

## **Special: The new Magic novel *Nemesis: Masquerades***

**Featuring Paul B. Thompson, author**

*Wed. Jan 26, 2000*

**TSRO\_Ginger:** Tonight, we chat with fantasy author Paul Thompson about his newest work: a foray into the world of **Magic: The Gathering**. His forthcoming title, *Nemesis*, tells the full story only hinted at by the card set.

**TSRO\_Ginger:** Paul, do you want to make any opening comments, or shall we get down to the Q and A?

**TSRPaul:** I attended a story conference at Wizards of the Coast HQ back in 1998, when the **Magic** series was mapped out. The editor said he needed someone to do a "dark and intense story" for this book. I said, "I can do that." And I did. *Nemesis* is about force, free will, and what evil really is.

**Walt:** Is it true what they say about Ertai? Does he turns evil? If so, how could you do that to him?!

**TSRPaul:** Heh! Well, there was cheering in some quarters when I explained what I was going to do to Ertai, but his story is very much what *Nemesis* is about. He plays with fire and gets burned.

**Walt:** Does he at least get a big part? He was the best character.

**TSRPaul:** Yes, he's a major character. Why do you like Ertai, Walt?

**Walt:** Because everyone on the Weatherlight hated him, but in the end, he sacrificed himself to save them all. I just thought that made him a really unique character.

**TSRPaul:** He is quite a character. He tries to play with forces too great for him, though.

**Mel:** Okay, I am going to show off my ignorance here and ask if the book follows the selection of the new Evincar, as the card set does?

**TSRPaul:** I don't know who the card set goes with—I assume its the same as my novel. Starts with "C".

**Mel:** Ooh! I know who that is! Is the story mostly about the Evincar?

**TSRPaul:** Absolutely, Mel. That's the heart of the story: who will be the next Evincar? But, I'm going to dodge that one. The candidates for Evincar include Greven, Ertai, Crovax, and of course, Volrath. But only one gets the crown.

**Walt:** Uh... does Volrath live in the end? That'd suck if he couldn't face off against Gerrard again. Although, the card 'Ascendant Evincar' kinda gives it away.

**TSRPaul:** Well, there's more to the contest than just the outcome! The entire story is basically a lab experiment, performed by Phyrexia, with our cast as the guinea pigs. The matter under question is free will.

**TSRO\_Ginger:** Can you make heads or tails of these stories if you are woefully ignorant of the card game?

**TSRPaul:** Of course. I'm not actually a **Magic** player myself.

**SWC:** How did you prepare for these books?

**TSRPaul:** Wizards called me up (because of my track record doing **Dragonlance** books) and invited me to a story conference in Washington. Four writers were brought in to help plan and plot out the **Magic** series. We spent a week doing it. I plotted my novel myself, based on the parameters set up at the meeting.

**TSRO\_Durst:** Do you foresee writing more **Magic** novels?

**TSRPaul:** I'm not signed up to do another **Magic** novel—yet. I would, of course. I enjoyed writing *Nemesis* immensely.

**SWC:** How long does it take you to complete a book, from outline to final draft?

**TSRPaul:** About eight months, in the case of *Nemesis*.

**Mel:** Phyrexia rocks as a concept. Did you have much latitude in the details of the world? 'Cause I'd like to hear a little about what you conceptualized for it.

**TSRPaul:** I didn't create Phyrexia, but I elaborated on it. I see it as the ultimate 19th century industrial hell: smoke, acid aerosols, heat, and acres of rusty metal.

**Mel:** Ooh, acid aerosols!

**MaGiK GeEk:** Any plans to write any books for the **Magic** trilogy after the current one?

**TSRPaul:** I'd like to, but they haven't asked me yet. I covet the War trilogy.

**Walt:** Is there any mention of Mercadia?

**TSRPaul:** Mercadia doesn't figure in the novel, Walt.

**Walt:** But didn't Volrath just get back from Mercadia?

**TSRPaul:** Yes, but he doesn't have time to say much about it. Partly this is because my novel was written before *Mercadian Masques* was finished. It's all from Rath, plus a little from Phyrexia.

**Mel:** Volrath: "Yeah I was in Mercadia, and all I got was this lousy t-shirt".

**TSRPaul:** I mean, Volrath comes back and finds himself essentially displaced. He takes a subtle approach to the problem.

