



# The *Illuminata*

Delving Deep Into The Worlds of Science Fiction and Fantasy

## The Neverending Movie: Lord of the Rings

By Bret Funk

*Due to the holidays and other real-world concerns, the series on character writing could not be continued as planned. Part III will be included in next month's edition.*

I should preface this review by saying that, despite the somewhat sarcastic title, I thoroughly enjoyed the movie and intend to examine each part in more detail at a later date. And I say movie because, just as the novel was intended to be a solitary work, the three installments of *The Lord of the Rings* are far more enjoyable when taken as a whole.

Kudos must be given to Peter Jackson and the studio executives with the guts to risk so much (basically everything!) on the films. Jackson, though passionate, was far from a notable name in direction, and the majority of the cast, Sir Ian McKellan and Elijah Wood notwithstanding, were unknowns or little-knowns (in America, at least.) The studio granted the films a huge budget, and opted to film all three at once, committing to the movie whether it be a success or a failure. Perhaps this was for the best:

If you know a movie must succeed or you will have three miserable failures, you might be more inclined to do it right.

The episodic filming, ending each installment (especially the first) without a true resolution, was an additional risk. Trilogies (*Star Wars*, *The Matrix*) often leave the middle movie open-ended, but rarely does the first chapter of a series cut off so abruptly, and with as little excitement. Perhaps Jackson counted on the loyalty of the series already-established fan base (a wise move), or perhaps his own integrity prevented him from chopping a classic

work of SF literature to suit his own needs (then again, after watching *The Two Towers* and *Return of the King*, maybe not).

*Fellowship* was a fantastic movie, far more true to the book than many imagined it would be. The effects were astounding, the cast superb, and the changes minor and, for the most part, forgivable. The Tom Bombadillo sequence, though one of my favorites in the book, lifts right out without affecting the story, and if some elves were sacrificed so that Liv Tyler's Arwen could get a little more face time, who could blame Jackson. In a movie with few women characters, dozens of battle sequences, and a love-story that is, at best, background, steps must be taken to make the film appealing to women without an innate love of speculative fiction (a far larger demographic than women with one, I might add!).

*Fellowship* was not without its flaws. It's a little boring, for one, a problem it shares with the book, and the ending is something of a let down. The major climactic sequence (Gandalf's apparent death) happens a good forty-five minutes before the actual end of the movie, and in comparison, the cut-off point (Boromir's betrayal and redemption, and Frodo's decision to carry on alone) leaves something to be desired. For many who were not already fans of the books, the end of *Fellowship* may seem inappropriate.

*The Two Towers* continued Tolkien's epic grandly, and was my favorite of the three (something it shares with the middle movie of many trilogies) despite the increased number of controversial plot changes. While the Elves appearance at Helm's Deep was forgivable, Frodo's journey to Osgiliath served no purpose other than to paint Faramir as a far less noble man than the books did. In one of the universe's greatest ironies, my biggest complaint about this movie is that too much was edited out. The additional footage on the DVD (from Gimli's witty lines to a better understanding of the characters Faramir, Boromir, and Denethor, to the much anticipated – and missed – destruction of the Orcs by Fanghorn Forest) only

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## Part IV: The Mechanics

Before getting into mechanics, I need to address an important item that might otherwise be overlooked. Timing. The passage of time is fluid in Role-Playing games. Time may pass as quickly or as slowly as is desired by the Game Master or the Players desire. While talking with an important NPC and doing active role-playing, time moves as it does in the real world. However, while riding a thousand miles across an open plain, time will be sped up for obvious reasons.

In a combat situation, time slows down greatly, to facilitate the die rolling and to make sure that all of the players and the Game Master are on the same page.

The most common way that time is broken up is by turns. A **turn** is the amount of time in which a character can do a single action. Attack, defend, dodge, turn to flee, possibly cast a spell, etc. When combat begins, time switches to turns. The time it takes for all of the characters to have a turn is called a **round**, and once round one is over, and if combat has not ended, the group then proceeds to another round, and another and so on until combat is ended. Rounds have no set duration, as they are dependent on the number of characters in combat. Turns and Rounds, keep them in mind.

The easiest way to handle a mechanics discussion is just to run a sample combat to see what rolls should be made when, and how the combat flows. The Italicized segments are my explanations of the behind the scenes math that creates certain rolls. Much of what will be detailed here has been at least partially addressed in the previous two columns, so before reading this you may want to refresh yourself with the material covered beforehand.

That said, let's meet today's combatants. Bob the Bard is happy little guy armed with a longsword and wearing chainmail who enjoys walks along the beach and captivating audiences. Jimbo the Jerk is a thief who waylays innocents and enjoys fat jokes and cold capon legs, and is wielding an axe and wearing leather armor. Randy is playing Bob, while Zack plays Jimbo.

After an off color comment about the weight of Bob's body of work, the two of them step outside and prepare to settle their differences.

Bob's initiative is 4 (*Dexterity of 3 + Perception of 4 - Weapons Speed of 3*) while Jimbo clocks in at a 0 (*Dexterity of 2 + Perception of 2 - Weapons Speed of 4*). This means that Bob may attack first, to defend his wounded pride.

