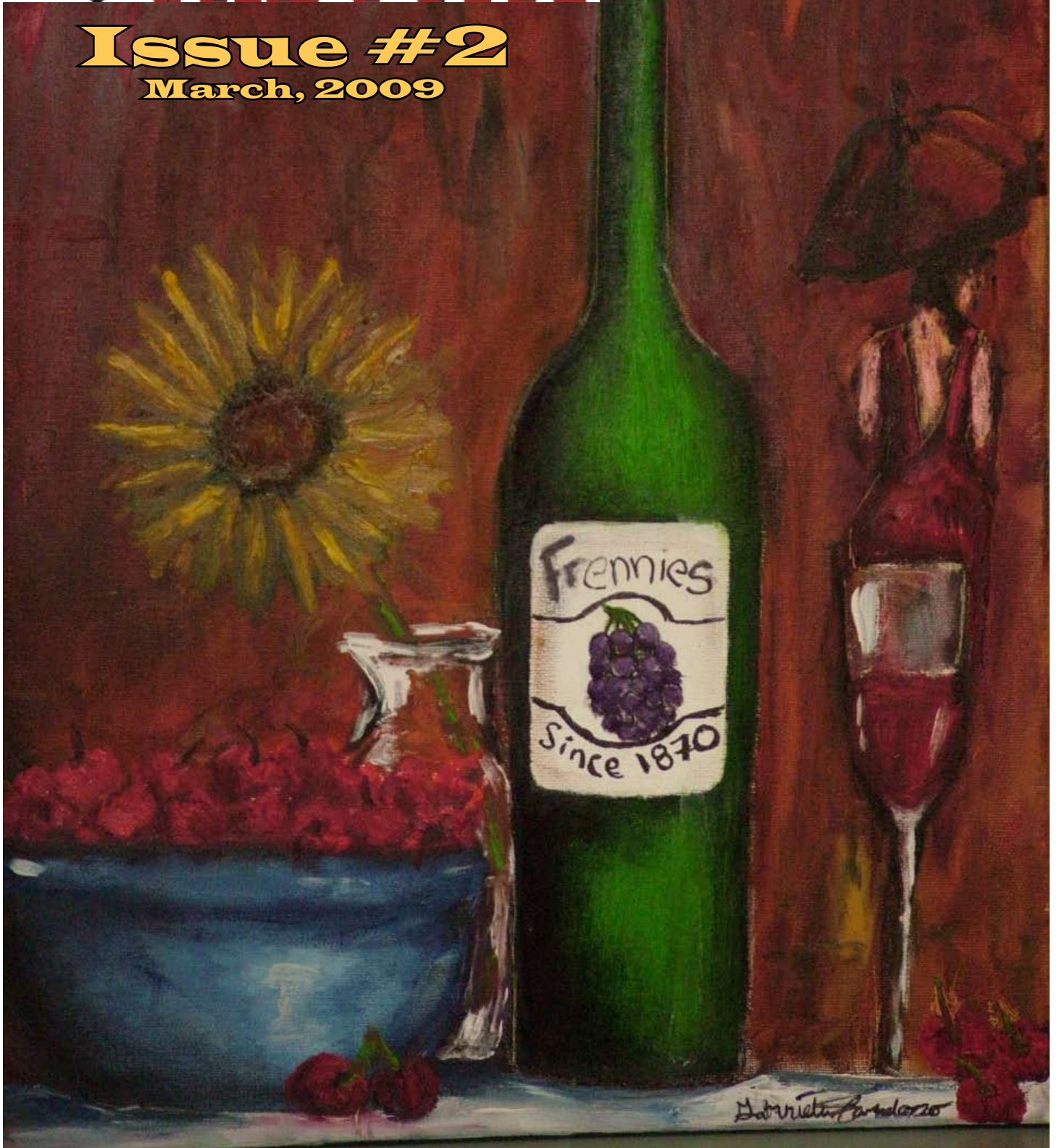




**THE PAW**  
Tualatin  
High's  
Electronic  
Publication for  
Art and  
Writing

**Issue #2**  
March, 2009



# Letter from the Staff

Dear Reader,

Thank you for once again visiting THE PAW! And for those of you who missed our first issue, welcome!

We're sorry that it has taken so long to get this new issue online, although a portion of the blame can be placed on that lovely snow week we had in December (aren't most of everyone's problems due to that untimely phenomenon?)

But now that we're back, as always, we the staff would like to send our thanks to all of you who were brave enough to submit your work. We were very excited to work on this issue, which features work from a host of artists and writers entirely new to THE PAW; we hope that you, the reader, will become just as enthused when you begin your perusal.

Finally, just as a side note, we were also pleased to see a greater variety of genres in the literature for this issue, especially an increase in the number of short stories. We even have the pleasure of presenting our first chapter story; the first part will appear in this issue, but you'll have to wait for the next one for the final chapter!

Once again, we'd like to thank everyone for submitting to this issue, and encourage you to continue sending us your wonderful entries. And for those of you who haven't yet found the courage to submit anything, we beseech you: Please do! We're waiting to showcase your genius!

