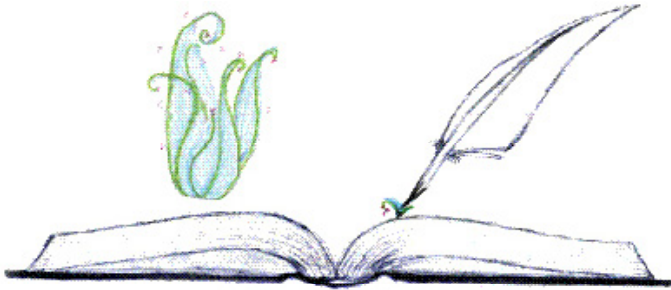




SUB~CREATION

Wheaton College | FALL 2014



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In association with



WhInklings



Editorial Team

Joseph Abdelmelek

As an ex-English-major-turned-Conservie, Joseph feels that he is better suited to criticizing others' work than submitting his own.

Johana Martinez

Johana Martínez is a junior History major whose chief delights revolve around family, friends, and chocolate.

Beth Potterveld

Beth got her M.A. in Biblical Exegesis from Wheaton in May 2011, and married a particle physicist the next day. The Wheaton College Tolkien Society was founded her last semester here, and she has actively participated in it ever since. When the club president suggested a writing club (the WhInklings) and a literary journal (Sub-Creation), she jumped at the chance to help make these a reality.

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Editor's Note

I was thinking and thinking about this semester's stories, and staring at their titles for a long time, trying to figure out a theme. Our first issue had several darker pieces, dealing with a ghost, murders, death of a loved one, or even Death himself. In the spring, all our tales clearly revolved around the fantastic creatures in them: a pixie, dragons, alien monsters. But for this issue, I can't think of an overarching theme that would tie a humorous science fiction piece about baking with a dark historical fiction piece about soul searching; or a poetic romp in the woods with a steam-punk dirigible race; let alone a lay of Arthurian romance and a short story of a gumshoe cracking the case. (If you see the connection, please let me know.)

But that's why genre fiction is so wonderful, isn't it? All these stories fit perfectly in the realm of fantastic literature. There's something in genre fiction for everyone, for every situation, for every dream or nightmare. The realistic world and its fiction holds all of human experience and thought—no small or limiting feat—but genre fiction will always hold all that, plus all we can imagine beyond it!

Enjoy!

Beth Potterveld

PROSE

Anna Trujillo ('17)

Anna Trujillo eats cookies for breakfast, cake for lunch, and ice cream for dinner. Her hobbies include skiing, drawing, and teleporting home to Alaska a few times a week for snowball fights. After college, she plans to join a hermit commune.

Johana Martínez ('15)

Johana Martínez is a junior History major whose chief delights revolve around family, friends, and chocolate.

Josepha Natzke ('18)

Josepha Natzke is a freshman from Newberg, Oregon. She enjoys spending her time drinking lattes, watching old sci-fi movies, or walking in the rain.

Anna Tipton ('15)

Anna Tipton is an English major who hails from northwest Indiana. She enjoys drinking loose-leaf tea while reading literature—her favorite writers including John Milton, John Keats, and Marilynne Robinson.

How to Bake Chocolate Chip Cookies on Mars

by Anna Trujillo

Last Sunday, I woke up when a Martian materialized in my bedroom.

He jerked up my blinds and light gushed in, terminating my previously peaceful sleep. "Arise, Earthling, or Valecko will dispose of you in an unpleasant and ticklesome fashion," he said.

I blinked my eyes free of painful shards of light and squinted into his wrinkly, red, three-eyed face. Then my gaze fell to his equally red and wrinkly hands. He had long, flexible fingers with no fingernails, perfect for tickling.

My eyes flashed to my roommate's bed. Empty, of course. She was an early riser. Without backup, I doubted I could trounce this creature in a tickle war.

"All right," I said, shrinking back as the Martian's hands twitched threateningly toward my midsection. "I'll do whatever you say."

His face crinkled even more, contorting into something that resembled an extremely ugly smile. His hands relaxed, and despite the grotesqueness of his features, for a moment his furrowed face seemed somehow endearing. "Come with Valecko to Valecko's planet," he said, "and teach Valecko how to make chocolate chip cookies."

We teleported to Mars. Swift wind sent fine, rust-colored dust racing down the narrow roads of

a sleepy Martian town. The buildings were all low and crooked-looking, and over their roofs I could see mountains towering in the distance.

“First you need butter,” I told the Martian. I had figured out by now that his name was Valecko. “One cup of it.”

“What is butter?” Valecko asked, and I realized that this mission could be more difficult than I’d thought.

“It forms when you churn cream,” I tried to explain. “You know, from cows.”

The Martian’s eyes lit up. “Ah!” he said, “Valecko knows cows. We have moon-cows on this planet. We Martians pillaged them from your planet’s satellite.”

Before I could figure out if pilfering livestock off a neighboring planet’s moon was considered a hostile act, Valecko had dragged me to a field of short, scruffy grass where thirteen thin cows grazed. It took me a long time to figure out how to milk the cows and churn enough butter to make an approximately cup-sized lump.

“Next we need sugar,” I said once Valecko had stored the butter safely in his pocket. “Do you have sugar on Mars?”

I was no expert on Martian physiognomy, but when Valecko glanced at me, his expression held what could only be described as scorn. “Every planet in this universe has sugar,” he said, and led me to his own kitchen to measure out my estimation of a cup.

That was the easy part.

Valecko told me there was no vanilla on his planet, so he taught me to extract a sticky juice

from a particular type of flower that grew only in pitch-dark caves. By the time I emerged with two teaspoons full, I had vowed that when I got home, I would arrange to have a headlamp surgically attached to my head. Then I had to battle a Martian bird the size of a camel in order to steal one of its tiny eggs from its nest.

I cracked the egg — pitiful prize for the scratches I had sustained from the bird's sharp talons — and dropped it into the misshapen ceramic bowl Valecko had found. He took great pleasure in stirring the ingredients we had collected, splattering both of us with cloying brown goo in the process.

"Next we need flour," I said. I hadn't eaten breakfast or brushed my teeth, and after my encounters with the moon-cows and the Martian bird, my pajamas were sweat-soaked and soiled. The Martian sky gave no indication how long I'd been on this planet, but it felt like weeks.

"Is flour made from daisies and chrysanthemums?" Valecko asked.

"No," I told him. "It's ground from wheat."

"Oh. There is no wheat on Valecko's planet, but Valecko knows what we can use instead."

We ground two and a quarter cups of flour from a purple fruit that looked like a potato and was as hard as a rock. Valecko told me that salt was rare on Mars, and the nearest supply was in the next village, seven miles away. "But if you do not want to make the journey," he said, "you can cut yourself with this knife Valecko has acquired — Valecko apologizes for its rustiness — and flavor the cookies with your salty Earthling blood."

I chose to run the seven miles and back. I'm sure I lost more salt in sweat on the journey than the half a teaspoon I brought back.

I didn't expect Valecko to have baking soda, but when I asked him for some, he gave me a teaspoon of a gray, gritty substance and told me it would work as nicely as the sodium bicarbonate humans use on Earth. I didn't argue. By then I was too tired.

Valecko stirred the concoction as I stretched my tired legs and examined my many minor wounds from my fight with the giant Martian bird. "Now all we need is the last ingredient," I said, trying to keep my voice from revealing my eagerness to put this ordeal behind me. "Chocolate chips. Where can we find some?"

Valecko led me out of his cramped domicile and pointed at the mountains that loomed far away. "At the top of that second peak there is a single tree," he said, voice reverent. "And on that single tree grow those rich brown fruits you Earthlings call chocolate chips."

I stared at the indicated summit. It looked impossibly high. Something inside me shriveled up, preparing to die. "You mean I have to climb all the way up there?"

"Valecko would do it, but Valecko is too old," the Martian said smugly. "And you should feel honored to make such a journey. You will be the first Earthling in all of history to pluck the fruits of the sacred chocolate chip tree."

I tried to protest, but after that speech all my objections sounded ungrateful, so I clamped my mouth shut and set off at a determined run toward

the mountains. Not long later, my determined run deteriorated into a somewhat-less-determined jog. Then the land tipped uphill and my jog became a labored walk. The mountain grew steeper the higher I climbed, and I walked bent over, my hands clutching my thighs to keep my screaming quadriceps from bursting out of my body. Mars's reduced gravity made me feel clumsy and light-headed but did nothing to ease the ascent.

By the time I reached the peak, the sun had set and two moons shone in the sky. Light fell sparkling from the stars to gleam against the shingly ground. And rising against the heavens, motionless in the breezeless night air, stood my deciduous destination—the sacred chocolate chip tree.

I staggered to it and pulled a flexible branch low enough to inspect. It was dotted with thick smooth leaves and tiny brown chips. I forced my aching, wheezing lungs to draw a deep, slow breath and caught the unmistakable aroma of rich chocolate. I gathered six handfuls of the dark morsels, tore one sleeve off my grimy t-shirt, and bundled them safely in the fabric. By now thirst had seized my throat in a stranglehold, so I ripped some leaves from the tree and licked the few drops of moisture from the shallow bowl of each. Then, clutching the chocolate chips to my chest, I started back down the mountain.

By the time I tripped through Valecko's door, dawn streaked the sky.

The Martian appeared, yawning hugely. "What took you so long?"

I handed him the chocolate chips.

I stirred the chocolate chips into the cookie dough while Valecko set his oven to three hundred and fifty degrees Fahrenheit, which was exactly twelve and a half degrees on the Martian temperature scale. I gave instructions in fragments, as I didn't feel chipper enough to string them into sentences. "Tray. Scoop cookies on. Oven. Wait. Ten minutes."

I didn't have much hope that the cookies would turn out. The dough looked like thick purple paint with chocolate chips stirred in.

Ten minutes later, the cookies proved my pessimism correct when they emerged from the oven looking like dried purple paint with chocolate chips stirred in. Valecko tasted one and declared it divine. I tasted one and decided it tasted like a sweaty sock rolled in a sewer and then sprinkled with sugar and chocolate.

"Valecko," I said, "I need to get home." I'd been gone for over a day now, by both Martian and earthly standards, and was anxious to get back. I had homework to do, classes to attend... and a comfortable bed with which to reacquaint myself.

"Yes," the Martian said, "Valecko will send you back to your home planet. Thank you for bringing Valecko the secret of the Earthling race. We will use it wisely to dominate your species and take control of your planet."

Then he snapped his fingers, and I reappeared in bed.

I looked at my watch and checked the date. It was just past nine, Monday morning now, and I needed to move quickly if I wanted to make it to my nine fifteen class on time.

