

K nights of the Dinner T able®

TALES FROM THE VAULT VOLUME TWO

By Jolly R. Blackburn

Cover by George Urbanic

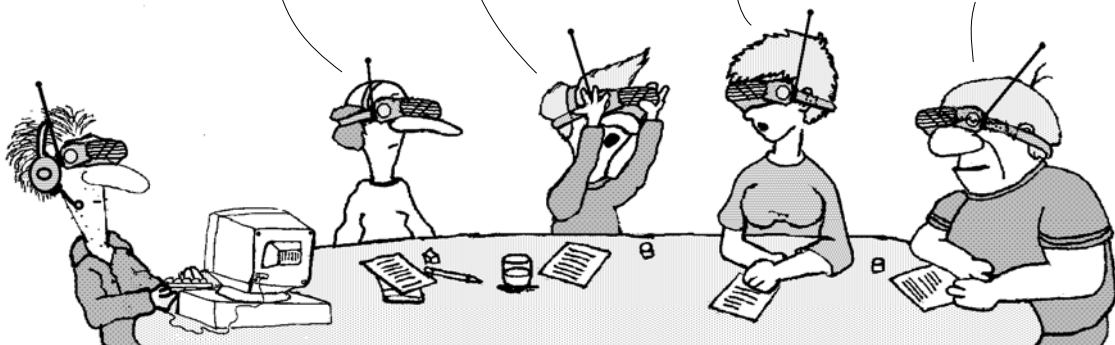
Sample file

HEY THIS **BLOWS!!** THE **ORCS** IN **VIRTUAL HACKMASTER** ARE ALL JUST **CARBON COPIES** OF EACH OTHER. ALL THEY DID WAS FLIP THE HEADS AND CHANGE THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS. WHAT KIND OF **CRAP** IS THIS?

WHEN **GARY JACKSON** WAS AT **HACKCON** LAST MONTH SOME **JOKER** STOOD UP AND MENTIONED THAT. **GARY** CLAIMED THEY'RE **SUPPOSED** TO BE THAT WAY. THE **ORCS OF PRAX** HAVE APPARENTLY PERFECTED THE **CLONING PROCESS**.

WELL, THE **KOBOLDS** MUST HAVE STOLEN THEIR TECHNOLOGY BECAUSE THEY LOOK **EXACTLY** LIKE THE **ORCS** ONLY **25%** SMALLER AND WITH A BIT MORE **GREYTONE!**

YEAH, THAT LITTLE EXTRA TOUCH OF **GREYTONE** MAKES **ALL** THE DIFFERENCE. THIS THING **ROCKS ASS!**





KENZER AND COMPANY

Knights of the Dinner Table Tales From The Vault Volume Two

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Subscriptions: Six month, one-year and two-year subscriptions to the monthly **Knights of the Dinner Table** magazine are available. Please see our website for ordering details and prices.

Other Merchandise: We have additional Knights of the Dinner Table compilations for sale including subsequent volumes of **Tales from the Vault** as well as the **Bundles of Trouble** trade paperbacks that feature the early issues of Knights of the Dinner Table magazine.

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Mailing Address:
Kenzer and Company
511 W. Greenwood Ave.
Waukegan, IL 60087

E-mail:
questions@kenzerco.com

World Wide Web address:
<http://www.kenzerco.com>

Submissions: We accept submissions for strip ideas, jokes, cartoons, etc. We are interested in running anything that other gamers and fans would enjoy. See our website for writer's guidelines. Electronic submissions preferred.

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"We have Vault!!"

- KoDT Spelunk Team Leader Steve Johansson

It just occurred to me as I was sitting down to write the editorial for this second volume of *Tales from the Vault*™ that in a very few short months, *Knights of the Dinner Table*™ will be celebrating its tenth birthday. (*The first strip ran in Shadis*™ #2 March, 1990) Ten years? Holy Toledo, what a wild ride it's been.

Obviously, I'm like a proud father and grateful to have played a role in creating something which seems to be generating so much laughter. These shoulders, however, aren't wide enough to take on ALL the credit.

First off, I was inspired to do my own strip by such greats as J.D. Webster of *Finieous Fingers*™ fame, Larry Elmore (*SnarfQuest*™), David A. Trampier (*Wormy*™), Jason Holmgren (*Joe Genero*™) and last but not least, Phil Morrissey (*Murphy's Rules*™). Besides providing me with countless hours of laughs they helped pave the way for a grungy, ragtag team of Knights who wielded dicebags instead of swords.