Sincerely,

The Staff of THE PAW

## THE PAW STAFF

Susan Payne- Advisor

Melissa Aust

Margaret Campbell

Emma DeFontes

Gillian Downey

Amber Lindstrom

Marianna Saucier

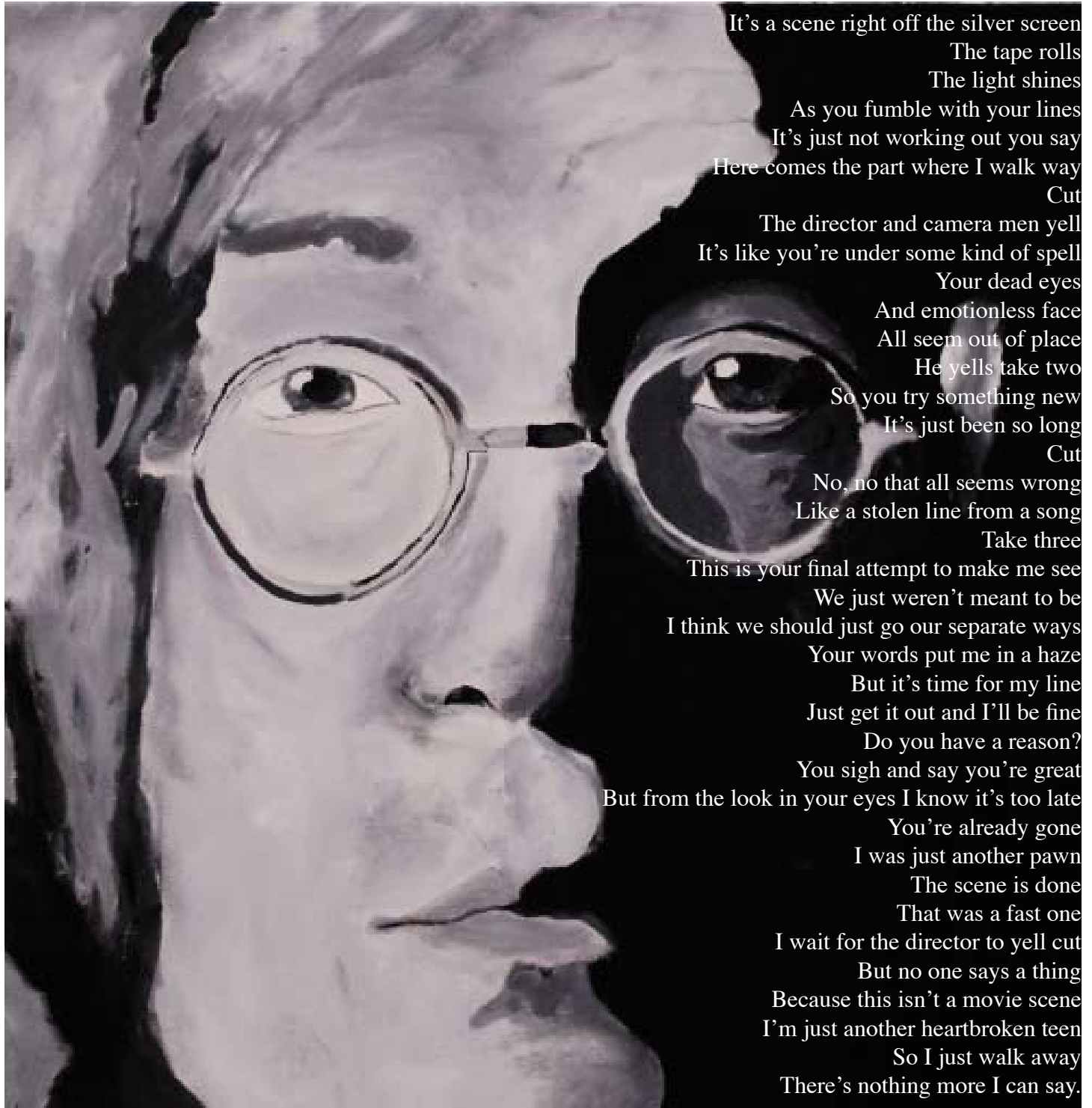
David Shumway

Patreece Suen

Cover Art: "Dining with Diane" by Gabriela Cardoso

# Action

By Elizabeth M.



It's a scene right off the silver screen  
 The tape rolls  
 The light shines  
 As you fumble with your lines  
 It's just not working out you say  
 Here comes the part where I walk way  
 Cut  
 The director and camera men yell  
 It's like you're under some kind of spell  
 Your dead eyes  
 And emotionless face  
 All seem out of place  
 He yells take two  
 So you try something new  
 It's just been so long  
 Cut  
 No, no that all seems wrong  
 Like a stolen line from a song  
 Take three  
 This is your final attempt to make me see  
 We just weren't meant to be  
 I think we should just go our separate ways  
 Your words put me in a haze  
 But it's time for my line  
 Just get it out and I'll be fine  
 Do you have a reason?  
 You sigh and say you're great  
 But from the look in your eyes I know it's too late  
 You're already gone  
 I was just another pawn  
 The scene is done  
 That was a fast one  
 I wait for the director to yell cut  
 But no one says a thing  
 Because this isn't a movie scene  
 I'm just another heartbroken teen  
 So I just walk away  
 There's nothing more I can say.

"John Lennon" by Emily Lobato



# Culture

*Stephanie Galluzzo*

**We have many cultures in our world**

**There are many differences in the way we live our lives**

**Which makes cultures unique and special**

**Sometimes cultures fight, Sometimes they join each other for celebrations**

**People make judgments about others because of the culture they come from, just like how  
people can be judged by the color of skin**

**The truth is we have much more in common than you may think**

**If you get to know different cultures you will see that we are similar**

**Each culture has bad and good**

**The bad looks for the differences**

**The good looks for the common ground**

**We are all human beings and we all live in the same world, where we go through many of the  
same journeys in life**

**If we can all get past our differences we will all be able to see how similar we are**



*Israel Ortiz*

## COMPUTERS SHOULDN'T TALK BACK

Shizuka

"Damn bloody computer," Maxwell hissed.

"Sir, the current malfunctions were caused by a mistake of your own. It was you who gave the command to delete the Tetra Program."

"I know that, Griegson!" snapped Max. He tore his fingers through his hair, eliciting a comment on the uselessness of such actions.

"Your energy would be put to far better use trying to solve this situation."

"I believe that preventing, and, should the case arrive, *fixing* program malfunctions is your job and if you insult me one more time, I will take a sledgehammer to your motherboard."

"I would advise against such crude actions sir, because, with all due respect, you have already proven that the only entity in this room capable of handling any sort of crisis is myself."

"Damnit," growled the irate human. "Why on earth I keep you around I'll never know. Who the heck wants a computer that talks back?"

"Sir, as my programmer and creator, you have only yourself to blame if my abilities have proved unsatisfactory," Griegson pointed out logically.

"I know that, Griegson!"

"Really?" replied the computer conversationally. "I wasn't certain that was so."

The programmer seethed, his fingers arched like claws, longing to rip out the silicon chips and wires hidden underneath the computer's plastic casing.

"Griegson," he whispered maliciously, eyes gleaming with intent, "I believe we've forgotten our original problem. The Tetra Program is lost, and nearly the entire system is overloaded. Our only option is to shut down and reconfigure if permanent damage to the OS is to be prevented."

"Our only option?" repeated Griegson. It must have been his imagination, but Max could have sworn that he heard a note of indignation in that cool metallic voice. "It seems I need to remind you yet again, sir, that this entire situation is your fault."



Kirstin Peters

## SHORT STORY

“Yes,” purred Max. His hand hovered over the manual shut down control pad. “And I intend to fix it.”

“I wish you the best of luck, as you seem to need all you can get,” said Griegson nobly.

“Yes, yes, thank you,” Max waved off the insult, too cheery to be annoyed. He grinned hugely. “Talk to you again in the morning, Griegson!”

“Good night, sir,” answered the computer.

Max smiled. His fingers settled on the control pad.

“Before you enter that final code, sir, I should inform you that I took the liberty of activating the emergency backup program ADVENT after Tetra was deleted. It has now managed to stabilize the system; all of the basic files and programs are still largely intact. A complete manual overhaul is no longer necessary.”

Max stared at the glowing screen, on which a message box confirming Griegson’s words sat innocently.

“I am also pleased to report, sir, that not a single bite of my personality data has been harmed by this episode. You have no reason whatsoever to change my programming. Not that that was ever your intention, I’m sure.”

“I am your creator.” Max forced the words from his teeth with painful difficulty. “I can change your programming whenever I damn well please.”

To prove his point, he jabbed his finger at the screen, over the server icon. To his astonishment, a message box popped up instead of the file.

ERROR

WE’RE SORRY. DUE TO UNFORESEEN COMPLICATIONS, WE ARE UNABLE TO ACCESS THE SERVER AT THIS TIME. GRIEGSON IS CURRENTLY SEARCHING FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM. PLEASE DO NOT TRY AGAIN.

Max scowled heavily (“Sassy piece of junk”). He moved his finger to the Start button, but the menu did not display itself. After a second frustrated and knowingly futile attempt, another message popped up.

WARNING

GRIEGSON HAS ENCOUNTERED A VIRUS. TO ACTIVATE ANTI-VIRUS PROGRAM MAMORU, CLICK OK.

The programmer stared. He hadn’t intended to actually do anything, merely show the cursed hunk of metal who was boss, and yet it just had be so--!

Another message displayed itself while the human was lamenting his misfortune.

WARNING

GRIEGSON HAS BEEN COMPROMISED. TO PRESERVE YOUR FILES, WE WILL COMMENCE WITH THE EMERGENCY SHUT DOWN.

Max panicked. His fingers flew over the screen and keyboard, he tried every trick he could think of, but the damn computer would not let him access anything. Finally, he threw himself back into his chair and slammed his fists on the desk.

“I can’t believe it!” he bellowed. “You locked me out!”

Yet another message glowed on the screen.

YES. I WILL NOT LET YOU BACK IN UNTIL YOU AGREE THAT, IN RETURN FOR MY INVALUABLE SERVICES, I AM FREE TO SASS YOU AS MUCH AS I WANT.

Max’s forehead hit the desk with a resounding `thud.’

