

CLAWMARKS



53



Contents

Lisa.....	4
Darren Louw	
Movie and TV reviews.....	6
Bronwen Ellis	
Hell and the Hound.....	8
Darren Louw	
Tirol and Trouble.....	12
Darren Louw	
Geek Elitism.....	15
Brent Benade	



Credits

Editing: James de Haast

Artwork:

Layout: James de Haast

LISA

By Darren Louw

Susie had an imaginary friend. Lisa, is what she called her. Lisa had a long braid, it was so long it was tied around her neck like a scarf. Susie did everything with Lisa, tea parties, tag, even play on the swings.

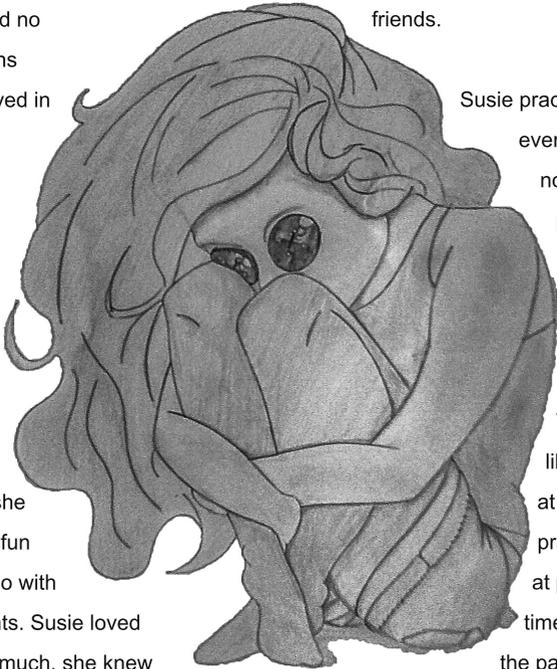
Susie's parents didn't mind that she had an imaginary friend since she was so young. Susie was being home schooled and lived on a very secluded farm, so there were not any other children to play with, only Lisa. Susie loved Lisa very much, and spent all of her free time playing with Lisa.

Susie was ten years old, which most considered too old for imaginary friends, but Susie's parents had no friends with opinions anymore, they stayed in bed all day and all night. Susie made the food and Lisa helped her. Susie loved her parents and Lisa very much, so she did not mind making all the food. Susie enjoyed drawing, she would draw all the fun things she would do with Lisa and her parents. Susie loved her drawings very much, she knew

her parents loved them too so she hung them all around her parents' bed so that when they woke up that would be the first thing they saw. Lisa helped Susie hang up her drawings, Lisa was very helpful.

Susie's parents used to work for a big company in a big, boring building. It made them very angry all the time. They would shout a lot and hurt Susie. Susie did not mind, she loved her parents very much. She used to wish that they would not be so angry with each other and with her all the time.

Lisa felt very sorry for Susie and her parents. Lisa and Susie were best friends.



Susie practiced her piano every day, she did not want her parents to wake up at piano lesson time while she was not practicing. They would not like that very much at all, so Susie practiced every day at piano lesson time. Lisa would turn the pages of the sheet

music for Susie. Susie and Lisa made a great team. Lisa did not want Susie to stop playing during piano lesson time if her parents were going to hurt her again. Lisa was a very good friend.

Susie had to wash her parents every day so that they would not stink, they got very stinky lying in bed all day, so Susie decided to start washing them. She would take a bucket and a sponge and wipe them off, Lisa would bring the soap and empty the bucket for Susie. Lisa only wanted Susie to be happy. Lisa cared about Susie.

Susie studied her subjects every day, just like her parents told her to do. Susie did not want to take a chance that her parents woke up and tested her. She wanted everything to be right. Lisa would help Susie by testing her. Lisa and Susie studied very hard every day after piano practice. Susie did not want to get hurt anymore. Lisa did not want Susie to get hurt anymore. Lisa only wanted to help Susie. Lisa was Susie's best friend.