Over the years KODT has become something of a creative melting pot. Hundreds of people have put their thumbprint on the Knights — contributing to the beast. From countless story ideas which have poured in via mail/E-mail, to the army of fans who have badgered their local game shop to carry the comic book. (*and, on the flip side, all those retailers who have shoved a copy of KODT into the hands of a potential customer and ordered, "READ THIS!"*) the success of KODT rests largely on the shoulders of our fans.

And speaking of thumbprints and creative input the work isn't nearly as lonely as it used to be around here. Since KODT joined the ranks of Kenzer and Company and the formation of the KODT Development Team, the Knights have gone far beyond

anything I ever imagined. It's a great team and I'm grateful things fell into place as they have.

Incidentally, the reason you are able to hold a copy of *Vault II* in your hands is due to reader demand.

For the last two years, we've been sending the *Keeper of the Vault* (Steve Johansson) down into the dank subterranean hole he calls his 'basement' to do a page count on the strips in his archive to determine if we had enough material to go to press.

(*Steve's basement, by the way, was apparently carved out of living rock by a Chi-town clan of dwarven engineers. The ceiling is only five feet high and Steve is the only member of the KoDT Development Team with the passage-negotiating skills to explore the chambers without beaming himself on loadbearing support beams. A few years ago four interns wandered into the Vault looking for a box of Issue #4's of KoDT. They haven't been seen nor heard from since.*)

We were thrilled when, a few months ago, Steve emerged from the Vault with the joyous news.

"*I've done the math! We have Vault!*"

The strips in *Tales from the Vault* are near and dear to my heart. Almost all the strips in this compilation appeared in the back of magazines - which is exactly where the strip originally attracted its following and took root.

I hope you enjoy this second volume. Many thanks to all the unsung heroes who contributed (put their thumbprint) on the characters and storylines presented here.

Jolly R. Blackburn

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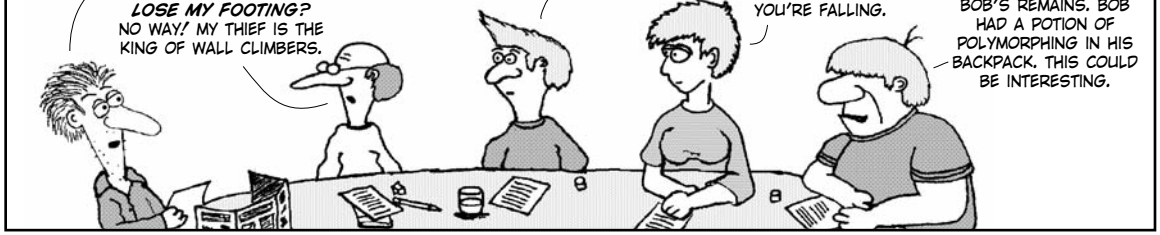
SORRY BOB, AS YOUR THIEF WAS TRYING TO CRAWL BACK DOWN THE CASTLE WALL HE LOSES HIS FOOTING AND FALLS. LET'S SEE... LOOKS LIKE IT'S A 7200 FOOT DROP TO THE BEAUTIFUL MARBLE-PAVED COURTYARD BELOW. THE CITY GUARDS SCOOP UP THE PUDDLE OF GOO THAT REMAINS AND DUMP IT IN THE MOAT. THE GATORS FEAST ON THE TASTY SUBSTANCE AND LIFE IN THE BIG CITY MOVES ON TURNING A BLIND, UNSYMPATHETIC EYE TO THE PATHETIC DEMISE OF YOUR THIEF.

AWWWH DUDE, YOU WERE ROBBED. THAT SUCKS. I'M GONNA BUY A KEG OF DWARVEN MEAD AND POUR IT IN THE MOAT IN HONOR OF MY POOR DEAD FRIEND. CAN I ROLL TO SEE IF I CRY? ANY EXPERIENCE POINTS FOR GRATUITOUS MOURNING?

GO OUT IN STYLE BOB. SCREAM *HASTUR* OR SOMETHING WHILE YOU'RE FALLING.

I WANNA WATCH AND SEE WHICH GATOR EATS BOB'S REMAINS. BOB HAD A PORTION OF POLYMORPHING IN HIS BACKPACK. THIS COULD BE INTERESTING.

LOSE MY FOOTING? NO WAY! MY THIEF IS THE KING OF WALL CLIMBERS.



