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Diary of a Nerf Gun-Wielding Veteran

I know you've seen us; we're the people running around campus with toy dart guns. Sure, it may make us look childish. Sure, it may be taboo in this day and age. And sure, we might look really, really stupid to a lot of people. But you know what? I bet we're having more fun than you are.

Officially (or at least, as official as we've ever gotten), we are known as the St. Andrew's Guild of Assassins, or SAGA for short. Why our club charter was turned down, I can't imagine. In addition to this title, our group also refers to the game as "Killer," or simply "Nerf." Killer is the name of the Steve Jackson Games system that inspired us, while the latter name, of course, comes from the manufacturer of our colorful equipment. Whatever we call it, the objective remains the same: to shoot your friends with foam darts for fun and glory. Even if you lose one of these confrontations, a battle with a worthy opponent will have your peers talking of it in the cafeteria for weeks to come.

Our games come in a few varieties, or scenarios. The most basic is a free-for-all. As the name would suggest, a free-for-all means that anyone in the game is a target, although that doesn't preclude unofficial alliances. Of course, you should never be surprised if your allies turn on you.

The most commonly played game in SAGA is known as a Circle of Death. Each player is given one target among the SAGA-playing populace. That target is after someone else, etc., until the circle loops back to the first person. As targets are eliminated, the circle grows smaller until, theoretically, the last two players are left to duel it out.

Another favorite is the Vampire game, where there are two teams: Vampires and Vampire Hunters. This game only runs at night and generally it starts with three Vampires. These Vampires can shoot Hunters, turning them into Vampires and adding them to their ranks. Meanwhile, the Hunters try to exterminate the Vampires, who, after being shot, remain dead. The catch is that each Vampire must feed every three nights, so as the Hunter population dwindles, Vampires start "starving" to death.

There are several other scenarios and even the common ones are spiced up with surprises like Death Squads, Zombies and punishments for players who go Rogue. All in all, one of the most enjoyable parts about playing SAGA is in the oddities each game presents. No predictions for a given scenario ever survive past the first day, and, very quickly, the players start doing things the scenario administrator couldn't have predicted. Sometimes these oddities turn into new playing styles, though more often they turn into a Rule That Should Not Have To Be Spoken.

But why do it? Well, there's always the exercise excuse. Nothing gets your blood pumping like a maniac with a plastic purple chaingun chasing you down the