Shoemaker Village

Volume 33 - November 1999



In Neighborhood News... Neighborhood millennium party preparations underway!

The Knights of the Square Table: The party begins to discover the forces behind their situation!





PLUS!

Plans for annual Holiday Bonus Issue unveiled!

Code Red! Latest UMHS happenings in *The Bear Facts*!

Effects of summer drought still visible!

Three contributions by Matthew Care!

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Editor's Pages

Information you should know

Welcome to the November issue of *Shoemaker Village*!

First, you may have noticed that this issue is a few days behind schedule. Unfortunately, due to an excess of homework, the *Village* staff unanimously agreed that it would be best to postpone the publication of this month's issue for one week. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused you.

Also, you may have noticed that we made a mistake last month. A short story, entitled "Another Essay on the School Computer System", was not printed as scheduled due to last minute proofreading errors. Since the article was not included last month, we have reprinted it in this month's issue. This article was originally rejected by *The Bear Print*, the UMHS school newspaper, because of its controversial nature.

The big news this month is in regard to next month's annual December Bonus Issue. While, in previous years, we have struggled to live up to promises about this issue, we can assure you that this year's issue will be worth remembering by everyone. We have begun work on this issue before the November issue is completed in order to make it the biggest issue of *Shoemaker Village* ever! Currently, the estimated page count for next month's issue is around fifty pages, even without the contributions of our story writers.

To make this possible, we have several special sections in the works for the December issue. Of course, as we have every year, we will be including the famous "Year in Review" insert that has received rave reviews from subscribers over the past few years. In case you haven't seen it before, this section reviews news that has happened during the past year in the neighborhood and around the area. In addition, we will also be including a similar section for Lori Blickley's *The Bear Facts*, which will fill you in on all the happenings at UMHS during the past year.

Furthermore, Stephen Sokolowski has been hard at work on his novel, *The Knights of the Square Table*, which has now grown to 250 pages. We plan to include at least ten pages of heart-pounding action next month, so keep reading this exciting story! As if that isn't enough, *Humor from the Village Square* will be featuring more jokes from everyone's favorite comedian (you know whom I'm talking about, right?) that we managed to scrape up from some hard-to-find Internet sites and other materials, along with an extravaganza of other comedy to fit the holiday season. Most importantly, we will be including a surprise section to be revealed next month. We can only tell you that it will be huge and will be the most comprehensive undertaking in the history of the *Village*. We hope that you will keep reading when the December issue is published!

Even though the majority of our efforts have been focused on the December Bonus issue of the *Village*, there is other news to report. The *Shoemaker Village* webpages, which have been constantly updated, are looking for a new webmaster to help us maintain the pages. By volunteering for this position, one would be listed as a member of *Village* staff and have input into what goes on in the *Village*. If you are

interested, contact us as soon as possible. We hope to add several new features to the website during our Christmas break in December.

Unfortunately, our subscription list is continuing to shrink in size as more and more members allow their subscriptions to lapse. We regret that we cannot send multiple notices to each subscriber if their membership expires. If your membership has expired, you will only receive one notice - so renew now before you forget! The prices for the *Village* remain the same: $5.50 for six months and $10.00 for a one-year subscription.

Also, thank you to Mr. Learn, who again donated $5.00 toward the welfare of the *Village*, and Mrs. Schran, who donated $3.00. Their help is appreciated.

That's all for this month! Amanda has implored me to include her opinion on the Code Red drill at UMHS: "There should be code brown for a bear running through the school, too!" Happy Thanksgiving, and we hope you'll stay with us until the December issue of the *Village*! We're sure you won't be disappointed.

A Note from the Assistant Editor

Matthew Care

Another month, another issue. And you'll be happy to know that I've had a realization. You people don't want excuses . . . you want results! Last issues's lame attempt to make excuses for not producing didn't go well. All I got were dirty looks and whiney, mocking renditions of, "Oh, I didn't have time," followed by, "JUST DO IT!" Well, I did it. Did I wait until the last minute? Absolutely. But I did it.

Shortly after the last publication, I received an onslaught of inspiration. In one week, I received topics for five pieces! I thought to myself, "This is what authors live for." It is getting less likely that one of them will ever get done. The topic has grown somewhat stale, but I may still write it. Meanwhile, enjoy some of my articles this month. Featured is a sort of exhibition of forum-style, opinion articles relating to school.

Due to complications in publication, the December issue will be in your hand before you have barely finished reading this issue. Contained within will be some exciting end-of-year sections. There is . . . hold your breath for this . . . a work of fiction in progress. That is to say, I will be contributing a story to the December issue. It is not related to holidays at all. It is, in fact, going to be a rather dark piece. You won't want to miss it.

Thank you for your continued support of the *Village*. And if you're a new reader, please get in contact with us.

A quick note to any English teachers who may read this: Please forgive the quality of my essay. You know which one I'm talking about. I broke just about every rule possible on writing a formal composition. But, it isn't a formal comp, so I don't want to hear one word about it.

Acknowledgments

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The December Bonus issue of *Shoemaker Village* will be published on Wednesday, November 24,1999.
All contributions for the next issue must be received by Sunday, November 21, 1999.

Upcoming topics in **The Discussion Forum:**
December 1999: Open Forum (Holiday topic preferred)
February 2000: Is the state of the environment better or worse than it was twenty years ago?

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Puzzle Page

H A C I R E M A F R E E D O M
G O C A R R O T S M A Y B B S
A T R U O C L A Y O R O N Z Q
T H A N K S G I V I N G V V U
H D N R O C G N I F F U T S A
T V B F K F S M I R G L I P S
E T E C A V P R T S E V R A H
R P R G H M E L F E S G W B C
I A R A E I I R E B M E V O N
N R I F D T L L O N F A L L T
G A E L O I A L Y L T D E B U
R D S F O O T B A L L Y A L R
A E Q S Y A D I L O H S V Y K
V V L P O T A T O E S A E P E
Y M L N I N D I A N S W S L Y

America
Blessing
Bonfire
Carrots
Chill
Cold
Corn
Cranberries
Fall
Family
Food
Football
Freedom
Gathering
Gravy
Harvest
Holidays
Horn of Plenty
Indians
Leaves
November
Parade
Peas
Pilgrims
Potatoes
Rolls
Royal Court
Squash
Stuffing
Thanksgiving
Tradition
Turkey
Vegetables
Yams

Neighborhood News

November 1999

NEIGHBORHOOD MILLENNIUM PARTY PREPARATIONS TO BEGIN

The neighborhood millennium party, which has been in the works since August, is now being moved into the planning stages.

Neighbor Henry Sokolowski, organizer of the party, has planned a neighborhood meeting to discuss ideas and develop plans for the celebration which will take place on Friday, December 31, 1999.

Currently, ten houses have volunteered to become involved in the festivities. This number has increased from eight, which was the previous estimate at the end of August.

