

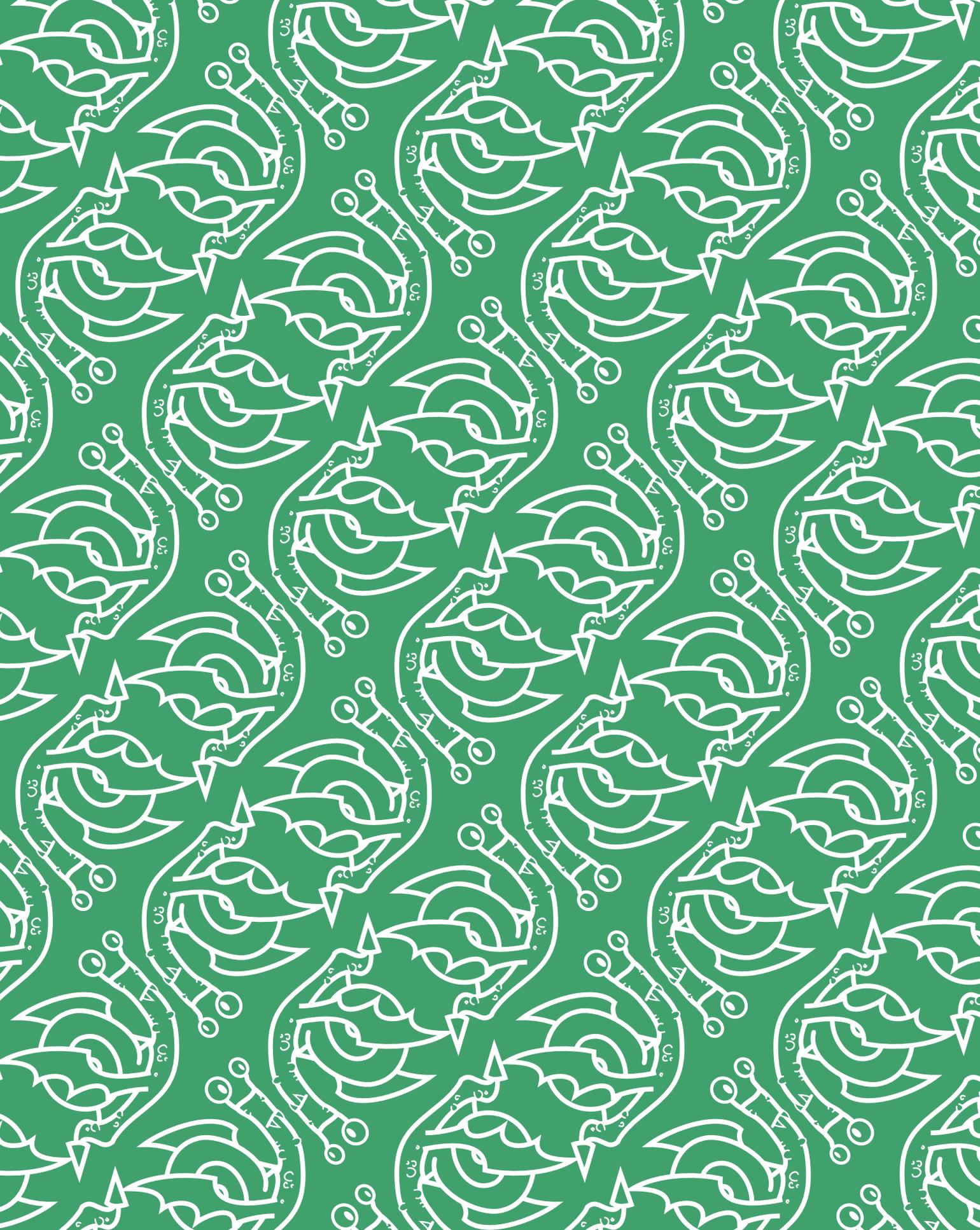
The Order of the Stick™

Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales



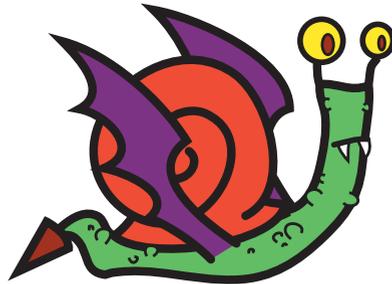
by Rich Burlew

GIANT in the
PLAYGROUND™



The
Order of the **Stick**[™]

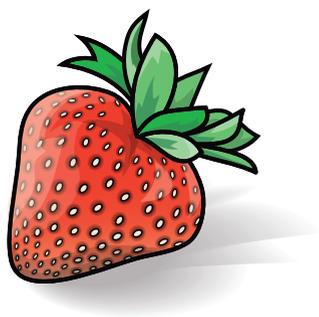
Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales



Written and Illustrated by
Rich Burlew

GIANT in
the
PLAYGROUND[™]

www.GiantITP.com



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The Order of the Stick™

by Rich Burlew

Available in print or digital PDF!

The Main Story

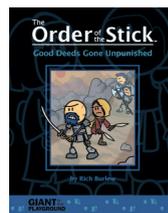
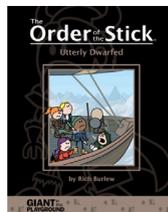
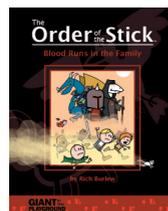
- *Dungeon Crawl'n' Fools*
- *No Cure for the Paladin Blues*
- *War and XPs*
- *Don't Split the Party*
- *Blood Runs in the Family*
- *Utterly Dwarfed*

The Prequels

- *On the Origin of PCs*
- *Start of Darkness*
- *Civil Servant* (digital only)
- *Good Deeds Gone Unpunished*

The Random Stuff

- *Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales*
- *Haleo and Julelan* (digital only)
- *The OOTS Coloring Book* (print only)





Preface

by Xykon

So, my agent calls me up while I'm chilling in the ruins of a noble and just civilization—that's just how the Big X rolls—and he tells me I need to read this "The Order of the Stick" book. I tell him, Sheckie, I don't need to read anything, or do I have to remind you what happened to your wife when you told me I needed to cut down on the off-color jokes? He said no, Lord Xykon. I could hear the tears in his voice, and let me tell you, I got a good chuckle out of that. But anyway, he tells me it would be good if I read this advance copy of a book he just got his hands on, all about this adventuring party and their travels through a dungeon and stuff. So I say fax it over, and he does, and I start reading.

Long story short, I allowed him to live because man, are these guys funny! I couldn't stop laughing at them, with their wacky observational comedy stylings. Like making jokes about hit points? Classic! Comedy gold. That sort of thing never gets old. Unless they revise the rules so that there aren't hit points anymore, in which case it'll get old really fast. And talk about characters! Normally, I'd need to slaughter at least an entire village to get that much depth out of the last surviving child, and even they would have a 50-50 chance of just growing up to be an alcoholic instead of an avenging champion.

And I'm thinking, "Xykon, why can't you ever face heroes this interesting?" Those paladins were good for a giggle, but they weren't really in my weight class, know what I mean? All I'm stuck with is that crazy elf that broke in and wrecked up the place. Or that Beigeblade guy, what's his name...Rob? Roger? Yeah, I'm pretty sure it was Roger. Anyway, not exactly the most entertaining crew of enemies, as these things go.

Which got me to thinking why that might be. I mean, I'm a hip young lich with everything to prove and nothing to lose. Protagonists ought to be lining up to take a shot at me (which would be convenient, given the shape of a *lightning bolt* spell). There must be something keeping the really high-quality good guys away. So I asked a few of my minions, but they didn't know. After the zombies disposed of their powdery remains, I realized the truth. There was nothing wrong with *me*—I was the same badass as ever. No, the problem was *public relations*. Heroes didn't know I was out there, waiting to fight. I needed to get the word out, and fast.

First, I tried a classified ad in one of those alt-weekly newspapers, but it didn't work. Here's the ad I placed:

Me: 100% bone and ready to tussle. You: done with grinding and ready for the big finish. You penetrate my secret lair or I desecrate your holy temple, either way is fine with me. No monks.

Not only didn't I get any decent heroes, but the men and women who did respond were mostly monks after I specifically ruled them out. At least, I'm assuming that they were monks based on the fact that they didn't bring armor or weapons and were trying to grapple me. Plus, I think one of them said something about, "flurry of blows."

Anyhoo, next I tried internet advertising. They told me I needed to provide a banner, so I had the hobgoblins sew a 30-foot-long tapestry with my picture and an invitation to do battle in 15 languages. They do good work with needlecrafts, hobgoblins, I'll say that about them. But apparently, that banner wasn't the right size or something? I don't know. They said they were not going to be able to place it on a website after all, so I decided to place *them* on a website, with the web in question belonging to an 800-lb. blood spider. The ironic part is that they tried to run, but they were horribly killed instead. Wait, is that irony? I don't know. It was funny.

Then I tried viral advertising, but it was too hard to get the ad copy on the side of the virus' protein shell. And then it mutated and killed a few thousand people. Which you'd think would have been pretty good publicity for a villain in and of itself, but no such luck. Turns out I mostly killed internet celebrities, so it was seen as a boon to society.

And then it hit me. I should write the preface for that *Order of the Stick* book. I bet lots of heroes read that. So listen up, if you're a hero, a protagonist, a champion, or any sort of general do-gooder, I'm looking to swap out my current opposition for something a little more upscale. I can promise top quality battles with some good one-liners, and if you're the type that gets really worked up over inhuman atrocities, well, we're going to get along just fine. Just come to Azure City, Southern Continent, and start killing minions. Eventually, someone will get back to you for your paperwork.

No monks.

Xykon
Lich sorcerer
March 2011



Introduction

by Rich Burlew

Welcome, loyal readers, to the book of completely random stuff I put together to pad out the comic strips that ran in *Dragon*® into a full-length product.

What? I'm not supposed to say that? Crap. OK, let's try this again.

Welcome, loyal readers, to a magical collection of tales to delight; of flights of fantasy and odd rarities sure to enthrall anyone who loves *The Order of the Stick*!

Geez, that just sounds *douchey*.

OK, look, I'll level with you. I've really wanted to put the strips that ran in *Dragon* into print for a long time, but I'm a small company. I can't sell a 22-page book for a decent enough price to put food on my table. So I came up with some other stuff to go with it. Some of it is stuff I've always wanted to do and for which I've now finally found a place, some of it is stuff for which there's been a strong fan demand, and some of it is crap I pulled out of my ass because I thought it was funny. My hope is that all of it entertains, because more than any other book I've put out, that's the whole point of this one: To make you laugh.

Because, see, there's no overarching plot here. No epic tale of incompetent good versus apathetic evil. No filling in of previously-unrevealed secrets. Just 100-something pages of jokes. Some of them involving poo.

Obviously the centerpiece, the stuff you all paid for, is the [series of strips](#) that were originally printed in *Dragon*, the official D&D® magazine that ran from 1978 to 2007, and to which I was proud to be able to contribute the very last page of content. I also have some commentary about that process appearing alongside it, especially regarding the cancellation and how I heard about it.

After that, we have probably the single most requested subject ever: *The Order of the Stick* deals with the changeover to [4th Edition D&D](#), in their own satirical way. I made the decision not to switch the main strip (the one found online or in our big fat color compilation books) to "4E" when it came out because by that point, I was past the halfway mark of my story and I felt a changeover would be confusing to part-time readers, as well as distract from the plot. That doesn't mean I didn't start making mental note of some of the more joke-worthy aspects of the system, though, and while I only have 20 or so pages to dish them out in this book, I think both people who love and people who love to hate the system will be able to appreciate what I've come up with.

The third big [section](#) is something I'm introducing called simply **StickTales**—where the characters of *The Order of the Stick* retell classic fairy tales or pieces of literature. This is

something I've been wanting to do for a few years now, and I have many ideas for it, but I've been hesitant to try to bring it to the reading public cold. Consider this my proof of concept, then: if everyone likes it, maybe we'll see more such stories as bonus materials in other books or as stand-alone extras. If it goes over like an adamantine beholder, well, at least I got these out of my system.

I personally enjoyed writing them a lot, because they give me a chance to vent something that's been a thorn in my side for years with *OOTS*—the fact that the powers and abilities associated with D&D characters shove most traditional storytelling idioms into a canvas sack and then beat them with hammers until they stop moving. I've always been frustrated by the experience of having to work around such gamechangers as *teleport*, *scrying*, *commune*, and the biggest tension-killers of them all, *raise dead* and its mean older brother *true resurrection*. So now I'm turning the tables by exploring how even baseline assumptions about the game would utterly trash classic stories written in the real world. I hope you read them not just as another round of comedy or a retelling of a story you've heard before, but as one more cheap shot at the game that I love.

And the last major thing in the book is a Julio Scoundré! story, because I wanted to write something fun and action-oriented. Writing Julio is like writing Elan and Haley in one character, with an airship. And although it took a few tries, I got the chance to try out a (slightly) different art style along the way.

So, I hope you enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed the change of pace in writing it. If you like the pure comedy herein, I'm thrilled. If you don't, well, think of it as support for the more plot-driven comic that you like so much in our compilations. Either way, I'll get out of the way now and let you get down to some [air pirate action](#).

Thanks, as always, for your support.

Rich Burlew
March 2011

Sugar, Spice, and Writing Commentaries Twice:

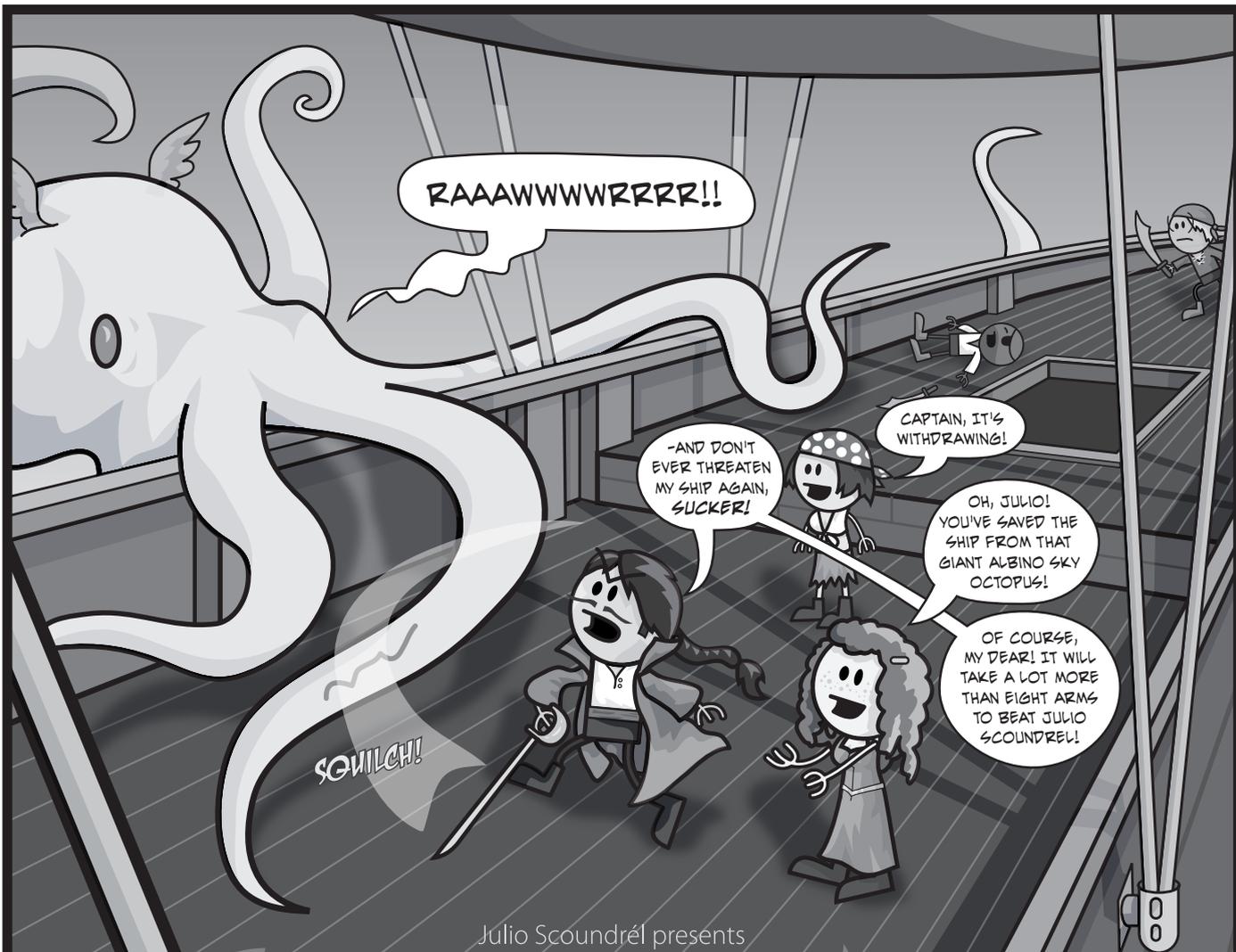
Hey everyone, this is Rich in the fuuuuuuture of 2024, preparing the digital edition you're reading right now. In addition to everything else mentioned above, I've included the six original *OOTS* comics that I did for the very-short-lived *Gygax*™ magazine that was published quarterly in 2014 and 2015. I've also written a full page of new commentary talking about that experience and also looking back on the material in the rest of this book. You can find all of that after the "Invaders from the Fourth Edition" story, or you can just click on [this link](#) because here in the far-fung future, we have hyperlinked PDF files.

The Order of the Stick

Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales



Julio Scoundrel and the
Curse of the Mummy Queen



Julio Scoundrél presents

Julio Scoundrél and the CURSE OF THE MUMMY QUEEN!

by Julio Scoundrél



I SWEAR, JULIO, I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY WEIRD THINGS SINCE YOU RESCUED ME FROM THAT EVIL VILLAIN'S CLUTCHES TWO DAYS AGO!*

THAT'S THE LIFE OF A SKY PIRATE, VIRGINIA: EXCITEMENT AROUND EVERY CURVE!

NOW, LET'S YOU AND I HEAD BACK TO MY CABIN AND FIND OUR OWN EXCITEMENT AROUND EVERY ONE OF YOUR CURVES!

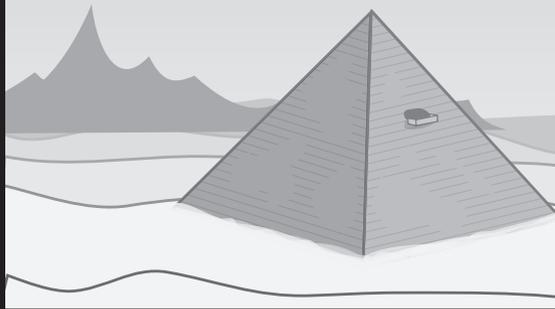
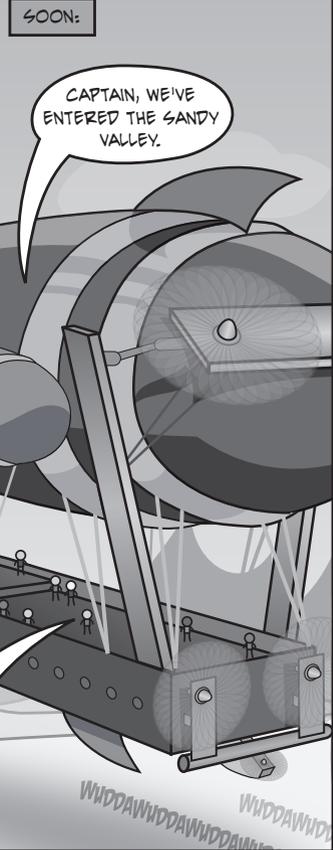
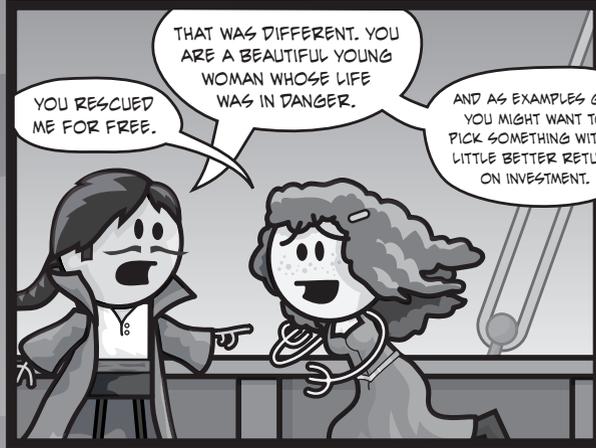
* ISSUE 93, JULIOTEERS!



OH, JULIO, I'M IN NO MOOD FOR THAT! NOT WHEN MY HOME VILLAGE IS BEING HELD HOSTAGE BY THE MUMMY QUEEN OF SANDY VALLEY!

TWO WEEKS AGO, THE EVIL QUEEN AMONTOP SENT FORTH HER VILE MINIONS FROM HER PYRAMID TOMB TO STEAL MY VILLAGE'S-

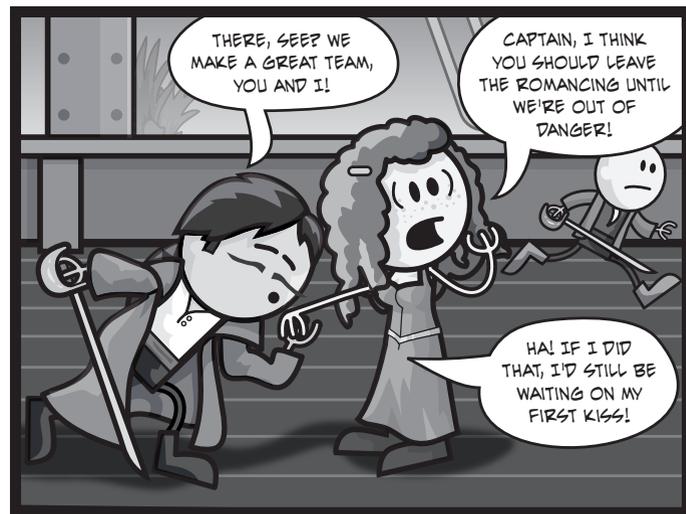
WHAT THE WHAT, NOW?

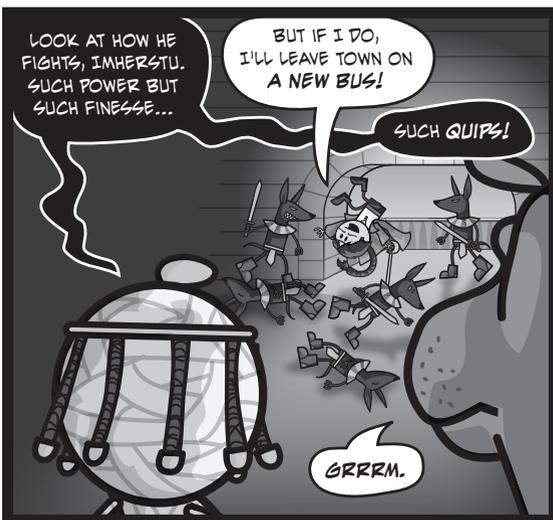
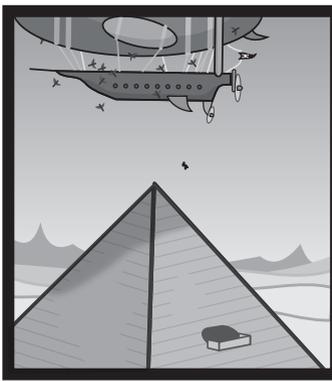


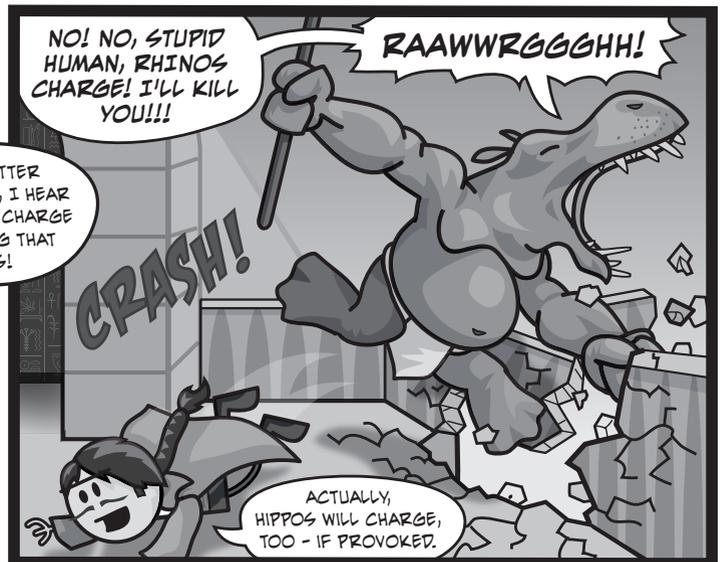
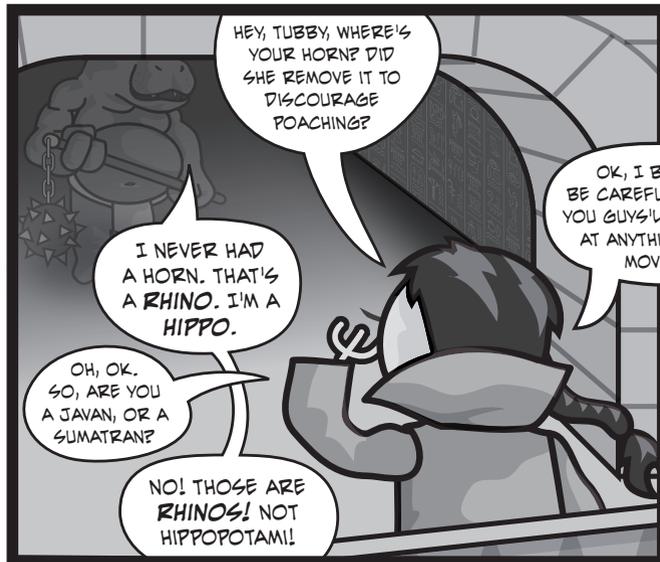
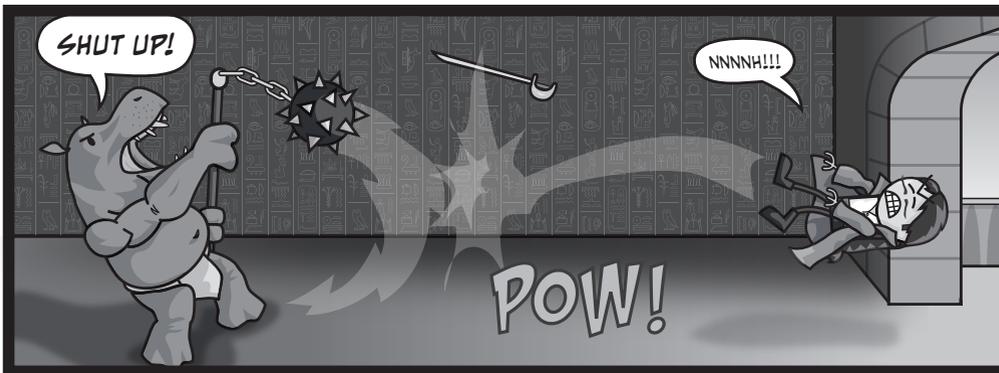
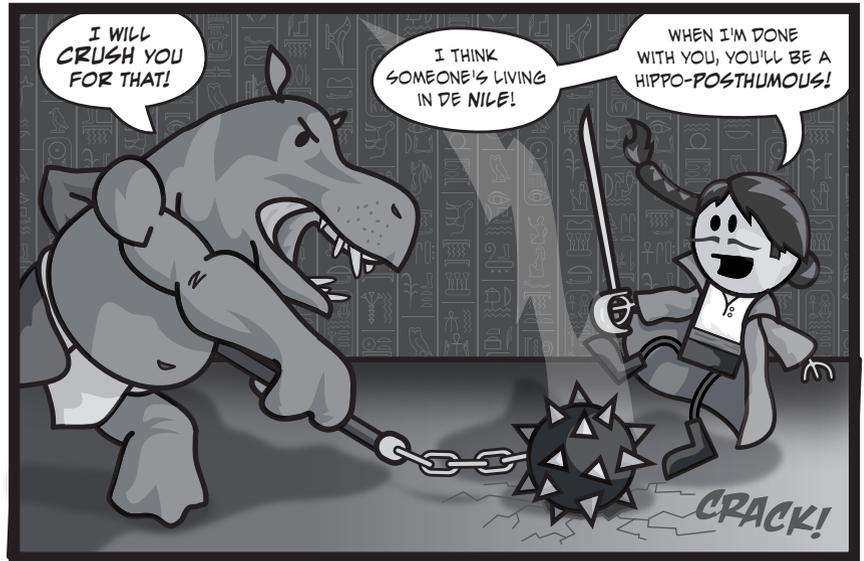
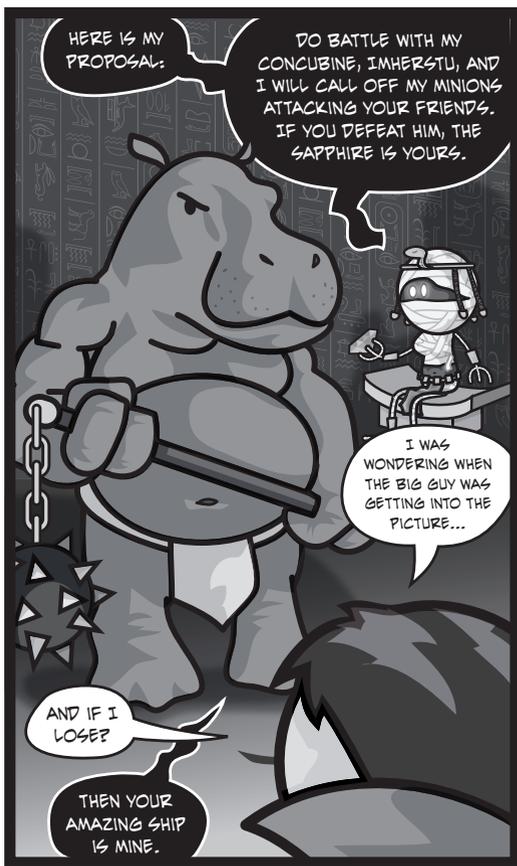
GOOD SPEED, MR. SECUNDUS. NOW GET US AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN TO THE PYRAMID.

I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO SLOG MY WAY THROUGH A BUNCH OF RANDOM ENCOUNTERS ON THE PATH THERE.

WIDDAWIDDAWIDDAWIDDAW







EXCELLENT WORK, MORTAL. YOU HAVE DEFEATED MY CONCUBINE.

GREAT, SO LET'S GET THAT SAPPHIRE WRAPPED UP TO-GO, AND-

NOW KNEEL.

HUH?

KNEEL!!!

WHA - WHAT'S HAPPENING??

DO YOU NOT NOW THE CURSE OF THE MUMMY QUEEN? ANY MAN WHO DEFEATS HER CONCUBINE *BECOMES* HER CONCUBINE! YOU ARE MY SLAVE FOR A HUNDRED YEARS AND A DAY, CAPTAIN!

THE SAPPHIRE IS YOURS, OF COURSE. I ONLY STOLE IT TO LURE SOME DASHING YOUNG HERO TO MY LAIR. I TIRED OF IMHERSTU AND HIS BRITISH WAYS.

THOUGH I CANNOT FORCE YOU TO LOVE ME, I CAN WAIT. AFTER 20, 30, OR 50 YEARS, YOU WILL GROW TO LOVE ME.

AND THEN WE WILL CONSUMMATE OUR MARRIAGE.

WHAT IF...WHAT IF I COULD GIVE YOU WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TONIGHT?

I'LL MAKE YOU A BARGAIN. I'LL SPEND ONE NIGHT HERE WILLINGLY - ENTHUSIASTICALLY - AS YOUR CONCUBINE.

...EXPLAIN.

IN RETURN, YOU RELEASE ME FROM THE CURSE AND LET ME GO ON MY WAY.

HHMMM...VERY WELL, MORTAL. I DO LONG FOR A LOVER WHO IS NOT MY MINDSLAVE.

LET US MAKE HOT DRY LOVE.

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'RE ACTUALLY GORGEOUS BENEATH ALL OF THOSE BANDAGES?

IT'S LITERALLY LIKE A GRAVEYARD THREW UP UNDER HERE.

WELL, I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE FOR WAITING.

COME ON, MUMMY CHICK. LET'S GET AS FREAKY AS I HOPE I EVER NEED TO!

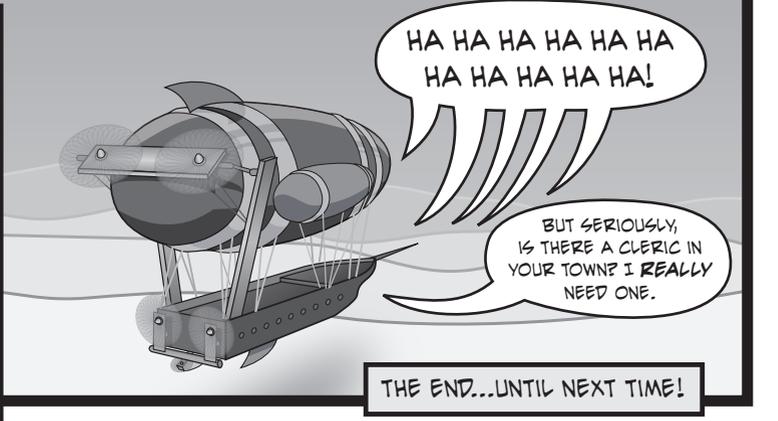
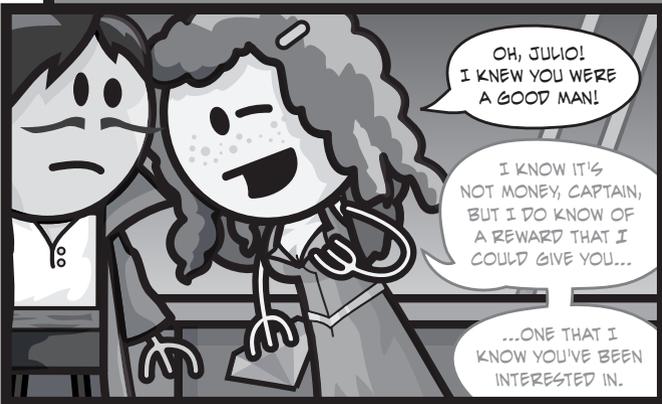
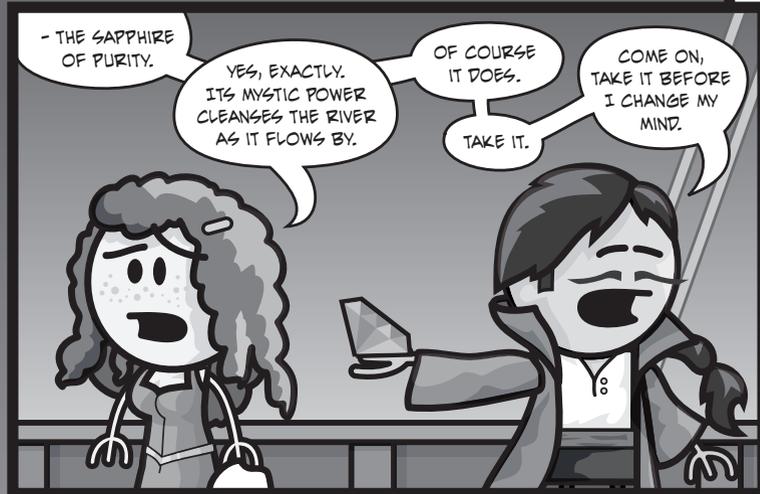
YES! THIS NIGHT OF UNHOLY PLEASURE WILL LIVE ON FOR A THOUSAND YEARS IN MY UNDYING MEMORY!

THIS WON'T BE SO BAD...AT LEAST YOU HAVE A NICE RACK.

BE CAREFUL, IT'S INFESTED WITH SCARABS.

SEE, NOW THAT'S JUST A MOOD-KILLER.

SORRY.



PIRATE MAILBAG!



The only letter column answered by Julio Scoundré! himself! • Send to: P.O. Box 492, Cliffport CP 0031

Hey gang! Another month, another exciting issue of *Julio Scoundré! The Official Comic Adaptation of the Life and Times of Julio Scoundré!*™ Let's get right down to business and answer some letters.

~~~~

Hey Julio!

Issue #120 was one of the best yet. I just loved the look on your face when it turned out the hippogriff had eaten your applesauce. I just have one question, though: At the end of the story, does the Dark Librarian know that you've swapped the secret message with a copy of your mother's seafood paella recipe, or does he still think that the Orange Warlord will be bringing the you-know-what?

—Ted

Glad you liked the hippogriff scene, Ted. It was more fun relating it to the artist than it was living through, I can assure you! We haven't seen the last of old D.L. in the pages of the comic, so I can't give too much away yet. But if you're interested, he should show up again about six issues from now. We should learn whether or not the toffee is in the spinner by then!

~~~~

Mr. Scoundré!

While your officially licensed comic book purports to be a realistic depiction of actual events, I recently had the opportunity to see your ship, the *Mechane*, firsthand. I could not help but notice that it is heavily armed with no less than four heavy-duty ballistae—which are conspicuously absent from the images of the ship in the comic. The only possible conclusion,

Mr. Scoundré! is that you are attempting to deceive your readers into thinking you are more brave or daring than you actually are, as you have the power of several siege engines at your disposal at all times. Please explain.

—Correct in Cliffport

What you're failing to remember, "Correct," is that the stories in the comic book are tales from my **past**. Yes, the *Mechane* currently sports some heavy artillery, but those were only added when I served as a privateer in the Soggy Biscuit War of 1178-1179. The current stories are from at least ten years before that! If you happen to see me at one of my personal appearances, you'll notice that the dark black hair seen in the comics is a thing of the past as well.

~~~~

Dear Pirate Mailbag,

I know everyone is writing in to ask about Julio, but I wanted to know more about Fidel! Now there's a good-looking young man, and one who knows how to keep his hand steady on the wheel. Is the real first mate of the *Mechane* seeing anyone?

—Future Mrs. Secundus

I'll pass your letter along, but the bad news is that not only is the real Fidel quite a bit older than the version you see in the comics (just like the rest of us), but he has also been happily married to our ship's flotation specialist, Lakaita, for five years. If you have issue #73, open it to page 10, panel 6 for an artist's interpretation of the real (much younger) future Mrs. Secundus; she's the one holding the armadillo. Now let's get back to talking about me!

Mr. Julio Scoundré!

We hereby notify you on behalf of our client, Miss Greta Heroda, of our intention to seek a paternity settlement in the case of Miss Heroda's recently born son.

—Jones & Rodriguez

Not the sort of talking about me that I had in mind. OK, I feel like I say this every issue, but please, people! Paternity, child support, property damage, and sexual harassment notifications must all be sent to **P.O. box 491 only**; box 492 is for letters to the comic book letter column. Try to keep it straight, folks.

~~~~

Dear Julio,

Yours is my favorite comic, but I had to finally write in and get something off my chest. I love the writing, but I can't take the crappy art anymore. It's just not very realistic to see all these weird little pools of darkness at the bottom of everyone's feet. I know you've said they're called "shadows," but I think they detract from the story by making the whole world just seem less lifelike. Please, get rid of them.

—Jason

Thanks for the compliments on the script, Jason. As far as the art goes, the artist chose a style that he feels best expresses the action-adventure feeling of the stories I've relayed to him. He is obviously very skilled and could certainly delete the shading to make the comic more representational of reality, but he feels that this art style is not objectively "crappier" than any other. It just brings a different aesthetic to the comic, one that is unique. We hope you understand.

Dear Mr. Julio,

I like your comic. It is really really fun. I like how you beat up all the bad guys. I don't like how you kiss girls all the time. I want to grow up to be like you. I drew a picture of you and me on your boat, do you want to see it? My mommy said I had to ask.

—Aiden (age 5)

