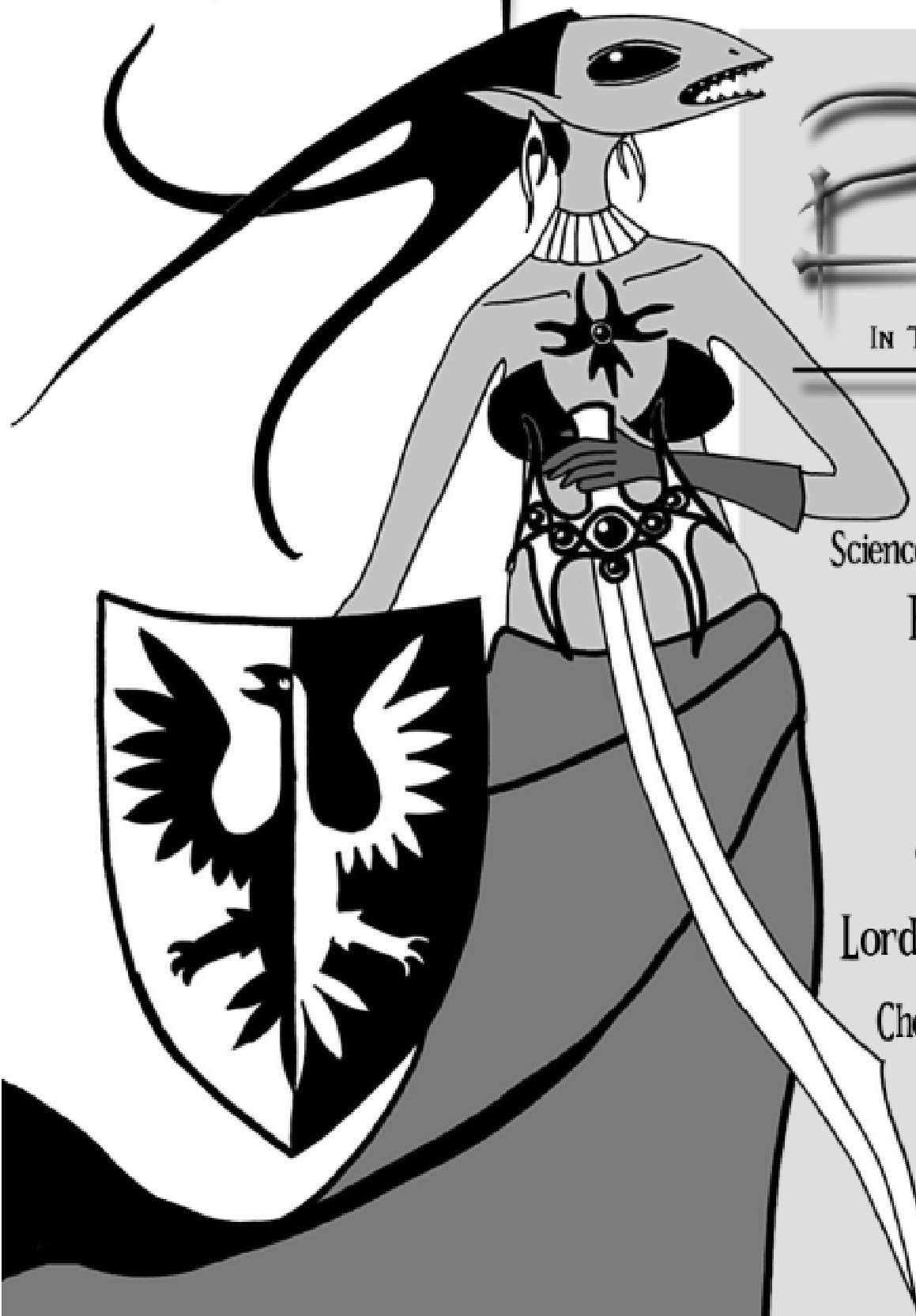


claw marks

ONLINE EDITION



26

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Cheap Ass Books!



Orientation Week Edition 2002

Editorial

Well, yet another obstreperous CLAWmarks edition dragged screaming in to a world ill-prepared for its arrival. By Editors ill-prepared for the lack of delivery on the part of all the CLAWmembers who at some time within the past few weeks promised us an article and never produced it. A thank-you to all those diligent writers and artists who *did* produce the goods.

4 oz. flour, 1 egg, ½ pint milk

So does this editor actually have anything valid to say? Perhaps, but it might require sifting a significant amount of waffle. Waffle is habit forming, you know. And this CLAWmarks has a lot of it. In fact, we spent a good deal of time this week generating waffle for CLAWmarks instead of enjoying our last few days of vac. Yeah, that's right. You'd better be bloody grateful, too.

Has it yet become clear enough that Mark's hand is hovering over the button that says BITCH in angry fuchsia-coloured letters?

Perhaps it's a result of too much caffeine. Every editorial seems to start like this.

Descarte: what were you thinking!?

And why are we here? Where *is* here?

Philosophical debates aside, you're at the beginning of four days and 36 pages of bowel-heaving, writers'-block-crushing agony. You're probably feeling a little lost. Don't worry, you're in familiar company.

What on earth is this wad of paper you've picked up, thrust at you by black-attired, sun-fried¹ CLAWs veterans?

If you're a keen-bean and you know it, clap your hands.

And why do we all wear black? I'm really only mentioning this because it's what we get asked every year. David®, the CLAWthing formerly known as d@vid, formerly known as ComputerBob (way back when first-year maths was new to him), and possibly soon to be known as [insert sound of yaks mating here] answered this very question rather eloquently - so grab last semester's CLAWmarks (#25) if you really want to know.

What do you say when friends die?

Thankfully it is a rare enough occurrence in the lives of most, at least until they turn 60. And when friends do go, perhaps the only thing to express is a wish to have known the person better while you had the chance. CLAWs mourns the loss of all of its souls. Rest In Peace Andrew.

Over to Duncan for a minute.

It's the economy, stupid

the last section was written by a very angry and irritable Mark Ferry.

Now on to the Duncan part (uhm). So this took a really long time to produce. Adrianna, Mark, Simon, Gareth, Dave99 and I were working almost solidly for a few days, especially Dave99 who worked *REALLY* hard at *Hitman* while I was trying to sleep.

Thanks too to all of the art contributors... Kait, Lindsey, Dave99, Simon and especially Adrianna. And that bag of Transkei Gold.

Where's the SPON?

The SPON is wherever you put it.

¹ This assumes that it won't be raining during O-Week, which, considering what I've just written, means it probably will.





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BOZ AND GRENZ

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A WIZARD'S STAFF

EDITOR Mark "do it yourself" Ferry
 CO-EDITORS Adrianna "fangirl" Pinska
 Duncan "lemme just flash my BIOS" Truter
 EDITORIAL TEAM Simon Cross
 Gareth Saul
 David Sharpe

CONTRIBUTORS

WRITERS Not enough, damn you
 ART Adrianna Pinska
 Kait Bratusha
 Lindsey Brake
 Simon Cross

ARTWORK

COVER, MOST OF IT **Adrianna** "can't draw guys"
Pinska
 CELTIC KNOTTING, BACK COVER KAIT BRATUSHA
 TALK TO THE HAND, DRUG NUN & OTHERS *Louise Brune*
 SPONTENTS DRAGONS **NOT** Michelle Wisnahn!

EQUIPMENT

NETWORK SUPERVISOR Gareth Saul
 NETWORK ANNIHILATOR Duncan "I don't think it worked" Truter

HAS A KNOB ON ITS END

ENTERTAINMENT Red Right Hand (over and over)
 DIVINE INSPIRATION www.churchofeuthanasia.org
 864 FREAKIN FONTS <http://home.arcor.de/tatjana32/killerfonts/download/>

ONLINE EDITION - 09 MARCH 2002

ANIME REVIEWS

a guide to a few good non-hentai series by Duncan Truter

Since I have been stuck at home working for the holidays, I have not had much recreation time, so I've downloaded lots and lots of anime. That's why currently that's all I can write about! LOL. anyway <turns loser mode off> I have realised that subtitled anime is much better than anime dubbed by Americans. It helps to have the original voices, if you want the full experience of the anime. Each episode is about 22-24 minutes.

Trigun (comedy/action) 1-26

This is an anime set on a desert planet in the far future. The protagonist is Vash, a wanted criminal, and the other main characters are two agents of the Bernadelli insurance company, who are sent to find Vash. This anime has a really good plot, and is one of the better series out there. Vash is a character with a mysterious past, but as the story progresses, the truth is revealed. There is in fact a good reason for the \$60,000,000,000 bounty on Vash's head. This has some typical anime bad guys, including the standard-fare cyborgs and freaks and even a Samurai.

the episodes are once-off, in that they don't advance the plot as a whole. This is very well-animated and good to watch in an



intoxicated state.

Escaflowne (epic/action) 1-26(?)

This anime is strange. It combines sci-fi and fantasy by introducing a planet with a medi-aeval society and dragons, but manages to include mecha as well (the old 'lost tech of the ancients' plot device). The heroine is a Japanese girl whose magic ability lands her on this planet. She makes friends with the king, whose small kingdom soon gets de-



Cowboy bebop (action) 1-26

This is another Sci-fi anime. This is set in a time when the solar system has been colonised. The story centres around a pair of bounty-hunters (cowboys), and how they fare in their freelance occupation. This is different to the other two animes in that the at least half of



stroyed. She uses her prophetic ability to help a small group of rebels to fight the obligatory evil emperor. There is a movie of this series too, which I have not seen yet. This anime can be heavy going at times, like Evangelion, and is also better than average.

It's a Gazebo, Eric!

A brief illustrated guide to dealing with morons.

originally by Richard Aronson

Let us cast our minds back to the early days of fantasy roleplaying... In the early '70s, Ed Whitechurch ran "his game," and one of the participants was Eric Sorenson, a veritable giant of a man. This story is essentially true: I knew both Ed and Eric, and neither denies it (although Eric, for reasons that will become apparent, never repeats it). The gist of it is that Eric... well, you need a bit more about Eric. Eric comes quite close to being a computer. When he games, he methodically considers each possibility before choosing his preferred option. If given time, he will invariably pick the optimum solution. It has been known to take weeks. He is otherwise, in all respects, a superior gamer, and I've spent many happy hours competing with and against him, as long as he is given enough time. So... Eric was playing a neutral paladin (Why should only lawful, good religions get to have holy warriors? was the rationale) in Ed's game. He even had a holy sword, which fought well and did all those things holy swords are supposed to do, including good or evil (by random die roll). He was on some lord's lands when the following exchange occurred:

ED: You see a well-groomed garden. In the middle, on a small hill, you see A GAZEBO.

ERIC: **A GAZEBO**? What colour is it?

ED: *(Pause)* It's white, Eric.

ERIC: How far away is it?

ED: About 50 yards.

ERIC: How big is it?

ED: *(Pause)* It's about 30 feet across, 15

feet high, with a pointed top.

ERIC: I use my sword to detect whether it's good.

ED: It's not good, Eric. It's a gazebo!

ERIC: *(Pause)* I call out to it.

ED: It won't answer. It's a gazebo!

ERIC: *(Pause)* I sheathe my sword and draw my bow and arrows. Does it respond in any way?

ED: No, Eric. **It's a gazebo!**

ERIC: I shoot it with my bow *(rolls to hit)*. What happened?

ED: There is now a **gazebo** with an arrow sticking out of it.

ERIC: *(Pause)* Wasn't it wounded?

ED: Of course not, Eric! **It's a gazebo!**

ERIC: *(Whimper)* But that was a

plus-three arrow!

ED: It's a **gazebo**, Eric, a **gazebo**! If you really want to try to destroy it, you could try to chop it with an axe, I suppose, or you could try to burn it, but I don't know why anybody would even try. **It's a @#%\$*& gazebo!**

ERIC: *(Long pause - he has no axe or fire spells)* I run away.

ED: *(Thoroughly frustrated)* It's too late. You've awakened the gazebo, and it catches you and eats you.

ERIC: *(Reaching for his dice)* Maybe I'll roll up a fire-using mage so I can avenge my paladin...

At this point, the increasingly amused fellow party members restored a modicum of order by explaining what a gazebo is. This is solely an afterthought, of course, but Eric is doubly lucky that the gazebo was not situated on a grassy knoll.



FANFICTION: It DOES NOT Suck

OR: AdRIANNA COMES Out OF THE cLoSEt

Most people who have heard of fanfiction consider it to be derivative soft porn written by sad, spotty 15 year old fangirls. Anyone who actually admits to enjoying the stuff is immediately packed into that slightly greasy box in the back of the cupboard which is normally reserved for those who own Britney Spears CDs, read the Stile Project a lot or carry other stigmata of eternal loserdom.

I would like to point out, however, that most people who have heard of roleplaying consider it to be a rather stupid game played by sad, spotty 15 year old fanboys - and we all know that that isn't strictly true. This is one of the reasons that I'm coming out of the fanfiction closet in this magazine. The other is that fanfiction and roleplaying have something in common beyond the status of obscure minority hobby.