Bob declares that he is going to attack on his turn, so Randy rolls his Weapon Skill with his longsword (29%), and gets a 25, meaning that he succeeds. Jimbo declares that he is going to parry the attack this turn. Zack rolls his Weapon Skill with his axe (20%) and gets a 42. Uh-oh, Jimbo missed the parry, meaning he was struck by Bob's sword.

Randy rolls his die again to see how successful Bob was. (*As mentioned in Part III: Tools of War, this is where the tables for the degree of success come into play*) He gets a 32. After a quick check on the weapon table, Randy declares that Bob achieved an Average Success, and rolls his damage (1D10 + 2). The damage roll is 3, meaning Bob inflicts 5 points of Damage on old Jimbo.

Zack checks on his armor table and sees that under an Average Success, his leather armor will deflect 1 point of damage, so he sustains 4 Hit Points worth of injuries. (*The specific type of injury is left to the Game Master to decide on*) Jimbo only has 11 Hit Points (*Hit Points = Strength 4 + Constitution 2 + 5*), so Zack has to be careful, but decides that Jimbo is not in immediate danger yet.

This is the end of round one. (*Both Bob and Jimbo have had a turn to act*) Bob is satisfied, but Jimbo is now upset that he was wounded. He will not disengage, but hurls another taunt at Bob. Bob decides to use his initiative to press his attack, after all, Jimbo is asking for it.

Bob attacks and Randy rolls over his skill, meaning he misses. Zack rolls to dodge and succeeds, meaning that no damage was incurred anywhere.

In round three, Randy declares that Bob will attack again. He rolls a 19; success! Zack declares that he is also attacking this turn, and rolls a 20; also succeeding. Bob rolls to discover the extent of his success. He rolls an 85, a Major Success. He rolls his damage die, and gets a 3, meaning he inflicts 7 points of damage. Zack knows that on a Major Success, Jimbo's leather armor won't deflect any damage, so he records the wound, leaving Jimbo with only one Hit Point left. Now, Zack rolls to find Jimbo's degree of success. He rolls a 92, a Critical Success! Zack rolls the damage (*2D10 + Strength 4*) and scores 12, meaning he inflicts 16 points of damage! Bob's chainmail can only deflect one point of damage on a Critical Success, so he suffers 15 Hit Points worth of Damage, and dies. (*Bob only had 10 Hit Points to begin with*).

Combat is over, because Bob is now no more, but Jimbo only has 1 Hit Point left. That may be a mortal wound, depending on the desires of the Game Master.

Con't on page 9

One of the highlights of attending conventions is learning about the authors, artists, experts and celebrities that grace these events. I now own a David Drake autograph! What I also wish I had owned was some of the art offered at cons. As science fiction creeps into my daily vernacular, so does the art. When I look at movie posters or books, it is often the cover art that allures me, not necessarily the plot or the author (does that make me shallow?). Art sells; it is advertising. It is painstaking, exact work—a labor of love, though everyone is a critic. Art seldom gets dirty, but can be dirty and you can get dirty doing it. It's flashy and trashy (Boris Vallejo, Frank Frazetta), serene (Jim Burns—I love his color depth) and sinister.

Luckily, science fiction and fantasy art take as many forms. Walking through the gallery at the annual Sci-Fi Convention, I-CON, I realized how truly diverse it is. Even better, I was able to talk at length with two of the featured artists and gain a new perspective. Let me introduce **Lee Seed** and her friend, **Albrecht**. Both women live in the 'outer' Houston, Texas area and have known each other for several years, often working on joint collaborations.

Lee sports vermilion hair that frames her intelligent face. Exquisite hands belie strength that can manipulate brush or pencil for hours. She is boldly dressed in flowing purple, smiling easily as she expounds on this much-loved subject. Albrecht, no stranger to art galleries, was more of a newcomer to conventions and is Lee's twin in opposite with long, dark hair and smoky, beguiling eyes. Creamy skin and dark clothing emphasize trademark blood-red lips. While Lee is tall, Albrecht is diminutive and has perfect posture! Both artists were enchanting, gracious and had a definite message. As we talked, I realized the misleading ease of their creations. They spoke in vivid images, instantly inspired and transferred to meaning; like watching someone splash watercolor on porous paper, creating shades of intensity as we conversed.

*Lee Seed*, a student of fashion history, reflects this in the study of the fabric she chooses for her pictures. The folds and flow of the fabric on her subjects is exquisite in detail so that touching it seems necessary to convince it truly is linear. Influenced by Edgar Allen Poe, fairy tales, Tolkien, and others too numerous to mention, she creates various types of artwork, but mainly uses mermaids, fairies, fantasy with dark, gothic overtones, and Arthurian myths for her subject matter. Her work tends to be fanciful and sometimes

romantic and thoughtful. Lee confessed that as a child she was afraid of "the things that you can't see".

She likes watercolors, often using shades of one color as a common trademark of her work. Other types of medium Lee enjoys working with are charcoal, pen and ink and pastels. Her favorites are watercolor and pastels.

