

CLAW MARKS

FEBRUARY 2014



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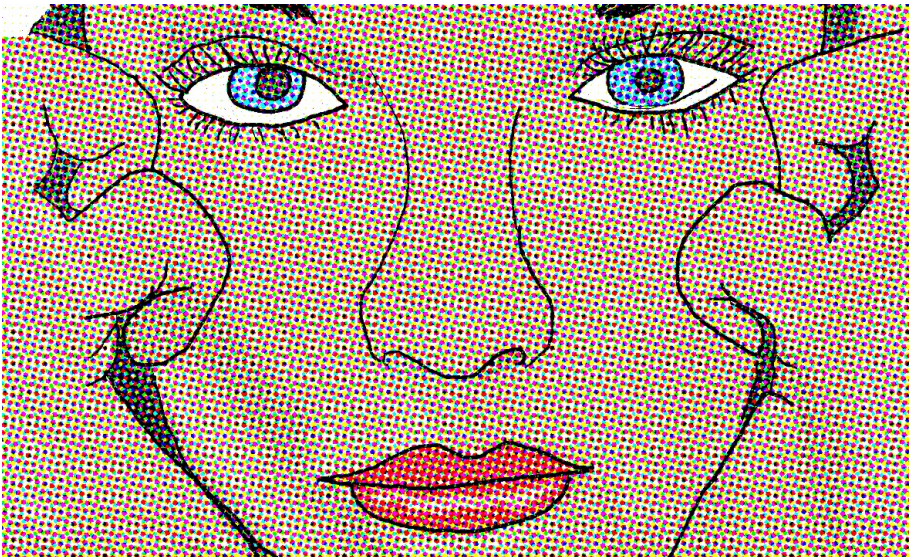
LETTER FROM THE CLAWTHING

Greetings and salutations, my name is Fortuné Dederen and I'll be your Clawthing this year. Our specials include cynicism with a side of dry wit, pessimism mixed with self-deprecatative humour, and for dessert, Obscure pop-culture references served with a side of really old internet memes.

I am an avid fan of all things gaming related, from the table-top games involving dungeons and flying lizards, to the vast digital world of dungeons and flying lizards online. I also enjoy converting others to the cause of dice-rolling, and try to do so everywhere I go.

According to some, I can be difficult to contact in which case I would advise you to contact Daniel (caretaker of the secretaries), who will then yell at me out of my hermitage. I look forward to playing games with you at the Claws evenings this year, and having your opinions yelled at to me by Daniel.

Your CLAWthing,
Fortuné Dederen



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Welcome to the Legion

By Quentin Coetzee

Welcome, to those of you who have just joined the Cape Legion of Adventurers and Wargamers. A great many worlds open before you. Some of which range from conquering dungeons filled with ancient horrors threatening to devour the world, to shooting down robots hell-bent on destroying the only hope you have for your people.

The stories are a large part of what makes games fun. This is especially true for the card game Gloom. In Gloom, you take control of the destiny of a family. However, instead of making them prosperous and happy, you strive to make each person of the household feel as miserable as possible, such that they are likely to thank you when you grant them eternal rest. This gives you negative Pathos Points, which are your key to victory. You also have to make your opponent's families as happy as you can, giving them positive Pathos points. Happiness, contrary to what people may believe about games, counts against you here as the person with the lowest total Pathos wins.

Although it may sound like a horribly depressing game on paper, a large part of its merit lies in being able to tell a story through the events that have happened. With Storytelling, satisfaction and humour is guaranteed. Take time to describe why the head of the household decided to try the family dog for treason instead of just stating it and playing the card. It is especially entertaining when your opponent family finds out that the professor just stole their little angel's body to reanimate it as her long-lost daughter...

Schadenfreude is guaranteed within Gloom, and is just one of the joys to be had within the Legion.

The stories of your adventures will be the tales of legend told around the fire. Choose your guild, arm yourselves and always shoot first. Let the marauding (and looting) begin!

LARPING FOR DUMMIES

By James de Haast

In titling this article I have had to ask myself whether this title has been used before; undoubtedly the answer is yes, however I don't care.

So as the painfully uncreative, obvious and probably over used title implies this is a quick simple and easy guide to larping. It is aimed at those who haven't larped or those that find themselves very confused during there first, second, third.... nth larp. Lets clear of few things up before we dive into the do's and don'ts of larping, first of all I don't claim to be very good at larping which is what puts me in a perfect position to know what not to do and secondly I haven't taken part in nearly as many larps as I would have liked to.

So it's the night of your first larp, you've read you character sheet you think you are ready. Suddenly it dawns on you; you don't know who else is playing, what if you know no one. Maybe you relish the chance to make new friends, perhaps the fact that you not having any idea on what

you are doing and could be making a fool of your self in front of strangest doesn't frighten you. I know it did for me, the excitement replaced by some from of nervous anxiety about the unknown on the car trip to the venue. Well as it turns out, there is no real need to panic, the people that larp are just like you, well for the most part. At some stage in everyone's larping history they have been the new guy.

So here are some tips on how to get through your first larp. First and foremost understand your character, there is nothing worse then the feeling of getting home after a larp went pear shaped and everyone you were supposed to love are now dead only to find out that some over sight lead to the chain of event's. At my first larp the lack of a character sheet combined with some other factors made it rather interesting and challenging for me. Thus when the time came for me to take part in my second larp, I read, reread, and then made about 3 pages of notes on my character adding extra flavour, trying to figure out how I would react to other character. Now it's not that I don't recommend this, but it turns out that carrying around 3 to 4 A4 pages while larping is not idea nor particularly fun.



larping is almost like improv acting it is fast, it flows, it becomes natural after a while. Having four pages of secrete back-story on your person and then constantly having to refer to it every time someone asks you a question is a drag and stops being fun very quickly.

To summarise all of that into one really long sentence that should be remembered for all eternity. While larping you are the character, so get to know them beforehand and if you need to refer to notes during a larp use a summarised version of your character sheet. Having said that, you may want a small print out of your back-story just in case.

Never drink the wine. One of the other mistakes I made in my first larp was drinking the wine. It seemed like the logical thing to do at the time, the mood of the larp was right and it dealt with the nerves, however it becomes increasingly hard to stay in character with every glass and very soon the supposedly bashful character is walking around the room fearlessly talking to everyone. Now why acting slightly out of character doesn't instantly kill the larp it does make you feel like a bit of a dilt the next day.

Don't larp on an empty stomach. This should be a rule for everything you do besides surgery. It's not like there isn't food that larps, in fact for the larps I have done the

food has been rather good. However there are two problems to coming hungry first is it is rather rude to eat all the food. The second however is far more relevant the; the best part of larping is that it is unpredictable and fluid, and thus you can not be sure that the food will be edible. Thankfully this has never

happened to me, however I keep it in mind when I stuff down as much food as I can before anyone can poison it or cut my tongue.

