



The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into the Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

The *Illuminata*: Bringing SF&F Fans Together Since This Morning

by Bret M. Funk

When I co-founded Tyrannosaurus Press in early 2002, I had two main goals. The first was to publish quality science fiction and fantasy, works that might otherwise have slipped through the cracks in the system. I wanted a publishing company that worked with writers, not against them; one that encouraged—maybe even sought—creative input from its authors; and one that selected a title on its merits, and not on its author's credentials. So far, I'm happy to say that the company is doing well. Sales of our first title are steadily increasing, and we have already received a number of interesting submissions from promising new authors.

Reaching my second goal—promoting quality works of science fiction and fantasy—has been more difficult. Recommending works by other authors—when you really want people to read your own!—is not easy; finding time to read books or watch movies while supporting a burgeoning new business is virtu-

ally impossible. Over the last few months I managed to submit a few reviews to various publications, but in my heart, I believed I could do more.

Then, on a hot and humid New Orleans night, I had an idea. Some might call it an epiphany. If I—with the help of Tyrannosaurus Press and a few carefully-chosen friends—could put together a newsletter, one exploring science fiction and fantasy in all its many and varied forms, I could reach my goal while at the same time bringing a little more recognition to both myself and my company. That's every businessman's dream.

A couple months and a few headaches later, *The Illuminata* was born. Just one problem. What to include?

Articles, of course. Fans of science fiction tend to have strong opinions, and our writers are no exceptions. Each month, *The Illuminata* will contain several well-thought-out columns covering various aspects of SF&F, and likely written with the irreverent humor and sarcastic wit we've come to love. From time to time we might even feature an interview—if we can find an author, actor, or SF Publisher available (and willing) to participate.

Articles are good, but no SF&F newsletter would be complete without reviews. So expect to see some in each edition. Books, movies, TV series, comics, and video games—anything's possible, so long as it is sci-fi or fantasy related. And while most review publications focus on new titles and best-selling authors, *The Illuminata* will have a more universal approach. Our goal is to promote good SF&F, not just new SF&F. So expect to find classic works and unknown authors alongside the more traditional reviews.

Finally, in every edition we will showcase one or two works of original fiction. These stories or excerpts may come from the minds of our staff writers, or they may be submitted to us from outside sources; either way, we hope they will be entertaining. We want to make sure you, our readers, keep coming back for more.

In fact, we want your feedback—your suggestions, questions, and opinions. If you disagree with one of our articles, submit a rebuttal; if you want to recommend a book or comment on one of our stories, please do so. We only have two conditions: be honest, and be kind. We can't guarantee that every reader's submission will be printed, but if your words are slanderous or unnecessarily cruel, then I'm certain that they won't be included.

That being said; sit back, relax, and enjoy. Welcome to *The Illuminata*.

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Flights of Fancy: Transportation And Communication In The Future (Part I)

by Brian Otridge

How often have you watched a Science Fiction movie and thought that something looked improbable? In this respect, visualizations of future forms of transportation and communication seem to get the full Hollywood treatment. It goes from the ridiculous to the sublime. At the low budget extreme, there are autos that look the same as today's. At the other Industrial Light and Magic gone mad extreme, air cars whiz through the streets of New York at multiple levels.

The problem with visualizing the future is that most people can only use their present frame of reference and knowledge of emerging technologies. An analogy would be describing a television to Leonardo da Vinci and asking him to create one with the technology available to him.

He would first of all limit himself to a static black and white picture: moving color pictures would seem like too big a step at once. He would erect a picture on top of a hill and divide it into squares. He would brief some accomplices on the protocols he would employ, then send them off to the next hill with one of his telescopes and a blank sheet of paper squared off the same way. Leonardo would go through each square - if it were more than half black he would raise his right hand above his head, if it were not, he would hold his hand out level. The observer would read these signals, and shout instructions out to his colleague who would mark the squares, or not, accordingly. A modest picture of 100 squares a side would take nearly three hours to transmit at one square a second. He would think that we were magicians.

So how do you predict the future of transportation and communication, to produce plausible solutions? Of course if you're writing fantasy, it doesn't matter. You can have dragons with howdahs strapped to their backs walking and flying around with passengers, magic mirrors, or anything else you please. But if you wish to remain within the known bounds of this universe, letting your imagination run wild is a little trickier.