Every year, Lee draws a romantic 'couple' piece as an ongoing anthology, recently completing *Cupid and Psyche*. She loves series pieces: mermaids, faeries, couples, horror, and heroes. Lee has illustrated several books and is a sought-after convention guest. Some of her studio work can be seen at conventions and on her website.

*Albrecht* was originally interested in photography and owns an impressive collection of books about still life. Her interest in literature and mythology naturally extended to darker, good/evil themes. She also finds inspiration from the classic television series, Dark Shadows. The good and evil interpretation is studied in a triptych series, *From the Light Into The Shadow*, three drawings of angel/fallen angel, that captivate the eye and the mind.

Her favorite medium, graphite, brings out monochrome. "Black and white can be so dramatic. The medium has to give the audience impact." She also uses *gouache*, a solid opaque color that is crushed and prepared with a type of gum, pastels and watercolor, to create visual perception, texture.

Working on a project while we converse, Albrecht said she was heavily influenced by Amityville-type horror stories, "where you can't control anything, you can't wake up." Both woman voice this same idea, 'what you don't see, your imagination fills in the picture'. They have so much in common, it is easy to understand why they work with each other and attend conventions together. They are a striking visual contrast, dark and light.

Lee and Albrecht also collaborate on projects like *Claudia*, an Anne Rice character; Lee draws it, Albrecht colors it. Sometimes they will do half of a picture and the other will finish it. Or, one artist will do it in blue while the other will use a different color so that each artist's work can be identified, though the piece itself is seamless.

"*Spoiled through video, media.*" Our conversation evolved to a global concern for both artists. Albrecht laments that kids often will 'just watch the movie' rather than read and visualize. "I'd hate to see books

# Whatever Happened to the Starship Enterprise? (5 of 5)

by Erin Branham

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

## Part Five: Reruns – the Final Frontier?

*And this is the noble truth of the arising of sorrow. It arises from craving, which leads to rebirth, which brings delight and passion...*

- *Sumyatta-nikaya*, The Pali Canon,  
sacred scriptures of Theravada Buddhists

Star Trek is the little meme that could. When it should have died, it instead took root in a tiny niche. There it burrowed in so deeply that when the harsh realities of life in an environment ruled by the marketplace tried to cut it out, it instead turned around and taught the marketplace a thing or two. Once just another weird sci-fi tale, it is now an institution, a cornerstone in Paramount's financial structure and the standard by which space SF on TV is measured. New programs tend to define themselves along a spectrum set out by Trek as when both *Farscape* and the short-lived but brilliant *Firefly* were billed as 'the anti-Trek'. And yet there can be no argument, Trekkdom is now as hidebound, squabbling and backwards as medieval Europe, split into factions bound together only by the rather bloated, luxury-worshipping and wholly unspiritual Church.

The clergy have certainly lost their way. The producers are no longer committed to the concepts that once made Trek great. While they seem to want to tap Trek's long-running appeal and keep their faithful followers (and their money), they reject the words Star Trek for their title, and with it, I can't help but wonder, have they thrown away the all-important core elements? Science fiction seems to have disappeared, for *Enterprise* has yet to turn out a single episode that meditates memorably on a High Concept. The attempts at social allegory have been clumsy, as have been the stabs at penetrating the human condition through character exploration. Bits and pieces of classical civilization are recovered from time to time, but they are so poorly understood that they end up feeling ridiculous.

A grave miscalculation may have occurred in the conception of *Enterprise*. Whether they knew it or not, by mining the pre-Kirk era, the producers have set up conflicting expectations. Prequels are a dangerous business – just ask George Lucas. Creators seek to continue onward with their material, and turning back to the past of their own universes fifteen or twenty years later in real time, causes a stylistic dissonance.

Within Trek, the sensibility with which *Enterprise* is written is that of the modern series. Within the Trek universe, the sensibility ought to be more in line with *Star Trek* itself. Much as I hate continuity cops, I too feel the disparity when races from the later Trek series like the Ferengi show up in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, while interesting species from *Star Trek* are not used. If the producers were looking to hit upon new material, one has to ask why are they recycling ideas from the various 24<sup>th</sup> century series? The announced intention for both *Voyager* and *Enterprise* was a return to the frontier feeling of the original series, but the quest to recapture TNG's popularity has led to a treatment of the material that mimics that series' smooth and cool attitude rather than the edgy, impassioned feeling of *Star Trek*. There seems to be little real attempt to use the history of Trek to storytelling advantage, and instead *Enterprise* comes across as a weak clone with the name Star Trek slapped on it in hopes that will be enough to keep viewers loyal. Someone seems to have mistaken Trekkies for the mainstream audience that prefers the security of a brand name to substance.

