



# The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

## Breaking Out The Yardstick: 3-D Character (2 of 4)

By Bret Funk

Characters are the backbone of every novel, the focus around which all other elements revolve. They control the story, sometimes even more than the author does. The plot is dependent upon their actions, and the author's message is expressed through their successes or failures. Like a Pied Piper for the literary-minded, we expect characters to transport us to a different world, lead us blindly down the story's twisting path, and make it so we not only enjoy the unrealistic or impossible events we read about, but believe them.

This is a lot of responsibility to place on fictional creations, and since they are incapable of providing for themselves, it falls to the author to supply them with tools they need to succeed. Some might argue that originality is the key to successful characters, but it is not. A limited number of characteristics exist; finding a combination of traits that has not been tried would be nigh on impossible. From monstrous tyrants to wise, aged leaders to

noble (or tragic) knights, character types have been explored and successfully re-explored since the dawn of fictional writing. Even the anti-types – the cowardly warrior or bumbling wizard – have been used until they are as comfortable (if, perhaps, more comical) than the more expected amalgamations.

Three-dimensional characters are more than unique, they are believable, and it is that element of believability that makes them more effective than their cardboard cousins.

With dimension comes distinctiveness, not because the character type has never been seen before, but because the sum of all parts leads to a unique individual, just like in reality.

Length, the feeling that a character is more than a point on the page, is the first dimension, and the most important. From it, the other two dimensions will grow, taking on shape and substance. For the purposes of writing, Length is mostly a measure of time, the impression that a character came from somewhere and is going somewhere, even if that somewhere is only the grave. Without Length, a character is little more than a thing, a creature who exists only in the now.

Many major players encountered in books are given Length by default. Writing a successful story that has characters going nowhere and doing nothing is... challenging. Without a future, there is no story, and the work becomes little more than a snapshot. This style works for a vignette, or perhaps even a short story, but the characters in any work of novel length should have a destination.

In addition to a future, main characters often have a past, too, though sometimes a very rudimentary one, to help explain their actions. The need for history can be circumvented by showing the motivational event in the body of the text, but a writer should be cautious when removing elements of history from a character, especially one central to the story. Upbringing has an effect on action even in the face of a cataclysmic event. You would not expect the son of die-hard pacifists to react the same way to his village's slaughter as the son of fierce warriors, and should our peace-loving example decide to take up a sword in vengeance, his decision will have a far more profound effect on readers than the warrior's.

While writers give main characters, and to some extent secondary ones, Length in their writing, minor players are by and large ignored, a mistake

Con't on page 20

### In This Edition

**3-D Characters (2 of 4)**  
Adding Length

**RPG Corner v2.9**  
Combat

**KeyCOMMENTary**  
Archtypes of Fantasy VI

**Whatever Happened To The**  
**Starship Enterprise (4 of 5)**

**Birth Of An ICON**

**The Writer's Block:**  
Habits of PublishING Writers

**Reviews**  
Moon Dancing  
Moon's Dreaming  
Project A-Ko  
LXG

**And More!**

# RPG Corner v2.9: Combat in Role Playing Games

by Doug >|< Roper of EPIC Gaming

## Part III: The Tools of War

Combat usually involves weapons and armor. Instead of looking at each individual type of weapon that can be used, or each type of armor that can be worn, it is easiest to group like items together. For example, any sword with a blade longer than a foot and shorter than two and a half feet would be considered a short sword, no matter the particulars of the weapon's design. The same goes for longswords, axes, maces, spears, pole-arms, daggers, bows and what have you.

Something that I mentioned when talking about Initiative was Weapon Speed. This is a number that reflects the weight and ease of usage for a weapon. I wish I could explain all about this and provide tables and charts for any kind of weapon you can think of, but I can't. I can explain how it works in my system here, and let you fill in the gaps for your own system later, and create the statistics for as many different weapons as your heart desires.

My Initiative score = Dexterity + Perception - Weapon Speed. The addition of the two Attributes will come to a number between 2 and 20, so my Weapon Speed numbers should make an impact, but should not be prohibitive. For example, daggers would have a weapon speed of 1, since they are small and light. The number would increase with weight and size of the weapon, so that a pole-arm (basically a ten-foot pole with some kind of spear or axe head attached) would have a Weapon Speed of 13 or 14, meaning a person using one would almost never have an opportunity to go first in a combat situation. The other weapons would fall between these extremes. Shortswords = 2, longswords and shortbows = 3, axes and maces and morning stars = 4, spears and longbows = 5 etc. If you find that these numbers make for very unbalanced fights, then please tweak them and change them as you see fit. I undoubtedly will.

The other important statistic that individual weapons carry is the amount of damage that they can do. In a lot of cases, the damage that they do is relative to the strength of the character wielding said weapon, but they should all have some kind of base damage to start from. Combat in my fantasy game will be very deadly, so the damage that the weapons can inflict will be high compared to the amount of damage that the characters can sustain before death. The numerical representation of the amount of physical destruction a character's body can sustain before death is commonly referred

to as Hit Points. As mentioned in earlier columns, Hit Points are determined by adding the Strength and Constitution Attributes, then adding 5 points to that, for a number between 7 and 15. Hit points can be increased by increasing Attributes, and by spending experience points. The maximum a character can attain isn't important now, but I cannot imagine a character in any of my games with more than 40 Hit points. If you are looking for a less deadly way to use a system similar to this one, just up the available Hit Points for characters in a way that makes the weapons less lethal.

So how much damage does a weapon do? It depends on the relative success of the attack. To determine that, we need to develop a table where we can follow a line to determine the degree of success and locate the amount of damage easily. (Determining success and the degree of success will be explained a bit more in **Part IV: Mechanics**) The individual Game Master needs to work these tables out for himself; the following examples are simply made to provide a framework and a reference point. My system will go something like this:

<b>Minimal Success</b>	<b>Damage Inflicted</b>
Die Roll =	1 - 12
Weapon =	Longsword 1D10
	Axe 1D10 + 1
<b>Moderate Success</b>	<b>Damage Inflicted</b>
Die Roll =	13 - 25
Weapon =	Longsword 1D10 + 1
	Axe 1D10 + 3
<b>Average Success</b>	<b>Damage Inflicted</b>
Die Roll =	26 - 74
Weapon =	Longsword 1D10 + 2
	Axe 1D10 + 5
<b>Major Success</b>	<b>Damage Inflicted</b>
Die Roll =	76 - 88
Weapon =	Longsword 1D10 + 3
	Axe 1D10 + Strength
<b>Critical Success</b>	<b>Damage Inflicted</b>
Die Roll =	89 - 00
Weapon =	Longsword 1D10+Strnth
	Axe 2D10 + Strength

In the event a modifier is greater than the character's Attribute (in this case Strength), I would use the previous modifier at 2 numbers higher. For example, Sammy Smurf hits a Giant Ant with his longsword and scores a Critical Success. Sammy's Strength is only a 3 so he would roll his damage on the D10, then add 5 since it is 2 greater than the previous modifier of 3. Clear? Good.

And now, armor. As I said earlier, armor should never be the first line of defense. Armor exists to protect the combatant from damage when attacks do sneak through the other defenses. As such, armor doesn't repel so much as it deflects. In my game, armor exists

Con't on page 17

## *Nemesis: The Enemy at Large*

While it is entirely possible for an adventure, fantasy, or other type of tale to progress to its conclusion without the introduction of an enemy, I would suggest such a structure is rare, indeed. For most heroic figures, their nemesis rests with conquering an enemy. Even in the case of a foe that never comes face-to-face with the protagonist, you are apt to find that the mere *perception* of threat remains sufficiently tangible to affect the choices of the hero, which in turn have direct bearing on the course of his journey.

Perhaps we should start by distinguishing these types of enemies by calling one *Actual Foe* and the other *Perceived Foe*. Indeed, many an *actual foe* begins as only an enemy perceived – a known yet unmet threat – which by the height of the tale or series has materialized in the flesh. Let's look at some examples.

Early in the opening episode of *Star Wars, A New Hope* (I'm speaking here in terms of the order in which they were presented to the public, so please, no barking e-mails!), Luke Skywalker *learns* of Darth Vader. Throughout the unfolding of the tale he has several near-encounters with this dark and menacing enemy (hey, the guy's his father – that's menacing enough for me) but never does he come face-to-face with Vader. George Lucas saved *that* climactic and much-anticipated moment for *The Empire Strikes Back*, the second installment of his original triplet of trilogies.

Such deliberate orchestration of plot dynamic – something we touched upon earlier in this series on archetypes – creates and sustains the dramatic tension necessary to keep the reader or viewer hooked. Let's take a peek at another example.

In Tyrannosaurus Press's own banner series, *Boundary's Fall*, the hero's nemesis (or what we presume to be thus) is introduced by author Bret Funk in the opening tale (Book I: *Path of Glory*), yet remains to be met head-on by the novel's close. This by no means translates into a paucity of adventure and action between the first page and the last; rather this structure serves as a precise model of *Perceived Foe*. Indeed, an invisible – or unrealized – enemy often is the more empowered.

While reading any novel with this archetypal design, we operate under the assumption that this terrible and destructive enemy will eventually maneuver into direct contact with the protagonist. We watch for it; crave it, even. This encounter will, in all likelihood, be

the culmination of the hero's journey – one in which we have traveled by his side – and whatever follows will tend toward the *anti-climactic* if the author dawdles too long in the wrap-up.

Whether or not, as readers or viewers, our expectations of eventually meeting this cloaked enemy are fulfilled is a secondary consideration to the necessary effect that our *knowledge* of his existence creates within us. Again, this is because *perceived* threats are usually more powerful than actual ones. After all, it is difficult to act against a notion. How and against what do we parry? The strength of unmet enemies creates in the reader anxiety and in the hero, vulnerability.

