

Fanatical Publishing's

# Weekly Review

Issue #66

July 22, 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, and cover art if you have any.

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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# ORIGINAL LITERATURE



The swashbuckling adventure from Universal Studios, now a novelization, exclusively from Fanatical Publishing!

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/jb-hickock/against-all-flags/ebook/product-21120417.html>

# LIMBO

Ambiguous-Catharsis  
of <http://ambiguous-catharsis.deviantart.com>

Some souls go right through, you know? They don't even pause. It's right through limbo without a second glance, and then on to be judged and sent up or down. They're the easy ones, because I can lay back and hold my lamp and they follow the light like moths to a flame, the ends of their frayed personalities fluttering even though there isn't any wind.

While the masses go through without any problems, there are always those few troublemakers that just can't seem to resist the lure of limbo. See, in limbo, there's nothing, and while that may sound awful to you folks who are living halfway decent lives, to the souls that just came out of Hell on Earth, nothing is really attractive.

Limbo doesn't hurt. It doesn't feel good, either, but there's no pain and no heartache and no wincing from the bruises on your back. There's no joy, but there's also no suffering or fatigue or withdrawal. There's just... existence and perpetuity, and some of them think that since it doesn't hurt, it must be the end of the line.

That's a misconception. Hell hurts, but so does Heaven, in a kind of twisted, masochistic way. Songs of praise and streets paved with gold aside, there's pain behind those pearly gates. Once you're up there, you've got a bird's eye view of everything that's happening on Earth. Not so bad, you say? Yeah, well, you can't do anything about it. You can sit and watch your loved ones suffer and plod on through life, but you can't offer support and you can't intervene.

Hell is worse, but you already knew that. Fire and brimstone and personalized punishment, all wrapped up in a neat little package you can't escape. Kind of like the Hotel California, you know?

That song is about drugs, and that's what limbo is like. Being high. Being so far gone that nothing, nothing can touch you or hurt you or make you feel anything at all. Are you starting to see why people don't want to leave? It's such a relief. The quiet. The emptiness. The complete lack of stimulation.

But I can't let them stay there, just like you can't let someone you know do drugs. It feels wrong, right there behind your heart and ribs.

And if you think an intervention when someone is alive is hard, try it when they're dead. When they don't have anything to live for. When their world has actually ended.

They never expect me. Some of them think I'm Charon, but the ones that get stuck in limbo aren't usually religious. The religious ones know that there's something else, something more, and they go right through. It's the rest of them that get caught up and need a little extra shove from me.

We converse. I learn their life stories, why they're so happy to exist somewhere where nothing hurts. The combinations of domestic abuse, addictions, trauma, PTSD, and mental disorders are always different, but it's always a mixture of those things. The souls that get stuck in limbo didn't lead happy lives. They had no one to comfort them, no one to give them hope for a better future, and certainly no one to tell them that there would one day be a time when even hurting would be better than feeling nothing at all.

How screwed up is that? I convince these poor souls to leave their peace and quiet to return to an existence that hurts no matter what. And what's even worse? They thank me for it. They thank me for dragging them out of limbo and into Heaven (or Hell, as the case often is), because as soon as they leave, they realize what death really is. Nothing.

There was this kid, an English major named Jasper who'd been on cocaine for seven years and a prostitute for three, who was stuck in limbo. I'll never forget him. When I finally convinced him to leave and move on, he stopped right in front of me, the edges of his soul stained with the pain that was slowly seeping back into him.

And then he said, "I would cut, just to feel something, to prove to myself that I was still alive. The pain always cut through the fog and let me know I was still in it, still kicking. The... limbo, you called it? The limbo is nothing. It's that place the drugs took me too, that I would force myself to go to when... And now I feel again. I... feel like I'm still in this. That there's more. That there's... hope?"

What could I say?

*I'm sorry the only way to give you hope for a better future was to make you feel pain.*

# NEW AGE OF HEROES THE FOREST AND THE LABYRINTH

SaviorToFew  
of <http://saviortofew.deviantart.com>

They ran to the Hunter Forest and found the Golden Stag of Artemis. Using the Soul of Pan, Isalus spoke with the Stag and asked it to take them to Artemis.

In the heart of the forest, they found the Goddess of the Moon and Hunt.

"Hello, nephew. My brother informed of your mission, and I know Chaos will find me soon, so I want you to take my Bow, the Selene Bow."

Nickolaes took the bow, and Artemis said, "Now I want you to kill me so you can take my Soul."

Nickolaes said, "No."

Then Chaos appeared and said, "Then I will."

He killed Artemis, and vanished.

Isalus took her Soul and gained the powers of the Moon and the Hunt, and shared it with Nickolaes and Artemis.

"Now we can go to the realm of Death. I know where the entrance is."

Naminas said, "Where?"

"My home. The cave in the Typhon Mountains."

They ran to the cave on the side of the Typhon Mountains. He took the maps of the Realm of Death and the Labyrinth. He then knocked on a wall and it opened the entrance. They went through and walked to the Palace of Thanatos without any obstacles.

Inside the Palace was the body of Thanatos and a giant Minotaur skeleton.

Isalus flew to it right arm and found some cracks in the bones, and said, "Fly around and break the bones!"

He broke the arms, Naminas broke the legs, and Nickolaes broke the torso. As the skull fell, it screamed and shattered on the ground.

Isalus took and shared Thanatos's Soul with them.

Nickolaes said, "Where is the Labyrinth?"

"Right underneath us." He tapped at an out-of-place stone floor and a staircase opened. They walked down to the many corridors of the Labyrinth. He took out the map and breathed on it. It went from 3000+ halls to just 1 leading to Daedalus's workshop. He found Daedalus's Wings and quickly made 2 more pairs of Wings for Nickolaes and Naminas.

He also found schematics to Project Bane-The Spear of Retribution.

He read the list of materials: Wood from the Tree of the Hesperides, 3 Phoenix Feathers, the Omphalos Stone, and Orb of the Winds, and a Piece of the Sky.

They decided to get the feathers after everything else, because the Phoenix is at Mount Olympus. Isalus drew paths to the Underworld and the Hunter Forest on the map and the paths became real.

Nickolaes went to the Underworld for the Sky Piece, Naminas went to the Hunter Forest for the Wood, and Isalus left the Labyrinth and the Realm of Death to Typhon Mountains.



# DEATH IN SMOKE

XShenLong  
of <http://xshenlong.deviantart.com>

The sky is as dreary as it is grey. The dull monochrome brings back memories. Aching memories that still wound and twist cruelly even though years have flown by. I can't help but wonder, on a melancholic day like this, where rain patters gently against the stained windows. If you had never taken that first breath.. Would you have gone under so soon? If you had never taken that first breath.. Would I still be lying here today?

How pitiful! I look across the room at the white strokes painted mechanically onto the slab of wood. It is small, and it lies almost unnoticeable on a table. Is this what you wanted? No one remembers. Everyone is gone. And the only thing left is memories, which fade with startling speed.

