

# DADDY ISSUES

The background of the cover features the silhouettes of a man and a boy standing on a grassy hill. The man is on the right, taller, with his right arm around the boy's shoulder. The boy is on the left, shorter. They are both facing away from the camera, looking out over a vast landscape under a dramatic sunset sky with orange and yellow clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow behind the figures.

SEPTEMBER 2019

**DADS GONE WILD!**

**LISTS AND TIPS, OH MY!**

**IGNEOUS B.I.G. TRIES HIS HAND AT POETRY!**

***PLUS!* RON STAMPLER RETURNS WITH MORE MOVIE REVIEWS!**



**ANTHONY BURCH**  
DADDY MASTER

## BEGINNER SYSTEMS

### FIVE D&D ALTERNATIVES FOR NEWBIE DMS

**Dungeons & Dragons** can be intimidating.

At its best, it's a streamlined vehicle for cooperative storytelling and strategic combat. At its worst, it's both too simple and too complex. (For example, there are no rules for how setting someone on fire should work, but try explaining how prepared spells and spell slots and spell components work without answering at least five clarifying questions.)

D&D is also the most popular roleplaying system, which means your players are at least passingly familiar with it, which means they might actually notice when you're DMing it wrong.

And a big part of being a DM is about tricking your players into not knowing that you're DMing wrong.

So -- if you want to start DMing a game for your friends, it's entirely possible that **Dungeons & Dragons** might not be the right system for you. Here are some ones you might want to try instead:

#### NUMENERA

**Numenera** is the first system I ever DM'd for, and I had a blast doing it. It's mechanics are just simple enough to grok (you've only got three stats) and just complex enough to ask your players to make fun, weird choices (your stats are also your health *and* your

mana, so the more cool stuff you do, the closer you get to death).

Its world is also beautifully weird. Rather than appealing to the typical Tolkien fantasy, the world of **Numenera** is all about weirdness and mystery. **Dungeons & Dragons** is about going into a dungeon and fighting bad guys to get loot. **Numenera** is about coming across bizarre situations/creatures/technology and trying to understand how they work.

The types of folks I tend to play with often prefer the latter to the former, so we had a great time finding weird-ass items (a coffee mug that turns any liquid inside it into orange juice) and using them to solve equally weird-ass problems (stuck inside the belly of a continent-sized giant, one player dropped the mug into its stomach fluids, subsequently causing all of its internal liquids to turn into orange juice, which resulted in the giant vomiting them all out).

#### BLADES IN THE DARK

**Blades in the Dark** is basically *Dishonored* and/or *Thief* as a coop tabletop game. It's fuckin' great

**Blades in the Dark** will seem intimidating at first - the average fanmade "cheat sheet" runs about six pages. But **Blades** is actually spectacularly easy to DM because, unlike many other roleplaying systems, the players drive all the action. As the DM, you don't have

to come up with prebaked stories or encounters for your players: they'll just tell you vaguely what they want to do ("let's get some blackmail material on that spirit-worshipping countess we met last session"), and then you'll ask questions and provide gameplay guardrails to keep everything moving.

I've never spent a single minute on prep for my **Blades** campaign, and that's because the system's mechanics are so damn well-designed. Your players will be a crew of ne'er-do-wells, and they'll have to go up against other criminal syndicates with their own motives and power levels and opinions of each other. I don't need to spend an hour thinking up a dungeon, because the players will look at the interconnected relationships that make up the city of Duskwall and come up with their own cool plans.

"Ooh," my players once said, "we're at war with the Red Sashes, who are way higher level than us...but the Red Sashes make their money by selling to the Church of Ecstasy. So what if we go to the Church and undercut the Red Sashes, thereby cutting them off from their primary source of income?"

"Great," I said. "Let's roll on the Cool Heist Table Thingy (*not actually called that*) and see what job the Church just hired the Red Sashes to complete. If you can sneak in and complete it before the Red Sashes do, then maybe the Church will start working with you instead of them."

Also, the flashback system (where you spend currency to retcon details into a scene rather than having to Dad Huddle and pre-plan every eight seconds) is pure brilliance.

