



The Premier Magazine of Games and Gaming



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As I am writing this (11 Sep), *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* is getting the publicity that we used to just dream about, back when we were freezing in Gary's basement in the beginning.

If we had our 'druthers', it would not have happened in such a fashion. By now, as you read this, I hope the mystery surrounding the disappearance of James Egbert has been happily resolved. Whatever the circumstances of the incident, it has been a nightmare for his parents and family, as well as for TSR Hobbies, Inc.

It has been speculated that James was involved in some sort of *D&D* game that went beyond the realm of pencil and paper roleplaying, and may have mutated into something tragic. *D&D* was seized upon as a possible connection to the disappearance, for a variety of reasons. First, James was an avid player. Indeed, I have met him at past conventions, and he used to subscribe to *TD*.

Secondly, there was the matter of the pins in the bulletin board, and the speculation that they formed some sort of clue *ala* a *D&D* map or clue. Added to this was the fact that the pins possibly resembled the steam tunnel system under James' college, and an anonymous tip that "live" games had been played out there in the past, as well as other places on the campus. Pictures of the map were sent to TSR, for analysis, with no concrete results.

Third, the day of his disappearance was the day prior to GENCON XII, and there have been reports that attendees think that they may have seen him at the con. Sadly, convention registration doesn't show him registered anywhere.

Finally, James has an IQ that qualifies him as a genius, and *D&D* is a very intricate and complex game, appealing to bright people. This was seen as sufficient evidence to possibly link the two, at least in the headlines.

Some of the reporting has been every bit as bizarre as the circumstances surrounding the whole affair.

The chief detective hired by the parents has made some incorrect statements regarding the game that have only fueled the controversy and added to the misconceptions surrounding it. Unfortunately, the nature of the incorrect answers has led to sensationalist type speculation. *D&D* has been described as a cult-like activity, and every editor knows that cults sell papers, or dogfood, in the case of TV.

These basic mistakes have linked the supposed method of playing *D&D* to this disappearance. The detective is quoted as saying, by both UP and AP, "You have a dungeon master — he designs the characters. Someone is put into the dungeon, and it's up to him to get out." He was further quoted as saying that ". . . in some instances when a person plays the game 'you actually leave your body and go out of your

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Fantasyland had not burst, but it had taken heavy damage.

Sunday afternoon is trade-show time in the exhibit area, when dealers can mingle (as if they haven't already) and can be buyers instead of sellers for a chance. At the least, it's a period of time that is well spent by everyone in the exhibit area. Those who aren't signing contracts, shooting the breeze or catching forty winks can always get the tick backed up to the loading dock and start headin' out. Can't blame anybody for leaving early; some of them came a long way to get there, and that proves they knew it'd be worth their while.

\* \* \*

It is with no small measure of pride that I tell you I was one of the last people to leave the Parkside campus as GenCon XII faded into memory. John Baillie, who does the best impersonation of an Englishman I'd ever seen, was tied up (figuratively) overseeing the tournament finals of "Green Things," and we didn't head for Lake Geneva until well past sunset. Being the loyal fellows that we are, none of us from The Dragon would consider leaving John behind. But there were some mighty oaths being flung from the parking lot in the general direction of the Znutar.

I, for one, didn't mind the wait. It gave me time to reflect. This is supposed to be a story about first impressions, right? Well, I said to myself that night, what's your first impression?

I thought it out, word by word, in my mind. When I got home that night, I wrote it down. A week later, it became the first three paragraphs of the story you just finished reading.

## Rumbles

(cont. from page 2)

mind". A campus policeman said that dozens of *D&D* games were being played by "very secretive groups".

All of this has been grist for the journalists' mill, and has resulted in some pretty bizarre headlines, all playing on the esoteric aspects of the game, some slanted from the incorrect assumptions. A few choice samples that we have seen here, and only the gods know how many we haven't seen, include "Missing youth could be on adventure game", "Is Missing Student Victim of Game?", "Intellectual fantasy' results in bizarre disappearance", "Student May Have Lost His Life to Intellectual Fantasy Game", "Student feared dead in 'dungeon'", and more of the like.

The most important consideration here is that all of the *supposed* link to this unfortunate incident was somehow *assumed* to exist, when in truth no such link has been proven.

No one connected with *D&D*, from the authors, through the editors, typesetters, proofreaders down to the final stage, the shippers, ever envisioned anything like this happening. The slightest hint that this game somehow *may* have cost someone their life is horrifying to each and every one of us.

If this is true, and the worst fears are realized when this mystery is resolved, something is drastically wrong. If James *is* located and all ends happily, the amount of suffering and grief has certainly been disproportionate.

If the worst is true, let it serve as a painful and sad lesson to all of us that play games, that games are simply games, meant to be amusing diversions and a way to kill time in a fun fashion, and nothing more.

TSR has never ever suggested that *D&D* was meant to be acted out. How could it be, when half of what makes it so much fun — magic — can not be simulated?

This incident could conceivably affect each of you who reads this. If the 'bizarre' tag sticks, all of us should consider the idea that we might meet with scorn, or macabre fascination, or be branded as 'intellectual loonies'. In view of the distortions caused by the media, it may become incumbent now upon all of us to actively seek to correct the misconceptions now formed or forming whenever and wherever possible.

For now, we can only hope and pray that James will be located and in good health. No game is worth dying for . . .

\* \* \*

You may have noticed a couple of new names on the masthead. THE DRAGON is growing, and is no longer a one man show. John Baillie is our new UK Correspondent/Editor. When he returns to England at the end of the summer, he will be laying the groundwork for a regular feature on Wargaming in the UK. How soon it begins to appear depends on John and the vagaries of overseas mail.

As the size of TD increases, we are trying to share the good fortune with those that made it possible; you, the readers, and the authors and artists whose works fill our pages. We are paying more than ever before for stories and art. Our being able to do that helps us get more and more top quality material, to the benefit of the reader.

We have some extraordinary plans for the next few issues that I'd like to share with you. In TD 31, we will have a feature story on adventuring in that most dangerous of all the dangerous outdoor areas; the jungle. Shades of Tarzan and Bomba the Jungle Boy! Along with that feature will be included a top rate piece of fiction, probably a Gar Fox tale of Niall of the Far Travels.

TD 32 will see the inclusion of the winning module from the IDDC. We are researching the logistics at this writing, and have no idea yet of how large it will be.

TD 33 will have the new MAPPING THE DUNGEONS DM List. This one promises to be a bigger monster than the last, with new listings all over the world. In the future, TD will compile the list once a year and publish it.

TD 34 (there's a number that was only a pipe dream three years ago) will have another insert. It will be one of three things, not selected as of this writing: 1) the runner-up in the IDDC; 2) another game from Tom Wham; 3) the long awaited DIRT.

The inclusion of the IDDC winner will inaugurate a new pricing structure for TD. Issues with a major insert/inclusion will be 25-50¢ more per issue on the stands. Subscription prices will remain unaffected. The most recent game-inclusion was supposed to have inaugurated the policy (TD 28, containing *TAGTFOS*, should have been priced at \$2.50), but we overlooked the change in the rush of getting ready for GenCon and finishing THE BEST OF TD. Our oversight was your good fortune.

*Timothy Kask*

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## There's More to Come

Space does not permit us to squeeze in all of our coverage of GenCon XII in this issue, so . . .

In next month's TD, we'll have a feature with color photos of the winners in the figure-painting contest sponsored by TSR Periodicals. There will be story and photo coverage of the Strategists Club banquet. And in the Dragon's Augury next month, TD Editor Tim Kask will take you on a stroll, booth by booth, through the exhibit area. Until then . . .