I scrambled out of bed, wincing at the complaint of every muscle, sweat and red dust clinging to my skin. I grabbed my backpack and opened my door.

“Greetings, Earthling,” said the leering Jupiterite on the other side. He was seven feet tall and held a long sword as coolly as I would hold a pencil. “Come with me to my planet and teach me to make chocolate mousse, or I will dispose of you in a painful and cacophonous way...”

Mystery

by Johana Martinez

The absurdity. The silliness. The lies. Reality versus the surreal, was there a difference? Should there be a difference? What did any of it mean really? Why? Why? Why? The questions bombarded him, getting more outrageous, more boring, filling him with frustration at both the questioners and himself. He was supposed to have the answers, that was what was killing him. If only... He pulled at his hair as he perused the papers scattered in front of him, covering all of his large desk. He picked one up at random. He recalled its contents as he glanced at the pictures this particular packet contained. A layout of the house, including where the body had been found, pictures accompanied by character descriptions of those involved, the gardener, the maid, the niece, the husband, the murdered... Where was the photo of the murderer he idly wondered, absently scratching the side of his face.

The story unfolded easily enough. A rich woman, a very rich woman, a much younger husband, an attractive niece, an old gardener who fought quite often with his employer, a maid never seen without headphones (she was a teenager chosen for economic purposes, not skill). All these people interacted on an almost daily basis in the overly ornate mansion the wealthy woman had built for

herself. One day, she was found in the garden, with a statue next to her, as broken as she was. An ambulance was called, everyone assumed it was an accident. Hell, it still probably was an accident. Too bad an overzealous pup of an officer had noticed the bottom of the statue had been scraped at, loosening it from its place on the balcony of the house. The balcony that everyone had access to, if they had access to the house. That was the main point, it couldn't have been an accident with the evidence of tampering, and it couldn't have been an outsider, the old lady had too many valuables and was too smart about thieves to not have made her house a fortress.

Paranoid perhaps. Why was she paranoid? Someone should maybe ask the gardener. He had been associated with the old dame the longest, as the niece had admitted that her aunt had gone off the grid for years at a time in her youth, before inviting her to live with her when she came to this city to finish her doctoral studies.

The niece. That girl was one piece of work, clever and pretty and all that, but you could tell she worked at it. There were marks on her nose where glasses probably rested when she wasn't in company, her wardrobe had a few items which were out of sync with the others, indicating a time when she wasn't as suave and stylish. But her intelligence could not be doubted, he personally couldn't even say what her PhD was in, so completely out of his depth was he comparatively. From what he could tell, the rich lady had been just as smart, except without the book learning. Which made him wonder how she had gotten killed. It must have been a

bit of bad luck, a happenstance of fate. Like how the husband had described their relationship.

The husband. That idiot. He was floundering, and had no idea what to say or do. He declared that he had fell for her at Fate's beckoning, that their love was written in the stars. He smiled at the memory of the husband's interview, before they met he had been tempted to peg the murder on the chap, spousal murder was a trend after all, and the age gap and wealth he was to inherit were easily temptations for murder, maybe he was in love with that dish of a niece too. Yet the man was so obviously wound around the little finger of his wife that with her dead he had nothing to say, nothing to do, and was completely lost within the world without her. Hopefully that puppy dog would find someone else to take pity upon him. The maid obviously thought him attractive.

The maid. Nevermind, she was an idiot easily read and understood. Another stupid nineteen year old, professedly in love with her boyfriend yet still quite appreciative of others, working as a maid until she saved up enough to begin realizing her vague potential, whatever it was. She was too caught up in her own life to care much for the situation of her employer, and had neither the brains nor the verve to commit such a crime.

Where was the answer? He needed to find one. He must find one. Or else it wouldn't just be his job on the line, his credibility would be a thing of the past. What was the answer to this puzzle the old lady had given him with her death? He looked at her picture on his desk and imagined her smiling in triumph at him. Triumph. Her triumph. He picked up

the picture frame and looked hard, before abruptly standing up and hurrying out the door.

He stared in contemplation at the old woman's grave, an ostentatiously expensive stone serving as the monument to this wily, wealthy dame. He noticed the curmudgeonly gardener approaching along the path, a bouquet of narcissi in his rough hands. The man's scowl twisted into a scornful smile as he noticed the detective.

"Finally made it here, did you?" He grunted as he knelt in front of the grave of the employer he notoriously hated. "You'd think it would be protocol to visit the grave of the person you're working to provide justice for. Or would that make you as suspicious a character as me?"

"Did you help her?"

"No. I didn't know she would kill herself, I didn't even realize she was sick, for all I knew she was so upset after her last doctor's visit. How did you figure it out?"

"Her picture. I noticed at her temples her hair was beginning to fall out. We have the whole family history on file, courtesy of her niece, and there is no genetic precedent for hair loss. That, combined with her regular diet and schedule, which we got from the maid, made me realize she was sick. I just hadn't realized how sick." The detective, hard-boiled as he was, looked at her grave in mingled admiration and sadness. "She was a fine old dame. If I had known..."

"You couldn't have stopped her, boy" growled the gardener, still kneeling. "She was too smart, too determined. When she wanted a better life for her son, a respectable life, what did she

do but come back to her home country and set up shop as a proper, eccentric, and grand person. She even married a dope to keep up the facade of a woman trying to recapture her youth that she had lost through focus on her career." The older man suddenly snorted. "As though she hadn't lived enough in her youth. I should know."

The detective assessed the weathered man critically. "You old scoundrel. You were so good at pretending to hate her, considering you were a part of her old gang." He reached into his breast pocket thoughtfully as he paused. "You helped each other slip away from powers that be in at least five different countries. I could still get a hefty sum for handing you in." He placed a cigarette between his teeth, and smirked at the gardener. "Though she, of course, was the real big fish making all the decisions between you all. You never had much say in what she did."

"That's no way to talk to your father, boy." The gardener's eyes twinkled. "I must admit I wasn't taken with the idea of her marrying that jellyfish. But we always made up boy, no matter how much we fought. Take a lesson from that." He looked up at the sky, lost in memories. "She was right though, no one ever questioned how she made all her money in foreign parts with her playing that part. And she was smart enough to get part of it put in the hands of those she really cared about before taking her leave. Though no doubt she left enough to keep the niece and jellyfish happy." The man snorted again, fondly running his hand over the grave stone. "I have to admit, she did always know what was best."

The gardener stood, and looked the detective up and down. "You have the official answer?"

"It was an accident, the scraping was from carelessness last time the gutters were cleaned."

The crook nodded his head and turned his back on the detective, sticking his hand in the air for a moment as his only sign of farewell. The detective watched the scoundrel go; they would meet again.

He rested his own hand upon the gravestone for a moment, and whispered, "Good-bye, old mum. Dad's right, you were always right." He smirked, imagining his unacknowledged mother, who left him to pave the way for him to come to this country as a proper person, not a criminal, smirking right back at him.

He left to hand in the official answer, which explained in the incident in less inexplicable, and less true, terms. Because that was the answer his mother wished him to give.

Racing Day

by Josepha Natzke

It's an hour and a bit past noon, and I'm sitting outside a jail cell, looking in at my Da. Pale, sickly looking sunlight is leaking in from the little window above his head, and he is still in one of the vague stages between drunk and hungover, his matted head slumped into his hands. Jeradine, the town deputy, is watching us from the corner with a plug of tobacco between her jaws, her city slicker boots propped up on the stacks of Aircraft tickets on her desk.

"It's Racing Day," I tell Da. "It's starting in an hour."

He doesn't respond. He doesn't even look up, and I know it's because he's ashamed to be seen like this. As if everyone in the town didn't already know about him and his habits, and how most nights he ended up breaking into neighbors' houses for spare coin. I clear my throat to fill the dust-filled, hungover silence. "I'm racing, Da. I built my own Craft."

He gives his shoulders a sort of limp shrug, a gesture I can't read. I can practically hear Jeradine sneering behind me. I stand up and lean against the rusty iron bars. "How long you gotta be in here?"

"He's in there until he's good and dried up,"

Jeradine says flatly. "Sheriff's orders. Looks like I'm gonna be his nanny for a little while."

"Thanks," I say, just because I know the gratitude will get her ticking, and look back to my Da. "I did all the work myself. No borrowed plans or anything. Mister Sal says it's good work. He might hire me, if I win."

"If," Da snorts. He heaves a few bitter coughs and leans back against the dirt wall, his long hair like sweaty little snakes, stuck to his pasty face. He used to forget to cut it: he'd be so hard at work that he'd let it grow long, and then Ma would cut it in the middle of the night, when he was asleep, as a huge family joke. But that was before, when he actually worked. After the whiskey started making him angry she didn't dare cut it anymore, and now it just hangs there, like an oily veil that separates him from the world and from all of his failures.

Maybe I should feel sorry for him. I saw everything he went through; saw his life's work packed away under his very nose, sent off and sold to some enterprising Aircraft company in the big city. But I can't feel anything, because in his eyes, his biggest failure is standing right in front of him: me, his own son. Eighteen, and not going off to Flying Academy in the fall. A representative came to town a few weeks back, interviewing all of us Potentials. I told him I wanted to be a mechanic. He laughed in my face and told me being a mechanic wouldn't get me any pretty girls.

Well, I'm a bit past hoping on attentions from the pretty girls, now that my father's the village idiot and runs the street naked after losing his pants in a card game. He used to be a proper

businessman, and I used to have prospects. Now I keep my head down, and I think it makes my old Da even angrier, simply because I don't seem too keen on fighting the people that scorn him.

If only he really knew. I'm going to race today, and I'm going to fight for all it's worth.

But he doesn't. He make more wet hacking noises from somewhere in his lungs, and his glittering eyes look at me through the snakes. The alcohol has dumbed his senses, but it's only sharpened his black spirit. "Your friend," he slurs. "That mayor's kid...Alfred? What's his name?"

He drawls out the words, just to tease me. "Alfonso," I spit back at him. "Not a friend."

"Mayor wants him to win. He's got the money to do it, too." He grins at me. "You ain't gonna win. Not against the Mayor's kid."

"What do you know about it?"

"I know that mayor," Da says loudly, leaning forward. "Ate too much mince pie with the bastard, back in the day. He wants to win, and he's got the money. You don't."

"Yeah, well why's that?" I retort. Da shifts on his stool. I know that he wants me to get angry: it makes him happy, to make other people feel worse than him, but I don't care. I'm about to beat him and everything he's failed at.

"They're all crooked, Ark. They're all crooked stuffed turkeys, and you and I know it." He tries to laugh, but it takes too much work, so he just gasps pitifully instead. "They cheated me..."

"You cheated yourself," I tell him.

"You gotta get down to the track," Jeradine cuts in, spitting out her plug. "Not much time."

