

THE ASYLUM, No. 6



MORATORIUM

By Alan R. Moon

"I'm a gamer." The voice is very soft. "I've been a gamer for", hesitating, "for, about twenty-three years." "About three years ago", the control slipping now, "my wife left me." "My kids don't respect me anymore, my eldest boy won't even talk to me, even the dog growls at me. My wife married this other guy, an insurance salesman just like me who golfs on weekends. He's home by noon. He's never even heard of wargaming. Thinks *THIRD REICH* is a book by some guy named Shirley." The tears come.

Audience members cry along, emotion unrestrained.

Someone breaks into a chorus of "We shall Overcome". Others join in. Tears subside in song.

"I'm sorry."

"That's okay brother, take your time."

He wipes his face with a monogrammed handkerchief (AM). Blows his nose. Snuffs out the last snuffle.

"It all began in December '65. We were shopping for a Christmas present for my boy. He was two then. We were in some toy store. She, my wife, went to look at dolls and stuff for my brother's kids. I headed for the trains, just to look. As I was walking down the game aisle, I saw this game called *AFRIKA KORPS*. My father had been at Tobruk. Said he saw Rommel. I picked up the game and opened it.

I never got to the trains. A half hour or so later, my wife found me in that same aisle setting up the pieces on the map, on one of the aisle shelves. Needless to say, I bought the game.

It wasn't easy to find opponents for wargames in those days, so at first, I just played solitaire. I spent a lot of nights in my basement trying to find the perfect German strategy. And after I had it, I went on to other games. But I was getting restless. I wanted an opponent. My three-year old was candy.

I advertised for opponents. After several weeks, a guy called me. He lived about two hundred miles away, but I had to go. I beat him.

We started to get together regularly. I'd visit and stay overnight and get into work the next day after noon. Tell my boss I'd been away on business. Once a week, then twice a week. I told my wife they were regular business trips.

Meanwhile, I kept advertising. At last, it paid off. A guy in the next town called me. And he had a friend who gamed too. Suddenly, other opponents surfaced. I began to write to people in other states and play by mail. It was then that I began to lose my head. Playing three, four nights a week, business trips every weekend.

My wife found out. She was hysterical. I told her it was only social gaming. She begged me to get some help, to see someone. I told her everything was under control, I could handle it. She told me I was sick. I had a disease. I laughed. I told her I just needed one more game.

She was right, of course, I was hooked. I kept worrying where my next game would come from. I started staying home during the day to plan strategy for an upcoming game. I only felt calm when I was gaming.

I bought every game out. Magazines. Books. Blank counters. War souvenirs. T-shirts. I was spending all my time gaming. My thirst was unending.

Not surprisingly, I was fired. Actually, I had been fired several weeks before I found out. I walked into the office one day to get a book I'd left there, and my boss told me I was fired. I didn't care. I thanked him.

I collected unemployment and stayed home. My wife got a job. I began to steal the household money, what little there was. My kids hid their piggy-banks. I couldn't stop myself. The unemployment ran out, but I stayed home.

How my wife suffered through those years. Why she stayed with me I'll never know. Finally, she left. It was that, or die. I had stopped caring about how I looked, what I ate, sex, everything except games. I didn't even play against anyone anymore. I stayed home and worked on the ultimate wargame. It was going to be a map of the world, made up of dozens of regular-sized maps and hundred of thousands of counters. And I was already planning its extension—the whole universe. I don't even remember her leaving.

I was living in the basement now. No contact with the outside world. One day, a man came down the stairs and just stared at me. Then he went back up. The next day, they came for me. A whole bunch

of people. Cops. Health Inspector. Doctor. Attendants. Collectors.

On the way out to the van, I noticed there was no furniture in the house, most of windows were broken, there were no cars in the driveway, and the grass hadn't been cut. I would have to tell the wife about that, I thought to myself.

I went cold turkey. The shakes, convulsions, the whole bit. It worked for awhile. About two months. Then I got a job as a short-order cook. I spent my first paycheck on games.

The second time was worse than the first. The third worse still. After that, the times became lost in horror. I knew I was dying, but I couldn't save myself.

Then I met Bill. He'd been a gamer too. He told me about GA and the buddy system. Said he'd be my buddy. I said I'd try it. And I did. One day though, I cheated—bought a game. Just one. Bill found it under the bed during his daily inspection. He beat me senseless.

I lay on my bed for days, near death. Bill wouldn't take me to the doctor. Said it was better I die.

One morning, a bluebird landed on the windowsill. I watched it and it seemed not to notice me. It was so happy. Suddenly, I knew the truth. I remembered the man I'd been years before. I cried and the tears washed my face. My soul was cleansed. I broke the habit."

Applause. Cheers.

Filing out, the members pass under a doorway with the sign:

GAMERS ANONYMOUS
Serving the Afflicted since 1972

