



**K**nights of the **D**inner **T**able™

# BUNDLE OF TROUBLE

VOLUME EIGHT



HAVE YOU MISSED ALL THE LAUGHS THE

# Knights of the Dinner Table™

HAVE TO OFFER?

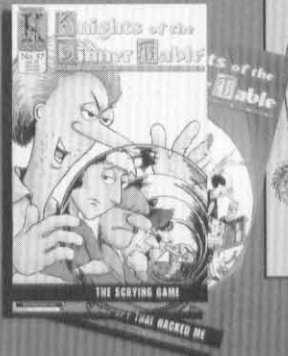
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QUIT YER SNIVELING!!  
I AIN'T GOT NO TEARS FOR YOU!!  
ANYONE STUPID ENOUGH TO STICK  
THEIR HEAD IN A HOLE IN THE WALL  
TO HAVE A QUICK LOOK-SEE  
DESERVES WHAT YOU GOT!!

(SNICKER) REVENGE IS SWEET!!  
NOTHING LIKE A 'S MACE OF BASHING  
TO MAKE SOMEONE'S HEAD EXPLODE  
LIKE A RIPE WATERMELON!!

ESPECIALLY WHEN BRANDISHED  
BY A HILL GIANT!!

DON'T WORRY NEWT!!  
FIRE BLOSSOM SCRAPES UP  
YOUR BRAIN-GOO AND  
CAREFULLY PLACES IT IN  
YOUR HELMET!!

DON'T FORGET - WE STILL HAVE  
TO PAY HIM FOR HIS SERVICES!!

HMM, PERHAPS WE SHOULD  
KEEP HIM ON RETAINER.

SOB!!  
SNORT!!



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## KENZER AND COMPANY

### Knights of the Dinner Table Bundle of Trouble Volume Eight

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# Knights of the Dinner Table™

## BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOLUME EIGHT

### 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 22 thru 24**  
**OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!! • DICE FOLLIES! • HACKZILLA**

# Editorial of a Madman

**A**t long last!! Another volume of **Bundles of Trouble!** It's been about six months since the last volume hit the streets and readers have been hounding us to release this one. So what's so special about Volume 8? Well, for one, the long awaited conclusion to the **BagWars Epic** appears in this volume. That's right. The conflict beginning in *KODT#14's (BOT#5) Barringer Rebellion* and continuing for nearly forty pages of strips in *BOT's 5 thru 7* is finally decided. Who is the winner? Well....I won't spoil the ending for you here. You'll have to read it for yourselves.

It's interesting to note, however, that we've recieved a lot of E-mail from concerned fans on the subject of **BagWars**. A surprising number of those letters had something in common. Many of you wrote in to say, *"Please! Let B.A. win this time! He's long overdue!!"*

I'd just like to point out, that as a policy, we're not swayed by such requests. After all, the first rule of **HackMaster** is to let the *"dice fall where they may."* As much as we pity B.A.'s plight as **GameMaster** we don't feel it would be right to intervene and 'fudge' the outcome. Rest assured that the outcome of **BagWars** as presented in this volume is exactly as Fate dictated. We don't make the shots — we just call them as they happen.

As for the rest of the **Bundle of Trouble** you hold in your hands, this volume contains two strips which I'm personally fond of. **Through Steam Tunnels Deep** and **The BassMasters of Muncie**.

Both strips were heavily inspired by the real-life events of my own gaming group. Frankly, I'm not sure how much detail I can go into regarding the actual events. (*Not sure what the statute of limitations is on these types of things.*) **Through Steam-Tunnels Deep**, as if you couldn't guess, was inspired by our own steam-tunnel forays into the 'underdark' beneath the campus of **Ball State University**. Aaaah, the memories. We had some hair-raising adventures dodging the campus police and militant janitors armed with mop handles in those dark passageways. (*Incidentally, a few years back a fan from Ball State wrote me to inform me of some bad news. Apparently with the advent of fibre-optic cable and computer networking the steam*

*tunnels have been locked down and secured with some high-tech gadgetry. And so ends an era of Urban adventuring...*)

The **BassMasters** in its entirety was inspired by a camping trip I took with **Lew Herring** (*the 'real' Bob Herzog*) back on Fourth of July weekend in 1981. To make a long story short, we rented a canoe and spent several evenings paddling up remote coves to 'Primitive Campgrounds' (*hey, that's what they call them*) along the shore of the **Missisniewa Reservoir**.

Armed with a bag full of *pop-bottle rockets* and *roman candles* we recreated our own version of the Naval gun shore bombardments of D-day Normandy. The results were a bit unexpected — As we attacked one campsite, an angry mob of campers spilled out of their tents and sleeping bags and ran down to the shoreline with flashlights and makeshift weapons. (*I'm not kidding*) As we frantically paddled away into the darkness we were alarmed to hear numerous outboard motors burp and then roar to life.

We barely escaped with our lives by beaching our canoe on an island and pulling it into some mosquito-infested undergrowth. We lay in the mud for hours as angry shouts and churning wakes echoed all around us. I can still remember **Lew** mumbling under his breath from his hiding place a few feet away, *"Great! I'm lying in the mud getting eaten alive by mosquitoes and a bunch of fishermen want to kill me!"*

To this day **Lew** maintains it was my idea to **shore bombard** the banks of the **Missisniewa Reservoir**. I write it off as a case of selective memory. I clearly recall that it was **HE** who first suggested the idea. And I think he was a bit shocked I actually memorialized the event by basing a **KODT** strip on it.

Oh well, I was told to fill a page with an editorial and I see by my word-counter that I've accomplished my mission. Enough rambling for now.

*Jolly R. Blackburn*

Game on!

Jolly R. Blackburn

C'MON GUYS. CUT IT OUT. LEAVE TEFLOM BILLY ALONE.

STOP IT! YOU'RE BEING CRUEL!! CAN'T YOU JUST ACCEPT BRIAN'S APOLOGY AND LET IT GO AT THAT?

THIS AIN'T ABOUT FORGIVENESS, SARA IT'S ABOUT PAYBACK!

THESE GAUNLETS OF 'WORLD OF HURT' WUSS-SLAPPING ROCK ASS!! I'M SLAPPIN' HIM DOWN LIKE A PUPPY WITH A WEAK BLADDER!!!

C-C-C'MON, D-D-DAVE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO SHORT CHANGE YOU FOR THE PIZZA. IT WAS A FRICKIN' ACCIDENT --REALLY!





## KENZER AND COMPANY

### Knights of the Dinner Table #22 Opportunity Knocks!

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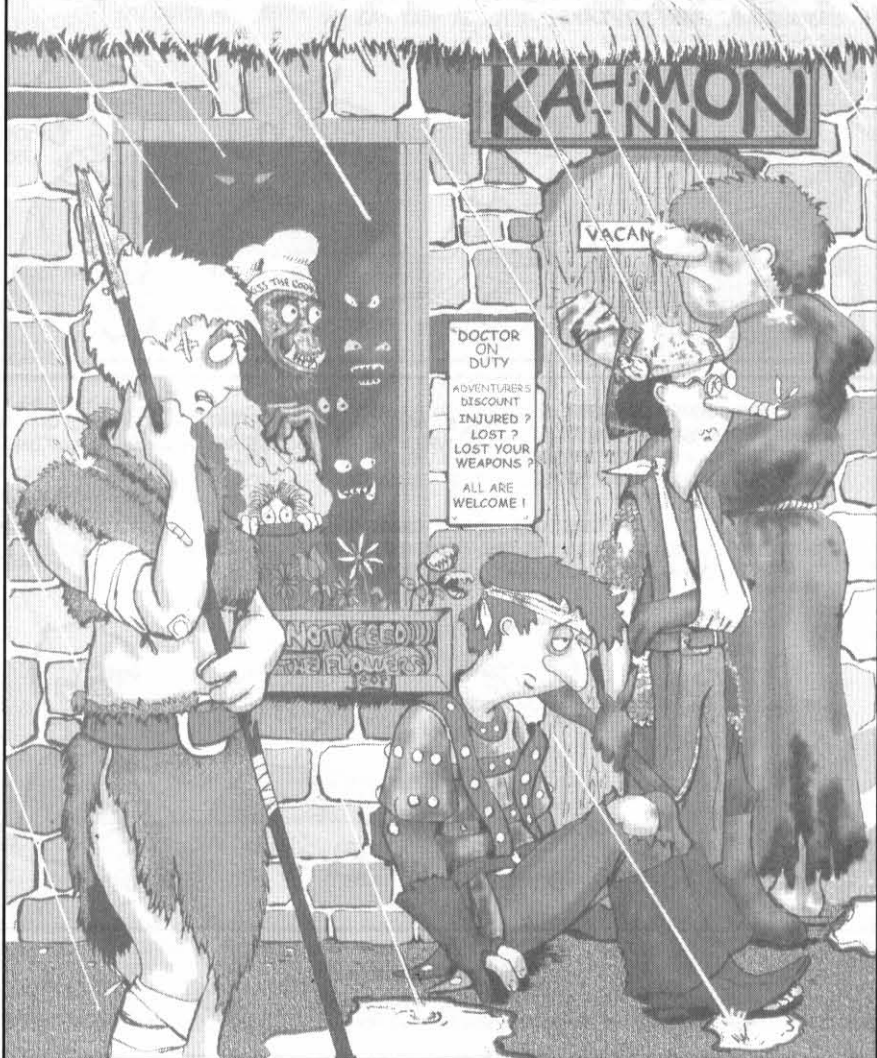
# Knights of the Dinner Table™

## “Opportunity Knocks!!”

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Cover Art by George Vrbanic



# Dawg Daze Afternoon

WELL? IS *EVERYONE* READY TO PLAY *DAWG: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME*? THIS IS SO EXCITING. I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE ACTUALLY GOING TO PLAY *MY* GAME.



OKAY WE DECIDED TO USE THE *HONOR SYSTEM*. EACH OF YOU WERE TO CREATE YOUR CHARACTERS ON YOUR OWN THIS WEEK AND BRING THEM TO THE GAME!



LET'S GO AROUND THE TABLE AND EACH OF YOU CAN TELL THE GROUP ABOUT HIS OR HER CHARACTER. *BOB*, LET'S START WITH YOU!

*MY CHARACTER SUCKS!!* I'M JUST NOT SURE I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO GET INTO THIS GAME.

*HUH??* BUT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO WAS SO *EXCITED* ABOUT PLAYING *DAWG*. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM??

I DON'T WANNA SAY. I JUST THINK IT'S BEST IF WE DIDN'T PLAY *DAWG* TONIGHT.



WHAT THE *HELL* ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?? YOU SAID!! I SAT RIGHT HERE AND I HEARD YOU — YOU SAID MY GAME "*ROCKS!*" YOU *BEGGED* ME TO RUN A GAME FOR YOU. NOW *AFTER* I'VE SPENT ALL WEEK *BUSTIN' MY BEHIND* WORKING UP A *DAWG ADVENTURE* YOU *DON'T WANT TO PLAY??*

YEAH, THAT'S PRETTY MUCH WHAT I'M SAYING. I DON'T WANT TO PLAY *DAWG: THE RPG!!* SO IF YOU DON'T MIND, CAN WE JUST GET BACK TO OUR *HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN??*

YEAH, I VOTE FOR *HACKMASTER* TOO!!

LUUUUU...YEAH, *HACKMASTER* DOES SOUND GOOD.

HEY, I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING *DAWG!!* WHAT GIVES??



*DAVE*, YOU TOO?? *SARA??* ARE YOU GUYS SAYING YOU'RE IN AGREEMENT WITH *BOB* ON THIS?? YOU *DON'T WANT* TO PLAY *MY* GAME??

HEY, MAYBE YOU SHOULD START PULLING OUT YOUR NOTES FOR *HACKMASTER* WHILE WE'RE DISCUSSING THIS. WE'RE CUTTING INTO *GAME TIME!!*

UH...MMMMMMM...ER, UH, MAYBE WE CAN PLAY *DAWG* SOME OTHER TIME, B.A.

I'M SORRY B.A.!! I REALLY *WANTED* TO PLAY THIS GAME — *FOR YOU!!* BUT I'M NOT SURE I CAN GET INTO IT EITHER!!

IS THIS SOME KIND OF *JOKE!!*

I'LL PLAY!!



Continued from Bundle of Trouble Volume Seven: "The Pilgrimage to GaryCon"

**NO HACKMASTER!!** YOU WERE **HOT** TO PLAY MY GAME A FEW DAYS AGO — COULDN'T WAIT — **JUST HAD TO PLAY!!** WELL, I JUST WASTED **TEN HOURS** PREPPING AN ADVENTURE FOR THIS **FREAKIN' GAME!!** SO WE'RE GOING TO SIT HERE AND YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME **WHY** THE SUDDEN **CHANGE OF HEART!!**

AWH, C'MON, B.A.!! WE'RE ALL FRIENDS HERE. WE DON'T WANT TO **TRASH** YOUR **BABY** RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF YOU.

YEAH, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT CAUSED YOU TO HAVE A **NERVOUS BREAKDOWN** THAT ONE...UH...OOPS.



**WHO TOLD YOU THAT!!** SOMEONE BEEN RUNNING THEIR MOUTH DOWN AT **WEIRD PETE'S** AGAIN?? **HUH??** I BET IT WAS **EARL SLACKMOZER** WASN'T IT?? WELL, FOR YOUR INFORMATION IT WASN'T A **NERVOUS BREAKDOWN!!** IT WAS JUST A BAD CASE OF **MENTAL EXHAUSTION!!** I WAS UNDER A LOT OF **STRESS** AND **STUFF!!** THE **PRINTER** WAS **HOUNDING** ME FOR HIS **SIX GRAND!!** AND THOSE **DAMN FREELANCE ARTISTS** I HIRED DEMONSTRATED AT MY **BOOTH** AT **GARYCON!!** AND DON'T EVEN GET ME STARTED ABOUT THOSE **KNOW-NOTHING GAME REVIEWERS** AT **HACKJOURNAL!!**

DUDE, CHILL!! WE'RE YOUR **FRIENDS** REMEMBER??

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHO TOLD ME. BUT IT DEFINITELY WASN'T **SARA** OR **BRIAN!!**

THANKS, DAVE!

NUMB DICE!!



I'M SERIOUS!! I WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU GUYS DON'T WANT TO PLAY. TELL ME **POINT BLANK** WHAT IT IS YOU DON'T LIKE ABOUT **MY GAME!!** GO AHEAD — I GOT **THICK SKIN!!** I CAN TAKE IT!!

YOU REALLY WANNA KNOW?? I'LL TELL YOU THE PROBLEMS I HAD WITH THE GAME IF YOU PROMISE YOU WON'T **TAKE IT OUT** ON MY CHARACTER NEXT TIME WE PLAY **HACKMASTER!!**

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU GUYS?? I LOVE **DAWG!!** SURE THERE WERE **87 TYPOS** (41 BEING GRAMMATICAL IN NATURE AND 46 BEING SPELLING ERRORS) AND YES, THERE ARE SOME **SERIOUS RULE QUIRKS** BUT THAT'S WHAT **SECOND EDITIONS** ARE FOR!!

YEAH ME TOO!! BUT YOU GOTTA PROMISE!!

B.A., MAYBE YOU SHOULD **CALM DOWN** AND **THEN** WE CAN TALK ABOUT THIS.

I **PROMISE** I WON'T HOLD IT AGAINST YOU!! I WANT YOUR **HONEST OPINION!**



OKAY, THE FIRST **BIG RED FLAG** THAT TOLD ME THIS GAME **BLEW CHUNKS** WAS THE WHEN I FOUND OUT YOU ONLY GOT TO ROLL ONE **FOUR SIDER** FOR YOUR **PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES!!** NO WAY IN **HELL** I'M PLAYING A **PEDIGREED BLACK LAB** WITH ONLY A **TWO STRENGTH** AND A **THREE INTELLIGENCE!!** WHAT WERE YOU THINKING??

AND MY **JUNKYARD CUR** HAS TO **SAVE VS. CANINE COMPULSION** EVERYTIME HE SEES A **CAR** OR HE HAS TO **CHASE** IT?? **DAMN!!** AND THERE'S A **THIRTY-FIVE PERCENT** CHANCE I'LL RUN OUT IN FRONT OF **ONCOMING TRAFFIC** EVERY TIME I CROSS A STREET??

I LOST INTEREST WHEN I NOTICED THAT **BEG, SIT, ROLL OVER** AND **PLAY DEAD** WERE LISTED ON THE **SKILL TABLES**. SORRY, B.A.!!

GEE, I THOUGHT THOSE SKILLS WERE NEAT.



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! MY GAME WAS DESIGNED TO ALLOW PLAYERS TO TAKE ON THE ROLE OF A DOMESTICATED CANINE!! EVERYTHING YOU JUST MENTIONED HELPS DO THAT!! YOU'RE A DOG NOT SOME MEDIEVAL WARRIOR RIPPLING WITH MUSCLES AND BRANDISHING A SWORD!!

DON'T GET US WRONG, B.A. WE APPRECIATE THE EFFORT. I CAN SEE WHAT YOU WERE GOING FOR — BUT DAMN — YOU TOOK IT TOO FAR!! MY CHARACTER WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM HIS MOTHER BEFORE HE WAS WEANED SO NOW I'M OVERLY DEPENDENT ON MY MASTER FOR SHOWS OF AFFECTION AND APPROVAL?? WHAT KIND OF CRAP IS THAT?

I TRIED TO ROLL UP A GREYHOUND RACING DOG BUT THE BACKGROUND GENERATION TABLES INDICATED I HAD BEEN RETIRED FOR FAILURE TO WIN A PURSE AND EUTHANIZED!!

AND THOSE SPAYED AND NEUTERED TABLES WERE BRUTAL!!

BUT GUYS, THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF THE GAME!!



DOGS HAVE BEEN BRED FOR CENTURIES TO BE SUBSERVIENT TO MAN!! YOUR CHARACTER IS CONSTANTLY AT ODDS WITH HIMSELF AS THE ETERNAL TUG-OF-WAR BETWEEN THE PRIMORDIAL "CALL OF THE WILD" AND THE MENTAL IMPRINTING OF DOMESTICATION RAGES ON IN YOUR HEART!!

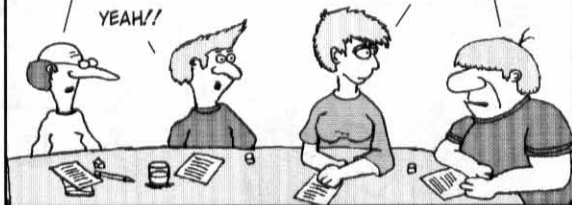
RETURN TO THE WILD!!! RUN WITH THE PACK!!! THAT'S WHAT YOUR CHARACTER WANTS TO DO!! BUT THE STINKIN' HUMANS WON'T LET YOU!! FALL OUT OF LINE AND THEY PEN YOU IN OR CHAIN YOU TO SOME FREAKIN' DOG IGLOO IN THE BACKYARD SO YOU CAN FREEZE YOUR TAIL OFF EATING GENERIC DOGGIE CHOW FROM A HUB CAP WHILE THEY EAT BOLOGNA AND CHEESE SANDWICHES IN THEIR WARM COZY HOUSES AND WATCH BARNABY JONES RERUNS ON THE TELLY!!!

THIS GAME IS ABOUT AWAKENING!! DISCOVERING THAT YOUR ESSENCE DOES NOT REVOLVE AROUND HUMANS BUT THE PACK!!

THAT RUNNING WITH THE PACK STUFF SOUNDS KEWL!!

MAYBE THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN I THOUGHT.

YEAH!!

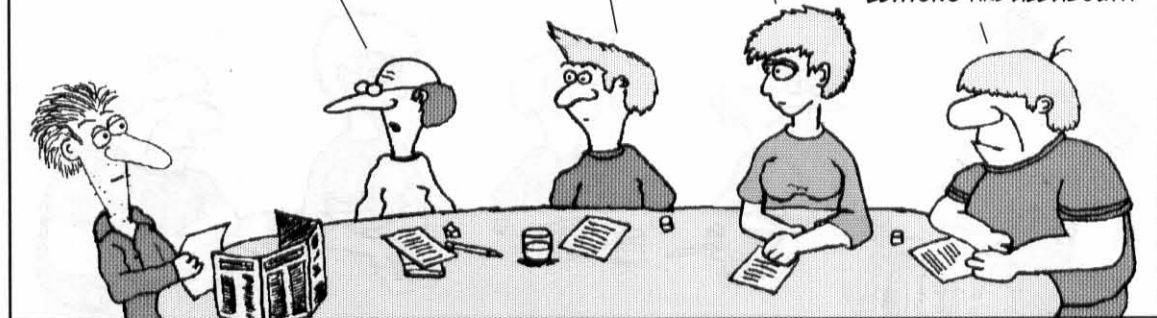


OKAY, I GUESS I'LL TOUGH IT OUT AND PLAY AFTER ALL, B.A. MAYBE THERE'S MORE TO THIS GAME THAN I THOUGHT.

"RETURN TO THE WILD!! RUN WITH THE PACK!!" THAT'S KEWL!! YOU SHOULD HAVE PUT THAT BLURB ON THE BACK COVER!!

THIS MAY BE INTERESTING!! SO OUR GOAL IS THROW OFF THE SHACKLES OF OPPRESSION AND SERVITUDE AND MAKE SOME KIND OF EXODUS BACK TO THE WILD?? I SURE WISH YOU WOULD HAVE MADE THAT CLEARER IN THE BOOK!!

AGAIN, THAT'S WHAT SECOND EDITIONS ARE ALL ABOUT!!



## LATER THAT SAME NIGHT...

OKAY BOB, AS YOU START TO LEAVE THE YARD YOUR MASTER LOOKS UP FROM HIS MORNING PAPER AND WHISTLES FOR YOU TO COME BACK!! YOU'LL HAVE TO ROLL VS. CANINE COMPULSION!! IF YOU FAIL, YOUR OBEDIENCE TRAINING WINS OUT AND YOU ARE COMPELLED TO RUN BACK SIT AT HIS FEET!!

THIS SUCKS!!! I WANNA RUN AWAY SO I CAN HANG OUT WITH DAVE AT THE JUNK YARD AND CHASE RATS! THIS GUY HAS ME ON A SHORT LEASH!!

HEY YOU'RE A VERY EXPENSIVE BREED!! YOUR MASTER ISN'T GOING TO LET YOU MIX IT UP WITH A COMMON MUTT!!

B.A., I'M ATTEMPTING TO DIG UNDER THE FENCE OF MY KENNEL!!

I'M PACING THE YARD. ANYTHING INTERESTING HAPPEN YET?

HAVE I GOTTEN TIRED OF CHASIN' THAT CAR YET??



## LATER STILL...

OKAY BOB, YOU MANAGE TO ELUDE YOUR MASTER BY RUNNING THROUGH A THICK HEDGE ROW!! YOU FIND A PERFECT ESCAPE ROUTE THROUGH A SMALL HOLE IN THE WOODEN FENCE IN THE BACKYARD.

HOODY HOO!! I'M RUNNING AS FAST AS I CAN!! AS SOON AS I HAVE ENOUGH DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND THAT YARD I'LL STOP TO GET MY BEARINGS!!

SORRY BOB, AS YOU ARE RUNNING YOU PASS A SMALL MAPLE TREE WHICH HAS BEEN MARKED BY A STRANGE CANINE AS CLAIMED TERRITORY!! YOU'LL HAVE TO SAVE VS. CANINE COMPULSION! IF YOU FAIL YOU MUST STOP TO SNIFF AND INVESTIGATE!!

THE THING TO DO BOB IS TO MARK THE TREE AS YOUR OWN!!



## AT THE END OF THE NIGHT...

OH, C'MON, B.A.!!! YOU ASKED US WHAT WE THOUGHT OF YOUR GAME NOW THAT WE'VE PLAYED IT!!!

YEA, AND YOU'D BETTER REWARD US WITH PLENTY OF TREASURE IN NEXT WEEK'S HACKMASTER SESSION FOR BEING SUCH GOOD SPORTS AND SITTING THROUGH THIS.

DO YOU THINK HE'LL BE ALRIGHT? MAYBE I SHOULD GO TALK TO HIM.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT OL' B.A.. HIS BARK IS WORSE THAN HIS BITE.



# Through Steam-Tunnels Deep

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



I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IF THERE IS **SO MUCH RISK** INVOLVED IN GOING INTO THE **STEAM TUNNELS** WHY DO YOU **ADVERTISE** THE EVENT ON **WEIRD PETE'S BULLETIN BOARD**?? WON'T THEY BE EXPECTING US??

IT'S PART OF THE **ADVENTURE** YOU IDIOT!! THE **CAMPUS POLICE** REPRESENT THE **IMPERIAL PATROL!!**

IT'S **INTENSE!!** THE **ADRENALINE RUSH** IS UNBELIEVABLE!!

IT'S MY WAY OF HEIGHTENING THE SENSE OF DANGER!!

OH!



WELL I WISH WE COULD **TONE DOWN** THAT **SENSE OF DANGER** A BIT!! LAST TIME I ENDED UP RUNNING DOWN **FRATERNITY ROW** DOOR-TO-DOOR SEEKING **ASYLUM!!** **GAWD DAMN FRAT RATS!!** THEY WOULDN'T LET ME IN!!

WHY WOULD THEY?? IF A **FAT OLD MAN** DRESSED IN **WIZARDS GARB** AND TOTIN' A **WOODEN SWORD** SHOWED UP AT MY DOOR AT **FIVE** IN THE **FREAKIN' MORNING** I WOULDN'T LET HIM IN EITHER!!

**DAMMIT!!** IT WASN'T A **WOODEN SWORD!** IT WAS A **STAFF OF THE DARK MAGE!!** THEY GOT IT WRONG ON THE POLICE REPORT.



LOOK, THIS IS **EXACTLY** THE REASON WHY I SET UP A **SAFE HOUSE** ON THE EDGE OF **CAMPUS**. IF **ANYTHING** GOES WRONG WE ALL MEET BACK AT **PATTY GAUZEWEILER'S** PLACE — **GOT IT??** SHE'S LEAVING HER **TOOL SHED** UNLOCKED. THERE'LL BE A **POLICE SCANNER**, **FOOD** AND **SODA** STASHED BEHIND THE **WORK BENCH!!**

**PATTY GAUZEWEILER??** I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS **SCARIER** — THE THOUGHT OF HIDING ON THE **LAM** AT **PATTY'S PLACE** OR GOING INTO THOSE **RAT INFESTED STEAM TUNNELS!!**

WHAT KIND OF **SODA??** I CAN'T DRINK **DIET!!**

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN!! IT'S NICE TO SEE WE'RE LEARNING FROM **PAST MISTAKES!!**

HMMRRFFFF — **PATTY HAS AN EIGHTY-FIVE DOLLAR UNPAID TAB** AT THE STORE. THIS MAY BE A GOOD OPP TO SPEAK WITH HER ABOUT THAT.



WELL, IF THERE ARE **NO MORE** QUESTIONS I GUESS WE CAN CALL IT A NIGHT. I'LL SEE **ALL** OF YOU **SATURDAY MORNING**. DON'T BE LATE!!

DID I MENTION I HAVE A **SLEEP DISORDER??** SOMETIMES I DON'T WAKE UP ON TIME!



## LATE SATURDAY NIGHT...

WELL THAT'S IT!! IT'S BEEN **EIGHTEEN HOURS** AND STILL **NO NEWT!!** THE BOY IS **OBVIOUSLY LOST!!** SORRY **PETE**, LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO CALL IN A **SEARCH AND RESCUE EFFORT** AFTER ALL!!

**CRIPES!!** I KNEW THAT LITTLE FART WAS TROUBLE. THE **PRESS** IS GOING TO **REAM ME AGAIN!!** REMEMBER, EVERYONE — I HAD **NOTHING** TO DO WITH THIS!! **OKAY??**

IT'S MY FAULT!! I'M THE ONE WHO TOLD HIM TO SEARCH THAT SIDE CORRIDOR!!

GEE, I'M SORRY I WASN'T THERE. RAN INTO SOME ROAD CONSTRUCTION.



# The Lost One(s)



I JUST HEARD THE **BAD NEWS!!**  
**NEWT FORAGER** IS LOST IN THE **STEAM TUNNELS??**

YEAH, THE LITTLE **JERK** DIDN'T LISTEN TO DIRECTIONS. WANDERED OFF SOMEWHERE IN **GRID ALPHA!!** UH... NOT THAT I WAS THERE OR ANYTHING.

**GRID ALPHA??**  
ARE YOU SURE?? HE'S **DOOMED!!** THAT'S THE SECTION I WAS LOST IN. **SEVEN DAYS\*** I FOUGHT TO CLING TO LIFE IN THOSE **FOUL TUNNELS!**

I HOPE THE **SEARCH AND RESCUE** PARTY IS LARGE ENOUGH TO PROPERLY **SWEEP** THAT SECTION.

**NOTICE:**  
The Games Pit has never condoned nor encouraged Steam Tunnel Excursions.

AFTER **THREE DAYS** OF SEARCHING, SOME OF THE **SEARCH COORDINATORS** HAVE DECIDED IT'S ANOTHER **HOAX!!** **MORTIMER DUNLAP'S** LITTLE PRANK LAST FEBRUARY IS STILL FRESH IN THEIR MEMORIES. **SIXTEEN DAYS** OF SEARCHING — ENDS UP THE GUY WAS IN **TAHOE** PLAYING **NICKEL SLOT MACHINES** AND SIPPING **JACK-N-COKES.**

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?? THEY'RE NOT TAKING THIS THING **SERIOUSLY??** I DON'T KNOW **NEWT** THAT WELL, BUT I **DO KNOW** HE WOULDN'T **STOOP** SO LOW AS TO GIVE THE **GAMING COMMUNITY** ANOTHER **BLACK EYE** BY PULLING SOME **LAME STUNT!!**

REGARDLESS, THEY'RE CALLING OFF THE SEARCH AT **MIDNIGHT** IF NOTHING TURNS UP!!

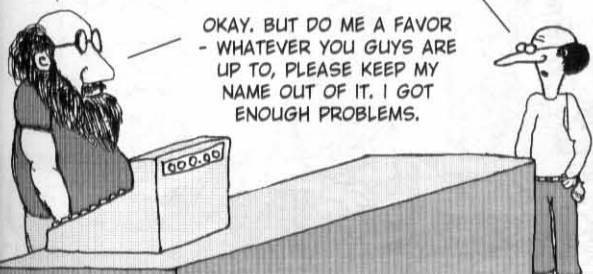
**CALLING OFF THE SEARCH??** THEY CAN'T DO THAT, **PETE!!** SOMEBODY HAS TO DO SOMETHING!!

\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume One: "Dueling GameMasters"

YOU'RE RIGHT!! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THIS KIND OF THING DOES FOR MY *BUSINESS*?? THE PRESS IS TRYING TO LAY THIS THING ON *MY SHOULDERS*!!

WE'LL KEEP ME POSTED ON THE STATUS OF THE *SEARCH AND RESCUE PARTY*. I'M GOING TO CALL AN *EMERGENCY SESSION* OF THE *KNIGHTS* AND SEE WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT THIS.

OKAY. BUT DO ME A FAVOR - WHATEVER YOU GUYS ARE UP TO, PLEASE KEEP MY NAME OUT OF IT. I GOT ENOUGH PROBLEMS.



### MOMENTS LATER...

HELLO, *B.A.*?? WE GOT A "*GAMER IN THE HOLE*" IN *GRID ALPHA*!! IT LOOKS GRIM!! I'M GOING IN!! I COULD USE SOME SUPPORT!!

I ALREADY HEARD!! BETTER GET OVER HERE.

ROGER THAT!! I'M GRABBING MY GEAR AND THEN I'M PICKING UP *DAVE*. WE'LL BE *RIGHT THERE*!



### MEANWHILE IN NEWT'S APARTMENT ACROSS TOWN...

"MEANWHILE IN OTHER NEWS, *MUNCIE AUTHORITIES* HAVE ANNOUNCED THEY WILL BE CALLING OFF THE *SEARCH* FOR A LOCAL BOY WHO WAS REPORTED *LOST* IN *BALL STATE'S STEAM TUNNEL LABYRINTH* LAST *SATURDAY*. OFFICIALS NOW BELIEVE THAT SITUATION TO HAVE BEEN A *HOAX*. WE NOW TURN TO OUR *ON THE SCENE* REPORTER, *NILES NASH* AT THE *GAMES PIT*!!"

CALLING OFF THE *SEARCH*?? *GEEZE*!!! I COULD BE DYING DOWN THERE!! WHAT'S WRONG WITH THESE PEOPLE??



### LATER THAT NIGHT...

OKAY, I JUST GOT THE CALL FROM *WEIRD PETE*!! THE *SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM* HAS BEEN PULLED OUT!! THEY DIDN'T TURN UP *ANY SIGN OF NEWT*.

*MY GAWD*!! IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER AGAIN!! JUST LIKE IT DID *ELEVEN YEARS AGO*!! *FERGUSON'S FOLLY: THE SEQUEL*!!

NITRO IS A DISGRACE TO THE *GM'S SHIELD*!!

POOR *NEWT*!!! I BET HE'S SCARED TO DEATH!

IF NOT DEAD ALREADY!



*SORRY B.A.*!! I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE *LEFT BEHIND* - TO BE ABANDONED BY YOUR *SO-CALLED "COMRADES"* TO *FEND FOR YOURSELF*!! *DAVE* AND I ARE GOING IN!! ARE YOU GUYS GOING TO SERVE AS OUR *SUPPORT TEAM* OR ARE WE *ALONE* ON THIS?

BOB, I KNOW YOU SPENT A LOT OF TIME PREPARING THIS "*GAMER IN THE HOLE*" *RESCUE MISSION* AND ALL, BUT I'M HAVING SOME *SERIOUS DOUBTS* ABOUT LETTING YOU GUYS PUT IT INTO *PLAY*!!

HEY, WE *ALL SWORE* TO THE *GAMER'S CREED*, DIDN'T WE?

- IN THE ABSENCE OF A BETTER PLAN, I GUESS I'M IN!!!

COUNT ME IN, DUDE!!



DON'T GET ME WRONG. IF WE DO THIS — I'M BEHIND YOU **ONE HUNDRED PERCENT!!** IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE A FEW CONCERNS I FEEL WE NEED TO ADDRESS BEFORE WE **JUMP** INTO THIS.

**FINE!!** PUT IT ON THE TABLE. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM??

WELL, UH...ER...I'M JUST NOT SURE IT'S A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU IN PARTICULAR TO BE GOING BACK IN THERE. BOB.

I THINK WHAT **B.A.'S** TRYING TO SAY, **BOB**, IS YOU'LL BE FACING THE **DEMONS OF YOUR PAST** IN THOSE **TUNNELS!!** ARE YOU PREPARED TO DEAL WITH THOSE **RESURFACED FEELINGS??**

BUT **BOB'S** BEEN THERE! HE KNOWS THE GROUND!

DON'T **CANDY-COAT** THE WORDS, **SARA!!**



THERE'S A **MENTAL COMPETENCE ISSUE** HERE **BOBBY-BOY!!** THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN THAT **NASTY RUMOR** THAT YOU **FREAKED OUT** DURING THAT **FATEFUL EXPEDITION** ELEVEN YEARS AGO AND **INDIRECTLY CAUSED FERGUSON'S FOLLY!!**

**NITRO** HAS **ALWAYS** MAINTAINED THAT THE **GROUP** GOT LOST WHILE SEARCHING FOR YOU!!



**THAT'S NOT TRUE!!** I WAS GOING FOR HELP!! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAY IT BEFORE IT SINKS IN — **HUH??**

C'MON **BRIAN**, THAT WAS A **LOW BLOW!!** YOU KNOW **NITRO** TRIED MAKING **BOB** A **SCAPEGOAT!!**

I THOUGHT WE ALL AGREED TO ACCEPT **BOB'S** VERSION OF THE STORY, **BRIAN**. BESIDES, I THINK **BOB'S** WILLINGNESS TO GO **BACK IN** TO RESCUE **NEWT** SAYS A **LOT!!**

**GOOD POINT!!**



**ANY OTHER CONCERNS??**

UH, NO, BUT I DO HAVE A QUESTION. I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE YOU WANT **SARA** TO SERVE AS **OPERATION COMMANDER!!** I WAS A BIT SURPRISED... UH...ME BEING THE GROUP'S DESIGNATED **GM** AND ALL.

YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO BE OUR **LIFELINE** WHILE WE'RE DOWN THERE!! I WANT A **COOL HEAD** AT THE HELM. SORRY **B.A.!!**

WE TRUST **SARA!!**



I'M WARNING YOU, **BOB**, IF YOU MAKE ME **OPERATIONS COMMANDER**, I WANT THE AUTHORITY TO **PULL THE PLUG** ON THIS THING IF I FEEL YOU'RE GETTING IN OVER YOUR HEADS — AND I WON'T **HESITATE** TO DO SO!!

YOU GOT IT **SARA!!**

AGREED!



**FINE!! SARA, YOU'RE THE OP-COM!** BUT WHILE I WAS WAITING FOR YOU GUYS TO SHOW UP, I WENT AHEAD AND **PLOTTED** SEVERAL AREAS OF **TUNNEL** THE **SEARCH PARTY** FAILED TO CHECK. I SUGGEST WE MAKE THESE **HIGH PRIORITY** ON THE **MISSION TASK LIST!!**

**GOOD JOB, B.A.!!** BUT I'LL WANT TO CHECK YOUR **PLOTTINGS** AGAINST MY OWN. I HAVE A **GUT FEELING** NEWT MAY HAVE **CROSSED OVER** INTO THE **CITY SEWER SYSTEM!!** IF THAT'S TRUE THIS **MISSION** MAY BE **BEYOND THE SCOPE** OF OUR ABILITIES. HOWEVER, IF WE CAN FIND **EVIDENCE** THAT THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED, WE MAY BE ABLE TO CONVINC **MUNCIE OFFICIALS** TO **REINSTITUTE** THE **SEARCH** AND **BEEF IT UP!!**

**THE SEWERS!!** YOU MEAN **RAT HAVEN??**

**CRIMINEY!!** WE MAY NEED SOME **REAL FIRE POWER!!**

**SORRY GUYS — NO GUNS!!** I MEAN IT!!

IF NEWT'S IN **RAT HAVEN** YOU BETTER TAKE A **BODY BAG!**

OKAY, LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS ARE FAIRLY **HEAVILY** EQUIPPED. ARE YOU SURE **ALL** THAT **EQUIPMENT** IS **NECESSARY??** CARRYING TOO MUCH WEIGHT IS ONLY GOING TO SLOW YOU DOWN AND BRING ON **FATIGUE** MORE QUICKLY!! MAYBE WE SHOULD ELIMINATE A FEW THINGS.

**ELIMINATE A FEW THINGS??** LOOK MISSY, EVERYTHING I'M CARRYING WAS SELECTED AFTER **CAREFUL CONSIDERATION** AND **IN-THE-FIELD EXPERIENCE!** YOU SEEM TO FORGET THAT **I'VE BEEN THERE!!**

**BETTER TO HAVE A THING** AND NOT NEED IT, THAN TO **NEED A THING** AND NOT HAVE IT!!

EVEN SO, LET'S JUST GO OVER WHAT YOU'RE CARRYING — JUST TO BE SURE!

**BETTER LISTEN** TO HER, GUYS. AFTER ALL SHE'S THE **OP-COM!**

THOSE WHO TRAVEL **LIGHT** LIVE TO FIGHT!!

OKAY, RIGHT OFF, I ALREADY SEE A FEW THINGS I THINK YOU COULD DO WITHOUT. DAVE, I'M AFRAID THE **MISSION REQUIREMENTS** DON'T CALL FOR A **BASEBALL BAT!!**

**HEY IT'S FOR PERSONAL DEFENSE!!** WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'LL BE UP AGAINST!! HAVEN'T YOU HEARD THOSE RUMORS ABOUT **MONSTER RATS** IN **RAT HAVEN??**

**PULEEZE!** THAT'S JUST AN **URBAN MYTH** LIKE **ALLIGATORS** IN THE **SEWER!!**

**ALLIGATORS IN THE SEWER!??**

I FORGOT ABOUT THOSE **BASTARDS!!** DAVE'S RIGHT, WE'RE GOING TO NEED SOME **FIRE POWER!**

I THINK SOMEBODY LEFT THAT PART OUT OF THE **MISSION PACKET!!**

**YEAH!!** THEY SAY THEY'RE **HUGE!!!** LIKE **FREAKIN' GREAT DANES!**

JUST **LOSE THE BAT** — **ALL RIGHT?**

OKAY, SO WHAT'S WITH THE **SLEEPING BAG??** DO YOU **REALLY** THINK YOU'LL BE CATCHING SOME **Z'S** IN THE **STEAM TUNNELS??**

SHOWS HOW MUCH YOU KNOW!! IT'S NOT A SLEEPING BAG, IT'S A **SEVERE WEATHER SURVIVAL SHELTER** WITH **GORTEX LINING!!**

THE **SHELTER** WAS MY IDEA!! DURING **FURGUESON'S FOLLY**, **HYPOTHERMIA** NEARLY DID US IN!!

YOU'RE GOING IN A **STEAM TUNNEL** NOT ON AN **ARCTIC EXPEDITION!!**



**LOSE THE TENT!!** NOW THEN...UH...ER... EXCUSE ME, **DAVE**, BUT WHY ARE YOU WEARING **WAR PAINT?**

I'M ONE-SIXTEENTH **ALGONQUIN!!** I'M TRYING TO **TAP INTO** MY **NATIVE AMERICAN ROOTS**, THUS DRAWING ON ANY **RESIDUAL INSTINCTS** OR **SKILLS** MY **HERTIAGE** MAY HAVE INSTILLED IN ME.

WE'LL LOSE THE "**HOOO-AAAH**" MENTALITY!! THIS IS A **MERC** MISSION!!

**ALGONQUIN??** I THOUGHT YOUR FAMILY CAME FROM OHIO, DUDE?



AND WHILE YER AT IT, GET RID OF THE **NINJA HEADBAND** OR WHATEVER IT IS.

WHY DO YOU **INSIST** ON TAKING **ALL THE FUN** OUT OF THIS THING — **HUH??** WHAT'S WRONG WITH **MENTALLY PSYCHING** MYSELF UP WITH THE SYMBOLS OF **PROUD WARRIORS?**

YOU **ARE** FROM OHIO AREN'T YOU?



OKAY OKAY, YOU CAN KEEP THE FACE PAINT. NOW WHAT'S THAT STRANGE DEVICE YOU HAVE AROUND YOUR NECK?

IT'S A **PLUMB BOB!** I GRABBED IT FROM MY DAD'S WORKBENCH ON THE WAY OUT. THOUGHT IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY.

A **PLUMB BOB??**

BUT...UH...OH WELL, I GUESS YOU CAN TAKE IT.

IT'S FOR CHECKING **VERTICALITY!!**

HMMM, I BET YOU COULD CHECK FOR **SLOPING CORRIDORS** WITH THAT?

VERTICALITY?



LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THAT **HUGE BACKPACK** YOU HAVE STRAPPED ON. WHAT **ON EARTH** ARE YOU CARRYING IN IT?

I BROKE INTO THE **EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT SHACK** ON CAMPUS AND **SNAGGED THE JAWS OF LIFE** — SO THAT'S IN THERE ALONG WITH **FOUR GALLONS** OF WATER AND A **HALF CASE** OF **DOUBLE NOODLES SOUP!!**

**JAWS OF LIFE!!** OH LORD!! AND A **HALF CASE** OF **SOUP??**

THEY NEVER HEARD OF **IRON RATIONS** AT THE **PRICE CLUB!!**

THEY LAUGHED AT US!!

**IRON RATIONS??** THEY'RE IN **AISLE FIVE** ALONG WITH THE **KIBBLE!!**



I THINK YOU CAN LEAVE BEHIND THE **JAWS OF LIFE** AND ONE OR TWO CANS OF **SOUP** EACH SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT AND IF YOU CONSERVE YOUR WATER, **ONE GALLON** SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR BOTH OF YOU.

C'MON SARA, THIS IS **POINTLESS!!** IF IT TURNS OUT WE'RE CARRYING **TOO MUCH** EQUIPMENT WE CAN **DUMP IT** ONCE WE'RE DOWN THERE!! I'M NOT **GIVING UP** MY **EXTRA WATER!!** NO WAY I'M STRAINING TUNNEL WATER THROUGH MY UNDERWEAR TO MAKE IT POTABLE AGAIN!!

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.

YEAH, TIME'S A' WASTIN'!!



OKAY BRIAN, LET'S GO OVER THE **TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE MISSION**. ARE YOU SURE THE **RADIO HEADSETS** HAVE ENOUGH RANGE TO KEEP US IN CONTACT??

**YOU BET!!** THESE BABIES HAVE A RANGE OF **TWELVE MILES!!**



'COURSE, I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH **INTERFERENCE** WE'LL RUN INTO. THOSE **STEAM TUNNELS** ARE FILLED WITH TELECOMMUNICATION CABLES AND **HIGH VOLTAGE LINES!!** AS A PRECAUTION, I'M SENDING THEM IN WITH A **HAND-HELD AERIAL** WHICH THEY CAN SHOVE UP THROUGH ANY **MAN HOLE COVER** OR **VENTILATION GRATE** FOR BETTER RECEPTION!!

YOU THE MAN BRIAN!!

OUTSTANDING!!

I'M PROUD OF YOU BRIAN, GOOD JOB.



WAIT, IT GETS **EVEN BETTER!!** I MODIFIED A **LOW-JACK VEHICLE TRANSPONDER** FOR YOU GUYS TO CARRY WITH YOU AS A **HOMING BECON**. BY TAPPING INTO THE **POLICE BAND** AND TRIANGULATING WITH THE **WMUN** RADIO TOWER, I CAN MONITOR YOUR **EXACT** POSITION DOWN TO WITHIN **THREE METERS** RIGHT HERE WITH THIS UNIT ATTACHED TO MY LAPTOP. WE'LL BE ABLE TO TALK YOU THROUGH AND GIVE YOU DIRECTIONS FROM THE MAPS.

WMUN??

YOU SURE THIS IS GONNA WORK??

YEA, YOUR GADGETS ALWAYS SEEM TO BE ERROR PRONE...



