

BALOK'S BOOKS OF BANTER

Book 1:

Quips & Insults

Sheryl Nantus



BALOK'S BOOK OF BANTER: QUIPS & INSULTS

Author - Sheryl Nantus
Line Developer - Deborah Balsam
Editor - Deborah Balsam
Cover - Sean C. Frolich
Layout - Deborah Balsam



INTRO

You step inside the front door of the inn, drenched from the night rain that's soaked you through to the skin. The tables are full tonight with other travelers seeking shelter. The table to your left is already home to a riotous team of dwarven miners detailing the finer points of granite to each other while drinking more ale than should be physically possible.

There's no room at the bar and a good thing too: the pair of elven mages having a stare-down over obviously expensive bottles of wine shouldn't be interrupted by the likes of you.

You spy a single seat at the back, the small, uneven wooden table jiggling as the single occupant continues to scribble in a leather-bound journal. Oblivious to your approach the hooded man looks up when you ask for the empty seat, then nods quickly and returns to his writing - totally focused on drawing his quill across the blank paper.

A waitress appears out of the crowd, pushing her way through with a practiced gait, her voluptuous bosom barely contained in a dirty lace bodice.

"Thank you for coming to our establishment tonight." The well-practiced line falls flat. "We have roast rabbit, venison stew and of course some fine drinks for the tired traveler..." She pauses, waiting for your response.

Digging in your purse you find only a few coppers, being between jobs and all. The raven-haired barmaid scowls at you as you slowly count out the coins into your hand.

"Bring us two full meals." The voice comes from the stranger seated across from you; his face still shrouded in shadow. His gloved hand dips below the table and returns with a flourish, tossing gold coins at the woman as she gawks. "And your best ale. None of that watered down wine." His voice takes on a dangerously low tone. "The good stuff."

"Yes sir. Right away, sir." The woman backs away quickly, scooping up the coin and depositing each one between her ample cleavage before she disappears into the crowd.

You thank the mysterious stranger, unsure of what you're getting into. He waves your platitudes aside and pulls his hood off to reveal a rather common-looking face and a crooked smile.

"If you wish to repay me, then come and talk to me of your adventures." He waves his hand over the blank pages. "I don't want to hear about your trials necessarily, but the great comments and curses that have made your travels more interesting than the usual." His dark eyes lock with yours, sending a chill down your spine. Something about this man is not quite...normal. "Tell me what's made you smile, made your blood run hot, made you chuckle even as you cursed your opponent."

You feel your mouth open and the words spill out, barely under your own control. As a large mug of ale appears on the wooden table in front of you you recall all the snide comments and snappy retorts you've heard over the years...

QUIPS DWARF- BASED.

1. By the beard of your mother!
2. By the beard of my mother!
3. Your dice, my hammer. Throw them again.
4. Your mother's sister's father told that to my father's friend's cousin (twice removed) so it MUST be true.
5. You couldn't tell a mine shaft from an arrow shaft.
6. Are you trying to compensate for something with the size of that hammer?
7. He talks out of both sides of his beard.
8. You've got pretty small stones for your clan.
9. Want me to carry your hammer for you?



10. Dwarven women have beards – what's your excuse?
11. Come back when you grow a beard!
12. That's a mighty big hammer for such a little lad... sure you can handle it?
13. He's got more secrets than an abandoned mithral mine.
14. That's more tangled than my beard.
15. She's about as deep as a dwarf's first dig!
16. His hammer's made of rotten wood.

ELF- BASED.

1. Well bob my ears and call me a human!
2. Your mother must have been a human.
3. You couldn't tell a maple from a larch.
4. My people were building cities while your ancestors were still discovering opposable thumbs.
5. This isn't ale – it's the wet wringings of a dwarf's soggy cloak.
6. I've seen better jewelry on a swamp hag.

7. You couldn't tell the difference between real gold, fool's gold and yellow-painted wood!

8. May you wake up with a beard!

9. My hearing's sharper than your sword.

10. Shall I string your bow for you?

11. You make more noise than a herd of dwarves!

12. Do you have moss between your ears?

13. You shoot a crooked arrow.

14. You're more crooked than that arrow.

15. You're more crooked than your aim.

16. His bow isn't the most crooked thing about him.

17. He's like moss – always where he's not wanted, damp and usually foul smelling.

18. He's greener than a year-old sapling.

19. She's so clumsy a blade of grass could trip her.

20. Everyone has a place in the forest. Unfortunately, yours happens to be that fungus.

21. Everyone has a place in the forest. Everyone, except for you.

22. Everyone has a place in the forest. Yours is just beyond the last tree.

23. She's like your favorite bow – well-worn, a loose pull and an easy kill.

24. You do know that you hold the string at the back of the bow, right?

25. Sure he's a great tracker – to the tavern and back!

26. He couldn't track a Fire Golem in a dry forest.



HALFLING-BASED.

