

Fanatical Publishing's

# Weekly Review

Issue #59

April 21, 2013

## AND NOW, a word from the publisher:

Hello folks, Jochannon here; first let me say thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy, and please feel free to share it with your friends, re-post it to your profile, spread it around; the more people who get to read it, the better!

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If you want to contribute, I'd love to see your work, send it to me at the aforementioned e-mail address with: 'category(prose, fanfic, poetry), story title, author's name' in the subject line: please include the text of your story in the body of the email, and please include a cover letter about you, your work, or whatever; include any links you want.

Do you have any questions or comments? If you do, I'd to hear them; write to me at the aforementioned e-mail address.

I'm bad at stopping these things, so I'll just say again: thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy!

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# THE WALLS

Jess Pumroy

Hi! My name is Jess. I'm 16 years old and I'm an amateur writer from Asheville, North Carolina. If you enjoy my work, please feel free to visit my blog, where I post quite a bit of my writing as well as offer what advice I can to struggling writers like myself. <http://aclutteredwritersbrain.tumblr.com/>

It is nearly midnight as I lay here, my mind writhing in it's violent frenzy, a torturous sensation which has plagued my restless brain since I first experienced the vehement animation of the walls. As I pen this manuscript, I pray that my terror will leak from my heart and onto the page, providing me with some means of psychological rest so that I may find slumber, if only a moment's peace should be mine. But I fear that this scribbled entry will not prove cathartic enough to relive me of these horrors and anxieties which dance so tauntingly through my memory. My fear is greater still that I may not be long for this world; these wild phantasms may find me at any moment, driving me to such a state of madness that I should end my insane sufferings altogether. I have not shared these paranormal experiences with another living soul for fear of that awful ridicule which humans tend to place upon things they do not comprehend, but I will share it with you, whoever you are, should you happen upon this paper. Yes-I will tell you, dearest intrigued reader, the whole of my peculiar story.

I mentioned briefly the concept of living walls. Indeed, you must think me mad, but I fear this is no fable. Several nights ago, ere I shuffled wearily through my house to my bedchamber, there came a violent banging from through my household walls. Upon first hearing it, I suspected it had only been the trickery of imagination or dreamery that carried these sounds to my ear. It certainly is peculiar, the way one dismisses those dangers which he cannot logically explain! The wild thumping, which persistently continued as though many prisoners were trying desperately to escape some fatal chamber on the other side of my walls, grew louder, and even tangible as I lay upon my bed. I felt the damned banging upon those walls as a man feels his own heart beating in his chest! Reverting to my childhood fears, I pulled my heavy, tattered quilt over my head, hiding myself from those monsters that seemed to close in around me. Sweat collected on my palms and brow in clammy, icy beads as my heart pounded inside my chest, sending my psyche into a horrified frenzy. What demon had found its way from the depths of Hell to haunt me here?

In an act of bravery (or rather, some form of psychological masochism) I dared to peek out my head from beneath the covers, my trembling hands allowing just enough space between it and my eyes that I could see but a small fraction of my bedchamber. The horrors which danced before my eyes then are sickening to recall, but for you, o' reader, I will attempt to hold their memory in the forefront of my mind so that I may describe them to you. My bedchamber, being rather small in size, left a minuscule amount of space around my creaking bed, save for one side, which allowed just enough room for a night stand to the left of my door. This, by consequence, left my feet nearly pressed against the adjacent wall. You may deem this information unnecessary, but I tell you these things only so that you may see these beasts as I have.

The hard, wooden walls around me had stretched and morphed so that they no longer resembled wood at all, but rather some strange elastic cloth, stretched tightly o'er the beasts that protruded from it. Dozens of impressions, human in form, but demon in nature, stretched towards me, their agonized faces silently screaming furiously into the night, as if it had been my fault alone that they suffered here. Petrified with fear, I could only lay frozen upon my bed as the hands of those horrific apparitions—the hands of hell—reached for me. Before long, the hands had found me, clawing that the flesh of my arms and legs through the thickness of my quilt, which I clung to for my life. Though by now I had tightly closed my weeping eyes, unable to witness the horrors which were unfolding before me, I could feel them pulling me sluggishly through the wall, back to whatever wicked dimension they had come from. Unable to fight them, I let out a scream, a blood-curdling shriek that echoed in the emptiness of the night.

I'm afraid, my friend, that I cannot describe the demonic terrors which I imagine befell me after that moment, for I fainted in the clutches of those nightmarish beasts. My dreams thereafter, thank Heaven, were plagued with no memorable phantoms. Upon waking, I lay frozen beneath my blanket, unable to open my eyes for fear that one of the ghastly faces would be looming only inches from my head. At length, I gathered the strength to open but one of my wary eyes, still hazy with the fog of slumber. There hung no beast above my eyes, and so I dared to open the other, glancing cautiously about my cramped chamber. It was empty, save for several thin rays of morning light shining in from the cracks in the shutters. It seemed to me, however, that the shadows of what had been there were still haunting my bedchamber, my memory flashing nearly transparent images before my eyes. My heart still raced as I sat up in bed, making sure that each inch of my walls stood free of the humanoid monsters. It seemed that, for the moment, I was safe.

This, however, did not last. The next night, the anxieties which come with darkness and memories of the phantoms already plaguing my mind as I tucked myself into bed, the walls rose to life again, those monsters groping for me once more. On this night I tried to flee, but it seemed that wherever I ventured within my home, those specters would follow. Their tyrant did not stop at the walls; by now I felt as though they haunted my mind as well, intending to follow wherever on the Earth I went until they caught me and brought my body back to the devil himself.

The first incident was seven nights ago on this night, and each moment since it has gotten steadily worse, their evils infecting my brain like some dreadful disease. O' reader, how I hate them! I fear greatly that their next visit shall be the most horrific, that they may actually drag me to Hell with them now! I suppose now, though, that they could not do so much more to me; they have already stolen my sleep, my solace, and, I believe, my sanity. See how I speak so calmly of Hell and death? I must be insane by now! Ah! Here again comes that demonic knocking from through my bedchamber walls! Like a guest who wishes to come for a kindly visit, yet steals precious things from me as he speaks of Earth's most unpleasant evils!

I have made my peace, beloved reader, by telling you this tragic tale. If my thoughts that this is indeed my final hour of life rein true, I will leave you with frail hopes that my madness is not infectious, and that these grotesque phantasms will not in turn come hungrily for you, whoever you are, once you have read this final manuscript.