I look at Da. "Are you gonna wish me luck or not?"

"Good luck, kid," he spits between coughs. "It ain't gonna do you any good, though."

It's pretty clear that the conversation's finished. Jeradine escorts me to the door of the police office. "He'll come through," she says easily. "Don't worry."

"I almost wish he'd stay drunk," I confess. "So he wouldn't try and come back to us. Ma's been off so much easier with him out of the house."

She looks me over with those green eyes that most boys have a fainting spell over. "Yeah," she says, "maybe." She leans against the doorframe. "You'd best get down to the track, Ark. Ain't it starting soon?"

"Yeah. You coming?"

She jerks her head in the direction of the cell. "Got a nannying job."

"Oh, right."

"Did you name her?"

"Who?"

"Your Craft," she says, kicking at the dust that lies in a thick layer on the stoop. "She needs a name if she's gonna race."

"Hadn't thought about it much," I admit.

"Well, she needs a name."

I give it a thought. "Jeradine. I'll name her Jeradine."

She rolls her green eyes. "Don't you start, Ark."

"What?" I give her a grin. "It's repaying a favor, see? You watch my Da dry up, and you get your name on a prime, first-place dirigible."

She grins too. "First place? You've got quite a stuffed chest there."

"Well, maybe second place." I start down the street. "Wish me luck?"

"All my best. Just don't crash it." She steps back inside.

I can't keep the grin from my face as I walk down towards the track. I got all of Jeradine's luck for the race. Maybe I'll get a kiss if I come back with the prize.

#

The track isn't a real track. It's mostly just the name we give to the starting place of the race. It's on the westward edge of the village, where every enterprising young man lines up his dirigible, facing towards the jagged Dog Mountain on the horizon. We're all young, and pretty slim, because that's all the weight a little Craft will carry; if you want to race it, at least.

Everyone who enters is supposed to have drawn up his own design, but looking up and down the line, you can see that it's certainly not the case. Some have propeller mechanisms that couldn't have come from anywhere but the city. Others are downright military class. It happens every year: rich suits like Alfonso spend some coin up in the city and get 'tips' from the experts.

We'll start the race two hours after the sun hits noon, each boy flying his own Craft out over the flat farming plain. Once we reach the Hills, there's a load of turbulence and crafty wind currents. The first one to make it around Dog Mountain and back before sunset is the winner, which means they get a little bit of money and a whole lot of respect.

Pretty much everyone comes out to watch the race. They're cluttered behind the finish line on their picnic blankets like flies swarming around sugar: the gossipy wives, jabbering as fast as the clicking of the knitting needles in their hands, the children, who run around like fat little puppies, begging at every vendor stall for food and pulling tricks on unsuspecting passersby, and the old men admiring the Crafts, pulling bets and passing off money when they think their wives aren't looking.

And then there's all those pretty girls, of course; the ones I don't ever pay any attention to. They're all in their finery, drowning in a sea of ruffles and bow and ribbons, and to my extreme dismay, they're all gathered around the very large and impressive dirigible of none other than the Mayor's son, Alfonso himself.

He's a fallen angel alright, just like they say, but what people generally don't know is that fallen angels have been kicked out of heaven on account of their ugliness. There's nothing generally handsome about him from what I can see. I guess frog eyes and a ponytail tied up in a ribbon are girls' standards of beauty, but all I see is some strange amphibian creature dressed up in velvet, giggling like a hare that's gotten into aged white wine.

There's a little trumpet fanfare from the announcement stand, which means that all of us contestants have to get in a line and shake hands. Of course, Alfonso's the last one to greet me. His hand is slimy and cold, like a newt's. He sneers at me. "What are you flying in, Ark? Your grandma's wheelchair?"

"And what's yours, a steam engine?" I reply,

keeping my manner as cool as is possible.

He minces a little smile at me. "Surprised your father's not here to see you off. Actually, I'm not surprised at all, come to think of it. I heard he threw himself through Reb's glass window."

"It's none of my trouble," I say. The other boys are all done shaking hands and now they're watching us.

"I suppose you have to win today, don't you?" Alfonso continues, glancing around at the boys with what I suppose is meant to be a knowledgeable twinkle in his eye. "So you can pay for a new pane of glass?"

I'm a little heated, and it's hard to fight the urge to plant a first in one of his froglike eyes. "I am going to win this," I tell him. "Just you wait."

Bill the grocer comes forward. He's one of the race officials. "Gentlemen, please go to your Crafts. We've gotta start soon."

"You're just like your Da," Alfonso taunts, backing away. "You lose everything but you're still fighting. Fighting like a cornered dog, ain't you?"

"I would've been like you," I call after him. "If my Da weren't ruined. But maybe I'm glad I'm not. I'm glad I'm not like you, Alfie. If I were rich, would I look like a frog? Like you?"

Alfie's eyes are blazing now, but Bill gives him a push and me a glare, and we head to our respective Crafts. I take a few deep breaths to shake it all off. Anger might help in a fist fight, but it won't help in a race.

My craft's at the end of the line. It's a bad place for starting, but it's my first year, so I don't expect any better. She may look small and simple

to a lot of common folk who don't know anything about good Crafts, but to me she's a beauty. Her copper hull shines in the sun, and her hydrogen cell is filled up nicely. She bobs up and down gently in the breeze, held down by her landing chains, ready to go.

I check the pressure valves on the gas tubes and give the propeller a spin or two, just to be sure that it doesn't grind against the side like it did on my last test run. Then I swing a leg over the side and settle down into the pilot's seat, the old leather chair that the creditors didn't take along with the rest of Da's stuff. I run a hand over the controls and look out at the smooth plain before me. Jeradine's ready to run.

There's a few more minutes where all the boys are hanging around their Crafts, looking around the crowd for compliments and itching to get going, and then there's a trumpet fanfare from the announcement booth, and the mayor's standing up, trying to get everybody quiet.

He starts talking, but from my spot I can't hear anything he's saying, which is just as well—none of it matters anyways. He's just a fat suit, and so is his son. I look around at the spectators for my family. There's Ma, talking to the preacher's wife, and Veera with her friends, all braiding each other's hair. The twins are running off somewhere, probably going to steal something. I see Mister Sal by the announcement booth: we meet eyes and he tips his hat to me. Some more good luck, I suppose.

The mayor mumbles out a bunch of sentences, and when he sees that no one's listening to him because they want the race to start, he goes and

gets the starting flag, a large red banner which he holds up in the air.

My heart speeds up a considerable amount, and the man next to him blows a whistle. Everyone pulls the ignition lever, and twenty dirigibles hum to life. Jeradine purrs under my feet as I adjust the gas levels to get ready for takeoff.

Now there's a countdown from everyone in the crowd: they're all chanting, *ten, nine, eight*, and I find my eyes wandering down to the center of the line, towards Alfonso. He's leaned forward in his seat, all squirmy and excited. He looks back at me, and gives me that upper-class sneer. I get the urge to growl along with my Craft. He won't win this year, not with me in the running.

The countdown comes down to the last few numbers, and even though the air is full of shouting, it's all quiet in my mind. Two village boys are kneeling by Jeradine's grounding chains, ready to let her loose. I look back to the mayor. He's bringing down his arm, and the red banner's slicing down in front of him like a bloody knife. I push down the thrust and let out the hydrogen level to full blast.

Takeoff is always a magical sight: twenty dirigibles, rising into the sky with their translucent hydrogen cells gleaming like oblong soap bubbles in the sun. But it's quite a different thing to be in the midst of the mayhem itself. I cut in towards the center for a better draft off of all the eager ships out in the front. By the time I feel comfortably situated the race is about twenty minutes in, and there are already some Crafts that have cut out: Rolf the meat vendor's little two-cell is smoking, and the baker's son's dirigible is sinking down towards the plain.

The rest of us rise into the air like a pack of

birds, all jostling to get ahead. At this point, I don't care much who has the lead. It all goes into the aerodynamics once we're into the wind currents in the hills: how the structure of the Crafts can withstand gusts of wind and the like. That will be the real test.

Jeradine reaches about a hundred and fifty feet and I level off the altitude and settle back a bit. It's a clear cruise of about an hour until we reach the hills. I note the time on my watch and look around a bit. Alfonso's about three dirigibles across from me, about a nose ahead. I close the distance so that we're even, just because I don't want him to give me another sneer. On my other side is Berro, a boy who used to apprentice for my Da. We exchange casual smiles, but there's no time for talk. This is business, right here. Competition.

The dirigibles have all spread out pretty well by now: we've all thought of different ways to get into the hills, different passes and spots that we think might have easier wind patterns. Me, I swerve out to the right, because there's a flatter area to the south, where the wind will just push me faster, if anything. I look out at the other boys and my heart sinks down to the bottom of my stomach. Apparently Alfonso had the same idea. He's breaking free of the pack too, headed straight towards me, like he deliberately wants to get me ticked.

Well, I'm not happy about this. Not at all. I thought up this route on my own, and I was proud of it, because everyone always tries to swing to the left, and I thought I'd be the only one to do this. So I ask Jeradine for a little more speed, and the propeller gets humming a little faster. Soon we're zipping over the plowed field like a regular military-grade

Craft, the Hill growing closer, right on schedule.

The only problem is that Alfonso and his great bully Craft are picking up speed too, and to my dismay, he's pulling up pretty close: nearly on my heel. I can't let out any more fuel than I am now, because I need some reserve if the going gets tough in the turn around Dog Mountain. Alfie's gotten close enough to sneer at me now, and there's no way I can get away from it. "How are we feeling, Ark? Getting sick in that little crib? You gonna throw up all over the place like your Da?"

I swerve away from him. We're getting close to the hills, and I don't want to be too distracted. "You insult like a four year old, Alfie," I shout over my shoulder. "Why don't you keep your little mouth shut?"

He lunges forward and Jeradine lurches under my feet: he actually butted me from behind. I want to fight back, want to fight bad, but we're almost to the first hill now, and I have to adjust my altitude and gas pressure. There's a little gust of wind, and it brushes his craft away from mine.

I wouldn't have minded giving him a little more wisdom, but the time for talk is over: there's a labyrinth of hills and valleys before me, and it's going to take a tricky piece of navigation to avoid getting smashed on a cliff face and staying away from Alfonso. Now I understand my problem: if I'm in front of him, he can just follow my lead through the tricky passageways. I'm giving him a straight path to glory.

There's a big pit of anger in my chest now, burning like a swarm of angry yellow jackets: they're eating me up, and I go ahead and feed it.

He wants to follow me? Then let him follow me to his own doom. I glance down at the map I have battened down on the dashboard and cut a sharp right. There's a little space between two cliffs here, one that I know I can make it through. I duck down into it and avoid grazing the cliff walls. It's a tight squeeze, and there's no way Alfonso can follow me in his clumsy, bottom-heavy dish-rag pail of a ship.

