

[Cover: Will be added when I get it printed.]

## **Welcome to Issue Three of Out of Character 2011!**

It is I, your faithful Promotions Officer, Melina Bourne.

This issue contains some wonderful articles from my beloved contributors (all three of you). It also contains a list of upcoming events which you should attend because they'll be loads of fun!

### **This issue would not be possible without the following people:**

- Thank you to Jan, Mark and Marsden for contributing articles.
- Some more thanks to Mark for information about Minicon and SIFI (yes, I could have gone to the website and retrieved the information myself, but that sounds suspiciously like effort).
- And yet more thanks to Jan for making sure I actually got this done.
- And of course, thanks to Matt Angel's gaming group for inspiring the cover for this issue (sure, the issue probably could have existed without you, but the cover wouldn't have been as awesome).

**And now**, since I need to somehow wrangle this publication into a number of pages that is divisible by four, I will now ramble on in my own extremely important article about content.

Actually, I'll start off by telling you about the cover illustration. Since no one else ever draws anything for OoC, I have been doing the covers for about a year now. I've never really put a huge amount of thought into them, to be honest. I just draw whatever I feel like, usually only a few hours before I need to get the issue printed.

The first issue for this year featured a rather simple picture of a halfling being menaced by a dragon. It was the result of Sophie Tucker's choose-your-own-adventure story (speaking of which: no, the second part of the story will not be contained within this issue. Sophie had essays to write. Yes, that is an acceptable excuse. And since only two people voted for an ending anyway, I wasn't inclined to bully her).

This issue's cover was drawn after a particularly fun gaming session in which the party cleansed a town of heathens. And by "cleansed" I mean "killed everyone and burnt the place to the ground." I sometimes think that there are certain members of the party who should not be allowed to speak to each other, for the safety of the community in general. But then I get distracted by an infidel that needs smiting...

**Oh! I also wanted to talk about reader participation!** Because you know what? This publication runs entirely on submissions from others. I can't do more than a cover and a few pages of content myself, and the same goes for every other Promotions Officer. And because there are only a few others who ever get up and write something, it ends up being the same few people writing the content for every issue.

**So here is my challenge to you:** Next time something particularly funny happens in your game; next time you have an idea for a new system; next time you build a custom spell or item; next time you think, however fleetingly, of writing something for Out of Character... DO IT. Write it down! Share it with the rest of Saga! There's no better way to let other gamers know how awesome you are!

It doesn't have to be a five page long, finely crafted and elegant piece of prose. So long as it's funny, interesting, helpful or at all relevant. It doesn't have to be more than a paragraph or two. Come on, it'll take you less than an hour to write. What could it hurt?

In fact, you don't even have to write something. If you have any artistic skill at all, you can draw a cover or a comic, or send in a picture of the character you're playing at the moment!

Whatever you want, just do it.

Because the alternative is that this publication slowly morphs into something written entirely by the current Promotions Officer, becoming a soapbox for their own ideas and ideals. In my case, it will turn into twelve pages of me complaining about not having any content...

And that's all I had to say. See you next issue, gamers.

Excelsior!

(I've always wondered if "Excelsior" works like "Candlejack." You say it, and then a few moments later Stan Lee's lawyers show up and make you disappe

## Upcoming Events:

### Minicon:

Minicon runs on the 3rd & 4th of September from 8am to 7pm each day at the Otakaro Building at the University of Canterbury Dovedale Campus (the College of Education).

Entry will be free to Saga members, \$5 for non-members.

### **We are still seeking GMs for one-offs, or in fact anyone wanting to run anything at all!**

A note from the organiser: "SIFI still needs donations people! As in everyone should donate dammit! While Minicon is free, the food ain't folks! No money, no fruit. No fruit...well...no fruit."

What is SIFI, I hear you asking? SIFI is the Saga Inc. Fruit Initiative, and it originated this year at Buckets of Dice. People donate money before an event, and Saga goes out and buys all kinds of different fruit, which is handed out for free to anyone attending the event. It was such a success at Buckets of Dice that we are going to run it for every event. Minicon is up next, and we need more fruit money!

### SANcon:

SANcon is running on the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> of September, and is a joint effort between all the most awesome clubs at the University; Sci-Fi Soc, Saga, KAOS, Ordo Cygni, and so on. It is also running at the Dovedale Campus, and will feature workshops, demonstrations, film screenings, and all sorts of awesome nerdy stuff.

For updates and information on both events, check Saga's website: [www.saga.org.nz](http://www.saga.org.nz)

## Ransom GMing

By Jan-Yves Ruzika

If you've ever GMed, you know how it goes. You're doing something when suddenly you get the best idea for a game. You're watching a movie, or reading a book, or playing a game, when suddenly you realise, "I want to play in an RPG that's like Starship Troopers, where you think it's about killing aliens but it's actually about coming to terms with yourself and what makes you a person." You already have the outline of the character you want to play, some idealistic young hick who's going to have to kill his commanding officer at some point. You know exactly how you'll phrase it to the GM.