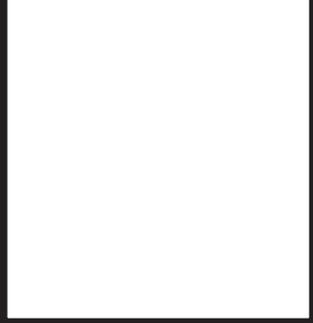
Hey there, Aiden! It's always great to hear from my youngest Juliateers! I would love to see the picture you drew. You can send it to the same address that you put on this letter, and maybe I'll even print it in a future letter column! Unless your mommy says she knows me personally, in which case have her send it to box 491.

~~~~

**NEXT MONTH!** It's more thrilling sky pirate action as Virginia and I find ourselves caught between the Flying Submarine of Doctor Obstreperous and the Broomstick Gang of Peculiar Peak! Can I keep those crazy witches off of my ship long enough to unlock the secret of the not-so-good doctor's Possibility Eraser? Can I rescue Virginia when she's taken captive by the cabal's secret benefactor? Did I ever remember to get that mummy rot thing taken care of? And what does all this have to do with the search for the Cosmic Soupcan?? Find out in the next exciting issue of *Julio Scoundré!*™!

Until then, keep riding the skies!

*Julio Scoundré!*  
xoxo



## Julio Always Was a Sketchy Fellow

Like I said in the introduction, one of the goals with the Julio Scoundrél story was to do something more action-oriented; a story that was more comic book than comic strip. Because while *OOTS* has action elements, it is usually a comic strip first and foremost. You may have noticed that the characters talk a lot. A whole lot. This was a chance to switch up my priorities and put the visuals first.

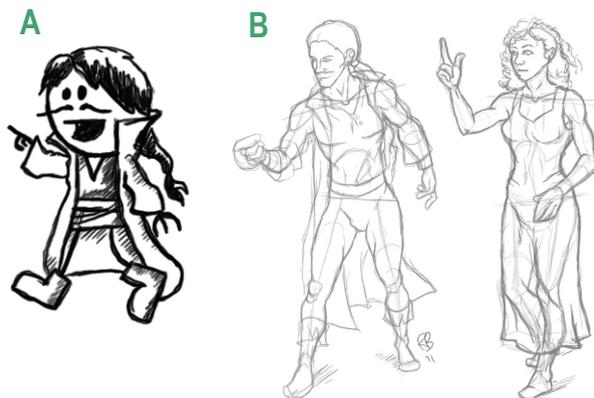
Which meant I needed better art. Don't get me wrong, I love my regular art style, but my argument in defense of stick figures has always been that it is appropriate because of how it reflects the comedic nature of the series and still lets you know what's going on. The unstated implication of that premise is that with a series that was less comedic, the *OOTS* art style would not be acceptable. With Julio Scoundrél, the comedy was taking a back seat, so the visuals needed to step up.

My first instinct was to try a fully hand-drawn style, to maximize the difference between the regular strip and this "comic within a comic" that was being produced within the *OOTS* world. The images on [these pages](#) were part of those attempts, but there were some problems right away. First, the process was enormously time-consuming; one page of hand-drawn images took me as long as ten regular *OOTS* pages, meaning that a nine-page story would have taken as long as the entire rest of this book. But what really hurt it was that hand-drawing was also very space-intensive. It really needed no more than four (or at most, five) panels per page in order to look right. If I shrunk the art more than that, it

**Bottom Right:** My original character sketches for Julio and Virginia, in full comic book style (pencils (B) and inks (C), both done digitally on a graphics tablet; I would have added the sword blade with vectors to keep it straight). I really liked how these came out as stand-alone pieces of art, but they didn't feel comedic enough for the sort of story I had planned. They were far too realistic for a tale that was going to feature a man bedding a mummy! Plus, using this style would have required me to get photo reference for every panel, something that I thought would be difficult considering the kind of acrobatics Julio pulls.

**Bottom Left:** I didn't get further than this one drawing (A) before deciding that redrawing stick figures by hand was not going to be a good idea.

**Opposite:** An unfinished page from my second major attempt. Definitely more cartoony than the character sketches...but it's not really working, especially for Julio himself. He looks more like a caricature than a cartoon. The mummy queen and the hippo-man look good, though, and I would reuse these panel layouts for my final version.



became difficult to pick out what was happening. By contrast, check out the final page for the sequence pictured to the left; I was able to get three more panels of action onto the same page without a problem. Since I only had a fixed number of pages with which to work, less per page meant less story; you'll note that the jackalfolk are missing from the final panel in the page opposite because I didn't have room in the story for them. It went directly to the challenge between Julio and Imherstu. Even if you added in these two pages that I'm using right now, the total story had far less material than it does now (and it's a pretty short story).

And then I had trouble nailing down exactly what style I wanted to use. Realistic? Cartoony? In-between? I tried several variations, including hand-drawing stick figures like I had done before for the "Crayons of Time" series, but none of them clicked. It may be because I created Julio as a stick figure, but nothing really looked like him to me.

So I went back to stick figures, but realized that comic book style was as much about composition and staging as it was about rendering. If I put my emphasis on dynamic layouts, it would feel like a superhero comic even if it still featured simplistic renderings. I also upgraded my usual art to include lighting and more organic-looking speech balloons. I wrote the story using a one-man adaptation of the "Marvel Method," which is to say that I loosely plotted it, then laid out the panels with the characters, and then went back and wrote the actual dialogue after I knew what was happening in each panel. I feel like that really took the emphasis away from the talking that happens in a usual *OOTS* strip, at the expense of having as many jokes. I also think I did an OK job of capturing a comic book vibe with the panel layout, successfully "actioning up" my stick figures. I include the hand-drawn material here to show you the differences. Who knows? Maybe someday I'll find a project that suits this style of drawing perfectly. For now, though, enjoy the extra bonus art.

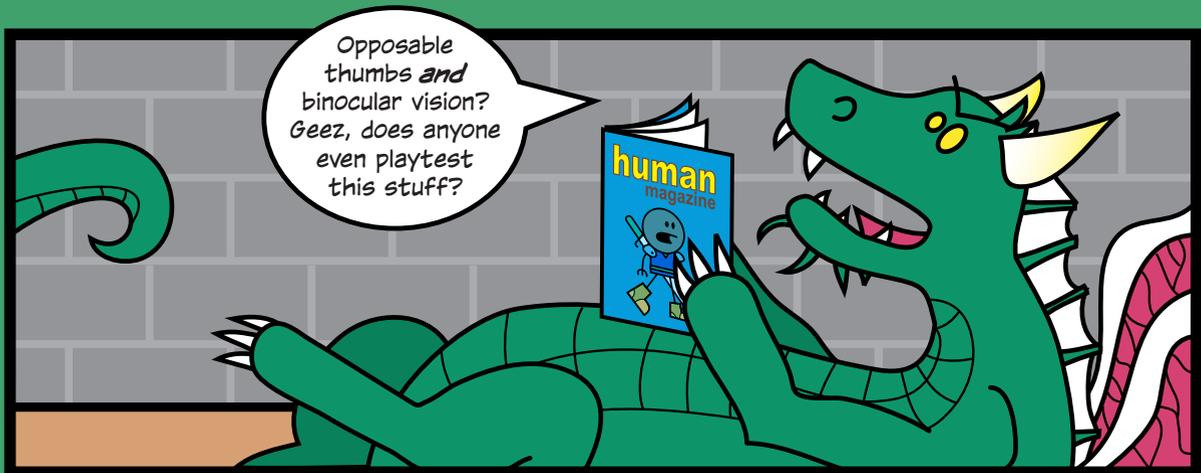


# In the Realm of the Dragon



# The Order of the Stick

**Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales**



The Magazine Strips

## Riding the Dragon

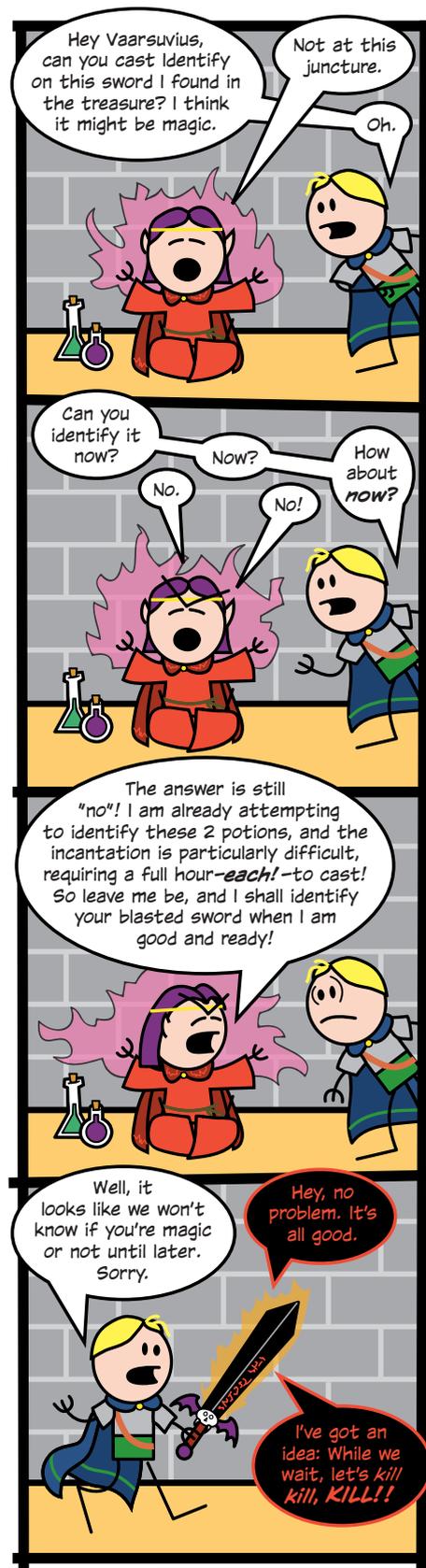
The first time I was approached by Paizo Publishing®, then-licensees of the *Dragon*® trademark from Wizards of the Coast®, was at the RPGA's now-defunct Winter Fantasy convention in February of 2005. I had been invited down to Arlington, VA, on the RPGA's dime as a guest, and to promote the short-lived *Five Foot Steps* comic that I was drawing for their bi-weekly newsletter. The convention was great, one of the best show memories from that time period. Most of the attendees didn't know who the guy drawing stick figures in the convention lobby was, but many that did got themselves a crayon-drawn original of their favorite PCs. During this con, Jason Buhlman from Paizo asked me to go have a drink with him regarding a business opportunity he had in mind for me.

Sidenote: During this meeting, Chris Perkins of Wizards of the Coast interrupted us to tell us that he had writing work for both of us. I don't know what Jason's ended up being, but for me, it was the *Explorer's Handbook*, a book I co-wrote for the 3.5 Edition of D&D® for the Eberron campaign setting—the same setting that beat out my entry for Wizards' Fantasy Setting Search two years earlier. Sidenote to the sidenote: Jason and I ended up co-writing *Dungeonscape* for Wizards two years after that, which has some of my favorite work that I did for them before I bailed on game writing in order to focus my attention on comics. Jason, of course, went on to create the *Pathfinder*® roleplaying game for Paizo as Lead Developer after all this went down.

Anyway, we never actually got a drink, as the bar was already closed. But we did talk about me doing a comic for *Dragon*—not just any comic, though, but OOTS specifically. My biggest concern was that I would maintain all rights to the strips and the characters, since I was already making my living off of the online version of the same intellectual property, which he assured me I would. So we made plans to discuss the issue further over email, we shook hands and then...well, things sort of stalled for a few months. We traded emails back and forth, but there wasn't much activity until that August. Why August? Well, because August is when GenCon happens, and at GenCon 2005, I released *On the Origin of PCs*, my first book of all original content. And it sold like I had printed it on scrolls of *wish*. Suddenly, there was new incentive on both sides to get a deal signed, and within a month, I had contracts in my hand.

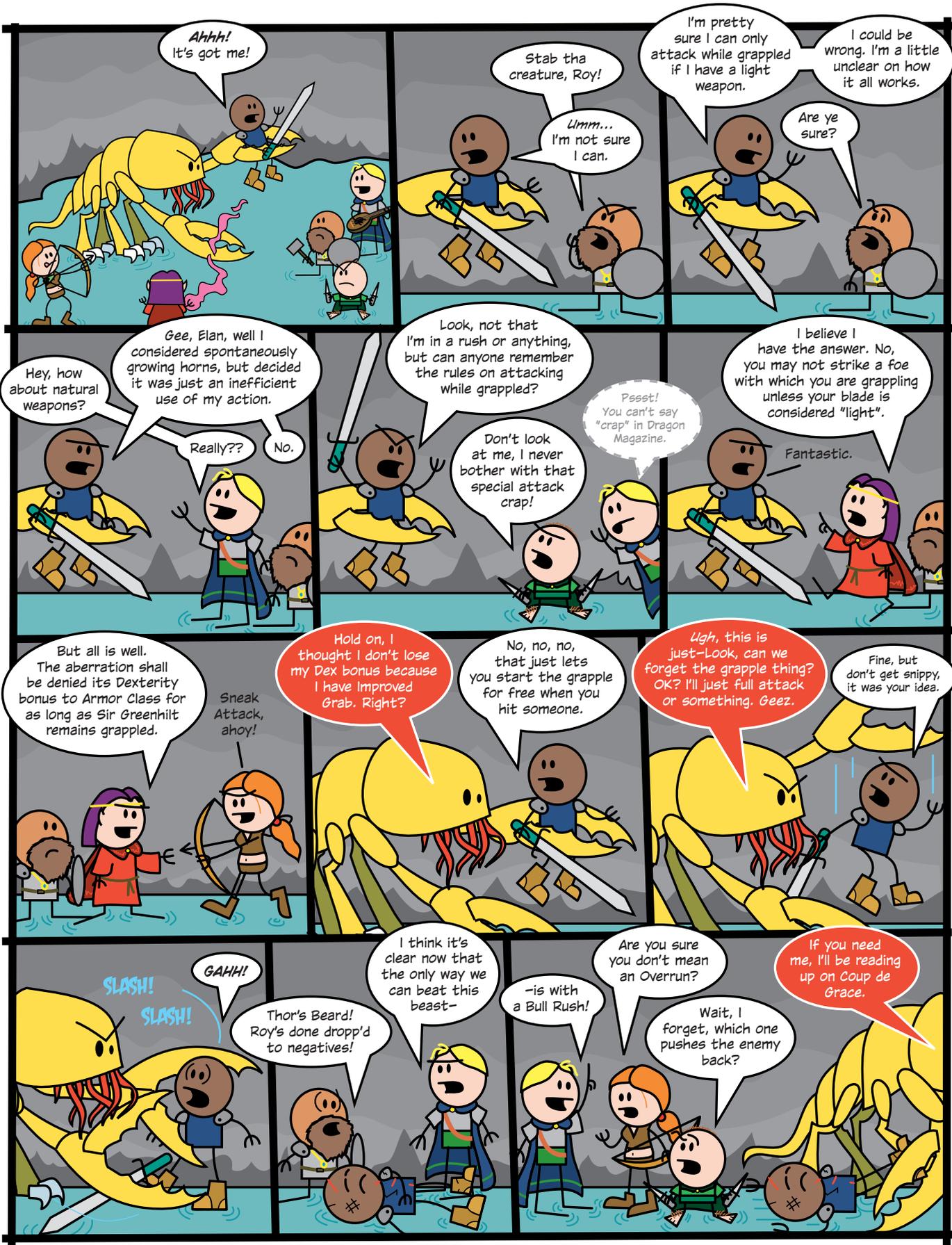
The comic premiered in the December 2005 issue, #338, with the strip appearing on the opposite page. I decided to forego introducing the characters in favor of just getting down to business. Originally, the plan was to introduce the strip with a full-page comic in the first issue, then switch over to a single vertical strip of panels, like the comic to the right that appeared in the second issue with OOTS, *Dragon* #339. Therefore, I didn't want to waste what was (in my mind at the time) my only shot at the back page of the comic with a rehashed version of my online cast page. All of my fans had already seen the characters be introduced, and with one strip a month, it wasn't like I was going to delve into a deep storyline with them anyway. However, the vertical strip format was only ever used once. By the time the third comic for #340 was ready to be delivered, the folks at Paizo informed me that response to the comic appearing had been overwhelmingly positive and that they wanted to switch to a full-size comic in every issue. From that point on, OOTS had the back page until the magazine was cancelled.

Working on the comics for *Dragon* was sort of surreal, in the sense that I was at once incredibly awed and flattered by having my hack work published in the periodical that literally hooked me into roleplaying games in the first place, and on the other hand I was completely frustrated every month to come up with a gag. I had already harvested most of the low-hanging fruit when it came to making fun of D&D for my online comic, and I didn't really want to trash the game too much in the official publication anyway. I had to assume that every single comic could be a given reader's first exposure to OOTS, so I couldn't rely on using my usual *LOL Elan's dumb!* as a punchline. I couldn't use what needed to happen next for the story as a scaffolding, either. I had to come up with a funny, self-contained joke every time, and it was pretty tough. I didn't always hit my deadlines as a result (and the fact that I had them at all was a huge shift from my self-employed work habits).



#339 I.D. Required

*Continued on page 44.*



Ahhh!  
It's got me!

Stab the creature, Roy!

I'm pretty sure I can only attack while grappled if I have a light weapon.

I could be wrong. I'm a little unclear on how it all works.

Umm... I'm not sure I can.

Are ye sure?

Gee, Eian, well I considered spontaneously growing horns, but decided it was just an inefficient use of my action.

Hey, how about natural weapons?

Really???

No.

Look, not that I'm in a rush or anything, but can anyone remember the rules on attacking while grappled?

Don't look at me, I never bother with that special attack crap!

Pssst! You can't say "crap" in Dragon Magazine.

I believe I have the answer. No, you may not strike a foe with which you are grappling unless your blade is considered "light".

Fantastic.

But all is well. The aberration shall be denied its Dexterity bonus to Armor Class for as long as Sir Greenhilt remains grappled.

Sneak Attack, ahoy!

Hold on, I thought I don't lose my Dex bonus because I have Improved Grab. Right?

No, no, no, that just lets you start the grapple for free when you hit someone.

Ugh, this is just-Look, can we forget the grapple thing? OK? I'll just full attack or something. Geez.

Fine, but don't get snippy, it was your idea.

SLASH!  
SLASH!

GAHH!

Thor's Beard! Roy's done dropp'd to negatives!

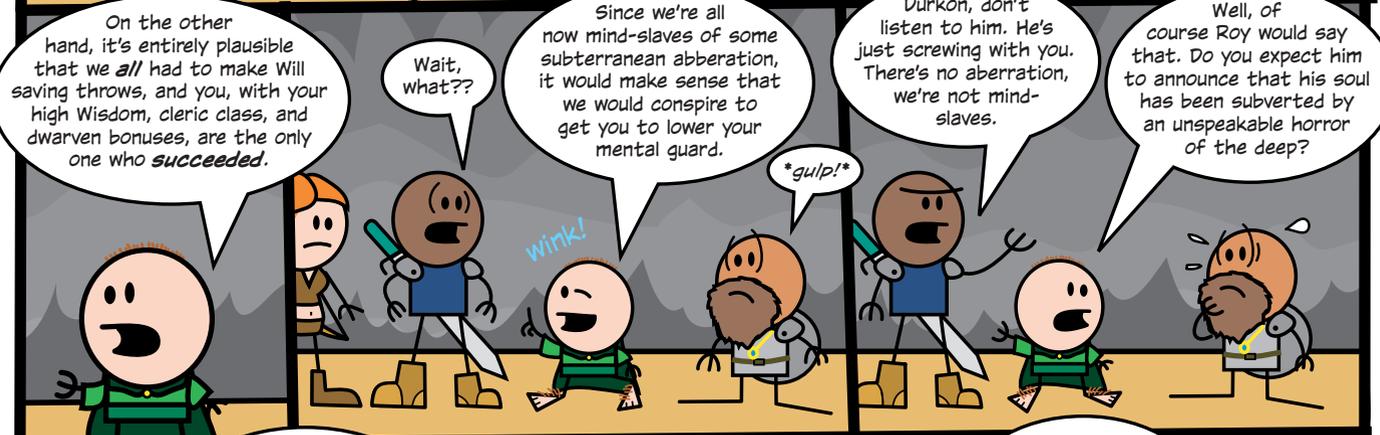
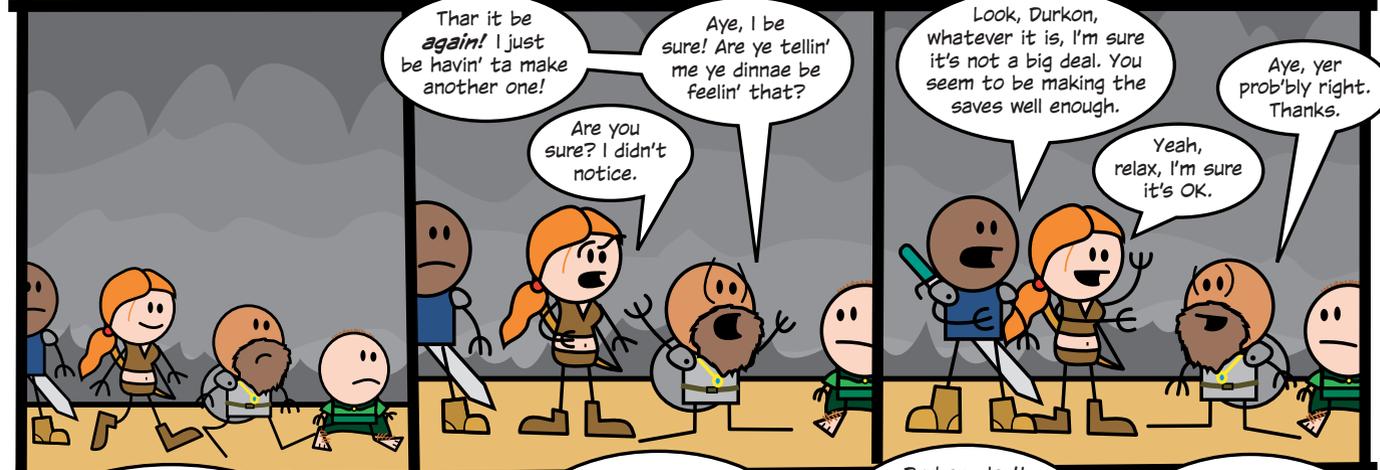
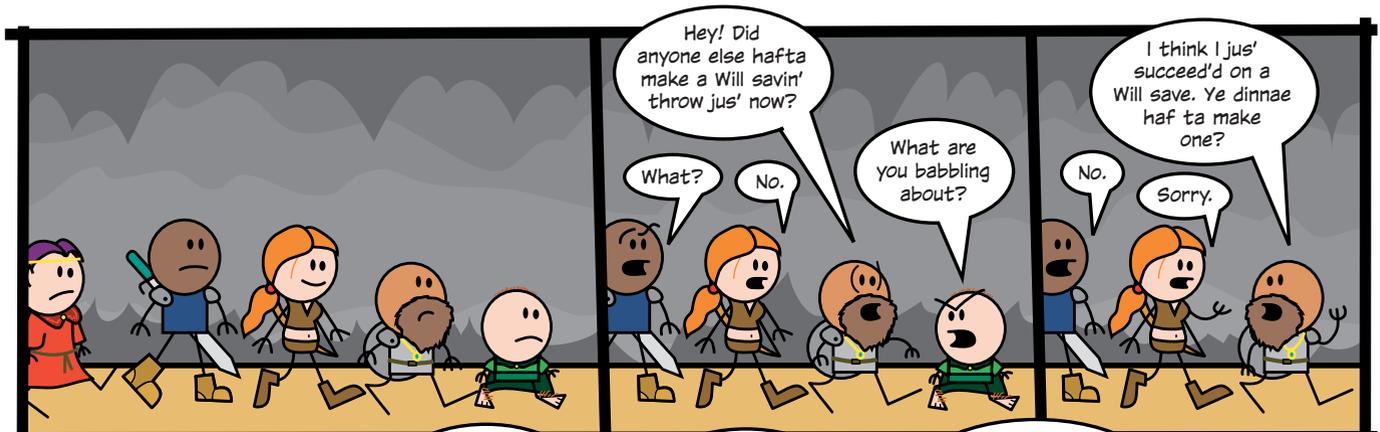
I think it's clear now that the only way we can beat this beast-

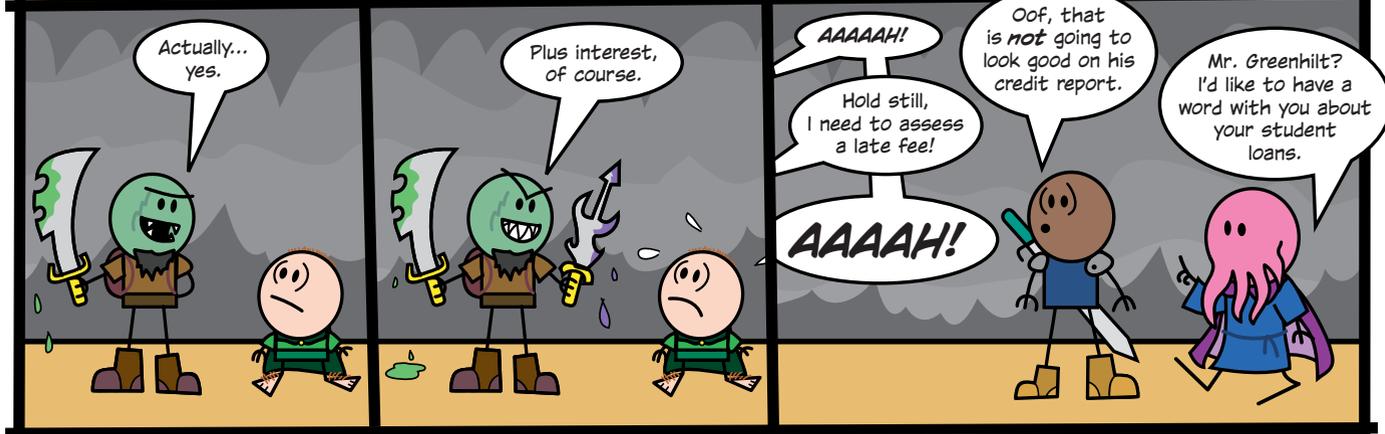
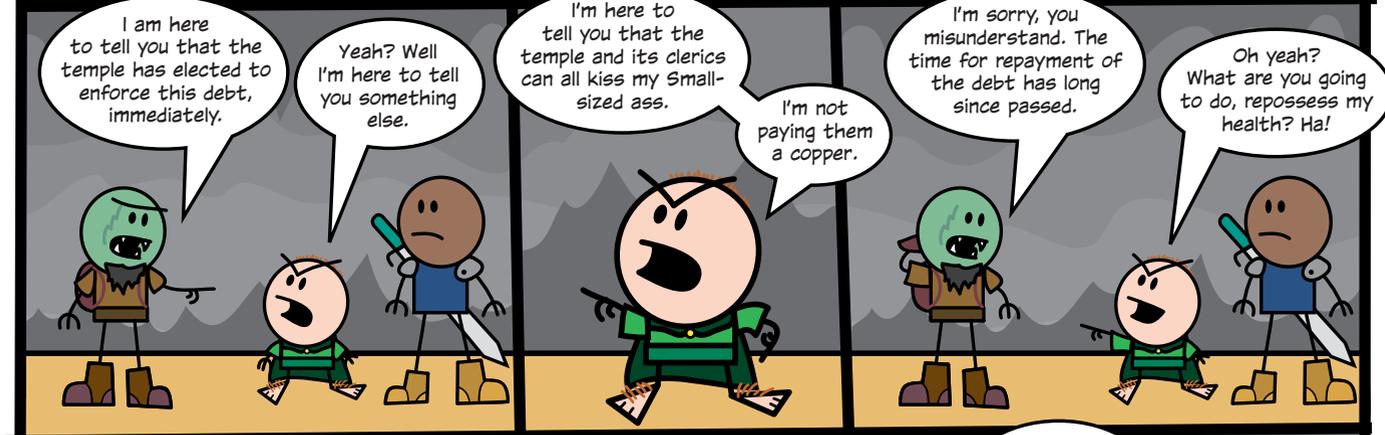
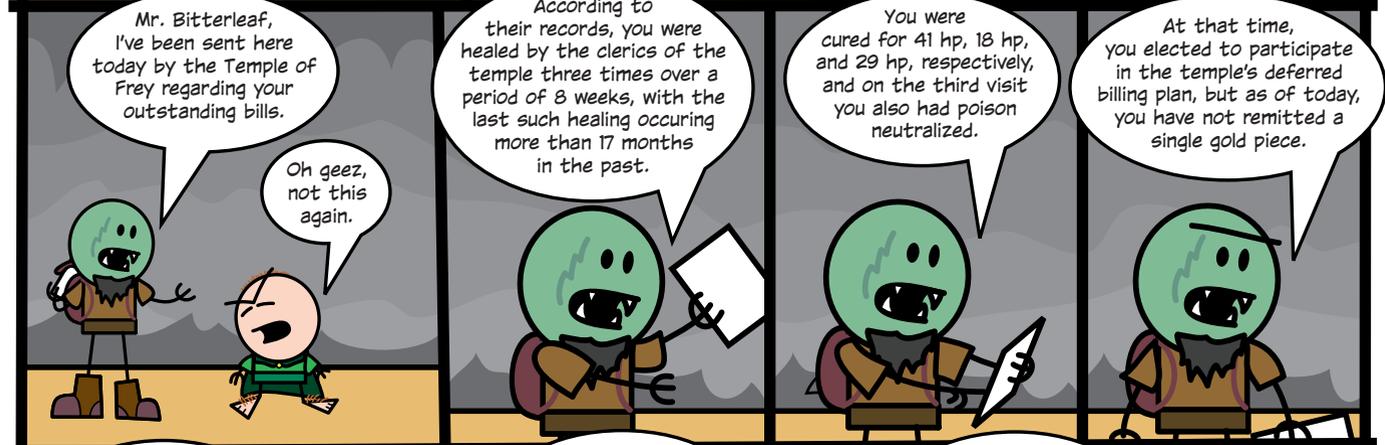
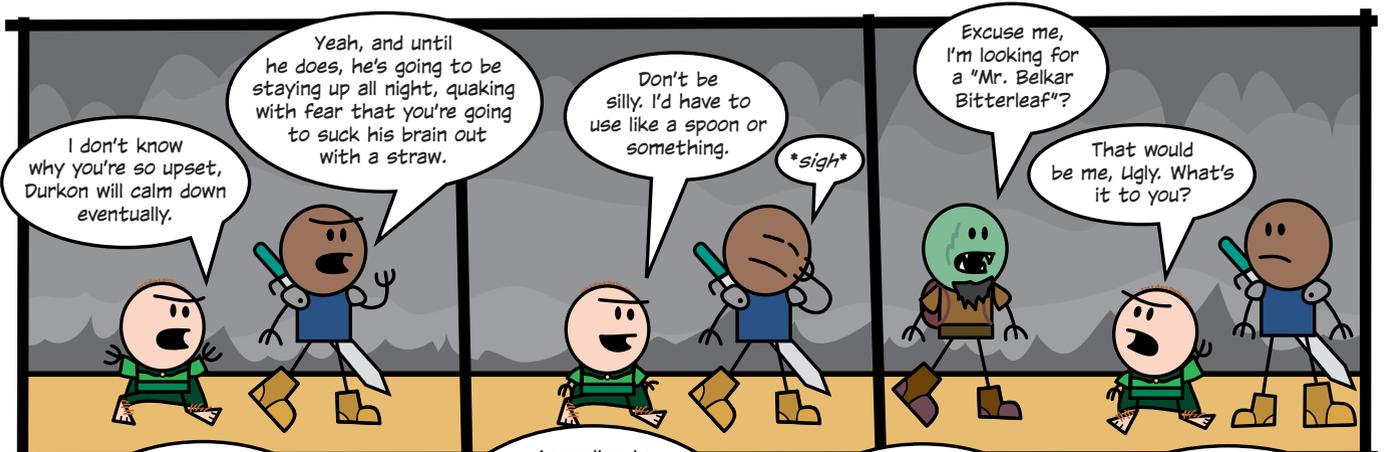
-is with a Bull Rush!

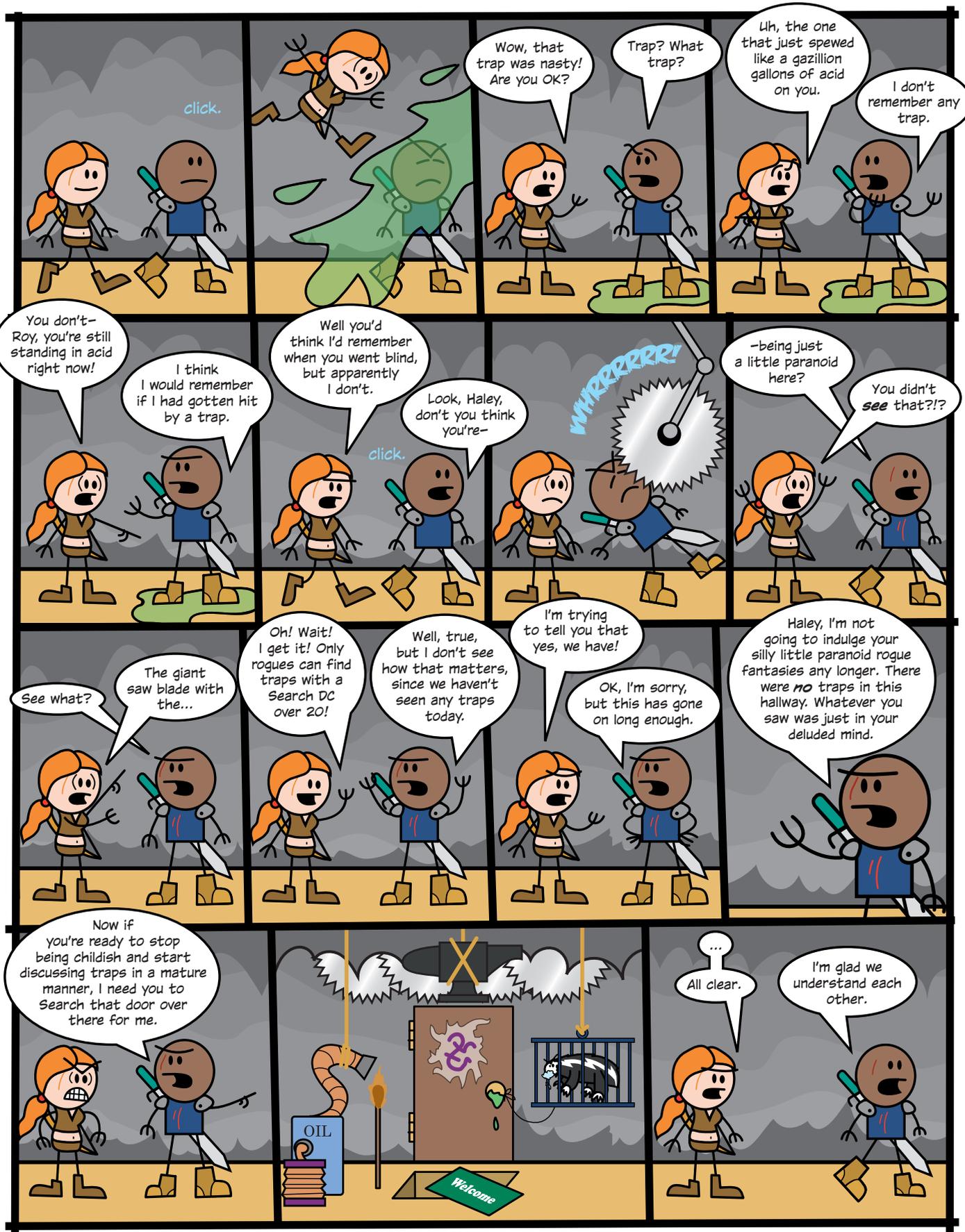
Are you sure you don't mean an Overrun?

Wait, I forget, which one pushes the enemy back?

If you need me, I'll be reading up on Coup de Grace.







click.

Wow, that trap was nasty! Are you OK?

Trap? What trap?

Uh, the one that just spewed like a gazillion gallons of acid on you.

I don't remember any trap.

You don't- Roy, you're still standing in acid right now!

I think I would remember if I had gotten hit by a trap.

Well you'd think I'd remember when you went blind, but apparently I don't.

Look, Haley, don't you think you're-

click.

WHRRRRRR!

-being just a little paranoid here?

You didn't see that?!?

See what?

The giant saw blade with the...

Oh! Wait! I get it! Only rogues can find traps with a Search DC over 20!

Well, true, but I don't see how that matters, since we haven't seen any traps today.

I'm trying to tell you that yes, we have!

OK, I'm sorry, but this has gone on long enough.

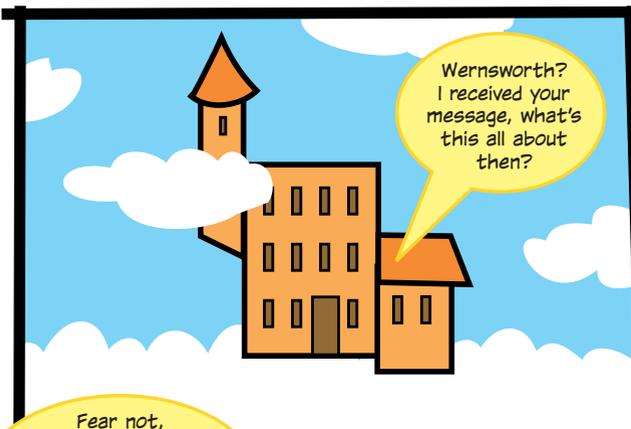
Haley, I'm not going to indulge your silly little paranoid rogue fantasies any longer. There were **no** traps in this hallway. Whatever you saw was just in your deluded mind.

Now if you're ready to stop being childish and start discussing traps in a mature manner, I need you to Search that door over there for me.



All clear.

I'm glad we understand each other.



Wernsworth? I received your message, what's this all about then?



Please enter, Bogglesby, my good man, and prepare to be amazed.

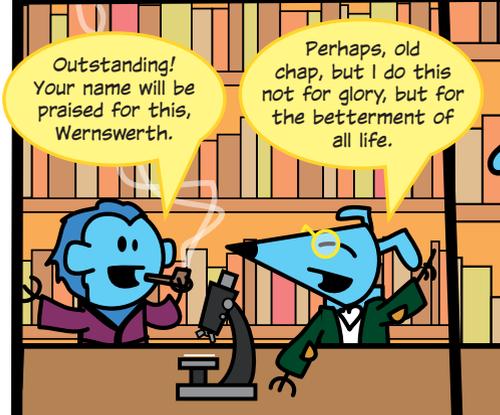
I should hope so, as your missive has called me away from my rereading of the complete works of Arneson.

Fear not, old friend, as what I have to show you will turn out to be well worth the interruption of your literary analysis.

I believe I stand on the very precipice of a scientific discovery that will certainly revolutionize everything we know about the universe.

The cell under this microscope is the only one of its kind, the product of centuries of selective breeding to capture the pure essence of mortality in one cell. In approximately 37.84 seconds, it will undergo mitosis.

By observing that reaction, I will finally understand the meaning of life! And with that knowledge, I will be able to wipe out famine and disease on the Material Plane forever!



Outstanding! Your name will be praised for this, Wernsworth.

Perhaps, old chap, but I do this not for glory, but for the betterment of all life.



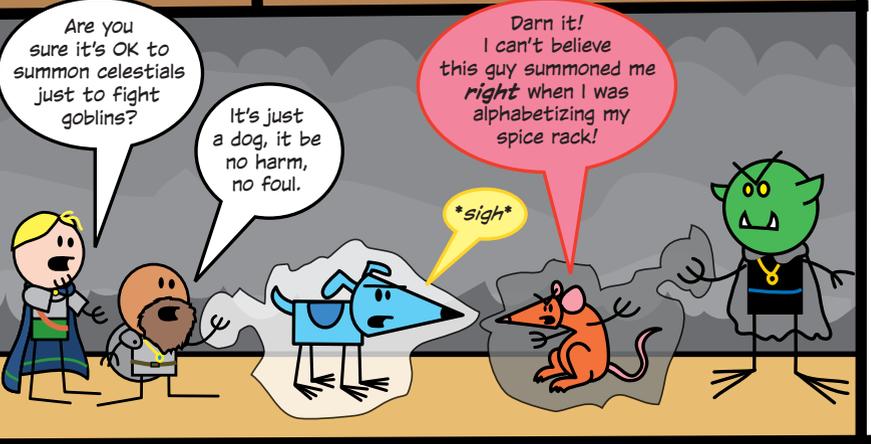
Just a few more seconds... there it goes...



Wait—what's happening? I'm being pulled away??



No! Not when I'm this close! No!

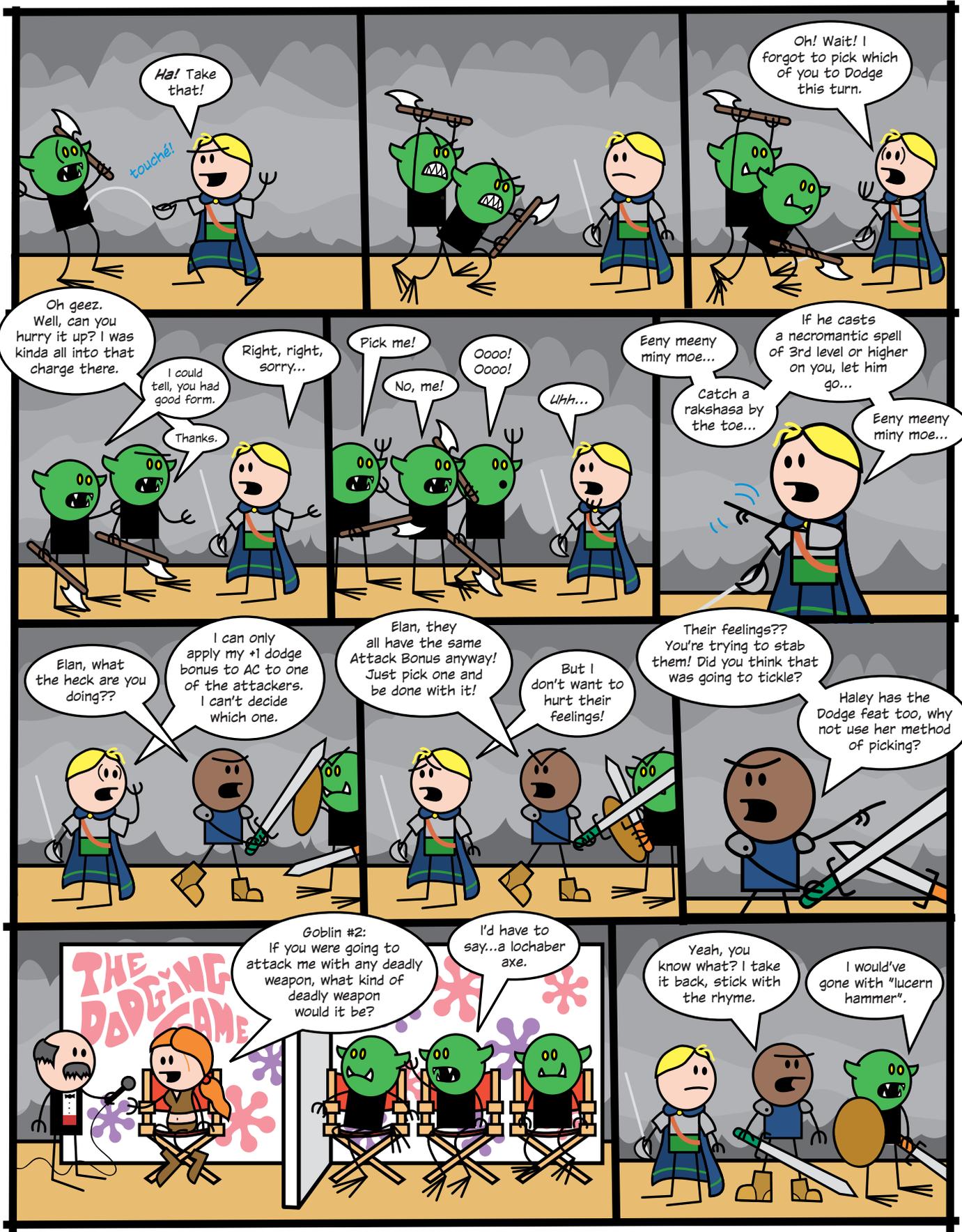


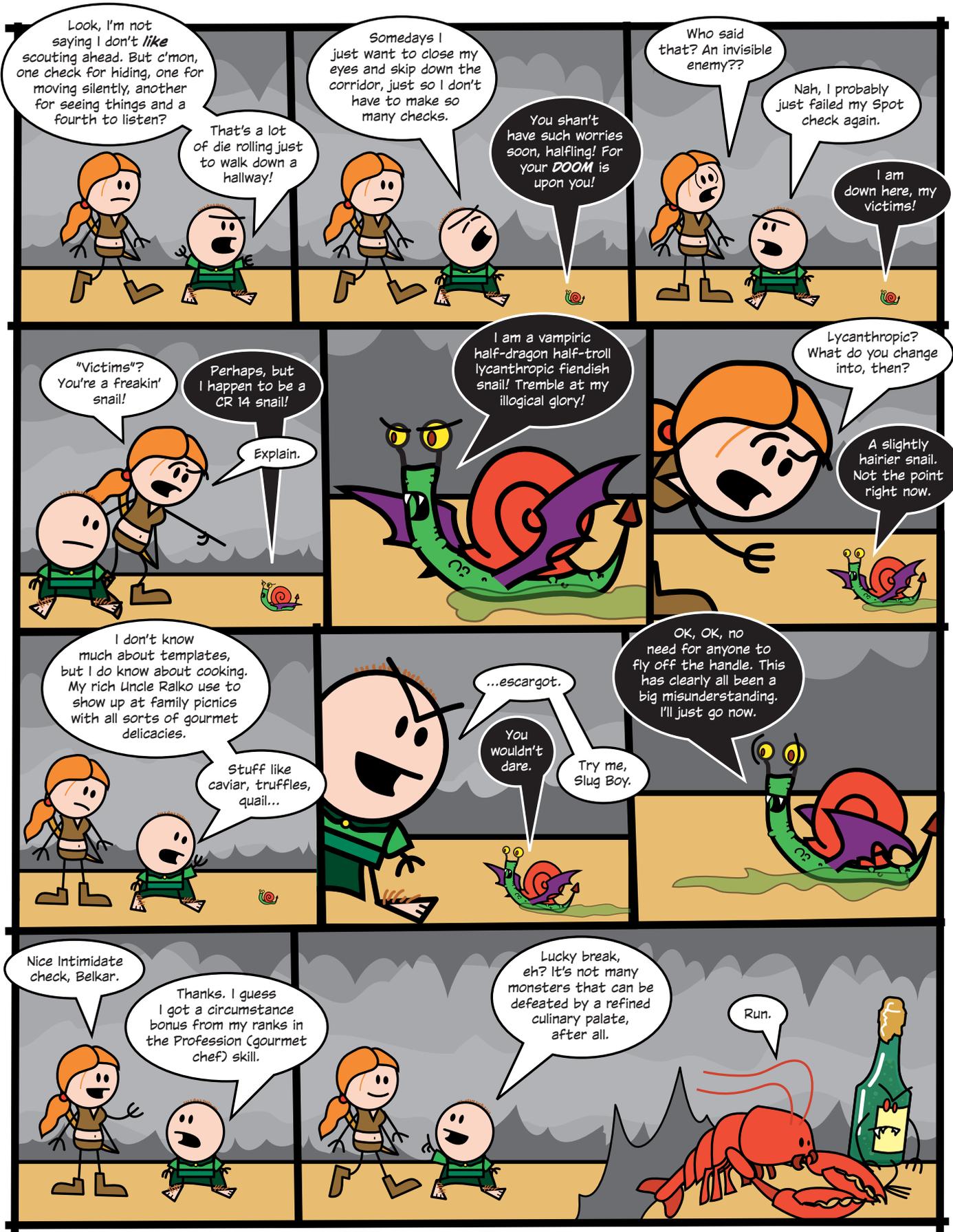
Are you sure it's OK to summon celestials just to fight goblins?

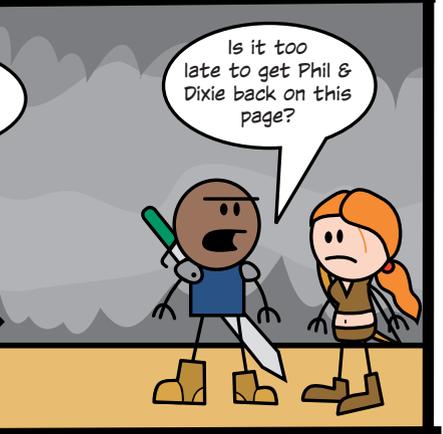
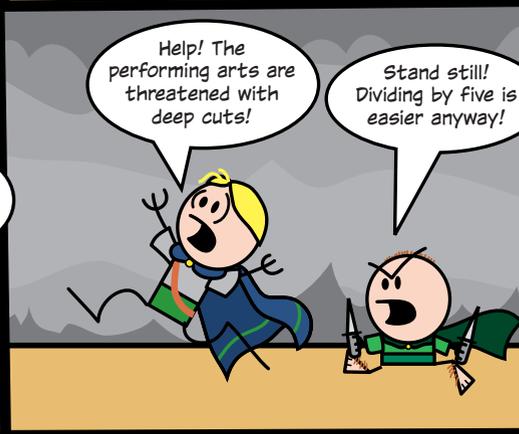
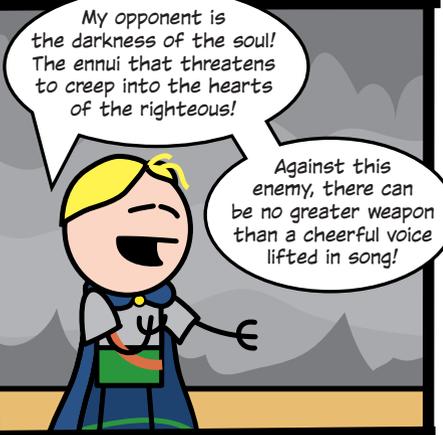
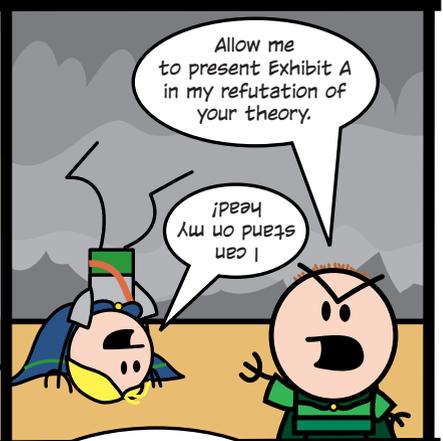
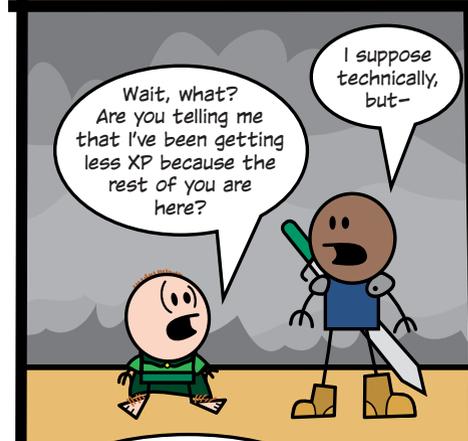
It's just a dog, it be no harm, no foul.

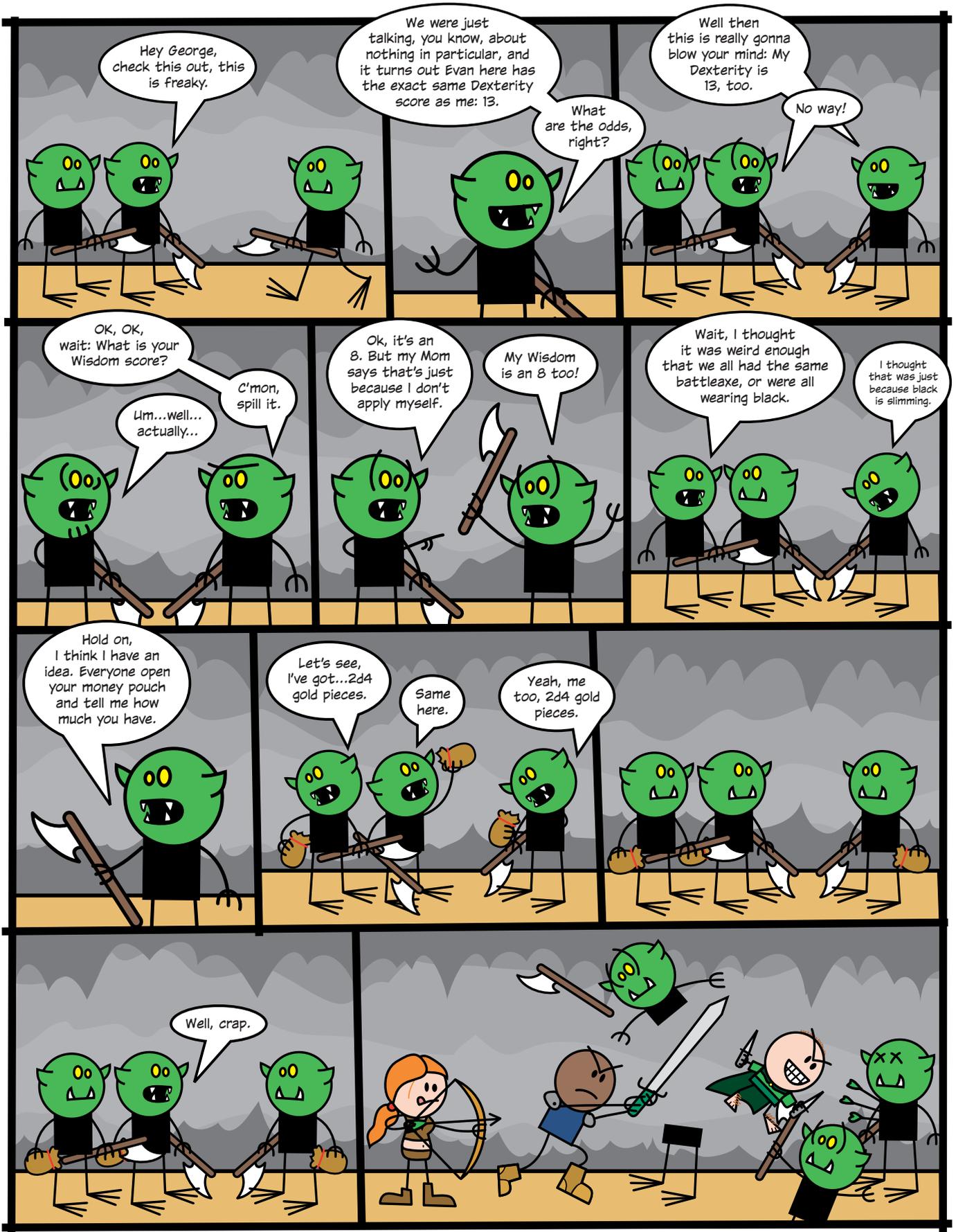
Darn it! I can't believe this guy summoned me *right* when I was alphabetizing my spice rack!

\*sigh\*









Hey George, check this out, this is freaky.

We were just talking, you know, about nothing in particular, and it turns out Evan here has the exact same Dexterity score as me: 13.

Well then this is really gonna blow your mind: My Dexterity is 13, too.

What are the odds, right?

No way!

OK, OK, wait: What is your Wisdom score?

C'mon, spill it.

Um...well... actually...

OK, it's an 8. But my Mom says that's just because I don't apply myself.

My Wisdom is an 8 too!

Wait, I thought it was weird enough that we all had the same battleaxe, or were all wearing black.

I thought that was just because black is slimming.

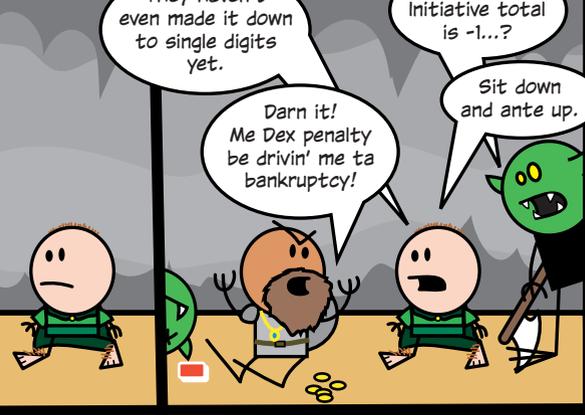
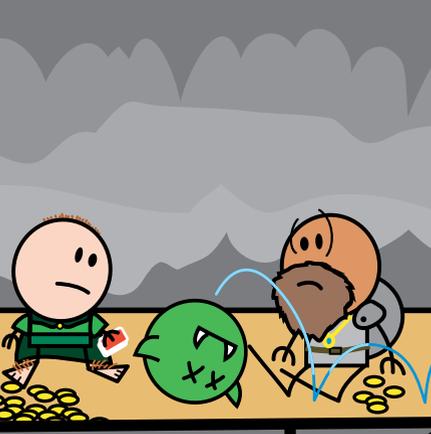
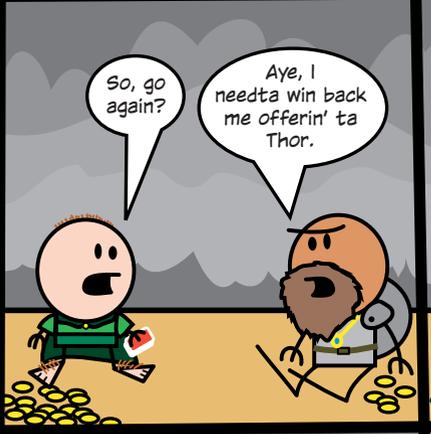
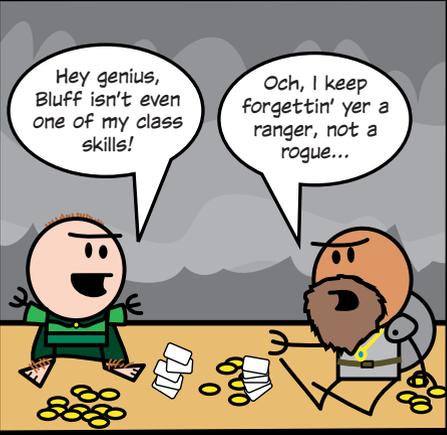
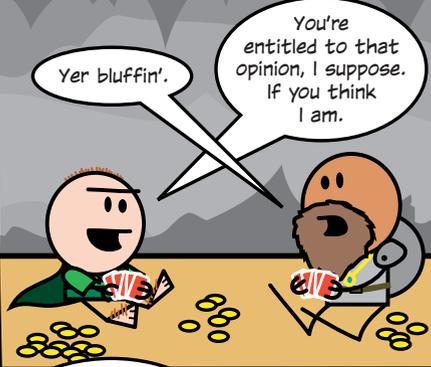
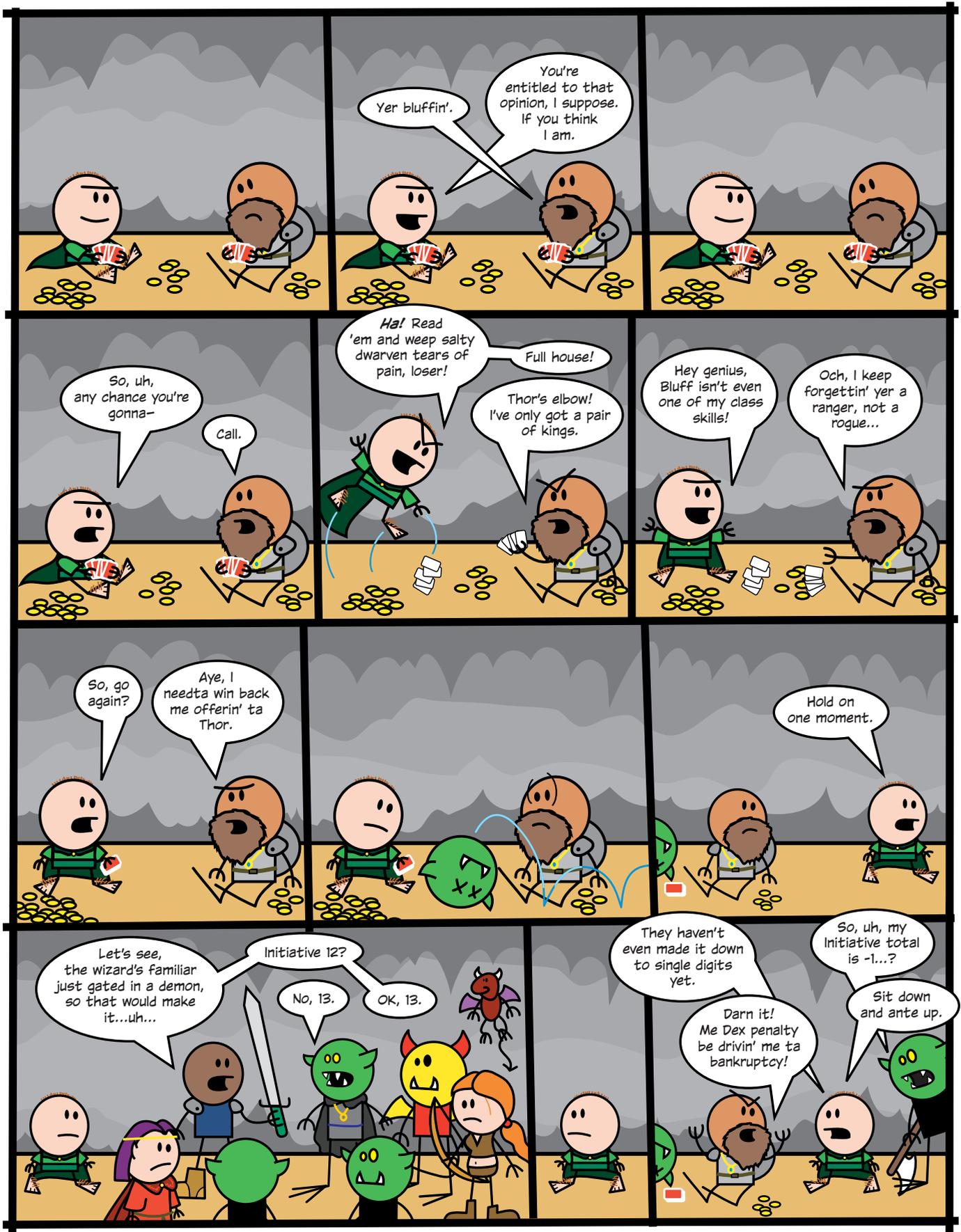
Hold on, I think I have an idea. Everyone open your money pouch and tell me how much you have.

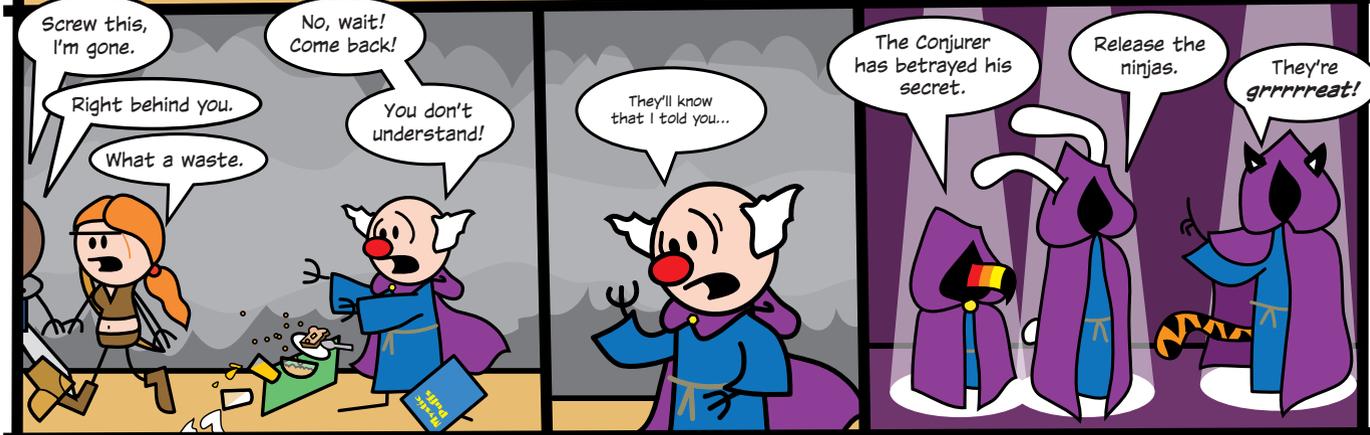
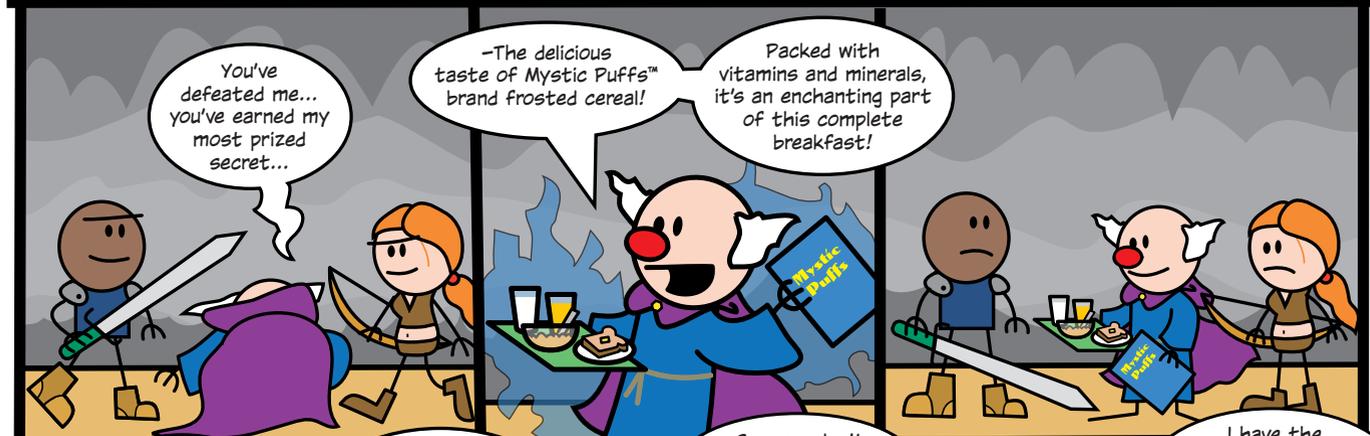
Let's see, I've got...2d4 gold pieces.

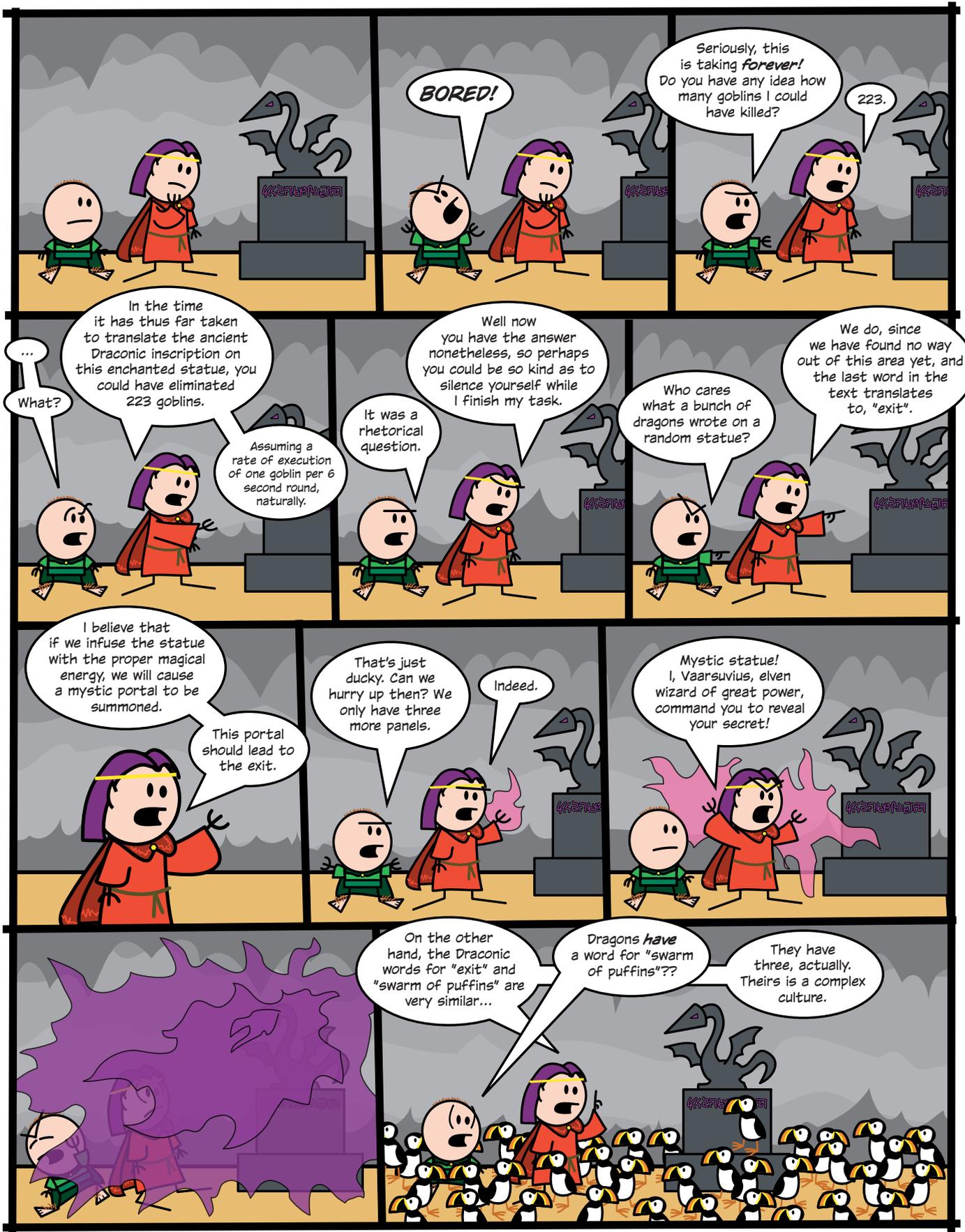
Same here.

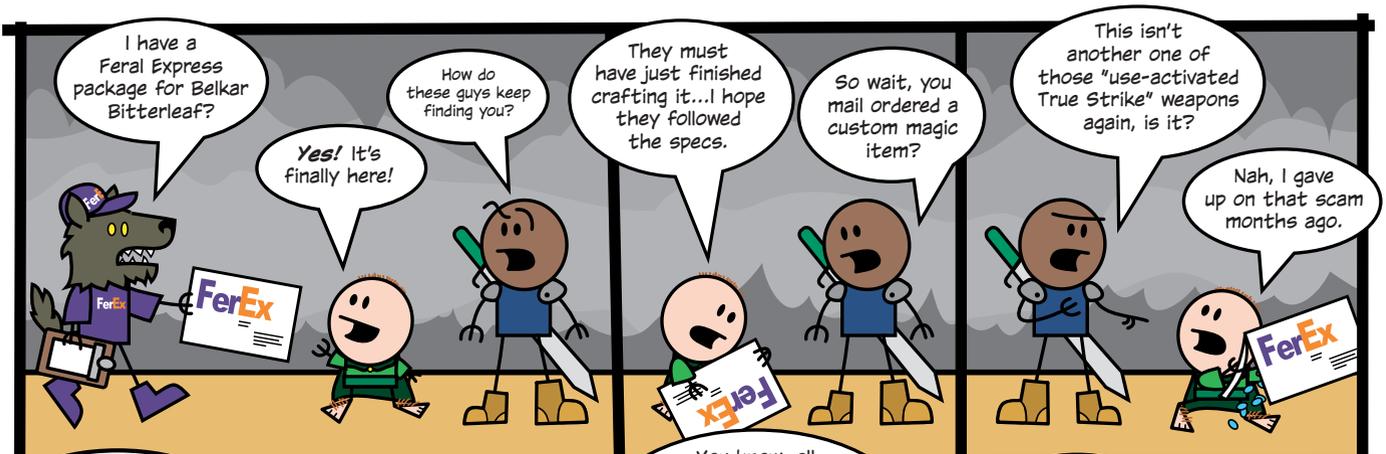
Yeah, me too, 2d4 gold pieces.

Well, crap.









I have a Feral Express package for Belkar Bitterleaf?

Yes! It's finally here!

How do these guys keep finding you?

They must have just finished crafting it...I hope they followed the specs.

So wait, you mail ordered a custom magic item?

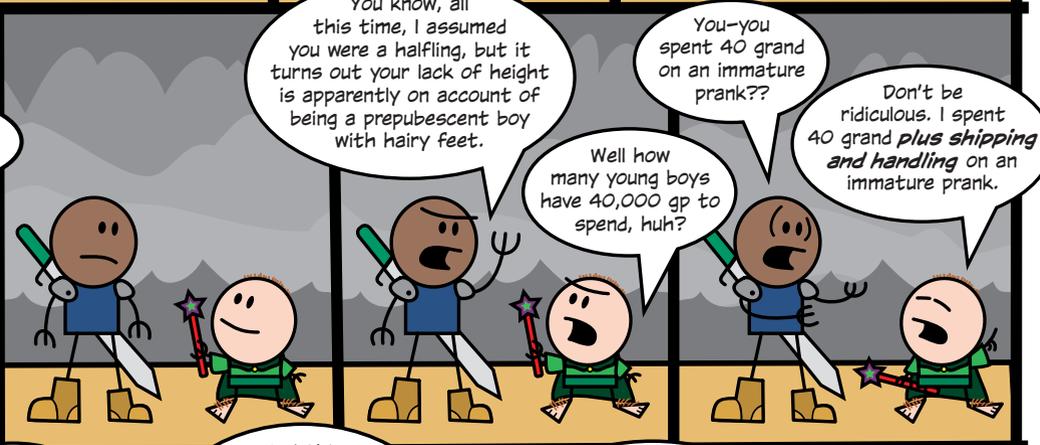
This isn't another one of those "use-activated True Strike" weapons again, is it?

Nah, I gave up on that scam months ago.



Behold! The most awesome magic item ever made!

The Wand of Dispel Clothing!



You know, all this time, I assumed you were a halfling, but it turns out your lack of height is apparently on account of being a prepubescent boy with hairy feet.

You-you spent 40 grand on an immature prank??

