

Armadillo Droppings™

ARMADILLO GAMES

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Entertainment Quarterly

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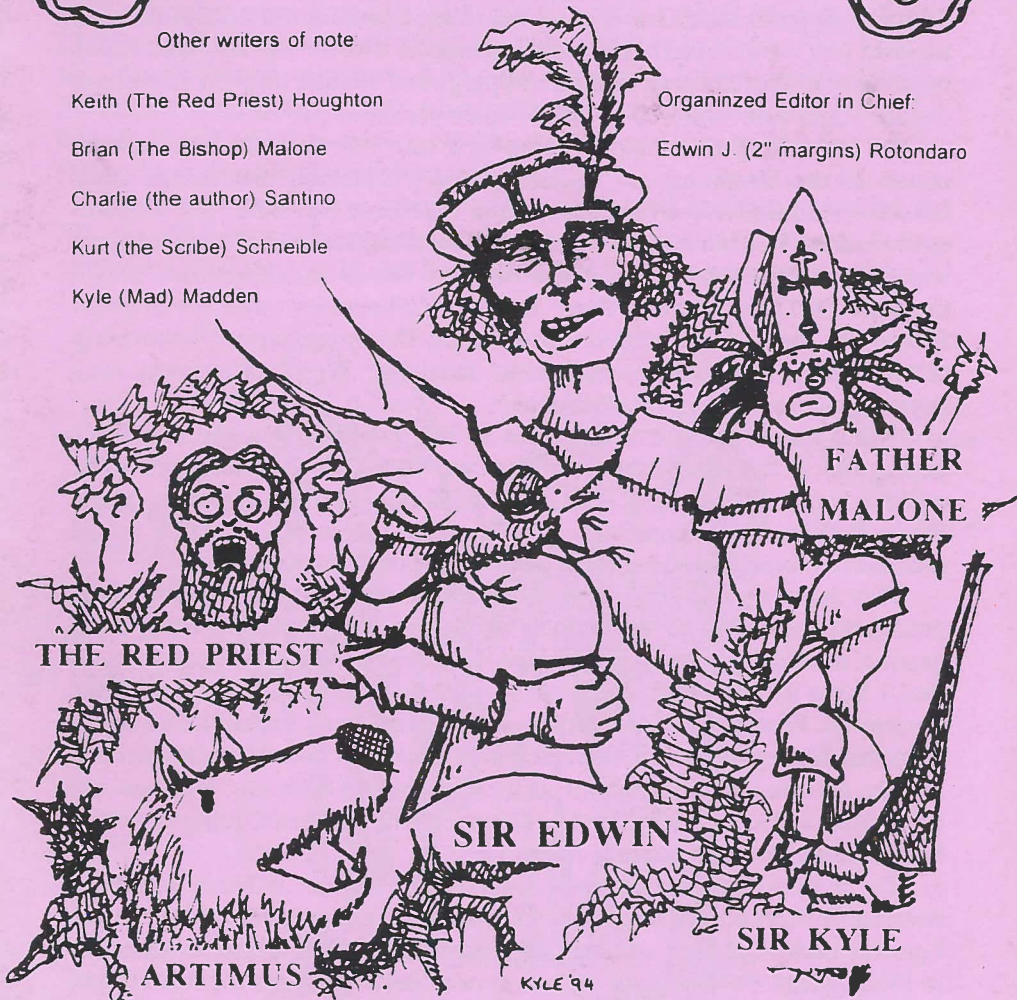
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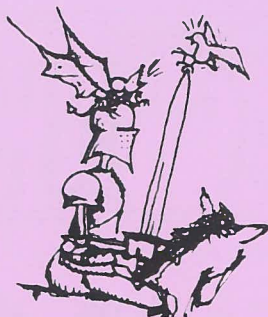
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Edwin J. (2" margins) Rotondaro



SPECIAL NEW DIRECTIONS ISSUE!

EDitorial



Don't be alarmed, yes this really is a new edition of the Armadillo Droppings. We decided to try and crank the Spring issue out right after the Winter Issue in a desperate attempt to get back on track. With any luck, the Summer issue will appear in mid to late August and the Fall issue will come together in late October or early November.

Ah the joy of publishing a fanzine. The Droppings is only a quarterly digest sized publication, but it takes up a decent amount of both Keith and my own free time. A strange thing happened to us over the last year. More retail outlets started carrying the Droppings and we had to print additional copies. Right now we're up to 1600 copies per issue (or 115lbs).

It's interesting to see how others view our efforts. Keith sent several copies of the Droppings to "Factsheet Five", a fanzine that covers other fanzines. And yes we even got reviewed in Factsheet Five #51. The reviewer examined the Fall issue which was our special Godzilla issue. The Droppings was lumped with other 'zines in the category known as "Obsessions" which included "8-Track Mind", "Baby Boomer Collectibles" and "Autograph Research". In the reviewer's kind words, the Droppings were "A funky/hip version of the Japanese aname/model fanzines." Well that's pretty slick company we're keeping these days eh?

What makes the above comment so interesting is that the reviewer's perception of the Armadillo Droppings was based on the nearest thing he could compare the sample issue to, the aforementioned Japanese 'zines. While that particular issue did cover Godzilla videos and Godzilla model kits, that's certainly not the focus of the Droppings by any means.

