



**Creating An Indie Editorial Team  
Interview with**

- **David Davis**
- **Jeremy Petravicz**
- **Bruno Tramontozzi**

**For podcast release  
Monday, February 3, 2019**

KENNEALLY: A video trailer for the recently published book boldly promises, your adventure awaits. The collection of short stories, *Arcanum Draconis: Tales from the Violet Thorne*, builds on characters and plotlines set in the world of Draconis, a live-action role-playing game. Think Dungeons & Dragons come to life. But the players in this shared world game aren't only acting, they are also creating. Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series, I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book.

When a trio of Draconis players, living in the greater Boston area, moved from the New England woods, where they go LARPing, to the online digital environment of independent publishing, they found another adventure awaited them. In the world of the Violet Thorne, alliances are made and broken, and the imaginary becomes real. And just like the LARP, indie publishing turns out to require creativity, collaboration, and commitment to a shared world. David Davis, Jeremy Petravicz, and Bruno Tramontozzi join me now. Welcome to Beyond the Book, gentlemen.

M: Hello there, Chris.

M: Chris, how are you?

M: Hey, Chris.

KENNEALLY: We're looking forward to chatting with you. We're going to learn about LARPing if we don't already know about it. But we're going to learn more about creating an editorial team the indie way, looking at how independent publishing has brought the three of you together in much the same way that it has in the games you play, and we'll tell people about each of you individually.

Dave Davis is a colleague of mine here at Copyright Clearance Center, has been on Beyond the Book before. David, good to talk to you.



DAVIS: Thanks, Chris, good to be here.

KENNEALLY: Dave Davis is also a frequent contributor to the Copyright Clearance Center *Velocity of Content* blog, and he's also an independent author of fiction and nonfiction.

Jeremy Petravicz joins us, as well. Jeremy, welcome.

PETRAVICZ: Thank you, Chris. Thank you Chris.

KENNEALLY: Good to have you here, Jeremy. Jeremy has Ph.D. in neurobiology and currently is an editor at Wylie Publishing. He's a lifelong reader of fantasy and a player of tabletop games. He started at Draconis as an NPC – that's a non-player character, one of those actors who put on the interactive play, and eventually he became part of the directing staff.

And then also joining us is Bruno Tramontozzi. Bruno, welcome to Beyond the Book.

TRAMONTOZZI: Thanks for having us, Chris.

KENNEALLY: Bruno Tramontozzi is a fitness expert, software developer, and the originator and ultimate instigator of much that came to be known as Draconis gaming. He is proficient with the Adobe suite of publishing tools, and is responsible for most of the art in the book.

And this is a program about publishing, so we want to focus on that, gents, but it is helpful, I think, for the audience to understand a little bit more about live action role playing. Did I get it right? It is a bit like Dungeons & Dragons come to life. Does that seem fair?

TRAMONTOZZI: This is Bruno. Yeah, I would say that it's – the way I like to explain to people is generally more like a murder mystery evening. So if you were to go – in a murder mystery dinner type of thing, the play happens around you. Whereas within our gaming environment, you can actually influence the story a little bit more. So it's not just you're observing something interesting and it's a cool story that you get to participate in. With us, you actually get to influence and that story and make – send it in ways that you might – nobody really expects. So we get surprised pretty often by the things people do.



KENNEALLY: And you mentioned the dinner theater thing, that's a great analogy. Dinner takes place over the course of three courses. How long do these kinds of games usually run? Over the course of a weekend?

TRAMONTOZZI: So it's generally a weekend thing for us, Friday night to Sunday afternoon type of thing. And then we have multiple games per year where the story arc continues from game to game. So you can come in for one of those particular weekend events, but if you were to stay for longer, there's a whole story arc that – it's basically a novel split into around 15 to 20 events. So our last event – our last arc went 20 – it was 18 events, actually, 18 episodes. So yeah, that's –

KENNEALLY: And Jeremy Petravicz, I want to ask you about this because you confess to be a lifelong reader of fantasy and a player of tabletop games. This is taking a lot of those elements that you find in fantasy novels and in those kinds of tabletop games, and then putting it in the woods, right? It must be a way to really kind of live out some of the imaginative experiences you've had.

