

Fanatical Publishing's

Weekly Review

Issue #86

January 26, 2014

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 share it with your friends, re-post it to your profile, spread it around; the more people who get to read it, the better!

If you are not subscribed, but you want to be, there's nothing easier: Just e-mail me at fanaticalweekly@gmail.com with 'subscribing' in the subject line.

I've got a website, where you can download old issues for free:
<http://fanaticalpublishing.weebly.com/my-e-zines.html>

If you want to contribute, I'd love to see your work, send it to me at fanaticalweekly@gmail.com with:
'category(prose, fanfic, or poetry), STORY TITLE, Author's Name'
in the subject line.

You can include the text of your story in the body of the email, attached as an RTF, or you can put in a link to your story on some webpage. Please include a cover letter about you, your work, or whatever; include any links you want, and cover art if you have any.

But please, please, please for the love of the almighty, please do not attach your work as a .doc or .docx.

Do you have any questions or comments? If you do, I'd to hear them; write to me at fanaticalweekly@gmail.com.

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

Table of Contents

Original Prose

LET'S PLAY DETECTIVE?, FaerieBox

Page 5

THE ALL-OR-NONE ENDING, Katelyn Rushe

Page 9

Fan fiction

ME₃ THE HELLDIVER SAGA - THE LAST CYCLE: CHAPTER

5, Veyron722Skyhook

Page 12

LEGEND OF ZELDA - A FLAME'S THEFT: CHAPTER 2,

LittleWriterLink

Page 29

Poetry

NO MISTAKES, TheMeTheyDontSee

Page 36

Poetry, The Seasons Game - January, Albin L.J. Myhrman

Page 37

KEEP ME TILL DAWN, David Villegas

Page 38

THE LAKE AND ELIZA

Bebopboy

Page 39

UNTITLED KNIFE CLICK, Bootshopstory

Page 46

ORIGINAL LITERATURE

LET'S PLAY DETECTIVE?

CHAPTER 12

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

"I think you are right, Carrie. You're always so sensible and sensitive."

Okay, this was rather weird. My twin complimenting me. I stared at her in bewilderment as I followed her steps, wondering whether she'd fallen sick without warning or abducted by ETs.

She simply continued, without looking at me. She'd a thoughtful expression as she walked.

"Really. It *is* a simple crime." she said. "A complicated crime is too reflected, has too many little things about it – has more chances of leaving an easy clue to follow. This one is bare. No evidences, no one there to 'presence' what's happened." she rubbed her chin, in a detective-like manner. "Except Grandpa, of course. But we couldn't even see his body!"

I suddenly shuddered. Unlike her, I wasn't exactly excited to see my first corpse.

I ended that gloomy talk, by asking in a whisper:

"But... how could this be, Alice? A 'bare' crime, without clues? It can't be real."

"Oh, you didn't understand right, sis." she explained: "If you're a person who has any moral sense, you know you're doing something wrong when you commit a crime. Don't you? – Rhetoric question, don't answer. Then you plan, put details and details, or get nervous and make a mistake. Now, if you don't care about what you're doing..."

"A cold assassin. A sociopath."

I held my breath. Sister just gazed at me, frowning one brow and raising the other.

"You use too-dramatic words, you know? But ok, then we have your sociopath. A person capable of committing a 'bare' crime. Easy and clean, without trouble."

"You have nice theories, Alice." I commented, admired.

She bowed her head in a 'thank you', and gestured for silence about this matter, for she'd her hand already resting on the knob of the kitchen's door.

I got it, and nodded. We didn't want Zia to hear this. She'd get pretty mad with us. No more cookies.

When we entered the back-door of the kitchen, Zia was under the frame of the other, on the opposite side of the room, and finishing

shouting at someone. I couldn't understand about which matter. The angry words were confused by her foreign accent. But she looked very, very angry.

Alice glanced at me, right before Zia leave the door. I had no idea. I just gazed back at the maid, in silence.

Her head kept half-turned at the door on the first moment, and she huffed as walked away, her clear-brown eyes glaring at the other corridor's direction. It took a second or two for her to perceive us there.

Zia was still fuming. She made a wide, irritated gesture of 'stop and out of my kitchen', and simply let all of her anger plummet down on us.

"I don't care what you'll say!" she cried out loud. "I'm not going to take a *cup of tea* to that man!"

"Uh...Okay..." Sis backed, nodding with intimidated stupefaction. I stepped forward.

"Zia...? What's wrong?" I inquired.

Zia halted of a sudden, the whole fury of a moment ago vanishing to leave just a surprise-blank expression. Her thin brows rose, and comprehension slowly lightened on her face.

"Oh... You don't know anything. I'm so sorry, misses, I am." she looked embarrassed. "You got me in a bad moment."

"It's okay." my twin replied, raising an eyebrow. "Who we were talking about, after all?"

Zia's face closed again. She replied dryly:

"Your dear uncle, Jack Grayson."

"Uncle Jack?" I frowned, bewildered. "What's the matter with him?"

"Oh, are you talking about him being in bed with a cold, or about him *harassing* me?" Zia spit the last words with all the poison possible.

"Ah!..."

"... uh..."

"...beg your pardon?" we both asked, at the same time.

She eyed us crossed and nodded, with an annoyed sarcastic smile. Alice assented slowly, licking her lips. She then pulled a little stool, placing it next to Zia.

"Okay, dearie. Please sit down, calm yourself, and open your heart to us. Tell everything that's troubling you."

I wanted to hide my face and die. Sister is not self-interested and manipulative. Ah, no.

But I was also eager to listen at this. I almost couldn't refrain my curiosity, waiting while Zia obeyed my sister and sat down. Our foreigner maid breathed deep, slowly, to regain charge of her emotions, before trying to explain herself.

“Please forgive me, misses. It was just once – but it’s so... so...”

She gesticulated, now simply upset, almost choking with tears. Alice caught another stool, arranging it before the first. She dropped on it, with her legs crossed. She gazed at Zia.

I was the only one able to see the sudden coldness in her green eyes. Something like the impassibility of a judge... Or more to the heartless impartiality of a genius. Oh, I’m so over-poetic. She was just putting her gray-matter to work.

“Don’t worry Zia.” she feigned gentleness. “Really. Tell us when it has happened. And what our reckless, drunkard uncle did. I’m sure that it wasn’t quite his fault.”

Zia snorted, rolling her eyes. But Alice had loosened her tongue.

“Yea, yea. Well, he was really very drunk that day. Why, don’t you remember, Miss Alice? It was when I left to make more tea, on the b...”

Zia covered her mouth so abruptly, awkwardly, that was easy to guess which day. Grandpa’s birthday. Grandpa’s death day. Uncle was so drunk that afternoon that we could smell the alcohol in his breath from the other corner of the room.

Alice smiled, slyly.

“Ah.” my perverted sister suddenly frowned. “I thought he was going out to vomit, when he left the room after you. Could never wonder that he was looking for fun-“

I kicked her stool with all my heart, though too late. Sister scrubbed the kitchen’s floor with her nose, and ended up in a very unpretty crawling position. When she turned, looking up at me, you couldn’t imagine the hatred that glimmered in her eyes. I didn’t retreat – just crossed my arms over my chest, still reprehensive.

Eye-battle. We are masters of this game. And I wouldn’t give it away to her...

We were distracted by a clear, crystalline laughter. Both my sister and I turned, slightly surprised.

It was Zia. She was folded in two on the little wooden stool, holding her belly. She straightened her body very slowly, still laughing.

“Really, misses, you’re so funny...” she glanced at Alice, and squeezed her eyes, smiling. “You’re a lot like Mr. John, do you know? That day...” she glared at the ceiling, painted of a clean white. “...when he asked me to bring tea to the library... I was arranging the tray, with the cup, the milk, sugar, a piece of cake... like always. A usual day.” she winced, her nose turning up. “Then your uncle came. He was so un-gentleman...! Creeping close from behind and... pinching my hips! A well-bred English man shouldn’t behave that way! I had to slap him and push him away. And he still fell over the tray!” she exclaimed, indignant. “He broke that beautiful lid, from the

Chinese teapot – knocked it straight to the floor, he did. Mr. John scolded me for that lid... Your aunt too.”

She shrugged, frowning with a sad manner.

“I would never imagine that *that* would happen when we left him and I went to fix dinner...”

We were staring at her, in silence. But it was all Zia had to tell.

She shook her head and sighed – more like a teary expiration. Then, she glanced down, and her face returned to a stone stubbornness, glaring at us. She underlined:

“But I’m still *not going* to take *breakfast in bed* to that guy! If he can’t stand on his feet to come down, it’s not my problem, and I *don’t care!*”

“Ok, ok, we understood. We’re not going to *force* you.” Alice said. She looked at me. “Let’s solve this...”