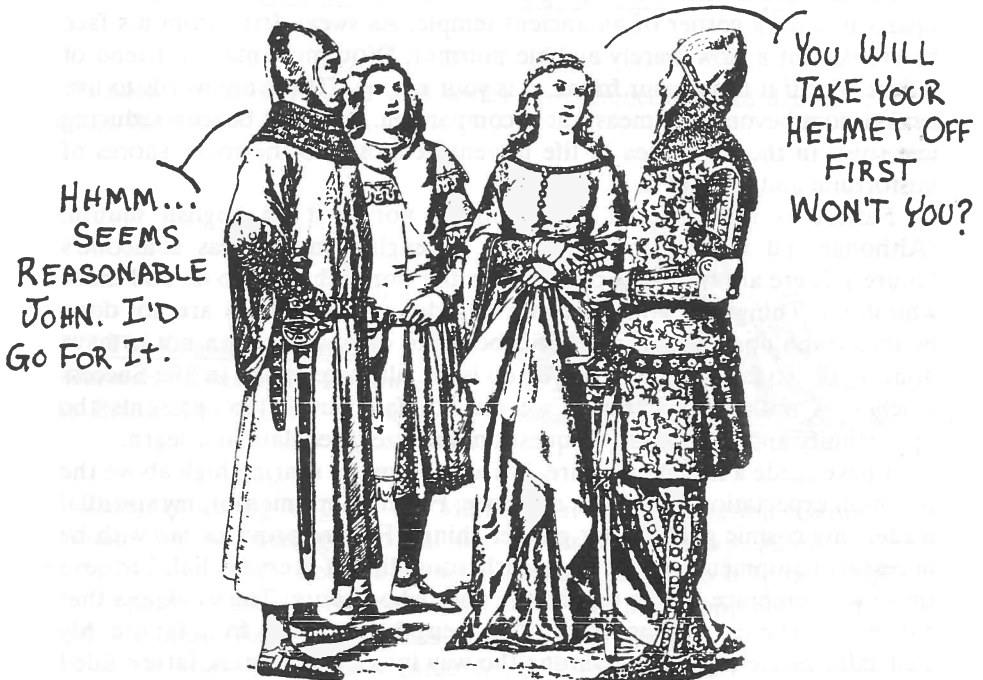
This issue of the Droppings is hopefully an example of the kind of publication we want to be, namely an entertaining publication covering gaming, modelling and popular culture. This issue premiers two new features that I hope will become a permanent or at least semi-regular part of the Droppings. First is "The Holy Order of the Enlightened Armadillo", a comic strip that features a cast of characters that do in fact bear a resemblance to friends, editors and contributors of the Droppings. With any luck you will be treated to our view of the Middle Ages and organized religion with a healthy dose of satire and low humor.

On a more interesting note, our second regular column will be a continuing short novella written by local author Charlie Santino. Charlie and I go way back to college and his own credentials include a stint as an editor at Dodd Mead Publishing as well as several collaborations for Marvel and

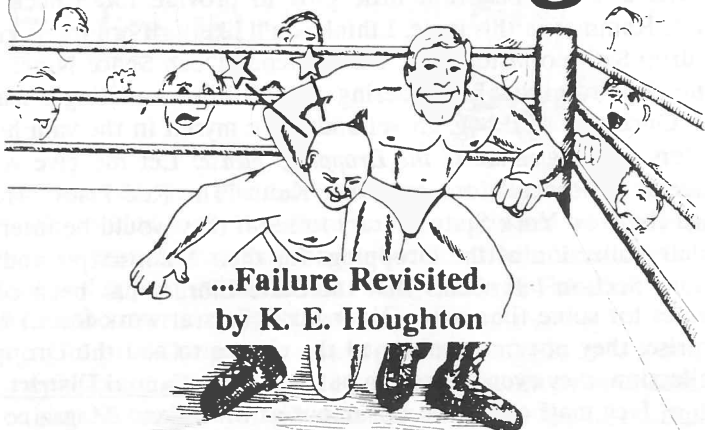
DC Comics. In short Charlie knows the biz and can be counted on to produce a worthy product. He has to after all since he's now self employed with a wife and two beautiful little girls to provide for. Check out the premier of Rammer in this issue, I think you'll like it. If not let us know and we will drop Santino faster than FOX ditched Deep Space Nine!

By now you're probably wondering where all this rambling is leading to. So am I. Once again I'll beg, grovel and abase myself in the vain hope that our readers will *contribute to the Droppings please!* Let me give you some encouragement. Recently our publisher Keith "The Red Priest" Houghton contacted the New York State Library to see if they would be interested in a complete collection of the Droppings for their Manuscripts and Special Collections Section. It seems that the State Library has been collecting other 'zines for some time now. (Your tax dollars at work folks.) Much to our surprise, they not only welcomed the chance to add the Droppings to their collection, they even offered to put it in their Capital District Culture Collection! Hey maybe we'll be as famous as Metroland Magazine. Maybe not. The important thing here is that the Droppings have become a vehicle for self expression. So far only a limited handful of us have been driving. So hop on board and join us as we avoid the wall and stay on the fast track. (How 'bout those bad metaphors gang?)

If you are interested in submitting material please feel free to call me at 518-463-8955 after 6PM or Keith Houghton at 518-356-3916. See you in the archives. I'll be the guy in the Yankees jacket with the white golf cap on.



big time wrestling



It was ten years ago that Armadillo Games published its first sports game called "Big Time Wrestling". It was 1984 and Armadillo Games was a small game shop in Scotia, NY, Ron Reagan was president and Trivial Pursuit was all the rage. "All things must pass", George Harrison said and so they did. None so unnoticed though as "Big Time Wrestling", doomed to fail before it ever started.

Somewhere in the steamy jungles of Cambodia, a bald, overweight man squats in a dark corner of an ancient temple. As sweat drips from his face he croaks out a slow, barely audible murmur, "You must make a friend of failure. For if it is not your friend, it is your enemy." These are words to live by. Wisdom beyond any measurable comparison. A far off beacon seducing lost souls in the raging sea of life to venture closer to the rocky shores of misfortune and be glad in it.

Failure is not the end of all things, nor is it an english muffin. (Although, I'd be willing to bet that an english muffin was someone's failure.) There are two types of people in the world, those who do and those who don't. Things are done by those who do, whereas things are not done by those who don't. In my mind it is better to do and fail than not to have done at all. To fail at something you do is the ultimate lesson in life. Success teaches us nothing except that we did not fail, but failure presents the opportunity and motivation to question, analyze, speculate and learn.

I have made a friend of failure. We are soulmates soaring high above the common expectations of human existence. Failure is my mentor, my spiritual leader, my cosmic guide to far greater things. Failure provides me with the necessary equipment to scale the treacherous cliffs of everyday life. I believe those who embrace failure will be the ones who endure. The weakness that comes with success is no match for the strength that comes from failure. My past failures are signposts pointing the way into the future. A future filled

with ever greater failures that I can relish and someday remember fondly like good friends who have gone away but are not forgotten. I have made a friend of failure.