## LAND OF INSANITY PT2

riolightwarrior  
of <http://riolightwarrior.deviantart.com>

I soon let the sergeant go, and put my pistols back in their holsters. I took in the scenery; everything was soaked in blood. Dirt and bodies were all over the place. Everything was dead. The houses were empty, and the stalls were destroyed. Some houses were missing huge chunks of wall. The sergeant soon came back, acting a little more cautious around me than he was before.

"Corporal, you are going to be dishonorably discharged after this." A simple little gaze made him quiver slightly. Such a pitiful man.

"Yeah, and dip shit, I don't care. I would love it if they did that. It just means I don't have to take orders from pompous asses like you." As soon as I said that, he started yelling at me again. hehe. When will he ever learn? While he was yelling, I slowly pulled one of my guns out, then held it there, smoking my cig. With a pull of the trigger, "Bang!" He fell to the ground holding his knee. Writhing in pain, he cursed me to the ends of the earth.

I turned around to face him, then knelt down beside him, looking him dead in the eye. "Awww. Poor baby. Did you get hurt, poor thing? Well there are three ways to stop you from screaming. One is to take you to the medics." His head nodded so rapidly, I thought it would come off. "Or I could just end your pathetic life here." I pulled my pistol to his head and glared at him. "Or you could be a nice little boy and just shut up and suck it up."

He soon shut up and looked at me in complete fear. After shooting the sergeant, four quiet days passed. I wasn't bothered or messed with by anyone. A plane came to pick us all up on the fourth day to take us home. Upon landing on base in Rockwell, I was arrested by the MP's, and thrown into a cell, and left there for a week. Food and drinks were dropped off for me around breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I sat there alone for the entire week before someone came to my cell.

An old man in a butler's outfit, holding a small laptop came to my cell a little out of the ordinary. "Hello, good sir. I'm here on the behalf of Mr. X. If you would be so kind as to listen to his offer..."

"Beat it Jeeves! I have no time to deal with you or your master. If he



wants me or something, he should have come himself."

"Oh, dear. My master wasn't kidding when he said you would have quite the temper. Well then, I will leave this here just in case you decide to change your mind." He put the laptop on the ground, and slid it into my cell, then bowed to me. "Have a nice day, Sir," he said politely, then walked away. I sat there for days, staring at the laptop before I finally broke.

I opened the laptop, and a program opened up. A silhouette appeared on the screen as this somewhat distorted voice said, "Ah. You have finally decided to listen to my offer, have you Mr. Bane? Good. I assure you, this offer will be the best one you will ever have."

The voice was too distorted. I couldn't tell if it was male or female, or young or old. I couldn't help but to ask. "Who the Hell are you?"

I heard a slight chuckle from the other end. "I am Mr. X, my friend, and I am here to offer you your freedom."

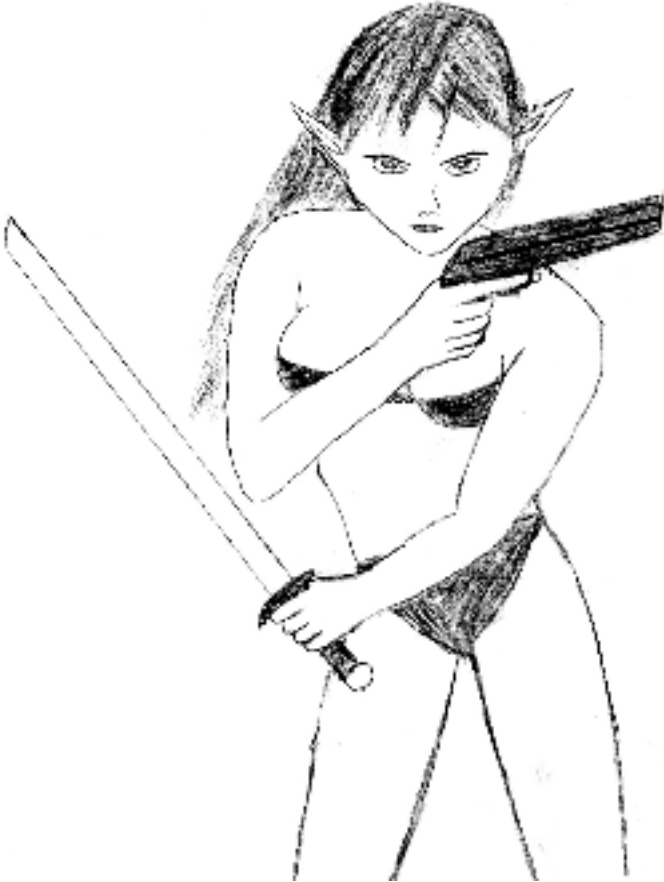
I couldn't believe what I was hearing. *My freedom.* Whose face did I piss in that this guy would want my freedom? "All right, I'm listening."

"I am putting together a little group of like-minded individuals, such as yourself. People who have been wronged. Who have been sent to their deaths in a Hell hole."

*A group of like minds. Hub. Sounds like my kind of group.* "When do I start?"

I heard another chuckle from the other end, "Good. Think you can wait for about a year while I get everything ready?" I was probably going to be stuck there that long anyway.

# FAN FICTION



**or: Leanna's Return**

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# ME2 HELLDIVER SAGA CHAPTER 26: OLD BLOOD

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Once again, the Hellhound touched down and the doors opened. Austin had felt it best that he didn't take Kraan or Grunt with him for this mission. If Kraan found out the truth about Mordin modifying the Genophage, he would kill the Salarian without hesitation. Austin wasn't sure if Grunt felt the same way, but he still wasn't willing to take any risks. He may share their views of the Genophage, but Mordin was essential for the mission.

Urz hopped out of the Hellhound accompanied by Tali. Dell and Sill had now finished Urz's proper battle armour. This time, the Varren wore more a silver variant of his original armour. It was also more plated than the last and designed to look like large scales. It also had spikes and sharp edges in places. It was fair to say that trying touch Urz while he was wearing the armour was not recommended if you valued your life or a body part.

The crew had been rather surprised when Austin had told them that he now had a pet Varren, some had even thought it to be a bad idea. Urz however had been extremely well behaved and appeared to be getting along with the crew very well. Tali and Kasumi in particular had been very fond of him. Tali had even called him cute.

There were still a few things that needed sorted though. Most importantly, Austin still had to decide where Urz would sleep. He'd be able to roam the ship freely, but he needed somewhere where he could always rest without there being any problems. Normally, Austin would just get Urz a comfortable large basket and let him sleep in the captain's quarters, but at the same time, Austin was a bit concerned that he and Liara wouldn't be able to enjoy their "special nights" knowing that Urz might be watching them. Then again, Urz probably wouldn't be interested, but Austin didn't know that. For all he knew, Urz would be curious with the sight before him.