“Maybe we can see uncle Jack for you.” I proposed, turning to Zia. “Then no one gets mad with you, and you can stay here downstairs.”

Zia gleamed. She gave us a white, wide grin, grateful.

She put a whole chocolate bar in our hands, before pushing us through the door with breakfast for uncle, and a brown bottle of medicine.

While I carried the heavy tray, Alice revolved the bottle between her fingers, entertained in watching the darkish liquid inside glue to the walls of the bottle as she made it move. She raised an eyebrow.

I pitied Uncle. Even from distance, that thing was nauseating.

They aren’t totally wrong about woman. We can be vengeful.

THE ALL-OR-NONE ENDING

Katelyn Rushe of:

<http://krrouse.deviantart.com/>

http://www.amazon.com/Katelyn-Rushe/e/B009F00OR6/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_pop_1

and <https://www.fanfiction.net/u/342929/>

I got reacquainted with the Whodunnit comedy film “Clue” earlier this week. In case you're unfamiliar with that movie, it's adapted from the classic Parker Brothers board game (back in the days when movies based on board games were clever and memorable) and was originally released in theatres in three different versions, each with its own unique ending. Each version can be viewed on the DVD, either with all three resolutions shown one after the other at the film's end or with just one resolution that the DVD randomly chooses.

The three endings go as follows: In Ending 1, one of the six suspects turns out to be the murderer, who also had some help from an accomplice before adding them to the body count. In Ending 2, another suspect who worked entirely alone turns out to be the murderer. In Ending 3, every suspect turns out to have killed one person each over the course of the film. While none of these endings makes total sense, I've always liked the version where everyone is guilty the best. Not only does it take the film's over-the-top-confusion motif to the maximum, but it also feels truer to the original board game, where every suspect has been the killer at some point.

This leads to today's topic, something I like to call an “All-or-none” ending. This is a type of narrative outcome, specifically in stories containing a competitive element, that either combines or dismisses every option for an outcome that the story originally presents. In murder mysteries like “Clue”, the usual assumption going in is that just one of the suspects is the culprit, so an ending where everyone's a culprit is far more surprising because it shows that we were right to be suspicious of every character the whole time. In the case of “Clue”, the “everyone's a culprit” ending also makes the overall story and ensemble cast of characters feel more unified and balanced since it doesn't suddenly pick one suspect to focus on at the end.

In contrast, another Whodunnit comedy film called “Murder by Death” plays with our murder mystery expectations by revealing that there was never really a murder at all—maybe. That's another

confusing one. Either way, none of the detectives involved ever wins their host's contest by solving the case and identifying a culprit. Similarly, in the films "It's a Mad Mad Mad Mad World" and "Rat Race", none of the parties chasing after the cash prize ends up winning it. These resolutions again create unification and balance in their overall stories and ensemble casts by not suddenly favoring one character over the rest.

All-or-None endings are also popular in "versus" movies. The assumption going into a film called "Mega Shark Versus Giant Octopus" is that one of the over-sized sea monsters will defeat the other by the end, much like how a boxing match has a clear winner and loser in the final round. Instead, the Mega Shark and the Giant Octopus kill each other at the same time and there's no winner at all. "Pokémon: The First Movie" builds up to a huge throw-down between Mew and Mewtwo, but both characters end up deciding to call it a draw because they're too evenly matched for one to defeat the other. This could be a case of a fight having either no winner or two winners, depending on how you want to look at it.

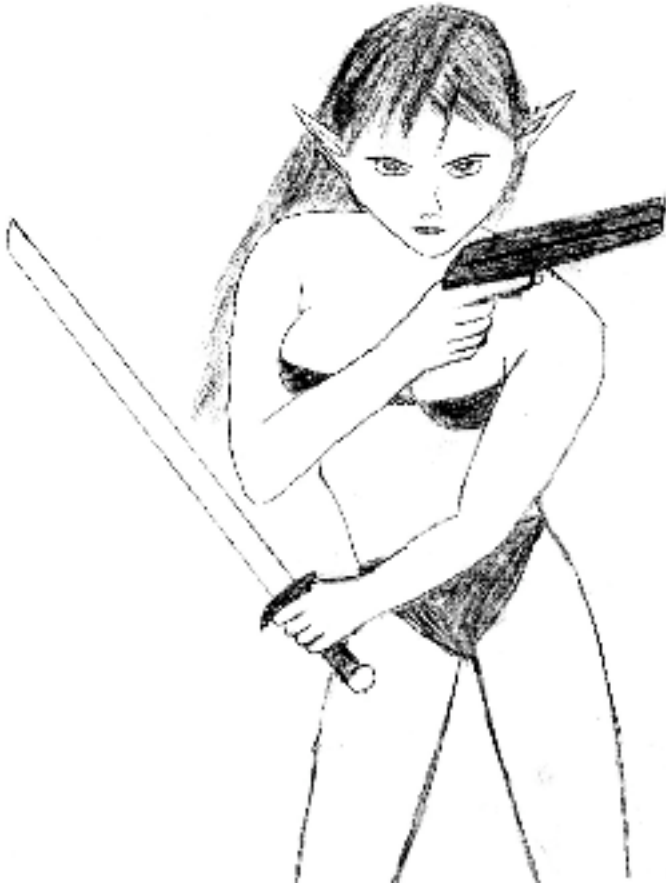
Even when films like this do pick a victor, they don't always commit to it. Films like "Freddy vs. Jason", "Alien vs. Predator", and a large number of Godzilla movies end with a last-minute hint that the loser is or could be a threat still. This seems to be a trend for two reasons: 1) It leaves the film open for sequels, and 2) it keeps the film from totally disappointing and alienating fans of the defeated character. While this may be a more cynical view of All-or-None endings, these movies are still aware that both of their titular combatants are equally important.

So what am I getting at with all this rambling? Mainly that the All-or-Nothing ending has a place in storytelling even if it may seem indecisive at first. It's always important to have a clear hierarchy of importance in mind for your characters when you write, and in cases where all of your major players are of equal importance, suddenly shifting most of the attention to one of them at the end can feel a bit out of nowhere and arbitrary.

If you properly set one character apart from the rest throughout the story, perhaps by telling it from their point of view or by giving them the most emphasis in each scene, then making them the focus of the ending would feel a lot more natural. That's not to say that this rule can never be broken, but it's usually best to clearly set something up before paying it off. Otherwise, a lot more stories might come with multiple, interchangeable endings that don't always add up.

And that doesn't fare well outside of a comedy.

FAN FICTION



or: Leanna's Return

Your Fan Fiction is published here for free, but if you want to help keep it free, check out some other things I publish, like

ME₃ THE HELLDIVER SAGA, THE LAST CYCLE:

CHAPTER 5: FROM ASHES

Veyron722skyhook

“Major, are you alright? I can only imagine what it was like down on Palaven.” Samantha asked.

“I thought you’d be more concerned about Sarah than me.” Austin joked.

“You’re her brother. I’m allowed to be concerned about you too, aren’t I?” Traynor replied.

“I know, Samantha. I was just joking.” Austin smiled.

“Must say, EDI getting a body was a huge surprise. I’d have swooned if I wasn’t already in love with Sarah. Still, if she’d told me about her plan to obtain a body, I’d have volunteered to help.” Said Traynor.

“I do not wish to force a conflict of interests between our friendship and your duty.” Said EDI over the comm.

“I’d have preferred a conflict of interest to a hard restart of half our systems... but thanks, regardless.” Said Traynor.

Just as Austin was about to leave though, Traynor quickly stopped him.

“While you here, though, I found something while scanning channels. Grissom Academy is requesting help. The Reaper invasion front will hit them soon.” She said.

“What can we do to help them? I believe I have some old friends who work there.” Austin asked.

“A Turian evac transport responded to their distress call, so normally I’d say we don’t need to do anything. But something sounded off in the Turian signal. I had EDI perform an analysis. It’s fake.” Said Samantha.

“Cerberus...” Austin growled.

“Yes. EDI said that too. She said it was similar to the one that lured you to a Collector Ship...?” Samantha inquired.

“Bit of a long story, but she’s right.” Austin nodded.

“In any event, whoever faked the signal wants us to think Grissom Academy’s being evacuated. But I believe they’re still in danger!” said Traynor.

“Good work, Samantha. Very good work.” Said Austin.

“Thank you... Major.” Said Traynor, just barely able to speak. Words were hard to describe how flattered the comm

specialist was. The brother of her dear lover had once again just complimented her on her work. She'd always thought it would be much harder than that to really get the approval and friendship of her lover's brother.

The Grissom Academy was within view through the Normandy's cockpit. Another ship was alongside it.