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. KNUCKLES IS REALLY DEAD?? THIS IS SO TRAGIC. HE WAS THE BEST CHARACTER I EVER RAN. (SNIFF) I'M GOING TO LAMINATE HIS CHARACTER SHEET AND FRAME IT. I'LL NEVER FORGET KNUCKLES... NEVER!!!!

OH COULD YOU PASS ME ANOTHER CHARACTER SHEET?



WEEKS LATER...

SORRY SARA, YOU'RE UNABLE TO PICK THE LOCK. THAT'S YOUR THIRD ATTEMPT. YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS TO DO IT.

COME ON DUDE. KNUCKLES HAS BEEN DEAD FOR WEEKS. LET HIM GO. HE WAS JUST A CHARACTER FOR CRYING OUT LOUD.

BESIDES YOU HAVE *BARREL-FIST* THE DWARF NOW. HE'S A WONDERFUL CHARACTER, BOB.

LET THE DEAD REST IN PEACE, BOB.

SIGH - KNUCKLES COULD HAVE PICKED THAT LOCK IN NOTHING FLAT. WHAT A GUY. I SURE MISS HIM.



JUST A CHARACTER???

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WOULD EVER SAY SUCH A THING DAVE. HOW COULD YOU FORGET THE TIME KNUCKLES BELLY-CRAWLED INTO THAT DRAGON'S LAIR TO RETRIEVE YOUR BODY SO WE COULD RAISE YOU BACK UP? *HUH???*

AND YOU SARA... IT BREAKS MY HEART TO HEAR YOU GO ON AND ON ABOUT MY STUPID FIRST LEVEL DWARF BUT YOU NEVER HAD A KIND WORD FOR KNUCKLES. NEVER ANY PRAISE FOR THE KING OF WALLCLIMBERS WHO SAVED YOUR BUTT FROM THAT RABID WEREGOAT ON THE HIGHLANDS THAT ONE TIME.



AND WHAT ABOUT YOU BRIAN?? YOU *UNGRATEFUL WRETCH!!* WHO WAS THE GUY WHO SHIMMIED UP THE *DARK MAGE'S* STORMDRAIN TO STEAL THAT *RING OF HEFTY SPELL CASTING* YOU PRIZE SO HIGHLY?? AND WHO TRACKED DOWN AND BACKSTABBED THAT SAILOR WHO MADE YOU WEAR A DRESS AND DANCE WITH HIM ALL NIGHT?

I'M JUST GLAD KNUCKLES ISN'T HERE TO WITNESS THIS PATHETIC LACK OF RESPECT OF HIS GOOD MEMORY. *HMMRRRRFFF!*

NEXT WEEK...

AS YOU OPEN THE CASKET YOU ARE STARTLED TO SEE *KNUCKLES THE MASTER WALL CLIMBER!!!* HE WEEPS WITH JOY AT THE SIGHT OF HIS OLD FRIENDS. HE EXPLAINS THAT THE IMPACT OF THE FALL CAUSED THE MAGICAL POTIONS IN HIS BACKPACK TO SHATTER HAVING UNEXPECTED AND POWERFUL RESULTS. APPARENTLY, JUST AS THE GATOR WAS ABOUT TO DEVOUR HIS REMAINS, HE FOUND HIMSELF TELEPORTED MILES AWAY, WHERE HE WAS IMMEDIATELY CAPTURED BY THE *LIZARDMEN* THE GROUP JUST KILLED AND MADE A PRISONER. BOB YOU CAN PULL OUT KNUCKLE'S CHARACTER SHEET AND RESUME PLAYING HIM.

