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ABOUT THE COVER

This parody a classic Marvel comic cover is by the Fraim Brothers.

KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™ was accidentally created by Jolly R. Blackburn way back in 1990 as 'filler' for his small press magazine, **Shadis**. It was something of a *'creative burp'* and Jolly really didn't give it much thought. Perhaps that's why he was just as surprised as anyone that soon **KODT** was overshadowing everything else he'd ever done and that the *created* was now controlling the *creator*. The **Knights** have gone far beyond anything Jolly or the D-Team (David Kenzer, Brian Jelke, Steve Johansson and Barbara Blackburn) ever imagined. In 2006, Jolly was inducted into the **Hall of Fame**. Now, with over 235 issues and over 60 trade paper backs under their belts, it's been a wild ride and we look forward to seeing where the **Knights** take us next.

Knights of the Dinner Table MAGAZINE

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CRIES FROM THE ATTIC™

Editorial of a madman

SYMPATHY FOR THE JERK

I have been pretty upset with Brian Van Hoose's antics over the past issues, just like many of you. I told my husband that the **Knights** should boot him from the group, and give him the cold shoulder for his hand in breaking up Bob and Shee.

But, my husband had to go and humanize the guy and there goes all that great-feeling hate and superiority out the window! Now, I start to care about even the jerk. Because, you see, I start to understand that Brian is like many people, wired in a way that blinds him to the consequences of his actions. It's not that he doesn't care about his friends, in my opinion. It's that he feels as if he sees the bigger picture, when he is really oblivious as to how his shenanigans will come crashing down around him, possibly with innocent casualties in his wake.

And, let's face it. He has never truly forced anyone, including Bob, to do anything. If Brian had tried to mail Sara, do you think she'd have gone for it? No. She would not, because she has the inner strength to say no to stupid ideas most of the time.

Bob, on the other hand, has just as much blindness as Brian. He dives in to Brian's schemes with full faith in a guy who has failed him time and again. It is Bob's fatal flaw, perhaps, but maybe he has finally woken up, even if it is a bit late.

Brian, for all of his selfishness, his arrogance, his rudeness even, is an exaggeration of real people who struggle with ethics when get carried away, who get in over their heads and who think that by pushing through and willing it, they can make things turn out to their advantage. They believe this even in the face of overwhelming odds.

And now, **KODT**'s resident jerk (well, one of them) has gotten a wake-up call, as his scheming has blown up in his face, in spite of the fact that both of his schemes actually seemed to have worked. It's just that the cost for those victories has come at too high a price and now he is left finally, thanks to Pete, with the realization that it's not okay to do just anything to win. Sometimes, you have to be content with what life has given you and be thankful for what you already have. But, I also think many of us can relate to having times where you feel dissatisfied, and long for more out of life. And, when you think you can get something you are sure will better your life, most of us would go for it. Maybe not to the extremes Brian has, but, then he's a comic book character. In a way, he reminds me a bit of Lucille Ball. Remember on **I Love Lucy** how she would constantly cook up schemes that would blow-up in her face? Remember how determined she could get? Remember how she seemed to ignore the potential consequences of her actions to the detriment of Ricky, Ethel, Fred or herself? Her exaggerated qualities became charming and hilarious. I once got into trouble in a language lab while in Army training because when I was done with my lesson, I would sometimes watch Lucy with headphones on and I could not keep from laughing out loud.

I completely understand that some readers hate Brian. I have too, many times. There have been times I've wanted to see someone pop him in the nose. And, when I read that Sheila tackled him at **GenCon**, I was happy. He needs a good whooping once in a while. After all, he's a comic book character. In real life, I don't condone violence, even if I do imagine how satisfying it would feel to smash a pie in the face of an irritating person once in awhile.

But here I am pleading Brian's case anyway, a thing I never thought I would do. All of these characters (for the most part) have redeeming qualities. I love them (except maybe Newt). They brighten up my day and have done so for others over the years.

Here's hoping that Brian will learn a few things and take his greed down a notch or two for awhile anyway. He's too hilarious to be completely reformed.

Hope you enjoy the issue. Til next month.