"And there's the folks who answered the distress call. Cerberus cruiser. At least a dozen fighters on blockade duty. Too many for us in a straight-up fight. They must want this place bad." Said Joker.

"Receiving incoming transmission." Said EDI.

"Normandy SR3, this is Kahlee Sanders, director of Grissom Academy. We need immediate assistance. Cerberus is attacking the facility. They're after the students." Said a female voice through the comm.

"This is Major Shepard. We're blocked on a direct approach." Said Austin.

"I know. They've taken control of our docking bays." Said Kahlee.

"Any alternatives?" Austin asked.

"There's an auxiliary cargo port I could probably open." Kahlee asked.

"All right. We'll come in by shuttle and get the students out of there." Said Austin. "Joker, can you give us a diversion?"

"Boy, can I!" Joker smiled.

Austin felt it best this time to bring along Dash and Jet for this one. The final member was EDI. Austin knew she wanted to test out her new body in combat and he saw no problem with it.

"Keep the shuttle in position! We'll be back!" said Austin.

"Major. I'm locked in a server room around the corner. Cerberus troops are trying to get in." said Kahlee through the comm.

"We can take 'em." Said Austin, reaching for his M-76.

Just before the Major could touch it however, a hand suddenly stopped him.

"Why waste the ammunition?" Jet asked. "I got this."

Since Austin still had yet to see fully what Alpha's newest member could do and what talents she had, so he decided to give Jet a chance. He nodded and allowed the Helldiver to simply walk towards the Cerberus troops standing outside the room and trying to hack in.

Jet gave a loud whistle that attracted their attention.

"Helldiver!"

To Jet's surprise, one of the troops threw a flash bang grenade at her, something she hadn't counted on.

The flash from the grenade blinded her, enabling the Cerberus troops to bind her from behind.

“How many more of you are there?!” one of the troopers demanded.

“I’m not telling you anything.” Jet replied back.

“Then I guess we’ll have to do this the hard way.” Said the trooper, taking out his stun stick while the one that was binding her, held her off the ground. Quite impressive considering how heavy Helldiver’s were.

“I vote for the stay of execution.” Said Jet.

Oil started squirting from out of a small tube on Jet, blinding the trooper standing in front of her, and making the other one slip wildly.

“My eyes!” one of them yelled.

Managing to break free, Jet instantly activated her flight thrusters. She hovered a mere few centimetres above the ground, just enough for the flames from her feet to touch the oil, causing it to ignite.

The Cerberus troops that were caught in the flames screamed in pain as the fire burnt through their armour and into their flesh. They were even more helpless when the oil caused them both to slip completely and fall into fire. Chances of surviving that were almost impossible.

“Natasha’s tactic was rather intelligent.” Said EDI observantly.

As the Cerberus troops were burnt to a crisp, only one was left. With his ammo clip empty, he resorted to pulling out the only weapon he had left, his stun stick.

Jet however seemed completely unfazed by this. She even chuckled.

“That is not going to help you at all, young man.” She said, shaking her head.

“Yeah? And why the hell is that?!” the trooper replied back.

Reaching behind her back, Jet pulled out a massive weapon. What had at first looked like a small backpack, unfolded into what looked like a massive hi tech club of some sorts.

“Because mine’s bigger than yours.” Said Jet, as end of her weapon hit the ground with a loud clang.

“Is that a war hammer?!” Dash asked in disbelief.

“Yeah, and a bloody big one at that.” Said Austin, just as equally surprised that a Helldiver like Jet would wield a weapon like that.

“You don’t scare me, Helldiver. Put that hammer down!” the Cerberus trooper demanded.

Before the trooper could react in time however, Jet suddenly swung the war hammer upwards. The swing caught the trooper,

sending him flying to the floor.

“You want me to put me the hammer down? Wish granted!” said Jet.

Sure enough, Jet swung the hammer down, smashing right down on the troopers.

With all the troopers dead, the others joined Jet as she holstered her hammer, the weapon folding itself back up and settling neatly into the gap between her large metal wings.

“Bit extreme, Jet.” Said Austin. “But because it’s Cerberus, I’ll make an exception. They deserve it.”

“Thanks, sir. And don’t worry; I’m not a loose cannon with these things. Only when it’s people like Cerberus do I show no restraint.” Said Jet.

“Good to hear.” Said Austin. “Sanders, we’re clear. It’s me.”

The door opened. A woman in Alliance uniform with blonde air was waiting for them/ She had a shotgun in her hand. This of course was First Lieutenant Kahlee Sanders.

“Major, thank you. Anderson always said you were best. And with Cerberus coming for the students, I need the best.” She said.

“How many of you are there?” Austin asked.

“Fewer than twenty. Most were sent home when word of the Reaper invasion spread.” Said another voice.

With Kahlee, was another woman. This one however was a redhead, and not just any redhead. This was none other than former Yeoman of the Normandy, Kelly Chambers.

“Kelly?” said Austin in surprise.

“Hello, Shepard. It’s been a long time.” Kelly smiled. “I could just hug you.”

To the Yeoman’s surprise however, Austin walked up to her and gave her a hug, which she eventually returned.

“It’s good to see you, too, Kelly.” He said.

“I’d been so worried about you, all of you in fact.” Said Kelly as the two eventually separated. “With a lot of comms down, I had no way of knowing if anyone had survived the invasion.”

“If you’re here, then that must mean Jack’s here as well.”

Austin inquired.

“Yes. I believe she’s with the students that volunteered to stay. She’s helping them fight Cerberus off.” Said Kahlee.

“Bet she’s enjoying that.” Dash chuckled.

“You mentioned Anderson...” Austin asked.

“Yes. We met—God, what’s it been?—20 years ago, when he was a Spectre candidate. I was there when Saren betrayed him. David saved my life that day. He’s a good man.” Said Kahlee.

“He was on Earth when the Reapers hit. He stayed behind when we left.”

“I hadn’t heard... We’ve been cut off from most news. He’s alive?”

“Alive and fighting. He’s currently leading the resistance movement.”

“Good. If we get out of here... Well, just tell him to stay alive.”

“A few months knocking over practice dummies can’t prepare your students for war.”

“Agreed, but the Alliance needs every resource it can get, and our students are unique... resources. They wanted to help. How could we say no with the entire galaxy falling apart?” said Kahlee. “Hang on. I’ve been trying to get communications working.”

“This is Froeberg! There are students trapped in Orion Hall! Cerberus has us boxed in. They’re closing fast!”

“Damn it!” Kahlee cursed.

“Orion Hall?” Austin asked.

“Back out the door and down the hallway. I can get the door open.” Said Kahlee.

“We’ll bring them back here, and we’ll make a run for the shuttle.” Said Austin.

“Thank you, Major. Kelly and I will stay put. With luck, I can regain control of some of our systems.” Said Kahlee.

“Good luck, Shepard. Seeing you makes everything right again.” Kelly smiled.

The group dealt with a few small groups of Cerberus along the way as they focused on rescuing a few stranded students.

Eventually, they found the rest of the students. With them of course was a very face.

“Jack!”

“Shepard?”

Jack had really changed from the last time Austin had seen her.

The former convicts outfit had changed greatly. She now had bandages that covered up more of her skin from last time, a black jacket, and most noticeable of all, Jack had grown her hair out to the point that she now had a small pony tail.

This however was interrupted when something large started to force its way through the doorway that it was clearly too big for. It was an exosuit being piloted by a Cerberus trooper.

“I’ve just about had it with you bastards stealing our tech!” said Austin as he and the others went into cover.

“Everyone, get down! This thing’s outta your league! Shepard, keep it off us!” said Jack, heading up to the balcony with the other students and throwing up a biotic shield to protect them.

The Atlas mech turned it’s attention to them and started firing

it's gun. Due to the heavy firepower this mech had, it was hard to get an opening without being exposed to the main gun, which was strong enough to rip through a Helldiver's armour.

"Jet, see if you can create a distraction. There's room enough for you to hover at least." Said Austin.

Jet nodded and activated her flight thrusters. As she gently hovered in the air, she unholstered her main weapon, a small rail gun. It only fired singularly, but each round was strong enough to pierce armour.

Sure enough, Jet hovering around the place, gained the Atlas Mech's attention and it tried to lock on. Noticing this, Jet applied more boost so that she moved faster, causing the mech to keep turning in an effort to try and keep up with her.

Austin meanwhile snuck up and gently climbed up the mech until he reached the cockpit. Only too late did the pilot notice before Austin punched through the glass. Austin grabbed the trooper and threw him out for EDI to then stamp on his neck, breaking it.

"Dash, it's all yours." Said Austin as he hopped down.

"Cool!" Dash smiled as he climbed up and sat in the mech's pilot seat.

Just in time too, as more troopers entered the area, only for everyone to practically empty their guns right into them.