Still, that was something to worry about later. For now at least, Urz had settled in on the Normandy very well and didn't seem to mind his new home at all. Sill had in fact just been playing fetch with him an hour ago. Plus, the simulator would be perfect for taking him on regular walks and giving him exercise.

The team made their way back into the Urdnot camp, Urz walking along casually beside his new master. Tali would also occasionally give

him a friendly pat on the head.

Wrex was a bit surprised to see Austin back this soon.

"Back already, Shepard? What do you need?" he asked.

"I'm looking for a Salarian. He was captured by the Blood Pack and brought here."

"My scout commander can direct you. He's probably hear the perimeter running target practice. Don't take too much of his time. I need a constant watch on the other clans."

"Thanks again, Wrex. I need to go."

"Watch yourself, Shepard. Tuchanka isn't safe and homey, like Feros and Ilos."

"What do you want, Helldiver? Wrex told me to be polite. He didn't say you were going to talk to me."

"I'm looking for a Salarian. The Blood Pack captured him, and he was last seen around here."

"I heard about that Salarian, poor bastard. If it's Blood Pack, then Clan Weyrloc has him. Sent one of my scouts to check it out, but he never reported back. Guess they got him, too. Chief told me to give you one of the trucks. Just follow the highway to Weyrloc's base, if you've got the quads to deal with him and the Blood Pack."

"What can you tell me about Clan Weyrloc's base?"

"Last I heard, the Clan was holed up in a hospital. I haven't seen it, though. I've only ever seen Clan Weyrloc from a distance. If I'd gotten closer, I'd have taken a shot. You get inside, though, bring a big gun. Weyrloc's base is crawling with Blood Pack."

"That doesn't sound too defensible. Why'd they hole up there?"

"Any hospital on Tuchanka to be built well enough to withstand a bunch of enraged Krogan. When an injury forces us to switch over to secondary organs, things get messy. Higher thought processes don't always transition properly. "Blood rage," they call it."

"Any idea what they're doing with the Salarian?"

"I assumed they wanted to torture him. You don't take somebody home just to kill them. It's messy. Maybe he pissed off the Blood Pack, and they brought him here for special treatment. No skin off my hump what they do with him. One less alien on Tuchanka."

"You don't seem to have much love lost for aliens."

"Don't get your quads in a twist. If I was going to kill you, you'd know about it. Wrex believes we need to unite the Krogan people. I don't think we can do that with offworlders interfering. But it's not my call."

"What's Clan Weyrloc's reputation? And how are they involved with the Blood Pack?"

"Tough humps. And they're not friendly, like we are. You ever run into the Blood Pack? Mercenary gang. Clan Weyrloc started it. One of the only gangs with an off-world presence. They're fanatics, totally

devoted to Weyrloc Guld. Whatever they did with your Salarian, Guld's behind it."

"What makes Guld so special?"

"He's got two children. One of them is a girl. Some people think he's got a destiny. Not me. I had a cousin who won 20 consecutive games of quasar. Lucky bastard. I'd ask my cousin for a loan, but I wouldn't swear allegiance to him. Luck. That's all it is. Same for Guld."

"But the Blood Pack has non-Krogan members – like Vorcha."

"The Vorcha? They're just like the Varren, only they can use guns and don't crap on the floor as often."

"He didn't mean it like that, Urz."

"The Krogan are the only real members of the Blood Pack. Anyone else is just there to soak enemy fire."

"Repurposed Krogan hospital. Sturdy. Built to withstand punishment."

"Odd to see the Krogan devote so many resources to caring for the sick."

"Hospitals important to Krogan Sites of honor. Focus for repopulation."

"That body. Human. Need to take a look." "Sores, tumours, ligatures showing restraint at wrists and ankles. Track marks for repeated injection sites. Test subject. Victim of experimentation."

"I don't suppose there's any way to tell who this poor bastard was?"

"No tattoos or ID. Maybe slave or prisoner. Maybe merc or pirate."

Irrelevant now. Clearly part of Krogan tests to cure Genophage.

Humans useful as test subjects. Genetically diverse. Enables exploration of treatment modalities."

"Experiment on humans? That kind of crap is what makes Cerberus start to seem like a good idea!"

"Never used humans myself. Disgusting, unethical, sloppy. Used by brute-force researchers, not thinkers. No place in proper science."

Krogan use of humans unsurprising."

"I imagine you had to do a few live subjects while developing the new Genophage."

"No. Unnecessary. Limited tests to simulations, corpses, cloned tissue samples. High-level tests on Varren."

"Don't worry, boy. I'm not gonna let him do that to you."

"No tests on species with members capable of calculus. Simple rule, never broke it."

"Now we've got two reasons to shut this place down."

"Focus on Maelon. Too late to help the dead."

"I am the speaker for clan Weyrloc, offworlders. You have shed our blood. By rights, you should be dead already. But Weyrloc Guld, the Chief of Chiefs, has ordered that you be given leave to flee and spread

the message of our coming."

"Krogan don't generally let people go. What does Clan Weyrloc have planned?"

"If you leave now, you can tell your children that you saw Clan Weyrloc before our Blood Pack conquered the stars. You think the Urdnot impressive? They are pitiful. Weyrloc Guld will destroy them!"

"The Salarian will cure the Genophage and Clan Weyrloc will spread across the galaxy in a sea of blood!"

'Appears they discovered Maelon's work Unfortunate."

"It doesn't have to happen like this. I can understand want to cure the Genophage..."

"No, human! You understand nothing! You have not seen the piles of children that never lived! The Krogan were wronged! We will make it right, and then we will have our revenge!"

"Half the galaxy sees the Krogan as victims! If you start a war, you'll lose their support!"

"We have the Blood Pack, and we have the Salarian! When our clan numbers in the millions, we will not need support. When we cure the Genophage, Weyrloc Guld will rule all Krogan! The Krogan Rebellions will become the Krogan Empire! The surviving races will frighten their children with tales of what the Blood Pack did to the Turians! The Asari will scream as their Citadel plunges into the sun!"

"Like hell it will! You talk too much!"

"See? The human cannot hit a simple target!"

"Labs likely through there. Can smell antiseptic, hint of dead flesh."

"Sometimes I'm really glad I can turn off my mask's olfactory filters"

"As am I, Tali."

"Active console. May contain useful data. One moment. Genetic sequences. Hormone mutagens still steady. Protein chains, live tissue, cloned tissue. Very thorough. Standard treatment vectors. Avoiding scorched-earth immunosuppressant's to alter hormone levels. Good. Hate to see that."