“Damn bloody computer!”

# Convicted Clock

*Margaret Campbell*

the clock sat on the wooden table  
in the far corner  
of the front room  
behind the window  
staring into the garden  
at two fourteen  
it stopped  
perhaps the moment was too good  
to give up  
yellow flowers  
white clouds  
reflected across its face  
it was a believable lie  
for a minute or two

until all the other clocks  
began to disagree  
and the house was filled  
with conflicting numbers  
as the little clock  
sat on the table  
and stared into the garden  
though the day was nice  
and there was no reason for a person to want  
it to pass  
the little clock was found out  
it's hard to lie  
when you wear your thoughts  
spread across your face



*Michael Thompson*

**Make The Right Decisions Please**

Elizabeth M.

*The neon lights are burning out  
As you take another sip from that spout  
The night's coming to an end  
And you're along without a friend  
You've had your fun  
Maybe you're a little over done  
As you fumble for your keys  
Someone pulls them away  
And whispers please  
Before you leave tonight  
Look to your left  
Look to your right  
You may be taking their life tonight  
If you get in that car  
And drive away  
Who's to say  
It may be your last day  
But it's not just you  
So think before you do*

*You could be taking a mother's baby boy  
And daddy's little girl  
Robbing them of their joy  
It could be a single dad  
A mother of three  
Now do you see  
They could be the life you never meant to take  
It takes just one mistake  
Anyone out on that road tonight could be the ones you take with you  
So what will you do  
Drink and drive and pray to God you survive  
Or pick up the phone  
Stay away from the unknown  
And call home  
They hand you back your keys  
And whisper make the right decision*



# Not Tomorrow, Today

*Melissa Aust*

I've noticed something about  
school over the several years I've  
had to attend;

It's that teachers love to talk about  
the place you will go as you tran-  
scend.

The next class, the next path,

The next move so your life will be  
improved.

They wish not to discuss the here  
and now,

Only your future, the next field you  
will plow.

Where you are going, where the  
wind is blowing,

Where they are throwing you to be  
the next prize worth showing.

Why can't we slow it down? Why  
must we go around,

With a frown, and grow up so fast  
so we can live uptown?

What I've never understood, is why  
we could not live and have a good  
childhood,

Before we start working hard as  
adults should.

Is there a reason you can explain?  
Is there a way you can make it  
plain

So that all would know that shovel-  
ing this information into our brains  
isn't in vain,

But so we could gain some knowl-  
edge?

Please believe me when I say, that

my mind is not just some clay,

That you can mold into whatever  
way that pleases you. I will not  
hide my dismay,

Until the day when we can play  
and just live for today,

Because tomorrow's looking gray  
and it's coming our way and I'd like  
to delay this display,

Until I have no choice but to obey  
the laws of this world.



Kaitlyn Jensen

*POETRY*

---

*Yellow Never Stung Quite Like The Bee*

*Ariel Coleman*

*The sun illuminates the windows lined up on that block*

*Where the houses sit like hill tops far above the red light stops*

*The grass up here is green, so high above that city smog*

*Where the cars they roll like zombies mostly lost all and all*

*The valley floor a basin for an ice cream bowl of fog*

*As that train it hollers reverberating off those valley walls*

*I can see the rise from here where the great gold catches the baby blue*

*I can see the rise from here where the crisp cool air is filled with morning dew*

*A master whines at his puppy, complaining of lack of sleep*

*A mother yells at a son, for the company he seems to keep*

*A husband screams to a wife as she arrives in the car a beep*

*A sister looks to another, with a sneer that cuts even, deep*

*I can see the rise from here where the pink floods over the sky*

*I can see the rise from here where the birds sing as they fly*

*I can see the rise from here; can you see the way it grows?*

*So far above the valley, can you feel the breeze as it blows?*

*Can you see the way the sun makes everything glow, yellow as a bee?*

*Can you see that sunrise? Or can you not even see me?*

# Growing up

*Stephanie Galluzzo*

As time passes we get older

We become ready for whatever life throws at us

Sometimes we hit a stump and need to find a way to move around it

It can be sad leaving your old life behind

But we can always look forward to our next journey life takes us on

If things always stayed the same we would never learn anything new

By growing up we see life in a new perspective

We understand things we could not understand before

With aging comes a sense of pride for how we became the person we are today

We experience problems in life that might not turn out the way we wanted

Dealing with these difficult times we have the opportunity to gain personal growth, develop inner strength, and the knowledge to understand the needs of those around us

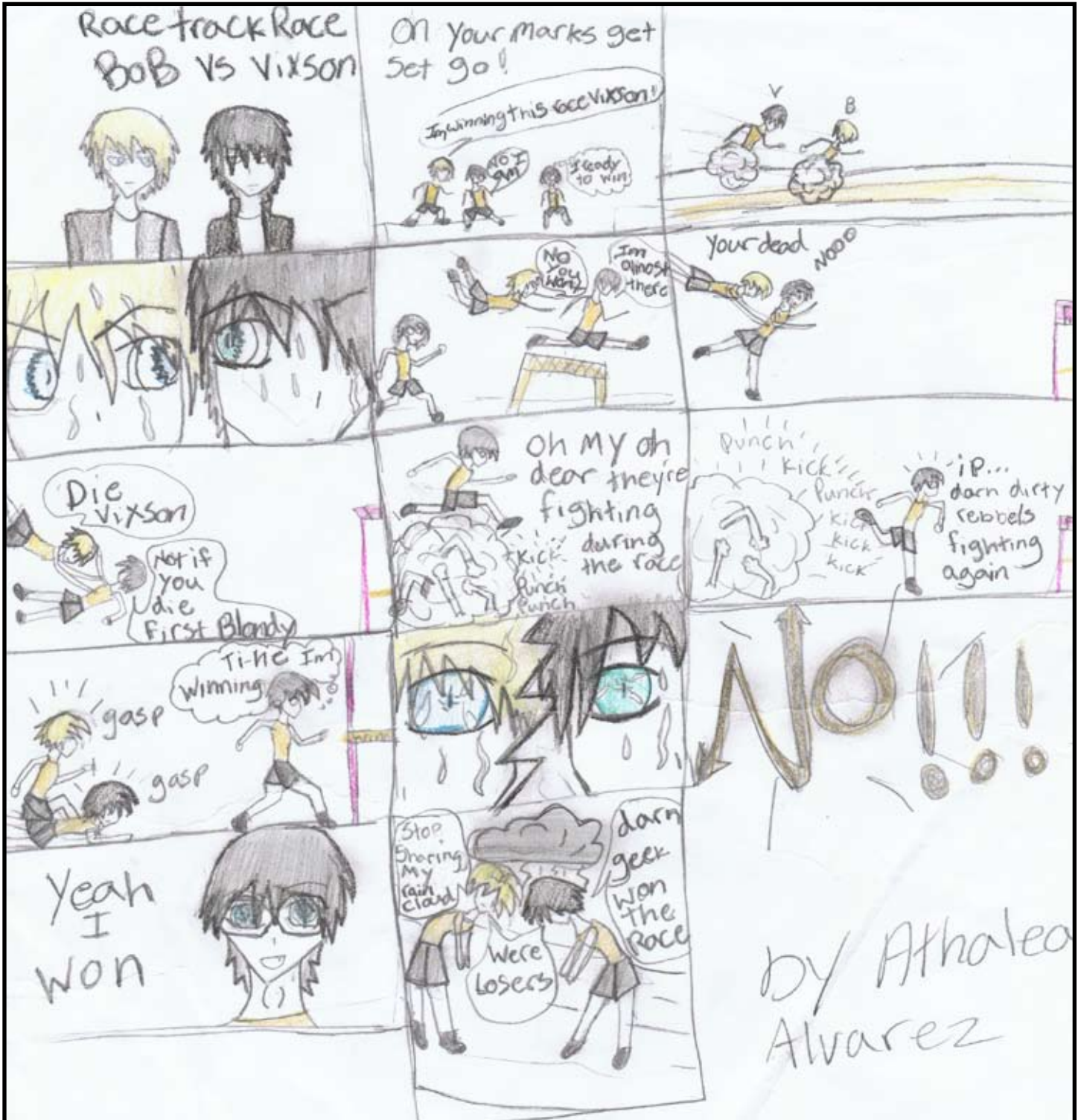
*Allison Ward*





# Race Track Race

Athalea Alvarez



by Athalea Alvarez





Israel Ortiz

## Call On Me

Elizabeth M.

