

OL ISSUE

MAY 19

Errational



Thinking

...YOU ARE NOT ALONE...

Contents

T ripped	11
A ce C ard G ames	12
T he V ery D istant G eneration	13
M agic C ard of the M onth	14
S park of I mmortality	15

Dear Readers,

This month we metaphorically launch ourselves back into action after a month of laziness. But if only that were true.

We, here at Errational Thinking, would like to thank everyone who has waited ever-so-patiently for our return, checking the site, drafting complaint emails that were never sent, and simply fuming that we dare do our coursework. All for this moment.

I was surprised that we had quite so many articles this month. Dare I say I had expected much less as it was the end of an academic year here, but, I have to say, I was pleasantly surprised at how many willing victims I had; despite my own bout of sloth.

Thus, this month, we treat you, Reader, to not one, not two, but a whole three articles of made up stuff that actually happened in: Tripped, The Very Distant Generation, and The Spark of Immortality. While still maintaining some credibility with Liam's Ace Card Games, and another Magic: The Gathering Card of the Month.

I shan't detain you longer, Reader; thus: read on.

Yours,

- Editor Emma



By Emma Johnson

Into The Thicket.

Moving swiftly along, the adventurers decided to focus on more important matters.

'Why's it surrounded by pis?' Ralala pointed to the strange, mathematically -shaped symbols surrounding the Hexapentacle of Doom.

'I—I don't know, I'll be honest,' their employer's eyes shifted. 'The last person to record what these symbols were was eaten by something...'

'Was he eaten by 3.14 somethings?'

'Possibly. There may have been pie involved, I'm not sure...'

'Is there a reason why there's a creepy face in the corner?'

Kitsune leant closer to the map. 'What is that?' she squinted at a strange doodle shaped somewhat like an anchor, yet with feline-like features; plonked somewhat precariously in a body of water. The cat clock looked on in amusement.

'C—Could be the maker's mark?' their employer fished for words, his own, sparse knowledge of the map running thin.

'I think we just avoid that bit entirely,' Tobi, particularly unimpressed with the peculiar drawings, threw in his two cents on the matter, the foreign coins falling un-noticed under the coffee table.

'It looks like a face from this angle,' Kitsune continued to study the map, her ears twitching; trying to make sense of nothing.

'I don't like water anyway,' Ralala shifted somewhat uncomfortably, either in need of another drink, or feeling like she'd had too many.

'Maybe we should just go up there,' Tobi pointed to Tstoy. 'And there,' his un-manicured finger pointed again on the map. 'And—'

Their employer slammed his hands on the table, a look of impatience and constipation about

him. 'Look. All I can really tell you is that those are villages and if there are three of them it's a town. That's our fair city of Animos there. Everything else is just—Yeah... That's water...'

'What about this giant blur here?' Tiff gestured vaguely at an inky, black stain.

'I think that's... That someone might've spilled water there, or something...'

'Then it's not dry-clean only then...'

'Yeah, no...'

'They've never been very reliable,' Ralala's eye twitched at the memory of her dry-cleaning gone terribly, terribly wrong.

'What's...?' Kitsune pointed to a poorly drawn symbol.

'That appears to be a castle,' their employer postulated, his posture starting to hurt his back.

'Okay...'

'Yeah.'

'Who lives in the castle?'

Ralala's question was promptly pushed out of the way by Tiff: 'This?'

'That is a W, or an M. Could be that maths symbol that means everything...' their employer started scratching his head, small flakes of dandruff fleeing the confusion of the map.

'Why can I see the table through the map?'

'That would be a hole someone has burned through it....'

'What about this bug red cross?'

'That would be a giant red cross.'

The adventurers seemed to mull over the important information they had, inconveniently, not gathered from their employer, his vague descriptions hanging in the air like the tail of the cat clock.

'So...' posited Tobi. 'We could still travel that way and nothing would happen?' he pointed to the edge of the map.

'As far as I'm aware you, yeah... I'm pretty sure everything on the fair moon of Yularia is safe.'

'Yeah yeah...'

'People have been living here for generations now. About 2 or 3.'

'Right.'

'It's pretty safe I'd say.'

'I wouldn't agree completely on that. I mean I've lived in the wilderness. I wouldn't say it's completely safe.'

'You're alive aren't you?'

'Yeah, but... It took a lot of work.'

