



Rotark's Revenge  
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Rotark, Leader of the hall of Kelash (Indiana's largest dwarven fighting realm, its mines sprawling to Urbana Illinois) stood before a large crack in the brick wall of the shop run by Toad, his goblin enemy. Rotark knelt in the moonlight, placing a glass bottle filled with kerosene on the boxes of comics in the store's basement.

Rotark absently pruned his red mohawk and twisted his braided beard with pleasure. Beneath his arm, he clenched the heavy tome he had come to retrieve. The tome held the history of every customer in town, set down by his father. It told of their favorite games, cards, comics, and sodas. Family secrets shared. Tragedy. Fortune.

Rotark padded the crack with torn comics coated in paraffin. The crack stood just below where Toad smoked, so that the goblin menace always ached there, smiling at Rotark as if they were friends, as if their feud were only a game, as if his father's livelihood was a joke.

The basement would blaze while Toad ran squealing for help.

Rotark stood, removed his leather fighting gloves that menaced with tin spikes, putting the heavy tome in his hands. As he walked beneath the yellow lamplight across the humid grass lawn of Center Park, he thought of how Toad would wonder how the dwarf leader had gotten the tome from the top box of comics in Toad's own shop.

Toad hadn't realized he hid it in plain sight. Even after the fire, Toad wondered if Rotark's old man just had a copy, one that remained unsinged.