What exactly is fanfiction? It is a work set in the universe of an existing television or book series, and usually

written about the established characters in that series. What distinguishes fanfiction from spinoff novels is that fanfiction, as its name suggests, is written by fans, for their enjoyment rather than for profit. Copious quantities of it are constantly being published on the

internet, although there are also printed fanzines.

Fanfiction is generally found in three sorts of places on the 'net: forums, archives and personal pages.

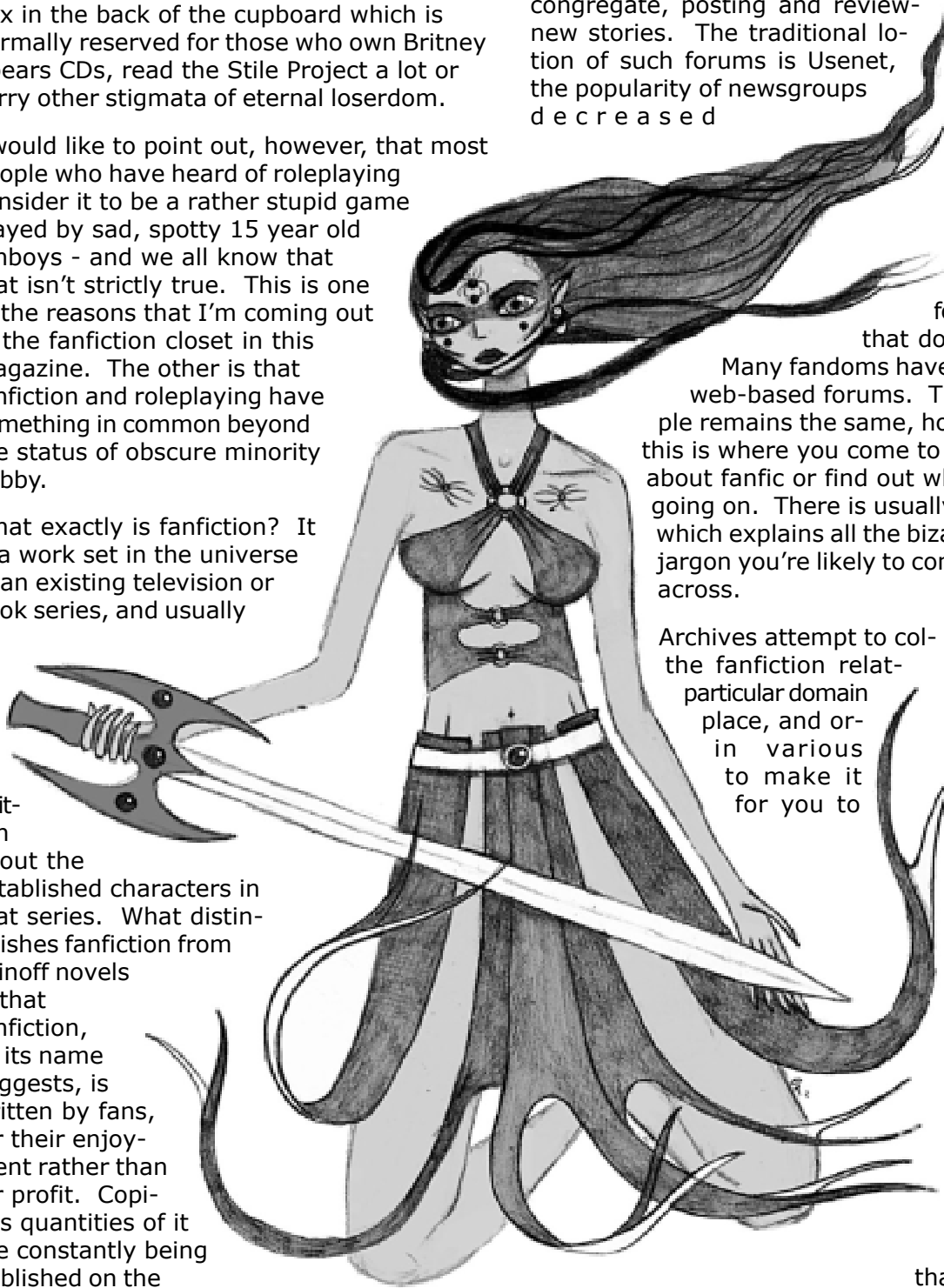
Forums are places where fanfic writers congregate, posting and reviewing new stories. The traditional location of such forums is Usenet, the popularity of newsgroups decreased

since the advent of web-based forums that don't suck.

Many fandoms have only web-based forums. The principle remains the same, however - this is where you come to talk about fanfic or find out what's going on. There is usually an FAQ which explains all the bizarre jargon you're likely to come across.

Archives attempt to collect all the fanfiction relating to a particular domain in one place, and organise it in various ways to make it easy for you to find what you want. Some of them are connected to a particular forum, and archive all stories that are

posted there. Archives are a good place to start your journey - the sheer volume of stories they contain ensures that if you persevere you will eventually find



something worthwhile.

Some writers don't interact much (or in fact at all) with the rest of the fanfic community. They don't post to forums, and their stories are not archived anywhere. Their work can only be found on their personal webpages. You can find pages like this through an internet search, or, if you've lurked around the forums enough, by word of mouth.

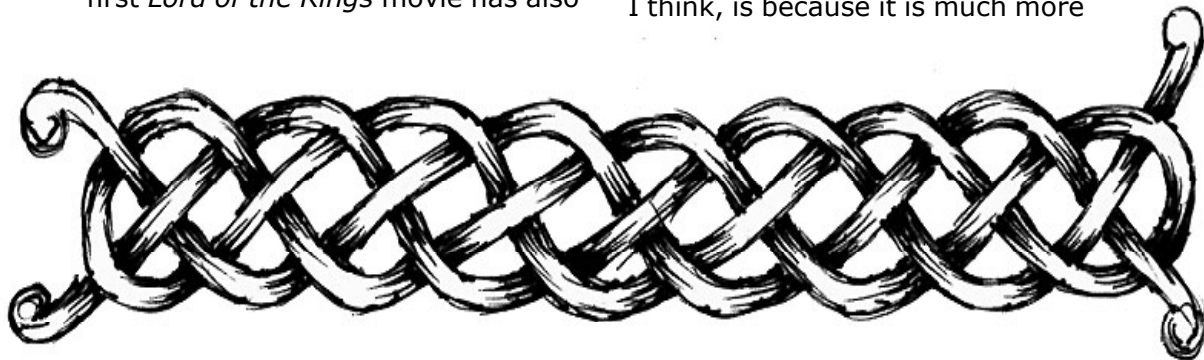
It's amazing (and sometimes quite disturbing) what you can find out there. One of the largest, most complete (although, sadly, infrequently updated) indices, *Fan Fiction on the Net*¹ lists hundreds of shows that have inspired fan writing. The most popular by far are *Star Trek*² and *The X-Files*³, but others also have their faithful followers. There are many that I have never heard of, and many that I would never have guessed to be able to inspire anyone to write a limerick (*cough* *The A-Team*?! You've got to be kidding!).

I did say "television or book series", and a series of books which has very recently captured the imagination of thousands is, of course, *Harry Potter*⁴. The release of the first *Lord of the Rings* movie has also

enterprise. The point is not to write a story and put some characters in it. The point is to take characters from a particular universe that you like and find interesting, and make them do what *you* want them to do. And frequently *with whom* you want them to do it.

Yes, a lot of fanfiction deals with relationships between characters. Writers generally like to experiment with things that will never, ever happen on TV. This is why slash (fanfiction containing homosexual relationships) is so popular, for example. While homosexuality is no longer a television taboo, its portrayal is usually restricted to sitcoms and mainstream drama series. The possibility of seeing a gay couple on *Star Trek* remains miniscule. For some time now, fans have pondered on what would happen if, for instance, Kirk had a thing for Spock - and they've written about it.

Like roleplaying, fanfiction can be taken very seriously indeed, semi-seriously, or not very seriously at all. Humorous fanfic often appeals to a wider audience than the hard-core fanfic community, but outsiders usually mock attempts at more serious work. This, I think, is because it is much more



rekindled interest in Tolkien's work⁵. By now you should have heard of the *Very Secret Diaries*⁶, a recent sequence of *Fellowship of the Ring* parodies which has made many of us snort hot beverages through our noses and onto our keyboards.

So what does this have to do with roleplaying? I think that the writing (and to a certain extent, reading) of fanfiction is driven by the same impulse as roleplaying - the urge to decide what happens instead of just being a passive observer.

Fanfiction writers have often been accused of having insufficient imagination to create their own characters and backgrounds. The authors of these accusations seem to misunderstand the fundamental objective of the

difficult to write something serious, and do it well, than to be funny. So many "serious" pieces of fanfiction are sappy, naive, cringeworthy *Mills & Boon* fodder that many people don't believe that there is any other kind.

It is an inescapable fact that 80 percent of fanfiction is utter crap. This is also true of all the written work on the internet, though. Most people can't write their way out of a paper bag. The trick is to sift through the purple prose

Did you laugh at Saruman's palantir relationship woes? Ha! You've been reading fanfiction. Now you might as well go all the way.

Follow some of the links below

to get started. If you don't find anything that takes your fancy, try Google... but be careful what you search for. You might just find it.

—

1. *Fan Fiction on the Net* <http://members.aol.com/ksnicholas/fanfic/index.html>
2. *alt.startrek.creative Archive* <http://www.trekiverse.org/>
3. *The Gossamer Project* <http://gossamer.x-philes.com/>
4. *FictionAlley.org* <http://www.fictionalley.org/>
5. *Middle Earth Fanfiction Archive* <http://www.tolkien-fanfiction.iwarp.com/>
6. *Cassandra Claire's LiveJournal* <http://www.livejournal.com/users/cassieclaire/>

WHERE TO GET OFF THE INTERNET, A GUIDE FOR THE UNINFORMED

CAN YOU WORK A COMPUTER?
- DUNCAN TRUTER

Arguably the best search engine on the internet is www.google.com, so if you need to download a program begin by searching for its homepage with the google search engine and get it from the download section of the site.

If you download grokster (www.grokster.com) and log on (an internet connection is required) you will be surprised by the amount of stuff available through this napster-like peer-to-peer network. Available material includes music mp3's, videos of all kinds (including lots of anime), movies, tv programmes and even documents, including roleplaying manuals. Software is also available here, including lots of warez (illegal software), like gamez and appz.

12

Unfortunately, many programs (including most windoze download managers) come

with spyware that can't be removed easily. Spyware may not be the worst thing in the world, but what most spyware programs do is collect data about you (what you type in to your internet browser, including search requests, and your name and password) and sends it off using your own connection. So when you dial up, skanky companies use your bandwidth for their own purposes. That is why spyware should to be taken off your machine.

Ad-Aware is a program that removes spyware from your pc, so get that and install it. Zonealarm is a firewall that is very useful for stopping spyware too, as it controls what programs can and can't use your Internet connection. If you have problems playing any of your videos, get some codecs from the downloads section of www.divx-digest.com.

www.noated.com is a good search page for manga.

Download mirc (www.mirc.co.za) and go to irc.bookwarez.net and join the #bw channel. there you will be able to get a whole lot of books, by downloading them off fserves. Get IRC help here <http://lordwolf.com/mirchelp/>



THE VERY SECRET DIARY OF ARAGORN, SON OF ARATHORN

reprinted from Cassandra Claire's Livejournal
<http://www.livejournal.com/users/cassieclaire>



DAY ONE:

Ringwraiths killed: 4. V. good.

Met up with Hobbits. Walked forty miles. Skinned a squirrel and ate it.

Still not King.

DAY FOUR:

Stuck on mountain with Hobbits. Boromir really annoying.

Not King yet.

DAY SIX:

Orcs killed: none. Disappointing. Stubble update: I look rugged and manly. Yes!

Keep wanting to drop-kick Gimli. Holding myself back.

Still not King.

DAY TEN:

Sorry no entries lately. V. dark in Mines of Moria. Big Balrog.

Not King today either.

DAY ELEVEN:

Orcs killed: 7. V. good. Stubble update: Looking mangy.

Legolas may be hotter than me.

I wonder if he would like me if I was King?

DAY 28:

Beginning to find Frodo disturbingly attractive. Have a feeling if I make a move, Sam would kill me. Also, hairy feet kind of a turn-off.

Still not King.

DAY 30:

In Lothlorien. Think Galadriel was hitting on me. Saucy wench.

Nice chat with Boromir. He's not so bad.

Took a shower. Yay!

But still not King.

DAY 32:

Orcs killed: none. Stubble update: subtly hairy.

Legolas told me that a shadow and a threat had been growing in his mind.

I think Legolas might be kinda gay.

Nope, not King.

DAY 33:

Orcs killed: Countless thousands. V. good.

Boromir killed by Orcs. Bummer. Though he died bravely in my arms, am now quite sure that he was very definitely gay.

Not so sure about Gimli either.

RIP Boromir.

Still not King, but at least Boromir seemed to think I was. Might however have been blood loss.

DAY 34:

Frodo went to Mordor. Said he was going alone, but took Sam with him. Why?

My God, is everyone in this movie gay but me?

Not so sure about me either.