By the time a protagonist *does* encounter his nemesis head-on (climax), he has typically – and it is to be hoped – acquired through the trials of his personal journey the necessary skills and knowledge to triumph in the confrontation.

If, then, we might wish to name the entire archetypal journey, which we have been discussing all these months, we could aptly christen it: *Overcoming Adversity*. Is this not the primal crux of *story*, the flagship epic of humanity? Natural enough that such a structure should be the veritable seed of the storytelling craft, then, don't you think? In almost every book we read or movie we enjoy, don't we observe and root for the protagonist as he or she navigates some variation of this basic path? Of course it is a structure – a framework for artistic expression – upon which countless variations can be woven, or the art of storytelling should have perished long ago. Nevertheless, each story is a journey dotted with recognizable milestones and these, my friends, are our elements of archetype!

Now, what if an enemy were intangible – and by this I mean not personified at all? This, certainly, is possible. One's nemesis might be *no one*. It might, in fact, be ... *time*. How might time drive the course of drama? This structure is also quite common. A race against time creates urgency, which in turn build dramatic tension. Think: Sandra Bullock and Keanu Reeves in *Speed*. True, there is an *Actual Foe* in this flick, but there is also the very real and very strong element of *dire consequences for an unmet deadline*. This variety of 'enemy' is also seen frequently in our earlier example, *A New Hope*, as indeed it is in so many tales. In *A New Hope* we witness Han Solo, Princess Leia and Luke Skywalker imperiled in the trash compactor scene; we see Obi Wan's race to deactivate the Death Star's

Con't on page 19

# Whatever Happened To The Starship Enterprise (4 of 5)

by Erin Branham

*A five-part look at the history of Star Trek and its fandom through the eyes of a lifelong Trekkie.*

## Part Four: To Explore Better Ratings, to Seek Out New Life and New Demographics

*O, mighty Caesar, dost thou lie so low?  
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure?*

- William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act III

*Star Trek: Voyager* seemed to have been conceived in an atmosphere of experimentation. Gambling again on the high ideals of Trekkies, they took what was probably even a bigger risk than a black leading man for an action show pre-*Xena*. The lead character was Captain Kathryn Janeway. The basic premise was again a large break from the *Star Trek*/TNG formula. While there was a starship, the only place it was boldly going – was home. *Voyager* premiered with “Caretaker”, and with its first scene announced its different intentions as the captain arrives at a penal colony to recruit a cashiered and convicted ex-Starfleet officer into her crew. The writers of *Trek* were quite consciously rejecting the pristine, unflawed humans that had been decreed in the TNG era. The early storyline was a contrivance to bring about the defining element of the show. Chasing displaced Maquis fighters, they find themselves carried to the far side of the galaxy and forced to incorporate the criminal band into the ship’s complement. While the story was hampered by the twists it had to take, the set up was compelling. A motley crew alone and without resources, a heavy theme of ideals and the reality of what they cost – that was good stuff.

Not since *Star Trek* itself had there been a *Trek* that broke from the gate as strongly as *Voyager*. While DS9 was gaining its feet in its third season with interesting explorations of its characters and cultures, *Voyager* surged forward with excellent thematic sci-fi, tinged with the underlying tension of the lost ship tale. But, just as DS9’s destiny was taking shape and the show was rooting deeper into its unique niche, *Voyager* slacked off. They did, however, finish the season with a series of wonderful episodes, including the best Q story ever told in “Death Wish”. Exploring the implications of willful death, the rights of the individual versus the community and the terror of change that even god-like aliens can experience, this was fine *Trek*.

*Voyager* continued in this way, alternately bland and intriguing. It was never without solid, even superior episodes – “Distant Origin”, about science fighting faith, “Living Witness”, where a living hologram saves a culture, and “Sacred Ground”, where faith overcomes science. But several aspects of the original premise were being dropped, the primary one being the melding of a Starfleet crew – rule-bound and disciplined – with the supposedly rebellious terrorist band. Everyone was getting along fine on the ship, and unless someone told you, you’d never have guessed watching from the third season on, that this was anything other than a straight from the Academy Starfleet crew. Any arc longer than a two-parter disappeared. The characters, particularly the all-important captain, seemed to stagnate.

The *Trek* office must have been an unhappy place around this time. Despite having turned out decent stories on two shows for two seasons, ratings were dropping off. DS9 was its own animal and, after the addition of Worf from TNG to its crew, it was plain it had to be what it was. It wasn’t going to gain back the numbers TNG had pulled. And *Voyager* wasn’t doing the trick either. Confusion must have been rampant. Had they screwed up by altering the whole flagship-final-frontier format? Had they glutted the market by running concurrent shows and ended up competing with themselves? Where had all the Trekkies gone?

To *The X-Files*, *Babylon 5*, *Xena* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Not only was there plenty of *Trek* on the table, there was a whole all-you-can-eat buffet of SF and fantasy. It was hard to be a geek after a while, trying to keep up with it all. And finally, we couldn’t. The audience split, and with the help of the World Wide Web, fandoms were like weeds, popping up everywhere, interconnecting. Message boards, fan pages, role playing games, fan fiction – now every show could be acted upon and delved into to your heart’s content. With so much to absorb you, there was little choice but to pick your favorites and settle in.

So, with competition rough, one can only imagine the panic the brokers who had thought they had a monopoly must have experienced. *Trek* had to be kicked up a notch, pronto. It seems the logic went something like this – who are our audience? Primarily 12 to 24 year old white males. What do they all like? Tits and ass. We need a babe. They didn’t even really try to hide their motivations, showing constant ads which played on pure cheesecake.

Con’t on page 17

# Legacy of Joe Haldeman: The Birth of An ICON

by Terry Crotinger/montanasing

I recently moved. It was a big one, half a country away from the high, majestic *Mohave Desert* in Arizona to the rolling fields of the *Corn Deserts* of Iowa. I went from a thriving private practice and full time job to a part-timer while I wait for certifications to catch up with me. One bright spot – who am I kidding? – THE bright spot was a bit of research I began when I knew I was moving. I found Mindbridge Foundation. I found the Cedar Rapids Sci-Fi Discussion Group (CRSFDG) and I found *Syphilis* (Science Fiction League of Iowa Students—SFLIS). Glory Be, I found others like me! I was no longer one of the few who openly admitted my interest, nay, my passion for science fiction of any genre. If you've been following my submissions, I had only this past year found a sanctuary in Northwest Arizona in the form of a Sci-Fi club at a remote school. Imagine how that brave group prepared me for the Midwest's version of intellectual discussion with their abundance of engineers, scientists and post-doctoral personas? But, what could I lose? I began attending Mindbridge meetings shortly after moving to my new tomb and after-life. I will tell you why this was so important to me, but first, let me tell you what Iowans enjoy besides Hawkeyes football and five seasons (no one can tell me if the fifth season is the 'highway construction' season or the 'mud' season).

Let me start with the Hawkeyes. Located in Iowa City, the University of Iowa is synonymous with achievement. Okay, the Big Ten Conference is a biggie. That said, the local computer gurus developed one of the first cyber-support communities for students in 1986, ISCA (Iowa Student Computer Group), using one server. Two of the members of Mindbridge are associated with this computer group (one is a past president), and they were the first friends to this tentative and foreign newbie.

However, long before the computer group organized, Joe Haldeman, science fiction writer and patron saint of Iowa science fiction taught creative writing at U.I. His students were so enthusiastic that *Syphilis* (SFLIS) was spawned in 1981, starting the first conventions and growing in interest but taking on a big chunk of responsibility. The Science Fiction League of Iowa Students still meets at the same local bar-and-grill for their weekly meetings, and occasionally, an industrious member hands out business cards that mention they attend syphilis meetings.

Out of *this* group came Mindbridge Foundation, a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, taking over the

ConCom for several annual conventions attended by locals, like me, and people from all over the country. ICON, AnimeIowa and Gamicon all started with this revolving group of SFLIS students who attended the university at one point and either moved on or stayed in the area after their education was complete (or not). Non-students, who hunger for a place to talk tech stumble onto information and join. There is a membership requirement—meeting attendance and registration at one of their corporate events like a convention. No dues. It is a nice set-up, actually. To qualify for membership, I attended two MB meetings, one convention and helped with clean-up—volunteer hours give you points for goodies or \$ off convention registration. Though, they didn't sing me the welcome song when I joined. I'll have to point this out at the next meeting.

Henry, the self-appointed and accommodating mentor from my first Mindbridge meeting, answered my *many* questions patiently, made me feel welcome, and best of all, shared similar interests; I wouldn't be stuck in the corn desert all by myself! From Henry I learned that ConCom was the *convention committee* that planned the convention(s), that ICON was the Iowa Sci-Fi and Fantasy Convention and that Gamicon was the gaming convention. AnimeIowa, I got on my own!

Without someone, in my case, Henry, to help me understand all the various syntax associated with conventions, I doubt I would have enjoyed ICON as deeply as I did. I am no stranger to Creation's Star Trek Conventions (Oklahoma City, two in Las Vegas and annual treks to the Hilton's ST Experience). But, I had no idea what to expect at a convention totally dedicated to science fiction. Henry gave me the inside jokes and framework to understand the acronyms being bantered about. As a newbie, I knew nothing. I did not know what the Argo was and why everyone went around 'arrg'ing like pirates, nor filking (yes, that is spelled correctly), nor why I should get a good seat before the convention started so I could see the opening ceremonies. I thank ICON for my indoctrination with the panel on 'Anime for Newbies' even though my Arizona kids had tried to teach me this before the upheaval of my worldly possessions. Now, weeks after ICON, Scott – my anime mentor and RPG master – selflessly lends me tapes and books, spending hours explaining them and catching me up in his enthusiasm for the genre.