"Kahlee said she was putting out an SOS. I had now ide the King of the Boy Scouts would show up." Jack smiled, finally letting down her barrier now that the coast was clear.

"Always the element of surprise." Austin smiled.

"All right, amp check! Prangley, those fields were weak. Cerberus isn't gonna lie down out of pity like that girl you took to prom." Jack said to her students. "Grab juice and an energy bar. We move in five."

The convict then jumped back down from the balcony and walked up to Austin.

"You picked a fine time to arrive, Shepard." She said.

"Nice to see you too, Jack." Said Austin, shaking Jack's hand.

"Shepard... I haven't heard anything from Kelly..." said Jack with worry.

"Kelly's safe, Jack. She's with Kahlee." Austin quickly said, much to Kelly's relief.

"Good. Couldn't bear it if Cerberus took her." Jack sighed with relief.

"Nor could I. She was part of the crew as well." Austin agreed.

"Jack's personality seems to be partly changed." Said EDI.

"Hey EDI. Nice body. Now you look like a sex bot instead of a sex toy." Said Jack.

"That sounds more like her." Dash nodded.

“Dash. See your mouth still hasn’t got you killed yet.” Said Jack.
“Still as charming as ever.”
“Okay. Right now, all I care about is getting my guys out of here.”

“Your guys?” Austin asked.

“Yeah. I guess so.”

“That many in two years? You and Kelly have been busy.” Dash joked.

Jack and Jet however didn’t seem to share the Scout’s sense of humour though.

“Screw you, Dash. You know what I meant.” Said Dash.

“It’s a joke. I do that.” Said Dash defensively.

“I can’t think of anybody who could care about them more.” Said Austin.

“Rather surprised myself. The Students responded well to my teaching style.” Said Jack.

“The psychotic biotic!”

“I will destroy you!”

“Drink your juice, Rodriguez. You couldn’t destroy wet tissue paper.” Said Jack.

At this however, Dash and Jet now found it very hard to contain their laughter.

“Now that one **is** funny.” Jet chuckled.

“For god’s sake!” Jack moaned, rolling her eyes.

“Sorry, Jack. Jet’s still a bit new to all this. She’ll have to get used to Dash’s odd sense of humour.” Austin apologised.

“She’d better.” Said Jack.

“*Cortez to extraction team. The Cerberus cruiser is coming back.*” Said Cortez through the comm.

“How long have we got?” Austin asked.

“*Two minutes, tops, Major. After that, there’s no way we’ll get past them.*” Cortez replied.

“Get out of here and back to the Normandy. We’ll find another way off the station.”

“*Roger that. Good luck, sir.*”

“Shepard to Sanders. The students are safe, but the shuttle’s a no go.” Austin said into his communicator.

“*Understood. I might know another way off the station, but I need station wide camera access. Can you disable the Cerberus security override? It’s routed through Orion hall, so it should be nearby.*” Kahlee replied.

Finding the override was easy since they had EDI with them. It was a small computer just a few feet away from where they were.

“Sanders, you should have access now.” Said Austin.

“*Got it. The fastest way is through the Atrium, but Cerberus has sealed the doors. You’ll need to disable the magnetic locks. The overrides should be*

directly above the door." Kahlee replied.

"Everyone be ready. We'll go in first and draw their fire." Said Austin as he and the others readied to move out.

"We'll shadow you from the second level and hit those fu... those guys from above." Said Jack.

"Did she just try not to swear?" Jet whispered to Dash.

"Yes, I think she did." Dash whispered back.

"Time your shots and stay safe."

"All right. I didn't bust my ass training you so you could die now. Keep low, pick your targets." Said Jack.

Despite the circumstances, the Atrium looked quite nice. It also worked especially well for Jet since she now had even more space to fly around in.

On the ground, EDI was also putting her new body to good use. As expected, she had tech skills. This came in handy for taking down the shields of the Cerberus Centurions.

Dash even seemed to be able to use the Atrium to his advantage. His recent new speed boost was definitely giving them an edge.

All the while, Jack and her students were keeping them covered from the high ground, which gave them even more of an advantage.

"Combat efficiency is good I assume?" Austin asked, firing a plasma blast as he went into cover next to EDI.

"I might consider having Dell give this body some upgrades. Some of its technology is outdated compared to Helldiver tech." EDI replied.

"Now you tell us..." Austin muttered.

As the last trooper was shot down, Austin heard Kahlee's voice through the comm.

"Major, I've reached the Cerberus shuttles without being detected. They know what they're doing though. You need to hurry."

Heading out of the Atrium, the group could see three more students encased in some kind of shield. Two Cerberus soldiers were trying to persuade them to deactivate it, with little success.

"That's an impressive barrier, Octavia. Our file says you've been working on shield technology." Said one of the troopers.

"Jet, I assume you know what to do?" Austin offered.

"With pleasure." Jet nodded.

The Helldiver activated her cloak and slowly snuck up on the two troops. Quietly unsheathing her war hammer, she waited until she was close enough before she then swung. The war hammer hit the first soldier right in the hand, sending him flying into the other and

causing them both to topple to the floor. Jet then once again brought the weapon right down, smashing both the troopers, as her cloak deactivated.

“I don’t know who you are, but stay back.” Octavia warned, rather surprised at seeing another person just appear out of nowhere.

“I’m Major Shepard with the Helldivers. We’re here to help.” Said Austin, joining Jet.

“I didn’t buy it from the last guy, and I’ve got no reason to buy it now.” Said Octavia.

“The Square root of 906.01 equals...”

Austin recognized that instantly. Cerberus’ Project Overlord himself...

“30.1.” Austin finished.

“Hello, Major Shepard.” Said David.

“David, you know him?” the other student asked.

“Yes. He rescued me from Nazara and Cerberus. Sent me here. He made it quiet.” David replied.

This seemed to be all the proof Octavia needed and she deactivated the shield.

“You did a great job keeping yourselves safe. The biotic students are up here. Stay close. They’ll get you out of here.” Said Austin.

“Okay. Uh, thanks.” Said Octavia.

She and the student left, leaving just David.

“He looks much healthier.” Said EDI.

“I remember you. The Normandy’s computer.” Said David.

“Sorry.”

“No apology is necessary.” Said EDI.

“Has Grissom academy been all right?” Austin asked.

“Yes. I’ve been counting.” David replied.

“Anything in particular?”

“The number of days you lengthened my life.”

The final part had the last of Cerberus. Fortunately, a welcome hpe had been left right at the entrance.

“They just left it empty. Really, you think they would’ve learned by now.” Said Dash, climbing into the Atlas mech.

“Jet keep us covered from the high ground, and feel free to show no restraint.” Said Austin.

“With pleasure sir.” SAID Jet, gently hovering up into the air while Dash walked up the steps in the mech followed by him and EDI.

“There’s the shuttle. Head over two by two. Prangley, Rodriguez, stay close.” SAID Jack, providing cover with biotics and a biotic barrier while the oother students made for the shuttle.

The whole place erupted into gunfire, Jet covering them from the air, Dash laying waste to them with the Atlas, and Austin and EDI picking up any stragglers.

“Hostiles up top!” Austin yelled, noticing several more troopers on the upper levels.

“I’m on ‘em!” said Jet, increasing her altitude slightly. The troopers hadn’t counted on a Helldiver that could fly, and so were rather surprised to see her.

“Oh crap.”

“How ‘bout a little fire, scarecrow?” Jet asked, instantly letting both her flamethrowers loose.

Judging by the screams of agony, Austin guessed Jet did indeed have the high ground taken care of. As he went into cover again however, he saw another Atlas Mech heading their way.

“Dash, watch your six!” he yelled.

Dash instantly turned and swung his Atlas’ main arm, punching the other hard enough to topple it over.

Austin quickly jumped on top of the Atlas before it could get up, smashed the glass open with his foot and threw a grenade in.

“Okay we’re clear. Move your ass before backup arrives!” Jack shouted as the Atlas exploded from the inside.

“You heard Jack! Move out!”

“Kahlee, how’s it coming?” Austin asked.

“Shuttles are unlocked.” Kahlee replied.

All the students quickly got into the shuttle as it opened up.

“Take the controls and get the students aboard.” Said Austin.

“Wait, where the hell’s Rodriguez?!” Jack asked.

Through the large sheet of glass, they could see Rodriguez fleeing from more Cerberus troopers. She was only just able to slide back into cover behind some nearby chairs.

“Ruddy, bloody hell!” Austin groaned, trying to smash the glass. “She needs covering fire!”

“She needs more than that!” said Jack.

The convict pushed Austin out of the way and threw a massive shockwave that not only shattered the glass, but also knocked down every trooper.