WELL... I GUESS WE'RE ALL SET. **WEIRD PETE** IS GOING TO DROP US OFF AT **ACCESS PORTAL D-51** NEAR THE **LIBRARY!!** WE'LL MAKE A **COMMO CHECK** WHEN WE GET THERE!

IT'S GOING TO HAVE TO BE A **COVERT OP!!** **CAMPUS POLICE** HAVE TIGHTENED SECURITY ON THE **ACCESSWAYS** TO THE TUNNELS.

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU GUYS!!! **BRING NEWT BACK!!** AND **BE CAREFUL!!** DON'T TAKE ANY UNNECESSARY RISKS!! AND REMEMBER, IF I DECIDE TO **ABORT** THIS MISSION, NO ARGUMENTS!! YOU GUYS COME OUT!!

I'LL BE THERE WITH YOU GUYS — YOUR VOICE IN THE SKY!!

GOOD LUCK GUYS!!



## TWO HOURS LATER...

B.A., ARE YOU GETTING ANYTHING YET?? I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS AT ALL. WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THEM IN OVER AN HOUR!!

NOTHING BUT STATIC!! I STILL CAN'T RAISE THEM. THEIR BATTERIES MUST BE DEAD OR SOMETHING. I'LL KEEP TRYING.

BATTERIES?? THEY'VE ONLY BEEN GONE TWO HOURS!! SURELY NEW BATTERIES WOULD LAST LONGER THAN THAT!!

I'LL KEEP TRYING, BUT THE CLOCK IS TICKING!! IF WE DON'T HEAR FROM THEM SOON WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO ALERT THE POLICE!!

I KNOW, BUT LET'S GIVE THEM A LITTLE MORE TIME.



BRIAN, I KNOW THIS IS A STUPID QUESTION, BUT YOU DID PUT NEW BATTERIES IN THOSE HEADSETS!! RIGHT??

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, SARA!! DO YOU KNOW HOW INSULTING THAT IS?? SHEESH!! HEY, AT LEAST WE HAVE SOME GOOD TUNES TO LISTEN TO FROM THE TRIANGULATION OFF OF WMUN!

I...I'M SORRY, BRIAN. YOU'RE RIGHT. FORGET I SAID ANYTHING!!

NEW BATTERIES?? DAMNED RECHARGEABLES!



AND, WE'RE NOT GETTING THEIR COORDINATES EITHER??

WELL, ACCORDING TO THE PROTOCOL THEY'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO MAKE ANY TURNS UNTIL RADIO CONTACT IS RESTABLISHED!! WHERE SHOULD THEY END UP IF THEY STAY ON A STRAIGHT COURSE??

IF THEY CONTINUE ON A STRAIGHT COURSE THE CORRIDOR EVENTUALLY DEAD ENDS AT ACCESS PORTAL B-24 IN THE BASEMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING. BUT THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO GET OUT THAT WAY!! IT'S BEEN SEALED BY THE CAMPUS POLICE FOR YEARS!!\*

AT LEAST THEY'LL BE SAFE. THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND THEIR WAY OUT FROM THERE.

SEE? THOSE JAWS OF LIFE ARE GOING TO COME IN HANDY AFTER ALL!! THEY'LL OPEN THAT SEALED ENTRYWAY LIKE TIN FOIL!!

THANK GAWD WE DIDN'T TAKE THEM INTO RAT HAVEN BEFORE WE LOST CONTACT!!



DAMN!! WHERE'S ALL THIS WATER COMING FROM?? MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TURNED BACK THERE.

SSSSHHH!! I HEAR SOMETHING — AND IT'S HEADING THIS WAY!!

SQUEAK!!

SQUEAK!!

SQUEAL!!

SQUEAK!!



\*See Nitro's Bio in Who's Who in the BlackHands (page 89).

THIS IS TERRIBLE. **BOB AND DAVE LOST???** (CHOKES)

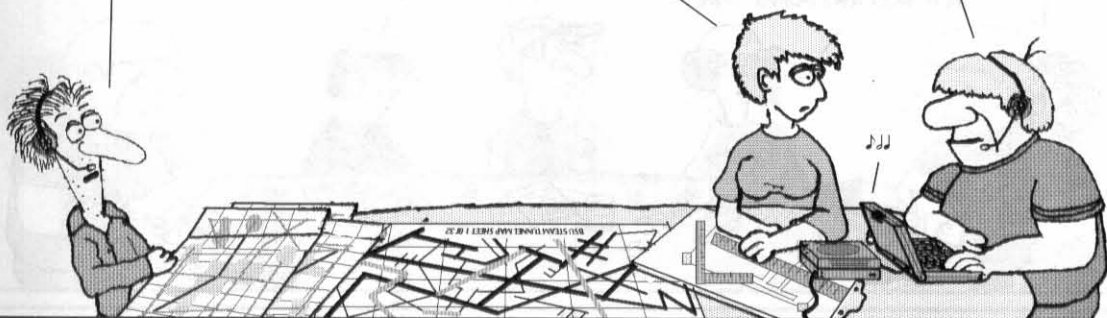
**DON'T BRIAN!** YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT WE LOST **RADIO CONTACT** WITH THE BOYS.

**BLAME???** HEY, IT'S NOT **MY FAULT!** YOU WERE THE **ONE IN CHARGE** OF THIS THING.

THAT'S IT **SARA!!** IT'S BEEN **EIGHTEEN HOURS** AND NO **CONTACT!!** I THINK WE'D BETTER CALL **911!!**

RELAX, **BRIAN.** NO ONE IS TRYING TO PLACE THE **BLAME** ON YOU!! **OKAY???**

OKAY. BUT JUST MAKE SURE YOU REMEMBER THAT WHEN YOU TALK WITH THE **PRESS!**



**EIGHT DAYS LATER...**

PARKING FOR AMERIKAN MADE BIKES ONLY!!  
YOU KIN PARK YER RICE BURNERS IN THE DUMPSTER!

HAWG WALLERS  
KICKSTAND PALACE  
COLD BEER POOL TELLERVISION

**GUSWEISER**  
THE WORKING MAN'S BEER

**MISSING**



**Bob Herzog**  
Last seen in BSU  
Steam Tunnels.

**HAVE YOU SEEN ME??**



**Dave Bozwell**  
Last seen in BSU  
Steam Tunnels.

SAY **HAWG**, I THINK YOU NEED TO PUT A COUPLE OF **URINE CAKES** IN THE MEN'S RESTROOM AGAIN. THE PLACE SMELLS PRETTY **RANK** TODAY!!!

IT AIN'T THE URINALS, **SWITCH!!** **LENNY AND SQUIGGY** DOWN THERE **PICKED AND SHOVELD** THEIR WAY OUT OF THE **SEWER** TODAY AND CAME UP **RIGHT SMACK DAB** IN THE MIDDLE OF MY **POOL ROOM!!** I'M HOLDING THEM AS **COLLATERAL** UNTIL SOMEONE BRINGS DOWN THE MONEY FOR THE DAMAGES!!

YEAH, YEAH, RATS THE SIZE OF **GREAT DANES!** I HEARD YOU THE FIRST TIME, **HALF PINT!** DO YOU THINK YOU COULD SIT DOWN- WIND FROM ME?

...I'M TELLIN' YA THESE **RATS** WERE **LINGAWNDLY!!** THEY TRACKED US RELENTLESSLY — **FOR DAYS!!** THEY'RE SMART TOO — **HUMAN SMART!!** ONE OF THEM TRIED TO DRAG **DAVE** AWAY IN HIS SHELTER WHILE HE WAS TRYING TO SLEEP. I HAD TO BEAT THEM OFF WITH A **LOUISVILLE SLUGGER!** THEN ONE OF THEM LUNGED RIGHT AT ME FROM OVERHEAD AND...

THE ZIPPER WAS **STUCK!!** I THOUGHT I WAS A **GONER!!**



# Opportunity Knocks

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

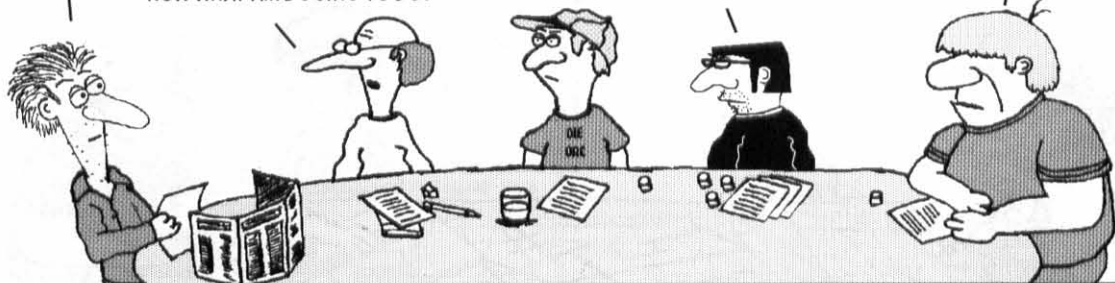
OKAY, THAT'S A WRAP. I WON'T BE ABLE TO PLAY THIS WEEKEND. MY *AUNT NUDRA* IS COMING TO TOWN AND I PROMISED MY PARENTS I'D DO THE *FAMILY THING*.

HEY DUDE, THERE'S PLENTY OF THINGS TO DO. *OPPORTUNITY IS KNOCKIN'* AS WE SPEAK!! WHY DON'T WE GO PLAY *PAINTBALL* AT *DEVER'S GULCH???* WE HAVEN'T PLAYED IN *AGES!!* I HEAR THE *BLACK HANDS* ARE TAKING ON ALL *CHALLENGERS* THIS WEEKEND!!

WHAT?? NO GAME THIS WEEKEND?? I TOLD YOU NOT TO *FREAKIN'* SPRING THESE THINGS ON ME AT THE LAST MINUTE?? *NOW WHAT AM I GOING TO DO??*

*BAAAH!* PAINT BALL SUCKS!! LAST TIME I PLAYED I GOT A *BRUISED KIDNEY!!*

I SAID I WAS SORRY, *JOHNNY!!*



*SORRY??* I TOLD YOU BEFORE — TAKE YOUR *"SORRY"* AND *SHOVE IT* IN YOUR *DICEBAG!* YOU WERE *OUT OF CONTROL* LAST TIME WE PLAYED — YOU KNOW THAT?? *PAINTBALL*, MY FRIEND, IS A *GENTLEMAN'S SPORT!!* YOU DON'T RESORT TO *HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT TACTICS* JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE RAN OUT OF *AMMO!!*

THE *BLACK HANDS* ARE CHALLENGING?? NO WAY!! THEY *CHEAT!!* BESIDES, THEY *TURBO-CHARGE* THEIR *PAINT BALL GUNS!* I HEARD *NITRO* BRAGGING TO *WEIRD PETE* THAT HE COULD PUNCH A HOLE IN AN *1/4 INCH SHEET OF PLYWOOD* FROM *FIFTY YARDS!!* THAT COULD *KILL SOMEONE!!*

HE'S RIGHT, BRIAN. SOME OF THE *GUYS* HAVE BEEN *COMPLAINING!!*

WADDA YA WHINING ABOUT?? ALL I DID WAS *BUTT-STROKE* YOU WITH THE *NON-BUSINESS* END OF MY *GUN!!*

SO WHAT? MY *POLY-LAMINATE FIBRE-WEAVE* COMBAT ARMOR CAN WITHSTAND *ANYTHING!!*

ANYTHING?? DUDE, YOU'RE *WHACKED!!* CAN IT STOP A *12-GAUGE DEER SLUG???*

DEER SLUG?? RIFLED OR *SMOOTH BORE?*



WHAT THE *HELL* ARE YOU SAYING?? THAT IT MAKES A *DIFFERENCE* IF THE *DEER SLUG* IS FIRED FROM A *RIFLED* OR *SMOOTH BORE* BARREL?? *ARE YOU NUTS???*

LOOK, MY POINT IS — THERE ARE *PLENTY* OF OTHER THINGS WE CAN DO THIS WEEKEND BESIDES PLAY *HACKMASTER!!* I WAS ONLY SUGGESTING *PAINTBALL* BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T PLAYED IN A *COON'S AGE!* I'VE PUT ON *FIFTEEN POUNDS* SINCE I STARTED PLAYING WITH YOU *GUYS.* WE NEED TO *GET OUT* AND DO THINGS MORE, LIKE *KICK AROUND THE SOCCER BALL* OR GO *ROCK CLIMBING* DOWN AT THE *QUARRY!!*

WELL, IN *CYBERHACK* A *SMOOTH BORE* HAS A *20 PERCENT* GREATER CHANCE OF MISSING THAN A *RIFLE!*

ACTUALLY IT'S *17 PERCENT,* DAVE, BUT I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE FINALLY STARTING TO GRASP THE *RULES.*

HEY, I GOT A GREAT *SOCCER BOARD GAME.* YA WANNA PLAY??

OH YEAH?? CAN I PLAY THE *BRAZILIAN TEAM???*



WHOAH, WHOAH, *WHOAH!!!* HEY GUYS, SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT YOU WERE REALLY ON TO A *GOOD IDEA* THERE!! I THINK YOU GUYS *SHOULD* TAKE A BREAK FROM *GAMING* AND DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT. WE'VE ALL BECOME *GAMER-SLUGS* LATELY. I CAN'T EVEN THINK OF THE LAST TIME I GOT SOME *REAL EXERCISE*. DO YOURSELVES A *FAVOR* AND TAKE *DAVE'S ADVICE!* GET AWAY FROM THE TABLE AND *DO SOMETHING!!*

WHAT?? YOU THINK I HAVE *NO LIFE* OUTSIDE OF *GAMING??* IS *THAT* IT?? I DO *PLENTY* OF STUFF BESIDES PLAY *HACKMASTER!!* MY LIFE IS *FULL* AND *COMPLETE!!*

GEE, I DIDN'T MEAN TO START SOMETHING HERE. I JUST THOUGHT IT WOULD BE *FUN* TO DO SOMETHING AS A *GROUP* AWAY FROM THE TABLE.

HEY, YOU CAN ALL COME TO MY PLACE AND WE CAN WATCH *KNEE DEEP IN ORCS* ON VIDEO AND ORDER *PIZZA!!*

DO YOU HAVE THE *DIRECTOR'S CUT??*



HEY THAT SOUNDS LIKE FUN. I'LL BRING MY *GAME-BRAT* AND *CARTRIDGES!* WE CAN PLAY VIDEO GAMES *AFTER* THE MOVIE.

OOOOOOOO, DO YOU HAVE *FULL CYBER JACKET??* I'M *THIS CLOSE* TO REACHING THE *THIRD LEVEL!!!* THE *OBSIDIAN CLAN WARRIOR* TAKES ME OUT *EVERY-TIME* ON THE *DRAWBRIDGE!!*

OBSIDIAN CLAN-WARRIOR?? DUDE, THERE'S A *CHEAT* FOR THAT. YOU AIM YOUR *BLASTER* IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION AND *HOLD DOWN* THE FIRE BUTTON. THEN PUSH THE *JUMP BUTTON* TWICE. IT WILL TELEPORT YOU *PAST* THE *DRAWBRIDGE* AND RACK YOU UP *5,000 POINTS* TO BOOT!! *IT ROCKS!!*

SOME CHEAT!! YOU *NEED* THE *KEY RING* FROM THE *OBSIDIAN WARRIOR* TO ENTER THE *KEEP* ON THE *FIFTH LEVEL*.



THE *KEEP* ON THE *FIFTH LEVEL??* AWH, DUDE, THERE'S A *CHEAT* FOR THAT TOO. ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS PLACE YER GUY TO THE LEFT OF THE GATE AND PUNCH THE BRICK WITH A *GREEN/SH-HUE* REPEATEDLY. YOU'LL TAKE *TWO HITPOINTS* OF DAMAGE BUT THAT'S ALL. *EVENTUALLY* THE BRICK WILL TURN INTO A *MARLBORO LOGO* AND YOU'LL BE *TELEPORTED* PAST THE *GATES*.

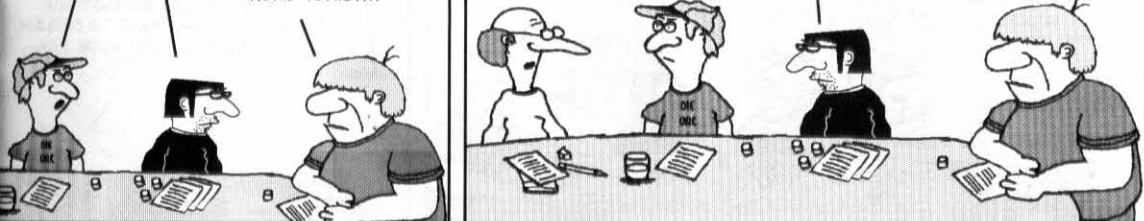
HEY BRIAN, CAN YOU BRING YER *PAINT* AND *BRUSHES??* I WANNA TOUCH UP MY *MINIATURES* WHILE I WATCH THE MOVIE. MY NEPHEWS WERE OVER THE OTHER DAY AND TRASHED MY *ORC LEGIONS!*

SURE BUT I'LL HAVE TO CHARGE YOU. FOR *TEN BUCKS*, I CAN PUT TOGETHER A *BASIC FANTASY PALETTE* OF *EIGHT COLORS*. I'LL EVEN THROW IN A *DOUBLE-AUGHT BRUSH!!*

FORGET THAT!! I THOUGHT WE COULD PLAY A FEW ROUNDS OF *NUCLEAR BLITZ* DURING THE FLICK.

CAN YOU WRITE THESE DOWN FOR ME??

HUH? ARE YOU SURE?? I DIDN'T KNOW THAT. I'LL TRY IT WHEN I GET HOME TONIGHT.



HEY THEY WERE A *GIFT!* AND I *ONLY* WORE THEM THAT *ONE* TIME. HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT??

**MY GAWD!!** IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT. *EVERYTHING* YOU GUYS DO *REVOLVES* AROUND GAMING. YOU'RE *PATHETIC!!*

THOSE ARE *MIGHTY STRONG WORDS* COMING FROM A GUY WHO WEARS *HACKMASTER PAJAMAS!!*

WHAT A HORRIBLE IMAGE THAT WAS!! I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE THEY MADE *ADULT PAJAMAS* WITH *BUILT-IN BOOTIES!!*

HEY IT WAS A *GAG GIFT!* I NEVER EXPECTED YOU TO ACTUALLY *WEAR* THEM!!



LOOK *BRAINIACS!!* MAYBE I'M *OVERSTEPPING* THE LINE HERE, BUT AS YOUR *GAME MASTER*, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR *HEALTH AND WELL BEING!!* THEREFORE I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A LITTLE *ADDED INCENTIVE* TO GET *OUTDOORS* THIS WEEKEND AND DO SOMETHING *NON-GAME RELATED!!*

HERE'S THE DEAL!! IF YOU GUYS CAN GO THE *ENTIRE* WEEKEND WITHOUT *PLAYING A GAME*, I'LL REWARD EACH OF YOU *ONE THOUSAND EXPERIENCE POINTS* TOWARD THE *ADVANCEMENT* OF YOUR *CHARACTERS!!!*

**YER DAMN RIGHT** YOU'RE *OVERSTEPPING* THE LINE *MISTER!!* WHAT WE DO DURING WITH OUR TIME *AWAY* FROM THIS TABLE IS OUR OWN *FREAKIN' BUSINE...* **HUH??** *INCENTIVE??* DOES IT INVOLVE *CASH?!*

AND YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING *OUTDOORS!!!* DO WE HAVE A *DEAL??*

OH GREAT!! HE'S BECOME *BARNEY THE GM NOW!!*



*ONE THOUSAND EXPERIENCE POINTS??* **HOODY-HOO!!** WELL YOU CAN JUST CALL ME *MISTER OUTDOORSMAN!!!* THAT'S ENOUGH TO KICK *EDDIE THE RANGER-TERMINATOR* UP TO *EIGHTH LEVEL!!!*

**A LITTLE LATER...**

**OH YEAH BABY!!!** THOSE *E.P.'S* ARE AS GOOD AS *MINE!!!*

HMMMMM...LOOKS LIKE THE *JOHN-MEISTER* IS GOING TO GIVE UP GAMING FOR A FEW DAYS. THOSE ARE SOME *EASY E.P.'S!!*

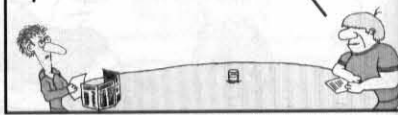
**WAIT A SECOND!!** IT JUST HIT ME. YOU GUYS ARE *MAKING A GAME* OUT OF THIS. THAT'S NOT WHAT I HAD IN MIND!! THE *WHOLE POINT* IS TO GET YOU GUYS *NOT TO GAME* FOR A FEW DAYS!!

**I LOVE A CHALLENGE!!!**

**ME TOO!!**

**KICK ASS!!**

UH, UH, *NO BACKPEDDLING, B.A.!!* YOU MADE THE *RULES!!* JUST BE READY TO *SIGN OFF* ON MY CHARACTER SHEET NEXT WEEK TO *CERTIFY* THOSE *EXPERIENCE POINTS*. I MIGHT HAVE TO EXPLAIN HOW I EARNED THEM SOME DAY.



**ACCEPTING B.A.'S  
CHALLENGE AND  
LURED BY THE  
PROMISE OF "EASY  
EXPERIENCE POINTS"  
THE KNIGHTS TAKE  
A VOW — TO SPEND  
A WEEKEND  
WITHOUT PLAYING ANY  
GAMES AND TO  
EXPERIENCE THE  
"GREAT OUTDOORS"!!**



THE **TOKYO EXPRESS** IS SOMEWHERE OUT HERE ATTEMPTING TO SUPPLY THE **UPCOMING INVASION** OF THE **SOLOMON ISLES!!** WE'RE THE **ONLY THING** IN IT'S PATH!! **WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM!!**



**THIRTY MINUTES LATER...**

**BRI...BRI...BRIAN!!!** THERE'S A BOAT — A **BIG BOAT!!** IT'S CROSSING OUR PATH!!

**HOLY MOLELY!!!** THAT'S NO BOAT!! IT'S AN **IMPERIAL BATTLESHIP!!** **BATTLE STATIONS EVERYONE!!!** WE'RE MAKING A **TORPEDO RUN** ON HER!!

I THINK IT'S THE **YAMATO, SIR!!** AND SHE'S TURNING TO ENGAGE HER **MAIN GUNS** ON US!!

HEY THAT GUY IS **WAVING US OFF!!**

**TAKE COVER!!**



**LATER AT BRIAN'S "SECRET" FISHING SPOT...**

HEY **JOHNNY**, WHERE THE HELL IS **YOUR FISHING POLE??** YOU'RE GONNA MISS **ALL THE ACTION!!**

YEAH, I THINK I GOTTA **BITE ALREADY!!**

I'LL KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THAT **CRAZY FISHERMAN** IN CASE HE STARTS **CHASING US AGAIN!**

AWWWW, THAT GUY IS JUST SORE BECAUSE WE **SANK HIS BATTLESHIP!!** (SNICKER)

HEY DAVE, CAST IN THE **OTHER DIRECTION!!** YOU'RE FISHIN' **MY SPOT!**



**A LITTLE LATER...**

WHERE THE HELL ARE ALL THE FISH?? WE'VE BEEN SITTING HERE FOR TWENTY MINUTES AND NOTHING!!! THIS "SECRET" FISHING SPOT SUCKS!!

SSSSHHHHH, I THINK I GOT A BITE!! C'MON BABY — TAKE THE WORM. C'MON BABY!!

WHERE THE HELL IS THAT NOISE COMING FROM?? DOES ANYONE ELSE HERE THAT BEEPING SOUND??

HUH?

MEEP!  
MEEP!  
MEEP!



IT'S JUST MY **BASSMASTER 5000 DIGITAL HOMING LURE!!** IT SENDS OUT AN **ULTRA-SONIC PULSE** WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO DRIVE THE BASS MAD!! COST ME **FIFTY BUCKS** BUT I FIGURE IT'LL BE WORTH IT!!

HEY CUT THE CHATTER!! I THINK I GOT A BITE!! THIS ONE'S A **WISE ONE!!** SHE'S TESTING ME!!

YOU'RE PUTTING A **FIFTY DOLLAR LURE** ON A **POCKET FISHERMAN!!**

YEAH.. SO?

MEEP!  
MEEP!  
MEEP!



**A WEE BIT LATER...**

**CRIPES!! C'MON ALREADY!!** I AIN'T GOT A **FREAKIN' NIBBLE** YET!!

I SURE HOPE THIS **500-POUND TEST LINE** IS **STRONG ENOUGH!** THE WAY THIS **OL' GIRL** IS ACTING, I BET SHE'S A **REAL FIGHTER!!**

**500-POUND TEST LINE!!** YOU FISHIN' FOR **BLUE MARLIN** OR SOMETHING?? **SHEESH!!**

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WE'VE BEEN HERE FOR **NEARLY AN HOUR!!** IN **HACKMASTER** YOU HAVE A **BASE 25 PERCENT** CHANCE OF **LANDING A FISH EVERY TURN!!** AND IN A **TEMPERATE** BODY OF **FRESHWATER** YOU GET A **+5 MODIFIER.**



WHEN I GET BACK I'M GONNA EMAIL **GARY JACKSON** AND LET HIM KNOW ABOUT THIS. I THINK HIS FIGURES ARE OFF OR SOMETHING.

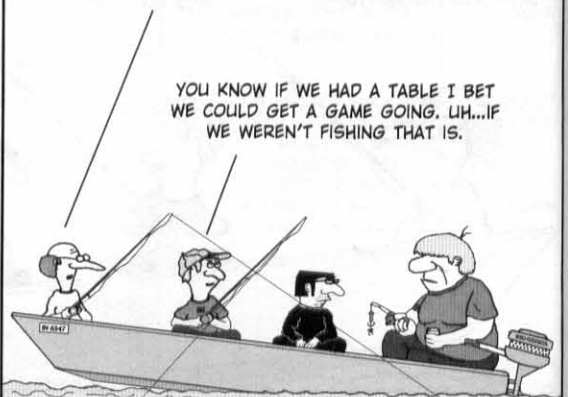
IT'S TOO BAD WE DIDN'T BRING A COUPLE OF **DICE.** WE COULD'VE ROLLED THEM EVERY HOUR TO SEE WHAT WE WOULD HAVE CAUGHT IF WE WERE FISHING IN **HACKMASTER.**

**DICE?** WE'RE IN LUCK. I THREW MY **DICEBAG** IN MY **TACKLE BOX** — UH... JUST IN CASE.



YOU BROUGHT **DICE??** GEE, I THREW MY **HACKMASTER BOOKS** IN MY **BACKPACK** BEFORE I LEFT. JUST IN CASE THINGS GOT SLOW — THOUGHT I COULD DO A LITTLE **READING** BETWEEN BITES.

YOU KNOW IF WE HAD A **TABLE** I BET WE COULD GET A **GAME** GOING. UH...IF WE WEREN'T FISHING THAT IS.



HEY, IS THAT A *PICNIC TABLE* OVER THERE ON SHORE??



HERE, HOLD MY POLE. I'LL START THE MOTOR.

I'LL GET THE ANCHOR!!

LET'S GO!!



*THERE!!* PUT ER IN RIGHT THERE ALONG THOSE ROCKS!!

YOU GUYS GRAB THE TABLE!! I'LL RUN OVER TO THAT *CAMPER TRAILER* AND SEE IF THEY HAVE ANY PENCILS AND PAPER!!

GOOD IDEA!! I'LL GIVE YOU A *TEN SPOT!!* SEE IF YOU CAN *COMMANDEER* SOME *SNACKS* AND *SODA!!*

YEAH, SEE IF THEY HAVE ANY *DIET SNAPPLE!!*



### THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

OKAY, SO LET'S HAVE IT!! DO I *AWARD* YOU GUYS THE *EXPERIENCE POINT INCENTIVE* OR NOT?? DID YOU MANAGE TO GO AN *ENTIRE WEEKEND* WITHOUT *GAMING*??

JUST *SHUT UP* AND START RUNNING THE GAME — *OKAY??*



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**KENZER AND COMPANY**

Knights of the Dinner Table #23  
**Dice Follies!**  
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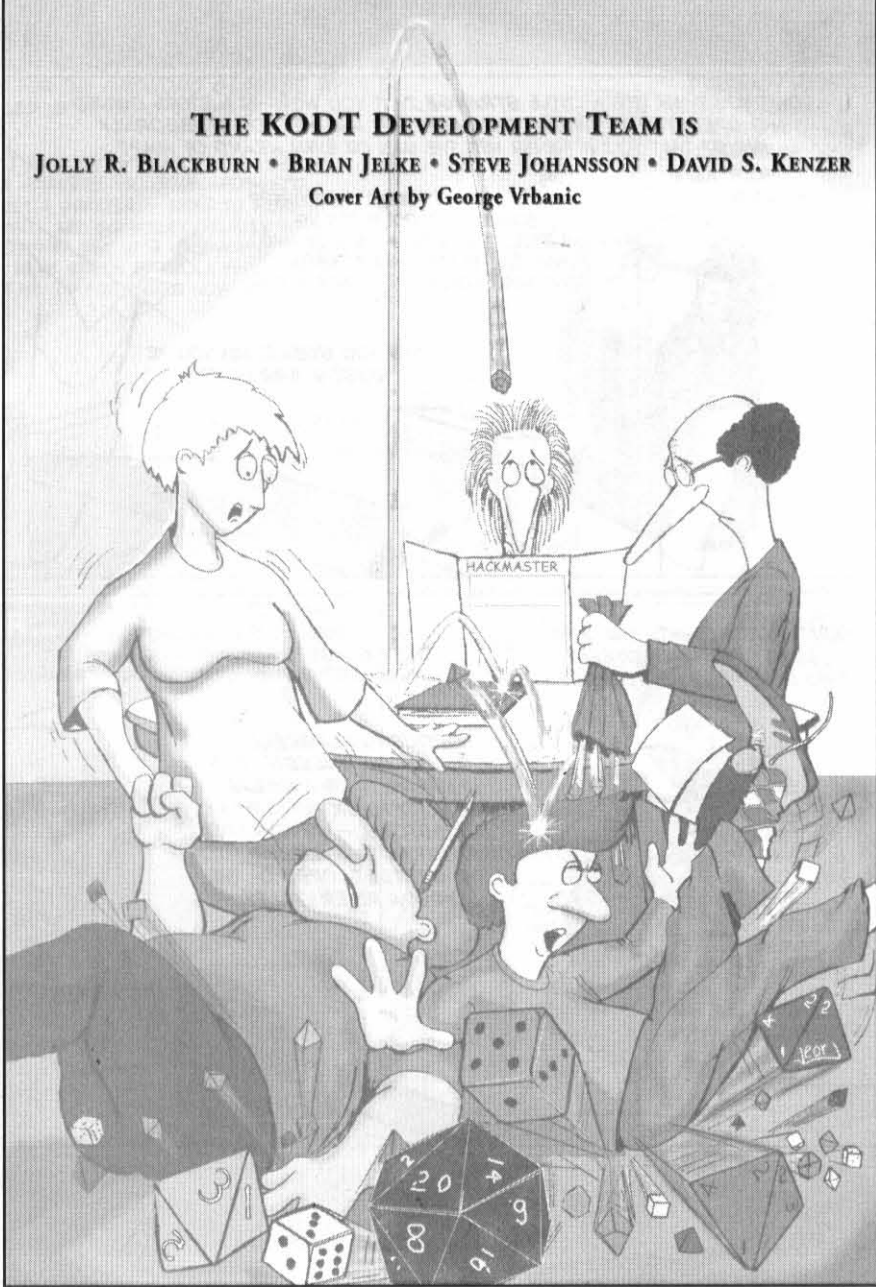
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anything that other gamers and fans  
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# Knights of the Dinner Table™

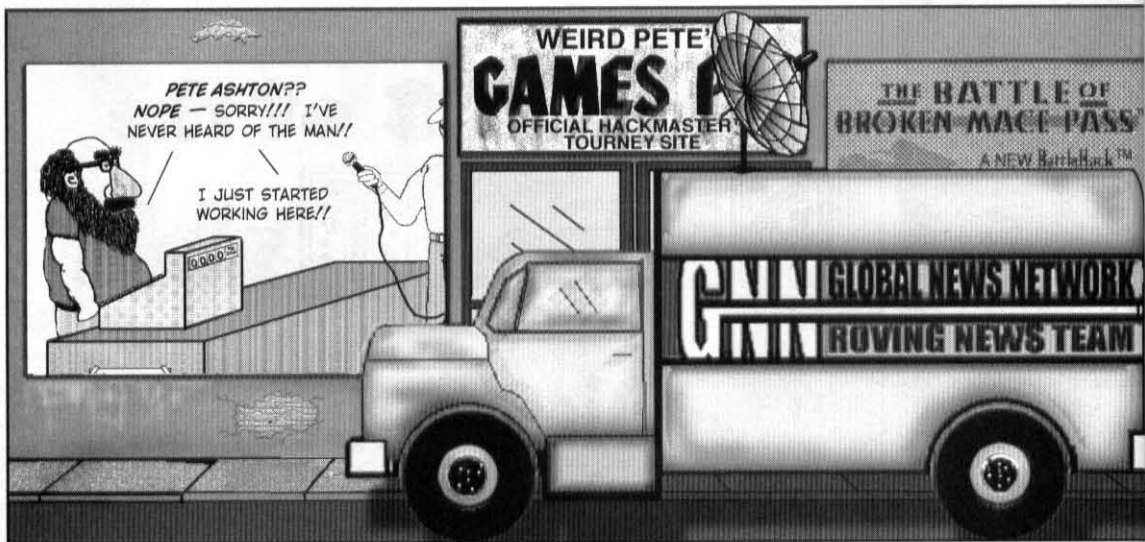
## “Dice Follies!”

**THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS**  
**JOLLY R. BLACKBURN • BRIAN JELKE • STEVE JOHANSSON • DAVID S. KENZER**  
**Cover Art by George Vrbanic**



# The Scapegoat

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBUR



PETE ASHTON??  
NOPE — SORRY!!! I'VE  
NEVER HEARD OF THE MAN!!

I JUST STARTED  
WORKING HERE!!

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE *STRANGE* THAT YOU WORK IN A STORE OWNED  
AND OPERATED BY "WEIRD PETE ASHTON" AND YET YOU *STUBBORNLY*  
*INSIST* THAT YOU'VE NEVER MET THE MAN OR EVEN HEARD OF HIM??

YOU *DID* SAY PETE ASHTON, RIGHT??  
SORRY, JUST DOESN'T RING  
A BELL. I WAS TOLD THE GUY WHO  
OWNS THIS PLACE LIVES IN *NEPAL* OR  
SOMETHING. ONLY VISITS ONCE A YEAR.

AND YOU *STILL* CLAIM YOU'RE  
JUST A *BAG BOY*??

*YEP!!* THAT'S RIGHT. I'M JUST  
A *LOWLY PAID EMPLOYEE!!*  
THEY DON'T TELL ME *NOTHIN'!*

AND I SUPPOSE THE *GROUCHO*  
*NOSE GLASSES* ARE JUST PART  
OF THE WORK UNIFORM??

*GROUCHO GLASSES??*  
SIR, I AM *OFFENDED!!* THIS  
HAPPENS TO BE A *RITUAL*  
*FERTILITY MASK* WORN BY MY  
*ANCESTORS* — AN OBSCURE  
NOMADIC TRIBE WHO ONCE WANDERED  
THE *GENTLE SLOPES* OF THE  
*VOLGA RIVER VALLEY*.

JUST ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT **STEAM TUNNEL FORAY '98??**  
THE **RESCUE EFFORT** ALONE COST THE TAXPAYERS MANY  
THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS. THIS STORE PROMOTED THAT EVENT!!

I THINK THOSE  
**TAXPAYERS**  
DESERVE TO  
HEAR  
**WHY!!!**

THINK FAST!! UH...**FIGHT OR FLIGHT??** NO, NO, STUPID — **THINK!!**  
USE YOUR **ROLE-PLAYING SKILLS!!** YOU GOT THE **EDGE** ON THIS GUY.  
YOU CAN **DANCE** YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS **PICKLE!!**

**THREE LIVES** WERE NEARLY LOST  
BECAUSE OF A **GAME** THIS STORE SELLS  
AND PROMOTES!! WHY ARE YOU  
ENCOURAGING THE **YOUTH OF MUNCIE**  
TO ENGAGE IN **DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR??**

DROP THE **LITTLE CHARADE, MR. ASHTON!!** I SAW YOU  
SCRAMBLING FOR THE **GROUCHO GLASSES** WHEN I  
PULLED UP IN FRONT OF THE STORE.

LOOK I TOLD YA, MY NAME'S NOT ASHTON.  
IT'S **MEPHISTO...ER...JOHN MEPHISTO.**  
I'M JUST A **GREETER** — USED TO WORK AT  
WALMART. MR. **SQUIRRLY** USUALLY RUNS  
THE REGISTER BUT HE'S RECOVERING FROM  
A RARE STRAIN OF **EBOLA** TYPE B.  
LAID HIM UP FOR WEEKS NOW. ALSO...

I ALREADY HAVE  
**NEW FORAGER'S**  
INTERVIEW WITH HIS  
**VERSION** OF THE  
EVENTS ON **TAPE!!**  
NOW I WANT YOURS.

LOOK 'JOHN', I'M  
NOT LEAVING MUNCIE  
UNTIL I GET  
**MY STORY!!**

**TWO DAYS LATER...**

**GOOD  
GAWD!!**  
HE'S STILL  
OUT THERE!!

I CAN'T TAKE IT  
ANYMORE!!  
I'VE GOT TO GO  
**UNDERGROUND**  
UNTIL THINGS  
**COOL OFF!**

**PART TIME HELP WANTED!**  
**SEE THE MAN INSIDE!**

HELLO? **GAMIN'  
DICK??** IT'S ME  
**PETE!!** IS THIS  
LINE SECURE??

**DAMN PETE!!**  
THAT YOU??  
**SHEEYAT  
BOY!!** THEY  
GOT YOU'SE  
ON DA  
**NEWS!!**

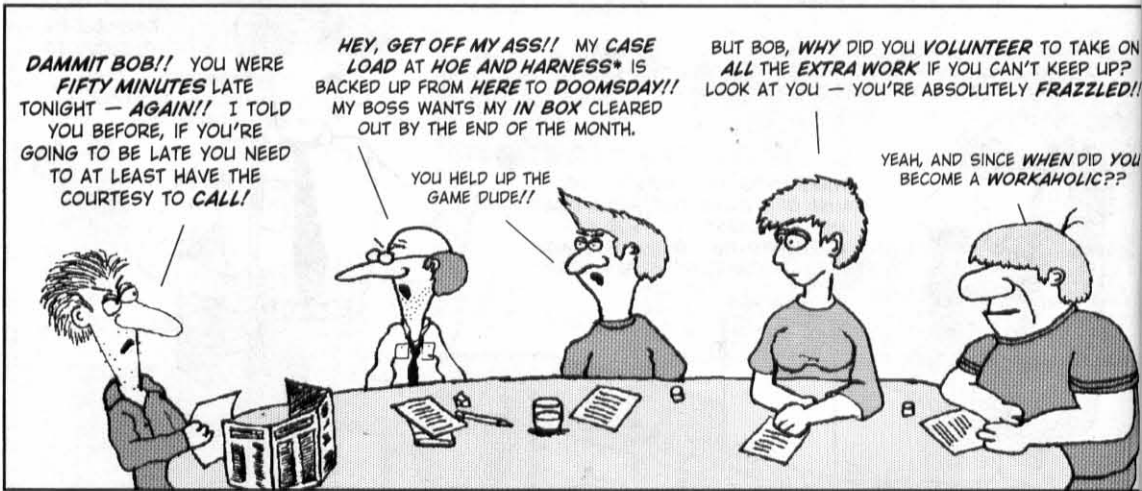
**YOU'RE TELLING ME??** LOOK, I WANNA BORROW  
YER COUSIN'S **HUNTING LODGE** AT THE LAKES TO  
HIDE OUT FOR A FEW WEEKS UNTIL THIS BLOWS OVER!

**YOU GOT IT HOSS!!** COUR'S N YER GONNA  
OWE ME! HOW 'BOUT TAKIN' A FEW DOZEN  
CASES O' THESE **ONE-LEGGED DWARF  
KITS** OFF'N MUH HANDS?

YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO  
**KICK** A MAN WHEN HE'S  
DOWN, DON'T YA??

# Help Wanted!!

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBUR



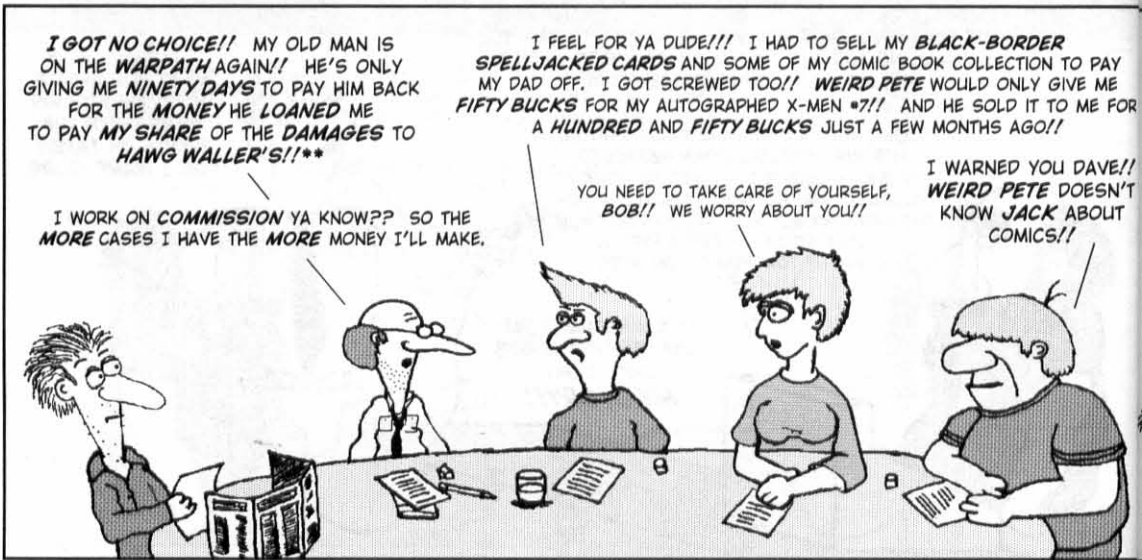
**DAMMIT BOB!!** YOU WERE **FIFTY MINUTES LATE** TONIGHT — **AGAIN!!** I TOLD YOU BEFORE, IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE YOU NEED TO AT LEAST HAVE THE COURTESY TO **CALL!**

**HEY, GET OFF MY ASS!!** MY **CASE LOAD AT HOE AND HARNESS\*** IS BACKED UP FROM **HERE TO DOOMSDAY!!** MY BOSS WANTS MY **IN BOX** CLEARED OUT BY THE END OF THE MONTH.

BUT BOB, **WHY DID YOU VOLUNTEER** TO TAKE ON **ALL THE EXTRA WORK** IF YOU CAN'T KEEP UP? LOOK AT YOU — YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY **FRAZZLED!!**

YOU HELD UP THE **GAME DUDE!!**

YEAH, AND SINCE **WHEN DID YOU** BECOME A **WORKAHOLIC??**



**I GOT NO CHOICE!!** MY OLD MAN IS ON THE **WARPATH** AGAIN!! HE'S ONLY GIVING ME **NINETY DAYS** TO PAY HIM BACK FOR THE **MONEY HE LOANED** ME TO PAY **MY SHARE OF THE DAMAGES** TO **HAWG WALLER'S!!\*\***

I FEEL FOR YA DUDE!!! I HAD TO SELL MY **BLACK-BORDER SPELLJACKED CARDS** AND SOME OF MY **COMIC BOOK** COLLECTION TO PAY MY DAD OFF. I GOT **SCREWED TOO!!** **WEIRD PETE** WOULD ONLY GIVE ME **FIFTY BUCKS** FOR MY **AUTOGRAPHED X-MEN #7!!** AND HE SOLD IT TO ME FOR A **HUNDRED AND FIFTY BUCKS** JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO!!

I WORK ON **COMMISSION** YA KNOW?? SO THE **MORE CASES** I HAVE THE **MORE MONEY** I'LL MAKE.

YOU NEED TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, **BOB!!** WE WORRY ABOUT YOU!!

I WARNED YOU DAVE!! **WEIRD PETE** DOESN'T KNOW **JACK** ABOUT **COMICS!!**



I WISELY CASHED IN MY **SPELLJACKED CARDS** MONTHS AGO AND PRICES PLUMMETED **60%** WITHIN MERE DAYS!! I **INVESTED** ALL MY RETURNS IN **SCORCHED EARTH'S** NEW **CCG, "PSYCHO-BABBLE."** I PREDICT CARD AND SET PRICES TO **QUADRUPLE** OVER THE NEXT **18 MONTHS!!**

**PSYCHO-BABBLE!!** OOOH... THAT'S THE **PREMIUM CARD** GAME I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT. HOW IS IT??

HOW IS IT? ARE YOU **MAD??** THOSE CARDS ARE WORTH A FORTUNE. I AIN'T **PLAYIN'** WITH THEM!



LIKE I SAID, **"I GOT NO CHOICE!"** IF I DON'T PAY OFF THE **LOAN** IN TIME MY DAD'S GONNA CHARGE ME **18 1/2 PERCENT INTEREST** COMPOUNDED **DAILY!!** I MAY HAVE TO TAKE ON A **SECOND JOB** OR **SELL MY CHEVETTE!!** I'M **BLEEDING HERE!!** BETWEEN THE TIME I MISSED GOING TO **GARYCON\*\*** AND THE **EIGHT DAYS** I MISSED WHILE IN **RAT HAVEN,** I'M BARELY MAKING **RENT!!**

YOU NAMED YOUR CAR **MARGO??**

SELL **MARGO?** DUDE, DON'T EVEN SAY THAT!! **NO WAY!!**

YOUR DAD IS CHARGING YOU **INTEREST??**

18 1/2 PERCENT??