Con't on page 19

# The Writer's Block: Five Habits of PublishING Writers

by Charles Gramlich

What separates published writers from the unpublished? I used to think (back before I was published) that it was a lot. I know now that it's not very much, and with the explosion of the world wide web it's getting less all the time. But of all the people who get published on the net these days, and of all the people who pay to have their novels produced by print on demand presses, how many are making a career for themselves in writing? How many are making money? And are they likely to see their readership grow? That's why this article is not about getting published but about publishING, about the habits that will help you if you want to build a career for yourself in writing. Check them out. See if you agree or disagree. And write on.

**Habit 1: Making time for writing.** Publishing writers make time for writing, and they do so consistently, day in and day out. No one can write unless they have time to sit and think and plot at the keyboard. But if you wait for time to find you, it never will. You make time for going to the movies, time for watching TV, time for spending with your loved ones. You also have to make time for writing, and one of the easiest ways to start is to first identify where your free time is.

Pay attention to your schedule for a full week. You don't have to jot down what you do every single minute, but notice where you spend your hours. For example, how much time do you spend getting ready for work or school? How much time do you spend actually working or in classes? What kind of lunch and dinner schedule do you have? How much TV do you watch? How much do you talk on the phone?

Then, depending on both the free time you have and on how long you think you can sit at the computer, map out an hour or so a day—or more—for writing. Maybe you have an extra hour between afternoon classes, or use the hour before you go to bed when you're usually watching TV. Many writers who are well known now, like John Grisham, wrote parts of their first novels on their lunch breaks or as they rode the subway. But, whatever time you find for yourself, it's critical that you actually use it consistently for writing. Do not sharpen pencils during that time. Do not stop for a snack. Write.

For people who are starting out, I'd suggest that you try to write at least five days a week—I usually write six—but I'd also suggest that you don't try to write for five or six hours at a time. Start out with forty-five

minutes to an hour, and build up from there as you get familiar with the process and the work. Writing is an intensive act and, at least for me, a couple of hours can be pretty draining.

**Habit 2: Look up things about which you are unsure.** Learn to keep a dictionary and a grammar guide close at hand while you're writing. If you're not sure of a word's meaning, look it up. If you can't recall how a semicolon is used, look it up. Almost everything you need to know about writing is written down somewhere. Make it a habit to check yourself against such sources. This will take effort at first—the easiest thing is to be lazy—but it'll soon become routine.

In addition to a dictionary and a grammar guide, I keep a thesaurus on my desk and a little book called *The Elements of Style* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) by William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style* is under a hundred pages but is one of the best books you can buy on how to express yourself well. Encyclopedias are also good to have around, and I like to have the internet handy to check facts and spellings. (Be careful not to let yourself get caught up in surfing, though.) I even started my own computer file of writing notes, ranging from "adverb" to "zeugma."

**Habit 3: Do multiple drafts of everything.** The habit that might improve your writing the most is to rewrite everything you do. Just assume that your first draft is not good enough. Do it over again. This seems like work, and that's exactly what it is. But, after all, you would never expect to build a perfect chair the first time you tried carpentry, would you? Even if you did, you would still have to sand it, and polish it, and paint it. Writing is the same way. You don't build a perfect, or even a publishable, story or novel without effort.

When people ask me how many drafts to do I can never give them an answer. It depends upon the writer and the piece, and even on the section of the piece that you're working on. Most writers rewrite the opening and the ending more than the middle because they know how critical it is to hook the reader at the start and leave them satisfied at the end. The beginning sells your book (or story); the ending sells your next one.

**Habit 4: Use writing as a way of challenging yourself.** Any job that you do over and over in exactly the same way is going to get boring after a while. Never let this happen to your writing. Vary not only

Con't on page 19

## Reviews

### Moon's Dancing

Marguerite Kraus & Susan Sizemore



Five Star, Dec 2003 \$25.95  
465 pp.; ISBN 1594140634  
By Harriet Klausner

The three kingdoms of Sitrene, Dherrcia and Rhenland are all changing, descending into chaos and anarchy due to the heir apparent Prince Damon of Rhenland. In Dherrcia, when the queen dies her brother falsely accuses her son of

matricide and steals the throne. The true king goes into hiding, gathering support for taking back the crown from his uncle when the time is right. A cruel betrayal on the part of Prince Damon puts the untested wife of Prince Pirse on the throne as Queen Regent, a title she hopes to hold only until her husband can return to her and reclaim what is rightfully his.

Sitrene is the most stable of the three kingdoms as King Sene is not only well loved but highly regarded for his fair and just rule. Prince Damon sets a plan in motion that will result in the death of the king. Sene's son takes the throne and hopes that he will be able to justly rule over his land but the fear is that Prince Damon will send his armies into his country.

Since his father's health is failing Damon makes plans to rule the world once he ascends to the throne of Rhenland. He imprisons his sister Princess Vray because she dared to disgrace him and break his rules whenever she could help through the help of a dreamer. She escapes and flees to the keeper Jordy who learns to love her as if she was his own daughter. After Vray recovers physically and emotionally, she returns to her homeland with a plan to oust her evil sibling from power and become the new queen. She marries Damon's captain of the guard Dael who has secretly been working with Jordy for years to ferment a revolution of Keepers against Shapers. Slowly and subtly, Vray encourages the people's unrest. Neither Vray nor Damon let one another know about their relationship with Jordy who has welded the keepers of Rhenland into a powerful army.

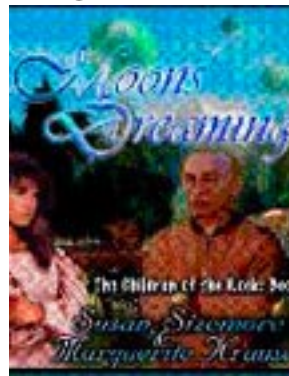
When his sire dies, King Damon implements all of his plans none of which are working because of the popular support of Vray and Dael. He believes in order to keep his kingdom he must kill Vray and his former captain of the guards.

Book two of *The Children of the Rock Trilogy* is epic fantasy at its finest. Ineffective and power hungry kings almost destroy the world and it is up to the next generation to repair the damage their elders have done. Wizards play a key role in keeping the lines of communications open between the three kingdoms as they descend into anarchy. The fact that they make mistakes and fumble at key moments prove that they are all too human and not to be overly feared.

Vray has always known that she was in love with Dael so it was easy to maneuver him into marriage since he loved her ever since she was a teenager and kept throwing herself at him. Both work to overthrow her brother and put Vray on the throne but it is only at the end of this novel that they realize that Jordy knows both of them and their plans. He is a very kind, loving and strong willed but will risk all for the country he loves. *Moon's Dancing* is an enthralling work that will give readers hours of pleasure.

### Moon's Dreaming

Marguerite Kraus & Susan Sizemore



Five Star, Dec 2003, \$25.95  
508 pp.; ISBN 1594140626  
By Harriet Klausner

When the plague struck, so many people were killed that the eleven kingdoms consolidated into three. Only Sitrene ruled by King Sene follows the old traditions and has the shapers doing their job protecting the keepers from

the magical beasts. A union between a Keeper and a Shaper is sterile except when the time comes for Dreamers to be born. When they grow up they protect the realm from creatures from other dimensions who want to wage war on humankind. King Sene's son is expected to marry his keeper's foster daughter, but she chooses to love the monarch causing dissension.

In Dherrica, when the queen is murdered, her brother Palle declares that his nephew Prince Pirse killed his mother and names him an Abstainer. The Prince escapes the trap his uncle set for him and he is protected by the keepers because he fights monsters and Abstainers who would hurt them. A wizard has him cross paths with Doran a beautiful keeper woman in the hopes they will have a Dreamer child if they ever stop fighting long enough to mate. King Palle's rule is ineffectual and the

# Reviews

## Moon's (con't)

realm is rapidly dissolving into anarchy.

In Rhenlan, the king is dying from fire bear poison and his heir Prince Damon is slowly but steadily coming into his own. He brooks no defiance and when his sister Vrey disobeys him, she is banished to a horrible place and treated like a lowly serving wench. The Dreamers rescue her and place her with a keeper family to recover in mind and body. Her foster father Jordy sees the young men of the town forcibly conscripted into the army and the guards take what they want from the villagers. Prince Damon is becoming such a dictator that the country is on the verge of revolt.

*Moon's Dreaming* is a spectacular epic fantasy about a world that seems very real. It is a place where tradition is slowly being destroyed and the only way to stop it is for brave men and women to overthrow evil or ineffective despots responsible for deteriorating conditions out of office.

The Dreamers, who live for centuries, move the players around as if they were chess pieces in the hopes that a certain prediction will come true. The other races feel genuine and enhance the complexity of the relationships. Margaret Krause and Susan Sizemore have left enough threads dangling so that readers will know the general story line of the next tale *Moon's Dancing*. Prince Pirse must somehow find a way to prove his innocence and throw the usurper off his throne. Princess Vrey must somehow find the strength to come out of hiding and rescue the populace against her brother. How these two events will happen will be two of the reasons readers will want to read the sequel to *Moon's Dreaming*. The audience will also want to revisit characters that have somehow become like old friends.

## Anime: Project A-Ko

Central Park Media, 1986.



Director: Katsuhiko Nishijima

ASIN: 6305080070

By Terry Crotinger

Eiko Magami (A-Ko), Biiko Daitokuji (B-Ko) and Shiiko Kotobuki (C-Ko) are high school students at the same school. But they share a common history. A-Ko and C-Ko are fast friends, though C-Ko is ditsy and acts more like a first grader. B-Ko is

jealous of A-Ko's friendship with C-Ko and tries to fight for C-Ko's affection. Little does she know that A-Ko has super powers and easily defends herself against B-Ko.