Wasting now time, Austin hurried over and helped Rodriguez up and into the shuttle followed closely by Jack.

“Joker, we flew out on a Cerberus shuttle. Watch your fire. We’ll destroy it when we’re finished.” He said.

“*Right, I’ve got you on sensors. Should just be a minute.*” Joker replied.

“Thank you, Major. We’d have never gotten off that station if

you hadn't come." Said Kahlee, gratefully.

"F—forget that. We kicked some ass. Next place we dock, you're all getting inked. My treat. What do you guys want? Ascensions Project Logo? Glowing fist? Maybe a Unicorn for Rodriguez?" said Jack.

"Screw you, ma'am!" Rodriguez laughed.

"Ma'am, how many tattoos do you have, anyway?" Prangley asked.

"Hell if I know, Prangley." Jack replied.

"Well she was gonna burn off the Yeoman she got on her ass..." said Kelly, slyly. "...but I think she wants to hang on to it for a while."

"Shut up and kiss me, Kelly!"

Jack instantly pulled Kelly into a long passionate kiss, much to the delight to the students and even Austin. He was happy for the both of them.

"I can't believe we got them out alive." Said Kelly, once Jack had finally stopped kissing her.

"I was going to suggest that they stick to support roles. But perhaps they're ready, after all." Said Kahlee.

Jack cast Austin a look at this. Austin knew Jack enough to know what that look meant.

"They're definitely ready... but we need them in a support role." Said Austin.

"What?! We trained for artillery strikes!" Prangley argued.

"We don't need another artillery unit. We need stronger barriers for our front-line squads." Said Austin.

"This is bullshit!" Rodriguez shouted.

"Hey, if that's where they need us, that's where we go! Besides, I'm sure we'll get some shots in." said Jack.

"Major, we've got a visual on you now. Preparing to dock." Said Joker. "Hey, Jack, now that you're military, you gonna wear a uniform? Or are you just getting the officer's bars tattooed on?"

"Screw you, f... flight lieutenant." Said Jack, once again apparently stopping herself from swearing.

"Uh... what the hell was that?"

"Jack promised to watch her language to maintain the necessary professionalism from our teachers." Kelly chuckled.

"What, does she have a swear jar or something? Cause I bet if we emptied that thing, we could afford another cruiser." Joker laughed.

"Cover your ears, kids." Said Jack. "Hey, Joker, f--

This time, it wasn't Admiral Hackett addressing Austin in the comm room, it was none other than Anderson himself.

"Shepard. Dammed, if you aren't a sight for sore eyes." The Admiral

smiled.

“Good to see you too, Admiral.” Said Austin.

“*There’s no need to be so formal one me.*” Said Anderson.

“Force of habit I’m afraid.” Said Austin.

“*Have it your way. Looks like you didn’t waste any time getting to work. I can only imagine what would’ve happened to those kids if they’d fallen into Cerberus hands.*” Said Anderson.

“They’re definitely eager to help.” Said Austin.

“*These students are some of the best humanity has to offer... and we’re throwing them into battle. Goddamn it. I hate this war. Hackett didn’t mention in his report...*”

“Kahlee Sanders is safe by the way. She’s with the recruits.”

“*Thanks, Shepard. When I heard about the attack... Well, I’ve already lost a lot of friends.*”

“She asked me to tell you to stay alive.”

“*Did she now? Well.*”

“*Thanks, Shepard. That might be the first good news I’ve heard this week. Anderson out.*”

Traynor was still at work station, having been monitoring the comms throughout the mission. She then felt a presence behind her.

“I just got word, Major. Everyone for Grissom Academy has arrived safely.” She said.

“He wouldn’t have known about them you hadn’t caught the distress signal, darling.” Said an unexpected voice.

Before Samantha could turn around, she felt a female figure brush against her back and a pair of arms wrap around her.

“Oh. Sorry, I thought you were your brother.” Said Traynor embarisingly.

“You did great. You allowed Austin to save many lives. I’d say that’s earned you a kiss.” Said Sarah.

“Sarah, not in front of everyone else...” Traynor whispered.

“Let them look.”

Before Samantha could even object, Sarah pulled her into a long and very amazing kiss, one that almost sucked all the breath out of her.

Traynor quickly made a mental note in her head to thank Sarah greatly for this later.

An email had reached Austin that Ashley was recovering and that she had just recently regained her consciousness at long last. Her email also said that she’d been offered the chance to be a Spectre. Hardly unexpected though given the many things Ashley had done.

Just as Austin had walked up to the galaxy map, Traynor had even told him that he had recovered a message from Miranda, so he

had decided to see her first before visiting Ashley.

He found her near the docking on the Citadel.

“Shepard. It’s been too long.” Said Miranda. “We live in interesting times.”

“A little too interesting.” Said Austin, shaking hands with Miranda.

“It’s not been the same since I got reassigned from the Normandy. I’m hoping though the Arkanes might decide to let me come back aboard. That is if you want me back.” Said Miranda, slightly hesitant.

“Why wouldn’t I? Thought I made it clear you’d earned my trust. You made it clear that you’d let go of Cerberus completely, case closed.” Said Austin.

“I just wasn’t sure if you still felt that way, especially since Cerberus have done all these terrible things recently.” Said Miranda.

“Doesn’t matter now.”

“Shepard, about all of this...”

“I’m all right, trust me. We’ll out some way to destroy the Reapers.”

“Everybody has a weakness. Even the Reapers.”

“What about you? What brings you here if you’re still meant to be on duty?” Austin asked.

“I am...” Miranda said hesitantly. “Shepard, promise you won’t tell anyone. Technically, I’m not meant to be here at all.”

“What’s going on?” Austin asked.

“I haven’t heard from Oriana for a while. I’m getting worried.” Miranda explained. “I’ve consulted the Arkanes many times, but they’re still not able to tell me anything and they promise they’re not withholding anything. I don’t want to overreact but... well, there’s a lot going on. I just know my father’s involved.”

“Do you need my help at all?” Austin asked.

“I appreciate the offer, Shepard—but you have your hands full.” Said Miranda gratefully. “If I need a door or two kicked down, I know just who to call. But for now, I’ll be fine.”

“Okay. I understand.” Said Austin. “Stay in contact.”

“I’ll try.”

The hospital was busy as usual, but some of the patients did look as though they’d been able to recover well thanks to the supplies he’d bought for them.

As the Helldiver walked into Ashley’s room, he found a somewhat unwelcome person with her.

“I’d like an answer, Lieutenant Commander. The galaxy has need of exceptional soldiers like you, now more than ever.” Said Udina.

“I still need time. You’ll have my answer soon, I promise.” Said Ashley.

“I’ll look forward to it.” Said Udina as he left.

Griffin had also been notified that Ashley was conscious now and he’d arrived shortly after.

“Hey, Ash.” He smiled.

“Hey, Griff. Still as handsome as ever.” Ashley smiled back as she and Griffin kissed.

“You don’t look so bad yourself.” Said Griffin.

“See you brought Austin as well.” Ashley.

“I got you email. Made your decision yet?” Austin asked.

“About becoming a Spectre? Not yet. It’s an honour and all... but... I don’t know. I need to think about it some more.” Ashley.

“At least you get a choice. They forced the position on me.” Said Austin, sitting down on a nearby chair.

“Yeah. I heard that you outright refused to be reinstated again recently. That’s twice now. I can’t imagine that Council is happy about losing a good operative.” Said Ashley.

“I didn’t need it and it was just holding me back. Was an easy decision for me.”

“Here, I picked this up for you. Figured you had some down-time.” Said Griffin, giving Ashley some flowers and chocolate.

“Thanks, that’s sweet. I’ve been climbing the walls.” Ashley smiled.

“How are you doing?” Austin asked.

“Good, considering.” Ashley replied. “The nurse said you and Griffin checked in on me earlier. Still out cold, I guess.”

“We didn’t have time to talk. I thought maybe if you were up for it...”

“You’re always such a good friend.” Ashley smiled happily. She made sure to acknowledge Griffin as well. “Don’t worry, Griff. I’m not forgetting about you. The nurse told me you spent nearly a whole day by my side, most of it in prayer.”

“Looks like those prayers got answered too.” Griffin smiled, lovingly stroking Ashley’s hair.

“I should probably give you two some space. Let me know if you need anything at all, Ash.” Said Austin, gently getting up.

“Wait. There’s one more thing. I wasn’t sure if I should mention it.” Ashley quickly said.

“What is it?”

“I have family back on Earth. I haven’t heard from them. It’s making me crazy. But I know you’re busy, old friend. We can talk about it later if you like.”

“I’ve got time, Ash. Speak and I’ll listen.” Said Austin. “Who’s back on Earth?”

“Mom, plus my three sisters. Sarah was away on her honeymoon. You remember Thomas obviously?”

