISTAKE DUE TO A MISPRINT IN THE FIRST EDITION RULES AND THE ABSENCE OF ANY OFFICIAL ERRATA SHEETS BEING DISTRIBUTED FOR NEARLY 18 MONTHS.



WOW!!

EXCELLENT!!

OKAY **SMALL FRY**, ANSWER ME THIS!! YOU'VE JUST HACKED AND SLASHED YOUR WAY THROUGH FOUR LEVELS OF THE MEANEST, TOUGHEST DUNGEON THIS SIDE OF GARY'S BASEMENT. YOU'VE GOT **TWO HIT POINTS LEFT**, AN EMPTY WATER FLASK AND NOTHING BUT A STALE CORN-DODGER IN YOUR BACK PACK. SUDDENLY A **GNOLL HEAD-HUNTING PARTY** STUMBLES OUT OF A SIDE CORRIDOR **RIGHT INTO YOUR PATH**. THERE YOU ARE, STARING AT EACH OTHER EYEBALL TO EYEBALL. WHAT DO YOU DO? **WHAT DOOOO YOU DO??**

WELL SEEING THAT THIS IS A CATEGORY SIX CAMPAIGN THE RULE OF THUMB WOULD BE, **WHEN IN DOUBT, HACK??**

GOOD ANSWER!!
GOOD ANSWER!!

HE DIDN'T EVEN BREAK A SWEAT!

NOT BAD KID!!



HE'LL DO!!



WELL OKAY!! I GUESS WE HAVE A GAME THEN. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS GET YOU A COPY OF BOB'S CHARACTER SHEET AND...

THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, MR. FELTON. I MET WITH MY CLIENT THIS AFTERNOON IN THE PARK FOR A PRE-GAME BRIEFING AND TO LAY OUT THE TERMS OF MY SERVICE. I HAVE MR. HERZOG'S CHARACTER RIGHT HERE.

ALL RIGHT!!
LET'S PLAY!!



THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY, THE LEVER-AND-PULLEY SYSTEM TY CONSTRUCTED DID THE TRICK. THE HEAVY IRON GATE FINALLY BEGINS TO MOVE AND SLOWLY RAISES. A LARGE CAVERNOUS CHAMBER IS REVEALED, THE FLOOR OF WHICH IS LITTERED WITH THE CHARRED BONES OF HUNDREDS OF HEROES WHO MET THEIR DEMISE HERE.

GOOD JOB TY!!
LET'S CHECK IT OUT.

THIS CHAMBER HAS DRAGON SIGNS WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. WE'D BETTER BE ON OUR TOES.

PARDON ME FOR A MINUTE. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CALL THIS IN.

CALL WHAT IN?



HELLO? MR. HERZOG? TY HERE. I'VE GOT A SITUATION HERE. ABOUT TO ENTER A LARGE CAVERN AND THERE'S A VERY GOOD CHANCE IT'S AN AMBUSH ZONE. THE GM HAS BEEN CAREFULLY FEEDING US CLUES AND FLAVOR TEXT THAT LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THE HOSTILES WILL BE SOME FORM OF DRAGON-KIND.

IN HIS OWN WAY, BOB HAS FOUND A WAY TO STILL PLAY.

YOU'RE CONSULTING WITH BOB?

UH-HUH, I READ YOU BUT DO YOU REALLY THINK A CROSSBOW CHARGE IS WISE? WE'RE DEALING WITH SOME UNKNOWNNS HERE.

WOW THIS IS KINDA LIKE HAVING BOB HERE EXCEPT HE ISN'T.

HAR HAR!! YOU CAN'T STOP A GAMER!! A GAMER WILL ALWAYS FIND A WAY!!



WELL, I STRONGLY ADVISED MY CLIENT AGAINST IT, BUT HE WANTS TO READY HIS CROSSBOW OF SLAYING AND RUSH INTO THE ROOM FIRING AT ANYTHING THAT MOVES. SO I GUESS I'LL CARRY OUT THOSE ACTIONS ACCORDING TO HIS WISHES BUT I'M STRONGLY OPPOSED TO IT.

WHOOH DUDE!! YOU CALLED IT!! YOU SAID IT WAS AN AMBUSH AND IT WAS. **AWESOME!!**

WELL NOW HE'S IN A WORLD OF HURT. WE'D BETTER GET IN THERE AND ENGAGE THE DRAGON OR BOB'S CHARACTER IS TOAST!!

AS WELL YOU SHOULD BE, TY!! I'M AFRAID YOU TAKE 45 POINTS OF DAMAGE FROM A TORRENT OF **DRAGON BREATH** FROM POINT BLANK RANGE!!!

BRINGING A COUPLE OF FIREBALLS ON LINE B.A.



AS THE BATTLE DRAGS ON...

THE DRAGON TAKES A **FULL HIT** FROM YOUR HACKMASTER +12 DAVE. HE SHAKES IT OFF LIKE IT A MOSQUITO BITE AND COUNTERS WITH A BITE ATTACK AND TWO CLAW ATTACKS. IT LOOKS PRETTY BAD FOR YOU DAVE. YOU ONLY HAVE THREE HIT POINTS LEFT.

GAAA!! TY! QUICK!! DRAW HIS FIRE SO I CAN PULL BACK AND TAKE A SWIG OF **HEALING POTION!!**

DAVE, WE'RE OUTMATCHED. LET'S PULL OUT!!

PULL OUT?? YOU DON'T ASK A HERO TO PULL OUT, SARA!! PULLING OUT IS JUST ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING YOU QUIT.

NO PROBLEM! I'LL STEP UP AND...UH, EXCUSE ME I HAVE A CALL COMING IN.

**BRINGING!!!
BRINGING!!!**



TY HERE. OH, GOOD EVENING MR. HERZOG. NO, I'M AFRAID IT ISN'T GOING VERY WELL. KNUCKLES' HIT POINTS ARE DOWN 73 PERCENT. TWO MORE HITS LIKE THE LAST ONE AND HE BUYS THE FARM. WHAT'S THAT??...UH HUH.....YEAH... WELL YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT DAVE'S CHARACTER ONLY HAS THREE HIT POINTS AND HE'S REQUESTED ASSISTANCE.

I THOUGHT PERHAPS...
WHAT'S THAT?... NO SIR... I'M SORRY SIR... YOU GOT IT...
OKAY... I'LL KEEP YOU POSTED.



KNUCKLES IS PULLING OUT!! MY CLIENT FEELS IT'S A NO-WIN SITUATION AND HE'D LIKE TO RE-EVALUATE THE SITUATION.

PULLING OUT?? YOU LITTLE RUNT!! DOESN'T BOB KNOW I'M TOAST IF YOU DON'T COVER ME?

MAYBE YOU SHOULD CALL HIM AND EXPLAIN THE SITUATION.



I'M SORRY SIR! MY CLIENT'S INSTRUCTIONS WERE VERY CLEAR. WHEN I INFORMED HIM OF YOUR PREDICAMENT HE RESPONDED BY SAYING, "LET THE DEAD TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN!! GET MY CHARACTER OUT OF HARM'S WAY!!"

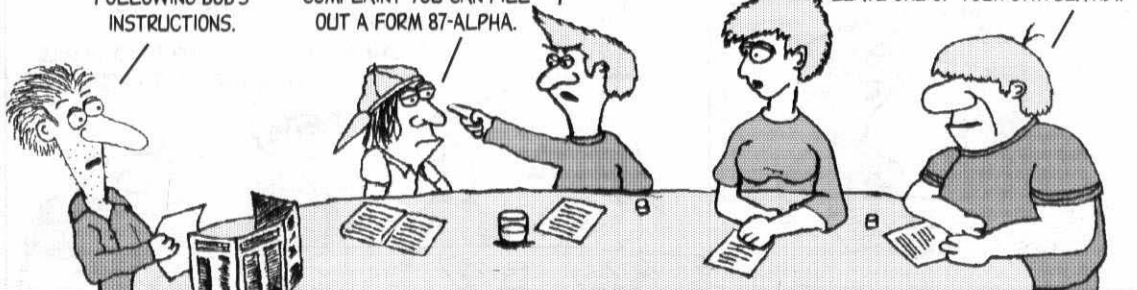
I DON'T GIVE A **RAT'S ASS** WHAT YOUR CLIENT SAID. YOU GET YOUR SORRY LITTLE BUTT BACK IN THERE AND **COVER ME!!**

EASY DAVE!! TY IS JUST FOLLOWING BOB'S INSTRUCTIONS.

IF YOU WANT TO LODGE A COMPLAINT YOU CAN FILL OUT A FORM 87-ALPHA.

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! TY IS DUTY-BOUND TO ACT ACCORDING TO BOB'S WISHES. DON'T TAKE IT OUT ON HIM.

WHAT COWARDICE!! YOU NEVER LEAVE ONE OF YOUR OWN BEHIND!!



AN HOUR LATER...

OKAY, YOU FINALLY MANAGE TO DRAG DAVE'S BODY TO THE SURFACE. YOUR TORCH BEARER, KNOBBYFOOT, INFORMS YOU THAT THERE IS A HIGH-LEVEL CLERIC WHO LIVES IN THE HILLS NEAR HIS VILLAGE WHO HAS BEEN KNOWN TO RAISE THE DEAD. (FOR THE USUAL FEE OF COURSE.)

OH??? YOU ALLOW RESURRECTIONS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN?? THAT RULE ALWAYS RUBBED ME THE WRONG WAY. IT'S A FORM OF CHEATING. IF YOU CAN'T CUT THE MUSTARD THE FIRST TIME YOU DON'T DESERVE A SECOND CHANCE. THAT'S WHAT I'VE ALWAYS SAID. BUT...UH...IT'S YOUR CAMPAIGN.

YOU'RE REALLY STARTIN' TO GET ON MY NERVES WITH THIS HOLIER-THAN-THOU CRAP!!

THAT'S ONE OF THE BEAUTIES OF ROLE-PLAYING. IT CAN BE TAILORED TO SUIT ANYONE'S TASTES.

EVERYONE KICK IN 1,500 GOLD PIECES TO COVER THE COSTS OF DAVE'S RESURRECTION.



KICK IN GOLD PIECES?? WHAT FOR??

PARTY POLICY, SMALL FRY!! EVERYONE KICKS IN TO RAISE THE DEAD AFTER AN ADVENTURE. SO COUGH UP!!

EXCUSE ME, I'M GONNA HAVE TO CALL MY CLIENT TO GET CLEARANCE FOR SUCH AN EXPENDITURE. I'M ONLY AUTHORIZED TO SPEND 100 GOLD PER CAMPAIGN DAY FOR FOOD AND BOARDING. ANYTHING ELSE HAS TO BE CLEARED.

BOB CERTAINLY GAVE YOU A SHORT LEASH, TY.

MAKE IT QUICK!! I'D LIKE TO GET BACK INTO THE DUNGEON.

IT'S TRADITIONAL, TY. THEY'RE BEING STRAIGHT WITH YOU.



HEY BOSS, IT'S ME TY. LOOK, I'M CALLING YOU TO GET APPROVAL FOR A 1,500 GP EXPENDITURE... WHAT'S THAT?... OH IT'S TO HELP GET DAVE'S CHARACTER RESURRECTED... UH HUH... YES... I AGREE... YES BOSS... UH HUH... OKEE DOKEY. I'LL KEEP YOU POSTED. BYE BOSS.

COME ON, WHAT DID HE SAY?

MR. HERZOG TOLD ME TO USE MY OWN DISCRETION. I'M SORRY DAVE, WE'RE NOT PAYING!!!

WADDA YA MEAN YER NOT PAYIN'??

WELL, IT'S MY OPINION THAT YOUR DEATH WAS A DIRECT RESULT OF YOUR OWN STUPIDITY AND RECKLESS ACTIONS. YOU NEVER STAND TOE-TO-TOE WITH A SWACK-IRON DRAGON. THE SITUATION CALLED FOR TACTICS AND CLUNNING.

YOU GOT WAX IN YOUR EARS? IT'S A HOUSE RULE.



WELL, IF WE **ALL** PLAYED BY **HOUSE RULES** WE'D HAVE CHAOS WOULDN'T WE GENTLEMEN?? I'M SORRY, IT WOULD GO AGAINST MY PRINCIPLES TO PAY GOOD MONEY SO **MISTER "FOUR MEN FOR A QUARTER" BOY** HERE CAN HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE AT LIFE.

THAT'S IT!!! HOW'D YOU LIKE TO STEP OUTSIDE YOU **LITTLE MUNCHKIN!!** HUH??

DAVE, HE'S ONLY TWELVE YEARS OLD. YOU CAN'T TAKE A LITTLE KID OUT IN THE FRONT YARD AND KNOCK HIM AROUND.

SHE'S RIGHT!!! LET'S TAKE HIM OUT TO THE TOOL SHED. WE CAN START THE LAWNMOWER SO IT DROWNS OUT HIS SCREAMS.

OPINIONATED LITTLE CUSS ISN'T HE?



SOME **FISTICUFFS** EH?? I'D LOVE TO JOIN YOU BUT MY UNCLE IS SUPPOSED TO PICK ME UP IN TEN MINUTES. WHEN **UNCLE NITRO** GETS HERE PERHAPS YOU WANT TO ASK HIM IF HE'S WILLING TO WAIT AROUND WHILE WE GO AT IT.

NITRO!! UH... UH... (SHUDDER)... NAW KID... UH... THAT'S OKAY. JUST HAVIN' A LITTLE FUN WITH YA. WE DO THAT TO ALL THE NEW GUYS. INITIATION RITUAL. HEH...HEH... ACTUALLY, I NEED TO BE GOING MYSELF.

NITRO HAS FAMILY?? GAWD, I NEVER EVEN CONSIDERED SUCH A POSSIBILITY. I THOUGHT HE WAS CREATED IN A LAB.

DAVE WAS DANCING WITH DEATH AND DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT.

UNCLE NITRO?? (GULP) YOU'RE NITRO'S NEPHEW?



AFTER THE GAME...

I CAN'T STAND THAT KID. HE GAVE ME AN EVALUATION OF TONIGHT'S GAME BEFORE HE LEFT. HE DOCKED ME 25 POINTS FOR NOT HAVING ANY SNACKS OR OFFERING HIM A SODA.

WE GOTTA GET BOB BACK!!

WHAT A GEEK!! DID YOU NOTICE HOW HE KEPT CLEANING HIS DICE WITH THOSE COTTON SWABS AND ALCOHOL?? WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT? NOW I KNOW WHY HE'S A FREAKIN' TEMP!!!! NOBODY WOULD LET THAT GUY PLAY IN THEIR GROUP MORE THAN ONCE. **SHEESH!!**

I HAVE TO ADMIT IT. I REALLY MISS BOB.

IF I CLOSE MY EYES AND CONCENTRATE, I CAN ALMOST HEAR THE TUMBLE OF HIS DICE.





KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #11
 "When In Doubt — Hack!"

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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 S.A.S.E. for writer's guidelines to the address listed above or E-mail jollyrb@aol.com.

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

"When in Doubt ...Hack!!!"

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



Editorial of a Madman

"It is a sad truth! There is no honor among collectors!"

Disgruntled KODT collector.

Their sad faces lined up at our booth all through the summer convention season. You could see it in their eyes as they desperately scanned the back issues of Knights of the Dinner Table at the booth. They were part of the growing group of readers we fondly refer to as the 'newbies' here at KenzerCo - unfortunates who only recently discovered the strip and were now scrambling to complete their collections.

After taking inventory of the available issues at the booth, they would move in closer and almost whisper the question, "Do you have any issue number ones tucked away?" Those of us who worked the booth would shake our heads sadly, apparently sympathetic to the plight of those beating the bushes for that rare first issue.

All through the summer, however, I felt a twinge of guilt. You see, I was harboring a dark secret. For many months I've been hoarding away my own selfish stash of KODT #1's. I'm ashamed to admit it but I squirreled away 10 issues for my personal collection. Seven of those issues I recently gave to the other shareholders at KenzerCo after months of badgering and interrogation.

I figure I can justify keeping two issues. One as a collectible and one as a personal reading copy. But what to do with the third copy? At GenCon someone suggested that I give it up as the grand prize in some sort of contest. It seemed like the only fair way of getting it into the hands of the right person.

Look for an announcement in a future issue of KODT for a contest, probably a KODT trivia quiz of sorts. The winner will receive that highly-coveted issue number one. So if you missed out on issue number one, here's a chance to get one. Watch for further details!!

Speaking of guilt, I'm afraid this issue of KODT is

going to hit the stands a few weeks late. Computer problems coupled with a busy convention schedule and a touch of lazy-day fever took their toll.

I was summoned before the KenzerCo High Council a few days ago and willingly took my flogging. I was also forced to endure a second trial-by-ordeal. I was forced to walk to Yellow Knife Lake in Canada to dig up a variety of wild shrubbery with my bare hands. Then I had to carry the shrubbery to Dave Kenzer's house and plant them around The Great Gazebo in his back yard. Just as I was about to leave, Dave emerged from the Gazebo's gaping jaws wearing a Masters of the Universe printed curtain in toga fashion and holding a dead herring.

He was just about to order me to cut down a tree with the herring when I managed to overpower him by pummeling him senseless with a tin of Spam. (And they wonder why I refuse to move to Chicago to be closer to the home office). I'm sure Dave has his own version of the story, but fortunately he doesn't have the space in the comic to present it.

Enjoy the issue at hand. As always, I look forward to your letters and comments.

Until next time!

Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn
August 24, 1997

Jolly never did give up his third copy of KODT #1. To this day he insists he 'lost' it. -Steve

HEY TY!!! WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GO?? I THOUGHT WE AGREED TO CHARGE THE DRAGON ON THE COUNT OF THREE?? I'M STANDING IN FRONT OF OL ROT GUT ALL ALONE HERE!!!

I HAD SECOND THOUGHTS AT THE LAST MINUTE. I REMEMBERED AN OLD RULE-OF-THUMB I LEARNED AT THE HACKMASTER ACADEMY. IF YOU MULTIPLY A DRAGON'S LENGTH IN FEET BY THE NUMBER OF TEETH YOU HAVE A FAIR APPROXIMATION OF HIS TOTAL HIT POINTS. I FIGURE IT'S AROUND 2,500 HITPOINTS. DOING SOME QUICK MATH I REALIZED THAT EVEN IF WE BOTH ROLLED CRITICAL HITS THE BEST WE COULD DO IN DAMAGE WOULD BE 975 POINTS!! AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY.

WOW!!! YOU WERE ONLY FIVE HIT-POINTS OFF!!! I'M WRITING THAT RULE DOWN.

TY, YOU COULD HAVE MENTIONED THAT TO DAVE BEFORE HE RUSHED INTO THE DRAGON'S LAIR.

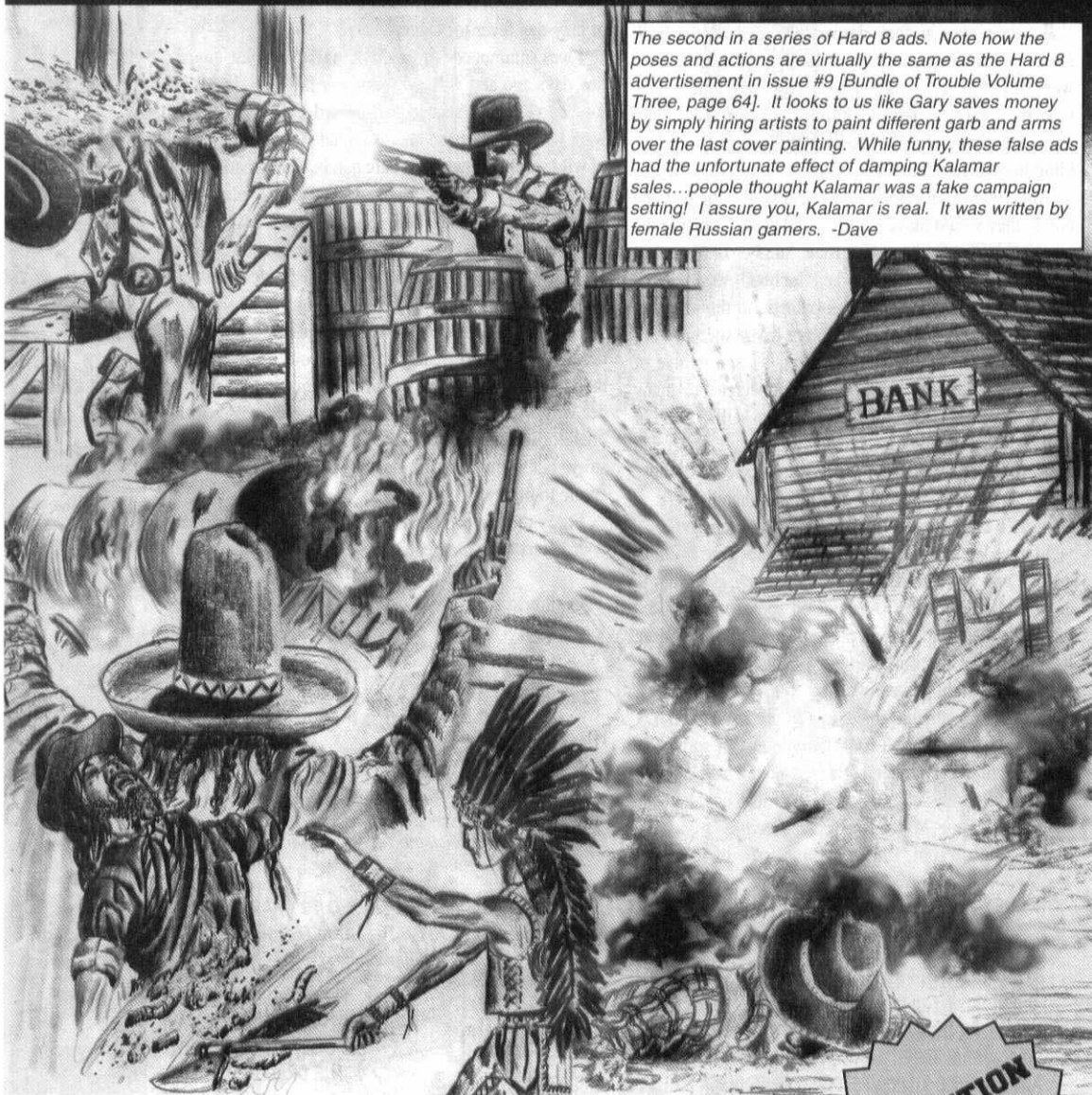
HMMMM. I WAS GUESSING 2,496 HITPOINTS. BUT YOU HAD THE RIGHT IDEA, TY.



GRIESES FROM THE ATTIC

Gary™ Jackson™'s®

CATTLEPUNK



The second in a series of Hard 8 ads. Note how the poses and actions are virtually the same as the Hard 8 advertisement in issue #9 [Bundle of Trouble Volume Three, page 64]. It looks to us like Gary saves money by simply hiring artists to paint different garb and arms over the last cover painting. While funny, these false ads had the unfortunate effect of damping Kalamar sales...people thought Kalamar was a fake campaign setting! I assure you, Kalamar is real. It was written by female Russian gamers. -Dave



NOT FOR WIMPS!
50% more mayhem than
CATTLEPUNK® 2nd Edition.

* some additional rulebooks supplementing the CattlePunk manual may be necessary for proper game play

some minor contributions by Edmund Finley

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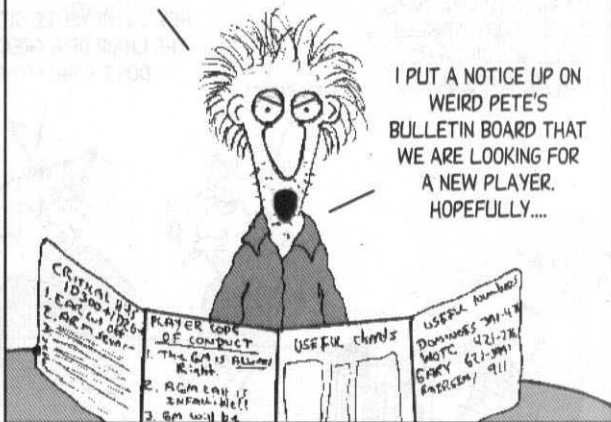
The Empty Chair

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

SIX WEEKS HAVE PASSED SINCE BOB'S DAD HAS FORBIDDEN HIM TO PLAY HACKMASTER!!* EVEN THOUGH BOB IS SORELY MISSED, B.A. HAS RELUCTANTLY DECIDED THAT A REPLACEMENT MUST BE FOUND FOR BOB'S EMPTY CHAIR.

"THE GAME MUST GO ON!!"

OKAY GUYS, I TALKED WITH BOB TODAY AND THERE'S NO CHANGE IN HIS SITUATION. I'M AFRAID HE'S NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GAME WITH US ANYTIME SOON. THEREFORE, I'VE DECIDED WE SHOULD START LOOKING FOR BOB'S REPLACEMENT.



I PUT A NOTICE UP ON WEIRD PETE'S BULLETIN BOARD THAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW PLAYER. HOPEFULLY....

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? REPLACE BOB?? NEVER!!

I HATE TO ADMIT IT BUT I MISS THE LITTLE GUY!! IT'S JUST NOT THE SAME WITHOUT BOBBY-BOY LOBBING BOLTS FROM HIS CROSSBOW.

I MISS BOB TOO, BUT I THINK B.A. IS RIGHT. WE SHOULD FIND A REPLACEMENT FOR HIM UNTIL HE COMES BACK.

JUST UNTIL BOB CAN MAKE IT BACK TO THE GAME.

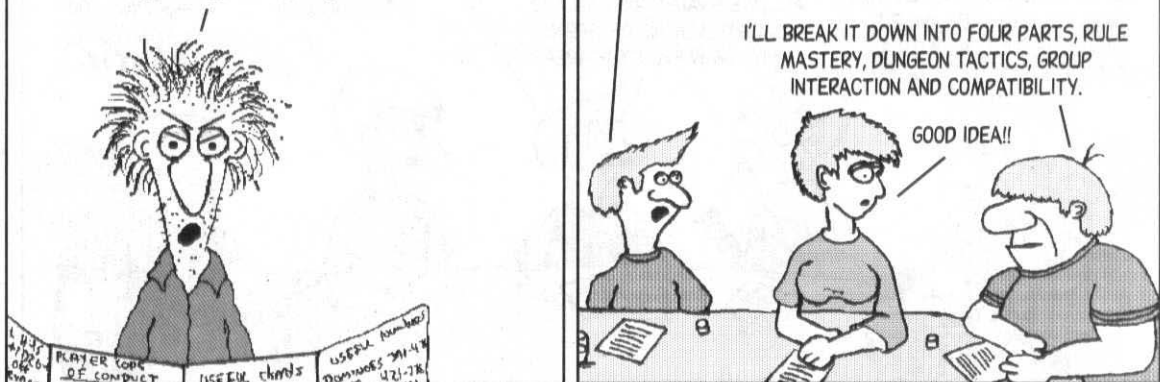


THEN IT'S DECIDED. NEXT WEEK WE'LL BEGIN INTERVIEWING REPLACEMENTS. OH... AND LET'S NOT MENTION THIS TO BOB IF WE SHOULD HAPPEN TO RUN INTO HIM. YOU KNOW HE WOULD TAKE IT THE WRONG WAY.

WELL, IF WE HAVE TO FIND A REPLACEMENT WE MIGHT AS WELL DEMAND THE BEST. BRIAN, WHY DON'T YOU WORK UP A CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA AND DESIRED TRAITS THAT WE CAN USE AS PART OF THE SCREENING PROCESS.

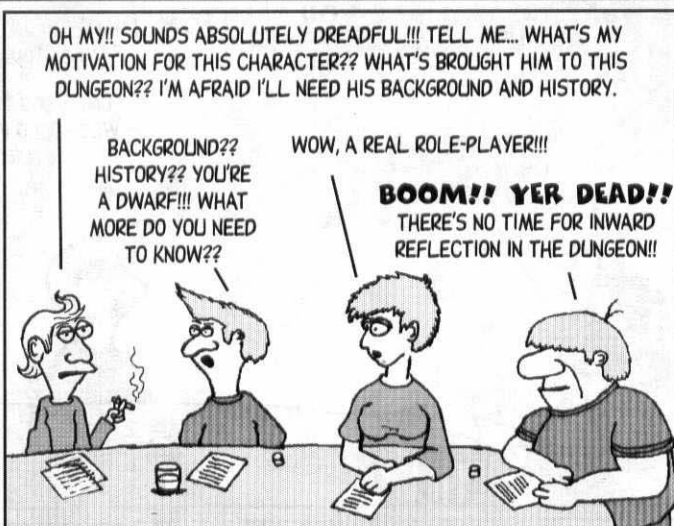
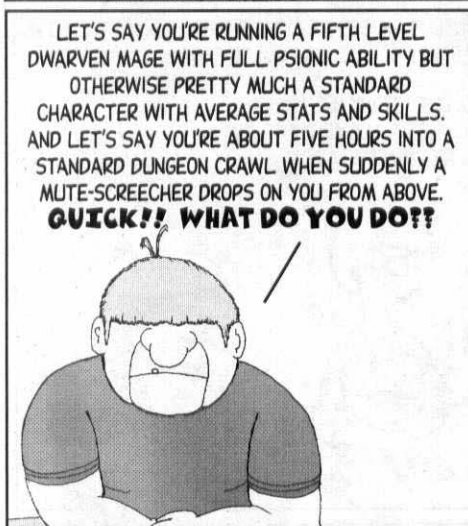
I'LL BREAK IT DOWN INTO FOUR PARTS, RULE MASTERY, DUNGEON TACTICS, GROUP INTERACTION AND COMPATIBILITY.

GOOD IDEA!!



* see p. 19

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...



LATER THAT EVENING...



*This is Cody Winkle's first appearance. (He returns in KoDT#32 and #33)

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

EVERYONE, THIS IS NEWT FORAGER. HE'S GOING TO BE PLAYING WITH US TONIGHT.

I'LL BE RUNNING A THIEF-ASSASSIN CALLED, **SHADOWVEIN!!** I WEAR A DARK CLOAK CALLED, **REVENGE** AND MY ONLY FRIEND IS THE **SAVAGE CALL** OF THE WILD NIGHT!!

ALL RIGHT NEWT!! SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO FIT RIGHT IN!!

WELCOME TO OUR TABLE, NEWT.

HMMMM...I'LL DISPENSE WITH THE STANDARD QUESTIONS. SOUNDS LIKE NEWT HAS A LITTLE EXPERIENCE UNDER HIS BELT.



LATER THAT NIGHT...

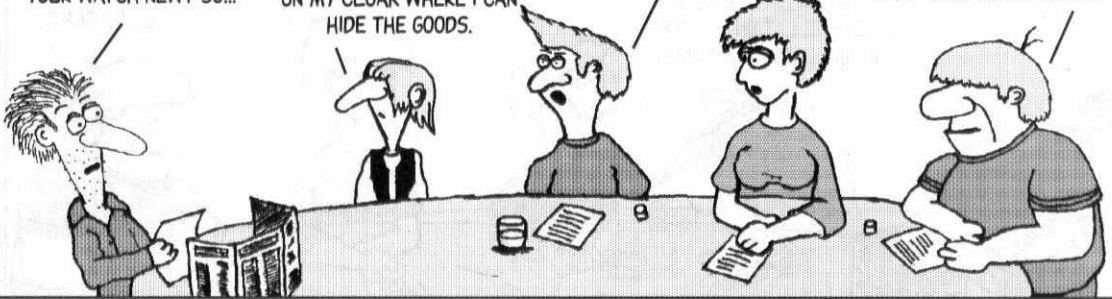
OKAY, LOOKS LIKE NEWT PULLS FIRST WATCH ON GUARD DUTY. NOTHING REALLY HAPPENS ON YOUR WATCH NEWT SO...