Getting confused? It gets stranger because B-Ko is a mad scientist type and overnight creates huge mechanical monsters to compensate for A-Ko's super powers, but A-Ko always wins the fight until B-Ko develops a special power suit that gives A-Ko a wake-up call. While this is happening, a plot to find and rescue a long-lost galactic princess is underway, and the princess is C-Ko! She is rescued/taken away in a Galactic Cruiser type ship leaving A- & B-Ko to put their problems behind them in order rescue C-Ko.

I won't spoil the fun too much, but this is a lighthearted anime with arch-type characters that garrie would love! There are obvious take-offs from mainline science fiction movies or books including many Star Wars references, one as a dubious 'honor' to David Weber, *Independence Day*, *Lost In Space* — the movie — and too many others to mention. It is almost like watching a Who's Who of Science Fiction. There are the little anime inside jokes scattered throughout this video as an intended parody of other anime. Jackie Chan had a movie with characters named Mr. A, Mr. B, Mr. C, Mr. D... Gee, I wonder if Project A-Ko might be like that? Watch for the fan dance (the fans are called "tessen") B-Ko does in the background; it is a Victory Dance. Check out websites for other parodies and inside jokes!

If you have never seen anything other than Speed Racer, this is a treat. Upper nudity occurs at the beginning, so watch what version you show the kids. There are five sequels, and after the first one, they get a little kinky with overtones of a bi-sexual nature. The Letterbox version is rated for general audiences, and DVDs top at about \$ 12.00, less for VHS or used. I wonder who this super-human adolescent teenager's parents are that read the Daily Planet...?

The Monks of Cool, whose tiny and exclusive monastery is hidden in a really cool and laid-back valley in the lower Ramtops, have a passing-out test for a novice. He is taken into a room full of all types of clothing and asked: Yo, my son, which of these is the most stylish thing to wear? And the correct answer is: Hey, whatever I select.

– (Terry Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*)

## Reviews

### The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Vol. 1

Author: Alan Moore



DC Comics, Trade, 192 pgs  
ISBN: 1563898586

Director: Stephen Norrington  
Starring: Sean Connery, Jason  
Flemyng, Naseeruddin Shah  
DVD Release Date: Dec 2003

### In a Different League A Review by Sherri Craig

There are many good movies out there that have been based on graphic novels. Really, there are. *The Crow* (the original one, at least) was decent. *Men in Black* was fun. *Mystery Men* was a campy classic as soon as it hit the screen. Edgy comic writer, Alan Moore has had a recent run of luck in Hollywood. The 2001 theatrical release of *From Hell* was a hit with audiences, but did not gain much critical acclamation. Fans are getting geared up for the 2004 release of *Constantine* and the DVD release of this summer's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. Both the movie and the trade paperback are good in their own rights, but as a comic fan, I find that I must offer a word of advice for those interested in the movie and a word of warning for those who enjoyed the book.

Let's begin with the movie. I had been regaled by the previews for about six months before the movie came to the theaters. As an English major and an avid fan of *Indiana Jones*, this movie seemed to be made just for me. I had heard of the comic series a few years before, but life as a graduate student had killed the pocket change I had reserved in earlier days for comics, so I had not read it.

I did not go into the theater expecting *Citizen Kane*, nor did I even expect *Indiana Jones*. The movie met my expectation. It was not a profound bit of celluloid, but it was entertaining, Sean Connery is always fun in a movie, but he did not really fit my mental description of Haggard's British adventurer (and precursor to *Indiana Jones* himself) Allan Quatermain (of *King Solomon's Mines* fame). Connery was, of course, Connery, dominating the screen, kicking ass and taking names. It was a shame, though, because the rest of the cast had a lot of potential. Peta Wilson had a nice presence as Mina Harker (nee Murray), catching the eye, once again, of an immortal (*Dorian Gray* this time, not *Dracula*). Speaking of *Dorian Gray*, Stuart Townsend did a rather lackluster job as the ever

youthful and decadent Gray. Once again, this character was just not the image one gets from the Wilde novel, though I must concede that Wilson looked her part.

Naseeruddin Shah's Nemo was a good representation from the Verne novel, though it seemed quite odd that he owned an automobile and seemed to have no problem treading on the land of the accursed enemy. He was a bit smaller than Nemo is described, but what he lacked in stature, he made up for in sword. The *Nautilus* looked pretty sharp too, though it also veered from the original description. Shah just had an aura of great interest around him. He was good, and he worked well with Hyde. Jason Flemyng was a high point in the movie. His poor, haunted Dr. Jekyll made me want to go back and reread Stevenson's novel. The CGI Hyde looked a bit off and had cheesy dialogue, but the interior conflict Jekyll had with Hyde was presented well.

Tony Curran's Invisible Man had a few amusing bits, but was, overall, not a very noticeable character (no pun intended). The disappearance of the character for a time in the movie left nothing to be missed. This character had a lot of potential, but came across bland. The final character was Tom Sawyer, a character who seemed thrown in. The kid was okay, but was nowhere near as interesting, or appealing, as the other characters. I did know, going into the film, that Sawyer was not in the comic. Shane West had a Tom Sawyer-esque cuteness and was, no doubt, thrown in to win over the attention of young American girls. The character was not near as annoying as I expected him to be.

The plot of the movie was mildly interesting, but it seemed a bit rushed and poorly thrown together. The pace was enough to keep most movie goers awake, though. When all was said and done, I left the theater feeling pretty good. It was fun, and I was glad that I had seen it. My husband grumbled a bit, but he'd been in a bad mood since *Hulk*. I did feel, however, that the movie wasn't quite up to par for most of the Alan Moore work that I'd seen.

After the movie, I wanted to go back and read the trade paperback. I can say that I am glad that I saw the movie first. Had I read the book first, I would not have enjoyed the movie nearly as much. In the book, I could see the masterful work of Moore in every page. The plot of the first story arc of the comic was immensely better than that of the movie. The characters were wonderfully complex, and the settings were particularly effective to the tone of the story.

All of the characters were much more interesting in the comic than they were in the movie. Sawyer, of course, was

## Reviews

### League (con't)

not there and neither was Gray. Mina, not Quatermain, was the leader of the group. She did not show her vampiric side in the book, but was instead quiet and a bit nervous. The differences in Quatermain's characters were perhaps the most drastic. Instead of being retired, hanging out in a bar/lodge in Africa, the Quatermain in the book has to be dragged out of an Opium den and must constantly be kept in line by Mina. The Invisible Man is also introduced in an interesting manner. He has taken to haunting a girls' school and has been solely responsible for a rash of immaculate conceptions. Mina and Allan must drag him out of there.

Overall, both the movie and the book have merits. The movie is fun and chances are, children will like it. The book's plot has much more detail and thought put into it than the movie. The book, however, is for mature audiences. I recommend both the movie and the book; though, I would strongly suggest one see the movie before reading the book. After watching the movie, find the book and be prepared for a whole new story. not there and neither was Gray. Mina, not Quatermain, was the leader of the group. She did not show her vampiric side in the book, but was instead quiet and a bit nervous. The differences in Quatermain's characters were perhaps the most drastic. Instead of being retired, hanging out in a bar/lodge in Africa, the Quatermain in the book has to be dragged out of an Opium den and must constantly be kept in line by Mina. The Invisible Man is also introduced in an interesting manner. He has taken to haunting a girls' school and has been solely responsible for a rash of immaculate conceptions. Mina and Allan must drag him out of there.

Overall, both the movie and the book have merits. The movie is fun and chances are, children will like it. The book's plot has much more detail and thought put into it than the movie. The book, however, is for mature audiences. I recommend both the movie and the book; though, I would strongly suggest one see the movie before reading the book. After watching the movie, find the book and be prepared for a whole new story.

If you see a whole thing - it seems that it's always beautiful. Planets, lives.... But close up a world's all dirt and rocks. And day to day, life's a hard job, you get tired, you lose the pattern.

– Ursula LeGuin

## Buy Boundary's Fall (Do It For The Children!)

The Christmas season is upon us, a season synonymous with two things: helping people and buying stuff. But for most of us, finding the right gift is almost as difficult as figuring out which charities to support. The lines, the hassles, the not knowing if your gift will be appreciated or if your donation will reach its intended destination (the one you intended, at least). Don't you wish there were some way you could get it all done at once, both buy your presents and help people? Don't you want to spread some holiday cheer by supporting literacy and helping some orphans find a better home?

Now you can! Illuminata editor garrie keyman wants to adopt two orphaned Ukrainian girls, but the expense of the multi-national adoption process is a bit more than a family can bear. To help her out, Tyrannosaurus Press has pledged a third of all book sales to her from now until those girls are nestled safely in her arms. Garrie is a fine editor and a kind person who wants to make the lives of two poor girls better.

If you want to support our efforts, please order *Path of Glory* or *Sword of Honor* individually for \$15.95 or as a set for \$30.00. You get a discount on the books, garrie gets that much closer to her goal, and whomever you buy the books for gets to read a critically-acclaimed fantasy tale. Everyone benefits!

Even better, the money that garrie raises will be given directly to the girls' orphanage, and if we surpass our goal, any additional funds will be donated to children's cancer research, meaning that your kind donation will help not just two children, but hundreds of them. And, if we fail to raise the required adoption fee, (an eventuality that we all refuse to consider) *all* proceeds earned will be donated to the girls' orphanage, ensuring that they, at least, will still benefit from the kindness of our patrons.