Barbara h. Blackburn

Barbara Blackburn
July, 4 2016

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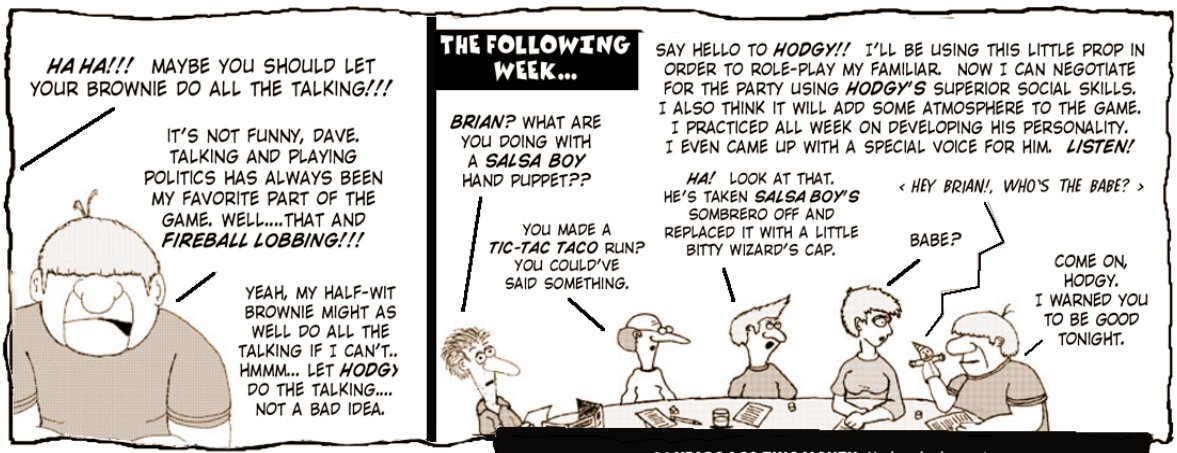
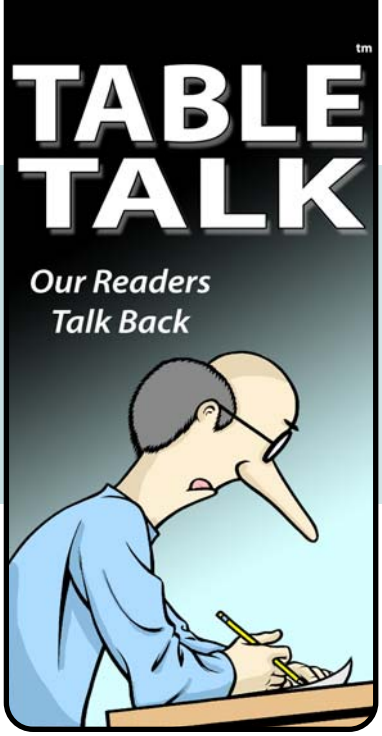


20 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH: Hodgy the brownie familiar first appears — in Dragon Magazine issue #231 July, 1996)



EDITOR'S NOTE: *The mail just never seems to stop. While we make every effort to read each and every letter, it is not always possible to give a personal reply. Even if your letter doesn't happen to be published or if you don't get a direct response, rest assured you are being heard.*

Remember, ***KODT*** *is an interactive magazine. We want you, the reader, to be involved. So keep your suggestions, thoughts and opinions (constructive and otherwise) coming. Opinions expressed by readers are not necessarily shared by the editor or Kenzer and Company. Please be aware that due to space considerations, some letters have been edited and/or trimmed. — Jolly*

Bob's Tattoo

I really enjoyed issue 233 but I'm disappointed we were left hanging without the answer to a most obvious question.

What the hell was the tattoo Bob got on his arm? Please tell me it was a d20. Maybe with Jolly's tag line, "May all yer hits be crits!" Or "Game On!". Seriously, I know I'm not alone when I say inquiring minds want to know.

Sandy F.

I'm a big believer in leaving some things to the readers' imaginations, Sandy. That's not to say, Bob's tattoo won't be revealed someday but the moment, I think it'll remain a secret. — ***Jolly***

From a New Fan

My name is Dan and I am a brand-new fan of **Knights of the Dinner Table** and of **HackMaster Fifth Edition.**

I have been a gamer for about 12 years or so. I came to RPGs while here in prison and it has changed my life.

I am part of a group of gamers who are dedicated to bettering ourselves and repairing the damage we have wrought in the past.

We are all drug and alcohol-free, participating in educational and rehabilitative programming, and playing the Game as much as possible. We come from all walks of life, from ex-military to ex-gangbanger.A friend of mine loaned me issues #215 to #230 of **KODT** and I was absolutely hooked!

"**Pwn Brian Express**" was MY game! It is the game I love the most. Not so much the PVP, though that is SO funny and fun, but the extended story encompassing so many personalities and history.