Don't be ridiculous. I spent 40 grand *plus shipping and handling* on an immature prank.

Well how many young boys have 40,000 gp to spend, huh?



C'mon, it'll be great. Picture the scene: We open the door and encounter a cabal of evil dark elf priestesses with a weird arachnid fetish.

I whip out the wand, and **BAM!** Hot naked draw chicks everywhere!

Then I bring out the oil and they start grappling each other...

And this titanic investiture of money and magic was preferable to you even considering coming to terms with your own emotional needs and learning to love another sentient being?

Well, duh.

I think you need to see it in action to appreciate its potential.

What? No!

Hey Haley! I have a gift here for you!!



What the-

Hey guys! What's going on?

No, Elan! Get out of the way!

Nice gift, Belkar!

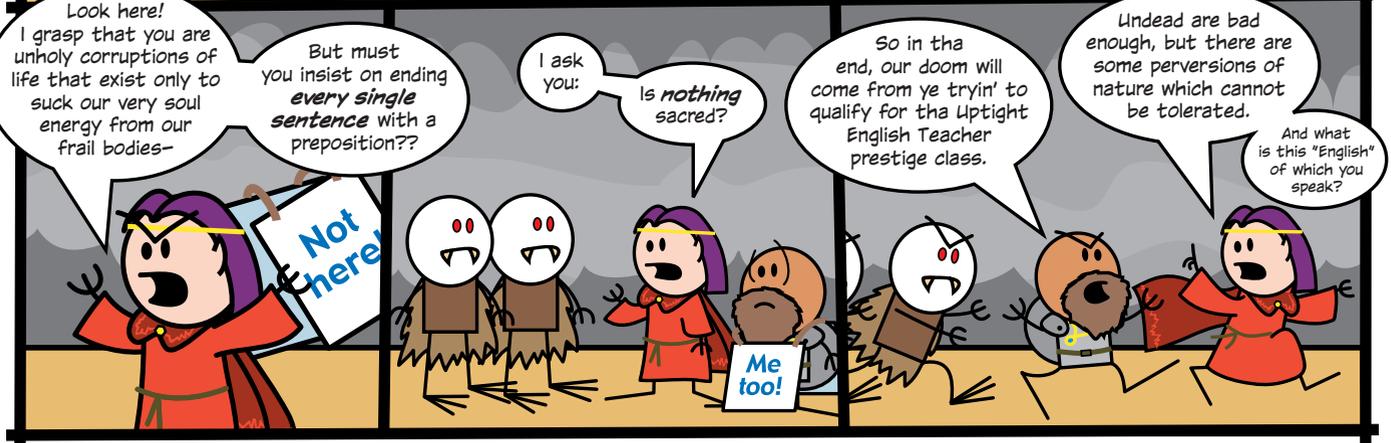
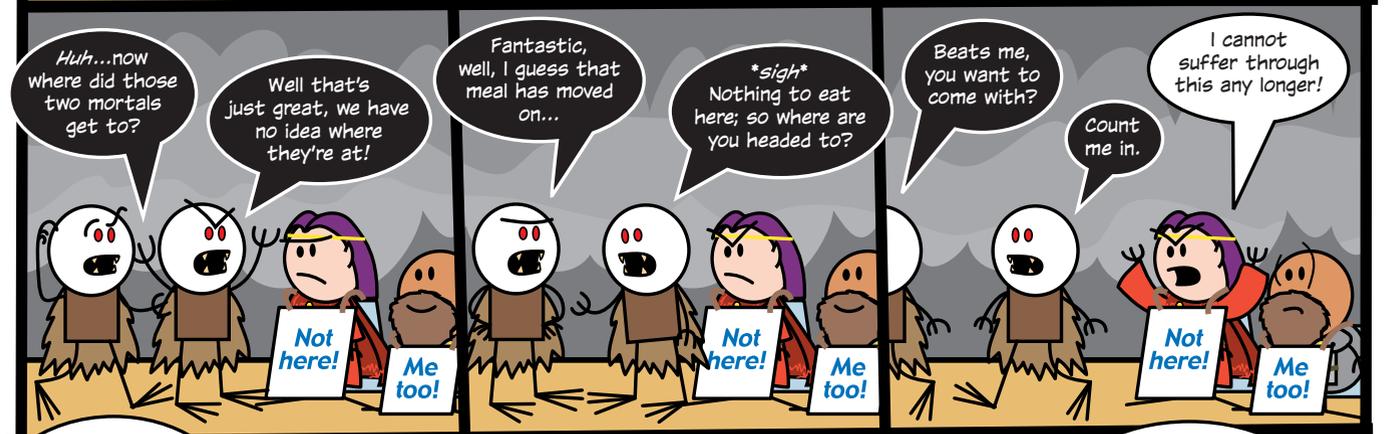
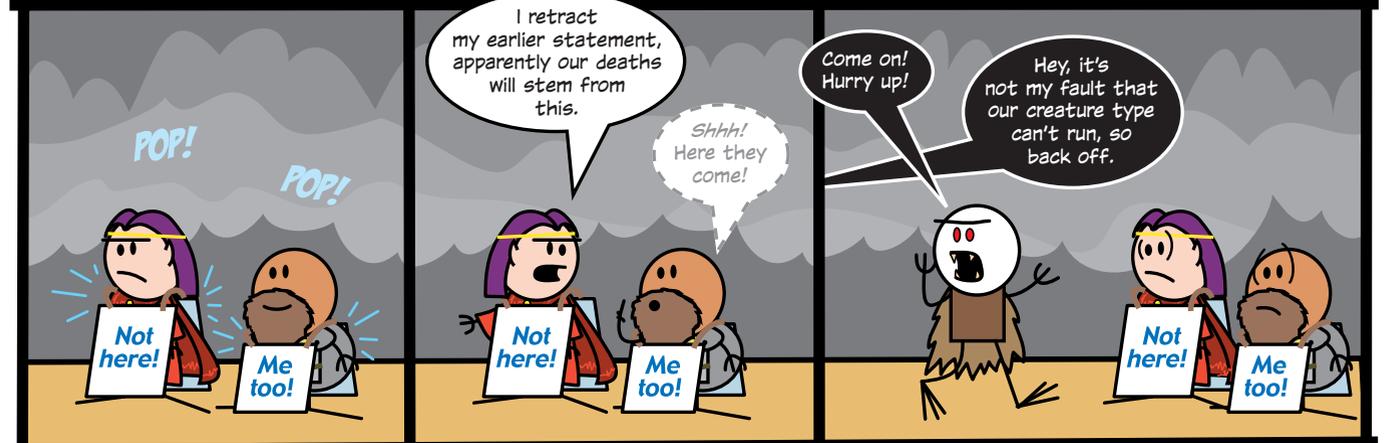
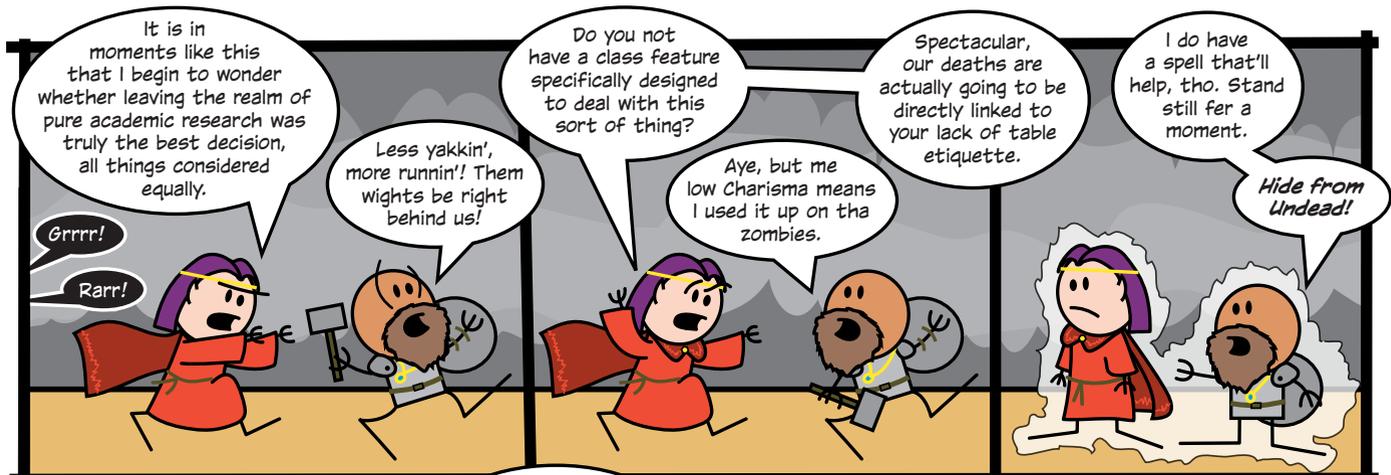
There might be an ice dragon nearby-I'm really chilly all of a sudden...

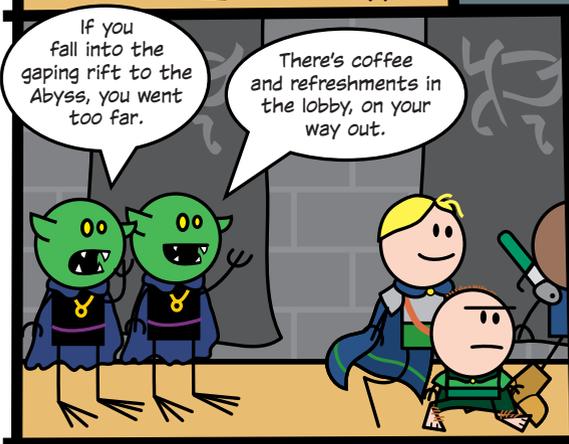
We're here from Standards and Practices. We're shutting this strip down now.

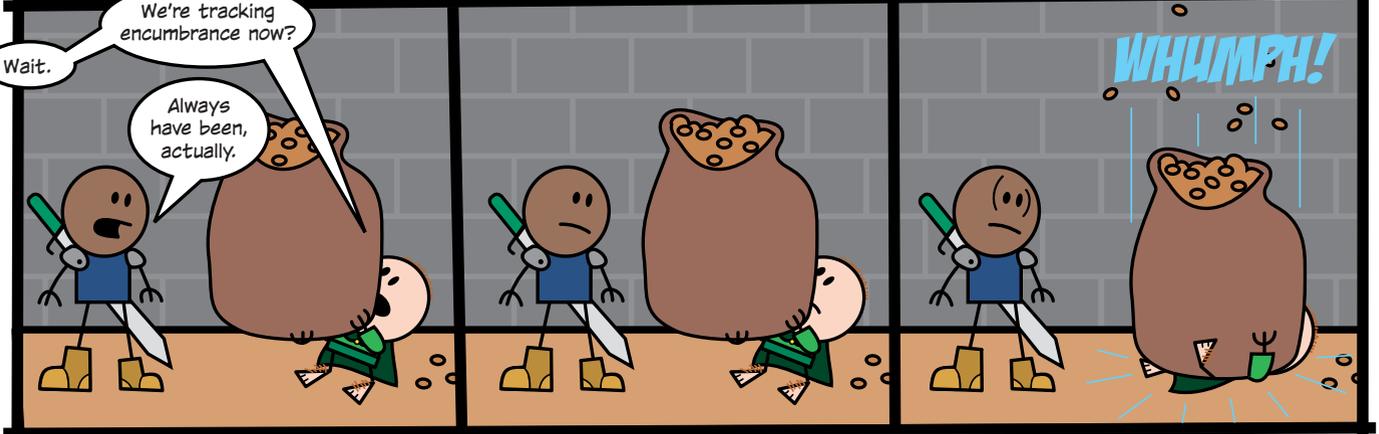
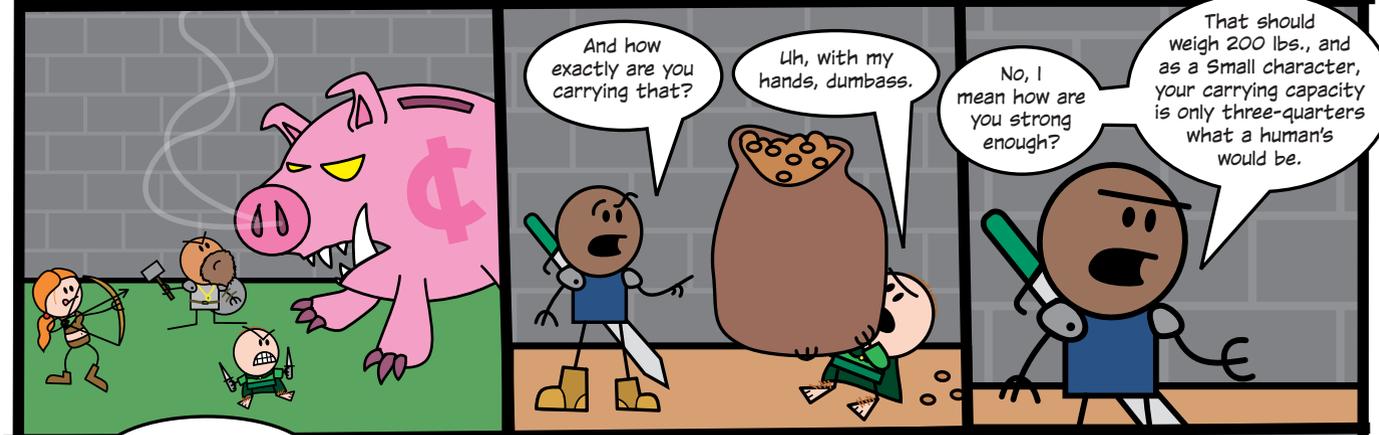
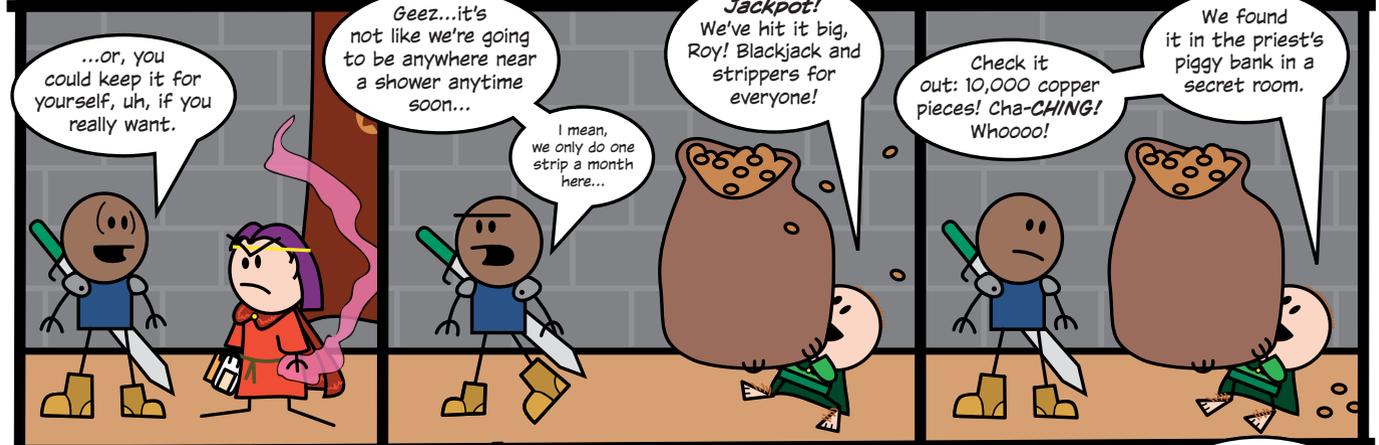
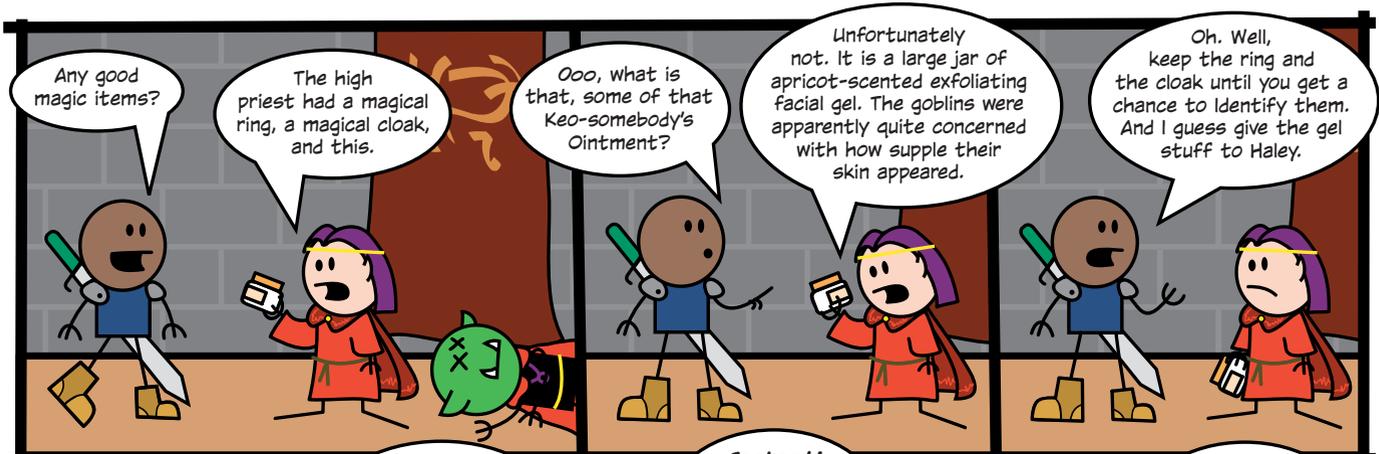
Took you long enough.

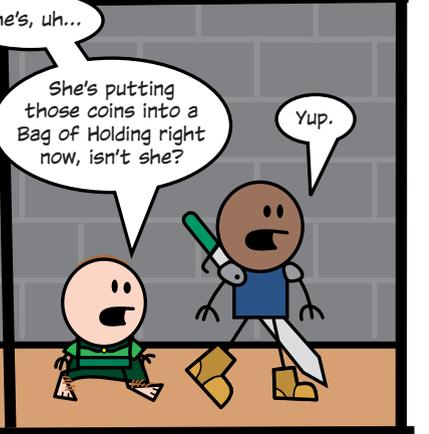
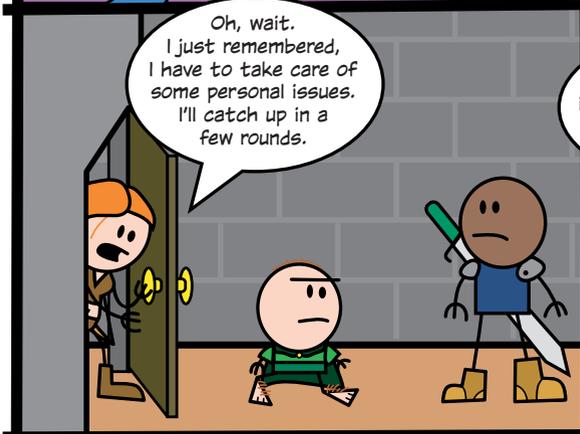
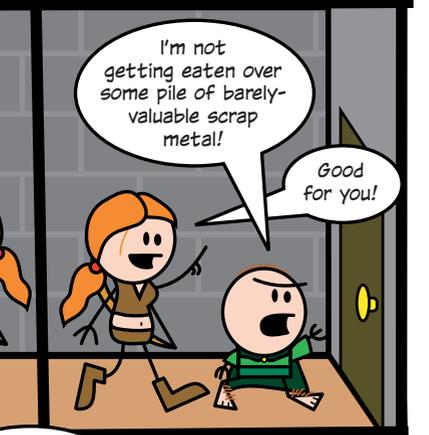
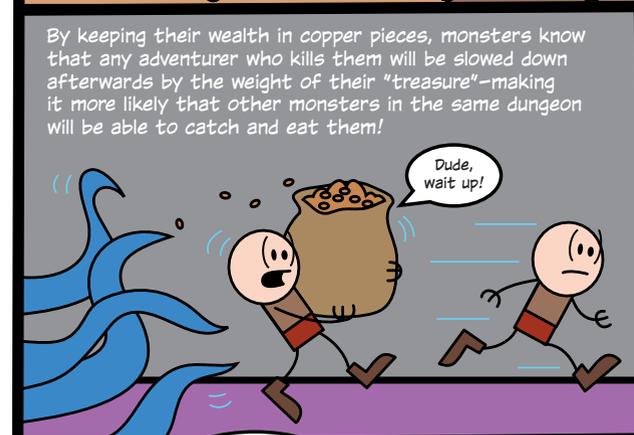
Gaah!! Reverse spell! Reverse spell!!!

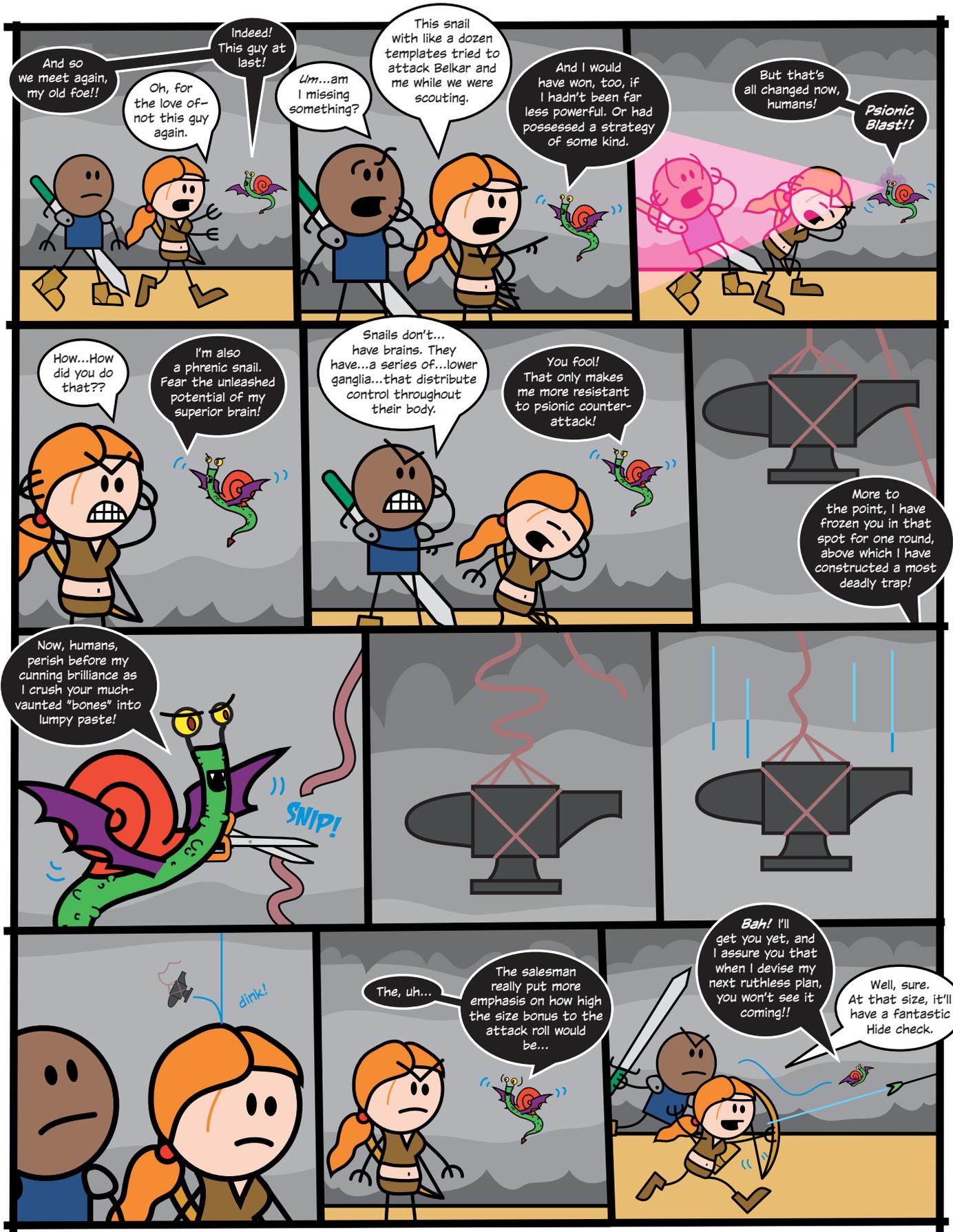
He's invisible!











And so we meet again, my old foe!!

Oh, for the love of- not this guy again.

Indeed! This guy at last!

Um...am I missing something?

This snail with like a dozen templates tried to attack Belkar and me while we were scouting.

And I would have won, too, if I hadn't been far less powerful. Or had possessed a strategy of some kind.

But that's all changed now, humans!

Psionic Blast!!

How...How did you do that??

I'm also a phrenic snail. Fear the unleashed potential of my superior brain!

Snails don't... have brains. They have...a series of...lower ganglia...that distribute control throughout their body.

You fool! That only makes me more resistant to psionic counter-attack!

More to the point, I have frozen you in that spot for one round, above which I have constructed a most deadly trap!

Now, humans, perish before my cunning brilliance as I crush your much-vaunted "bones" into lumpy paste!

SNIP!

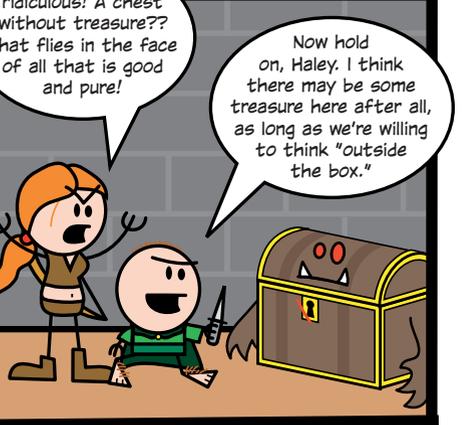
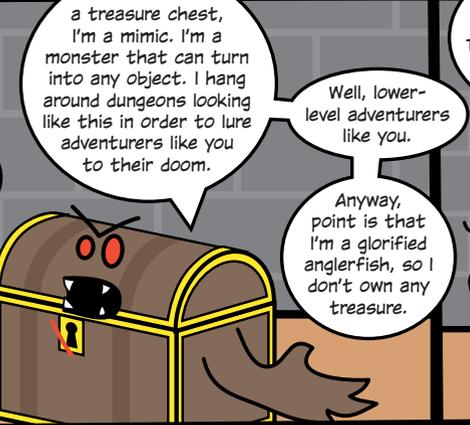
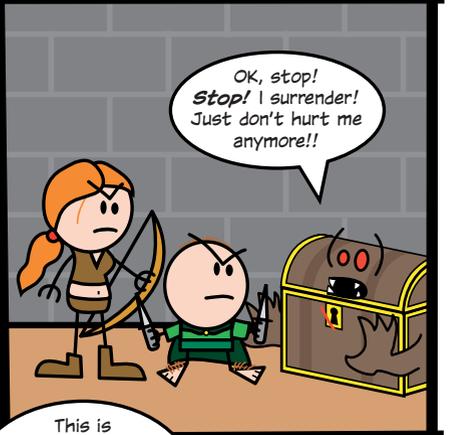
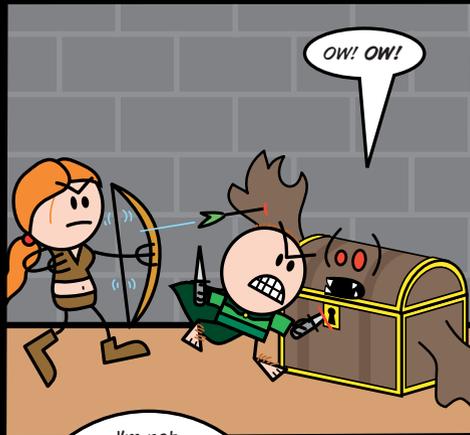
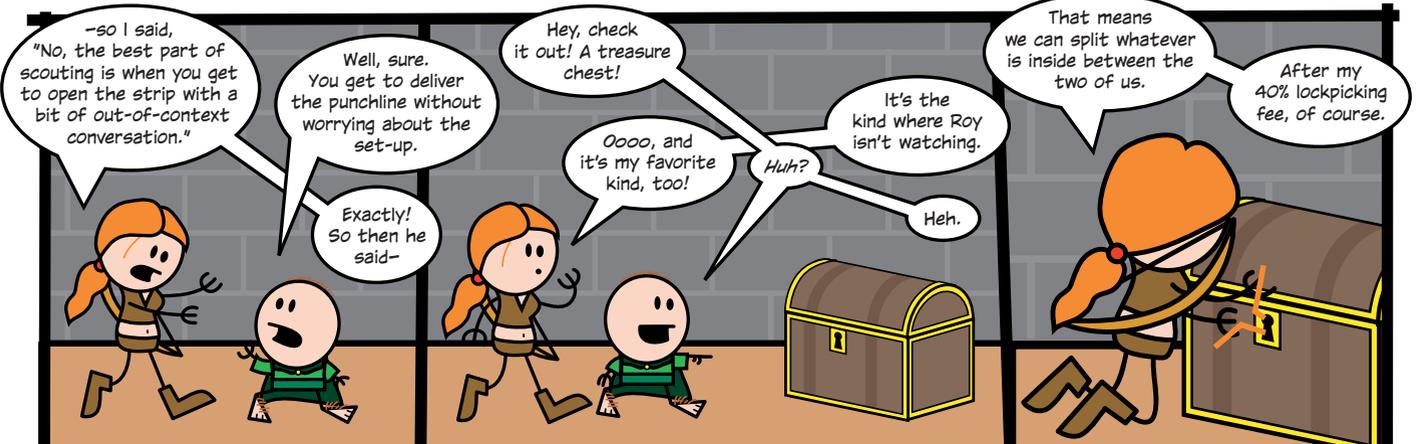
dink!

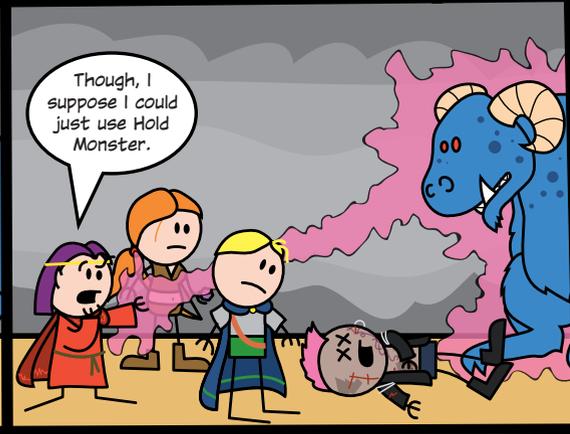
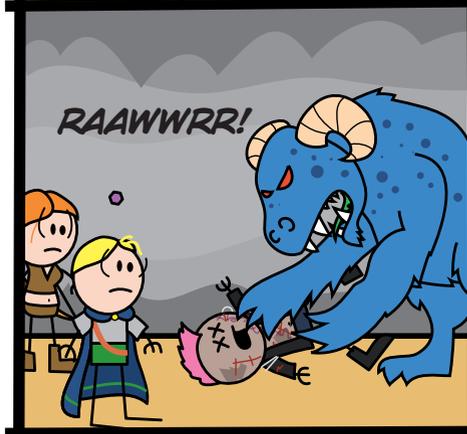
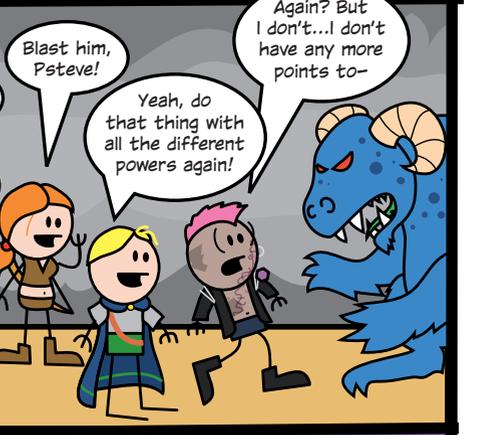
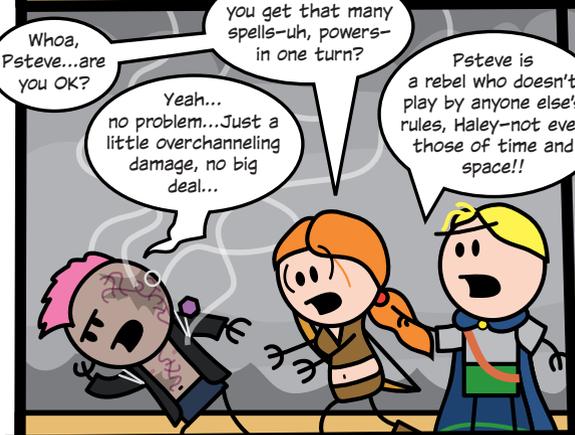
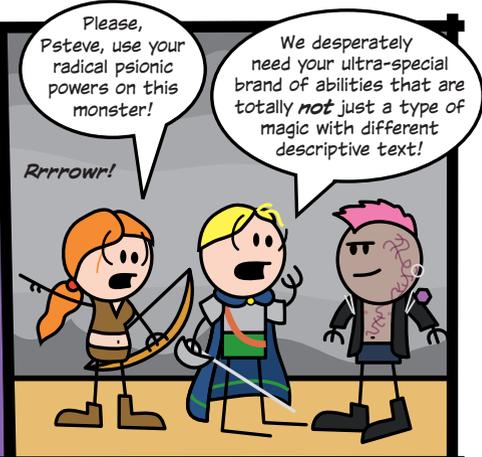
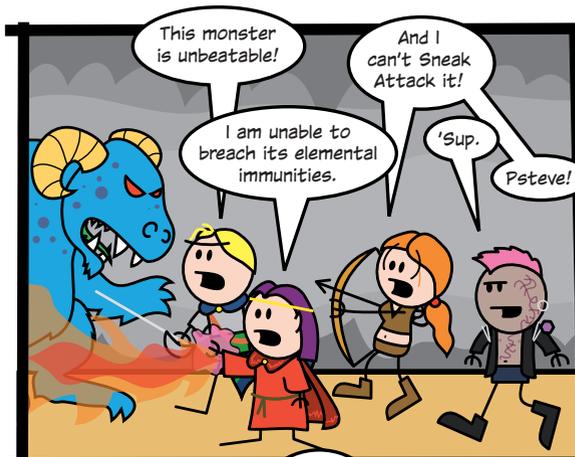
The, uh...

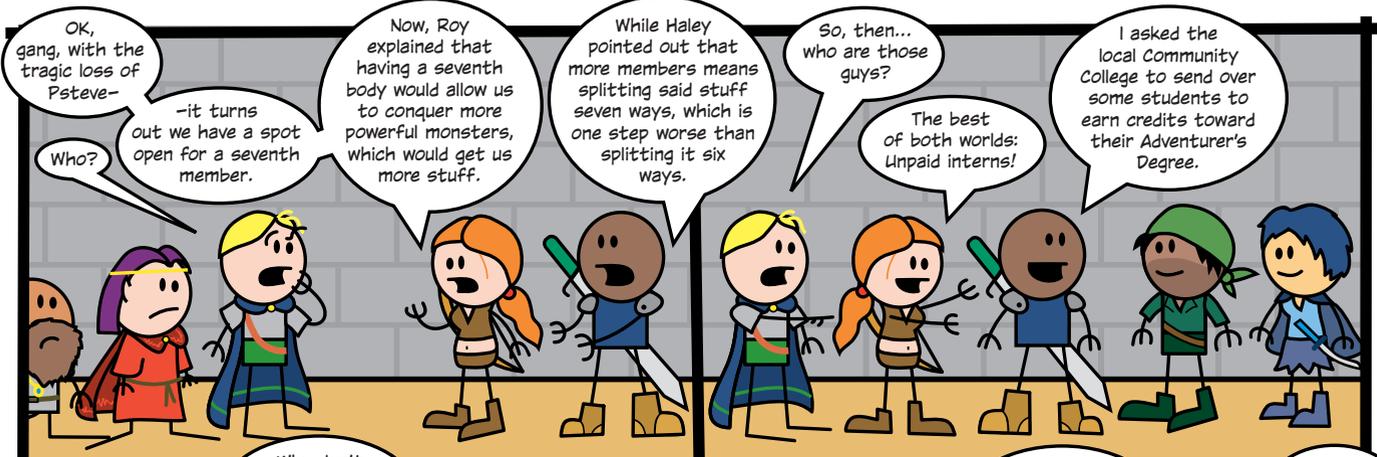
The salesman really put more emphasis on how high the size bonus to the attack roll would be...

Bah! I'll get you yet, and I assure you that when I devise my next ruthless plan, you won't see it coming!!

Well, sure. At that size, it'll have a fantastic Hide check.







OK, gang, with the tragic loss of Pstev-

Who?

-it turns out we have a spot open for a seventh member.

Now, Roy explained that having a seventh body would allow us to conquer more powerful monsters, which would get us more stuff.

While Haley pointed out that more members means splitting said stuff seven ways, which is one step worse than splitting it six ways.

So, then... who are those guys?

The best of both worlds: Unpaid interns!

I asked the local Community College to send over some students to earn credits toward their Adventurer's Degree.



Now, kids, what we have here is your basic generic goblin. We fight rooms full of these guys all the time.

Why don't you two head over and show us what you've got?

Yes, sir, Mr. Greenhilt.

Shut up.

Brownnoser.



Ha! Consider your spell stolen, goblin villain!

What?

Your spell. I forwent 1d6 points of sneak attack in order to steal your spells.

I'm a spellthief. Hand it over.

Kid, I don't have any spells.

Oh.



Can I have my 1d6 sneak attack damage back, then?

No.

But...I don't have any other class abilities yet.

And that's my problem how?

Stand aside, Randall! It's my turn now!

I just need to reallocate my essentia first.

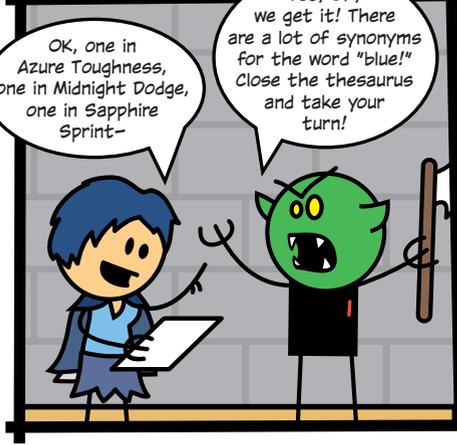
Let's see... How about 1 point in Azure Toughness, and the rest in Bluesteel Bracers?

No, wait, I want to put at least one in Cerulean Reflexes...and I can't forget about Cobalt Critical. Maybe two in that?

Can I go yet?

Calm down, this is all still a swift action.

Not from where I'm standing.



OK, one in Azure Toughness, one in Midnight Dodge, one in Sapphire Sprint-

Yes, OK, we get it! There are a lot of synonyms for the word "blue!" Close the thesaurus and take your turn!

Oh, wait, do I want to put any in my soulmelds?

Screw this! I'm outta here, you can find some other goblin to kill!

Does that count as defeating it?

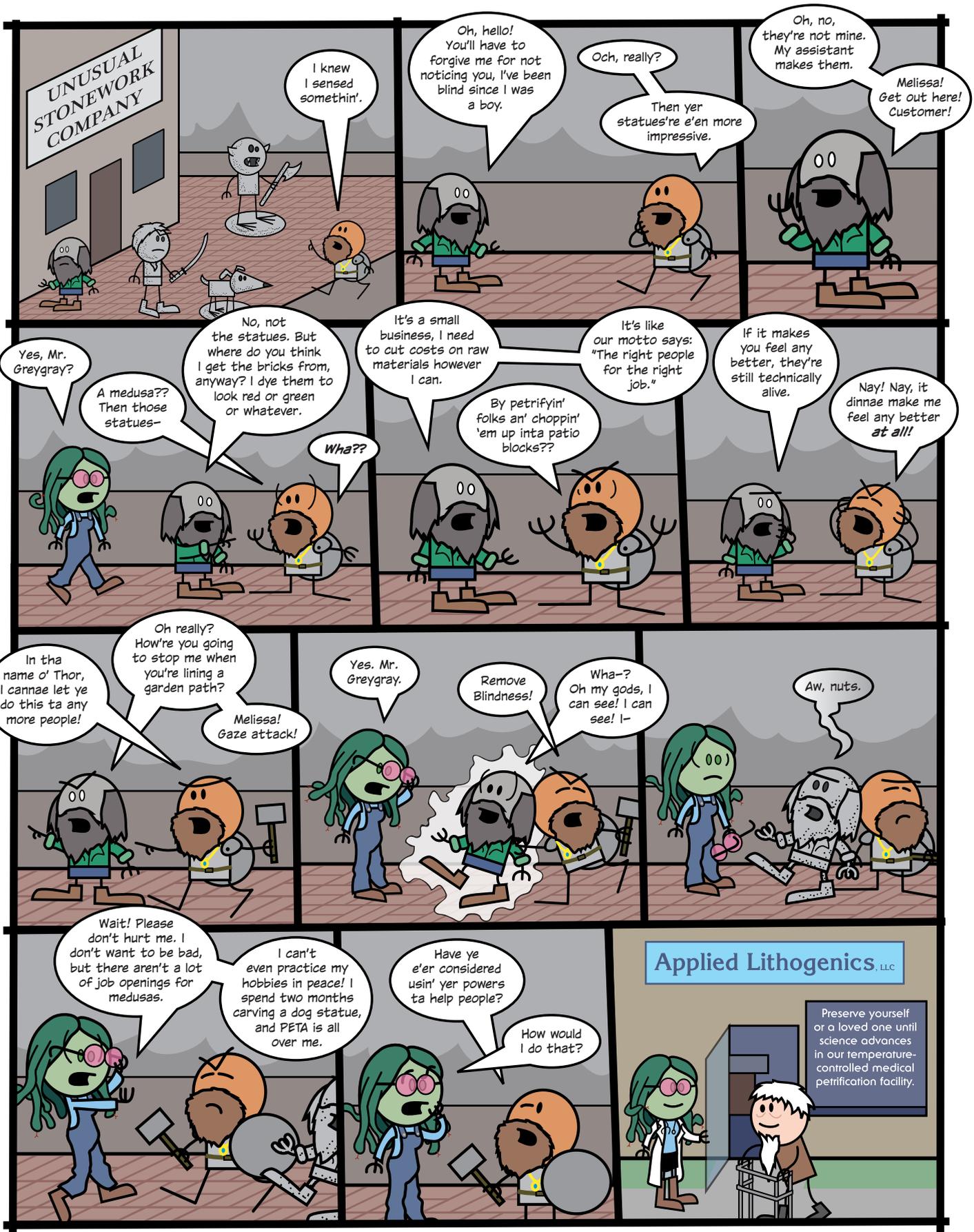
Oooo, does that mean I get a level now?

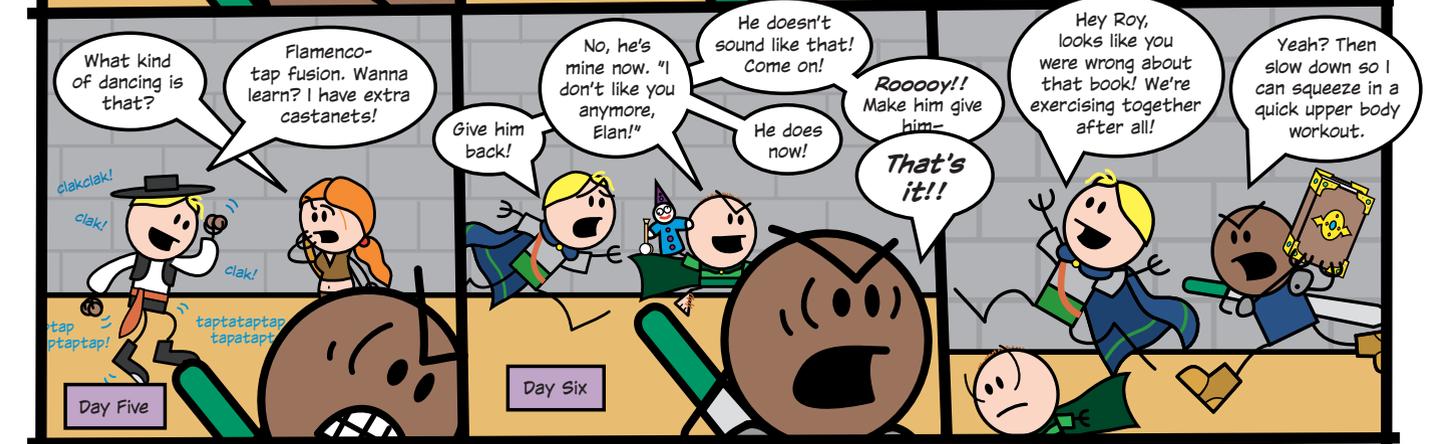
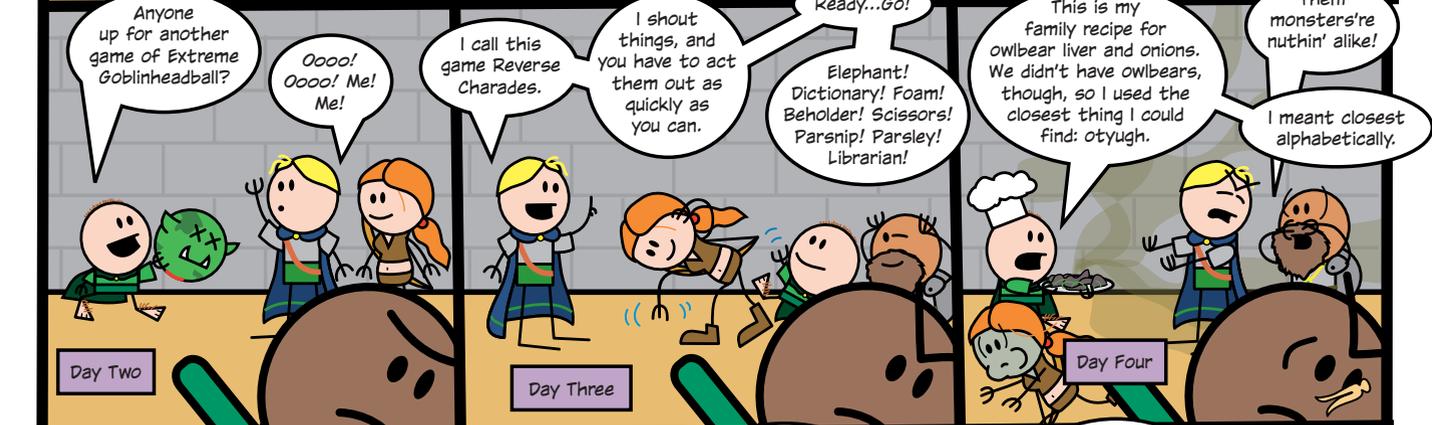
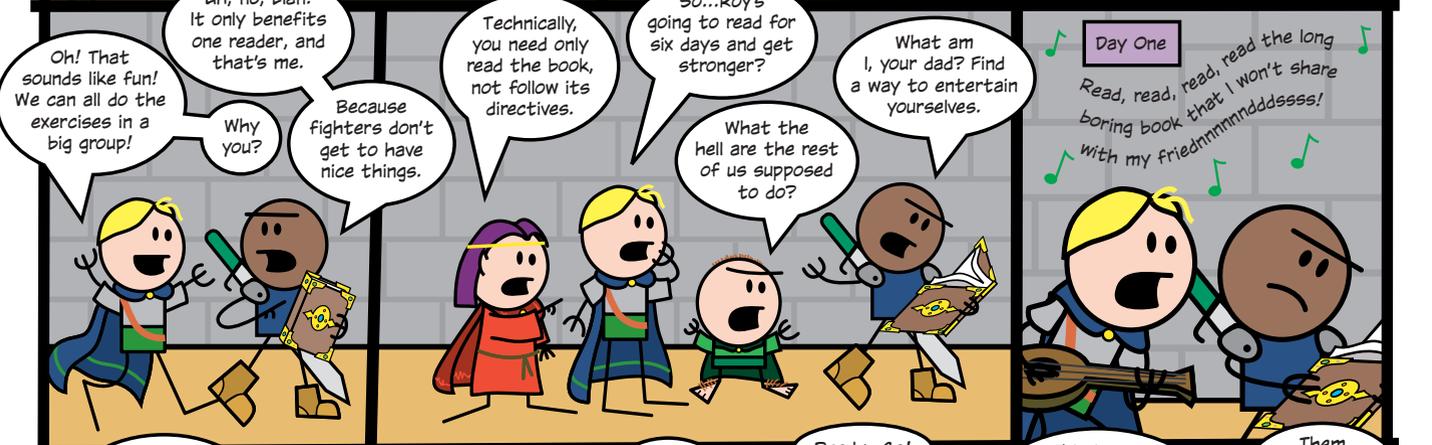
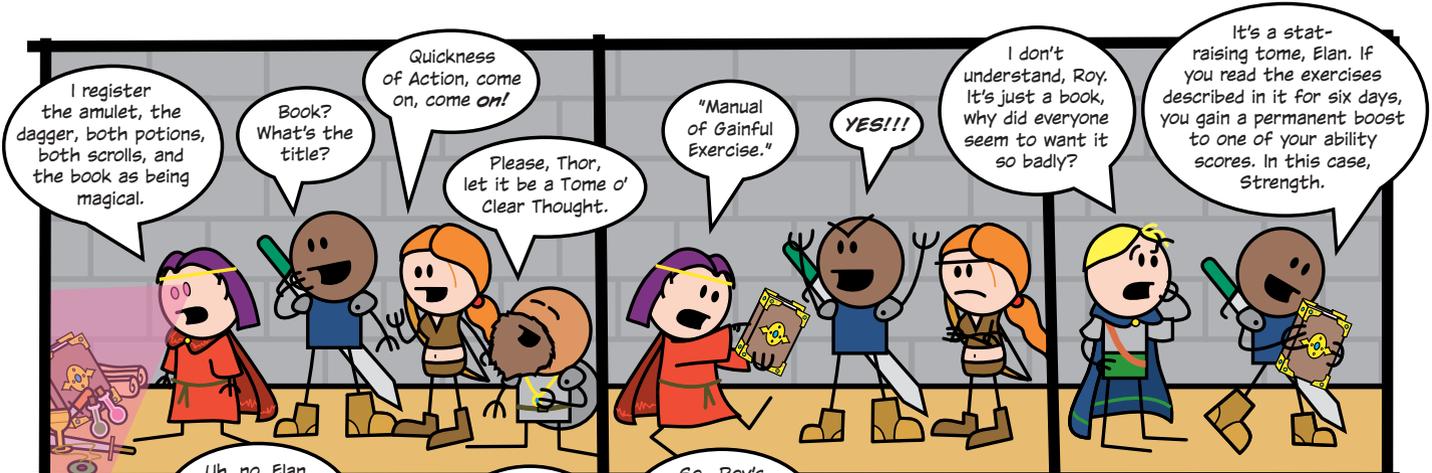
...Never mind.

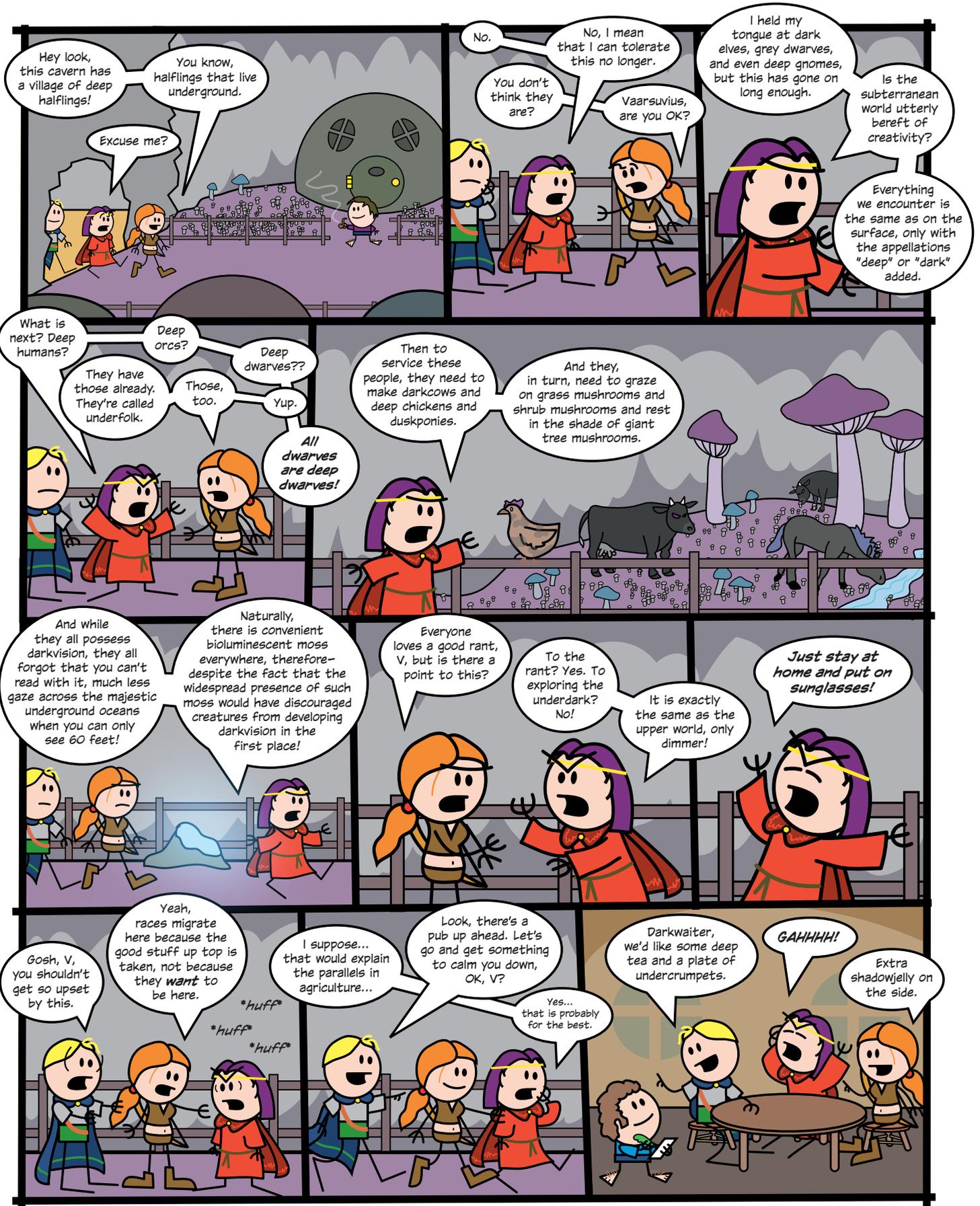


If it does, then Elan defeats me like ten times a day.

Sure, but you have to take it in Soulborn.







Hey look, this cavern has a village of deep halflings!

You know, halflings that live underground.

Excuse me?

No.

No, I mean that I can tolerate this no longer.

You don't think they are?

Vaarsuvius, are you OK?

I held my tongue at dark elves, grey dwarves, and even deep gnomes, but this has gone on long enough.

Is the subterranean world utterly bereft of creativity?

Everything we encounter is the same as on the surface, only with the appellations "deep" or "dark" added.

What is next? Deep humans?

Deep orcs?

Deep dwarves??

They have those already. They're called underfolk.

Those, too.

Yup.

All dwarves are deep dwarves!

Then to service these people, they need to make darkcows and deep chickens and duskponies.

And they, in turn, need to graze on grass mushrooms and shrub mushrooms and rest in the shade of giant tree mushrooms.

And while they all possess darkvision, they all forgot that you can't read with it, much less gaze across the majestic underground oceans when you can only see 60 feet!

Naturally, there is convenient bioluminescent moss everywhere, therefore—despite the fact that the widespread presence of such moss would have discouraged creatures from developing darkvision in the first place!

Everyone loves a good rant, V, but is there a point to this?

To the rant? Yes. To exploring the underdark? No!

It is exactly the same as the upper world, only dimmer!

Just stay at home and put on sunglasses!

Gosh, V, you shouldn't get so upset by this.

Yeah, races migrate here because the good stuff up top is taken, not because they *want* to be here.

\*huff\*  
\*huff\*  
\*huff\*

I suppose... that would explain the parallels in agriculture...

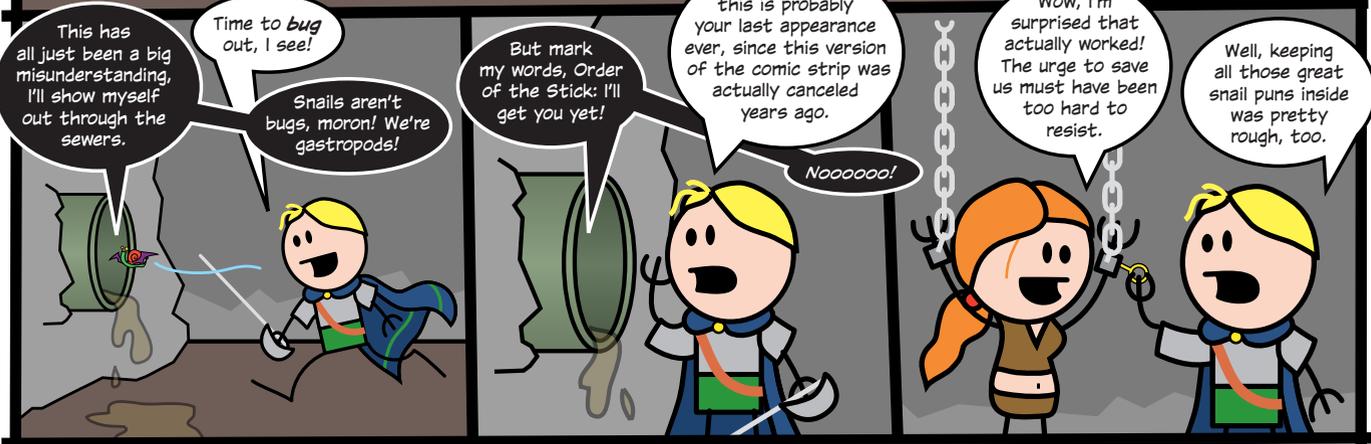
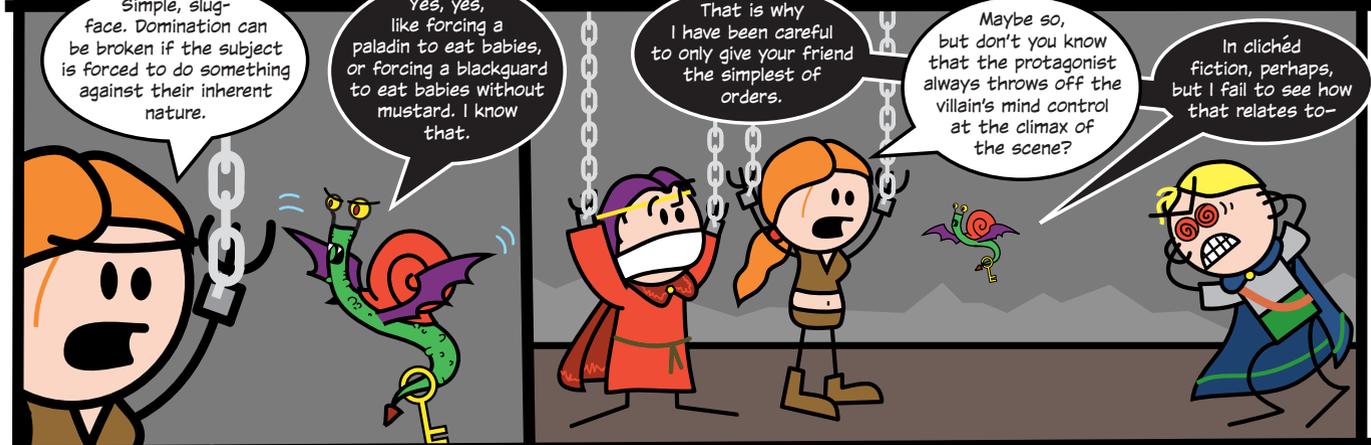
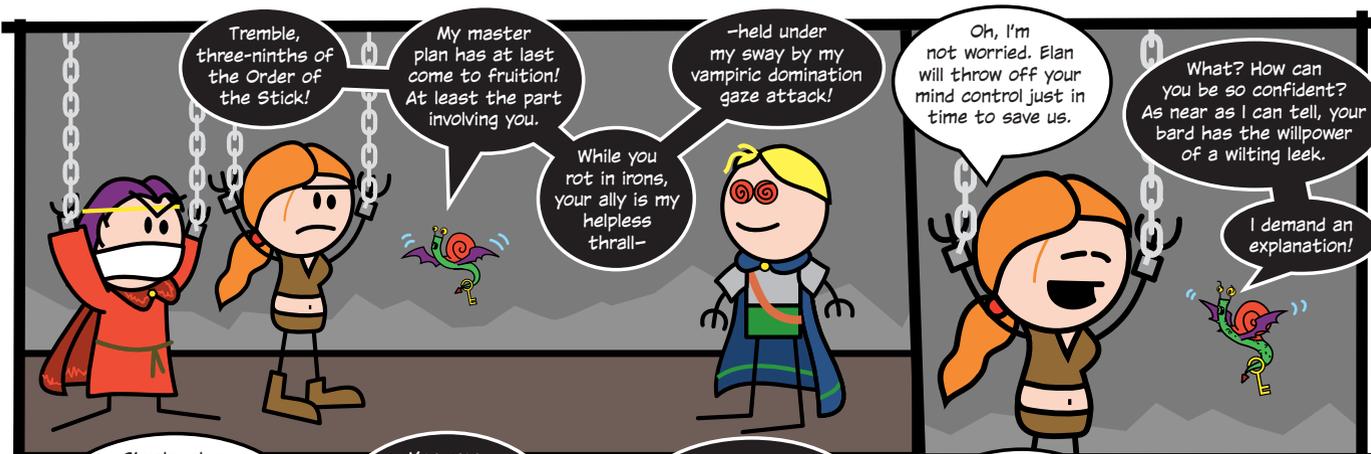
Look, there's a pub up ahead. Let's go and get something to calm you down, OK, V?

Yes... that is probably for the best.

Darkwaiter, we'd like some deep tea and a plate of undercrumpets.

GAHHHH!

Extra shadowjelly on the side.



Continued from [page 18](#):

One of the things I had a problem with in the print comic was the lack of supporting characters. While the heroes themselves were reasonably iconic—they could represent any adventuring party, and indeed that’s how they had been created—all of the villains from the online comic had very specific plots and motivations that I didn’t want to transfer over to this little alternate version. If I included Xykon, would I have to explain that he had killed Roy’s dad’s master? If I include the Linear Guild, is that appearance before or after Elan’s growth into a Dashing Swordsman? And given that I had one page a month, would using too many characters just get confusing?

In the end, I decided that I would create a recurring villain for the magazine *OOTS* that was completely new, but kept with the generally silly nature of the comics. No deeply tragic personal backstory here, just a comic foil who would appear about once a year to try to put one over on our heroes. What I chose was...a snail. Yes, the heavily-templated snail from issue [#345](#) was intended to be a recurring villain. I had distinct plans for at least two more appearances, and no reason to quit using him after that. Of course, I got news that the magazine was canceled just as I was working on his second appearance one year later, for [#357](#), so he never got his chance to return. I’m rectifying that now by adding in the bonus strips that represent what may have happened had he gotten his moment to shine. Two of the new strips are based on those old ideas for the snail’s return, while the other six are based on unrelated ideas I had sketched out for future issues or, in [one case](#), an idea I’d gotten since the magazine was canceled but couldn’t find a way to work into the online strip.

## The End is Nigh

Given that *OOTS* had the honor of giving the farewell address to *Dragon*® on the last page of the last issue, there’s some discussion to be had on the subject. I found out the magazine was being cancelled only a few hours before the public was informed; I got an apologetic email from Erik Mona (then-Art Director at Paizo Publishing®) explaining that Wizards of the Coast® had elected not to renew their license to produce print versions of *Dragon* and *Dungeon*®, that I had three strips left to produce for the magazine, and that I could do a commemorative installment for the final issue if I wanted. Never one to take one chance to put my foot in my mouth when I could have three, I immediately scrapped my plans for the snail’s return in favor of starting a three-strip story in which I vented my feelings about the cancellation. It’s old news now, but at the time I was furious—not because I was going to lose out on a revenue stream, but because in my mind, *Dragon* magazine was an institution that deserved better. I still feel that way, actually, though I understand that it’s long since a done deal.

In my [first strip](#), I introduced a character to serve as an allegory for the magazine itself: the Dragon, whose design spoofs the art from the cover of the very first issue of the magazine. But it was the [second strip](#) that I really got my chance to start expressing myself, where I had the Dragon relate his publication history, from his birth at TSR through his purchase by Wizards of the Coast, which was in turn bought by Hasbro, only to turn around and license him back out to Paizo. Much to my surprise, I was informed via email that my comic had failed to meet approval by Wizards

of the Coast themselves. What surprised me the most was that I didn’t know my comic was even subject to approval by them until that moment! But as it was explained to me, every page of the magazine required Wizards’ approval, and that included comics that may be a little harsh on their history. As a result, I needed to swap out one panel from the comic that I had drawn with a milder, but far-less-funny panel. The good news, as I mentioned earlier, is that I retained all rights to the *OOTS* comics that ran in *Dragon*—including the panel that didn’t run. So the version of the comic that’s published in this book contains the original joke in panel 8 (the one with the gentleman whose head is much like a potato) that they didn’t want you to see. Frankly, I didn’t even think it was that bad, but I’m a sucker for pointless pot-stirring.

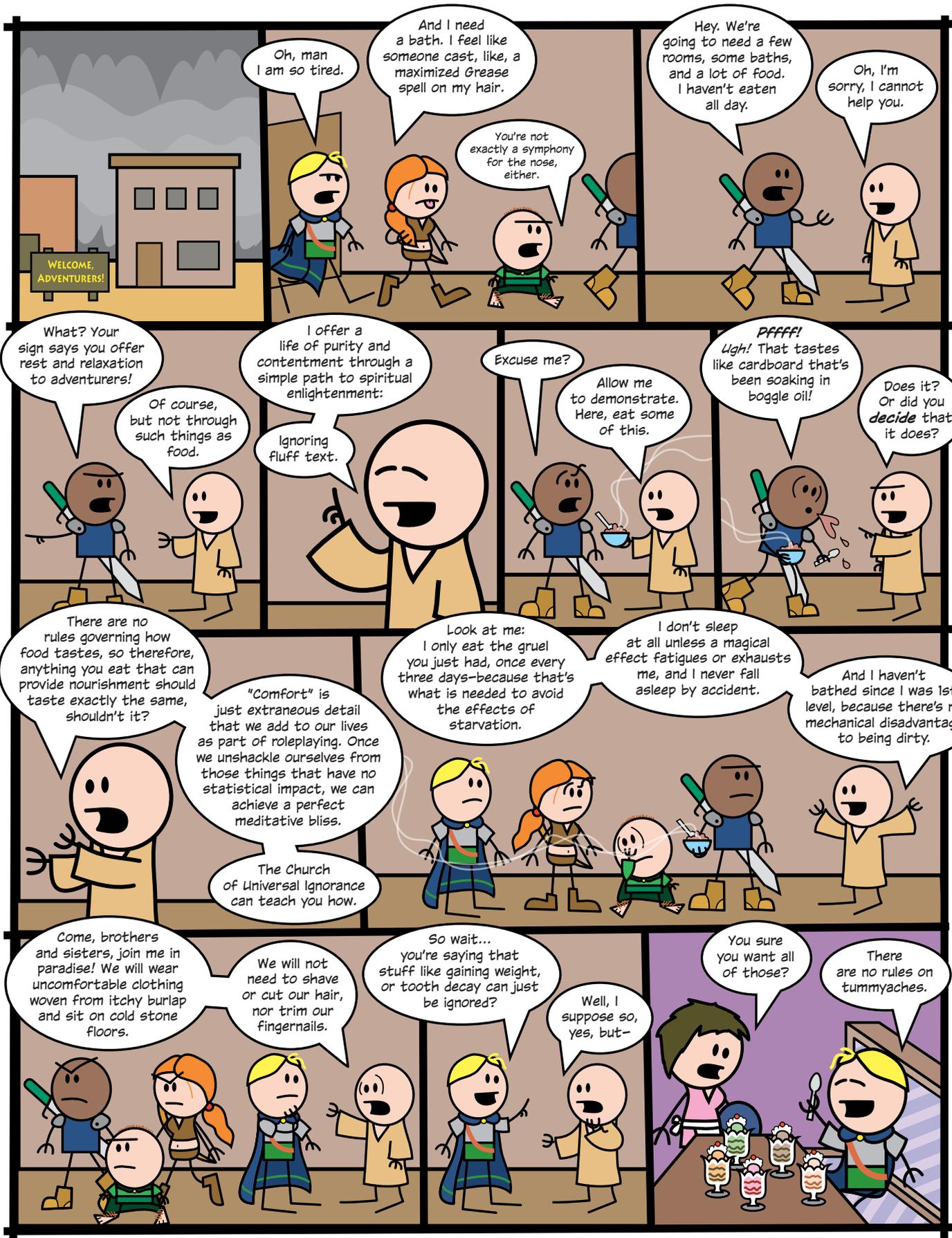
Finally, the [finale](#). I was glad I had gotten my rancor out the strip before, because for this, I really wanted to do something that would pay tribute to the comics that had come before me in the magazine’s long history. *Nodwick*, *Dork Tower*, and *Zogonia* were still running in the magazine, so I decided to let them do their own tribute and focused on the comics that had long since disappeared from the pages. You’d be surprised how hard it is, even in this information age, to find images from magazines printed in the 1970s. My dream was to get explicit permission from the creator of each previous comic to use a stick figure version of their characters, but half the creators were impossible to track down, and most of the other half didn’t respond in time due to the tight deadline (or at all). As a result, I crossed my fingers and trusted in Fair Use, as I so often do. I didn’t get any complaints from creators, and managed to get a few thanks in the process, so it worked out OK. In order to ensure that those creators get the proper tribute that they deserve—and so that the younger gamers know who they are—I’m listing them all below.

### Characters Parodied in Last Comic, Panel Three:

While the issues in which each comic first or last appeared are accurate, many comics experienced gaps during their run. Gaps longer than three issues are noted.

- Terlie Windyarm (woman with sword and shield) and Snarf (orange creature flying off top of panel), from Larry Elmore’s *SnarfQuest*, *Dragon* #75 to #145, #200. [www.larryelmore.com](http://www.larryelmore.com)
- Fineous Fingers (man in purple knit hat), from *Fineous Fingers* by J.D. Webster, *Dragon* #3 to #54.
- Phil (blond man in bowler hat) and Dixie (red-haired girl with mallet), from *What’s New with Phil and Dixie* by Phil Foglio, *Dragon* #49 to #84, #265 to #311. [www.studiofoglio.com/comics.html](http://www.studiofoglio.com/comics.html)
- Wormy (light green dragon with blue hat and cigar), from *Wormy* by Dave Trampier, *Dragon* #9 to #132.
- B.A., Bob, Dave, Sara, and Brian (five faces popping up from bottom edge of panel, left to right), from *Knights of the Dinner Table* by Jolly R. Blackburn, *Dragon* #226 to #269. [www.kenzercos.com](http://www.kenzercos.com)
- Yamara (halfling woman in red shirt) from *Yamara*, ©1984-2007 Barbara Manui and Chris Adams, *Dragon* #132 to #224. Used with permission. [www.yamara.com](http://www.yamara.com)

*Dragon* also featured many other comics over the decades that ran for ten issues or less, as well as the work of countless artists in the anthology feature *Dragonmirth*, which ran on-and-off from *Dragon* #32 to #289. Of particular note is the comic *Swordplay*, by Matthew Guss, which ran from #195 to #259 but featured no recurring characters (and thus I was unable to use), and *The Twilight Empire*, a comic by Stephen D. Sullivan and John M. Hebert that ran from #156 to #205, which I honestly just forgot about until after the strip was submitted.



Oh, man I am so tired.

And I need a bath. I feel like someone cast, like, a maximized Grease spell on my hair.

Hey. We're going to need a few rooms, some baths, and a lot of food. I haven't eaten all day.

Oh, I'm sorry, I cannot help you.

You're not exactly a symphony for the nose, either.

What? Your sign says you offer rest and relaxation to adventurers!

I offer a life of purity and contentment through a simple path to spiritual enlightenment:

Excuse me?

Allow me to demonstrate. Here, eat some of this.

Pffff! Ugh! That tastes like cardboard that's been soaking in boggle oil!

Does it? Or did you *decide* that it does?

Of course, but not through such things as food.

Ignoring fluff text.

There are no rules governing how food tastes, so therefore, anything you eat that can provide nourishment should taste exactly the same, shouldn't it?

"Comfort" is just extraneous detail that we add to our lives as part of roleplaying. Once we unshackle ourselves from those things that have no statistical impact, we can achieve a perfect meditative bliss.

Look at me: I only eat the gruel you just had, once every three days—because that's what is needed to avoid the effects of starvation.

I don't sleep at all unless a magical effect fatigues or exhausts me, and I never fall asleep by accident.

And I haven't bathed since I was 1st level, because there's no mechanical disadvantage to being dirty.

The Church of Universal Ignorance can teach you how.

Come, brothers and sisters, join me in paradise! We will wear uncomfortable clothing woven from itchy burlap and sit on cold stone floors.

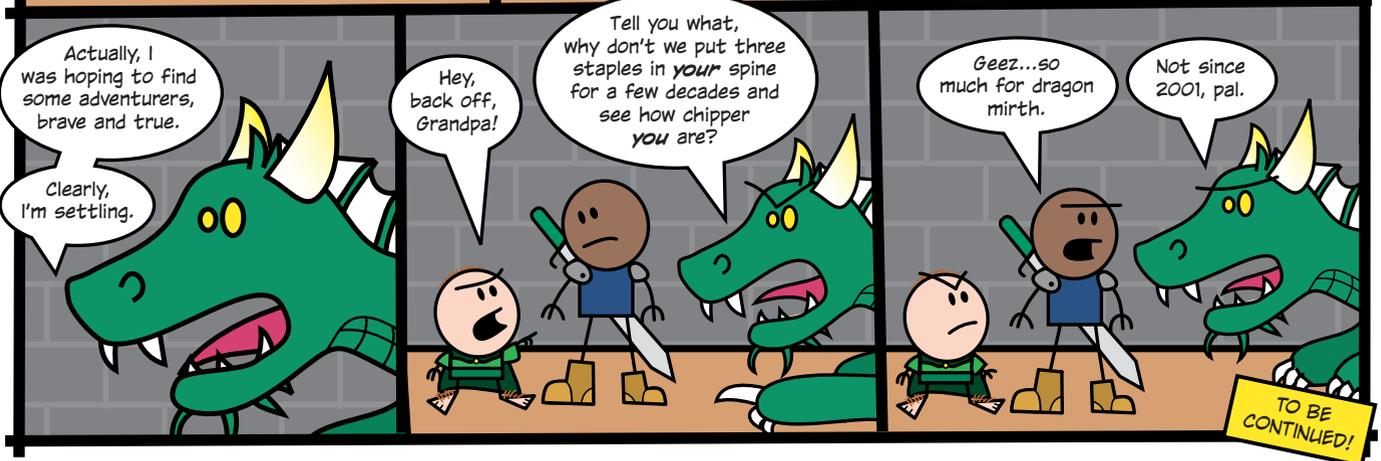
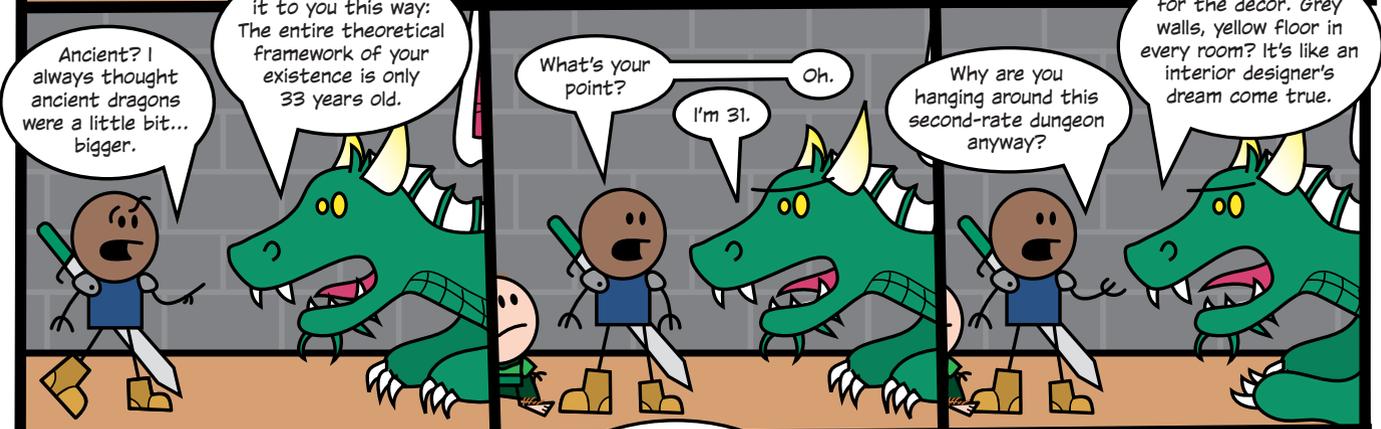
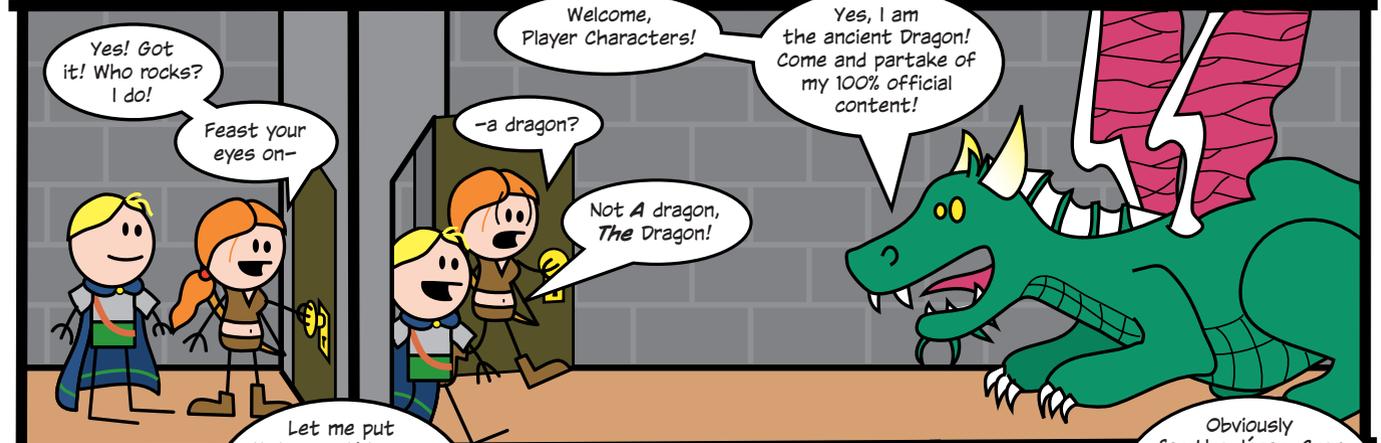
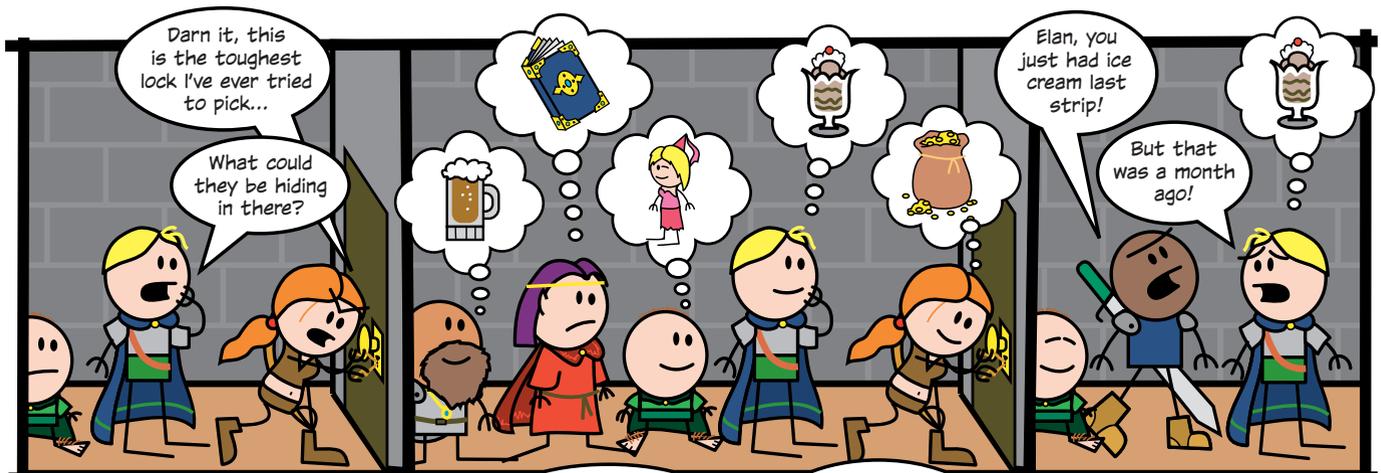
We will not need to shave or cut our hair, nor trim our fingernails.

So wait... you're saying that stuff like gaining weight, or tooth decay can just be ignored?

Well, I suppose so, yes, but—

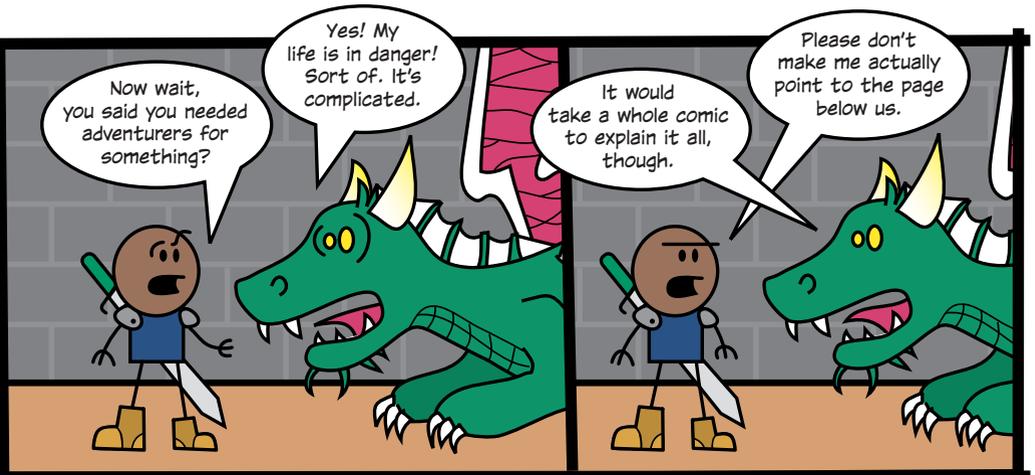
You sure you want all of those?

There are no rules on tummyaches.



Previously:  
The Order of the Stick  
encountered a thinly-  
veiled allegory.

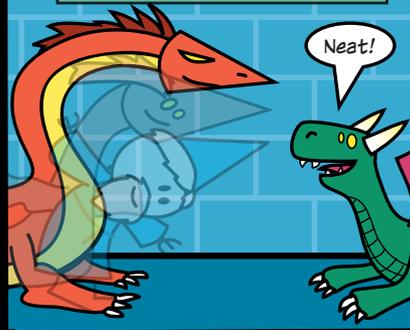
I mean, "dragon".



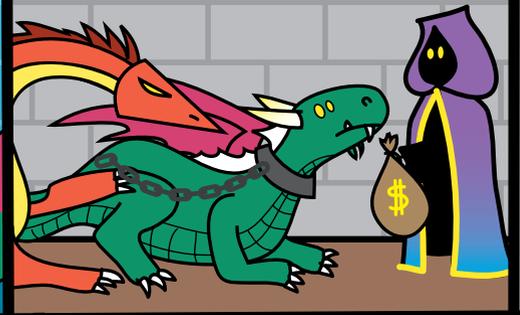
See, it all began when this nice wizard created me to replace some old newsletter.



We had a lot of fun, even when that wizard turned himself into a red dragon.



Unfortunately, the times got tough, so he had to sell me to this other wizard who lived by the shore.



I moved out west with him, and that was OK for a while, too.



