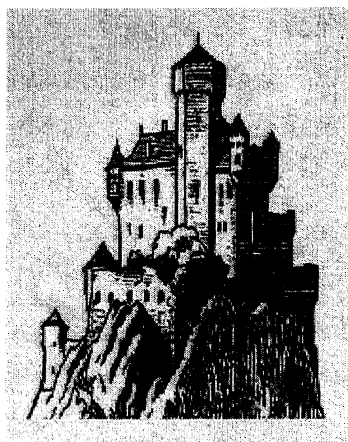


## Introduction

When we first started planning this issue of the YA Hotline we found it hard to believe that no one else had ever chosen fantasy as a topic. After all, fantasy has been around for hun-



dreds of years, and it is one of the most popular genres among teens. You would think it would have been discussed long ago. In any case, we chose to correct this oversight.

To do this, we had to embark on a strange and perilous journey. Our quest for information about the powerful and magical genre of fantasy began when a wise mage gave us the responsibility of travelling to the ends of the earth to find the sacred remnants of the Palabras Fantasticas – a scroll that had once contained the teachings of a celebrated wizard scholar who had dedicated his life to writing about the origins, description and popularity of fantasy, as well as the talented scribes who had recorded the stories. After the wizard's death, those who feared the writings which the scroll contained, tried to burn it. The old wizard was wise, however, and had anticipated that such a thing might happen. Just before he died he cast a spell upon it, so that if it was ever set on fire, it would not burn. When no amount of flames would cause even the slightest singe, the frustrated fantasy-haters tore the parchment into six pieces and scattered the scroll fragments to the far corners of the world.

With the passage of time, humans forgot that the Palabras had ever existed. Their knowledge of the alphabet, and their capacity to commit words to paper disappeared. Most of them were reduced to employing a form of communication based on simplistic grunts and body movements. In small pockets of the world, however, there existed tribes of people who had not let the ancient teachings die. They had kept their ancestors' tales of fantasy alive by writing them down in books, which they protected by erecting beautiful monuments in which they could be housed. These Librarians, as they called themselves, were shunned by society. People thought they dressed funny, they laughed at them, and they accused them of all kinds of evil acts. The Librarians did not let this thwart them, however, and by using an intricate intelligence system that they referred to as The Network, they managed to gather information about the whereabouts of the Palabras remnants. Unfortunately, all of their magical powers were consumed in the maintenance of their literacy, and they did not have the capacity to travel much beyond the boundaries of their villages.

Mage Vivoward, (thanks to the power of her all-seeing spectacles), knew of the honourable vocation that the Librarians had been pursuing and had been training us to follow in their footsteps. We had been studying their ways for two years, and as a final test to see if we were up to the challenge, Vivoward had given us the task of restoring the fantastic scroll back to its original state. As children of the future, we had magic that enabled us to travel great distances, either in body or in mind. The Librarians were particularly fascinated with a tool we used, called the Web. With it we could travel from one end of the world to the other and never leave

the room. Through it we discovered that there were Librarians in distant lands who had formed alliances with other tribes. Groups of people called Teachers were training humans how to read and write. Other tribes, called Publishers, were making copies of the books that had been stored in the Librarians' monuments, and Booksellers were secretly distributing them into the cities. The Librarians rejoiced in the knowledge that they were not alone in their task, and agreed that they would begin seeking out, and working with, branches of these other tribes in their own neighbourhood.

Armed with the elaborate information-seeking techniques that the Librarians had developed, along with our magical tools and our unique talents, we set off to retrieve the bits of parchment that those unimaginative humans had tried to destroy so long ago. All along the path poltergeists lurked in dark corners, waiting to trick us and longing to fill our heads with misinformation. The humans we encountered grunted at us in a manner that suggested we were wasting our time chasing after some long-forgotten book. The Palabras Fantasticas were only the illegible scribbles of a delirious old man, and not worth the paper upon which they were written. Still, we pressed on, confident that we were doing the right thing.

Before long, our perseverance was rewarded. One piece of scroll was found at the top of the world's highest mountain, a second at the bottom of the deepest sea. A third piece was found resting tranquilly among the lilies in a fertile valley, and a fourth was buried in the sand of an uninhabited desert. We found the fifth piece floating around on a iceberg, and the

sixth and final piece entombed in a cave. Each of these situations presented their own unique challenges, but we had been trained to match our search techniques to the environment, so all we had to do was carefully evaluate which tools would be most beneficial for the job. Sometimes we used the Web to obtain the information we were seeking, sometimes we consulted the reference books our Librarian friends had given us. Other times we simply talked to the locals. In each case we were successful.

When we returned a few months later, we presented the Librarians with the Palabras Fantasticas and urged them to share the book with their new friends the Teachers, Publishers and Booksellers, and whomsoever else they might meet. The Librarians dubbed us the Supernatural Six and cheered as we stepped through the portal to our own time and place. The book you hold in your hand at this very moment is a copy of that scroll. We hope that you appreciate the sacrifice and hardship that we had to endure to ensure that the knowledge it contains was not lost for eternity. Please read through the pages that follow, and discover the wonder and enjoyment that is fantasy literature for young adults.