

The home of the hobby's number one press game is...

THE VOICE OF DOOM

230 March 29, 1954

Circulation 142

I'd like to take this opportunity to begin putting the details of a long and cherished hobby tradition...

To understand how things got started, you would have to know that I was born and raised in this hobby on Joan Michaleki's excellent site, The Europa Bulletin. Throughout its 110 issues, most of which I was involved in, the Bulletin was a weekly publication...

I despise the concept of "dropped" letters. Letters that are dropped up into it by other people, usually by the editor. One of the reasons for the excellent Europa Bulletin was one of the leaders in the North American hobby...

These days, there are very few places where a letter writer with any talent can be heard. And, as one of these, I will be happy to announce that he is going to be able to do so in the form of an occasional "drop" in the Gossip Column of the Europa Bulletin...

But, who will drop the letters into the Gossip Column?

The Voice of Doom is a journal of general hobby news published every now and then by Bruce Lacey. It is published by the Europa Bulletin...

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The deadline for all news contained herein is April 15, 1954.

I mentioned on page 1 that Eric Kane had cut some letters about my GMing from the latest issue of Anduin, and one of those cut was my own. Since the letter was replying to issues that had been brought up in Anduin, VD is not really the right place to discuss it, but since Eric didn't print the letter I'll say my piece here.

As anyone who reads Anduin knows, Eric does not approve of my GMing style. Recently, the debates there have degenerated, however, with Eric sadly out-argued and more or less backed into a logical corner, sullenly making wilder and wilder statements and backing them up less and less. He has a bad habit of attaching derogatory adjectives to my GMing, and then standing by them even after several of his readers point out how ludicrous they are. Olsen in the latest issue hints to Eric that perhaps "hypocritical" is not the most accurate term for my GMing, but Eric stubbornly clings to it. And why is the GMing in VD hypocritical, you ask? Because I call myself a "strict" GM, and yet I allow myself the colossal gall to call players colluders when they are about to lose! (I dunno, you tell me...) And later in the issue, in an entirely unrelated discussion, he throws in an entirely gratuitous "Maybe our nation has been taking hypocrite lessons from Bruce Linsey." Well, maybe I'm a hypocrite and maybe I'm not (I've certainly been called much worse!), but Eric's reasons for calling me one certainly leave more than a little to be desired.

And speaking of hypocritical, far be it from me to apply the term to Eric, but a couple of issues ago he stated that if he had not won the NEPTUNE game here, he would have sought (and believes he would have gotten) an irregular ruling. Yup, folks, that's right. Eric Kane, who calls me a hypocrite, will sign up for a game knowing full well that the GM is going to rule strictly, and then, upon losing, seek an irregular ruling because the GM ruled strictly! Fortunately, none of the other four players who were around at games and felt the same way. I'm sure that Pat Conlon, Ed Jedry, Bob Schrank and Mark Duarte are gratified to know that if Eric hadn't won, he'd be protesting the win of whoever had.

Even more importantly, the whole idea of declaring a game irregular because the GMing was strict is absurd. The day it happens will be the day that the "irregular" label will lose much of its credibility with many hobby members, myself included. I mean, what next? Games ruled irregular because the GM allowed black press? Because they were run on the week deadlines? Maybe Eric doesn't realize that that which is different is not necessarily wrong, but I hope most of us do.

And it gets better yet... One of Eric's other labels is that my house rules are "silly". I took most of a year to do those damn house rules and I disagreed with the criticism. The VD house rules he lists as "silly" include the provision for parenthesized orders, the rule allowing players to call for their game results as soon as the deadline has passed, and the rule covering conditional orders. None of these rules are at all "silly", in my opinion. But lastish of Anduin, there is Eric again calling my house rules "silly" and totally ignoring the all-important question of why. OK, well maybe Eric truly does believe that the above three rules are "silly", but if so I want to know why. And if Eric had come in Anduin only to make up inappropriate descriptions without backing them up, well, we can always move the debate to VD, eh?

I hope I don't leave anyone with the wrong impression. Eric is one of the best friends I have in this hobby. He and I have both enjoyed staying at each other's houses, and have shared many good times at cons and elsewhere. But his arguments on the topic of GMing are utterly lacking in logic.

I wouldn't make that claim about just anyone who disagrees with me on GMing, either. I am worlds apart from Peter Ansoff and Mike Burno, for instance, but they at least make their points well and are therefore much harder to refute in these debates.

Finally, since I'm on the topic of Anduin, I see in the last issue that my GMing is attacked for its lack of honesty by none other than Steve Arnawoodian. Considering the source, here is all the rebuttal that argument needs:

On to other topics (gee, this is a chatty issue, yes?): it occurs to me that some of the players on my standby list might be scanning the game reports each issue for mentions of their name. This is not necessary. When you are called to stand by in VD, you receive a special flyer with your copy of the issue, which gives you the names and addresses of all the players, and offers you a copy of my houserules and any info you may need about the game. You can't miss it. So sleep easy.

And, while I'm on the subject, the standby list in VD consists of the following people at this time: Peter Ansoff, Konrad Baumeister, Doug Beyerlein, Don Burd, Dave Carter, Jim Chatfield, Pat Conlon, Cathy Cuning, John Davies, Michael Ditz, Mark Duarte, Chardo Edison, Mike Ehli, Greg Ellis, Matt Fleming, Mark Frueh, Dan Gorham, Ty Hare, Bob Howerton, Randal Husk, Edmund Jedry, Mark Johnson, Mike Jones, John Kador, Eric Kane, Chuck Kaplan, Matt Kazur, Mike Kettman, Steve Knight, Larry Lansing, George Leritte, Jerry Lucas, Jim Makuc, John Morris, Brian Orloff, Pat Pakel, "Jane Proskin", Jeff Panches, Michael Quirk, Rick Ragsdale, Paul Rauterberg, Rob Schmunk, Bob Weeney, Don Williams, Rob Wittmond, G.E. Blender, Ken Hager, Dan Young, and Bob Foote. That's a total of 47, not counting the ringers, which is still the longest standby list in the hobby, unless Andy Lischett has passed me again. Anyone who wants on or off should let me know. Standbys play for free, and receive three free issues upon finishing out their position.

Alas, it is very hard to get into a VD game as a standby, what with 47 of you willing to fill in for 24 positions which are mostly occupied by very reliable players anyway. Anyone on the standby list who doesn't want to be called into a particular VD game should let me know. Any VD player who doesn't want a particular standby called into his game should let me know. Such requests will be held in confidence and honored within reason.

The choice of which standby I will call for any given position is, of course, up to me (I don't follow any set pattern like some other GMs do), but I do take many different factors into account. If I am aware that a player is eager to get into a VD game, I will be likelier to call him. There are a couple of people on the list who are in the status of "as a last resort only" -- Paul Rauterberg and Konrad Baumeister, which means in all probability that they will never be called. I take into account whether you are already playing in a VD game, and whether any of the players in the game needing a standby live near you, and whether, as far as I can determine, you are already in other games with any of the players. Any of these will decrease your chance of being called for the position in question. Also, once you have played in or even stood by for one country in a given game, you can never be asked to stand by for a different country in the same game, under my houserules. However, I do have a practice of repeatedly calling the same person over and over for the same position until he gets in, as there is no harm in this and in fact it can be beneficial as the person may by then have some idea of where that country stands in the game. I have seen some pretty screwy practices used by other highly-regarded GMs in calling standbys: Michalski once called on someone to stand by for both Italy and Austria in the same game at the same time, and Larzelere once called a player into the game after he had been eliminated as a different country. You won't find that going on here! Nor will you ever see a country go into Civil Disorder for more than a season. The reasons for this were given in a BRUK Speaks editorial in VD #51. GD is harmful to the game and I would prefer to call a delay while a replacement player is found, even for a one-center power.

Standbys in VD are welcome to submit press, proposals, votes, etc.; but whatever they send in will be ignored if the original player returns. I still recall with annoyance an instance in Swedish Roundabout where one Bernard Sampson was called as a standby for an NMRing Dick Martin. Martin returned the next season, but Sampson was "in" the game long enough to have printed a snide press release referring to me as a win-only player or some such. (I ended up as part of a two-way draw.) So in VD, I won't print standby press unless the person actually lands the position. However, any player who has played in a given game here may continue to write press for that game even after he is no longer in it. See RIGEL last issue, with press from Bob

Sweeney, e.g. (Did I really leave the "S" off his name in the standby list on the previous page? Sorry 'bout that, Bob!)

There is also a policy in VD that, after a player has NMRed, other players (as well as the standby) may find out from me before the next deadline whether or not the original player has returned. I explained the reasons for this policy back in VD #63, but to quickly summarize, the standby is doing a favor for both me and the other players, and may not want to go to all the effort of negotiating if he isn't going to get the position anyway. This practice violates the usual GMing procedure of not ever revealing whether a player has orders on file, but I view it as preferable to making the standby (and the other players) wonder who will be playing the position next season. So if you NMR here, be forewarned!

Standbys who fail to answer a call are, in general, removed from the standby list, as are players who drop out of a game. Basically, my reasoning on that matter is that I just want reliable people there, so that I can avoid delaying a game to fill a vacated position.

And speaking of players who drop out of a game, VD has a policy of publicizing the names of such players here from time to time, to warn other GMs and/or co-players elsewhere that these people may be somewhat less than reliable. If you drop out of a VD game, your name remains on the Slightly Blackish List for a year, unless you write an apology/explanation for your drop. Players who have dropped out of a VD game over the course of the last year are Brent Bennett, Dave Spector, Peter Blitstein, Mike Frick, Peter DeLuca, and Dave Newell. That's way too many! Bear in mind also that you may lose the balance of your sub without refund if you drop out here. If you cannot play on, for any reason, send in a resignation with a final set of orders. It makes things much easier for me and for the other players.

So now you're all up to date regarding VD's standby policies!

Since I'm in one of my more loquacious moods, I think I'll take the time to comment further on Bob Olsen's letter in the latest Anduin. Bob suggests that all players new to the hobby be forced to play their first game in VD, much as the Army sends its new recruits to a tough boot camp to weed out the undesirables. He pictures me as the Lou Gossett of postal Diplomacy, wearing one of those Smokey Bear hats, waving a set of disallowed orders and screaming, "Hey, college man! Spain done got two coasts!" and suggests that I be hired as hobby drill instructor. He then goes on to say that I GM for ferocious competitors like myself, who want to squeeze every possible advantage out of their positions, even that which can be massaged out of that vast reservoir of detail known as the Houserules.

Well, Bob's comments are extremely funny and mostly on the mark, though I prefer to think that I'm GMing for that segment of the hobby who want a reliable, accurate, and strict GM (that last descriptor being the bugaboo for many players). However, if a player is smart enough to read the houserules and gain some advantage from this info, then I say more power to him. Really, though, I should elaborate just a little on my philosophy regarding the play of postal Diplomacy.

When you sit down to play an across the board game, you don't want to spend more than a few minutes, if that, learning the rules. You're just there for an hour or three worth of fun, and you probably won't remember this particular game for more than a few days anyhow.

The same is not true when you sign up for a Game of Postal Diplomacy. Now we are talking about a major event in your life. Your Game may take over two years to finish. This is a very significant portion of your entire life -- hell, some narriggas don't last that long these days. You should carefully consider and contemplate this Game you are about to undertake for at least a few weeks in advance, to make sure you're not rushing into an unsuitable long-term arrangement. And upon signing up, you should have no objection whatsoever to spending an hour or two reading the Rules for the Game you are going to be playing for the next two years. In fact, you should want to do this, since this Game will be one of the most important events in your short life. I myself am contemplating entering a Game at some point within the next two or three years, and believe you me, when I do, I am going to take the time and effort to read the Rules. That's my opinion, and I'm dead serious.

"Silly"... "inconsistent"... "hypocritical"... "honesty and fairness is flushed down the toilet"! VD once again presents its raison d'être: the GAMES! Without NMRs, of course...

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O R I O N

1982Y

KAISER FALLS ASLEEP AS SOUTHERN ALLIANCE ADVANCES!

Autumn 1911

FRANCE: A Spa r GAS

Winter 1911

ENGLAND: Build F LVP

FRANCE: Remove A Bur

GERMANY: NBR! GM removes F Bal

ITALY: Build A ROM

RUSSIA: Remove A Pru

TURKEY: even

Spring 1912

ENGLAND (Ansoff): F Lvp-IRI, F Lon-WAL, F Swe-NWY, F NAT-Mid

FRANCE (Williams): A GAS S A Mar, A MAR S A Gas, F Por S ENGLISH F Nat-Mid (ann), F ENG S ENGLISH F Nat-Mid

GERMANY (Wittmond): F Bal H (NSU), A MUN H, A Bel S A Mun (NSU), A BER U, F BOT U, A SIL-Gal, A LVN S A Mos (NSU), A RUM U, F EDI U

ITALY (Howerton): A VIE S TURKISH A Boh (OTM), A Rom-TUS, F Nap-TYR, A TYO-Mun, A PIE-Mar, F Mid-POR (F SPA(sc) S)

RUSSIA (Beyerlein): A Mos S A War (d; r StP, OTE), A WAR S A Mos

TURKEY (Leritte): F LYO S ITALIAN F Spa(sc)-Mar (NSO), F WES-Mid (F NAF S), A GAL-War, A BOH-Sil, A Sev-MOS (A UKR S), A Arm-RUM (F BLA C)

Game Notes: Turkey wants it publicized that he voted in favor of the (illegal) concession to Austria.

Since Germany did not submit a removal order, his F Bal was removed in accordance with the VD house rule covering CD removals. In case anyone not familiar with my notation is not sure, the German units on the board are in the spaces which are capitalized. There are no German units in Bal, Bel, or Mos. OK?

Press:

ROM to CON: I do believe that the folks in Paris are getting emotional about this war. What on earth did you tell them to evoke such an outburst as appeared in the last press? Actually, it was the best bit of press I've read for a long while.

ROM to PAR: Cheap underwear, am I? We'll see who has your shirt before long.

MUNICH to TYROLIA AND BOHEMIA: So once again vast armies struggle in stalemate, here in the very center of Europe. Thank God for good German military engineering and the Bavarian Alps!

ROM to LON: I liked your bit of press even more. I thought I was reading Hornblower there for a moment. Hang in there. There will always be an England (or so someone once said).

TURKEY to TURKEY: Boy, you're a Turkey.

ROM to PAR: It is about time to start building the barricades for your defense. First Lisbon, then Marseilles, then...

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PEGASUS

1982Z

RUSSIA WINS! GERMANY AND TURKEY SURVIVE!

The PEGASUS game has ended in a win by concession for Russia. The proposal for this, made last month, passed unanimously. The game-end chart, cast of players, and final press all follow. Congratulations to Mike on a hard-earned victory, and to all the other players for hanging in there. Congratulations especially to John and Jeff for staying around till game's end. And thanks to Mark Frush for the standby orders which, it turns out, would not have been needed had the game continued. Endgame statements are due next month. NMR fees have already been returned (remember?).

Game-end Chart:

	1901	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	
AUSTRIA	5	5	6	7	6	8	9	7	7	6	Game: 1982Z
ENGLAND	4	5	8	9	8	6	6	5	4	3	Zine: <u>The Voice of Doom</u>
FRANCE	4	5	5	7	8	9	6	7	8	8	GM: Bruce Lindsey
GERMANY	5	5	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	
ITALY	4	4	4	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	
RUSSIA	6	6	6	6	8	10	11	13	12	15	wins!
TURKEY	4	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	

Cast of Players:

- AUSTRIA: Randal Nuck
- ENGLAND: Jake Halverstadt
- FRANCE: Jim Chatfield
- GERMANY: John MacFarlane
- ITALY: Mike Jones (out 1905)
- RUSSIA: Mike Meisner (won 1911)
- TURKEY: Michael Spink (resigned S 02), Jeff Panches

Final Press:

ANKARA: The Sultan awoke in his palace this morning and found to his surprise that he was still alive. Surprises do happen, even in Turkey.

LONDON to WORLD: These damned Conservatives keep taking over the government, and trying to stop English involvement in the war. Then, the noble Labour party wins it back. Homeland or death! We will win!

BRUK to PEGASUS: Thanks to all of you -- PEGASUS was lots of fun. Now, let's have some nice, juicy end-game reports from all of you, OK?!

PEGASUS is only the fourth won game in VD's history. The very first was Dave Claman's 18-center win as France, in the ECLIPSE game -- a game that was marred by both sloppy play and unusually poor GMing. The second was Ron Brown's win by concession as Italy in KEPLER. Then there came Peter Rittstein's mini-win as a one-center Turkey in the MILKY WAY game, but this was ignored by unanimous player consent and the game continued; therefore it doesn't count. The third win here was Eric Kane's 18-center Russian victory in NEPTUNE. And now Mike Meisner joins this elite corps -- way to go, Mike!

(But let us not be too quick to forget the Houserules' victory in SIRIUS, chuckle, chuckle...)

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Q U A S A R

1952AE

ERRORS COST WESTERN ALLIES GALICIA AND UKRAINE!

Spring 1910

- AUSTRIA (Orloff): A Ven-ROM, A Tyc-VEN (A TRI S), A Bud-GAL (A VIE S)
- ENGLAND (Glaspey): A MOS-Ukr, A STP-Mos (A LVN S), A Pru-DEN (F BAL G), F Bel-ENG,
A SIL S FRENCH A Gal, F Nth-HLG, F Nwg-NIH, F BAR H
- FRANCE (Burd): A Gal S ENGLISH A Mos-Ukr (ann), A Mun-TYO (A BOH S, A PIE S),
F LYC-Tus, F TYR-Ion (F TUN S)
- GERMANY (Howerton): A Gal S ENGLISH A Mos-Ukr (NSU), A WAR U, A BER-Sil, A KIE-Ber
- ITALY (Kettman): A TUS-Ven
- TURKEY (Sweeney): F NAP S AUSTRIAN A Ven-Rom, F EAS-Ion (F GRE S), A Rum-UKR (A SEV S),
A Bul-RUM (F ELA S), A Ank-ARM

Press:

- CON to PARIS: He barks like a dog, acts like a dog, moves like a dog...do you think!?
- LONDON to PARIS: What did I tell you? (As an ex-teacher, I'm tempted to say, "We're going to do this until we get it right...")
- CON to AUS: Hold until relieved (you can take a potty break later...).
- GERMANY: Der Kaiser is happy to announce that the once proud Imperial Armies are once again on the march.
- CON to FRA: Join a growing alliance. There's plenty of real estate to the North for grabs. There's a "force" in our alliance (it's called "momentum".) (Or ExLax if you prefer.)
- CON to GER: What is this thing that allows you to survive?
- LONDON to WORLD: After receiving another fatuous note from the Sultan, England's clever queen ponders her next move. "Does he believe we intended meekly to let him make Ukraina a base for Eastern depredations? Nah! We shall block any such designs! We think highly of our allies; we shall resist every dastardly attack; the banners of civilization -- France, Germany, Britain -- shall prevail!"

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R I C E L

1983K

YOUCH! THAT TERRIBLE FACE IS IN A TERRIBLE PLACE!

Spring 1905

- AUSTRIA (Knight): A BOH-Gal, A Tyc-VIE (A TRI S), A SER-Rum
- FRANCE (Hare): A BUR-Mun, A Gas-MAR, F Tyr-ION, F Wes-TUN, F Iri-MID, F Lvp-WAL
- GERMANY (Heintzman): A Edi-YOR, F Lon-NIH (F SKA S, F DEN S), A VEN-Tri, A Mun-TYO,
A PIE S A Mun-Tyo, A Ber-MUN (A KIE S)
- ITALY (Ellis): F Tun-TYR, A Nap-APU (A ROM S)
- RUSSIA (Kleiman): A Nwy-SWE, F Nth-NWY, A StP-MOS, A Gal-BUD (A RUM S), A UKR-Gal,
F SEV-ElA
- TURKEY (Reilly): F ANK-ElA, F Aeg-CON, F Ion-ADR, A Gre-BUL, A Smy-ARM

Game Notes: The proposal to allow press one day late for this season only passed. My proposal last time to print press the deadline it is received, regardless of season separations, did not pass.

((RIGEL continues next page))

VD proudly presents....

THE RIGEL PRESS WAR EXTRAVAGANZA!

Starring...

The powerful German Kaiser and his treacherous wizard dwarf, Haspritzmann
 Ty-Threepio and his two-cent sidekick, Bobtwo-Detoo
 Tsar Dave Kleinman and his lovely Tsarina Lori, and their little kitty cat, Whiskers
 Prime Minister Greg Ellis of Italy, seeking his imprisoned family in Venice
 Tiara, the Ethiopian enchantress who casts a strange and powerful spell
 The dastardly Sultan Reilly of Turkey, and his most trusted friend and aide
 Commander Nelson von Heintzman, in charge of a renegade pirate vessel somewhere in
 the northern waters, and his captive, Prime Minister Bob Sweeney of England
 Cupcake Clockwinder, a young man on a strange and perilous mission, and his Uncle Olsen
 "Lorique," a mysterious whore from Monaco who possesses a mysterious subconscious
 talent
 Darth Linsey, evil Dark Lord of the Diplomacy Wars, Jeopardy Wars, Chess Wars,
 Press Wars, Star Wars, and other wars; and his ruthless subordinate, Governor Borch
 and various other assorted droogs, clones, and princesses...

WHITE ((via RUSSIA)) to BLACK:

- 1) P-QW4 P-R3
- 2) P-QN5 P-QB3
- 3) P-R4 Q-R5
- 4) N-QB3 ???

RUSSIA: Has anyone noticed that Germany and Russia are playing chess, and they are white and black in each game and that a Knight is a chess piece and that Reilly is in Moscow and that everyone can be called by a one-syllable name (Greg, Steve, Rich, Dave, Ty, Bruce, Bob, and Nels)?

BRUX to RUSSIA: "Nelse"? Isn't that stretching things a bit? But I've noticed that you guys don't obey one of the cardinal rules of English: "I" before "e" except after "c". Right, Kleinman? Right, Reilly? Right, Heintzman?

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

VIENNA to MOSCOW: Rats. Your loss.

VIENNA to NOBODY IN PARTICULAR: Is it ARMORED DUCK time yet?

RUSSIA to GERMANY: P-K4

ITALY to GM: You get press after I see the zins.

BRUX to ITALY: Well, hurry up and take it out of the envelope, then, for crissakes!

GERMANY to GM: ((Re "BLACK FOREST" press)) I don't believe I really wrote all that... Now I know I'm nuts...for sure!!!!

BRUX to GERMANY: You wrote it? Stop trying to take credit away from Rich Reilly. You know he writes all the press here!

THE NYLON CURTAIN FROM VIENNA to CONSTANTINOPLE: And we will all go down together...

VIENNA to VIENNA: Eat hot death.

ANKARA: Spring at last! Isn't it wonderful?

VIENNA: Just like everyone to know that my real purpose in entering this game was to test a hypothesis that the ~~stupidity~~ gullibility of the Austrian player is inversely related to Austria's failure. Thought I'd disproved it for a minute there, but no luck.

ROME to SNEAK #6: Nothing plays in Piedmont save operas.

KAISER to SULTAN: You have every right to be miffed; I apologize for my lack of writing. Too busy writing press!!!!

VIENNA to ROME: Popular speculation has it I pulled off a miracle in Fall 1901. What are my chances of securing papal dispensation for another?

VIENNA to THOR: ERNDT! Big buzzer for the gentleman in black! The name of the band is Talking Heads, not "The" Talking Heads.

DATELINE ROME: Parties in Rome continue following the bloodless takeover by Italian forces last spring. The Italian forces added taken support to the German forces in Venice, and the Austrian forces that landed in Apulia are reported to be in drastically short supply of provisions. The call to arms in Naples has been met with incredibly enthusiastic support; with thousands of men rallying around the cry, "To Venice and Victory!"

VIENNA to THE BLACK FOREST: You need the build? Yes, look at the board -- I need the stupid build!

BRUX to VIENNA: How can a build be stupid? Builds are inanimate objects, and therefore can be neither smart nor stupid. What a stupid press release that was.

VIENNA to PARIS: Oh, sure, it'll work out okay...but for whom?

KAISER to TSAR:

- 3) P-K4 Q-KR5
- 4) N-QB3 B-QB4
- 5) ???

SULTAN to KAISER: I've asked. When am I gonna receive? (A reply, that is.)

ST. PETERSBURG to BRUX: ...Do you have any ideas that could get me a Turkish ally? Or, how about a Turkish center?

BRUX to ST. PETERSBURG: Sure. If you can afford to pay Rich Reilly \$1000 to write your press for you, then...

ELLIS to BRUX: There!...So I flunk three tests this week. So my wife has left me and my boss is gonna fire me if he catches me using his typewriter again. So I NMRed in four other games. I am a loyal screaming Doomie to the end. I thought about cutting this in half diagonally, but I hear that's already been done. Instead I will just mail this to you late enough to keep you up for three nights typing it. HAHAHAHAHAAAA.

BRUX to ELLIS: Joke's on you, sucker. It only took me two nights!

MOSCOW: Hey Warsaw, do you know how many Turks it takes to change a light bulb?

WARSAW: Yea, six. One to hold the bulb and five to turn the ladder...

BRUX to RUSSIA: Rich is right, Dave. You'd better leave the jokes to him...

VIENNA to MOSCOW: Don't look now, but one of us hasn't lied to the other in this game...

((RIGEL continues next page))

DATELINE ROME: The Prime Minister and his cabinet met for eight straight hours today, for the sixth day in a row. Very little information has leaked out of these conferences, but speculation has it that there is a severe split in the cabinet as to what the armies' instructions are to be. Analysts have been hired by this paper to comment on the proceedings and where the Italian troops are likely to head.