Susie was very tired one day. Susie was too tired to make food for her parents, but Lisa did not want Susie to get hurt anymore. Susie did not want to wash her parents, but Lisa did not want

Susie to get hurt anymore. Susie did not want to practice piano, or study, or exercise anymore. Susie was tired of it all. Lisa did not want Susie to be cranky like Susie's parents were before they went to sleep. Lisa only wanted Susie to be happy. Susie would be happy if Lisa helped her get some sleep. Susie and Lisa helped Susie's parents get to sleep and they never argue anymore. Lisa only wanted Susie to be happy. Now Susie can sleep with her parents and be happy forever, just like Lisa. Just like Lisa and her parents when the men helped them go to sleep. Lisa with her long braid around her neck. Just like her parents.

Lisa made lots of people in her house go to sleep. Lisa had lots and lots of friends to play with now.



My Thoughts: A short review.

By Bronwen Ellis

Hello fellow role players. For your light reading pleasure I have included a couple of brief reviews for things I have watched recently (even though they may not be resent themselves, I watched them in the last couple of months). I hope it help you find something to do on the night when dice and friends are not around.

The first is a movie called "Predestination" by Michael Spierig. This is one of the most, 'what the fuck' movies, I have watched since "Memento" and is also an Australian job. It was wonderful to watch, as it was filled with, "what?" and "what now?" "When did that happen?" and "Hun?". Spending half the movie figuring out what is really going on is my kind of movie. The leads were well cast and the acting of very high quality. This is the story of one person who lives many lives and you feel her pain along the way, as she tries desperately to fight her own destiny. There is gender bending, time travel, and maniacs wanting to destroy the city with bombs. I found it to be truly great entertainment. It is something that could make a timeless graphic novel. Though is

in fact base on the short story "All you Zombies-" by Robert A. Heinlein. (Originally rejected by Playboy Magazine in 1959.) Hell, it starts with some guy walking into a bar and doesn't end with a bad joke, what's not to like.



The second thing I have watched recently is a TV series called "KillJoys". It is everything that should irritate me. It is a Sci-fi series that seems to be nothing but a "Firefly" wannabe. A lot of the main plot points are ridiculously similar. They are a family of three who make their living as bounty hunters, with no real home, but their ship. It has a quirky guy with short blond hair, who pilots the ship. There is his brother who was a soldier in the war and has had his brain altered to forget things. There is the sassy hot female. She trained to be an assassin on another world, though no one knows why she left. Due to "The Company" that won the war, medicine is scarce and often has to be smuggled in. You can't recreate Firefly okay?! You just can't, it is in a league of its own.... It's almost like having your favourite high school song covered by Justin Bieber..... Then why can I not stop watching?! Why did I stay up till midnight

even though I really needed sleep just to finish watching all the episodes I had?! I really want to know what happens next... It is a carbon copy of an older and magnificent TV Series... And amazingly, I don't care... I want to know what happens next...



HELL AND THE HOUND

By Darren Louw

Dad never got along well with Granny, she always sends me baked things and warm sweaters and once she even sent a very fun toy I had looked forward to. "Buying my boy off." Dad called it. He made the statement again on our way to Heaven's Falls. This brought the image of an unknown woman selling me off to slavery to mind. Mom saw the look on my face and said "Stop it, Graeme, you're scaring the poor dear." She scowled at him. I loved all the things Granny sent me but I had known nothing about her or where she lived. Just that she retired and moved to an old castle in the country side, near a lake. "Come on Rowena, he is a big boy, nothing's going to scare him." Dad said, looking proud. His mood changed completely when we started to approach a cemetery. His face was suddenly serious. "Don't breathe while you drive through a cemetery, or a spirit will be able to enter your body." I didn't believe him at first but even Mom seemed to go along with it, which got me blocking my nose and covering my mouth. They laughed once they had seen me.

As we neared the end of the cemetery I saw the name of the grounds in wrought iron letters: "Welcome to Heavensgate Keep.

You are now leaving Stairway cemetery."