I just love it. A friend later hooked me up with a set of **HackMaster** core books and I found a new religion!

The reason I write this, other than to repeat all the accolades and kudos you must get on a daily basis, is to ask you a couple of quick questions, if it isn't a hassle.

I love your comic and hope to eventually get a subscription, but being in prison, I only make $15 every two weeks and almost all of my money goes to the phone so I can call my wife, my kids and my grandsons.

I am not asking for your help or charity. You run a business, not a NFP. No, my question concerns the fact that I would love to submit various articles, art, and comics in return for issues.

I do not seek payment, since all I can offer is your choice of filler. The problem is that I do not have any access to the internet, a printer, or even a typewriter.

All that I submit would be handwritten (printed clearly). I am currently committed to writing adventures for a friend of yours in the hopes of building a name for myself with the best system out there, but I also have several comics, extensive **Tales from the Table**, a modest gift for creating creatures and NPCs and a notebook filled with adventure ideas.

I literally have nothing except time to sit around and write. I also have access to some of the best artists I have ever seen.

If you would like to give me an assignment or

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How to Contact Us

via **Online Forum** — Just pop over to www.kenzerco.com and visit our discussion forums
via **E-mail** — Send your strip ideas, reader mail, back room fodder and questions to jolly@kenzerco.com
via **Snail Mail** — Or write to us at KODT c/o KenzerCo, 511 W Greenwood Ave., Waukegan, IL 60087
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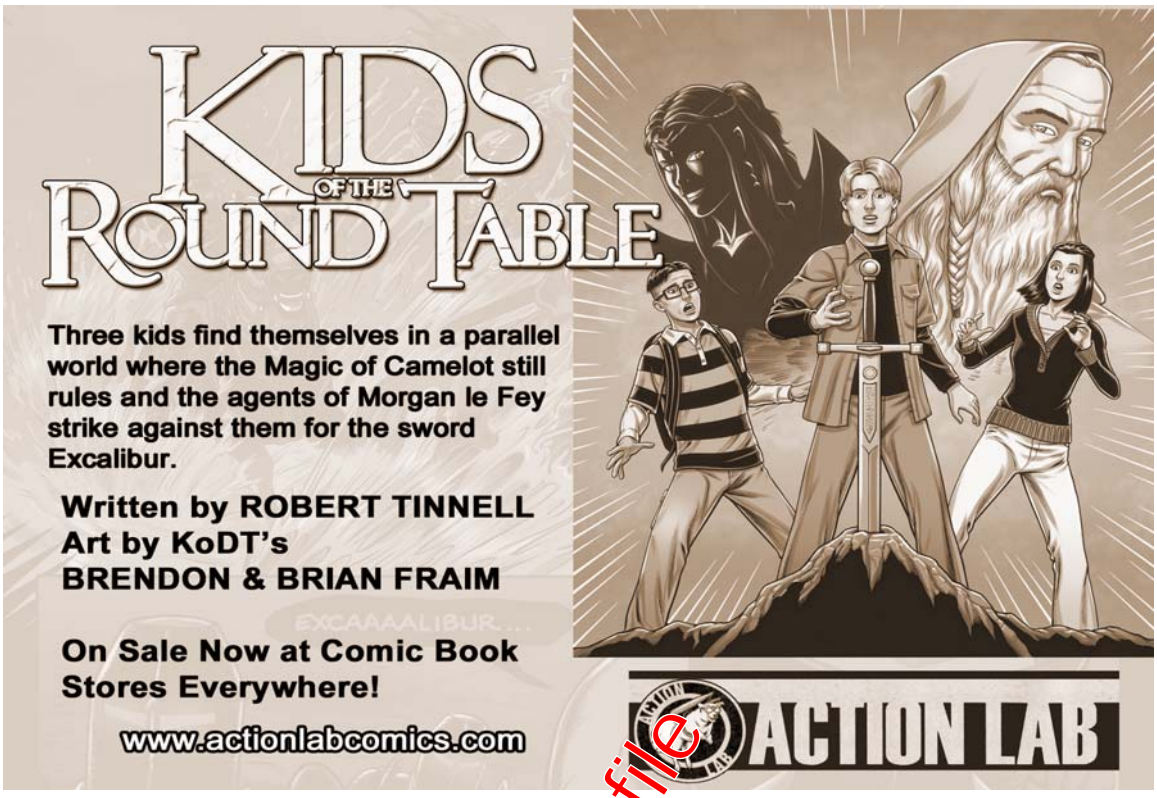


two in an effort to show my value as a writer, with not expectations on my part or promises on yours, I believe that I could make a valuable addition to your stable of minions, er, writers!

