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BUNDLE OF TROUBLE

VOLUME SEVEN



A COMPILATION OF KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE: ISSUES 19 THRU 21

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

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOLUME SEVEN

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS

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

Cover Art by GEORGE AND JACKIE VRBANIC

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Although he won't admit it, Knights of the Dinner Table™ was created by Jolly R. Blackburn way back in 1990 as 'filler' for the small press magazine Shadis™ (which he was publishing out of a spare bedroom). 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 19 thru 21

HEROES OF THE HACKLEAGUE • HACK IN SPACE • HOME IS WHERE YOU HANG YER DICEBAG

Editorial of a Madman

As Jolly noted in a previous volume of **Bundles of Trouble**, we look forward to working on each subsequent volume for several reasons. For one, each new compilation of the original KODT books affords an opportunity not only to clean up typos and reflect on the past but also to revisit some of the early stories and answer the question, "What happened next?"

One of the principal complaints voiced about KODT #19, for example, was that despite the SuperHero-themed cover it contained only four pages of the Knights actually playing a SuperHero RPG. What were we thinking? We never thought we'd hear the end of that one. To make amends, we've included a brand spanking new nine page retro-KODT entitled "The Dark Knights Return" in this volume's bonus section. (*This strip takes place just a few weeks after the strip in #19*). Oh, and speaking of the bonus section, you'll also find the next installment of the "Bag War" saga continued from **Bundle of Trouble #6**. Will Barringer finally get what's coming to him?

Having just returned from the KODT live reading at **Origins**, we were a bit surprised at the number of requests from the audience for "The Evil Among Us". (*Which just so happens to appear in this volume of Bundle of Trouble*) Apparently Sara's stepping out of her *goody-two-shoes* role and into that of 'Evil Thorina' really struck a chord with many of our female fans. And although they were introduced in KODT #17, this Bundle contains three (*count 'em! Three!*) **Black Hands** strips which really begin to set up the group's dynamic — including Nitro's futile attempts to exert control over his players. Stevil's classic line, "I'm Evil — Don't trust me" says it all.

Although this volume of **Bundles of Trouble** contains some of my favorite stories, it is special to me for an entirely different reason. Let me explain....

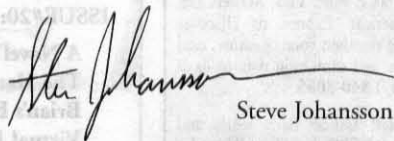
Up until a few weeks ago, your monthly serving of KODT has been published out of several "spare bedrooms" by a development team moonlighting from their day jobs (*only Jolly has had the good fortune to work on KODT full time these past four years*).

I am proud to announce, however, that as of this publication fellow D-Team member Brian Jelke and myself have retired from our engineering jobs to pursue a full time career with **KenzerCo**. Thanks to the overwhelming support of our readers (*you*) we have both attained every gamer's fantasy — professional gamers. Hoody Hoo!! (*Only Bob Herzog was upset to learn of our choice replying with a terse, "I don't think Dave Kenzer even looked at my resume!"*)

All of this, of course, is good news for KODT fans. This means we will have more time to devote to our product lines and writing strips. (*It also means Jolly can stop whining about not having anyone to talk to at the water cooler on his coffee breaks.*) It's been a fun ride and it just got better. There's going to be some exciting new things coming out of **KenzerCo** in the coming year. Again, we have you to thank.

You're the reason we're able to continue bringing out fun new products which [*we hope*] delight and amuse!

To all our readers — you guys (and girls) **RULE!**


Steve Johansson





KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table #19
"Heroes of the HackLeague"
Originally Published: May, 1998

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Knights of the Dinner Table™

"Heroes of the HackLeague"

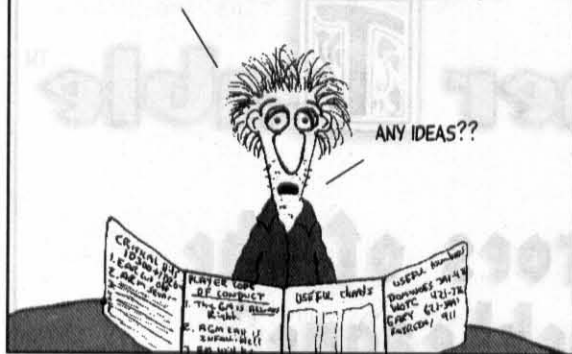
The KODT Development Team is
Jolly R. Blackburn, Brian Jelke,
Steve Johansson and David S. Kenzer
Cover Art by George and Jackie Vrbanic



Don't Go There

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
AND RICHARD BARTLETT

HEY GUYS, BEFORE YOU GO HOME, WE HAVE A LITTLE PROBLEM TO DISCUSS. I'M AFRAID WE CAN'T PLAY HERE NEXT THURSDAY. WE HAVE TO FIND SOME PLACE ELSE TO PLAY TEMPORARILY.



ANY IDEAS??

PLAY SOMEPLACE ELSE?? ARE YOU INSANE?? DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT TOOK ME TO TRAIN THIS SPOT FOR PROPER **DICE ROLLS**?? WHAT'S THE **BIG PROBLEM**?? WE PLAY HERE NEXT WEEK JUST LIKE WE ALWAYS DO!!!



BUT...BUT...

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?? YOU HAVE **ANOTHER GROUP** DON'T YOU?? WHO ARE THEY?? WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES??

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR NO **BUTS**!! WE PLAY **HERE**!!

LET'S NOT OVER REACT GUYS.

WILL YOU LET ME EXPLAIN?? MY GRANDPARENTS ARE VISITING NEXT WEEK AND MY PARENTS DON'T WANT **ANY** GAMING IN THE HOUSE WHILE THEY'RE HERE. SO, WE CAN'T USE THIS ROOM FOR OUR GAME. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER VENUE AND **THAT'S THAT**!!

PAPPY FELTON IS COMING TO VISIT?? HOW'S THE OLD MAN DOING?? I THOUGHT WE KILLED HIM THAT NIGHT.

YOUR GRANDPA IS SO KEWL!! HIS **DWARF NINJA** ROCKED.

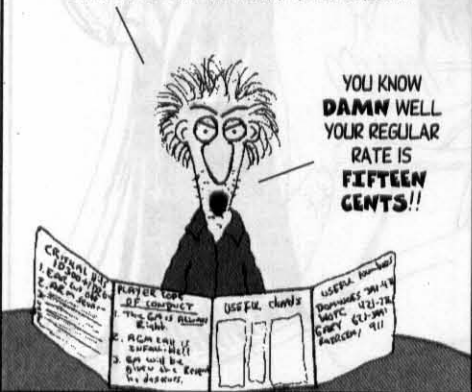
THE POOR MAN. WHEN HE ASKED FOR WE'D TEACH HIM HOW TO PLAY **HACKMASTER** I REALLY THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA. HOW WERE WE SUPPOSED TO KNOW IT WOULD TRIGGER A **FLASHBACK**??

DWARF NINJA?? HMMRRFFF, NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT THAT CHARACTER EXCEPT IT **BROKE** EVERY CONVENTION IN THE BOOK. A DWARF WITH FULL **MONK** ABILITIES?? TO TOP IT OFF **B.A.** LET HIM GET AWAY WITH USING A **LONG BOW**!! BUT I GUESS **BLOOD** IS THICKER THAN **THE RULES**!!!



OH NO! DON'T **EVEN** GO THERE, BRIAN. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KEPT **GOADING** HIM INTO EVERY SUSPECTED TRAP AND PIT!! THE MAN WENT THROUGH SIX CHARACTERS IN **ONE** EVENING. AND TO TOP IT ALL OFF YOU HAD THE **GALL** TO CHARGE HIM TWENTY FIVE CENTS FOR EACH NEW CHARACTER SHEET!!

YOU KNOW **DAMN WELL** YOUR REGULAR RATE IS **FIFTEEN CENTS**!!

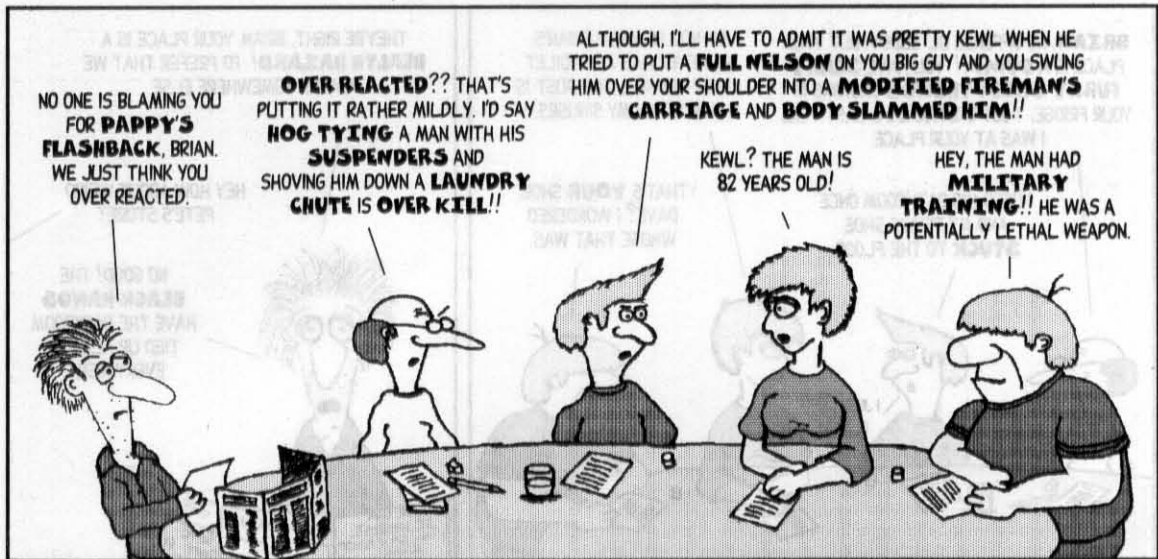


YEAH YOU **CHISELER**!! AND IT'S **YOUR** FAULT HE CAN'T PLAY WITH US ANYMORE AND IT'S **YOUR** FAULT WE GOTTA FIND SOMEPLACE ELSE TO PLAY NEXT WEEK. **I'M HOPPIN' MAD ABOUT IT**!!

YEAH, WE LIKED **PAPPY**!!

SHOVE IT IN YER DICEBAG!! FIFTEEN CENTS IS MY **CLUB RATE**!! PAPPY WASN'T AN OFFICIAL MEMBER OF THE **KNIGHTS** SO HE GETS MY **STREET RATE. TOUGH NOOGIES**!! AND HOW THE HELL IS IT **MY** FAULT HE CAN'T PLAY WITH US?? I CAN'T HELP IT HE HAD AN **IWO JIMA FLASHBACK**!! A MAN COMES AT ME SWINGING A CANE I **DEFEND MYSELF**!!! **PERIOD**!!!





NO ONE IS BLAMING YOU FOR **PAPPY'S FLASHBACK**, BRIAN. WE JUST THINK YOU OVER REACTED.

OVER REACTED?? THAT'S PUTTING IT RATHER MILDLY. I'D SAY **HOG TYING** A MAN WITH HIS **SUSPENDERS** AND SHOVING HIM DOWN A **LAUNDRY CRUTE** IS **OVER KILL!!**

ALTHOUGH, I'LL HAVE TO ADMIT IT WAS PRETTY KEWL. WHEN HE TRIED TO PUT A **FULL NELSON** ON YOU BIG GUY AND YOU SWUNG HIM OVER YOUR SHOULDER INTO A **MODIFIED FIREMAN'S CARRIAGE** AND **BODY SLAMMED HIM!!**

KEWL? THE MAN IS 82 YEARS OLD!

HEY, THE MAN HAD **MILITARY TRAINING!!** HE WAS A POTENTIALLY LETHAL WEAPON.



I'LL NEVER FORGET THE LOOK ON HIS FACE AS THEY SHOVED HIM INTO THAT AMBULANCE. HE JUST KEPT ASKIN' IF OUR FLAG HAD MADE IT UP THE HILL.

BRAWLING WITH AN 82 YEAR OLD MAN!! I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE YOU COULD BE SO HEARTLESS, BRIAN.

CAN I HELP IT IF THE MAN THOUGHT I WAS A **JAPANESE SNIPER??** I'M TELLIN' YA I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS IN PERIL. DON'T LET HIS AGE FOOL YOU. THE MAN PACKED A PRETTY MEAN **LEFT HOOK!!**



HEY NO ONE'S FAULTIN' YA FOR TAKIN' THE **OLD MAN** DOWN. I THINK WE ALL UNDERSTOOD THAT, BUT WHEN A MAN CRAWLS FROM THE ROOM THE FIGHT'S OVER YOU DON'T DRAG HIM BACK IN BY HIS ANKLES FOR MORE.

GOOD POINT, DAVE. IT'S NOT LIKE **PAPPY** TOUCHED YOUR DICE OR ANYTHING. HE WAS JUST A LITTLE OBNOXIOUS.

DON'T SIT THERE AND TRY TO JUSTIFY IT, BRIAN. YOU REALLY DISAPPOINT ME.

HEY, I WAS BLINDED WITH RAGE. I CHIPPED IN ON HIS ARTIFICIAL HIP DIDN'T I?



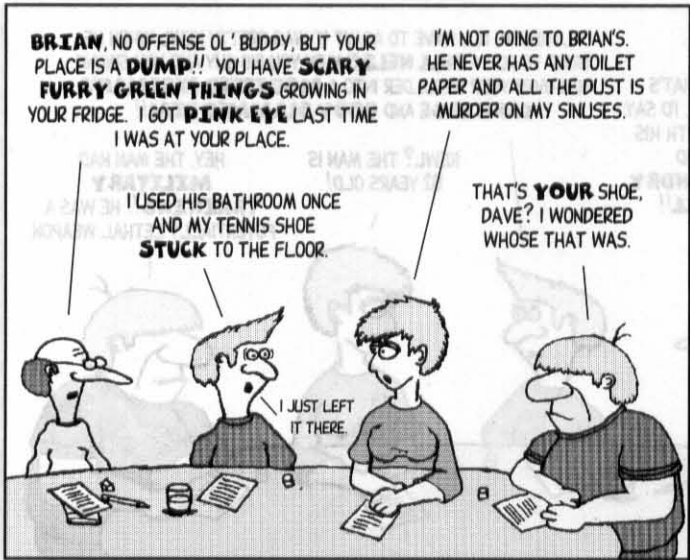
THE POINT IS, AFTER **PAPPY'S "ACCIDENT"** WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO GAME IN THE HOUSE WHILE HE'S VISITING. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE THE GAME TO SOMEONE ELSE'S TABLE NEXT WEEK.

WE CAN'T USE MY PLACE. **NO WAY!!** MY DAD THINKS YOU GUYS ARE THE **SPAWN OF SATAN**. HE SAID IF HE EVER HEARD THE RATTLE OF DICE IN OUR HOUSE AGAIN THEY'D BE LOCKIN' HIS ASS UP FOR **HOMICIDE!!**

I'D VOLUNTEER MY CRIB BUT I GOT RID OF MY TABLE TO MAKE ROOM FOR MY **FOOS BALL GAME**. AND...UH...I AIN'T GOT NO CHAIRS.

GEE. MY TABLE IS TOO SMALL AND...UH...ER. YOU DON'T HAVE CHAIRS??

NO PROBLEMO! I'VE BEEN BEGGIN' YOU GUYS TO COME OVER TO MY PLACE. IT'LL BE GREAT TO HAVE ALL MY **MANUALS** WITHIN **ARM'S REACH** FOR ONCE.



BRIAN, NO OFFENSE OL' BUDDY, BUT YOUR PLACE IS A **DUMP!!** YOU HAVE **SCARY FURRY GREEN THINGS** GROWING IN YOUR FRIDGE. I GOT **PINK EYE** LAST TIME I WAS AT YOUR PLACE.

I'M NOT GOING TO BRIAN'S. HE NEVER HAS ANY TOILET PAPER AND ALL THE DUST IS MURDER ON MY SINUSES.

I USED HIS BATHROOM ONCE AND MY TENNIS SHOE **STUCK** TO THE FLOOR.

THAT'S **YOUR SHOE**, DAVE? I WONDERED WHOSE THAT WAS.

I JUST LEFT IT THERE.



THEY'RE RIGHT, BRIAN. YOUR PLACE IS A **HEALTH HAZARD!** I'D PREFER THAT WE PLAYED SOMEWHERE ELSE.

HEY HOW ABOUT WEIRD PETE'S STORE?

NO GOOD! THE **BLACK HANDS** HAVE THE BACKROOM TIED UP ALMOST EVERY NIGHT.



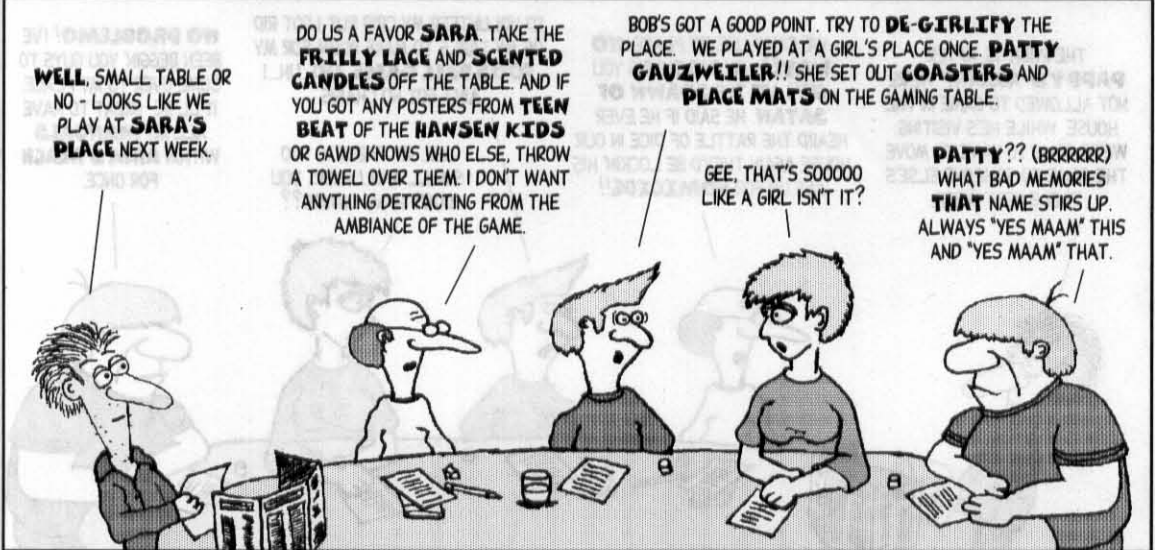
THIS BLOWS BIG TIME!! WE GOT NO PLACE TO GO??

I SUPPOSE WE COULD JUST **SKIP** NEXT WEEK'S GAME.

W-W-WHAT?? CANCEL THE GAME?? **ARE YOU MAD??** WHAT THE HELL'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOU SEEM PRETTY EAGER TO THROW IN THE TOWEL. YOU'RE OUR **GAME MASTER!!** OUR LEADER!! **REMEMBER??** YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SET THE EXAMPLE. IT'S YOUR JOB TO RALLY THE TROOPS WHEN MORALE IS LOW AND FORGE AHEAD.

WELL...I SUPPOSE WE COULD SQUEEZE IN AROUND MY TABLE AND MAKE DO.

BEAUTIFULLY PUT, BOB!!



WELL, SMALL TABLE OR NO - LOOKS LIKE WE PLAY AT **SARA'S PLACE** NEXT WEEK.

DO US A FAVOR **SARA**. TAKE THE **FRILLY LACE** AND **SCENTED CANDLES** OFF THE TABLE. AND IF YOU GOT ANY POSTERS FROM **TEEN BEAT** OF THE **HANSEN KIDS** OR GAWD KNOWS WHO ELSE, THROW A TOWEL OVER THEM. I DON'T WANT ANYTHING DETRACTING FROM THE AMBIANCE OF THE GAME.

BOB'S GOT A GOOD POINT. TRY TO **DE-GIRLIFY** THE PLACE. WE PLAYED AT A GIRL'S PLACE ONCE. **PATTY GAUZEWEILER!!** SHE SET OUT **COASTERS** AND **PLACE MATS** ON THE GAMING TABLE.

GEE, THAT'S SOOOOONE LIKE A GIRL ISN'T IT?

PATTY?? (BRRRRRR) WHAT BAD MEMORIES THAT NAME STIRS UP. ALWAYS "YES MAAM" THIS AND "YES MAAM" THAT.

Note: There's a running joke in the company about there never being any toilet paper at my house. (This was back in my days as a bachelor of course). So... somebody snuck in the bit about Brian's bathroom above prior to going to press. -- Jolly



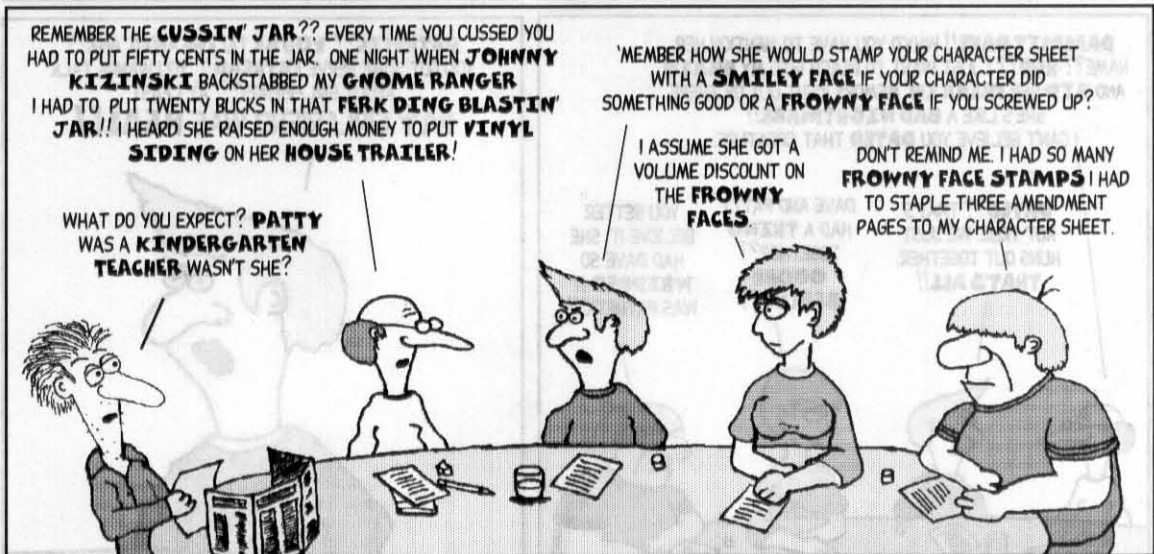
PATTY GAUZWEILER!!! DON'T EVEN MENTION THAT NAME IN THIS **SACRED PLACE**. REMEMBER WHEN SHE DOCKED ME **500 EXPERIENCE POINTS** FOR LEAVING THE TOILET SEAT UP??

AND ONCE WHEN **BRIAN** THREW A TWENTY-SIDER AT ME, SHE MADE HIM STAND IN THE **TIME OUT CORNER** FOR TWENTY MINUTES.

HMMMN. TIME OUT CORNER...

SHE NEVER LIKED ME. SEEMED LIKE I WAS ALWAYS GETTING SENT TO THE **TIME OUT CORNER** FOR ONE STUPID REASON OR ANOTHER.

SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE



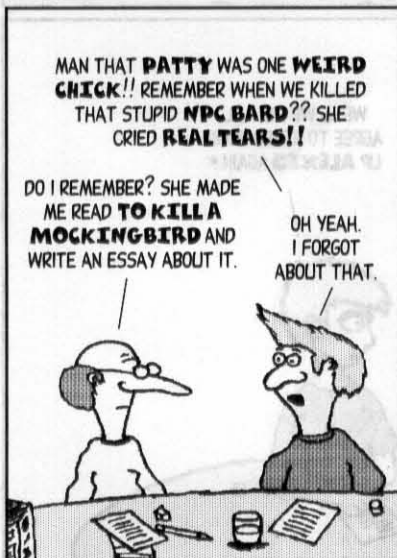
REMEMBER THE **CUSSIN' JAR**?? EVERY TIME YOU CUSS'D YOU HAD TO PUT FIFTY CENTS IN THE JAR. ONE NIGHT WHEN **JOHNNY KIZINSKI** BACKSTABBED MY **GNOME RANGER** I HAD TO PUT TWENTY BUCKS IN THAT **FERK DING BLASTIN' JAR!!** I HEARD SHE RAISED ENOUGH MONEY TO PUT **VINYL SIDING** ON HER **HOUSE TRAILER!**

'MEMBER HOW SHE WOULD STAMP YOUR CHARACTER SHEET WITH A **SMILEY FACE** IF YOUR CHARACTER DID SOMETHING GOOD OR A **FROWNY FACE** IF YOU SCREWED UP?

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? **PATTY** WAS A **KINDERGARTEN TEACHER**. WASN'T SHE?

I ASSUME SHE GOT A VOLUME DISCOUNT ON THE **FROWNY FACES**.

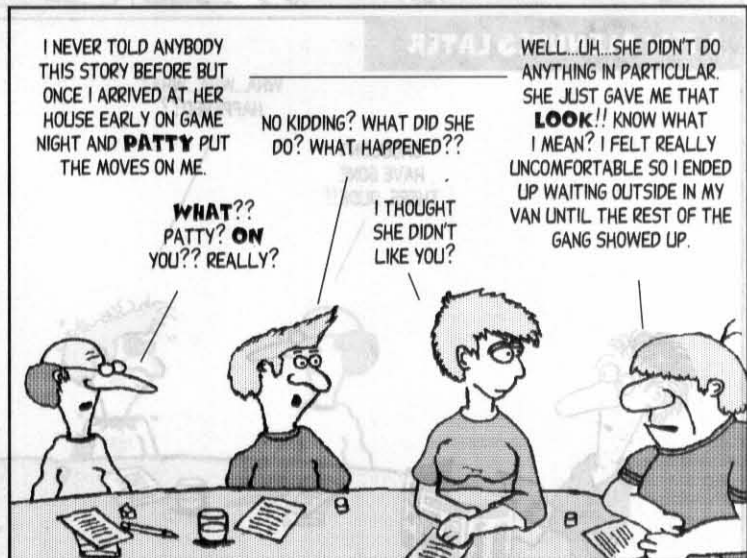
DON'T REMIND ME. I HAD SO MANY **FROWNY FACE STAMPS** I HAD TO STAPLE THREE AMENDMENT PAGES TO MY CHARACTER SHEET.



MAN THAT **PATTY** WAS ONE **WEIRD CHICK!!** REMEMBER WHEN WE KILLED THAT STUPID **NPC BARD??** SHE CRIED **REAL TEARS!!**

DO I REMEMBER? SHE MADE ME READ **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD** AND WRITE AN ESSAY ABOUT IT.

OH YEAH. I FORGOT ABOUT THAT.



I NEVER TOLD ANYBODY THIS STORY BEFORE BUT ONCE I ARRIVED AT HER HOUSE EARLY ON GAME NIGHT AND **PATTY** PUT THE MOVES ON ME.

NO KIDDING? WHAT DID SHE DO? WHAT HAPPENED??

WHAT?? PATTY?? **ON** YOU?? REALLY?

I THOUGHT SHE DIDN'T LIKE YOU?

WELL...UH...SHE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR. SHE JUST GAVE ME THAT **LOOK!!** KNOW WHAT I MEAN? I FELT REALLY UNCOMFORTABLE SO I ENDED UP WAITING OUTSIDE IN MY VAN UNTIL THE REST OF THE GANG SHOWED UP.



ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE TIME YOU SHOWED UP FOUR HOURS EARLY, UNANNOUNCED SO YOU COULD WATCH THE **BRISCO COUNTY JR. MARATHON** ON HER CABLE??

YEAH - **SO?** WHAT'S YOUR POINT? SHE STILL GAVE ME A **FUNNY LOOK!!**

AND WEREN'T YOU WEARING YOUR **GREEN LANTERN T-SHIRT** AND **FLIP FLOPS??**

THEY WEREN'T **FLIP FLOPS** THEY WERE **ORTHOPEDIC SANDALS!!**



A FEMALE **GAMEMASTER**. EH?? I SURE WISH I COULD HAVE MET **PATTY**. I BET WE'D HAVE LOT'S TO TALK ABOUT.



DAMMIT DAVE!! WHY'D YOU HAVE TO MENTION HER NAME?? **HUH??** I JUST WANT TO REACH INTO MY **BRAIN** AND **RIP HER FREAKIN' MEMORY** RIGHT OUT OF THERE. SHE'S LIKE A **BAD NIGHTMARE!!** I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU **DATED** THAT CREATURE.

DATED?? THAT'S NOT TRUE. WE JUST HUNG OUT TOGETHER. **THAT'S ALL!!**

DAVE AND PATTY HAD A **THING** TOGETHER?? **OOOH REALLY??**

YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT. SHE HAD DAVE SO **WHIPPED** IT WAS PATHETIC!!



PATHETIC?? YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ME?? YOU GOT SOME NERVE **FATHEAD!!** YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT GIRLFRIENDS?? AT LEAST **MY GIRLFRIEND WAS REAL!!**

A FEW MINUTES LATER....



WHA...WHA...WHAT HAPPENED??

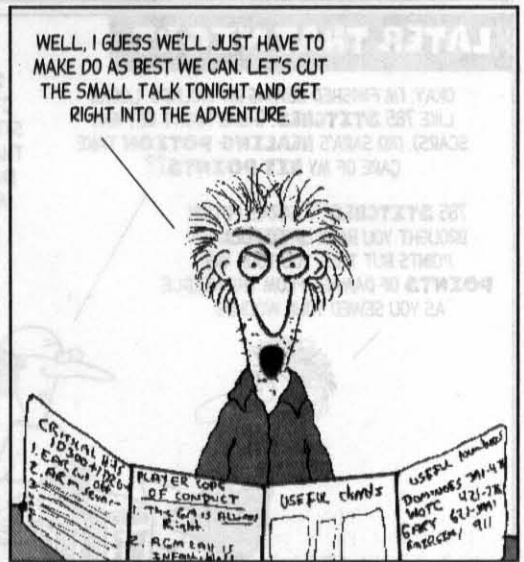
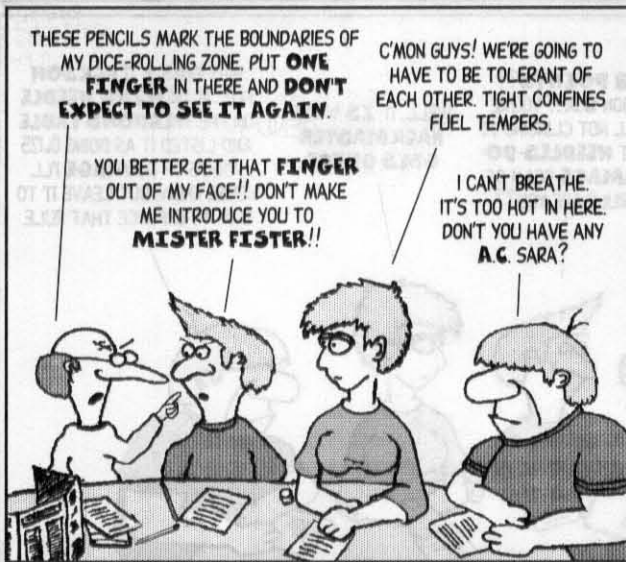
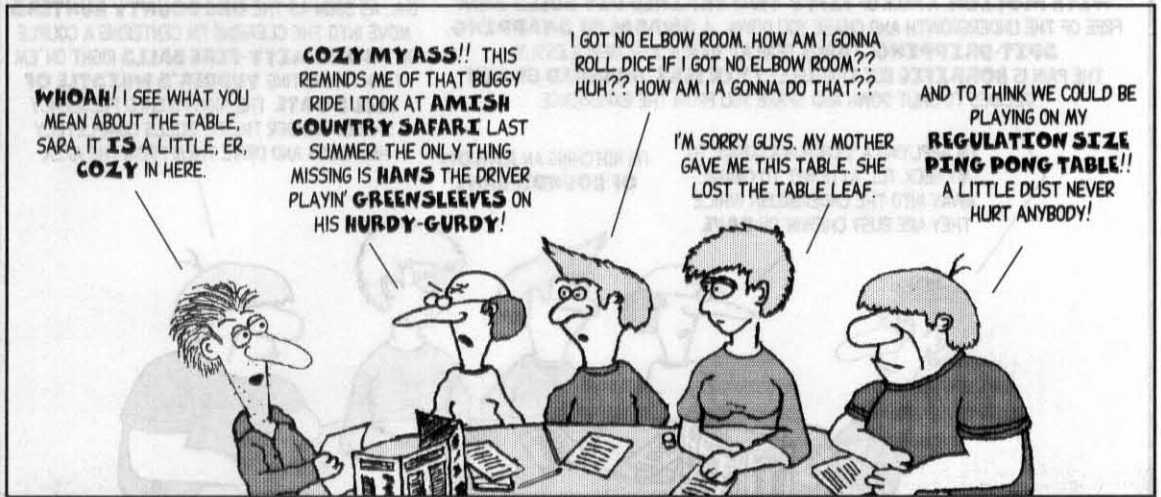
SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE THERE, DUDE!!

WELL WE DID ALL AGREE TO NEVER BRING UP **ALEXIS** AGAIN.*

* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Two [KODT #6] "The Great Intervention"

Dances with PitBulls

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



This strip was based on a real adventure. A player noticed war dogs on the price lists and insisted on buying a dozen of them. I'd retell the story here but to be honest the outcome was pretty much the same as what happens in the strip. — Jolly

SORRY DAVE, JUST AS YOU BREAK INTO A GOOD STRIDE THE THICKET **EXPLODES WITH MOTION**. A PACK OF **FIFTY-TWO TRAINED PIT BULLS** BREAK FREE OF THE UNDERGROWTH AND CHASE YOU DOWN. A **SWARM OF SNAPPING, SPIT-DRIPPING JAWS** TEAR AT YOUR FLESH MERCILESSLY. THE PAIN IS **HORRIFIC** BUT THANKFULLY YOUR **FEAR-MUDDLED BRAIN** DECIDES TO SHUT DOWN AND SPARE YOU FROM THE EXPERIENCE.

B.A., AS SOON AS THE **ORC BOUNTY HUNTERS** MOVE INTO THE CLEARING I'M CENTERING A COUPLE OF **PROXIMITY-FIRE BALLS** RIGHT ON 'EM. THEN I'M CASTING **YUDDER'S WHISTLE OF HELL'S GATE**. THE HIGH PITCHED FREQUENCY SHOULD RENDER THE PIT BULLS COMPLETELY HELPLESS AND DRIVE THEM FROM THE AREA.

I'M APPLYING A **TOURNIQUET** TO MY NECK. I'LL ATTEMPT TO CRAWL AWAY INTO THE UNDERBRUSH WHILE THEY ARE BUSY CHEWIN' ON DAVE.

I'M NOTCHING AN **ARROW OF HOUND'S BANE!**



LATER THAT NIGHT

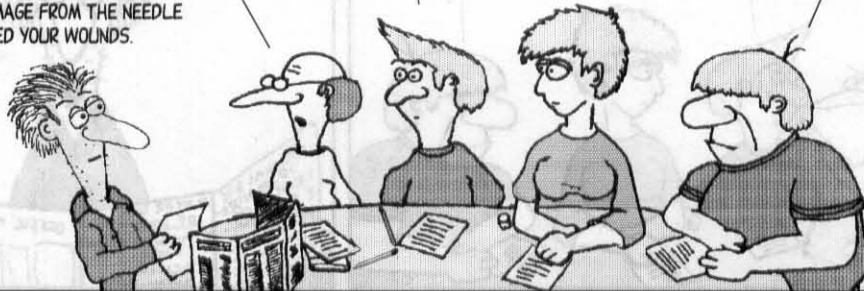
OKAY, I'M FINISHED SEWING MY WOUNDS. LOOKS LIKE 785 **STITCHES**. (HOPE I DON'T GET ANY SCARS). DID SARA'S **HEALING POTION** TAKE CARE OF MY **HIT POINTS**??

785 **STITCHES**?? SARA'S POTION BROUGHT YOU BACK UP TO FULL HIT POINTS BUT THEN YOU TOOK **98 POINTS** OF DAMAGE FROM THE NEEDLE AS YOU SEWED YOUR WOUNDS.

98 POINTS?? C'MON B.A.!! YOU'RE STILL NOT CLINGING TO THAT **NEEDLES-DO-DAMAGE** SCAM OF A RULE ARE YOU??

WELL, IT **IS** IN THE **HACKMASTER GM'S GUIDE**.

WHY **GARY JACKSON** PUT A **SEWING NEEDLE** ON THE **WEAPONS TABLE** AND LISTED IT AS DOING 0.125 POINTS OF **DAMAGE** I'LL NEVER KNOW. BUT LEAVE IT TO **B.A.** TO ENFORCE THAT RULE.



I CAN'T BELIEVE **GILEAD** PUT A PRICE ON OUR HEADS. THOSE **ORC BOUNTY HUNTERS** ARE RELENTLESS!!

WHY WOULDN'T THEY BE? **GILEAD'S BOUNTY** IS BEING MATCHED BY **ANK-TANG** AND THE **SOUTHERN ORC LEAGUE**

HEY SARA, THIS PLACE REALLY AIN'T AS BAD AS I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE. IT SMELLS LIKE PINE TREES.

UH, THANKS DAVE. IT'S CALLED AIR FRESHENER. I HOPE I DIDN'T OVER DO IT. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO PUT A LITTLE EXTRA OUT SINCE I KNEW WE'D BE SO CRAMPED FOR SPACE.

AIR FRESHENER?? THANK GOODNESS. I JUST ASSUMED YOU WERE WEARING SOME KIND'A CHEAP PERFUME.



When Bob says, "I'm applying a tourniquet to my neck", I nearly shot coke out my nose the first time I read that. I love that line. -Brian

I SAW THAT!! YOU ROLL THAT PENCIL ANOTHER 1/6TH OF ITS CIRCUMFERENCE AND YOU'LL WAKE UP IN THE **HOSPITAL!**

I DIDN'T MOVE IT. THE TABLE ROCKS WHEN I TRY TO BREATHE!!

SOMEONE MUST HAVE KICKED THE DOMINO OUT FROM UNDER THE BAD LEG.



YOU GUYS MAY WANT TO THINK ABOUT MOVING ON!! WORD IS SPREADING ON THE STREET THAT SEVERAL **ORC BANDS** HAVE BEEN SEEN IN THE AREA. YOU CAN BET YOUR BOTTOM DOLLAR THAT THEY ARE **BOUNTY HUNTERS** CLOSING IN ON YOU.

I DON'T KNOW HOW IT GOT STARTED BUT I'M TIRED OF RUNNING. **KNUCKLES** NEVER RAN FROM A FIGHT IN HIS LIFE. I THINK WE SHOULD STAND OUR GROUND AND FIGHT IT OUT **HERE!!**

THE DWARF IS RIGHT!! WE'RE TIRED OF GETTIN' OUR BUTTS KICKED BY A BUNCH OF NO ACCOUNT **ORC-SCUM!!** IT'S ABOUT TIME WE SHOWED 'EM WHAT WE'RE MADE OF!!

THE ORCS AREN'T THE PROBLEM - IT'S THOSE **DAMNED PIT BULLS!!**



WELL, DON'T EXPECT ANY HELP FROM THE LOCAL TOWNSFOLK. THE TOWN IS TOO FAR FROM **IMPERIAL PATROLS**. THEY WOULD FEAR **ORC REPRISALS!**

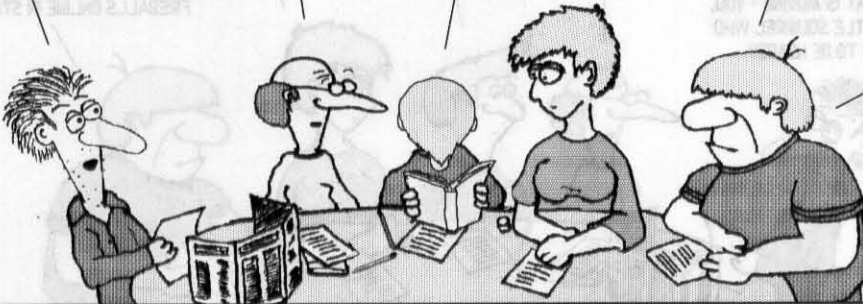
DAVE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?? WE AIN'T GOT TIME FOR READING BOOKS.

I JUST REMEMBERED. **PIT BULLS** ARE LISTED ON THE **STANDARD EQUIPMENT LISTS!!** CHECK THIS OUT - THEY ONLY COST **FIVE SILVER PIECES EACH!!** AND THE **AVAILABILITY IS 8D100** IN ANY MEDIUM-SIZED TOWN OR VILLAGE.

THAT HAS TO BE A **TYPO!!**

TYP0 - SHMYPO!! WITHOUT ANY OFFICIAL **ERRATA SHEET** AMENDING OR RESCINDING IT - **IT'S OFFICIAL!!**

CRY HAVOC!! AND LET LOOSE THE **DOGS OF WAR!!** **HOODY FRICKIN' HOO!!**



HOLD ON GUYS - I KNOW WHAT YER THINKING BUT IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. YOU BETTER CHECK THAT PRICE LIST AGAIN. **FIVE SILVER PIECES** IS FOR AN **UNTRAINED PIT BULL**. A FULLY TRAINED PIT BULL IS **500 GOLD PIECES!!** BESIDES THERE IS A MINIMUM SIX-WEEK **BONDING PERIOD** BETWEEN DOG AND TRAINER IN ORDER TO EARN THE ANIMAL'S **LOYALTY**.

GIVE ME A BREAK, HUH? WE DON'T WANT 'EM TO FETCH THE NEWSPAPER OR MAKE LIKE **LASSIE!!** PIT BULLS WERE BRED TO ATTACK AND INFLICT DAMAGE. IT COMES NATURAL TO THEM. **AIN'T NO TRAINING ABOUT IT!!**

I'M BUYING TWO HUNDRED FOR MYSELF.

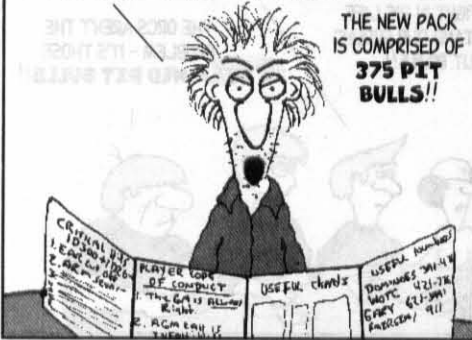
GUESS I'LL BUY A FEW HUNDRED AS WELL. WE BETTER STOCK UP SOME **DOGGY CHOW** WHILE WE'RE AT IT.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

THE **ALPHA-MALE** FROM DAVE'S **PIT BULL PACK** RIPS THE **ENTRAILS** OUT OF **BRIAN'S ALPHA-MALE** THUS ESTABLISHING LEADERSHIP OVER THE **COMBINED PACK**!! AFTER LOSING AN ADDITIONAL 15 DOGS DUE TO THE READJUSTMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE **NEW PECKING ORDER**.

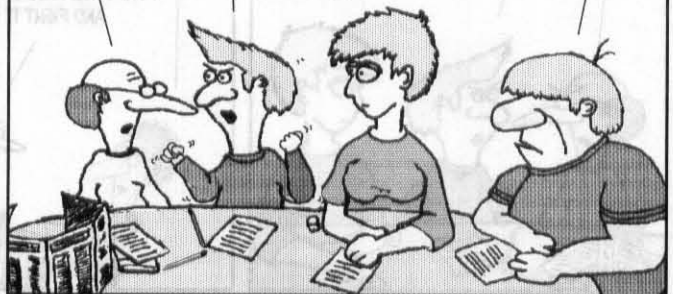
THE NEW PACK IS COMPRISED OF **375 PIT BULLS**!!



HOODY KALA-FRAGILUS HOO!! DID YOU SEE THAT?? MY **DOGS** ARE **KICKIN' ASS** AND **TAKIN' NAMES**!! AND HELL, THEY'RE DOING IT ALL ON THEIR OWN. I DON'T EVEN HAVE TO GIVE THEM ORDERS.

GOOD GAWD THEY'RE **NASTY VARMINTS**!! YOU SURE YOU CAN CONTROL THEM?

CONTROL THEM?? YOU DONT PUT A CHAIN ON **BLIND RAGE**!! THEY CAN'T EVEN GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER.



A WEE LITTLE BIT LATER..

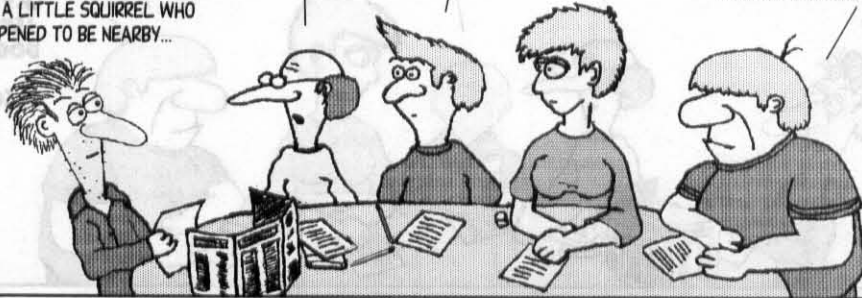
OKAY BOB, AS YOU ARE MOUNTING YOUR HORSE, ONE OF THE **PIT BULLS** SPOOKS IT. THE HORSE REARS UP ON ITS HIND LEGS AND YOU TUMBLE TO THE GROUND. SENSING THE ANIMAL'S FEAR THE **PIT BULL PACK** EXPLODES WITH **BLOOD LUST**. THEY DESCEND UPON ANYTHING THAT IS MOVING - YOU, YOUR HORSE, A LITTLE SQUIRREL WHO JUST HAPPENED TO BE NEARBY...