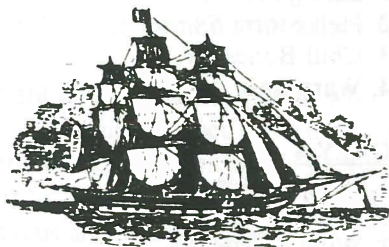
"Big Time Wrestling" is an old friend who's time has come and gone. Where did the flaw lie in my old friend that caused it to become the failure we now know it to be? It was the basic premise that sentenced this poor sod to an early grave. "Big Time Wrestling" was a spoof of professional wrestling. Everyone knows that professional wrestling is a fraud. Not a sport, but merely outrageous entertainment. Those who like professional wrestling do not want to be reminded of this, so a game that slaps them in the face with reality is considered offensive. Those who don't like professional wrestling have no interest in anything remotely connected with it, including "Big Time Wrestling". Here lies the fatal birth defect that doomed "Big Time Wrestling" to the ranks of my other past failures.

"Big Time Wrestling" was not the end of all things, nor was it an english muffin, so do not despair for I have made a friend of failure and I am a far better person for having produced "Big Time Wrestling", than you are for having not.

**(Big Time Wrestling was published by
Armadillo Games and created by
Keith Houghton and Kurt Schneible.
Copyright 1984.)**

(Ed's note - This is the first in a series of reference articles dedicated to Games Workshop products.)

The Organized Gamer
(formerly Romans in Review)
by Brian "The Bishop" Malone



Recently during a game of Man-O-War at Imagination Games in Colonie, NY, we managed to get our card sets mixed up. After sorting everything out, it was decided we would make a listing to help should this ever happen again. In the next few issues of the Droppings I will be providing these Quick Check Lists that I have drawn up.

Set 1 is Man-O-War Basic game, Magic cards and Man-O-War cards.

MAN-O'-WAR CARDS

Crew Cards 8 (blue)

1. Warrior Priests
2. Boarding Nets
3. War Leader
4. Shield Wall
5. Berserkers
6. Chain Grapples
7. Volley Fire
8. Villainous Crew

Special 8 (red)

1. Magic Standard
2. Treachery
3. Dreaded Captain
4. Magic Figurehead
5. Ship's Surgeon
6. Divine Icon of Wrath
7. War Banner
8. Rogue Captain

Hull Cards 8 (yellow)

1. Massive Hull
2. Fire Pumps
3. Streamlined hull x 2
4. Inspired Seamanship
5. Reinforced Bulkheads
6. Heavy Timbering
7. Armour plating

Guns 8 (Green)

1. Inspired Gunnery
2. Master Gunner
3. Bow Chasers
4. Crows Nest Guns
5. Long Range
6. Swivel Guns
7. Heavy Cannon
8. Fire Strike

MAGIC CARDS

AMBER 4 Casting Roll D6

1. Aura of Growth 4+
2. Serpents of Doom 4+
3. Plague Vermin 5+
4. Causeway of Light 4+

JADE 4

1. Living Mire 4+
2. Hell Storm 5+
3. Chill Bones 4+
4. Warp Shift 4+

GREY 4

1. Blood Silver 4+
2. Wind Blast 4+
3. Wind Master 4+
4. Torrent 4+

GOLD 4 Casting Roll D6

1. Blades of Battle 4+
2. Repair 2+
3. Sunblaze 4+
4. Heal 4+

LIGHT 4 Casting Roll D6

1. Fog of Limbo 4+
2. Illusion of Death 4+
3. Rotting Timbers 4+
4. Iceberg 5+

BRIGHT 4

1. Inferno 4+
2. Raging Insanity 5+
3. Panic 3+
4. Volcano 6+

CELESTIAL 4

1. Blizzard 4+
2. Sea of Glass 5+
3. Storm Force 5+
4. Storm Strike 4+

Amethyst 4 Casting Roll D6

1. Spectre 4+
2. Soaring Disc 6+
3. Burning Fist 5+
4. Wall of Flame 3+

Editor's note: This is the first installment of a new series by local luminary Charles Santino, who's really too big to be doing something like this for us. What's his angle??)

Bruno McGurk – with his kind
of brawn, who needs brains?

RAMMER!

by CHARLES SANTINO

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Part 1

Bruno McGurk tweezed a grey hair from the otherwise brownish fur on his ears and smiled, admiring himself in the mirror. For ten unendurable months he'd felt like he'd looked like hell, and he had, but now he fancied himself the best-looking ugly guy in the galaxy.

He pressed his face against the plasti-glass of his cabin's view hole and peered out at the deep, dark endlessness of space, and it was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. He didn't see it for long, though. In the blink of an eye he was on the cabin floor, writhing in agony, his left leg twisting up like a spastic pretzel.

"Freakin' cramps!"

Grabbing his calf and thigh in his huge hands he mashed his muscles into submission. Then he was back on his feet, combing his hair and admiring his slag heap of a body.

He felt boyish twinges of excitement at the prospect of two whole months gallivanting in space, before — his stomach turned at the thought of it — before it was time to return here, to Government Space Factory 1AF909: Ram Scoop Engine Assembly. He forced his breakfast of Trigellian eklets back down his esophagus and silently barked an order to every organ in his body to behave. They did.

Muscle spasms, and a weak stomach, and bacterial and viral infections, and every imaginable kind (and some unimaginable kinds) of disease...they were all part of toiling in weightlessness ten-twelfths of a year at a stretch.

Bruno knew the routine. After a few years your immune system just

shuts down entirely and you quickly die, usually of a smorgasbord of incurable disorders. Then you are replaced. Then your relatives get a check from the Dead Workers Compensation Board.

(No one ever sued the government over space worker deaths. No surprise there: lawsuits against the government had been banned long, long ago.)

So how to beat the odds? Bruno figured he'd bank most of his generous pay and quit before he died. He'd find a less hazardous occupation — like the military. But come the end of his two month vacation, his big wad of mamoo was always gone, and the finest gambling institutions and most beautiful women in known space were always a little bit happier. Next year, damn it, I'll show some restraint, Bruno resolved.

Horns sounded and lights flashed, signalling five minutes until the annual Payday brawl.

Bruno grabbed his duffel bag and rumbled down the corridor. He took the long cut so he could swing past Administrative and quick-ogle the female workers there. He calculated that if he ran as fast as he could, he could sneak a peak and still arrive at Payday Bay with the better part of a second to spare. The sight of a freshly assigned keyboard operator nearly stopped Bruno in his tracks, but he knew he didn't have time to ascertain any more than the fact that she was worth a closer look when he came back from vacation. She wasn't old and she wasn't fat — two big plusses, in Bruno's judgment.

