SOFTWARE & TECH

# The Order Of The Stick

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795583509468304

## Introduction: The Unlikely Epic of Stick Figures

In the vast and ever-expanding universe of webcomics, few titles have achieved the lasting impact and dedicated following of **The Order of the Stick**. Created by Rich Burlew in 2003, this deceptively simple comic began as a lighthearted gag strip parodying the rules and clichés of Dungeons & Dragons. However, what started as a humorous take on dice rolls, character sheets, and dungeon crawls has since evolved into one of the most profound, emotionally resonant, and tightly plotted narratives in the history of online comics. The stick figures that populate this world have become icons, proving that the most powerful stories can be told with the simplest tools. This article explores the history, characters, themes, and enduring legacy of **The Order of the Stick**, offering a comprehensive guide for both newcomers and long-time fans.

## The Genesis of a Stick Figure Saga

### From D&D Joke to Grand Narrative

**The Order of the Stick**first appeared on September 23, 2003, on a small website run by Rich Burlew. The initial strips were short, punchy, and heavily reliant on the reader's familiarity with D&D mechanics. Jokes about hit points, character classes, and alignment systems were central to the humor. The story followed a party of adventurers, the eponymous Order of the Stick, as they embarked on a quest to stop the evil sorcerer Xykon from gaining ultimate power. Early on, the comic was primarily a vehicle for gaming humor, but Burlew had grander plans. As the story progressed, the plot deepened, characters underwent significant development, and the stakes escalated dramatically. The transition from a gag-a-day format to a serialized epic was gradual but deliberate, and it is this evolution that has made the comic a masterpiece of long-form storytelling.

### The Art of Simplicity

The most immediately striking aspect of **The Order of the Stick**is its art style. The characters are rendered as simple stick figures with minimal detail, a deliberate choice by Burlew to emphasize dialogue, character expressions, and panel composition over realistic illustration. This minimalist approach allows for incredible readability, ensuring that the humor and drama are never cluttered by excessive artistic detail. Despite the simplicity, the characters are remarkably expressive, with distinct silhouettes, accessories, and color schemes that make them instantly recognizable. The art has evolved over the years, with Burlew refining his line work, adding more nuanced expressions, and occasionally experimenting with dramatic perspectives and visual metaphors. Yet, the core stick figure aesthetic remains intact, a testament to the power of visual clarity in storytelling.

## The World of the Stick: A Setting Built on Rules

The universe of **The Order of the Stick** is explicitly built on the mechanics of a tabletop role-playing game. The characters are aware of their own classes, levels, hit points, and spells, and they often discuss these meta

elements as part of the story. This self-awareness is a source of endless humor, but it also serves a deeper purpose. By grounding the world in a system of rules, Burlew creates a framework for tension, strategy, and consequence. When a character takes damage, it matters. When they level up, it signifies growth. The rules of the game become the laws of physics in this universe, and the characters must navigate them just as real people navigate the laws of nature. This unique blend of metafiction and

The Order of the Stick a flavor unlike any other story.

### Key Locations and the Geography of the Stickverse

The story spans a variety of locations, each with its own distinct feel and purpose. From the pastoral landscape of Azure City to the frozen wastes of the Northern Lands, the world is rich with lore. The Dungeon of Xykon, the Oracle's mountain, the village of Greysky City, and the hidden lair of the Linear Guild are all integral to the plot. The geography is not merely a backdrop; it is a tool for storytelling. Battles are won and lost based on terrain, alliances are forged through travel, and entire civilizations rise and fall within the narrative. The world feels lived-in, with a history that predates the current story and a future that hangs in the balance with every turn of the page.

## The Characters: More Than Just Stats

The heart of any great story is its characters, and **The Order of the Stick**excels in this area. The six principal members of the Order are not the stereotypical adventurers they initially appear to be. Over hundreds of strips, they have grown, suffered, and evolved into fully realized individuals.

### Roy Greenhilt: The Pragmatic Leader

Roy, the party's Fighter, is the voice of reason and strategy. He is a master tactician who must constantly manage the chaotic impulses of his companions. His personal quest to avenge his father and prove his worth as a hero gives him a strong narrative drive. Roy is the character who most often grapples with the moral implications of their actions, making him the moral center of the group. His growth from a frustrated leader to a compassionate and insightful commander is one of the most satisfying arcs in the series.

### Durkon Thundershield: The Faithful Companion

Durkon, the Dwarf Cleric of Thor, is the party's healer and spiritual support. He speaks in a gentle Scottish-style dialect and is defined by his unwavering loyalty and sense of duty. Durkon's story takes a dramatic turn when he is vampirized, leading to a long and harrowing arc that explores themes of corruption, faith, and redemption. His struggle to reclaim his body and his faith is a powerful testament to Burlew's ability to blend high fantasy horror with genuine pathos.

### Vaarsuvius: The Arrogant Archmage

Vaarsuvius, the Elven Wizard, is a character of immense power and equally immense ego. Their use of spells and arcane knowledge is often the key to victory, but their arrogance and ambition frequently lead to disaster. V's storyline delves into the themes of power, responsibility, and the costs of magic. The famous "The Pawn and the Prince" arc features V making a pact with ancient fiends, leading to a devastating climax that redefines the nature of magic itself. V is a character who must learn that true power comes not from raw strength, but from wisdom and connection to others.