#### LASERS AND FEELINGS

I've not actually played this system before, but it comes highly recommended by a bunch of people I respect.

Basically, the rules are as light as can be. You've only got two stats: lasers (as in, science, fighting, aggression, techy shit) and feelings (charm, empathy, intimidation, emotional intelligence). The higher one stat is, the lower the other stat becomes. You roll on some tables to come up with a Star Trek-ian adven-

ture, and then you set your friends loose.

This system seems like it'll require a fair amount of quick improvisation on the DM's part, but that's a small price to pay for such significant rule streamlining. I frigging hate when I have to stop a session in progress to look up rules minutiae, and that seems to be an impossibility when playing **Lasers and Feelings**.

#### GRANT HOWITT'S RPGS

Grant Howitt makes RPGs whose rules are so simple that they can fit on a single piece of paper. They're absolutely brilliant. I've had a ton of fun with his stuff, especially **The Witch is Dead**.

In **The Witch is Dead**, the players are normal-ass forest animals who have to find and murder the witch-hunter who killed the kindhearted witch of the forest. Because you have basically no powers other than a single, shitty spell ("create a spark," "make a book read its contents aloud") the players have to get *really* clever. And because you're only trying to kill one dude, the scale stays small and manageable and personal. It miiiight be my favorite RPG system ever? I dunno. I highly recommend it, anyway.

#### IN CONCLUSION...

If you try to DM a game of **Dungeons & Dragons** and you don't have a great time, it might not be that you don't like DMing -- you might just need to fart around with another tabletop system.

# DARRYL'S GOT GAME

## PEA-KNUCKLE FOR KNUCKEHEADS BY: DARRYL WILSON

Pea-knuckle.

That's not a typo. This aint your daddy's Pinochle. Pea-Knuckle is a no holds barred fighting sport with a little green twist. This wild game has become popular all across Faerun with the youths that are looking for not only a brutal fun sport, but one with tactical nuance, and sophisticated strategies.

The object of Pea-knuckle is to punch your opponent as hard as you can. Now, that alone wouldn't be much of a game. No. But that little green twist I mentioned earlier, well, that tiwst is a little pea. Like one your mama used to make you eat. You place that green veg between your knuckle, and now you have to swing that haymaker, while *not* crushing that pea. It's harder than it looks.

But don't worry. I'm here to share my game with you. Because after a couple of weeks, I've grown into quite a "knuckler." If you follow these tips, you'll be knocking down your competitors left and right, and have a pea left over for dessert!

I should also clarify, these tips work for the Traditional pea-knuckle. Though I *do* think some of the basic strats and tips will work for some regional variations.

First, let's talk pre-game. Knucklers don't say "it all starts with pea" for shits and giggles. You can't just grab a pea and start swinging and hope to win. Not all peas are created equal. Now don't worry, this isn't impossible like trying to figure out if an avocado is

ripe at the market. Stick to the following rules, and you'll land yourself a perfect pea.

Does it fall out of your knuckles when you turn your fist to the ground? If it does, that pea is too small for you.

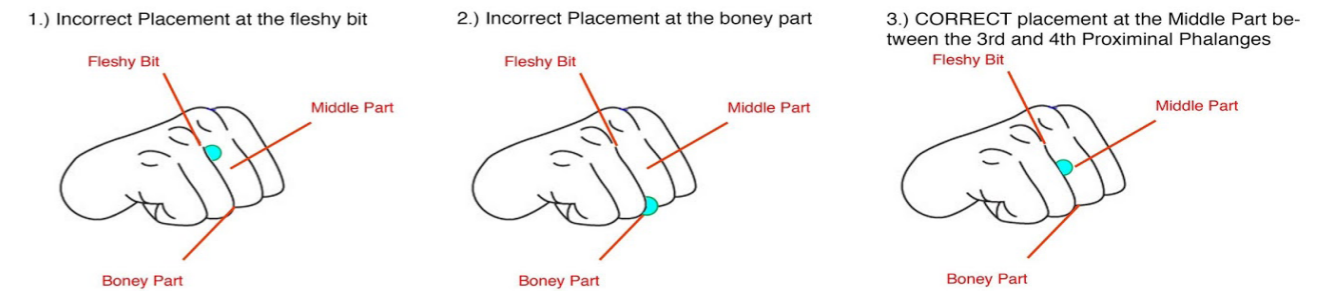
Do you have to smush it into your knuckles? Toss that bad boy away. It's just too big.