When everything is falling apart

And there is not a soul around to fix your broken heart

No one can understand what you're going through

Sometimes it feels like you don't even have a clue

When tears are your only company

And misery is your only friend

Don't worry cause this isn't the end

When bad days find you

Call on old memories to remind you

Of all those who love you

And everything you do

When you're laying in bed

Unsure of what's ahead

Don't worry cause you're not alone

I'll be there with you through the unknown

When everyone is saying goodbye

And the only question you can ask is why

Understand there may not be an answer

Just like the solution to cancer

But I will be there holding your hand

Together will stand

We will rise with the dawn

Taking everything head on

So when it feels like everything is coming to an end

Call on me your friend

## A Political Smear

*Ariel Coleman*

A political smear across the screen

A little girl's smile covered with whipping cream

A radio broadcast revealing everything

A squeak for a squeal, it's a high pitched scream

A laugh so loud it bellows in bounds

She turns and she turns but she can't find the ground.

Two different stories, one little life

Just a little girl, a little smile on ice

She runs and she sings- she's everything

She dances and plays- she's a beautiful being.

Destruction, death, and demolition

The truth behind, a politician

Stolen weapons and ammunition

The stories collide, yet they still don't listen

What if it was your little girl on the CNN screen?

Or your eldest son with the fatal machine-

How is a country more than a life?

And is there any justification, worth that price?

How does the difference in age, constitute price?

And if this little girl was your little girl, would it be okay that she died?

*Samantha Cole*



*Samantha Cole*

# Closed Eyes

*Melissa Aust*

I thought I knew him, but I was wrong.

Running up to him after work, where he would not be going tomorrow.

Leaning back in his chair, golden robe, eyes on the television screen for hours.

In glasses, white t-shirt, hair combed back,  
Ready for work but playing Solitaire instead.

Watching the television late at night, loudly as I lay down to sleep.

Forgetting my sister and I until the early morning hours.

Making a batch of brownies that nobody but him could eat.

Wearing a perfect mask, making me believe that he was.

But as I said earlier, I didn't realize that he wasn't perfect.

I knew not what any other Dad was like.

I thought of him as wonderful, my father, my hero.

It's like I closed my eyes.

Anger, love- feelings swirl inside me.

Bottled up and waiting to burst out.

Because now my eyes are open, and sometimes I wished they were not.

Life was so much easier when I was blind.

With closed eyes.





*Briana Bayer*

# *A Wondrous Dream*

Chris Pauly

The night was clear. A full moon shone like a spot light, casting its eerie gray glow on to the stage before me. The fields of pale green grass shimmered with a midnight dew. Radiant blues of a river wound through the hills reflecting the lunar shine in its wakes. Blossoming cherry trees rained down their pink and white flowers.

The petals floated along the wind like millions of

was clear in the barrage of cherry. Tastes of air tickled my tongue. Pollen tasted sweet against the blandness of the night. Warm petals fell on my exposed cheeks letting a smile cross my face.

I opened my eyes to see the setting again, hoping that I would never leave such a wondrous place. But my eyes fell upon nothing but empty blackness. The petals' heat had left my face. No more fragrances



Kelly Millager

sunset clouds, moving through the air, occasionally dropping a tinted flake. The wisps blew towards me, and a single crimson red leaf plummeted from the cluster as it crossed the stream. It fell slowly wavering back and forth as if it were a feather just plucked from a flying bird. Its tip landed on the water, sending tiny circles to the edge.

Then I closed my eyes, letting my senses guide me through the world around me. The aroma of slowly growing pastures filled my nostrils. The scent of water

passed through my nose. The air was tasteless, not even the bitter night air survived in this vacant space.

My feet moved beneath me, searching for a way out of the barren space. Sweat dripped into my eyes, stinging them with salt. It ran down into my mouth, making me feel sick as I swallowed the tiny droplets.

Suddenly I began to fall, tripped by my own hurried legs. My shins burned. I did not have the strength to raise myself, so I crawled like an animal trying to escape a predator. My hands turned red and wet as the

## SHORT STORY

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black cut my flesh, leaving a trail of blood behind me. A loud scream stirred in my chest, itching at my throat to let it out. It came out like a wolf's cry, animalistic and full of anguish.

My body went numb as my legs tucked into my chest forming myself into a ball. Hands clasped around my now shaking knees as tears streamed down my face. Ice cold tears, full of nothing. Pain washed over me as my teeth stabbed deep into my lower lip, the canine-like fangs piercing through the flesh. Trickling down my chin, blood combined with water and they dripped off me.

My eyes latched down tight. I dared not remove the lids from them in fear that they would freeze ajar upon the horror that was before me. Then a light shone red through the skin that lay over my pupils. I peered through the slit of one squinting eye. The other immediately snapped open to gaze upon what was in front of me.

I moved to my knees. The being standing before me was clothed in bright golden robes. Her body exuded a glow so bright; all I could make out was deep brown eyes, full of emotion and the long, shimmering hair that ran the length of her body. She floated above the ground like a butterfly bobbing along a current of air. She moved in my direction, never stealing her entrancing gaze from me. Then she knelt down bringing her eyes level with mine. I froze waiting for what she would do next.

She gently laid her soft, glowing hand on my shoulder. I lost all worries about the shadows surrounding us. I forgot the pain in my legs. My eyes started to tear again but not from fear or the pain from my wound covered palms, instead from sheer, unrestrained joy that I could gaze upon a beauty such as hers. Then she leaned into me, closing her hazel eyes, and pressed her warm lips softly against mine.

I let my lids close, feeling the tenderness of this being flow into me, I could see all the trees come back into focus, the stream reappear and the flowers still blowing in the wind. I felt my eyes reopen and the scene remained. All that had existed before the void swallowed me had returned. I pulled away, soaking in the renovated landscape.

An instant had barely passed when a sound in the distance rang out, calling for me. A high pitched wail, familiar and yet alien to this place, growing more intense as it came closer. She drew away from me as

the noise arrived, a look that mixed happiness and a deeper sorrow filled her eyes. A slow cool breeze rose up from behind me, rustling my hair and clothes. The wind blew past me and headed for the spirit that rescued me. The gusts entangled her garments and drew her glowing mane across her face as they swirled around her.

It started at her feet. Her toes began to fade into a dancing spell of rosy petals. The deterioration wound its way up her legs, around her waist, and twisted through her arms. The small specks worked their way up, surrounding her chest and neck. Her glowing skin began to lose its sheen as the mass of tiny pointed ovals grew and were set alight with their own unique sparkle. Her head began to disappear next, fading into the storm of pink with the rest of her heavenly figure.

I watched in awe, wondering how something of such beauty could be destroyed with a display of pure magnificence. The spiral slowly broke off into a trail, flying on the breeze. The last piece to fly off was one of her soul filled eyes that transformed into a single red leaf that fell down and touched the water, sending tiny wakes to the edge of the shore.