'I dare say that's enough.'

'Why do you think I started smoking?'

'Look,' their employer began rubbing his temples, the red scratches on his scalp doing nothing for his sickly rose complexion. 'I want you to go there – the Hexapentacle of Doom. We can just call it the Hexapentacle of Happiness, if you'd rather—'

'Yeah, that would make it more enticing,' Ralala picked up at the renaming of their destination.

'I don't know. Doom. It sounds like an adventurous thing to do...' Tobi was less than thrilled with the frilly-sounding Hexapentacle of Happiness.

'Surrounded by a pi forest...'

'Yeah, I wouldn't suggest eating anything around it...'

'So, wait wait wait. Are you trying to say there are dangers around there?' Tobi joined in the rubbing of the temples.

'Well... It is the Hexapentacle of Doom. No one'd suggest eating anything near the Hexapentacle of Doom.'

'But you just said the whole moon was safe.'

'Well it's not especially safe *at the moment*.'

'Oh, good enough.' A strange silence settled over the room as each person turned to look at Tiff, the employer's fingers momentarily stopping the massage of his temple which was, by this point, starting to bruise most magnificently.



Liam's Ace Card Games



By Liam Wright

This month I was absolutely spoilt for choice by the number of card games to review; so what better game to pick than The Spoils.

The Spoils is a card game I discovered just before the first issue of Errational Thinking. I found it randomly on one of my favourite online outlets for trading cards and the name alone was enough to intrigue me. Through some searching I found out it was released in 2006, which got me thinking 'why am I only hearing about it now then?' I did some more research and found that the original company encountered some troubles in 2007, was only picked up again in 2010, and has slowly been rising in popularity since.

So let's jump into the review and start with the good bits. The Spoils play out very similarly to Magic the Gathering, but with what I can only describe as improvements.

The Spoils has five trades which are the different factions you can play with, these can be combined in any way you see fit leaving the game very open to your own preferred play style; with almost unlimited customisation.



To start the game you need to pick a faction card; these give you an influence value which act as your

life points, state your starting resource cards, what your starting hand size is, the cost to draw extra cards or play extra resources during your turn, and gives you one special ability. You normally pick a faction card that fits with one of the trades you're playing as. This is a very good mechanic as it means you can have variable life totals and abilities in each game you play.

After doing the set up required on the chosen faction card the game can start. This is where the Spoils has an interesting mechanic, which at first I wasn't too keen on, but has grown on me as time's gone by. At the start of each turn you can either play a resource card or draw a card from your deck. As I said, initially I didn't like this mechanic, but then I saw why it had been implemented and it's pretty innovative: it's to control the amount of resources you have access to, and to strategise more than you, perhaps, normally would. It forces you to think: 'do I want more resources or do I want better cards from my deck?' Even if you don't like the sounds of this mechanic your faction card lets you pay unused resources to draw a card, or to play a resource, which means, later in the game, you could possibly be drawing loads of cards, or getting out lots of resources depending on your play style.

So you have faction, you know how to start your turn, you've got some characters on the field and it's time to attack, this is where another great feature of The Spoils comes in. When you decide to attack in The Spoils you can either attack with one big group of all your characters, with a couple of small groups, or with one character on its own. This is again another example of the flexible play style that means you need to plan the best way to attack, in order to reduce your opponents influence cost. It doesn't end on the attacking side though; you have to put a lot of thought in to defence too. You need to be thinking how your opponent going to attack so you can decide which attacks to block, if they attack as a group you can

block the entire thing with just one character and most probably lose that character, but if they attack with just one character each time you may be able to block one or two attacks, though your opponent may outweigh you in number, meaning they will eventually get through, it's all about deciding the correct time to block for minimum damage.

Another thing that adds to the attacking and blocking strategies is the speed of each card. Faster characters can get in and damage slower characters before they can damage them. This forces you to think about how to attack and block, for example if your opponent has a lot of fast characters, and you have strong but slow characters, then sending your attacking party in individually may not work out too well, as they may kill your characters before you can kill theirs. So that some of the good parts of The Spoils, I could talk about the good for many more pages, but what about the bad?