WHAT THE??
THEY'RE ATTACKING ME??

DAMMIT BOB!! NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE!! YOU'VE SENT THEM INTO A FRENZY.

I'M SURE I HEAR THE COMMOTION FROM MY GUARD POST. I'LL HEAD FOR THE AREA AS QUICKLY AS I CAN WHILE READING MY BOW.

I'M HEADING THAT WAY AS WELL. UNTIL I CAN PROPERLY ASSESS THE TACTICAL SITUATION I'LL HAVE A COUPLE OF FIREBALLS ONLINE IN STANDBY!



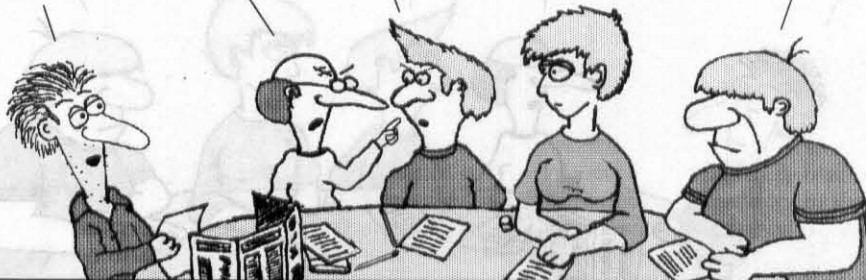
CALL OFF YOUR FREAKIN' DOGS!! YOU HEAR ME??

AS **SARA** AND **BRIAN** APPROACH ALL YOU CAN SEE IS A **WRITHING MASS** OF DOGS CENTERED ON **BOB** AND HIS HORSE.

ALL RIGHT, **ALL RIGHT**!! DON'T GET YOUR **DICEBAG** ALL IN A **WAD**!! B.A. I'M BLOWING MY **DOG WHISTLE** AND CALLING THEM BACK.

OH DEAR, IF I SHOOT INTO THE PACK I MIGHT HIT BOB BY MISTAKE.

IF THE WHISTLE DOESN'T WORK I'M LETTIN' LOOSE THESE **FIREBALLS**!! WE CAN ALWAYS **SIFT** BOB OUT FROM THE ASHES AND HAVE HIM **RAISED**.



IT TAKES SEVERAL **GOOD** BLASTS FROM YOUR WHISTLE BEFORE THE DOGS SHOW ANY REACTION, DAVE. SUDDENLY THEY CEASE **MAULING** BOB AND AN **ERY** SILENCE SETS IN AS THEY TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO YOU. YOU FEEL HUNDREDS OF PAIRS OF **SOULLESS BLACK EYES** STARING AT YOU WITH INTENSE CURIOSITY FOR SEVERAL LONG MOMENTS. THEN, AS IF ON CUE, THEY BEGIN RUNNING TOWARD YOU AS IF THE PACK WERE A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL!!

WHEN!!! YOU SEE THERE? I KNEW THE WHISTLE WOULD COME IN HANDY. SORRY ABOUT THAT BOB - WITH A LITTLE MORE TRAINING I'M SURE THEY'LL COME TO RECOGNIZE YOU AS A FRIEND. THEN WE CAN...

DAVE AS THE PACK DRAWS NEAR YOU ARE **ALARMED** BY THE **CRESCENDO** OF **SNARLS AND GROWLS** THAT PRECEDES THEM. YOUR INSTINCTS TELL YOU TO **RUN FOR YOUR LIFE** BUT SADLY, IT'S TOO LATE. YOU ARE ENGLUFED BY THE PACK AS HUNDREDS OF SEEKING, GRASPING FANGS TEAR INTO YOUR FLESH AND PULL YOU TO THE GROUND.

EVER NOTICE THAT B.A.'S **FLAVOR TEXT** SWELLS IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO HOW MUCH ONE OF OUR CHARACTERS IS GETTING SCREWED?



I NEED A DAMAGE REPORT!!

WELL FORTUNATELY BOB, YOU WERE WEARING A HELMET AND BREAST PLATE SO YOU DIDN'T TAKE MUCH DAMAGE TO THE HEAD OR ABDOMEN. UNFORTUNATELY THE DOGS WERE ABLE TO RIP OFF YOUR ARMS AND ONE REMAINING LEG. FROM YOUR LIMITED VANTAGE POINT YOU CAN SEE YOUR SHREDDED LIMBS SCATTERED ABOUT YOU IN THE LEAVES AND GRASS.

GAAAAA!! THAT'S NOT FAIR!!! **WIPE THAT STUPID SMIRK OFF YER FACE!!**

I'M BLOWIN' THE WHISTLE AGAIN. DO THEY REACT??

YES THEY DO!! IT SEEMS TO **INTENSIFY** THEIR **SAVAGE ATTACK**. I GUESS I'LL STAND AT A DISTANCE AND FIRE AS MANY ARROWS INTO THE PACK AS I CAN.

I'M LETTIN' LOOSE MY **FIREBALLS** AND BRINGING A COUPLE OF **SIDE WINDERS** UP.



AFTER THE BATTLE..

OKAY BRIAN, YOU FIND **DAVE'S** MISSING HAND IN THE BELLY OF THE NEXT DOG YOU CUT OPEN THAT ACCOUNTS FOR ALL THE MISSING BODY PARTS.

BOB, MY BARBARIAN MADE A SADDLE FRAME TO HOLD YOUR TORSO. YOU CAN RIDE DAVE'S HORSE. I'LL PUT THE REINS IN YOUR TEETH.

YOU OWE ME **BIG TIME**, GUYS. OKAY, B.A.. I THROW THE HAND IN THE **MEAT-BARROW** WITH THE OTHER PARTS. I GUESS WE CAN SORT BOB'S PARTS FROM DAVE'S WHEN WE GET TO THE **TEMPLE OF LUVIA**.

GEE, THANKS SARA.

CLOVER-FLAX IS A GOOD HORSE.



AS YOU ARE PREPARING TO LEAVE THE CAMPSITE YOU NOTICE MOVEMENT NEAR THE FOREST'S EDGE. THERE, STANDING **PROUD** AND **DEFIANT** IS THE **ALPHA-MALE PIT BULL!** HE APPARENTLY ESCAPED DURING THE BATTLE.

WHAT'S HE DOING?? IS HE ATTACKING??

OH THIS IS BAD! THIS IS **VERY** BAD.

I'LL FIRE AN ARROW - INTENTIONALLY MISSING HIM IN AN ATTEMPT TO DRIVE HIM OFF.

I WONDER WHAT HE WANTS?? IS THERE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT THIS DOG, B.A.??



NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THIS DOG HAS AN AURA OF LEADERSHIP ABOUT HIM. HE SEEMS KEENLY INTELLIGENT. HIS DARK EYES STUDY YOU JUST AS A **GREAT WARRIOR** STUDIES A **WORTHY ADVERSARY** BEFORE BATTLE. YET, THERE'S A HINT OF PLEADING IN HIS DEAMEOR WITH THE FAINTEST TINGE OF REGRET. IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE WERE SORRY. STANDING THERE ALONE, WITHOUT A PACK TO LEAD OR A MASTER TO FOLLOW YOU FEEL A SENSE OF **PITY** FOR HIM!!!

RUN AWAY!! IT'S A TRAP!!

BOB'S RIGHT. THIS HAS SO MANY **RED FLAGS** IT LOOKS LIKE THE **KREMLIN ON MAYDAY!!**



I THINK THEY MAY BE RIGHT, BRIAN. **B.A.** IS PUSHING ALL MY BUTTONS. NOTHING I'D LIKE MORE THAN TO SPARE THE ANIMAL'S LIFE BUT IT SMELLS LIKE A TRAP.

LET'S NOT BE HASTY. I THINK THERE MAY BE SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THIS DOG. OKAY, I SHOW THE DOG MY EMPTY OUTSTRETCHED PALMS. I'LL SLOWLY APPROACH THE ANIMAL WHILE REASSURING HIM WITH A FRIENDLY, GENTLE VOICE. "NICE DOGGY-DOGGY!! GOOD DOGGY-DOGGY!!"



THE DOG IS ENCOURAGED BY YOUR WORDS AND GESTURES. HE BARKS AND PLAYFULLY SPINS IN A CIRCLE IN AN ALMOST **PUPPY-LIKE** FASHION.

OOOOOOOOO, ISN'T THAT SO PRECIOUS? HE CERTAINLY SEEMS FRIENDLY.

OOOOO, MORE RED FLAGS!!

THIS IS GOING TO BE BAD.

YA SEE? I'M WINNING HIS CONFIDENCE. I'LL HAVE HIM EATING OUT OF MY HAND.



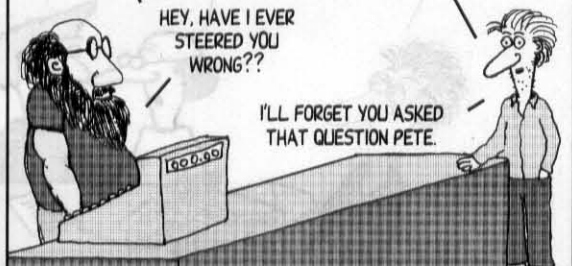
THE NEXT DAY..

HAR HAR!! YOU MANAGED TO **KILL BRIAN** WITH THE OLD **LOST PUPPY** ROUTINE?? **HAR HAR!!** THAT'S A HOOT!! I CAN'T WAIT TO **RAZZ** HIM ABOUT IT WHEN HE COMES IN.

I'M TELLIN' YA 'OO.39: **PUTTING SPICE BACK IN YOUR FLAVOR TEXT** IS THE BEST DAMN **GAME MASTER SELF HELP** BOOK I'VE EVER PURCHASED. THANKS FOR THE TIP.

HEY, HAVE I EVER STEERED YOU WRONG??

I'LL FORGET YOU ASKED THAT QUESTION PETE.



Got Yer Number

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

I'M SITTIN' HERE LOOKIN' AT A BUNCH OF **LOSERS!!** YOU GUYS MISSED OUT. YOU SHOULD HAVE GONE TO **WEIRD PETE'S MIDNIGHT GAME AUCTION** SATURDAY NIGHT.

I STOPPED GOING TO THOSE THINGS MONTHS AGO. IT'S JUST AN EXCUSE FOR **PETE** TO UNLOAD CRAP HE CAN'T SELL IN HIS STORE. A MAN CAN ONLY BUY SO MANY **SPELLJACKED** STARTER DECKS FOR A BUCK BEFORE THE THRILL WEARS OFF.

THERE'S AN UGLY RUMOR THAT **WEIRD PETE** HIRES CERTAIN **LOW LIVES** TO SIT IN THE AUDIENCE AND DRIVE THE BIDS UP.

LOW LIVES?? HEY, THREE PERCENT COMMISSION IS HARD TO TURN DOWN.



HA HA!!! PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF!! **BEHOLD!!!** THIS LITTLE BEAUTY CAME UP FOR AUCTION LAST SATURDAY. **GARY JACKSON'S BUSINESS CARD** WITH HIS **AUTOGRAPH** ON THE BACK!!

HOLY MOLY!!! THE HOLY GRAIL OF ALL AUTOGRAPHS!! HOW THE HELL DID THAT TURN UP AT A LOCAL AUCTION???

APPARENTLY **EARL SLACKMOZER** BLEW A HARD DRIVE AND NEEDED TO RAISE SOME QUICK CASH. HE DUMPED ALL KINDS OF KEWL CRAP IN THE AUCTION BUT **THIS** WAS THE REAL GEM.

GOOD FOR YOU BOB. IT SHOULD MAKE AN EXCELLENT INVESTMENT SINCE **GARY JACKSON** HAS REFUSED TO GIVE AUTOGRAPHS SINCE 1986.

I'LL SAY!! HIS SIGNATURE IS GOING FOR **FIFTY BUCKS** ON THE ALT.HACKMASTER FANDOM NEWSGROUP.

GARY JACKSON? REALLY?



WELL I PAID A LITTLE MORE THAN THAT. SOME JERK KEPT BIDDING AGAINST ME. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHO HE WAS UP AGAINST. WHEN I SEE SOMETHING I WANT - **I GET IT!!** BESIDES, I'M SURE IT WILL GO UP IN VALUE. ESPECIALLY IF **GARY** KICKS THE BUCKET OR SOMETHING. YOU NEVER KNOW.

WOW!! THE **GRAND MASTER OF GAMING** SIGNED THIS. HE ACTUALLY HELD **THIS** CARD IN HIS HAND.

YOU SHOULD GET IT FRAMED BOB AND PUT IT ON YOUR WALL. YOU REALLY GOT SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF THERE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE **EARL** WOULD LET SOMETHING LIKE THAT GO FROM HIS COLLECTION.

OH WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF HE GOT HIT BY A TRUCK? YOU COULD REALLY CASH IN. (SHEESH).





OKAY HERO, LET ME HAVE THE CARD BACK. IF YOU STARE AT IT ANY HARDER YOU'RE GONNA TAKE THE INK OFF.

WHOAH!! DUDE DID YOU TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THIS BUSINESS CARD??



OF COURSE I LOOKED AT IT. IT'S AN **OFFICIAL HARDEIGHT ENTERPRISES BIZ CARD**. EVERYTHING IS KOSHER!!

LOOK IT!! HIS HOME PHONE NUMBER IS ON HERE. RIGHT THERE!! THE GAWDFATHER OF GAMING!!! WE...WE...COULD CALL HIM ANYTIME WE WANTED TO.

HIS HOME PHONE??

MOTHER OF BLESSED DICE THROWS!! YOU'VE STRUCK GOLD, BOBBY BOY!!



DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH SOME FANS WOULD PAY TO GET THAT PHONE NUMBER?? IT'S LIKE A KEY TO **GARY'S FRONT DOOR!!** CALL THE MAN DIRECT AND TALK TO HIM **ONE-ON-ONE!!** PITCH HIM ON YOUR GAME DESIGN IDEAS! SQUID FREE PRODUCT FROM HIM!!

THE POSSIBILITIES BOGGLE THE MIND!!



HEY, LET'S CALL HIM **RIGHT NOW** AND TALK TO HIM AND STUFF. IT WOULD BE KEWL TO...**GAAA!!!!**

IT WOULD BE NICE TO TALK TO **GARY** BUT...INVADE THE MAN'S PRIVACY?? IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE A GOOD IDEA.

GIVE ME THAT DAMN CARD!!

WHOOSH!!



HELL NO YOU DON'T INVADE THE MAN'S PRIVACY. WHAT DO YOU TAKE ME FOR?? A **COMMON FANBOY??** THERE'S A CERTAIN DEGREE OF RESPONSIBILITY THAT COMES WITH OWNING A PIECE OF INFORMATION LIKE THIS. IT SHOULD BE SAFE-GUARDED. THE SECRET IS KNOWING **WHEN** TO MAKE THE PHONE CALL. IT SHOULD ONLY BE USED FOR A REALLY SPECIAL OCCASION. NOT JUST TO CALL UP AND SAY, **'HEY HOW ARE YA?'**

I'M SORRY. I GUESS YER RIGHT. MAN, HAVING IT IN THE PALM OF MY HAND AND ALL - IT JUST WENT TO MY HEAD.

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU BOB. I AGREE WITH YOU WHOLE HEARTEDLY.

DITTO! DESTINY BROUGHT THIS INFORMATION INTO YOUR LAP. IT SHOULD ONLY BE USED WITH GREAT CARE AND FORETHOUGHT.

LATER THAT SAME NIGHT..

UNBELIEVABLE BOB!!! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU ROLLED **FOUR CONSECUTIVE CRITICAL TO-HITS!!!** THE **SLUDGE WYRM** LETS OUT A **BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM!!** COMBINED WITH THE DAMAGE FROM BRIAN'S **SPHERE OF NAPALM** AND DAVE'S **HACKMASTER -12** THE DRAGON CRASHES TO THE CAVERN FLOOR.

HOODY HOO!! WE DROPPED THE BASTARD IN **JUST FOUR COMBAT ROUNDS!!!** I BET THAT AIN'T **NEVER** BEEN DONE BEFORE.

I HATE TO ADMIT IT BUT THAT WAS PRETTY EXCITING. WHAT A GREAT EXAMPLE OF WHAT GOOD TEAM WORK CAN ACCOMPLISH. TOO BAD HE DECLINED TO NEGOTIATE.

AAAAAHH. LET'S JUST SIT HERE AND SAVOR THE MOMENT. I WISH WE HAD VIDEOTAPED THIS.

SAY BYE-BYE WYRM!!



DUDE!! YOU KNOW WHO I BET WOULD **LOVE** TO HEAR ABOUT THIS?? HUH?? **GARY JACKSON!!!**

GUYS IT'S **TWO A.M.!!** MAYBE YOU SHOULD JUST WRITE HIM A LETTER.

THAT'S A **DAMN** GOOD IDEA. I BET HE AIN'T NEVER HEARD OF ANYONE DROPPING A SLUDGE WYRM IN FOUR ROUNDS!!

A LETTER?? YOU CAN'T DO JUSTICE TO A STORY LIKE THIS WITH A **FREAKIN' LETTER!!**

BESIDES, **GARY'S** A GAMER LIKE US!! HE'S PROBABLY UP PLAYING RIGHT NOW!!

GEEZE - I WAS JUST SAYIN, THAT'S ALL.



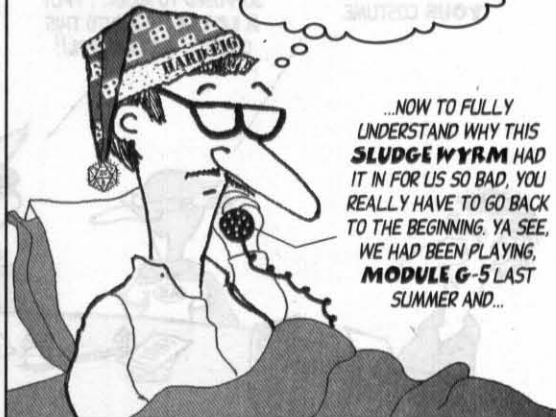
TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

..SO BY THIS TIME **OL' WYRM** IS GETTIN' PRETTY HOT AND SEZ, **"WHO'S GONNA MAKE ME?"** SO **KNUCKLES** SHOOT'S BACK, **"YER LOOKIN' AT HIM!"** HA HA, COURSE THIS WENT OVER LIKE A BAG OF BRICKS. IT WAS OBVIOUS HE WAS ABOUT TO **THROW DOWN**. YOU COULD CUT THE TENSION WITH A KNIFE. SO WE...

DON'T LEAVE OUT THE PART WHERE I TOLD HIM TO KISS MY ROSY-RED BUTT!



BOB HERZOG?? WHO THE HELL IS BOB HERZOG??



...NOW TO FULLY UNDERSTAND WHY THIS **SLUDGE WYRM** HAD IT IN FOR US SO BAD, YOU REALLY HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING. YA SEE, WE HAD BEEN PLAYING, **MODULE G-5** LAST SUMMER AND...

A Time for Heroes

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
AND STEVE JOHANSSON

WELL, LOOKS LIKE EVERYBODY IS READY TO PLAY SOME **HEROES AND ZEROS**. I HOPE YOU REMEMBERED TO BRING YOUR OLD CHARACTER SHEETS. WE'RE GOING TO PICK UP THE CAMPAIGN WHERE WE LEFT OFF LAST SUMMER*.

OH, AND... UH... ER... **GREAT COSTUMES** BY THE WAY. I THINK IT WILL REALLY ADD TO THE **ATMOSPHERE!**

THANKS!! I WORKED ON MINE ALL WEEKEND. I MODIFIED AN OLD HALLOWEEN COSTUME I FOUND IN THE ATTIC. I HAVEN'T WORN IT SINCE THE **SEVENTH GRADE** BUT AMAZINGLY ENOUGH, IT STILL FITS. IT MAKES THE PERFECT COSTUME FOR MY CHARACTER **ROACH BOY!!**

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY COSTUME?? **THE WHISPER ROCKS!!! 'HE RIDES THE LONG SHADOWS OF NIGHT LIKE A WHISPER ON THE WIND!!'** THAT'S MY NEW MOTTO. CAME UP WITH IT ON THE WAY TO THE GAME.

THAT'S NICE, BOB. IT'S VERY STRIKING.

YOU'RE A POET, DAVE.

WELL THEY CERTAINLY ATTRACT ATTENTION. MY MOM COMMENTED THAT YOU GUYS LOOK LIKE YOU'RE UP TO NO GOOD.

HEY, THAT'S WHAT THE **STATE TROOPER** SAID WHEN HE PULLED US OVER ON THE WAY OVER HERE.

THAT DUDE HAD **NO SENSE OF HUMOR** WHATSOEVER.

SPEAKING OF COSTUMES WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED TO YOURS, SARA? I THOUGHT WE ALL AGREED TO MAKE COSTUMES TO PUMP UP THE ATMOSPHERE. **WHAT GIVES??**

YEAH!! YOU LOOK **PRETTY SILLY** BEING THE **ONLY** PERSON TO NOT HAVE A COSTUME!!

OH...UH...WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT. I **FORGOT** MINE. I COULD JUST KICK MYSELF.

HEY BRIAN, YOUR COSTUME **KICKS ASS!!** I APPROVE. AT LEAST, UNLIKE DAVE, YOU PUT A LITTLE THOUGHT INTO **YOUR** COSTUME.

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?? I PUT **A LOT OF WORK** INTO THIS OUTFIT!! **IT'S KEWL!!**

C'MON DAVE!! THROWING ON SOME **SHADES**, DONNING A **TRENCH COAT** AND TYING A **LAME ASS BANDANA** AROUND YOUR FACE DOESN'T CONSTITUTE A **COSTUME!!** YOU LOOK LIKE YER ABOUT TO KNOCK OFF A **SLUSHY MART** OR SOMETHING.

BACK OFF JACK!!! NOBODY KNOCKS **THE WHISPER!!** THIS COSTUME EVOKES **FEAR** AND **DREAD** IN THE HEART OF THE WRONG DOER!!

* See Tales From the Vault: Volume Two (Dragon #243)

I GOT A **BIG SURPRISE** FOR YOU GUYS!! YOU KNOW HOW YOU GOT KIND OF BORED WITH YOUR CHARACTERS AND DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOURSELVES BETWEEN MISSIONS?? WELL, I BOUGHT THE LATEST SUPPLEMENT, **BACKGROUND TOOL CHEST**!! IT'S PACKED WITH RANDOM TABLES TO HELP FLESH OUT YOUR CHARACTERS.



WHOAH, WHOAH **WHOAH!!!** STOP THE BUS CHIEF!! WE'RE PLAYING ESTABLISHED CHARACTERS. I DON'T WANT TO GO SCREWIN' AROUND WITH THEM NOW!! BESIDES, **ROACH BOY** IS FINE JUST THE WAY HE IS.

AW C'MON GUYS!! I SPENT EIGHTEEN BUCKS ON THIS SUPPLEMENT.

HMMMM, **WHISPER** COULD USE A LITTLE FINE TUNING.

B.A. HAS A POINT. **H&Z** CHARACTERS **ARE** VERY TWO DIMENSIONAL.

WHICH IS WHY WE SUGGESTED COSTUMES!!



THINK ABOUT IT! WHAT DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHARACTERS?? BOB - WHO IS **ROACH BOY**? I MEAN WHO IS HE **REALLY**? WHAT MOTIVATES HIM? ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM IS THAT HE HAS **RESISTANCE TO CRUSHING DAMAGE**. HE CAN SURVIVE A **NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST**. HE CAN SUBSIST ON A **SOAP FLAKE AND NEWSPAPER** DIET. HE HAS TO **SCURRY TO SHADOWS** WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE TURNED ON. C'MON!!! WHAT AN **EMPTY SHELL** OF A CHARACTER. I'M OFFERING FLESH AND BONE!! A BACKGROUND!! **ROOTS!!!** HELL, EVERY CHARACTER HAS HIS OWN **ORIGINS ISSUE** DOESN'T HE? IT'S IMPORTANT TO A HERO.

HEY YOU FORGOT **CHEETAH SPEED!!!** REMEMBER?? I SACRIFICED SOME ATTRIBUTE POINTS TO GET THAT.

BIG DEAL!! YOUR **ENDURANCE** IS SO LOW YOU CAN ONLY RUN ONE CITY BLOCK BEFORE YOU GET **WINDED**.

HEY, B.A. MAKES A GOOD ARGUMENT.

YEAH, HE WEAVES HIS WORDS LIKE A SPIDER WEAVES A WEB. I AIN'T FALLIN' FOR IT THIS TIME.



OKAY, COUNT ME IN, B.A.!! **GYMNINGIA** COULD USE A GOOD BACKGROUND!!

THANKS SARA!! YOU WON'T REGRET IT. NOW, FIRST THING YOU NEED TO DO IS ROLL TWO TWENTY SIDERS AND ADD THE RESULT!! THIS WILL DETERMINE THE **OCCUPATION** OF YOUR **SECRET PERSONA**!

OKAY BUT YOU HAVE TO STAND BY THE RESULTS, **MISSY!!**

TOUGH TALK FROM A MAN WEARING PANTY HOSE AND A **CAPTAIN DORK MASK!!**



OKAY, HERE GOES!! LOOKS LIKE A...**38!!**

EEEWW, THAT'S GOOD!! YOU GET TO ROLL ON **CAREER TABLE A**.

WADDAYA DOING?? YOU CAN GET DECENT RESULTS JUST LETTIN' EM ROLL OFF YER PALM LIKE THAT.

I DUNNO!! LOOKS LIKE SHE'S DOING OKAY TO ME!!

HA!! GARY JACKSON'S A PALM ROLLER YA KNOW.



TWELVE DIE ROLL RESULTS LATER..

OKAY SARA, HERE IS **GYMNNINIA'S** NEW BACKGROUND. SHE WAS BORN IN **ROMANIA** TO **POOR IRISH SQUASH FARMERS**. YOUR FATHER WAS A PROFESSIONAL **BASKET BALL PLAYER** BUT WAS KILLED BY **BRAZILIAN DRUG CARTEL HITMEN** DURING THE **COCAINE WARS** OF 1973. YOUR MOTHER TOOK ON A JOB ON THE **ALASKAN PIPE LINE** TO HELP FEED YOU AND YOUR THREE SIBLINGS. FOR YEARS YOU WATCHED HER **WITHER** AWAY UNDER THE BRUTAL **SLAVE-LIKE** CONDITIONS OF THE **PIPELINE CHAIN GANGS** IN THE **PACIFIC NORTHWEST**. YOU MANAGED TO ESCAPE YOUR MISERABLE PLIGHT WHEN YOUR INCREDIBLE GYMNASTIC SKILLS CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF THE **CIA**. THEY RECRUITED YOU AND EVENTUALLY YOU WERE ADMITTED INTO THE **HACKLEAGUE!!**



TWENTY MINUTES LATER..

OKAY BOB THAT RESULTS BUMPS YOU TO THE **WELL-TO-DO TABLE C**. HMMMM... LOOKS LIKE YOUR SECRET IDENTITY IS A **LAY-ABOUT SOCIALITE!!** YOUR HOBBIES ARE THE **BALLET**, **WAGNERIAN OPERAS** AND YOU OCCASIONALLY LIKE TO CATCH A **SERGIO LEONI FLICK**. OH...AND IT SAYS HERE YOU HAVE A **VICTORIAN SALT-AND-PEPPER SHAKER** COLLECTION ON LOAN TO THE **METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**. OH THIS IS NICE - LOOKS LIKE YOU GET **FOUR GRAND** A MONTH FROM YOUR MOTHER AS A **SPENDING ALLOWANCE**.



A WEE BIT LATER...

OKAY BRIAN, SAYS HERE YOU WERE A **KICK BOXER**. YOU GOT YANKED FROM THE **PROFESSIONAL CIRCUIT** AFTER **STEROIDS** WERE DETECTED IN A ROUTINE URINE ANALYSIS. EVEN SO, YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN SET FOR LIFE BUT YOUR **MANAGER** DUMPED ALL YOUR WINNINGS INTO A **FRIED-KIWI FRANCHISE** AND YOU LOST YOUR ASS!! THIS PROMPTED YOU TO DRIVE YOUR MANAGER'S LOWER JAW INTO HIS BRAIN PAN WITH A **TIRE IRON**. THAT LITTLE STUNT EARNED YOU A 25 YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR MANSLAUGHTER. HMMMM...THIS IS ODD, SAYS HERE YOU LATER MOVED ON TO WIN THE **GOVERNORSHIP OF SOUTH DAKOTA** IN A LANDSLIDE ELECTION. THE **SAVINGS AND LOAN SCANDAL** SWEEPED YOU UP WITH IT AND YOU ENDED UP RUNNING A **TIRE-RETRADING SHOP** IN **CRIPPLE CREEK, COLORADO!**





I CAN'T BELIEVE **GARY JACKSON** LET THIS **PIECE OF CRAP** GO OUT THE DOOR!! WHAT WAS HE THINKING??

B.A. MUST BE SCREWIN' IT UP SOMEHOW. MAYBE HE SHOULD RE-READ THE **GETTING STARTED** CHAPTER.

THIS IS SOOOOOOOO BAD. YOU'D THINK AN **EIGHT YEAR OLD KID** WROTE IT OR SOMETHING. IT'S LIKE SOMEONE TOOK EVERY STEREOTYPE THEY COULD FIND AND JUST THREW THEM TOGETHER. **NORHYME! NO REASON!!**

DAVE'S RIGHT. WE MUST BE MISSING SOMETHING HERE.



WELL LET ME READ THE SUPPLEMENT AGAIN. MAYBE I **DID** SCREW IT UP SOMEHOW. WE ALL KNOW **GARY JACKSON'S PLAYTESTING AND QUALITY CONTROL DIVISION** IS THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS.

YOU GOT THAT RIGHT! I'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET MY STUFF PUBLISHED BY THEM FOR YEARS. THEY'RE VERY **DISCRIMINATING AND ANAL** ABOUT WHAT THEY WILL ACCEPT FOR PUBLICATION.

THAT'S WHY THEY CALL HIM THE **GAWDFATHER OF GAMING!!**

YEAH, THAT'S 'CAUSE **GARY** CARES ABOUT HIS PRODUCT. HE WOULDN'T PUT HIS NAME ON IT IF HE DIDN'T!!

HE'S ONE OF A KIND. THE **BIG LUG!!**



SIR? YOUR YOUNGEST SON IS HERE TO SEE YOU. SHOULD I SEND HIM ON IN??

(SIGH) YEAH, TULEY!! SEND HIM IN. THIS IS THE **HARDEST** THING I'VE EVER HAD TO DO. I DON'T WANT ANY INTERRUPTIONS SO HOLD ALL MY PHONE CALLS.



HI DADDY!! MOM SAID YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME??

LOOK SON, I KNOW I PROMISED YOU COULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE **HEROES AND ZEROES** LINE, BUT WE'VE BEEN GETTING TOO MANY COMPLAINTS. I GOTTA TAKE IT AWAY FROM YOU.

IT BREAKS MY HEART, **TIMMY**. BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO MOVE YOU OVER TO **SPACEHACK** FOR YOUR NEXT THREE SUPPLEMENTS.

NO!! IT'S MINE!! **YOU PROMISED!!**

This is Timmy Jackson's first appearance. I'm not even sure where the inspiration came from but Steve Johansson and I created the character (an 8 year old game designer) during a plane ride to Origins '97 in Miami, Florida. — July

SORRY NEWT!! THE **HALF-OGRE** HIT YOU AGAIN FOR **56 POINTS OF DAMAGE!!!** THE **MASSIVE BLOW SENDS KRAGIN THRIFT AXE** HURLING OVER THE **PRECIPICE**. HE LANDS IN THE **ANGRY WHITE OCEAN** WHERE THE **POUNDING SURF** EMBRACES THE **JAGGED ROCKS OF HARD KNUCKLE POINT**. **THOUSANDS OF STONE CRABS** SCURRY FROM THEIR LAIRS IN THE ROCKS TO FEAST ON THE SOFT FLESHY PARTS OF YOUR BODY. THE WIND ROARS. **TWO GNOMES** WHO HAPPENED TO BE **CRABBING** ON A SMALL BOAT JUST OFF SHORE **LAUGH HYSTERICALLY** AT THE SPECTACLE OF YOUR **DEMISE!!** IT IS A STORY THEY WILL CARRY BACK WITH THEM TO THE TAVERN AFTER THEIR DAY'S WORK. THEY WILL EMBELLISH THE TALE OF COURSE, ADDING THEIR OWN CURIOUS BRAND OF **GNOMISH HUMOR** BUT YOU CAN BE SURE THAT THE TALE OF **KRAGIN VS. ATTICUS THE HALF OGRE** WILL BE TOLD AND RETOLD OVER THE YEARS, EACH STORY TELLER ADDING HIS OWN SPECIAL TOUCH TO THE STORY. THIS IS HOW **LEGENDS** ARE BORN!!



THEY'RE LAUGHING AT ME??

AAAAH, I SEE YOU'VE PUT YOUR COPY OF "0039: PUTTING SPICE BACK IN YOUR FLAVOR TEXT" TO **GOOD USE**, NITRO.

WELL FORTUNATELY I LET YOU GUYS TALK ME INTO TAKING OUT THAT **STEVI'L'S GROUP INSURANCE POLICY**. I CAN'T BELIEVE I KICKED UP SUCH A FUSS ABOUT IT. GUESS THAT **ONE THOUSAND GOLD PIECE PER SESSION PREMIUM** IS GOING TO PAY OFF AFTER ALL. SO HOW DOES THIS WORK? YOU GUYS RETRIEVE MY BODY AND GET ME RAISED - I KNOW THAT. BUT DOES MY POLICY COVER MEDICAL?? I'LL NEED SUBSTANTIAL HEALING.

HOW DOES IT WORK?? SORRY TO BREAK THIS TO YOU, GUY. I KNOW IT'S TOUGH - YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER **BITING THE BIG ONE** AND ALL... BUT THE WAY THIS WORKS IS THAT THE REST OF US DIVVY UP THE **9,000 GOLD PIECES** YOU PAID TOWARD YOUR POLICY. WE THEN BUY A ROUND OF DRINKS AND DANCE THE **MOCKING JIG** ON YOUR SHALLOW GRAVE. **THAT'S HOW IT WORKS!!**

SORRY NEWT!! IT'S AN OLD PRACTICAL JOKE THEY PLAY ON **ALL** THE NEW GUYS. IT'S TRADITION. THEY GOT ME TOO WHEN I FIRST JOINED THE GROUP.

CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY, I PAID IN **75,000 GP'S** BEFORE I CAUGHT ON.



SURELY YOU'RE NOT GOING TO **KEEP** MY MONEY AND LEAVE ME ON THE BEACH TO **ROT!!** WHY...WHY, THAT WOULD BE **DISHONEST!!!**

DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY, **NEWT**. WE'RE JUST BEING TRUE TO OUR CHARACTERS.

OF COURSE IT'S DISHONEST YOU DORK!! **WE'RE CHAOTIC EVIL**. MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT YOU DIED **TOO SOON**. I WAS HOPING TO GET AT LEAST **TEN GRAND** FOR MY SHARE.

WE'RE TEACHING YOU A VALUABLE LESSON, **NEWT**. YOU TAKE THIS AND LEARN FROM IT. IT WILL MAKE YOU A BETTER ROLEPLAYER.



AND THE 4,500 G.P.S I'VE PAID INTO THE OLD ADVENTURERS' HOME AND SOCIAL SECURITY??

SORRY DUDE!

HEY WHEN A CASH COW WANDERS INTO YOUR BACKYARD YOU MILK THAT DUMB ANIMAL FOR EVERY DROP YOU CAN GET. FACE IT NEWT, THERE'S NO ROOM FOR THE WEAK AND STUPID IN THE WORLD OF HACKMASTER!



WELL, NEWT NO SENSE IN MOPING ABOUT IT. YA GOTTA CLIMB BACK ON THAT HORSE AND PUSH ONWARD! ROLL UP A NEW CHARACTER AND BRING HIM TO THE GAME NEXT WEEK.



THE FOLLOWING WEEK..

BEFORE WE GET STARTED, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR NEW CHARACTER NEWT.

OH, I'D BE GLAD TO SIR. I WAS SO IMPRESSED BY THAT HALF-OGRE WHO KILLED KRAGIN LAST WEEK THAT I DECIDED TO PLAY ONE MYSELF. THIS IS A FIRST FOR ME. I'M SURE IT WILL BE A CHALLENGE BUT AFTER READING UP ON HALF-OGRES I REALLY THINK I CAN PULL THIS ROLE OFF.

YOU'RE PLAYIN' A FREAKIN HALF-OGRE?? WELL THIS SHOULD BE AN INTERESTING GAME. MY CHARACTER, RASPUTIN JUST HAPPENS TO HAVE A PSYCHOTIC AVERSION TO HALF-OGRES. I THOUGHT YOU KNEW THAT.

TOUGH BREAK, NEWT!! YOU'D BE ADVISED TO JUST ROLL UP ANOTHER CHARACTER AND SAVE YOURSELF THE GRIEF.



OH NO, I THINK YOU'LL LIKE THIS HALF-OGRE, STEVIL. I PUT TONS OF WORK INTO HIS BACKGROUND AND CHARACTER. I'M SURE AS YOU GET TO KNOW HIM YOU WILL ACCEPT, GRONDLE MOON-BARKER AS A VALUABLE MEMBER OF THE PARTY.

EWWWWWW, I SEE I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S READ NORMAN BOWZER'S MOON-BARKER TRILOGY. IT'S A PITY THE THIRD BOOK NEVER CAME OUT.

THE SIERRA LEAGUE THREATENED TO BOYCOTT HARDB IF THEY KILLED ANY MORE TREES PUBLISHING THAT HORRIBLE DRIVEL BOWZER SUCKS!!

I'M TELLIN' YA STRAIGHT UP. LITTLE GRONDLE OR WHATEVER HIS NAME IS, HAS THE LIFE-EXPECTANCY OF A TADPOLE IN A TROUT POND. FOR YOU LAYMEN, THAT'S ABOUT FOUR SECONDS. YA BETTER TAKE PETE'S ADVICE AND JUST ROLL UP ANOTHER CHARACTER. THERE'S NO WAY RASPUTIN IS GONNA ALLOW A HALF-OGRE TO JOIN THE PARTY. COMPRENDE AMIGO?

NO OFFENSE, BUT I RECKON I CAN PLAY WHAT I WANNA PLAY.

HOW CAN YOU SAY BOWZER SUCKS? HAVE YOU EVER READ HIS BOOK, TROLL FURY?? IT'S A CLASSIC.

LOOK, I'VE GOT A JOB SO I CAN'T LAY AROUND ALL MORNING READING TRASH NOVELS AND WATCHING JERRY SPRINGER.





C'MON STEVIL, LET THE KID TELL YOU ABOUT HIS CHARACTER BEFORE YOU MAKE ANY HASTY DECISIONS.

LOOK, I EVEN DREW A PICTURE OF HIM. THIS PORTRAYS **GRONDLE** AT THE **BATTLE OF MOSS BEAR ROCK!!** SEE THE SCAR ON HIS CHEEK? THAT'S WHERE HE TOOK AN **ORC'S ARROW** AFTER THROWING HIMSELF IN HARMS WAY TO SAVE HIS COMMANDER.

OH GREAT, SO HE'S THE **AUDIE MURPHY OF HALF-OGRES** EH? GEE, I'D FEEL REAL BAD KILLING A WAR HERO BUT...UH...HE'S DEAD MEAT IF HE TRIES TO JOIN **THIS** PARTY.

TOOK AN ARROW FOR THE BRASS HUH?? THAT'S JUST THE KIND OF BACKGROUND FLAVOR TEXT THE JUDGES LOOK FOR IN TOURNAMENTS. **GOOD STUFF!!!** LOOKS LIKE MY CHARACTER MAY HAVE TAKEN A FEW ARROWS HIMSELF.

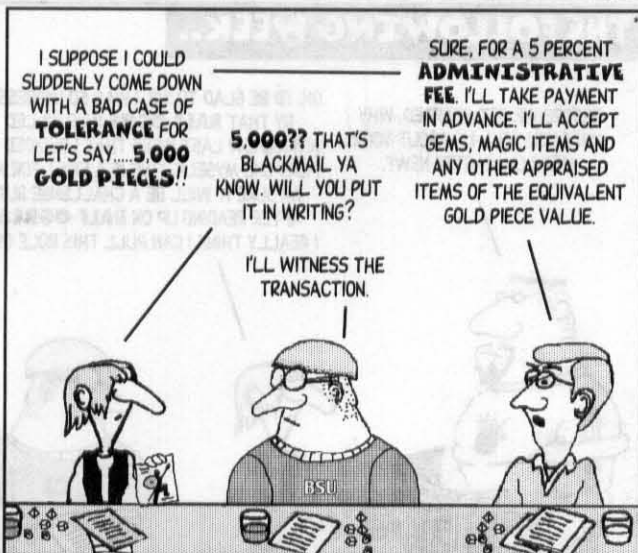
SCORBBLE
SCORBBLE



AWW, C'MON STEVIL. I SPENT 19 HOURS WORKING ON THIS CHARACTER. WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR **RASPUTIN** TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY AND LET **GRONDLE** JOIN UP WITH THE PARTY?? HUH??

GIVE THE KID A BREAK, STEVIL. HE DREW A PICTURE OF HIM AND EVERYTHING.

LOOK THE OTHER WAY? I DUNNO, MY HATRED OF **HALF-OGRES** RUNS PRETTY DARNED DEEP.

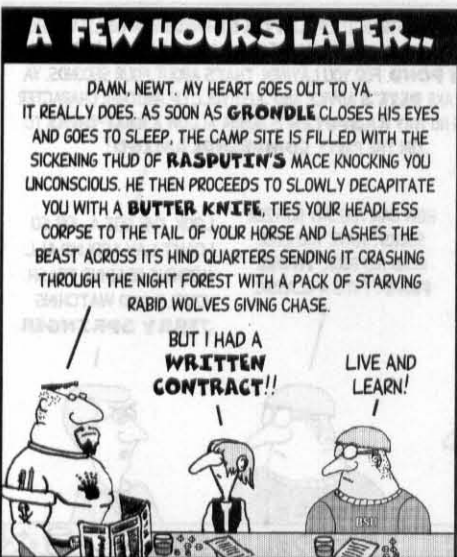


I SUPPOSE I COULD SUDDENLY COME DOWN WITH A BAD CASE OF **TOLERANCE** FOR LET'S SAY...**5,000 GOLD PIECES!!**

5,000?? THAT'S BLACKMAIL YA KNOW. WILL YOU PUT IT IN WRITING?

SURE, FOR A 5 PERCENT **ADMINISTRATIVE FEE**. I'LL TAKE PAYMENT IN ADVANCE. I'LL ACCEPT GEMS, MAGIC ITEMS AND ANY OTHER APPRAISED ITEMS OF THE EQUIVALENT GOLD PIECE VALUE.

I'LL WITNESS THE TRANSACTION.



A FEW HOURS LATER..

DAMN, NEWT. MY HEART GOES OUT TO YA. IT REALLY DOES. AS SOON AS **GRONDLE** CLOSES HIS EYES AND GOES TO SLEEP, THE CAMP SITE IS FILLED WITH THE SICKENING THUD OF **RASPUTIN'S** MACE KNOCKING YOU UNCONSCIOUS. HE THEN PROCEEDS TO SLOWLY DECAPITATE YOU WITH A **BUTTER KNIFE**, TIES YOUR HEADLESS CORPSE TO THE TAIL OF YOUR HORSE AND LASHES THE BEAST ACROSS ITS HIND QUARTERS SENDING IT CRASHING THROUGH THE NIGHT FOREST WITH A PACK OF STARVING RABID WOLVES GIVING CHASE.

BUT I HAD A **WRITTEN CONTRACT!!**

LIVE AND LEARN!



DAMMIT STEVIL, WILL YOU LAY OFF THE KID?? IT'S NOT GETTING ANY EASIER TO FIND REPLACEMENT PLAYERS YOU KNOW.

BUT HE MAKES IT **5000** EASY!! LIKE TAKING CANDY FROM A BABY. WHAT PART OF, **'I'M EVIL - DON'T TRUST ME'** DOESN'T HE UNDERSTAND??

HEY I LIKED THE FIVE PERCENT ADMINISTRATIVE FEE - THAT WAS A NEW ONE ON ME.

YEAH, I CAME UP WITH THAT ON THE FLY. PRETTY SLICK EH??

OKAY, NEXT WEEK IT'S **MY** TURN TO SHAKE THE KID DOWN.

Knights of the Dinner Table™

"Hack in Space!"