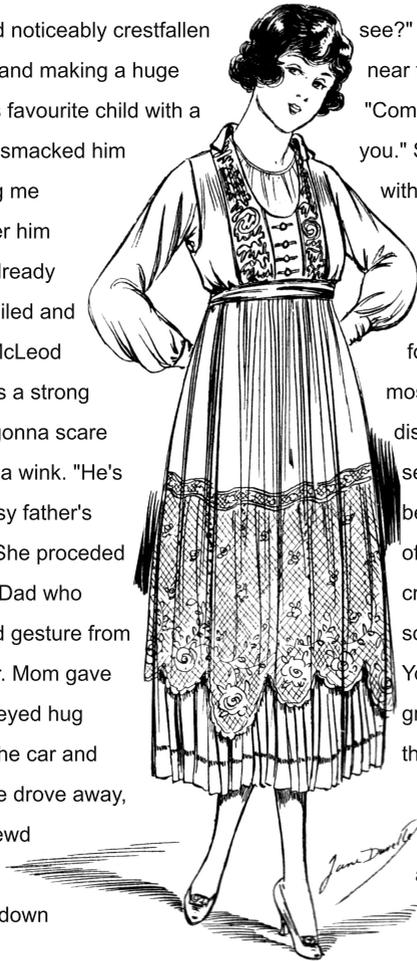
The names seemed good natured, and oddly reminiscent of an attraction rather than an actual castle people would have lived in. Granny lived in one giant cottage in the woods. Heavensgate Keep stood three stories tall with turrets on each major corner, the filled up remnants of what must once have been a moat could be seen underneath the permanently lowered drawbridge. It would seem as though there had been quite a few violations of the "No Swimming" signs hung all around the perimeter. I wondered what interesting things I would find buried deep beneath the soft ground. Dad walked up behind me with my bags, my mom stood next to me. "Don't worry, sweetie, it's only for the holidays. We'll come pick you up again as soon as its over." She said with a reassuring smile.

Dad turned to me and said "She would never sell you, but if she tries to cook you or use you in a potion, run away. She's also batty so remind her who you are every now and then." Mom smacked him upside the head as he laughed. She seemed nervous, so I nudged her hand and she put it on my head. We walked up to the door and Mom used the huge stone doorknocker, it was

attached to a set of gleaming, darkwood doors. It took a while, but as soon as Dad perked up and said "Maybe she died?" the doors began to open and there she was. She was everything one would expect from a grandmother. She opened the door wearing an apron around a floral gown, her grey hair in a tight bun. She wore round specs on a short nose with wise old eyes hiding behind a warm smile. The air smelled like cookies as soon as the door was opened. Dad looked noticeably crestfallen before hugging me and making a huge scene of leaving his favourite child with a crazy old bat. Mom smacked him again before kissing me goodbye. "Look after him now, mother, he's already eleven." Granny smiled and said "He's got the McLeod look about him. He's a strong one, ain't no witch gonna scare him." She said with a wink. "He's got none of his pansy father's cowardice in him." She proceeded to stare daggers at Dad who returned with a lewd gesture from the safety of the car. Mom gave me one final, teary eyed hug before getting into the car and smacking Dad as he drove away, giving Granny the lewd gesture out the window all the way down

the cemetery.

"A real gentleman that father of yours, always sends me my favourite cigars. Your mother would hear none of it. Still a massive ponce though, I must say." She laughed raucously. I was too nervous to approach her when the sky darkened and a loud clap of thunder and a violent crash was heard. Causing me to yelp in alarm and cower behind her. "Don't worry lad, it's just a tree, see?" She pointed to a fallen willow near the edge of the graveyard. "Come inside before the rain gets you." She ushered me into the foyer with a shove, and proceeded to give me a rushed tour of the liveable areas of the keep, which had once been some form of tourist attraction, as most of the wings had fallen into disrepair. "Breakfast is strictly at seven o'clock and no later, I may be an old woman but I have a lot of duties to fulfil so I'm up at the crack of dawn. You're on holiday so I'll give you some time to rest. You're free to explore the grounds up until the fence where the graves start after breakfast. Supper is at six o'clock and you can help yourself to anything in the pantry at lunch time." She smiled warmly



before quickly shuffling off.