\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Five: "For the Love of Knuckles"

\*\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Eight: (this issue) "The Lost One(s)"

**SECOND JOB??** HEY BOB, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE INTERESTED BUT I THINK I MAY HAVE A SOLUTION FOR YOU!! I WAS DOWN AT **WEIRD PETE'S** TODAY TO **SPECIAL ORDER "WATERCREST DOWN"** AND HE'S LOOKING FOR **PART TIME** HELP FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. HE'S SUDDENLY DECIDED TO TAKE A **VACATION!!** HE SEEMED PRETTY **HARD UP** TO FIND SOMEONE **FAST!!**

**PETE'S HIRING??** REALLY? DAMN, WORKING IN A **GAME STORE** WOULD **KICK ASS!!** MAYBE I'LL **MOSEY** ON DOWN THERE TOMORROW ON MY **LUNCH BREAK** AND GET ALL THE DETAILS!!

**VACATION??** HE WORKS IN A **GAME STORE**. WHY WOULD **PETE** NEED TO TAKE A **VACATION??**

**DAMN!!** I WONDER HOW MANY POSITIONS ARE AVAILABLE??

**GOOD IDEA, B.A.!!**



OH...WAIT A SECOND. **WHAT AM I THINKING??** **NITRO FERGUSON** USES THE **BACK ROOM** OF THE **GAMES PIT** TO RUN HIS **CAMPAIGNS** AFTER HOURS!!

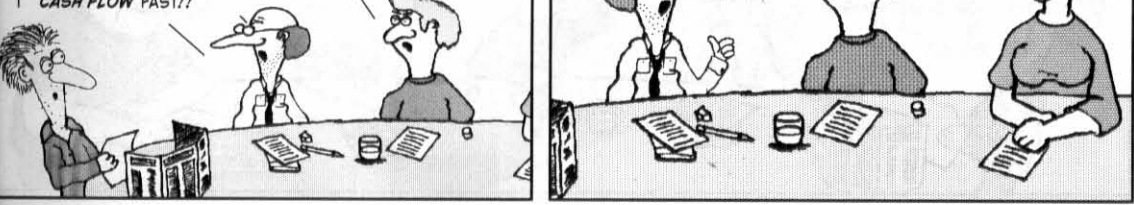
DO I LOOK LIKE I'M **WORRIED??** HUH?? I'M TELLIN' YA — I WORKED THE GUY OVER PRETTY GOOD. HE'S **SCARED** OF ME!! BESIDES, **NITRO** KNOWS **ARTICLE THREE** OF THE **PLAYERS CODE OF CONDUCT!!** THE **GAMING TABLE** AND **LOCAL GAME SHOP** ARE **NEUTRAL TERRITORY!** HE KNOWS IF HE LAYS A HAND ON ME HE'LL BE **BANNED** FROM EVERY **GAMING EVENT** IN **DELAWARE COUNTY** FOR THE NEXT **FIVE YEARS!!**

**NITRO??** (ERP) UH...ER... SO WHAT?? I AIN'T AFRAID OF HIM!! PEOPLE ARE **STILL** TALKING ABOUT THAT **ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT** I ADMINISTERED TO HIM LAST SUMMER AT **HACKCON MUNCIE\*\*!**

OH BROTHER!

I MAY BE OUT ON THE **STREET** IF I DON'T CREATE SOME POSITIVE **CASH FLOW** FAST!!

**DUDE** ARE YOU **NUTS??** THE MAN SAT RIGHT HERE BEHIND THAT **SCREEN** AND **SWORE** HE'D GET **REVENGE\*\*!!**



**BOB**, I THINK YOU'RE A LITTLE **OVERCONFIDENT** ABOUT THIS AREN'T YOU? BESIDES YOU **BLINDED NITRO** BY DUMPING AN OPENED **SALT SHAKER** IN HIS EYES AND THEN YOU **SMACKED** HIM ON THE BACK OF THE HEAD WITH A **HACKMASTER'S GM GUIDE!!** THE MAN WAS TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR YOUR **DIRTY TACTICS!!**

**BOB** FORGETS THAT **GAME CONVENTIONS** ARE ALSO CONSIDERED **NEUTRAL TERRITORY** ACCORDING TO THE **CODE OF CONDUCT!!**

**UNPREPARED MY ASS!** I WARNED HIM ABOUT TOUCHING MY **DICE** — **TWICE!!** BESIDES, I LEARNED **THAT SALT SHAKER TRICK** FROM YOU, WHEN YOU GOT INTO THAT FIGHT WITH **SHEILA HOROWITZ**.

HEY, I ALMOST (CACKLE) FORGOT ABOUT THAT (SNORT) **BRAWL!!** (SNICKER) **SHEILA** DECKED YOU **GOOD, B.A.!!** WHOOO-BOY!! THE LOOK ON YOUR FACE!! **HAR HAR!**

HOW MANY TIMES DO WE HAVE TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU?? **THE MAN TOUCHED HIS DICE!!** **BOB** WAS TOTALLY JUSTIFIED IN DOING WHAT HE DID.

THAT WAS DIFFERENT! THE GIRL HAD A **KNIFE!!**



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Two: "The Safety Lecture"  
 \*\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Three: "Lord of Steam"

I DON'T CARE *WHAT* YOU GUYS SAY. *VIOLENCE IS NEVER* THE ANSWER. IT DISTURBS ME THAT YOU CAN SIT HERE AND RATIONALIZE HARMING ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. BESIDES, THE DELAWARE COUNTY CHAPTER OF THE HACKMASTER ASSOCIATION SEEMS TO HAVE AGREED WITH ME. BOB WAS *CENSURED* FOR HIS ACTIONS AND REPRIMANDED!!

THE ONLY THING THAT PUZZLES ME IS THAT IT'S BEEN OVER A *YEAR* SINCE THE INCIDENT AND *NITRO* HASN'T MADE HIS MOVE. IT'S NOT LIKE HIM. WE HAD A *BOB'S LIFE EXPECTANCY* POOL DOWN AT *WEIRD PETE'S*. I ONLY GAVE HIM *THIRTY DAYS!*

BOY, YOU *REALLY* DON'T GET IT — DO YOU, *MS. CHEESEHEAD??* THERE WASN'T A MAN OR WOMAN ON THAT *BOARD OF INQUIRY* WHO DIDN'T *EMPATHIZE* WITH ME!! THAT'S WHY THEY GAVE ME A TOKEN *SLAP-ON-THE-WRIST!!*

(SNORT!! AND WHEN B.A. CAME TO HE SAID, "WHAT HAPPENED?")

SO WHAT IF SHE *DECKED* ME?? SHE *CHEATED* AND I *CALLED* HER ON IT!! THAT'S *WHAT MATTERS!!*

*HAR HAR!* IT'S *KILLING* ME!!



WELL BOB, YOU'RE A *GROWN BOY!* YOU DO WHAT YOU THINK BEST. BUT I'M TELLIN' YA — IT WOULD BE A *BIG MISTAKE* TO PUT YOURSELF IN *CLOSE PROXIMITY* TO A *SWORN ENEMY* ON A DAILY BASIS. EVERY TIME HE SEES YOU, HE'S GONNA THINK ABOUT THAT *MORGANSTERN THROAT LOCK* YOU PUT ON HIM.

OH MAN, MY SIDES HURT!! (SNICKER) THE *BEST PART* WAS WHEN SHE HELD HIM DOWN (*HAR HAR*) AND GAVE HIM AN *ATOMIC WEDGIE!! HA HA HA - HOOOOOO BOOOY!!*

WELL DON'T LOSE ANY SLEEP OVER IT, *MR. GLASS-JAW!!* I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.

OH GAWD, I THINK I NEED A TISSUE OR SOMETHING!!

UH...WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT SHEILA AND *B.A.* IN A FIGHT???

BOB, IF YOU GET THAT JOB YOU'LL BE *OUR MAN* ON THE *INSIDE TRACK!!* CHECK ABOUT *EMPLOYEE DISCOUNTS* ON *PRODUCT!!*

*GLASS-JAW* I'M TELLIN' YA THAT *DICE BAG* WAS WEIGHTED OR SOMETHING.



## PLAYERS' Code of Conduct

Drafted by the HackMaster Players' Association, June 5th 1981  
Ratified by the H.M.P.A. Local 254 (Muncie), March 21st 1983



1. The Game Must Go On!
2. The GameMaster is ALWAYS RIGHT!
3. The Game Table is neutral territory. (As are Game Conventions and Game Shops.) [Amended Aug 12, 1997]
4. A player shall not look behind the GameMaster's screen or look at his or her notes.
5. All information on a player's character sheet shall be accurate and truthful.
6. A player shall not lay down dice and character sheet with more than one GameMaster without their prime GM's prior approval and knowledge. [Amended July 3, 1982, December 8, 1989, May 15, 1992]
7. A player shall not cheat and will report those who do to their GameMaster immediately.
8. A player shall take responsibility for their own actions and/or behavior when deemed inappropriate by others and shall not attribute them to HackMaster, roleplaying in general or to Hard Eight Enterprises.
9. A player shall not cover or touch fellow players' dice and/or any other random number generating devices. (including electronic dice, chits, designated coins and personal spinners.) [Amended 3, 1993]
10. A player shall not distribute photocopied or electronically scanned HackMaster products to other players.

# The Substitute

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN AND DAVID S. KENZER



(GULP) UH,  
HEY NITRO!!

BOBBY BOY!!  
WHAT A SURPRISE!!

BACK ROOM IS ALL SET UP AND READY FOR YOUR GAME. JUST MAKE SURE THE **BACK DOOR** IS LOCKED WHEN YOU GUYS LEAVE.

I SEE **PETE** FOUND SOMEONE TO TAKE THE **AFTERNOON SHIFT** AFTER ALL!! YOU PLANNING ON TAKING OFF?

YEAH, AS SOON AS I EMPTY THE TRASH AND MOP UP. I WON'T GET IN YOUR WAY.



ACTUALLY, I'M **GLAD** YOU'RE HERE. WITH **PETE** FLYING THE COOP ON SHORT NOTICE, WE'RE IN A BIT OF A **FIX**!! WE'RE GOING TO HAVE AN **EMPTY CHAIR** AND THE ADVENTURE WAS DESIGNED FOR **FOUR PLAYERS**!! THINK YOU COULD SIT **IN WITH US**??

WELL, THAT'S KIND OF YOU TO... ???!!

WAIT A SECOND!! YOU WANT **ME** TO SIT IN ON **YOUR** GAME??

WHY SO SURPRISED? YER A DAMN GOOD **PLAYER**, BOB!! THE GUYS WOULD BE **THRILLED** IF YOU **SUBSTITUTED** FOR **PETE** TONIGHT!!

AND... YOU'D BE DOING ME A **BIG FAVOR**. IT WOULD BE LIKE **OLD TIMES**, EH?

WELL...UH...I DUNNO. MAYBE IT'S NOT SUCH A GOOD IDEA. YOU KNOW **B.A.**!! HE TENDS TO HAVE A **COW** IF WE PLAY OUR CHARACTERS UNDER ANOTHER **GM** WITHOUT LETTING HIM KNOW. BESIDES, HE MADE US RE-TAKE THE **OATH OF LOYALTY** LAST SUMMER.

**NO PROBLEM!** YOU WOULDN'T BE PLAYING **YOUR** CHARACTER. YOU'D BE PLAYING **PETE'S** CHARACTER. NOT EVEN **B.A.** COULD HAVE A PROBLEM WITH **THAT**!!

YOU WANT ME TO PLAY **PETE'S** CHARACTER?? ARE YOU **NUTS**?? HE'D HAVE ME **DRAWN AND QUARTERED** IF HE FOUND OUT!!

AGAIN, **NOT A PROBLEM!!** IT WAS **PETE'S** IDEA TO FIND A **SUBSTITUTE PLAYER**!! THERE'S **BUKU EXPERIENCE POINTS** AND **TREASURE** AT STAKE HERE. HE DOESN'T WANT TO LOSE HIS **SHARES**!! BESIDES, I KNOW YOU'RE UP FOR A GOOD OLD **HACKFEST**!!

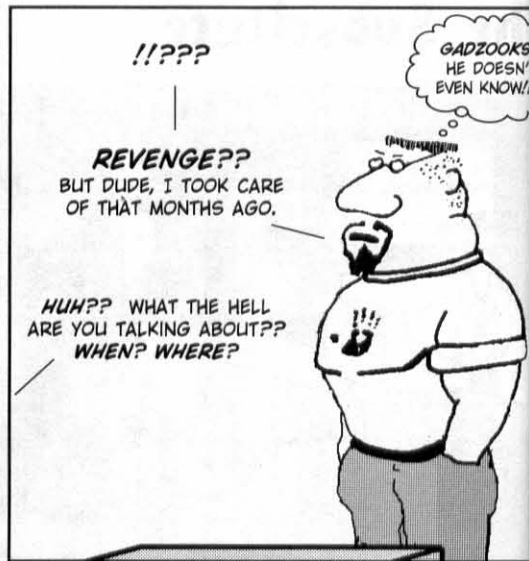
\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Three: "GameMaster of the Realm"



**BOO-KOO HACKING?? (PROUL) DAMN, SOUNDS GOOD.**  
I GUESS I COULD SIT IN FOR JUST...UH... ER...  
HMMMMMMMMMMMM..

**NOW WHAT'S WRONG??**

I WAS JUST WONDERING.  
**WHAT'S YOUR ANGLE??**  
THIS ISN'T PART OF YOUR  
**BIG SCHEME TO GET**  
**REVENGE ON ME IS IT??**



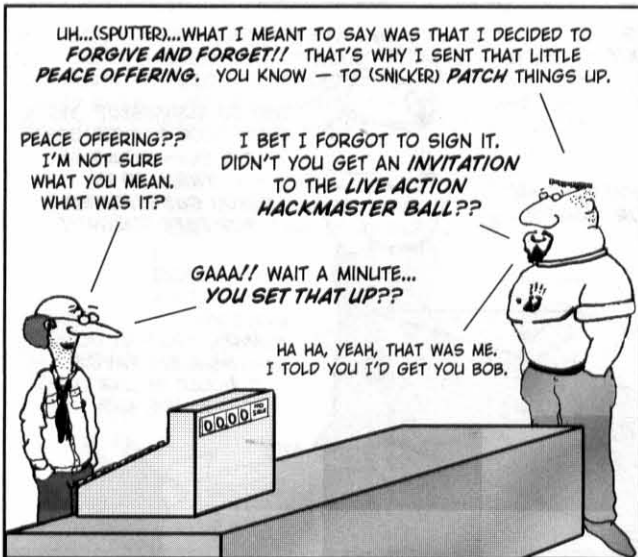
**!!???**

**REVENGE??**

BUT DUDE, I TOOK CARE  
OF THAT MONTHS AGO.

**HUH??** WHAT THE HELL  
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT??  
**WHEN? WHERE?**

GADZOOKS  
HE DOESN'T  
EVEN KNOW!!



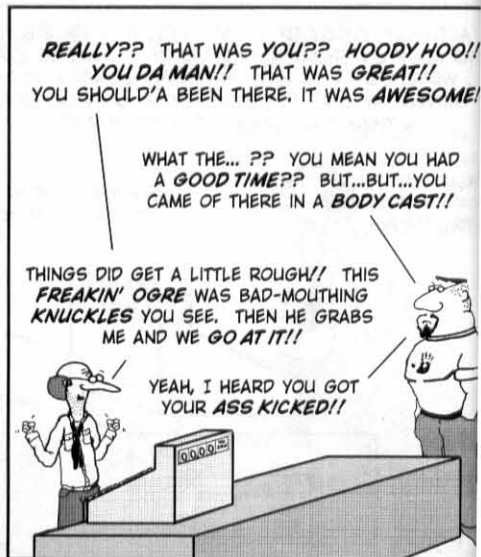
UH...(SPUTTER)...WHAT I MEANT TO SAY WAS THAT I DECIDED TO  
**FORGIVE AND FORGET!!** THAT'S WHY I SENT THAT LITTLE  
**PEACE OFFERING.** YOU KNOW — TO (SNICKER) PATCH THINGS UP.

PEACE OFFERING??  
I'M NOT SURE  
WHAT YOU MEAN.  
WHAT WAS IT?

I BET I FORGOT TO SIGN IT.  
DIDN'T YOU GET AN **INVITATION**  
TO THE **LIVE ACTION**  
**HACKMASTER BALL??**

**GAAA!!** WAIT A MINUTE...  
**YOU SET THAT UP??**

HA HA, YEAH, THAT WAS ME.  
I TOLD YOU I'D GET YOU BOB.



**REALLY??** THAT WAS YOU?? **HOODY HOO!!**  
**YOU DA MAN!!** THAT WAS **GREAT!!**  
YOU SHOULD'A BEEN THERE. IT WAS **AWESOME!!**

WHAT THE... ?? YOU MEAN YOU HAD  
A **GOOD TIME??** BUT...BUT...YOU  
CAME OF THERE IN A **BODY CAST!!**

THINGS DID GET A LITTLE ROUGH!! THIS  
**FREAKIN' OGRE** WAS BAD-MOUTHING  
**KNUCKLES** YOU SEE. THEN HE GRABS  
ME AND WE **GO AT IT!!**

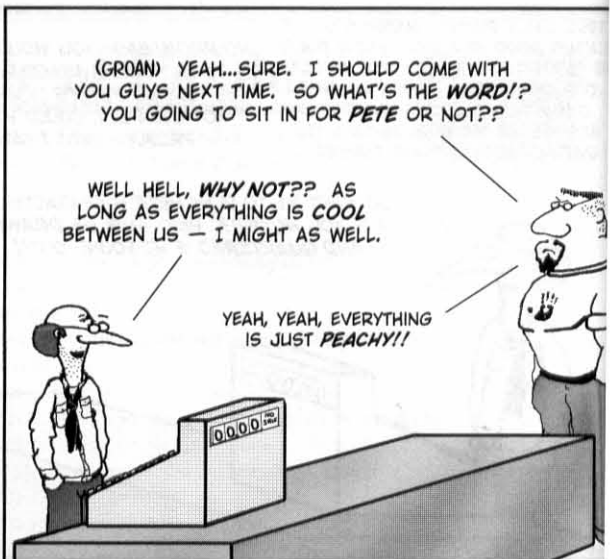
YEAH, I HEARD YOU GOT  
YOUR **ASS KICKED!!**



WADDA YA MEAN HE KICKED MY ASS?? I WAS  
HOLDING MY OWN PRETTY GOOD. IT WAS SUPPOSED  
TO BE A **ONE-ON-ONE** AFFAIR — YA KNOW?  
BUT THEN HIS DAMN **BUGBEAR BUDDY** JUMPED ME  
FROM BEHIND. LUCKY FOR ME **BRIAN...ER....**  
**TEFLON BILLY** WAS THERE. HE MUST HAVE **THROWN**  
THAT **BUGBEAR** A GOOD **FIFTY FEET!!**

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU HAD  
THE **TIME** OF YOUR LIFE.

**IT WAS AWESOME!!** WE'VE BEEN  
TALKING ABOUT GOING AGAIN.  
YOU SHOULD COME WITH US!



(GROAN) YEAH...SURE. I SHOULD COME WITH  
YOU GUYS NEXT TIME. SO WHAT'S THE **WORD!?**  
YOU GOING TO SIT IN FOR **PETE** OR NOT??

WELL HELL, **WHY NOT??** AS  
LONG AS EVERYTHING IS **COOL**  
BETWEEN US — I MIGHT AS WELL.

YEAH, YEAH, EVERYTHING  
IS JUST **PEACHY!!**

\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Six: "Nitro's Revenge"

# A Man Out Standing in His Field

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

OKAY AS YOU ALL KNOW, PETE HAS SKIPPED TOWN FOR A FEW WEEKS. I'VE ASKED BOB HERZOG TO SIT IN FOR THE OLD MAN AND PLAY MEPHISTO!!

HEY BOB!! THANKS FOR FILLING IN TONIGHT!! WE'D REALLY BE HURTIN' WITHOUT MEPHISTO'S ADDED FIREPOWER!!

OH, BY THE WAY, I LOANED A FEW THINGS TO MEPHISTO LAST WEEK TO HOLD FOR RASPUTIN! CAN YOU GO AHEAD AND GIVE THEM BACK TO ME? JUST A RING OF CLOAKING, A \*8 DAGGER OF HINDSIGHT AND A 5000 G.P. GEM!!

BOB'S PLAYING MEPHISTO?? DID YOU CLEAR THIS WITH PETE??

PETE MUST TRUST YOU!! HE'S NEVER LET ANY OF US RUN ONE OF HIS CHARACTERS.

UH, OKAY, SURE. BUT THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE ANNOTATED HERE AS FAR AS OWNERSHIP!!

PETE'S COOL WITH IT NEWT!



OH, THEY WOULDN'T BE, MEPHISTO AND RAZ ARE FAIRLY TIGHT!! WE'RE ALWAYS TOSSIN' STUFF BACK AND FORTH IN THE THE HEAT OF BATTLE!! SAY, THAT REMINDS ME, I THINK HE HAS MY ROD OF LORDSHIP TUCKED AWAY THERE SOMEPLACE. AND UH...YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO NOTICE IF THE COMMAND WORD FOR IT IS JOTTED DOWN THERE SOMEPLACE DO YOU? I THINK I MAY HAVE FORGOTTEN IT!!

SIR?? ARE YOU GOING TO ALLOW THIS?? THEY'RE PICKING POOR MEPHISTO CLEAN!!

YOU KNOW, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS I LOANED MEPHISTO THAT I'D LIKE BACK AS WELL.

LET'S SEE...ROD OF WATER WALKING, ROD OF STORM BREWING, ROD OF...AHHH!! HERE IT IS ROD OF LORDSHIP. THE COMMAND WORD IS "GRATEFUL DEAD"

HELL WITH IT!! LET PETE SORT IT OUT WHEN HE GETS BACK FROM HIS LA-LA LAND VACATION!!

OH YEAH!! THANK YOU, MY FRIEND.

WHAT EVER!



OKAY, SO LAST WEEK THE GROUP WAS TAKING A SHORT CUT THROUGH KROOPER'S MEADOW TO THE CAVERNS OF MANY PERILS!! WE STOPPED THE ACTION JUST AS YOU GUYS WERE BREAKING CAMP ALONG THE EDGE OF THE GNARLED TOOTH HILLS!!

SIR DO I HAVE TO?? BOB'S NOT EVEN A MEMBER OF THE BLACK HANDS!! I DON'T SEE HOW THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIM!!

UH...I'M SORRY NITRO!! I HATE TO INTERRUPT BUT I JUST GOTTA ASK!! WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING AROUND NEWT'S NECK??

IF SOMEONE ASKS — YOU "SAY THE WORDS" — PERIOD!!!! IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO ASKS!!

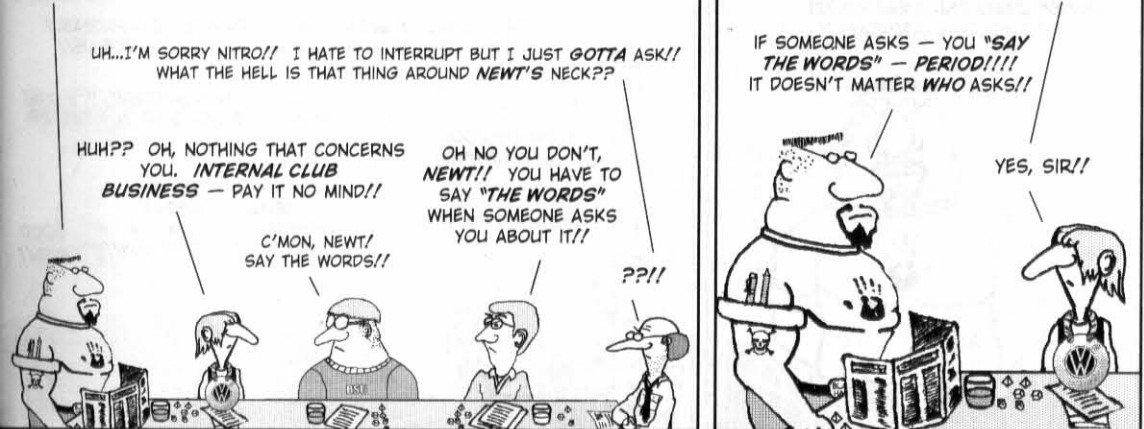
HUH?? OH, NOTHING THAT CONCERNS YOU. INTERNAL CLUB BUSINESS — PAY IT NO MIND!!

OH NO YOU DON'T, NEWT!! YOU HAVE TO SAY "THE WORDS" WHEN SOMEONE ASKS YOU ABOUT IT!!

YES, SIR!!

C'MON, NEWT! SAY THE WORDS!!

??!!



(AHEM)... "I AM THE **KEEPER OF THE HUB CAP OF SHAME!!** I WEAR THIS **TOKEN OF DEGRADATION** BECAUSE MY ACTIONS BROUGHT **DISGRACE** AND **DISHONOR** TO MYSELF, THE **BLACK HANDS GAMING SOCIETY** AND TO THE **GAMING COMMUNITY AT LARGE!** **BEHOLD MY SHAME!** **LOOK DOWN UPON ME!**"

NICE TRY **SMART GUY!!** YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO **STAND UP** WHEN YOU SAY IT!!

AND THE **GESTURES!!** YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO THE **HAND GESTURES!!** **NOW DO IT RIGHT!!!** **!!!!??**



**FIVE MINUTES LATER...**

"...I WEAR THIS **TOKEN OF DEGRADATION** BECAUSE MY ACTIONS BROUGHT **DISGRACE** AND **DISHONOR** TO MYSELF, THE **BLACK HANDS GAMING SOCIETY** AND TO THE **GAMING COMMUNITY AT LARGE!** **BEHOLD MY..."**

**C'MON NEWT!!** PUT SOME MORE **UMMFFF** INTO IT!! I'M NOT SENSING ANY **SINCERITY** HERE!! THAT'S THE KEY TO YOUR **REDEMPTION!!** **SINCERITY** AND **REMORSE** — **DEEP REMORSE!!**

**PROJECT YOUR VOICE!!** AND TRY TO TURN THIS WAY A LITTLE SO **BOB** CAN SEE THE **HUBCAP!!**

WHAT THE **HELL** IS THIS ALL ABOUT???



**NEWT** IS BEING **PUNISHED** FOR THE LITTLE **"HOAX"** HE PERPETRATED RECENTLY.\*

**HOAX??** YOU MEAN IT REALLY WAS A **HOAX**? HE WASN'T **LOST** AFTER ALL??

YEP, IT'S BEEN **CONFIRMED!!** WHEN HE EMERGED FROM A **STORM SEWER** OVER **FORTY MILES** AWAY IN **MARION** TWENTY DAYS LATER WE GOT A LITTLE **SUSPICIOUS!!**

ONCE WE CONFRONTED HIM WITH MAPS OF BOTH SYSTEMS SHOWING THEY **DON'T** CONNECT — HE CRACKED LIKE A **MACADAMIA NUT!**

HE WASN'T **LOST??**

**NOPE!!** HE WAS MAKIN' LIKE A **COUCH POTATO** AT HIS **CRIB** THE WHOLE TIME!!



BY THE WAY, I COULDN'T HELP BUT NOTICE **YOUR MUG** ON THE BACK OF A **MILK CARTON** RECENTLY. SO... HOW WAS IT DOWN IN **RAT HAVEN??**

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, OKAY?

THE **RATS** AS **BIG** AS THEY SAY??

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.

WHEN DID YOU REALIZE YOU WERE **LOST!**

**I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!!**

HOW'D THE **UNDERWEAR STRAINER** WORK THIS TIME **BOB?**



**FIVE MINUTES LATER...**

AS YOU BREAK OUT OF THE **FOREST** INTO THE OPEN **GRASSLANDS**, YOU SUDDENLY DETECT A **LONE FIGURE** STANDING OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF A **HUGE FIELD!!**

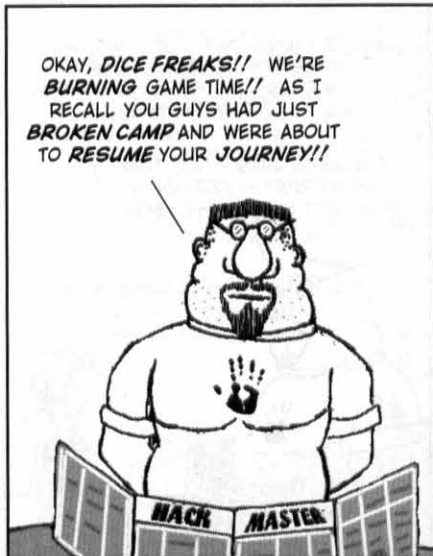
THIS IS A **GOOD SIGN!!** IF IT'S AN **NPC** HE'S PROBABLY GOING TO HAVE SOME **USEFUL** INFORMATION FOR US!!

I BLOW MY **HORN OF SALUTATION!!** TO ANNOUNCE OUR PRESENCE!! ANY REACTION??

LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, IT'S JUST SOME DUDE STANDING IN A **FIELD???**

I'M GAZING INTO MY **MARBLE OF EAGLE VISION!!** I'LL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS **GUY!!**

**GOOD IDEA!**



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Eight: (this issue) "The Last One(s)"

STEVI, LOOKING THROUGH YOUR MARBLE YOU CAN SEE THAT THE MAN IS BUCK NAKED EXCEPT FOR A LARGE HUMAN FEMUR WHICH HE APPEARS TO BRANDISHING LIKE SOME SORT OF CLUB!! HE'S STANDING NEXT TO A STONE PIT ABOUT FOUR FEET IN DIAMETER WITH HIS BACK TOWARD YOU FACING EAST. HE APPEARS TO BE STARING INTENTLY TOWARD THE HORIZON.

HE DOESN'T SEEM TO PAY ANY ATTENTION TO THE BELLOWING FROM YOUR HORN, NEWT. IN FACT HE SEEMS TO BE IN SOME KIND OF MEDITATIVE TRANCE!!



## A FEW MINUTES LATER...

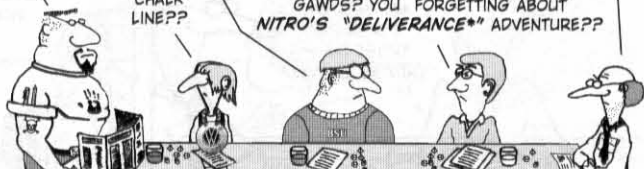
AS YOU GUYS MOVE CLOSER TOWARD THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE, YOU NOW DETECT THAT HE IS ACTUALLY STANDING IN THE CENTER OF AN EMORMOUS CIRCLE!! THE CIRCLE IS ABOUT A QUARTER MILE IN DIAMETER AND OUTLINED BY A CHALK LINE WHICH IS ABOUT TEN FEET IN WIDTH!!! THE INTERIOR OF THE CIRCLE IS SIMPLY A BLANKET OF GRASS OF ALMOST PUTTING GREEN QUALITY!!

AM I HEARING YOU RIGHT?? THIS IS SOME NAKED DUDE JUST STANDING IN SOME FIELD??

STAY ALERT EVERYONE!! NUDE NPC'S ARE TYPICALLY GAWDS OR DEMI-GAWDS!!

CHALK LINE??

GAWDS? YOU FORGETTING ABOUT NITRO'S "DELIVERANCE" ADVENTURE??



LET'S SEE WHAT OL' MEPHISTO HAS HERE AS FAR AS RANGED WEAPONS OR SPELLS! HMMMM... DAMN, NO CROSSBOW! OH... HERE WE GO!! I'LL CAST A SKIPPING-BETTY FIREBALL AT THIS DUDE!! SAYS HERE AS LONG AS IT HAS AN UNOBSTRUCTED-LEVEL PATH TO IT'S TARGET IT CAN SKIP UP TO A MILE!!

WHOOAH!! HOLD ON THERE, TEX!! YOU'RE NOT PLANNING ON CASTING THAT SPELL ARE YOU? WE HAVEN'T ASCERTAINED IF THE SUBJECT IS A HOSTILE, NEUTRAL OR FRIENDLY YET!

RAZ IS RIGHT. NITRO'S ADVENTURES ARE USUALLY NPC DRIVEN!! KILLING THE "WRONG" NPC CAN WRECK THE WHOLE ADVENTURE!



GUYS, I'M A LITTLE CONCERNED ABOUT THIS "CHALK LINE CIRCLE!" I GOT A LITTLE RULE-OF-THUMB I GO BY. IF YOU SEE A CHALK LINE NEVER, NEVER, NEVER CROSS IT, BREAK IT OR STEP ON IT!!

HUB CAP BOY SPEAKS THE TRUTH!! THESE TYPE OF THINGS USUALLY INVOLVE GREAT EVIL MAGIC OR BEINGS!! I SAY WE WASTE HIM WITH RANGED WEAPONS!!

NAW, I DISAGREE!! IT'S A TWO-SIDED COIN!! CHALK LINES CAN ALSO WARD OFF EVIL!! SO WHO'S TO KNOW?? WE NEED TO INVESTIGATE TO BE SURE!!

I HATE TO ADMIT IT BUT HE DOES HAVE A GOOD POINT!! HMMMM...



IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO RISK THE ENTIRE PARTY ON THIS SORT OF THING. USUALLY ONE OF US VOLUNTEERS TO GOES IN ALONE AND CHECK OUT THE SITUATION. THAT WAY IF HE GETS INTO TROUBLE THE OTHERS CAN FIGURE OUT A SOLUTION AND PULL HIM OUT!

YEAH!! USUALLY ONE OF US VOLUNTEERS TO GO IN ALONE!!

MAKES SENSE TO ME. NO SENSE IN EVERYONE RUNNING INTO HARM'S WAY!!



UH... WHY IS EVERYONE LOOKING AT ME?? ISN'T SOMEONE GOING TO VOLUNTEER??

MY CHARACTER IS CHAOTIC EVIL WITH A SELF-CENTERED MIND BENT!! IT WOULD BE AN ALIGNMENT VIOLATION FOR ME TO VOLUNTEER TO DO ANYTHING SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF AN INTEREST IN THE WELL BEING OF OTHERS!!

AND FIRE BLOSSOM ONLY HAS 12 HIT POINTS! THE RISK TO HER IS DISPROPORTIONATELY GREATER THAN THE TO THE REST OF YOU!

I JUST DON'T FEEL RIGHT ABOUT VOLUNTEERING SOMEONE ELSE'S CHARACTER, BUT...

I DON'T DO CHALK LINES!!



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume One: "Dueling GameMasters"

## A FEW MINUTES LATER...

OKAY BOB, AS SOON AS YOU STEP ACROSS THE *CHALK LINE* YOU ARE IMMEDIATELY TELEPORTED TO THE MIDDLE OF THE CIRCLE. YOU SUDDENLY FIND YOURSELF STANDING IN FRONT OF THE *MYSTERIOUS* FIGURE!! ALL OF YOUR POSSESSIONS ARE GONE!!

UH... WHAT DO I NEED TO ROLL TO SAVE!!

SAVE?? SORRY, THERE'S NO SAVING THROW!! THE MAN BEFORE YOU LOOKS AT YOU WITH A SET OF BRILLIANT BLUE EYES BEHIND WHICH SHINES A NOBLE LUSTRE!! HE RAISES THE FEMUR TO THE SKY AND SHOUTS, "I AM THE WALRUS!! I AM THE DICE MAN!! KOO-KOO-KACHOO!!" \*

UH OH!! IT'S ANDY WARHOL AGAIN!

HA! TOLD YA IT WAS A GAWD!

I HATE THIS GUY!!

OKAY, TELL YA WHAT, GIVE ME BACK THE RING OF CLOAKING AND THE \*8 DAGGER OF HINDSIGHT AND I'LL SNEAK OUT THERE AND SEE WHAT THE DEAL IS!!

SORRY, NO CAN DO!!

HUH?? WHY NOT??

I MISPLACED THEM!!

WADDA YA MEAN YOU MISPLACED THEM?

I HAVE ALZHEIMER'S AS A CHARACTER FLAW!!

ALZHEIMER'S!! ARE YOU SURE??

OH YEAH, MEPHISTO!! I'M SURE! TRUST ME — THEY'RE GONE!!

ALL THE GAWDS IN NITRO'S WORLD ARE DEAD CELEBRITIES FROM REAL LIFE WHO ACHIEVED CULT STATUS AFTER THEIR DEATHS!!

WAA...WHAT?? YOU MEAN DUDES LIKE ELVIS, LORNE GREEN, AND JAMES DEAN?? HOW BIZZARE!!

YEAH, 'CEPT LORNE GREEN DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT!!

THE BATTLESTAR GALATICA GUY DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT BUT ANDY WARHOL DID?

WARHOL WAS INTO CULT FIGURES AND ICONS!!

HE'S THE HEAD GAWD OF THE PANTHEON

ARE YOU TELLING ME ALL THE GAWDS OF THIS WORLD ARE DEAD CELEBRITIES?? WHO THE HELL IS MEPHISTO'S PATRON GAWD, HUH?? LET'S SEE... HA...HARRY HOUDINI??

HOUDINI IS THE GAWD OF MAGIC USERS!! HE'S ALSO ASSOCIATED WITH FORTUITUOUS ESCAPES!!

ELVIS IS THE GAWD OF BARDS AND ENRICO FERMI IS THE GAWD OF SAGES AND MATHEMATICIANS!!

ELVIS?? NOT JOHN LENNON??

HEY, WE'RE TALKING THE YOUNG ELVIS HERE — BEFORE HE MADE THE MOVIE CLAM BAKE!!

THIS IS THE STRANGEST THING I'VE EVER HEARD OF!!

NITRO HAS A KNACK FOR STRANGE!!

## THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY DICE FREAKS!! I HATE TO INTERRUPT THE LITTLE LESSON ON KRAAG WORLD DOWN THERE BUT MEPHISTO IS BUCK NAKED AND STANDING FACE TO FACE WITH ANDY WARHOL!! OKAY BOB, ANDY HANDS YOU THE FEMUR AND...

UH...I'M SORRY!! CAN WE PAUSE RIGHT THERE?? I GOTTA USE THE RESTROOM!!

WELL...I...UH...(SIGH)... OF COURSE, BOB!! GO AHEAD!! BUT PLEASE MAKE IT FAST!! WE'VE GOT A LOT OF GROUND TO COVER TONIGHT!!

OH DON'T WORRY!! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!!

I DON'T THINK HE'S COMING BACK!!

SURE HE WILL. MANY A TIME I'VE SPENT OVER AN HOUR IN THE CAN. JUST GIVE HIM SOME MORE TIME.

THANKS FOR THAT IMAGERY GORDO...

\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Three: "Lord of Steam"

# It Takes a Thief!

BASED ON A STORY BY ANDY VETROMILE



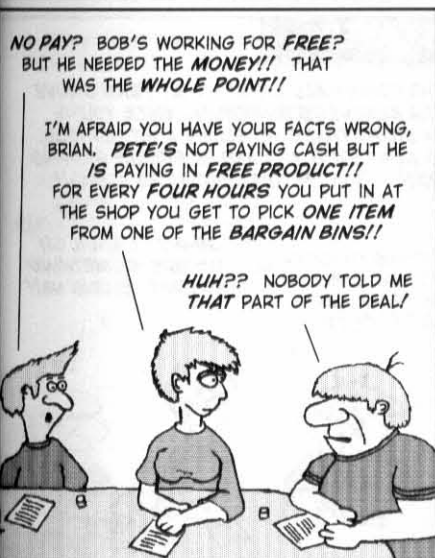
HEY GANG, **BOB'S** GOING TO BE **LATE** TONIGHT. WE'RE NOT GOING TO WAIT FOR HIM, HOWEVER. SINCE **KNUCKLES** IS LAID UP IN THE **HOSPICE** HEALING UP ANYWAY, I FIGURE YOU GUYS CAN GO AHEAD AND GET SOME **SIDE-ADVENTURING** IN!

HE GOT THAT PART TIME JOB WORKING AT THE **GAMES PIT**!! HE HAS THE **FOUR TO EIGHT** SHIFT!!

START WITHOUT **BOB**! NO WAY! HE'LL GO **BALLISTIC**! WHERE THE HELL IS HE ANYWAY?

TALK ABOUT A KID IN A **CANDYSTORE**!

HEY, I ALMOST TOOK THAT JOB BUT **PETE'S** NOT PAYING ANYTHING!!



**NO PAY?** **BOB'S** WORKING FOR **FREE**? BUT HE NEEDED THE **MONEY**!! THAT WAS THE **WHOLE POINT**!!

I'M AFRAID YOU HAVE YOUR FACTS WRONG, **BRIAN**. **PETE'S** NOT PAYING CASH BUT HE IS PAYING IN **FREE PRODUCT**!! FOR EVERY **FOUR HOURS** YOU PUT IN AT THE SHOP YOU GET TO PICK **ONE ITEM** FROM ONE OF THE **BARGAIN BINS**!!

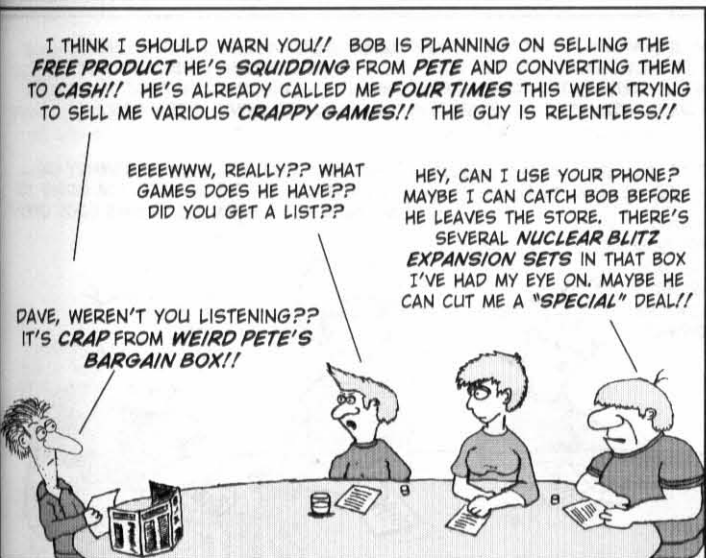
**HUH??** NOBODY TOLD ME THAT PART OF THE DEAL!



**PETE** PROBABLY DIDN'T TELL YOU BECAUSE YOU AND **SQUIRRELY** DON'T GET ALONG TOO WELL\*. EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE **AFRAID** OF BEING AROUND **SQUIRRELY** - ESPECIALLY **ALONE**!! PART OF THE JOB INCLUDES CLEANING OUT HIS CAGE AND FEEDING HIM. **BOB** SEEMS TO HAVE A WAY WITH HIM.

YEAH, HE HAS IT IN FOR YOU **BAD**!! THE WAY HE LOOKS AT YOU WHEN YOU GO IN THE STORE MAKES THE HAIR ON THE BACK OF MY NECK STAND ON END!!

WE DON'T GET ALONG BECAUSE HE HOLDS A **GRUDGE** - THAT'S ALL!! AND JUST BECAUSE I INSIST ON CARRYING MY **PAINT BALL GUN** WITH ME WHEN GOING DOWN THERE DOESN'T MEAN I'M **AFRAID**!! IT'S JUST A **DETERRENT**!!



I THINK I SHOULD WARN YOU!! **BOB** IS PLANNING ON SELLING THE **FREE PRODUCT** HE'S **SQUIDDING** FROM **PETE** AND CONVERTING THEM TO **CASH**!! HE'S ALREADY CALLED ME **FOUR TIMES** THIS WEEK TRYING TO SELL ME VARIOUS **CRAPPY GAMES**!! THE GUY IS **RELENTLESS**!!

EEEEWWW, REALLY?? WHAT GAMES DOES HE HAVE?? DID YOU GET A LIST??

HEY, CAN I USE YOUR PHONE? MAYBE I CAN CATCH **BOB** BEFORE HE LEAVES THE STORE. THERE'S SEVERAL **NUCLEAR BLITZ EXPANSION SETS** IN THAT BOX I'VE HAD MY EYE ON. MAYBE HE CAN CUT ME A "**SPECIAL**" DEAL!!

**DAVE**, WEREN'T YOU LISTENING?? IT'S **CRAP** FROM **WEIRD PETE'S BARGAIN BOX**!!



DUDE, I HATE TO BREAK THE BAD NEWS TO YA, BUT **GORDO SHECKBERRY** SCARFED UP THOSE **N.B. SETS** WEEKS AGO!! **PETE** CUT HIM A DEAL COZ HE BOUGHT **ALL** OF THEM!!

**WHA...WHAT??** HOW THE HELL DID **GORDO** FIND THEM?? I HID THEM BETWEEN THE **BACK ISSUES** OF **LADIES' HACKJOURNAL** AND THE **CAPTAIN PLANET: THE RPG** MODULES!! NOBODY EVER LOOKS IN **THAT BOX**!!

I BELIEVE **GORDO** RUNS A **CAPTAIN PLANET** CAMPAIGN FROM TIME TO TIME.

\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Four: "Blood Bath at the Games Pit"

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE CUT THE CHATTER AND GET STARTED?? HUH? AS YOU RECALL, **KNUCKLES** IS STILL RECOVERING FROM THAT FALL OFF THE **BIRCH-ROC'S** BACK! SO WE'LL ASSUME HIS CHARACTER IS STILL HEALING UP IN THE **HOSPICE**, UNTIL BOB GETS HERE. **MEANWHILE**, YOU GUYS HAVE PROBLEMS OF YOUR OWN, **REMEMBER?**

I'LL SAY WE HAVE **PROBLEMS!!** WE'RE **ALL BROKE!!** WE NEED TO FIND SOME **MONEY AND FAST!!**

I **STILL** CAN'T BELIEVE WE FELL FOR THAT **"GET RICH QUICK"** SCAM!! ISN'T THERE SOME SORT OF **CONSUMER PROTECTION OFFICE** IN **FERN GROVE** WE CAN FILE A COMPLAINT AT??

DON'T FORGET ALL THOSE **I.O.U.S** YOU'VE GOT FLOATING OUT THERE!!

LIKE THEY SAY, "IF IT'S SOUNDS **TOO GOOD** TO BE TRUE — IT PROBABLY IS!!"

YEAH BUT HE WAS A **SMOOTH TALKER!**

OH, WE PLAN ON **SKIPPING TOWN** BEFORE THEY COME DUE!

HOW WERE WE SUPPOSE TO KNOW IT WAS A **SCAM??** THE GUY TALKED A PRETTY GOOD TALK AND BESIDES, IF I RECALL CORRECTLY, **YOU WERE EVEN TAKEN IN, SARA!**

TAKEN IN?? I WAS AGAINST **POOLING ALL OUR MONEY** AND PUTTING IT IN **THAT BAG** FROM THE VERY START!! YOU GUYS **MADE ME PUT MY MONEY** IN IT!!