**Mel:** I bet. Volrath is quite the diplomat.

**TSRPaul:** Well, compared to some people in the novel, he's "Mr. Smooth."

**MaGiK GeEk:** What is your favorite storyline that has been developed for **Magic**?

**TSRPaul:** Oh, Eladamri. To me, he is the most dangerous character in the whole story arc.

**Walt:** How about Takara? Or is she officially dead?

**TSRPaul:** Takara is a survivor...

**SWC:** I have not read the **Magic** books, but I'm curious as to whether you see any parallels between Phyrexia and Krynn?

**TSRPaul:** Phyrexia and Krynn? Hmm. One might make the case that Krynn could end up like Phyrexia, if the dragons and Dark Queen's force triumph—but I don't think that will happen. Krynn has a beneficent goddess looking out for it; Phyrexia has a bunch of wicked demigods trying to make it as evil as possible.

**Walt:** Is Mirri mentioned at all? Like, in a funeral of some sort, or anything?

**TSRPaul:** Alas, Mirri is mentioned only in passing.

**Mel:** I was sad that they did her in. The line is short of female characters.

**Walt:** Who's Lin Sivvi? I've seen mention of him/her in the cards, but is he/she in the novel?

**TSRPaul:** If you like female characters in **Magic**, there's a first class one (if I may say so) in *Nemesis*. Sivi's the woman, Walt. A martial artist.

**Mel:** Why do the Phyrexians choose now to attack? Strategically, just getting a new Evincar doesn't seem like the best time.

**Walt:** I agree with Mel. Don't the Phyrexians understand that the Weatherlight could mess everything up? Why don't they just wait a few hundred more years, after Gerrard is dead?

**TSRPaul:** The Evincar thing is one of their behavioral experiments, it doesn't affect their invasion plans. They don't have a few hundred years to wait! Phyrexia won't last forever; it's an artificial plane.

**Talinthas:** What is the relative time of *Nemesis* in relation to *The Dark* or *Ice Age*?

**TSRPaul:** *Nemesis* is "modern", which is much later than *Ice Age*.

**Walt:** I'd imagine you're probably not allowed to answer this, and it doesn't have much to do with *Nemesis*, but is Yawgmoth a planeswalker? He wasn't at the end of *The Thran*.

**TSRPaul:** The nature of Yawgmoth is, as yet, a mystery.

**Mel:** Do we find out what, exactly, is the urgency for Phyrexians then?

**TSRPaul:** I'm not sure I want to step on later books' toes, Mel, as far as that plot point goes.

**Mel:** Okay, so the whole deal is mapped out then? Not a made-up plan like, oh, *The X-Files*.

**TSRPaul:** It's mapped out. Oh boy, is it mapped out. Give *Nemesis* a try. It's a rather harsh story. Then again, it's about a harsh place full of harsh people.

**VoidCorpMan:** Are there going to be a lot of spoilers about *Mercadian Masques*? I'm almost done but not quite..

**TSRPaul:** No spoilers that I know of. *Nemesis* and *Mercadian Masques* don't overlap, except in the person of Volrath.

**Walt:** Yeah, uh, thanks for answering all the questions. There should be more focus on storyline like this.

**SWC:** Paul, I have an off-topic question if that's alright. Any new **Dragonlance** books for you on the horizon?

**TSRPaul:** Tonya Cook and I are doing a new trilogy of **Dragonlance** novels collectively called *The Barbarians*.

**SWC:** It must be quite a different experience writing solo when you've done quite a few books with Tonya.

**TSRPaul:** I've published several books solo. It is different writing with a collaborator.

**Talinthas:** Can you tell us anything about it? I know you are only supposed to talk about the *Nemesis* novel, but I have almost all things **Dragonlance**.

**TSRPaul:** OK, but I do want to keep close to *Nemesis*, too. Any questions about *The Barbarians* in particular?

**Talinthas:** A brief synopsis will do. No one will tell me anything!

**TSRPaul:** The trilogy describes the rise of human civilization on the plains, before the Cataclysm and before the Graygem is loosed—circa 4000 PC.

**TSRO\_Durst:** So shortly after Igraine and the Irda leave Ansalon, right?

**TSRPaul:** Right.

**TSRO\_Durst:** Ooh, excellent! I loved the Irda novel, and am interested in the period just after it.

**SWC:** Do you find yourself drawn to really epic story lines, such as this one and the *Kinslayer War*?

**TSRPaul:** Yes. I'm a historian by training, so I like the sweep of history.

**SWC:** Have you written much non-fiction? What are your primary areas of interest?

**TSRPaul:** I've published quite a few non-fiction articles, but no books: military history, history of science, the occult, etc. Looks like it's time to wrap it up. I guess I'll say good night. Thanks all!

**TSRO\_Ginger:** Take care, Paul, come and visit us again soon.