Look for any splits in the skin. If a pea is already splitting, you better believe its gonna smash with the slightest punch.

Now, if you are playing a tournament, you may be allowed to bring your own pea rather than grab one from a communal pile. If so, this little trick can put you ahead of the pack without technically cheating. As you can imagine, there are rules against freezing the pea, cooking it, soaking it in starch, etc. But there is no rule against survival of the fittest!

Here's what you do. First, you'll need a bunch of peas - 200 should be good. Next, take two of them, and place each one between your thumb and index finger in either hand. Apply increasing pressure until one of them breaks. The one that survived, was stronger. Now grab a new pea and do the same thing with it and the previous pea that survived the first battle. Continue to do this until you are done with all the peas. What you have left is the strongest of 200 peas! Now you can plow your opponent in the face without having to worry about that little nugget popping.

Fig 1. Proper Pea-Knuckle pea placement



That's half the game right there.

Speaking of punching, I'm not going to go into fighting technique. I am assuming if you are playing pea-knuckle you already know how to throw a punch. Also, there are plenty of fighting manuals out there you can explore.

Okay, finally. Let's talk about good holding technique. Cause having the world strongest pea is not going to do you any good if you don't know how to hold the damn thing.

There are three parts of knuckle. There is the boney part, the middle, and the fleshy bit. The fleshy bit is where your two fingers meet. You want the pea to be in the middle. The Boney part seems like a good place because its hard, and you would think it will protect the pea. Unfortunately, you are also putting the pea in the line of fire. That boney part of your knuckle has a good chance of hitting your opponent's face, and then you have pea soup on your hands.

The fleshy part is enticing because you can practically hide your pea in there. The only problem with that is that there is nothing protecting the pea. There is also a better chance of the pea slipping out.

So the middle is where you want to place the pea. While not boney, the skin is tight and firm, providing good support. But there is still enough give to protect the pea from smashing.

A good technique I have found for exactly where to place it, is to make a fist, then stick your thumb through your knuckle. Where you're the tip of your thumb is, is where you should place your pea.

That's it! I know I went through a lot in a short amount of time. A small article like this isn't going to be able to address all the complexities of pea-knuckle. But hopefully these tips help.

Darryl signing off, and hoping that my game, that I just shared, will help your game be the best game you can game!

### Pea-Knuckle - Variations across Faerun

#### The Original

- Put a pea in your knuckles
- Punch someone in the face as hard as you can.
- You win if the pea in your knuckle doesn't break

#### Pea-Knuckle (Waterdeep Variant)

- Played underwater.
- You lose if your pea slips out from your knuckles and floats to the top.
- Spectators watch from a boat above, and look out for a pea that rises to the surface. If they see one, they then scream "Bouy!" and dive into the water to beat up both contestants.
- Best played with 6-8 players.

#### Trio Pea-farious

*(Origin unknown, though likely from Tier Breche Academy in Menzoberranzan)*

- 2-4 players
- Each player takes THREE peas and places them in each of their knuckles.
- If all your peas are smashed you lose, and are named a "ghost"
- The winner gets one free punch on each of the ghost's faces.

#### Bloody Pea-Knuckles (Ravenport Variant)

- Players call the Pea, "The skull"
- The winner gets to drink the blood of the loser.

#### Pea Through the Gate (Baldur's Gate Variant)

- Two opponents place a pea between their knuckles
- At the start of a bell, both participants try to punch each other in the face.
- You win if you successfully punch the pea into your opponent's mouth.
- If you smash your pea, your opponent wins, and you are forced to eat their pea.

# HAI, KUS! I'M DAD!

**A SELECTION OF POE-"TREE"  
BY: HENRY OAK**

HAI, KUS! I'M DAD!