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



The most significant thing I recall about this issue has nothing to do with the strips. It was in this issue that we published a *Brian's Small Press* picks for the Avelon: *Scrolls of Dyorn* Preview comic. My initial impressions of this comic and publishing the review would later lead to meeting Manny Vega and the rest of the Drawbridge crew. Now Manny works full time for KenzerCo and is the driving force behind *HackMasters of EverKnight*. Somehow that book got into my hands (I don't recall from where). I chose it over many other products to spotlight and now we have a great new comic to enjoy. -Brian

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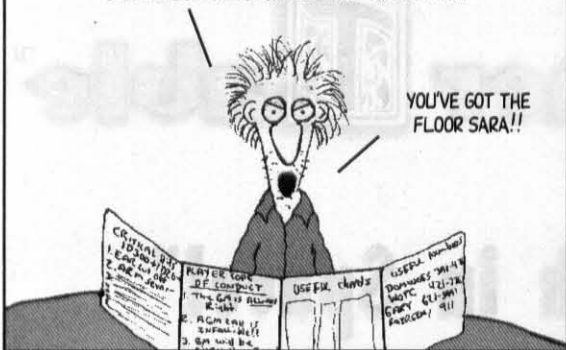
Submissions: We accept submis-
sions for strip ideas, jokes, car-
toons, etc. We are interested in
running anything that other
gamers and fans would enjoy.
Check out our website for writer's
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A Novel Idea

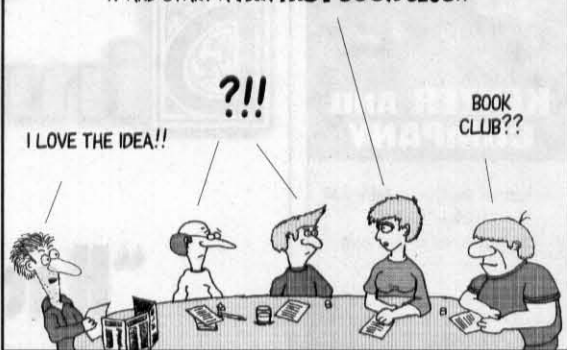
BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

OKAY GUYS, BEFORE YOU TAKE OFF I PROMISED **SARA** SHE COULD ADDRESS THE GROUP. I THINK SHE'S STRUCK UPON A **WONDERFUL IDEA** AND I WANT EVERYONE TO SHOW SOME **GOODWILL** AND SOME **TEAM SPIRIT** AND SUPPORT HER ON THIS.



YOU'VE GOT THE FLOOR SARA!!

THANKS B.A.!! I'VE BEEN THINKING A LOT ABOUT **BOOK CLUBS** LATELY. IT'S WHERE A GROUP OF FRIENDS, LIKE US, ALL PICK THE SAME BOOK TO READ. THEN WE GET TOGETHER ONCE A WEEK AND DISCUSS THE BOOK. I THOUGHT PERHAPS WE COULD PUT A SPIN ON IT AND START A **FANTASY BOOK CLUB**!!



??!

I LOVE THE IDEA!!

BOOK CLUB??

NOW BEFORE SOMEONE GOES ACCUSING ME OF BEING **DIFFICULT** OR ANYTHING, I JUST WANT TO POINT SOMETHING OUT. THIS SOUNDS **SUSPICIOUSLY** LIKE MY **ENGLISH LITERATURE CLASS** IN HIGH SCHOOL!!

WHY YA WANNA GO STIRRING UP BAD MEMORIES!! **HUH!!** JUST THE THOUGHT OF HAVING TO READ ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE **CLIFFE NOTES** MAKES ME WANNA PUT A GUN TO MY HEAD!!

HEY I KNOW WHAT SHE'S TALKING ABOUT. I MEET IN A CHATROOM EVERY TUESDAY ONLINE WITH A BOOK CLUB. IT'S A LOT OF FUN!!

IT'S NOT LIKE THAT, GUYS. LET HER FINISH EXPLAINING.



REALLY BRIAN?? YOU'RE PARTICIPATING IN A **BOOK CLUB**?? I THINK THAT'S WONDERFUL. WHAT KIND OF BOOKS DO YOU DISCUSS??

RIGHT NOW WE'RE READING **CODE WARS: THE HISTORY OF HIGH-LEVEL PROGRAMMING IN AMERICA**!! WE'VE BEEN HAVING SOME PRETTY HEAVY DISCUSSION ON IT.

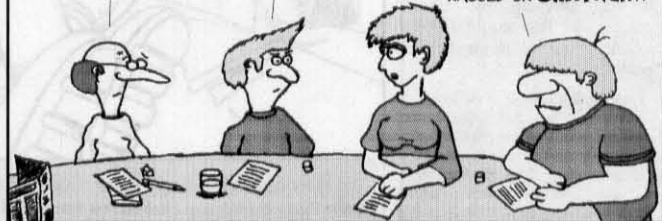


ALL I'M SUGGESTING IS THAT WE PICK A **FANTASY NOVEL** THAT WE CAN ALL READ AND AFTER THE GAME EACH WEEK WE SPEND A FEW MINUTES DISCUSSING WHAT WE'VE READ. NOT ONLY DOES IT STRENGTHEN THE BOND BETWEEN FRIENDS BUT IT HELPS US TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER MORE, **AND** IT HELPS YOU GET MORE OUT OF YOUR READING. IT MAKES READING A **SHARED EXPERIENCE** JUST LIKE **ROLEPLAYING**!! WE SHOULD GIVE IT A TRY.

PICK A BOOK? WHO GETS TO DECIDE??

WHY NOT A **VIDEO CLUB**?? WE CAN DISCUSS MOVIES.

I'LL READ ANYTHING BUT **HARLAN ELLISON**. ME AND HIM DON'T GET ALONG EVER SINCE HE RAGGED ON **SHATNER**!!



WELL TO START THINGS OFF, I'VE ALREADY PICKED A BOOK. AND I'VE ALREADY BOUGHT A COPY FOR EACH OF YOU - **MY TREAT!!** ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS PICK IT UP AT **WEIRD PETE'S**. I THOUGHT WE COULD READ **NINE SCARS** BY **ELIZABETH MARTLEY!!**

IT'S GETTING RAVE REVIEWS IN ALL THE GAME MAGAZINES. AFTER THIS ONE WE CAN ROTATE AND SOMEONE ELSE CAN PICK THE NEXT BOOK.

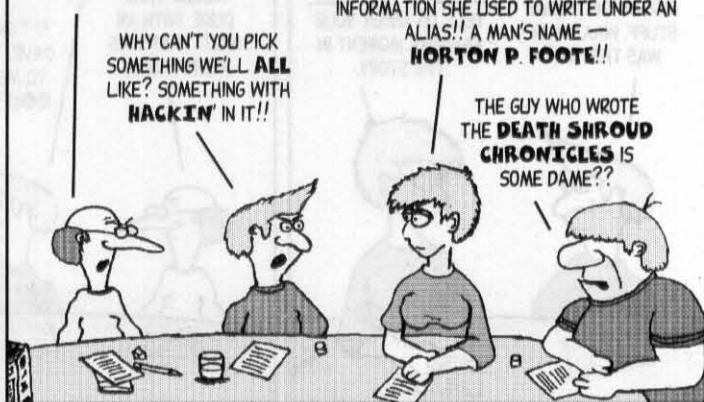


ELIZABETH MARTLEY?? OH CRIPES - TELL ME YA DIDN'T PICK A FREAKIN' **ROMANCE NOVEL!!** NO WAY IN HELL I'M WADING THROUGH THAT CRAP.

WHY CAN'T YOU PICK SOMETHING WE'LL **ALL** LIKE? SOMETHING WITH **HACKIN'** IN IT!!

C'MON GUYS!! YOU CAN'T BE THAT CLOSED MINDED. ARE YOU TELLING ME A WOMAN CAN'T WRITE **GOOD FANTASY??** **MS. MARTLEY** HAPPENS TO BE THE **HIGHEST PAID** AUTHOR IN THE BUSINESS. AND FOR YOUR INFORMATION SHE USED TO WRITE UNDER AN ALIAS!! A MAN'S NAME - **HORTON P. FOOTE!!**

THE GUY WHO WROTE **THE DEATH SHROUD CHRONICLES** IS SOME DAME??



LOOK, I'LL SWEETEN THE POT, GUYS!! ANYONE WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE **AFTER GAME** BOOK DISCUSSIONS WILL GET A **500 EXPERIENCE POINT GRATUITY** ADDED TO THAT EVENING'S **TAKE!!** HOW'S THAT GRAB YA?

MAKE IT **750** AND THROW IN **2020** POINTS OF **HEALING** AND YOU GOT A DEAL!!

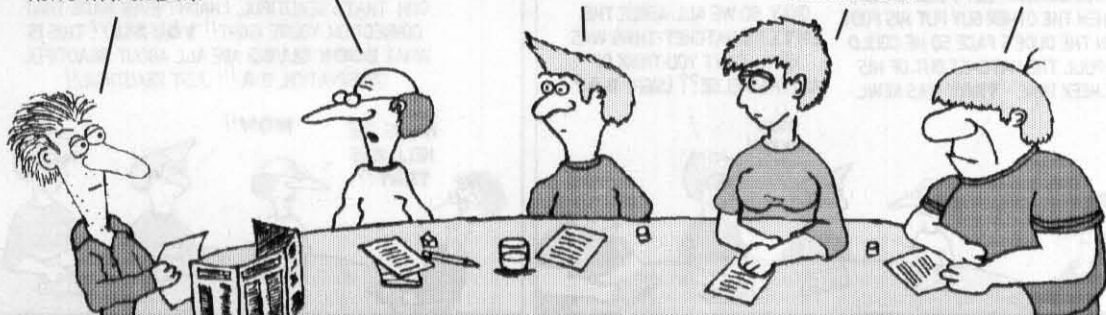
HEALING?? TELL YA WHAT, I'LL COME UP TO **650** ON THE **E.P.'S** AND THROW IN A FLAT **TWENTY HIT POINTS** FOR THE GROUP THAT YOU CAN ALLOCATE AS NEEDED. **HUH??**

YOU CAUGHT ME IN A GOOD MOOD. **DONE DEAL!!**

GOOD JOB, BOB!!

HOW KEWL!! THIS WILL BE FUN. YOU'LL SEE.

HORTON P. FOOTE IS A GIRL?? ARE YOU SURE??

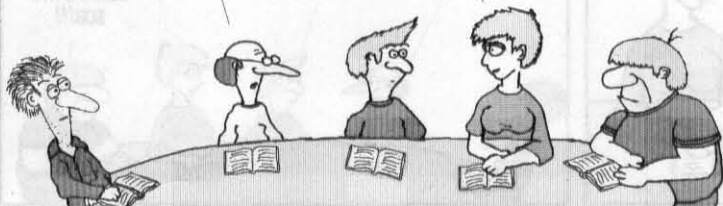


ONE WEEK LATER AFTER THE GAME..

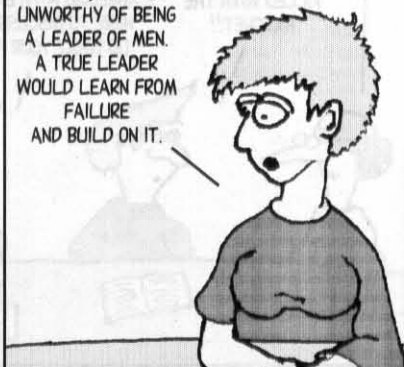
THIS IS SO EXCITING. OUR VERY FIRST **BOOK DISCUSSION!!** I JUST KNOW YOU'LL FIND THIS A REWARDING AND WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOR. HOPEFULLY IT WILL BECOME PART OF OUR TRADITIONAL GAME NIGHT. SINCE THIS IS NEW TO MOST OF YOU, LET ME KICK OFF THE DISCUSSION BY TELLING YOU WHICH MOMENT IN THE BOOK WAS **MOST MEANINGFUL** TO ME.

IS THIS A TEST? NOBODY SAID NOTHING ABOUT ANY TESTS!! I'M NOT PROPERLY PREPARED.

IT'S NOT A TEST. IT'S JUST A DISCUSSION. YOU'LL SEE.



I THOUGHT THE SCENE WHERE **LORD STOUT-HEART** STOOD ON THE **RAMPART** OF HIS **RUINED CASTLE** AND CURSED THE **GAWDS** WAS THE DEFINING MOMENT OF THE BOOK. BY BLAMING THE **GAWDS** FOR HIS OWN FAILURE IN BATTLE **LORD STOUT-HEART** PROVED HE WAS UNWORTHY OF BEING A LEADER OF MEN. A TRUE LEADER WOULD LEARN FROM FAILURE AND BUILD ON IT.



SEE HOW THIS WORKS?? C'MON DAVE, WHY DONT YOU BREAK THE ICE AND TELL US WHAT PART OF THE BOOK TOUCHED YOU THE MOST.

GEE, I MISSED THAT CURSIN' THE GAWDS STUFF. WHAT PAGE WAS THAT ON?

MISSED IT?? OH WELL, TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE MOMENT IN THE STORY.



WELL, UH... YOU KNOW THE GUY, I THINK HE WAS SOMEBODY'S BROTHER OR SUMTHUN? HE KILLED THAT OTHER DUDE? YOU KNOW THE ONE WHO SEEMED LIKE HE WAS MAD AT A LOT OF PEOPLE?? WELL...UH...I THOUGHT THAT WAS KEWL.

YEAH, YEAH, HE KILLED THAT DUDE. WITH AN AXE!! THAT WAS PRETTY NEAT.

IT WASN'T AN AXE. IT WAS A HATCHET. I HIGHLIGHTED THAT PART.

!!!! OKAY, I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, DAVE. IT JUST SEEMED LIKE SO MUCH BACKDROP TO ME, BUT THAT'S YOUR OPINION. THAT'S GOOD. BOB?? WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE MOMENT??



GEE DAVE ALREADY TOOK WHAT I WAS GONNA SAY. THAT **HATCHET-TO-THE-FACE** THING WAS JUST ABOUT THE BEST PART OF THE BOOK.

WELL, YES, BUT THAT WAS IN THE **OPENING CHAPTER**. SURELY THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT THE BOOK YOU FOUND INTERESTING.

HMMMMMMM...LET'S SEE. UH...OH, WHEN THE OTHER GUY PUT HIS FOOT ON THE DUDE'S FACE SO HE COULD PULL THE HATCHET OUT OF HIS CHEEK BONE - **THAT WAS KEWL.**

OKAY, SO WE ALL AGREE THE **ENTIRE** HATCHET-THING WAS KEWL. CANT YOU THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE?? (SIGH) **B.A.?**

THAT ROCKED!



WELL I THOUGHT IT WAS INTERESTING THAT THE **TUMULTUOUS ROMANCE** BETWEEN **LADY GEEERVEY** AND **LORD STOUT-HEART** SEEMED TO BE IN SYNC WITH THE **EBB AND FLOW** OF THE **CIVIL WAR** WHICH WAS SHATTERING THE **URTHSYTE KINGDOM** IN THE BACKGROUND. IT WAS SAD THAT WHEN THE **HOSTILITIES** CEASED SO DID THEIR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER. OF COURSE I COULD BE READING TOO MUCH INTO IT BUT THAT'S WHAT STRUCK ME MOST ABOUT THE BOOK.

OOH THAT'S BEAUTIFUL. I HADN'T EVEN MADE THAT CONNECTION. YOU'RE RIGHT!! **YOU SEE??** THIS IS WHAT **BOOK CLUBS** ARE ALL ABOUT. BEAUTIFUL OBSERVATION, **B.A.!!!** JUST BEAUTIFUL!!

WHERE THE HELL WAS THAT??

WOW!!



NO HOLD ON A SEC. I HAD A LOT OF PROBLEMS WITH THIS BOOK. THIS **MARTLEY CHICK** DONT KNOW **JACK** ABOUT WRITING FANTASY. I GOTTA BE HONEST. THIS BOOK **BLEW!!** SORRY, SARA.

EXCEPT THAT PART WHERE THE GUY GOT KILLED WITH THE HATCHET!!

NO, NO, THIS IS GOOD. DONT APOLOGIZE THIS ISN'T ABOUT AGREEING WITH EACH OTHER. WE'RE HERE TO DISCUSS THE BOOK. TELL US WHAT YOUR PROBLEMS WERE.

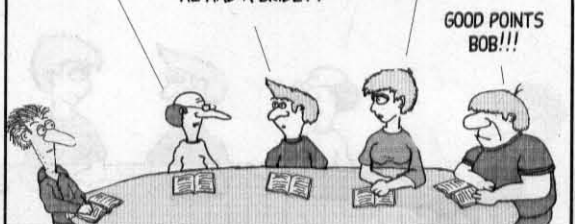


OKAY, FIRST OFF THIS **LORD STOUT-FART** OR WHATEVER HIS NAME WAS - WHO THE HELL WAS HE?? THIS IS THE HERO OF THE BOOK? WHAT A JOKE! THE MAN'S GOT NO **MAGIC WEAPONS**, NO **MAGIC ARMOR!!** HE KILLED FOUR DUDES WHEN THEY TRIED TO CARRY OFF HIS BRIDE AND THE **IDIOT** DIDN'T EVEN STOP TO SEARCH THE BODIES. I WAS SO MAD I WAS **YELLING** AT THE BOOK. THEN WHEN HE WAS SEARCHING THAT **KEEP** TO RESCUE HIS CAPTURED MEN HE DIDN'T CHECK FOR **SECRET DOOR ONE!!!** NO CHECKS FOR **TRAPS!!NADA!! ZIP!!** WHAT A GOOF!!

HE HAD A BRIDE??

ARE YOU SERIOUS??

GOOD POINTS BOB!!!



OH?? SO YOU AGREE WITH BOB'S COMMENTS?? LET'S HEAR YOUR VIEWS ON THE BOOK, BRIAN.

ACTUALLY MY **BEEF** WITH THE BOOK IS WITH ITS LACK OF **PLAUSIBILITY!!** IT TOOK THE GUY **FOUR MONTHS** TO CROSS THE **DESERTS OF BARROON**. I PUT MY **HACKMASTER HEX OVERLAY** ON THE MAP THEY PRINTED ON THE BACK COVER AND THAT DUDE SHOULD HAVE BEEN TRAVELING **FOUR HEXES PER DAY EASY!!** TEN DAYS TOPS AND HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN OUT OF THAT DESERT.

WELL ONCE I STUMBLED UPON THAT LITTLE MISTAKE I GOT TO THINKING SO I DID SOME CALCULATIONS. I WAS ABLE TO TAKE THE **FENCING-DUEL** BETWEEN **LORD STOUT-HEART** AND **MASTER DU'MARE** AND GET A FAIR APPROXIMATION OF HIS **MAXIMUM HITPOINTS!!** IT WAS AN EASY MATTER OF DIVIDING THE FIGHT INTO COMBAT ROUNDS AND, (USING THE DESCRIPTIVE TEXT), ASSIGN **TO-HIT DAMAGE** TO EACH BLOW UNTIL **LORD STOUT-HEART** PASSED OUT FROM THE PAIN. BY MY FIGURES HE HAD **108 H.P.'S**.

A VERY INTERESTING NUMBER. THAT WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE HE WAS AN **8TH TO 10TH LEVEL FIGHTER!!** ABOUT RIGHT FOR A MAN OF HIS **POSITION AND STATUS!!**

BUT WHAT HAPPENS?? THE GUY GETS IN A FIST FIGHT WITH A LOWLY **STABLE MASTER**, (A ZERO LEVEL NPC TYPE BY ALL ACCOUNTS) AND GETS **COLD-COCKED** WITH **ONE PUNCH!!! PREPOSTEROUS!!** THEN WHEN HE RUNS OUT OF FOOD WHILE LOST IN **THE THICKETS OF WOE** HE COLLAPSES FROM **NEAR-STARVATION** AFTER A MERE **SIX DAYS!!! INCREDIBLE!!!** EVEN IF YOU ALLOW FOR THE MAXIMUM OF A **10 HITPOINT** LOSS PER DAY FROM LACK OF FOOD THE GUY COULD HAVE EASILY GONE **TEN DAYS** WITHOUT **FOOD!!** THE LIST GOES **ON AND ON!!** ONE MAJOR DISCREPANCY AND TECHNICAL FLAW AFTER THE OTHER. AND LET'S NOT EVEN GET STARTED ON THE SUBJECT OF **WEAPON PROFICIENCIES, PRIMARY SKILLS, KNOWN LANGUAGES, ETC.** I GIVE THIS BOOK THE **BIG THUMBS DOWN!!**

UH HUH. I COULDN'T PUT MY THUMB ON IT BUT I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT THAT DUDE.

A LOWLY **STABLE MASTER??**

UH..ER..UH...

OKAY, OKAY, SO THE **BOOK CLUB** THING WAS A **BAD IDEA!!** I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU'D BE SUBJECTING EVERYTHING TO THE **HACK-MASTER BAROMETER**. NOT EVEN **SHAKESPEARE** COULD STAND UP TO YOUR **TOUGH HACK-N-SLASH** STANDARDS!!

SHAKESPEARE?? ISN'T THAT THE **LICHE LORD** FROM **MODULE B-12: SWAMP PHANTOMS??**

YEAH!! HE WAS KICKASS!! I GOT MY **ANKLETS OF LEVITATION** FROM HIM.

I'M GLAD WE DID THIS. I'M GOING TO GO OVER ALL MY **HORTON P. FOOTE** BOOKS AND DO THE MATH. LOOKS LIKE HE HAS A LITTLE **CREDIBILITY** PROBLEM.

The Hang Nail Incident

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN



THE **BARKEEP** THROWS A **DWARVEN HAND AXE** AT YOU **BOB!!** IT BARELY MISSES YOUR HEAD. UNFORTUNATELY, SINCE **EL RAVAGER** WAS BACKING YOU UP HE GETS HIT FOR **16 POINTS OF DAMAGE!!**

WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH THIS GUY? ALL I DID WAS **WUSS-SLAP** THE **SURLY WAITRESS** FOR GIVING ME **LIP!!**

APPARENTLY THE **SURLY WAITRESS** IS HIS WIFE.

I GOT HIT?? **DAMN!!** I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD BOB YOU WERE TRYING TO SHOOT A **PEACH PIT** OFF HER HEAD WITH YOUR **CROSSBOW** AND YOU MISSED!! **TWICE!!**

IT'S NOT BOB'S FAULT THE LIGHT IS CRAPPY IN THIS BAR.



WELL IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU THINK IT'S RIGHT OR NOT. IN THE FRONTIER TOWN OF **HANG-NAIL** MIGHT MAKES RIGHT!! WITH A SNAP OF HIS FINGERS TEN WELL-ARMED, BRITISH LOOKING **BOUNCERS** EMERGE FROM THE BACK ROOM AND ASK YOU TO LEAVE.

BOUNCERS!! THAT'S A GOOD NAME FOR THEM COZ I'M GONNA **BOUNCE** THEIR HEADS OFF THE FLOOR AND SLAM DUNK THEM!! I GOT A **5,000 GOLD PIECE** BET ON THIS **PEACH PIT** THING.

UH...BOB...HOLD ON A SEC. WE CAME TO TOWN TO REST AND **HEAL UP** - REMEMBER?? AFTER GETTING **WHACKED** WITH THAT AXE I'M DOWN TO **4 HIT POINTS!!** I DON'T THINK WE CAN HANDLE THESE GUYS!!

I'M DOWN TO **12 HIT-POINTS** MYSELF FROM THE **OGRE AMBUSH**.

YEAH WE TOOK A BEATING IN THE **DUNGEON OF THORN RIDGE!!**



DO MY EARS DECEIVE ME?? HUH?? ARE YOU SUGGESTING WE **RUN AWAY** FROM A FIGHT?? THIS SUDDEN DISPLAY OF **COWARDICE** SICKENS ME!!

EVER HEAR THE EXPRESSION, "HE WHO **RUNS AWAY, LIVES TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY**"?

BACK OFF JACK!! I'M JUST SAYIN' WE AREN'T EXACTLY IN TOP FIGHTING CONDITION - THAT'S ALL!!

GAAAA!! SHE SAID IT!! YOU HEARD HER!! SHE SAID **RUN AWAY!!** OH I'M NOT BELIEVIN' THIS. LOOKS LIKE **KNUCKLES** THE **KING OF WALL CLIMBERS** HOOKED UP WITH A BUNCH OF **YELLER NO GOOD**....

YOU BETTER NOT BE CALLIN' **EL RAVAGER** NO COWARD! I CAN TELL YOU **THAT!!** YOU WANT A FIGHT SO BAD YOU JUST MIGHT FIND ONE - ON THE END OF MY **HACKMASTER** - **12!!**

GUYS, CHILL OUT! PLEASE!

WHILE YOU GUYS ARE ARGUING, THE **BOUNCERS** START LAUGHING AT YOU!! ONE OF THEM NUDGES ANOTHER AND POINTS AT YOU SAYING, "AWWWWWWWW, DA WIDDLE WARRIORS ARE AFRAID TO FIGHT!" (SNICKER)

OH GREAT!! THIS IS JUST WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT. I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF OUR **STREET GRED** GOES DOWN **TWENTY PERCENTILES!!!**

DON'T FALL FOR IT DAVE. CAN'T YOU SEE **B.A.** IS TRYING TO PROD YOU INTO A FIGHT? WALK AWAY!! YOU CAN ALWAYS COME BACK TO DEAL WITH YOUR PRIDE WHEN YOU'RE AT **FULL HITPOINTS!!!**

LAUGHING! THEY'RE LAUGHING AT US? AWH MAN, I HATE THAT.

SARA'S RIGHT, DAVE. BUT STILL...THEY **ARE** LAUGHING AT US.



SO WHAT? THEY'RE LAUGHING AT US. HAVEN'T YOU EVER HEARD THE EXPRESSION, "HE WHO LAUGHS LAST, LAUGHS LON...."

OH JUST **PUT A LID ON IT!!** WILL YA?? YOU'RE **NOT A MAN**, SARA. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THEY'RE NOT **JUST** LAUGHING AT US. THEY'RE TRAMPLING ON OUR **HONOR!!**

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D LIVE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN MY COMRADES WOULD RUN AWAY FROM A RUN-OF-THE-MILL **BAR FIGHT!!** YOU'RE BREAKIN' MY HEART HERE. YOU REALLY ARE.

GEE..I DIDN'T LOOK AT IT LIKE THAT. I THINK I SEE YOUR POINT.

BOB, ALL THIS **BRAVADO** SOUNDS REALLY NICE BUT **MOTIVATIONAL SPEECHES** DON'T CHANGE THE **FACTS!!** WE'RE ON OUR LAST LEG HERE.

DAMMIT!! THE DWARF IS RIGHT!!



NO **SELF RESPECTING HERO** WOULD ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE PUSHED AROUND BY SOME **LOWLY BAR SCUM!!!** IF THEY WANT A FIGHT - **BY GAWD LET'S GIVE IT TO 'EM!!**

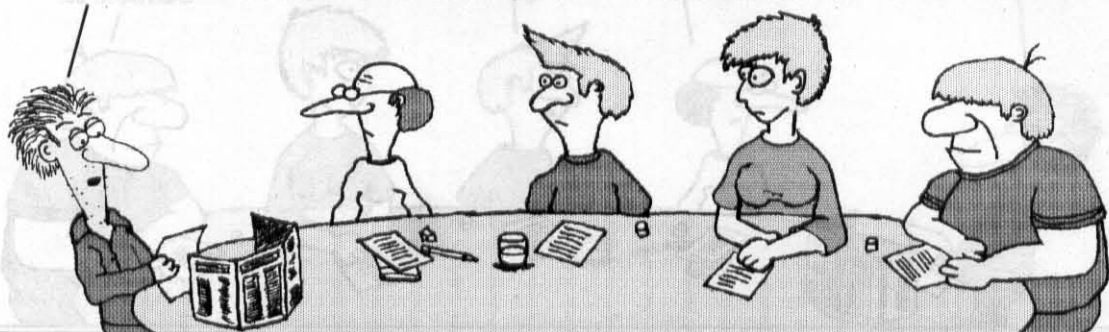
COUNT ME IN DUDE!! C'MON **HIGH FIVE!!!** LET'S KICK SOME ASS AND BRING THE ROOF DOWN ON THESE **BASTARDS!!!**

HOODY HOO!! I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON MY BOYS!!



TEN MINUTES LATER...

YOU WAKE UP IN A **TURNIP FIELD** TWELVE MILES OUTSIDE OF TOWN. YOU'VE BEEN STRIPPED NAKED, TARRED AND FEATHERED, HOG-TIED AND YOUR BUTTOCKS HAVE BEEN BRANDED WITH THE **RUNE OF COWARDICE!!** (YOU EACH TOOK 2 HITPOINTS FROM THE PAIN OF BEING BRANDED, BY THE WAY.) IRON LEG BANDS WITH LITTLE COPPER BELLS HAVE BEEN RIVETED AROUND YOUR WRISTS AND ANKLES SO NO MATTER WHERE YOU WANDER, YOU CAN BE PROPERLY **HEGKLED AND MOCKED**. A NOTE HAS BEEN PINNED TO THE FLESH OF BOB'S CHEST (ANOTHER 1 HITPOINT OF DAMAGE FOR THE NEEDLE) WHICH READS, **'STAY OUT OF HANG NAIL OR YOU'LL GET MORE OF THE SAME!'**



NO OFFENSE BOB BUT WHO EVER SAID THAT, "WALK AWAY AND LIVE TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY" CRAP WAS A **FREAKIN' GENIUS!!** I THINK **SARA** WAS ON TO SOMETHING.

HEY WE MIGHT HAVE LOST BUT AT LEAST WE STILL HAVE OUR PRIDE DUDE!!

OH YEAH, WE CAN HOLD OUR HEADS UP HIGH AS WE JING, JING, JINGLE OUR WAY BY PROUDLY.

I'M MAKING A **SALVE** OUT OF SOME CRUSHED TURNIP LEAVES AND APPLYING IT TO MY BUTT WOUND!!

HEY, HEY, DON'T BE STINGY WITH THE **MEDIC-SKILLS** DUDE. HOW ABOUT RUBBIN' SOME OF THAT STUFF ON ME?

I WOULDN'T MIND A LITTLE MEDICAL ATTENTION MYSELF, BRIAN. WOULD YOU BE A DEAR?? (SNICKER)

YO!! AND ME TOO!!

FIRK-DING-BLAST!! WHO DO I LOOK LIKE?? **DOCTOR FREAKIN' RUTH??**

I'M SWEARING AN **OATH** TO MY PATRON GAWD, **LOKI!!** THE SUN SHALL NOT SET AGAIN ON THE TOWN OF **HANG NAIL!!** I CURSE THE PLACE AND ALL THOSE WHO DWELL IN IT!! THE **WRATH OF KNUCKLES** IS ABOUT TO DESCEND UPON THEM!!

BUT DUDE WE ONLY HAVE A HANDFUL OF HITPOINTS LEFT BETWEEN US!!

OKAY, OKAY, SO WE REST UP. **THEN** WE GO **KICK SOME ASS!!**

BUT WE'RE **NAKED!!**

SO WHAT?? WE'LL REST UP, STEAL SOME CLOTHES AND **THEN** WE GO **WASTE THOSE DUDES!!!**

BUT WE GOT NO WEAPONS, NO ARMOR!! WE'RE LIKE A BUNCH OF **BUMS!!**



Note: There was some minor debate when this strip was turned in over Brian's line in the third panel and which would be funnier; Dr. Ruth or (which the way it was originally written) Dr. Quin; Medicine Woman. — Jolly

GEEZE LOUEEZE!! WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOUR **FIGHTING SPIRIT??** SO WHAT IF THINGS ARE STACKED AGAINST US?? SO WHAT IF WE TOOK A LITTLE BEATING?? IT'S NO TIME TO **QUIT!!** WHEN THE GOING GETS ROUGH THE ROUGH GET GOING!! YOU PULL YOURSELF UP BY THE **BOOTSTRAPS** AND JUMP BACK INTO THE **FRAY!!**

DOES THIS MEAN WE HAVE TO GET OUR BUTTS KICKED AGAIN??

THE DWARF IF RIGHT!! IT AIN'T OVER TIL IT'S OVER!!

NO!! IT MEANS WE USE OUR **WITS** AND REGAIN OUR **EDGE!!**

AMEN!! PREACH ON, BROTHER BOB!!



B.A.!! WE'RE MARCHING BACK DOWN THAT ROAD TOWARD **HANG NAIL!!!** LET ME KNOW IF WE RUN INTO ANYBODY ON THE WAY THERE.

YOU'RE...YOU'RE GOING BACK?? TO **HANG NAIL??** NAKED, TARRED AND FEATHERED?? JUST GOING BACK??

THAT'S RIGHT!! AND AS FOR ME, I'M HOLDING MY HEAD HIGH AND WALKING LIKE I GOT A PURPOSE!!

BUT...BUT... WE'RE HEADING BACK? **NOW??**



RELAX GUYS, IT'S **TWELVE MILES** BACK TO TOWN. YOU GOTTA TRUST ME ON THIS. I THINK I'VE GOT A PLAN.

TRUST YOU?? FOLLOWING A **NAKED MAN** WITH A **BRAND ON HIS BUTT** AND **BELLS** ON HIS ANKLES DOESN'T INSPIRE A WHOLE LOT OF **TRUST!!**

YOU **THINK** YOU HAVE A PLAN??

I SUGGEST WE BREAK FOR A **BATHROOM HUDDLE** TO DISCUSS MY PLAN.

LET'S SEE WHAT HE COMES UP WITH.



TEN MINUTES LATER...

OKAY YOU WALK ABOUT **FIVE MILES** AND COME ACROSS **TWO BEGGARS** FIGHTING OVER A **DEAD CHIPMUNK** BY THE ROAD SIDE. THEY HEAR THE **RINGING CHORUS** OF BELLS APPROACHING AND STOP TO LOOK UP AND WATCH YOU APPROACH!!

I SMILE WARMLY AND EXTEND MY ARMS IN A FRIENDLY MANNER. "MY FRIENDS!!" I SAY, "LOOK HOW THE PEOPLE OF **HANG NAIL** TREAT THE **POOR** AND **UNFORTUNATE!!**"

UH, THEY LOOKED SHOCKED. "THEY DID THESE THINGS TO YOU? WHY?"

ALL WE DID WAS ASK TO DRINK FROM THEIR WELL!!



ONE OF THE BEGGARS LOOKS AT YOU IN DISBELIEF. "BUT MY FRIEND, WE WERE JUST HEADING FOR THAT PLACE. WE WERE TOLD THAT THE PEOPLE OF **HANG NAIL** WERE GENEROUS AND KIND TO THE **DOWN TRODDEN!!**"

"OF COURSE THAT'S WHAT YOU HEARD. THEY FIND **GREAT SPORT** IN MISTREATING THOSE OF **NO MEANS**. THEY SPREAD THAT RUMOR TO ATTRACT OTHERS SO THAT THEY MAY GIVE THEM THE SAME TREATMENT WE RECEIVED." B.A., I SHOW THEM THE NOTE THEY PINNED TO MY CHEST.

WE ARE GOING BACK THERE TO TEACH THEM A LESSON!! JOIN US!! WON'T YOU??

DOWN WITH THE RICH!!

WE'VE GOT TO TEACH THOSE **BASTARDS** THAT THEY CAN'T TREAT **BEGGARS** LIKE THIS!!



WELL, I GUESS THE **BEGGARS** WOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY **ANGERED** BY YOUR **ALLEGATIONS** TO JOIN UP WITH YOU.

HOODY HOO!!! I TELL THEM TO FALL INTO RANK. THEN WE'LL PROCEED DOWN THE ROAD. DON'T FORGET YOU **HAVE** TO ROLL FOR **RANDOM ENCOUNTERS** EVERY **TURN** ON A **PATROLLED ROAD!!**

WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY UP TO??



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

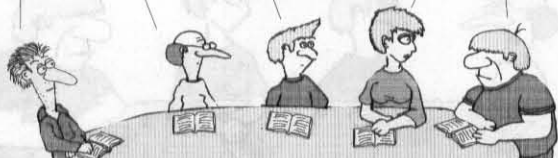
OKAY, YOU WALK ABOUT TWO MILES AND YOU RUN INTO **TWO ALMSMEN** AND A **PANHANDLER!!**

WHAT'S THE VERDICT, BRIAN?? THESE GUYS QUALIFY AS **BEGGARS**??

YER DAMN STRAIGHT THEY DO!! GO AHEAD AND RECRUIT THEM. THAT PUTS US AT FIFTY-EIGHT TOTAL!! TWO MORE AND WE'LL HAVE **SIX MOBS!!*** WE'RE WELL ON OUR WAY TO OUR QUOTA!!!

OUTSTANDING!!

THIS JUST MIGHT WORK!



BEGGAR MOBS!!!

I **KNOW** WHAT YOU GUYS ARE UP TO. DON'T EVEN THINK I'M GOING TO LET YOU GET AWAY WITH IT.

SORRY B.A., YOU **CAN'T** STOP US. WE HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT 75% OF **ALL** RANDOM ENCOUNTERS ALONG A **PATROLLED ROAD** IN A **TEMPERATE ZONE** ARE **BEGGAR ENCOUNTERS!!**

AND THEY ARE ENCOUNTERED IN GROUPS OF **1010!!** BY THE TIME WE GET TO **HANG NAIL** WE ESTIMATE WE'LL HAVE AN ARMY OF AT LEAST **150 BEGGARS!!**

WHICH WORKS OUT TO **15 MOBS!!**

THAT'S ASSUMING WE WALK A **TWENTY-MINUTE-MILE** PACE. THAT'S **TWO ENCOUNTERS** PER MILE FOR A TOTAL OF **TWENTY FOUR ENCOUNTERS!!**



A WEE BIT LATER....

OKAY, YOUR **BEGGAR ARMY** SWEEPS OVER THE TOWN OF **HANG NAIL** LIKE A SWARM OF LOCUSTS SUBDUING EVERYONE THAT CROSSES THEIR PATH!! BUILDINGS ARE SET ABLAZE, WAGONS ARE OVERTURNED, THE SHRINE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MARKET PLACE IS TOPPLED!!

GREAT!! I'LL GRAB THE **SIX BEGGARS** I KEPT IN RESERVE. SINCE US **FOUR** HAVE TECHNICALLY BEEN RELEGATED TO **BEGGAR STATUS** WE SHOULD CONSTITUTE A **BEGGAR MOB** PER THE RULES. I'LL LEAD **OUR** MOB TO THE TAVERN. WE'LL QUICKLY **OVERBEAR** ANYONE WE FIND THERE. DURING THE COMMOTION, **BRIAN** WILL BREAK OFF TO RETRIEVE OUR BELONGINGS!!

WHERE DO THEY KEEP THE **TAR** AND **FEATHERS**?? I'M GOING TO **DOUBLE-DIP** THAT **BARKEEP!!**

DON'T FORGET THE **BELLS!!** WE'LL NEED **LOTS** OF BELLS.

SWEET, SWEET, REVENGE!!



* See *Bundle of Trouble* Volume Four [KODT#12] "An Overbearing Situation"

Brian's Eggs

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN AND DAVID KENZER

OKAY, THE LAST **OWLBEAR** SHRIEKS IN PAIN AND COLLAPSES IN A BLOODY HEAP. AFTER SEARCHING THE **OWLBEAR'S LAIR** YOU DISCOVER WHY THEY FOUGHT SO **VALIANTLY!!!** YOU FIND A LARGE NEST THAT CONTAINS **SIX EGGS!!**

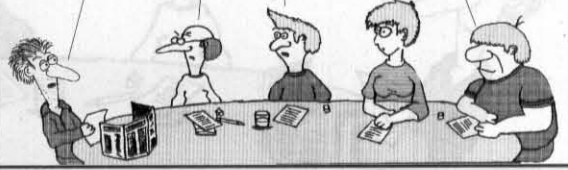


EGGS?? WE WENT THROUGH **ALL THAT** AND THERE'S NOTHING IN HERE BUT SOME **STUPID EGGS??** I'LL **STOMP** ON THEM AND THEN WE'LL GET THE **HELL** OUT OF HERE AND MOVE ON.

WHAT A WASTE OF TIME!! AT LEAST WE CLEANED UP ON **EXPERIENCE POINTS**. THAT WAS A PRETTY DECENT FIGHT.

SORRY GUYS, I TRIED TO TELL YOU IT WAS **JUST** A LAIR.

BOB WAIT!!! DON'T STOMP ON THE EGGS!!



HUH??
WHY NOT??

WHY?? WELL... ER... UH... **SPELL COMPONENTS!!** THAT'S IT. I READ AN ARTICLE IN **HACK JOURNAL** RECENTLY ON GATHERING SPELL COMPONENTS AND **OWL BEAR EGGS** ARE LOADED WITH THEM. THEY COULD COME IN HANDY.

??!

GO AHEAD!!! KNOCK YOURSELF OUT, DUDE!! THEY'RE ALL YOURS!!

I DON'T RECALL THAT ARTICLE. WHICH ISSUE WAS THAT?

OH, UH. IT WAS IN THE **BRITISH** VERSION.



LATER THAT NIGHT...

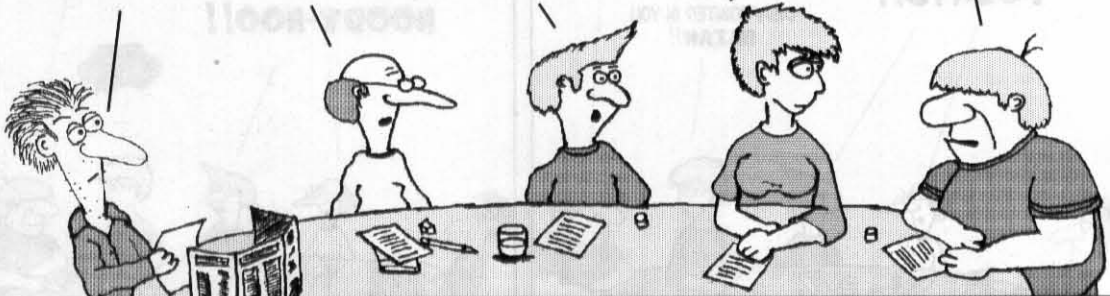
OKAY BRIAN, THE **CARPENTER** FINISHES THE **CAGE** YOU ASKED HIM TO BUILD. HE SAYS HE'LL DELIVER IT TO THE **STABLE** AS DIRECTED.

HE'S FUSSIN' OVER THOSE EGGS LIKE AN **OLD MOTHER HEN!!**

THE **BIG GUYS** GONE SOFT ON US.

BRIAN, THAT IS **SO SWEET!!**

OUTSTANDING. I'LL LINE THE **CAGE BOTTOM** WITH **FRESH STRAW** AND GENTLY ARRANGE THE **OWLBEAR EGGS** IN A CIRCLE AND COVER THEM WITH A **WOOLEN BLANKET**. THEN I'LL COVER THE CAGE WITH **CANVAS**. I'M PAYIN' THE **STABLE BOY** ONE GOLD PIECE PER DAY TO STAND WATCH OVER THE CAGE AND MAKE SURE NO ONE DISTURBS IT. I'LL CHECK ON IT WHEN WE COME BACK TO TOWN EACH NIGHT.



Based on a true story from Dave Kenzer's campaign in which a barbarian named Thundar tried to raise his own owlbears. Breeding monsters to kill for experience points gave us a similar idea. We always wanted to capture an undead monster of the type that drained experience levels. Then when a PC gained a level and blew his roll for hit points, he could go get himself drained that level and try for better luck on the dice next time. -Brian

ONE WEEK LATER...

BRIAN, THE **VETERINARIAN** YOU SUMMONED ARRIVES. HE LOOKS AT THE EGGS AND TELLS YOU THE STRANGE MOLD GROWING ON THE EGGS IS NATURAL. THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU UP TO BRIAN?? YOU SURE ARE WASTING A LOT OF TIME AND MONEY ON THOSE **STUPID EGGS**. YOU WOULDN'T BE PLANNING ON SELLING THEM OR SOMETHING AND KEEPING THE MONEY FOR YOURSELF WOULD YOU?

THANK GAWD!! I THOUGHT PERHAPS THE **EGGS** HAD GONE BAD. I'M GOING PAY THE **VET** A RETAINER TO BE ON CALL AT ALL TIMES.

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU BRIAN. IF YOU NEED ANY HELP TURNING THE EGGS OR GUARDING THEM, I'LL BE GLAD TO PULL A FEW SHIFTS AND SLEEP IN THE STABLE.

YOU FREAK!!



A FEW GAME SESSION LATER...

OKAY BRIAN, YOUR **ROUTINE GROW SPELLS** BRING THE **OWL BEAR CUBS** UP TO **FULL MATURITY** IN A MATTER OF DAYS. THERE ARE NOW **36 EGGS** IN THE HATCHERY.

THIS AIN'T NATURAL!! HE'S BREEDING MONSTERS!!! SOMEBODY NEEDS TO PUT A STOP TO THIS **MADNESS!!**

HOLY MOLY!! HE'S RAISING A WHOLE **GAGGLE** OF **OWL BEARS!!**

I ORDER MORE CAGES AND SEPARATE THE ADULT **OWL BEARS** FROM THE **EGGS & CUBS**.

BRIAN, DUDE, WHAT THE HELL HAS GOTTEN INTO YOU?? YOU'RE RAISING **FREAKIN' OWL BEARS** FOR GAWD'S SAKE!! **SNAP OUT OF IT!!** THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR WEEKS.

IF YOU DON'T PUT AN **END** TO IT - BOB AND I WILL INTERVENE!! WE'RE WARNING YOU!!

GUYS, BRIAN'S CHARACTER IS GOING TO LEARN MANY WONDERFUL AND EXCITING THINGS ABOUT THESE CREATURES.

RELAX GUYS, CHECK IT OUT...



B.A., I USE A **SPEAR** AND KILL THE **SIX ADULT OWL BEARS** IN THEIR CAGES. I ESTIMATE THEY ARE WORTH **900 EXPERIENCE POINTS** A POP FOR A TOTAL OF **8,100 E.P.'S!!!**

8,000 EXPERIENCE POINTS!!

I AM SO DISAPPOINTED IN YOU **BRIAN!!**

DON'T WORRY GUYS!! I'LL LET EACH OF YOU HAVE A **SHARE OF THE E.P.'S** IN THE **NEXT HARVEST!!** ONCE MY **HATCHERY** IS UP AND RUNNING AT FULL SPEED I EXPECT TO BE CRANKING OUT **TWO TO THREE HUNDRED OWL BEARS** A WEEK.