First is the opinion of Antonio Giseppi, Professor of Military Science at the University of Rome. "The creation of a new second armored division was absolutely essential to the security of Italy. If Italy is ever to regain full sovereignty the Armies of Germany and Austria have to be driven from the vital land routes to the north. Our navy has done an excellent job of keeping supplies from the nation of Tunis flowing into Italian ports, and despite the threat of a cutoff from the French and Turkish fleets, I believe the navy can keep those goods coming. The French have not broken their word yet, and I doubt that they will do so now. The Turks, although obviously heathens and less trustworthy than the Catholic French, have genuine motivation to cooperate with the Italian government. Naturally popular opinion in the south is heavily against an alliance with the Turks; after all, many of the Sailors of the Second Fleet lived in the area around Naples. But war and politics make strange bedfellows. An alliance with the Turks was inevitable. How long it will last depends mostly upon the actions of the Germans and Russians. The Turkish government is in an expansionist mood, and without the threat of an invasion at home I am sure they will be back.

"In the meantime our concern has to be the recovery of Northern Italy. The only way to do that would be with armies and prayer. Some advocate an immediate attack on Venice, and I have to admit that I am one of the advocates. We have been promised support from the Austrians and our intelligence units tell us that the Germans don't plan on supporting the Venice occupation forces. I am afraid the Prime Minister is thinking more about the welfare of his family than that of Italy."

The Honorable Magistrate and Professor of Political Science at the Tuscanian School of Law: "How quickly the political tides can shift. A few short months ago the people of this nation turned to a new leader to attempt the negotiating of an end to the war. Now, heady with the scent of victory, we have a faction of jingoists demanding retribution. Revenge is hardly enough motive to start a war, and who would we attack? The Germans who presently occupy Venice? The Austrians who have only recently been routed from the Seven Hills? The Turks who lied so viciously to the Prime Minister in his first months? Perhaps the French, who are our most potent threat? As you can see, we are hardly in a position to claim revenge upon those who have wronged us. It would seem a more prudent move, both militarily and politically, for the cabinet to negotiate the eventual return of Venice. Further bloodshed would only further intensify the anti-conservative party sentiment and further weaken the Prime Minister's hold on the government. I think an attack on Venice would be the worst possible action on this point in time."

Naval expert and Professor of History at the University of Naples: "Italy has historically been a sea power, and it is the vital links to the African continent that have kept us alive thus far. The lack of a second fleet is catastrophic! Although Venice is an exceptional port, the prime target for Italy should be to take control of the Mediterranean. Italy cannot tolerate foreign vessels in her waters, especially the Ionian. The Prime Minister is following a reckless course, sure to be the undoing of our country. I do not advocate further expansionism, but I am in favor of a stronger defensive position. The great Empire of Ancient Rome controlled the world through the powers of her Navy. It was not until the legions of Rome attempted invasions of Germany and England that the Empire met its first defeats. The lessons that history teaches us should not be so casually thrown aside."

Obviously there is a variety of opinion as to what Italy's goals are and how she should go about achieving them. One thing that wasn't mentioned by any of our

RIGEL (continued)

11

distinguished panel is the fact that before the Prime Minister took office Italy was facing the very real possibility of extinction. As is often the case in politics, the public always asks, "What have you done for me lately?" Dissention is continuing to grow, and elections will probably be called for by the end of this year. Should the Conservative party lose its coalition at that time, then perhaps history will give the Prime Minister the just and rightful title of Italy's saviour. It doesn't look like he will be given his due by the people he has so tirelessly worked to help.

ROME -- THE PRIME MINISTER'S APARTMENT: Once again he found himself looking out over the rooftops of Rome in the light of early dawn. He looked much older than the last time he remembered seeing this same view, the morning he had been asked to form a new government. Rome was safe now. At least for this year. Venice was still in German hands, and his family, well, they were still alive at last report. He had not seen his wife for over a year, nearly two, but he found no difficulty in remembering her face. He pictured her laughing as they rode the gondolas together in Venice. He had been much younger then, and she had completely captivated him. As a lawyer just starting out his political career he had little to offer, but she never seemed to mind. Her father had been a high official in the Dukedom of Venice previous to Italy's consolidation into a single country. He still had some influence at the time the war broke out, and was appointed as a General in the Army. It was he who had led the Italians into battle in Trieste. More than likely he was dead now, as were most of his men.

"Foolish old man," he found himself talking to himself. Italy's ancient claims to Trieste were no reason to attack today. The old man had no concept of modern war. The Germans and Austrians had dug trenches to hide in while the Italian army stood in neat rows to be shot down. The world was changing, and one had to change with it or die.

"Prime Minister?" A non-descript man stood in the doorway of the dimly-lit room, peering into the darkness. Startled by the intrusion, the Minister did not answer immediately. "Prime Minister?" the man repeated, apparently not sure of who stood silhouetted against the window.

"Who is asking?" One could never be too cautious. Enemies from within were always more dangerous than any other.

"I have a message from the Prime Minister. From Venice." The man took on an air of slight superiority, much like a child with a secret. "I have orders to tell the Prime Minister only, and I was told to meet him here."

The Minister crossed the room in four large steps and grasped the startled messenger by the shoulders. "You have word from my wife? Out with it, man!"

"I...I have word of your wife, sir. She did not make her normal rendezvous with the underground. We knew she was being watched and thought that she had been unable to get away. We sent a young boy to report on the lady's house. When he came back he told us the place had been raided by the Germans. They were taking out furniture, clothes, everything. Our spies at the Occupation Headquarters never got word of this development, or I swear to you, sir, we would have gotten her out." The messenger's voice took on a quality of rage and frustration as he related the further details. The Prime Minister turned back toward the window. It wouldn't be good for this underling to see the tears he could not hold back.

"Is she still alive? Can you tell me that?"

"Our contacts tell us that she is being held at Occupation Headquarters. She is safe for the moment. I am afraid there is more news, sir. They tell us that Rasputmann is on his way to Venice. I fear this has something to do with your family."

Rasputmann! The name of the despicable dwarf sent a shock through him. Many blamed the start of the war on him, saying that he had cast his spells over several

((RIGEL continues next page))

of the heads of state. Peasants spoke of him in whispers, and even members of his own cabinet had pointed out the suicidal alliance that France had with Germany, and blamed it on Rasputin. Russia could have taken Berlin not six months ago, and didn't. Germany should have been losing units, and instead she grew even stronger. What could he want with the Minister's family? Even as this thought occurred to him he was interrupted by a knock.

"I beg your forgiveness, Prime Minister, but we have just received this communique from the German high command. I thought you should be alerted immediately."

His hand trembled only slightly as he took the sheet. "The High Command, under order of the Kaiser, has taken the wife and children of the Prime Minister into protective custody. We are sure that our allies in Italy have no objections to this measure, as it is simply a move to protect the family from possible harm should Venice prove to be a battleground once again. We want to assure the Prime Minister and his government that as long as we hold Venice, his family is more than safe."

"Leave me." As the two men left his chamber the Minister crushed the paper in his hand, and rage and frustration once again forced tears near the surface. If his wife and children were harmed, the world would pay!

SWEENEY to RIGEL: So, this is what a Russian ship looks like. I thought that Nelson might have kept me in Germany -- that is, until his fleet met the Russian fleet in the Norwegian Sea. Oh well, at least I got a change of clothes, and don't I ever look chic in a silver lamé jumper with little swastikas for buttons.

"Ahem!" says a voice behind me. I choose to ignore the voice as I watch Nelson's ships pass over the horizon. "Ahem!" says the voice again. This time I decide to pay attention -- layonet points tend to do that.

"Yes," I say, "What do you want?"

"Masz. Sweeney," says the Lt., "Czar Kleiman is aboard and desires your presence... now."

"Very well." I turn sadly. "Lead on, then." As I am led forward, I am struck with how stark and barren the ship appears -- obviously cheap wartime construction. He means to hold his Northern (my Northern!) possessions with these! Heaven help him 'cause Nelson sure won't. I am taken below. A guard stands outside his door -- I'm quickly but efficiently searched.

Nothing is discovered except for two knives, a garote, two throwing stars, a handful of caltrops and a small but efficient time bomb -- hardly anything. The guard is visibly distressed at my arsenal but I wittily say, "You should have seen what the Germans found," whereupon he sweats even more than before. Eventually, I'm led into Kleiman's presence.

"Have a seat, Rob." I'm rudely placed into a chair and shackles applied to my feet, arms and neck -- fairly immobile, you might say.

"So you decided to stop writing my press, eh?" sneers Dave. "Your refusal may well have cost me the Press War." I yawn. Suddenly, Dave steps forward and slaps me quite hard in the mouth. "Pay attention, Prime Minister -- you are my prisoner now. That our Nelson didn't know just how powerful your press is, he only knows how badly I want you and his price is high!"

Dave paces back and forth. Turning, he points his finger in my face and sneers, "You will work night and day turning out press for me. I cannot continue to pay Reilly, who as you know wrote my press after you refused in '02, these prices to stop locking foolish in this press war. So you! You will do it or face the consequences! Do you understand?"

I think furiously. "And if I refuse?"

"This!" says Dave as he pulls out his revolver and places it to my forehead, "this will be yours if you refuse or if you displease me!"

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

I sweat (who wouldn't?) and being a man of principle, agree. So...

Dateline Moscow: Victorious Russian armies announce the fall of Con and the capture of the infamous Rich Beilly. It is also rumored that marked U.S. dollars recently stolen from Russia's State Bank have been found on his person. The U.S. dollars (\$1000 in 5's and 10's) were reportedly stolen by a sneak thief and smuggled from Russia by carrier goat.

The investigation committee looking into the matter has declared the case closed. Sultan Reilly is currently being "interviewed" and an excerpt of this interview will be presented next issue.

"It's the best I can do on short notice, Dave," I sweat intensely as he fingers his pistol. "Next month's will be much better, I promise."

"Very well," says Dave, "but don't forget who is the master here!"

I'm taken back to my quarters in ball and chains. He's quite mad, don't you know? Isn't there someone out there who'll rescue me? Soon? Please?

BOB to BRUX: As long as you print it (i.e. you masochist), I'll write it (e.g. press). I need to win something, even if it's only a press war. (ONLY?!?).

THE GERMAN FLAGSHIP, SOMEWHERE IN THE NORTH ((via FRANCE)): In the dark corner of the stern hold lies a bundle, oblong-shaped, slightly resilient. Two rats, crawling over the sack, seeking a hole into it, are startled by a sudden movement from within. They scamper back to their hidey hole. The movement is repeated, and then the bundle tips to one side, as its sides expand. There is a sustained "rillip", and the cloth falls away, as a hunched shape stands and stretches. Eyes open and flicker, quickly adjusting to the dark. Hands run over body, checking damage, stopping at two distinct holes. A smile crosses the face, as recent memories come flooding back. Yes, the mission was successful. Everything proceeds in its orderly fashion.

Suddenly, the trap door is pulled up, and greyish light pours down, beamlike. Fading back, hidden by supply boxes and barrels, eyes readjust, other senses come into play. A single sailor backs down the ladder. He turns, and begins to walk toward the rear. Something, though, doesn't seem right. He looks to his left, and sees an empty sack where there should be one with a body in it. He warily walks toward the corner, and in so doing presents his back to the shadowy figure. It is his last mistake.

The ladder is cautiously climbed a couple of minutes later. It is just past dusk, but there is still some light. No one, however, pays any attention to the man crawling out of the hold, carrying a small barrel. The trap door is closed, and the rats once again come out of their pathole, wriggle through holes in the sack that are now easy to find, feeding on the still warm, but quickly cooling meat they find there.

On deck, von Heintzman and Sweeney are arguing; sweat pours off Sweeney's forehead.

"I don't understand this sudden change in plans! Why can't you tell me what's going on?" pleads Bob.

"Because it is not necessary for you to know. All you need to know is that there are people on shore there," he points to the mainland, off which the ship lies anchored by a quarter kilometer, "who will take you to Brussels, and from there you will be driven by carriage to Switzerland, via Germany, where you will live the rest of your days in relative comfort, albeit in exile, as well. If you try to leave Switzerland, or to escape en route, you'll be killed outright. Simple enough, if you ask me."

Bob continues to plead and beg for more information, but Nelson turns away with, "My dinner grows cold." He retires to his cabin as preparations to lower the life-boat, with Sweeney in it, continue. Finally, throwing epithets and oaths, the former

((RIGEL continues next page))

Prime Minister of England begins to row toward the Belgian shore. Nelson watches for a few minutes from his porthole, and begins to turn away, when he hears a muffled splash nearby. He turns back, and barely makes out a shock of white hair bob up from the water, and begin to move toward shore in the rowboat's wake. He frowns, thinks for a moment, and is beginning to move toward the door when it is opened first from the other side. His first mate, eyes filled with consternation and what, to the German leader's experienced scrutiny, appears to be the beginnings of fear, storms into the cabin. "Sir! It's...it's..." He catches himself, salutes, and begins again. "Sir! There's been a murder on board...Actually, three, sir, and maybe a fourth, since we can't seem to find the bo'sun!"

"How were they killed, Herr Kruger?"

"The...their heads, sir, were torn..." Kruger begins to choke, then controls himself once more "...torn from their bodies."

Nelson bows his head, seems to concentrate for a minute, as though in prayer, then turns his back on his officer.

"Very well, Herr Kruger. Prepare the bodies for a full naval funeral. They will be listed as lost at sea. And locate the bo'sun. Begin in the rear hold. I have a feeling you'll find him there."

"But, but sir, what about the murderer, an investigation, what..."

"I'm quite sure the murderer is no longer on board, Mister, and I suggest you not question my orders again. Also, set sail for St. Petersburg."

Kruger mumbles a "Ja wohl, mein Oberführer" and hurriedly leaves, closing the door behind him.

Nelson crosses to the table that had recently held the cloned body of Ty Hare, removes the shroud, and swings the tabletop back on its hidden hinges. Beneath lies another shroud, outlining a body. He pulls the shroud back from the face, and smiles ruefully at the features that confront him.

"Well, well, Mr. Sweeney, an interesting turn of events, nicht wahr?" As the name is mentioned, the eyes of the body flicker, flicker again, and open. They stare at each other, and a smile begins to play over the previously lifeless lips of the prone form.

Taken aback, von Reintzman quickly speaks the words taught him by his most ingenious dwarf advisor. "Sleep, Bob, sleep. Your time has not yet come." He covers the face again, as the eyes close, and shuts the tabletop. "But soon, very soon," as the ship's sails unfurl, and the bow turns northeastward into the approaching night.

ELLIS to RIGEL: I thought I should point out to the meadows of the filthy garbage that Reilly sends in just exactly what happened up in his dorm room. To begin with, how could being the Tsarina be so bad that it would drive a person to visit Moscow, Idaho? I can't imagine anything that bad. Second, it should be known that Rich regards anything above a catatonic stare as a seductive gaze. Necrophilia is a step up from his usual dates. Finally, this supposed exposé only proves that Dave is the superior player. The entire "affair" was arranged beautifully! First he gets his wife to suppress her natural revulsion for both Rich and Moscow, Idaho, to try this ploy. That was the mark of a true diplomat. I can't even get my wife to check the mail. Then, in order to save his wife's virtue, he sends a Bo Derek look-alike at precisely the right moment. Actually, it wasn't a Bo look-alike, as evidenced by the brown hair. It was really a cocker spaniel. Dave obviously knew his opponent couldn't tell the difference, and hiring a person to submit to Rich would have been much too expensive. I should also point out that I was the person who originally suggested this to Dave. Dave was so impressed that he now believes I am in complete control of the game, and that I am dictating everyone's moves except his own. If that were true, Dave, I would simply propose a concession to Italy and have done with it.

ELLIS to BRUK: I propose a concession to Italy.

BRUK to ELLIS: A what? HAHAHAHAHAHAAAA!

FRANKE: ((re above press)) Thanks, Charde.

((FRANKE continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

ANKARA, MARCH 3, 1905:

"Your ineptness amazes me! Such stupid maneuvers...I should have you all shot!"

"But...sir..." the generals stammered.

"If there was anyone else to replace you, I would! Now get out of my sight! I must rethink our plans..."

"Sir, we..."

"Out! OUT!!!"

The military leaders scurried out, leaving only the Sultan and his most trusted aide behind. The Sultan seemed unaware that anyone else was left with him, and with a loud sigh, he fell back into his favorite chair.

"Don't you think, perhaps, you have treated them a little more harshly than they deserve?"

The Sultan glanced up. "Oh, it's you. You startled me."

"My apologies. I merely wanted to say that...or rather, I felt I had to say... well, under the circumstances, I believe that the generals are doing as good a job as one might expect."

"Really? And just what circumstances are you referring to, my friend?"

"Well, you've hardly made it easy on them with your continual change of plans." The aide was nervous, but spoke boldly.

"Oh? Such as...?" the Sultan asked innocently.

"Such as your starting at war with Austria, then Russia, then Italy, and now I suppose Russia again."

"Hmm. Yes, I can see what you mean. Except you are mistaken on one account, my friend."

"Am I?"

"Yes." The Sultan stood up and moved toward the map. "For we are not attacking Russia again, as you believed, but rather...here."

The aide's eyes widened when he saw where the Sultan had pointed. "But...but sir, you cannot mean...after all that's happened..."

"I can, and I do. Please leave me now."

"Sir, I must protest!"

"Leave me now!" the Sultan commanded. "I do not wish to get angry with you!"

Further protest was stopped by the Sultan's angry gaze. The aide stared at him in amazement, then turned and strode out of the room.

* * *

The Sultan was deeply troubled upon returning to his quarters from a meeting with his chief of security. Rumor had it that an agent of the dreaded Russian Okrana had been sent to Ankara to assassinate "he with authority." In his darkened study the Sultan sat and closed his weary eyes, attempted to relax.

A soft breeze blowing the curtains by the balcony interrupted his thoughts. "That's strange," he thought, puzzled. "I didn't leave the doors to the balcony open..." And then he felt the presence of someone else, nearby, hiding in the dark.

"Who's there?" he called out, but no one answered. For a moment, the Sultan felt foolish; of course there was nobody there. Hastily he stood and moved to turn on a light.

"No!" a wavering voice called out. "Don't do that."

The Sultan froze, then turned. In the darkness he could barely see the form of a man, holding a gun. Both stood motionless.

The Sultan forced his voice to be calm. "Who are you?"

"Someone who cares, about this country, and its people. Someone who wishes to end the insanity that guides it."

((RIGEL continues next page))

The Sultan was stunned by the familiar voice he heard. "My most trusted friend... you have come to do this?"

"Yes," the aide replied nervously. "Someone had to, but...I was the only one... with courage."

"Are there others behind this then?"

"No! No...I am the only one. I saw what must be done, and...I am responsible."

"And so, you have come to murder me?"

The aide hesitated. "Yes. Don't try to talk me out of it." His voice was shaky.

"No, I won't, my friend." The Sultan spoke soothingly.

"My mind is made up!"

"Of course it is, and I respect you for it. You have shown yourself a man of great courage. But please, before I die, tell me why you are doing this."

"Because you are insane!" the aide cried. "You are leading this country to ruin!"

"I am doing this? Do you not think that I would end this war if I could? It is the other leaders of Europe. They are the ones who are insane."

"No, it is you! You will ruin us with your ridiculous negotiations. You make friends of enemies and enemies of friends. And now you plan...and now..." The aide's voice was practically a sob. The gun shook in his hand. Cautiously, the Sultan stepped forward.

"My friend...I have done the best that I can."

"No, stay back!" The aide lifted the gun high, trying to steady himself.

"And if you shoot me, what then will become of this country? Who will lead?"

"I have made my decision!"

The Sultan stepped closer. "You cannot shoot me. This country would be lost without me as its leader."

"Better to be lost than to be led into Hell!"

"My friend, you do not mean that."

"Yes! Stay back! I will shoot!"

"My friend, I do what is best. This war, it is forced upon us. And...my friend..."

"No..."

"Most trusted companion, we are not attacking Austria."

The aide jerked his head back as if he'd been hit. "What?!"

"I'm sorry, I lied to you. I was testing your loyalty to your country. You have proved yourself loyal."

"No," the aide gasped, "You..."

The Sultan stretched forward, arms outstretched. "Give me the gun, please..."

Almost involuntarily, the shaking hand dropped the gun, and the aide, with an anguished sob, fell forward into the Sultan's arms. The Sultan held him, hesitated, then called out: "Guards!"

After a second call, the guards entered the room. They stared in bewilderment at the sight of their leader embracing a crying man.

"Take him to his room," the Sultan ordered. "And guard the door. He is not to be allowed out without my permission."

"What has happened, sir?" the guards asked anxiously.

"Never mind that. Come, take him."

As the guards lifted the aide from the Sultan, the aide looked up, and at the guards, frightened and confused.

"Sir?" he asked, "What...what is to become of me?"

The Sultan studied him, and considered for a moment.

"I think you need a rest, my friend...a long rest." Then he motioned to the guards. "Take him away!"

As the guards carried the aide off, the Sultan glanced down, saw the aide's gun lying on the soft luxuriant carpet. He picked it up, examined it curiously, shook

RIGEL (continued)

his head, and sighed.

"My most trusted friend," he murmured. "Has it come to this?"

Carefully, he placed the gun on the table, switched off the lights, and sat back in his favorite chair, alone.

KLEIDMAN to RIGEL: Well, folks, did any of you believe that dribble that Reilly claimed to be "The R.A.T. Alliance"? No. Just as I thought. Perhaps then, my droogs, you'd care to hear a different story...the real story of...

The R.A.T. Alliance.

It was late in the evening of November 15, and your humble narrator, diligent Doonie that he is, was reading "Voice of Doom, Issue 78" for the seventh time, to insure its prominence in his memory:

"But did I not order A Ser S A Bud and A Bud S A Ser?

And doesn't a unit have to hold in order to support?"

So deeply involved in this treachery was I that I jumped in surprise when I heard the firm knock on my door. And this was no ordinary knocking, let me tell you. This was a knocking both desperate and promising, and I knew immediately that someone had come to beg. Not in the mood for beggars, I decided to ignore the knocking. But when it persisted, I went to the door.

There stood Steve Knight.

"Steve! What a surprise!"

"Hello, Dave. I was just in the neighborhood, and...I hope I'm not disturbing you."

"Not at all. Come in. Have a seat..." We sat down. "So how's it going? How's Rich?"

"Fine, fine. Rich's fine..."

"Good. And you?"

"Great..." He paused, and I saw that he was nervous about something.

"Anything wrong?"

"No...no..."

"C'mon," I coaxed. "You can tell me."

"Well...it's Rich. He's not doing so well."

"Oh? How so?"

"Well...he's depressed, really depressed about this RIGEL game. Each letter is the same old thing. He knows we can't beat you. He hasn't had a build, well at least one that wasn't because he retreated a unit off the board, since 1903. He sees you growing each season -- you and Germany seem to have a wonderful relationship. Well, ours isn't nearly as good. We only have 9 centers. You and Nelson have 17. I've just got to do something to cheer Rich up."

"How can I help?"

"Well, you know he'd really like to work with you."

"Yes, I know. I do have this firm belief that I shouldn't work fools. But then again, BRUK and I were allies at DIPCON. I guess there's an exception to everything."

"Does that mean you'll help him?"

"Well, does he realize that this is just a game? That his studies are more important (sorry, Bruce)? That it is all for fun?"

"That's just it, he doesn't know that this is just a game. He acts like he is the Sultan...and...it really hurts him when he's not doing a good job."

"Really? He takes it that serious?"

"Yes. He even tried to get Kathy Byrne to join his harem."

"Boy, I didn't realize he was that desperate."

"Yes...well..." Steve looked down at his hands. "Rich's not much fun to work with when he's losing. Even Ellis avoids him."

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

"And you've come to ask me if I'd lay off him."

"Oh, Dave, it'd mean so much to me."

"But Steve, I can't do that."

"Oh, Dave, for me. For the good of The Voice of Doom. We don't want Rich to do something we'd all regret."

"Well, he's already done things we all regret."

"Dave, I mean something really bad."

"What could he possibly do, Steve?"

"NMR."

"No, he wouldn't do that, would he?"

"Maybe -- then he'd have an excuse for losing."

"Steve, I can't..."

"Dave, I'll do ANYTHING."

I was taken aback.

"Anything?" I gulped.

"Anything. I'd even attack Germany."

Attack Nelson, I thought. Hammmmm. Now could I use this?

"Please, Dave."

"OK, first you've got to convince Rich to move away from me."

"Move away?"

"No, not farther than Idaho. I mean in the game." This guy is real stupid. "We'll have to make my 'gift' to you and him look like an accident. I still value Nelson over you and Rich. He has been a wonderful ally. You can just ask Bob Sweeney." And AT&T, I thought. "Then, you need to move away -- maybe toward Nelson, but don't take any of his centers. I'll then attack you."

"Dave, that's be great. I'd gladly sacrifice my centers so that Rich can survive. Maybe he'd even take a few -- you know, Serbia, Trieste. Then he could beat that French puppet Ellis. It'd make him feel great. Of course, you and Nelson would continue to beat him in the game, but his face would be saved."

"Yes, I am quite a guy."

"I'll be forever in your debt."

"True. But I want you to realize that I'm not doing this for you, but because I want to help Rich out. Germany will still be my main ally."

"Of course..."

"So I'll write Rich, accepting your RAT alliance, and then..."

...a knock on the door interrupted. I looked out the peep hole and saw no one. I did note that the weather was getting bad. But then another knock. I decided to open the door.

"Thought you'd never open the door," said the short dwarf. I immediately recognized Rasputmann, the royal seer of Germany.

"What do you want, warlock?" I boldly asked. Steve was no longer in sight -- evidently cowering in some corner.

"My dear sir," the dwarf gently murmured, "all is not as it seems; but, if it were, it would not remain so."

Affronted by the strangeness of the wizard dwarf's manner and his cryptic response, I responded, "You are too bold, magician. The situation is grave, the pendulum is erratic, and what you say is no answer."

Yes, I didn't understand what I had said, but it sounded awfully good for a mere mortal.

Many seconds passed as the gaze of Rasputmann bored steadily into my eyes. A feeling of alarm suddenly befall me as a vision arose before my eyes. I was now outside the castle walls in the storm-wracked night. I looked up into the violent skies and to my horror spied in the air the flight of some ghastly creature.

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

Gigantic scaly wings flapped to and fro, searching for prey. I turned to flee as the dragon spotted me and spat forth an arc of fire. Breathing the scorched, steamy air, I fled toward a small copse only to stumble to a halt and with appalled fascination watch a fire-breathing chimera emerge from its shelter and lope toward me through the rainy night. Wet and fearful, my very soul shriveled within me, I numbly heard a shrill cackling. Looking up at the ramparts of the castle, I saw the ugly faces of the stone gargoyles thereon convulsed in a living and frightful laughter. My heart seemed to stop and a wave of blackness passed over me...