## Paeden Full

Oh, little lost lamb  
with the eyes of a tiger!  
Don't grow up too soon

## Darryl Wilson's War

a good, firm handshake  
with a sadness in the squeeze  
the Man with the Van

## The Cover Artist

shredding on loose strings  
gives his sound that edge he needs  
to hide the bad notes

## Dockers All the Way Down

Under every pair  
Of pants he wears: a secret —  
And a business card.

## Birds of the Oak Tree

Sharp beaks, bright feathers  
wild wings flapping so fast  
My beautiful boys



# HITTIN' THE ROAD

BY: GLENN CLOSE

America's a pretty wet and wild place, and having spent many hours on tour with the Trio has given the G-man here an appreciation for the finest in weird roadside attractions.

I'm still hunting down the happenin' spots here in this wacky fantasy world we found ourselves in (so far, most of them don't really stack up to your typical *Love's*, let alone a *Flyin' J*), so until I get some more miles under my belt, here's some of my favorite digs from back home:

## THE MYSTERY SPOT

SANTA CRUZ, CA

This place is wild, man! Opened up by George Prather in 1939 because he got dizzy after walking up a hill (there used to be so much land back then I guess people bought up acres of it for just about any reason they could come up with. In this case, "nausea" was how the Prather family came to acquire this particular spot), this is a place where gravity doesn't work!

Water flows uphill, people can do the MJ lean, you get a little bit dizzy. Now the poindexters will be quick to tell you that this is because it's all an elaborate optical illusion, but that doesn't explain why compass needles go haywire and wildlife avoids the place. If you ask me, the answer there is simple - calling the place a "gravity hill" and citing it on Wikipedia is just another way for the powers that be to enforce the complacency of the fact that ancient (possibly alien) energies flow through here, messin' up compasses and making you feel dizzy. It's evidence of the supernatural, hiding in plain sight, and made to look kooky and ridiculous by branding it a "roadside attraction!"

## CORAL CASTLE

HOMESTEAD, FL

Now this one's a bit off the beaten path, but well-worth the side jaunt to check it out. Story goes that Edward Leedskalnin got dumped by his 16-year old girlfriend *and* got terminal tuberculosis at the same time, but managed to get over both with the healing power of magnets.

He then spent the next twenty-eight years single-handedly building a gigantic castle consisting of huge multi-ton blocks of limestone. Eyewitnesses at the time said he was able to move those rocks "like helium balloons," and some folks even theorize he independently discovered some of the secrets and techniques used to build Stonehenge and Easter Island (the rocks on the island, not the island itself).

When asked why he spent his life building this place, he would enigmatically answer it was for his "sweet sixteen." Now over the years people have come to interpret that to mean he was lovelorn for his lady (Billy Idol even wrote a song about it, called "*Sweet Sixteen*" in 1987), but The Closer here rejects that story.

For one - he healed up using magnets, which we all know can basically reverse the negative chakras from heartbreak. Secondly - any student of the Freemasons would recognize that the "Sweet Sixteen" he was referring to was actually a reference to the sacred sixteen-part oath that all masons must pledge. My theory? That girlfriend wasn't a girlfriend at all, but a CIA agent attempting to assassinate Ed (likely not his real name) with weaponized tuberculosis because he unearthed some of the alien building techniques that have been around since the Great Pyramids.

Too bad for the Agency that she failed (the government types, I've found, always underestimate the power of magnets), so ol' Ed shuddered himself in Florida and built Coral Castle as a means to investigate and prove his alien theories!

## DINSAUR KINGDOM II

NATURAL BRIDGE, VA

This is the sequel to the original Dinosaur Kingdom, which burned down in 2012. This place asks a bold "what if" question, which is "what if the Union soldiers stumbled upon a hidden valley of dinosaurs during the civil war, but then the dinosaurs turned on them." Lest you think the artist Mark Cline is a supporter of the Confederacy, it should be noted he wants to do a similar park up in Gettysburg, depicting Confederate soldiers getting overrun by raptors. Mark's a good dude and mad chill and his fiberglass work is top notch. Plus, this attraction's got Abraham Lincoln and a *cyborg Stonewall Jackson!*

## FINALLY...

As I said before, America is a land of weird and kitsch, mountains on the horizon, wide open spaces. When it comes to taking the road seriously, it's basically just us and, bizarrely, the Germans. So next time you find yourself cruise controlling across this massive land of ours, take a moment to stop off at one of the weird places along the way.

