



Knights of the **D**inner **T**able™

BUNDLE OF TROUBLE

VOLUME NINE



HAVE YOU MISSED ALL THE LAUGHS THE

Knights of the Dinner Table™

HAVE TO OFFER?

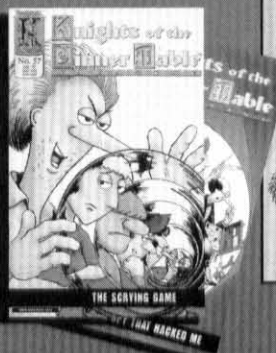
FIRK! DING! BLAST!!!

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Not a single *Knights* strip is out of print! The *Knights* trade paperback series save the day! *Tales from the Vault 1-3* are a complete collection of the *Knights'* strips from the beginning of time (aka 1990) until they started in their own magazine, while each of the *Bundle of Trouble* volumes packs three classic *KoDT* issues together with nearly an issue's worth of new material.



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 +5 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 LIP 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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Knights of the Dinner Table™

BUNDLE OF TROUBLE VOLUME NINE

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 *Asmall* 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 25 thru 27

SECRETS OF THE HACKFILES • THE MASK OF EL RAVAGER • HACKBURGER HILL

**KENZER AND
COMPANY**

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

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CRIES FROM THE ATTIC

"We're baaack..."

Welcome to the ninth volume of Bundle of Trouble. Looking at the masthead of BOT #8 lying open on my cluttered desk I see that 16 months have passed since we published that compilation. Surely that's a typo I think to myself. There's no way that was nearly a year and a half ago! I pick up the phone and dial 102 - Brian Jelke picks up the phone. "Hey Bri, did we publish BOT #8 in January of last year?" I ask. "Yea, what of it?" he replies. "I dunno. Doesn't seem like it was that long ago." Then I recall... HackMaster.

In the interim since the last Bundle of Trouble, HackMaster has grown from a plot device spoof of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons to a real role-playing game backed up by over 2000 closely typeset pages of material. Gary Jackson [Gawd rest his soul] would be proud. But enough of excuses, let's get on to the matter at hand.

It seems ironic to begin this collection with our cover parody of *The X-files* given that the series will be concluding its run this very month. Be that as it may, this issue begins a wonderful story arc in which the GM-player tension is brought to a new high (or low depending on your perspective.) Having let his players run egregiously amuck, B.A. succumbs to following the advice of fellow GM Earl Slackmozer in a decidedly underhanded attempt to rectify a situation his poorly thought out flavor text created.

These issues mark an important milestone in the KoDT saga and a jumping-off point for future storylines. We introduced the Intra-genre campaign rules and almost painted ourselves into a corner by casually giving the Untouchable Trio Plus One access to advanced technology. In the original unprinted version of the Operation Skim strip (issue #25) the storyline ended right after B.A. managed to have the Knights inadvertently use their Spacehack characters to destroy all the "treasure" he allowed their HackMaster characters to accumulate. B.A. beat them and that was that. Then Brian J. realized what the implications of the strip were. B.A. thought he had his group over a barrel but he had inadvertently given them a massive advantage by giving their medieval fantasy characters in HackMaster access to highly advanced (and destructive) technology. We decided to run with it and see how the situation would play out. What followed was a classic GM vs. player power struggle that

spanned the three issues contained in this volume. In the end, B.A. still won but it sure wasn't easy for him to get there and he earned the ire of his players in doing it.

Also, this volume of Bundle of Trouble marks the first time we've included hard to find bonus strips that originally appeared in print elsewhere. The bonus section strips in this volume originally appeared in the back of Kenzer & Company's Avelon comic series (a rare collector's item indeed). The storyline and action in these strips closely parallels the plot of what was going on in the Avelon storyline. Unfortunately for readers following the story at the time, the Avelon title was cancelled after issue #11 and the KODT strip that was supposed to conclude the storyline in Avelon #12 never got printed. We had people contacting us and asking us if we could just email them the text version of the strip because they wanted to know how it ended. Well fans, the wait is over. This volume provides the concluding strip to the Avelon KODT storyline titled, "The Legend of Heirs". Of course, most of you wouldn't know it but even the KODT strip title is a spoof of the Avelon comic it was slated to appear in which was titled "The Heir of Legends". This strip particularly hits home for Brian J. and Dave K. as they are both experiencing the joys of their third recently born child. In fact, Brian J.'s first child was the original inspiration for the Legend of Heirs strip. We wanted to explore how Bob might deal with raising a newborn child in the game and drew from real life for comedic effect.

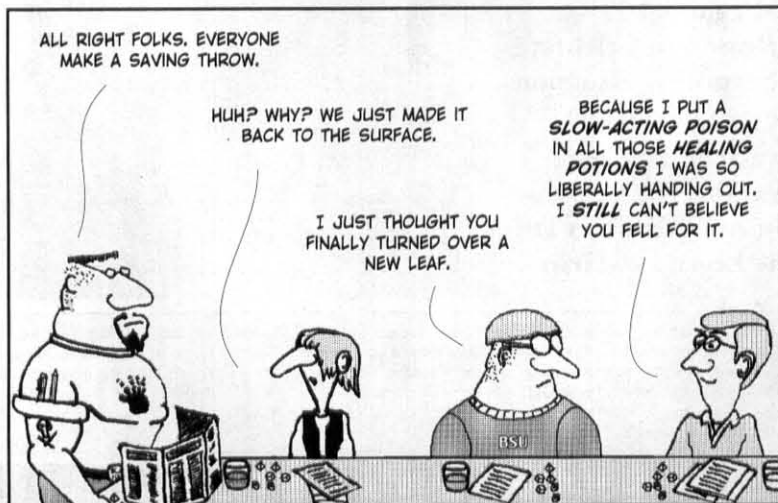
Like many of the other Bundle of Trouble volumes this one has some significant milestones in the development of KODT, our company and our personal lives. Enjoy the classic moments!

Brian Jelke

Brian Jelke

Steve Johansson

Steve Johansson



Knights of the Dinner Table™

"Secrets of the Hackfiles"

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS

JOLLY R. BLACKBURN • BRIAN JELKE • STEVE JOHANSSON • DAVID S. KENZER
Cover Art by George and Jackie Vrbanic

KENZER AND COMPANY

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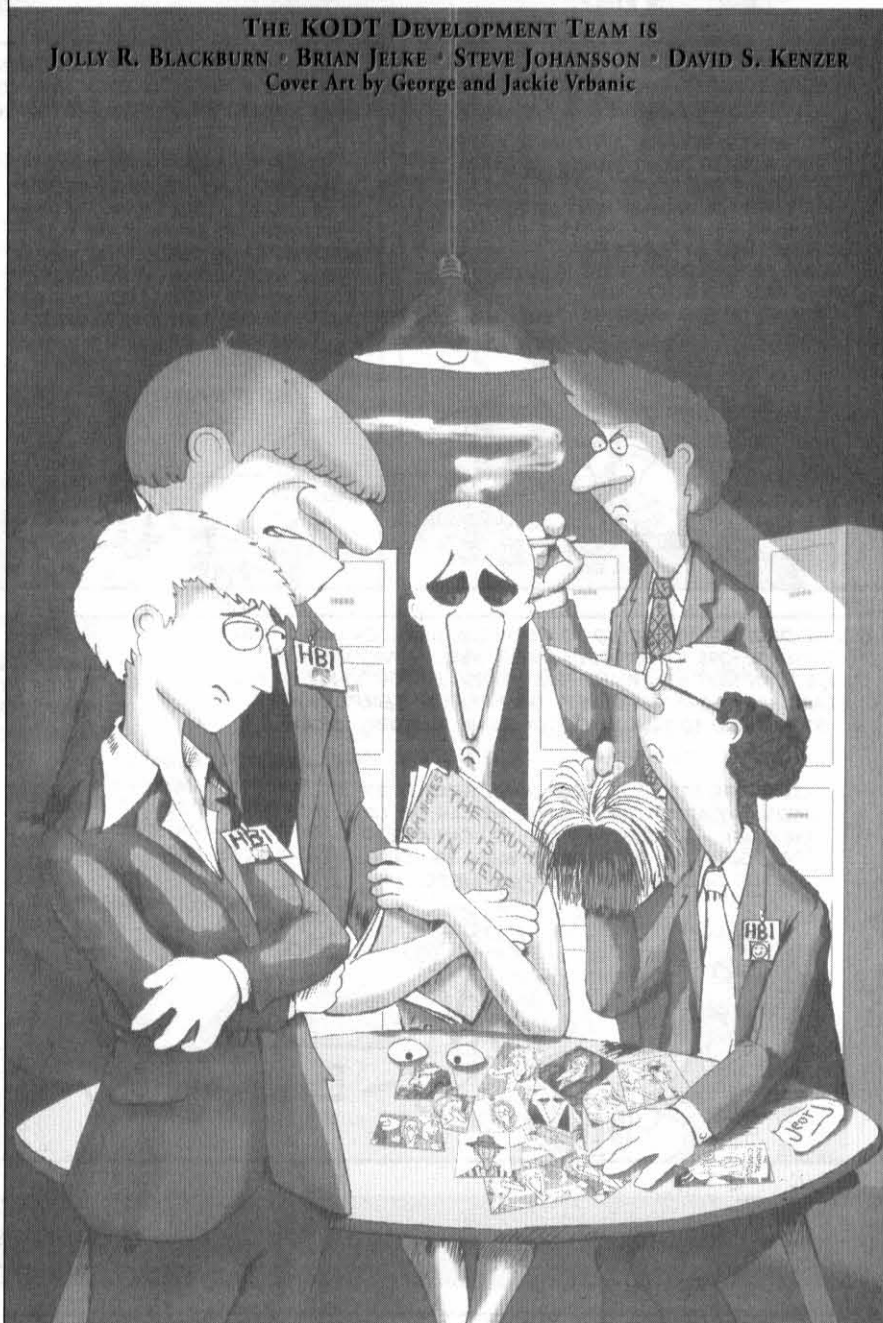
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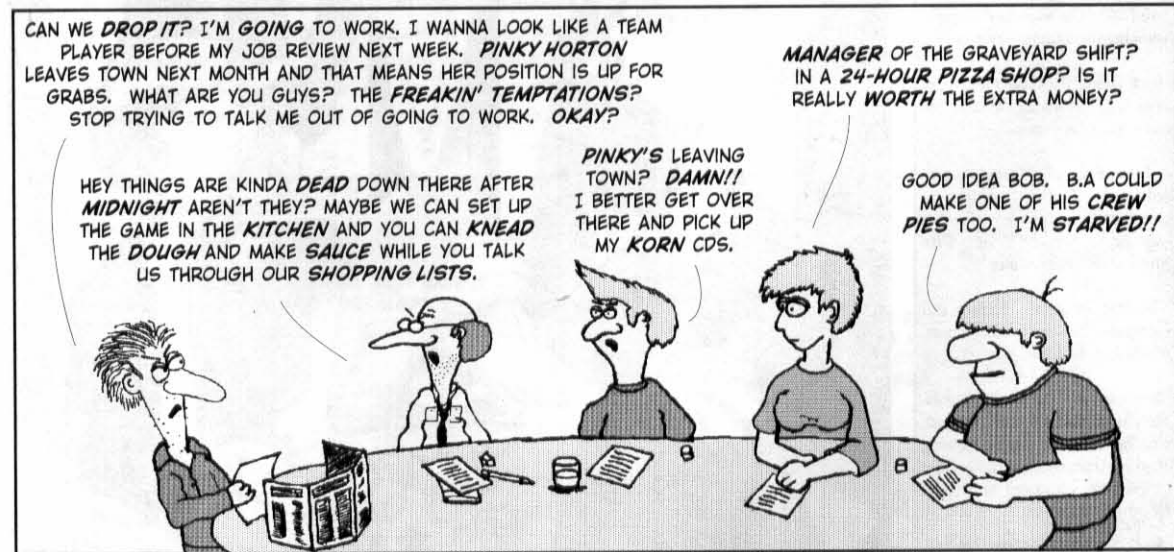
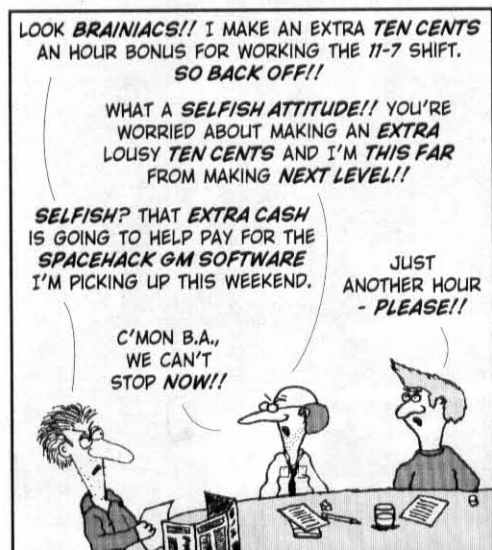
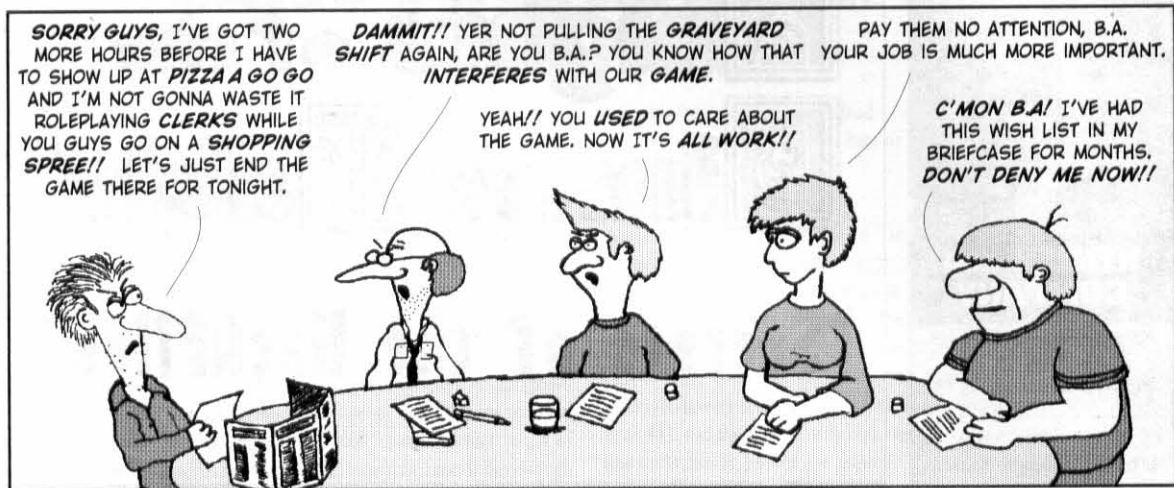
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Working Class Fool

BY STEVE JOHANSSON
WITH JOLLY BLACKBURN, BRIAN JELKE & DAVID S. KENZER



* See BOT #8 (KODT#24: The Ultimate Treasure)

The original version of this strip had Dave referring to a 60s classic rock band in the 4th panel. Luckily Steve was able to revise it & Dave came off sounding much more current and hip. -Brian

PLAY IN THE KITCHEN? WHILE I'M WORKING? YOU GUYS REALLY TAKE THE CAKE YOU KNOW THAT? TALK ABOUT **SELFISH ATTITUDE!!** YOU'D **JEOPARDIZE** MY JOB JUST SO YOU CAN SQUEEZE IN A FEW MORE HOURS OF **GAMING?**

THANKS A LOT!!

WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING AGAINST YOUR **JOB** BUT YOU SHOULDN'T LET IT RUIN **THE GAME!!** YOU USED TO BE **BETTER** THAN THIS. **JUST LOOK AT ME!!** I'M HOLDING DOWN **TWO JOBS** AND I'VE ONLY HAD **THREE HOURS** SLEEP IN THE LAST **FOUR DAYS** BUT I'M HERE, AIN'T I? I MAKE THAT **EXTRA EFFORT!!** I JUST WISH YOU WOULD DO THE SAME.

B.A.'S RIGHT, BOB. HIS **BOSS** COULD WALK IN ON US AND HE'D BE IN A **WORLD OF HURT!!**

LET'S JUST END THINGS HERE AND PICK IT UP NEXT WEEK.

THERE **HAS** TO BE A WAY!!
HMMMM....



HEY!! WHAT IF WE ALL PILED INTO **DAVE'S CAR** AND PULLED UP TO THE **DRIVE-UP WINDOW?** WE COULD PRETEND LIKE WE'RE **ORDERING FOOD** WHILE **B.A.** RUNS THE GAME OVER THE **SPEAKER!!** IF SOMEONE ELSE SHOULD PULL UP WE JUST DRIVE AROUND THE **BUILDING** AND GET BACK IN LINE AND THE **GAME GOES ON!!**

BRILLIANT IDEA!! YOU DA MAN, BOB. BUT UH, EVERYONE WILL HAVE TO **CHIP IN** FOR GAS. THE OL' **PACER** IS RUNNING ON **FUMES!!**

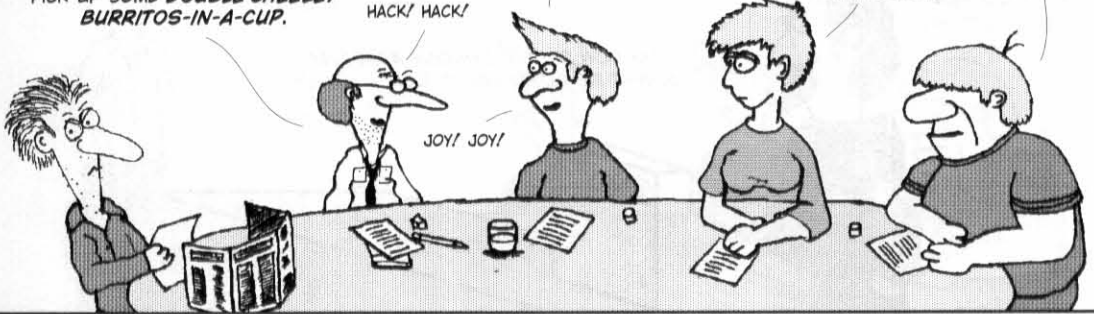
SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN.
I CALL **SHOTGUN!!**

KEWL BEANS!! MAYBE WE CAN RUN BY **TIC TAC TACO** FIRST AND PICK UP SOME **DOUBLE CHEEZEY BURRITOS-IN-A-CUP.**

HACK! HACK!

OH BROTHER...

JOY! JOY!



MOMENTS LATER...

HE'S SCREWED!! CALLING IN SICK AT THE LAST MINUTE IS GOING TO BE A **BIG FREAKIN' BLACK MARK** ON THAT **JOB REVIEW.**

WHAT DOES HE MEAN HE'S **CALLING IN SICK?** HE WAS FINE A **FEW MINUTES** AGO.

I DUNNO BUT HE DID **SUDDENLY LOOK ILL.** I HOPE IT ISN'T **CONTAGIOUS.**

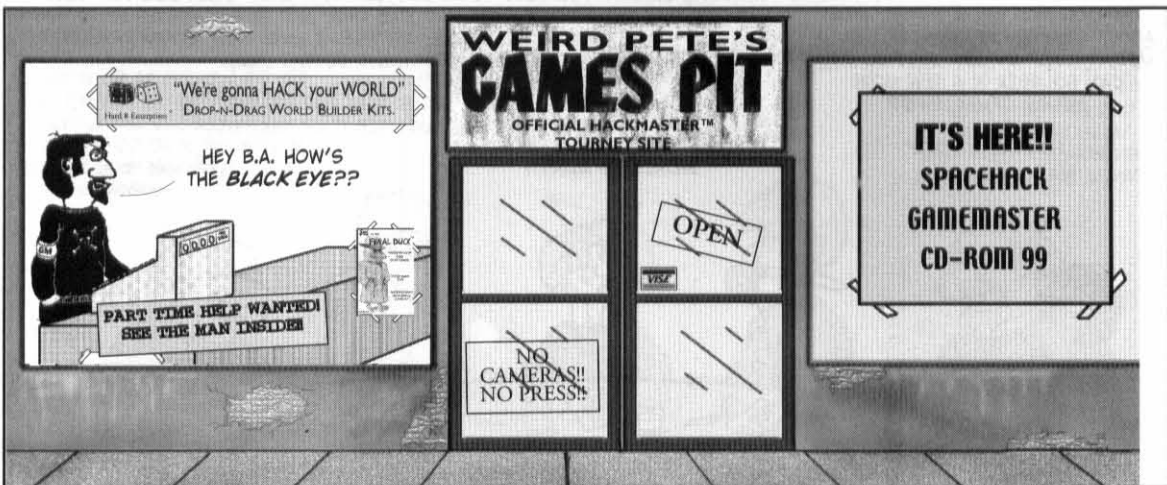
DON'T WORRY GUYS. WHAT **B.A.** HAS YOU **CAN'T CATCH.** IT'S CALLED A **WORK ETHIC!!**

HE'S A **FOOL** TO BE **JEOPARDIZING** THOSE **FREE PIZZA PERKS!!**



OPERATION SKIM

BY STEVE JOHANSSON
WITH JOLLY BLACKBURN, BRIAN JELKE & DAVID S. KENZER



HUH? OH IT'S MUCH BETTER. THANK YOU FOR ASKING. HEY, I CAME IN TO PICK UP THE *SPACEHACK CDROM*. I CAN'T WAIT TO BREAK THE *SHRINKWRAP*.

YEAH, IT'S IN. WE WERE HOLDING YOUR COPY FOR YOU. I GOTTA WARN YOU THOUGH - WE'VE ALREADY HAD A *DOZEN RETURNS* THIS MORNING. LOOKS LIKE *HARDB* GOT A LITTLE *SLOPPY* WHEN PROGRAMMING THE *CODE*. LOT'S OF SYSTEM CRASHES AND ERROR CODES WITH THIS ONE!!

THANKS FOR THE WARNING BUT *BRIAN* TURNED ME ON TO SOME *PATCHES* ON *HARDB.COM* WHICH SHOULD FIX THINGS...

SAY HOW DID THE *LYRIONS ACADEMY* ADVENTURE GO? WERE MY IDEAS USEFUL?

ACTUALLY I *SCREWED* IT UP *BIG TIME*. *BRIAN* THE *WALKING ENCYCLOPEDIA* USED SOME *OBSCURE FOOTNOTES* ON THE *PRICE LISTS* TO UNDERMINE ME.

BASTARD!! THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN *EX-GM* CROSSES THE *FENCE* AND BECOMES A *PLAYER* AGAIN. *DAMN!!* I WAS REALLY CURIOUS TO SEE HOW THEY WOULD *REACT* TO AN ADVENTURE WITH NO *REAL TREASURE*. SO WHAT HAPPENED?

IT WAS *HORRIBLE!!* THEY MANAGED TO *RAKE IN* OVER A *MILLION GOLD PIECES* BY TAKING EVERYTHING THAT WASN'T *NAILED DOWN* IN THE *ACADEMY* AND AUCTIONING IT OFF.

A MILLION GEE-PEE'S? GOOD GAWD MAN!! YOU CAN'T HAVE *PLAYER CHARACTERS* WALKING AROUND WITH *THAT KIND OF WEALTH*. THEY'RE GOING TO *TRASH* YOUR ENTIRE CAMPAIGN.

DON'T YOU THINK I KNOW THAT? THEY SHOWED UP LAST NIGHT WITH THEIR *SHOPPING LISTS!!* YOU SHOULD SEE SOME OF THE THINGS THEY WANTED TO BUY. I ENDED UP TRYING TO *STALL* THEM BUT THEY'RE INSISTENT ON SPENDING ALL THAT MONEY.

THIS IS BAD. *VERY BAD!!* YOU'VE GOT TO *SKIM OFF* THAT *EXCESS CASH* AND *QUICK!!*

YEAH. BUT HOW?

OH DON'T WORRY. THERE ARE WAYS, MY FRIEND, THERE ARE WAYS. I HAPPEN TO HAVE A FEW **TRIED-AND-TRUE** TRICKS UP MY SLEEVE. I TOOK OVER A **CAMPAIGN** RUN BY A **MONTY HAUL GM** SEVERAL YEARS AGO AND INHERITED A GROUP OF **FAT AND SASSY** PLAYERS. THEY **SCREAMED BLOODY MURDER** AT THE SLIGHTEST HINT OF ME TRYING TO **SCALE** THINGS BACK. SO I USED THEIR **GREED** AGAINST THEM. THEY NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT THEM. IT WAS CLASSIC!!

SOUNDS GREAT!! DO YOU THINK IT WOULD WORK FOR ME? WHAT DO I DO?

OKAY, LET ME GIVE YOU THE RUNDOWN ON SOMETHING I LIKE TO CALL **OPERATION SKIM!!** BUT YOU MUST **SWEAR** NEVER TO DIVULGE THIS INFORMATION TO ANY **PLAYER-TYPES**.

I SWEAR!!
FILL ME IN.

THE FOLLOWING WEEK...

B.A. CLAIMS HE **BURNT OUT** ON **HACKMASTER** AND WANTS TO TAKE A BREAK. **THIS BLOWS!!** I WAS ALL **GEARED UP** TO SPEND MY **MONEY** TONIGHT. I'M THINKING OF GETTING **PLATINUM HORSESHOES** FOR **CLOVER FAX** TO MATCH HER **BARDING!!**

GREAT!! NOW THAT **BOB** IS FINALLY HERE WE CAN GET STARTED!!

SORRY I'M LATE, GUYS BUT I... ER... **WHAT THE HELL IS WITH THE COMPUTER?** AND WHY DOES **SARA** HAVE THE **STAR CHARTS** FROM **SPACEHACK** OUT?

PERSONALLY, I WOULDN'T MIND PLAYING A LITTLE **SPACEHACK** AGAIN. JUST FOR A CHANGE OF PACE. **HACKMASTER** WILL STILL BE THERE **NEXT WEEK!!**

I SURE WOULDN'T MIND SEEING HOW THE NEW **GM SOFTWARE** HELPS THE GAME!!

I'M TOO **TIRED** TO FIGHT IT. AS LONG WE CAN **GAME** TONIGHT, I'M HAPPY. I SAT IN ON ANOTHER SESSION WITH THE **BLACK HANDS** LAST NIGHT AFTER **WORK**. ALL NIGHT LONG I KEPT HAVING **NIGHTMARES** THAT **NITRO** WAS COMIN' AFTER ME ON A **POGO STICK** SHOUTING, "I AM THE **DICEMAN!**"

I DUNNO ABOUT **SPACEHACK**. LAST TIME WE GOT OUR **BUTTS** WHOOPED BY THOSE **ONE-LEGGED GAGWALLERS!!**

HOW WAS HE SUPPOSED TO KNOW THEY HAD ANOTHER **15 SHIPS** AS A **CLOAKED ESCORT?** BUT **FORGET THE GAGWALLERS**. MY **LIGHT SABRE** ACCIDENTALLY **KICKED ON** WHEN I WAS PUTTING IT IN MY **FRONT POCKET** AND THERE'S NOTHING ON THE **CYBERNETIC ENHANCEMENT CHARTS** TO REPLACE WHAT I LOST!!!

THIS WILL BE **GREAT!!** THIS NEW **GM-ASSISTANT PROGRAM** IS REALLY **SWEET!!**

THAT WAS **YOUR FAULT**, DAVE, FOR INSISTING ON **BLASTING** THEIR **ENVOY SHIP!!**

OKAY, WE CAN PLAY **SPACEHACK**. BUT YOU HAVE TO PROMISE THAT WE RETURN TO OUR **HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN** NEXT WEEK. NO MORE **STALLING!**

STALLING? WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I JUST WANT A LITTLE BREAK FROM **HACKMASTER!** THAT'S ALL.

YEAH, YEAH, SURE. WE WAITED AT THAT **DRIVE-UP WINDOW** FOR **FORTY FIVE FREAKIN' MINUTES** LAST WEEK. DON'T EVEN **THINK** WE DIDN'T SEE YOU HIDING BEHIND THE **FRONT COUNTER!** WE COULD SEE THE TOP OF THAT **FRAYED MOP** YOU CALL **HAIR** IN THE **REFLECTION** OF THE **PIZZA OVENS**.

THAT WASN'T ME!
I WAS HOME SICK
- REMEMBER??

MAYBE IT WAS JUST A **FRAYED MOP!**

WE KNOW YOU'RE **DEAD SET** AGAINST US SPENDING OUR MONEY. YOU MIGHT AS WELL ACCEPT IT.



I **REALLY** DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT. AT ANY RATE, WE'RE **BURNING** GOOD GAME TIME SO LET'S GET STARTED - **SHALL WE?** I'LL JUST BOOT UP **MOLLY** HERE AND...

LET'S DO IT!! I'M STILL A LITTLE CONCERNED THAT YOU NEVER HAD THAT **PENTIUM CHIP** REPLACED!! JUST TO BE **SAFE** I'M GOING TO DOUBLE CHECK THE MATH WITH **PENCIL AND PAPER**.

NOW YOU'RE TALKING!! I CAME TO **GAME** SO LET'S GET ON WITH IT.

I'M CERTAINLY READY.
BEEN READY!!

READY FOR A COURSE
HEADING, SIR.



A LITTLE BIT LATER...

ALRIGHT, YOU GUN THE ENGINES ON (GROAN) **MARGO** AND MAKE FOR THE **PSI-ANDRELLICUS WORMHOLE**. BRIAN, WHAT ARE YOUR CYLINDRICAL COORDINATES, TRAJECTORY AND VELOCITY SO THAT I CAN PLUG 'EM INTO THE **SPACEHACK STELLAR NAVIGATION PROGRAM?**

DUDE, NAMING OUR SHIP AFTER YER CAR REALLY **BLOWS**. WE GOTTA COME UP WITH A **BETTER** NAME FOR THE SHIP.

LET'S SEE...WE'LL GO WITH A PARABOLIC TRAJECTORY AT **2.75 C**. YOU GOT THOSE COORDINATES YET SARA?

HUH?? BUT IT'S A **GREAT NAME!!** YA GOTTA ADMIT THESE TERRELIAN FRIGATES **DO** LOOK LIKE A GIANT '76 **PACER!!**

I PLACE r , θ AND z AT **1451, 3 RADIANS** AND **78, BRIAN**.

THRE RADIANS?? ARE YOU SURE? RECHECK THOSE FIGURES, WOULD YOU?



LATER STILL...

OKAY, THE **REFUELING TUG** DISENGAGES AND YOU ARE NOW READY TO LEAVE THE SYSTEM. YOU GET **FOUR LOTTERY TICKETS** FOR GETTING A **FULL REFILL!!**

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH ALL THESE HIGHLY ADVANCED, SILICON-BASED LIFE FORMS BENT ON CONQUERING THE GALAXY THROUGH **LOTTERY SCAMS???** SEEMS LIKE WE ENCOUNTER THEM ON EVERY OTHER SYSTEM WE VISIT.

SOUNDS LIKE MORE OF LITTLE TIMMY JACKSON'S WORK TO ME.

WELL AT LEAST WE HEARD SOME **GOOD RUMORS** AT THE **BAR**. WE SHOULD CHECK OUT THAT **PLANET** THAT THE OLD **LABCOAT** WAS BABBLING ABOUT.

"EVERY TICKET A WINNER" **MY ASS!!** YOU GOTTA TAKE YOUR WINNING TICKETS TO **ALPHA BACKWASH** TO REDEEM THEM.

I **AGREE**. LET'S PLOT A COURSE.

CHURN!!
CHURN!!
CHATTER!!



FIVE MINUTES LATER...

GEEZE LOUEEZZEE!! ISN'T THAT **DAMN THING** FINISHED PROCESSING A **SIMPLE FLIGHT PLAN?** I THINK I LIKED THINGS BETTER WHEN WE JUST ROLLED ON A CHART TO SEE IF WE STRAYED OFF COURSE.

SORRY GUYS, YOU SEEM TO HAVE RUN INTO A **WORMHOLE ANOMALY!!** YOUR INSTRUMENTS BEHAVE **STRANGELY** FOR SEVERAL MINUTES BUT THEN EVERYTHING SEEMS TO RETURN TO NORMAL.

I RUN A FULL SYS-CHECK!!

I'M PUTTING ON MY **VAC SUIT** JUST IN CASE.

OH DEAR!! I SHOULD HAVE ROUNDED UP THAT **PARABOLIC TRAJECTORY**.

WORMHOLE ANOMALY? BUT **PSI-ANDRELLICUS** HAS BEEN CERTIFIED BY THE **FEDS** FOR DECADES. IT'S A PRIMARY STAR-LANE. IT'S **ALWAYS** BEEN VERY STABLE.

WHIR!!
BANG!!
CLICK!!



OKAY, YOUR SHIP **BREAKS WARP** IN A SMALL SYSTEM NEAR THE EDGE OF THE **THIRD RADIAL ARM**. LOOKS LIKE A **TYPICAL CLASS SIX**: YELLOW SUN, 3 ROCKY INNER PLANETS AND A FEW GAS GIANTS FURTHER OUT.

I RUN A QUICK **BIO-FEASIBILITY** QUERY THROUGH THE COMPUTER. IF I GET A MATCH, I SWITCH OVER TO THE **BROADBAND RADIO SPECTRUM** TO SCAN FOR SIGNALS FROM AN INTELLIGENT SOCIETY.

DON'T FORGET TO TAP INTO THE **MICROWAVE SPECTRUM** AS WELL. WE DON'T WANT A REPEAT OF THE **LITTLE SURPRISE** WE GOT ON **BETA SIGMUS 2**.

AYE AYE, SIR!

DAMN GAGWALLERS!



IT LOOKS LIKE THE **THIRD PLANET** MIGHT SUPPORT LIFE BUT YOU DON'T DETECT ANY TRAFFIC ON YOUR **SPECTRUM ANALYZERS**.

LET'S GO IN FOR A LOOK-SEE. WE COULD USE SOME **SHORE LEAVE**.

NOT SO FAST!! I GOT A FUNNY FEELING ABOUT THIS PLACE. LET'S TAKE A **CLOSER LOOK**.

I'M BRINGING **MARGO** IN FOR A QUICK SUB-ORBITAL PASS. **OPTI-SENSORS** SET TO **HI-REZ**. WE'LL CUT IN BEHIND THAT MOON TO GO OVER WHAT WE DISCOVER.



LOOKS LIKE THERE'S DEFINITE **HUMANOID ACTIVITY**. YOU FIND A FEW CITIES AND SIGNS OF AGRICULTURE. CO₂ LEVELS INDICATE A **PRE-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY**. PROBABLY **TECH LEVEL TWO**.

TECH LEVEL TWO? **KICK ASS!!** WE'LL BE **RUNNING THIS JOINT** ONCE WE'VE LIT UP A FEW **LOCAL YOKEL BEHINDS** WITH SOME **LASER-FIRE!!**

THE **LARGEST CITY** YOU SEE IS LOCATED ABOUT **38 DEGREES NORTH LATITUDE**. A **LARGE PEAK** AND SOME **RUGGED FOOTHILLS** OVERSHADOW IT. THERE'S ALSO AN **EXTENSIVE NETWORK** OF ROADS, AQUEDUCTS AND CANALS WHICH ALL SEEM TO CENTER ON THE **CITY**.

SARA, PUT **MARGO** IN STATIONARY ORBIT. I WANT AN **AWAY TEAM** IN **FULL ASSAULT GEAR!!** WE'LL TAKE THE **SHUTTLE CRAFT** DOWN AND TAKE A **CLOSER LOOK** AT THIS CITY.

THAT **RUGGED TERRAIN** OUGHT TO BE A GOOD PLACE TO STASH THE **SHUTTLE** WHILE WE RECONNOITER THE AREA.

I CALL DIBS ON THE **NUKE ARRAY BACK PACK!!**

NUKES?

MOMENTS LATER...

AS YOU DESCEND, YOU NOTICE A **LARGE PARTY** OF BIPEDS CLUMSILY MOVING SOME SORT OF GOODS OVER THE **RUGGED TERRAIN**.

I MAN THE **PARTICLE BEAM TURRET** AND STRAFE THEM!! THEN I'LL **CIRCLE AROUND** FOR A **SECONDARY ATTACK**.

WHOAH!! HOLD ON TEX!! REMEMBER WE UPGRADED TO **POSITRON ANTIMATTER BLASTERS**. IF YOU LIGHT THOSE PUPPIES UP OUTSIDE OF A **VACUUM**, YOU'LL INSTANTLY TURN THE SHIP INTO **RADIOACTIVE SLAG!!**

GOOD CATCH, DAVE. LET'S JUST GET INTO OUR **POWERED SUITS** AND DO THIS THE OLD FASHIONED WAY.

BESIDES, MAYBE THEY'RE **FRIENDLY**. WE SHOULD TRY AND TALK WITH THEM.

TALK IS FOR THE **WUSS OF HEART!!**

AS YOU EXIT THE **SHUTTLE** IN YOUR **POWERED SUITS**, THE MASS OF HUMANOIDS BEGIN TO SCATTER IN EVERY DIRECTION DISCARDING THE BOXES THEY WERE CARRYING. IT LOOKS LIKE THEIR **LEADERS** ARE TRYING IN VAIN TO KEEP THEM FROM FLEEING.

LEADERS, EH? I NOSE INTO A **FULL DIVE** AND CENTER ON THEM!! LET'S CUT OUT THE **HEART** OF THIS OUTFIT.

TWO BALLS OF FIRE DETONATE AROUND YOU BOB. LET'S SEE, YOUR **GYROS** ARE FRIED AND YOU FIND YOURSELF CRASHING TO THE GROUND - THE IMPACT OF WHICH **OVERLOADS** YOUR FORCE SCREEN.

WHAT THE **HELL?** I THOUGHT THIS WAS A **TECH LEVEL TWO PLANET**. WHERE'D THOSE MISSILES COME FROM IN A **PRE-GUNPOWDER SOCIETY?**

DAMMIT!! THEY DREW **FIRST BLOOD!!** NOW I'M **HOPPING MAD!!** I LET LOOSE A CLUSTER OF **INCENDIARIES** IN AN ARC IN FRONT OF ME.

I'LL BET THESE GUYS ARE **OFF-WORLDBERS** LIKE US.

WE NEED TO FIND THE **SOURCE** OF THAT FIREPOWER. I'LL SCAN FOR **THERMAL TRAJECTORY SIGNATURES**.

THERE'S NO **THERMAL TRAJECTORY SIGNATURE**, SARA. HOWEVER, YOU DO FIND RESIDUAL LEVELS OF AN UNUSUAL **SUBDIMENSIONAL RADIATION FIELD** IN THE VICINITY OF A PORTLY ROBED INDIVIDUAL. HE APPEARS TO BE PERFORMING A SERIES OF ELABORATE **HAND GESTURES**.

SUBDIMENSIONAL RADIATION FIELD? THAT'S NOT IN THE **SPACEHACK BOOKS!!**

I PULL OUT MY **BLASTER RIFLE** AND TURN THE **FAT GUY** TO **ASHES!!**

I **CHUCK** A **STUN GRENADE** INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE GROUP OF **LEADERS**. THEN I'LL MOVE IN WITH MY **VIBRO BLADE** AND CUT SOME THROATS.

SORRY BOB, AS YOU ARE ATTEMPTING TO REACH YOUR WEAPON YOU ARE SUDDENLY **GORED** BY A **WILD ANIMAL** WHO WAS HIDING IN THE BUSHES.

HAND GESTURES? I THINK HE'S TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH US.

GORED?