HOODY-HOO!!



Virtual Liabilities

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN

WELL, THAT WRAPS UP TONIGHT'S GAME. I THINK THIS ADVENTURE IS SHAPING UP NICELY. IF ALL GOES WELL YOU SHOULD REACH THE **DUNGEON** NEXT WEEK AND THINGS WILL REALLY **HIT THE FAN!!**

I SURE HOPE SO. GETTING LOST IN THAT **FOREST MAZE** FOR SIX WEEKS **SUCKED!!** SOMETIMES I THINK YOU JUST DO THAT BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING PREPARED.

I WAS SO SICK OF HEARING "A LARGE TREE BLOCKS YOUR WAY."

I'LL SAY!!

MY BREADCRUMB TRAIL WOULD HAVE WORKED IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THOSE DARN BANDS OF **FORAGING SQUIRRELS!!**



YEAH... WELL, THOSE **MAZES** CAN BE PRETTY TOUGH SOMETIMES BUT THEY **ARE** A LARGE PART OF **CLASSIC FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING!** ANYWAY, THAT CONCLUDES TONIGHT'S GAME. I'LL SEE YOU GUYS NEXT WEEK.

OH B.A., YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ABOUT SATURDAY HAVE YOU?? YOU PROMISED I COULD BRING OVER MY COMPUTER SO YOU CAN **PLAYTEST** MY NEW COMPUTER GAME, **VIRTUAL LIABILITIES!!**

OH YEAH. OF COURSE. WE CAN STILL DO THAT. HOW ABOUT **NOONISH!!**

GREAT!! I'LL BE HERE. I THINK YOU'LL LIKE WHAT I'VE COME UP WITH THIS TIME.

HE'S BEEN WORKING ON THAT GAME FOR AGES, IT SEEMS.

WHERE DOES HE FIND THE TIME?

BRIAN IS SO KEWL!!



THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY...

WOW BRIAN THIS REALLY SEEMS COMPLEX. THIS WON'T HURT **MOLLY** WILL IT? YOU KNOW HOW **SKITTISH** I AM ABOUT TAMPERING WITH HER SINCE THAT LITTLE **ACCIDENT!!**

RELAX, ALL I DID WAS NETWORK OUR COMPUTERS. AND I WISH YOU WOULD JUST FORGET ABOUT THAT **LITTLE MISHAP** LAST SUMMER. I'M TELLIN' YA, MEMORY BOARDS EXPLODE ALL THE TIME. IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH MY **VIRUS PROTECTION PROGRAM!!**

I KNOW YOU KEEP SAYING THAT BUT WHEN THE SCREEN KEPT FLASHING THE MESSAGE, "**MEMORY IS INFECTED!!**

TAKING MAXIMUM AGGRESSIVE MEASURES. PLEASE STAND AWAY FROM THE COMPUTER!!" I JUST CAN'T SHAKE MY DOUBTS THAT YOUR PROGRAM WASN'T RESPONSIBLE.

MAN, YOU KNOW HOW TO BEAT A DEAD HORSE DON'T YOU?? CAN WE DROP IT?? I CAME TO SHOW YOU MY **NEW PROGRAM** NOT TALK ABOUT WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE. **SHEESH!!**



ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, SO TELL ME ABOUT THIS GAME YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING SO MUCH TIME ON. WHAT'S IT CALLED?

VIRTUAL LIABILITIES??
WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT??
SOME KIND OF **STOCK MARKET SIMULATION** OR SOMETHING?

I BELIEVE I'M ON THE **THRESHOLD** OF SOMETHING **BIG!!** YOU KNOW TRUE COMPUTER GAMES HAVE ONLY BEEN AROUND FOR **TWENTY-FIVE YEARS** OR SO. IT ALL STARTED WITH SOME LAME ASS GAME CALLED **PONG** AND EVENTUALLY LED TO THE FIRST **CRUDE** ARCADE STYLE GAMES LIKE **SPACE INVADERS** AND **CENTIPEDE**. THINK OF IT!! THOSE PRIMITIVE GAMES GARNERED **MILLIONS AND MILLIONS** OF DOLLARS FOR THEIR CREATORS. BUT HOW FAR HAVE WE COME SINCE THOSE FLEDGLING DAYS?? NOT FAR MY FRIEND!! SURE YOU HAVE YOUR **FANCY-SMANCY GRAPHICS** AND YOUR **NERD-BRAT YUPPIE PROGRAMMERS** CRANKING OUT THEIR **MINDLESS SCREEN-TRASH** INTERACTIVE SIMULATIONS. HOW THE HELL THEY JUSTIFY PUTTING A **FIFTY DOLLAR** PRICE TAG ON A CRUMMY FIFTY CENT **CD ROM** REALLY BURNS MY ASS!! **WHAT??** THESE GUYS THINK I'M MADE OF MONEY?? I GOTTA CHOOSE BETWEEN PAYING RENT OR BUYING THE LATEST **PIECE OF CRAP** THEY'RE CHURNING OUT EVERY FOUR DAYS?? ANOTHER THING THAT TICKS ME OFF IS...

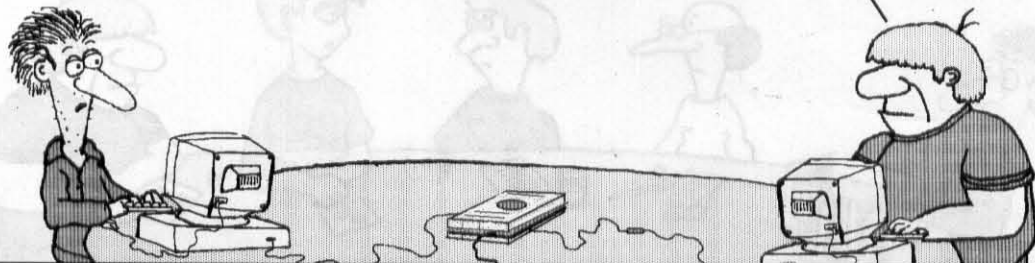
UH HUH...YEAH...ER...**BRIAN...BRIAN!!**

BRIAN!!



I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR TIRED OLD **SPIEL** ON **COMPUTER GAMES**. I'VE HEARD IT. JUST TELL ME WHAT THIS GAME IS ALL ABOUT AND LET'S PLAY!!

WELL...WHAT I WAS **TRYING** TO TELL YOU **BEFORE** YOU SO RUDELY INTERRUPTED IS THAT **ALL** THE COMPUTER GAMES PROGRAMMED TO DATE HAVE HAD ONE **MAJOR FLAW!!** WHILE THEY ATTEMPT TO IMMERSE THE PLAYER IN A **SIMULATED ENVIRONMENT** WHERE HE IS SUPPOSEDLY PITTED AGAINST VARIOUS FOES IN **LIFE-OR-DEATH** SITUATIONS THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN ONE IMPORTANT DETAIL!! THE PLAYER HAS **NOTHING** TO LOSE IN THE SIMULATION BUT THE TIME AND EFFORT HE'S INVESTED IN THE GAME. HE KNOWS HE CAN ALWAYS START OVER AGAIN. THERE IS NO RISK, NO SENSE OF LOSS, THEREFORE THE IMMERSION INTO THE COMPUTER ENVIRONMENT CAN NEVER BE FULLY ATTAINED!!! **UNTIL NOW!!** I'VE BROKEN THE **LIABILITY BARRIER**.

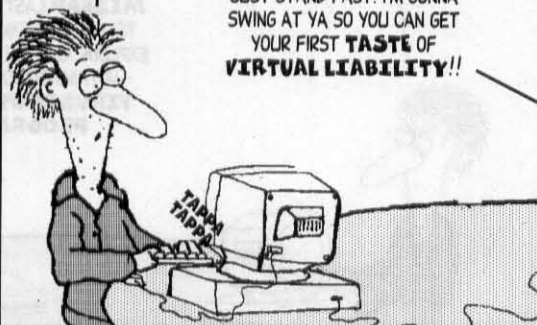
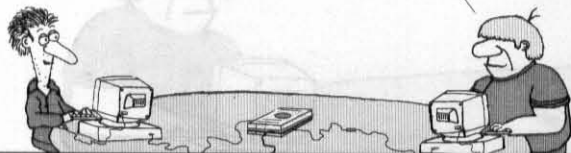


REALLY? **LIABILITY BARRIER** HUH? YOU KNOW, I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. I NEVER REALLY ENJOYED **COMPUTER RPGS** BECAUSE I COULD NEVER REALLY IDENTIFY WITH THE ONSCREEN CHARACTER. YOU MAY BE ON TO SOMETHING.

OKAY, HITTING ENTER..... **OOOOHHHH!!!!** YEAH, I SEE YOU. LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE STANDING ABOUT **TEN FEET** AWAY AND UH...YOU'RE BRANDISHING A RATHER LARGE LOOKING **SWORD!!** HMMMMMMM...OKAY, SO WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

I'M TELLIN' YA - IT'S A **MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH!!** LET'S GET STARTED. JUST HIT ENTER. I'VE ALREADY SET UP FOR A **ONE-ON-ONE** ARMED ENCOUNTER SO YOU CAN GET A FEEL FOR WHAT I'VE DONE.

JUST STAND FAST. I'M GONNA SWING AT YA SO YOU CAN GET YOUR FIRST **TASTE** OF **VIRTUAL LIABILITY!!**



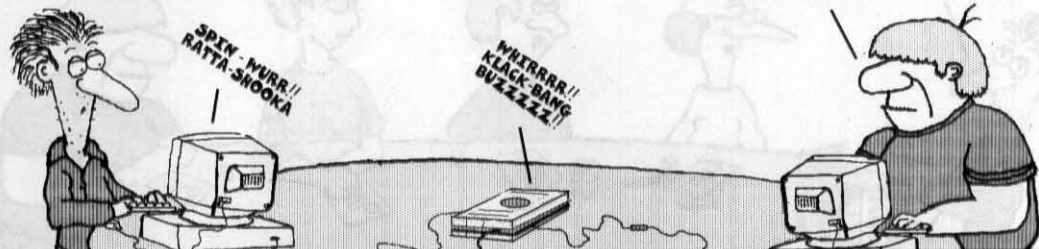
WHOAH!! WHAT'S THAT NOISE?? MY COMPUTER IS VIBRATING.

RELAX, THAT'S JUST MY SPECIAL **SERVO-INTERFACE** COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR COMPUTER AND DETERMINING WHAT ASSETS YOU ARE **WAGERING** FOR THE **DUEL!!**

WAGER?
ASSETS?? WHAT DO YOU MEAN? DON'T I GET TO SET MY OWN WAGER?? WHAT ASSETS??

NO, THE PROGRAM DETERMINES WHAT ASSETS YOU ARE RISKING IN COMBAT. IT SEARCHES YOUR **HARD DRIVE** AND SELECTS THE **TOP TWENTY** MOST FREQUENTLY ACCESSED **DOCUMENT FILES** AND ASSIGNS THEM AS **DAMAGE ZONES**.

YOU'LL SEE IN A MOMENT. HERE COMES MY FIRST SWING!!



SPRY-NWR!!
RATTA-SHOKA

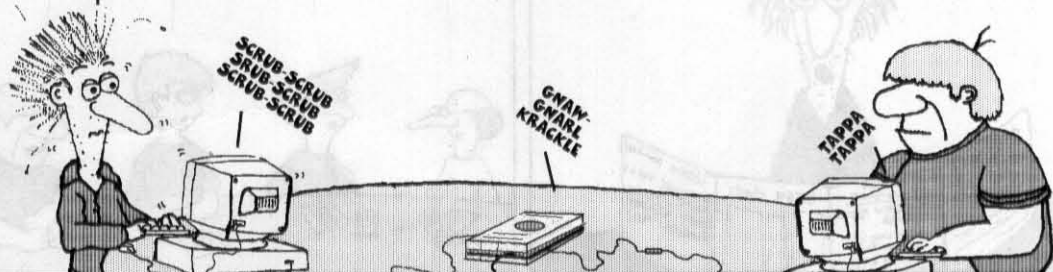
WHIRRR!!
KIAK-BANG!!
BUZZZZ!!

GAAA!!! AAAAEEIII!!!
WAA...WHAT??? IT'S DELETING MY **ELECTRONIC CHECKBOOK!!!** MY **HACKMASTER NOVEL???** FRI-IIPPP!!! FURP-DING-SHGUR-RTTT!!

HUH??? YA SEE?? YOU'RE FEELIN' IT AREN'T YA?? KINDA GETS YOU RIGHT IN THE PIT OF YOUR STOMACH. BY ADDING THE **RISK** OF LOSING SOMETHING OF **PERSONAL VALUE** AND **IMPORT** I'VE MANAGED TO ADD **SIMULATED PAIN** TO THE GAME.

MY...MY... **ADVENTURE ARCHIVES??**
GONE?? TURN IT OFF!!! SHUT THIS **DAMN THING DOWN!!!**
NOW!!!!

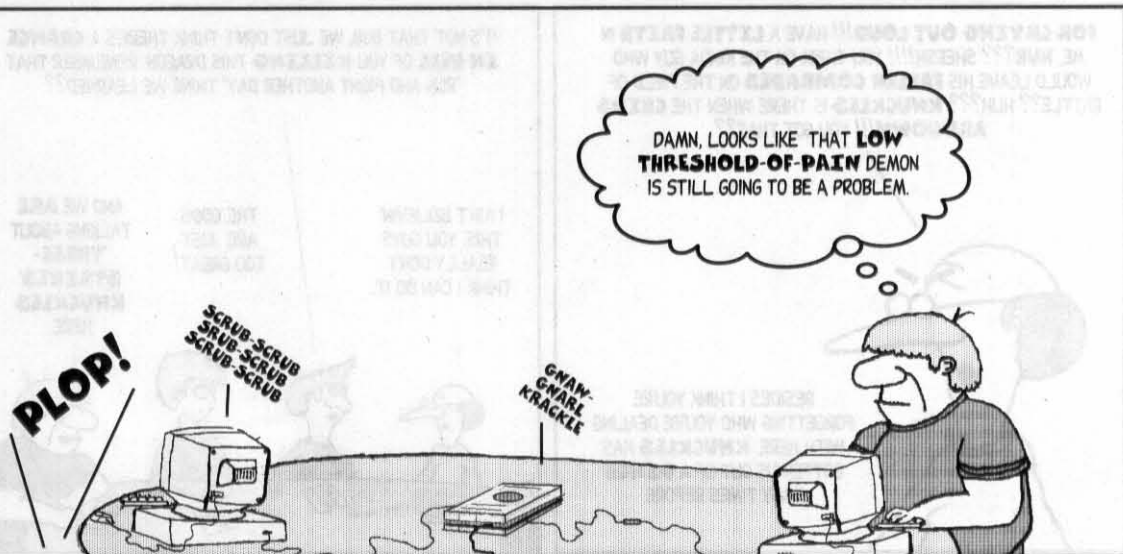
PRETTY INTENSE HUH??
BRACE YOURSELF. I'M GOING FOR THE **ABDOMEN!!!**



SCRUB-SCRUB
SCRUB-SCRUB
SCRUB-SCRUB

GNAN-
GNARL
KRACKLE

TAPPA
TAPPA



DAMN, LOOKS LIKE THAT **LOW THRESHOLD-OF-PAIN DEMON** IS STILL GOING TO BE A PROBLEM.

PLOP!

SCRUB-SCRUB
SCRUB-SCRUB
SCRUB-SCRUB

GNAN-
GNARL
KRACKLE

Have a Little Faith

BY STEVE JOHANSSON

OKAY, DAVE THE **SWACK-IRON DRAGON** HITS YOU SQUARELY WITH HIS HUGE TAIL AND KNOCKS YOU ACROSS THE CHAMBER. YOU'RE **OUT COLD!!!** THIS MEANS THAT **KNUCKLES THE THIEF** IS THE **ONLY ONE** LEFT STANDING!!

GAAA!!! AND I'M OUT OF **CROSSBOW BOLTS!!**

OH MAN, THAT DRAGON KICKED OUR BUTTS!!! AND B.A. IS ON ONE OF HIS LUCKY-STREAKS!! THAT DRAGON AIN'T MISSED A TO HIT ROLL YET!!

WELL, IT LOOKS GRIM.

YOU MIGHT AS WELL SAVE YOURSELF BOB AND RUN FOR IT!



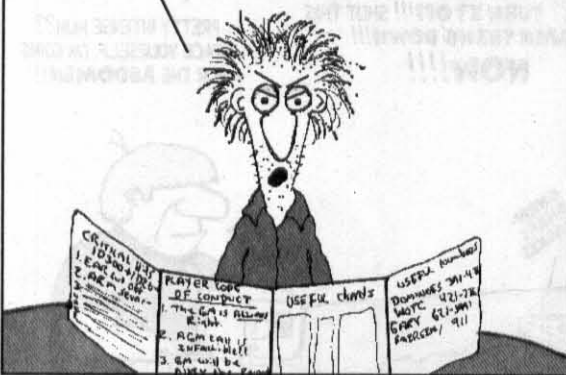
LOOK, BOB, I HAVE TO BE UPFRONT WITH YOU. BRIAN'S LAST **FIREBALL BARRAGE** LEFT THE **DRAGON** WITH ONLY 12 HITPOINTS!!!! UNFORTUNATELY, YOU ONLY HAVE FOUR HIT POINTS LEFT. YOU CAN CHOOSE TO RUN NOW OR ATTACK THE DRAGON ONE MORE TIME. IF YOU MISS, HOWEVER, YOU'RE DEAD AND THE ENTIRE PARTY **DIES!!**

GEE!! WHAT SHOULD I DO?? RUN AWAY OR **SAVE MY BUDDIES??**

DON'T WORRY BOB!!! NO ONE'S GOING TO GIVE YOU ANY FLACK IF YOU SAVE YOURSELF!!

YEAH, WHY SACRIFICE YOUR LIFE FOR A **LOST CAUSE!!!**

I MIGHT AS WELL PULL OUT A **NEW CHARACTER SHEET** AND GET STARTED.



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!! HAVE A **LITTLE FAITH** IN ME, **HUH???** SHEESH!!!! YOU THINK I'M THE KINDA GUY WHO WOULD LEAVE HIS **FALLEN COMRADES** ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE?? **HUH???** **KNUCKLES** IS THERE WHEN THE **CHIPS ARE DOWN!!!** YOU GOT THAT??

IT'S NOT THAT BOB, WE JUST DON'T THINK THERE'S A **CHANGE IN HELL** OF YOU **KILLING** THIS DRAGON. REMEMBER THAT "RUN AND FIGHT ANOTHER DAY" THING WE LEARNED??

I AIN'T BELIEVIN' THIS. YOU GUYS REALLY DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT.

THE ODDS ARE JUST TOO GREAT!

AND WE **ARE** TALKING ABOUT **THREE-STRIKES** **KNUCKLES** HERE.

BESIDES I THINK YOU'RE FORGETTING WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH HERE. **KNUCKLES** HAS GOTTEN US OUT OF A **PINCH** MANY TIMES BEFORE.



Bob had been kicked around so much over the past several issues that I wrote this strip just to give him the opportunity to get even for once. -Steve

THERE YA GO KNOCKING DOWN **KNUCKLES** AGAIN!!!! **WHAT THE HELL'S UP WITH THAT???** HE'S THE LAST GUY STANDING ISN'T HE?? HUH?? HOW MANY TIMES DOES HE HAVE TO SAVE YOUR BUTTS FROM A TIGHT SPOT BEFORE HE EARNS A **LITTLE RESPECT??**

SORRY BOB. YOU'RE RIGHT. GOOD LUCK!!

CALM DOWN, BOB. I DON'T THINK THEY MEANT ANYTHING BY IT.

DAMN, CHILL OUT DUDE!!! WE'RE JUST SAYING THE ODDS OF PULLING THIS OFF ARE PRETTY SLIM. THAT'S ALL.

WELL, IF YER GONNA DO IT - **DO IT!!**



BRIAN, CAN YOU HAND ME DOWN A **NEW CHARACTER SHEET** FROM YOUR BRIEF CASE??

OKAY, I CAN THROW IN A **PLASTIC DOCUMENT PROTECTOR** FOR 15 EXTRA CENTS.

FINE, OK!!
YOU RAT BASTARDS!!
I GET THE **POINT**. I'LL (QUOTE) **RUN AND FIGHT ANOTHER DAY** (UNQUOTE) BUT THERE'S A FEW THINGS I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF FIRST...

??!

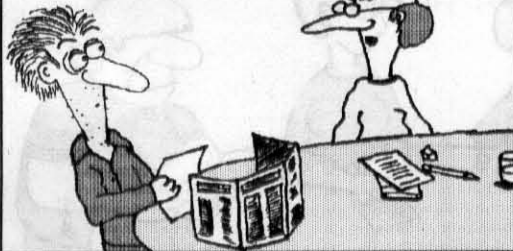
WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, YOU MIGHT AS WELL GET ME ONE.



I **ARTFULLY DODGE** MY WAY OVER TO **TEFLON BILLY'S** CORPSE AND **LIBERATE** THAT **POTION OF INVISIBILITY** HE KEEPS TUCKED IN HIS **SOCK!!** ONCE I HAVE THAT **BAD BABY** IN MY LITTLE HANDS I'M GOING TO DRINK IT.

OKAY YOU MANAGED TO EVADE THE DRAGON AND RETRIEVE THE **POTION**. YOU'RE NOW **INVISIBLE!!**

OKAY, SINCE I'M THERE, I'LL GO AHEAD AND GRAB **TEFLON BILLY'S, RING OF HEFTY DAMAGE**, HIS COIN POUCH, THE **RUBY** IN HIS NAVEL AND HIS **BRACERS OF DIMENSIONAL SHIFT!!**





OH GEE, I'M OUTTA **CROSSBOW BOLTS** AIN'T I? WELL, NEVER MIND. LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A PERFECTLY GOOD **HACKMASTER ·12** LAYING NEAR THE **STUPID LOOKING** FIGHTER TYPE OVER HERE.

UH...BOB, ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING?

OH YEAH, I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. NEXT I'M GONNA GO OVER AND...



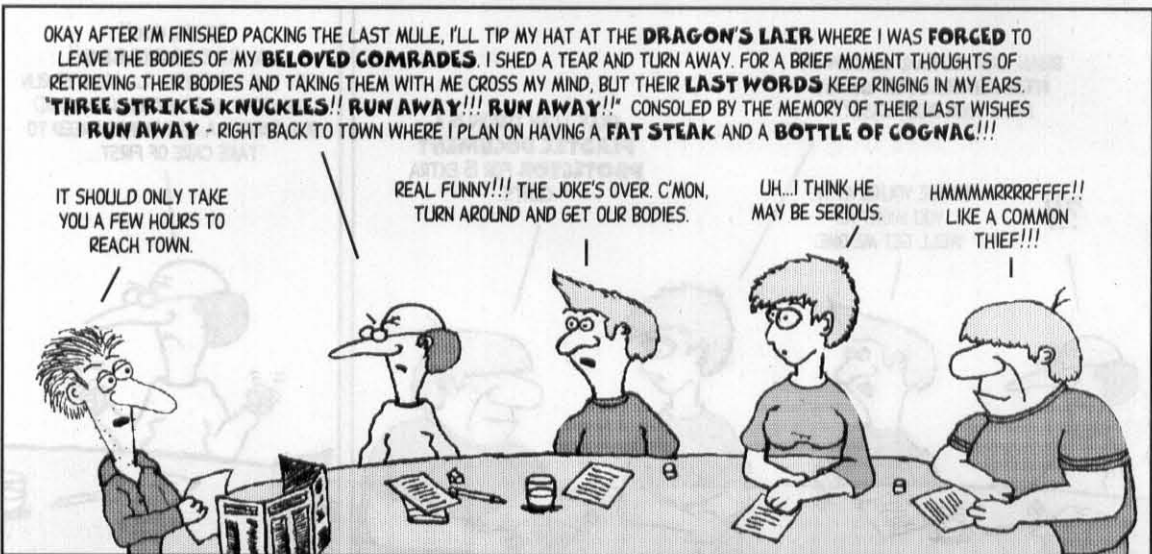
LOOK **CUE BALL!!!** YOU MADE YOUR POINT. NOW QUIT JOKING AROUND AND GET US **RAISED FROM THE DEAD!!!**

WHOA!! WHAT WAS THAT?? I THOUGHT I HEARD A NOISE?? THE ACOUSTICS IN THIS **CAVERN** ARE DOWN RIGHT **EERIE!!**

WE MEAN IT!! GIMME MY SWORD BACK AND GET US OUT OF HERE!!

OH I'M SORRY, I CAN'T **SPEAK DEAD!!!** CAN'T MAKE OUT A SINGLE WORD.

C'MON BOB!!



OKAY AFTER I'M FINISHED PACKING THE LAST MULE, I'LL TIP MY HAT AT THE **DRAGON'S LAIR** WHERE I WAS **FORCED** TO LEAVE THE BODIES OF MY **BELOVED COMRADES**. I SHED A TEAR AND TURN AWAY. FOR A BRIEF MOMENT THOUGHTS OF RETRIEVING THEIR BODIES AND TAKING THEM WITH ME CROSS MY MIND, BUT THEIR **LAST WORDS** KEEP RINGING IN MY EARS. **THREE STRIKES KNUCKLES!!! RUN AWAY!!! RUN AWAY!!!** CONSOLED BY THE MEMORY OF THEIR LAST WISHES I **RUN AWAY** - RIGHT BACK TO TOWN WHERE I PLAN ON HAVING A **FAT STEAK** AND A **BOTTLE OF COGNAC!!!**

IT SHOULD ONLY TAKE YOU A FEW HOURS TO REACH TOWN.

REAL FUNNY!!! THE JOKE'S OVER. C'MON, TURN AROUND AND GET OUR BODIES.

UH...I THINK HE MAY BE SERIOUS.

HMMMMRRRRFFFF!! LIKE A COMMON THIEF!!!

LATER THAT EVENING...

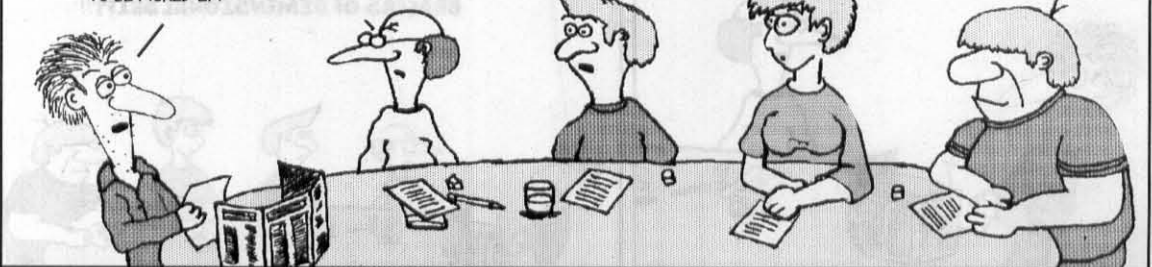
I USE THE LAST OF THE GOLD FROM SELLING **TEFLON BILLY'S SPELLBOOKS** TO PUT THE FINAL GILDED TOUCHES ON **KNUCKLES MANOR**. I THEN GO OUT AND REVIEW THE **MERCENARY REGIMENT** I HIRED ON THE PROCEEDS FROM **EL RAVAGER'S HACKMASTER ·12...**

BOB, WHEN WE SAID **"RUN AWAY AND FIGHT ANOTHER DAY"** WE MEANT YOU SHOULD COME BACK **THE NEXT DAY** AND **FIGHT THAT DRAGON** AND RETRIEVE OUR BODIES!!

GEE, I HEAR THOSE STRANGE NOISES AGAIN.

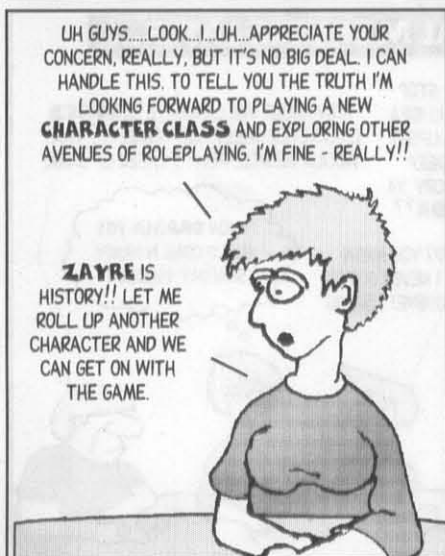
SO YOU DON'T **SPEAK DEAD** HUH?? MAYBE I SHOULD TRANSLATE IT INTO **FIST-SPEAK** FOR YA!!

OKAY, AND YOUR **GOLD-PLATED** ARMOR IS READY TO BE PICKED UP.



Monday Mourning

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN



I MEAN, C'MON - AFTER ALL IT **IS** JUST A **GAME**. AND IT WOULD BE SILLY FOR ME TO GET ALL UPSET ABOUT...UH...ER...UH...

I MEAN **ZAYRE'S** STATS WERE ACTUALLY **QUITE AVERAGE!!** YOU ALL KNEW THAT. IT'S REALLY AMAZING SHE SURVIVED AS LONG AS SHE DID. SHE'S PROBABLY BETTER OFF, ANYWAY. RIGHT? **RIGHT??**

MY GAWD YOU'RE A **COLD BITCH** AREN'T YOU?? WHAT KIND OF PERSON ARE YOU?? HOW CAN YOU SIT THERE AND RUN **ZAYRE** INTO THE GROUND LIKE THAT?? **SHE SAVED MY LIFE!!**

NOT ONLY THAT - NOW YOU'RE GONNA **DUMP** ON HACKMASTER?? **JUST A GAME??**

BUT I... BUT...



FORGET I SAID ANYTHING. YOU'RE RIGHT, I'M TAKING IT PRETTY HARD. I GUESS I WAS IN A STATE OF DENIAL. YEAH, I'M **REALLY** UPSET ABOUT **ZAYRE'S DEATH**. I'M SO GLAD YOU GUYS WERE THERE FOR ME.

WELL....I'M GLAD TO HEAR YOU TALKING SOME SENSE. HEY IT'S OKAY GETTING UPSET BECAUSE YOUR CHARACTER IS DEAD AND ALL BUT THAT'S **NO EXCUSE** TO GO KNOCKING **HACKMASTER** OR **DISIN** A **GOOD CHARACTER!!** I'M REALLY SURPRISED AT YOUR ATTITUDE **SARA!!**

YEAH, FOR A MOMENT THERE I THOUGHT I WAS LOOKING AT AN **EVIL DOPPLEGANGER SARA!!**

LOOK, I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO SAY IT. LIKE I SAID I WAS IN DENIAL. I'M OKAY NOW - **REALLY!!**

THAT'S GOOD, SARA. NOW THE HEALING CAN BEGIN.



I'M STILL NOT SURE. HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE JUST NOT TELLING US WHAT YOU **THINK** WE WANT TO HEAR. HOW DO WE KNOW YOU'RE **SINCERE???** HUH?? **MISS ICE WOMAN!!**

BOB'S RIGHT. YOU'RE NOT JUST YANKING OUR CHAINS ARE YA? YOU SAID SOME PRETTY **HARSH** STUFF.

GOOD POINT, GUYS. MAYBE SHE'S JUST JERKIN' US AROUND SO WE'LL GET OFF HER CASE.

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER...

C'MON SARA. STOP CRYIN' I HAD NO IDEA YOU WERE SO UPSET AND HURT DEEP INSIDE. DON'T CRY. YA WANT A **SODA??**

HOW ABOUT WE LAMINATE **ZAYRE'S** CHARACTER SHEET AND FRAME IT? THAT WOULD BE NICE, HUH?? CHEER UP SARA.

(SNIFF) YOU KNOW WHAT? I NEVER GOT TO SAY GOODBYE! (**SOB**)

I KNEW **DRAMA 101** WOULD COME IN HANDY SOMEDAY. (SHEESH)



I Write the Songs, I Write the Songs!

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN



OKAY **NEWT**, DID YOU ROLL UP A **NEW CHARACTER** TO REPLACE **GRONDEL MOON BARKER**??

YES I DID. I DECIDED TO RUN AN **ELVEN BARD** NAMED **BEN STRING-PLUCKER**!!

A **BARD**? WE'VE NEVER HAD ANYONE RUN A **BARD** BEFORE. THIS SHOULD BE INTERESTING.

FOR **CRYING OUT LOUD**, I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING FOR **PARTY BALANCE** HERE?? WE NEED ANOTHER **FIGHTER** NOT SOME **POET-IN-TIGHTS** STRUMMIN' ON A **FREAKIN' LYRE** SINGING ABOUT THE **MOON** IN THE **TREES**.

HMMMM... **BARDS** CAN BE USEFUL. THEIR **SONGS** CAN GIVE **BONUSES** TO THE **PARTY'S HONOR** AND **FAME FACTORS**.



IT'S EVEN BETTER THAN THAT. **BEN** HAS AN **18 CHARISMA** SO HIS **SINGING** CAN **CHARM LISTENERS** INTO JOINING HIS CAUSE AND EVEN DOING **BATTLE** FOR HIM. AND IF I **PLAY** WHILE YOU **GUYS** ARE ENGAGED IN **COMBAT** YOU GET A **+5** ON YOUR **TO-HITS** AND **DAMAGE**!!

MAYBE IT'S JUST ME BUT THE THOUGHT OF SOME **FREAK** FOLLOWING US AROUND AND SINGING TO US KINDA **WEIRDS ME OUT**!! IT JUST DOESN'T FEEL LIKE **HIGH FANTASY**!!

AWH GEE, THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN. DAMN SHAME I DIDN'T PICK A **MUSICAL INSTRUMENT PROFICIENCY** FOR MY CHARACTER.

SOUNDS LIKE THE **KID** DID HIS **HOMEWORK**.

HEY **FIRE BLOSSOM** KNOWS HOW TO PLAY THE **GNOMISH MANDOLIN**!!! MAYBE WE COULD **JAM** TOGETHER AROUND THE **CAMP FIRE** SOMETIME.

GREAT!! MAYBE YOU **GUYS** CAN FORM A **BAND** AND CALL YOURSELVES, **QUEEZY** AND THE **BLOWHARD**.



LATER THAT NIGHT...

OKAY, YOU **GUYS** SET UP **CAMP** ON THE SHORE OF THE **LAKE** ON A PATCH OF **SANDY BEACH**. THE NEXT MORNING YOU **RESUME** YOUR **JOURNEY** TO THE...

WAIT SIR!! **BEN STRING-PLUCKER** HAS FINISHED HIS FIRST **BALLAD**. HE WANTS TO SING IT TO HIS **COMRADES**. IT'S WORTH **3** POINTS OF **HEALING**!!

WAY TO GO, **NEWT**!!

I GOT A **BAD FEELING** ABOUT THIS!!

"THE **BRAVE MEN** SET OUT FROM **GRAND HOLLOW**, THEY **BOLDLY** SET OFF DOWN THE **TRAIL**. AND **DANGER** LURKED NEAR - BUT THEY HAD NO **FEAR**, THE **BRAVE, BRAVE MEN** FROM **GRAND HOLLOW**!! OH THERE NEVER SEEMS TO BE ENOUGH **RHYMES**, FOR ALL THE **SONGS** OF OUR **GOOD TIMES**, **MEN FROM GRAND HOLLOW**!! **FRIENDS FROM GRAND HOLLOW**!!! W0000-W00000-000000HHH-00HHH-W0000000!!!!" *

HEY, IT'S ABOUT **US**!!!

RASPUTIN IS ANNOYED!!

* Sung to the tune of "Time in a Bottle"

No one ever wanted to play a bard in Dave Kenzer's campaign because he would make you actually sing a song for your bard powers to have any effect. -Brian

UH...THAT...WAS...UH, THAT WAS NICE, **NEWT**. I DIDN'T REALIZE **BARDS** WROTE SONGS ABOUT TRIVIAL THINGS LIKE MOVING FROM **POINT A TO POINT B** ESPECIALLY WHEN **NOTHING REALLY HAPPENS!!!** BUT THAT WAS A, UH, CUTE LITTLE SONG. REAL NICE.

NOW, AS I WAS SAYING, THE PARTY MOVES ON DOWN THE ROAD AND SHOULD REACH THE **DUNGEON** BY NIGHTFALL.



HEY, I HAVE A LITTLE **TRAVELING DITTY** WHICH WILL MAKE OUR JOURNEY MORE ENJOYABLE. -5 VS. **ROAD FATIGUE!!**

HEY I WASN'T KIDDING!! **RASPUTIN** WAS REALLY ANNOYED BY YOUR SINGING. I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO TELL YOU HOW **FREAKIN' ANNOYED** HE WAS. MAYBE YOU SHOULD LAY OFF THE **GROONING**.

AWFULLY THOUGHTFUL OF YOU **NEWT!**



TEN MINUTES LATER..

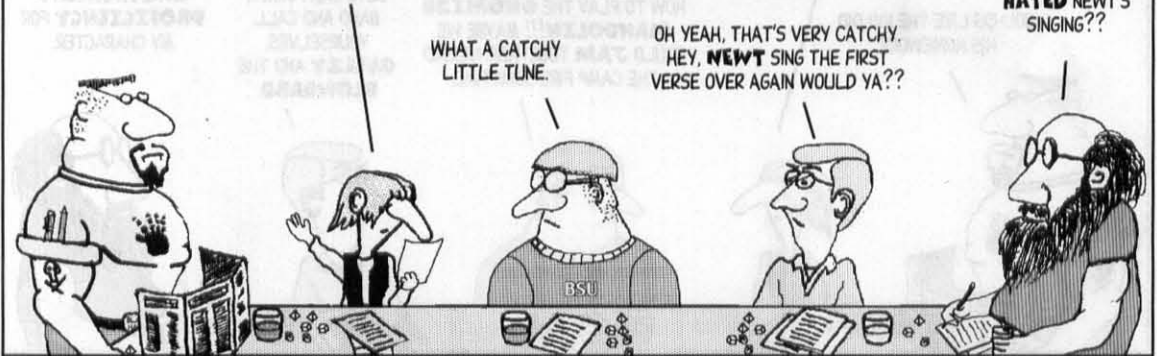
"WE'RE OFF TO FIND THE **DUNGEON**, THE ONE WE HEARD **RUMORS** ABOUT. IT COULD BE REAL, IT COULD BE FALSE, WE REALLY WON'T KNOW TIL WE'RE THERE. WE'LL SPIKE THE DOORS, WE'LL SEARCH THE FLOORS, WE'LL MAP THE HALLS WITH PEN AND QUILL, AND THEN WE'LL KILL, WE'LL KILL, WE'LL KILL, **WE'LL KILL!!!** OH I BET IT WILL BE A WONDERFUL **THRILL!!!** WE'RE OFF TO FIND THE **DUNGEON**, THE ONE WE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT!!!"*

???

HEY **STEVIL**, I THOUGHT **RASPUTIN** HATED **NEWT'S** SINGING??

WHAT A CATCHY LITTLE TUNE.

OH YEAH, THAT'S VERY CATCHY. HEY, **NEWT** SING THE FIRST VERSE OVER AGAIN WOULD YA??



A FEW SECONDS LATER..

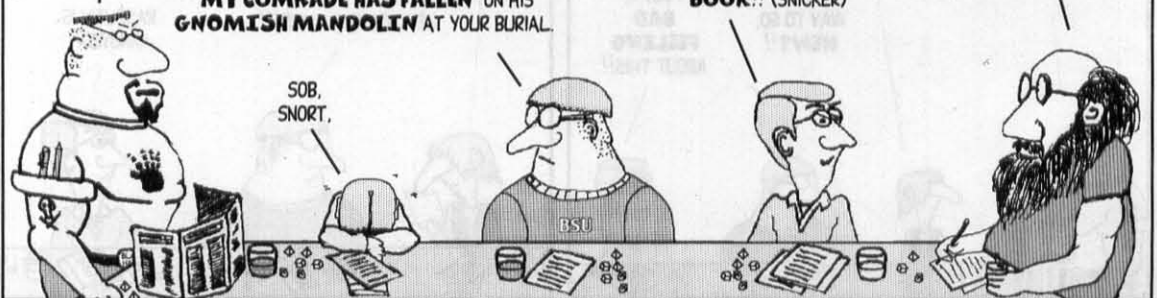
I'M SORRY **NEWT**, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. APPARENTLY YOUR MUSIC DROVE **RASPUTIN** BERSERK!! IT WOULDN'T BE RIGHT TO **OVERRIDE** A PLAYER WHO IS JUST TRYING TO STAY IN CHARACTER. YOU ROLL UP A **NEW CHARACTER** AND WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER GO AT IT NEXT WEEK.

KICK ASS!! I NEEDED THE +5 TO **HIT/DAMAGE BONUS** LISTENING TO HIS SONG GAVE ME IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY **BACKSTAB** HIM. LET HIM PUT THAT IN HIS **SONG BOOK!!** (SNICKER)

DAMN, **STEVIL**. THAT WAS A FAIRLY CATCHY TUNE. I WAS JUST STARTING TO GET INTO IT.

DON'T WORRY **NEWT**, **FIRE BLOSSOM** PLAYS, '**MY COMRADE HAS FALLEN**' ON HIS **GNOMISH MANDOLIN** AT YOUR BURIAL.

SOB, SNORT.



* Sung to the tune of "Follow the Yellow Brick Road."



KENZER AND COMPANY

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"Home is Where
You Hang Yer Dice Bag"
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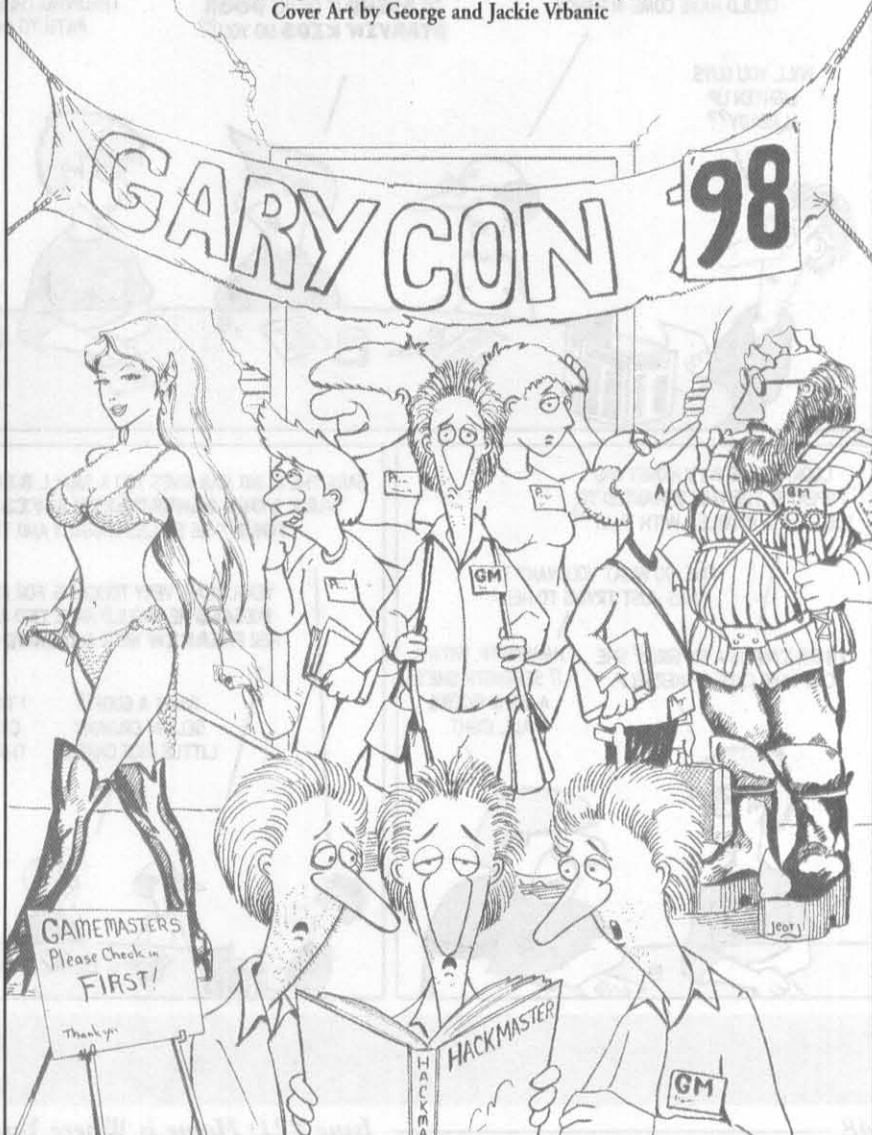
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Knights of the Dinner Table™

"Home is Where You Hang Yer Dice Bag!"

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The Evil Among Us

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN AND STEVE JOHANSSON

AS YOU GUYS ARE LEAVING THE **TEMPLE OF LUVIA** YOU NOTICE A **BLIND MAN** STANDING AT THE GATES SELLING **RICE CAKES**. HE TURNS TOWARD YOU AS YOU APPROACH AND GESTURES FOR YOU TO STOP.



'PLEASE, WON'T YOU HELP ME FEED MY FAMILY BY BUYING A TASTY SNACK TREAT??'

MY CHARACTER IS FEELING PRETTY GENEROUS. WE MADE OUT LIKE BANDITS IN THAT **DUNGEON CRAWL** AND SHE FEELS THE GAWDS WERE WATCHING OVER HER. I THROW **FIFTY GOLD PIECES** INTO THE PALM OF HIS HAND AND PAT HIM WARMLY ON THE SHOULDER. **'PEACE GO WITH YOU STRANGER.'**



THE **BLIND MAN** IS OVERWHELMED WITH YOUR ACT OF GOODNESS **SARA!**

?!?