Books may be ordered online, or by sending a check or money order for the appropriate amount (residents of Louisiana, please add sales tax) to:

### Book Orders

**Tyrannosaurus Press**  
PO Box 8337

**New Orleans, LA 70183-8337**

If you have any questions, or if you would prefer to donate money without purchasing books (for which garrie will be eternally grateful) you may contact us at [Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com](mailto:Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com)

**Merry Christmas From T-Press and *The Illuminata!***

# Original Fiction

## The Fierce, the Furious, and the Faceless Freaks A Draco and Vole Adventure by Charles Sinclair

Part II: The story rejoins our heroes following their humiliating defeat by kobolds.

The three of them set off, the rain pelting them as they walked. Vole started to tell about the time he hitched a ride on the back of a giant crow and flew all the way to Carthas Daine, but after Draco told him three times to shut up, then threatened to cut off all his limbs and nail them each to a different tree, Vole finally fell silent. And so, they walked in silence for a several minutes, to Draco's great relief.

The rain fell all around them as they marched single file up the muddy path. The twisted forms of the sickly trees all but blocked out the thin light of the moon that shone above them.

"Ugh," said Vole finally. "So much water. It reminds me of the time I fell off that ship and was rescued by a giant talking squid. Did I ever tell you that one?"

"Twice now," said Draco. "And I didn't believe it either time."

"Well, maybe if you'd—"

Vole stopped and swung his bow upwards. His eyes scanned the darkness.

"What is it, Vole?" whispered Draco, edging up behind Vole, his axes at the ready.

Inartan pulled a crossbow bolt awkwardly out of his quiver and struggled loudly with it, trying to jam it into his crossbow in the dark. He cursed in his own language as his wet fingers slipped again and again on the string, finally dropping the bolt in the mud.

"Damn it," he said, reaching down to retrieve it.

"Did you see that?" whispered Vole.

"No," said Draco. "That's why I'm asking you what it was."

"Something moved in the bushes over there."

Inartan quickly wiped most of the mud off the crossbow bolt and, after much swearing and struggling, managed to wedge it into the crossbow and pull the string back.

Draco's eyes scanned the darkness. "I don't see anything."

"It's over there," pointed Vole. "There it is!"

"What?" said Inartan. "Where?" His finger instinctively closed on the trigger of his crossbow as he followed the line of Vole's finger.

*Twang!*

The bolt shot from the end of his crossbow, whizzing right by Draco's ear, and slammed into a tree, startling a nearby bird.

"Sorry," said Inartan. "Sorry..."

"By the beard of Grahgg!" said Draco, making sure his ear was still attached to his head. "Are you sure you've fired that thing before?"

"Sure," he said. "Plenty of times."

Draco looked at him and raised a questioning eyebrow.

"Well..." said Inartan. "A *few* times."

"A *few* times?"

"... Okay, *twice*... But, I'm getting better!"

Draco looked back at Vole and raised the other eyebrow.

Inartan pulled another bolt from his quiver and started to reload, his hands shaking badly.

"It's all right, Inartan," said Vole. "I'd never even shot an arrow before my cousin Vildarr and I went on that quest to find the Soul Gem."

"Vole, you *stole* that so-called gem from a one-eyed drunk, who was sleeping off the effects of a bottle and a half of whiskey. It was hardly much of a quest."

Vole scoffed. "That's *hardly* the way I remember it. First of all, that so-called drunk was really a *lich!*"

"Vole, he was most definitely *not* a lich. He just called himself a lich so the townspeople would stop beating him up. He was just a crazy old man who lived in a cave."

Con't on page 12

# Original Fiction

## Draco and Vole (con't)

"Well, okay, maybe he wasn't a lich, but he was certainly a wizard!"

"He wasn't a wizard, either. He was just a useless old drunk."

"Well, I saw him cast a spell."

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah, he turned my cousin into a rabbit!"

"A *rabbit*?!" Draco paused, scarcely able to believe what he was hearing. "Vole, I..." He shook his head. "Forget it. I'm not even going to dignify that with a response."

"Seriously?" said Inartan, looking up from struggling to load his crossbow. "He turned Vildarr into a rabbit?"

"Ohhhh, no," said Draco. "Inartan, a little piece of advice. Do not believe *anything* Vole says. Not a single word."

"Whatever," said Vole, waving aside Draco's remark. "All I know is that one day my cousin was an ordinary elf and now... he's a *rabbit*." Vole paused for a second. "In fact... you remember that three foot long rabbit we saw outside of Terant Vare a few months back?"

Draco grinned mischievously. "Yes, I do, actually."

Vole rocked back proudly on his heels. "That was him."

"Vole, I *ate* that rabbit."

"You ate cousin Vildarr?!"

"And, he was damn tasty."

"... I think I'm going to be sick."

Draco shook his head. "Well, it looks like you're doubly screwed, because that gem you stole is a fake. The real one is with Lady Altryn in Carthas Daine."

"It is *not* a fake!" protested Vole. "I have it right he—" He reached instinctively for his backpack, then stopped short, remembering he had left what little was left of it back where they'd been robbed by the kobolds. Vole groaned.

"Ha!" said Inartan, finally getting the bolt loaded into his crossbow.

"Ready for action?" asked Draco.

"Damn straight," said Inartan, hoisting the mud-covered crossbow, inadvertently pointing it directly at Draco's face. "Valla is with us, now."

"Great," said Vole. "This will be just like the time we stole that jeweled goblet in Ladrass Daine."

"Except," said Draco, gently pointing the end of Inartan's crossbow away from his face. "We're not covered in cow manure. And you're not dressed like a bar-wench."

"Not yet, anyway—"

Vole stopped at the unmistakable sound of a twig snapping. Inartan gave a yelp of surprise and leapt into the air, twisting around. His boots made a loud slurping sound as he landed in the mud, trying hard not to fall over in the slippery muck. He raised his crossbow and aimed it at tree after tree, scanning the darkness for a target.

Vole's presumably sharp, elven eyes peered into the darkness, looking left and right, finally stopping on a dark form beside a large row of bushes. Another twig snapped.

"There!" he yelled, pointing at the large, motionless form. "There it is! Shoot it. *Shoot it!*"

Inartan and Vole both fired into the darkness and watched helplessly as their arrows bounced right off the intended target. Draco took a step back and threw one of his axes at the dark mass. The motionless form did not move at all as the steel axe clanged against it. A shower of sparks streamed into the air as the axe bounced off the target and flew off into the night.

Draco stood for a second, peering into the darkness.

"Vole, that's a *rock!*"

"Oh... Well, it looked like a monster from here."

"Well, you look like an idiot from *here!*"

Draco groaned. Water ran in rivulets off his beard. Overhead, the clouds rumbled and began to dump even more rain on the already sopping-wet party. Draco shook his head and muttered to himself as he looked at Vole.

Con't on page 13

# Original Fiction

## Draco and Vole (con't)

He shivered there in the cold, his boots covered in mud with water running down into them, his beard covered with muck and still containing the odd branch or two. Draco stared at the elf with all the hatred he could muster. He shook his head and tried hard to remember a time when he was more miserable. (Actually, he managed to think of several times and, curiously, all of them were scenarios involving Vole).

"Vole, if we *ever* get out of this forest, I swear I'm going to take your head, and squeeze it so hard—"

"Hello, there!" said a voice behind them.

"Monsters!" yelled Vole. His fingers instinctively let go of his bowstring, shooting another arrow off into the distance, where it ricocheted off the rock and finally stuck into the side of a large tree.

Draco wheeled around and brought his other axe to bear on the source of the sound. Inartan, empty crossbow in hand, stepped forward and raised his crossbow, ready to impale whatever had crawled out of the forest to greet them.

Several feet away, under the shelter of a large tree, stood what looked like a very small man. He stood about three feet high, with delicate features but an abnormally large nose. He was dressed in the tailored green and brown clothes of a well-heeled traveler, and his hat was completely soaked, the brim bent down under the weight of the rain. He held an intricately carved walking stick in his hand and looked with cautious interest at the three individuals before him.

Draco groaned. "Great," he said. "A Dresyn. That's all we need."

The island nation of Dresylia was home to a race of very small and slender people, who looked in almost every way like humans, but who only grew to about three feet tall. Many people said they were distant cousins to the elves of Sylara, but most thought they were just skinny little freaks who ought to be avoided at all costs. Often obsessed with maps and gadgets, and sometimes given to casting mischievous spells on unsuspecting farmers, the Dresyn were generally viewed as annoying but harmless. But, after several pranks involving loud, braying, illusionary sheep and a few wildly speculative and unconfirmed rumors about rampant laundry-snatching, the Dresyn were all but banned from the Commonwealth of Par Venthalis, and had not been seen there for almost twenty years.

"Show yourself, you little thief," sneered Draco.

The little man held up his hands. "Easy there, kind sir. I'm a traveller in these parts, just like you. I mean you no harm."

The three members of the party looked at each other. Vole shrugged.

"Travelling these lands is awfully dangerous for a... person such as yourself," said Draco.

"I could say the same thing about you," said the Dresyn. Draco and Vole looked at each other. "An elf and a dwarf, travelling *together*?" He shook his head disapprovingly. "Could look like trouble in these human-occupied lands. You're lucky you haven't been arrested yet." He looked at Inartan. "All of you."

The party shifted uncomfortably.

"Okay, fine," said Draco, keeping a watchful eye on the Dresyn. "But, still... You shouldn't go around sneaking up on people like that. It's uh... Well, it's rude."

The little man smiled thinly. "Of course," he said, the rain continuing to run off his hat. "I'm sure you're right." He gathered his cloak about him, trying to shake a little of the rain off.