Do dress up. While dressing up is not always required it is encouraged, bringing props can turn out to be very useful later on as long as you can justify why your character has said prop during briefing. Personally I find dressing the part, part of the fun. However there are better reasons, than it is fun, to do it. You are the character, you need to either stay in character all night or be able to slip in and out seamlessly between freezes, choosing what to wear, helps you better think like your character. The other reason why dressing the part can be useful is it helps other characters identify you, like people judge you by your clothing in real life so do characters judge in larps. If all of that still isn't convincing then the mere fact that having a coat might help you woo the girl, survive the acid rain, help you reach your goal, or simply prevent you from dying should sway you in the direction of dressing the part.

A Vain Hope

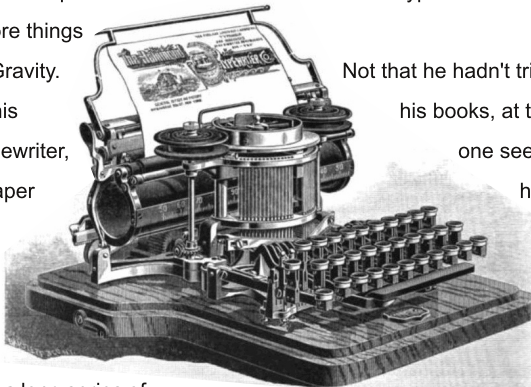
By Calvin Brizzi

Kenneth Nash wrote books that didn't exist. Well, they didn't exist before he wrote them, naturally. He wrote the books that weren't really supposed to exist. Books that were mentioned in other books, other works of fiction.

Have you ever read "The Princess Bride"? William Goldman calls it an abridged version of a book by the same name written by S. Morgensten, with all the boring parts left out. S. Morgensten wrote no such book, but Kenneth Nash did. Even the boring parts.

Why he did it, he wasn't sure. As a teen he'd giggled and laughed through "The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy" and had been saddened by the thought that he'd never ever get to read some of the hilariously-titled books that were mentioned within. So, he decided, he'd write one of them himself. He chose one of the simple ones:

Fifty-Three more things to do in Zero Gravity. He borrowed his father's old typewriter, found some paper and, a month later, had finished his first of what would become a long series of



books.

Kenneth Nash wrote every free moment he had, until he finished a book. Then he would read every free moment he had, until he found another book to write. And so on and so forth, and now, he was fifty-five. Or had been fifty-five to be more precise.

And in all those years no-one ever read his books. Which is about the saddest thing you could ever say about a writer. Not that anyone else would call him a writer. To everyone else but his neighbours he was a reserved man, that worked hard at the office but didn't socialize much. To his neighbours he was "that infernal racket that continues until the middle of the night", Kenneth had never stopped loving his typewriter, you see? And even though it had had every piece replaced ten times over, it was still the same typewriter to him.

Not that he hadn't tried to get people to read his books, at the beginning. But no-one seemed interested. And so he gave up, and never tried again. Which again, was a sad circumstance. Because Kenneth Nash had a talent no

other man had ever possessed: the books were spot on. Had one of the authors whose work he had spent hours upon hours reading taken the time

to read just one of his books, they would've been astounded, incredulous. Each book was exactly as the original author had imagined it, down to the poorly-drawn covers.

Fifty-five is a sad age to die at. But a life of sitting at a typewriter and eating nothing but microwave meals will do that to a man. Kenneth Nash left all he had to a library, on condition they preserved his books. Kenneth Nash had the vain hope that someday, someone would open one of them, and, just for a second, appreciate what he had done.

A short review for Pathfinder Adventure Card Game: Rise of the Runelords.

At first glance, this game might seem like another deckbuilding game, similar to Thunderstone, Dominion or countless others. There are a few key things that make it quite different and exciting though.



The game is purely cooperative, as you and some friends pick unique characters and work together to defeat sequences of increasingly difficult scenario decks. Instead of buying cards and adding it to your deck, you earn new cards by encountering them on scenarios, and in between adventures you get to streamline your deck and add a permanent "feat" bonuses to your character.

The cards have great art and variety, and each character interacts with them differently - for example, a sorcerer might not be able to use a weapon card, but could discard it instead to charge a spell, while a warrior gets to put a weapon card back into his deck after using it. meanwhile, a cleric can "heal" to shuffle cards allies discarded back into their decks.

One downside to this game, as with other deckbuilding variants, is its hefty pricetag, and the need for addon card packs (I believe there are 5 already, and they're making more). The base set, although fun, contains enough cards only for 4 players and 8 scenarios, so after a while I'll probably want to expand my selection before it gets boring. The publishers encourage you to make your own cards, which I am considering, but it would obviously be a big time investment.

KAOS REPORTED

Reporting by Dylan Nelson

As these reports generally start, Authorities (with a capital A) were actively looking into a then-recent, inexplicable outbreak of violence on the upper campus of the University of Cape Town.

The first known incident occurred at approximately 08:50 on Wednesday, 25 September in the RW James Building. One Maciek Stankiewicz, a beloved tutor for a popular first-year Physics course, was found dead in a pool of his own blood. The most worrying aspect about this - experts agreed - was that Maciek Stankiewicz had been found dead in a pool of his own blood no fewer than seven times in the previous two years. Many suspected that it may have been Physics that had killed Maciek, but the ninja-stars found sticking out from his back suggested otherwise. Nobody was particularly concerned, however, and the general consensus was that Maciek would have been seen walking around barefoot again by the following Tuesday, as was generally the case when Maciek Stankiewicz was found in a pool of his own blood. What was concerning, however, is that it was also generally the case that the death of Maciek Stankiewicz marked the start of a long series of unexplained murders that generally were never resolved.

A further four bodies were discovered at about the same time in the Mathematics building outside M304. Due to the small amount of time between the incidents, it did not seem likely - although it is now known to have been the case - that Maciek Stankiewicz' killer was involved. Many of the victims were enrolled in UCT's first year Applied Mathematics course and were believed to be members of a "cult of Jeff" which had a large following amongst students in the class. A Facebook page entitled "Jeff Murugan appreciation page" was investigated for more information. Adherents to the cult generally believed Jeff to be divine and often quoted him at inappropriate times. It had also become a trend to abuse Physics by trying to balance Coke-cans at an angle along their bottom rims. It remains unknown what the symbolism behind this was, but it is generally believed to have been Very Important™, but not strictly necessary.