"We could get together and go from house to house to celebrate each decade this century," Henry said recently on his suggestion for the activities that will take place.

The Spiecker family, one of the first to join the bandwagon, had originally planned their own New Year's festivities. Incidentally, the Spieckers live at 2000 Acorn Place, which is where Henry plans the group will end up at midnight.

"I want to make this a thing to remember," Henry said. As the new millennium approaches, we'll keep you informed of changing plans as soon as we are aware of them.

HALLOWEEN REVIEW

Halloween, though it was one of the warmest on record, disappointed many residents this year with an abnormally low interest by neighborhood children.

Whereas in previous years trick-or-treaters would line the streets to venture to as many houses as possible, few children roamed the neighborhood on Sunday, October 31.

Henry Sokolowski, who had originally planned to dress up as a phantom to scare those who would come to the door looking for candy, was forced to give up before 7:00 due to the low turnout.

"This was the worst year ever," he commented. "There were no more than fifteen kids. What am I going to do with all this candy?" Many other neighbors and residents had the same complaints. One correspondent as far away from the neighborhood as Bridesburg reported the same.

Why, in this time of prosperity and one of the lowest crime rates in years, would children stop trick-or-treating? This year's temperature at 6:00 p.m. on Halloween night was reported at an amazing 66 degrees, the warmest in years. In addition, many neighbors decorated their houses the most in recent memory.

NEW SCHOOL BOARD ELECTED

The Upper Moreland school board race concluded on Tuesday, November 2, when general elections were held.

According to an article on The Intelligencer-Record's phillyburbs.com website, the candidates-elect are all Republicans. The victors included Karen Houck, with 3,113 votes; David Bender, with 2,395; David Hasiuk, 2,235; Ronnalee Colantonio, 2,231; and neighborhood resident Skip Lynch, 2,122.

Lynch, who resides at 2060 Acorn Place, is unsure of what the future holds for the district, though he commented on an immediate goal to research the methods other districts used to boost test scores.

Three democratic candidates were defeated in the election - Sandra Durnin, with 1,158 votes; Albert J. DerMovsesian, 1,347; and Stephen Hecht, 1,193.

Interestingly enough, many of the candidates cited concern about the usefulness of Intensive Scheduling. One of the candidates even suggested modifying the current schedule so that certain classes are held year-round.

Keep reading the *Village* for up-to-date

news on the school board as it takes office soon.

OTHER NEWS TIDBITS

-Curbs around Upper Moreland Township have recently begun being marked "H' Cap" with white paint, suggesting that handicapped ramps will be installed soon around the township. Handicapped ramps have been installed in newer roads of the township in recent years.

-A new electrical pole has been placed in the ground next to an old, leaning pole in front of the Barnes' house. The pole had been tilted for years; however, a recent accident involving a drunk driver prompted the replacement.

-The recent summer drought has had lasting effects on the area, including these rhododendrons, which were spotted in bloom on October 2, 1999. Typically, this type of tree blooms in late May or early June.



The white spots on this rhododendron tree are blooms.

Going to the Dogz

DOG NEWS THIS MONTH

-Klaus, owned by Tim and Mary Sue Hoffman, will stay in the neighborhood according to the Hoffmans. As you may recall, Klaus had left the neighborhood before his debilitating car accident last month. Reportedly, he is now doing fine and will make a full recovery.

-Max, owned by the Rorvik family that resides at 2005 Pioneer Road, has not been sighted around the neighborhood recently. In September, Max and other animals belonging to the Rorviks had been roaming the neighborhood unattended.

The Bear Facts

By Lori Blickley

October has been a busy month for many. With sports, the fall season is coming to a close. The girl's tennis team finished with a winning season this year. The soccer team also ended with a winning record; however, they were unable to win the League. The girls field hockey team is still playing on. Last week, they won the League. Now the girls are competing for the District title. The boys cross country team is also having a great year. They won at Districts and are now competing at States.



This shop, located in Sedona, Arizona, sells memoirs to vacationing tourists.

The Upper Moreland Marching Unit competed at Giant Stadium this past weekend. They came in 10th place. There were 15 bands competing. All the scores were very close; so, they did do a great job! The band also has a big comp. coming up on November 13. They will be playing at Red Lion Stadium.

Spirit painting sessions have started. The remaining dates are. . .

November 9 7:00 - 9:00pm
November 15 7:00 - 9:00pm
November 16 7:00 - 9:00pm
November 22 6:00 - 9:00pm
November 23 6:00 - 9:30pm

Spirit paining, or hall decorations, is a

competition between the grades. Each grade tries to decorate their designated hallway the best. The halls are judged on creativeness, appearance, and SPIRIT! The purpose is to get the entire school excited for our rival football game against Hatboro-Horsham.

On November 21, Hatboro will be holding its annual parade. The homecoming court will be riding in cars, the band will be marching, and the cheerleaders will be cheering. Come out and cheer on these groups.

On November 22, the high school will celebrate Spirit Week. On Monday, students are encouraged to wear purple. Tuesday, students ought to wear gold. Finally, on Wednesday, students should wear purple and gold. Wednesday, November 24, is also the prep-rally at school. Yeah, UM!

This year, the football game is home. The game is on Thanksgiving Day, in the morning. The night before the game, there is a parade and then a bonfire at the high school. Following the bonfire is an all-school dance for $3.00. Good luck, Bears!

This year, the fall play is The Imaginary Invalid. Tickets are already on sale if you would like reserved seating. Tickets will also be sold at the door. The play will be on Friday, November 19 and Saturday, November 20 at 7:30 p.m. in the auditorium.

Humor from the Village Square

Be sure to check out our expanded Humor section in the Holiday Bonus Issue of *Shoemaker Village* next month!

OPEN LETTER TO MY BANK MANAGER

Dear Manager,

I am writing to thank you for bouncing the check with which I endeavored to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, some three nanoseconds must have elapsed between his presenting the check and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honor it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my entire salary, an arrangement which, I admit, has only been in place for eight years.

You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity and also for debiting my account with $50 by way of penalty for the inconvenience I caused to your bank. My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to re-think my errant financial ways. You have set me on the path of fiscal righteousness.

No more will our relationship be blighted by these unpleasant incidents, for I am restructuring my affairs in 1999, taking as my model the procedures, attitudes and conduct of your very bank. I can think of no greater compliment, and I know you will be excited and proud to hear it.

To this end, please be advised about the following changes:

First, I have noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you I am confronted by the impersonal, ever-changing, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh and blood person.

My mortgage and loan repayments will, therefore and hereafter, no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank, by check, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee of your branch, whom you must nominate. You will be aware that it is an offense under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope.