Slowly, ever so slowly, I felt the emotions of alarm and fear recede from my mind. I opened my eyes and I was back in my doorway, still staring straight into the flat gaze of Rasputmann. For many moments not a sound was heard but the ticking of a clock. Then the wizard dwarf softly hissed, "Yes, I am bold. And my answer to you is enough."

"But, did you bring the pizza?"

Rasputmann seemed disheartened. The game was over; he must make a living. "Yes, Pepperoni and Ham. I did make it in half an hour, right? You got any coupons?"

"No, I guess it's full price night. Your employer is certainly taking advantage of me. No discounts without coupons -- no more free Cokes. Keep the change."

I took the pizza and Coke. Steve must have left. Too bad, I'll have to eat it alone.

REILLY to RIGEL: My droogs, here is where the story gets really sad. As you may recall, I had agreed to become part of (what would have been) a glorious R.A.T. alliance, due to the urgings of my ethical principles. But as you may also realize, no such alliance ever arose in this horrorshow game of ours. That's right, my friends: I had been royally duped by the treacherous Tsar and Tsarina, and so had made a most serious mistake in pulling away from Sevastapol...where I was on the verge of victory, as you may also recall.

It was indeed a grim state of affairs, one which seemed to offer no way out. But that night, as I was reading Hamlet for the seventh time (to insure its permanence in my memory and, more importantly, to allow me to quote it here) I was inspired by Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of Act IV, Scene IV..."O, from this time forth, / My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!"

Contemplating these words, I set out to perform a most dastardly deed. That night I drove long, through the storm that had risen as a compliment to my wrath, to the house of my arch-enemy Dave Kleiman. I would make the Tsar truly sorry that he'd dared to trifle with the Sultan.

At 10:00 PM I pulled in across the street from the home of my enemy...and I was just in time. Within a moment, the door opened and out came the means of my vengeance. Yes, my friends, that's right. Dave Kleiman's little bundle of fur -- Whiskers -- was let out for his nightly romp.

I waited for the door of the house to close, then quietly left my car and approached the creature, who was sniffing curiously around a bush.

"Hello, Wiskers," I called softly. "It's your friend the Sultan come to see you." He looked up at me. "Meow?"

"Yes, that's right. Your good friend, Sultan Reilly. Com'ere, my little furry droog."

The unsuspecting cat bound over to me, into my waiting arms. I stroked him lovingly as I carried him back to my car. He purred in contentment.

"Now, my friend, we're going on a little trip. Yes, that's right. Hop into the car. Yes...good."

I sat down beside him, shut the door, and breathed a sigh of relief. My mission was completed. I had Kleiman's cat, and now he would pay, and dearly, if he wanted

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

20

the creature back.

Later that night, Dave received a phone call from your humble narrator. A tired voice answered:

"Hello?"

"Is this David Kleinman?"

"Yes, it is."

"Mr. Kleinman, we have your cat!"

"What?!"

"We have your cat, and if you do not meet with our demands, terrible things will happen to him."

I heard Dave speaking urgently to his wife: "Lori, go find Whiskers, quick!" Then: "Who is this?"

"It's no use, Mr. Kleinman. Your lovely wife won't be able to find...her pet. I have him here with me." At that, I snatched Whiskers up off the floor (where he was playing with some dog toys I'd bought to keep him happy) and pushed his mouth up to the receiver. "Speak," I hissed.

"Meow?" he said, confused.

"Whiskers?! Is that you?"

"Meow."

"Oh god! Whiskers! Are you all right?!"

"He's all right now!" I replied, tossing Whiskers to the floor. "But he won't be... unless..."

"Unless what?"

"We have two demands. First, you must honor your commitment to an R.A.T. alliance in the RIGEL game. Second, you must issue a press release apologizing to the Sultan for all your offenses against him."

"Really, you villain! I thought I recognized your voice!"

"Do not try to contact the police, or ERUK. If any attempt is made to rescue Whiskers, he will be killed immediately."

"Really, you can't do this! It's..."

"I can, and I have!"

"Really, I beg you to reconsider, before it's too late!"

"It's already too late, Kleinman, unless you meet with my demands."

"But...Rich, what about your ethical principles?"

I winced at that, then replied, "There's a time for ethics and a time for war... and this is war!"

"I...Rich, does this mean you're not going to write me any more press?"

"Until you meet with my demands, yes!"

In the background I could hear Lori's panicked voice: "Dave, Whiskers is gone. I can't find him anywhere."

"I know, Rich Reilly's kidnapped him."

"What?" she cried. "Let me talk to him! Hello, Rich!"

"Hello Lori."

"Rich please, I beg you...give Whiskers back. I'll do anything."

"It's too late for that, Lori. It's all up to Dave now. If he joins the R.A.T. and apologizes to me, the cat will be returned."

With that, I hung up the phone, then looked down at the innocent little creature gnawing on a bone next to me. He gazed up at me, wide-eyed and innocent, questioning.

"Don't worry, little droog," I said, petting him gently. "Everything's going to be all right."

REILLY to ERUK: Aren't you glad I didn't make any crude pussy-jokes in that release? It was a terrible temptation, but I managed to hold off.

ERUK to REILLY: Why? Cat's got your tongue?

((RIGEL continues next page))

THE BLACK FOREST ((via GERMANY)): Atop a rocky ledge high in the mountains stood a man alone. Richly attired in dark garments of leather and velvet, a sable cloak billowing about him, he cast a somber figure as he braced himself against the swirling squalls of a midwinter storm. Whipped into a frenzy by great gusts of wind, bits and pieces of ice and snow were flung into his face stinging his flesh as the biting chill of frigid northern air seeped slowly through his body. Yet he remained, a quiet and unmoving presence, his tranquil gaze absorbing the magnificent tableau before him.

For beneath his stony perch lay a deep gorge which formed at one end a large, horseshoe shaped chasm into which thundered a mighty cataract. Beyond the curved rim of the immense cascade lay a broad, tumbling river swiftly prodding its chartreuse waters to their eternal downfall. Enduring stoically the cold and icy wetness of his stormy surroundings, this man, the powerful Kaiser of the German Reich, lingered at this site contemplating the rush and roar of the waters before him. He strove to see through the massive mist which veiled the base of the waterfall where the falling waters so explosively collapsed; unfortunately, his keen eyesight failed to pierce the curtain of rainy grey haze. Instead, he observed with contentment the sprightly stream which having survived its traumatic ordeal hurriedly scurried off down the long, narrow gorge continuing its journey to some unknown destination. Thus, for a while, as the timeless and ceaseless and persistent essence of nature pressed upon his soul, the Kaiser knew Peace...and together they reigned as one.

There came a moment, however, when the Kaiser heard the distinctive muted beat of heavy wings flapping in the air. The sound came not from the great gorge, but above and beyond the waterfall from that nearest stretch along the mighty river which so steadily flowed to its ruin. Fear and anxiety disrupted the harmony within the heart of the Kaiser as his worried eyes scanned the far sky for that telltale glint of shining scales or sudden belch of liquid fire scorching the heavens which would herald the approach of a dragon horde. No sign of dragon appeared, however; then, abruptly, a winged creature darted into view from around a river bend. Quickly it sped over the rim of the falls to vanish into the fog-covered chasm. Almost instantly, it reappeared out of the mist, hovering in clear space over the gorge within a stone's throw of the German warlord. Neighing shrilly with eyes rolling and hooves pawing, there reared in midair a winged steed the color of chalk. Aboard it, his little fists clutching tightly to the wildly whirling mane of his steed, rode Rasputin, a mischievous grin creasing his face as his tiny feet cruelly raked the beast's sides with sharp, pointed spurs.

Unsmilingly, the Kaiser watched the unlikely pair approach and land only a few paces away. As Rasputin nimbly slid off his mount, the winged horse whinnied in relief and alarm. Leaping into the air, the creature flashed away, one flailing hoof just missing the dwarf's dodging head. Grinning delightedly, the wizard gnome strutted toward his royal master and bowed low in greeting. The Kaiser sourly regarded his court sorcerer. Dressed in gaudy garments -- yellow, purple and green -- he appeared most debauched. Reluctantly, the Kaiser bade him welcome.

"Greetings, seer. How did you come to master one of the children of venerable Pegasus?"

The wizard blandly looked at him. "Such knowledge is not for the uninitiated, sire," he replied. "Let the feat stand on its own merit."

A faint flush crept over the Kaiser's face at the bold effrontery of his subaltern. Quickly, though, he mastered his emotions and returned the wizard's bland stare in equal measure.

"Well, then, Lord Seer," he unctuously murmured, "perhaps you can tell me, instead, why you are at the moment in my presence when by imperial command you ought to be in Venice attending to the needs of the family of the Italian Prime Minister?"

((RIGEL continues next page))

The rebuke caused Rasputmann to purse his little lips and squint his reptilian eyes at his leige lord. "They are in quite good hands, sire, I assure you. I left them under the care of a renowned merchant of Venice -- a follower of the Old Law."

"The Old Law?"

"Yes, sire; wherein retribution is exacted in terms of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

Nettled, the Kaiser silently mulled over the information. With growing anger, he scowled at Rasputmann. "You take much, too much, upon yourself, wizard. My intention is not to hold hostage the family of the Prime Minister but to safeguard them...I want no gruesome pounds of flesh delivered to our Italian ally!"

The little wizard shrugged his shoulders. "Nor do I, Lord, of course! And such will not happen as long as Italy remains by our side."

"Such will not happen in any case, magician," snapped the Kaiser.

Rasputmann merely smiled and nonchalantly flung out one hand in a gesture of dismissal. "Come, my lord, let us attend to other matters. Let us return to the castle and study and reflect upon The Board."

Slowly, the suppressed rage within the Kaiser ebbed away. A distant look appeared in his eyes and he smiled softly his acquiescence.

"Yes, of course, of course, my dear seer. You are quite right. And, in fact, we have not far to go for The Board has accompanied me to this restful retreat."

Rasputmann's body seemed to stiffen and his features grew harsh.

"You brought The Board with you?" he asked unbelievingly.

The Kaiser looked at him out of eyes wide with innocence. "Why, yes, Rasputmann, I did. Since critical military adjustments amongst the Major Powers necessitated a halt in active warfare, I seized the opportunity to attend to the needs of my spirit. Hence I sojourned to this natural hermitage and have found peace, rest, and solitude. And, of course, The Board must be with me..."

Rasputmann seemed not to hear. Through clenched teeth he spat out, "The Board, sire! The Board! It must never, never leave the castle unless guarded by a skilled master of the arcane arts!"

A mellow laugh drifted forth from the Kaiser. "But it is, my dear seer, it is."

Stupidly, Rasputmann asked, "It is what?"

"Why it is so guarded and cared for, seer. Another practitioner of the secret ways watches over The Board. Come, let us not tarry here. The Board and its new keeper are only a short distance away at the local fortress which has hosted me these past many weeks."

The Kaiser studied the dwarf's stricken face. "After all, my dear Rasputmann," the Kaiser smoothly smiled, "with you away at Venice, I, of course, had to find someone to tend to The Board in your absence."

The wizard stood speechless. The stillness of the moment was broken only by the dull rumble of the great waterfall. Slowly, Rasputmann trailed after the Kaiser who turned and wordlessly led the way back to the nearby castle.

* * *

Flickering torches snugly grasped by antique presses lit an empty dining hall. As Rasputmann and the Kaiser entered the room, their footsteps echoed in the silence. Crystal goblets of a sparkling turquoise wine were lifted high in the air as the two men perfunctorily toasted each other's health and slowly sipped their refreshment. The Kaiser moved toward a dark red divan and sank down into its cushions. He looked at the wizard dwarf who remained standing and motionless. Their eyes level, the two men silently regarded each other.

Finally, the Kaiser spoke. "My dear seer, as you may have surmised by now, I am far from pleased with your rather casual handling of the Venetian matter. I had

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RIGEL (continued)

expected you to display a greater understanding of the importance of our Italian ally. But let that pass for now." The Kaiser paused and then said, "Of even greater urgency and concern is the poor state of affairs in which our foreign policy is to be found."

Rasputmann's face began to purple. "Sire," he burst out, "whatever are you saying? Our military might is the greatest on The Board! We occupy northern Italy, two-thirds of England, and have a stranglehold on Scandinavia with units that could be used in devastating fashion at any time. We are the most powerful, sire! As I promised you we would be!"

A small, sad smile played briefly across the Kaiser's face as he regarded his court sorcerer. "All that is true, seer. But what of friendship? What of alliances? What of the effort to grow without jeopardizing the support of our nearest and dearest neighbors?"

Rasputmann snorted contemptuously. "An ally that is pretty much forced to bend to your will is the best ally."

"That may be quite true, seer. However, let me inform you that this last lengthy hiatus has witnessed a startling lack of communication between Germany and her allies!" The Kaiser arose and glared down at his seer. "France, Russia, Italy. Nations absolutely necessary for continued growth and survival have written but sparingly. Instead, reliable rumors abound of clandestine negotiations between our friends and the Austro-Turkish alliance."

"Come, sire," scoffed the wizard dwarf. "Plans of war continue apace, as you and I both well know."

"Yes, they do, seer, but what is likewise true is the fact that Italy always has and still does deeply resent our presence and distrusts our motives. What is similarly true is the fact that Russia deeply resents our presence in the Scandinavian waters which threaten his fragile hold upon that region. And, of course, the French continue to be disturbed over our continued occupation of England and Belgium!"

Rasputmann disdainfully grimaced. "Surely your diplomatic talents, sire, can put to rest the petty jealousies and fears of those provincial intellects?"

The Kaiser barked a short laugh. "Petty and provincial, seer? I think not. Those leaders have real concerns and grievances; which, by the by, have arisen solely from YOUR strategies..."

"So," rasped the midget magician, "I am to be the scapegoat, am I? Well, keep in mind, sire, that you approved those strategies."

With a bitter smile, the Kaiser glanced at the magician. "Did I have a choice, dragon master?"

Pent-up rage spilled forth from Rasputmann as he glowered at the Kaiser. "Perhaps not! Perhaps it would behoove you to remember that I am indeed a dragon master...and much, much more."

A genuine smile of pleasure spread across the Kaiser's features at this open threat uttered by his court sorcerer. "Verily, I do remember, seer, which is why, when you were gone to Venice, I obtained the services of another practitioner of the mystic paths."

"Yes," hissed Rasputmann. "I have been eagerly awaiting this audience with your new hireling. But I warn you, no warlock on the continent is as powerful as I!"

"Hummmmm," replied the Kaiser. "I know. And that is why my new imperial diviner is neither a man nor one born of these northern lands."

Rasputmann regarded the Kaiser with alarm. "You are in league with a witch?"

The Kaiser's radiant expression reflected the amused confidence of complete success. "Behold, seer, not just a witch, but a Nubian enchantress!"

A large wall panel slowly slid to one side revealing an iron portcullis cunningly built into the massive stone wall. Silently and smoothly, the heavy grating lifted.

((RIGEL continues next page))

Through the opening stopped a tall, angular woman. A golden gown shimmering in the torchlight accented her fine chocolate features. On top of her elaborately coiffured ebony hair rested a glittering crystal crown inlaid with rubies and emeralds. With a youthful feline grace she glided into the room. As she moved toward the two men, her midnight eyes burrowed deeply into Rasputmann's astonished stare.

With great difficulty Rasputmann tore his gaze away. "How dare you!" he raged at the Kaiser. "How dare you!"

Choking with fury, he sputtered, "Engaging the services of this Ethiopian wench! She has no occult power; only the common power of a harlot. You fool! You blind, stupid ---"

Rasputmann felt a constriction about his throat like the clamp of a vise. Unable to speak, he felt the painful pressure increase to the point where he could barely breathe. The African enchantress turned toward the Kaiser. Softly, she spoke. "I mind not how he speaks of me, Your Excellency. But of you..." His disrespect is most unbecoming."

The Kaiser thoughtfully regarded his spellbound wizard dwarf. "Yes, Tiara, it is, isn't it?"

"Well, then..." she gently smiled. Once again her dark gaze probed deeply into Rasputmann's eyes. He began to feel the room spin around and around. The golden sheen of her gown seemed to expand until his entire field of vision blurred into one fantastic golden haze. Suddenly, Rasputmann felt the inner whirling slow to a stop. The dazzling mist seemed to part in front of his very eyes so that he was able to espy within this golden gloom the strange setting just before him. A large violet cushion lay near his feet and upon it lay coiled a black cobra with eyes the color of melting ice. Blindly it stared at him as it writhed about on the cushion. Suddenly it uncoiled and arose, its long length weaving to and fro, its scarlet streaked black hood flaring in his face.

The wizard heard himself scream.

Instantly, the serpent changed shape. A jet black panther snarled viciously at him, its cobalt blue eyes burning into his brain. The wizard dwarf began to stagger away; he began to run. But there was no place to run to in this golden haze and always the sleek panther padded swiftly by his side. Tongue lolling, bright fangs gleaming, its strange, brilliant eyes fixed on his... And always the sound of musical laughter...

* * *

Both the Kaiser and Tiara the Dark Princess regarded the frozen figure of Rasputmann. "What did you do to him?" he asked her.

Tiara drew a deep breath. "He is in a trance; he is of another space and time." "Forever?"

She lightly laughed. "Nothing is forever, Your Excellency. Besides, he is a powerful wizard. My fresh strength has kept his wits dulled and his powers at bay. But the struggle is not over yet."

The Kaiser gently grasped her arm, steering her towards the doorway. "Come, Tiara, let us retire to our chambers this evening. It has been an arduous day for us both."

Dislodging his hand, she pulled away from him, shaking her head. "No, not yet, sire. There is one more matter that must be discussed."

She paused, collecting her thoughts. "There have been reliable accounts concerning strange doings in the British Isles and the North Sea."

"Yes, I know," he replied. "A Russian fleet cruising in the North Sea is strange -- quite. However, whether or not it is truly lost, the matter is being taken care of, I assure you."

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RIGEL (continued)

"It is not only that," Tiara said, "but also the rumors about the assassination of French Prime Minister Hare by the English leader-in-exile, Sweeney. Much has been heard, also, about the subsequent capture of that vicious slayer. At the moment, he is being held aboard a German naval ship under the command of one von Heintzman for transfer to the Russians."

"What? What's all this?" the Kaiser stuttered. "I know nothing about any of it."

Tiara regarded him gravely. "Your treacherous wizard dwarf has kept you in the dark on many matters, I am much afraid... Aboard this ship with the war criminal Sweeney and von Heintzman appears to be a simulacrum of Prime Minister Hare. Our best sources indicate that both Sweeney and von Heintzman nightly engage in perverse, orgiastic displays of violence involving repeated mutilation and disfigurement of the Hare object."

The Kaiser grimaced, "How disgusting!"

"True," Tiara agreed. "While it would seem that the simulacrum was on board the ship prior to Sweeney's arrival, all world intelligence agencies concur that only the British have the necessary technology to create such a monstrous lifeform. It is well known, sire, that the English scientific community, under the malign sponsorship of that rabid experimenter, Sweeney, were heavily involved in a secret project. It appears, now, the project centered around the construction of these living replicas of human beings through genetic manipulation. These creatures -- clones, as they are called -- can be created almost at will and in any quantity."

"Terrible, terrible," murmured the Kaiser. "But how did this clone of Hare find its way aboard a German ship, if the British were developing it?"

"That is not known yet, sire."

"Well, in any event, I will issue orders to von Heintzman to destroy the clone totally and to send Sweeney to Berlin. After that, I believe that an intensive psychological profile on von Heintzman is in order. Yes?"

Tiara sighed deeply. "I am afraid, Your Excellency, that the matter of this von Heintzman is somewhat complicated as well. Thorough investigation of your military files reveal no record of a von Heintzman serving the war effort by land, air or sea. Furthermore, no title of nobility for a 'von' Heintzman has ever been registered. The Heintzman familial name is of peasant origin, sire."

Silently, the Kaiser regarded his new seeress. "There is more, is there not, Tiara? Tell me, please."

"As you wish, sire. What is known at the moment concerns Rasputmann's skill as a necromancer. It would appear that he could conjure awake the dead, and, in fact, has raised up zombies and successfully infiltrated them into high military and diplomatic levels of government."

Shocked, the Kaiser whispered, "Are you telling me that this 'von' Heintzman is a zombie? And this thing is in command of a German fleet which has captured the British war criminal, Sweeney?"

"Well," Tiara slowly said, "it would seem, definitely, that it is in control of a German fleet, yes. But as to whether he has truly captured Sweeney... You see, sire, the question now is whether Sweeney is really Sweeney."

"What?"

"Your Excellency, the mass manufacture of clones could mean that perhaps the real Hare was not shot in the first place; perhaps this Sweeney person aboard our ship is not the real Sweeney. And with the possible resurrection of hordes of zombies by our own Rasputmann..."

((RIGEL continues next page))

Horror stricken, the Kaiser stared at his beautiful enchantress. "Do you mean to say that we can no longer distinguish between clones and zombies and Real People? Why, Tiara," he suddenly exclaimed, leaning forward, an eerie glow in his eyes, "is it conceivable that even we ourselves may not be real?"

Tiara said not a word, but merely gazed at him, thoughtfully.

* * *

The giant serpentine creature floating silently in the air over the castle, listening with keen ears to the conversation below, finally began its slow ascent of departure into the sky. Spitting forth an arc of scarlet lightning into the blackness of the night, the huge dragon began its long journey to that faraway mountaintop where the Elders rested awaiting its report on the day's events.

In the castle itself, the petrified form of Rasputin remained rigid. Yet he was aware of the dragon's mission and satisfaction raged within him. Every so often, his blank stare would clear and his eyes would gleam with malice and menace. Still, the golden mist always returned to gently smother him and within that lustrous haze prowled the bright-eyed panther whose snarls seemed to echo forever within his brain.

A RUN-DOWN WHOREHOUSE SOMEWHERE IN MONACO ((via FRANCE)):

My intelligence sources couldn't have been wrong. But why isn't she cooperating?

"Look, you paid your 50 Francs," she says as she holds her arms out to me, "so why don't we just get down to business?"

I roughly push her away and stalk to the grease-streaked window. Damn! Just when the southern campaign looked promising, the Germans and Russians begin joint maneuvers in the north. Von Heltzman's navy storms London, claiming that it was an accident, that they thought it was Denmark, and then the Germans trick me out of the Hated Bob.

I turn to look at the saucy tart sitting wearily on the weathered bed, map spread before her, staring questioningly at me. The problem, I'm thinking, is my French people. They need a military victory to restore their spirit and their pride as Frenchmen. But where? Where can we achieve a quick, decisive victory?

"Come on, you wench, try!" I pressure, advancing menacingly on her.

"I don't understand -- I don't understand what you want!" cries the slovenly trollop.

"Look," I begin, none-too-patiently. "I've got Germans and Russians advancing from the north, and a shaky, at best, alliance with the Austrian, Turkish, and Italian peoples, none of whom I trust. To top it off, the French people are threatening revolution if the war doesn't start turning in our favor, and quickly. Now I know you can help..." My voice has risen to a crescendo, and I wave angrily at the map.

"Well," she begins tentatively, looking at the map by her feet, littered with painted wooden blocks, "the yellow ones are pretty -- look how nice they go with the blue..." She pushes a piece forward with her toe.

"And see how the green ones look up here, next to the red ones? Oh, and look if we put some more blue over here!" Her interest is aroused and she is eagerly pushing colored blocks across the map with her foot.

At first I don't understand. This brazen strumpet seems to be randomly moving the continent's military forces around Europe. But then I look more closely: Turkish Fleet in the Ionian moves to the Adriatic. Italian Fleet in Tunis ordered into the Tyrrhenian. French Fleets from the Tyrrhenian into the Ionian Sea, and from the Western Mediterranean storm Tunis...

"But of course!" I cry, reaching for paper and pencil from the dresser. "Perfect. Beautiful!"

"Yeah, I know," she replies absent-mindedly. "I used to be an interior decorator. Not a bad one, either. Oooh! What a pretty pattern!"

I turn to her, and then I notice for the first time: she is beautiful! She is

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RIGEL (continued)

not only a brilliant tactician, but attractive as well. Everything a man could want. I stagger starstruck back to the bed and sit down next to her.

"You're -- you're amazing! Your powers are greater than any of my people knew. My dear," I gush, "what is your name?"

She appears surprised, caught off balance. "Lori K-- um...Lorique. Yes, Lorique."

"Lorique. Such a wonderful Franch name," I swoon. "Tell me: would you accompany me to dinner?"

She stands up and steps daintily to the dresser, where she dons a pair of pink cashmere pajamas (pink cashmere...?). "No, I'm sorry," she smiles. "I have another appointment right now."

There is a knock at the door. As Lorique flows gracefully to the door, I move to put away the map. I hear her open the door and say, "Oh, hello, Raspy. You're right on time."

I look over. In the doorway stands a swarthy runt, odd-looking even for a dwarf. There's a slightly mad glint in his eye and an anxious demeanor about him.

"Guten abend, mein liebchen," he croaks, stepping into the room. His eyes widen as he spies me putting the map away. Awkwardly he tries to hide behind his back the oversized briefcase he's brought with him.

I walk to the door, stepping over the dwarf, and kiss Lorique on the cheek. But I am eased out of the door before I can properly say goodbye.

ELLIS to KNIGHT: So, your little project got out of hand, did it? The houserules have beaten Stevie and Stevie is upset. Shades of Frankenstein's monster, no?

ELLIS to BRUX: Stevie is right, you know. The SIRIUS game should continue, and Austria should have to move off of Albania and back on to win. The rules are very clear. You are obviously confused on the matter yourself. First you list the houserules as a new player, then as the Austrian player, and on the endgame chart you list eight countries. What a BRUX. What would happen if a player forces eighteen centers in the spring, summer is separated by request, during which the eighteen-center power MMRs, and then both the original player and the standby MMR in the fall? Not a ridiculous possibility, as exhibited by Iron Dream in The Prince. Who wins. Well, on to less SIRIUS matters.