Going forward twenty-five to fifty years is not too much of a problem. It takes so long to get through politics, design and implementation that technology available now will probably not be fully applied till then. Look at Concorde: conceptualized after the end of World War II, first flown in the early 1970's, and still there are no more civil aircraft capable of flying at greater than the speed of sound.

Further forward than that, we may start envisaging new technologies, but not too advanced: railroads first ran in 1825, and someone from that era would just recognize one of today's trains. Even the best science fic-

tion writers can get optimistic. The great Arthur C Clarke fell foul with Space Odyssey 2001. He thought that 33 years was long enough, but I haven't yet noticed any rotating wheels taking tourists into earth orbit.

There are therefore a number of factors that will influence such developments. Firstly, there is the technology itself. We probably know enough about the universe now to envisage most possible technology developments, like interstellar ramjets, but how long will it take before they become a reality?

The next is the availability of the source of power: current transportation technology is based mainly on the combustion of hydrocarbons: what happens when they run out? Allied with this factor is the impact of the technology on the environment and vice versa. Without oxygen in the atmosphere, hydrocarbons don't burn, and the burning of these fuels fouls the atmosphere.

A factor that has been under-estimated in the past has been the development of information technology. Yes, Asimov foresaw humanlike robots with positronic brains, neither of which have become realities, but did he foresee the Internet?

Another factor is passenger comfort and safety. Even if a form of transport is perfectly safe, if it is perceived as unsafe then few people will use it. A good example is Larry Niven's ship in Ringworld, with a see-through force-field hull, that could make even the most travel hardened passenger feel insecure.

And finally, what about politics and economics? You can have all the physical technology, power, environment and computation that you like, but if there is no political will or spare cash then nothing happens. As a newly graduated air force officer I avidly watched the lunar landing live to see the 'one small step for man', hoping that I might serve on an orbital or moon-base sometime in my career. The 'giant leap for mankind' has not yet happened: the race with the Russians is over and there does not yet seem to be a commercial return from the moon.

In subsequent articles, the possibilities for the future development of transportation and communications technology will be explored, both near and far in time and space. Close to home, land, air, and sea transportation will be considered. Then the 'giant leap' into space will be made with interplanetary and interstellar travel. Having got to another planet, environmental conditions may be different, permitting alternative transportation arrangements. And finally, we will consider using non-physical means of communication: possible futures for voice, data, video and matter transmission.

The Lost Art of Suspense

by Bret Funk

Not so long ago, suspense was a major element in movie making. Prior to the development of high tech computer animation, film makers had to rely on prosthetics, makeup, and models. Their efforts, while impressive, generally resulted in less-than-realistic effects. Even monsters in cutting-edge effects films like *Jason and the Argonauts*, *Clash of the Titans*, and *An American Werewolf in London* were often more comical than frightening.

While advancements in makeup and CG have made disembowelings, decapitations, and dinosaurs all but real, the special effects revolution has led to the demise of more essential theatrical devices, like suspense and plot. In the 30's and 40's, when movie monsters were made with paper mâché, foam rubber, and thick makeup, movie makers went out of their way to keep their creatures hidden until the last possible moment. Nowadays, directors are so proud of their digitally-enhanced boogiemens that they occasionally forget to put them in a movie.

Detective movies... Gangster movies... Monster movies... All of them used to utilize suspense to capture their audience's attention. During the golden age of the silver screen, even B movies kept viewers glued to their seats with tantalizing glimpses of the terrifying, but still unknown, threat.

Hitchcock was the master. With carefully arranged camera angles and discordant sounds, he made the minutes prior to a murder endless; with well-placed silences and tense periods of inactivity, he raised some viewers' blood pressure and reduced others to tears. For decades, he ruled both the big and small screens.

In the 70's and 80's, when the first computer-aided special effects were being created on Cray supercomputers, there were a series of highly-suspenseful action/adventure movies. The notorious great white in *Jaws*, perhaps the 70's most successful suspense movie, makes its first true appearance halfway through the film. The *Predator* stalking Schwarzenegger and company through the jungles of South America is seen only as a near-invisible blur (and from a colorful, first person perspective) until the movie's climatic battle.