Sadness can be addictive. It descends like a beloved friend, and envelops like cold fur. And addicted, so you were. Perhaps I should have tried harder to stop you. After all, what was a bruise or two? What were a few wounds to the heart, when it was burnt black and broken now?

I raise a hand, exhaustion shaking the skeletal limb to the bone. And I can't help but stare, in morbid fascination. It was a bland structure, dead skin stretched too tightly over a cracked frame. I look so much like you now, you know? Exactly as you did while flames swallowed you as you lay in the wooden casket. Exactly like your corpse, as it was burnt to unrepentant ash.

The paper lying on the bedside is what I take, the serene pureness of colour somehow mocking in its whiteness. So I take a pen, and drag it over the paper, in a crude attempt at words;

Sweet toxic, beloved miasma  
Posing dryly as ambrosia  
A drug that burns liquid fire  
And spreads deadly through the winds

A sudden attack leaves me breathless. Gasping desperately for air, for the sweet breath of life. The irony curls my lips into a wry smile. It hurts. It burns.

My lungs no longer work the way they have to. My heart no longer beats the way it should. I can feel my dulled senses, and see my vision fade till everything is a blur. And I knew it had taken my eyes.

It was irreversible, the doctors had said. The illness was in its final stages. Was this what you wanted, when you told me you loved me? Was this what you had foreseen..? The piece of paper crumples in my shaking hands. Liar. It would never be finished, now. I lie back, waiting for death. And I wonder..

If you had never taken that first breath.. Would we still have reunited in the realm of the damned..?

# BITTER SWEET SORROW

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

"How about a horse?" Asked Luciana the next morning. She paused in the act of frying potatoes and crabmeat for breakfast and looked back over her shoulder at the room's other occupant. "Oi don't like 'orses." Said Niamh grumpily. Despite sitting, or rather lounging, on a bench seat beneath a flickering lantern she still contrived to be mostly in shadow. What could be seen of her skin reflected the sooty, dancing light pallidly. Her dark eyes glittered; sunlight caught in deep woodland pools. Luciana loved those eyes.

Their owner however was currently being her usual difficult self with all the mystery of a small child. Luciana made a face and turned back to the breakfast pan.

For a moment there was silence but for the pop and crackle of cooking food and hot butter. Behind her she heard the sound of the Wood Elf pouring herself another ale.

"But," she said over her shoulder, "I've heard tell it's dangerous now between here and the city."

Niamh made a disparaging noise. "Oi've never had much trouble."

"Maybe not." Replied Luciana. "But they say there are more Daedra about now, and then these gates..." she took the pan off of the stove and padded barefoot over to the table.

"They say a lot of things." Said Niamh, picking a small loaf of coarse bread up from the table and tearing off a chunk with her long fingers. "So they do." She cocked her head to one side, looking at Luciana and shrugging her shoulders. "And it's only the one gate anyway so it is." Biting off a chunk of the bread she chewed it thoughtfully for a moment, marshalling her words, all the while gesturing at the other woman with the remaining piece. Luciana ladled out their meal into wooden bowls, accompanied by the sounds of Niamh chewing and as a counterpoint, the tolling of the bells of the Chapel of Mara across the waterway.

"Anyway, that whatever-his-name-is is going to fix it for us. Apparently." The Bosmer said eventually with rather facetious emphasis upon the last word. She dropped the remains of the bread into the bowl with the fried food and grinned wolfishly at Luciana revealing white teeth and disconcertingly long, pointed canines.

Luciana took a swallow of mead, picked up a spoon, and after looking at it dubiously, rubbed it against the sleeve of her tunic.

"But nobody's seen him for months," she pointed out, "Not since he disappeared into it, Gods, he could be dead for anyone knows."  
Niamh, who had been packing food into her face in the manner of a starving refugee stopped mid-shovel and stared intently at the Breton seated opposite her. "Why?" She asked. "What d'you care anyway?"  
"Um..." Replied Luciana, suddenly aware of the earth starting to shift beneath her. "Well, I mean that that gate destroyed Kvatch, and, I don't see anyone else stepping in to help if he's gone and got himself killed and there are more of them." This last was said rather pointedly. She didn't want Niamh to go anywhere near the gate if she were honest, but sometimes - more often than not lately, it seemed - her attitude got her hackles up.  
Niamh ignored the remark anyway.  
"It's over aways yet." She gestured in a vaguely westwards direction.  
"Besides, any gate'll have to come through me first, to get to you so it will." She winked at Luciana.

Oh that's rich, thought Luciana. She did not, in her heart of hearts, believe for one second that her erstwhile lover would be anywhere near her if another gate were to open and become a threat to her, to either of them - regardless of the Elf's admittedly conveniently timed assurances that she herself was a changed woman who would do right by the other.

Luciana snorted and wiped her mouth with the back of her hand.  
"Is that what you told Jo, up in the city?"

Niamh never even batted an eyelid. "No," she said through a mouthful of potato, "we've not really spoken of it."

Well, at least she was honest; although alternatively she might just not care enough to lie. On balance Luciana preferred to believe the former was the case, or at least to hope so.

She put her spoon down in her half-empty bowl, blinked a couple of times and swallowed. "You're leaving soon, then?"

Opposite her, Niamh sat back from the table, leaning against the rough wooden planking that made up the wall of the dwelling. Luciana had made an effort to cover the walls of her home with furs to insulate it; money being tight though, she had not been able to finish the job and so bare wood was still very much the way of it. Bare wood and drafts.

The Wood Elf belched loudly.

"Good." She said, indicating with her eyes the now empty bowl in front of her. The other smiled, perhaps a little sadly, at her as she picked at her teeth with a long fingernail; chipped black nailpaint still clinging to it.

"And yes, Oi do intend to go soon. The city and up to Cheydinhal..." She didn't bother finishing the sentence, Luciana knew very well what Niamh did, occasionally, for a living; it remained unspoken between them though, the Bosmer's one real concession to the other's more delicate sensibilities.

That Luciana was upset there was no doubt. Despite, or rather in spite, of her outwardly flirtatious and lively demeanour she was at heart a sensitive soul and had increasingly fallen for Niamh of whom she felt, for all of her overt selfishness and seemingly uncaring nature; not to mention her obvious lack of fidelity, had something about her worth saving and worth fighting for. It had never been just a physical thing, for her at least; although she had nothing to complain about in that department.

Mentally, spiritually, and emotionally though she increasingly felt as if she were cast adrift in a stormy sea, strapped to the Elf and doomed to be tossed with her wherever the whims of the latter's ephemeral, fey nature may take them. It was a journey that once she would have relished, but one that now, increasingly, she had come to approach with a dreadful trepidation.