YOU HEARD WHAT THE GUY SAID!! THAT **BAG OF REPLICATION** ONLY HAD **ONE CHARGE!!**

IT MADE SENSE TO PUT **ALL OUR MONEY** IN IT. HE ONLY WANTED **TEN PERCENT** OF WHAT WAS **REPLICATED!!**

### A FEW MINUTES LATER...

LET'S JUST SAY I WAS THE **ONLY ONE** WHO **WASN'T** SURPRISED WHEN HE **TELEPORTED AWAY** WITH **BOTH** THE BAG AND OUR MONEY!! THE **PINK LEGWARMERS** GAVE IT AWAY FOR ME BUT **B.A.** WOULDN'T LET ME SAY ANYTHING BECAUSE **THORINA** IS A **NEW CHARACTER** AND WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THE **LAST** TIME YOU GUYS WERE **SCAMMED** BY THIS GUY!!

**BRIAN**, THE **GUARD** AT THE **TOWN HALL** INSISTS THAT **FERN GROVE** DOESN'T HAVE A **BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU!!** SINCE YOU'VE **STUBBORNLY** ASKED HIM **EIGHT TIMES** HE SEEMS A BIT NERVOUS. HE BACKS SEVERAL STEPS AWAY FROM YOU AND IS **FIRMLY** GRIPPING THE HILT OF HIS **SWORD!!** YOU'D BETTER JUST MOVE ALONG!!

I'M GOING TO **WASTE** THAT **GNOME!!**

DAMN THAT **JONID COINCRAWLER!!**\*

AFTER I VISIT **KNUCKLES** IN THE **HOSPICE**, I'M GOING GO CHECK ON **CLOVER FAX** AT THE **STABLE!!**

I'M GOING TO CHECK THE LOCAL OFFICE OF THE **TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY!!**

**AHA!!** I KNEW IT!! THERE'S **SOMETHING** HE ISN'T TELLING ME!!

### A WEE BIT LATER...

**BRIAN** AS YOU AND THE **GUARD** ARE **SCUFFLING** OVER THE **SWORD** YOU FINALLY MANAGE TO **YANK** IT AWAY FROM HIM. FINDING HIMSELF **UNARMED** AND FACING AN APPARENT **MADMAN** HE PROMPTLY TURNS AND **RUNS AWAY!!**

**SARA**, THE **NICE LADY** AT THE **TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY** OFFICE IS **VERY HELPFUL!!** ALTHOUGH SHE INFORMS YOU THAT THEY **NO LONGER** GIVE **LOW-INTEREST** LOANS TO ASSIST **STRANDED TRAVELLERS**, THEY **DO** SPONSOR A **CONTEST** TO PROVIDE SUCH **UNFORTUNATES** AS YOURSELVES A CHANCE TO WIN A **CASH PRIZE!!**

**CONTEST??** I'LL GET **ALL** THE DETAILS. WHAT DO WE HAVE TO LOSE?

HE RUNS AWAY?? **WHAT A WUSS!!** UH... I THINK I'LL DO THE SAME!! I'M GOING TO GO **HIDE** IN MY ROOM 'TIL THINGS COOL OFF!!

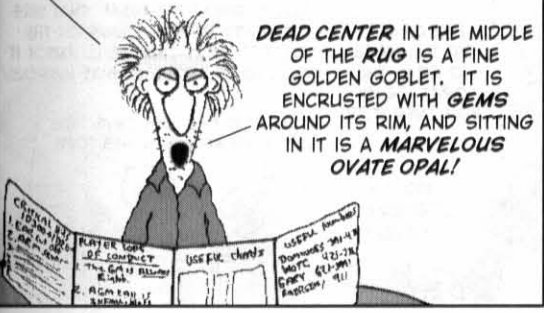
HEY, SINCE **BOB** IS **LAI**D UP, I'M GOING TO SEE HOW MUCH THE **STABLE MASTER** WILL **LOAN** ME AGAINST HIS **HORSE!!**



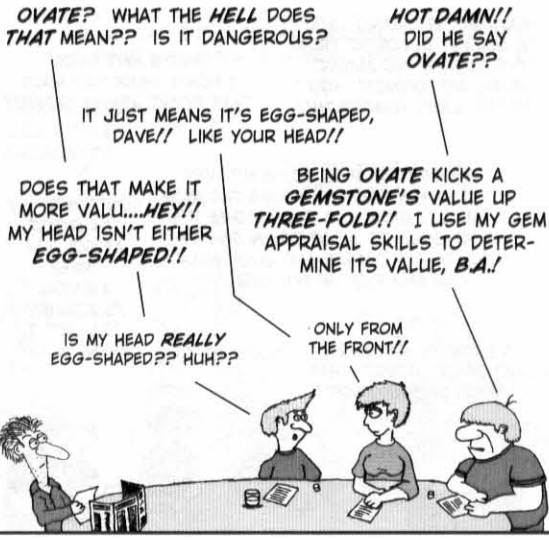
\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Four: "The Great Dragon Depository"

**LATER STILL...**

OKAY, AFTER ALL THE **STRANDED TRAVELLERS** HAVE ASSEMBLED IN THE **WAITING ROOM**, THE **NICE LADY** LEADS ALL OF YOU INTO A LARGE **COURT YARD** IN BACK OF THE **T.A.S. OFFICE BUILDING!!** AN **ORNATE RUG** APPROXIMATELY **FIFTY FEET BY FIFTY FEET SQUARE** COVERS THE CENTER OF THE **FLAGSTONE PAVEMENT!**

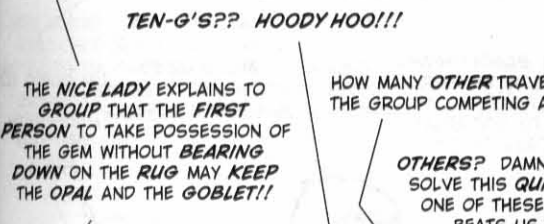


DEAD CENTER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RUG IS A FINE GOLDEN GOBLET. IT IS ENCRUSTED WITH GEMS AROUND ITS RIM, AND SITTING IN IT IS A MARVELOUS OVATE OPAL!

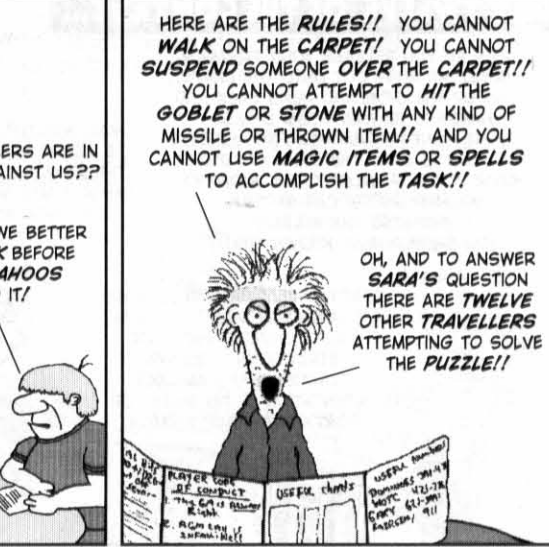


OVATE? WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?? IS IT DANGEROUS?  
HOT DAMN!! DID HE SAY OVATE??  
IT JUST MEANS IT'S EGG-SHAPED, DAVE!! LIKE YOUR HEAD!!  
DOES THAT MAKE IT MORE VALU...HEY!! MY HEAD ISN'T EITHER EGG-SHAPED!!  
BEING OVATE KICKS A GEMSTONE'S VALUE UP THREE-FOLD!! I USE MY GEM APPRAISAL SKILLS TO DETERMINE ITS VALUE, B.A.  
IS MY HEAD REALLY EGG-SHAPED?? HUH??  
ONLY FROM THE FRONT!!

A **CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE** OF THE OPAL WOULD BE SOMEWHERE AROUND **10,000 GOLD PIECES**, BRIAN!!

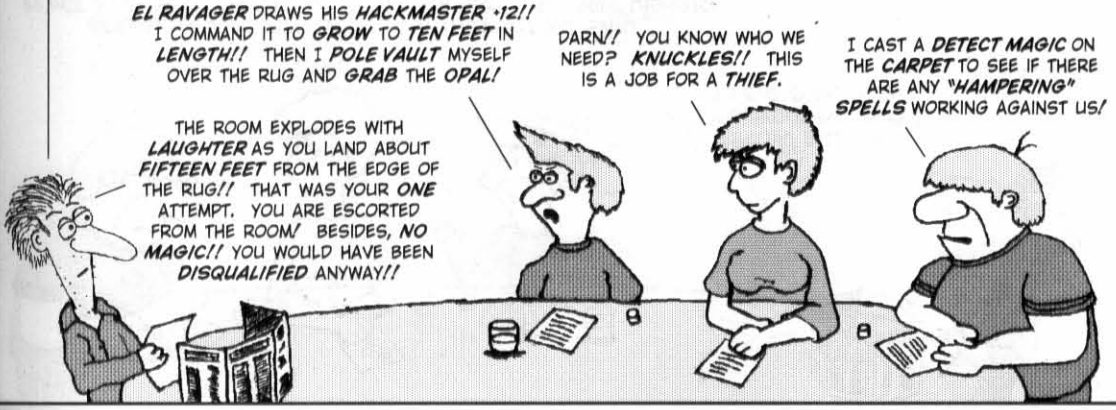


TEN-G'S?? HOODY HOO!!!  
THE NICE LADY EXPLAINS TO GROUP THAT THE FIRST PERSON TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE GEM WITHOUT BEARING DOWN ON THE RUG MAY KEEP THE OPAL AND THE GOBLET!!  
HOW MANY OTHER TRAVELLERS ARE IN THE GROUP COMPETING AGAINST US??  
OTHERS? DAMN, WE BETTER SOLVE THIS QUICK BEFORE ONE OF THESE YAHOO'S BEATS US TO IT!



HERE ARE THE RULES!! YOU CANNOT WALK ON THE CARPET! YOU CANNOT SUSPEND SOMEONE OVER THE CARPET!! YOU CANNOT ATTEMPT TO HIT THE GOBLET OR STONE WITH ANY KIND OF MISSILE OR THROWN ITEM!! AND YOU CANNOT USE MAGIC ITEMS OR SPELLS TO ACCOMPLISH THE TASK!!  
OH, AND TO ANSWER SARA'S QUESTION THERE ARE TWELVE OTHER TRAVELLERS ATTEMPTING TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE!!  
DO WE GET TO KEEP THE RUG TOO??

EACH TRAVELLER IS ALLOWED **ONE ATTEMPT** PER DAY TO SOLVE THE **PUZZLE!!** IF YOU FAIL YOU MUST LEAVE AND WON'T BE ALLOWED TO TRY AGAIN UNTIL THE **NEXT DAY!!** SOME OF THE OTHER 'YAHOO'S' AS BRIAN CALLED THEM HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN TRYING TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE FOR A **LONG TIME!!** MANY OF THEM ARE CARRYING **COMPLICATED** HAND-MADE DEVICES WHICH THEY HOPE WILL **GRAB THE OPAL** FOR THEM. ONE **ELDERLY TRAVELLER** HAS A SET OF CHARTS AND BLUE PRINTS AND SEEMS TO BE TAKING MEASUREMENTS! SUDDENLY THE **NICE LADY** RAISES BOTH ARMS AND ANNOUNCES, "**LET THE CONTEST BEGIN!!**"



EL RAVAGER DRAWS HIS HACKMASTER \*12!! I COMMAND IT TO GROW TO TEN FEET IN LENGTH!! THEN I POLE VAULT MYSELF OVER THE RUG AND GRAB THE OPAL!  
DARN! YOU KNOW WHO WE NEED? KNUCKLES!! THIS IS A JOB FOR A THIEF.  
I CAST A DETECT MAGIC ON THE CARPET TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY "HAMPERING" SPELLS WORKING AGAINST US!  
THE ROOM EXPLODES WITH LAUGHTER AS YOU LAND ABOUT FIFTEEN FEET FROM THE EDGE OF THE RUG!! THAT WAS YOUR ONE ATTEMPT. YOU ARE ESCORTED FROM THE ROOM! BESIDES, NO MAGIC!! YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN DISQUALIFIED ANYWAY!!

**DAY FIVE OF THE CONTEST...**

SORRY DAVE!! YOU UNDER ESTIMATED THE TENSION WHEN YOU WOUND DOWN YOUR MINIATURE CATAPULT!! IT HURTTLES YOU FACE-FIRST INTO THE FAR WALL OF THE COURTYARD!! YOU TAKE 93 POINTS OF DAMAGE FROM THE IMPACT AS YOUR CRANIUM AND JAW ARE SHATTERED, YOUR NOSE IS BROKEN AND YOUR LEFT EYEBALL IS DANGLING FROM ITS SOCKET!! MAKE A NOTE ON YOUR CHARACTER SHEET THAT EL RAVAGER NO LONGER HAS ANY FRONT TEETH!!

GOOD GOING BRIAN!! YOU ARE QUICKLY ESCORTED FROM THE ROOM!! NO MAGIC MEANS NO MAGIC!! YOU CAN TRY AGAIN TOMORROW!!

THAT'S NOT FAIR!! I DON'T THINK YOU MADE THAT POINT REALLY CLEAR!!

I GUESS IT'S UP TO ME, HUH? HEY, MAYBE IT'S A TRICK!! MAYBE THE RUG IS AN ILLUSION AND THEREFORE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO BEAR DOWN ON IT!! I'LL TAKE A CHANCE AND JUST WALK OUT AND PICK UP THE OPAL!!

DON'T WORRY!! I'M GOOD AT SOLVING THESE MENTAL PUZZLES!! I'LL GET IT EVENTUALLY!

THIS PROMPTS ANOTHER ROUND OF LAUGHTER! THAT WAS YOUR ONE ATTEMPT!

GOOD TRY!



THE OPAL!! DID I MANAGE TO GRAB THE OPAL ON MY WAY OVER IT??

DON'T SWEAT IT DAVE!! THAT WAS TWENTY REVOLUTIONS ON THE GEAR!! NEXT TIME WE'LL KNOCK IT DOWN TO 18 AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS

LOOK AT IT THIS WAY, DAVE. YOU LEFT YOUR MARK ON THIS TOWN.

NO, I'M SORRY, DAVE!!



**DAY TWELVE OF THE CONTEST...**

BRIAN AS YOU RELEASE YOUR TRAINED MONKEY HE RUNS OUT ONTO THE CARPET, PICKS UP THE OPAL AND RUNS BACK AND HANDS IT TO YOU!! THE OTHER CONTESTANTS ROAR WITH PROTEST!! THE GUARDS GRAB THE OPAL AND PUT IT BACK IN THE GOBLET!! THE MONKEY WALKED ON THE CARPET THUS BREAKING THE RULES!! YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT!!

STUPID MONKEY!! HE WAS SUPPOSED TO CLIMB UP THE WALL AND OUT OF THE COURTYARD AND MEET ME BACK AT MY ROOM LATER WITH THE OPAL!!

OKAY, BRUTIS THE BLACKSMITH IS GOING TO THROW ME OVER THE RUG!! I'M USING MY CAP AS A SMALL NET TO SCOOP UP THE OPAL AS I SAIL PAST!!

THEY WON'T ALLOW ME TO USE STILTS HUH?? OH WELL. IT WAS WORTH A TRY.

I'M GOING TO COMPARE NOTES WITH THAT OLD MAN!!

SORRY DAVE!! BRUTIS ONLY HAS A 5 INTELLIGENCE!! HE DIDN'T QUITE UNDERSTAND YOUR INSTRUCTIONS! YOU SOAR TOWARD THAT FAMILIAR INDENTATION IN THE WALL FOR FORTY POINTS OF DAMAGE!



**THREE HOURS LATER...**

OK GUYS, I THINK I FINALLY GOT A HANDLE ON IT. ONCE WE CORRECT FOR THE TORSIONAL DEFORMATION ON THE PRINCIPAL SUPPORT PYLONS, WE CAN GET DOWN TO CALCULATING THE MAXIMUM HORIZONTAL COMPONENT OF TENSION ON THE ROPES WE'RE USING AS SUPPORT MEMBERS. DAVE, WHAT'S THE HYPERBOLIC COSINE OF 234.56 TIMES THE LOGARITHM OF THE SQUARE ROOT OF 138.22?

ZZZZZZZZ...

WHOA THERE BIG GUY!! I CAN'T DO LOGARITHMS ON THIS LITTLE CALCULATOR.



**LATER THAT NIGHT...**

LOOKS LIKE I PUT ON MY *TOOL BELT* FOR NOTHING. I *TOLD* YOU GUYS THEY WOULDN'T LET US DO IT!

SORRY GUYS, WHEN THE WAGON LOAD OF *TIMBERS* ARRIVE AND YOU BEGIN TO *OFF LOAD* THE *GUARDS* HALT YOU!! THEY ARE *NOT* GOING TO ALLOW YOU TO BUILD A *SUSPENSION BRIDGE* IN THE *COURT YARD* OVER THE *RUG*!!

*THIS SUCKS!!!* THERE WAS NOTHING IN THE RULES ABOUT *NOT BUILDING BRIDGES!!*

CAN WE TAKE A BREAK? *MY HEAD HURTS!!*



**LATER THAT NIGHT...**

HEY, YOU'LL *NEVER* GUESS WHO TOOK THE *PART TIME JOB* ON *DAY SHIFT*!! TURNS OUT IT'S...

HEY GUYS! SORRY I'M LATE. *SQUIRELY* WOULDN'T GET BACK IN HIS CAGE AND THE *BATTERIES* ON THE *CATTLE PROD* WERE *DEAD*!! I HAD TO GO BUY A BAG OF *TIC-TAC TACO*, "*DOUBLE-CHEESEYS*" AND *THROW* THEM IN HIS CAGE TO *COAX* HIM BACK IN.

DUDE ARE WE *GLAD* TO SEE YOU!! WE NEED A *FRESH PERSPECTIVE* !!

YEAH WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO SOLVE THIS *PUZZLE* ALL NIGHT. WE'RE *STUMPED*!!

B.A. IS PLAYING *HEAD GAMES* WITH US. IT'S *OBVIOUSLY* UNSOLVABLE!



CATTLE PROD???

HUH???

WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO GET THIS *STUPID 10,000 GOLD PIECE GEMSTONE* OFF THIS *STUPID RUG* IN THIS *CONTEST*. TROUBLE IS THEY HAVE ALL THESE *STUPID RULES* SO IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE* TO *SOLVE*!!

DON'T EVEN BOTHER BOB!! IT'S JUST SOME *LAME NO-SOLVER* THAT *B.A.* THREW AT US TO KEEP US *OCCUPIED* UNTIL YOU SHOWED UP!!

*CONTEST??* YOU SAY IT'S SOME KIND OF *PUZZLE??* GIVE ME *ALL* THE *DETAILS*!!

WE *RACKED* OUR BRAINS!! WE'VE TRIED *EVERYTHING*!!

LET ME BRING YOU UP TO SPEED BOB...



## AFTER B.A. EXPLAINS THE RULES...

WELL...LET ME START WITH THE **MOST OBVIOUS SOLUTION**. I **KNEEL DOWN ON MY KNEES AT THE EDGE OF THE RUG** AND **BEGIN TO ROLL IT UP!!** WHEN I GET TO THE **MIDDLE** I'LL REACH OVER AND **PICK UP THE GOBLET AND OPAL!!**

**THAT'S IT!! THE OPAL AND GOBLET ARE YOURS!!**

???!!!



SORRY DUDES!! SOMETIMES IT JUST **"TAKES A THIEF!!"**



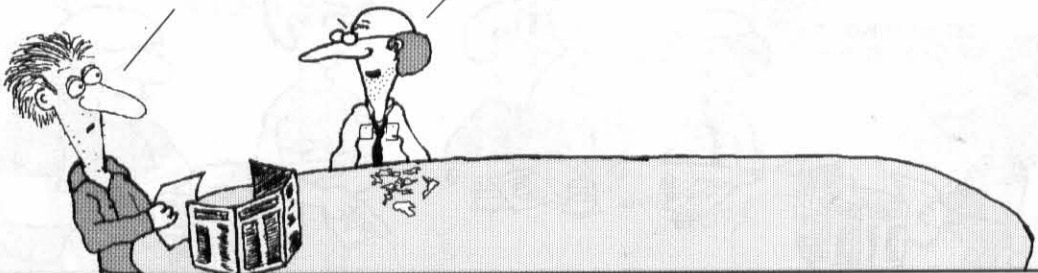
## A FEW MINUTES LATER...

OF COURSE THEY **TORE UP YOUR CHARACTER SHEET** AND **DUMPED SODA** DOWN THE FRONT OF YOUR PANTS, **BOB!!** ANNOUNCING THAT **KNUCKLES** WASN'T GOING TO **SHARE THE OPAL** WITH THE OTHERS WAS BAD ENOUGH BUT CLIMBING UP ON THE TABLE AND DOING THE **MOCKING JIG** WOULD HAVE PUSHED **ANYONE** OVER THE EDGE!! YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE **ALIVE!!**

WHO CARES? THEY'LL GET OVER IT!! I HAD A TOUGH WEEK AND THIS WAS **JUST** THE SORT OF THING I NEEDED!! **"KOO KOO-KACHOO, I AM THE DICE MAN" MY ASS!!**

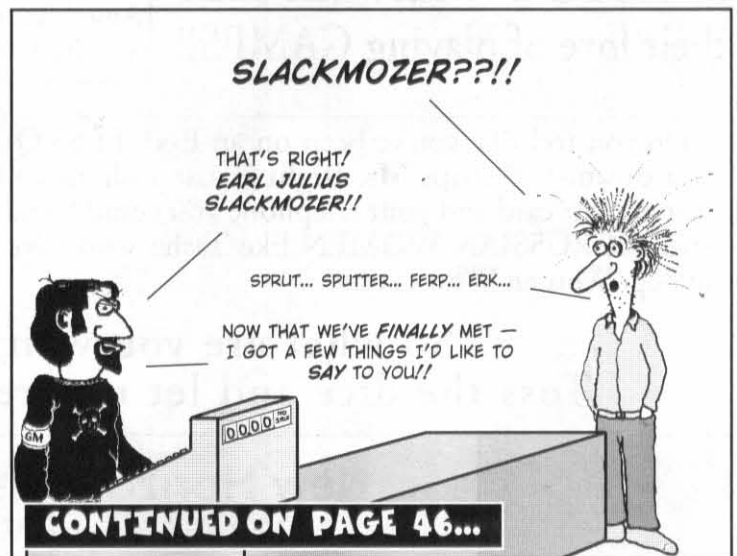
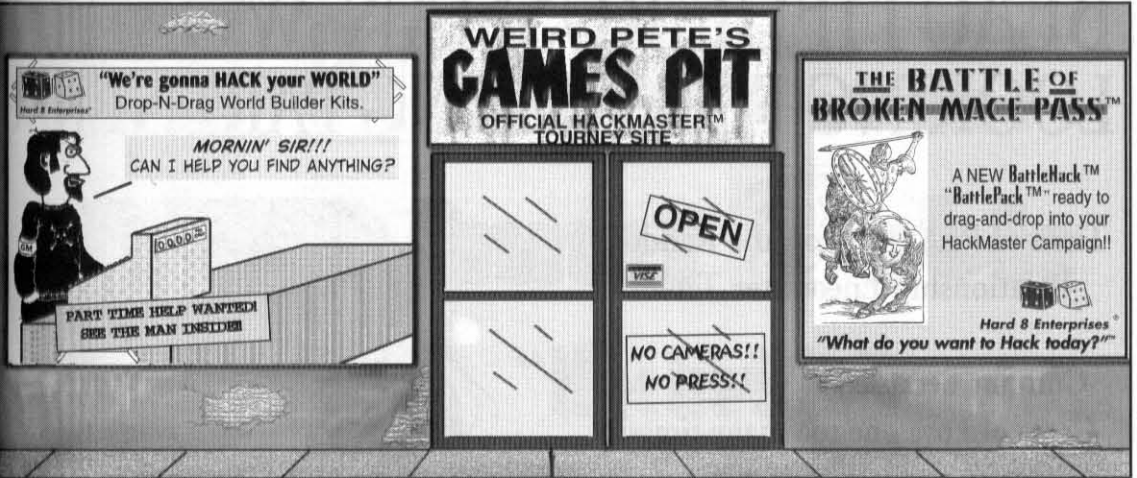
**DICE MAN?? PARDON ME??**

**FORGET IT!! JUST MY WAY OF SAYING THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME!!**



# The Unexpected Encounter

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Three: "GameMaster of the Realm"

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Knights of the Dinner Table #24  
**Hackzilla!**  
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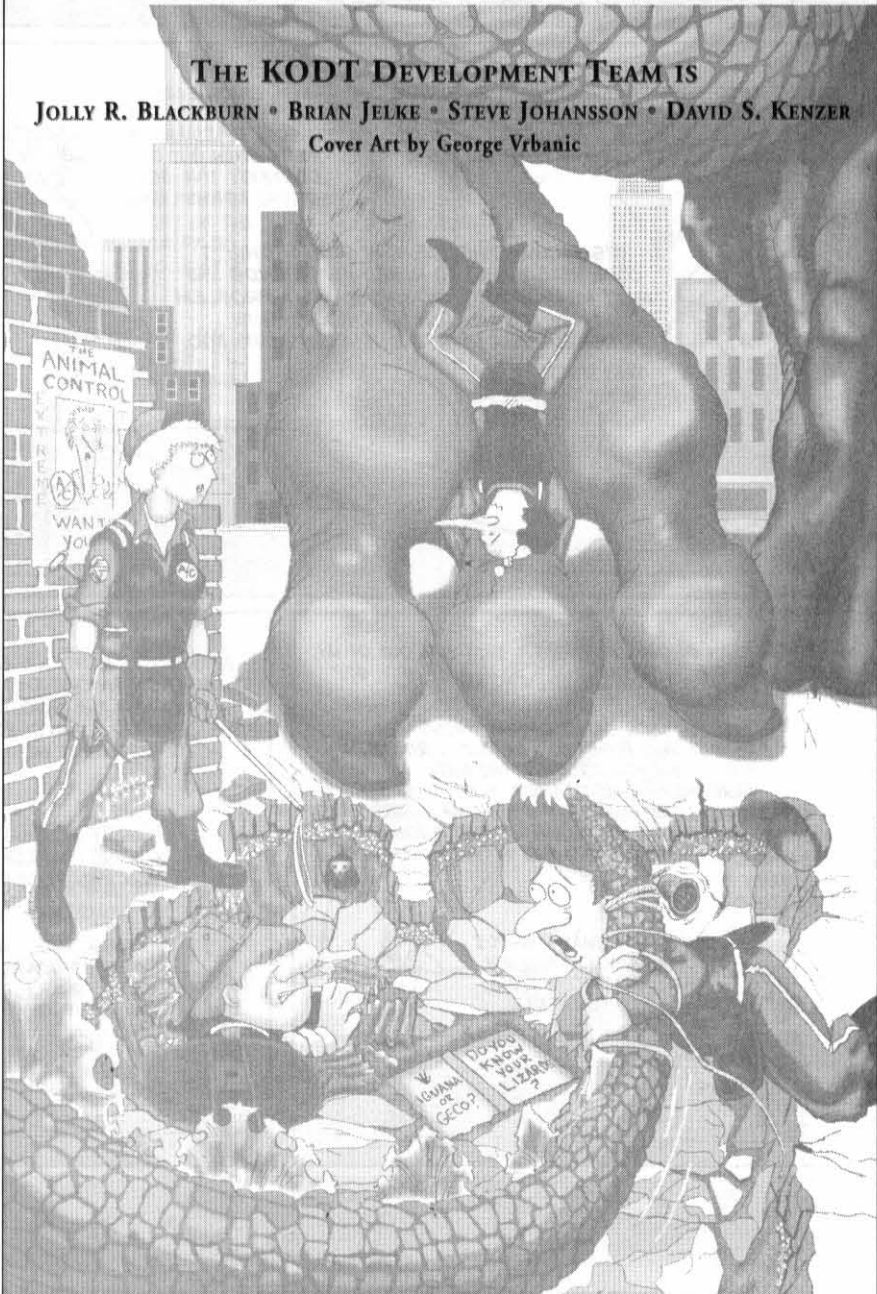
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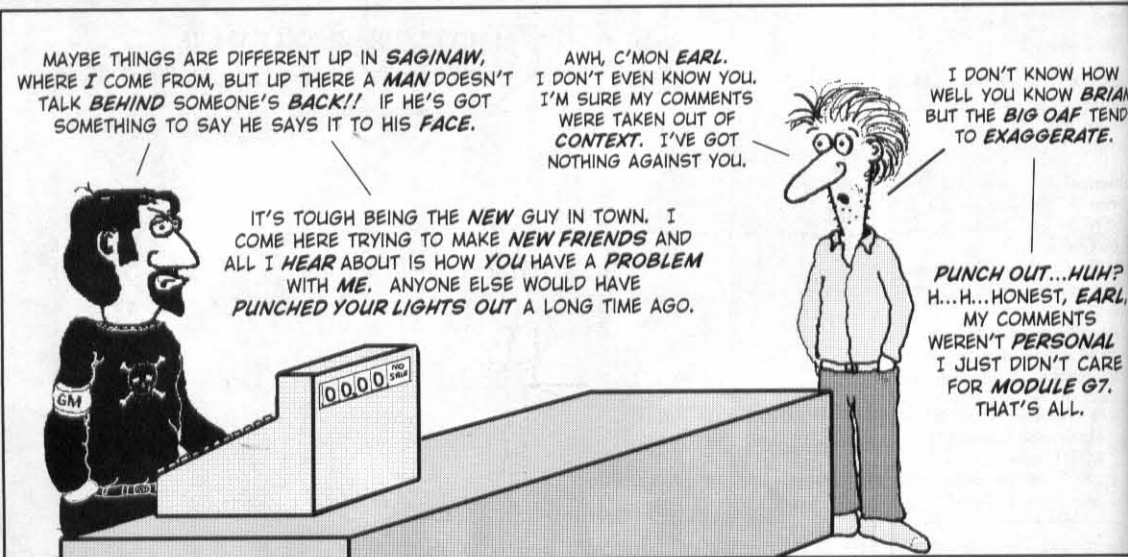
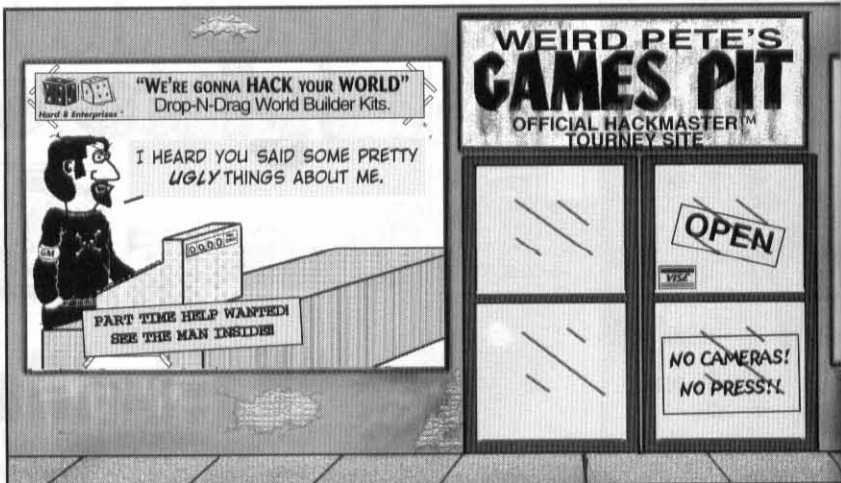
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# When Worlds Collide!

BY STEVE JOHANSSON AND JOLLY BLACKBLU

IN THE LAST EPISODE,  
**BA FELTON**  
 STUMBLED INTO A  
 NEW FACE BEHIND THE  
 REGISTER OF THE  
**GAMES PIT** —  
 HIS  
**ARCH NEMESIS**  
**EARL**  
**SLACKMOZER!!**



ANYWAY, I HAD THE *GNOME TITANS* ENTERING THE *ORDER OF BATTLE* JUST AFTER THE *DWARVEN PHALANX* MADE THEIR *CHARGE* ACROSS *WARBLER'S FIELD*. THIS GAVE THE *GNOME LEGIONS* TIME TO CATCH THEIR BREATH AND REFORM THEIR RANKS AFTER THE *GREEK FIRE BARRAGE*.



THAT'S PERFECT!! IT'S JUST LIKE THE *TITANS* TO COME INTO THE *BATTLE* JUST AS *ALL SEEMS LOST* IN ORDER TO *SAVE THE DAY*.



AND *FLATAROY'S GNOME GUARD*? I HAD THEM IN THE ADVENTURE TOO. HELL, IT WAS MY FAVORITE PART OF THE *WHOLE MODULE!!* I HAD *FLATAROY* AND HIS TROOPS HOLDING *BLIND WENCH PASS*. THEY WERE *SOLID, MAN!!* THEY KEPT THE *TROLLKIN AUXILIARIES* FROM ENTERING THE MAIN *BATTLE* AND OUTFLANKING THE *PROTECTORATES' FORMATION*. IT WAS SWEET!!



THAT'S BRILLIANT!! AND IT ALL MAKES PERFECT SENSE. *FLATAROY* WOULD BE HESITANT TO BRING HIS TROOPS OUT OF THE MOUNTAINS AFTER THE *BETRAYAL AT OX-FINORD!!*



HEY, THAT'S WHAT I SAID!! BUT *GARY* DIDN'T LIKE IT — HE CUT THAT PART OUT *COMPLETELY!!*



THAT SUCKS. HEY YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO HAVE A COPY OF THE *ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT* DO YOU? I'D LOVE TO LOOK AT IT.



REALLY? GEE, I'M FLATTERED. SURE, I'LL BRING IT IN SOMETIME.

I'VE BEEN WORKING ON A FEW ADVENTURES MYSELF FOR *PUBLICATION* BUT I HAVEN'T GOT AROUND TO SENDING THEM IN YET.



MAYBE YOU'D TAKE A LOOK AT THEM AND GIVE ME YOUR *OPINION*?

I'D LOVE TO!!

## TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

HEY GUYS. SORRY, I'M LATE *EARL*. I RAN HOME TO TAKE A SHOWER AND CLEAN UP BEFORE COMING IN.



NO PROBLEM. TO TELL THE TRUTH, I LOST TRACK OF THE TIME. *B.A.* AND I WERE HAVING A *GREAT CONVERSATION!!*



YOU AND *B.A.*? BUT YOU'RE *SWORN ENEMIES!!*



TURNS OUT WE HAVE A LOT IN *COMMON*. WE WERE JUST *COMPARING NOTES* ON *GAME MASTERING*.

HEY EARL, IF YOU'RE NOT DOING ANYTHING, MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION OVER A **DOUBLE-STUFFED PIZZA**.

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN. THE PLACE IS YOURS BOB. OH, BY THE WAY, **SQUIRRELY** AND I ORDERED OUT FOR **THAI FOOD** FOR LUNCH. HIS CAGE IS SMELLING **PRETTY RANK!!** YOU MIND TAKING CARE OF THAT?

**'THAI FOOD?? DAMMIT EARL!! NOT AGAIN!!**

**GREAT!! I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU MORE ABOUT MY **LYRION'S ACADEMY ADVENTURE**. MAYBE YOU HAVE SOME IDEAS ON **BEEFING** IT UP.**



### LATER THAT WEEK...

DUDE, DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY, BUT WE'RE FINDING IT **HARD TO BELIEVE** YOU GOT THAT **SHINER** FROM **BEANING** YOURSELF IN THE EYE WHILE PLAYING **HACKEY-SACK**. WHY DON'T YOU JUST COME CLEAN AND TELL US WHAT **REALLY** HAPPENED?

**BORIS ALPHONZO FELTON!!** FOR THE **LAST TIME!!** YOU TELL US **WHO** DID THIS TO YOU. **I MEAN IT!!**

**DAMN, B.A.!!** IT LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE USED YOUR FACE AS A **JACKHAMMER!!** WHAT'S THE **OTHER GUY** LOOK LIKE?

WHOEVER IT WAS THEY KNEW A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT **HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT**.

CAN WE JUST **DROP IT** AND START **PLAYING?**



REALLY? WHY DO YOU SAY THAT **BRIAN**? DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING?

WELL, THAT **BRUISE** TO HIS **ADAMS APPLE**, FOR EXAMPLE. MY GUESS IS THAT IT WAS PUT THERE BY A **SKILLFULLY** EXECUTED **REVERSE ELBOW SLAM**. IT'S CONSIDERED A **DISABLING OFFENSIVE TECHNIQUE** AND IS USUALLY RENDERED **AFTER THE TARGET** HAS BEEN **PUMMELED SENSELESS** WITH ONE OF MORE **BLOWS** TO THE HEAD OR UPPER BODY. **YEP**, WHOEVER WORKED OVER **B.A.** KNEW THE **FINER ART** OF **DEALING OUT DAMAGE!!**

I'M IMPRESSED, **BRIAN**. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD STUDIED THE **MARTIAL ARTS**.

OH, I DON'T. BUT **HACK-FU** HAS AN **EXCELLENT MARTIAL ARTS HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT** SYSTEM. SADLY MUCH OF IT IS TAGGED AS **OPTIONAL RULES** SO YOU CAN'T USE IT IN ANY **SANCTIONED TOURNAMENTS**.

PITY.

BORIS ALPHONZO? B.A.?



**FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!** I DIDN'T WANT TO SAY ANYTHING...IT'S KIND OF **EMBARASSING** REALLY. BUT **EARL** GAVE ME THE **SHINER**.

CALM DOWN BOB. IT WAS AN **ACCIDENT**. MY FAULT REALLY. I SHOULD'VE DUCKED.

**JUMPIN' BAJEEMERS!!** I THOUGHT IT WAS STRANGE HOW YOU GUYS WERE ACTING ALL **CHUMMY** AND EVERYTHING ALL OF A SUDDEN. HE **BUSH-WHACKED** YOU, DIDN'T HE?

**B.A. AND EARL ACTING CHUMMY?** WHEN? WHERE? HE HIT YOU??

**EARL SLACKMOZER?**

**HA!!** I WAS RIGHT. **EARL** HAPPENS TO BE A **BROWN BELT**.

BRUISES DON'T LIE.



I WENT OVER TO **EARL'S** HOUSE LAST NIGHT. HE'S HELPING ME **FLESH OUT** MY ADVENTURE ON **LYRION'S ACADEMY**. I GUESS WE GOT SIDE-TRACKED. HE TALKED ME INTO PLAYING **ROYAL HOUSE RUMBLE!!\***

**WH...WHAT?** YOU AND EARL PLAYED **SLAM MASTER?**

**THE BATHROOM?** YOU ACTUALLY MADE IT **THAT FAR?** **GOOD JOB, B.A.!!**

I WAS **THIS CLOSE** TO TAKING THE ELUSIVE **BATHROOM BELT!!**



**WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING?** YOU'RE GOING TO **HANG OUT** AT THE MAN'S HOUSE AFTER HE **CHEATED** ON THE **GAMEMASTER OF THE REALM CONTEST??**

**YEAH!!** EVERYONE KNOWS HE **CHEATED!!** THAT'S WHY HE'S BEEN **OSTRACIZED** FROM **GAMING SOCIETY**.

WE TALKED ABOUT THAT. HE CLAIMS HE FILLED OUT THE **ANSWERS** ON THAT COPY OF **HACKJOURNAL** YOU FOUND **AFTER** THE CONTEST. JUST A **MISUNDERSTANDING**, REALLY.

LAST **HACKCON** THEY EVEN CANCELED HIS **HACKMASTER** EVENT BECAUSE **NO ONE** SIGNED UP.

HE HAS THE **MARK OF CAIN!!**



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Three: "GameMaster of the Realm"

**DON'T YOU GET IT? THE MAN NEEDS YOU!! HE'S USING YOU TO GET BACK IN GOOD STANDING WITH GAMERS. YOU'RE VALIDATING HIM.**

**WHAT CAN I SAY?? I BELIEVE THE GUY'S STORY. HERE I'VE BEEN BADMOUTHING THE GUY FOR OVER A YEAR AND HE EXTENDS HIS HAND IN FRIENDSHIP. IF THAT DOESN'T SPEAK OF HIS CHARACTER — I DON'T KNOW WHAT DOES.**

**YEAH!!! HE'S GOING TO USE YOU LIKE A HANDI-WIPE TO CLEAN UP HIS REP AND THEN DISCARD YOU!!**

**I THINK B.A. IS DOING THE RIGHT THING. EARL DOESN'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS IN TOWN. MAYBE WE WERE TOO QUICK TO JUDGE.**

**HMMRRFFF!! THE MAN CHEATED.**

**FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!! CAN WE JUST DROP THE SUBJECT AND GET ON WITH THE GAME? ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT EARL AND I ARE OKAY WITH EACH OTHER. IT'S NICE TO HAVE ONE LESS ENEMY IN THE WORLD AND WHO KNOWS? MAYBE IT WILL BUILD INTO A REAL FRIENDSHIP.**

**TRUST ME, B.A.!! YOU KNOW I'M A PEOPLE PERSON AND GENERALLY EASY TO GET ALONG WITH, BUT THIS EARL IS BAD NEWS. NOTHING GOOD WILL COME OF THIS.**

**SO HOW'D YOU GET THE BLACK EYE?? I WANT DETAILS.**

**BOB A PEOPLE PERSON??**

**LET ME GUESS, HE PULLED THE SHOWER CURTAIN OVER YOUR HEAD.**

**YEAH, HE GOT ME WITH THE SHOWER CURTAIN, BUT I USED THE PLUNGER TO GET HIM IN A CHOKE HOLD!! HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO YIELD, OR SO I THOUGHT, WHEN HE IMPROVISED AND TURNED A SOAP-ON-A-ROPE INTO A PAIR OF NUNCHUKS.**

**NUNCHUKS? HE GOT ME WITH THE STYLING-MOUSSE-TO-THE-EYE ROUTINE.**

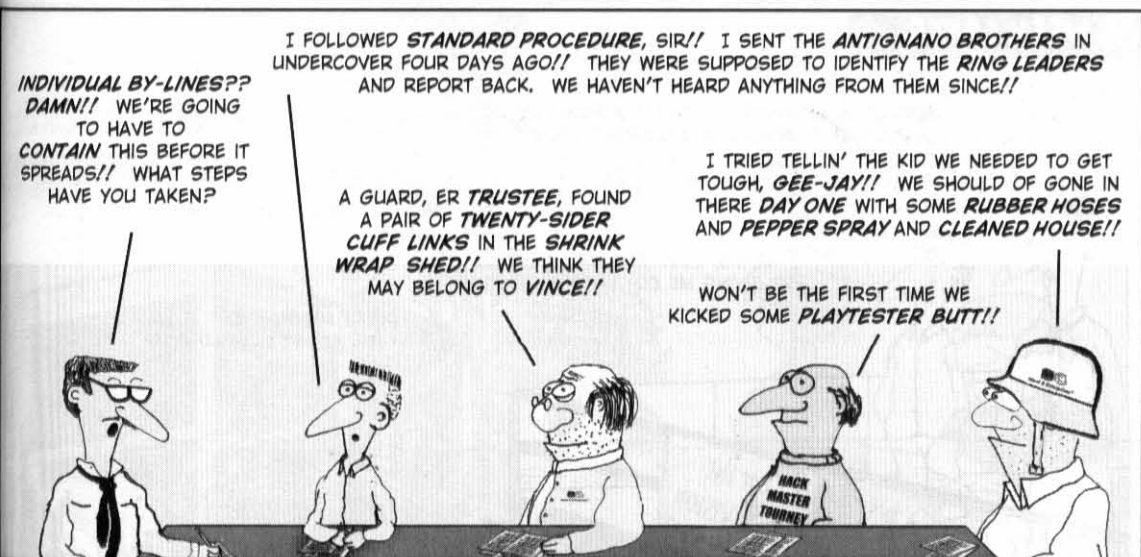
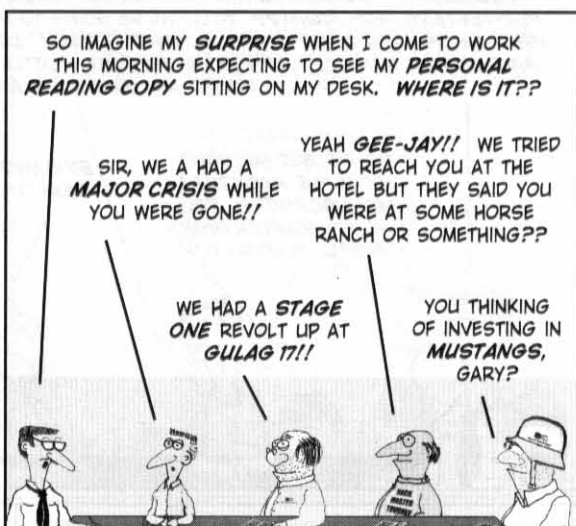
**DID YOU GUYS PLAY A BASEMENT ROUND?**

**I'M SHOCKED!! A WEEK AGO YOU COULDN'T SAY THE MAN'S NAME WITHOUT A NERVOUS TWITCH!!**

**IT'S LIKE THE TWILIGHT ZONE.**

# The Gary Jackson Files: Gulag 17

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN AND  
STEVE JOHANSSON



I APPRECIATE YOUR *SPIRIT BOYS*, I REALLY DO, BUT *VIOLENCE* WILL ONLY *FAN THE FLAMES OF REBELLION!!* WE NEED TO *NIP* THIS THING IN THE *PROVERBIAL BUD!!* WE'RE DEALING WITH *PLAYTESTERS* HERE *RIGHT??* WELL, WE'RE GOING TO MAKE THEM *SQUEAL!!* CLUT OFF *ALL* WORK ASSIGNMENTS FROM *CAMP 17* UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!! *LOCK DOWN* THE *CAMP GAME LIBRARY* AND *GAMING HALL* AS WELL. LET'S SEE IF THEY ARE A LITTLE MORE *COOPERATIVE* WHEN THEY HAVEN'T PLAYED ANY GAMES FOR A FEW DAYS!!

BU...BU...BUT SIR, WHAT ABOUT THE *HACKZILLA MANUSCRIPT??* THEY HAVE THE *MASTER DISK!!* THEY'LL DESTROY IT!!