Please find attached an Application Contact Status which I require our chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative. Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Justice of the Peace and that the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course I will issue your

employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in all dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modeled it on the number of button presses required to access my account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further by introducing you to my new telephone system, which, you will notice, is very much like yours. My authorized contact at your bank, the only person with whom I will have any dealings, may call me at any time and will be answered by an automated voice. By pressing buttons on the phone, he/she will be guided through an extensive set of menus:

1. To make an appointment to see me
2. To query a missing repayment
3. To make a general complaint or inquiry
4. To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there, Extension of living room to be communicated at the time the call is received;
5. To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am still sleeping. Extension of bedroom to be communicated at the time the call is received;
6. To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature. Extension of toilet to be communicated at the time the call is received.
7. To transfer the call to my mobile phone in case I am not at home.
8. To leave a message on my computer. To leave a message, a password to access my computer is required. Password will be communicated at a later date to the contact.
9. To return to the main menu and listen carefully to options 1 through 8.

The contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service. While this may on occasion involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration. This month I've chosen a refrain from The Best Of Woody Guthrie:

> "Oh, the banks are made of marble/ With a guard at every door/And the vaults are filled with silver/ That the miners sweated for"

After twenty minutes of that, our mutual contact will probably know it by heart. On a more serious note, we come to the matter of cost. As your bank has often pointed out, the ongoing drive for greater efficiency comes at a cost, a cost which you have always been quick to pass on to me. Let me repay your kindness by passing some costs back.

First, there is the matter of advertising material you send me. This I will read for a fee of $20 per page. Inquiries from your nominated contact will be billed at $5 per minute of my time spent in response. Any debits to my account, as, for example, in the matter of the penalty for the dishonored check, will be passed back to you.

My new phone service runs at 75 cents a minute (even Woody Guthrie doesn't come for free), so you would be well advised to keep your inquiries brief and to the point. Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

May I wish you a happy, if ever-so-slightly less prosperous, New Year.

Your humble client

EXCELLENT SCIENCE EXPLANATIONS

Most books now say our sun is a star. But it still knows how to change back into a sun in the daytime.

Question: What is one horsepower? Answer: One horsepower is the amount of energy it takes to drag a horse 500 feet in one second.

You can listen to thunder after lightening and tell how close you came to getting hit. If you don't hear it you got hit, so never mind.

Talc is found on rocks and on babies.

The law of gravity says no fair jumping up without coming back down.

When they broke open molecules, they found they were only stuffed with atoms. But when they broke open atoms, they found them stuffed with explosions.

When people run around and around in circles, we say they are crazy. When planets do it, we say they are orbiting.

Rainbows are just to look at, not to really understand.

Someday we may discover how to make magnets that can point in any direction.

South America has cold summers and hot winters, but somehow they still manage.

Water freezes at 32 degrees and boils at 212 degrees. There are 180 degrees between freezing and boiling because there are 180 degrees between north and south.

A vibration is a motion that cannot make up its mind.

There are 26 vitamins in all, but some of the letters are yet to be discovered. Finding them all means living forever.

There is a tremendous weight pushing down on the center of the Earth because of so much population stomping around up here these days.

Lime is a green-tasting rock.

Many dead animals in the past changed to fossils while others preferred to be oil.

Genetics explain why you look like your father and if you don't, why you should.

Vacuums are nothings. We only mention them to let them know we know they're there.

Some oxygen molecules help fires burn while others help make water, so sometimes it's brother against brother.

Some people can tell what time it is by looking at the sun. But I have never been able to make out the numbers.

We say the cause of perfume disappearing is evaporation. Evaporation gets blamed for a lot of things people forgot to put the top on.

To most people solutions mean finding the answers. But to chemists solutions are things that are still all mixed up.

In looking at a drop of water under a microscope, we find there are twice as many H's as O's.

Clouds are high flying fogs.

I am not sure how clouds get formed. But the clouds know how to do it, and that is the important thing.

Clouds just keep circling the earth around and around. And around. There is not much else to do.

Cyanide is so poisonous that one drop of it on a dog's tongue will kill the strongest man.

A blizzard is when it snows sideways.

A monsoon is a French gentleman.

Thunder is a rich source of loudness.

Isotherms and isobars are even more important than their names sound.

It is so hot in some places that the people there have to live in other places.

The wind is like the air, only pushier.

REASONS TO KEEP AN OPEN MIND ABOUT THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS

“Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.”

-- Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949

“I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.”
-- Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943

“But what . . . is it good for?”
-- Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968, commenting on the microchip.

“There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.”
-- Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977

“This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.”
-- Western Union internal memo, 1876.

“The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?”
-- David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

“The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C,' the idea must be feasible.”
-- A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith's paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. (Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.)

“Who the [heck] wants to hear actors talk?
-- H.M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927.

“I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper.”
-- Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in “Gone With The Wind.”

“A cookie store is a bad idea. Besides, the market research reports say America likes crispy cookies, not soft and chewy cookies like you make.”
-- Response to Debbi Fields' idea of starting Mrs. Fields' Cookies.

“We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.”
-- Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.

“Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible.”
-- Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895.

“If I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can't do this.”
-- Spencer Silver on the work that led to the unique adhesives for 3M Post-It” Notepads.

“Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.”
-- Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, Yale University, 1929.

“Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value.”
-- Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.

“Everything that can be invented has been invented.”
-- Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, US Office of Patents, 1899.

“Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction”.
-- Pierre Pachet, Professor of Physiology at Toulouse, 1872

“The abdomen, the chest, and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon”.
-- Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria 1873.

“640K ought to be enough for anybody.”
-- Bill Gates, 1981

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CAMPING TRIP

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine they lay down for the night, and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend.

"Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars."

"What does that tell you?"

Watson pondered for a minute.

"Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all-powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?"

Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke. "Watson, you idiot. Someone has stolen our tent."

30 SIGNS THAT TECHNOLOGY HAS TAKEN OVER YOUR LIFE

Your stationery is more cluttered than Warren Beatty's address book. The letterhead lists a fax number, e-mail addresses for two on-line services, and your Internet address, which spreads across the breadth of the letterhead and continues to the back. In essence, you have conceded that the first page of any letter you write *is* letterhead.

You have never sat through an entire movie without having at least one device on your body beep or buzz.

You need to fill out a form that must be typewritten, but you can't because there isn't one typewriter in your house -- only computers with laser printers.

You think of the gadgets in your office as "friends," but you forget to send your father a birthday card.

You disdain people who use low baud rates.

When you go into a computer store, you eavesdrop on a salesperson talking with customers -- and you butt in to correct him and spend the next twenty minutes answering the customers' questions, while the salesperson stands by silently, nodding his head.

You use the phrase "digital compression" in a conversation without thinking how strange your mouth feels when you say it.

You constantly find yourself in groups of people to whom you say the phrase "digital compression." Everyone understands what you mean, and you are not surprised or disappointed that you don't have to explain it.

You know Bill Gates' e-mail address, but you have to look up your own social security number.

You stop saying "phone number" and replace it with "voice number," since we all know the majority of phone lines in any house are plugged into contraptions that talk to other contraptions.

You sign Christmas cards by putting :-) next to your signature. Off the top of your head, you can think of nineteen keystroke symbols that are far more clever than :-).