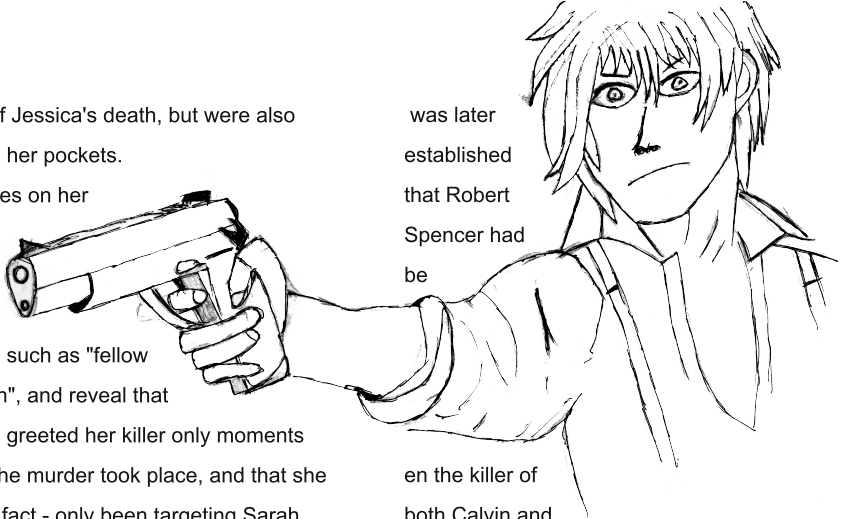
A task-team was established to investigate the possibility of some sort of ritual killing amongst the cult-members. The possibility was brought to light by the discovery of ninja-stars on the body of all four of the dead, namely Michael van Niekerk, Jessica Stanton, Sarah Taylor and Calvin Brizzi. Ninja-stars were found to not only be the

cause of Jessica's death, but were also found in her pockets. Messages on her phone contained phrases such as "fellow assassin", and reveal that she had greeted her killer only moments before the murder took place, and that she had - in fact - only been targeting Sarah Taylor. The possibility was also considered that there was some sort of organisational mastermind behind all of the deaths who used other people to "do his dirty work for him" and for whom, in the words of Calvin Brizzi, this was all "just some sick game". Calvin was unique amongst the dead in that ninja-stars were not found piercing his skin causing blood to ooze from his body, but he was found with ninja-stars lying next to him and a bullet through his head. It is now known that it had - in fact - been Calvin who had been responsible for all of the murders up to this point - except for his own.

Around noon, the body of one Jacques Heunis was discovered lying on the stairs behind the Computer Science building and with wounds similar in nature to those of Calvin Brizzi. It was not apparent whether he was murdered or whether he merely tripped and fell down the stairs. (And apparently hit a bullet on the way down) It

was later established that Robert Spencer had be

en the killer of both Calvin and of Jacques. At the time, however, it seemed entirely reasonable that he may have fallen down the stairs as this is not an uncommon cause of death. One is more likely to die from falling down stairs than from being attacked by a shark or being struck by lightning. We would once again like to take the opportunity to encourage readers to take extra precautions whilst walking up stairs at UCT, as there are a disproportionately large number of them and each one is a potential killer. One should not run down stairs while trying to avoid someone, nor should one carry sharp objects - such as ninja-stars - up stairs. Handrails should be used when they are provided and one should wear closed shoes at all times. Rather be overly cautious. Designate a friend to help carry you up the stairs if you suspect that you may become inebriated in the near future. One should take the elevator whenever possible, except if one finds oneself in the PD Hahn Building, or Leo Marquard Hall. As stairs can



not be trusted, one should not - under any circumstances - reply to a stairwell should it start speaking to him or her. Finally, watch out for people wielding ninja-stars. A star is just an I away from being a stair.

Evening came, and then morning - the first day.

The following morning - Thursday, 26 September - another member of the cult of Jeff was found dying outside the Mathematics building. Khadija Brey was found collapsed on the ground outside the door and managed - with great effort - to whisper something not-entirely-coherent about a "paper cut", and also about how the reporter should "watch Zoolander. It's a great film. Not award-winning, but definitely entertaining" before passing away at 09:50. Students who had been speaking to Ms Brey before the incident said that she had seemed on-edge and had been convinced that she was being followed by someone "Huge". (It is thought that they may have misheard her and that she had actually said "Pierre Hugo") They said that she had been trying to deduce whether she would have been safe on her way to her Physics lecture by trying to determine where this individual would be based on his timetable. This - unfortunately - distracted Ms Brey. While not paying attention to her surroundings, she slowly slumped to the stony sidewalk

beneath her. A book titled "Quantum Physics can't Hurt You" was found in her possession, and this is believed to have been a handbook detailing the various rituals performed by the cult.

Khadija's death was not entirely unlike the death of her fellow four cult members the previous day in that it was exactly like the deaths of the other four cult members. The most obvious similarity was the location. Less obviously, her death was caused by a ninja-star that is thought to have hit her in the hand. It remains a mystery why Ms Brey was convinced that it was merely a paper-cut. A popular explanation is that the avid film fan was merely trying to be dramatic.

Readers who may have been considering - or who have already started - pursuing a degree in Mathematics are urged to reconsider. The sudden decrease in life-expectancy and the indications of possible cult activity suggest that the danger already exists that mathematicians have made a covenant with the devil to darken the spirit and confine man in the bonds of Hell.

At 10:23, Khadija's death was followed by that of Wian Zeeman who was discovered in the food court behind the Computer Science building. He was found by a student who claimed that the food court smelled "even worse than usual". Authorities were certain

that his death was caused by one of the numerous pigeons which frequented the area. (The authorities were - naturally - completely wrong unless Conor Engelbrecht is actually a pigeon) The pigeon - it was assumed - named Bogdan - it was assumed - had tried to acquire some of Mr Zeeman's food, and when Wian refused to part with his sandwich, the pigeon grew aggressive and started to attack. Students in the food court were approached for comments.

"Ja, things are always like this. One can not sit down to have lunch without some damned bird trying to make off with it," remarked one such student.

"Smoke seems to keep some of the pigeons away sometimes. I don't know why people on UCT Confessions complain about the smokers. Really, they're doing this place a service," mused another. "And they make it smell better."

"He got what was coming to him. Everyone knows that once a pigeon has gotten it into its mind to steal one's food then there is nothing that one can do about it. I don't know why he resisted and tried to fight. One should not interfere with the pecking order that has developed at UCT"

The author feels that Wian's first mistake was climbing the stairs leading to Cissy

Gool Plaza.

Readers are encouraged to build themselves a bunker and stockpile on food for when the inevitable pigeon uprising occurs. We can only pray that the pigeons do not form an alliance with the stairs.

Another body was discovered inside the mathematics building at about 11am. The body was grotesquely disfigured and not immediately identifiable. It appeared to have lost a lot of mass very rapidly. Forensic analysis revealed that the body was that of Pierre Hugo, a former Jeffist. It may be the case that Mr Hugo was targeted specifically for leaving the religion.

The discovery of ninja-stars in Pierre's backpack raised a few questions. Were investigators right in assuming that the cult specifically advocated death by ninja-star? Why was Pierre carrying ninja-stars if he was no longer a member of the cult? Did he ever actually leave the cult at all? Were the stars placed in Mr Hugo's backpack by his killer as a warning to other cult-members? Were the ninja-stars maybe not tied to the cult at all? Who was responsible for the deaths then?

A final body was discovered in Room 300. Shaun Silson was wearing headphones at the time of his death. Officially, his death

was probably caused by whatever it was that had left the two bullet-wounds in his neck. Security footage indicated that Shaun was shot by a then-unidentified individual who appeared to be carrying a gun. Careful analysis of the surveillance data revealed that the killer had two legs which he used to propel himself along the floor; that the killer had hands which he used to hold the gun and to pull the trigger; that the killer had hair; and that the killer had a full mouth of teeth which became visible as the killer laughed maniacally. The killer had then remarked that Jeffists were deluded because Jeff was merely a prophet of the one-true-god who rested for six days and then created the world during an all-nighter.