FIFTY GOLD PIECES??

GEEZE LOUEEZE, SARA!! WE RISKED OUR LIVES FOR THAT GOLD. HOW IN THE HELL DO YOU **JUSTIFY** DOLING IT OUT LIKE THAT?? THOSE **FIFTY GOLD PIECES** COULD HAVE COME IN HANDY.

YEAH!! WHADDA YA GIVIN' IT TO SOME **STUPID** BLIND DUDE FOR? HE'S JUST AN **NPC!!** YOU DON'T THINK HE'S REALLY GOING TO **SPEND** IT ON HIS **POOR STARVIN' KIDS** DO YOU??

DAVE'S RIGHT, SARA. GIVIN' YER MONEY TO **NPC'S** EFFECTIVELY TAKES **HARD EARNED CURRENCY** OUT OF THE GAME. B.A. KNOWS YOU'RE A **BLEEDIN' HEART**. HE'S JUST THROWING THESE **HARD LUCK** TYPES IN YOUR PATH TO PART YOU FROM YOUR MONEY.

WILL YOU GUYS LIGHTEN UP ALREADY??



LOOK, IT WAS **MY** MONEY AND I SPENT IT THE WAY **I** WANTED TO. YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT??

FINE. DO WHAT YOU WANT TO. I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP.

THORINA IS A BIG GIRL!! SHE CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF.

HMMRRFFF, WITH A **T7** STRENGTH SHE'S A **BIG GIRL** ALL RIGHT.



SARA THE BLIND MAN GIVES YOU A SMALL **RICE CAKE** WRAPPED IN PAPER. **'MAY YOUR GENEROSITY REVISIT YOU A THOUSAND FOLD!!'** HE SMILES WARMLY AND TIPS HIS CAP TO YOU.

YEAH, YEAH, VERY TOUCHING. FOR **FIFTY FREAKIN' GOLD PIECES** HE SHOULD HAVE TIED A **FREAKIN' BIB** AROUND HER **FREAKIN' NECK** AND **HAND FREAKIN' FED** IT TO HER!

WHAT A GOOF!! SELLIN' CRUMMY LITTLE RICE CAKES.

I TAKE THE CAKE AND THANK HIM.

NOW RUN HOME TO YOUR LITTLE **NPC** FAMILY AND YOUR LITTLE **NPC** HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE.



IT'S THE CUSTOM IN THE **GRANDURIAN HILL COUNTRY** TO TASTE **FOOD** IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PERSON WHO GAVE IT TO YOU. TO FAIL TO DO SO WOULD BE AN **INSULT**. I IMMEDIATELY UNWRAP THE **RICE CAKE** AND EAT IT.

I'LL MAKE A **BIG SHOW** ABOUT HOW TASTY IT IS.



SARA AS SOON AS YOU UNWRAP THE CAKE IT CRUMBLES AWAY REVEALING A BEAUTIFUL **GOLD RING** SET WITH A **BLACK SHIMMERING STONE!!** THE **BLIND MAN** WINKS AND SMILES A TOOTHLESS GRIN AS HE TURNS AND DISAPPEARS INTO THE **THICK FOLIAGE** OF THE **TEMPLE GARDEN**.

GAAA!! GOLD RING??
WHERE? HOW?

CRIMINEY!! SOMEBODY COULD HAVE CHIPPED A TOOTH ON THAT **DAMN THING!!**

I'M BUYIN' **EVERY** RICE CAKE THAT GUY HAS!!

OH MY!! I HAD NO IDEA!!



I'M GOING TO ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW HIM. I MOVE WITH **GREAT STEALTH** INTO THE FOLIAGE.

I'M JINGLING MY COIN POUCH SO THE **BLIND MAN** CAN HEAR IT. I CALL OUT FOR HIM TO COME BACK.

LISTEN UP SARA. THAT RING IS PROBABLY JUST A **CHEAP** PIECE OF CRAP. I'LL BUY IT FROM YOU **RIGHT NOW!!** HOW'D YOU LIKE TO MAKE YOUR **FIFTY GOLD PIECES** BACK ALONG WITH A **TEN GOLD PIECE** PROFIT?

FORGET HIM, SARA. I'LL GIVE YOU **200 GOLD** FOR IT. **CASH MONEY!!**

SORRY BOB. APPARENTLY HE WAS MOVING **PRETTY FAST**. YOU CAN'T FIND HIM.

BUT HE'S **BLIND!!** YOU TELLIN' ME I CAN'T KEEP UP WITH A **BLIND MAN??**

DID HE DROP ANY RICE CAKES??

MAYBE HE WAS **FAKING** HIS BLINDNESS.

FAKING???

HEY **BACK OFF JACK!!** I'M TRYIN' TO NEGOTIATE A DEAL WITH THE LADY HERE. DO YOU MIND?

500 GOLD!! RIGHT HERE BABY!!! **C'MON!!**

NO SALE!



SORRY GUYS!! **THORINA** CHERISHES THE RING. SHE DOESN'T WANT TO PART WITH IT.

B.A., I SLIDE THE RING ON MY FINGER.



HERE - PASS THIS NOTE TO SARA. AND **DON'T READ IT!!**

HEY. MY **HACKMASTER** +12 CAME WITH A NOTE. **REMEMBER??**

I KNEW IT!! IT'S A MAGIC RING. MUST BE SOMETHING PRETTY SPECIAL IF IT COMES WITH A **SECRET NOTE** AND ALL.

MAYBE HE WAS AN **AGENT** OF THE **GAWDS** AWARDING ME FOR MY CHARITY??

JUST PASS HER THE NOTE.

I WONDER WHY HE GAVE IT TO SARA?



SARA, I'M CONFIDENT YOU CAN HANDLE THIS. IF YOU CAN'T JUST SAY SO AND WE CAN TAKE A BREAK AND TALK PRIVATELY.

Sara, the ring is cursed. You are now **CHAOTIC EVIL** and an agent of the **EVIL** Gawd, Grawdyng!! Your mission is to gather as much money and power as possible and to subjugate the region in the name of your master.

UH...HMMMMMMMM...IT'S A ...
...WELL... ACTUALLY IT'S **PRIVILEGED INFORMATION** GUYS. I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO SHARE THIS. AND UH, **BA??**
I DON'T THINK I'LL HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THIS. THIS COULD BE FUN.

C'MON SARA. DON'T BE SHY. SHARE IT WITH THE REST OF US. READ IT OUT LOUD!!!
COMRADES IN ARMS DON'T KEEP SECRETS FROM EACH OTHER.

WHAD YA GET?? IS IT GOOD??
BAD?? IT'S BAD ISN'T IT?? HUH??
IT'S GOOD?? WHAT IS IT??

5,000 G.P.'S FOR THE RING. RIGHT NOW!!

AN HOUR LATER...

SORRY BOB, WHEN YOU REACH FOR YOUR **GOIN POUCH** TO PAY THE **COBBLER** YOU CAN'T FIND IT. YOU FINALLY NOTICE THE **CUT** DRAWSTRINGS STILL DANGLING FROM YOUR BELT

DAMN!! THIS TOWN IS A **DEN OF THIEVES!!** FIRST THEY STEAL THE **BAG OF GEMS** I BURIED IN THE **STABLE**, THEN SOMEONE MADE OFF WITH MY **4 DAGGER OF HINDSIGHT** WHILE I WAS SLEEPING.

WE OBVIOUSLY NEED TO BE A LITTLE MORE ATTENTIVE ABOUT SAFEGUARDING OUR VALUABLES. SOMEONE STOLE MY **BRAGERS OF MAP SENSE!!**

WAAA??? MY **POUCH???**
SOMEBODY TOOK MY **POUCH???**
ARE YOU SURE??

YEAH. SOMEONE HAS MARKED US AS AN EASY TARGET.

SORRY, BOB. IT'S GONE.

A WEE BIT LATER...

OKAY BOB, YOUR BOLT HITS THE **ELF** IN THE ARM WITH A **SICKENING THUD!!** HE DROPS HIS SWORD AND RAISES HIS GOOD ARM IN THE AIR - **SURRENDERING!!**

HA!! HE AIN'T SO TOUGH **NOW** IS HE??
LET'S SEE IF HE'S A LITTLE MORE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT WHO SOLD HIM MY HORSE.

HE'LL TALK ALRIGHT!! OR HE'LL GET A TORCH TO THE GROIN.

BA., I'M NOTCHING AN **ARROW OF SMITE** IN MY **LONG BOW** AND MAKING A **CALLED SHOT** TO THE **ELF'S HEAD!!**

THE **ARROW** LODGES IN HIS **SKULL!!** HE **GURGLES INCOHERENTLY** FOR A FEW BRIEF SECONDS AND COLLAPSES IN A **BLOODY HEAP!!**

JUMPIN' BAJEMERS!!
WHAT THE...**SARA??**

??

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING??
I THOUGHT WE ALL AGREED THAT WE
NEEDED TO TAKE THIS DUDE **ALIVE!!** HE
OBVIOUSLY HAS CONNECTIONS WITH THE
THIEVES WHO STOLE ALL OUR STUFF.

WOW!! YOU JUST **CUT** THAT
GUY DOWN!! AND HE WAS
SURRENDERING!!!

SURRENDERING?? OH... I DIDN'T HEAR
THAT PART. WHEN HE RAISED HIS
ARM I THOUGHT HE WAS CASTING
SOME SORT OF **OFFENSIVE**
SPELL OR SOMETHING.

NICE SHOT,
SARA!!

THAT WAS
SO KEWL!!

GUESS WE WON'T BE
NEEDIN' THE TORCH.



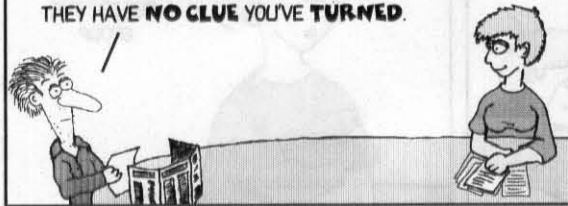
THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY SARA, YOU SAID YOU
WANTED TO MEET EARLY
SO YOU COULD DISCUSS
SOMETHING WITH ME.
WHAT'S UP?

I WANT TO GO OVER THE
'EVIL' THORINA'S
GAME PLAN.

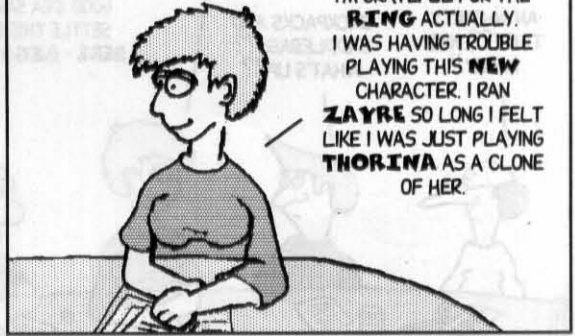
YOU KNOW, I DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO GO **THIS**
FAR. I THOUGHT THE GUYS WOULD FIND OUT
THE RING WAS **CURSED** AND COME UP
WITH A WAY TO **REMOVE** IT. AS IT IS,
THEY HAVE **NO CLUE** YOU'VE **TURNED**.

YEAH, ISN'T IT
GREAT!!



I'VE **NEVER** PLAYED AN **EVIL**
CHARACTER
BEFORE. I'M HAVING A **BLAST!!** SHE CAN DO
ANYTHING SHE WANTS. AND I'LL BE HONEST,
IT'S KINDA FUN MESSIN' WITH THE GUYS.

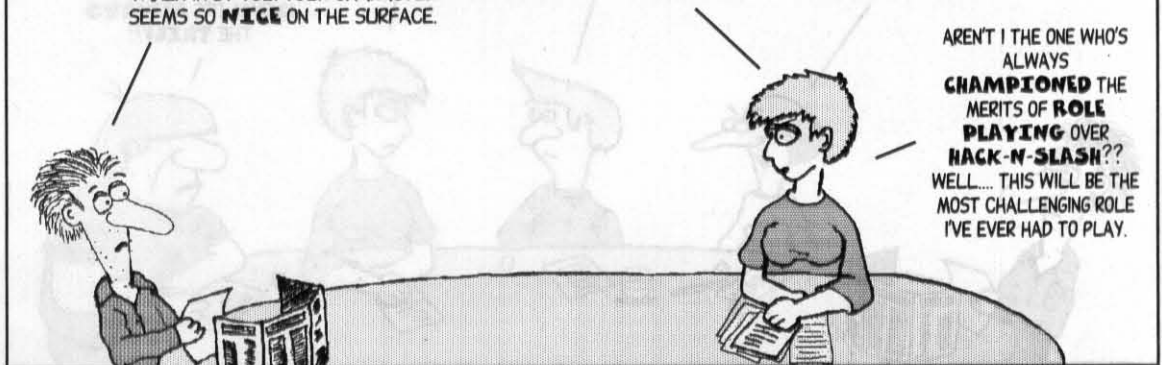
I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE
RING ACTUALLY.
I WAS HAVING TROUBLE
PLAYING THIS **NEW**
CHARACTER. I RAN
ZAYRE SO LONG I FELT
LIKE I WAS JUST PLAYING
THORINA AS A CLONE
OF HER.



I'M GLAD YOU'RE ENJOYING BEING **EVIL**
BUT MAYBE YOU SHOULD MAKE IT A BIT
MORE OBVIOUS TO THE REST OF
THE GROUP. SOMETIMES **I'M** EVEN
TAKEN IN BY YOU. YOUR CHARACTER
SEEMS SO **NICE** ON THE SURFACE.

IT'S CALLED **DECEPTION**, CUZ!! ONE OF THE
PRIME TOOLS OF MY NEW ALIGNMENT. YOU'RE
NOT SUGGESTING MY CHARACTER'S **I.Q.** SHOULD
HAVE DROPPED SEVERAL POINTS BECAUSE HER
OUTLOOK ON LIFE SUDDENLY CHANGED ARE YOU??
SHE'S **EVIL** NOT **STUPID EVIL!!!**

AREN'T I THE ONE WHO'S
ALWAYS
CHAMPIONED THE
MERITS OF **ROLE**
PLAYING OVER
HACK-N-SLASH??
WELL.... THIS WILL BE THE
MOST CHALLENGING ROLE
I'VE EVER HAD TO PLAY.



LATER THAT SAME NIGHT...

SORRY BOB, UPON CLOSELY EXAMINING THE RING YOU DISCOVER IT'S A **CHEAP FACSIMILE** OF THE RING YOU **USED** TO HAVE. APPARENTLY SOMEBODY SWAPPED A **PHONY** FOR THE **REAL McCOY!!**

SORRY BOB WHEN YOU PLACE YOUR **RING OF INVISIBILITY** ON YOUR FINGER IT DOESN'T WORK.

GAAAA!!! WHA..WA!!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?? OF COURSE IT WORKS. **I'M INVISIBLE.**

OH MAN, BUMMER. THAT RING WAS **ULTRA-KEWL!!!**

I HATE TO SAY IT BUT I THINK WE HAVE A **THIEF** RIGHT HERE AMONGST US. TOO MANY THINGS HAVE TURNED UP MISSING FOR IT TO BE AN **OUTSIDER.**

I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING.



OKAY GUYS, MY CHARACTER IS CALLING A GROUP MEETING. I'VE SELECTED A LARGE OAK TREE NEAR THE EDGE OF OUR **CAMP SITE** WHERE WE CAN GATHER. I WANT EVERYONE TO BRING THEIR **BACKPACKS** AND **SADDLEBAGS** WITH THEM. **WE NEED TO TALK!!**

AN IN-PARTY THIEF?? **NO WAY!!**

BACKPACKS AND SADDLEBAGS?? WHAT'S UP??

GOOD IDEA SARA. LET'S SETTLE THIS **RIGHT HERE - RIGHT NOW!!**

ALL RIGHT GUYS. I HOPE I'M WRONG. BUT I THINK **ONE** OF US HAS BEEN **STEALING** FROM THE REST OF THE PARTY. I'VE HAD MY SUSPICIONS FOR QUITE SOME TIME. BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO BE SURE.

I SUGGEST WE EACH EMPTY OUT THE CONTENTS OF OUR **PACKS** AND **SADDLEBAGS** BEFORE THE GROUP.



UH UH, **NOWAY!!** I AIN'T SHOWING **MY STUFF TO NOBODY!!** I DON'T WANT ALL MY **PERSONAL STUFF** LAID OUT FOR THE WORLD TO SEE. **KNUCKLES** IS A VERY **PRIVATE PERSON.**

YOU KNOW HOW **DWARVES** ARE.

WELL, WELL, LOOKS LIKE **SOMEONE** HAS SOMETHING TO HIDE. **LITTLE THINGS** HE DOESN'T WANT HIS **COMRADES IN ARMS** TO KNOW ABOUT. HMMMMM...I WONDER WHY??

YEAH, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN. IT'S **ALWAYS** THE **THIEF!!**



MINUTES LATER...

OKAY THE **FULL BODY CAVITY SEARCH** ON BOB DIDN'T TURN UP ANYTHING EITHER. LOOKS LIKE HE'S CLEAN. MAYBE YOU GUYS SHOULD APOLOGIZE TO HIM.

SORRY BOB. WHEN YOU RAN WE THOUGHT FOR SURE YOU WERE **GUILTY!!!**

I FEEL SO VIOLATED. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW **HACKMASTER HAD THOSE TABLES.**

WE HAD TO BE SURE.



OKAY AS DAVE EMPTIES THE CONTENTS OF HIS PACK ON THE GROUND YOU CAN SEE HE HAS A HAMMER, A DOZEN DOOR SPIKES, **FOUR COIN POUCHES** WITH **SEVERED DRAW STRINGS**, A SEWING KIT, SOME **BRAGGERS OF MAP SENSE**, SOME STALE BREAD, A **RING OF INVISIBILITY**, TEN FEET OF ROPE...

ACTUALLY THAT SHOULD ONLY BE **TEN** DOOR SPIKES. I USED TWO AS **TENT PEGS** LAST NIGHT AND...UH...**HUH??** WHERE'D THAT STUFF COME FROM?

COIN POUCHES?? RING?? **MY RING??**

OOOOH DAAAAVE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

AH HA!!



YOU!!! YOU...YOU...**BRUTUS!!** THERE'S NOTHIN' LOWER THAN AN **IN-PARTY THIEF!!** A CHARACTER WHO WOULD **STEAL** FROM HIS **OWN** ISN'T FIT TO **LIVE!!** I SAY WE **STRING HIS ASS UP!!!**

NO!! I GOT A BETTER IDEA. LET'S MAKE HIM **SUFFER**. TAKE AWAY HIS **MOST PRIZED POSSESSION** AND GIVE IT TO SOMEONE ELSE IN THE PARTY.

HUH?? NO...**WAIT!!! GUYS!!** I WAS **FRAMED!!!** FRAMED I TELL YOU!!!

EXCELLENT IDEA SARA!! TAKE HIS **HACKMASTER +12** FROM HIM.

AND THEN WE GIVE HIM **FORTY LASHES.**



FORTY LASHES LATER...

WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING?? **HUH??** WE WERE **THIS CLOSE!!** WE SWORE A **BLOOD OATH** TOGETHER. NOW YOU'VE **BROKEN THE CIRCLE**. **KNUCKLES** CAN **NEVER** TRUST YOU AGAIN.

WELL...LET'S SEE. WHO WANTS TO USE THE **HACK-MASTER??** HMMMM...BOB'S A THIEF SO IT'S OF NO USE TO HIM. AND UH...**BRIAN** IS A **MAGE** - HE CAN'T USE IT. I GUESS THAT SETTLES IT. MY **BARBARIAN** IS THE ONLY OTHER CHARACTER WHO CAN PROPERLY USE IT.

IN...INNOCENT!! FR_FR...**FRAMED!!**

YEAH, TAKE IT **SARA**. YOU EARNED IT. IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR YOU **DAVE** MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT.



A HOUR LATER...

OKAY, AS YOU KICK IN THE DOOR TO THE **SMALL CABIN** YOU **SURPRISE** TWO **ORCS** WHO WERE PLAYING A GAME OF CARDS.

I WASTE 'EM WITH MY CROSSBOW!!

I'M UNSHEATHING MY **HACK-MAS**... MY **HACK**... UH... ER... **DAVE** WILL YOU **PLEASE** QUIT STARING AT ME LIKE THAT??

CARDS?? I'M CHECKIN' THEM OUT. THEY MIGHT BE **WORTH** SOMETHING.

OH DON'T MIND ME. I'M JUST **PLAYING** MY CHARACTER. HE **HATES** YOU!!



AFTER THE GAME...

I MUST SAY SARA, YOU'VE CERTAINLY **EMBRACED** THIS **BEING-TURNED-EVIL** THING. **MURDERING** SURRENDERING ELVES, **STEALING** FROM THE PARTY AND THEN **FRAMING** DAVE FOR **YOUR** CRIMES.

WELL, I KNEW THE **ELF** WOULD **FINGER** ME IF HE WERE INTERROGATED. **FRAMING DAVE** WAS A **DOUBLE-WHAMMY!!** NOT ONLY DID IT **THROW** SUSPICION OFF OF ME BUT IT HELPED ME TO ACCOMPLISH ONE OF MY **SHORT-TERM** GOALS - ACQUIRING HIS **HACKMASTER SWORD**. I'LL NEED IT TO HELP FULFILL MY **DESTINY!!**

WELL, KEEP ME POSTED EACH WEEK ON WHAT YOU'RE UP TO. I'LL **TRY** NOT TO GIVE YOU AWAY.

THANKS. I'LL KEEP BUILDING **MISTRUST** AMONG THE OTHERS. IF I CAN KEEP THEM APART THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO **ALLY** THEMSELVES AGAINST ME.



I DREAD TO THINK WHAT THEY'LL DO TO YOU **WHEN** THEY FIND OUT WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING.

YEAH, I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THAT TOO. I'M GOING TO MAKE A **LOT** OF ENEMIES DURING MY RISE TO POWER. THERE'S AN OLD VIKING SAYING THAT GOES, "THE MOST DANGEROUS ENEMIES ARE THOSE WHO ONCE CALLED YOU FRIEND".

MY GAWD!! I'VE CREATED A **MONSTER!!**

EVENTUALLY, MY COMRADES IN ARMS WILL HAVE TO BE **ELIMINATED!!!**

IN THE MEANTIME THEY'LL BE USEFUL IN HELPING ME ESTABLISH A POWER BASE.



A FEW WEEKS LATER...

OKAY ABOUT THE 3 O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT **CAMP** IS BROKEN AS AN **ALARM BELL** BEGINS TO SOUND. **STARTLED** YOU ALL WAKE UP TO FIND **THORINA** CAUGHT IN THE **SUREGRIP-SNARE SPELL** SHE SET OFF WHEN TRYING TO RUMMAGE THROUGH **BRIAN'S SADDLEBAGS**.

SO THE **RAT** TOOK THE **BAIT** EH?? I BIND HER. THEN, I TAKE **MY HACK-MASTER SWORD** BACK!!

TIME TO FACE THE MUSIC, SARA!!!
THE JIG IS UP!!

WELL, LOOKS LIKE OUR **HUNCH** WAS RIGHT. WE CAUGHT HER **RED HANDED!!**



AT LAST **EL RAVAGER** IS **EXONERATED!!** I OUGHT TO **RUN YOU THROUGH** AFTER WHAT YOU DID!! MAKING ME YOUR **PATSY!! FRAMING ME!!** I HAD TO SUFFER THE INDIGNATION AND HUMILIATION OF BEING UNJUSTLY ACCUSED AND PUNISHED!! **OSTRACIZED** BY MY **BLOOD BROTHERS!!** MY **GOOD REP** HAS PROBABLY BEEN **PERMANENTLY TARNISHED**, AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF **YOU!!!**

WHA...WHAT TIPPED YOU OFF?? I THOUGHT I'D COVERED MY **TRACKS** PRETTY THOROUGHLY!!

IT WAS **BOB'S** CHRONIC COLD AND GRADUAL LOSS OF **HIT-POINTS** DAY TO DAY. IT DIDN'T CONFORM TO THE **RULES** ON **COLDS** OR **FLUS**.

YOU **BENEDICT ANNIE!!** YOU TRIED TO **POISON ME!!**

GUYS, IT WAS THE **CURSED RING!!**



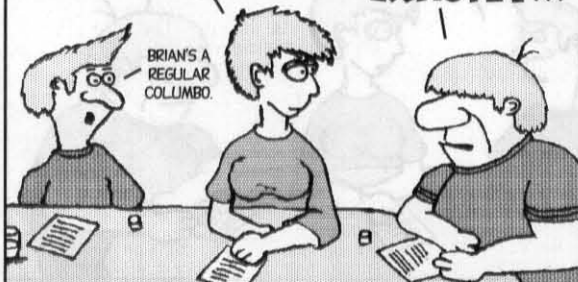
I KNEW SOMETHING WAS **WRONG** BUT I WASN'T SURE WHAT IT WAS. SO I STARTED KEEPING CHARTS ON **BOB'S** **HITPOINT** LOSS AND CRUNCHED SOME STATISTICS. IT WAS A **TEDIOUS** PROCESS BUT EVENTUALLY I MANAGED TO FIND SOMETHING IN THE **HACKMASTER** RULES WHICH SEEM TO FIT THE **PROFILE** OF BOB'S MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS.

A **RARE, EXPENSIVE** POISON THAT **MIMICS** THE **SYMPTOMS** OF THE COMMON COLD IN THE **EARLY STAGES!!** IT'S A **SLOW WORKING** POISON WHICH MUST BE ADMINISTERED IN **SMALL DOSES** OVER THE COURSE OF MANY DAYS OR EVEN WEEKS. THAT MEANT THE **WOULD-BE ASSASSIN** **HAD** TO BE ONE OF US. AND SINCE YOU HAD RECENTLY VOLUNTEERED TO REFILL OUR **WATERSKINS** EVERY MORNING BEFORE **BREAKING CAMP** - THE **FINGER** POINTED TO **YOU!!**

WITHERING BLUE??

EXACTLY!!!

BRIAN'S A **REGULAR COLUMBO**.



ALRIGHT **MISSY!!** **SQUIRM!!**

YEAH, START BEGGING FOR YOUR LIFE!!



NO, **THORINA** WILL NOT **PLEAD** OR **BEG** FOR HER LIFE. SHE'S **TOO PROUD** FOR THAT. SHE **BOWS** HER HEAD AND **AWAITS** HER FATE - OFFERING NO **APOLOGIES**, NO **EXPLANATION**.

AWH CRIPES, YER NO FUN. WE WANTED TO SEE YOU SWEAT IT OUT FOR A FEW MINUTES.

FOR A FEW MINUTES?? WHAT DO YOU MEAN??

WE MET THIS WEEK AND TALKED IT OVER.

WE'RE GONNA LET YOU LIVE AND WELCOME YOU TO THE GROUP.



YOU'RE GONNA LET ME LIVE?? NO WAY!! ARE YOU SERIOUS??

YEAH IT'S BEEN NICE NOT HAVING TO DEAL WITH THE **MS. GOODY-TWO-SHOES SARA** AROUND.

YEAH, WE WERE DULY IMPRESSED WITH YOUR PERFORMANCE. WE THINK YOU'LL MAKE A VALUABLE MEMBER OF THE GROUP.



YEAH, JUST TRY DIVERTING THAT **WICKEDNESS** OUTSIDE OF THE GROUP AND WE'LL WATCH YOUR BACK. WE CAN FINALLY EVEN THE SCORE WITH **LORD GILEAD** NOW THAT WE DON'T HAVE A **MOLE** OR A **SYMPATHIZER** IN OUR MIDST.

BUT GUYS, JUST DO A **REMOVE CURSE** ON ME AND THINGS WILL GO BACK TO NORMAL.

NO WAY!!! WE LIKE YOU JUST THE WAY YOU ARE.



AN HOUR LATER...

OKAY, OKAY, WE CAN TORCH AND BURN THE VILLAGE AND SLAUGHTER ALL ITS INHABITANTS. BUT I FAIL TO SEE ANY **STRATEGIC IMPORT** IN DOING SO. TO WIN A **WAR** YOU HAVE TO WIN THE **HEARTS** AND **MINDS** OF THE **PEOPLE!!** WE'RE ONLY MAKING ENEMIES OF THE VERY SAME PEOPLE WE'RE HOPING TO SUBJUGATE!!

WE NEED TO GET PEOPLE'S ATTENTION AND BUILD YOUR REPUTATION AS BEING A RUTHLESS LEADER. **FEAR** CAN WIN **BATTLES!!**

TWO **LAND-SCAPER FIREBALLS** AWAY!!

AND IT'S FUN!!



LATER...

THORINA THROWS DOWN HER SWORD AND LEAPS INTO THE PATH OF **GILEAD'S** CHARGING **PHALANX** OF **PIKEMEN!!**

GAA!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?? THAT'S **SUICIDE!!**

THE **PIKEMEN** SKEWER YOU LIKE A SUCKLING PIG SARA.

I PREFER TO THINK OF IT AS A **MERCY KILLING!!** IT WAS FUN PLAYING **AGAINST YOU GUYS** BUT BECOMING **ONE** OF YOU AND JOINING THE RANKS OF **HACK-N-SLASHERS????** IT'S PURE **TORTURE!!!**

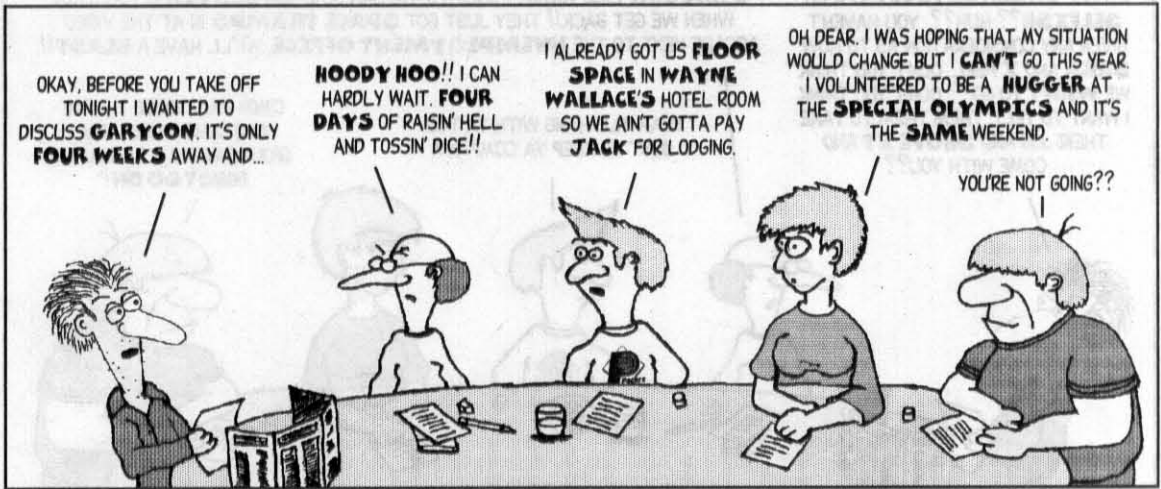
PLEASE DON'T TAKE **THORINA** AWAY FROM US.

DON'T WORRY GUYS. I GOT A **RING OF REGENERATION** WITH HER NAME ON IT.



Out of the Running

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN



OKAY, BEFORE YOU TAKE OFF TONIGHT I WANTED TO DISCUSS **GARYCON**. IT'S ONLY **FOUR WEEKS** AWAY AND...

HOODY HOO!! I CAN HARDLY WAIT. **FOUR DAYS** OF RAISIN' HELL AND TOSSIN' DICE!!

I ALREADY GOT US **FLOOR SPACE** IN **WAYNE WALLACE'S** HOTEL ROOM SO WE AIN'T GOTTA PAY **JACK** FOR LODGING.

OH DEAR. I WAS HOPING THAT MY SITUATION WOULD CHANGE BUT I **CAN'T** GO THIS YEAR. I VOLUNTEERED TO BE A **HUGGER** AT THE **SPECIAL OLYMPICS** AND IT'S THE **SAME WEEKEND**.

YOU'RE NOT GOING??



ACTUALLY, THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO BRING UP THE SUBJECT. I WON'T BE GOING EITHER. THERE'S AN OPENING FOR **DISTRICT MANAGER** COMING UP AT **PIZZA-A-GO-GO** AND THE WORD'S OUT THAT ANYONE TAKING TIME OFF IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WON'T BE CONSIDERED. SORRY GUYS, LOOKS LIKE I'M **OUT OF THE RUNNING** THIS YEAR!!

NOT GOING?? DID I HEAR YOU RIGHT?? YOU'RE GONNA LET SOME **SUCK-UP** JOB POSITION KEEP YOU FROM MAKING THE **SACRED PILGRIMAGE** TO **GARYCON**?? WHAT THE HELL'S WRONG WITH YOU?

B.A. YOU JUST GOTTA GO. YOUR DAD'S VAN IS THE **ONLY VEHICLE** IN THE GROUP THAT'S **JOURNEY-WORTHY!!** YOU CAN'T LET US DOWN LIKE THIS!!

YOU'RE BOTH BREAKING WITH TRADITION. WE **ALWAYS** GO TO **GARYCON** AS A GROUP.

EASE UP GUYS, I'M SURE IT WAS A TOUGH DECISION FOR HIM. IT **IS** HIS JOB.



SCREW THE JOB!! I DID!! MY **SORRY ASS SUPERVISOR** WOULDN'T GIVE ME THE TIME OFF SO **GUESS WHAT??** I'M GOING ANYWAY!!

BUT...BUT...YOU'LL BE FIRED. YOUR DAD WILL **KILL** YOU. DON'T YOU EVER THINK OF THE CONSEQUENCES??

SURE HE DOES! BUT BOB HAS **HIS** PRIORITIES STRAIGHT. YOU DON'T MISS **GARYCON!!**

BUT...BUT... (SIGH) WHATEVER!!

WELL THIS **BLOWS!!!** YOU GUYS SURE LET THE AIR OUT OF **MY BALLOON!!!** NOW WE'RE GONNA BE SHORT FOR **FIVE MAN TAG TEAM HACKMASTER**.

DAMN!! AND WE STOOD A GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING THIS YEAR. I HEARD **MUNSTER-TRUCK MADLEY** BROKE HIS COLLAR BONE LAST WEEK AT **HACKCON ORLANDO!!**

GUYS, I'M SORRY, REALLY.

Bob refers to GaryCon as Four Days of raisin' hell and tossin' dice. There were times some people in our gaming group (myself included on occasion) went up to Milwaukee for GENCON and didn't even register for the convention. The lure was going to stay in a hotel room with your buddies, havin' some parties and playin' some games among friends. -Brian

DON'T YOU GUYS THINK YOU'RE BEING A LITTLE **INSENSITIVE** AND A BIT **SELFISH**?? HUH?? YOU HAVEN'T GIVEN ANY CONSIDERATION AS TO HOW **SARA AND I FEEL**. DON'T YOU THINK WE **WANT TO GO**?? DON'T YOU THINK I WANT TO TELL THEM THEM TO TAKE THEIR JOB AND **SHOVE IT** AND COME WITH YOU??

THERE!!! YOU JUST SAID IT!! THERE'S YOUR SOLUTION. **QUIT!!** COME TO **GARYCON** LIKE YOU'RE 'POSED TO. WE CAN GO **JOB HUNTING** TOGETHER WHEN WE GET BACK!! THEY JUST GOT **SPACE TRAMPS** IN AT THE VIDEO ARCADE NEXT TO THE **UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE**. WE'LL HAVE A **BLAST!!**

YEAH. I'LL HANG WITH YA TOO. JUST TO KEEP YA COMPANY.

C'MON B.A.!! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CAME UP WITH THE GROUP'S MOTTO; **THE GAME MUST GO ON!!**



YEAH THAT'S RIGHT THE **'GAME GOES ON'** BUT SO DOES **'LIFE'**!! I'M TELLIN' YA I GOT A **REAL SHOT** AT THIS JOB PROMOTION. I DON'T WANT TO **SCREW IT UP!!**

MAYBE YOU CAN COME UP WITH A **GOOD REASON** TO TAKE TIME OFF. CALL IN SICK OR SOMETHING!! SURELY THEY COULDN'T HOLD **THAT** AGAINST YOU.

C'MON GUYS. WE SHOULD BE APPLAUDING **B.A.** FOR BEING SO RESPONSIBLE!!

YOU CAN TELL THEM YOU WERE **MUGGED** AND HAD **AMNESIA**!! I MET A GUY AT **HAWG WALLER'S** WHO CAN **BRUISE** YOU UP WITH A BAR OF SOAP IN A SOCK FOR **FIFTY BUCKS** TO MAKE IT LOOK CONVINCING

TELL 'EM YOU'RE HAVING YOUR **TONSILS** OUT AND YOU HAVE TO GO TO A **SPECIAL CLINIC** OUT OF STATE. THAT ONE WORKED FOR ME ONCE.

I GOT HIS BUSINESS CARD HERE SOMEPLACE.

GUYS, I CAN'T GO!!



I CAN'T GO!! END OF STORY. CASE CLOSED. NOT GONNA HAPPEN!! **OKAY??** HUH?? **NOW DROP IT!!!**

SURE...SURE...WE CAN DROP IT. BUT JUST TELL ME ONE THING, B.A. WHEN DID IT HAPPEN??

WHEN DID THE **GAMER** I ONCE KNEW AND LOVED WITHER AND DIE?? WEREN'T THERE ANY EARLY WARNING SIGNS?? NO CRIES FOR HELP?? DID YOU JUST WAKE UP ONE MORNING AND THE **PILOT LIGHT** HAD GONE OUT??

HAVE A GOOD TIME AT **GARYCON** GUYS!!

OH WE WILL!

IT WON'T BE THE SAME WITHOUT YOU THOUGH.

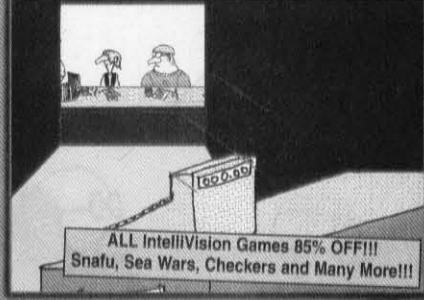


Notice Dave's Indiana Pacers T-shirt. I felt that he alone of the Knights would be a sports fan and added this little touch before going to press. -Steve

The Incentive Program

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN AND STEVE JOHANSSON

LATE ONE NIGHT IN WEIRD PETE'S BACK ROOM...



HACKERJACKS!!
THE TARTY DANDY WITH
A FREE ONE IN EVERY
BOX!!!

CLOSED

LIVE ACTION
RISK AT THE
BSU SOCCER
FIELD THIS
SATURDAY

PARENTS!! I'M
NOT YER
BABYSITTER!!

JUST IN!!
BATTLEHACK
5th Edition
Mass Combat for
HackMaster!!

LISTEN UP, **DICE FREAKS!!** I CAME UP WITH A **NEW** WAY TO **FORCE** YOU GUYS INTO WORKING MORE AS A **TEAM!!** SOMETHING I CALL, **NITRO'S TEAMWORK INCENTIVE PROGRAM!!**

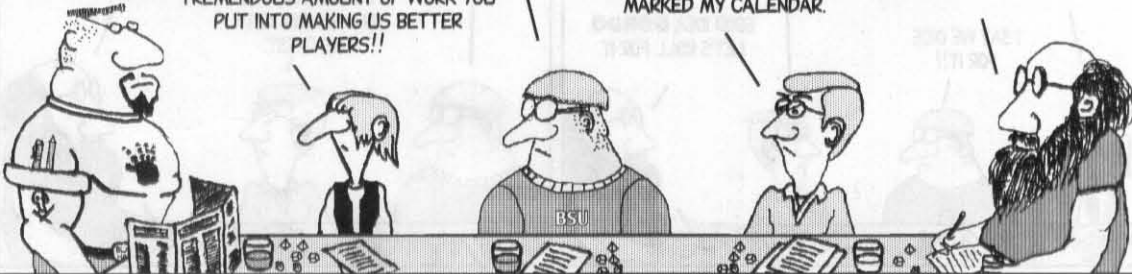
INCENTIVE PROGRAM??
HOW DOES IT WORK?

I WORKED UP A **LIST** OF VARIOUS **ACTIONS** WHICH I FEEL DEMONSTRATE GOOD **TEAMWORK QUALITIES!!** I'VE ASSIGNED EACH OF THESE ACTIONS A CERTAIN NUMBER OF POINTS RANGING FROM 1 TO 500. WHEN YOU DO ONE OF THE ACTIONS ON THE LIST YOU GET AWARDED THE APPROPRIATE POINTS.

SIR, I'M SURE I SPEAK FOR THE ENTIRE GROUP WHEN I SAY WE REALLY APPRECIATE THE TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF WORK YOU PUT INTO MAKING US BETTER PLAYERS!!

HEY NEWT, I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS **KISS-UP-TO-THE-GM DAY** AGAIN ALREADY. I SHOULD HAVE MARKED MY CALENDAR.

WE EARN POINTS FOR WORKING AS A **TEAM??**



THAT'S RIGHT PETE, THAT'S WHERE THE **INCENTIVE POINTS** COME INTO PLAY. YOU CAN TRADE IN YOUR **I.P.'S** LIKE **GREEN STAMPS** FOR ALL KINDS OF KEWL STUFF. TRADE IN **2,000 INCENTIVE POINTS** AND YOU CAN PICK A **MAGIC ITEM** FROM TABLE SIX OF THE **HACKMASTER PLAYER'S GUIDE!!** TRADE IN **5,000 POINTS** AND ADVANCE ONE **EXPERIENCE LEVEL** - NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

THE LIST OF ACTIONS AND THE POINT ASSIGNMENTS WILL ONLY BE REVEALED AS YOU EARN THEM. THIS MEANS YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE IT A PRACTICE TO WORK AS A TEAM IN ORDER TO EARN YOUR POINTS.

TEAMWORK EH? ME THINKS I SEE THE ROAD TO **12TH LEVEL!!** AND IT'S AN **OPEN HIGHWAY!!**

WOW!! WHERE CAN I SIGN UP??

PICK A MAGIC ITEM?? FOR REAL???

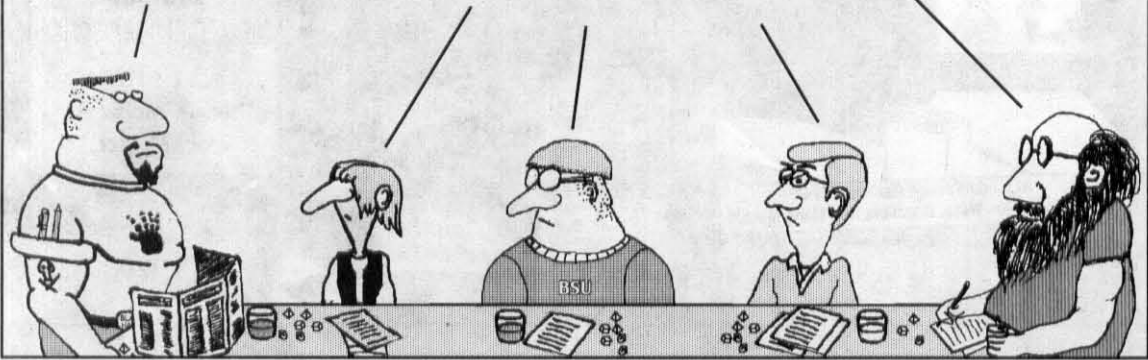
KA-CHING!!!



LATER THAT SAME NIGHT!!

OKAY LOOKS LIKE THIS ROOM IS **NORLIAR'S BEDROOM!!** THERE'S A LARGE BED, A NIGHTSTAND, A ROSEWOOD CHEST AND A PILE OF DIRTY LAUNDRY STACKED IN ONE CORNER.

I'M SEARCHING THE CHEST!!



DREAM ON **FAT HEADS!!** **RASPUTIN'S** LIGHTNING FAST REFLEXES GIVES HIM JUST THE EDGE HE NEEDS TO REACH THAT CHEST FIRST. WHY DON'T YOU GUYS FIGHT OVER THE PILE OF DIRTY LAUNDRY WHILE I HAVE A LITTLE LOOK-SEE.

ROLL FOR IT?? **WHY??** YOU ROLL DICE TO SETTLE **TIES!!** THIS IS **CLEAR CUT!!** I'M ALL OVER THAT CHEST. I'M **DANCIN'** ON IT!!

THAT'S NOT FAIR. YOU WERE IN THE REAR. YOU CAN'T BE **EVERYWHERE** AT THE **SAME TIME!!**

SURE I CAN. I'M FAST!! I'M **VERY** FAST. **WHOOSH-WHOOSH!!** THAT CHEST IS **MINE!!**

MAJORITY RULES!! C'MON, LET'S ROLL FOR IT!

HANG IT UP, STEVIL. WE'RE ROLLING TO SEE WHO GETS TO SEARCH WHAT (OR DO I NEED TO LET FIRE BLOSSOM KNOW WHERE HER **DARTS OF DAINTY DEMOLITION** VANISHED TO?)

I SAY WE DICE FOR IT!!

GOOD IDEA **GORDO.** LET'S ROLL FOR IT.

FINE! YOU WIN. HIGH NUMBER GETS THE CHEST.



OUTSTANDING!! LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS ARE FINALLY LEARNING TO **WORK TOGETHER.** YOU **RESOLVED A GROUP CONFLICT!!** I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO INTERVENE. THAT'S ONE OF THE ACTIONS ON THE LIST AND IT'S WORTH A **FAT 75 INCENTIVE POINTS!!!**

I'M AWARDING THE POINTS TO **GORDO** BECAUSE HE'S THE ONE WHO SUGGESTED ROLLING DICE TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE PEACEFULLY!!