HOLD ON, B.A. WHILE THEY ARE ALL SLEEPING I'M GOING THROUGH THEIR PACKS AND STEALING ANYTHING OF VALUE. I HAVE A POCKET OF HOLDING ON MY CLOAK WHERE I CAN HIDE THE GOODS.

HUH?? HEY YOU LITTLE THIEF!!! WE DON'T TOLERATE THAT KIND OF BEHAVIOR HERE. I'M DRAWING MY HACKMASTER +12!!

NEWT, YOU REALIZE SUCH ACTION WOULD JUST DISRUPT THE ENTIRE GAME? IT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA TO PROVOKE IN-PARTY FIGHTING.

OOOOOH, I'VE GOT A FEW SPECIAL SPELLS I'VE BEEN SAVING FOR JUST SUCH AN OCCASION.



SORRY GUYS!! YOU CAN'T ACT ON THAT INFORMATION BECAUSE YOUR CHARACTERS AREN'T AWARE OF THE THEFT YET. BESIDES, I'M USING MY RING OF SUGGESTION AND PLACING THE MEMORY IN YOUR MINDS THAT THE ITEMS WERE LOST WHILE CROSSING A STREAM. THERE'S NO SAVING THROW.

NEWT, MAYBE YOU SHOULD BACKTRACK AND RETHINK THIS. YOU'LL NEVER GET ALONG WITH THE GROUP IF YOU DO THIS.

UH... HE'S RIGHT. ACTUALLY THAT'S A BRILLIANT ACTION.

OH YEAH?? WELL I'M ATTACKING YOU JUST BECAUSE I'M IN A BAD MOOD!!

YEAH!! I'M IN A BAD MOOD TOO!! FIREBALL COMING ONLINE, B.A.!!



This is Newt Forager's first appearance. Newt is now a regular character (Black Hands) and, according to informal polls taken at the KODT live-readings, one of the most popular characters in the comic book. He's also been the subject of a drawn out debate on newbie-bashing in *BackRoom at the Games Pit* in the monthly magazine. -Jolly

WHO CARES?? I'M ONLY PLAYING WITH YOU GUYS TONIGHT. I'M ON THE WAITING LIST FOR **EARL SLACKMOZER'S** GROUP AND THERE'S AN OPENING NEXT WEEK. I JUST CAME TO STOCK UP ON SOME MAGIC ITEMS AND GOLD.

HEY NEWT, I'M GIVING YOU FAIR WARNING. IF YOU START RUNNING NOW YOU MAY BE ABLE TO MAKE THE DOOR BEFORE BRIAN MAKES YOU DO THE **PRETZEL-DANCE!!**

RUN NEWT RUN!!

SLACKMOZER!



THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY TY, WE NEED A HACKER-TYPE TO TAKE THE POINT UP FRONT ALONG SIDE MY FIGHTER. NO FRILLS! NO BELLS AND WHISTLES!! YOU SEE SOMETHING MOVE - YOU KILL IT!! IF ONE OF US GETS IN TROUBLE YOU COME TO OUR AID. YOU GOT IT??

WELCOME BACK TY. I'M GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.

NO PROBLEM MR. FELTON. AS A GAMER TEMP IT'S MY JOB TO FILL THE OCCASIONAL EMPTY CHAIR. HAD A LAST-MINUTE CANCELLATION SO YOUR PHONE CALL WAS TIMELY!!

THAT'S ONE WAY OF PUTTING IT DAVE.

LET'S GAME!!!



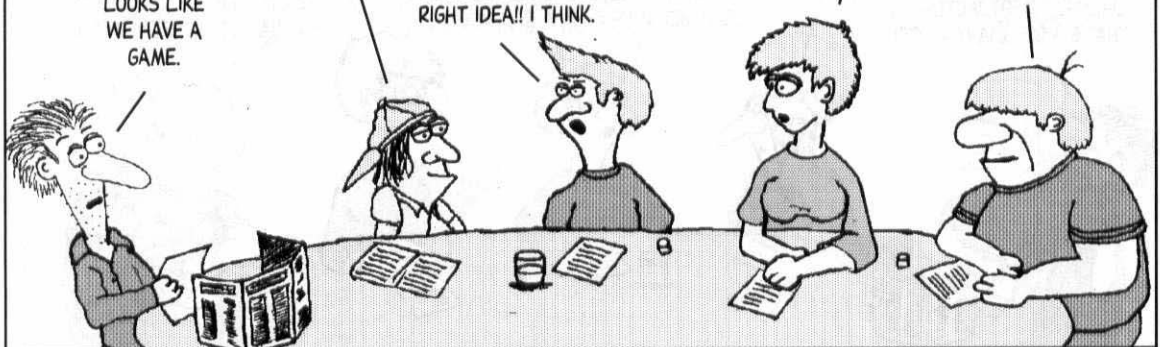
OOOHH, SO YOU WANT A MINDLESS HACK-N-SLASHER WHO SIMPLY SMASHES HIS WAY THROUGH THE ADVENTURE WITHOUT RESORTING TO ONE CLEVER THOUGHT OR EVEN ATTEMPTING TO ASPIRE TO ANYTHING GREATER THAN A PITBULL ON SPEED??

THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR BOB'S CHAIR, TY.

LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE A GAME.

YEAH!!! YOU GOT THE RIGHT IDEA!! I THINK.

I'LL BE WATCHING YOU TY.....JUST IN CASE.



That was the first appearance of the cute and helpless "newbie" Newt Forager. Let's see what y'all think after seeing him in action... suddenly Pete and Stevil don't seem so wrong, do they? -Dave

LATER THAT NIGHT...

OKAY YOU ENTER THE BUILDING ONLY TO DISCOVER IT'S A **LARGE ORPHANAGE**. THE PLAGUE HAS LEFT HUNDREDS OF SMALL CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTS. AN ELDERLY MONK APPROACHES YOU AND BEGS, "PLEASE KIND SIR, WE NEED SOME HEROES TO JOURNEY INTO THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS AND RETRIEVE THE TEMPLE TREASURY FROM SKAAG THE BLOOD-WYRM SO WE CAN FEED THE CHILDREN."

WHAT THE HECK IS HE DOING??
THEY'RE JUST CHILDREN??

I HAVE A SWORD IN EACH HAND AND I'M WADING THROUGH THE ORPHANS CUTTING THEM DOWN LIKE WHEAT!!!

WHOOOOAH TEX!!!
DOWN BOY!!!

APPARENTLY THAT'S
WHAT PITBULLS ON
SPEED DO. (SIGH)



AFTER THE GAME....

BOB LIVING ON HIS OWN?? DO
YOU THINK IT'S POSSIBLE?? HOW
WOULD HE SURVIVE??

THAT'S IT!!! WE'VE
GOT TO GET BOB
BACK!!! THINK!!!!
HOW DO WE DO IT??

WELL, HIS DAD SAID HE
COULDN'T PLAY AS LONG AS
HE LIVES UNDER HIS ROOF.
WE'VE GOT TO GET BOB OUT
ON HIS OWN!!

MAYBE THERE'S A
BETTER WAY.
I HAVE A PLAN....



THE FOLLOWING WEEK..

GAWD IT'S GOOD TO
HAVE YOU BACK BOB!!!

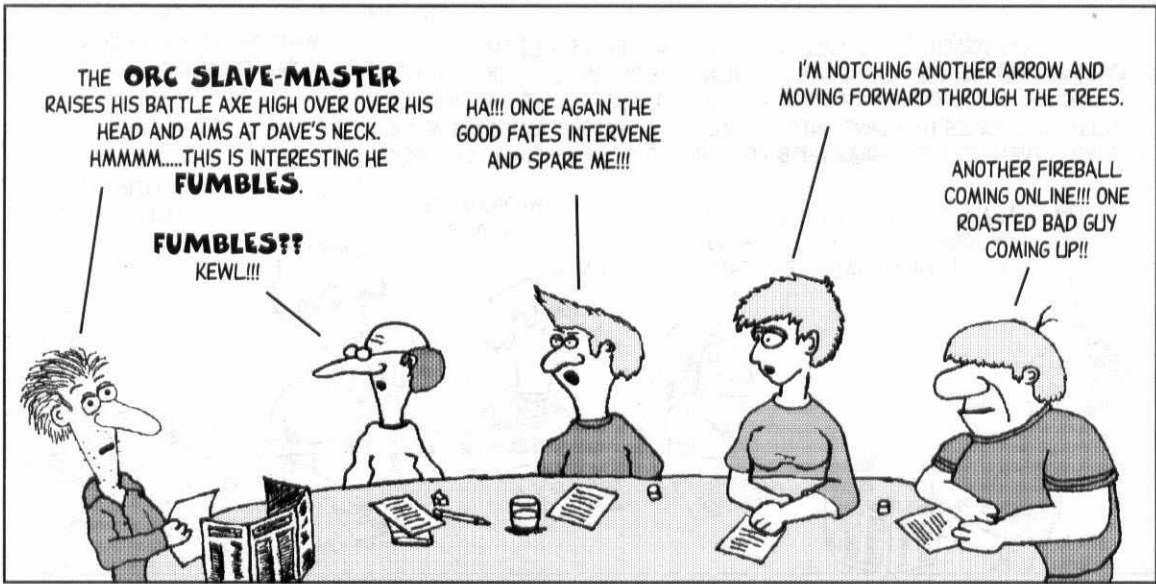
IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK.
TELLING MY OLD MAN I WAS
GOING TO DAVE'S FUNERAL
WAS A BRILLIANT PLAN. BUT
WHAT ABOUT NEXT WEEK?

NEXT WEEK YOU
HAVE A JOB
INTERVIEW WITH
THE F.B.I. DUDE!!!
(NUDGE NUDGE)

DON'T YOU THINK BOB'S DAD IS GOING
TO FIGURE IT OUT EVENTUALLY?

HAAA!!! HE'S DEALING WITH
ROLE-PLAYERS, SARA!!!! WE CAN
COME UP WITH A ZILLION EXCUSES
TO GET BOB OUT OF THE HOUSE ON
THURSDAY NIGHT.





MAYBE THIS IS ONE OF THOSE SPECIAL OCCASIONS WHERE THE **HACKMASTER SUPPORT LINE** WOULD BE USEFUL. IT'S BEEN UP AND RUNNING FOR A FEW MONTHS NOW. THE NUMBER IS LISTED IN THE LAST ISSUE OF **HACKMASTER JOURNAL!!**



I'VE GOT IT WRITTEN IN ON MY GAMEMASTER SCREEN RIGHT HERE. HELL, IT'S A 1-900 NUMBER. WHY NOT??

AT LAST!! A LITTLE PLAYER JUSTICE JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY!!! WE'VE NEEDED THIS FOR YEARS!!!

GOOD OL' GARY!! WHAT A GUY!!! STARTING UP A SUPPORT LINE REALLY SHOWS HE CARES!!

THIS IS GREAT!!! WE CAN GO RIGHT TO THE MAN HIMSELF!!!

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR??? CALL!!



A DOZEN BUSY SIGNALS LATER...

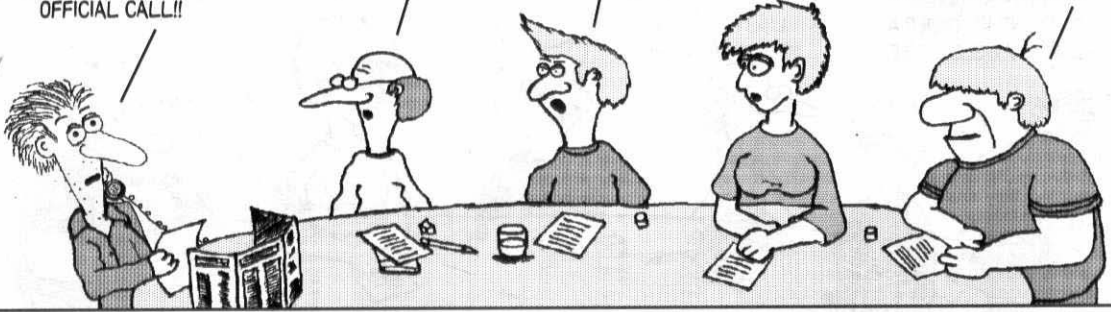
SSSSSHHHHH!!! IT'S RINGING!!! IT'S RINGING!! HELLO? YEAH, WE HAVE A RULE DISPUTE HERE AND NEED AN OFFICIAL CALL!!

IS IT GARY HIMSELF?? WE DON'T WANT JUST ANY DWEBB!!

MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A HACKMASTER CLASS SWORD HERE.

OH, LIKE GARY HAS NOTHING TO DO BUT HANG AROUND ON A THURSDAY NIGHT TAKING CALLS FROM GAMERS.

MAKE SURE YOU GET A SPECIFIC PAGE, PARAGRAPH AND RULE REFERENCE!!



THANK YOU FOR CALLING SIR!! WHILE I HAVE YOU ON THE LINE WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN ORDERING OUR NEW HACKMASTER TEMPORARY TATTOO SETS?? WE HAVE FOUR TO CHOOSE FROM. WE ALSO HAVE THE OFFICIAL HACKMASTER GRAPH PAPER IN STOCK...

UH...NO, NO THANK YOU. WHAT'S THAT? REALLY? HMMMM... OKAY. SURE. I'LL TAKE THREE PACKS. UH HUH... UH HUH... HMMMM, OKAY. YEAH, PUT ME DOWN FOR TWO OF THOSE. UH HUH...

WHAT'S HE SAYING??

WOW!! SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE GIVING HIM A TON OF INFORMATION. THIS IS AWESOME!!! WE SHOULD BE RECORDING THIS.

IS IT REALLY GARY?? TELL HIM I SAID HI!!!



Jolly originally had the support line as an 800 number. I thought this was out of character for Gary Jackson and secretly changed it to a 900 number before going to press :-)-Steve

TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

HEY GUYS, THEY'RE TELLING ME THE ANSWER WILL BE REVEALED IN THE **HACKMASTER RULE CLARIFICATION MANUAL VOLUME III** WHICH SHIPS ON MONDAY!!!

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT LINE IS THIS??

DO THEY TAKE CREDIT CARDS???

WE GOT TO KNOW!!

CAN THEY OVERNIGHT IT???

I CAN'T WAIT 'TIL MONDAY!!

DAMN!!! I DON'T HAVE THAT ONE!! ORDER TWO COPIES!!!



AN HOUR LATER...

REALLY?? UH HUH...YEAH, I GUESS I COULD USE A FEW NEW GEM DICE NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT. WHAT'S THAT?? A VOLUME DISCOUNT IF I ORDER A BUSHEL?? WELL...SURE...

DAMN DUDE!!!
HANG UP AND LET'S GET BACK TO THE GAME!!!

A BUSHEL OF DICE?? WHAT KIND OF DEAL ARE THEY GIVING???

UH.....DID HE SAY THIS WAS A 1-900 NUMBER???

B.A., GET A PRICE ON SODA-REPELLENT CHARACTER SHEETS. I'M RUNNING LOW!!!



LATER...

WELL WE SHOULD HAVE AN ANSWER MONDAY WHEN THE BOOK ARRIVES. WHAT A GREAT SERVICE!!!

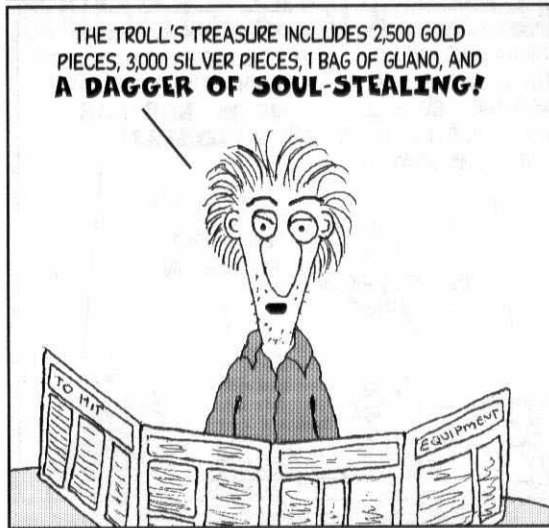
AND THEY SAY GARY DOESN'T CARE ANYMORE!!!
I'M GOING TO WRITE A LETTER AND THANK HIM!!!

DID YOU TELL HIM I SAID HELLO???

I KNOW SOMEONE WHO WILL BE WORKING OVERTIME MAKING PIZZAS NEXT MONTH.

DAMN, WE SHOULD HAVE PAID THE EXTRA FIFTEEN BUCKS FOR MORNING DELIVERY!!!





OKAY, LOOKS LIKE BOB WINS THE ROLL. ACCORDING TO THE **HACKMASTER TREASURE TOME** A DAGGER OF SOUL-STEALING GOES FOR 8,000 GOLD PIECES. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO BOB?

SORRY DUDE!!! HE SAID CASH-ON-HAND. IF YOU CAN'T PAY THEN BRIAN GETS A CHANCE TO BUY IT.

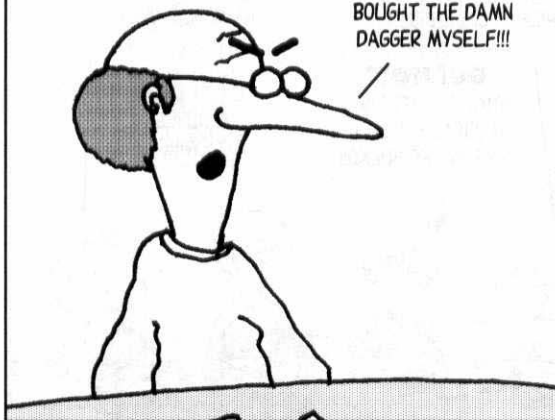
I AGREE. YOU HAVE TO PAY NOW OR IT MOVES ON TO THE NEXT GUY.

EXCELLENT!!! ONCE AGAIN MY BAG OF HOLDING SAVES THE DAY. I HAVE EXACTLY 6,000 GOLD PIECES. AFTER DEDUCTING MY SHARE I ONLY HAVE TO PAY EACH OF YOU 2,000 GP FOR A TOTAL OF 6,000.

GAAAAA!! THAT'S STEEP!!! BUT I ONLY HAVE 7,200 GOLD PIECES ON ME. I'LL PAY THE REST WHEN WE GET BACK TO TOWN AND I CAN GET TO MY STASH. WADDA YA SAY??



HEY!!! THAT'S NOT FAIR!!! IF I HAD KNOWN THAT I WOULD HAVE BOUGHT THE DAMN DAGGER MYSELF!!!



I'M WARNING YOU BIG GUY!!! HAND OVER THAT DAGGER OR THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY!!! WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER??

IT'S CALLED BASIC MATH, BOB!!! LEARN IT! USE IT!!! IT'S YOUR FRIEND!!! **HAR HAR - LOSER!!**

HEY BRIAN, CAN YOU CAST A DETECT MAGIC ON MY GUANO??

BRIAN, DON'T PROVOKE HIM!



WHILE THE FAT MAGE IS LAUGHING I'M MAKING A CALLED SHOT WITH A **BOLT OF SLAYING!!** I'M SHOOTING HIM IN THE GNADS AND TAKING BACK MY DAGGER!!

I'M TASTING SOME OF THE GUANO. DO I FEEL DIFFERENT?? IF SO, I'M GOING TO MIX SOME WITH MY DRINKING WATER.

DAVE, DO YOU KNOW WHAT GUANO IS??

??? **WHAT THE...** THAT DOES IT!! B.A. I'M THROWING THE DAGGER AT BOB!!

OH NO. THERE GOES THE ADVENTURE.



I ROLLED A NATURAL TWENTY!!! NOT ONLY DO I HIT FOR 8 POINTS OF DAMAGE BUT **I'VE JUST STOLEN BOB'S SOUL!!!**
HAR HAR HAR!!

WELL BOBBY BOY... CARE TO **MAKE A DEAL??**

YOU BASTARD!!! GIVE ME MY SOUL BACK OR DAVE WILL CUT YOU DOWN IN YOUR TRACKS!!!

WHOOOOAHHHH!! I AIN'T MESSIN' WITH HIM. NOBODY IS GONNA STEAL MY SOUL. I'M ONLY 2,000 POINTS FROM 17TH LEVEL DUDE!!

EVERYBODY CALM DOWN!!! THIS IS RIDICULOUS!!

DO I HEAR AN OPENING BID FOR BOB'S SOUL??

THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

DAMN IT DAVE, STOP BIDDING AGAINST ME!!! **CUT IT OUT!!**

8 HOURS OF DUNGEON PREP DOWN THE DRAIN!!

HEY, IT'S AN OPEN AUCTION!! I GOT JUST AS MUCH A RIGHT TO BID AS YOU DO!!!

OKAY BRIAN, MY FINAL OFFER IS 6,000 IN GOLD AND MY MAGIC ROCK*.

POOR BOB.

GEE, I DUNNO. DAVE IS THROWING IN A WHOLE BAG OF GUANO.

AFTER THE GAME.....

YOU GUYS SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELVES!!! HE LEFT IN TEARS.

HEY, I'M PLAYING A DWARF!!!! I'VE GOTTA MAKE A PROFIT. IF I CAN'T DOUBLE MY MONEY ON A TRANSACTION I AIN'T DEALING.

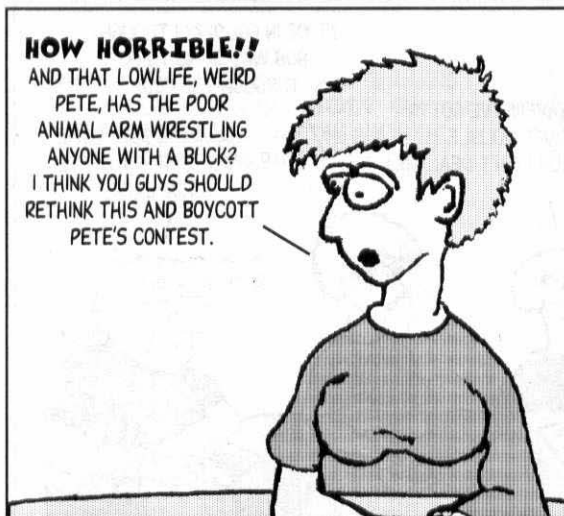
25,000 IN GOLD??? I THOUGHT BOB WAS GOING TO GO THROUGH THE ROOF.

GAWD I MISSED BOB!!! IT'S SO NICE TO HAVE HIM BACK.

* see Bundle of Trouble Volume One [KoDT #3] "I Got a Rock"

BLOOD BATH AT THE GAMES PIT

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



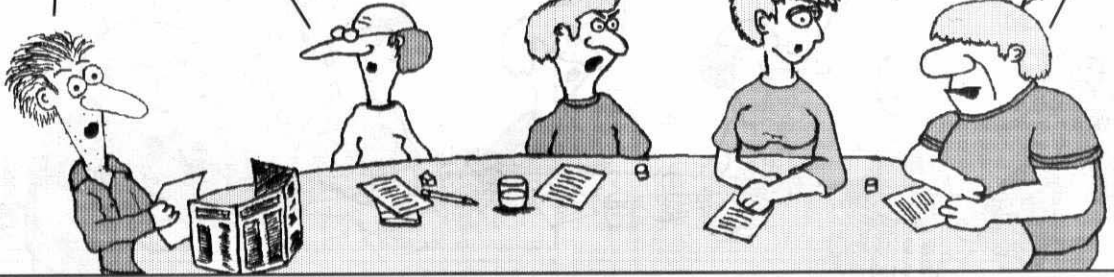
WELL, SO FAR NITRO FERGUJESON IS THE FAVORITE TO WIN.
I WOULDN'T GET MY HOPES UP OF WINNING THOSE BOOKS.

NITRO! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH. HE'S LOST THE HUNGER FOR HACKMASTER. I'LL HAVE THAT **EYE-OF-THE-TIGER ADVANTAGE** ON HIM. BESIDES, I'M GONNA DO A LITTLE CARBOHYDRATE-LOADING FRIDAY NIGHT.

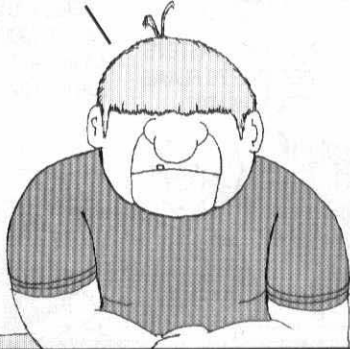
WADDA YA SAY, BRIAN?? YOU IN OR WHAT?? YOU'RE NOT STILL AFRAID OF SQUIRRELY ARE YOU?

HELLO?? BRIAN?? YOU'RE AFRAID OF SQUIRRELY?? WHAT EVER FOR??

I WAS IN A HACKMASTER TOURNAMENT ONE WEEKEND AND THE THIEF STOLE MY GUMMY-BEARS. WE SCUFFLED OVER THEM AND HE BIT ME.



NOW EVERY TIME I GO INTO WEIRD PETE'S STORE I TAUNT SQUIRRELY BY STANDING NEAR HIS CAGE AND EATING A CANDY BAR. I'VE SEEN THAT LOOK IN HIS EYE. HE WANTS ME.
HE WANTS ME BAD!!



DUDE, SWALLOW YOUR FEAR!! WE'RE TALKING ABOUT 1ST EDITION HACKMASTER!!! SIGNED BY GARY HIMSELF!!!!

BRIAN DON'T DO IT!!! JOIN MY BOYCOTT AND DON'T BE A PART OF THIS NONSENSE!!

THAT MONKEY IS LAUGHING AT YOU, DUDE!!! YOU GOTTA THROW DOWN WITH HIM.

I'LL HAVE TO THINK ON THIS FOR A WHILE. YOU GUYS WANNA GET A PIZZA??



ONE WEEK LATER...

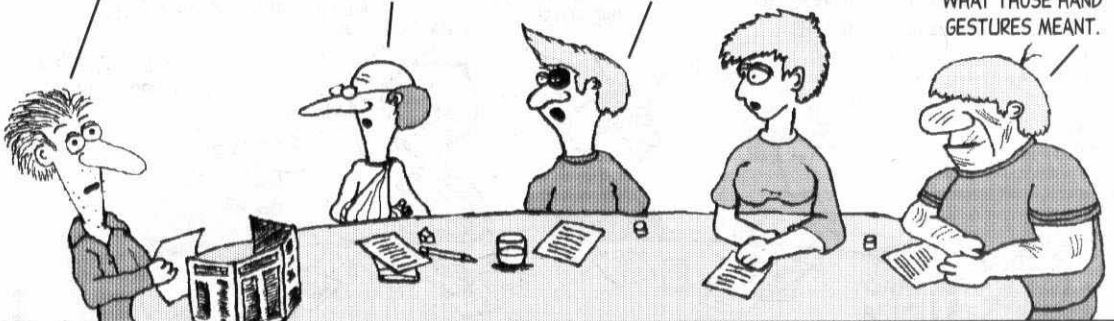
GOOD LORD!! WHAT HAPPENED??!

I GOT A WRENCHED SHOULDER AND A HAIRLINE FRACTURE OF THE FIBULA.

THAT DAMN MONKEY WUSS-SLAPPED ME!! AND THEN HE LAUGHED AT ME!! I SWEAR TO GAWD, I'M GONNA GET REVENGE!!

BRIAN WAS DISQUALIFIED FOR FIGHTING WITH SQUIRRELY BEHIND THE COUNTER. IT TOOK FIVE GUYS TO BREAK IT UP.

HE PROVOKED ME!! I KNOW DARN WELL WHAT THOSE HAND GESTURES MEANT.



OKAY GUYS, AS YOU FORCE OPEN THE **LARGE IRON PORTAL** YOU REVEAL A LONG NARROW HALLWAY. AT THE OTHER END, YOU SEE THE EVIL **LICH MASTER, THROD** LAUGHING **MANIACALLY** AND TAUNTING YOU TO COME HITHER!

MIGHTY BOLD TALK BOYS!! REMEMBER, THIS GUY CAN SUCK LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE FROM YOUR CHARACTER MERELY BY TOUCH!!

YEAH, LAUGH IT UP **CORPSE-BREATH!!** YOU'RE GONNA BE EATIN' THE BOLTS FROM MY **CROSSBOW OF SLAYING** IN A FEW SECONDS.

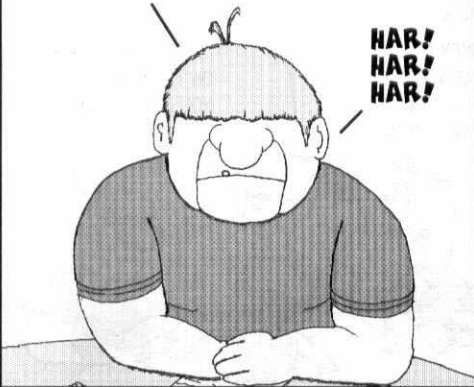
THE STING OF MY **HACKMASTER +12** WILL SILENCE HIS LAUGHTER!

THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS YOU HAVE A POWERFUL MAGE AS AN ALLY!!



I'M LETTIN' LOOSE A COUPLE OF **FACTOR FIVE SIDEWINDER FIREBALLS!!** LET'S SEE HOW OL' THROD LAUGH HIS WAY OUT OF **THAT!!**

**HAR!
HAR!
HAR!**

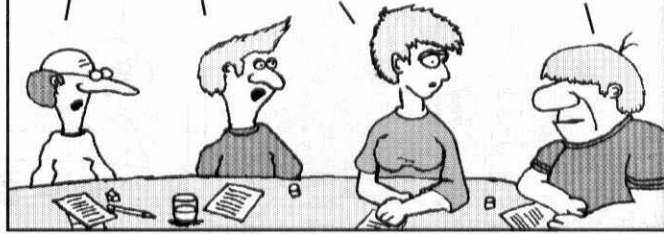


HOODY HOO!! WAY TO GO BIG GUY!!! WE WORK TOGETHER LIKE A WELL-OILED MACHINE!!! YOU SOFTEN 'EM UP - WE GO IN AND FINISH 'EM OFF.

WE'RE INVINCIBLE!!

AREN'T LICH MASTER'S IMPERVIOUS TO FLAME AND HEAT??

HUH?? OF COURSE NOT. THEY... UH, OH YEAH. YOU'RE RIGHT. (GULP) DAMN THAT 2ND EDITION ERRATA!!



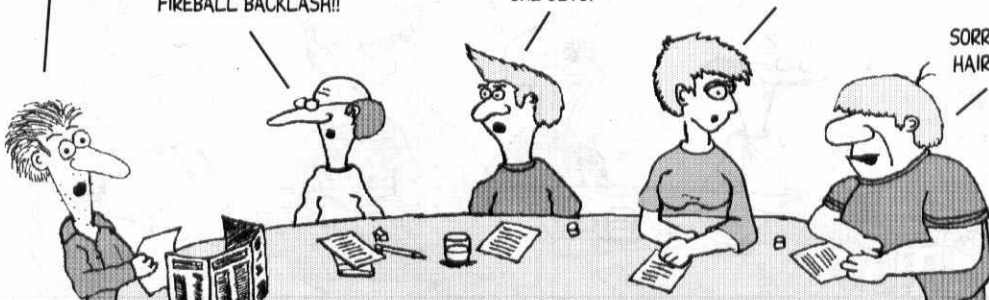
IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER BECAUSE THE LICH CASTS A POWERFUL **PUSH SPELL** JUST AS BRIAN'S FIREBALLS WERE LOOSED. THE **LARGE IRON PORTALS SLAM SHUT** BEFORE THE FIREBALLS PASS THROUGH!!! THEY **EXPLODE RIGHT IN YOUR FACE!!** AND SINCE YOU ARE IN A NARROW, CONFINED SPACE THEY DO **DOUBLE DAMAGE!!**

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!! WE CAME ALL THIS WAY ONLY TO BE THWARTED BY FIREBALL BACKLASH!!