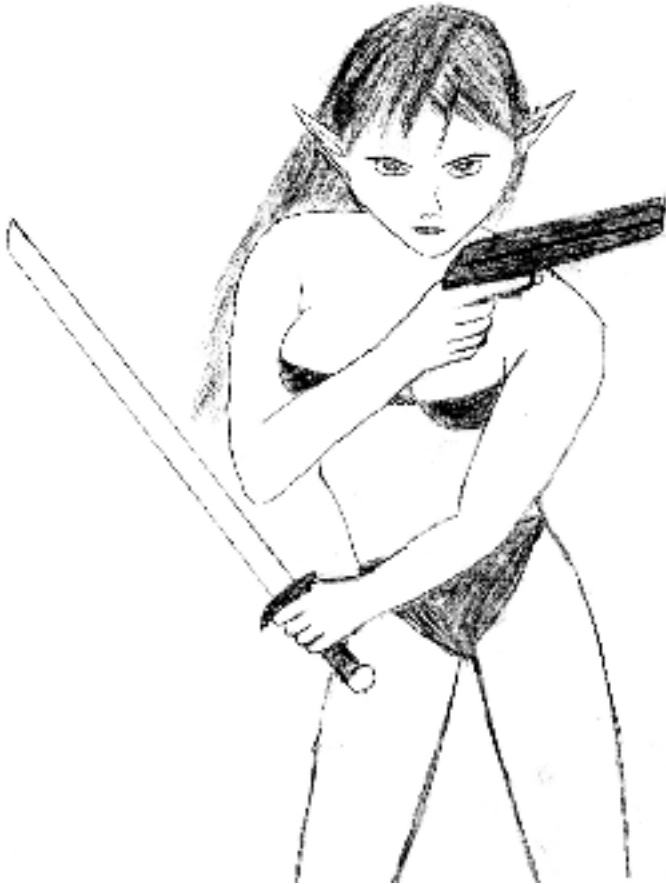
All this she kept to herself though. She doubted it would have made much difference to Niamh, if she were to know her true feelings; whether she would care.

But still, for all that, she missed her when she was away, worried for her safety; looked out for her return. She hated her indifference and her blatant sleeping around.

She loved her and she wished her dead but mostly, mostly she was confused and a little lost truth be told - She'd rather be with Niamh than not, and some Niamh was at least better than none at all.

...

# FAN FICTION



or: Leanna's Return

# ME2 HELLDIVER SAGA CHAPTER 33: OVERLORD

Veyron722skyhook  
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Austin had to admit that everyone aboard the Normandy, including him, was getting bored. Without any more loyalty missions, or anywhere else to go, everyone was struggling to find things to keep them occupied. Sure there'd been that time a few days ago where the Normandy had received even more upgrades from some of the other crew which were guaranteed to give them the edge and advantages they needed over a Collector Ship. But that had been a while now and the refit hadn't taken very long.

Normally, Austin would try and kill the time by spending it constantly with his hopefully future wife, Liara. But his quarters didn't have much. He didn't have any movies for them to watch and they couldn't use the bath a lot due to the water supply. They also didn't want to overdo their sex; otherwise it might have a negative impact on their relationship.

Some of the others had managed to take care of the boredom by using the simulator to brush up on their combat skills, but Austin preferred to use the spare time in a more peaceful manner. If he were able to, he would've taken Liara out on a date.

It did suddenly occur to Austin now that they could perhaps go to get the Reaper IFF now. They'd got everyone now, and they were as ready as they could be. No time like the present.

Austin was just about to ask for EDI to tell Joker to plot a course, when the AI suddenly appeared in front of him. Austin knew from this that she must have something to tell him. EDI didn't contact Austin out of respect for his privacy unless it was something important.

"Important news, EDI?" he asked, yawning a bit.

"The Arkane Council wishes to speak to you in the debriefing room, Shepard." said EDI.

"Another colony attack?" Austin asked, this time with urgency. If the Arkane Council was calling, that could only mean it was either something urgent or a colony attack.

"I am afraid I do not know the details. They did say however that it concerns Cerberus." said EDI.

"I'll be right down."

"Shepard. I trust your mission is going well?" Spartan asked.

"I'd say we may be ready to go after the IFF now, Councillors. So yes, it is going well." Austin replied.

"We hate to hold you up then, Major. But we have a situation we'd like you to investigate." said Tarnack.

"EDI told me it concerns Cerberus. Do I need to be concerned about Miranda and Jacob again?" Austin asked.

"Fortunately, no. Mr Taylor and Miss Lawson are not involved with this." replied one of the councillors.

"Our spies in Cerberus recently found out about one of their secret operations called Project Overlord. They weren't able to find out the full details, but what we do know is that they were experimenting on controlling something and they've now gone dark. Whatever they're doing, it can't be good." Spartan explained.

"Without knowing the full extent of what Cerberus is up to, we're uneasy by sending in full force so..."

"So you'd like us to go there, assess the situation, and call in the fleet if necessary?" Austin asked.

"Yes." Tarnack replied.

"Consider it done then, Councillors." said Austin as he bowed his head.

"Good. And Shepard, be careful. I know we do not know much, but something about this is making us feel uneasy." said Spartan.

As the Normandy entered the atmosphere of ..., Austin, Sarah, X-5 and Liara climbed into the Hammerhead. Chances are they were going to need it.

The large hover vehicle touched down and everyone stepped out. As soon as they did however, a voice sounded in the comlink.

"Thank god you came! My name is Dr. Gavin Archer. The situation is urgent – we're facing a catastrophic VI breakout. I'll explain the details later, but you must retract that transmission dish! The controls aren't far from your position. You have to hurry!"

Normally, Austin would want to know the full details. But under the circumstances, he'd make an exception.

The group headed into the facility. It was a mess. Blood stains on the walls, overturned furniture, consoles sparking, and a lot of dead bodies.

"What the hell happened here?" said Sarah.

"That's what we're here to find out, sis." said Austin.

"No one said anything about a house of horrors." said X-5.

"Oh don't be a baby." said Sarah.

They descended some stairs before a large monitor turned itself on. A scientist could be seen on it. It looked like he was talking to them.

"Over here – on the monitor."



The others cautiously stepped forward until he could see them. "Ah, there you are. I've locked myself in a computer room on the far side of the base. There are Geth on the loose. A rouge VI program has seized control and... I've lost a lot of friends today. I'd hate to see you join them. Please watch yourself." he said. He had the same voice as the one they'd heard when they arrived, so this was obviously Gavin Archer.

If Austin had known that the Geth were involved, he would've brought Leena and Tai with him. Still, it wasn't like his current squad was unsuitable for fighting Geth.

They followed the path to an observation deck. In the distance, they could see a large transmitting dish. Austin pressed the button and the dish slowly began descending. Just as it was about to complete however, it stopped.

"System error." said the computer.

What happened next made everyone jump back in fright. Every single holographic interface glowed a bright green with two bright eyes staring out of them. A loud unintelligible buzz could be heard. They appeared for a few moments before then vanishing.

"Damn it! The VI's overridden the controls. We have to stop him - he's trying to upload his program off planet." said Archer.

"Destroy the antennas inside the dish. There's a tram on the lower level. Get to it as fast as you can!"