75 POINTS WOW!!

OKAY THAT'S IT. I'M READY TO RACK UP SOME INCENTIVE POINTS.

DAMN!! I GOT TO GET ME SOME OF THAT POINT ACTION.

HEY, I THINK I SEE HOW THIS WORKS.



MOMENTS LATER...

OKAY **GORDO**, YOUR **TOURNIQUET** STOPS THE **ARTERIAL BLEEDING** ON **NEWT'S** LEG WOUND. YOU'RE ON A ROLL TONIGHT. YOU JUST HIT **ANOTHER** ACTION FROM THE LIST. **500 INCENTIVE POINTS** FOR RENDERING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO A FELLOW PLAYER!!

HA!! I HAD A HUNCH THAT WOULD BE ON THE LIST.

LOOKS LIKE THE DAYS OF **SEWIN'** YOUR OWN WOUNDS ARE OVER. AT **500 POINTS** A POP I'M THINKING ABOUT BECOMING A FIELD SURGEON.

I CALL DIBS ON **ASSISTING** THE **NEXT** PERSON WHO TAKES **DAMAGE**.

ARE YOU SURE **BADGERS** GET A **SEVER-LIMB** ATTACK??



MOMENTS LATER...

OKAY **STEVI**, YOU GOT **SIX!!** COUNT 'EM!! **SIX LOOGEY SPIT-DEMONS** CLAWING AT YOUR FACE!! YOU JUST TOOK 56 POINTS IN SINUS-CAVITY DAMAGE AND 12 POINTS OF RETINAL DAMAGE!! HOW'S THAT GRAB YA?? **IT SUCKS TO BE YOU!!!**

FIRE BLOSSOM LAYS HANDS ON **RASPUTIN** AND CURES 4 POINTS OF DAMAGE. THEN SHE SCURRIES BETWEEN THE DEMONS' LEGS ATTEMPTING TO DISTRACT THEM.

I ELEVATE HIS FEET AND TREAT HIM FOR **SHOCK!!**

HOLD ON A SECOND!! I HAD MY **HOOD OF MISTY SHADOWS** PULLED OVER MY FACE. THAT GIVES ME A +4 FACIAL ARMOR CLASS!!

SORRY GORDO!! I ALREADY SAID I WAS **READYING** MY **FIRST AID KIT!!** C'MON **NITRO**, LAY THOSE **I.P.'S** ON ME!!



MOVE ASIDE!!! YOU BUTCHERS!! LET ME SEW UP THOSE **SINUS CAVITIES!!** CAN'T YOU SEE THE KID NEEDS **REAL MEDICAL HELP??**

I'M SMACKIN' **RASPUTIN** ON THE BACK OF THE HEAD WITH THE **FLAT** OF THE BLADE ON MY SWORD!! HOPEFULLY I CAN KNOCK HIM OUT LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO TIE HIM DOWN ON A LITTER AND GET HIM TREATMENT.

BACK OFF PETE!! NOBODYS LAYING THEIR **POINT-MOOCHING** HANDS ON ME!!

HEY IF **NEWT'S** HITTING HIM IN THE HEAD, CAN I TREAT **STEVI** FOR THOSE WOUNDS AND GAIN ADDITIONAL **INCENTIVE POINTS??**

HE'S REFUSING TREATMENT. **SHOCK** MUST HAVE ALREADY SET IN. WE'LL HAVE TO SUBDUDE HIM.

C'MON **STEVI**. I NEED THOSE POINTS. YOU SCRATCH MY BACK - I'LL SCRATCH YERS.

HE'LL THANK US LATER.

OKAY **DEAL!!**

GET AWAY FROM ME!!! I'M MAKING **WEIRD PETE** MY PERSONAL PHYSICIAN!!



A LITTLE LATER...

OKAY AS YOU ARE WALKING DOWN THE **DUNGEON CORRIDOR** YOU COME TO A **PIT!!** IT LOOKS TO BE **TEN FEET ACROSS, TEN FEET DEEP AND SPIKED!!**



(PSST) NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO RETURN THE FAVOR. I WANT TO SEE YOU GET HURT AND GET HURT BADLY. MAKE IT LOOK GOOD - WE DON'T WANT **NITRO** CATCHING ON TO US.

WADDA YOU GUYS WHISPERING ABOUT AGAIN??

DON'T WORRY!! YOU CAN COUNT ON ME.



I THINK THE **PIT** IS JUST AN ILLUSION. I'M CONVINCED OF IT. I'M SO SURE OF IT THAT I RUN AHEAD OF THE GROUP AND LEAP ON TO THE **ILLUSIONARY PIT!!**

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING??

NOTHING I SAID COULD HAVE POSSIBLY GIVEN YOU THE IMPRESSION THE **PIT** IS AN **ILLUSION**. DO YOU WANT TO RETHINK YOUR ACTION?

HEY, MY CHARACTER IS **UTTERLY CONVINCED** THAT **PIT** IS A SIMPLE **ILLUSION!!** I'M JUST TRYING TO **PROVE** IT IN A **DRAMATIC FASHION**.

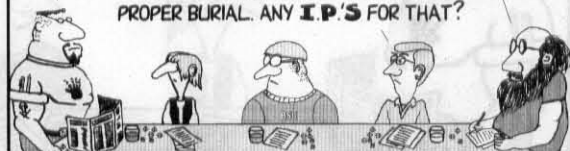
ALL RIGHT!! **DOCTOR RAZ** IS STANDING BY.



WELL **HERO** IT'S **NOT** AN **ILLUSION!!!** I DON'T KNOW IF THAT FACT DAWNED ON YOU AS THE **POISONED SPIKES** PIERCED YOUR **LIVER, SPLEEN AND LEFT LUNG** OR WHEN THE **TEN TON GRANITE BLOCK** IN THE CEILING OVERHEAD WAS **RELEASED** DROPPING WITH A **SICKENING THUD** INTO THE **PIT!!!**

ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME I'M DEAD?? I ONLY WANTED A LITTLE **INCIDENTAL DAMAGE**. I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. THAT **PIT'S A DEATH TRAP!!!** I WON'T JUMP IN IT AFTER ALL.

I SCRAPE UP HIS **GOO** AND GIVE IT A PROPER BURIAL. ANY **I.P.'S** FOR THAT?



NO, I'M SORRY. YOU DON'T GET ANY **FREAKIN' INCENTIVE POINTS** FOR BURYING A **DEAD COMRADE**. IN FACT I THINK I'M GOING TO **PULL** MY PROGRAM UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. I THINK IT NEEDS A LITTLE WORK.

THANKS A LOT **SHEMP!!** YOU COST ME **500 I.P.'S**.

I THOUGHT IT WAS A SIMPLE PIT TRAP. HOW WAS I TO KNOW **NITRO** HAD A COPY OF **GNARLTOOTH'S BOOK OF TRAPS?**

I GOT A PUTTY KNIFE IF YOU NEED IT TO HELP SCRAPE UP **ALL** OF PETE.

SO THE PIT WAS REAL?



AFTER THE GAME...

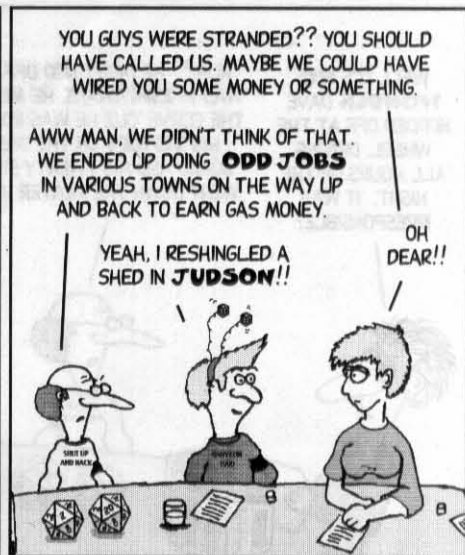
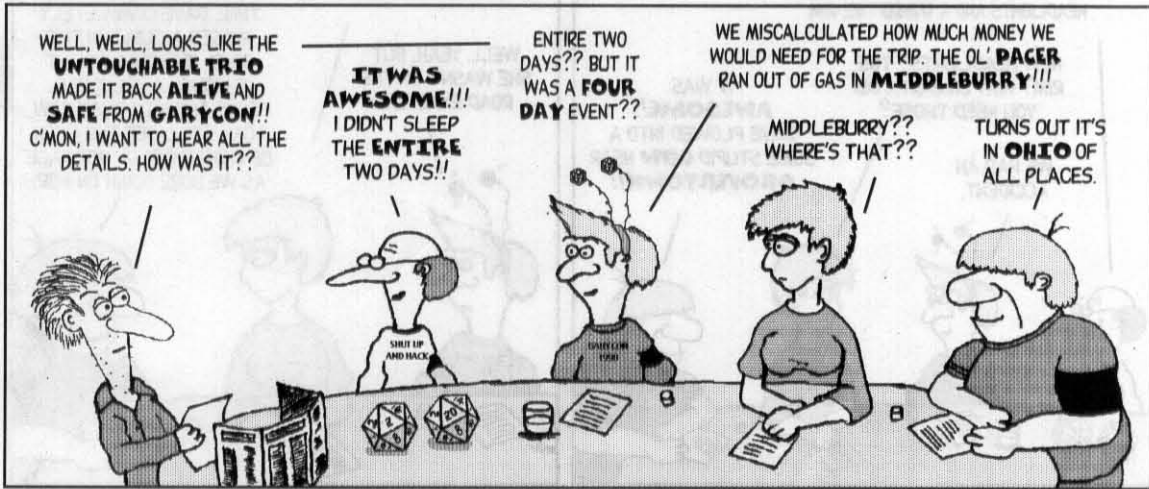
WHERE DID I GO WRONG PETE?

HEY THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH TINKERING WITH THE RULES, **NITRO**. YOU KNOW THAT. BUT IF YOU SET OUT TO BUILD A BETTER **MOUSETRAP** BE SURE YOU'RE NOT DEALING WITH A **PACK OF CARNIVOROUS RATS!!**



The Pilgrimage to GaryCon

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN



YEAH THAT DECK WAS A **BITCH!!** BUT IT EARNED US ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY A SET OF **NEW** HEADLIGHTS AND A **USED** TIRE RIM.

NEW HEADLIGHTS? TIRE RIM? WHY ON EARTH DID YOU NEED THOSE?

WE HAD AN ACCIDENT.

IT WAS **AWESOME!!** DAVE PLOWED INTO A SOME STUPID **COW** NEAR **GROVERTOWN!!**

YOU HIT A COW?? ON THE HIGHWAY??

WELL YEAH, BUT SHE WASN'T ON THE ROAD EXACTLY.

IT WAS STANDING IN SOME DUDE'S BARNYARD AT THE TIME. DAVE COMPLETELY MISSED A CURVE IN THE ROAD. **ZOOM!!** RIGHT THROUGH A SPLIT RAIL FENCE AND INTO THAT COW. I CAN STILL SEE THE LOOK OF **HORROR** ON HER FACE AS WE BORE DOWN ON HER.

WELL IT'S **NO WONDER** DAVE NODDED OFF AT THE WHEEL. DRIVING ALL HOURS OF THE NIGHT. IT WAS **IRRESPONSIBLE!**

HUH?? HE DIDN'T NOD OFF. HE WAS **WIDE AWAKE**. HE MISSED THE CURVE 'CUZ HE WAS ROLLIN' HIS **TO HIT** ON THE DASHBOARD AND HIS TWENTY SIDER WENT DOWN THE HEATER VENT.

YEAH. I WAS TRYING TO FISH IT OUT WITH SOME CHEWIN GUM ON THE END OF A SODA STRAW.

???? ROLLING A **TO HIT??** WHILE YOU WERE DRIVING?? YOU MEAN YOU WERE.....

BOB WAS **GMING** A PRETTY MEAN GAME OF **HACKMASTER** FROM THE BACKSEAT.

THE SAD THING IS WE'LL **NEVER** KNOW IF YOUR HURLED **BATTLE AXE** TOOK OUT THAT **OGRE!!**

NO, I GUESS WE NEVER WILL.

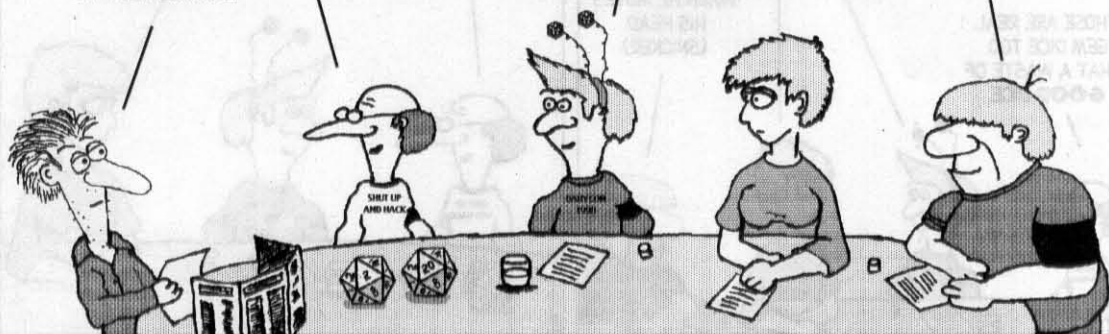
I'M AFRAID TO HEAR ANYMORE. YOU GLIYS ARE SCARING THE HELL OUT OF ME. LET'S JUST SKIP OVER THE TRIP THERE. TELL US ABOUT **GARYCON**. YOU MISSED **TWO FULL DAYS** OF THE SHOW. DID YOU MANAGE TO SALVAGE ANYTHING FROM THE TRIP TO MAKE IT WORTH WHILE?

OH WITHOUT A DOUBT. I TOLD YA, ALREADY. **IT WAS AWESOME!!** SO MUCH TO DO AND SEE.

AS SOON AS WE HIT THE DOOR WE MANAGED TO JUMP INTO A **PICK UP** GAME OF **HACKMASTER** WITH SOME **GM** FROM **KANSAS CITY!!!** HE WAS PRETTY GOOD.

HE WAS GOOD ALL RIGHT BUT HE WASN'T **THAT GOOD!!** I HAD TO SET HIM STRAIGHT ON A FEW **BOGUS** RULE CALLS. BUT I'LL GIVE HIM CREDIT. HE WAS REALLY RECEPTIVE TO MY COACHING AND EVEN TOOK SOME NOTES.

WELL I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT. TELL US MORE.



I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER. WHAT'S WITH THE **BLACK ARM BANDS!!**

EVERYONE AT THE CON WAS WEARING THEM. WE'RE SHOWING OUR **SUPPORT** FOR THE **HACKMASTER PLAYER SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT!!**

PLAYER SOLIDARITY?? **I KNEW IT!!!** I JUST KNEW YOU GUYS WOULD GET SWEEPED UP IN **NORMAN ROCK THE BOAT BOWZER'S** HYPE. HE'S BEEN TRYING TO ORGANIZE THE PLAYERS AGAINST THE **GM'S** FOR YEARS. HE ALWAYS **FAILS!!**

NOT THIS TIME. HE HELD A MASS RALLY THE LAST NIGHT OF THE CON.

IT WAS **STANDING ROOM ONLY!!**

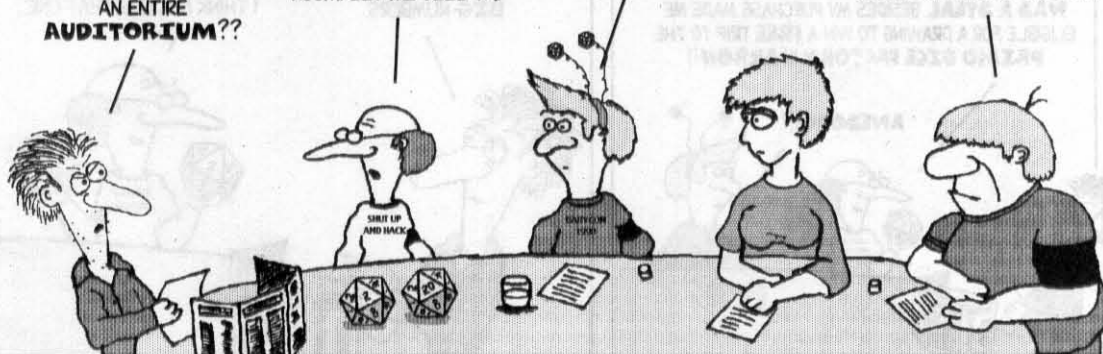


WHAT?? ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME HE PULLED IT OFF?? HE FOUND ENOUGH **IDIOTS** TO BUY INTO HIS PROPAGANDA TO PACK AN ENTIRE **AUDITORIUM??**

WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT AN AUDITORIUM?? WE MET IN **WAYNE WALLACE'S** HOTEL ROOM. THERE WAS A LOT OF **ENERGY** IN THAT ROOM. LET ME TELL YA.

GET USED TO IT B.A.!! WE PLAYERS HAVE A **VOICE** NOW. THAT **GM SCREEN** IS COMIN' DOWN BABY!!

UNFORTUNATELY, A FAILED **COUP D'ETAT** BY A **ROGUE FACTION** (THE **LADIES OF HACK**) SPLINTERED THE MOVEMENT'S FOLLOWING IN THE CLOSING HOURS OF THE CON.





DAVE, I'M DYING TO ASK, WHERE DID YOU GET THE **TWENTY-SIDER ANTENNAE??** THEY'RE REALLY CUTE.

THEY'RE KEWL. HUH?? I TRADED MY **GARY JACKSON** ERASER-DICE FOR 'EM.

THOSE ARE REAL GEM DICE TOO. WHAT A WASTE OF **GOOD** DICE.

THEY'RE SOOOO FUNNY. LOOK IT - THEY BOUNCE WHEN HE MOVES HIS HEAD. (SNICKER)



OKAY, OKAY, C'MON SARA. HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED ANYTHING **ELSE** WE BROUGHT BACK FROM **GARYCON??** HUH?? I'VE BEEN SITTING HERE WAITING FOR YOU OR B.A. TO SAY SOMETHING.

OH I NOTICED THE NEW T-SHIRT BOB. VERY NICE.



NO!!! NOT THE SHIRT. **C'MON!!!** DIDN'T YOU NOTICE THE **GAG DICE??** SEE?? THEY'RE **REALLY BIG!!!** HA HA!!! **THEY'RE SO FREAKIN' HUGE!!** HAR!! HAR!!

ARE YOU **REALLY** GOING TO USE 'EM?? I DON'T THINK YOU HAVE ENOUGH ROOM.

NO YOU IDIOT!! DON'T YOU GET IT?? THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE FUNNY...YOU KNOW?? 'CUZ THEY'RE **SO BIG!!!** LOOK AT 'EM - **THEY'RE HUGE!!**

YEAH. THEY'RE BIG ALRIGHT.

YEAH, THEY'RE BIG.

(CACKLE) WE JUST CRACKED UP WHEN WE SAW THEM. WE **HAD** TO GET THEM.



OKAY, OKAY, THOSE ARE SOME REALLY **FUNNY** DICE, BOB. DON'T YOU THINK YOU WASTED YOUR MONEY ON THEM THOUGH - CONSIDERING YOU WERE SO STRAPPED FOR GAS MONEY AND THE FACT THAT YOU **PROBABLY** DON'T HAVE A JOB TO RETURN TO.

THEY WERE ON SALE. TWO FOR TWENTY BUCKS!!! **IT WAS A STEAL.** BESIDES MY PURCHASE MADE ME ELIGIBLE FOR A DRAWING TO WIN A **FREE TRIP TO THE PRIMO DICE FACTORY IN AKRON!!!**

AWESOME!!



BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT - **THEY ARE FUNNY!!** I CAN'T WAIT TO GO TO **HACKCON MUNCIE** THIS FALL AND PULL THESE BABIES OUT OF MY **DICE BAG** DURING THE TOURNAMENT. (SNICKER) IT'S GONNA **BUST** UP THE WHOLE TABLE.

WELL ONE THING FOR SURE, I BET THEY ROLL **REALLY BIG** NUMBERS.

HEY THAT'S PRETTY FUNNY. I THINK I'LL USE THAT ONE.

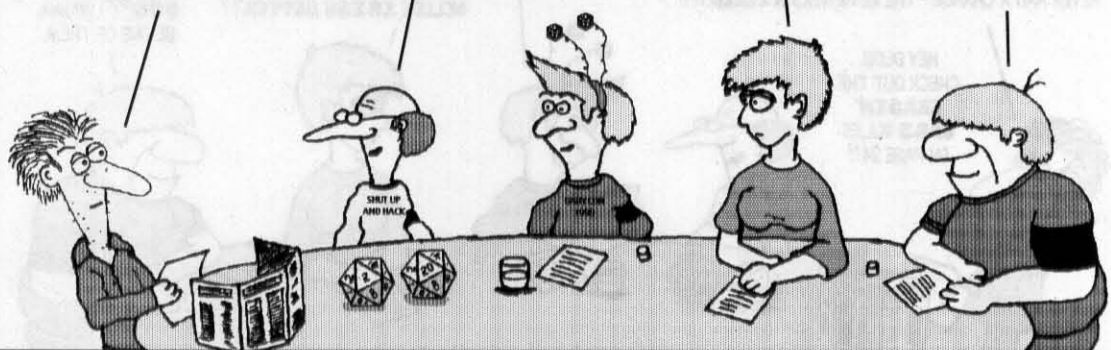
OKAY, LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS BROUGHT BACK SOME SOUVENIRS AND PLAYED SOME HACKMASTER. ANYTHING ELSE EXCITING HAPPEN AT THE SHOW?

WELL, WE FELT SO BAD THAT OUR VERY OWN **GAME MASTER** COULDN'T MAKE IT TO **GARYCON** THAT WE TOOK WHAT WAS LEFT FROM THE **DECK** MONEY AND BOUGHT YOU A GIFT.

YOU...YOU...BOUGHT **ME** A GIFT? YOU MEAN YOU GUYS WERE STRAPPED FOR CASH AND YOU STILL SAW FIT TO BUY ME A GIFT?? I'M TOUCHED. I REALLY AM.

HOW SWEET!!

WHEN WE SAW IT WE **HAD** TO BUY IT FOR YOU.



YEAH, IT'S A GAME. IT HAD YOUR **NAME** WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. **LITERALLY!!**

I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT IT COULD BE.

PROMISE? PROMISE WHAT?

ALL WE ASK IS THAT YOU PROMISE **ONE** THING.

THAT YOU'LL RUN IT FOR US SOMEDAY, SOON.



TADA!!! DUDE WE FOUND AN OLD COPY OF **DAWG THE ROLEPLAYING GAME!!!** WRITTEN BY ONE, **B.A. FELTON!!!** **HOODY HOO!!!!**

WE THOUGHT YOU'D BE **SURPRISED**. WHEN **BRIAN** TOLD US YOU HAD **BURNED** EVERY COPY YOU HAD, WE JUST **KNEW** WE HAD TO BUY IT FOR YOU.

YOU FOUND...ERP...DINK LURP... **MY GAME??**



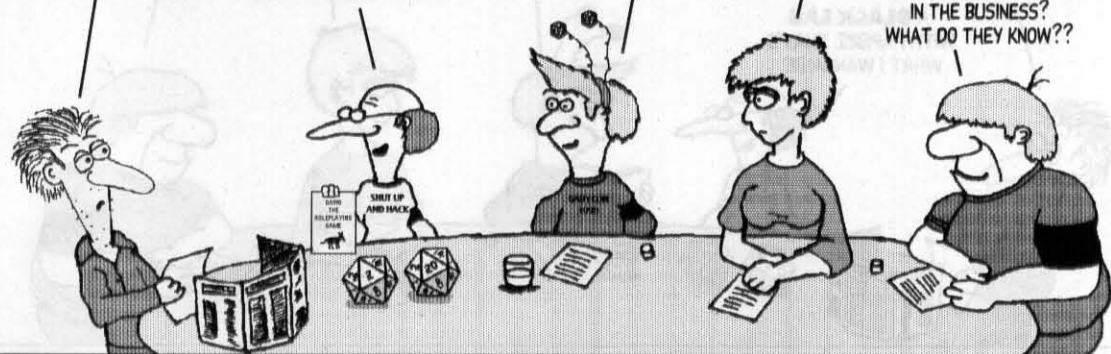
GUYS, I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT...REALLY. BUT YOU REALLY **SHOULDN'T HAVE!!**

DUDE RELAX!! IT ONLY COST **FIFTY CENTS!!!** WE STUMBLED ACROSS IT IN A BOX OF **CRAPPY GAMES** SOME DUDE WAS NEVER ABLE TO SELL.

WE READ IT ON THE WAY HOME FROM **GARYCON!!** WE WANT TO PLAY.

LOOK GUYS, I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL BUT **B.A.** HAD A **VERY BAD** EXPERIENCE SELF PUBLISHING THAT GAME. I THINK HE WANTS TO PUT IT **ALL** BEHIND HIM AND MOVE ON.

SO WHAT IF IT WAS **TRASHED** BY EVERY **GAME REVIEWER** IN THE BUSINESS? WHAT DO THEY KNOW??



GUYS, I'M AFRAID SARA IS RIGHT. THERE'S A REASON I **BURNED** EVERY COPY I COULD GET MY HANDS ON. IT REPRESENTS ALL MY **HOPES AND DREAMS** BRUTALLY **BASHED TO DEATH** AND **GROUND UNDERFOOT** BY SOME **FIRK DING BLASTIN' KNOW NOTHING WANNA-BE GAME DESIGNERS** WHO CALL THEMSELVES **REVIEWERS**. THE GAME NEVER HAD A CHANCE - THE REVIEWERS **KILLED IT!!**

OH THIS IS GREAT. YOU CAN BE A **ROTTWEILER, DOBERMAN, GERMAN SHEPHERD, ST. BERNARD, CHOW, MASTIFF, RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK, AKITA, BORZOI, KUVASZ, LHASA APSO, SHIH TZU, BLUETICK COONHOUND, WEIMARANER, WHIPPET, GORGI, KEESHOND, PHAROAH HOUND, TIBETAN TERRIER...**

HOW 'BOUT **IRISH SETTER??** DID HE REMEMBER TO INCLUDE **IRISH SETTER??**

HOW BOUT A **WIENER DOG??** I WANNA BE ONE OF THEM.

HEY DUDE, CHECK OUT THE **CHASIN' CARS** RULES ON PAGE 24!!



WAIT A MINUTE. IS THIS A JOKE?? DID **NITRO** PUT YOU GUYS UP TO THIS??

DUDE, WE **LOVE IT!!** WE REALLY WANT TO PLAY. IT LOOKS LIKE IT **KICKS ASS!!** I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'VE BEEN SO **ASHAMED** OF IT ALL THESE YEARS.

YOU REALLY LIKE MY GAME?? YOU MEAN... YOU MEAN YOU WANT TO **PLAY?? MY GAME??**

WOW!!! LOOK AT THE **DAMAGE FACTOR FOR PIT BULLS!!** I WANNA BE ONE OF THEM.

HEY, I WAS ONE OF THE **ORIGINAL** PLAYTESTERS. YOU'LL FIND MY NAME LISTED AMONG THE CREDITS.

I THINK THEY'RE SERIOUS, B.A.!!



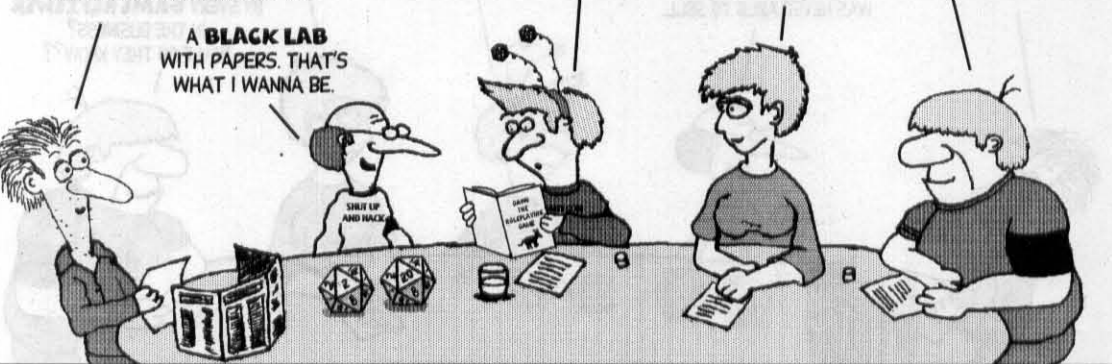
HMMMMM...MAYBE I WAS JUST AHEAD OF MY TIME. THE MARKET WASN'T READY FOR THE UNIQUE CONCEPT OF **DAWG** OR SOMETHING. OKAY, YOU'RE ON. I'LL BRUSH UP ON THE RULES, DUST OFF MY OLD NOTES AND RUN YOU GUYS THROUGH A FEW GAMES OF IT.

OOOOOOHHH, SAYS HERE A PEDIGREE **DAWG** WITH KENNEL PAPERS CAN USE THE **SHOW DAWG RULES!!**

SOUNDS LIKE FUN. WE'LL HAVE A **HOOWWWLING GOOD TIME!!**

I CAN HARDLY WAIT.

A **BLACK LAB** WITH PAPERS. THAT'S WHAT I WANNA BE.



KODT

IT AIN'T OVER
TIL THE FAT
MAN SAYS SO.

APPROVED
BY THE
Hard 8
Enterprises
AUTHORITY

**THE FUN
CONTINUES**

LIKE A
FREE
ISSUE OF
KODT!!

20 PAGES!!
OF **ALL NEW**
MATERIAL



BONUS SECTION

BAGWAR FOUR ISN'T GOING WELL FOR OUR **STALWART KNIGHTS** -- HAVING BEEN FORCED TO RETREAT TO LICK THEIR WOUNDS, B.A. HOPES THE "BARRINGER AFFAIR" HAS BEEN LAID TO REST.

BUT **EVEN** AS HE PREPARES TO **PROD** HIS PLAYERS INTO **NEW** ADVENTURE OPPS, HE'S ABOUT TO **LEARN** THAT A **NEW** MILITARY ACTION AGAINST **BARRINGER** AND HIS MEN IS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT AIN'T OVER? C'MON GUYS, WE'VE BURNED **SIX WEEKS** OF GAME TIME DEALING WITH **BARRINGER**. FOR CRYING OUT LOUD -- **LET IT GO!!** A FEW DECENT **DUNGEON CRAWLS** AND YOU CAN **REPLACE** MOST OF THE **STUFF** YOU LOST TO HIM IN THE **BAG**.

OH NO! IT AIN'T OVER! NOT BY A **LONG SHOT!** THIS HAS GOTTEN **PERSONAL!**

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, B.A., **BRIAN** HAS COME UP WITH A **NEW PLAN**. AND IT **JUST** COULD WORK.

WE MET IN **PRIVATE** YESTERDAY AND WORKED OUT **ALL** THE **DETAILS**

P-P-P-PLAN? YOU GUYS HAVE A **NEW PLAN?** OH FOR THE LOVE OF...

THAT'S JUST GREAT.

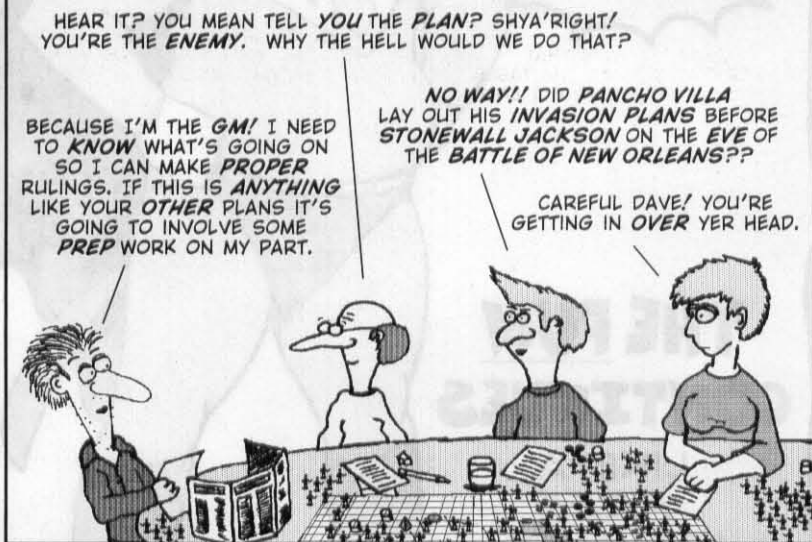
OKAY, LET'S HEAR IT.



FRATER USE
SE COMPANY
THE GUY OF ALLIES
BAG

USEFUL CHANDS

USERS: PANCHO VILLA
DUNGEON: 200-45
MAGIC: 523-78
CITY: 613-901
PASTOR: 411



HEAR IT? YOU MEAN TELL **YOU** THE **PLAN?** SHYA'RIGHT! YOU'RE THE **ENEMY**. WHY THE HELL WOULD WE DO THAT?

BECAUSE I'M THE **GM!** I NEED TO **KNOW** WHAT'S GOING ON SO I CAN MAKE **PROPER** RULINGS. IF THIS IS **ANYTHING** LIKE YOUR **OTHER** PLANS IT'S GOING TO INVOLVE SOME **PREP** WORK ON MY PART.

NO WAY!! DID **PANCHO VILLA** LAY OUT HIS **INVASION PLANS** BEFORE **STONEWALL JACKSON** ON THE EVE OF THE **BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS???**

CAREFUL DAVE! YOU'RE GETTING IN **OVER** YER HEAD.

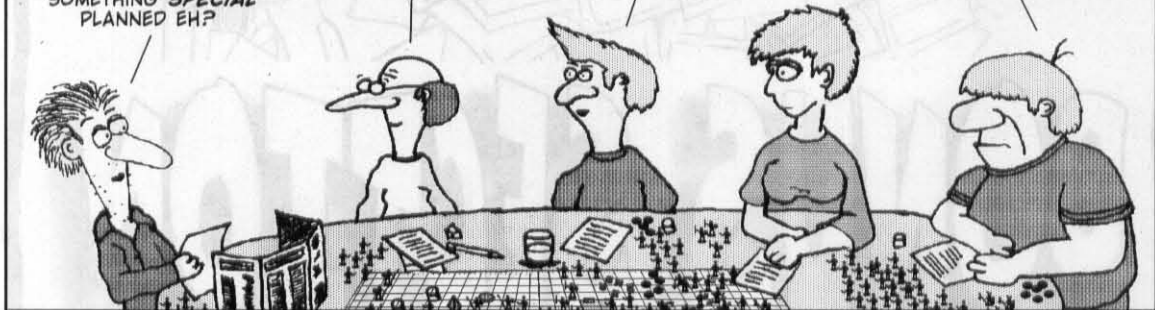
SORRY B.A. I HAVE TO **CONCUR**. WE'RE NOT **ABOUT** TO SHOW OUR CARDS. YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO **SEE 'EM ONE AT A TIME**. THERE'S **TOO MUCH** AT STAKE HERE.

YOU GUYS ARE **REALLY** TAKING THIS **SERIOUSLY** AREN'T YOU? YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING **SPECIAL** PLANNED EH?

LET'S JUST SAY **BARRINGER** WILL **NEVER** SEE IT COMING. -TEH HEH-

YEAH, WE'RE GOING TO **HIT** HIM LIKE A **THIEF IN THE NIGHT!**

OKAY, ON TO THE **FIRST ORDER** OF **BUSINESS!**



* Continued from *Bundle of Trouble* Volume Six

WE'RE TAKING EVERY MAGICAL CONTAINER WE HAVE IN INVENTORY AND PILING THEM UP ON THE TABLE BEFORE US.

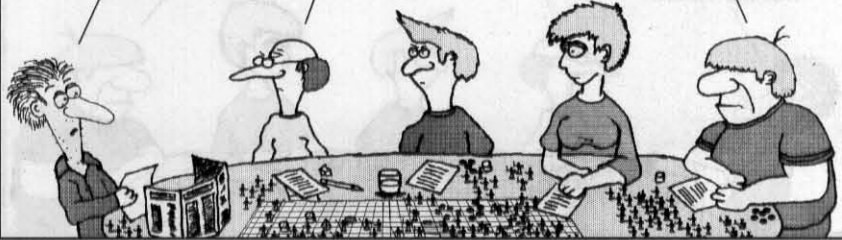
THAT INCLUDES BOB'S FANNY PACK OF HOLDING, MY SADDLE BAGS OF HEFTY CAPACITY, SARA'S NEVER-FULL CARGO POUCH, MY BAG OF ENDLESS STORAGE, DAVE'S CHEST OF...

HUH? YOU'RE PILING ALL THIS STUFF UP ON THE TABLE? BUT WHY?

AAH, AAH, AAH, ONE CARD AT A TIME MY FRIEND. KEEP LISTENING.

TRUST ME, B.A. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS.

AS I WAS SAYING -- DAVE'S CHEST OF MASSIVE VOLUME, MY BACKPACK OF HEFTY CAPAC...

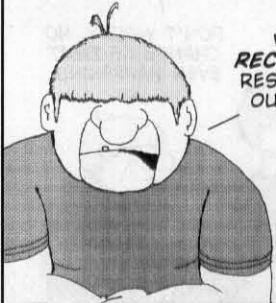


TEN MINUTES LATER...

OKAY, SO NOW THAT EVERYTHING'S ON THE TABLE WE'RE GOING TO MAKE A LIST.

THEN WE'RE GOING TO TURN EACH ITEM UPSIDE DOWN AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.

WE'LL RECORD THE RESULTS ON OUR LIST.

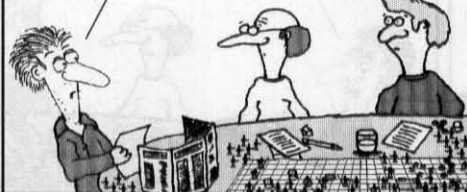


TURN 'EM UPSIDE DOWN? I DON'T GET IT..... WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DO A GOOFY-ASS THING LIKE THAT?

JUST A LITTLE TEST. WE WANNA SEE IF THE CONTENTS OF EACH CONTAINER FALLS OUT WHEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

W-W-W-WHAT?

IS IT STARTING TO SINK IN YET?



GOOD GAWD! THEY KNOW! BUT HOW? HOW??!!



WELL, UH.....ER...L-L-LET'S S-S-S-SAVE SOME TIME HERE. NO SENSE IN GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF TURNING ALL FORTY THREE ITEMS UPSIDE DOWN. I CAN TELL YOU RIGHT NOW THAT THE CONTENTS OF EACH TUMBLE OUT --JUST AS YOU WOULD EXPECT.

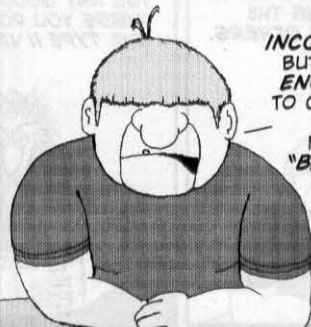
UH HUH! BRIAN SAID YOU'D TRY TO "DUCK AND COVER." YOU BETTER THINK AGAIN, B.A. MAYBE YOU SHOULD CHECK YOUR NOTES. LOOK IN THE MARGINS -- GOT ANY SPECIAL ANNOTATIONS ON ANY OF THESE ITEMS?

N-N-N-NOPE. EVERYTHING'S KOSHER HERE.



OKAY B.A., JUDGING FROM THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE, YOU APPARENTLY SEE WHERE THIS IS HEADING. I GUESS WE CAN TELL YOU THIS MUCH -- WE RECENTLY OBTAINED A COPY OF THE SO-CALLED, JACKSON DOCUMENT!*

IT WAS AN INCOMPLETE COPY BUT THERE WAS ENOUGH THERE TO CLUE US IN ON THE TRUE NATURE OF "BAG WORLD"



* See KODT#43 "The Jackson Document". Also see Bundles of Trouble Volume Six for the story as to how Brian came to acquire the document, or download it at www.kenzerco.com. Reading the document may help your understanding of this strip.

UH...ER, JACKSON DOCUMENT?? YOU MEAN THAT OLD GAMER-MYTH THAT WAS FLOATING AROUND A FEW YEARS BACK? SOMETHING ABOUT A "YANKED" APPENDUM TO THE HACKMASTER RULES WASN'T IT? -GULP- YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE IT'S OUT THERE. AFTER ALL, GARY JACKSON DEBUNKED THE RUMOR IN HIS EDITORIAL TO...

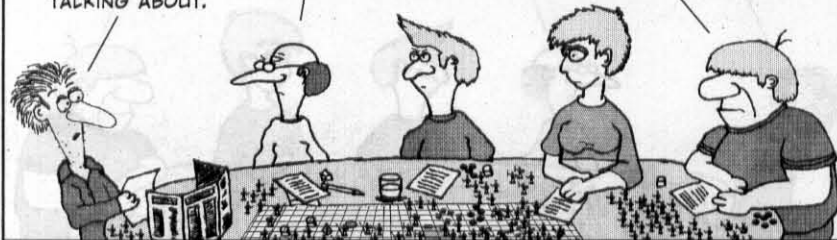
CUT THE CHARADES, B.A. I'VE HELD A COPY IN MY HANDS AND I KNOW IT EXISTS. FURTHER MORE WE KNOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN IMPLEMENTING ITS CONCEPTS INTO YOUR CAMPAIGN.

W-W-WHY, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT Y-Y-YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

MORE IMPORTANTLY WE KNOW THE DOCUMENT DEALS WITH GARY'S FURTHER DEFINING OF MSDS -- MEGA-CAPACITY STORAGE DEVICES.

ACCORDING TO THE DOCUMENT THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF MSDS. TYPE 1 AND TYPE 2.

IT SAYS THE BEST WAY TO DETERMINE WHICH TYPE OF BAG YOU HAVE IS TO TURN IT UPSIDE DOWN. IF THE CONTENTS DON'T TUMBLE OUT YOU HAVE THE RARER -- TYPE II



ALL RIGHT, DAMMIT! IT'S OBVIOUS YOU'VE READ THE DAMN THING! THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! THAT'S A VERY SENSITIVE DOCUMENT AND IT WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF PLAYERS. I DEMAND TO KNOW WHO GAVE IT UP.

I'LL SEE TO IT HE OR SHE NEVER GMS IN THIS TOWN AGAIN.



WAIT A SECOND -- IT JUST HIT ME. IT WAS WEIRD PETE WASN'T IT? SURE - SURE, IT ALL MAKES SENSE NOW. THE GAME AUDIT.* I HAD TO SHOW HIM MY COPY OF J-DOC TO ANSWER THE GRIEVANCES YOU BROUGHT AGAINST ME. THE RAT BASTARD - HE TOLD YOU DIDN'T HE?

SORRY, B.A. WHILE I CAN'T REVEAL MY SOURCES I CAN SAY PETE WAS NOT INVOLVED -- THOUGH I DID TRY TO SHAKE HIM DOWN. HE WAS TIGHTER THAN A STEEL DRUM.

THEN WHO? PATTY? WAS IT PATTY? OR HOW ABOUT THAT WHITEY MORAN? I'D FIGURE HIM FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

DON'T TELL 'IM ANYTHING, BRI.

DON'T WORRY. NO CHANCE OF THAT EVER HAPPENING.



BESIDES, EVEN THOUGH I HAVEN'T GM'ED IN YEARS I'VE KEPT MY GM CREDENTIALS UPDATED AND CURRENT. SO TECHNICALLY MY SOURCE DID NO WRONG. THOUGH I SUPPOSE YOU COULD TURN ME IN FOR SHARING THE INFO WITH THE OTHERS.

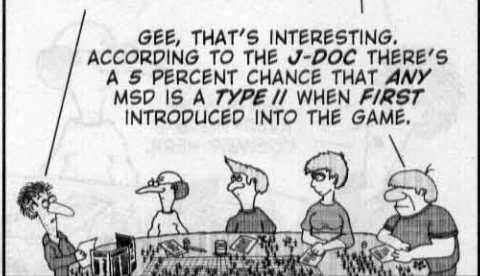
I WOULDN'T DO THAT TO A FRIEND AND YOU KNOW IT. I SUPPOSE YOU WERE COUNTING ON THAT.

AWWW THE HELL WITH IT. IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S GOING TO DO YOU ANY GOOD. NONE OF THE MSDS YOU POSSESS ARE OF THE TYPE II VARIETY ANYWAY.

OH...REALLY? SO ARE YOU SAYING YOU HAVE ANNOTATIONS IN YOUR NOTES AS TO EXACTLY WHICH TYPE EACH OF OUR MSDS FALL UNDER? TYPE 1 OR TYPE 2?

N-N-NO! I'M NOT SAYING THAT. THERE'S NO NEED TO ANNOTATE THE TYPE BECAUSE I KNOW THEY'RE ALL TYPE 1.

GEE, THAT'S INTERESTING. ACCORDING TO THE J-DOC THERE'S A 5 PERCENT CHANCE THAT ANY MSD IS A TYPE II WHEN FIRST INTRODUCED INTO THE GAME.