Still not King, goddammit.

PLASMA STEALTH AND NEUTRON SCANNERS

by Simon Cross

The bleeding edge of science is often stranger than fiction, and despite the flagrant disregard shown for reality by genres such as Cyberpunk, having technology that might one day actually exist included in your roleplaying games is kinda cool.

One area of technology always of interest to roleplayers is stealth and how to combat it. This article explores two pieces of technology which are currently being researched. The first uses plasma bubbles to hide, propel and protect objects in space. The second uses beams of neutrons to probe objects, and coincidentally might be able to see through the cloaking provided by the first.

Neither is currently being implemented, but both are undergoing rapid investigation and development.

PLASMA

Where would a cyberpunk be without his trusty plasma cannon - a weapon of mass destruction spewing a stream of high temperature, high pressure gas?

that is, a gas in which many atoms have had one or more of their outer electrons stripped from them.

One place where such a form of matter occurs is the sun's corona. Gas leaving the sun's surface is heated to around one million degrees Celsius, and this strips as many as thirteen or fourteen electrons from each of the atoms within it. The resulting plasma often forms giant arcs, reminiscent of the magnetic field lines around a magnet. These plumes are a result of the plasma's being trapped within the sun's magnetic field.

Another place where plasmas are found is the vacuum of space. In these extremely low-pressure, low-temperature conditions atoms may lose their electrons and become ionised.

When combined with a weak magnetic field - a few times the strength of that generated by a fridge magnet - these low-pressure, low-temperature plasmas have three very interesting applications.

All three rely on the same effect. When one releases a small amount of plasma into a weak magnetic field, the



A plasma, however, is not necessarily hot, nor do the particles involved have to be under extreme pressure.

magnetic field confines the plasma. The plasma then exerts a weak force on the magnetic field. If the magnet is surrounded by a vacuum, there is no external pressure to balance that of the plasma and the magnet field lines are forced outwards. The

result is a large bubble of plasma which in theory could be grown to hundreds or thousands of kilometres across.

The first possible use of this effect is as a propulsion device for ships travelling within the solar system. Consider a spaceship surrounded by a plasma bubble. The solar wind is a stream of energetic particles emit by the sun. If the plasma bubble is large enough it acts as a sail, catching the solar wind.

Since the solar wind is streaming away from the sun, the spaceship and its surrounding plasma bubble experience a net force away from the sun. Although the pressure exerted by the solar wind decreases as one moves further from the sun, the great thing is that the decrease in pressure allows the area of our spaceship's plasma bubble to increase proportionally. The result is a constant acceleration of our spaceship away from the sun.

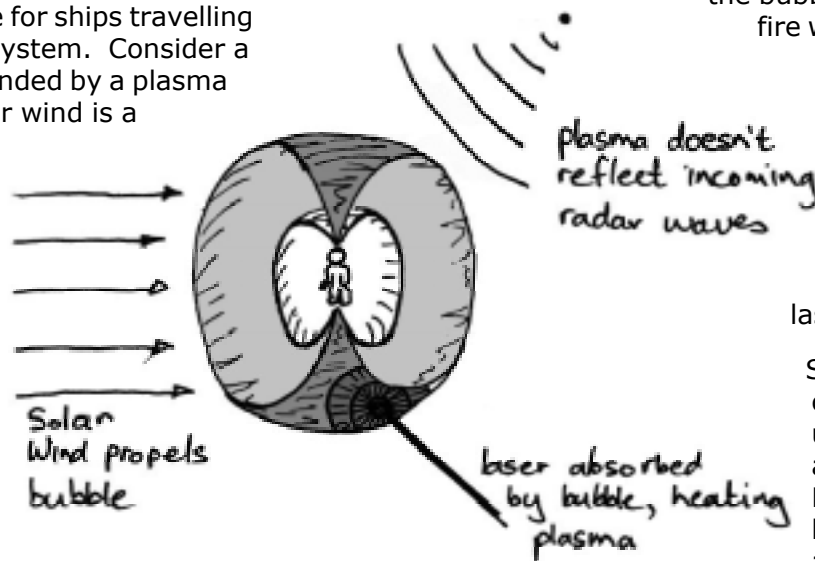
The primary advantage of this means of propulsion is that no fuel is required other than replacement of the small amounts of plasma which bleed off from the ship's bubble into space. One disadvantage is that it's a one-way trip. The solar wind always blows away from the sun. Another disadvantage is related to the second use, and will be explained shortly.

When electromagnetic waves (for example, visible light) impinge on a plasma it completely absorbs them. As a result, our plasma bubble appears as a black spot. Against the black background of space the bubble and the ship contained within are practically invisible. Can anyone say cloaking device?

Now, the problem is that we have difficulties communicating with our spaceship. Any electromagnetic signal we send at the bubble will be bounced, so the ship has to trail some sort of antenna in order to receive radio signals from the outside world.

The third application of the plasma bubble is as a shield against laser fire. When a laser is

fired at our spaceship surrounded by its plasma bubble the energy of the laser is absorbed by the plasma and the heat is spread quickly through out the bubble. Sustained fire will eventually heat up the plasma, destroying the bubble. Until then our spaceship is effectively immune to laser fire.



Such a shield could even be used by an astronaut on E.V.A. or by a black ops assault squad

on their way to a spacestation. The black ops squad of 15 astronauts inflate their plasma bubbles, rendering them invisible and shielding them against laser fire. The solar wind pushes on the bubbles, accelerating them towards their target. Shortly before landing they turn off the magnetic field maintaining the plasma bubble, fire the retro-burners on their space-suits and they're at their target.

[<http://www.geophys.washington.edu/Space/SpaceModel/M2P2/theory.html> - Group at Washington University who have done some experimental testing of plasma bubbles in a large vacuum chamber]

NEUTRONS

Investigators, policemen and spaceship captains in futuristic settings often rely on mysterious scanners for finding clues, illegal goods and valuable information about their opponents' ships. But how would such scanners work?

Assuming that there is no action at a distance, any scanner has to send some sort of particle towards the object being scanned and receive some particles in return. For instance, the plasma bubble mentioned above avoids detection by simply absorbing all incoming light.

The chief drawback of modern scanners is that they primarily make use of electromagnetic

waves (radar, lasers) which interact with all charged particles. As a result, electromagnetic waves must be given a large amount of energy before they penetrate far into the surface of the object being scanned. Otherwise, they are simply absorbed and re-emitted by particles near the surface. Our eyes are a good example of this - we only see the outside of objects.



If scanners were to make use of particles which do not interact via the electromagnetic force, the particles could penetrate more deeply into the object being scanned without having to be imparted copious amounts of energy. This would allow a more thorough probing of an object's composition.

The list of elementary particles which do not interact electromagnetically is rather short: neutrinos, gluons and the z-boson. Of these the neutrino interacts so weakly that detecting enough of them might require scanners larger than the earth itself, while creating a beam of gluons or z-bosons would require rather

large amounts of energy - the beam of scanning particles might well destroy the target.

Since none of the elementary particles fit the bill, some sort of composite particle is needed. The simplest composite particles are the hadrons and the mesons. Mesons (consisting of a quark-antiquark pair) are not commonly occurring particles. However, the neutron, the lightest hadron after the proton, is quite suitable and readily available since it occurs in the nuclei of most atoms.

The neutron consists of three quarks whose charges add to give zero and interacts chiefly through the strong force which has a very short range.

Techniques which use neutron beams to scan luggage at airports are currently being developed. The chief difficulty is that a reconstruction of the full three-dimensional composition of an object is mathematically far more difficult than a simple reconstruction of the surface. In addition, it is necessary to capture the phase of the returning beam, as is done by traditional holograms. Thirdly, current experimental detectors are quite large and as a result cannot resolve objects much smaller than a softdrink can.

These disadvantages are balanced by the advantage of being able to determine the exact elements comprising every part of the object being scanned.

Coincidentally, neutrons could easily penetrate the low pressure plasma bubble mentioned earlier. Since the neutrons are uncharged they are not affected by the charged particles of the plasma and pass through it much as they would through any rarefied gas.

Unsurprisingly, neutron scanning is a research area not currently short of funding.

[<http://www.richmond.edu/~mfetea/andyrichmond.htm> - Researchers from the University of Cape Town who are currently developing neutron scanners for airports]

Disclaimer: Although it seems likely that all technologies mentioned will be implemented at some stage, I'm not a specialist in either plasma or neutron physics and can't guarantee that I haven't made any glaring errors while extrapolating.

Roleplaying as a Storyboard and Plot Design Tool

by Simon Cross

- with ideas from discussions with Adrianna Pinska and Jessica Tiffin

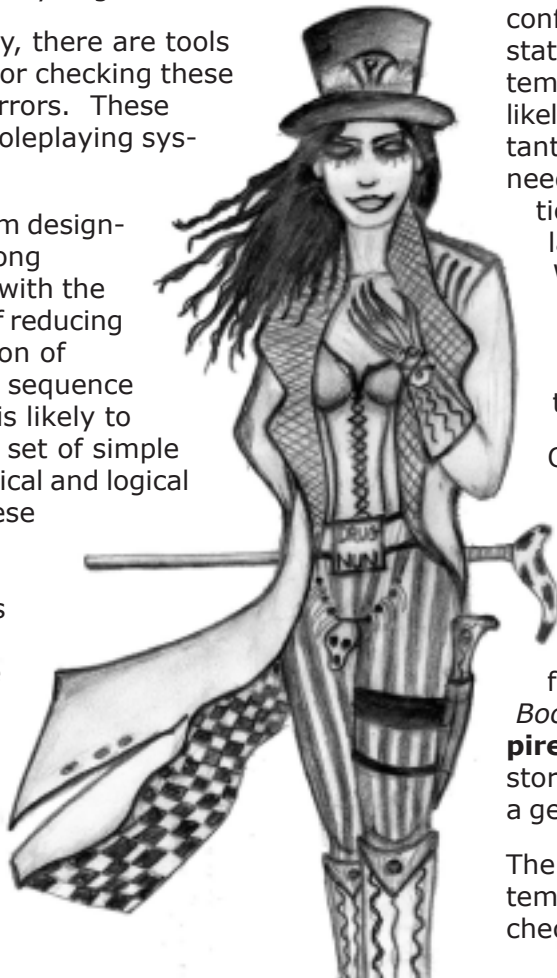
We've all, at some stage, watched a scene in a movie or play, or read a scene in a book and thought to ourselves, 'Why didn't the heroine just blow the door away?' or 'How come he can suddenly use that bizarre alien weapon?'

Characters who were useless dimwits moments earlier are suddenly highly-skilled, crackshot, ass-kicking heroes. The funky gadget used to escape certain death only minutes before now languishes in the heroine's pocket. And let us not mention **Star Trek's** Magic Transporter Beam, the last refuge of scriptwriters who realise ten minutes before the end of the episode that they have painted themselves into a corner.

In films the monitoring of visual continuity is performed by a continuity director, but the plot continuity - part of the scriptwriter's job - seems badly neglected.

Fortunately, there are tools available for checking these types of errors. These tools are roleplaying systems.

RPG system designers have long struggled with the problem of reducing the question of whether a sequence of events is likely to occur to a set of simple mathematical and logical rules. These rules are what we roleplayers use to adjudicate events. Rules are available for multitudes of



genres and slightly altered realities.

I believe that many stories, both written and filmed, would benefit from having the script writers sit down, create character sheets for all the characters involved and go through the important scenes checking that the events are likely within the context of the system rules. This would make the writers aware of events which are unlikely and should possibly be altered.

The story need not conform exactly to the statistics of the system used, since unlikely events often have an important role to play. However, every story needs an underlying set of rules, presuppositions and assumptions which are by and large adhered to through out the story. Without these rules all we have is a random series of events. Deviations from these rules should be performed consciously by the author, not slipped in through negligence.

Obviously these rules need not be those of reality as we know it. Many genres exist precisely because they explore the consequences of altering the fundamental assumptions of the world in which the story occurs. Fortunately, there are roleplaying systems for most genres, except possibly *Mills & Boon* (although there is *White Wolf's Vampire: The Masquerade*). Also, individual stories often explore the effects of tweaking a genre's basic assumptions.

The use of roleplaying systems as a plot continuity checking aid suggests the



possibility of using systems to generate the plot itself. The writers construct a roleplaying module that provides the starting point for the story. They next gather a bunch of people to play the module, for instance at a convention, and record what happens.

Afterwards, the writers select a set of events to form the plot, either by taking a single running of the module or by mixing, matching and tweaking sections found in a number of different runs of the module. Given a good enough selection of roleplayers one might even include dialogue from the playing of the module.

The recent **Dungeons & Dragons** movie was an excellent opportunity to attempt plot construction using this method. It seems likely that a story created in this manner would pick up a lot of the flavour of the system. The script created would probably have been more plausible, less directly cribbed from **Star Wars** and would certainly have taken a lot less than ten years to develop.

I think the use of roleplaying as a storyboard aid would improve the general quality of movies being produced. I believe it would aid poorer and less experienced scriptwriters (the majority by definition) more since they will most likely make a greater number of errors. What it cannot do is provide the details and fine touches. Roleplaying systems are, after all, designed to simplify reality so that it is more manageable.