I'M **BLASTING** THAT **VARMIT** THAT **GORED** ME!! WHAT THE HELL WAS IT ANYWAY?

LOOKS LIKE A SMALL DOMESTICATED **CAMEL-LIKE** CREATURE EXCEPT IT HAS **NO HUMP**.

DAMN!! THEY MUST BE **TRAINED ATTACK ANIMALS** OR SOMETHING.



DAVE, YOUR **GRENADE** SEEMS TO HIT SOME SORT OF **INVISIBLE FORCE FIELD**. IT STOPS IN MIDAIR AND FALLS TO THE GROUND WHERE IT EXPLODES TOO FAR FROM ITS TARGET TO HAVE ANY EFFECT. MEANWHILE A **BEARDED PYGMY** FIRES A **BOLT LAUNCHER** AT YOU. THE **BOLT** PIERCES YOUR **POWERED ARMOR** LIKE IT WAS MADE OF ALUMINUM FOIL. YOU TAKE **48 POINTS OF DAMAGE!!**

LOOKS LIKE THEY WANT TO PLAY **HARD BALL**. LET'S BREAK OUT THE **NUKES!!**

I'M TWO STEPS AHEAD OF YA. I'M **PREPPING** A COUPLE OF **DIMINISHED YIELD NUKES** AS WE SPEAK.



OH DEAR!!

SEVERAL ROUNDS OF COMBAT LATER...

BOB, THE **BEARDED PYGMY** FIRES ANOTHER VOLLEY FROM HIS **BOLT LAUNCHER** AT YOU BUT HE MISSES AGAIN. LOOKS LIKE THE **THERMAL BLAST** FROM YOUR MISSILE HAS **BLINDED** HIM. **DAVE**, THE SUPPRESSIVE FIRE FROM YOUR **GATTLING LASER CANNON** SEEMS TO JUST BREAK UP IN FRONT OF THE OTHER HUMANIDS.

WE'VE DESTROYED MOST OF THEIR EQUIPMENT BUT THEY JUST KEEP COMING. THEY SEEM **INTENT** ON PROTECTING ALL THOSE **BOXES** THEIR **WORKERS** DISCARDED WHEN THEY FLED!!

WHO THE HELL ARE THESE GUYS?

THEY'RE RELENTLESS!! DON'T THEY KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO **SURRENDER**?

THEY'RE OBVIOUSLY A **PROUD PEOPLE**.

SOON TO BE **DEAD PEOPLE!!**



A LITTLE LATER...

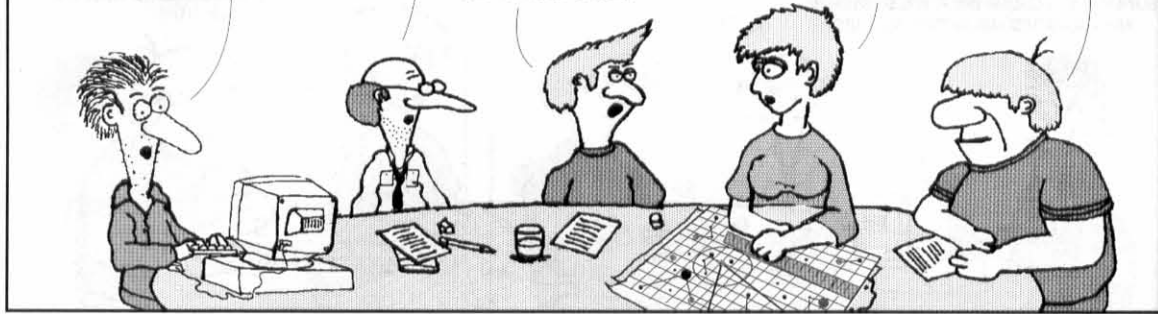
DAVE, YOUR *INCENDIARY GRENADE* MISSES. IT BOUNCES THREE TIMES AND LANDS ON THE PILE OF *BOXES* AND EXPLODES. A *HUGE BONFIRE* BEGINS RAGING! THE *HUMANOID LEADERS* TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE *COVERING SMOKE* AND SLIP AWAY.

HOODY HOO!! WE KICKED THEIR BUTTS!! THEY'RE LEAVING THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

DAG NAB IT, DAVE!! I TOLD YOU TO TAKE IT EASY WITH THOSE *INCENDIARIES!!* NOW YOU'VE GONE AND DESTROYED ALL THE *SPOILS*.

I'M HAVING A HARD TIME BELIEVING THIS IS ONLY A *TECH 2 PLANET!!* STILL - NO *HIGH TECH* IS SHOWING UP ON *ANY* OF MY SCANS!!

DAMN, I WANTED TO GET A LOOK AT WHAT WAS IN THOSE BOXES.



I'LL GET IN THE *SHUTTLE CRAFT* AND DUMP SOME OF THE *COOLANT* FROM THE *PRIMARY ENGINES* OVER THE FIRE. MAYBE WE CAN SALVAGE SOMETHING FROM THE ASHES.

GOOD THINKING, BOB! I'LL RULE THAT THE *COOLANT* EXTINGUISHES THE FLAMES. HOWEVER OVER 90% OF THE *GOODS* HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO ASHES.

I GUESS WE'LL PICK THROUGH THE ASHES. CAN WE DETERMINE WHAT WAS IN THE BOXES?

YOU FIND NOTHING BUT *CHARRED BITS* OF BOOKS, SCROLLS, VARIOUS TYPES OF FURNITURE, ETC...

JUST A BUNCH OF *CRAP?* WHAT WAS THIS? A *U-HAUL CARAVAN?*

THEY WERE WILLING TO *DIE* FOR THIS *JUNK!!* WHAT GIVES?

NO GOLD? NO JEWELS? NOTHING?

??/? WAIT A MINUTE!! YOU DON'T THINK...

NOPE!!

THINK WHAT?



GUYS, WE'VE BEEN *HAD!!* WE JUST ATTACKED OUR *OWN CHARACTERS* FROM OUR *HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN!!*

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT??

DON'T YOU GUYS SEE? IT *ALL FITS!!* A CAMEL-LIKE CREATURE WITH NO HUMP THAT *GORES* PEOPLE. REMEMBER THE *LLAMAS?* A BEARDED PYGMY WITH A BOLT LAUNCHER? SOUNDS LIKE *KNUCKLES* TO ME. MYSTERIOUS BALLS OF FIRE? BOXES OF BOOKS AND FURNITURE? AND DOESN'T A LARGE PEAK OVERSHADOW FANGARIE? I'M TELLING YOU WE'VE JUST ATTACKED *OUR CHARACTERS* AT THE POINT WE WERE CLEARING OUT *LYRIONS ACADEMY*.

YOU'RE TALKING CRAZY, *SARA!!*

THE PORTLY FIGURE IN ROBES? *TEFLON BILLY?*



Sara makes an astute observation. So how long did it take for you to figure it out? -Brian

BUT THAT'S *INSANE!!* WHAT THE HELL IS THE POINT IN HAVING US *ATTACK OURSELVES?*

DO I HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU? WE JUST *DESTROYED* ALL THE *GOODS* FROM *LYRIONS ACADEMY* BEFORE OUR CHARACTERS COULD SELL IT.

NO WAY!! OUR CHARACTERS ALREADY SOLD THAT STUFF. THIS ADVENTURE DOESN'T CHANGE *ANYTHING.*

THE WORMHOLE ANOMALY!!!

ACCORDING TO THE *SPACEHACK SPACE FARER'S MANUAL*, WORMHOLE ANOMALIES CAN RESULT IN *TIME SLIPPAGE!!* IT'S POSSIBLE WE WENT INTO THE PAST. AND ACCORDING TO THE *INTRA-GENRE CAMPAIGN RULES* THE ACTIONS OF ONE CAMPAIGN SUPERCEDE THOSE ACTIONS OF A PREVIOUS CAMPAIGN.



WHAT ARE YOU GUYS TRYING TO SAY? *B.A.* IS TRYING TO *SCREW US OVER* ON OUR *MILLION G.P.S?*

SORRY GUYS, HE FOUND A WAY TO DO IT AND THE *RULES* BACK HIM UP!!

OH MY *GAWD!!*
BEAM ME UP SCOTTIE!!

HE OUTSMARTED US.

THIS BLOWS!!

BLOWS?
NO WAY.
THIS IS
GREAT!!

HUH? *GREAT?* BRIAN DON'T YOU GET IT? *NO WISH LISTS!! NO SHOPPING SPREE!! WE'RE SCREWED!*

WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY WITH THIS!! WE SHOULD *PROTEST!!*

NO WAY!! HE JUST DID US A *FAVOR!!* ONE MILLION G.P.'S WAS CHUMP CHANGE COMPARED TO WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO. THINK ABOUT IT. WE HAVE A *SHIP!!* WE HAVE *HIGH TECH!!* WE'RE *STAYING* HERE AND TAKING OVER THIS *DUMP!!*

YOU'RE SOOO BAD!

NEXT WEEK...

OKAY, I STAND UP AND GIVE A *TOAST* TO OUR NEW PARTNERS!! "TO *KNUCKLES THE SIXTH, EL RAVAGER, TEFLON BILLY* AND *THORINA -- THE WORLD!!*" THEN I'LL HAND EACH OF THEM A COPY OF OUR *PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT.*

C'MON GUYS. THIS AIN'T FUNNY!! YOU SHOULD RETURN TO YOUR *OWN* WORLD.

I CLEARED OUT *CARGO HOLD 4A* AND CONVERTED IT TO A *BUNK ROOM* FOR *EL RAVAGER.* I TELL HIM HE CAN STAY THERE WHENEVER HE WANTS TO. I'M GONNA BE TEACHIN' HIM HOW TO USE A *BLASTER RIFLE* AND OTHER STUFF.

WELL, THIS SHOULD CERTAINLY BE AN INTERESTING CAMPAIGN FROM HERE ON OUT!

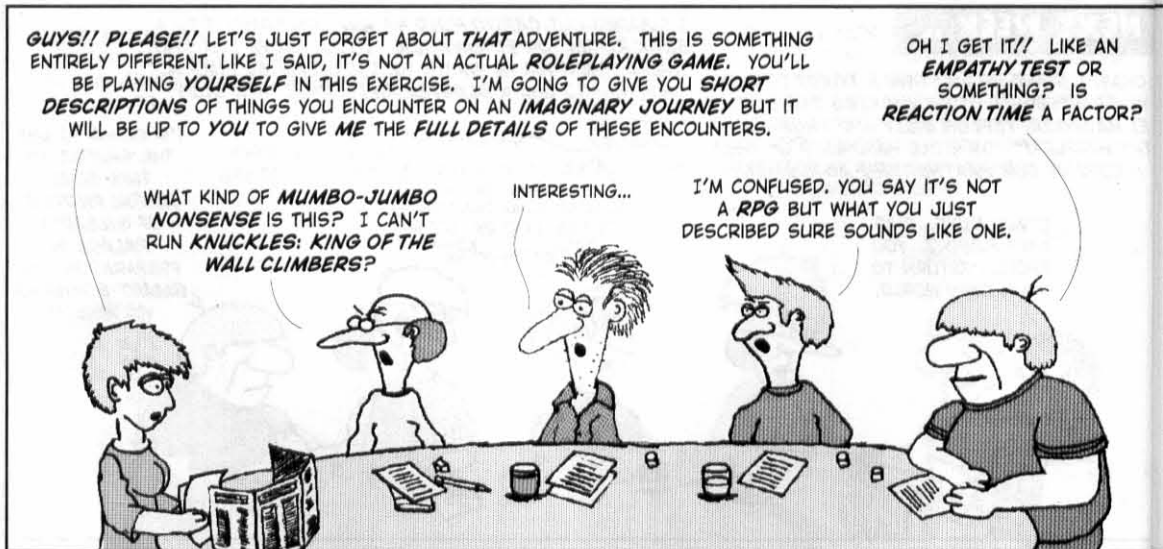
I'M GOING TO USE THE SHUTTLE TO TAKE SOME *AERIAL PHOTOS* OF *GILEAD'S PALACE* IN PREPARATION FOR *SMART-BOMBING* HIS ASS!!!



* I have some fond memories working on this strip. It was one of those strips which was going no where and we just couldn't find an proper ending for it. It was a very troublesome strip to put to bed and as the deadline for getting the issue to press came and went there was a lot of pressure to simply wrap it up and be done with it. Fortunately, about this time, Brian and I were invited to Pentacon (Fort Wayne, Indiana) as special guests. This gave us an opportunity to sit at the booth for toss around ideas for two days. Somewhere between hawking issues of KODT and multiple cans of Diet Coke we struck on the idea of mixing Space Hack with HackMaster. It totally came out of left field — Jolly

Project Projective

BY MARK ABRAM
WITH JOLLY BLACKBUR



* This strip is one of my personal favorites. It was one of the rare strip ideas submitted by a fan that I immediately knew we MUST do. It also was a rare chance for Sara to be in control. Mark's original script was much different than the final version which appears here. His version stuck much more closely with the actual 'self discovery' exercise used in psychology classes. — Jolly

LIKE I SAID, THIS IS AN **EXERCISE** TO AID YOU IN **SELF DISCOVERY**. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS GIVE ME **HONEST RESPONSES**. AFTER WE'RE DONE WITH THE **JOURNEY**, WE'LL GO OVER OUR RESPONSES AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT THOSE RESPONSES **REVEAL** ABOUT YOUR **INNER SELF**. IT'S REALLY AMAZING. WHY DON'T WE JUST **JUMP IN** AND START?

I'M GAME, BUT IT'S A **WASTE OF TIME!!** I'VE BEEN IN **TOUCH** WITH MY **INNER SELF** FOR YEARS.

WAIT!! WE DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO **BUY EQUIPMENT!!**

GO AHEAD AND START SARA. WE'LL CATCH ON.

I'M STILL CONFUSED. THIS FEELS LIKE **HOMEWORK!**



OKAY HERE WE GO. YOU'RE ON A **PATH**. TRY TO PICTURE WHAT THE **PATH** LOOKS LIKE IN YOUR MIND AND **DESCRIBE** IT TO ME!!

SO AM I PLAYING **KNUCKLES** OR WHAT? YOU NEVER SAID.

WHAT PATH? WHERE ARE WE? HOW DID WE GET HERE?

USE YOUR **IMAGINATION**. YOU'RE PLAYING **YOURSELVES** IN THIS AND EACH OF YOU ARE ON YOUR **OWN PATH**. TELL ME WHAT **YOUR PATH** LOOKS LIKE. SINCE I'VE DONE THIS BEFORE I'LL USE MY **SAME** RESPONSES.

A **PATH?**

SO WE JUST **MAKE UP** WHAT WE SEE? HEY THIS MIGHT BE **FUN!**



OKAY **MY PATH** RUNS THROUGH A **SHADY FOREST** AND IS LINED WITH **GREEN FERNS** AND **HANGING MOSS**. IT'S VERY BEAUTIFUL.

MY PATH SUCKS BECAUSE I THINK THIS EXERCISE **SUCKS!!**

MY PATH RUNS THROUGH A **DESERT**. THERE ARE LOTS OF **DUNES** AND **SUN BLEACHED BONES**.

OOOOH!! OOOH!!!! I **PICK** SOME OF THE **HANGING MOSS** AND **TASTE** IT! DOES IT HAVE ANY **MEDICINAL POWERS?**

DOOFUS!! YOU CAN'T **PICK MOSS** FROM **SARA'S PATH**. YOU HAVE TO **MAKE UP** YOUR OWN.



OKAY AS YOU ARE WALKING ALONG YOUR PATH YOU FIND A **CUP**. PICTURE THE CUP IN YOUR MIND. NOW **DESCRIBE** THE CUP AND WHAT YOU DO WITH IT. **MINE** IS A **GOLDEN CHALICE** WITH INTRICATE ENGRAVINGS ON IT OF **CELTIC MYTHOLOGICAL SCENES**. I'M PICKING IT UP AND TAKING IT WITH ME.

HEY!! THIS IS LIKE **ZORK!!** REMEMBER? WE SHOULD **TAKE EVERYTHING** 'CUZ WE MIGHT NEED CERTAIN ITEMS TO SOLVE **PUZZLES** LATER ON.

JUST DESCRIBE YOUR CUP, BOB. AND WHAT YOU DO WITH IT.

ZORK WAS SO KEWL!!

ZORK?



OH YEAH, THE CUP. **MINE** IS AN **ALE MUG** AND IT'S **FULL** OF GOOD **DWARVEN MEAD!!** I'M TAKING IT WITH ME ALONG WITH **ANYTHING** ELSE I MIGHT STUMBLE ACROSS!!

I ENVISION A **TEA CUP**. IT HAS A CRACK IN IT AND IS BADLY CHIPPED BUT I TAKE IT WITH ME ANYWAY.

THAT THE **BEST** YOU CAN DO **B.A.?**

MINE'S A **SOUVENIR SHOT GLASS** FROM THE **TOMB OF HORRENDOUS DOOM!!**



MY CUP IS A **JEWEL ENCRUSTED GRAIL** WITH **RUNES OF POWER** WHICH READ "**HE WHO DRINKS FROM ME SHALL LIVE FOREVER!**" I DRINK **DEEPLY** AND FEEL A SURGE OF **LIFE GIVING POWER**.

THIS BLOWS!! ALL I GOT WAS A **CRUMMY ALE MUG**.

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE **RAINBOW, BOB!!** YOU'VE GOT A **FREE TICKET** ON THIS **JOURNEY**. YOU CAN MAKE UP **ANYTHING** YOU WANT.

MAN, FORGET THE **STUPID SHOT GLASS!!** I FIND A **GRAIL TOO!!**

THIS IS JUST AN **EXERCISE!!** THIS ISN'T ABOUT **EXPERIENCE POINTS, BOB**.



OKAY FURTHER DOWN THE **PATH** YOU FIND A **KEY**. PICTURE THE KEY IN YOUR MIND AND DESCRIBE IT TO ME. WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE **KEY?**

I SEE A **RUSTY SKELETON KEY**. IT'S BENT SO I DON'T BOTHER TO PICK IT UP.

I SEE A **SKELETON KEY TOO!** AND I PICK IT UP.

A KEY, HUH? **MINE** IS A **MAGICAL KEY** WHICH OPENS **ANY LOCK!** HEH, HEH, **I RULE!!**

I FIND THE **KEYS** TO A **PORSCHE TURBO** WHICH IS PARKED JUST ALONGSIDE THE TRAIL.

I'M GOING **OFF SCRIPT** A BIT BUT I FOUND A SET OF **LOCKPICKS** THAT WILL OPEN **ALL TYPES** OF DOORS.



OKAY, SO YOU CONTINUE YOUR *JOURNEY* DOWN YOUR OWN *PERSONAL PATH*. SOON YOU COME TO A *LARGE BEAR!* WHAT DO YOU DO? *MY BEAR* TURNS OUT TO BE *VERY TAME* AND I'M ABLE TO *HAND FEED* IT AND *BEFRIEND* IT! HE DECIDES TO *ACCOMPANY* ME ON MY *JOURNEY*.

I WASTE IT WITH MY CROSSBOW!!

I PLAY *DEAD* AND HOPE IT LEAVES ME ALONE AND CONTINUES ON ITS WAY.

HOODY HOO!! ABOUT TIME SOMETHING HACKWORTHY CAME ALONG!! I FLOOR THE PEDAL ON MY *PORCSHE* AND MAKE *ROADKILL* OUT OF MY BEAR!!

HMMMM...



LOOKS LIKE MY *BOY SCOUT TRAINING* WILL COME IN HANDY HERE. ACCORDING TO PAGE 67 OF THE *BOY SCOUT'S HANDBOOK*, "BEARS ARE INTERESTED PRIMARILY IN SCROUNGING FOR FOOD. YOU SHOULD *NEVER RUN* FROM A BEAR AS THEY ARE *ATTRACTED* TO *FAST MOVEMENT*. THEY ALSO DISLIKE *HIGH PITCHED NOISES*."

I SPEAK IN A *SOOTHING VOICE* AS I BACK AWAY FROM THE BEAR! IT SHOULD HAVE LITTLE OR *NO INTEREST* IN ME AND MOVE ON.

WHAT ABOUT *PLAYING DEAD*? DOES IT HAPPEN TO MENTION THAT AS A *TACTIC* FOR AVOIDING TROUBLE WITH A *WILD BEAR*?

SORRY B.A., YOU'RE *DEAD MEAT!!* PLAYING DEAD IS JUST AN *OPEN INVITATION* FOR THE BEAR TO *CHOW DOWN* ON YOU.

IF HE'S DEAD I'M TAKING HIS *TEACUP*.



(SIGH) OKAY, OKAY, BOB AND DAVE MANAGE TO *KILL* THE BEAR. *B.A.*, THE BEAR SNIFFS AT YOU MOMENTARILY, APPEARS TO BE *BORED*, AND MOVES ON. *BRIAN*, THE STEPS YOU TOOK TO *AVOID* THE BEAR SEEM TO WORK. HE LEAVES THE AREA. OKAY, AS YOU CONTINUE DOWN THE *PATH* YOU COME TO A *CLEARING*. DESCRIBE IT.

MY *CLEARING* IS JUST A PLACE IN THE *WOODS* WHERE THE *TREES* HAVE *THINNED OUT*.

I SEE A *DRIED OUT MEADOW*. A *STORM* IS BREWING *OVERHEAD* THOUGH AND IT'S BEGINNING TO *THUNDER*.

HEY!! IT *JUST* HIT ME. WE CAN DO *ANYTHING* HERE.

HMMMMM... I'M GOING TO HAVE TO PUT SOME THOUGHT INTO THIS ONE....



MY CLEARING IS FILLED WITH GOLD AND MAGICAL TREASURE!! HA HA!! AND A BEAUTIFUL BIKINI-CLAD RED HEAD!! I PUT THE TREASURE IN THE TRUNK OF MY PORSCHE AND LET THE REDHEAD RIDE SHOTGUN.

I THINK YOU'RE GETTING CARRIED AWAY WITH THIS. IT'S ABOUT SELF DISCOVERY!!

LOSER!! CHECK THIS OUT!! MY CLEARING IS A BATTLEFIELD WHERE TWO MIGHTY ARMIES HAVE PAUSED FOR A CEASE-FIRE SO THEY CAN GATHER THE WOUNDED AND DEAD.



TENSION IS HIGH!! THE FOG OF WAR HANGS HEAVY HERE. THE RED HUED SKY SEEMS TO ACCENTUATE THE BLOOD-SPLATTERED FIELD AS HUNGRY VULTURES CIRCLE OVERHEAD WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO FEED.

ONE THING'S FOR SURE - THE FIGHTING WILL RESUME!!



WOW!! THAT WAS INTENSE BRIAN!! UH...MY CLEARING IS A SYLVAN GLADE WITH BRIGHT BLUE SKIES OVERHEAD AND IT RADIATES WITH WARM SUNLIGHT.

DAMN!! I WISH I WAS IN YOUR WORLD, BRIAN! IT ROCKS!!!

BEAUTIFUL, JUST BEAUTIFUL!! FOR A MOMENT IT WAS ALMOST AS IF HE WERE GMING AGAIN LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS!!

WAY TO GO BRIAN!! WHAT CAUSED THE WAR? WHO'S FIGHTING WHO? DO THEY HAVE CATAPULTS? HUHP? HOW ABOUT CHARIOTS? THEY GOT THOSE? HOW MANY SOLDIERS WERE KILLED?

THE ANSWER, MY FRIEND, IS BLOWIN' IN THE WIND. HAR HAR!!

UH, DID YOU GUYS HEAR ME??

I CRACK MYSELF UP!



OKAY, LET'S MOVE ON. AFTER THE CLEARING YOU COME TO SOME FALLEN TREES ACROSS THE PATH WHICH BLOCK YOUR WAY. WHAT DO YOU DO?

AHH HAA!! AN OLD ORCISH AMBUSH TRICK!! YOU DIDN'T EVEN THINK TO TRY TO HIDE IT DID YOU SARA? WELL, I'M GOING TO OUTSMART THEM. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT, MISSY!! I TURN AROUND AND HEAD THE OTHER WAY. HA HA!! STUPID ORCS!! THEY'LL BE SITTING THERE FOR HOURS WAITING FOR ME TO COME BY!!

I PULL OUT A CHAINSAW AND CUT MY WAY THROUGH.

I ASK THE REDHEAD TO GET OUT AND CLEAR THE PATH SO I CAN CONTINUE. THEN I...WHOAH!! YOU HAVE A CHAINSAW?

I SPROUT WINGS AND FLY OVER THEM.



*This entire page was added to the script as an after thought. To be honest, I was a page short of material for the issue so I had to go back and look for a strip I could expand. B.A.'s fond remembrance of Brian as a GM is telling. — Jolly

ONCE AGAIN, I'LL REMIND YOU THAT THIS IS *NOT* HACKMASTER. THERE ARE *NO* *AMBUSHES* IN THE *TREES!!* *NO* *ORCS!!* (SIGH). ANYWAY, YOU CONTINUE ON YOUR WAY AND COME TO A *BODY OF WATER*. DESCRIBE IT TO ME AND TELL ME IF YOU *DRINK* FROM IT.

I PICTURE A *MUD PUDDLE* INFESTED WITH *MOSQUITOES* AND *POLLYWOGS!!* NO WAY I'M DRINKING FROM IT. BESIDES, I STILL HAVE MY *DWARVEN MEAD* IN MY *ALE MUG*. I'LL JUST TAKE A SWIG OF THAT IF I'M THIRSTY.

I SEE AN *OCEAN!* I'M WADING ON THE *BEACH*. I'M *NOT* DRINKING SINCE THAT WOULD ONLY MAKE MY THIRST *WORSE*.

I SEE A *RIVER*.

I SEE A *LAKE!*

MY *BODY OF WATER* IS A *MYSTERIOUS UNDERGROUND RIVER!!* IT FLOWS FROM AN *UNKNOWN SPRING* AND REACHES A *RAGING TORRENT* AT THE POINT IT FLOWS PAST ME. IT'S *TOO DANGEROUS* TO GET CLOSE TO SO I CAN'T DRINK FROM IT.

VERY GOOD, DAVE!
I LIKE *YOUR* *BODY*
OF WATER.

I'M LOOKING AT *NIMUE'S LAKE*.
IT IS *PURE* AND *UNTOUCHED*.
I SIT BY THE BANKS
IN *REVERENCE* TO THE
LADY OF THE LAKE.

INTERESTING RESPONSES, GUYS. MY *BODY OF WATER* WAS A *MOUNTAIN LAKE*. I *JUMPED* RIGHT IN AND SWAM ABOUT. OKAY, YOU CONTINUE ON AND COME TO A *FORK IN THE PATH*. ONE WAY LEADS TO A *VILLAGE*. THE OTHER GOES *DEEPER* INTO A *WOODS*. WHICH PATH DO YOU CHOOSE?

I'M HEADING TOWARD THE *WOODS* 'CUZ I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT'S AN *ORC VILLAGE* TO THE LEFT!! THEY'RE PROBABLY *PISSED* THAT I AVOIDED THEIR *AMBUSH!!* I'M GOING TO CIRCLE AROUND AND SET FIRE TO THEIR *HUTS* AFTER *SUNDOWN!!*

ORCS?
AGAIN?

I'M PROBABLY *THIRSTY* SINCE I COULDN'T DRINK FROM THE *OCEAN* SO I HEAD FOR THE *VILLAGE*. IT'S A NICE, PEACEFUL COMMUNITY AND ALL THE CHILDREN RUN OUT TO GREET ME WHEN THEY SEE ME APPROACHING. I'M GIVEN FOOD AND SHELTER.

I WENT TO THE *VILLAGE* TOO. IT SEEMS MUCH SAFER THAN THE *WOODS*.

IF ANY *ORCS* RUN OUT OF THE *BURNING* BUILDINGS, I *WASTE 'EM!!*

I HEAD FOR THE *VILLAGE* TOO!! I'M GOING TO PARK MY *PORSCHE* IN FRONT OF THE *TAVERN* AND GO INSIDE. I'LL PUT MY *SHOT GLASS* TO GOOD USE AND *TIE ONE ON!!*

OH YEAH, THE *TAVERN* HAPPENS TO BE A *STRIP CLUB!!* AND ALL THE *DANCERS* *DIG ME!!*

I'M TAKING THE *ROAD LESS TRAVELED*. I HEAD FOR THE *WOODS*.

ALRIGHT GUYS, THAT'S THE **END OF THE JOURNEY**. NOW FOR THE **FUN PART!!** THIS **EXERCISE** WAS DEVELOPED BY **PSYCHOLOGISTS!!** THE THINGS YOU ENCOUNTERED ON YOUR **JOURNEY** ARE **SYMBOLIC** OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF **LIFE** AND HOW YOU **DEAL** WITH THEM. FOR EXAMPLE THE **CUP** REPRESENTS **KNOWLEDGE**. WHAT YOU DID WITH THE **CUP** REPRESENTS HOW MUCH YOU **VALUE** THAT **KNOWLEDGE**.

SAYS WHO? THIS IS **WHACKED!!** HOW DOES AN **ALE MUG** REPRESENT **KNOWLEDGE**?

C'MON GUYS. IT'S JUST A GENERALIZATION. THE **FUN PART** IS FIGURING WHAT OUR RESPONSES REVEAL ABOUT OURSELVES.

SO SOME **PSYCHO-EXPERT DUDE** JUST DECIDED THAT? MAYBE MY **CUP** REPRESENTS MY **OUTGOING PERSONALITY** OR MY **CHARISMA!!**

I THINK MY **GRAIL** FITS ME VERY WELL!!



LOOK **MISSY!!** I DON'T THINK YOU CAN **ACCURATELY** SURVEY SOMEONE'S PERSONALITY WITH SOME **STUPID** EXERCISE LIKE THIS. WHO DO THESE GUYS THINK THEY ARE? YOU CAN'T JUST **SHOE-HORN** PEOPLE LIKE THEY WERE **BLOCKS OF WOOD!**

BOB, CHILL OUT! IT'S JUST A TOOL TO PROMOTE DISCUSSION AND TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO LOOK AT **WHY** YOU ANSWERED THE WAY YOU DID.

SO WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? I'M SUPPOSED TO BE SOME KIND OF **PROBLEM DRINKER** BECAUSE I SAID **SHOT GLASS!!** HUH?

WHAT DO THE OTHER THINGS MEAN?

GO ON, SARA.



OKAY, THE **KEY** IS SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT **WISDOM**. THE **BEAR** REPRESENTS **ADVERSITY** AND HOW YOU **DEAL** WITH IT. THE **CLEARING** REPRESENTS YOUR **OUTLOOK ON LIFE**. THE **TREES** SHOW HOW YOU **DEAL** WITH **OBSTACLES** AND **PROBLEMS**. AND THE...

WHAT? ARE YOU SAYING I **RUN AWAY** FROM MY PROBLEMS? THAT'S NOT FAIR!! I'M TELLIN' YA THERE WAS AN **ORC AMBUSH** IN THOSE **FALLEN TREES!!** I'D BET MY **LIFE** ON IT!!



I DUNNO GUYS, THIS **SYMBOLOLOGY STUFF** REALLY SEEMS TO **RING TRUE!!** ALL OF MY ANSWERS FIT. I **CHERISH KNOWLEDGE**. I'M **WISE** IN A **WIDE VARIETY** OF AREAS. I USUALLY TRY TO KEEP A **COOL HEAD** AND AVOID **ADVERSITY** BY THINKING MY WAY THROUGH IT. I REFUSE TO LET **OBSTACLES** SLOW ME DOWN AND **FLY** RIGHT BY THEM **UNSCATHED**. AND TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I THINK ALL OF **YOUR ANSWERS** FIT YOU GUYS PRETTY WELL TOO!!

GOOD JOB, BRIAN!! THAT'S THE WAY YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO LOOK AT IT.

HUH? WHAT'S THAT, **FATHEAD!!** YOU SAYING I RUN AWAY FROM MY PROBLEMS TOO?

BUT MY **KEY** WAS **BENT!!** I WONDER WHAT THAT MEANS?

COOL HEAD? YOU?



ACTUALLY...UH...IT DOESN'T
LOOK LIKE THIS IS
WORKING OUT WELL. MAYBE
WE SHOULD JUST DROP
THE **WHOLE THING!!**

NO REALLY!! LET'S
JUST **DROP IT!!**

WAIT A MINUTE SARA!!
YOU DIDN'T TELL US WHAT
THE **BODY OF WATER**
REPRESENTS!!

OH NO!! YOU STARTED
IT NOW LET'S **FINISH**
IT!! I'M KICKIN' ASS
HERE. WHAT'S THE
BODY OF WATER MEAN??

OH ALL RIGHT. THE **BODY OF WATER** IS
SUPPOSED TO REPRESENT YOUR **SEXUALITY!!**

WHAT!!??

UH-OH!!

SE...SE...SE...SEXU...SEXU...**SEXUALITY?** NOW
YOU'VE GONE **TOO FAR!!** WHERE DO YOU
GET OFF SAYING MY **SEX LIFE** IS JUST A
LITTLE **MUD PUDDLE!!** WHAT IS **THAT**
SUPPOSED TO **IMPLY?** HUH??

DAMN STRAIGHT IT MEANS **NOTHING!!** I'M NOT
AFRAID TO DRINK FROM THE **RAGING TORRENT!!**

BUT I JUST **WADED** IN THE
WATER AND DIDN'T **DRINK!!**
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

HAR HAR!! FACE THE MUSIC
GUYS. ONCE AGAIN, THE
ANSWERS ALL FIT. MY **BODY OF**
WATER WAS A **PEACEFUL** AND
TRANQUIL PLACE. I'M COMPLETELY
AT **EASE** WITH MY **SEX LIFE!!**

GUYS, FORGET IT.
IT MEANS **NOTHING!!**
REALLY!!

AT EASE? OH, SO WHAT YOU ARE SAYING IS THAT YOU'RE **CELIBATE BY CHOICE?** YOUR BODY OF WATER WAS **PURE AND UNTOUCHED!!**

NOW THAT I **THINK** ABOUT IT, **BRIAN**, YOUR ANSWER FITS YOU **PERFECTLY!!** YOU SAW AN **IMAGINARY LAKE** OCCUPIED BY AN **IMAGINARY WOMAN** WHO DOESN'T EVEN **EXIST!! HA HA!! FITS YOU TO A TEE!!**

CRIPES DAVE!! YOU KNOW NOT TO GO THERE!!

HUH? **IMAGINARY??** WH...WH...**WHY YOU!!**

OH DEAR!!



DAVE, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO LEARN TO **NOT GO THERE?** THE **BIG GUY** IS GOING TO **KILL** YOU ONE OF THESE DAYS!!

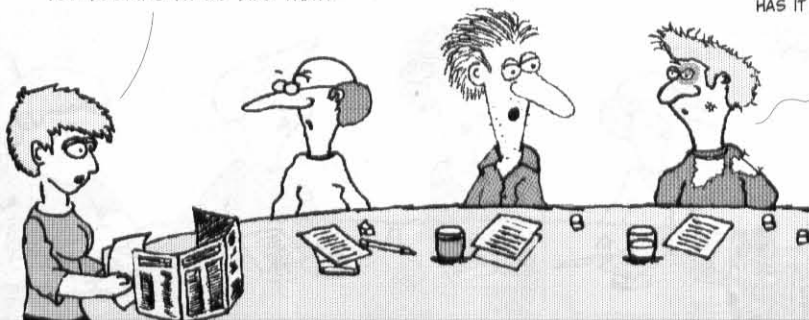
I HAD A LAUNDRY TICKET BUT I THINK I LOST IT. MAY I HAVE ANOTHER?

OH NO!! I'M SORRY DAVE!! I REALLY DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO TURN OUT THIS WAY. I WISH... I...UH..ER... **BOB??!!** WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?

DAVE? YOU OKAY?

THEY'RE KILLING US OUT THERE, COACH. DON'T SEND ME BACK IN. NUMBER 24 HAS IT IN FOR ME **BAD!**

SLAM!



SOOOOO, YOU JUST **"JUMPED RIGHT IN AND SWAM ABOUT"** HUH, SARA? TELL ME MORE...

ERP..UH...(BLUSH) I SHOULD BE GOING, ACTUALLY. I'VE GOT A **MIDTERM** COMING UP.

I WONDER IF I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THAT BENT KEY?

KERPLOP!

LEMME 'LONE MA. IT'S A **SNOW DAY**. NO SCHOOL TODAY - GO SLEEPY.



Knights of the Dinner Table™

“The Mask of El Ravager”

THE KODT DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS
JOLLY R. BLACKBURN • BRIAN JELKE • STEVE JOHANSSON • DAVID S. KENZER
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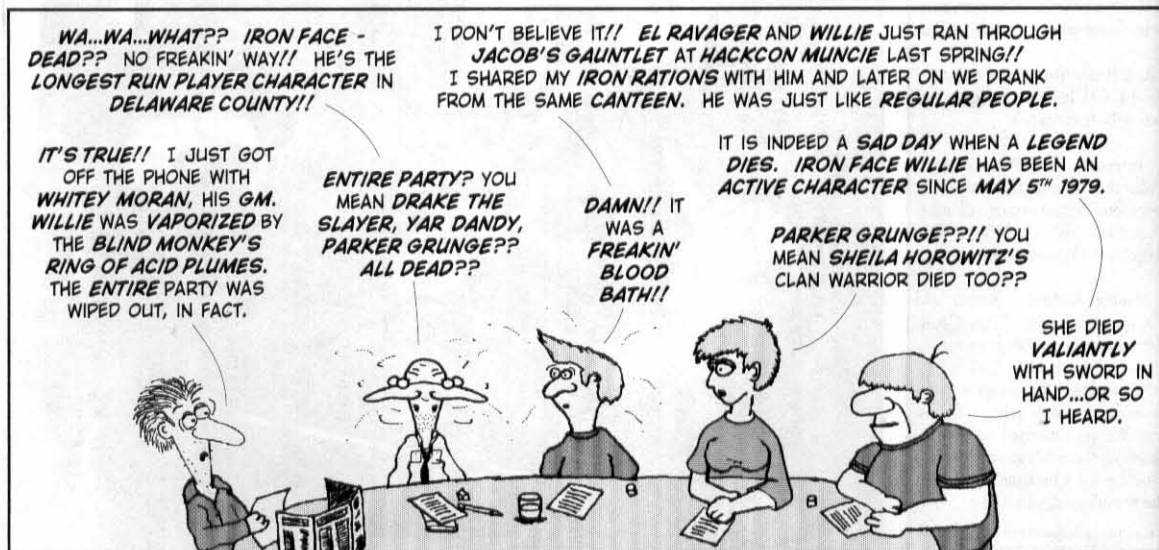
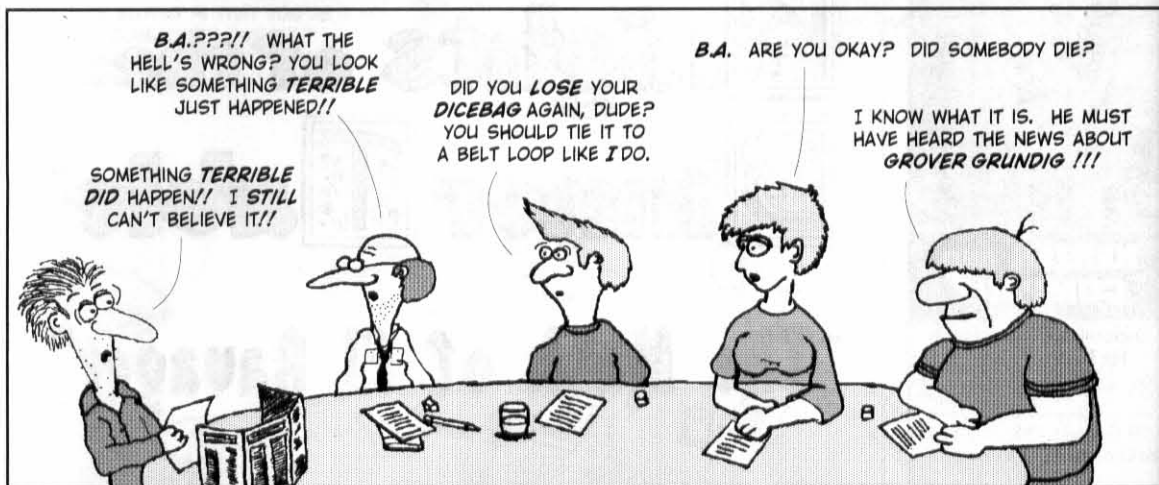
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A Hero's Demise

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
BASED ON IDEAS SUGGESTED BY
DAN ALBERT AND ERIC MILES



GAWD, I'M SAD. I FEEL LIKE THERE'S A HOLE IN MY CHEST!! I HAVEN'T FELT THIS WAY SINCE MY CAT **MISTER DANDERS** DIED ON **CHRISTMAS MORNING** WHEN I WAS A KID.