The group didn't need to be told twice, and they increased their pace. Pretty soon, they came to a tram. They hurried into it and it set off the dish.

"Damn it all - he's aligning the dish to a new upload target! He'll have a clear line of sight to our satellite! This is going to be tight." said Archer.

The doors opened and they hurried to the dish itself.

"You need to destroy the support struts now. They have their own capacitors - try blowing them up!"

"There better be a good reason for this." said Sarah as they climbed the steps to the base of the dish.

"I actually hope so too." Austin replied.

They reached the massive inside of the dish where the supports where. Before they could get to work however, a rocket suddenly headed in their direction.

"Watch out! Incoming!" Liara yelled as she threw up a biotic shield to protect everyone.

Austin looked to see where the shot had come from. A small army of Geth had arrived. Something strange about them however was that their eyes where glowing green. It was almost as though they were being controlled by something.

Everyone went to cover and began firing. Fortunately, these VI

controlled Geth didn't seem to act any different than normal Geth, so they had the same sort of tactics and weaknesses that the group could exploit.

They split into two teams. Sarah and X-5 keeping the Geth occupied while Austin and Liara worked on destroying the capacitors.

The battle was very short lived as the last Geth fell and the final Capacitor was destroyed.

"You've done it! You've severed the link to the satellite!" said Archer.

Just before everyone could relax however, the dish started to shake violently. Looking up, Austin saw the structure starting to fall apart.

"You've got to be kidding me..." Austin groaned as he saw the debris fall in their direction.

"Shall we run for our lives now?" X-5 asked casually.

"Yep. MOVE! The whole thing's giving way!" Austin yelled.

Everyone ran as fast as they could.

"We're not gonna make it!" X-5 yelled as they saw the gap between the dish and the balcony was too big.

"We're gonna make it! JUMP!"

Everyone jumped, except Sarah who Austin grabbed onto. She couldn't jump as far as the others since she didn't have Helldiver armour. They all managed to land on the balcony just as the entire dish fell apart and collapsed.

"Over here!"

Archer came running out of the smoke at them.

"What the hell is going on around here?" Sarah asked.

"Man's reach exceeding his grasp. Come on, I'll explain." said Archer.

Austin helped Liara up and they followed Archer back to the tram.

"Thank, brother." said Sarah, grateful for what Austin had done.

"What would you do without me?" Austin smiled.

Both siblings banged fists with another.

"You have my eternal thanks, Major Shepard. You bought us some time, though probably not much. This isn't over yet." said Archer. They were back in the complex right next to the landing bay where the Hammerhead was.

Everyone else was outside gathering the bodies up and putting them in bags. Even though they were Cerberus, the dead still deserved some respect.

"You owe us that explanation." said Austin.

"This is Project Overlord. An attempt to gain influence over the Geth by interfacing a human mind with a VI. The results have been...

less than unsatisfactory. Archer explained. "My brother David volunteered to serve as a test subject. But somehow, his mind isn't able to handle the VI connection. He's like a virus now, infecting our networks and seizing control of any technology he finds. It's why you had to destroy the dish. Imagine if his program got off-world."

"How does he take control of electronics?" Austin asked.

"This is a hybrid intelligence the likes of which I've never seen. I don't know where the man ends and the machine begins." Archer replied. "One thing that does confuse me is why he hasn't tried to hack and control your suits."

"I think I know. We have several of the best firewalls in the galaxy, and the Arkanes build the Helldivers to resist all forms of hacking." said Austin. "I wouldn't be surprised if he hasn't tried because he knows he'll fail."

"That makes sense." said Archer.

"Still, you should have considered that before you started the experiment!" said Austin crossly.

"We couldn't be expected to account for every outcome! Certainly not the abomination David has become." said Archer.

"Davi... the VI has fortified itself in the main laboratory at Atlas Station. It's in lockdown now. To enter, you need to manually override from our facilities in the Prometheus and Vulcan Stations."

"How does the lockdown work?" Austin asked.

"It's a fail-safe procedure in the event of an emergency. Normally, all three project leads have to agree to cancel the lockdown. I'm the only one left now. I can give my authorization, but you'll have to manually reset the other two yourself."

Archer then walked up to nearby panel and pulled a cylinder out of it. One of the three bars on the holographic screen retracted.

"And what happens if I have to kill your brother?" Austin asked.

"Let's just hope it doesn't come to that." said Archer as he sat down.

"What exactly went wrong with the experiment?" Austin asked.

"David volunteered to interface with the VI to give it genuine consciousness. Theoretically it should have been safe, but... with artificial intelligence there is no such thing as safe." Archer replied.

"Then you shouldn't have attempted it!" said Austin.

"And what if you had never attempted to find the Reapers, Major Shepard? Where would the galaxy be then? Sometimes you have to ignore the risks." said Archer defensively.

"We're heading out now." said Austin.

"The other stations are all within driving distance. Best of luck, Major." said Archer.

After crossing a surprisingly beautiful canyon to get to the station, the

Hammerhead slowed down as it entered the volcanic plains of Vulcan station. Austin was very thankful now that Dell had made some upgrades to it and also done maintenance check just this morning as he saw the big rivers of lava.

"Major, this is Archer. I advise extreme caution. Vulcan Station is our geothermal plant. They stopped reporting in shortly after the experi-" said Archer through the radio, but he was cut off before he could finish.

"Scanning area... Analysis: VI infection is present within plant machinery. Advise caution." said the Hammerhead's computer.

It took several long hours and hundreds of fights with both Geth and mechs to get through the station to the lockdown. While Austin was no longer bored, he was beginning to think that he should've been careful what he wished for. Perhaps it became too true.

Regardless though, they soon found the area that had the lockdown. When they entered the room, they found a possessed mech shooting and trying to damage the lockdown control. It kicked it several times before it noticed the group.

Before it could fire on them however, they fired first. The mech instantly lost both its arms. Its green holographic eyes then seemed to disappear as the VI connection ceased. The armless mech, confused, simply started running around like headless chicken.

Austin simply ignored it and pulled the pillar out of the lockdown.

"Override of Atlas Station lockdown accepted."

"...are you receiving this? Major Shepard, this is Dr Archer. Please respond." he heard through his comm.

"I hear you, Doctor. We've hit the override at Vulcan Station and are moving on." said Austin.

He once again noticed the armless mech standing right next to him. It wasn't any good like this, and it really just seemed like torture. Best thing to do: put it out of its misery. He activated his shoulder cannon, and blew the mechs head off.

"Shepard out."

"Major, that was a daring piece of work. Vulcan Station was a success." said Archer.

The Hammerhead was now en-route to Prometheus station. Austin had to be careful not to run over any of the cows. It was tempting, but he wasn't a thoughtless killer.

"It's a shame actually. We see such beautiful vistas, yet we're never there under good circumstances." said Sarah as she admired the view.

"I guess that's a part of the job." said Austin.

Just at that moment however, there was a sudden bump. Austin hadn't been looking where he was going and had accidentally hit a cow.