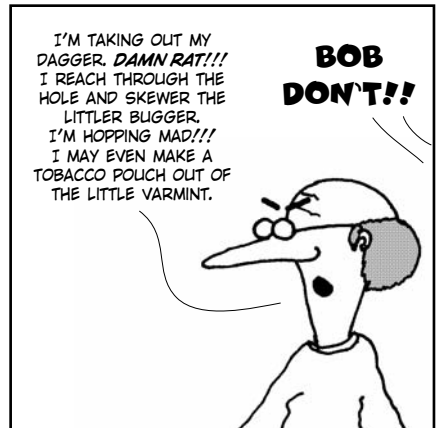
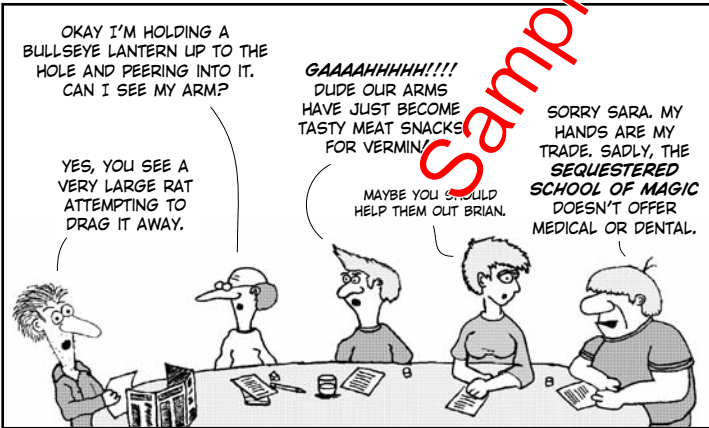
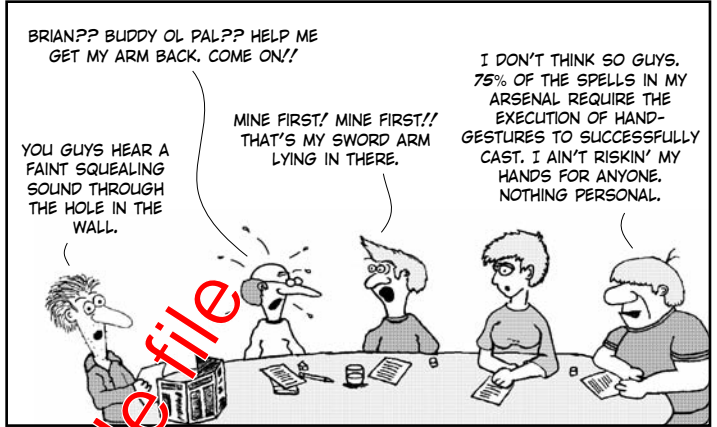
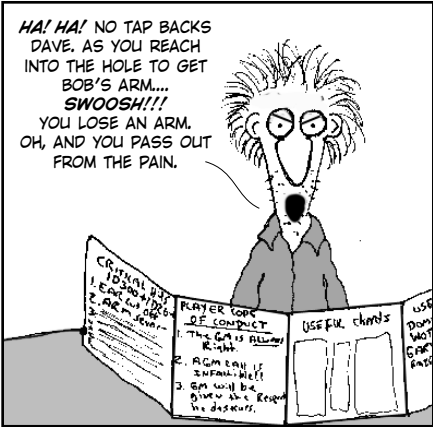
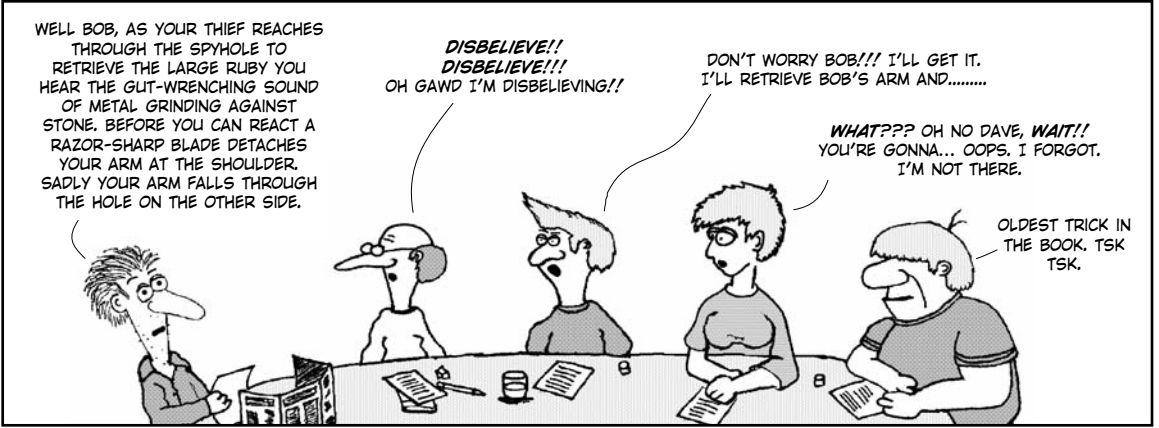
KNUCKLES!!!! (SOB) I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. HE'S BACK. OH HOW BEAUTIFUL. KUDOS, B.A. FOR COMING UP WITH SUCH A MOVING, AND TOUCHING PLOT DEVICE.