"Most people wouldn't be so casual about developing a sterility plague, Mordin."

"Not developing. Modifying. Much more difficult. Working within confines of existing Genophage. A hundred times the complexity. Errors unacceptable. Could cause total sterility, malignant tumours. Could even reduce effectiveness. Worse than doing nothing. Had to keep Krogan population stable. One in one thousand. Perfect target, optimal growth. Like gardening."

"Pretty it up however you like. You're talking about murdering millions!"

"No. Murdered no one. Altered fertility, prevented fetal development

of nervous system. Have killed many, Shepard. Many methods. Gunfire, knives, drugs, tech attacks, once with farming equipment. But not with medicine."

"The effect on Tuchanka are still your responsibility! You upgraded the virus that kept them in barbarism!"

"Krogan committed war crimes. Refused to negotiate. Turian defeat not complete. Krogan could have recovered, attacked again. Conventional war too risky. Krogan forces too strong. Genophage only option. Krogan forced Genophage. Us or them. No apologies for winning. Wouldn't have minded peaceful solution."

"We're not going to find Maelon staring at consoles. Come on."

"Dead Krogan. Female. Tumours indicate experimentation. No restraint marks. Volunteer. Sterile Weyrloc female willing to risk procedures. Hoped for cure. Pointless. Pointless waste of life."

"Didn't expect you to be disturbed by the sight of a dead Krogan."

"What? Why? Because of Genophage work? Irrelevant. No, causative. Never experimented on live Krogan. Never killed with medicine. Her death not my work, only reaction to it. Goal was to stabilize population. Never wanted this. Can see it logically... but still unnecessary. Foolish waste of life. Hate to see it."

"I didn't think you'd had much direct contact with things like this.

Did you even come to Tuchanka after dropping your plague?"

"Yearly recon missions. Water, tissue samples. Ensure no mistakes.

Superiors offered to carry it on. Refused. Need to see it in person.

Need to look. Need to see. Accept it as necessary. See small picture.

Remind myself why I run a clinic on Omega."

"Rest, young

mother. Find your gods. Find someplace better."

"You are full of odd surprises, Mordin. I didn't expect spirituality from you, Mordin."

"Genophage modification altered millions of lives. Then saw results. Ego, humility, juxtaposition. Frailty of life. Size of universe. Explored religions after work completed. Different races. No answers. Many questions."

"Sounds like you were trying to deal with your guilty conscience. The doctor who killed millions."

"Modified Genophage project great in scope. Scientifically brilliant. But ethically difficult. Krogan reaction visceral, tragic. Not guilty, but responsible. Trained as doctor. Genophage affects fertility. Doesn't kill. Still caused this. Hard to see big picture behind pile of corpses."

"Can you really just rationalize it all away? How do you justify it?"

"Wheel of life. Popular Salarian concept. Similar to human Hinduism in focus on reincarnation. Appealing to see life as endless. Fix mistakes in next life. Learn, adapt, improve. Refuse to believe life ends here. Too wasteful. Have more to offer. Mistakes to fix. Cannot

end here. Could do so much more.”

“If you need this much soul-searching to get over it, it just shows the Genophage was wrong.”

“Had to be done. Rachni Wars, Krogan Rebellions all pointed to Krogan aggression. So many simulations. Effects of Krogan population increase. All pointed to war. Extinction. Genophage or genocide. Save galaxy from Krogan. Save Krogan from galaxy.”

“You could have cured the Genophage, instead. Brought hope to the Krogan. They’d have rejoiced. But no, you just went and made things worse.”

“Assumes human reaction. Krogan stimulus response different. Harsh environment, take chance to fight, flee. Would have caused chaos on Tuchanka. Victor would have war economy, bloodthirsty army. Galactic expansion outcome. More war. Genophage saved lives, war would’ve ended.”

“So you’re willing to sterilize a species based on the evidence of a few simulations? That’s pathetic!”

“Millions of data points. Years of arguments. Countless scenarios. All noted Krogan fragmentation as dangerous. No unified culture to support repopulation. Would have been war. Turians and humans destroying Krogan utterly. Genophage was better. Saved lives.”

“Did it?! Look at the dead woman, Mordin! It doesn’t look like you saved her!”

“No. It doesn’t. Worked with available data. Only option. No other possible... Doesn’t matter.”

“You killed the Blood Pack guards!”

“Not Blood Pack, not member of Clan Weyrloc. Wrong clan markings.”

“I’m an Urdnot scout. Weyrloc guards got me. Brought me here.”

“The chief scout told us to watch for you. We’ve taken out the guards. Get back to Urdnot.”

“I can’t. The Weyrloc did things to me. Drugs. Injections. Said I was sacrificing for the good of all Krogan. Experiments to cure the Genophage. Everything’s blurry. Hard to think. Have to stay.”



“Mordin, can you get him back on his feet? Stims, maybe? Something to bolster his immune system?”

“You don’t understand. I’m not too sick to leave. I have to stay. They’re curing the Genophage. They’re going to make it all better! They have to keep doing the tests!”

“Caution, Shepard. Patient unstable, susceptible. Brainwashed.”

“Why do you want them to keep doing the tests?”

“This is my fault. I got caught. Wasn’t strong enough, not good enough. This is the best I can do. This is all I can do. I’m not big enough to have a real shot with the females. I’ll never have kids of my own. But if I help undo the Genophage, then I mattered!”

“Millions of children will be born – Weyrloc children. They’re going to destroy the other clans.”

“But... no. No, they said I was helping Urdnot!”

“If you want to help, Urdnot, you need to get back there. But it would take a real badass to make it back to camp while injured.”

“I can do it.”

“You? I said a badass, not some scout whining like a Quarian with a tummy-ache.”

“I’m standing right here!”

“I can do it! I’m up! And I’m going to the female camp!”

“Damn right you are! Get back there and show them what you’re worth! Go, go!”

“Rah!”

“I can’t believe that worked.”

“Shepard, I’m detecting crates ahead that are holding unstable materials. A misplaced shot could cause a significant explosion.”

“Or a well-placed shot. Explosives useful. Burn through Krogan

armour.”

“Maelon. Alive. Unharmed.”  
restraint. No evidence of torture. Don’t understand.”

“No signs of

“For such a smart man, Professor, you always had trouble seeing evidence that disagreed with your preconceptions. How long will it take you admit that I’m here because I wish to be here?”

“He wasn’t kidnapped. He came here voluntarily to cure the Genophage.”

“Impossible. Whole team agreed! Project necessary!”