"Oops." said Austin, trying to sound innocent.

Before anyone could say anything though, the cow suddenly got back up. It shook itself a bit, and then simply walked off like nothing had happened.

"That was lucky. Next time keep your eyes on the road, or whatever." said Sarah.

"Don't distract me then." Austin retorted.

"Can we not argue now, please?!" Liara interrupted.

That seemed to do the trick.

"Major Shepard, Prometheus Station is a crashed Geth ship full of dormant machines used in our experiment. Our people there have gone silent. It's likely the VI has activated the defence shields to keep you out. Good lu-"

"Where's Sandra when you need here to keep a secure signal?" Sarah sighed.

Sure enough, the remains of a crashed Geth dreadnought could be seen in the distance.

"Why do I get the feeling we're gonna find hundreds of Geth in there?" X-5 sighed.

"I don't know about you, but whenever I see Geth, I always reminded of the Terror Geth. You remember him, don't you?" said Sarah.

"Everyone remembers the Terror Geth. Especially me and Liara." said Austin.

"That was when we first met." said Liara, smiling as she remembered the events on Therum. Three years ago that had been, and yet here she and Austin were, now lovers and bond mates as though it were only yesterday.

The overall atmosphere of the dreadnought was a bit scarier. They were expecting a Geth to jump out at them any minute. There were a few Geth bodies lying around, but every single one of them was dead and deactivated.

After a small while of navigating the ship, and even having to build a makeshift bridge to cross a lot of open water (X-5 couldn't swim and he also didn't know if he was water proof or not. He wasn't willing to test that now in case it fired all his circuits and killed him)

The next override was activated. Now Atlas station was accessible.

"Override of Atlas Station lockdown accepted."

"Well, that one was a lot easier than I thought it was gonna be."

said X-5.

At that moment however, the humming sound of machines powering up echoed around the entire dreadnought. One of the dead Geth then started moving, its eye glowing green.

"And there's the catch," said Austin.

"You wanted this to be hard, X-5? You just got your wish." Sarah sighed.

"Me and my big mouth." X-5 sighed.

"Looks like you're in, Major. Good. I'm getting some troubling readings here, though. The VI is trying to upload its program directly from your location. Get to the server room and shut down the core before it can—"

"Lost it again."

"Comm channels never where the Arkane's strongest points.

"Get ready. I wouldn't be surprised if this button summoned a Reaper," he said.

"Oh no you don't!" said Austin as he tried to move. But he couldn't. His suit was in danger.

"Warning! Hacking attempt detected!" his suit's computer warned him.

"Austin!" Liara shouted as she ran to him, but some of the energy forced her back.

"I can't control my movement!" Austin groaned as he tried to regain control.

"Firewall breached! Movement controls compromised!" said the suit.

Without any control, the suit made Austin walk outside of the room before David's influence seemed to leave him.

The door sealed itself, the holographic lock disappearing only to be replaced by thousands of red ones.

"Austin! Austin!" Liara yelled as she and the others tried to get it open,

"Insufficient and unauthorized codes! Rejecting!" said the suit.

Austin's vision went static for a moment before it returned to normal. He tried to move, and found that he now had control again. His vision seemed a bit different. Now everything was green and holographic. It was strange, but easy to get used to. It actually reminded Austin of the very early simulators that the Helldivers once used before more lifelike advanced versions were made.

"Movement control re-enabled. Systems secure!"

"Must remember to tell Dell to perhaps make an upgrade for this," Austin said to himself. He then turned to the locked door and banged on it. "Guys, are you okay? Can you hear me?"

"Austin! Thank the goddess you're alright. Are you okay?" he heard Liara reply from the other side.

"I'm fine! I've regained control my suit and my firewalls seem to be keeping the VI out. What about you?" he replied.

"We're okay, but we're stuck in here. He's hacked the door and locked us in." said Sarah.

"I don't see any way to get you out." said Austin.

With all the different locks, it was impossible for him to force it open. Cutting probably wouldn't work either

"You'll have to go on without us then. Shut the VI down." said Sarah.

"Okay."

"Be careful, my love." said Liara.

"Don't worry, Liara. They'd have to rebuild the Terror Geth to have a faintest chance at least of taking me down." said Austin.

Out of the corner of his eye, he then noticed what looked like a holographic video recording. It was of three people heading through the door on the far side.

Austin had a feeling that something was going on here. Perhaps there was more to this than he knew. Remaining cautious though, he unholstered his M-76 Revenant and went through the door.

After dealing with a few more Geth, Austin found himself inside a lab. As he looked around, he saw some sort of disturbance in the distance. He walked up to it, and it seemed to turn into a video log. Two holograms of Archer, and who Austin guessed was David, were projected in front of him.

"Square root of 906.01 is 30.1... square root of 912.04 is 30.2..." David mumbled to himself.

"Time on this project is running out. There are no options left. How to get the Geth's attention?" said Archer.

At that moment, David suddenly stood up, and to Austin utter astonishment, he mimicked the Geth language.

"Did he just...?" Austin thought. "... Now I've seen everything."

"The robot says hello." said David.

"Eureka. David, you're a miracle worker." said Archer.

"David, I want you to order the Geth to take a step forward." said Archer.

"How does he do it?" asked one of the scientists.

"David is a mathematical savant. His autistic mind can interpret the Geth language at its most basic form and mimic their phonetics." Archer explained. "With his photographic memory, cross-referencing the meaning is a snap. He's literally a human computer."

"And you think he can interface with the Geth's neural network?"

"I do." Archer replied.

"Is that even safe, Doctor?"

"I see no harm in finding out."

The holograms once again vanished.

"There's more to this than I was told, isn't there, David?" Austin asked. He didn't expect there to be reply, instead another disturbance appeared.

"Square root of 906.01 is 30.1... square root of 912.04 is 30.2..." said David.

"David, can you repeat my notes from Thursday's experiment?" Archer requested.

"Square root of 918.09 is 30.3." said David, almost oblivious to what his brother had just said.

"David! Please pay attention!" said Archer, a bit more serious this time.

"Loud! It's getting loud in here." Said David.

"I'm sorry, you didn't deserve that. Would you mind repeating my notes from Thursday's experiment?" said Archer.

"Log 137.3. The experiment yielded no discernible patterns of Geth obedience. End dictation now, David. Hell, the Illusive Man will have my head for this" said David.

"Thank you. And how are you feeling today?" Archer asked.

"Square root of 924.16 is 30.4... earplugs would be good." David replied.

"Square root of 906.01 is 30.1... square root of 912.04 is 30.2..."

"We're ready. Open a connection to the Geth network."

"QUIET!"

"David, NO! Tell the Geth to stand down!" Archer order urgently.

"QUEIT! PLEASE MAKE IT STOP!"

Another hologram suddenly projected in front of Archer. It was far too static for Austin to see it clearly but whatever it was, it was massive. The hologram practically stood at over 3 meters tall.

The holograms of the scientist and Archer turned to face it.

"What the the..." said Archer before the hologram log was cut off.