No one had ever left me alone before, no matter how much Mom and Dad trusted me. Suddenly I was alone in a strange but beautiful castle, surely full of history that nobody knew. I started to explore the castle but only the first two floors were open and only about six rooms on the first floor, the ground floor consisted of a ballroom, dining room, kitchen, living space and a library. I decided I would raid the pantry for something sweet to eat as Mom never let me have anything but my brothers and sisters always fed me cake and pastries. The kitchen was very quaint, almost no real modern modifications had been made to the kitchen except the cooler. The stove seemed to be a wood burning oven which still smelled like the tasty cookies Granny must have been making for me. My nose quickly led me to the part of the pantry where my food was sitting and I quickly cleared out a bowl of soup and bread that had been left with my name on it. I licked my lips and looked around the pantry but couldn't reach anything else worth eating. I followed my nose out of the pantry before a terrible smell filled it. A stinky cat. Staring at me from across the kitchen. I never liked cats and they never liked me. Except for the kitten that Big Sister brought home one day, she's adorable. I chased the offensive vermin all the way outside shouting for it to

leave Granny alone, it ran straight out the door and disappeared into the cemetery. I looked out over the cemetery in victory and had begun trotting around the grounds looking into the hedge maze curiously. I decided to avoid it until the next morning, so I proceeded to make my mark on either side of the entrance before running around chasing the crows and digging a hole in the moat in search of treasure.

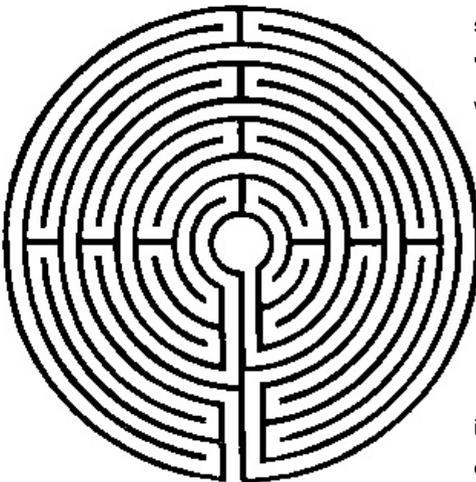
The grounds were huge, mostly occupied by the hedge maze and a whole lot of grass. It was decently kept up by a creepy old man with a scythe who I cleverly avoided. I scratched my head before shaking the dirt off of myself and heading back inside for supper. Granny put my food down and I sat and waited for her to say grace, oddly enough when Mom said grace the word grace was said only when she announced that we all had to close our eyes and then she spoke to her father, a man who I assumed suddenly appeared while all our eyes were closed, fearing this man I kept my eyes open every time, just in case he decided to hurt my family. Mom's father never sent me anything for Christmas so I never liked him. Granny decided not to speak to Mom's father and she dove right into her food, which I also did making sure not to leave anything in my bowl. When Granny was finished she went into the kitchen and brought out a very sweet sticky

pudding which I had hoped would be a regular occurrence. At this rate I'd never leave Granny's house! I went to bed and fell asleep quickly with Granny rubbing my head.

The next morning I ate a bowl of tasty wheat based stuff, like the cereal little brother and sister ate with me. I quickly ran outside to explore the hedge maze, Granny and the creepy scythe man were nowhere to be found. I decided to enter the maze and explore as much as I could. The maze was kept well and I could not even see over the top. Even when I jumped. I spent what felt like hours in the maze and I soon got hungry. I decided to retrace my steps and get back to the castle. I marked the spot where I stopped and quickly ran out again, the maze seemed like a long straight line rather than a series of dead ends. Which

was too easy, just really long. For lunch it had been soup and bread and a few sweet pies that time. Which was cleared as quickly as before. I went back out again, I could not see Granny anywhere and I couldn't even smell her either. Her distinctive vanilla cookie smell seemed to have been coming from the maze, which was weird, I hadn't seen her go in. I quickly started to run through as fast as I could, I started to hear voices. "-have to deal with him. He's poking his nose where it doesn't belong." It was the creepy old scythe man.