“How was I supposed to disagree with the great Doctor Solus? I was your student! I looked up to you!”

“Experiments performed here. Live subjects! Prisoners! Torture and executions. Your doing?”

“We’ve already got the blood of millions on our hands, Doctor. If it takes a bit more to put things right, then so be it. I can deal with that.”

“Why work with Clan Weyrloc? And how did you get access to the Genophage data?”

“The data was easy to obtain. We all still had clearance. We were heroes. All I had to do was ask. As for the Weyrloc, they were the only clan with both the resources and the commitment.”

“Urdnot has a larger camp than Weyrloc. Why not use them?”

“Urdnot Wrex is too soft. He wasn’t willing to do the experiments I needed. It’s Urdnot’s loss and Weyrloc’s gain. Their clan will be the first to recover from the crime we committed.”

“Maelon clearly doesn’t need rescuing. What do you want to do?”

“Have to end this.”

“You can’t face the truth, can you? Can’t admit that your brilliant mind led you to commit an atrocity!”



“If you won’t keep it, then I will. I tolerated the fact that you modified the Genophage and I’ve already been forced to destroy one Genophage cure. I will not do it again. Besides, you regret what the Krogan have become. You see the horror of what they did here, what they’re willing to do to undo this mistake, but you see the loss, too.”

“Wasted potential.”

“They don’t deserve this, Mordin. Save the data.”

“Point taken, Shepard. Capturing data, wiping local copy. Still years away from cure. But closer than starting from scratch. Done. Ready to go. Ready to be off Tuchanka. Anywhere else. Maybe somewhere sunny.”

“Let’s get out of here.”

“Still hard to believe Maelon betrayed me. Betrayed my work. Disgusted by his actions. Proud of his nerve, though. Always thought he lacked backbone.”

“You’re really at peace with what happened?”

“Yes. Of course. Can’t change what happened. Life continues. Back to mission, back to work. Become like Maelon otherwise. Salarian emotional processing faster than other species. Has to be. Short-lived culture. Can’t spend time reminiscing.”

“So you really don’t feel bad at all about what happened on Tuchanka?”

“Yes, correct. Now, at least. Greatly distressed at the time. Stages of grief. Loss, anger, rationalization. Dealt with it. Most issues settled on Tuchanka. Some on shuttle back to Normandy.”

“What about Maelon’s data on the Genophage? His attempts at a cure?”

“What about it? Have it over there somewhere. Not dealing with it now. Need to focus on Collectors.”

“Not important now, regardless. Appreciate you helping me back on Tuchanka.”



# ALL THINGS END

## CHAPTER 1: UNTIL THE ENDS COMES

Coiragefan09

Courage has been suffering from strange seizure like pains lately and Muriel has been acting unusually sad as well. He goes to his computer looking for answers and finds out that he's going to be put down because of his illness. This ultimately leads to a strange journey that just might save his life and unfortunately for Computer, he's getting dragged along for the ride.

Find The Full Story At: <http://www.fanfiction.net/s/6196192/1/All-Things-End>

My Profile At: <http://courage09.deviantart.com/>

Courage whined softly as he trudged up the creaky staircase onto the second floor of the house. An air of depression hung over him, which was fairly unusual for the tiny dog. His ears were drooped like a puppy who had just been scolded and he kept himself on all fours as he could not will himself to walk upright in his current state. He needed answers and he knew that there was only one person who could give him those answers. He didn't enjoy conversing with this person but he was willing to put up with him for now just so long as he got the information he needed.

He whined again. Ever since that visit to the veterinarian three days ago Muriel had been acting strangely. She'd been avoiding him and wouldn't even talk to him whenever he tried to cheer her up. He'd been completely devastated when she wouldn't let him lay on her lap anymore and she always seemed like she was on the verge of crying now. Even Eustace seemed a bit off lately as the cranky old farmer wasn't even calling him a stupid dog anymore.

He pushed the attic door open and went over to the desk where his computer sat. He pulled himself up into the chair and felt his stomach lurch at how much effort it had taken him just to get up there. For months now he had been lacking the energy to do much of anything anymore. It was one of the many things that had left him worried since the veterinarian visit.

He flicked the switch on the side of the computer and waited. He was expecting the usual sort of greeting from the machine and he was not looking forward to it. Sighing listlessly, he allowed himself to sink deeper into the wooden chair out of both fear and anticipation.

The screen of the computer flickered to life, displaying a bluish-green backdrop. There was a moments pause before an exaggerated sigh originated from the machine's speakers and echoed through the empty attic.

"What is it now, you twit?" A bored voice asked, clearly coming from the the computer. It spoke with an intelligent, if somewhat rude tone and while it's voice was male it was tinged with a slightly metallic tone as if it were simulated and not real.

Courage let his paws rest on the keyboard, unsure of where to begin. He was afraid that he wouldn't make sense if he rushed and the last thing he needed right now was the computer complaining about that too. He sighed weakly and gathered his thoughts. He wasn't looking forward to this by any stretch of the imagination.

"Well?" The machine asked impatiently. It's words typed itself out across the screen as it talked.

Courage was used to 'his' usual antics but this time he didn't bother to acknowledge his impatience like he normally did. Under normal circumstances they argued, a lot. Computer always seemed to have something to be annoyed about and Courage always hated listening to him complain. They nearly always fought and Computer almost always won.

Courage began typing, slowly, to make sure he was spelling out as many of his words as correctly as possible. His writing skills were not the best, he could read just fine but he found typing and writing very difficult, especially if he were in a panic, which was almost every time he was using his computer. He wasn't very good at speaking English either, whenever he panicked his language usually turned into a gibbering mess of English and dog speak. Computer himself had gotten pretty good at understanding his gibberish but he never missed a chance to mock him about it.

'Something's been wrong with me lately.' He typed, hesitating for a moment. Computer did not respond to his statement so he continued. 'Something inside me hurts. It starts in my chest and then it spreads out. The pain gets so bad I can barely move and I usually black out. When I wake up I feel weak and tired, it takes hours to get better. It wasn't so bad at first because it would only happen every once in awhile but now it happens all the time, sometimes even twice a day. I'm tired all the time now.'

He stopped. His fingers were trembling on the keys. He was terrified at what could possibly be happening to him. The mysterious seizure like pains had always frightened him but now they were getting worse and he couldn't do anything to stop them. He couldn't forget about how strange Muriel and Eustace were acting either. When this had first started he had tried to act normal around them but they had

noticed anyway. Heck, he had even tried to hide himself in a closet when he felt an 'attack' coming on but they had found him in the middle of the seizure anyway. They had taken him to the vet to get him checked out and now they were suddenly acting like he didn't exist at all. He was starting to wonder if he had done something wrong to make them treat him like this but he couldn't help it if he was sick.