"So, uh, what brings you out on a night like this, little fellow?" asked Vole, slowly pulling out another arrow.

"I should ask you the same thing," replied the Dresyn.

"That," said Draco. "Is none of your concern."

"But," continued Vole. "It certainly doesn't have anything to do with a large gang of kobolds—"

"Vole!" whispered Draco.

"Sorry."

Draco shook his head. "Look, we're out here because we're, uh..." He looked over at Vole.

"We're... *adventurers!*" declared Vole, puffing out his chest, raising his hands over his head and wiggling his fingers menacingly.

"But, what are you doing standing around in the rain?"

"*Adventuring!*" said Vole.

Con't on page 14

# Original Fiction

## Draco and Vole (con't)

"Ah."

"But, more importantly," said Inartan. "We are here to serve Valla, and obey His commands."

The Dresyn raised a tentative eyebrow. "Valla, you say?"

"Yes," said Inartan. "The light of Valla is all around us. Shining on us."

"Indeed?" The little man looked around at the rain, the clouds, and the dark, twisted trees.

"Well," said Inartan. "Not *literally* shining, obviously. But, still..."

"You still haven't answered our question," said Draco, running his fingers along the blade of his axe.

"Question?"

"As to what you're doing out here."

"Well," said the Dresyn, reclining against a tree. "I'm out here on a special mission."

"You don't say," said Draco, his eyes drifting over to Vole. He hoped that Vole would catch his glance and respond. But Vole just looked at him blankly.

"Yes," said the Dresyn. "A very important one."

"Important, you say?" Draco again looked sidelong at Vole, raising his eyebrow only slightly, again trying to catch Vole's attention, and again failing.

"Indeed."

"Well, why don't you tell us about it?" asked Draco, trying for the third time to catch Vole's eye, but Vole had become distracted by the glint of the moonlight off the tip of his arrow and was waving it around in the air, watching it shimmer.

"Actually," said the little man, with just a hint of arrogance, which was very uncharacteristic for a Dresyn. "I'm a cartographer. And, I'm mapping this area." He stared with curious fascination at Vole, who was waving his arrow around in the moonlight like an idiot, completely enthralled by the reflection in the tip. "I uh... seek to make these woods safer for all who travel them. I want to make sure no one gets lost or injured, or falls prey to any of the dangers in these woods."

"Any money in that?" asked Draco.

"Hardly. But, I think making the woods safe for travelers is much more important than a few extra coins in my purse."

Vole's attention snapped back to the present at the Dresyn's mention of money in his purse, and he nocked his arrow.

Draco shrugged. "I suppose."

"Money is uh... very important to you?" asked the Dresyn.

"Duh," said Vole.

The Dresyn shifted uneasily as he looked at the troupe of mud-stained and water-logged "*adventurers*." He looked at their muddy boots, their dirt-covered faces, and the air of desperation that hung over them like a cloud. The tumblers of his mind turned. "Oh," he said. "You are... looking for work?"

"Perhaps..." said the dwarf, nodding a little.

"Work, yes," said Vole. "But, more importantly, we're looking for... *adventure!*"

Draco groaned.

"And, is there any money in *that*?"

"Ha. Usually. Unless you're set upon by kobo--"

"Vole!"

"Sorry."

"Set upon by...?"

"By misfortune," said the dwarf, grinning mirthlessly.

The Dresyn tapped the ends of his fingers together.

"Well, misfortune is the seed to the tree of wisdom. And, the roots of wisdom are deep indeed."

"Well," said Vole, relaxing his bow a little. "You're a philosophical little fellow, aren't you?"

The little man shrugged.

"And I, as a rule, don't shoot philosophers." He removed the arrow from his bow.

Con't on page 15

# Original Fiction

## Draco and Vole (con't)

"Yes," said Draco. "Perhaps, it's time we introduced ourselves formally."

The little man removed his little hat and bowed a little, the puddle of rain spilling down off the brim of his hat. "My name is Thomas Reginald Bartlehollow. You can call me Tom."

"I am Draco," said the dwarf, giving a proper dwarven bow, bowing so low his beard sank into the mud. He pulled it back quickly, and it slapped against his chest. "Of the clan Orcshire," he continued, hoping dearly that no one would notice the mud dripping from his beard. He stood up and rested his hands proudly on his remaining axe. "Warrior for hire."

Inartan stepped into the moonlight and bowed slightly, both hands extended palm up, as was customary in his homeland of the Northern Wastes. "I am Inartan Orlif, servant of Valla."

"And I am Vole, Bard and Entertainer to the Commonwealth. Spinner of tales and drinker of ales. Lifter of skirts and lifter of spirits."

"In other words, he's a traveling clown," said Inartan.

"Traveling *idiot*, more like it," said Draco.

"Well, Mr. Tom," said Vole, ignoring Draco's remark. "Perhaps, you are more familiar with these woods than us. Maybe you can help us find a way out and into Ardwyn Daine."

Tom thought for a second, looking around at the darkness and the mass of tangled trees. "Well, I uh..." His eyes settled on the party, which he sensed were staring at him. "No problem," he said, quickly.

"Good," said Vole, pulling out the map. "Because, according to my map here, the woods get deeper if we head east across this clearing, but..." He lifted his head up and looked around. "The map says there should be a huge river around here somewhere. Perhaps we should follow it downstream—"

Tom thought for a second. "There's no river around here."

Draco groaned. "Damn it, Vole. Let me see that map," he said, snatching it out of Vole's hands.

"Hey!"

Draco looked at the map, holding it up to the moonlight, peering into it, reading every square inch of it, his eyes scanning slowly from left to right across the page. When he finally reached the bottom right corner, he stopped cold. He could hardly believe his eyes. His fingernails dug into the parchment as his fists slowly clenched into tight balls. "Vole," he spat. "This... this is a *placemat!*"

"What?!"

"It's a *placemat* from an *inn!* It's just decorated to look like a map."

"It is *not!*" protested Vole.

"But, Vole, look. It says right here: 'Property of the Headless Whore Inn. Not to be used for actual navigation.'"

"It's probably a typo."

"Vole—you—argh... Vole, how much did you pay for this pile of crap?"

"Sixteen copper pieces."

"Oh, sweet Valla," said Inartan.

"Vole, you *idiot!*" spat Draco. "I can't even buy a rag to wipe my rear end for sixteen copper pieces. How did you think you were getting an accurate map of the Commonwealth?"

"I've gotten good deals like that before."

"Oh, please."

"Like that time I bought that magic wand."

"Vole, that was a stick."

"It was a *magic wand*... created by wood fairies."

"It was a *stick*... created by a tree!"

Vole scoffed. "You don't know *what* you're talking about."

Draco sighed and began to rub his temples, which had begun to throb. He believed it was a side-effect of long-term exposure to Vole.

"I still say it's a real map," said Vole.

Draco just shook his head. He tucked the map/placemat inside his mail shirt. "I swear," said Draco. "If I were not so tired and so wet, I would cut off your limbs right here and leave you to die in this ugly, Grahgg-forsaken forest. Ugh. You are *worthless!*"

Con't on page 16

## Original Fiction

### Draco and Vole (con't)

"Now, now," said Inartan. "Let's not degenerate into violence. I'm sure Valla has a role for even Vole to play."

"Thank you," said Vole, smiling contentedly.

Draco shook his head and muttered to himself.

"One of these days," said Vole. "You are going to get down on your knees and thank Grahgg that we have that map."

"One of these days," said Draco. "You are going to get down on your knees and I'm going to chop your fool head off."

"Well," said Tom, taking a step forward. "If I am not mistaken, the town of Ardwyn Daine lies directly to the east of us. If we head across that clearing and keep going, we should reach it by dawn."

"Finally," said Draco. "A man with a sense of direction."

"Care to travel with us?" asked Inartan.

Tom shrugged. "Absolutely. Much safer to travel in numbers, you know."

"Then, let us be off," said Draco. "Lead on, good Dresyn."

Tom gathered his cloak about him and stepped onto the muddy path, joining the party.

"So, you're a cartographer, eh?" asked Draco, pulling out the map.

"Indeed, I am."

"What do you think of this map?"

Tom looked at it. "Looks like a placemat."

"I told you."

---

## Illuminations Speculative Fiction Writing Contest

Tyrannosaurus Press and *The Illuminata* are happy to announce a new Illuminations writing contest. This contest will be different than the last; instead of cash prizes, winners will have their stories printed, not only in an upcoming edition of *The Illuminata*, but also in a short story anthology to be published by Tyrannosaurus Press in late 2004. This is an excellent opportunity for budding authors and seasoned writers alike, two writing credits and a contest win all at once!

A one-time fee of \$5.00 (per entry) is required to submit a story; multiple entries are allowed. This fee will be used to compensate the judges and to finance this and similar projects in the future. Once the anthology is published, Tyrannosaurus Press will make copies available to all contest entrants (regardless of whether or not they win) at a discounted price. Our goal is to help talented but unknown authors gain exposure for their work.

If a work is selected to be included in the anthology, the author agrees to give Tyrannosaurus Press first on-line publication rights (in *The Illuminata*) as well as English language print rights for the story in the anthology. All other rights to the story will remain with the author, and it should be noted that the author will be free to seek publication of the story in any forms and/or venues, other than those stated in the contract, immediately and indefinitely. A contract will be sent when the story is accepted for the anthology.