Now Bruno had to run a notch faster than *as-fast-as-he-could*. He rounded the last turn onto the corridor approaching Payday Bay and instantly regretted his dalliance at Administrative. The mechanized door was closing. The circular portal to the Bay shrunk smaller and smaller as the plates of its diaphragm slid towards the center of the hole. On the other side of the slowly winking circle Bruno saw the laughing faces of fellow factory workers from dozens of different worlds.

He flung himself at the hole, stuffing his duffel bag into what was left of the doorway. Except in the event of an emergency, the doorway *should* rebound when it meets resistance from a duffel bag, or anything else stiffer than a facial tissue. After all, that could be someone's extremity in there. Often it was.

The door worked about as well as the rest of the space factory, which is to say it was fickle on a good day. It kept closing. Bruno tried to pull the bag out. Always the pranksters, his pals on the other side tried to pull

it in. This back-and-forth stroking stimulated the electronics of the portal in some odd fashion, the kind of inexplicable, whacko phenomenon familiar only to those who've ever had to deal at any time with any kind of machine.

The door opened. Bruno bounded in, teeth clenched and fists ready to pummel. The miscreants who'd grabbed Bruno's duffel bag turned tail and fled.

"Ya better run, ya jerks!" Bruno shouted, waving the bag over his head. A crooked smile ruptured his grim features. So they were scared of him! Well, that's the way it *should* be around here!

A pencil-thin streak of liquid fire shot past him and splattered on the floor like quicksilver magma. The duffel smacked into Bruno's nose as a second super-hot squirt cut through its handle.

"Boys, boys. No fighting, please."

The smooth, oily voice was unmistakable. Bruno looked up and saw Paymaster Rebo posed authoritatively on the catwalk above the Bay. His fire pistol, still held at arm's length, dripped yellow-red-orange blobs of incineration, a hellish faucet in need of a new washer.

It never occurred to Bruno that avoiding Rebo's scorching shower of death was the true motivation for his chums' quick retreat, not his own *macho* posturing. Simple deduction, especially in stressful situations, was rare in the McGurk mind. And right now the miniscule portion of Bruno's brain devoted to higher reasoning was fully occupied searching for a reason not to scale the catwalk and stick that fire pistol in Rebo's ear. A moment's reflection told Bruno that getting paid for ten months work was a good enough excuse not to beat up the Paymaster today. But Rebo annoyed Bruno in a big way, and Bruno's memory was as long as his temper was short. There would come a day of reckoning.

"One minute to issuance, workers! Look alive down there!"

Rebo teased the button that, when pressed, would send hundreds of thousands of newly printed bills — in 10-, 20-, 50-, and 100-kvecky denominations — blasting out of a half-dozen chutes aimed at the two hundred or so laborer-creatures waiting in the Bay. Then they would round up as much loot as they could cram into their duffel bags. After three minutes, and not a second longer, Rebo would burn off the excess cash like dead leaves. Stragglers took their chances. Bruno hated toting around that much legal tender on vacation, but space factory workers were such a bad credit risk that the government restricted them to cash-only transactions.

Bruno noticed that the chutes were smaller and greasier-looking than last year's models and that they were tilted down at a more severe

angle. When the first money-starved, impatient worker tried to clamber up one of the chutes (there were always a few each Payday), Bruno understood the efficacy of the alterations. The virtually frictionless lubricant applied to the insides of the chutes, combined with the smaller diameter and steeper pitch, made it impossible to penetrate the tunnels.

The hapless worker fell out just as the cash came flying.

What followed was a feeding frenzy of unparalleled senselessness. There was more than enough money for everyone and more than enough time for everyone to fill their bags and get out before Rebo set fire to the place. Yet even before the first bill had touched the floor, the fighting began. Kidneys were punched, eyes poked, teeth knocked out, stomachs elbowed, as the precious seconds ticked-ticked-ticked away. Bruno, an old hand at this game, uncharacteristically resisted the urge to smash and stomp; he concentrated on collecting his yearly wages.

A octopussian worker-thing from Kurgosh IV whip-snapped a tentacle at Bruno's legs, tripping him up.

"Yoo hoggon du beeg beels, MeeGoik," the mollusc challenged.

"Up yers, skoongeel," Bruno parried wittily. "Yer wastin' time — go find yer own big bills, stoopit!"

"Six seconds to evacuation," said Rebo from the catwalk.

"Yoo roob mee dee wroong wee, hoomon."

"Five."

"I'll rub ya through a cheese grater if ya don't get off my back!"

"Four."

The octopus was the butt of countless cooking jokes, and the utensil reference pushed him over the edge. He wrapped twelve of his seventeen tentacles around Bruno's head and used the rest for leverage.

"Three."

Bruno pulled him off, threw him hard against the floor, and resumed his quest for cash. His bag was fully packed at last.

"Two."

Bruno and two hundred workers made a desperate dash for the door. A sudden tentacle around Bruno's ankle stopped him cold.

"One."

"Gee mee yoo bog, MeeGoik."

"Zero!"

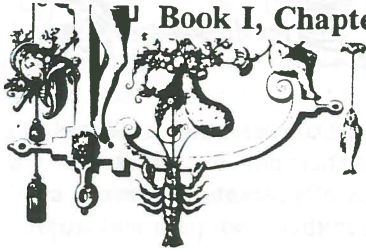
They fought over Bruno's bag, knee-deep in currency.

Rebo shot his fire pistol at the Bay floor, instantly turning it into a raging inferno. The wildfire raced towards the two combatants.

(to be continued)



A reading from the "Temptations of St. Edwin the Nervous"
Book I, Chapter I: "I lose my pants"



The Lord said My servant has grown lax and fat and does not show the proper respect. I will test his faith.

And lo so it came to be that on Holy Thursday as he dressed for work, St. Edwin the Nervous did find his green pants missing from his most excellent double breasted suit. And he was most anxious and vexed and did doubt in the Lord.

Then an angel of the Lord did appear and said "Go ye forth and search for your pants so that you will not embarrass yourself further. St. Edwin then set forth on the quest for the holy green pants. And his quest took him to many strange places in the wilderness of the Grand Street parking lot. And the pants remained hidden for it was not the Lord's will that they be revealed at this time.