PETRAVICZ: Yeah, absolutely, and that actually is a primary draw for a lot of the people that come to the game is a lot of the people that come are readers of fantasy, tabletop – people have played tabletop games, especially Dungeons & Dragons, given our setting. So it does give them that chance to move off the table to spend an entire weekend just fully immersed in the experience and busy acting out all those things that you were doing on pen and paper, but now you're out there with a suit of armor that you put on and a sword that you've got – safe sword, but – And then you're fighting orcs, you're fighting monsters, and you're just living out that –

KENNEALLY: I want to understand a little bit about this evolution that you had, Jeremy. You went from being a NPC, as we described, a non-player character. Those are the folks that kind of set the story in motion, if I'm right, and eventually you became part of the directing staff. So how did playing evolve for you? Tell us a little bit about that.

PETRAVICZ: So I primarily started at the game solely because (inaudible) last minute (inaudible) and I've been friends with Bruno for a long time and played games with him. I haven't done that much LARPing before, myself. And so came and he handed me an NPC role that he thought I'd be good at, and I ended up doing that same role for about three and a half years. That role was incredible, it was a lot of fun, and Florimel ended up being a really interesting character because Bruno, thankfully, gave me the freedom to develop him. Along with him is that kind of (inaudible). And so he ended up, by the end of the game, becoming a very – a character that was very much tied to some of the events that were happening in the



game, mostly by accident, originally. And then further down the road we kind of molded it a bit more.

But yeah, so that is what kind of led me towards ending up being part of the group that was running the game was that that NPC role became important to the players, important to myself as well. And so it became a natural fit that then I would then help out, kind of directing some of the story of the game along with Bruno and just kind of driving things forward.

KENNEALLY: All right. So David Davis, we have chatted with you on Beyond the Book before about some of your contributions for the *Velocity of Content* blog. So you enjoy writing. You also enjoy this LARPing. But why now move from the playing to the creating, and how important is it for you to have this book, *Arcanum Draconis*?

DAVIS: That's interesting, Chris. So I started playing relatively late. I had played D&D more or less forever, like since it came out. But I have a cousin that invited me to Draconis (inaudible) said it's great, you're going to love to try it, so I did, and we had a blast. I played one consistent character through the episodes that I had had it. And after that, we sort of had a gap here when we weren't meeting. I said to these guys, wouldn't it be fun to go to the players and say, tell your story. You guys can write, some of you were English majors. Let's give it a try and we'll put something together and it'll be cool. I had a little bit, as you said, experience writing fiction, and this is an extension of that. So that's basically how we got to it.

KENNEALLY: And it's a shared world, but this is also a way for you three and for the other contributors to the book, to the anthology, really, to share your experiences, to share your fantasies, your imaginative creation of this new world. So there's a lot of sharing on. How important is that sense of collaboration, that this is, in a way, rather like a big studio movie. They're not the creation of a single individual, but there's a whole set full of people.

DAVIS: That was new to me for this round of putting a book together, the idea being that it's a shared world that we all participated in. So each point of view in each story is from the person – the character of the person that wrote it, but they need to be knitted together into the common experience of this world. Jeremy did a lot of that on the consistency side.

KENNEALLY: All right, well, let's talk about what you three have learned about independent publishing. You all have different roles in this. So David, just to continue with you for a moment. So you were contributing as a writer, but also doing a lot of editing and working with people who, their first job, maybe even



their second job isn't writing. So how much of a challenge is that, to put an anthology like this together, to give it some kind of editorial quality?

DAVIS: We worked – some were easier than others, but everybody was really cooperative. It's actually people you know, people you slogged around killing goblins with, and so there's an element of trust and there is the aspect of well, the editorial staff has a sense of the whole, and we want this to fit in. We want this to be the best story from you that it can be. And each of the writers was highly cooperative on that, and I think we got to a good place.