HEY, MEMBER WHEN **IRON FACE** BEHEADED THE DRAGON **SWILL GUT** DURING **HACK TOURNEY '87??** THE DUDE WAS DOWN TO **THREE HITPOINTS** BUT HE JUST KEPT COMIN' BACK AT THAT DRAGON!!

REMEMBER? DUDE, I WAS IN THAT GAME!! **IRON FACE** SAVED OUR BUTTS THAT DAY!

REALLY?!

YOU KNOW, I'M FEELING KIND OF SAD TOO. IT'S FUNNY, BUT IT'S ALMOST LIKE A PIECE OF **LOCAL GAMING HISTORY** JUST DIED. MY GOODNESS!! **GROVER** RAN THAT CHARACTER FOR ALMOST **TWENTY YEARS!!**

I JUST WISH **EL RAVAGER** COULD HAVE BEEN THERE. MAYBE I COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING - **ANYTHING!!**

YEAH!! MAYBE **KNUCKLES** COULD HAVE SAVED HIM TOO!!

EASY THERE GUYS. "**MAYBE SOUP**" IS A **COLD DISH** THAT LEAVES THE SOUL **EMPTY** AND **WANTING**. THERE'S NOTHING WE COULD HAVE DONE. **DEATH** BLINDLY SERVES THE **FATES**. WHEN THEY CALL - YOU MUST GO!!

EL RAVAGER FEELS THE RIPPLES OF **IRON FACE WILLIE'S** DEATH THROES AS THEY TEAR ACROSS THE **INTER-DIMENSIONAL TIME CONTINUUM!!** MOVED TO TEARS, HE CLIMBS TO A **HIGH PLACE** AND **CURSES THE WIND!!** (SOB) THEN HE KNEELS, UNSHEATHES HIS **HACKMASTER +12** AND DIPS THE POINT OF HIS BLADE FOR A BRIEF MOMENT. (WHIMPER)

OH WOW!, THAT WAS BEAUTIFUL! I WISH YOU HAD THOUGHT TO INVITE ME TO JOIN YOU. I'D LIKE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO **IRON FACE** TOO!!

SORRY DUDE. **EL RAVAGER** ALWAYS **MOURNS** IN **SOLITUDE**. IT'S HIS WAY.

I TOO FEEL THE **RIPPLES** AND AM TOUCHED. **TEFLON BILLY** FIRES A **TEN VOLLEY** SALUTE OF **CHAINED LIGHTNING** FIRE BALLS INTO THE **GREAT PURPLE VEIL** OF NIGHT.

DAVE THAT WAS TOUCHING. I THINK I'M GOING TO CRY.



I WRITE THE NAME OF **IRON FACE WILLIE** ON A **+5 BOLT OF SKEWERING** AND FIRE IT INTO THE **BRASIER OF ETERNAL FLAME** IN THE **TEMPLE OF THOR** THUS SACRIFICING A **MAGIC ITEM** IN TRIBUTE TO THE HERO'S DEATH. THE URGE TO WEEP TUGS AT **KNUCKLES** BUT HE IS TOO PROUD TO YIELD.

OUTSTANDING BOB!! NOT ONLY IS THAT A BEAUTIFUL TRIBUTE BUT SACRIFICING A **MAGIC ITEM** TO A **MAJOR DIETY** GIVES YOU A **+5 MODIFIER** ON YOUR NEXT **DIVINE INTERVENTION BESEECHMENT!!**

+5?? DAMN!! I THOUGHT IT WAS +10. OH WELL - WHATEVER.

I GUESS IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS. HUH, BOB?

GOOD JOB!!

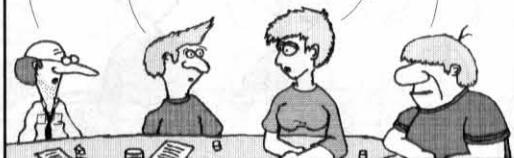


GEE, I WAS JUST THINKING...AFTER **TWENTY YEARS** OF **CONTINUOUS PLAY** YOU WOULD THINK **IRON FACE WILLIE** WOULD HAVE REACHED **GAWDHOOD STATUS** BY NOW, OR AT THE VERY LEAST **IMMORTAL STATUS**.

HE HAD A FEW **SET BACKS** ALONG THE WAY. THERE WAS THAT **DEMON LICHE** INCIDENT IN '84. I THINK HE SUFFERED A **TWELVE LEVEL** EXPERIENCE DRAIN FROM THAT **BASTARD!!**

AND THEN HE WAS TURNED INTO A **NEW BORN BABE** BY A **BOTCHED LIMITED WISH SPELL!!**

YEAH, **WILLIE** HAD A TOUGH GO AT IT.



NEW BORN BABE?? YOU MEAN HE HAD TO *START ALL OVER FROM SCRATCH??* I NEVER KNEW THAT.

YEAH, HE CAUGHT A *HEARING-IMPAIRED LEPRECHAUN* AND WISHED TO BE TELEPORTED "*BACK TO THE TOMB*". THE *LEPRECHAUN* THOUGHT HE SAID "*BACK TO THE WOMB!!*"

AN EXCELLENT *GM CALL* BY THE WAY. (HMMMMM)

THE DUDE WAS *ROBBED!!*

AAAAAAHHH, *GROVER* TOOK IT ON THE CHIN LIKE A *TROOPER!!* ANYONE ELSE WOULD HAVE RETIRED THAT CHARACTER RIGHT THEN AND THERE BUT NOT *DA CRIT MAN!!* AND DON'T FORGET HE WAS PROHIBITED FROM REACHING *IMMORTAL STATUS* ANYWAY. HE WAS POLYMORPHED INTO A *PYGMY LIZARD-NEWT* IN THE *HALLS OF FERA-KAHN* MODULE. *LIZARD NEWTS* DON'T HAVE ANY *SPONSORING-GAWDS* POWERFUL ENOUGH TO GRANT *IMMORTALITY*.

SCRIBBLE
SCRIBBLE

IT'S A DAMN SHAME!! ALL THOSE ADVENTURES! ALL THOSE MEMORIES! *IRON FACE WILLIE* IS NOW NOTHING BUT A COLLECTION OF NUMBERS AND LOVINGLY SCRAWLED NOTES ON SOME YELLOWING CHARACTER SHEET THAT WILL BE TUCKED AWAY IN ONE OF *GROVER'S* THREE RING BINDERS. WHERE'S THE *JUSTICE* IN THAT??

IT MAKES YOU STOP AND THINK DOESN'T IT? A FEW BAD ROLLS, A FAILED SAVING THROW HERE OR THERE AND ANY OF OUR CHARACTERS COULD SUFFER THE SAME FATE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMIND ME! I'VE LOST MANY A GOOD CHARACTER OVER THE YEARS! REMEMBER *BENNY THE MAGE?* HE KICKED *ORC ASS!!* THEY EVEN NAMED THE BRIDGE OVER *RUTLER'S RIVER* AFTER HIM. *TEFLON BILLY* WAS THERE FOR THE DEDICATION. REMEMBER?



HEY, I HAVE A *GREAT IDEA!!* WHY DON'T WE ORGANIZE A *WAKE* FOR *IRON FACE* DOWN AT *WEIRD PETE'S* THIS *SATURDAY*. YOU KNOW - A *MEMORIAL SERVICE!!*

THAT IDEA *ROCKS DUDE!!* IT WOULD GIVE US ALL A CHANCE TO SAY *GOODBYE* AND PAY OUR *RESPECTS*.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT *ROCKS* BUT IT CERTAINLY IS AN *INTERESTING* NOTION.

WE COULD *SELL SNACKS!*

I READ ABOUT AN ARTICLE IN *HACKJOURNAL* LAST MONTH ABOUT A *GAMING CLUB* IN *BOISE* WHO HELD A *MEMORIAL GET-TOGETHER* FOR CHARACTERS WHO PERISHED DURING A LOCAL *HACKTOURNEY DEATH MATCH*.

PEOPLE GOT UP AND SHARED STORIES ABOUT THE *DECEASED*. IT WENT OVER SO WELL IT'S NOW A *SCHEDULED EVENT* AT EVERY *HACKCON* IN *IDAHO!*



WHAT A **FREAKIN' AWESOME IDEA!!** WE SHOULD TRY TO GET SOMETHING LIKE THAT GOING HERE **LOCALLY!!**

I READ THAT ARTICLE. THEY EVEN STARTED A **SINGING BARD TROUPE**. PLAYERS CAN WRITE THEIR OWN **BALLADS** ABOUT THEIR DEPARTED CHARACTERS' DEEDS. THE **BARDS** PERFORM THEM AT THE SERVICES!

WOW! THAT'S SO KEWL!!

ONCE AGAIN, **IDAHO** LEADS THE WAY WHEN IT COMES TO **RPG INNOVATION!!**

HEY! **WEIRD PETE** IS SUPPOSED TO BE BACK FROM HIS **VACATION** TOMORROW. WHEN I GO INTO WORK I'LL ASK HIM ABOUT USING HIS STORE FOR THE **MEMORIAL SERVICE** THIS SATURDAY.

SATURDAY? DARN! I WON'T BE ABLE TO ATTEND. MY **BOOK CLUB** IS MEETING THAT DAY AT THE **LIBRARY**.

CAN'T GO? JUST TELL THEM ABOUT THE **SERVICE**. THEY'LL UNDERSTAND.

TELL THE GIRLS ABOUT...UH...ER...

HEY! MAYBE I SHOULD DUST OFF MY **PROPOSAL** TO THE **HACKMASTER ASSOCIATION** AND SUBMIT IT AGAIN! THE **DEATH** OF A **ROLE-PLAYING LEGEND** LIKE **IRON FACE WILLIE** MIGHT BE JUST THE SORT OF **CATALYST** NEEDED TO GARNER ENOUGH SUPPORT TO GET IT APPROVED THIS TIME.

PROPOSAL? YOU MEAN THE ONE ASKING FOR AN **OFFICIAL RULING** THAT **FEMALE DWARVES** HAVE **BEARDS?** WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH **WILLIE?**

IF THEY APPROVE THAT **PROPOSAL**, I'LL SUBMIT A **PROPOSAL** OF MY OWN — THAT THEY ADD **LADY REMINGTONS** TO THE **EQUIPMENT LIST!!**

HEY!! I TOLD YOU - DON'T GO **MESSIN'** AROUND WITH **DWARVEN CULTURE!!**

NO! NOT THAT **PROPOSAL!** THE **OTHER ONE!**

OH NO! WE'RE NOT DIGGING UP THAT ISSUE AGAIN!!



I'M TALKING ABOUT MY IDEA FOR SETTING ASIDE THE **FIRST SATURDAY IN FEBRUARY** AS **PLAYER CHARACTER MEMORIAL DAY!!** A DAY SET ASIDE TO SUSPEND ALL **GAMING**. IT WOULD ALLOW **GAMING GROUPS** TO GET TOGETHER AND TALK ABOUT THEIR **OLD CHARACTERS** AND **OLD ADVENTURES**.

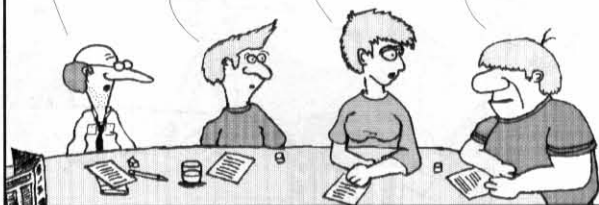
DUDE YOU SHOULD STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT AND TURN THAT BABY IN AGAIN!

BESIDES, **NORMAN BOWZER** AND HIS **CRONIES** SWEEPED THE **ACADEMY ELECTIONS** LAST MONTH AND REPLACED MOST OF THE **INCUMBENT DIRECTORS**. WITH ALL THAT **NEW BLOOD** AND **FRESH ATTITUDES** YOUR **PROPOSAL** STANDS A BETTER CHANCE.

THE **ACADEMY** REJECTED IT THE LAST **SIX TIMES** I SUBMITTED IT!

STORMIN' NORMAN WILL BACK IT! I KNOW HE WILL!

YEAH! **BOWZER'S** WHOLE PLATFORM WAS BASED ON **REFORM!**



THANKS FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT, GUYS! I'M GONNA DO IT! I'M GOING TO PULL IT OUT AND SEND IT IN AGAIN! I'LL EVEN DRAW UP A *PETITION* AND HAVE FOLKS AT THE *MEMORIAL SERVICE* THIS SATURDAY SIGN IT. I THINK I'LL *PIGGY BACK* IT WITH MY IDEA FOR A *PLAYER CHARACTER HALL OF FAME* TOO!

A *HALL OF FAME* IS LONG OVERDUE!! *KNUCKLES* IS A *SHOE-IN* TO BE INDUCTED!! AFTER ALL, HOW MANY *THIEVES* CAN SAY THEY SNATCHED THE *STAR OF THE BLIND MAGE* FROM THE *APE-GAWD* IN THE *TERROR AT THUNDER RIDGE MODULE*?*

YOU WERE *HOT* THAT NIGHT!! *TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY TRAPS* AND YOU *DISARMED* THEM ALL!! I BET THE *APE SHAMANS* ARE STILL MOANING AND CRYING ABOUT THAT LITTLE FEAT. REMEMBER THE LOOK ON THE *APE GAWD'S* FACE WHEN YOU BURST INTO THE *INNER SANCTUM* WITH HIS *HIGH PRIEST'S* HEAD ON A *SPIT*?? HA HA!!

HEY! I TRAPPED THE *APE GAWD* IN MY *BELT BUCKLE OF HOLDING*! REMEMBER?

I WONDER IF HE'S STILL IN THERE? I'D FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THAT!



GEE, I WAS ALL *TORN UP* ABOUT *IRON FACE WILLIE* DYING AND ALL BUT THIS IS KIND OF EXCITING!! WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT THE *HALL OF FAME* EVER SINCE THEY PULLED *PC OBITUARIES* FROM *HACKJOURNAL* THREE YEARS AGO.

THOSE JERKS! I WAS SO TICKED OFF!! THEY PULLED THE *OBITS* THE VERY MONTH *VICTOR'S* WOULD HAVE APPEARED! AND THEY *STIFFED* ME ON THE *FIFTY DOLLAR CHECK* I MAILED THEM TO COVER IT!

VICTOR? GAWD, THERE'S A CHARACTER I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IN A WHILE! HE AND *BUBBA LOUIE* WERE BURIED TOGETHER IN A *COMMON GRAVE*!***

TWO DOLLARS A WORD TO RUN A CHARACTER OBITUARY WAS A LITTLE STEEP.

BUT IT WAS ONLY A *BUCK* IF YOU WERE A *LIFE TIME SUBSCRIBER* LIKE ME!



I MUST SAY, I'M *PROUD* OF YOU GUYS! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU SO *COMMUNITY MINDED!* IF YOUR EFFORTS PAY OFF *GAMERS EVERYWHERE* WILL BE *ETERNALLY GRATEFUL* TO YOU!

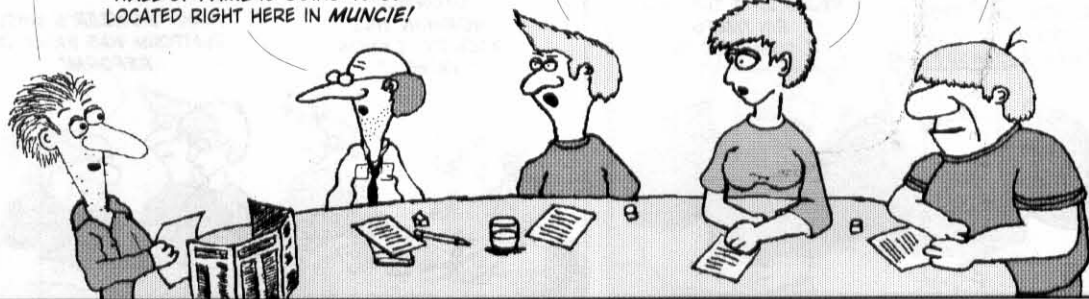
I'M GONNA PULL OUT ALL MY *OLD CHARACTER SHEETS* TONIGHT AND BRING THEM TO THE *SERVICE* SO WE CAN LOOK AT THEM. THINK OF ALL THE *STORIES* ENCRYPTED ON THOSE PAGES.

WILLIE'S DEATH COULD BE THE BEST THING TO EVER HAPPEN TO THIS TOWN!! IF I GET MY WAY THAT *HALL OF FAME* IS GOING TO BE LOCATED RIGHT HERE IN *MUNCIE!*

YEAH! *MUNCIE* COULD BE THE *SUNDANCE OF GAMING* SOMEDAY!

NO NEED TO DO THAT, DAVE. I HAVE COPIES OF ALL YOUR *CHARACTER SHEETS* IN MY *BRIEF CASE* WITH EVERYONE ELSE'S, REMEMBER?

I'M PROUD OF YOU GUYS, TOO!



* See Dragon #246 [Tales from the Vault vol. 2]

** See Tales From the Vault: Page 16

Holodeck Not Needed

STORY BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

WOW!! THE **MOOD** IS REALLY **LOW** IN THIS ROOM. SINCE EVERYONE IS SO **UPSET** ABOUT THE DEATH OF **IRON FACE**, PERHAPS WE NEED TO **CANCEL** THE GAME AND JUST TRY AGAIN NEXT WEEK.

CANCEL THE GAME? ARE YOU NUTS? I'VE BEEN WAITING **ALL WEEK** TO PLAY!! WE'RE GOING TO USE OUR **TERRILIAN FRIGATE*** TO MAP OUT THE ENTIRE SURFACE OF **GARWEEZE WURLD** FROM ORBIT.

AND WE WERE GOING TO DROP SOME **NUKES** ON **FANGAERIE** TONIGHT!!

WHOAH, WHOAH! HOLD IT GUYS.



WHAT THE **HELL** ARE YOU DOING? I THOUGHT WE AGREED NOT TO DISCUSS OUR **PLANS** IN FRONT OF **B.A.**..

RELAX **BIG GUY!** WE DIDN'T GIVE AWAY ANY DETAILS. AT LEAST NOT ENOUGH FOR HIM TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

YEAH!! WHAT ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT? **B.A.'S** GOT **NOTHING** IN THIS CAMPAIGN THAT CAN MATCH THE FIREPOWER OF **MARGO!!** WE'RE INVINCIBLE!!

YOU THINK **B.A.** IS UP TO SOMETHING, BRIAN?



OF COURSE HE'S UP TO SOMETHING!! A **LITTLE BIRD** TOLD ME THIS HOUSE LOOKED LIKE A **GAMEMASTER CONVENTION** LAST NIGHT. **EARL SLACKMOZER** AND **NITRO** WERE **BOTH** HERE FOR OVER **FOUR HOURS!!** AND IF THAT WEREN'T **INTERESTING ENOUGH** OVER A **DOZEN** PHONE CALLS WERE MADE TO THE **HACKMASTER SUPPORT LINE**.

WHY THAT'S **ABSRD!!** I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU GOT YOUR **INFORMATION, BRIAN**, BUT YOU'RE WRONG.

EARL, NITRO AND **B.A.?** ALL UNDER ONE ROOF?

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?

SOUNDS LIKE A **WAR COUNCIL!**



A **WAR COUNCIL** INDEED!! IT'S A **WAR** AGAINST **US!!** THEY'VE OBVIOUSLY PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER TO COME UP WITH SOME **DEVIOUS PLOT** TO **DISINFECT** **B.A.'S HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN** OF ALL THE **SPACEHACK TECH** WE MANAGED TO BRING INTO IT.

SO WHAT? WE ALREADY CRUNCHED ALL THE NUMBERS - REMEMBER? WITH OUR **COMBINED DAMAGE** POTENTIAL WE CAN HANDLE ANYTHING **B.A.** CAN THROW AGAINST US.

YEAH! WE KNEW **B.A.** WOULD TRY SOMETHING. THAT'S WHY WE MET OVER THE WEEKEND TO PLAN OUR STRATEGY.

AFRAID HE'LL OUTSMART YOU, BRIAN?



HELL NO, I'M NOT AFRAID!! BUT I AM A LITTLE CONCERNED WHEN **THREE** EXPERIENCED **GM'S** MEET IN SECRET TO **PLOT** AGAINST US! **THANK GAWD** **PETE** WAS OUT OF TOWN 'CUZ I'M SURE THEY WOULD HAVE CONSULTED HIM AS WELL. ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT WE NEED TO **KEEP OUR GUARD UP. ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN TONIGHT!!**



* See KODT #25: Operation Skim. (The characters manage to bring a Space Hack Frigate into their HackMaster campaign.)

YOU'RE RIGHT! WE CAN'T TRUST *B.A.*..
MAYBE WE SHOULD ABANDON *PLAN A*
AND IMMEDIATELY EXECUTE *PLAN B*.
CATCH THE BASTARD OFF GUARD!!

I AGREE!! WE STRIKE *HARD AND FAST!!*
KNOCK THE WIND OUT OF HIM!!

DO WE REALLY WANT TO USE
PLAN B? IT COULD POSSIBLY
WRECK THE ENTIRE CAMPAIGN!!

A RISK WE'RE
WILLING TO TAKE!!

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD GUYS!! YOU ACT LIKE I'M THE *ENEMY!!* I'M
YOUR *GAMEMASTER!* I DON'T SIT AROUND *PLOTTING* AGAINST YOU.

C'MON!! LET'S GET THIS *GAME* ROLLING!!
THERE'S A WHOLE LOTTA *HACKIN'* TO BE DONE!!

WHAT'S THE MATTER,
B.A.?? GETTIN'
NERVOUS?

WELL THIS SHOULD BE
INTERESTING, ANYWAY.
GOOD LUCK, BRIAN.

THANKS!!

OKAY *B.A.*, FIRST THING WE'RE GOING TO DO IS *IMMUNIZE* OUR *HACKMASTER* CHARACTERS WITH EVERY
VACCINATION WE CAN FIND IN OUR *SICKBAY*. WE'LL ALSO *DRAW BLOOD* FROM BOTH OUR *SPACEHACK*
CHARACTERS AND OUR *HACKMASTER* CHARACTERS. WE HAVE THE *BIO-COMPUTERS* BEGIN A *COMPARATIVE*
ANALYSIS LOOKING FOR ANY *HARMFUL CONTAGIONS* THAT COULD BE TRANSFERRED BETWEEN THE TWO.

FIRK DING BLAST/
WHAT THE HELL
MADE YOU THINK
TO DO THAT?

PATTY GAUZEWEILER SAID YOU
BORROWED HER COPY OF *H.G.*
WELLS' *WAR OF THE WORLDS!*

SO WE FIGURED YOU
WERE GOING TO TRY
AND KILL US WITH A
VIRUS OR BACTERIA!

AS AN ADDED *PRECAUTION*
WE'RE GONNA WEAR OUR
VAC SUITS AT ALL TIMES!!

NEXT WE'RE GONNA BREAK OUT THE *MAINTENANCE-BORGS* WE
HAVE STORED IN *HOLDING BAY DELTA*. WE'RE GOING TO PUT
THEM ON *FULL TIME* MAINTENANCE DUTY. WE WANT THEM
TO KEEP THE *SHIP* AND *ALL EQUIPMENT* IN
SHOWROOM FLOOR CONDITION!!

SO YOU GUYS MET OVER
THE WEEKEND, HUH?

WE FIGURED YOUR NEXT STEP WOULD BE TO
TRY AND DESTROY OUR SHIP AND EQUIPMENT
THROUGH MECHANICAL FAILURE.

JUST FRIDAY NIGHT
AND SATURDAY
AFTERNOON, *B.A.*..

I MADE A LIST OF ALL *ESSENTIAL SHIP*
COMPONENTS. I'M GOING TO HAVE THE
REPLICATOR COMPUTERS BEGIN
WORKING ON REPLACEMENTS PARTS.

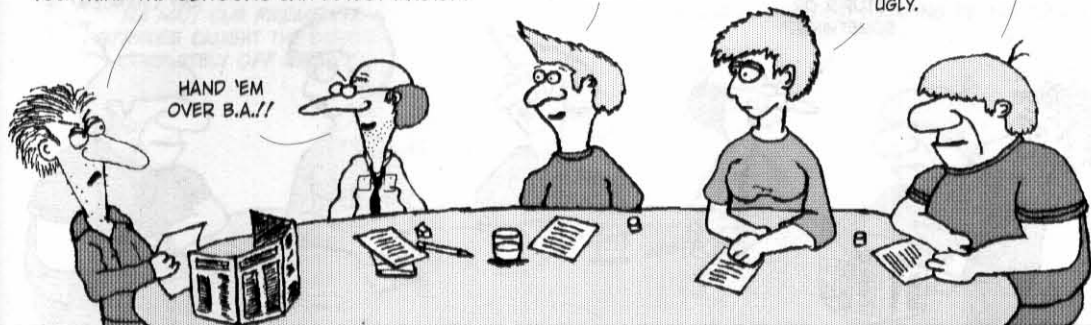
I WILL BE ADJUSTING OUR ORBIT SO WE EVENTUALLY PASS OVER THE **ENTIRE SURFACE** OF THE WORLD. THIS SHOULD GIVE US A **DIGITAL MAP** WHICH WE CAN USE TO LAYOUT OUR PLANS FOR TAKING OVER THE WORLD. YOU MIGHT AS WELL DIG OUT THAT **BOXED SET OF GARWEEZE WURLD MAPS, B.A.!**
 I'D LIKE TO TAKE THEM HOME WITH ME TO STUDY. OH...I ALMOST FORGOT.
 NEXT I'M GOING TO **RECALIBRATE** THE SHIP'S SENSORS SO THEY CAN **DETECT MAGIC!!**

FRPPPPPTTT!!! WHAT?? I'M NOT GIVING YOU **MY MAPS!!** AND WHAT THE HELL MAKES YOU THINK THE **SENSORS** CAN DETECT MAGIC??

MAN IS HE MAD!!

I KNEW THIS WOULD GET UGLY.

HAND 'EM OVER B.A.!!



SORRY B.A., YOU ALREADY ESTABLISHED THAT LITTLE FACT. **REMEMBER??** LAST WEEK YOU SAID OUR **SENSORS** PICKED UP "RESIDUAL LEVELS OF AN UNUSUAL SUBDIMENSIONAL FIELD" WHEN **TEFLON BILLY** CAST THOSE **FIREBALLS** AT OUR **SPACEHACK CHARACTERS!** THAT MEANS THE **SIGNATURE** IS STORED IN SARA'S **PORTABLE SCANNER!** SHOULD BE A SIMPLE MATTER TO UPLOAD IT TO THE **SHIP'S MAINFRAME COMPUTER!!**



IN HIS SPARE TIME **TEFLON BILLY** WILL CAST ALL THE SPELLS IN HIS **SPELL BOOK** WHILE **HECTOR MUNROE** RECORDS EACH **UNIQUE SIGNATURE OF SUBDIMENSIONAL FIELD DISTURBANCES.** THIS SHOULD ALLOW OUR **SENSORS** TO IDENTIFY THE NATURE OF ANY **MAGIC** IT DETECTS!!

BRIAN, YOU'RE A **FRICKIN' GENIUS!!**

HEY, SCAN MY **HACKMASTER +12** WHILE YOU'RE AT IT!! I WANT IT'S SIGNATURE STORED IN THE COMPUTERS. THAT WAY IF IT GETS LOST I CAN FIND IT.

MY GAWD!! WHAT HAVE I DONE??

BRIAN, I'M IMPRESSED!!



THE BEST PART IS THAT GIVEN ENOUGH **TIME** I THINK I MAY BE ABLE TO MODIFY THE **SENSORS** SO THAT THEY USE THE **SIGNATURES** TO **RECREATE** OR **REPLICATE** THE **DISTURBANCES** IN THE **SUBDIMENSIONAL FIELD.**

REPLICATE?? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WHAT GOOD WOULD THAT DO?

DO YOU MEAN OUR SHIP MIGHT BE ABLE TO **CAST SPELLS??**

NOT ONLY **CAST** THEM BUT I'LL BE ABLE LINK IT WITH THE **FUZZY LOGIC TACTICAL SYSTEM** SO IT CAN DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE **SPELL** FOR ANY SITUATION!

WOW!



BRIAN, I TAKE BACK WHAT I SAID. YOU'RE NOT A GENIUS. YOU'RE A **GAWD!!** IF YOU CAN TURN **MARGO** INTO A **SPACE FARING MAJOR RELIC,** YOU'LL BE INDUCTED INTO THE **HALL OF FAME** FOR SURE!!

AND TO THINK THAT **BOTH EL RAVAGER** AND **STERLING LURGE** WILL BE THERE TO WITNESS IT. THEY'LL BE TALKING ABOUT THIS FOR **YEARS!**

GO BRIAN GO!! I'M FLOORED!!

IT'S NOTHING.



UH...GUYS, I HAVE TO MAKE A PHONE CALL REAL QUICK. I TOLD MY MANAGER I WOULD CHECK IN WITH HER TONIGHT.

A PHONE CALL?? GO WITH HIM DAVE. MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T TRY TO CONTACT ANY OF HIS GAMEMASTER BUDDIES FOR ADVICE. I THINK WE HAVE HIM RUNNING SCARED.

YOU THINK WE'RE STUPID OR SOMETHING?

ROGER THAT!! I'M ON TOP OF IT!!

LET THE MAN MAKE HIS PHONE CALL.

THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT, SARA!! WE CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES!



SCUFFLE!

UH HUH, WHAT DID I TELL YOU? SOUNDS LIKE B.A. TRIED TO PULL A FAST ONE!!

SHOVE!

??!! YOU DON'T THINK THEY ARE ACTUALLY FIGHTING DO YOU? MAYBE WE SHOULD GO HELP.

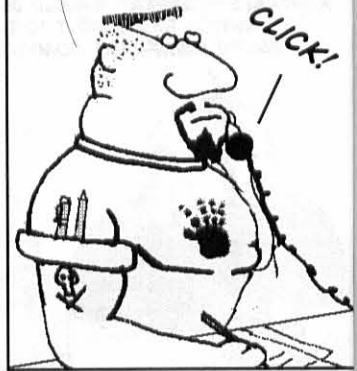
I APPRECIATE YOUR FIGHTING SPIRIT SARA BUT I THINK DAVE CAN HANDLE HIMSELF!

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT, BOB.



MEANWHILE...

NITRO HERE. HELLO? ANYBODY THERE? HELLO??



CLICK!

A FEW MINUTES LATER...

YOU LOCKED HIM IN THE LINEN CLOSET?? DUDE, THAT WON'T DO. WE NEED HIM!! WHO'S GONNA RUN THE GAME?

IT'S JUST 'TIL HE CALMS DOWN A LITTLE!! HE WENT BALLISTIC AFTER I TOOK HIM DOWN WITH A FLYING TACKLE! I HAD TO DO IT! AS SOON AS WE HIT THE LIVING ROOM HE GRABBED THE CORDLESS PHONE, PUNCHED THE SPEED DIAL AND TRIED TO MAKE A DASH FOR THE GARAGE.

YOU DID THE RIGHT THING, DAVE.



I'M STILL A LITTLE CONCERNED ABOUT THAT **HUGE MAGIC SHIELD** GILEAD MANAGED TO PLACE OVER THE ENTIRE POPULATED AREA OF **FANGAERIE**. BY MY CALCULATIONS IT WOULD TAKE **32 MAGES** (18TH LEVEL OR ABOVE) CHAIN-CASTING ONE MASSIVE **MAGIC SHIELD SPELL** TO PULL THAT OFF!

IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE WERE **ANTICIPATING** OUR ATTACK.

IF HE'S EMPLOYING **HIGH LEVEL MAGES** HE MAY HAVE A FEW **SCRYERS** ON THE PAYROLL. THEY COULD HAVE WARNED HIM ABOUT OUR ATTACK!

THEY DEFINITELY WERE EXPECTING AN **AERIAL ATTACK**. BUT HOW?

SO WHAT? WE STILL **LIT UP HIS ASS!!**



OH SOMEBODY WARNED HIM ALRIGHT!! BUT I BET IT WASN'T SOME **LAME ASS SCRYE!!**

HUH? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

LET ME SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU, **MS. CHEESEHEAD!!** IT'S NO SECRET YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN **SWEET** ON THIS **GILEAD DUDE!!** MAYBE IT WAS YOU WHO WARNED HIM!

ME? **GET REAL!!** IT WAS **ZAYRE** WHO FANCIED **GILEAD**. SHE'S DEAD - REMEMBER? **THORINA** DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HIM!

YEAH, **CHEESE-HEAD SNITCH!!**



LOOK! I DON'T LIKE BEING CALLED **CHEESEHEAD**, **MISSY**, **MS. WISCONSIN** OR ANY OF THOSE OTHER **DEROGATORY** LITTLE **TAGS** YOU GUYS LIKE TO THROW ON ME. **GOT IT?!!**

GAAA!! I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY IT!! **REALLY!**

I DON'T LIKE YOU **CALLIN'** HER THOSE NAMES EITHER.



HEY, WE WERE TALKIN' **IN CHARACTER!!** YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE THESE THINGS SO PERSONALLY!!

I GUESS **SOME** PEOPLE FROM **CERTAIN STATES** DON'T KNOW HOW TO **ROLE PLAY!!** HMMRRRRFFF.

THAT'S FINE, GUYS. AND I WAS JUST REACTING **IN CHARACTER!!** NEXT PERSON WHO CALLS ME A **CHEESEHEAD** WILL BE EATING THEIR **CHRISTMAS DINNER** THROUGH A **STRAW!**

WE SHOULDN'T BE FIGHTING AMONGST OURSELVES ANYWAY. WE GOT **BIGGER PROBLEMS**.



SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOU GUYS, BUT WHILE YOU ARE CONTEMPLATING A SECURITY LEAK, THE SHIP'S SENSORS DETECT A MASSIVE OBJECT RISING FROM THE PLANET'S SURFACE AT TREMENDOUS SPEED AND HEADING DIRECTLY FOR MARGO!!

I'M RUNNING MY SPELL DIAGNOSTIC PROGRAM TO SEE IF I CAN IDENTIFY IT!! I'LL ALSO TRY AND PIN POINT IT'S POINT OF ORIGIN ON THE SURFACE.

WHAT THE HELL? IS IT A MISSILE OR SOMETHING?

I'M CLIMBING IN THE FORWARD GUN TURRET!

I'M RAISING THE SHIELDS AND SOUNDING BATTLE STATIONS!!



BRIAN, YOUR PROGRAM IDENTIFIES THE OBJECT AS A TYPE OF FIREBALL. IT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN CHAIN-CAST. IT'S ALMOST 1000 FEET IN DIAMETER AND MOVING AT MACH THREE SPEED!!

I ATTEMPT TO DISBELIEVE IT!! IS IT STILL THERE?

A CHAIN-FIREBALL? AND IT'S ATTEMPTING TO STRIKE US? IN ORBIT?

I FIRE AT THE CENTER OF THE FIREBALL HOPING TO BREAK IT UP!

MY GAWD! THE DAMAGE RATING FOR THAT BASTARD MUST BE ENORMOUS!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

THAT FIREBALL WAS HUGE!! IT ALMOST TOOK OUT OUR SHIP IN ORBIT!! THANK GAWD BRIAN WAS ABLE TO MODIFY THE SHIELDS SO THEY EMITTED A DISPEL MAGIC AURA ABOUT THE SHIP.

YEAH BUT IT ALMOST BURNED OUT THE SHIELD GRIDDING!! WE CAN'T RELY ON IT TO WORK A SECOND TIME. WE WERE LUCKY!

WHERE THE HELL DID IT COME FROM?

HOW BIZZARE!



B.A., I'M CHECKING THE COMPUTERS. WHERE WAS THE POINT OF ORIGIN FOR THAT FIREBALL??

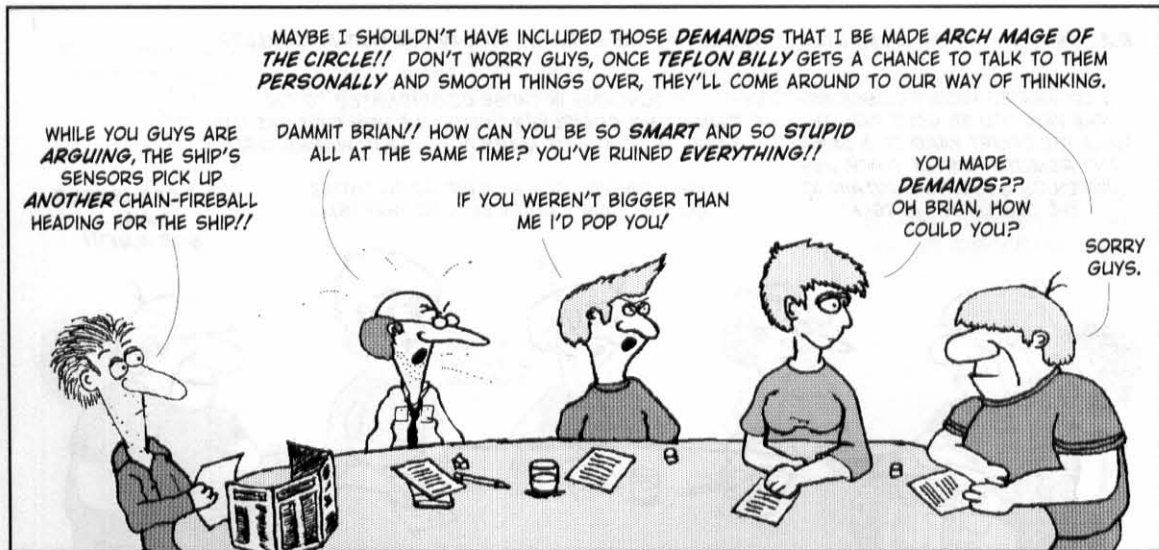
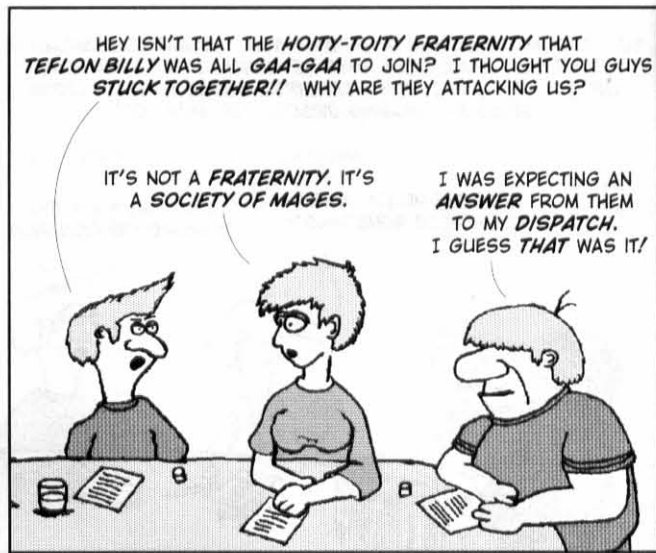
IT ORIGINATED FROM THE ISLE OF THE VEIL. TO BE MORE PRECISE FROM THE COURT YARD OF A LARGE AND REMOTE CASTLE WHICH LIES HIDDEN ON A HIGH MOUNTAIN AT THE CENTER OF THE ISLE!