Well gameplay wise there isn't really anything bad, it all been thought out very well and it clearly went through a lot of play testing before it was released. One thing I can say though is it has clearly been made for the adult market. And mostly male at that. It's a little perverted in some of its art and text. Some of it is just for humour and to add depth to the world, and is very subtle, so much so in some cases I only noticed it when I was playing a friend and she pointed it out to me. Other parts though, like the resource cards, are clearly playing on the seven deadly sins theme to the fullest advantage. I'm sure the game could have worked just as well without the blatant fan service, but at the same time I understand it is meant to display how dark and dirty the world of The Spoils is.



To sum up: The Spoils is a master piece of a card game, it has beautiful art (not including the fan service in places), well thought out gameplay and mechanics, and a particularly British sense of humour. I'm a little split in what to rate it, on the one hand I want to give it 100% for the game play and lack of problems in that game play, and for the world it's based in (it has cats as the bankers!). At the same time though I feel it should be deducted points for the fan service it has in some of its art. As an overall score I'm going to give 95% (almost four suits) as I cannot fault it for anything but the fan service, without that it would have gotten 100%.



THE VERY DISTANT GENERATION

By Josh Curzon

Descending from the docking ramp of his mighty vessel, the *Gloria Aquilla*, the young Rogue Trader, Xanatov Van Furyon, lead his friends onwards to their first taste of glory since entering the Koronus expanse. Descending into the hustle and bustle of life that flows through the streets of Port Wander, the young Xanatov spies a trio of hulking shapes moving purposefully through the crowd. Even as he feels the thundering footsteps of these two metre tall arrivals, Xanatov realises that these are some of the mighty Space Marines, servants of the proud Adeptus Astartes. Sensing that he is being watched, the captain of these great warriors pauses, turning to fix the unfortunate Rouge Trader with a piercing stare

"Is there a problem, Citizen?" he growls through his augmented voice box.

"Er... W- What are you doing here?" Xanatov ventured cautiously, taking a step back as the Space Marine's glare twisted in to a scowl

"We are the Emperor's angels of mercy and death, His will made manifest. Our business is His, not yours, Rogue Trader!" he snarls, taking a thundering step forwards before deciding the naïve Rogue Trader is not worth the effort and stomping away.

"M'lord!" came a slightly muffled call from the throng of merchants at the bay's edge, which parted to reveal a young, lean, clean shaven Arbite leading a detachment of his fellow law enforcers towards Xanatov. "M'lord! I am Captain Alversia; command dispatched us to attend to your needs while you're with us. It is an honour!" He enthused, bowing from the waist to the leaders of the expedition.

"Good!" Nate, the Void Master, growled in gruff tones of appreciation at this deferential treatment from the authorities, his companions greeting the captain in a slightly warmer manner as their leader

drifted over to the scrum of traders and merchants, listening eagerly to the sales pitch of a shady trader bartering what he claimed to be genuine Termagant claws.

"Shouldn't we get to business, Xanatov?" Queried Quirilli, already reviewing a transcript of the message they had received several weeks ago from a contact in port wander on his dataslate.

"What? Oh – quite! Captain Alversia? Lead us to the Dust Market, if you please."

"Certainly, m'lord!" the young Arbite replied, already signalling his men into an escort formation and setting off down a narrow side street away from the dockside.

Several minutes and many twists and turns later, the party of explorers had managed to immerse itself in the hubbub of life that filled the streets of Port Wander, merchants lining every pavement with their stalls, calling out their competing chants and pitches. As he strode alongside his Navigator companion, Veneligrath Viv, Torrian Stubbs was irritated to find his path blocked by a particularly insistent and – perhaps – foolish carpet trader dressed in a dirty purple waistcoat and matching baggy trousers.

"You, sir, perhaps you would like to purchase one of my fine carpets!" he called enthusiastically, giving a wide, friendly smile as he stepped in front of the priest.

"No, thank you, I'm not interested" Torrian sighed, waving the merchant, who would not budge, aside impatiently.

"But you are a priest, yes? Please, Father, come and look at my carpets! I have many many fine carpets for you here! Perhaps you could use this fine red specimen in the chapel?"

"No, I assure you, I don't want to buy a carpet!" the priest replied, exasperation entering his voice slightly as he gave up trying to simply walk around the merchant.

"Ah, but then why else would you come by the

shop of Mal – “

“Problem?” came the stern voice of Xanatov from behind the merchant, who turned to glimpse something long, metallic and lined with teeth in the Rogue Trader’s hand. Turning back to his mark, the Merchant saw that a chainsword was visible at the hip of the priest, and that he was readying to draw it.