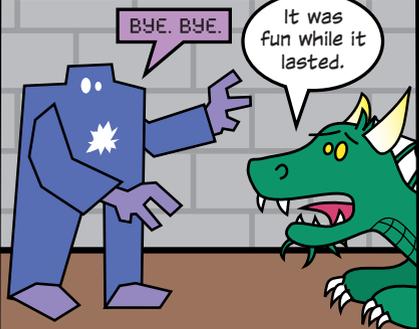
Then, the wizard got a new boss...



...and soon, he didn't have time to play with me anymore. So he built a golem out of parts he had lying around the office, and gave me to it.



The golem and I played together, but now the wizard needs me back.

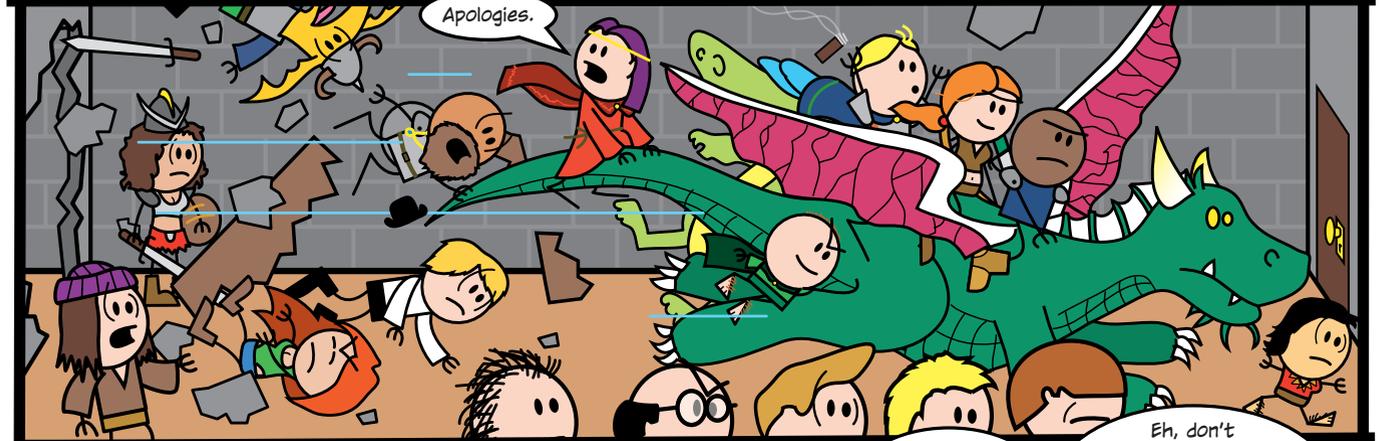
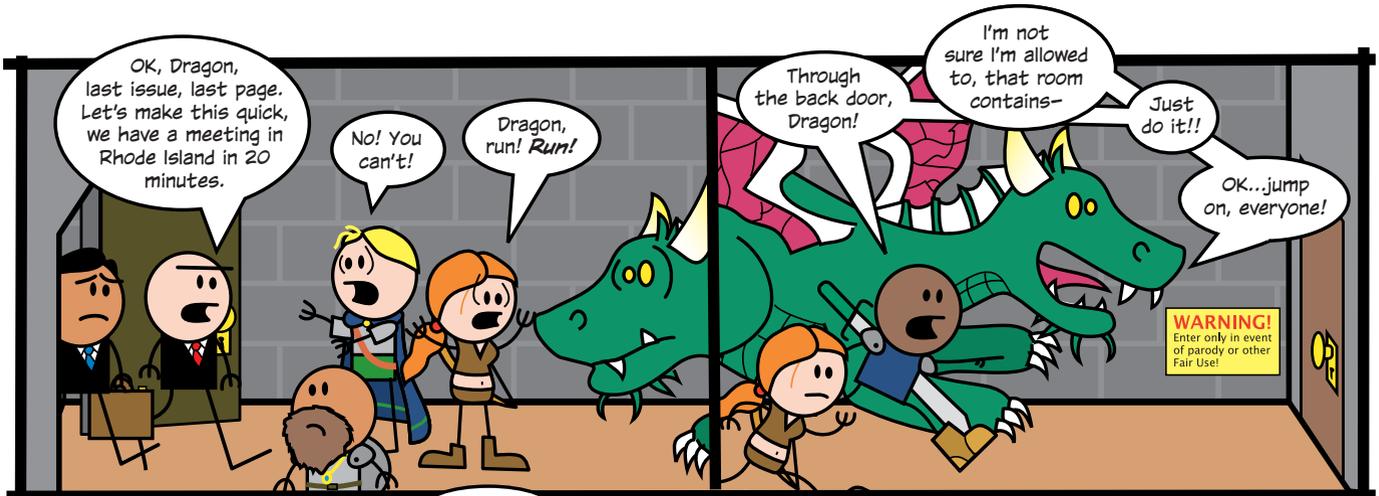


He has a spell that will convert me to electricity or something. I'm honestly not sure how that's going to work yet.



At any rate, it'll be the end of me as I am now!

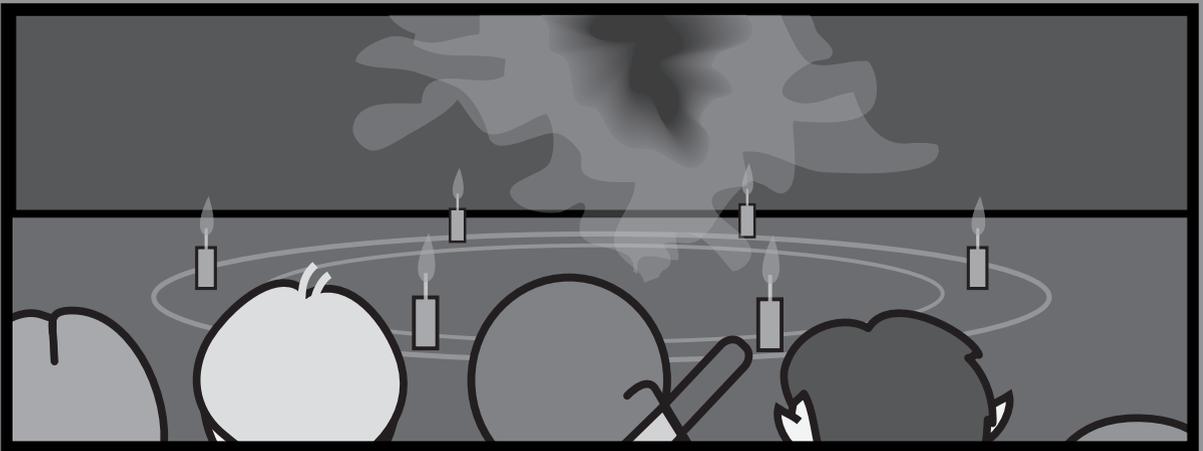




The  
**Order** of the **Stick**

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**Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales**



**Edition Wars:  
Invaders from the Fourth Dimension**

## I Plead the Fourth

The degree to which this section only exists due to fan demand for it cannot be understated. In 2008, when Fourth Edition hit gaming tables around the world, I surprised a lot of people by deciding that *OOTS* was not going to switch to the new version, despite the fact that the comic still had its roots in spoofing the world of fantasy roleplaying games. The reasons were sound, in my mind: My comic was much more about the characters by that point than gags, and to stop the advancing plot to explain the changes to every one of them seemed like a good way to grind my story momentum to a halt. Plus, certain critical rule factors hadn't even been released yet, like what bards or sorcerers were going to be like. I couldn't have one of my core protagonists and my primary antagonist sidelined while the rest of the team got complete makeovers. But most importantly, I had to play Third Edition for years before I was able to have enough system mastery to spontaneously write jokes about it. That sort of familiarity was just nowhere on the horizon when the system was published, so I elected not to have it come up in the online comic at all.

By now, of course, many of those factors have changed. The bard and the sorcerer were released in 2009, and I have had some experience playing Fourth Edition. Not nearly as much as I had with Third, but enough to have gotten the hang of it. (I don't really get a lot of time to play any edition these days, so my hands-on time has been sharply limited.) The one thing that hasn't changed was my disinclination to halt the story in order to explain the switchover. That hasn't stopped me from getting emails almost every week asking for *OOTS* to take a shot at it, though. So when it came time to prepare a release for the long-overdue *Dragon* magazine strips, I saw an opportunity. Not only is this book safely outside the perception of casual fans who might be confused by the idea of upgrading editions, but the printed strips took place in a wholly separate continuity—one free from the confines of the main story's events and locations. It seemed like the perfect compromise: the fans get their long-awaited Fourth Edition jokes, and I get to keep my main story intact. And so here we are.

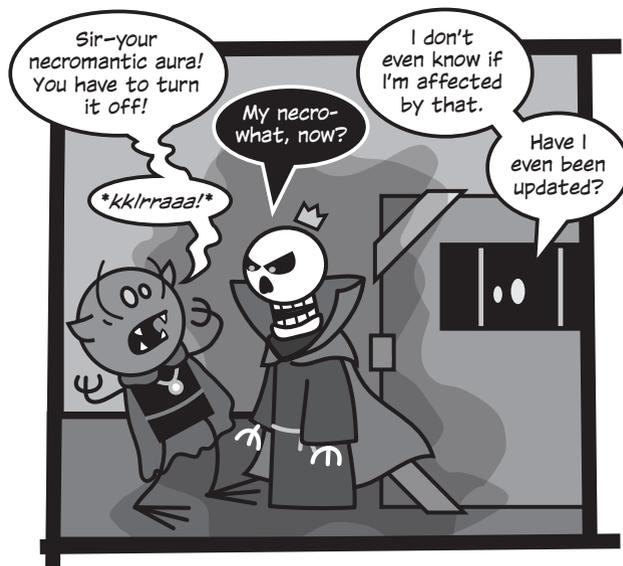
Now, if you've read the following section already—and I recommend that you do so before reading any more of my thoughts on it—it may seem like I'm coming off a bit harsh on Fourth Edition. A higher percentage of the jokes are at its expense rather than that of its predecessor, after all. But keep in mind that I've had hundreds of strips online to harp on Third Edition's various logic flaws and inconsistencies, plus those from the previous section. No one wants me to reread the same ground again, especially when I only have 22 pages here to squeeze in everything that I want to spoof about the newer game. So please, no angry emails about how I wasn't "fair" to Fourth Edition because I made fun of it more. That's my job. It's what I do. You knew I was a snake when you brought me home.

It almost goes without saying, but both systems have strengths and weaknesses. In my entirely idiosyncratic (but still technically professional) opinion, Fourth Edition is ideal at running tactical encounters—short-range dungeon battles where neither side is really prepared for what they're going to face next. This is ostensibly what dungeon crawling has always been about, but Fourth Edition definitely puts the premise at the forefront. Meanwhile, Third Edition

has more opportunities for long-term strategic planning, both at character creation and when accomplishing goals within the framework of the game. I know which of the two methodologies to which I am more partial, but I would never presume that my preference was anything more than that—my preference.

When it comes right down to it, the so-called "Edition Wars" really amount to a battle not over which system is objectively better, but over whether or not the base of players needs to accept a new system just because that system is published. On one side of the debate, there's the knowledge that no one can break into your house at night and burn your existing books; if you want to keep playing an old edition, nothing is physically stopping you. Heck, lots of people still play First Edition, or Original D&D! On the other hand, by doing so, you are making a conscious decision to separate yourself from those who are following the current product lines. If enough people refuse to convert, then it becomes harder for both sides to find people for their gaming groups. If you try to play both editions simultaneously, you end up splitting your gaming time such that neither game really gets your full attention. Few people have enough free time to play in multiple groups. So, system aside, there are compelling arguments for either staying current or sticking with the one you love even if progress marches on. There are no easy answers.

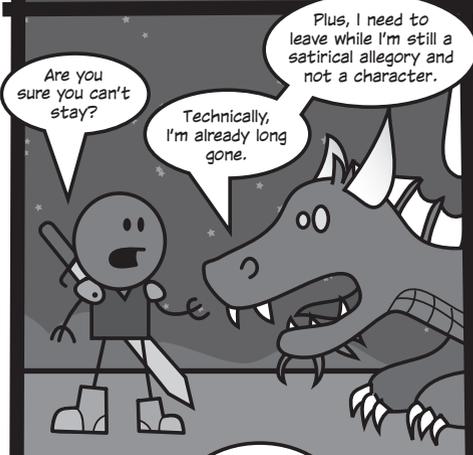
As the hobby goes on and there's a Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Edition, probably all within our lifetime if the game doesn't die off, I expect the rancor between factions will become less intense. When there are a dozen different flavors of D&D to choose from, it will seem somewhat silly to fervently declare loyalty to one (and only one) of them. Gamers will need to be at least passingly conversant in all of the extant editions just to be able to move between different gaming groups. You'll have one group playing Third Edition but poaching the saving throw rules from Sixth Edition, another playing Fifth Edition but reinstating the alignment rules from First Edition, and a third group playing cutting-edge Ninth Edition by interfacing their brainstems directly with the DM-O-Matic 4500 and using their actual psionic powers to tell their characters to manifest pretend psionic powers. It'll be crazy, you wait and see.





OK, last stop, everybody off.

Geez, that flight felt like it took four years!



Are you sure you can't stay?

Technically, I'm already long gone.

Plus, I need to leave while I'm still a satirical allegory and not a character.



Goodbye, Dragon! Goodbye!

We love you!

\*Sigh\* I miss it already.

Aye, lad, I unnerstand.



So...now what? We were in that dungeon so long, I don't know what to do.

I think I saw a big town a few miles back while we were flying.

It's not like we really had a storyline...

We could go rent some rooms at the inn and sleep in real beds tonight.



Sounds good to me. I could definitely use some R&R.

No, Roy, Dee and Dee, not Arr and Arr. That would be about pirates.

Just start walking.



Och, tha a beast, once so powerful, could end up like tha...it just dinnae bode well fer any o' us.

I fear tha this is only a harbinger o' some great cosmic shift.

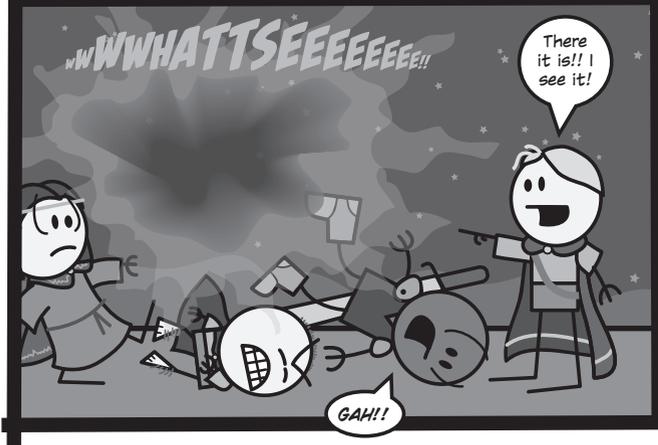
What do you mean, Durkon?

I concur, actually. The precise ramifications cannot be predicted, but it certainly portends ill.

OK, well, I guess we'll keep on the lookout for Certain Doom as we walk.

I don't think you can actually see doom, Ean, that's-

OK! I think it usually looks like a swirly energy thing.



WWHATTSEEEEEEE!!

There it is!! I see it!

GAH!!

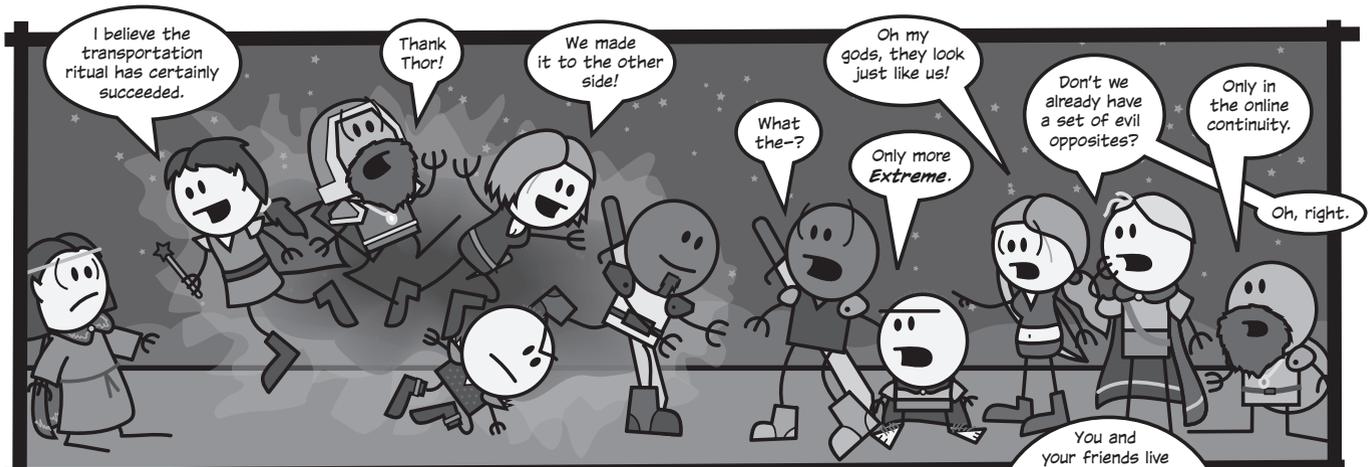


Hey, look, I see people coming out!

No, and yes. They look... oddly familiar.

What the hell is that?

Should we attack them? And by that I mean, will you be mad at me if I attack them?



I believe the transportation ritual has certainly succeeded.

Thank Thor!

We made it to the other side!

Oh my gods, they look just like us!

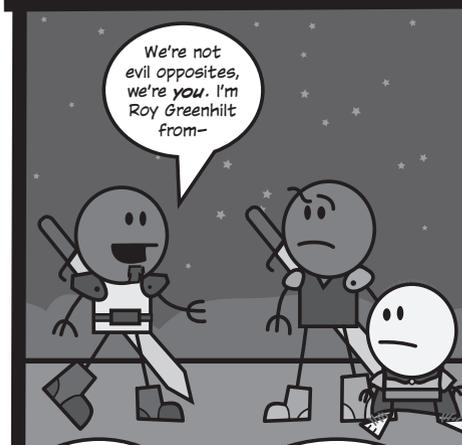
Don't we already have a set of evil opposites?

Only in the online continuity.

Oh, right.

What the-?

Only more Extreme.



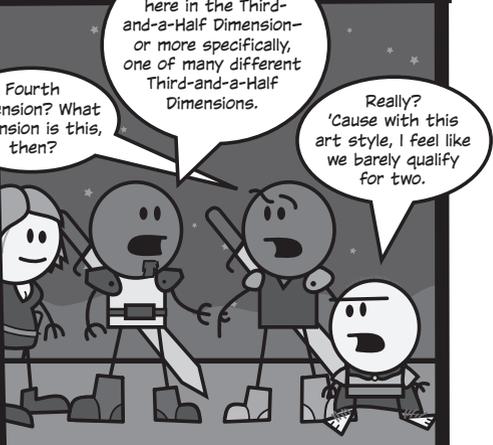
We're not evil opposites, we're *you*. I'm Roy Greenhilt from-



**THE FOURTH EDITION!**

(Dimension.)

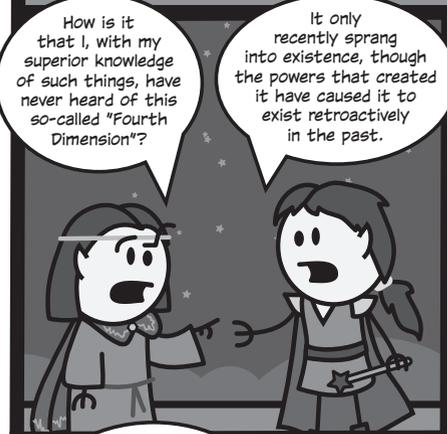
**THE FOURTH DIMENSION!**



You and your friends live here in the Third-and-a-Half Dimension- or more specifically, one of many different Third-and-a-Half Dimensions.

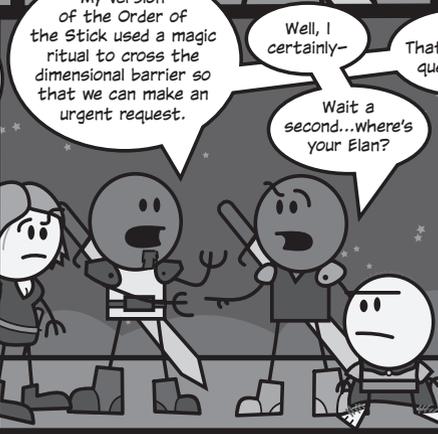
Fourth Dimension? What dimension is this, then?

Really? 'Cause with this art style, I feel like we barely qualify for two.



How is it that I, with my superior knowledge of such things, have never heard of this so-called "Fourth Dimension"?

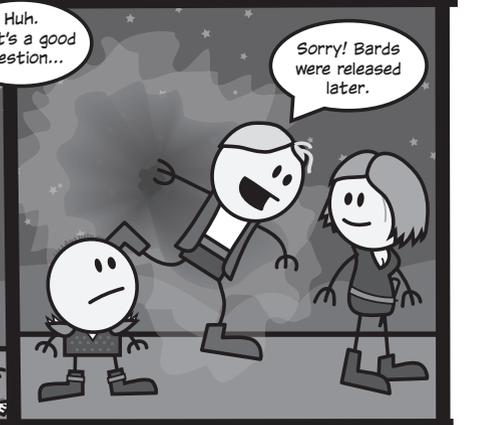
It only recently sprang into existence, though the powers that created it have caused it to exist retroactively in the past.



My version of the Order of the Stick used a magic ritual to cross the dimensional barrier so that we can make an urgent request.

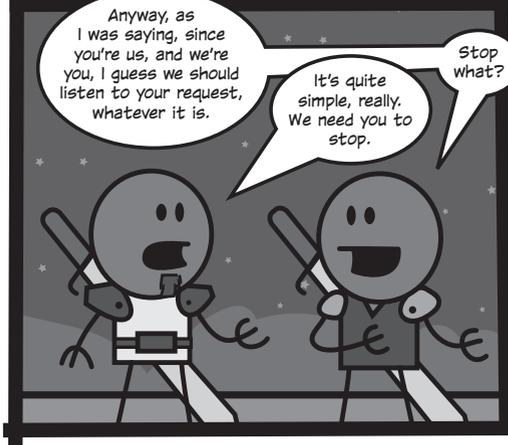
Well, I certainly-

Wait a second...where's your Elan?



Huh. That's a good question...

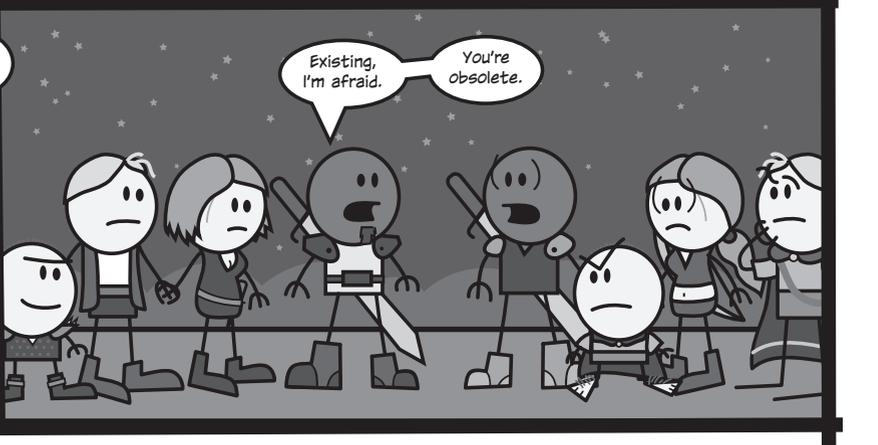
Sorry! Bards were released later.



Anyway, as I was saying, since you're us, and we're you, I guess we should listen to your request, whatever it is.

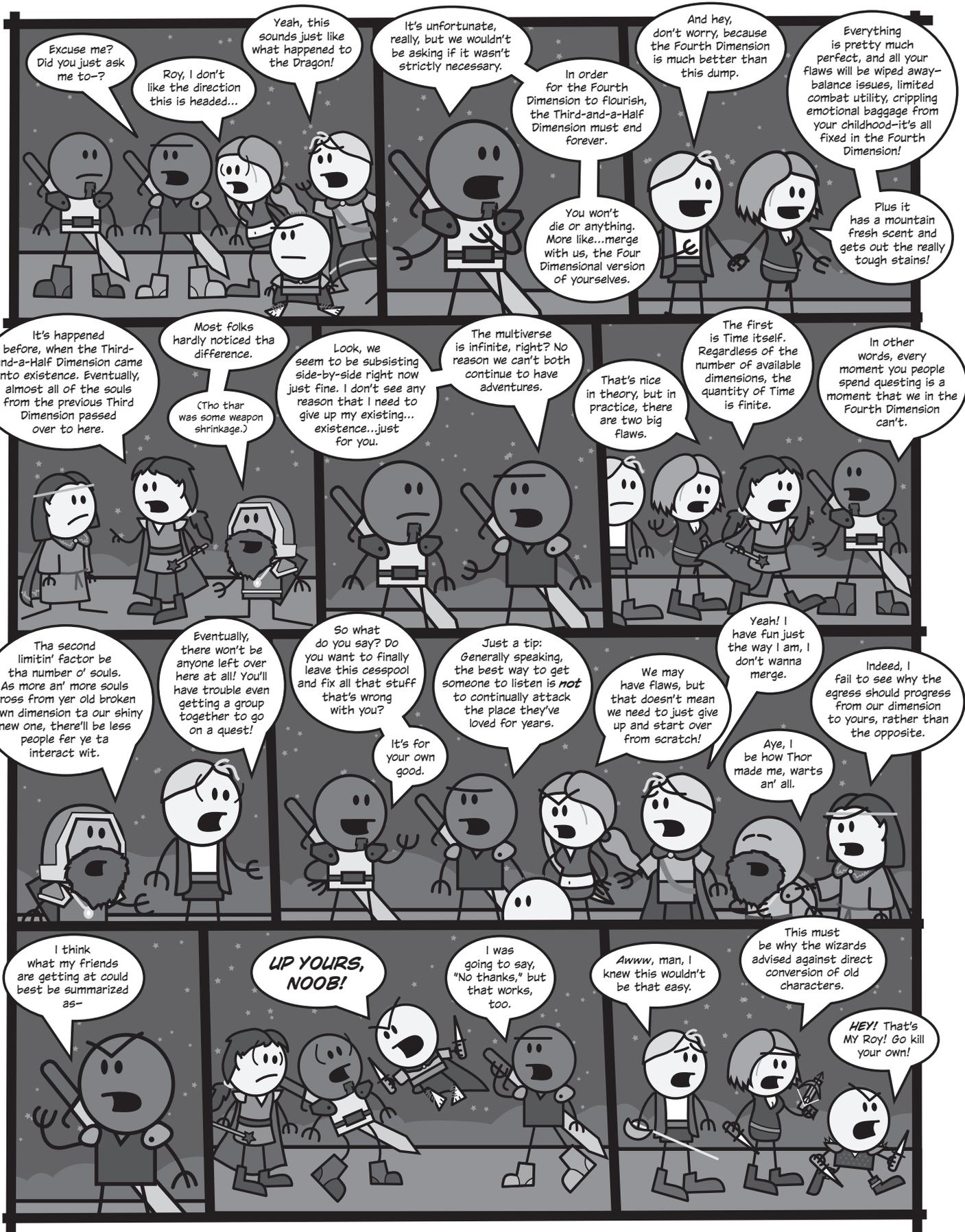
It's quite simple, really. We need you to stop.

Stop what?



Existing, I'm afraid.

You're obsolete.





You arrogant antiquated fools! Do you not perceive how we are trying to improve your world?

You could improve it by leaving it.

Equally acceptable. Chain Lightning.

Refuse, refuse, refuse, refuse to give up our system bloat!

Or being buried six feet under it!

Sneak Attack!

Prayer!

OK, well, we tried this the easy way. Time for the hard way.

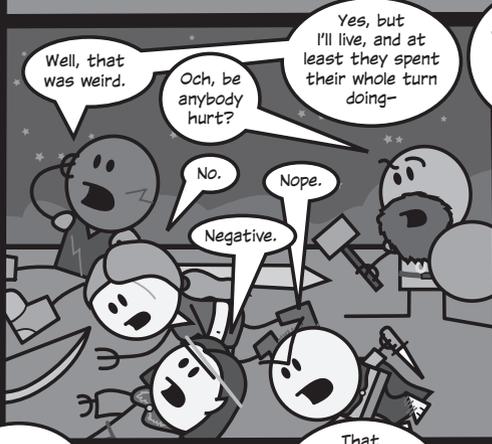
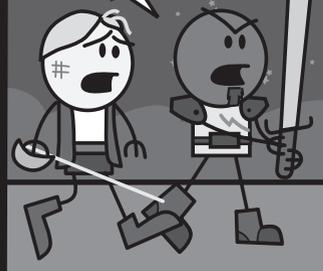
Awwwww! The hard way sounds hard.

For them, Elan. Hard for them, not us.

Knock Them Down!

Crap!

Whoa!



Well, that was weird.

Och, be anybody hurt?

No.

Nope.

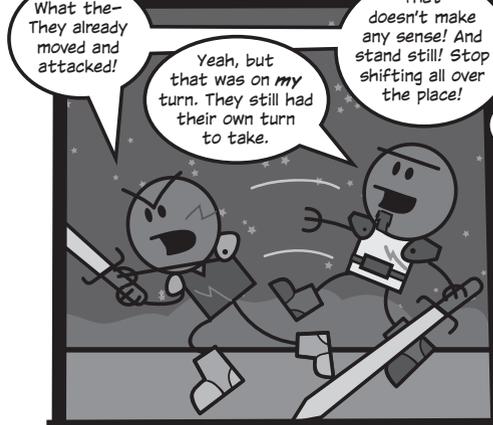
Negative.

Yes, but I'll live, and at least they spent their whole turn doing-

Second Wind! And Majestic Word on Haley!

Sneak Attack Deft Strike!

Claws of the Griffon, baby!



What the- They already moved and attacked!

Yeah, but that was on *my* turn. They still had their own turn to take.

That doesn't make any sense! And stand still! Stop shifting all over the place!

Positioning is very important in our world.

What kind of fighter are you if you don't want to stand in one place and dish out a full attack?

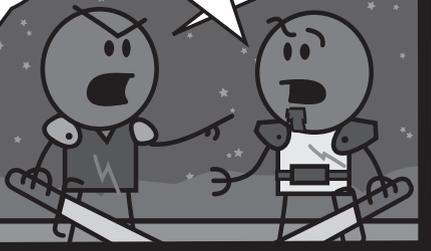
I'm not a fighter at all. I'm actually a warlord. I use my superior leadership skills to turn the tide of battle.

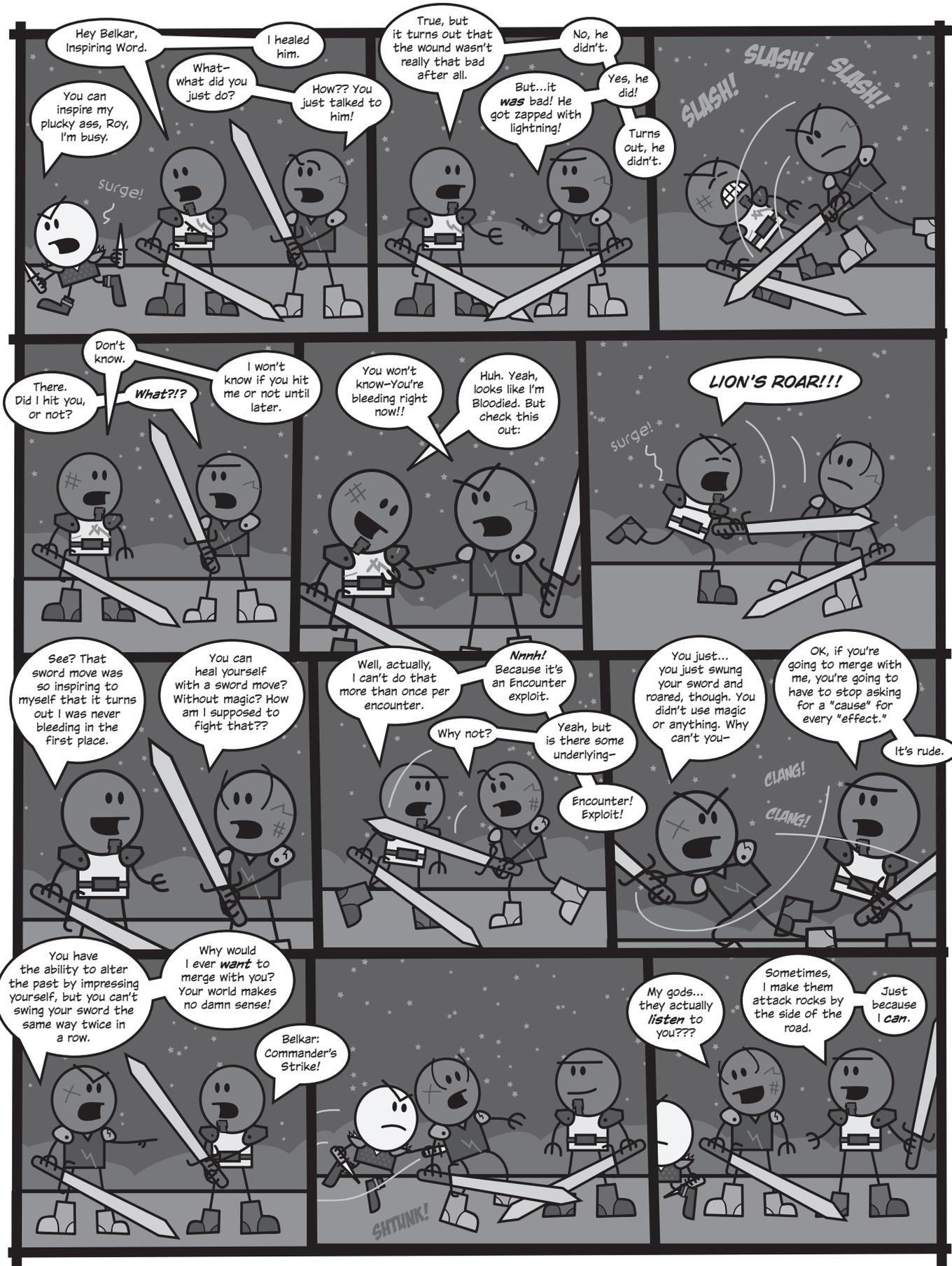
Which makes me wonder...with our Intelligence score, shouldn't you be a warblade or something?

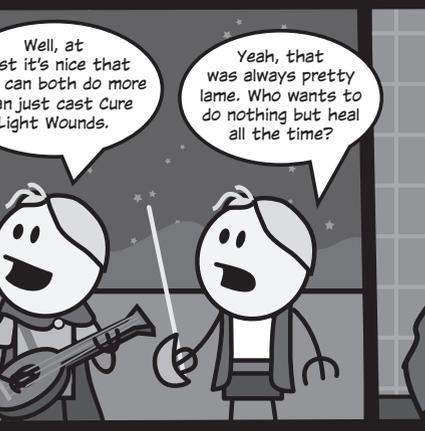
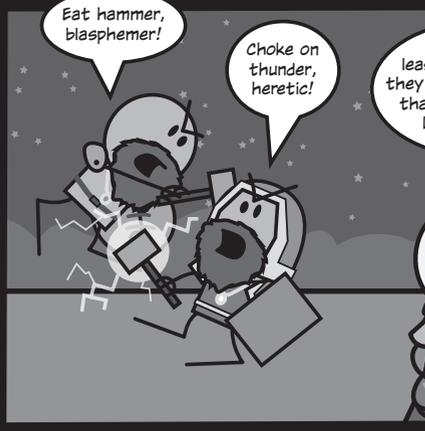
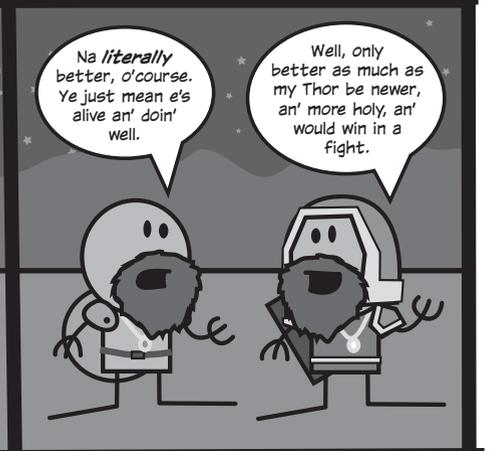
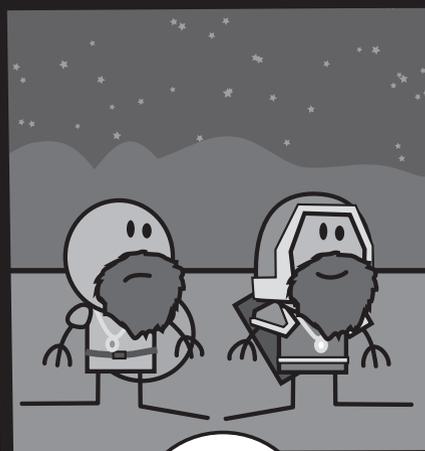
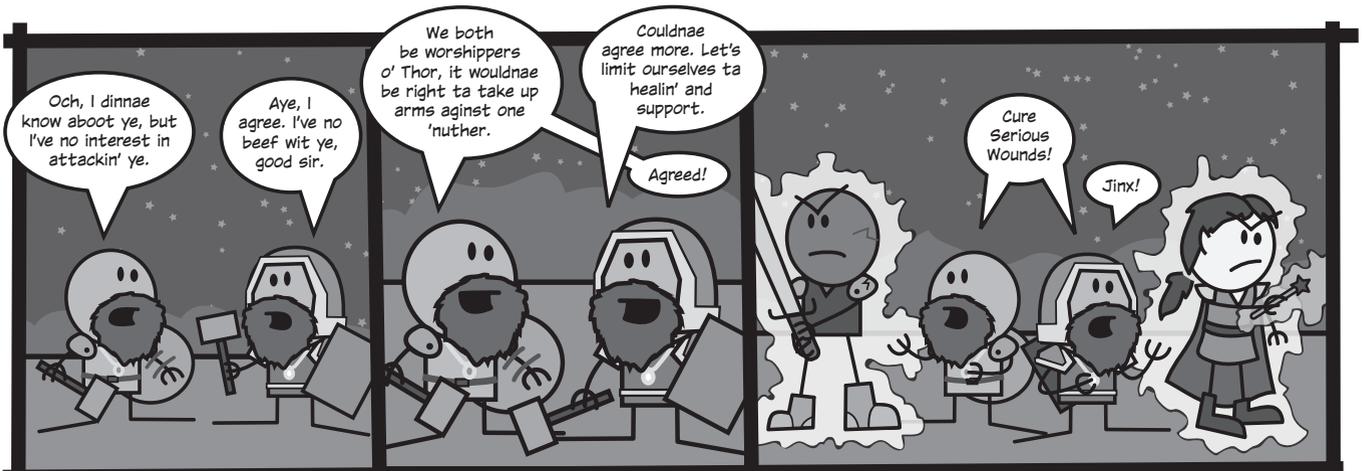
You know as well as I do that Dad would never have paid for a Ph.D. program!

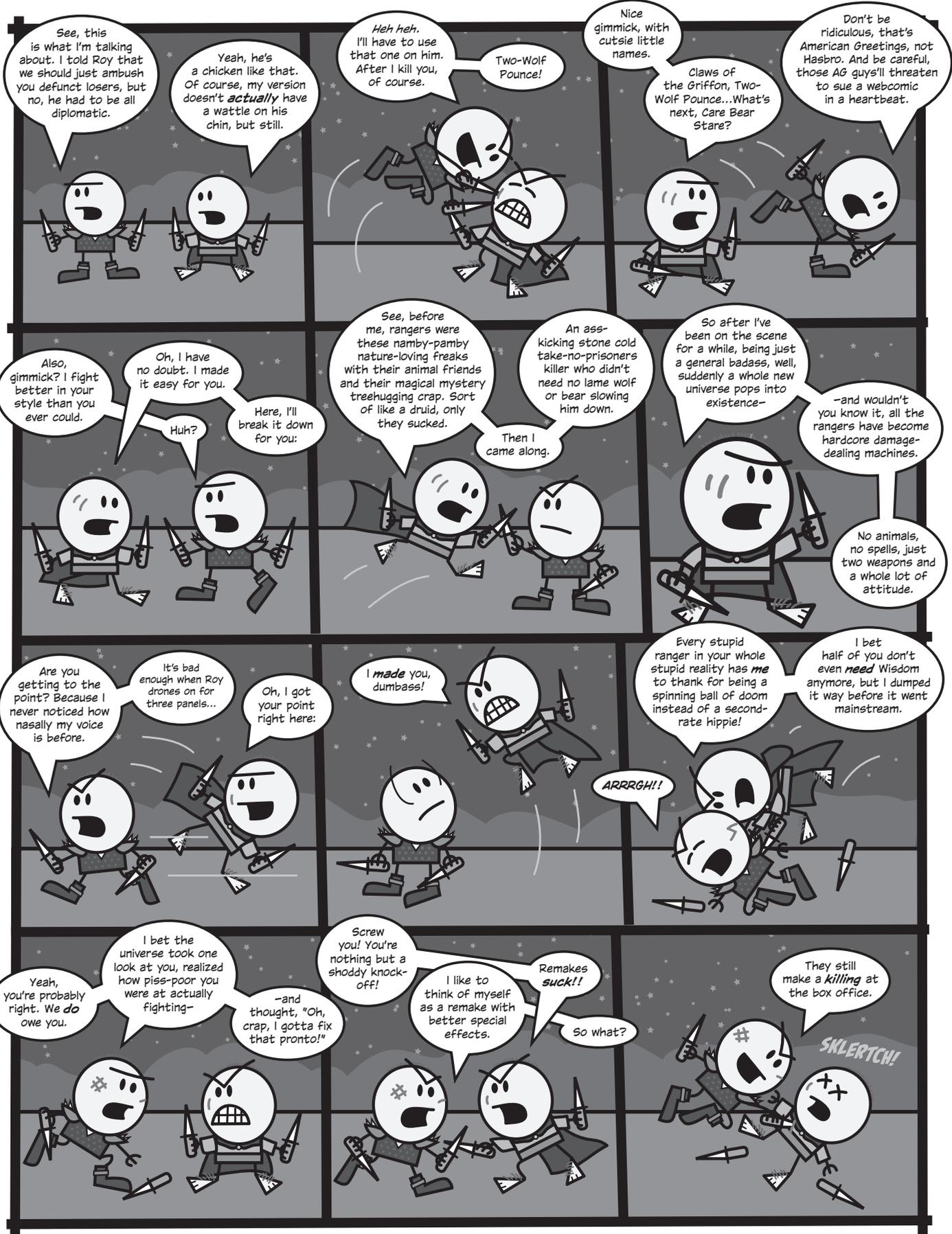


CLANG!









See, this is what I'm talking about. I told Roy that we should just ambush you defunct losers, but no, he had to be all diplomatic.

Yeah, he's a chicken like that. Of course, my version doesn't *actually* have a wattle on his chin, but still.

Heh heh. I'll have to use that one on him. After I kill you, of course.

Two-Wolf Pounce!

Nice gimmick, with cutesie little names.

Claws of the Griffon, Two-Wolf Pounce...What's next, Care Bear Stare?

Don't be ridiculous, that's American Greetings, not Hasbro. And be careful, those AG guys'll threaten to sue a webcomic in a heartbeat.

Also, gimmick? I fight better in your style than you ever could.

Oh, I have no doubt. I made it easy for you.

Huh?

Here, I'll break it down for you:

See, before me, rangers were these namby-pamby nature-loving freaks with their animal friends and their magical mystery treehugging crap. Sort of like a druid, only they sucked.

An ass-kicking stone cold take-no-prisoners killer who didn't need no lame wolf or bear slowing him down.

Then I came along.

So after I've been on the scene for a while, being just a general badass, well, suddenly a whole new universe pops into existence-

-and wouldn't you know it, all the rangers have become hardcore damage-dealing machines.

No animals, no spells, just two weapons and a whole lot of attitude.

Are you getting to the point? Because I never noticed how nasally my voice is before.

It's bad enough when Roy drones on for three panels...

Oh, I got your point right here:

I made you, dumbass!

Every stupid ranger in your whole stupid reality has *me* to thank for being a spinning ball of doom instead of a second-rate hippie!

I bet half of you don't even *need* Wisdom anymore, but I dumped it way before it went mainstream.

ARRRRGH!!

Yeah, you're probably right. We do owe you.

I bet the universe took one look at you, realized how piss-poor you were at actually fighting-

-and thought, "Oh, crap, I gotta fix that pronto!"

Screw you! You're nothing but a shoddy knock-off!

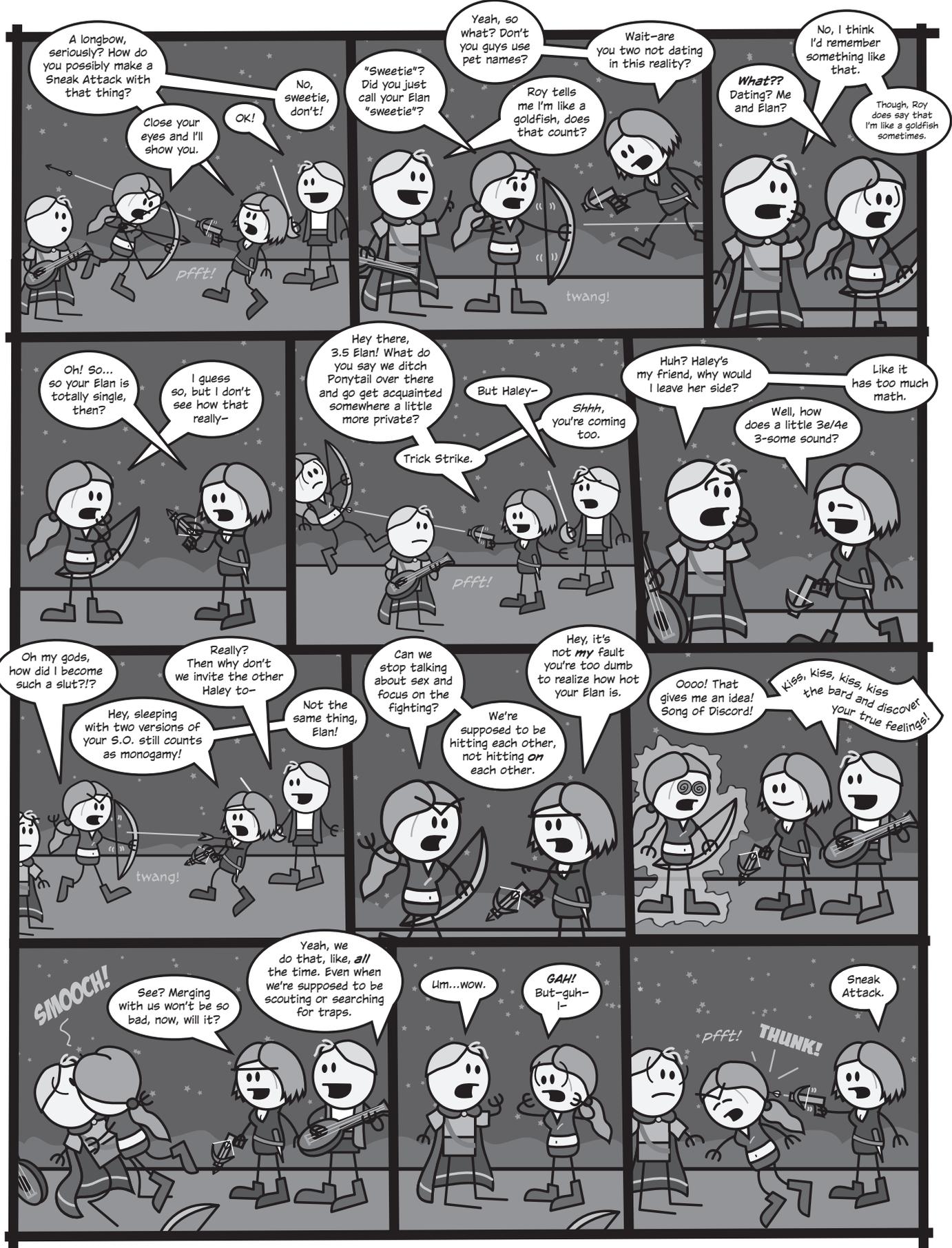
I like to think of myself as a remake with better special effects.

Remakes suck!!

So what?

They still make a *killing* at the box office.

SKLERTCH!



A longbow, seriously? How do you possibly make a Sneak Attack with that thing?

Close your eyes and I'll show you.

OK!

No, sweetie, don't!

"Sweetie"? Did you just call your Elan "sweetie"?

Yeah, so what? Don't you guys use pet names?

Roy tells me I'm like a goldfish, does that count?

Wait—are you two not dating in this reality?

What?? Dating? Me and Elan?

No, I think I'd remember something like that.

Though, Roy does say that I'm like a goldfish sometimes.

pfft!

twang!

Oh! So... so your Elan is totally single, then?

I guess so, but I don't see how that really—

Hey there, 3.5 Elan! What do you say we ditch Ponytail over there and go get acquainted somewhere a little more private?

But Haley—

Shhh, you're coming too.

Trick Strike.

pfft!

Huh? Haley's my friend, why would I leave her side?

Like it has too much math.

Well, how does a little 3e/4e 3-some sound?

Oh my gods, how did I become such a slut?!

Really? Then why don't we invite the other Haley to—

Not the same thing, Elan!

Hey, sleeping with two versions of your S.O. still counts as monogamy!

Can we stop talking about sex and focus on the fighting?

We're supposed to be hitting each other, not hitting *on* each other.

Hey, it's not *my* fault you're too dumb to realize how hot your Elan is.

Oooo! That gives me an idea! Song of Discord!

Kiss, kiss, kiss the bard and discover your true feelings!

twang!

SMOOCH!

See? Merging with us won't be so bad, now, will it?

Yeah, we do that, like, *all* the time. Even when we're supposed to be scouting or searching for traps.

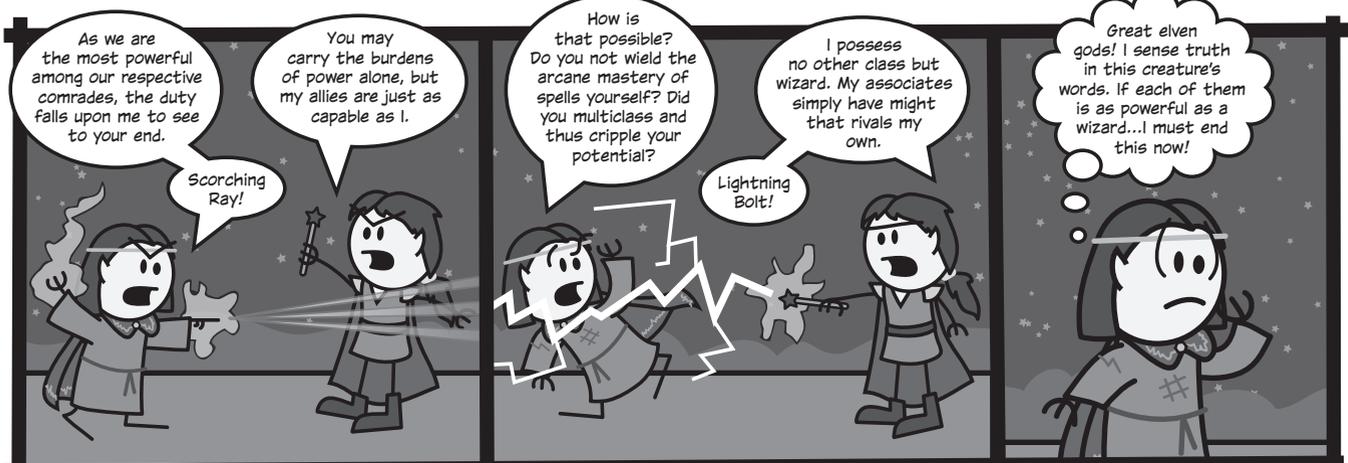
Um...wow.

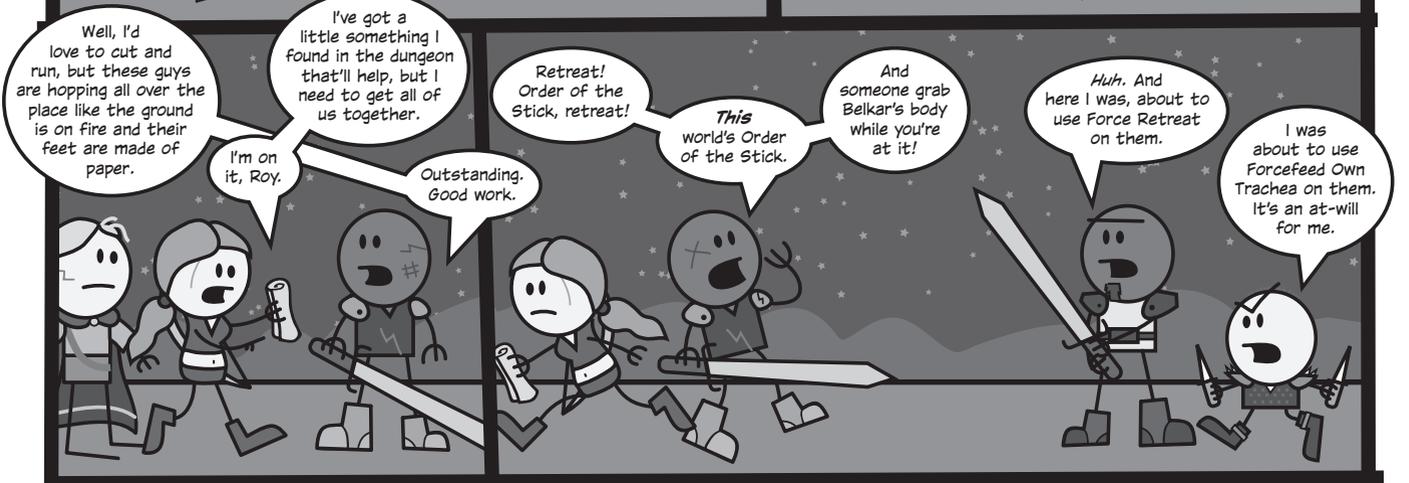
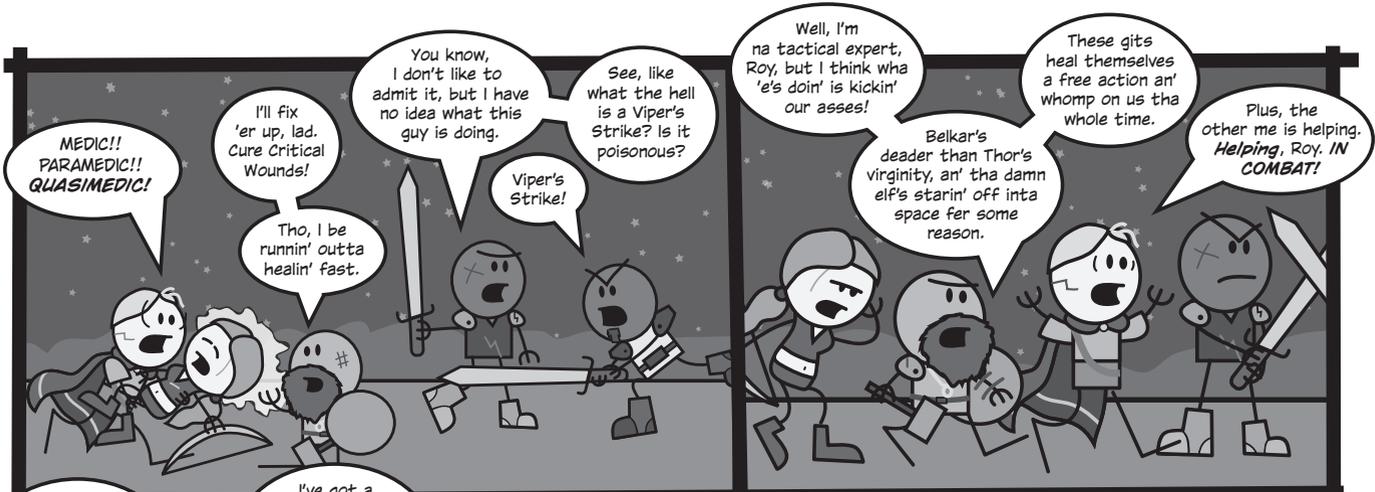
GAH! But-guh-!

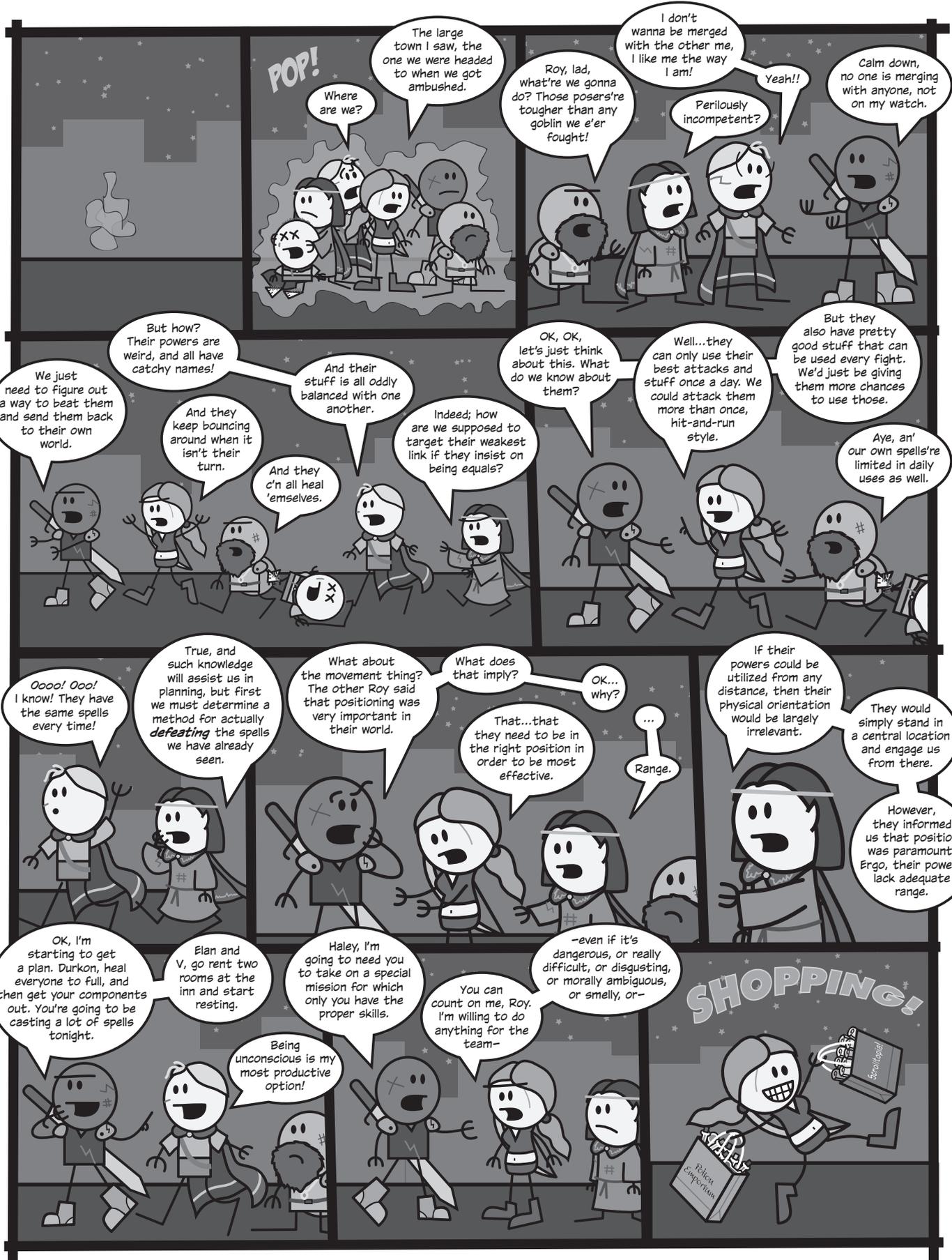
Sneak Attack.

pfft!

THUNK!







POP!

The large town I saw, the one we were headed to when we got ambushed.

Where are we?

Roy, lad, what're we gonna do? Those posers're tougher than any goblin we e'er fought!

I don't wanna be merged with the other me, I like me the way I am!

Yeah!!

Perilously incompetent?

Calm down, no one is merging with anyone, not on my watch.

We just need to figure out a way to beat them and send them back to their own world.

But how? Their powers are weird, and all have catchy names!

And they keep bouncing around when it isn't their turn.

And their stuff is all oddly balanced with one another.

And they c'n all heal 'emselves.

Indeed; how are we supposed to target their weakest link if they insist on being equals?

OK, OK, let's just think about this. What do we know about them?

Well...they can only use their best attacks and stuff once a day. We could attack them more than once, hit-and-run style.

But they also have pretty good stuff that can be used every fight. We'd just be giving them more chances to use those.

Aye, an' our own spells're limited in daily uses as well.

Oooo! Ooo! I know! They have the same spells every time!

True, and such knowledge will assist us in planning, but first we must determine a method for actually defeating the spells we have already seen.

What about the movement thing? The other Roy said that positioning was very important in their world.

What does that imply?

OK... why?

That...that they need to be in the right position in order to be most effective.

Range.

If their powers could be utilized from any distance, then their physical orientation would be largely irrelevant.

They would simply stand in a central location and engage us from there.

However, they informed us that position was paramount. Ergo, their powers lack adequate range.