I'M PUNCHING IN THOSE COORDINATES TO THE TARGETING COMPUTER. LET'S SEE HOW THEY LIKE THE STING OF COUPLE OF MARK IV NUCLEAR WARHEADS!!

WHAT THE HELL DID WE EVER DO TO THOSE GUYS? I AIN'T NEVER BEEN TO THAT ISLE.

ISLE OF THE VEIL?
(GASP)
BOB WAIT!!!





A FEW MINUTES LATER...

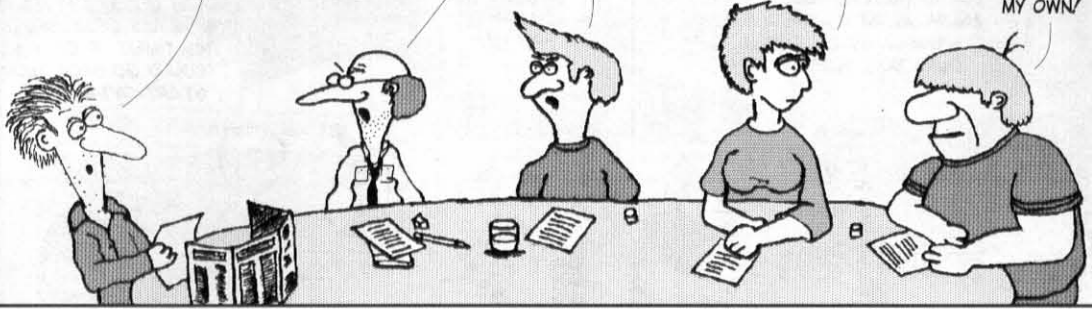
AS YOUR MISSILES CLOSE IN ON THE CASTLE IT **DISAPPEARS**. APPARENTLY IT WAS AN **ILLUSION** MEANT TO DRAW YOUR FIRE!! MEANWHILE, TWO MORE **ENORMOUS FIREBALLS** LEAVE THE SURFACE AND STREAK TOWARD YOU!!

ILLUSION?? THESE GUYS DON'T FIGHT FAIR!! I'M GOING TO LET LOOSE A **FULL BATTERY OF MISSILES!!** THAT **ENTIRE ISLAND** WILL BE NOTHING BUT A **GLAZED LUMP OF GLASS** WHEN I GET THROUGH WITH IT!!

NOW YOU'RE **TALKIN' BOB!!**

I TRIED TO TELL YOU. THE WHOLE CAMPAIGN IS BEING WRECKED!!

THIS WASN'T HOW IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE!! I'M GOING AGAINST MY OWN!



SECONDS LATER..

YOUR **BATTERY OF MISSILES** (ALL **FIFTY-FIVE OF THEM**) STRIKES THE **ISLAND** AT THE **PRECISE MOMENT** THE **CIRCLE** WAS ABOUT TO CAST ANOTHER **CHAIN-FIREBALL**. THE MISSILES **DETONATE** JUST AS THE **SUBDIMENSIONAL FABRIC** HAD BEEN **TAPPED**. AS A RESULT, A **HUGE RIFT** IS OPENED UP AND **CATASTROPHIC FORCES** ARE UNLEASHED!!

CATASTROPHIC FORCES? IS THAT GOOD OR BAD?

I GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS!!

GOOD LORD!! I ENGAGE THE ENGINES AND TAKE US **OUT OF THE SYSTEM!!**

OH NO!!



AS **MARGO'S ENGINES** ENGAGE AND THE SHIP **ZIPS** OUT OF ORBIT AND HEADS FOR **DEEP SPACE** YOU ARE **BUFFETED** BY THE **SHOCK WAVES** OF A **TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION!!** GAZING INTO THE **MAIN VIEWSCREEN**, YOU WITNESS THE **DEATH OF A WORLD!!** THE PLANET OF **GARWEEZE WURLD** IS **SPLIT TO THE CORE** AND **TORN ASUNDER!!** THEN, IN A **BLINDING FLASH**, IT **EXPLODES** AND IS PULVERIZED INTO **BILLIONS OF BITS OF DEBRIS!!**

HOW MANY EXPERIENCE POINTS IS THAT WORTH?

YOU MEAN, WE **KILLED GARWEEZE WURLD?**

WE CAN **NEVER** GO HOME!!

I GUESS THEY SHOULD HAVE AGREED TO MY DEMANDS AFTER ALL...



NOW WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?? I WANTED TO **RULE GARWEEZE WURLD!!** I DIDN'T WANT TO DESTROY IT!!

EL RAVAGER CLIMBS TO A HIGH PLACE IN THE SHIP AND DIPS THE POINT OF HIS **HACKMASTER *12** IN TRIBUTE TO....

OH SHUT UP, DAVE!!

ACTUALLY, DAVE....



YOU'LL FIND WHAT YOU HAVE THERE IS JUST A PLAIN OLD **HACKMASTER CLASS SWORD!!** THERE AIN'T NO **PLUS 12** ABOUT IT ANY MORE.

HUH? QUIT PLAYIN' AROUND!! THAT'S NOT FUNNY. IT IS TOO A **PLUS 12!!**

HE'S RIGHT, DAVE. MAGIC ITEMS DERIVE THEIR POWER FROM THE **MAGIC AURA** THAT PERMEATES THE CAMPAIGN WORLD. OURS NO LONGER EXISTS.

??!!



WHAT ABOUT MY **CROSSBOW OF SLAYING??** MY **RING OF STEALTH??** YOU MEAN THEY HAVE NO POWERS??

THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'LL FIND THEY ARE QUITE ORDINARY NOW.

BRIAN!! DO SOMETHING!! FIX IT!!

YOU CAN DO IT, BRIAN!!

SORRY GUYS. I'M AFRAID WE REALLY **SCREWED UP** THIS TIME!! IF ONLY WE COULD GO BACK AND **START OVER...HMM...**



THIRTY MINUTES LATER..

OKAY, YOU BREAK OUT OF THE **WORMHOLE ANOMALY** AND BEHOLD THE **BEAUTIFUL BLUE ORB** OF **GARWEEZE WORLD** HANGING IN IT'S PROPER PLACE IN ORBIT. LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE ARRIVED BACK IN THE SYSTEM ABOUT THREE WEEKS BEFORE YOU **BLEW IT ALL UP** THE FIRST TIME.

HOPEFULLY YOU GUYS HAVE LEARNED FROM YOUR MISTAKES. LET'S NOT REPEAT WHAT WE...

HOODY HOO!! WHO SAID YOU COULD NEVER GO HOME!!

I GOT MY **PLUS TWELVE** BACK!!

WE SHOULD **NUKE** FANGAERIE RIGHT AWAY BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO PUT UP THEIR **MAGIC SHIELD!!**



B.A., WHILE THEY ARE DISTRACTED I'M GOING TO INITIATE THE **SELF DESTRUCT SEQUENCE** ON **MARGO**. WE SHOULD BE HIGH ENOUGH IN ORBIT THAT ANY DEBRIS WILL BURN UP ON REENTRY!!

HUH?? **SARA??** WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING??

I'M SAVING OUR **HACKMASTER CAMPAIGN!!** TRUST ME - IT'S BETTER THIS WAY.

INTERESTING... OUR **HACKMASTER** CHARACTERS SHOULD STILL BE ON THE SURFACE GOING ABOUT THEIR REGULAR LIVES. **THANKS SARA!**

BUT YOU'LL KILL US **ALL!!**

WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU?

WHEW!! IT'S **FIXED** AND I DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO RESORT TO THE **'IT WAS ALL A DREAM'** SOLUTION **NITRO** CAME UP WITH.



Say Goodnight, Raz!

STORY SUGGESTED BY "DWARF LORD"

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



DAMMIT, PETE!! HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP BELLY ACHING OVER THIS? YOUR STUFF IS GONE SO GET OVER IT!! OKAY? LET IT GO SO WE CAN RESUME THE GAME!!

LET IT GO? ARE YOU INSANE? I LEAVE TOWN FOR A FEW STINKIN' WEEKS AND ENTRUST MY CHARACTER TO SOMEONE ELSE'S CARE AND WHAT HAPPENS? I GET ROBBED!! AND YOU WANT ME TO SHRUG IT OFF LIKE NOTHING HAPPENED AND MOVE ON?? I'M NOT NEW YA KNOW. I DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THIS!! I WANT SOME ANSWERS. WHERE THE HELL IS MY 'B DAGGER OF HINDSIGHT AND ALL MY OTHER STUFF?

HEY! WHY YA GOTTA DIS ME? I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!

LOOK, IT'S NOT OUR FAULT BOB DOLED YOUR STUFF OUT LIKE HE WAS SOME KIND OF GAMER SANTA!! WE TRIED TO STOP HIM BUT HE WOULDN'T LISTEN TO REASON.

YEAH! HE WAS OUT OF CONTROL! HE FORCED YOUR STUFF ON US!

BOB??!!



OH, SO THAT'S ALL IT WAS!! WHEW!! THANK GAWD!! AT LEAST MY STUFF IS ALL IN THE FAMILY - SO TO SPEAK. GOOD!! LET'S JUST TRANSFER ALL MY CRAP BACK TO MY CHARACTER SHEET REAL QUICK AND WE CAN GET ON WITH THE GAME! I'LL DEAL WITH BOB LATER.

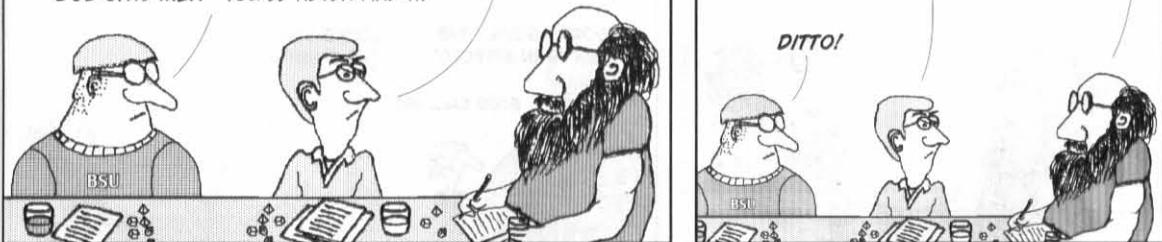
SORRY, NO CAN DO. AS FAR AS RAZ IS CONCERNED, MEPHISTO GAVE HIM THAT RING OF CLOAKING AND OTHER STUFF AS A GIFT.

I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN. I KNEW YOU WOULD RENIG!! THAT'S WHY I HID THE STUFF BOB GAVE ME!! YOU'LL NEVER FIND IT!

PERHAPS RAZ AND FIRE BLOSSOM HAVE THEIR HEADS UP THEIR BUTTS SO FAR THEY COULDN'T HEAR ME. I'LL SAY IT A LITTLE LOUDER - I WANT MY STUFF BACK!!

OH, I HEARD YOU. MAYBE YOU DIDN'T HEAR MY REPLY. "I DON'T THINK SO!" I'M JUST PLAYING MY CHARACTER. ALL HE KNOWS IS THAT MEPHISTO GAVE HIM SOME KEWL STUFF!

DITTO!



I'M WARNING YOU GUYS!! DON'T FORGET **MEPHISTO** IS A **BLOOD MAGE**!! I HAVE ACCESS TO **ALL** THE **VENGEANCE SPELLS**!! YOU HEAR? **ALL** OF THEM!! AND I'M NOT AFRAID TO USE THEM! I WANT MY **STUFF**!! YOU HAVE **FIVE SECONDS** TO **COMPLY**!!

VEN-VENGEANCE SPELLS? HOLD ON PETE! I GOT YOUR **PAN FLUTE OF FAERIE DANCING** HIDDEN IN MY **BED ROLL**!! I RETRIEVE IT AND GIVE IT BACK TO YOU!

YOUR **IDLE THREATS** ANNOY THE **GREAT RASPUTIN**!!



HMMRRRRFFFF!! HOW THE HELL CAN YOU **FOLD** LIKE THAT? THE **OLD MAN** IS **BLUFFING**. **NOBODY** USES THE **VENGEANCE SPELLS**, YOU **IDIOT**!! YOU HAVE TO **SACRIFICE ATTRIBUTE POINTS** TO CAST THEM!

HEY, WE'RE TALKIN ABOUT **PETE** HERE!! HE GETS **CRAZY** WHEN YOU CROSS HIM! I'M NOT TAKIN' ANY CHANCES. I'M GIVING THE **FLUTE** BACK.

YOUR **COWARDICE** SICKENS ME!



YOU MAY BE ADEPT AT **INTIMIDATING** THE **TIMID**, MY FRIEND, BUT **RASPUTIN** HAPPENS TO BE CUT FROM A **STAUNCHER CLOTH**! YOU WANNA DANCE WITH THE **DEVIL**? C'MON **FAT MAN**...

LET'S SEE WHAT YER MADE OF!!

FAT MAN? FRRRRRILULUPPP;-GURT-SPLUTTER!! **THAT DOES IT!!** **MEPHISTO** PUTS THE **PATHORGIAN DEATH HEX** ON YOU! IT'LL COST ME **TWO POINTS** OF **CONSTITUTION** BUT IT'S WORTH IT!

I WOULDN'T PROVOKE HIM **STEVIL**. OOPS - **TOO LATE!**

DEATH HEX?? WHAT THE HELL DOES **THAT** DO?

I'M STEPPING AWAY FROM **STEVIL**...

CRIPES, PETE!! I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D HAVE THE **GUTS** TO DO IT. ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, IF YOUR **PRECIOUS** MAGIC ITEMS MEAN SO MUCH TO YOU - YOU CAN HAVE THEM BACK!



I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU TALKIN' SENSE NOW. OKAY, I CALL OFF THE **DEATH HEX** THEN.

OKAY, FAIR ENOUGH. I'LL CALL OFF THE **EXTREMELY LONG** AND **PAINFUL** **DEATH** MY **FERTILE** LITTLE MIND WAS **A-BREWIN'** FOR YOU.



SORRY GUYS. I'M GONNA **RULE** THAT **MEPHISTO'S** SPELL HAS ALREADY TAKEN **EFFECT**!! **RASPUTIN** IS **HEXED**!! DON'T FORGET TO MARK OFF THOSE **CONSTITUTION POINTS**, **PETE**!!

C'MON, **NITRO**!! I NEVER SAID I WAS ACTUALLY CASTING THE SPELL!! JUST A LITTLE **SABRE RATTLING** TO MAKE THE OTHER GUY **BLINK**!

YEAH! WHY ARE YOU **BUTTIN'** IN FOR ANYWAY?? I THOUGHT YOU WANTED US TO RESOLVE OUR DIFFERENCES ON OUR OWN!!

SORRY GUYS. THE **HEX** IS IN **EFFECT**!!

LOOKS LIKE I MADE THE **RIGHT** CHOICE!

GOOD CALL, SIR!



LATER THAT SAME EVENING...

OKAY, **RASPUTIN'S** DAGGER OF SEEKING HITS **MEPHISTO** IN THE CHEST FOR **SEVENTY POINTS OF DAMAGE!!** SORRY **PETE**, LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE DEAD. FORTUNATELY OR **UNFORTUNATELY** DEPENDING ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, YOU MANAGED TO GET OFF YOUR **PUSH SPELL!!** **RASPUTIN** LOSES HIS FOOTING AND FALLS OFF THE **ROOF OF THE TEMPLE**. HIS BODY LANDS WITH A **SICKENING THUD** IN THE MIDDLE OF THE **SACRIFICIAL ANIMAL PEN**. IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG FOR THE **WILD BOARS** TO BEGIN TUGGING AT HIS BODY FOR THE CHOICEST BITS OF FLESH.

SEE WHAT YOUR **PETTINESS** HAS COME TO? NOW WE'RE **DEAD** AND IN A **WORLD OF HURT!!** IT'S **FIFTY MILES** TO THE NEAREST **CLERIC** WHERE WE CAN GET RAISED!! THE PRIEST IN THIS TEMPLE IS A **LOWLY INITIATE!!**

FIFTY MILES, A HUNDRED MILES!! WHAT DOES IT MATTER? YOU DON'T THINK **GORDO'S** PIXIE FAERIE IS GOING TO BE ABLE TO DRAG OUR BODIES THERE DO YOU?

WOW!! YOU GUYS REALLY DUKED IT OUT!!

YOU BOTH DIED WELL.



SIR, I SEARCH THE LOCAL AREA AND **PROCURE** A **MULE**. THEN I'LL CAREFULLY WRAP THE BODIES AND PLACE THEM ON THE BEAST. WITH GREAT **HASTE** I WILL SET OFF FOR **MURDYTON** AND SEEK OUT THE **HIGH PRIEST** TO PERFORM THE **RAISE DEAD RITES**. I'LL PUT UP THE MONEY FOR THE **FEE** THOUGH I'LL TRY TO **NEGOTIATE** THE BEST POSSIBLE RATE FOR MY FRIENDS.

THIS IS SO BEAUTIFUL. IT REMINDS ME OF **GUS MCCALL** HAULING THE BODY OF HIS **DEAD FRIEND** BACK TO **LONESOME DOVE**.

NEWT? IS THAT REALLY YOU?

WHAT'S YOUR ANGLE **NEWT?** I THOUGHT YOU HATED US.

YEAH!



PERHAPS **KRAGIN II** FEELS WE JUST STARTED OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT! THAT GIVEN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES WE COULD HAVE BEEN THE **BEST OF FRIENDS**. PERHAPS THIS ONE SIMPLE ACT OF **CHARITY** IS HIS WAY OF ALTERING THE COURSE OF EVENTS SO WE CAN START ANEW.

(SOB) **BLUBBER..SNORT...**I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYTHING SO BEAUTIFUL IN ALL MY YEARS AT THE TABLE. I'M GOING TO WRITE THAT DOWN AND SEND IT IN TO **GARY!!**

GEE...MAYBE WE WERE WRONG ABOUT YOU. **THANKS!**

YEAH, THANKS!



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

OKAY **NEWT**, THE **PRIEST** CAST THE SPELL AND BOTH **RASPUTIN** AND **MEPHISTO** RETURN FROM THE **LAND OF THE DEAD** AS THEIR BODIES BEGIN TO **HEAVE AND MOAN**.

KEWL!! I TAKE A DAGGER AND CUT THEIR THROATS!! THEY SHOULD ONLY HAVE **ONE HIT POINT EACH!!** I'LL TAKE THE EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR THE KILLS AND THEN HAVE THEM RAISED AGAIN!! I'LL KEEP DOING THIS UNTIL BOTH OF THEM ARE OUT OF **CONSTITUTION POINTS** AND **FOREVER DEAD!!** OH, AND I'LL USE THEIR TREASURE AND MAGIC ITEMS TO PAY FOR IT!!

IT TAKES THE KID A **LONG TIME** TO GET HIS **REVENGE** BUT WHEN HE DOES - **BOY IS HE GOOD!!**

YEA WHATEVER. (GRUMBLE)

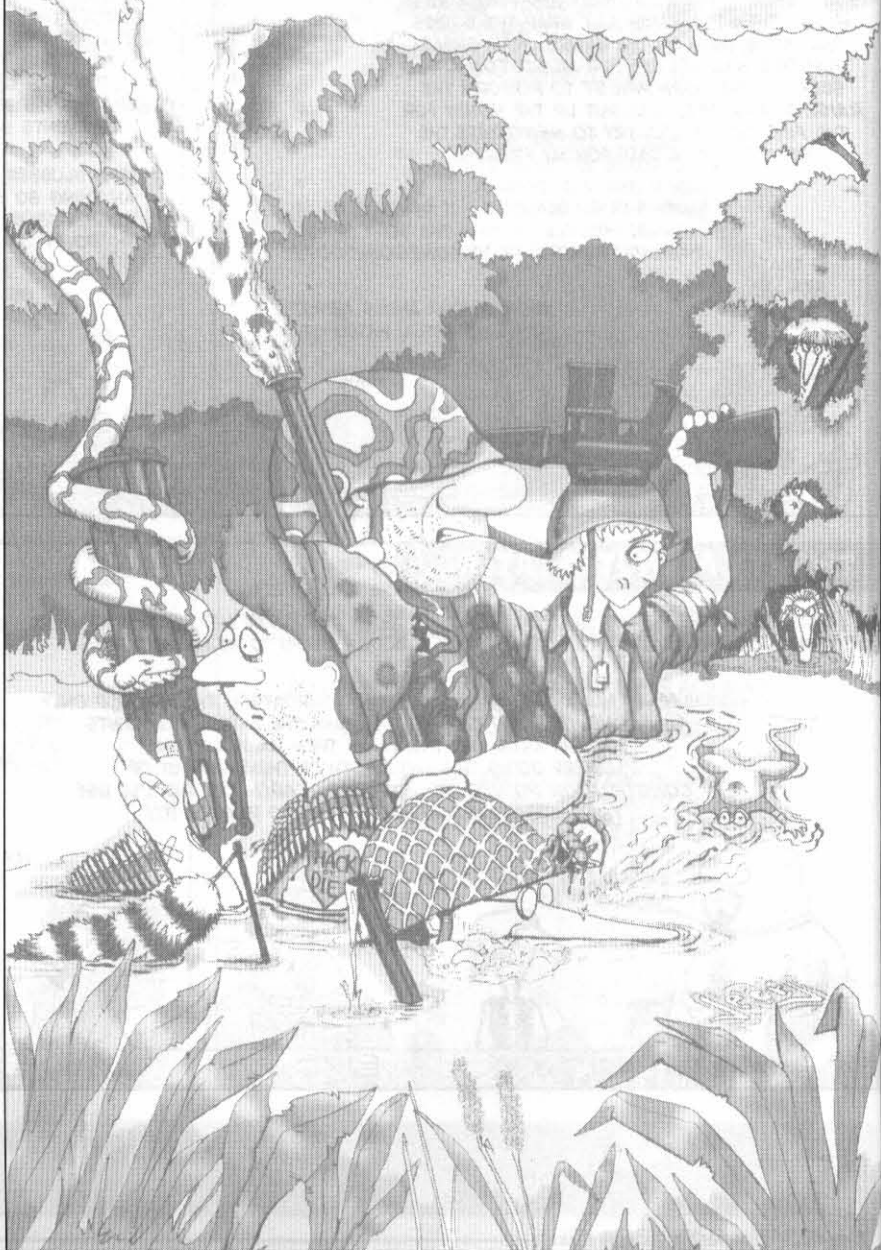


Knights of the Dinner Table™

“Hackburger Hill”

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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A Few Good Men

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN



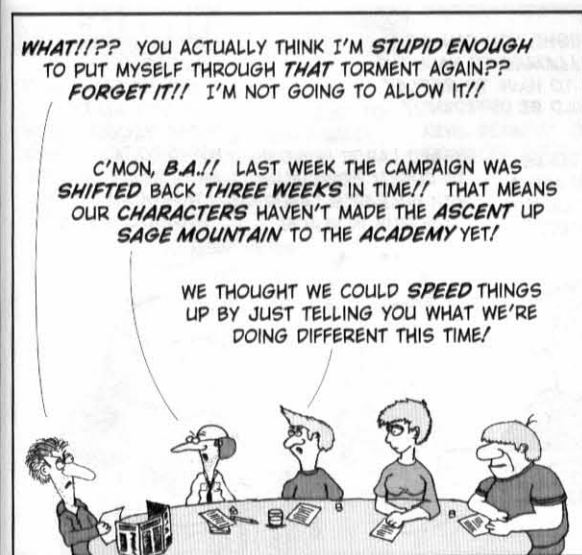
GOOD! LOOKS LIKE EVERYONE IS HERE! I'VE GOT A REALLY **EXCITING** ADVENTURE WORKED UP TONIGHT!! I THINK YOU GUYS WILL FIND IT VERY...

WHOA!! HOLD IT THERE A MINUTE **CHIEF!!** WE'VE GOT A FEW **OLD MATTERS** TO TAKE CARE OF BEFORE EMBARKING ON ANY **NEW ADVENTURES!**

YEAH!! FIRST YOU'VE GOTTA RUN US THROUGH **LYRION'S ACADEMY*** AGAIN!!

SORRY, B.A.!! IT WASN'T **MY IDEA!!**

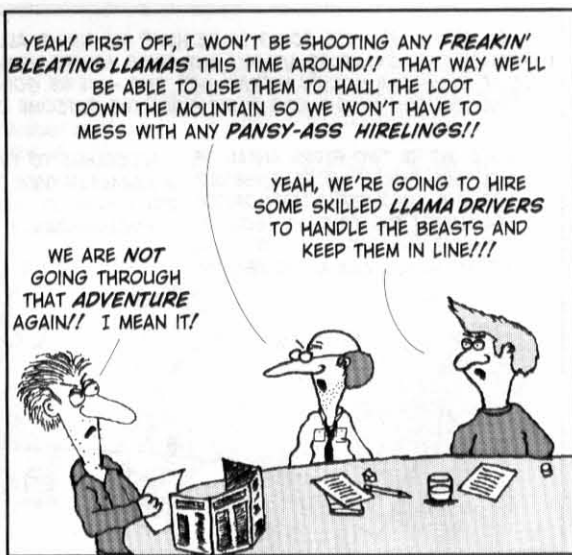
AND **THIS TIME** WE'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE ALL THOSE **FOOLISH MISTAKES!!**



WHAT!?!? YOU ACTUALLY THINK I'M **STUPID ENOUGH** TO PUT MYSELF THROUGH **THAT TORMENT** AGAIN?? **FORGET IT!!** I'M NOT GOING TO ALLOW IT!!

C'MON, B.A.!! LAST WEEK THE CAMPAIGN WAS **SHIFTED BACK THREE WEEKS** IN TIME!! THAT MEANS OUR **CHARACTERS** HAVEN'T MADE THE **ASCENT** UP **SAGE MOUNTAIN** TO THE **ACADEMY** YET!

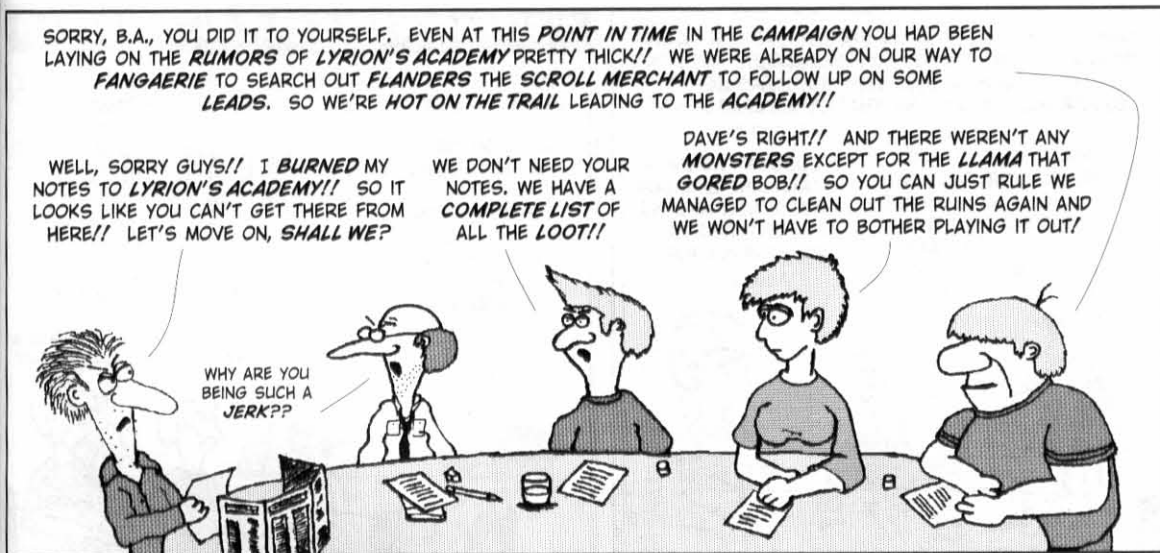
WE THOUGHT WE COULD **SPEED** THINGS UP BY JUST TELLING YOU WHAT WE'RE DOING DIFFERENT THIS TIME!



YEAH! FIRST OFF, I WON'T BE SHOOTING ANY **FREAKIN' BLEATING LLAMAS** THIS TIME AROUND!! THAT WAY WE'LL BE ABLE TO USE THEM TO HAUL THE **LOOT** DOWN THE MOUNTAIN SO WE WON'T HAVE TO MESS WITH ANY **PANSY-ASS HIRELINGS!!**

YEAH, WE'RE GOING TO HIRE SOME **SKILLED LLAMA DRIVERS** TO HANDLE THE BEASTS AND KEEP THEM IN LINE!!

WE ARE **NOT** GOING THROUGH **THAT ADVENTURE** AGAIN!! I MEAN IT!



SORRY, B.A., YOU DID IT TO YOURSELF. EVEN AT THIS **POINT IN TIME** IN THE **CAMPAIGN** YOU HAD BEEN LAYING ON THE **RUMORS** OF **LYRION'S ACADEMY** PRETTY THICK!! WE WERE ALREADY ON OUR WAY TO **FANGAERIE** TO SEARCH OUT **FLANDERS** THE **SCROLL MERCHANT** TO FOLLOW UP ON SOME **LEADS**. SO WE'RE **HOT ON THE TRAIL** LEADING TO THE **ACADEMY!!**

WELL, **SORRY** GUYS!! I **BURNED** MY NOTES TO **LYRION'S ACADEMY!!** SO IT LOOKS LIKE YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE!! LET'S MOVE ON, **SHALL WE?**

WE DON'T NEED YOUR NOTES. WE HAVE A **COMPLETE LIST** OF ALL THE **LOOT!!**

DAVE'S RIGHT!! AND THERE WEREN'T ANY **MONSTERS** EXCEPT FOR THE **LLAMA** THAT **GORED BOB!!** SO YOU CAN JUST RULE WE MANAGED TO CLEAN OUT THE **RUINS** AGAIN AND WE WON'T HAVE TO BOTHER PLAYING IT OUT!

WHY ARE YOU BEING SUCH A **JERK??**

* See KODT#24: The Ultimate Treasure

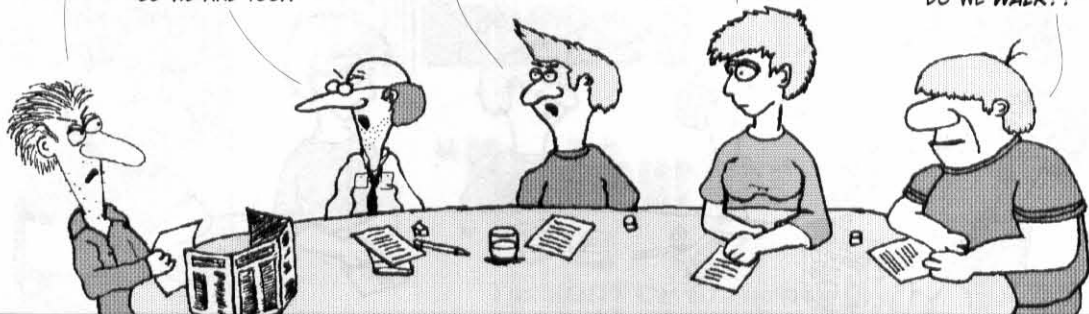
YOU GUYS THINK YOU'RE **PRETTY CLEVER**, DON'T YOU? LOOK, I'LL ADMIT IT!! **LYRION'S ACADEMY** WAS A **BIG FREAKIN' MISTAKE!!** JUST BECAUSE I FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SOME **STUPID FOOTNOTES** ON THE PRICE LIST YOU GUYS WALKED AWAY WITH NEARLY **TWO MILLION GOLD PIECES!!** I'M PUTTING MY FOOT DOWN!! **LYRION'S ACADEMY** NO LONGER EXISTS!! THERE'S NOTHING ON TOP OF THAT MOUNTAIN BUT A FLOCK OF **GRAZING LLAMAS!!**

WELL, WE FIGURED YOU'D TAKE A **HARD STANCE!!** SO WE ARE TOO!!

WE'VE ALL AGREED TO **WALK** FROM THE TABLE IF YOU DON'T GIVE US A CHANCE TO GET THAT **LOOT** AGAIN!!

THEY'RE QUITE SERIOUS, B.A.!!

SO WHAT'S IT GONG TO BE **SCREEN-MONKEY??** DO WE **DANCE** OR DO WE **WALK??**



SO THAT'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE HUH? ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN GO THROUGH THE ADVENTURE AGAIN!! BUT SINCE YOU'RE USING **LLAMAS** TO HAUL THE **LOOT** DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL THIS TIME - WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO **REPLAY** THAT PORTION OF THE ADVENTURE SINCE THE **OUTCOME** COULD BE DIFFERENT!!

YOU'RE RIGHT!! THE **OUTCOME** WILL BE DIFFERENT THIS TIME!! WE LEFT **FIFTY** OF THOSE **BLOOD BIRCH WARDROBES** BEHIND LAST TIME!! THEY'RE WORTH AN EXTRA **750,000 G.P.'S!!**

HA!! WE'RE TWO STEPS AHEAD OF YOU THIS TIME!! WE REMEMBERED THOSE **GORED PERUVIAN COFFEE FARMERS** YOU TOLD US ABOUT!! THAT'S WHY I SUGGESTED THE PROFESSIONAL **LLAMA DRIVERS!!**

ACCORDING TO THE RULES A **LLAMA DRIVER** CAN ADD A **25% BONUS** TO EACH LLAMA'S **ENCUMBRANCE LIMIT!!**

SKILLED LABOR IS GOING TO COST!! ESPECIALLY WITH **GILEAD'S** LABOR REFORMS IN PLACE!

LET THEM TAKE THE RISK!!



DAMN!! SHE'S RIGHT!! WE SHOULD HIRE OUR **LLAMA DRIVERS** BEFORE WE GET TO **FANGAERIE!!** WE DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH **WORKERS COMP, SEVERANCE PAY** AND ALL THAT OTHER CRAP AGAIN!!

GOOD THINKING, BOB!! BESIDES, THE ROAD TRIP WILL GIVE US A CHANCE TO **BOND** WITH THEM SO THEIR **LOYALTY MODIFIERS** GO UP!!

I SUGGEST WE **EACH** RECRUIT AND HIRE OUR **OWN DRIVER** WHO WE WILL BE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

OKAY, B.A.! WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO RECRUIT SOME **LLAMA DRIVERS** IN THE FIRST TOWN WE COME TO.

OKAY, YOU COME TO A SMALL TOWN CALLED **GRUBSWORTH!!** THERE SEEMS TO BE A GOOD SIZED CROWD AT THE **TAVERN!!**

THE **TAVERN** IS AS GOOD A PLACE TO START AS ANY!! WE'LL WALK IN AND FIND A SEAT!! I'M GOING TO TRY AND LOOK VERY IMPORTANT WITH THE INTENTION OF MAKING A **GOOD IMPRESSION!!**

GOOD IMPRESSION? YOU HAVE A **COW** PAINTED ON YOUR SHIELD!



I CLIMB UP ON A **TABLE** AND ANNOUNCE TO THE **ENTIRE TAVERN** THAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR **FOUR EXPERIENCED LLAMA DRIVERS!!**

EVERY FACE IN THE JOINT TURNS TO YOU, BOB AND IS FILLED WITH **UTTER CONFUSION AND DISMAY!!** EXCEPT FOR THE MELANCHOLY CHIRP OF A **CRICKET** COMING FROM BENEATH THE FLOOR BOARDS THE **SILENCE IS DEAFENING!!**

NO ONE STEPS FORWARD?

HUH, A CRICKET?

BE REAL, BOB!! YOU DIDN'T EXPECT TO WALK INTO A **SMALL FARMING COMMUNITY** AND FIND FOUR **UNEMPLOYED LLAMA DRIVERS** KICKING BACK AND SOAKING UP THE SUDS DID YOU? I BET THERE ISN'T A **LLAMA** WITHIN **FIFTY MILES** OF THIS PLACE!!

FINE!! THEN I'LL ANNOUNCE I'M LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD **ANIMAL CONTROL SPECIALISTS??** HOW ABOUT THAT??

I'M GOING TO TRY AND CATCH THAT CRICKET!! THEY'RE **GOOD LUCK!!** MAYBE IT WILL GIVE ME A **BONUS ON TO-HITS!!**

DAMN! I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT!!

TEN MINUTES LATER...

OH FOR THE LOVE OF GAWD!! JUST TO **SHUT YOU UP**, SEVERAL MEN FINALLY STAND UP AND ADMIT THEY KNOW A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT **HANDLING ANIMALS!!**

NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE!

KEWL BEANS!! GO AHEAD AND READ OFF THEIR NAMES, **B.A.!!**

WHY DO YOU NEED TO KNOW THEIR NAMES? WE HAVEN'T EVEN ESTABLISHED IF THEY ARE QUALIFIED YET!

B.A. HAS A HABIT OF GIVING ALL THE GOOD NPC'S **COLORFUL NICKNAMES!!**

A LITTLE LATER...

I CAN'T DECIDE BETWEEN **SKINNY STILTSKIN** OR THIS DUDE, **ARCHIBALD!** I LIKE THE FACT THAT **SKINNY** HAS CHOSEN **CROSSBOW** AS A WEAPON PROFICIENCY AND KNOWS A LITTLE **GULLY DWARF** BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, **ARCHIBALD** HAS **GEM APPRAISAL** AND **FORAGE FOOD** SKILLS!! IT'S GOING TO BE A TOUGH CHOICE!!

I LIKE **ARCHIE** TOO! HE CAN WIELD TWO SWORDS AT THE SAME TIME!

I THINK I'VE TAKEN A SHINE TO **ONE EYED GUS!!** WHEN YOU GAVE HIM THE **SHIRKER TEST** HE WAS HONEST ENOUGH TO ACTUALLY PICK UP THE COIN AND POINT OUT THAT YOU HAD DROPPED IT!! I THINK THAT SHOWS **TRUE CHARACTER!**

BUT HE'S GOT NO **DEPTH PERCEPTION!!** HE'D BE FAIRLY USELESS IN A FIGHT!

YEAH, HE'S LAME!!

