

Council of Thieves



Fact or Fiction

Hey there, reader! As this is my first foreword in *Pathfinder*, allow me to introduce myself—my name is James Sutter, and I’m the Fiction Editor for Paizo. As Wes is off paying a visit to his exotic homeland (Baltimore) and Jacobs is currently buried under the Rubenesque weight of this volume’s adventure, I’ve been asked to stop by and tell you a bit about what’s coming down the road for *Pathfinder* fiction. But first, a brief word about this month’s adventure author, Greg A. Vaughan.

Greg Vaughan is what you might call a “stealth game designer”—a big, friendly, clean-cut guy with several kids and a respectable job in a mundane industry. While it might be going too far to call him a Boy Scout, if your grandmother tells you that some nice young man helped her across the street, it was probably Greg Vaughan. Perhaps the best description I can give of Greg is that, at last year’s PaizoCon organized play event, he was instantly and unanimously chosen to play Andoran’s faction leader. (Of course, Wes

played a vampy Chelish countess and I was his overeager imp familiar, so what does that say of us?) In short—everything about Greg screams all-American poster child.

And as it turns out, he also designs some of the most elaborate, intricate RPG adventures you’ve ever seen, with map designs so detailed you could use them to build a house (or a haunted castle, or the lost city of Xin-Shalast). So when I heard that he was writing this adventure, I knew my introduction would be short—for Greg Vaughan’s work truly speaks for itself.

Now on to fiction.

Pathfinder Fiction

“So, when are we going to see some novels set in the *Pathfinder* Chronicles campaign setting?” It’s one of the most frequently asked questions on Paizo’s messageboards and from our friends and colleagues at conventions. It’s no secret that, for many of us, novels set in game worlds were

Foreword

our first introductions to various settings, and in some cases, the works of authors like R. A. Salvatore or Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman have managed to bring their associated campaign settings to thousands of readers who might never have seen a d20 in their lives. Game fiction allows us to bring our worlds to life and tell stories in ways adventures or sourcebooks can't, and gives us all another way to keep our heads in the world outside of the actual gaming session.

Of course, Pathfinder Chronicles fiction is nothing new to Paizo. We've been doing it in the Pathfinder's Journal section of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* since the second volume, in which a handful of authors teamed up to take Pathfinder Eando on a rough-and-tumble ride from the western edge of Varisia all the way to the City at the Center of the World (an 18-episode experience he may not be entirely thankful for). From those exciting and sometimes frantic days, we learned some valuable lessons and moved onward and upward with Elaine Cunningham's *Dark Tapestry*, our first 6-chapter arc done all by one author. Serialized in the Legacy of Fire Adventure Path, Elaine's story brought a fresh new flavor as it followed hard-edged druid Channa Ti across the deserts of Katapesh and Osirion in search of the *Reliquary of the Drowned God*. And even as you read this, Dave Gross is finishing up *Hell's Pawns*, a story in which our hero Radovan plays the tiefling Watson to Varian Jeggare's Sherlock Holmes in a diabolical mystery of noir fantasy set in Chelixa's grim capitol.

And the adventure doesn't stop there, of course. Starting with the Kingmaker Adventure Path, we'll be hearkening back to the journal's beginnings with another multi-author escapade following the comic adventures of Ollix Kaddar, exiled son of a minor lord, and his priest companion Phargas as the shiftless pair wanders the River Kingdoms in search of greatness, glory, and riches—but without all the *work*. And after that it's down to the Mwangi Expanse with Robin D. Laws for a rumble in the jungle as Mr. Laws shows us how even enemies can work together in pursuit of a noble goal like human sacrifice.

But as cool as the journals are, that's not usually what people mean when they ask about Pathfinder fiction. They want to know when we'll have paperback novels in the science fiction and fantasy section of their local bookstore, squashed between *Star Trek* novels and the latest *Diablo* yarn. And the answer is: very soon.

Let me repeat that again, just for the record:

Pathfinder novels are coming.

Needless to say, there's a lot of excitement around here. While we can't drop names just yet, outlines are being approved and contracts are being signed as we speak, and some of the authors are folks that will make your jaw drop. Be sure to keep an eye on paizo.com in the coming months, because as soon as the details are set in stone, you can bet we'll be shouting them from the rooftops.

A Fiction Manifesto

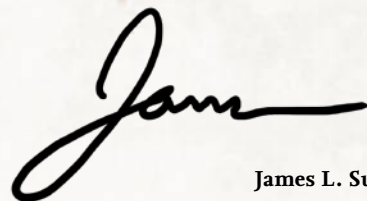
As Spider-Man has taught us all, with great power comes great responsibility. It's something everyone at Paizo keeps in mind, but nowhere have we thought harder about it than in relation to the Pathfinder fiction line. As excited as we are, we know that game fiction can also cause tremendous problems if there's conflict between it and the game setting—after all, if you're reading this, there's a high probability that you're playing in Golarion, and that means we've got a responsibility not to muck up the world we're both imagining. To that end, I'd like to offer a few promises as Fiction Editor:

We will not be breaking the toys. As far as I'm concerned, the single biggest sin a fiction editor at a game company can make (well, aside from turning out cruddy books) is nuking the world. While I completely understand the desire to tell stories incorporating big ol' continuity bombs (hey, my character in Jacobs's Sandpoint campaign wants to take out the *Starstone*), it's a disservice to every other storyteller—meaning GM—who wants to do the same in his home game. We have no plans to kill gods, drop alien invasions, or sink Chelixa into the sea (as much as it might deserve it). It's bad stewardship of the world that we all—designers, editors, and readers—have poured so much time and energy into.

Which isn't to say that our world is static. Since we first introduced *Pathfinder*, Golarion has seen the rise of a runelord, regicide, the potential return of the Rough Beast's spawn, and a near-miss from an asteroid. But the reason we've done those things in adventures rather than novels is that we believe the players in those dramas should be, well, players—such world-shaking events should be caused or prevented by PC action, making any major changes in your version of Golarion an organic process, and ultimately your decision.

So what will you see when the novel line launches? Simple: stories about characters. When you find a character you love, you can have tremendous adventures with minimal impact on a setting. The deaths of a few people, a strange artifact, a quest for revenge or a thirst for forbidden knowledge—all of these things could be happening a few doors down from you right now, and you'd never know. But if you care about the people involved—ah, now that's a different story. It's the investment that makes it personal.

But if you disagree, hey—you can always still blow up the world.



James L. Sutter
Fiction Editor
james.sutter@paizo.com