OK, I'm starting to get a plan. Durkon, heal everyone to full, and then get your components out. You're going to be casting a lot of spells tonight.

Elan and V, go rent two rooms at the inn and start resting.

Haley, I'm going to need you to take on a special mission for which only you have the proper skills.

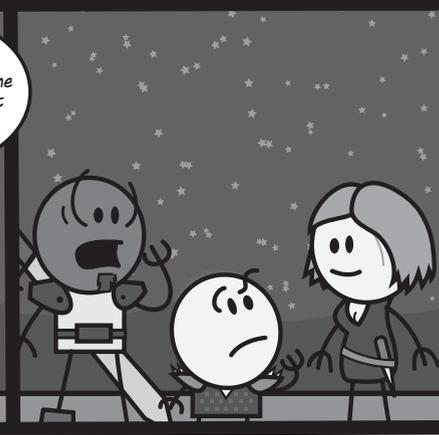
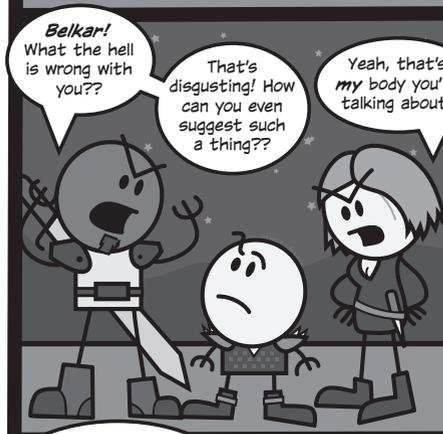
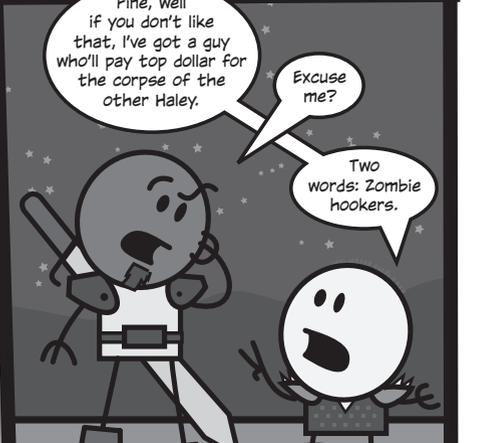
You can count on me, Roy. I'm willing to do anything for the team-

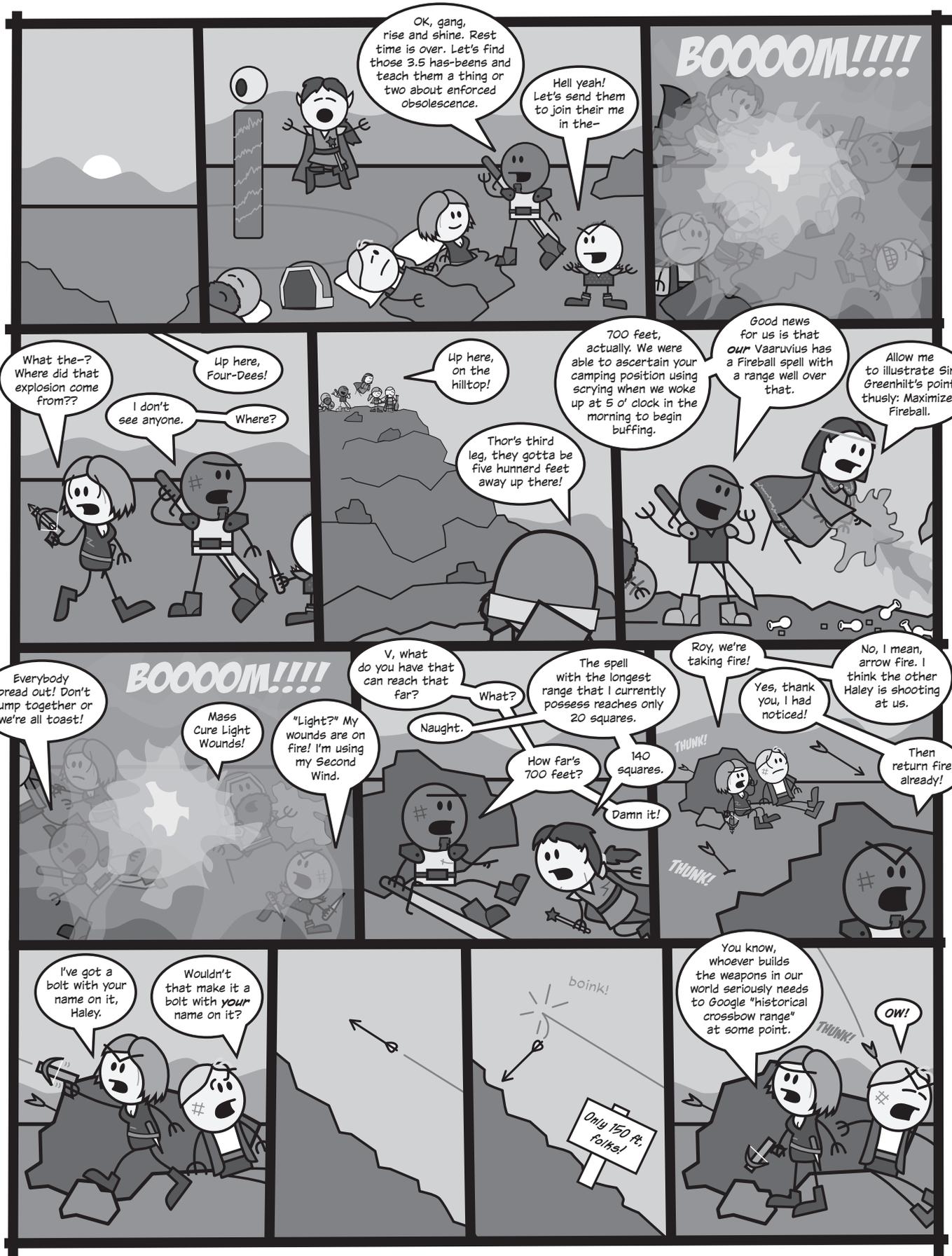
-even if it's dangerous, or really difficult, or disgusting, or morally ambiguous, or smelly, or-

Being unconscious is my most productive option!

SHOPPING!







OK, gang, rise and shine. Rest time is over. Let's find those 3.5 has-beens and teach them a thing or two about enforced obsolescence.

Hell yeah! Let's send them to join their me in the-

**BOOOOM!!!!**

What the-? Where did that explosion come from??

I don't see anyone.

Up here, Four-Dees!

Where?

Up here, on the hilltop!

Thor's third leg, they gotta be five hunderd feet away up there!

700 feet, actually. We were able to ascertain your camping position using scrying when we woke up at 5 o' clock in the morning to begin buffing.

Good news for us is that our Vaaruvius has a Fireball spell with a range well over that.

Allow me to illustrate Sir Greenhilt's point thusly: Maximized Fireball.

**BOOOOM!!!!**

Everybody spread out! Don't clump together or we're all toast!

Mass Cure Light Wounds!

"Light?" My wounds are on fire! I'm using my Second Wind.

V, what do you have that can reach that far?

What?

Naught.

The spell with the longest range that I currently possess reaches only 20 squares.

How far's 700 feet?

140 squares.

Damn it!

Roy, we're taking fire!

Yes, thank you, I had noticed!

No, I mean, arrow fire. I think the other Haley is shooting at us.

Then return fire already!

I've got a bolt with your name on it, Haley.

Wouldn't that make it a bolt with *your* name on it?

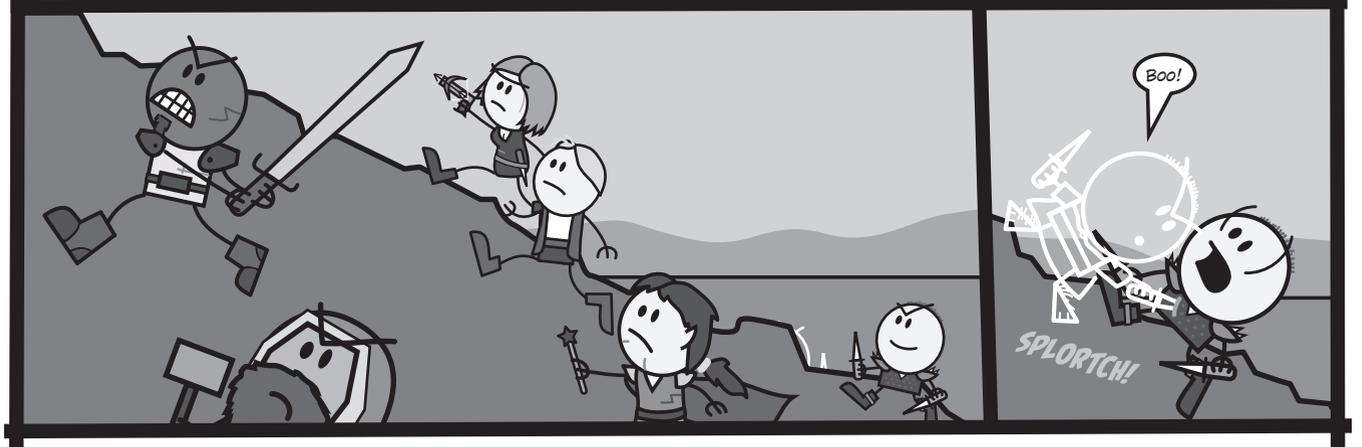
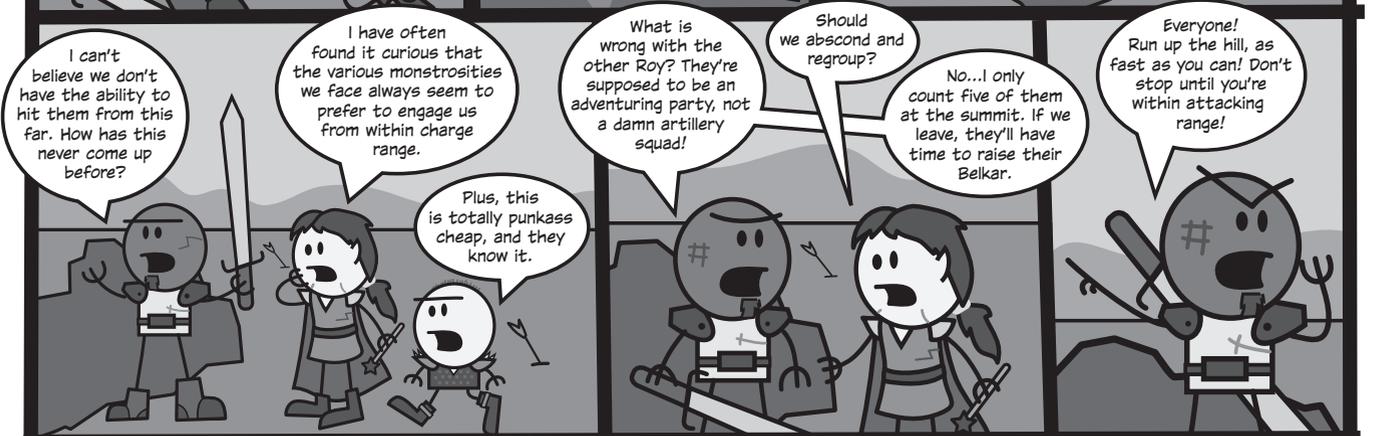
boink!

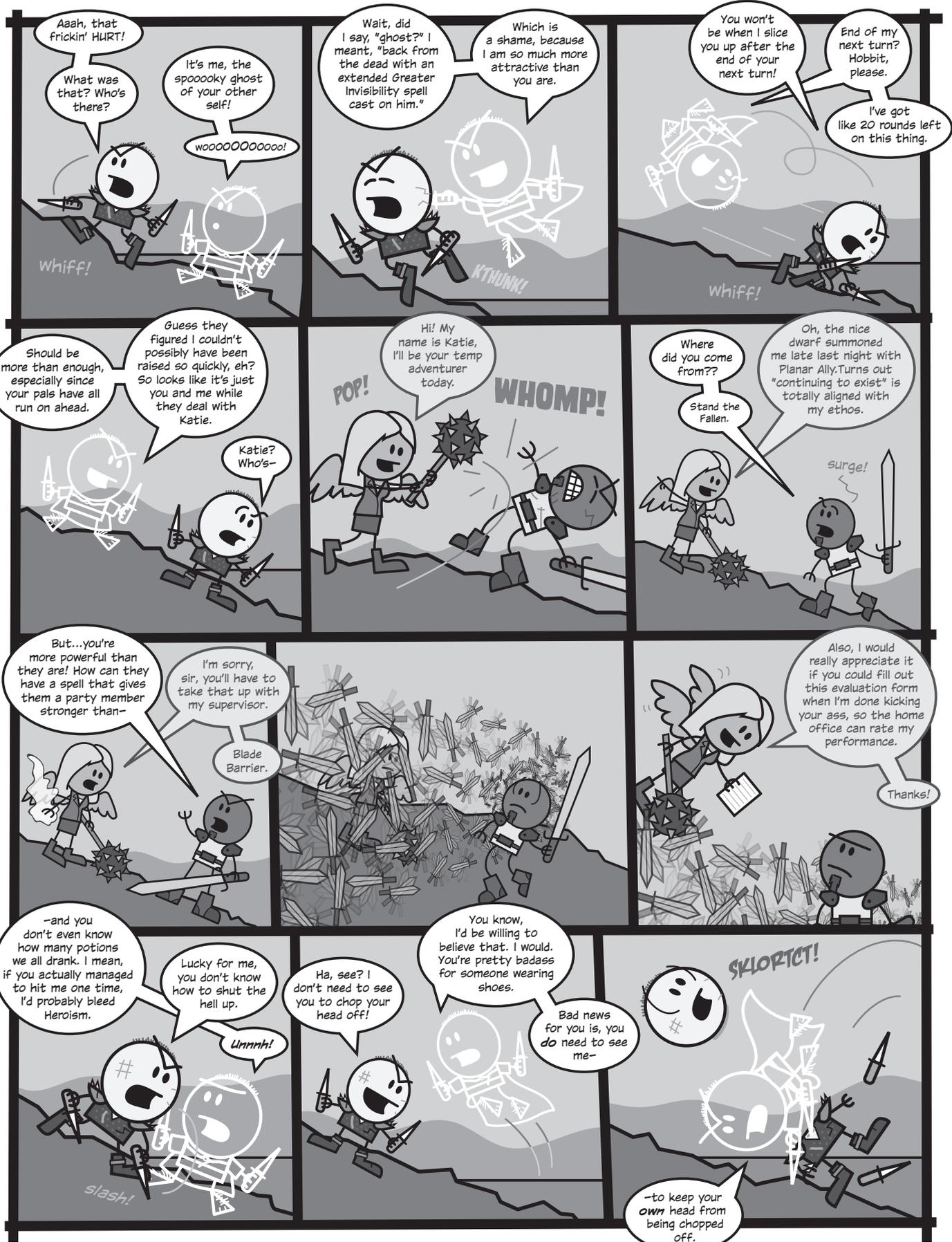
Only 150 ft. folks!

You know, whoever builds the weapons in our world seriously needs to Google "historical crossbow range" at some point.

THUNK!

OW!





Aaah, that frickin' HURT!

What was that? Who's there?

It's me, the spooooky ghost of your other self!

woooooOOOOoooo!

whiff!

Wait, did I say, "ghost?" I meant, "back from the dead with an extended Greater Invisibility spell cast on him."

Which is a shame, because I am so much more attractive than you are.

KTHUNK!

You won't be when I slice you up after the end of your next turn!

End of my next turn? Hobbit, please.

I've got like 20 rounds left on this thing.

whiff!

Should be more than enough, especially since your pals have all run on ahead.

Guess they figured I couldn't possibly have been raised so quickly, eh? So looks like it's just you and me while they deal with Katie.

Katie? Who's-

POP!

Hi! My name is Katie, I'll be your temp adventurer today.

WHOMP!

Where did you come from??

Stand the Fallen.

Oh, the nice dwarf summoned me late last night with Planar Ally. Turns out "continuing to exist" is totally aligned with my ethos.

surge!

But...you're more powerful than they are! How can they have a spell that gives them a party member stronger than-

I'm sorry, sir, you'll have to take that up with my supervisor.

Blade Barrier.

Also, I would really appreciate it if you could fill out this evaluation form when I'm done kicking your ass, so the home office can rate my performance.

Thanks!

-and you don't even know how many potions we all drank. I mean, if you actually managed to hit me one time, I'd probably bleed Heroism.

Lucky for me, you don't know how to shut the hell up.

Ummh!

Ha, see? I don't need to see you to chop your head off!

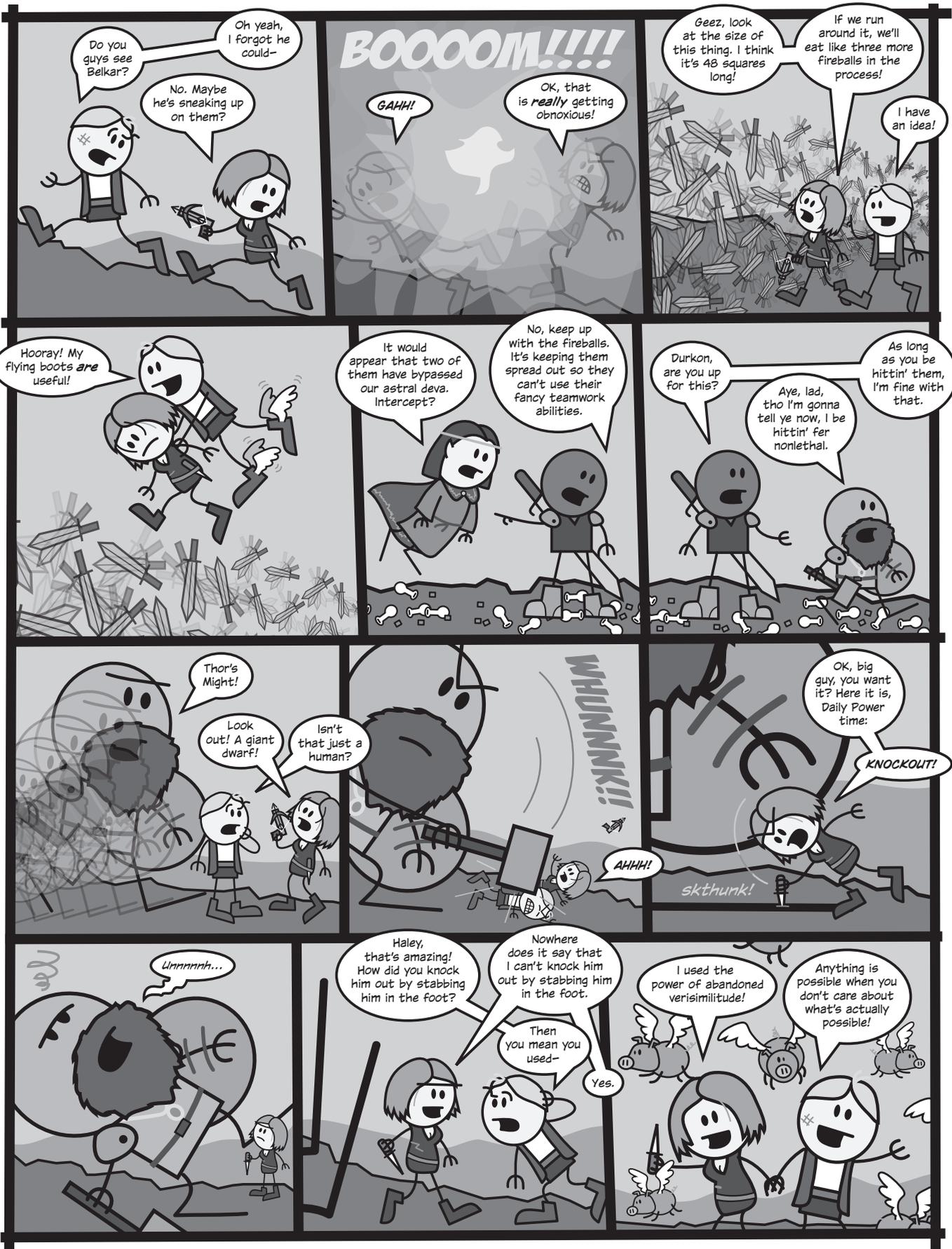
You know, I'd be willing to believe that. I would. You're pretty badass for someone wearing shoes.

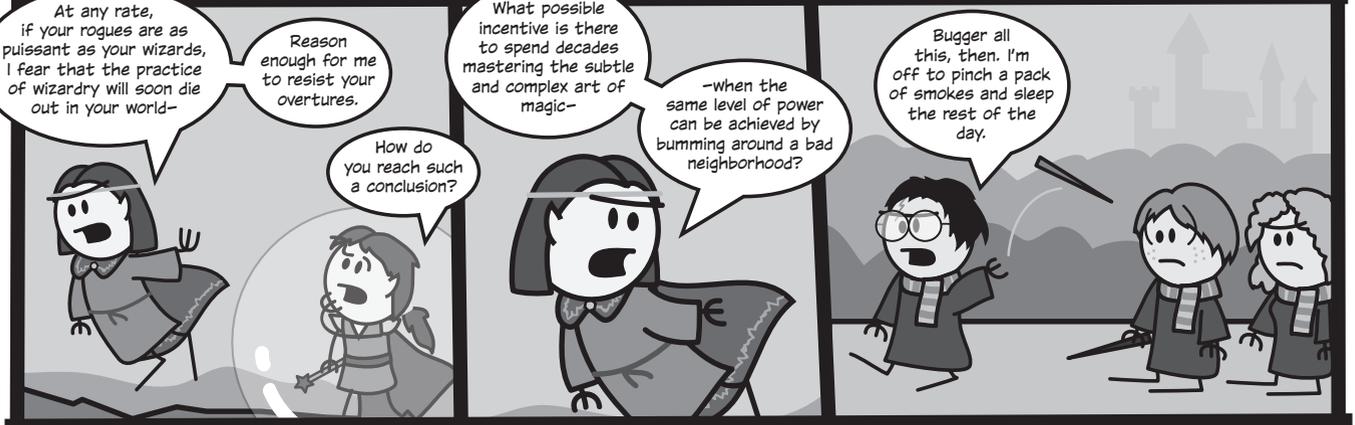
Bad news for you is, you do need to see me-

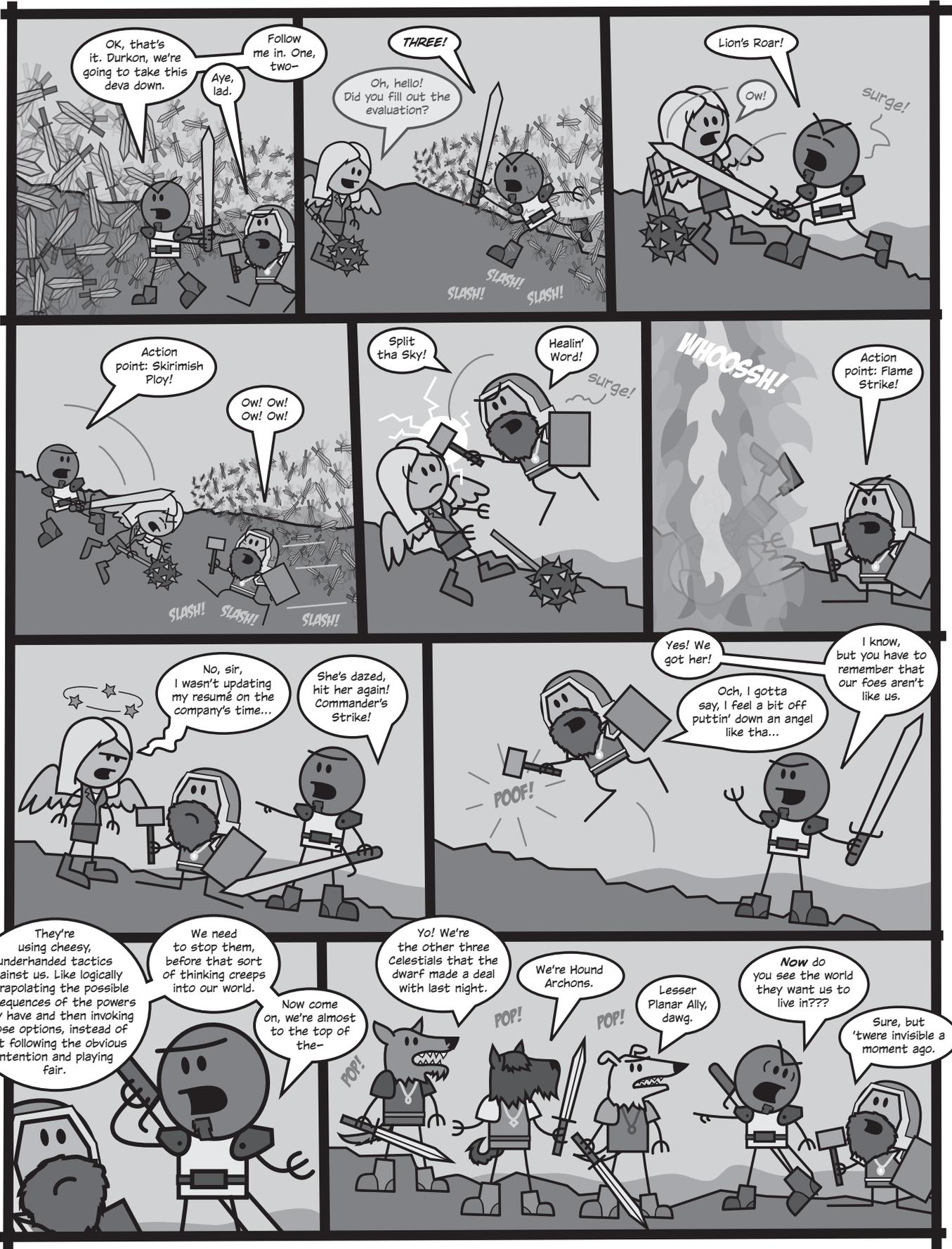
SKLORTCT!

slash!

-to keep your OWN head from being chopped off.







OK, that's it. Durkon, we're going to take this deva down.

Follow me in. One, two-

Aye, lad.

THREE!

Oh, hello! Did you fill out the evaluation?

Lion's Roar!

Ow!

surge!

Action point: Skirmish Play!

Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!

Split tha sky!

Healin' Word!

surge!

WHOOSH!

Action point: Flame Strike!

SLASH! SLASH! SLASH!

Yes! We got her!

I know, but you have to remember that our foes aren't like us.

No, sir, I wasn't updating my resumé on the company's time...

She's dazed, hit her again! Commander's Strike!

Och, I gotta say, I feel a bit off puttin' down an angel like tha...

POOF!

They're using cheesy, underhanded tactics against us. Like logically extrapolating the possible consequences of the powers they have and then invoking those options, instead of just following the obvious intention and playing fair.

We need to stop them, before that sort of thinking creeps into our world.

Now come on, we're almost to the top of the-

Yo! We're the other three Celestials that the dwarf made a deal with last night.

We're Hound Archons.

Lesser Planar Ally, dawg.

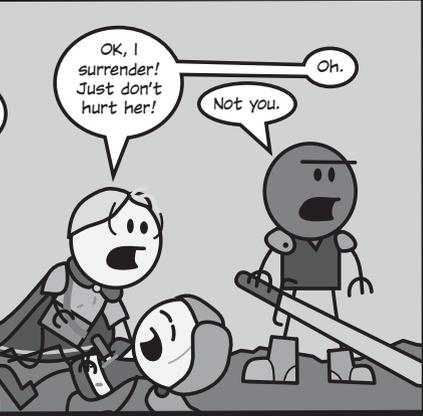
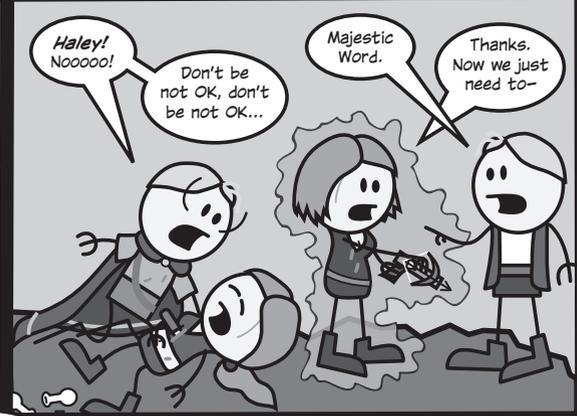
Now do you see the world they want us to live in???

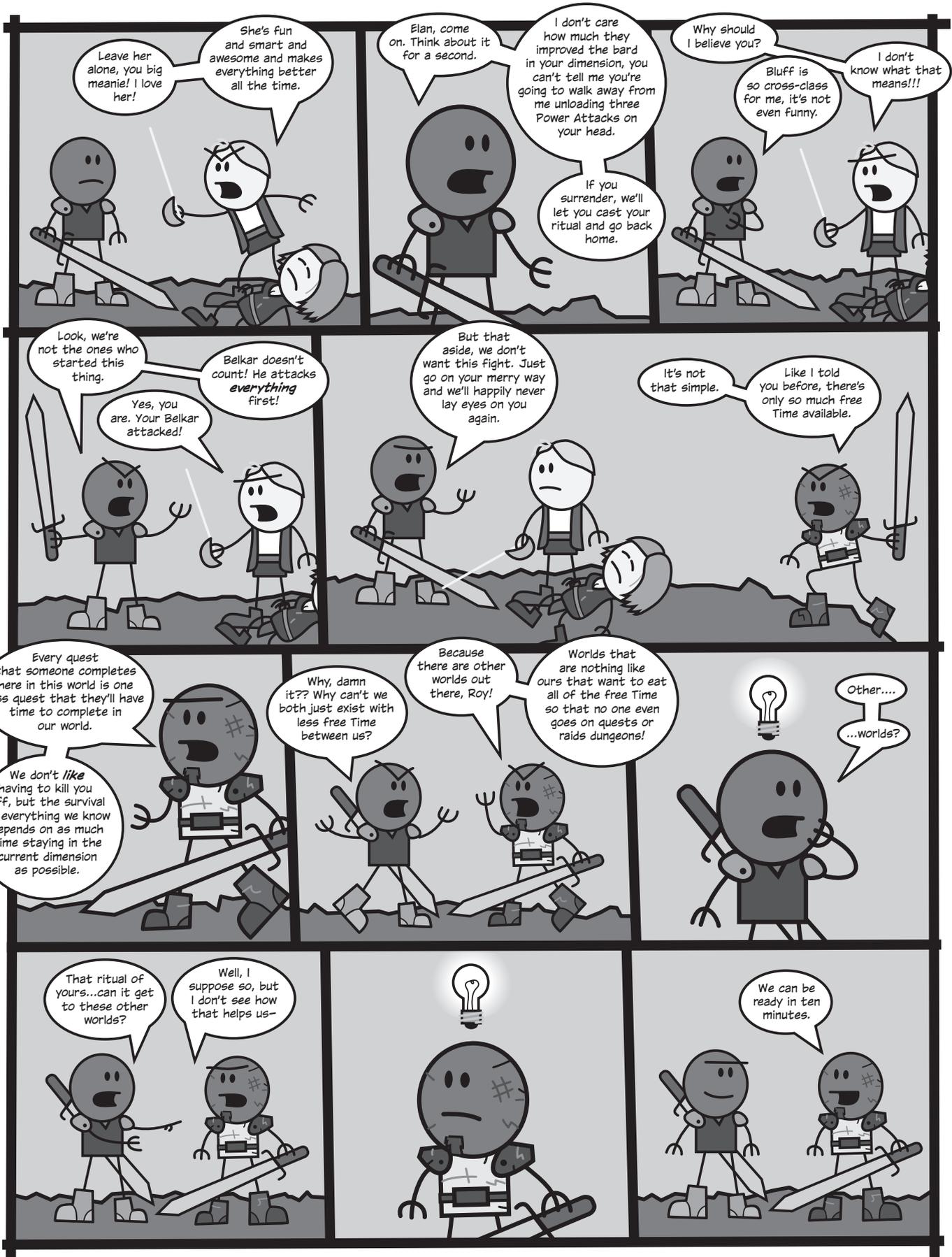
Sure, but 'twere invisible a moment ago.

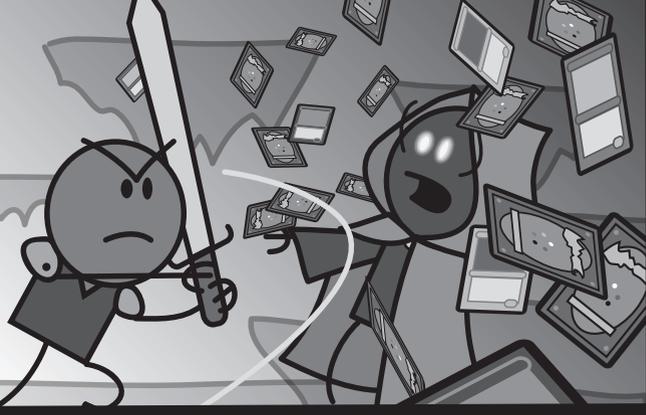
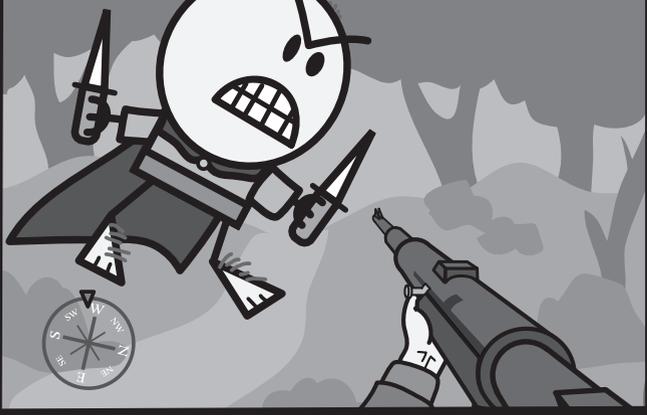
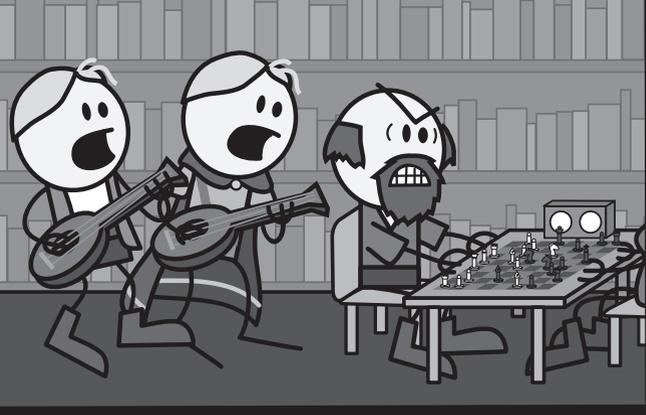
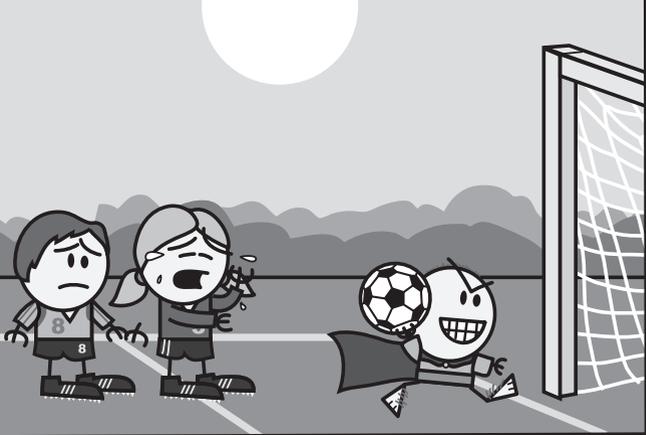
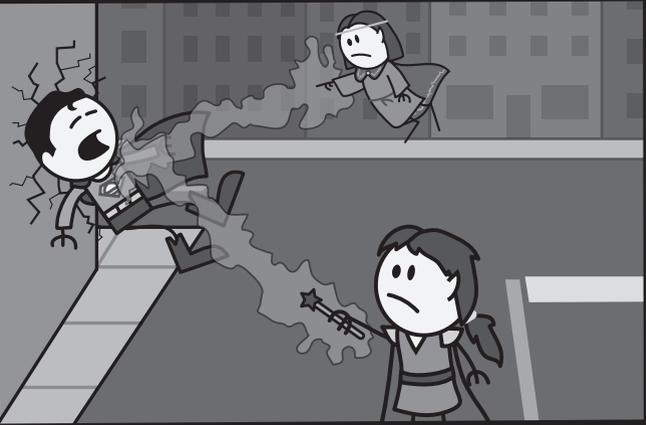
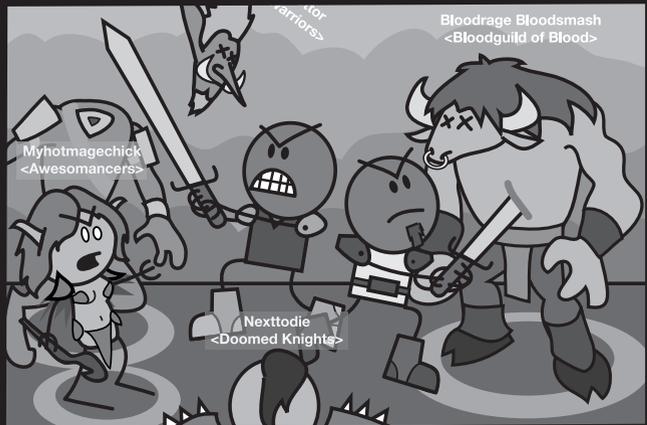
POP!

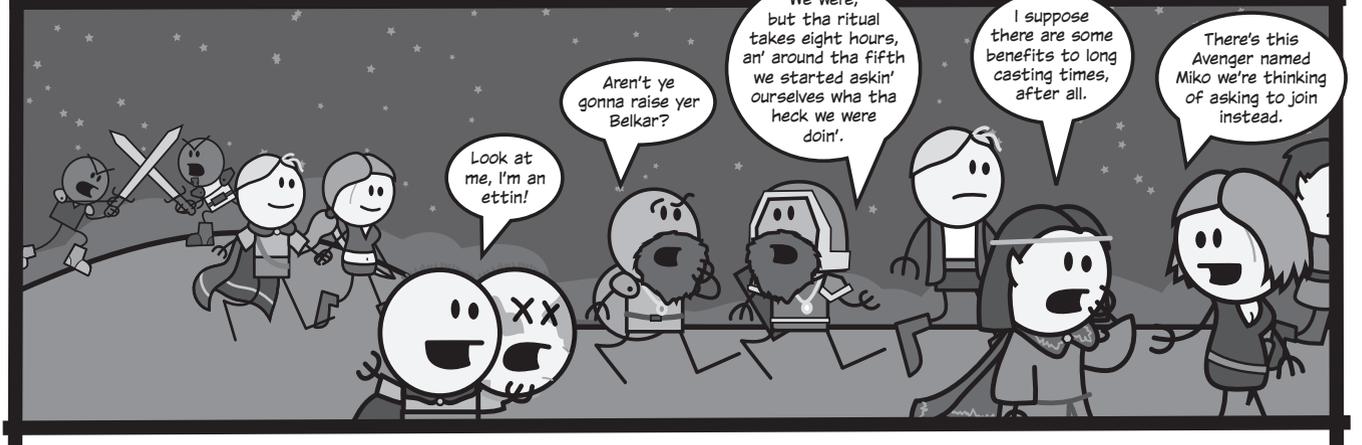
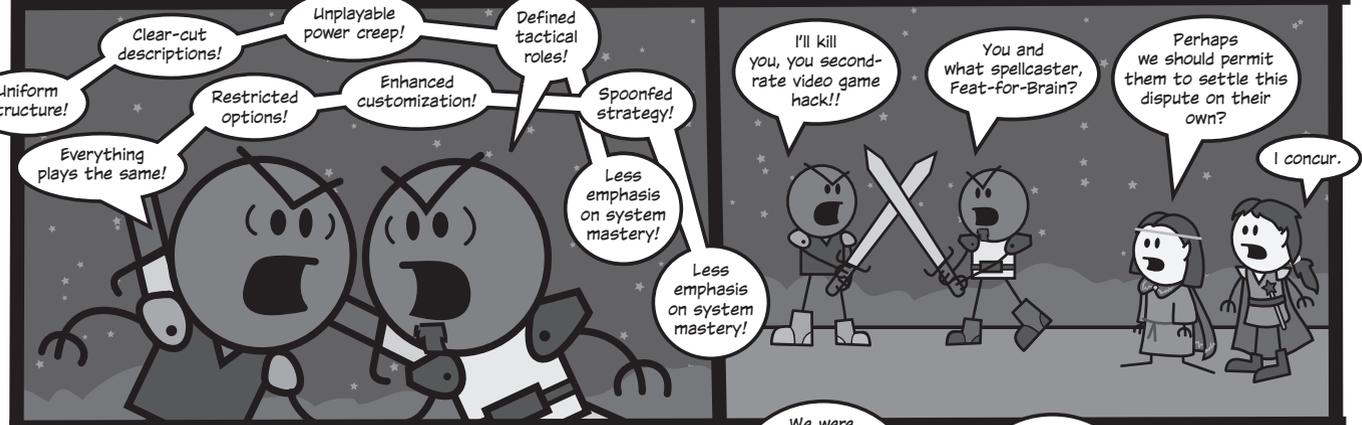
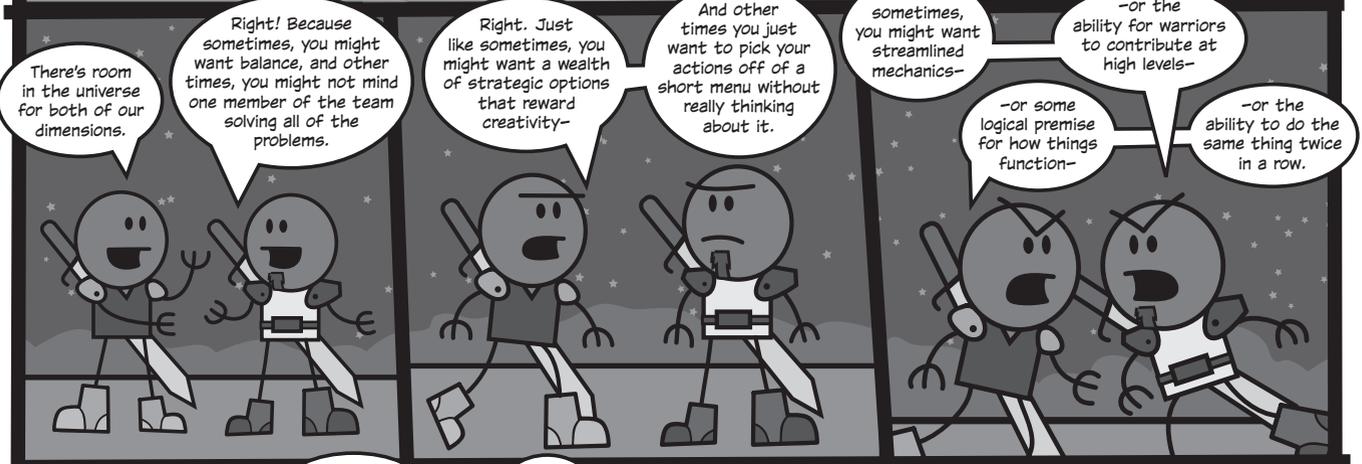
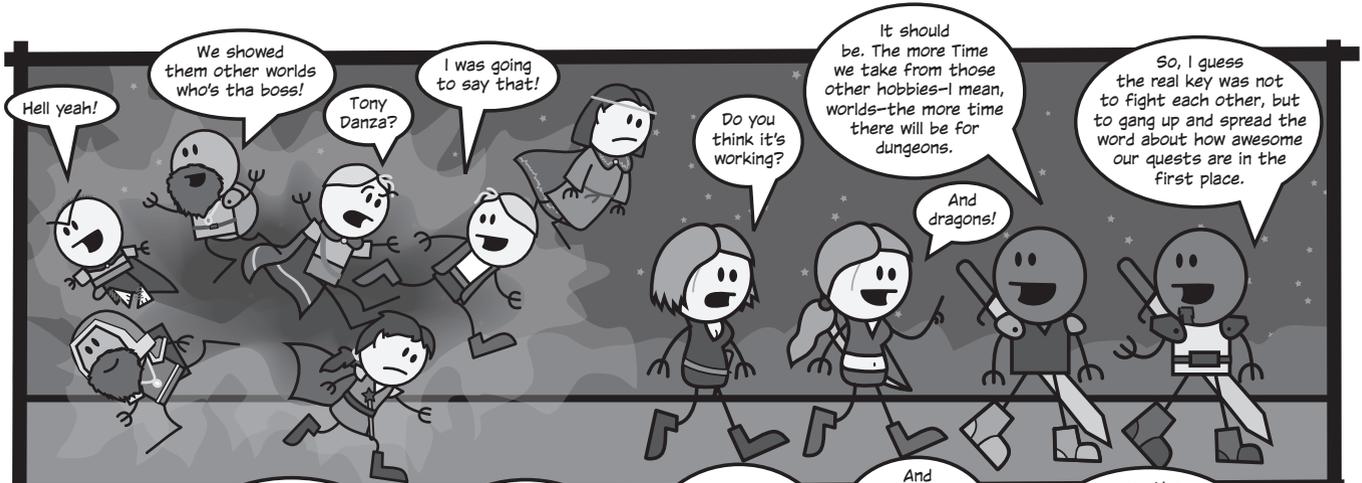
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POP!



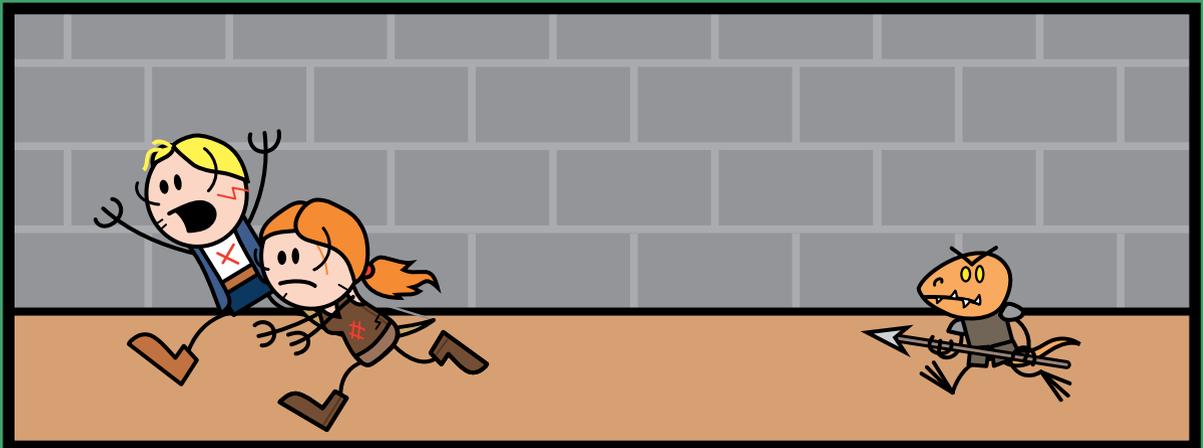






# The Order of the Stick

Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales



The (Other) Magazine Strips

## No Idea Who Owns the Trademark on “Gygax”

The six pages in this section were originally published in *Gygax* magazine, and if you’ve never heard of that particular publication, well, neither did almost anyone else. It was the brainchild of a guy named Jayson Eliot, who managed to get his hands on the TSR trademark and wanted to basically resurrect a version of *Dragon* magazine, particularly one that looked and felt as it did during the 1980’s. I guess Jayson approached me because I had made my [feelings](#) about how *Dragon* was canceled very well known, and he believed I would appreciate the spirit behind his project. He was right, and we agreed that I would draw new *OOTS* strips not just as content for the bimonthly magazine but as a way to hopefully bring some portion of my readership over to the fledgling venture. I even suggested that I could draw the comic for free for the first publication year—Jayson did not have the budget to afford the per-page rate I had been getting from Paizo for my *Dragon* strips, but I wanted to give the whole thing the best chance to succeed early.

For the comics themselves, I knew I wanted to stick with the “magazine continuity” that I had started with the *Dragon* strips and then kept going with the “Invaders from the Fourth Dimension” story—for all the same reasons I had created that alternate universe in the first place. But I was conscious of how hard it had been for me to write completely stand-alone gags without any larger plot to hang onto. Furthermore, *Gygax* magazine was entirely a system neutral magazine rather than being the official publication of D&D, and Wizards had already announced (but not yet published) Fifth Edition anyway. Rule-specific jokes were out. I had to come up with a hook that I could use to reliably generate humor ideas for the indefinite future (since I had no idea how long this magazine was going to last).

That’s how I came up with the reboot. The one aspect of the game that I had not really taken a crack at parodying was extremely low-level gameplay, when characters have single-digit hit point totals and only a few silver pieces to their names. The original *OOTS* comics started with the cast already in the mid-levels, with Durkon locking down the party level as early as strip #6 by casting two *cure serious wounds* spells. If I brought the characters back to 1st level, not only would I get a new source of things to mock, but it would clearly distinguish the *Gygax* strips from the online comic, where the same characters were having conversations with literal gods. Another writer might have simply started a new third timeline, or treated it as a prequel series to the previous *Dragon* strips, but I thought it would be much stupider (and thus funnier) for the characters to be fully aware of the fact that they’d been arbitrarily rebooted. That let me do some digs at modern media franchises in general, giving me another well to go to for punchlines.

Sadly, the magazine only lasted six issues. I have no idea what exactly happened there, so if you’re looking for tea, I have none to spill. The time when strip #7 would have been assigned came and went, and at first I thought that the problem was payment, since that would have been the first issue where I would have been charging them. But the issue just never came out at all, and that was that. I had just started working up to something resembling an actual story in these comics, as I was setting up the kobold dungeon mentioned at the end of #6 to be the setting for the next handful of strips. I didn’t have any specific plans beyond that, though, which is why there’s not a secret trove of bonus pages continuing the *Gygax* story in here. I was just going to wing it from issue to issue, and once it fell apart, I shelved the whole thing. Although it’s a shame I didn’t see the end coming, I could have drawn a really poignant look back at the magazine’s long rich history, ending with my characters flying off into the sunset on the back of a stick figure Gary Gygax. Alas, the road not taken.

One really obscure note, on the off-chance that anyone reading this actually has copies of the original print magazines: I used the *Gygax* strips to experiment with fonts and text sizes during the time period when I was planning on switching the look of the dialogue in the main comic. So the original strips for issues #1-#2 used one typeface and #3 used a different one, with the one I tried in #4 becoming the new standard font for *OOTS* speech

balloons from that point forward. The comics presented here have had their fonts standardized with the rest of this book (which has also been relettered with the new choice, except for Julio’s story). Does anyone care about this? No, but someone will ask if I don’t mention it.

## Sugar, Spice, and Writing Commentaries Twice

I wanted to take a moment here, since I’m already putting in commentary about the *Gygax* comics, to reflect back on the rest of this book now that we’re 13 years past its original publication. There are some jokes in here that really aged extremely poorly—the bit in Xykon’s text introduction about starting a deadly plague is, um, unfortunate in retrospect. But I do feel like a lot of this book holds up in other ways.

I am definitely satisfied, looking back, on the section about [Fourth Edition](#). Specifically, the way I came down on the side of saying that fighting over editions is a waste of time and everyone should play whatever they like playing. I feel that’s ultimately been vindicated as the best attitude to have about these things, even as Fifth Edition has long since come in and beat up Fourth, and sort-of-Sixth is waiting in the wings as of this writing.

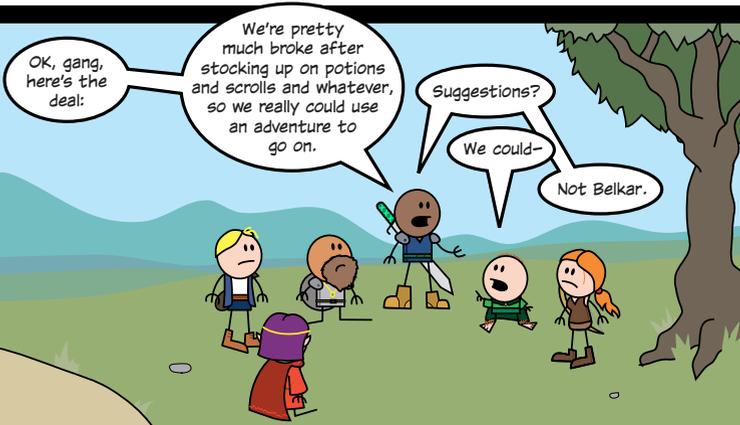
The fact is, there are always going to be people who stick with an old edition they love, and if the current trend passes them by, well, that’s OK. That’s what getting old feels like, a lot of the time: a series of choices about when and where to look at the direction everyone is headed and say, “Nah, go on without me.” You hope they have fun but you’re staying here. There are lots of deeply serious topics on which I strive to challenge myself and update my thinking in the face of my creeping curmudgeonization, and I think that’s absolutely essential. On the question of D&D rulesets, though, I know I’m not hurting anyone else by sticking my fingers in my ears and stubbornly refusing to try anything new. Which is especially easy since I don’t think I’ve actually played a single session of D&D, any edition, in the last ten years or so—I can wax nostalgic about the good old days of Third Edition without needing to wrangle the broken unbalanced mess that it really was. (And kids, this is how all nostalgia works.)

Anyway, all of this is a way of saying no, I’m not going to do another story like that one for any new editions, if for no other reason than I haven’t played them and I’m not likely to.

Another piece I think has held up well is the [Julio Scoundél](#) comic. Not the jokes or the rampant sexism, obviously, I mean the art. If you’ve read the main comic at any point from 2014 on, you’ll know that I adapted a lot of the drawing style from that story over to the main comic. This was obviously not the plan when I was working on this book, which is why I have a whole two pages talking about my struggles with it. But I was so happy with how it came out and how it managed to be more visually complex while still looking recognizably like *OOTS* that I decided to keep it. While the more substantial arms and legs are the most obvious aspect of the Julio art, I also did a lot of experimenting with camera angles and panel composition in this story that I’ve tried to continue doing ever since. I did have to drop the shading, though; the amount of time it would have added to my already slow work pace was just unsustainable. I now reserve it only for unusually strong lighting effects, particularly Roy’s green sword glow.

I feel like I already said plenty about the [Dragon comics](#) when this book was first published, so that just leaves the [StickTales](#). My only regret there is that I haven’t done more of them since! I did release one additional Shakespeare adaptation, [Haleo & Julelan](#), as a standalone story—and then I never got back to do more. Mostly because I had trouble keeping up with other, more important parts of the overall narrative, so it was hard to justify time spent working on new ideas that were 100% non-canon. Still, I hope I get to squeeze at least one more StickTales in before *OOTS* rides off into the sunset at some indeterminate point in the future.

Rich Burlew  
June 5, 2024



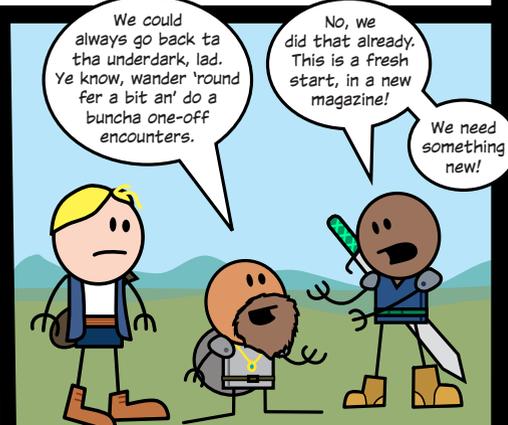
OK, gang, here's the deal:

We're pretty much broke after stocking up on potions and scrolls and whatever, so we really could use an adventure to go on.

Suggestions?

We could-

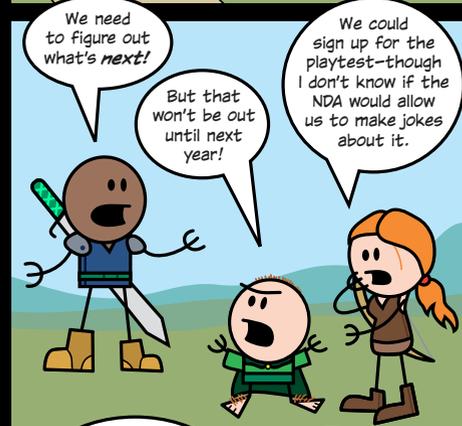
Not Belkar.



We could always go back to the underdark, lad. Ye know, wander 'round fer a bit an' do a buncha one-off encounters.

No, we did that already. This is a fresh start, in a new magazine!

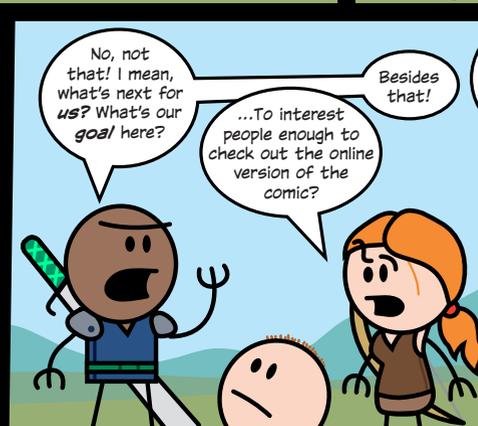
We need something new!



We need to figure out what's next!

But that won't be out until next year!

We could sign up for the playtest-though I don't know if the NDA would allow us to make jokes about it.



No, not that! I mean, what's next for us? What's our goal here?

Besides that!

...To interest people enough to check out the online version of the comic?



If I may interject before our ostensibly medieval fiction becomes wholly modern-or, rather, post- thereof?

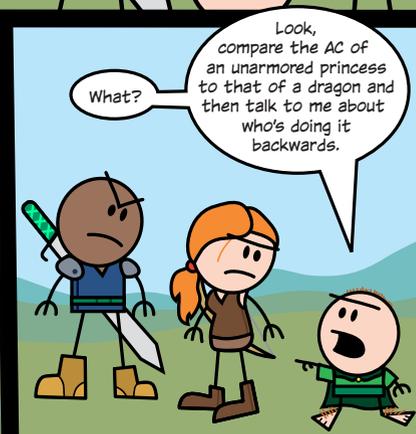
It seems to me that our needs might be met by one of the cornerstones of fantasy literature: the quest.



Yes! Vaarsuvius is right. We need to find ourselves one of the classics-like stopping an evil sorcerer from taking over the world!

Or slaying the dragon and saving the princess!

Or slaying the princess and extorting the dragon!



What?

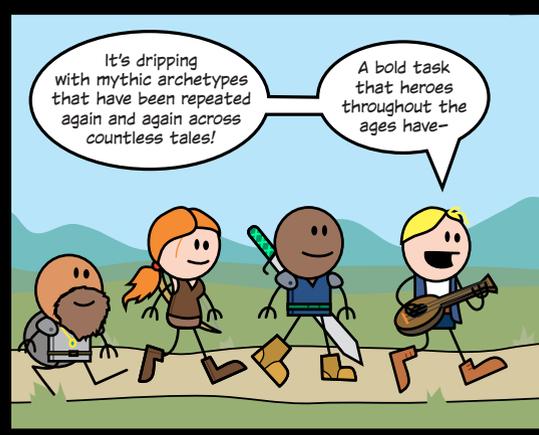
Look, compare the AC of an unarmored princess to that of a dragon and then talk to me about who's doing it backwards.



Don't worry, Roy! I know a place where we can find one of the most traditional quests in all of fantasy!

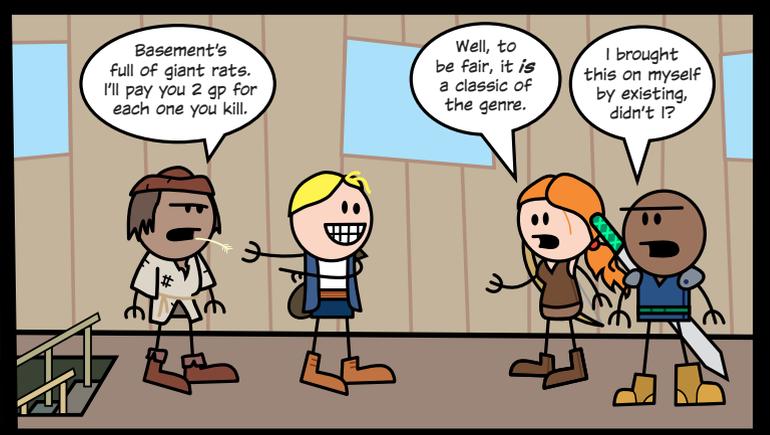
It includes a legion of dark mysterious foes, a great subterranean chamber, and a golden treasure for us to claim!

You...do?



It's dripping with mythic archetypes that have been repeated again and again across countless tales!

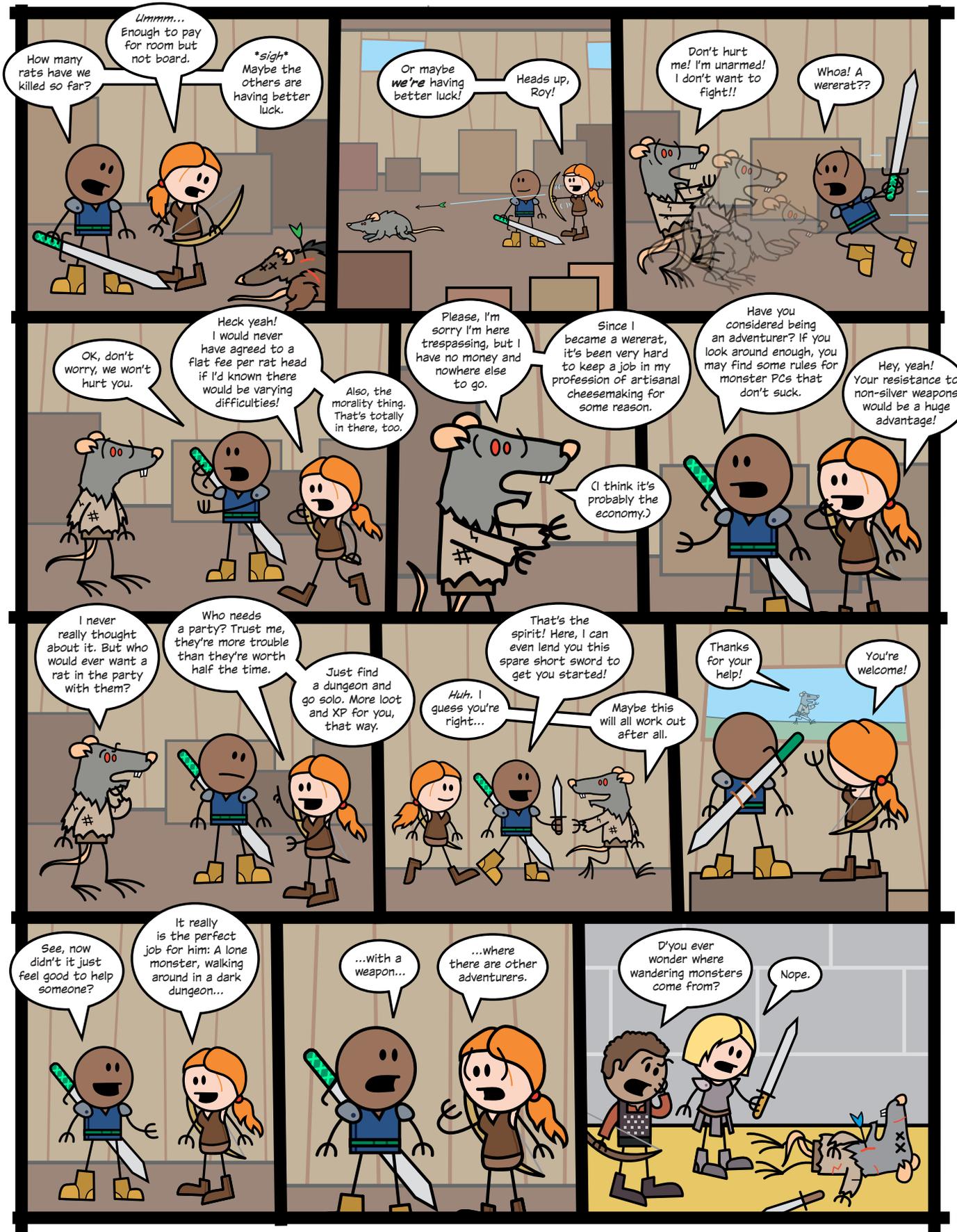
A bold task that heroes throughout the ages have-



Basement's full of giant rats. I'll pay you 2 gp for each one you kill.

Well, to be fair, it is a classic of the genre.

I brought this on myself by existing, didn't I?



How many rats have we killed so far?

Ummm... Enough to pay for room but not board.

\*sigh\* Maybe the others are having better luck.

Or maybe we're having better luck!

Heads up, Roy!

Don't hurt me! I'm unarmed! I don't want to fight!!

Whoa! A wererat??

OK, don't worry, we won't hurt you.

Heck yeah! I would never have agreed to a flat fee per rat head if I'd known there would be varying difficulties!

Also, the morality thing. That's totally in there, too.