Now, if somebody would just tell the scriptwriters.

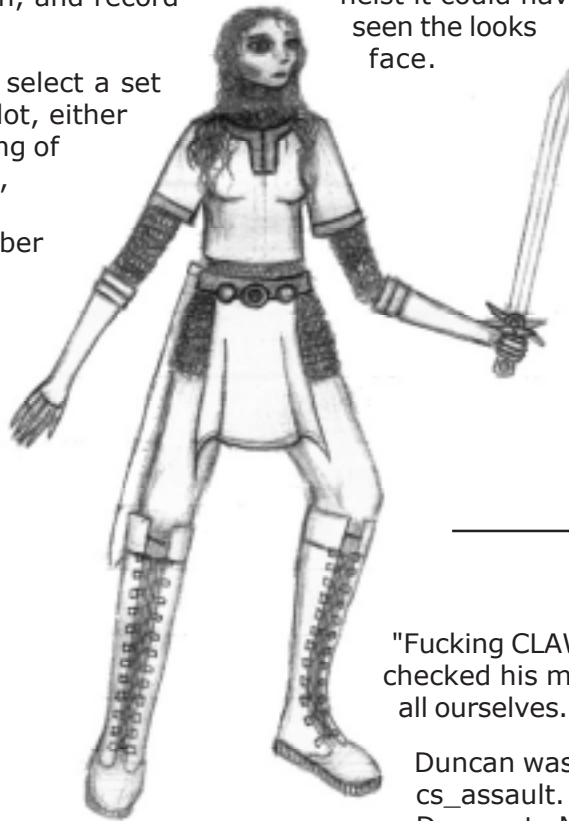
THEY ALL LOOKED TO HIM...

The job was perfect, Tom thought. Right time, place, planning, equipment. What a heist it could have been. Wish I could have seen the looks on the bank manager's face.

He sighed, suddenly tired. The bars felt cold and hard.

"Judge's waiting." he said as he unlocked the court cell.

-Dave

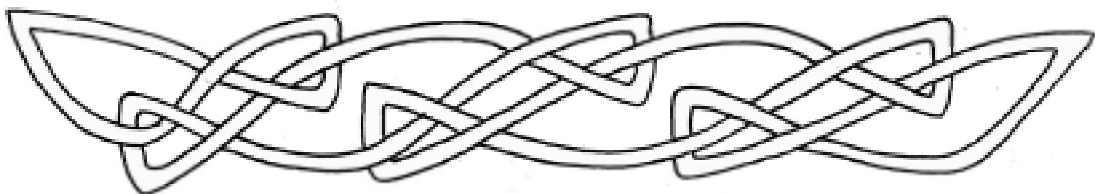


"Fucking CLAWmembers." said Mark as he checked his mail. "We'll just have to do it all ourselves."

Duncan was playing David at cs_assault. "Later on." said a red-eyed Duncan to Mark.

"Fuck this, I'm ready to pack it all up!" said Mark. "We just won't have a CLAWmarks."

-Duncan





Yes, we admit it. We're addicts. But let's ignore that maniacal sales pitch for a second, and try to give you a slightly more in-depth view of Magic.

Yes, Magic is a card game. (Duh). It revolves around one objective : defeat your opponent wizard by any means possible (usually by reducing his 20 'life to 0 - but more about that later). The game is played using carefully (or in some cases, haphazardly) constructed decks, consisting of a minimum of 60 cards.



Magic : the Addiction

*This being a small treatise on both the good and evil involved with playing the card game **Magic: the Gathering**, as written by two Magic addicts, **Sed Martin** and **Ross Grater**.*

Part 1: 'Have you seen Trainspotting?' by Sed Martin

Magic: the Gathering.

Sure you've heard of it - that silly game that all those strange plebs play on Saturday afternoon at the Stadium on Main. But how many of you know that Magic is played by over 1 million people worldwide, and these are just the ones that play in tournaments? How many others must play the game on purely a social level? And did you know that up to 30 000 dollars is up for grabs for winning a single Magic tournament, many of which are broadcast live on ESPN?!

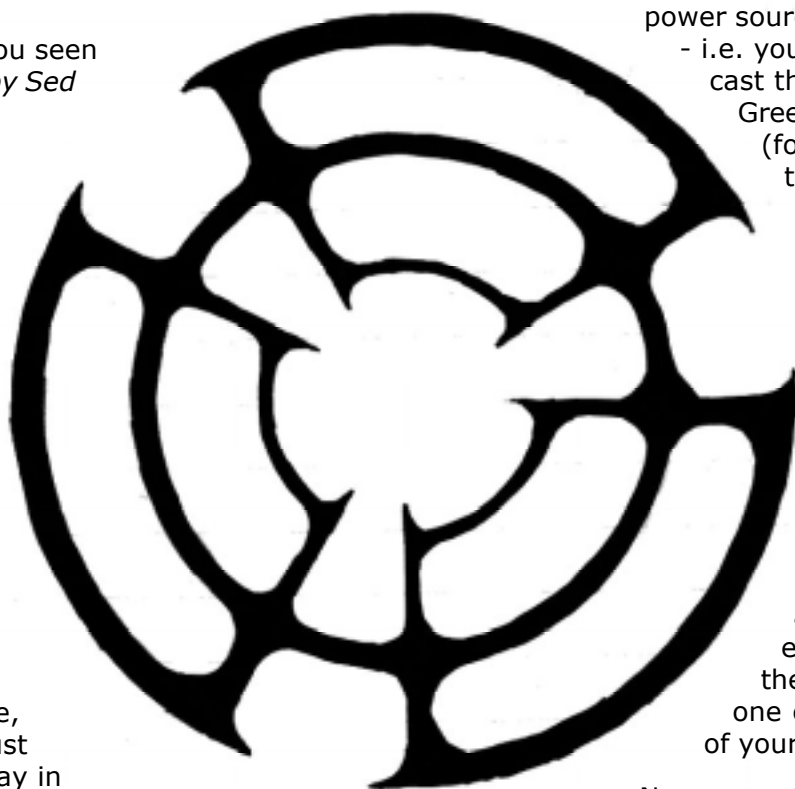
Yes! YES! MUAHAHAHAHAHAHA.....errr.....ignore that.

Magic itself consists of five colours, each one representing a specific area of Magic : White for life and rebirth, Black for death and decay, Red for chaos, Green for nature and Blue for deception and trickery.

Each colour has its own type of land associated with it, which are the power sources in the game - i.e. you need lands to cast things into play.

Green lands (forests) allow you to cast green spells, red lands (mountains) allow you to cast red spells, and so forth.

When the game begins, you draw seven cards (the maximum hand size at any time), and each turn thereafter, draw one card at the start of your turn.



Now, one of the key elements in Magic revolves around the concept of 'tapping'. 'Tapping' refers to the rotating of a card in play to signify the fact that its ability has been used. Once a card is 'tapped', its ability may not be used again until the beginning of your next turn, where an 'untap' phase occurs, and all tapped cards

are returned to their normal states. Lands are possibly the most important tapping items in the game. When a land in play is 'tapped' it provides you with one mana of its colour (remember forests = green mana, mountains = red, etc.). Using this mana, cards can be cast from your hand into play.

Confused? Well, you should be. It takes most people a while to get the above concept. Maybe this will help. Think of tapping Magic cards like...errr...toilets. Yes that's it. When you flush them (the toilets, NOT the cards) you empty out the water reservoir. They then take a while to fill before you can use them again. See, no mess no fuss.

Okay, this might not be the best comparison out there, but it works. Sort of.

Cards vary in strength and ability, and this is generally reflected by the amount of mana required to put them into play. Cards with smaller abilities normally cost one or two mana of a

colour to be paid before they can be cast, whereas more powerful ones can cost anything from 6 or 7 upwards. Some even require more than one colour of mana.



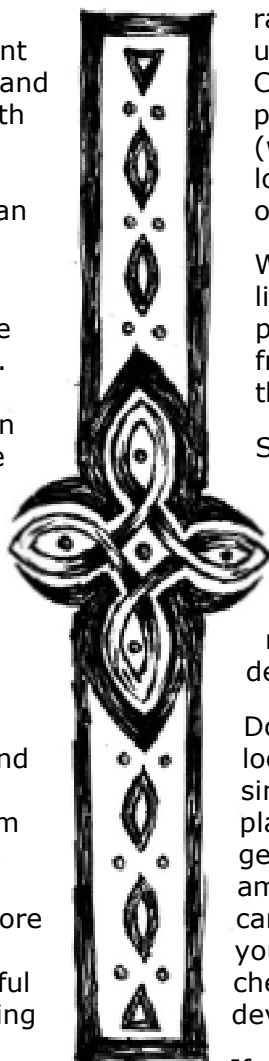
This, in its simplest form, is Magic. Obviously, the game is far, far more complex than this, but to understand the basics of what's happening when you next watch a Magic game, this will suffice.

What we have failed to talk about, however, are the actual costs (not casting costs) involved in playing Magic. And this is where things get a bit nasty.

Magic cards are printed in batches, with some cards being printed far more frequently than others. This is signified on the card by the colour of the expansion symbol on them

- black for common, silver for uncommon, and gold for

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rare. The rarer the card, the better it usually is, and thus the more it costs. Cards are usually sold in booster packs consisting of 15 random cards (with one rare), but the player looking for a specific card has to fork out cash equal to its current value.

While common cards often sell for as little as 25 cents, some older powerful rares can fetch anything from a few hundred to a few thousand DOLLARS.

So, yes. Magic can get VERY, VERY expensive. Especially for those looking to win tournaments. There are decks out there (including some owned by the two authors of this here article) that are worth many hundreds of Rands. Some decks can be worth even more.

Don't be disheartened if you are looking to get into Magic, however: simply speaking to one of the older players out there will probably not only get you some good tips, but a fair amount of common and uncommon cards that can easily be used to build your first deck (do not underestimate cheap decks - they can prove devastatingly effective).

If you have any questions, feel free to ask someone else (preferably Ross).

Seriously though, several games will be played in O-week as demonstrations, so if you feel up to entering the 'friendly, non-competitive, polite' world of Magic, make a stop at the CLAWroom.

(Please note : Shelagh kindly pointed out that if Americans will put something called 'When Good Pets Go Bad' on TV, the ESPN quote sounds even less impressive)



J - Tho 2: Return of the Students

- 24 CLAWmembers commune with nature



The hills are alive with the sound of CLAWmembers. In what seems to be becoming a tradition, a jubilant group of post-exam blues students marched off to Bain's Kloof for a weekend of R&R. According to plan, the first wave gathered at UCT and, after waiting for a few latecomers, set off in convoy. An hour and a half later, after negotiating insane mountain roads, they arrived at the beautiful campsite.

By far the greatest parts of the campsite were the magnificent pools and waterfalls. Directly by the camp was a large (albeit shallow) pool with a natural rock slide and an underwater tunnel to swim through. A half-hour hike upstream following the river led

to a series of waterfalls, providing many opportunities to jump from dizzying heights into plunge pools and for people to sun themselves on rocky outcrops. Brindley gave us all a demonstration of his Zen mastery by meditating under a waterfall while care was taken not to drop cameras into the water.

This year things seemed better organised, although there was still a shortage of braai grids and a couple of other staples (not helped by Duncan's "who left their cutlery in my mug?" followed by said cutlery flying through the air into the nearby river). Food was in abundance, as was alcohol (a student's staple diet). The campsite itself was amazing, with easy access to telephones (no cell-reception) and hot running water for the showers.

The campfire every night was a good (but sometimes windy) place to hang out, drink and braai. Many strange things happened at night during that camping trip. Later on in the weekend, there were two different campfires, but the only heavy drinking was done by Piotr. Brindley's word game (Jeffrey Archer) was played one evening.

Janet and Colette showed us all how to dye your hair red the natural way - with mud packs and henna. There was also extensive consumption of natural 'erbal tea (aiii) with all the normal consequences (including Lucas feeling ill the day after). Piotr had a bit too much to drink and smoke - his worst moment came when "the trees started dancing". One particularly memorable moment deserves mention - 10 (or so) people cramming into a small car, steaming up the windows and bouncing to the Moulin Rouge soundtrack.

Eventually though, as with all things, the weary campers packed themselves up and wandered home, leaving the campsite once again quiet and peaceful.

RETRO GAMING

Gareth Saul cleans out his computer room

Whether you're bored with Quake 667, can't run Quake 667 or are so spastic that Quake 667 makes you drop an O-ring, there is a solution that does not cost money (well, much anyway).

I'm talking about the classics - remember all those old games you can't find anymore? Well, you can now. Available for free on the net are plenty of old titles that are no longer sold in stores. Just search for 'dos games' or 'abandonware' and you'll find plenty of sites offering these games for free. For a start, try www.cdos.org. To give you a taste of what's out there, let me share a few of my favourites with you:

UFO: Enemy Unknown / X-COM: Terror from the Deep

Arguably two of the best squad-based tactical simulations ever, the first two games in the XCOM series are excellent strategic games. Begin by building a base, shoot down UFO's, then send in a crack team to salvage what you can. From research to combat to base construction, guide your organisation's efforts to save Earth from an extraterrestrial menace.