THANK GOD! PLAYING WITH KNUCKLES ISN'T NEARLY AS BAD AS HAVING TO HEAR ABOUT HOW GREAT HE WAS EVERY 5 MINUTES.

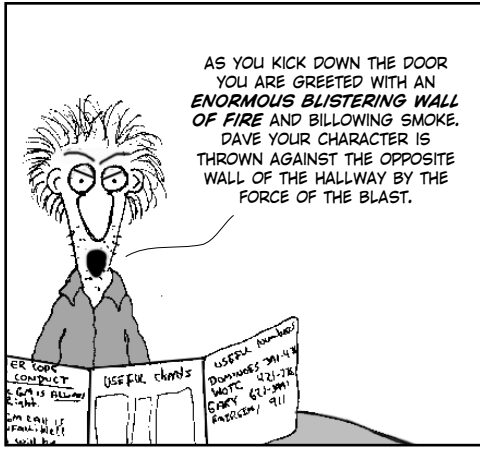
NORMALLY I NEVER BACK-PEDDLE ON A CHARACTER-DEATH. BUT POOR BOB WAS EXHIBITING THE CLASSIC SYMPTOMS OF *ADVERSE CHARACTER-LOSS SYNDROME*.

WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I HADN'T INTERVENED?

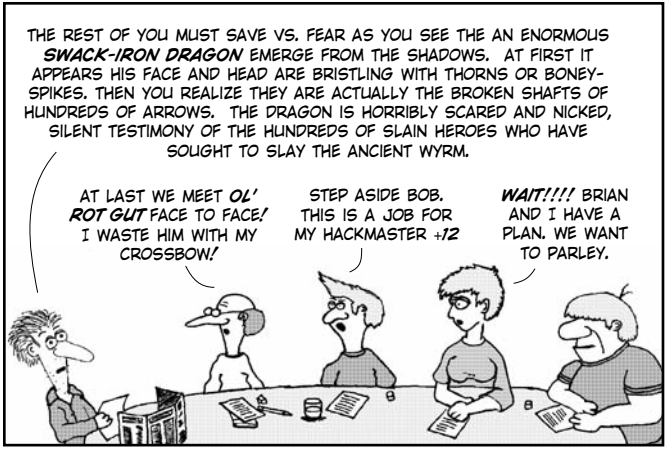




*Note: A brief explanation is in order for this strip and the one which follows it ("The Wine Test"). Longer versions of both strips have appeared in Knights of the Dinner Table. (see Bundle of Trouble vol. 3) When Dragon went on hiatus for seven months (between December 1996 and July 1997), it looked doubtful the strips which had already been turned in would ever be published. The material was lengthened and reworked for the comic book. Shortly thereafter, Dragon resurfaced and the original strips were run.

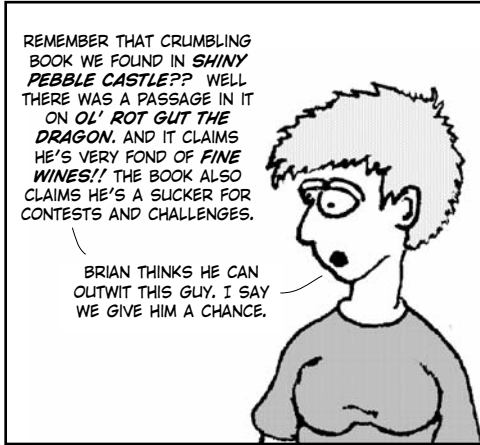


AS YOU KICK DOWN THE DOOR YOU ARE GREETED WITH AN **ENORMOUS BLISTERING WALL OF FIRE** AND BILLOWING SMOKE. DAVE YOUR CHARACTER IS THROWN AGAINST THE OPPOSITE WALL OF THE HALLWAY BY THE FORCE OF THE BLAST.