BRUX to ELLIS: 'Twouldn't happen in VD. The fall season would be delayed till someone actually got moves in for it. As for SIRIUS, check on the ombudsman's ruling this issue...

ROME to REILLY: I can take the move to the Ionian. I might even be able to overlook the silly-assed lies. "Droogie" had me upset. "Droog" is little better. BUT SCUMBUNNY IS THE LAST STRAW! THIS MEANS WAR! What? We're already fighting the Turks? Damn!

ELLIS to KLEIMAN: So you want to know why I have been trying to get everyone to attack you. Well, besides all the obvious reasons, you have left me almost entirely out of the Jeopardy press! Three stupid lines! Playing with matches, indeed. You don't like it? Well come do something about it! Nelson and Knight, get out of the way! Let me take on this Turkey myself. Oh, sorry Rich.

NELSON to TY: Are you all right? No letters, no phone...to nobody.

GERMANY to AUSTRIA: Yeah, I know; I've neglected you, too. Soon, soon...

VIENNA to BERLIN: Hello? I thought you at least still talked to your victims...

VIENNA to BRUX: At least if I guess wrong it'll be quick this time...

BRUX to VIENNA: Really? As quick as, oh, say, Federal Express?

ROME to PARIS AND ANKARA: Oklahoma used to be a part of Texas. It was zoned as a garbage dump.

BRUX to ROME: You're lucky Michalski doesn't read these things...

ROME to RIGEL: Sorry, guys -- no change in Italian players this year. Now if you will all kindly take a step back?

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

28

VIENNA to ROME: Now take Venice -- please.

VIENNA to ROME: After our phone conversation, it occurred to me that this game could be RIGged. I sure hope not.

VIENNA: Of course, the main question is how long will I be able to use this dateline. Pets?

ELLIS to NELSON: If you believe in reincarnation, can you imagine what BRUX will be in his next life? It is frightening, just to think about it. I would be willing to bet he used to work for the government in previous lives. Knight was probably a toad, which is why he finds it so easy to toady to BRUX now.

BRUX to RIGEL: My droogs, I'm sure you're all tired of hearing about the RAT alliance. Perhaps you'd like to hear a different story. The story of...

A Terrible Press Release

It was late in the evening of November 15, and your humble editor, diligent gamesmaster that he is, was reading "Houserules" for the seventh time, to insure its permanence in his memory:

"Dogs, computer programs, extraterrestrials, and droogies may all play, so long as they abide by these houserules."

So deeply involved in this comedy was I that I jumped in surprise when I heard the firm knocking on my door. And this was no ordinary firm knocking, let me tell you. This was a knocking both desperate and promising, and I knew immediately that someone had come to bug me. Not in the mood for buggers, I decided to ignore the knocking. But when it persisted, I went to open the door.

There stood Ty Hare's terrible face.

"Ty Hare's terrible face! What a surprise!"

"Hello, BRUX. I was just in the neighborhood, and...I hope I'm not disturbing you."

"Not at all. Come in. Have a seat..." We sat down together on the couch. "So how's it going? How's Ty?"

"Fine, fine. Ty's fine..."

"Good. And you?"

"Terrible..." It paused, and I could see that it was nervous about something.

"Anything wrong?"

"No...no..."

"C'mon," I coaxed. "You can tell me."

"Well...it's Ty. He's not doing so well."

"Oh? How so?"

"Well, he's depressed, really depressed, about this RIGEL game he is in. All day long he ropes about the house, moaning and groaning that he's doomed, and wishing you'd stop calling his face terrible. You know, he really thinks very highly of you, BRUX, and...he'd really prefer it if you'd call his face horrible."

"Yes, I know, Ty Hare's terrible face. But surely he realizes this is just a game...that it's all for fun."

"That's just it, he doesn't know it's just a game. He acts like he is really the President of France...and...it really makes him feel dreadfully awful when he thinks his horrible face is terrible."

"Really? He takes it that SIRIUS?"

"No, that was Knight. But he even calls me his little droog, and I have to call him Ty the Tyrant. And whenever he reaches the end of his rope, which is often these days, I have to call him Ty the Knot."

"That's amazing. But I guess we all have our little secret fantasies. Mine is that someday Ed Wrobel will shut up."

"Yes, well, Ty's not much fun to live on when he's depressed. I'm going to have to leave him if this keeps up. Even whiskers avoid him and..."

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RIGEL (continued)

"Well, at least he doesn't have to shave! But you've come to ask me if I'd lay off him."

"Oh BRUX, it'd mean so much to me."

"But Ty Hare's terrible face, I can't do that."

"Oh please, BRUX, for me. Pretty, pretty please!"

"Ty Hare's terrible face, my ethical principles...I've got to continue calling you terrible."

"BRUX, please, I'll do anything...anything!"

"I...I'm sorry. Terribly sorry."

It hesitated for a moment, then said in a soft voice, "BRUX, I'll do anything." I was taken aback.

"Anything?" I gulped.

"Anything." It gazed at me terribly.

Now I know what you're thinking, little droogs. You're thinking that Ty Hare's terrible face's offer to do anything was enough to make me forget my ethical principles. But you're wrong, my friends, oh yes. For what actually happened is that, at that very same moment, I remembered another of my ethical principles. "Never make a player lose face," is how it goes. Therefore, I replied...

"OK, I'll do it."

"You will? Oh thank you, BRUX! Thank you, thank you, thank you."

"Don't mention it."

"I'm forever in your debt."

"True. But I want you to realize that I'm not doing this for...your offer...but because I want to help Ty out. I will still privately think of his face as terrible."

"Of course..."

"So I'll write to Ty, and tell him he has a horrible face, and then..."

And then I saw Ty Hare's terrible face gazing at me horribly. Quickly it slid over close to me, and then...

...a knock on the door interrupted.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

"Who's there?" I replied.

"Kleiman!"

"Kleiman who?"

"Kleiman a mountain! Let me in, will ya?!"

I went over and opened the door, and there, much to my surprise, stood Dave Kleiman. Ty Hare's face made a quick, terrible disappearance. Apparently it had no wish to be voted on again.

"Dave! It really is you! Come in, come in. How's Lori?"

"Fine."

"Correct, for \$40! So, what brings you here, Dave?"

"Oh, I was just passing through, and..."

"Correct, for \$60! Would you like something to drink?"

"Yeah..."

"Correct, for \$80!"

"BRUX, cut the crap, will you? How did we ever get involved in these Press Wars, anyway?"

"Ah, my boy, I thought you'd never ask. Sit down and I'll tell you the whole story."

"Wait a minute. Is this going to be as long as the house rules?"

"Pretty close. And its even got the same author! It all began..."

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RIGEL (continued)

A LONG TIME AGO, ON A CONTINENT FAR, FAR AWAY ((via AUSTRIA)):

XXXX	XXXX	XXXXX	XXX	XXX	X X	XXX	XXXX	XXX
X X	X X	X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X	X X
X X	X X	X	X	X	X	X X	X X	X
XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXX	XXX	X X X	XXXXX	XXXX	XXX
X	X X	X	X	X	X X X	X X	X X	X
X	X X	X	X X	X X	X X X	X X	X X	X X
X	X X	XXXXX	XXX	XXX	X X	X X	X X	XXX

It is a period of civil war on the continent. Rebel writers, in battle against the Empire, have managed to steal an article pertaining to the Empire's secret weapon, the dreaded DOOM STAR, a mine so large that it can put entire planets to sleep. As we enter the story, an Imperial force is battling a small rebel missile in orbit around a small size...

* * *

"Madness, this is madness!" wailed Ty-Threepio to his sidekick, Bobtwo-Detoo, as the fire from Imperial Battle Envelopes drew nearer to the rebel missile they were aboard. "We'll be destroyed for sure." A jolt went through the missile as a shot from the Imperial forces hit home, and a deep, throbbing hum began to pervade the vessel. "Oh, my goodness! What is it, Bobtwo?" At that request, the short, inexpressive stamp adhered himself to one of the missile's edges, and began reporting to his larger companion via a series of chirps and whistles. "Being boarded?!" Threepio cried. "Oh, dear, I don't know how the Princess will ever manage to get us out of this!"

A group of hand-written rebel vowels and consonants jogged past the two stamps and set themselves up with weapons poised on the missile's salutation, preparing to defend against the impending onslaught of crisply typed Imperial Storm Letters. Sounds of scraping could be heard from outside, as well as muffled voices giving commands. Abruptly the ominous humming stopped, leaving only the faint, distant noises of other rebel letters struggling with the damage done to the missile itself. The two stamps hurried out of the way as the Imperial Forces obliterated the salutation and formed a boarding hole. The first wave of Storm Letters poured into the main body of the text in their Imperial Ditto armor, firing lethal bolts of purple ink at the dauntless rebel forces. From their entrenched positions in the opening paragraphs, the rebel letters were able to hold off the Storm Letters at first, and the opening sentences were soon awash in a sea of purple. The Storm Letters' precision, however, soon cut into the rebels and, chunks of graphite raining around them, they began an all-out retreat just as the first paragraph fell, making the question of whether or not they would be able to completely resist the imperial troops merely an academic one.

A tall, menacing figure stepped onto the captured missile through the remnants of the salutation, his black cape flowing behind him. The Imperial Commander emerged from the center of the text, where his forces were continuing to rout the rebels, leading the captain of the missile. "Nothing, sir," he reported. "We've captured most of the crew, including the captain here, but the table of contents has been wiped clean." The Dark Lord nodded, and seized the missile's captain by the throat with a hairy hand, lifting him off the ground as he tightened his grip.

"Where is the article you stole?" the hand's owner rumbled, menace lacing his words. "What have you done with the masters?"

The captain choked. "We--stole--no article." The hand tightened, and the

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

captain's struggles for breath became more frantic. "Please...we're an...innocent envelope...on a...mission...to...request..." The body went limp, and the Dark Lord threw the lifeless form away in disgust.

* * *

"Bobtwo! What are you doing?" The small stamp ignored the questions of his more expensive companion, leading them both to the missive's emergency reply cards. "You can't go in there -- it's not permitted!" Threepio was clearly distressed by the impertinence of his companion, but Bobtwo paid him no mind and continued towards his destination, barely stopping to answer Threepio with a few buzzes and clicks. "Mission?" Threepio questioned, "What mission? Come back here at once!" Suddenly a bolt of purple ink shot past Threepio's head, taking out a nearby sentence with a large purple explosion. This inspired a change of heart in the worried stamp. "Oh, I'm going to regret this!" Threepio wailed, as he followed Bobtwo onto the card. "Are you sure you know how to address this thing properly, you little troublemaker?"

* * *

Two storm letters entered the room, escorting a small, handcuffed figure clad in a simple white robe. The Dark Lord turned and towered over the still-defiant woman. She in turn fixed a haughty stare on him, a half-smile of recognition on her face.

"Darth Linsey...I should have known. Only you would be so bold -- and so stupid. When the Imperial Ombudsman hears of this outrage --"

"Don't play games with me, Princess Kleiman." The Dark Lord pointed an ominous finger, already impatient with the trouble he had been caused. "You aren't on any mercy mission this time. Where is the stolen article?"

The Princess' self-assurance was unshaken. "I don't know what you're talking about. We're a peaceful letter, simply requesting a sample."

"You are a traitor and a leader of the rebellion!" Linsey snapped. "Take her away!"

As the guards muscled her from the room, the Commander stepped up behind the Dark Lord. "She'll die before she gives you any information," he pointed out softly. Linsey's voice sank to an annoyed growl. "Leave that to me."

* * *

Threepio stepped off the reply card and looked all around. Bobtwo had gotten them to the zine safely, but where were they? "What a forsaken place this is," he mused aloud. "Nothing but white space as far as I can see..." Bobtwo appeared on the edge of the card and whistled. "No, I don't much care for this wasteland you've brought us to," Threepio answered. "I just knew you'd get us into some awful mess like this. What are we supposed to do now, when there's absolutely no one around?" Bobtwo chirped again, and clicked twice. "And I do wish you'd stop babbling about this 'mission' nonsense," Threepio continued. "It's enough to--"

He was interrupted by a particularly shrill whistle from his companion, who indicated the distant horizon. At a barely discernable distance, a large mailing label was making its ponderous way across the surface of the white space. Threepio was overjoyed. "Oh, a sign of civilization!" he exclaimed with glee. "We're saved!" He waved in the direction of the craft. "Over here! I say, over here!"

* * *

Just outside the door of his home, Cupcake Clockwinder stared wistfully at the sky. Working in his uncle's bakery wasn't so bad, he thought, but there were so many other parts of the hobby that were more exciting. If only he weren't stuck in a backwards zine where people only knew how to play Risk. As things stood, though, it was all he could do to dream about the vague reports one heard of rebellion

((RIGEL continues next page))

between mixing batter and making sure the baked goods didn't burn.

"Cake! Cake!" The voice of his uncle interrupted Cupcake's reverie. "Where are you?"

Cake sighed and took a last fleeting glance at the sun. "Coming, Uncle Olsen!" he called. He turned and ran back into the bakery, bumping straight into his uncle's pudgy form.

"Oh, there you are, Cake," his uncle said. "Listen, I just came back from purchasing these two stamps at the auction in P'dora, and they need a little fixing up. Can I have you do it? Your aunt wants me to try some new coffee she just bought -- say it's the richest kind."

"Yeah, sure, Uncle Olsen." Cake did not appear at all thrilled with the thought of having to do more work.

"Great! I'll just leave you to get acquainted. I'll try to be back as soon as I can."

Threepio interpreted this as a cue to speak up. "Allow me to introduce myself, sir. I'm Ty-Threepio, a three-cent stamp, and my companion here is Bobtwo-Detoo--"

Cake interrupted him with a groan. "No, don't tell me. Let me guess -- a two-cent stamp." Threepio nodded and smiled broadly. "Pleased to meet both of you, I guess. You can call me Cake." He bent to examine the smaller stamp's condition. "Say, you've lost a lot of adhesive backing -- looks like you two have seen a bit of action."

"Well, I daresay we have, what with the rebellion and all," Threepio replied.

This last remark caught Cake's full attention. "The rebellion! he exclaimed. "You two know about the rebellion?"

"Yes, sir, we do. Well, not much, actually, but it's because we've had some rebellion-related problems on our last missive that we've ended up on this zine. Except that I don't know which zine it is."

Cake's excitement calmed quickly when Threepio's question brought his mind back to his unhappiness with his surroundings. "Well, if there's a bright center to the hobby, you're on the zine that's furthest from it," he answered in a disgusted tone, returning to the smaller stamp. He squinted, peering along Bobtwo's edges. "Humm... seems like some of your perforations are out of line here," he mused, then leaned over and selected a trimmer with which to realign them. Cake applied the tool to one corner of the stamp, but ran into resistance. "Something seems to be stuck," he grunted, as he applied more pressure. The extra pressure appeared to do the trick, for whatever was stuck suddenly gave way, sending the young man tumbling to the floor of the bakery.

Cake got back up off the floor, ready to take out some of his frustrations on the perforations, when he stopped. There on the stamp's surface was a face he hadn't seen before, slightly blurry, but nevertheless a female face and nevertheless talking to him! "Help me, Obegone Kenobi!" it said. "You're my only hope!" There was a slight click and the face appeared again. "Help me, Obegone Kenobi! You're my only hope!"

Cake was astonished. "What is this? Who is she? What's going on here?" Bobtwo didn't respond, except to play the message once again: "Help me, Obegone Kenobi! You're my only hope!" Since he was obviously not going to get anywhere with the smaller stamp, he appealed to the other. "Threepio, ask him what he's doing!"

"I have, sir. He actually claims that he belongs to this Obegone Kenobi and that he has a message for him. I can't say that I comprehend what he's talking about. Our owner on the missive wasn't named Kenobi."

Cake considered this. "Obegone Kenobi... Say, I wonder if he means old Nelson Kenobi. He's an old hermit that lives around here. I don't think that he owns any stamps, though." Cake set the trimmer back down. "Listen," he said to the two, "you wait here. I'm going to ask Uncle Olsen about this."

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RIGEL (continued)

Cake entered the house and made his way to the kitchen, where he heard his uncle arguing with his aunt. "Listen, I don't care if this stuff is grown on the Matterhorn!" Olsen shouted. Cake considered the dangers of confronting his uncle in such a mood, and decided to enter the kitchen anyway. "It tastes like -- yes, Cake, what is it?"

"Sorry, Uncle Olsen, but I think those two stamps you bought have already been cancelled."

This news did not brighten his uncle's mood any. "What?!" Olsen exploded. "There's not a mark on them! If those bandits in P'dora ripped us off..."

Cake decided not to press his luck. "Well, I don't know for sure, but the two-cent one claims that he belongs to someone else. Said he'd been used by someone named Obegone Kenobi." Cake didn't see his uncle and aunt exchange a significant glance. "I thought he might have meant old Nelson Kenobi out by the fringe."

His uncle's mood softened, but he seemed uncomfortable. "N-no, it's probably nothing, Cake. You'd better forget it."

Cake's curiosity was aroused by his uncle's reluctance to discuss it. "Well, is it someone related to Nelson, then? What if he comes looking for them? We wouldn't want any trouble. Maybe I should go out and ask old Nelson."

This last remark changed his uncle's mood from nervous to frightened. "You stay away from him, you hear me!" he shouted. "I've told you about him before. He's a crazy old man. He's dangerous and full of mischief, and he's best left well alone. As for this 'Obegone,' I'm sure he's no longer in the hobby. Now that's all I want hear about it. Those stamps are ours now, and I want you to finish fixing them up!"

* * *

Cake walked back from the house to the bakery. He always hated it when his uncle was in a rotten mood -- especially when it hadn't even been his fault! He was only trying to play it safe. Why did it always seem that he was having to pay the costs for others' paranoia? At least it seemed like the day couldn't get any worse.

When he reentered the bakery, however, he became absolutely certain that it could. Only the larger of the two stamps was there. "Threepio!" Cake exclaimed. "What happened to Bobtwo?!"

"I really don't know, sir," Threepio replied. "I had only turned my back for a minute just now, and when I looked up you were there and he was gone."

"Oh, great. If Uncle Olson finds out about this, I'm going to get it. We'd better go looking for him."

"If I may make a suggestion, sir, it may very well have something to do with this 'mission' gibberish he's been babbling on about."

"Good idea. We'll take my mailing label and head out in Nelson Kenobi's direction, see if we can't spot him along the way. Boy, I can already tell this little stamp's going to cause me a lot of trouble!"

"Oh, he excels at that, sir," replied Threepio cheerily.

* * *

Cake's label sped along the surface of the zinc as the young man stared intently at the horizon, both to keep a sharp lookout for the prodigal stamp, and also to make it clear to Threepio that he was in no mood to listen to much more of his chatter. "Come on, he's gotta be here somewhere," he muttered to himself. "We must be almost to Nelson's house -- at least I think it's around here somewhere."

"Excuse me, sir," Threepio put in, "but isn't that Bobtwo over in that direction?"

"You're right, it is," Cake agreed. "Thanks, Threepio. And he was almost to Nelson's." Cake accelerated the label, and they quickly caught up with the small stamp.

Threepio was quick to admonish his sidekick. "Bobtwo, what is the idea of

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RISSEL (continued)

wandering off like this? That'll be quite enough of this 'Obegone Kenobi' nonsense. We've both been worried sick about you!"

"You know," Cake said, "as long as we're this close to Nelson's house, I think we might as well stop in and ask him about you. I'm in enough trouble with my uncle as it is, and at least that way he'll be angry with me instead of with either of you."

"Did you hear that, Bobtwo?" Threepio cooed. "You should be most grateful that master Cake has taken such an interest in protecting you."

"Come on, you two," Cake instructed. "Onto the label and let's make this quick."

It was only a few minutes more to the old man's house, and despite Cake's not giving his uncle's warnings much credence, they did have enough of an effect to make Cake feel a little hesitant as he knocked on the door. Despite his hopes, however, the knock was answered rather promptly by a white-haired man dressed in a shabby cloak, with a peace symbol hanging from his neck. Cake thought he'd better make the first introduction. "Nelson...? Hello, Nelson, it's me...Cupcake (Clockwinder, remember?"

At the mention of the name, the old man gave a joyful start of recognition. "Cake! Why, of course I remember. So good to see you, my young friend. It's been such a long time -- and look how you've grown! But tell me, young man, what brings you all the way out here?"

"This stamp. He wandered off, claiming he'd been owned before...by someone called Obegone Kenobi. Is he a relative of yours? My uncle said he probably left the hobby."

A distant look grew in the old man's eyes as soon as Cake mentioned the name. "Obegone!" he breathed. "Ob... Now that's a name I haven't heard in a long time. A long time." He chuckled. "No, he hasn't left the hobby. Not yet, at least."

"You know him?"

"Know him?" Nelson shot back, smiling. "Of course I know him. He's me. I haven't gone by the name Obegone since before you were born, though."

"Then this stamp does belong to you!" Cake concluded.

"Well, now, that's most peculiar," Nelson mused. "Can't recall ever using a stamp before. Not recently, anyway. Well, come inside, my friend, and let's have a look at you." He ushered the three into his home, then sat down in front of Bobtwo and began looking over the perforations.

Cake watched the old man with a mixture of fear and fascination. "Oh, yes," he remembered. "there was a message of some sort stored on him somehow -- that's why I thought he was yours. I stumbled across it earlier."

Nelson straightened up in surprise. "I seem to have found it."

They looked at the surface of the small stamp and saw the same face that Cake had seen earlier, but in a much longer message. "General Obegone Kenobi. I am Princess Kleinman of The Diplomat. I present myself in the name of the Alliance to Overthrow the Empire. You fought for our cause long ago in the IDA Wars, General Kenobi, and we beg you to aid us now in our most desperate hour. Information vital to the survival of the alliance is contained in this stamp. I ask that you see that this stamp be delivered safely to The Diplomat, where the information may be safely retrieved. You must help me, Obegone Kenobi! You're my only hope! I will be captured shortly, but they will learn nothing from me. Do not fail us." The face went hazy and vanished, leaving only the stamp itself.

Cake was awed by what he had heard, and turned towards the old man with a questioning look. Nelson gave no indication that the message had affected him at all, save to stare off into space and stroke his chin thoughtfully. "General Kenobi?" Cake asked, tentatively. "You fought in the IDA Wars?"

"Yes, Cake, I did, although it was a while back. I was a Press Writer once," he added, fixing a stare on the young man. "Like your father."

"My father?" Cake echoed. "But my father was simply a baker, like my uncle."

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RIGEL (continued)

"Or so your uncle wants you to believe. He never cared much for your father's adventurous spirit, and was always worried that you'd take after him if you knew too much about what he really was. No, your father was really a fellow Press Writer. He could address an envelope better than anyone else I ever knew. The Farce was strong in him. And he was a good friend." Nelson sighed. "All this reminds me, I have something for you." He turned and rummaged around in a chest. "Your father wanted you to have it when you got old enough -- ah, here it is."

He turned back to Cake and handed the young man a small, slender object. "What is it?" Cake asked.

"Your father's pensaber," Kenobi replied. "It was the formal weapon of a Press Writer, not as clumsy or random as a typer. A civilized weapon for a more civilized age."

"What's this 'Farce' you mentioned earlier?" Cake questioned.

"Let us just say that it is something which every Press Writer must deal with. It is a form of common understanding that flows through and sustains everyone in the hobby. Once you become aware of it, it is a potent tool. Knowledge of the Farce and how to manipulate it is what gives a Press Writer his power. You should learn the ways of the Farce too, Cake, if you are to come with me to The Diplomat."

"The Diplomat?" Cake exclaimed. "I'm not going to The Diplomat. I've got work to do -- I've even got to get home now..."

"I need your help, Cake. I can't do this alone. I'm getting too old for this sort of thing. This mission is too important -- you saw the message."

Cake thought about this, thought about his aunt and uncle, thought about how tedious it'd be to force people to read even more of this drivel by arguing the point. "Yeah, what the hell," he agreed. "Take me with you. I want to learn to be a Press Writer, just like my father."

"Fine," said Nelson. "First, we need to get to Moz Easley to arrange passage to The Diplomat..."

* * *

Cake stopped the label at the entrance to the subzine and glanced at the sign at the top of the page: "You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy." He looked back down at the title and turned to Nelson with an incredulous stare. "Do you really think we can find someone here capable of getting orders in to The Diplomat?"

The old man smiled, explaining, "Most of the good writers frequent this place." Cake still appeared skeptical. "Watch yourself, though," Nelson warned. "This place can be rough."

The younger man nodded and stepped into the dark interior of the subzine, musing as to the type of hobby members that would frequent such a shabby establishment. The stamps followed him, tentatively.

"Hey!" Cake peered through the gloom and saw a large, hulking figure behind the bar glaring in his direction. "We don't serve their kind here!"

Cake stared, managed a stammered reply. "Wh-what?"

"Your stamps. They'll have to wait outside. We don't serve 'minor denominations' here." He sloshed a drink down in front of a creature at the bar, then turned back and stared at Cake and the two stamps.

Cake turned to Threepio. "You'd better wait outside with the label. We don't want any trouble in here."

"I heartily agree with you, sir," responded Threepio, as he and Bobtwo beat a hasty retreat out to a more reputable section of the zine.

Cake made his way to the bar and slid in next to Nelson, who was busy talking with a tall, furry anthropoid. On the other side, slumped over on the bar and

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RIGEL (continued)

clutching wooden blocks in their hands, were two other creatures, sound asleep. Cake caught the bartender's eye and ordered a wapatuli, then turned his attention back to the snoozing creatures. He got the vague and unsettling feeling that he should somehow wake them...

He tried to shake the feeling by making sense of the conversation Nelson was having with the furry anthropoid. The bartender interrupted Cake's eavesdropping by setting his drink in front of him. As he reached forward to take it, Cake's elbow bumped the creature nearest him, who in turn bumped his neighbor. Cake swallowed hard on his drink as both creatures awoke with a start. The one who had been bumped looked at this watch and immediately began yelling at Cake in an incomprehensible language as he pointed and gesticulated at this timepiece.

The creature's companion came up beside his friend and grinned maliciously at Cake. "He doesn't like you," he said, with a deceptively friendly air.