Darklands

A bit difficult to get hold of, but well worth the download if you can. This game shows medieval Germany in all its historical glory. Create a group of characters (from priests to warriors to noblemen to thieves) and explore the countryside. Use alchemy and saints to help your men, save the world from evil cultists, slay a dragon (hah!) and more.

Wolfenstein 3D

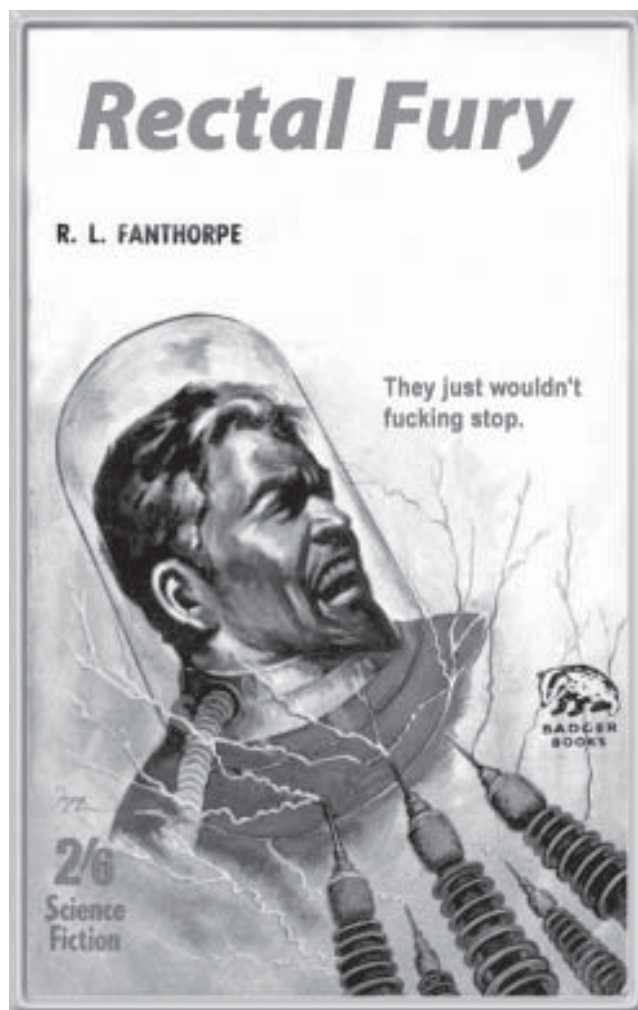
The grand-daddy of first-person shooters. Everyone should be able to say they played this at least once. A revolutionary game, it hinted at things to come. OK, so there was no vertical and everything was based on a grid system, but it still had gameplay in spades (well, kinda).

Prince of Persia

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One of the best platformers ever

made. Overthrow the evil vizier and claim the kingdom for yourself! Unparalleled gameplay made this one of the classics. To succeed, you will have to master complex swordplay and develop hair-trigger reactions.



Quest games

The list here is endless! From Sierra's offerings (King's Quest, Leisure Suit Larry, Quest for Glory, Space Quest and more) to the Kyrandia series, Monkey Island and more. For a darker side try the Gabriel Knight series, or for humour who can forget Sam & Max Hit the Road.

So, next time you need a quick gaming fix, try some of the classics on for size - you never know... you might just get hooked!

Wargaming at CLAWs, or...

SMALL SOLDIERS, BIG GUNS

Wargaming this year will be bigger and better than ever. We have more Warhammer 40k players in CLAW and ex-CLAW players than ever before, not to mention a whole horde of players in the Wizards league (Mmmmmmm... fresh meat). This means that we now have more resources with which to play and all CLAWmembers are encouraged to try playing Warhammer. Games are now being played every Sunday at the Stadium on Main, with a recent tournament sponsored by Wizards awarding first place to John Warncke and second place to yours truly. But Warhammer, as important as it is, isn't the only aspect of wargaming. There are a whole host of other Games Workshop games and independent systems to be played, most of which can use the same models. But more on that later.

Blood Bowl, Necromunda and Warhammer 40k

This year sees the start of a new season of BloodBowl, the fantasy version of American Football (only more nasty) and we hope to see a restart of the Necromunda campaigns - gangfights in the dangerous lower levels of a massive spire-like city. We need lots of players since this year we should have prizes. CLAWs has access to all the equipment and models for these games. This year we have a CLAW gang (models for use by anyone in CLAW) and soon we will have a CLAW BloodBowl team. More equipment means more games.



To those unfamiliar with wargaming:

Warhammer 40k is a turn-based tabletop strategy game which can be likened to highly complicated games of chess. Battles take about an hour to a day depending on the size of game. Armies are "bought" with points, so 1000 point battles involve one or more 1000 points of armies chosen from the army lists belonging to the warring races. Battlefields are generally about four by six feet in size and are usually covered with scaled scenery (small trees, buildings, etc.). Players take turns to take movement, shooting and close-combat phases. Models in each army have their own rules and statistics, with their relevant strengths and weaknesses. Models move and shoot in inches and dice are used to check movement, shooting, close-combat, armour and morale. This is true of most wargaming systems, not just Warhammer. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to find someone who cares.

Independent games

While the large commercial games like Warhammer will always be the most popular wargames, there are a large number of independent games systems available on the web. These games vary immensely in scale, complexity and setting. From western style showdowns, steamy Vietnam jungle skirmishes to massive alien battles, anything is possible. Since several CLAWmembers have Warhammer armies, more than enough models and terrain are available for playing alternative systems. So get out those plastic cowboys and indians, those WWII soldiers and those horrible plastic dinosaurs. There are games to be played.

Though my guards may sleep
and ships may lay at anchor, our
foes know full well that big guns
never tire.

The Tyrant of Badab

Independent systems:

Here are some settings and the associated rules as found at freewargamesrules.co.uk .

Aliens

* "Is This Just Another Bug Hunt"

Vietnam

* Charlie Foxtrot

Starship Troopers

* BUGS!
* Mobile Infantry
* WARGAME RULES FOR STARSHIP TROOPERS

Generic

* Firefight Mass Combat
* Slammer
* Skirmish '90 Modern Wargames Rules 1915-2005
* POINT OF NO RETURN
* City of Fire Wargames Rules

freewargamesrules.co.uk - Where all rules are free!
<http://freespace.virgin.net/pete.jones/index.htm>

Only the insane have
strength enough to prosper;
only those that prosper
truly judge what is sane.

Proverb

Strategy & Tactics

Strategy: the whole plan of attack with the aims of the mission in mind. It is the most important aspect of wargaming. Strategy starts before setting up troops, before considering terrain and placement. It starts with a consideration of your opponent, the mission and with the choice of forces.

A habit that I have noticed in many wargamers, especially the young and inexperienced, is to make unbalanced armies. Generally they are armies which

depend on an inordinate amount of firepower at the expense of mobility and or close combat potential. The vast holes blown in the opponents forces are often not enough to make up for the obvious holes in their own tactics. But this is a symptom of a greater problem.

A great flaw in many a wargamer's forces is neglecting to include flexibility. Armies with an excessive amount of firepower may find themselves too slow to reach objectives or dying in assault to crack troops. Forces which rely too much on close combat may find themselves shot to bits crossing the battlefield or fighting full strength squads with whittled down squads. Fast, and by implication, lightly armoured troops may reach the objectives but be unable to hold them for any length of time. Armies which concentrate on anti-troop measures may find a tank with armour that they can't penetrate, and armies which employ too many anti-tank weapons could be swamped by sheer numbers of troops.

Many gamers argue that concentrating on one particular aspect of warfare is the order of the day. After all, if you have a particular focus then you can use this strength to exploit the natural weaknesses of the majority of the forces in a balanced army to this strength. For example, if you were to concentrate on close combat, your close combat troops should mop the floor with opposing standard troops and heavy support troops, and your elite close combat troops fare even better. However this means that any standard (or sneaky and devious) tactic of countering or avoiding close combat will set your whole army at a disadvantage. For example, your opponent deploying their army far away from yours, with large open-fire corridors between his troops and yours.

A balanced, flexible army should have the tools to deal with any threat. It should include enough troops to handle reasonable casualties and hold territory, close combat troops to

To be Unclean
That is the mark
of the Mutant.

To be Impure
That is the mark
of the Mutant.

To be Abhorred
That is the mark
of the Mutant.

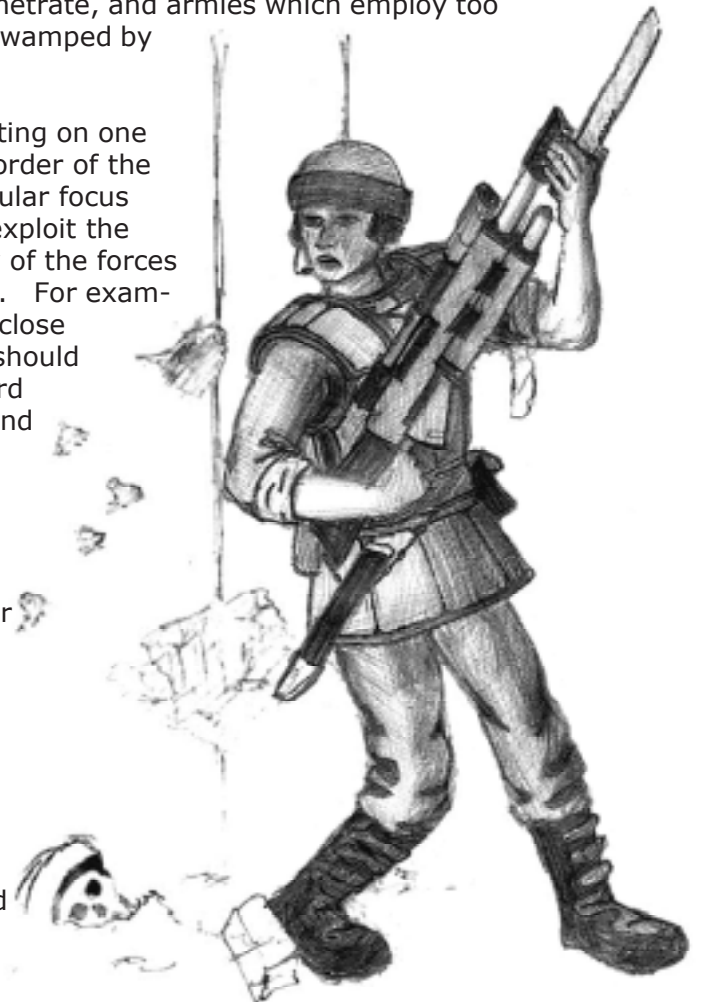
To be Reviled
That is the mark
of the Mutant.

To be Hunted
That is the mark
of the Mutant.

To be Purged
That is the fate of
the Mutant.

To be Cleansed
For that is the fate
of all Mutants.

Extract from a
Training Chant in
the *First Book of
Indoctrinations*



No-one forgets their litanies to the Emperor in a fox-hole

disrupt advances and harry heavy weapons crews, enough heavy support weapons to deal with tanks and heavily armoured troops and enough manoeuvrability to flank opposing forces if necessary and reach objectives. Deciding the optimal mix is usually something learned through experience. The ultimate experience and test of an army is the tournament.

In tournaments, players usually play with fixed armies, created before the tournament (although usually the morning of). This means that an army has to be balanced and flexible enough to deal with any other type of army, and handle any mission sent its way, be it holding an objective, escaping from an ambush or wiping out the enemy. This is the perfect testing ground (albeit possibly a bit too late for anyone who is serious about tournaments) and one has to be prepared for any eventuality since there is usually no chance to adapt one's army to face a different threat.

This topic of flexibility can be extended to almost any scale of warfare, be it large or small. There are obvious exceptions to these recommendations and many instances where massive amounts of firepower or a high degree of mobility is required. It must always be remembered that the army must be chosen for the mission at hand and the objective of the battle must be considered carefully, so this must be reflected in the structure of the army. While, when constructing an army, the most important consideration will always be the mission objective, balance and flexibility is still vital and, in the case of a tournament as mentioned above, may even be an objective.

I hope that this gives some insight and useful advice for those of you who will be playing any wargames any time soon. Now say after me: objective! Objective! Objective!

Victory does not always rest with the big guns: but, if we rest in front of them we shall be lost.
Commander Argentius - Adeptus Astartes Silverskulls

More on Warhammer 40K

Warhammer 40K is a futuristic wargame set 40 thousand years in the future in a galaxy plagued by war and strife. There are many different races and even more different factions, the most important and powerful of which is the Imperium of Mankind, guarded by the Imperial Guard and the Legiones Astartes, also known as the Space Marines. Here is a brief list of the different armies and the races that they are most similar to:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Imperial Guard | Humans (<i>loyal</i>) |
| Space Marines | Humans (<i>loyal</i>) |
| Eldar | Elves |
| Dark Eldar | Dark elves |
| Orcs | Orcs |
| Chaos Space Marines | Humans (<i>renegade</i>) |
| Tau | Humanoid aliens |
| Tyranids | Alien hive fleet |
| Necrons | Robotic race |

Even a brief history of the Warhammer 40K universe would take about a page, but there is a great deal to read about this highly detailed setting both in print and on the internet.