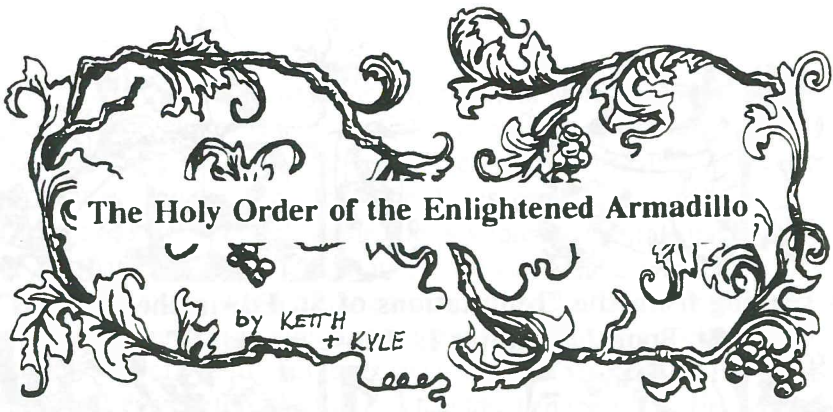
So St. Edwin did go unto the land of the Capital Police to further abase himself of the sin of pride. And still the blessed pants were not found. He was truly at his lowest ebb.

The unbelievers who were his co-workers did mock him and say "Whose bed did you leave them under Eddy?"

Yet his true faith did not waiver. He knew that he would one day be reunited with his pants, if not in this life, then in heaven. So he did trudge the familiar path back to his car and kept a vigilant eye out for his trousers.

And behold in the fading sunlight he came across a forlorn bundle of cloth that had survived the snows and rains and attentions of the beasts of the field. The blessed pants were found and there was great rejoicing. For that which was lost had been found and all things are possible in the Lord!





During the long (or was it thick) Ages of Darkness, the world was filled with pain and stupidity. The feudal kings and their nobles competed with the Church for control of the miserable masses of peasants that made up the vast majority of the population. Wallowing in their own pain and stupidity, the masses were in too much pain and too stupid to realize that they were indeed in pain and stupid. For pain and stupidity was all that the Church and the Monarchy was willing to dole out to the hapless masses and thus pain and stupidity was all they knew.

Amongst the dark vastness of the painfully stupid were a few barely flickering lights. One such flicker was Sir Kyle of Madden, a Teutonic Knight so pure, so honest, so simple that even the stones beneath his feet were considered more witty than he. It was this great intellect, coupled with the fact that he had a nice castle in a wealthy bishopric and plenty of peasants to push around, that led him to believe that a balance of power must be kept between Holy Mother Church and the Divine Right of Kings. For only in this way would the world remain unchanged and pure as it was intended, or perhaps he just liked kicking peasants now and then. But



FATHER MALONE



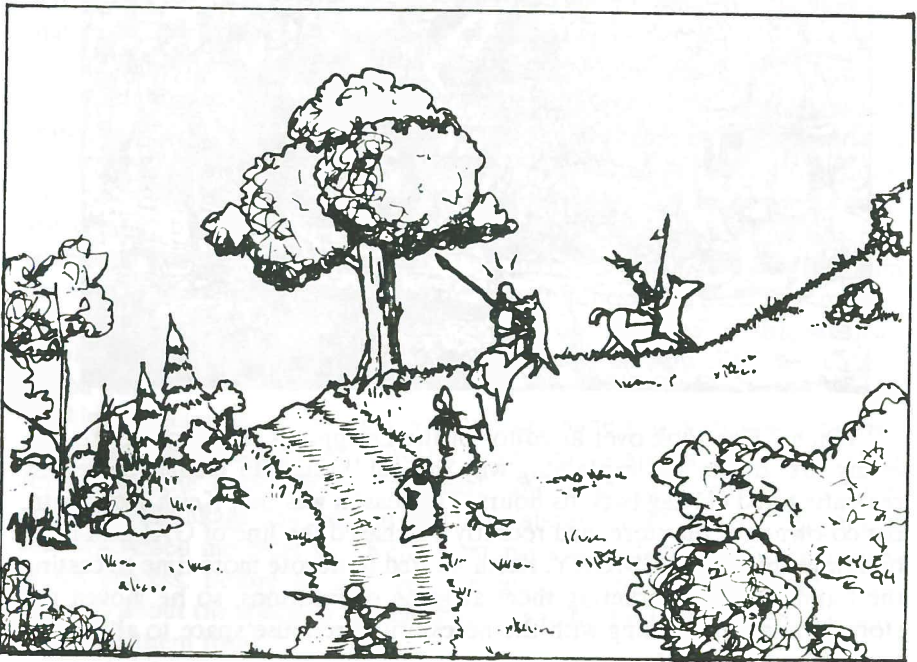
SIR KYLE

whatever his motives, he vowed on his mother's grave (which was odd, because she wasn't dead yet) that he would uphold the principles of both Church and State and with any luck retire a wealthy man.

Thus it came to be that Sir Kyle of Madden was chosen by both the Evil King George XVII and the Archbishop of Bousenberry to escort Pope John Thomas III through the countryside of England to insure his safety and basically show him a good time.

Sir Kyle would be accompanied by Tom Parker his faithful manservant and advisor on all things worldly. Christopher the apprentice cod piece maker was also pressed into service to see to any personal needs Sir Kyle may have. And finally, Father Malone, the local Bishop would attend to the Pope should he have any Holy requirements during his visit to the island kingdom of England.

The Archbishop of Bousenberry, Evil King George XVII and Pope John Thomas III were all satisfied with these arrangements, and thus



...The Journey Began...