"I'm sorry," Cake murmured as he tried to turn back to the bar.

The companion caught Cake roughly by the shoulder. "I don't like you, either," he continued, still smiling.

"Look, I said I was sorry," Cake protested, wishing desperately he were somewhere, or someone, else.

The companion leaned forward and jabbed a finger at the obviously bewildered young man. "You'd better watch yourself. I've been banned from twelve zinas!"

"I'll be careful," Cake stammered.

"You'll be stabbed!" the companion snarled, as he reached for the weapon at his side. Customers immediately backed away from the two, clearing a space as if on cue.

This brought the bartender charging clumsily out from behind his bar, waving his hands and shouting. "Hey! Hey! No typers in my place!"

Nelson's hand came to rest gently on Cake's shoulder. "Come, let me buy you a drink," he said to the two antagonists. "This little one isn't worth your trouble."

The trigger-happy companion stopped with his weapon half out of its holster and exchanged a look with the creature, then stepped back and looked Cake up and down. "You know, you're right. He doesn't look like he could play his way out of a paper bag." With that, the two turned and walked away, leaving Cake with his mouth open to taxi slowly indignant.

Nelson chuckled softly, and led the still astonished young man back to the large anthropoid to whom he had been talking. "Cake, this is Chewellis. He's first mate on an envelope that might suit our purposes." Chewellis grunted, and led the two to a table where a sharp-featured young man was leaning in a chair, his back to a wall.

"Han Reilly, captain of the Millenium Sultan. Chewie tells me you're looking for passage to The Diplomat?"

"That's right -- if it's a fast envelope," Nelson answered.

"Fast? You mean you've never even heard of the Millenium Sultan?"

Nelson smiled. "Should we have?"

"It's the envelope that made the Dalton run in two days! She's fast enough for you, old man. What's your cargo?"

"Only passengers. Myself, the boy, and two stamps -- and no questions asked."

Reilly appeared vaguely intrigued. "Local trouble?"

"Let's just say we'd like to avoid any Vocal entanglements."

"Hum -- that'll cost you extra." Reilly leaned back with his hands behind his head and performed some mental calculations. "It'll cost you ten free issues -- in advance."

Cake's sensibilities were offended by the thought of such a high price, offended enough that his assertiveness reappeared. "Ten free issues!" he exploded. "We could buy our own envelope for that much!"

Reilly sneered. "Sure, kid, but who's gonna address it for you? You?"

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RIGEL (continued)

"You bet I could! I'm not such a bad writer myself!" He turned to Kenobi. "Come on, we don't have to listen to this."

The old man remained intent on the writer. "We'll give you two free issues now -- and fifteen when we reach The Diplomat."

Reilly gave a long whistle and thought this over. "Seventeen...! That much is worth the risk. Alright, old man, you've got yourselves an envelope. Box 94, first thing tomorrow morning."

* * *

Cake and Nelson showed up promptly on time and were ushered into the P.O. Box by Chewellis. There rested the envelope that was the Millenium Sultan, a sight that failed in a significant way to live up to Cake's expectations. It looked as though it had been used in every conceivable way an envelope could be used, folded, spindled, and mutilated, and yet still make a tenuous claim to being an envelope. It bore a large red "THIRD CLASS" stamp directly on what Cake assumed was its front. When he spotted this, Cake could no longer keep his incredulity contained. "What a piece of junk!" he blurted out.

Reilly stepped out from behind the envelope, annoyed but still nonplussed. "Hey, she may not look like much, but I've made a few special modifications myself. She'll make Special Delivery faster than anything anyone else has." He smiled and turned back to the Millenium Sultan. "Now, if you'll just be patient, we'll be on our way as soon as I get a chance to--"

A bolt of purple ditto ink interrupted his anticipated list of repair work, as it took out a section of the wall of the P.O. Box. "On second thought," said Reilly as he quickly reached for the typer at his side, "we appear to be a little rushed, so if you'll kindly step aboard..." Cake, Nelson and the stamps hustled inside the envelope while Reilly fired off a quick round from his typer in the direction of the source of the ditto. "Chewie -- get us out of here!" he called, and he followed the passengers on board just as he caught sight of several storm letters charging in the entrance to the P.O. Box. Before any of them could bring their weapons to bear on the envelope itself, however, the Millenium Sultan was gone.

Reilly made his way to the front of the envelope and fell into the pilot's seat in front of Cake and Nelson. Chewellis grunted and indicated the report from one of the tracking devices. Reilly glanced at it quickly, then turned back to the other instruments. "I know...looks like two or three battle envelopes. They're going to try to box us in." He shouted back to Nelson, "What'd you two do to attract this kind of company?"

"Can't you outrun them?" Cake asked sarcastically. "I thought you said this thing was fast."

"Watch your mouth, kid, or you'll find yourself in the dead letter office!" Reilly snapped. "We'll be safe once we make the jump to Special Delivery. Wish I'd known you two were so popular, old man."

"Why?" Cake taunted. "Would you have been afraid to take us?"

"I sure as hell would have boosted your fare!" Reilly responded.

"How long before we can make the jump?" Nelson asked.

"We're still a little close to home. It'll be a few minutes before we can compensate."

"A few minutes!" moaned Cake. "At the rate they're gaining..."

"Making the jump to Special Delivery isn't like frosting cakes, kid!" Reilly shouted. "One wrong calculation and you could wind up in the middle of Le Front du Fraud. Better strap yourselves in. Could be rough if we get hit before the calculations are completed."

Back in the hold, Threepio and Bobtwo were both adhered to their spots, but both

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RIGEL (continued)

were also almost painfully aware of how close to home some of the Imperial shots were hitting. "Was this trip really necessary?" Threepio complained to Bobtwo. "I'd forgotten how much I detest the mails."

* * *

The Imperial Admiral entered the quiet conference room aboard the Doom Star, and made his way to the screen where the Governor was watching the vessel's progress. "We have entered the vicinity of The Diplomat, Governor. We await your order," he reported.

"Fine," the Governor answered as he stared up at the Admiral. A ponderous knock came from the other entrance to the room. "Leave me now. My orders will be relayed to you."

The Admiral left the room just as the other door opened, allowing Princess Kleiman to enter escorted by two armed guards, and followed by Darth Linsey. The Princess' haughty demeanor had been scarcely diminished, and she immediately approached the room's occupant.

"Governor Barch," she spat. "I should have expected to find you holding Linsey's leash. I thought I recognized the glare the moment I set foot on board."

"Charming to the last, eh, Lord Linsey? Since you're proving so uncooperative, Your Highness, we are, of course, forced to remove you from the hobby. Before your untimely demise, however, I thought it only fitting to allow you a last, fleeting glance at your own zine." He motioned the Princess over towards the screen. "I think it will make a perfect target for the demonstration of the power of this Doom Star."

The Princess whirled around. "No! You can't! The Diplomat is a peaceful zine, with no articles! You can't..."

"You would prefer another target, Your Highness? A less sedate one, perhaps? Then name the zine."

The Princess stared, shocked and uncomprehending, her face ashen. She finally whispered, "Anduin. They're in Anduin."

"There, Lord Linsey, you see? She can be reasonable. Proceed with the operation!"

"No!" the Princess shouted.

* * *

On board the Millennium Sultan, Reilly came back to the main hold where the rest of the party was assembled. "You can stop worrying about your friends now -- they'll never track us through Special Delivery. Told you I'd lose them."

Nelson stopped explaining something to Cake long enough to nod in acknowledgement, and Cake himself was too engrossed in what the old man was saying to pay attention to anything else.

"Hey, don't everybody thank me all at once," Reilly grouched.

"No, Cake," Nelson admonished. "You need to hold your pensaber like this, make your lines smoother and less choppy. Remember, the Farce should be omnipresent, and it will make itself known in what you write. It should both direct your writing and be directed by your writing. Now try again."

Cake bent over the paper again, and tried to manipulate the pensaber in the manner Kenobi had instructed. Try as he might, though, he couldn't get the unruly implement to behave correctly and it fell from his hands, which only brought a burst of accusing laughter from Reilly. "Some hocus-pocus religion and an archaic weapon are no replacement for a good typer at your side," he sneered.

Cake took umbrage at Reilly's taunts. "You don't believe in the Farce?"

"Kid," Reilly responded, "I've seen too many crazy things in this hobby to believe in some mystical 'Farce' that has some sort of control over things. I control my own destiny. And if I were you, I wouldn't follow this old man so blindly."

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RIGEL (continued)

Nelson just sailed at that and turned his attention back to Cake. "I suggest you try it again, Cake," he said in a reassuring tone of voice, "only this time with this on." Nelson slipped a blindfold over the surprised young man's eyes.

"But if I can't see, how am I going to write?" Cake protested.

"Your eyes can deceive you -- so don't trust them," Kenobi explained. "Let yourself go from your conscious thoughts, Cake. Remember, a good Press Writer doesn't think! Open your mind and let it drift without a thought...drift..." Almost automatically, Cake's hand firmly grasped the pensaber and began to move across the surface of the paper, completing one line, and then another. Cake dropped the pensaber in surprise, and tore the blindfold from his face to stare at what he had written.

"You see," Nelson said warmly, "you can do it."

"I'd call it luck," Reilly snorted.

"In my experience, my young friend," Nelson responded, "there's no such thing as chance in this hobby."

"You know," Cake murmured, "I did feel something. I could almost make sense of what I was writing."

Kenobi beamed proudly. "Congratulations, Cake. You've just taken the first step into a larger universe."

A speaker started beeping in the hold, and a light started flashing near where Reilly was sitting. "We're coming up on The Diplomat," he explained. "We'll be slowing down shortly to make the approach." He got up and made his way to the front of the envelope, followed closely by Nelson and Cake.

Reilly slumped down in his chair again next to Chewellis, his attention locked on the envelope's readouts. "Steady...steady...Okay, Chewie, now." Reilly eased up on a large letter next to his chair, and the envelope received a large jolt. Large chunks of paper and ink appeared out of nothing, hurtling past the ship accompanied by remnants of staples and mailing labels. The Millenium Sultan began shuddering violently.

"What the..." Reilly muttered, thoroughly surprised.

Cake strapped himself back in his seat, since they were obviously in for another rough time of things. "What's going on?" he questioned.

"We're back in Third Class," Reilly informed him, "but we've come out in the middle of one of the worst offal storms I've ever seen -- and it's not even listed in the census. According to the calculations, our position is correct. Only one thing's missing -- The Diplomat."

"But that's crazy!"

"I've triple-checked the charts, and this is the right address, but The Diplomat simply isn't here."

"What? That can't be!"

"I'm tellin' you, kid, there's no zine. From the readings I'm getting, it looks like The Diplomat has been simply...blown away. Tally."

Cake was stunned. "But...how?"

Kenobi came into the cockpit and sat down. "The Empire," he firmly declared.

"No," Reilly objected, shaking his head as he flipped switches. "Even all the back issues couldn't have done this. It would have taken a thousand zines massing a lot more firepower and invective than has ever existed in the hobby."

Suddenly, an alarm went off in the cabin, and a small, square form darted past the window and whizzed away. "Another letter," Reilly commented, "but I didn't get a chance to judge the type."

Kenobi was sure. "That's an Imperial Postcard."

"After him!" Cake cried. "If he reports that he saw us, we're in big trouble."

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RIGEL (continued)

"Not if I can help it." Han sprang into action. "Chewellis, jam its postage and lay in a pursuit course. But what's a postcard doing so far from base?"

"It must have gotten lost, been part of a mass-mailing or something," Cake offered.

Reilly responded confidently. "Well, he won't be around long enough to tell anyone about us -- we're almost on top of him. It looks like he's headed for that small novel up ahead."

Kenobi's voice softened, then gained intensity. "That's no novel. That's a *Dipzine!*"

"Can't be. It's too big to be a *Dipzine*. Isn't it...?" Han's voice trailed off as the realization sunk in.

Cake broke the silence. "I've got a very bad feeling about this..."

"Yeah, I think you're right, kid. Chewellis, full reverse!" Han sprang into action once again, only this time the envelope shook as he tried to turn it in the opposite direction.

Panic began to edge into Cake's voice. "We're still moving towards it! Do something!"

"Shut up, kid!" Reilly shouted. "It's too late -- we're caught in a tractor beam. They're dragging us in. We'd better shut down before we get too hot." He flipped more switches, and the shaking began to subside. He checked the typer in its holster. "Well, anyway, they're not going to get me without a fight..."

Kenobi put a gentle hand on Reilly's shoulder. "There are, you realize, alternatives to fighting..."

To be continued...

VIENNA: Sorry it's taken so long, fellas, but I wanted to enter into this thing with a suitably large splash. Rich, your check is in the mail; many thanks.

VIENNA to WORLD: BUT ESPECIALLY MOSCOW AND CONSTANTINOPLE: Okay, guys, you want to concede the press war to me on sheer guts?

BRUX to VIENNA: "Suitably large splash", huh? Wouldn't it be more accurate to call it a sensational masterpiece of press, that will be long remembered as a hobby classic?

BRUX to RIGEL: JUPL... No! I can't do it! It would be sacrilege!

BRUX to WORLD: Seriously, this group of guys is phenomenal! Let this issue of VD stand forever as a monument to Bob Sweeney, Dave Kleinman, Rich Reilly, Steve Knight, Ty Hare, Greg Ellis, and Nelson Heitzman -- seven of the greatest Press Writers ever assembled in one game. Keep it up, guys -- I'll go broke yet!

~~*****~~

Joan just called from LeperCon as I was typing this page. Got to speak with just about everyone still there, including Joan and Ken, Cathy Cuning (who has a really cute giggle), Mike Ehli, my favorite niece Samantha, and -- yup -- Terry Tallman. Sounds as though everyone had/is having a great time. LeperCon joins PudgeCon on my list of events to attend, at some unspecified but eagerly anticipated later date.

Speaking of Tallman, it seems he is having problems coming up with derogatory things to say about me in North Sealth, West George. His latest issue bemoans this sudden lack of inspiration, so I'm sure a few of his readers can come up with a juicy quote or two for him, hey? Terry came up with what has to be the quote of the century in a recent issue when he said, "I would never recommend VD to a rocky looking for games either as an original player or as an opportunity to standby."

The RIGEL game began just over a year ago in VI -- as an all-novice game.

41

The Gossip Column

From James Woodson (2/6/84):

BRUX,

It's been much too long since I wrote you, so I'll really have to catch up.

The Anniversary issue was incredible, but then you've probably heard that. I'm glad you filled the folks in on the Finchley Central stuff. I enjoyed reading it in Acolyte and Denver Glont. However, how dare you use the word "Raging" in the title of that article!?! You don't see me writing stuff entitled "The Doom of Nuclear Warfare" or such, do you? I expect an apology!

Oh, am I a "loyal, screaming Doomie" by definition? Loyal, perhaps. Screaming, never! I might shout or cry, but never do I scream!

I share Jim Finley's sentiments about your BeethovenCon play. I began reading it, saw where it was leading, and stopped. I never did finish it. Obviously, Larry didn't take much offense, and I'm glad. But I don't think it was kosher to write an entire zine with the sole purpose of attacking someone's character.

On Rail Baron vs. Empire Builder. I've played RB many times (and own it) and EB once (at Thanksgiving ByrneCon). I prefer Rail Baron. Certainly EB has more flexibility in the lines that can be created, but I think the one weakness is that with the "choose where you want to go" (within limits), instead of "you're going here!" as in RB, destination rule, you can avoid any area of the map you want to for the entire game. (Did I get all of those commas right?) Thus you might never have to ride another player's lines. You can't do that for long in RB.

As co-founder of the "Bob Olsen Toady Association", I must protest the unfair treatment afforded "The Great One" in the pages of VD #90. Specifically in Mike Mazzer's "Doomie of the Year" essay and your "Elements of Persuasion" article. Twice, Mazzer uses the phrase, "...and Olsen, well, enough said" in referring to Bob's alleged poor diplomatic skills and writing ability. You, in discussing deceiving someone, say, "Olsen, on the other hand...well, never mind."

From reading these passages those Doomies who are unaware of Bob's vast diplomatic prowess might mistakenly believe that he is a poor player and easily fooled. Please set the record straight. Any persons wishing to toady to Bob and join the BOTA can write myself or Kathy Byrne for membership.

The contest idea is a great one. I've already identified 18 of them! I must protest, though, about the free clue you gave me. Honestly! Ed Wrobel was a giveaway anyway! Anyone who can't identify his quote is really "deadwood".

Anyone who wants to trade information can write me: P.O. Box 18645, Corpus Christi, TX 78418.

I think Steve Knight deserved to win Doomie of the Year. Too bad I didn't write an essay about him.

I don't agree with you about anarchy in the hobby, but who really wants to discuss it?

I finally got around to reading the "Shep Rose" letter. I wonder who wanted to take the time to put that whole thing together? Then again, who would be stupid enough to print up something every month and mail it out to 50-100 people just so they can lose money, and a Friday night? (Besides you and me, that is.)

Bravo! to RIGEL. Keep up the great press, guys! How about some more "Jeopardy"?

Bruce, how about writing me a letter sometime, eh? I'd like to know what you think of RM, now that I'm getting the hang of it.

((I think it's one of the more enjoyable zines around, and by the time this is printed by letter to you will probably be published already.

In my opinion, the "Shep Rose" letter was one of the most entertaining pieces of writing ever published in the pages of a dipzine, and I hope that the author will

write some more. It seems that some people just can't appreciate a good hoax. Sigh. I dislike it when one hobby member attacks another, and then tries to pass it off as humor. I have seen many examples of this in recent months. Yet I will not back down at all regarding the play about Feery. To me, that is good, solid satire, and if something like it were written about me, I assure you I'd laugh along with everyone else. I've heard several people criticize it now (you, Finley, and Langley!), but if I had to do it over again, I'd publish it exactly as I did in VD #38. Sorry you took it as an attack on Larry's character; see his letter later this issue.

Perhaps the latest installment of "Pilgrim and the Shipmaster" made up for the other comments about Olsen, eh? While I don't think anyone ever accused Bob of a lack of writing ability, he certainly is lots of fun to needle. Believe me when I tell you that long after I am dead and gone, I shall be cheerfully picking on Bob Olsen. He's just so...lovable!))

From Steve Langley (2/14/84):

Dear Bruce,

Your reaction to my support of the diptax quite surprised me. You, an anarchist? Will rinders never cease. Here I've always thought of you as an independent but generally hobby supportive type. Down with boardman Numbers! Down with the Orphan Service!

Actually, I can't argue the case for Boardman Numbers, Miller Numbers, Cmbudsmen Service, Lagoon Committee, et. al. I do feel that the orphan service fills a need that is greater than just that felt by the few whose games are...lost? Dropped? in mid game. To put the Orphan Service on a pay-as-you-use footing, the orphans would not only have to pay the original GM his fee (maybe as little as \$10, but generally a bit more) but would then have to pay to find another GM. In such a case, the most likely reaction would be to drop the game entirely. So? What loss? You may ask.

The loss is the loss of the occasional neo who decides that the whole thing is not worth the candle. Perhaps you feel that there are so many neos that diptax can afford the loss. Personally, I don't feel that way. The loss of a neo is a loss to each of us in the hobby, and the Orphan Service goes a long way toward minimizing such losses (at least through the interrupted/dropped game route). As such, it is a service to the hobby at large, not just the people whose games are saved from oblivion. As a service to the hobby at large, I feel it is worthy of support by the hobby at large.

In no way do I intend that such feelings should imply that I'm into organization or think that committees and game boards and federations and... are necessary to diptax. I don't think that's the case at all. I think we can get along quite comfortably with volunteers for all the services, yourself included. I just think that some of the volunteers should send money.

((By now you have read my somewhat watered-down stance as I stated it in my reply to Kathy's letter in VD #92. Yet, I still do not feel that anybody in the hobby should have to pay anything to a hobby service when he is not buying directly. I know, I know. That doesn't solve the very real problem you describe. If anyone in the hobby realizes the importance of having a steady influx of novices, I do, and I agree with your sentiments. I confess to the fact that I don't have a satisfactory solution. Perhaps we could organize a committee to set fire to the hair of GMs who abdicate their responsibilities? I dunno. But forcing people to pay for the shortcomings of others is not the answer, in my opinion, and I object to it on principle.

Finally, I regard my self as very much a "hobby supporter" type. I just don't view hobby organizations as constructive to the hobby itself. But I'm going to take much more criticism on this later this issue, so I won't move further on...

From Doug Beyerlein (2/5/84):

Dear Bruce,

VB #90 arrived a week or more ago. I don't know how you continue to put out so much in each issue of VD. Impressive.

A couple of weeks back you asked if I knew of any zines that have hit the 2000 page mark. I have never seen any statistics on the total number of pages published and so I didn't answer immediately. However, in thinking it over I can think of a couple of zines that might qualify. Specifically, I guess that Walt Buchanan's Hoonier Archives and John McCallum's Broddingnag may have reached the 2000 page mark, but I don't know for sure. The next time I talk to Buchanan I will see if he knows for sure.

Thanks for the plug in #90 for my adjudication pamphlet. Since I sent you a complimentary copy I am returning the \$2.00 (in stamps) that you sent me for a copy.

I read your reply to Steve Langley's letter in #90 with interest. I see that you have joined the ranks of Tallman and company in proclaiming anarchy as the only true way for the hobby. Bruce Liney toadies to no organization -- good for you. But is it good for the hobby? I wonder.

This hobby seems to be in a prolonged period of adolescence. Everyone is out to prove that they are individuals. There is nothing wrong with that when it comes to publishing a zine and running games. But at the same time the hobby seems to be limiting itself in terms of possible growth. The game and the hobby have a great potential, but no one seems interested or capable of exploiting it. Most vocal members of the hobby seem to be intent on expressing their individuality at every opportunity they get and that unfortunately includes shooting down everyone else's ideas. That results in the hobby stagnating. Maybe that doesn't bother you because you are obviously achieving your hobby goals through VD, but someday you will leave the hobby and a new Bruce Liney will come along. The cycle repeats itself. Maybe you say great, but for some of us who appear to be doomed to participate in this hobby until our dying days, we wonder what could be possible if this hobby ever gets a chance to mature. I must admit that while I am hopeful I am not optimistic.

((Thanks for your input on the 2000-page question, and for the complimentary copy of your adjudication pamphlet.

I don't quite understand your analogy between anarchy and adolescence. You see, I feel the way I do not merely for selfish reasons, as your comments seem to imply, but because I truly believe that individuality is good for the whole hobby. Let me elaborate. You have read Terry Tallman's editorial about the very highly organized Chess hobby. There are rules and procedures and, it would appear, committees for everything. And from time to time I see suggestions for this sort of standardization within our hobby. Several times in the past five years, for example, I've read where someone thinks the hobby ought to have a standardized set of house rules. Other people seem intent on organizing people just for the sake of organization. While these voices seem to be in the minority now, I dread the day that they are not. I enjoy the variety of different GMing and publishing styles that the hobby currently has to offer, and I truly believe it would be a tragedy (of sorts) if the hobby progresses to the stage postal Chess has reached, where people are pressured or forced to conform to a hobby-wide standard.

Right now, anyone can join a game tailored pretty much to his liking, and anyone with the energy and resources can start up a zine, and within certain reasonable bounds no one is really concerned with the way other people do things. While of course this leads to occasional off-beat GMing practices, or even to orphaned games by fly-by-night GMs, overall I still find it desirable. The debates can rage so long as people are interested, and no one has to worry that he is going to have to conform to a standard not to his liking. I personally enjoy the lack of restrictions we have in postal Diplomacy, and I feel that this situation is beneficial to the hobby as well.

44

I guess I'm not expressing this argument very well at all, am I? But look at things this way. After over four years of publishing, I am still running games the way I want to run them, and for that matter the way most of my players want them run. There is a sizable element of people out there who consider my GMing techniques to be "wrong". Some of these people even hold high positions in the hobby right now. Thank god that this isn't postal chess, where I could be ostracized, forced to change, or condemned by some central organization with enough clout to destroy my system (or publisher) who doesn't conform to their ideas. Because there are people out there who in my opinion would that if they could. And this scenario applies not only to myself, but to anyone who chooses to be "different".

1984 has arrived in the real world. I shall work to ensure that it never arrives in postal Diplomacy, so long as I am in the hobby, and that is going to be for a long, long time.))

From Rich Reilly (2/10/84):

Dear ERUX,

With a little help from Steve Knight, who sent me a copy of your letter in Politesse, I've finally come to a conclusion, of sorts, concerning the recent letter-butcherings. Actually, my feelings are mixed: on the one hand, I tend to agree with those who say you exercised poor judgement in your "retaliation" to Ed's editing of your letter. On the other hand, I believe Ed got carried away sending letters to all the Doomsies. Obviously, Ed wanted to make sure we all knew what a horrible person you are. Or perhaps he didn't think you'd reply publicly if he only sent his letter to you. (?)

What I'm wondering, ERUX, is how and why your "poor judgement" came about? It occurs to me that you might have in fact been quite irritated by Ed's original "act of mischief". I don't doubt that I'd be upset at someone making fun of something serious which I wrote. Indeed, I'm certain that I would be. Perhaps you were also, upon seeing Ed's butchering of your letter, and so decided to retaliate. If such is the case, I can't blame you for it, although I still think you exercised poor judgement in not making it clear to all that you'd edited Ed's letter.

But then, you've already admitted as much, haven't you?

So why don't you and Ed just apologize to each other, admit that you've both used some poor judgement as of late, and forget the whole business...including the double-ordered unit argument! Neither of you is ever going to win that one, both of you being convinced that you're right, so why bother with it?

A few other comments:

I tend to agree with you on the matter of dip-taxes, but I don't feel like discussing it. Also, like you and Kathy Byrne, I'd rather get a letter in the mail... I love letters, both writing them and receiving them. That's one reason I love PSM Diplomacy...and one reason I love my typewriter.

To Steve Knight: SPI better than AH?!!? No way. SPI had nothing to compare to such AH greats as Third Reich, Kingmaker, Bismarck, or... (need I bother to say it) Diplomacy. SPI did put out some good stuff, though -- a few of their games were favorites of mine -- and it was quite sad to see them go under...and even sadder to see TSR get hold of them.