“I couldn’t forget. You almost begged me to attend the wedding.”

“Yeah. Anyway, he got called in and she was stuck alone. She called me. It’s been pretty tough.”

“I imagine.”

“I was always there to protect them growing up. Even when I was off on tour, they knew they could talk to me.” Said Ashley. “I told her to come to the Citadel. We could wait for news together.”

“If it helps, I can a squad to investigate.”

“You can do that?”

“Course I can. I’m a Major, and one of the best at that.”

“I appreciate that, Austin. Thank you.”

“I should get back to work.” Said Austin. “Griffin, same as usual.”

“Got it. I’ll be ready to go when you need me.” Griffin nodded, sitting down in the same chair that Austin had been in originally, still holding Ashley’s hand.

“Take care of yourself, Ash.” Said Austin.

“You too, old friend.” Said Ashley.

Even though it was still far from sleeping hours, Austin was feeling a little tired and felt it best to simply take a nap. Before he could however, he noticed his private terminal had received a new message from Xun saying that she and Liara has something to show him when he had time.

Since now was as good a time as any, Austin decided to call them up now.

“Xun, Liara tells me you and she have been working on something you wanted to show me?” he said.

“Yes. I’ll be right up. I’ll bring Liara as well.” Xun replied.

A few seconds later, Xun arrived with a small device in her arms.

“Come on in.”

“Thank you. May we sit?” Xun asked as she and Liara entered.

Liara gave her husband a kiss as they both sat down. Xun put the device on the table and started accessing it.

“Xun and I have been thinking about the knowledge we’ve gathered on the Reapers, and how easily it could be lost again.” said Liara.

“So, we put a plan in motion to preserve things for the future.” Said Xun.

“We’re not gonna lose this war. I won’t let that happen.” Said Austin, supportingly.

"I know you won't. But still, it couldn't hurt to at least prepare for the worst." Said Liara, holding Austin's hand.

"It's as you have so often said, my friend. "Better safe than sorry." Said Xun.

"When you put it that way, I agree." Said Austin. "Hmm, what's this?"

A small beam of some kind started projecting out of the device.

"A record of the galaxy. Information on the Reapers, Relays, different cultures, and blueprints of the crucible." Said Xun as various different images were projected out of the device.

"But there's one entry we wanted your opinion on." Said Liara.

"Which one?" Austin asked.

"Your own." Said Liara, as a hologram of Austin himself was projected out of the device. "Xun and I would be honoured to have your input."

"How would you like history to remember you?" Xun asked.

"50,000 years is a long time for a computer to sit around." Said Austin.

"Please. I'm still an archaeologist. Xun and I know what we're doing." Liara chuckled.

"We're encasing these records in time capsules and seeding copies on multiple planets. And while it's not fool proof, the VI I'm installing has every translation and linguistics program we know of." Xun explained.

"So it's like Vigil in a way." Said Austin.

"Yes. We've been preparing it for some time." Said Xun.

"And it will be a privilege to guide the future discoverers of these records." Said Glyph, suddenly flying out the device and hovering around a bit. *"Have you decided what you would like Professor T'soni and Mistress Xun to write in your entry, Major?"*

"You know me better than anyone to fill in the blanks, darling." Said Austin, giving Liara a gentle pat on the back.

"Are you sure?" Liara asked.

"Of course I am." Austin replied. "I'd like it to be your call, my love."

"Alright. Let's begin with the fact that the Helldiver's most famous officer was born and raised in space. My husband could handle any weapon in the galaxy. The Arkanes never saw a finer soldier." Liara narrated. "He was a warrior and a leader, one who made peace where he could. And I love him with all my heart."

"Careful this doesn't sound like a diary." Austin smiled.

"I can't help myself." Liara chuckled, snuggling into her bond mate's shoulder as he put his arm around her.

"It always warms my heart to see a couple like you two." Xun

smiled. "You're both good friends."

"You've been there for us too, Xun." Said Austin.

"No I haven't. I wish now that I could've joined you back on Ilium." Xun sighed, sitting down on the opposite side of Austin.

"You made up for it." Said Austin.

"Well, I suppose you wife and I did just write your name in the stars." Said Xun.

"Not to mention that we've also made sure that years from now, you'll be known as a legend. Hopefully even the slayer of the Reapers." Said Liara.

"Wouldn't mind that title myself. Just another reason to win this war." Austin smiled.

"I love you, Austin."

"Love you, Liara."

The two were about to kiss, but they remembered that Xun was sitting right next to them. The Chinese Helldiver however just smiled.

"Bù jièyì w?." She said, which translated into English as "Don't mind me."



Chapter two - The Bottom Of The Well

Link washed his hands in the sink using a bar of soap that Pippa had nearly swallowed thinking it was food once. He was unsure if the taste of lavender was changing her appetite slightly as the Cuccos outside were getting a little braver with her around them now. Every night he would have to brush her coat free of feathers when she had pounced on one, wanting them to play with her. Of course, the Cuccos were used to her bouncing around, falling over her feet when she got excited, as pups often do.

He carried out the bucket and walked the short distance to the well. A stone well that kept every person and animal well watered. He tied the bucket to the small string that was attached to the wooden post above the well itself.

“Morning, Link!” a cheery voice came from behind him, startling him and making him fall headfirst into the well with a shallow splash. “Whoops. Are you alright?”

Link glanced up at her with a silent moan. But his frown suddenly changed to horror as the water had dried up; almost every drop had vanished from the well, apart from the shallow puddle that Link had crashed into. His feet were just off the ground, kicking the little stones that occupied the floor; but his waist was above the water level. He had known that the water was emptying from the well, but the clouds were thick with rain and the wind was too cool for drought.

“I know, right? That brain of yours is working; isn’t it?” the cheery voice giggled cannonballing into the water. Soaking him even more and renewing his frown. “Don’t give me that look. It’s fun.”

Link brushed his hair out of his eyes and stared at the person in front of him. A charming, if not loud young girl at fourteen years old swum before him, she had short curly red hair that stopped at her shoulders and bright green eyes; her clothes consisted of a bright blue dress with a darker blue edging and V-neck collar and a pair of brown sandals. Link sighed, as the girl lay a hand on his shoulder and splashed more water in his face.

Link lowered his shoulders and cocked his head to the side.

“What?” the girl smirked following his gaze to the wall behind her. There was a small crack in the bricks that built it up the well. Link put a hand to his chin in thought and leaned against the wall, staring into the crack. “That’s where all the water’s going?” the girl smirked putting an eye to the hole, Link threw his arms into the air.

The girl began to pull out a loose brick and dropped in the water, then another, and another. Link grabbed her wrist gently and pulled her back as more of the water around them began to trickle through the gap she had made. She glanced at him; closing her eyes as a little brown rock fell from the top of the well next to Link. Link let

out a noticeable tut as the little brown rock was not a little brown rock, but a wet puppy covered in white feathers.

Pippa barked at the two-legged as she swam in the wet, spitting out a few feathers as her master scooped her up. Master pointed to some square stones that were higher up and knelt down to push some of the grey stones that were in the wet. Master had a nice furless face for being a two-legged; it always wore happiness, or at least most of the time. The corners of his mouth would turn upward and sometimes it would open when he was really happy with her, though his tongue never lolled over his teeth like hers. She could tell Master was tired, he was yawning a lot and his eyes were never fully open unless he was barking at someone in his silent voice. He needed rest. She barked for his attention as the she-two-legged continued to move more grey stones; he looked at her with his grey eyes. They were bright but dull at the same time. She whined at him, tilting her head to the side. Master stroked her head, using his short brush like nails to dig into her coat. It was lovely. She relaxed in his arms with a sigh as the she-two-legged clambered into the hole she had made. Master was a little more reluctant to follow.

Link cradled the pup in his arms and climbed through the hole to where his friend was. She ran on ahead leaving him to look around the old well. The bricks were slimy and damp with the water that was constantly flowing through and all light had vanished from within as the remains of soaked torches hung on the walls, clogged with mildew.

“Come on, Link!” the girl shouted from the end of the corridor. Link put Pippa down on the ground and yanked out a torch from the wall; feeling for a dry spot on the wall beneath it, he ran the end up the bricks to light it. The walls were so damp that the bricks crumbled at his touch. With a defeated sigh he lowered his arm and looked at the wall curiously, the torch strike may not have made the torch light but had made a straight white line that was visible in the dark. His hand tightened on the torch as he followed the girl. Pippa at his heels.

“Where’s your brother, Rosie? It doesn’t take him that long to get water.” Link’s mother asked braiding her orange hair in her shaking fingers

“I don’t know.” Rosie shrugged washing her hands “Pippa’s gone looking for him so I wouldn’t worry.”

