

Summer 2009 Issue 10

D&D D&D **RPG**

SNEAK PREVIEW

KOBOLD™

Quarterly

A Magazine of Kobolds & Dragons

Stout and Sturdy: Ed Greenwood's

DWARVEN ALES



Big Trouble: Ecology of the

HILL GIANT

John Wick's

WICKED HALFLINGS

Secrets of the

GELATINOUS CUBE

Interview with

JEFF GRUBB

Deadly Skill Challenges / Back from the Dead / Clockwork Hounds / Map of the Sand Dragon Inn / Better PC Backgrounds / Rampant Elf Lust

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The sorceress in red and her two feathered friends shine with all the magic that Malcolm McClinton can conjure. This is McClinton's second appearance on our cover.

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Ethical and Unethical Gaming



Dour brain is strong enough to generate a placebo effect that can really help heal your body. Your mind can dream up entire worlds and adventures and characters. Invention and science and story are powerful forces that change the world, and the way we see it.

Roleplaying games connect us to that power, and put it in our hands to amuse and entertain our friends. We have adventures, foiling villains and killing horrible monsters, and we loot the bodies.

Ah, yes. The plundering of tombs and the rifling through packs and purses for a few more gold pieces. Is it really heroic to dig through some dead bandits pockets or to snatch a golden chain from a drow priestess's neck? I used to think so. Conan was very big on snatching loot and making off with it. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser were thieves by profession. So loot is a universal good, right?

I'm not so sure. And I wish treasure were a smaller part of the standard game.

Maybe the group I game with has grown a little older and wiser. There's no "search the bodies" rogue in my regular group. Our favorite pyromaniac gamer moved to the UK. Maybe it's just a lull until we recruit someone more, er, colorful.

Or maybe it's just that too much real-world looting, torturing, killing, and despair makes me appreciate real heroism. I've always found priests and paladins the most interesting classes from a roleplaying perspective. They've got faith, they've got a code, and a cruel DM can make

their lives miserable. And yet, the hard questions of taking the right action aren't all that hard for the devout and the noble, who can lean on their code to make roleplaying choices.

Which is why it's always so interesting to me that those ethical dimensions of character get set aside when the DM describes a locked chest. Even the paladin wants loot, because that holy slayer will help take down demons and protect the civilized world from darkness. It's loot with a cause. Vows of poverty are a minor inconvenience to the PC, easily rationalized away.

Someday I want to write a set of pregenerated PCs for a convention adventure. They would be a warrior maiden paladin like Joan of Arc, an assassin dedicated to the God of Death, a devout priest of some extra-shiney Goodness – all characters with strong codes of conduct. And send them out into a set of increasingly vile tasks: Stealing money from goblin orphans, maybe. Or defending a corrupt merchant-prince. Or kidnapping hostages to secure a treaty. An adventure full of dilemmas, in other words.

I predict that most gaming groups would sail right through without a qualm or hesitation, as long as the goal was defined as good. But the one player who said "Is it right to steal from the tomb of a saint?" --- that's the guy I'd want to invite to my home game.

What about your gaming group: Are they paragons or plunderers at heart? And does it matter, as long as you are enjoying the game?

Wolfgang Baur
Kobold in Chief