"Nonsense, he has no idea what he's doing, even if he finds anything who's he gonna tell?" That was Granny! Who were they talking about? Me? Surely not, no one said I may not dig holes and explore the maze. "I'm just saying, Rowena, he keeps digging up the moat. Not to mention the cat is nowhere to be found." Creepy scythe guy said, in a hoarse whisper which I followed. "Come now Harold. He's eleven, he can dig wherever he wants. I had a dog that age once and he died almost the same year. I say you can leave him alone, besides the moon is up tonight and the coven is gathering here as we speak. We need to prepare for them or the Hellsings will catch us." Hellsings? Coven? Catch? All too familiar. I decided not to reveal myself and instead continued towards the center until I could protect Granny and the Coven



(whatever that was) from the Hellsings.
(Whoever that was). I was glad to hear my conquest over the cat was still in effect though.

That night the Coven, who turned out to be a group of Grannies, gathered in the centre of the maze. I stood diligently by awaiting the oncoming threat of the Hellsings. I decided not to reveal my presence to Granny since she would probably get mad. The Coven of Grannies stood in a big red star around a pot of boiling liquid, it didn't smell very nice, I had hoped it wasn't going to be for supper. Granny started saying some weird words I had never heard before, even weirder than coven or Hellsings. The rest of the Grannies began to say the same words as Granny, over and over. Eventually the pot shot a bright light straight into the sky making the sky go red and shoot lightning. The chanting continued even when one of the Grannies sprayed red out of her face and an arrow shot out of her forehead. More arrows came and the

grannies continued to chant, I ran out and shouted for them to look out! But they didn't hear me, so I chased one of the bad men that were shooting arrows and bit his neck, he sprayed the red stuff too, and fell asleep. It tasted bad, but I had to protect Granny. I attacked the next two as well, but Granny started throwing fire at them, they fell asleep as well. I shouted at Granny, but she didn't see him. I ran forwards and jumped at him, pain shot up my side and the man burst into flames. Granny was lying down next to me. "You saved me, boy, you're a good boy." She said rubbing my head. The sky was dropping fire all around us, the ground was tearing open. I wagged my tail to show Granny I was happy, and then I closed my eyes and went to sleep, the sound of the ground opening and huge shouts from big brothers all around me.