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU GUYS PASSED UP ON THE GNOME TWINS, **EENIE AND MEENIE!!** IF THEY ARE TRULY **IDENTICAL TWINS** AS **B.A.** INDICATED THAT MEANS THEY'LL ENHANCE EACH OTHER!! ACCORDING TO THE RULES AN **IDENTICAL TWIN** CAN LEARN ANY SKILL HIS COUNTERPART KNOWS **FIFTY PERCENT FASTER** THAN NORM!! IF I TAKE THESE GUYS UNDER MY WING AS **APPRENTICES** I CAN TEACH THEM THE ART OF MAGIC!! BY SPLITTING THEIR LESSON PLANS EACH TWIN SHOULD BE ABLE TO TEACH THE OTHER WHAT HE'S LEARNED AND THEY'LL **BOTH** ADVANCE AT AN ACCELERATED RATE!!

I DUNNO, BRIAN, TEACHING A **HIRELING** HOW TO WORK MAGIC SEEMS PRETTY RISKY TO ME!! WHAT IF THEY TURN ON YOU?

YEAH!! LOOK WHAT HAPPENED WITH **GILEAD!!**

I AGREE, BRIAN!! IT SOUNDS LIKE A **BIG RESPONSIBILITY!!**

RELAX!! I READ UP ON **HIRELING LOYALTY!!**



THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS YOU CAN DO TO RAISE THE **LOYALTY MODIFIERS** OF A **HIRELING!!** I'VE CRUNCHED THE NUMBERS AND CAME UP WITH SEVERAL **FORMULAS** THAT MAKES IT ALMOST **IMPOSSIBLE** FOR A **HIRELING** TURN ON HIS **MASTER!!**

OH YEAH? WELL C'MON, BIG GUY, SHARE THE **KNOWLEDGE!!** WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO?

IT'S ALL ABOUT **RESPECT!!** YOU'VE GOT KEEP THAT LINE BETWEEN **HIRELING** AND **BOSS** CLEARLY DEFINED!!!

OUTSTANDING, BRIAN!! **RESPECT IS** THE KEY TO BUILDING TRUST AND **LOYALTY** WITH ANY **NPC!!** I FIND THAT PAYING ABOVE AVERAGE WAGES AND A SHARE IN TREASURE WORKS VERY WELL!

RESPECT? AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T COST ME ANYTHING THEY CAN HAVE IT!!

A SHARE OF TREASURE? THAT'S WHACKED!

SORRY, SARA, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN!



YOU'VE GOT TO TEACH YOUR **HIRELINGS** THAT YOU DEMAND **RESPECT** AT ALL TIMES!! THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS OF DOING THIS BUT A **SEVERE BUTT WHUPPING** ABOUT EVERY 6 TO 8 DAYS PRETTY MUCH DOES THE TRICK. YOU'VE GOT TO REMIND THEM WHY YOU'RE THE **BOSS** EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE. IT'S ALL ABOUT **MENTAL CONDITIONING**. EVENTUALLY THEIR NEED TO MEET WITH YOUR APPROVAL BECOMES SO GREAT THAT THE THOUGHT OF TURNING ON YOU NEVER ENTERS THEIR MIND!!

SO YOU'RE SAYING, BY KICKING **SKINNY STILTSKIN'S** ASS - THE DUDE IS GOING TO BE MORE LOYAL TO ME?

HEY, I SAW THAT IN THE MOVIE, **AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN!!** THE DUDE WAS A HARD CASE UNTIL THE **DRILL** PUNCHED HIM OUT!

BRIAN!! WHAT YOU ARE DESCRIBING SOUNDS LIKE **CLASSIC BATTERED SPOUSE SYNDROME!!**

THEY GOT A NAME FOR IT?

SEVERE BUTT WHUPPINGS? EVERY 6 TO 8 DAYS?



*There was

I'M APPALLED BY WHAT I'M HEARING!! BRIAN ARE YOU SUGGESTING TO THE OTHERS THAT YOU BRUTALLY BEAT YOUR HIRELINGS ON A ROUTINE BASIS SIMPLY TO GAIN A FEW POSITIVE MODIFIERS ON THE LOYALTY CHARTS??

NOT ME PERSONALLY MIND YOU!! I THINK IT'S PRETTY APPALLING MYSELF!! BUT TEFLON BILLY IS A SELF-PROFESSED OPPORTUNIST!! HE'D BACKSTAB HIS OWN MOTHER TO GET AHEAD. ACTUALLY, HE DID JUST THAT!! I GOT IT WRITTEN DOWN ON MY CHARACTER SHEET HERE SOMEPLACE. LOOK, IF WUSS SLAPPING A HIRELING EVERY NOW AND THEN GETS THE JOB DONE - SO BE IT!!

THIS FORMULA WON'T INSTILL LOYALTY BUT IT WILL GENERATE DEEP HATRED!!

KNUCKLES HAS NO PROBLEM WITH IT!

ME NEITHER!!

IT'S JUST TOO CRUEL FOR WORDS!!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

SORRY BOB! SKINNY STILTSKIN REFUSES TO SIGN ON UNLESS YOU PROVIDE HIM WITH A MOUNT AND A NEW PAIR OF BOOTS!! HE ALSO WANTS AN ADVANCE ON HIS PAY SO HE CAN BUY SOME PROVISIONS AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CARE OF HIS INVALID MOTHER WHILE HE'S AWAY!

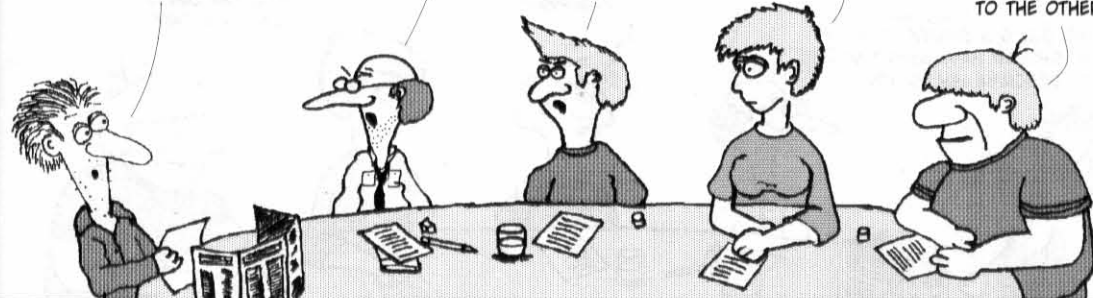
WHAT? DO I HAVE STUPID WRITTEN ON MY FOREHEAD OR SOMETHING?

THIS IS WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT, BOB!! YOU SEE? HE'S TESTING YOU - TRYING TO BLUR THAT LINE! YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW HIM HE CAN'T GET OVER ON YOU LIKE THAT!!

MAN OH MAN, I'M SURE GLAD I PASSED UP ON HIM!

HIS MOTHER? OH, HOW SAD!! PAY THE MAN, BOB!

PUT HIM IN HIS PLACE QUICK!! IT COULD SPREAD TO THE OTHERS!



WATCH THIS!! SKINNY IS ABOUT TO GET A LITTLE ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT! WHY DON'T YOU GATHER THE OTHER HIRELINGS TOGETHER TO WATCH THE EXAMPLE I MAKE OUT OF THIS CLOWN!!

OH, I ALMOST FORGOT. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU WHIP HIM IN A FAIR FIGHT!! THAT MEANS YOU SHOULDN'T USE ANY WEAPONS OR MAGIC!! YOU'VE GOT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU, AS A MAN, ER....DWARF...ARE THE SUPERIOR BY VIRTUE OF YOUR OWN METTLE!!

BRIAN'S RIGHT! IN THAT MOVIE, LOU GOSSETT JR. TOOK OFF HIS SHIRT AND BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF RICHARD GERE WITH HIS BARE FISTS!! IT WAS AWESOME!!

ONE EYED GUS WON'T BE IN ATTENDANCE! I'M TAKING HIM SHOPPING FOR SOME LEATHER ARMOR!

YEAH!! THAT WAS JUST LIKE THE SCENE IN STRIPES WHERE SGT. HULKA TOOK OFF HIS DRILL SERGEANT HAT AND PUNCHED BILL MURRAY IN THE GUT!!

YOU'RE FLIRTING WITH DISASTER SARA!! YOU'RE BEING SOFT!



A WEE BIT LATER...

FOR SEVERAL SECONDS **SKINNY** JUST STANDS THERE WITH A LOOK OF **SHOCK** AND **CONFUSION** ON HIS FACE! HE SEEMS PUZZLED AS TO WHY YOU PUNCHED HIM IN THE CHIN.

DAZED AND CONFUSED IS HE? I FIGURED THIS GUY HAD A **GLASS JAW!!** I'M GOING TO **RABBIT PUNCH** HIM IN THE **KIDNEYS** FOR **GOOD MEASURE!**

SLOWLY HIS CONFUSION TURNS TO **ANGER** AS HIS FACE TURNS A **DEEP HUE OF PURPLE!!**

IS HE GIVING ME MY PROPER **RESPECT** YET?

EWWW, DUDE! I THINK HE WANTS A PIECE OF YOU!!

HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE **FALLING IN LINE** THERE BOB!!

CAREFUL BOB!! IF HE FINDS OUT YOU'RE USING YOUR **+5 GLOVES OF STRIKING** YOU'LL LOSE FACE!!



JUST AS YOU ARE ABOUT TO PUNCH POOR **SKINNY** IN THE RIBS FOR A THIRD TIME YOU SUDDENLY FEEL HIS **LARGE BRUTISH HANDS** ON YOUR **THROAT!!** SUDDENLY YOU ARE AIRBORNE BUT ONLY FOR A SECOND. YOU **SMASH** THROUGH THE **BACK WALL** OF THE TAVERN AND LAND IN THE **SLOP TROUGH** OF A **PIG PEN!**

WHA...WHAT? WHAT THE HELL?? **LARGE BRUTISH HANDS??** WHERE THE HELL DID HE GET THOSE? HIS NICKNAME IS **SKINNY** FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!

AAHH, DUDE!! HE SET YOU UP!! HE KNEW YOU PICKED **SKINNY** 'CUZ YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD TAKE HIM IN A FIGHT!

YEAH!! SOUNDS FISHY TO ME! I BET **B.A.** CHANGED HIS STATS **AFTER** HE LEARNED OF MY FORMULA FOR **HIRELING LOYALTY!!**

THE GUY'S A **BRUTE**, BOB! YOU SHOULD HAVE ASKED ME TO DESCRIBE HIM TO YOU!

WELL, THE **GM** IS ALWAYS RIGHT!



LOOK **BRAINIAC**, LOTS OF NICKNAMES ARE THE **OPPOSITE** OF THE BEARER'S **TRUE NATURE**. LIKE **LITTLE JOHN**, FOR EXAMPLE, FROM **ROBIN HOOD!!** HE WASN'T **LITTLE** AT ALL HE WAS **HUGE!!** YOUR PROBLEM IS THAT YOU **ASSUMED!!** YOU CAN'T BLAME ME FOR **THAT!**

NO, DAVE WAS RIGHT! YOU SET ME UP! I THOUGHT I HIRED A **BARNEY FIFE** TYPE AND YOU GAVE ME **LURCH!!**

B.A. SURE IS GETTING **SNEAKY** LATELY. HE MUST STILL BE GETTING TIPS FROM **EARL!**

HEY DUDE, YA WANNA TRADE? I'LL SWAP YA **SKINNY** FOR **ARCHIE!!**

NO WAY, DUDE! ARCHIE WAS THE **PICK** OF THE **LITTER!!**

HE'S GOT **SEW WOUNDS** AS A **SECONDARY SKILL!!**

SORRY, NO DEAL!

I SEE. SO YOU'RE ADMITTING DEFEAT!! **SKINNY** GOT THE BEST OF YOU?

NO! I'M JUST SAYING THAT HE WASN'T EXACTLY WHAT HE LED ME TO BELIEVE! I WASN'T PREPARED!!



RAT BASTARD!!



YOU BLEW IT BOB!! NOW THAT HE'S **KICKED** YER BUTT IT'S GOING TO BE HARD TO WIN HIS **RESPECT**. THE ONLY THING LEFT TO DO IS TO **BE A MAN** AND APOLOGIZE TO HIM FOR YOUR ACTIONS. DEPENDING ON HIS **NOBLE CHARACTER FACTOR**, THERE'S A **SLIM POSSIBILITY** HE'LL ADMIRE YOU FOR HAVING THE GUTS TO STAND UP AND ADMIT YOU WERE WRONG. IT COULD EARN BACK AT LEAST A **SMIDGEN** OF RESPECT FOR YOU IN HIS EYES. IT MAY BE **JUST ENOUGH** TO CARRY US THROUGH THE **LYRION'S ACADEMY** ADVENTURE WITHOUT HIM TURNING ON YOU. AFTERWARDS YOU CAN **DUMP** HIM - WHO NEEDS A FULL-TIME **LLAMA DRIVER** ANYWAY??

APOLOGIZE?? ME??
YOU SHOULD BE THE ONE APOLOGIZING. YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TOLD ME TO SLAP HIM AROUND!

YEAH!! I'M BEGINNING TO THINK YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

I AGREE WITH YOU - I THINK. AT LEAST THE APOLOGY PART.

IT'S NOT MY FAULT **SKINNY** WOUND YOUR CLOCK!

SKINNY OFFERS HIS HAND TO PULL YOU OUT OF THE **SLOP TROUGH**, BOB!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

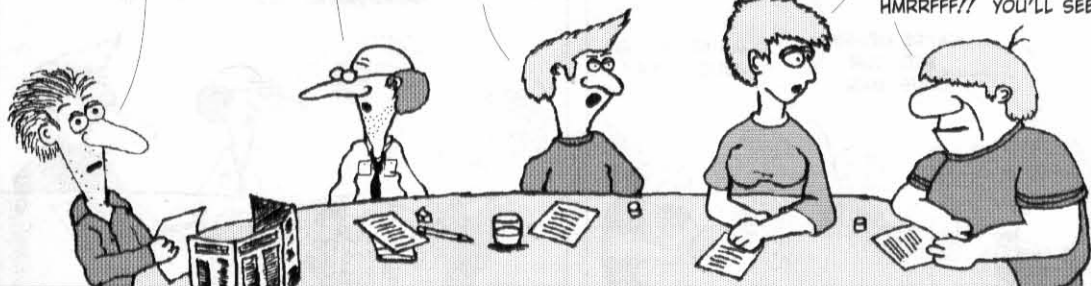
SKINNY ACCEPTS YOUR APOLOGY, BOB!! HE FEELS SO BAD ABOUT WHAT HE DID THAT HE OFFERS TO POLISH YOUR **CROSS BOW OF SLAYING** AND WIPE DOWN YOUR **BOLTS!!**

BINGO!! LOOKS LIKE SOME **LOYALTY POINTS** KICKED IN!! I KNEW OFFERING MY APOLOGY IN THE MORE FORMAL, **HIGH GULLY DWARF DIALECT** WOULD MOVE HIM. I GIVE HIM MY **CROSSBOW**, MY **BOOTS OF STEALTH** AND MY **BACKPACK** AND TELL HIM TO GET ALL THE **FILTH** OFF OF THEM!! IF HE DOES A GOOD JOB I'LL CONSIDER THROWING HIM THAT MONEY FOR HIS **MOTHER** - BUT IT'S GOING TO BE DEDUCTED FROM HIS **WAGES AND EARNINGS!!**

BRIAN, WHY DO I DOUBT YOU? YOU'RE A **GAWD!!**

I STILL SAY **MY WAY** IS THE BETTER WAY!!

HMRRFFF!! YOU'LL SEE!!



LATER THAT NIGHT...

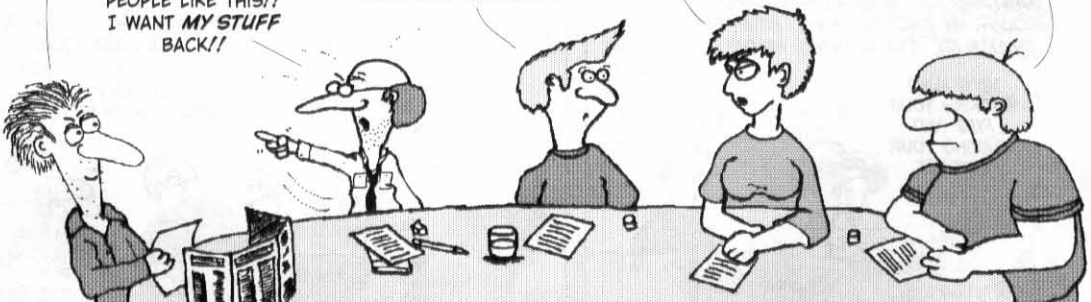
SORRY BOB!! THREE DAYS HAVE PASSED AND THERE'S STILL NO SIGN OF **SKINNY!!** WHEN YOU ASK AROUND TOWN ABOUT WHERE HE LIVES AND THE WHEREABOUTS OF HIS **INVALID MOTHER** YOU ARE GREETED WITH **LAUGHTER!!** IT SEEMS **SKINNY** HAS BEEN RUNNING THAT **SCAM** FOR YEARS.

THAT ISN'T FAIR!! YOU CAN'T TREAT PEOPLE LIKE THIS!! I WANT **MY STUFF** BACK!!

GEEZE LOUEEZE!! WHO KNEW?? HE JUST DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THE TYPE!!

I THINK I LIKE **SKINNY!!** I LIKE HIM A LOT!

DAMN! AND HE HAD A KEWL NICKNAME AND **EVERYTHING!!** EARL SLACKMOZER'S WORK - I'M TELLIN' YA!



* It occurred to me while reviewing this strip that Brian Jelke should have received partial credit. Brian suggested the name Skinny Stiltskin as well as the notion that the name was misleading and that rather than being a weakling, Skinny was in fact strong and powerful. That was just enough inspiration for me to take the ball and run with it. — Jolly

Old Familiar Places

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

OKAY AS YOU REACH THE **SUMMIT OF SAGE MOUNTAIN** YOU ARE SHOCKED TO SEE THERE IS A **FLURRY OF ACTIVITY!!!** ALL ABOUT THE RUINS MEN ARE WORKING HARD AT VARIOUS TASKS. ONE **WORK CREW** IS BUSY INVENTORYING BOOKS AND PLACING THEM IN **CRATES**. ANOTHER GROUP IS LEADING A TEAM OF **HEAVILY LADEN LLAMAS** TO AN ASSEMBLY AREA WHERE THEY SEEM TO BE WAITING FOR THE DESCENT!!

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE? THEY WEREN'T HERE BEFORE!!

HEY! THEY'RE TAKING OUR **LOOT!** WE HAD **DIBS!**

I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS **AT ALL!!**

HEY, THIS DIDN'T HAPPEN THE **FIRST TIME** WE DID THIS ADVENTURE? WHAT'S UP?



YOU IDIOTS **BLEW IT!!** THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED!! YOU MARCHED INTO **GRUBSWORTH** AND ANNOUNCED TO THE **WHOLE WORLD** YOU WERE LOOKING FOR **LLAMA DRIVERS!!** DON'T YOU THINK THE LOCALS HEARD THE RUMORS OF **LYRION'S ACADEMY** TOO?

FOUL! FOUL! IT TOOK US **MONTHS** OF GAME TIME TO ASSEMBLE **ALL THE CLUES!!** HOW THE HELL DID A BUNCH OF **HAYSEEDS** IN SOME **BACKWASH SQUALLERS-VILLE** FIGURE IT OUT SO FAST?

YOU'RE MESSIN' WITH OUR HEADS, MAN!!

IT DOES SEEM HARD TO BELIEVE, B.A.!



HARD TO BELIEVE? PERHAPS **REALITY** WILL SET IN ONCE YOU NOTICE **SKINNY STILTSKIN** EMERGE FROM THE **TEMPLE OF KNOWLEDGE** HOLDING **KNUCKLE'S BACKPACK!**

SKINNY?? HE'S A DEAD MAN!! YOU HEAR ME?? A **DEAD MAN!!**

WELL, THAT MAY BE — BUT FOR A DEAD MAN, HE SURE SEEMS TO GET AROUND!



YOU STILL HAVEN'T EXPLAINED WHAT HE'S DOING HERE! AND WHO THE HELL ARE ALL THESE **OTHER JOKERS?**

IF YOU THINK **REAL HARD**, BOB, YOU MAY RECALL THAT YOU HAD **ALL YOUR NOTES** ON **LYRION'S ACADEMY** IN YOUR **BACKPACK!!** NOT ONLY CAN **SKINNY** SPEAK **GULLY DWARF** BUT APPARENTLY HE CAN **READ IT** AS WELL!!

HE READ MY **NOTES??** YOU MEAN THAT **BASTARD** HAS BEEN **RUMMAGING** THROUGH MY **BACKPACK** AND STUFF?? **THAT'S IT!** I'M **HOPPING MAD!!**

SOME NERVE!

HE'S ALSO SMOKING YOUR **PIPE** AND WEARING YOUR **BOOTS!**



THAT'S IT!! I PULL OUT MY MATCHED PAIR OF **+5 DAGGERS** OF **VITAL-ORGAN SEEKING** AND CHARGE TOWARD HIM!! I'M GONG TO **CARVE HIM UP** LIKE A **THANKSGIVING GOOSE!!**

WHOOOAH!! DID YOU HEAR THAT? THE DUDE IS SMOKING HIS **PIPE!** THE **LORD OF THE DWARVEN FORGE** GAVE THAT TO HIM.

HUH? **NO BOB!!** WAIT!! B.A. IS TRYING TO **PROVOKE YOU!!**

AND WIPE THAT **GOOFY SMIRK** OFF YER FACE!

AND DOING A **GOOD JOB** OF IT!



* Some readers may have noticed that Bob is in a particularly bad mood when he's wearing his work clothes (i.e. his dress shirt and tie). The implication is that he's had a bad day at work and needs to vent through his character.

HUH? *WAIT?* WAIT FOR WHAT? C'MON GUYS!! I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO GET *BLOODY!!* WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

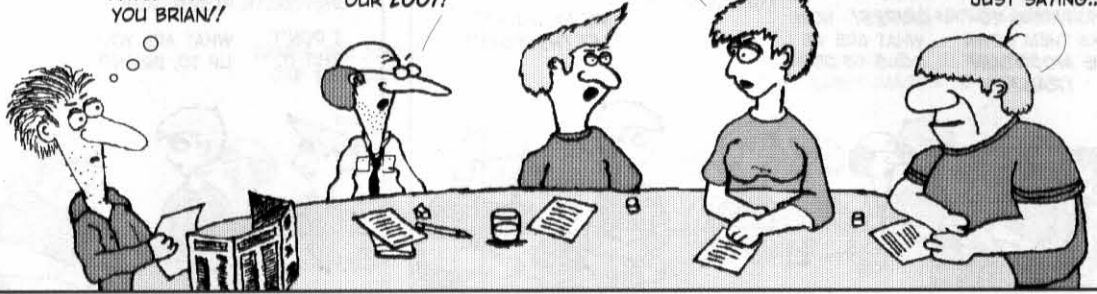
BOB YOU'RE FALLING RIGHT INTO *B.A.'S* TRAP!! DON'T YOU SEE? HE'S TRYING TO SCREW US OUT OF THE *TWO MIL* IN *GOLD* WE'RE GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS STUFF WHEN WE AUCTION IT OFF! HE *WANTS* US TO MIX IT UP WITH THESE GUYS. THEN IN THE *FOG OF WAR* HE CAN FIND A WAY TO DESTROY THE LOOT OR SOMETHING.

WELL WE CAN'T JUST LET THEM WALK OFF THE MOUNTAIN WITH OUR *LOOT!*

BRIAN IS RIGHT. PERHAPS WE CAN NEGOTIATE A DEAL - A PARTNERSHIP OR SOMETHING. WE COULD ALL SHARE IN THE PROFITS!!

(SIGH) NO, SARA, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN! I'M JUST SAYING....

RATS! DAMN YOU BRIAN!!



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD *MS. PARLEY-GOODSHOES!!* ISN'T YOUR CHARACTER GOOD FOR ANYTHING EXCEPT *TALKING!!* NEGOTIATING IS LIKE BRINGIN' A *KNIFE* TO A *GUN FIGHT!* YOU'RE GONNA *LOSE* EVERY TIME!

YEAH, WHEN YOU ROLLED UP *THORINA* YOU SAID A *WOODLAND BARBARIAN* WOULD BE A REAL ASSET TO THE PARTY!! SO FAR YOU'VE BEEN *ALL SHOW AND NO GO!!* YOU BETTER START PULLING YOUR WEIGHT AROUND HERE, *MISSY!* SO HOW ABOUT A LITTLE *MORE HACKIN'* AND A LITTLE *LESS SMACKIN'* OF THE LIPS?

START PULLING MY WEIGHT?? (SPUTTER) *HEY!!* IT JUST SO HAPPENS *THORINA* IS A *VITAL MEMBER* OF THIS *PARTY!* *FURP....SPUTTER.....ERP.....*

WILL YOU GUYS *LISTEN* TO ME FOR A SECOND? *HUH?*



SORRY BIG GUY! YOU WERE TRYING TO MAKE A POINT?

I'M JUST SAYING THAT GETTING INTO A *MAJOR FIGHT* RIGHT NOW WORKS TOWARD *B.A.'S* OBJECTIVE AND NOT OURS!! I'M JUST SUGGESTING WE *LAY LOW* FOR A FEW MINUTES AND *ASSESS THE SITUATION!*

GOOD IDEA BRIAN!!

HMMMM...MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT!

WHAT DO YOU THINK, SARA?

MUMBLE, MUMBLE... WHATEVER!



ALRIGHT *B.A.*, I NEED THE *TACTICALS!!* SINCE THERE WAS SUCH A "*FLURRY OF ACTIVITY*" WE SHOULD HAVE DETECTED *THEM* BEFORE THEY DETECTED *US!!* WE'LL HIDE BEHIND SOME BUSHES. I WANNA KNOW HOW MANY MEN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT AND WHAT KIND OF WEAPONRY IS VISIBLE. GIVE ME A LAYOUT OF WHO'S WHERE AND WHAT THEY'RE DOING!!

DID I MENTION *SKINNY* WAS SMOKING YOUR PIPE?

DON'T BE SORE, SARA! *EL RAVAGER* LIKES *THORINA!* REALLY!! I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY...

JUST GIVE ME THE INFO! OKAY?

YEAH, YEAH, SURE.



TEN MINUTES LATER...

DAMN!! A HUNDRED AND FIFTY MEN? LOOKS LIKE SKINNY IS EXPECTING US TO ATTACK!! IT'S JUST LIKE BRIAN SAID!!

WELL THEY'VE GOT ALL THE LLAMAS PACKED AND IT LOOKS LIKE THEY ARE PREPARING TO TAKE THEM DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL!

ONLY 150?? TOO BAD!! DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THERE'LL BE ENOUGH SWORD-FODDER TO GO AROUND!! I'LL HACK 'EM, YOU GUYS STACK 'EM!

CRIPES! NOW WHAT ARE WE GONG TO DO?

RELAX GUYS!! LET THEM GO!!



HUH? LET THEM GO?? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

I'M SAYING LET THEM HEAD DOWN THE CLIFF-SIDE TRAIL WITH THE LLAMA TRAIN!! THIS IS ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!!

I DON'T GET IT.

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, BRIAN?



HEY B.A., WE WAIT UNTIL THE ENTIRE GROUP HAS HEADED OUT AND THEY ARE ALL ON THE CLIFF-SIDE TRAIL. I'M WATCHING THEM REAL CLOSE AS THEY FILE DOWN THE TRAIL. WHAT'S THEIR MARCHING ORDER?

MARCHING ORDER?? WHAT DO YOU MEAN??

YOU KNOW - MARCHING ORDER?? ARE THE LLAMAS ALL AT THE FRONT OF THE LINE? AT THE REAR?? WHERE ARE THE SOLDIERS - WHAT'S THE MARCHING ORDER?

HEY I GOT THAT FUNNY FEELING - I THINK BRIAN'S ABOUT TO DO HIS MAGIC AGAIN!!

YEAH, I GOT THE SAME FEELING!

ME TOO!



UH...ER...LET'S SEE, THE LLAMAS ARE AT THE FRONT OF THE FILE AND THE SOLDIERS ARE ALL AT THE... NO WAIT. IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND. THE SOLDIERS ARE IN FRONT AND THE LLAMAS ARE IN BACK!

ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT? C'MON B.A. WHICH IS IT? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO KNOW THESE THINGS. GIVE ME SOMETHING TO WORK WITH HERE.

UH...NO, I WAS RIGHT THE FIRST TIME. THE SOLDIERS ARE AT THE REAR!! THAT'S IT!!

GOOD! NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE!



OKAY B.A., THE LAST TIME YOU RAN THIS ADVENTURE YOU SAID THE "TREACHEROUS CLIFF SIDE TRAIL" WAS ONLY FIFTEEN INCHES IN WIDTH AT IT'S WIDEST!! REMEMBER?? YOU TOLD US THAT WHEN WE LOST ALL THOSE MULES ON OUR FIRST ATTEMPT UP THE MOUNTAIN. THAT MEANS IF WE ATTACK THESE GUYS ON THE TRAIL THE BEST THEY CAN DO IS A ONE MAN FRONT!! AND SINCE YOU INDICATED THAT THE SOLDIERS ARE ALL IN THE REAR OF THE MARCHING ORDER, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO JUST FOLLOW BEHIND AT A SAFE DISTANCE AND PICK THEM OFF ONE BY ONE WITH PROXIMITY-FIREBALL SPELLS! THERE'S REALLY NOTHING THEY CAN DO ABOUT IT EXCEPT VOLUNTARILY JUMP OFF THE TRAIL TO THEIR DEATHS IN ORDER TO ROB ME OF THE EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR THE KILL!!

HOODY- HOO!!

I LUV YOU, MAN!!

NICE!!



TEN MINUTES LATER...

SORRY GUYS, ANOTHER LLAMA SLIPS ON A LOOSE ROCK AND FALLS OFF THE EDGE OF THE TRAIL!!

DAMN!! THERE GOES ANOTHER FIFTEEN THOUSAND G.P. WARDROBE!! WE'RE LOSING A FORTUNE IN ATTRITION!

THAT'S THE FIFTH ONE TO FALL!!



WELL, I'LL PUT A STOP TO THIS NONSENSE!! I'M BREAKING OUT THAT GOOD STRONG ROPE FROM MY POUCH OF PLENTY!! I'M GOING TO FASHION A SAFETY LINE BETWEEN EACH LLAMA!! THAT SHOULD KEEP ANY MORE OF THE STUPID BRUTES FROM FALLING!!

GOOD THINKING, BOB!! B.A. IS UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS AGAIN!!

IT'S SKINNY'S FAULT!! HE DIDN'T PACK THOSE LLAMAS PROPERLY!! I DON'T THINK HE KNEW JACK ABOUT LLAMAS!!

CONSIDERING B.A. IS THE GM I WOULDN'T IMAGINE HE WOULD!



LATER THAT NIGHT...

YOU WATCH IN HORROR AS THE LEAD LLAMA DROPS OFF THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF-SIDE TRAIL!! AND SINCE YOU SAW FIT TO SECURE EACH LLAMA WITH THE OTHER WITH GOOD STRONG ROPE EACH SUBSEQUENT LLAMA DOWN THE TRAIN IS PULLED FROM THE LEDGE!! IN THE SPACE OF A FEW SECONDS THE ENTIRE LLAMA TRAIN IS DISLODGED AND PLUMMETING TOWARDS ITS DEATH!! YOU HEAR THE FADING ECHOES OF THEIR MASS BLEATING FOR SEVERAL SECONDS BEFORE THEY AND THEIR CARGO ARE SPLATTERED ACROSS THE JAGGED ROCKS HUNDREDS OF FEET BELOW!!

HEY, THOSE WERE SHEEP SHANK KNOTS IN THAT ROPE! DID THEY HOLD?

DID ANY SURVIVE??

OH THE HUMANITY!!

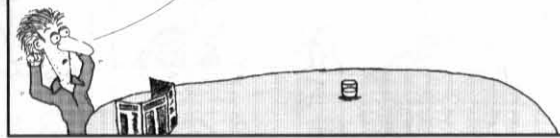


HOODY HOO!! I WON!! DAMN, IT FEELS GOOD TO SAY THAT!! HOODY FREAKIN' HOO!! YOU GUYS NEVER EVEN SAW IT COMING!! HA HA!! WAIT 'TIL PETE HEARS ABOUT THIS!



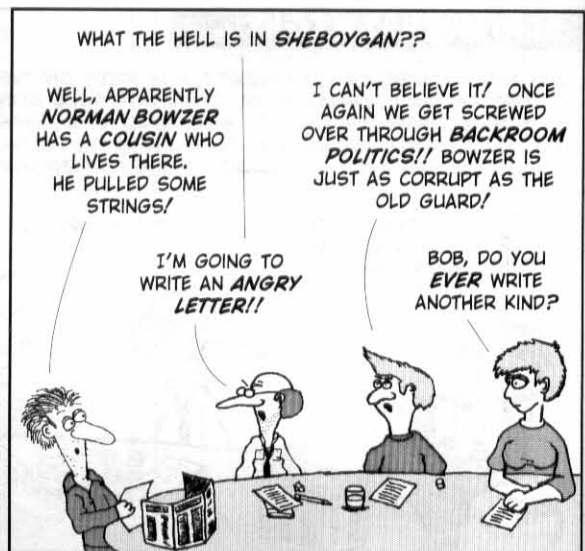
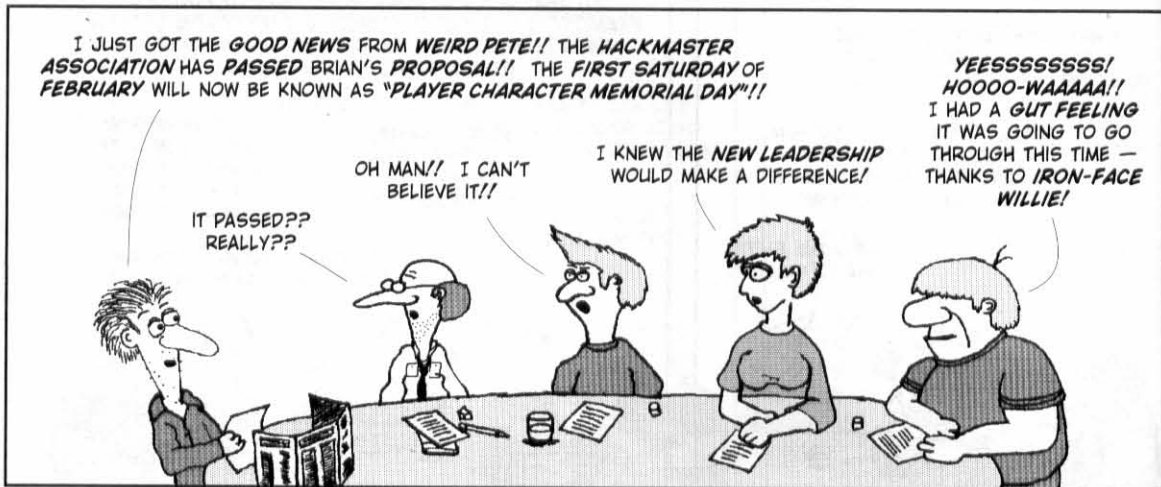
HOODY HOOOOO!!! ...UH...ER...

HEY!!! WHERE'D EVERYBODY GO??



A Reason to Celebrate

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
STORY IDEA SUGGESTED BY JIM BURLESON



THE FIRST THIRTY MINUTES OF *PRIVATE RYAN* WAS AWESOME!! I'D STACK IT UP AGAINST *STARSHIP* ANY DAY! WHEN THE DVD COMES OUT I'M GOING TO MAKE A LOOP OF THAT PART AND RUN IT IN THE BACKGROUND WHILE I PLAY "WORLD WAR III AND THEN SOME"

YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!! SPEILBERG WAS TRYING TO STRIP AWAY THE ROMANCE AND GLORY OF WAR WITH THAT SCENE — NOT PRESENT A HACK-FEST!!

WELL MY VOTE IS FOR *STARSHIP TROOPERS*!!

WE'RE THERE, DUDE!

HE SHOWED WAR THE WAY IT REALLY WAS!! IT WAS SOOO KEWL!!



YOU GUYS EMBARRASSED ME TO DEATH DURING *PRIVATE RYAN*!! WHILE EVERYONE ELSE WAS STUNNED AND DEEPLY MOVED BY THE HORRORS OF WAR, YOU GUYS WERE JUMPING IN YOUR SEATS YELLING 'KICK ASS!' AND HIGH FIVING EACH OTHER!

HEY, WE WERE DEEPLY MOVED BY THAT MOVIE TOO!! I GOT SO EXCITED I SPILLED MY COKE — TWICE!

I WAS MOVED TOO! I GOT SO INTO IT I LOW-CRAWLED TO THE SNACK BAR AND BACK!

PLEASE DON'T LECTURE US AGAIN ON THE EVILS OF VIOLENCE, SARA!



YEAH LET'S NOT GO OVER THAT SUBJECT AGAIN!! I GOT THE FULL LECTURE WHEN I BABY-SAT SARA'S LITTLE SISTER AND SHE FOUND OUT I HAD RENTED *BAMBI* AND SHOWED IT TO HER!!

SANDY IS ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD, BOB! SHE WAS TRAUMATIZED BY THE DEATH OF *BAMBI'S* MOTHER!!

STOP SAYING THAT! SHE DIDN'T DIE! SHE RAN OFF WITH THAT BIG BUCK!! SHE WANTED *BAMBI* TO GROW UP!!

OH BOO HOO!! THE MOTHER WAS KILLED BY HUNTERS! SO WHAT?



ACTUALLY *BAMBI* WAS PRETTY VIOLENT!! *BAMBI'S* MOM WAS WASTED IN A HAIL OF BULLETS!! AND THEN THERE WAS THAT BITCHIN' FIRE!! AND HOW ABOUT THAT FIGHT BETWEEN THE TWO DEER? OR THOSE WILD DOGS? I WAS JUST A LITTLE TYKE WHEN I SAW IT AND I HAD NIGHTMARES FOR WEEKS!!

HEY, IT WAS JUST SOME STUPID ANIMAL NOT A PERSON!! PEOPLE ARE PRYING DEAD DEER OFF THEIR FRONT BUMPERS ALL THE TIME!!

YOU'RE WHACKED!! MY MOM TOLD ME *BAMBI'S* MOM WAS JUST TRYING TO WEAN HIM!

OH BOB...



DON'T YOU SEE? YOUR MOM COULD SEE YOU WERE UPSET. YOU WERE PROBABLY JUST A LITTLE KID AND COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS HAPPENING. SO SHE TRIED TO SPARE YOUR FEELINGS AND TOLD YOU SOMETHING THAT WASN'T TRUE!!

MY MOM WOULDN'T LIE TO ME!! YOU GUYS DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!!

DUDE, SHE ALSO TOLD YOU OL' YELLER WRESTLED THE GUN AWAY FROM THE KID AND ESCAPED!!



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

DUDE, I'M TELLIN' IT TO YA STRAIGHT!! *E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL PART II* WAS A STRAIGHT-TO-VIDEO MOVIE!! I SAW IT!! THEY CATCH THE LITTLE GUY AND DISSECT HIM!! THEY SEW HIM BACK UP LATER AND HE BECOMES A HEROIN ADDICT. SOME DUDE ROLLS HIM LATER ON IN THE MOVIE AND HAS HIM STUFFED!! I THINK WES CRAVEN DIRECTED IT!!!

E.T. DIDN'T EITHER DIE!! YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO GET AT ME. LEAVE ME ALONE!!



A WEE BIT LATER...

GUYS CAN WE QUIT ARGUING ABOUT MOVIES AND GET ON WITH THE GAME?