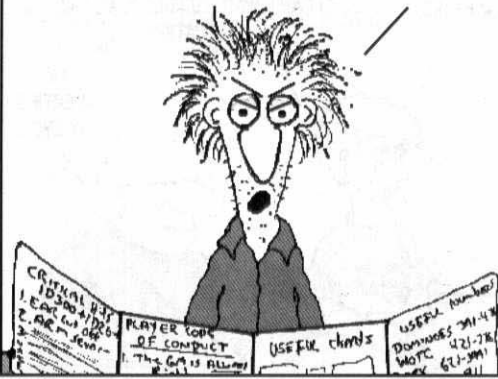
NO WAY WE'RE GETTING OUT OF THIS ONE GUYS!

I'M VERY DISAPPOINTED BRIAN. YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT THINGS THROUGH BEFORE TRYING TO KILL THROD ALL BY YOURSELF.

SORRY! I'VE GOT A HAIRPIN TRIGGER.



WELL, HOLD ON TO YOUR SEATS FOLKS!! AS YOU LIE ON THE COLD FLOOR WRITHING IN PAIN AND AGONY, THE IRON PORTALS BEGIN TO CREAK ON THEIR HINGES. THEY ARE OPENING AGAIN. TO YOUR HORROR YOU CAN SEE **THROD** MOVING DOWN THE CORRIDOR TOWARD YOU. HIS INSANE LAUGHTER ECHOES FROM THE WALLS. "HOW DARE YOU PROFANE MY SANCTUARY OF EVIL!!!! **NOW I SHALL MAKE YOU PAY!!**"



GAME OVER MAN!!!
WE'RE ALL GONNA END UP AS ZERO-LEVEL WRAITHS AND SLAVES TO THROD FOR ALL ETERNITY!!! **THIS SUCKS!!**

COME ON BRIAN!! SURELY YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN YOUR BAG OF TRICKS THAT CAN SAVE US.

SAY, WHAT ABOUT THAT BAG OF POTIONS YOU FOUND ON THE THIRD LEVEL??

HEY, I FORGOT ALL ABOUT THOSE. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DO.



HEY B.A., THERE WERE FOUR VIALS OF POTION. I'M PASSING THEM OUT RANDOMLY. EACH OF US WILL DRINK A POTION. HOPEFULLY ONE OF THESE BAD BOYS WILL SAVE OUR BUTTS.



GIMME THE BLUE ONE!!! I WANT THE BLUE ONE!!

I GOT DIBS ON THE YELLOW ONE. I JUST KNOW IT'S A POTION OF GIANT STRENGTH. COME TO PAPA!!

DON'T WORRY BRIAN, I'LL TAKE THE PINK ONE. THAT LEAVES YOU WITH THE GREEN ONE.

WELL, BOTTOMS UP!! LET'S HOPE THIS WORKS.



MOMENTS LATER...

OKAY LET'S GO AROUND THE TABLE. BOB, YOU JUST DRANK A POTION OF **POLYMORPH TO PRIMATE**. LET'S SEE ACCORDING TO THE TABLE YOU JUST TURNED INTO A **RINGTAIL LEMUR!!** DAVE, I'M AFRAID YOU DRANK A **POTION OF ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT**. YOU ARE SUDDENLY TELEPORTED TO ANOTHER PLANE WHERE YOU ARE QUICKLY JUDGED BY A COMMITTEE OF GAWDS AND IMMORTALS, FOUND GUILTY OF VIOLATING THE CONVENTIONS OF YOUR CHOSEN ALIGNMENT, STRIPPED OF ALL YOUR POSSESSIONS, BEATEN SEVERELY AND TELEPORTED BACK TO THE PARTY.

A RINGTAIL WHAT??

MAN, TALK ABOUT SWIFT JUSTICE!

I'M NEXT. (GULP)



SARA YOU JUST DRANK A VIAL OF THE MYTHICAL **VENUS ELIXIR!!** THE FIRST PERSON YOU LAY EYES UPON WILL WIN YOUR HEART AND YOUR UNDYING LOVE. AND THE FIRST PERSON YOU SEE WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR EYES IS...

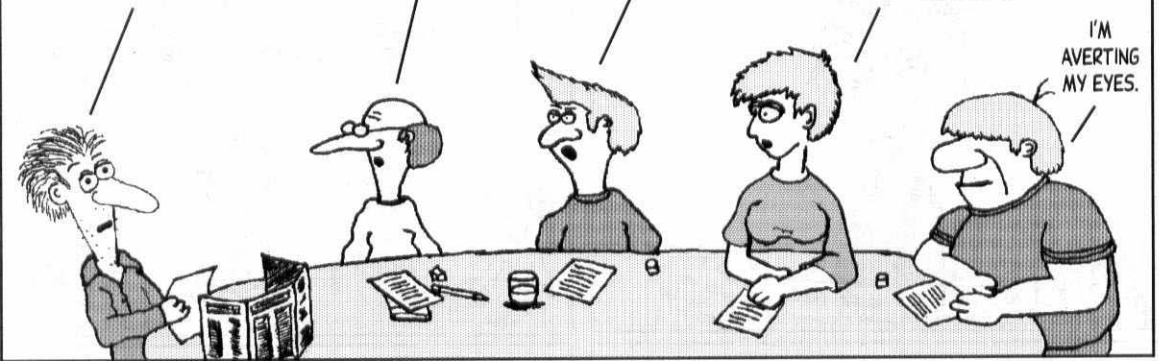
ACTUALLY, I WANT TO SAVE YOU FOR LAST SARA. YOU PICKED A REALLY INTERESTING POTION. BRIAN, YOUR POTION WAS A DUD. YOU FEEL NO EFFECT WHATSOEVER.

A DUD?? SO WHAT'S WITH SARA'S POTION?? WHAT HAPPENS TO HER?

PLEASE NOT ME!!! I DON'T NEED ANY GROUPIES.

VENUS ELIXIR?? HOW INTERESTING. I CAN'T WAIT TO ROLEPLAY THIS SITUATION.

I'M AVERTING MY EYES.



SORRY BRIAN!!! LET THE DICE FALL WHERE THEY MAY!! AND THE DICE SAY SARA SEES YOU FIRST AND FALLS MADLY IN LOVE WITH YOU!!



MY BARBARIAN LOOKS PASSIONATELY INTO THE EYES OF THE HANDSOME MAGE. I FLUTTER MY BABY-BLUES AT HIM AND MOVE TOWARD...

RUN BRIAN!!! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!!!

UH... ER... (BLUSH) SPUTTER... UH... ER... (GASP)... UH...

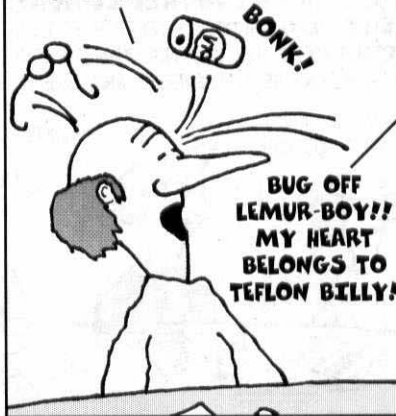


HEY COOCHIE MOMMA, HOW'S ABOUT BRINGING SOME OF THAT BARBARIAN LOVE STUFF OVER HERE??



WRRRRRRR!! MEOWWRRRRR!!

COOCHIE COOCHIE COO... UMMRFFF!



BONK!
BUG OFF LEMUR-BOY!! MY HEART BELONGS TO TEFLON BILLY!

OKAY GUYS, LET'S NOT FORGET **THROD!** HE'S STILL MOVING TOWARDS YOU WITH AN EVIL GLOW IN HIS HOLLOW EYES!!!



I'M GOING TO RULE THAT SARA'S BARBARIAN IS SO INSPIRED BY HER LOVE FOR BRIAN THAT SHE GAINS A ONE-TIME SURGE OF REPLENISHING POWER. IT WILL LAST ONE COMBAT ROUND. HOWEVER, SHE WILL STILL NEED TO ROLL A **NATURAL TWENTY** TO SCORE A HIT. THE REST OF YOU ARE STILL TOO WEAK TO FIGHT.

HEY DON'T FORGET I'M A LEMUR NOW!!! DON'T I GET MODIFIERS FOR THAT??

INSPIRED BY THE BEAUTY OF THE HANDSOME MAGE, MY BARBARIAN RISES UP ON ONE KNEE. SHE DRAWS A JADE ARROW AND KNOCKS IT IN HER ELVEN BOW. I GRACEFULLY PULL BACK THE BOW STRING, KNOWING THAT FAILURE WILL MEAN THE DEATH OF MY ONE TRUE LOVE.

CAN SOMEBODY LOAN ME A BLANKET AND A SWORD??

HANDSOME???



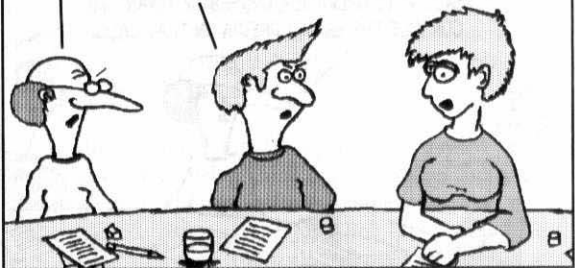
HAA!!! MY LOVE WINS OVER THE HANDS OF FATE!!! A NATURAL TWENTY!!!



WAY TO GO SARA!!

LOOKS LIKE YOU JUST EARNED THE **MOST VALUABLE PLAYER AWARD*** FOR A SINGLE SESSION!!

I CAN'T TAKE CREDIT BOYS!! I WAS INSPIRED BY THE LOVE OF MY HEART!!



THE JADE ARROW STRIKES **THROD** RIGHT IN THE HEART!!! THE EVIL GLOW BEHIND HIS EYES FLICKERS AND FADES AS DOES HIS LAUGHTER. HE FALLS **LIFELESS** TO THE DUNGEON FLOOR IN A HEAP OF BONE FRAGMENTS AND DUST!!

HOODY HOO!! I SCURRY UP TO HIS REMAINS AND SNATCH UP HIS RINGS AND NECKLACES!!

I'M HANGING BACK WITH THE HANDSOME MAGE AND TENDING TO HIS WOUNDS. WHERE DOES IT HURT BABYCAKES??

I'M FOLLOWING THE LEMUR!!! I'LL SEARCH THE BODY FOR ANY OTHER TREASURE!!

I'M DESPERATELY SEARCHING THROUGH MY SPELL BOOK FOR A **BREAK CURSE SPELL!!**



* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Two [KoDT #6] "Shiny Things Upon His Chest"

ARRRRRGHHH!!! I CAN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER!! I'M ATTACKING SARA WHILE SHE'S DISTRACTED. MAYBE A COUPLE OF GOOD WHACKS ACROSS THE BACK OF THE HEAD WILL BREAK THE SPELL!!

GUYS??? FOR CRYING OUT LOUD. MY CHARACTER IS SIMPLY IN LOVE WITH BRIAN'S CHARACTER. **IT'S NOT A HOSTILE ACT!!**

SILENCE SEDUCTRESS!!
A FEW BOLTS FROM MY CROSSBOW WILL DAMPEN THE FLAMES OF YOUR LOVE!!

YES! YES! WE MUST SAVE OUR BRAVE COMRADE FROM THE **VILE TEMPTRESS!!**

THANKS GUYS!!! I WAS ON THE VERGE OF USING MY POISON RING ON MYSELF.



SEVERAL COMBAT ROUNDS LATER...

SARA'S ARROW HITS DAVE FOR 12 POINTS OF DAMAGE KILLING HIM. BOB, YOU MANAGE TO DRAG YOURSELF BEHIND HIS LIMP BODY TO GAIN A MAKESHIFT COVER BONUS FOR NEXT ROUND.

DID I MANAGE TO THROW MY ROCK BEFORE SHE KILLED ME?

MY LOVE IS STRONG, TEFLON BILLY!!! YOU CAN'T DENY ME WHAT I NEED SO BADLY. YIELD TO ME AND BE COMPLETE!!

I STILL SAY A RINGTAIL LEMUR IS STRONG ENOUGH TO OPERATE A CROSSBOW. I WANT TO CONSULT THE ENCYCLOPEDIA ON THAT CALL.

UH...ER...UH...I'M OPENING MY POISON RING AND SWALLOWING THE CONTENTS. **"GRANT ME MY ESCAPE DR. DEATH!!"**



LATER THAT EVENING...

SORRY BRIAN, AS LONG AS SARA CONTINUES TO SUCCESSFULLY HAVE YOU RAISED FROM THE DEAD, YOU'LL HAVE TO ENDURE HER ATTENTIONS.

I'M GOING TO ATTEMPT TO PICK THE LOCK ON MY CAGE AGAIN!!! NO WAY IN HELL I'M GOING IN THAT PETTING ZOO.

I'M CONCENTRATING REAL HARD TO GATHER MY ETHEREAL POWERS. I'M COMING BACK TO HAUNT SARA.

WELCOME BACK SWEET PRINCE!!! MUSTN'T BE A BAD BOY AND JUMP FROM THE TALL TOWER AGAIN, PEACHY-WEACHY!!

DAGGER TO WRIST B.A.!!! I GET A +2 MODIFIER FOR DESPERATION. I'M ROLLING!!!





B.A.'s GENCON '97 REPORT

Well, it's finally over. Another GenCon. The Knights and I had a great time this year, our first with KenzerCo. Sara, Bob, Dave and I showed up on Wednesday afternoon to help set up the booth. Brian was already there. He came up early Tuesday morning to touch up a few miniatures for the painting contest. On the drive up from Muncie, we amused ourselves by creating new words for songs on the radio. I can only recall two or three. One was Dave's *Sharp Broadsword* - to the tune of *Sharp Dressed Man* by ZZ Top:

*Broadsword, crossbow, ten feet of rope 'cause ya never knooooo;
Caltrop, iron spike, I got a mule and I named him Miiiike;
C'mon step-up I'm gonna do you in;
'Cause every Orc's scared of a sharp broadsword.*

Another was Bob's classic *Dwarven Rhapsody* - to the tune of *Bohemian Rhapsody* by Queen. Here's a small piece:

*B.A! Just killed my dwarf;
Put a poisoned knife against my head;
I rolled a 1 and now I'm dead.
B.A! Oooo-ooh. My dwarf had just begun;
But now you've gone and blown my dwarf away.
I'm just a poor dwarf nobody loves me;
He's just a poor dwarf from a poor family;
Spare him his life from this monstrosity.
Easy come easy go, you missed your saving throw.
Will you let me reroll? I will not NO!!!
Please let me reroll! I will not NO!!!
Let me reroll! Let him reroll! Let him re-roooooo-ll!
Oooh mama mia mama mia, let me reroll!*

We finally arrived, set up the booth, received work assignments (register, Monty Python demos, autographing our buttons and pictures for adoring fans, etc.) and went to game in our room at the Hyatt. Brian stayed behind to "get some practice playing MPHG for my demo time tomorrow." That seemed crazy because Brian plays MPHG almost more often than Hackmaster™, and he knows all the rules by heart. (Later he told me he just wanted to play MPHG with Brian Jelke to try to catch him on a rules flaw - he was unsuccessful, but to his credit the big guy did win two of three games with his special "Frenchman deck"). The rest of us had a great time playing *Give Me the Brain!*

The next day the show started. Yep 30,000 screaming gamers all crammed into downtown Milwaukee. The con was BIG. Tons of new games and new companies. The TSR castle still stood in the center. Rumor had it WoTC was going to pull it down at the end of the show and all the gamers could take a piece à la the Berlin Wall, but alas, the rumor was false.

Anyway, the REAL fun came after hours. Thursday night Jolly got drunk at the WoTC tent party and made a fool of himself. He had to be wheeled back to the room in a luggage cart. It was virtually impossible to get to sleep

that night over the din of Jolly's horrendous Temple of Snoring. Several times before dawn, Dave was forced to free his pillow, sheet, room curtains and cot from Jolly's *Sucking Nasal Tractor Beam*™.

The next day also proved to be a great time. We all went down to the Live Action *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* event. There fans from the audience acted out on stage the whole movie, scene by scene. A good time was had by all and Sarah won a T-Shirt for acting out the part of Zoot.

That night we played the classic card game *Nuclear War* with Rick Loomis of *Flying Buffalo, Inc.* It was quite a thrill. The best part was forcing Rick to play by my home rules. Later, we made paper airplanes out of KoDT flyers and threw them from the balcony into the bar/open gaming area. Brian's was the best. An odd structure, it flew clear down into the restaurant.

The next day we played in the Hackmaster™ tournament. We would have advanced to the final round if our game hadn't been interrupted. An ambulance burst through the south doors of the role-playing area in a desperate effort to get to the Arena where Nitro was running his new Hackmaster™ variant, *Live Action Gladiatorial Combat*.

That night Jolly made a spider out of pipe cleaners and Dave Kenzer attached it to fishing line and lowered from the Hyatt balcony onto unsuspecting role players. Everyone at the bar had a good laugh at the prank. Then we moved to the other side of the balcony where we lowered the spider onto some Live Action Gamers. Unfortunately, when the Vampire players spotted the spider they swatted it, then stomped on it. Vamps, no sense of humor.

Elsewhere, at the *White Wolf* party, Bob spotted Jolly. As a prank, he snuck up behind him, tickled his sides and whispered "hey sweetie" in his ear. To Bob's complete surprise, the man who turned around was NOT Jolly. Bob could only stammer a weak, "Uh, I thought you were Jolly Blackburn, my roommate."

The next day was Sunday, the last day of the con. We were quite busy hawking our goods all day. At Dave's suggestion and over Sara's objection, we Knights split before booth breakdown. I hope the nice folks at KenzerCo don't remember and cut us off next year. Anyway, when we left the parking garage, Brian had a plan to scam our way out of paying for parking; just tell the guards we lost our parking ticket. We tried, but they had my license plate number written down. We thought we could role-play our way out of it, explaining that we paid in full the night before when we drove out to Lake Michigan for the *HackBeard*™ award ceremony and fish-fry. The angry old manager threatened to call the cops, so we ponied up the dough and headed back to Muncie. All the while we were a-singin',

Broadsword, crossbow, ten feet of rope 'cause ya never knooooo...

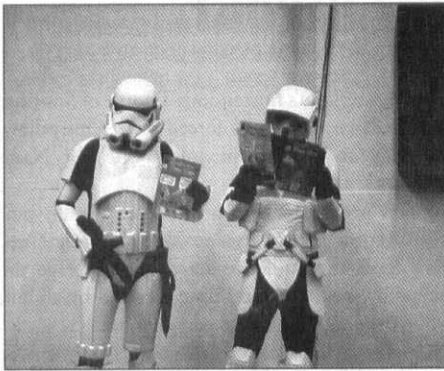
See you at HackCon™!

BA Felton

* Shadis fans may recall that B.A. Felton used to do convention reports in the column, Bits N' Pieces.

shots from the KODT-cam™

TWO FIREBALLS
COMING ONLINE B.A.!!



Hey BA,
why do we
always
get
stuck
manning
the
booth?



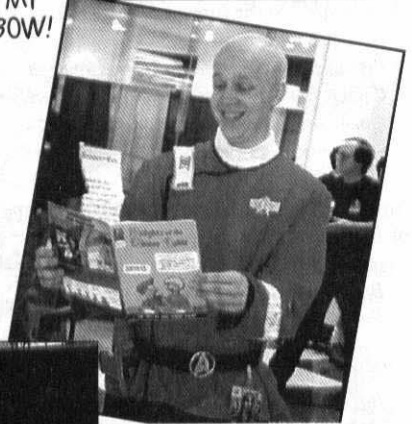
I WASTE 'EM
WITH MY
CROSSBOW!

I'm tellin' you, it's just another drill.
No one would dare attack this station.
Hey, is there a new SpaceHack story in
that issue?

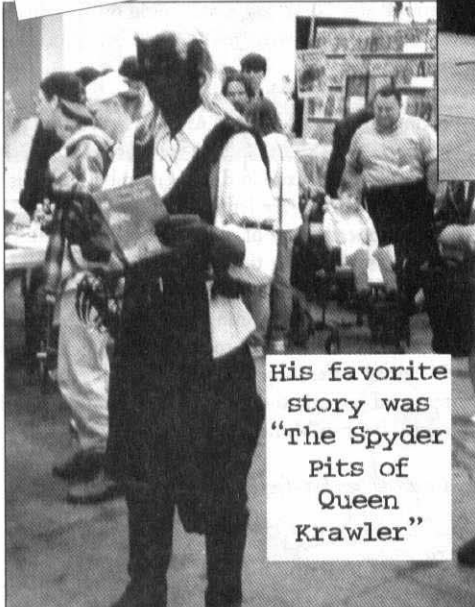


Hmmm, I wonder what
Jabba would pay for a
HackMaster +12?

The Phantom knows
what the most
popular comic strip
in the gaming
industry is.

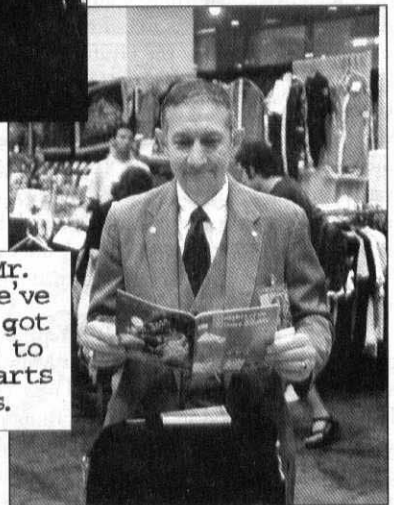


Beam me up
Scottie. There's
no intelligent
life here!



His favorite
story was
"The Spyder
Pits of
Queen
Krawler"

Sorry Mr.
Perot, we've
already got
someone to
make charts
for us.



These photographs were taken at DragonCon 1997.

Knights of the Dinner Table™

"The Good, The Bad, and the Unlucky!"

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



**KENZER AND
COMPANY**

Knights of the Dinner Table #12
"The Good, the Bad, and the Unlucky"
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Editorial of a Madman

“Where the hell are we??”

- Lost Ball State University Student

It was a warm August afternoon and I was just finishing up the latest issue of KODT when I noticed a rather battered and rust-encrusted sedan pull into my driveway. I studied the car for a moment as it sat idling roughly for several minutes. From my front window I could make out four occupants in the car — two in the front seat, two in back. They seemed to be in a huddle around a large road map. The driver was wearing a BSU (Ball State University) baseball cap which was shoved back high on his forehead. He looked like a man who had just been told, “you can’t get there from here.”

I shrugged and returned to my work. They were obviously lost and had pulled off the road to get their bearings. It wasn’t the first time someone had gotten their sense of direction turned around on the winding country road where I live. Fifteen minutes later I happened to glance out the window again and was surprised to find the car still sitting in my driveway.

The occupants had spilled out of the car and each of them seemed to be glancing or pointing in a different direction with looks of utter confusion written all over their faces. By this point I had to know what was going on and opened my front door. Stepping out on the deck, one of the lost souls noticed me and flashed a huge smile.

“Man are we lost!!” he yelled out. I wasn’t sure if he was making a statement or asking a question.

“Where you guys heading?” I asked.

“Back to Ball State!” yelled one of the other guys, “Until we decided to make a detour to Marion.”

“Detour? Why?”

“We’re looking for the Knights of the Dinner Table editorial offices!”

“Knights of the Din...offices?” I thought for a moment wondering what the hell they were talking about when it hit me. I began to laugh. Not one of those, “ha ha — I get the punch line” laughs. No, it was one of those, “aaaahhh haaaaa!!! I’m laughing at YOU” sort of laughs.

The sight of these poor guys, off the beaten path, looking for the KenzerCo editorial offices [Indiana branch] was the

funniest thing I’d seen in a very long time. I pointed to my house and told them they were at the right place.

After exchanging some strange looks amongst themselves, one of them yelled back, “Are you sure? We’re looking for Jolly Blackburn!” That got me laughing once again. I invited them in for the ‘grand tour’ and offered them soda and cold pizza. We even managed to squeeze in an episode of **The Simpsons** and a couple of games of **Give Me Da Brain** during their visit.

As it turned out, Bob, Mike, Craig and Dan had been on a roadtrip to a game shop in Fort Wayne, Indiana where they had bought up a few back issues of **Knights of the Dinner Table**. They were reading the stories aloud on the trip back home when they passed by the Marion exit on I-69 and realized it was the same town listed in the comic books as being the home of the ‘editorial office’.

As Mike explained it, they drove up and down Monroe Pike looking for ‘a big office building’. I showed them my computer set up, my game collection, the scary barn and my raccoon. I felt like they had come a long way only to be disappointed.

A few hours later they decided that they should be heading back to Ball State and as they were heading out the door Craig turned and asked, “Would you mind if I ran out to car and got my camera? I’d like to get a picture of all of us standing in front of your house.” Again, I laughed.

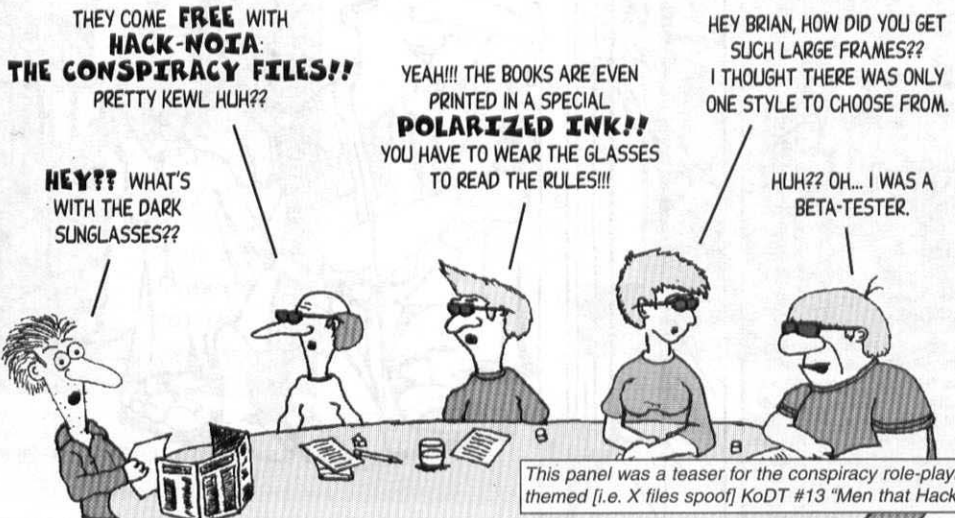
As they were piling into their car and we said our good-byes, I told them I was sorry if the KODT offices were a disappointment. Almost in unison the shot back with, “Hell No!!! This is great!!! We’re gonna come back and hang out with you sometime!!!”

Just as they were pulling out on the road, Dan put his head out the window and waved. “Hey!!! You should put this in the comic book!!!”

Good idea, Dan. Y’all come back now - ya hear??

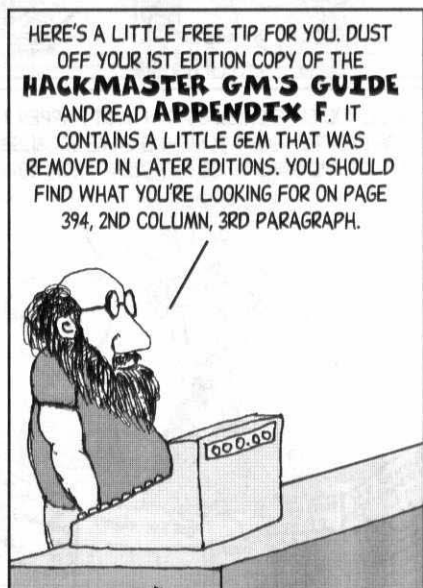
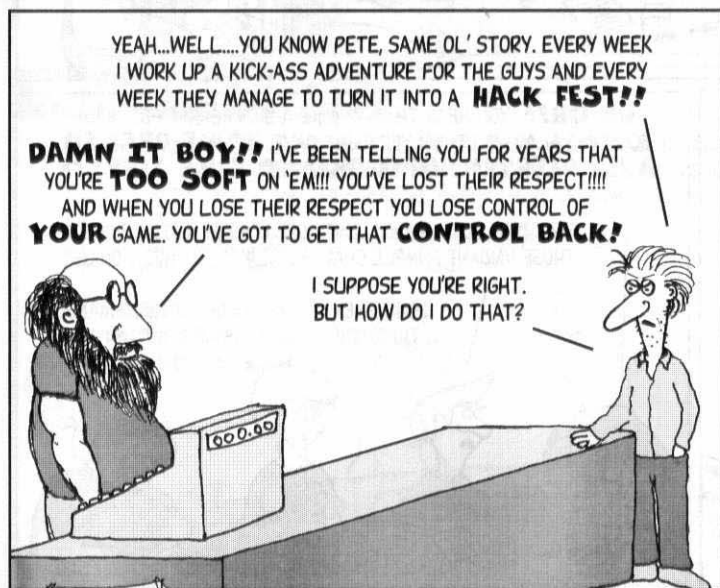
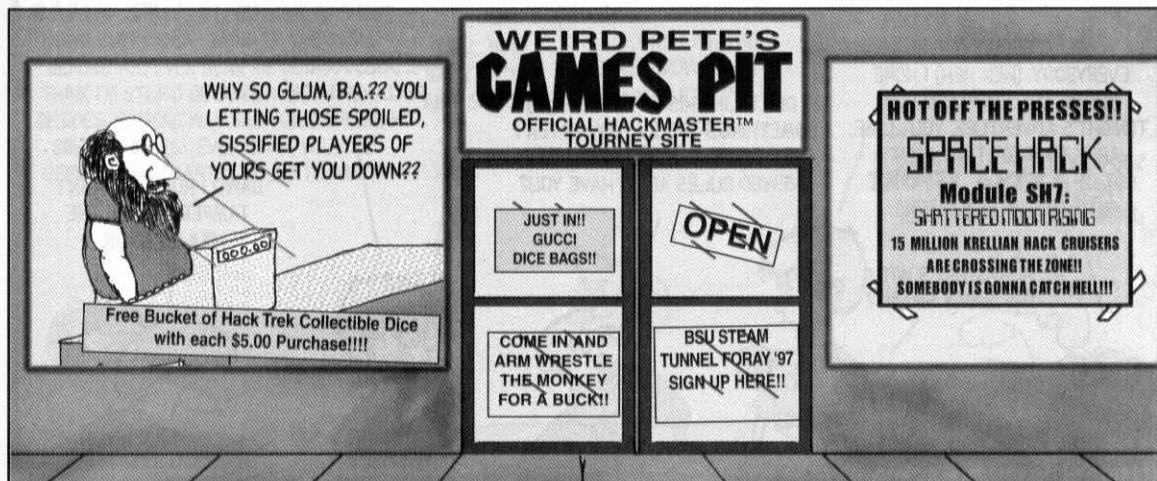
Jolly R. Blackburn

Jolly R. Blackburn
September 15, 1997

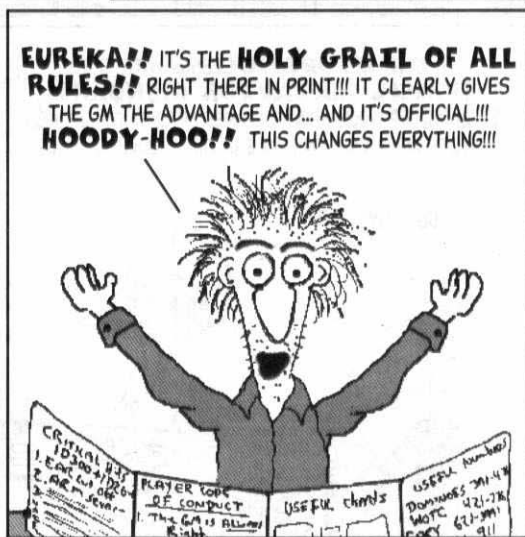


An Overbearing Situation

STORY SUGGESTED BY ROY GARGAGLIANO



ARMED WITH WEIRD PETE'S ADVICE B.A. RETURNS HOME TO CONSULT HIS 1ST EDITION HACKMASTER GUIDE



THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

WELL GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY. (HEH HEH) I HOPE YOU'RE ALL PREPARED FOR TONIGHT'S ADVENTURE. YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW THAT I PUT A LOT OF **EXTRA EFFORT** INTO THIS WEEK'S OUTING.