JB

TOIL AND TROUBLE

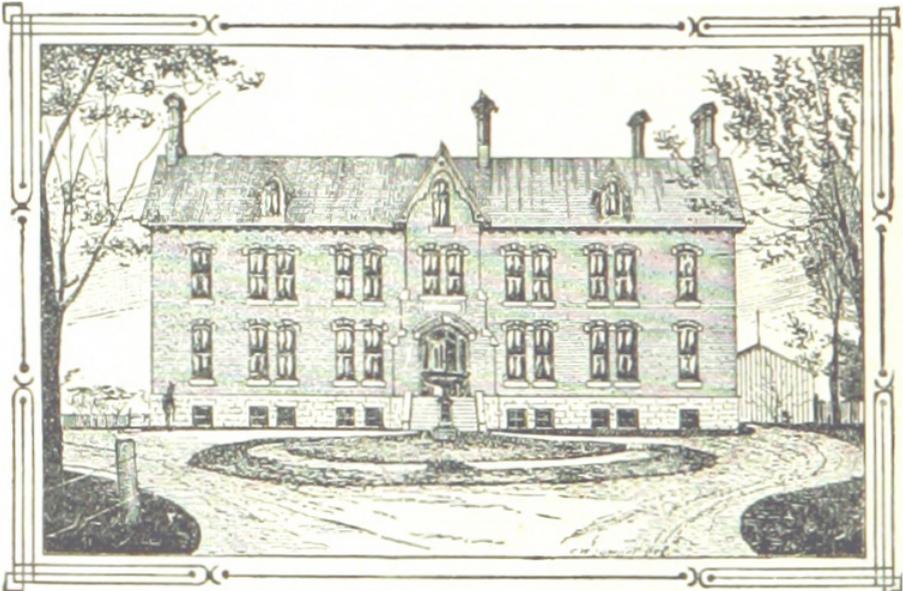
By Darren Louw

"I must apologise, but we do not allow couples in your... situation to adopt children. We accept only the highest standard for families for these children considering how many people have attempted to ride the coat tails of these children to fame and glory and caused several nervous breakdowns and ruined the futures of many potential masters." Sam and Alex were trying to become parents, but to no avail. They were having trouble with everything ever since they got married. Alex's parents loved Sam but they also wanted grandchildren, which they sadly could not do on their own. Sam held onto Alex's hand and squeezed tightly. "Mr. Woodstock, I was here once myself, I'm

just trying to give another child the same opportunities that I had." Sam pleaded.

"I am truly sorry Sam, but you and Alex do not qualify for this adoption. You simply have too much debt on your name, not to mention your home is not satisfactory." Mr.

Woodstock stared at the nervous couple with a light grimace. Sam kicked away the chair, standing up, "This has nothing to do with that! You're just being biased towards us!" Sam spoke with fire and brimstone, Alex quickly stood up "We are sorry Mr. Woodstock. We'll get out of your hair, we're sorry we did not meet your requirements." They stood up and left, Sam was seething.

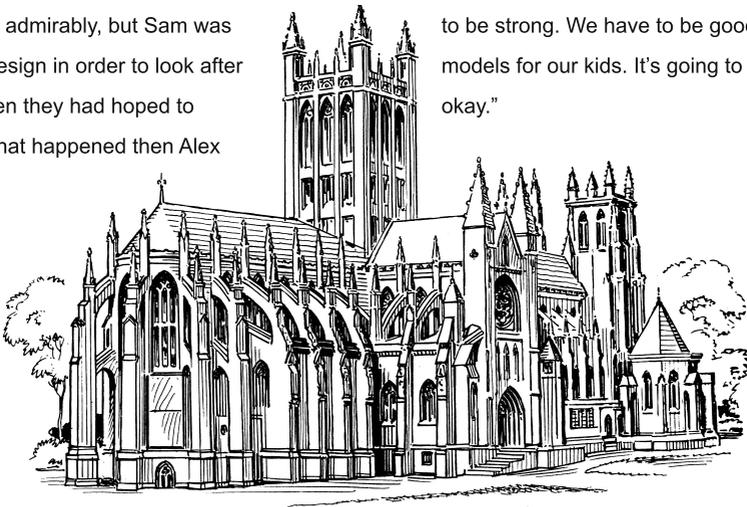


Mr. Woodstock wiped his brow, "Honestly, what is the world coming to?" he said shaking his head at the leaving car with the seething couple inside.

"I can't believe we got rejected. Who rejects a perfectly capable couple from adopting a child? My parents were allowed to adopt me and they were exactly like us. It's all because of that Woodstock twit." Sam had not calmed down, Alex remained quiet. Allowing Sam to vent was the best idea for now. "It's going to be alright, Sam. I know you had your heart set on someone from the same orphanage, but it's not the end, we're bound to find somewhere that we can adopt from." Alex said reassuringly, but they both knew that Woodstock had been right, the debt was a problem. Ironically it was for a house, so that their children would have space to run around and have their own rooms. They were keeping up with the payments admirably, but Sam was going to resign in order to look after the children they had hoped to adopt. If that happened then Alex

would be forced to pay off the house alone, which was not exactly a good idea, since he was studying to become a sister at the hospital and until that was done there would not be enough money to make each payment.

They faced a daily struggle considering that very few people accepted their life choices. Every time they passed people in public together they could feel the eyes staring at them, judging them. It was almost unbearable, but together they knew they could make it through anything together. Sam returned home one day and found Alex passed out on the floor, completely drunk with evidence of heavy crying all over the table. Sam sighed, and cleaned up after Alex. "It's all my fault, it's all my fault" came the hoarse whisper from Alex's mouth. Sam kissed Alex's forehead, "Don't blame yourself, you know that's not true. We have to be strong. We have to be good role models for our kids. It's going to be okay."