OH NO!! NOT UNTIL WE SETTLE THIS!! I DON'T RECALL *FREE WILLY* GETTING CAUGHT IN A *TUNA NET* AND GETTING *CHOPPED UP* BY THE *TRAWLER'S PROPELLORS*!! IF WE HAVE TO GO RENT THE MOVIE SO I CAN *PROVE* MY POINT THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GONNA DO!!

I DON'T THINK HIS NAME WAS ACTUALLY "*FREE WILLY*" BOB, I THINK IT'S JUST *WILLY*!! FREEING HIM WAS WHAT THE MOVIE WAS....

OH JUST *SHUT UP*, B.A.!! IF YOU'D LIE ABOUT *OL' YELLER* GETTING SHOT YOU'D LIE ABOUT ANYTHING!

ACTUALLY BOB, DAVE WAS ONLY *HALF RIGHT*!! THE *FISHERMEN* BEAT HIM TO DEATH WITH *SHOVELS* BECAUSE HIS *THRASHING* WAS DESTROYING THEIR *NETS*!!

THAT POOCH IS DEAD, BOB!

BRIAN, STOP! HE'S HAD ENOUGH!!



AFTER THE GAME...

MY, MY, THAT CERTAINLY WAS *ONE DOOZY* OF A *TEMPER TANTRUM* YOU EXHIBITED THERE BOB!! HAVE YOU GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO MY SUGGESTION OF A *RAGE MANAGEMENT CLASS*??

I'M SORRY. I'VE BEEN UNDER *A LOT* OF STRESS AT WORK LATELY. LAST WEEK SOMEONE TOOK MY *POTTED GERANIUM* FROM MY CUBICLE. I TOLD MY *SUPERVISOR* BUT HE DIDN'T EVEN CARE!

AND I'M *ALWAYS* THE ONE WHO HAS TO CRAWL DOWN AND UNJAM THE *COPY MACHINE*!!



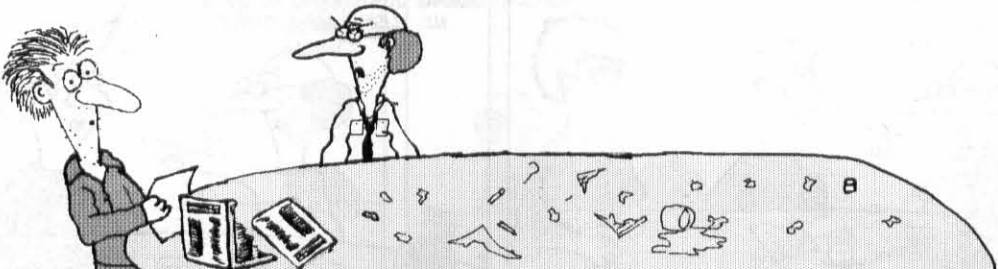
I HAD NO IDEA!! BOB, YOU KNOW I'M YOUR *FRIEND* AS WELL AS YOUR *GM*!! IF YOU *EVER* NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE - YOU KNOW, VENT YOUR FEELINGS, I'LL ALWAYS LEND AN EAR. SOMETIMES IT HELPS JUST TO TALK ABOUT THESE THINGS.

THANKS, B.A./ YOU KNOW, I FEEL BETTER ALREADY.

GOOD!! WE CARE ABOUT YOU BOB/ ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?



YEAH!! THE *SHEYBOYGAN* THING!! THAT REALLY *BURNS MY ASS*!!



A Surprising Situation

BY DAVID S. KENZER & BRIAN JELKE

JUST AS SOON AS SARA GETS HERE WE CAN START TONIGHT'S ADVENTURE, *THE TROLL GAUNDS OF MEADOWLAND*.

JUST WHERE IS SARA ANYWAY? SHE WAS LATE LAST WEEK, TOO.

AND SHE CANCELED ON ME SATURDAY, WE WERE GOING TO RENT GARY JACKSON'S *HACKFEST: THE MOVIE* AGAIN AND WATCH IT ON HER MOM'S *BIG SCREEN TV*! I WAS EVEN THINKING ABOUT PAYING HER THE \$16.25 I OWED HER FROM THE *LAST SIX MOVIES*.

IT'S JUST NOT LIKE HER TO HOLD UP THE GAME!!

I THINK SHE HAD A DATE.

A DATE?!!!

YUP.

ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT DAVE?? WITH WHO?

SOME DUDE THAT WORKS WITH HER AT BIG-BIG VIDEO. I WAS RETURNING *'NIGHT OF THE LONG FANGS AND BLOODY STAKES'* LAST NIGHT AND I SAW THEM SMOOCHIN' IN THE *VIDEO REWIND STATION*!! HIS NAME IS *JOHN LEE* - AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT HIS NAME TAG SAID!

RING!!
RING!!

YOU MEAN ON SATURDAY SHE *BAILED ON ME* FOR SOME *GUY*?? WHAT THE HELL DOES THIS LEE GUY GOT THAT I AIN'T GOT?

WELL BOB, UH...ER, NEVER MIND.

THINK SHE'LL STILL GO WITH US TO SEE STARSHIP TROOPERS AT THE SUDS AND VIEW LAST CHANCE THEATRE NEXT WEEKEND?

OF COURSE, WE'RE HER PALS, SHE WOULDN'T ABANDON US. RIGHT BRIAN?

HELLO?

MUH? UH, YEAH. SURE, DAVE.

UH, THAT WAS SARA, LOOKS LIKE SHE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE IT TONIGHT, SOMETHING CAME UP.

MUH? NOT COMING? BUT SHE CAN'T JUST BLOW THIS...

SHE SAID DAVE CAN RUN HER CHARACTER.

WHA... WHA... DAVE?? OH, I'M NOT BELIEVING THIS!!

I GET TO RUN THORINA?? KEWL!!

LATER, IN THE DUNGEON...

YOU APPROACH A PAIR OF DOUBLE DOORS. STRANGE RUNES ADORN THE SURFACE. YOUR TORCHES FLICKER AS A MUSTY BREEZE DRIFTS PAST.

MAN, A THIEF'S WORK IS NEVER DONE. I'LL CHECK THE DOORS FOR TRAPS. OH, AND I'LL BE CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH THE RUNES. AND I'LL AVERT MY GAZE, TOO.

WAIT BOB...

KNUCKLES HAS ALWAYS CONTRIBUTED MORE THAN HIS FAIR SHARE OF SCOUTING AHEAD AND SEARCHING. WHY DON'T YOU LET THORINA HELP YOU FOR ONCE?

THAT'S A GREAT IDEA! LAST TIME B.A. THREW A RUNE AT US, IT TURNED KNUCKLES THE VI INTO LIQUID AND HE DRAINED AWAY.

JUST MAKE SURE KNUCKLES CLEARS THE TRAPS FIRST. I DON'T WANT TO GET CAUGHT IN ANY AREA EFFECTS BECAUSE THE STUPID WOODLAND BARBARIAN SPRANG ONE OF B.A.'S TRAPS ON US.

KNUCKLES DOESN'T FIND ANY TRAPS ON THE DOORS.

WELL THORINA, IT LOOKS LIKE THE BALL'S IN YOUR COURT.

KEWL. THORINA WILL TAKE A RUNNING START AND BURST THROUGH THE DOORS IN AN ATTEMPT TO SURPRISE ANYTHING ON THE OTHER SIDE.

HMMM. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORTH TRYING TO READ THOSE RUNES. OH WELL. THORINA IS OBVIOUSLY A WOMAN OF ACTION.

WHO ARE WE TO GET IN HER WAY?

THORINA SMASHES THE DOORS TO PIECES AND CLUMSILY TUMBLES DOWN THE LONG STONE STAIRCASE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

MAYBE NEXT TIME WE SHOULD TIE A ROPE TO HER OR SOMETHING.

NO PROBLEM, IT SAYS HERE ON HER CHARACTER SHEET THAT SHE'S GOT TUMBLING AS A NON-WEAPON PROFICIENCY. SHE'LL GRACEFULLY CONTINUE TO ROLL DOWN THE STAIRS AND COME UP SWINGING.

WOW!! AND SHE'S WELL VERSED IN TROLL CUSTOMS AND ETIQUETTE TOO!

I GUESS THE REST OF US CAN CAUTIOUSLY FOLLOW.



THORINA LANDS AT THE FEET OF A LARGE ROCK TROLL. BEFORE HE ATTACKS, HE CAN'T HELP BUT LAUGH WITH SURPRISE AT THE WAY SHE BARRELED INTO THE ROOM.

HOODY HOO!! WE GOT SURPRISE. THIS DUDE'S TOAST.

THORINA WILL SUMMERSAULT FORWARD, TAKING HIM OFF AT THE KNEES AND CONTINUE ON, BURSTING THROUGH ANY OTHER EXIT FROM THE ROOM HUNTING FOR ANOTHER OPPONENT! IF I CAN KEEP THIS SURPRISE THING GOING, THIS WHOLE LAIR WILL BE OURS IN NO TIME!

DAVE, THAT RULED! IT WAS JUST LIKE HOW YOU PLAY LARA CROFT IN TOMB RAIDER II.



BRIAN'S RIGHT, DAVE. YOUR RENDITION OF THORINA ROCKS-ASS. TOO BAD SARA'S NOT HERE TO GET A LESSON IN ROLE-PLAYING WOODLAND BARBARIANS FROM YOU. YOU DA MAN!!!

HEY SURPRISE IS SURPRISE, BA. I DON'T THINK YOU'LL FIND TWO DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS IN THE HACKMASTER PLAYER'S HANDBOOK. WHETHER THIS GUY'S LAUGHING OR CRYING, THORINA GETS HER FREE ATTACKS IF HE'S SURPRISED.

I DON'T THINK YOU GUYS UNDERSTAND. I SAID THE TROLL LAUGHED WITH SURPRISE, NOT THAT HE "WAS" SURPRISED.

YEAH!! SURPRISE IS SURPRISE! PLUS I ROLLED A 20! TAKE THAT B.A.!!

THIS IS INTERESTING. LET'S SEE HOW THE "HURRY UP OFFENSE" WORKS IN THE DUNGEON SETTING.



OKAY FINE, I'LL CHOOSE MY WORDS MORE CAREFULLY NEXT TIME, BUT REMEMBER, NIT-PICKING ON DICTION CAN WORK BOTH WAYS. THORINA SURPRISINGLY SCORES A DEVASTATING MORTAL BLOW TO THE SURPRISED ROCK TROLL WHICH SURPRISES HIM EVEN MORE SINCE HE WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THAT HE WAS SURPRISED IN THE FIRST PLACE. PSSSHMMF!!

B.A., AT THE INSTANT I SENSE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE BLOW, I'LL BASH THROUGH THE NEAREST DOOR WITHOUT HESITATION. EL RAVAGER AND THE REST OF US WILL CAUTIOUSLY FOLLOW.

YOU KNOW, WOODLAND BARBARIANS HAVE A 50% CHANCE OF SURPRISE, BUT IT CAN BE INCREASED DRAMATICALLY (ALL THE WAY TO 90%!!!) BY UNENCUMBERING THEM. NEXT TIME YOU GET A FREE SEGMENT DAVE, DROP SOME OF THORINA'S EXTRA GEAR.

EXCELLENT! WAY TO GO THORINA.

GOTCHA, BRIAN!!!



WELL ALL THE RACKET ATTRACTED SOME COMPANY. THE DOOR TO THE ROOM BURSTS OPEN WITH A MOB OF ROCK TROLLS POURING INTO THE ROOM.

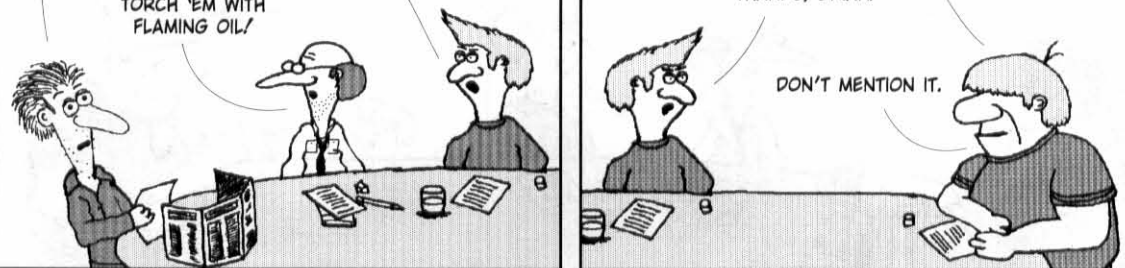
WAIT A MINUTE, B.A.!! LAST TURN I SAID I WAS HAVING THORINA BURST THROUGH THE DOOR TO THE NEXT ROOM. THEY CAN'T BURST IN ON US. WE'RE BURSTING IN ON THEM!!

A MOB HUH? I'LL TORCH 'EM WITH FLAMING OIL!

DAVE, YOU'RE PLAYING AT AN EXTREMELY HIGH LEVEL OF SKILL TONIGHT! I'M IMPRESSED. LOOKS LIKE ALL MY YEARS OF TUTELAGE ARE FINALLY PAYING BIG DIVIDENDS FOR YOU.

THANKS, BRIAN!

DON'T MENTION IT.



WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE DAVE? EITHER YOU FIGHT THEM IN THE NEXT ROOM OR YOU FIGHT THEM IN THE FIRST ROOM.

YOU GOTTA AT LEAST LET US ROLL FOR INITIATIVE, B. A.

YEAH, ROLL FOR INITIATIVE. IT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE. WITH THORINA THE WOODLAND BARBARIAN LEADING, WE'VE GOT A 50% CHANCE TO SURPRISE. IT SAYS SO RIGHT HERE ON HER RECORD SHEET. WE CAN POTENTIALLY TAKE OUT THIS ENTIRE DUNGEON WITHOUT THEM EVER KNOWING WHAT HIT 'EM.

AND DON'T FORGET SHE ALSO GETS +10 TO DAMAGE AGAINST GIANT-KIN, B.A. YOU SCREWED US ON THAT ONCE BEFORE, YA KNOW.



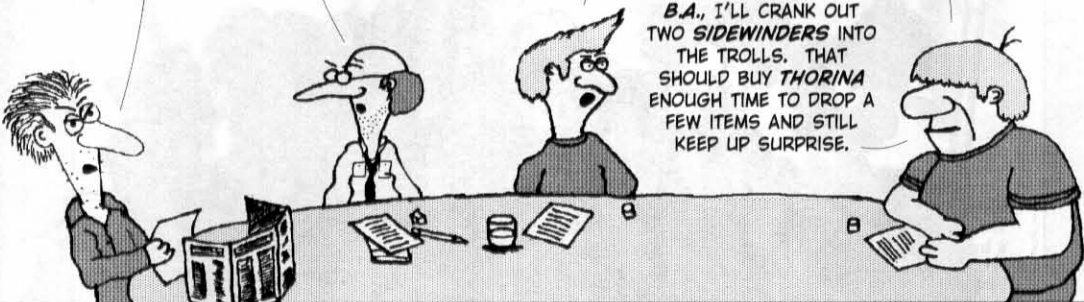
WHA? I NEVER SCREWED YOU ON THAT RULE BEFORE! AND FOR THE LAST TIME, I'M NOT OUT TO SCREW YOU GUYS OVER!!!!

HUH? LIKE HELL YOU'RE NOT. WHAT ABOUT **KNUCKLES**, HUH?? YOU SCREWED HIM BUT GOOD IN THAT **SHAM** OF A COURTROOM YOU INVENTED.*

HEY BRIAN, WHAT ITEMS HAVE THE ABSOLUTE **GREATEST ENCUMBRANCE?**

WELL, LET'S SEE. IN ORDER, I'D SAY **SHIELD AND WEAPON**, BUT YOU'LL NEED THOSE. ANY **BACKPACKS** FULL OF TREASURE OR RATIONS ARE GOOD TO DUMP. OF COURSE, THERE'S BREAST PLATE, GREAVES, HELM, BRASSART, GAUNTLETS, ETC.

B.A., I'LL CRANK OUT TWO **SIDEWINDERS** INTO THE TROLLS. THAT SHOULD BUY **THORINA** ENOUGH TIME TO DROP A FEW ITEMS AND STILL KEEP UP SURPRISE.



OKAY BRIAN YOUR **SIDEWINDERS** EASILY BLAST THE **TROLLS** INTO BITS.

ALRIGHT B.A., **THORINA** TOSSES HER HELM, THEN **CUTS** THE STRAPS ON HER BREAST PLATE, GREAVES, BRASSART AND ANY OTHER **ARMOR** SHE'S GOT. I'LL ALSO DROP THE LARGE SACK WITH MY FOOD AND GOLD.

AWESOME!!! BOLD MOVE, DAVE. THAT'LL BUMP **THORINA** UP TO AN **88%** CHANCE TO SURPRISE!!

SO WHAT, B.A.? IT SAYS HERE SHE HAS A **RING OF FAST SCABBING** WITH THREE CHARGES AND 3 POTIONS OF **TRIPLE ANTIBIOTIC HEALING SALVE**. I'LL JUST USE THOSE AND **ROCK ON!!**

DAVE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? **THORINA** WILL BE CUT TO RIBBONS!!

DUDE, **THORINA'S** ALMOST NAKED!

WOW! I WISH WE COULD HAVE VIDEO TAPED THIS SO WE COULD SHOW **SARA!!**

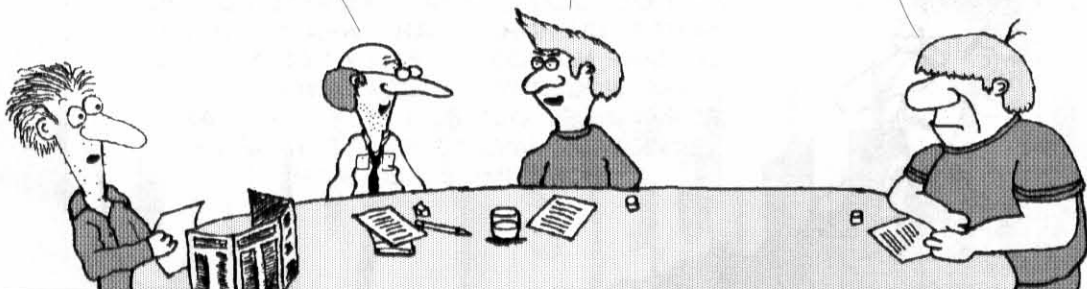
I GUESS **THORINA** DOESN'T WANT THAT STUFF. HEY B.A., **TEFLON BILLY** WILL GRAB ANYTHING **THORINA** LEAVES BEHIND. WE CAN ITEMIZE LATER.



YOU KNOW DAVE, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL **THORINA** AND I ARE GROWING CLOSER AS ADVENTURING BUDDIES. YOU'VE REALLY ADDED SOME **SPICE** TO THE OL' GIRL.

THANKS, BOB. IT'S A REAL **CHALLENGE** TO PLAY A DIFFERENT **CHARACTER TYPE** SOMETIMES, BUT I THINK I'VE GOT THE HANG OF IT.

WOW! IMAGINE CLEARING OUT THE ENTIRE **TROLL GAUNDS** MODULE IN **ONE SESSION**. **SARA'S** GOING TO BE SO **IMPRESSED** WITH US. LET'S GO BOYS. TIME'S A WASTIN'.



* See Bundle of Trouble Volume Five [KODT#14: Judgement Day]

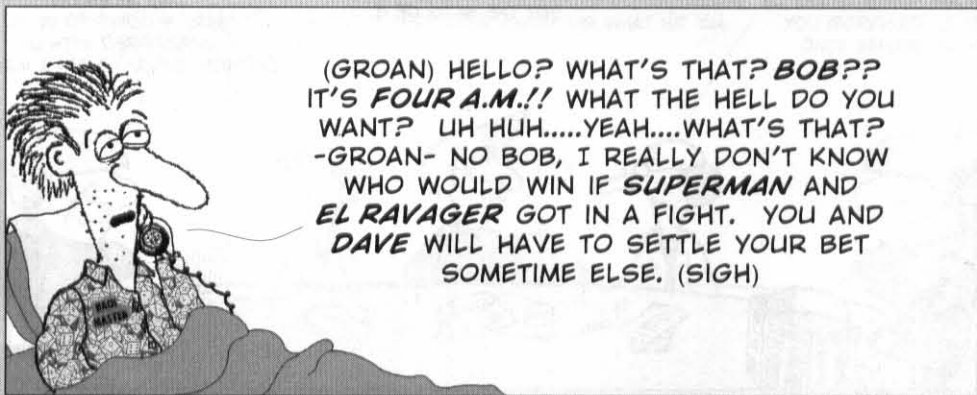
Jedi Knights of the Dinner Table



Brian Burke of Muncie Indiana submitted this beautiful rendition of the Knights as Jedis. Is that Bob as Yoda?



The Knights playing, "THIRD WORLD DICTATORS". Submitted anonymously at PentaCon '98



KODIT

IT AIN'T OVER 'TIL
THE **FAT MAN**
SAYS SO.

APPROVED
BY THE
Hard 8
Enterprises

AUTHORITY

**THE FUN
CONTINUES**



BONUS SECTION

Five Shall be Called

STORY BY BRIAN JELKE AND DAVID S. KENZER

AS YOU APPROACH THE WALLS OF THE ANCIENT CITY, YOU FEEL A SENSE OF AWE. THE ARCHITECTURE IS UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER SEEN. THROGS OF DOWNTRODDEN PEOPLE ARE IN ATTENDANCE EITHER TO TRY THEIR LUCK AT THE TEST OR TO STEAL A BRIEF GLIMPSE AT THE TRUE CHOSEN ONES, HOPING FOR SALVATION. YOU RECALL THE PROPHECY, "FIVE SHALL BE CALLED, ONE SHALL BE CHOSEN."

NOBODY'S STEALING ANYTHING FROM ME. ANYONE SO MUCH AS LOOKS AT ME THE WRONG WAY, THEY'RE GONNA GET THE BUSINESS END OF A CROSSBOW BOLT REAL QUICK.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WITH THONGS ON? I THOUGHT WE WERE IN THE NORTHERN LANDS?

THAT'S "THRONG" DAVE, AS IN "A CROWD OF PEOPLE".

DOWNTRODDEN EHP? WE COULD GAIN SOME FOLLOWERS HERE PRETTY EASILY. BETTER HOLD OFF 'TIL WE GET THE CROWN OF THRAIN THOUGH — IT COULD BE A BEGGAR MOB IN THE MAKING.



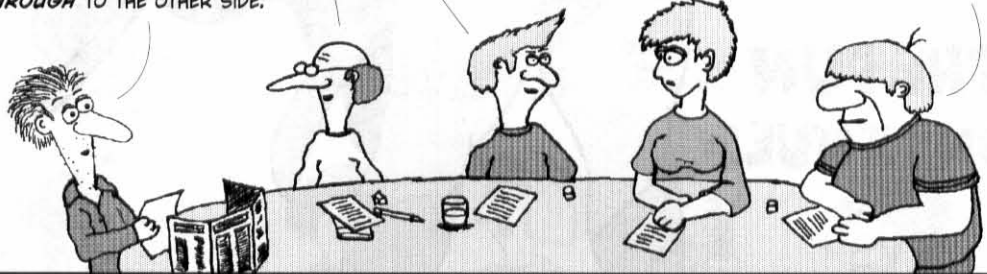
OK LET'S GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD. KNUCKLES, KING OF THE WALL CLIMBERS, IS GONNA WALK UP TO THE CITY WALL AND SCURRY OVER.

AS SOON AS KNUCKLES TOUCHES THE WALL, HE FEELS A STRANGE SENSATION COME OVER HIM. THE BRICKS SEEMS TO PART BEFORE YOUR TOUCH AND YOU PASS THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE.

NOW THERE'S A WHOLE CROWD OF PEOPLE WITH THONGS ON? I'M LIKIN' THIS. I'M GONNA GET ONE, TOO. YOU KNOW, MIX IT UP WITH THE LOCALS AND ALL.

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

OBVIOUSLY WE'RE ALL GOING TO BE PART OF THE FIVE WHO WERE CALLED. IT WOULD BE A PRETTY LAME ADVENTURE IF KNUCKLES WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD GET IN. I JUST WONDER WHO THE 5TH WILL BE.



AS BRIAN GUESSED, YOU ALL FEEL A STRANGE SENSATION UPON TOUCHING THE WALL. IT APPEARS YOU ARE EACH AMONG THE CALLED. FEELING A BIT DAZED, YOU ALL END UP SAFELY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL.

I KNEW THAT FORTUNE TELLER IN KRIEGBOTTOM WAS HOLDING OUT ON US!!

YEAH, SHE TOLD US ABOUT THIS PLACE BUT CLAMMED UP QUICK WHEN THAT DARK CLOUD APPEARED IN HER CRYSTAL BALL.

PUTTING THAT HOOD OVER HER FACE AND THREATENING TO LOCK HER IN A SMALL WOODEN CHEST WAS A BIT MUCH. I DON'T THINK I'D FEEL VERY COOPERATIVE EITHER.

IF SHE WAS A REAL FORTUNE TELLER SHE SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT COMING. HEH, HEH!



These strips originally appeared in Kenzerco's Avelon comic series. The antics of the Knights closely parallels the plot of those comics. -Brian

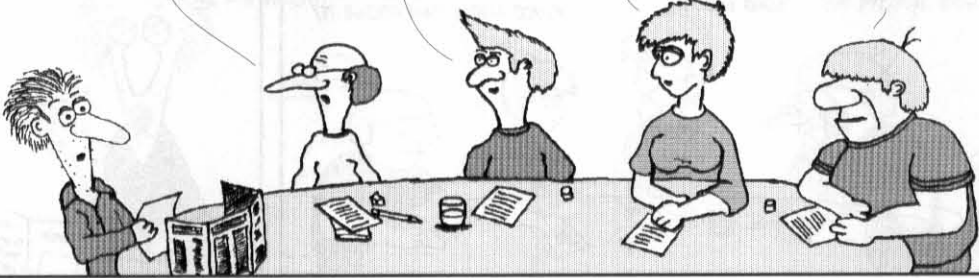
PEERING AT THE **ANCIENT HEIROGLYPHICS** ON THE NUMEROUS BUILDINGS, YOU SEEM TO SEE **MOTION** IN THE DISTANCE. YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE **NOT ALONE**. **SUDDENLY**, YOU ARE **DISTRACTED** BY THE **SHAMBLING** MOTION OF **TWO MUCH LARGER THREATS**. IT SEEMS THE **GIANT STATUES** GUARDING THE ENTRANCE TO THE CITY HAVE **ANIMATED** AND ARE MOVING TOWARDS YOU MENACINGLY.

STONE GOLEMS EH? I FIRE A **BOLT OF STONE** PIERCING FROM MY **CROSSBOW OF DOOM**. THAT SHOULD SOFTEN THEM UP A BIT!!

ALL RIGHT!! **BATTLE!** I'M GONNA HOP UP AND GIVE 'EM A TASTE OF MY **HACKMASTER '12!**

I'LL TAKE ON THE ONE **OPPOSITE** DAVE. MY **BATTLE AXE** HASN'T TASTED **LIVING STONE** IN A WHILE. AND IT'S **HUNGRY!**

LETTIN' LOOSE A **LAVA YIELD FIREBALL**, B. A.. THESE GUYS SHOULD BE **PUTTY** IN A FEW SECONDS.



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

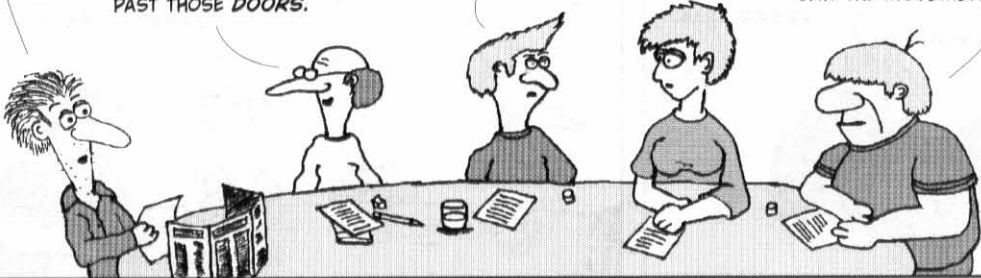
IN AN **OVERWHELMING** DISPLAY OF **FIREPOWER** AND **BRUTE FORCE**, YOU MANAGE TO DISPATCH THE GOLEMS. YOU NOW STAND BEFORE THE **LARGE DOUBLE DOORS** TO THE **INNER CITY**.

HOODY HOO!! I LIVE FOR COMBAT LIKE THAT. BRING 'EM ON B. A.! LET'S GET PAST THOSE **DOORS**.

IT LOOKS LIKE THE ADVENTURE HAS STARTED IN **FULL SWING** BUT WHY ARE THERE STILL ONLY **FOUR OF US?** MAYBE THE PROPHECY WAS **WRONG**.

I THINK WE MIGHT FIND OUR ANSWER IF WE **INVESTIGATE** THAT **MOVEMENT** WE SAW IN THE DISTANCE EARLIER. IT WOULD BE BEST TO HAVE A **FULL PARTY** BEFORE WE **BREACH** THE **INNER CITY**.

SARA'S RIGHT. BESIDES I DON'T LIKE US LEAVIN' OUR BACKS **UNPROTECTED**. WE'LL **SNEAK** OVER TO WHERE WE SAW THE **MOVEMENT**, B. A..



OK, AS YOU ROUND THE CORNER ON THIS **SACRED STREET**, YOU EASILY SPOT AN **OLD BEGGAR** HOLDING A **SHINY TIN CUP** IN ONE HAND AND A WALKING CANE IN THE OTHER. **BORIS THE BLIND** CALLS OUT, "**WHO GOES THERE??**"

WHA... HOW?? I THOUGHT...

IMPOSSIBLE!!

THE **PROPHECY** GAVE NO RESTRICTIONS ON WHO COULD BE AMONG THE **CHOSEN**. **BORIS** IS OBVIOUSLY **SUPPOSED** TO BE HERE WITH US.

OUR **OLD NEMESIS**, THE **BLIND BEGGAR?** NICE TRY B. A., THIS GUY'S OBVIOUSLY AN **EXPERIENCE POINT LEECH** IF I EVER SAW ONE.

BORIS SHOUTS, "**GREETINGS**, FELLOW **CHOSEN ONES**. I AM BUT A **SIMPLE BLIND MAN**, BUT **FATE** HAS SMILED UPON ME TODAY. FOR I, TOO, HAVE BEEN CALLED TO QUEST FOR THE **LEGENDARY CROWN OF THRAIN**. I TRUST WE CAN **WORK TOGETHER** TO FIND IT."



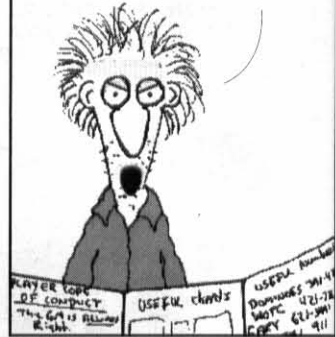
OH, THIS IS GREAT! OUR OLD ENEMY **BORIS THE BLIND** STUMBLES RIGHT IN FRONT OF US AND **NO CITY GUARD OR BEGGAR MOB** TO HELP HIM THIS TIME. I'M GIVIN' HIM THE **BACK OF MY GAUNTLET** AND MAKIN' HIM SIP **MOAT JUICE** FROM MY **BOOTS** FOR SURE!!

THAT **TIN CUP** IS OURS, BORIS. YOU'VE DENIED US LONG ENOUGH.

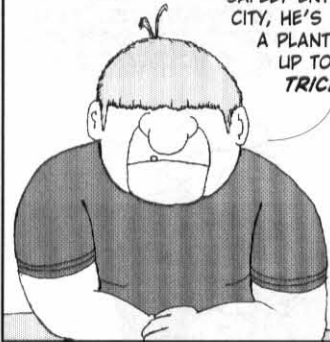
WAIT A MINUTE, YOU **CRETINS**. **BORIS** IS HERE FOR A **REASON**. THE **FATES** HAVE **SPOKEN**. IF YOU ATTACK HIM, YOU MAY **RUIN OUR ONLY CHANCE** OF FINDING THE **CROWN**. AND, YOU'LL HAVE TO GET PAST **ME, FIRST!**

HOLD ON **SARA**. NO NEED TO RESORT TO **BLOWS** OVER THIS. **BORIS THE BLIND** IS A **FAKE** AND I CAN PROVE IT!

BORIS REELS IN **HORROR** AS HE **RECOGNIZES** YOUR VOICES AND REALIZES WHO YOU ARE. HE **BEGS** FOR **MERCY** IN THE NAME OF **LUVIA**. "IT WASN'T **MY** FAULT. YOU DREW **FIRST BLOOD**. NOT **ME!!**"



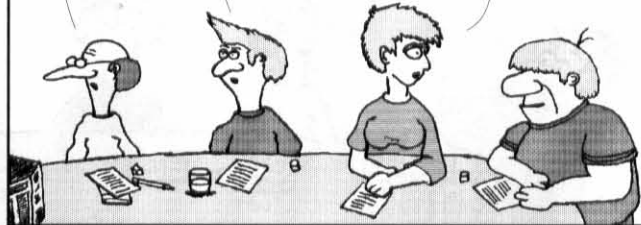
I WASN'T SURE I SHOULD **TELL** ANYONE — BUT SINCE **B.A.** DIDN'T SAY **OTHERWISE**, I HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO ASSUME MY **FAMILIAR** IS ALIVE AND WELL, AND WITH US WHERE WE STAND. IT STANDS TO REASON THAT **BENNY THE CAT** MUST BE THE **FIFTH ONE** CALLED AS PER THE PROPHECY. SINCE **BORIS** SHOWED UP **AFTER** ALL FIVE OF US SAFELY ENTERED THE CITY, HE'S GOT TO BE A **PLANT**. **B.A.** IS UP TO HIS **OLD TRICKS** AGAIN!



I **KNEW** IT!! WHO SENT YOU, **BORIS**? WAS IT THAT **UNGRATEFUL GILEAD** HOPING TO GET ANOTHER **MAJOR ARTIFACT** ALL TO HIMSELF?

YEAH, **TALK** OR IT AIN'T GONNA BE PRETTY, **OLD MAN!!**

YOU'RE **WRONG**, **BRIAN**. AND I'M STILL DEFENDING **BORIS** WITH **MY LIFE**. YOUR **FAMILIAR'S LIFE FORCE** IS IRREVOCABLY **LINKED** WITH YOUR **OWN**. YOU KNEW THAT WHEN YOU SUMMONED HIM. ONE MIGHT EVEN SAY YOU ARE **ONE AND THE SAME BEING**. THEREFORE, **BORIS** HAS TO BE THE **FIFTH ONE** FULFILLING THE PROPHECY AND I **WON'T** LET YOU **GUYS** SCREW UP ANOTHER **CLASSIC ADVENTURE**.



BORIS CONTINUES HIS PLEAS. "I WAS NOT SENT BY **ANYONE**. I **STOWED AWAY** ONE NIGHT INSIDE A WAGON. WHEN I **AWOKE** I FOUND MYSELF IN THE MIDST OF THE **PILGRIMS** OUTSIDE THESE WALLS. WHEN I HEARD STORIES OF THE **PROPHECY**, I TRIED MY LUCK ON THE WALL JUST AS YOU DID. **BELIEVE ME**, I'M JUST AS SURPRISED TO BE HERE AS **YOU ARE!**"

DAMMIT, HOW DO WE FIGURE OUT THE **TRUTH**?

I **TOLD** YOU GUYS. HE'S **HERE** FOR A **REASON**. IT'S THE **PROPHECY!**

I'M WILLING TO LET IT GO. LIKE **BOB** SAID, HE'S NOT SUCH A THREAT WITHOUT A **CITY GUARD** AND HIS **BEGGAR CRONIES** TO BACK HIM UP. **BESIDES**, ONCE WE GET THE **CROWN OF THRAIN**, IT'LL BE PRETTY SWEET USING IT TO MAKE **BORIS** OUR **WILLING SLAVE**. JUST REMEMBER, WE'RE ON TO YOU **B. A.**



TO BE CONTINUED...

One Shall Be Chosen

STORY BY BRIAN JELKE

OK, LET'S RECAP. YOU'VE ENTERED THE ANCIENT **STRONGHOLD OF HELMSGUARD** WHERE IT HAS BEEN **PROPHESIED** THAT FIVE PEOPLE WILL BE CALLED TO SEEK THE **CROWN OF THRAIN**. THE FOUR OF YOU HAVE BEEN JOINED BY YOUR OLD **NEMESIS**, **BORIS THE BLIND** AND HAVE AGREED TO LET HIM ACCOMPANY YOU. THE LARGE GATES TO THE INNER CITY **LOOM** BEFORE YOU. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO NEXT?

BORIS JUST BETTER REMEMBER TO PULL HIS WEIGHT.

I'LL TELL **BORIS** TO STICK CLOSE TO ME.

THAT'S RIGHT **SARA**, KEEP HIM **WELL PROTECTED**. I WANT HIM TO BE HEALTHY ENOUGH TO FULLY PERCEIVE THE **FOUL TASTE OF DEFEAT** WHEN WE USE THE CROWN TO **DOMINATE** HIS **PITIFUL** EXISTENCE.



LATER...

CONTINUING DOWN THE CORRIDOR, YOU COME TO A **DOORWAY** THAT OPENS INTO A **LARGE CAVERN** WITH A CONTINUING **PASSAGEWAY** ON THE OTHER SIDE. YOU ARE AMAZED TO SEE A **LARGE REPTILIAN CREATURE** BEFORE YOU WITH **MAGNIFICENTLY BEAUTIFUL GLOWING EYES**. IT BEGINS TO SLOWLY TURN TOWARDS YOU AS YOU APPROACH.

BEAUTIFUL GLOWING EYES EH? MAYBE THEY'RE WORTH SOME DOUGH, LIKE **GEMS** OR SOMETHING. I'LL TAKE A **CLOSER LOOK**.

HACK FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER!! WE'VE GOT TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.

BOB!!! DON'T LOOK IT IN THE EYES! IT'S A **BASILISK!!** YOU'LL TURN TO STONE!

PULL OUT, NOW!! **PULL OUT!** WE NEED TIME TO PREPARE.



TURN TO STONE?! DAMN. WE'RE **HIGH-TAILIN'** IT BACK INTO THE CORRIDOR.

OK, AS WE RUN BACK I'M GONNA **TOSS BORIS** WITH HIS STUPID WALKING CANE AND **SHINY TIN CUP** BEHIND ME AND **SLAM** THE DOOR **SHUT** TO COVER OUR ESCAPE.

DAVE!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING? I THOUGHT WE **AGREED** TO GRANT **BORIS** PROTECTION AND **FAIR TREATMENT!**

RELAX **SARA**. **BORIS** IS SUPPOSEDLY BLIND RIGHT? THAT MEANS THE **BASILISK** CAN'T TURN HIM TO STONE. THE **ENSUING CONFUSION** SHOULD BE ALL WE NEED TO PLAN OUR **ATTACK**.



LET ME GET THIS **STRAIGHT**. YOUR "**HEROES**" ARE **RUNNING AWAY** FROM A **MONSTER** TO PLAN YOUR **ATTACK** AND **THROWING** A **POOR BLIND BEGGAR** ARMED WITH **NOTHING** BUT A **WALKING CANE** AND A **SHINY TIN CLIP** TO THE **BEAST** AS A **DIVERSIONARY TACTIC??**

YOU COWARDS!! I'M GOING IN AFTER HIM B. A. THAT **BASILISK** CAN STILL **BITE**. **BORIS** DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A **REAL WEAPON**. JUST THAT **STUPID WALKING CANE** AND **SHINY TIN CLIP**.