“Stand away, citizen!” an Arbite shouted as the rest of the group came to a halt and he saw the danger the merchant was in, even the Arbites had no authority over a Rogue Trader and his retinue.

“I- Excuse me, M’lord” the unfortunate merchant stammered, slipping back towards his stall and clearing the path for the party once more.

Grumbling, muttering under his breath about how he should burn the foolish trader for heresy, Torrian followed, scowling all the while.

The rest of the trip was largely uneventful, the only event of real note being the parting of a huge crowd at the sight of Veneligrath the Navigator; a sanctioned mutant is still, after all, a mutant. None the less, after roughly 20 minutes of leisurely walking, Xanatov and his companions reached the Dust Market.

“Split up, our contact will be wearing my father’s insignia,” he muttered to the other three, stroking a finger over the ornate octagonal token hanging from a chain attached to his cap. To the captain, he issued a few brief orders – to keep an eye out for trouble and make sure that Veneligrath kept out of trouble – then he, too, delved in to the market. Perhaps predictably, his companions promptly ignored Xanatov’s orders, instead investigating the various weapon and armour stalls.

Veneligrath stuck close to Quirilli, purchasing the odd trinket through the Seneschal, since most traders refused to acknowledge the presence of a mutant, or else shunned him outright ; besides, as a skilled and logical seneschal, Quirilli was most adept at bartering, securing many bargain prices for his companion.

Nate, somewhat predictably, went to the first gun stall he could find, admiring the generally shoddy firearms with a great deal more reverence than was due or, indeed, healthy. His eyes settled on a

particularly fine (or rather, relatively unbroken) Bolt-pistol, a weapon that would far surpass the firepower of his laspistol.

“How much for this?” he demanded, waving the weapon enthusiastically in front of the merchant’s face

“That...” the merchant growled, firmly grasping Nate’s wrist and taking the gun from him before he could take someone’s eye out “ will cost you four hundred and eighty five ThroneGelt”

“It’s worth three hundred and not a Gelt more!” Quirilli called from somewhere over Nate’s shoulder.

“Four hundred!” the merchant yelled back, ignoring Nate

“Three fifty and a barrel of sacred unguent!”

“Done!” the merchant exclaimed, shoving the gun roughly in to Nate’s hands and snatching the promissory note and ThroneGelt from Quirilli’s hand, which had emerged from over Nate’s shoulder “now, the ammo will cost you another two Gelt per clip...”

The Young Van Furyon had done a little of exploring of his own, but was unfortunately unsuccessful; Oh he’d found plenty of useless junk, and even a few trinkets almost worth acquiring, but he was still no closer to finding the mysterious contact. Scowling, he stomped back towards the spaceport, stopping on the outer edge of the market and clambering on to a protesting merchants chronometer stall.

“Citizens!” he shouted, struggling to project his voice over the general din of the crowd “Citizens!!” he yelled again, loud enough to attract some brief glances, and perhaps the attention of the crowd had he not faltered at the sight of his companions slipping in to the local temple to seek answers from the ecclesiarchy. Rolling his eyes, the impatient Rogue Trader drew his bolt pistol, firing off a round in the air and adopting a commanding stance.

Silence immediately ensued. The square grew deathly quiet, the only noise being that of a few nervous Arbites readying their lascarbines in case trouble was about to break out.

“I am Xanatov Van Furyon,” the noble Rogue

Trader shouted, his voice of assumed superiority "I seek the man known as..." he checks his dataslate, reading the name displayed there loud and clear "...Orbest Dray! If there any here who can lead me to him!?" As he spoke, Xanatov spied a mysterious figure lurking towards the back of the crowd, watching him most intently and, even as he returned this stranger's gaze, Xanatov saw them slip away down a side ally.

"Back to your business, citizens!" Captain Alversia yelled, seizing the initiative as Xanatov stood gawping at the rapidly moving figure.

"There!" the Rogue Trader yelled, pointing at the ally at the back of the market, showing his emerging companions the way to go again, dropping to the ground and sprinting after the stranger.

As he neared the corner of the ally, Xanatov was jerked back, his arm held in the iron, vice like grip of a slim, 'stringy' merchant sat behind a table of scrap.