I DON'T LIKE HIS ATTITUDE GUYS. SOMETHING'S UP. B.A. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN EXPERIMENTING WITH HOME-BREWED RULES AGAIN HAVE YOU?

HE DOES HAVE A PECULIAR LOOK ON HIS FACE.

GAWD I HOPE HE HASN'T TAMPERED WITH THE RULES AGAIN.

HUH? WHAT'S WITH THE GOOFY SMIRK??



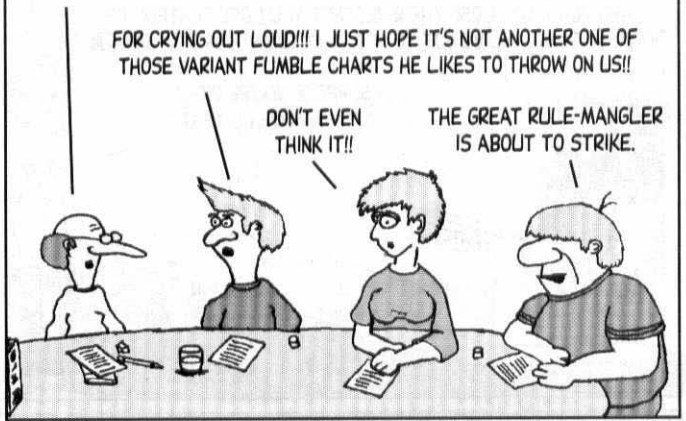
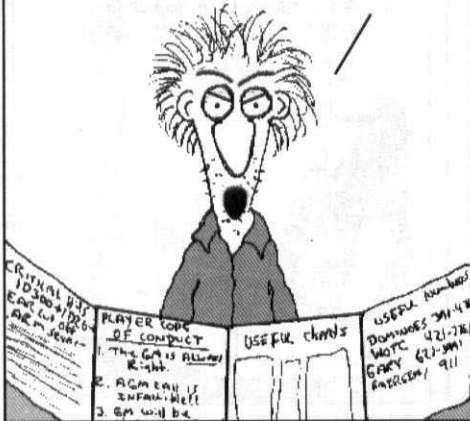
WILL YOU GUYS CHILL OUT?? I JUST HAPPEN TO BE EXCITED ABOUT TONIGHT'S GAME BECAUSE THINGS ARE GOING TO BE DIFFERENT FROM NOW...

UH OH!! YOU HEAR THAT??? LIKE A BIG FREAKIN' FOG HORN SOUNDING ALARM!!! I THINK YER RIGHT DAVE. **HOME-BREWED RULE ALERT!! HOME-BREWED RULE ALERT!!**

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!! I JUST HOPE IT'S NOT ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE VARIANT FUMBLE CHARTS HE LIKES TO THROW ON US!!

DON'T EVEN THINK IT!!

THE GREAT RULE-MANGLER IS ABOUT TO STRIKE.



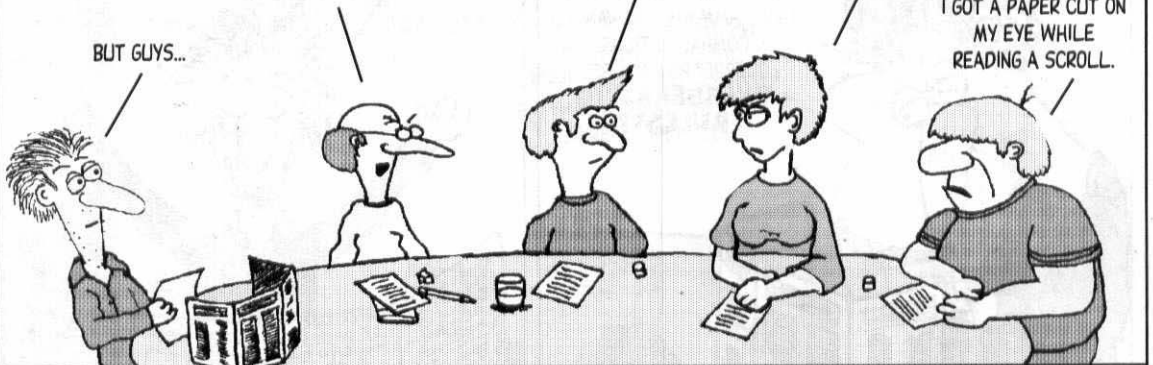
I THOUGHT HE LEARNED HIS LESSON WITH THOSE **FUMBLE CHARTS FOR MUNDANE TASKS??** YOU KNOW, THE ONES THAT SAID I CHIPPED MY TOOTH WITH A SPOON WHILE EATING A BOWL OF SOUP??

AND I GOT TRENCH FOOT JUST BECAUSE I DRANK FROM A PUBLIC FOUNTAIN.

HMMRRFFF! I TOOK FOUR POINTS OF DAMAGE PUTTING ON MY ARMOR.

BUT GUYS...

YOU WERE LUCKY! I GOT A PAPER CUT ON MY EYE WHILE READING A SCROLL.



DAMN IT!! DO YOU HAVE TO SHOOT DOWN EVERY IDEA I BRING TO THE TABLE BEFORE YOU EVEN HEAR ME OUT?? YOU THINK I'M STUPID OR SOMETHING?? HUH? BESIDES, NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT HOME-BREWED RULES. EVERYTHING WILL BE OFFICIAL HACKMASTER RULES TONIGHT!!

WELL WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST SAY SO?

LOOKS LIKE THE SCARECROW FOUND A BRAIN!!! LET'S PLAY!!

WHAT A RELIEF.

EVEN SO, LET'S STAY ON OUR TOES. IT STILL DOESN'T EXPLAIN THE STUPID SMIRK.



LATER THAT NIGHT...

AS YOU ARE ENTERING THE CITY YOU NOTICE A **BLIND BEGGAR** SITTING BY THE GATE WITH A MANGY, **THREE-LEGGED DOG**. AS YOU PASS BY, THE BEGGAR HOLDS OUT A TIN CLIP AND CRIES OUT, "ALMS FOR THE POOR! ALMS FOR THE POOR!"

HE'S BLIND EH?? I LOOK IN THE CLIP. HOW MUCH MONEY IS IN IT??

I'M WATCHIN' BOB'S BACK IN CASE ANYONE NOTICES.

OH GAWD, DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT. YOU GUYS ARE SO **PATHETIC!!**

HUH?? I DUNNO. MAYBE FOUR OR FIVE SILVER PIECES. **WHO CARES??**

I'M TRYING TO CHARM THE DOG!!



MY THIEF, KNUCKLES, USES HIS STEALTHY FINGERS TO TAKE THE SILVER PIECES FROM THE CLIP WHILE CLEVERLY REPLACING THEM WITH WORTHLESS SLUGS. (SNICKER)

OH THE MUTT IS COPPIN' AN ATTITUDE HUH?? I WHACK HIM WITH THE HILT OF MY SWORD!!

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!! THE DOG IS JUST LOOKING OUT FOR HIS MASTER!!!

OKAY, AS SOON AS YOU DO THE **THREE-LEGGED DOG** BEGINS TO BARK LOUDLY AT YOU!!!

IT'S SO SAD HE ONLY HAS THREE LEGS. POOR POOCH.



Here we see some interesting insight into Brian's weakness for animals...a weakness that will show itself again in Bundle of Trouble Volume Five. -Dave

DAVE SMACKS THE DOG ON THE HEAD WITH THE HILT OF HIS SWORD BUT IT ONLY CAUSES THE DOG TO YIP IN PAIN AND RESUME BARKING EVEN LOUDER!!!! SUDDENLY **FORTY-FIVE BEGGARS** WORK THEIR WAY OUT OF THE CROWD TO COME TO THEIR COMRADE'S AID. THEY ARE ARMED WITH **BLUNT WOODEN CLUBS, VARIOUS LENGTHS OF ROPE** AND **DAGGERS**.

BEGGARS?? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING. WHAT A JOKE!!! I WASTE 'EM WITH MY **CROSSBOW!!**

I LEAP INTO THE **UNRULY MOB OF BEGGARS** AND **MOW THEM DOWN** WITH MY **HACKMASTER+12**. THERE'LL BE NOTHING BUT **NUBS AND STUBS** LEFT WHEN I'M FINISHED!!

BUT...BUT...
(SIGH)

I GOT **FIREBALLS** COMING ONLINE!!!



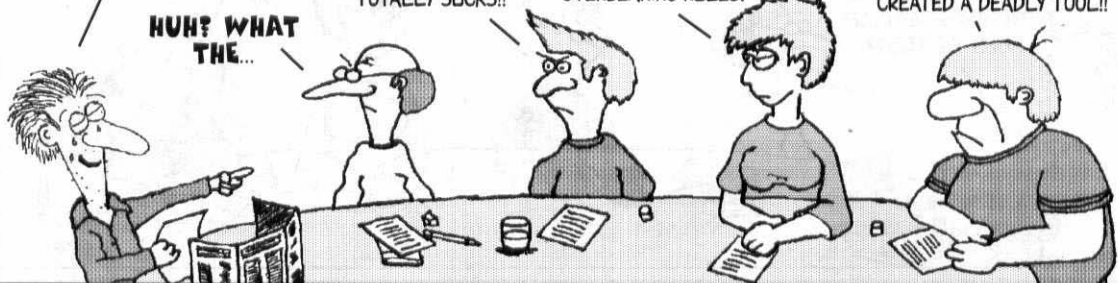
NOT SO FAST GUYS!!! I'M IMPLEMENTING **OPTIONAL COMBAT RULE 56:12C, OVERBEARING**. YOU'LL FIND IT IN **APPENDIX F** IN THE **FIRST EDITION HACKMASTER GM'S GUIDE!!** (AHEM) ACCORDING TO THAT RULE AN **ANGRY MOB** AUTOMATICALLY SUCCEEDS WHEN ATTEMPTING AN **OVERBEARING ATTACK** ON A **SINGLE TARGET**. ACCORDING TO CHAPTER 8 OF **THE GUIDE**, TEN BEGGARS CONSTITUTE A MOB!! SO YOU EACH HAVE TEN BEGGARS SUCCESSFULLY OVERBEARING YOU!!! **HEE-HEE-HOO!!!** AN OVERBORNE TARGET IS RENDERED COMPLETELY HELPLESS AND CAN BE DISARMED AND BOUND.

HUH? WHAT THE...

FOUL!! THIS TOTALLY SUCKS!!

UH-OH!!! NOT THE OVERBEARING RULES.

DAMN!! HE'S COMBINED TWO FLAWED RULES AND CREATED A DEADLY TOOL!!



YOU ARE ALL QUICKLY OVERBORNE AND PUMMELED SENSELESS!!! **HAR HAR!!** THIS IS GREAT!!! THE **ANGRY MOB OF BEGGARS** BINDS YOU AND DRAGS YOU DOWN THE MAIN STREET OF THE CITY TO THE MARKETPLACE. THERE, THEY STRIP YOU OF ALL YOUR POSSESSIONS, TATTOO YOU WITH **RUNES OF SHAME** AND MAKE YOU DO HUMILIATING TRICKS TO AMUSE THE EVER-GROWING CROWD OF ON-LOOKERS. THEN THEY SUMMON THE **MAGISTRATE** AND DEMAND CRIMINAL PROSECUTION!!! **HAR HAR!!**

RUNES OF SHAME??? I AIN'T LETTIN' NO ONE PUT **RUNES OF SHAME** ON ME!!!

STOP SMIRKIN' AT US!!! IT'S NOT FUNNY!!

COME ON, B.A.!!! YOU'RE EXPLOITING A FEW OBSCURE, ANTIQUATED RULES!!!!

I'LL BET WEIRD PETE IS BEHIND THIS... (GRRRRR)



ALL RIGHT, B.A.!! I'M IMPRESSED. COMBINING THE LAME **OVERBEARING RULES** WITH THE **BEGGAR CLAUSE** OF THE **ANGRY MOB RULES** WAS A BRILLIANT MOVE!!! I SALUTE YOU. OKAY?? BUT I SUGGEST WE BAN THIS PARTICULAR RULE HYBRID FROM OUR TABLE. IT UNBALANCES THE GAME.



AWH POOR BABIES!!!! **WAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!** HOW'S IT FEEL GETTING A TASTE OF YOUR OWN MEDICINE?? **HUH???** YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN USING THE RULES AGAINST ME ALL THESE YEARS AND FINALLY, **FINALLY**, THE RULES WORK FOR ME!!! AND WHAT'S YOUR REACTION?? **YOU WANNA CRY ABOUT IT!!** WELL TOUGH NOOGIES!!!! THINGS ARE GOING TO CHANGE AROUND HERE. NOW BEFORE YOU GUYS ACT UP AND START GETTING OUT OF LINE, YOU'LL REMEMBER THE **LITTLE OVERBEARING BULLET** IN MY ARSENAL AND THINK TWICE ABOUT IT!!!!



DEATH TO TYRANTS!!

HIS EYES ARE GLAZING OVER!!

QUICKLY ROBIN, TO THE BAT CAVE!!

THE FOLLOWING WEEK....

YEAH!! WE'RE GONNA FEED THEM AND BUY THEM STUFF. ALL THEY HAVE TO DO IS OVERBEAR ANYTHING THAT CROSSES OUR PATH!!!

HUH?? WHAT DO YOU GUYS WANT TO DO AGAIN??

WE'RE WALKING AROUND THE CITY AND EACH OF US IS GOING TO HIRE 10 BEGGARS TO HANG OUT WITH US AT ALL TIMES.

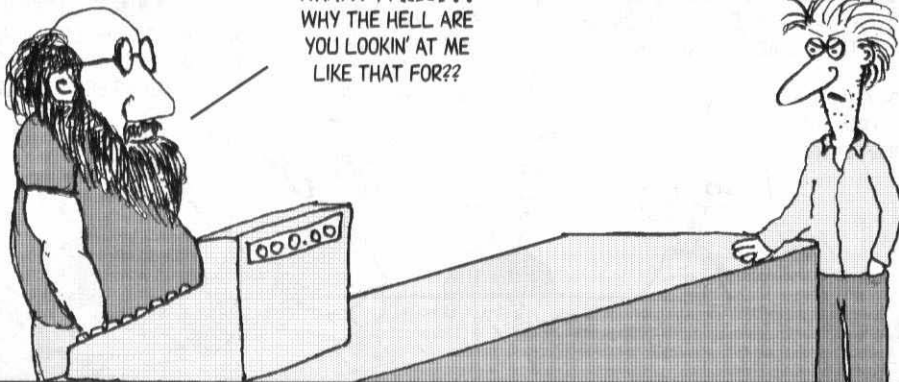
LET'S GO OVERBEAR A DRAGON!!

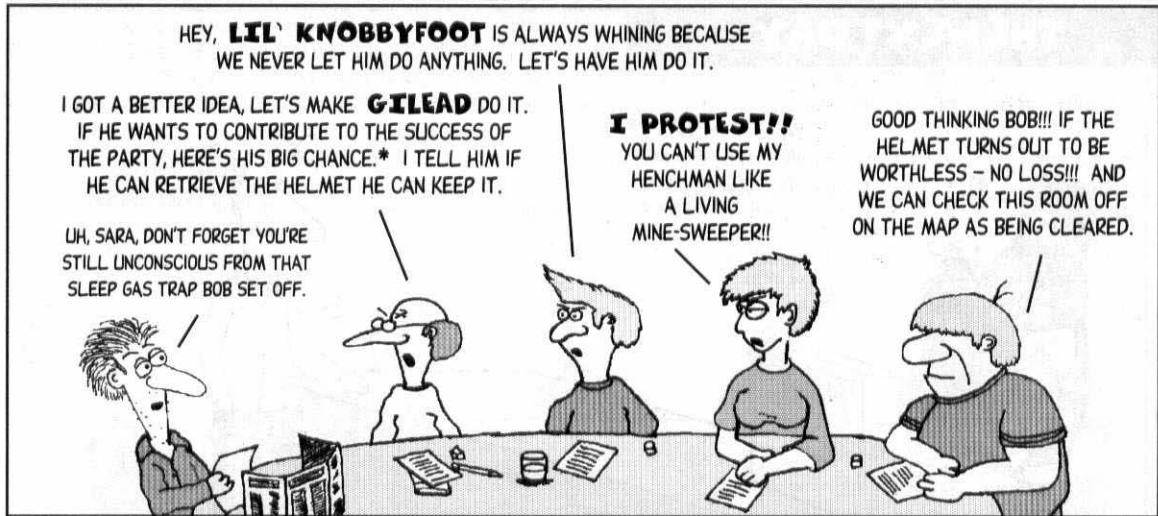
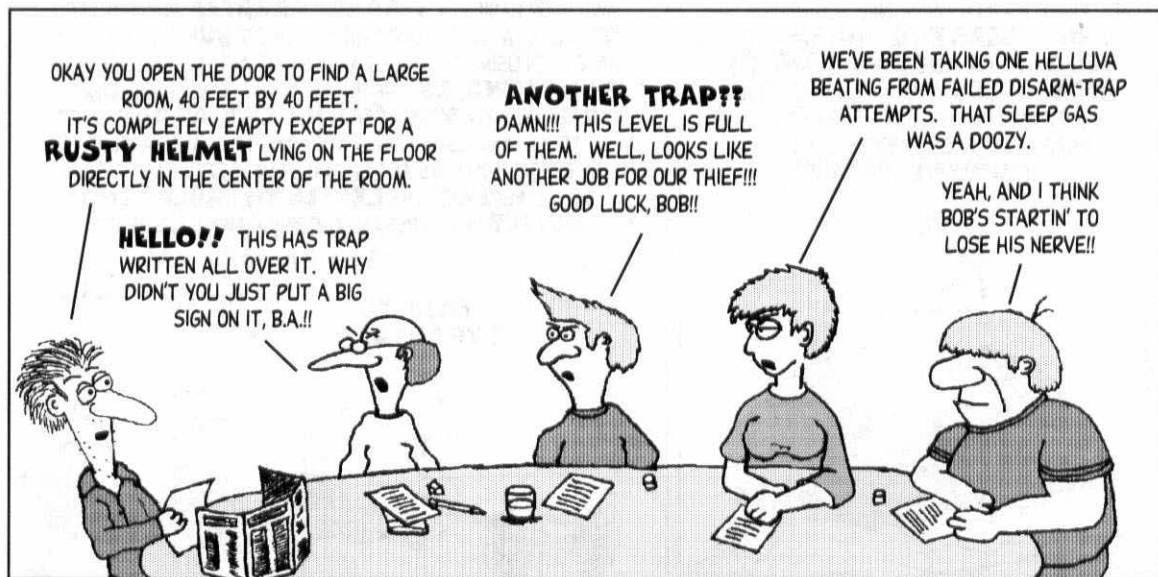
YEAH, WE THOUGHT IT OVER. THOSE OVERBEARING RULES WORK BOTH WAYS!!!



THE NEXT DAY....

WHAT?? **WHAT??** WHY THE HELL ARE YOU LOOKIN' AT ME LIKE THAT FOR??





* see Bundle of Trouble Volume Three [KoDT #8]: "Balance of Terror"

The creation of the great Lord Gilead. -Dave

GILEAD SCOFFS!! I'LL STAY HERE AND GUARD MY MISTRESS, SARINA THE RANGER. I'M NOT ON **YOUR** PAYROLL, SO **GET YOUR OWN DAMN HELMET!!!**



HEY!! I DON'T THINK I LIKE HIS ATTITUDE!! DON'T THINK I WONT SLAP HIM AROUND WITH THE BACK OF MY GAUNTLET!!! SARINA'S OUT COLD SO SHE WON'T SAVE HIM FROM A GOOD BUTT-WHUPPIN' RIGHT HERE!!!



TWENTY MINUTES LATER.....

GILEAD IS STILL KICKING AND SCREAMING BUT YOU MANAGED TO KNOCK THE BACKPACK OUT OF HIS HANDS AND FINALLY WRESTLE HIM TO THE GROUND.

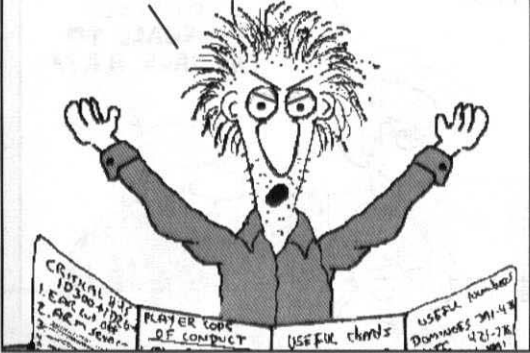
DAMN!! HE'S A TOUGH LITTLE SCRAPPER. HE BEANED ME WITH THAT PACK FIVE TIMES!!!

GRRRR!!!!
AM I AWAKE YET?

MAKE SURE HE STOMPS AROUND REAL GOOD TO SET OFF ANY TRAPS!!



GILEAD PICKS UP THE HELMET AND PLACES IT ON HIS HEAD. THE RUST IMMEDIATELY FALLS AWAY REVEALING BEAUTIFUL SILVER AND GOLD INLAYS AGAINST A BRONZE BACKGROUND. IT IS THE LEGENDARY **HELM OF LORDSHIP!!!**



HELM OF...**HELM OF LORDSHIP!!**
I CALL DIBS!!! THAT HELMET IS PERFECT FOR ME!!

I TELL GILEAD TO TOSS ME THE HELMET!!

HEY??? YOU PROMISED GILEAD COULD KEEP IT!!

GIVE AN NPC A MAJOR RELIC??? I DON'T THINK SO!!



* see Bundle of Trouble Volume Three [KoDT #7]: "A Call for Heroes"

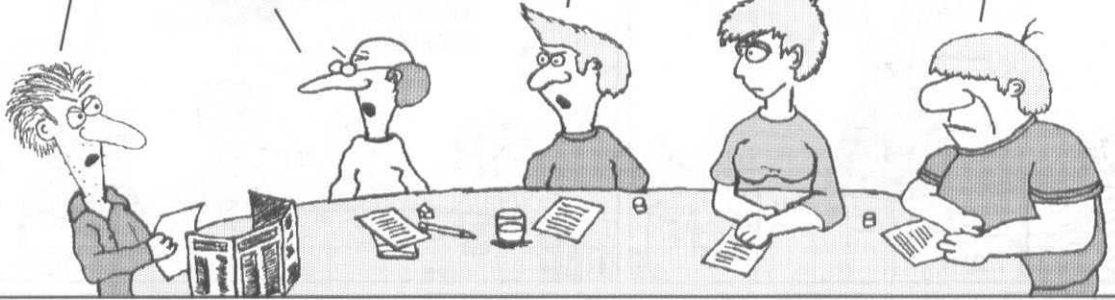
GILEAD IS SUDDENLY TRANSFORMED. HE IS NOW SURROUNDED BY A **STRONG MAGICAL AURA** THAT EMITS A POWERFUL **CHARM SPELL**. ANYONE STANDING IN HIS PRESENCE MUST SAVE VS. CHARM WITH A MINUS 10 MODIFIER OR IMMEDIATELY BECOME A LOYAL FOLLOWER OF **LORD GILEAD!!**

GO GILEAD!! I ALWAYS KNEW HE'D MAKE GOOD!! (CACKLE)

LORD GILEAD??
NO WAY!! HE'S STILL WORKING FOR US!!

ME SERVE GILEAD???
NEVER!! NEVER I SAY!!!

I'M AVERTING MY EYES!!!



TWENTY MINUTES LATER....

GILEAD UNROLLS THE BLUEPRINTS ON THE TABLE AND EXPLAINS HOW HE WANTS HIS CASTLE BUILT. FIRST BOB AND DAVE WILL CLEAR THE FOREST, SAVING THE TIMBER TO USE FOR LATER CONSTRUCTION. BRIAN IS QUARRYING LIMESTONE BLOCKS FROM THE RIDGE LINE TWO MILES TO THE SOUTH. SARA, YOU'LL BE IN CHARGE OF THE EVER-GROWING THROG OF FOLLOWERS AND ASSIGNING THEM THEIR DUTIES. OH....DAVE, I ALMOST FORGOT, YOU FEEL COMPELLED TO GIVE GILEAD YOUR HACKMASTER +12.

CASTLE?? WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE KEEP WE JUST BUILT FOR HIM??

DAMN IT!!! THERE'S GOTTA BE A WAY TO BREAK THIS CHARM SPELL!!!

ALL RIGHT!!! I'M THE TASKMASTER!!

THE LORDSHIP CHARM SPELL CAN ONLY BE BROKEN BY DEATH!!



TWO HOURS LATER...

WILL YOU GUYS STOP IT?? I'M NOT GOING TO ALLOW YOU TO KILL YOURSELVES!!! YOU'RE CHARMED AND THAT'S THAT!!

COME ON, B.A.!! I RUBBED BACON GREASE ALL OVER MYSELF AND I'M SLAPPIN' THE HELL OUT OF THE BEAR WITH MY BELT. YOU CAN'T TELL ME HE DOESN'T RIP ME TO SHREDS!!

I HIT MYSELF IN THE HEAD WITH AN AXE AGAIN!!! HOW MUCH DAMAGE DID I DO THIS TIME??

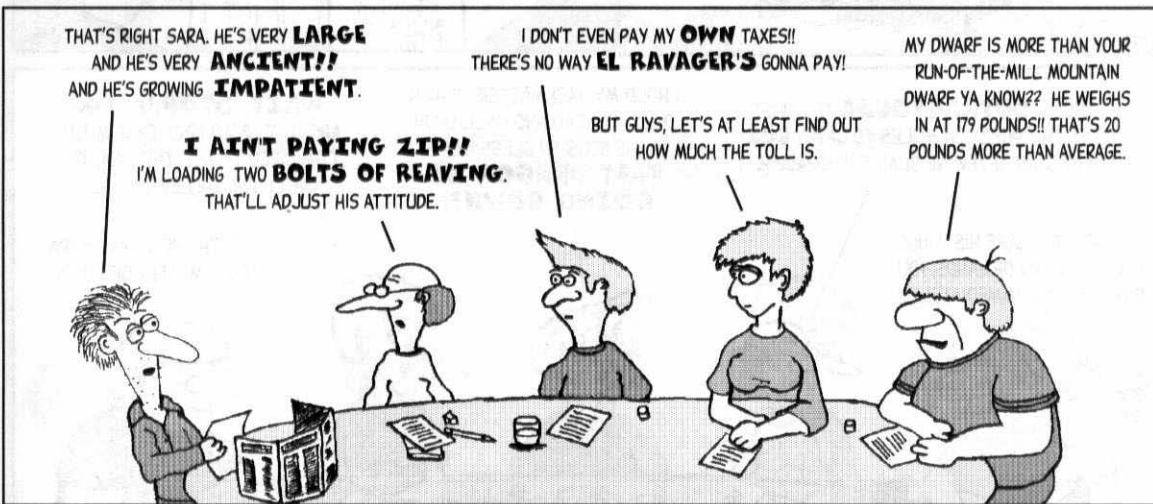
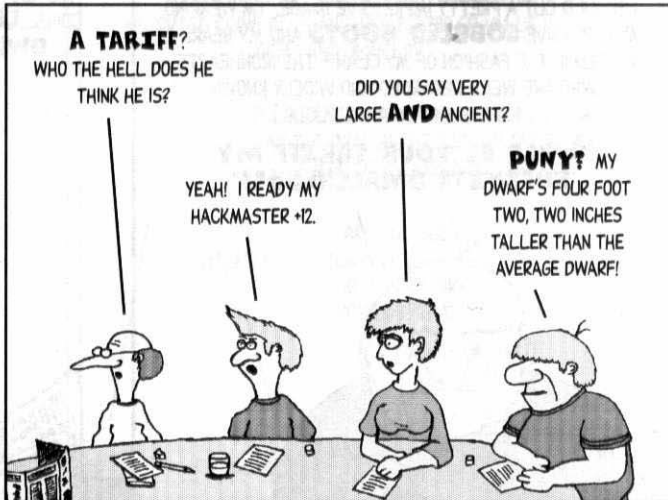
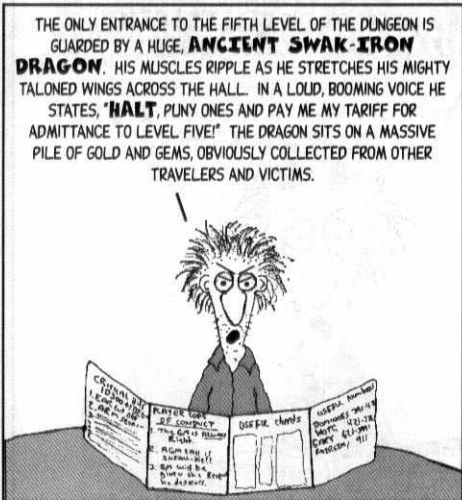
COME ON GUYS, THIS IS FUN!!! WE CAN SUPPORT GILEAD'S RISE TO KINGSHIP!!

BETTER DEAD THAN TO SERVE AN NPC!!!
FIREBALL TO THE FACE, B.A.!!



The Price of Passage

BY DAVID KENZER
WITH STEVE JOHANSSON AND JOLLY BLACKBURN



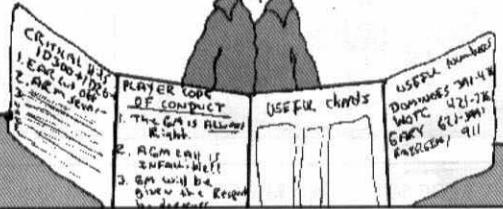
Price of Passage is a landmark strip in a lot of ways. It was the first strip initially written by someone other than Jolly. I wrote it in just a few hours, actually. Brian had a contribution or two and so did Steve (you'll see notes on these later). But as has become typical of the October issue, it was late (GenCon puts a hurtin' on KenzerCo's August production). Because of the tardiness, Jolly actually did not contribute at all to the writing of the strip and the artwork (surprise, surprise) was completely recycled. So what you see is the first strip ever completely composed without Jolly's immediate help (although I'm pretty sure he fixed up my layout, or did it all himself). I like to think Price of Passage spring-boarded KoDT's transformation into a group development effort. While strips as early as issue #5 had involvement from Brian, Steve and/or myself, issue #12 is the first where we see Jolly's kids grow up into stand-alone KoDT writers. In hindsight it's pretty interesting that almost every strip in Bundle of Trouble Volume Five was a collaborative effort. -Dave

OK B.A., MY DWARVEN MAGE APPROACHES THE DRAGON. I SHOULD CUT A PRETTY IMPRESSIVE IMAGE. I'M WEARING MY EXPENSIVE **COBBLED BOOTS** AND MY BEARD IS BRAIDED IN THE FASHION OF MY CLAN - THE IRONHEARTS - WHO ARE WELL REGARDED AND WIDELY KNOWN. I SPEAK FIRMLY AND LOUDLY,

"WHAT BE YOUR TARIFF MY INFINITE SMALLNESS?!"



AS THE MASSIVE DRAGON SPEAKS, FIRE LICKS FORTH FROM HIS NOSTRILS HEATING THE WHOLE AREA. "2,000 GOLD COINS...**EACH!** EXCEPT FOR THE **BELLIGERENT DWARF!!** HE SHALL PAY 3,000 **GOLD.**"



2,000!!! OUTRAGEOUS! I'LL JUST INVEST THE MONEY ON MULES TO CARRY BACK THAT HOARD AFTER WE SLAY THIS DRAGON!!

I HOLD MY HACKMASTER +12 HIGH OVER MY HEAD AND CALL UPON THE GODS TO BLESS ME!! **THAT DRAGON IS GOING DOWN!!**

WAIT, STOP!! THINK ABOUT IT. 2,000 ISN'T THAT MUCH COMPARED TO ALL THE WEALTH WE'LL GET ON LEVEL FIVE!