The minute I saw the **Knights of the Dinner Table** and **HackMaster**, I knew it was my goal to join your family, even if only as the "weird cousin nobody ever talks about."

I want to be there when the gaming world realizes what we have known all along, that **HM** is the best system. Well… what you guys knew all along. I'm just a Danny-come-lately.

I have enclosed a second letter with a list of questions for "**Ask Gary**."

All of the other contributions I have can wait until you (or another) gives me the 'okay' for printed-by-hand submissions.

Is there a Monster Creation guideline for determining crunch statistics, and most importantly, EP values for new monsters? I do not have any access to internet, as I mentioned earlier.

If it is not too much to ask, please pass on my respect and appreciation to Mrs. Blackburn for her extremely good **Bait and Tackle** contribution, as well as her **Deadly Trappings** and **Denizens of Tellene** articles.

She is a very talented lady. You are a lucky man. My beautiful wife has many awesome traits and talents, but she is not a gamer! Mrs. B's **Bait & Tackle** articles are surprisingly catchy and inspiring for as small as they are. Much kudos.

I very much appreciate your time and consideration, Jolly.

I have made many mistakes in my four decades, but I sincerely wish to give back and make other's lives just a little brighter, if I can. I am a huge fan (6'9", 260 lbs) and loyal to a fault. I count my blessings, big or small, and I am grateful for being awakened to **Knights of the Dinner Table** and Hackmaster. (B.A., Patty, Sara, and Hunter are my faves!)

Sincerely,

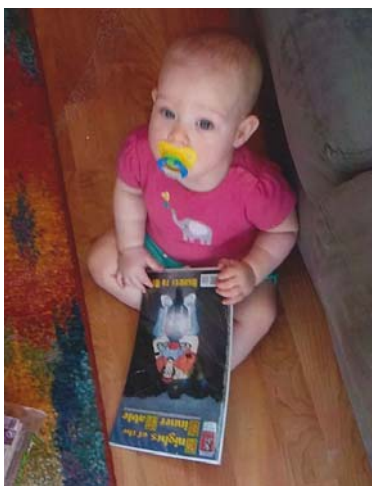
Dan

*Thanks for your letter, Dan. I decided to run it in **KODT** because I felt it was positive and full of coolness. Also because on social media over the past few years stories have been circulating about many prisons banning RPGs altogether — so that makes your letter all the more interesting.*

As for writing for KODT the door is open. Normally we prefer submissions in text documents but I'm willing to make exceptions for people in situations such as yourself. I'm sending you our writers' guidelines (for the rest of you they are available on www.kenzerco.com).

Generally anything of interest to gamers is fair game. Short adventures are fine. Guest editorials. Articles. And of course most of the regular features. Trading for product is fine as well and can be arranged upon acceptance.

*Good luck, and thanks for the lengthy hand written letter. They are so rare these days. — **Jolly***



A New KODT Fan

Kenzer Co Team, here is a picture of my daughter Leia, enjoying and issue of "**Knights**."

It was one of the first things my now husband gave to his then non-gamer girlfriend to help explain what this RPG-thing is.

Of course he now regrets his decision every other week, given that I have become the "Bob" of

Sample file

our gaming group.

Our daughter will hopefully continue the tradition. I read her "**Knights**" on a regular basis; hopefully she'll be more a "Sarah."

Thank You for all the laughs & great stories.

Sara Castlebury & family

KODT 232

A lot going down in this issue, and I'm not sure if I feel sorry for Bob or not. I definitely do, however, want to congratulate B.A. on finally growing a pair the way he slapped down Brian in defense of his girlfriend!

While we see the end of the relationship between Bob & Sheila going down in flames, I hope this will be the beginning of B.A. & Patty's going on to the next level!

Wm. Van Ness

Endicott, NY

KODT 233

HackMaster players kept acting like humans in **Dawg the RPG**. It could have been the **Knights** years ago, except they have played B.A.'s game enough to know better.

Trying to convince B.A. that a dog could figure out how to start and drive the van was really funny because there is a British book on teaching your dog to drive. It's for those times that you are too drunk to do it yourself and man's best friend will get you home.

I so wanted to see if Brian retains his title in **Sea Hack**. As a rules lawyer he's got a strategy against Troy to convince him that he's got a trick up his sleeve with "unescorted" convoys.