"Smooth, m'lord." The merchant growled, thin lips barely moving in his heavily lined and scarred face.

"Oi! Get your hands off him!" Turrian shouted, leading his companions through the shifting throng, brandishing his flamer threateningly.

"My apologies, lord" the hand around Xanatov's loosened, slipping momentarily in its owners robes and emerging with the ornate seal of house Van Furyon "*By the emperor I have sought...*"

"...*And by my will, his light has followed*" the pair muttered as one, reciting the motto of Hieronymo Van Furyon. "You're a hard man to find, Dray."

"I have to be, M'lord. Aint' no informer done much listenin' if'n everyone knows he's there and a-listenin', 'least ways he ain't listened to ought useful... And yer grandpappy told me to listen good an' proper afore he went off a-galavanting across th' expanse again."

"...Yes... and now you've listened enough, or so it seems..." Xanatov carefully replied, somewhat thrown by the abrupt switch to the rough sailor's cant Dray had switched to and taking a moment to catch up.

"You have information for us?" Quirilli snapped, eyeing the grizzled spacerat with evident distaste – At least Nate looked the part of a shipmaster

"Your message said you had information relating

to the *Righteous Path*?"

"Aye... that I do, 'n that'd be another reason fer me being al' sneaky-like. Bein' a listener, y'know ter watch yeh be sayin'."

"What is it you have for us?" Xanatov asked, his tone firm, if a little less critical than Quirilli's.

"M'lord..." his powerful hands retreated under the table, causing the rest of the group to tense a little, before they emerged with a small, plain wooden box, just barely big enough to prevent Orbest's fingers from meeting as he lowered it on to the table before him. Around the middle of the box, a band of machinery and circuits could be seen, culminating in an intricate locking mechanism dead centre on the front panel. In place of a lock, there was a tiny circular plate of adamantium, just big enough for a thumb to rest on. "Ifn' you please."

Hesitantly, the young trader placed his thumb on the plate, snapping his hand back as the whole thing hisses loudly, the box spitting out a cloud of white steam as the lid popped upwards ever so slightly.

"What... is it?" he asked, tentatively lifting the lid to reveal a smooth shard of purple crystal nestled amongst thick velvet padding

"A mnemonic crystal!" Viv exclaimed, pushing past Nate and Quirilli and holding two closed fingers over it "...Full of data, lightly secured...." He closed his eyes, focusing on the knowledge stored within the crystal

CAW!

A blur of metal, lights, oil and feathers; A piercing screech. A cyber-Raven tearing through the air, the crystal now stuck firmly in its Talons. Before the group can even react, there is a shout, and several citizens begin to scream, a volley of las fire ripping into them, scything over the heads of Quirilli and Torian. Port Wander, it would seem, is not so quiet after all.

MAGIC

The Gathering

Card of the Month

By Tom Coppinger



In a heated game of Magic: the Gathering, each deck is filled with tiny armies, nasty tricks, and big threats, and each of them is thrown out in an attempt to prove victorious. But if there has ever been a card allowing you to brag about your mad Magic-playing skills, it

could only be Madcap Skills.

Madcap Skills is a red aura that casts for one red and one colourless mana, and gives your creature a giant boost to power, making them so relentless that your opponent needs an additional creature to block it.

The concept of requiring two or more creatures to block seems to getting much more frequent with cards such as Pyreheart Wolf, Ripscale Predator, and Gruul War Chant, but the earliest version of this mechanic appeared back in 1994 as a widespread enchantment named Goblin War Drums. In fact, the closest thing resembling Madcap Skills was printed just a year later in Ice Age, a red aura casting for a single red mana named Imposing Visage which lacked the power boost. The mechanic has been slipping in throughout the years, and it's been infrequent enough to throw off many players in each set it's thrown into.

But what's so threatening about Madcap Skills? It contains three different factors which sum up the whole package. +3 to power is nothing to be

sniffed at, especially if the additional blocker requirement can cause it to hit the player more frequently. The biggest factor, however, is its cheap mana cost. If you enchant your first cheap creature, there to hold the field for the first few turns, you can turn it from a redundant blocker, later on in the game, to a high power evader that puts the opponent on their toes.