KENNEALLY: Bruno Tramontozzi, you've done a lot of work with Adobe and their variety of publishing tools, and you helped to create the design for the book, and the cover art and so forth. Independent publishing, I think people mostly come to it in the Kindle or through some other reader, so they're really devouring these books the way they devour fantasy books or whatever. But design still plays a role. It gives people a sense of professionalism, maybe it just makes an easier, a better experience. Talk about that. Why is, in independent publishing, design important to you?

TRAMONTOZZI: Well, I'd say that one of the major factors that contributed to the way I designed the book for me came from my desire to make it a book that I would want to pick up and read. So I've been – just like Jeremy, I've been reading fantasy books since I was 12. I grew up on the genre. And when you're looking for a new series, one of the things that makes it easy to pick out is when you're walking through a bookstore, I just look for covers that are interesting. So that's one of the things that's nice about walking through a physical bookstore that I still enjoy. So I'll walk through, I'll look at that cover, and say, wow, that cover looks really cool, what might be in there? Then you read the back of the – the blurb on the back and say, is that something that I might be interested in?

So my first take was, from that perspective, to say all right, Let me come up with a book that is interesting to look at, initially, just grabs your eye, and then after that tells a little bit about, in picture form, the story that you're going to tell. That's what we try to do. It's certainly my first book cover, so I'm certainly no expert in this, and I'm sure there are many ways it could be better, but that was basically where I was – that was my first shot at that.

And then within the formatting of the interior of the book, consistency throughout the book was one thing we were really trying to maintain with regards to an image or something. Like we've got an image at the beginning of every chapter that is basically the logo from our game, and that's always eight lines down from the top, three lines from the beginning. So those kinds of consistency adds some secondary



level of professionalism, or at least the look of professionalism, and that's what we're trying to look at. There are a lot of books that we looked at, written by other authors. The books are fantastic, but maybe they weren't – they didn't take that level of – they didn't take the time to really dial those in. I think those are important factors with regards to the consistency of the look.

KENNEALLY: Jeremy Petravicz, I want to bring you in because Bruno was mentioning about continuity and consistency, and I guess that was your role in this editorial project, probably a lot like the role you played first as an NPC, and then in the directing staff. Talk about the importance of continuity.

PETRAVICZ: So as Dave and Bruno can definitely tell you, continuity for me is kind of a – almost a OCD hang-up, where I've developed a fairly strong capacity in our game story that I can remember things that happened about six events ago, and if somebody comes up with a contradiction to that, I end up pointing it out and then everybody either gets mad at me or is like, oh, OK, that's great.

KENNEALLY: Well, listen, you should've been hanging around the *Game of Thrones* set when the Starbucks coffee cup was there, right?

PETRAVICZ: Yeah, I know. So, yeah, for me part of what I ended up taking on in the book – I was definitely assisted by Dave and Bruno, so it wasn't purely a sole operation by myself – was just ensuring that in people's stories, especially because we have a couple of characters that show up in multiple stories, that you are doing something in your story that completely contradicted how that person was in another story. So it's just maintaining the continuity that way, keeping characters kind of intact across stories. And, yeah, just in general like the world, like you weren't breaking some rule that we have in the world, even if there's an unwritten rule somewhere, just a general aspect of the world, like nobody showing up with a cell phone, nobody showed up with a Starbucks cup, things like that.

KENNEALLY: And again, that's about the reader. You don't want to jar the reader, take them out of the fantasy experience and make them aware of the book as this artifact.

PETRAVICZ: Yeah, it's critically important, the whole – because that's one of the things that we also stressed in the game was the whole sense of immersion and keeping – you're staying in-game the entire time you're there, and you want that also in the book. You don't want something that's going to jar you out of the narrative where you're then having to question, well, who's right in this situation? Is it the person in this story? Is it the person in this story? Even though you realize they're being told from different points of view.