1. Go shave your feet!

2. May your ale go stale!

3. Kiss my furry feet!

4. I have the appetite of an Ogre and the purse of a Kobold.

GNOME- BASED.

5. Of course he's reliable! He's family. Well, my father's brother's cousin's son-in-law that married into the family due to that little accident...

6. I don't call it thieving. I think of it as redistribution of the common wealth. And I'm as common as it gets.

7. Size doesn't matter. Really.

8. Ever had a halfling's footprint on your face?

9. You know what they say about large feet, right?

10. He's like fresh pipeweed – green and barely tolerable.

11. Wisdom is like a good pouch of pipeweed – eked out in small doses and treasured by those who can appreciate it.

12. Don't think of it as being robbed. Think of it as your purse being liberated.

13. She's like a bad smoking pipe – a waste of time and money and leaves a bad taste in your mouth.

14. Judge me by my stature and I'll judge you by your intelligence... and they're both pretty small!

15. He's about as brave as he is tall.

16. Not that he's a coward but he'll be back at the inn long before the battle is over – and picking through your treasure chests!

1. S/He babbles like a mad badger.

2. I've been in better rabbit holes than this place.

3. Illusionist, yes – miracle worker, no.

4. Well, it looked like a good idea.

5. One little mispronounced word... yes, it'll wear off. I think. I hope.

6. A good cave is worth any set of plate mail.

7. Bravery is all fine and well but it doesn't put gold into your purse.

8. You call it cowardice, I say it's a well-



honed survival instinct.

9. Good advice is like a good hunting ground – never enough to go around.

10. Always respect the forest – because it surely won't respect you.

11. Things are not always as they seem. Actually, sometimes they are. And always at the worst time.

12. Size isn't everything – check out the thickness of my spellbook!

13. All is illusion... until it smacks you in the face, that is!

14. I've had better meals with the badgers.

15. Small, but mighty. Mighty good at hiding, that is.

16. I'd tell you a tale of woe... but you're already living it!

17. Sure he's good in a fight – good at running, that is!



5. That's not a meal. (tosses whole wild boar onto table) Now THIS is a meal. For me. And just me.

6. Toe jam? Nah, this is the last gnome who annoyed me.

7. You want silence, go join a monastery.

8. In battle, size DOES matter.

9. My butter knife, your greatsword.

10. Your spear, my toothpick.

11. I may be ugly, but at least I've got a good personality - RIGHT?

12. Who needs sweet words when you've got a good weapon?

13. You're sure your other parent wasn't a golem?

HALF-ORC-BASED.