Please, I'm sorry I'm here trespassing, but I have no money and nowhere else to go.

Since I became a wererat, it's been very hard to keep a job in my profession of artisanal cheesemaking for some reason.

Have you considered being an adventurer? If you look around enough, you may find some rules for monster PCs that don't suck.

Hey, yeah! Your resistance to non-silver weapons would be a huge advantage!

(I think it's probably the economy.)

I never really thought about it. But who would ever want a rat in the party with them?

Who needs a party? Trust me, they're more trouble than they're worth half the time.

Just find a dungeon and go solo. More loot and XP for you, that way.

That's the spirit! Here, I can even lend you this spare short sword to get you started!

Huh. I guess you're right...

Maybe this will all work out after all.

Thanks for your help!

You're welcome!

See, now didn't it just feel good to help someone?

It really is the perfect job for him: A lone monster, walking around in a dark dungeon...

...with a weapon...

...where there are other adventurers.

D'you ever wonder where wandering monsters come from?

Nope.



Oh, come on! Are we still not done with the rats-in-the-basement quest yet?

Sorry, Roy. They're nimble little guys.

Owww! That hurt!

Nnnrgh!

CHOMP!

WOOSH!!

Is it just me, or are we sucking even more than usual?

Yeah, I haven't had this much trouble with giant rats since I was low level.

Oh man! Roy! Don't you see?? I think we've been **rebooted!**

Don't be stupid, Flan. Boots are for suckers.



No, guys—when a franchise runs out of ideas, they start over from the very beginning so they can tell different stories—

—or, more often, the **same** stories with a bunch of arbitrary cosmetic differences.

So they'll change around someone's origin story or gender or race.

Now that you mention it, my family history is completely different.

I believe I have switched genders.

What were you before?

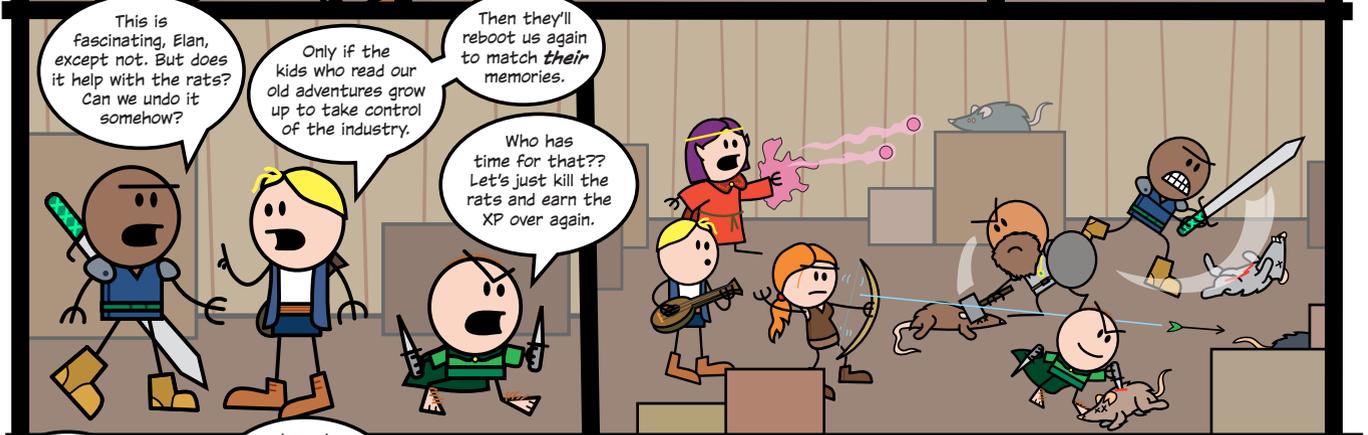
An' now I'm a hill dwarf!

...Mountain dwarf, mebbe?

If only there was a way to be 100% sure this was a reboot...

Also, I think my long-established harmonious marriage has been retroactively abolished so that it never happened.

Jackpot!



This is fascinating, Flan, except not. But does it help with the rats? Can we undo it somehow?

Only if the kids who read our old adventures grow up to take control of the industry.

Then they'll reboot us again to match **their** memories.

Who has time for that?? Let's just kill the rats and earn the XP over again.



Whew! Now **that** was a work out!

Yeah, but wasn't it exciting?

I must confess, there was a certain authenticity to the experience.

Maybe this won't be so bad. We can avoid making the same mistakes the second time around.

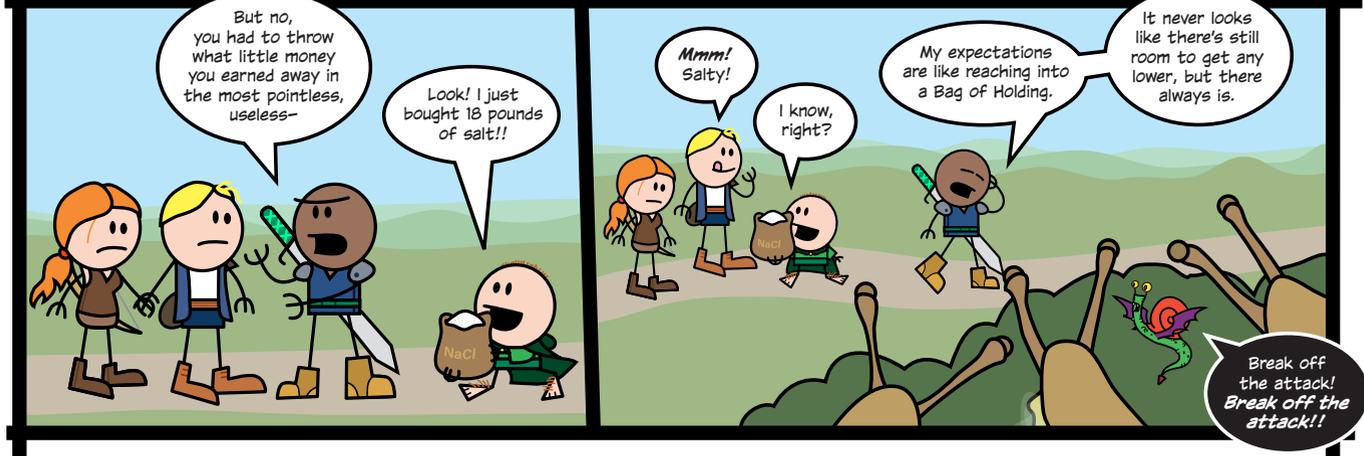
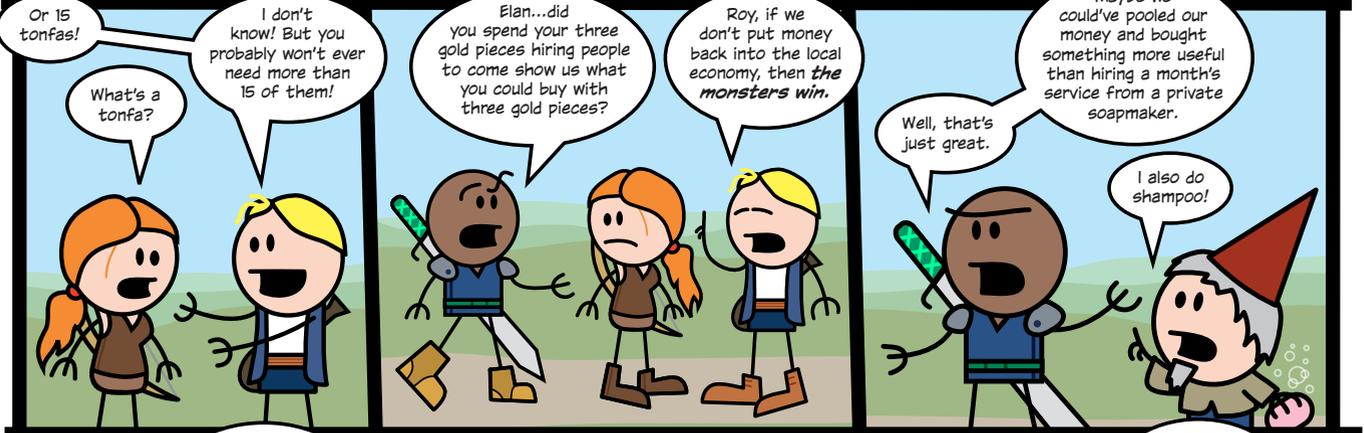
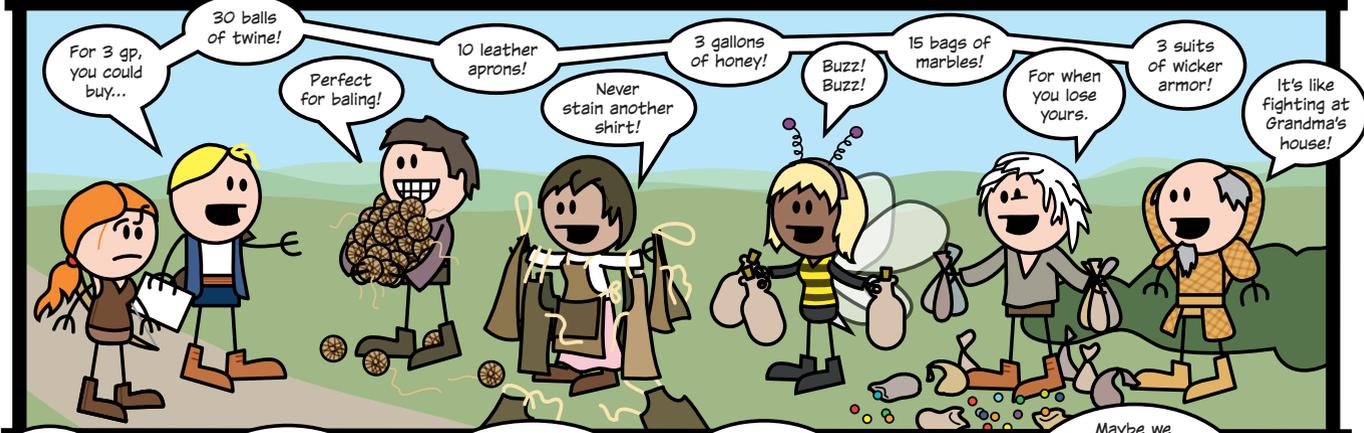
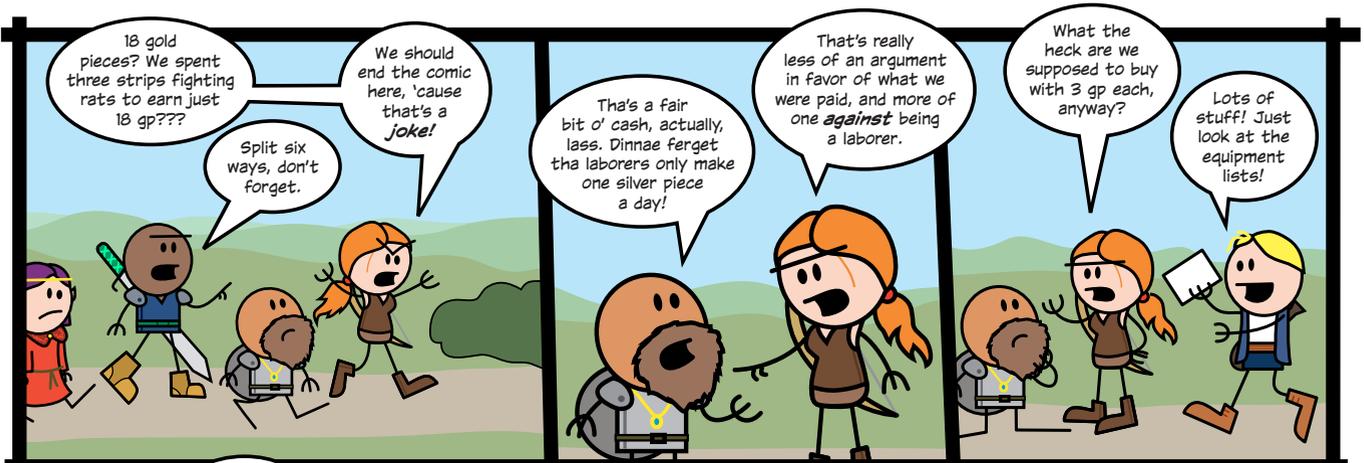
Squeak.

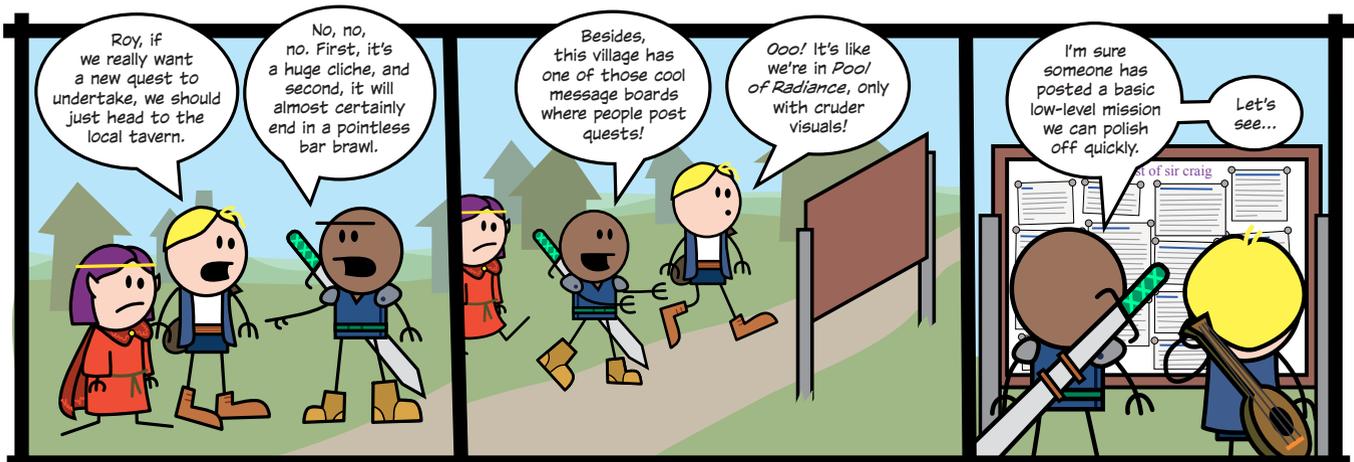
Or we can do things pretty much the same as always.

It's like we're living in our own Greatest Hits album!!

You have a strange definition of **great**, honey. And **hits**.

And **living**.





## the list of sir craig

### ???

Attractive 140 yr old elf sorcerer and owl familiar looking for a third to take our special bond to the next level. DDF, feathers a plus.

### Let's explore

Edition-curious 3.5 female looking for special someone to help convert me. Open to 2e, 5e, BECM, whatever.

### Five levels, just renovated

Roomy dungeon sublet available in posh Valley of Terror neighborhood. Barracks, recently upgraded torture chamber, magical security features. Looking for mid-level monstrous humanoid tribe to occupy while I travel to planes unknown studying unholy secrets to immortality.

### Opportunity for hiring

We are an up-and-coming adventuring party looking for a dependable henchman. Great working environment, upbeat, fun! Temp position could turn permanent for right person, depending on survival rate.

### I Object (to Being Single)

Single male lawyer of color w/ great hair looking for a nice guy to love. Must like cuddles! I'm an excellent cook and like board games. Don't worry about my scowling partner, we're just friends.

### Missed Connection

You: Human barbarian man tearing through tribe of orc warriors with flaming greataxe.  
Me: One of 2d8 noncombatant females the party paladin made you spare. We locked eyes over the corpse of every man I've ever known, but I was too shy to say hi. Let's meet at the tree where you impaled our chief's severed head as a warning to all.

### BBEG living at minion prices!

Spacious volcano cave offers plenty of living space that needs to be seen to be believed!! Rent includes geothermic energy, nearby stream, and wifi. Pets OK if they're immune to fire.

### For sale—GoOP 1e

Vintage First Edition gauntlets of ogre power, used condition. Provides Strength 18/00 with stylish retro feel. Srs offers only.

### House my spawn

Clean athletic aberration from darkened pit of despair seeking warm mammal body in which to incubate my brood. I will inject my innumerable eggs into your abdomen while you cry to your impotent gods. No drama.

### hellpuppies need a home

we have 3 adorable hellhound pups for immediate adoption. spayed/neutered, up on all shots. not castletrained. need right evil overlord to love them and give them their forever home (they are immortal).

### hey yo yo!

i'm a m cg halfling lvl 2 bard that needs a couch to crash on for a few nights while performing in the area. lookin for chill fun-loving folks who don't mind smell of pipeweed.

### Research asst. needed

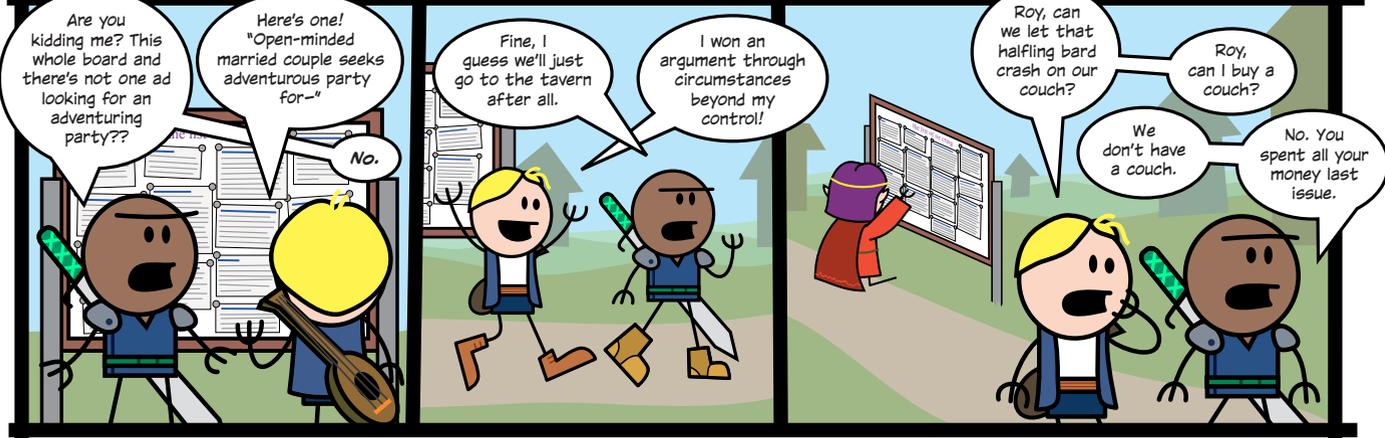
Continue your postgraduate education in the fast-growing field of bio-magic through an internship working directly with a leading experimental magician. Ideal candidate must have good communication skills, at least 1 yr experience in clerical or necromantic position. Must be willing to travel to planes unknown.

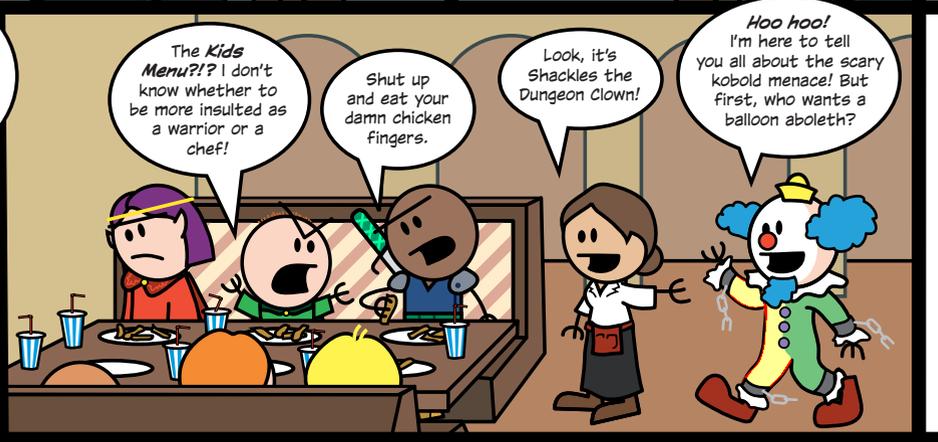
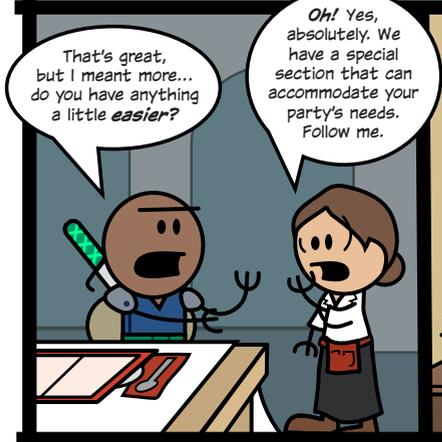
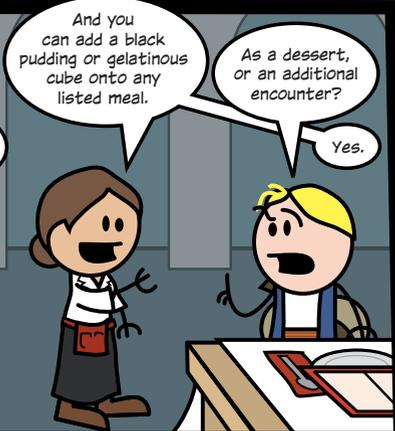
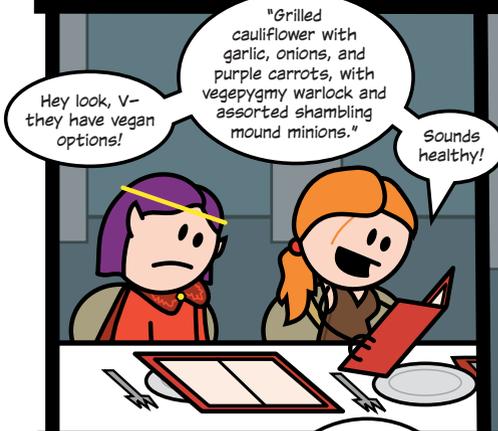
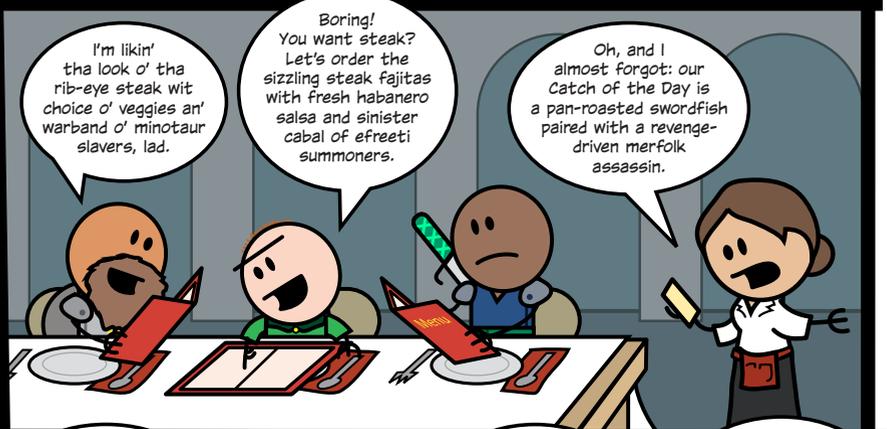
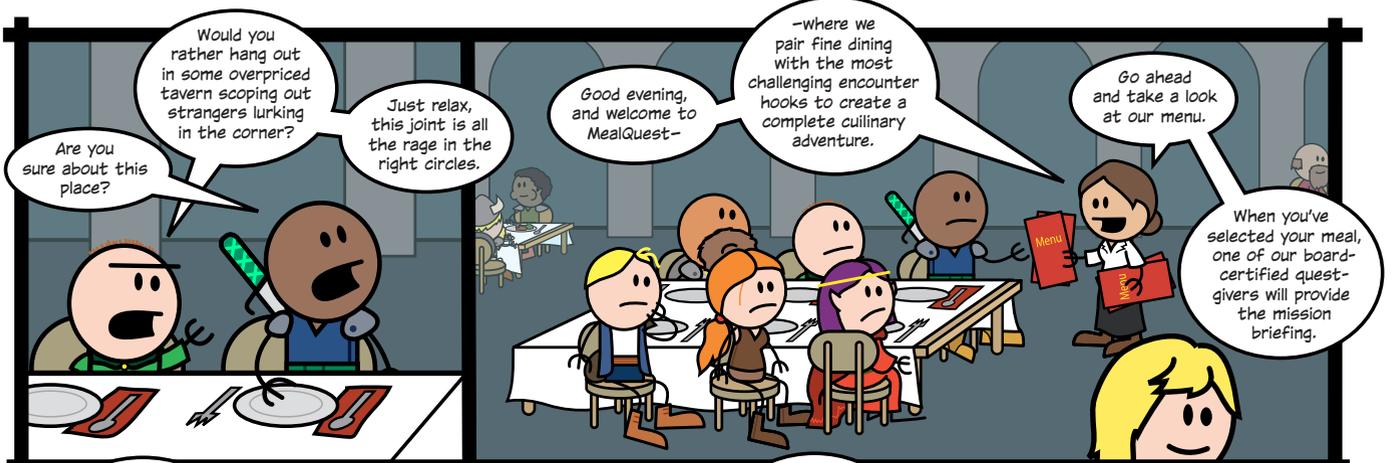
### Animal Companion?

Male druid needs wolf or

### Extradiimensional Loft 4 Rent

Yes, you can rent a loft in a

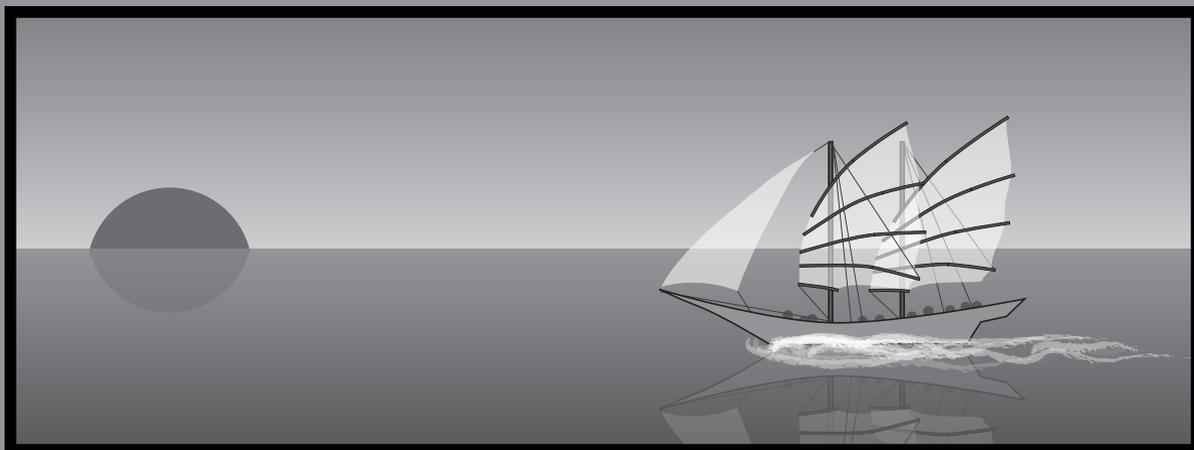




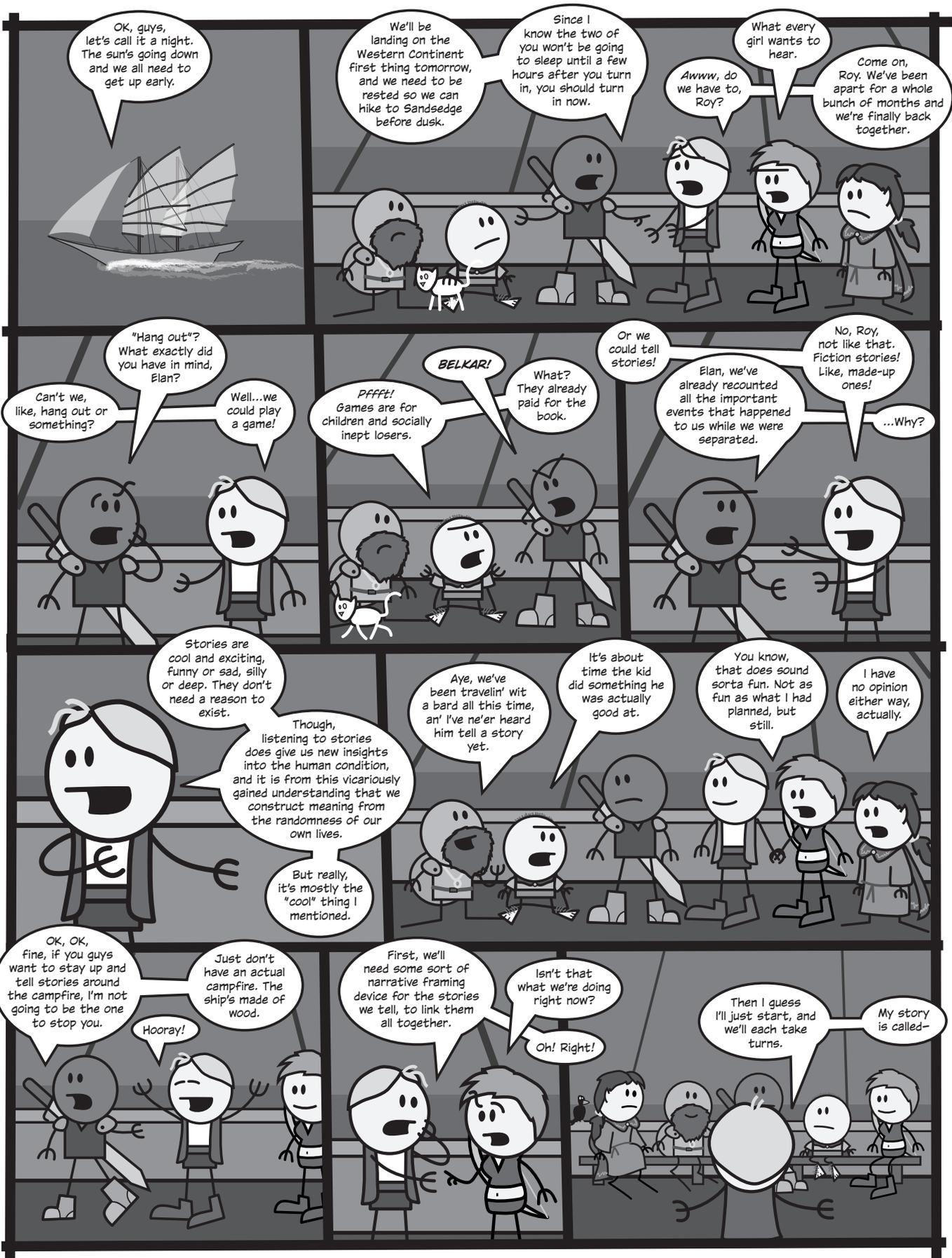
The  
**Order** of the **Stick**

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**Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales**



Stick Tales



OK, guys, let's call it a night. The sun's going down and we all need to get up early.

We'll be landing on the Western Continent first thing tomorrow, and we need to be rested so we can hike to Sandsedge before dusk.

Since I know the two of you won't be going to sleep until a few hours after you turn in, you should turn in now.

What every girl wants to hear.

Come on, Roy. We've been apart for a whole bunch of months and we're finally back together.

Awww, do we have to, Roy?

"Hang out"? What exactly did you have in mind, Elan?

Can't we, like, hang out or something?

Well...we could play a game!

Pffff! Games are for children and socially inept losers.

**BELKAR!**

What? They already paid for the book.

Or we could tell stories!

Elan, we've already recounted all the important events that happened to us while we were separated.

No, Roy, not like that. Fiction stories! Like, made-up ones!

...Why?

Stories are cool and exciting, funny or sad, silly or deep. They don't need a reason to exist.

Though, listening to stories does give us new insights into the human condition, and it is from this vicariously gained understanding that we construct meaning from the randomness of our own lives.

But really, it's mostly the "cool" thing I mentioned.

Aye, we've been travelin' wit a bard all this time, an' I've ne'er heard him tell a story yet.

It's about time the kid did something he was actually good at.

You know, that does sound sorta fun. Not as fun as what I had planned, but still.

I have no opinion either way, actually.

OK, OK, fine, if you guys want to stay up and tell stories around the campfire, I'm not going to be the one to stop you.

Just don't have an actual campfire. The ship's made of wood.

Hooray!

First, we'll need some sort of narrative framing device for the stories we tell, to link them all together.

Isn't that what we're doing right now?

Oh! Right!

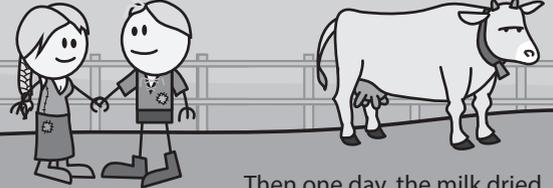
Then I guess I'll just start, and we'll each take turns.

My story is called-

# Elan and the Beanstalk

Once upon a time, there was a courageous and totally cool boy who lived with his mother in a tiny shack.

They were very happy, but they were poor – so poor that they didn't own anything but a cow that gave them milk.



Then one day, the milk dried up. And so his mother said—

Why? Why did the milk suddenly dry up?

Huh? I dunno. It just did.

Hmmm. Seems like a plot hole already.

No, don't you see? The milk drying up will be addressed later in the story.

Uh, right. So his mother said:

Honey, why don't you take the cow and sell it to the butcher? We need the money.

Awww, Mom, do I have to? I don't want to sell her to a butcher!

Makes sense. They should cut out the middleman and just slaughter it themselves.

No, he didn't want to sell the cow to the butcher because he loved her.

MUNCH. MUNCH. MUNCH. MUNCH.

How did he feel about the mom? 'Cause she may be lighter, but human meat sells for a LOT more per pound.

I get it. He loved the cow, but not enough to kill his own mother for it.

Uh, no, he loved his mom, too. So he agreed to bring the cow to the butcher.

...Right.

Home  
Hamlet

Along the road to town, he met a strange-looking woman. Or maybe it was a man, I guess it doesn't really matter to the story.

Greetings, young boy.

Greetings, mysterious stranger.

Thanks. Milky is awesome, but we're poor and I need to sell her.

That is a superlative bovine specimen that you are leading.

It just so happens that I am in the market for purchasing an animal such as that.

Really???

Indeed. I am a wizard, and I have need of a regular supply of cow guano as a material component for a spell I am researching: Delayed Blast Fireball.

Wow! So does that mean you would take good care of her instead of hitting her on the head and making cheeseburgers out of her??

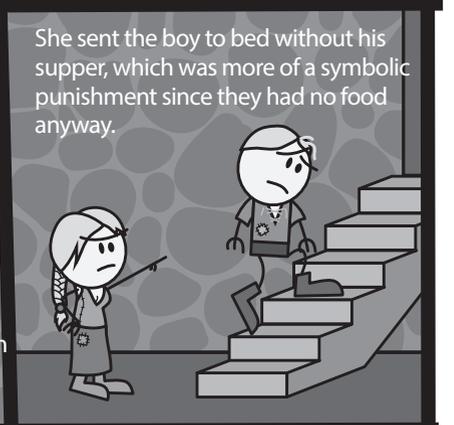
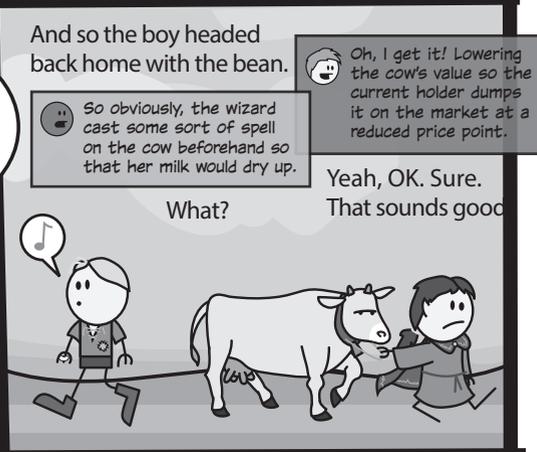
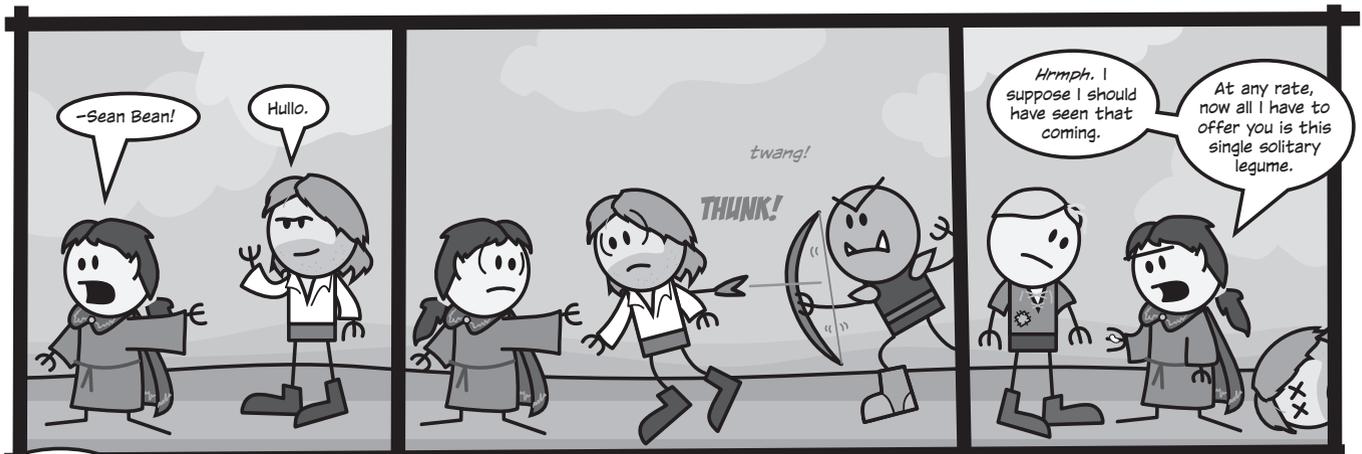
I have no interest in burgers, cheese or otherwise. My diet is largely tofu-based.

Hooray!

And in return, I shall give you a treasure both rare and powerful!

A payment of unstoppable mystic might and unrivaled potency!

I shall remit unto you exactly one—



—a HUGE beanstalk, rising up to the clouds!



Hey! Boy! Explain ta me whar this tree came from o'ernight. It's casting shadow on me lawful property, an' I dinnae like it!

Sorry, Mr. Thundershield.

My mom threw a magic bean out the window, and I guess it landed in the compost pile or something.

Och, I dinnae like tha looks o' this. Lemme get me axe, I'll chop it down 'fore it kills us all.

How can a beanstalk kill us?

Sneakily, tha's how! Never turn yer back on somethin' wit tha word "stalk" in its name, lad.

But before the boy's neighbor could get his axe, the boy's mother came running out.

Oh, my son! It's so beautiful! I'm sorry I ever doubted you!

Now we'll have as many beans as we can eat, and we can sell the surplus to other farmers for a profit.

Wow, you're right, Mom! We'll never go hungry again!

And they never did.

THE END.

Not much of a twist. I mean, the word, "beanstalk" was in the title.

Wait, that's the whole story?

Well, yeah.

That story sucked!

I don't know if I'd go that far, but it did seem a little...light.

They had no food, and now they do. Problem solved!



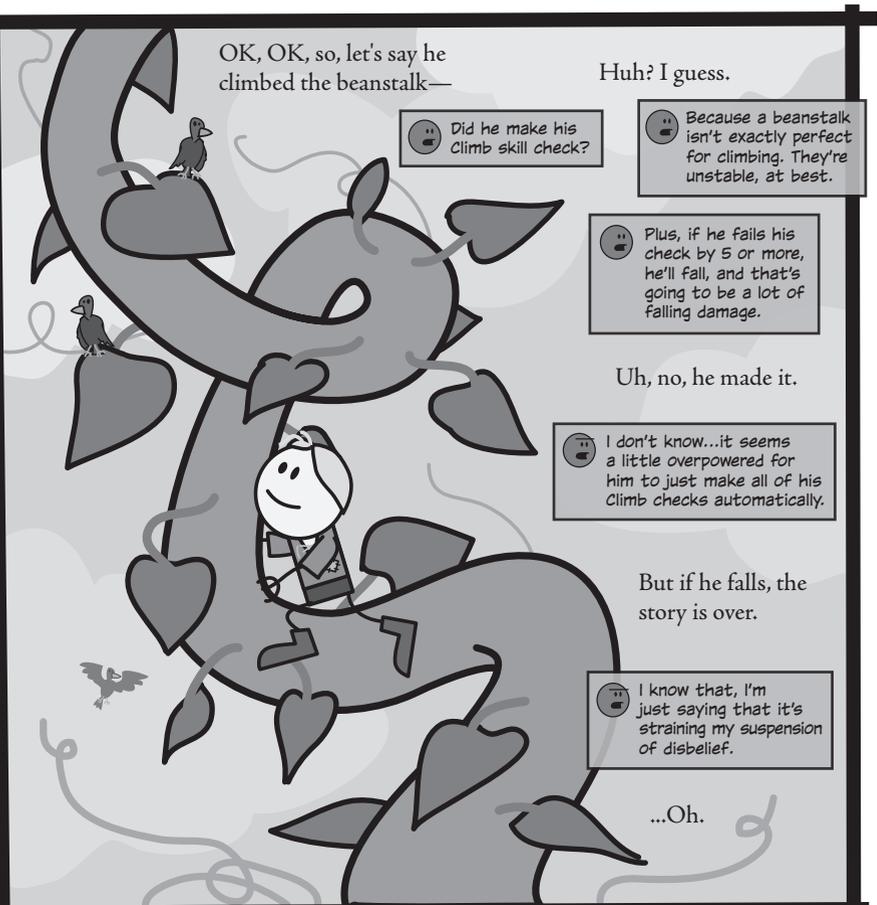
Well...what if the boy climbed the beanstalk?

Why would he do that?

I dunno, maybe there's something cool at the top.

Oh! Yeah, that would be neat.

'e has a lifetime supply o' beans. Wha more could one man want?



OK, OK, so, let's say he climbed the beanstalk—

Huh? I guess.

Did he make his Climb skill check?

Because a beanstalk isn't exactly perfect for climbing. They're unstable, at best.

Plus, if he fails his check by 5 or more, he'll fall, and that's going to be a lot of falling damage.

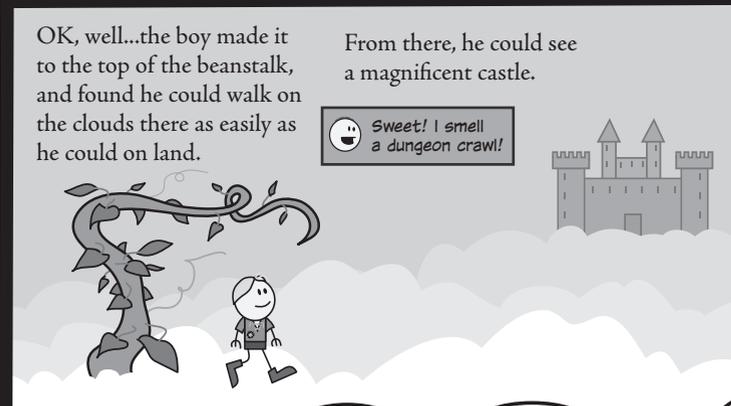
Uh, no, he made it.

I don't know...it seems a little overpowered for him to just make all of his Climb checks automatically.

But if he falls, the story is over.

I know that, I'm just saying that it's straining my suspension of disbelief.

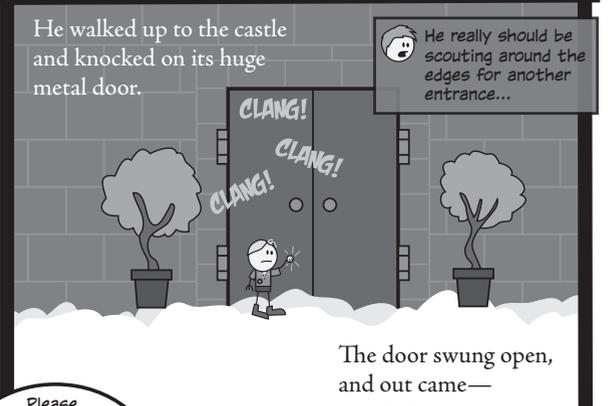
...Oh.



OK, well...the boy made it to the top of the beanstalk, and found he could walk on the clouds there as easily as he could on land.

From there, he could see a magnificent castle.

Sweet! I smell a dungeon crawl!



He walked up to the castle and knocked on its huge metal door.

He really should be scouting around the edges for another entrance...

The door swung open, and out came—



—a humble serving girl.

Oooo, I like where this is heading!

Look, I told you last time, we don't want the Sunday Times delivered to—

Oh! Hello!

Um, hi! I was wondering who's castle this was. Is it yours?

Please. Like I could afford the property taxes on residential clouds. No, this place belongs to my supervisor.

He's not home right now.

Oh, so you work here? That must be cool.

Yes, I'm a lowly housekeeper. A lowly unmarried housekeeper. Who doesn't even have a boyfriend, either.

Completely single, I guess is the point.



Do you want to come in? I can make you something to eat. Or show you around the kitchen.

Or the pantry. Or my bedroom.

Sure, that sounds great!

Really?

I'm super-hungry!

Oh.

For some reason, I didn't stop to have any bean-related dishes before I climbed here.

You climbed here? From the world below?

See? I told you it strained suspension of disbelief!

You must have a lot of upper body strength. I don't suppose you'd want to show me what sort of guns you're packing under that-

SLAM!!



CRAP!

Under what crap?

That's my boss, coming in the back entrance!

And that's why you always scout!

I'm not allowed to have personal visitors during work hours! He'll kill me if he sees you!

Did I mention that he's a giant?

No.

He's a giant.

Well, we live on a cloud, so what do you think?

Sure. Now hide!

GLOMP!

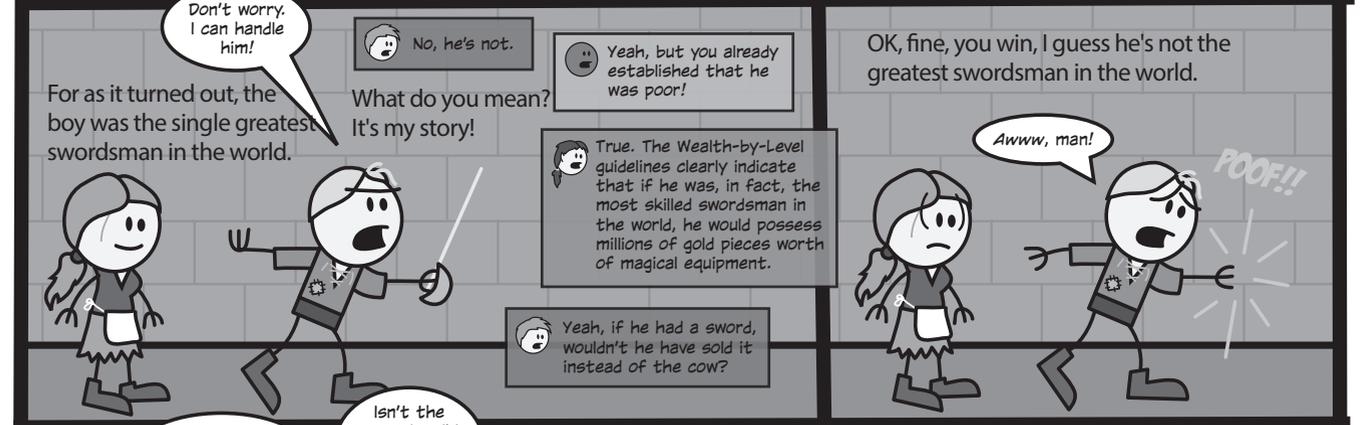
GLOMP!

GLOMP!

GLOMP!

...Mountain giant?

What kind of giant?



Don't worry. I can handle him!

No, he's not.

Yeah, but you already established that he was poor!

For as it turned out, the boy was the single greatest swordsman in the world.

What do you mean? It's my story!

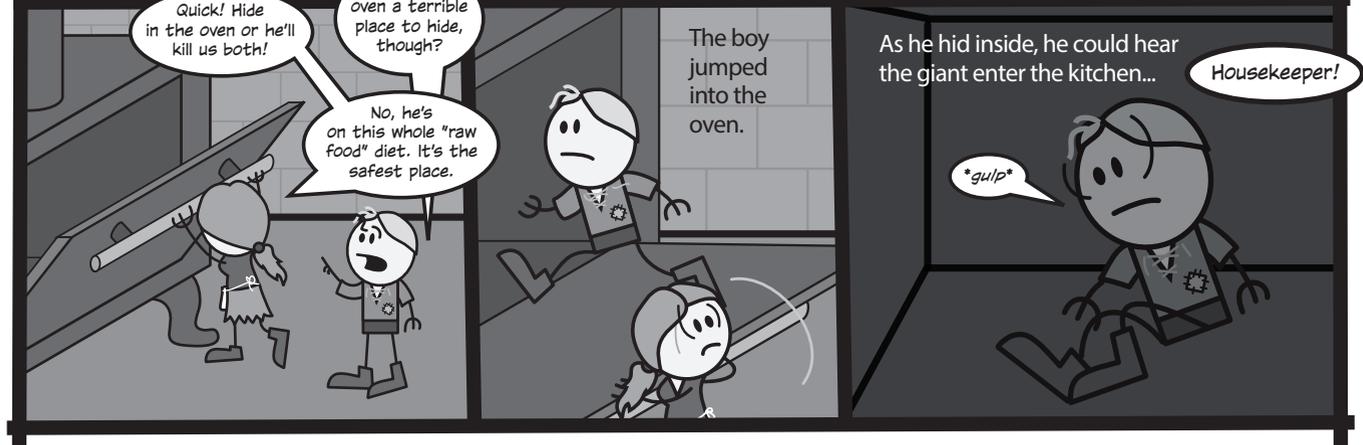
True. The Wealth-by-Level guidelines clearly indicate that if he was, in fact, the most skilled swordsman in the world, he would possess millions of gold pieces worth of magical equipment.

Yeah, if he had a sword, wouldn't he have sold it instead of the cow?

OK, fine, you win, I guess he's not the greatest swordsman in the world.

Awww, man!

POOF!!



Quick! Hide in the oven or he'll kill us both!

Isn't the oven a terrible place to hide, though?

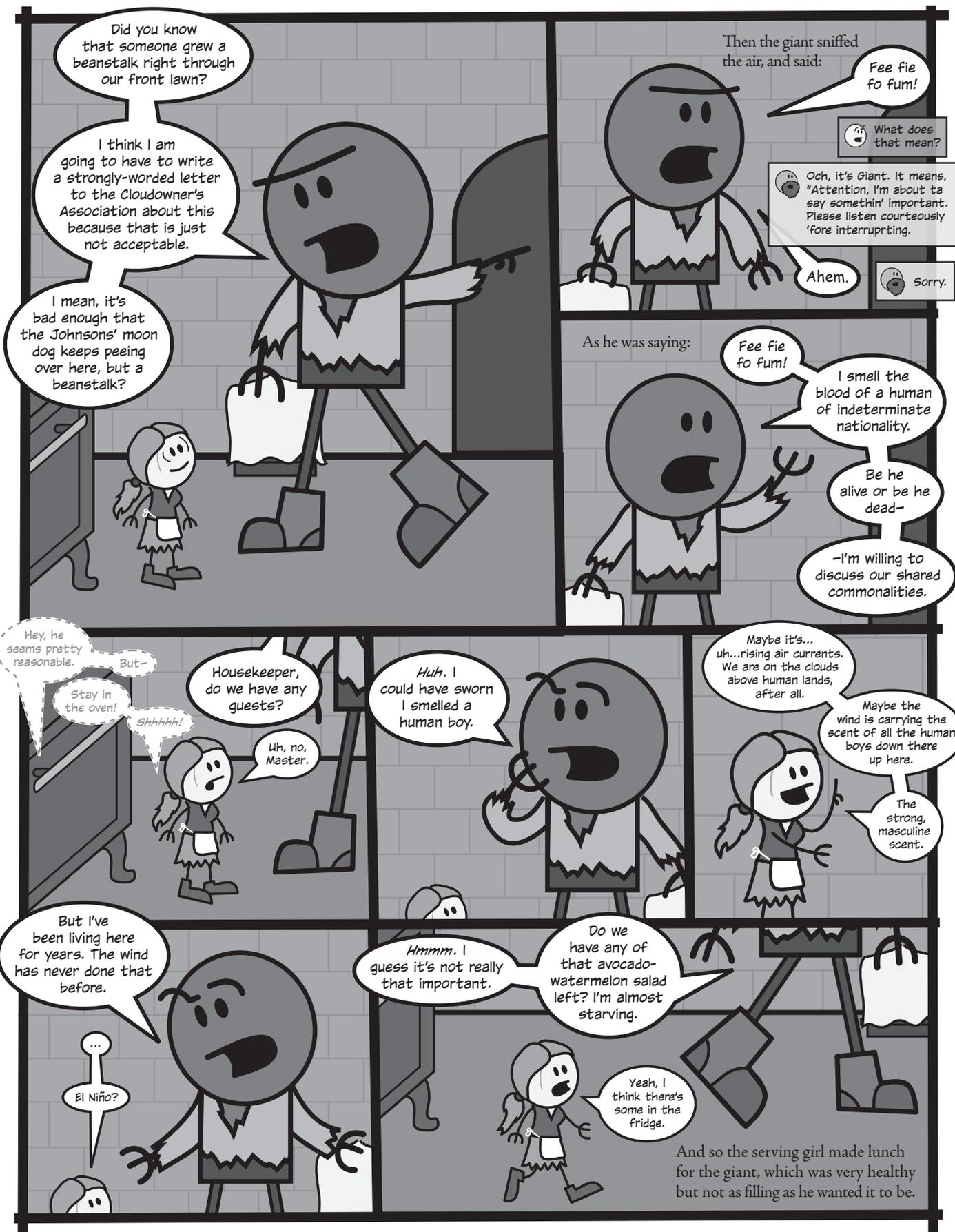
No, he's on this whole "raw food" diet. It's the safest place.

The boy jumped into the oven.

As he hid inside, he could hear the giant enter the kitchen...

Housekeeper!

\*gulp\*



Did you know that someone grew a beanstalk right through our front lawn?

I think I am going to have to write a strongly-worded letter to the Clowdowner's Association about this because that is just not acceptable.

I mean, it's bad enough that the Johnsons' moon dog keeps peeing over here, but a beanstalk?

Then the giant sniffed the air, and said:

Fee fie fo fum!

What does that mean?

Och, it's Giant. It means, "Attention, I'm about to say somethin' important. Please listen courteously fore interrupting.

Ahem.

Sorry.

As he was saying:

Fee fie fo fum!

I smell the blood of a human of indeterminate nationality.

Be he alive or be he dead-

-I'm willing to discuss our shared commonalities.

Hey, he seems pretty reasonable.

But-

Stay in the oven!

Shhhhhh!

Housekeeper, do we have any guests?

Uh, no, Master.

Huh. I could have sworn I smelled a human boy.

Maybe it's... uh... rising air currents. We are on the clouds above human lands, after all.

Maybe the wind is carrying the scent of all the human boys down there up here.

The strong, masculine scent.

But I've been living here for years. The wind has never done that before.

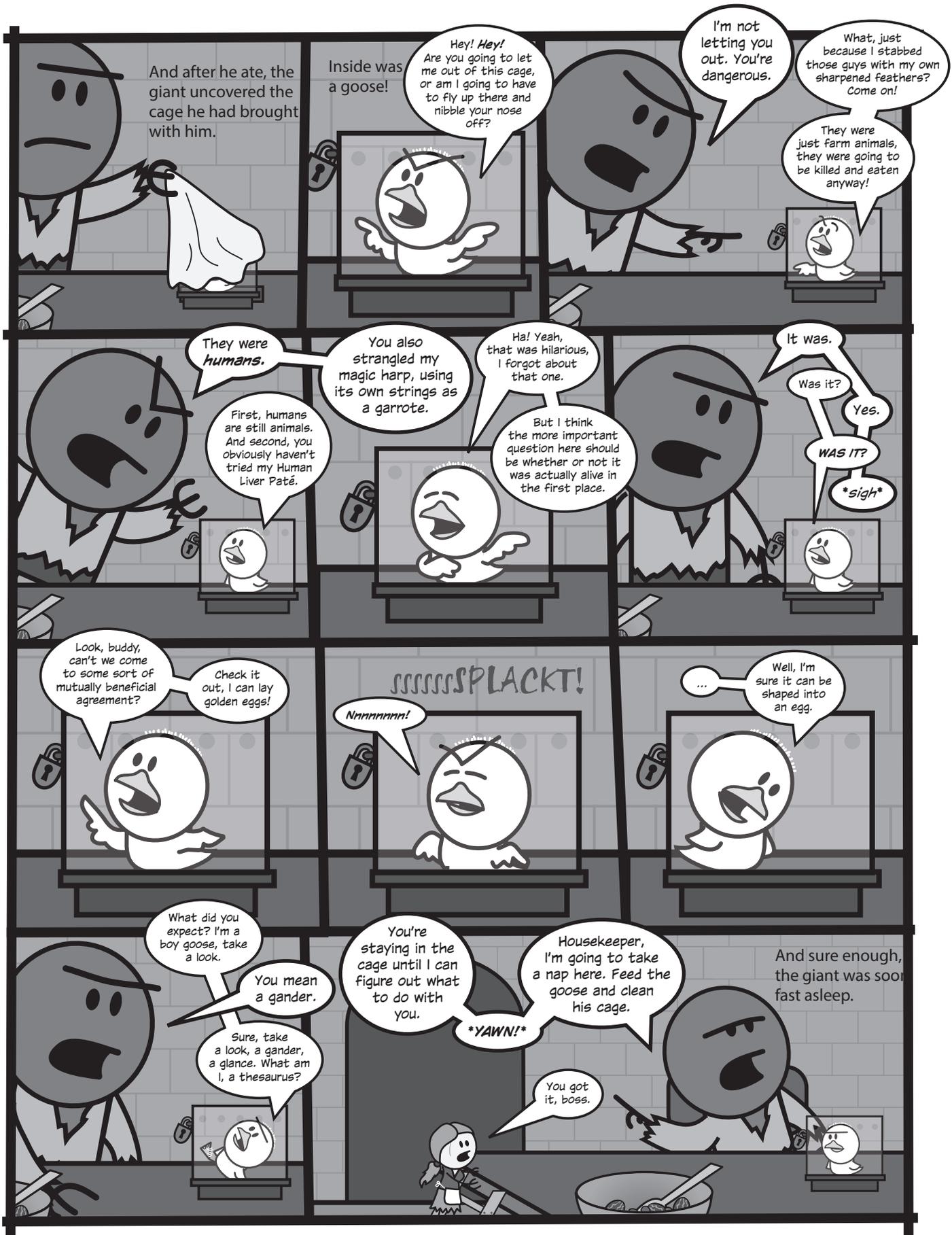
Hmmm. I guess it's not really that important.

Do we have any of that avocado-watermelon salad left? I'm almost starving.

...  
El Niño?

Yeah, I think there's some in the fridge.

And so the serving girl made lunch for the giant, which was very healthy but not as filling as he wanted it to be.



And after he ate, the giant uncovered the cage he had brought with him.

Inside was a goose!

Hey! Hey! Are you going to let me out of this cage, or am I going to have to fly up there and nibble your nose off?

I'm not letting you out. You're dangerous.

What, just because I stabbed those guys with my own sharpened feathers? Come on!

They were just farm animals, they were going to be killed and eaten anyway!

They were humans.

First, humans are still animals. And second, you obviously haven't tried my Human Liver Paté.