Austin was beginning to understand what was going on. Archer had lied to him about David volunteering, he hadn't had a choice.

Austin's thoughts however where interrupted when the green holographic of Overlord suddenly turned bright red. The face disappeared and was now replaced with what looked like a red mechanical eye of sorts. Then something extremely unexpected



happened.

Out of the top of the ring, a humanoid hologram ascended. It was a Geth. But as it appeared even more, he saw that this was not an ordinary Geth at all. It was a three metre tall Geth prime with clawed feet, a nuke launcher on its right wrist, and two long horns protruding from its head.

To the Helldiver's horror, there in front of him, stood a perfect life-like hologram... of the Terror Geth.

The hologram looked straight at him. It even emitted the same deep voiced language that the real Terror Geth once did. Austin did at least know that this was not the real Terror Geth at all. He'd killed that mutated Geth Prime himself and had watched it die. He could easily work out that the VI must've accessed one of his suit's recordings and had registered the Terror Geth as a suitable enemy (and its case, a defence mechanism)

The Terror Geth hologram emitted the same low and threatening growl as the real Terror Geth and hopped down from the platform. Austin could see where this was going and holstered his rifle. He then took out his sword and also activated his omni blade. He had a feeling that while this wasn't the real Terror Geth, the hologram could still fight like the real one.

The Terror Geth charged, blade arm at the ready. The two opponents clashed fiercely with one another. A few bits of good news was that the hologram did seem to move slower than its counterpart, so Austin was able to either dodge or block it's strikes.

However, the hologram still moved with the same ferocity and strength as the original. One punch landed Austin in the stomach and he was sent flying. Fortunately, he was able to dig his omni blade into the ground and slow him down.

The hologram Terror Geth even used its nuke launcher, which fired real shots. Something Austin was beginning to notice was that his suit upgrades were really showing their true purpose now. He moved faster than he had originally against the Geth, he was stronger, and he was also a bit smarter now. The last three years had made him a bit wiser and he also knew a few new tricks to put to use.

The Terror Geth made another swing at him, but he dodged under it and sliced the Geth Prime's leg with both his blades. The hologram temporarily stumbled, but quickly got back up and lunged again. Despite that Austin was clearly hurting it, and the hologram being solid, he just wasn't causing enough damage. Not to mention that the hologram seemed to keep healing ever single injury. While the Helldiver had the skills, strength and speed to defeat this hologram, they would all mean nothing if he couldn't critically damage it.

The two lunged at each other again and both clashed, ending up

in a blade lock. The enemies glared at one another as they tried to overpower the other. Despite that they were face to face, the Terror Geth didn't say anything. It was very quiet. The only noises it did make were the growls and usual noises that all Geth made.

Then Austin spotted something. A holographic stream of some kind had appeared around the main platform where David was connected to the VI. At one end of the stream was what looked like an upload signal, and it was very slowly traveling to the other end.

"Oh no. He's trying to upload to the Normandy!" Austin thought. "Not on my watch!"

Using manual aim, the Helldiver activated his plasma cannon and targeted the uplink. The Terror Geth only just noticed this, and tried to upset his aim, but the shot had already fired by the time it happened. The plasma hit its target and the uplink went static before disappearing. This seemed to have an effect on the holographic Terror Geth as well, as it also went static for a minute and fell to its knees in a state of weakness.

"Gotcha!" Austin thought.

This small victory was short lived though, as the hologram quickly got back up, ready for another fight. This time though, Austin knew how to beat him. David was inside the sphere VI core, which was protected by several barriers. Those however had come down when the uplink had been halted. If he could damage that core enough times, perhaps this could all end.

The Terror Geth made another running charge. This time though, Austin was clever. He rolled out of the way, causing the Terror Geth to run right past him. It smashed into the VI core hard, getting its horns stuck at the same time.

Despite the situation he was on, Austin couldn't help but chuckle a bit. It was actually a bit humorous to see the Terror Geth try to force itself free like sometimes happened in a comedy cartoon.

As the hologram pushed as hard as it could to free itself, the VI once again tried another upload. Once again, Austin fired upon it and it went static again and disappeared. Once again, the Terror Geth hologram flickered, this time more. Clearly that was hurting it and the VI.

The Terror Geth finally gave a violent push and was freed, damaging the VI core even more at the same time.

The two once again clashed around the Core. Whenever it tried to upload its program, Austin destroyed it and fired more on the VI core. The more damage he caused, the more ferocious the Terror Geth seemed to get. The VI was obviously detecting that it was getting closer and closer to being deactivated. If a VI could experience fear, this was probably the closest it could get.

Austin managed to get an opening and he parried one of the

hologram's strikes, causing it to stumble. Seizing his chance at an opening, he spun and plunged Excalibur straight into the eye.

"Let's see you get up from that one." Said Austin.

The Terror Geth hologram however seemed almost unfazed by this. To Austin astonishment, it reached up and gently pulled the sword out. The wound healed instantly.

"What does it take to kill you?!" said Austin as he managed to shrug off the hologram's grip and backed away to give himself more room.

This time the Terror Geth swung at Austin with its nuke launcher. That however was a big mistake, as Austin dodged it and as it went past he cut it with both his blades.

The launcher quickly became unstable by the damage and exploded. The cubes scattering everywhere seemed to disorient Austin for a moment. So much so that he did notice the Terror Geth swing at him again. It may have lost its entire arm, but as the Helldiver knew, it took more than that to bring down this particular Geth Prime.

Only too late did he fail to block the attack and the Terror Geth knocked Excalibur out of his hand and pinned his omni blade arm with one of its feet.

The Helldiver struggled as hard as he could to get free, but the grip was too strong. The Terror Geth slowly raised its blade arm to deliver the final blow.

"You die!" it said, mimicking the same thing he had said before severing the real Terror Geth's head three years ago.

Austin struggled even more. He did not fear death, but it couldn't end like this. If he died, who would defeat the Reapers?

All the while, the Terror Geth had failed to notice that the AI was sparking. The amount of damage it had sustained was critical.

"Warning! AI core at critical levels!"

The red holo eye flickered. Once again, David's voice seemed echo throughout the chamber.

"QUIET! PLEASE MAKE IT STOP!"

The hologram went static and terminated itself. This then travelled down to the AI core which practically exploded. At the very same time, the Terror Geth thrust its blade forward. Right before the blade could pierce through Austin's armour however, the hologram seemed to explode as well into several tiny green cubes. Austin opened his eyes, he was alive.

"Now that was way too close." he said in his mind. He was panting rather heavily. It had been an intense fight.

He slowly got back up on his feet and looked at where the AI core had been. What he saw however, made him go pale.

David was held in the air by several clamps of some sort. He had two large pipes forced into his mouth, a metallic colour and harness of

some sort grafted painfully into the flesh around his neck, and several pipes plugged into his arms. The very ends of them also went right through his arms. David's eyes were also forced to be kept open with special clamps. There were clear signs of tears running down his face. The whole sight of it was horrible. Austin could barely imagine how much torture and pain this must be for him. How could Archer do this to his own brother? How could anyone do this to another person?!