For all that I criticize *Enterprise*, I don't actively dislike the show. The second season has seen some improvement, with an occasional episode that echoes, quietly, the core greatness of Trek. "Canamar" had a hint of the taut character suspense we saw in "A Balance of Terror" and "The First Duty". "Judgment" had an inkling of the wonderful final scene of "Mirror, Mirror". Still, *Enterprise* has so far been mediocre. The characters have a constipated quality – but so did TNG's at first. Blandness characterizes the direction, the writing, and the acting. Not one story has been challenging to its audience – in fact a good deal of it seems aimed at your average 14 year old, complete with butt and boob jokes. The scenes have no power even when they hit on an interesting idea. They don't stick with you the way lines did in previous Trek. There has been no "Not chess, Spock. Poker.", "Consider that in the history of many worlds there have always been disposable people.", "Maritsa, who was good for nothing but cowering under his bunk and weeping like a woman, covering his ears because he couldn't bear to hear the screaming of the Bajorans...", "You will adapt". Personally, I know better than to ever decide anything Trek is out for the count. In other words, it wouldn't surprise me if *Enterprise* achieves moments like these – if it survives.

Trekkies today sometimes remind me of the scene in the Roman Coliseum in Monty Python's *Life of*

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## On Becoming a Complete Mentor Case:

Way back in the opening chapter of our discussion on archetypes, we introduced the *waif protagonist*. Soon after, we sent her on a *quest*, armed her with a *whoosh* (personal talisman/majikal object), placed *obstacles* in her path which threatened to deter her from fulfilling her quest, then offered her *companionship*, so that she had someone with whom to share her journey. Finally, we established her *nemesis*, that dark vehicle of her fateful confrontation or trial, which is so often – though by no means always -- manifested in a menacing character of counter-heroic proportions.

So, what now? What elements are yet missing from the construct of our tale? There are indeed several. This month, let's examine another vital character archetype, one nearly as vital as the protagonist, herself – especially should she prove to be a heroine without the favor of other companionship. This month, let's take a look at how we bestow upon our main character the benediction of wise council: enter the *mentor*, stage right.

To be sure, no one has ever grown up without a teacher of some sort. Even Kipling's Mowgli and his ilk – those not raised by their own kind – still have the benefit of someone's or *something's* instruction. Mowgli had the instruction and protection first of his wolf kin, then of Bagheera the panther and Baloo the bear. It is disturbing, perhaps, but not entirely too surprising, to note that guidance is rarely offered by one's own parents (and as a parent, I take stinging exception to this annoyingly pervasive literary tendency).

Of course, I say that this truth in archetypal story structure is not surprising since we are, after all, dealing for the most part in *waif* protagonists. Why, consider that even in Disney's *Pocahontas* the protagonist takes council from a TREE over that of her own father – albeit she does also garner some essential and meaningful instruction from his wise council, as well. *Still!* It does seem to be a trans-cultural and time-tested 'norm' that offspring fail to heed their own parents in favor of some rather provocative sorts.

What manner of creature *are* these mentor types? One might call to mind a wizened and somewhat stooped gentleman of considerable age – one frequently sporting a long white beard and seen with a crook – (Dumbledore in Rowling's *Harry Potter*) but such personification is only the height of stereotype. The more creative are limited only by the imagination of

the writer: consider a mentor wherein size matters not and his demeanor at first would seem to peg him more of pest than prophet (Yoda in Lucas's *Star Wars*). What of Clarence Oddbody (Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*), the bumbling angel who hasn't gotten his wings but is determined to do so by helping George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) realize the worth of life even at its lowest?

Occasionally it is the mentor who is the child and the protagonist the one more nearly wizened. Think Tiny Tim to Ebenezer Scrooge (Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*). It might appear at first bloom that the three ghosts of Christmas by whom Scrooge is visited are his instructors, but they are not. Rather they are companions on his reluctant quest and in the end it is the untarnished optimism of Tiny Tim -- and all for which he stands – that wins over the hardened heart of Scrooge.

Another observation about many *mentor* characters is that, while they may appear to materialize precisely at – or just prior to – the protagonist's moment of most critical need, they in fact have often been 'watching' their charge from a distance, perhaps awaiting the most auspicious time to enter into the action. Clarence, Yoda, and Dumbledore are each an example of just such an element of the archetypal mentor's profile. I feel confident you would not be hard pressed to name more.

Yes, *mentors* are – or *can* be -- an eclectic lot, depending on the creative prowess of writers. They can be small as pixies or as gargantuan as skyscrapers; they can be spiritual, corporeal, charming, obnoxious, imbued with magical abilities or as pragmatic as pitchforks. Regardless of their outward designs, the single defining – and unifying – characteristic of *mentors* is that they ... well ... mentor! They teach.

What the *mentor* imparts, of course, depends on the needs of the protagonist, his student. Perhaps it is combat techniques of some sort. Perhaps the mentor will illuminate secret knowledge or ready his charge emotionally. The only truly essential parameter of the mentor-protagonist relationship is that whatever the *mentor* passes onto the protagonist must in some way serve our heroine on her quest.

Secondary to this primary point in the relationship between these two characters is this: that although their time together might endure to one degree or another, they *will* part. It is true that they may travel together for a time as companions, but make no error, the mentor cannot serve his role properly if left in the company of his protégé in perpetuity. His departure is

# The Writer's Block: Don't Talk, Write!

by Charles Gramlich

Writing and talking are two ways of communicating ideas. Talking is more familiar to most of us and, unfortunately, it's often common for new writers to write much like they talk. Although this is fine for a personal letter to a friend, or even for the first draft of a short story, it's not good enough for a query letter to a prospective agent or publisher, or for a story that is to be submitted to an editor. Formal writing is not the same as talking, and this causes us writers some enormous difficulties but also gives us some enormous benefits.