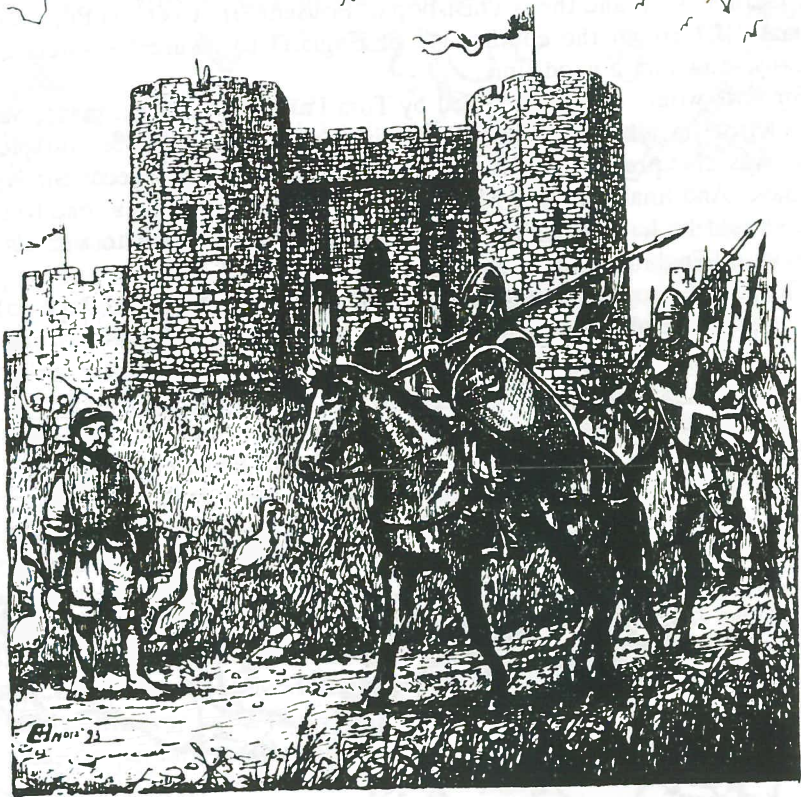


A Visit to GALLIA MINIATURES

by

Ed Rotondaro

w/ assistance from Keith Houghton



When I first took over as editor of the Droppings way back in '92, one of my first duties was explaining why the old Armadillo Games Store was relocating and cutting back its hours. The reason was that Keith Houghton, the co-owner of the store, had recently purchased the line of GALLIA resin buildings from the ARMORY. Keith wanted to devote more time to casting the buildings and marketing them at game conventions, so he moved the store to a larger building with the necessary warehouse space to allow him to run the business full time.

Well as things turned out, the economy was in a slump and Gallia wasn't selling the way Keith would have liked. He then closed Armadillo Games and found another smaller warehouse to run GALLIA on a part time basis. A funny thing happened. Due to a lot of hard work, GALLIA became popular again to the point where it was necessary to make the trip from his home to the warehouse to work on orders every weekend. The problem was the new warehouse was very cold in winter and this effected the casting

process. The inconvenience of traveling to a site without a phone coupled with an act of vandalism this fall convinced Keith that the next logical step was to convert his garage into the necessary space and run the business from his home. This would give him the flexibility to work anytime he felt without having to travel.

Well I visited the newly expanded garage and watched the first pouring of resin back in January. The nicely insulated and comfortably heated shop is a welcome change from the old warehouse on Foster Avenue. One can actually sit around in shirt sleeves and drink coffee in comfort.

If you have ever purchased a Gallia resin building, you know that they are not exactly inexpensive. Well there's a reason for that, the process of casting resin miniatures is both labor intensive and time consuming. Basically there are two ways of casting resin; gravity casting and spin casting. Spin casting resin works well with rounded shapes and does produce nice, slick miniatures in a reasonable amount of time, but it requires additional equipment and is not as good for sharply defined objects such as square buildings or large objects such as 25mm castle towers. One of the problems with sharply defined squared edged shapes is that the edges trap air bubbles that can distort the finished casting.

Gallia products are gravity cast in specially made RTV (room temperature vulcanizing) silicone rubber molds. One of the most important tasks that Keith had to undertake when he first bought the company was to create new production molds for many of the buildings in his catalog. Molds wear out over time, and when they do, the casting quality suffers. The molds are created by pouring the RTV silicone into the master mold which is boxed (or dammed) on five sides. The master is then put in a vacuum chamber to remove the air and ensure proper adhesion. The curing process usually takes from 24 to 48 hours. To give you an idea of the expenses involved, the special RTV silicone used in mold making costs \$300 a five gallon pail.

Unlike many manufacturers who use urethane resins or epoxy resins, Gallia uses an unsaturated polyester resin that is specially formulated to reproduce fine detail in casting small and medium sized objects with minimum shrinkage and heat production (about 250 F). One of the things that impressed me most was Keith's extensive knowledge of the chemistry of his process. Before he acquired the company, he put in several hours learning about the specialty products he uses in his business as well as where to obtain them from.

With this somewhat lengthy introduction, let's see how a building is cast. Normally Keith mixes up a half gallon of pre-promoted resin in a paper bucket. The term pre-promoted means that the resin is designed to react with a special catalyst. This catalyst, Organic peroxide is added by weight and will cause the resin to cure at room temperature. The gel time is approximately 15 minutes with a full cure in 24 to 48 hours.

A small amount of black dye is added to color the resin and mixed with

a special mixer attached to a power drill. This is followed by extremely fine grade pure white Calcium carbonate. The calcium has several functions; it acts as a filler, it reduces shrinkage during curing to almost nothing, it helps absorb heat and finally it makes the resin very resilient. The dye and the calcium also give the resin its standard Gallia gray color.

The resulting mixture, after straining through a screen, is then poured halfway up into each silicone mold and the details are hand brushed in to reduce the amount of air bubbles trapped on the surface. A plug is then placed in the mold. The plug is a spacer usually made of silicone that takes up space in the center of the mold. This makes the item hollow and reduces the weight once the resin has cured and the plug is removed. Once the plug is in place, resin is added to fill in the remaining gaps. The curing time is once again between 24 and 48 hours. Bear in mind that while the resin cures, the mold cannot be used. This means that only so many items can be cast at a given time. In the case of small scale buildings, Keith usually has several duplicates of each mold, but when you are talking about something specialized like the large 25mm ruined castle keep, there's only one or two at best. This means that it is quite difficult to mass produce resin buildings of the quality and size that Gallia offers in its catalog.

If a quicker curing time is desired, or if the casting area cannot be kept at 70 degrees, a cobalt solution can be added to accelerate the process by increasing the internal heat during curing. This gives you a gel time of 5 minutes and a curing time of four hours.

Once the item is completely cured, it is removed from the mold and the bottom of each piece is sanded flat using a large table belt sander. (A very dusty process requiring the operator to wear a respirator, goggles and other protective gear.)

Since many of the components of Gallia buildings are specialized, they must be bought in bulk at considerable expense. The polyester resin comes in 55 gallon barrels weighing over 500 lbs, while the calcium carbonate comes in 50 lb bags on 2500 lb pallets. Oh did I mention that these are smallest quantities you can buy of these raw materials?