KENNEALLY: Well, David Davis, I want to ask you about the choices you made in going to Kindle and using Kindle as the publishing platform for the book. There are lots of options out there for independent publishers, you've looked at them closely, why go with this?

DAVIS: There's a lot to like about the Amazon Kindle solution. I found it easy and workable. I'm not an expert at these things, I need tools that work and are intuitive. My experience had been with it before, as you know, when we talked about my earlier short story collection, and I just pitched it to these guys as going with that as a known, not an upfront dollar cost, and the tools work. Plus there's principally a – with a paperback you get distribution by Amazon, and with Kindle you get it out there, and Prime subscribers can take a look at it for nearly nothing.

KENNEALLY: All right. So we are looking at a copy of the book here at our studio table, and we see Bruno's cover art. It's a nice striking blue, feels like a real book in one's hand. What's next? You've got the book, but you have to start to share it with the rest of the world. That means those onerous tasks for independent publishers of promotion and marketing. OK, so what are you guys going to do about that. Bruno, any thoughts on how to help the world find this book?

TRAMONTOZZI: I think the first thing we did was reach out to our local family and friends network on social media and things like that. But I think beyond that, once the seven books that (inaudible) had purchased, you're going to want to reach out to your community. So for us, our community are all the players that play in our game, friends of them – friends of theirs. And then we also will be marketing it out to – we're going to have a booth at Boston Comic Con for the game, and we'll have the book there available as well.

I just think the book and the game complement each other well, and it's a way for us to illustrate that we're established, that we've got a lot of lore that goes into games. A lot of times when people want to play a game like ours they want to know what's the world like, and there's a one-pager that sums that up for us. We have literally a book, in addition to the entire series.

So marketing that would be via on our website with links to social media. We'll be having the booths. And then from there it's a matter of – I read a bunch of material that seemed to illustrate that the more books you have on Amazon, the higher your ranking goes. Getting reviews from all the people that read our books are important. That helps your ranking and your search ranking. So it's a multiprong attack. It's sort of a throw it all at the wall and see what sticks.



KENNEALLY: It's a real commitment, though. And Jeremy Petravicz, last word on that from you. You come out of publishing – a different kind of publishing, of course, Wylie Publishing, with your Ph.D. in neurobiology, you're talking about scholarly and scientific publishing. But you understand that the job isn't over once something is published. There's a whole post-publication responsibility. And what are you going to be taking on, yourself, for this book?

PETRAVICZ: So myself, I've been working with Bruno and Dave to think about the social media approach. Bruno had mentioned the booth at Comic Con, so working on that. And then, yeah, I have been actually springing (sp?) around colleagues at work who are also at the publishing company I'm with, deal with non-academic books, things like that, so I'm showing it to some of them to try to gauge interest and see what channels they have, or recommendations they might have on how to promote things.

KENNEALLY: Great. Well, we have enjoyed chatting with this editorial team and game playing team. We've been talking today on Beyond the Book with my colleague from Copyright Clearance Center, Dave Davis. David, thank you for joining me.

DAVIS: Thank you Chris, it was a joy.

KENNEALLY: And Jeremy Petravicz, he's an editor at Wylie Publishing and deeply involved here in the *Draconis* game, and as well with development of this anthology. Jeremy, thank you for joining me.

PETRAVICZ: Thank you, Chris. Thanks for having us.

KENNEALLY: And then finally, Bruno Tramontozzi, who did a lot of the art and the publishing design for *Arcanum* – I want to say it the Latin way, but I'll say it the Boston way, *Arcanum Draconis*. Bruno Tramontozzi, thank you for joining me.

TRAMONTOZZI: Thanks, Chris, been a pleasure.

KENNEALLY: Beyond the Book is produced by Copyright Clearance Center. Our co-producer and recording engineer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. Subscribe to the program wherever you go for podcasts, and follow us on Twitter and Facebook. The complete Beyond the Book podcast archive is available at [beyondthebook.com](http://beyondthebook.com). I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for listening and join us again soon on CCC's Beyond the Book.

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