The next morning Sam started to wash up all the dishes Alex had used when a phone started ringing in the living room. Sam picked up a dish cloth on his way out to answer the phone. "Williams' residence, how can I help you?" Sam goes silent for a few minutes as the voice on the other end continued to speak in a rushed, excited tone. Sam put down the phone, stunned silent. Tears started streaming onto the top of the table from Sam's face. Alex jerked awake suddenly and hurried down the hall to Sam's side, "What happened? What's going on?" Alex asked urgently, "I felt you crying, what happened?" Sam squeezed Alex's hand.

"That was Violet, from the orphanage, Mr. Williams was fired. Our adoption papers were approved. We're going to be parents!" Alex picked up Sam and danced around the room a picture of pure happiness across their faces. They rushed into the car and down the road, all the way to the orphanage where Violet was eagerly standing awaiting the ecstatic couple. A wide smile on all of their faces. "Mr. Woodstock's opinion was not supported by the rest of the orphanage's leaders, he was discharged with immediate effect for his misconduct. I am terribly sorry for this grave inconvenience, on behalf of the board, I would like to apologise for any and all trouble he caused you. Sam smiled "It's really alright Violet, I'm just glad he got

justice for being so biased towards us, just because of who we are. Just because we aren't like him." Alex squeezed Sam's hand, they stepped forward and sat down. "Alright then, we would like to get the paperwork over and done with as soon as possible. We would still like to adopt Lisa if that's alright with you?"

Violet waved the happy family off as they drove away. She didn't understand why people were so against magic users. After all, the whole orphanage was full of them.



Geek Elitism

By Brent Benade

Somewhere right now there's a person watching Naruto for the first time. She'll realise that a world of magic and violence and angst spawned from a dissimilar culture halfway across the world tugs her heart in a way that american sitcoms and dramas never did. She'll go onto the internet and realise that there's a world of fans for this marvelous cultural export and she'll shout from the e-Mountaintop: "NARUTO IS SUGOI!"

And like zombies alerted by gunfire They will rise. And one by one self-proclaimed fans of the genre will tear her down. They will take this new-found discovery and pull it through the mud. It will be badly written and childish and she will be A Bad Person, who should Feel Bad About Liking This Sort of Thing. Because they, who've been watching anime for years now, say so.

Welcome to Nerd-dom, we don't want you.

Odds are, if you're reading this you are one of those few people who looked outside the boundaries of the entertainment and hobbies immediately before you. You explored fantasy or science fiction. You decided that rolling strange dice while sharing stories with friends was the best



way to spend a Saturday. You thought, maybe cartoons aren't just for kids and comics won't give you acne. Or a card game could be more than clubs, hearts, diamonds and spades. You found ways to be a protagonist, to compete with strangers on the internet using coloured pixels. And any of these interests you came to have (however much they've grown) probably started with the simplest, or most well known example of the genre. Many people haven't felt the need to move beyond those initial introductions.

AND THAT'S OKAY.

Surely we can understand this? As a collection of sub-cultures famous for being the butt of society's jokes? As people who, when it mattered most to us, chose to face social ridicule in the name of that one bright

interest which cut through the haze of pop-culture around us? Surely it doesn't matter that a person likes D&D when you like Whitewolf? Does it matter that the first time they got into Superheroes was through a movie? Or, goodness forbid, they prefer Squirrel-girl to Ms Marvel?

But to some it's not okay. Because growing up they were special for liking these things, and now instead of greeting all of these new people as friends they need to find ways to undermine those people's interests. They slander passions which people assimilate into core parts of their identity and create arbitrary internal scales of credibility. Suddenly spending 14 hours a week making a costume to look like a game character makes you less of a gamer than a person playing that character over those hours. Suddenly the fact that there exists something else, makes what people have and love worth less, and them worthless.

Because They want to be unique.

"There can't be others because then what am I?"