Got to love Sara's idea to level the playing field against the **Hacksmiths**. With most of them having played **Dawg,** they have a great chance to win even though the Hacksmiths have worked on the revised game.

Boy, rumors have increased the single damage point that Bob did to GJ to 200. What's going to happen after the Hack Off?

Randomizer

AISLE 17

Gary Jackson is going to be FURIOUS someone sold his vintage **Hacker Jacks**.

Not so much because it's introduced a major health hazard to the Con, but because he specifically wanted that set aside for his personal archive. Someone's in big trouble. Also, I notice that Brian is doing little to nothing to improve his reputation among the gaming community...

And it was really touching to see Crutch come to Bob's aid and just be a good friend to him. What a guy! I'd rather see Crutch at Brian's spot at the Knight's table.

Adamantyr

POOR JUAN

I really love it when something happens in **Knights** that appears of no real import and then, many issues later it comes around again and ends up somehow impacting the characters or the stories. Just so cool.

Too many instances to mention really, Jolly seems to be a master at doing this, but in 233 I got a good laugh when Jo Jo Zeke phoned Juan to inquire about a certain product in Aisle 17.

Funny because of course it was Juan last year who tried to tell Wes it would be 'wrong' to sent that expired product out the door.

And who gets confronted about it? Poor Juan.

Well at least he didn't rat out Wes.

Keep the issues coming gang.

Mike S.

FLGS

Mr. Blackburn, I am a big fan of yours and live in Paris. I buy my issues of **Knights** at a local game store here called DreamWej.

I was wondering if non-U.S. stores are eligible for your **FLGS** spotlight feature. You have many readers here by the way. Every issue I buy gets passed around many times. Often I must purchase the same issue again because they don't come back to me.

I also wanted to ask if you ever attend conventions in Europe.

Amadour A.

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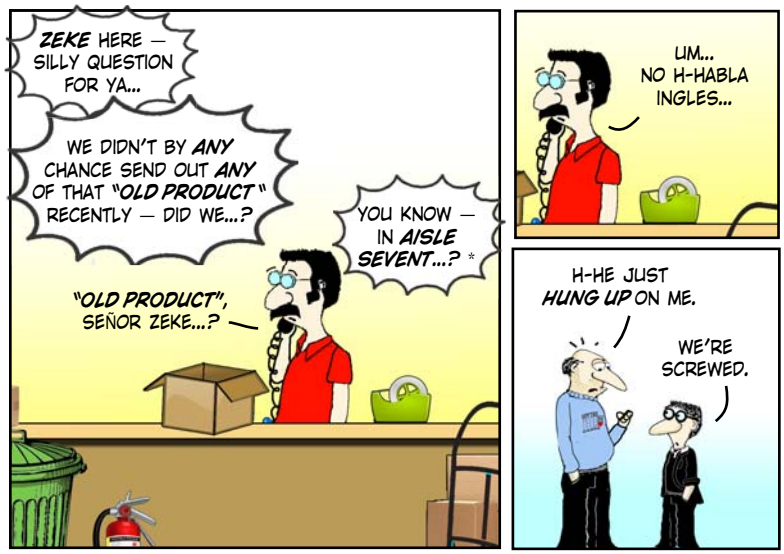

*Amadour, indeed ALL game stores no matter where they are located in the world are eligible to be spotlighted in **KODT**.*

As you have pointed out we have readers all over the globe, as well as readers who are well traveled. Not to mention gamers seems to have a natural curiosity about their brothers and sisters from other parts of the world.

*Alas, I haven't been to a convention abroad in several years. (I used to go to **Essen**). I'm not against doing so however if there is interest (and travel/lodging is provided). In fact, I'm very keen to do so.*

*Thanks for supporting our efforts abroad. Make those gamer friends of yours buy thier own copies of Knights of the Dinner Table by the way. ;) — **Jolly***

An Empty Chair

Jolly, can you run the Empty Chair for my friend, Neale Davidson...? Neale passed away unexpectedly recently.

He was an avid geek and a huge Star Trek fan among other things. I never met him personally, our acquaintance was limited to interactions on **Facebook** and various **Star Trek** groups on the net. We butted heads often.

Neale was notoriously political and opinionated. He enjoy nothing more than a good argument. Some people hated him for it but once you got to know him it was clear he was a good guy.

A family man who loved his wife and kids. He just happened to be passionate about all things geek. He'll be missed.

Part of my routine each day was checking in to see what he had to say and to see what new font he had designed.

Rex P.