You also strangled my magic harp, using its own strings as a garrote.

Ha! Yeah, that was hilarious, I forgot about that one.

But I think the more important question here should be whether or not it was actually alive in the first place.

It was.

Was it?

Yes.

WAS IT?

\*sigh\*

Look, buddy, can't we come to some sort of mutually beneficial agreement?

Check it out, I can lay golden eggs!

Nnnnnnnn!

Well, I'm sure it can be shaped into an egg.

What did you expect? I'm a boy goose, take a look.

You mean a gander.

Sure, take a look, a gander, a glance. What am I, a thesaurus?

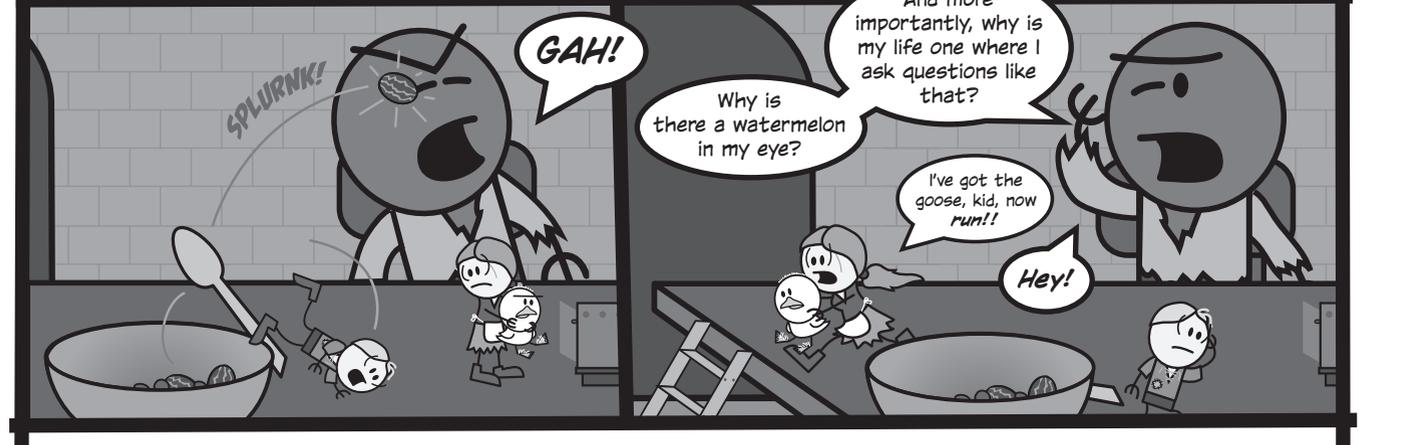
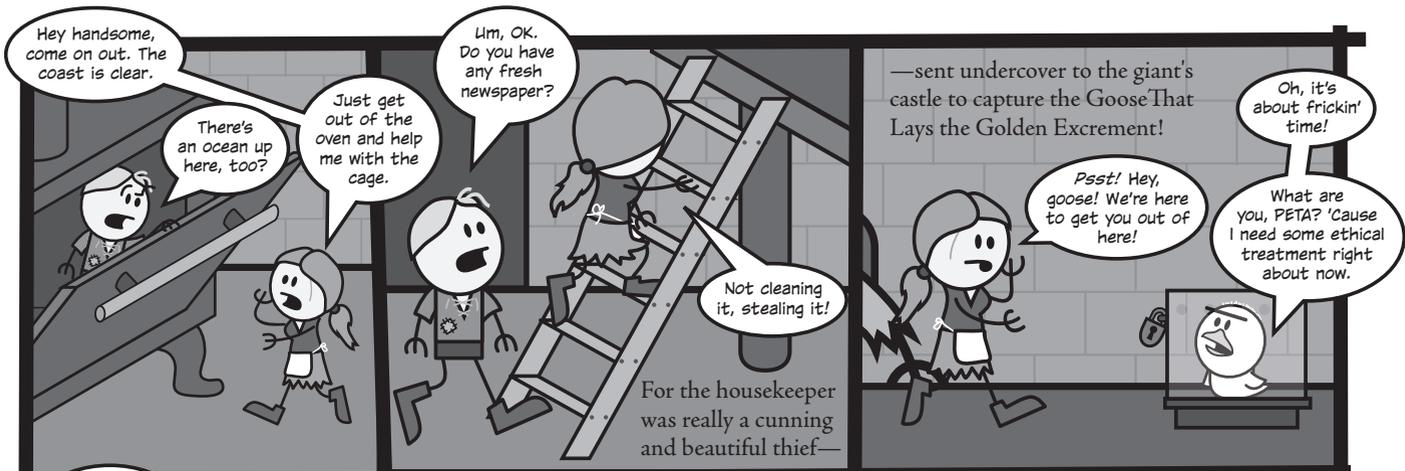
You're staying in the cage until I can figure out what to do with you.

\*YAWN!\*

Housekeeper, I'm going to take a nap here. Feed the goose and clean his cage.

You got it, boss.

And sure enough, the giant was soon fast asleep.



The boy and the serving girl ran out of the castle with the goose, while the giant gave chase!

Bwa ha ha ha ha! Kiss my mothergoosing ass, you big hairless ape!

Stop! That goose is a menace to society!

Is that your beanstalk?

I don't know, I didn't write my name on it!

Faster! The big hairless ape is catching up, you slightly smaller hairless apes!

Wait, you sprung the goose, and you're the ones who put weeds in my lawn??

Well, fee fie foe factum, I'm gonna bury my foot in your-

And so the giant began to climb down the beanstalk after them!

No, you can't chop it down! My son is up there!

Then 'e's as good as dead anyway, lass. A plant tha big dinnae mess around takin' prisoners.

Mom, I'm back! And I have a goose!

And a girl! Who's totally daughter-in-law material!

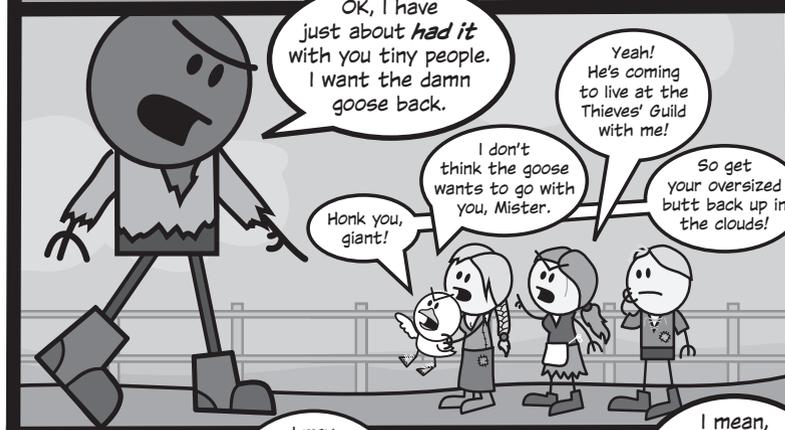
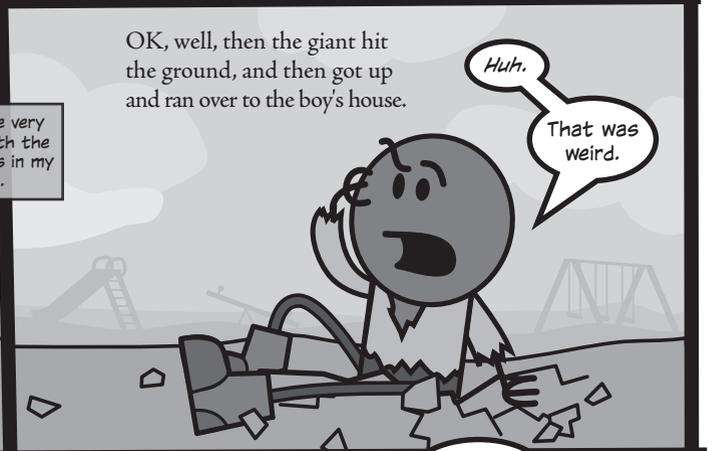
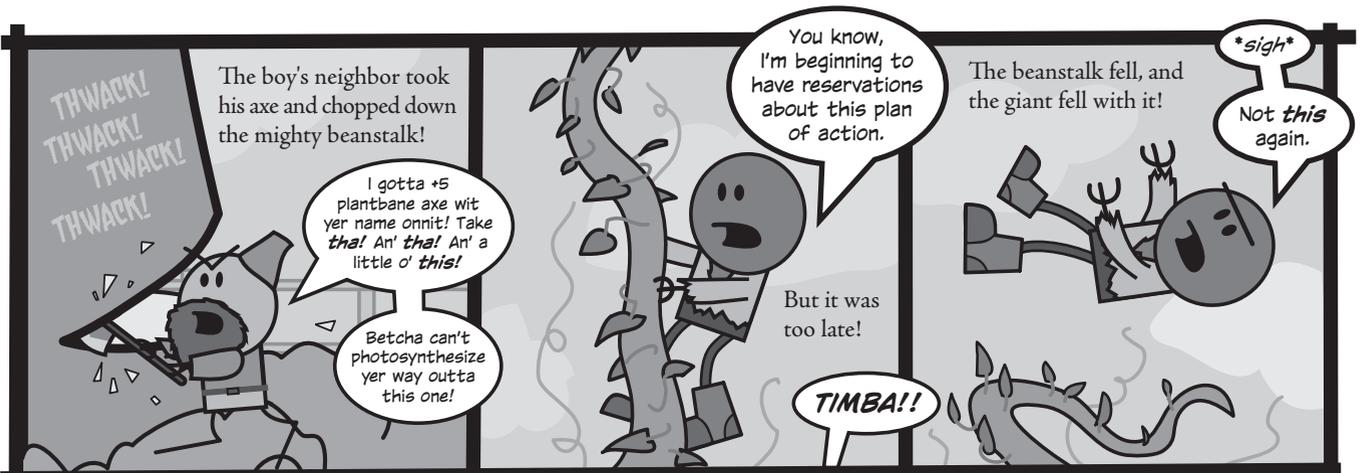
Thar, yer lad's safe! Now stand aside! I'm choppin' tha thing down now!

But what about all those free beans?

Let him do it, there's an angry giant chasing us!

Well, we *did* steal his goose...

FUMNK!  
FUMNK!



Just then, the wizard walked up the path with Milky the Cow.

Excuse me, I would like to return this bovine.

What? I thought you were going to take care of her! Is there something wrong with her poo?

No, no, her fecal consistency is superlative.

However, I purchased her rashly, as I do not have room for her to graze in my tower.

AHA!

Said the boy,

I have an idea that will make everyone happy!

What I really need is a cow that can fit within the small uncomfortable cage that I already have.

I'm leaning towards breeding a parrot-cow of some sort.

The boy gave the goose to the wizard, and the wizard gave the boy his cow back.

Hey! I didn't approve this transaction!

The wizard kept the goose in a small uncomfortable cage. Every week, the wizard collected the goose's golden poop and brought it to the boy's house.

In return, the boy gave the wizard a big bucket of Milky's manure.

...They swapped crap??

Sure! And with the golden dung, the boy and his mother were able to buy land and start a bean farm. They made millions!

What about the serving girl? She was supposed to get a cut of that money!

The serving girl married the boy, so she was rich, too.

And she quit the Thieves' Guild to have babies.

Hmmm. A little domestic, but I guess not bad.

BEANSTALK FARMS

The giant was happy that the goose was being punished, so he went back home.

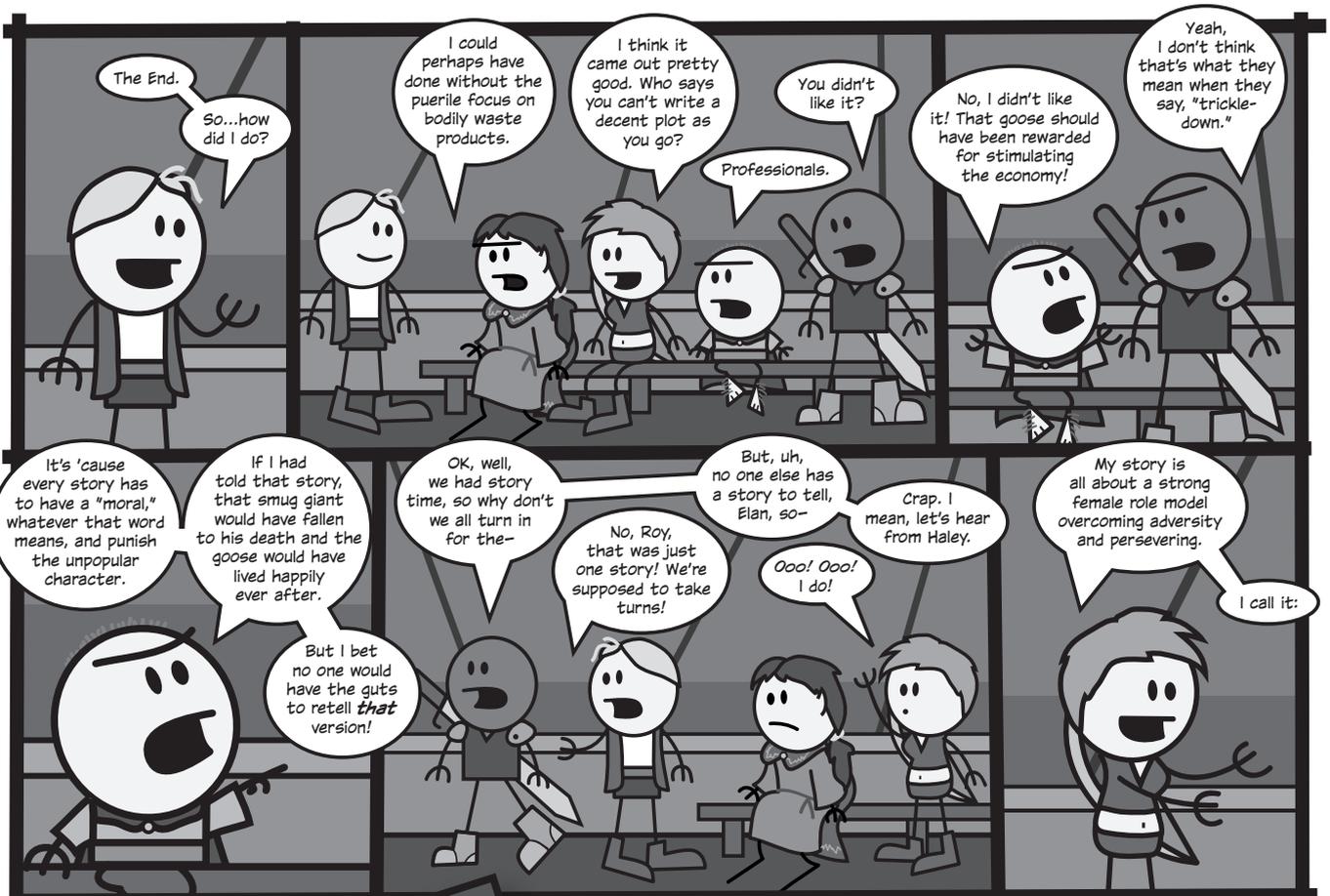
And they all lived happily ever after.

Except for the goose. He was miserable for a few years, then he died.

How did he get back to-

Fly!

Oh.



# Little Red Riding HOODLUM!

Once upon a time, there was a young woman walking through—

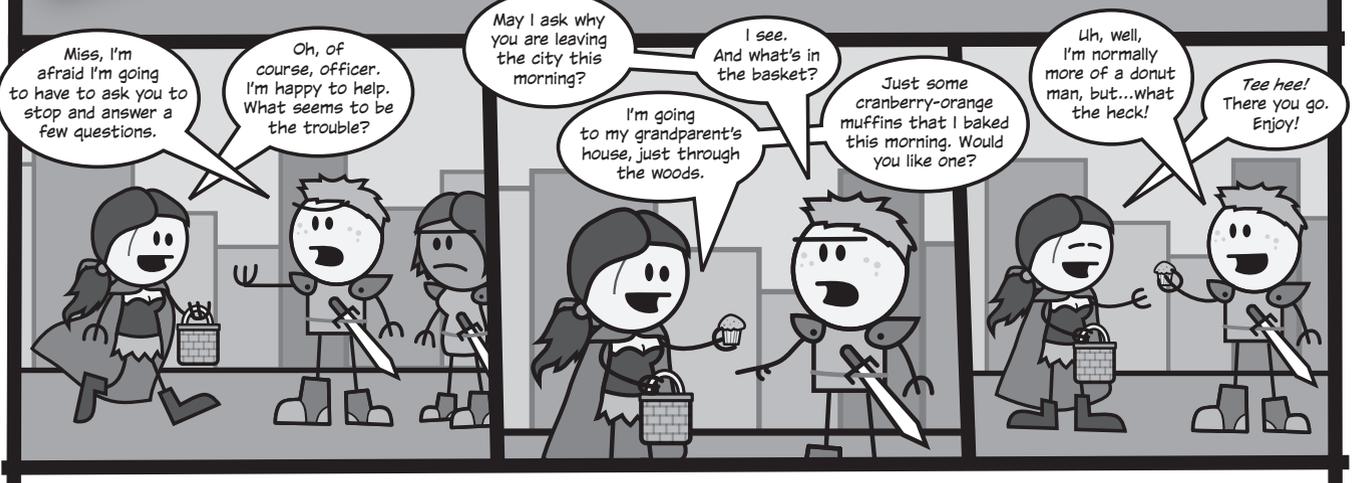
What did she look like?  
What was she wearing?  
What was her name?

Elan, don't interrupt.  
Just listen to the story.

Awww, but everyone got to interrupt me!

That's because you're a doormat.

Oh yeah.





Mmmm, delicious!

If I'm not out of place asking, officer, why were you stopping me?

Oh, it's nothing, really.

It's just that the mysterious and brilliant international jewel thief—which the papers have dubbed, "Little Red Riding Hoodlum"—

—stole thirty thousand gold pieces worth of rubies from the duke's castle last night.

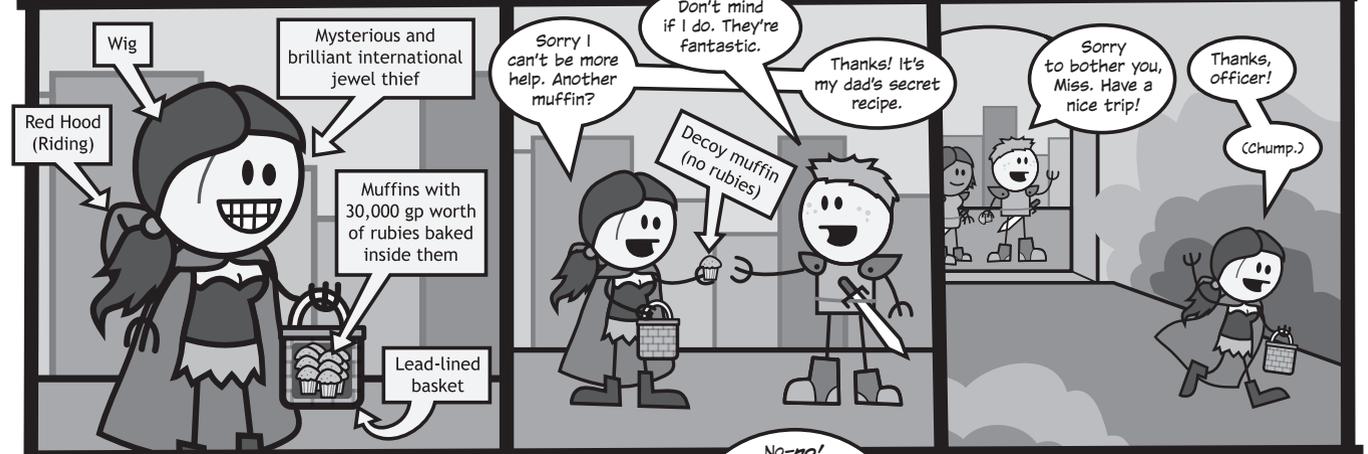
Oh my! I'm sorry to hear that, officer, but I don't know anything about that.

Yeah, it was a longshot, but since you have a red cloak...

The Locate Object spell says she's clean. No rubies.

Plus, her hair's the wrong color.

Storytime News  
**RIDING HOODLUM STRIKES AGAIN!**  
 Police "baffled" by string of daring jewel heists  
 Text in papers to be replaced by grey lines  
 Police sketch artist



Wig

Red Hood (Riding)

Mysterious and brilliant international jewel thief

Muffins with 30,000 gp worth of rubies baked inside them

Lead-lined basket

Sorry I can't be more help. Another muffin?

Don't mind if I do. They're fantastic.

Thanks! It's my dad's secret recipe.

Decoy muffin (no rubies)

Sorry to bother you, Miss. Have a nice trip!

Thanks, officer!

(Chump.)



OK, I just need to get through the woods, and then the wizard can use these rubies as the magical reagents to enchant my red hood into a kickass Phoenix Cloak.

Then I'll be able to use it to fly whenever I want, letting me rob even the most secure towers!

No-no! Listen, you get him on the phone and you find out why I keep ending up as the animal in these things, got it?

OK. OK, I gotta go, it's starting.

Wait-what is that fantastic smell? Cranberry? And orange? In some sort of baked good?



As pickup lines go, that's the worst I've ever heard, Wolf.

No, I mean the smell of the warm bread, or scone, or—

Hey, is that smell coming from you?

Oh, you mean my muffins?

Yes! They look incredible. Are those walnuts on top?

Pecans, actually.

Can I have one?

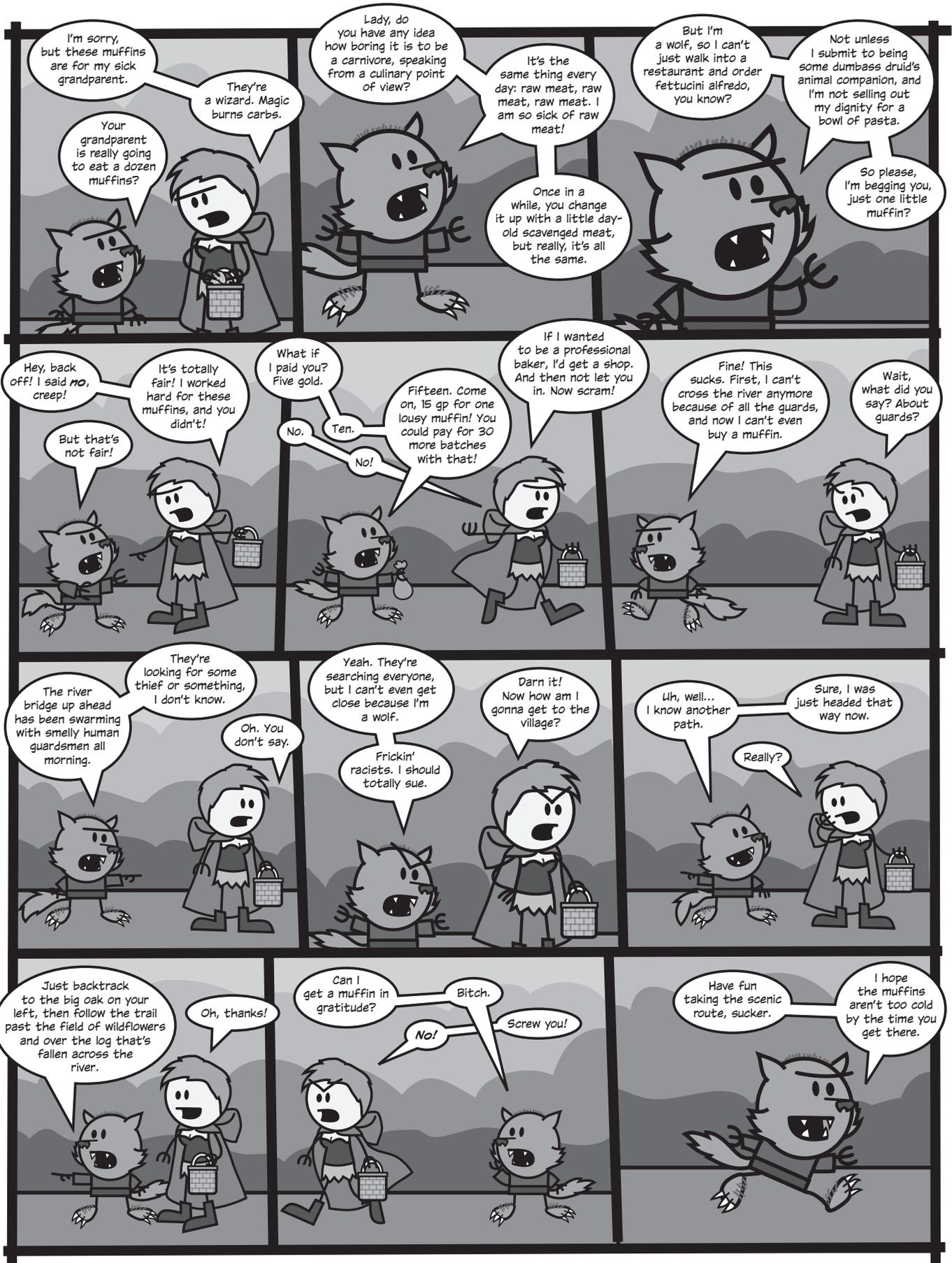
What? No!

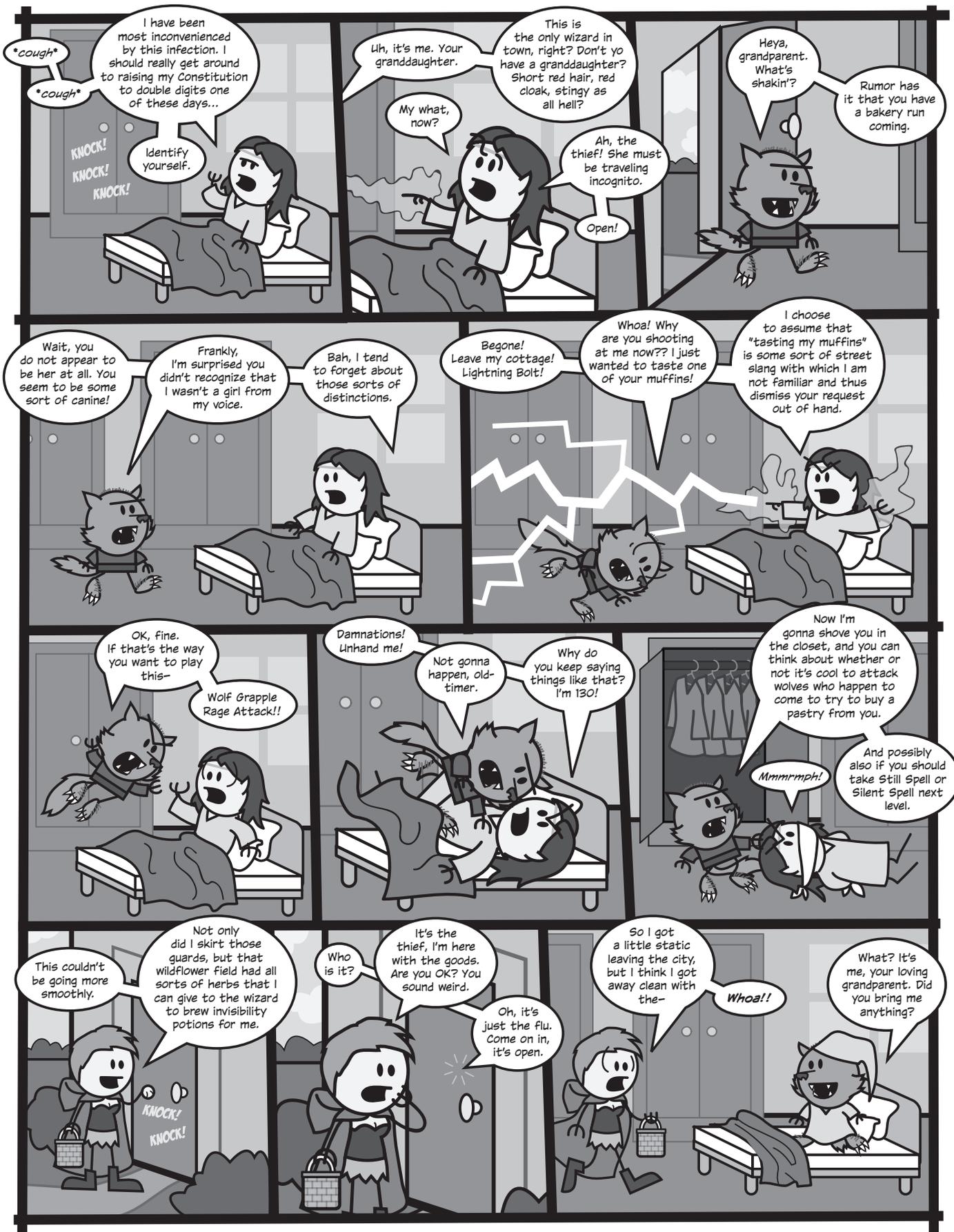
Yeah, but I'm out of decoys.

I don't know what that means.

But you have like a dozen in there!

It means no muffins for you, Fuzzball.





\*cough\*  
\*cough\*

I have been most inconvenienced by this infection. I should really get around to raising my Constitution to double digits one of these days...

KNOCK!  
KNOCK!  
KNOCK!

Identify yourself.

Uh, it's me. Your granddaughter.

My what, now?

This is the only wizard in town, right? Don't you have a granddaughter? Short red hair, red cloak, stingy as all hell?

Ah, the thief! She must be traveling incognito.

Open!

Heya, grandparent. What's shakin'?

Rumor has it that you have a bakery run coming.

Wait, you do not appear to be her at all. You seem to be some sort of canine!

Frankly, I'm surprised you didn't recognize that I wasn't a girl from my voice.

Bah, I tend to forget about those sorts of distinctions.

Begone! Leave my cottage! Lightning Bolt!

Whoa! Why are you shooting at me now?? I just wanted to taste one of your muffins!

I choose to assume that "tasting my muffins" is some sort of street slang with which I am not familiar and thus dismiss your request out of hand.

OK, fine. If that's the way you want to play this-

Wolf Grapple Rage Attack!!

Damnation! Unhand me!

Not gonna happen, old-timer.

Why do you keep saying things like that? I'm 130!

Now I'm gonna shove you in the closet, and you can think about whether or not it's cool to attack wolves who happen to come to try to buy a pastry from you.

Mmmrrmph!

And possibly also if you should take Still Spell or Silent Spell next level.

This couldn't be going more smoothly.

Not only did I skirt those guards, but that wildflower field had all sorts of herbs that I can give to the wizard to brew invisibility potions for me.

Who is it?

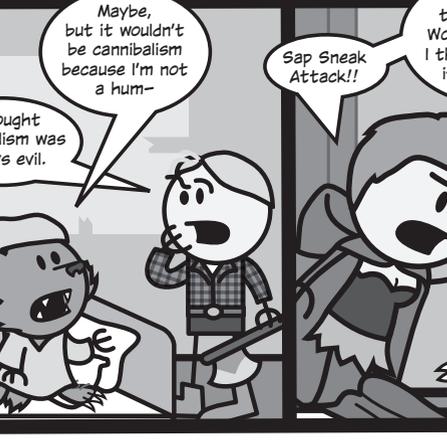
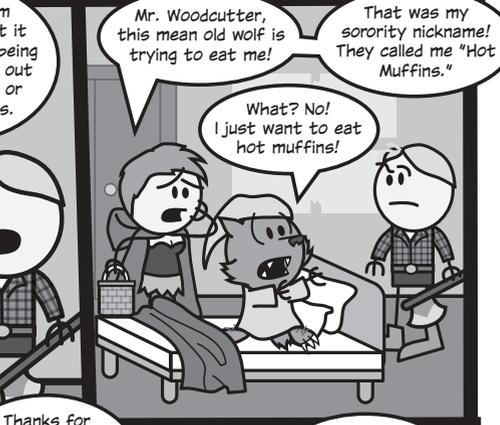
It's the thief, I'm here with the goods. Are you OK? You sound weird.

Oh, it's just the flu. Come on in, it's open.

So I got a little static leaving the city, but I think I got away clean with the-

Whoa!!

What? It's me, your loving grandparent. Did you bring me anything?





Your assistance is most appreciated.

"10% discount" appreciated?

*\*sigh\** Yes.

So what are we going to do with the wolf?

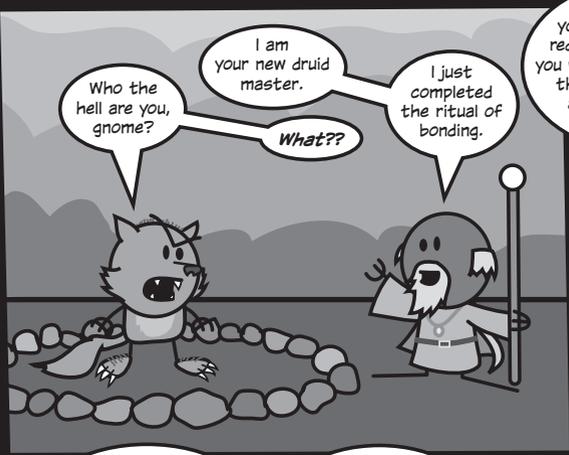
Oh, I've got an idea...

Umhhhh... my head...



Where am I? And where are my clothes?

You are a beast of the wild, you have no need for clothing anymore.

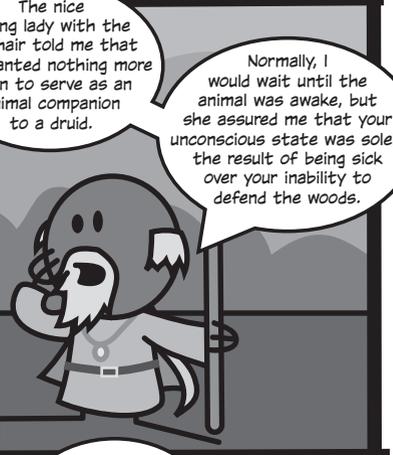


Who the hell are you, gnome?

I am your new druid master.

What??

I just completed the ritual of bonding.



The nice young lady with the red hair told me that you wanted nothing more than to serve as an animal companion to a druid.

Normally, I would wait until the animal was awake, but she assured me that your unconscious state was solely the result of being sick over your inability to defend the woods.



Come along, Wolf, we have much to do if we are to bring civilization to its knees.

That two-faced muffin-hogging whore!



Huh. Actually, that doesn't sound too bad... Hey, I don't suppose you're hungry, are you?

Great! Let's stop at a diner on the way. I'm thinking manicotti for me.

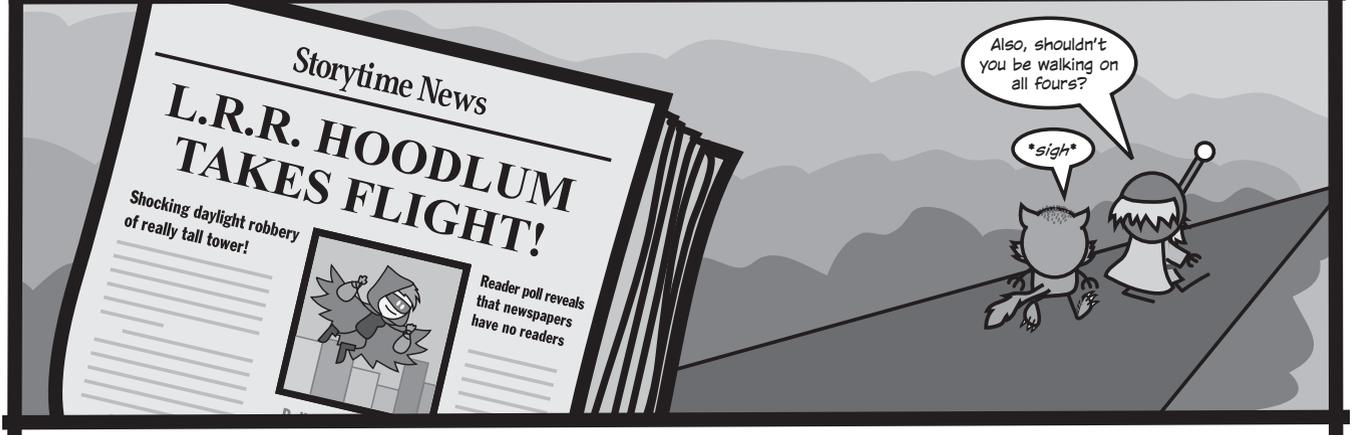
I am a little peckish, actually.

Now, Wolf, you know it would go against Nature for me to feed you that.



But don't worry, I'll make sure you have all the raw meat you could ever want from now on!

Goddamn it!



**Storytime News**

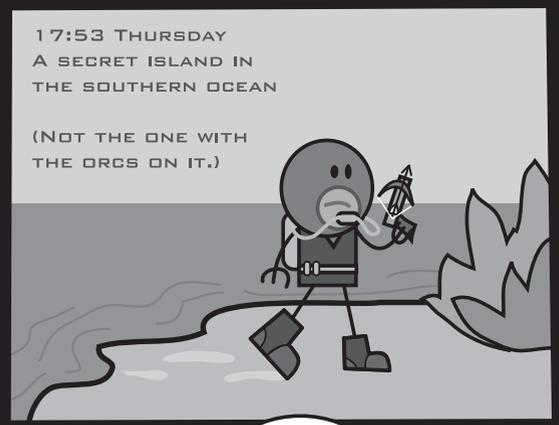
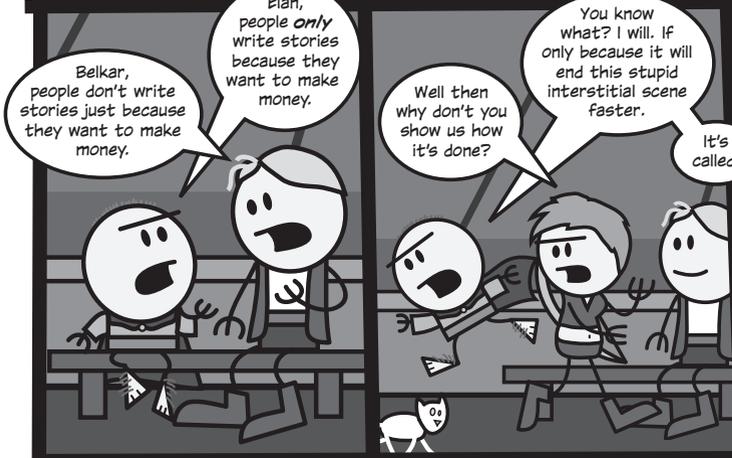
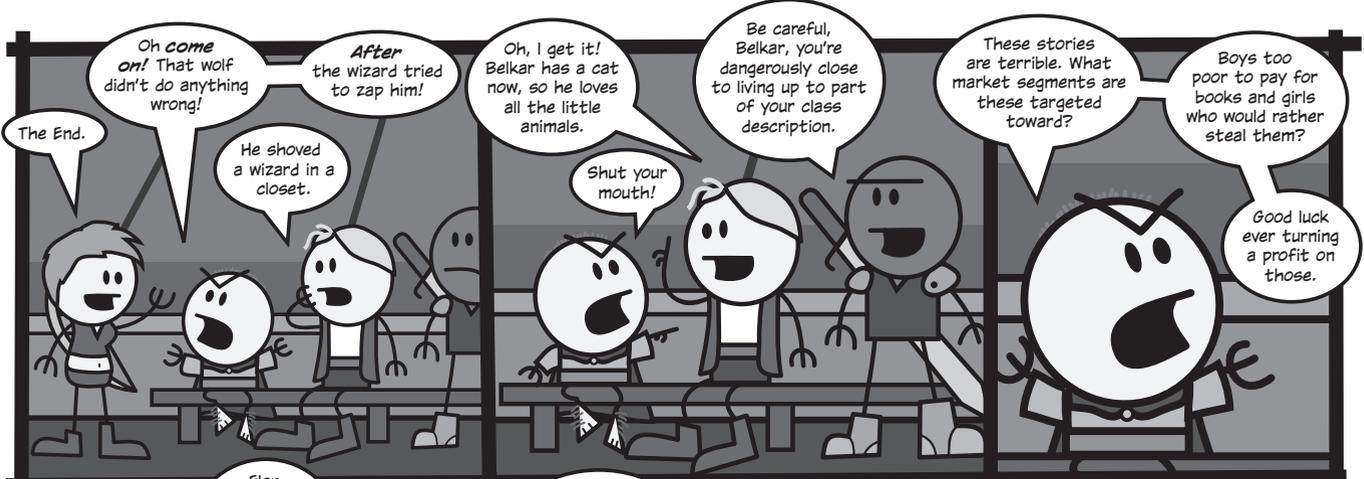
**L.R.R. HOODLUM TAKES FLIGHT!**

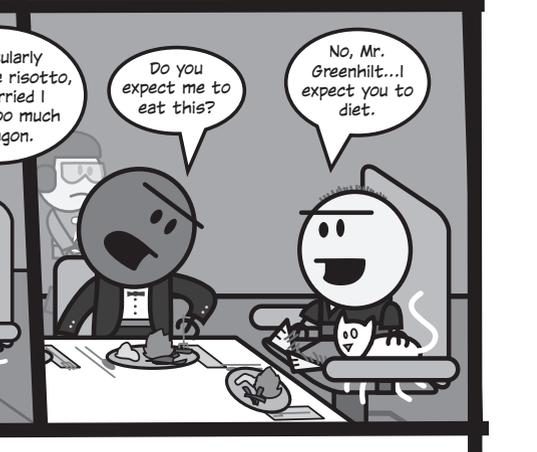
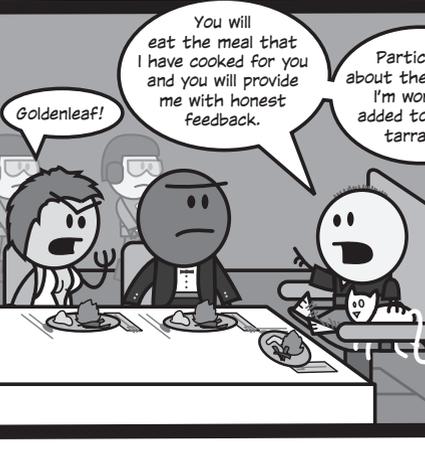
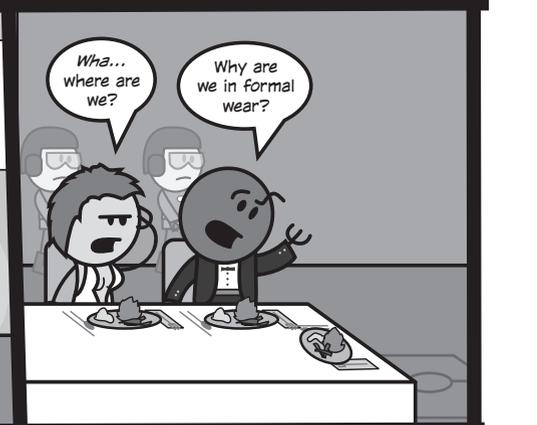
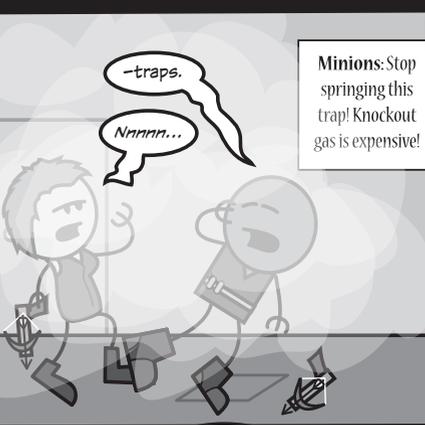
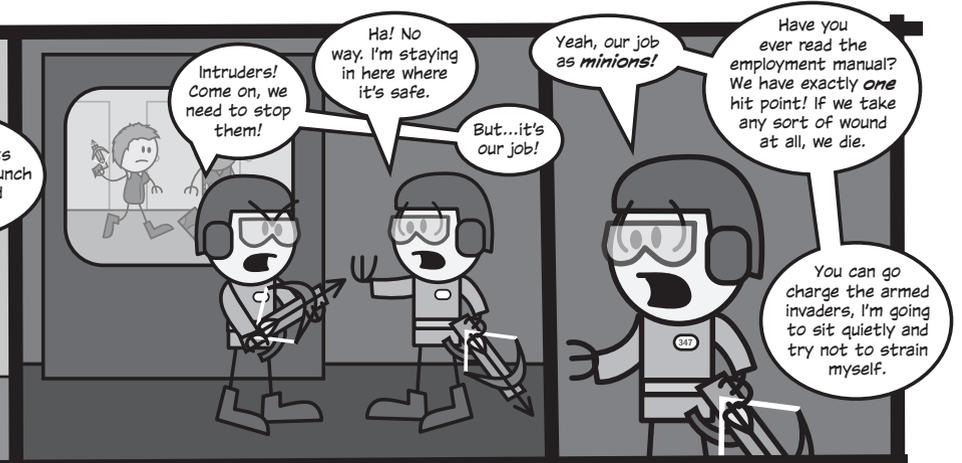
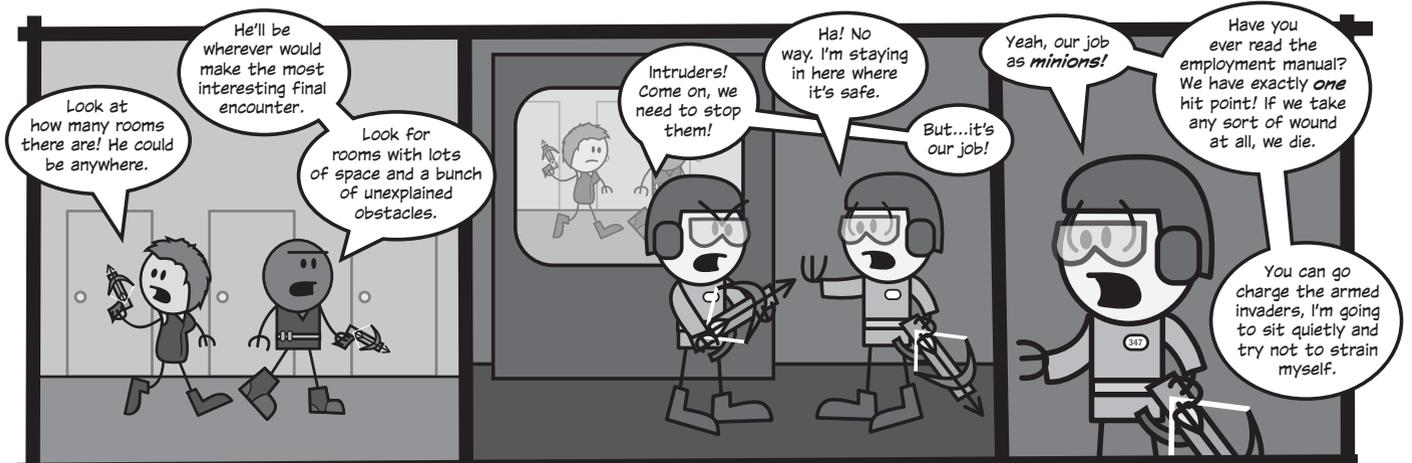
Shocking daylight robbery of really tall tower!

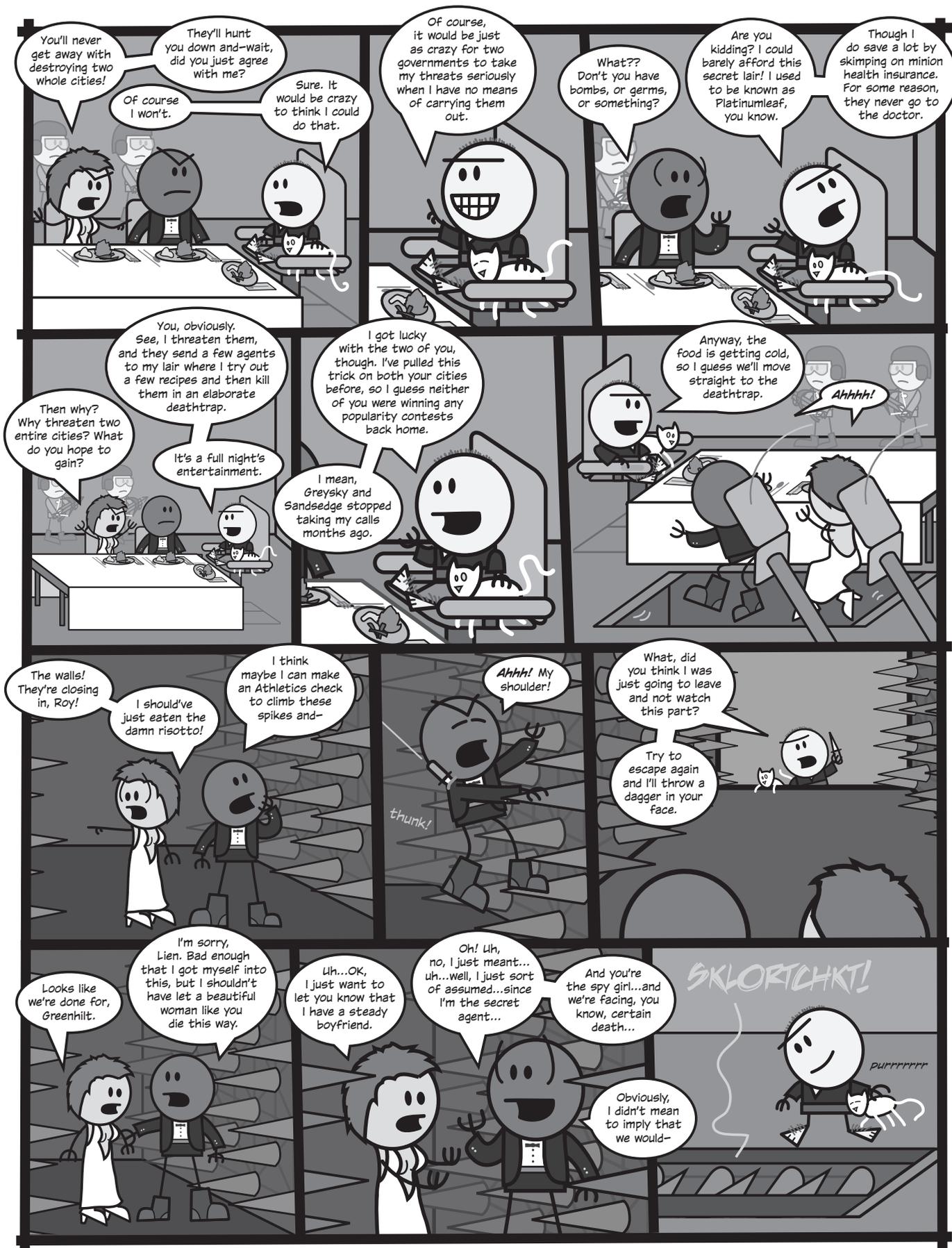
Reader poll reveals that newspapers have no readers

Also, shouldn't you be walking on all fours?

*\*sigh\**







You'll never get away with destroying two whole cities!

They'll hunt you down and—wait, did you just agree with me?

Of course I won't.

Sure. It would be crazy to think I could do that.

Of course, it would be just as crazy for two governments to take my threats seriously when I have no means of carrying them out.

What?? Don't you have bombs, or germs, or something?

Are you kidding? I could barely afford this secret lair! I used to be known as Platinumleaf, you know.

Though I do save a lot by skimping on minion health insurance. For some reason, they never go to the doctor.

You, obviously. See, I threaten them, and they send a few agents to my lair where I try out a few recipes and then kill them in an elaborate deathtrap.

I got lucky with the two of you, though. I've pulled this trick on both your cities before, so I guess neither of you were winning any popularity contests back home.

Then why? Why threaten two entire cities? What do you hope to gain?

It's a full night's entertainment.

I mean, Greysky and Sandsedge stopped taking my calls months ago.

Anyway, the food is getting cold, so I guess we'll move straight to the deathtrap.

Ahhhh!

The walls! They're closing in, Roy!

I should've just eaten the damn risotto!

I think maybe I can make an Athletics check to climb these spikes and—

Ahhh! My shoulder!

What, did you think I was just going to leave and not watch this part?

Try to escape again and I'll throw a dagger in your face.

Looks like we're done for, Greenhit.

I'm sorry, Lien. Bad enough that I got myself into this, but I shouldn't have let a beautiful woman like you die this way.

Uh...OK, I just want to let you know that I have a steady boyfriend.

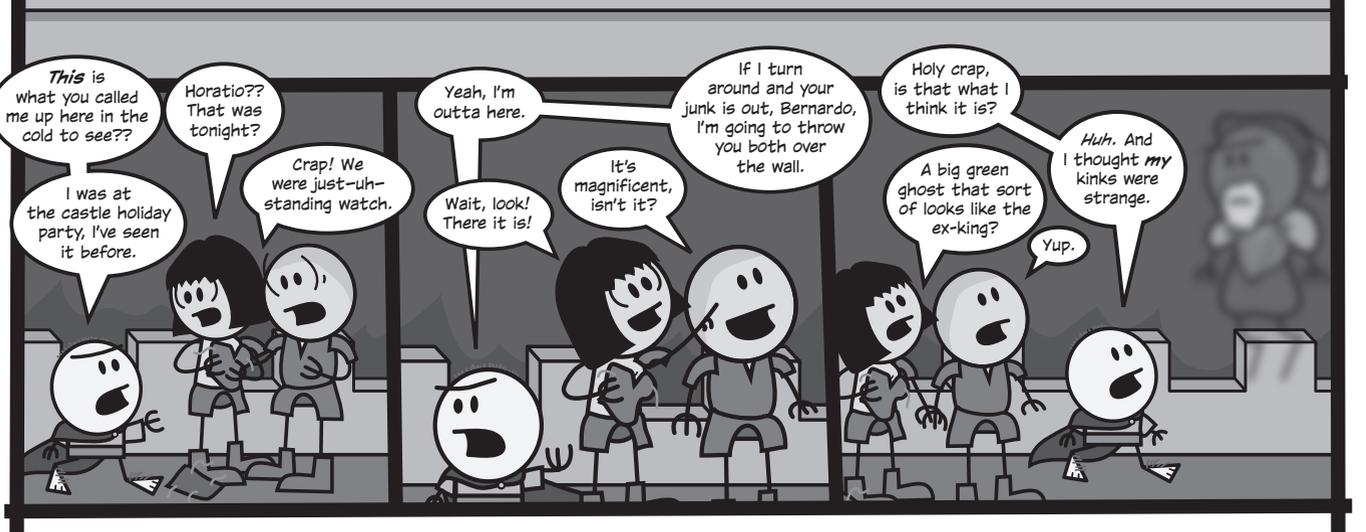
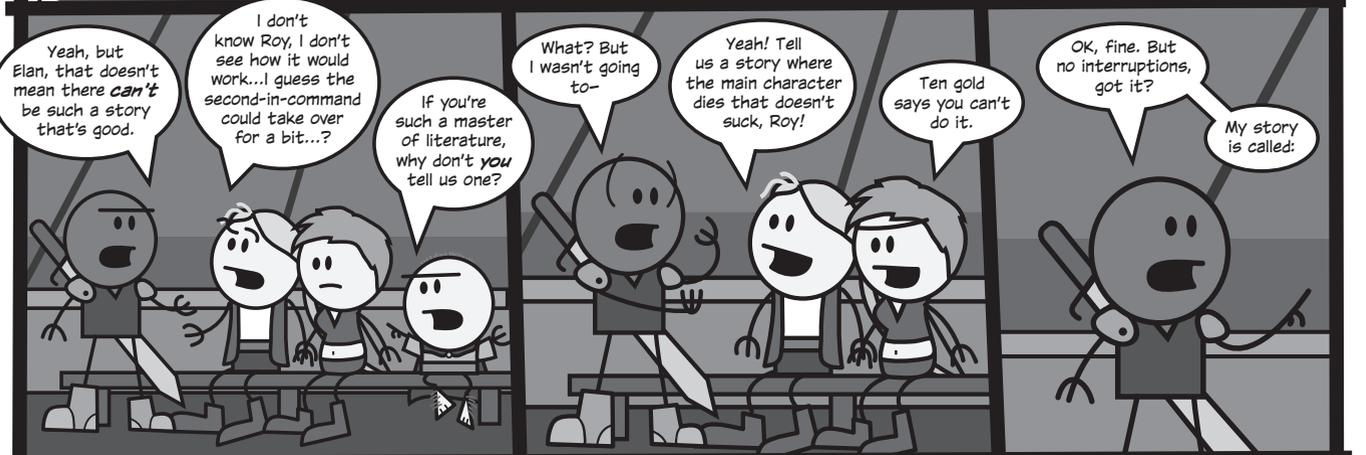
Oh! Uh, no, I just meant... uh...well, I just sort of assumed...since I'm the secret agent...

And you're the spy girl...and we're facing, you know, certain death...

Obviously, I didn't mean to imply that we would—

SKLORTCHKT!

Purrrrrrrr



Act 1, Scene 2

King Klaudius, Chancellor Shojonius is here to ask permission for his daughter, Laerta Liyazaki, to return to France to continue her studies.

She asked Baron Von Scruff really nicely, and he agreed to let her depart.

I shall study with the righteous fury of a hundred warriors!

Yeah, yeah, whatever. Go back to wherever, I don't care.

Thank you, my liege.

The pages of my notebook will be bathed in the blood of the wicked.

Ink is too expensive.

Well, Prince Fortinbras is marching this way with a huge army, but he won't get here until the last page.

Booooooring.

Who the hell are you?

Greenhilt.

The son of the former king.

The king that sat on that very throne and wore that very crown!

I'm just... I'm just totally spacing on this, sorry.

Is this really all I have on my schedule?

You should have thought of that before you became king.

Who?

Your nephew, Greenhilt. Doesn't ring a bell.

What king?

Your brother!!

Oh! OK, yeah, I think I remember that guy. I didn't know he had kids.

Didn't know you're married to my mother!

Yes! She's sitting next to you right now!!

Hi, honey.

Huh. When did that happen?

You married her like a week after my father died in his sleep.

Sorta fast, don't you think?

Yes!! Yes, I do in fact think it was "sorta fast."

I am?

Sire, you are an undead monstrosity and she is likely post-menopausal.

And those two don't cancel each other out, right?

Well, whatever your name is, don't let yourself get too worked up over any of this.

I mean, who really cares who may or may not have killed whom?

Life's too short, you know?

Maybe I got her pregnant?

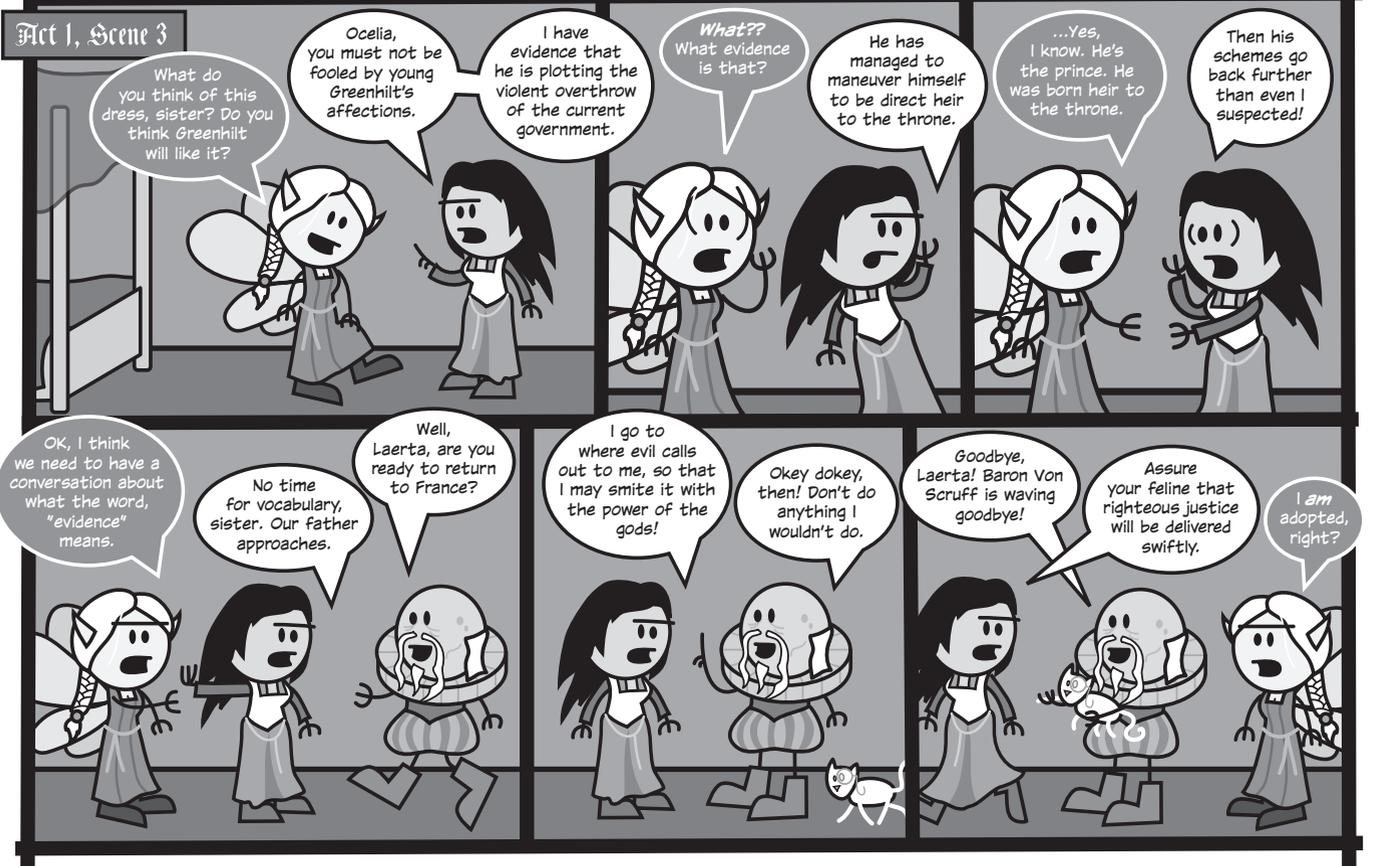
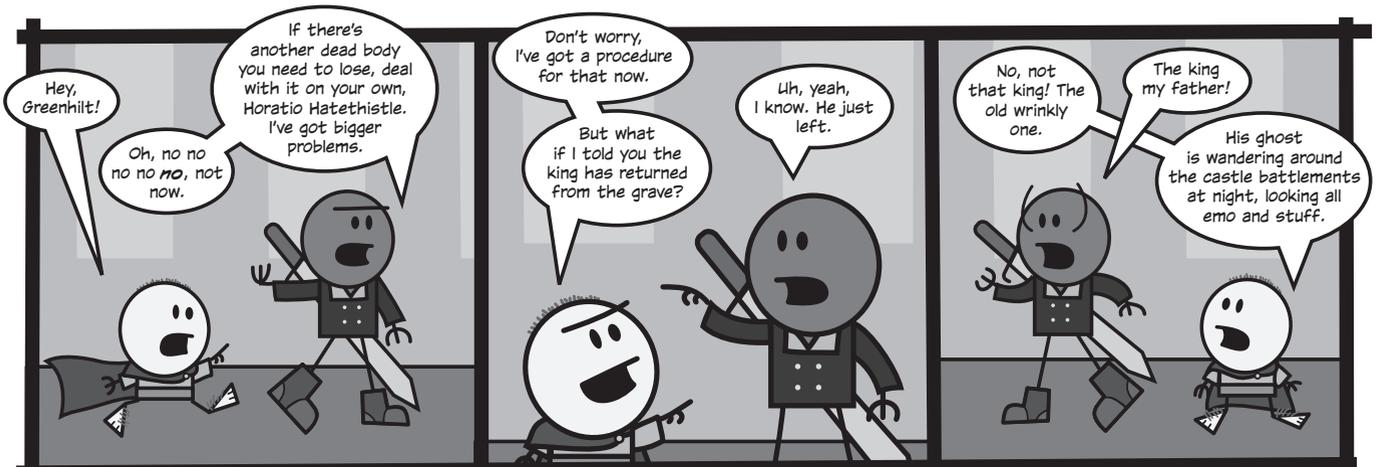
No, sire.

Right now, it feels way too long.

Hey, you know, that would make a pretty good topic for a soliloquy.

Eh. Why bother?

That, too!



Act 1, Scenes 4 and 5

Yes...it is I, King Greenhilt, your father...

Of course, I don't really need to specify that last part, do I?

It's not like my son followed me into the king business or anything.

No, I'm just saying, you'd think the fact that this country is a hereditary monarchy would be enough to maybe convince you to follow in my footsteps-

-but I guess not.

Roy...Roy Greenhilt...

Dad? Is that really you??

Dad, don't start.

Dad, you told me that all that mattered to you was that I succeed.

To the throne!!

I wanted you to succeed me to the throne!

Look, Dad, regardless of what you think, I have a pretty good career going in the brooding industry, so why don't you tell me why you're-

HALFLING RAGE GHOST ATTACK!!

What the fladoodle??

Horatio! What the hell are you doing??

Planned?

Uh, attacking a ghost. Obviously. Just like we planned.

Sure, you said you wanted to talk to the ghost. That way, I could attack while it was distracted.

Too good to be king, but not too good to still hang out with this little psycho, eh?

No, Horatio, I don't want to fight my father's ghost!

Then why did I spend all afternoon shopping for Ghost Touch daggers?

Because you're insane??

Look, it's hard enough to find level-appropriate encounters around this dump.

Your dad had a lot of class levels, and now he has a template on top of that? Challenge Rating jackpot, baby!

Now come on, flank him before His Phantom Highness gets away.

Hullo? 'sthis tha place wit tha ghost problem?

You brought a cleric?

Sure. It'll cut down on the XP per person, but I thought it was worth it since we knew we were fighting undead.

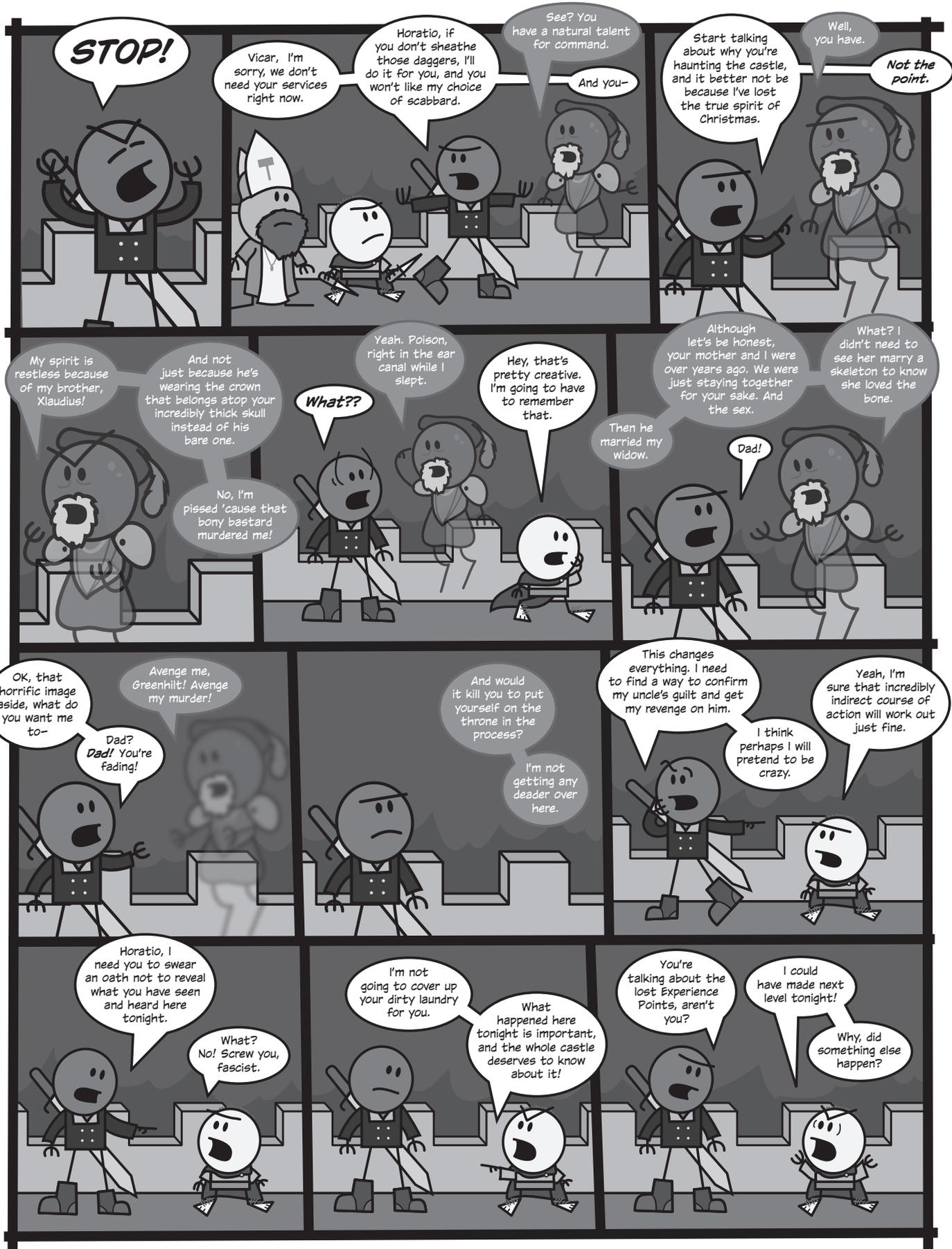
We're not fighting-

Tha pow'r o' Thor compels ye!

Stop!

Yeah, bustin' makes me feel good!

You're no Bill Murray. More like Rick Moranis. "Honey, I Shrank the I.Q."



**STOP!**

Vicar, I'm sorry, we don't need your services right now.

Horatio, if you don't sheathe those daggers, I'll do it for you, and you won't like my choice of scabbard.

See? You have a natural talent for command.

Start talking about why you're haunting the castle, and it better not be because I've lost the true spirit of Christmas.

Well, you have.

**Not the point.**

My spirit is restless because of my brother, Klaudius!

And not just because he's wearing the crown that belongs atop your incredibly thick skull instead of his bare one.

**What??**

Yeah. Poison, right in the ear canal while I slept.

Hey, that's pretty creative. I'm going to have to remember that.

Although let's be honest, your mother and I were over years ago. We were just staying together for your sake. And the sex.

What? I didn't need to see her marry a skeleton to know she loved the bone.

No, I'm pissed 'cause that bony bastard murdered me!

Then he married my widow.

Dad!

OK, that horrific image aside, what do you want me to-

Avenge me, Greenhilt! Avenge my murder!

Dad? You're fading!

And would it kill you to put yourself on the throne in the process?

I'm not getting any deader over here.

This changes everything. I need to find a way to confirm my uncle's guilt and get my revenge on him.

I think perhaps I will pretend to be crazy.

Yeah, I'm sure that incredibly indirect course of action will work out just fine.

Horatio, I need you to swear an oath not to reveal what you have seen and heard here tonight.

What? No! Screw you, fascist.

I'm not going to cover up your dirty laundry for you.

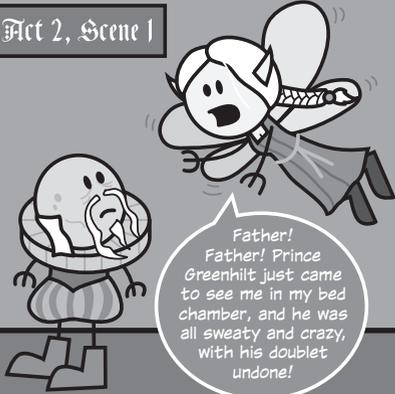
What happened here tonight is important, and the whole castle deserves to know about it!

You're talking about the lost Experience Points, aren't you?

I could have made next level tonight!

Why, did something else happen?