BY GAWD THE *OLD MAN* STILL HAS IT!! *BEAUTIFUL GEE-JAY!! BEAUTIFUL!!*

TAKE THEIR *DICE* AWAY FROM THEM TOO!! THAT'LL HIT 'EM WHERE IT HURTS!!

AND IF THAT DOESN'T WORK WE SHOULD *KICK SOME ASS!!*



FORTUNATELY I ANTICIPATED THIS KIND OF *CRISIS!!* I HAD A *PARTIAL HACKZILLA MANUSCRIPT* SENT TO *CAMP 5* THREE WEEKS AGO!! LET'S GET THAT COPY BACK HERE IN THE OFFICE BEFORE *DISSENSION* SPREADS BETWEEN *CAMPS!!* EDMUND, I'M CHARGING YOU WITH GETTING THAT MANUSCRIPT READY FOR PRESS, *ASAP!!*

THEN WE *CLEAN HOUSE* AT *CAMP 17!!* WE SEND 'EM *ALL HOME* AND REPLACE THEM WITH *NEW RECRUITS!!* IT'S THE *ONLY WAY!!*

WILL DO, SIR!!

SIR, LET ME BE THE FIRST TO SAY IT!! IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU *BACK HOME!!*

DAMN!! I'D SURE LIKE A CHANCE TO *SLAP* AROUND ONE OR TWO OF THOSE *PUNKS* BEFORE WE PUT THEM ON THE *BUS!!*

YEAH, ME TOO!!



**A WEEK LATER...**

GOOD JOB, *EDMUND!!* YOU DID A *BANG UP* JOB OF PULLING, "*HACKZILLA AT LARGE*" TOGETHER!!

THANKS, SIR!! AND UH... THANKS FOR GIVING ME *CO-WRITING CREDIT!!*

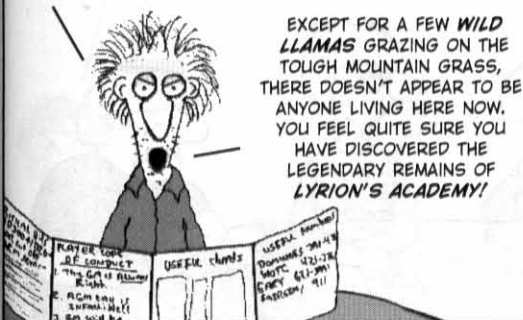
DON'T MENTION IT!! IT WAS THE *LEAST* I COULD DO!!



# Beating to Death!

BASED ON A STORY BY ANDY VETROMILE

AS YOU COME OFF THE CLIFFSIDE TRAIL ONTO THE PLATEAU OF SAGE MOUNTAIN, YOU SEE THE LOW RUINS OF A STONE WALL SURROUNDING WHAT APPEARS TO BE A VILLA. THE BUILDINGS ARE REMARKABLY WELL-PRESERVED.



EXCEPT FOR A FEW WILD LLAMAS GRAZING ON THE TOUGH MOUNTAIN GRASS, THERE DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ANYONE LIVING HERE NOW. YOU FEEL QUITE SURE YOU HAVE DISCOVERED THE LEGENDARY REMAINS OF LYRION'S ACADEMY!

I KNEW IT WAS UP HERE! I KNEW IT! IF YOU HAD JUST LET ME TORTURE THAT SCROLL MERCHANT A LITTLE WHILE LONGER I BET HE WOULD'VE CRACKED AND DRAWN US A MAP.

YEAH! WE COULDA SAVED TWO DAYS SEARCHING FOR THIS PLACE.

DRAW A MAP? YOU WERE CUTTING OFF HIS FINGERS!! HOW IN THE HELL DID YOU EXPECT THE POOR MAN TO DRAW YOU A MAP?



SARA IS RIGHT. THAT WAS A BOTCHED JOB OF TORTURING, BOB. MAIMING AN NPC ONLY INCREASES HIS INDIGNATION AND HIS RESOLVE TO NOT COOPERATE!! THAT'S WHY I PREFER ABDOMINAL BEATINGS WITH A SACK FILLED WITH POTATOES OR THE OLD STANDBY, TORCH TO THE GROIN!! GOOD FOR A -10 AND -25 MODIFIER RESPECTIVELY TO A "SHATTER WILL" ROLL.

HEY, MY WAY WOULD'VE WORKED IF SARA HADN'T CUT HIM DOWN FROM THE RAFTERS WHEN I WENT TO THE BLACKSMITH TO GET THAT HOT BRANDING IRON!!

DAMN!! SHOULD'A SAID SOMETHING DUDE.

THE MAN DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING. WE WERE WASTING OUR TIME WITH HIM.



AS YOU PASS FROM ONE LOW BUILDING TO THE NEXT, YOU SEE THAT THEY'RE IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE FOR HAVING BEEN DESERTED FOR SEVERAL CENTURIES.

I'M CHECKING OUT THE LLAMAS. DO ANY OF THEM LOOK UNUSUAL?

LLAMAS? HOW MANY ARE THERE? THIS IS GOOD NEWS!! THEY'RE RATHER SHY AND TIMID CREATURES. THAT MEANS THERE MUST NOT BE A WHOLE LOT OF MONSTERS IN THE AREA.

HOT DAMN!! THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF STRONG MAGIC KEEPING THIS STUFF IN SUCH GOOD CONDITION.

DON'T EVEN GO THERE, DAVE. THERE AREN'T ANY MAGIC LLAMAS HERE.



THERE ARE A DOZEN OR SO LLAMAS GRAZING ABOUT THE HIGH PLATEAU. BUT IT WOULD BE SILLY TO ASSUME THAT THERE ARE NO DANGEROUS CREATURES LURKING ABOUT. LLAMAS HAPPEN TO BE AGILE AND NIMBLE CREATURES AND ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO CATCH. THIS PROBABLY EXPLAINS WHY THEY AREN'T CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR PRESENCE.

YEAH WELL, ACCORDING TO THE HACKLOPEDIA OF BEASTS, AT THIS ALTITUDE THE ONLY CREATURES THAT APPEAR WITH ANY FREQUENCY ARE FROST ROCs, LLAMAS, REGAL EAGLES, AND SUBTERRANEAN MAGNA-FERRETS. PITY. NONE OF THEM HAS A TREASURE RATING ABOVE TABLE JJ-2.

WELL? DO ANY OF THEM LOOK UNUSUAL?

NIMBLE MY ASS!! I WASTE ONE OF 'EM WITH MY CROSSBOW!!



BOB YOUR BOLT STRIKES A LLAMA YEARLING. IT BEGINS BLEATING PATHETICALLY AS IT FALLS TO THE GROUND.

BLEEDING PATHETICALLY? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

NO IDIOT!! I SAID, "BLEATING" NOT "BLEEDING."

LLAMAS DON'T BLEAT!! THEY WHINNY LIKE HORSES DON'T THEY?

WHINNY? THAT'S ABSURD.

I THOUGHT THEY WERE MUTE LIKE GIRAFFES.



I'M SORRY BOB, BUT I'M SURE LLAMAS BLEAT AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THIS ONE IS DOING.

FINE!! IF YOU WANT TO FLY-IN-THE-FACE OF REALITY, GO AHEAD. BUT IT RUINS THE GAME FOR US. I CAN'T GET INTO MY CHARACTER WITH BLEATING LLAMAS ALL OVER THE PLACE.

WE'LL STOP SHOOTING THEM WITH YOUR STUPID BOLTS AND YOU WON'T HAVE TO HEAR THEM.

DUDE HE CALLED YOU STUPID!!



STOP SHOOTING THEM? OH YEAH? WELL, I'M GOING TO DO A LITTLE TARGET PRACTICE. I LOAD UP MY BOLT-OF-RETURN-UPON-COMMAND AND WASTE EVERY BLEATING LLAMA IN SIGHT!!

BOB'S GOT A GOOD POINT. ALL THAT BLEATING IS LIKELY TO ATTRACT A FEW FROST ROCs OR SOMETHING. I'M BRINGING A COUPLE OF FIREBALLS ONLINE.

WILL YOU JUST FORGET ABOUT THE FREAKIN' LLAMAS. THEY AREN'T IMPORTANT TO THE ADVENTURE. SHEESH!!!

SCHLIING!! I DRAW MY HACKMASTER .12 AND DELIVER THE KILLING BLOW TO ANY WOUNDED.



**TWENTY MINUTES LATER...**

OKAY FINE!! YOU MANAGE TO CORNER THE LAST LLAMA AGAINST A BROKEN SECTION OF WALL. FEELING THREATENED, THE BEAST GORES YOU FOR 25 POINTS OF DAMAGE!!

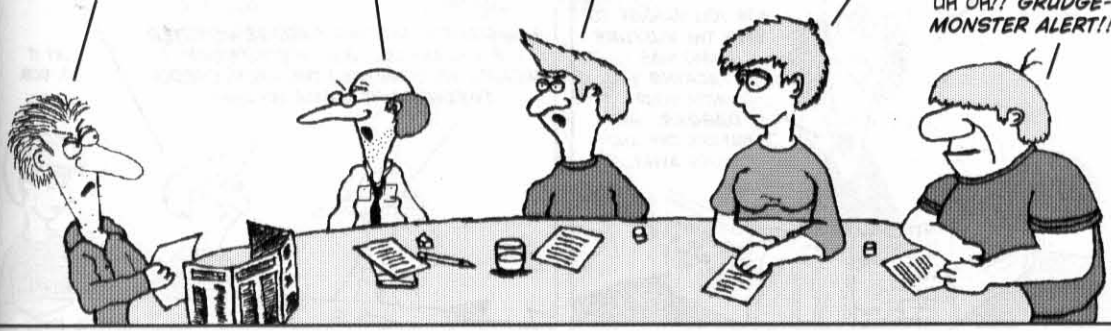
GAAAA!! HE GORES ME? WITH WHAT?

HEY, I THOUGHT YOU SAID NONE OF THEM LOOKED UNUSUAL.

A LLAMA WITH ANTLERS?

UH OH!! GRUDGE-MONSTER ALERT!!

YOU MESSED WITH ONE LLAMA TOO MANY, BOB. THIS ONE HAPPENS TO BE A TWELVE POINT BUCK!!



GRUDGE MONSTER IS RIGHT!! YOU'RE JUST MAKING UP THIS "GORE CRAP" BECAUSE I CALLED YOU ON YOUR STUPID BLEATING LLAMAS.

I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SIDE WITH BOB. LLAMAS DEFINITELY DON'T HAVE ANTLERS.

I AM NOT. I HAPPEN TO KNOW A LOT ABOUT LLAMAS!! I DID A SCIENCE PROJECT ON THEM IN HIGH SCHOOL.

SHYA RIGHT!! LLAMAS DON'T HAVE ANTLERS AND YOU KNOW IT.

THIS BLOWS!! YOU'RE USING THE GAME TO GET BACK AT A PLAYER!!

THE HACKLOPEDIA OF BEASTS SURE DOESN'T LIST ANY GORE DAMAGE RATING FOR LLAMAS.

EVERY YEAR OVER FIFTY PERUVIAN COFFEE FARMERS ARE GORED BY LLAMAS.



**TEN MINUTES LATER...**

THIS IS LIKE THE TIME HE ATTACKED US WITH THAT HEDGEROW BECAUSE WE MADE FUN OF HIS NEW HAIR CUT. REMEMBER?

...AND ON THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL THEY SHOWED A FOURTEEN-POINT LLAMA TAKE ON A PACK OF TIMBER WOLVES AND EMERGE UNSCATHED!! THEY'RE ACTUALLY REMARKABLE FIGHTERS.

OH YEAH. HE GOT THAT FUNKY "GREG BRADY" PERM DOWN AT SITTIN' PURTY BEAUTY COLLEGE.

SSSSHHHH!! LET HIM KEEP TALKING. HE'S DIGGING HIMSELF IN DEEPER AND DEEPER. HE'S LIKE THE CLIFF CLAVIN OF GAMEMASTERS.

'GREG BRADY' PERM? B.A.?

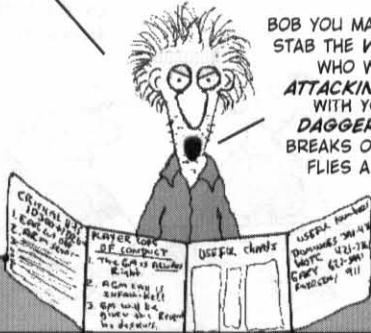


# Ultimate Treasure!

BASED ON STORY IDEAS SUBMITTED BY  
ANDY VETROMILE, DANNY STERLING AND FRANK MERRIAH

OKAY, YOU THROW THE **LAST** OF THE **LLAMA CARCASSES** OFF THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF. THAT SHOULD **DEPRIVE** THE **RED-CRESTED SNOW VULTURES** OF ANY FURTHER MEALS. THEY CIRCLE OVERHEAD FOR QUITE SOME TIME BEFORE DRIFTING OFF TO SEARCH FOR FOOD ELSEWHERE.

BOB YOU MANAGE TO STAB THE VULTURE WHO WAS ATTACKING YOU WITH YOUR DAGGER. HE BREAKS OFF AND FLIES AWAY.



THOSE **FREAKIN' LLAMAS** ARE MORE **DANGEROUS** DEAD THAN **ALIVE!!** I ALMOST BECAME A **TASTY MEAT SNACK** FOR SOME **FREAKIN' VULTURE**.

I GUESS PUTTING ALL THOSE **LLAMA STEAKS** IN OUR **BACKPACKS** WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA.

HMMRRRRFFF!! ANOTHER **GRUDGE MONSTER** IF YOU ASK ME. **B.A.** IS STILL SORE BECAUSE WE CONSULTED THE **HACKLOPEDIA**. **TWELVE POINT LLAMA MY ASS!!**

LET IT GO, BOB.



OKAY, DOWN TO **SERIOUS BUSINESS**. ALL THE **LEGENDS** ABOUT THIS **ANCIENT EGGHEAD-ACADEMY** SPEAK OF THE **ULTIMATE TREASURE**. WE'RE GOING TO **GET SOME OF THAT ACTION!!** WE'RE GOING TO START **EXPLORING THE BUILDINGS** FROM TOP TO BOTTOM. TELL US **EVERYTHING WE SEE**.

HOW SAD. THIS USED TO BE A PLACE OF **HIGHER LEARNING**. SOME OF THE **GREATEST SAGES** OF **GARWEEZE WURLD** STUDIED HERE.

THERE ARE **TWO DOZEN BUILDINGS** ARRANGED IN A **LARGE RECTANGULAR PATTERN** AROUND AN OPEN **COURTYARD**. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COURTYARD IS A **LARGE BUILDING** WHICH APPEARS TO BE A **TEMPLE**.

**TEMPLE??!!** MIGHT AS WELL START THERE.

**YEAH!!** I BET THE **GOOD STUFF** IS IN THE **TEMPLE**. IT ALWAYS IS.

**YEAH, TILL THEY CHEESED OFF** THE **BANE-LORDS** AND THEY CHASED THEM OFF THE **MOUNTAIN**.



## A FEW MINUTES LATER...

THE "**TEMPLE OF KNOWLEDGE**" TURNS OUT TO BE **EMPTY** EXCEPT FOR A **SMALL MARBLE PEDESTAL** WHICH SITS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE **SANCTUARY**. FROM HIGH OVERHEAD IN THE **ORNATE RECESSES** OF THE **LARGE DOMED CEILING** COMES THE SOFT FLUTTER OF WINGS FROM NESTING **SWALLOWS** AND **SPARROWS**.

AS YOU LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT THE **PEDESTAL** YOU NOTICE THAT A **BRONZE SCULPTURE** OF AN **OPEN BOOK** LIES ON TOP.

**EMPTY? CRIPES!!** I GUESS WE'LL CHECK OUT THE **PEDESTAL**.

MAN, WHAT A **LOUSY TEMPLE!** NO **JEWELLED STATUES?** NO **GEM ENCRUSTED HOLY ITEMS?**

I THINK IT SOUNDS **BEAUTIFUL**. SO **PEACEFUL**.

**I READ THE BRONZE BOOK!**



THE BOOK SIMPLY READS, "THE ULTIMATE TREASURE IS..." THERE'S MORE BUT YOU CAN'T QUITE MAKE OUT THE WORDS BECAUSE OF THE ACCUMULATION OF BIRD DROPPINGS.

BIRD DROPPINGS?  
I PULL UP THE HOOD OF MY CAPE. DID I GET ANY IN MY HAIR?

CAREFUL BRUSHING IT OFF, BOB. BIRD DROPPINGS ARE HIGHLY ACIDIC AND MAY HAVE ETCHED THE BRONZE. YOU MIGHT ACCIDENTALLY WIPE AWAY ANY TRACE OF WHAT'S WRITTEN THERE.

IT'S A CLUE!!  
I BRUSH AWAY THE BIRD DROPPINGS WITH MY LLAMA-HAIR CAP.

THIS DUMP IS NOTHING BUT A GLORIFIED CHICKEN COOP!!

GOOD POINT!! THIS MAY BE OUR ONLY CLUE TO THE TREASURE!



THE BIRD DROPPINGS HAVE BUILT UP QUITE A BIT OVER THE YEARS BUT YOU ARE ABLE TO CLEAR OFF ENOUGH TO MAKE OUT THE REST OF THE PASSAGE. THE FULL TEXT NOW READS, "THE ULTIMATE TREASURE IS KNOWLEDGE."

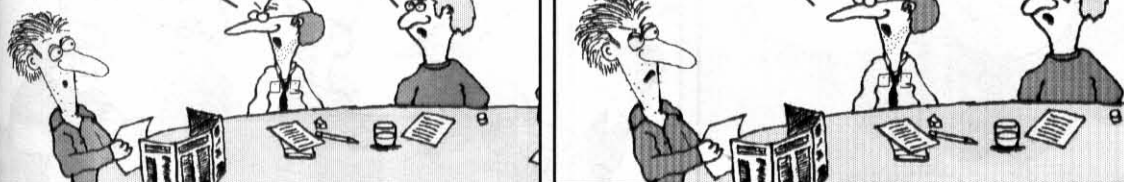
HOODY HOO!! WE KICK AAAAA.....GAAAAA!!!  
KNOWLEDGE? THE ULTIMATE TREASURE IS KNOWLEDGE? WHAT THE HELL IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

THIS BLOWS!!! DOES THIS MEAN THERE'S NO ULTIMATE TREASURE?

LOOK YOU MORONS!! IT'S A PHILOSOPHICAL TRUTH — A PROVERB, IF YOU WILL. THIS TEMPLE IS A SHRINE TO THE QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE. YOU KNOW...LIKE IN LEARNING!! I'M SORRY IT'S NOT A TREASURES-R-US. THE FOUNDERS OF THIS ACADEMY HELD TO HIGHER IDEALS THAN HOARDING MATERIAL WEALTH. THIS SACRED PLACE WAS DEDICATED TO THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE.

WE DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY FOR BIRD CRAP AND BLEATING LLAMAS.

LOOKS LIKE DAVE NAILED IT ON THE HEAD. THIS PLACE BLOWS!!!



GUYS, TREASURE ISN'T ALWAYS MEASURED BY ITS GLITTER. I'M SURE THERE IS LOTS OF TREASURE TO BE FOUND HERE. IT'S JUST A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE. WE HAVEN'T EVEN CHECKED THE OTHER BUILDINGS YET. THINK OF ALL THE STORED KNOWLEDGE THAT COULD LIE WITHIN THESE WALLS.

LEAVE IT TO MS. WISCONSIN TO BUY INTO THIS KNOWLEDGE DRIVEL!! WHAT GOOD IS IT?

SARA HAS A GOOD POINT. WE HAVEN'T EXPLORED THE OTHER BUILDINGS YET.

YEAH! YOU CAN'T SPEND IT.

AND DIDN'T BOB SAY SOMETHING ABOUT B.A. COMPARING NOTES WITH EARL SLACKMOZER ON THIS ADVENTURE? WE SHOULD KEEP THAT IN MIND. THIS MAY NOT BE THE SAME OL' LAME VARIETY OF ADVENTURE THAT WE'RE USED TO B.A. GRINDING OUT EACH WEEK.

SO LET'S LOOK HARD AT THIS THING AND STAY ALERT.



# AFTER FRUITLESS HOURS OF SEARCHING...

OKAY, YOU KICK IN THE DOOR AND THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH ROWS OF **BEAUTIFUL DESKS MADE OF BLOOD-BIRCH AND STONE-OAK**. EACH DESK IS **INTRICATELY CARVED** WITH VARIOUS SCENES FROM **CLOUD GIANT MYTHOLOGY**.

**ULTIMATE TREASURE — SCHMULTIMATE TREASURE**. NOT A **SINGLE COPPER PIECE** IN THIS **FREAKIN' DUMP!!** JUST TONS OF BOOKS AND FURNITURE.

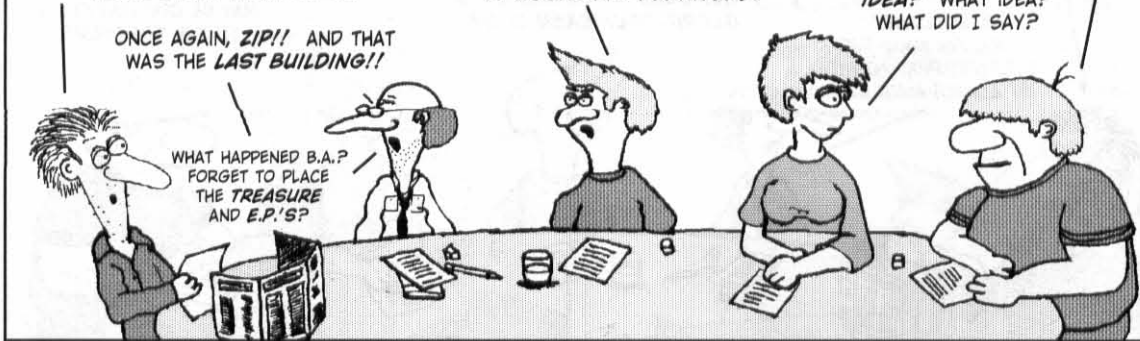
WELL, IF WE WERE IN THE **USED BOOK OR FURNITURE BUSINESS** WE'D HAVE IT MADE.

HMMMMMM...THAT'S NOT A BAD IDEA.

ONCE AGAIN, **ZIP!!** AND THAT WAS THE **LAST BUILDING!!**

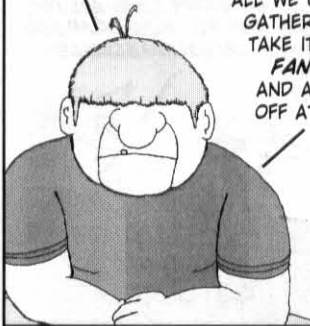
**IDEA? WHAT IDEA?** WHAT DID I SAY?

WHAT HAPPENED B.A.? FORGET TO PLACE THE **TREASURE** AND **E.P.'S?**



**YO GUYS!!!** SARA JUST POINTED SOMETHING OUT. PERHAPS THE **TREASURE** HAS BEEN STARING US IN THE FACE **ALL THE TIME** AND WE JUST DIDN'T REALIZE IT. THERE MUST BE A **FORTUNE** HERE IN **BOOKS, SCROLLS, TAPESTRIES, DESKS, LAWN ORNAMENTS, AND SO ON**.

ALL WE GOTTA DO IS GATHER IT UP AND TAKE IT DOWN TO **FANGAERIE** AND AUCTION IT OFF AT MARKET.



**ARE YOU NUTS?** HAUL ALL THIS CRAP DOWN THE MOUNTAIN? IT TOOK US **FIVE DAYS** TO NEGOTIATE THAT **CLIFFSIDE TRAIL**. **ON FOOT!!** IT'S TOO **TREACHEROUS** FOR HORSES OR **BURROS**.

TOO BAD **BRIAN**. YOU HAD THE **MAKINGS** OF A **GOOD IDEA** THERE BUT YOU DIDN'T **THINK IT THROUGH**. THE **FOUR** OF US COULDN'T CARRY ENOUGH TO MAKE IT WORTHWHILE.

**DAMN!!** WELL, I WONDER HOW THE HELL THEY GOT ALL THIS STUFF UP HERE?

YEAH WHAT DO YOU EXPECT US TO DO? CARRY IT ON OUR BACKS?

OH...I DUNNO...



MAYBE THEY USED **LLAMAS** AS **BEASTS-OF-BURDEN** LIKE THE **INCAS** DID!!

!!!??



YOU BASTARD!! YOU MADE ME  
KILL THOSE LLAMAS ON PURPOSE!!

GET REAL BOB!! HOW DID  
I MAKE YOU DO THAT?

LLAMAS? BUT THAT WOULD BE  
DANGEROUS!! DIDN'T YOU  
HEAR WHAT B.A. SAID ABOUT  
GORED COFFEE FARMERS??

"BLEATING!" DAMMIT!!  
THAT'S HOW!! YOU KNEW THAT  
WOULD PUSH MY BUTTONS!!

SHUT UP  
DAVE, YOU'RE  
SCARING ME.



OKAY SO WE SCREWED UP. WE ELIMINATED ONE  
OF THE PRIME SOLUTIONS FOR BRINGING THIS  
STUFF DOWN THE MOUNTAIN. WE'LL JUST HAVE  
TO FIND ANOTHER WAY. WHAT ABOUT YOUR  
BAG OF HEFTY STORAGE CAPACITY?

HEY I JUST REMEMBERED. I  
GOT 18/50 STRENGTH. I CAN  
CARRY 250 EXTRA POUNDS!!

FORGET THAT!! SGT.  
BARRINGER\* SENT OUT  
AN UPDATED RATE  
SHEET LAST WEEK FOR  
STORAGE FEES.  
THEY'RE OUTRAGEOUS!!

I BET I COULD  
BENCH PRESS ONE  
OF THOSE PEWS.



OKAY, HERE'S AN IDEA. WE SEND BOB AND DAVE  
DOWN TO THE VALLEY FLOOR TO ROUND UP AN  
ARMY OF HIRELINGS. MEANWHILE, SARA AND I  
CAN BE INVENTORING ANYTHING OF VALUE AND  
SEPARATING IT FROM THE JUNK!!

ARMY OF HIRELINGS? THAT SOUNDS  
LIKE A MAJOR INVESTMENT.

WHY DO I HAVE TO GO?  
I'M A DWARF, REMEMBER?  
I HAVE TO TAKE 2.5 STEPS  
TO YOUR EVERY TWO.

AN INVESTMENT? THAT'S  
EXACTLY WHAT IT IS.  
BUT THE PAYBACK IS  
GOING TO BE SWEET.

ARMY?



ACCORDING TO MY ROUGH TALLY OF THE ITEMS B.A.  
DESCRIBED, I ESTIMATE THAT THERE ARE 25,000 BOOKS,  
80,000 SCROLLS (NON-MAGICAL), 150 TEAKWOOD  
WARDROBE SETS, 500 BLOOD-BIRCH AND STONE-OAK  
DESKS, 75 BRONZE STATUES, 15 TAPESTRIES...

WELL, YOU GET THE  
IDEA. IF WE CAN  
GET ANYTHING  
CLOSE TO FAIR  
MARKET VALUE FOR  
THESE ITEMS WE'RE  
TALKING SOME  
MAJOR MOOLA!!



MAJOR MOOLA? WELL WHY DIDN'T  
YOU SAY SO? HELP IS ON THE WAY!!  
IF DAVE AND I FORCE MARCH  
OURSELVES WE CAN CUT OUR  
DESCENT TIME BY HALF.

YEAH!! WE'LL TAKE SOME HITPOINTS  
BUT IF WE HIRE A FEW LITTER BEARERS  
FOR THE RETURN TRIP WE CAN REST AND  
HEAL UP ON THE WAY BACK UP.

HMMMMM, THIS IS UNUSUAL.  
I THINK I ACTUALLY LIKE THE  
GAME PLAN THIS TIME.

THAT'S THE SPIRIT!!  
WHILE YOU'RE GONE, SARA  
AND I WILL GO THROUGH  
THE BUILDINGS WITH A  
FINE TOOTH COMB.



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Five: "Barringer's Rebellion"

**LATER BACK IN FANGAERIE...**

OKAY, YOUR *DISGUISES* WORKED. THE *GUARDS* AT THE GATE FAILED TO RECOGNIZE YOU ALTHOUGH THEY WERE *CURIOUS* AS TO WHY A *MILK MAID* WOULD BE TRAVELLING WITH A *DANCING CHIMPANZEE*. YOU DO NOTICE ON THE *WANTED POSTERS* HOWEVER THAT THE *REWARD* ON YOUR HEADS HAS GONE UP TO *FIVE THOUSAND GOLD PIECES*.

*GONE UP? SHEESH!!* WHY WON'T *GILEAD* JUST LET IT GO? SO WE *SCREWED UP HIS PRECIOUS ORKIN PEACE TALKS\**. FOR THAT THE MAN IS GOING TO HOLD A *GRUDGE*?

HOW COME I ALWAYS HAVE TO WEAR THE *MILK MAID* COSTUME?

UH OH. MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T HAVE SENT THEM IN ALONE.

KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED.



OKAY, I'LL POST A *JOB LIST* ON THE *PUBLIC NOTICE BOARD*. "LOOKING FOR FIVE HUNDRED ABLE-BODIED MEN FOR PROFITABLE VENTURE. PAY IS *TWO SILVER PIECES PER MAN*." WE'LL SET UP SHOP DOWN AT THE *SULLIED DAMSEL PUB* WHERE WE CAN SCREEN APPLICANTS. WE DON'T WANT ANY *LAZY-TYPES* ON THE PAYROLL, SO WE'LL ADMINISTER THE *SHIRKER-TEST*.

*SHIRKER-TEST?* WHAT'S THAT?

YOU THROW A *COPPER PIECE* ON THE GROUND. IF THEY *DON'T* BEND DOWN TO PICK IT UP, THEY EITHER *DON'T* NEED THE MONEY *BAD ENOUGH* OR THEY'RE SIMPLY *TOO LAZY* TO BEND OVER. EITHER WAY — YOU DON'T WANT SOMEONE LIKE *THAT* ON THE PAYROLL.

UH...OKAY!! AS YOU ARE TACKLING UP YOUR *JOB LIST* TWO OLD MEN COME UP AND STARE AT YOU!!

WHAT THE HELL DO *THEY* WANT?

I'M GOING TO DANCE ON THEIR FACE WITH MY *FISTS* IF THEY DON'T MOVE ALONG.

I THINK THEY'RE WAITING TO SEE IF YOU'LL *DANCE* FOR THEM.



**TWENTY MINUTES LATER...**

THIS IS *RIDICULOUS!!* NOBODY IS RESPONDING TO OUR *JOB OFFER*? NOT EVEN A *NIBBLE*?

*GILEAD'S* SOCIAL REFORM PROGRAM IS SO SUCCESSFUL THAT *UNEMPLOYMENT* IS ALMOST *NIL*. *WAGES* ARE GOOD, TOO. NO ONE WANTS TO GIVE UP A *CUSHY* JOB IN THE CITY FOR A *RISKY* ONE IN THE *WILDERNESS*.

WE'LL GO DOWN TO THE *NOTICE BOARD* AND *SWEETEN* THE OFFER.



**A WEE BIT LATER...**

AS YOU ARE *UPDATING* YOUR *JOB OFFER*, A *CITY OFFICIAL* WALKS UP TO YOU. HE'S ACCOMPANIED BY *TWO GUARDS*. HE EXPLAINS THAT IT'S *ILLEGAL* TO POST A *JOB* WHICH DOESN'T ADHERE TO THE *MINIMUM WAGE STANDARD*.

*MINIMUM WAGE?* WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY TALKIN' ABOUT!! ACCORDING TO THE *HACKMASTER PLAYER'S GUIDE*, THE *STANDARD* HIRELING FEE FOR A *PORTER* IS ONLY *ONE SILVER PER DAY*.

YEAH!! — WHAT THE HELL IS THIS GUY'S PROBLEM ANYWAY?

*GILEAD* HAS IMPOSED A *MINIMUM WAGE*?



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Six: "When Peace Comes to Shove"

THE CITY OFFICIAL EXPLAINS THAT THE **LIVING WAGE ORDINANCE** WAS PASSED **SIX MONTHS AGO**. ANY EMPLOYER OFFERING A JOB THAT INVOLVES '**RISK OF LIFE**' OR POTENTIAL '**LOSS OF LIMB**' MUST PAY **ONE GOLD PIECE PER DAY**.

THIS IS **WHACKED!!** WE AIN'T PAYING!!

IN ADDITION, FOR EACH EMPLOYEE YOU MUST PAY A **500 G.P. DEPOSIT** TOWARD **WORKERS COMP.** IF AN EMPLOYEE IS KILLED OR MAIMED THE MONEY IS **FORFEITED** AND PAID OUT TO **SURVIVORS**. THE **JOB PLACEMENT BUREAU** WILL EXPLAIN IT ALL TO YOU.

LOOKS LIKE **GILEAD** DIDN'T FORGET WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE A **HIRELING\***.

DEPOSIT?

DAMN!!



## LATER AT THE FANGAERIE JOB PLACEMENT BUREAU...

OKAY YOUR **PAPERWORK** IS ALMOST READY TO BE SIGNED. THE WAY THIS WORKS IS THAT YOU **APPROXIMATE** THE **LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT** AND PAY THE **AGENCY** AN AMOUNT EQUAL TO THE **FULL WAGE** WHICH WILL BE OWED TO **EACH MAN** UPON COMPLETION OF THE JOB PLUS A **TWENTY PERCENT ADMIN FEE**. THE **PLACEMENT OFFICE** WILL HANDLE PAYING OUT **WAGES** AND COLLECTING **EMPLOYMENT TAXES**.

PAY? UPFRONT?

ADMIN FEE?



## LATER ON THE WAY BACK UP THE MOUNTAIN...

SORRY **BOB**. THE **EMPLOYEE LIAISON** WON'T ALLOW YOU TO **FORCE MARCH** THE MEN. HE ALSO INSISTS YOU **HONOR** THE WRITTEN AGREEMENT YOU SIGNED.

THE MEN ARE SUPPOSED TO GET A **FIFTEEN MINUTE** WATER BREAK EVERY **TWO HOURS**. AND HE'S NOT GOING TO MARCH HIS MEN DURING THE HEAT OF THE **MID-DAY SUN**. YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND A **SHADY AREA** TO HAVE **CHOW**.

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? **THE PANSY BRIGADE?** I WAS SUPPOSED TO HIRE AN **ARMY!!** THESE GUYS BITCH AND MOAN LIKE A BUNCH OF **GIRL SCOUTS!!**

**FOUR DAYS** AND WE'RE NOT EVEN HALFWAY UP THE MOUNTAIN. MARCHING THESE GUYS IS LIKE DRAGGIN' AN ANCHOR THROUGH THE MUD.

MAYBE THIS WASN'T A GOOD IDEA.

WE'RE IN **HIRELING HELL!!**



## AND FINALLY, BACK AT THE ACADEMY...

YOU HEARD ME!! UNDER **FANGAERIAN EMPLOYMENT LAW** NO EMPLOYEE CAN BE FORCED TO CARRY MORE THAN **FIFTY PERCENT** OF HIS **BODY WEIGHT** — AND EVEN THEN ONLY FOR AN ALLOTMENT OF TIME NOT EXCEEDING **ONE HOUR** DURING ANY **TWENTY FOUR HOUR** PERIOD.

**WAA...WHAT?? FIFTY PERCENT??** BUT THEN IT WILL TAKE **SEVERAL TRIPS** TO HAUL ALL THIS STUFF DOWN. WE'RE TALKING **WEEKS!!!**

**FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!** THESE **FREAKIN' BASTARDS** ARE **BLEEDING US DRY!!!** OVERTIME!! **TIME-AND-A-HALF!!** WATER BREAKS!! **COST-OF-LIVING ALLOWANCES!!** AND NOW THAT WE'RE HERE THEY'RE NOT WILLING TO PUT IN A **FULL DAY'S WORK?**

IT CERTAINLY IS A **COMPLICATED** BUREAUCRACY. I HOPE **GILEAD** KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.

EVEN SO — OUR **PROFITS** SHOULD STILL BE **CONSIDERABLE**.



\* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Four: "Just for the Helm of It!"

**THREE WEEKS OF GAME TIME LATER...**

**PENSION PLAN?** WE NEVER AGREED TO PAY INTO ANY **FREAKIN' PENSION PLAN!!** THAT'S IT, THE **GRAY TRAIN STOPS RIGHT HERE!!** THERE WASN'T THAT MUCH STUFF LEFT ON THE **MOUNTAIN** ANYWAY. I'M GIVING **EVERYONE** THEIR **WALKING PAPERS**.

OH...SO YOU'RE **FIRING** YOUR **EMPLOYEES** THEN?

THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO SETTLE UP WITH THE **PLACEMENT BUREAU**.

THAT'S RIGHT. WE'RE GIVING THEM THE **BIG BOOT!!** AND GOOD RIDDANCE.



**SETTLE UP?** MAYBE YOU GOT **WAX IN YOUR EARS**. I SAID THE **GRAY TRAIN HAS PULLED OUT OF THE STATION!!** THE **SOAKING STOPS RIGHT HERE!!** **COMPRENDE?**

I HEARD YOU. BUT YOU'LL NEED TO PAY **SEVERANCE PAY** WHICH IS BASICALLY 70% OF EACH MAN'S **DAILY INCOME** FOR A PERIOD OF **THIRTY DAYS**.

**SEVERANCE PAY?** I AIN'T BELIEVIN' THIS CRAP!! FOR 500 **MEN?** THAT'S A **FORTUNE!!**

**STINKIN' HIRELINGS!!**

**GOOD GAWD!!**



**AFTER "SETTLING UP"...**

WELL, I JUST **TALLIED UP** THE **DAMAGE**. IT COST US OVER **TWENTY THOUSAND GOLD PIECES** TO HIRE THOSE **WORTHLESS THUGS**. WHAT A **SCAM!!**

WELL, AT LEAST WE GOT THE **STUFF OFF THE MOUNTAIN**. **HOLY MOLEY!! TWENTY GEES?** I HOPE WE MAKE ENOUGH MONEY SELLING THIS STUFF TO GET OUR MONEY BACK.

RELAX GUYS. **BRIAN** SEEMS TO THINK WE'LL STILL COME OUT OF THIS WITH A **HEFTY PROFIT**.

I DON'T "**THINK**", I **KNOW** WE WILL.



YOU KNOW, I REALLY HATE TO **BURST YOUR BUBBLE**. I WANTED TO SAY SOMETHING BEFORE... BUT... UH... I'M AFRAID YOU **GOOFED** **BRIAN**. THE STUFF YOU BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE **MOUNTAIN ACADEMY** ISN'T WORTH ANYTHING **NEAR** WHAT YOU THINK IT IS.

**HUH?** WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

UH OH. HERE IT COMES!! **B.A.** HAS FOUND A WAY TO **SCREW US OVER, AGAIN!!**

I'M SORRY GUYS BUT UH...LET'S TAKE THE **BOOKS** FOR EXAMPLE. YOU HAVE SOMETHING LIKE **32,000** OF THEM, **RIGHT?** WELL, LOOK AT THE **HACKMASTER PRICE LIST**. A **USED BOOK** SELLS FOR ABOUT **FIVE COPPER PIECES**.

**FIVE COPPER?**



DO THE MATH!! TEN COPPER EQUALS ONE SILVER PIECE. TWENTY SILVER PIECES EQUAL ONE GOLD. ASSUMING YOU CAN FIND BUYERS FOR ALL 32,000 BOOKS YOU'RE GOING TO **RAKE IN ABOUT 800 GOLD PIECES** FOR YOUR TROUBLE. **WHOOPEE!** AND DON'T FORGET YOU HAVE TO **DEDUCT THE MONEY** YOU PAID OUT TO YOUR **HIRELINGS**. I'M TELLIN' YA - **YOU LOST MONEY** ON THIS DEAL. **BIG TIME!!**

**NO WAY!!** THOSE BOOKS ARE WORTH A LOT OF MONEY!! BRIAN SAID SO. **YEAH!!**

**BIG NEWS FLASH FOR YA. BRIAN ISN'T ALWAYS RIGHT.**



**DAMN, BRIAN!!** IT ISN'T LIKE YOU TO **SCREW UP** LIKE THIS. YOU'RE SLIPPING !! **THE TEFLON BILLY** I KNOW WOULDN'T HAVE BLUNDERED LIKE THIS. WHAT'S THE STORY?

**YEAH BIG GUY!!** YOU BEEN SICK OR SOMETHING?

**GEE GUYS. HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN ME, HUH? HAVE I EVER LET YOU DOWN?**



B.A. I'M AFRAID YOU **FAILED** TO NOTICE THE **SMALL ANNOTATIONS** TO THE VARIOUS **PRICES** ON THAT LIST. TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT **USED BOOKS**. YOU'LL NOTICE IT HAS A **FOOTNOTE "C"** NEXT TO IT. YOU CAN LOOK IT UP BUT BASICALLY IT INDICATES THAT THE PRICE OF A BOOK GOES UP BY **ONE COPPER PIECE PER YEAR** FROM THE **DATE OF PUBLICATION**.

YOU SAID THE **ACADEMY** WAS **ABANDONED** OVER **TWO HUNDRED YEARS** AGO.



THAT MEANS **EACH BOOK** IS AT LEAST **TWO HUNDRED YEARS** OLD!! BY **MY MATH** THAT MAKES THE PRICE ABOUT A **GOLD PIECE PER!!** I'D SAY THE **THIRTY TWO THOUSAND GOLD PIECES** WE'LL GET FROM THE **BOOK SALES** ALONE IS **PRETTY SWEET**, BUT THE **REAL MONEY** IS GOING TO COME FROM ALL THAT **ANTIQUE FURNITURE**.

**HOODY HOO!!** BRIAN, YER DA MAN!! I LOVE IT WHEN YOU DO THIS.

**HOO-YAA!!** IT'S LIKE **DANCING** WHEN YOU DO THIS.

**OH, IT GETS BETTER.**



### THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY, SO TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT AN **ANTIQUE WARDROBE** IS WORTH A **BASE 3,000 GOLD PIECES** AND THAT BEING MADE OF **BLOOD-BIRCH** GIVES IT A **X5 VALUE MODIFIER** EACH **WARDROBE** SHOULD BE WORTH **15,000 G.P.'S** TOO BAD WE ONLY BROUGHT BACK **ONE HUNDRED** OF THEM. STILL, THAT'S AN **ADDITIONAL 1,500,000 GOLD PIECES!!** WHAT'S THE **TALLY** SO FAR?

**ONE MILLION NINE, BIG GUY!!**

**EXCELLENT, LET'S ADD UP THE SCROLLS.** THEY HAVE A **FOOTNOTE "F"** WHICH...

**HAPPY! HAPPY!**

**GO BRIAN, GO!**



**C'MON B.A.!!** **DIVVY OUT THE EXPERIENCE POINTS!!** WHY YA GOTTA BE SO **CHILDISH?**

**OH MAN IS HE EVER MAD!!** I WONDER WHY HE'S TAKING IT SO HARD?

I WONDER WHERE HE WAS GOING WITH THAT **BASEBALL BAT?**

I WONDER WHY HE **FREAKED** WHEN I ASKED IF I GOT ANY **EXPERIENCE POINTS** FOR THE **LLAMAS?**

I DUNNO... SOMETHING ABOUT **FOOTNOTING** MY VAN...



## A Moment in Gaming History #84

In 1976, Lars Johansson was an unassuming architecture student at St. Olaf College with a simple dream of someday designing and building his vision — a national chain of budget hotels.

As fate would have it, one night Lars was invited to sit in on a game of HackMaster being GMed by Jackie Wu. The two became fast friends and developed the idea of doing a full scale model of the vast dungeon labyrinth from their favorite adventure, module F5: **Tomb of Horrendous Horror**.

In 1979 the two friends pooled their money and purchased 400 acres of wooded property in Sioux Narrows, Ontario. 2 million dollars and twelve years later the unfinished 'dungeon' was seized by the Canadian government after it was determined to be a hazardous waste site. Jackie Wu committed suicide in 1994. Lars Johansson now lives in College Park, Maryland where he manages a Taste Freeze and runs a popular HackMaster campaign for local students.



Lars Johansson and Jackie Wu going over the blueprints of their dungeon in 1976.

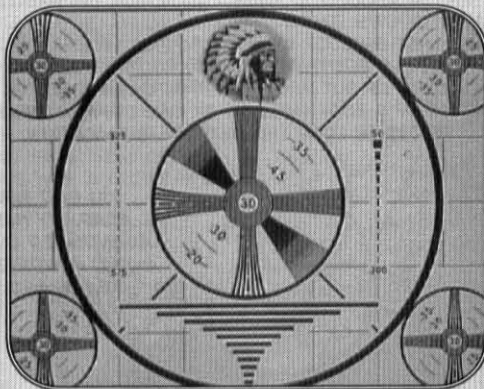
## A Moment in Gaming History #12

Cosmo Berent was a soft-spoken accountant at NBC Studios in New York City in 1956. Television was in its infancy and Peck the daydreamer used to spend his lunch hour eating his salami on rye on a quiet bench outside Milton Berle's sound studio longing for a chance to get a foot in the door.

One day, in a flash of inspiration, Cosmo struck upon the idea of creating "video games" by using the same technology which beamed Uncle Milty into homes across America to create a new medium people could interact with and play games on. For six years Cosmo Berent worked on his vision. Unfortunately, he died of a massive coronary in July of 1961 - his work incomplete.

While going through his belongings, co-workers stumbled upon one of the 'playing fields' Cosmo had designed for one of his games "Video BullsEye". As a memorial to their fallen comrade, they snuck the playing field into the studios and when the daily broadcast ended they televised it.

The next morning when an NBC exec demanded to know what the strange image was which was being broadcast after hours one



of the conspirators offered an on-the-fly explanation, "uh...er...it's a test pattern sir." The explanation was accepted and thus the 'test pattern' was born.

## A Moment in Gaming History #73

A dark cloud descended over the games industry when Fent and Yurdin Mishler decided to play a live action roleplaying game based on the movie, **Deliverance**, in the summer of 1978.

Taking on the role 'disgruntled mountain folk' the Mishler brothers began harrassing and assaulting innocent visitors at a local city park by chasing them with canoe oars and pelting grounds workers with various forms of road kill.