### Haley Starshine: The Reluctant Rogue

Haley, the Human Rogue, starts as a charming but selfish thief. Over time, she evolves into a caring leader and a devoted partner to Elan. Her journey includes overcoming a deeply held fear of poverty, learning to trust others, and eventually becoming the de facto leader of the Order in Roy's absence. Haley's character arc is a wonderful study in personal growth, showing how even the most flawed individuals can become heroes through their choices and relationships.

Elan: The Bard of Chaos

Elan, the Halfling Bard, is the comic relief who becomes an unexpected hero. His childlike optimism and love of storytelling often land the party in trouble, but his creativity and courage save them just as often. Elan's journey is deeply tied to his family, especially his father, the villainous Tarquin, and his half-brother, Nale. Elan's growth involves learning that being a good person and a good storyteller are not mutually exclusive, and that heroism can take many forms.

### Belkar Bitterleaf: The Unredeemable Rogue

Belkar, the Halfling Ranger, is the party's resident psychopath. He enjoys killing, has no moral compass, and is openly hostile to almost everyone. Yet, Belkar is one of the most fascinating characters in the comic. His violent tendencies are frequently a source of dark humor, but as the story progresses, Burlew explores the consequences of such a personality. Belkar's slow, grudging, and often hilarious journey toward something resembling teamwork is a highlight. The question of whether he can ever be redeemed—or even if he wants to be—drives much of his later character development.

### The Villains: Xykon and Team Evil

No discussion of **The Order of the Stick**is complete without mentioning its villains. Xykon, the lich sorcerer, is a classic megalomaniac villain who chews the scenery with delight. He is driven by a pure love of destruction and a complete disregard for the lives of others. His right-hand lichen, Redcloak, is a far more complex antagonist. Redcloak is a goblinoid who seeks to right the wrongs done to his people. His tragic backstory and conflicting loyalties make him one of the most compelling villains in modern fantasy. The dynamic between Xykon's raw power and Redcloak's cunning strategy creates a formidable and unpredictable threat.

## The Balance of Humor and Drama

One of the defining features of **The Order of the Stick**is its masterful balance of humor and drama. The comic is genuinely funny, with jokes ranging from sly D&D references to broad physical comedy, wordplay, and meta-narrative humor. However, Burlew never lets the humor undermine the serious moments. When a character dies, it is treated with weight and respect. When a battle is lost, the consequences are felt for strips to come. The tonal shifts are handled with remarkable skill, moving from a laugh-out-loud gag to a gut-wrenching revelation in the span of a single panel. This ability to laugh and cry in equal measure is what elevates the comic from genre parody to true literature.

## Reception, Impact, and the Kickstarter Phenomenon

**The Order of the Stick**has garnered a massive and loyal fanbase over its two-decade run. It has been praised for its writing, character development, and innovative approach to storytelling within the webcomic medium. In 2012, Rich Burlew launched a Kickstarter campaign to reprint the comic's earlier books, which had gone out of print. The campaign was a staggering success, raising over $1.2 million, making it one of the most successful webcomic Kickstarters at the time. This influx of funds allowed Burlew to focus entirely on the comic and to produce high-quality print editions. The Kickstarter also served as a testament to the deep connection between the creator and his audience.

The comic has been collected into a series of printed books, each containing annotations, side stories, and commentary from Burlew. These books are prized by fans for their thoroughness and insight. The comic's influence can be seen in the way it has normalized long-form, narrative-driven webcomics and proved that a simple art style can tell a complex story. It remains a shining example of what independent creators can achieve with talent, perseverance, and a deep understanding of their craft.

Themes and Depth: More Than a Game

Beneath the stick figures and the D&D jokes, **The Order of the Stick**explores profound themes. The nature of good and evil is a central concern, with characters constantly questioning their own alignment and the morality of their actions. Redcloak's storyline, in particular, forces readers to understand a villain's perspective and appreciate the systemic injustices that can drive someone to darkness. The comic also deals with the price of power, the importance of family and legacy, the value of teamwork, and the struggle to find meaning in a world governed by arbitrary rules. Burlew weaves these themes into the fabric of the narrative, never preaching but always inviting the reader to think.

## Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of the Stick

As **The Order of the Stick**continues toward its eventual conclusion, its place in webcomic history is already secure. It is a work of immense ambition, crafted with love and intelligence over the course of more than two decades. The


### Related Articles

- **Are James Blunt And Emily Blunt Related**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/are-james-blunt-and-emily-blunt-related.pdf
- **Was Remember Me Based On A True Story**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/was-remember-me-based-on-a-true-story.pdf
- **Ess Employee Self Service Costco**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/ess-employee-self-service-costco.pdf
- **The Case For Christianity By Cs Lewis**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/the-case-for-christianity-by-cs-lewis.pdf



TOPIC INDEX

#order • #stick • #the

DIGITAL EDITION

the-order-of-the-stick

DIGITAL EDITION

the-order-of-the-stick

DIGITAL EDITION

the-order-of-the-stick

DIGITAL EDITION

the-order-of-the-stick