Picture this. By turn 2 you play your two mana costing 2/2 creature. On turn three, you can then enchant it with Madcap Skills turning it into a scary 5/2 that requires your opponent to have another creature. You're putting huge pressure on your opponent from the third turn, making them scramble to get a second creature so soon. They now have a decision to make: do they dispose of this quickly with their best removal spells, or try and round up creatures to kill it and save the spells for later on in the game? Either way, it'll have to involve them dealing with a huge threat early-game, which could end up setting them back later on.

One of the best compliments to Madcap Skills also comes from Gatecrash. Alpha Authority is a green aura casting for one colourless and one green mana, and it gives enchanted creature Hexproof and limits it to being blocked by only one creature. A useful aura in its own right, it combines with Madcap Skills really well. Madcap Skills requires two or more of your opponent's creatures to block it, yet Alpha Authority demands that only one creature gets the honour of entering the ring with it. What does this mean? Why, only that none can stand to your creature, making it unblockable! And then, when you factor in the other boosts from each card, it gets an extra 3 power to exploit its unblockable nature, which is doubly hard to deal with when it's hexproof as well.

The fastest combos in the Return to Ravnica block involving this card lie within the Gruul clans and the cult of Rakdos. The Burning Tree Emissary casts for two of either Red or Green, and gives

back the mana spent on it as Red and Green, to which you can then enchant it with Madcap Skills on the same turn. Cast those two spells on your second turn, then when your third comes around compliment it further with the other aura in Gruul, Alpha Authority. Now your Burning Tree Emissary is unblockable, hexproof and can attack for 5 damage each turn. Very scary.

But if that isn't fast enough for you, the Rakdos Cackler can attack for 5 damage as soon as your second turn. Casting for just one red or black mana, this can hit the table on your first go and be unleashed to 2 power and toughness. Then on your second turn, he's ready to attack, and you need only give him the mad skills to attack for 5. And by your second go, it's extremely unlikely that your opponent will have managed to summon a one-mana and then two-mana creature, even if they took the first turn. Guaranteeing 5 damage from your second turn is one sure-fire way of saying to your opponent, "It's on."

On its own, Madcap Skills gives you the advantage early on in the game, and to draw it late and enchant it on a giant fat creature of yours helps ensure it finishes off the opponent. Whether you use it raw or combine it with other crazy cards, having these mad skills really takes you far.



THE SPARK OF IMMORTALITY

By Patrick McNeany

Karis had always known her world for what it was, not the be all and end all of the livelihood of her people, but part of The Bigger Whole. So, as she found her time in the city of Lekal pass, she could not understand why people felt so confined within its walls. The tales of perils across the Planes of Ohr, surrounding the city, seemed to her to be minute in light of the greater threats of The Bigger Whole.

Karis had never been a scared child, she'd always felt that, however bad the world was, she knew about worse things. Neither had she ever been an awed child for the same reason, no matter how impressive something appeared, it could not compare to the splendour of the dragons of Shiv or the city plane of Ravnica, with its waterways and terraces. She knew she would have worried her matron if she hadn't been so anxious over the younger inhabitants of the orphanage. Matron Hanmah had been the best she could be, but had always seen Karis as one of the children who could care for themselves; she had cared for all the children in her care but had always paid more attention to the younger children.

It was often this lack of attentiveness that led Karis on her solitary trips of exploration around the poorer residential areas where the orphanage was housed. She liked to think of herself exploring some dilapidated old house and falling through into another world, where she could find wild and exotic things. She knew she would be punished something awful if the matron ever found out what she did with her spare time, all the adults we're afraid for the children of Lekal. There we're always so few children around.

ooO*Ooo

Karis was exploring again, she was trying to lose herself; it had been too long since she had felt as though she belonged. It was the eve of her seventeenth year, when she would be expelled

from the orphanage to find her own way in the world though, as everyone knew, what use would an orphan prove themselves, without schooling or experience. The seventeenth year of an orphan was often a death sentence all on its own. Her current conquest consisted of an abandoned facility in the juncture of the residential and industrial quarters of Lekal. She had had her eye on it for a while now and had been saving it for a special occasion. The complex had two floors and two basement levels. Lekal's layout was a well known design, the over-city, where the rich lived to play, and four quarters in the under-city. Basements in the under-city were a scarce occurrence which was what had first attracted Karis to the building.

The decent in to the bowels of the building was very similar to many of her previous urban explorations; it had the same smooth stone walls and rotting wooden floorboards, and stairs leading down into dark chamber populated with a menagerie or rodents and insects. Karis descended along with the darkness, picking her steps carefully.