In order to avoid having a liberal bias, it should be pointed out that video footage is easy to doctor and that authorities often try to hide the truth. The official story is about equally as likely to have occurred as Shaun having been strangled by his headphones as he fell down some stairs. The headphones would presumably have been attached to a computer which would have provided the necessary tension. The bullet wounds in his neck would naturally have been caused in the same way as those of Jacques Heunis the day before: Shaun could have hit a stray bullet on the way down.

Evening came, and then mourning - the second day.

Robert Spencer died that Friday morning. It is reported that he had seen a barrel above and had remarked about it before he had died. While it is clear that he had - in fact - been referring to the barrel of a gun, it is still fun to imagine that Robert had died after someone had dumped a large barrel of water on him, and that he had either drowned or had been critically injured under the weight of the water, like the extras in Michael Curtiz's "Noah's Ark".

Later the same day, Daniel Adamiak was held down by a pedestrian while a man with two legs, two hands, hair, a mouthful of teeth and a propensity for maniacal laughter doused him with a vial of acid. CPS, of course, were busy talking on their toy phones and later did not seem to realise that identifying features in the attacker which are shared by almost every human being on the planet was not a suitable substitute for doing their jobs.

Daniel's flatmate, James de Haast, was also attacked that day. A single text message sent from his phone in TSL read "I'm dead James". Shortly thereafter, a message was received from Gwyneth Allwright who admitted to killing James, and which went on to describe how much fun it would be to

stalk her new target since it was someone who she actually knew.

Evening came, and then morning - the third day.

The weekend went by and was - for the most part - uneventful. Maciek Stankiewicz was reportedly seen at Pick 'n Pay, which wasn't too strange as he never stays dead for long.

The Monday morning, however, saw the death of Liam Baker and also of Gwyneth Allwright. Eyewitnesses claim that Gwyneth's killer had written his name all over the windows of Leslie Social using her blood. Authorities, however, were still unable to identify the killer. The killer had then draped Gwyneth's body over the vending machines and had stuffed chocolate wrappers in her mouth. His motives remain unclear.

Evening came, and then mourning - the fourth day.

Two deaths occurred on the Tuesday morning. Conor Engelbrecht - also a Jeffist - managed to get a shot in at Sean Wentzel - his attacker - in the Mathematics building before passing on. Sean had shot first, and Conor's shot was not fatal. (This can be seen by noting that Sean Wentzel had

remained alive after the incident and had then proceeded to go to his Physics lecture)

The final death in what had become a very tragic week, was of a man who has been identified to have been a man named Hugh Mann. A large group of people had watch Sean gun down Mr Mann, and a passerby also got a shot in in order to ensure that Mr Mann was dead. This incident was met with much cheering and Sean was declared to be the winner of KAOS, and is now the proud owner of the Elder Gun - a weapon which had previously belonged to Calvin Brizzi.

The large crowd remained mostly silent when approached for comment, but did remark that Sean had been an individual who had truly been in possession of two legs, two arms, hair, a mouthful of teeth and a propensity for maniacal laughter.

Evening came, and then morning - the fifth day - and Sean said: "It is good".

The next round of KAOS will start on Monday, 17 February 2014. Anyone who wishes to participate should submit their name, a contact number, an e-mail address and a recent photograph of themselves to NLSDYL001@myuct.ac.za by 14 February 2014.

MY LARPING JOURNEY

By Rolf Weimar

My first CLAWs roleplaying event was, appropriately enough, a LARP. It was a very intriguing idea, almost as if you were in a play, but had free will to do whatever it is your character would do in that situation. My first LARP was High Seas, way back in 2003. Even back then, when I had very little to exposure to any kind of roleplaying, I knew LARPing was something I wanted to be involved in. To me,LARPs are one of the few ways that I can think of to be a part of some other place or time.

LARPs, like most other roleplaying systems, have a lot of flexibility in the kind of experience it can provide for its players. You can have a serious and realistic science fiction universe, or a crazy fantasy world with elves and fairies, and many in between. I have played in countless LARPs over the years, and I am always impressed by the creativity of the writers of the LARPs and also the potential LARPs have for telling interesting stories in a unique way.

Every roleplaying system has its advantages and disadvantages. Modules are great for short stories, but also allow the characters to roam a bit. Campaigns are great for long stories and give players a lot of freedom. Character interaction varies both on players and DMs, where some DMs prefer to concentrate on the mechanical sides, while others give players more freedom to act out their characters.

LARPs do a lot of things well, but have very clear shortcomings in other areas. LARPs are great for interpersonal stories, a lot of them being dramatic, although I have played in some comedy style LARPs. Where they are not so good, is in providing a lot of freedom for movement and exploration, since LARPs happen in a real world space, unlike modules where it is all in the minds of the players. Play mechanics are another area where LARPs can experience trouble.

Whereas modules and campaigns need mechanics as a way for players to interact with the world, LARPs can certainly play almost mechanic free. Integrating mechanics into a live action game presents some problems. How does a player use a skill that their character has, but them as a player does not (e.g. pick pocket)? Unless the player happens to be a good pickpocket, you will have to come up with a mechanic for it, and of course, it brings into it the whole player versus character knowledge problem.

You have to take the object from them, but then tell them that they didn't know it was gone. Some players will then try to find a way to get their character to realise it is gone. Another problem is preventing the player who lost something from knowing who stole it. In some LARPs I have played, dice were used for some skill rolls, but this is clumsy and can hold up the flow of the game. I saw a brilliant solution to this in one LARP, where playing cards from ace to ten were used as skill rolls. I have used this mechanic in all my LARPs since.

Lie detect mechanics are another interesting example of how a mechanic actually plays out in a game. A player could have a card that says, "Did just lie to me?" Players generally respect mechanics enough to give something like that an honest answer, but I recommend players who are unsure of the veracity of the answer to have a DM around just in case. Player character knowledge also comes into play, as the player now knows that they have been caught.

A counter lie detect card is a tough mechanic to run. By simply using the counter, the player who used the lie detect is now very suspicious and thinks he has something to hide. Of course though, it is just a mechanic and the cards are certainly outside the realm of the game and just

used to simulate what is really someone who is good at reading body language, and someone who is good at fooling even deception experts.



I wrote my first LARP in late 2003. I have always been a big fan of science fiction, mostly on TV. Star Trek is one of my favourite, so I decided that I would write a science fiction LARP set in a new galaxy, but with some interesting politics thrown in. LARPs are very good at this kind of drama. LARPs are an interesting challenge as a writer. You have to come up with an interesting main story for the LARP that serves as a backdrop for the LARP and also gets people interested in playing in it, but you also have to give each character an interesting story, link the story with other players, and give them their own objectives which either link in with, or are opposed by other players.