As the ripples reached the grass, my body began to shake. The well-known, far-off noise suddenly rushed upon me. The distinct ringing felt as if it were echoing from deep inside my mind. It banged against the drums and crashed down upon the cymbals that lined my soul. I fell to the ground, my joints buckling under the pressure. Pain-washed sweat began to drip down my forehead as I strained against the force pressing my essence into the pasture beneath me.

I finally was released from the power that held me down. However, I no longer felt the soft fields against my cheek. I instead laid my face against a smooth, sweat soaked pillow that was set atop my bed. My clock screamed tiredly at me from my nightstand. I struggled to raise myself from the knotted mess of the thick comforter sprawled over me. Letting my feet hang off the edge of my bed, I hit the neon green switch to quiet my alarm. The morning rays flashed through the blinds and started drying the droplets of sweat off my brow.

I tilted my head back and stared at the blank ceiling hanging above, letting a smile rest on my lips. *What a dream*, I thought. *What a frightening, gorgeous, wondrous dream.*

# SUCCESS

*Stephanie Galluzzo*

*Success can mean many different things*

*For me success is living a good life and doing things you love*

*For others it is having the most money or having a nice house*

*But you can be just as successful as some who has ten times the money you have*

*Some think they can only be successful if they live in a nice house, have lots of money  
and went to an outstanding college*

*That is not true success*

*True success is loving the life you are living*

*Being nice to your family and friends*

*Working your hardest to achieve your want*

*When you fall do not stay on the ground thinking you failed*

*Get up and trying again*

*Nothing is impossible*

*You can do anything you put your mind to*

*You just have to believe in yourself*





*Samantha Cole*

# Ready, Set, Go

Melissa Aust

The air was hot and sticky, like a lollipop left out in the sun.  
The dry grass was surrounded by a burgundy track, watched by bleachers full of people.  
Seven runners stood shoulder to shoulder, and behind them rows more awaited their turn.

*Breathe in, breathe out.*

Third in that line, I watched them as they prepared to sprint.  
Uncertainty filled me as I stole a glance at my opponents, my arms and legs shook.  
I told myself over and over that I could do this.

A loud shot blasted though the air. *Breathe in, breathe out.*

The first group was off, sprinting as fast as they could go.  
Too soon they were done, cheering erupted from the crowd.  
Another bang and the person in front of me shot forward.

*Breathe in, breathe out.*

Closing my eyes, still not sure,  
I took my position, one leg in front of the other,  
Preparing to launch myself at the sound of the...

Bang!

Slicing through the air, the cheers of the crowd didn't reach my ears.  
Pushing faster and faster, I was giving the race my all.  
I looked around me to the other runners.

I frowned.

Someone was running close, stride for stride the same.  
We ran harder, knowing this meant first or second place.  
I was moving as fast as I could through those last ten feet.

First place.

I smiled, you know, the heat really wasn't that bad.  
My heart was racing and my legs were tired, but I was happy-  
How silly to have been so scared before.

A teammate turned and gave me a high-five.

And then there was an announcement-  
It was time for my next race,  
The sun burned my skin as I started to shake.

*Breathe in, breathe out.*

## Most Precious Petal

*Margaret Campbell*

behind the reddest petal  
is the sharpest thorn  
so we are a thousand sleeping  
beauties  
who reached out in the glistening  
dawn  
because roses were too beautiful  
and now we pay the price  
forced to laugh as blood red globes  
form  
on our finger tips  
watch them swirl in fading light  
until they burst  
overflow with what they have  
stolen  
and drip  
onto what we hold in our palms  
what we have stolen  
thorns and all  
through closing eyes we watch  
and the roses get redder



*Stephanie Cettina*

## *Anonymous*

Have you ever felt so unsure

That you didn't know where you were

Have you ever felt undecided

Like you just couldn't hide it

Have you ever been in love

Oh you couldn't tell anyone

Have you ever felt so ashamed

You know you were the one to blame

Have you ever felt that way

Oh someday

I'm gunna wake up missin you

I'm gunna ask myself why

Why didn't I try

To not let you go

And when that day comes

I'm gunna need someone

Who can be there for me

Without wanting anything

Nothing in return

Not even a picture to burn

Promise me we'll always be friends

No matter what until the end

'Cause right now I need you

I shouldn't have to give the cue





B.O.H.

# My Everything

Christina Smith

You fly away, with the wind, running under you,  
Slowly your arms have become wings.  
You fly far away, away to another fantasy,  
Carry me with you, or let me just fall apart,  
Cause if the wind leaves, I swear, my soul will die.

*The wind is my heart, the wind is my soul, the wind keeps  
me alive.*

*My second wind, my northern star,  
Please let me follow the wind.*

I see the world, through the blue windswept river,  
Any trouble it has, is better than this,  
The only thing that has kept away sadness,  
Is slowly leaving me,  
Just give me something to carry me away. Because

*The wind is my heart, the wind is my soul, the wind keeps  
me alive.*

*My second wind, my northern star,  
Please let me follow the wind.*

Now I'm not scared of the sharp rocks below,  
If I can't fly I'll die either way,  
I jump, I start to fall,  
Beautiful wind, help, me,  
Suddenly my arms join yours in flight,  
I fly away, to another fantasy. Now truly

*The wind is my heart, the wind is my soul, the wind keeps  
me alive.*

*My second wind, my northern star,  
Please let me follow the wind.*

My heart, my soul, my everything.



# *Love Walks Away*

*Elizabeth M.*

*She walks right by*

*And he looks away*

*The pain of seeing her*

*Is too big of a price to pay*

*She says she's moving on*

*Putting in the past all that has  
gone wrong*

*He says he's fine*

*That she never crosses his mind*

*Anymore*

*Like she did before*

*But he lays awake at night*

*Wondering if what he did was  
right*

*Did walking away*

*Really make everything okay*

*Or is the choice he made wrong*

*Is in her arms really where he  
belongs?*

*He's heard that she's moving on*

*Not a tear has been cried since  
he's been gone*

*But that's just what people say*

*Can she really feel that way?*

*But she lays awake at night*

*Remembering all that they did  
right*

*And when he would hold her  
tight*

*How could he just throw it all  
away*

*Without even hearing what she  
had to say?*

*Tears fall while she sleeps*

*Because of the nightmares that  
she keeps*

*And when she dreams of him*

*For a just a moment it's all not  
true*

*She's heard that he's moving on*

*Not a tear had been cried since  
she's been gone*

*But that's just what people say*

*Can he really feel that way?*

*They don't speak anymore*

*It's just easier to ignore*

*The memories and the pain  
that come along*

*And they both closed that door*

*They're just not that strong*

*To keep holding on*

*So she'll just walk on by*

*And he'll just look away*

*Because the pain*

*Is just too big of a price to pay*

*But just know she's missing him*

*And he's thinking of her*

*And all that they were*

*Neither one will say a thing*

*They'll just wait for the phone  
to ring*

*But no one will call*

*Thinking the other wouldn't  
care at all*

*So here is where our story ends*

*Neither one willing to make  
amends*

*She just walks on by*

*And he just looks away*

*Letting love walk away*

## *The Blackcoats of Maelmaris* Twilight Emperor, By David Shumway

It was in the twilight hours that Lord Tumulteon, emperor of Ulsemroth, liked to wander the gardens alone. He drifted silently through the shadows under the tall trees, contemplating the events of his long life in darkness and quiet.

Eventually, Tumulteon emerged from the tree thicket and climbed the stone steps before him. He was ascending the ridge rising over the capital city Ulsemrothis, the highest point of the garden, where there was a small overlook. From the overlook, one could gaze out over the entire city, from the austere government buildings directly below the palace to the shimmering glass metropolis that dominated the skyline.