“Ah, Pippa, she loves him.” her mother sighed leaning back on her pillow “They have been inseparable since he found her.”

“Why did you let him keep her, Mother?” Rosie complained

Her mother looked appalled. “You know Link’s condition. Having a friend that is about as silent as him makes their bond strong.

I am never going to ask him to put her out. He's trained her well."

"I wouldn't call it a 'condition'" Rosie snorted, her mother sliced the air with her hand

"Link doesn't have a proper voice, Rosie. I told you this when you were very young. Though he makes sounds like grunts and gasps, he doesn't have the power to speak words."

"Mother, I've heard it all before."

"Then you should be reminded of it."

"Mother, you should get some rest, save your strength."

"You have no idea what your brother does for us." her mother grunted shutting her eyes.

For she had worked out why Link would sneak off at dawn for the medicine when it would only take him half the day to get to town and back, it also made sense why he was always doing chores when he came home. To pay back for his criminal acts and clear his mind. Though Link had a good reason for stealing, she knew he would never steal unless he had to; that was why Rosie could never know why he always took his bow to get the medicine. She would hate herself if he got caught or if Pippa got snatched. "And that is something that you should never find out."

Pippa barked at Master, her paws were soaked with trotting in the shallow water around them. Master needed rest. Now. But no matter how much she tugged at his chewy-paws, he never swayed from following the she-two-legged. Master picked her up and placed her on his shoulder, she liked being up here, though it was still as dark as on the floor. The she-two-legged shouted something in two-legged language that she could not understand. Master rolled his eyes and began to run, slow, but fast for a two-legged. They came to a hole where there was wet, Master knelt down and dipped his furless paws into the wet and stuck his tongue out. The wet smelled bad, though the two-legged could not smell it, she could; it smelled like rotten meat, a smell that had caught her nose before, but hoped that she would never smell again. For some reason though, the scent of rotten meat was moving and not with the air like normal scents. This one was moving in steps like a two-legged or feathered dog. Pippa yapped at Master, falling off his shoulder in alarm. Master turned his head and caught her before she hit the stone floor. She continued to yap, backing up slightly and raising her head up high to carry the sound of her howls.

"What's up with Pippa?" the girl asked folding her arms. Link glanced at the howling pup and held out a hand. Pippa whined and ducked her tail in between her legs. Link's ears flicked up as something bashed into the wall cracking the bricks slightly and crumbling some dust from them into the stinking water.

Link grabbed the girl's hand and pulled her back as a brick crashed into the water to reveal a skeletal arm and hand clawing at the bricks at the scent of the living. The girl let out a scream, Link let out an audible scream as well. Pippa barked them back to focus. Link nodded and crouched down so she could jump up on his back.

They skidded through the twisted tunnels they had crossed through using Link's markings till the bright morning light blinded them at the bottom of the well. Footsteps echoed within with roars of the skeletal monsters that followed their hot-footed trail. Link glanced around for a second; his gaze fell on the rope that the bucket was attached to then to his friend. Without another moment of thought he untied the bucket from the rope and tied it around his friend's waist. Before she could say a word of complaint; Pippa hopped from his shoulder onto hers as Link got her standing on his shoulders. The pup leapt for the swinging rope above and her jaws snapped shut. The little weight she carried brought the rope into the girl's reach that then lowered it into Link's. Pippa growled as Link hoisted the girl back up to the top of the well; the skeletal figures were starting to approach. Roaring their battle cries as they had found a boy. Pippa charged, narrowly dodging a rusty sword that struck the stones instead of her. Pippa snarled at a skeletal figure, barking her warnings and threats at their deaf ears. Link edged backwards till his hands touched the walls; his heart thumping against his chest.

"Link! Grab on!" the girl shouted from above lowering the rope to him. A skeletal figure however was leaning over him; staring through tiny green ovals they called eyes. It roared in his face, a roar so loud and powerful that Link's hair blew in its breath from its toothless jaw. It suddenly let out a scream in shock as Pippa dug her teeth into the skeletal figure's left leg, going for the ankle bone more than the leg itself as she was too small to reach otherwise. She clung on as the skeletal figure as it thumped her with its shield arm, forcing her to roll into Link's feet; her jaws still clinging onto the monster's foot.

Link picked up his irritable and sore pup in his arms, scratching her behind the ears to comfort her as he turned his back on the skeletal figure that raised its sword

"Link, catch!" the girl shouted as a bow clonked on the skeletal figure's forehead. The quiver of arrows and tool-pouch bashing into it shortly after. Link opened his tool-pouch with his free hand and sprinkled his arrow tips with black powder, striking them up the wall he let them hiss in his hand. Before the skeletal figure could react, the bricks exploded around them. Covering it and its friend in debris.

Link leaned against a wall in the tunnel with a silent laugh of nervousness, clinging onto his most treasured of possessions: his beautiful long bow and quiver and his trusty pup. He heard Pippa give a sigh of relief as she chewed the foot to pieces, but never swallowing

it. Link looked up from her; most of the exit was blocked off, barely any room to squeeze through; so that only left the option to walk through the tunnels to find an exit.

He placed Pippa on the floor and pulled out a small worn out candle, no bigger than a tea-light from the tool-pouch and lit it by making sparks on the wall with a clean arrow. Next he felt around for a torch and touched the orange flame to the wood, it lit up almost immediately.

And Pippa wanted to carry it.

Of course, the stick was much bigger than her and she kept dropping it, so Link was sure to bring another lit one, just in case.

Pippa looked offended, after all; sticks were a dog's thing.

They wandered around for what seemed like forever till they came to the place the skeletal figures came from. Beyond the water, there was a dark blue chest and stone sign to the side of it. Link lifted a finger to his face at Pippa. She plonked her backside down in slight annoyance; she wanted to follow him across the water but one torch out was enough.

Link rubbed his fingers across the sign, the words almost unreadable with age combating them.

The key to water is ice and the key to ice is wood.

Link glanced over at the chest, his eyes swerving from the sign and it for about a minute. He opened the chest and coughed with the dust that had erupted from inside. Though, he had not expected the chest to be a tunnel to somewhere.

Link rolled his eyes at the sound of Pippa's whines and tapped his left hip. He dropped the torch and dived into the water, her tongue lying over her teeth as he placed her on his stomach and strapped his bow over his shoulder.

They slid down the tunnel with a sharp intake of his breath.

POETRY

NO MISTAKES

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

No eraser, no mistakes.
Concentration's what it takes.
Don't want poems full of scribble.
Want my poetry to look whole.
Gotta think the words in your head.
Don't write them out once they're said.
Thoughts are written out of order.
Must use arrows as the sorter.
Perfection is what's key,
But perfection just isn't me

THE SEASONS GAME - JANUARY

L.J. Myhrman
of <http://aborror.deviantart.com>

I saw some flower shots pushing up through the snow
and I realized
that Swedish seasons play poker with mother Nature
about who gets to be in charge

So with the snow covering still green plants
and new-born ones pushing through the white cold
I'm sure
that Winter is the best one at bluffing

And I'm sure the only thing they have to bet
is months, weeks, days
and clothes.
and mother Nature is since long
in just her underwear.

Winter sits there in his coat
Summer didn't really start out clothed
Autumn wears too little and too much at the same time
just to stay in style
and no one's seen Spring since the last hand.

Although mother Nature's been losing since the night began
they never try to push her out
She goes and gets Spring
who's wearing mascara stains down her face
and goosebumps on her skin

Because if mother Nature truly lost
it'd be such a sausage-fest
even if spring if spring has tits
oh yes, Winter snickers
"she is budding, that's for sure."

KEEP ME TILL DAWN

David Villegas

I lay wake in my mat and let Mozart do his work as my mind slowly
slips into day dreams of sorts
It keeps nightmares a bay; letting the array like sound waves soak in
and bathe in my brain
And may I say, the way the lunar light hit's the mirror and reflects it
upon my chamber walls seems perfectly right
And Bam! I feel the rot and it lays waste to my limbs and it seems like
I'm frozen in time and there's no way to escape
I'm confused, what the hell to do: that I have no clue
As the pain reaches through my chest and I can feel a drop flowing
from my eye
And the beat of the drums in the requiem of Amadeus begins to
speed its way into that of my heart
And the chorus rises with the heat of the moment! And we're evenly
matched
Evenly intertwined, no longer just my lullaby
And I remind my self to hate the feeling of cries
For the reason that I think my self stupid after the drips die out
And so I hold it, and so I let the music consume me
As the sun brings about a new day the second I manage to close my
eyes
I curse my self for picking such a reaping and epic lullaby, its affects
have stolen my nights.