Mission to Xamtoh was a LARP about a dissident movement on the border world of Xamtoh. First contact was made with a race called the Geltuh, and along with the humans, the alliance had been successful for many years, until the emergence of dissidents. Fearing the movement could tear the alliance apart, a special envoy was sent to Xamtoh to deal with the dissidents.

As my first LARP, it was a very fun experience writing it. It had a small amount of players, partly to limit the work, but also to make it more manageable to run. The feedback after the LARP was very helpful. Some players felt they didn't have enough to do, and felt the LARP as a whole ran out of steam. LARP writing is very interesting as there are no textbooks on it, and you have to pick it up as you go. I had learned a lot from writing the LARP and also from the actual running where players gave feedback. Some of the objectives were a bit lopsided and their set up was not done very well. For instance, one player was given an item that was meant purely for someone else's objective. This makes the other objective possible, but there was no given reason why that player should have that item. The justification in writing must be there and the item should be valuable to the player. If someone wants to steal it, they will have to fight for it. If it is pickpocketed, the player will want it back and will be searching for the pickpocket.

Objectives in a LARP, I have found, can work best if there are competing forces for either the same result (i.e. both want to get an item, or complete a task) or both require the same resources (i.e. both need some magic crystal for a spell, or access to a computer). Most of the objectives in Mission to Xamtoh were self contained, so people could complete them without any problems from other players. I did some editing after the first running of the LARP, but did not run it again.

I would write my next LARP in 2005. Over the years, I had watched many different sci-fi and fantasy shows, and read many different types of fiction. After finishing watching one very good sci-fi show, a central plotpoint had inspired me to write a LARP built on this idea. The kind of politics that shows up in stories, the heavily dramatic interactions and interplay of different views and objectives is very interesting to me. I would also take what I learned from my first LARP and apply it to this LARP.

Festival of Jandrean Emancipation was, funnily enough given its inspiration, a fantasy LARP. Over the years, I have found that the epic backdrop of a lot of these sci-fi and fantasy stories

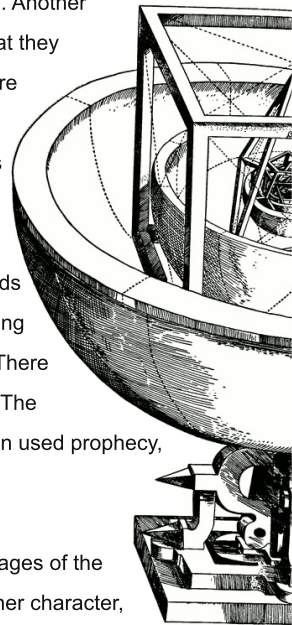
have provided a good foundation for stories, both those that hearken back to the “olden days” and also those that seek to carry on the legacy of the ones that have come before. The LARP’s story revolves around the invasion of Jandrea by the Tolovens. The Tolovens would surely have won, except for a brave Jandrean general who inspired his troops and lead a counterattack against the Tolovens.

The Tolovens were soundly defeated, and an annual festival was started that would celebrate the Jandreans victory, hence the title. The LARP takes place 500 years after the battle, and the Jandrean king has invited people from all round to come celebrate with them. Another thing about LARPs that some could say is a disadvantage, but I do not, is that they normally take place in a central area, with little room to roam. LARPs often are conferences, meetings, parties or celebrations. A setting like this, where players can’t run off and do there own thing in one corner of the world has its advantages, and also allows certain types of stories to be told.

I thought a fun addition would be to give all of the magic wielders actual wands to use. It was fun to see people walk around with short dowl sticks and pointing them at people. I also wanted to try out a prophecy mechanic for the LARP. There were three main skills in the LARP: Magic, Prophecy and Weapon handling. The Tolovens could only use weapons, Lukent used Magic predominantly, Quilnen used prophecy, and the Jandreans were average in all the skills.

In a world where prophecy is real, prophecy should not be restricted to the pages of the character sheet. During the LARP, if a player wanted a prophecy about another character, they could get a prophecy, out of a possible 5 times they could do this, and get a craftily worded sentence or two about their target. It worked out well, and I kept it in for the second running.

The epic story, people from 4 different races, and objectives and players stories that connected characters together better than my previous LARP, kept player’s interest, leading to a satisfying end of LARP encounter. The debriefing was very interesting, as I heard the story from each player’s perspective, and how they had gone about their objectives. Casting is another thing I learned from this LARP. Some characters can only be played by experienced players, so I tried for my next running to pair the characters up with the players better.



I had some ideas for LARPs after this, but none came together until my honours year in 2008. I was playing around with some core ideas, until I came upon one that I wanted to develop into a full LARP. As anyone who has done honours knows, it was very busy, and although I got some basic setup done, I didn't have time to develop it any further. Next year, I was working and again didn't have too much time to put into it.

The beginning of this year, I decided that I would devote some time to this LARP. My plan was for an epic sci-fi LARP, and I would then need help with the writing, as it would be too much for just one person. Through conversations with my friend, the story changed a lot until we were both happy with what had been added. It was a fun experience, as we both came up with ideas, and the challenge then became how to integrate them into the story. Writing with another person is a very different exercise, but the extra writers added immeasurably to the LARP. I got a second friend involved, and he worked on one of the races.

The Founding of Tellas Beta is by far my biggest LARP, both in player numbers and scope. Writing a LARP of this size has taken a long time, but it has been worth it. The playtest, while a bit rough on the edges, was successful, and we got a lot of useful input. The story, which I will cover only as much as the blurb does, is about a meeting between 4 of the major alien governments in our galaxy: The enigmatic Ayos, the scientific and emotionless Taynen, the aggressive and loud Dranek, and the ambitious Humans.

As I said before, writing this size of LARP is difficult, because the possible connections increase quickly when you add new characters. Adding the Dragonfire theme was also an interesting challenge, but it added an interesting aspect to the LARP. The main areas that we worked on for this LARP is making a large and eventful galaxy, which turned out to be a bit of work, but we think has paid off.

LARPs are great fun for players, and an interesting challenge for writers. I started writing a long time ago, before I wrote LARPs, and writing LARPs is just as interesting as anything else I have written. LARPs have great potential for storytelling. With this great potential, and the enjoyment I have had writing them, I will continue writing LARPs long into the future.

Interactivity and the Emergent

By Berndt Hannweg

Narrative – (n) 1. A spoken or written account of events; a story

2. The practice or art of telling stories

What makes role-playing so fun? Is it the wide scope of creativity and world building? The ability to create and control a fantastical representation of yourself? The ability to discover something new and exciting, from a hidden treasure to a mysterious planet?

It is all these things and more, but these features also exist in other forms of media, such as films, novels and computer and console games. So, again, why role-playing?

I believe that the attraction is two-fold. First and foremost is the idea of interactivity. Films and novels are, however exciting, rather static. The viewer or reader has no control over where the story is going to go, and it's the same story every time.