1. You want pretty, go kiss an elf!

2. Two fangs good, one fang bad.

3. Yes, that IS my mother!

4. Two words. Dwarf-tossing.

14. Stealth is for sissies.

15. Hide in shadows? Maybe hide in MY shadow...

16. I'm about as beautiful as you are useful.

17. There's nothing that an application of brute force won't fix.

18. Do I look like I'd blend into a crowd?

19. If I wanted simple I'd call a dwarf.

20. I belong to an exclusive club. (hefts tree branch) This one, to be precise.

INSULTS



1. May your blade cut like a rusted spoon.

2. That's about as useful as a paladin in a whorehouse.

3. You sing like a wounded kobold.

4. I'd rather play cards with a beholder.

5. I'd rather kiss a lich.

6. You smell like a lich's britches!

7. That wizard seems a bit TOO familiar with his familiar, if you know what I mean...

8. You're as strong as an ogre all right - too bad it's your breath.

9. Hurry Up! Treants move faster than you do!

10. Anyone who carries a sword that big is compensating for something...

11. Are you sure you're not wearing a ring of delusion?

12. You shoot like a cyclops with an eye-patch.

13. I've seen better armor in a pile of rust monster droppings.

14. You smell like a wererat in heat.

15. You've got a better chance counting the warts on a slaad.

16. Nice spell, fumblefingers.
17. You smell as bad as a troglodyte and you're only half as handsome.
18. If you think that's true, your helmet is on too tight.
19. I've never seen a spell cast with such skill and technique before! Too bad it didn't work.
20. I'd sooner trust a doppelganger!
21. This tastes like an orc cooked it! Or sat in it...
22. You fight like a wounded barbarian... well the crying part anyway.
23. That blow was so light you might as well left the scabbard on your blade!
24. A mindflayer would starve to death if it caught you.
25. You smell like a wet werewolf.
26. It's not alchemy, people!
27. You hold your sword like a kobold - like you're about to drop it.
28. If you're going to fall on your sword, let me get out of the way first. And hold it for you.
29. You're unluckier than a tone-deaf bard.
30. My robe is NOT a napkin!
31. I'm going to whoop you like a rust monster on an iron golem!
32. You go first - I've got a strong survival instinct.
33. Don't call me expendable!
34. You're the sand in the cyclops' eye!
35. You're more twisted than a mindflayer's tentacles!
36. If you're going to pray, pray faster!
37. Kiss my shiny plate mail-covered butt!
38. You going to kiss that or kill it?
39. You smell like an otyugh's outhouse!
40. I'd sooner shake hands with a chull than trust you!
41. Scrape the mold off your sword and do something!
42. You make a goblin seem smart.
43. Run up there and be a distraction while I get away... er, go for help.
44. Do I look like your personal shield?
45. You make a drow seem positively sunny!
46. You've got a better chance of having a druid buy a house in the city!
47. You move like a shambling mound; a drunken shambling mound.
48. I've seen gelatinous cubes with more personality.
49. You call that quiet? I've heard less noise from ogres in plate mail!

50. Stealth does NOT mean you always show up last after the fighting is over to loot the bodies.

51. Backstab the enemy, not your teammates!

52. You'd drive a madman to sanity.

53. You smell like a hellhound's drool!

54. You're more crooked than a woodland path.

55. Talk is cheap – but I'll pay you to shut up!

56. Sure, there's dumb luck – but you're too dumb to have it.

57. It's kill FIRST then loot, you idiot!

58. You're thicker than an ogre's hide.

59. If I wanted to go someplace dark, dank-smelling and depressing I'd visit my in-laws!

60. I've seen better steeds at the local tavern – on the menu!

61. Being a sidekick means being at my side... so I can kick you!

62. I've had paper cuts worse than this wound!

63. You've got a better chance of stealing from the thieves guild than pulling this off.

64. If I had a gold piece for every idiot like you I've killed, I could rival a dragon's horde!

65. I've had better conversations with zombies.

66. The last time he had a date he had to use charm monster! And grease. And enlarge.

67. He's got a codpiece two times too large.

68. Her spellbook's a few pages short.

69. Traveling with him is like dancing on caltrops – no matter what you do you'll end up hurting!

70. He's as brave as his shield is large... and he's using a buckler!

71. She's good at backstabbing – with and without a dagger!

72. I'm not saying that she's ugly, but she'd give a gorgon a run for her money!

73. Good thing you brought all that rope – easier to hang you!

74. Last date he had didn't survive the turn undead attempt.

75. She's always good at advancing... to the rear!

76. He's good at finding every trap there is – and tripping them!

77. If he had to sing for his supper he'd starve to death.

78. Last spell he cast incinerated a group of goblins two miles away. Of course, it was supposed to be aimed at the horde of frost giants in front of us.

79. If he had a coat of arms, it'd include a chicken's head and the back end of a stallion.

80. Someone as ugly as you could scare a ghastr.

81. Your soul's so dark you make a lich seem charitable.

82. With a personality like yours I'd stay clear of the cleric – don't want to get caught in any turn undead attempts.

83. Your mother obviously chose the lesser of two evils – and married him!

84. You're as useful as a druid in full plate!

85. I'll fight for a good cause – just not yours!

86. Your fingers may be nimble, but so's my sword!

87. He's got bull's strength but a feeble-mind.

88. He's got the heart of a lion but the mind of a mouse.

89. She's so dumb she gets bruised knuckles from using *knock*.

90. I'd rather massage a stone golem!

91. She's so dumb she once cast *barkskin* on her tongue 'cause the stew was too hot!

92. When your animal companion's smarter than you are, there's a problem!

93. He's a great warrior... at the dinner table!

94. She's a bonus to any party. Any ENEMY party, that is!

95. Some people ride to your rescue – he walks backwards.

96. He's a fine judge of horseflesh – just taste his stew!

97. I'm not saying you can't count on him, but he's had more resurrections than you've had meals!

98. He's about as stealthy as a bull elephant in heat!

99. I've seen more danger in the middle of the market square!

100. The cow looked better in that leather armor.

101. He's got as much magical ability as my loincloth.

102. As a packhorse she's great – as a warrior, not so much.

103. Let's just say he doesn't need to be a wizard to cast *stinking cloud*.

104. I'm not saying she's unlucky, but the last cleric who cast *bleed* near her fell down a mineshaft a minute later.



AS HOT AS...