THE DRAGON FLAPS HIS WINGS FURIOUSLY AND DEMANDS YOU PAY THE TOLL IMMEDIATELY!!!

IT'S THE PRINCIPAL SARA. IT'S A MATTER OF HONOR.



YEAH MISSY, IT'S A MATTER OF HONOR. ARE YOU ASKING KNUCKLES TO STAND BY AND WATCH HIS PARTY GET EXTORTED BY SOME DUMB DRAGON? **HUH?**

WHAT HELL ARE WE THINKING?? THIS DRAGON HAS AN INCREDIBLE TREASURE HORDE!!! LET'S KICK HIS ASS AND TAKE IT!!!

BUT HE'S HUGE **AND** ANCIENT. HE'LL PROBABLY KILL HALF OF US, IF NOT ALL OF US.

YOU GUYS BETTER MAKE A DECISION FAST, THE DRAGON IS GREATLY ANNOYED!!!

HMMMMM...THERE IS A LOT OF TREASURE HERE...



I think Brian added the Ironheart clan bit. After his own famous dwarven character, Bromide Ironheart. If you're interested in learning more about the Ironheart clan see "Borne in Blood" in KoDT #33 or just ask Brian at a con. I warn you, though, reading the fiction will take far less of your time. SOLOMO! -Dave

HEY B.A., APPROXIMATELY HOW MUCH TREASURE IS IN THIS DRAGON'S HORDE? I USE MY **COIN PILE NUMERICAL APPROXIMATION** SECONDARY SKILL. DON'T FORGET MY **+15 BONUS** BECAUSE I'M A DWARF. I ALSO HAVE **ASTUTE OBSERVATION** AND **GEM APPRAISAL** SKILLS!!!



YOU ROUGHLY ESTIMATE 1,103,342 GP VALUE IN ASSORTED COINS PLUS ANOTHER 822,789 GP VALUE IN GEMS AND JEWELRY.

REALLY? THAT MUCH?? HMMM....OKAY, I PAY THE DRAGON THE 2,000 GP TARIFF PLUS THE 1,000 GP BELLIGERENCY PENALTY.

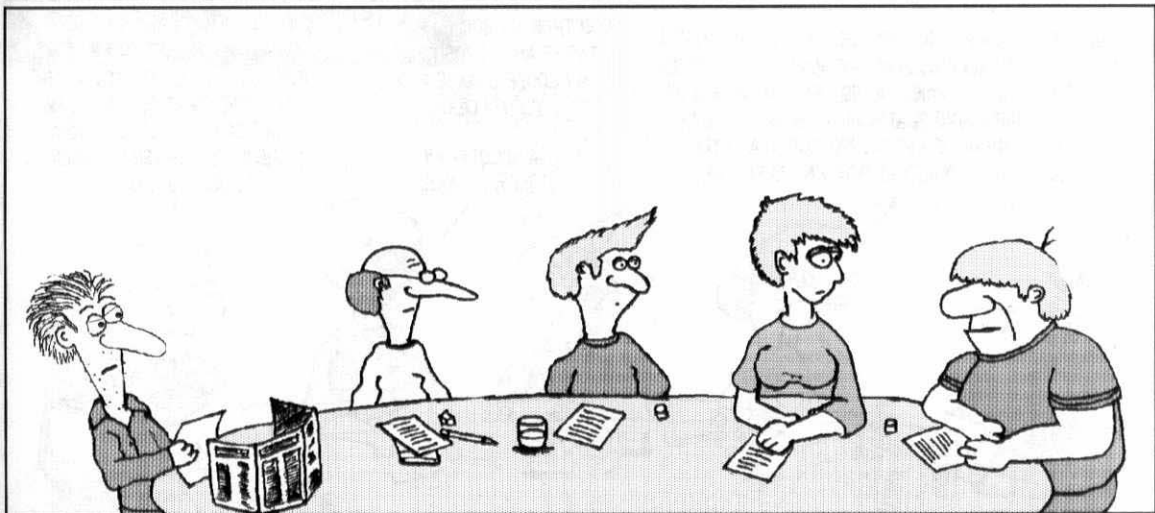
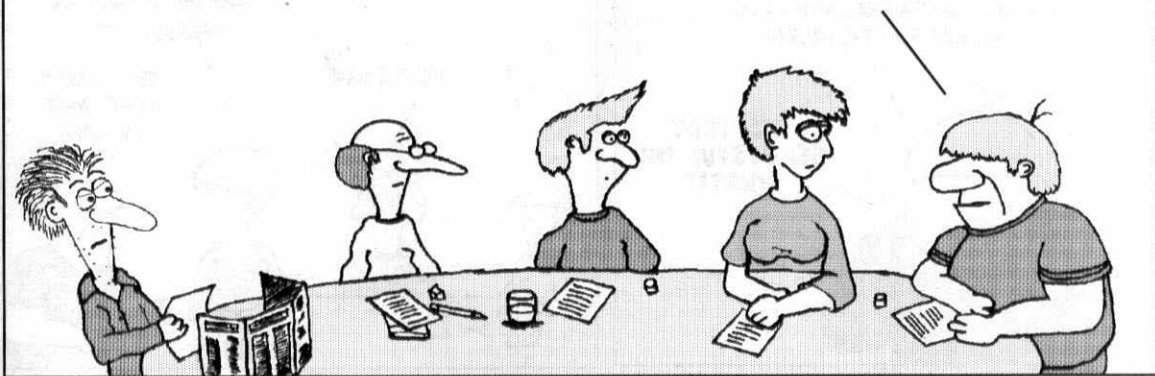
HUH??

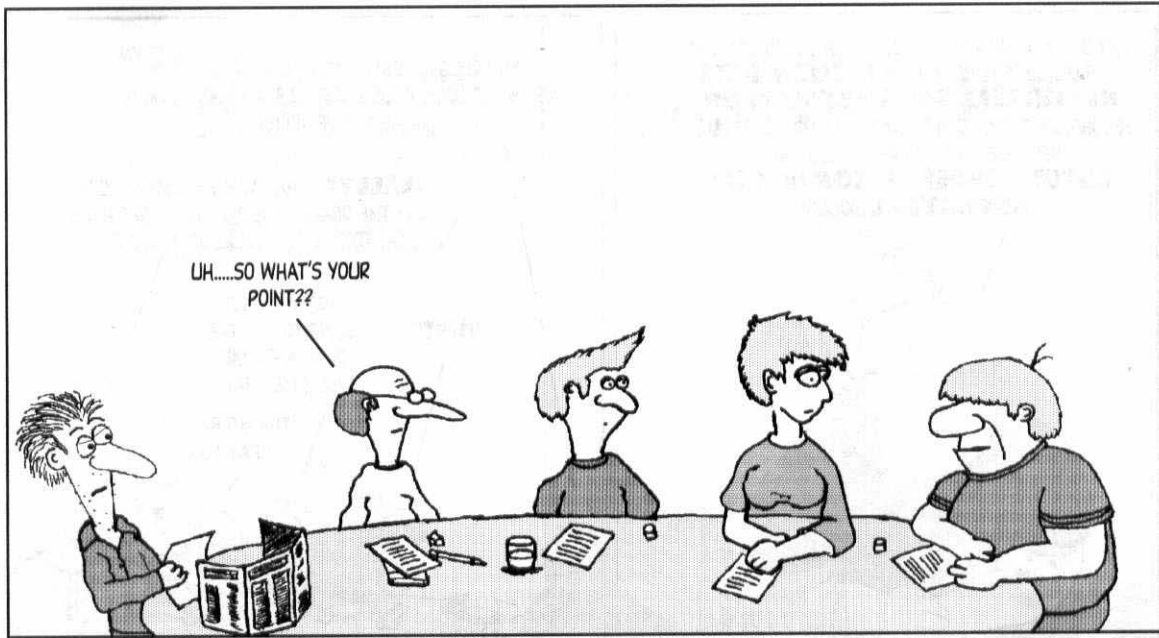
ARE YOU JUST GOING TO LET THE DRAGON EXTORT YOU LIKE THAT?

THANKS BRIAN!!!
I PAY TOO!!



LISTEN GUYS, THIS IS GREAT. BY MY CALCULATIONS, LESS LIVING AND MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES AND ADJUSTING FOR INFLATION, THAT DRAGON HAS RECEIVED A MINIMUM OF 1,892 TARIFFS!!!





UH.....SO WHAT'S YOUR POINT??

DUH!! IF THE DRAGON HAS BEEN GUARDING THE ENTRANCE FOR THAT LONG AND EXTORTS THAT MANY PEOPLE, THE ODDS OF HIM BEING SLAIN ARE ALMOST NIL. WE SIMPLY DEPOSIT 2,000 GOLD HERE EVERY TIME WE PASS! IT'S LIKE OUR OWN PERSONAL, **DRAGON DEPOSITORY**. WHEN WE WANT TO MAKE A FINAL WITHDRAWAL WE JUST SLAY THE DRAGON!

IS THAT BEAUTIFUL OR WHAT??

NO, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL!!!!
AWESOME!!!

NOT TO RAIN ON YOUR PARADE, BUT UH....WHAT MAKES YOU THINK WE CAN SLAY THIS GUY LATER??

YOU THE MAN!!!

RELAX SARA!!! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!!

I PAY THE DRAGON HIS TARIFF!! HELL, SINCE THIS JUST A DEPOSIT, I MIGHT AS WELL UNLOAD SOME OF THIS OTHER STUFF FOR SAFE KEEPING. I ALSO LEAVE MY POUCH OF HOLDING WITH 8,063 PLATINUM, MY SPARE SET OF ELFIN CHAINMAIL OF ASTRAL PROJECTION AND THE MUDDY BOOTS FROM THAT ORGE ON LEVEL TWO.

GOOD THINKING, BOB!!! I PAY MY TARIFF AND DEPOSIT ALL MY LOOSE CHANGE AND HALF MY GEMS.

I'M HOLDING MY MONEY, THANKS.

I'LL EMPTY ALL OF THE MAHOGANY FURNITURE FROM MY PORTABLE HOLE EXCEPT FOR THE ARMOIRE. THAT OUTTA CLEAR SOME SPACE. I'LL ALSO DUMP THE 187,962 COPPER I'VE BEEN CARRYING AROUND.



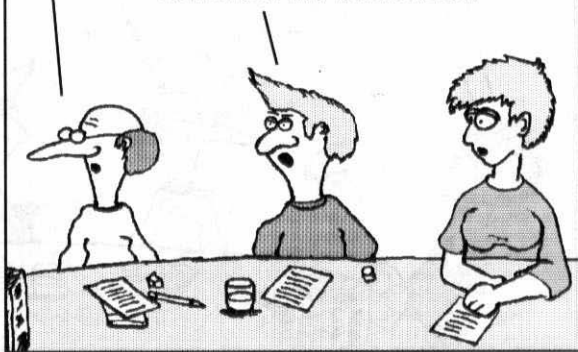
Steve's brilliant addition to this strip was the muddy boots from the ogre on level two. -Dave

O.K. WISE GUYS, THE DRAGON REFUSES TO LET YOU PASS BECAUSE KNOBBY FOOT HASN'T PAID.



KNOBBY CAN PAY HIS OWN WAY!!! JUST TELL HIM TO TAKE IT OUT OF THAT 5,000 IN GEMS SETTLEMENT THE CONSTABLE OF **FERN GROVE** AWARDED HIM IN OUR LAWSUIT SETTLEMENT!!!*

HEY, I ALMOST FORGOT ABOUT THAT. THE LITTLE BASTARD IS RICH!!! PAIN AND SUFFERING?? PUBLIC HUMILIATION?? LET ME IN ON SOME OF THAT ACTION. SHEESH!!!



KNOBBY FOOT SHRUGS AND SHAKES HIS HEAD. "BUT I DON'T HAVE 2,000 IN GOLD ON ME!!!" THE DRAGON LAUGHS HIDEOUSLY AND REACHES FOR THE TINY TORCH BEARER!!!

OH YOU'RE BREAKIN' MY HEART!!! I'LL SAVE THE LITTLE RUNT. I STEP IN FRONT OF THE DRAGON AND GIVE HIM 2,000 FOR OL' KNOBBY. THAT WAY I WON'T HAVE TO CARRY IT. DON'T FORGET THAT ON YOUR NEXT LOYALTY ROLL, B.A.

WHAT A GUY!!!

BETTER GET A NOTARIZED I.O.U. FOR THAT BOB!!!

ALRIGHT!!! LET'S HIT THAT LOWER LEVEL!!!



A FEW HOURS LATER....

O.K. YOU'VE CLEANED OUT LEVEL SEVEN. YOU HAVE JUST ONE LEVEL LEFT. DAVE, EL RAVAGER IS STILL BLEEDING PROFUSELY FROM THAT CRITICAL HIT TO HIS SPLEEN.

I USE MY FINAL **SUTURE ARTERY** SCROLL TO HELP MEND EL RAVAGER'S WOUND. THAT SHOULD STOP THE INTERNAL HEMORRHAGING.

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE AND GET OUR COMRADE HEALED. WE'LL COME BACK FOR THE REST OF THE LOOT LATER.

THAT DOUBLE-HASTED STONE GIANT GOT LUCKY THAT'S ALL!!! I'LL TAKE HIM OUT NEXT TIME!!!

YEAH, LET'S DEPOSIT OUR GOLD AND TREASURE WITH OUR PET DRAGON AND GET BACK TO TOWN!!!



* see Bundle of Trouble Volume Three [KoDT #7]: "Coward of the County"

A FEW MOMENTS LATER....

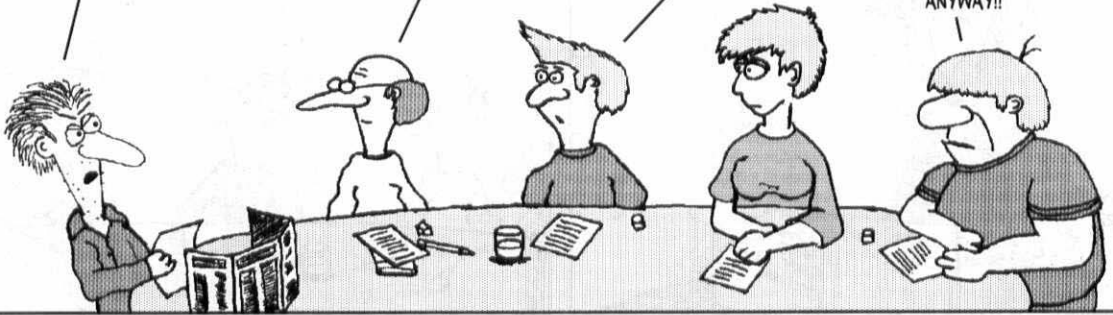
OKAY AFTER YOU **DEPOSIT** YOUR GOLD AND TREASURE WITH THE DRAGON AND ATTEMPT TO MOVE PAST HIM, HE SUDDENLY ROARS, "**YOU MUST PAY THE TARIFF!! 2,000 GOLD PIECES EACH!!**"

YOU GOT A BAD CASE OF SHORT-TERM MEMORY LOSS **SCALE-FACE!!** HUH?? WE ALREADY PAID YOUR STINKIN' TARIFF!!! BESIDES, WE'RE EXITING NOT ENTERING!!!

"THE TARIFF IS 2,000 GOLD EACH!!! TO PASS ME. YOU MUST PAY!!! I CARE NOT WHICH DIRECTION YOU ARE TRAVELLING!!"

WELL THIS TOTALLY SUCKS!!! YOU'D THINK HE WOULD HAVE MENTIONED THAT BEFORE!!

WHO CARES!!!! IN THE END WE'LL GET IT ALL BACK ANYWAY!!



THE DRAGON YAWNS AND IMPATIENTLY TAPS HIS CLAWS ON THE FLOOR. "**YOU WILL PAY NOW OR RETURN TO THE FIFTH LEVEL!!**"

YEAH, YEAH, LIGHTEN UP **FIDO!!** JUST REACH BEHIND YOU AND TAKE IT FROM MY ACCOUNT!!!! I HAVE PLENTY OF GOLD THERE TO COVER MY TAB A DOZEN TIMES OVER!

I'M PAYING THE DRAGON AND HEADING FOR THE SURFACE!!!

THE DRAGON LAUGHS!!!! "**YOUR ACCOUNT!!**" THERE ARE NO ACCOUNTS!!! ALL THAT YOU SEE HERE BELONGS TO ME!!!"

UH-OH!!! I DIDN'T HOLD BACK ANY POCKET CHANGE EITHER!!



SLOWLY THE DRAGON PEELS AN EVIL GRIN, REVEALING SCORES OF RAZOR SHARP TEETH. SPITTLE POURS FROM THE CORNERS OF HIS MAW, "**PAY NOW OR DIE!**" THE HALL ECHOES WITH HIS ROAR, TEMPORARILY DEAFENING YOU.

YOU GOT WAX IN YER EARS? I SAID I'M CASH POOR AT THE MOMENT. I'LL TELL YOU WHAT!! I'LL JUST PAY YOU TWICE WHEN I GET BACK. WE JUST WANT TO ZIP INTO TOWN TO....

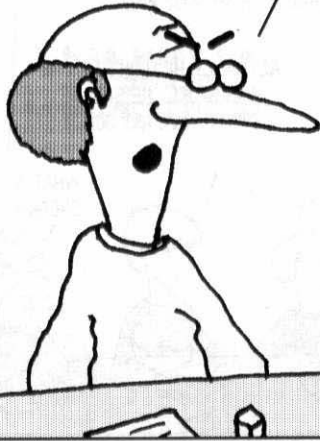
HEY, MAYBE WE COULD JUST LEAVE KNOBBY FOOT AS COLLATERAL. OR BETTER YET, MAYBE HE'LL ACCEPT HIM AS A SACRIFICE!!

(SIGH)

WE'D BETTER DO SOMETHING!! WE DON'T HAVE THE HIT POINTS OR STRENGTH TO BATTLE THIS DUDE RIGHT NOW!!



SACRIFICE KNOBBY?? **NO WAY!!** AFTER ALL THE MONEY I SANK INTO HIM? HIS LOYALTY BONUS TO ME MUST BE OFF THE CHARTS BY NOW!! BESIDES, I THINK THIS DRAGON DEPOSITORY THING HAS DRAWN ME AND KNOBBY CLOSER TOGETHER.



LOOK GUYS!! THE IMPORTANT THING RIGHT NOW IS TO SURVIVE SO WE CAN RETURN ANOTHER DAY!!! OFFER HIM ONE OF YOUR MAGIC ITEMS!!!

GIVE UP SOME MAGIC??

I SURE DON'T LIKE THE THOUGHT OF THAT!!

GOOD THINKING!!! I HAVE A **POTION OF DWARF CONTROL.**

WHAT ARE THE ODDS OF MEETING A FEMALE DWARF ANYWAY??

WHO CARES?? WE'RE GONNA GET BACK ANYWAY WHEN WE MAKE A LITTLE WITHDRAWAL!! (HEH HEH)



OKAY BRIAN, THE DRAGON ACCEPTS YOUR POTION AS PAYMENT. HE BELLOWS, "I WILL ACCEPT ONE MAGIC ITEM FROM EACH OF YOU AS YOUR TARIFF!!"

ALL RIGHT, I GUESS I'LL GIVE HIM THESE STUPID **PINK LEGWARMERS OF SPEED.** THEY WERE GNOME SIZED ANYWAY. THE ONLY ONE WHO' THEY'D FIT IS KNOBBY FOOT AND WHAT'S THE USE OF HAVING A TORCH-BEARER THAT WALKS TOO FAST?

I OFFER HIM MY **NOSE RING OF VISCID GLOBS.** IT ONLY HAS ONE CHARGE LEFT ANYWAY.

GREAT!!! WE'RE OUTTA HERE!!!

LET'S GO GET HEALED UP AND THEN WE'LL COME BACK AND KICK SOME DRAGON ASS!!



YOU'RE FORGETTING SOMEONE!!!! WHAT ABOUT **KNOBBY FOOT??** HE HAS TO PAY THE TARIFF TOO!!

SORRY, JACK!! MAGIC IS WHERE **THIS** GRAVY TRAIN STOPS. GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE KNOBBY BEHIND AFTER ALL.

GEE!! I KINDA FEEL BAD LEAVIN' THE LITTLE GUY BEHIND.

YOU CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM BEHIND! I START HEADING BACK TO THE DRAGON.

WE'LL MISS THE LITTLE GUY. MAYBE I SHOULD USE MY **RING OF KEVORKIAN** TO LESSEN THE AGONY.



I think I had something lame like Slippers of Speed, Brian changed it to Pink Legwarmers. To this day, I think of Pink Legwarmers of Speed whenever I think of lame magic items ("Uh, two magic items, each, huh? I give him a Potion of Delusion and my Horn of Bubbles."). -Dave

NOBBY FOOT REACHES INTO HIS POUCH, TOSSES THE DRAGON FOUR 500 GP GEMS AND PASSES BY.

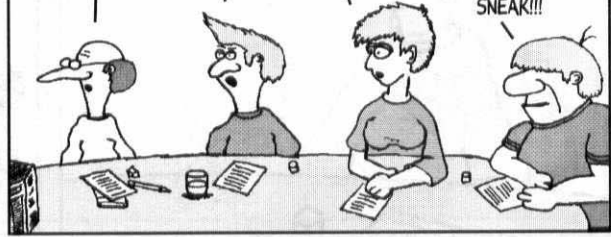


WHA-WHAT THE HELL?? THE LITTLE FREE-LOADIN' THIEF!!! WHERE'D HE GET THE GEMS?? HE TOLD US HE WAS BROKE!!! HE LIED TO ME AND LET ME CARRY HIS ASS!!

HEY NOBBY, PAY FOR ME TOO, WILL YA? YA NEVER KNOW WHEN I MIGHT NEED THAT LAST CHARGE ON MY NOSE RING.

ACTUALLY, HE DIDN'T SAY HE WAS BROKE. HE SAID HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY GOLD!!

WHAT A SNEAK!!!

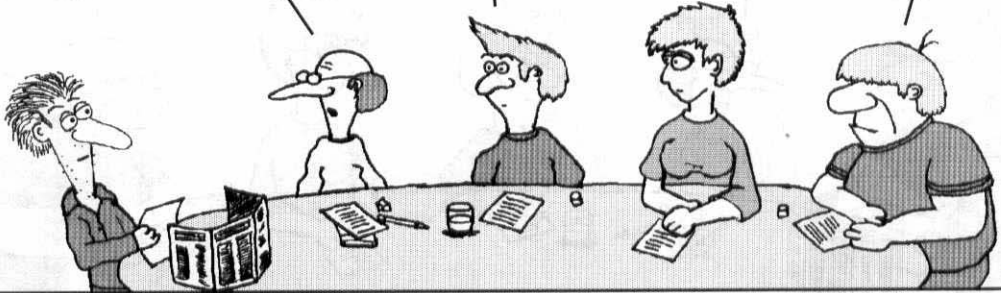


COME BACK HERE YOU **LITTLE BASTARD!** I'M HOPPING MAD. I'LL KILL YOU! I PULL OUT MY CROSSBOW OF SLAYING AND PUMP HIM FULL OF BOLTS OF THRASHING.

DUDE, WE'VE BEEN SCAMMED BY A LOWLY TORCHBEARER!!

RUN NOBBYFOOT RUN!!

AND AFTER ALL WE DID FOR HIM!!! LIKE A KNIFE TO THE BACK!! I'M REALLY HURT!!



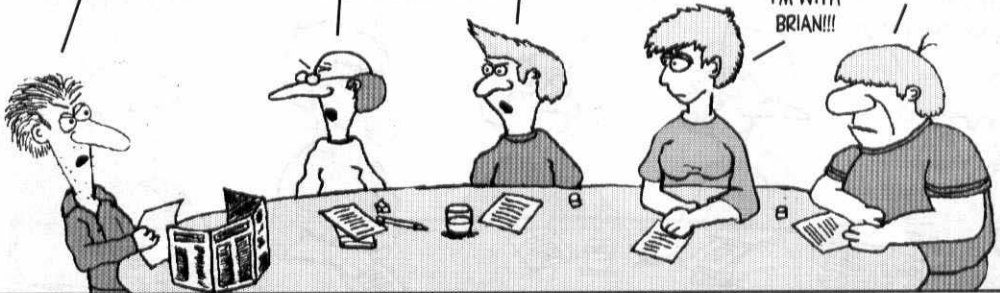
TOO LATE BOB!!! NOBBY FOOT IS ALREADY ON LEVEL FOUR AND RACING FOR THE SURFACE!!

DAMN!! WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE, HE'S DEAD. YOU HEAR ME, **DEAD!!** THAT'S IT... **SOMETHING'S** GONNA DIE. I FIRE A **BOLT OF REAVING** INTO THAT **DAMN DRAGON!**

WHADDA YA DOIN??

HOLY MOLY!! IT'S ABOUT TO HIT THE FAN AND HIT THE FAN BIG TIME!!! I RUN DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE FIRTH LEVEL BEFORE HE BREATHES!!!

I'M WITH BRIAN!!!



Speaking of Bromide Ironheart, this piece of the story (Knobby not having 2000 gold coins on him) comes directly from my old college campaign. It wasn't a dragon, but rather a toll or a ferryman's fee. In that tale, Bromide (Brian Jelke) played the part of Bob and the party's 4 intelligence fighter played the part of knobby foot. "But Witmore doesn't have five gold coins." And Bromide paid his way. Later Witmore pulls out a handful of platinum and throws them into a wishing well. After Bromide went ballistic, "I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T HAVE FIVE GOLD!", Witmore simply shrugged and said, "I didn't, I had platinum, but no gold." -Dave

YOUR BOLTS HIT THE DRAGON AND IT **DISAPPEARS** IN A CLOUD OF GREASY BLACK SMOKE ALONG WITH ALL THE TREASURE. WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS YOU SEE YOUR OLD NEMESIS, **JONID COINCRAWLER**, THE GNOME ILLUSIONIST!! HE IS STANDING THERE WITH A HUGE GRIN ON HIS FACE, HOLDING BOB'S BULGING **BAG OF HOLDING**, DAVE'S **SUITCASE OF MASSIVE TRAVEL** AND BRIAN'S **BELT OF INFINITE SPACE**.

MY MAHOGANY FURNITURE AND CHERRY-WOOD DINING SET!! I RUN BACK UP THE STAIRS.

WAA WHAT THE... JONID COINCRAWLER??

HUH??? I THOUGHT WE'D KILLED HIM YEARS AGO!!!

TALK ABOUT SCAMS!!! THE ENTIRE TIME IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION?



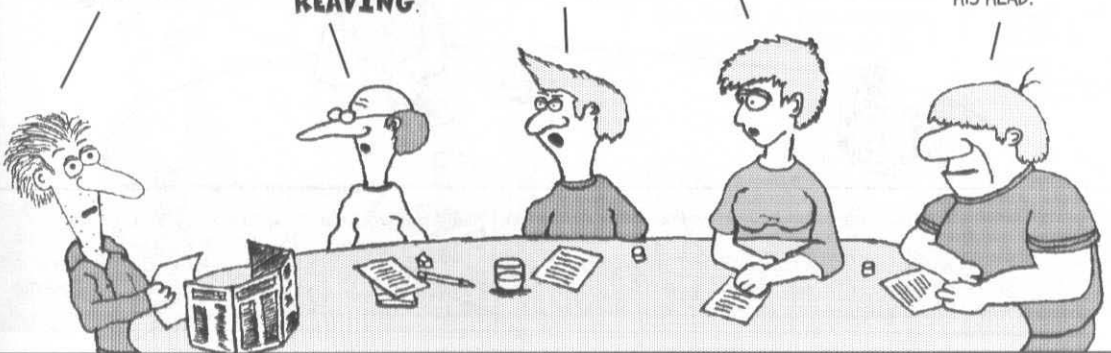
JONID RUNS FOR THE STAIRS TO LEVEL 4.

SNEAKY LITTLE BASTARD! I WASTE HIM WITH TWO **BOLTS OF REAVING**.

I CUT HIM IN TWO, CALLED SHOT TO THE HEAD.

I'M PULLING OUT MY MACE

MEGA ICE CHUNKS OF JORAKK ON HIS HEAD.



TOO LATE!! HA HA!!! YOU'RE GONNA LOVE THIS!!! JONID IS WEARING BOB'S **PINK LEGWARMERS OF SPEED!!** HE EASILY ESCAPES TAKING THE TREASURE WITH HIM!!!

P-P- PINK LEGWARMERS!!!

SO.....LIKE ALL OF OUR STUFF IS GONE?? HE JUST RIPPED US OFF??

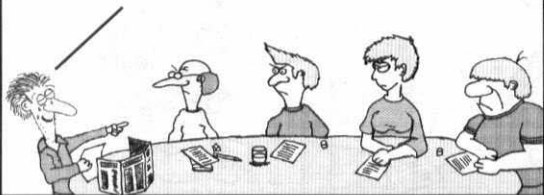
SO MUCH FOR THE **GREAT DRAGON DEPOSITORY.**



Jonid Coincrawler was a gnome NPC illusionist/thief in a campaign I was running in high school. I always thought it was a funny name. I'm pretty sure he bit it in the Giants or Drow series. -Dave

OH MAN, I'M IN TEARS HERE!!! THIS IS SO **DAMN FUNNY!!!** I CLEANED YOU GUYS OUT!!! **HA HA!!!** I TOOK... **HAR HAR**... EVERY RED CENT YOU HAD!!! BUT THE... **HEE HEE HOO**... THE FUNNY THING IS... **HAR HAR**... YOU JUST HANDED IT OVER LIKE A BUNCH OF IDIOTS!!!! HA HA!!! I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL WEIRD PETE!!!

DRAGON DEPOSITORY???
YOU GUYS CRACK ME UP!!! IT WAS SO HARD KEEPING A STRAIGHT FACE!!!



HAAA!!! HAAAA!!! I WISH I HAD A CAMERA!!! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE LOOKS ON YOUR FACES!!! **HA HA!!!**

YOU GRAB THE DUCT-TAPE, I'LL GO GET THE ROPE OUT OF MY CHEVETTE.

I'M TWO STEPS AHEAD OF YOU DUDE!!

AND DON'T FORGET THE CAT!!

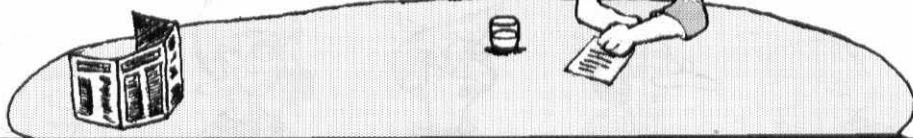


THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

DAMN IT SARA!! CUT ME DOWN!!!! YOU'RE MY COUSIN FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!!!



SORRY B.A., THEY MADE ME PINKY-SWEAR I'D WAIT AN HOUR BEFORE CUTTING YOU DOWN. MEANWHILE, YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T WIGGLE SO MUCH, IT ONLY PROVOKES THE CAT!!



Now that I get to the end here, it looks like Jolly did add something...I think he added tears to BA and the bit about the cat. -Dave

The panel below was my first inadvertant attempt at a single panel KoDT. I had extra space to fill in #12s "Weird Pete's Bulletin Board" and chose to satarize the picture of the kid reading the spell book which we had been running as filler for several months. I turns out this panel really hit home with some game store owners - at least one of whom posted it at his counter! -Steve

HEY KID!!! THIS ISN'T THE MUNCIE PUBLIC LIBRARY. I THINK YOU'VE BEEN LOOKIN' AT THAT BOOK LONG ENOUGH!!!



FREE TRIP TO THE MORGUE!
Just STEAL from something from these premises

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL GAMESHOP!