You back up your data every day.

Your wife asks you to pick up some minipads for her at the store and you return with a rest for your mouse.

You think jokes about being unable to program a VCR are stupid.

On vacation, you are reading a computer manual and turning the pages faster than everyone else who is reading John Grisham novels.

The thought that a CD could refer to finance or music rarely enters your mind.

You are able to argue persuasively the Ross Perot's phrase “electronic town hall” makes more sense than the term “information superhighway,” but you don't because, after all, the man still uses hand-drawn pie charts.

You go to computer trade shows and map out your path of the exhibit hall in advance. But you cannot give someone directions to your house without looking up the street names.

You would rather get more dots per inch than miles per gallon.

You become upset when a person calls you on the phone to sell you something, but you think it's okay for a computer to call and demand that you start pushing buttons on your telephone to receive more information about the product it is selling.

You know without a doubt that disks Come in five-and-a-quarter-and three-and-a-half-inch sizes.

Al Gore strikes you as an “intriguing” fellow.

You own a set of itty-bitty screw-drivers and you actually know where they are.

While contemporaries swap stories about their recent hernia surgeries, you compare mouse-induced index-finger strain with a nine-year-old.

You are so knowledgeable about technology that you feel secure enough to say “I don't know” when someone asks you a technology question instead of feeling compelled to make something up.

You rotate your screen savers more frequently than your automobile tires.

You have a functioning home copier machine, but every toaster you own turns bread into charcoal.

You have ended friendships because of irreconcilably different opinions about which is better -- the track ball or the track pad.

You understand all the jokes in this message. If so, my friend, technology has taken over your life. We suggest, for your own good, that you go lie under a tree and write a haiku. And don't use a laptop.

Y2K? Why Not?

Because. That is the answer–because. Oh...but I suppose you want to know why. You want it all, don’t you!

People, let’s face reality for a second, shall we. The Cobalt catastrophe that we’re expecting isn’t going to happen. I’d first like to cite that it is only since maybe 1998 that the common man has given a second thought about Y2K. The scientists, the programers–they’ve had this worked out for quite a while. Every computer made in this decade has had the bug worked out of it! But people don’t know this and they buy into the hype.

It’s only two months now. Is your computer safe? “Thank you, it is, and so it was when I

bought it. So, you can keep your fifty dollar Y2K software." Some people think it's a conspiracy. "It's the government man! They're trying to erase us! Credit records, prison records, the national debt, your very identity, man!" Well, it's a conspiracy alright, but not in the way most people think. See, no one benefits if the entire planet reenters the stone age, but some people can get rich off of the fear of this happening. Think about it. The Y2K software. "Protect your computer for the year 2000!" "Get the new Y2K-proof version of Windows." "Is your mattress Y2K compliant? What about your washing machine? No? We have everything you need!" Don't you see? The media's obsession with it, the constant commercials to remind us–they've been setting us up (I use the term "they" loosely. I don't know who "they" are, but you get the idea).

Hey, if it makes you feel better, keep your bank statements. Buy a generator. Stock up on canned food and batteries. I simply do not see the need. January 1, 2000 is going to be just another day. When the ball drops on this millennium, and Dick Clark (who can tell you *from experience* that the turn of a millennium is no big deal) leads the world in a "Happy 2000," the lights won't go out. Nothing is going to explode. Your computer will still work. It will be the end of a good year, a great century, and a millennium that...well, I'm mostly indifferent about. So please, let's refrain from looting and rioting.

Oh, and if you go outside on January 1st, and your car won't start, don't panic. It's not that fancy European computer chip. You probably just left your lights on.

Y2K Or Not Y2K?

I don't think that the millennium bug called "Y2K" is going to do much harm to anybody. Frankly, I think this is a lot of hype because this has never happened before. Now that it is going on, people are thinking that the world is going to Come to a crashing halt at midnight on January 1st, 2000. People are selling stocks, taking money out of banks, and buying enough food to help them get through this. Despite what many people see on commercials, the bug is not going to do any harm whatsoever. I have seen a commercial where everybody is counting down the final ten seconds of the year, and when they hit zero, all the lights in the entire city go out. That is not going to happen. I know it is only a commercial and it is meant to buy their product, but the commercial is ridiculous. Companies have started to make products that are Y2K compatible. When people realize that the bug is not going to do that much harm, people are going to realize that they went through all that trouble for nothing. I met somebody during the summer who works for IBM – one of the leading computer companies in the world. I asked him about the millennium bug, and he said that it was just a lot of hype; nothing really huge is going to happen.

Begin Plans for Your Fallout Shelter NOW! *or* Y2K and You...and Me

Well, that time of month is upon me again-Stephen sending me any kind of alert that he can to tell me my article is late. The official topic: "Will the Y2K bug cause a breakdown of the world as we know it, or will nothing happen?" As the computer expert that I am, let me tell you honestly that, yes, the year 2000 will cause the world to crumble. I know that this is going to upset a lot of people. I mean, who would be happy at the end of the world; but we just have to face that we only have about 59 days left to live on the planet.

If you didn't guess it before, I'll Come right out and tell you now that I was only kidding. Please don't go build a fallout shelter in you backyard as a result of reading the first paragraph. What does Y2K really mean for you and me? Lots of people are asking that question. From what I can gather, not too much will happen. Read on and be amazed.

A few computers may shut down as a result of not recognizing the 00 date. How many people still have computers that aren't Y2K compliant, though? If they do, 2000 is a good time to spring for that new computer. Maybe the computers at school will crash and the network will collapse. That's about the most tragic thing that could happen. Physics work could be delayed indefinitely, and then where would we all be?

Maybe the electric company will have some problems and the power will be out for a couple of days. Is that so bad? When the tornado hit last year three blocks from my house, my family lost power for three days. It wasn't so bad. It was kind of like camping out, only inside the house. If we lose power, it will probably take less than the first week of 2000 to restore. Other utilities could be lost as well, but there is a bright side--your bills will be lower for January.

I think the people who are going out to Home Depot to get their Y2K supply kits are going a little overboard. Anything that goes terribly wrong as a result of the new year is not going to take very long to fix. The first week of the new year will be spent cleaning up from massive New Year's parties,

trying to live out resolutions, and fixing minor Y2K problems. It won't be that different from previous years. My advice: Y2K is not the end of the world, don't be alarmed at the new year, and don't build your very own fallout shelter.

Why the Y2K Bug Will Cause No Harm

With the new millennium fast approaching, many people are concerned about the Year 2000 computer bug. While some believe that no harm will Come of this minor malfunction, others are convinced that the implications of this bug will spell the end of the world. Some of the more dedicated believers are taking precautions from buying canned food to constructing bomb shelters in case of an accidental nuclear attack. Despite the public opinion, the so-called “millennium bug” will cause little or no trouble on January 1 for many reasons.