Resin casting is a very labor intensive job which requires a good amount of time. This doesn't include making master molds, making production molds, sales and advertising, maintenance, packaging, attending conventions and shows, ordering supplies and all the usual paperwork.

Gallia produces a wide range of structures in three scales, micro-armor (1/285th), 15mm and 25mm. The bulk of the line covers historical buildings with some fantasy. A good deal of the micro-armor buildings can be used in games such as Space Marine or Battletech, while the 15mm pieces are very popular with historical miniatures gamers. The 25mm line aimed at the diorama builder and the miniature gamer, although some of the pieces such as the fantasy temple with its sacrificial altar could be used in role playing games to create highly detailed dungeons, etc. If you're interested in obtaining a free catalog, just write to Keith Houghton at the address on the front cover.



The Garden Path by Vernon "Snuffy" Sodgrass

First of all, let me apologize for my lengthy absence from this fine publication. I was on assignment for the Rural Guerilla, a trade publication which asked me to investigate the harvesting of land mines in Guatemala. Well I'm back and on my feet, thanks to effective microsurgery.

That time of year has come to talk about your spring garden. Now is the time for turning the soil and planting. Sequence is important here - turn the soil first, then plant.

But what to plant? That depends on you. Remember, plant crops in the spring that you will want to eat in the Fall. An obvious point, perhaps but I'm consistently surprised by people who plant crops they don't like to eat. For example, Summer squash. Most people plant it because it grows in the summer and has the word "summer" in it. I guess they feel as if they have no other choice. But let's face it, who likes it? I mean you can't eat "summer". It's a time of year, not a food. As far as the "squash" part of it is concerned, I could squash a caterpillar under my sneaker, but who would want to eat that?

Horse radish is another good example. It's grown and sold everywhere, even though most people have no interest in eating either horses or radishes. So why would it be any different if you grow them together? I guess that's why the grocery shelves are full of the stuff, wasting space and gathering dust.

So what do you plant? Personally, I like a combination of green vegetables and tubers. 'Panama Red' on the other hand, grows nothing but coffee beans and blueberry squatties. But hey, this is my column.

For a green vegetable I prefer stinkweed. It looks great in a tossed salad. Or, cook it as a change of pace in your quiche or casserole. Delicious!

The potato (no "e" at the end please) is the predictable selection during any discussion of deep-rooted vegetables. For an alternative, how about the tulip bulb? Most folks think of the tulip only as a pleasant flower. yes, it's tasty eaten in a salad or with pasta sticks. The tulip bulb however, is an unheralded delicacy. Either cooked or raw, the tulip bulb could provide many satisfying and nourishing meals, if only more people would give it a chance. I have, and look where it's gotten me: a world renowned author, lecturer, and I daresay, media personality.

Now a final word about protecting your crops. Believe me there are many evildoers out there, both human and animal, who would love to decimate your hard work. There are a number of possible reasons for this ranging from envy of your gardening skills, to plain and simple hunger.

Regardless of the reason, your valuable crops must be protected. A few carefully inserted land mines can do the job, but let me provide a word of caution. Prepare and retain a detailed schematic diagram listing the exact location of each mine. Either that, or find yourself a good microsurgeon before you start planting.

Next time: Harvesting and Preserving



BATTLETECH TACTICAL HANDBOOK

a review by
Ed Rotondaro



The BattleTech Tactical handbook is FASA's latest supplement for their popular BattleTech combat system. Similar in size and shape to their various technical Readouts, it retails for \$12.00.

Those of you out there who have been reading the Droppings for some time now that I tend to review each and every BattleTech release. You may also recall that I tend to be more than a little critical of mediocre supplements. Well the reasons for this are twofold: first off I have been playing the game since it first came out in 1985. Obviously I must still like the system after all these years. Secondly, I have spent considerable amounts of money on the various supplements, map sheet sets, role playing materials and games. This entitles me to gripe whenever FASA doesn't do a good job.

After that somewhat lengthy introduction, let me begin by saying that the new Tactical handbook is further evidence of the maturation of the BattleTech system. Like the Compendium before it, this Handbook sets out to revise the rules where necessary and offer gamers some interesting optional rules and new equipment for their consideration.

FASA has created a three level system for Battletech. All rules and mechs from the basic game and the 3025 Readout are considered level one. Level two includes mechs from the 3050 and 3055 readouts as well as rules from the Battletech Compendium. Level Three includes mechs and rules from the new Tactical Handbook as well as the "Unbound" supplement. These rules are considered optional and are not meant to be used in official Battletech tournaments, but can be used in your own campaigns. Under the new level system, Land Air Mechs (LAMs) are considered to be Level Three technology and as such cannot be used in tournaments. This is probably due to the recognition that most GMs don't like the LAM rules and usually ban them from their games.

Among the new rules are a reinterpretation of Thunder LRMs. In their original incarnation, Thunder LRMs could easily hit any target since they were fired at the target hex rather than a mech or vehicle. Since firing at hexes is done at a -4 modifier, you could almost guarantee success. Under the new system, you still target a hex, but any unit in the hex can leave without setting off the mines since they were able to detect where the LRMs delivered the munitions. This helps balance out the ease of delivery and makes the Thunder LRMs more acceptable.

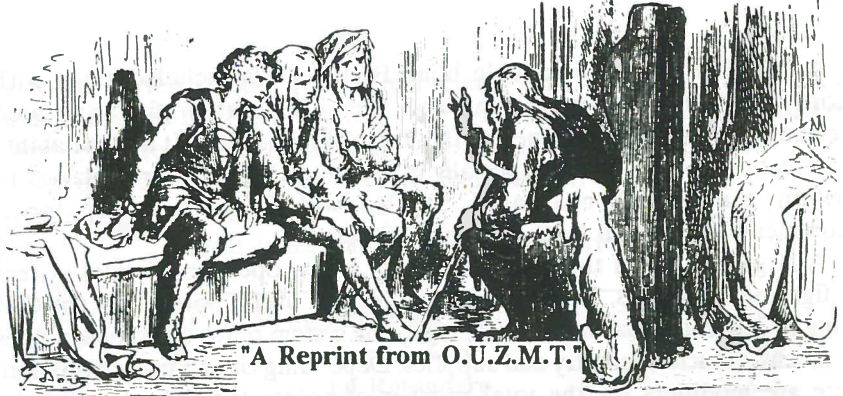
A complete system of double blind Battletech is included along with record sheets to plot movement and fire. This system first appeared elsewhere, but it is more refined in the Tactical Handbook. It has the ability to recreate "the fog of war", especially in urban settings and force players to perform genuine reconnaissance. It also will slow down play, so I recommend it for small lance on lance battles.