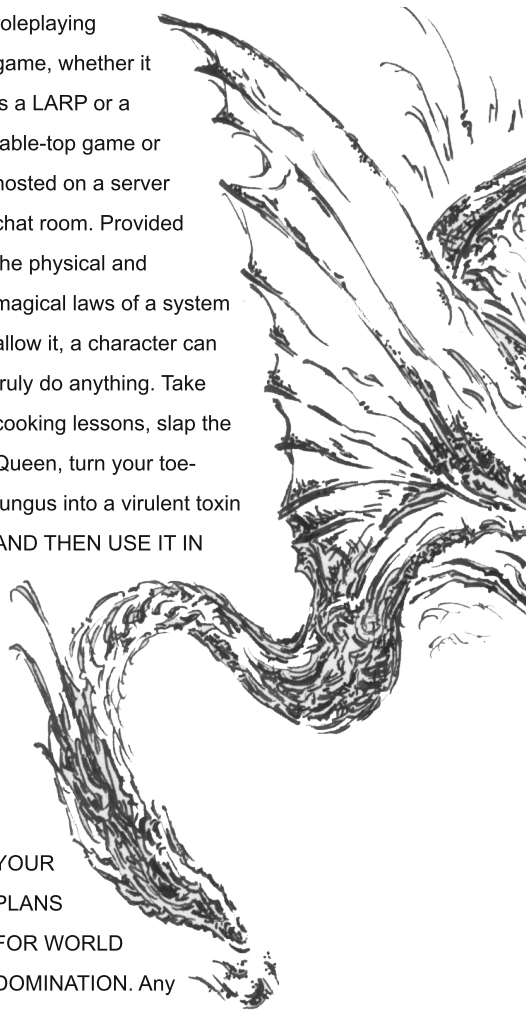
Gaming goes some way to alleviating this, but again, there is a barrier to interactivity. There is a limit to how well a game can be programmed to react to a player's actions, and often one runs into cases of "But Thou Must", where in order to progress the plot the player has to make a decision or take an

action that they'd rather not.

True freedom is the bread and butter of any roleplaying

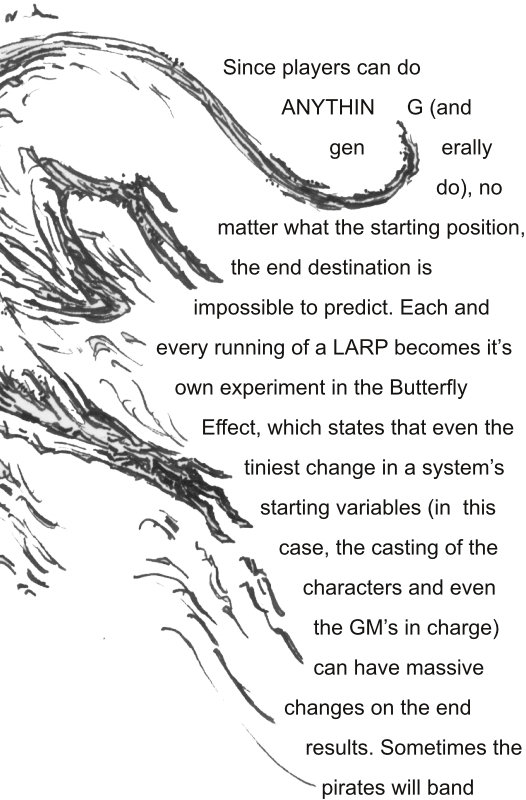
game, whether it is a LARP or a table-top game or hosted on a server chat room. Provided the physical and magical laws of a system allow it, a character can truly do anything. Take cooking lessons, slap the Queen, turn your toe-fungus into a virulent toxin AND THEN USE IT IN

YOUR PLANS FOR WORLD DOMINATION. Any GM worth half their salt allows his players to do whatever they want.



But be careful, for true freedom includes the freedom to accept the consequences of your actions.

With an almost unlimited scope, it is no surprise therefore that the stories and tales that emerge from any roleplaying session are almost always creative, surprising and, if not enjoyable, then certainly memorable.



together to defeat the sea demons and form an unstoppable raiding force. Sometimes they'll kill each other in a fit of paranoia and black magic before the first demon even makes an appearance. You can never tell.

And sometimes, it isn't even the destination, but the highlights of the journey which make the trip through a roleplay so memorable. My favourite example of this was my first ever LARP, the nuclear fallout/cabin-fever LARP "Bunker". The highlight of the running was an event that did not and could not have happened on any other running. A LARPer wore, as part of his costume, a plastic grenade on his belt. At a point of high action in the third act, the prop fell off, and the pin came out. The GM's ruled that the grenade would detonate.

Just like that, events were in motion which would cause almost everyone to die in the resulting inferno and chaos. One tiny event swung the course of the entire LARP and the fates of all involved. All because someone dropped a prop.

Even the most carefully planned campaign has massive potential for weird and wonderful player-generated narrative. Pity the poor GM, who despite all their planning and effort, has to contend with players who, nine times out of eight, will do everything BUT the expected.

In a recent campaign, the GM carefully laid the groundwork for the PC's to eventually gain demonic powers. He introduced a devilish character and harsh circumstances, confident that his players would make the

trade and he could break out his Demonic rulebook.

Of course, the players said no. So paranoid, suspicious and pig-headed were we that we refused to even consider the trade. And instead of becoming demonically-possessed, we prevailed over circumstances through our own determination and not a little dumb luck. What might have happened had we accepted the deal? Where might the story have gone? We can't even hope to guess, but one can't deny that that choice significantly changed the course of the campaign (and coursed the GM to put the rulebook away for a brimstone rainy day).

It even happens to the legends themselves! The greatest Dungeons and Dragons module of all time, the infamous "Tomb of Horrors", was beaten at a roleplaying event when canny PC's used a deadly trap on the demi-lich himself. Gary Gygax was on hand to adjudicate that, yes, the proposed solution would work. And yet another amazing chronicle is born.

It is this emergent narrative that I enjoy most about roleplaying, and what brings me back to the table and the make-believe rooms again and again. Every roleplayer has their own stories, about how THEIR group defeated the ninjas/ won the rock band

contest/ survived the fashion show/ secured intergalactic peace. The best LARP writers allow for it, the greatest GM's encourage it.

This is what makes role-playing such an exceptional form of entertainment, for all that it might be called "playing pretend" for those not in the know. Whenever a player dons a costume, sits down at a module, or prepare to roll the dice, they truly do not know where the journey might take them.

And THAT'S amazing.

This committee member got a little lost

I have written this thing so many times over now, however I am sure that I have finally got it right. As it would turn out I was wrong, I swear this is really the last time I am rewriting this thing. Due to some logistical changes it is now really short. So without farther ado.

My name is James and I will be your guild mistress of the next year. I am proud of my title and feel no need to redact it. I think it goes with out saying that I like role playing. Thankfully, or maybe it disappoints you, that is pretty much all I am going to say about myself.

Your Guild Mistress James

Procedural Cloning: The Genesis

By Robert Spencer

When Dr. Fassenbiender both stepped out of the capsules, it took them half a second to realise who was Dr. Fassenbiender and who was not.