The Good, The Bad, and the Unlucky

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN AND
STEVE JOHANSSON

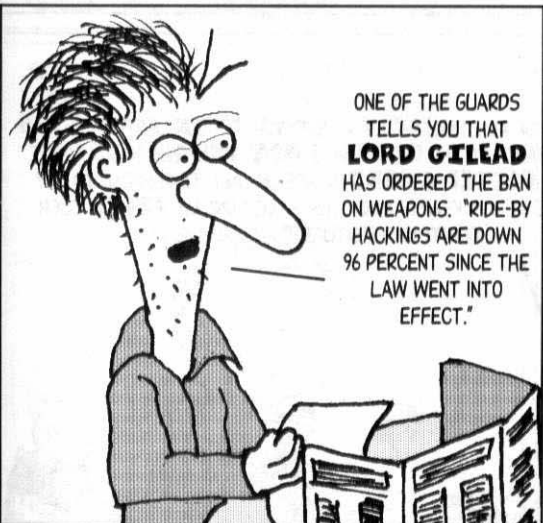
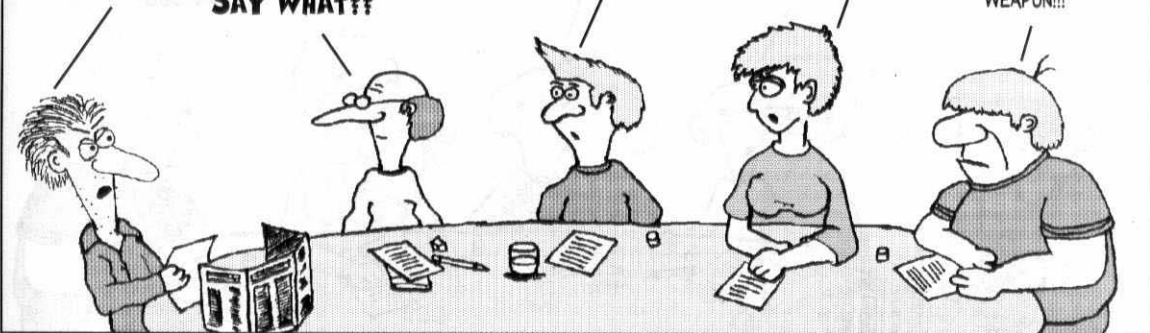
AS YOU APPROACH THE GATES TO THE CITY OF **FANGAERIE**, TWO WELL-GROOMED GUARDS IN FRESHLY PRESSED UNIFORMS STROLL OVER TO YOU. "**OUR APOLOGIES KIND TRAVELLERS BUT WEAPONS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE CITY.**" YOU MUST LEAVE THEM HERE AT THE GATE. THEY WILL BE RETURNED UPON YOUR DEPARTURE.

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT??
WE COME TO FANGAERIE ALL THE TIME!!!
THEY'VE NEVER BANNED WEAPONS BEFORE!!!

SAY WHAT??

HOW ODD. SOMETHING MUST
HAVE HAPPENED.

HA!!! MY WHOLE
BODY IS A
WEAPON!!!



ONE OF THE GUARDS
TELLS YOU THAT
LORD GILEAD
HAS ORDERED THE BAN
ON WEAPONS. "RIDE-BY
HACKINGS ARE DOWN
96 PERCENT SINCE THE
LAW WENT INTO
EFFECT."

LORD GILEAD??
DIRTY BASTARD!!! HE'S TAKEN
OVER THE WHOLE REGION!!!

I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL!!! HE'S
TRYING TO RESTORE PEACE
AND ORDER. OBVIOUSLY
I TAUGHT HIM WELL.

HE HAS THE WHOLE CITY UNDER HIS
EVIL SPELL!!! I KNEW HE ALWAYS
COVETED MY HACKMASTER +12.
THIS IS HIS PLAN TO GET IT!!

A LOUSY, LOWLY
HENCHMAN AND
THEY'RE CALLING
HIM **LORD??**



WELL THERE'S NO WAY I'M GIVING UP MY WEAPONS WITHOUT A FIGHT!!! AND I HAVE TO
GET INTO THE CITY TO RETRIEVE MY **SECRET STASH** OF GOLD. THAT DAMN
JONID COINCRAWLER MADE OFF WITH EVERYTHING I HAD.

GUYS, WHY DON'T WE JUST CHECK
OUR WEAPONS LIKE EVERYONE ELSE
AND GO ABOUT OUR BUSINESS???

PLEASE SIRs AND MA'AM, FOR THE
WELFARE OF ALL, WE HUMBLy
REQUEST THAT YOU ALLOW US TO
CHECK YOUR WEAPONS.

HEY, WE CAN TAKE OUT THESE TWO
GUARDS - **NO PROBLEM!!**

SORRY SARA, BUT I'M NOT
LETTIN' THIS GILEAD DUDE
PUSH ME AROUND.



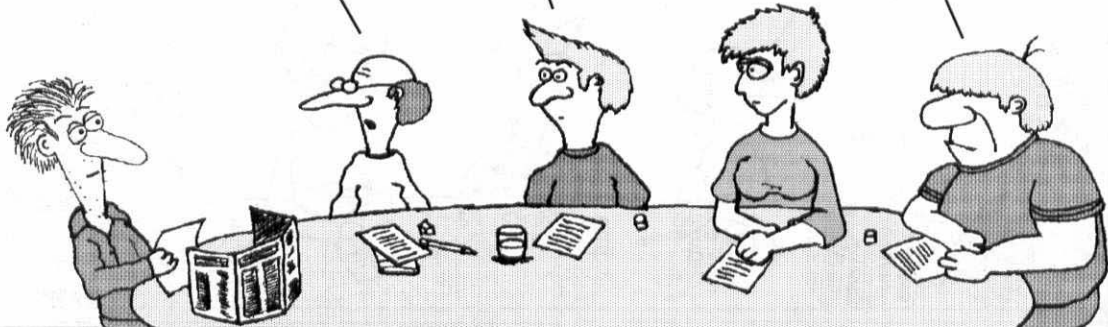
When writing this strip with Jolly, I suggested that it might be funnier if Gilead established a progressive, liberal kingdom instead of the easy gag of yet another sworn NPC enemy of the Knights (no matter how justifiable this was after his treatment at their hands...) Thus was born the "Great Society" of Fangaerie which became the setting for many future misadventures. -Steve

I'M PULLING OUT MY CROSSBOW AND LOADING UP A COUPLE OF **BOLTS-OF-DEVASTATION!!!**

NOW YER TALKIN!!!
SCHLINNGG!!
PULLING OUT MY HACKMASTER +12 HERE B.A.!!!

OH LORD!! B.A., I GIVE THE GUARDS MY LONGBOW, QUIVER OF ARROWS, AND MY SHORT-SWORD AND HEAD INTO THE CITY. IF YOU GUYS SURVIVE, I'LL MEET YOU AT THE **LAME SHEPHERD!!**

I'M CASTING A **QUIVERING WEB OF CHAINED FIRE-BALLS** HERE, B.A.!!!

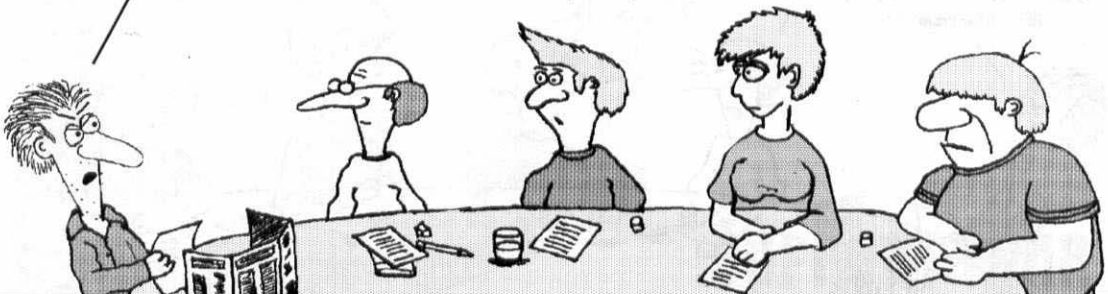


WHOAH, WHOAH, WHOAH, **WHOAH!!**
HOLD ON THERE FOR A SECOND. I KNOW I'M GOING TO REGRET DOING THIS - BUT LET'S REVIEW THE SITUATION AND YOUR OPTIONS. **FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!**

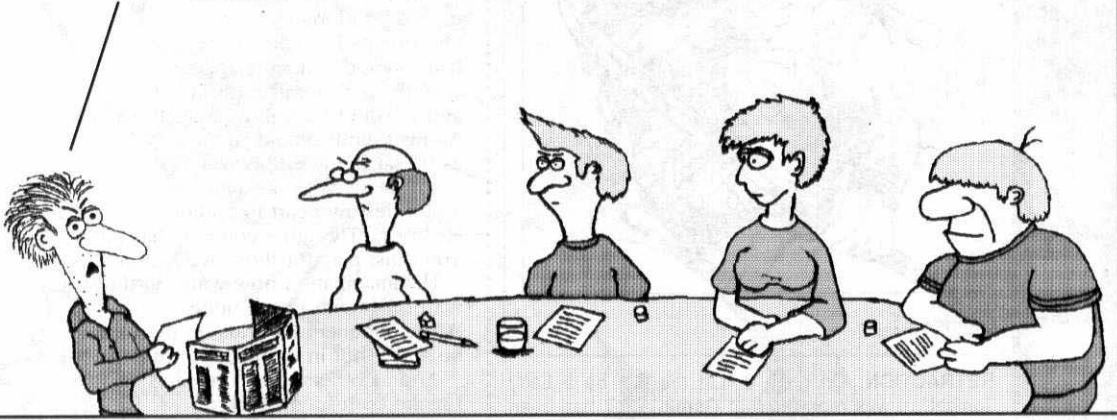
FIRST OF ALL TAKE A LOOK AROUND YOU. TO YOUR LEFT IS THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE **GUARD POST NUMBER 25** WHERE **75 RELIEF GUARDS** ARE ON CALL TO RESPOND TO ANY EMERGENCY. KEEP IN MIND THIS IS JUST ONE OF **FIFTY** SUCH GUARD POSTS SITUATED AROUND THE CITY.



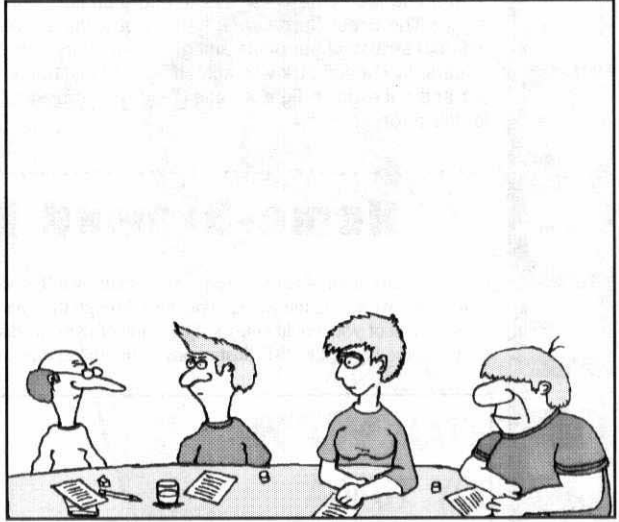
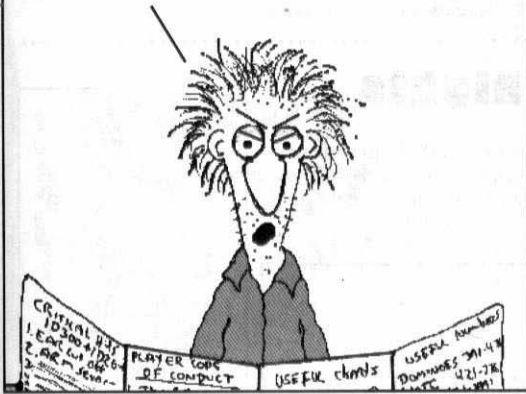
NOW TAKE A LOOK AT THE TOWERS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE GATE!!! YOU'LL NOTICE A **FIVE-MAN CONTINGENT** MANNING EACH TOWER. IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW IT, EACH TOWER IS ARMED WITH **CAULDRONS OF BOILING OIL, MEDIUM-SIZED BALLISTAE** WHICH CAN FIRE **TWELVE-FOOT IRON SPEARS** UP TO 1,000 YARDS WITH DEVASTATING ACCURACY. EACH MAN IS AN **EXPERT** WITH THE **LONGBOW** AND TO QUALIFY FOR TOWER DUTY HAS TO PASS A BI-MONTHLY MARKSMANSHIP EVALUATION. EACH TOWER IS ALSO EQUIPPED WITH AN **ALARM HORN**. A SIMPLE BLAST FROM THE HORN WILL SUMMON **150 TO 300 MEN** WITHIN TWO COMBAT ROUNDS!!!



OKAY, SO THERE'S YOUR SITUATION. NOW LET'S REVIEW YOUR OPTIONS!!! **ONE!!** YOU CAN CHECK YOUR WEAPONS WITH THE GUARDS. IN RETURN YOU WILL GET AN OFFICIAL RECEIPT WITH THE TOWN COUNCIL'S OFFICIAL SEAL GUARANTEEING THE SAFE RETURN OF YOUR WEAPONS WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO LEAVE THE CITY. **TWO!!** YOU CAN KEEP YOUR WEAPONS - TURN AROUND - AND WALK AWAY!!! OH...AND THEN THERE'S **THREE!!** THE BRILLIANT OPTION YOU'VE ALREADY POINTED OUT - YOU CAN DRAW YOUR WEAPONS, ATTACK THE GUARDS AND END UP FIGHTING THE ENTIRE CITY, WHICH I'M SURE WOULD BE GREAT FUN BUT WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN ALL OF YOUR DEATHS AND MOST LIKELY RUIN YET ANOTHER CAMPAIGN!!!



OKAY, SO WE'VE REVIEWED YOUR SITUATION AND YOUR OPTIONS. LET'S TAKE A DEEP BREATH, BACKTRACK A LITTLE BIT AND START OVER. OKAY, SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO??



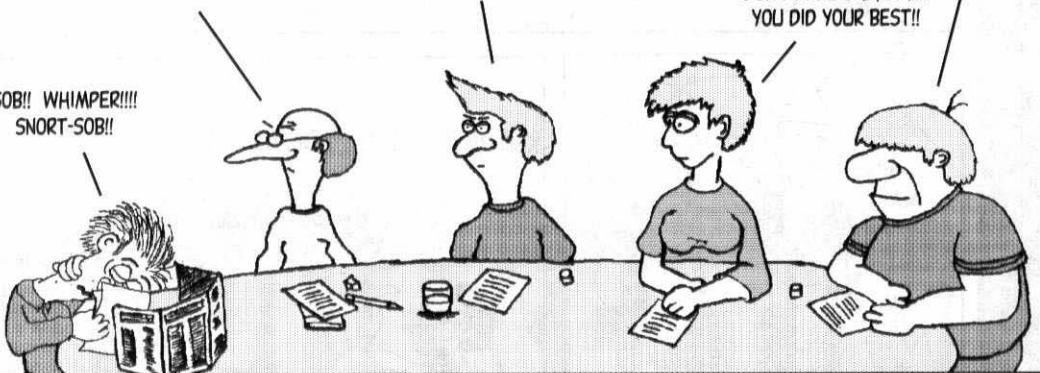
I'M PULLING OUT MY CROSSBOW AND LOADING UP A COUPLE OF **BOLTS-OF-DEVASTATION!!!**

SCHLINNGG!!
PULLING OUT MY HACKMASTER +12

I'M CASTING A **QUIVERING-WEB OF CHAINED-FIREBALLS.**

DON'T FEEL BAD, B.A.!!!
YOU DID YOUR BEST!!

SOB!! WHIMPER!!!!
SNORT-SOB!!



"This Man - Tarred and Feathered???"



RETRACTION: On page 8 "Let the GM be a Lady Tonight", it was reported that **Gamin' Dick** had been 'tarred and feathered' by a mob of angry gamers during the **The Great Card Crash**. Afterwards, the above polaroid arrived at our office along with an angry note. Apparently Gamin' Dick was able to fight off his attackers and survived to fight another day. We apologize for the error.

Eulogy of a Gamer™*

By Gary Jackson

There is an empty chair,
At the table this day.
A hallowed place where,
A friend once played.

The roll of his rugged dice,
my ears do long to hear.
Or perhaps I would suffice,
If he should suddenly appear.

With character sheet in hand,
and a bag of Cheeze-noodles to share.
All his friends would stand,
as he sat in the empty chair.

I hear his voice a-callin'
and it ties my heart in a knot.
He cries, "Though a comrade has fallen,
You must play for those who cannot!"

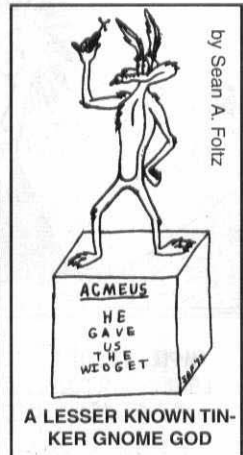
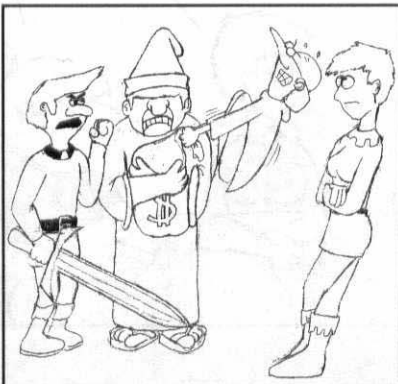
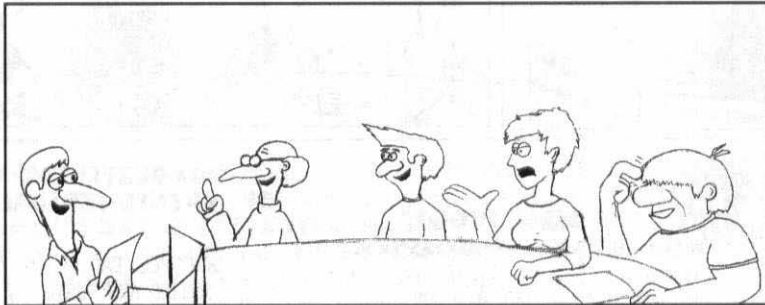
His imagination now walks in the sun
with others who have none.
We've conquered worlds on the run,
he and I, but in the name of fun.

And as others may come and go,
I make both friend and foe
But that I long for most—
Is our past, now a ghost.

* *Eulogy of a Gamer* was briefly quoted by Brian on page 19 "The Temp". Gary Jackson reportedly wrote this poem when his old friend Garrod Havatya quit role-playing.

Home-Brewed Knights

Over the years, a lot of readers have sent us their own 'home-brewed' KoDT strips or illustrations. We love seeing the KoDT characters through the eyes of other artists. We thought perhaps the rest of you would enjoy seeing some of these works of art. We'll try to run the 'best of' the home-brewed KoDT illustrations from time to time as space permits.



KODIT

APPROVED
BY THE
Hard 8
Enterprises
AUTHORITY

IT AIN'T OVER
TIL IT'S OVER!!



**CHIN UP
BUNKY!!**
THE FUN AIN'T
OVER YET.

17 PAGES OF
NEW MATERIAL
AWAIT YOU!!

BONUS SECTION

De-Meritorious Conduct

"The Never-Before-Seen Past Adventures of the Knights of the Dinner Table"

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING STRIP TAKES PLACE SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE DAVE JOINED THE KNIGHTS.

DUE TO WHAT HAS COME TO BE KNOWN AS THE "INCIDENT" THE GROUP'S REGULAR GAMEMASTER, BRIAN VANHOOSE, HAS JUST RECENTLY HUNG UP HIS GM SCREEN AND REFUSES TO RUN ANOTHER GAME.

WEIRD PETE HAS OFFERED TO STEP IN AS THE GROUP'S TEMPORARY GAMEMASTER UNTIL A REPLACEMENT CAN BE FOUND.

OKAY BOB, YOU MANAGE TO **LOW CRAWL** UP TO THE WELL AND CUT THE ROPE. THE DRAW-BUCKET PLUNGES INTO THE MURKY DEPTHS OF THE WELL. SECONDS LATER IT MAKES A MUFFLED **SPLASH** AS IT STRIKES THE WATER AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SHAFT. THE **ORCAN GUARDS** DON'T SEEM TO NOTICE ANYTHING.

HOO-HOO!! I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE LOOKS ON THEIR FACES WHEN THEY TRY TO DRAW WATER IN THE MORNING. I'M GOING TO LEAVE MY **CALLING CARD** AND THEN HELP B.A. WITH THE HORSES.

CALLING CARD, INDEED. -SNICKER-



SURE, SURE, **WHATEVER!** OKAY B.A., YOU'RE UP. **TAR MARKYAR*** MANAGES TO MOVE UP TO THE ROPED OFF AREA WHERE THE **ORCS' HORSES** HAVE BEEN GATHERED TOGETHER FOR THE NIGHT. THERE ARE ABOUT FIFTY **MALNOURISHED** HORSES OF LOWLAND BREED VARIETY NERVOUSLY CLUSTERED TOGETHER. YOU NOTICE THAT EACH HORSE HAS BEEN HOBBOLED IN TYPICAL ORC FASHION.

WHOAH THERE, COCHISE! DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID? I'M LEAVING MY **CALLING CARD**.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU **BABBLING** ABOUT? **CALLING CARD?** WHAT CALLING CARD?

I CLIMB UP ON THE RIM OF THE WELL AND **PEE** IN IT. ACCORDING TO THE BOOK, **DEFILING** A WELL OR CISTERN IS WORTH **5 COUP-POINTS**.



NOPE. SORRY. 'FRAID NOT. **WISHFUL-THINKING BOY!** THE WALL AROUND THE WELL IS ABOUT FOUR FEET HIGH - YOUR PUNY ASS **DWARF** ISN'T ABLE TO CLIMB THE SMOOTH, **HIGHLY POLISHED** STONES WHICH MAKE UP THE WALL. BESIDES, THE STONES ARE COVERED WITH A **SLIMY GREEN MOLD** WHICH MAKE THE STONES VERY **SLIPPERY**.

BUT I'M A **THIEF!** I GOT THE **CLIMB WALLS** ABILITY.

HIGHLY POLISHED? IT'S **MY** UNDERSTANDING THAT ORCAN STRUCTURES ARE VERY **CRUDE** AT BEST. THEY DON'T HAVE THE SKILL NOR THE TOOLS TO PROPERLY **CUT** AND **DRESS** STONE SO SMOOTHLY.

B.A.'S RIGHT. ORCS LACK THE MASONRY SKILLS TO DO SUCH **QUALITY** WORK.

YOU FIND THE WALL IS **BEYOND** YOUR CAPABILITIES.

LOOKS LIKE **PETE** IS **BLOCKING**.



*see Bundle of Trouble Volume Two [KoDT#5] "Beating the Odds" (Tar Markvar is B.A.'s gnome thief with the "worst stats you ever saw".)

NOW DID I SAY THE WELL WAS OF ORCAN CONSTRUCT OR DESIGN? *DID I?* EVER HEAR OF *SLAVE LABOR WISE ASS?* IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT *DWARVEN STONE CUTTERS* WERE PUT UNDER THE LASH AND FORCED TO DIG THE WELL AND ENCLOSE IT. SO MAYBE YOU'LL *STOP TRYING* TO ANALYZE THE GAME AND *SHUT UP!!*

GOT IT??!!

ERP..ER...
Y..Y..YES, SIR.

DWARVEN SLAVES?? WHY THOSE LOW DOWN GOOD FOR NOTHIN'.... *FINGERS SHY-SHADOW* IS HOPPING MAD! HE RECOGNIZES THE STONE WORK BEING OF *DWARVEN DESIGN*. NOW HE'S *DOUBLY DETERMINED* TO *POLLUTE* THE WELL. I TAKE OFF MY *HELMET* AND PLACE IT ON THE GROUND. I USE IT AS A *STEP* TO *BOOST* MYSELF UP ON THE WALL.

THE GROUND AROUND THE WELL IS VERY *SOFT AND MUDDY*. SEEMS THE *ORCS SLOSHED* QUITE A BIT A WATER FROM THE BUCKET ONTO THE GROUND WHEN THEY WERE WATERING THEIR HORSES. THE *HELMET SINKS* INTO THE MUD UNDER YOUR WEIGHT.

SINKS??!!

OH FOR PETE'S SAKE! OKAY, OKAY, I TURN MY *HELMET UPSIDE DOWN* AND PEE IN IT. THEN I'LL HOLD THE *HELMET* OVER THE WALL AND *POUR* THE CONTENTS INTO THE WELL.

-SIGH- BOB WHY ARE YOU WASTING *MY* TIME WITH *FOOLISH* ACTIONS?

FOOLISH? I'M ATTEMPTING TO *DISHONOR* A SWORN ENEMY.

POLLUTING THE WATER SUPPLY OF A OF A *SWORN ENEMY* IS A COMPLETELY *LEGITIMATE* ACTION. *PETE*. REMEMBER WHEN *SKRAAG FALLOW* TOOK A WHIZ IN THE TOWN FOUNTAIN IN THOSE *HACKMASTERS OF EVERKNIGHT* BOOKS? WHEN I READ THAT PART I *JUMPED* UP FROM MY CHAIR AND *CHEERED!* THAT WAS SOME HEROIC STUFF.

YEAH. *SKRAAG FALLOW* WAS *ALWAYS* DOING KEWL STUFF LIKE THAT.

HMMRRRRFFFF!

THAT WAS IN BOOK FOUR - RIGHT?

YEAH. I THINK.

YEAH, WELL, UNFORTUNATELY THE *CRAFTSMANSHIP* ON *SHY-SHADOW'S* HELMET IS A BIT *SHODDY*. THE REINFORCEMENT BANDS WEREN'T PROPERLY COOLED AFTER BEING RIVETED - THE HELMET *LEAKS* LIKE A *SIEVE*. BY THE WAY, *JOHNNY*, TAKE *FOUR DEMERITS* FOR *BIGFOOTING* THE *GM*.

SHODDY? BUT I ONLY BUY THE *BEST* EQUIPMENT. SAYS SO RIGHT HERE ON MY CHARACTER SHEET. AND, GIVEN MY DWARF HAS A *SECONDARY SKILL* OF *ARMOR REPAIR* I WOULD HAVE REPAIRED ANY SUCH *MINOR DEFECTS* AS SOON AS I DETECTED THEM.

-SNICKER- EASY DOES IT, *JOHNNY*. YOU DON'T WANT TO LOSE *ANOTHER* LEVEL FOR ACCRUING TOO MANY *DEMERITS* AGAIN. -CHUCKLE-

DEMERITS?
FIRK DING
BLAST...

OKAY I'LL PLAY. JUST HOW WOULD YOU HAVE 'REPAIRED' THE HELMET. GO AHEAD AND DESCRIBE TO ME *EXACTLY* WHAT YOU DID.

I WOULD HAVE *WATER PROOFED* MY HELMET BY REMOVING THE LINER AND APPLYING A MIXTURE OF *BEESWAX* AND *BITUMEN* TO THE INNER SURFACES AND AROUND THE RIVETS - *FOUR COATS!!* ONE OF THE *FIRST* WAR-TRICKS MY FATHER TAUGHT ME.

WELL, WELL, A *SURPRISINGLY* GOOD ANSWER.

THANKS.

NOW THEN, CARE TO *SHOW ME WHERE* ON YOUR *CHARACTER SHEET* YOU'VE *INDICATED* THE DESCRIBED-ACTION HAVING TAKEN PLACE?

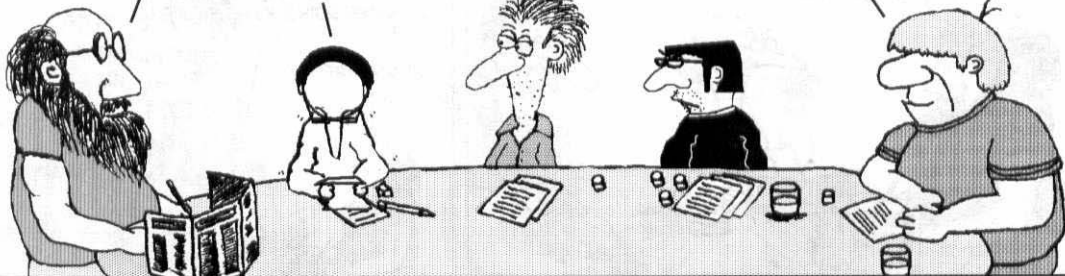


UH...ER...S...S...SURE. IT'S UH... LET'S SEE.... I'M *SURE* IT'S ON HERE *SOMEPLACE*. UH....ER.....

YEP. JUST AS I THOUGHT. TRYIN' TO PULL THE *WOOL* OVER OL' *PETE'S* EYES WEREN'T YAP? YOU JUST EARNED *SIX DEMERITS!!*

NO, REALLY, I'M *SURE* IT'S HERE.

EXCUSE ME, PETE. BEFORE YOU GO GETTIN' ALL *DEMERIT-HAPPY* AND EVERYTHING, ACCORDING TO THE RULES *ARMOR REPAIRS* ARE LISTED AS A MUNDANE/ROUTINE TASK. AS SUCH IT IS *ASSUMED* SUCH ACTIONS TAKE PLACE *OUTSIDE* THE REALM OF ACTIVE GAME TIME AND *AUTOMATICALLY* TAKE PLACE. THE MERE FACT THAT YOU HAVE US MARK OFF A *FLAT 200 GP MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP* EXPENSE AT THE END OF EACH GAME MONTH INDICATES THAT SUCH *MINOR REPAIRS* ARE ACCOUNTED FOR. I JUST THOUGHT I'D *POINT* THAT OUT.



WELL, ISN'T THAT SPECIAL? THANK YOU *VERY MUCH* FOR YOUR *POINTING* THAT OUT, *BRIAN*. NOW WHY DON'T JUST GO AHEAD AND PUT YOURSELF DOWN FOR...

I KNOW, I KNOW. *FOUR DEMERITS*.

MAKE IT *15, SMART ASS!*

FIFTEEN? BUT *BIGFOOTING* IS A STANDARD *FOUR POINTS*. CHANGING THE RULES ON US *MIDSTREAM* AGAIN PETE?



ANTICIPATING A *GM'S CALL* IS AN ADDITIONAL *9 DEMERITS* MY FRIEND. BUT YOU JUST EARNED YOURSELF ANOTHER *TEN DEMERITS* FOR *BACK SASSIN'*. CARE TO TRY FOR SOME MORE?

TEN MORE? WHAT THE HELL FOR?

FIFTEEN!!

IS??? BUT... BUT...



THAT'S NOT FAIR PETE! I WAS JUST TRYING TO...

TWENTY DEMERITS!!
YOU WANNA KEEP GOING?

UH... ER... N...N...NO! ER... SIR!

I DIDN'T THINK SO.



OKAY BOBBY-BOY, BACK TO YOU! SO YOU WANNA *INSIST* ON LEAVING YER *CALLING CARD* EH? FINE! *SHY-SHADOW* PEEES INTO HIS HELMET AND POURS THE CONTENTS INTO THE WELL. *CONGRATULATIONS!* YOU JUST *SOILED* YOUR HEAD GEAR. *HAPPY NOW??!!*

WELL....YEAH. NOT SURE I LIKE THE *SPIN* YOU'VE PUT ON IT, THOUGH.

I'M A *NERVOUS WRECK* HERE. WHAT'S WITH ALL THE *DEMERITS* AND STUFF?

I'VE HAD IT ABOUT UP TO *HERE* WITH THE FRICKIN' *DEMERITS*.

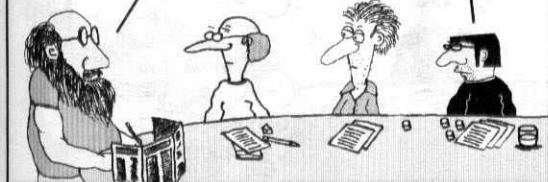


WHAT ARE YOU TWO *GIRLS* BELLY ACHING ABOUT DOWN THERE? YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH MY *DEMERIT SYSTEM*? AT LEAST HAVE THE *BACKBONE* TO TELL ME TO MY FACE.