Thanks for the letter, Rex. I had just heard of Neale's passing when your message hit my inbox. I actually have some history with Neale.

*Years ago his wife worked for my brother in West Lafayette, Indiana. We began corresponding on AOL (this was mid to late 90's). It was scattered over the years but eventually it picked up again on **Facebook** and he would routinely join in on discussions on my wall.*

*And oh yes, I am well aware of Neale's fondness for debate. We butted heads as well and often (He hated the new **Star Trek** movies and I love them much to his great disappointment.)*

I was sorry to hear about his passing.

Jolly

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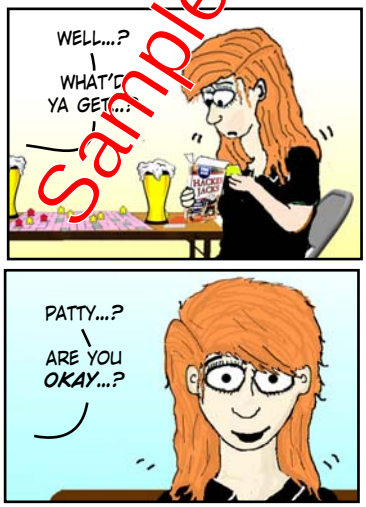


Patty's Prize

I squealed with joy when reading the last few panels of issue 233. The look on Patty's face — I know what this means. And it makes me very, very happy. Can't wait til issue 234.

I was wondering who might end up with it. I was so afraid that prick, Brian would get it in the ened. Thank you.

Jenny F. ❑

The Empty Chair

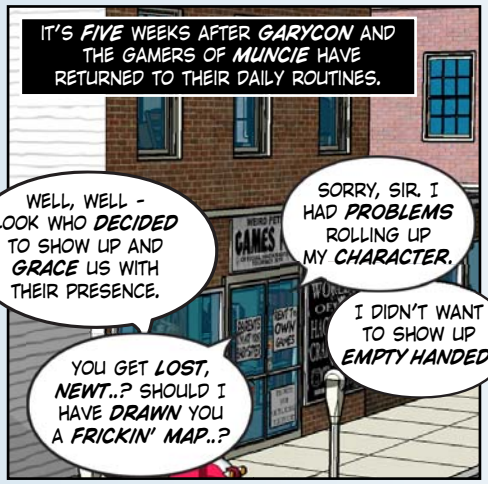
Eulogy for a Gamer

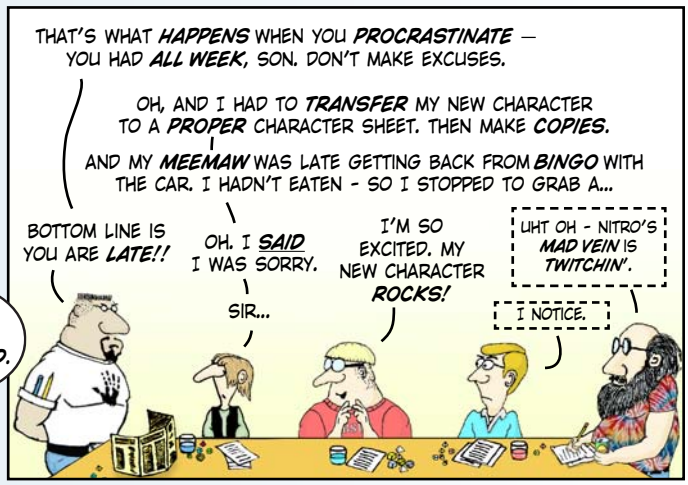
There is an empty chair,
at the table this day.
A hallowed place where,
a friend once played.
The roll of his dice,
my ears long to hear.
Or perhaps it would suffice,
if he should suddenly appear.
With character sheet in hand,
and a bag of
Cheeze-doodles to share.
All his friends would stand,
as he sat in the empty chair.
I hear his voice a-callin',
and it ties my heart in a knot.
For he cries,
"Though a comrade has fallen,
You must play for those who cannot."
We conquered worlds on the run,
he and I in the name of fun.
And as others may come and go,
I make both friend and foe.
But what I long for most,
is our past now long a ghost.