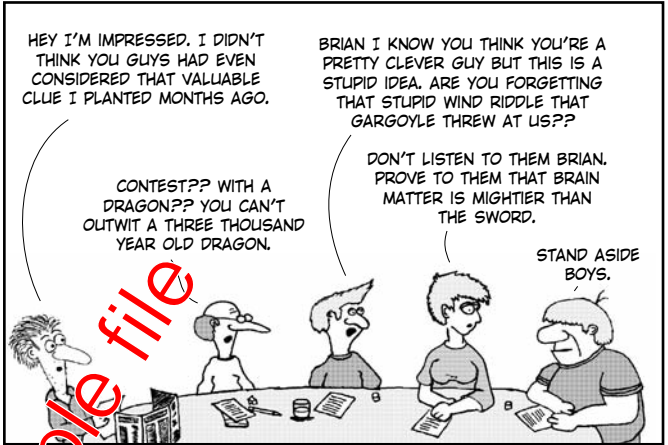
THE REST OF YOU MUST SAVE VS. FEAR AS YOU SEE THE AN ENORMOUS **SWACK-IRON DRAGON** EMERGE FROM THE SHADOWS. AT FIRST IT APPEARS HIS FACE AND HEAD ARE BRISTLING WITH THORNS OR BONEY-SPIKES. THEN YOU REALIZE THEY ARE ACTUALLY THE BROKEN SHAFTS OF HUNDREDS OF ARROWS. THE DRAGON IS HORRIBLY SCARED AND NICKED,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

AT LAST WE MEET **OL' ROT GUT** FACE TO FACE! I WASTE HIM WITH MY CROSSBOW!
 STEP ASIDE BOB. THIS IS A JOB FOR MY HACKMASTER +72
WAIT!!!! BRIAN AND I HAVE A PLAN. WE WANT TO PARLEY.



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

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



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

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

CONTEST?? WITH A DRAGON?? YOU CAN'T OUTWIT A THREE THOUSAND YEAR OLD DRAGON.

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

STAND ASIDE BOYS.



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

HERE ARE THE TERMS. FOR EVERY BOTTLE OF WINE HE CAN'T IDENTIFY BY TASTE, WE GET TO TAKE ONE LARGE SACK OF GOLD COINS FROM HIS HORDE. FOR EVERY BOTTLE OF WINE HE CORRECTLY IDENTIFIES, ONE MEMBER OF OUR PARTY WILL BECOME HIS WILLING SLAVE. **DOES HE ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE???**

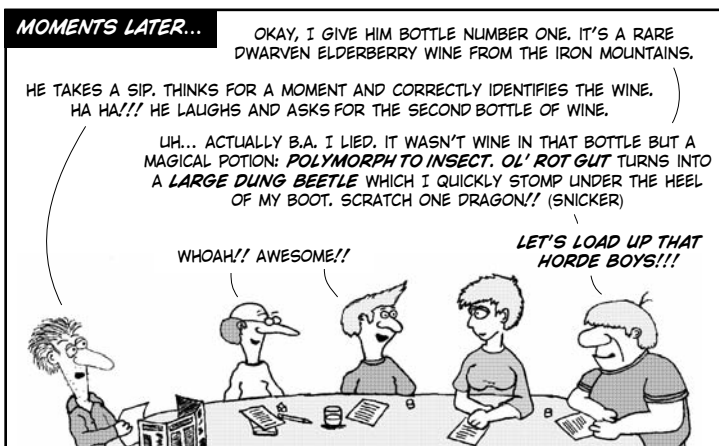


YES HE ACCEPTS. **OL' ROT GUT** LOVES THE IDEA AND SEEMS VERY EAGER TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE.

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

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

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



MOMENTS LATER...

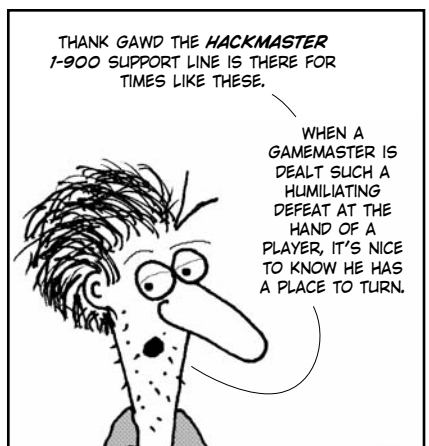
OKAY, I GIVE HIM BOTTLE NUMBER ONE. IT'S A RARE DWARVEN ELDERBERRY WINE FROM THE IRON MOUNTAINS.

HE TAKES A SIP. THINKS FOR A MOMENT AND CORRECTLY IDENTIFIES THE WINE. HA HA!!! HE LAUGHS AND ASKS FOR THE SECOND BOTTLE OF WINE.

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

WHOAH!! AWESOME!!

LET'S LOAD UP THAT HORDE BOYS!!!



THANK GAWD THE **HACKMASTER** 1-900 SUPPORT LINE IS THERE FOR TIMES LIKE THESE.

WHEN A GAMEMASTER IS DEALT SUCH A HUMILIATING DEFEAT AT THE HAND OF A PLAYER, IT'S NICE TO KNOW HE HAS A PLACE TO TURN.