YEAH, WE GOT A *BIG PROBLEM* WITH THE *DEMERITS*.

HELL, I'M A *REASONABLE* GUY. TELL YA WHAT, HAND ME DOWN YOUR *CHARACTER SHEETS*. I'LL MAKE A FEW *ADJUSTMENTS*.

REALLY??



JUST LIKE I'VE ALWAYS SAID. THE *SQUEAKY WHEEL* GETS THE *GREASE*. HERE, HAND THIS DOWN TO THE *OL' MAN*.

I GUESS IT SOMETIMES *PAYS* TO VOCALIZE WHEN YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE *GAME MASTER*.



LET'S SEE WHAT WE HAVE HERE. HMMMMMMM... SAY, THIS **DOODLE OF TAR MARKYAR** IS PRETTY NIFTY, B.A. AND LOOK AT THIS... YOU'VE BEEN KEEPING A **RUNNING JOURNAL** ON HIS EXPLOITS AND ACHIEVEMENTS. HOW QUAIN'T.

ACTUALLY THAT'S **JERRY ELMORE'S** WORK. HE WAS DOING CHARACTER SKETCHES AT **HACKCON** LAST SUMMER.

AND I LIKE HOW YOU **AGED** YOUR CHARACTER SHEET, JOHNNY. LOOKS LIKE **REAL** PARCHMENT.

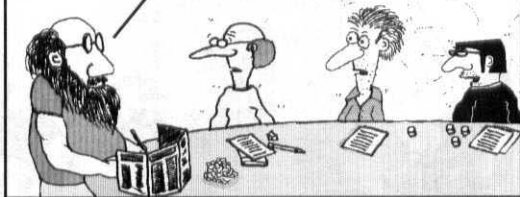
ACTUALLY PAPER DOES THAT WHEN EXPOSED TO CIGARETTE SMOKE FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME.



RIP!!! TEAR!!!! REND!!!!

WELCOME TO THE GAME OF **HARD KNOCKS AND CONSEQUENCES** GIRLS. YOU DON'T LIKE **DEMERITS**? THEN I SUGGEST YOU **LEARN** HOW TO PLAY THE GAME. I GOT NO STOMACH FOR **WHINERS AND COMPLAINERS**.

YOU THINK **LONG AND HARD** ON THAT WHILE YOU'RE **RECONSTRUCTING** YOUR CHARACTER SHEETS.



AT THE END OF THE GAMING SESSION...

OKAY, AS I SAID BEFORE - I'M A **REASONABLE** GUY. THOSE OF YOU WHO WISH TO **WORK OFF** SOME OF YOUR **DEMERITS** CAN DO SO BY **VOLUNTEERING** TO PUT IN SOME TIME DOWN AT MY **STORE** THIS WEEK. FOR EVERY **HOUR** YOU PUT IN BEHIND THE COUNTER, I'LL TAKE OFF **ONE DEMERIT**. I'LL LEAVE A **TIME CHART** WITH BRIAN AND YOU CAN SCHEDULE YOUR HOURS. JUST MAKE SURE I HAVE IT WHEN I OPEN UP **MONDAY MORNING**.



TEN MINUTES LATER....

THIS TOTALLY **BLOWS!!** ACCORDING TO MY FIGURES I GOTTA PUT IN AN **EIGHTY-HOUR** WORK WEEK DOWN AT THE **GAMES PIT** OR I STAND TO LOSE **TWO** LEVELS.

WE REALLY NEED TO **LEARN** NOT TO PLAY WITH **WEIRD PETE** WHEN HE HAS **VACATION TIME** COMING UP.

YOU GUYS CAVED IN **TOO** QUICKLY. LAST SUMMER I NEGOTIATED A **TWO** DEMERIT PER HOUR DEAL WITH HIM.

BOB, PUNCH IN THESE NUMBERS. I WANNA **DOUBLE-CHECK** MY MATH. 25, 15, 4, 16, 8, 9,....



Let Dead Dwarves Lie

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN AND STEVE JOHANSSON
BASED ON A STORY IDEA BY ??*

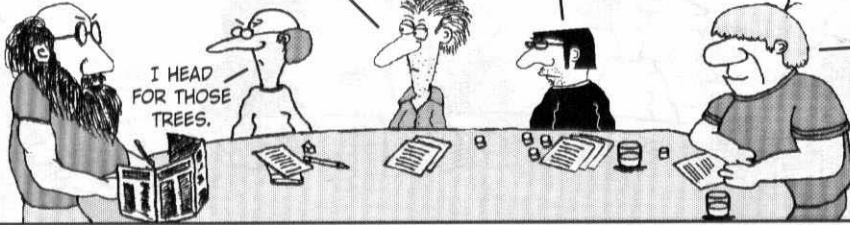
AS YOU ARE ABOUT TO CROSS THE **BRIDGE**, YOU ARE AMBUSHED BY A **DETACHMENT OF ORC BRIGANDS** WHO HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO **GUARD** THE BRIDGE WITH THEIR **LIVES**. THEY HAVE **DUG IN** ON THE SURROUNDING HILLSIDES WHERE THEY HAVE ESTABLISHED A **KILLING ZONE**. **DOZENS OF ARROWS** RAIN DOWN UPON YOU AS YOU **PANIC** AND **SCATTER**. THE **ONLY COVER** IS A GROVE OF TREES ON THE **RIVER BANK**.

TAR MARKVAR WRAPS HIMSELF IN HIS **CAPE OF MANY-TAPESTRIES** AND **HIDES IN SHADOWS!**

I SIGNAL FOR **PIGLY THINWILLOW†** TO THROW ME **CARVIN' MARVIN!** I'LL TRY TO CIRCLE ROUND AND GET BEHIND THOSE FIRING POSITIONS.

LOOKS LIKE THE **ESCALATING ORC WARS** HAVE ALREADY SPREAD TO THIS REGION.

I HEAD FOR THOSE TREES.



BOB, YOU'RE STRUCK WITH **THREE ARROWS** FOR A TOTAL OF **12 POINTS** OF DAMAGE. **OOPS**, LOOKS LIKE AT LEAST **ONE** OF THOSE ARROWS WAS A **CALLED SHOT** TO THE HEAD - SINCE YOU'RE **NOT** WEARING A **HELMET** YOU TAKE AN **INCAPACITATING WOUND** AS WELL. YOU **DROP** TO YOUR KNEES AND **WRITHE** IN **AGONY**.

DID YOU ROLL FOR THAT? I DON'T THINK I HEARD YOU **ROLL** FOR THAT.

YOU BUCKIN' FOR SOME **MORE DEMERITS** ARE YA? 'COS, IF YOU **ARE**, I COULD USE SOME HELP AT THE STORE THIS WEEK.

UH, ER, NEVER MIND.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

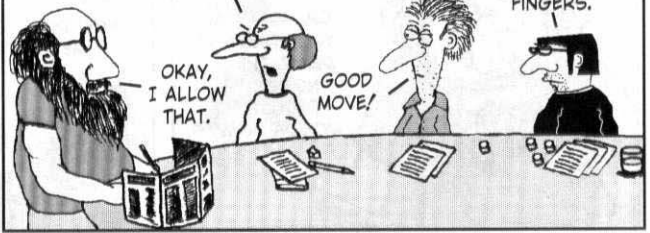
THE **ORC-CUB STANDARD BEARER** BUYS INTO YOUR **"PLAYING DEAD"** PLOY, BOB. HE STANDS OVER YOU AND BENDS DOWN TO SEARCH YOUR **PRONE** BODY. HE SEEMS VERY INTERESTED IN THOSE **LEGWARMERS OF SPEED** YOU'RE WEARING. HE ATTEMPTS TO PULL THEM FROM YOUR BODY.

AS HE'S SEARCHING MY BODY I REACH DOWN **DEEP** WITHIN MYSELF AND **MUSTER** THE STRENGTH TO RETRIEVE THE **DAGGER** FROM MY **THIGH-HIGH BOOTS!** I GO RIGHT FOR HIS KIDNEY.

ATTA BOY, FINGERS.

OKAY, I ALLOW THAT.

GOOD MOVE!



I TAKE MY **FREE HAND** AND PULL THE **BASTARD'S** FACE DOWN CLOSE TO MINE. AS I DRIVE THE BLADE HOME, I **STARE** INTO HIS EYES AND WHISPER THE NAME OF MY **DWARVEN CLAN** IN HIS EAR. I **WANT** THIS DUDE TO KNOW WHO TOOK HIM **OUT** OF THE GAME.

NOW **THAT'S** WHAT I'M TALKIN' ABOUT. **NICE TOUCH!!** I LOVE IT WHEN PLAYERS BRING THOSE KIND OF **DRAMATICS** TO THE GAME, MAKES IT **FUN** FOR EVERYONE.

OH MAN, THAT WAS **FRICKIN' AWESOME!** THAT WAS **ALMOST** AS GOOD AS **BRIAN** MAKING THAT **FIRE-TENDER** EAT HIS OWN FOOT.

HE GOT MY **DANDER** UP WHEN HE GROIN KICKED ME.



SORRY TO **BURST** YOUR BUBBLE, BOB, BUT THE **YOUTHFULLY ENERGETIC ORC** EASILY BLOCKS YOUR **DAGGER** THRUST WITH THE **BRACER** ON HIS LEFT FOREARM. HE THEN GRABS THE BLADE, **WRESTLES** IT FROM YOUR GRASP AND **TURNS** IT ON YOU. PLACING HIS **FULL WEIGHT** ON THE HILT HE PLUNGES THE BLADE THROUGH YOUR LEATHER ARMOR. HE GETS A ***4** ON HIS **TO-HIT** FOR ATTACKING A **PRONE** TARGET. THE BLADE SINKS **DEEP** INTO YOUR CHEST FOR....

WHOA!! LOOKS LIKE **27 POINTS** OF DAMAGE. **YOU'RE IN A WORLD OF HURT!**



* This strip is based on a suggestion submitted by one of our readers. Unfortunately he or she neglected to include his or her name.
† see Bundle of Trouble Volume Two "Carvin Marvin" [Pigly Thinwillow is the group's NPC hiring-torch bearer.]

GAAA!!! WHAT THE... **I'M DEAD?** NO OFFENSE **PETE**, BUT DID YOU EVEN **BOTHER** ROLLING DICE? I MEAN, I'M SITTING **RIGHT** HERE AND I DIDN'T HEAR **ANY** DICE BEING ROLLED. JUST THOUGHT I'D ASK.

THAT'S 'COS I ROLL 'EM IN THE **PALM** OF MY HAND SO **NOBODY** CAN HEAR THEM. I LIKE TO KEEP THE PLAYERS **GUESSING**. NOW, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE A **PROBLEM** WITH THAT, WOULD YOU?

UH... N...N...NO, SIR, -GULP - NO PROBLEM WHATSOEVER.

YOU **WHINE** TOO MUCH. YOU KNOW THAT?

DON'T WORRY BOB, **IRON SWALLOW** SHALL AVENGE HIS **BROTHER'S** DEATH! **PETE**, I RETRIEVE **MARVIN** FROM THE **RIBS** OF THE **DEAD CHIEFTAIN** AND **RUN** DOWN THE HILL TO LAY SOME **HELLACIOUS** CARNAGE ON THAT **STANDARD BEARER'S** ASS.

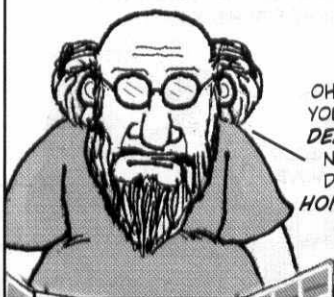
YOU KNOW THE **HMPA*** DID SOME TESTS THAT PROVED THE **OPEN PALM** IS NOT A **SUFFICIENT** ROLLING SURFACE FOR ACCURATE DICE RESOLUTION.



BOB, THE **ORC-CUB** USES YOUR **COLLAR** TO WIPE THE BLOOD FROM THE **DAGGER**.

HE PAUSES **JUST** LONG ENOUGH TO LEAVE HIS **CALLING CARD** ON YOUR **CORPSE**.

OH, AND SINCE YOU'RE **STONE DEAD**, THERE'S NO NEED TO DEDUCT THE **HONOR POINTS**.



I CHOP OFF THE **STANDARD BEARER'S** HEAD WITH **CARVIN' MARVIN** AND KICK IT **HACKEYSACK-STYLE** INTO THE RIVER. **KER-SPLASH** - THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE. I **RULE!!**

DON'T WORRY, BOB. WE'LL GET YOU **RAISED**.

NOW DON'T GO GIVIN' ME THAT LOOK.

HMMMM... NOW **WHERE** WAS THAT??



I'LL GO AHEAD AND **GRIEVE** AND **WEEP** OVER BOB'S DEAD BODY. I REALLY MAKE A FUSS AND YELL "**WHY?? WHY HIM?? WHY NOT ME??**" I'M REALLY LAYIN' DOWN A **SONG AND DANCE** ROUTINE - **TOTAL ANGUISH!!** REAL **SINCERE** STUFF. THAT SHOULD ERASE A FEW POINTS OF **ALIGNMENT INFRACTION** FROM MY **TAB** AND GET THE FRICKIN' **GAWD**S OFF MY BACK.

WHOAH! HOLD ON THERE **SPEEDY GONZALEZ!!** YOU'RE GETTIN' **AHEAD** OF YOURSELF.

YOU'RE GONNA GET STRUCK BY LIGHTNING AGAIN IF YER NOT CAREFUL.

BAAAA!! IF THEY DON'T LIKE IT THEY CAN KISS MY HAIRY **DWARVEN BUTT!**

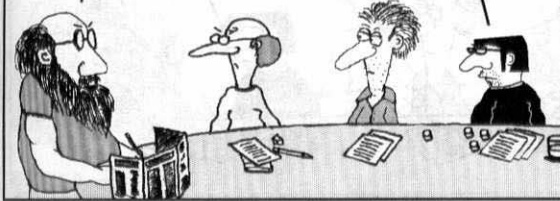
AH HA!!! JUST AS I THOUGHT.



* HMPA - HackMaster Players' Association

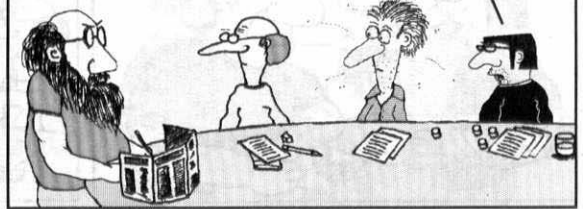
LET ME **DRAG** YOU BACK TO HARD, FIRM **REALITY**, JOHNNY. IT'S A GOOD **FIFTY YARDS** FROM THE CREST OF THE **HILL** TO THE **BRIDGE** WHERE **BOB'S** BODY LIES. IT'S GOING TO TAKE A **FEW** ROUNDS FOR YOU TO **TRAVERSE** THAT MUCH DISTANCE AND ENGAGE THE **STANDARD BEARER**. BUT **FIRST** YOU'LL HAVE TO CONTEND WITH THE FOUR **ORC WAR-DOGS** WHICH HAVE JUST BURST ON TO THE SCENE.

OH YEAH? SEND 'EM **MY** WAY. I'LL MAKE **QUICK** WORK OUT OF THE **MUTTS**. LET'S SEE HOW THEY LIKE **48 INCHES** OF **CRUEL, HARD STEEL** DOWN THE **GULLET!**



THE **WAR-DOGS** BEGIN TO CLOSE WITH YOU, **JOHNNY** BUT THEN THEY PICK UP THE **SCENT** OF **TAR MARKVAR'S** COWARDLY ASS **HIDING** IN THE SHADOWS. THEY PROCEED TO VICIOUSLY **MAUL** HIM AS HE SCREAMS LIKE A **LITTLE GIRL**. IT'S NOT A **PRETTY** SIGHT.

PERFECT. SINCE **B.A.** HAS THEM **PREOCCUPIED** I CAN FOCUS ON TAKING DOWN THAT **STANDARD BEARER**.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER....

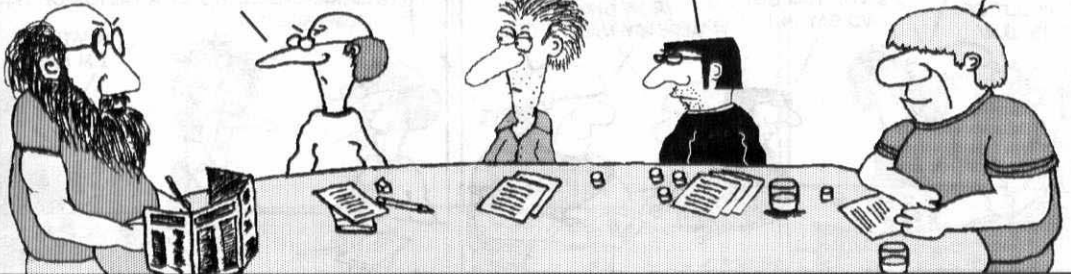
THE **ORC-CUB'S** HEAD TUMBLES END-OVER-END. IT ARCS PERFECTLY THROUGH THE AIR AND INTO THE RIVER. THE REMAINING **ORC SOLDIERS** RUN FOR COVER INTO THE FOREST. YOU NOW **CONTROL** THE **BRIDGE**.

AS SOON AS **PIGLY** IS FINISHED GATHERING UP MY **ENTRAILS** AND SEWING ME BACK UP, I'LL DRINK **ANOTHER** FLASK OF **HEALING JUICE!**

GREAT. NOW THESE **JOKERS** CAN GET ME RAISED SO I CAN GET **BACK** IN THE GAME.

I'LL SEARCH THE **ORC-CUB'S** BODY FOR ANY **GOODIES** AND THEN GO OVER TO....

I CALL DIBS ON THE DAGGER!!



HUH? **DAGGER?** WHAT DAGGER?

??!

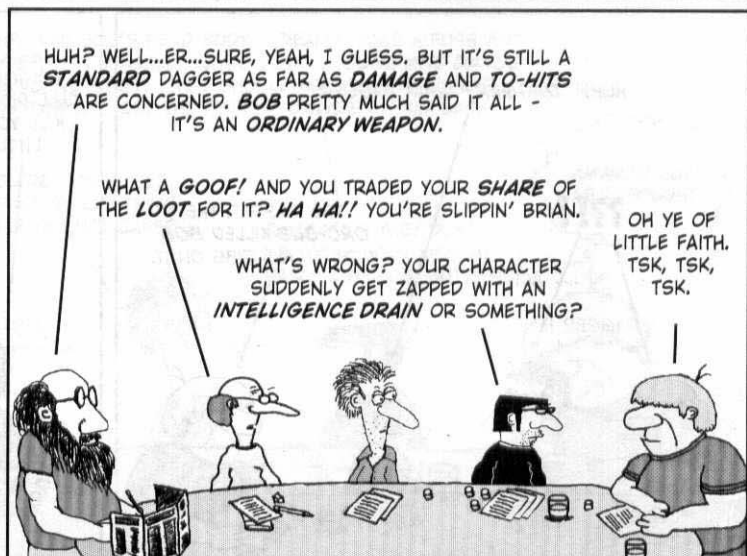
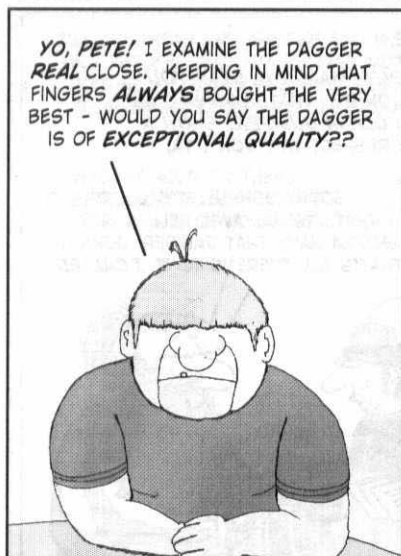
THE **DAGGER** THE **ORC-CUB** KILLED **BOB** WITH. I CALL **DIBS** ON IT.



HELLO???! WADDA YA MEAN YOU CALL **DIBS** ON IT? THAT DUDE WAS **MY** KILL YOU **CLAIM JUMPER!** SHOW A LITTLE RESPECT WHY DON'T YA.

SORRY JOHNNY. IT'S JUST THAT...WELL... AWH, HELL, I JUST **GOTTA** HAVE THAT **DAGGER**, JOHNNY. THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT. **I CALLED!**





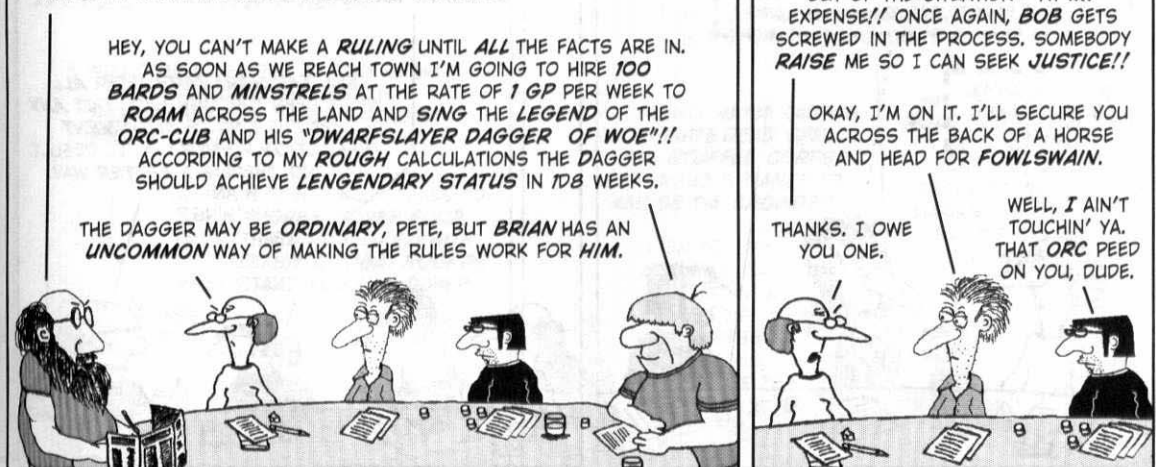
ACCORDING TO THE *HACKMASTER BOOK OF ARTIFACTS* SUPPLEMENT, PAGE 146, LEFT SIDE BAR, SIXTH PARAGRAPH, "ANY WEAPON OF *EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY* WHICH WAS USED TO KILL A CREATURE, INCLUDING PLAYER CHARACTERS OF AT LEAST 10TH LEVEL, MAY *PERMUTE* INTO A *MINOR ARTIFACT* WITH 204 *MAGICAL POWERS*".



NOT SO FAST, BRIAN. IT JUST SO HAPPENS I'M *FAMILIAR* WITH THAT LITTLE *SIDEBAR* IN *CHAPTER FIVE*. YOU *CONVENIENTLY* LEFT OUT ONE *VERY* IMPORTANT *ITEM*. ACCORDING TO THOSE RULES THE WEAPON IN QUESTION MUST *ALSO* BE THE SUBJECT OF "WIDESPREAD TALES AND LEGENDS".



I WOULDN'T *FRET* ABOUT IT, BOB. I'VE ALREADY *MADE* MY CALL. THE DAGGER IS *QUITE* ORDINARY.



GAWD, I'M SORRY BOB. IT *PAINS* ME TO SAY THIS BUT, IF WE *RAISE* YOU IT'S GONNA CONSTITUTE A *-25 MODIFIER* ON THE *ARTIFACT PERMUTATION TABLE*. THAT JUST WON'T DO. NO SIR - WON'T DO AT ALL!!

UH OH, LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A *FLY* IN THE *OINTMENT*. WHAT A *QUANDARY!*

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

BACK ME UP *JOHNNY* AND I'LL CUT YOU IN FOR FIFTEEN PERCENT.

SORRY, BOB. IT'S *TOO SWEET* AN OPPORTUNITY TO PASS UP. I KNOW OUR CHARACTERS ARE *BLOOD* AND EVERYTHING BUT *GREED* IS *ONE MONSTER IRON SWALLOW* HAS *NEVER* BEEN ABLE TO VANQUISH.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

WHAT, I *THINK* THEY'RE SAYING IS WE SHOULD "*LET DEAD DWARVES LIE*", BOB. BUT DON'T WORRY, IF I HAVE TO TAKE YOU IN *MYSELF* I *WILL* GET YOU *RAISED*.

THANKS, B.A. NICE TO KNOW WHO YOU CAN COUNT ON WHEN THE *CHIPS* ARE DOWN.

DON'T MENTION IT.

EASY THERE *LOW-STATS-MEISTER!!* I'M AFRAID I CAN'T LET YOU *DO* THAT. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SOME *MAJOR* EXPERIENCE POINTS HERE AND WHO KNOWS WHAT KIND OF *MAGICAL POWERS* THIS THING IS GOING TO HAVE.

??!! ARE...ARE YOU *THREATENING* ME?

JUST *STEP AWAY* FROM THE CORPSE, *GNOME-BOY!!*

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO GET *UGLY*, B.A. IT'S ALL UP TO YOU. JUST *WALK AWAY*.

-PSSST- DON'T WORRY, BOB. I'LL *CIRCLE 'ROUND* AND COME BACK TO GET YOU. -WINK- -WINK-

HUH? OH...OKAY. -WINK- -WINK- GOTCHA!!

HEAR THAT? B.A.'S DONE GONE *TURNCOAT* ON US. WE MAY HAVE TO *KILL* HIM.

KILL TAR MARKVAR? AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH? YOU GOT *ANY* IDEA THE KIND OF *ALIGNMENT INFRACTION POINTS* THAT'LL RESULT IN? NO, THERE'S A *BETTER* WAY.

YEAH? WHAT'S THAT?

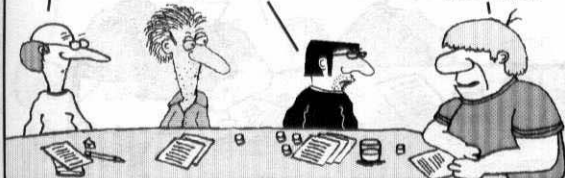
YOU CAN'T **RAISE** SOMEONE IF HE'S MISSING A **VITAL ORGAN**. KNOW WHAT I MEAN? SO WE'LL JUST **CUT OUT** SHY-SHADOW'S **HEART** AND **TAKE IT** WITH US FOR **SAFE KEEPING**.

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, BRIAN. YOU **CAN'T** BE SERIOUS.

SERIOUS AS A HEART ATTACK!!
HAR HAR!! YOU WALKED **RIGHT INTO** THAT ONE, **BOBBY-BOY**.

GEE, **IRON SWALLON** COULDN'T CUT OUT THE **HEART** OF HIS OWN **BABY BROTHER**. CAN YOU DO IT?

I GOT NO PROBLEM WITH THAT.



YER A DEAD MAN!! YOU HEAR ME?
A DEAD MAN!!

DEAD MAN? **ME??!!** HMMMM.... LET ME CHECK ON THAT. **NOPE!** SORRY! I STILL GOT OVER **HALF** MY **HIT-POINTS**. I THINK YOU MUST BE **CONFUSED**. THE ONLY **DEAD MAN**... ER **DWARF** HERE IS **YOU!!**

YOU'RE A **HEARTLESS** INDIVIDUAL, **BOB**. **HAR HAR!!**



TWENTY MINUTES LATER....

YOU **LOSE**, BRIAN! YOUR HALF-BAKED **LITTLE PLAN** JUST **FIZZLED!** **DESPITE** ALL THE **BARDS'** SINGING ABOUT THE **DWARF-SLAYER DAGGER** OF **WOE** THE **GREAT UNWASHED MASSES** AREN'T BUYIN' IT. SEEMS LIKE SO MUCH **HYPE** TO THEM. THEY WANT **PROOF**.

OKAY, SO I HIRE SOMEONE TO **TRAVEL** AROUND BEHIND THE **BARDS** AND **EXHIBIT** THE **HEART OF SHYSHADOW** TO THE **DISBELIEVERS!**

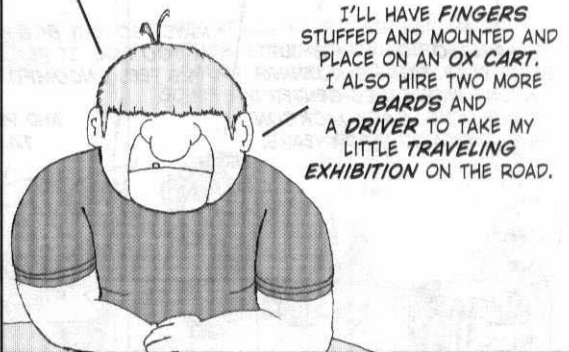
NOPE. SORRY. THEY AREN'T CONVINCED. A **COUNTER-RUMOR** STARTS GOING AROUND THAT IT'S THE **HEART** OF A **BABOON**. THEY WANNA SEE THE **BODY**.

SO THE GAME IS **HARDBALL** IS IT?



WELL, THEN I SUPPOSE I'LL SEND **PIGLY THINWILLOW** BACK TO **BOB'S GRAVESITE** TO DIG UP HIS **STINKIN' ASS BODY**. I'LL HAVE **PIGLY** TAKE THE **CORPSE** TO THAT **TAXIDERMIST** OVER IN **GRETCH WILLOW** - THE GUY WHO DID SUCH A **SUPERB** JOB MOUNTING THAT **SHAMBLING HULK** FOR MY **STUDY**.

I'LL HAVE **FINGERS** STUFFED AND MOUNTED AND PLACE ON AN **OX CART**. I ALSO HIRE TWO MORE **BARDS** AND A **DRIVER** TO TAKE MY **LITTLE TRAVELING EXHIBITION** ON THE ROAD.



GRAVE??!! WHAT GRAVE? YOU GUYS JUST **ROLLED** MY **BODY** IN A **DITCH** AND KICKED SOME **LEAVES** OVER ME.

I WOULD HAVE OFFERED TO STAY BEHIND AND DIG A GRAVE **BOB** BUT THAT **DISEMBOWELMENT** ATTACK BY THOSE **WAR DOGS** TOOK A **LOT** OUT OF ME.

YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT TAKES TO DIG A **PROPER GRAVE**? **FOUR TURNS!!** A **HASTY-GRAVESITE** ONLY TAKES **SIX COMBAT ROUNDS**. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?



AN HOUR LATER....

NOW WHAT THE HELL WOULD MAKE HIM **STORM OFF** LIKE THAT?

OH, I DUNNO. MAYBE CASTING AN **ANIMATE DEAD SPELL** ON HIS **STUFFED CORPSE** AND HAVING IT **DANCE** TO **AMUSE** THE **CROWD??**

WHEN YOU SEE **BOB** TELL HIM THAT LEAVIN' A **GAME-IN-PROGRESS** EARNED HIM **FIFTY DEMERITS**.