Sure enough, when I dare to glance over my shoulder, he's gone. I rise up out of the little space, back up into the clear air, and I'm all by myself. Got rid of that stuffed suit once and for all.

But something's off. There's a lower hum in the air, a much bigger engine somewhere. And I smell acid smoke, from some foreign motor. I take a look around at the hills, and sure enough, I see a sight frightening enough to near knock me out of the sky.

It's a great, black Craft, an Airfish, rising up from behind a hill behind me. Its shiny black hydrogen cell gleams in the sun like a bloated, poisonous bubble. No markings, no flags: there's only one thing it can be, and that's Pirates.

To hell with the race. I don't want to be sport for Pirates. I pull up on the speed and zip up out of sight, behind a rock, waiting. But the Airfish wasn't following me. No, I don't even think it saw me. Instead, it's chasing another Craft, and that's Alfonso's.

Shoot me dead if you want, but I don't feel any sort of happy feelings at this sight. Alfonso's in a panic; I can see it by the way he's pulling away from the Airfish: quick, jerky steering motions. He's pulling a lot of gas, and I know that if the Pirates are

in for a serious catch, they can run all of the fuel out of him in about ten minutes.

I look up towards Dog Mountain. I don't see any other dirigibles around: they're probably caught up in the currents or crashed on the cliffs. The Mountain stands there alone, waiting for me to get to it. Jeradine hums impatiently: she's ready to go. Alfonso's getting a good distance away from me, and the Airfish is following him. I can see little men scurrying around on deck with harpoon guns. He sure does deserve it.

I push down all thought of Alfie's weak nerves and swing Jeradine around towards the Mountain. I need this so badly; I've been working for this day for half my life. I'll wait for Alfie to lead the Airfish a bit farther away, and the finish line is practically there for me.

I've got my eye set back on my route now, trying to figure out who the winds might be blowing through, when this huge sound rips through the air. I look around back to the Airfish, and I see two flashes of fire blossom from the cannons in its belly. Alfie's hydrogen cells blow in a huge flaming cloud, and I can hear his engine scream in protest. His carrier pitches and starts to spin down toward the earth with a trail of black smoke.

It's so helpless, spinning towards the rocks below, and Alfie's trying and failing to bring the nose out from under the rest of the carrier. My hands move themselves, and I turn away from the Mountain, away from the price, and instead towards Alfie and his frog-eyed, stuffed-suit sneer, cursing my own selfishness. If there was anything my father never taught me, it was that life mattered more than

money, and I intend to learn from what he didn't say as much as I can.

The wind has picked up, lifting Alfie's carrier a little bit and slowing his fall. The Airfish is wheeling overhead like a weird, mutated buzzard, just waiting. What they're waiting for, I really have no clue. Is it for spare parts? For sport? It doesn't really matter. All that matters is that Alfie needs to be saved. And I'm the only one who can do the saving.

I push the thruster into full gear and pull out a few lengths of hydrogen, but not too much, because I've still got to get out of here somehow. I come within a few shiplengths of Alfie. He's yanking at the steering levers, panicked, and looks up to see me with wide eyes. I pull as close as I dare. "Keep that nose up, Alfie!"

He's doing his best already, and I try and compensate, to match his falling speed and keep my Craft under control. There's a shot fired from above, and a big ball of fire whooshes past us. The Airfish isn't very happy, and the ground's coming up on us fast. "You've got to jump!" I tell him over the hum of the engines. "On my count!"

"I can't!" He yanks on different controls desperately.

"You've got to! I'll count to three!"

He looks at the gap of empty air between us. I dip in a little closer. "One!"

Another shot fired down past us. It scorches Alfie's already smoking hydrogen cell.

"Two!"

There's an acid smell from my engine: I'm pushing her limits a little too hard for her liking, but she'll just have to put up with it.

“Three!”

Another fireball, and I dodge away and pull up to Alfie. He gets up on the edge of his craft, waver- ing back and forth for balance. It starts to buck- le and tip under his weight, and with a high-pitched little yelp, he jumps forward over empty air.

I’ve closed my eyes, afraid that he’ll miss or that another cannon shot will blow us apart into scorched vulture steak, and for a moment it seems like that: the Craft dips down heavily, and the pro- peller shudders a bit. And then I open my eyes, and Alfie’s clinging on to the back of Da’s old chair, his hair on fire and his eyes as wide as a choking bull- frog’s.

I say a few words that Ma wouldn’t approve of, and there’s another fireball, like a bolt of light- ning, as if she prayed for me to be punished right here and now. But it’s another cannon shot, and I gun Jeradine back into full speed and we swerve away. I can see the other dirigibles up by Dog Mountain, and they’re rounding the corner. The sun’s swung pretty low, too, and everything’s or- ange and pretty, which is a strange observation to make when you’re being chased by pirates. Either way, it was a sight to see.

Well, I know we aren’t going to try and finish the Race, because my fuel’s bound to be running low, and Alfie is putting a whole lot of extra weight on the ship, what with his velvet suit and everything. He’s put out the fire in his hair and is sort of squeezed down behind my chair, catching his breath. The Air- fish is pulling back, disinterested, and I duck back into that little crevice between cliffs that I used try- ing to get rid of Alfie. They can’t follow us here.

We pull through and I look back, and sure enough, the big bully's turned its rotten behind around and is tailing off north, probably to terrorize some other villages. I can't help but let out a sigh of relief. I turn around to look at Alfonso, and for the first time since Da lost his business, I don't have any mean things to say about his suit or the mayor. I can only see the shock written all over his face. "You okay?" I ask.

He nods. "That was a hell of a stunt, Ark."

"Same to you," I said. "I expected you to pull in and give up."

"Yeah." He looks a little sheepish. "I was thinking about it."

I don't really have an answer to that. I busy my mind adjusting the altitude.

"Wouldn't have surprised you if I did, would it?" Alfie says flatly. "Your Da's right, even when he's drunk. I'm nothing more than a rich suit, just like my father."

I have to turn around and make sure he isn't joking with me. But he looks perfectly serious, and for the first time I feel a little sorry that he has such ugly frog eyes. He can't help it, can he? "I wouldn't say that," I tell him. "Not after just now."

"Thanks," he says.

We don't say much after that. We just fly through the sunset air, humming along over the plain in the orange sunset, headed towards the lights of the village close to the horizon.

#

The celebration has already started when we pull in with the other straggling Crafts. Jeradine touches ground, and I let out a relieved sigh and

power down her engine. For once, it feels good to be on solid ground.

Alfonso helps me close up the Craft: pulling out the propeller to let it cool and letting out the little hydrogen that's left in the cell.

"Where have you been?" The mayor is waddling towards us, his eyes fixed on his son. Mister Sal is tailing after him, wheezing on his cane. Alfonso begins to explain what happened, but Sal brushes right past him and grabs my arm. "You lost a win to saving that frog?" he asks, ignoring the looks of outrage from the mayor and Alfonso.

"I couldn't just leave him," I tell him. "I'll try the Race again next year."

Sal glares over at the two of them. Then he turns grudgingly back to me. "Well, no matter. It seems you've had your luck anyways."

"How do you mean?"

"You didn't win, Ark, but you've got a solid hand at design. No one can deny that, not even the enterprising city folk."

For the first time I see two men from the city standing off to one side, clearly out of place in their long dark cloaks.

"This is Mister Bertram from Steel and Sons Enterprise," Sal says, introducing the taller one. "He has an offer for you."

Mister Bertram shakes my hand and looks at me with iron-gray eyes. "We want to buy your designs."

"My designs?" I can hardly believe it. "My ship?"

"It can use a little work on the streamlining of the hull." Mister Bertram's partner speaks up in a

nasal voice. "However, it is quite excellent."

"Thank you."

"I have a contract in my Craft which I can fetch for you." Mister Bertram looks around at the celebration and sniffs. "I suppose we'll have to disassemble the ship here."

"Disassemble the ship?" I ask. "What are you talking about?"

"We'll have to take it back to the city with us."

"My ship? Why can't I keep it?"

"Ark, just let it go," Sal says, giving me a warning shake of the head.

"We are buying your ship," Mister Bertram says, with an ugly smile that is probably supposed to be polite. "We are taking it away."

I look to Sal, but he's got his head bowed and his hat swept off to these fancy dandies. "Is there a problem with me keeping it?" I ask. "With me keeping my own ship?"

"What would you do with a racing craft out here?" Mister Bertram lifts his chin smugly. "You can't race it again. And you can't hoe crops with it either."

His companion lets out a high little laugh. "If we buy the designs," he says, "we get the ship as well. And you get your money. That's how it works in the big city, at least."

They stare down at me, and I've got a tingly feeling, the feeling that I've been in this situation before. Then I remember: I remember the day when Da opened the door to two city folk, with the same long cloaks. They told him that they'd come to take his things away, and when he tried to con-

test it, they just stared him down with those cold eyes down those long, distinguished noses.

My father relented. He parted with his life. But I'm not going to part with mine.

"I won't give her up." Bertram raises an eyebrow, but I keep talking before he can get any sort of word in. "I'll part with the designs, but not the ship. That's my deal. Take it or leave it."

There's a static pause, more terrifying than the moment I first saw that pirate Craft. Mister Bertram finally snaps to and purses his lips. "Well, we'll be leaving it then."

His companion nudges him. "Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. If the town folk don't learn their place, it's not worth our time to deal with them."

"Thank you for your understanding," I tell him. He gives me his most withering glare, then stalks off into the crowd with his sniveling counterpart.

"What were you thinking?" Sal hisses, his gnarled hand coming down on my shoulder. "You just let them walk away?"

"My Da let them win," I tell him. "I can't let them win. We're just as good as the city folk."

He sighs and shakes his head. "You could be something, Ark, if you weren't so stubborn. You could make it in the city, with those designs."

"I don't want to make it in the city. I want to make it here." The more I talk about it, the more I know it to be true. This place is dusty and full of stuffed mayors and drunken fathers, but I love it here. I love the freedom.

All of this must flash across my face somehow, because the wrinkles around Sal's eyes lighten up a little. He smiles. "Well, your loss."

"I'll make it."

"I know you will," he chuckles. "That's why I'm willing to do you a favor. That job's still on the table, if you want it."

"The job? For you?"

"Of course it's for me. I'll work you hard, but I'll take you." He winks with a twinkle in his eye. "As long as you don't favor the drink as much as your Da did."

#

It's half an hour later that I'm walking down Main Street in the growing gloom of night, a purse of money as an advance from Sal in hand and a toast to the winning Craft sitting warm in my gut. I've been through hell, but I feel relatively happy.