Magic: the Addiction III

Part II: The Tournament Diaries

Hi. My name's Ross. And I'm addicted to Magic. [Hi Ross - ed.]

(The author highly recommends a rudimentary knowledge of Magic: the Gathering before reading this article. Otherwise you'll probably be bored to tears. Or worse.)

It all started several years ago when I experimented with a strange card game that a friend had tried and said was good. I did a bit of dabbling, and before I knew it I was doing it every day, but it was all good right? I was young and invincible right?

Eventually it got to the point where the old cards that I had just didn't do the same things for me any more. I only had so much money to spend on new cards, so sooner or later I stopped playing simply because I couldn't afford it. I thought that that was it. I'd had my fun. No repercussions!

Then, after an absence of several years, I played in a Grand Prix tournament. The prize money for winning one of these is insanely large. In US Dollars! And as you can imagine, the kick from playing for that is amazing. Man, what a high!

I was instantly hooked. The cards were all new - I'd never tried any of them before - and insanely powerful. The good stuff. The fix of a lifetime. I had to have more. But the only way to do it was forking out lots of money. Everybody else was doing it. Why not me?

Money suddenly didn't mean anything any more. It was all about buying that totally amazing card at Outer Limits, or trying to open the most broken of broken rares in your booster pack (Broken = Really really good). And then proceeding to wipe the floor with your opponent. It was all

good. And better than ever.

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But then, this weekend, I realised I may have a problem. I spent R1 400 on Magic. I may need help. But I don't want it! I've never felt so alive...



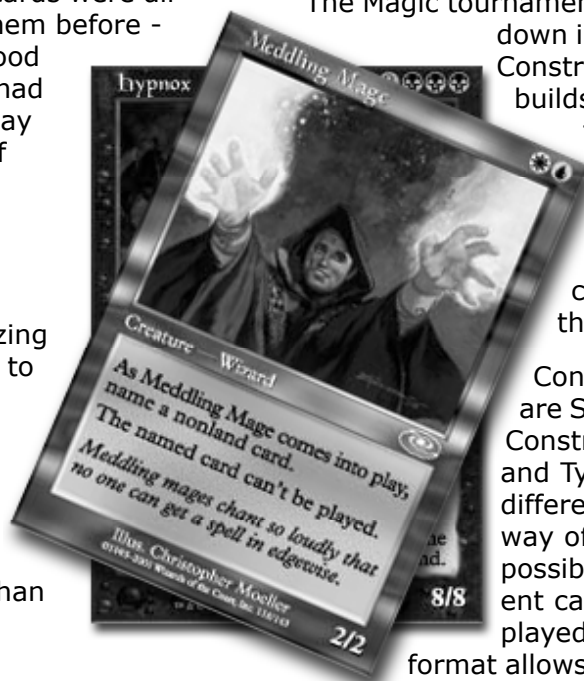
The CLAWthing asked if I could outline a few things about the tournament scene in South Africa. I apologise for the boring nature of aforementioned outline, set out below.

WARNING: BORING MATERIAL AHEAD>>>

OK, so you're obviously a die-hard magic fan (or wannabe), or maybe you're just as boring as I am. WRONG buddy!!! I'm an accountant, so you'd better have a good excuse to be reading this...

All right already - I'll begin with the outline of tournament Magic in SA...

Last chance to turn back... No? OK.



The Magic tournament scene is broken down into 2 formats: Constructed (where one builds a deck with cards that one owns or borrows) and Limited (where one builds a deck on the day with cards supplied at the tournament).

Constructed formats are Standard, Block Constructed, Extended and Type 1. These different formats are a way of restricting the possible number of different cards that could be played. The Type 1 format allows every Magic card

ever printed to be played, and the other formats exclude certain older sets of cards. However, certain cards have been banned, simply because they are too good, and can't be played.

Standard is the most popular format for tournaments in South Africa.

Limited tournaments can consist of a number of different ways of getting cards to make one's deck. There is Sealed (where the player gets a random set of cards that are still 'sealed' in their wrappings), Booster Draft, Rochester Draft and Rotissiere Draft (all methods whereby the card packs are opened, and players get to choose which cards they want).

Every person who has played in an official Magic tournament will have a rating, for each of the two formats, and a combined (or Composite) one, which is simply an average of the other two. This system is very similar to the rating system in chess. New players start on a rating of 1600. For every game that someone wins, they will gain rating points, and conversely, for every game they lose, they will lose rating points. The number of points lost depends on the importance of the tournament (the k-value), and how good the other player was.

The more important the tournament, the more points gained/lost. The better one's opponent is, the more points gained/fewer points lost. However, as one begins to increase in rating, the fewer points gained/more points lost for losing to players rated below you.

To put the rating system into perspective, the best player in the world is currently on 2121 points (composite). The worst player in the world is currently on 1334 (yes, he is American).



The top player in South Africa, ex-CLAWmember, Andrew Mitchell, is on 2036 points, and is ranked 27th in the world. The second best player in South Africa, Pieter Loupser, is on 1914 points. Everyone else is below 1900.

There are three categories of magic players. Scrubs are the players who suck. Misers are the players who are some good. Pros are those guys who could actually make a living playing Magic (and some do). In South Africa, scrubs are generally those players who are below 1700 points (with exceptions).

Misers are those players between 1700 and 1900 or so points. So SA has only 2 (potential) pros.

I've just made miser status. Sed is still a scrub. It feels good...

There is another way of classing SA magic players: Andrew Mitchell, and everyone else. He's just too good.

Magic is mainly played in Cape Town and Johannesburg/Pretoria, although Durban and PE have also produced some decent Magic players. The rest of the country (with the exception of Pietersburg) doesn't really feature in the South African Magic scene.

There are many different tournament types (in order of importance):

1) FNM (Friday Night



Magic) and Arena tournaments are played on Fridays, for the chance to win shiny cards, but is the least important tournament type.

2) Weeknight Magic is usually organised by one of the players in order to practice for an upcoming event, and is usually held at someone's house.

3) Saturday Tournaments - there are usually 2 standard tournaments held on Saturday - one for scrubs, and one that is open to all.

4) Sunday Tournaments - There are also usually 2 tournaments on Sunday, but these are any format that players decide on beforehand, but are usually standard.

5) Pro Tour Qualifiers - Winning one of these gets you a plane ticket to the next Pro Tour, where you could win up to \$30 000! These are pretty important.

6) Regionals - Each area of the country has a regional tournament to determine who is good enough to make it to the national Tournament. The top 25% of each regional tournament gets an invite to play in Nationals. The top 25 in the country get an invite automatically.

7) Nationals - This is where the South African team to play at Worlds is decided. The top 3 players get to go to the World Championships (in Sydney this year).

8) Grand Prix - South Africa has only ever hosted one of these (in Cape Town), and quite a bit of money is up for stake. 32nd place will earn you \$250 (over R3 000). That's not bad.

9) Pro Tours - South Africa has never hosted one of these, but consider that \$30 000 is up for a first place, and then tell me that I have no reason to play as much Magic as I do. There are only 5 of these every year.

10) Worlds - The World Championships. SA has never hosted one, but who knows. This is where the world champion is decided (although this is only one of the three ways to rate who is the best in the world). There is only one of these every year (understandably).

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11) The Invitational. This is

probably the most prestigious Magic tournament ever, and only 16 players actually compete. But these 16 players are

some of the best players in the world, chosen by the public. It was played in South Africa this year. There is only one prize. The privilege of designing your own Magic card. No, there is no money involved. It's all about prestige.



An important aspect of tournament Magic is the Internet. There are currently 3 sites dedicated to Magic in South Africa, one based in Pretoria/Jo'burg, one based solely in Cape Town, and one balanced between Cape Town and Natal. There are others, but they haven't really taken off.

Then there are the international sites - mainly based in the USA. This is where all the best deck ideas come from. If a deck has worked in the states, it will usually work here, so those with Internet access usually end up playing the "best" deck.

However, things in South Africa don't work quite the same way as in the States. There aren't as many people with internet access, and a lot of the cards aren't actually that readily available, so people end up playing archetypes that are not expected, and spoiling the plans of the "best" decks. So there never really is one "best" deck for more than about 2 weeks, because they fail to be consistent.

I warned y'all it was going to be boring, but guess what? It's almost over! You can now go and walk on hot coals for sheer entertainment value, because its quite evident that you're a masochist to read all that.

I've rambled on and on going absolutely nowhere with this article, so I'm going to end it. I hope you all weren't bored to tears... it really is rather documentary style, and I apologize for that. I try to be amusing, but I'm an accountant, so it's tough. You can check out some of my stuff @ www.SAMagic.4dw.com where I'm usually funnier, but for some reason, today I ended up as boring as dry pizza. Sorry.

Oh, and to those of you who skipped the outline, and jumped to the end just to see if it was better, it wasn't.

42 Reasons why I Hate:

the TALIBAN

Archbigot of the Necropolis

- ...they hate
 - ...they hate the Americans
 - ...Americans have freckles
 - ...they hate the Buddhists
 - ...they hate the Hindus
 - ...they hate the Muslims
- ...they hate the Christians
- ...they hate the Jews
 - ...they hate freckles
 - ...they hate bigots
 - ...bigots hate them
 - ...they're muscling in on my territory
- ...they farm goats
- ...they blow goats
 - ...and camels
 - ...they don't get freckles
 - ...they do
 - ...they don't
 - ...they smell funny
 - ...they probably haven't seen a banana
 - ...they're against porn
- ...they don't like Pokémon
 - ...Pokémon don't like them
 - ...there isn't enough Pokémon porn
 - ...they live in caves
 - ...they're dirty
 - ...so are they
- ...they hate women
 - ...women hate them
 - ...they're involved with the Americans
 - ...they're trained by the Americans
- ...they ARE Americans
- ...they hate Bush
 - ...bush is a moron
 - ...the Taliban are morons
 - ...they don't eat pretzels
 - ...neither does Bush
 - ...hey Mr Taliban, tally me banana
 - ...they don't know how to tally bananas
 - ...they censor stuff
 - ...they'll censor this
 - ...and ban that
 - ...tally ban
 - ...their mothers
 - ...blow goats
 - ...goats blow them
 - ...the Americans blow them
 - ...they blow food packages

- ...the food packages are yellow
 - ...the bombs are yellow
 - ...they bomb phallic landmarks
 - ...bananas are yellow
 - ...bananas are phallic
- ...Pokémon are yellow
 - ...bananas have freckles
 - ...they have one eye
- ...mock me?!? You fried cyclopes!
- ...they have beards
 - ...their women have beards
 - ...Captain Dorego's employs them
 - ...you can't tell the difference
- ...Pokémon have beards
 - ...if you look closely
 - ...they're nomads
 - ...they're mad
 - ...they think I'm mad
 - ...I am not mad
 - ...they smell funny
- ...they make weed
 - ...they hate weed.
- ...they sell weed to the Afghans
- ...and then beat them when they smoke it
- ...weed smells funny
- ...man, that Taliban hash
- ...the Geneva convention applies to them
 - ...but the Americans disagree with that point
 - ...they `r33d j00r mai1'
 - ...they Ownz the americans
 - ...the Americans Ownz j00
 - ...and read your mail
 - ...that ownage is nasty, but so are the ...Taliban
 - ...they hate women's ankles
- ...skank ho biznatch
- ...on Kenilworth main road (not allowed by Taliban)
- ...which is a bad thing

...I am jealous

g

29

Cheap-Ass Books How to feed your addiction

by Adrianna Pinska

I don't need to tell you how insanely expensive new books are, or how much more expensive they're going to get as a result of the current state of the Rand. Even at the much reduced prices of the Book Warehouse (Main Road, Rondebosch, near Pick 'n Pay; yes, they do vouchers) most of us can't afford to buy as many new books as we would like.

Fortunately, new books are not our only option.

Only slightly dodgy

One of the other possibilities is the local chain of Paperweights - those shops that get surplus books and magazines from regular bookshops and flog them relatively cheaply. Sadly, no Paperweight I know of is actually still paper-weight (they used to be), and most books you found there were surplus stock for a reason. It's worth having an occasional look, though. Paperweights are a good place to find imported magazines like 2000 AD, Analog, Asimov's and the Fantasy & Science Fiction Magazine. Sometimes, if you're really, really lucky, you can even find a slightly damaged copy of an entirely non-dodgy book.

There's a Paperweight in Main Road, Rondebosch, across the road from the Pick 'n Pay. A lot of shopping complexes (the ones that aren't poncy) have them.

Second-hand bookshops are a wonderful thing

Much of the world's best fantasy and science fiction

was written decades ago. Many of the shiny-covered novels being sold in Exclusive Books for a hundred bucks apiece are fresh reprints of classics from the fifties - you can buy their earlier editions second-hand for as little as five Rand.