HEY, THIS **TRAVELING ROAD SHOW** IS COSTING ME A **FORTUNE!** I WAS JUST TRYING TO **RECOUP** EXPENSES BY MAKING HIM **PERFORM** FOR **TIPS**. IS THAT SO **WRONG?**

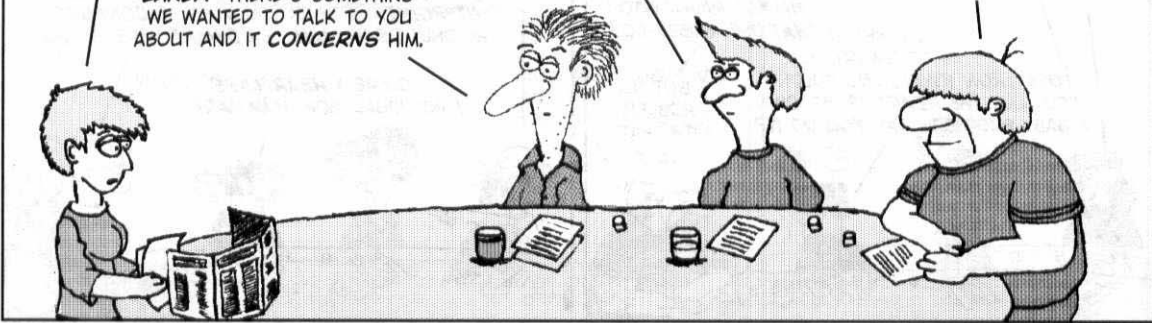


OKAY, I'M **HERE!** SO WHAT WAS **SO** IMPORTANT THAT YOU CALLED TO ASK IF WE COULD MEET AN **HOUR** EARLY TONIGHT. AND, UH, **WHERE'S BOB?**

ACTUALLY **BOB'S** THE **REASON** WE WANTED TO MEET **EARLY**. THERE'S SOMETHING WE WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT AND IT **CONCERNS** HIM.

YOU **UNLEASHED** A **GREAT EVIL** HERE AT THIS TABLE, **SARA**. WE'RE ASKING YOUR HELP TO **DESTROY** IT!

IT WAS **OKAY** WHEN IT WAS JUST **IN-HOUSE** AND **AMONG** FRIENDS. BUT **NOW** THE **ENTIRE** TOWN IS TALKING ABOUT IT.



GREAT EVIL?? **BOB??!!!** WHAT ON **EARTH** ARE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT? I **JUST** SAW BOB YESTERDAY. HE SEEMED **FINE!**

THE PROBLEM IS THE **FEMALE CHARACTER** HE'S BEEN RUNNING IN YOUR CAMPAIGN. IT'S GETTING KINDA **SCARY!**

BOBARELLO? OH YOU'RE JUST BEING SILLY. THERE'S **NOTHING** WRONG WITH CROSS-GENDER ROLE-PLAYING. **GARY JACKSON** HAS ADVOCATED IT FOR YEARS.

MAYBE SO, BUT **BOB** HAS TAKEN IT **TOO FAR**. IT REALLY MAKES US FEEL **UNCOMFORTABLE**.

AND PEOPLE ARE **TALKING!**

LOOK, **SARA**, I'M THE **FIRST** PERSON TO RALLY BEHIND THE BANNER OF **GOOD** ROLEPLAYING AND ALL THAT.

HELL, I'VE EVEN PLAYED A FEW **FEMALE CHARACTERS** HERE AND THERE OVER THE YEARS. BUT **BOB** SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN **SUCKED** INTO SOMETHING MUCH **DEEPER** AND **MUCH MORE DISTURBING**. WE JUST WANT IT TO END.

EXACTLY **WHAT** ARE YOU ASKING ME TO DO?

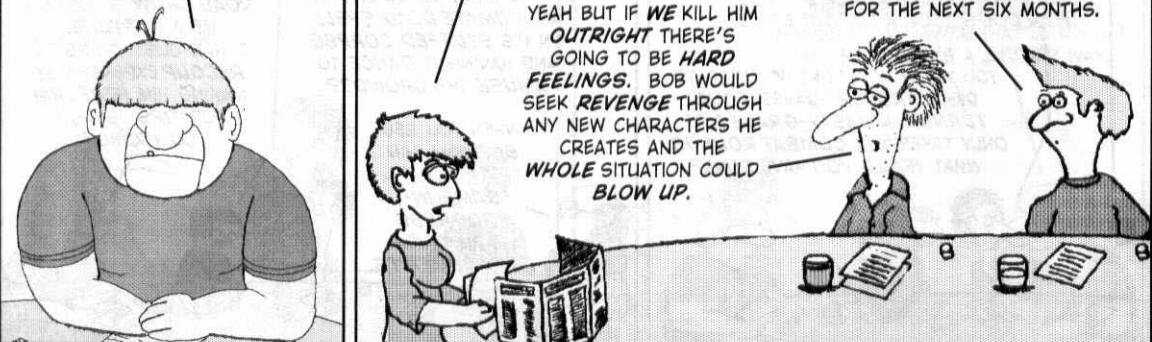


SIMPLY PUT, **SARA**, **BOBARELLO MUST DIE!!**

ARE YOU **SUGGESTING** I **DELIBERATELY** SET UP BOB'S CHARACTER TO DIE? DO YOU KNOW HOW **INCREDIBLY** UNFAIR, NOT TO MENTION **UNETHICAL** THAT WOULD BE? AS A **GAMEMASTER**, I HAVE **CERTAIN** RESPONSIBILITIES. BESIDES, YOU **KNOW** HOW ATTACHED BOB TENDS TO GET TO HIS **CHARACTERS**. WHY ARE YOU ASKING **ME** TO DO YOUR **DIRTY WORK** ANYWAY? YOUR CHARACTERS COULD **CERTAINLY** KILL BOB'S CHARACTER AT **ANYTIME**.

YEAH, **GRUDGE MATCHES** FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

YEAH BUT IF **WE** KILL HIM **OUTRIGHT** THERE'S GOING TO BE **HARD FEELINGS**. BOB WOULD SEEK **REVENGE** THROUGH ANY NEW CHARACTERS HE CREATES AND THE **WHOLE SITUATION** COULD **BLOW UP**.



* Note: This strip is a follow-up to "Let the GM be a Lady Tonight" (page 5)

YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, COULD TAKE OUT BOBARELLO WITHOUT BOB EVER KNOWING IT WAS BY DESIGN. ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS FUDGE A DIE RESULT HERE. DROP IN A RANDOM MONSTER THERE. THERE ARE DOZENS OF WAYS FOR YOU TO COVER YOUR TRACKS.

FUDGE A DIE ROLL? THAT IS SO WRONG.

NO SARA, A GUY PLAYING SOME BABE-CHARACTER. THAT'S WRONG!!

C'MON SARA. WE'RE ASKING FOR YOUR HELP.

WE JUST WANT THE OLD BOB BACK.

YOU'RE ASKING ME TO VIOLATE THE GM CODE OF CONDUCT!

YOU KNOW WHAT? I'VE HEARD ENOUGH! THIS DISCUSSION IS ENDED! I DON'T WANT YOU GUYS BRINGING IT UP AGAIN. EVER!!

YOU DO REALIZE YOU'RE FORCING US TO TAKE MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS? ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BOBARELLO IS GOING DOWN.

WHATEVER! I JUST WANT IT CLEAR THAT I WON'T HAVE ANY PART OF IT.

AN HOUR LATER...

HEY GUYS!! SORRY, I'M LATE. I WAS PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON MY BOBARELLO FIGURE. I USED SOME SQUADRON PUTTY TO MODIFY AN OLD SHEENA OF THE JUNGLE FIGURE I FOUND IN WEIRD PETE'S BARGAIN BIN.

SHE'S WEARING HER DUNGEON CRAWL ENSEMBLE. I COULDN'T DECIDE IF I SHOULD PORTRAY HER IN HER SKIN-TIGHT DOE-SKIN LEGGINGS OR IN HER SNAKE SKIN MINI SKIRT.

LOOK IT!! I EVEN MANAGED TO CAPTURE THE CUTE WAY SHE WRINKLES HER NOSE WHEN SHE'S IN HACK MODE!! AND LOOK HOW I GAVE HER PUMPS-OF-WALL CLIMBING A METALLIC SHEEN.

I NOT REALLY HAPPY WITH HER HAIRDO THOUGH. I THINK SHE SHOULD MORE A FARRA FAUCETT BIG HAIR THING GOING. AND I THINK I'LL GIVE HER A...

AFTER THE GAME...

SO... EXACTLY WHEN DID YOU DECIDE BOBARELLO HAD TO DIE?

WAS IT THAT OBVIOUS? -SIGH- IT HAD TO BE DONE. HE WAS REALLY STARTING TO WEIRD ME OUT.

THAT WAS SO BRUTAL! IS THERE REALLY A HUMAN SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION TABLE?

DON'T LOSE ANY SLEEP OVER IT, SARA. YOU DID THE RIGHT THING.

PLAYER ADVANTAGE CODES

BOB, HERES YER COPY.
PUT IT IN A SAFE PLACE
BRIAN

CLASSIFIED

GAMEMASTER NONDISCLOURE

COPY 3 OF 5
Bob's Copy

APPLE CORE: Let's pretend like we are leaving peacefully. Then we come back to settle the score.

AZTEC SURPRISE: Magic Users, throw some tactical spells on the situation.

Borrow an Eraser: The GM is screwin' us on experience points. Let's trash this adventure.

BATHROOM BREAK: Someone do something to get the GM away from the table so we can sneak a look at his notes!

BLACK FRISBEE: I'm blind and about to fire or throw a projectile. Take cover!

BLACK GUARD: Steal the GM's dice after the game and bring them down to Weird Pete's for testing. (often used when the GM starts rolling in excess of five crits a session).

BLACK JELLY BEAN: We need a distraction. Flip the table and commence brawling.

BLUE DIAMOND WRAP: Let's ditch the new player and resume the game later.

BRING ME YER BEST WINE: Let's start a brawl in the tavern!

BUTTERMILK 5: On my command we waste this monster/NPC by attacking simultaneously.

CATCH COLD: Agree to an NPC's demands in order to gain the advantage and backstab him later.

CHERRY DELIGHT: I'll douse this guy with oil. Somebody else set him ablaze.

CHILI BURRITO: I'm gonna throw a fireball down the next hallway so hang back.

CHILI CHEESE BURRITO: Push that worthless NPC into hallway, too.

CHOSEN ONE: Potential Fireball Backlash Alert! Outta the way! You've been forewarned.

DAMAGED GOODS: We're taking too much damage. Run Away!

DISK SPACE: I'm running a statistical analysis on our tactical options on my laptop. Stall the GM until I get the results.

KUDOS ON THE ADVENTURE, (GM'S NAME): Hey guys, I think I've found a way to BUST this adventure. I'll leave a message in the restroom explaining the details.

FINGERNAIL: Kill all available NPC's for the XP.

FORTY-TWO: We're about to learn the meaning of life, in other words were dealing with a Killer-GM. Watch your ass!

GREEN BELL: Distract the enemy so that the thief can backstab him.

HAIRCUT: A warning to the rest of the party by one of the party who has entered a room ahead of the rest that they need to duck when they come into the room, or risk losing a few inches in height.

IS THAT ALL HE'S GOT?: I'm almost out of hit points! Somebody toss me some healing juice.

I SEE YOUR POINT: That counter offer was unacceptable. Attack!!

I THINK I NEED A BIGGER BOX: I wanna catch this guy. He'll make a fine henchman.

I'M FEELING MUCH BETTER TODAY: My character's alignment has been changed (typically to CE), or my character has been possessed, or my character is really a doppelganger. A warning to other players that you are no longer in control of your character.

JET LI: Go ballistic, nutso. Kill everything.

KIND HEARTED FOOL: It just got personal. Let's string the GM up by his ankles and duct tape his mouth shut.

LET'S BE NICE TO HIM: This guy has information we need. Torch to the groin.

MAGIC MAN: At the city gate, let the Bard do the talking.

MORE SODA ANYONE?: Is it just me, or is the GM up to something?

MORE LIGHT: Use torture in the interrogation.

NON-DAIRY CREAMER: Check all livestock in the area for magical powers.

PAPER CUP: We've got the GM where we want him, but not for long! Keep the heat on.

PARLEY... Stall till we can get healed, gain an advantage, etc.

PASS THE POTATO CHIPS: Let the NPC's go in to deal with these monsters/NPCs and wear them down. Then we'll go in and mop up and gather the spoils.

PIG IN A BLANKET: Cover the spellcaster so he has time to finish the incantation and cast a spell.

PINK FROSTING: Make an excuse to leave the table. We need to huddle.

POSTAL SERVICE: The GM seems mad. Maybe if we go easy on him, we'll get loads of treasure/XPs/etc.

PRICKLY HEAT: Get the oil flasks out and be ready to light and throw 'em.

PULL MY FINGER: Thief! Do your thing. We'll cover you.

PURPLE CAT: Help me steal that magic item and kill the owner.

RED SUNSET (number): Scatter to the four winds! We'll meet back in the number of days indicated at our base-of-operations.

REMEDIAL TRAINING: This player-character is annoying as hell. Let's WASTE him to teach this player a lesson.

SCHOOL'S OUT: Just agree to anything this guy says. As soon as he's finished talking we kill him.

SNAPPLE WHIP: Somebody block the door so the GM can't get away. Then we GO for him.

SPAZ THE DUCK: Accidentally knock over the GM Screen so we can verify those dice results.

SPICY SALSA: I'm wasting the next NPC that mouths off to me ... uh, be ready to back me up.

SWANKY PAD: Let's torch this place.

SOUP'S ON: Used by a player who's character is separated from the party and isn't allowed to convey any information. This phrase warns the group of imminent danger.

STONE COLD: Argue amongst ourselves in order to stall the GM from making a call or taking further action against the group.

TAKE THE JUNKER FOR A RIDE: Time to ditch the GM's adventure plan and have some fun!

TAKING OUT THE TRASH: A form of gamer-style justice reserved for those who have brought harm or dishonor to a group or one of its members.

TALK TO ME: I'm "THIS" close to making next level. We need to stir up some easy experience points.

TIGER, TIGER, BURNING BRIGHT: Cast a fireball - NOW! Screw the backlash. We need to take this badboy out.

THROW RUG: A warning to the rest of the party by one of the party members who has entered a room ahead of the rest that there is a pit trap in the room.

THROW TINDER ON THE FIRE: Get ready to throw the hirelings for cannon fodder.

TWISTED TOPPING: Order and hide a pizza from the GM.

* NOTE: These **Player Advantage Codes** were compiled by members of the Yahoo! Knights of the **Dinner Table Fan Club**.

There are plans to compile similar lists in the future. To join the fun go to <http://www.clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/knightsofthedinnertable>

b.a.

FELTON



B.A. is 30 years old and lives with his parents. When he isn't gaming he works part-time in his dad's dry cleaning shop. B.A. dropped out of college to follow his dream of being a game designer. He sunk \$6,000 into his first gaming product, **DAWG: the Role-Playing Game™**, which was a bomb. B.A. suffered a nervous breakdown and left gaming for a few years before picking up his dice bag again. He founded the Knights of the Dinner Table. He's currently employed at **Pizza-A-Go Go**.



bob

HERZOG

Bob is 26 years old and also lives with his parents. He currently works for his dad at the **Hoe and Harness Insurance Co.** In the past he has had a record of losing his job because of his temper and sharp tongue. Bob was the first dues paying member of the group. He's from the old school of role-playing and believes it's all about breaking things and killing people. He made the local papers twice when he got lost in the steam tunnels under the Ball State. *(The first time for seven days.)*

Knights of the Dinner Table™

Dave is 22 years old and attends Ball State University where he is studying cultural anthropology. He also has a minor in dance theory. (which he originally pursued as a ploy to meet chicks). He was introduced to role-playing by Bob whom he met at a local paintball tournament. *(He saved Bob's butt from a double-flanker)* Dave is a true blooded hack-n-slasher who becomes bored easily. He often forgets to bring his character sheet to the game and tends to borrow someone else's dice. Dave originally joined the group to take advantage of the free munchies.

dave

BOZWELL



sara

FELTON



Sara is 25 years old and is B.A.'s cousin. She recently moved back to Muncie, Indiana from Wisconsin and is the newest member of the group. Unfortunately, Sara is also the only female in the group and fights a lonely battle to bring more role-play into the group's gaming sessions and less hack-n-slash. Sara has decided it is her sworn obligation to bring the other members of the group around to her style of play. She attempts to do this by example but occasionally has to resort to threats and physical bullying to make her point.



johnny

KIZINSKI

Johnny "Lucky" Kizinski was one of the original members of the **Knights of the Dinner Table Gaming Club**. He was highly respected by the other members for his gaming style and dedication to the game. He is mostly remembered, however, for his incredible luck with the dice and his uncanny habit of coming up with the right results at the right time. Mention his name around any gaming table in Muncie, Indiana and you're likely to hear the sad refrain, "the boy could play!" Johnny's story has an unhappy ending however. One night during a power session of **CattlePunk**, his luck ran out. He fumbled consecutively FIVE times, failed four saving throws, and missed twelve to-hits over the course of the evening. As a result four high level player characters met their demise. Johnny's unlucky streak haunted him in the weeks that followed and he eventually lost interest in the game and hung up his dice bag. He moved out of state and now manages a **Big Juices** in Wisconsin.

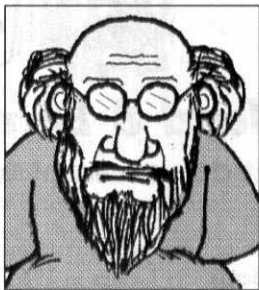
nitro FERGUESON

Victor Ferguson became known as the *Lord of Steam* when he adapted the HackMaster rules to live-action play and began taking hand picked groups of players on late night forays into the labyrinth of steam tunnels beneath Ball State University. After 'Ferguson's Folly' made national headlines (Victor and his group were lost for 7 days prompting a massive rescue search), the steam tunnels were secured and dozens of entrances were sealed with concrete. There are several contradicting accounts of what happened weeks later on the evening of January 5th, 1987 but it involved a satchel of C-4 high explosive, a miscalculation of the expected blast radius, and a medical evacuation of the Campus Administration Building which collapsed during an attempt to breach the steam tunnels. The incident earned Victor the nickname 'Nitro' and 5 years probation. Nitro has been president of the **Black Hand Gaming Society** for 8 years, taking over from Weird Pete.



weird PETE

"Weird" Pete Ashton is the sole proprietor of a local game store called the **Games Pit**. He is proud of the fact that he was one of the co-designers of the cult classic role-playing game, *Lynch Mob*™. Pete loves to relate the story of how he was burned by his partners and lost "millions". Pete is always available for advice but oddly seems to be very bitter about the hobby he loves so much. He was a major stockholder in Hard 8 Enterprises but sold his shares mere days before HackMaster was released. Pete co-founded the **Black Hand Gaming Society** along with Nitro and served as president for the first four years of the club's existence. The backroom of Pete's shop serves as home table for the Society.



flak jack MONTY

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.



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



BLACK HAND GAMING SOCIETY

newt FORAGER



Newt was the only child of a career military couple. He spent his childhood either being dragged around the globe or tossed back and forth between various uncles and grandparents. Perhaps that's why Newt has trouble making friends and fitting in. He wet his feet in gaming by playing every play-by-mail game he could track down and earned a bit of notoriety by toppling the five year powergrip of the top player in the PBM game, *Tribes of Angst* and essentially shutting down the game. Later he was introduced to HackMaster through a MUDD on the internet and embraced the game. After running through every Solo-Adventure published he set out on a quest to find a group to play with. Unfortunately he's finding it difficult to find a group who will tolerate his personality quirks.



gary
JACKSON

Gary Jackson is fondly known as the “Gawdfather of Gaming” by millions of gaming enthusiasts around the world. His failing wargame company, Hard 8 Enterprises, was about to close its doors for good in 1977 when Gary tossed the dice on a hastily produced role-playing game, *The HackMasters of EverKnight™*. The first print run was quickly snapped off the shelves and soon frantic distributors were calling Gary’s three-man shop with pleas of

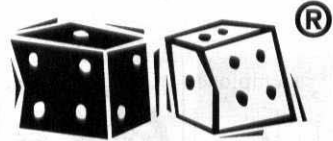
“More!” Gary has been riding Hackmaster spin-offs ever since. For those who want to know what ‘hard eight’ means, it refers to the game of craps where Gary has blown thousands of dollars of company money over the years on his frequent trips to Vegas.



edmund
FINLEY

Edmund 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”.



Hard 8 Enterprises®
What do you want to Hack today?™

Jo Jo is one of Gary Jackson’s favorite, “yes-men”. When he bought out Battle Cry Games in 1984, Jo Jo Zeke came as part of the deal. For years Jo Jo was considered the ‘*King of Hex-and-Cardboard-Counter*’ wargames and has over forty-two titles under his belt. His most famous game design was ‘*The Pope’s Panzers*’ a ‘what-if’ wargame simulation that rocked war gaming circles around the country. The sequel, ‘*V-Rockets at the Vatican*’ earned him his first Gamers’ Choice Award for best

game design. Jo Jo is now responsible for writing much of the flavor text for HackMaster adventures (something he has a knack for), and crunching rules. It is rumored he lives in his office at Hard Eight Enterprises.



jo jo
ZEKE

the antignano
BROTHERS

Very few people have ever seen the infamous Antignano Brothers. Those who have are usually reluctant to talk about it. It’s known that Gary Jackson has kept them on the payroll for years. Their checks are usually annotated with the cryptic words, “for various services rendered”. It is said that Vince and Tony Antignano wear grey, pinstripe suits with twenty-sider cuff links. A few years ago, Nitro Ferguson publicly insulted Gary Jackson at a convention. A few days later, he FedExed a letter of apology to Gary. It is rumored the Antignano Brothers paid him a ‘visit’.



pete
SKIPOWSKI

Pete has been with Gary Jackson since the beginning. In fact they met in college where they used to play epic sessions of MERC

ARMOR and BLAZING GUNS. When Gary started his company, Pete came onboard as his first full-time game designer (working for shares in the beginning). In recent years the friendship has been strained as Gary's projects have repeatedly over-shadowed Pete's pet projects. In fact Gary usually targets Pete for his much publicized verbal abuse and ego-bruising. Still, Pete is loyal to Gary and Hard 8 Enterprises and rarely complains.

Waco Bob is one of the original share holders of Hard 8. He really doesn't do much at the company other than agree with virtually every word that comes out of Gary's mouth. Waco has done well, financially, working with Gary and that seems to be enough to have earned his undying devotion. Waco does sit in on every playtesting session he can. But since he seems to love every game he plays, regardless of its flaws, his value as a playtester leaves a lot to be desired. He invariably fills out his playtester evaluation forms with, "This game is the next HackMaster!!"

'waco' bob
FORSEY



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.

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

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 fip Heroes and Zeroes, but was reassigned due to a rash of complaints following the release of H&Z's Background Tool Chest supplement. Gary, uncharacteristically emotional, felt terrible about this and has promised to make it up to Timmy by bringing his favorite TV hero, Xena the Warrior Princess, to the next HackCon.

KODT Random Flavor Text/Encounter Generator (1d100)

Try rolling on this table next time you need a quick encounter or just some dungeon dressing.

Larry Granato

01-05	Blind Beggar with cup (<i>roll for initiative</i>)	68	Severed Hand (<i>roll d10</i>)
06-08	Sack of dirt clods* (<i>encumbrance = 50 lbs.</i>)	1-7	Dead
09-10	Cow (<i>Guernsey</i>)*	8-9	Undead
11-12	Rock Trolls (<i>1-12</i>)	10	The dreaded Hand of Vectra
13	Flock of migratory bird (flying in formation) circle above party (long range for bows)	69-70	Grudge Monster (<i>GM's choice</i>)
14-16	Shrubberies (<i>2-5</i>)	71-72	Were-goats (<i>3-30</i>)
17	Deity disguised as blind beggar	73	Lake of Molten lava
18-20	Squirrel drops nut on party (<i>1-3 partial surprise, 4-6 total surprise</i>)	74-75	Nondescript stone*
21-23	Puddle of vomit	76-78	Vampire halflings / Ninjas / dwarves / Paladin-Assassins (<i>2-16</i>)
24-30	Rampaging orcs (<i>200-2000, +2 due to battle frenzy</i>)	79-80	Giant Rats (<i>1d6; will carry off and devour any severed limbs</i>)
31-33	Toenail clippings*	81	Clubfooted torchbearer
34-35	Mangy 3-legged dog (<i>50% chance of 1-20 beggars nearby</i>)	82-83	Box of candle stubs* (<i>encumbrance = 10lbs.</i>)
36-39	Outdoor Furnishings (<i>roll d6</i>):	84	White rabbit looks at pocket watch, then pops into hole
1-2	Gazebo (<i>AC5, 22 hp</i>)	85	Dying dwarf (<i>1 hp due to sucking chest wound</i>)
3-4	Swing (<i>does 1d6 on back swing if attacker fails to duck</i>)	86-87	Soiled handkerchief*
5-6	Green Davenport (<i>blunt weapons do 2 damage due to heavy padding</i>)	88	Demon Lord
40	Ghost of dead NPC follower haunts party	89	Sword in a stone (<i>roll 1d20; 1-19 = cursed -9, 20 = +12 Hackmaster</i>)
41-42	Dead skunk*	90-91	Barrel of rusty nails*
43-44	Bag of Guano*	92	Dense Forest (<i>trees = 100 hp, 1 every 5' in all directions, each must be destroyed to pass</i>)
45-46	Purple impaler (<i>wounds cause profuse bleeding; make DEX check to avoid slipping</i>)	93	Chest of broken glass*
47-49	Lizardman droppings leading north	94	Lich Master
50	A morning zephyr whistles through trees (<i>check for surprise</i>)	95	Sewing kit (can be used on wounds)
51-52	Dragon: roll d8	96	Set of 5 green towels (<i>monogrammed with Hoody-Hoo™</i>)*
1-2	Blue spiny-horned dragon	97	4 NPCs: tin golem with axe (<i>1d8 damage</i>), straw man (<i>fire does +2/die</i>), leonine humanoid (<i>morale -6</i>), human female with dog (<i>AC 5 due to speed, bite does 1d4</i>).
3	Speckled dragon	98-99	Pothole (<i>make DEX roll to avoid, if roll fails use B.A.'s critical hit tables</i>)
4	Guardian sun-wyrm	00	Shabby, barefoot peasant-type, going by the name of ACaine (<i>seems unusually quick and agile</i>)
5-6	Slag copper dragon		
7-8	Swack-iron dragon		
53-54	Dirty socks*		
55-56	Rabid weasel (<i>save vs disease</i>)		
57-62	Enraged mob (<i>20-200; probably from the party's last encounter</i>)		
63-64	Hedge Ogres (<i>3-30</i>)		
65	Festering cesspool (<i>save vs. nausea</i>)		
66-67	Chicken in road*		

* the GM should frequently remind the players that artifacts and other really powerful magic items do not detect as magical



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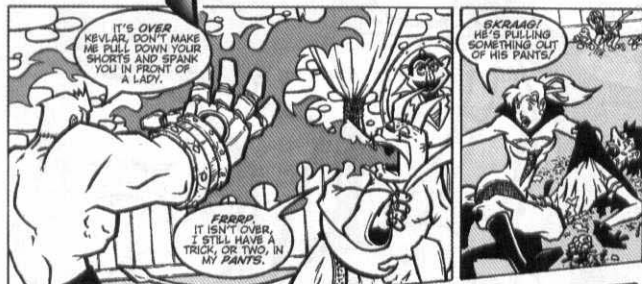
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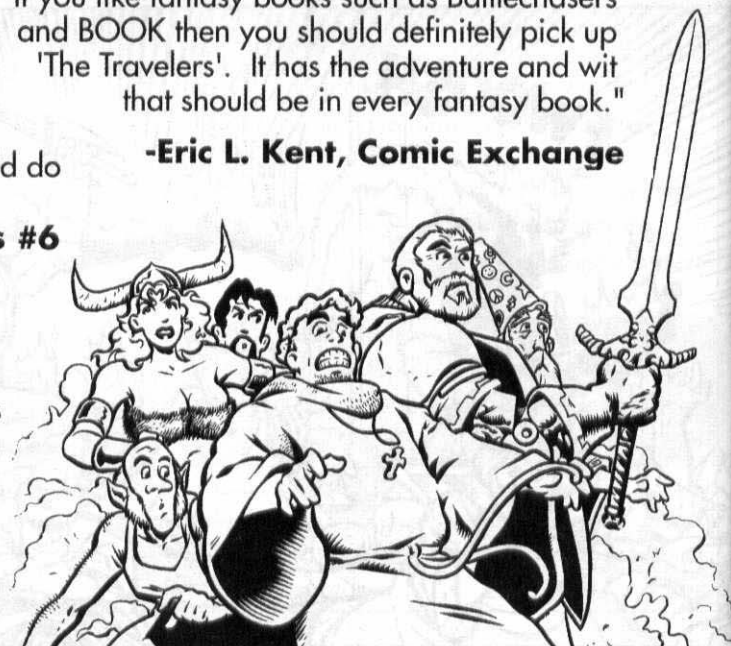
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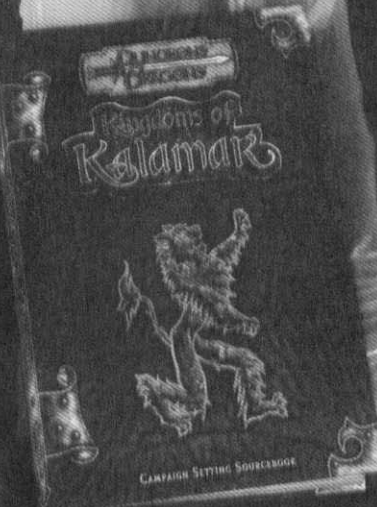
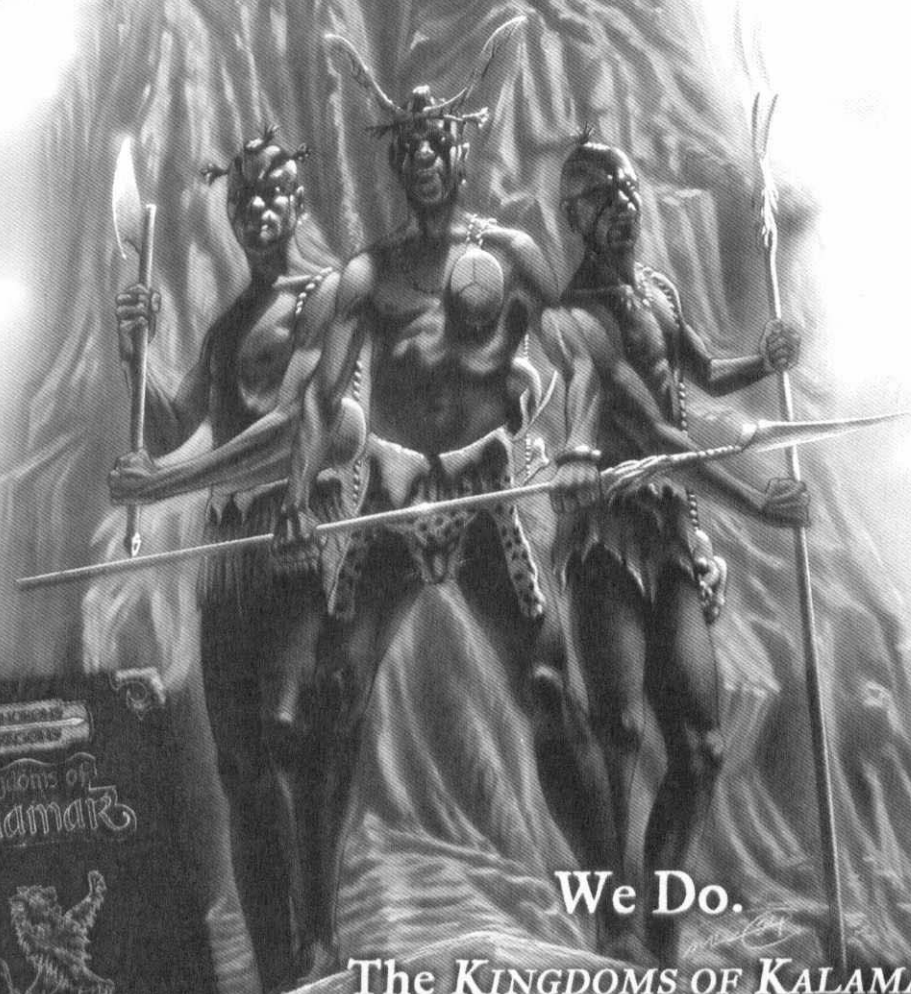
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