'I could barely get up here without needing to take a break.' He continued. 'Muriel noticed how tired I've been and she took me to see the vet. He looked me over and they talked about something, I wasn't really sure what. Muriel's been avoiding me ever since and she seems so sad now. I don't want to make her sad but I'm not really sure what I did wrong.' He added that last part solely out of fear that maybe he really did do something wrong. It comforted him to voice his worries even if he knew Computer wouldn't care.

There was a long silence as his rude companion did his job. His words lingered on the screen as he stared intently into it, hoping that he could finally get the answers he was looking for. It wasn't like Computer to remain this quiet even while he was searching and that worried him deeply.

Just as he was about to ask what was taking so long the machine finally uttered a small, "Oh dear."

"What?" Courage asked out loud, not bothering to type it in. His heart lurched with dread.

"Well, from the sound of it, it looks like you have a very rare and very serious condition. It's only found in dogs and it is..." The machine hesitated.

"What?" Courage asked again, dreading whatever was about to be said. "Is...is it bad?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, there is no cure. The condition is...always fatal." There was a hint of awe and even a bit of sympathy in that cynical machine's voice.

"W-What?" Courage gasped. His mind seemed to shut down. The true implications of what he had just been told didn't hit him until several seconds later.

Always fatal? He was...going to die? How could that be? How could he be sick enough to die? He wasn't supposed to die! Not before Muriel!

"It can't be right....i-it can't be!" He gasped. His entire body was shivering on its own accord. Fear washed over him as his own mortality became apparent. He was going to die....

Computer continued, ignoring Courage's desperation. "There is a treatment for the illness but it really only delays the inevitable. It helps with the symptoms but it only keeps a dog affected by the illness alive for about an extra year or so and that is only under the best of circumstances. Its very expensive too, nothing an old retired couple



would be able to afford."

Courage was shaking in terror. Disbelief wracked his brain. Could nothing really save him? He began to type again in a frenzy. 'But Eustace is always stashing money away! He can't be that heartless! Why won't he help me!'

"Please calm down, twit!" The machine replied. He was speaking as though this were business as usual.

'How can you tell me to calm down? I'm about to die! Now isn't the time to be calm!' Courage typed furiously. He was sure he missed a couple of keys but he was shaking so hard that it didn't matter.

"Because you're mowing in my keys!" Computer replied angrily. "Look twit, nothing the farmer is hoarding would be enough to help you. When I say expensive I mean you could buy a mansion with that kind of money. The treatment is only for quality bred dogs with exceptionally wealthy owners and even then you're still doomed in the end."

Courage whined softly, unsure of what to do. He place a paw on his chest and wondered when the next attack would occur. He couldn't imagine what it would be like to die from that sort of pain. He whined again as panic began to build up inside of him. It was even more powerful than ever and he didn't know what to do about it. He wanted to run, scream, or cry, but none of it would help him in the end.

"I feel for you, twit, I really do, but there isn't much that can be done. Muriel must be avoiding you because she knows she can't help you."

Silence filled the gloomy attic, neither machine nor dog knew what else to say. Courage was sure Computer had never thought he would become fatally ill just as much as he hadn't. He squeezed his eyes shut, unsure of what to do. So many emotions rolled through him and he couldn't stop even one of them.

If only he could...he could....wait....

He perked up, realizing that he had forgotten something when he had told Computer about his illness. He began to type again, with renewed hope. 'While I was at the vet he said something about putting me to sleep. I'm not sure what that is. Is he going to put me to sleep and perform surgery on me? Maybe he's going to try and fix me!' He smiled at that thought. Maybe he could be saved after all!

"Oh dear, well..." Computer spoke. He seemed to be at a loss for words. Once again he slipped out of his business as usual tone just for a moment. He hesitated a moment as if it were better to leave whatever he was about to say left unsaid.

"Don't you know what being 'put to sleep' means?" He asked, choosing his words very carefully.

Courage shook his head. The hesitation in the machine's voice made him lurch with fear once again. "Is it something bad?" He asked softly.

The machine sighed quietly as though he'd rather not deal with this. He waited a moment and began to speak once more. "I won't lie to you. Its best you know. Putting you to sleep is the kid friendly term for putting you down, they're going to kill you."

Courage's jaw hit the ground.

"Its a mercy killing of course. It's so you won't suffer needlessly, especially in the late stages of the disease. It will be painless, unlike waiting."

Courage said nothing, he didn't even blink. His mind just couldn't wrap around the fact that Muriel was about to let some vet put him down. She had him scheduled to visit him again next Friday, were they planning on doing it then? Had he not gone to Computer he wouldn't have even known it was coming. He felt...betrayed.

"You still in there, twit?" Computer asked, pulling him out of this thoughts.

He shook his head in disbelief "H-How could Muriel do this to me? I-I..."

Tears started to fill his eyes. He felt angry, sad, scared, and confused all at the same time. He felt as though Muriel had intentionally betrayed him to this fate on purpose. He choked back a sob as several of his tears fell freely onto the keyboard beneath him.

"She just wants what's best for you. She wouldn't want you to suffer in the end." Computer spoke. He was trying to comfort him, at least as best as any cynical machine could.

It wasn't working....

"How can she let some vet kill me?" He cried out. His voice was rising with fear. "Doesn't she care about me more than that? I-I don't want to die!" He began to sob hopelessly. He was doomed and nothing could save him.

"Would you rather suffer in the end? I'm sure its painless. Why do you think they call it 'putting to sleep'? Surely that's preferable to wasting away, painfully I might add."

"I don't want to die!" He sobbed. "I want to live! I want things to go back to the way they used to be!"

"Twit..." Computer tried to interject. His tone was becoming annoyed.

"Why? Why did I have to get sick? I want to nap in Muriel's lap again! I want her to talk to me again like she used to! I want to be able to do things again without having to worry about an attack! I want to have my energy back! I-I..."

"Come on, dog. Don't be so..."

"I even want Eustace to scare me again! I want things to go back to the way they used to be!"

It was almost too awful to think about. He'd never spend another day just enjoying life with Muriel. He'd never spend another lazy afternoon just snoozing on her lap. Everything he loved about life he'd lose in death.

He'd...he'd never see her or Eustace ever again. He'd never save them from monsters again. He'd never sample new recipes Muriel was developing. He'd never help her with the laundry, cleaning up, cooking, washing, planting. The list went on and on it only frightened him even more. He couldn't bear the thought of losing the only thing he had ever known. He wasn't supposed to die before them!