It didn't take long for police to ban the brothers from the park. A few days later they picked up their game at a rest area on I-75 south of Cincinnati. Fent was arrested after kicking in a bathroom stall and shoving a large orange traffic cone over the head of the occupant. Yurdin was captured four days later after falling off a highway overpass.

At their trial the brothers continually broke out in verbal fights over who had scored the most points. The matter was finally resolved by the judge who determined Fent was the winner.



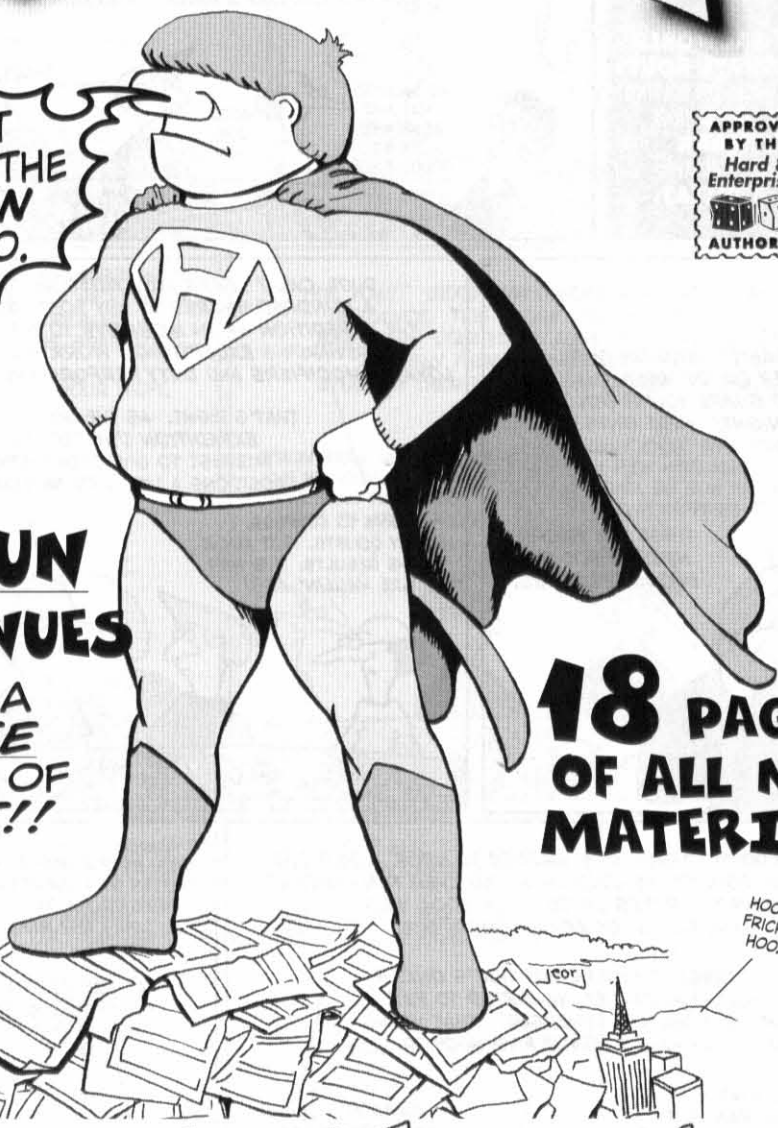
Fent and Yurdin Mishler shortly before sentencing.

These "Moments in Gaming History" were a monthly "filler" feature aimed at a KenzerCo employee with the hope of seeing him cry. Jolly eventually gave up after several unsuccessful months.

# KODT

IT AIN'T  
OVER TIL THE  
**FAT MAN**  
SAYS SO.

APPROVED  
BY THE  
Hard &  
Enterprises  
AUTHORITY



**THE FUN  
CONTINUES**

LIKE A  
**FREE**  
ISSUE OF  
**KODT!!**

**18 PAGES  
OF ALL NEW  
MATERIAL**

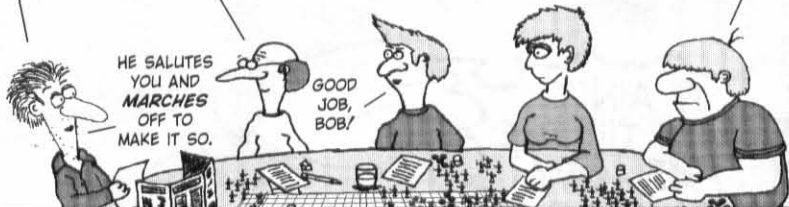
# BONUS SECTION

HAVING LEARNED THE **SECRETS** OF **BAGWORLD** OUR **STALWART ADVENTURERS** HAVE FORMED AN **EXPEDITIONARY PARTY**.

BY ENTERING **BAGWORLD** VIA AN **ALTERNATE ROUTE** (BOB'S FANNY PACK OF HOLDING) THE **KNIGHTS** HOPE TO **OUTFLANK** BARRINGER'S ARMY AND DEAL IT **DEFEAT**.

**SERGEANT MCGREEVY** REPORTS THAT THE LAST OF THE **WAGONS** HAVE BEEN **MOVED** INTO THE **BAG** AND HAVE BEEN **RE-ASSEMBLED**. AS SOON AS THEY'RE FINISHED **LOADING** THE **PROVISIONS** THE **EXPEDITIONARY PARTY** WILL BE READY FOR **FURTHER ORDERS**.

**KEWL BEANS!** THAT MEANS WE'RE **TWO DAYS** AHEAD OF **SCHEDULE**. I INFORM THE **SERGEANT** HE JUST EARNED HIMSELF AN **EXTRA SHARE** FOR A **JOB WELL DONE**. AS SOON AS HIS MEN ARE FINISHED **MOVING** THOSE **PALLETS** OF **IRON RATIONS** INTO THE **BAG** THEY CAN TAKE A **BREAK** FOR **EVENING CHOW**.

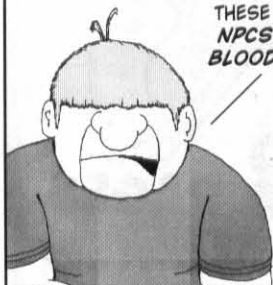


HE SALUTES YOU AND **MARCHES OFF** TO MAKE IT SO.

GOOD JOB, BOB!

**WHOAH!!!** HOLD ON THERE **MISTER CANDY MAN!** THAT'S THE **THIRD SHARE** YOU'VE **DOLED OUT** TONIGHT! WHAT GIVES?

THESE ARE FRICKIN' **NPCS** — NOT YER **BLOOD RELATIVES**.

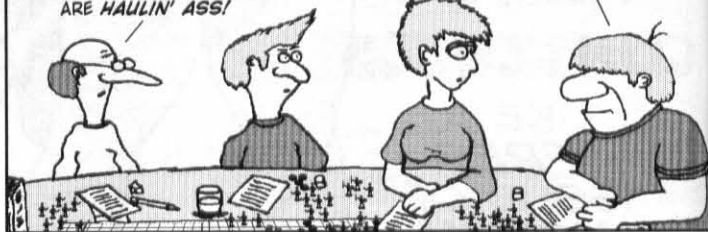


**DUDE, CHILL!** **SARA** AUTHORIZED ME TO AWARD UP TO A **HUNDRED SHARES** OF ANY **BOOTY** REALIZED DURING THE **EXPEDITION** AS AN **INCENTIVE** TO THE **MEN**. SHE CLAIMS **REWARDING EXCEPTIONAL WORK** WILL **KICK UP** THE **LOYALTY MODIFIERS** AND **DUTY PERFORMANCE** OF THE **HIRED HELP**.

THAT'S RIGHT. AS THE **'HIRELING LIAISON'** FOR THIS **EXPEDITION** I'VE DECIDED IT'S IN OUR **BEST INTEREST** TO GIVE THOSE **NPCS** IN **LEADERSHIP** POSITIONS A **LITTLE OWNERSHIP** IN THE **MISSION**.

I HAVE TO CONFESS, I **HAD MY DOUBTS**. BUT **LOOK** AT THE **RESULTS**. THE **MEN** ARE **HAULIN' ASS!**

OWNERSHIP???



**SARA**, YOU DON'T FRICKIN' GIVE **SHARES** TO **NPCS** — **PERIOD!!** THERE'S NO **POINT!!** AS LONG AS WE PAY THEM **TEN PERCENT** ABOVE THE **RATES** LISTED IN THE **BOOK**, WE'RE **MAXED OUT** ON **LOYALTY MODIFIERS**.

**SORRY TO CORRECT** YOU **BRIAN**, BUT THAT'S **ONLY IF** YOU PAY THEM IN **ADVANCE!** WE **OPTED** TO **PAY** THEM **AFTER** THE **MISSION** — **REMEMBER?** THAT MEANS THEY CURRENTLY HAVE A **MINUS FIVE** MODIFIER.

SEEP? SHE STARTS TO MAKE SOME **SENSE** IF YOU LISTEN TO HER.

**BAAA!!!** YOU'RE **SLIPPING**, **SARA**.



YOU KEEP **FORGETTING** THAT THE **RULES** WERE WRITTEN BY A **GAMEMASTER**. YOU'VE GOT TO GO **BEYOND** THE **RULES** — **REACH BETWEEN** THE **LINES** AND MAKE THEM **WORK** FOR YOU.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WE SHOULD **CHEAT?**

OF **COURSE** NOT. DON'T BE **RIDICULOUS**. I'M JUST SAYING YOU CAN'T LET THE **RULES MASTER** YOU. YOU HAVE TO **MASTER** THE **RULES!**



PERHAPS YOU'VE *FORGOTTEN* BUT I *CANCELLED* OUT THAT '*MINUS FIVE*' BY *SUCCESSFULLY* GIVING A '*ROUSING SPEECH*' AND CONVINCING THE *MEN* THEY'RE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON A *NOBLE CAUSE*. YA SEEP? WITH A *LITTLE EFFORT* YOU CAN GAIN THE *EDGE* AND *STILL* PLAY BY THE *RULES*.

AND IF ONE OF US AGREES TO *FAKE* HIS OR HER OWN *DEATH* IN THE *FINAL BATTLE* I MAY BE ABLE TO *GUILT* THE *HIRELINGS* INTO TAKING *HALF PAY* BY USING MY *RING OF THE MARTYRDOM* TO...

THAT'S ABSURD!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SIMPLY TREATING THE *HIRELINGS* IN A JUST AND *FAIR* FASHION? DON'T YOU THINK THAT'D BE AN *EASIER* WAY TO WIN THEIR *LOYALTY* THAN USING *TRICKS* AND *DECEPTION*? FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, YOU'RE *SUPPOSED* TO BE *LAWFUL GOOD*!

BEING *LAWFUL GOOD* DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO BE *LAWFUL STUPID*, SARA.

*AMEN, DAVE!* AND THEY DON'T HAND OUT *E.P.S* IN *HACKMASTER* FOR BEING *SOFT* ON *HIRELINGS*.

YOU WANNA TALK *LAWFUL STUPID*? HOW MANY *HIRELING REVOLTS* DO WE HAVE TO *ENDURE* BEFORE YOU *REALIZE* YOU *REAP* WHAT YOU *SOW*, BRAINIAC!

NOT SURE I *CATCH* YOUR *DRIFT*.

I'M TALKING ABOUT HOW YOU CONTINUALLY *ABUSE* THE *HIRED HELP* TO THE *POINT* THEY END UP *TURNING* ON US.

ME??!!

YES, *YOU!!* *SERGEANT BARRINGER* AND HIS *MEN FOR INSTANCE*. THIS ENTIRE STRING OF NEVER-ENDING *BAG WARS* STARTED BECAUSE YOU WERE TOO *CHEAP* TO BUY THEM *HORSES* AND INSISTED ON *STORING* THEM IN YOUR *BAG OF HEFTY CAPACITY*! I

C'MON SARA. QUIT *RUBBING* THE *BIG GUY'S NOSE* IN IT. HOW MANY TIMES DOES HE HAVE TO *APOLOGIZE*?

OKAY, OKAY, SO I *FORGOT* ABOUT A *FEW* *HIRELINGS* I PLACED IN A *BAG*. SO *SUE* ME. THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO *ANYONE*!

AND HOW ABOUT THE TIME YOU *CHARMED* THE *TORCH BEARER* AND PUT A *HASTE SPELL* ON HIM AND HAD HIM *CHARGE* THAT *SWACK IRON DRAGON*.

*DUH!!* YOU WERE *THERE!* I NEEDED A *HEAT SOURCE* FOR MY *HEAT-SEEKING FIST OF THUNDER* TO *HONE* IN ON. HE WAS *EXPENDABLE!*

WELL, WHEN THE *OTHER* *HIRELINGS* SAW THAT *HORRIFIC* BIT OF *TREACHERY* THEY *FLED* THE *DUNGEON*, RAN TO THE *MAGISTRATE* AND FILED *CHARGES* AGAINST *ALL* OF US.

OH, SO *NOW* YOU'RE GOING TO BRING UP THE *LYNCHING THING* AGAIN? IS THAT IT?

*CRIMINEY!!* I THOUGHT THAT WAS ALL *WATER* UNDER THE *BRIDGE!!*

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? *PICK ON BRIAN* DAY?

SEEMS TO ME THAT *MOST* OF OUR *PROBLEMS* WITH *NPC-TYPES* WERE BECAUSE OF *YOU!*

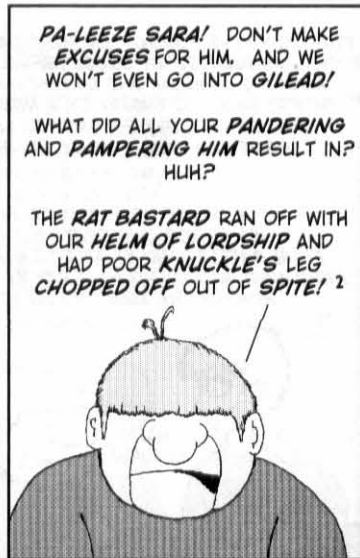


ME???! WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

YOU'RE TOO SOFT ON THEM. TAKE **KNOBBY FOOT** -- PERFECT EXAMPLE! YOU WERE ALWAYS PROTECTING THAT LITTLE RUNT! AND WHAT DID HE DO?

HE **TURNUED COAT** ON US AND ENDED UP **STEALING** BOB'S **DWARVEN WARHORSE**. HE EVEN **ATE** DAVE'S **MAGIC COW!!!** 1

BUT YOU GUYS WERE GOING TO EAT HIM!



**PA-LEEZE SARA!** DON'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR HIM. AND WE WON'T EVEN GO INTO **GILEAD!**

WHAT DID ALL YOUR **PANDERING** AND **PAMPERING** HIM RESULT IN? HUH?

THE **RAT BASTARD** RAN OFF WITH OUR **HELM OF LORDSHIP** AND HAD POOR **KNUCKLE'S** LEG **CHOPPED OFF** OUT OF **SPITE!** 2



I COULD GO ON **FOREVER**. ANYONE REMEMBER **AHK TANG** THE **ORKIN HIGH PRIEST**? HUH? REMEMBER HOW **SARA** AIDED HIS **ESCAPE** 'COS SHE FELT **SORRY** FOR HIS ASS? THAT **FRICKIN' ORC** WAS A **THORN** IN OUR BUTTS FOR **YEARS**. OH...AND HOW 'BOUT THAT **DWARF** WITH THE **SUCKING CHEST WOUND**? REMEMBER HOW **SARA** BROUGHT THE **WRATH OF LUVIA** DOWN ON US 'COS SHE WOULDN'T LET US TAKE CARE OF **BUSINESS?** 3

OH FOR THE LOVE OF... YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A **KNACK** FOR TWISTING THE **TRUTH**, BRIAN. YOU KNOW THAT?

I TWIST THE **TRUTH** LIKE A **KNIFE** 'COS IT **HURTS** -- DOESN'T IT?

I AM NOT GOING TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION!



DON'T YOU **DARE** TRY TO TURN THIS AROUND ON **ME**.

I WAS **TRYING** TO MAKE A **POINT**, BRIAN. IF YOU HAD **TREATED** YOUR HIRELINGS WITH A LITTLE **RESPECT** INSTEAD OF TREATING THEM LIKE **INVENTORY** WE WOULDN'T HAVE SPENT THE LAST **SIX MONTHS** BOGGED DOWN IN THIS WAR OF **ATTRITION**.



BRIAN'S RIGHT, SARA. WE **ALWAYS** GET **BURNED** WHEN WE LISTEN TO YOU. AND SOMEHOW YOU ALWAYS COME THROUGH IT **UNSCATHED**. LIKE THE TIME **GILEAD** THREW OUR **BUTTS** IN **PRISON**. WE WERE **FIGHTING** FOR OUR VERY **LIVES** IN THE '**HOLE**' WHILE YOU WERE KICKIN' BACK WITH **LORD GILEAD** IN HIS **SWANKY DIGS** DOIN' **DOCTOR SHOTS** AND EATIN' **BON BONS**. 4

AND NOW YOU'RE HANDING OUT SHARES OF OUR TREASURE LIKE THEY'RE **TWO FER A PENNY CANDY** OR SOMETHING.

ARE YOU GUYS TALKIN' IN **CHARACTER** RIGHT NOW? 'COS IT **DEFINITELY** SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE IN A **FANTASY WORLD**.

THAT'S IT. I'M **NIXING** THIS **NONSENSE!!**

SHE'S OUT OF CONTROL!

1. See Bundle of Trouble Volume Six: "Where Now Brown Cow?"  
2. See Bundle of Trouble Volume Four: "Just for the Helm of It"

3. See Bundle of Trouble Volume Three: "An Orc too Far"  
4. See Bundle of Trouble Volume Six: "Dewin' Hard Time"

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? NIXING? NIXING WHAT?

IT MEANS *EXACTLY* WHAT I SAID. I'M *VETOING* YOUR LITTLE *PROFIT SHARING PROGRAM*. AND WHAT'S MORE, I'M TAKING BACK THE *SHARES* YOU'VE ALREADY GIVEN OUT.

WHAT? BUT YOU CAN'T DO THAT. SOME OF THE MEN HAVE BEEN WORKING THEMSELVES TO *DEATH* EXPECTING TO GET *CUT IN* ON THE *BOOTY*.

TOUGH KITTY TOENAILS!!

I MEAN IT BRIAN!! MY PERSONAL *REPUTATION* IS ON THE LINE HERE. I *VOUCHED* FOR THE PARTY'S *HONOR*! I *ASSURED* THE *MEN* THEY'D BE TREATED *FAIRLY* BY US.

WHO CARES WHAT THEY THINK? THEY'RE *JUST NPCs*, SARA.

I'M NOT *JOKING*.

YOU GUYS *MADE ME* *HIRELING LIAISON* BECAUSE I HAVE A *GOOD TRACK RECORD* DEALING WITH *NPCS*. IT'S MY *JOB* TO MAKE SURE THE *MERCS* ARE *HAPPY* SO WE DON'T END UP WITH ANOTHER *REVOLT* WHILE *DEEP* IN *BAGWORLD*.

IF YOU *INSIST* ON INTERFERING I'LL HAVE TO TELL THE *MEN* YOU CAN'T BE *TRUSTED* AND THEN I'LL *WALK!*

GEEZE LOUEEZE, SARA. I HAD *NO IDEA* YOU FELT SO *STRONGLY* ABOUT IT. *FINE!!* I *STILL* THINK IT'S A *VERY BAD IDEA* GIVIN' *SHARES* TO *NPCS* BUT FOR THE SAKE OF *PARTY UNITY*...

WELL.....I SUPPOSE I CAN *CONCEDE* THE POINT AND LET THIS ONE GO.

REALLY? YOU'RE SERIOUS? WHY BRIAN, T-T-THAT'S UNCHARACTERISTICALLY *"BIG"* OF YOU. I... ER...THANKS. DON'T YOU WORRY — THIS IS GOING TO PAY BACK *HUGE* DIVIDENDS. YOU JUST WAIT AND *SEE* IF IT DOESN'T.

WHATEVER. I'LL AGREE TO *ANYTHING* IF IT MEANS WE CAN STOP ALL THE *BITCHIN'* AND *MOANIN'* AND GET THIS *SHOW* ON THE ROAD. I'M *ACHING* TO GIVE *BARRINGER* SOME *PAYBACK!!*

WALK?

YOU GOT A DEAL!

OKAY BOB, WRITE UP A *LIST* OF THOSE *HIRELINGS* YOU FEEL HAVE *DISTINGUISHED* THEMSELVES. YOU CAN *AWARD* *SHARES* ACCORDINGLY BUT BE *SURE* TO KEEP AT LEAST *FIFTY SHARES* IN *RESERVE*. WE'LL USE *THOSE* TO BUILD *ESPRIT DE CORPS* ALONG THE *JOURNEY*.

YOU GOT IT. I'LL CHECK WITH *SERGEANT MCGREEVY* AND GET HIS *INPUT*.

HEY, LAY SOME OF THAT *SPREE DA CORD* ON ME WHY DON'T YA?

THAT'S VERY FUNNY DAVE.

I'M *SERIOUS!*

SURE, SURE. GIVE 'EM AS MANY *SHARES* AS YOU WANT. BUT THEY'LL PLAY *HELL* COLLECTING THEM.

# The Bag Raiders: Dark Side of the Bag

JOLLY R. BLACKBUR

WHILE YOU'RE GOING OVER THE **MISSION LOGISTICS** WITH YOUR **BATTLELORDS** THERE'S A **KNOCK** AT THE DOOR. **SERGEANT MCGREEVY** ENTERS AND REPORTS THE MEN HAVE FINISHED **OFF-LOADING** THE **PALLETS** INTO THE BAG. HE WANTS TO KNOW IF THERE ARE ANY FURTHER ORDERS BEFORE HE SENDS THE MEN TO **CHOW**.

**OUTSTANDING!** GOOD WORK, **SARGE**. GO AHEAD AND LET 'EM **EAT!** THEN HAVE 'EM SET UP **CAMP** INSIDE THE **BAG!** WE WANT TO GET AN **EARLY** START IN THE MORNING SO MAKE SURE THEY GET A **GOOD NIGHT'S** SLEEP.

**WOW!** NOW THAT'S A **GOOD MAN**. WE SHOULD **HOLD ON** TO HIM AFTER THIS IS ALL OVER.

**HMMRRFFF!!** AND WHY **SHOULDN'T** HE BE **KISSIN' BUTT?** THE **LITTLE MOOCH** IS GETTIN' **FIVE SHARES** OF THE **BOOTY**.

**AYE, SIR!** AS YOU **WISH SIR**.

THAT **REALLY CHAPS** MY **HIDE**.



BY THE WAY, **BOB**, YOU BETTER POST SOME **ROVING GUARDS** ON THE **PERIMETER** OF THE **BAGZONE**. THE **ODDS** OF ANY **TROUBLE** AT THIS POINT ARE NEXT TO **NIL** BUT STILL... **J-DOC** <sup>1</sup> HAD A **WHOLE SECTION** ON **BAG RAIDERS**. IT'D BE JUST LIKE **B.A.** TO HAVE **JONID COINCRAWLER** OR THE LIKE **SNEAK** INTO CAMP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND **SCREW** WITH US.

**GOOD IDEA!** I'LL SET UP SOME **PICKETS** AND PERSONALLY MAKE A **WALK THRU** BEFORE TURNING IN FOR THE NIGHT.

**SAY,** IT MIGHT BE A **GOOD IDEA** TO TAKE ANOTHER **READING** AND MAKE SURE OUR **TROJAN PIG** IS STILL OPERATING.

**TROJAN PIG?** OH...RIGHT.

**B.A.** I WANT TO TAKE SOME **TEST SOUNDINGS** WITH **BOB'S BRACERS** OF **MAP SENSE** AND **DOUBLE-CHECK** THOSE **BEARINGS** I MADE ON THAT **JADE PIG**. <sup>2</sup>



**NO CHANGES, BRIAN.** ACCORDING TO THE **BRACERS** THE **PIG** IS **STILL** LOCATED TO THE **SOUTH WEST**.

THE **DISTANCE** LOOKS TO BE AROUND **950 MILES!**

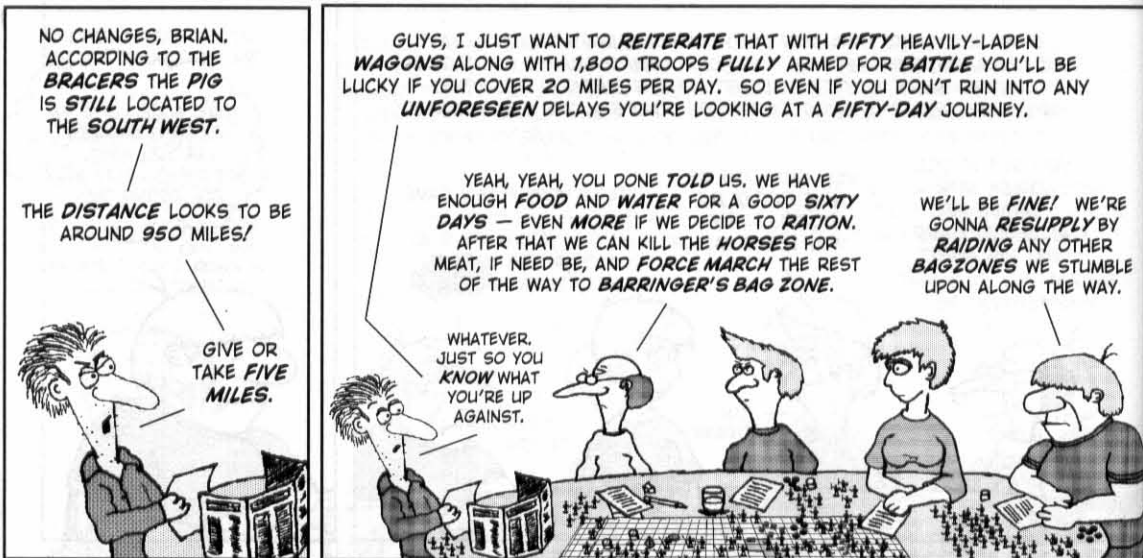
**GIVE OR TAKE FIVE MILES.**

**GUYS,** I JUST WANT TO **REITERATE** THAT WITH **FIFTY** HEAVILY-LADEN **WAGONS** ALONG WITH **1,800 TROOPS** FULLY ARMED FOR **BATTLE** YOU'LL BE **LUCKY** IF YOU COVER **20 MILES** PER DAY. SO EVEN IF YOU DON'T RUN INTO ANY **UNFORESEEN** DELAYS YOU'RE LOOKING AT A **FIFTY-DAY** JOURNEY.

**YEAH, YEAH,** YOU DONE **TOLD** US. WE HAVE ENOUGH **FOOD** AND **WATER** FOR A **GOOD SIXTY DAYS** — EVEN **MORE** IF WE DECIDE TO **RATION**. AFTER THAT WE CAN **KILL THE HORSES** FOR **MEAT**, IF NEED BE, AND **FORCE MARCH** THE REST OF THE WAY TO **BARRINGER'S BAG ZONE**.

WE'LL BE **FINE!** WE'RE GONNA **RESUPPLY** BY **RAIDING** ANY OTHER **BAGZONES** WE **STUMBLE** UPON ALONG THE WAY.

**WHATEVER.** JUST SO YOU **KNOW** WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST.



<sup>1</sup> 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 [kenzerco.com](http://kenzerco.com). Reading the document may help your understanding of this strip.  
<sup>2</sup> See Bundle of Trouble Volume Seven "The Bag Raiders: Of Dice and Men". Brian places a Ring of Tele-Location into a Jade Pig statue and presents it to Barringer as a gift after Bob calibrates his Bracers of Map Sense to hone in on it. They hope to use the pig as a beacon to guide them to Barringer's Bag Zone.

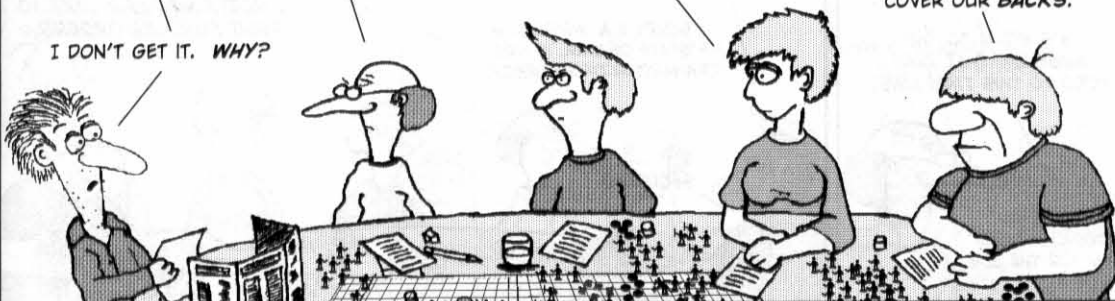
SO *HERE'S* THE PLAN. — YOU MIGHT WANNA TAKE SOME *NOTES* ON THIS — THE *FOUR* OF US SPEND THE NIGHT *OUTSIDE* THE *BAG*. WE WANT ONE *LAST NIGHT* IN A REAL BED IN OUR ROOMS AT THE *INN*. IN THE *MORNING* WE'LL PAY *GRETCHEN* THE *INN KEEPER* IN *ADVANCE* WITH *GOOD HARD COIN* TO RENT OUR ROOM FOR *NINETY DAYS*. WE'LL MAKE IT *VERY CLEAR* THAT THERE'LL BE A *LITTLE EXTRA SOMETHING* FOR HER IF SHE SEES TO IT THAT WE'RE NOT *DISTURBED*. SHE'S TO BRING A *MEAL* FOR *FOUR* TO OUR ROOM *THREE TIMES* A DAY AND LEAVE IT *OUTSIDE* THE *DOOR*.

YOU'RE RENTING A ROOM FOR *NINETY DAYS*? AND *THREE MEALS* A DAY?

*SECURITY PURPOSES!* WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE BOTH *BAGS* ARE *SECURE* WHILE WE'RE IN *BAGWORLD*.

AND WE'RE LEAVING A *FOUR-MAN GUARD* BEHIND TO COVER OUR *BACKS*.

I DON'T GET IT. *WHY?*



GUARDS??

YEAH, THEY'LL BE *GUARDING* THE *BAGS*. WE'LL ALSO NEED THEM TO *EXTRACT* US FROM *BAG WORLD* WHEN THE TIME COMES.

OH...RIGHT. *GOOD THINKING*. I'M *IMPRESSED*. LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS HAVE *REALLY* THOUGHT THIS OUT.

WELL, LIKE BRIAN SAID. WE WOULDN'T PUT IT *PAST* YOU TO TRY AND *SCREW US* OVER. WE'RE BEING *EXTRA CAREFUL* NOT TO GIVE YOU ANY *ROPE* TO *HANG* US WITH.



WE'RE ALSO LEAVING THE *GUARDS* A *SLUSH FUND* JUST IN CASE THERE'S ANY *UNFORESEEN TROUBLE!*

WE MAY NEED THEM TO SEND IN MORE *SUPPLIES* OR *REINFORCEMENTS*.

I'M TAKING *SIX DOZEN CARRIER PIGEONS* SO WE CAN *RELAY* MESSAGES BACK TO THEM.



NICE TRY, BRIAN. BUT I DON'T THINK THAT WOULD WORK. FROM WHAT I KNOW OF *CARRIER PIGEONS* THEY DETERMINE HOW THEIR ROUTE BACK TO THEIR *HOME STATION* BY THE ANGLE OF THE *SUN* AND ITS *RELATIVE POSITION* ALONG THE APPROPRIATE *FLIGHT PATH*. YOUR *PIGEONS* WOULD BE *UTTERLY LOST* IN *BAGWORLD* BECAUSE THERE *IS* NO *SUN* TO GET A *RECKONING* FROM.

THIS IS *HACKMASTER* NOT *BIOLOGY 101*, B.A. THERE'S *NOTHING* IN THE RULES ON *CARRIER PIGEONS* REGARDING THE *SUN* OR *RELATIVE ANGLES* AND SO FORTH. THEY SIMPLY STATE THAT A *CARRIER PIGEON* ONLY HAS A *TWO-PERCENT* CHANCE OF GETTING *LOST* AND *NOT* BEING ABLE TO FIND ITS *HOME STATION*. IT'S A *STRAIGHT DIE ROLL*.

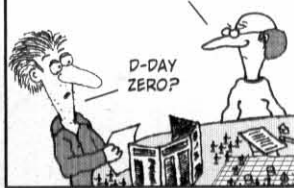
-SIGH- THERE ARE JUST *SOME THINGS* THAT SHOULDN'T BE HANDLED WITH AN *ALL-INCLUSIVE* DIE ROLL.

MAYBE SO, BUT A *RULE'S* A *RULE*.



IN THE *MORNING* WE'LL ENTER THE *BAG* AND LEAD OUR *EXPEDITIONARY PARTY* DOWN THE ROAD TO *VICTORY!*

MEANWHILE, OUR *FOUR-MAN GUARD* WILL HAVE ORDERS TO NOTE THE *HOUR* OF OUR DEPARTURE WHICH WILL BE *DESIGNATED* AS *D-DAY ZERO*



THAT'S RIGHT. **SIXTY DAYS TO THE HOUR** AFTER OUR DEPARTURE (ALSO KNOWN AS **D-DAY PLUS SIXTY**) THE FOUR-MAN **GUARD** HAVE ORDERS TO GATHER UP THE **BAGS** AND **HAUL ASS** OUT OF TOWN.

IT'S **VITAL** TO THE **MISSION** THAT THEY HOLD TO THIS **TIME LINE**.

THAT'S WHY I **HAND PICKED** THEM FOR THE **JOB**.



THEY'LL **RIDE HARD** AND **FAST** TO THAT **LITTLE PECAN GROVE** NEAR **HERTZINGOWER LAKE** — YOU KNOW THE PLACE — WE **THREW DOWN** WITH THE **FANDOGGLE BROTHERS** THERE THAT ONE TIME AND **ROYALLY KICKED** THEIR **BUTTS!!** ANYWAY, THAT'S WHERE OUR **GUARDS** ARE TO **HOOK UP** WITH **MAJOR KRAVITZ** AND **SARA'S MERCENARY COHORTS** — **VENGEANCE** AND **FURY**. THEY'LL SET UP **CAMP** AND AT **NOON** THE FOLLOWING DAY THEY'LL...

WHOOAH! HOLD ON. **VENGEANCE** AND **FURY?** BUT I THOUGHT **SARA** DISBANDED THEM **WEEKS** AGO. WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

TEH HEH... THAT'S WHAT WE **WANTED** YOU TO THINK, B.A. WE **SECRETLY** HAD THEM WITHDRAW TO **HERTZINGOWER LAKE** TO AWAIT **FURTHER ORDERS**.

SORRY B.A. WE'RE IN A STATE OF WAR. IT WAS A MATTER OF **SECRECY**.

SECRECY?



ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME YOU **DELIBERATELY** WITHHELD **VITAL INFORMATION** FROM ME? **FWIIRPPP!!!!** B-B-BUT I'M THE **GAMEMASTER** YOU FREAKIN' **DORKS!** Y-Y-YOU CAN'T KEEP **SECRETS** FROM THE **GM!!**

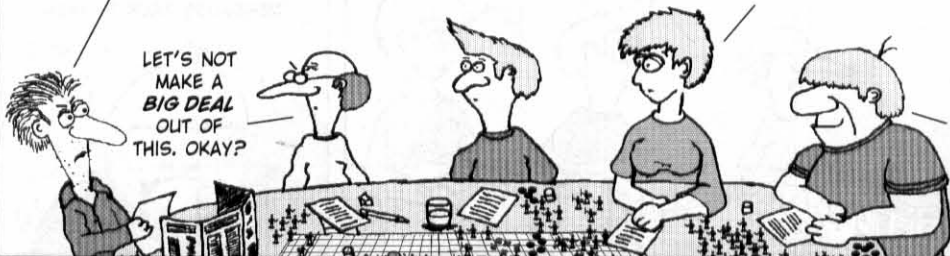
I'M SORRY, B.A. I REALLY AM. BUT THEY **INSISTED** THAT I NOT SAY ANYTHING.

I'M AT A COMPLETE **LOSS** FOR WORDS HERE. WHAT MADE YOU THINK YOU COULD GET AWAY WITH THIS?

NOT TO WORRY. I KEPT VERY **CAREFUL NOTES** AND EVERYTHING IS **ANNOTATED** ON MY CHARACTER SHEET SHOWING THE **STATUS** OF MY **MERCS** INCLUDING **WEEKLY PAYROLL**. THEY'VE BEEN PAID IN **FULL** AND IN A **TIMELY** FASHION.

LET'S NOT MAKE A **BIG DEAL** OUT OF THIS. OKAY?

WHAT'S THE **PROBLEM**, B.A.? DID WE CATCH YOU WITH YOUR **PANTS** DOWN?



IT'S LIKE **BOB** SAID.

**THIS IS WAR.**

WE FELT IT WAS IN OUR **BEST INTEREST** NOT TO SHOW **ALL** OUR CARDS.



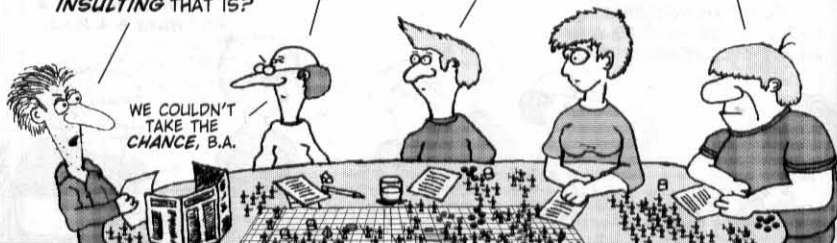
AS I WAS STARTING TO **EXPLAIN**, BEFORE YOU SO **RUDELY** INTERRUPTED, AT **NOON** ON "**D-DAY PLUS SIXTY-ONE**" WE'RE GOING TO LAUNCH A MASS **TWO-PRONGED** COORDINATED ATTACK AGAINST **BARRINGER'S CASTLE**. ONE FROM **WITHIN** THE **BAG** AND ONE FROM **WITHOUT**. THE **POOR FOOLS** WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT THEM.

OH...SO **THAT'S** IT. AND YOU DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD **TRUST** ME NOT TO **ACT** ON THAT BIT OF INFORMATION IF I **KNEW** BEFOREHAND? DO YOU HAVE **ANY IDEA** HOW **INSULTING** THAT IS?

THIS IS **IT**, B.A.! THIS IS GOING TO BE THE **FINAL BATTLE** OF **BAGWAR FOUR**. IT ENDS **HERE!** WHOEVER EMERGES WITH THE **VICTOR'S LAUREL** TAKES IT **ALL!**

**NO HOLDS BARRED!**

WE COULDN'T TAKE THE **CHANCE**, B.A.



I See Bundle of Trouble Volume Six "Bag War Four". Part of the group's mercenary army (under Sara's personal command) which was involved with the final charge into Barringer's Bag before being forced to retreat. The cohorts were routed after being outflanked by a surprise attack from a Trollkin Army.

**A WEE BIT LATER IN BAGWORD...**

NO HOLDS BARRED, EH? THAT'S THE WAY THEY WANNA PLAY IT? FINE! THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GONNA BE.

OKAY, AFTER WE'VE TRAVELLED ABOUT FIVE MILES OR SO OUTSIDE THE BAGZONE I HALT THE WAGON TRAIN SO BRIAN CAN TAKE A READING ON THE PIG. DOES HE PICK UP ANYTHING?

NOPE. SORRY. THE BRACERS DON'T SEEM TO FUNCTION AT ALL.

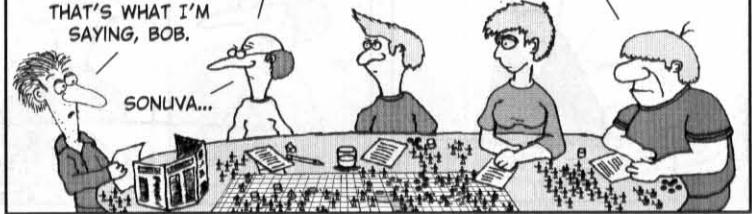
WHAT KIND OF TRICK IS THIS, B.A.? THOSE BRACERS HAVE UNLIMITED CHARGES.

HUH? YOU MEAN THEY DON'T WORK?

THERE'S NO REASON FOR THEM NOT TO BE WORKING.

THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING, BOB.

SONUVA...



YEAH, I BET YER SORRY. OKAY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED BUT I INTEND ON FINDING OUT. I'M GOING TO PULL OUT MY +4 DAGGER OF HINDSIGHT AND SEE IF IT CAN TELL ME IF WE DID SOMETHING WRONG.

UH OH. YOU DON'T THINK....??

SORRY, IT DOESN'T SEEM TO WORK EITHER.

JUMPIN' BAJEEMERS! THAT'S TWO MAGIC ITEMS TO GO KAPUT ON US. WHAT GIVES?

B.A. I PULL OUT MY RING OF ILLUMINATION AND PUT IT ON. DOES ANYTHING HAPPEN?

HUH? BUT IT HAS FOUR CHARGES LEFT ON IT. I KNOW THAT FOR A FACT!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING SARA? DON'T GO WASTIN' A CHARGE LIKE THAT.

REGARDLESS, BOB, IT DOESN'T WORK.

IT'S JUST B.A. UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS AGAIN.



YOUR HUNCH IS CORRECT, SARA. NONE OF YOUR MAGIC ITEMS APPEAR TO BE WORKING.

OTHERWISE YOU WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT THE DESOLATE WASTELAND OF BAGWORD WHICH LIES BETWEEN BAGZONES IS PERMEATED WITH A VERY POWERFUL FORCE WHICH NULLIFIES ALL MAGICAL ENERGY.

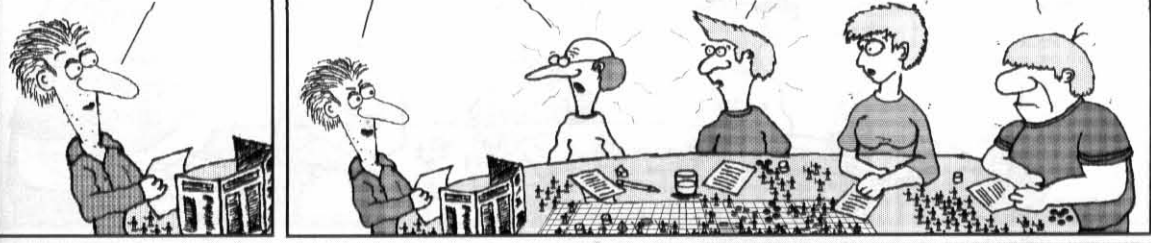
TOO BAD YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO OBTAIN A COMPLETE COPY OF THE JACKSON DOCUMENT.

YOU MEAN NO MAGIC??!!

SAY WHAT??!!

WHAT KIND OF CRAZY MIXED-UP WORLD IS THIS?

-GASP-



AS LONG AS YOU ARE IN **BAGWORLD** AND **OUTSIDE** THE PERIMETER OF ANY **BAGZONES** YOUR **MAGIC** IS **USELESS**. THIS GOES FOR **MAGIC WEAPONS**, **ARMOR**, **SPELLS** AND EVEN **SCROLLS**.



CRITICAL HIT!  
ID 300-7700  
EAT FOR 100  
AG 100-000

PLAYER LOG  
OF CONDUCT  
THIS GA IS ALL  
RIGHT

USE FOR CHARMS

DID YOU **HEAR** WHAT HE SAID?  
MY **CROSSBOW OF SLAYING!!!!**

MY **HACKMASTER**  
PLUS **TWELVE!!!**



WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TWO CRYING ABOUT? I'M A **MAGIC USER** FOR CRYING OUT LOUD! WITHOUT MY **SPELL ARSENAL** AND VAST ARRAY OF **CAREFULLY-SELECTED MAGIC ITEMS** I'M **EXPOSED!!**

MAYBE WE SHOULD **PULL OUT** AND **RETHINK THIS**.



DON'T WORRY. THE **ANTI-MAGIC FIELD** WON'T PERMANENTLY **HARM** YOUR **MAGIC ITEMS**.

ONCE YOU STEP INTO A **BAGZONE** OR SIMPLY LEAVE **BAGWORLD** THEY'LL FUNCTION **NORMALLY** AGAIN.



CRITICAL HIT!  
ID 300-7700  
EAT FOR 100  
AG 100-000

PLAYER LOG  
OF CONDUCT

USE FOR CHARMS

HOLD ON. LET'S NOT **PANIC**. I SUSPECT THIS GOES **BOTH WAYS**. IF WE DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO OUR **MAGIC** WHILE TRAVELLING BETWEEN **ZONES** THEN **NO ONE ELSE** DOES EITHER. I CALL THAT A **LEVEL PLAYING FIELD**.

HMMRRFFF! AND I CALL IT A **KILLING FIELD!!**  
WE'D BE **FOOLS** TO GO ON.

HEY, DON'T FORGET -- WE HAVE **1,800 MEN** TO BACK US UP IF WE RUN INTO TROUBLE.

BUT WITHOUT THOSE **BRACERS OF MAPSENSE** TO **GUIDE** US WE'D BE WANDERING AROUND **BLIND**.

I FEEL **NAKED** WITHOUT MY **CROSSBOW** IN **TOP FORM**.

**BLIND I TELL YOU!!**



HEY THAT'S RIGHT. IF WE CAN'T GET OUR **BEARINGS** AND CHECK OUR **POSITION** WE COULD GET **LOST!!** AND **BAGWORLD** IS A **HUGE FRICKIN' PLACE** TO GET LOST IN. WE'D **NEVER** FIND OUR WAY BACK OUT.

THAT'S A **LEGITIMATE** CONCERN GLYS. THE **BONES** OF THOSE WHO GOT **LOST** AND **PERISHED** WHILE **EXPLORING BAGWORLD** ARE STREWN ABOUT **EVERYWHERE!**

**WAIT!** DON'T WE STILL HAVE THAT **COMPASS** BOB LIFTED FROM THE **TEMPLE OF THE SEA GAWD?** IT'S NOT **MAGICAL** — I BET WOULD **STILL WORK!**

YEAH. I STILL GOT IT. WE COULDN'T **PAWN** IT 'COS IT HAD **TEMPLE-STUFF** WRITTEN ALL OVER IT.