- A balor's tongue.
- A barbarian's rage.
- A paladin's face in a brothel.
- A dwarven smith's Forge.
- A red dragon's Breath.

AS DRY AS...

- A wood elf's wit.
- A sandworm's skin.
- A behir's scale.

AS COLD AS...

- A frost giant's arse/behind/nethers.
- A mad wizard's mercy.
- A dwarf's treasure chamber.
- A lich's bedroom.
- An ice dragon's grasp.
- A vampire's kiss.

AS BIG AS...

- A paladin's ego.
- A bad rogue's reputation.
- A bard's songbook.
- A dragon's greed.

AS SMALL AS...

- A drow's Heart.
- A halfling's purse.
- A city guard's attention span.
- An assassin's mercy.
- A barbarian's patience.

AS WET AS...

- A swamp hag's armpit.
- A mindflayer's mouth.
- A lizardfolk's larder.



EPILOGUE

You blink wildly, your head snapping back as if waking from a bad dream. The remains of a fine meal lie in front of you, the rabbit carcass picked clean of all meat. A loaf of freshly-baked bread is nothing more than a series of crusts sucking up the last of the cold soup sitting at the bottom of the largest bowl you've ever seen.

Flexing your grease-stained fingers you stare down at the table, feeling more full than you can ever remember being. A less-than-subtle burp rolls out of your stomach, shocking you with the noise.

The morning sunlight is just beginning to force its way in past the shuttered windows, fighting with the dying embers of the central fireplace for attention. The dwarven party has finally fallen quiet, the combined beards of the snoring individuals soaking up any spilled beer on the tabletop. The rest of the inn's patrons have either wandered upstairs to sleep, passed out atop the tables or stumbled outside to greet the day.

The stranger across from you has pulled his hood up again and is sitting back in his chair. One gloved hand continues to dance across the open page with the feathered quill, finally falling quiet as he notices you. Placing the quill down he closes the journal with only a few blank pages left.

"Thank you for a most entertaining night." He leans forward only far enough to show you his smile, then tilts back into the fast-retreating shadows of the room. "I have enjoyed our time together."

You shake your head from side to side, trying to clear away the few remaining clouds in your mind. The stranger gets to his feet with the book clutched to his chest.

"I only wish I had more time to chat with you, but the morning arrives and I must move along." He pauses as if unsure of what to say next.

"If you ever have need of my... services, please consider contacting me. I would be interested in hearing more of your tales." His hand slips inside one pocket of his robe, withdrawing a small scrap of paper. "But please be careful about calling me. My Master is a bit... demanding about what we do in public." With another nod and a smile he takes a step back into the darkness on the wall, disappearing as easily as if he had passed through a door.

The scrap floats in the air for just a second then drifts down onto the table. With trembling fingers you reach out and pull the paper towards you.

Your tongue goes numb as you stumble over the words, afraid to say them out loud for the sake of your soul. Your eyes drift to the single candle on your table, melted almost down to the nub and the flame. Maybe you should burn the paper; purge the night's events from your mind and body.

Instead your hand slips the scrap into your pouch, sitting atop a newly found stash of gold coins that now weigh down your belt. And you wonder for a long minute before the voluptuous waitress arrives with your breakfast exactly how much of your soul you've just parted with.

And if you'll meet him again.

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use," "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10 Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12 Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13 Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14 Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15 COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

System Reference Document Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Joanthan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, based on original material by David Arneson and E. Gary Gygax.

Balok's Books of Banter: Quips & Insults, Copyright 2005, Dog Soul Publishing, Sean C. Frolich and Deborah Balsam.

Open Game Content:

All materials and content, barring original artwork, place names, proper names, and adventure descriptions and original fiction is provided as Open Content.

DESIGNATION OF PRODUCT IDENTITY

The following items are designated as Product Identity in accordance with section 1 (e) of the Open Gaming license version 1.0. All content not specifically listed as OGC or clipart, including all art and narratives, Dog Soul Publishing, and any logos belonging to the former.