To get a feel for the way people talk, try listening to a casual conversation among your friends. Don't eavesdrop. Just listen for a while instead of talking. Notice the insertions of "uh" into the conversation, the short pauses while someone tries to think of something to say, the interruptions as one person cuts off another.

Spoken language gets its message across, but there are always false starts, considerable backtracking, and the use of "reactive" speech, which means that each person's response builds upon information just provided by the other person. Written language cannot proceed this way, both because it looks confusing on the printed page ("I...uh... well...we wanted), and because there is only one person present at a time, first the writer and then the reader.

Another thing that is true of talking--but not of writing--is that there is a substantial amount of non-verbal communication involved in a spoken exchange. You can emphasize your words with hand gestures, punching the air with a fist or pointing a finger, and you can show indecisiveness with a shrug. You can judge how clearly your point is being made by watching the other person's facial expressions, rushing on at smiles and nods, backtracking at frowns and head shakes. A spoken conversation uses body movements for punctuation and is filled with immediate feedback on the speaker's success, or lack of it, in conveying a message or telling a story. This just doesn't happen in writing--though question marks and other punctuation symbols are a feeble attempt to add some of the same information.

The audience that you are trying to reach with your writing might be in the next city, or the next state, or the next country. They can't shake their heads at you if they fail to understand something you tell them. This is the major weakness of writing, and because of it you have to think about what you are saying much more carefully when you write than when you talk.

If you say something confusing while chatting with someone, then it takes very little energy for them to ask you a question. But if you confuse someone who is reading your words, the easiest thing for them to do is either tune out your message and just scan the piece, or to throw it aside and turn to something else. These are not good outcomes, particularly if the individual reading your work is the same person who might be going to purchase it from you. To communicate effectively on paper you have to anticipate questions the reader might ask, and then provide him or her with everything needed to answer those questions.

What kind of questions do readers ask? There are two good ways to find out. First, develop your own reading habit, and especially cultivate the ability to read critically. For example, you've probably found confusing paragraphs in stories or articles before. Chances are you skipped over them to something easier. Critical reading means not skipping the confusing stuff. It means asking why those passages are confusing. Is it you? Or did the writer do something wrong? Often, you'll find that the writer left out some important piece of information you needed to know. By reading critically and examining other people's mistakes, you can begin to see the kind of things that a writer needs to do to communicate effectively.

A second way to find out what readers need from writers is to let some friends read your story or article and tell you where it confused them. Choose those friends carefully, though. Don't pick people who will only brag on your writing. Good as that might be for your ego, it won't help you sell to an editor who doesn't know you. Pick people who will be honest and listen to them with an open mind. Pay special attention to those things that several people point out as a problem. Taking criticism is not easy, but it is absolutely necessary if you are going to get better. This doesn't mean you have to agree with everything your friends say, but it does mean that you should give their comments careful consideration.

And remember, don't talk. Write!

Almost everything about a human creature is ridiculous, except its ability to suffer bravely and die gallantly for whatever it loves and believes in.

- Heinlein

# Reviews

## Ill Wind

Rachel Caine



Roc, Dec 2003, \$6.99, 352 pp.  
ISBN 0451459520

Review by Harriet Klausner

If not for the weather wardens, earth would have been totally devastated years ago. However, though they make up less than one percent of the human population, it is this dedicated group that keeps Earth from global destruction. With a wave of a hand these wizards can control

weather, fire, earth, and water. These talented wardens use magic to keep hurricanes, raging fires, and tsunamis under control. The most powerful wardens have their own djinn, magical beings that enhance their powers. Fear of a warden causing havoc has led to strictly enforced policies. Thus to become a weather warden, one must adhere to very strict regulations as defined by an association for using their power. If a warden goes rogue, the association strips that person of their powers and erases their memories.

Weather Warden Joanne Baldwin is one of the best at using a flick of her hand to rein in the elements. However, the association accuses Joanne of corruption, illegal use of her powers, and murder of the senior warden who placed the Demon Mark on her. Condemned, Joanne decides to flee into the wild because she knows she cannot explain the homicide without discussing and showing the mark. She is caught between a hard place and a rock because if she does nothing she is considered a killer; if she shows the mark she is dead.

Joanne knows her only hope to survive is to find Lewis, the most powerful warden but he is now an outlawed rogue. She knows she must give the Mark to a djinn owned by him since he has three. On her trek, she meets David, a djinn with no master. Trusting her, David pleads with Joanne to enslave him and he will take the Mark. However, she cannot comply because since they made love she cannot doom the person she cherishes. However, David doesn't want her to die or free the demon, but she refuses to condemn her beloved djinn to eternal insanity. One of them will have to acquiesce for no other solution seems available.

Though quite exciting as a fabulous epic fantasy, fans will appreciate the depth of the key characters especially the heroine, her djinn, and Lewis.

The story line moves forward speedier than a fast moving storm, but also insures that the audience understands the motives of the prime players.