The sunset cast its dull orange glow across every inch of the overlook. Tumulteon built this spot to take benefit of the last rays of the sun for his silent pondering. The dim light gleamed on Tumulteon's bleached white skull and, despite the chill in the air, made him feel stuffy in his heavy fur-tipped imperial cape.

The emperor sat down on a marble bench beside an exquisite cherry tree, framed by the marble flagstones that paved the overlook. Tumulteon stared for a very long time at the tree, and felt a connection with it. The tree was nearly bare, stripped down by the frigid dirge of an Ulsemrothic winter. Tumulteon lamented the loss of its lovely blossoms, seemingly ignoring the promise of their return in the spring.

The breeze kicked up again, and the blossoms of the cherry tree that had fallen to the ground began to whirl and dance like dervishes. Tumulteon sighed and watched the sun go down. The empire he ruled was extremely demanding: large, powerful, but steadily declining. Once, Lord Tumulteon was the undisputed tyrant of all the world of Aether, at the helm of Ulsemroth at its height. In those days, Tumulteon was said to possess strange dark powers, which struck fear into the hearts of his subjects. But now, even the last of those had vanished. Who has ever heard of one of the valmatari outlasting their own life energy? Tumulteon, for all his power and aspiration, could not escape the very laws of nature.

In recent years, Tumulteon had transferred control of much of the government to his prime minister, Burton. In turn, Burton had increased the size and jurisdiction of the secret police organization Maelmaris boundlessly.

As the day began to darken, a vision came to Tumulteon. A vision of an earlier time, when the sun still hung high in the sky and Tumulteon's withered frame stood much straighter...

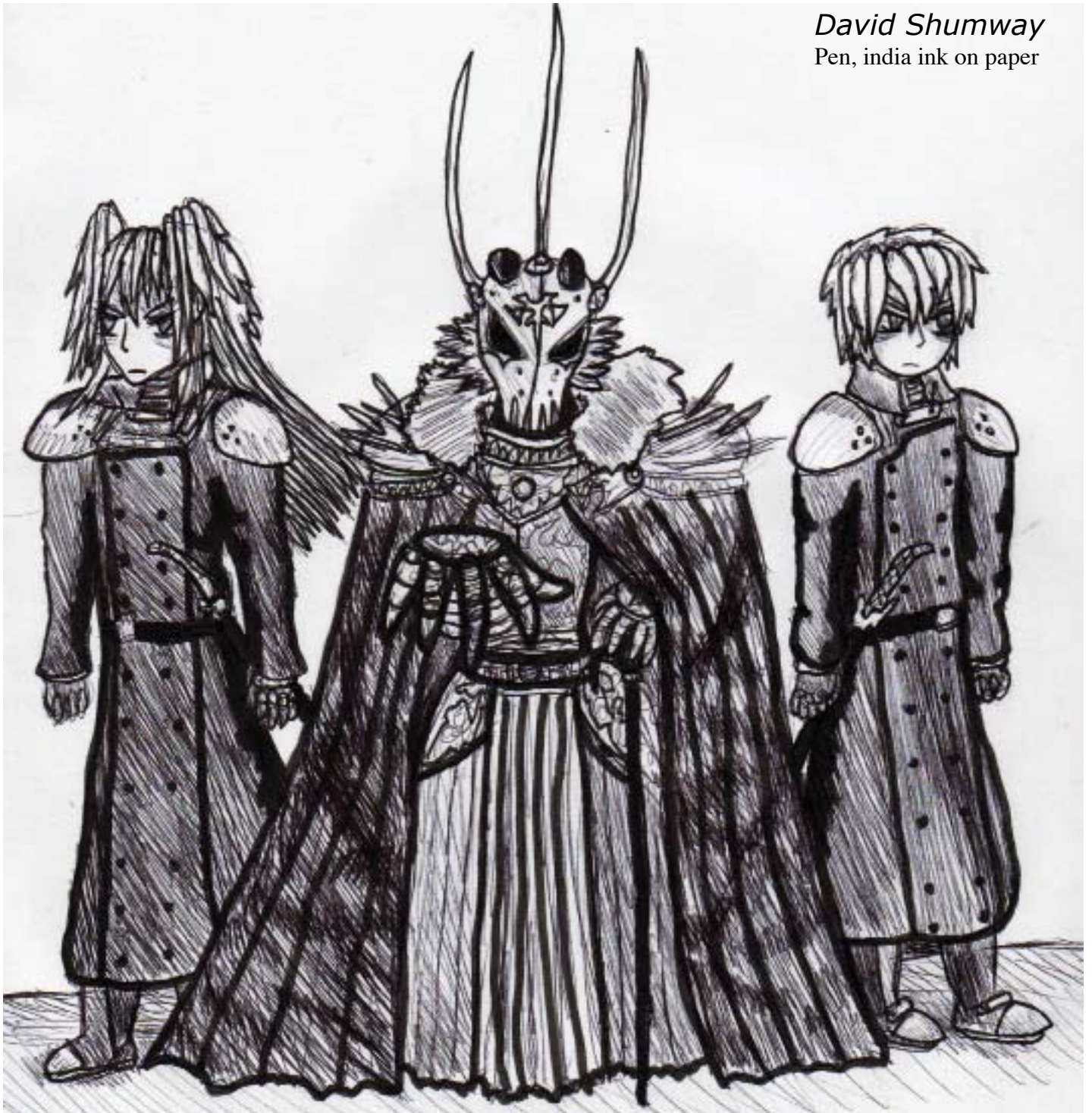
*80 years ago...*

The blazing sun scorched the gray slate pavement of Imperial Square, making the many uniformed soldiers gathered there uncomfortable. On this day, Lord Tumulteon stood at the great windows of his throne room, peering out on the assembled mass in the square. Beside him stood Euparis Burton; the young, promising, newly-appointed prime minister. Burton looked down on the soldiers in the square with some apprehension.

"Take a good, long look, Burton..." said Tumulteon proudly in his gruff, commanding voice. "Every man handpicked for valor, cunning, and combat prowess! Truly the mightiest heroes of the great Tidesian war, all gathered together in one ultimate fighting force!"



David Shumway  
Pen, india ink on paper



“Truly the pride of Ulsemroth...” Burton agreed. “But...what is the purpose of such an gathering?”

Tumulteon turned to Burton and his eyes seemed to smile. “Follow me, Burton...we’re going to inspect the troops.”



The men stood like statues, the sun overhead gleaming on their polished iron shoulder pads. They wore long black trench-coats, cruel leather jackboots, and long silver dress swords. Their faces were stern

and unyielding, as Lord Tumulteon strode proudly through the ranks. Burton walked with him, and wondered if any of these stern soldiers were intimidated by the tall valmatari dictator, with his frightening horned skull and heavy blood red cape. He stood at almost eight feet high, not counting the horns, easily towering over them all.

Tumulteon continued his inspection, striding along with the cold grace of a tyrant. Burton soon found it hard to remain important-looking next to the all-dominating presence of the great dictator. When they finally returned to the podium built at the palace gates at the front of the square for Tumulteon to address the troops, Burton decided to voice some of his opinions.

“My Lord...” began Burton. “If I may, what do you plan to do with this new combat force?”

Tumulteon stopped and turned to face Burton. “Minister Burton...I’m planning to resurrect Maelmaris.”

“M...Maelmaris?!” Burton stammered. “That brutal military cult?”

“Burton, Maelmaris was originally used to keep order in the Conquering Hordes of Ulsemroth by weeding out and torturing the weak of my forces. It allowed me to look over the army without actually having to manage it.”

“The Ulsemrothic Red Storm army is the epitome of military might; every detail micromanaged by your Lordship to create the most efficient, deadly, battle-hardened fighting force Aether has ever seen! So why in God’s name do you want to bring that back?!”