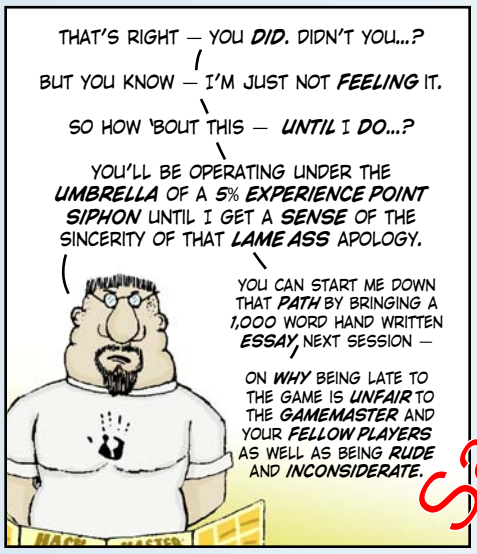
Neale Davidson
1971- 2016

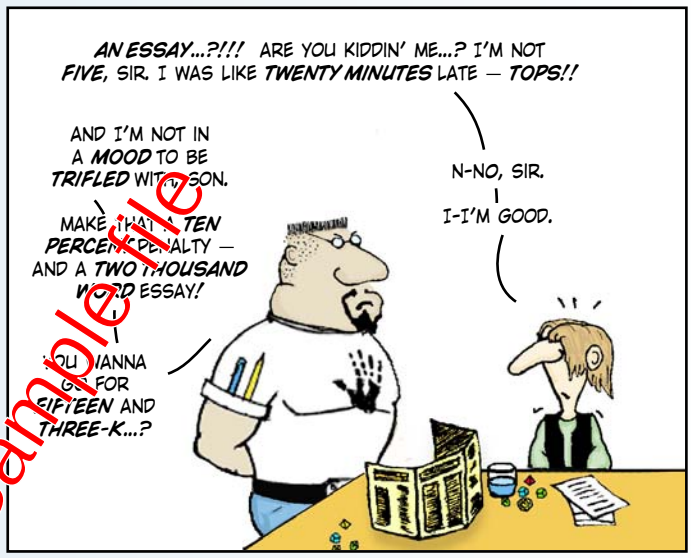
Secret Nemesis

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN









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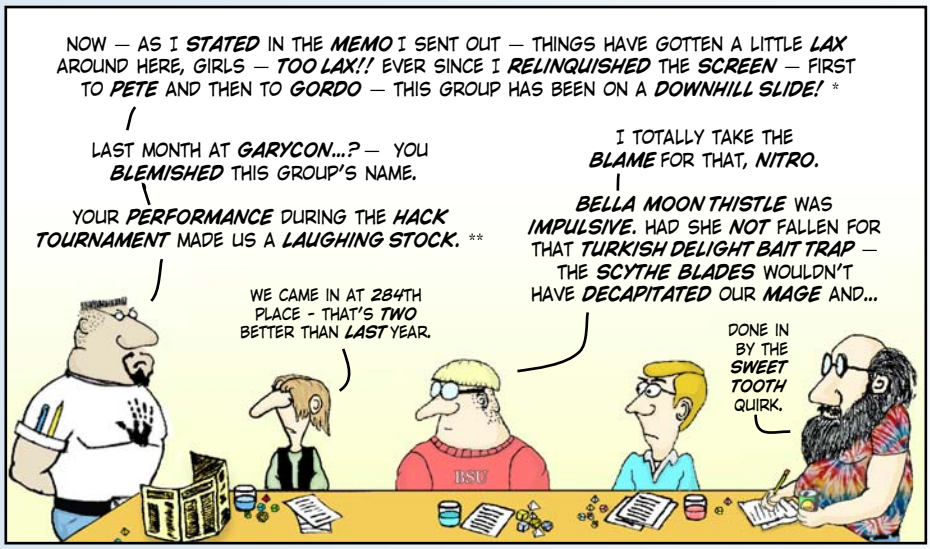

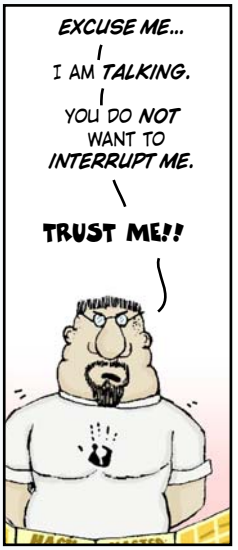

* See **KODT 159: The Summons** and **KODT 174: To the Minors —** Nitro was stripped of his credentials for his D-Day Invasion incident at Gary Con. After an appeal he is given them back, but only allowed to run games for the Pee Wees.
** See **KODT 233: Rumblings —** The Black Hands are in a tournament against the Flagstaff Strangler at Gary Con.