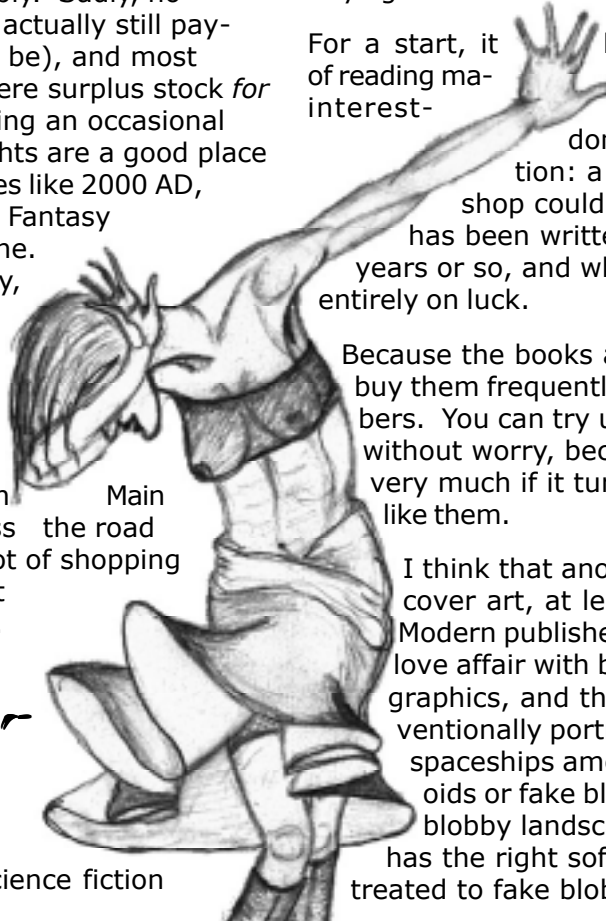
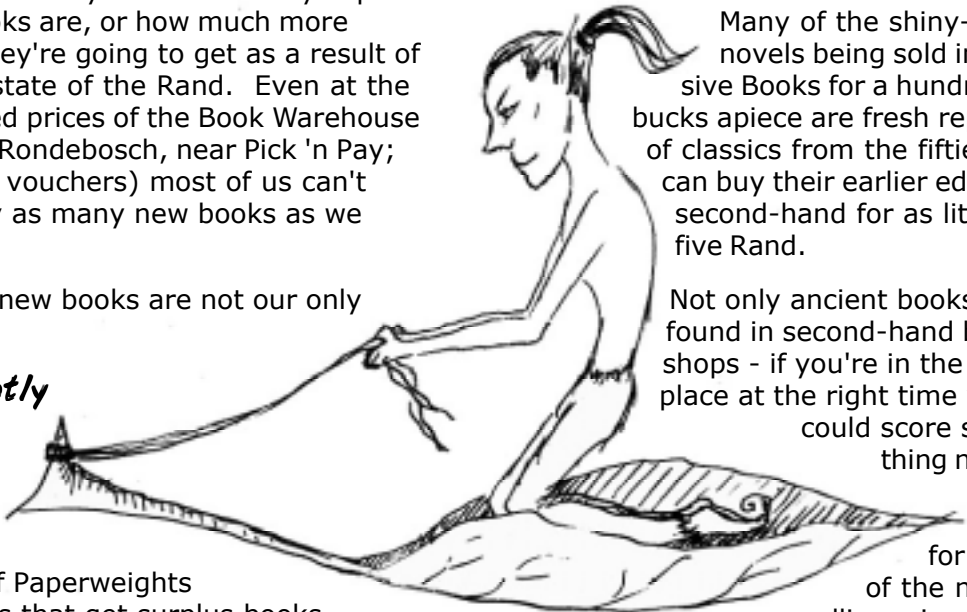
Not only ancient books can be found in second-hand bookshops - if you're in the right place at the right time you could score something nearly brand-new for a fifth of the new selling price.

Buying second-hand has many perks.

For a start, it broadens your choice of reading material and adds an interesting element of randomness to your selection: a second-hand bookshop could contain anything that has been written in the past fifty years or so, and what you find depends entirely on luck.

Because the books are so cheap you can buy them frequently and in large numbers. You can try unfamiliar authors without worry, because you don't lose very much if it turns out that you don't like them.

I think that another perk is better cover art, at least in science fiction. Modern publishers are continuing their love affair with bad 3D computer graphics, and thus new covers conventionally portray either fake blobby spaceships among fake blobby asteroids or fake blobby buildings on fake blobby landscapes. If the "artist" has the right software we also get treated to fake blobby people. Yuck.



Future generations will look back on this era and cringe. In the sixties, covers were done by people who could draw.

Where? Where?

There are many places to get used books in Cape Town. Here follows a list of those that I know about.

Key to approximate prices:

E: expensive - R20, R25 or more

M: medium - R8, R10, R15

C: cheap - R5, R6, R7

VC: very cheap - R5 or less

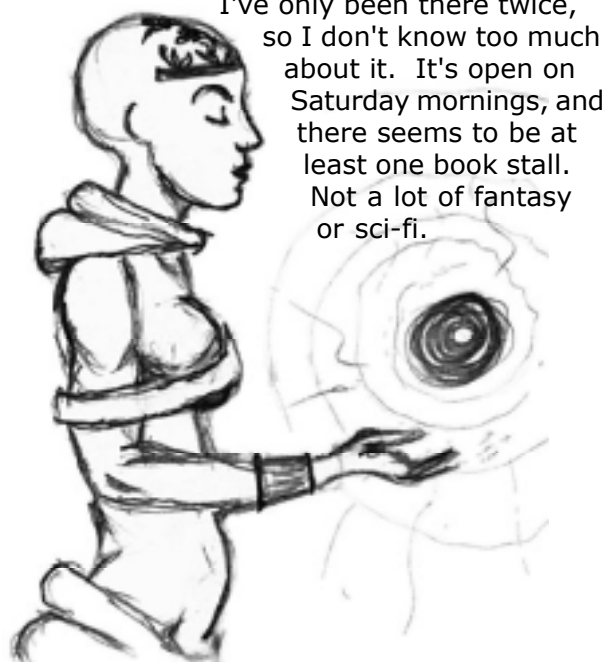
Paarden Eiland Flea Market

along Marine Drive towards Woodbridge Island
VC, C, M, E

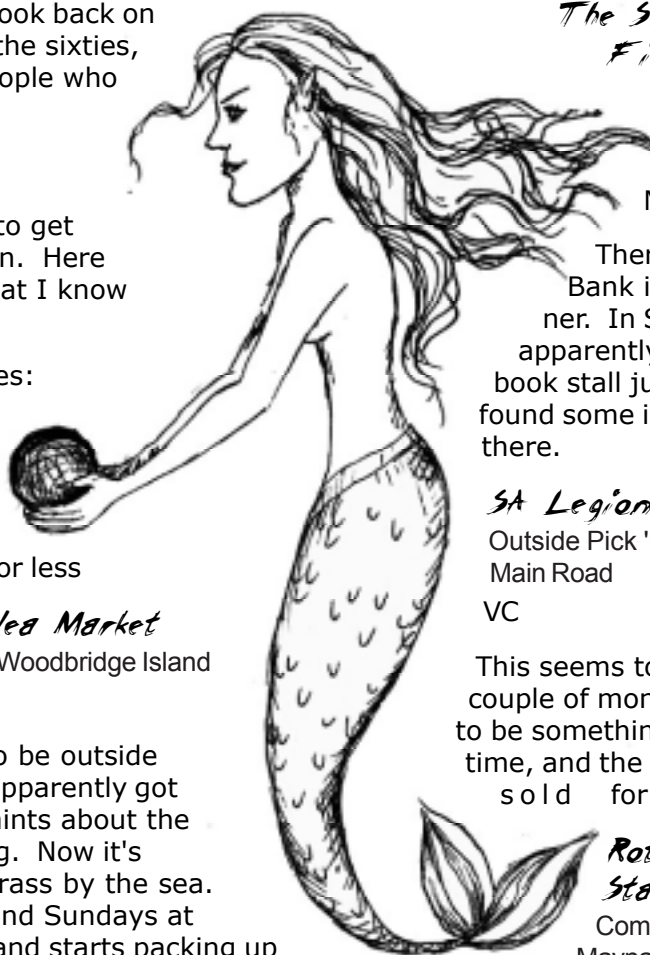
It's the one that used to be outside Woodbridge Island but apparently got booted out after complaints about the noise and lack of parking. Now it's moved to a stretch of grass by the sea. It opens on Saturdays and Sundays at about 9 in the morning and starts packing up at about 2. There are several book stalls, and most of the books are very cheap. It's very dusty there, so don't wear anything you mind getting grubby. Those with long hair are advised to tie it securely and cover it, especially if it's windy.

Rondebosch Craft Market

In the park along Campground Road
M, E



I've only been there twice, so I don't know too much about it. It's open on Saturday mornings, and there seems to be at least one book stall. Not a lot of fantasy or sci-fi.



The Stall Outside the First National Bank

On the Corner In St George's Mall

M, E

There's a First National Bank in town. On a corner. In St George's Mall, apparently. There is usually a book stall just outside. I've found some interesting stuff there.

SA Legion Booksale

Outside Pick 'n Pay in Rondebosch Main Road

VC

This seems to happen once every couple of months. There seems to be something good there every time, and the books are usually sold for a rand each.

Rotary Club Book Stall

Community Chest Carnival, Maynardville

VVVVC

This is a seasonal event which I always await eagerly. An enormous tent filled with books, the overwhelming majority of which are... wait for it... sold by weight. Yes, actually sold by weight. Of course, the downside is that 90% of them are absolute crap, so you have to search through the endless tables to find what you like, but I think it's worth it. And hey, it's all for charity. Be sure to go there more than once, as the supply is replenished regularly.

Reader's Den

148 Long Street

M, E

There used to be two Reader's Dens - a bookshop and a comic shop. The former recently disappeared, but fortunately all its sci-fi and fantasy is now being sold in the latter. It has a large selection of good books. It also has many comics (what with being a comic shop and all) and comic action figures. There are two rather nice life-size models of Catwoman in the display, but I haven't asked if they're for sale.



Bookwise

197 Long Street

M, E

Here be an abnormally large number of D&D novels, also many, many jacket-less classic sci-fi hardcovers. Of course, they have other things too. A nice, large selection.

Tommy's Modern Booksellers

130 Long Street

C, M, E

Not that much sci-fi or fantasy - only a couple of shelves. However, they have a few newish Pratchetts with the other glossy books in the display window.

Long Street Books

140 Long Street

M, E

Very large selection here. There is one table covered in horror and another with fantasy/sci-fi.

CWD Bookshop

C, M, E

I haven't been there in a while. As I recall, they have a couple of shelves of rather good sci-fi.

CAFDA

Werdmuller Centre, Claremont

I have never been to CAFDA. "What? Infidel!" you cry. Yes, yes, I've been very bad, I know.

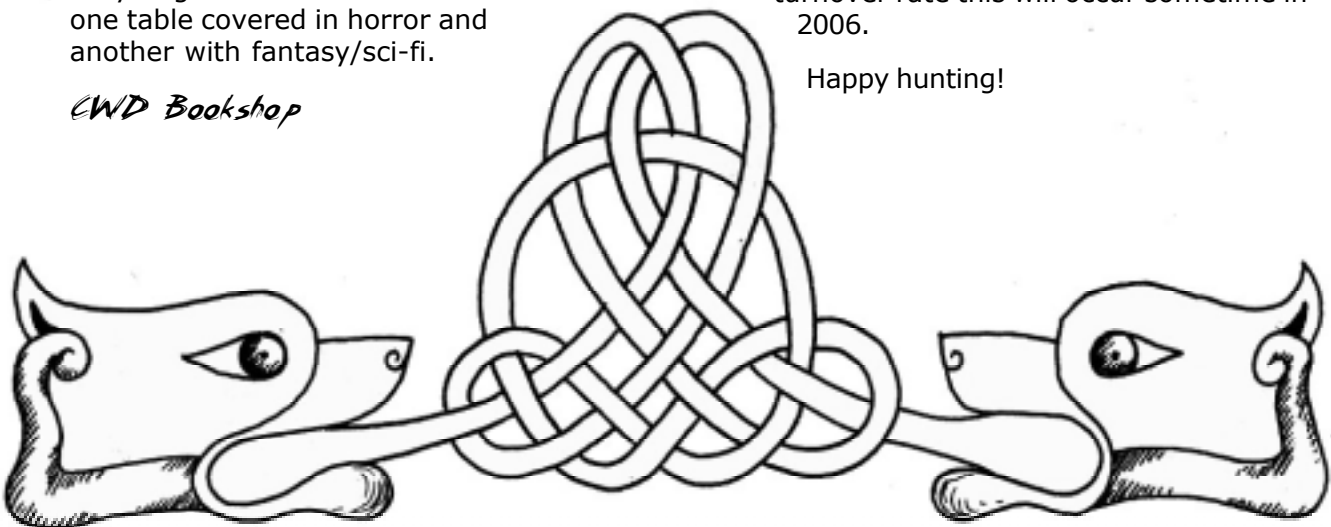
I can tell you stories about the splendour that is CAFDA. I have been told it resembles the library of the Unseen University in Ankh Morpork. Some say that the books are stacked to the ceiling, and the stacks stretch off into the distance, as far as the eye can see. I hear that some who dared to enter it have not yet returned.