For those who don’t understand the cause of the Y2K bug exactly, the bug originated back in the 1970's when programmers programmed computers to understand two-digit dates instead of four-digit ones. This was done in order to save on computer memory, which was at a premium in those days and was extremely expensive. A common misconception is that these original programmers who developed the operating systems that power today’s computers didn’t realize that this would cause problems in the future. In fact, it was well-known to almost everyone who paid attention that malfunctions would, in fact, occur in little over a month and a half from today. Dates in a computer are stored as a five-digit string of numbers. For example, the date “November 5, 1999" would be interpreted as “99309". The first two digits of the five stand for the year, while the other three stand for the day of the year. (November 5 is the 309th day of a non-leap year.) Ironically, the programmers of these archaic machines would post the numbers “99365" (which, translated, would stand for December 31, 1999) on broken or malfunctioning equipment to signify that it needed to be repaired, or use these numbers to state that something bad had happened.

Regardless of why the bug came to exist, the world is in a frenzy attempting to fix noncompliant computers. Some precautions, like ordering enough prescription medication for a month or two after January 1, are worth listening to. Others are just not worth paying attention to. My mom, for example, works at a bank. The management of the bank has ordered that all personnel are not

allowed to take a vacation day from December 15 to January 7, because they are anticipating that people will run to the bank to withdraw their money before whatever Y2K problems that occur cause them to go bankrupt. Though this may sound serious, nobody is going to lose even a penny during this period because an institution was created, called the FDIC, to protect what happened in the Great Depression from happening again. Most people won't use common sense, and therefore, make doomsday predictions.

The most important reason, however, that the Y2K bug is being made out to be more than it is is that many people have a lot to gain from it. If you ask any Y2K doomsday predictor, they will make things seem like the end of the world is coming and suggest that you be prepared for the upcoming destruction. Of course, you can purchase these supplies directly from him, as well as any of his cohorts, at a special price that is available for a limited time. Instilling fear in people in order to get them to buy your products is not a new marketing technique. Y2K survival kits and other quackery have been on the market for years, preying on the unfounded fears of ignorant people. These products range from reasonable precautions, such as flashlights and canned food, to bomb shelters and one year's worth of survival rations delivered to your front door. Obviously, some people take this seriously and buy these products, thus encouraging unscrupulous people to continue to sell oddities such as these.

Y2K frauds don't end there, either. Some have even gone as far as to pretend that they are customer service people at banks, requesting account information in order to back it up in case of Y2K troubles. These criminals then use the information to deduct money from your account and run off. This is the real problem with Y2K.

Another Essay on the School Computer System

by Stephen Sokolowski

Though there are many parts of UMHS that need improvement, I feel that improvement in the school computer system is one of the top priorities. There are many aspects of the system that have to be changed in order to make the system more useful to everyone.

Looking back two years, I actually think that the old DOS-based computer system was, in many ways, more advantageous to everyone. When the new Windows 95 system was installed last year when the library was refurbished, there was very little software available on the computers. Though the number of programs has increased significantly this year, the security program detracts from the functionality of the software.

The program disallows access to many web sites which it considers having questionable content. I can understand that this is important so that some students don't view websites with inappropriate content. Unfortunately, the program also blocks access to several educational websites, along with restricting all file transfer access. This means that it is impossible to send work home to complete later, as the e-mail software isn't working yet.

There are also problems with the e-mail software, mainly why it exists in the first place. Everybody who's been on the Internet knows that there are too many free e-mail services to count. Many users already have accounts on these services and had used them in school until the Groupwise program was suddenly installed and all other e-mail access banned. While the program is a nice addition to the system, and will help those who need an e-mail, it is completely unnecessary to ban all outside e-mail access. Having access to an account that a student can reach from both the school network and his or her home computer only makes it less complicated. Why waste the enormous amount of money (usually thousands of dollars) for a site license for the GroupWise program, when anybody can get an e-mail account for free on the Internet? (The money could even have been used to reduce the prices of the cafeteria food!)

I've always disagreed with the school's decision to have Microsoft Word as the word processing software on the computers. Every teacher I've talked with has had negative comments on the Word software. The program is extremely unfriendly to figure out for those who have never used any word processor before, and it lacks the features that an experienced user needs. I had a word processing class with the WordPerfect software on the network, and I must say that it was extremely easy to use, much more so than Word. All the way back to when most of us were in Middle School, WordPerfect had been the program of choice, so why was it changed?

I believe that the computer administrators need to address these issues as soon as possible to ensure the best possible system for both the students and teachers. While there may be factors that I am unaware about, the network needs to be changed immediately.

The UMHS Royal Court

Having attended Upper Moreland High School for three years now, I have experienced the Thanksgiving season and the festivities that accompany the holiday. Many schools have long-standing traditions that are observed around Thanksgiving. One of these activities is the Thanksgiving Day Royal Court, where students are elected to be part of the Court to represent the school in the Hatboro Christmas Parade and various school functions. The students that are selected to the Court are expected to be good all-around students, involved in extracurricular activities, and active in class meetings and happenings.

Recently, however, the Court has been reduced to the level of a popularity contest. I'm not saying this to lower the students who have been elected to the court, because it's not their fault. In fact, the students that are elected have no say in how the voting progresses; students are nominated by other students before official voting begins. Instead, it is the fault of the general student body for simply electing their most popular peers instead of thinking of who fits the criteria best. As a result, those who are elected, had they not as many friends, would probably not do well at all.

I have not known anyone who has been chosen to be on the Court recently without being one of the most popular members of their class. Conversely, someone who is not as well-known or conservative, but is still actively involved out of school, has absolutely no chance of even being nominated.

An article was recently published in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* regarding this subject. On Sunday, October 31, on page B1, the article mentions that students no longer select those girls "with a barbie-doll figure", but also those who are athletes, scholars, and class officers. Several people also testify that the contest is not about popularity at all. Perhaps this is true at Council Rock (a school mentioned in the article), but it certainly isn't true at Upper Moreland. I'm tired of hearing the same popular students elected to the court every year. Perhaps the students should take a few pointers from

other schools before the Royal Court elections next year.

English Books

By Matthew Care

Did you ever wonder why we read the books that we do in English class? "They're just trying to torture us," you say. Well, that's not their intention, but *they* don't list entertaining the students as a #1 priority. Mr. Krieger's second period English class had a discussion about this one day several weeks ago. What do *A Separate Peace*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The House On Mango Street*, and just about everything by Shakespeare have in common? If you answered, "They're all tremendously boring," you're close...but you have to look at the big picture. See, "boring" in this case means uncontroversial. The greatest criteria a book has to pass before it can be part of public school curriculum is its potential to instigate a controversy. It's very hard to please everyone all of the time. As a student it's easy to judge a book and condemn...well, *someone* for making us read the "classics." However, as an administrator, one has to think of how everyone is affected by what the students are taught in school.