NOW, I DON'T WANNA **DWELL** ON THIS — I JUST WANNA GIVE YOU **FAIR WARNING.**

NOW THAT THE **HMA** HAS SEEN FIT TO **RESTORE** MY FULL **GAME MASTER CREDENTIALS** — IT'S A **NEW GAME**

I'M GONNA **WHIP** THIS **GROUP** BACK INTO SHAPE - AND THAT, LADIES, MEANS GETTING BACK TO **BASICS.**

AS WELL AS **GROUP DISCIPLINE.**

HACK MASTER

AS I SAID IN THE **MEMO,** I AM **REBOOTING** THE **CAMPAIGN.**

AND AS **LONG** AS WE'RE STARTING OUT ON A **FRESH SLATE** —

THIS IS A **PERFECT** OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GROUP TO **FINALLY** EMBRACE THE **LATEST RULE** EDITION OF **HACKMASTER.**

BALLS, I WAS ITCHIN' TO RUN **RASPUTIN** AGAIN.

HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO COMPLETE HIS **DUAL-CLASS TRAINING** AND PICK UP SOME WICKED **MATRIX-STYLE** HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT SKILLS!

OOO - I WANTED TO **SEE** THAT - **DODGIN'** ARROWS AND **BOLTS** WITH YOUR **SLO-MO** POWERS WOULD'VE ROCKED.

OH — I SEE WE HAVE SOME **SLOW LEARNERS.** PETE, STEVIL — YOU'LL EACH TAKE A **MINUS EIGHT** ON YOUR **FIRST** TO-HIT AND **DEFENSE** ROLLS FOR THE NIGHT.

CRAP

DAMN - HE'S IN **DICK GM** MODE.

NOW THEN — YOU WERE **TOLD** TO SHOW UP WITH **NEW** CHARACTERS IN **HAND.**

GOING WITH THE **HONOR SYSTEM** WAS **AGAINST** MY BETTER JUDGEMENT.

I **SINCERELY** HOPE YOU HAVEN'T **TAKEN** ADVANTAGE AND **DISAPPOINT** ME.

PLEASE PASS DOWN THE **COPIES** OF YOUR CHARACTER SHEETS YOU WERE **TOLD** TO BRING,

VERY GOOD — SO LET'S **REVIEW** YOUR CHARACTERS BY GOING DOWN THE TABLE.

NEWT - START US OUT.

THIS **SO** EXCITING **CHARACTER INTROS!!!**

NEW BEGINNINGS. THE **POTENTIAL** OF **NEW** BURGEONING FRIENDSHIPS AND BONDS...

I **BET,** SIR.

I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO LIKE WHAT I CAME UP WITH.

I **HATE** HIS CHARACTER ALREADY.

I WENT WITH A **MULTI-CLASS CHARACTER** THIS TIME OUT.

HIS NAME IS **DIRE BLADE.**

Sample file

"DIRE BLADE"...? - HRRRMPH.

KID'S PLAYIN' AN **ASSASSIN.**

AND **FIVE** WILL GET YOU **TEN** HE'S STILL **HOLDIN'** A **GRUDGE** OVER US CHOPPIN' HIS **BODY** UP FOR **TRAP BAIT** AT THE **CHRISTMAS PARTY GAME.**

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HE WAS SO **SORE** ABOUT - HE WAS **TWO** PAYMENTS BEHIND ON CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PARTY **RESURRECTION FUND.**

HE'S A **HALF-GREVAN THIEF** — UM,

NON-DISCLOSURE ON HIS **OTHER** CLASS AS FAR AS **ANNOUNCING** IT TO THE **GROUP,** SIR.

EVERYTHING'S **ANNOTATED** ON THE **COPY** I GAVE YOU.

HALF GREVAN?!!

COOL, HUH...?

UH HUH... YOU **NAILED IT.**

WE **BEST** BE ON OUR **TOES.**

SON — WHAT ARE YOU TRYIN' TO **PULL? GREVAN'S** AREN'T A **PLAYER CLASS!**

AND I'M NOT **AWARE** OF ANY SUCH THING AS A **HALF GREVAN!**

ACTUALLY SIR — HACKJOURNAL ISSUE **457** INTRODUCED 'EM.

HE'S RIGHT.

"TRUST ME ON THIS, SARA. I'VE PLAYED A LOT OF KUCHOOLOO AND THE ONE THING I KNOW IS **BURN THE BOOKS!"**

—Brian Van Hoose, ***Tales from the Vault #1, p. 27***