And who can forget the terror inspired by *Alien* and its successors? Though brilliantly conceived and well constructed, the majority of the films' tension is created by *not* seeing the monsters. Whether crawling through access tunnels or holed up in an abandoned colony, knowing the aliens are out there

and waiting for them to appear is far more stressful than what happens after they arrive. The ever-quickening staccato pulse of the motion sensors, coupled to Hicks' repeated cries of 'Game Over, Man! Game Over!' are one of the most disturbing memories of my childhood.

Sadly, this renaissance of quality movie-making was not to last. Though some directors put out consistent fare, and from time to time a gem is found, in general, as special effects get better, movies get worse. Some directors have become little more than second-rate magicians, hoping that, with some unexpected flashes and sleight-of-hand, they can distract us long enough to empty our wallets.

Today, few movies shock me—though several have managed to disgust me—and even fewer keep me on the edge of my seat. Science fiction movies, once pioneers of suspense, have become hackneyed: the time-honored tactics lost among gaping plot holes, bad acting, and an industry that puts marketing concerns ahead of film making.

Even *Hannibal* was not immune. Riding on the laurels of its predecessor, one of the 90's great suspense films, and starring one of fiction's most feared villains, *Hannibal* lost sight of what made *Silence of the Lambs* so spectacular.

Why can't we have the best of both worlds? Why can't a movie contain dazzling, realistic special effects and an intense, thought-provoking plot? Personally, I can't think of a single reason, but in an era where a five minute scene with Austin Powers and a fecally-contaminated cup of coffee epitomizes suspense, perhaps I'm asking too much.

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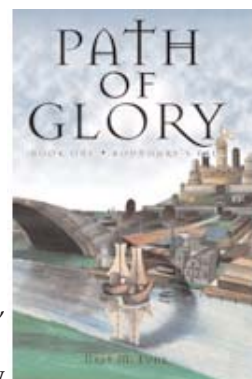
Path of Glory

Book One • Boundary's Fall

by Bret M. Funk

ISBN: 0-9718819-1-X

\$19.95 (US)



'An entertaining epic and a deftly-written saga of hope, determination, and courage.'

— Midwest Book Review

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The RPG Corner (Vol. 1): What is Role-Playing?

by Doug >|< Roper of Epic Gaming

Where to begin?

This is the introductory column for EPIC Gaming's RPG Corner, and as such I think it only appropriate to start slow and at the beginning. Being part of a Sci-Fi and Fantasy newsletter doesn't necessarily mean that everyone who may read this is familiar with Role-Play Gaming. I'd like to take some time to talk about the basics of Role-Playing, so everyone can start as close to the same page as we can reasonably get.

First of all, a lot of people have great misconceptions about Role-Playing games. The biggest and most glaring that comes to my mind is the idea that Role-Playing games are for lonely teenage boys who sit around basement card tables and spend endless hours rolling dice and looking up results on tables. Another misconception is that Role-Playing Games (RPG's for short) are sinister, shady and somehow corrupting devices for reprogramming kids to hate their parents, or for creating cults and subcultures devoted to dubious purposes. While there is a definite gaming culture, it is far from the picture the extremists would paint for the world about RPG's and those that play them. Still, identifying yourself as a gamer is usually a good way to get people laughing and pointing at you, and not in a good way.

Why do these notions exist? As with anything, it's because people just don't have all of the facts. So, the first few parts of this column are dedicated to detailing the facts as I understand them. I hope that when I'm finished with this introduction, you, dear reader, will have a better idea of who I am, and why I love RPG's the way I do.

I also hope that you'd be so kind as to stop pointing and laughing. It's getting old.

So, what *is* Role-Playing?

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Path of Glory

Book One of Boundary's Fall

For a limited time, Tyrannosaurus Press is offering readers of the *Illuminata* a very special deal on **autographed** copies of *Path of Glory*. This coupon, if mailed with check or money order to Tyrannosaurus Press, entitles the buyer to an additional \$5.00 off the already discounted price. For more information, visit TyrannosaurusPress.com.

This offer invalid with any other special. Payment must accompany order. Please include an additional \$2.00 for shipping, and residents of Louisiana, add appropriate sales tax (4% state, 9% Orleans Parish)

A Role-Playing group consists of a small number (although there are exceptions) of people, most of whom have a single character or persona that they are in charge of. One of the people is called the Gamemaster, and it falls to this person to narrate the scenery, events and other characters with which the group will interact.