And so, in a small laboratory at the back of the Centre for Untested Technologies (or the "Creators of Unspeakable Terrors" as it was known to the not-so-kind newspaper journalists who occasionally tried to get the government to shut it down) the first of the many psychological issues that are today all so common in the world of Procedural Cloning was experienced.

Since this was the first successful Procedural Cloning (the attempt by Doctors Gredarski and Smith of 2077 is widely considered to not have succeeded: despite the fact that an exact replica of Smith's cat was constructed, many reason that is the subsequent disintegration one and a

third seconds later disqualify it) there were no philosophical or psychological frameworks that either Dr. Fassenbiender could apply to the situation and both promptly fainted.

When they both regained consciousness they were so similar in thought that no words were necessary to convey to each other the shock and horror they experienced. Due to the relative positions of the two capsules, both could identify themselves, leading the first word ever uttered by a clone as Dr. Fassenbiender[1] sat on the floor and exclaimed "shit."

It would take seven years and countless hours of psychoanalyse before Jackson would formulate his Method of Recognising the Other in Self, which is the most widely accepted method of dealing with the shocking experience of meeting oneself for

the first time. It states that at the moment of cloning, one person becomes two, who henceforth diverge in personality, tastes and identity. Both can lay claim to all experiences up to the cloning, but neither has any seniority after the event. This theory is claimed



as original by both Jacksons (resulting the famed Jackson v Jackson litigation (presided over by Davids and Davids) which has yet to be resolved).

This theory is supported by the League of Others, but many fundamental religious organisations rebuke it, claiming that natural conception and birth beget a soul and that Others are thus empty shells. This has, not unexpectedly, led to violence in certain areas of the world, and the great Massacre of Romania and her sister states of 2089 is testament to the horror that endures when man turns upon himself.

For Fassenbiender, the horror was only beginning, as he sat back to back.

"Well."

"Yeah."

"Mary is going to kill me."

"You? How about me?"

"True."

"She wouldn't want to..."

"No, I doubt it."

"Right."

"Could get double the work done."

"Won't work. No shared knowledge base"

"Hmm."

At this point, both Fassenbienders passed out from exhaustion, and were found the next morning by an intern called Silverson. Silverson would later go on to advise all seventeen country-states on various clone related issues, and is the author of the renowned book "Seeing Double, a Short History of Procedural Cloning."

It should be noted that Mary Fassenbiender did eventually clone herself, and after a number of the most embarrassing double dates, Dr Fassenbiender[1] and Mary Fassenbiender[0] ran away to a small town in Southern France. Dr Fassenbiender[0] and Mary Fassenbiender[1] still live happily in Cornwall, where they are working on making the Procedural Cloning device more efficient. They have four children (two Johns and two Amys) and (as of going to press) sixteen cats.

THE FOURTH FLOOR

By Berndt Hannweg

What do you get when you combine a possessed accountant, a bureaucrat with a skeleton in his magic closet, a linguist who isn't all she seems, a secretary on the run from her gangster father and a scientist with the social skills of a piece of glowing rock?

Possibly the world's most hostile work environment.

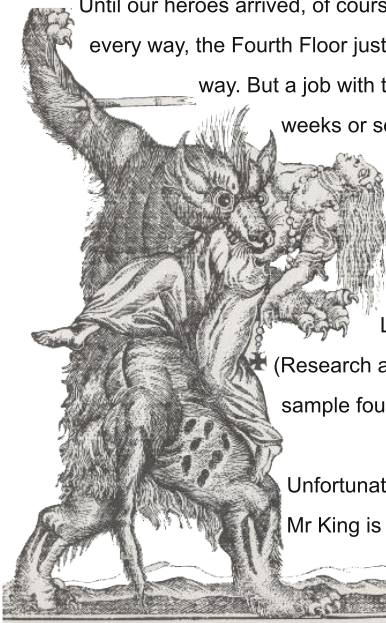
Meet the staff of the Fourth Floor, a World of Darkness variant campaign run by Warren Russell, where five completely normal (well, for a given value of "normal") human beings are recruited by a shadowy corporation to conduct a research operation out of the sunny town of Progresso, Mexico.

Complicating matters is the fact that the town is the site of a very old and very fragile truce between werewolves, vampires and mages. Overseen by the Queen of the Winter Court, and more practically adjudicated by Sanchez the Mexican detective, this truce has held strong for a very long time.

Until our heroes arrived, of course. Employed by the devil and out of their depth in every way, the Fourth Floor just wanted to collect their pay cheque and be on their way. But a job with the Orion Corporation may be a job for life. Say, four weeks or so.

Act One saw Mr Gacy, an executive specialising in firing human resources, attempt to corral the talents of Mr King (Accounting), Miss Smith (Acquisitions and Logistics), Miss Williams (Linguistics) and Dr Parry (Research and Development) into investigating a glowing rock sample found in the Progresso area.

Unfortunately, Mr Gacy is being stalked by a room with no exits, Mr King is possessed and part of a chess game where killing a piece is taken literally, Miss Smith is trying to rescue her druggie boyfriend from a vampiric cult and Miss



Williams is being haunted by her very definitely dead brother. Dr Parry is completely normal in every way, but it's hard to conduct proper science when people keep breaking the laws of physics in front of you.

After narrowly being killed by territorial werewolves, the act ended with the team acclimatising to Progresso, and meeting their REAL boss, the creepy, shadow-teleporting Lucille.

Who promptly sent them on an amazing team-building exercise in Guatemala. Despite exploding cars, gun-toting mercenaries, sacrificial priests and one awkward family barbecue, the team managed to escape the jungle, rescue a detective after (sort of) setting her police station on fire, perform a mercy-killing at a dog track and, most harrowing of all, successfully return to Progresso.

Which, we find in Act 3, is kind of going to hell in a handbasket. The Tremere, ancient quasi-vampires, are returning, and Sanchez's efforts to keep the peace prove insufficient. Despite losing their minds, their souls and at least one boyfriend, the Fourth Floor still finds time to blow up their company headquarters, declare war on the Winter Court, and disrupt the return of Hades, the White King.

Mr King now resides in a mental asylum, Mr Gacy and Dr Parry are doing clandestine work for even shadier organisations, Miss Williams is dealing with her Age-Regression and Miss Smith is keeping the otherworldly citizens of Chicago in line.

But it seems that the Tremere are still out there, biding their time to return and seize power, and even greater forces may wish to make use of the very specialized skills of...the Fourth Floor.



Advice no-one asked for By Fortuné Dederen

So you want to play a table-top roleplaying game do you? Well, you're in luck because there's a plethora of systems out there to confuse you to no end. Before you decide on a system, you should know that in general, most rpg's can be split between two broad categories: Simulation, and Narrative. Simulation games include systems like the iconic Dungeons and Dragons, Shadowrun, and Star wars (d20). These systems are called simulations because they have a strict set of rules on how the game, the player characters, and the world works, most of the actions you can make in them have a set of rules on how you can perform those actions. In contrast, a Narrative game focuses less on having rules define what you can and can't do, and more on what you can do based on the narrative that your GM(game master) has planned out. For example, in an rpg your character may have a pistol with a certain amount of ammunition; In a simulation game, you will always know how much ammo your pistol has at all times, whereas in a Narrative game, your GM may tell you when you have run out of ammunition when they feel it is appropriate to the story.