She had embarked the last flight of stairs when, with a sudden creak and an ominous crack, she felt the floor boards give underneath her. With a shriek she felt the boards give way completely, plunging her down; further than should have been possible.

ooO*Ooo

Underground, she knew she was underground at least. Probably under the under-city judging by the rough-hewn cut of the cavern she was in. No Lekalian had made this cavern, they were far to preoccupied with tight angles and smooth walls. "Will you work or be cast?"

Karis jumped at the quiet, harsh voice that whispered the question. She turned slowly toward the barred entrance to the hole in the wall she currently occupied. The voice belonged to an odd

creature of rusted scarlet and dull gold. It perched on one leg, though it obviously had a second.

"Excuse me?" Karis' voice piped in the gloom.

"Where am I? And what do you mean?"

"Will you work or be cast?" the strange creature asked again. Its head cocked to one side as though curious about her. "If you do not work you will be cast."

"Okay. I'll work. So where am I? And who are you?" Karis repeated her earlier question, liking the being less and less.

"My name is Jalique. This is the old Bazaar, it was a thoroughfare long ago," the creature, Jalique, opened the gate. "It was a place of splendour and magic, with dancing fire and lightning of every colour imaginable," the reply was near wistful.

"What if I ran?" Karis stuck out her chest, trying to hide her fear.

"Please believe I would catch you," Jalique sounded almost woeful. Indeed, Karis had realised how pointless it would have been, she knew she had no chance of figuring out where she was, or how to return to the surface.

"You have made your choice, come, you shall work," Jalique opened the cell door and nudged Karis in front. They were in a round room with hole in the walls every few feet, each blocked off with bars similar to those that had until a few moments ago held Karis. A second nudge came to propel Karis into moving forward, towards a rough wooden door. Glancing back over her shoulder she opened the door at the nod of Jalique, stepping through into the densely wooded area from a stout wood, cabin doorway was the last thing she had expected. It had also, apparently, been the last thing Jalique had expected, if the screech was anything to go by.

"Where is it?! My love, my lord, forgive me! Where have you gone?!" The wailing was so sincere Karis felt a pang of remorse for the creature; that was until it turned all its rage and confusion on her.

"What did you do, girl?! What magic is this?" The words dripped with dark intent and acid.

"I don't know," Karis started to back away from Jalique, but the creature moved with incredible speed, dashing forward and clutching at the front of Karis' shirt. "Jalique. I don't know what happened, or where we are. Please." Karis didn't know what she was asking for.

Jalique hissed and spat on the ground next to Karis' feet, then without warning dropped her backward and dashed off in the direction of the cabin they had emerged from; so fast that Karis was able to see her intent as she fell. She landed roughly and began to tumble down a sloping hill. *I hope things don't get worse.* She thought as she fell. Unfortunately this proved to be untrue as, at the bottom of the hill, she had a sudden and unwanted interaction with a tree. Karis moaned as she found herself falling into unconsciousness for the second time in who knew how many hours.

To be continued...

Biographies

Tom **C**oppinger - Tom is currently the unknowing host of a sentient tentacle monstrosity that resides on top of his head, lying dormant while he's awake. Don't tell him though, he thinks his hair is just hard to maintain.

Josh **C**urzon - Stupendously charming and darkly charismatic, Josh is the Magazine's resident Rouge Trader, well versed in the tales of our most futuristic adventurers. This fiendish devil raids the countless stars of the Imperium, all while maintaining his suave air, in part due to his most splendid Kidney Hat (+7 charisma).

Emma **J**ohnson – Emma: lazy, prone to forgetfulness, and oftentimes wrong, couldn't be bothered to think of a new bio this month, so she's reusing one of her old ones. Or is she?

Patrick **M**c**N**eany - Patrick is mostly the gamer who watches and waits for the perfect moment to display how insane he really is. He prefers to play in games rather than run them, keeping a good balance of crazy and on track. He will try any game once whether it's card games, board games or RPG's.

Liam **W**right - Liam Wright is a very busy person, current duties include Web designer/developer for Errational Thinking, head of TableTop Society, secretary of Anime society, and university student. Somehow with all that going on he still finds time to hang out with his friends and plot the Earth's demise with nano viruses and bio weapons.