The light's still on at the jail. Jeradine's sitting on a stool outside Da's cell. He's lying on the ground, his face shielded from the lights by the strings of hair.

Jeradine jumps up when she sees me. "Here's the hero," she says in a hushed voice.

"I didn't win. I'm sorry."

"I know," she says. "What are you doing here?"

"Came to give this to my Da." I hold up the money. "For Reb's new window."

"He's asleep," she says, and he lets out a gurgling snore to announce the fact.

"It's alright." In the dim light and quiet of the cell, I can feel my good mood seeping away, like water in sun-caked dirt.

"What's wrong?" Jeradine comes up next to me. "You did a brave thing today, Ark."

"I didn't win. I wanted to tell him that I won."

That I beat out those old stuffed suits.”

“Oh.” She sighs. “I don’t know that it would have made any difference to him, Ark. He’s too deep in his own troubles.”

I look at his long, limp form stretched out on the dirt floor. “I wish he wasn’t.”

“You’re better than him.”

But I’m not. Da isn’t an evil man. He’s a broken one, and as much time as he spent fixing machines, he can’t fix himself. We aren’t so different after all. Can I really be so ashamed of him? Would I really have done any better in his circumstance?

I think back to my Craft, and to how much I love her, how hard I’ve worked. To have that taken away from a man, for him to be stripped of something... it would have been like being torn from your life and waving goodbye as it takes off down the road, spewing dust in your face.

I look down at Da with the bag of money in my hand, and I look past the veil of stringy hair. The face there is dusty and sad and exhausted: exhausted from what he’s brought upon himself. I feel sorry for my Da. I don’t want him to be like this.

I turn away from the cell. Let the old man sleep.

“Aren’t you going to give him the money?” Jeradine asks.

“Not today,” I say. “Can’t give it up so fast.”

Jeradine nods. For such a tough deputy girl with black leather boots, she’s surprisingly good at understanding things like this. “I’ll keep an eye on him,” she tells me.

I leave the jail and walk down the street, kicking at dirt clods and making some attempt at hum-

ming a tune. I'm coming back to the jail tomorrow. I'll tell Da about the advance. I'll use it to buy my own set of tools. Then, with the first paycheck, I'll replace that window. And after that, I'll be making money for the family again, and on nights off I'll do my own work in the warehouse. Dreams of the city and of the Academy seem far from this dusty town that I've grown to love. I'll make it on my own here. I'll build my own life, and I'll keep working until Da can rebuild his.

I have a hope burrowed somewhere deep in me. I hope that one day Da will stand up and brush the hair out of his eyes, that one day maybe he won't be so broken. He'll come to the warehouse and he'll be there with me, picking up the broken parts and carefully fixing them. And for the first time in a long while, we'll be happy. Both of us.

Benedict

by Anna Tipton

Prologue

I am not here to tell a story about Benedict Arnold. Assuredly, my good Reader is familiar with that story, for it has been told and scorned many a time in history classes. If the Reader wants to learn all the facts of the infamous betrayal, then I suggest he seek some other source to learn about them, for it is not my purpose to tell them. No, for my task is of a much more miserable and haunting nature, and my pen and heart groan in one as I fulfill it. But fulfill it I must. Take heart, O faithful Reader, for I tell the story of a shattered and corrupt soul. The Reader already knows how the story ends, but does he know the soul that ended with it? I daresay he does not, and therefore I seek to impart greater insight into the heart of Benedict Arnold.

I

Our story begins in the year 1780 in a dim room in Albany, New York. The sky growled dangerously with thunder, and rain beat somnolently on the window pains. The room was dark save for the light of a warm fire crackling in the fireplace. It made the room glow eerily. There was a desk in

the corner of the room, and on it were the appurtenances needed to write letters (for letter-writing). Also in the room was a mirror that was long enough to reflect a man cap-a-pie. The mirror reflected the room so that it looked even gloomier and more eerie than it really was. It stripped the room of all hominess and left it barren—like a skeleton stripped of its living flesh. It also reflected a man standing at the window. He looked out with tense, searching eyes. He was a man whose brow was always furrowed in deep contemplation and whose jaw was always set, as though with a firm decision. This mirror depicted him with ashen, waxy skin that was horrifying to behold. He looked like a veritable scepter with shining, intense eyes. The real man (not the reflection) had neither this horrifying skin nor shining eyes. Indeed, the mirror played a trick on the eye, for the man's skin was quite normal.

The man, the Reader will note, was Benedict Arnold.

One would forget he was flesh, as he stood so motionless at the window, when suddenly he stirred. He heard a disturbance outside, the sound of a horse and of voices. The voices died down, and in a few minutes the door to his chambers opened and admitted Commander Washington. He wore riding boots and a greatcoat dripping with fresh raindrops, and his face was flushed. He walked in with a robust step, and his eyes were shining with excitement. He had spent the last few hours cruising down the Hudson River from Saratoga to get to Albany. Benedict saluted him as he entered.

“General,” Washington acknowledged, inclining his head. “Your leg?”

“Tolerable.”

“Ah!”

“You made it here in a timely manner.”

“Yes, yes,” Washington replied, pacing the room with his quick step. He stopped in front of the mirror and looked at it curiously. When he did this, Arnold subtly turned around, facing the window, so that his face was no longer in the reflection. Washington puzzled over what he thought was such a sickly, ghostly face of the general, but he gave no more thought to it as he resumed pacing and his train of thought.

“General, I understand you are in a difficult place right now. It must be infuriating having been passed over for promotion by the Continental Congress, and your wound is such an inconvenience.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, I recognize your skill, General. I would like to give you command over a section of the Continental Army. What say you?”

Benedict was still. His eyes followed the raindrops that slid down the windowpane. At last he spoke.

“I wish to decline your offer, Commander.”

Benedict heard Washington’s pacing stop. He turned around and faced Washington, who was studying him.

“I would like to request instead, Commander, to have command over West Point.”

“West Point? Great Scott, man! You can’t be serious.”

West Point was the least likely place for such a one as General Benedict Arnold to be positioned, thought Washington. It was a fort on the Hudson River, but it was inactive at that time.

“Assuredly, I am,” Benedict affirmed, inclining his head.

“Whatever for?”

Benedict replied in his quiet, sure voice.

“Because, Commander, my leg is not well, and I am in no condition to command a section. At this time, command of West Point would be appropriate for me.”

Washington walked to the fire and gazed with furrowed brows into it. He turned Benedict’s words over in his head for a few moments before he spoke.

“As you wish, General.”

With that he turned around, gave a brisk nod of farewell to the General, and went to leave the room.

“Captain!”

Washington stopped at the door and turned around to face Benedict, feeling nostalgic at Benedict’s use of the old title. Benedict saluted him, and Washington saluted him back. With that he was gone.

II

Stillness ensued in the chamber. The only sound and movement was from the crackling fire. Benedict was still staring at the door through which his Commander had just left. His eyes drifted to the mirror, where he could see himself

clearly. His reflection's waxy skin stretched tightly around his skull, making his eyes look larger in proportion to the rest of his face and more disturbing in their shininess. His veins were dark, dark purple, almost black, and looked like earthy roots framing his face. Because his skin was so taut, the veins formed lumps on the surface. What is more, his body looked thinner and fainter than it really was. With trembling hands he felt his torso and his face and was reassured that he was plump with flesh and healthy skin. He sneered at his false reflection, and the ghostly, demonic reflection sneered back at him. It was such a horrifying sight that it made him shiver.

He sat down at his desk and prepared to write. Quill in hand, he hesitated, shifting his eyes to the fire. Whether he gazed there for minutes or hours, he did not know. What did he see in those flames? No one will ever know; all we can know is what he wrote thereafter.

It was a letter addressed to John André, a British major with whom he had been in contact. It was later decoded and read as follows:

I have accepted the command at West Point as a post in which I can render most essential services, and which will be in my disposal. The mass of the people are heartily tired of the war, and wish to be on their former footing. They are promised great events from this year's exertion. If disappointed, you have only to persevere and the contest will soon be at an end. The present struggles are like the pangs on a dying man, violent but of a short duration.

As life and fortune are risked by serving His Majesty, it is necessary that the latter shall be secured, as well as with a compensation for services, for £20,000.

I am Sir, your humble servant.

III

My candle runs low, and my time is running out. I have not the time to describe all the events that followed the writing of that fatal letter, how Major André readily agreed upon buying West Point from Benedict Arnold and how the treachery was thwarted and the traitor revealed when the major was intercepted by American officials, and with him were incriminating letters. The Reader will permit me, then, to skip over these events. Let us now turn our attention to the dark heart of the man whose treachery had at last been revealed.

Benedict Arnold stood in the same spot where we met him: At the window in his chambers, looking out into the icy dawn. All his treachery had been laid naked before all eyes, like a whitewashed tomb cut open to reveal the rotting flesh within. What expression was betrayed on his firm brow? There was none. He retained his stony composure all this time.

He turned from the window, and before him was the mirror which had thus far reflected a ghostly image. What horror was there in that reflection compared to the rotting skeleton that stared at him now? Now, all his flesh had decayed away, and his skin had shrunk and had

become so faint and translucent that he could see the brown, decaying bone beneath it. Where his heart should have been, there was instead a great, black cavity, as though a fire had burned out of his chest and left a singed hole. His once-polished uniform now hung disheveled and in rags on his gaunt body.

Now at last emotion was betrayed on his face. Now at last a great roar erupted from his chest and through his lips. With a devilish fire in his eye he took a candelabra and thrashed the mirror with it. The mirror cracked into fragments, each fragment revealing another face that scorned the traitor. He smashed the mirror until all the glass fell to the floor.

“This is not my face!” he cried to the breaking of the glass. “This is not my heart!”

Indeed, the mirror had given a false reflection of the man looking at it. He had a heart that beat soundly in his chest. He had flesh and healthy skin to fill out his uniform. The mirror was a lie.

The candelabra slipped from his hand and dropped to the floor with a dense thud as Benedict left the room. Like a drunken man he staggered out of the building and into the forest outside. There nature enveloped him with her grassy, open arms.

Is there compunction where there is treachery? Does the heart gasp in a last, desperate attempt to make right the wrongs committed? Had anyone seen Benedict at that moment, the person would have fled, fearing he had seen a demon-spirit risen to haunt the forest. Indeed, Benedict was a tortured soul embodied. He wrung his hands

with such devilish fervor, and his eyes burned and darted desperately about, as though reaching out to grasp for help or consolation. No help was to be found, though. His clothes were disheveled and his hair unkept, a sight never before seen on one so punctilious.