* See Bundles of Trouble Volume Six "The Game-Audit"

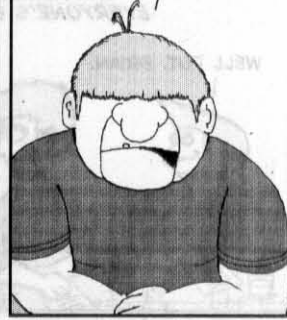
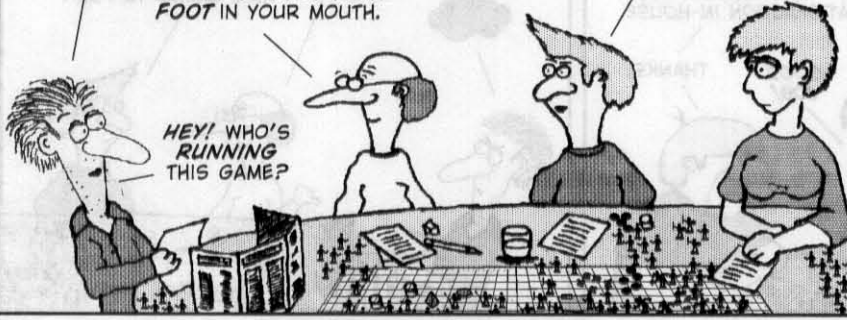
NICE TRY!! KUDOS!! EXCELLENT MANEUVER BRIAN. I SEE WHERE YOU'RE GOING WITH THIS. YOU'RE TRYING TO ROPE ME INTO RETROACTIVELY ROLLING FOR EACH MSD TO SEE IF ANY OF THEM ARE TYPE II. THANKS FOR THE DANCE BUT I'M NOT LIFTING MY SKIRT OLD FRIEND. THE JACKSON DOCUMENT IS AN INTERESTING PIECE OF WORK BUT I'M UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO ABIDE BY IT. YOU CAN TAKE YOUR FIVE PERCENT CHANCE AND SHOVE IT UP YOUR...

EVER HEAR OF A LITTLE H.M.P.A.* CLAUSE CALLED THE "RULES OF FAIR PLAY?", B.A.?

WHOA! YOU BETTER HEAR HIM OUT B.A. BEFORE YOU PUT YOUR FOOT IN YOUR MOUTH.

BRIAN PREDICTED YOUR ARGUMENT WOULD PROCEED ALONG THESE LINES.

HEY! WHO'S RUNNING THIS GAME?



RULES OF FAIR PLAY? UH...NO, I DON'T THINK SO. WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH ANYTHING?

C'MON. SURELY YOU KNOW OF IT! IT WAS ADDED TO THE GM CODE OF CONDUCT BACK IN 1995 AS A RESULT OF CASE B50527A -- "BOWZER VS. HACKCON SAGINAW" IT WAS A LANDMARK CASE. I'M SURPRISED YOU DON'T REMEMBER IT.

...WAS USING THE OPTIONAL OVERBEARING TABLES FROM APPENDIX F OF THE 2ND EDITION HACK-MASTER RULES TO RESOLVE COMBAT FOR HIS UNDEAD ORC LEGIONS -- THE FEATURED MONSTER IN THAT PARTICULAR ADVENTURE.

OKAY, OKAY, I MAY HAVE HEARD OF IT BUT I DON'T REMEMBER THE DETAILS. AGAIN -- WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH ANYTHING WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE?

EVERYTHING!! IN THAT CASE NORMAN BOWZER CHARGED THAT A TOURNAMENT GM...

NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT IN ITSELF BUT THE GM WOULDN'T ALLOW THE PLAYERS TO USE THOSE SAME OPTIONAL RULES.



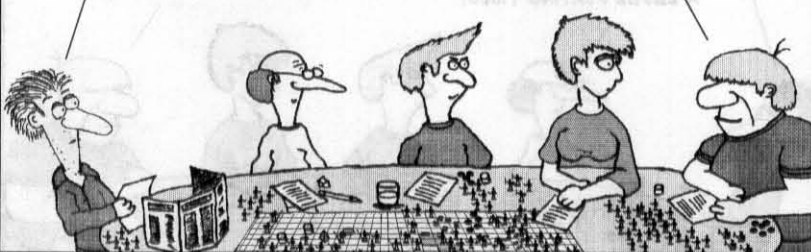
THE H.M.P.A. WISELY CONCLUDED THAT THIS CONSTITUTED AN "UNFAIR" ADVANTAGE AND CREATED A BREACH IN THE PLAYER-GM RELATIONSHIP. THUS THEY AMENDED THE GM C.O.C TO INCLUDE THE "RULES OF FAIR PLAY CLAUSE". BASICALLY IT STATES THAT THE RULES HAVE TO BE THE SAME FOR BOTH THE GM'S MONSTERS-NPCS AND PLAYER CHARACTERS.

BASICALLY YOU DECIDED THAT BARRINGER'S BAG WAS OF THE TYPE II VARIETY BECAUSE IT CLEARLY GAVE HIM AN ADVANTAGE.

I'M NOT SURE I CATCH YER DRIFT, BRIAN. CAN YOU JUST GIVE ME THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY?

OF COURSE, I WAS JUST GETTING TO MY POINT.

BUT BY INTRODUCING THE CONCEPTS IN THE J-DOC AS "OPTIONAL RULES" INTO THIS CAMPAIGN THE RULES OF FAIR PLAY CLAUSE CAME INTO PLAY AS WELL.



* HackMaster's Players Association

THE RULES HAVE TO CUT BOTH WAYS. BY DENYING US THE FIVE PERCENT POSSIBILITY THAT EACH PARTICULAR MEGA-CAPACITY STORAGE DEVICE WE ACQUIRED IS A TYPE II ITEM YOU ARE IN VIOLATION OF H.M.P.A. STANDARDS.

I'M NOT SUGGESTING WE INVOLVE THEM -- LIKE YOU SAID WE'RE FRIENDS. I'D LIKE TO THINK WE CAN REMEDY THE SITUATION TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION IN-HOUSE

WELL PUT, BRIAN.

GOOD JOB!

THANKS.

UH OH! HEADS UP, EVERYBODY. HE'S GOT THAT GRUDGE MONSTER LOOK. WE COULD BE IN FOR A TOUGH RIDE IN THE OL' DUNGEON TONIGHT.

WAIT 'TIL HE FINDS OUT WHAT WE'RE REALLY UP TO. HE'S GOING TO FLIP!

YEAH, RIGHT! LIKE I DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS IS ALL HEADING. YOU THINK IF YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON ANOTHER TYPE II BAG OR CONTAINER YOU'LL BE ABLE TO ENTER BAG WORLD THROUGH ANOTHER PORTAL AND LAUNCH A SECRET ATTACK ON BARRINGER. BUT YOUR PLAN IS FLAWED AND LET ME TELL YOU WHY. EACH BAG ZONE IN BAG WORLD CAN POTENTIALLY BE THOUSANDS OF MILES APART. AND THERE ARE NO MAPS!!! YOU WON'T HAVE A CLUE AS TO WHICH DIRECTION TO HEAD OR HOW FAR YOU'LL HAVE TO TRAVEL WITHIN BAG WORLD IN ORDER TO REACH BARRINGER'S BAG ZONE.

SHOWS HOW MUCH YOU KNOW. FOR YOUR INFORMATION WE CAME UP WITH A WAY TO...

BOB!!!! SHUT UP, DUDE. YER BLOWIN' IT.

DAMMIT BOB! SHUT THAT YAP OF YERS BEFORE I SHUT IT FOR YOU. SHEESH!

A WAY TO DO WHAT?

UH, ER, NEVER MIND.

CRIPES!! IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.

OKAY FINE! I'M NOT GOING TO DISPUTE THE "RULES OF FAIR PLAY" THING. MAYBE YOU HAVE A VALID POINT -- MAYBE YOU DON'T. TELL YA WHAT I'M GOING TO DO -- I'M GOING TO LET YOU ROLL FOR EACH BAG. IF YOU ROLL A ZERO-FIVE OR LESS THEN THAT BAG IS A TYPE II. BUT I'M WARNING YOU -- IF YOU GO THROUGH WITH THIS, THE JACKSON DOCUMENT -- IN ITS ENTIRETY -- COMES INTO PLAY. BOTH FOR ME AND FOR YOU. FAIR ENOUGH?

AGREED! THAT'S ALL WE WANTED. A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD.

EXCELLENT!! ALL WE NEED IS A LITTLE LUCK AND OUR PLAN CAN MOVE FORWARD!!

OKAY BOB!
HISTORICALLY
YOU'VE BEEN OUR
HOTTEST-ROLLER!

YOU'RE GOING TO ROLL
FOR EACH ITEM. JUST
THINK **LOW NUMBERS!**
IF WE DON'T SECURE
ANOTHER **TYPE II** BAG
ALL OUR **PLANS** GO
UP IN **SMOKE!**



DON'T WORRY GUYS, I **WON'T** LET YOU DOWN. I PULLED OUT THE
"CURSED SISTERS". THEY HAVEN'T SEEN THE **LIGHT OF DAY** SINCE
THAT **UNLUCKY** STREAK BACK IN '91. **DAISY** AND **DALENE** ARE THE
LOWEST ROLLING PAIR OF **PERCENTILES** I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED.

DUDE, I THOUGHT YOU TOOK A **SLEDGE
HAMMER** TO THOSE **DICE** YEARS AGO.

WHOA, HOLD ON
A SECOND!

GOOD THINKING, BOB!
JUST **'BE'** THE DICE.



I THOUGHT WE WERE
GOING FOR A **LEVEL**
PLAYING FIELD HERE. YOU
WANNA **HEDGE** YER BET
WITH **LUCKY**... ER..
UNLUCKY DICE?
I DON'T **THINK** SO.

I GOING TO **INSIST** THAT
YOU ROLL WITH A PAIR OF
VIRGIN DICE! I'VE GOT
SOME UP IN MY **ROOM** --
I'LL GO GET 'EM.



VIRGIN DICE??!! YOU WANT ME TO ROLL **DICE** THAT
ARE **UNTESTED** IN THE **HEAT** IF **THE GAME?**

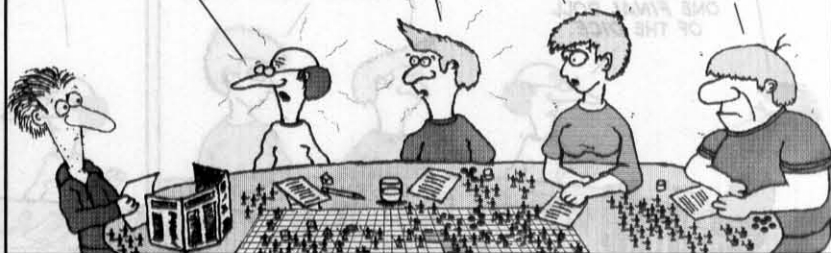
I CAN'T BELIEVE
YOU'D EVEN
SUGGEST
SUCH A THING.

YOU CAN'T SEND A **PLAYER**
INTO A **GAME-SITUATION**
UNDER **THOSE CONDITIONS**.

THAT'S **SACRILEGE**.

YOU'RE **MAD!**

NO WAY!!



THERE ARE **TWO THINGS** YOU **NEVER** DO. SEND A
SOLDIER INTO **BATTLE** WITHOUT A **ZEROED WEAPON**
AND SEND A **GAMER** INTO AN **ADVENTURE**
WITH **VIRGIN DICE!** IT JUST **ISN'T DONE!**

HE'S **EXCEEDING** HIS **AUTHORITY** AS A **GM!**
THAT'S WHAT HE'S DOING. HE'S GOT TO BE **STOPPED**.

YOU DON'T **MESS**
WITH A **MAN'S DICE!**

I SHOULD MAKE SOME
PHONE CALLS!



FINE! JUST ROLL
THE **DAMN DICE!**

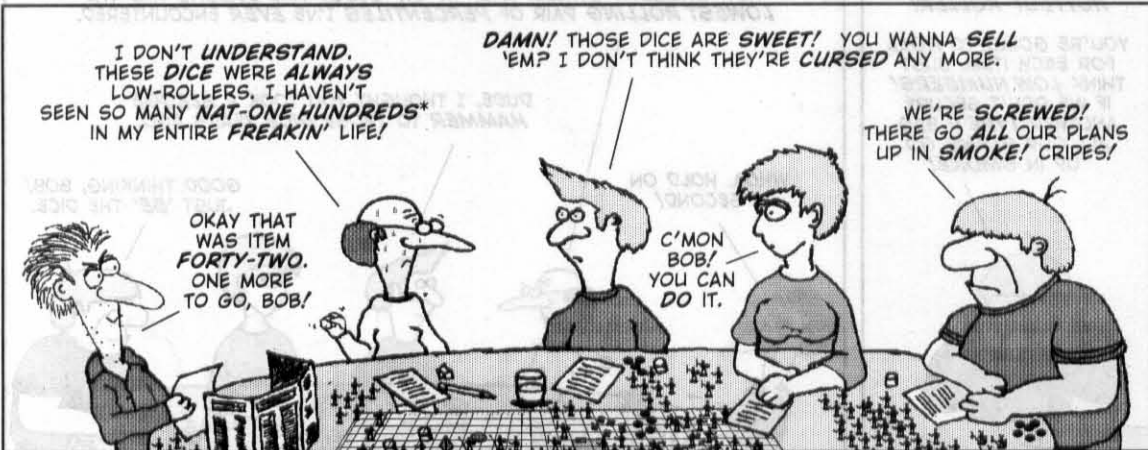
DEALING WITH
A **GAMER** AND
HIS **DICE** IS
LIKE DEALING
WITH THE
N.R.A. AND
GUN CONTROL.



PLAYER CODE
OF CONDUCT
THE GM IS ALWAYS
Right
GM CAN...
USEFUL items
USEFUL numbers
DAMAGES 3A1-47
WOLF 421-78
GARY 611-301
SARCOM 911

The Bag Raiders: ...of Dice and Men

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



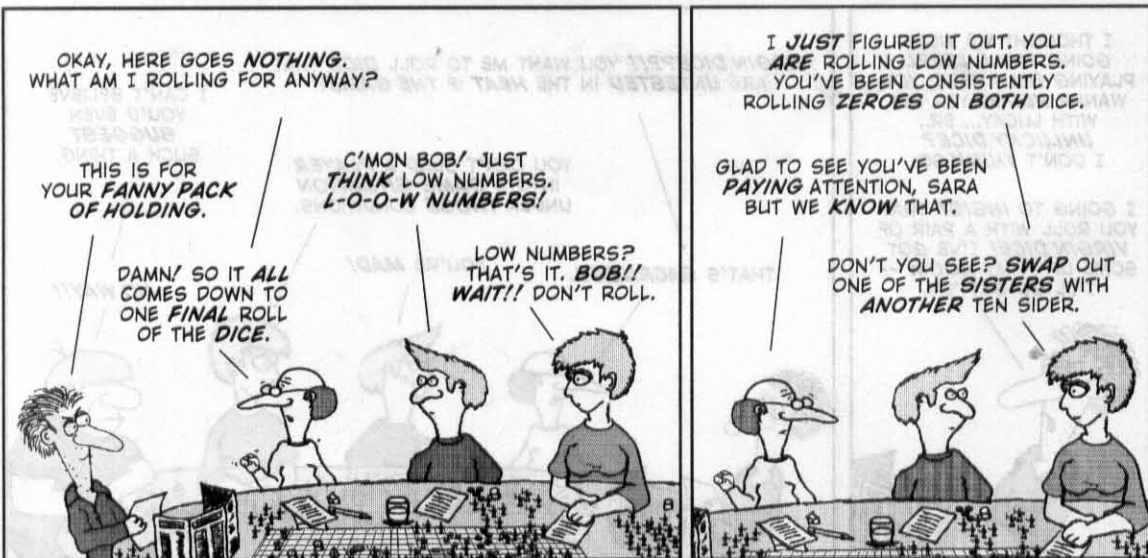
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. THESE DICE WERE ALWAYS LOW-ROLLERS. I HAVEN'T SEEN SO MANY NAT-ONE HUNDREDS* IN MY ENTIRE FREAKIN' LIFE!

DAMN! THOSE DICE ARE SWEET! YOU WANNA SELL 'EM? I DON'T THINK THEY'RE CURSED ANY MORE.

WE'RE SCREWED! THERE GO ALL OUR PLANS UP IN SMOKE! CRIPES!

OKAY THAT WAS ITEM FORTY-TWO. ONE MORE TO GO, BOB!

C'MON BOB! YOU CAN DO IT.



OKAY, HERE GOES NOTHING. WHAT AM I ROLLING FOR ANYWAY?

I JUST FIGURED IT OUT. YOU ARE ROLLING LOW NUMBERS. YOU'VE BEEN CONSISTENTLY ROLLING ZEROES ON BOTH DICE.

THIS IS FOR YOUR FANNY PACK OF HOLDING.

C'MON BOB! JUST THINK LOW NUMBERS. L-O-O-W NUMBERS!

GLAD TO SEE YOU'VE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION, SARA BUT WE KNOW THAT.

DAMN! SO IT ALL COMES DOWN TO ONE FINAL ROLL OF THE DICE.

LOW NUMBERS? THAT'S IT, BOB!! WAIT!! DON'T ROLL.

DON'T YOU SEE? SWAP OUT ONE OF THE SISTERS WITH ANOTHER TEN SIDER.



BY CANCELLING OUT THE OTHER SISTER'S PROPENSITY TO ROLL A ZERO WE'LL HAVE BETTER ODDS.

SARA THAT'S ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT!! THERE'S A FIFTY PERCENT CHANCE THE OTHER DIE WILL COME UP WITH A RESULT OF ONE THRU FIVE! I LIKE THOSE ODDS!! I MUST BE SLIPPING. THE THOUGHT NEVER EVEN OCCURRED TO ME.

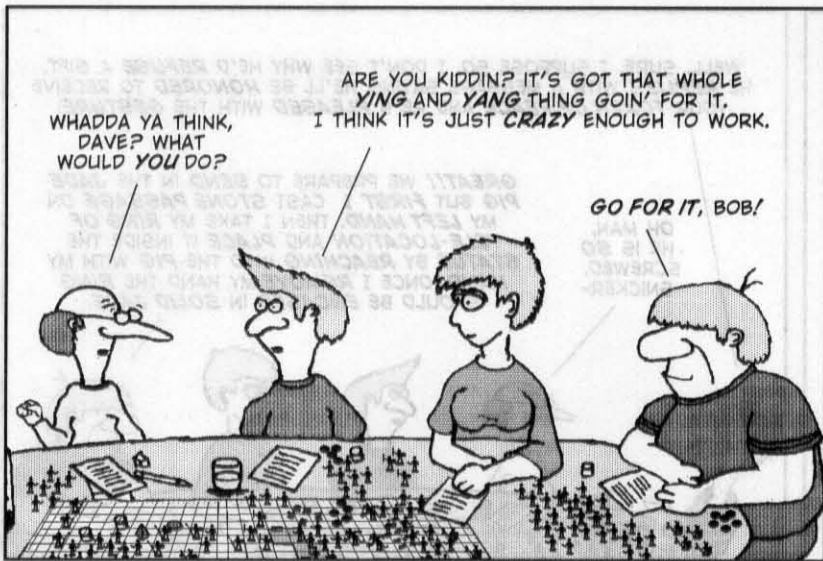
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? MIX MY DICE? I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THAT. IT GOES AGAINST MY GRAIN.

TRUST ME. AS A SINGLE WOMAN I'VE HAD TO LEARN TO WORK THE NUMBERS WHEN THINGS GET TIGHT.

DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR DESPERATE MEASURES, BOB.

GEE...I JUST DON'T KNOW.

* Nat One Hundred. Gamer slang for "Natural One Hundred" Similar to Nat-Twenty or Nat-Ten.



WHADDA YA THINK, DAVE? WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

ARE YOU KIDDIN'? IT'S GOT THAT WHOLE YING AND YANG THING GOIN' FOR IT. I THINK IT'S JUST CRAZY ENOUGH TO WORK.

GO FOR IT, BOB!



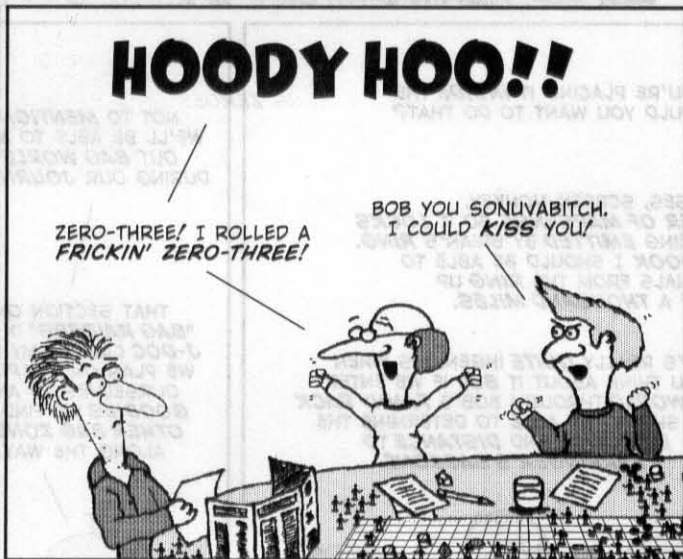
I'M GOING WITH SARA'S SUGGESTION.

I'M SWAPPING OUT DAISY WITH MY "LUCKY" TEN SIDER, BARRET!!

THE OL' BOY HAS NEVER LET ME DOWN.

ROLL!! TUMBLE! TUMBLE! TUMBLE!

HOODY HOO!!



ZERO-THREE! I ROLLED A FRICKIN' ZERO-THREE!

BOB YOU SONUVABITCH. I COULD KISS YOU!



WELL.....LOOKS LIKE WE FOUND THAT "ALTERNATE ROUTE" INTO BAG WORLD YOU WERE WANTING. CONGRATULATIONS, BIG GUY.

LET'S NOT START WITH THE BACK-PATting JUST YET. THERE ARE STILL A CRAP LOAD OF PITFALLS TO AVOID BEFORE WE PULL THIS OFF.



OKAY, B.A. IT'S TIME TO REVEAL ANOTHER CARD TO YOU. I'M SENDING A COURIER INTO BARRINGER'S BAG TO DELIVER A MESSAGE.



MESSAGE? WHAT KIND OF MESSAGE?

WE CONGRATULATE HIM ON HIS RECENT VICTORY. WE TELL HIM IN THE INTEREST OF BETTERING RELATIONS AND AS A TOKEN OF OUR DESIRE FOR PEACE HE IS TO EXPECT DELIVERY OF A GIFT.

A GIFT?

YEAH, YOU REMEMBER THAT JADE PIG STATUE WE LIFTED FROM THE TEMPLE OF THE SOW-GAWDESS?

WE WANT TO PRESENT IT TO BARRINGER.

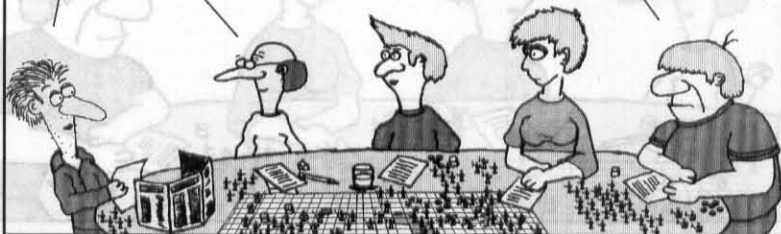
WE WAIT FOR A RESPONSE. IS HE WILLING TO ACCEPT OUR GIFT?



WELL, SURE. I SUPPOSE SO. I DON'T SEE WHY HE'D REFUSE A GIFT. HE REPLIES WITH A MESSAGE SAYING HE'LL BE HONORED TO RECEIVE YOUR TOKEN OF PEACE AND HE'S PLEASSED WITH THE GESTURE.

OH MAN, HE IS SO SCREWED. -SNICKER-

GREAT!! WE PREPARE TO SEND IN THE JADE PIG BUT FIRST I CAST STONE PASSAGE ON MY LEFT HAND. THEN I TAKE MY RING OF TELE-LOCATION AND PLACE IT INSIDE THE STATUE BY REACHING INTO THE PIG WITH MY HAND. ONCE I REMOVE MY HAND THE RING SHOULD BE ENCASED IN SOLID JADE.

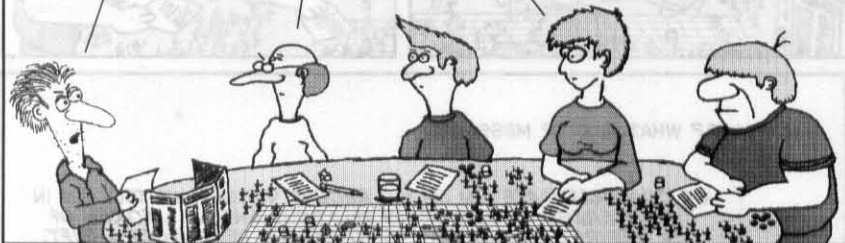


RING OF TELE-LOCATION? AND YOU'RE PLACING IT INSIDE THE JADE PIG? I DON'T GET IT. WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DO THAT?

HOLD YER HORSES, SCREEN-MONKEY. I CALIBRATE MY BRACER OF MAPSENSE SO IT LOCKS ONTO THE SIGNATURE BEING EMITTED BY BRIAN'S RING. ACCORDING TO THE BOOK I SHOULD BE ABLE TO PICK UP THE SIGNALS FROM THE RING UP TO A RANGE OF A THOUSAND MILES.

IT'S REALLY QUITE INGENIOUS WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT B.A. IF WE ENTER BAG WORLD THROUGH BOB'S FANNY PACK WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DETERMINE THE DIRECTION AND DISTANCE TO BARRINGER'S BAGZONE.

FIRP!! YOU WANNA TRACK THE PIG?



NOT TO MENTION WE'LL BE ABLE TO MAP OUT BAG WORLD DURING OUR JOURNEY.

THAT SECTION ON "BAG RAIDERS" IN THE J-DOC CAUGHT MY EYE. WE PLAN ON HELPING OURSELVES TO FIND IN OTHER BAG ZONES ALONG THE WAY.



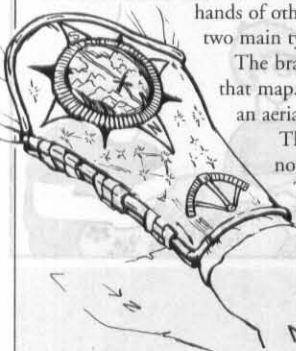
Bracers of MapSense™ G.P. Value: varies X.P. Value: varies

These remarkable bracers were created by the nefarious Grunge Elf (aka the Grels) darkmages to aid the DeathRover scouting parties as they explored deep forest labyrinths for new realms to conquer. Eventually, several of these prized items fell into the hands of other mages and were duplicated. Thus, there are numerous varieties in existence now. There seems to be two main types; those with a set number of charges (1d20) and those capable of unlimited use.

The bracers allow the wearer to know exactly where he is located on any map, along with his orientation on that map. (i.e. which direction he/she is facing.) It includes a built-in compass and a small crystal which shows an aerial-like view of his immediate surroundings.

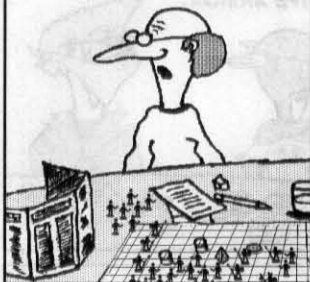
The bracers only show land features and structures. They do NOT show the position of creatures who are not within his line of sight. They also allow the wearer to draw accurate maps based on what he is seeing.

This includes scale, distance, heights etc. Note, however, that if he is seeing an illusion or if there are any camouflage/concealment factors involved which he hasn't detected, his map will reflect his perception. Some dwarven clones of Bracers of MapSense are said to have ore-deposit and stone-detecting abilities. A special version of these bracers (a limited run of fifty) were commissioned by the Sequestered Circle of Magicks to commemorate their two-thousandth anniversary. These are highly sought after and have detect-magic and locate water abilities.



AWH, DON'T LOOK SO GLUM, B.A. WE REALIZE THERE WILL BE LOT'S OF OBSTACLES YOU CAN THROW IN OUR WAY.

YOU'LL HAVE TIME TO GET YOUR DUCKS ALL IN A ROW BEFORE THE REAL PLAN UNFOLDS.



WE'VE GOT SOME PREPARATION TO DO OURSELVES BEFORE GOING INTO BAGWORLD. FOR INSTANCE WE WANNA HEAD BACK TO THE CITY OF THE LAZY OAKS AND ATTEMPT TO RAISE A SMALL ARMY OF MERCENARIES AND RECRUIT SOME SKILLED LABORERS.

HUH? I UNDERSTAND THE MERCENARIES BUT SKILLED LABORERS? WHY?

FIRST WE PLAN ON CONQUERING BAGWORLD. THEN WE PLAN ON COLONIZING IT. WE'LL NEED WORKERS WITH VARIOUS SKILLS.

IT'S ALL VERY EXCITING ISN'T IT?

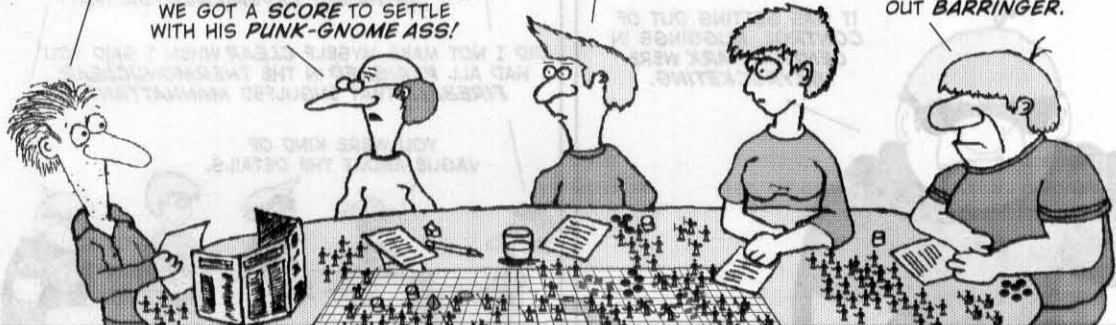


YOU WANT TO COLONIZE BAGWORLD?

WHY NOT? WE FIGURE IT'LL TAKE YEARS TO PLUNDER ALL THE THOUSANDS OF BAG ZONES. WHAT BETTER PLACE TO WAREHOUSE ALL THE LOOT THAN IN BAGWORLD ITSELF? BUT FIRST WE'LL NEED TO CLEANSE IT OF OTHER BAG RAIDERS AND SO FORTH.

AND WE READ JONID COINCRAWLER BASES HIS OPERATION OUT OF BAGWORLD. WE GOT A SCORE TO SETTLE WITH HIS PUNK-GNOME ASS!

OUR FIRST GOAL, OF COURSE IS TO TAKE OUT BARRINGER.



MAYBE THIS IS A GOOD PLACE TO STOP THE GAME. WE NEED TO GO OVER OUR LIST OF PROVISIONS FOR OUR EXPEDITIONARY FORCE AND I REALLY WOULDN'T MIND GOING BACK OVER THAT LIST OF SKILLED LABORERS WE CAME UP WITH. I'M WONDERING IF WE SHOULD ADD A FEW MORE SIEGECRAFT ENGINEERS.

GOOD IDEA. MAYBE WE CAN TALK OVER A PIZZA.

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN. LET'S DO IT.



A FEW MOMENTS LATER...

WHAT WOULD GARY DO?



CONTINUED IN BOT VOL. 8

'The Dark Knights Return'*

BY BRIAN JELKE
WITH JOLLY BLACKBURN

WELL THAT'S JUST *PEACHY!* THERE GOES *FIFTY-FOUR* BUCKS DOWN THE DRAIN -- *ANOTHER* CAMPAIGN RUINED BY *PLAYER STUPIDITY!*

FIRST YOU *START* A *NUCLEAR* WAR WITH *RUSSIA* AND THEN YOU COME UP WITH THE *BRIGHT* IDEA TO *FRAME* THE *LEGION* OF *RUIN*. -- NOT EVEN TAKING INTO *ACCOUNT* THAT THEIR *HEADQUARTERS* WAS LOCATED IN *MANHATTAN'S* *LOWER* *EAST* *SIDE!*

HEY DID THE *ROACHMOBILE* SURVIVE THE *NUCLEAR* *STRIKE*? IT HAS *PLUS* *FIVE* *REACTIVE* *ARMOR*.

YOU REALLY TAKE THE *CAKE*. YOU KNOW THAT?

NOW *HOLD* *ON*, *B.A.!* BEFORE YOU GO *DOGGING* US OUT -- WE HAD *GOOD* *INTENTIONS*. THE *LEGION* OF *RUIN* HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR NEARLY EVERY *PETTY* *CRIME* IN *NEW* *YORK* SINCE THE *EARLY* *SEVENTIES*. OUR *ONLY* *INTEREST* WAS TO *PROTECT* THE *INNOCENT*.

IT WAS GETTING OUT OF *CONTROL*. *MUGGINGS* IN *CENTRAL* *PARK* WERE *SKYROCKETING*.

WELL WITH *NEW* *YORK* *CITY* NOW BEING ONE *HUGE* *SLAG* *PILE* OF *RADIOACTIVE* *MOLTEN* *GOO* I'M WILLING TO BET *MUGGINGS* IN THE *PARK* ARE *NOT* A *PROBLEM* *ANYMORE*.

SO IN A *ROUNDAABOUT* WAY WE *DID* *ACHIEVE* OUR *MISSION* *REQUIREMENT* AND *ERADICATED* *CRIME* IN THE *BIG* *APPLE*. DO WE GET *EXPERIENCE* FOR THAT?

DID I NOT MAKE MYSELF *CLEAR* WHEN I SAID YOU HAD ALL *PERISHED* IN THE *THERMONUCLEAR* *FIREBALL* THAT *ENGULFED* *MANHATTAN*?

YOU WERE KIND OF *VAGUE* ABOUT THE *DETAILS*.

THEN LET ME *REITERATE*. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF *ROACH* *BOY*, YOU WERE ALL *VAPORIZED* BY THE *NUCLEAR* *FIREBALL*. AND ALTHOUGH HIS *SUPERPOWERS* EFFECTIVELY LET HIM "*SURVIVE* A *NUCLEAR* *HOLOCAUST*", HE IS ENCASED IN THE *MOLTEN* *SLAG* THAT WAS ONCE THE *ROACHMOBILE*. -- YOU ARE *DEAD!* *CAMPAIGN* *OVER!* NOW MAYBE YOU CAN *TELL* ME WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THIS *FIFTY* *DOLLAR* *CAMPAIGN* *SET* THAT WAS *BASED* IN *NEW* *YORK*.

OH, YEAH. THAT'S TOUGH. HEY, *WEIRD* *PETE* BUYS *USED* *GAMES* FOR *FIVE* *PERCENT* OF THE ORIGINAL *RETAIL* *PRICE!!!*

HEY, WAIT A *MINUTE*. YER FORGETTING SOMETHING *AREN'T* YOU? DIDN'T THE *BAD* *APPLE* *CAMPAIGN* *SET* COME WITH A *FREE* *ADVENTURE* FOR *HARD* *EIGHT'S* *NEW* *VIGILANTE* *JUSTICE* *RULES*?

THANKS, BUT NO THANKS. I'D RATHER *SHELVE* IT.

SOMETHING CALLED *STREET* *LEVEL* -- I READ A *REVIEW* ABOUT IT. IT'S A *NITTY* *GRITTY* *VERSION* OF *HEROES* AND *ZEROES*.

CRIMEFIGHTING ON A *LOW* *BUDGET*.

Based on a story by Pete Hooper
* This strip is a sequel to "A Time For Heroes" (page 18)

VIGILANTE JUSTICE?? HEY, I READ ABOUT THAT. THEY HAVE SOME REALLY **INNOVATIVE** SUPER POWERS. YOUR CHARACTERS ARE **SUPER HEROES** WITHOUT A **FRANCHISE** OR **GROUP** TO FINANCE THEIR WORK SO YOU'RE **FORCED** TO OPERATE OUTSIDE THE LAW.

DOES THAT MEAN WE DON'T HAVE TO ADHERE TO THE **HERO CODE OF CONDUCT**?

FROM WHAT I READ PRETTY MUCH **ANYTHING** GOES AS LONG AS YOU DON'T GET CAUGHT.

SWEET!

HOODY HOO!! THERE'S YOUR **SOLUTION**, B.A. WE CAN ROLL UP **MODIFIED** CHARACTERS WITH THESE **VIGILANTE JUSTICE** RULES AND YOU CAN START US ON A **NEW CAMPAIGN** NEXT WEEK. **SEE?** YOUR **FIFTY BUCKS** WON'T GO TO **WASTE** AFTER ALL.

ARE YOU **SURE** ABOUT THIS? I LOOKED **V.J.** OVER AND I GOTTA TELL YA -- IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE ANYTHING YOU WOULD WANT TO...

GOOD! THEN IT'S DECIDED. NEXT WEEK WE PLAY **VIGILANTE JUSTICE!!** KEWL!

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

SO YOU GUYS READY TO GIVE **VIGILANTE JUSTICE** A TRY? DID EVERYONE ROLL UP THEIR CHARACTERS?

I **REALLY** WISH SOMEONE HAD **MENTIONED** THAT **TIMMY JACKSON** WROTE THIS THING.

WHO CARES IF **TIMMY** WROTE IT. I THOUGHT THE **NEW CHARACTER GENERATION** RULES **ROCKED ASS!**

I TRIED TO WARN YOU **BOB**. TOO LATE NOW.

YEAH! THE **KID** DID ALL RIGHT!

I GUESS I WAS A BIT **DISAPPOINTED** IN THE **SUPER POWER** CHOICES. ALL OF THEM SEEMED KIND OF **LAME!**

DUDE THAT'S 'COS WE'RE **STREET LEVEL** ALL THE WAY.

YEAH, **BOB**.

LET THE **SUPERCHUNKS** **SAVE THE WORLD!** WE'RE THE **ONES** WHO FIGHT **CRIME** WHERE IT **LIVES** -- ON THE **STREETS!!** OUR **QUARRY** ARE THE **CAR THIEVES**, **MAFIA HIT MEN**, **DRUG KINGPINS**, ETC.

WELL PUT **SARA**. NOW, WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR **NEW CHARACTERS**.

WELL, WITH THE **LIMITED** SELECTION OF **SUPERPOWERS** TO CHOOSE FROM I DID THE **BEST** THAT I COULD. I'VE GOT A GUY CALLED **THE SCRATCHER**. HE'S GOT **FINGERNAILS OF STEEL** AND CAN MAKE **INCREDIBLY ANNOYING** SCREECHING SOUNDS ON THE **PORTABLE CHALKBOARD** HE CARRIES WITH HIM. AS AN **ADDED BONUS** I'VE GOT THE **POWER OF REPULSION**. I CAN'T BE TOUCHED BY OTHER HUMAN BEINGS. IT'S A **LONELY** LIFE BUT I NEVER **LOSE** IN A **FIST FIGHT**.

UH.....OKAY. NEXT??

EWWWW/
FINGERNAILS
OF STEEL!

GOOD
JOB,
BOB!

I WENT WITH **CREATIVE USE OF KITCHEN UTENSILS.**

POT LID BOY WEARS **POT LIDS** AS ARMOR, HE CAN **THROW 'EM** AS **WEAPONS** OR **PLAY TUNES** ON 'EM WITH **LOCAL STREET CORNER MUSICIANS.**

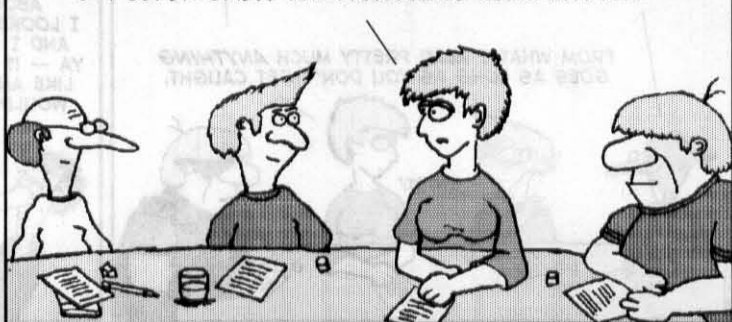
--WHICH I **USE** AS MY **COVER.**

YOU ROLLED A 4 ON YER PRIMARY POWER ROLL, HUH?

YEAH.



MY CHARACTER IS CALLED **DEADLINE.** IN HER REGULAR LIFE SHE'S A **REPORTER** FOR A SMALL **NEWSPAPER.** IT KEEPS ME UP ON ALL THE **GOSSIP** AROUND TOWN. **LOOSE-LIPPED COPS, MAFIA FIGURES, SNITCHES** -- I'VE GOT **ACCESS** TO THEM **ALL.** FOR MY **SUPER POWER** I CHOSE **UNCANNY NIMBLE FINGERS.** THIS MEANS I CAN **TYPE** OR **TAKE SHORTHAND** UP TO **1,000 WORDS PER MINUTE** WITH **VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT ACCURACY.** I'M LIKE A **HUMAN COPY MACHINE.** I'VE ALSO GOT **SUPER SMELL** AND **FRAGRANCE MANIPULATION.**



MY CHARACTER IS CALLED **NEMONIC** -- SPELLED WITH AN **"N".** I DROPPED THE **M** TO ADD A LITTLE **MYSTERY.** I MINNED OUT MY OTHER ABILITIES AND TOOK **SPEECH IMPEDIMENT** AS A **CHARACTER FLAW** SO I COULD GET **MAX INTELLIGENCE** AND THUS **TOTAL RECALL** AS A **SUPER POWER.** AS SUCH I READ BOOKS A LOT AND REMEMBER **EVERYTHING.**

IF ANYTHING COMES UP THAT **BRIAN VAN HOOSE** DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT, THE **RULES** ALLOW ME TO JUST GO **LOOK IT UP.** I'M A **WALKING ENCYCLOPEDIA.**



THAT'S GOOD BRIAN BUT DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR **CHARACTER FLAW.** IN **HEROES AND ZEROES** YOU CAN EARN **EXPERIENCE POINT** BONUSES IF YOU **ROLE-PLAY** YOUR **FLAWS.** WHAT TYPE OF **SPEECH IMPEDIMENT** DOES YOUR CHARACTER HAVE ANYWAY?

S-ST-ST-STUTTERING.

OH MAN, **THIS** SHOULD BE INTERESTING.

HEY -- THAT WAS PRETTY GOOD.

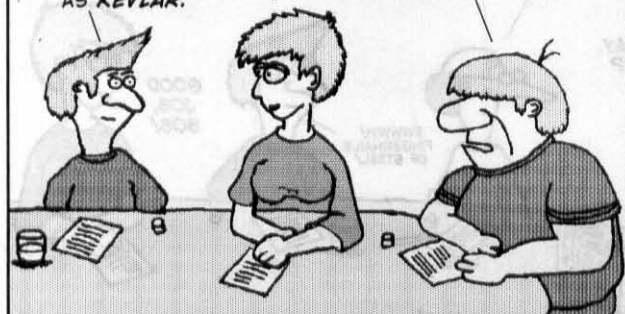
T-T-THANKS!



IN ADDITION TO OUR GUNS, **NEMONIC** AND I ROUTINELY WEAR **KEVLAR BODY ARMOR** WHEN WE'RE ON A CASE. CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL WITH ALL THE **SUPERVILLIANS** RUNNING AROUND THESE DAYS.

GOOD IDEA. COURSE MY **POT LID ARMOR** RATES AS **KEVLAR.**

N-N- N-NOT TO M-MENTION THE REGULAR B-B-BAD GU-GUYS.



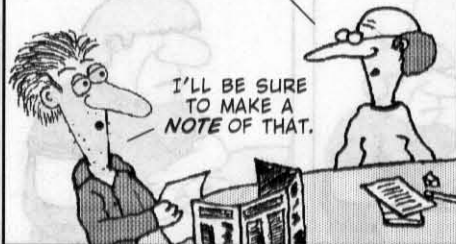
OKAY, I'M GOING TO **RULE** THAT **DEADLINE** AND **NEMONIC** ALREADY KNOW EACH OTHER AND THAT SHE USES HIM AS A **FACT CHECKER** FOR HER **NEWSPAPER COLUMNS.** **DEADLINE** HAS RECENTLY PLACED AN AD LOOKING FOR SOME **SUPPORT** IN CRACKING A **JERSEY CAR THEFT RING** SHE'S BEEN TIPPED OFF ABOUT.

THE **SCRATCHER** AND **POT LID BOY** HAVE ANSWERED THE AD AND YOU ALL MEET AT THE OFFICES OF THE NEWSPAPER.



OH B.A., I **ALMOST** FORGOT. WE'RE ALL PACKING **GUNS** TOO. I'VE GOT A **9MM SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL** I KEEP IN A **SHOULDER HOLSTER**.

BY THE WAY, I OFTEN WEAR AS **LITTLE CLOTHING** AS POSSIBLE TO TAKE **FULL ADVANTAGE** OF MY **REPULSION SUPER POWER**. WEARING CLOTHES WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO **GRAB** ME. THE CLOTHES THAT I DO WEAR ARE HELD TOGETHER BY **VELCRO** SO I CAN MAKE A **QUICK ESCAPE** IF I NEED TO.



I'LL BE SURE TO MAKE A **NOTE** OF THAT.

DUDE YOU SHOULD CHANGE YOUR NAME TO **REPULSOR** OR **THE REPULSINATOR** OR SOMETHING. THAT POWER IS **MUCH MORE AWESOME** THAN THE **CHALK BOARD** THING.

I KNOW BUT I KIND OF WANT TO KEEP THAT **ACE** UP MY SLEEVE IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. WHY **ADVERTISE** MY ADVANTAGE?



HEH, HEH, THE **SCRATCHER**. OH MAN, THAT IS SO **LAME**.

AAHHH.

I CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER. I'M NOT REALLY **PLEASED** WITH THE **RESPONSE** TO MY AD BUT IF **THIS** IS THE **MUSCLE** I HAVE TO **WORK** WITH I SUPPOSE IT'LL **HAVE** TO DO. WHERE DOES MY **TIP** LEAD ME TO B.A.? DO I HAVE ANY **LEADS**?