2000 pages of VD? Congratulations!

((Thanks. I'm sending you a copy of an article which appeared on page 1 of VD #58, which may help you to understand my occasional lapses of judgement. Any other Doomsie who is interested and wants to see it should just ask. ~))

While I agree with your criticisms of me, I wish that you and everyone else would stop picking on Ed Probel. So far as I am concerned, he has done nothing wrong whatsoever in this latest flap, and that includes his mass-mailing. While it appears that I may be just about his only defender, I am certainly not afraid to take an unpopular stance. It was Ed's right to send his letter to anyone he wants, and I

do not see why anyone would object to this. Therefore, I disagree with your suggestion that he apologize to me.

You know, though, you seem to be making the whole thing into something more serious than it really is. I did not get irritated by Ed's butchery of my letter. I think it was very funny (as is much of Ed's stuff), and I laughed when I first heard about it (from Gary Coughlan over the phone). My "retaliation" was merely intended as a humorous comeback, and I'm sure Ed took no real offense. As you can see by the following letter...))

From Ed Wrobel (2/21/84):

Bruce--

How come you say it's my own medicine if you also admit you shouldn't have presented my letter as you did? Isn't this a contradiction? Most of my open letter was devoted to explaining the differences in our approaches. Didn't you read it? You seem to be conceding that the differences are important but also asserting that they are unimportant! This sounds like a job for Mark Berch!! (You can never get an apologist when you need one!)

((Our correspondent is a noted editor and master of politesse from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The apparent contradiction of which he speaks requires little clarification. His "own medicine" refers to the act of altering a letter so that its meaning is the opposite of that intended by the author. The differences in presentation, which were important, are that in one instance the editor expunged his ellipses while in the other, he did not. That, and other indications in the latter instances that such editing had been performed, have already been noted and acknowledged in these pages.

Our correspondent is assured that his letter was read in its entirety.))

From Charo Edison (2/21/84, and that's a Freudian typo; his name is Edison):

Dear

How many Jewish mothers-in-law does it take to screw in a light bulb? None. They just sit in the dark and suffer!

How many anarchists does it take to screw in a light bulb? All of them!

Why do ducks have flat feet? From stamping out forest fires!

Why do elephants have flat feet? From stamping out burning ducks!

Why do elephants fly upside-down? To trip the birds, silly!

Why did the first monkey fall out of the tree? Because it was dead! Why'd the second monkey fall out of the tree? Because it was dead! Why did the third monkey fall out of the tree!?! Peer pressure.

((How many Jewish mothers-in-law does it take to swallow one of Charo's jokes? None -- they ain't kosher. How many Charos does it take to change a light bulb? Non -- there is nothing brilliant about him whatsoever! Why do I print stuff like this? Sadism. Why do Charos jokes end up as litter for the floor of my canary's cage? Guzz they're for the birds!))

From Larry Peery (1/21/84):

Dear ERUX:

Let's see. Can I be brief, clear, and concise? Probably not. Oh well, what's new? Can I get a message through to the New York Dippy crowd? Probably not. Well, what's new about that?

I was going to wait and reply to what you sent me in the next Xero but I decided to respond now. Please print it as is or don't.

As I noted in my last letter your BeethovenCon play didn't bother me. I thought it was kind of cute. At least it showed some creative talent.

I appreciate Kane's kind words in his Doomic of the Year article. I think I'll make him official Xenologic stats man. I like the idea of April 15th as Peeriday. We'll make it a paid holiday and we can enter it under undeserved income on our diptax forms.

I'm more concerned about your response to Langley's letter.

Your position was interesting and I suppose Lenin or Mao would have liked it (the anarchist approach). It could be rebutted in many ways at many levels. With no effect, I think. You are putting forth what is, I think, a gut feeling. I'm not sure why you have it but it certainly isn't unknown in our world (real or Dippy). But raising the discussion from an intellectual debate to a jihad is hardly needed. Now, let's see if I call your Fire Department, your Police Department, etc. and tell them that when you call for help they are to discuss your paying for your needs directly before they provide the services you need...well, maybe you get the idea. I tend to stand by an old, old analogy. I think FDR used it when talking about the Lend Lease. It was called the "fire hose speech." Look it up sometime.

I guess I take kind of a passive attitude when people say bad things about me and my ideas. It's like water off a duck's back (sorry, Don Williams). But I happened to read some things John Boardman wrote about me in Graustark when I was filing away old issues from the Don Miller Collection. I read John's drivel, laughed, thought about what I was doing and why, and went back to work. As they say, those who can, do. Those who can't, preach.

And, well, if you want to quote TNP ((Tallman?)) as a source of inspiration, OK. There are worse possibilities, I suppose.

Your finally (...) comment bothered me. If something like this is rubbing raw nerves that badly then maybe you need a dose of my next proposal, a Peeribathical. What's that? Simple. I think every pubber should take an annual, biannual, or whatever, holiday. Many, many others have proposed that idea. I know after three years of Xeno I could use one. Instead I'm thinking about going to DipCon in Dallas. The waters of the Pedranales are a good cure. If not the chili will clear you out. I hear.

Remind me to never go to a movie with you.

I'm most concerned about Jim Finley's letter. Some people probably did see it the same way Jim did. Some people who read it here thought that. I didn't. But I have weird tastes in Dippy literature. Obviously, so do you.

Still, that is not the kind of reaction I wanted to the Diptax proposal. I wanted to promote discussion, even raise some consciousness levels (if possible), stir up a bit of concern about the other guy's welfare. Instead people are building walls, cutting lines of communication, and engaging in other kinds of intertribal warfare. There are only a few hundreds of us, happily enough for justifying this kind of nonsense.

I have no solution for any of this. I'm upset that Jim cancelled his sub to VD. He's the kind of reader you need and yours is the kind of zine he needs to read (gets his adrenalin going). Sigh, so much better than sitting around like a bump wondering if A Paris should go to Picardy or Burgundy in 1901. For you, I suggest two things. Listen to a musical called 1776 and then listen to one called You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown. That's strange but some of my exotic cures do work. Ask Baumeister.

I waved a flag and you tried to throw a lot of bull. Sigh, ever seen a bullfight? You can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she responds to that question.

In fact, there's a question for you to ask the readers of VD. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A BULLFIGHT? WOULD YOU WANT TO? WHY? WHY NOT? Bet you get a lot of interesting responses, especially from people who know nothing about the sport or art of bullfighting.

I'm listening to Don Carlos by Verdi, done by the Met, as I type this. It's

difficult to concentrate on this letter as I listen to the opera. Have you ever heard of it? Ever seen it? I recommend it to you. There is much in Verdi for any serious Dippy player or hobbyist.

Finally, I've read almost as much crap about you in the hobby press over the last year as you've probably read about me. The difference is, I guess, that in all our personal contacts (or hobby contacts or whatever you call them) I've had nothing but a helpful professional rapport with you. I've enjoyed working with you on the few projects we've done together. I will not let an issue, any issue, or anything anyone else writes, or even anything you write or publish, change that. We may not agree on philosophical things but that hasn't stopped us from working together on projects of mutual interest. That's what counts. ((Amen.))

So, when I see Finley I'll kick him in the butt (remember, he's the Marine, I'm the over-sized TNT pillow) and try and pound some sense into his head. I appreciate his friendship and support but he's got to learn that all the wolves with big teeth and smiles aren't harmful. Merely worrying the lambs among us.

I hope there will be no more cancelled subs to VD over all this. All this? Over this tempest in a teapot. Over this glorious isle called verbiage. Whoops, sorry Willy.

((Well, maybe we can make up for the loss of one Doonle by gaining another one. Will you accept a mutual sub between Xenc and VD?

You know, your dignity and style allow you to come out of this fracas (?) looking like a white knight. I don't agree with many (most?) of your proposals, the diptax included, but at the same time I don't agree with those who seem to reject any of your ideas out of hand because they come from you. You and I are fundamentally at opposite ends of a spectrum; you the hobby organizer, me the anarchist. Yet I respect your ideas even if I don't agree with them, especially the way you respond to criticism, and I like you. Anyone who reads the third-to-last paragraph of your letter and doesn't respect you should go back and read it again. And again. And again, till it sinks in.

Specifically regarding the diptax, I do not agree with your analogy to the use of real-life emergency services such as the Police and Fire Departments. This is a postal hobby and we do not have any life-threatening situations that must be dealt with on an instantaneous basis. Please see also my reply to Steve Langley in this issue.

Doug Beyerlein wrote an article for VD a few years ago, proposing the idea of a vacation away from Postal Diplomacy. He suggested August as a good time for this. In my opinion, this should be a personal decision on the part of each publisher (I didn't say each hobby member, as ultimately the GMS and publishers would determine whether this could be effected). Of course, allowing each publisher to decide if and when to take time off from his hobby would mean that the whole hobby would not shut down all at once, but that's a lesser evil than forcing a "vacation" on people who don't want it. As for myself, I go at a pretty relaxed pace anyway (I often don't do any typing for a whole week after publishing) and don't really feel the need to take off any more time from the hobby than I already do. But I wouldn't object if others felt differently.

I know just enough about bullfighting to realize that it isn't either an art or a sport. Selfish cruelty is somewhat closer to the mark.))

((And room for a quick plug for one of Larry's projects that I do support: the Don Miller Memorial Award, for outstanding service to the Diplomacy hobby. Send your nomination to Larry Peery, Box 8416, San Diego, CA 92102 by April 1, and include a few sentences on why you are nominating the person. Rod Walker was last year's very deserving winner. The election will be held in mid-April and May. Any person in the hobby (other than those on the Nominations Committee) may nominate any other person. Services to the hobby in 1983 should be considered in making your nomination.))

From Mark Paul:

BRUX,

Please thank Don Del Grande for making clear the circumstances of Chaosium - Avalon Hill as far as Runequest goes. I was more addressing Dragon Pass and ELRIC, but editorial rights for Runequest remain in the hands of Chaosium, and my cartoon was a bit of a cheap shot (sorry about that).

To make up for it I would have to admit that the designers of Chaosium are probably the best in the hobby currently, and the arrangement with Avalon Hill is a good idea. I had several letters from Doonies about my comments concerning The Struggle of Nations. All have said the same thing. It's the most underrated game on the market. Hardcore gamers looking for a treat could invest their money in worse. Avalon Hill's edition of Dragon Pass has a semi-rigid mapboard. This is an improvement over the Chaosium's paper mapboard. (It's the best fantasy wargame around.) If you look in the latest edition of The General, Freedom in the Galaxy is the featured game. I'm glad it's getting the attention it deserves. In the column "What Have You Been Playing Lately" Titan tops the list of most played games. It looks like the Titanmania of this summer has yet to die.

((With all this hoopla over Struggle of Nations, I may just have to break down and give it a try!))

From Dan Young (excerpts):

BRUX,

My compliments on Voice of Doom issues #90 and 91. Although many Dippy players might find most of the material irrelevant, I find it quite entertaining -- the humor items alone are worth the price.

...Did you know that your letter column is a great advertisement for selling back issues (for me, at least)? After reading your letter column, I figured I had to steal, er, borrow the money to purchase some. (My mother would like to have you arrested for contributing to the delinquency of a minor, what with all the money I'm "throwing away" on Diplomacy, but since I turned 18 last December, I'd say you're pretty safe.)

Well, gotta go now. But I anxiously await the Voice of Doom issues -- God only knows what I'd do in Calculus without them.

PS. Are there any other requirements/fees to be a standby player besides having a sub? If not, I would like to be added to the standby list.

((You're on it, then! And I'm glad to help out with contributing to the delinquency of a minor any time by turning 'em into Doonies!))

Calculus should be very handy for you now. You can learn how to integrate all the negotiations from your fellow players so that you can differentiate between the lies and the truths...))

From Ronald Brown (2/5/84, excerpt):

Dear Bruce,

Not much to respond to these days, as I rarely have time to read zines thoroughly. You might like to know though that I told Kathy Byrne that you know the Rulebook better than anyone else in the hobby. Whenever you make a "controversial" ruling, I check out the Rulebook, et voila, BRUX is right again! That whole argument over "double orders" is absurd, as the Rulebook defines "hold" and "support" as different orders and then says that ambiguous orders are not allowed. So, what's the problem? I just can't follow the convoluted arguments that claim two separate and contradictory orders are not ambiguous. Guess what's obvious to you and me is not so obvious to everyone.

((Whoa there! I don't claim to know the Rulebook better than anyone else in the hobby, and some of my "controversial" rulings are dictated by houserules rather than the Rulebook. Nonetheless, your comments specifically about double orders are on target. Some of the loudest criticism of my decision has come from people who, it must be suspected, are going to disagree with any GMing decision in a VD game (else why not criticize all the other GMs who view "holding" and "supporting" as two distinct orders?). Kind of like the people who tear down a Peeriproject just because Peery proposed it...but you know I don't mind all the discussion it generated!))

From Mark Berch (2/28/84):

Dear BRUK,

On the issue of summoning an ombudsman, I agree 100% with Kathy and disagree with you.

An ombudsman system can and should provide two functions. The first is the opportunity to reverse an error made by the GM. Your policy does not compromise that function, since you probably have a good sense of when you might be overruled.

However, the ombudsman system can provide a second function. It can give the players a sense of protection, a feeling that their rights are not entirely at the whim of the GM, a feeling of confidence that they do have access to an appeal route. For them to have this confidence fully, they must have the assurance of appeal if they so desire. What we are talking about here primarily is peace of mind, the security of knowing that protection is available if needed. This benefit accrues even if never used. Presumably, one sleeps at night a trifle easier, knowing that the fire department is functional, even if one never uses its services.

Yes, of course this risks delay, since a delay will normally occur. It is impossible to quantify either the above benefit, or the harm caused by the delay. My own feeling, however, is that the majority of your players would see the balance the same way Kathy and I do -- viz., delay is a modest price to pay for the benefit. If other players believe the request to be frivolous, they have ways of settling the score. The fear of such revenge would easily dissuade most frivolous requests.

((Sorry, I still disagree entirely. First of all, let me reiterate (again) the fact that it is only in very rare situations that I would refuse to call for an ombudsman, so generally speaking, players have the "protection" you speak of for any legitimate requests. Secondly, I've already stated, and now do so again, that I do not view the role of the ombudsman as a third party who makes the players more comfortable by his (potential or actual) presence. To my way of thinking, if someone does not trust my judgement as a GM, he should not be playing here in the first place. The function of the ombudsman in a VD game is to render a conclusive ruling in those situations in which neither the player nor the GM is clearly in the wrong. There are of course many such "grey areas" in the adjudication of Diplomacy games. Remember that I do not recommend that newer GMs, or even some more experienced ones, follow my lead in this regard. I think that all new GMs, and many others, would do well to guarantee an ombudsman on request. But there are a few GMs out there (Coughlan, e.g.) under whom I would be perfectly at ease as a player, even without that assurance. And I am confident that many (or most) of my players feel the same way about me -- else why would they be playing here with that houserule in effect?

Finally, you have totally ignored one of my arguments against the use of an ombudsman in situations where the player has clearly erred: that in the unlikely circumstance of an incorrect ruling (which is a possibility, albeit a faint one), not only would the game in question be harmed, since I would be obligated to implement an incorrect ruling, but a bad precedent would be set for similar future protests. See my reply to Kathy in #90 for more about this matter.))

From Samantha's Mommy (2/10/84 through 2/17/84):

Dear BRUX,

I'll start a letter to you and there's no telling how long it will take to finish it. It's not really true what I told you on the phone about not having much time to write letters. It's just that I talk to you often enough that almost any news in a letter will be outdated by the time you receive it. I now have three VD issues to reply to and that takes a lot of time and concentration and inspiration, which don't always occur at once. But we'll give this a try.

Samantha enjoyed the birthday card you sent and wants you to have this balloon left over from her party. She's having me send them out to people who've been nice to her.

The "Vanishing Leprechaun" is bound to be a hit at LepreCon. Thanks! It will definitely be mounted on cardboard before then. That's a good idea. Loved the wrapping job on the package. What a unique way to use old sines!

Looks like Ken is planning to answer the Dippy Spaces Quiz. If he does, it will be a first, and probably a last. He takes his name, Deadwood, very seriously.

Bruce, you really must set a better example for Samantha. She doesn't understand why, since you eat cat food, I won't let her eat dog food. She can play with it, hand it to the dogs, spread it out all over the deck, even sit in it, but as soon as it goes in her mouth, the game is over. At \$9.21 for 50 pounds, dogfood is a cheap playstuff for a kid, but it's definitely not for eating.

OK, starting with the most recent VD and working backwards.

Did you realize that the Log of the Project Titanic is cyclic?

Ken and I were both horrified that Voice of Doom has chosen to endorse Ronald Reagan for President. We thought of cancelling our sub, but decided not to be -- shall we say -- pigheaded about the issue. I assume this means you will give all Doomies equal space for the endorsement of other favorite candidates. I hereby join John Michalski (in what is probably a once-in-a-lifetime agreement) in promoting JESSE JACKSON for PRESIDENT. Ken plans to support whatever Democrat runs against Reagan. He wishes for the good old days when he could actually cast a vote for a good candidate rather than against a bad one.

And you even had the gull to invite Ronnie to Lake George? Well, just tell him to bring his own steaks.

The Pilgrim and the Dipmaster was wonderful!
Issue #90;

So Samantha nominated me for Doomie of the Year. I was proud to be in such an exclusive field of candidates. And it's nice to see that the best man won. Please stop teaching my kid big words like "darcimonoriously." She can't even say "papa" yet (it comes out as "dada"). And no luck yet with getting her to say "BRUX."

Who does Steve Knight think he is, anyway, signing his letter "Love and bunny foo foo"? That's my line! If he likes it that much, he can just come out here and sing it to Samantha for a few hours. That'd teach him!

Love the 2000 Pages of Juicy Quotes Contest. Four identified, 96 to go. ☹️
And last but not least, #89;

In response to Greg Ellis' letter, I have a right to decide not to defend myself against a killer, but Samantha isn't old enough to make such a decision for herself, so I would definitely defend her. I was amazed when she was born how strong the mother/child bond is, and how quickly it develops. It's probably even stronger than the bond between a husband and wife. I knew right away that I would do anything to protect her, and I'm sure most mothers feel the same way. Greg, you raised a good point, and I'm glad you brought it up.

I'll get this in the mail before another VD shows up with more issues to comment on.

((Thanks for another darcimonoriously entertaining letter. And I'll buy the steaks at Lake George for Uncle Ronnie.))

From Jeff Noto (2/20/84):

Dear BRUX,

Yes, another letter. The main purpose of this thing is to send you the enclosed picture of Jennifer reading her favorite dipzine. That's me in the picture as well...

To Mark Paul: re your comments on Flattop (VD #91, p. 17). Daniel Webster was known to show up at many speaking engagements drunk (although these events occurred during the twilight of his career). Perhaps Winston Churchill would've been better.

Feast or famine dept.: In addition to working 40 hours a week as a motel desk clerk, I'm also employed as a stock clerk at a local supermarket. I work 25-30 hours a week there. Yes, that is a lot of hours, but the bills must be paid.

Could you please send me Jeff Punches' address? ((Done.)) Maybe he can stop by and see me next time he's in the area. Speaking of which, you are welcome to visit Lisa, Jenny and me at any time.

PS. Do you still answer your phone calls with "The Voice of Doom!" now?

((Nah. People thought it was weird, and I like people to realize that I'm absolutely normal.

With all those hours you work, it's surprising you have time to write any letters.

Loved the photo of Jenny holding up her copy of Voice of Doom! It's been added to my collection.))

From Ronald Brown (excerpt):

Dear Bruce,

...We greatly enjoyed the "Pullet Surprise" in VD 91. Reminded me of the bloopers I saw as a teacher. The only one that comes to mind occurred on a grade 11 final literature exam in which the students were asked to discuss the symbolic structure of Orwell's 1984. One lad wrote: "I liked this book a lot. I never knew there was cymbals in books before." I probably scribbled something in the margin like, "What, no drums?" He probably went on through life thinking I was weird. A lot of kids never understood my sense of humour.

((A lot of kids never understood mine, either. You should have seen some of the looks I got when I once told a class that their homework for Christmas vacation was to hand in the answers to all of the questions on pages 331-338. (The textbook had around 280 pages.) Oh well.))

From Jake Halverstadt (3/7/84):

My dear Mr. President:

...I must admit I was rather disappointed to see The Voice of Doom endorse this Reagan fellow for the presidency. Can we expect VD to switch to a policy of running only "gunboat Diplomacy" games in the future -- if you're serious about getting Reagan to sub, you'd better consider it -- that sort of game is obviously better suited to the Reaganistas.

You say you "look at the Soviet military machine growing ominously on the horizon, and tremble in (your) boots." Has it occurred to you that people in the Soviet Union, the rest of Europe -- indeed, the rest of the world -- might look at the booming American military machine and the cowboy at its throttle, and do a bit of quaking in their clogs?

We've seen what Reagan thinks he can get away with -- Lebanon, Grenada, Central America to name a few -- when he is facing reelection. The thought of a second Reagan term, with no accountability save impeachment to the voters, scares the bejeebers out of me.

The Voice of Doom is a journal of Diplomacy -- show me the diplomatic achievements of the Reagan administration. I am led to remember the words of John F. Kennedy, when he observed that the eagle on the Seal of the United States carried the olive branch of peace in one talon, and a bundle of arrows in the other. Kennedy pledged to pay equal attention to each, and I'd feel a lot better if our current president would review those words.

Nor am I pleased with Reagan's handling of domestic affairs. I am serious in my contention that "Reaganomics" will prove to be the foundation of a class struggle -- a divisive, possibly bloody civil war between the haves and have-nots -- that could take place within the decade. That American military machine continues to thrive, along with a foreign aid policy that seems to be based on military rather than social concerns. This irresponsible misallocation of fiscal resources comes at the expense of American education, industrial revitalization, and the much-needed repair of our infrastructure.

Bruce, I really think it's time to abandon, not stay the course. We're supposed to be a nation by, for and of all the people. But it seems, more so than ever, that the rich get richer and the rest of us take it up the ass. I see too many people -- young, intelligent, innovative people -- forced to make do, while the entrenched powers consolidate their gains. If this is true in a dynamic state like Colorado, Doomies in such places as the Northeast and Great Lakes states must be even more aware of the problem.

As you already know, I am an active and loyal Democrat. I am looking forward to May 7, when I can go to my precinct caucus and begin my battle against a second Reagan term. That I support Gary Hart is no surprise to you, and I hope to represent my neighborhood and my state at the party's national convention, where I hope we can nominate the Senator.

I think that, as in 1960, the Democrats can help the nation to turn its back on the old ways, and step into the future.

In the spirit of the old saw that friends should never take up discussions of religion or politics, I'll refrain from the former. Though I must admit, I have plenty to say about this move toward prayer in schools...

Maybe you'll bring religion up in a future VD. I hope to hell we're on the same side in that one.

PS. Come on, admit it -- your Reagan endorsement ain't going to hurt VD's controversial image a bit!

(PS)² Got a load of neat stuff -- none of it political at all -- from Radio Beijing today. Included were a very nice color calendar, a pennant, stickers and postcards. Also a friendly note wishing for better US - China relations. Wish you could see all the neat stuff I get from my shortwave listening. Bet you think I'm a Commie for all my contacts with that sort of country.

((To the contrary, your shortwave hobby sounds very intriguing.

I support Reagan because I agree 100% with the credo that the best offense is a good defense. I believe Ronnie when he tells us that peace through strength is the only way to maintain peace. But I more or less curtailed the politics in VD a while back, my endorsement notwithstanding, and don't want to get that into it.

Religion, also, is a topic that won't get a lot of space here. Suffice it to say that if any single issue might turn me against Reagan, it's his foolish and unconstitutional support for the reintroduction of legalised prayer into our public school systems.

As an afterthought, the term "Democrat from Colorado" sounds internally inconsistent to me -- but out of all my readers, I think that only John Kelley will understand. Anyway, have fun at the Democratic convention -- I hope your guy beats out Mondale, anyhow -- and may the best man win in November!))

by Mark Berch

At first glance the SIRIUS Matter would appear to be just an ordinary GM-player dispute, going to the ombudsman for his rubber stamp, to sanction the shafting of another player in another VD game. And yet, appearances are so deceiving, especially in VD. In reality, this is an attempt to swindle Mark Berch, perpetrated by Bruce, probably in cahoots with that windbag, Steve Knight.

But first, some background. This game had its origins in "Finchley Central". This was a game first described by Richard Walkerdine in Ethel the Frog, second cycle, #12. The first person to say "Finchley Central" wins. BRUX decided that this game was so simple-minded that even VD readers would probably be able to master it. However, it needed to be adapted slightly because he didn't think his readers would be able to remember such an obscure word as "Finchley". BRUX selected the name "Diplomacy Central" out of the pathetic and transparent desire to have VD thought of as the center of the hobby. The victory criterion was selected to be the first player to successfully order a unit to Albania. BRUX conducted a statistical analysis of all VD games and determined that F Tri-Alb was the second most common S '01 move, and therefore his readers have probably figured that one out. (The most common is A Con-Bul, but BRUX has been bedmouthing that for so long that he's certainly not going to base his game on it.) And so the game was born.

Some of you are probably wondering: why all the background? Is it really necessary to belabor the obvious, viz., BRUX's low opinion of his readers? And what is its connection with the actual dispute? Well, none, actually. But BRUX pays by the length, remember, so shameless padding is the order of the day.

Now, in the actual dispute, Steve Knight, the Austrian player, NMRed in S '01. "Neutral" orders were used as per the Houserules, which included F Tri-Alb. BRUX, the only GM ever to have a crush on his own Houserules, declared his Houserules to be the winner. This was accompanied by BRUX's standard set of smug remarks on how marvelous his Houserules are. His Houserules not only take care of all conceivable game circumstances (and many inconceivable ones as well) but also can win a postal game and given enough time will probably publish a zine, get into a feud with Eric Kane, and -- who knows -- maybe suffer burnout as well!

Anyhow, Steve Knight protested, and BRUX asked for all interested parties to send their remarks to the ombudsman, viz., me. For those interested, I am a member of the International Ombudsman's Federation, Local 752. Yup, this is a union ombudsman, down with scabs, etc.