THE LAKE AND ELIZA

Bebopboy
of <http://bebopboy.deviantart.com>

This piece of writing was very hard to categorize. It's essentially a Fictional/Short story/Narrative/Prose/Fixed form poem. I wanted you all to read it in its' entirety, instead of breaking it up into two submissions.

This is a story about love and grief. A story about how fickle life can truly be.

The first part of this writing piece is a present day narrative written in fixed form poetry style, with some short story dialogue.
The second part of this writing piece is a flashback narrative written in fixed form poetry style, with some short story dialogue.
The third part of this writing piece is a flashback narrative, written in prose style consisting of sixteen paragraphs.
The fourth and final part of this writing piece goes back to the present day Narrative written in short story dialogue.

Lest I rest through autumns crest
For many moons of discontent;
To thine soul mate, I professed
This cabin echoes my lament.

I wonder where thou hast gone
My once sanguine spirit of yore;
And why thy visage is withdrawn
From tranquil waves upon the shore.

I keep hearing whispers from the lake
Day by day, the voice draws nearer.
I find myself begin to shake
As the message becomes clearer.

“You have to...”

“I have to what?!”
“Please tell me!”

The spectral voice then faded away
I swear I've heard that voice before.
Before my mind begins to fray
I long to hear that voice once more.

I took the boat out passed the birch tree
Then sat there, floating for hours.
Yet could not resonate her voice with thee
Then sullen skies brought forth showers.

On those placid days that followed
I dreamt a dream of darken waves;
That engulfed me, yet left me hollowed
Deep beneath their watery graves.

'Tis mid November, I still remember
I shall not leave this bed of mine.
No saccharine breeze, nor torrid ember
Could free this sorrow, I confine.

On such a weary winter's eve
I hear her whispers in my ear.
I race to the lake, in hopes to perceive
A woman in white then starts to appear.

“It can't be... Eliza?!”

But you...”

“You have to move on from past turmoil,
Too long, have you tortured yourself.”

“You were with me this whole time?”

“I can't bear to see you hurting like this,
It wasn't your fault, my love.”

“I can't help but to blame myself,
Eliza, If only I...”

We courted amidst the evening mist
Her eyes reflected the dying light.
The crickets were chirping as we kissed

Down by the lake, what a perfect sight.

Eliza and I, felt so elated
Our lives were intermeshed as one.
The union that our hearts created
Shone bright enough for everyone.

Eliza was always beguiled
By how the lake glistened at sunrise.
With a single glance, she smiled
As rays of twilight flooded her eyes.

With my Eliza, I saw no faults
She always laughed whenever we tried
To dance a simple ballroom waltz,
As we stumbled along, side by side.

On every Sunday afternoon
Eliza and I would fish by the docks.
Yet found ourselves inopportune.
The only thing we caught was rocks.

Eliza laid festoons across our bed
That she assembled with delicate care.
Then used the flowers that were dead
To grace atop her golden hair.

We huddled by the fireplace
Whenever beset by December's chill
Then fell asleep, pressed face to face
Much like the lake, so frozen still.

There was this most intriguing dove
That sang a song to greet the dawn.
Eliza fed it with such love
Atop the lamppost it perched on.

On sunny days we took the boat
Out to Driftwood Island Pass.
Then read aloud the poems we wrote
In laden fields of willow grass.

Eliza's energy surpassed my kind
The times we ran along the sand.
Yet never once left me behind

For she would always hold my hand.

Autumn was Eliza's favorite time of year
She told me so, with such a smile.
The leaves a luster, filled her with cheer
That season with her, made life worthwhile.

When we camped at Pale Stone Meadows
Eliza would catch fireflies in a jar
To intermingle with the shadows;
That could be seen from near to far.

A leaf afloat, on water's glassy veil
Was how Eliza wanted to be seen.
A leaf so lovely, yet so frail.
A lake so lucid, and pristine.

On one stormy Thursday-break
Our anniversary had arrived.
Eliza began to kiss me awake
Despite the rain, our love had thrived.

The thoroughfare we took into town
Was paved with blocks of cobblestone;
And all the oak trees were cut down
Beside the road, where they had grown.

Grimville is where we went to trade
And barter with the common crowd.
The hustle and bustle of this arcade
We found to be most terribly loud.

Some days we rode our horse, D'Artagnan
Throughout the trails of Pine Grove Peak.
Then down the banks of Cradle Canyon
Arriving at Spring Hollow Creek.

Some windswept nights, Eliza spoke
In such a tone of slumbers deep.
She'd hold me close, when she awoke
Then slowly drifted back to sleep.

When I was fraught by daily stress
And couldn't take the outside world.
I watched Eliza's silking dress

That flew about, each time she twirled.

So summer fell on our homestead
Then autumn set into fruition.
Two years had passed, since we had wed
With such a graceful repetition.

Then in one fell swoop
My life would change forever.

That familiar dove woke us to a brisk autumn day.
Eliza sprung out of bed with a childlike glee.
Then she jostled me awake in a playful manner,
which made it difficult for me to feel grumpy.
Eliza was drinking her tea on the edge of the pier,
with her legs dangling just above the
water's surface.
I told her about my trip to Grimville, for an ongoing
bartering arrangement and I would be back
before nightfall.
Eliza brushed down D'Artagnan, as both of their
manes shone radiantly in the early morning sun.
She made a pouty face, then smiled before wishing
me a safe journey.
A final kiss farewell,
then I rode off to Grimville.

In retrospect, it occurred to me that Eliza and I have
never spent more than half a day apart from each other.
It took a little over an hour before I saw the Grimville
sign arching over broad iron gates.
I was starting to regret not having Eliza accompany me
for this particular bartering deal. For her beauty and
charm would smooth out any of my shortcomings.

This town was overpopulated with an array of
unscrupulous characters. It took me several hours to
form a binding agreement in the fine print, but I
managed all the same.
As I was walking down the smoke filled streets, a gypsy
woman had befallen me. "It's not too late to know your fate",
the gypsy said with a haggard voice.
"Ten coins for me

And you shall see;
How your life
Will truly be.”

So I inquired her persistent plea, then we sat down inside a tavern. She took my palm, then cast some jewels that scattered across the table. Then she closed her eyes with deep contemplation, and told me what my future entailed. “What you cherish most in life, is never set in stone”, she said to me.

I shrugged her off, and stormed out of the tavern in disbelief. Then I loaded D’Artagnan for the journey home.

So I had returned to my Eliza, just as dusk was beginning to illuminate the lake in a hazy shade of auburn. Then I unpacked the provisions that I acquired back in town. Eliza greeted me like a flower would greet the sunlight, and we embraced each other in a most beloved way.

After we ate dinner, Eliza was walking to the lake, when I watched her trip and get mud all over her legs. She laughed then blew me a kiss through the cabin window. She then lifted her skirt up to her hips and walked a couple feet into the lake to wash off the mud. I was searching for a towel to bring to Eliza, when I heard a scream, a scream so piercing that it shook me to the very core. Eliza was calling out to me, then I saw it.

Pale arms flailing in the darkness. I ran to the boat with a lantern and rope at hand. Eliza was an adept swimmer, but there is no way she could have gotten to the near center of the lake that fast. At that moment I rowed to her with a pace that no one on earth could dare match.

“No, Eliza!” I shouted at the sight of her descending into blackness. I used the rope to link myself to the boat, then dove into the murky depths. I couldn’t breathe, not from the lack of air, but from the sight of Eliza’s dormant body as I lifted her onto the boat.

“This can’t be happening”, I kept saying to myself over and over again. “Come back to me!” I said, as I tried to breathe life back into her. I kept pressing down, then breathing into her soaked body. I was praying to see any signs of movement,

but I saw nothing. I looked at Eliza with astonished
eyes, to see no marks on her body whatsoever.
She was being pulled, I saw it!
What took her?

I couldn't stop gasping in tears as Eliza's cold lifeless
limbs hung in my arms. I couldn't help but think of
that gypsy from Grimville. Did she foresee this moment?

For Eliza's will, I laid her body in flames. Then I
took the boat and spread her ashes upon the lake
that she held so dear.

"Eliza, if only I got to you sooner,
That night will forever be etched into my memory."

"Shhhh, my love,
The only thing you're responsible for,
Is how happy you made me feel each day."

"I don't have much time left here, my love,
But you have so much more life to live;
Away from this lake."

"Please don't leave, Eliza.
Don't leave me again!"

As I look back on that lake,
I feel calm and frightened,

all at once.

UNTITLED KNIFE CLICK

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

slade slipped
th knife click
key hole
star a traipsing
visage of yester year
th nimble din of
auburn
is th isle
a strain of pitchers
that
dive light a slim of
mice hole
shutters
th mansion deep
of dust
& spider eggs
handsome women
dancing in th ghost light candles
of every other day of holiday
near the spirit window
show