**COMPASS? HO HO!!**  
THAT'S RIGHT. WE HAVE A **COMPASS!**



EUREKA!! PROBLEM SOLVED!! I TOOK A MAP MAKING AND READING COURSE AT HACKMASTER CAMP '95. I CAN PUT THAT COMPASS TO GOOD USE.

NOW THAT'S THE BRIAN I KNOW.

THIS IS GREAT!! ALL I NEED TO DO IS DETERMINE MY PACE SO WE CAN DETERMINE DISTANCE TRAVELLED. THEN I'LL SHOOT A SERIES OF AZIMUTHS USING THE THREE-MAN FORWARD SCOUT TECHNIQUE.

YEAH, THAT'S THE TICKET!!

AND ASSUMING A CARRIER PIGEON WILL FLY DIRECTLY BACK TO THE FANNY PACK'S BAGZONE I CAN SHOOT A BACK AZIMUTH OFF THE DIRECTION OF ITS FLIGHT AND VERIFY WE'RE ON COURSE.

HMMMMMM..... I WAS HOPING TO USE THE BRACERS TO MAP OUT BAGWORLD BUT I SUPPOSE WE COULD STILL DO THAT UTILIZING THE COMPASS.

IF WE STUMBLE UPON ANY OTHER BAGZONES WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO USE THE BRACERS TO TRIANGULATE OUR POSITION.

YES, IT SHOULD WORK.

### LATER THAT NIGHT, MILES DEEP INTO BAGWORLD...

TWO OF YOUR SCOUTS COME RIDING IN HARD OUT OF THE SHADOWS. THEY REALLY HAVE THEIR HORSES WORKED INTO A LATHER. AS THEY APPROACH ONE OF THE SCOUTS LEAPS FROM HIS HORSE AND RENDERS A SALUTE. HE REPORTS THEY'VE DISCOVERED YET ANOTHER BAGZONE JUST A FEW MILES TO THE NORTH.

"IT'S A FAT ONE, SIR! FOUR CHESTS OF SILVER. A BUNCH OF BOOKS. FORTY KEGS OF ALE. IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR US TO CARRY."

GOOD LORD! THAT'S THE THIRD BAGZONE WE'VE HIT UPON AND THIS IS ONLY THE FIFTH DAY. WE'RE CLEANING UP.

GOOD WORK, BOYS. EMPTY ONE OF THE WAGONS, TAKE TEN MEN AND GO LOAD IT ALL UP.

GREAT. NOW I'M RUNNING A GAME FOR LEWIS AND FRICKIN' CLARK. WHERE THE HELL DOES HE PICK THIS STUFF UP?

NO PROBLEM. TIME TO CRANK UP THE PRESSURE.

LOOKS LIKE MY IDEA OF SENDING OUT SCOUTING PARTIES IN A RADIAL PATTERN IS PAYING OFF.

REMIND ME TO FRISK THAT LOOTING PARTY WHEN THEY RETURN. I'VE GOT A HUNCH SOME OF THE GOODS AREN'T MAKING IT INTO THE KITTY.

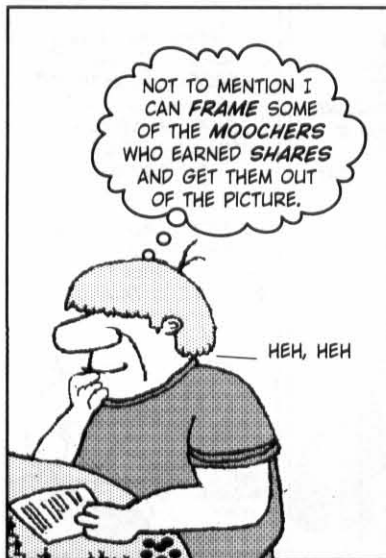
YOU WANT TO PAT THEM DOWN? YOU CAN'T DO THAT WITHOUT ANY EVIDENCE OF WRONGDOING.

THEN WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST?

I'LL LET THE OFFICERS KNOW OF OUR SUSPICIONS. I'VE GOTTEN TO KNOW THEM FAIRLY WELL AND I'D BANK ON THEIR INTEGRITY. I'LL TELL THEM TO PUT OUT A SHARPEYE FOR ANY PILFERING.

AND IF WE CATCH ANYONE DOING SO WE'LL FLOG HIM BEFORE THE REST OF THE MEN AND BANISH HIM FROM THE EXPEDITION.

KEWL! WORKS FOR ME. BY LETTING THE OFFICERS FERRET OUT ANY WRONG DOING AND ADMINISTERING PUNISHMENT WE CAN DISTANCE OURSELVES.



NOT TO MENTION I CAN **FRAME** SOME OF THE **MOOCHERS** WHO EARNED **SHARES** AND GET THEM OUT OF THE PICTURE.

HEH, HEH

### A WEE BIT LATER...

THE **RETURNING** SCOUTS REPORT IN. THEY'VE LOCATED A **BAGZONE** ABOUT SIX MILES TO THE **EAST**. IT CONTAINS HUNDREDS OF BOLTS OF **FINE SILK** AND THOUSANDS OF **SCROLLS**. MOST OF THEM LOOK TO BE **LEGAL DOCUMENTS** LIKE **DEEDS** AND SUCH. IT'LL TAKE AT LEAST **THREE WAGONS** TO HAUL IT ALL.



I TELL THEM TO GO AHEAD AND UNLOAD THREE WAGONS AND TAKE A **DETAIL** TO GO FETCH THE STUFF.

THIS IS FRICKIN' UNBELIEVABLE!

THREE MORE WAGONS. OH DEAR...

WATZZA MATTER, SARA?

FRANKLY I'M A LITTLE CONCERNED. DO YOU THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO BE THROWING **PROVISIONS** OFF THE WAGONS TO MAKE ROOM FOR MORE **BOOTY**?

WE'VE GOT A **LONG** WAY TO GO.

YOU WORRY TOO MUCH SARA. LOOK HOW MANY **BAG ZONES** WE'RE FINDING.

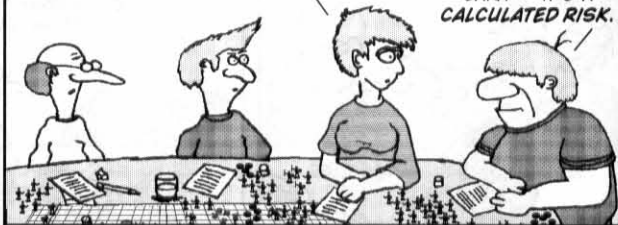
THERE'S SURE TO BE SOME **PROVISIONS** IN ONE OF THEM.



NO OFFENSE, BRIAN BUT YOU'RE **GAMBLING!!!** RAIDING **BAGZONES** ON THE WAY TO **BARRINGER'S CASTLE** WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A **SECONDARY OBJECTIVE**.

YOU'RE LETTING **GREED** JEOPARDIZE THE **ENTIRE** EXPEDITION. IF WE RUN OUT OF **PROVISIONS** THEN WHAT? AND DON'T FORGET WE HAVE A **TIME TABLE** TO STICK TO — IF WE DON'T ARRIVE ON **SCHEDULE** OUR **COORDINATED ATTACK** WILL **FIZZLE**.

IT'S NOT GAMBLING SARA -- IT'S A **CALCULATED RISK**.



BESIDES I'VE **HEDGED** MY BET. DON'T FORGET WE LEFT FIVE **WAGON WRIGHTS** BEHIND AT **BAGZONE ALPHA-32**. ACCORDING TO THE RULES THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO **CHURN OUT TWO WAGONS** PER WEEK USING THAT CRAP LOAD OF **TIMBER** WE FOUND THERE. BY THE TIME THAT **HERD OF OXEN** WE FOUND AT **BAGZONE ALPHA-17** ARRIVE THERE SHOULD BE **SIX WAGONS** READY FOR USE.

**FAT GOOD** THOSE WAGONS WILL DO US WHEN WE'VE ALL **STARVED** TO DEATH.

TRUST ME, BY THE TIME WE NEED THOSE **PROVISIONS** WE **DUMPED** OUR **WAGON TEAMS** WILL HAVE **PICKED** THEM UP AND BE **WELL** ON THEIR WAY. THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS CATCHING UP.



AND WHAT HAPPENS IF THE **OWNERS** OF THOSE **BAGS** OPEN THEM UP AND **DISCOVER** WHAT'S GOING ON?

FOR CRYIN' OUT **LOUD**, SARA! WHY DO YOU HAVE SUCH A **DEFEATIST ATTITUDE?**

I STILL SAY YOUR **GREED** IS GOING TO DO US IN.



**A WEE BIT LATER STILL...**

OKAY, FINE! SERGEANT MCGREEVEY RETURNS FROM THE BIVOQUAC AREA WITH THE "PILFERED GOODS" YOU PLANTED.



HE LAYS A BAG OF SILVER COINS AND A GOLD BROOCH ON THE TABLE.

HE APPEARS TO BE STUNNED WITH DISBELIEF. "WHY, I'VE KNOWN PRIVATE GARRET MY ENTIRE LIFE, SIR! HE'S NEVER DONE A DISHONEST THING IN HIS LIFE! I...I...JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN THIS."

DON'T TAKE IT SO HARD, SARGE! WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE INNER-WORKINGS OF ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL? I EXPECT YOU TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF HIM. EVERY MAN SIGNED THE EXPEDITION CHARTER AND KNOWS THE PUNISHMENT FOR PILFERING. SO DO YOUR DUTY!

"AYE, SIR. AS ORDERED. BUT I STILL SAY THERE'S SOMETHING AMISS ABOUT..."

THAT'LL BE ALL, MCGREEVEY!!

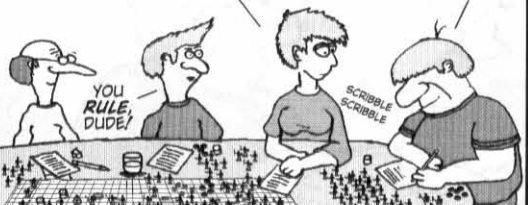
HEH, HEH!!



OH MAN THIS IS GREAT. ONCE PRIVATE GARRET HAS BEEN BANISHED THAT'LL ONLY LEAVE FIFTEEN OF THE SHARES BOB DOLED OUT STILL OUTSTANDING. I'D BETTER KEWL IT WITH THE SET-UPS FOR A FEW NIGHTS, THO - OL' MCGREEVEY IS STARTING TO SUSPECT SOMETHING. I SUPPOSE A LITTLE FRIENDLY FIRE DURING THE FINAL BATTLE CAN TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

I'M WARNING YOU, BRIAN. YOU BETTER PRAY MY CHARACTER DOESN'T GET WIND OF WHAT YOU'RE DOING. THERE'S NO WAY SHE WOULD TOLERATE SUCH UNDERHANDEDNESS!

YEAH, UH HUH. SURE.



YOU RULE, DUDE!

SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE

**SOMEWHERE NEAR THE HALF-WAY POINT...**

SERGEANT MCGREEVEY REPORTS THAT ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE MEN HAVE FALLEN OUT. HE STRONGLY ADVISES AGAINST CONTINUING WITH THE FORCE MARCH. HIS MEN DESPERATELY NEED TO REST. HE ALSO TAKES EXCEPTION TO THE ADDITIONAL REDUCTION IN THE DAILY RATION OF FOOD AND WATER. "MY BOYS CAN'T TAKE THIS ABUSE MUCH LONGER, SIR. I'M BEGGING YOU TO EASE UP."

I KNEW IT. I KNEW WE WERE SPOILING THE MEN WHEN WE LET 'EM HAVE FOUR TURNS OF R&R.

WELL WE CAN'T SLOW DOWN.



YOU KNOW, I'M BEGINNING TO THINK BRIAN WAS RIGHT. WE'VE BEEN TOO SOFT ON THESE GUYS.

I'D JUST LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT YOU'VE LOST 376 MEN SO FAR TO FATIGUE AND DEHYDRATION! YOU'D BETTER START HEEDING THE ADVICE OF YOUR OFFICERS OR YOU'RE GOING TO FIND YOURSELF IN A WORLD OF HUR...

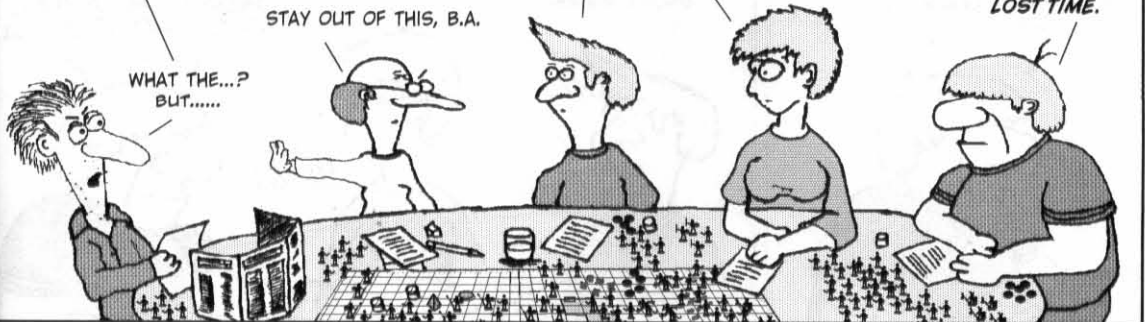
GREAT! NOW THAT WE'VE GOT FIVE HUNDRED MILES BEHIND US THEY DECIDE TO SHOW THEIR TRUE COLORS!

GUYS, WE HAVE BEEN PUSHING THEM PRETTY HARD.

DAMN! WE'VE GOT TO MAKE UP LOST TIME.

STAY OUT OF THIS, B.A.

WHAT THE...? BUT.....



B.A., WE'LL CUT A *DEAL* WITH *MCGREEVY*. WE'LL LET HIM DECIDE THE *BEST* WAY TO HANDLE THIS *CRISIS*.

IF HE CAN GET US TO *BARRINGERS REALM* ON *TIME* WE'LL GIVE HIM A *TWENTY-FIVE* SHARE BONUS!!

ALL HE HAS TO DO IS TELL US WHAT HE NEEDS TO MAKE IT *HAPPEN* AND WE'LL DO IT.



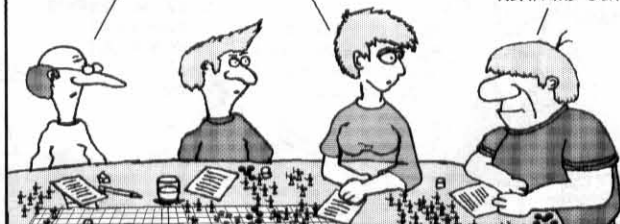
WHOOAH! YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE AN *NPC* THAT KIND OF *RESPONSIBILITY*? THAT'S NOT LIKE YOU.

YEAH DUDE, WHAT'S UP? WE'RE *THIS* CLOSE TO HAVING A *MUTINY* ON OUR HANDS.

RELAX! IT'S ALL PART OF MY *PLAN*! SOMETHING *WEIRD* PETE ONCE TAUGHT ME.

PETE? OH LORD, WE'RE *DOOMED*.

HEAR ME OUT.



IT'S QUITE *SIMPLE* REALLY. WE'VE BEEN *PURPOSELY* PUSHING THE MEN TO THEIR *BREAKING POINT* WHILE TRYING TO *DODGE* A *MORALE CHECK* FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. *B.A.*, IN SO MANY WORDS, HAS JUST *CLUED* US IN THAT SUCH A CHECK IS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE.

I HEAR THE *MUSIC* BUT I'M AFRAID I DON'T KNOW THE *DANCE*, BIG GUY. WHAT'RE YOU UP TO?

IF *B.A.* MAKES A *MORALE CHECK* WE'RE *THROUGH*!

YOU DON'T SEE IT, DO YOU? BY *TOSSING* THE PROBLEM BACK TO *MCGREEVY*, AN *NPC*, I'VE EFFECTIVELY FORCED THE *GAMEMASTER* TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM FOR US.



WHEN WE *INTERVIEWED* FOR AN *NPC-LEADER* FOR THE *EXPEDITION*, *B.A.* WENT ON AND ON ABOUT *MCGREEVY'S* CREDENTIALS AND MILITARY EXPERIENCE.

APPARENTLY *MCGREEVY* HAS THE *SKILLS* AND *KNOW-HOW* TO LEAD MEN SO WHY NOT LET HIM DO IT?



THAT'S YOUR PLAN? TO LET *B.A.* UNDO THE *DAMAGE* YOU'VE DONE? AND WHAT ABOUT THE *SHARES*? YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE UP *TWENTY-FIVE* OF THEM TO *MCGREEVY*?? BRIAN, IF YOU HAD JUST DONE THIS *MY WAY* FROM THE BEGINNING AND TREATED THE MEN FAIRLY...

THAT'S IT, I'M MAKING A *DOPPLEGANGER CHECK* ON YOU *BRIAN*.

LIKE I SAID, *SARA*, A LITTLE *FRIENDLY FIRE* AT THE *RIGHT MOMENT* AND *MCGREEVY* WON'T COLLECT *SQUAT*.



YOU'RE *EVIL*, *BRIAN*, *PURE EVIL*!!

## LATER, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BARRINGER'S BAGZONE...

TOUCHE!  
OLD FRIEND,  
TOUCHE'.  
YOU LANDED  
A BLOW BUT  
I'M NOT  
DOWN YET!

YOUR *SCOUTS* REPORT BACK THAT *BARRINGER* SEEMS TO BE *UNPREPARED* FOR AN ATTACK FROM *OUTSIDE* HIS ZONE. EXCEPT FOR A FEW *TOKEN GUARD POSTS* ALL OF HIS *DEFENSES* SEEMED TO BE FOCUSED *INWARD* TOWARD THE *BAG'S* OPENING.

WELL *THAT'S* GOOD NEWS. LOOKS LIKE WE MADE IT IN *TIME* AND WITH JUST *HOURS* TO SPARE. WE'LL USE WHAT LITTLE TIME WE HAVE LEFT TO *RECONNOITER* THE AREA.

WE'LL WAIT FOR *MAJOR KRAVITZ'S* ATTACK FROM OUTSIDE THE *BAG*.

SURE. WHY DON'T YOU *DO* THAT.



ONCE *BARRINGER* HAS DEPLOYED HIS FORCES IN RESPONSE WE'LL MOVE IN.

UTILIZING *SPEED OF HORSE* WE'LL MAKE A WIDE *PINCER* MOVEMENT WHICH WILL CLOSE AROUND *BARRINGER'S* CASTLE.

MEANWHILE MY *BATLEMAGE* CONTINGENT WILL MOVE FORWARD INTO THE *PERIMETER* AND BEGIN LAYING DOWN SOME HEAVY *FIREBALL BARRAGES* ON THE *TROLLKIN* ARMY WHEN THEY PRESENT THEMSELVES.



## AS THE BATTLE ENSUES...

YOUR *SURPRISE ATTACK* COMPLETELY *DEMORALIZES* *BARRINGER'S* *ELITE GUARD*. YOU OVERRUN THEIR *LINES* AND SEND THEM *REELING* BACK TO THE *CASTLE*. MEANWHILE, UPON SEEING *BARRINGER'S* MEN FLEE THE FIELD OF BATTLE, THE *TROLLKIN* *AUXILIARY* STOPS DEAD IN IT TRACKS. A FEW MOMENTS LATER THEIR *WARLORD* SOUNDS A RETREAT BY BLOWING ON A *MIGHTY BRONZE HORN*. THE *TROLLS* IMMEDIATELY WITHDRAW FROM THE *BAG ZONE* AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE *SHADOWS*.

HOODY FRICKIN' HOO!!  
WE GOT THE BASTARDS  
ON THE RUN!

LET'S LAY IT ON 'EM!  
I ORDER MY *SKIRMISHERS*  
TO ADVANCE AND TURN  
THOSE *CATAPULTS* AROUND  
TO FACE THE *CASTLE*!



## MANY COMBAT ROUNDS LATER...

*PRISONERS?* WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT TAKING *PRISONERS?* MY MEN *MOW* THROUGH THEM LIKE *WHEAT!* DEATH TO COWARDS!! AS WE *STORM* THE GATES I SEND BACK *ORDERS* FOR THOSE *ARCHERS* TO LAY DOWN SOME *COVERING FIRE*.

AFTER SWEEPING OVER *BARRINGER'S* STATIC DEFENSES AND POURING OVER THE *OUTER WALLS* YOUR MEN ARE *DRUNK* WITH *BLOOD LUST*. THEIR *WAR CRIES* ARE BOTH *DEAFENING* AND *TERRIFYING* TO THE DEFENDERS OF THE *INNER KEEP*.

I RAISE MY *HACKMASTER* OVER MY HEAD AND *PERSONALLY* LEAD THE CHARGE OVER THE *WALLS!*

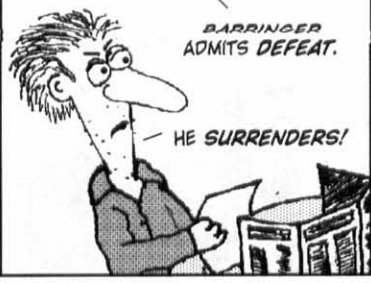
NOT TO WORRY BOB. MY *ARCHERS* ARE *POURING* IT ON!!

I *SHIFT* MY *BATLEMAGE* LINE TO BRING OUR *CHAINED LIGHTNING BOLTS* TO BEAR ON THOSE GATES.



**AND AS THE OUTCOME BECOMES CLEAR...**

THROUGH THE *THICK SMOKE* RISING UP FROM THE *CASTLE* YOU SEE A SINGLE *WHITE FLAG* BEING *HOISTED* UP ON THE *FLAG POLE*.



*BARRINGER ADMITS DEFEAT.*  
HE *SURRENDERS!*

**VICTORY IS OURS!!!**

DUDE, I *LOVE* YOU! THAT *CHARGE* INTO THE *COURT YARD* WAS *AWESOME!!*

COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU WATCHIN' MY *BACK*, DUDE.



SLAP!

WELL, YOU *DID* IT. YOU FINALLY BROUGHT *BARRINGER* DOWN TO HIS *KNEES*.

I KNOW THIS IS A *STUPID QUESTION* BUT WE ARE GOING TO BE *GRACIOUS* VICTORS AREN'T WE?

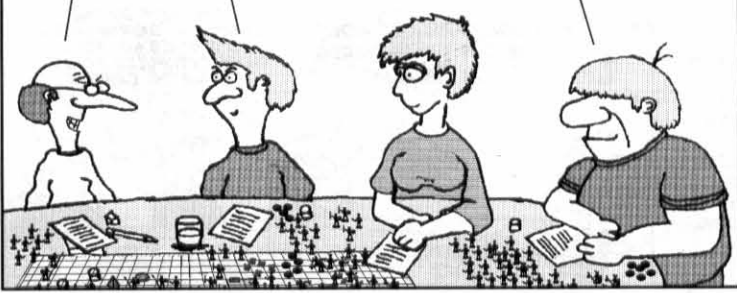
SHYA' RIGHT!



OH MAN, WE *KICKED* HIS ASS AND *THEN* SOME. TALK ABOUT *PAYBACK!!* THAT DUDE OWES US SOME *CHANGE!!*

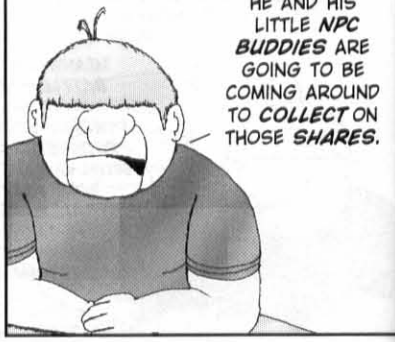
HEH HEH, I CAN'T WAIT TO PRESENT HIM WITH OUR *TERMS OF SURRENDER*. HE'S GONNA *FREAK!!*

HOLD UP GUYS! WE HAVE MORE *PRESSING* CONCERNS TO DEAL WITH.



IT'S UNFORTUNATE BUT IN THE *HEAT* OF BATTLE, OUR FRIEND, *MCGREEVY* MANAGED TO *EVADE* MY *FRIENDLY* FIRE.

HE AND HIS *LITTLE NPC BUDDIES* ARE GOING TO BE COMING AROUND TO *COLLECT* ON THOSE *SHARES*.



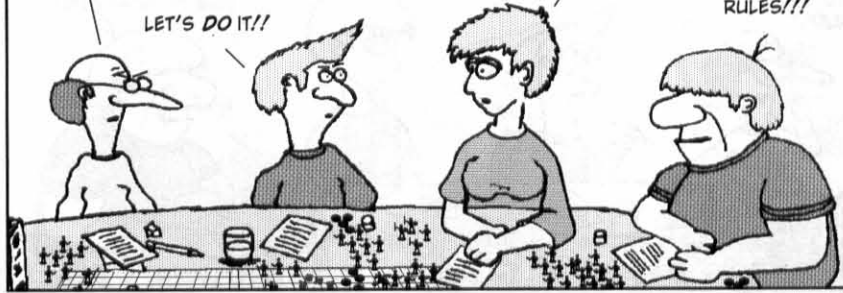
I SUGGEST WHILE HE'S *DISTRACTED* ROUNDING UP *BARRINGER'S* MEN AND *GUARDING* THEM WE START *INVENTORYING* THE *GOODS*. WE SHOULD START *SEPARATING* ALL THE *HIGH VALUE* ITEMS LIKE *PRECIOUS METALS* AND *GEMS* AND *SQUIRREL* THEM AWAY IF YOU *KNOW* WHAT I MEAN.

GOOD IDEA! IF THEY'RE GOING TO LAY CLAIM TO *SHARES* OF THE *BOOTY* WE MIGHT AS WELL GIVE THEM THE *CRAPPY* STUFF.

NOW GUYS, WAIT. DO YOU THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA? THERE'S *SURE* TO BE TROUBLE IF...

SORRY SARA, IT'S 3 TO 1. *MAJORITY* RULES!!!

LET'S DO IT!!



I'VE GOT A *BAD FEELING* ABOUT THIS.



## AN HOUR LATER...

...402 CANDLES, TWO ROWBOATS, 8 OARS, 4 TENTS, 128 WINTER BLANKETS, A 60 FOOT EXTENSION LADDER, 277 CROSSBOW BOLTS, A SET OF MAHOGANY FURNITURE (MINUS ONE ARMOIRE), A CANISTER OF FURNITURE POLISH, A CASE AND A HALF OF RYE WHISKY, A KEG OF GRAIN ALCOHOL, 27 BAKED BRICKS, 5 BAGS OF MORTAR, 4 BAGS OF SAND, 1,208 ARROWS, 47 FINELY CRAFTED DAGGERS, 900 BALES OF HAY, A BLACKSMITH'S FORGE, ANVIL AND BLACKSMITH TOOLS, 75 BARRELS OF COAL, SEVEN CATAPULTS, THREE BALLISTAE, ONE BRONZE-REINFORCED RAM ROD NAMED 'DOOMBRINGER', TWO SUITS OF +4 PLATEMAIL, A KETTLE OF GREEK FIRE, ONE SAUSAGE GRINDER, FIVE SIDES OF CURED BEEF, ONE STUFFED PURPLE IMPALER, ONE SWACK IRON DRAGON SKIN, SEVEN PINTS OF GUTROT ALE...

OH MAN! IT'S ALL THERE. EVEN THE SAUSAGE GRINDER! YUM!

WE'RE RICH!!

...FIVE WOLF PELTS, 12 WAGONS (UNASSEMBLED), ONE DOSE OF JOHNNY RED BLARNEY'S MAGICAL-CURE-ALL-TONIC (GUARANTEED TO CURE HANG-OVERS, HEADACHES, CATARACTS, SYPHILIS, ULCERS AND OTHER COMMON HOUSEHOLD AILMENTS), A MANUAL ON ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, 24 METRIC TONS OF BAUXITE, 87 METRIC TONS OF COPPER ORE, 500 GALLONS OF WHALE OIL, 857,462 COPPER PIECES, 575,000 SILVER PIECES, 1,787,452 GOLD PIECES, A PAIR OF MUDDY BOOTS, A PEWTER SALT SHAKER SET,...

HOLY MOLY!! WHERE THE HELL DID BARRINGER GET ALL THIS STUFF?

LOOKS LIKE BARRINGER AND HIS BOYS HAVE BEEN DOING A LITTLE BAG RAIDING OVER THE YEARS.

...FIVE GREEN TOWELS, A SILVER TRAY WITH TOENAIL CLIPPINGS, A TAXIDERMIED CAT, A ROCK, 2 TEN-FOOT WOODEN PLANKS, A SACK OF NAILS, A HAND SAW, FOUR CLAW HAMMERS, A MANUAL ON CONSTRUCTING SMALL FORTRESSES AND DEFENSE WORKS, **HOODY HOO!!** MY LIBRARY OF SPELL BOOKS AND SCROLLS, AN EMPTY PARROT CAGE, A BROKEN PADLOCK, A STATUE OF THOR, A PORTABLE TEMPLE WITH ALTAR AND SACRIFICIAL CHAMBER, FOUR SUITS OF PLATEMAIL ARMOR, SIX WOODEN MALLETS...

DAMN! I'M STARTING TO REGRET HANDING OUT ALL THOSE FRICKIN' SHARES. EVEN THE CRAPPY STUFF IS KEWL.

TELL ME ABOUT IT.

...FORTY SEVEN UNITS OF IRON RATIONS, 750 SKINS OF MEDIOCRE WINE, EIGHT BARRELS OF FINE WINE, THREE MILES OF STRONG ROPE, 25 TORCHES, 1003 FLASKS OF OIL, 4 HOODED LANTERNS, 6 BULLSEYE LANTERNS, A SNAKE SKIN, TWO WAR DRUMS, A BOX OF DUNGEON DEBRIS, A BAG OF CHALK, A SPOOL OF SILK, A WAR CHARIOT, 700 HEAD OF CATTLE, 120 HORSES, 47 GOATS, 6 HENS, 2 GEESE, A CAT, A DWARVEN WARHORSE, A LAME OX...

DIBS ON THE DWARVEN WARHORSE!!

OOOOOOOH, WAR DRUMS!! KEWL!!

...FOUR BARRELS OF SALTED TROLL MEAT, THREE TAPESTRIES, A GAZEBO-PELT, A FISHING POLE AND TACKLE, A BAG OF FERTILIZER, ONE MACAW FEATHER (MAGIC), A COPY OF CRIMSON LOTUS' JOURNAL, A BEAVER TRAP, A FUNNY-LOOKING STICK, A TURTLE SHELL, **GADZOOKS!!!** 500 BARS OF MITHRIL??!! THE FEET OF VECTRA? WOW!!

HOT DAMN!! HEY, AFTER THE GAME SESSION LET'S HIT THE BAR! I WANNA BUY YOU GUYS A ROUND OF DRINKS.

SURE, I'M IN.

BUT WE STILL HAVE ALL THE STUFF WE'VE LOOTED FROM THOSE BAGZONES TO GO OVER.

LET'S GIVE MCGREEVY SOME THINGS TO DO TO DISTRACT HIM WHILE WE DOCTOR THE BOOKS.

# LATER THAT NIGHT...

WHILE YOU ARE SITTING IN YOUR ROOM AT THE INN COUNTING YOUR ILL-GOTTEN RICHES THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

CRIPES! WHO IS IT?

IT'S MCGREEVY. AND HE SOUNDS VERY UPSET.

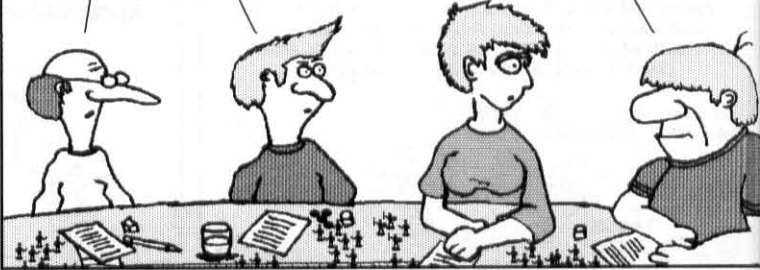
OH NO!!



WADDA WE DO? IF HE SEES ALL THIS STUFF THE JIG IS UP!!

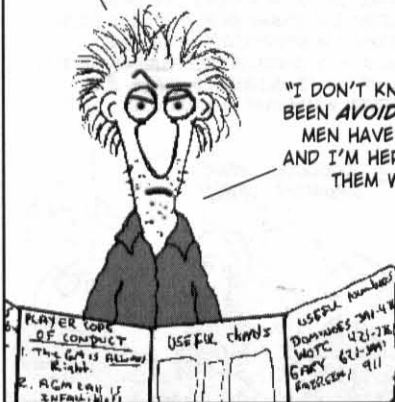
DON'T PANIC! JUST STALL HIM. WE'LL JUST SCOOP IT ALL INTO YOUR FANNY PACK OF HOLDING. HE WON'T KNOW JACK SQUAT ABOUT WHAT WE'RE DOING.

GOOD THINKING! YOU HOLD IT OPEN AND I'LL SCOOP!



MCGREEVY IS REALLY KNOCKING HARD NOW. HE YELLS, "I CAN HEAR YOU IN THERE, SIR! I DEMAND TO SPEAK WITH YOU!!!"

"I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING ME BUT THE MEN HAVE GRIEVANCES AND I'M HERE TO ADDRESS THEM WITH YOU!!!"



OKAY, OKAY, I STALL HIM JUST LONG ENOUGH FOR THEM TO CLEAR THE TABLE AND THEN I OPEN THE DOOR.

AS THE DOOR OPENS YOU ARE SHOCKED TO SEE MCGREEVY IS ACCOMPANIED BY TWO DOZEN MEN-AT-ARMS!

W-W-W-WAAA????!!  
WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?

HOLY SH...

"WE HAVE GRIEVANCES, SIR."



AS THEY PUSH THEIR WAY INTO THE ROOM, MCGREEVY EXPLAINS THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME BOOTY MISSING FROM THE EXPEDITION TREASURY.

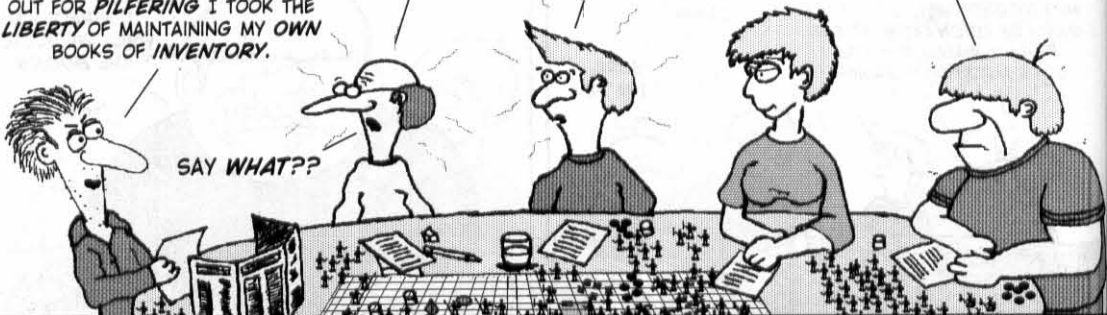
FOUL!! I CALL FOUL!! THERE'S NO WAY FOR HIM TO KNOW THAT.

ON THE CONTRARY, SIR. WHEN YOU ORDERED ME TO BE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR PILFERING I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF MAINTAINING MY OWN BOOKS OF INVENTORY.

UH OH....

WHY THAT SNEAKY LITTLE...

SAY WHAT???



"IMAGINE MY **SURPRISE** TO LEARN THAT VIRTUALLY **ALL** THE **GOLD** AND **JEWELS** ARE MISSING. ALL THE **MAGIC ITEMS** TOO. EVEN THAT **JADE PIG** WE FOUND IN **BARRINGER'S STUDY** IS MISSING."

UH...ER...GOOD WORK, **S-S-S-SARGE**. I'M...UH, I'M **GLAD** YER ON YER TOES. DO A **FULL SEARCH** OF **BARRINGER'S REALM** AND FIND THE **CULPRITS!!** THERE...UH...WILL BE SOME EXTRA **SHARES** IN IT FOR YA IF YOU **FIND** THOSE RESPONSIBLE.

"**AWFULLY GENEROUS** OF YOU SIR. BUT **THIS ONE** IS ON ME. REALLY DON'T HAVE TO GO **FAR YA** SEE..."

UH, I'M SLOWLY PUSHING THE **FANNY PACK** OF **HOLDING** UNDER THE **TABLE** WITH THE **TOE** OF MY **BOOT**.

-GULP-

**MCGREEVY LUNGES** FOR THE **FANNY PACK!!**

"I **BELIEVE** THE MISSING ITEMS WILL BE FOUND IN **THIS BAG, SIR**."

"**MEN! ARREST** THESE **SCOUNDRELS!!**"

I **GRAB** THE **FANNY PACK** FROM HIS HANDS AND **TOSS** IT INTO **BRIAN'S BAG** OF **HEFTY CAPACITY!!** THEN I **JUMP** IN IT MYSELF AND...

SORRY, DAVE. THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD... HUH? WHAT'S THAT? YOU WANT TO **THROW** THE... UH...ER...SURE. **OKAY!** I'LL **ALLOW** THAT.

**NO!!**

AND I'M **RIGHT** BEHIND HIM!

OF COURSE. NO PROBLEM.

**FIRP... DING... BLAST!!**  
WHAT THE **HELL** ARE YOU **DOING????!!!**

WE'RE GETTIN' THE **HELL** OUT OF **DODGE!** THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING! YOU **WITH** US?

B-B-BUT... YOU... -GASP- JUST **THREW** THE **FANNY...**? -ERP- INTO THE... -GURP-

BRIAN?

**GONE!** --MUMBLE MUMBLE-- **ALL GONE!!** IT WAS **RIGHT** -- MUMBLE-- IN THE **PALM** OF OUR HANDS. -SNIFF- **GONE!!**

BRIAN SNAP OUT OF IT! WE GRAB A COUPLE OF **HORSES** AND HIDE OUT IN **BAGWORLD** TIL THINGS **BLOW** OVER. WHAT'S THE **BIG DEAL?**

BRIAN, DEAR, ARE YOU **OKAY?**

BRIAN, YOU'RE **SCARING** ME.

MUMBLE MUMBLE

DID I **MISS** SOMETHING? WHAT THE **HELL'S WRONG** WITH HIM?

YOU POOR MISERABLE **FOOLS!!** DIDN'T **BRIAN** EVER EXPLAIN TO YOU WHAT HAPPENS IF ONE **TYPE II** BAG IS PLACED INSIDE **ANOTHER?**

I DUNNO. HE READ **J-DOC** TO US BUT WE DIDN'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION. WE FIGURED HE HAD ALL THAT **STUFF COVERED**.

WHY? -GULP- IS THAT **BAD??!!**

UH OH....

IS IT **BAD?**

THE BAG BEING PLACED INSIDE THE OTHER BAG IMMEDIATELY EXPLODES IN A FLASH OF BRILLIANT WHITE LIGHT. BOTH IT AND ITS CONTENTS ARE VAPORIZED. FORTUNATELY FOR YOU THIS HAPPENS INSTANTANEOUSLY. WHEN DAVE DROPPED THE FANNY PACK INTO THE BAG OF HEFTY CAPACITY IT EXPLODED, KNOCKING THE TWO OF YOU CLEAR.

MEANWHILE THE RECEIVING BAG SUFFERS A BAGZONE SHUFFLE! IT IS RANDOMLY REASSIGNED TO ANOTHER TYPE II BAG SOMEWHERE IN GARWEEZE WURLD.\*

DON'T WE GET A SAVING THROW?

YOU LOST ME, EXACTLY WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?



WHAT DOES IT MEAN? IT MEANS THAT BARRINGERS REALM ALONG WITH ALL ITS RICHES HAS SUDDENLY BEEN LOST TO YOU.

AS YOU PEEER INTO YOUR BAG OF HEFTY CAPACITY YOU FIND THAT ITS NEW BAGZONE CONTAINS A FEW BAGS OF LONG GRAIN RICE AND A WOODEN SPATULA.



### LATER THAT NIGHT, AT HAWG WALLERS...

I HAVEN'T SEEN SO MANY SAD FACES SINCE THEY CLOSED DOWN THE BUNNY RANCH.

YOU GUYS LOSE YER ASS AT THE BOATS OR SOMETHING?

WORSHHHTT! WE -HIC- HAD THE ENTIRE WURLD IN DA PALM OF OUR HANDS. BUT WE LID IT SWIP AWAY. FZZZZZTTT!! JESS LIKE DAT! GONE!

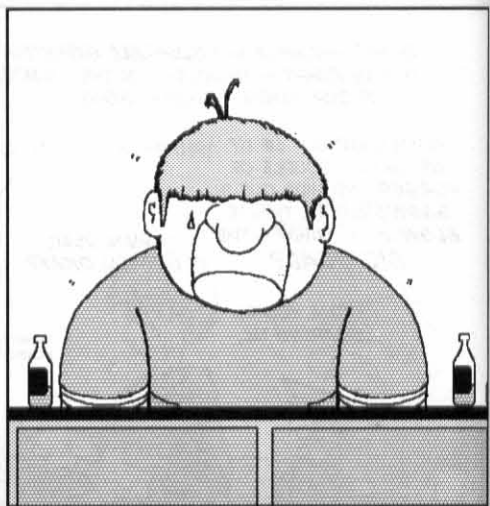
OH GAWD. WHEN I TINK OF DA EEE PEES WE WERE LOOKIN' AT. -GROAN- I BET WE HAD ENLUFF TA KICK US UP TA TWEENY FIFFT WEVEL -- EEEZEE! -HIC-



C'MON, BEEG GUY -HIC- BAWINGER'S REALM IZ STILL OUT D'ERE SUM WHEREZ. -HIC-

BESIDESTH, WE STILLTH KICKETH 'IS ASS!! -HIC- DAY CAN'T TAKE DAT AWAY FROM US. -HIC-

OH GAWD. 500 BARS OF MITHRIL. -SNIFF- G-G-GONE....



- FINIS -

\* See KODT#43 or download the J-Doc at [www.kenzerco.com](http://www.kenzerco.com) for a more detailed explanation of Bag Zones and Zone Shuffling.

# Who's Who in KODT

The very first KODT strip had two characters — B.A. Felton and Bob Herzog. Ten years and 400+ strips later, the cast of characters has swelled considerably. (*While we've never bothered making a detailed list of all the characters mentioned or appearing in KODT, at least one rabid fan puts the number at close to fifty*).

Since the beginning, inquisitive readers have wanted to know more and more about their favorite characters in the comic. Our answer was to begin running short bios on the characters in the back of each volume of **Bundle of Trouble** and **Tales From the Vault**.

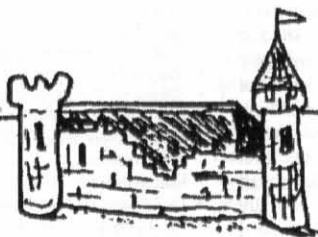
These "Who's Who" listings (*Which are basically short bios for the Knights themselves, along with members of the Black Hands, Hard Eight Enterprises etc.*) have proved to be popular with readers and are also invaluable to 'newbies' who have just stumbled across an issue of KODT for the first time and need to catch up.

Many fans, however, have been demanding bios for the more obscure members of the KODT family. Every day we receive mail from the curious demanding to know everything from, "What's the story with B.A.'s cat, Prowler?" to "Does Dave have a real job?" One reader recently asked, "Who's the chick on all GaryCon covers of KODT?"

Okay, Okay, we decided to answer a few of these questions and many, many more.

WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT THAT WE'D  
STILL BE AT THIS TABLE TEN YEARS  
LATER.

MY DAD FOR ONE.



© 9RB  
90

b.a.

## FELTON

B.A. (Boris Alphonzo not Bad Attitude or Bozo as his schoolmates called him) Felton is a devoted GameMaster, loyal to his group and the game known as **HackMaster™**. In his 30s, he still lives with his mom, but this has given him the time to perfect his craft. To make money, he drags himself away from his game designs to work the graveyard shift at the local Pizza-Go-Go.

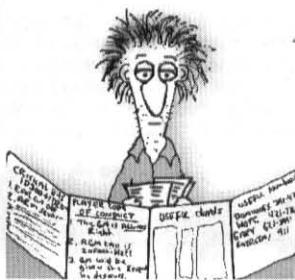
In his early years, B.A. played a Gnomish thief named Tar Markvar, a character fate frowned on, whose wit outshone his wisdom to the day of his death.

B.A.'s college career of anthropology and history study didn't last long; he dropped out to pursue his dream of being a game designer. He spent his life savings into developing and producing his first independent game, **DAWG: the RolePlaying Game™**. Unfortunately, the game failed and bombed; B.A. believes to this day the game didn't sell due to a negative review in *WatchDog Gamer* magazine (run by Nitro Furgueson). This was too much for B.A., who suffered a nervous breakdown and gave up gaming. A few years later, the sound of rolling dice called to him once more - he began gaming again and founded the **Knights of the Dinner Table**. At their peak, the KODT boasted a membership of 26; in the following years, membership has fluctuated and now dropped to a steady five.

B.A. has always tried to push the envelope both in features, description and imagination. The first adventure he ran as a GM was "The Hordes of Dark Devastation". Swiftly moving from pre-generated shelf adventures to his own adaptations and creations, he inflicted ran his first home-brewed adventure "It's A Rocky Road To Frankenstein's Castle" - the **HackMaster™** adaptation of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show", while Bob and Brian were the only Knights. His innovations didn't stop there - successfully mixing incompatible systems, employing the most intense game aids or taking his group into the 21st Century with GM aids and player systems are samples of B.A.'s dedication. Granted, not every one of his experiments is a complete success; sometimes the role of a GM must fly in the face of available facts. But his hard work, his innovations, his time at the **HackMaster™ Academy** and his willingness to spread the joy of **HackMaster™** to new players or new GameMasters give proof of B.A.'s caring, love and dedication to the phenomena that are Gary Jackson's **HackMaster™** and the **KODT**.

It hasn't always been easy for B.A.; his great work isn't always appreciated - or without dangerous incident either. Although B.A. has had some glorious moments, one of the darkest moments - for himself and for the Knights - was the day he chose to quit when fellow/competing GM Earl Slackmozer moved into the county and cheered to win the respect that was rightfully B.A.'s; and yet in the end, B.A. and the Knights won through. With a slice of pizza in one hand and the notes for his adventure with a home-brewed system, B.A. keeps the thoroughly well-deserved title... of GameMaster of the **Knights of the Dinner Table**.