Oh yeah, the GM.

So you go to your friends. "Oh man," you say to them, "you know what's be awesome?" And you tell them all about your Starship Troopers game, and they grin and nod and go "Man, that \*is\* awesome!" And then one of them says the phrase you were hoping, praying, one of them wouldn't say: "So, when're you running it?" And you want to scream and yell at him because the whole reason you're telling them is so that one of \*them\* runs it for \*you\*. But of course now it's your game and you'll be the one running it and, even better, now you've mentioned it, anyone who was thinking of running anything similar is discouraged because they don't want to tread on your intellectual territory.

So eventually, you end up running it. Your players love it. And you don't get to enjoy it, because you're busy making it run. To quote a

friend of mine, "the games you end up running are the ones you really want to be in."

Maybe your group is different - maybe you have a happy commune of gamers who can all share their feelings and get other people to run the games they want to be in. In which case: congratulations. But chances are you aren't in one of those groups, or you aren't even in a regular group (which is probably the case if you're reading this at SAGA, the cross-group melting pot that we are). At which point, if you want to play in a particular game, you're pretty much down to serendipity and sexual favours - and SAGA only condones one of these.

Before you ask, it's the first one we condone. We aren't KAOS.

Here is my attempt at solving the problem: ransom GMing. It rewards GMs, the one group in gaming who need rewarding, and it helps players play the games they want to play. Two birds, one stone.

Here's how it works. Say you have that Starship Troopers idea. You post it to the mailing list, or air it at SAGA. "Here is my awesome idea," you say, "and I want someone to run it." And then you provide an incentive. Maybe a place to play if it's not on a SAGA night (or an earthquake knocks out our venue, \*again\*). Maybe dinner, or snacks, or gaming minis, or whatever it is that acts as the lubricant in the gears of your game.

Now here's the fun bit: if anyone else likes the sound of the game, they can also offer bribes and ransom. Maybe they'll write up adventure logs. Maybe they can provide a battlemat. Maybe they

have a bunch of supplements that would make everything cool. Maybe they have the super-extra-limited-edition playbook that the author only published 50 ashcans of at an Origins back in 2006 or something.

Then if any GM likes the sound of the game, they can pick it up, run with it, and get the ransom offered by the players. Consider it a reward for the amount of time you put into the game, or a token of appreciation from the people who depend on you for entertainment. Is this a perfect solution? No. People won't always GM games just because they get things out of it, and sometimes all the people willing to GM will already be running the games they want to run. It's more of a focussed solution to a small problem that will crop up every once in a while. It has a lot of faults - there's only so much you can offer the GM, especially if they already own all the books or it's not a prop-heavy game, and I figure you need two or three people to get into it before it starts to work. But it's good way to gauge enthusiasm for a game, it rewards GMs, and when it works it lets you play in the game you want to play in, instead of always running it.

And if it doesn't work, I guess there's always sexual favours.

## **On the duology of the Elf-Dwarf species**

*by Osric Beker*

During my travels across the width and breadth of this Empire, as well as some of the more uncivilized lands to be found outside of the Empire, it has come to my attention, from evidence that I have seen with my own eyes, that we have made a gross error in regards to the Elves and Dwarves.

Some, primarily the Elves and Dwarves, would have us believe that they are in fact two whole and separate species, distinct and unrelated to one another. I however put forth a different theory, presented here with my evidence, for my claim that in fact the Elves and Dwarves are not just the same species, but in fact are the adult forms, albeit the different genders, of a species that originates all the way back with the Halflings that inhabit the Moot.

A present to you my reasoning as to why the Elves and Dwarves are in fact the same species with the establishment of their gender within this dual-species.

As any who have encountered an elf will know, there is in fact no elf with facial hair anywhere. Equally the opposite can be said of Dwarves - there are no dwarves, save those humiliated in combat or the victims of horrible circumstance, that are clean shaven. It is fair to say that Dwarves are unequalled when it comes to beards. This I present as biological proof that Elves are in fact the female of this re-categorized species and the Dwarves are the male of the species.

Furthermore, evidence can also be found in the psychology of the genders of this species. I shall here draw parallels to the human species, the dominate and superior species of the Empire, as everyone knows without a doubt, for we are after all the masters of the Empire. Take the average human male - strong, prone to aggression Now, if we were to amplify those traits we would arrive with a temperament similar to Dwarves. Dwarves it can be said also undertake the pursuits of mining and construction, activities that could be considered masculine.

We are then able to compare quite happily the Elves with the female sex of the human species. Fair skinned, usually far better presented than the males, less prone to violence, though equally capable of, perhaps even better at, exacting a horrifying revenge when provoked. Elves seem to prefer beauty and nature motifs as well as other pursuits that align more with a feminine personality than that of the Dwarves.