The Gamemaster acts as a director, creating the environment, while the players interact with that environment through their characters. The players must interact with the world created by the Gamemaster in order to unravel the plot and accomplish whatever goals they set out to achieve. All of this is done within the collective imagination of the Gamemaster and the players.

There are usually rules to govern the way in which conflicts are resolved, but that falls outside of the Role-Playing aspect of the game, and into the Rules/System side of it—something I don't think we need to go into just yet. My focus is the Role-Playing; actually slipping into another character and interacting through them, solving problems and having adventures through the eyes of a fictional character can be quite a powerful experience.

The scenarios are as varied as the individual Gamemaster. RPG's can fall into almost any imaginable genre, such as science fiction, fantasy, horror, romance, exploration, mystery and most times, a healthy mixture of several of these.

There are systems and whole worlds already detailed and ready to use. These sets of rules and setting supplements are the RPG's most people think of when the word comes up. Games like the world famous *Dungeons & Dragons*TM, *Call of Cthulhu*TM, and *Shadowrun*TM, have their own rules and settings that people can use for their own games, but the rulebooks by themselves are not enough to get a game going.

Past all of the fancy dressings and flashy rulebooks, at its heart, Role-Playing is an exercise in socialization. There are notable exceptions to this, of course. Some games are strictly about combat; some are only concerned with personal advancement. I'll go on in later ramblings to talk about the various types of RPG's, and where I think they belong, but for now I want to focus on Role-Playing itself. No matter the setting, no matter how many are playing, the people who play these games work together to create a memorable experience for themselves. It's a communal undertaking. There can be no game without the cooperation of the Gamemaster and the players; within the game, nothing would get done if not for the interaction between characters. Interaction is a key word, and one I'll probably use a lot in the future. A game built on interacting with others in a host of different circumstances has the capacity to grow beyond a purely recreational form, to become a powerful tool for self-improvement, self-exploration, and even education.

People choose to Role-Play for many reasons, but they generally break down into one of seven groups, or models. Next time, we'll take a look at these models and see how they apply to different gaming situations.

Book Reviews

Books. Science Fiction and Fantasy books in particular. To many they are gateways into fantastic worlds, worlds with exotic creatures and stunning, all-but-impossible-to-believe locales. To others they are a much-needed escape from reality, a chance to become the hero (or villain) the reader always wanted to be but rarely is. For still others—perhaps a frighteningly large majority—books (of all genres) have become little more than wasted space, items useful only for their ability to level a rickety

table, start a fire on a cold winter night, or keep a hot cup from ruining an expensive piece of furniture.

For those who still enjoy the printed word, this section of our newsletter is for you. Here we will review books old and new; authors famous, infamous, and unknown; and worlds both near and far. We'll also give you, our readers, a chance to share your thoughts and recommendations with each other.

So join us. Read a book or two this month. You probably won't even regret it.

Morgawr (The Voyage of the Jerle Shannara, 3) by Terry Brooks



Del Rey, Sept 2002
\$27.95 (Hardcover), 416 pp.
ISBN 0345435729

Review by Harriet Klausner

The last known living druid in the world, Walker, has organized an expedition. He plans to journey across the sea, to Castledown, to locate the magic book of the ancients. Along the way, he and his companions find the lost gemstones of Shannara, which once belonged to the elves. They also realize that Walker's greatest enemy, the deadly Isle Witch, is following them. The two foes meet in the ruins of Castledown, where both sides suffer heavy casualties. Although Walker is mortally wounded, he and the Sword of Shanarra force the Isle Witch to realize who she is and the numerous transgressions she has committed.

Unable to cope with the truth, the Isle Witch turns inward, falling into a catatonic state. As he nears death, and with his final breath, Walker charges Bek, the brother of the Isle Witch, to take care of his sister, impressing

upon him the importance of his mission, for the Isle Witch has a destiny awaiting her that she must fulfill. Bek and his companions find this no easy task, for the demon Morgawr, the Isle Witch's mentor, has come to find his traitorous protégé and kill her.