The preferred system for B.A. and the Knights is Gary™ Jackson™'s **HackMaster™**, with its derivative supplements, **SpaceHack™** and **Cattlepunk™**.



## brian VAN HOOSE

The almost perfect phrase to describe Brian van Hoose is "idiot savant" - minus the idiot bit. A young lifetime of devotion to his computer hobby has instilled in Brian the precision required to make him what he is today - a wal-

ling, talking, nearly perfect, unstoppable, organic **HackMaster™** machine, living and breathing The Game.

Brian's early computer hobby developed into running his own Internet connected BB5, a hobby that helps support him. His other means of financial support comes from the - again, very precise - hobby/business of miniatures, painting and selling. Mindful of the economics of the situation, a van Hoose painted miniature comes in three styles of increasing quality and price: *Slop-N-Go*, *Table-Top* and *Museum Qualities*. His other hobbies include his beloved Fantasy and Science Fiction TV shows and novels (note the *Babylon 5* mural painted on his van or his *Green Lantern t-shirt*). Then again, he also claims to have been abducted by aliens. Which way the therefore goes on that one, nobody is sure.

His personal life obviously reflects the flaw points which balance his otherwise precise lifestyle. Outside the Knights, personal expression is one of Brian's weaker points. Brian himself is a quiet, withdrawn man, apparently barely capable of stringing three words together into a clear sentence. For that matter, Brian also - in spite of a decent tenor singing voice - appears to be so unnerved by the idea of having to sing he breaks out in hives. Brian's Armor of Reticence, however, has its weaknesses. Once shattered, the resultant explosion is terrifying - and usually leads to the table being picked up and flipped over in a mad rush of blind rage. Brian is also quick to defend himself - when B.A.'s 82 year old grandfather had a flashback and attacked Brian "the Japanese sniper", Brian defended himself admirably... or at least it was fairly admirable until Pappy Felton crawled from the room and Battle-Rage Brian dragged him back in by the ankles. And all the gawds in all the heavens help you if you mention something like Alexis to him now (Alexis? His make-believe girlfriend).

His home would be declared a biohazard if ever inspected by the appropriate health authorities - scary, furry green things growing in the refrigerator, dust that scares asthmatics into fits and a bizarrely adhesive substance on the floor of the bathroom. Best not to ask.

Brian's devotion to and mastery of **HackMaster™** is unparalleled, possibly superior to any other single person in the history of **HackMaster™**. Owner of what is probably the most complete collection of **HackMaster™** manuals, articles and supplements outside the offices of **Hard8™**, the purpose of the manuals in Brian's case is simply to provide proof for others - Brian himself is an living, breathing encyclopaedia, a repository for virtually every rule, line, table or piece of **HackMaster™** information there is, down to the footnotes and page numbers, letter perfect. His calculations of remaining hit points, ratios, percentages, probabilities, experience or saving point values, body weights and statistics put Seymour Cray to shame.

In recent history, Brian has never been seen to act as a GameMaster. In spite of his astonishing **HackMaster™** ability, his Third Place Award in the Saginaw RPG Tourney of 1978 and the fact that he himself introduced B.A. to **HackMaster™**, Brian underwent a terrible trauma at GaryCon'89, some terrible, mysterious event that caused him to actually give up role-playing for almost a year. Fortunately for the institution of role-playing, Brian recovered and went from strength to strength from there - except for the fact that Brian never acts as a GM anymore.

Brian's training is, of course, supplemented by his attendance at the 1987 and 1993 **HackMaster™** camp (at which he attended the same ten-day demi-human culture classes and was awarded a badge for his Orc-speak prowess. His other great service to the world of **HackMaster™** was his proposal of the Gamer Achievement Awards, a concept he is now developing with the help of Bob and Dave. Brian proposed the GAA to the **Gary Jackson Academy Of Role-Playing**, designed to be worn beneath convention name tags and at other formal gaming events.

But Brian's phenomenal mastery of **HackMaster™** isn't the only feature that makes him a terrifyingly good player - the other factors are his ruthlessness, tactical cunning and his ability to exploit any shoddy rule.

### Examples of Brian's frightening cunning include the times he:

- Killed the Vampire lord Vardania armed only with a wooden stake, sacrificing himself to save his comrades - whilst being a first-level character
- Saved the entire crew of the **HackCruiser Warmonger** from untimely death at the hands of space-pirates with his knowledge of mass-transporter systems and explosives
- Saved the party from being slaves of Rot Gut the **Swack-Iron Dragon** by tricking it into polymorphing into a dung beetle
- Tricked B.A. into running a **HackMaster™** game when the party should have been playing **SpaceHack™**
- Took over the entire town of Muskeegie in **CattlePunk™**
- Rescued the entire party from imprisonment and execution with his Teleportation ring
- Created the **Warmonger** Science Officer

### Brian's characters have included:

- **Crimson Lotus**, **Black Lotus** & **Benny the Mage** in the ongoing **KODT HackMaster™** adventures
- **Shotgun Billy** and **Big Jim Murdock** in **CattlePunk™**
- **The Leader of the Green Empire of Asia** in **Risque™**
- **The Warmonger's Science Officer** in **SpaceHack™**
- **Nigel Molenski** in **HackNoia™**
- **A Caped Crusader** in **Heroes And Zeros™**

## 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 Jesus** in Wisconsin.

Bob Herzog is one of the world's last true gamers, a living embodiment of Gary Jackson's rallying cry, "The game must go on!". Still living with his parents and watching soaps, Bob's devotion to the game is unflagging and unquestionable; even when his temper and sharp tongue lose him several jobs, regardless of societal, peer or parental pressure, no sacrifice or hardship is too great for Bob and the game.

Bob's role-playing adventures away from the table are further testament. Rope burns, a \$500 dentist bill and a temporary makeover were just entrees. Bob's crowning glory was the nationally publicized Furgueson's Folly - a boy scout troop's eight day foray into the steam tunnels of Muncie led by none other than the Lord of Steam, Nitro Furgueson. In that week, Bob looked death in the face and lived to tell the tale, leaving a big piece of himself in those sewer tunnels.

Great Hack'n'Slasher that Bob is, his strengths do not lie in GameMastering or adventure writing, as evidenced by his earlier attempts after watching The Wizard of Oz and once mapping a dungeon after the design of his own house.

Bob's most touching quirk is his devotion to those blessed tools of the RolePlayer, his dice. Bob's dice collection is one of the largest known in Muncie, especially his pride and joy, the lucky ten-sider. His attachment to his favorite polyhedron was most evident when it was lost at a local convention; Bob's "Have you seen this die" poster campaign became an unavoidable feature of nearly every vertical surface at the Ball State Campus. But Bob's dice fetish goes beyond mere love; when Nitro dared touch Bob's dice, Bob lost it and quote "went mediæval on Nitro's ass" unquote.

Bob's devotion to the game was most evident in what may have been the second darkest age of the KODT - the day Bob's dad (an adjuster for Hoe And Harness Farmer's Insurance) saw a 60 Minutes Special on HackMaster™, searched Bob's room and found Bob's HackMaster™ manuals. On that day, Bob's dad forced him to get a real job and banned Bob from gaming.

A comrade had fallen and the Knights had to play for Bob who could not. For weeks, the Knights played with a succession of substitutes, including the Gamer Temp Corps's Ty Ferfel, the young and unsocial Newt Forager and a suc-

cession of other... erm... players. In the end, it was only quick thinking on Bob's part that allowed him to return to the Table. Unfortunately, the tightly stretched web of far-fetched lies and damning deceit was torn when Dave was spotted alive and well by Bob's dad. In the end, all the precautions came to naught and Bob's dad discovered Bob's game again. A deal was made - if Bob could maintain a steady job following in his father's footsteps as an adjuster for H&H Farmer's Insurance, Bob could continue the game. Although this has damaged his dream of becoming a professional role-player, it has also strengthened Bob's intense need to hack and slash.

Bob's most famous and favorite character is the one and only Knuckles the Sixth, King of the Wall Climbers. Knuckles is a dwarven thief/fighter with a braided beard, brandishing a crossbow or axe, wearing studded leather armor, a hooded cape and a ring on the middle finger of his left hand. Knuckles's back is tattooed with arcane symbols, imprinted on his flesh by the hand of (Brian's mage) Teflon Billy, making Knuckles one of Teflon Billy's two walking, talking emergency spellbooks. Although the opportunity doesn't come up often, Knuckles is also a gourmet chef (with a 75% proficiency in gourmet food preparation).

It takes a moment to notice his left leg - instead of a leg of flesh and blood, it appears to be a wooden leg, made of fine blood-wood, adorned with ivory inlays and gilded with pure gold. Knuckles was unjustly sentenced to losing his left leg (hacked off at the knee) as punishment for the murder of a beggar in Lord Gilead's city of Fangaerie. Before they left the city, the party's torch-bearer Knobby Foot found the legendary Wooden Leg of Dwarven Pirate Sturm Pyre at the Fangaerie Bazaar.

Knuckles's favorite steed is Mike the Dwarven Warhorse, successor to Door Stop. Bob/Knuckles values Mike very highly - not only as a companion or beast of burden, but also as an effective lethal weapon. Bob's/Knuckles's second favorite weapon is his Axe of Doom. The Axe is second only to his favorite weapon - found by Shadow Pete in the Halls of the Mountain Mage, the Crossbow of Doom has been handed down to Knuckles and is his constant companion of chaos which he uses with various bolts, including the Bolt of Torment, +6 Bolt of Despair, +8 Bolt of Devastation, Bolt of Reaving, Bolt of Threshing and the Bolt of Skewering.

When the Knights made the switch to being sponsored by Kenzer and Company, Bob and Dave nearly didn't make it - the brass were considering losing the Dangerous Duo and replacing them with a pair of power-gamers. In the end, an impassioned plea by B.A. and Sara saved them from grisly fates as temps in the Gamer Temp Corps or as miniature painters.



bob  
HERZOG

From humble beginnings, Dave Bozwell has embraced role-playing with a passion, empathy and loyalty worthy of awards, rarely matched in the many worlds of HackMaster™.

As a welcome break from his Ball State U. courses of cultural anthropology and dance theory, Dave was introduced to role-playing by Bob in the days when B.A., Bob, Johnny Kizinski and Brian were the only Knights. In his rebel years, Dave was the sort of guy who'd paint the words "IN THE NADS" on the side of a water tower and risk his "life" saving a Paintball-War Buddy, paving the way for the on-the-edge, bored-with-tiny-details, true-blooded, hungry-for-victory Hack'n'Slasher that he was to become.

His introduction to the subtleties and intricacies of HackMaster™ was an historic, solemn moment. A few early RPG life experiences prepared Dave for the rigors of RPG life ahead; most notably, playing in Nitro Furgueson's "Trial By Ordeal" LARP and the accidental target-end testing of Weird Pete's experimental gasoline-powered Fireball Generator.

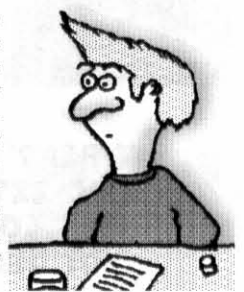
For a long time, HackMaster was "just a game" to Dave, much like Paintball, Risk or Nintendo. He'd play one session with the Knights and miss another two... until that fateful hour when Dave and his adventuring human fighter El Ravager discovered one of the powerful relics of the HackMaster™ polyverse... the HackMaster +12. HackMaster +12 A major relic of the HackMaster™ polyverse, the HackMaster +12 wielded by El Ravager (a.k.a. Dave Bozwell) is one of the only four known to exist on Garweeze Würld. Made of pure Dwarven steel, a HackMaster +12 is forged in the belly of Blind Luvia, tempered in a vat of the blood of a fearsome Swack-Iron Dragon. The mystic runes of warning and power on the blade are etched by the fifty most skilled and blessed blind Dwarven craftsmen of Garweeze Würld; the blade is then polished with the chest hair of Thor himself. The eldritch Death Rune imprinted on the hilt is the earthly manifestation of a powerful spell; cast upon a victim, it steals their soul and banishes them from the world of the living forever. Twinned with the necromantic power of Vlad'neer of Robinloft in the form of the Pommel

Stone of Vlad'neer, this fantastic weapon becomes the most fearsome, unstoppable force for swift and deadly justice in the HackMaster™ polyverse, a mighty HackMaster +15 (Batteries not included). Dave's attachment to his HackMaster +12 is almost like no other - when faced with the possibility of finding the Pommel Stone of Vlad'neer (see above), Dave's response was a simple and profound expression of joy. The only other time Dave has ever expressed such astonishment was when the Knights played an April Fool's joke on Dave, making him think that his HackMaster +12 had been destroyed by a curse.

Since becoming such a devoted player Dave has, of course, tried his hand at being a GameMaster. His success can be summed up very simply.

The only element of the HackMaster™ polyverse that Dave could love as much as his HackMaster +12 was his faithful mount. Not his good steed the horse Clover-Flax, his equine companion - but Clover-Flax's predecessor, Chelsic. Chelsic began life as a cow peacefully munching grass in a field near a palace/castle of an evil lord. It was Dave/El Ravager's finely honed instincts that led to the discovery of this seemingly innocuous cow's incredible properties. Even though Dave/El Ravager took the best care he could of the bovine she ran away, taking the to-hit bonus Dave was sure she gave El Ravager with her.

Dave's most famous character is, of course, El Ravager the HackMaster +12-wielding human Fighter. It bears mentioning that El Ravager's back is tattooed with arcane symbols, imprinted on his flesh by the hand of (Brian's mage) Teflon Billy, making El Ravager one of Teflon Billy's two walking, talking emergency spellbooks.



dave  
BOZWELL

Sara Felton is the exception that proves the rule. Where the rest of the Knights Of the Dinner Table are the fire, heart and soul, Sara is the cooler, wiser head of the group, the perfect foil to their impetuosity - a consummate professional in the business of HackMaster™.

Moving from Wisconsin to Muncie, the home town of her cousin B.A., led her to an invitation to join the Knights. The wealth of experience she brought to the Table was more than anyone expected - role-playing for ten years, regional champion of the Wisconsin Gary Jackson Role-Playing Tourney for four years running and attended the HackMaster™ camp in 1992 (*spending ten days studying demi-human cultures*).

Sara even stretches to the role of GameMaster with ease, her latest triumph being convincing a bunch of sexist Hack'N'Slash maniacs to put aside their usual characters for a night and play female characters, warming her up for an upcoming GaryCon.

Sara is quite the perfectionist; for her, the art of HackMaster™ and role-playing is more of a science to be carefully and properly executed, whether in the playing, GameMastering or even tasks such as mere mapping. Her role-playing is technically near-perfect, with her ability to either suppress or use her personal feelings to enhance her role-playing. She has earned her respect - not only from the people who live in the many worlds of HackMaster™, but even from the most impossible taskmasters of the game - the Knights Of the Dinner Table.

Sara has reflexes that would scare a striking cobra. Those instant reflexes, however, are generally used for only one thing around the table. The second someone makes a sexist comment, Sara's hand is tightly gripped on their shirt, pulling them into range of the fist she has cocked and ready to launch into the face of the offender.

Unless a sexist comment has been made, Sara maintains her cool at all times. Sure, she regrets the loss of her favorite character Zayre the Barbarian, but she keeps the perspective that Zayre was just a fictional construct defined by numbers on paper. A cool, calm professional, Sara is ready to move on with her expertise in the game that is HackMaster™.

sara  
FELTON



**BE SURE TO RESERVE YOUR COPY OF  
THE NEXT ISSUE AT YOUR FAVORITE  
GAME OR COMIC SHOP!!**

**I READ MINE WITH A  
TWO LITER BOTTLE OF  
JOLT COLA AND A BAG  
OF SHOCK TARTS!!**



**I READ MINE WITH A  
PACK OF CAMELS AND  
A FIFTH OF JACK!!**



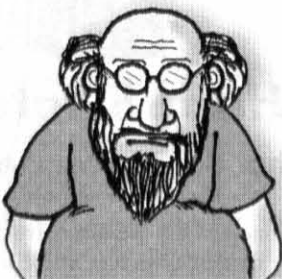
**"WHAT DO YOU READ YOURS WITH??!!"**

## nitro FERGUESON



Victor Ferguson became known as the *Lord of Steam* when he adapted the HackMaster rules to live-action play and began taking hand picked groups of players on late night forays into the labyrinth of steam tunnels beneath Ball State University. After 'Ferguson's Folly' made national headlines (Victor and his group were lost for 7 days prompting a massive rescue search), the steam tunnels were secured and dozens of entrances were sealed with concrete. There are several contradicting accounts of what happened weeks later on the evening of January 5th, 1987 but it involved a satchel of C-4 high explosive, a miscalculation of the expected blast radius, and a medical evacuation of the Campus Administration Building which collapsed during an attempt to breach the steam tunnels. The incident earned Victor the nickname 'Nitro' and 5 years probation. Nitro has been president of the **Black Hand Gaming Society** for 8 years, taking over from Weird Pete.

## 'weird' PETE ASHTON



"Weird" Pete Ashton is the sole proprietor of a local game store called the **Games Pit**. He is proud of the fact that he was one of the co-designers of the cult classic role-playing game, **Lynch Mob™**. Pete loves to relate the story of how he was burned by his partners and lost "millions". Pete is always available for advice but oddly seems to be very bitter about the hobby he loves so much. He was a major stockholder in **Hard 8 Enterprises** but sold his shares mere days before HackMaster was released. Pete co-founded the **Black Hand Gaming Society** along with Nitro and served as president for the first four years of the club's existence. The backroom of Pete's shop serves as home table for the Society.

## flak jack MONTY



Jack "Flak Jack" Monty is well known in Muncie, Indiana as a consequence of his highly publicized 1994 trial *People v. Monty*. Jack was convicted of aggravated assault, endangering the public and a half dozen other charges as a result of his commando-style assault on a city bus armed with water balloons and several auto-fire equipped paintball guns. Jack was playing a live-action game of **Urban Assassin™** and was attempting to 'take out' several players who had sought refuge on a passing bus. The judge was not amused and sentenced Jack to six months confinement. The sentence was waived, however, on the condition that Jack enlist in the armed forces. Jack joined the Army for a two year hitch. DoD cutbacks allowed him to end his tour early and return to Muncie to attend BSU on the GI Bill while completing his military obligation in the Indiana National Guard. He joined the **Black Hands** soon afterwards and earned a reputation for being a formidable player.

## stevil VAN HOSTLE



Stevil has a day job administering customer warranty claims. For years he satisfied his gaming itch through freelance work for various gaming industry publications. However, his divorce a couple of years back freed up time for him to get back into real gaming. He met Gordon Sheckberry at work [prior to his unfortunate(?) accident] and 'Gordo' subsequently introduced him to the **Black Hands**. He now commutes to Muncie every Friday night from his apartment in suburban Indianapolis.

Gordon 'Gordo' Sheckberry graduated from Ball State with a Chemical Engineering degree in his back pocket. (Although never proven, it has long been suspected that he cooked up the batch of C-4 Nitro used to level the Administration Building). Gordo was involved in a bizarre industrial accident that seriously impaired his vision and resulted in the loss of ALL his body hair. He is famous for his bad toupee and coke bottle-lens glasses.

The accident bestowed Gordo with the gift of total lifetime disability allowing him to game almost daily with various groups around Delaware county. (Thus he is the envy of gamers everywhere.) Gordo has been a member of the **Black Hands** for four years.



## gordo SHECKBERRY



## newt FORAGER



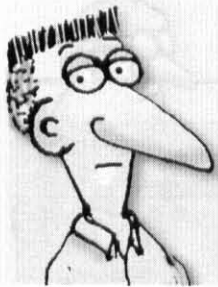
Newt was the only child of a career military couple. He spent his childhood either being dragged around the globe or tossed back and forth between various uncles and grandparents. Perhaps that's why Newt has trouble making friends and fitting in. He wet his feet in gaming by playing every play-by-mail game he could track down and earned a bit of notoriety by toppling the five year powergrip of the top player in the PBM game, **Tribes of Angst** and essentially shutting down the game. Later he was introduced to HackMaster through a MUDD on the internet and embraced the game. After running through every Solo-Adventure published he set out on a quest to find a group to play with. Unfortunately he's finding it difficult to find a group who will tolerate his personality quirks.



## gary JACKSON

Gary Jackson is fondly known as the “Gawdfather of Gaming” by millions of gaming enthusiasts around the world. His failing wargame company, Hard 8 Enterprises, was about to close its doors for good in 1977 when Gary tossed the dice on a hastily produced role-playing game, *The HackMasters of EverKnight™*. The first print run was quickly snapped off the shelves and soon frantic distributors were calling Gary’s three-man

shop with pleas of “More!” Gary has been riding Hackmaster spin-offs ever since. For those who want to know what ‘hard eight’ means, it refers to the game of craps where Gary has blown thousands of dollars of company money over the years on his frequent trips to Vegas.



## edmund FINLEY

Edmund Finley was once Gary Jackson’s paperboy. One morning he was coerced into filling an empty chair

during a play-testing session of HackMaster and became ensnared in ‘Gary’s Game’. That was twenty years ago and Edmund has been on the Hard 8 team ever since (though he’s only been on the payroll for the past four months). Edmund wears the proud title of “Director of Research and Development” and recently oversaw the production of his first written work, *Abe, Babes and RollerBlades™*, described as a “sexy, zany, time-travelling romp through history and fashion”.



## Hard 8 Enterprises® What do you want to Hack today?™

Jo Jo is one of Gary Jackson’s favorite, “yes-men”. When he bought out *Battle Cry Games* in 1984, Jo Jo Zeke came as part of the deal. For years Jo Jo was considered the ‘*King of Hex-and-Cardboard-Counter*’ wargames and has over forty-two titles under his belt. His most famous game design was ‘*The Pope’s Panzers*’ a ‘what-if’ wargame simulation that rocked war gaming circles around the country. The sequel, ‘*V-Rockets at the Vatican*’ earned him his first Gamers’ Choice Award for best game design. Jo Jo is now responsible for writing much of the flavor text for HackMaster adventures (something he has a knack for), and crunching rules. It is rumored he lives in his office at Hard Eight Enterprises.



## jo jo ZEKE

## the antignano BROTHERS

Very few people have ever seen the infamous Antignano Brothers. Those who have are usually reluctant to talk about it. It’s known that Gary Jackson has kept them on the payroll for years. Their checks are usually annotated with the cryptic words, “for various services rendered”. It is said that Vince and Tony Antignano wear grey, pinstripe suits with twenty-sider cuff links. A few years ago, Nitro Ferguson publicly insulted Gary Jackson at a convention. A few days later, he FedExed a letter of apology to Gary. It is rumored the Antignano Brothers paid him a ‘visit’.



**pete**  
**SKIPOWSKI**

Pete has been with Gary Jackson since the beginning. In fact they met in college where they used to play epic sessions of MERC

ARMOR and BLAZING GUNS. When Gary started his company, Pete came onboard as his first full-time game designer (working for shares in the beginning). In recent years the friendship has been strained as Gary's projects have repeatedly over-shadowed Pete's pet projects. In fact Gary usually targets Pete for his much publicized verbal abuse and ego-bruising. Still, Pete is loyal to Gary and Hard 8 Enterprises and rarely complains.

Waco Bob is one of the original share holders of Hard 8. He really doesn't do much at the company other than agree with virtually every word that comes out of Gary's mouth. Waco has done well, financially, working with Gary and that seems to be enough to have earned his undying devotion. Waco does sit in on every playtesting session he can. But since he seems to love every game he plays, regardless of its flaws, his value as a playtester leaves a lot to be desired. He invariably fills out his playtester evaluation forms with, "This game is the next HackMaster!!"

**'waco' bob**  
**FORSEY**



Tuley isn't an employee at Hard 8, nor is he considered an intern. He originally came to the company as part of a Summer Playtester program. He was tricked into running the company's customer service department by being led to believe it was a 'virtual corporation computer game' and that he was earning points based on how well he 'played' the game, which involved answering the phone and working out 'variable solutions' to each call. No one has mentioned the 'game' in quite some time and Tuley seems content to live in his office, occasionally order out for pizza and man his station.



**tuley**  
**PRISWINKLE**



**norman**  
**BOWSER**

Norman Bowser is a role player who made good and realized his dream. He started out as a freelancer and began to pump so much HackMaster material into the Hard 8 offices that

he was eventually asked to come on board. A few years ago he replaced Earl Slackmozer as the editor of HackJournal magazine and has been doing a bang up job of scratching the 'hack-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 fip **Heroes and Zeroes**, but was reassigned due to a rash of complaints following the release of H&Z's **Background Tool Chest** supplement. Gary, uncharacteristically emotional, felt terrible about this and has promised to make it up to Timmy by bringing his favorite TV hero, Xena the Warrior Princess, to the next HackCon.

# WHO'S WHO IN KODT

Not much is known about this mysterious figure. Many gamers know her by sight even though they've never actually met her.

Bridget was introduced to gaming initially through *SpellJacked* by an ex-boyfriend. She later became enthralled with live-action gaming such as *"Vampyre: Lords of Darkness."*

Her costumes have made her an icon. *"Did you see what Bridget was wearing?"* is frequently heard at any con she is attending.



**bridget**  
**KEATING**



*Bridget stylin' at GaryCon '98 (left) & '99 (right),*



**morey "pappy"**  
**FELTON**

Pappy Felton is B.A.'s 83-year-old grandfather. He served proudly as a *'Fighting Sea Bear'* during World War II.

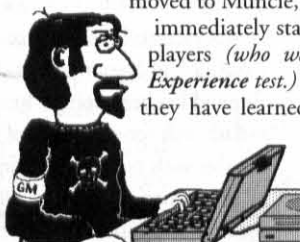
His unit was involved with building airstrips, following the Marines as they island-hopped across the South Pacific.

No one knows the full story, but apparently Pappy was left behind on Tulagi when the Japanese re-occupied the island for a short period. Alone for weeks, he eluded his would-be captors. Later, after being rescued, he was sent back to the 'States a hero.

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.

**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.

**tyrone**  
**FERFEL**

Ty Ferfel is the driving force behind the **Gamer Temp Corps**. He came up with the idea when a campaign he was playing in was wrecked because several regular players dropped out with little notice. Ty and his friends volunteered to fill the occasional 'empty chair' for GameMasters who found themselves in a similar situation. Ty even managed to talk **Weird Pete** into becoming a sponsor for the program after the local chapter of the **HackMasters Players' Association** refused to endorse the **Gamer Temp Corps**. Ty, who happens to be a nephew of **Nitro Ferguson**, was once a **Black Hand** but was drummed out after a physical altercation with **Stevil van Hostle**. (Had he agreed to wear the 'hubcap of shame' as punishment he could have stayed.)



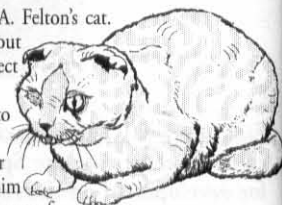
**colonel**  
**PROWLER**

Colonel Prowler (also known as "Full Bird") is B.A. Felton's cat. Prowler's ferocity and propensity to attack without warning has earned him a great deal of fear and respect from those around him.

Anyone who visits the Felton household is wise to heed the advice, "Best to give him (Prowler) a wide berth."

It is rumored that Prowler was once a loveable, even affectionate pet but after siring hundreds of litters in the neighborhood, B.A. was court-ordered to have him neutered. It is this event which is believed to have caused Prowler's sudden change of temperament. The fifty pound cat has been blamed for the strange disappearances of several neighborhood dogs (including a Great Dane named Moulder) but no direct proof has ever been presented to support this.

He has a fondness for dice, metal figures and many other items which, once claimed as his own, are tucked away in his bedding in the corner of the laundry room. It is believed hundreds of 'lost' dice are among his horde.



## troy quincy WATSON

Troy became something of a celebrity when he hosted a talk show on BSU's campus radio station. In Troy's own words he's 'not a gamer.' He refuses to sit in as a player and enjoys GMing because it's the only creative outlet he can find time for with his extremely heavy course load. As a GM he's fairly easy going. Troy is studying Finance and Media Relations. He's also active in the Student Board and Indiana Young Republicans.



Vincent is attending Ball State on a soccer scholarship. During his sophomore year he changed his major from Business Management to Marketing. He openly admits that one of the main reasons he likes role-playing is because he can 'screw around' with people's heads while in character and rattle their cages.

There was a bit of a scandal involving Vince a while back which threatened his scholarship—something to do with photographs.



## vincent DWYER

John Lee attended BSU for a while but dropped out because he couldn't decide on a major. He managed to keep his Student I.D., however so he can still use the campus facilities. He considers himself a 'ladies man' and only became involved with gaming because an old girlfriend played and introduced him to Troy and his group.

Troy used worked at Big Big Video where he met Sara Felton. The two dated for awhile and John managed to lure Sara away from the Knights of the Dinner Table as a player and convince her to joining Troys Boys. Later Sara discovered she was being used, (Troy's Boys needed a female player for the Hackmaster Tournament) and the two split up.



## john LEE

## TROY'S BOYS

a.k.a. "THE BOTTOM FEEDERS"

Troy Watson and his players don't really consider themselves a gaming club. They simply don't take their weekly game that seriously and rarely participate in local conventions or tournaments. (With the exception of an occasional HackMaster Tournament if a cash prize is involved.)

They consider their style of play to be superior to those of most other groups and have little interest in socializing or having contact with other gamers who they consider, "weird".

It is for this reason they are largely invisible from the point of view of Muncie's gaming community.

They jokingly refer to themselves as the "Bottom Feeders" because during freshman year they pledged several fraternities but, with the exception of Troy, were never initiated.



## pat 'lanky' GROGAN

Lanky learned to role-play as a child when he was forced to sit in on his teenage uncle's campaigns and play the parts of various NPCs. Perhaps it's for that reason he often seems bored with the game and distracted. He takes his gaming even less seriously than the others in the group. He's been know to excuse himself to use the restroom and never return. No one seems to mind though. It's

just part of his personality and most people accept him as he is. Lanky is an engineering major considered to be something of a 'wiz kid' when it comes mathematics. He often makes decisions in the game based on his calculations of the odds and percentages involved in any given situation.

Cody Winkle is a 'floater', one of many HackMaster players in Muncie who just can't seem to find a group where he fits in. Even the Black Hands (who are known for taking those 'black sheep' players no one else will have) will have him. 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")

Cody 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.

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 "Talking 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. He's listed on the Gamer Temp Corps database.



## cody WINKLE

Logan is one of the 'old guard' Gamemasters of the Muncie area. His group, "Logan's Heroes" have won more Regional HackMaster Tournaments than any other group. Logan learned to 'sling-dice' under the watchful eye of Brian van Hoose back when he was still GMing. Eventually Brian tired of Logan's pre-tenacious attitude - the last straw being his adoption of a haughty faux-british accent - and booted him out. Since no one stepped up to adopt him into their group, he was forced to begin his own. His style is best described as harsh & meticulous, brooking no dissent from 'rules lawyers' (having been trained by the best in the business, he knows all the tricks of the trade.) His players have become formidable gaming machines under his "no crap" regime. It's worth mentioning that Logan is widely despised.

After rescuing several gamers who became lost in the BSU steamtunnels while playing live-action HackMaster, Officer Tandy was sent by his department to attend a B.A.H.M. Seminar (Bothered About Hack Master - an organization whose members are convinced that HackMaster and other fantasy role-playing games like it are inherently evil and constitute a threat to young, impressionable minds.) He has taken a personal interest in various Muncie gaming -groups which he feels are "breeding grounds" for trouble.



## doug TANDY

## logan FOREMAX

# hawk waller's kick-

This seedy bar on Muncie's west-side has a reputation for being a place 'best avoided'.

It is said that even the Police are afraid to enter. (If duty should require them to do so, they usually show up in great numbers.)

Strangely enough, the bar has attracted the attention of several gamers in the area who have come to the conclusion that the bar and its clientele are more 'bark' than bite.

These days, it's not all that uncommon to see someone rolling up a character at a side table or discussing last night's game with a few friends.



eli 'hawg'  
WALLERS

burglar one night. After pistol whipping the perp with his own pistol, Hawg let him go.

No one can actually remember Hawg ever using the weapon but few have any doubt that he wouldn't hesitate to use it — After all, he bears numerous scars which testify to the fact that he's not one to shy away from a fight.

Despite his reputation as a tough guy, most customers feel a certain degree of comfort in the fact that he runs a tight ship. He's a no-nonsense type of guy. Keep things peaceful and pay your tab and you'll find he's easy enough to get along with.

Hawg is the owner of the Kickstand Palace. To hear him tell it, he was just a drifter passing through town until he won the bar in a game of poker.

It's a good story and Hawg is known for telling some tall-ones so it's anyone's guess what the truth really is.

Hawg carries a gun which he claims to have wrestled out of the hands of a would-be

Switch earned his nickname during the great heyday of Farm Implement theft rings which were rampant in America's heartland during the mid 80's.

His speciality was 'switching' serial numbers on combines and thrashers before they were loaded onto flatbed trailers destined (eventually) for the Ukraine where they were in hot demand.

Eventually a Department of Agriculture special task force got wind of such doings and threw out its nets. Unfortunately for Switch he was quickly ensared. When the Feds had enough "dirt" [literally AND figuratively] on Switch they tightened their noose and convinced him to "squeal". Once he started it was hard to shut him up.

To avoid prosecution, Switch became an all too willing informant. He did his job well and with great zeal.

Most of his former partners in crime went to prison. (Including Crutch, who to this day isn't aware that Switch sold him out.)

These days, Switch is just another petty-thug operating beneath the radar (for the most part) of the local police. He manages to work just enough 'jobs' to keep himself in 'walking around money'.

Switch has a weakness for gambling in all its forms — be it cock fighting, dog racing, horses, craps, slots, bear baiting, or his favorite - Penny Pachinko.

This means he's usually broke.



martin 'switch'  
WUJCIK

Crutch is an ex-con. A two-time loser who's been put on notice. If he screws up one more time and finds himself on the wrong side of the law -- he goes down the river for good.

He's a permanent fixture at Hawg Wallers (though according to the terms of his probation he's forbidden to even step foot inside a bar. Then again, the police don't exactly do walk-thrus at Hawg's.)

Even with his record, it's not hard for those who take the time to get to know him that he basically has a good heart. He tends to be a loyal friend and is definitely the kind of guy you'd want in your corner during a fight.

It is this blind loyalty, however, that often gets him in trouble. Recently Crutch discovered role-playing and something about Cattlepunk clicked with him. He's now a member of Patty's Perps and struggling to win the approval of the other players.



leslie 'crutch'  
HUMPHRIES

Whitey was once a member of Knights of the Dinner Table. He left shortly after Brian VanHoose hung up the GM Screen because he didn't like B.A. Felton's style of play. After drifting from group to group for a few years he founded the Dorm Troopers and lured Grover Grundig, Bob Herzog and Brian VanHoose away from the Knights to join his club.

Although Bob and Brian eventually drifted back to B.A.'s table, Sheila and Grover stayed on. Whitey has been censured by the H.M.P.A. on four separate occasions, losing his GM-credentials twice. He has a reputation for being lax when it comes to the rules and too easy on his players.



whitey  
MORAN

Grover "Da Crit Man" Grundig is perhaps best known for having run the longest-running character in Delaware County (Iron Face Willie.)

When Willie was finally killed the entire gaming community was shaken with the news.

Grover dropped out of gaming for a short time after causing the Dorm Troopers to be disqualified from last year's HackMaster Tourney.



grover  
GRUNDIG

## THE DORM TROOPERS

The Dorm Troopers was originally a splinter-group of the Knights of the Dinner Table who broke off to form their own table.

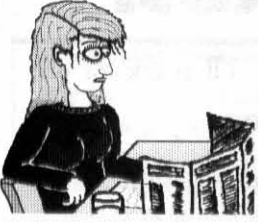
The D.T.'s are highly competitive though in recent months they have suffered from a drop off in membership.



sheila  
HOROWITZ

Sheila was introduced to role-playing by Dave Bozwell who dated her for a short time. During the relationship, she frequently played with the Knights of the Dinner Table but was never allowed to officially join. (At the time the group had a "No Girls" policy) The relationship cooled after Sheila and B.A. got into a fist fight in his front yard. (B.A. accused her of cheating). Sheila eventually hooked up with the Dorm Troopers. She's generally accepted as one of the guys when it comes to gaming. Sheila stirred up a bit of trouble a few years ago when she tried to run a male character in a regional HackMaster Tournament at Gaming Dick's Game Emporium. When Gaming Dick refused to allow her to enter the tournament she lodged a complaint with the H.M.P.A. Her case brought about changes to the Tournament Rules and depending on your position, made her either a hero or a villain.

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 'positive reinforcement' and other teaching tools from her classroom to the gaming table. Patty had 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.

Mona is a free spirit with plenty of time to game due to the fact that her children have grown and she was left a sizeable inheritance by a great uncle. With her husband gone too, Mona answers to no one — something she openly confesses to being proud of. She speaks her mind and makes no apologies for doing so. Even so, most people seem to enjoy Mo's company. When she isn't gaming she does volunteer work around the community, including James Whitcomb Riley Elementary, where she met Patty.



mona "mo"  
WERT

PATTY'S  
PERPS



Eddie Ramirez has been known as "Tank" since high school, when he was named League Commissioner for the Fantasy Football League. He is extremely proud of his unique character -- a Frost Giant Thief named Kraven. He is currently "tutoring" Crutch on the finer aspects of roleplaying and "playing well with others".

eddie "tank"  
Ramirez

Painfully shy as a kid, Tank was bumped from group to group until he eventually responded to an ad posted on Weird Pete's bulleting board. Patty has been working with him and has slowly coaxed him out of his shell.

Patty's Perpetrators are one of the newest sanctioned groups to be recognized by the H.M.P.A. in Muncie.

They've yet to win any tournaments but the group has twice been commended for demonstrating "Good Sportsmanship."



chad  
Aguilar

Chad is a graduate student at Ball State University majoring in history with an eye toward teaching. To make ends meet he works part time as a disc jockey at fraternity parties and other campus events. He's known for being something of a hothead and quick to anger. This has caused him alot of problems at the gaming table over the years — He spends a lot of time 'pondering the five points' in Patty's time-out corner.

Chad's an ex-munchkin. He began playing HackMaster at the ripe young age of 13. Like most of the other Perps, he found he was welcomed at Patty's table.

When the collectible card game, **Spell-Jacked** first came out, Chad went out of control and blew his savings AND his college tuition on booster packs thinking he was 'investing' his money. He got burned during the 'Card Crash' of '96 and is still dealing with the debt.



S.S.#234-56A-003  
SQUIRRELY

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.

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 who 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. Squirrely really seems to enjoy the attention and is apparently proud of the fact he remains unbeaten.

## FAMOUS LAST WORDS!

- "Let me handle this."
- "Whaddya mean, a pentagram only has FIVE sides?"
- "What a useless scroll. It just says, HASTUR HASTUR HASTUR over and over again..."
- "Click?? ...This doesn't come with ammo?"
- "Why is your torch flame turning blue?"
- "Trust me."
- "He hit me for HOW MUCH?????"
- "Hey, this chest just bit me!"
- "Don't worry, he is probably just first level."
- "This 250' wall has so many holes, it should be easy to climb."
- "Why is this man speaking in sign language?"
- "I'll open the door, sneak up on him from behind and backstab him!"
- "I have this dungeon at home, I know where everything is!"
- "A Nightmare, huh? I'll attack for one round and prepare to run."
- "I'll take off my armor so I'm silent and slip past the dragon."
- "NPC: "Let's drop our weapons and talk." PC: "Okay!"
- "Well ....., I'll touch it again."
- "I attempt to disbelieve."
- "Oops."
- "OK! I moon the Balrog!"
- "My first arrow MISSED the magic-user pointing at me?? OK, I shoot again!"
- "Trap? What trap?"
- "Don't worry. I've got a plan."
- "They can't see me. I'm invisible!"
- "I wonder what's in here?"
- "He wouldn't try that trick again!"
- "Money!"



Originally appeared as part of the editorial for KODT issue #23

## "Oh man! They trashed it! All those memories — Gone!!"

*Anonymous Gamer at GenCon '98 upon seeing the old MECCA center being demolished.*

The summer 1998 convention season was over and all of us here were feeling much the same - grateful for the journey but very glad to be home where we can settle down for the fall and winter and get back to what we liked best - producing product and writing comic strips. Fortunately, we hadn't come home empty handed. Hundreds of fans had stopped by our booth to say, "Hey, I got a funny story for you. Maybe you can use it!"

All in all it was a great con-season for KenzerCo. We didn't take any casualties (though Dave Kenzer was nearly beaten to death after telling a complete stranger in an elevator, "I'm not wearing any underwear!") and we weren't asked to leave any parties!! (Steve Johansson was thrown from a 7th floor balcony after singing "You're the wo-wo-woman I want!" fifteen consecutive times on his portable karaoke machine, but he bought his way back into the party with a bottle of Old Grandd.)

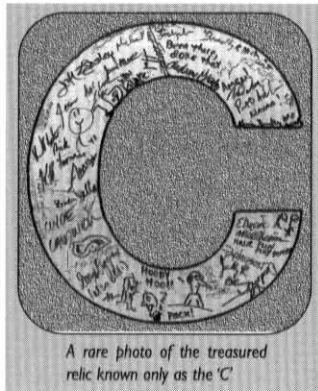
Sadly, I was reminded once again that this was also a season of change. The Games Industry is a small one by any standard and as such it's a tight one. Sure we have our own peculiar brand of politics, feuds and in-fighting, but I think most of us involved in making games feel like we're part of a larger family. By-and-large most of us are here for the same reason. We love playing games and being around those who share that passion. I always try to remember this 'common ground' when I'm dealing with others in this line of work and that's probably why I usually mention friendships and gaming in the same breath. To me, the two go hand-in-hand.

So when one of us in the industry falls or drops from the fold, I think we all feel a sense of loss as well as the unsettling feeling that, "Hey, that could have been me!"

Did I say 'season of change'? Perhaps the most obvious change was arriving at GenCon that year and witnessing the demolition of the old convention site. It was an eerie sight to behold the large pile of rubble and twisted iron that used to be the old exhibitor hall.

Though many of us already knew the center was being torn down, I don't think it sunk in until we actually got there and stood on the old steps that once led into the main foyer of MECCA. It looked like a bomb had gone off deep in the bowels of the building. As one gamer put it, "Damn! That's sad!"

Throughout the weekend small groups of people could be seen gathering in front of the old site to take pictures, talk of old times



A rare photo of the treasured relic known only as the 'C'

and to mourn the loss of what many described as an 'old friend'.

At night, the careful observer, could make out shadows climbing the barricades around the site and scurrying around the rubble piles collecting small pieces of shattered concrete to take home as momentos. I even overheard several exhibitors joking about packaging the stones and selling them as 'pieces of gaming history' (at least I think they were joking).

On the last day of the con one of those 'scurrying shadows' gave us one of his momentos. It was a large aluminum letter

'C'. I was just about to ask what it was when it hit me. I'd seen this letter many, many times before!! It was from the old MECCA walls and had once spelled out the name of the building. I grabbed a black pen and set off on a mission - to get as many folks at the con to sign it as possible. I don't know why but it seemed like the thing to do. When Dave Kenzer asked where I was going and I told him, he immediately said, "What an awesome idea!" and joined me on my quest. Invariably as we walked up to people and asked them to sign the 'C' they would look at us strangely. Then as we explained what it was they would smile, grab the pen and say, "Damn! What a great idea!"

Soon people were seeking US out and asking to sign the 'C'. Although we weren't discriminating about who signed the 'C', (we wanted gamers to sign it as well as gaming celebrities) we came away with a pretty impressive collection of signatures - Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, Peter Adkison, Rick Loomis, Jeff Easley, Clyde Cauldwell, Keith Parkinson, Eric Wujick, Frank Mentzer, Greg Stafford, John Kovalic, Edwin Milheim, Larry Elmore, Ken Whitman, Lou Zocchi, Paul Lidberg, and far too many more to list.

By the end of the day we were getting offers to buy the 'C'. Several people came by to make sure so-and-so's name was on the 'C' because so-and-so HAD to be on there. For some reason the 'C' had become important to people. It meant something - like a group photo saying, "I was there!"

This isn't to say GenCon died for me. I enjoyed that year's show and always look forward to the next one. Like moving into any new house it just didn't feel like home. For that to happen it has to hold memories of good times, which, after a few more cons, I'm sure will happen.

In the meantime, I've unofficially become the Keeper of the 'C' and it holds a place of honor on the wall over my desk. I plan on bringing it back to GenCon every year to be displayed at our booth along with the hubcap of shame, our can of SPAM, the kissing-fish and of course the 'migrating' coconut shells.

*Jolly R. Blackburn*

Jolly R. Blackburn  
Keeper of the 'C'



Out with the old - in with the new!! The old MECCA center, home of GENCON in years past is demolished.

ISSUES TWENTY-TWO THROUGH TWENTY-FOUR OF

# **K**nights of the **D**inner **T**able

CRAMMED BETWEEN TWO COVERS!

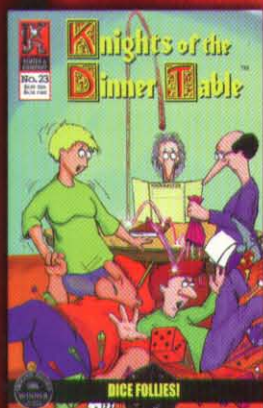


## KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE ISSUE #22 **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!!**

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED: AUGUST, 1998

Features the classic strips:

- Dawg Daze Afternoon*
- Through Steam-Tunnels Deep (Black Hands)*
- The Last One(s)*
- Opportunity Knocks (Retro KODT)*
- The Bassmasters of Muncie (Retro KODT)*

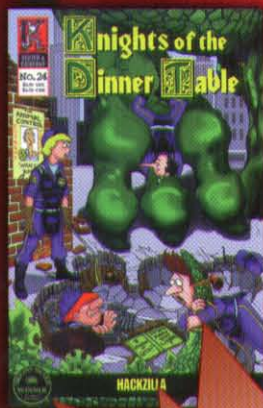


## KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE ISSUE #23 **DICE FOLLIES!**

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER, 1998

Features the classic strips:

- The Scapegoat*
- Help Wanted!!*
- The Substitute*
- A Man Out Standing In His Field (Black Hands)*
- It Takes A Thief!*
- The Unexpected Encounter*



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