A great struggle of being in a high school English class (more than any other class, because it is where inter-class conversation is most encouraged) is being restricted in the content that you, the student, can be exposed to. The easiest way to start a conversation in a room full of sleep-deprived students is to throw out a controversial topic. There are certain rules of what you can and can't say. There has to be. Anyone can acknowledge the need for some rules of speech. But for the most part, anything said by a student to another student, in the spirit of debate, is fair game. What does this have to do with the books? The point is this. Isolated, or even reoccurring incidents of discussion of controversial topics are different than a teacher assigning a book containing controversial material. That's when the phones start to ring. That's when the accusations start flying.

If it seems like all the books you read are old, written by dead guys, those are the classics. Your English teachers read it when they were in high school, and so did their teachers. These are the tried and true books of our time--written for the ages. No one wants to take the time to select new books when there are perfectly good old ones already in stock. You may wish that the class was reading a

more modern, interesting book, but what about the person next to you? Did you ever think about that? One example of this that Mr. Krieger's class brought up was *The Color Purple.* I've never read it, but I hear it's a powerful, wonderful book. What I DO know is that a major part of it is lesbianism. Some people don't want to be exposed to that subject. I'm not allowed to tell you whether it's right or wrong. Neither is any teacher. To avoid this, the school will never force any student to read it. This is applied to many controversial topics. There are parents who simply don't want their children to be exposed to certain things in school. Once a student hears something that contradicts the parents' teachings, the parents say it was being forced on the children. The lawyers go to work. The book gets blacklisted, or the teacher gets fired. Whatever the outcome, the majority suffers.

So, we could go through all that...or, we could discuss the elements of style and break down a classic so far that it becomes impossible to enjoy. What do you think they choose? Try to look at it from a different perspective. The next time you want to complain (and there will always be a next time), keep some shred of this knowledge in the back of your mind. I'm not saying that I like or support the system. I'm just stating the reasons.

Power to the Parents

The faults inherent in our modern school systems
Another article destined to cause dissension among the *Village* staff
by Matthew Care

Yes, Steve, I know you disagree with me. Why don't you write a counter-piece?

School is different than it used to be, no question of that. There are many more classes than used to be offered, students have to deal with a different set of problems than their parents, and there is a greater emphasis on total, heterogeneous inclusion of students. Also changed since the previous generation is the idea of a student's individual rights. Well, the state supreme courts may have had the best intentions, but...you're going to think I'm crazy when I say this, but there is a grey area on this issue. For all of the people that benefit, how many get affected *negatively* by the hard-core, watch you like a hawk regulations and the panicky, "no means no," he said-she said atmosphere they create? This idea is just part of my thesis. I'm not saying, nor should anyone say, that students' rights are bad. The point I am arguing is that this well-rooted concept of protecting students has entered a new phase in which the teacher does *not* know best. I question how anyone could think that! It's a certain caliber of parent that raises the problem which causes us all to suffer. It's the type that complains about the school tax, does not make a real effort to know what is going on in the school, and then calls a lawyer at the first controversial issue or "bad touch." At this point, we're not talking about public high school. By that level of education, the parties involved are mature enough to resolve an issue without sending it home. So now, you could be wondering where this article is going. This article is dedicated to my mom, who works in special education. After hearing all the stuff that goes on at her job, I was compelled to have a say about it.

She started her career working with mentally challenged kids more than twenty years ago. Quitting to raise my sister and myself, she basically bypassed the 80's without a paid job. (We all know mothering is a full time job.) Going back to work in the early years of this decade, I can only imagine what she found had changed. She is currently employed through the I.U. in a special ed class

at a regular high school. The kids are not there to learn as you or I would. They are severely challenged and are learning basic skills. Some of the more severe cases my mom has worked with are children who injure themselves. Certain disorders can cause a person to make an uncontrollable repetitive motion, which could include battering themself about the head. If you see anyone doing this and you know they won't stop, your first instinct is to make them stop! You can't do that anymore. No teacher can restrain a student in any way.

One of the other more interesting things that has happened was a parent of a student coming into the class to observe. As distracting at that is, they can't be turned down. But that wasn't the extent of it. Observation is one thing, but this parent decided to second guess my mom on more than one occasion, telling her that she, the teacher, wasn't interacting with their child right. There was no actual problem, and the child had been responding as best as could be expected to my mom's techniques every time. I wouldn't have been able to deal with it. Imagine someone coming to your work and saying "you're doing it wrong, do it this way," and you have NO choice but to accommodate. That is what is becoming of the entire education system in this country. Maybe you don't think it happens because it's never happened to you. And somewhere a teacher is getting reprimanded because they accidentally broke the bubble that kept someone's child sheltered from everything that is different in the world.

I abhor the reckless way in which the few can throw their power around to spoil it for the many. I believe it is the job of a parent to teach their child certain things at home. Love, nurture them. Teach them right from wrong and pass on your values. But after imparting a good set of ethics, you have to let them go. Part of that is saying "run off to school now and expand your mind." Let the teachers do their job. They get paid for it for a reason! School is a business, not a hobby–they know what they're doing, and no one is there to corrupt your children.

The Knights of the Square Table

Chapter 7

The air was filled with pounding footsteps as the five knights rushed out of the room and up the corridor. There was something unnatural about them; as all their movements seemed short and jerky. They did, however, possess the ability to run exceedingly fast- so fast that they were out of sight around the corner before Chapin and Katie were able to react. Apparently, they had not been noticed again.

Inside the room, the argument continued. "How is it possible that they've discovered us?" the first voice screamed, loud enough that his wail was heard all over the compound.

"They weren't supposed to be able to get up here," the second said. "I thought I had blocked out their magic."

"Well, you didn't, did you?" the first said sarcastically. A loud crash was heard as the first threw something against one of the glass walls of the room. It didn't break, but bounced off with a loud TWANG and returned to the floor.

"What should we do?" Katie asked Chapin in a panic. "They're going to discover that we're here soon enough, but we can't run back up the corridor, either."

"Are there any other exits around here?" Chapin asked. "Look around."

The long, sloped corridor was to their left, with the entrance to the glass room to their right. Behind them was a dark, unknown space that had not returned to brightness when the lights had gone back on. The entire area had a surreal aspect to it, as if it was somehow being controlled.

Since it was impossible to find out what was lurking in the darkness without actually venturing into it, Katie motioned to Chapin to follow her. The room was larger than they had imagined. It stretched back at least a hundred feet, where they came upon a door. From the distance, it didn't appear to be a door because it was etched into the wall somehow.

Vainly, they tried to open it, but failed. Pressing her ear up to the door, Katie could hear a humming noise coming from the inside. Distraught, they returned to the door of the glass room to watch the conversation inside. Currently, all was silent. Upon looking inside, Katie and Chapin were surprised to find that nobody was there. The room looked as if it had been vacated in a hurry while they were inspecting the strange door.

Deciding that it was safe to venture inside if it was only for a second, Katie went inside, motioning for Chapin to watch the corridor that led down to where she was standing. If anyone was to attempt to sneak up on them, they would have to make their presence known first by entering through the corridor.