Sometimes Terry Brooks' works match the best of J. R. Tolkien, and *The Voyage of the Jerle Shannara: Morgawr* is one of those great instances where he succeeds. Elves, gnomes, dwarves, and druids are so vividly portrayed that readers come to believe they are real species living alongside the humans that Brooks encounters outside his word processor. Though Walker is a typical champion, one that the audience admires for his courage, the action-packed storyline contains numerous other heroes and heroines. Many of them willingly sacrifice their lives for the overall good, enabling key characters to escape the dangers they find themselves in. Brooks unabashedly, yet cleverly, sets up the reader for the next Shannara trilogy, in which—based upon this story, at least—the Isle Witch plays a prominent and seemingly surprising role. Fans of epic fantasy will definitely want to read this exciting work and its wondrous predecessors, as the Brooks Universe continues to shine with fantastic tales. Fifty years from now, readers will be comparing contemporary authors to Terry Brooks.

Want To Share Your Thoughts With Us?

Fans of science fiction and fantasy are, almost by definition, opinionated. Doggedly opinionated. Break-your-arm, kick-you-where-it-counts, never-say-die opinionated. And though having strong opinions, and the will to use them, is not exclusive to SF&F, we tend to take it to the extreme.

Submitted for your inspection: innocent Kirk vs. Picard conversations that end in near riots, a *Wheel of Time* FAQ better researched and more well-thought-out than most dissertations, and innumerable debates explaining (or condemning) the 'science' needed to make many of our favorite stories possible.

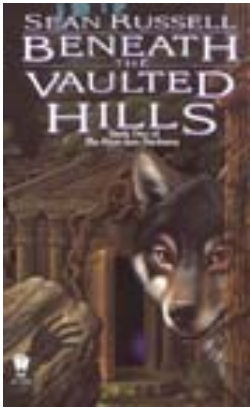
Tired of being ignored? Want to share your thoughts with the rest of the world and put those fools in their place?

Then let us know what you think! If you've read one of our books and disagree with our assessment, tell us. If, after reading one of our columns, you can't believe that people so dim-witted could form a complete thought, let alone write an entire article, we challenge you to write one of your own.

The Illuminata is a forum for all opinions, not just *our* opinions. If you have something to say, then write it down and send it to Illuminata@TyrannosaurusPress.com.

Beneath the Vaulted Hills

by Sean Russell



Daw Books, 1998
\$7.99 (Paperback)
ISBN: 0886777941
Review by Bret Funk

Beneath the Vaulted Hills is a beautifully-conceived fantasy tale. Written by Sean Russell, author of the Moontide and Magic Rise duology, the story follows Erasmus Flattery—a man of science once fostered in the home of Lord Eldrich, the last of Farrland's magi. Erasmus is called upon to aide his friend, Samuel Hayes, in escaping capture by both men of the Admiralty and a group of mysterious strangers.

Erasmus, haunted by demons from his past, has spent his life seeking knowledge of the arcane. His relationship

with Hayes brings him closer than ever to realizing his goal. But he is not the only player in this game of intrigue. The Tellerites, a band of renegade magi long thought dead, seek knowledge now known only by Lord Eldrich. Eldrich, a figure of mystery and legend, more feared than admired, will stop at nothing to remove the last vestiges of magic from the world before he, too, is forced to leave. Each character has a role in the story, and the dramatic, cliff-hanger ending leaves the reader wondering which characters move the pieces, and which are the pawns.

The concepts of empiricism and natural science, strongly woven throughout Beneath the Vaulted Hills, are rarely considered in fantasy works, and the setting—a late-medieval society, empowered through the use of the recently-developed cannon—is one not often explored by fantasy writers. Nevertheless, Russell manages to instill both personality and believability into his characters and their countries. Fans of both science and magic will delight in Russell's work.

Requiem for the Sun (Rhapsody, 3)

by Elizabeth Haydon



Tor, Sept 2002
\$27.95 (Hardback)
ISBN: 0312878842
Review by Harriet Klausner

After all the battles, adventures and trials the three friends (Rhapsody the Singer, Achmed the Firbolg King, and Grunthor his Sergeant-Major) have gone through, they feel good about life, are in harmony with themselves, and remain friends with one another. The trio once brought peace to a war-savaged land; now Achmed and Grunthor are rebuilding a once-mighty civilization in the ruins of Ylorc. While Achmed and Grunthor restore their country, Rhapsody and her husband, the hybrid human-dragon Ashe, rule the loosely federated Cymrian Alliance. The future looks very bright for the trio and their countrymen.