Entry fees may be paid online or by mail. To pay by mail, send a check or money order to:

**Illuminations Writing Contest**  
**Tyrannosaurus Press**  
**PO Box 8337**  
**New Orleans, LA 70182-8337**

Both a hardcopy and digital copy of each entry should be submitted to the above address. Digital copies may be mailed on floppy or CD, or they may be e-mailed to [Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com](mailto:Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com), but please query us first (without attachments) to ensure that your file is not automatically deleted. Digital files may be sent in Adobe (.pdf), Word (.doc), Wordperfect (.wpd), or Rich Text (.rtf) formats. For guidelines and more details, please visit <http://www.tyrannosauruspress.com/Illuminata/Illuminations.html> or e-mail us at [Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com](mailto:Illuminations@TyrannosaurusPress.com)

## RPG Corner (con't)

as a damage reducer, not as an absorber. The lighter armors can deflect small amounts of damage, while the heavier metal armors will deflect more, but armor will rarely stop all of the damage inflicted by a blow.

Armor, like weapons, comes in several styles that are grouped together for ease of usage according to an approximation of how much damage they can deflect. At the low end of the scale we find regular clothes and leather or other animal hide armor, then we move to leather/metal combinations, like ring mail and sewn plate, where metal rings or plates are sewn onto a leather coat. After that one moves into all metal armor, like chainmail, and then all the way to full plate armor, like the knights of Hollywood.

Determining how much damage the armor can deflect is a touchy subject, and just like determining how much damage a weapon can do, it depends on the level of success of the attack. A lucky or glancing blow will never do as much damage as a precision strike, and so once again we are forced to develop a table to determine the damage deflecting qualities of armor. As with Hit Points, increasing the amount of damage that the armor can deflect can lessen the severity of combat.

As before I will only give a small example, since the table should be self-explanatory, and is ultimately the domain of the individual Game Master.

This table is used after the character has failed to either dodge or parry. The attacker declares what level of success he has, and the defender can look up on the chart how much damage is taken off of the attacker's damage roll.

<b><i>Minimal Success</i></b>	<b><i>Damage Deflected</i></b>
Leather Armor	3 Points
Chainmail	4 Points
<b><i>Moderate Success</i></b>	<b><i>Damage Deflected</i></b>
Leather Armor	2 Points
Chainmail	3 Points
<b><i>Average Success</i></b>	<b><i>Damage Deflected</i></b>
Leather Armor	1 Point
Chainmail	2 Points
<b><i>Major Success</i></b>	<b><i>Damage Deflected</i></b>
Leather Armor	None
Chainmail	1 Point
<b><i>Critical Success</i></b>	<b><i>Damage Deflected</i></b>
Leather Armor	None
Chainmail	1 Point

Now we can see how the more successful the attack, the more likely a character is to suffer a fatal injury. As with everything, there will be adjustments to this system, and additions of modifiers.

For Game Masters with more experience, things like an armor's weight and mobility can be taken into account, as well as weapon arm fatigue and modifiers from incurred damage, such as bleeding, damaged limbs and so on. Damage to weapons and armor can reduce their combat effectiveness, and then there's the whole issue of magic in combat, but we'll save magic for its own column. Right now, we have the basic components for running a combat sequence, but we've run out of room so we'll have to wait till next time to see it in action!

## Whatever Happened (con't)

For all that the introduction of Seven of Nine is disdained, nay, spat upon, by huge numbers of Trekkies, and her costume was most certainly pandering, the character was an intriguing one who was not handled badly from an SF, and Trek, point of view. A human rescued from assimilation by the frightening cyborg race that had haunted Trek since "The Best of Both Worlds", Seven struggled to find her humanity and individuality through a series of quite good stories such as "Drone" in which she had to teach an advanced Borg drone how to be an individual, only to lose him when he learned his lessons so well he sacrificed himself for the crew. Still, a large number of Trekkies blew conventional wisdom out of the water when they rejected the obvious attempt to titillate them with her body. It was suddenly apparent that the producers didn't know their audience.

The tone of Trek changed then. The Pax Romana had ended and the universe had split into the Byzantine Empire of DS9, a densely interwoven and complicated structure – and a Western Empire that didn't know which direction to go with so many barbarian interlopers over-running the landscape. Far more SF and fantasy shows were appearing all the time – *Farscape*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Angel*. *Voyager*, which had started as one thing, was trying trick after trick, some flying wildly in from left field, in an attempt to duplicate TNG's success. Because it was never allowed to find its own identity the way TNG and DS9 had done, it never gelled. And, it remains to be seen how fateful one choice about *Voyager* was – it was the only Trek in which no starship Enterprise ever appeared. Beginning with a premise that practically demanded

Con't on page 18

### Whatever Happened (con't)

arc development, the ship and the characters never changed, and fans were often unhappy with the show's use of the "reset button". Story contrivances to return everything to a status quo at the end of each hour were out of step with a story about people surviving a perilous journey home through dangerous space. Yet on the one hand, it is understandable that the producers were focused on doing whatever was necessary to make *Voyager* accessible to a wider audience. On the other hand, one wonders why they thought something as fundamentally based in science fiction concepts as Trek would naturally appeal to anyone outside the small audience that has always been the core of SF. They didn't seem to see that they had gotten a lucky convergence of factors with TNG and that this convergence would never occur again.

There were events that made it hard to see this. TNG had a solid success with its second film, *Star Trek: First Contact*. Ironically, as *Voyager* was being pushed into an episodic format that ignored its own past, *First Contact* picked up an earlier storyline and brought Picard into conflict with the Borg again. It also tapped a bit of Trek lore from way back in the original days by having the crew present at a pivotal moment in the universe's fictional history, meeting the inventor of warp drive who hadn't been seen since the *Star Trek* episode "Communion". Fans loved it and it was a good enough movie to draw in the more casual ranks of Generation-D. After a time though, opinions of the film would split. Hardcore members of Generation-D didn't like how Picard was played as flawed, having gone nearly around the bend with vengeance. Then there was the Borg Queen, a character *Voyager* picked up and put to poor use. Two years later the third film, *Star Trek: Insurrection*, produced a giant "meh" from fans. Criticisms of *Voyager* were becoming vicious. The flame was sputtering.

Series V was regularly discussed on internet fan boards. Everyone knew it was coming as *Voyager* wrapped up what had become the traditional seven season run. New Trek had now been produced continually for fifteen years, and for half that time at a rate of two per week. The total output equaled over 500 hours, without counting the original series. That's a lot of Trek. People wondered if a little rest was in order. Dissatisfaction was rampant. The premise for the new series went round in little bits and pieces. It was to be a prequel, set before the United Federation of Planets was even created, a hundred years before the time of

Kirk and company, the unexplored 22<sup>nd</sup> century of the Trek universe. Most agreed this could be interesting. Others worried that such a show would mess up "history". Trek had sprouted continuity cops – fans who angst over the universe being consistent and hanging together as a whole. It is an odd phenomenon within Trek since there have always been elements that were changed, concepts of races such as the Trill and background structures like Starfleet, which had evolved from show to show and even within the individual series. Consistency had never before been a big issue, so long as the stories were good.

*Enterprise* premiered with "Broken Bow". While the show had some interesting moments, it seemed many of the worst fears of fans had come true – and if they hadn't the mood was such that every little blip was dissected and criticized. One thing was truly lacking and that was the science fiction core that had been apparent in every single Trek pilot that had come before. There was no reflecting on the nature of humanity, reality, power, compassion, time or responsibility. However, there was an intriguing, if controversial, take on the relationship between humans and Vulcans, the revered race of logic-dedicated partners of Earth. The story, involving first contact with the Klingon Empire, was utterly forgettable, though perhaps no more so than TNG's or *Voyager*'s premiere episodes. A few other odd decisions sent Trekkies into paroxysms of rage and confusion. The show opened with a stunning montage mixing images of humanity's real history of exploration with elements that led into Trek's fictional history. Over this, rather than the stirring declaration of *Star Trek* and TNG or the majestic orchestral scores of DS9 and *Voyager*, was a pop tune that sounded like a bad prom song, and that was entirely without even the overheated poetry common to fantastic sci-fi. Worse though was a small thing – the name *Star Trek* was dropped from the title. And it is this decision that frames the current problems of Trek, for its writers, producers and fans alike. *Enterprise* is hemorrhaging viewers, and for the first time in a long time, the future of Trek is in question.

---

### Writers Wanted!

*The Illuminata* is seeking talented writers to contribute to our newsletter. Whether you wish to submit articles or stories, regularly or occasionally, this is the place for you to gain some exposure and add another notch to your writing resume. Visit us online at:

[www.TyrannosaurusPress.com/Illuminata](http://www.TyrannosaurusPress.com/Illuminata)

### Birth of An ICON (con't)

Before I conclude, I must mention the Cedar Rapids Discussion Group (CRSFDG). At ICON I met a woman who moved to Cedar Rapids a month earlier than I did. We have been email/CRSFDG buddies ever since, with plans to beta each other's writing; even reading the same book so we can have even more fun at CRSFDG meetings. This group has been running for over fifteen years and are, or were, Mindbridge or SFLIS members. See what Haldeman did!?!

The significance to me is this: One man's writing workshop sparked a legacy that has endured over twenty years, spawning three dynamic groups, three conventions, many friendships, and card-carrying lunacy. How many other groups have such a prolific and colorful past and their own patron saint?

Unexpected friends unconditionally helped bridge the gap from my beloved Arizona to Iowa. Henry and Scott continue to mentor me as I discover new facets of science fiction without hesitation and without a critical eye at something my Arizona friends shrugged at uncomprehendingly. (EAGLE Sci-Fi Club excluded, of course!) New friends, new beginnings; I really am a newbie! Lucky me.

In January, I want to explore the artistic works of Lee Seed and Albrecht, two of the featured artists at ICON, and both from my old stomping grounds of Houston! It should be Illuminating.

Bless the *Haldeman* forever....