Act 2, Scene 1



Father!  
Father! Prince Greenhiit just came to see me in my bed chamber, and he was all sweaty and crazy, with his doublet undone!



Aghast!  
You were right to come directly to me, Ocelia.

Um, right. I came directly to you. We didn't do anything else first.



Baron Von Scruff says that Greenhiit's behavior has turned from melancholic to erratic.

We must tell the king about this.

We certainly didn't do anything twice...

Act 2, Scene 2



King Klaudius, my cat and I agree that young Greenhiit has gone mad because my daughter has refused his advances.

Yep, I am all about the refusing.

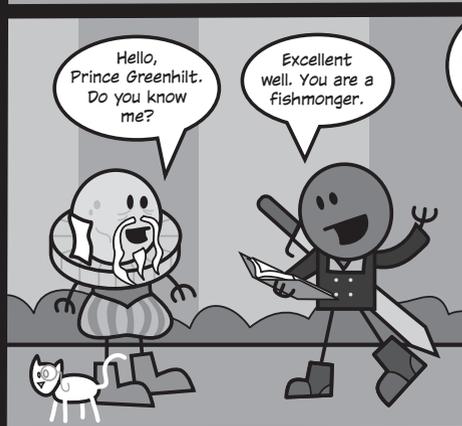
Wait... who are we talking about? Grownhiit?

Look, here he comes, reading a book.

I'll talk to him and see what he says.

Come on, honey.

Whatever. It's almost time for today's Peasant Deathmatch anyway.



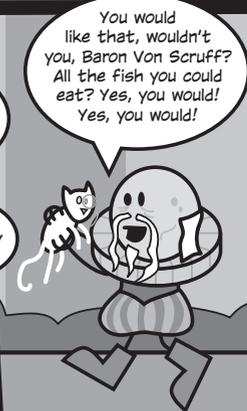
Hello, Prince Greenhiit. Do you know me?

Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

Oh! You know, I thought I was a chancellor, but maybe I *am* a fishmonger. I certainly smell like one.

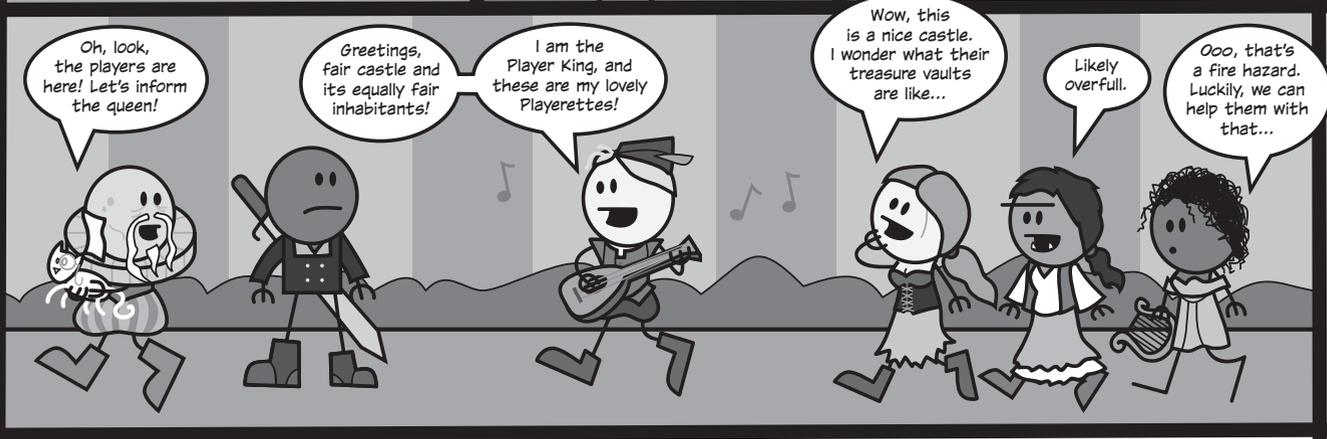
It certainly makes more sense. I wouldn't trust me to advise a king.

I mean, I talk to my cat!!



You would like that, wouldn't you, Baron Von Scruff? All the fish you could eat? Yes, you would! Yes, you would!

OK, I'm going to need to seriously step up my game if I want anyone around here to believe I'm crazy.



Oh, look, the players are here! Let's inform the queen!

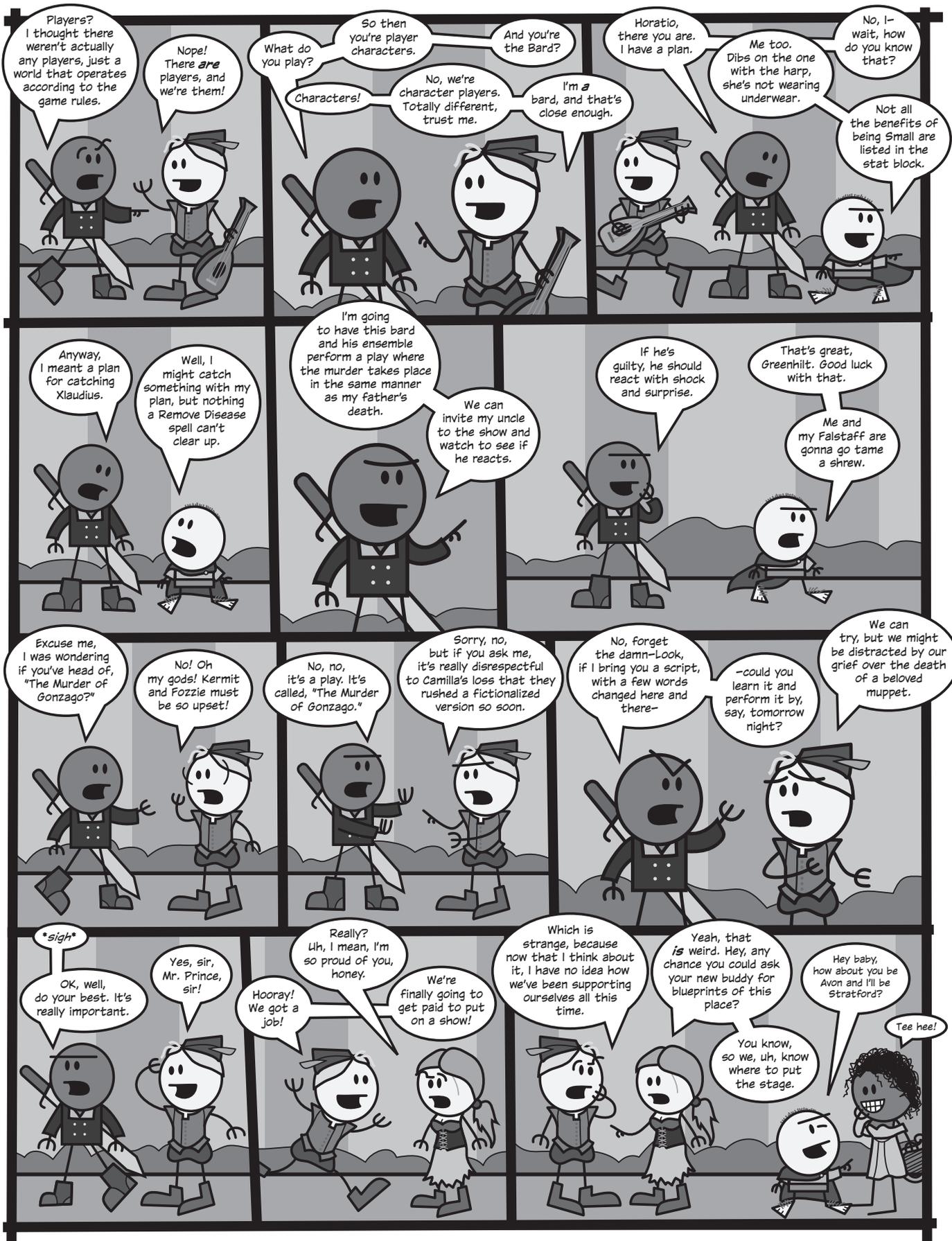
Greetings, fair castle and its equally fair inhabitants!

I am the Player King, and these are my lovely Playerettes!

Wow, this is a nice castle. I wonder what their treasure vaults are like...

Likely overfull.

Ooo, that's a fire hazard. Luckily, we can help them with that...



Players? I thought there weren't actually any players, just a world that operates according to the game rules.

Nope! There *are* players, and we're them!

So then you're player characters.

And you're the Bard?

Characters!

No, we're character players. Totally different, trust me.

I'm a bard, and that's close enough.

Horatio, there you are. I have a plan.

Me too. Dibs on the one with the harp, she's not wearing underwear.

No, I— wait, how do you know that?

Not all the benefits of being Small are listed in the stat block.

Anyway, I meant a plan for catching Klaudius.

Well, I might catch something with my plan, but nothing a Remove Disease spell can't clear up.

I'm going to have this bard and his ensemble perform a play where the murder takes place in the same manner as my father's death.

We can invite my uncle to the show and watch to see if he reacts.

If he's guilty, he should react with shock and surprise.

That's great, Greenhilt. Good luck with that.

Me and my Falstaff are gonna go tame a shrew.

Excuse me, I was wondering if you've heard of, "The Murder of Gonzago?"

No! Oh my gods! Kermit and Fozzie must be so upset!

No, no, it's a play. It's called, "The Murder of Gonzago."

Sorry, no, but if you ask me, it's really disrespectful to Camilla's loss that they rushed a fictionalized version so soon.

No, forget the damn—Look, if I bring you a script, with a few words changed here and there—

—could you learn it and perform it by, say, tomorrow night?

We can try, but we might be distracted by our grief over the death of a beloved muppet.

\*sigh\*

OK, well, do your best. It's really important.

Yes, sir, Mr. Prince, sir!

Really? Uh, I mean, I'm so proud of you, honey.

Hooray! We got a job!

We're finally going to get paid to put on a show!

Which is strange, because now that I think about it, I have no idea how we've been supporting ourselves all this time.

Yeah, that *is* weird. Hey, any chance you could ask your new buddy for blueprints of this place?

Hey baby, how about you be Avon and I'll be Stratford?

Tee hee!

You know, so we, uh, know where to put the stage.

Sire, look! Prince Greenhilt approaches where my daughter is taking her lessons. Baron Von Scruff says we should listen!

I have no idea what you're talking about, but that cat thing is really starting to wig me out.

Act 3, Scene 1

To be, or not to be: That is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them?

To die; to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish'd.

To die, to sleep; To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub. For in that sleep of death what dreams may come When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause: There's—

They need not.

Excuse me? I was in the middle of a soliloquy. Didn't you notice the line breaks?

Apologies, but I thought you might like to know that events transpiring after our earthly demise need not give us pause.

It is a relatively simple matter to summon visions of the Outer Planes, where the spirits of mortal beings reside postmortem.

The... Outer Planes?

Ocelia, get thee to an orrery.

Indeed, I shall show you.

Yes, professor.

Sixteen unique planes of existence form a great wheel around the central axis of reality.

For example, this plane here is formed from massive interlocking metal gears, while its opposite number is a swirling rainbow soup.

Between them is a silvery void of infinite space.

Don't forget the elemental planes, too, professor.

True, true.

Further, as far as I know, the gods have put no prohibition on self-slaughter.

If one wished, I see no reason why one could not simply kill oneself and deliver one's soul as a ready soldier for one's respective alignment.

Soldier..? What do you—

Oh yes. As it transpires, the afterlife is the scene of millenia-old conflicts in which angels, demons, devils, magic robots, and giant anthropomorphized frogs do battle to gain control of your dead spirit.

So you're saying that if I kill myself, I'm only going to end up involved in a whole new set of intrigues, only this time with crazy-ass monsters instead of Danes?

I suppose that is one way of summarizing the situation, yes.

I guess... I guess it's just easier to stick with the conflict I already know.

Thus convenience does make cowards of us all.

So the guy with the sword is named Toby? Or not Toby?

I don't know, but I'm pretty sure the answers are in room 2B.

Act 3, Scene 2

Well it's about time we got some entertainment around here.

I'm not sure I'm familiar with this play.

Oh, I think you may be more familiar with it than you think.

Oooo! Look, it's starting.

Oh, my love! I love you so much!

Why do you keep calling me that?

I love you too, First Husband.

No reason.



I think I'll take a nap here in the garden.

Sure, you do that, honey. Sweet dreams.



Aha! It is I, your secret lover!

Hello, secret lover and future Second Husband!

Bwa ha ha ha!

Zzzzz!

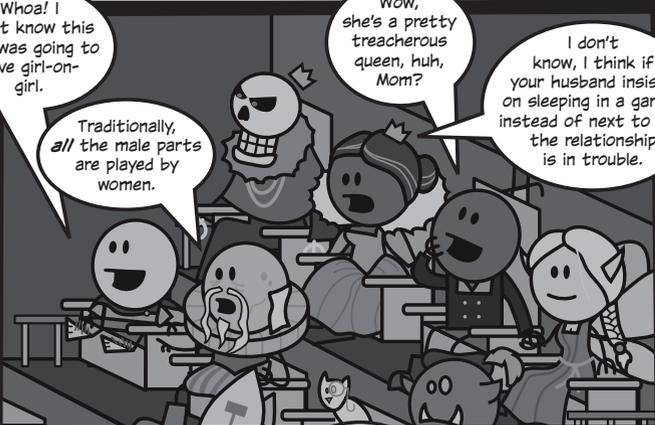


Whoa! I didn't know this play was going to have girl-on-girl.

Traditionally, all the male parts are played by women.

Wow, she's a pretty treacherous queen, huh, Mom?

I don't know, I think if your husband insists on sleeping in a garden instead of next to you, the relationship is in trouble.



Now, secret lover, let us undertake the poisoning of your First Husband!

Not so fast!

He may be your First Husband, but he's also my baby's father!

Zzzzz!

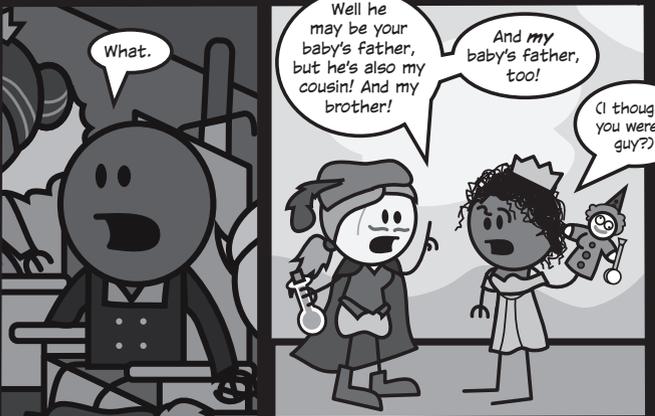


What.

Well he may be your baby's father, but he's also my cousin! And my brother!

And my baby's father, too!

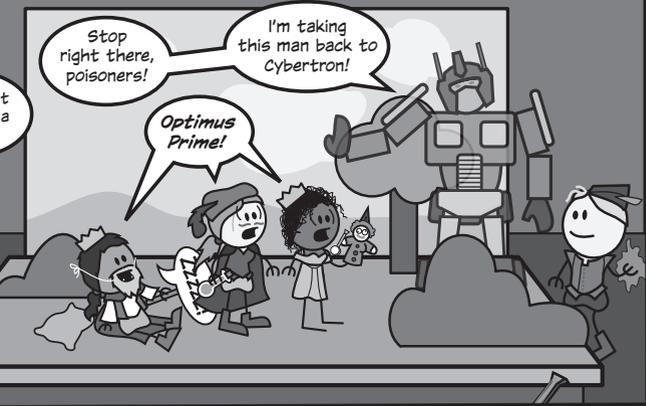
(I thought you were a guy?)

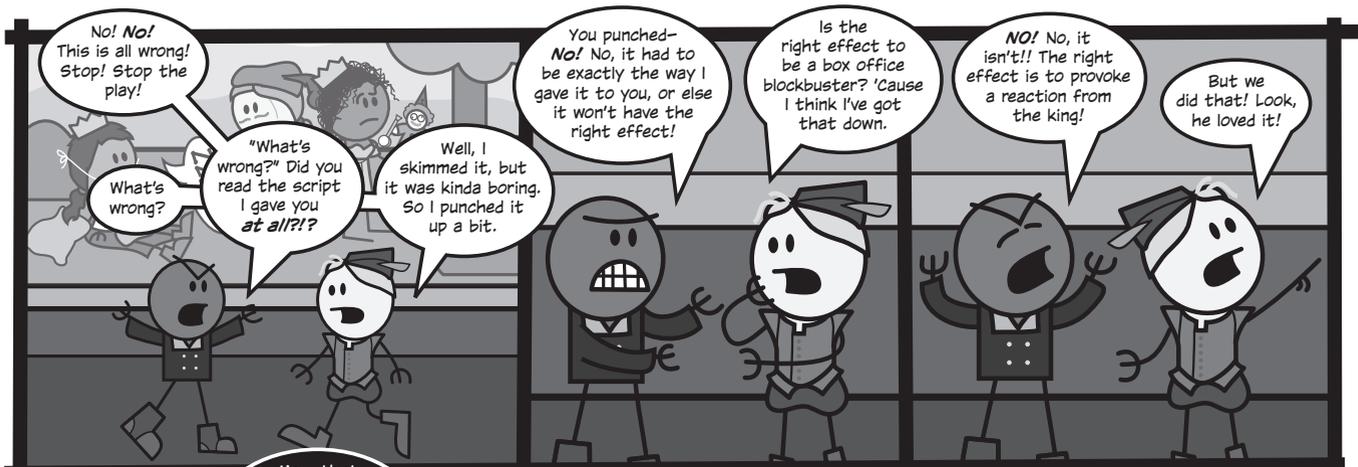


Stop right there, poisoners!

I'm taking this man back to cybertron!

Optimus Prime!





No! No!  
This is all wrong!  
Stop! Stop the play!

What's wrong?

"What's wrong?" Did you read the script I gave you at all!?!?

Well, I skimmed it, but it was kinda boring. So I punched it up a bit.

You punched—  
**No!** No, it had to be exactly the way I gave it to you, or else it won't have the right effect!

Is the right effect to be a box office blockbuster? 'Cause I think I've got that down.

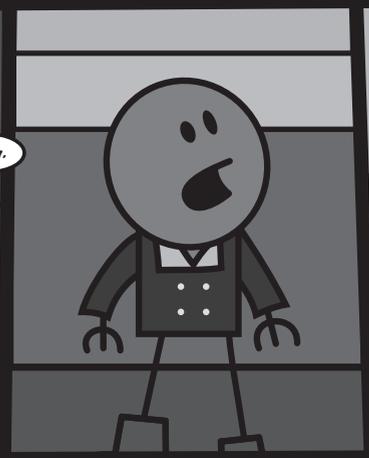
**NO!** No, it isn't!! The right effect is to provoke a reaction from the king!

But we did that! Look, he loved it!



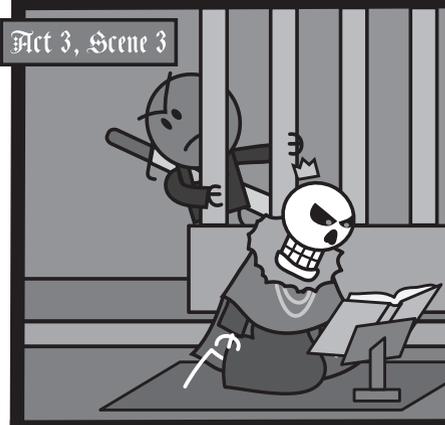
Man, that play was great! I haven't had this much fun since I poisoned your husband in the ear.

Shhh.

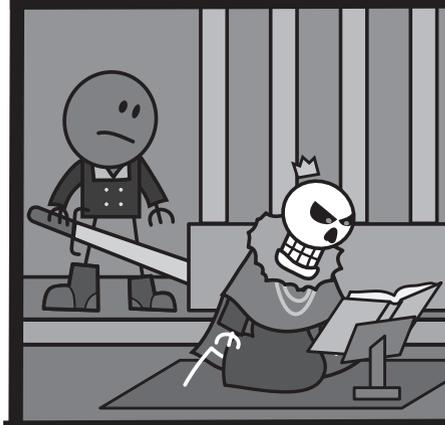
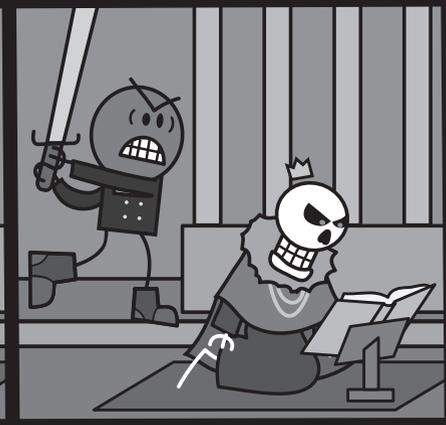


GAAHHH!!

Geez, what's that guy's problem?



Act 3, Scene 3



Screw it.



Hey, can someone turn the page for me?

Helloooooo?

Act 3, Scene 4

Your son is on the way here, Madam. Baron Von Scruff and I will hide behind this curtain and listen!

Is that all you do around here?

I have a lot of free time.

Hey, Mom. So, what the hell? You knew that monster killed Dad, and you **married** him?

Oh, you know how it is, Roy. You get to be a certain age and you want a man who's dependable.

He's not a man, Mom, he's undead!

Your last husband only died because this one murdered him!!

Right, which means he won't up and die on me like my last husband.

Sweetie, noble ideas about not marrying your husband's murderer won't keep me warm at night.

Neither will he! He's a **skeleton!**

Actually, a lich is totally different from a skeleton.

Xlaudius? Do I have to chop your head off again?

No, no! It's me, Chancellor Shojonius! Don't hurt me!

Oh, OK. You have to be more careful, though, I almost stabbed you right through the curtain.

Actually, listen carefully, young Greenhit.

I am not actually the idiot I purport to be, I merely pretend in order to keep those who covet my position in court from moving against me.

Your father knew the truth, and used me to spy on his enemies by acting the fool.

Yeah, nice try, Xlaudius. You may be able to use magic to disguise your voice, but you don't speak anything like Shojonius.

You haven't mentioned your cat once.

No, listen, I'm telling you the-

No, Roy! It's really-

Let's see how long it takes you to regenerate from **this** one, evil lich!

Ummmmh!

**SPLORTCH!**

Talk about your unbelievable stories.

I mean, who goes through an elaborate ruse, pretending to be insane, just to learn...

...things about your enemies.

Ah, crap.

Don't worry, Roy, I'm sure acting crazy seemed like an original idea when you came up with it.

*\*sigh\**

Thanks, Mom. That's exactly the part I was worried about.

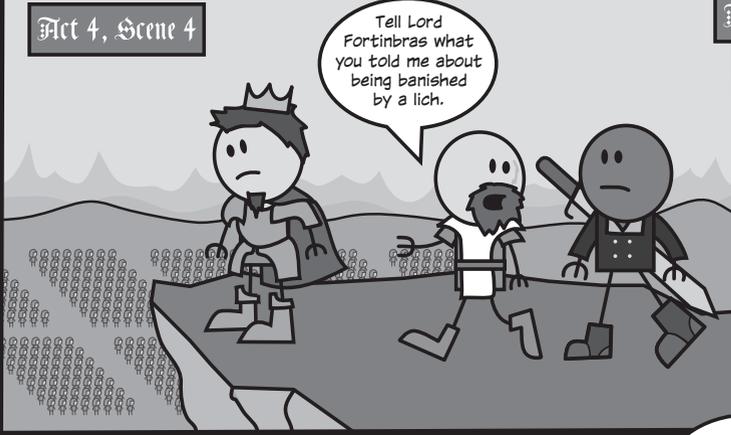
Act 4, Scene 1



Act 4, Scene 2 & 3



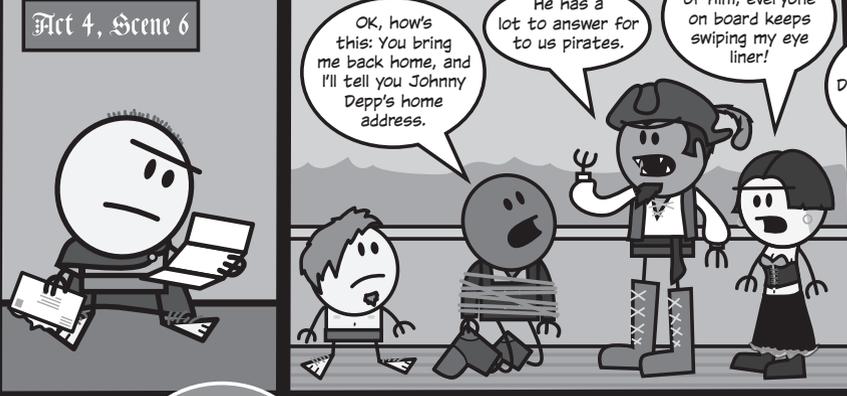
Act 4, Scene 4



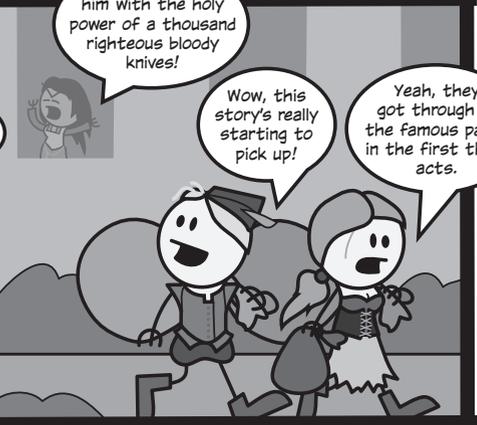
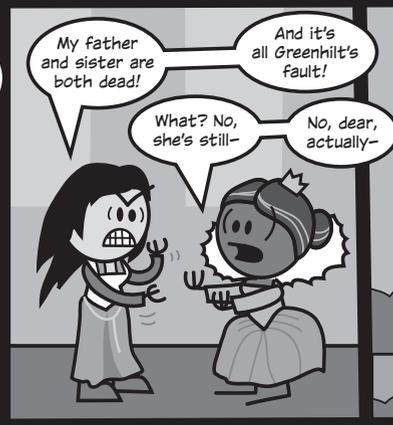
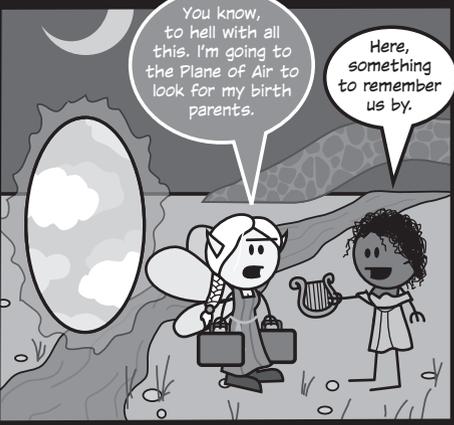
Act 4, Scene 5



Act 4, Scene 6



Act 4, Scene 7



Act 5, Scene 1

Dig faster, Thog! We need to complete this secret tunnel so that we can rob the castle before my hated brother, the Player King, can do so.

thog just saying, thog was looking forward to iambic pentameter. now thog is sad.

Thanks for meeting me at the docks, Horatio.

Hey, you're the one who said that if I had a dead body, I needed to deal with it on my own, so don't complain to me because I was—Oh! I mean, you're welcome.

Uh...excuse me? What are you two doing digging so close to the castle?

What?! Uh, nothing! Nothing at all. Digging graves.

thog provide local color.

Doesn't one generally dig graves in graveyards, not alongside the road to the capital?

Well, sure, if you want to be buried with the riffraff.

These are exclusive luxury graves for Denmark's well-to-do.

Professional inquiry: How long does it take a body to decay enough that it can no longer be identified?

Oh, eight or nine years—but you need to remove the teeth.

Right, the dental records! Of course!

OK, this disturbing line of discussion is not making me any less suspicious as to why you're here.

Oh! Hey! Let's play a guessing game!

oooo! thog likes games!

Guess who's skull this was.

...Some sort of monitor lizard?

It was the king's jester, Yikyik.

Alas, poor Yikyik. You slew him, Horatio.

A fellow of infinite pest, and most obnoxious, frankly.

**GREENHILT!**

The gods informed me you'd returned from England.

Yeah? You're sure it wasn't the letters that I sent ahead that spilled the beans?

The gods made you send that letter!

Quick, into the tunnel while they're distracted!

exeunt thog and nale.

Soon, you will pay for your treachery in killing my father and sister!!

Look, Laerta, the thing with your dad was just a total accident. I'm sorry, I'll try to make it up to you.

And your sister is doing fine. She sent me a Sending from the Elemental Plane of Air just this morning.

Lies! My sister would never correspond with her own murderer!

...Huh?

Mark my words, my sword will send you after her!

So...it's like a plane-shifting sword, or something?

It will shift you to HELL!

...Is that a yes?

Act 5, Scene 2

-so they had sent along a letter with me, ordering that I be killed once we got to England, but I swapped it out with one naming those other two guys they had escort me.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

Yeah.

Hello, merry olde England!

I think we're really going to love it here.

Ah, Greenhilt. King Xlaudius has asked me to relay a message.

Miss Liyazaki and he have made a wager based on whether or not you can defeat her in a sword duel-

-in a transparent attempt for her to get revenge on you for killing her father.

I say you accept.

Why? It sounds like a terrible idea.

No, I think it will speed up the climax of this meandering story.

-and further, I have heard rumors that Greenhilt spoke with the shade of his father!

He will die for his evil acts and for consorting with the undead!

Self-awareness really isn't your thing, is it?

OK, here's the poison for your blade.

BEGIN!

You will pay for your deed!

No, the other one.

I told you, your sister is alive and well.

Oh, right.

Yeah, this is exciting. Two warriors standing still and attacking each other.

Hooray for core melee.

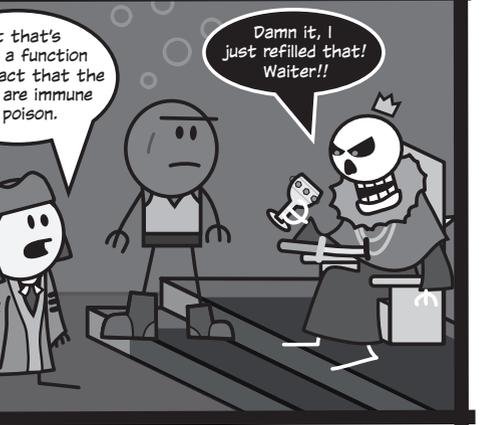
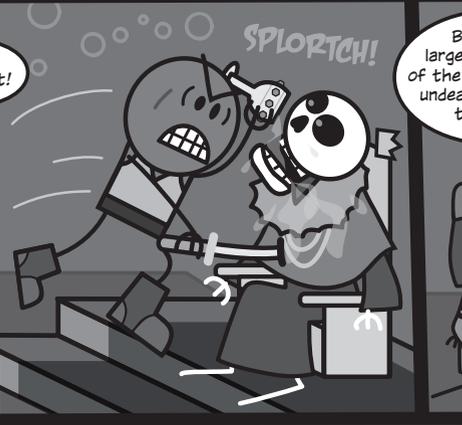
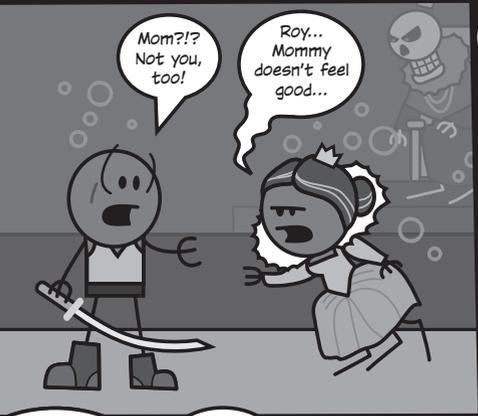
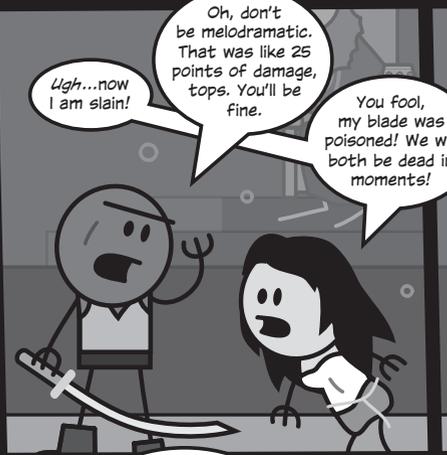
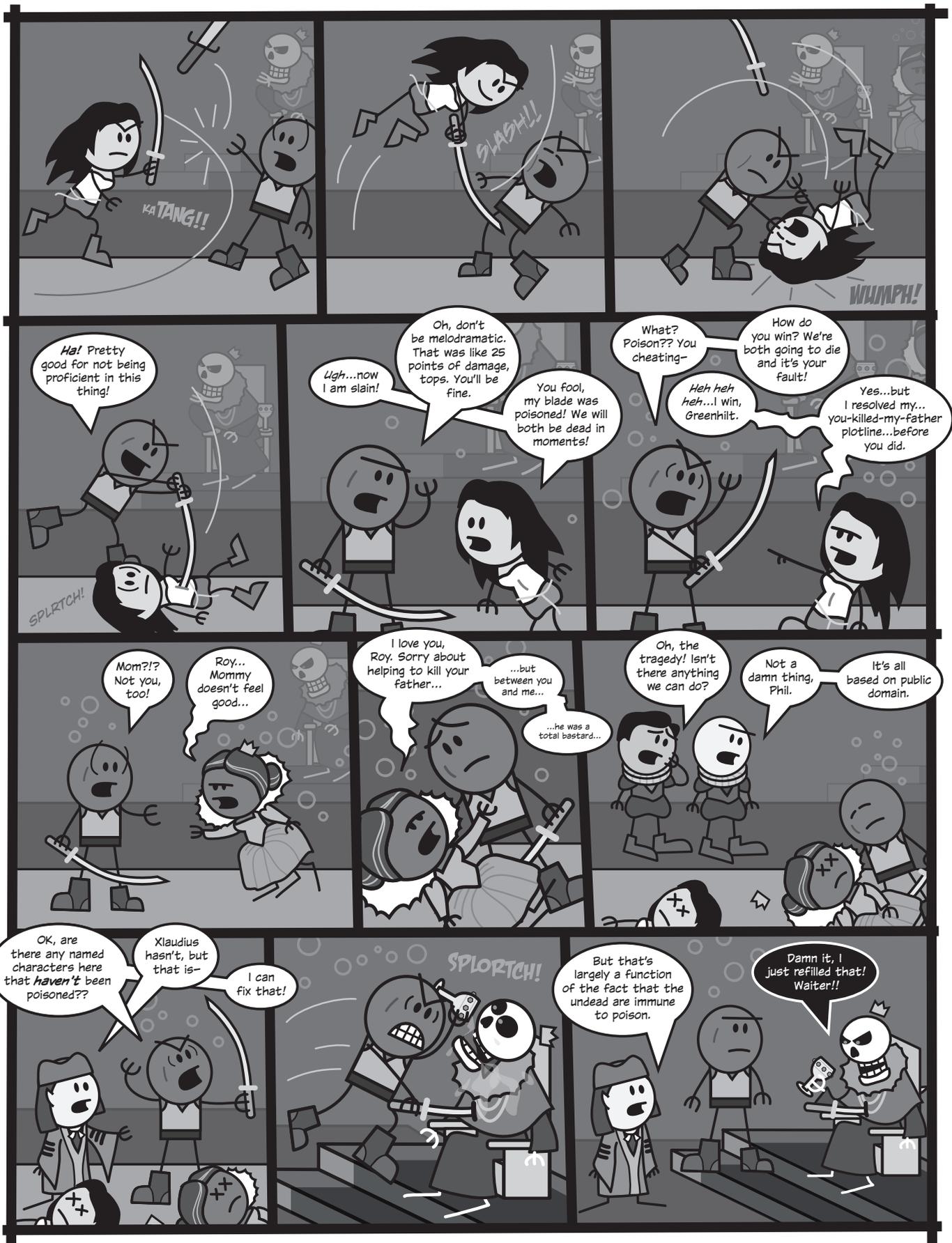
A hit, a palpable hit!

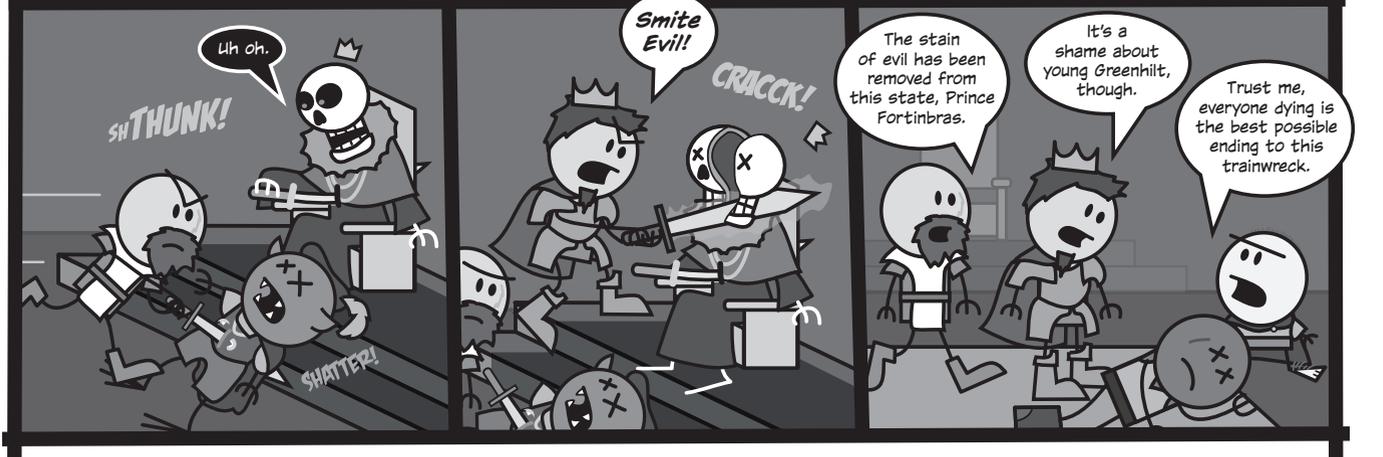
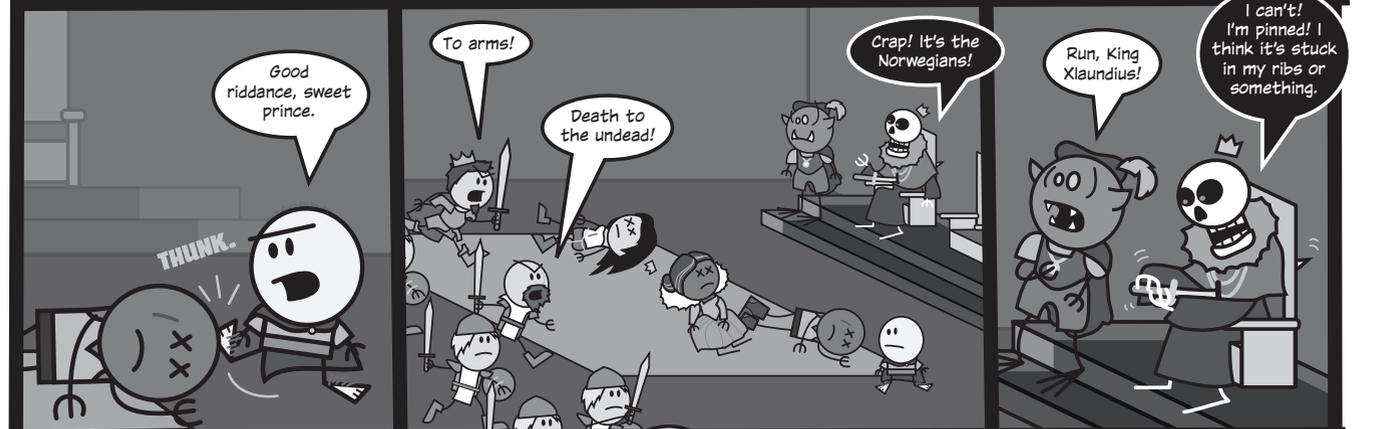
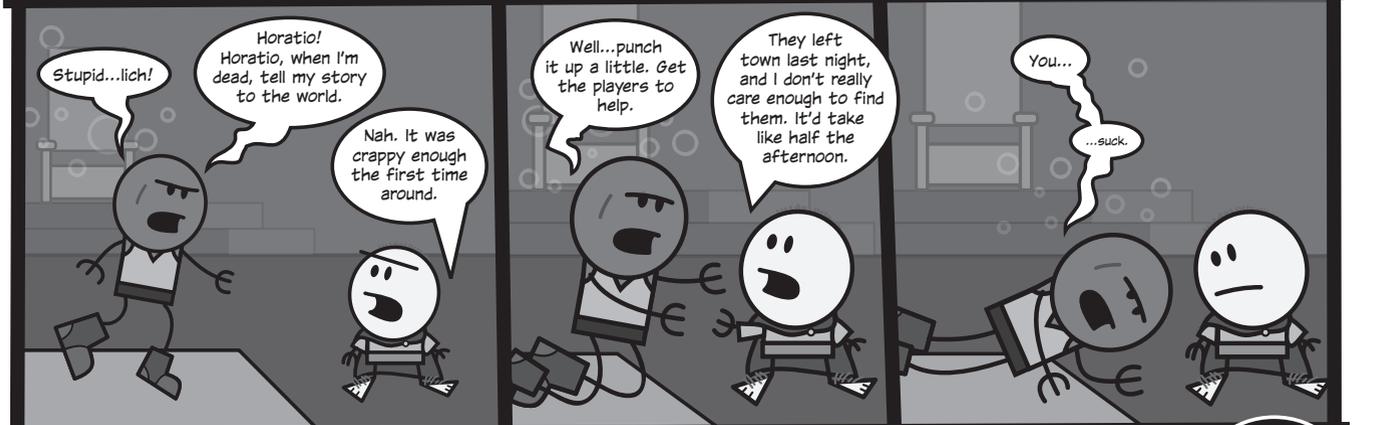
Eh, on second thought, can we get the play with the giant robot back?

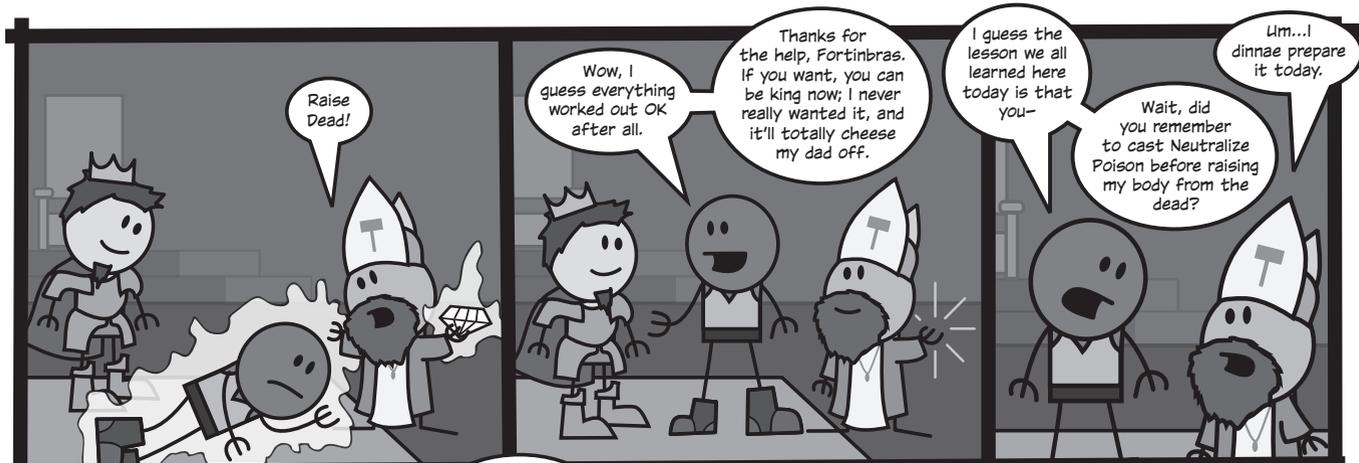
The Queen drinks to you, Greenhilt!

GLUG! GLUG! GLUG!

Huh. How did I run out of poisonberry cocktail already? Waiter!







Raise Dead!

Wow, I guess everything worked out OK after all.

Thanks for the help, Fortinbras. If you want, you can be king now; I never really wanted it, and it'll totally cheese my dad off.

I guess the lesson we all learned here today is that you-

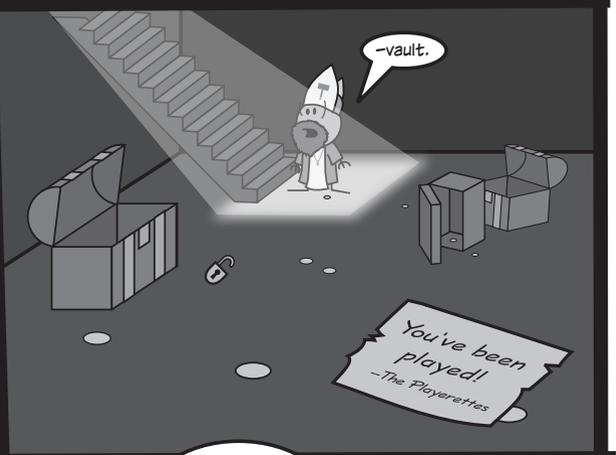
Wait, did you remember to cast Neutralize Poison before raising my body from the dead?

Um...I dinnae prepare it today.



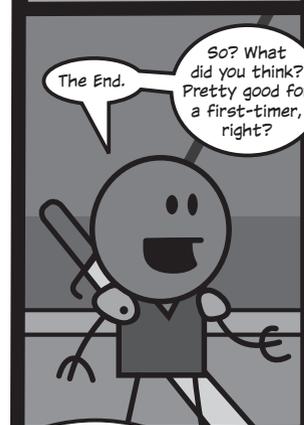
Rrrcgh!

Och, not a problem, folks! I'll just be gettin' more diamonds from tha castle's secret treasure-



-vault.

You've been played!  
-The Playerettes



The End.

So? What did you think? Pretty good for a first-timer, right?

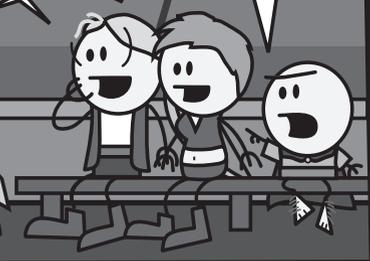


Well, Roy, it was...uh...very...

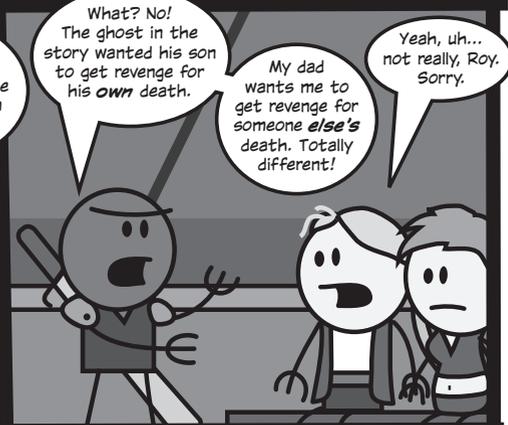
Yeah! Realistic!

Realistic!

...What does that mean?



It means you obviously ripped the whole thing off from your own life!



What? No! The ghost in the story wanted his son to get revenge for his *own* death.

My dad wants me to get revenge for someone *else's* death. Totally different!

Yeah, uh... not really, Roy. Sorry.



I must also confess that I found the names of the locations distracting. Denmark? England? *France??*

I realize it is a work of fiction, but one cannot simply string some letters together and call it a name.



An' why dinnae the hero just get tha cleric ta use Divination ta see if the king were guilty?



OK, OK, fine. I'm a crappy storyteller.

Enough stories, then. Everyone go to bed.

And then go to *sleep*. We have a big day tomorrow.

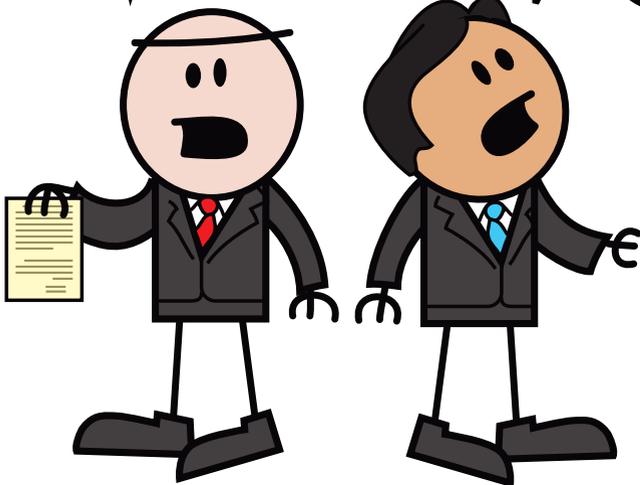


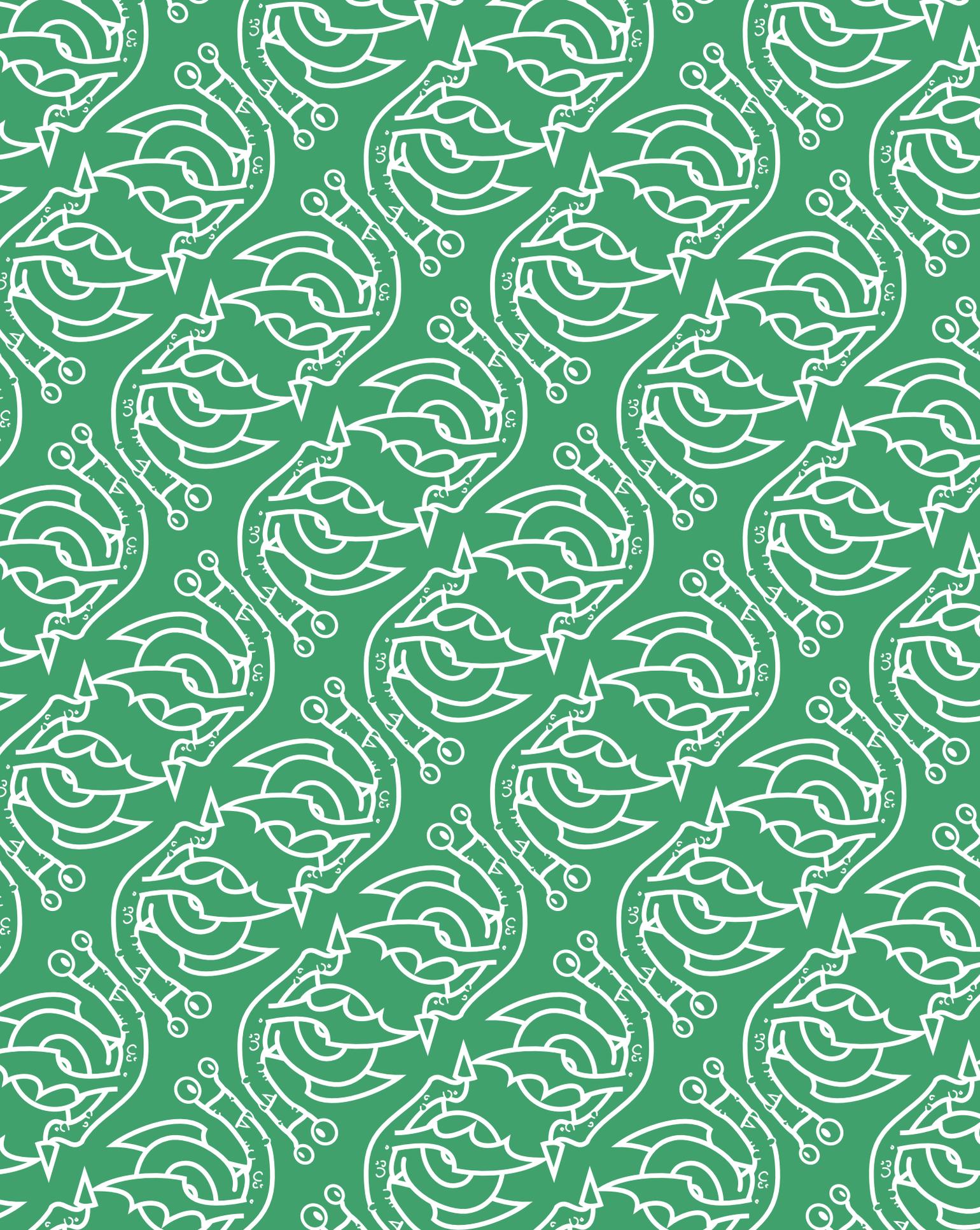
We need to get back to the *real* story.

OK, that's  
it! We're shutting  
this book down before  
it gets any worse.  
*Cease and desist!*

It's a shame  
they couldn't find  
something to put on  
this last page.

Oh! Wait!





## May contain comedy. Made on shared equipment with action-adventure.

The Order of the Stick: Snips, Snails, and Dragon Tales is by far the least necessary book we've ever released! Crammed full of ideas that have nothing whatsoever to do with the main story of Rich Burlew's award-winning *The Order of the Stick* comedic fantasy saga, this book is as optional as they come! Inside, you'll learn absolutely no secrets about the characters, nor will you see the resolution (or even acknowledgement) of any outstanding plot points. No, it's just a book full of funny comics that happen to feature the same characters doing different things. Good luck finding a physical copy, unless it's being sold by some jerk charging a huge mark-up (whoever gave them that idea?), but this digital edition is now yours!

### Stuff we put in this book:

- All 22 strips of *OOTS* that appeared in *Dragon*® magazine in 2005-2007, plus author recollections on how he got the gig.
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- Vaarsuvius' gender and the exact genus and species of the monster in the darkness.
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