What thoughts haunted his mind? Voices from a void spoke faintly to him. What did they say? Only he knew, but we might surmise that they were voices that bespoke shame upon him, voices that reminded him of his initial cause, the cause of his country. How had he gotten in the way of the cause of America? Was it money that distracted him? Greed? Power? Glory? He spat at the words. Where was the glory in this? What value was there in money when a sad, disappointed face loomed before him: That of his captain, George Washington. The face did not condemn him or show a glimmer of surprise. Those soft, gentle eyes were too awesome for that. Rather, the eyes fell upon him like a gentle, acid rain. The acid seeped into his heart and burned holes in it.

He cried aloud as he fell to his knees, gazing bleakly at the looming clouds above him. The trees around him were the sole hearers of this agonized cry, and with their ancient grief would they carry its sound to the earth. Their gnarled faces looked at him knowingly, but no pity did they have for him. He was only one more battered soul to the many that came and passed in this world. They contented themselves to watch stolidly by and drink in his groans.

Benedict dug his fingers into his hair and rocked himself as heaven shed her endless tears

upon the earth. We began our story with rain. It was raining when Benedict asked George Washington permission to command West Point, a request so ludicrous in Washington's eyes. And now, in the heart of the forest, it rained as the monster of a man's soul came out to drink, but instead of rich, wholesome water, it drank the agony of its own blood. Only once has the monster been released from his soul, and only once will it ever.

Where was his mind when this chain had been wrapped around his heart, bearing with it a great weight? Now his heart heaved and groaned with the pangs of childbirth. He experienced hell in those tense moments. Had it been hours, days, or years, Benedict could not have said. To him it was an eternity, an eternity of battling his guilt.

He came now to a final decision, a decision that was so painful that the very thought of it stripped him of his humanity. America had taken a toll because of him, but that did not mean he loved it less. The face of his Captain loomed once again before his eyes. How could those eyes bear to look upon him, the monster he was? How could those arms ever accept him, a backstabber? To go back was not an option; he could only go forward into the quagmire into which he got himself.

Benedict stood and began walking, he knew not whither. His mind was in a cloud of despair, and his thoughts were bleak and stank with the grief of sin. Hallucinations flitted before his wild eyes, visions of beasts, angels, and demons. He had a vague feeling they were fighting over him. He reached his hands forward as thought to brush

them away, but they stood clearly before his eyes, laughing, taunting, scorning, and fighting.

In the distance through the trees he could see a British encampment. For a moment he could hear the trumpets of heaven blowing one last attempt to save his soul. The mournful, pathetic groan of a dying man surged from within him and escaped his lips. It was such a profound embodiment of anguish, and once again only the earth drank in the sound so that no human ears would ever hear it.

It was in this moment that Benedict for the last time stood on the brink of decision. For one moment hope gleamed before him, a ray so faint, yet so pristine that it was enough to counter all his despair. The ray gave him new thoughts. Might the chalice of his blood be exchanged for a chalice of pure, living water? Might America know the pardon of a soul once lost but now found? Would Washington forgive him and trust him once again to be a general of the Continental Army?

Alas! For in that same moment, Darkness, too, took its last stand, and violently did it fight. So violently did it fight that the ray of hope vanished as suddenly as it appeared, and Benedict sank even deeper than before into his own wickedness and despair. He saw hands of black vapor emerge from his phantasmagoria and grope at his Continental Army uniform. They moved with deliberate slowness, having been accustomed to the timelessness of death. When they touched him, an iciness unbound by temperature cut to his heart. Partly with horror and partly with

delicious, grasping greed did he see his own hands cling to his blue uniform and tear. He tore it down his chest. The buttons burst, and the fabric ripped. With wonder he watched his savage strength tear his coat off, bursting the buttons and ripping it all the way down. The vapor-like hands enshrouded him as he did so, dancing around him until they were indistinguishable and created a cloud around him.

With trembling hands Benedict Arnold dropped the tattered coat into the sopping mud. The moment it touched the ground all vapor vanished, and a thick, deathly silence ensued. He could not hear, but could feel, the soft, labored throbbing of his chest. He looked down and gasped when he saw the cavity in his breast, right where his heart should have been. The heartless hole beat dully with what life was left in him, that life that longs desperately for redemption and will fight for it until the very last breath.

Anguished, torn, and empty, but yet with that faint, persistent life in his chest, Benedict stumbled onward toward the British encampment. It was not with resolution that he went. No, for as he went forward, he felt as though a chain was painfully wrapped around his ankle and pulling him backward to home. And yet he went forward. The chalice was brought, unwonted, to his lips, and, with loathsome thoughts toward himself, he drank deeply the dregs of his choice. With slow, uncertain steps, he walked forward toward the British encampment and to the quagmire that awaited him.

Darkness had prevailed.

Whistle

by Anna Trujillo

I don't remember when I first met Whistle, but I do remember that, as children, she and I went dashing along the edge of the bluff behind my house every evening without fail. In the winter the snow crunched beneath our boots; in the summer the mud squelched and mosquitoes droned, and we squashed the pests in our quick hands and dared each other to eat them. No matter what the season, spectacular sunsets saturated the sky and the satisfying scent of friendship filled our lungs with every breath.

Once, as we were playing hide-and-seek in the untamed shrubs at the top of the bluff, I tried to charge straight through a thorn bush and received the wrath of the prickly plant. By the time I tore myself free from the needle-lined branches, angry red lines rose like ridges on my bare arms. Bright blood leaked through the deepest few and splattered my shirt.

"Whistle!" I called. I was six, and for a first-grader convinced of the world's general geniality, there are few things more terrifying than discovering that the local flora is not as friendly as you assumed. "I need a band-aid!" Whistle had already chosen her hiding place and was nowhere to be seen. I bit my lip to hold back a threatening trickle of tears.

Then Whistle emerged from behind a nearby shrub and sprinted to my side. She tromped through the same thorn bush that had inflicted me with so much pain, ignoring the hot red scratches that it raked across her bare legs, and offered me her bandanna to mop up the tributaries of blood. Then she walked me home for what seemed like miles and miles, but it only took a few minutes. By the time we reached my house, my cheerfulness had nearly returned. Everything always seemed better with Whistle at my side.

“That rosebush had no reason to attack me,” I grumbled.

“We’ll make sure it doesn’t happen again,” she assured me. “As long as I’m around, I won’t let anything happen to you.”

I looked up at her and saw the truth of this statement in her eyes. She was not much older than me, but birthdays are heavier the younger you are. No doubt of Whistle’s valor dared present itself in my mind. She was Whistle. She was always there. The two of us together could tackle any spiny old rosebush.

Our escapades never grew old, and a moment spent with Whistle never proved dull. In autumn we gathered piles of dazzlingly colored leaves into heaps and thrashed about in them for hours without wearying. When the first snowflakes spun from sky to earth like speck-sized parachuters, I never felt the discomfort of cold as long as Whistle and I adventured together.

When enough of the puffy precipitation had fallen, I greeted Whistle one evening with architectural aspirations. “Let’s build a snowman,” I said.

Whistle explained that snowman building wasn't so much the job of an architect as of a sculptor. But she approved of the proposal, so we set to work rolling snowballs the size of small elephants at the rim of the bluff and piling them on top of each other.

It was hard work, but our efforts resulted in magnificence no artist could match. Our snowman towered six inches taller than Whistle and more than four times as wide, with stout sticks for arms and bits of gravel we'd scraped from my frozen driveway arranged into a hideous face.

"It's pretty scary-looking," Whistle said. "I hope it turns out to be a good guy, otherwise we'll have to destroy it."

I looked into the snowman's face, and—unbelievable as this may sound—the snowman's pebble eye winked. "Did you see that?" I gasped.

"What?" Whistle asked, but before I could answer, the snowman's right arm twitched upward and flapped in a small wave.

Whistle screamed. "Run, Laurie!" she yelled, and we scrambled for my house, tracking snow into the mudroom and flinging soaked hats and mittens onto the floor. My mom met us with a mug of hot chocolate and an oatmeal cookie, and when I begged her for a second cookie for Whistle, she relented and added another to the plate. Whistle and I ate in the kitchen under an anxious hush, and then we wandered back outside and approached the edge of the bluff to see what had become of the snowman.

It wasn't there.

I stood mouth-open yet unable to speak. All my words had fallen out.

Whistle shivered up against me. “Look, tracks,” she said.

We followed the tracks down the bluff. They formed a winding, churned-up valley in which we sat and slid down the steep slope. We got to the bottom and struggled to our feet through the knee-deep drifts atop the frozen lake.

Our snowman stood at the end of the tracks not twenty feet away. Its face had rearranged into something even more unsightly than before, and as we watched it twitched a twiggy hand in a minute salute.

“It’s alive,” I squeaked.

Whistle, always the brave one, did not allow terror to chase her voice into lofty octaves. “We’ve got to kill it,” she said.

I knew this was true. You don’t let a monster of your own construction run rampant over the earth—not unless you crave catastrophe. I knew all about Frankenstein and his creation. But that snowman suddenly looked ten times bigger than it had when first built. “No way we can kill that thing,” I said.

“Anything’s possible with superior weaponry,” Whistle said, and the firmness in her voice made me swallow all objections.

We ran back to my house and dug two aluminum baseball bats from where they’d lain dormant under a pile of cobwebs since fall. The weight in my hand did much to ease my fear, but not nearly as much as Whistle’s presence beside me as we again made the tumble down the bluff.

“Where’d it go?” Whistle asked.

I scanned the area, squinting through sharp setting sun, and pointed a few hundred feet north. “It moved—it’s trying to run away.”

Indeed the snowman had migrated. Fortunately, it didn’t possess legs and its progress proved petty. Whistle and I caught up with it easily and held our weapons before us with courage to match that of medieval knights.

“On three,” Whistle instructed. I gave a curt nod. “One... two... three!”

We threw ourselves at the snowy statue, bats flailing and chunks of snow flying around us. Looking back, it’s a miracle we didn’t knock out each other’s brains.

“I got an arm!” I yelled as the stick slammed the snow.

“Good going, Laurie—let me get the head!” Whistle wound up a mighty swing and let her bat fly—wham!—and the monster’s head exploded like a cold white firework. My whoops rang across the wide lake and echoed off the western mountains.

If there was a heart in that snowman’s body, it must’ve been as pale and frozen as the snowball that housed it, because we didn’t notice it as we pounded the rest of that beast to chilled powder.

After a few weeks had passed, when the snowman incident ceased to scare us and instead was fondly remembered as a great adventure, I met Whistle one cold winter evening. A few stars had broken through the sky, although the heavens had not yet deepened to black from a blanket of blue. Twirled orange tendrils poked and waved from the sinking sun across the water, dyeing the faraway mountains the color of lemonade.

“Do you know how to ice skate?” Whistle asked as we admired the sky.