### Writer's Block (con't)

the words, but the tone and style from one story to another. If you usually write in third person, try first person for a change. Play games with your writing if that helps keep your interest. For example, try cutting a word from each paragraph of your final draft, or try to remove all the adverbs. Some such experiments will fail, but each time you try something new you'll be using writing muscles that you didn't know you had, and that will make you a better writer.

**Habit 5: Read.** This is something that I don't think can be stressed enough. Quite simply, good writers are also good readers. This doesn't mean they read only classics. More likely, it means that they read a little bit of everything, novels, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, the backs of cereal boxes. Reading provides you with ideas, including the facts that you need in your stories, but it also gives you a sense of language, of how words are used. The more you read, the better you'll write.

### KeyCOMMENTary (con't)

tractor beam so the Millennium Falcon can escape; and of course the entire tail end of the film is a race to score a direct hit on the ventilator shaft to the Death Star's reactor (thereby destroying the Death Star) before Yavin's moon (where the Alliance is holed up) comes within firing range and the rebellion can be obliterated in one fell swoop.

But time is not the only non-personified enemy available in the creative writer's tension-building toolbox. This month, let's try a different sort of assignment than we have been accustomed to doing in the past. I'll leave it to you to make a list of, oh, say ten, non-personified 'enemies' against which a protagonist might find himself pitted. If you like, we can still divide into *writer* and *reader* teams. Writers – no fair cheating – you must come up with these on your own. Do not go to your bookshelves nor your video closets. Readers, however, you may feel free to seek resources and then try to cite about ten examples of non-personified enemies other than *time*. Good luck. I'll give you precisely one month to turn in your lists! On your mark, get set, go!

### Classic Horror Novel Quiz

The horror "novel" was relatively rare until about the 1970s. For most of its history, horror has been the province of short story writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, M. R. James, H. P. Lovecraft, Oliver Onions, and Ambrose Bierce. But some longer works were around, and after the publication of Stephen King's *Carrie* in 1974, the novel became the dominant mode for horror fiction. Can you match the horror authors on the left with their classic books on the right? 0-5 correct could mean that horror is not for you, 6-10 is... well, horrible in the best sense of the word, more than 10 and you'll have people wondering what kind of childhood YOU had.

(Answers on page 21)

- |                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Bram Stoker            | The Rats                    |
| 2. Anne Rice              | The Exorcist                |
| 3. Dean Koontz            | The Silence of the Lambs    |
| 4. Ramsey Campbell        | The House on the Borderland |
| 5. William Peter Blatty   | Ghost Story                 |
| 6. Thomas Harris          | Dracula                     |
| 7. Mary Shelley           | The Doll Who Ate His Mother |
| 8. Robert Louis Stevenson | Rosemary's Baby             |
| 9. Peter Straub           | The House Next Door         |
| 10. William Hope Hodgson  | Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde     |
| 11. Shirley Jackson       | Interview with the Vampire  |
| 12. James Herbert         | Jaws                        |
| 13. Ira Levin             | The Haunting of Hill House  |
| 14. Anne Rivers Siddons   | Frankenstein                |
| 15. Peter Benchley        | Phantoms                    |

### 3-D Characters (con't)

that has turned many works from exceptional to adequate. Though developing the hero is far more important than fleshing out the character who makes his boots, no world will truly come alive unless *all* the characters are real. When a writer makes those inconsequential characters exist, not just on their one page, but throughout the entire story, the work metamorphoses from a tale into a world. As each character's individual past works its way into the story, the story itself develops a history, one that augments, and sometimes eclipses, the history originally intended by the author.

Numerous examples of Length's effectiveness in developing a world exist in modern SF literature. *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* have both experienced incredible success in the decades since their introductions, and though neither was originally intended to be a literary phenomenon, dozens of novels have been written in each universe, many revolving around characters tangential to, or even nonexistent in, the original stories. Herbert's *Dune* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* have spawned books whose sole purpose is to explore the histories set forth in the originals, and successful stories like *Blade Runner* and games like *Forgotten Realms* have led to the creation of subsequent works that explore the world more fully while leaving the original characters behind.

The most convincing evidence, however, that the addition of Length leads to the creation of self-sustaining, believable worlds is readers' ever-growing fascination with fan fiction. From *Buffy* to *Farscape* to *Harry Potter*, fans are writing stories that take place in any and every successful SF movie, series, or book; and while many involve the much-beloved characters familiar to readers, nearly as many follow new characters living in the original universe.

Adding Length to a character is far from difficult; it can be accomplished in a variety of ways and on a number of different levels. Most importantly, it can be worked in subtly so as to not interrupt the flow of the story, a real worry when developing minor characters.

To start, a writer must make the characters real in his mind. Once he believes they are integral to the story, their importance will be shown in his writing.

Rather than thinking 'anonymous drunken warrior throws punch at hero' or 'hero encounters random beggar,' a moment should be spent thinking about *why* the character is there, not in terms of the event the character is meant to create, but rather the reason, in the bounds of the writer's universe, that this minor player has reached this destination. *Why* was the warrior drunk, because he was celebrating or mourning? *What* past event created the unfortunate beggar, and why did he think the hero was a good mark? These questions will affect not only how these characters react, but will also aid the author in developing an overall tone for a particular scene or his story as a whole.

This reflection need not be detailed nor time-consuming; in fact, with practice, it becomes almost unconscious. Once it is accomplished successfully, these minor characters will appear, not just as an object encountered by the hero, but as a person in their own right, one that adds a little hint of dimension to the world at large. Whether or not they ever re-enter the story, their contribution has been made, and the story can only benefit from it.

Once the characters are real to the author, they must be made real to the reader. Much of this will be unconscious; elements of the characters' personalities will appear by the simple fact that the author sees them as more than a plot device. But to ensure that these individuals are taken seriously by readers, a number of simple tricks can be used.

Names are of the utmost importance. In and of themselves, names convey a lot about a character's past, both in their sound and in their meaning. The name 'Kraltor' doesn't bring to mind the image of a waifish, innocent elven boy, and 'Harmony' may evoke the impression of a character in peace with her surroundings even if no additional description exists to support that supposition. Even when the reader misreads an intended irony or overlooks the significance of a name, watching Noskil battle Kantwin carries more weight than watching warrior 1 narrowly defeat his opponent, warrior 2.

Titles can be used to similar effect without breaking the flow of a story. Lord Captain Kraltor is a very different character than Kraltor the Miller's Son. Those few words not only convey radically different

### 3-D Characters (con't)

images, they imply radically different histories. Much of that history is left up to the reader to create, but so long as it's there, the character will stand out as more than mere words.

Description can also be used to show elements of a character's past. From what clothes a character wears, to the number of scars on his face, to whether or not he shows either off proudly, description provides readers with the information they need to make the leap from plot device to person. Expression of emotion and reaction to stimuli, though far more important in the exploration of Width and Depth, also hint at events in a character's past. When a brave warrior is taken aback by the sudden appearance of a spider, it could signify a past trauma. For all sufferers of arachnophobia there is an instant connection, and those personal connections are what help readers turn flat characters into three-dimensional ones.

Care must be taken with description, though, to ensure that the pace of the story is not interrupted by inconsequential. To be effective, descriptions must be succinct. Paragraphs of detailed minutia on every creature encountered will not only bog down a story, it will be counterproductive to the goal of adding Length. Small amounts of description, tossed casually into the body of the text, will have a far more profound effect. It is important to remember that the goal is not to create an explanation for everything in the world, but to write a world that explains itself. If a thousand readers reach a thousand different conclusions, the author has not failed to create a convincing world, not so long as each reader believes his own interpretation.

Length can be added on a number of levels besides that of the individual. In fact, many of these levels should be taken into account when creating a character's history. Race, upbringing and nationality, to name a few, will all have an effect on the individual. Characters of one race, be it Elven, Gnomish, or a new, as-yet-unexplored race of creatures, will have their own racial characteristics and propensities, as well as a shared history. Similarly, all regions, villages and nations will have their own history, and all characters within them will have been exposed to the same government,

religion, society and prejudices during their lives. How will these things affect the character in question? Will he fit the stereotype, or will he be an outlier? If he differs from the norm, in which aspects and to what degree does he differ?

Once characteristics and history have been assigned to a race or nation, either through description or the introduction of a template character, additional characters can be given the same Length by merely mentioning the race or land of origin, or by one of the more common unifying elements, dialect. Any differences between the current character and the template can be addressed through prose or dialogue when the time is right. With little effort, similarities and differences between characters can be shown, and once each character hints at individuality, the world will come alive.

Again, caution must be taken when using race or nationality to give a character Length. A great deal of effort goes into designing a culture; to tweak every individual within that culture may seem a daunting task. The temptation to allow all non-essential characters to fall into a cookie-cutter form is strong, but the author must fight the urge of expediency. In the real world, we do not expect all people from the same place to act the same or believe exactly the same things. Why, then, should we hold our fantasy worlds to a lesser standard?

The irony of writing successful fantasy is that, to be successful, it must be realistic, and the first step to making a believable world is making the characters real. By giving each character a past, present, and future, an author adds Length to his story, giving his world dimension. Even when Length is used subtly, or merely hinted at, it adds an undercurrent of complexity that makes the universe stand out, and it is that uniqueness that draws readers in and keeps them coming back.

---

### Answers to Quiz on Page 19

1. Dracula, 2. Interview with the Vampire, 3. Phantoms, 4. Doll Who Ate His Mother, 5. The Exorcist, 6. Silence of the Lambs, 7. Frankenstein, 8. Jekyll and Hyde, 9. Ghost Story, 10. House on the Borderland, 11. Haunting of Hill House, 12. The Rats, 13. Rosemary's Baby, 14. House Next Door, 15. Jaws.