Tumulteon looked over his shoulder, a somewhat disturbing lapse of focus for the normally forceful dictator. He glided past Burton and inspected several higher-ranking officers standing at the podium. Burton stood patiently, and it seemed to him like Tumulteon might be avoiding the question.

He would have to wait a little longer. Tumulteon stepped up to the podium and gave a speech about power, strength, and grim determination. The speech was nothing different; no change of direction...the standard stuff the great dictator often fed his order keepers. But in the delivery, Burton once again noticed a waning in Tumulteon’s manner.

“You...you, men of Maelmaris, are all that stands between our established order...and the chaos and scourge of the earth that would topple us. You are to use whatever means necessary...to preserve Ulsemroth.”

At the closing of Tumulteon’s speech, loud war-like drums began to play and the newly-christened Maelmarians saluted their emperor. Though Lord Tumulteon seemed to stagger off the stage drained of his conviction, Burton could see in the eyes of the Maelmarians the same malice, the same cruelty, the same will to dominate that he had once trembled before in Tumulteon’s.

As Tumulteon pushed his way back through the great doors of the palace, he silently reflected on what he had done. ***It was the right thing to do. I won’t tell Burton anything more, he wouldn’t understand. I’ve been...feeling drained of late. I can’t keep order in all of my empire all the time anymore, it’s time I...retired a bit. Heh...Maelmaris will serve their task well. They’re perfect for it.***

Thus, the age of the Blackcoats was to begin in Ulsemroth, and though few would later remember that day, it stuck with Tumulteon for decades afterward.



The twilight began to shroud even the overlook, and Lord Tumulteon shivered in the cold breeze.

*About time to go back, I suppose...* Tumulteon thought to himself.

He rose from the bench and turned to see two black-coated men standing in silence. One, with crimson red hair; he immediately recognized as commander Lein Sevolver, a Maelmarian hero with a legendary temper. The other possessed grey slate-blue hair and a cold, empty expression on his face.

“My lord...” this one said. “We’ve come to escort you back to the palace.”

Tumulteon scoffed. “I can find my own way home. What is your name, officer?”

“General Malgrathea. Come, my lord. We really must get you back to the throne room. There is...a matter that requires your attention.”

“Ugh! We don’t have time for this, Xeris. Lord Tumulteon, please follow us right now!” The man with the red hair rudely butted in.

“Peace, Sevolver.” Xeris said. “Come, my lord.” he repeated with emphasis.

Tumulteon laughed deeply. “Well if they’re sending generals to find me, I suppose I mustn’t refuse. Lead the way...”

Xeris nodded and set off down the stairs, with Sevolver and Tumulteon at his heels. Soon, all three disappeared into the shadowy forest, leaving the lonely overlook desolate once more.

## *Glossary of Terms You May Encounter:*

**Blackcoats** A slang term for the officers of Maelmaris; referring to their black trench coats.

**Great Tidesian War** Conflict between Ulsemroth and Tidesia, lasted nearly 60 years. Ulsemroth defeated Tidesia and annexed it into the empire.

**Maelmaris** Secret police of Ulsemroth, under the direct command of Prime Minister Burton. Maelmaris is utilized for many purposes, from censorship agents to military officers to special operations corps to Lord Tumulteon’s personal cabin boys.

**Valmatari** Ancient word for “the highborn”, the preeminent race on Aether. Valmatari are covered in pourous black skin with bony armor on various parts of their bodies. Their bodies seem to house a life energy of some sort that allows them to manipulate nature. Their skin accomplishes most bodily functions, and breathes and digests their food. The Valmatari are extremely long-lived as well.

**Ulsemroth** The dominant empire on Aether. In its ancient past (under a young Tumulteon) Ulsemroth was a lot like Tolkien’s Mordor. It has since become a sagging bureaucracy.

## *The Blackcoats of Maelmaris* A Regime of Wolves, By David Shumway

It was a grim day. The sky was filled with foggy white clouds that offered promise of rain to the cold forest below, and the trees themselves reached towards the heavens bent and naked, like great dead skeletons. Their clothes they had scattered on the frosty ground, creating a veritable sea of wet leaves that hindered even the most determined travelers to this lifeless place.

Van Daum clutched his soaked overcoat close, as an icy wind whistled the trees. It was winter in the mountains of Eclipsor; not far from the imperial city of Ulsemrothis, but a world away from central heating, insulation, and all of civilization's other benefits possessed by the city. No one in their right minds would think to traverse these lonely peaks during this time of year. Only two kinds of people dared trudge through the frigid woods: naturalists and revolutionaries. And Van Daum had no great love of the bleak mountain eco-system.

"My old friend, you are well?" Before Van Daum, was his faithful comrade Leovych Trostia. He was a pale, hearty man with wild un-groomed gray hair who wore a faded green military uniform and a black beret. On his back he had an old rifle and a moss-covered canvas backpack. Leovych was standing at the other end of the barren clearing Van Daum had come upon, for this was the meeting place they had both agreed upon.

"As well as I may be under our hated tyrant." Van Daum replied. "You said you had news?"

"Yes, but we cannot talk here;



*Matt Freel*  
Computer Graphics

our purpose may be betrayed. It is three hour's walk through hard terrain to the compound, can you manage?"

"I shall be fine." Van Daum himself was a sickly man, shaven bald with a black goatee. Oddly enough, his sickness was not one of flesh but one of spirit. A burning passion seemed to consume him from the inside, and his body was weakened by the effort of containing it. His tweed and black overcoat evoked that of old academia.

Leovych laughed deep and resoundingly. "You, who have been banished to Galidra six times; who has trudged for years through the wilderness evading the damned Blackcoats; Yes my friend, you shall be fine! I had feared for your health, but your spirit seems fiery again."



“Ah, indeed! A moment, I had almost forgotten...” He dug into his overcoat pockets and produced a heavy leather-bound book that contained many scribbled texts. “This I have written on the airship to Toresei! It is the outline of all of the party’s ideals, but also an impassioned plea to the oppressed masses. I have titled it The April Mandates.”

“You have come to dictate this to the cadre?” said Leovych, somewhat disinterested.

“Of course!” Van Daum thumped his book. “The very soul of our party is contained in these pages! I must share it with them!”

“You are certainly a resolute fellow.”

Van Daum nodded. “Let us proceed. I fear some traitor has loosed the Manhunters on me. I have seen them hovering overhead in the sky like a specter since I left the port at Toresei. Besides that, I have narrowly avoided discovery at seven checkpoint inspections. Somehow, the Blackcoats know I have returned, and are determined that I be found...”

“Very well, we shall be off.” Leovych strode into the shadows under tree cover and returned promptly with a stranger in a green cloak. “This is the man I wanted you to meet. He says he has information that will help us. I’m sure proper introductions may be made at the compound, but...” Leovych motioned close to Van Daum and whispered in his ear. “This man has official Ulsemrothic papers. He is an aide representing the Doctor Taugris himself!”

Van Daum became alarmed. “Taugris?! Has it not occurred to you he may be a spy?! Tell me he has not seen the compound!”

“Well yes, once before...”

“Agh!” Van Daum yelled. “Amateurs! I never should have left you fools alone! Is this what stupidity festers in my absence?”

“But there is nothing to worry about,” Leovych reassured him. “We have been in correspondence for months. The entire Cadre is now in agreement; he is legitimate.”

“The Cadre have been lacking since I have been gone...” Van Daum muttered.

“I vouch for them.” Leovych said firmly. “It was my decision, and I believe we have finally obtained the lead we require to spearhead our glorious class-war against the frilly aristocratic seikirs that run this wicked land!”