"Twit, seriously-" Computer spoke again, still trying to get the panicking dog's attention. It was a minor miracle that his little breakdown hadn't been heard by Muriel or Eustace downstairs yet.

"I-I don't want to die, I don't want to leave Muriel! Why did this have to happen to me?" He buried his face in his paws and sobbed.

"ENOUGH!" Computer finally yelled cranking up his speakers to full blast. Having never raised his voice in Courage's presence before, it shut the pink dog up instantly.

"Throwing yourself into a panic isn't going to help anyone or anything! Pull yourself together!"

Courage sniffed and nodded gently. He began wiping tears from his eyes, feeling slightly foolish over his breakdown. He was still very much afraid but he knew he shouldn't have panicked like that...

He was still shaking several minutes later. He couldn't calm down knowing what was coming. His chest had started to burn and he knew that if Computer had not stopped him he probably would have thrown himself into another attack by accident.

'What should I do?' He typed. He was desperately looking for something, anything to hope for.

"I honestly don't know what to tell you. At least you've calmed down." The machine replied sounding like he were at a loss himself. Courage could hardly remember the last time Computer didn't have an answer for him.

'I-' He began to type but stopped. He reconsidered it and let his shaking paws rest on the keyboard.

"What is it, dog?" Computer asked, sounding weary.

Courage sighed and typed, 'I know it's a stupid thing to say, but...I'm scared.'

There was a slight chuckle from the machine. "Anybody in your predicament would be. Believe it or not, I do understand."

'I don't want some vet to stick a needle in me and never wake up again.' He stopped and couldn't hold back a newly formed fountain of tears. He let them fall freely.

The machine said not a word as he sobbed. This allowed him to get all his emotions out in one fell swoop. It took several minutes

before he could compose himself again and he was grateful that Computer hadn't mocked him during that time. He was just glad that he was listening, even if he didn't care.

He began to type again. 'I-I also don't want to waste away until an attack finally does me in either. I....I'm scared of what's going to happen.'

The machine sighed yet again. "I don't want to get your hopes up but I believe I might have an idea."

"R-Really?" He asked out loud. A small pang of hope entered his gut. Maybe Computer would have the answers he needed after all....

"Yes, but like I said I don't want to get your hopes up. I plan to look into some kind of supernatural solution to this little conundrum. Things like legendary objects or places that can heal the terminally ill. It will be like looking for a needle in a haystack though. Most of it will be just that, legends, or might possibly have lost it's ability to heal, or it might have just been a hoax all along. This isn't even including the fact that it might be halfway across the world or that there might be some complex ritual just to make it work."

"B-but you will look, won't you?"

"Of course, but please don't stake all your hope on something like this. I can't guarantee anything will pan out and I honestly don't want to make things worse in the end. I'm afraid that solutions to living problems are rarely found in supernatural ones." He sounded exhausted at the thought of it all and even a bit worried.

"We only have until Friday though." Courage added. "Muriel is taking me back to the vet then. I-I think they plan on d-doing...it' then."

"Friday, huh? No pressure." Computer remarked sarcastically. "Alright, I'll begin searching. Please leave me now so that I can work in peace." He had gone back to that business as usual tone.

Courage nodded in agreement. He was about to leave before deciding to type one last thing into the keyboard.

'Thank you'

There was no response.

He picked himself up and dropped out of the chair. He was about halfway across the attic when Computer spoke, making him jump with surprise.

"You don't deserve this, you know." He said speaking as though he needed to get this off his chest. "I'm sorry I can't be much help. Even if I can't find a way to cure you I will still do everything in my power to help you, I promise." He sighed. "Well, at least until the end comes."

# BASIL IN LIMBOLAND

FeatherSpiral  
of <http://featherspiral.deviantart.com>

Nicky Basil and Mannic Grove fall down a long distance before they hit the ground hard.

Having managed to use his limbs to absorb some of the impact, Nicky is dazed but somehow alive. But when he tries to lift his head, he realizes his face is embedded into the floor.

*I don't believe this...*

He pulls harder, causing his muzzle to stretch before being released with an audible 'pop'. He looks around and sees white everywhere - or is it light grey?

He struggles to rise from the invisible ground and looks up, then shouts: "Mannic! Mannic, where are you?"

A groan answers, and Nicky turns around to see some sort of hole, as well as a fuzzy shadow right below him. Turns out the ground isn't invisible after all, it's just the same color as... the walls and ceiling? the sky?

"Mannic!"

But a huge, neon yellow lizard -a dragon!- crawls out of the hole and fearfully looks left and right. As their eyes meet, both Nicky and the lizard scream and lay a hoof or paw over their respective muzzles.

*Hoof... muzzle...*

Nicky yelps and stares at them, bringing both his arms closer to his face. His hands are replaced by hooves, he has a long muzzle, and his body is covered in pastel green fur!

He then remembers that the two of them are participating in some experimental mumbo-jumbo, where weird things are expected.

"Nicky?" says Mannic's voice in disbelief as the wingless dragon blinks. "Tell me that's you, man..."

Nicky drops his hooves back onto the ground and sighs. "Oh yeah, it's me. Yup."

"Oh, phew."

They look at each other, then each one carefully inspects his own new body. Nicky Basil has turned into a winged horse, while Mannic Grove is now a dragon.

"Um... blimey," Mannic says uneasily. "Was this supposed to happen?"

Nicky tries to see more than light grey around them and fails. "Don't know. I didn't understand all that technical blabber any more than you did."

"Are we in a really messed-up dream, or what?"

This time, Nicky stares directly at him. "Dream... could be. Have you seen Inception?"

The dragon makes a duckface. "Naw. Heard of it, is all."

Shrugging, Nicky proceeds to testing out his new limbs. For now, it's just the legs, as he doesn't feel confident enough to use his wings.

Mannic mutters: "A pegasus and a dragon walk into a bar..." He then tries walking, but his legs wobble and he falls within two seconds. Cursing under his breath, he complains to the horse: "Good Lord, couldn't we at least keep our normal limbs?"

But Nicky shakes his head. "Dude... it's not THAT complicated."

"Yeah? Why don't you enlighten me, o master?"

*How quickly he forgets*, the winged horse thought. "How did you crawl out of the hole? You were already a dragon."

"No idea!"

"Exactly my point!"

Nicky bounces happily towards him, ignoring the dragon's envious stare, and explains: "When you are human and walking, you don't think about the motion of your legs at each stride. You just will your legs to carry you forwards, and your body kinda obeys. See?"

He takes a few steps, then trips on his own hoof and faceplants.