Inside, the room was unmemorable. There were a few chairs and a table. The entire room was glass, the strength of which surprised Katie when she jumped up and down. It must be enchanted, she thought.

On the wall, however, there was a strange panel that looked as if it didn't belong where it was. The walls were stark white; yet the panel was some sort of metal that didn't quite fit in. She tried to open it; however, it was sealed. Maybe Dave and Christopher knew what was going on...

Five large men loomed in front of Christopher and Dave, who stood still, not wanting to agitate them.

"What have you done?" the foremost of the group stated in a cybernetic tone.

"We weren't trying to do anything," Dave said, pleading. The others moved toward them in a menacing fashion. Suddenly, just as one reached out to grab Christopher, the entire building seemed to lurch.

"What's going on?" Dave asked in surprise as he was thrown backward. The giant men in front

of them didn't seem to flinch. Christopher, noticing that rocks were falling from the ceiling, ran into the room, dragging Dave behind with him. The rockslide continued, blocking off the entrance to the door. The building stopped shaking, but suddenly, it felt to Dave and Christopher like they were falling. The giants outside were clawing at the rocks, but it would take them hours if they hoped to get in. They were safe from the moment.

There was one window in the room, and Dave looked out of it to discover that the ground was getting larger - the floating city was falling toward the earth! Inside the room, one of the mysterious machines began to beep - the frequency increasing every second. Another machine in the room emitted a loud tone. Outside in the city, Dave could see Mike, scrambling with the knights.

"We don't have long!" Dave screamed. "We're falling - what are we going to do?"

"Try pressing those buttons over there!" Christopher said. "Anything! We have to stop this before we all get killed!" The beeping was growing more intense. The faint outlines of groups of trees in the plains were now becoming apparent. Outside the door to the room, the men had apparently given up, noticing their impending doom.

Dave rushed over to the machines that lined the walls and began to frantically push everything he could, but to no avail. The earth loomed up out the window. After pressing all of the buttons, and still being unsuccessful, Dave looked around for a last-ditch effort. Christopher was pounding at the strange machines on the opposite end of the room.

Without any prior warning, the beeping ceased. A second later, Dave and Christopher were knocked to the floor as the city abruptly stopped its descent.

"What just happened?" Dave asked, relieved. "Did you do anything?"

"I don't know," Christopher replied. "I was pounding on that thing over there when it stopped." He stood up, and Dave wasn't far behind. Looking out the window, they were no more than a hundred feet above the ground now. A few more seconds and they would have all perished, Dave thought.

"I don't think it matters why it stopped," Dave said, second guessing himself. "It seems to be stopped for now, so let's get ourselves and the others off this island."

"There's only one problem with that," Christopher said grimly, pointing at the doorway, which was now caved in with rocks.

"Could we use the stones to get out?" Dave asked.

Christopher took the water stone out of the pocket of his traveling clothes, and held it up. "I don't think there's enough energy left in it," he said in a disappointed tone.

"You might as well try it," Dave said. "If it doesn't work, we don't have many options."

"If it didn't work, the stone would be drained anyway," Christopher said. "We probably should try to conserve the energy it has, but you're right - we don't have any other choice."

Christopher stepped closer to the rock pile, and held the stone up to the rocks. There was a loud crash, and the pile shifted. A few rocks that were formerly near the top crashed down with a loud noise. Then all was silent.

"Well, that didn't work," Dave said disappointedly.

"Wait!" Christopher exclaimed. "Look, there's a hold near the top!" Indeed, there was, but it was only a few feet wide and hardly that in height.

"Do you think we could fit through that?" Dave asked.

"I don't think so, but the best way to find out is to try it," he said. With a determined attitude, Christopher began to climb the pile.

The knights were in a panic. Mike had tried to calm them down, but had ceased his efforts when he began to doubt that the city would survive the tragedy. The ground under their feet continued to shake, and the falling sensation continued. Mike wondered what the cause could be, or what was going on. He and the knights had moved out of the shadow of the capitol building, but they were still surrounded by other buildings, and debris was continuing to rain on them from above.

When the shaking stopped several seconds later, Mike supposed that they were now safe, but he quickly realized his mistake. Though the episode had passed, flying objects continued to fall. After all was done, several knights had suffered serious injuries. Though they were not life-threatening, they required attention from the assistants that traveled along with the knights.

Throughout the entire time, all that Mike had been able to do was wait. There wasn't a sound in the entire city, as if all of its inhabitants had been involved in some catastrophic disaster. Perhaps it worse than the one they had just experienced. But then, why would all the structures still be intact? That raised even more questions for Mike. How was it possible that the buildings around him were so tall in this world?

Before he had time to ponder these questions, a knight from the group rushed up to Mike and told him, "Sir, I think you'd better come and look at this."

"Why? What's wrong?" Mike asked in alarm. The knight was speaking in very grave tones.

"You'll see very soon," he said. "Follow me."

Mike followed the knight down the road outside the capitol building. It led toward the edge of the island, where the familiar force field was in place. As they approached, it became apparent to Mike that something wasn't right. When he reached the edge of the island, he looked down in awe. They were only a hundred feet above the ground now.

"That's why it felt like we were falling," Mike said to the knight.

"Yes," he explained. "This city was falling from the sky."

"We're lucky we survived," Mike mumbled to himself, and then said out loud, "Why would the city fall that far and suddenly stop?"

"I have no idea," the knight said frankly. "Well, I'd better leave you alone." Without another word, the knight walked back toward the rest of the knights.

As Mike was looking out over the country, pondering why the city had fallen, there was a rumbling noise. The city was now rising up back in the sky almost as fast as it had fallen before. Mike hurried back to the camp to inform the knights.

After explaining all that had happened, he shouted quickly, "Hurry! We need to find the others and get out of here!" In the silent, deserted streets, his voice echoed all around him. The knights hurriedly gathered themselves up and rose. Mike led them toward the building.

"Help me get this door open," Mike ordered the knights. Three knights ran to the front and began to struggle with the heavy doors, but they wouldn't budge. Seeing they were unsuccessful, three other also rushed to help, but it was to no avail. The doors were somehow locked. Breaking in was out of the question, as the metal doors would most likely prove impenetrable.

"Does anyone have any suggestions?" Mike asked the knights, not being able to think clearly. The rising sensation continued, as if the city was being returned to the height that it had been at before.

"Look - there's an opening we can probably get in through over there," one knight suggested, pointing to the right of the main entrance. A few bricks that held up the building had fallen out during the rapid descent, and now left a gaping hole in the wall. It had not been noticed before because a pillar blocked it from direct view from the street.

"Let's go!" Mike said, motioning for the knights to proceed. They moved inside, completely unprepared for the dangers that awaited them.

Katie and Chapin were still waiting outside the door of the room, trapped, when the island had begun to fall. Before that, the original two men had returned to the unusual room from where the giants had left.