I shook my head, and Whistle led me down toward the water. Only it hadn't been water for months; the winter sun and frigid air had transformed the lake into a sheet of ice as though by magic. Thick and brushed by a layer of windswept snow, it was the slipperiest surface I'd ever walked upon.

“Look, this is better than ice skating!” Whistle exclaimed. And with a running start, she slid on the heels of her boots across the ice, laughing with hysterical glee and sending white flakes flying in her wake.

I joined her and together we glided across the ice, going farther with each attempt. Breath that had been frozen only minutes before warmed in our throats, and my hair grew damp and soupy warm beneath my hat.

“You see those mountains?” Whistle asked, pointing to the thin band of yellow in the distance. By now pink and purple had joined the orange in lighting up the western sky. “They're pretty far away, don't you think?”

“Sure,” I said, squinting at the aloof peaks.

“I bet we can slide all the way to the mountains,” Whistle said. “We can slide all that way and touch the sunset!”

“What does the sunset feel like?” I asked.

She took a moment to consider. “Like a warm bath,” she decided. “It feels like you're washing yourself with warm cocoa. And if you lick it, it tastes like cotton candy.”

The thought of warm cocoa and cotton candy was more than enough to convince me to try to reach the distant dusk. I clasped Whistle's mittened

hand in mine and we took a running start. With the air whipping past our faces and the cold shooing us along, we flew down that sheet of ice.

Eventually our momentum diminished, but we just built up another running start and took off again. Miles and miles we covered in each burst. The mountains grew closer and home shrank farther away.

We must have traveled at least an hour when Whistle produced two muffins from nowhere and offered one to me. It was warm, sending steam swirling through the winter air, and was heavy with cinnamon. I shoved a chunk into my mouth and kept sliding.

By now the sunset had matured, sending warmer, more definite colors seeping across the horizon. The red light reflected off Whistle's oxygenated face. "Think we can make it?" I asked, panting.

"For sure," she said. "Another two hours and we'll be licking that purple streak, all buttery with strands of yellow."

My mouth watered at the thought. I knew then with certainty that the sunset was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. I was seven years old now, and in my seemingly substantial life I had wanted many things—paintbrushes, light-up sneakers, chocolate, pets. But never had a desire ever grabbed me as achingly as my thirst for the sunset did then.

Yet even as I yearned, my spirits sank. "Two hours?" I said. "I need to get home for dinner."

Whistle looked at the sunset. Her hat had fallen back, loosing frays of hair over her face, and I knew her well enough to read that she wanted that

sunset as badly as I did. She huffed out a cloudy breath. “Okay,” she said. “The sunset will be back tomorrow—we’ll get it then. Meet me at the bluff at five?”

“Okay,” I said. I was tired from running, but my grin broke through my sweaty face. “Pull me back?”

She held out her arms. I rushed behind her and grabbed her hands, and she sprinted toward home with me gliding behind her. When she started to fire, I let go and surged up beside her, and we ran-slid, ran-slid across the ice. My heart pounded so hard in my chest and the air hit my starving lungs so painfully that I was sure it was the closest to dead I’d ever been. But I was even surer that I’d never been so alive.

We scrambled up the bluff with aching legs and sopping mittens. Whistle walked me home, both of us panting and brushing the snow off our legs. “Tomorrow at five,” Whistle said in front of my door.

“I’ll be there,” I said. “I promise.”

I went inside, the spicy scent of pork chops jolting me to the realization that the muffin from Whistle had done nothing to sate my appetite. Mom flew at me with some tirade about staying out too late, fussing that my dinner was cold, but it tasted fine to me. It wasn’t as succulent as my imaginings of the sunset, though.

The next day passed in a flurry of anticipation. By four I’d already pulled on my coat and boots and went tromping around the house with unrestrained glee, almost able to feel the sunset slipping through my fingers.

Mom emerged from the laundry room, damp hands rubbing dark circles onto her sweatshirt.

“Laurie, stop being so rambunctious,” she said. “And take off your snow boots; you’ll track filth all over the carpet.”

“I’m meeting Whistle at five to touch the sunset,” I explained.

Mom shook her head, unreasonably irritated. “Not until you clean your room you aren’t,” she said. “Make your bed, pick up your toys, dust the dresser, and vacuum the carpet. Then I want you to help me fold the laundry.”

Joy transformed into a precipitate of dread and settled in the depths of my stomach. Even at age seven, I knew that this list of chores could never be accomplished in under an hour. “But Mom,” I protested, “I promised Whistle!”

“Chores come first.”

“Even before promises?”

“Get to work,” Mom said.

I threw my blankets over my bed and smoothed them somewhat, piled stuffed animals in my closet, and forced the door closed. I checked the time on my Disney alarm clock—I had to leave soon if I didn’t want to be late. “Mom, I’m going!” I called. I raced for the door.

Mom stepped back out of the laundry room and caught my jacket sleeve. “I didn’t hear the vacuum,” she said.

“Please, Mom, I can’t vacuum now,” I explained. “I need to be at the bluff. I need to get to the sunset. I promised Whistle!”

Mom looked at me with that particular form of maternal displeasure meant to stop all arguments mid-flight. “Laurie,” she said, “you’re seven years old. I’d expect you to know how to prioritize by now—

don't you know that household duties are more important than play dates with imaginary friends?"

And she sent me back to my room.

I straightened and dusted the dresser, vacuumed the floor, and relayed piles of clothes from the laundry room to my closet. I felt numb, as if I'd been dunked in ice and my mind was just beginning to register the chill that clutched my body. Mom had said it. She had said what I'd refused to acknowledge for as long as I could remember. Whistle, my best—probably my only—friend, was not real.

Thoughts swirled like eddying snowflakes in my mind. If I knew Whistle was imaginary, would our adventures still be the same? Would this concrete, colorless knowledge build a barrier between my friend and me that would prove impossible to breach, no matter how high our leaps? I tried to tell myself no. I tried to tell myself that Whistle and I had been friends too long to let such details deter us. The line between fact and fantasy was hazy at best, and I'd skirt along one side and she'd creep along the other until we found a gap large enough for one of us to squeeze through.

Chores done, throat constricted, I burst from the house and whipped to the bluff. I stared over the edge. The sunset threw its glow over the mountains, painting the snow and lighting the long path Whistle and I had planned to travel. "Whistle!" I yelled.

The snow sang silence in reply.

My pulse, through the stillness, pleaded without words. Please come, Whistle. I don't care if you're imaginary. I can still love you the same. We can still have adventures. We can still reach

the sunset. Though I craned my eyes and hoped with my breath and muscles tight inside me, the bluff remained deserted.

“Whistle!” I yelled. Remember how you protected me when we were little? How you saved me from that rosebush last summer? How you assured me that as long as you were around, nothing would ever happen to me? Remember making snow angels right here where I stand? How that snowman we constructed came to life, and you commanded its vehement obliteration? Remember racing toward the sunset yesterday, you pulling me awhile when my legs grew too tired? Remember how we agreed to reach that sunset tonight? Remember how I promised I'd be here?

Remember Laurie? Remember me?

“Whistle!” I yelled again, but my voice was tinny in the frosty air. I sank into the snow and watched the sun lower slowly into its bed behind the mountains. I sat there for hours, ignoring Mom's calls that dinnertime had arrived. The snow was so much colder today, the bluff's emptiness so tangible. I did not stand up until the last streak of sunset melted into the black night sky.

Today, years later, I have a house on a bluff and walk its edge alone each evening. By now the childhood heartache has faded. But nothing can erase a friendship as strong as the one I shared with Whistle, not even the line that divides this world from one more magical.

Sometimes, for variety, I get up early and walk the bluff in the morning, and when I do I face east instead of west. As the sun peeks up, I think of God on the first day, watching time's first sunrise color a

newborn sky. I like to think that Whistle reached the sunset without me, that she plowed right through it and kept going with circumnavigational intent, and one day she'll run from the east and grab my hand and laugh her energetic laugh that still sometimes echoes in my ears.

"How was the sunset?" I'll ask. "How did it taste?"

"Like cotton candy," she'll say. "And as warm as hot chocolate."

"Delicious," I'll say, and I won't hide my longing.

"It was," she'll agree. "But the sunrise is even better. Come on—this way—I want you to taste it, too."

ART

Anna Jakubiec ('17)

Writing major and semiprofessional doodler. Credits to her name include making up biographies for the people in her classes, thereby giving them far more exciting lives. Rumor has it that if you look in the mirror and say "Clara Oswald has no personality" three times, she will magically appear and slap you in the face. She also likes drawing scary time traveler ladies on occasion, but hey, who doesn't?



Time Walker

POETRY

Arah Ko ('XX)

Arah Ko hails from the Big Island of Hawaii and has been published in *GREYstone*, *BRICKrhetoric*, *Teen Ink*, The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and *Crashtest Lit Magazine*. When she is not studying like a wild Wheaton student, she pretends to fight dragons.

Luke Andersen ('19)

Luke Andersen is a freshman from Gilbertsville, PA. He runs Cross Country and plans on majoring in ancient languages.

Firelings
by Arah Ko

We loved the woods,
smoking twigs like cigarettes
orange leaves from ancient trees
scalding our bare feet with their bright glow.
We stomped on Dr. Seuss moss,
tiny stems of yellow-green
crushed between our toes
sunshine blazed through canopies
warming our eyes with liquid light,
changing the color of our hair,
sudden glimpses of the strange creatures
we might have been, once
in the woods.