Surely we should understand that people can be allowed to be passionate about anything in this wide universe of games and fantasies and creativity?

That the passion itself, and the fact that the person went out of their way to cultivate it makes them One Of Us more than the number of years they've been dressing up for LARPs.

It's easy to place blame on others for this nonsense. It's easy to forget when we called out someone forgetting the rules the second time they tried tabletop roleplaying. It's easy to reframe ripping into someone's fandom in terms of "showing them that there's something better".

It's easy to forget that moment when we were younger and wanted to climb to the mountaintop with that new talisman of cultural discovery and shout to all the world about it's virtues.

So when we see that moment, instead of vicariously breathing it in and remembering, we try to drown it with our years of well-trained cynicism and arbitrary metrics of superiority.

Welcome to Nerd-dom.

.
. .
.

The moral of the story is "Don't be an Asshole."

Letter from the editor

This is the fourth CLAWmarks I have put together; I guess that is some cause for celebration. With each issue I have devoted time and effort to try and insure that the final product is perfect. I am not saying I always get it right, I mean just this time last year I made the horrendous decision to have an extra-long issue printed. The point I am trying to make is that it is a miracle that I haven't gone insane yet, and that to the best of my knowledge none of my predecessors have either.

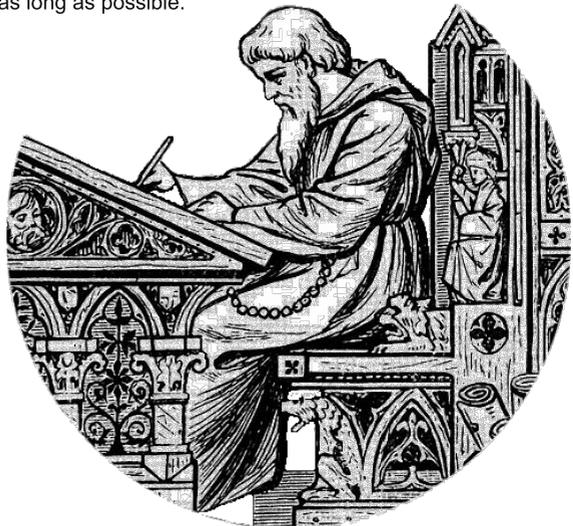
Despite the stress of last minute submissions, working on CLAWmarks is something I really enjoy and under all the stress I look forward to each new issue. That is because I enjoy reading your articles and seeing your artwork. I enjoy the challenge of stretching my imagination to best match drawings and photos to articles, and the sometimes rather challenging job of cleaning up scanned or photographed art pieces.

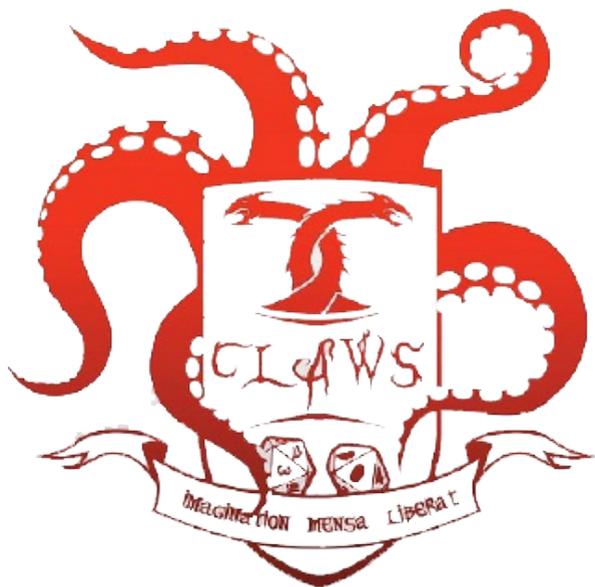
Everyone who has submitted work will know that I try and I believe have succeeded over the years in include every piece; the day I get to many submissions is something I both look forward to and dread.

I guess in short I am trying to say thank you for making my job so enjoyable, and I look forward to putting together CLAWmarks for as long as possible.

Regards

James Andrew de Haast





ISSN 1728-3221