"What's going on?"one of the men asked as the city began plummeting toward the ground.

"I'm sure it's just a minor malfunction," the other said with great aplomb. "I'm sure that everything's under control."

The first one was obviously extremely annoyed at this remark, but said nothing. After waiting for a few more seconds, he lost control. "You've been saying that for the past hour, but everything's

not under control!" he screamed. "If nothing's done in a few minutes, we're all going to be killed!"

"There's always the emergency switch," the second replied, keeping his calm.

A tapping noise was heard, as if one of them was tapping his foot on the floor in a nervous fashion. The ground continued to get closer and closer in the windows. Katie and Chapin braced themselves for what seemed inevitable.

"That's far enough!" the first screamed. There was a tramping of feet, and then the falling stopped abruptly. Katie, who had been standing to the immediate right of the door frame, was thrown to the ground, exposed in full view to the two men inside.

"Hey!" the second screamed for the first time. "Who are you?"

"Run!" Chapin screamed, and began to rush for the corridor. Katie, realizing that they now had to take the chance of running into the giants, followed her into the long, sloped corridor.

"Stop!" one of the men screamed. "Who are you?" Katie didn't look back, but it was apparent that they were being chased - and the two were gaining of them too.

"They know our secret!" the other yelled. They were closing faster than Katie and Chapin could run. They approached the turn in the corridor that signified that they were halfway to their goal.

In the end, it was useless. The two men caught up to Katie and Chapin just as they were rounding the bend. The larger of the two, leading the pack, grabbed for Chapin and missed. Katie, following behind her, tripped and fell down, blocking the corridor. As the two men attempted to subdue Katie, Chapin sped away into the darkness.

As she approached the top, completely exhausted and out of breath, she noticed that large pieces of the building had fallen, blocking the path and the large entryway. Suddenly, however, she heard voices, and hid against the wall.

"They may be anywhere in here. Let's split up. Half of you go up, and the other half down. We'll meet back here, barring any unforseen difficulties." The voice approached Chapin's position.

"Mike!" she said, running out into the atrium. Mike was standing there with about seventy-five knights, moving toward where Chapin stood.

"Chapin!" Mike said. "What's wrong?"

"Katie! She's been captured!" Chapin said, out of breath. It would have been useless to attempt to hide against the wall, anyway, given how out of breath Chapin was.

"Where?" Mike asked.

"Down below. We were running away and I was able to escape, but she couldn't."

"How long is that corridor?"

"What you see is only half of it."

"We can compare notes about what's happened later. Everyone, go down in pairs. Run as fast as you can to get out of the corridor as quickly as possible, and we'll see what's down below. Try not to hurt anyone unless they attack you first."

The knights lined up in orderly rows. Christopher and Katie went to the end of the line to follow. Mike gave the order, and the knights started down at a breakneck pace. Their training had been so great so that they left space between the pairs without being told so they wouldn't trip over each other, in addition to placing the better armored knights in the front lines.

When they were nearing the exit at the bottom of the corridor after the turn, a loud buzzing noise filled the air. Suddenly, there were a shout, "Don't move!" It was one of the voices Katie and Chapin had heard before.

Chapin and Mike pushed through the knights that stood waiting in the corridor and around the entryway to the glass room. They were horrified by what they saw. Katie, bound to a chair, was in front of the two large men, one of whom was holding a sword in a menacing fashion.

"Nobody moves or she dies!" one said calmly, as he had before.

"Stop! Everyone!" Mike said, panicked. The knights stopped in their tracks and stood like statues at attention. "Nobody make a move!"

"What do you want?" Chapin asked in fear.

"The same thing you want," came the reply. "Peace and prosperity."

"Yavin is an evil creature. Nobody can ever enjoy peace under his rule," Mike sneered.

"That is where you are sorely mistaken," the men said together in an eerie tone. One moved up to the doorframe, while the other stayed in the middle of the glass room with the sword, guarding Katie. "Yavin will bring us all peace and liberation. You will be sorry that you ever opposed him."

"You're being tricked," Chapin said, realizing that these two were under a sort of magic spell. "Yavin can't make any of that happen. He will destroy you."

"Perhaps," the closer one said in a monotone voice. "But there are greater powers in the world."

"What do you mean?" Mike said, puzzled.

"Enough!" the other said, moving forward a step. "We must not divulge our secrets."

"What secrets?" Chapin asked, but backed off when one of the men raised his sword high over Katie's head. Looking up, she slouched down as if she could hide, but didn't say anything.

"Let's heighten the odds a bit, shall we?" the calm man continued, keeping his cool. Moving out of the doorway, he made his way to the far wall of the room, where the strange panel that Katie had seen earlier was located. Taking a key out of his pocket, he held it up to the mysterious carvings, and the doors parted. Inside was a large lever with no markings on it.

The knights stood speechless, craning their necks in an attempt to determine the purpose of the strange lever. Chapin and Mike, who were now at the head of the group, motioned for the knights to ready themselves while the men's backs were turned.

"Oh, I wouldn't try that if I were you," the calm man said from inside. "If I pull this lever, you'll all be rotting piles of mush in a matter of minutes. Nobody can survive a fall from this high."

"You're going to cause the island to fall?" Mike asked.

"Not if I don't have to. It would be a shame if all your friends were killed."

"You'd die too," Katie pointed out, venturing to speak for the first time since she had been captured.

"That's not the point," one of them said. "If we die, it will be a small sacrifice for Yavin's master plan."

Suddenly, from the back ranks, someone yelled, "Chapin!" It was Dave, who was rushing toward the glass room. Christopher was hot on his heels, but they both stopped abruptly when they saw the gravity of the situation.

"Stop where you are!" one of them commanded. "My, my, how we play these childish games!"

"Now, to the real purpose of this meeting since everyone's here," the calm man said, motioning to Dave and Christopher. "I have a feeling you know exactly what happened to the troll stronghold during the battle a week ago."

"What happened?" Christopher stumbled. "Um... of course, we know what happened," he stammered, his voice now rising in emotion. "But why would we want to tell you?"

"You would want to tell us because your lives will depend on whether I feel the urge to pull this lever in the next few minutes. Now talk or you will die!"

"If you kill us, you'll never receive the information," Christopher said bluntly. The two men looked at each other, as if they had not expected this contingency. Every knight in attendance was watching Mike intently. He looked at Christopher. The two men were still unprepared. Christopher nodded, and Mike dropped his hand.

At that instant, the knights surged into the room, swords drawn. When they had reached Katie, several knights quickly pulled the chair out of the room while the other surrounded the two men.

"Too late," the calm man said, still maintaining his composure. "That was a mistake." He pulled the lever. Five knights behind him quickly drew their swords and decapitated the man along with his partner. Their bodies fell to the floor with a loud thump.

"Yes!" Mike said, rushing into the room. His congratulations were premature. There was a loud grinding noise, and the ground began to rush up beneath them.