A large portion of the book consists of a new operational rules system for fighting campaigns. This is definitely the most useful portion for any GM trying to generate a Battletech campaign. The system relies on combat values for mechs, vehicles, infantry and supplies. Depending on the type of mission, there are modifiers for the total number of points the defender and the attacker get to spend on units, logistical support and reinforcements. There are a variety of battles that can be generated such as a meeting engagement, pursuit, counterattack and planetary landing. After each battle, the victory points are compared and the level of victory is determined. A decisive victory can mean that the winner gets a favorable setup for the next battle. There is a table for random events between actions such as accidental ammo explosions when rearming your mechs, or sabotage during the repair phase. Overall, this operational system was desperately needed and can be modified to suit the type of campaign you wish to run.

The final section of the manual has dozens of new weapon systems, mainly for the Inner Sphere although there are some new sensor systems for the Clans. The bulk of the new weapons are Inner Sphere copies of Clan autocannons and streak missile systems. This makes sense since of all the Clan high tech weapons, the easiest to duplicate would be the improved autocannons. The Inner Sphere also has some unique new LRM systems such as the extended range LRMs which can reach out to 38 hexes. The new Thunderbolt LRMs are large single missiles that deliver the full damage of an LRM system. For instance a Thunderbolt-20 system would do 20 points of damage in one spot, sort of like an autocannon. The down side is the systems generate more heat than conventional LRMs and their range is only 18 hexes. Also, they weigh more and carry far less ammo per ton. Still they are a potent addition to the Inner Sphere's arsenal.

On the defensive side, there are new armor types that provide additional protection against lasers or tandem charge missiles. The downside is each armor type is bulkier than ferro-fibrous armor and each has a vulnerability to certain attacks. A new anti-missile laser system is available for both the Inner Sphere and the Clans. Players no longer need worry about running out of anti-missile ammo with this system, but the system generates 3D6 heat whenever it is used and can only engage one flight of missiles per combat round. Still it is worth using since it only weighs one ton.

Overall, the Tactical handbook is a much needed compilation for the serious experienced Battletech player. The new equipment will probably start showing up in future supplements so this is a good way to introduce it to those who want more variety in their games. The operational rules alone make this Handbook a necessity for any GM running a campaign. While not perfect, the Battletech Tactical Handbook still rates an A+.



The following article is reprinted by permission from the pages of "The Official Unofficial 'Zine of the Muselix Throng," Volume 3, Issue 5, published by Steven Roberts (Snafu Moose).

A brief explanation may be in order. O.U.Z.M.T. is the newsletter of the Moose Illuminati. The Moose are avid promoters of their favorite sport, Rat Pucking. Rat Pucking is a game which entails whacking a rat about with a stick until you bash the rat into a predesignated object. The Moose have published official rules for this game and a brief history which suggests that Rat Pucking was the medieval forerunner of the modern game of golf. This may or may not be true, but according to Mendacious Moose the game of golf originated in an entirely different manner. Thus I give you:

Rat-Pucking De-Bunked by Mendacious Moose

In order to correct certain errors of fact previously published in this scandalous periodical, (Ed's note - he means OUZMT, not the Droppings) the true origins of the art form and religion of golf must be revealed to its readership. The invention of golf, and two related Scottish habits go back to a dim time when the Scots and the French were allied by their mutual hatred and distrust of the English. There was a social contract as well as joint military action at this time.

It was immediately made clear however, that though allied, the French arrogantly regarded themselves as the superior race, far more clever and sophisticated. They looked down on the Scots as being 'hicks', 'rubes' and rather stupid.

Because of this attitude, they played practical jokes on the Scots. Most of these were short-lived, simple and crude and did not leave a mark on either culture. Three jokes however, left a permanent imprint on Scottish life.

The first of these of course was golf. The French nobleman, Francois de Frottage, invented the game to be the most intentionally profligate and expensive use of large tracts of real estate in the history of mankind (at least prior to municipal parking lots). He set up the rules for equipment and play which defied logic. Particularly insidious was the necessity of using clubs to

hit the ball out of the sand, tall grass and deep woods, when any damn fool could tell that throwing it out would be more effective. Scoring based on strokes, so that a six inch putt counted the same as a 300 yard drive was also his idea. The rule that the best player who scored low, (meaning high), must tee off first on the next hole, hitting toward the kilts of the players ahead of him may have been part of a French plot of genocide.

After hundreds of years, the Scots still have not caught on to the cruelty of the game and how angry and depressed that are after a frustrating day on the links. And the French laugh behind their backs.

The second major joke was the bagpipes. Invented by an ancestor of Giles de Paris, the Marquis de Sade last of a family long known for its cruelty and perversions, this so-called musical instrument has inflicted more pain on the Scots and on innocent bystanders than any sound source developed prior to the electric guitar. The Scots have not caught on to this joke either.

The third joke backfired on the French by giving the Scots the fortitude to bear the first two jokes. Since the invention of the still, the Scots had always made whiskey. The French did not approve, because they were a nation of winos, then as now. They sought to ruin whiskey for the Scots and suggested that malted barley be toasted dry over smoky peat fires prior to fermentation. The French plot was to create a beverage tasting like the liquid produced from washing off a ham with turpentine as it comes from the smokehouse.

Imagine the French surprise to find that the new whiskey made the Scots healthy, frugal and wise. It gave them the fortitude to batter a little ball around a golf course in the rain and wind, and left them immune to the pneumonia that such activity causes in less blessed races. Whereas ordinary whiskey caused intoxication, Scotch gave only a gentle glow, a feeling of well-being and deep insight into the mysteries of the universe. It was also a good substitute for iodine and the first wonder drug.

It fortified their senses sufficiently to enable them to withstand the sound of angry bagpipes and let them delude themselves into thinking it music, but it also gave them the guts to and wisdom to kick the French the hell out of Scotland so they could go on hating the English in peace and comfort, if not quiet.

Thus it has been ever since.

Kingly Decree

**I've been on forty-five minutes
and I have to get off.**



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