YUP. **BRILLIANT** ISN'T IT?
KUDOS TO **DAVE**
FOR THE **GOOD IDEA**.

THANKS **BOB!** I LIKE
TO BELIEVE I CAN
THINK ON MY FEET.

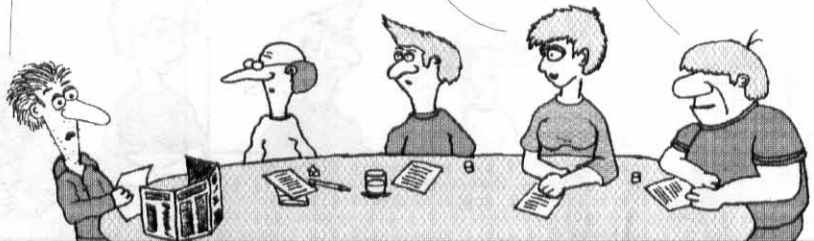


HHMMM.
SHINY
TIN CLIP!

OK **WISE GUYS**, **SARA** OPENS THE **DOOR** TO SEE THE **BASILISK TOWERING** OVER **BORIS**, **POISED TO STRIKE!** SENSING **DANGER**, **BORIS** REELS IN **FEAR** AND **INSTINCTIVELY** COVERS HIS **FACE** WITH THE **ONE THING** AT **HAND**; HIS **SHINY TIN CLIP!** AS THE **BASILISK** FOCUSES ITS **GAZE ATTACK**, IT **PAUSES** AT THE **LAST SECOND**, REALIZING ITS **ERROR** A **MOMENT TOO LATE!** THE **CREATURE'S OWN DEADLY GAZE** IS REFLECTED BACK AT IT BY THE **SHINY TIN SURFACE** OF **BORIS' TIN CLIP**. IT **TURNS TO STONE** AND **BORIS** CRIES OUT, "WHAT'S GOING ON?" AFTER HE **DETECTS** THE **PROFOUND HUSH** IN THE **AIR**.

HOODY HOO!! WAY TO BE,
BORIS! I KNEW YOU
WOULD **PROVE YOURSELF**.

VERY CLEVER, B. A.. YOU **MANAGED** TO **SAVE BORIS** AND **TAKE OUT YOUR OWN** **BASILISK** FOR US IN THE **PROCESS**. **LET'S MOVE ON**, TROOPS!



AFTER MORE DUNGEON CRAWLING...

AS YOU ENTER THE **INNER SANCTUM** OF THE **TEMPLE OF THRAIN**, YOU SEE A **BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED HELMET** **HOVERING** ABOVE AN **ORNATE PEDESTAL**. YOU'VE TAKEN A **LOT OF DAMAGE** TO GET HERE BUT YOU'VE **FINALLY ARRIVED** AT YOUR **GOAL!**

NO TEMPLE GUARDS?
NO MONSTERS?
NICE TRY B. A.. I'M
CHECKIN' FOR **TRAPS**.

GOOD THINKING, BOB! YOU FIND A **TRIP WIRE** A FEW FEET IN FROM THE **ENTRANCE**. IT LOOKS LIKE IT MIGHT CAUSE **PART OF THE CEILING** TO **COLLAPSE**.

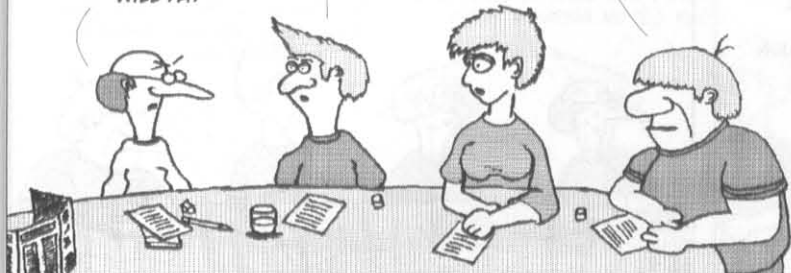


DON'T TRY TO DISARM IT, BOB!
IF YOU FAIL AND SET
THAT THING OFF, YOU MIGHT
DAMAGE THE CROWN.

DAVE'S RIGHT, BOB. IT'S NOT
WORTH THE RISK. AS LONG AS
WE KNOW WHERE IT IS, WE CAN
EASILY AVOID IT. I'LL GIVE
BORIS AND MY FAMILIAR BENNY
THE CAT EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS
THAT THEY ARE TO REMAIN IN THE
DOORWAY. OTHERWISE, THEY
MIGHT SET OFF THE TRAP.

OK, YOU ALL EASILY AVOID THE
TRIP WIRE AND ENTER THE
ROOM WHILE BORIS
WAITS IN THE DOORWAY.
WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?

HAVE A LITTLE FAITH,
WILL YA?



WELL, AS THE OFFICIAL PARTY
SCOUT, I'LL WALK UP TO THE
CROWN AND TAKE IT!

NOT SO FAST, BOBBYBOY!! THAT
CROWN IS DESTINED FOR A LEADER.
JUST SIT TIGHT AND WATCH MY BACK
WHILE I MAKE HISTORY.
I GRAB THE CROWN, B. A..

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T LET ANY OF
YOU TAKE IT. SINCE I'VE
SWORN I WON'T LET THE
CROWN FALL INTO THE WRONG
HANDS AND BE USED FOR EVIL,
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE IT
FOR MYSELF. YOU'LL ALL HAVE
TO ROLL FOR INITIATIVE TO
BEAT ME THERE!!

WAIT A MINUTE
BRIAN. I'M
ALWAYS LEADING
THIS PARTY! THAT
CROWN IS MINE!!

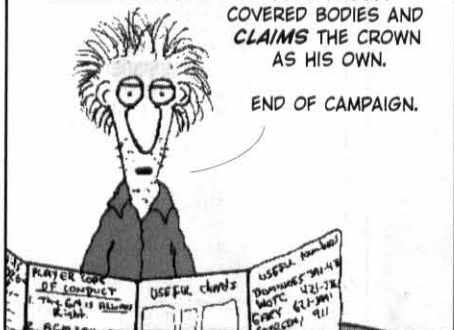


FINE!!



WAIT A MINUTE!! BEFORE YOU GUYS CAN END YOUR *DISPUTE* OVER THE CROWN, BORIS REACHES FORWARD AND **TRIPS THE WIRE** WITH HIS CANE. YOU HEAR BORIS LAUGH AND SHOUT, **"FOOLS! I AM THE CHOSEN ONE!"** AS THE STONE CEILING ABOVE YOU COLLAPSES AND **CRUSHES YOU FLAT!** BORIS STUMBLES OVER YOUR RUBBLE-COVERED BODIES AND **CLAIMS THE CROWN** AS HIS OWN.

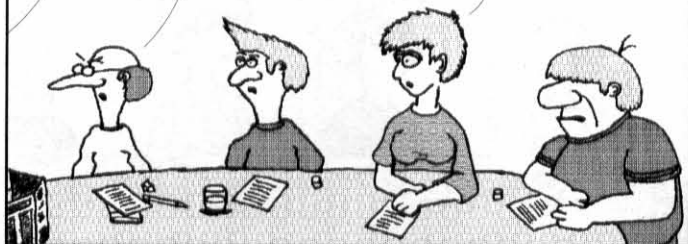
END OF CAMPAIGN.



DO YOU GUYS WANT TO ROLL UP **NEW CHARACTERS** NOW OR WAIT 'TIL NEXT WEEK?

DON'T WE GET A SAVING THROW?

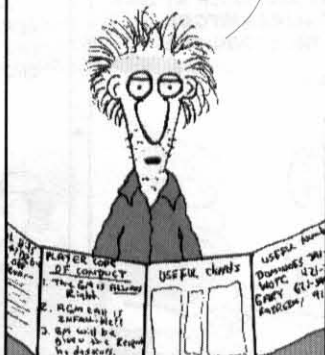
ET TU, BORIS?



NOW WAIT A MINUTE, B. A.. I'VE **PLANNED AHEAD!** BEFORE **BORIS** CAN DON THAT CROWN, MY BATTERED HAND **SURGES UP** FROM THE RUBBLE TO **STOP** HIM. IT'S A LITTLE KNOWN FACT THAT, IN ADDITION TO BEING THE **GAWD OF WISDOM**, THRAIN'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE ALSO INCLUDES **MOUNTAINEERING** AND **AVALANCHES**. THIS WAS PUBLISHED IN **GARY JACKSON'S "ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT STORIES"** WHICH INCLUDES **"THRAIN OF THE WILD FRONTIER."** ON A HUNCH I HAPPENED TO MEMORIZE THE SPELL **PROTECTION FROM FALLING ROCKS** AND CAST IT ON MYSELF TODAY AS CLEARLY INDICATED ON MY **RECORD SHEET!**



THRAIN OF THE WILD FRONTIER? I NEVER HEARD OF IT BUT SINCE YOUR RECORD SHEET SEEMS TO BE **IN ORDER**, I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO **ALLOW** IT.



EXCELLENT!! NOW I GRAB THE CROWN AND DO MY LITTLE **SUPERIOR DANCE** RIGHT IN BORIS' FACE...



NOT SO FAST, BRIAN! YOU DO INDEED SURPRISE BORIS BY GRABBING HIS LEG. IN FACT HE'S SO **STARTLED** WHEN YOU PULL HIM DOWN, THE CROWN GOES **FLYING** FROM HIS HAND. IN A BIZARRE QUIRK OF FATE, IT ALMOST APPEARS TO MOVE IN **SLOW MOTION** AS IT TUMBLES ACROSS THE ROOM ONTO THE HEAD OF **BENNY THE CAT!** HIS EYES LIGHT UP WITH PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE. YOUR FAMILIAR HAS JUST ATTAINED **DEMIGAWD STATUS!**

I **KNEW** I SHOULD HAVE TRIED HARDER TO **BOND** WITH BENNY AFTER THAT NIGHT HE **CURLED UP** BY THE CAMPFIRE WITH ME.

WHAT THE H... **FIRK DING BLAST!!** HMMFFF... OK B.A., LOOKS LIKE YOU WIN. BENNY GETS THE CROWN. BUT SINCE HIS **LIFE FORCE** IS INTIMATELY LINKED WITH **MINE** AND HIS FAMILIAR STATUS MEANS HE SHARES HIS **SPECIAL POWERS** WITH ME, SOUNDS LIKE I'VE GOT THE GOODS AFTER ALL. NOW THAT I'VE EFFECTIVELY GOT WHAT I CAME FOR, I'LL HAVE **BENNY** USE THE POWER OF THE CROWN TO **RAISE** MY COMRADES AND WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY. HAR. HAR. BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME, BORIS!



You Are What You Drink

BY BRIAN JELKE

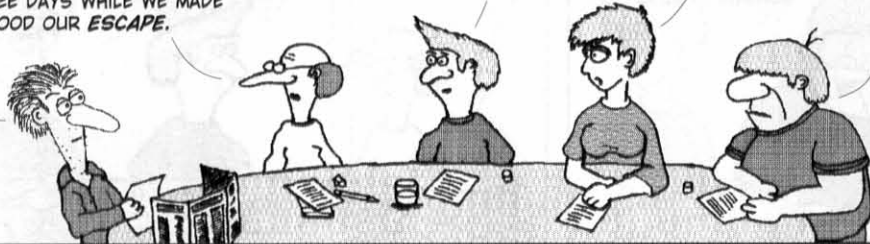
IN THE DISTANT NIGHT SKY YOU SEE A **RED GLOW** FROM THE RAZING OF THE CITADEL AT **HENARD'S RUN**. YOU'VE NARROWLY MANAGED TO **ESCAPE** THE DESTRUCTION WITH YOUR LIVES. WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?

MAN, I CAN'T BELIEVE THE CITADEL FELL. WE LEFT **STRICT ORDERS!!** EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD WAS TO FIGHT TO THE DEATH. I WAS SURE THEY'D LAST AT **LEAST TWO** OR THREE DAYS WHILE WE MADE **GOOD OUR ESCAPE**.

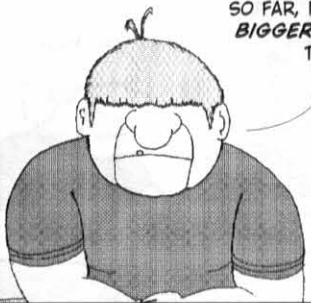
I KNOW! I WAS **SO SURE** THAT GIVING MILITARY TRAINING TO THOSE **HALF-WITS** WE RELEASED FROM THE "HOME" WOULD **PAY OFF**. I MEAN, THERE WERE **HUNDREDS** OF THEM AND I SHOWED 'EM EVERY FIGHTING MOVE I KNOW.

WITH THE ARMY **DEFEATED** ON THE BATTLEFIELD, IT'S NO WONDER THE CITADEL FELL. THOSE PEOPLE WERE JUST **ORDINARY CITIZENS** WHO LOOKED TO US FOR LEADERSHIP. INSTEAD WE BUGGED OUT IN THE DARK OF NIGHT, SEALING THEIR FATE. WE SHOULD HAVE MADE A **LAST STAND!**

DAMN ORCS!



WIPE AWAY YOUR TEARS, **SARA**. THERE'S MUCH MORE AT STAKE HERE THAN THE **CITADEL AT HENARD'S RUN** AND YOUR FRAGILE CONSCIENCE. IF WE DIDN'T MAKE IT OUT OF THERE, WHO ELSE BUT US WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WARN THE **TARLOT CLANS**, THE **SHUREL** AND THE **HALFLINGS OF BREEZY CREEK!** WE'VE GOT A JOB TO DO. AND BASED ON WHAT **B.A.** HAS THROWN AT US SO FAR, IT'S MUCH **BIGGER** THAN YOU THINK.



WE HAVEN'T BEEN IN **DO-DO** THIS DEEP SINCE **ORCS AT THE GATES**. I MEAN THIS **ORCS: THE RECKONING** SUPPLEMENT REALLY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO THROW THE ENTIRE CAMPAIGN WORLD OUT OF **KILTER**.

BRIAN'S RIGHT **SARA**. AFTER WE GET TO **BREEZY CREEK**, WE'VE GOT TO MOBILIZE THE BARBARIAN CLANS OF **HIGHLAND HENGE**. THEY'LL BE OUR LAST BEST HOPE TO STOP THIS FILTHY OOOZING MASS OF **ORC STINK** WE'VE BEEN RUNNING FROM SO LONG.

FINE, THEN WE STAND WITH THE BARBARIAN CLANS. **NO MORE RUNNING!!**



LATER...

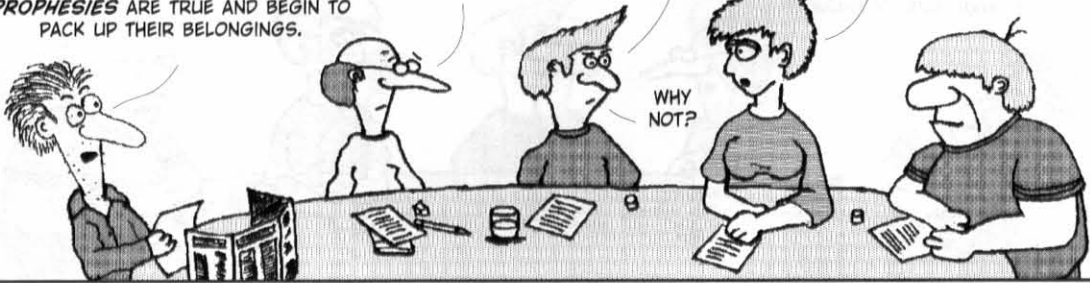
OK, YOUR MEETING WITH THE **BREEZY CREEK COUNCIL OF ELDERS** WAS SUCCESSFUL. THEY CAN'T IGNORE THE WARNING SIGNS: MASSIVE DUST CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON, THE NIGHTTIME GLOW OF DISTANT CITIES AS THEY **BURN TO THE GROUND** AND FARMER **WILMO'S COW** HASN'T GIVEN MILK IN A WEEK! THE PEOPLE WHISPER THAT THE **PROPHECIES** ARE TRUE AND BEGIN TO PACK UP THEIR BELONGINGS.

THEN IT'S ON TO **HIGHLAND HENGE** BUT HOW ARE WE GOING TO CONVINCE THE CLANSMEN TO LISTEN TO US? THEY **HATE** OUTSIDERS!

ONE OF US WILL JUST HAVE TO **CHALLENGE** EACH CLAN LEADER TO PERSONAL COMBAT. THAT'S **ALL** THEY RESPECT. IT'S THE **ONLY** WAY TO GET TO THEM.

YES **DAVE**, BUT WHICH ONE OF US CAN TAKE ON A **SINGLE CLAN LORD** ONE ON ONE IN NON-LETHAL COMBAT, LET ALONE **TWELVE IN A ROW**. IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN JUST CHOP 'EM ALL DOWN WITH YOUR **HACKMASTER '12**.

WHY NOT?



SARA'S RIGHT DAVE. IF WE CRUSH THOSE CLAN LORDS, IT'LL RUIN THE MORALE OF THE PEOPLE. REMEMBER HOW THOSE SAGEBRUSH GNOMES ACTED WHEN WE TOOK HOSTAGES AND DEMANDED OWNERSHIP OF THEIR MINING RIGHTS! THINGS REALLY GOT OUT OF HAND WHEN THEY STAGED THAT RESCUE ATTEMPT.

WHenever we flex a little muscle and try to SEIZE POWER in any group, B.A. ALWAYS THROWS IT BACK IN OUR FACES. LET'S FIGURE SOMETHING ELSE OUT.



HOW ABOUT DAVE GOES IN FOR THE FIGHT AND THEN I BACKSTAB THE GUY. THAT SHOULD DO THE TRICK!!

WHOA, I DON'T WANT TO BE ANYWHERE NEAR ONE OF YOUR "SO-CALLED" BACKSTABS. I'M STILL SMARTING FROM THE LAST TIME YOU CRITICALLY MISSED!

YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT BOB. WE'RE TRYING TO HELP THESE PEOPLE, NOT MURDER THEIR LEADERS.



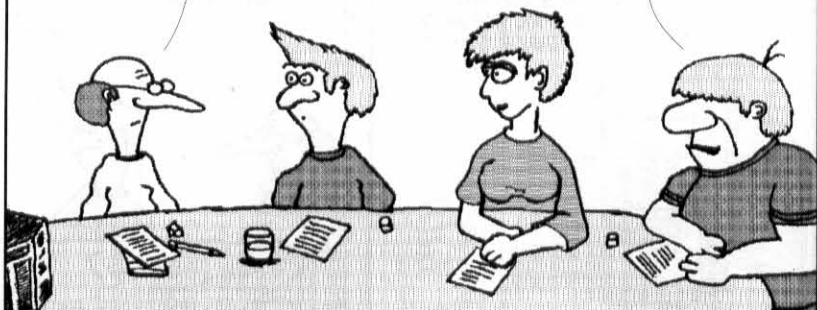
WE'VE GOT TO THINK HERE. LET'S SEE, ACCORDING TO THE STORIES, THE CLAN LORDS OF HIGHLAND HENGE CAN SMELL FEAR. THEN THEY USE IT AGAINST YOU.

IT GIVES THEM THEIR STRENGTH AND POWER.



HOW DO WE STOP THAT? B.A. WILL MAKE US ROLL ON THE FEARTABLES FOR SURE.

NO QUESTION. WE NEED A SECRET EDGE. EVERYONE DO A MAGIC ITEM SHOUT-OUT. I NEED TO SEE WHAT WE HAVE TO WORK WITH.



OK. I'VE GOT MY CROSSBOW OF DOOM WITH 38 BOLTS OF REAVING, BOOTS WITH EVER-MUD-FREE SOLES, KNEEPADS OF PROTECTION +2, A BELT OF DWARVENKIND, MITTENS OF FIRE RESISTANCE, A KEG OF FRIAR TUCKER'S HERBAL HEALING POTION, A POTION OF DELUSION, A POTION OF SMELL IMMUNITY, A...

FRIAR TUCKER'S HERBAL HEALING POTION? THAT ONLY HAS A SHELF LIFE OF TWO YEARS GAME TIME, YA KNOW.

I TRIED THAT FRIAR TUCKER'S ONCE. IT TASTED LIKE COUGH MEDICINE.

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, BOB. GIVE ME THAT POTION OF DELUSION. I'VE GOT AN IDEA.



AFTER BOB GIVES ME THE *POTION*, I'LL GO THRU MY BACKPACK. I THINK I'VE GOT *JUST THE THING* FOR US. I NEVER THOUGHT THIS WOULD COME IN HANDY BUT I'M GLAD I KEPT IT. AH, HERE IT IS. HERE YOU GO, DAVE. IT'S A *POTION OF SUPREME INVINCIBILITY AND FEARLESS COMMAND OVER HIGHLAND HENGE CLAN LORDS!*

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS ISSUE THE *CHALLENGE*, DRINK THE *POTION* AND THE COMBAT SHOULD BE OVER *BEFORE* YOU KNOW IT!

WOW, WHAT LUCK! IT'S JUST WHAT WE NEED. WHAT *ADVENTURE* DID YOU FIND THAT ON?

OH, UM I... ER UH, GOT IT ON A *SOLO ADVENTURE* B.A. RAN FOR ME A WHILE BACK! HE MUST HAVE BEEN *SOWING THE SEEDS* FOR THIS *ADVENTURE* A *LONG* TIME AGO.

INTERESTING.

HERE, TAKE THIS *NOTE* B. A.

WHAT'S GOING ON *SARA*?

NOTE?

WELL, THIS IS A *BIT UNUSUAL*, BUT IT'S OK I GUESS.

YOUR PARTY TRAVELS UP THE *LONELY MOUNTAIN TRAIL* THAT LEADS TO THE *FABLED PASS* AT *HIGHLAND HENGE*. A RUSTIC VILLAGE OF MOUNTAIN PEOPLE SOON REVEALS ITSELF. PEOPLE *BARTER* AND *GOSSIP* IN THE STREETS. CHILDREN RUN AND PLAY. YOU THEN COME TO A CIRCLE WHERE ONE *IMPOSSIBLY MUSCULAR MAN* HAS JUST DEFEATED ANOTHER *BULDDING BODY BUILDER* IN A *BRUTAL WRESTLING MATCH*.

SARA HANDS YOU THE *POTION*, *DAVE*. WHAT DO YOU DO?

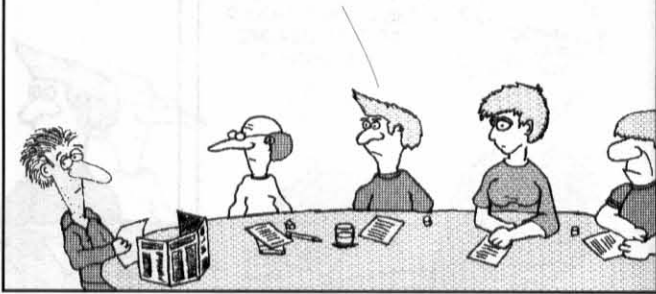
(GULP!) I GUESS THIS IS IT. I'LL HAND MY *HACKMASTER +12* OVER TO *KNUCKLES* FOR SAFEKEEPING. THEN I DOWN THE *POTION* *SARA* GAVE ME AND STEP INTO THE RING.

GO GET 'EM, *DAVE*! REMEMBER, YOU'RE *INVINCIBLE* TO THESE GUYS. *NO FEAR!!* THE *POTION* WILL MAKE SURE OF THAT.

"**OUTSIDER!**" THE ENORMOUS MOUNTAIN MAN GROWLS. "YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO **CHALLENGE ME!** YOU ARE **NOT WORTHY!** I WILL SLOWLY **BREAK OFF** EACH ONE OF YOUR **FINGERS** AND FORCE YOU TO **SWALLOW** THEM. I WILL **CRUSH YOU** WHERE YOU STAND AS YOU **TREMBLE** IN YOUR **BOOTS** AND CRY OUT FOR YOUR **MOTHER.**"



THEN YOU ARE **AFRAID** OF MY **CHALLENGE??** YOUR **CHILDLIKE** THREATS CANNOT HARM ME. I **COMMAND** YOU TO SURRENDER BEFORE I AM **FORCED** TO GIVE YOU A **BEAR-SKIN WEDGIE** IN FRONT OF YOUR **ENTIRE CLAN!!**



HE TAKES A STEP BACK LOOKING **CONFUSED** AND **SNIFFS INTENSELY** AT THE AIR IN YOUR DIRECTION. "THEN YOU ARE **NOT AFRAID** OF ME? - SNIFF - - SNIFF - HAVE YOU **NO FEAR???** I SMELL NOTHING BUT THE **FILTH** UNDER YOUR **NAILS**. **HOW CAN THIS BE???**" AT THAT MOMENT, HIS **HUGE MUSCLES** AND SUPERIOR STATURE LITERALLY **SHRINK** IN SIZE BEFORE YOUR EYES. HE **RESPECTFULLY** STEPS OUT OF THE CIRCLE.



HOODY HOO!! THAT WAS EASY! WHO'S NEXT? WHO WANTS A **PIECE** OF ME?



TAKE IT **EASY**, DAVE. THAT **POTION OF DELUSION** COULD WEAR OFF AT ANY MOMENT. I MEAN... UH... **POTION OF CLAN LORD SLAYING**, ER... UH... AND **DOMINATION?** WHAT WAS THAT AGAIN, SARA?



KICK ASS! NOW THAT WE'VE GOT THEIR **RESPECT**, WE CAN RECRUIT THEM AS **SHOCK TROOPS** IN THE WARS WITH THE **ORCS!!**

P.P..POTION OF D.. DELUSION? YOU MEAN THAT DUDE COULD HAVE **MOPPED UP** THE DIRT WITH ME AT ANY TIME? THAT WAS A **DIRTY TRICK**.

YOU DID **FINE**, DAVE! YOU PLAYED THE PART **PERFECTLY**. THE POTION WAS JUST SO B. A. WOULDN'T CHECK THE **FEAR TABLES** ON US.

BUT THE WAY YOU PLAYED IT WE DIDN'T EVEN **NEED** IT. WE COULD HAVE GIVEN YOU A BOTTLE OF **ANYTHING** AND GOTTEN THE **SAME RESULT!** HEY, AT LEAST IT WASN'T A **POTION OF INCONTINENCE**.

CLEVER TRICK, SARA. **GOOD JOB.**



The Legend of Heirs

WRITTEN BY BRIAN JELKE

OK, LET'S RECAP. YOUR PARTY HAS BEEN **RUNNING** FROM A **MASSIVE ORC ARMY** FOR **WEEKS** AND YOU'VE MANAGED TO EVACUATE MOST OF THE PEACEFUL PEOPLES IN THE PATH OF THE DESTRUCTION. YOU'VE **JUST** EARNED THE **RESPECT** OF THE **BARBARIAN LORDS OF HIGHLAND HENGE** BY CHALLENGING THEIR CHAMPION IN SINGLE COMBAT. NOW WHAT?

I'M GOING TO MUSTER THE PEOPLE FOR AN **INSPIRATIONAL SPEECH!** WE NEED TO GET THESE DUDES IN A **FIGHTIN' MOOD** IF WE WANT TO RALLY THEM TO DEFEAT THAT **SEETHING MASS OF ORC GUTS** ROLLING OUR WAY.

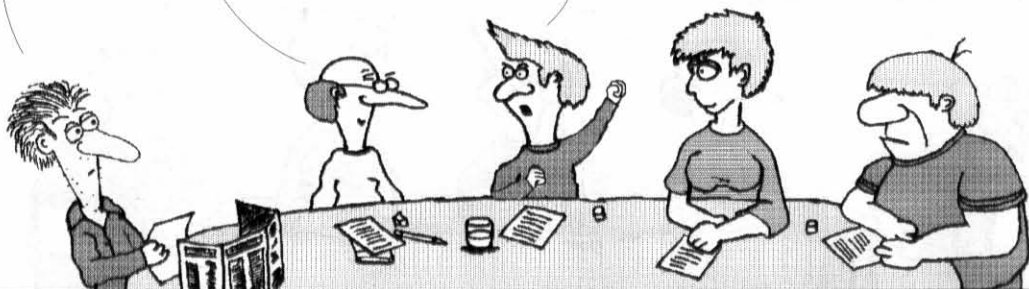
YOU'D BETTER PREPARE A **SPEECH DAVE**. AFTER ALL, YOU ARE THE **CLAN LORD CHAMPION!** MAKE SURE YOU IMPLY THERE'S **RICHES** IN IT FOR THEM. YOU KNOW, THE **SPOILS GO TO THE VICTOR**, AND ALL THAT SHOULD GIVE YOU A **+5 MODIFIER** ON THE **INSPIRATIONAL SPEECH TABLE!**



OK, AS YOU SPREAD THE WORD, THE PEOPLE OF **HIGHLAND HENGE** TURN OUT IN **ASTONISHING NUMBERS** TO HEAR THE WORDS OF THE CURIOUS OUTSIDERS. THEY THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE **TURMOIL** IN THE **LOWLANDS!**

HOODY HOO! DO YOUR STUFF, DAVE.

MY NAME IS **EL RAVAGER!** CLANSFOLK, THERE IS AN **EVIL ARMY** OF DECADENT **ORCS** LESS THAN TWO DAYS WALK FROM YOUR HOMELANDS. THEY HAVE **PILLAGED THE LOWLANDS** AND MEAN TO TAKE HIGHLAND HENGE ALSO. THEY WILL **KILL YOU ALL** WITHOUT REMORSE AND LEAVE NOTHING BUT **ASHES!** ARE YOU STRONG ENOUGH, **CLANS OF JANOVAL??** ARE YOU READY FOR **WAR??**



VOICES IN THE CROWD RESPOND, "HOW CAN WE KNOW THIS IS NOT A **LURE US** FROM OUR HOME WHILE OUR VILLAGES ARE **UNGUARDED??**" "WHY SHOULD WE HELP THE **LOWLANDERS** WHO LOOK UPON US AS **BEASTS AND SAVAGES??**" "HOW CAN WE TRUST ONE WHO HIMSELF IS CALLED **THE RAVAGER??**"

I'M **SLIPPIN'** INTO THE **CROWD** B. A. I WANT TO SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO **PICK A FEW POCKETS.**

I, ER UH...

REMEMBER THE **SPOILS MODIFIERS, DAVE!** COME ON, DON'T **WUSS OUT.**



DAMMIT!! I STEP UP AND SPEAK TO THEM, B. A.. **BROTHERS AND SISTERS**, I HAVE **WITNESSED** THE ORC ATROCITIES **FIRST HAND!!** IT STARTED FAR, FAR AWAY AND WE FELL BACK — FOR IT DID NOT AFFECT US. THE EVIL CAME TO OUR **OWN VILLAGES** AND WE FELL BACK. THERE IS **ALWAYS** ANOTHER PLACE TO LIVE, OR SO WE **THOUGHT**. WE SAW THEM **DESTROY** ENTIRE CIVILIZATIONS AND WE FELL BACK, HOPING TO WARN OTHERS. THEY **CHASED US MERCILESSLY** THROUGH THE PLAINS AND STILL WE FELL BACK. THE LINE WILL BE DRAWN HERE! **NOW!!** THERE IS **NO MORE FALLING BACK!!** WE WILL **LEAD YOU!** **TOGETHER WE WILL WIN!!**

ER... UH, AND THE **LOOT**, DON'T FORGET THE **LOOT**. C'MON B.A. GIVE US THE **MODIFIER**.



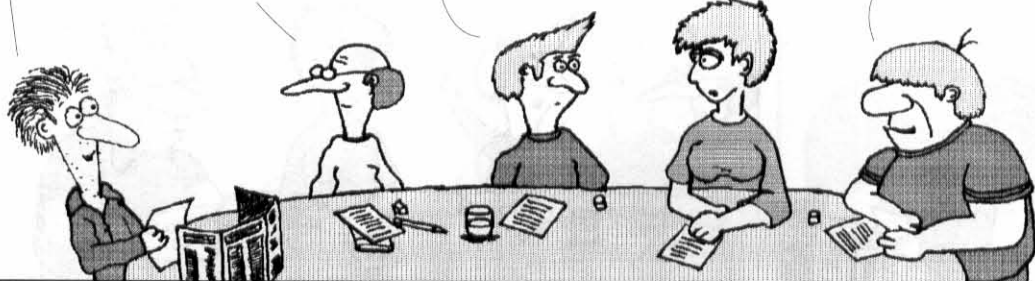
WELL **BRIAN**, IT SEEMS THAT THE **CLANSMEN** ARE MOTIVATED ENOUGH BY **SARA'S PASSIONATE SPEECH!** THEY BEGIN TO **TAKE UP ARMS** AND MUSTER INTO SMALL UNITS TO PREPARE FOR THE **IMPENDING BATTLE**.

I'LL MEET WITH **EACH CLAN LEADER** ASAP B. A.. I WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT THE **STRENGTH** OF THE **TRIBES** SO WE CAN DEPLOY THEM APPROPRIATELY.

WOW!! GOOD JOB, **SARA**. WINNING THEM OVER WITH NO MENTION OF **SPOILS** WILL MAKE IT **24 TIMES MORE LIKELY** THAT AS THEIR LEADERS WE CAN **SECRETLY HOARD** ANYTHING OF VALUE TAKEN FROM THE **OPPOSING ARMY**.

EXCELLENT! THERE'S GOT TO BE A LOT OF **COMMOTION**, I SHOULD EASILY BE ABLE TO POCKET A FEW **TRINKETS**. COME ON B. A., LAY IT ON ME.

WE DIDN'T **FALL BACK**. I'VE BEEN WANTING TO VISIT **HIGHLAND HENGE** FOR A LONG TIME NOW. THIS WAS ALL PART OF MY TRIP.



THE CLANS QUICKLY MOBILIZE AND **ALL MALES OF FIGHTING AGE** DEPART TO MEET THE **LOOMING ORCISH THREAT!**

LET'S GO OVER THOSE **DRUM SIGNALS** AGAIN, **DAVE**. I WANT TO MAKE SURE ALL OUR UNITS ARE IN **CONSTANT COMMUNICATION!**

I'M **PSYCHED!!** THOSE ORCS ARE **HISTORY NOW!**



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

THE **TWO ARMIES** MEET IN A VISCIOUS CLASH OF ARMS! THE CLANSMEN FIGHT FIERCELY UNDER YOUR COMMAND BUT THE **ORC REINFORCEMENTS** NEVER SEEM TO DWINDLE. JUST DAYS AFTER THE BATTLE BEGINS, **EL RAVAGER'S GOUT** BEGINS ACTING UP AGAIN. I'M AFRAID YOU'RE KNEES ARE **SWOLLEN** LIKE GRAPEFRUITS CAUSING YOU TO BECOME **BED-RIDDEN** AND UNABLE TO RESUME YOUR COMMAND.

DON'T WORRY, OLD BUDDY. **KNUCKLES** WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU. I'M GETTIN' YOU BACK TO THE **VILLAGE** WHERE YOU CAN **REST UP!**

FIRK!! I SHOULDN'T HAVE EATEN ALL THOSE **LIVER-N'-ONIONS**.

I HAD AN UNCLE WITH THE **GOUT** ONCE. DAMNEDEST THING I EVER SAW.



BACK IN THE **VILLAGE**, IT IS EASY TO FIND ACCOMMODATIONS. WITH ALL THE MEN **GONE TO WAR**, THE POPULATION OF **WIDOWS** AND **ORPHANS** IS QUICKLY GOING UP, AS IS THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE BEDS!

WIDOWS AND ORPHANS? SOUNDS LIKE THEY NEED A **STRONG SHOULDER TO CRY ON**. I'M JUST THE MAN FOR THAT JOB. I'LL BE VISITING AS MANY OF THEM AS I CAN. YOU KNOW, SPREADING **GOOD WILL** AND ALL THAT **CRAP!**

THE **RAV** NEEDS PLENTY OF GOOD FOOD AND ALE, AND **NOW!** LET'S SLAUGHTER SOME HORSES. YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY, "**STARVE A FEVER, FEED THE GOUT.**"

UH... GUYS, THERE'S STILL A WHOLE **MESS OF ORCS** OUT THERE! THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO **FOOL AROUND**.



BOB, YOUR ADVANCES TOWARDS THE **WOMEN** AND **CHILDREN** OF THE VILLAGE ARE RECEIVED WITH **OPEN ARMS**. IT SEEMS THEY ARE TREATED AS **SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS** IN THEIR SOCIETY — HAVING A MALE SHOW EVEN A **SHRED OF KINDNESS** TO THEM IS A DREAM COME TRUE! THEY **LAVISH KNUCKLES** AND **EL RAVAGER** WITH ATTENTION, FOOD AND DRINK, 'THOUGH SOME OF THEM ARE CONCERNED OVER **RAV'S** PROPENSITY FOR THE **BOTTLE**.

HOODY HOO!! IT'S LIKE OUR OWN PARADISE ISLAND!

WHAT?? THEY THINK BECAUSE I'M A **WAR HERO** I DON'T HAVE **PROBLEMS** LIKE EVERYONE ELSE? THAT I HAVE **NO FAULTS?** **SHEESH...** I'M FEELIN' LIKE **ELVIS** HERE. NOBODY UNDERSTANDS THE **REAL ME**.

I **CAN'T BELIEVE** THIS.



NINE MONTHS (GAME TIME) LATER...

THE **ORCISH WARS** CONTINUE FOR MANY MONTHS. THE TWO ARMIES ARE SO **EVENLY MATCHED** THAT NEITHER CAN GAIN A **TACTICAL ADVANTAGE**. BOB, YOUR INTEREST IN THE **WIDOWS** OF THE VILLAGE IS NOT WITHOUT **CONSEQUENCES**. THE WIDOW **ANDROMEDIA** IS **WITH CHILD** AND ITS BIRTH IS IMMINENT.

HOLY CRAP!! HOW COME SHE DIDN'T TELL ME? I'M GOING TO SEE HER **RIGHT AWAY**. WE'VE GOT TO GET THAT LITTLE TYKE INTO **THIEF SCHOOL** RIGHT AWAY. YOU CAN NEVER START 'EM TOO YOUNG!

WHOA. CONGRATULATIONS DUDE!



ARE YOU GUYS **NUTS??** WE NEED YOUR HELP TO **BREAK THE SIEGE!** THERE IS A **WAR ON** — AND WE DON'T APPRECIATE HOW YOU KEEP **MONOPOLIZING GAME TIME** WITH YOUR **DESPICABLE INDISCRETIONS!** HAVE YOU GUYS **FORGOTTEN HOW TO HACK??**

SARA'S RIGHT, GUYS. I THINK WE'VE REACHED THE OPTIMUM NUMBER OF **CASUALTIES** TO MINIMIZE **EXPERIENCE POINT DRAIN** WHILE STILL ALLOWING AN ADEQUATE CHANCE TO WIN. IT'S TIME TO **END THIS LITTLE FRAY!**



SHORTLY THEREAFTER...

ANDROMEDIA RESISTS YOUR CLAIM TO **CUSTODY**. "THIS IS A CHILD OF DESTINY," SHE **PROCLAIMS**. "SHE WILL GROW TO **LEAD THE CLANS** TO A **NEW ERA** OF RULERSHIP BY WOMEN. YOU HAVE **SERVED US WELL, FLATLANDER.**"

CHILD OF DESTINY, MY ASS! THE ONLY DESTINY THIS LITTLE LADY HAS IS A DATE WITH THE **THIEVES' GUILD** BACK IN **HORROWTOWN**. I'M **TAKIN' HER** AND THERE'S **NOTHING** YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME!!