With those two concepts in mind, I would recommend a simulation type game for beginners, since the game itself will give you a variety of tools to play the game with, although this doesn't mean you shouldn't start with a Narrative game. As for suggestions for beginner systems, I would suggest the following:

Dungeons and Dragons/Pathfinder: Both systems provide an excellent kit for introducing people to role-playing games, with the latter being slightly less clunky than the former.

Dungeon World: Dungeon world is a mix between a Narrative game and a Simulation game, and has a very simple set of rules. It is focused more on using language to describe what your characters are doing, and less on using maths. Also, it's free.

D20 Star Wars: The sci-fi version of Dungeons of Dragons, also easily accessible.

The Window: A Narrative type game commonly used at Claws. You can essentially tell any kind of story in any setting using this system, with a simple rule set, and a large focus on the story, and characters.

Once you've chosen a system, I would advise you to stick to a maximum of four to five players. I'm currently a Game master for a group of seven, which can be great fun, but also the very definition of chaos, as well as having to cut the time players can think on their actions, lest we sink hours into killing boars.

Finally, the biggest piece of advice I can give. Have fun, if you aren't having in a game, then there is very little point to being there. So don't be afraid of jumping from system until you find the one that works for you and your group.



The Dangers Of Golf

By Tabitha Thrash

Claws meet Arthur, Arthur meet Claws. Arthur is, or was, a variety of dragon known as the Scottish Highlands Dragon. However however the SHDs (for short) are not in fact a species of their own but rather a sub-species of the flamboyant Welsh Fighting Dragon (now extinct with the last of their kind famously killed by a human named George using a very underhand manoeuvre). This melanistic sub set of the WFDs is much shyer and rarely seen due the high



rate of golf balls being aimed at them when they do appear. Most SHDs range in colour from mauve to indigo and Arthur is in fact a deep purple with red spines. Disbelieving his family about the dangers of golf he set off to learn from a grand master and now his head forms a neat golf club sock on a large wood. He has since served as a warning to subsequent generations of his family.



A word from the committee

A word from our Scriveners

We are twin hats, from the planet Tifferia, You may call us Fedora and Trilby, or, simply, hat's 1 and A. We have come to Earth to spread the concepts that are peace and this human emotion called "friendship". You will find that these concepts are indistinguishable from "hats".

Our ship landed us in the urban sprawl that you call Cape Town. Here we discovered the most noble and appetizing organisation, simply known as CLAWs. Mastering your human Democracy, we have risen to that rank of Scrivener on the Committee . It is a well known Earth fact that your human weaponry pales in the face of your writing pens and, as the collective Scrivener, we now hold the key to all the pens. Your feeble intellects must come to realise, that, clearly, resistance is futile. You cannot stop our human love (Not to be confused with things that are not hats).

We have already assimilated one of your CLAW lackeys, a drone named Daniel Adamiak. It goes with out saying that his life has improved exponentially since he has started wearing us. Listen to his veritable testimony and believe his true words:

"Hi, I'm Daniel. Wearing hats has improved my life significantly. Smile and make human, thumbs-up gesture"

Now that is certainly the speech of an Earth human who has complete control over his own mental faculties.

Only a fool would stand in disbelief at all these facts that we present to you, but wait! There is one more true fact we must reveal that is not a lie. Our species has migrated across the parsecs and have infiltrated your vestiges of mass commune, your so-called "malls", thus making our offer of eternal happiness and peace available to all that wear us (Happiness and wearing hats are actually the same thing).

So find the hat nearest you and spread the love (of wearing hats).

Hello! (Just a moment? I need to quickly greet these people) My name is Robert, and I am your treasurer or, hehe, Hoarder of Monies. Yep, I am the Man with the Moola, the Chap of the Coins, Name behind the Notes, you name it. (Yes, economy is fine thanks) I just wanted to say hello, and introduce myself and let you know that I will be taking good care of your society funding (yes, yes, a stopover in Buenos Aires is acceptable) and will be enabling you to do all those lovely things like Dragonfire without having to worry about your pockets because, hehe, I will be worrying about them for you! Now if you will excuse me, I have a plane to catch.

Smaug

Dylan Nelson (Hugh Mann) became the Master Assassin of the Cape Legion of Adventurers and Wargamers after his failure to become the Hoarder of Monies led to his scheming to relieve Robert Spencer of the role.

A final word

By James de Haast

So I haven't seen an outro in any of the other issues of CLAWmarks; however this is a very special issue of CLAWmark. In case you didn't notice the large 50 on the front cover this is in fact the fiftieth issue of CLAWmarks. Thus marking the 25th year of our glorious society's existence.

Originally there was going to be a long piece introducing who I was where I thanked a bunch of people and said some witty things. This however feels like a much better place to say thank you and extend my gratitude towards a very large number of people, some of which I have had the honour of meeting.

In preparation for editing and outputting this issue of CLAWmarks I thought some research was necessary and thus have read quiet a few of the past issues. There were some interesting predictions in the very first letter from the CLAWthing, though it was named Sage and Onion Advice at the time. While we have not started the 2012 Orc revolution or surpassed the "Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" in sales, we have come a long way. The mere fact that our society is older then all of the committees members, well at least to the best of my knowledge, speaks volumes about our success.

I feel that at fifty issues it is about time to start thanking people; however grateful I am for every contribution, past present and future, it doesn't warrant going through every CLAWmarks issue and recording names. Honestly that would take forever and I'm pretty sure no one really wants to read a list of names. So in the interest of both yours and my sanity I shall not be printing a long list of names, well not that long at least.

I do however want to thank every person who has helped make CLAWs what it is today as well as every person who has ever contributed to CLAWmarks. Producing CLAWmarks is no small task, nor is insuring that there are LARPs running, modules to play and games in the game box. So lets take the time to say thank you to every person who has written/DM'd a LARP/module/campaign or contributed to the games box. CLAWs would simply be a bunch of very confused and bored role-players standing around in a room without you.

To all committee members, past, present and future, with out your guidance CLAWmarks would never get printed nor would rooms be booked or now games bought, not to mention the time and effort that is put into making sure Dragonfire is amazing year after year. To the CLAWs members who pick up the slack when the committee is over worked, over stressed, or otherwise unavailable. I have little doubt that your sure dedication to the society has carried though some hard times.

Where would CLAWs be without its members? Every single person who takes part in a game adds something to it, no matter how much help or hassle they cause. They make your game more interesting, they add their own flavour to your modules, campaigns, LARPs, or board games.

So as you can see there is no way I could even hope to start naming names; there are far to many and I certainly don't know them all. There is only one way to make sure that everyone who needs to be thanked is.

CLAWs wish to sincerely thank you, <your name> _____, for your actions, past, present and future. Without you we would not be all that we are. May the forces of darkness not get you just yet.

CLAWs