Austin slowly stepped closer to him. He'd seen some of the horrible things Cerberus had done, but this... this was so much worse. He was almost lost for words.

"Quiet - please make it stop." David repeated. He couldn't speak due to the tubes forced into his mouth. The computer must be reading his speech patterns.

"I've made it stop, David. It's over." Austin managed to say.

"Wait! Major!" a voice yelled.

Austin turned to see Archer run into the chamber.

"I'm begging you. Don't do anything rash." he said.

"You told me David volunteered! You lied to me!" Austin yelled as he seized the doctor by the neck.

"By necessity! If I'd told you the truth, you would have shut me down and not him. It's not like I planned this. It was an accident. Seeing David communicate with the Geth... it all seemed harmless."

"I saw his memory - he begged you not to do this." said Austin.

"I was desperate! The Illusive Man doesn't broker failure!" said Archer. "Any war we fight with the Geth will be bloody. I was asked to find a way to avoid that."

"Who the hell gave you the right to play God?!" Austin nearly shouted.

"People who were too afraid to make difficult decisions themselves. When they pray for a miracle, they're really praying for men like me to make the tough choices. If my work spares a million mothers mourning the loss of a million sons, my conscience will rest easy." said Archer.

"So you'll sacrifice your brother's happiness for your own ambition?" Austin asked.

"Square root of 906.01 equals..." said David.

"30.1." Archer finished. There was a long silence before he spoke again. "What I've done to David is unethical. If he dies, it's unforgivable. Let me take care of him. Please."

"Quiet - please make it stop." David repeated.

"I've seen enough of your cruelty to know he'll never be free from it here. I'm taking him away." said Austin.

"No! Leave him! He's too valuable!" Archer shouted. He pulled out a pistol and fired several shots at Austin.

All the rounds did was bounce off his hard armour. Austin turned back ground and punched Archer right in the face. He staggered back clutching his bleeding nose.

"You even think about coming after your brother, and this bullet and maybe even a plasma shot will be waiting for you! Then we'll see who's valuable!" Austin shouted as he pointed his own Phalanx pistol at Archer.

"Where will you take him?" the scientist asked.

"Grissom Academy. They can help special cases like David - minus the torture. He'll also be safe from Cerberus and the Illusive Man. And he can go to hell a thousand times if he disapproves of this! I didn't Cerberus could sink any lower than what I've seen them do to children, I was so wrong." said Austin. The Helldiver then activated his comlink. "Joker, contact the Academy and let them know we've got someone who needs their help."

"Aye aye, Major." Joker replied.

"And one more thing, more Helldivers and Arkanes will come to secure this base. They'll see to it that all this is destroyed so that it can't be used again." said Austin.

"What about me?" Archer asked.

"if you're lucky, they'll just take what information they can get from you and send you back to Cerberus. They won't even want you to step one foot on their home-world to stand trial. If not, well I hope you like prison food." Austin replied.

The room was silent as Austin worked on getting David out of the machine. One thing could be heard however as David repeated the phrase over and over again.

"Square root of 912.04 is 30.2... it all seemed harmless..."

"It's okay. It's over. You're safe." said Austin as he helped David down after finally freeing him.

"You stopped him." David said.

"Him? Him, who?" Austin asked.

"The voices... Nazara... he will return..."

David only managed that much before he seemed to go into shock.

"What was all that about?" Austin asked himself.

"Square root of 912.04 is 30.2... it all seemed harmless..."

Austin simply lay in bed with Liara. They were still clothed, just cuddling. Liara had offered Austin some much needed comfort after what he'd seen and endured. In-particular she'd been horrified after seeing what Archer had done to David, and most surprised when her bond mate had mentioned about the holographic Terror Geth, but Austin had assured her it was nothing to worry about. After all, he killed the real one himself 3 years ago.

Liara had managed to drift off while cuddling with her bond mate and was now sleeping very peacefully. Austin simply smiled as he watched the sleeping Asari. Something about Liara made her look very cute when she was sleeping.

The peaceful cuddling was interrupted however when EDI suddenly appeared.

"This better be good, EDI." said Austin, whispering so as not to wake Liara up.

EDI seemed to get the message and lowered the volume of her voice to a whisper as well.

"I apologise for the interruption, Shepard. But Miss Lawson was hoping to speak with you when you have a moment." she said.

"What does she want this time?!" Austin groaned quietly.

"I believe she said something about an apology." EDI replied.

"About bloody time."

Austin gently got up, being careful not to wake Liara. He soon had himself free of her arms and was off the bed. Just before he left though, he picked up the covers and gently drew them over Liara. He then planted a gentle kiss on her forehead.

"Sweet dreams, my Blue Goddess." he smiled.

Austin was hoping this would go okay. If Miranda was finally going to apologize, then they'd both be on good terms. When he entered, he found the former Cerberus Operative in her usual spot. She had what looked like a look of regret on her face.

"Shepard, thank you for coming. I'm sorry if interrupted anything." she said, almost with a hint of sadness in her voice. It was rather unexpected.

"EDI told me you wanted to apologise." said Austin as he crossed his arms.

"Yes. I've been having a long look at many of files and data you have on Cerberus. What I've read broke my heart... but it's also opened my eyes. And having recently heard about Overlord has only added to that. You, the Arkanes and every single Helldiver is right about Cerberus. I used to think that the Illusive Man wanted humanity to have more strength, but now I see that what he really wants to have us dominate all the other races, and even I think that is wrong." said Miranda. "What I'm trying to say is, I'm sorry for the way I've been, and I take back everything I've said to defend Cerberus. I've been such a fool."

Austin was silent for a few moments. He was glad to see that Miranda had finally come round, but he was still waiting for her to say something else.

"I'm a forgiving person, Miranda. I'm glad you've finally seen the truth, but you should really be apologizing to Jack, not me. You really insulted her last time." he said.

"I already have. It took a bit of talks, but we worked things out. She's now accepted my apology. She still doesn't like me, but we're on good terms now." said Miranda.

"Good. Glad to hear you won't be having any more arguments." said Austin.

"I just want you to know, Shepard. Whatever happens out there, you have my full support." said Miranda.

"Glad to hear, Miranda." Austin smiled.

"So, shall we get back to work, Major?"

"Carry on, Lawson."

"Yes sir!"

Austin left Miranda's quarters and headed up to the Galaxy Map. He knew immediately where to go now. It had gone on long enough now. It was time to get the Reaper IFF...

With Overlord now shut down, a few Arkane scientists, one or two Helldiver squads and a clean-up crew had arrived to secure the base. Archer was still there since he was now in Helldiver custody. The Helldivers planned to let him go back though as they had no intention of offering him defection after what he did to his brother. It wasn't like Archer had learned any secrets anyway, and they'd keep the base.