I have accumulated a disturbing set of frankly sinister facts associated with this game. Consider please the following:

1. Peter Ansoff offered to stand by. His letter was written well before the game ended, yet wasn't printed till well after the game ended.

2. The Houserules have supposedly snatched a victory away from Steve Knight. But guess who compiled these houserules? Guess who organized them, who eliminated some embarrassing self-contradictions and who probably added a few ringers (this last point has not yet been verified, since no one other than BRUX and Steve has actually read through them completely)? Yup -- Steve Knight? Coincidence? Really? If Russia and Turkey both open to the Black Sea in S '01, do you call that a coincidence?

3. Kathy Byrne had been feuding with Bruce Linsey. Suddenly, in a move that rocked the ECC, all was patched up! Within days, Kathy Byrne was entered as a player in this game. Another coincidence? Try to reconcile that with the fact that Ms. Byrne has stated in 36% of the hobby's zines (latest count as of 2/27/84) that she would NEVER play under BRUX's houserules.

4. This game is a variant. Yet no Miller Number was ever given. Why?

5. During the period for interested parties to write, the Houserules never wrote me. Bruce had comments in VD, but those were in behalf of his decision (well, in behalf of the rectitude of his decision, if you want to be technical). I find it strange that the purported winner didn't even present his (her?) (its?) case in writing.

6. Bob Olsen, another of the players in the game, writes, "My forged orders for SIRIUS got there one day late (I'll just BET they did!)." What is that all about? Sounds very sinister to me.

7. Steve Knight has inexplicitly declined to claim the win. This is very strange! Steve makes the point that since he only NMRed once, he could not have been removed, and therefore the Houserules could not have become a player of record for the game. That being the case, Steve would still be in the game, and therefore would be the winner, since his fleet is indubitably in Albania. Yet he disclaims the win. Why?

8. Finally, we must wonder if the Houserules' hands (pages?) are really clean (unmudged?) in this matter. They are required (V.2e) to be "neutral". Can moves which win the game really be considered neutral?

And what of the role of the ombudsman? I see that both Gary Coughlan and Dick Martin agree they are useless. When Gary and Dick agree on something, one must be very wary, Gary. (Say "very wary Gary" ten times quickly. Your lips will melt.)

I am in an additional quandary. Steve's arguments (about not being removed because he missed only one move) are irrefutable. On the other hand, I am obligated by my terms of employment to always back Bruce.

Now, possibly you are wondering, "What about the part where Berch gets swindled?" I'm coming to that. It is well known that Bruce pays for VD material by length. Two pages get more free issues than one. Peery can get two free issues just clearing his throat. But there is an exception! There is a flat one issue payment for -- you guessed it -- an ombudsman's decision. BRUK plans to get an entertaining article out of me -- and he only has to pay me one issue! Well, to hell with that!

Thus, I must make a decision which is not an ombudsman's decision. I have to show that Bruce is right and that Steve is right, for reasons stated above. In short, I must produce the most extreme waffle of my entire career!

Yes, the Houserules won. However, the neutral orders, which are in the Houserules, are merely an agent of Steve Knight. They act on his behalf -- they are there to move his units -- they are still his. You've heard of the legal expression "in loco parentis"? Well, the neutral orders were acting "in loco playerus". Therefore, Steve has won. Please note that there is thus no controversy -- just as BRUK desired. Yes, I aim to please.

((Thanks, and five free issues, to Mark for rendering this decision. Just a couple of quick corrections to the above: Glover Rogerson invented the game and term "Diplomacy Central", not me, and the game did have a Miller Number. I suggest that interested readers go back and look at the number closely, though. (w))

Thanks to my seven ~~players~~ players in this game, as well as Mark. And chuckles to anyone who thought there was really anything SIRIUS about this game all along.))

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EUROPEAN DOONES PLEASE NOTE: Several of you were around for Alex's Column while it was running in these pages. This summer, Alex Lord will be traveling in Europe with her school Spanish club, and at various times will probably be in France, Belgium, and England. She has expressed an interest in meeting some of you, most especially Ivo Doumau of The Netherlands, since he has written to her before. Maybe one of you would like to help her celebrate her 17th birthday while she is there? Alex's address is Box 178, Hamacroix, New York 12037, U.S.A. if any of you care to drop her a line.

Meanwhile, we here at VD Headquarters will try to persuade Alex to give us all an account of her European adventure subsequent to her return. We'll see. And, speaking of our ex-Doonee of the Year, she came out with quite the putdown a few days ago while cutting my hair:

Me: Do a good job, Al. I want to look attractive to all the girls in Dalton.

Alex: Sorry, Bruce. I'm only giving you a haircut. I don't do plastic surgery.



I arrived home just about five minutes ago, angry, from the home of two people who are my friends. I am angry because we argued. We argued because of different philosophies regarding gaming. This editorial is being composed on the typewriter while I'm in an awfully foul mood, so it is doubtful that it shall ever see print. If it does make it into VD, it will only be because I've reread it a few days from now, having given myself some time to calm down. If it doesn't make it...well, then you all will never know about it anyway.

The game was Monopoly, and I ought to point out that we weren't playing strictly by the rules to begin with. (We had way too many houses, money in Free Parking, and a host of other outrageous houserules which might well make a Monopoly purist weep in disgust.) It was a three-player game. My friends, whom I'll call Brad and Jane, are a married couple.

Brad had incredible luck the first few times around the board. Two or three times, he hit Free Parking, collecting in excess of \$500 each time. Jane and I each bought quite a bit of property, though we had to mortgage some of it eventually to keep buying. But Brad had the most of that commodity, as well as cash.

But Brad was at our mercy in one respect. Jane and I were fortunate enough to hit all of the color groups at least once between us, thereby locking Brad out of all the monopolies, unless we agreed to bargain with him. Meanwhile, Jane and I effected a trade which gave her the yellows and almost no cash, and me the light blues with a bit more cash. Brad tried hard to deal with Jane for a monopoly, but Jane wouldn't hear of it because with all his cash, his acquisition of a monopoly would mean ultimate bankruptcy for both of us. I sat across the table egging her on in her refusals, mumbled (correctly) that any deal with Brad would prove eventually to be to both of our detriments, and Jane needed little encouragement as it was. All offers were nixed. This went on for several turns.

Then came what for me was a big surprise, particularly as I know Brad well. He grabbed up his money, reached for the bank to put it away, and declared, "All right, I concede the game." Needless to say, that ended what for me had been a very entertaining evening, and the result is that here I am sitting and typing this, knowing that in all probability it will turn out unsuitable for publication.

Brad explained somewhat bitterly that he just played for fun, that he wanted to be free to make his deals unimpeded, that he didn't think my "diplomatic maneuvering" (which he pronounced with no small degree of sarcasm) made the game any better. I replied that all I was doing was the same thing I always did when I play any games: trying to win. I told him that I didn't think my actions were inconsistent with having fun. Naturally, with the tempers of the moment being what they were, none of the parties involved were very articulate, and nobody was persuaded of anything except his own already firmly-ingrained point of view.

Yet, on reflection, I can't see it any other way. When you sit down to play a game, you have to expect that the other players are going to try to win. In Diplomacy, sometimes this means that no one will negotiate with you. In Monopoly, it sometimes means that you will be in a position where no one is willing to trade with you, either permanently, or (as was the case in this game) temporarily. You have to accept that other players will sometimes try to keep you from winning, and if such action decreases your enjoyment of the game, well, that's the breaks.

I try to win (usually) whenever I sit down to play a game. That doesn't mean that I'm necessarily going to take out a gun and shoot the other players just because the rules don't prohibit it. But it certainly means that I'm going to try to deal with the other players to my advantage. To me, the game isn't fun if each player doesn't give his all. No, let me rephrase that. It's not fun if some of the players try to prohibit others from giving their all. This within the context of a friendly

evening or a fun game, of course, but I don't see the wheeling and dealing of Monopoly as detracting at all from the fun, and if a group of players feels differently then perhaps agreements prohibiting such actions should be made prior to the start of the game.

In short, I still think I've got a right to be pissed about what happened. Or, perhaps more accurately, I don't think that Brad had a right to be pissed over what happened. The game is for fun. Brux, and to most players, myself included, trying to win is part of the fun. I'm sitting here right now with a book in front of me, entitled "1000 Ways to Win Monopoly Games." A whole chapter of the book is devoted to the balance of power in Monopoly -- the strategy of remaining viable in the game by "ganging up" on the front-runner. Why should this particular strategy be singled out as "no fun"? Tonight I was made to feel like a heel for using it. And I'm still pissed, damn it. Just in case I do print this article, are there any reactions one way or the other? Or am I asking an already biased sample of people by publishing the question for an audience consisting largely of outthroat Diplomacy players?

((BRUX here. The events described above are now a couple of weeks old, and I ain't pissed no more. But I still agree with myself.))

~~\*\*\*\*\*~~

I am still looking for one or two hardy souls who might be interested in coming to KabinKon at Lake George in upstate New York for the third week in July. Not really a gaming convention, as the name might imply, this is simply a beautiful way to spend a week of summer vacation. Currently, no one is definite for that week, although Mike Barno and Peter Ansoff are strongly considering going, and Mark Luadi is a possible, but not likely. The following week Joan, Ken and Samantha will be there; the cabin looks to be full for that week. Anyone (non-smokers only, please) interested? Contact me for more details. You have to like real outdoor-type living to enjoy this... ((Late note: several people have cancelled...KabinKon looks off...))

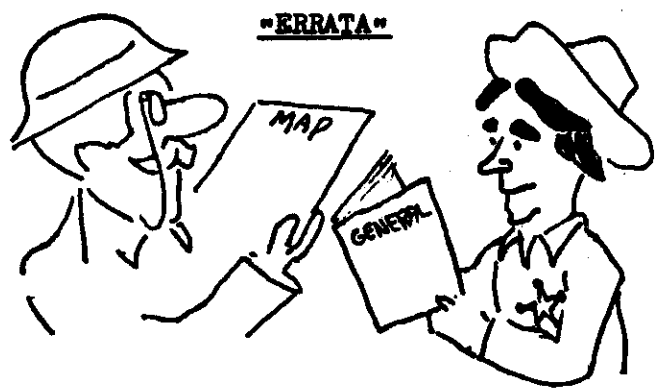
Voice of Doom regrets to have to report the death of former Doomie Glen Taylor, by his own hand. He died a couple of weeks ago, according to the latest issue of Graustark. Glen published the Diplomacy wine DIJACH.

Some quick plugs: Konrad Baumeister, Box 6039, Henle Village, Georgetown University, Washington, District of Columbia, United States of America 20057 publishes Give Me a Weapon, known for its piercing editorials, especially in the last two or three issues. (☺) Konrad is one of my oldest hobby friends -- VD was traded for his excellent zine Eggnog when I first began publishing -- and I always (well... usually) enjoy reading what he writes. Next time you get a couple of hours to write his address on an envelope, drop him a line and ask for a sample. He's also a reliable GM, always a plus in my book.

Dan R. Wilson, 215 Radiance Dr., San Antonio, TX 78218 is planning to begin publication of his new zine, Feudist (the flyer he sent out spells it "Fuedist") shortly. He plans to replace the Bruxus Bulletin as the hobby center of mudslinging and feuding. He says his policy will be to print letters entirely unedited, and to avoid taking sides in any of the feuds. Well, I have had just enough experience in my own zine and elsewhere with totally unedited letters to wonder just how long this policy is going to last, and I don't really plan to involve myself in any feuds in Dan's zine, but I will (hopefully) be mutually subbing with Dan. Long-time Doomies may remember that Dan once wrote an article for VD, describing a typical day in his life. He was in prison at the time. At Origins '82 in Baltimore, I got to meet Dan and liked him a lot. I'm eager to see what Feudist is going to look like. I think.

1984 is upon us and once again the game companies continue to use doublespeak to bend the English language in order to sell their products. Some recent examples include:

"ERRATA"

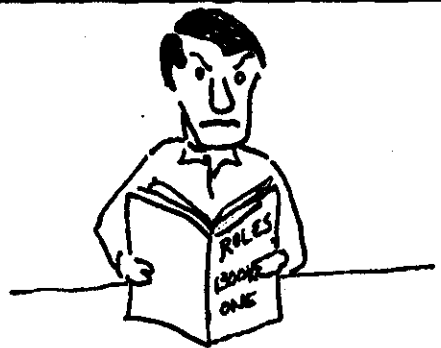


This is the title they give in back of the instruction book, or in The General where they admit mistakes, misprints, or missing game pieces. It's easier to do this then revise the game. Anyone who has tried to learn "Source of the Nile" and has wondered why a guide helps you get lost, or has looked through their Gunslinger game

for the coach mentioned in optional rule 4.5 knows what I mean.

" HIGHLY DETAILED "

"OFFERING A GREAT DEAL OF REALISM"



This means that this is the type of game which requires a bookmark for the instructions. It would probably be easier to build your own H-Bomb.

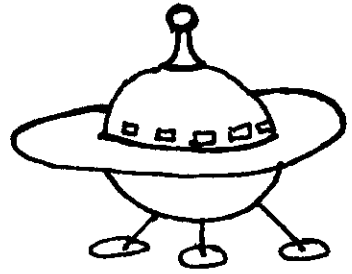


This usually means old and from a now defunct company. I don't mind when they do this, except if they change the name of the game and you buy it not knowing it's a remake of a game you may already own. For example:

" BEER AND PRETZELS GAME "

This is the first sign of a real turkey. It is how the designer defends himself when he is told the luck factor in his game is too high or when it is completely unrealistic. This is how Avalon Hill describes Naval War, and Wizard's Quest. Possibly if you had enough beer these games might start looking respectable.

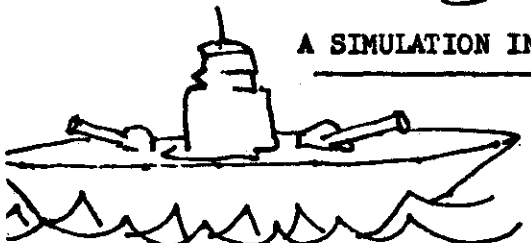
Dragon Pass was White Bear and Red Moon  
Collector was High Bid  
Little Round Top was The Twentieth Maine  
UFO: A Game of Close Encounters was UFO



A SIMULATION IN AN ABSTRACT SENSE



- "Random Characteristic Generation Devices"
- "Events Determined by Random Mechanics"
- "Six-sided Polynumeral Determinants"



Yes, it's just a pair of dice. In most cases this is the part of the game that costs the most, so they want them to sound pretty good. In the case of the old SPI games they are also the only study material in the game itself.

This means it's not a simulation at all. UFO and War at Sea as well as Naval Wars are good examples.

--Mark Paul

Gaining an Ally

## I. WHEREFORE AND WHY

In the game of Diplomacy, a player will often reach the mid-game years as part of an alliance that he started out believing was ideal, only to find that the current state of affairs is not as favorable as he had hoped. There are of course many reasons why this might occur. Perhaps his alliance is simply losing the war with little hope of turning it around, or maybe a once-reliable ally is showing signs of disloyalty or loss of interest. Or the reason may be more subtle; the alliance is doing well now, but if it continues the other partner will inevitably emerge as unacceptably dominant either in material or position. Whatever the reason, there will come times in your games when you will want to try to gain a new ally. And once this time comes, you may find that your main obstacle is inertia on the part of the prospective new partner: why should he all of a sudden scrap an alliance which he may find very enjoyable and profitable in order to team up with an unknown quantity -- you? There are a few diplomatic techniques that may improve your chances of overcoming this reluctance and if you find yourself in the position described above, you will need some understanding of them.

Before examining these strategies, I should point out that it is not my intention in this article to discuss puppeting. There are techniques other than those described here which may be employed when you are trying to ally with a country much larger or smaller than your own, but those are not within the scope of this essay. Rather, we are going to assume that you are a viable power trying to persuade another viable power to join with you in an alliance of approximate equals.

## II. BUILD A FOUNDATION

The first step in effecting a major shift of alliance structures to your benefit is actually a preliminary: you should have already established a history of open, friendly correspondence with your ally-to-be. Time and time again, it has been stated that you must keep writing to all players in the game, even your current enemies, and this is the most important reason. You don't know at any point in the game just who you will want to woo three or four game-years down the road; therefore, it is a fundamentally sound policy to maintain diplomatic relationships with every other country. If you have done this, then when you make the decision to try and court a prospective ally, your negotiations can be worked very naturally into the enjoyable correspondence you already have going; whereas if you abruptly start bombarding someone with proposals after a silence of several seasons duration, it will be very difficult to avoid appearing totally self-serving regardless of how many warm fuzzies you inject into your letters.

If you doubt the importance of this advice, think about one of the games you are playing in or have played in. At some point somewhere, you were probably at war with some country who didn't bother to write to you very often, if at all. Now suppose that out of the blue, this guy suddenly wanted you to switch to his side. How likely were you to agree to this, assuming there was no compelling reason for you to do so? Not very likely at all, right? On the other hand, if you treat all competent yourself, you've probably found yourself at war with some other good player with whom you did maintain a lively correspondence. It crossed your mind many times, didn't it, that you might enjoy working with this fellow. And if he had indicated his desire to do the same, why, you might very well have given it strong consideration, right? Put yourself in the other guy's shoes, then, and you'll realize the importance of regular correspondence when the time comes to persuade him to join forces with you. Build yourself a foundation for fluidity and success later in the game by keeping open all avenues of negotiation at all times.

III. SOW THE SEEDS OF DISCONTENT

Reference has already been made to the necessity of overcoming the inertia of your prospective ally's satisfaction with the current state of affairs. Before coming out with a suggestion for an alternative alliance structure, then, you must first ensure that he perceives weaknesses in the one that presently exists. This step in the process of gaining an ally is perhaps the most difficult of all; you must be patient and subtle about what you are doing. Your task will be further compounded if there really isn't any good reason for him to worry about his current situation; you will then have to invent reasons and make them sound as credible as possible. It may take several well-composed letters and more than one season to soften your target to the point where he is receptive to your suggestion that all is not ideal for him as matters stand now. You can hardly hide the fact that you are serving your own interests by doing this, so in general downplay this without actually denying it, and stress his interests.

There are many different reasons why a player might in fact be dissatisfied with the current situation, and not coincidentally, some of these were already mentioned at the beginning of this article in discussing why you might want to change matters. To reiterate, then, your ally-to-be might be made to realize that his side is going to lose the war, or his current ally is going to attain a dominant position or is unpredictable or losing interest or whatever, or that your side can retreat to a stalemate line if necessary. Emphasize whatever reasons are the most credible. Rock his boat of complacency by troubling the waters. Plant just a few weeds in his rose garden of contentment, and soon he may be ready to seek more fertile ground.

IV. PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE

Once your prospective ally has realized that there are shortcomings to his current alliance, there is still the danger that he may view his situation as the best available option despite its weaknesses. Your job now becomes that of a salesman; you must convince him that there is a preferable alternative to the course of action he is currently pursuing. That more favorable course of action happens to be an alliance with you.

You should point out to your friend specifically how the dangers and pitfalls of his current situation will be diminished or eliminated if he chooses to switch to your side. Once again, your degree of inventiveness must depend upon the realities of the game situation. Many times, you have only to speak the truth to formulate a persuasive argument for the proposed shift. Other times, there are reasons why the new alliance will not be to his advantage -- these must be hidden, downplayed, ignored, or whatever. You are the college graduate on a job interview; the eager gentleman courting a lovely lady. You are now in the position of selling yourself and whatever you have to offer.

Don't be afraid to let your ally-to-be know just how the new partnership is to work. You can talk about the division of spoils, comparing it to what he might expect to gain from his current course of action. Naturally, you will arrange it so that the new alliance will (or will seem to) benefit him more than the old one. If there are catches, they can either be brought out into the open now or glossed over until a commitment has been made on the board, depending upon your assessment of the likelihood that these conditions will doom your proposal before its implementation. Sometimes it might be better to hold off on springing such minor unpleasant surprises as "I want Belgium back by 1907!" until your friend has made and acted on his decision to switch sides. Other times, he may find such an after-the-fact revelation so irritating that he will consider himself betrayed and try to effect another alliance shift -- this one unfavorable to you, undoubtedly. If there are these drawbacks to your proposed realignment, walk on eggs when it comes to revealing them.

Although the new alliance must seem profitable to your friend -- else why should

he teams up with you to begin with -- you cannot go making unreasonable offers either. Only a rank novice, if anyone, will believe you if you offer him three of your centers to switch sides. Be realistic. If the other guy is about your equal in ability, then don't try to trick him with a ploy that you yourself would find transparent or even suspicious, because he will view it that way too.

Provides an alternative that fits into the fine groove of being better than what he has now, but not incredibly so, and your ally-to-be may finally be won over.

#### V. FORMULATE A PLAN

It's not always an easy matter to initiate an alliance in terms of the tactics to be used. Somebody is going to have to trust someone with whom he has until now been at war. There will always be some degree of suspicion on one or both sides that the arrangement is all a gigantic plot to get a decided positional advantage for the other guy. Indeed, it is rarely reasonable to suggest that your partner make all of the first moves; such a plan is so obviously an invitation to disaster that he may reject it out of hand anyway. Simultaneous action is often best, but it can be renegeged upon as well. If the current war was initiated when one of you stabbed the other, the original stabbee may insist that the other guy back off first out of fairness -- he's the one who first violated the trust, so he should be first to reestablish it -- but after a game-year or two of fighting this sort of reasoning just isn't likely to carry any weight with the original stabber; the war is in full swing regardless of who started it. Oftentimes you, as the proponent of the reconciliation, will find yourself pressured into making the first move. Or in some cases, perhaps one power has less to risk than the other by being the first to disengage. If Germany and Russia are fighting, and Russia controls the barren zone between the two countries' home centers, he may reasonably expect to have to make the first conciliatory move. The more trust that each party can inspire in the other, the better. But somehow you must accompany your suggestion for an alliance shift with a solid tactical means of accomplishing it, one which minimizes the risk to both parties. How many times have you seen, say, Austria and Germany stuck at each others' throats in the middle of the board, both wanting to disengage and turn to a more profitable front, but neither able to do so for fear that the other will keep coming? The fabric of alliance is indeed very difficult to weave until all the little tactical needles have been threaded. It's a tricky business, and you have to be sew careful or the whole thing will fall apart at the seams.

#### VI. KEEP AN OPEN DOOR

We have already made the point that this new alliance is to be between equals, and insofar as is possible, it may as well be conceived in this spirit of parity. When you finally propose your tactical plan, try not to sound too rigid. Make it clear that these are merely your suggestions, and ask your new ally (yeah -- positive thinking!) for his ideas or counterproposals. Most players like to feel that their thoughts are valued, so there is a psychological advantage to soliciting input from the other guy, in addition to which he may well come up with a genuine improvement on your tactics. So if you're sincere about being his ally, start it off right and listen to him as well as you write to him. Try to see the advantages in his proposals, without totally lowering your guard against the possibility that he might be taking advantage of the opportunity to set you up. If there are really any major bugs in his plans, by all means squash them -- but do so in a tactful and diplomatic manner.

In addition, you should be prepared for a rejection of your proposed alliance. Despite your best efforts, it will sometimes be impossible to overcome the inertia of complacency. Whether or not someone chooses to cross the threshold of alliance with you, your door should remain ajar. Maybe he just doesn't think the time is right,





## Why I'm Not Feuding with Ed Wrobel

62

It was inevitable that the question of why I am not feuding with Ed Wrobel would require a public answer. Certainly, given my past history of notheadedness, the vast volumes of critical material Ed has written about me in recent weeks might well be expected to provoke an outburst of BRUKian rage. Indeed, zillions upon zillions of loyal, screaming Doomies have implored me to "swat that mosquito and silence his incessant buzzing," or to "shut his mouth at least enough so that no words longer than eight syllables can emerge."

Well sadly, folks, the old BRUKer will prefer to wimp out this time. There are a number of reasons for this uncharacteristic decision. For one thing, I cherish my current status of not feuding with anyone. To be sure, there are a few Kruds and Woodys out there who aren't exactly my bosom buddies, but there isn't anyone with whom I'm really at war, and this is good and I intend to keep things that way. But there is a more telling reason still.

You see, regardless of the game, I play to win. Be it Diplomacy, Monopoly, chess, or... or feuding, I don't like to play in a game where the odds are stacked against me. I chose my opponents in previous feuds with great care and deliberation, so as to avoid ending up in a battle I was likely to lose. And indeed, all of my feuds have ended in at least a two-way draw, with an occasional outright win (Linsey vs. Masters, e.g.) thrown in. However, there is no question in my mind that a feud with Ed Wrobel would prove to be a devastating, losing proposition for me. The simple fact is that all of the advantages lie in Ed Wrobel's favor, not mine. Allow me to explain.

First of all, Ed has a command of the English language paralleled by no one else in the hobby. Whenever I read one of his letters, although I am in the dark regarding the exact meanings of many of his statements due to my unfamiliarity with several of the words he employs, I am always left with the vague impression that Bruce Linsey is a horrible creature. In fact, the effect is almost that of a Pavlov's Dog sort of conditioning -- it's gotten to the point where I have only to see a letter typed in that dreaded Wrobelscript and immediately my mouth begins to water in self-contempt. Ed has a magical touch with the written word. I, on the other hand, am just a poor, young, ignorant country hick whose verbal I.Q. is unsurpassed only by his bowling scores (and my balls are in the gutter even more often than my mind is, thank you). My writing skills are not even of the same order of magnitude as those of Ed Wrobel. On those rare occasions when I absolutely need a well-written rebuttal to something or other, I hire my lawyer and close personal friend, Mark Berch, to do the dirty work. But of late, the Dipimaster becomes more and more distracted by the needs of his youngest client, one Joshua Herschel, and seems to have less and less time available to prop me up against the tidal wave of Wrobeltalk that has deluged the hobby since the start of 1984.