A tapping sound is heard - Mannic is applauding. "Wonderful, wonderful. You're good at this, you can even trip on purpose! You did trip on purpose... right?"

The pegasus grunts and lifts himself up, smirking. "I'll never tell."

\* \* \* \* \*

After about half an hour, as the two friends have walked a long distance away from the crater, Mannic suddenly stops.

"Whoah, man... what the hell?"

Nicky then realizes their environment is no longer a plain light grey. They are now among tall trees, with dense foliage above their heads and dusty soil beneath their hooves and paws.

Nicky is amazed. *There's even the strong smell of forest, just like the real thing!*

"When did we enter the forest?" Mannic adds.

"No idea, I didn't see it coming either."

Wrinkles crease the dragon's muzzle. "Guess this means we're in... vegetative state?" His face then lightens up as he gets more ideas.

But the pegasus has the impression that something isn't right.

Suspiciously, he paces the small clearing they are in, leaving his friend to amuse himself and tell jokes to the air around him.

He blankly looks towards one side, then has the reflex of raising his

head for once.

Another reflex makes him leap and tackle his friend.

"Ow!" Mannic howls before they land in a small clearing two dozen meters away. "C'mon man, can't you take a-

The dragon is interrupted by a blast and rocks flying around.

When they finally dare to open their eyes seconds later, there's a crater right where Mannic stood earlier, and a stone ball a bit further.

"Bloody hell!" the dragon yells. "Who just... who did that!?"

"There!" Nicky is pointing towards a dark grey wall in the distance, hidden by the dense forest behind but visible from the clearing. "A town! Mannic, follow me!"

He then breaks into a gallop in the wall's direction. *A town... we might finally get answers!*

"Nicky! Gah, goddammit..." curses his friend, but follows him anyway, at least to try and beat some sense into his equine skull.

"A town means people," Nicky explains, "which means we can finally talk and find out what this place is!"

"Um... in case you haven't noticed... they tried to kill us. Blimey, how did you manage to live nearly thirty years with survival instincts like that?"

"Survival?" Nicky tosses over his shoulder, still running. "We're cartoony fantasy beasts now. Are we even able to die here?"

Mannic opens his reptilian maw but doesn't find anything clever to reply for now. He's too busy making zigzags in an attempt to dodge the rocks coming from right in front of them.

At the foot of the walls, they find an opening and go in. They are now walking through a seemingly endless alley or street, enclosed by sturdy-looking walls on both sides.

They realize their mistake as they finally see what's awaiting them at the end of the corridor.

"Whaaaah, a catapult!"

Nicky doesn't know if he or Mannic said that. Either way, they stop dead in their tracks and immediately run in the opposite direction.

A whistle followed by a ground-shaking rumble makes them briefly look back, then speed up. Another projectile was slung and is coming towards them, bouncing against the ground and somehow not touching the walls at all.

Suddenly, Nicky catches a glimpse of his wings - they are spread. He doesn't think he did that on purpose, but then he remembers what he told his friend: 'just will your legs to carry you forwards, and your body kinda obeys.'

He wants to go even faster, and his wings partially fold backwards to

improve his aerodynamism. He can't get out before the ball catches up -neither can Mannic- but he knows what to do.

When he runs past the dragon, who protests, his wings almost act by themselves. He is lifted up, but the change in air flow causes him to slow down, allowing Mannic to come up beneath him.

"Whah!" his dragon friend howls as Nicky coils his legs around him.

The pegasus then performs a nearly perfect loop -accompanied by Mannic's shouts-, goes well above the walls, and glides over inside the town.

Surprisingly, the landing is rather smooth, as there is a thick layer of grass covering the ground. Panting heavily, the two creatures look at each other, then simultaneously burst into laughter.

About a minute later, they finally gather the strength to get up... and find themselves surrounded by policemen with butterfly wings and bearing sharp spears.

"Oh, holy MOTH-er of God..."

His stock of puns now as exhausted as he, Mannic passes out.

"Wonderful," the pegasus mumbles. *What have I just gotten us into?*



# POETRY

is published here thanks to  
John Mahler's Quotes of the Day

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/john-mahler/john-mahlers-quotes-of-the-day/ebook/product-20105057.html>

Some people, at least, have enjoyed my Quotes of the Day, so here they are, for your amusement and bemusement: one entire year's worth of quotes. My quotes by the way; nobody else's. These are my thoughts and observations on the world around us: funny, sad, uplifting, evocative, inspiring, silly, and occasionally just plain stupid, they are all here for your perusal: enjoy!

# MELLIFLUOUS

Elijah Bassett

Elijah is a young Canadian poet who is always striving to be the best that he can be. He currently makes his home at <http://huntingforhappiness.deviantart.com/> but he has even bigger plans in store!

Mellifluous moonlight lifts me from madness?  
and the merging beams and shadows of night  
are as restless wraiths to my sight.??

The stars move adeptly, with perfect form  
and the sweet, smooth light their dances cast?  
illuminate my darkened mask.??

And as I revel in the night; that great captor  
of the colour of day,  
I'm warmed by the cold moon's rays  
that guide my way through  
the greatest journey;?  
to where, I cannot say.

But upon the slow fading of greatest Arcturus  
the deceiving stars and moonbeams?  
warn me that that sweet reprieve?  
from my life's grim themes?  
may only be lost  
in the rose-scented wind;?  
gone forever.

# LOVE STORY

Maria Kubiak

And now, I gave away my heart.  
You are my missing part.  
And now, you own it.  
I must commit.  
That I love you.  
You are the wonderful view.  
And I will tell them the truth.  
That we will be together.  
Forever.  
And never, gave up on this.  
So c'mon, I will give you my kiss.  
Let me taste your lips.  
Some may say that my eyes are eclipsed.  
Some may say that love is blind.  
That I lost my state of mind.  
But I won't care.  
And I swear.  
I won't leave your side.  
And be with you with pride.  
Even when I die.  
I will always be in the sky.  
Watching over you.  
I love you.

# MANSKEN AND SOLSKEN

Solilska  
of <http://solilska.deviantart.com>

Two sides of the same coin, Completely different but inexplicably the same,  
Only an edge to separate, Its the celebrated line to mark differences and strengths.  
Mirrors with different reflections and reflections with different faces.  
What Is the edge to the world but a whimsical twist of fate?  
What If a flip could unite and erase the edge?  
And who's to say what fate would throw when a edge Is landed,  
Is It fate, Our faces, Or our strengths and differences that bind us together?  
No, Gravity and fate can try to tame,  
But Its by our choice that we play this game.