Archer was cooperating willingly with the Helldivers and showing them where everything was, and holding back no secrets. Some of the Arkane scientists were examining some of the research for anything that might help them at all in their fight against Cerberus.

"I just want to know if there's anything more I could've done to prevent this." said Archer, the regret of what he'd done obvious in his voice.

"Well, you certainly could've added some more firewalls to it. This VI's so easy to hack." said one of the Arkanes.

"What do you mean it's easy to hack? It's been destroyed." said Archer.

A worried look crept onto the Arkane's face when Archer said that.

"But... it's still here." he said.

"What?!"

"It's still here. It..." the Arkane examined the VI program more clearly. His expression turned to even more worry as he saw something else about the VI. "It hasn't even been activated at all yet."

"But that's impossible. The VI was activated when we moved forward with the Project. It was destroyed by Shepard." said Archer. He too walked up to the console. Sure enough though, the Arkane was right. The VI was there, despite the fact that it shouldn't be. It was still in fact waiting for its full activation, something that should have happened when it was linked to David's mind. A horrible thought

began to creep into Archer's mind.

"Something we should know about, Archer?" the Arkane asked.

The two scientists looked at the large uplink array had David had originally been. They both casted worried looks at each other.

"I have a theory. But for all our sakes, I really hope it's wrong. If the VI intended for the project didn't make David do all this, then what did?"

Little did he know that the answer to that question would one day rock the universe of the Helldivers...



# TITLE

Author  
of

Cover Letter goes here: something about the work, the writer, or whatever else the writer wants to talk about.

# POETRY

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John Mahler's Quotes of the Day

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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!

# FALLING IN LOVE

Maria Kubiak

Loud alarm in my head.  
Am I falling in love?  
Am I giving away my heart?  
This is it.  
He took control over my body,  
It is the way he speaks to me,  
It is the way he looks at me,  
It is the way he touches me.  
Someone?  
Help me!

I'm falling in love,  
I'm giving away my heart.  
This is it.

# DELUSION

Esaiyon

I thought that we were working and  
everything was fine,  
Suddenly one day you flipped out and  
sold me for a dime.  
Replaced me with another,  
all your feelings now were gone.

You left me scarred, grieving,  
overflowing with fear,  
I shivered as I screamed your name,  
my eyes filled with tears.  
This cannot be real,  
it must be a bad dream,  
I remember yesterday  
the love of my life was here.

Now you've moved on and  
we're not even through,  
damn, I wish there was a way  
to get over you.  
"We gotta remain friends",  
that's what I keep thinking,  
Hoping you'd say you love me,  
but deeper I'm sinking.  
What you did to me  
should be called a sin,  
Our love was a dirty game  
where you always had to win.

I was so distraught  
when you walked out on me,  
disenchanted 'cause I believed that  
we were meant to be.  
You killed all my hopes,  
murdered all my dreams,  
ripped out my heart,  
you did it all with ease.

I was such a fool to

waste my time on you,  
I gave my heart to someone  
whose feelings were untrue.  
You gave your word to me,  
you promised so many things,  
Happiness, wealth and prosperity,  
you said I could fly on your wings.  
I've given you all that I could give,  
but your greedy soul wanted more,  
you took from me and  
now I'm taking from you,  
get down on your knees and  
tell me the truth.

You used to be an angel,  
so thoughtful and kind,  
till you turned into a demon,  
but love was still blind.

You just kept disrespecting me,  
hurting my soul,  
lying to me truthfully,  
things got out of control.  
You didn't wanna be nice anymore,  
you said that I was mad,  
how mad can you be 'bout someone  
that you want so bad?

I said that I was giving up,  
but I was too weak for that,  
All I know is that you broke my heart and  
we've never even met.

This is a bad dream  
'cause you were never real,  
there is no damage,  
nothing that should be healed.

Someday I'll find true love  
who will love me for me,  
Until then I'll follow my dreams and  
simply let it be.

# CONCEIVABLE CONCLUSIONS

Kela Lewis-Morin

Maybe we fall because we know we can  
And we stall when it comes to a helping hand.  
Because we refuse to accept and to understand.  
That a man would be willing to aid another man,  
Without some sort of under hand, profitable plan.

Maybe we project our perceptions on to others.  
Quotes that emerged and persevered by our mothers.  
Home truths that we go on to eventually discover.  
Making it the only way we can connect with each other.  
Spurring us to find like minded friends, associates and lovers.

Maybe we lie because the truth is too bitter to bear.  
We are inclined to believe that others do actually care.  
And that they will only listen so that they are able to compare  
Our circumstances, even though we know life is made to be unfair.  
That is why when the mighty fall, we all avidly stand by and stare.

There are a lot of fine details forgotten in the final figure.

There are a lot of surreal strokes painted into this picture.

There are a lot of what if's and maybes to consider.

Any eventuality could be a reality.

What you may call insanity,

Another may call clarity.

# HEARTLESS

Zorveska  
of <http://zorveska.deviantart.com>

I've told you my story,  
It reduced me to tears.  
But still you won't help me,  
The worst of my fears.

It's not something I can ignore any longer.  
More dead than alive.  
I struggle against the chains  
My own mind created to restrain me.

You'd rather see me suffer silently then allow me to recover:  
How is that love?  
I know you've always had favourites  
But surely you'd help me, just this once.

It's not like I asked much from you.  
I'd given up long ago  
Of ever feeling anything resembling  
Love from you.  
What you say are empty words,  
Devoid of meaning.  
Lifeless, like me.

It has been years now,  
Yet you still torture me with your looks,  
Disdain in your eyes.  
I was never good enough, never worthy.  
There was always someone better,  
More feminine, a daughter you would be proud of.  
You always did like to pour salt into my wounds.

I can honestly say  
I will cry at your funeral.  
Even though I hate you utterly,  
A part of me will always see you as my mother  
(even if you are a pathetic one).

One thing I will never understand,  
Is how you can look me in the eyes each drab day

And not feel the slightest bit of empathy, of pathos,  
Though you claim to be facing the exact same thing as me.

So whilst I experience this torture,  
Enslaved to my own soul,  
I can look you in the eyes,  
And know that I only have you to blame.



# A CLIFF EDGE

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Every night I drift into sleep,  
The same dream, the same adventure each time.  
For my mind is spiraling and trying to find:  
What does any of this mean?

And I find myself now, half way through my life,  
I've found a cliff edge,  
Abyss will you eat me? consume and take my pride?  
I have found i'm alone.

I look into this abyss:  
With no master I seem to recognize my own face,  
With no slave I seem to see my fate,  
I wish to become my master,  
Time falls like grains of sand,  
I think I've found the answer.

The sands come, the gap is my grave.  
Right or left no longer open to choice,  
For forward is my domain,  
A path to Princedom is shown.

As I fall I realize my reward: Pain  
Rewards are always double edged,  
Humanity a higher animal,  
Yet deprived and depraved to the core.  
Feed yourself.

I return as my master, not a son of any morning,  
I am here to feed myself,  
I return to reverse my deprivation,  
To indulge my depravations.