You may have also heard of a conflict in times past between Elves and Dwarves called the War of the Beard. This I dare conclude can be summed up quite simply as a gender conflict between two sub-species. The War of the Beard was merely one of the more active and formative conflicts between males and females of this species that can be compared perhaps between the low-lying and civilized conflicts found between husband and wife of the our own human species.

I believe that the true origin of the War of the Beard can perhaps be found in a desire of the Elves to have the Dwarves shave. May I dare ask just how many human wives have asked their husbands to shave only for it to cause a conflict between the two?

Now expand that conflict to not just between a couple but the entirety of the species between the two genders and you can explain the War of the Beard easily enough.

Similarly the Dwarven custom of the Book of Grudges can be explained in comparison to the human species. When it comes to conflicts between individuals, primarily those not requiring the ending of one another, males are typically more forgetful, especially when it comes to unintentional slights between a man and a woman. Whereas women seem able to remember every single last detail and hold on to it forever, men are more likely to forget.

I have no doubt this phenomena was the basis for the Book of Grudges in times past. The Dwarves, tired of being reminded of every single slight they may have either intentionally or unintentionally made, or letting the Elves off easily, decided long ago to start writing things down with the express purpose of not forgetting another single conflict, argument or hurt feeling. Petty behaviour I think that the human species most certainly should not emulate as we are more than civilized enough and capable enough to deal with our problems without needing to write them down and remember them in perpetuity.

I believe with these presented arguments I have laid the foundation for further study into the duology of the Elf-Dwarf species that needs to be investigated. The possibility that I am correct in this presentation is too important to be ignored for how it could change and dare I say improve our relations with Elves and Dwarves in the future as we gain a better understanding of how to deal with them.

However, to those that seek to expand the frontiers of knowledge into this brave new field, I suggest caution. I have discovered that this seems to be a very sensitive subject for the Elf-Dwarfs and that they seem to treat those asking questions into this subject with hostility.

As any who have encountered a Halfling in their life, be it from one visiting their community or adventures encountering them as they travel our Empire, Halflings are prodigious eaters. For people the size of children they consume a rather large amount of food. Admittedly this is the weakest part of my theory as I have no evidence to support it, but I theorize that this voracious appetite serves one purpose - preparation for a cocooning and transformation stage.

I wish to further expand this theory and find evidence to further link the Halflings into this species aside from my own suppositions. As of yet I have no conclusive evidence or theories for testing as to how a Halfling grows into either an Elf or Dwarf. I suspect it might have something along a Nature/Nurture issue during the cocooning phase and will seek to confirm this one way or the other in the near future.

I believe that I have presented my arguments for the reclassification of the Elf and Dwarf species as a single species, which for simplicity I have simple referred to as the Elf-Dwarf species, quiet well. I put it forward to the academics of the Empire to go forth, to leave their lofty towers and universities and travel forth to either confirm or deny my findings one way or the other.

Publisher's Note : It should be noted that shortly after the publishing of this article, Osric Beker was last seen fleeing the city of Altdorf while being chased by an Elf at considerable speed.

*(The real) Author's note: This entire idea arose from rather random In Character discussions during a Warhammer Fantasy campaign. It is based on some of the tropes of fantasy settings as well as how certain things were presented in the Warhammer Fantasy setting.*  
-Mark

## **Nibbler's Mousetrap**

*A custom Dungeons and Dragons spell by Marsden M Marsden*

*A magic ward to keep libraries free of rodents and discourage other annoying pests.*

D&D3.5 spell stats:

Abjuration [Force][Mind Affecting]

Level: Sor/Wiz 1; Bard 1

Components: V/S/M

Casting time: 1 full round

Range: Touch

Target: Object(s) touched

Duration: Permanent until discharged (D)

Saving Throw: Will partial; see text

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is cast on a scroll, tome or similar item. If the item is touched by a creature or construct other than the caster or others defined at the time of casting (usually by setting a password) a small mouse appears and bites the offender for 1 point of damage. The target must then make a Will save or involuntarily cry out in surprise or pain. Undead, constructs and other creatures immune to pain or mind-affecting effects automatically make this save.

The mouse is a force construct and the appearance of the effect can easily be customised by substituting the material component for part of any tiny or small animal. (Giantish versions may use medium animals.)

While the item is held by someone it is attuned to the spell is suppressed, enabling others to examine the item.

The spell creates one additional mouse per two caster levels (maximum 10), which may be placed on the same object or multiple objects. If more than one mouse is placed on an object they may be set to discharge one at a time or all at once.

Multiple Mousetrap spells may be cast on an item at once, but only the oldest casting will discharge each time the item is handled.

Material Component: A strand of mouse fur, or equivalent.