The path to CAFDA is long and perilous. Somewhere along the Main Road in Claremont, near the fabled Cavendish Centre, stands a tall and looming building. This building, it is said, contains a Chinese clothing shop. It is here that the treasures of CAFDA are hidden - those who have sought it successfully say that the realm is concealed so deeply within the monster's bowels that many travellers have turned back in despair, never setting eyes on its wonders. Perhaps you, dear reader, shall be one of the lucky few.

Epilogue

Well, that's it. If there are any other worthwhile bookshops in Cape Town, I haven't found them yet - and I'm not going to look for them until I've reached to the bottom of my bookpile. I estimate that at the current turnover rate this will occur sometime in 2006.

Happy hunting!



The RIP Section

RIP
Gencon
Welcome back
ICON

RIP
Book of Lies

a

Duncan: It's great, you can do it on your pants, or anything!

n

You pick up thinking minds around you...big mind, big mind, big mind, small feline mind..."
- Austin

"...blinding kobold intellect..." - Simon

w

"Why are you sucking my baton?" - Austin
"I'm just resting my mouth on it." - Simon



"Upon entering the tunnels, Lia confessed that she could **so** do a dwarf." - Simon

u

RIP
Ellyjobel

You should have drunk your fire resistance potion! Sorry about the orc. Hope life as a treat treats you better.



Wanted: Paladin mount, one (1). Been looking for five levels now, dammit!

d

Barbara: "No poking or fluffing!"



"Bevan, stop rubbing Marcia's scrotum!" -
Campey

o

"We could pepper this entire issue with short, like, paragraphs..." - Gareth Saul



"Does your mother know that you've been to <http://www.adult-sex-toys-direct.co.uk/shop/d-mart.cgi?command=list&group=dolls>"
- Gareth Saul

i

RIP

One hobgoblin slaving camp. Thanks for the money.



Missing

Cornelius Ex Miscellanea. Former apprentice baffled.



RIP

Oculus, familiar of Cornelius. I guess you crossed the wrong Ignem mage.
Dammit, why couldn't you talk?



Wanted

A woman in every town. Apply at the blacksmith's forge on the Zu Ravensburg estate.



Notice

To Banshee Knight in Turnstone Pass: we're coming to get you.



Notice

Himmuth, we need to talk. - Zerlia Mondegreen

m

Wanted

Ghost Roth familiar. Why are you laughing?



Wanted

New dice and fresh confidence.

f

Wanted

A mountain dew.



Notice

It's in the fridge, duh!

j

RIP

Three wicked hags and their minotaur. I guess we won't be having tea.



Notice

Untarg, we met your Bone Snapper relatives. Surprisingly, they were bright enough to flee when we gave them the chance.



RIP

One snake sceptre. Burnt by the righteous wrath of Tyr.



RIP

Lady Zerlia Mondegreen - zorched by a fireball that came out of nowhere. We'll resurrect you... if we get out of here alive.

r

RIP

Modrick of Skypony - damn that fireball. We hardly knew you.

i

RIP

Two dwarven clerics; same bloody fireball. Ooooh, we're going to get you, you Drow.

y

RIP

Modrik, late departed. Uthgardt sidekick. Waste of a Tatoo.



Only in America

The Couches are Dead! Long Live the Couches!

Gareth & Dave99 bid a fond farewell.

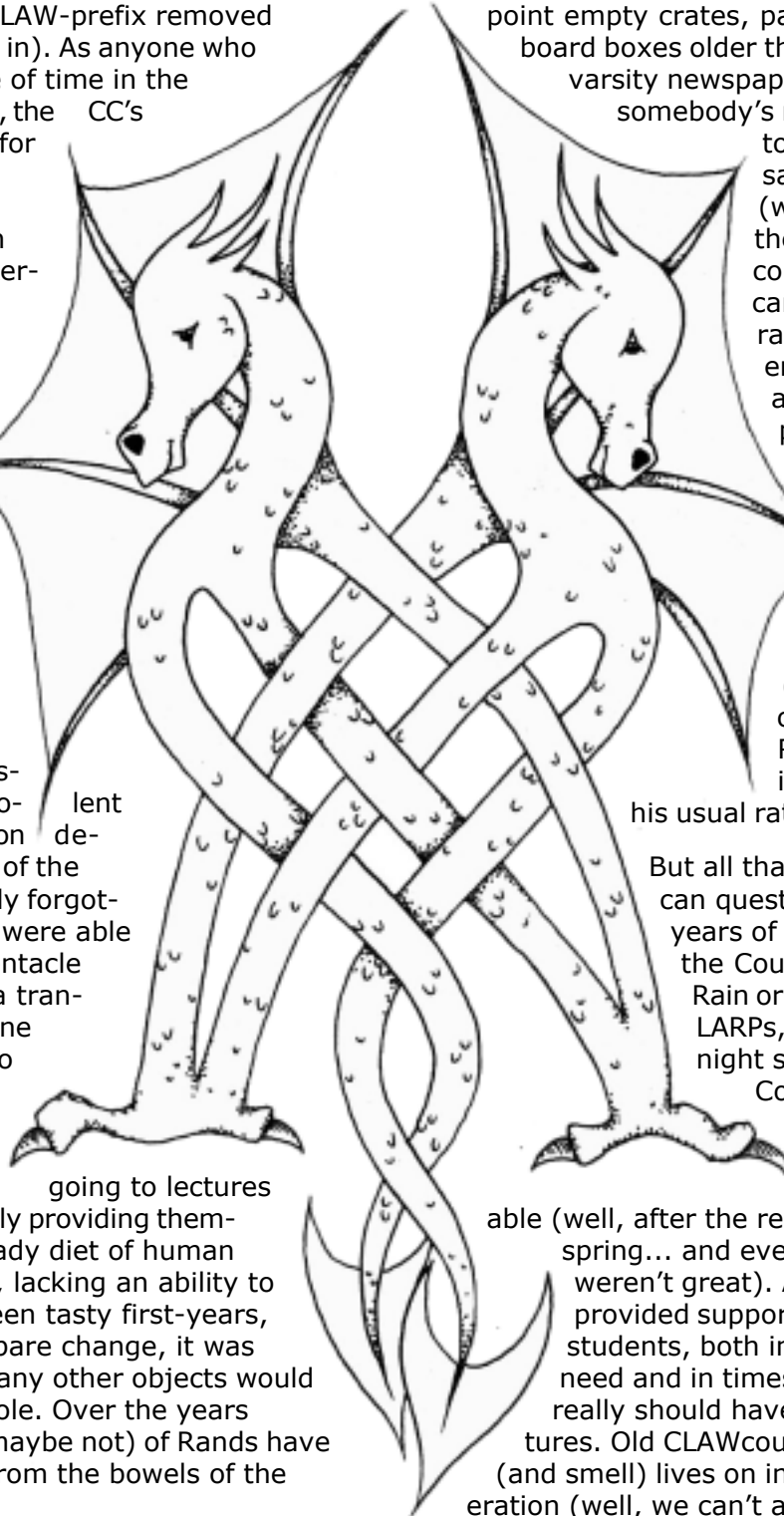
It is with a sad heart that we say farewell to the CLAWcouches (CC's) and greet a new set of couches (CLAW-prefix removed pending breaking in). As anyone who spent any degree of time in the CLAWroom knows, the CC's were responsible for just about all of CLAW's lethargy, lack of motivation and general slacker-ness. Thus, in remembrance, I review the joys and mysteries of: *The Couch*.

The first thing anyone should know about the Couches is that they were no ordinary stuffed conveniences. Rather, the Couches were possessed of a malevolent intelligence, bent on devouring the flesh of the young (and rapidly forgotten Bobs¹). They were able (by inserting a tentacle anally) to inject a tranquilizer into anyone foolish enough to seat themselves nearby - thus preventing them from leaving and going to lectures and simultaneously providing themselves with a steady diet of human waste. Of course, lacking an ability to distinguish between tasty first-years, text books and spare change, it was inevitable that many other objects would be swallowed whole. Over the years hundreds (well, maybe not) of Rands have been recovered from the bowels of the Couch.

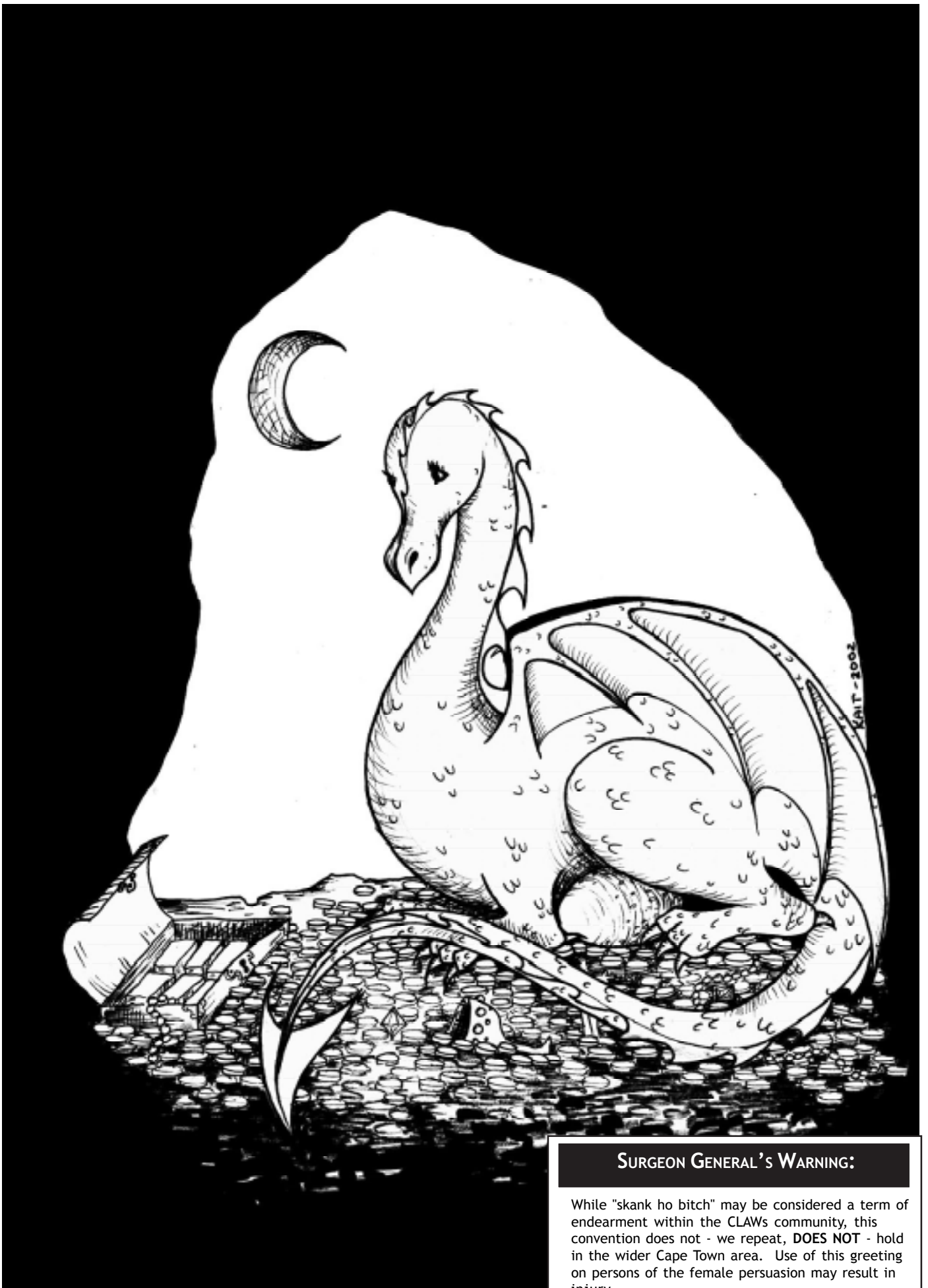
Of course, anyone who knew the history of the Couches was careful to avoid sitting on certain spots, for two reasons. Firstly, the

CLAWcouches of '99 were described as "surplus from the Inquisition". At one point empty crates, paint cans, cardboard boxes older than our parents, varsity newspapers and even somebody's notes were used to support the sagging seats (well, they were the seats, the couches just became dirty, elaborate junk containers). There is also a fine tradition of people wandering into the CLAWroom late at night and interrupting certain ... non PG-13 activities (when you're older you can ask Ryan for details, if you can afford his usual rate).

But all that aside, no one can question the endless years of valuable service the Couches gave us. Rain or shine, exams, LARPs, meridian or late night sessions, the Couches have been there, soft, yielding and comfortable (well, after the repairing that one spring... and even then they weren't great). All in all, they provided support to many tired students, both in their times of need and in times when they really should have been at lectures. Old CLAWcouches, your spirit (and smell) lives on in the new generation (well, we can't afford a proper exorcism).



¹ If you don't know, you are one.



SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING:

While "skank ho bitch" may be considered a term of endearment within the CLAWs community, this convention does not - we repeat, **DOES NOT** - hold in the wider Cape Town area. Use of this greeting on persons of the female persuasion may result in injury.