Joanne is a delightful heroine, who knows the weather in hell might be too hot for her to control, but that is where she seems heading if she fails at her quest. As the protagonist she learns a lot about herself (as does the audience) in ILL WIND. She won't kill an innocent to save herself though she is a very powerful Warden that even more powerful wardens can't always control. Readers will care deeply about this heroine because she gives without asking for anything back.

Her beloved is the male counterpoint to her. David will accept an eternity of insanity just to keep Joanne safe. That is the ultimate sacrifice, embodying what love is all about.

Lewis adds to the depth as the most powerful warden yet he is also a thief having stolen three bottles containing djinn from the bureaucratic association that he once swore allegiance to. He is the complex enigma to what seems like at first brush a simple good vs. evil plot, but is so much more. Fans of Laurell K. Hamilton and Jim Butcher's Dresden Files are going to love this fast paced action packed romantic urban fantasy starring a Mustang driving heroine.

## Thief of Lives

Barb & J.C. Hendee



Roc, Jan 2004, \$6.99, 446 pp.  
ISBN 0451459539

Review by Harriet Klausner

Magiere, her half-elf partner Leesil and their dog Chap have conned ignorant villagers into believing their towns were infested with vampires and they need to hire them to get

rid of the evil doers for an exorbitant price of course. Their reputation grew and any time a vampire hunter was needed, Magiere and her crew were called in. After making enough money, she bought the Sea Lion Inn in the small part of town Miska. Ironically that was the one place where a nest vampires were living and Magiere and Leesil, with a little help from Chap, destroyed the nest. The grateful town paid for rebuilding the inn after it was burned down while battling the vampires.

# Reviews

## Thief of Lives (con't)

Magiere discovers during the fight that she is a Dhampire, the offspring of a human mother and a vampire father. When she is in killing vampire mode, her body undergoes physical changes and she acts like a blood sucker. She is determined to never go through such an experience again and intends to stay in Miska tending her inn. Leesil knows their reputations are too well known to allow them to retire. When the capital city of Bela asks for the dhampire to travel there to flush out a nest of vampires, she has no choice but to go because her adopted town needs the money.

When they arrive, they know that there is at least one vampire in the city.

What they don't know is Ratboy, the vampire who escaped them in their last fight is now the leader of his own nest which consists of a beautiful spoiled and petulant vampiress and Chan the sorcerer vampire who is using the dhampire to sever the relationship of his master who now calls himself Tonet. Unknown to any of these players is that there is another vampire who is pulling their strings, a noble Dead who wants the dhampire to develop her powers so she can help him on his quest. This master vampire runs into many road blocks because he can't control the players even Chap who Magiere and Leesil discover is an elemental fey who is intelligent and has subtly been influencing them for years since they first met. War is looming.

This series will be appreciated by fans of Vicky Nelson's vampire series.

Magiere is stubborn, independent and has a vulnerable streak that will endear her to readers. Leesil is a half-breed former assassin who is trying to make up for his past misdeeds, but remains under scrutiny from the elves who believe he is a traitor who they have under surveillance because they do not trust him. His past and future hopefully will be answered in future books.

Chap is a unique and intriguing character whose canine appearances provides the perfect masquerade of a master Machiavellian manipulator trying to nudge Magiere into the fray.

The story line is cleverly devised to provide multiple layers, but all tie back to the key cast members. Supernatural fantasy readers will enjoy this action-packed strong tale because vampires, sorcerers, dhampires, elves, and fey-canines seem real. Fans will seek out the Hendees previous novel in this realm, DHAMPIRE, even if they have read it already.

## Illuminations Writing Contest

Tyrannosaurus Press and *The Illuminata* are happy to announce a new speculative fiction writing contest. Contest winners will have their stories printed in *The Illuminata* and in a short story anthology to be published by Tyrannosaurus Press. This is an excellent opportunity for budding authors and seasoned writers alike!

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 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 online 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)

At any rate, he will need time and some kind of medical attention to heal from his injuries.

This has been a sample combat, and it used many of the elements we discussed in the previous combat columns. There are only a few more loose ends to look at.

Unarmed combat, for example, can be treated just like another skill, with all forms of martial arts falling under the umbrella of the single Skill, or divisions for boxing, wrestling or other fighting forms.

Fighting to subdue can only be done when using specifically non-lethal weapons. I could not imagine trying to subdue someone with a broadsword, since it would be so easy to accidentally kill him or her. Subduing weapons should inflict pain, but not much damage, like a whip, blackjack or small club. Anything that can stun or daze an opponent, and not kill them could be used. Exceptionally strong characters may have a difficult time subduing people without hurting them, due to their strength.

Also, there may be question on how to regain lost Hit Points. Bodies heal and they heal at different rates, but for general purposes, lets look at the common recovery times for major surgery, which is little more than the careful infliction of a major wound (never mind that doctors usually fix something wrong inside, they still have to cut through tissue to get there). Weeks and months are required, so I would assume that 3-4 days would need to pass for a man to regain a lost Hit Point. That means that should Jimbo survive his two stabs or slashes, it will be 30 to 40 days of rest and attention before he is healed. This may be a little unrealistic, but players hate to have their character in traction while the game goes on without them. Magic can also be used to speed healing times.