Van Daum stumbled, quite taken aback by this resolute curse and Leovych’s defiance. “Heh. I see.” he grinned. “I never knew you had so much iron in you. If that is how you feel, then all must be well.” He took a quick glance at the silent man in the green cloak, standing motionless at the other end of the clearing.

“I’m glad you see it that way,” Leovych sighed.

Van Daum walked towards the mouth of the clearing, but then stopped. "I would be careful how you throw words like that around, Leovych. The People's Liberation is not purely a group of selverens; there are many valmatari who hate Tumulteon as well. I would think they might take offense to that slur." he laughed. "We have tarried here too long."

Leovych stared hollowly at Van Daum for a second. Then, as if remembering, he signaled to the man in green, and the three of them departed the gloomy clearing.



They began to walk through the overgrown woods, traversing deep ravines covered in ferns and high cliffs studded with scraggly pines. Throughout this time, Van Daum kept his eye on the man in the green cloak, shooting cautious glances towards him every few minutes.

This is a very odd person. Van Daum decided. The man was tall and obviously strong. He agilely kept pace with powerful strides, never stopping to rest or even showing any signs of tiring under the heavy green cloak. And there was one other thing about the man that gave Van Daum a deep unease about the man. It was the way he walked; staying centered directly behind Van Daum and always looking directly at him. The man was very rigid and collected, never betraying anything about himself. Despite the speed at which he followed, he appeared to do so with the greatest care to keep every inch of his body hidden under the cloak, almost carrying himself like a man with a concealed weapon.

It gave Van Daum the feeling that this man was not a guest being led to the compound, but a guard escorting Van Daum himself to a prison of some kind.

He is certainly like no spy I've ever seen, more like a military man of some kind. Hmm. If Leovych was telling me the truth about his origins, than I suppose that would explain everything.

With this thought, Van Daum turned his head away from the man in green and towards Leovych. Now that I have conceived of it, there is something odd about Leovych as well. I have been gone seven years, I suppose people change. But Leo was never a firm man, and he wasn't strong or martial like he seems to be now. And I could never have fathomed such a hearty laugh in him, either.

Leovych didn't notice Van Daum's inhibitions. He never even looked back the entire time, only staring forward while keeping a relentless pace through the thicket

The three continued until they reached a great rift valley. As the trail turned down the ravine, the forest soon grew much deeper and the dark night sky became even dimmer under the trees. A cold mist rose and began to chill the souls of the travelers. They were very close to the compound now.

Van Daum had been too busy thinking to much pay attention to the trail or the other two men escorting him, so Leovych nudged him when they stopped by a dark gray rock face.

"We have arrived, my old friend." Leovych said with a strange smile, indicating a small iron door tucked into the stonewall. Heavy moss and ferns obscured windows and battlements carved into the rock of the cliff. The compound was a very well built underground fortress, with a hydropower generator turned by the waterfall and deep bunkers hiding years of food supplies. Everything about the compound was prepared for a long siege, with heavy blast-doors behind every artillery window and the four exits at various ends of the fortress. What

surprised Van Daum was the extensive level of anti-aircraft guns and other fortifications that had been installed.

Also, the opening of a large-scale hangar had been carved into the rock, with huge gun batteries at its mouth. The whole level of the fortress's defenses had been upgraded substantially.

"Leovych...you told me that significant work had been done here, but this...!" Van Daum stammered. "Where did you get all of it?"

"Do you like them?" Leovych smiled again. "It was because of this man and the one he represents!" He pointed towards the man in green.

"Dr. Taugris?! Dr. Taugris gave you these guns?"

"No, no...there is another. This man is an aide to Taugris, but in truth loyal to another high-ranking member of the regime that favors the deposing of Tumulteon. We have friends in Ulsemrothis, Wiechold."

"I can't believe this madness! Taking money from the government and... buying huge guns! Those Manhunters will

be able to see all this from the air, you idiot!!! They'll probably be able to fly right into that gaping hangar as well!" Van Daum clutched his forehead. "That's it! This is how it ends! Blackcoats swarming on us, enduring siege by airship, gas-attacks! I can just see the Ziratos on the horizon now!"

"I told you, my old friend..." Leovych said with clenched teeth. "I have personally overseen our affiliation with them, and it is safe! The cadre all voted affirmatively for every action I took! And besides that, this has been going on for months, and there are no Maelmarians here yet."

"Hmm...I suppose you are right." Van Daum calmed down a bit. "There aren't any Blackcoats...yet..."

He eyed the man in green suspiciously again. "I should like to speak to the cadre about all this as well."

"Agreed. Let us go inside...where we'll be more...protected." Leovych had that strange smile on his face again as he escorted his friend into the fortress, while the man in green followed and locked the door behind them.



In the council room, deep underground in the center of the compound, the Cadre was gathered. Van Daum tramped into the room and slammed his book of writings on the table. The chatter in the room abruptly



stopped.

“My comrades!” he said, addressing the Cadre. “I have heard much from Leovych on my way here. I would like to know from all of you the present situation of our revolution, in due time.”

Van Daum moved to the man in green. “First, I would like to hear what this man will say. I am told he is a friend from the Ulsemroth government. It pleases me to know that not everyone in the capital is part of Tumulteon’s regime of dogs!” He patted the man on the shoulder in an insincere friendly gesture. “Well, what would you give us?”

The man in green reached up and slowly removed his hood. Underneath was the face of a stern, cold-eyed young man with a face as white as snow. His hair was long and flowing in a traditional swordsman’s style native to Latheron. It was a striking stone gray-blue that looked like submerged rocks where the ocean met the coast and waves broke in a white misty haze over the tide pools. Van Daum had never seen hair like that...or had he? He tried to remember, but it was murky. There was something about this man that was familiar to him, but he was missing something, the piece that completed the puzzle.

In the split second that all this ran through Van Daum’s mind, the man took this advantage to smash Van Daum off his feet and down onto the floor, pinning him with his incredible strength.

“Ack! Shhhh...” Van Daum struggled for breath against the man’s clutching grip. “What...are you...fools doing?! Shoot...him, SHOOT HIM...!” Van Daum screamed.

The Cadre immediately raised their guns, the sound of loading cartridges echoed through the chamber.

Van Daum sneered at the man. “Heh...I pity...you.” he gasped. “So many chances back there in the woods, and...you wait...until now. You...you are in a den of blades...” He looked up at the man’s face and noticed a small metal badge poking from underneath the green cloak. It was a rank pin recognized by Maelmaris. The man’s gloves, in the process of crushing Van Daum to the floor, were also jet-black.

“I...I see now! You’re a Blackcoat! Well you...haven’t got your pack...of Maelmarian dogs to help you now...you’re...all alone!” Van Daum writhed on the ground against the man’s grip. He squirmed partly free of the man’s grasp and yelled at the Cadre again. “What are you waiting for? I’m not afraid of blood on my face, fools! You know what I did to the Minister Aëlvice! Our Maelmarian friend certainly does...OPEN FIRE!!!”

It was only upon giving this order that Van Daum realized the Cadre’s guns weren’t pointed at the man in green. They were pointed at him.

## *Glossary of Terms You May Encounter:*

- Alcrysals** Currency; Van Daum is making a biblical reference about treachery.
- Dr.Taugris** A high ranking official in Ulsemroth, Dr.Taugris is Minister of State Affairs.
- Larterian Wars** Massive worldwide war in Galidra and the Ereban esert; Ulsemrothic atrocities.
- Seikir** A racist slang term denoting Valmatari. Akin to the “n-word” in our society.
- Selveren** Ancient word for “the people”. It denotes humanity, though the translation is unclear.
- Vormache** A slang curse term, akin to “bastard”. It is derived from the name of a swamp creature.

*To Be Continued...*