Though possessing great paranormal skills, neither the original threesome nor Ashe foretell the problems that start with Rhapsody, but impact them all. In a time before they entered the Tree, in a place that turned to dust many eons ago, the honorable Rhapsody, working for good as she always has, sacrificed herself by pledging her love to the seneschal Michael, preventing him from harming innocent beings. Now Michael has returned to

claim his prize, but Rhapsody has no desire to accompany him. She loves her husband and refuses to go, forcing Michael to abduct her. A distraught Ashe, accompanied by Grunthor and Achmed, pursue the seneschal, each one willing to die to free their beloved Rhapsody.

This strong sequel to the fantastic, well-received Rhapsody trilogy (see Rhapsody, Child of Blood; Prophecy, Child of Earth; and Destiny, Child of the Sky) is epic fantasy at its strongest. The latest plot, which stays true to plot of the previous novels, will remind genre fans of the worlds of Middle Earth and Shannara. Yet Haydon has created her own unique realm. The storyline is loaded with action, and is most attractive to readers who want both sword and sorcery and romance in their reading material. Achmed and Grunthor retain their charm, and here Haydon shines, taking two relatively dark protagonists and turning them into fan favorites.

It is easier to love Rhapsody. Though temporarily Michael's captive, the Singer never veers from the persona established in the previous novel. Instead, she and her companions are placed in a new, more deadly situation, forcing them once again to perform miracles, but doing so with the characteristics that readers have and will continue to treasure. In an incredibly few number of pages, Haydon proves she is a master sorceress, returning to the Rhapsody universe and producing a fabulous story with cross-genre appeal, yet retaining enough threads for future sequels.

Staff Reviewers Wanted!

The Illuminata is seeking writers willing to submit monthly SF&F-related book, movie, or television reviews. At this time, we are unable to pay for submissions; reviewers must be satisfied with the honor of sharing their opinions. Interested parties should fill out the staff writer form available at www.TyrannosaurusPress.com

What You'll See In Future *Illuminatas*

In the coming months, we hope to see the *Illuminata* expand in both readership and content. We have ambitious plans for our newsletter; eventually, we want it to cover all aspects of science fiction and fantasy. Below are some of the additions readers should expect in upcoming issues.

Expanded Reviews

While this edition's review section only contains books, we hope to see that change. In the future, we plan to include SF&F movie and television reviews as well. These reviews will cover not only new releases but also classics in the genre, pointing out strengths, weaknesses, and obvious oversights. We want to explore science fiction and fantasy in all its glory and point new fans in the right directions.

Once we settle in, we hope to add reviews and commentaries on other aspects of SF&F—comic books, role-playing and video games, and even web sites. Suggestions are welcome; let us know what you want to see and we'll do our best to include it.

Upcoming Events

One item we had hoped to include in this edition was a hot list of upcoming science fiction and fantasy related events. With the new season of television on the horizon, September would have been an ideal time, especially since (with obvious exceptions like *Star Trek*) science fiction shows do not often get the media attention of other prime time series.

Unfortunately, we took on a little more than we could handle this month, and the events calendar was one item shoved to the background. For the October issue (hopefully!), we plan to include an incomplete list of book and movie releases, television premiers, and SF&F events.

Short Stories & SF&F Poetry

Sometime before year's end, we hope to include one or two pieces of fiction in every edition. While we'd prefer something original and unpublished, we are certainly willing to consider pre-published works, provided that they are not under contract with any other organization or publication. Stories covering any aspect of scifi and fantasy will be considered, with the following exceptions: fan fiction (for legal reasons), works over 10,000 words, and works containing unnecessarily graphic violence or sexual situations. We apologize if this eliminates your stories, but for the time being, we want to appeal to a wide range of SF&F fans without battling too many law suits.

To submit a work for consideration, please visit www.TyrannosaurusPress.com and fill out the appropriate form.

Letters, Contests, and More

Comments, suggestions, and SF&F-related questions are welcome; in fact, they're hoped for. If you have something you want to say, send an e-mail message to Illuminata@TyrannosaurusPress.com. The best (and worst) reader letters will find their way into an edition of the *Illuminata*.

From time to time, Tyrannosaurus Press (or other interested parties) may run contests through the *Illuminata*, with prizes going to the winner. The nature of these contests are still a mystery (even to us!) so you'll have to keep reading if you want to find out more.

Also look for special discounts on SF&F books and memorabilia, interviews with SF&F authors and publishers, and more articles written by devoted fans and up-and-coming authors.

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