Well, that's my combat system in a nutshell. Combat in role-playing games usually runs pretty similarly to that, with only details being changed. New GM's should spend lots of time testing their systems to work out the kinks and to locate trouble spots before the players encounter them, and using this basic concept as a springboard can help you to generate your own system for running combat.

The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.

- Arthur C. Clarke

## Writer's Wanted

*The Illuminata* is seeking columnists and reviewers. This is an excellent opportunity, the chance to hone your writing skills and share your opinions with those who share your interests in SF. Regular and occasional submissions are welcome, as are short works of original fiction. For more information, fill out the application form on our website.

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### ConArt (con't)

die the way of the LP," Lee adds, both nod. One says, "Literature is going by the wayside. Kids don't recognize Cinderella!" "Unless it comes from Disney." We all laugh then silence cuts through our conversation as we realize how true those statements often are.

Both woman voiced similar sympathies for students and children who have artistic bents because they often receive ridicule from their classmates and sometimes, even parents because, 'You can't make money doing it'. "Online websites that allow youth to try and to receive critique is a great resource," Lee declares, adding, "Inspiration should be on several levels with kids." Lee emphasized that youth and children might begin by illustrating a scene or character from one of their favorite books. As a gift to nieces and nephews, Lee will illustrate a scene they request. Albrecht buys her younger relatives a classic book every year like Sleeping Beauty or Three Musketeers so they will eventually have a complete literary collection. Both women are outspoken in their encouragement for children to develop artistic talent, especially the girls. "We root for the women in a male dominated industry."

I thumb through the business cards I pick up while browsing the gallery and realize that more than half sport a man's name. I look at the displays from a male/female view and further understand that there is a definite difference in subject matter, though price and quality are about equal as I covet a dozen pieces I wish I owned. I'm not surprised that two are Lee's, one is Albrecht's and the other is not for sale, one of their collaborations. Ah, next year...

Further biographical information and finished, current and studio work can be found at:

<http://www.poppysedgraphics.com> (Lee Seed)  
<http://www.albrecht-illo.com> (Albrecht)

### Whatever Happened (con't)

Brian – “We’re not the Judean People’s Front, we’re the People’s Front of Judea. Those are the Judean’s People’s Front. SPLITTERS!” The internet has made possible a daily fandom where casual new viewers come into contact with the diehard folks who’ve been with Trek since the very beginning. There are purists who say “real” Trek ended in 1969, or 1994, or 2001. Roddenberry’s Vision is debated hotly. The writing of current offerings is criticized with rancor and rose-colored glasses depending on who’s doing it. The producers, Rick Berman and Brannon Braga, are regularly referred to as “the Killer B’s”, and considered by many to be misguided misfits who don’t get what Trek is really supposed to be about. The various fan factions quibble and occasionally holler and quite a few mourn for the good old days, which probably has more to do with nostalgia than reality. *Enterprise* has seen its ratings fall to half of what its premiere enjoyed as numerous fans have simply stopped watching. The latest Trek movie, *Star Trek: Nemesis*, was a bona fide bomb in Trek terms, making barely half the box office of *Star Trek V*, the universally acknowledged worst Trek movie ever, and its story was widely criticized by fans. In the greatest historical irony of Trek there is an active, though small, movement to start a letter-writing campaign to have *Enterprise* taken off the air. Trekkies have come full circle.

What has happened to the Starship Enterprise? Has it been corrupted and degraded? Is it about to be destroyed by a more powerful force than the Q Continuum? Or is it really just fine and the problem is fans grown fat and spoiled by plenty so that they can’t appreciate what they have? Is all this silly angsting completely out of place, since, in the immortal words of William Shatner, “It’s just a TV show!”?

Of course it’s just a TV show – well, and movies, computer games, books, collectible figures and models, and all the other merchandizing that every science fiction/ fantasy series gets treated to from Star Wars to Lara Croft: Tomb Raider. If you want, it’s plenty easy to walk through our culture partaking of this or that bit of ephemeral entertainment and enjoying it as pure, pointless fun. But Star Trek is also just a TV show like Arthurian adventures were just stories. People love to make divisions between entertainment and art, which is what I’m about to do. The only real difference is meaning. Art is entertainment with soul. Soul is that indefinable mysterious substance from which meaning springs. To me, anything that anyone can find meaning in is art, whether that be comic

books or Beethoven’s symphonies. Great art is that which stands the test of time and has a magic that can capture people across the ages. By that standard Trek is far too young to know whether or not it is truly great. But in a culture where pop culture icons tend to have a shelf-life of barely more than a decade, surviving even 37 years hints at a little more than a passing fad. That it is a piece of science fiction doing it, since SF is traditionally a rather fringe genre, only makes the phenomenon more impressive.

There is much fear among Trekkies that Trek has run its course and will soon no longer be produced. This is terrifying for many since everyone knows there will be new products, gallons of them, poured into any void to drown out the memory of our beloved Trek. But there is a small, calm center among the older Trekkies. For those of us who once knew only the bare three seasons of *Star Trek*, the inevitability of going back to living on reruns almost feels like greeting an old friend. The idea that Trek will die if it stops active production is just the hysterics of children afraid of the dark, unaware of what wonders the night can hold.