Except for The Thing. You should just look that one up on Wikipedia, man.

# RON'S REEL REVIEWS



**ONCE UPON A TIME... IN HOLLYWOOD**  
2019, Dir. Quentin Tarantino

*Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood* is a movie about a time in Hollywood that is not our current time. It is set in the past, which in the biz (meaning showbiz that is) is called a Period Piece. I did not get the "message" of this movie, but I've been told there's "a lot going on" and "love of nostalgia." Leonardo DiCaprio cries in this movie, and while I am not a film actor in the past, I would not have cried if I had been him. But I'm not him. I'm Ron. The biggest twist of this movie (NOT to give anything away) is that it is not a bedtime story as the title suggests. It's actually not a book a at, and is a movie with bad language. I personally found the bad language exhilarating and would see this film again to "unearth more meaning." Although the director of this movie hasn't made anything else I've seen, I think he has a bright future ahead of him once he "pays his dues" and gets more experience.

**3.5/5 stars**



**GREMLINS**  
1984, Dir. Joe Dante

*Gremlins* is a movie about gremlins. The tricky thing is that the gremlins do not start out as gremlins but are cute first. They look very much like a dog that I would like to adopt or perhaps a large hamster that would be pleasing to pet. They also sing, which to tell the truth was exhausting because I have already seen a couple of movies with singing. This was a scary movie with scary Gremlins, but is also a Christmas family film. Fun for the whole family and their gremlins! There are 3 rules that come with the gremlins and this movie would not be as exciting if the 3 rules had been followed. **3.5/5 stars.**



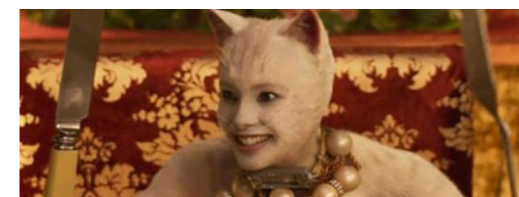
**SINGIN' IN THE RAIN**  
1952, Dir. Gene Kelly, Stanley Donen

*Singin' in the Rain* is a movie about singing in the rain. Unfortunately, this movie had much more singing than rain and I wish I had known that before I watched it, because I found I did not need to hold up an umbrella while sitting on the couch. Samantha enjoyed this movie more than I did, and even knew some of the songs. I may watched this film again in the future to join Samantha in the SINGING so I don't RAIN on her parade. Hehehehe. **3.5/5 stars.**



**SWORDFISH**  
2001, Dir. Dominic Sena

*Swordfish* is not a movie about swordfishes. In fact, it's odd that the movie is called *Swordfish*. Hugh Jackman stars as a hacker who hacks computers. He wears an earring. At the end, John Travolta is not really dead because that was a fake head that Hugh Jackman found in the freezer. This movie is the height of modern technology and we should take heed and prepare for the worst so that Hugh Jackman does not hack all of our computers. If I ever see Hugh Jackman come near my desktop computer system I won't hesitate to insult him. I wish this movie had more swordfishes. **3.5/5 stars.**



**CATS**  
2019, Dir. Tom Hooper

*Cats* is a movie about cats. This movie has not come out yet, but it is based on my favorite musical that I have seen and I'm sure I will enjoy it. I am excited for the digital fur technology because it might make the cats softer to pet. **5/5 stars.**





ABOVE: The Daddyzord faces off against Terry Sr.

RIGHT: Erin O'Neil and her tree pal, with the dads cruising along in the background.

Art by [Ferdino David Martinez](#)

(Twitter: @Ferdelicious2, IG: comedic\_neutral)



ABOVE: Erin finds Vince. Art by [illyri.art](#) (Instagram)

BELOW: Terry Jr. attempting to open a portal into the astral plane. Art by [Bek Houser](#)





**LEFT: Henry Oak, taking a call.**

**Art by [Olivia Hintz](#)**



**RIGHT: Henry Oak, totally protected.**

**Art by Olivia Wheless ([owheless@gmail.com](mailto:owheless@gmail.com) for commissions!)**

*Henry Oak*