Holly Green Courage by Luke Andersen

Lion-hearted Rob looked out
Out over the green grass growing
To the field staked with banners
blue

Where arms acted as bitter
judges
Where the victory pennants flew

He took up the lance and helm
Fasten'd the shield to the baldric
Then bound his belt around his
chest

Young Rob left his tent ironclad
And prayed for today to be
blessed

He whistled two notes for Hound-
hoof

His ironshod grey-haired horse
Clad in silver cloth to match her
master

Who could swim better than a
man

No hunting wolf charged faster

The knight who loved his horse
Like a treasured brother in arms
Looked out once more past his
camp

A torn and bloody field where
Dead warriors compete and
horses tramp

Rob's covered face turned grim
On this bloody tournament day
The joust did not come to battle
But he had a challenge to face
He readied his father's saddle

He gently kissed his little cross
And dispatched a desperate
prayer

A plea sent to his Father above
Rob's heart was filled with
thoughts

Of his vital honor and subdued
love

Eager to leave was Rob in haste
When he espied the borrowed
favor

A kerchief left for him to find
On the desk in his quarters
Also a note tearstained and
signed

As he grasped the holly green
cloth

Rob recalled the sight of sweet
Mary

The youngest daughter of his lord
Her house's honor was at stake
today

Rob mused as he belted on his
sword

All now readied, why further delay
The moon was sinking, bidding
adieu

To the Mercian land, while rosy-
fingered

Lovely dawn, who heralds the
hot sun

Swept up from the east and lin-
gered

Rob climbed onto Houndhoof's
back

Harry of Rosehall, Rob's squire
Handed up the scarred Helm

Urging the brave charger to hurry
To surpass any other horse in the
realm

Across the camp the first horns
yelled

The gloomy trumpets of the red
hosts

Wrought poorly of tin and brass
But then called the Rosehall horns
Singing more clearly than tinkling
glass

The young knight's heart swelled
Fit to burst with joy and eagerness

He snatched the wooden horn
And sounded a mighty note from
that

Which was slowly carved ere Rob
was born

Other hall's horns arose in answer
Rob told Harry to hoist their flag

A white bear affronté on black
The squire mounted and Rob
rode forth

With the setting moon to his back

Louder and louder the din grows
Then pandemonium bursts the
dike

The camp tossed in a sea of
sound

Everywhere there sounded uproar
As Rob rushed to attend the
crown'd

Far and away above his head
A lonely seagull sways unseen
A windswept mariner lacking a
nest

He sings to greet the new day
Freshly strengthened by the
night's rest

The Mew gull passed over Rob
And few in the Tournament saw
him

He was after all merely a tiny fellow
Knowing naught of human pride
Or tradition or officers who bellow

Heralds came forward with banners
bright

Their Lord's sigils emblazed thereon
The dark grey horse, the fiery
scarlet dragon,

The grim brown boar, the soaring
blue falcon,

The cruel black eagle, the wrathful
tawny lion

Foremost stood the green phoenix
Arrayed on a rippling field of
lavender

A crimson flaming mantle it bore
Blue-eyed with a golden crested
crown

The sign of the day's host, King
Pelennor

Houndhoof cried aloud with delight
To mingle with her fellow Rosehall
steeds

As Rob halted her alongside
The Royal tent to show respect
while

A fierce breeze flowed like the
tide

The king's herald called in turn to
Rob

Who confirmed his fidelity to his
Lord

And his dire keenness on this morn
To strive for weighty triumph and
To steel himself against defeat
forlorn

The earl of Rosehall, brother to
the king

Saluted the champion and
smiled

To see this youth, his adopted
child

Grown so chivalrous as was proper
Fearless through and through but
not wild

With his solemn duty done, Rob
Drew forth his long-shafted sword
with

The broad cross-guard and haft
turned

Towards the King in token of
friendship

He rode away as his heart burned

Pelennor was a man of three
score winters

The King regarded his youngest
daughter

A lady with unbound, chestnut
tresses long

Celtic features set in a freckled face
She had a clear voice made for
song

He inquired of his fair daughter
Why the knight, lion-hearted Rob,
Should her holly green kerchief
carry?

Thus in soft tones he spoke to
Her royal highness, Princess Mary

The princess blushed as words
failed

So anxious was Mary for Rob's
safety

She dared not to turn away
From her courageous chosen
Champion, in love she felt fey

At the marshalls' field, Rob
instructed

His squire to hold his lofty seat and
plant

The banner by the edge of the
lists

Rob dismounted to check that all
Was ready and then bound up
his fists

At the sound of his Christian name
Robert of Rosehall looked up

To see his challenger near at
hand

The champion bearing the dragon
flag

Surrounding Rob with his own
band

What a rosy pink boy comes now
He is no fighter nor ever will be
Ho young Robert, I'll soon tear

Away that holly green scarf
And soil your sigil, the white bear

Anxious to follow through
And leave the earnest deed
Behind him in the dust
Rob drew Bear's Tooth again
He was glad to see no rust

He murmured *In nomine Patris et
Filii et Spiritus Sancti, trado vitam mei
Atqui credens imperio vestrum*
His soft prayer is kept brief
As he is lined up by a drum

By the far tent a poet tells a tale:
The last dragon stood brooding
Over her nest in a dank den,
The eggs smashed in and the
shells
Strewn in pieces on a mountain

Her mate waits slain in the valley
Below the mountain, while up
here

Her last litter is trampled under-
foot

She bellows out her hot red rage,
Stamping in the ash and the soot

With these woeful words winging by
The knightly youth dresses his
arms

Letting loose his reins and breath
Heaving his long lance heaven-
ward

He ponders the specter of death

Sitting under the broad green pavilion,
The King's family waits restlessly
Mary depends on Eleanor for sight
Her constant sister relates to her
The fierce details of each fight

And now flags beckon for Rosehall
Waving forth their champion
Robert
His dread short moment of war
Has come to him untimely
By the honor bound oath he swore

Rob's first match was on horse
Against an arbitrary challenger
Tilting with one of the eagle hall
Encased in iron, he was a daunting
Sight to see, stalwart and tall

He saluted his noble adversary
Using the elder fashion of address
And received the same courtesy
in reply
Rob took his appointed place in
the lists
Knowing that he had cast his die

The red flag was dropped
Let go by an attending page
The knights spurred the horses forth
Stamp Stamp Clang go the
drumming hooves
Both chargers striving for their
worth

The men and animals met with a
crunch
Cold bronze hitting quick flesh
Rusted iron smiting pine and oak
Rob withstood the stroke whereas
His adversary's spear broke

But the knight who flew the eagle
Pierced with his lance the fair
shield
That Rob carried, doing grave
harm
With the blow to his doughty armor
And tearing the favor from his
arm

The holly green kerchief tore
Caught on the shattering spear
Pinned by the iron and pine
It shivered in the wind like
Foam swept from the brine

Mary felt Eleanor shudder
And feeling distressed called out
How fairs our Rosehall knight
Whyfore does everybody shout
Sister, how goes the bitter fight

Eleanor turned to her sad sister
And softly spoke of Rob's match
Our champion honorably (persists)
Dear Mary (the crowd cheered
As Rob thundered through the
lists)

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The black eagle missed the mark
His pine spear has shivered
And the slivers scatter like leaves
Soon you may have Rob's favors
To wear upon your sleeves

But Rob's shield was hewn
through
The embossment was scoured off
And the armor beneath caught
a scratch
He requires a proffered substitute
To enter his final match

Rob called for Harry's Help
His stalwart comrade in arms
And trusted friend who bore
A spare shield in the fashion
Of a green leaf with corners four

The knight and the novice
Traded white shield for green
Then Rob settled in his seat
To wait for his allotted turn
When he would fight on his feet

"Scarlet dragon on foot with
white bear"
Rob was ready, his sharp sword
drawn
He disregarded the taunts of
Dragonhall
At his plain shield lacking device
Green shield, green scarf was
their call

Rob merely smiled, by far

The best snarl he could muster
Before him stretched the open
square
Around it jostled the observers
All under the blue sky so fair

Rob struck first with Bear's Tooth
To cut off the other's rude slur
He employed the flat side of the
blade
Twisting his wrist to save the edge
So it would not blunt and fade

Three and forty blows Rob gave
Seven and thirty he collected
The green shield, like to a leaf
Withstood each tremor quite well
The other's shield shook like a
sheaf

Both knights paused for fatigue
Stepping back a pace for breath
Rob held still for the last blow
Then struck, knocking the other
over
But he hewed not his fallen foe

A horn was sounded then
As the crowd roared for the winner
While Rob clasped his arm in pain
The thick woolen cloth was tainted
By a blossoming red stain

Lion-hearted Rob looked down
Down to the green grass growing
On a field staked with bloody
banners blue

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Where arms acted as bitter judges
Where the tattered pennants
flew

He turned about face to leave
Knowing enough was enough
All debts of honor were paid
His first trial done, the next unfore-
seen
He would not fear to be afraid

But lo, his breath comes pained
And echoes how deeply the
enemy etched

The swinging sword's bite is keen
Rob knotted tight around his cut
That wonderful scrap of holly
green

Oh Mary, Oh Mary, cast not down
Your fair head with frown and
weeping

Loving Rob is sorely hurt enough
And no more, still as strong
As an oak polished by whistling
sough

Two fair streams appeared
Trickling together down her
cheeks
Pooling from her sightless eyes
She looks no less beautiful
When she gives way and cries

The holly green cloth is bloodied
It is torn and the knot comes un-
done

But it has not lost its leafy glow
The cloth looked happy to Rob
As battle proved sour and slow

The pages conduct the victor
home
Looking fierce after vicious
ordeals
Under the cool and shade of the
canopy dome
Rob draws nigh to his hale king
While Houndhoof happily stamps
the loam

The proceedings were halted
For Rob's spurs to be confirmed
By his master, who perceives
The joy of his daughter when
Rob's

New spurs are bound to his
greaves

With the due honors conferred
King Pelennor addressed Mary
Dear lass, will you take this lad
For it is clear that you love him
And I would not have you be sad

The troth was promptly resolved
And the hale old king joyously
Joined their hands by a knot
In the presence of so many others
There on that grass covered spot

The crowd lifted up this hymn
Arise ye sons of Adam
Attend ye maids of Eve

The Lord lives and reigns
So do not weep or grieve

To the memory of John Brewster
Hill.

Love, Frankenstein
by Arah Ko

Strip me of my skin and kiss
the throbbing veins entangled
by my brittle bones,
scrape my blackened heart from the
chasm of my chest,
sew me together with tender hands
again and again
until I am whole, once more.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- We welcome submissions from any member of the Wheaton College community, whether student, faculty, staff, or alum. Only two pieces from any one author may be submitted per issue.
- For copyright reasons, we must limit our published selection to original characters and worlds only. Please, no fan-fiction or fan-art.
- While the journal's main emphasis is on fiction, we will also consider poetry, non-fiction, essay, and art for publication.
- The journal will only publish genre fiction. The genres included are:
 - Science fiction
 - Fantasy
 - Mystery
 - Action/Adventure
 - Horror
 - Western
- We are interested in any mix of these or similar genres. If your piece falls under a genre we missed, please contact us and ask about it. We will most likely welcome your story!
- Short fiction is preferred, but chapters of longer stories may have the opportunity to be published serially.
- Essays and other non-fiction submissions may be on these genres themselves, authors who write in them, personal experiences with genres, reviews of popular works of genre fiction, etc.
- Art submissions must have as their main subject something to do with the target genres. Please submit your work as a high-resolution PDF.

Deadlines

Submission deadlines are:

- Fall semester—October 31
- Spring semester—March 17

We will accept submissions at any point during the semester, but only those submitted before the above dates will be considered for the current issue. Submissions should be e-mailed as attachments to *SubCreation@my.wheaton.edu*. If your piece is too big for an e-mail attachment, simply contact the same address for further instructions. Please include your full name and Wheaton e-mail address with your submission.

Contact Us

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