Trek is tired, and I have little doubt that if it goes to sleep it will need to rest for a long time – perhaps longer than I will live. But sleep is not death. It wasn’t for Camelot and it won’t be for the Enterprise. The long night may now be upon us, but the Dark Ages were followed by the Renaissance, when gods and monsters were resurrected and reworked into art of unspeakable beauty. There’s a goofy Trekkie impulse inside me that hopes Trek will survive not only in song, but that its spirit, that little meme at its core all about humanity’s greatness and foolishness, the acceptance of difference, the struggle to explore the unknown both within and without, and the belief in our ability to meet the challenges of exploration with compassion and courage – that all this will inspire us in reality. I not only believe the future will see Trek live on in new stories, but that one day we will reach to the stars, and, at least in some small part because of Star Trek, we will do it in a ship called Enterprise.

And if that isn’t what it means to be a Trekkie then I don’t know what is. Live long and prosper.

*Space – the final frontier.*

*These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise.*

*Her five-year mission – to explore strange new worlds,*

*To seek out new life and new civilizations.*

*To boldly go where no one has gone before.*

- Gene Roddenberry, *Star Trek*

### KeyCOMMENTary (con't)

usually a peak of considerable drama in most tales, and the power of his influence on the protagonist – which may not have yet become evident – will typically be played out poignantly in the story's climax.

For authors, *mentor* characters can be at once great fun and hugely difficult to mold. It is most often through the guise of the *mentor* character that storytellers will impart – either consciously or subconsciously – their own philosophical values and spiritual viewpoints. At times, the conduct and council of *mentor* characters will take even the author by surprise; becoming, after a fashion, the self-elucidating flowering of the writer's own psyche.

What, then, you may ask, of tales in which no *mentor* is evident? First, let us stress this point: that all protagonists *will* undertake a journey, which is to say that they will not finish in the same place where they began. True, they might return to their original *physical* surroundings, but they will positively be on new ground with regard to knowledge, spiritual growth, or physical achievement – and quite frequently all three. What I mean to demonstrate is that inevitably *change* takes place and that this change, whatever it is, represents the crux of the story; the moral; the lesson; the *point of the protagonist's quest*. And while the vehicle for testing the hero's mettle is the antagonist (*nemesis*), the pivot around which the heroine reels into change is her *mentor*.

Does that mean one's *mentor* must be personified? Of course it doesn't. Situations themselves can cause us to pivot. Realizations can change us, as can the sheer experience of pain or loss. In real life many people mentor themselves though trying times, but interior monologues or endless journaling provide a pretty dull backdrop for dramatic structure. Because we are human – and because humanity is most accurately defined in relationships – the majority of tales that rise to an archetypal level will employ a *mentor* as a discernible and usually likeable character.

That said, let me leave you with the notion that it is also feasible for the role of *mentor* to shift amid minor characters the *waif protagonist* encounters on the course of her quest. Yet another orchestration of the *mentor* role might be to have it shared by several long-term (although in the end, most likely transient) companions, though either of these methods is more rare than the structuring we've already discussed.

Fine, then. We've reached our point of assignment. Readers, page through the stories you've been using

for this series and identify the *mentor* character in each. This is usually not tricky. Chances are, the *mentor* will be as readily identifiable as is the protagonist, herself. Writers, please do a character sketch of your *mentor*, and if you haven't yet developed one, think about adding this character type to your story now.

Next month we will move away from character archetypes and touch upon an archetype of structure I'll be calling the *darkening*. Till then, my students, may the course be with you.

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### LOTR (con't)

added to the movie, and in retrospect should not have been cut.

*Return of the King* was a fine conclusion to the epic, but it suffered from many of the same problems listed above and a few of its own. Several sequences important in the book (the return to the shire, for instance) were not even filmed, but as they easily lift out of the story without interrupting flow (an important consideration when a movie is pushing three and a half hours) it can be forgiven. Battle sequences were long but not disappointing (the never-ending siege of Minas Tirith did not bore me, quite unlike the never-ending siege of Xion), though one might wish that the last and strongest fortification in Middle Earth could have held up against at least one catapult volley before crumbling.

Jackson opted to make numerous minor plot changes and a few more critical ones in *Return of the King*. None of them really detracted from the enjoyment of the film, but most served no justifiable purpose, forcing the question: why were they made? And the movie reeked of melodrama (understandably, I suppose) but by the end it waxed annoying, especially when coupled to the seemingly endless multi-part epilogue. More in track with my usual opinion, I feel that a bit more of this movie could have hit the cutting room floor, and the knowledge that an additional hour of footage will be added to the DVD makes me nervous.

All in all, Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* is a fantastic adaptation of one of fantasy's most beloved epics. As always, I recommend reading the books first (for maximum enjoyment, skip the Concerning Hobbits section and jump right into the story), but if your aversion to reading anything thicker than this newsletter makes that impossible, don't plan to watch the whole series in a day, and try not to drink too much before the movie starts.