Secondly, Ed Wrobel is an up-and-coming young feuder, so full of enthusiasm for the battle that he is currently feuding with his (ex-?) wife Maggie in the pages of Politesse. I, on the other hand, am merely a worn-out old has-been; a shadow of my once-fearful former self. No longer does the dark spectre of a BRUKian-conceived Whitestonia forgery haunt the hallways of our hobby. Gone are the days of BLACK HOLE-mania and all but the vaguest memories of the Tro Affair. This washed-up old geezer may be a sentimental favorite with some, but in the arena of hobby feuding I am no longer a match for a new and unscarred gladiator such as Ed Wrobel.

Ed's third advantage is perhaps his greatest: he is able to communicate with every single hobby member who receives either of our zines. Be not fooled, gentle readers, by the fact that Voice of Doom has a larger circulation than Politesse, for this apparent advantage is more than overcome by a pair of strong mitigating factors. One of these is that Ed Wrobel can (and did) directly reach my entire sub list on his own, because I tremble not at the presentation of both sides of an issue to my readership and therefore have fearlessly published my address list each anniversary issue. In contrast, I have no such access to the mailboxes of the readers of Politesse.

Ed's exact subscription list being quite unknown to me. Even if I were inclined to indulge in a Wrobellesque mass-mailing (and I am not), I have not the information necessary to communicate with the readers of Politesse. But the mass-mailing was (I suspect) just a one-time affair; of far more consequence is this: despite all the hoopla over my butchery of one of Ed's recent letters, ED WROBEL IS ALLOWED TO BE HEARD IN THE PAGES OF MY ZINE, AND BRUCE LINSLEY IS MUZZLED IN THE PAGES OF HIS. It is true that I changed the meaning of Ed's letter in a recent issue of VD, but this was purely in (attempted) fun and I had no qualms whatsoever about printing the entire text of his letter, along with my rebuttal, two weeks later. In glaring contrast to this, Ed has still not printed the full text of my earlier letter to him -- the one whose meaning he altered. He too has claimed that his editing was in fun, but if this were true, then would he not be willing to print my letter in its entirety in a follow-up issue? The suspicion is strong here that the editing which occurred in the pages of Politesse had its origins not "in fun," but in the irrefutability of my arguments. This suspicion can of course be allayed in large part if Ed Wrobel would proceed to print my letter in full.

And make no mistake about it, folks, this third advantage of being able to communicate with all the readers of both zines is a powerful weapon indeed for Ed. In those circumstances where I am in the wrong (such as in the Episode of the Expunged Ellipses), Ed can make sure that every reader of my zine and his knows all about it. In those circumstances where Ed is in the wrong (such as his brazenly unsportsmanlike behavior in the wake of an unfavorable GMing decision and the subsequent ombudsman's ruling), Ed can make sure that the opposing arguments are hidden from his readers. For example, he can avoid having to answer embarrassing questions like "Why is Bruce Linsey such a dreadful GM for believing that 'hold' and 'support' are two different orders when many other respected GMs (Dave Kleiman, Jim Meinel, Mike Conner, Paul Rauterberg, both Ron Browns, Steve Hutton, John Boardman) would have ruled the same way?" simply by ignoring them. And that, my Doomies, is an advantage that I do not feel I can overcome.

So those are the reasons you will not see me indulge in a feud with Ed Wrobel. He has all the advantages, and yes, there is one more reason still. Ed Wrobel and I are very good friends. And I do not feud with my friends.

### The Raving

Once upon a deadline noble, while I GMed for Ed Wrobel  
 Over many a curious order from the diplomatic corps,  
 Suddenly there came a scolding, "Armies can't support while holding!"  
 Controversy starts unfolding, back in VD sixty-four.  
 How much longer will he play here, blowing orders by the score?  
 Quoth Ed Wrobel, "Nevermore!"

Thence upon a later deadline, "Turk Protests!", read NEPTUNE's headline  
 Over many a furious holler from a player who was sore,  
 Suddenly there came a snorting, "Armies can hold while supporting!  
 Arbitration I'll be courting; Linsey, you're a GM poor!"  
 How much longer can he yammer, polysyllables galore?  
 Quoth Ed Wrobel, "Evermore!"

Thence upon a deadline later, letter from the arbitrator  
 Over many a scurrilous holler from the diplomatic boor,  
 Suddenly set down the ruling: "Hold? Support? You must be fooling!"  
 Wrobel's temper needed cooling, to this day his ego's sore.  
 How much longer can he clamor, reams of Wrobeltalk galore?  
 Quoth Ed Wrobel, "Evermore!"

The Dippy Spaces Results

Seven people responded to the Dippy Spaces Quiz. Their names are: Ken Hager, Dan Young, Jim Chatfield, Mark Berch, Randolph Smyth, Dave Kleinman, and Stephen Wilcox. I shall refer to them only by their first names below.

1. Which supply center aside from Munich can never be captured by Turkey in 1902?

Ken, Dan, and Randolph chose Berlin, but this can be captured via a convoy through the Baltic Sea. Dave noted this, and concluded that I had erred in devising the question. Jim, Mark, and Stephen got it correct: Smyrna. Since Turkey can never lose Smyrna in 1901, he can never capture it in 1902.

2. From which space can an army receive a legal order to move to the most other spaces?

Ken didn't answer. Dan said Bulgaria. Mark said Denmark. Randolph chose Constantinople. Dave picked St. Pete. Jim and Stephen got it right: Kiel, with 39. Bulgaria and St. Pete follow with 38 apiece. I thought this was going to be a giveaway.

3. Which space has never been and will never be mentioned in a legal order given to a fleet?

Ken didn't answer. Everyone else got it right: Bohemia. The only space which doesn't border any coastal provinces.

4. From which space can an army reach the home territory of any Great Power within three moves, provided no multi-fleet convoys are used?

Ken said Tunis, but an army there won't make it to Germany in time. Everyone else got it right: Silesia.

5. From which land space is it impossible for an English army to retreat as the result of a Russian-supported Turkish attack in 1904? ((There, I finally got it right!))

Ken didn't answer. Everyone else correctly said Portugal. No unit can ever retreat from Portugal. Looks like Randolph was right on when he added, "I don't think all the misdirection will fool many people for long."

6. In Spring 1902 a German unit bounced with an Austrian unit, leaving both of them adjacent to no supply centers. In which space did they bounce?

Mark replied, "No unique answer. Tyo will do. GERMANY: A Mun-Tyo; AUSTRIA: A Tri-Tyo; FRANCE: A Ruh S A Bur-Mun ((and presumably A Bur-Mun)); ITALY: F Adr S A Ven-Tri ((and A Ven-Tri)). Germany and Austria have bounced in Tyo. Both units were dislodged. They retreated OTB, leaving them adjacent to no supply centers." I am going to count this answer as incorrect, for reasons I'll get to in a minute. Everyone else got the correct answer of North Africa. The two spaces on the board which are not adjacent to any supply centers are Tunis and London. From there, the solution is a piece o' cake.

Mark's answer is wrong on two counts. First, retreats occur after the spring. Therefore, Mark's statement that the units were left adjacent to no supply centers is not accurate till after the summer (retreat) season has been played. Secondly, after a unit has retreated off the board, it no longer exists as a unit. It dies and becomes a ghost. Otherwise, we could refer to a one-center power with, say, five units (four of which have been removed earlier in the game). And Rule XIII.2 amplifies the correctness of this ruling that a unit not on the board is no unit at all. Leave it to Mark...

7. A unit on the board ((uh oh, Mark is sure to pick up on that now!)) belongs to a power with one center and no chance of growing. In exactly two and a half game years, a Russian unit will be adjacent to this unit. Where is the Russian unit now?

Ken didn't answer. Dan, Dave, and Stephen all thought it was a fleet in StP(nc). Mark said, "No unique answer. Tyc will do. The power is in CD, hence cannot grow. It could be, e.g., in Ven. The Russian unit could just sit in Tyc for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years and meet your conditions." I am tempted to disallow this on the grounds that "sit" is not a valid order, but since I don't like being a prick I'll accept it as correct. I hadn't considered Civil Disorder. Only Jim and Randolph got my answer of North Africa, though curiously each gave a different scenario. Randolph: "...it is stuck beside the A Tun in question in a game where those two armies are the only remaining units. (Any other armies would provide some chance for A Tun's growth unless isolation in/of England was involved.)" Jim: "I'm assuming that there are no fleets in the game, one power has 17 armies and no other power has units on the mainland. The one-center power is in Tunis and the Russian unit is in NAF to begin with. This is the only way I can see that someone has no chance of growing. Of course the 17-center power could win the game before the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  year stipulation. So let's say the 17-center power has all his armies in England so he has no chance of winning." Both scenarios are possible, though Jim's last two sentences are extraneous. Barring CD, there can be no fleets in the game, and either no armies on the mainland or 17.

8. One season, an English army was attacked by five Russian armies, none of them in supply centers. The same season, a German army was attacked by five Austrian armies, none of them in supply centers. The next season, the English and German armies mentioned above moved so that they were adjacent to each other. An Italian army supported the English move and a Turkish fleet supported the German move. The season after that, the afore-mentioned Italian army and Turkish fleet bounced in a vacant space. Throughout all of this, the French F Wes remained unordered. In which space did the Italian army bounce with the Turkish fleet?

Dan didn't answer. Jim and Mark said Denmark. Ken, Randolph, Dave, and Stephen all said Sweden, which was my intended answer. Since devising the question, I've discovered that Denmark and Finland are also correct, so all except Dan get credit. The details of the answer are too long and boring to go into here.

9. There is a certain board position which, as it happens, can never legally occur in Spring 1920. In a certain game, however, this position did occur legally in Fall, 1920. After the Spring 1917 moves in this game were played, Gascony, Moscow, and Albania were all empty, while the Ukraine was occupied by a French army. Which space (other than the Ukraine) was necessarily occupied at this time?

This was the best of the bunch. Ken, Dan, and Mark gave no answer. Oops... same for Randolph. Mark complained that the phrase "at this time" in the question is indefinite, and Randolph objected to the references to a certain board position occurring in a season, pointing out that it is unclear whether this means before or after the season has been played. Both complaints are valid, though neither of them seemed to be on the right track anyway. Jim guessed Munich and Stephen guessed Galicia. Only Dave got the right answer: the Adriatic Sea.

Under no circumstances can Austria build more than one fleet per game year. Therefore, Austria can never acquire a 17th fleet until Winter, 1916. There are exactly 17 spaces on the board (Sty, Bar, Nwy, Flg, Swe, Bot, Lvn, Pru, Bal, Ben, Kie, Den, Ska, Hlg, Hol, Edi, Yor) which require at least 8 seasons before they can be reached by an Austrian fleet built in Trieste. Therefore, any board position in which all of these 17 spaces are occupied by Austrian fleets is impossible until Fall 1920 has been played. And the 17th-built fleet must head out through the Ionian as fast as possible to make it north by Fall 1920. Since Albania was empty after Spring 1917 was played, the only other way out was through the Adriatic Sea, so this space was necessarily occupied at this time. Comprendé?

10. Which supply center must England capture in order to receive three builds in 1901?

Everyone got Norway. Talk about anticlimatic...

Final scores: Ken--3, Dan--5, Jim--9, Mark--7, Randolph--7, Dave--7, Stephen--8. Jim Chatfield wins two free issues of VD. 'Twas fun!

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The following is just in from John Kador:

Dear BRUK:

I'm happy to announce that on March 8th, my son Daniel Payne Kador was born. Mother and child are both doing well.

The baby was due in mid-April so his coming six weeks "early" caused us some problems and more apprehension. Premature babies can be problematic. But the fact was that the baby was completely full term: it was our due date that was grossly off.

How can that be? you ask. The human gestation period is often hard to pin down. Aside from the information given to the doctor about her last period, there are few checks during the course of the pregnancy to confirm, support, or cast doubt on the first estimate. One such check is being used more and more: sonograms. We didn't have one done because, while they seem perfectly safe, we didn't feel that the risk, however minimal it might be, was worth whatever information we received. If we had had one done, it might have given us clues that the due date was actually much closer.

But there were some good side effects to the early delivery. First, we didn't have the anxiety of the last-minute wait. Many of the couples in our birth preparation class are in the pickle now. They always have a full tank of gas and the car is always pointed in the direction of the hospital.

On the other hand, we also weren't quite prepared for the baby's arrival. Having figured that we had another month or so, we didn't have any baby clothes or food. Luckily, I had put the baby's room together the previous weekend.

Another bad part about having a baby that was assumed to be premature was that the medical team really took over the management of the delivery until it was clear that the baby was in full term and healthy. But for a while there, it got tense as the intensive team neonatal unit stood by with their Star Trek equipment. As soon as they saw the baby come out, they knew they weren't needed and they split.

We wanted the birth experience to be more ours. We wanted to be in control. That's why we signed up at a birthing center: a home-type environment that eschews a medical model for a more natural model. The birthing center, of course, only takes low-risk pregnancies: no twins, no breech deliveries, no C-sections, and no preemies. That's why we had to go to the hospital. I don't question their judgement or prudence. But I wish we had the birthing center experience instead. It's cheaper, faster, and more flexible.

Still, Daniel is home now and resting and eating. I have no idea how he's going to change my life but I have a feeling I'm going to find out very soon.

Best,
John

The Voice of Doom sends its congratulations and best wishes to John and Anna Beth. John is a longtime Doomic and friend here. Thanks, also, for letting me share the above with my readers, John. I'm sure many of us share in your happiness.

John and Anna Beth recently moved and John has (naturally) had to cut back on his hobby activities somewhat. Their address now is: 505 Second Ave., Melbourne Beach, FL 32951.

Back Issues for Sale!

I recently came into possession of spare copies of most of my first 42 issues, which are now available to interested Doomies. Following is a list of the issues available, the price, and a capsule description of each. WARNING: the twelve-pagers may contain some good writing, but they are definitely not of the quality of the issues I've been putting out for the past couple of years. I'll try to give you a fair evaluation of each. Large orders may be sent thrid class, so be patient. First come; first served. Money received for issues already sold out will be returned.

C'mon buy some back issues and discover what an arrogant snob BRUX used to be!

- #2 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, first VD gamestarts, houserules, excellent Halloween feature by Judy Linsey, very first letter published in VD. Not a great issue.
- #4 -- 80¢ -- 30 pages and one of the very best of my early issues. First article in Jack Masters' Player Profile series (warning: Masters' articles may be plagiarized), lots of chitchat, large letter column, much more.
- #5 -- 70¢ -- 24 pages, loaded with controversy. Want to see the old BRUX at his worst? This one's for you! Phony "Volker" confession, BRUX Speaks on Gay Rights, BRUX blasts Curtis Gibson, Dave White blasts BRUX, BRUX overreacts to Coughlan...you get the picture...
- #6 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, mostly games, another Masters article, "Louisiana Does Not Exist" article. Not much of an issue.
- #7 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, all reading, excellent Masters article, love letter from Kathy Byrne, BRUX Speaks on Cross-Game Play, letters, more. Good ish.
- #8 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages on beautiful dark red paper, Jan Luokenbill's article on press, write-up of the first ByrneCon, BRUX blasts his players for not reading the houserules. Not bad.
- #9 -- 60¢ -- 12 pages, the BLACK HOLE Affair -- read all about it! Inside-out Dippy, short letter col. Controversial.
- #10 - 60¢ -- 12 pages, Masters' article on Conrad Shortley is absolutely a hobby classic, several letters and humor items. Good issue.
- #11 - 50¢ -- 12 pages, almost all games except for a boring article on conditional orders. Poor issue.
- #12 - 50¢ -- 12 pages, Sherlock Holmes Diplomacy Mystery, humorous exposé of how BRUX got his name, a gross cartoon, good article by Paul Heftz, letters and more. Worth price.
- #13 - 50¢ -- 18 pages, this was the first Dr. Breuss issue and not nearly as good as the later "Zoo" issue. This one is called "Horton Hatches the Egg", and it's pretty bad.
- #14 - 70¢ -- 18 pages, details of my feud with John Caruso and more on the BLACK HOLE Affair, good letter col, nice travel article by Rauterberg, controversial issue not for the faint of heart.
- #15 - 50¢ -- 12 pages, mostly games, excellent editorial arguing in favor of allowing negotiations prior to retreats and adjustments (which nobody has ever rebutted), article by Masters. Fair issue. Barely.
- #16 - 60¢ -- 12 pages, excellent play "Naked Came the Gamesmaster" by Dave Perlmutter, reprinted articles by Smyth and Harmon which later appeared in Supernova, Dave White takes his final (and greatest) blast at BRUX. Very good.
- #17 - 50¢ -- 12 pages, BRUX removes foot from mouth, Paper Airplane Dippy, two other articles and games. Fair issue.
- #18 - 50¢ -- 12 pages including solution to Sherlock Holmes Puzzle, John Kador's first "Diplomatic Typochondriac" article, letters, more. Not bad.
- #19 - 50¢ -- 12 pages, FIRST USAGE OF THE TERM "DOOMIE"!, discussion of Origins '80, games, "Life After the Knife" (later printed in Supernova). Fair issue.
- #20 - 50¢ -- 12 pages, good letter column and an excellent article by Coughlan. Pretty good issue.

- #21 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, and one of the very best of my early issues. Five articles, humor, chitchat, no games, letters include some very important advice to world-be pubbers. Very good issue.
- #22 -- 40¢ -- 12 pages, mostly games. Outstandingly terrible issue.
- #25 -- 40¢ -- 12 pages, humor on deadlines, games, article by Perlmutter. Poor ish.
- #26 -- 90¢ -- 32 pages, some print hard to read. This was my first amish and it was excellent. 2 articles on various topics, reply to a Rulebook Quiz, two-part Gossip Column, Boardman on fakers, much more.
- #27 -- 50¢ -- 24 pages, second round of VD gamestarts, lots of letters, two articles are both pretty boring. Not a good issue.
- #28 -- 60¢ -- 24 pages. Games, including Rauterberg's excellent "2001" press that I keep bragging about, Robert Lipton gets gruapy, "LIV and Let LIV" article, tirade on sloppy playing, BRUX Goes Wandering in Canada, quite a bit more. N'bad...
- #29 -- 60¢ -- 24 pages. This was a free Christmas issue, and tried to avoid controversy. BRUX's engagement announcement, Indecipherable article by Laurence Brothers, endings of some of VD's early games, first Doomie of the Year results. Very good issue overall.
- #31 -- 90¢ -- 32 pages, good Kador article, outstanding Rauterberg press in JUPITER, heated debates on "Tro" affair, outstanding letter col, article on Europa Express, excellent humor by Baumeister, lots more. Great issue.
- #32 -- \$1.00 -- 40 pages, well worth the price as it's one of my best issues ever, more "Tro" controversy, ELACK HOLE wrap-up, superb Olsen press in KEPLER, 14 pages of letters, play by Baumeister and Martin, good article by Condon, lots of humor stuff, my article on student teaching, tons more, outstanding issue.
- #33 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, the "Incredible Shrinking Zine", games and not a whole lot else. Pretty poor issue.
- #34 -- 40¢ -- 12 pages, Arnott's "Draft" article, good KEPLER press, little else.
- #35 -- 40¢ -- 12 pages, games, letters. Pussy Galore, nothing spectacular.
- #36 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, more of Baumeister/Martin play, BRUX Speaks on blacklisting, nice letter col, no games.
- #37 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, letters include tirade by Boardman, good Doug Landon article on ambiguous orders, excellent Crazy Envelopes, more. Good issue.
- #39 -- 40¢ -- 12 pages, porno from Jeff Albrecht, article on "tro" by Martin, Crazy Envelopes, fairly weak issue.
- #40 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, special zine review issue which was very well received, contains full-page reviews of my ten favorite zines (only two of which would be in my current top ten -- DD and EE!), and nothing else.
- #41 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, no games, Dan Wilson's article on prison life, Vatican Variant, good Crazy Envelopes, good letter col, not a bad issue overall.
- #42 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, Crazy Envelope winner, more KB/TH! play, letters, games. Pretty poor issue overall.

Now I'm looking through the rest of the spare back issues I've got put away. Several copies left of #'s 36, 39, and 40, so lower those prices to 35¢ each. Also...

- #46 -- 35¢ -- 12 pages, excellent article on GenCon East '81, good cartoon, Del Grande's article on Origins '81, some letters. Not bad.
- #47 -- 35¢ -- 12 pages, Boardman vs. Jim Williams controversy, nice letter from Baumeister, Phyllis Byrne cartoon, no games, worth it for controversy fans.
- #48 -- 50¢ -- 12 pages, only one copy left so priced a bit higher, humor by Olsen, "Fake" article by Pack, "Kit Carson" fake letter by me, "Italy" article by Mark Lew, excellent cartoon, OK letter col, no games. OK issue.
- #49 -- 35¢ -- 12 pages, no games, Michalski "How to Play" piece, good letter col.

- #50 -- 35¢ -- 12 pages, more Tro stuff, Coughlan article, thoughts on my first 50 issues, fair letter col, mediocre issue overall.
- #51 -- 35¢ -- 12 pages, exposé on Masters' plagiarism, article by Pack, good reprinted article on "Diversity" by Allen Wells (say, what ever happened to him?), BRUX Speaks on Civil Disorder, good issue.
- #52 -- 35¢ -- 12 pages, no games, "Tonight Show" theme issue with some sick humor, Wells on fakes, fiction by Langley, short Berch articles, funny issue worth price.
- #53 -- 35¢ -- 12 pages, mostly games, good Rauterberg satire piece, very poor issue anyway.
- #64 -- \$1.50 -- 46 pages. The best con article I've ever written, on Origins '62, some very good press, Mark Paul and Jim Finley cartoons, history article by Ansoff, achingly beautiful poem about "The Sea" by Alex Lord, letters, letters, letters, articles by Berch and Pack, results of "Best Diplomat" contest, so much more. Stunning issue. One left.
- #70 -- \$1.50 -- 46 pages, and no games. Articles by Halverstadt, Berch, Halverstadt again, Walker, and Chuff Afflerbach's "Broken Record" article, one of the very best pieces of writing ever to appear in VD. Poem by Alex, controversy by Dick Martin, 34 pages of letters. I could sell this one and #64 for more, I'll betcha! Only one left.
- #74 -- 50¢ -- 24 pages. Alex's First annish was one of her best columns, editorial denouncing controversy, good letter col. Fair issue, not as good as most of the recent ones.
- #75 -- 50¢ -- 22 pages. The "Zoo" issue. Satire by Dr. Breuss, this is the best humor I've ever written. A curiosity if nothing else.
- #84 -- 40¢ -- 16 pages, not worth the price. Short humor article by me, controversial Coughlan letter, probably my worst issue since #53.
- #85 -- \$3.00 -- 170 pages. My fourth annish. My best issue ever, by far.
I have a few of the very recent issues left in stock too, but most of you have them anyway. OK, folks, buy 'em up while they last!

ALSO for sale, sent third class: a bundle of zines received here. issues included will be up to around five years old. Great for hobby novices who want to see a broad sampling of zines past and present. Great for me, as you'll help me unclutter my living room and I'll be able to watch TV again. Bundle of 40-50 zines costs \$3.50; 90-100 costs \$6.00; bundle of over 200 for \$11.00. Quantities are just about unlimited.

Mark Berch has sent in this humor item from an 11-year old issue of Bushwacker:

Once upon a time there lived a wicked king who had gained absolute power by getting his people to accept a new religion in which the people worshipped porpoises as gods. The king himself was the high priest of this religion. Since the survival of the political state depended on the people's acceptance of the State religion, it was necessary to keep them ignorant of the true nature of porpoises, including the fact that they can die. To keep the people from finding out that porpoises die, the king built a special tank for them behind the palace and forbade all but himself from approaching the tank. In order to insure that no one else would get near, he had a moat dug around the tank, and in the moat he placed the Royal Lions. There was a single narrow wooden bridge across the boat, with an iron gate, to which the king possessed the only key. Every day, the king would personally cross the moat over the lions to feed the porpoises. Thus, the people were kept ignorant and the king continued his tyrannical rule. It chanced that one day the king came to the moat bearing a basket of dead sea gulls to feed to the porpoises. As he started over the bridge, it collapsed, and he fell into the pit with the lions. As the lions pounced on him and began to eat him, the king reflected on the error of his ways, concluding: "It is wrong to bring gulls across State Lions for immortal porpoises."

The latest issue of Raging Main is just in and contains a hobby rarity: an Ed Wrobel letter that does not mention me! On a similar topic, DD #79 just arrived, and had it not been for a passing mention of me in a letter from Robert Sacks, I wouldn't have been mentioned there at all either. Thanks to Robert for keeping alive a streak of 33 issues of DD that have referred either to me, or VD; indeed, had it not been for Berch's "Israel" issue that string would go all the way back to DD #33 (Dan's 40 issues). I did note, though, that I also received only a very brief, passing mention in the issue on GMing errors...

Anyway, all this silence about me will be taken to mean that you folks out there don't love me any more, and you know what that means. I'll have to do something controversial to get back in the news!

By now, of course, you're probably all thinking: "Do I really have to pay for all this pitiful drivel that BRUX calls a sine?" Well...you don't, really. There are several ways to get free issues of VD. One is to stand by here -- see page 3. A second way is by bringing in a new subscriber -- if he mentions your name as a reference (one person only) upon subbing, you get a freebie. Third way is to win one of the contests I always seem to be running. But the way I like most is when you earn free issues by writing an article for VD. If it's original and I use it, you earn 3 free issues per printed page. I prefer articles pertaining to Diplomacy, but just about anything is a candidate for publication if it's reasonably well-written.

I mention this because, except for the Dooms of the Year entries, contributions have been very light here ever since my fourth anniversary in October. I really could use a few more articles from some of you out there, especially with Alex's Column gone, and hope some of you will start sending me some from time to time. Otherwise, you'll have to put up with my writing! That, and the free issues, ought to be inducement enough.

And, I still have no entries for the Quote Contest, due now in a few short weeks. If this price keeps up (which is doubtful), then you can win all those free issues just by telling me which was your own quote!

Finally, if you didn't read the RIGEL press yet, I strongly urge you to go back and do so. These guys know how to write real press (not just the pages upon pages of silly one-liners that mar some sines). Some people may wonder how I manage to type all that up -- hell, it's a pleasure to type up press like theirs! (But no, I'm not offering to do it for other GMS...) I consider myself very fortunate indeed to be GMing the RIGEL game.

BRUX

Bruce Linsey
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