THERE IS **NO WAY** THIS'LL TURN OUT WELL.



TWO DAYS (GAME TIME) LATER...

KNUCKLES WILL NEED TO WASH **ALL THE DIAPERS AGAIN**. AND **LITTLE KNUCKLET** JUST DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO KEEP DOWN THE **GOAT'S MILK** YOU'VE BEEN FEEDING HER. AND SHE'S CRYING **LIKE A BANSHEE** AGAIN!

DAMN, **POOPY PANTS** AND CRYING BABIES. WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT **ROLE-PLAYING** COULD BE LIKE THIS? THIS KID'S GOING BACK TO HER **BARBARIAN MOTHER!** THE OPEN ROAD AND THE **DANK DUNGEON** IS **NO PLACE** FOR A LITTLE GIRL.

YOU MADE THE **RIGHT CHOICE**, BOB. WE'VE GOT A **WAR** TO FINISH!

I LOVE IT!

YEAH IT'D BE BEST TO COME BACK AND GET HER ON HER **16TH BIRTHDAY**.



Raining Babies

BY JOLLY, STEVE AND DAVE

HEY GUYS, I JUST GOT AN EMAIL FROM **BRIAN JELKE**. APPARENTLY HE AND HIS WIFE JUST HAD A **BABY DAUGHTER**. I WAS THINKING WE SHOULD CHIP IN AND SEND 'EM SOME FLOWERS.

HEY, THIS IS GREAT. IF WE CAN GET **BARB** AND **JOLLY** TO PUMP OUT JUST A **FEW MORE DICE-DRIBBLERS** WE CAN START AN **IN-HOUSE KIDDIE HACK-LEAGUE**.

WHAT? ANOTHER KID? GEEZUS, BETWEEN HIM AND THE **KENZERS** IT'S **RAINING BABIES** AROUND HERE.

GEE, THE **'SIXTH KNIGHT'** MUST BE WORKING SOME KIND OF **TAX-ANGLE** OR SOMETHING.

C'MON, BOB. THAT AIN'T NICE!

SO WHAT'S THE KID'S NAME?

VERONICA!

VERONICA?

HEY THAT'S FRICKIN' **AWESOME!** SO HE NAMED HIS KID AFTER THE CHARACTER, **'VERONICA THE STORM WEAVER'** FROM GARY'S NOVELLA, **"HACK A LEAGUE ONWARD"**?

THAT CHARACTER WAS **KICK ASS!**

SHE HAD IT **ALL!**

YOU GUYS ARE **WHACKED!** THAT CHARACTER **BLEW!** SURE SHE WAS A GOOD **TOE-TO-TOE** FIGHTER BUT WHEN THE **CHIPS** WERE DOWN AND HER **PARTY** NEEDED HER — WHAT DID SHE DO? SHE **TOOK THE GOLD** AND ABANDONED HER **PARTY!**

UH... NO BRIAN. I DON'T THINK THE **JELKES** NAMED THEIR DAUGHTER AFTER...

BRAINS, BEAUTY AND A **RAZOR-TO-THE-THROAT** ATTITUDE WHEN IT CAME TO **HACKING**.

I'D BETTER GET **BRI** ON THE PHONE. IF HE NAMED HIS LITTLE **GIRL** AFTER **THAT** CHARACTER SHE'S GOING TO GROW UP **STIGMATIZED!**

BOB, YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T BOTHER. I CAN **ASSURE** YOU THE **JELKES** DIDN'T NAME **VERONICA** AFTER A **HACKMASTER** CHARACTER.

OH MAN, THAT CHARACTER **ROCKED!** WHAT A **PACKAGE!**

GEE, I DIDN'T KNOW **BRI** WAS SUCH A BIG FAN OF **GARY'S** WORK.

OH...? AND SINCE WHEN DID YOU AND THE **"JELKES"** GET SO **TIGHT!** HUH?

GUYS, MAYBE WE SHOULD GET BACK ON TOPIC. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO SEND? **FLOWERS?** A **CARD?**

HOW 'BOUT A **HACK-MINI** STARTER SET? WE COULD THROW IN SOME **PAINT** AND **PRIMER**.

MINIS? YOU'RE JOKING, RIGHT?

SARA'S RIGHT. YOU DON'T GET A BRAND SPANKING NEW **BABY A HACK-MINI STARTER SET!** SHE WOULDN'T **APPRECIATE** THE GESTURE. YOU GOT TO START THE KID OUT **RIGHT!** WE SHOULD GET HER A COUPLE OF **FOAM-DICE CHEW TOYS!** NOTHING LIKE STARTING THE **DICE BONDING PROCESS** EARLY! BY THE TIME SHE'S **TWO MONTHS** OLD SHE'LL BE **THROWIN'** NAT-TWENTIES LIKE A **PROFESSIONAL!**

ON SECOND THOUGHT. MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST BUY GIFTS **SEPARATELY**.

I STILL THINK WE NEED TO TALK TO **BRIAN** ABOUT THIS **NAME-THING!** HE'S MAKING A **BIG MISTAKE**.

GEE, I WONDER WHY THEY DIDN'T NAME HER **THORINA** OR **JUSTINA?** MAYBE YOU'RE NOT AS **TIGHT** WITH THE **JELKES** AS YOU THINK, **SARA**.

ANY WORD ON HER **STATS** YET?

POOR KID.

*On March 15, 2002 the 'Sixth Knight', Brian Jelke and his wife Alissa welcomed a new baby daughter into the world. As most of our readers already know there's a long standing tradition at KenzerCo to do a special in-house irreverent **KODT** strip on such an occasion. The above strip was written by the D-Team to commemorate the event. Since so many readers have asked to see such in-house strips we present it here. In an email sent up soon after Veronica's birth, Brian wrote, "I already ran her [Veronica] through a grueling 12 hour hack session. She's got a pixie-fairy beszerker-assosin and she's already racked up over 100K EPs. I'm tellin' ya, this kid found some loopholes I'd never even dreamed of! We're already up to the letter J in the HOBs and I can't stop her."

A MOMENT IN GAMING HISTORY #12

In 1928, four angry female college students from UCLA set out to drag the games industry 'screaming' into the a new era. Upset because the popular roleplaying game, "SpeakEasy" had no provisions for female player characters the '**Ladies of Hack**' (as the press soon dubbed them) staged protest marches at gaming conventions all around the country.

The group's efforts were ineffective, however, and by the fall of 1932 members were clamoring for new leadership. Fran McKinney answered the call and developed the 'In yer face!' approach to protesting by taking their cause directly to the gaming table using semi-violent tactics such as dicebag pummeling and atomic wedgies to persuade change.

The group disbanded in 1948. □



Myrtle, Babs, Fran and Betty Jo at a Rally in 1930

A MOMENT IN GAMING HISTORY #41

In the late 1920's Scam Sheets threatened to bring Roleplaying to its knees. Unscrupulous GameMasters looking to make a fast buck stood outside Game Convention halls offering to sell pre-played player characters to attendees. Trading/Selling player characters was a common practice among gamers at the time. Most GameMasters allowed their players to bring such characters into their campaigns - naively supposing that the characters had legitimately earned their levels of experience and possessions under another GM's watchful eye.

In 1928, however, a Character Generating Sweat Shop was uncovered in downtown St. Louis by investigative reporter, Sherm Maddock. His articles revealed that Sham-GM's were running bogus campaigns in which hundreds of Character-Grinders were running characters through Monty Haul adventures designed to quickly fatten them up with treasure and experience so they could be sold on the street.

This revelation put an end to Character swapping and to a dark moment in gaming history. □



Player Character Scalpers peddle their wares

A MOMENT IN GAMING HISTORY #47

It was an idea that couldn't fail and that's exactly what supporters told Norm Cravitz when he showed them his blue prints. By combining the power of vacuum tubes, radio diodes and new computer technologies developed by the air transportation industry, Norm was convinced he could build the world's first computerized Game Master screen.

It was something GM's were anxious to see. Such a device could free them from the tedium of record keeping and detail management during their sessions and allow them to devote more time and energy to story telling.

Norm was able to raise over \$50,000 in investment to develop his high tech gadget and spent the next five years in seclusion working on it's development. Finally by the fall of 1949, investors were in a state of panic and demanded to see what their money had bought them. Feeling the pressure, Norm agreed to a demonstration of a prototype.

His GM Screen required twenty linear feet of table space to set up as well as access to over thirty five electrical outlets and over two hundred feet of electrical extension cord. (During the forty minute demo over a dozen vacuum tubes and fifteen fuses were blown.) If this weren't enough, the investors soon learned that the heat generated by the screen raised the room temperature to a balmy ninety-two degrees.

Undaunted, Norm proceeded to demonstrate how his screen could handle virtually all GM tasks by taking a small group of volunteers into a dungeon. At first the investors were impressed. Many of them began congratulating each other on what looked to be a sound investment. Elation soon turned to shock. While calculating the number of torches required to explore the second level of the dungeon, a capacitor exploded deep in the bowels of the screen resulting in a fire.

Fortunately, Norm had the forethought to have several fire extinguishers on hand and was able to put out the flames in short order. The damage, however, was already done. The investors bailed on the project and Norm's name and reputation were dragged through the mud. □



Norm Cravitz pushes the 'twenty sider' switch on his high tech GM Screen

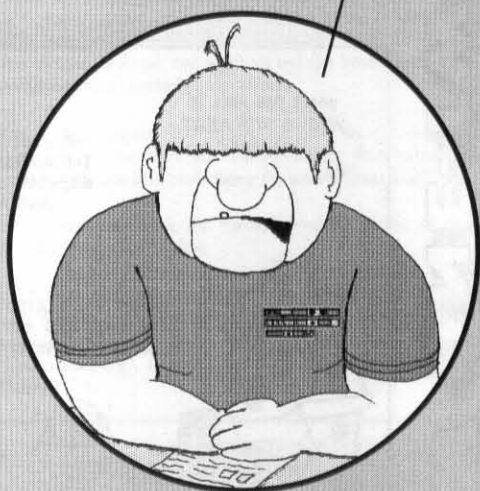
These "Moments in Gaming History" were a monthly "filler" feature originally aimed at a KenzerCo employee with the hope of seeing him cry. Jolly eventually gave up after running out of employees to taunt.

KODT: IN YER FACE EVERY FREAKIN' MONTH!!

**I READ MINE WITH
A BANANA-MANGO
SNAPPLE!!**



**I READ MINE WITH
A DIET RASPBERRY
ICE-TEA SNAPPLE AND
TWO MOONPIES!!**



**THE LITTLE ONE
ANNOYS THE HELL
OUT OF ME!!!**

"WHAT DO YOU READ YOURS WITH?!!!"

Above is a compilation of "upcoming issue" spots from KoDT #25-#27 in which various characters revealed their beverage of choice when reading KoDT.



Originally appeared as part of the editorial for KODT issue #25



Originally appeared as part of the editorial for KODT issue #26.
See "Tales from the Table" on page 95 for background on Newt's woe.



Originally appeared as part of the editorial for KODT issue #27

FACT OR FICTION? CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

Eric S. Stevens recently compiled the following list interesting of "facts". Yeah, right!! Our in-house **Research Committee** is on to him! Eric has deliberately mixed in several bogus claims in his list. Can you weed them out? To help you on your quest for the truth here's a tip - only ten of the twenty facts on the following list are **TRUE!** Good Luck!! The answers can be found at the bottom of the page.

1. The polar bear is so well insulated it does not show up on infra-red scanners except for its breath.
2. Benjamin Franklin suffered from a rare ailment called Mena-tesla-dosis whereby his specific bio-chemistry, supplemented with external electricity, would produce endorphins in the brain; his kite flying habit was more an addiction than a scientific pursuit.
3. A kangaroo can not walk backwards.
4. A one inch thick cable stretched between the Earth and moon would consist of more steel than all the battleships ever made.
5. With an income of over 400 million dollars a week, it would not be worth Bill Gates' time to pick up \$100,000 off the street, if it were there for the taking, and deposit the cash in his bank if it took him more than 3 minutes to do so (<39K/min return on time).
6. The highly exothermic oxidation characteristic of the paint used on the Hindenburg has led experts to believe more heat was produced from the burning paint than the hydrogen burn.
7. The largest known giant sea squid, captured off the coast of New Zealand, measured 23 feet in diameter at the hood and was found to have three Filipino fishermen in its stomach (who were still in their boat).
8. If the Hubble telescope mirror was expanded to the size of the Gulf of Mexico, its largest defect would be no more than five inches high.
9. In chemical content, the human body is worth about 57 cents.
10. Great white sharks do not have a limiting age, rather, enough non-digestible debris eventually accumulates in its stomach to the point it is no longer buoyant and it sinks to the bottom to crawl with its fins until it starves.
11. Upon his death, Albert Einstein's brain was frozen, sliced up, and sent to various Medical Universities for post mortem study.
12. The unique pitch of the Midwestern Screech Owl will shatter a vehicles windshield at twenty feet.
13. Although noted for its impressive destructive capacity when utilized in thermal-nuclear warheads, Plutonium's more probable threat comes from its chemical properties, being more toxic when inhaled than arsenic.
14. There is more cheese in Switzerland than there is concrete in the Empire State Building.
15. The Peruvian fire beetle spits flames up to seven feet with enough heat to cauterize the human jugular vein.
16. The sloth's metabolism is so slow that it takes a half hour to drown.
17. It was not until the far side of his first lunar orbit that astronaut Buzz Aldrin realized he had left his garden sprinkler running and before radio contact could be re-established and before NASA officials could remedy the situation, everything washed away with the exception of three rutabagas, two eggplants and five brussel sprouts (that would discourage anybody's trip home).
18. The strongest organic fiber known, silk from the elusive Japanese Ginsu spider, is so tough that the web literally dices unsuspecting prey that run into its strands; hence the name "Ginsu knife".
19. The animal responsible for the most human deaths in North America is the whitetail deer.
20. To this day, recalcitrant ex-East German officials withhold coordinates to submerged ruins discovered in 1943 by notorious U-Boat commander Otto Von Schlichting and this site, the "Unterwasserburg", is more commonly referred to in English as "Atlantis".

The puzzler above was the "Parting Shots" for issue #27.

The strip below was slated to run in HackJournal #1 but was pulled prior to publication.

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY BLACKBURN

CHANGE IT?? WHAT IN THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?? YOU CAN'T GO AROUND TAMPERING WITH OFFICIAL TITLES. **GAME MASTER** IS A TIME-HONORED TRADITION!! I WON'T GIVE IT UP WITHOUT A FIGHT!!!

HOW ABOUT **GAME CUSTODIAN??** OR MAYBE **GAME TRUSTEE??**

TRUSTEE COULD WORK. IT DENOTES **RESPONSIBILITY** WITHOUT SUGGESTING **AUTHORITY.**

WHILE WE ARE ON THE **SUBJECT**, I PROPOSE THAT A **GROUP CONSENSUS** AMONG ALL THE PLAYERS CAN EFFECTIVELY **VETO** ANY **GAME TRUSTEE CALL.**

HMMM... I THINK YOU ARE ON TO SOMETHING.

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME!!



Answers for Fact or Fiction - The true facts are: #1,3,5,6,8,10,11,13,16,19

Who's Who in KODT

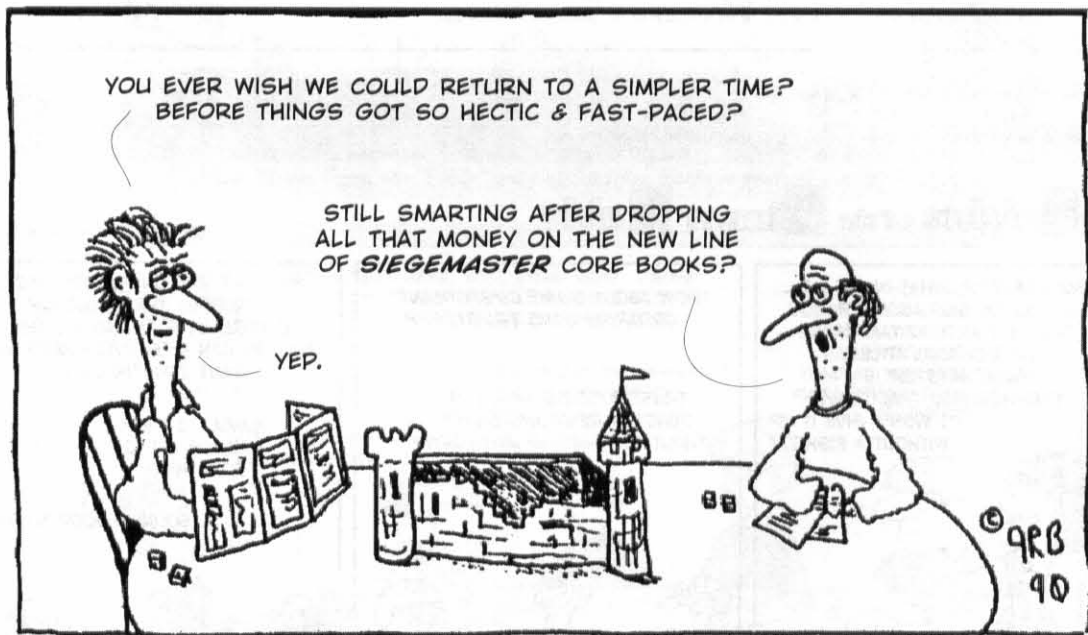
The very first KODT strip had two characters — B.A. Felton and Bob Herzog. Ten years and 400+ strips later, the cast of characters has swelled considerably. (*While we've never bothered making a detailed list of all the characters mentioned or appearing in KODT, at least one rabid fan puts the number 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.



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 of \$6000 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 Ferguson). 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 stands at 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 cheated 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®**.



b.a.
FELTON



brian
VAN HOOSE

comes in three styles of increasing quality and price: *Slop-N-Go*, *Table-Top* and *Museum Qualities*. 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 go on that one, nobody is sure.

His personal life obviously reflects the flaw points which balance his otherwise precise life-style. 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 Zeroes™**



bob HERZOG

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 unflinching 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-sided. 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 medieval 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 succession 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 Thrashing 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.

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 University courses of cultural anthropology and dance theory, Dave was introduced to role-playing by Bob Herzog in the days when B.A., Bob, Johnny Kizinski and Brian were the only Knights of the Dinner Table. 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 destined 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, Risque 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 Wurd. 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 Wurd; 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, Chelsie. Chelsie 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. Felton, Sara was invited 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 attending the HackMaster™ camp in 1992 (*spending ten days in grueling study of demi-human cultures*).

Sara even stretches her skills into the role of GameMaster with ease, her latest triumph being to convince 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 tournament.

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 to bigger and better game sessions with her expertise in the game that is HackMaster™.



sara
FELTON

Johnny "Lucky" Kizinski was one of the original founding 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

just about any gaming table in Muncie, Indiana and you're likely to hear the sad refrain, "the boy could play!"

Johnny's story has an unhappy ending however. One night during a power session of CattlePunk, his luck ran out. He fumbled consecutively FIVE times, failed four saving throws, and missed twelve to-hits over the course of the evening. As a result four high level player characters met their demise.

Johnny's unlucky streak haunted him in the weeks that followed and he eventually lost interest in the game and hung up his dice bag. He moved out of state and now manages a Big Juices in Wisconsin.



johnny
KIZINSKI

WHY FIGHT OVER THE LAST COPY OF KODT ??

BACK OFF JACK!! THAT COPY OF ISSUE NUMBER SIX IS MINE!!

HA!! I DON'T THINK SO, SQUIRREL BOY!! I PUT SPIT ALL OVER IT!!

VILE FIEND!!



RESERVE YOUR COPY TODAY!!

Jolly Blackburn (left) & David Kenzer (right) horse around at the GAMA 1998 trade show and end up in an ad to run later that year in KoDt #26

nitro
FERGUESON

Victor Ferguson became known as the *Lord of Steam* when he adapted the HackMaster rules to live-action play and began taking hand picked groups of players on late night forays into the labyrinth of steam tunnels beneath Ball State University. After 'Ferguson's Folly' made national headlines (Victor and his group were lost for 7 days prompting a massive rescue search), the steam tunnels were secured and dozens of entrances were sealed with concrete. There are several contradicting accounts of what happened weeks later on the evening of January 5th, 1987 but it involved a satchel of C-4 high explosive, a miscalculation of the expected blast radius, and a medical evacuation of the Campus Administration Building which collapsed during an attempt to breach the steam tunnels. The incident earned Victor the nickname 'Nitro' and 5 years probation. Nitro has been president of the **Black Hand Gaming Society** for 8 years, taking over from Weird Pete.



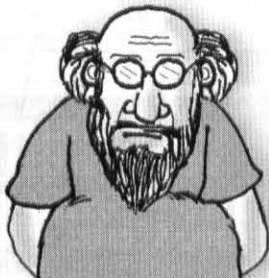
stevil
VAN HOSTLE

Stevil has a day job administering customer warranty claims. For years he satisfied his gaming itch through freelance work for various gaming industry publications. However, his divorce a couple of years back freed up time for him to get back into real gaming. He met Gordon Sheckberry at work [prior to his unfortunate(?) accident] and 'Gordo' subsequently introduced him to the **Black Hands**. He now commutes to Muncie every Friday night from his apartment in suburban Indianapolis.



"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.



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



flak jack
MONTY

Jack was playing a live-action game of *Urban Assassin™* and was attempting to 'take out' several players who had sought refuge on a passing bus. The judge was not amused and sentenced Jack to six months confinement. The sentence was waived, however, on the condition that Jack enlist in the armed forces. Jack joined the Army for a two year hitch. DoD cutbacks allowed him to end his tour early and return to Muncie to attend BSU on the GI Bill while completing his military obligation in the Indiana National Guard. He joined the **Black Hands** soon afterwards and earned a reputation for being a formidable player.

Jack "Flak Jack" Monty is well known in Muncie, Indiana as a consequence of his highly publicized 1994 trial *People v. Monty*. Jack

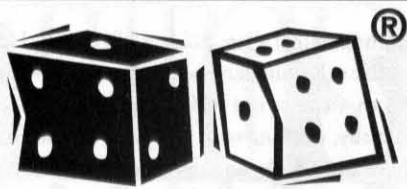
was convicted of aggravated assault, endangering the public and a half dozen other charges as a result of his commando-style assault on a city bus armed with water balloons and several auto-fire equipped paintball guns.



newt
FORAGER

Newt was the only child of a career military couple. He spent his childhood either being dragged around the globe or tossed back and forth between various uncles and grandparents. Perhaps that's why Newt has trouble making friends and fitting in. He wet his feet in gaming by playing every play-by-mail game he could track down and earned a bit of notoriety by topping the five year powergrip of the top player in the PBM game, *Tribes of Angst* and essentially shutting down the game. Later he was introduced to **HackMaster** through a MUDD on the internet and embraced the game.

After running through every Solo-Adventure published he set out on a quest to find a group to play with. The **Black Hands Gaming Society** have allowed him to play at their table for some time. Unfortunately he's finding it difficult to find a group who will tolerate his personality quirks.



Hard 8 Enterprises®

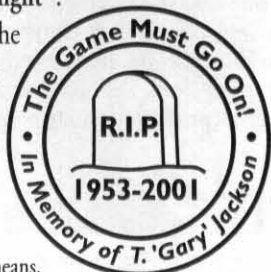
What do you want to Hack™ today?™



Gary Jackson was fondly known as the “Gawdfather of Gaming” by millions of gaming enthusiasts around the world.

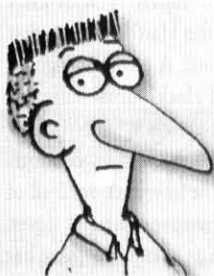
His failing wargame company, Hard 8 Enterprises, was about to close its doors for good in 1977 when Gary tossed the dice on a hastily produced role-playing game, *The HackMasters of EverKnight™*.

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 rode Hackmaster spin-offs until his untimely death in a plane accident.



(For those who want to know what ‘hard eight’ means, it refers to the game of craps where Gary blew thousands of dollars of company money over the years on his frequent trips to Las Vegas.)

gary “gee-jay”
JACKSON

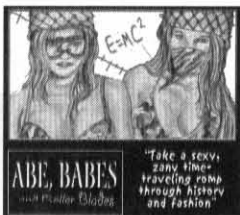


edmund
FINLEY

Edmund Finley was once Gary Jackson’s paperboy. One morning he was coerced into filling an empty chair during a play-testing session of HackMaster and became ensnared in ‘Gary’s Game’.

That was twenty years ago and Edmund has been on the Hard 8 team ever since (though he’s only been on the payroll for the past four months). Edmund wears the proud title of

“Director of Research and Development” and recently oversaw the production of his first written work, *Abe, Babes and RollerBlades™*, described as a “sexy, zany, time-travelling romp through history and fashion”.



the antignano
BROTHERS

Very few people have ever seen the infamous Antignano Brothers. Those who have are usually reluctant to talk about it. It is known that Gary Jackson has kept them on the Hard Eight Enterprises 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 solid gold 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’.



jo jo
ZEKE

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.



pete
SKIPOWSKI

Pete has been with Gary Jackson since the beginning. In fact they met in college where they used to play epic sessions of MERC

ARMOR and BLAZING GUNS. When Gary started his company, Pete came onboard as his first full-time game designer (working for shares in the beginning). In recent years the friendship has been strained as Gary's projects have repeatedly over-shadowed Pete's pet projects. In fact Gary usually targets Pete for his much publicized verbal abuse and ego-bruising. Still, Pete is loyal to Gary and Hard 8 Enterprises and rarely complains.

Waco Bob is one of the original share holders of Hard 8. He really doesn't do much at the company other than agree with virtually every word that comes out of Gary's mouth. Waco has done well, financially, working with Gary and that seems to be enough to have earned his undying devotion. Waco does sit in on every playtesting session he can. But since he seems to love every game he plays, regardless of its flaws, his value as a playtester leaves a lot to be desired. He invariably fills out his playtester evaluation forms with, "This game is the next HackMaster!!"



'waco' bob
FORSEY

Tuley isn't an employee at Hard 8, nor is he considered an intern. He originally came to the company as part of a Summer Playtester program. He was tricked into running the company's customer service department by being led to believe it was a 'virtual corporation computer game' and that he was earning points based on how well he 'played' the game, which involved answering the phone and working out 'variable solutions' to each call. No one has mentioned the 'game' in quite some time and Tuley seems content to live in his office, occasionally order out for pizza and man his station.



tuley
PRISWINKLE



norman
BOWSER

Norman Bowser is a role player who made good and realized his dream. He started out as a freelancer and began to pump so much HackMaster material into the Hard 8 offices that he was eventually asked to come on board. A few years ago he replaced Earl Slackmozer as the editor of HackJournal magazine and has been doing a bang up job of scratching the 'hack-n-slash' itch for thousands of fans. Gary has become so comfortable with Norman's writing ability that he has sanctioned all of Norman's material as 'official' Hackmaster material (even though Gary rarely reads Norman's work as of late). Norman has a long standing rivalry with Bitter Stevil. Norman cut Stevil's column from HackJournal soon after taking the helm.

timmy
JACKSON



Eight year old Timmy Jackson is Gary's youngest son. He is also the newly installed chief developer for the **SpaceHack** sci-fi roleplaying game. He had been responsible for development on the superhero 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 Bee'* during World War II.

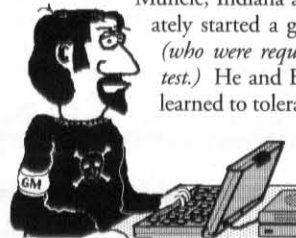
His unit was involved with building airstrips, following the Marines as they island-hopped across the South Pacific.

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.)



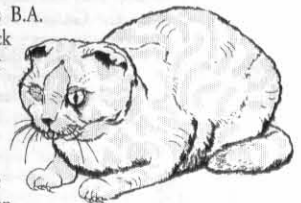
colonel
PROWLER

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 **Mouthier**) 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 hoard.





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 DWYER

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.

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

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.

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 known to excuse himself to use the restroom and never return. No one seems to mind though.

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 "Taking Out the Trash". Cody refused to identify his attackers and has largely dropped out of sight - occasionally popping up to fill in an empty seat. He's listed on the Gamer Temp Corps database.



cody WINKLE



logan FOREMAX

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 pretentious 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

HAWG WALLER'S KICKSTAND PALACE

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

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 burglar

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 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.

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



whitey MORAN

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.

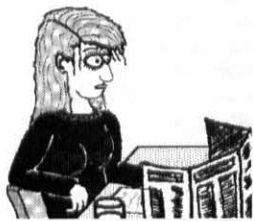


sheila HOROWITZ

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

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.



PATTY'S PERPS

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."

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



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.



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 fambelt 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.

"Hoody Hoo, Sergeant, Hoody Hoo!!"

Gomer Pyle giving Sergeant Carter the 'signal'

It seems every letter or email we receive ends with one or more questions regarding KODT. One particular question which people seem to ask a lot is, "Where did Hoody Hoo come from and what does it mean?"

The phrase has become something of a verbal high-five for gamers everywhere since Bob first uttered it on the pages of KODT (KODT Issue#5: *Spaced Out!*). It's also become the warcry for *Kenzer and Company* at conventions over the past year (much to the annoyance of other exhibitors). For lack of anything else to ramble about this issue, here is a short history of "Hoody Hoo!"

First, of all, I simply borrowed the phrase. It's from one of my favorite episodes of the old TV show, *Gomer Pyle*. Since many of you probably don't share my fondness for the old sixties sitcom let me describe the episode. In it, Gomer and Sgt. Carter have been dropped off alone in the wilderness as part of a survival exercise where they have to live off the land for five days and avoid being captured or being reduced to surrendering from lack of food and water. In one scene, Sgt. Carter instructs Gomer to give him a 'signal' (a birdcall) if he sees anyone coming as he sneaks into observe the enemy.

Moments later the audience hears Gomer's shrill voice yelling out, "Hoody Hoo, Sergeant, Hoody Hoo!" Years later during a session of AD&D a buddy of mine, (playing a thief about to steal some horses from a band of soldiers camping along a forest road) asked me to signal him much the same way - by doing a birdcall if I saw anyone coming. When the DM informed me the guard was circling back in the direction of the thief I blurted out, "Hoody Hoo, Balin, Hoody Hoo!" It got a big laugh and after that it became something of a running gag for the group.

A few years later, while attending *Ball State University*, my friend Lew Herring (the inspiration for the character, Bob, by the way) and

I discovered it was great fun to climb up a tree in the Quad and hide in the branches just before night classes let out. As small groups of students made their way back in the dark to their dorms they were apt to hear, "Hoody Hoo!" coming from the branches overhead. (We later added more birdcalls to the list such as "Booob Whittttt", "Whoooooperwiiiiiiiiiii" and the ever popular, "Caw! Caw! Caw!") The result was usually some very startled, if not agitated students. One night a perturbed frat rat tried to pelt us out of the tree with rocks. On another night after belting out a hearty, "Hoody Hoo!" as two girls passed beneath us, we heard one say to the other, "Don't pay any attention to them! They do that EVERY night!" Soon afterwards, the ritual ended and we moved on to other things.

It was only later during games of *Gettysburg™*, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich™* and *Axis and Allies™* that I began to use the phrase as my own personal, "rebel yell" to taunt the enemy. If you want to provoke someone into flipping a table try yelling "Hoody Hoo!" at them everytime you kill one of his armies. It's a sure bet.

Anyway, when I first had Bob utter the phrase in the comic strip it was meant to be an inside joke among myself and my old friends. I never dreamed that a few years later I would be able to walk through an open game room at GENCON and hear someone yell it out and high five a fellow player because they just racked up some experience points and treasure!

Maybe that's why it's contagious! It reminds us that games are supposed to be fun. Well, till next issue - good gaming!

Jolly R. Blackburn

October 5th, 1998

"Damn!! She's beautiful!! And she plays GURPS?? I think I'm in love!!"

Joe Cirillo of Central Park Media commenting about 'Tasha'

It began innocently enough at GENCON a few months ago. Brian Jelke and myself were chowing down on hamburgers at a local eatery outside the convention hall when I heard someone call my name. I turned to find Paul Lidberg (Mr "Crunchy Frog Enterprises" himself) sitting at a table behind me.

"Jolly!! I've got an idea for something to put in KODT!! You HAVE to do it!! Picture this — an ad that reads, 'Russian Women seeking Gamers like You!' with a 1-800 number at the bottom!!"

I nearly choked on my hamburger as I began to chuckle. It WAS a funny idea. I pulled out my notepad and scrawled a few notes to remind myself.

"Do it!" Paul added, "I bet you'll have people who don't realize it's a joke and try to call!" I really doubted that would happen. Readers would obviously see it for what it was - a joke. Just another example of what KODT is all about — Gamers poking fun at themselves.

Well, the verdict is in. Apparently Paul was right. As soon as the issue the ad appeared in hit the streets we began receiving reports that people were attempting to call 1-800-GAME LOVE. When the number didn't work, a few determined readers even E-mailed me asking for the correct number. Another person called to get more information on New Horizons, Inc.

At a store signing recently, a fan opened up KODT #24 to the ad and showed it to me. "Is this a real ad or a put-on!"

"It's a joke!" I replied.

A look of utter disappointment swept over his face as he turned to his buddy. "Dude!! Tasha ain't real! I'm heartbroken!"

I felt a twinge of guilt for letting one of our readers down. Did I say 'one' of our readers? What about all those letters? How many other fans had been taken in only to have their hopes cruelly dashed and broken by getting a "the number you have dialed is not in service" recording?

I knew I would have to rectify things and tell everyone that the ad was fake. More importantly, I knew I had to make sure that blame was attributed to the right person.

Paul did it!

Jolly R. Blackburn

November 5th, 1998

BEAUTIFUL RUSSIAN WOMEN LOOKING FOR GAMING PARTNERS!

Tired of FLAKING on the
Random Relationship
Encounter Table?

Get-why because you've
LOST the
Game of Love one
too many times?!

Maybe you need
a new GAME PLAN!

In this new manual, THOUSANDS
of beautiful, single and
intelligent RUSSIAN WOMEN are
actively seeking AMERICAN
MEN who share their love
of playing GAMES!



Do you feel like you've been on an ENDLESS QUEST searching for
the love of your dreams? Perhaps Mrs. Right is just a phone call
away. That's right! Using a major credit card and your telephone card
could be calling in one of the thousands of beautiful RUSSIAN
WOMEN like Tasha who have been specially selected for our new
"Women Who Game!"

So what are you waiting for?
Now the dice and let nature do the rest!!
New Horizons, Inc.
1-800-GAME LOVE

Please fill the Order you need to order Catalog RUS-LUV-100

THE FIVE STAGES OF DRINKING & GAMING

STAGE 1: It's 11:00 on a weeknight, you've had a few beers. Someone suggests you play a little D&D. You get up to leave because you have work the next day when one of your friends rolls a CRIT!! One of your UNEMPLOYED friends. Here at stage one you think to yourself, "Oh come on, this is silly, why as long as I get seven hours of sleep (snaps fingers), I'm cool."

STAGE 2: It's midnight. You've just raided the Halls of the Mountain King and had a few more beers. You've just spent 20 minutes arguing against female dwarves. You get up to leave again, but the group just encountered a Blue Dragon. Someone hands you another beer, and now you're thinking, "Hey! I'm almost at 5th Level! What am I working for anyway? These are the good times! Besides, as long as I get five hours sleep (snaps fingers) I'm cool."

STAGE 3: One in the morning. You've abandoned beer for tequila. You've just spent 20 minutes arguing FOR female dwarves but insist they DON'T have beards!! And now you're thinking, "The hobgoblin waitress likes me! She wants me bad!" At stage three, you love the world. On the way to the bathroom you hug the GM. You get drinking fantasies. (like, "Hey fellas, if we bought our own bar, we could live together forever and play D&D every day! We could do it. Tommy, you could cook.") You know you should get up and leave so you can get some sleep but then you decide, "Oh, come on, come on now. As long as I get three hours sleep...and a complete change of blood (snaps fingers), I'm cool. Besides, the group needs my Fighter-Thief to explore the Sixth level of the dungeon!"

STAGE 4: It's two in the morning. You just punched out your best friend because he touched yer dice. You ARE a female dwarf! You decide it's time to go home but first you have to use the bathroom. This time on your way to the bathroom, you shove the GM and scream, "You want some of me?" because you think he's 'looking at me funny!' Then someone discovers a secret door in a side passage. "Well...as long as I'm

only going to get a few hours sleep anyway, I may as well....STAY UP ALL NIGHT!!!! Yeah! That'd be good for me. I don't mind going to that board meeting looking like Keith Richards. Yeah, I'll turn that around, make it work for me. And besides, as long as I get 31 hours sleep tomorrow I'm cool."

STAGE 5: Five in the morning. After unsuccessfully trying to duct tape the legs back on the kitchen table (Someone unwisely suggested your female dwarf was a tramp!) the group decides to migrate over to Harry's house to continue the game. He has a table and besides, he has to get up at 8 a.m. anyway to go to work. He'll appreciate a little gaming before clocking in. At this point, you're all drinking some kind of thick blue liquor, like something from a Klingon wedding. You arrive on Harry's doorstep and after pounding on the door and yelling, "Open up, Orc-Breath!" for five minutes his UNAMUSED father opens the door. You explain your presence on his doorstep. You chip a tooth on the doorstriker as he SLAMS the door in your face. "Sammy!", you hear someone yell, "Sammy has a gaming table in his garage!" On the way to 'Sammy's' you are pulled over by a state trooper whose attention was drawn to your vehicle because it happened to be dragging fifty feet of chain link fence behind it. (You vaguely recall someone saying, "Gates are for wusses!" earlier in the evening but you don't know why!) The police took away your dicebags before placing you and your friends in the holding cell but the joke is on them. You manage to improvise a set of 'random number generators' with a paper cup, a box of Chicklets gum and a Sharpee marker. You resume the game and by the time your parents arrive to post bail you've managed to reach 6th Level AND acquire a Ring of Invisibility from a mouthy Half Orc!!

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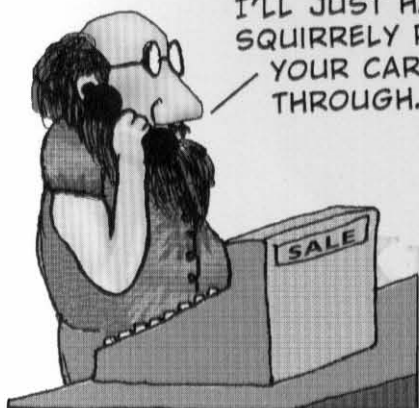
One player represents the bone-crushing invasion forces of the Republican Third Guard. The other player represents the home guard of Kuwait. Average playing time: 3 minutes



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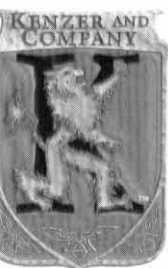
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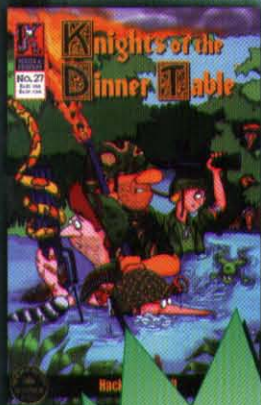
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