A **SEEDY BAR**? THAT'S **GREAT**! THIS SHOULD BE THE **PERFECT** OPPORTUNITY TO TRY OUT MY **NEW POWERS** AND WORK UP SOME **COMBAT TACTICALS**. YOU GOT SOMETHING **JUICY** PLANNED FOR US?

WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO TO THE **BAR** AND FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF?

OH MY -- THAT'S ACROSS THE **EAST RIVER**. DID ANYONE BUY A **CAR** WITH THEIR **STARTING MONEY**? WE MIGHT HAVE TO TAKE THE **SUBWAY**.

WHY THE **ATTITUDE**?

P-P-PUBLIC T-T-TRANSPORTATION? FOR S-S-SU-SUPERHEROS? I G-GUESS WE R-R-REALLY ARE STREET **LEV-LEVEL**.

YES. YOUR **INFORMANT** TELLS YOU TO GO TO THE **RAVEN BAR** AND LOOK AROUND. IT'S A **SEEDY JOINT** IN **BROOKLYN**.

H-H-HI GUYS. NICE TO MEET YOU.



YOU'RE RIGHT SARA, NONE OF YOU HAVE **CARS**. YOU ALL GO TO THE **SUBWAY** AND PICK UP A **TRAIN**. WHILE YOU'RE TRAVELING YOU GET SOME RATHER **UNUSUAL STARES**.

I GUESS THE **COMMON FOLK** AREN'T USED TO SEEING **REAL LIFE SUPERHEROS** IN **PERSON**.

THERE'S ONE **LITTLE BOY** IN PARTICULAR WHO CAN'T SEEM TO KEEP HIS EYES OFF OF YOU.

POT LID BOY DOESN'T LIKE BEING STARED AT LIKE A **FREAK**. I YELL "**WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU LOOKIN' AT!**"

E-E-EASY **POT LID BOY**. Y-Y-YOU DO LOOK A **LITTLE UNUSUAL** COVERED BY YOUR **REINFORCED POT LID ARMOR**. IF WE MAKE ANY **MONEY** OFF THIS F-F-FIRST J-J-JOB WE SHOULD DEFINITELY **INVEST** IN A **GROUP VAN**.

THIS IS SO **EMBARRASSING**. CAN I BORROW A **TOKEN**?



AS THE **TRAIN** PULLS INTO YOUR **STATION** THE SMALL BOY APPEARS **VERY** FRIGHTENED. HE **BACKS AWAY** FROM YOU AS HE STEPS OFF THE TRAIN. WHEN YOU GET OFF THE TRAIN PLATFORM HE GIVES YOU ONE **LAST GLANCE** AND RUNS OFF DOWN A SIDE STREET.

-SIGH- WELL LET'S TRY TO KEEP A LITTLE **LOWER PROFILE** IN THE BAR GUYS. OKAY?

M-MAY-MAY-B-B.... PERHAPS **P-POT LID B-BOY** SHOULD W-WA-WA-WAIT OUTSIDE, O-O-OUT B-BACK TO C-C-COVER THE EX-EXIT.

HA! WHO CARES ABOUT SOME **PUNK KID**? IT WILL HELP OUR **NOTORIETY FACTORS** IF HE SPREADS THE **WORD!**

OH **BOO HOO!!** RUN HOME TO **MAMA LITTLE BOY!** THAT'LL TEACH YA THAT **POT LID BOY** DOESN'T TAKE **CRAP** FROM ANYONE!!

S-S-S-SAY, G-G-GUYS!!



YOU **APPROACH** THE **BAR** ON FOOT AND THE THREE OF YOU **ENTER** WHILE **POT LID BOY** GOES AROUND THE **BACK**. THE **BAR** ISN'T VERY **CROWDED** YET. YOU **FIGURE** IT'S STILL **EARLY**. AFTER **SPENDING** SOME TIME TO **SIZE UP** THE PLACE, YOU **HEAR** A **MUFFLED SCREAM** COMING FROM **OUTSIDE**.

DAMN! THESE GUYS DON'T MESS AROUND. I'M GONNA **RUN** OUTSIDE, **CHALKBOARD** IN HAND, AND SEE WHAT THE **HELL** IS GOING ON.

YOU SEE A **MAN** LYING ON THE **GROUND** COMPLETELY COVERED IN A **PLASTIC FILM**. LOOKS LIKE HE'S **STRUGGLING** TO **BREATHE**. AS YOU **WALK** OUT THE **DOOR** TO **INVESTIGATE**, THE **SCRATCHER** IS **COLD-COCKED** FROM **BEHIND** WITH A **TIRE IRON**. **DEADLINE** AND **NEMONIC** SEE A **MAN** WHO **LITERALLY** HAS **TIRE IRONS FOR FINGERS** **STANDING** OVER THE **SCRATCHER**.

WE SHOULD **ALL GO**. WE'RE **RIGHT** BEHIND YOU **BOB!**

KEWL! THINGS ARE **HOPPING!**

"DIS **HERE** IS OUR **TURF**. **MIND** YOUR **OWN BUSINESS**."



HEY WHAT'S THE **BIG DEAL**? DON'T I **EVEN** GET A **SAVING THROW**?

WHOA! **SUPERPOWERED FELONS!** THIS LOOKS LIKE A **JOB** FOR **POT LID BOY**. I'M **COMING** FROM AROUND **BACK** AS **FAST** AS I CAN.

DARN! MY **SUPERPOWERS** ARE **USELESS** HERE. OH **WELL**, I'LL **DRAW** MY **GLOCK** AND **TELL** HIM TO "**FREEZE!**"

THAT'S **EDWARD TIRE IRON HANDS!** I **READ** ABOUT HIM. HE'S A **NOTORIOUS CAR THIEF** AND **WANTED** FOR A **STRING** OF **BAGEL SHOP** **ROBBERIES** IN **FOUR STATES**. I'LL **DRAW** MY **PEACEKEEPER** AS **WELL**.

NOPE! YOU'RE **OUT** LIKE A **LIGHT**.

THIS **BLOWS!**



THAT'S RIGHT **NEMONIC**, -- WHO SEEMS TO HAVE LOST HIS STUTTERING PROBLEM-- BUT BEFORE YOU CAN GET THE JUMP ON **EDWARD TIRE IRON HANDS**, NEMONIC IS **BLASTED** FROM BEHIND BY A **WATER JET** WITH THE **FORCE** OF A **FIRE HOSE**. **DEADLINE** TURNS TO SEE THE SOURCE OF THE JET JUST AS SHE HERSELF IS COVERED BY A FILM OF **PLASTIC WRAP**. A MAN BEHIND YOU IS **SPINNING IN A CIRCLE** WHILE SHOOTING **JETS OF WATER** FROM HIS ARMS. ANOTHER CROUCHES DOWN AS HE **SPRAYS HIS HEAVY DUTY PLASTIC FILM** OVER **DEADLINE**. THE **HUMAN SPRINKLER** AND **SHRINKWRAP MAN** LAUGH AS YOU BOTH FALL TO THE GROUND.

I KNOW BOB, BUT IN CASE YOU DIDN'T HEAR, EDWARD HAS **TIRE IRONS** INSTEAD OF **FINGERS**. THEY'RE MADE OF **IRON**, NOT **FLESH**.

WHAT ABOUT MY **REPULSION ABILITY**. THAT'S ALWAYS IN EFFECT YA KNOW. I CAN'T BE **TOUCHED** BY **HUMAN HANDS**.

FAIR'S FAIR. AT LEAST THE **VILLAINS** HAVE **LAME POWERS** TOO!



THESE **SUPERFREAKS** SHOULDN'T BE EXPECTING ME. I'LL COME FROM AROUND THE CORNER AND WING A COUPLE OF **TITANIUM-COATED, EXTRA-SHARP POT LIDS** AT EM.

ONE ROLL LATER...

GO AHEAD AND **ROLL** TO HIT DAVE. I'LL RULE THAT YOU CAN GET **ONE LID** OFF BEFORE WHAT IS **ABOUT** TO HAPPEN TAKES EFFECT.

CRIPES! SOMETHING'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN?

DAMN! A **FUMBLE!** HOW CAN THAT BE? IT WAS MY **CHANCE** TO **SAVE THE DAY** AND BE THE **HERO** AND I **FUMBLE?**

I TOLD YOU TO GET RID OF THAT **ROLL-TRUE AMBER-DEX** DIE!

IT SUCKS!



WELL YOU MANAGE AN **EXCELLENT TOSS** BUT UNFORTUNATELY IT'S WAY OFF BASE. YOUR **TITANIUM-COATED POT LID** GOES CRASHING INTO THE **DINER** ACROSS THE STREET. ALMOST **IMMEDIATELY** YOU HEAR THE SOUND OF **POLICE SIRENS** SWIFTLY APPROACHING.

HOW LONG AM I OUT FOR? I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CONSIDER THE "**QUICK RECOVERY FROM HEAD BLOWS**" ABILITY THE NEXT TIME I GET SOME **SKILL POINTS**.

NOT LONG! YOU'RE STARTING TO COME AROUND.

ANYTHING ELSE HAPPENING, B.A.?

C-C-COPS? WE BETTER **SC-SC-SCRAM B-BEFORE** WE **H-H-HA-HAVE** TO **E-EX EXPLAIN** THINGS.



YOU START TO COME TO BOB BUT YOU'RE STILL **GROGGY**. IT'LL BE A **FEW ROUNDS** TIL YOU'RE ABLE TO REACT. DAVE, JUST AS YOU ARE READYING TO **THROW** ANOTHER ONE OF YOUR **SPECIAL POT LIDS**, YOU ARE **DEVASTATED** BY AN **ATTACKER FROM ABOVE**. A MAN HAS FALLEN ON YOU WITH HIS FULL WEIGHT FROM THE TOP OF THE BUILDING LEAVING YOU LYING IN A **HEAP** AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE **ALLEYWAY**.

IT'S LIKE THESE GUYS KNEW WE WERE COMING. YOU SURE ABOUT THAT **"TIP OFF SOURCE"** SARAH? THIS WHOLE THING COULD BE A **SET UP**.

FALLS ON ME? WHAT THE HELL? WHAT ABOUT HIM? HE JUST **LANDED** ON A **HEAP OF SPECIALLY MADE HARDENED STEEL!!**

I READ ABOUT THIS GUY ALSO. ER, I MEAN, H-H-HE'S C-C-CALLED **THE F-F-FALLER**. HIS S-S-SU-SUPERPOWER IS THAT H-H-HE IS **IM IMPERVIOUS** TO **F-F-FALLING DAMAGE**.



THAT'S RIGHT BRIAN. IT'S **THE FALLER**, **EDWARD TIRE-IRON HANDS**, **SHRINK WRAP MAN** AND **THE HUMAN SPRINKLER**, ALSO KNOWN AS **THE NEFARIOUS FOUR**. AFTER FEELING THEY'VE MADE THEIR POINT, THEY ALL JUMP INTO A NEARBY **UNMARKED VAN** AND SPEED AWAY.

THERE'S GOT TO BE PEOPLE WATCHING BY NOW. I'M GOING TO... OH WAIT, MAYBE I SHOULD CUT **DEADLINE** OUT OF THAT **SHRINK WRAP** BEFORE SHE **SUFFOCATES**. I'LL USE MY **STEEL NAILS** TO SLICE THE PLASTIC.

AS SOON AS I'M ABLE TO SHAKE THE **COBWEBS LOOSE**, I'LL **CROUCH DOWN** IN THE ALLEYWAY TO TRY TO **AVOID DETECTION**.

THANKS, BOB!

I **MEMORIZE** THE DETAILS OF THE VAN BA. I-I-I ALSO TAKE A L-L LOOK AROUND AT THE **BYST-ST-ANDERS** TO M-M-MEMORIZE THE **FACES** OF THE **W-W-WITNESSES**.

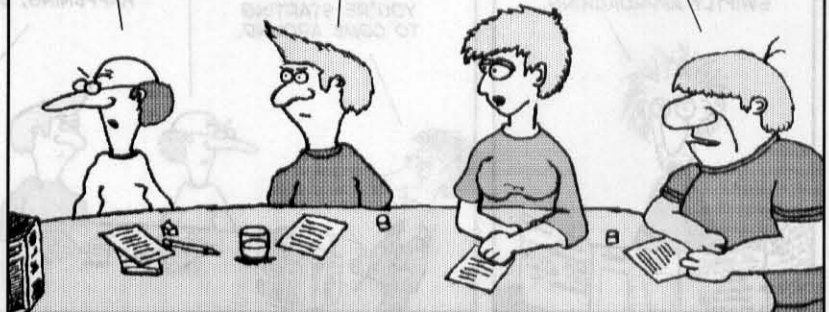


OK. YOU **LOOK AROUND** TO SEE A **SMALL CROWD** IN THE **DINER**. A COUPLE OF PEOPLE HAVE ALSO **SPILLED** OUT OF **THE RAVEN BAR** AND YOU ALSO NOTICE THE **BOY** FROM THE **SUBWAY** ACROSS THE STREET, JUST AS YOUR **EYES MEET**, HE **BOLTS AWAY**.

THE KID FROM THE **SUBWAY** YOU SAY? WHAT THE HELL IS HE **UP TO?** I'M **CHASIN'** AFTER THAT HIM. HE'S GOT SOME ANSWERS AND I WANT 'EM.

I'LL TEND TO THE **POOR GUY** WHO WAS ENCASED IN **SHRINK WRAP** IN THE FIRST PLACE AND MAKE SURE HE'S OK. DO I GET ANY **POINTS** FOR THAT?

I-I-I I'M G-G-G-GO GOING TO TO TO...



OK BRIAN, YOU CAN STOP WITH THE STUTTERING. I'M GETTING PRETTY SICK OF IT. I'LL BE SURE TO GIVE YOU YOUR ROLE-PLAYING EPS FOR THE SESSION. ANYWAY, AS THE SCRATCHER DASHES INTO THE STREET, THE COPS PULL UP, YANK OUT THEIR GUNS AND YELL "FREEZE SLEEZOIDS!"

SLEEZOIDS? NOBODY POINTS A GUN AT THE SCRATCHER! THEY'LL BE SORRY. I'M RAKIN' MY FINGERS OVER THE CHALK BOARD --FULL STRENGTH.

NO! BOB WAIT.....

FULL STRENGTH?

I-I-I'M C-C-C-COVERING M-M-MY... OH FIRK! I C-C-CAN'T S-S-STOP DOING IT. F-F-F-FIRK!

OH GREAT! WE'RE BLOWING IT - BIG TIME! IT'S EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF. LET'S SPLIT UP!

I'LL MEET YOU GUYS BACK AT THE OFFICE.

OK BOB, AS YOU GENERATE AN INCREDIBLY ANNOYING SCREECHING SOUND, THE COPS AND ALL THE WITNESSES DOUBLE OVER IN AGONY, BEGGING YOU TO STOP.

HA! THAT'LL TEACH EM. I'LL KEEP IT GOING SO THEY CAN'T REACT AND THEN WE'LL JUMP INTO THE SQUAD CAR AND SPEED AWAY.

WE'RE STEALING A POLICE CAR? HOW DO I GET MYSELF INTO THESE THINGS?

B-B-BEATS L-L-LEAVING ON F-F-FO-FOOT.

OK, YOU ALL MANAGE TO SUCCESSFULLY LEAVE THE SCENE OF THE ENCOUNTER, BUT NOT WITHOUT POLICE RECORDS. NOW I ASSUME YOU'LL BE WANTING TO TRY TO FIND THE NEFARIOUS FOUR SO YOU CAN GET BACK AT THEM AND UNCOVER THEIR CRIMES?

POLICE RECORDS???! OH MAN, WE'RE SCREWED!

I CAN'T OPERATE WITH A WARRANT OUT ON MY HEAD.

HOLD UP, SCREEN MONKEY! I GOTTA CLEAR MY NAME.

OH? AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO DO THAT?

I WANT TO BUST INTO POLICE HEADQUARTERS FIRST SO WE CAN WIPE OUR RECORDS CLEAN!

A LITTLE LATER...

OK FINE, YOUR PLAN TO POSE AS COMPUTER TECHS COMING IN TO PERFORM ROUTINE MAINTENANCE ON THE SYSTEM GETS YOU INTO THE COMPUTER ROOM. I CAN'T BELIEVE THE LUCK YOU HAD ON THOSE DICE ROLLS.

EXCELLENT. THAT EXTRA POINT I SPENT ON MY CHUTZPA ABILITY REALLY WENT A LONG WAY.

WHAT A SCAM. I LOVE IT.



WELL EVEN THOUGH YOUR COCKAMAMIE STORY SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED. YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T HAVE VERY MUCH TIME. THE DESK SERGEANT WAS PRETTY RELUCTANT TO LET YOU IN.

HE MUMBLED SOMETHING LIKE, "I WONDER IF I SHOULD CHECK WITH MY CAPTAIN JUST TO MAKE SURE?"

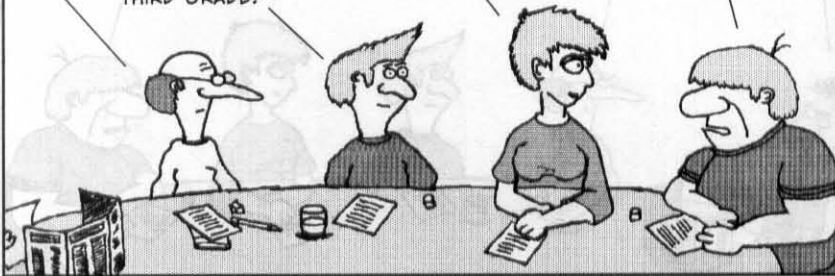


I'LL COVER THE DOOR. GO AHEAD AND GET TO WORK PNEUMATIC! ER... I MEAN PNEUMONIA... ER CRAP -- I FORGET HOW TO SAY YOUR NAME.

IT'S NEMONIC! SIT TIGHT GUYS. WE'RE JUST A FEW KEYSTROKES AWAY FROM BECOMING UPSTANDING CITIZENS AGAIN. ANYONE WANT A LETTER OF COMMENDATION OR CERTIFICATE OF MERIT ON THEIR PERMANENT RECORD? HEH HEH -- I CAN REWRITE HISTORY SO NOW'S YER CHANCE.

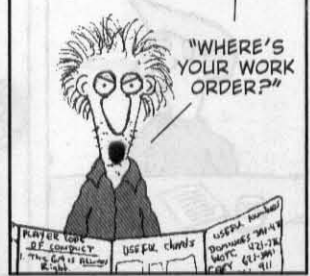
CAN YOU EDIT OUT THAT TIME I GOT DETENTION IN THE THIRD GRADE?

I'LL KEEP A NOSE TO THE DOOR. IF I SMELL ANYONE COMING I'LL LET YOU KNOW.



SINCE NEMONIC MAKES HIS HACKING PROFICIENCY ROLL, HE FINDS THE SECURITY SYSTEM EASY TO BYPASS AND MANAGES TO MAKE THE DESIRED CHANGES. SUDDENLY AN ANGRY POLICE LIEUTENANT BARGES IN WITH THE DESK SERGEANT AND GRABS YOU BY THE SHIRT.

"WHERE'S YOUR WORK ORDER?"



HUH? GRABBING ME BY THE SHIRT? NO WAY!! I WAS WEARING MY VELCRO TEAR-AWAY POLO SHIRT!

I PULL AWAY AND DRAW MY NINE MILLIMETER!

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! I FIRE THREE SHOTS INTO EACH OF THEIR HEADS!



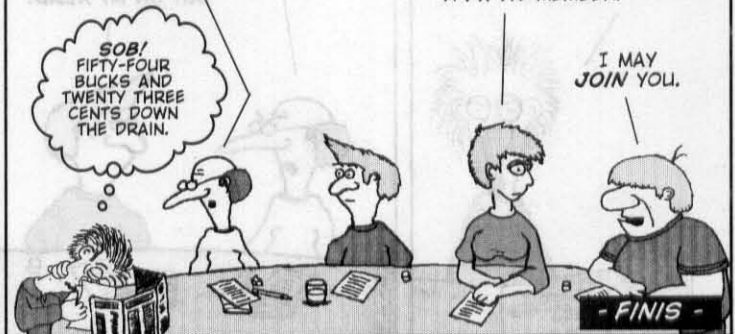
LATER AS FIFTH PRECINCT HEADQUARTERS BURNS...

DID YOU HEAR ME? I'M GOING TO GARROTE THAT FIRE INVESTIGATOR WHO LIFTED MY PRINTS OFF THAT GAS CAN! I'LL TOSS THE BODY INTO THE FLAMES TO DESTROY ANY EVIDENCE.

WE SEEM TO BE DIGGING OURSELVES IN DEEPER AND DEEPER. I'M THINKING OF ASKING THE NEFARIOUS FOUR IF THEY NEED A FIFTH MEMBER.

SOB! FIFTY-FOUR BUCKS AND TWENTY THREE CENTS DOWN THE DRAIN.

I MAY JOIN YOU.



b.a.

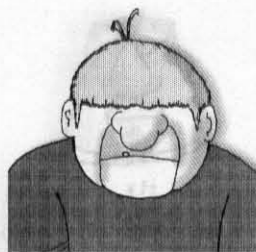
FELTON

B.A. is 30 years old and lives with his parents. When he isn't gaming he works part-time in his dad's dry cleaning shop. B.A. dropped out of college to follow his dream of being a game designer. He sunk \$6,000 into his first gaming product, **DAWG: the Role-Playing Game™**, which was a bomb. B.A. suffered a nervous breakdown and left gaming for a few years before picking up his dice bag again. He founded the Knights of the Dinner Table. He's currently employed at Pizza-A-Go Go.



brian

VAN HOOSE



Brian is 27 years old and lives alone. He manages to make a modest living operating a local ISP and selling painted miniatures. Brian is typically quiet and utters only three-word sentences unless a rule has been broken or his character has been maligned. Even though Brian can't remember his own phone number, he can recite entire passages of various rule books from memory. He used to claim to have a girlfriend (Alexis) who no one had ever seen. After being confronted by the other Knights on the subject, he refuses to discuss his dating life. And gawd help the poor soul who brings it up.

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

320 FERGUESON

Victor Ferguson became known as the *Lord of Steam* when he adapted the HackMaster rules to live-action play and began taking hand picked groups of players on late night forays into the labyrinth of steam tunnels beneath Ball State University. After 'Ferguson's Folly' made national headlines (Victor and his group were lost for 7 days prompting a massive rescue search), the steam tunnels were secured and dozens of entrances were sealed with concrete. There are several contradicting accounts of what happened weeks later on the evening of January 5th, 1987 but it involved a satchel of C-4 high explosive, a miscalculation of the expected blast radius, and a medical evacuation of the Campus Administration Building which collapsed during an attempt to breach the steam tunnels. The incident earned Victor the nickname 'Nitro' and 5 years probation. Nitro has been president of the **Black Hand Gaming Society** for 8 years, taking over from Weird Pete.



stevil

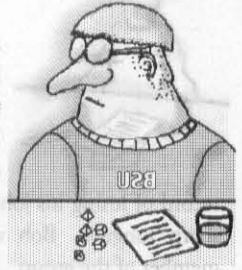
VAN HOSTLE

Stevil has a day job administering customer warranty claims. For years he satisfied his gaming itch through freelance work for various gaming industry publications. However, his divorce a couple of years back freed up time for him to get back into real gaming. He met Gordon Sheckberry at work [prior to his unfortunate(?) accident] and 'Gordo' subsequently introduced him to the **Black Hands**. He now commutes to Muncie every Friday night from his apartment in suburban Indianapolis.



Gordon 'Gordo' Sheckberry graduated from Ball State with a Chemical Engineering degree in his back pocket. (Although never proven, it has long been suspected that he cooked up the batch of C-4 Nitro used to level the Administration Building). Gordo was involved in a bizarre industrial accident that seriously impaired his vision and resulted in the loss of ALL his body hair. He is famous for his bad roupee and coke bottle-lens glasses.

The accident bestowed Gordo with the gift of total lifetime disability allowing him to game almost daily with various groups around Delaware county. (Thus he is the envy of gamers everywhere.) Gordo has been a member of the **Black Hands** for four years.



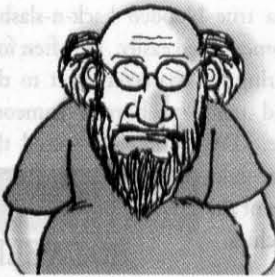
gordo

SHECKBERRY

weird

PETE

"Weird" Pete Ashton is the sole proprietor of a local game store called the **Games Pit**. He is proud of the fact that he was one of the co-designers of the cult classic role-playing game, **Lynch Mob™**. Pete loves to relate the story of how he was burned by his partners and lost "millions". Pete is always available for advice but oddly seems to be very bitter about the hobby he loves so much. He was a major stockholder in Hard 8 Enterprises but sold his shares mere days before HackMaster was released. Pete co-founded the **Black Hand Gaming Society** along with Nitro and served as president for the first four years of the club's existence. The backroom of Pete's shop serves as home table for the Society.



BLACK
GAMING



HANDS
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 topping 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.

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.

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Mentioned in passing....



Squirrely was one of a dozen chimpanzees who were the subjects of a joint NSA-USAF project which operated in secrecy at the height of the Cold War. Selected after a rigorous screening process the 'subjects' were taught a wide variety of skills of a covert military nature. His exceptional intelligence fast-tracked him even deeper into the shadows of secrecy. It is suspected he, and a dozen other chimps, were trained to fly modified U2 long-range reconnaissance aircraft. [*Wreckage of a U2 crash recently recovered in Sri Lanka lends credence to the theory. The remains of a chimpanzee in flight gear was discovered in the fuselage.*] The details of the project, however, and Squirrely's involvement have never been fully disclosed.

S.S.#234-56A-003

SQUIRRELY

A freedom of information act search uncovered scant details of his military service save for a directive from President Johnson, commissioning "S.S.#234-56A-003 into federal service" and "assigned to an undisclosed southeast Asian" base to begin an "operational role in the conflict." Other than that, Squirrely disappears from the record for the next twenty years.

With the collapse of the Soviet hegemony in 1989, the project lost funding and was forced to sell its test subjects at auction. Subject 234-56A-003 was purchased by a P. Ashton of Muncie, IN for the sum of \$586. (The serial number is tattooed on an inner lobe of Squirrely's left ear. Although fluent in lip reading and sign language (English, Russian and Vietnamese), neither his owner nor anyone that frequents the Games Pit shop are aware of it, nor his incredible background. Squirrely is content to live in secluded retirement, working as Pete's assistant and enjoying an occasional burrito.

Over the years, he's become an icon in the local gaming community - often mistaken for a monkey. At times, it appears he is employed by Pete, doing odd jobs after hours, unloading product from the back of trucks, mopping the floor, etc. Although apparently more intelligent than the average chimp, he seems to be accident-prone. (*Once he accidentally got caught in the fanbelt of Pete's VW while changing the oil.*)

Unbeknownst to Pete, for years Squirrely had been eating lead figurines (His cage was within arm's length of the display racks) resulting in the strange neurological disorder(s) that earned him his name and made him what he is today - an unbeaten, over-muscled, half-crazed, arm-wrestling, grudge-carrying, lunatic simian.

Weird Pete holds a yearly contest where people attempt to best Squirrely at arm wrestling. The chimpanzee really seems to enjoy the attention and is apparently proud of the fact remains unbeaten.

patty

GAUZWIELER



Patty majored in Elementary Education at BSU and currently teaches a Kindergarten class at James Whitcomb Riley Elementary. She was an early member of the **Black Hands** before splintering off to form her own group, "Patty's Perpetrators" (*more commonly referred to simply as "Patty's Perps"*) She has a reputation for bringing the 'positive reinforcement' and other teaching tools from her classroom to the gaming table. Patty has a 'thing' for Dave Bozwell (*who for a brief time had a 'thing' for her*) The two dated for several months before Dave broke it off.

earl julius

SLACKMOZER



Earl Slackmozer is regarded as a kind of 'local celebrity.' Besides running Tournament level **HackMaster** events at **GaryCon** and various local HackCons, he freelanced for **HardEight Enterprises** for several years with four published adventures under his belt (*including the highly acclaimed Module G-7: Gnome Uprising*). He moved to Muncie,

Indiana after transferring to Ball State from Saginaw Tech. He immediately started a gaming group (*Slacker's Hackers*) and began recruiting players (*who were required to take his HackMaster Basic Knowledge and Experience test.*) He and B.A. Felton butted heads several times but it appears they have learned to tolerate each other. There is now a begrudging respect between them.

His home-brewed live-action **SlamMaster Professional** Wrestling event, "Royal House Rumble" (*Held annually by invitation only*) continues to grow in popularity. Earl is currently writing up the rules and seeking a publisher.

Pappy Felton is B.A.'s 83-year-old grandfather. He served as a 'Fighting Sea Bee' in World War II. His unit was involved with building air-strips following the Marines as they island-hopped across the South Pacific.



After the war Pappy started a chain of dry-cleaning businesses in Muncie which he turned over to his son upon retirement.

Pappy now lives in Kissimmee Florida but returns home frequently to visit his kids and grandchildren. It's said he packs a mean' right punch.

morey "pappy" FELTON

Cody Winkle is active in community theatre and writes a movie review column for the college newspaper called "As I Saw It..." Except for a few favorable reviews for his portrayal of *Fagin* in the stage production of *Oliver* his acting career has been less than remarkable (though to listen to him you would think otherwise). Cody is a huge role-playing fan and likes to combine his acting skills with the game. He played with the **Black Hands** for a short time before being given the "big boot" by Weird Pete. (*Describing Cody, Weird Pete once said, "Despite the facts staring him right in the face he thinks very highly of himself -- I find that annoying."*)

Despite his acting career, most gamers know of him because of a rather bizarre event which happened at HackCon '98. Cody was found bound and gagged in a dumpster behind the Con site. It is suspected he was the victim of a form of gamer-style justice called "Taking Out the Trash". Cody refused to identify his attackers and has largely dropped out of sight - occasionally popping up to fill in an empty seat.



cody WINKLE



gary JACKSON

“More!” Gary has been riding Hackmaster spin-offs ever since. For those who want to know what ‘hard eight’ means, it refers to the game of craps where Gary has blown thousands of dollars of company money over the years on his frequent trips to Vegas.



edmund FINLEY

Edmund Finley was once Gary Jackson’s paperboy. One morning he was coerced into filling an empty chair

during a play-testing session of HackMaster and became ensnared in ‘Gary’s Game’. That was twenty years ago and Edmund has been on the Hard 8 team ever since (though he’s only been on the payroll for the past four months). Edmund wears the proud title of “Director of Research and Development” and recently oversaw the production of his first written work, *Abe, Babes and RollerBlades™*, described as a “sexy, zany, time-travelling romp through history and fashion”.

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’.



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



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

Tuley isn't an employee at Hard 8, nor is he considered an intern. He originally came to the company as part of a Summer Playtester program. He was tricked into running the company's customer service department by being led to believe it was a 'virtual corporation computer game' and that he was earning points based on how well he 'played' the game, which involved answering the phone and working out 'variable solutions' to each call. No one has mentioned the 'game' in quite some time and Tuley seems content to live in his office, occasionally order out for pizza and man his station.



tuley
PRISWINKLE

Norman Bowser is a role player who made good and realized his dream. He started out as a freelancer and began to pump so much HackMaster material into the Hard 8 offices that he was eventually asked to come on board. A few years ago he replaced Earl Slackmozer as the editor of HackJournal magazine and has been doing a bang up job of scratching the 'hack-n-slash' itch for thousands of fans. Gary has become so comfortable with Norman's writing ability that he has sanctioned all of Norman's material as 'official' Hackmaster material (even though Gary rarely reads Norman's work as of late). Norman has a long standing rivalry with Bitter Stevil. Norman cut Stevil's column from HackJournal soon after taking the helm.

timmy
JACKSON



Eight year old Timmy Jackson is Gary's youngest son. He is also the newly installed chief developer for the SpaceHack sci-fi roleplaying game. He had been responsible for development on the superhero frp Heroes and Zeroes, but was reassigned due to a rash of complaints following the release of H&Z's Background Tool Chest supplement. Gary, uncharacteristically emotional, felt terrible about this and has promised to make it up to Timmy by bringing his favorite TV hero, Xena the Warrior Princess, to the next HackCon.



SORRY GORDO!!
FIRE BLOSSOM
PLUMMETS OFF THE
CLIFF TO HER DEATH!!

HEY WAIT A MINUTE GORDO!! YOUR CHARACTER
IS A **PIXIE-FAERIE** RIGHT? WELL HELL!!
SHE CAN JUST FLY TO SAFETY!!

SHE CAN'T FLY. I HAD MY
WINGS CLIPPED SO I
COULD FIT INTO MY SUIT
OF **PLATEMAIL +5**

GORDO, STOP TALKING IN FIRST
PERSON WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING A
FEMALE CHARACTER.
YOU KNOW HOW IT
MAKES ME QUEASY.

HE'S JUST A BIRD
IN A GILDED SUIT
OF ARMOR.
HAR HAR!!

Originally appeared as part of the editorial for KODT issue #19



EWEEEEEE!! LOOK AT
SARA!! HER **HALF-ORG
BARBARIAN** HAS FACIAL
HAIR!! HOW GROSS!!

AW C'MON SARA!! THAT'S NOT
FAIR. WHAT HAPPENED TO
THE **PEEK-A-BOO
CHAIN MAIL BLOUSE
AND LEATHER THONG??**

SORRY GUYS!! I CONVINCED
WEIRD PETE TO PURCHASE THE
**FEMALE FIGHTER
ENHANCEMENT FILTERS** FOR
VIRTUAL HACKMASTER.

**DAMN
HIS HIDE!!**

Originally appeared as part of the editorial for KODT issue #20



OKAY BOB, I DISMANTLED MY
**INTERCONTINENTAL
MISSILE BATTERIES**
PER THE TERMS OF OUR CEASE
FIRE AGREEMENT. **NOW** CAN
I HAVE **FINANCIAL AID??**

HA!! HE FELL FOR IT.
I'LL **NUKE**, B.A. WITH
100 MEGATONS.
YOU FOLLOW UP WITH
YER **DIRTY NUKES!!**

I'M WARMIN' 'EM UP NOW,
DUDE!! JUST REMEMBER OUR
DEAL. I GET **IOWA!!** I WANT
YOUR **SHOCK TROOPS** ON
THAT LEFT FLANK **ASAP!!**

DOES THIS MEAN THE
PEACE CONFERENCE
HAS ADJOURNED??

IOWA?? FIRK DING
BLAST. I'M IMPLEMENTING
MY **SCORCHED EARTH**
PROGRAM.

Originally appeared as part of the editorial for KODT issue #21

Once when I was full into gaming (*I was twenty and worked eight hours a day and gamed ten*) a friend and I went out drinking before the weekly game session. We were pretty messed up when we arrived. (*We really shouldn't have been driving*). The week before, the party had been summoning demons to loose on a town. Anyway, we arrive at the house and enter screaming "*We are ready to summon demons!!!*" I was still yelling "HELL YEAH!" When my friend turned and shoved me out the door.

It turned out that all those track houses looked pretty much the same - especially at night and when you are drunk. We were in the house NEXT to the right house. The worst thing was that the neighbor was a minister having a prayer meeting when we walked in screaming.

Luke Ahearn
New Orleans, LA

Back when I was in the military I worked in the Nuclear Weapons Job field, (Imagine that, a gamer in charge of Nuclear weapons!) One day while at work I get a call from a gaming buddy:

Samir : Hello building _____ can I help you?

Chuck : *Hey I am really upset with Jeri and I wanna send him a letter bomb!*

Samir : Okay, do you care about the postal employees or is Jeri just your target?

Chuck : *Just Jeri.*

Samir : Okay, I will work up the spec and let you know the cost and success later.

Chuck : *Thanks, bye!*

(Jeri was an NPC in a sci fi game I was running, more an irritant then villain)

Later that day still at work.

Samir : Hello

Doering : *Hi, I wanna hire Mercenaries to take Bajan.*

Samir : Hmm do you need ships?

Doering : *Yeah, three companies worth.*

Samir : Weapons? Modern or what ever is currently available?

Doering : *The best I can afford.*

Samir : Okay I will draw up the cost and let you know if you can afford this venture.

Doering : *Bye*

(Bajan was a planet that the players were having problems with)

Later the next day I was suddenly called to the commanders office....the phones were being monitored.

MnyHeart
via E-mail

Back in 1982 my friends and I decided to go down to the local library to run a game of **The Fantasy Trip**. Things got pretty intense when one player stole a magic item from another.

As I tried my best to push the adventure along they kept bickering across the table. The one player kept saying to the other, "*You just wait. I'm just going to wait until you're sleeping and then I'm going to cut your throat with my dagger and take my ring back.*"

About ten minutes later two uniformed police officers walked cautiously into the Alcove where we were playing. We were totally confused and a bit shaken as they ordered us stand up. While we were being patted down, I asked one of the officer's what the problem was.

Instead of answering me he turned me around and said, "*Okay, we know one of you have a knife and we know one of you threatened to cut someone's throat with it.*"

Simultaneously we all broke out in laughter. After a bit of

explaining the red faced police officers explained that the acoustics in the library were very good. Someone in another alcove had heard just enough of our game session to get the wrong impression, causing them to frantically dial 911.

Richard Henson
Salt Lake City, Ut

My greatest 'gamer geek moment' took place when I was going through the metal detector at the airport and the alarm sounded. The guard held out a metal pan and requested that I empty my pockets into it.

Unfortunately, I had two dozen **Dragon Dice™** in my pockets. Designer, *Lester Smith* had handed me the dice just moments before I departed **DragonCon 95** (*This was before Dragon Dice was officially released so they were like rare gems to me.*) Not having anything to put the dice in I just crammed them in my pocket.

So there I was standing before a very confused guard who couldn't figure out what the hell these things were with their strange colors and mystic runnels. Worse yet, there was a building line of impatient travellers behind me who couldn't figure out what the hell they were either.

Another embarrassing moment was during my hitch in the Army. During **Desert Storm** our post received funding to have the computer terminals on post networked so we could send email back and forth across post.

It didn't take long for the *gamers-in-uniform* to figure out the same system could be used to chat back and forth during the duty day. We could talk about last night's game, discuss our plans for the next adventure. Great fun!! Things kept escalating until eventually we were actually running role-playing sessions over the network.

One day, I was running a nice game with my friend Specialist Hammonds (*who was on the other side of the post in the Admin Building*). In the middle of the game he suddenly stopped responding.

I kept sending him prompts. "Mike! You've got two orcs staring down your throat!! What are you doing? Mike?" (*keep in mind that on this system every time you sent a message to a terminal it arrived on the other end with an alert beep.*)

After five or six prompts and no answer I assumed duty must have called and was about to give up when a reply came back.

"Who is this?"

I scratched my head. Hammonds was a prankster so I thought he was being funny.

"Hey dude! You got two Orcs on you. What are you going to do?"

"Who the hell is this? Identify yourself!"

Now I was alarmed.

"Who is this?" I shot back.

"Major Morton!"

I immediately shut down my terminal and instantly transformed into *Sergeant Volunteer-for-any-task*. I ran courier duty for my supervisor, took the privates on police call of the company grounds, anything to put me out of the office and away from that terminal in case Major Morton tracked me down.

That night at the game I learned that it had been Specialist Hammonds all the time trying to put the 'fear of gawd' into me. I was greatly relieved to learn it was a joke but at the same time I felt like choking Hammonds where he stood.

For months I tried to pull the same joke on other players but they never fell for it. Now THAT was embarrassing.

Jolly R. Blackburn



KODI ALIGNMENT ANALYZER

The sticky problem of alignment can be difficult for both gamemasters and players. The following tips can be used to assist both in determining alignments and acceptable behavior. Characters can be rated broadly in two prime areas of ethics/morality. The first category is violent tendencies, which evaluates the disposition of the PC to use force as an answer to situations. Note that most, if not all, role-playing games are designed around fighting as the central activity, although newer ones give a nod towards "non-combat" skills, as if anyone would bother with them if they didn't also get to blow up stuff real good.

In any event, character advancement is based on killing things; nobody gets experience points for his fire-starting expertise or whatever (*unless he's an arsonist*).

The second category, unscrupulousness, appraises the character's level of dishonesty and deviousness. While this may apply to actions against other PCs, it normally gauges the amount of lying, cheating, and conniving the character uses against NPCs and the DM.

Answer each question below. Score zero points for each (a) answer, three points for each (b) answer, and five points for each (c) answer

CATEGORY I. VIOLENT TENDENCIES

1. A starving family asks for food. You:

- Point them to the nearest church or temple.
- Laugh and tell them to get a job.
- Put them out of their misery.

2. Badly wounded enemies are to be:

- Left to bleed to death
- Given a coup de grace
- Patched up and sold as slaves

3. Locals in the tavern are getting rowdy:

- Buy the house a round
- Start a fight
- Leave quietly and torch the place with a fireball

4. An unknown party approaches:

- Try to determine their alignment
- Attack on sight
- Pretend to be friends, then stab in the back

5. Acceptable kills:

- It is acceptable to kill monsters for treasure, even if they surrender
- It is acceptable to kill monsters
- It is acceptable to kill

CATEGORY II. UNSCRUPULOUSNESS

1. Laws are:

- to be obeyed, or bent if absolutely necessary
- to be ignored as much as possible
- to be broken with glee

2. Stealing from party members is:

- A despicable act
- An occupational hazard
- A convenient method to get treasure and cause trouble

3. Pilfering treasure from dead enemies before the party finds out about it is:

- To be avoided
- My job
- Dead or alive, friends or enemies, it makes no difference

4. Favorite classes/types:

- Warriors, clerics, rangers, paladins
- Thieves, rogues, spies, berserkers, barbarians
- Assassins, demonspawn, drow, inquisitors, undead

5. Cheating or stealing from the poor, elderly, crippled, widows, and orphans is:

- A vile deed
- Necessary in a pinch
- Traditional "trickle-up" economics

Bonus Question, counts in both categories; do you play "revenge" characters?

- Rarely or never
- When provoked
- All my characters are revenge characters

On the **Alignment Matrix** total up your score in each category and match the appropriate column. Violent tendencies is along the top, Unscrupulousness is down the left side.

		VIOLENT TENDENCIES		
		0-10 SOMEWHAT VIOLENT	11-20 VERY VIOLENT	21+ MAYHEM IS MY MIDDLE NAME
UNSCRUPULOUSNESS	0-10 ALMOST SCRUPULOUS	CHRONIC GOOD	AWFUL GOOD	LAWFUL GREEDY
	11-20 UNSCRUPULOUS	NERVOUS NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL GRABBY	ARMED NEUTRALITY
	21+ YOU MUST BE KIDDING	LEGAL EVIL	COMPULSIVE EVIL	CHAOTIC KINNEVIL

CHRONIC GOOD: These PCs are forever preaching sermonettes and often leave religious tracts instead of tips.

AWFUL GOOD: Like chronic good, but ready and willing to kill evildoers, heathens, and the slow of foot.

LAWFUL GREEDY: PCs who lay waste to foes and any unlucky bystanders alike in the name of law and order (and treasure).

NERVOUS NEUTRAL: Characters are the kind that chortle with glee when other members of the party take it on the chin but themselves run from any threatening situation. No matter how powerful they are, they avoid anything but "mopping up" operations. They often talk others into taking chances, claiming that they are too valuable to be risked.

NEUTRAL GRABBY: "Get what others have got, while the getting is good."

ARMED NEUTRALITY: Kill or be killed is the motto of the armed neutral. Unlike "good" PCs, they have no qualms about attacking the innocent and helpless, as long as there's something in it for them.

LEGAL EVIL: Evil Law school dropouts.

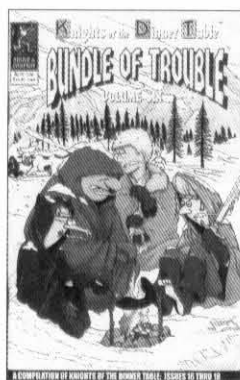
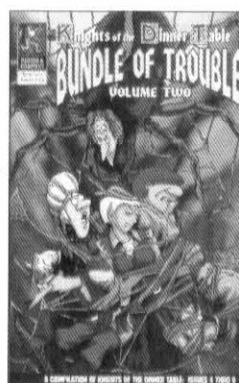
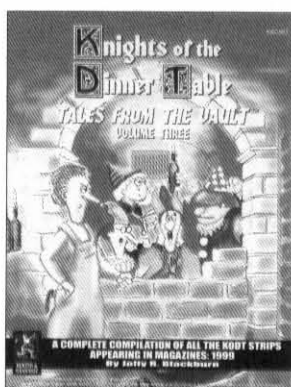
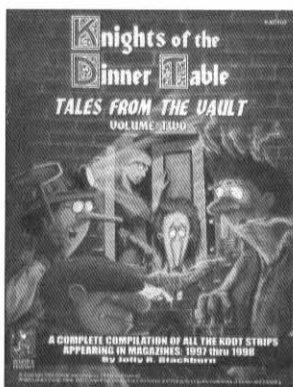
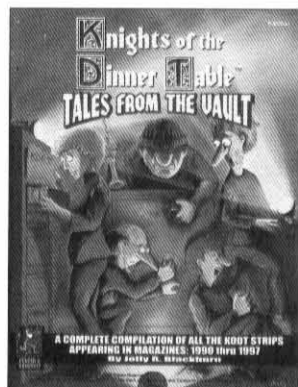
COMPULSIVE EVIL: Your run-of-the-mill slayers, serial killers, and mass murderers.

CHAOTIC KINNEVIL: The bane of many parties, these types are likely to go berserk at any time killing friends and enemies without distinction. In the words of Stevil van Hostle "What did you expect?"

By Larry Granato



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